

NAGORNO KARABAKH - 2020.
SIGNIFICANCE AND EXPECTATIONS
Expert Survey Results



YEREVAN 2020

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About the Survey

In the period of October 10 – November 10, 2019, Region Research Center conducted this expert survey on the NK elections scheduled for spring 2020. Unlike the past periods, this topic had started to be discussed in public platforms long before the launch of our study. It appeared in various contexts, being topical already so much ahead of time.

A total of 66 politicians, NGO representatives, individual public figures, analysts and other specialists took part in the survey. Some of them were in Armenia, namely 11 representing different political parties (including 3 Parliamentary forces) and 29 were NGO sector representatives and individual specialists, and some were in Karabakh, namely – 11 politicians (including 4 Parliamentary parties) and 15 NGO sector representatives and individual specialists. Among the surveyed in Karabakh there were 2 figures who have announced their intention to run in the NK presidential elections.

Thus, for the purposes of the survey a representative group was formed of political and public figures and individual experts who shape the discourse around the conflict and the domestic life in NK.

Methodology

The research was conducted through anonymous in-depth interviews. One representative from each political and non-governmental organization participated in the survey. The respondents answered 20 questions on the specificities of political and civil landscapes, the peculiarities of past and present electoral processes in NK, the importance of developing democracy in the context of security, conflict and NK internal developments, the attitudes towards elections, the peculiarities of electoral campaign and other interrelated issues.

The results were processed using qualitative and quantitative methods in discourse analysis. To answer some questions, each respondent had an opportunity to choose more than one priority or option. That is the reason why in a number of graphs the total quantified answers may exceed 100%.

There were a number of questions in response to which the groups of respondents from Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh mentioned completely different priorities. However, there were no stark differences revealed when comparing the answers provided by 2 other groups, namely the representatives of active political parties in Armenia and NK and those of public figures/experts.

That is why the results of the survey were presented from two viewpoints – as overall answers of all respondents, and as those of the groups from Armenia and Karabakh taken separately.

NAGORNO KARABAKH – 2020. SIGNIFICANCE AND EXPECTATIONS
EXPERT SURVEY RESULTS
(October 10 – November 10, 2019)

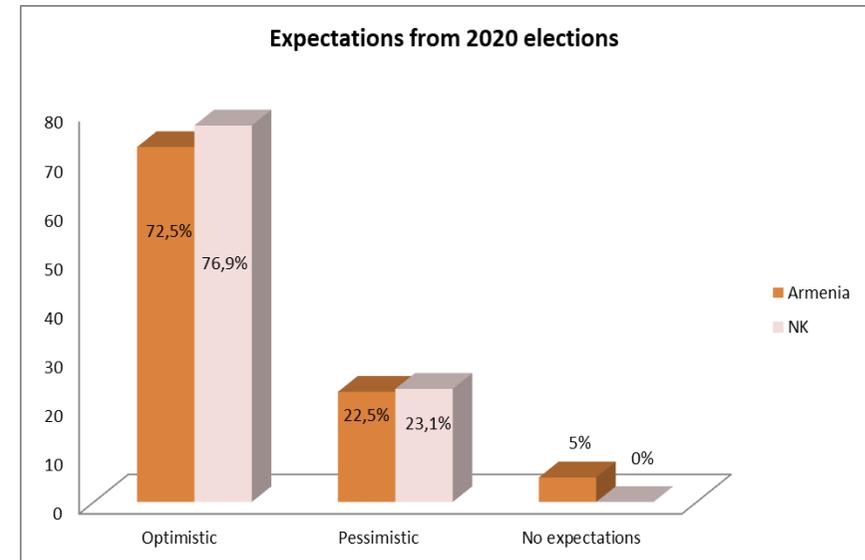
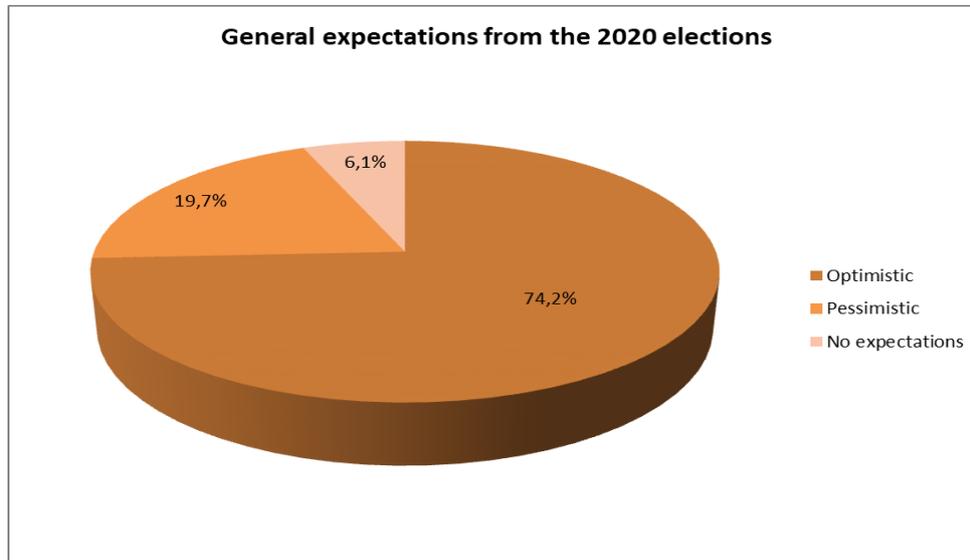
PART I. Expectations and Discourses

Expectations from NK 2020 elections

Most expectations from the upcoming NK elections are optimistic in Armenia and Karabakh. The same trend can be noticed when considering the overall results, as well as the results for the group from Armenia and that from NK individually.

The NK group of respondents had no one who would state they held no expectations from the upcoming electoral processes.

See the graphs below.



Those expectations were substantiated mainly through citing the following answers, as proposed.

Optimistic expectations	Pessimistic expectations: concerns	No expectation at all
<p>In Armenia and NK optimistic expectstions were formulated in terms of justifications that relate to the possibility of holding free and fair elections and the positive impact thereof from the viewpoints of public trust and effective</p>	<p>There are differences in the Armenia and NK segments in terms of substantiations for pessimistic expectations.</p> <p>Thus,</p>	<p>The justifications underlying these answers put forth the following considerations: Armenia is pursuing the wrong policy for ensuring NK’s subjectification, since it is necessary to document NK’s unification with Armenia</p>

<p>arrangements for internal processes in NK, as well as the harmonization of NK's socio-political life with Armenia.</p>	<p>In Armenia elections-related pessimism is expressed in the form of explicit concerns: internal tension may arise in Karabakh, clashes between adversary teams are not excluded as was the case in the past elections in Armenia, or escalation by Azerbaijan on the border and frontline during the elections is not excluded either.</p> <p>In NK pessimism was accounted for by the fact that the general expectations from the elections would not come true, life would not radically improve, new potential and new forces would not capacitate the Parliament substantially, the old methods of personal connections, resources and networks was going to work again.</p>	<p>de jure, and hence the upcoming elections in NK are the same as any local self-government elections in Armenia.</p>
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Discourses on 2020 in Armenia and NK

Respondents were asked to describe the discourses on the 2020 elections that are circulating in Armenia and NK and, in fact, create a comprehensive picture of public expectations and perceptions.

There are no significant differences marked in the answers of respondents from Armenia and Karabakh.

The discourses described can be classified as belonging to three groups:

- In Armenia the discourse that rolls out is on the harmonization of the political environments in NK and Armenia, on the impact of the Velvet Revolution, and the involvement of Armenia in NK elections. Whereas in NK the predominant discourse is on “Independence or unification?” Even though as those who responded in this manner highlight that these two discourses are fundamentally about more effective security and protection of Armenian interests.
- In both Armenia and NK the discourse on individuals focuses on which candidate running for the elections has better chances of victory, with reference to the support guarantees from the official circles in Armenia. And those direct and indirect messages influence the electorate.
- As it was underlined by the representatives of the NK group, there is a difference in the nature of the Armenian and Karabakh discourses. In Armenia, the discourses roll out within the logic of revolution vs counter-revolution, “black” vs “white”, whereas in the NK the borderline between these two camps is not that rigidly clear, people interact with each other regardless of their varied approaches in relation to different issues.

PART II. 2020 Elections in the Context of the Conflict

Our questionnaire contained a number of questions that helped consider the elections in the context of the conflict.

Significance of Democracy in NK

According to overall results, and the answers of the Armenian and Karabakh groups separately, the vast majority believes democratic reforms have a major significance for NK in the context of the conflict. But these observations come with different justifications:

In NK the number of respondents who mainly prioritize this issue in the context of domestic developments link democratization with socio-political and economic development and the establishment of rights and freedoms in Karabakh which “can only have a positive impact on the protection of the Armenian interests.”

Whereas in the group from Armenia the number of respondents who substantiated the significance of democracy due to the conflict was larger.

A number of typical statements with both references are presented below.

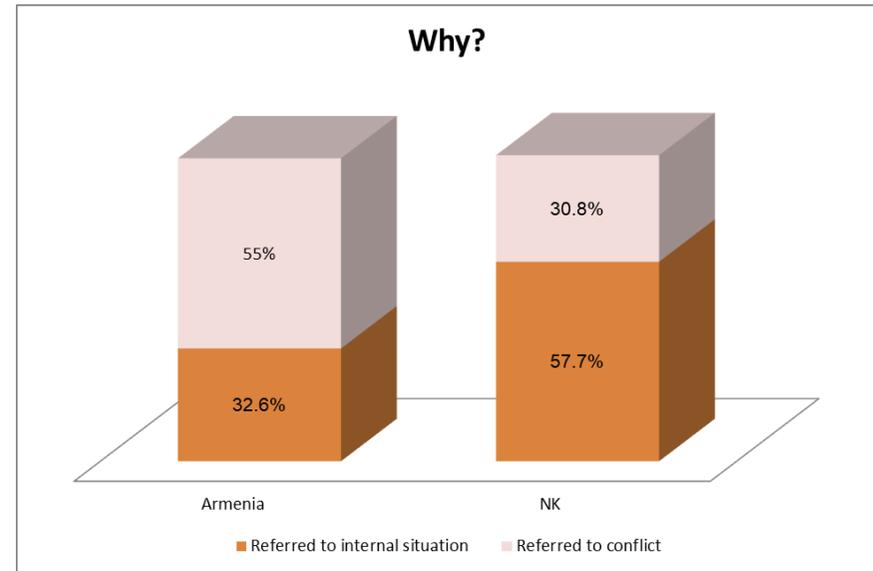
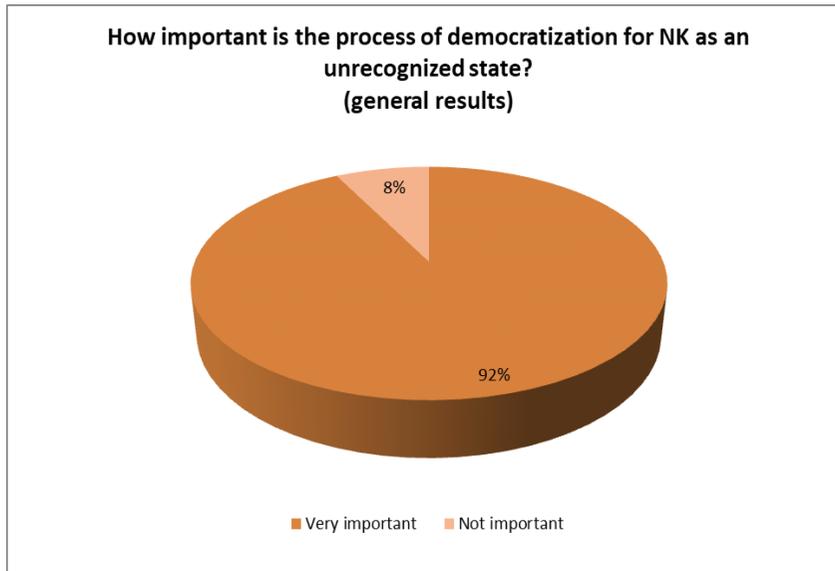
Reference to the improvement of life domestically

- “Democracy and the making of democratic institutions in Artsakh are important from the viewpoint of social justice, business initiative.” “It is important for Artsakh domestically, to ensure more solidarity in public life.”
- “Democracy and security in domestic realities are intertwined for us, it is an important security resource for us.” “Justice is of fundamental importance especially as Artsakh is waging a war.”
- “It is not going to be of any importance from the viewpoint of conflict resolution, but domestically the importance is huge, thus, the relations between the leaderships of the RA and Artsakh, and in general, the relations between the two states will be in harmony.”
- “The lack of atmosphere of justice that exists in Artsakh today poses a major security challenge. In the conditions of democracy, people engage in various processes with more trust, be it conscription, investments in their homeland, or any other type of public participation.”
- “Democratization gives hope for the future.”

Reference to the conflict

- “Democracy is of major significance because it justifies why Artsakh cannot be part of authoritarian Azerbaijan.”
- “It is important to prove to international organizations that Artsakh is a sovereign state which can organize its own domestic life.” “It influences international perspectives, for it enables to speak the same language and have the same, comprehensible standards.”
- “Democracy is NK’s trump card in the conflict, as the conflict is about rights.”

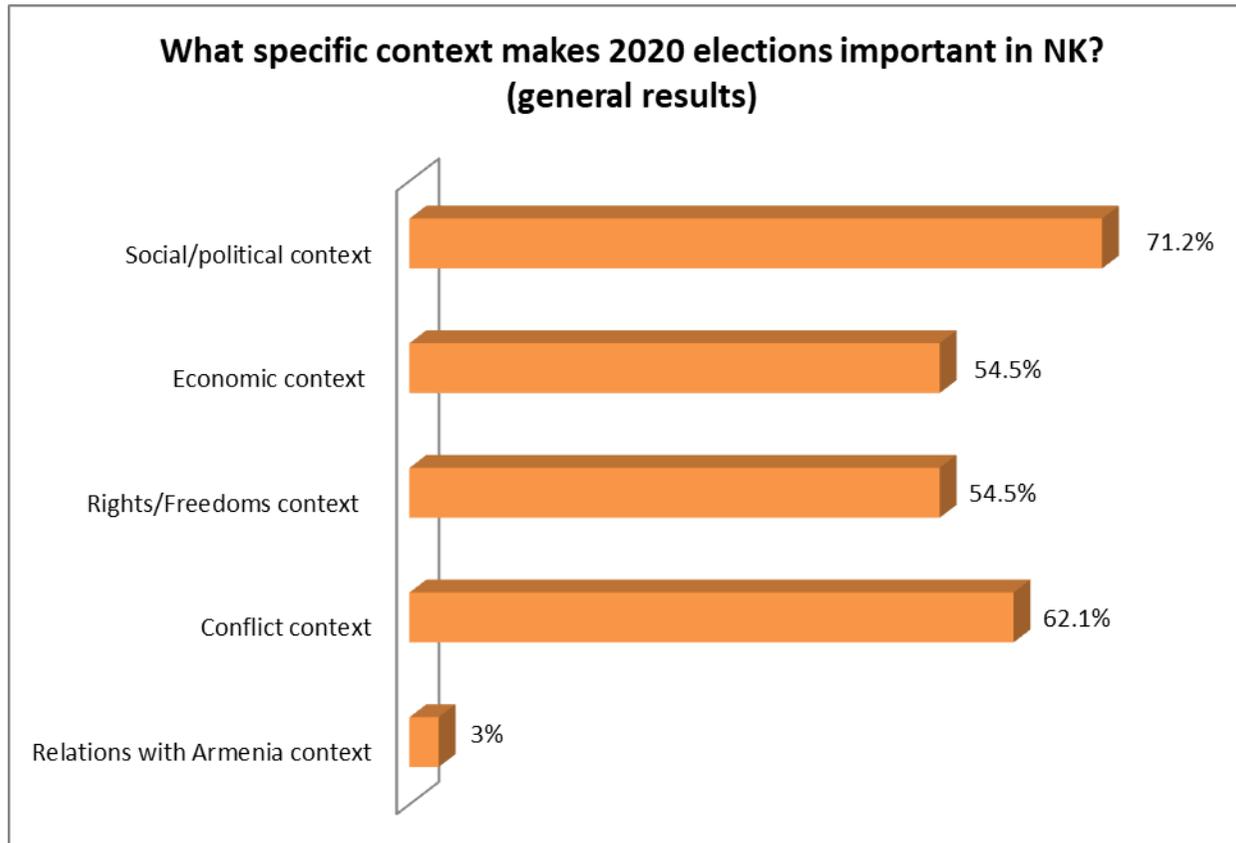
See the graphs below.



Contexts important for the elections

According to all respondents, the 2020 elections are important from a number of viewpoints. Socio-political context was mentioned most, followed by the conflict, economic development, rights and freedoms. A significantly small number of respondents (3%) mentioned that the elections are important in the context of relations with Armenia.

See the graph below.

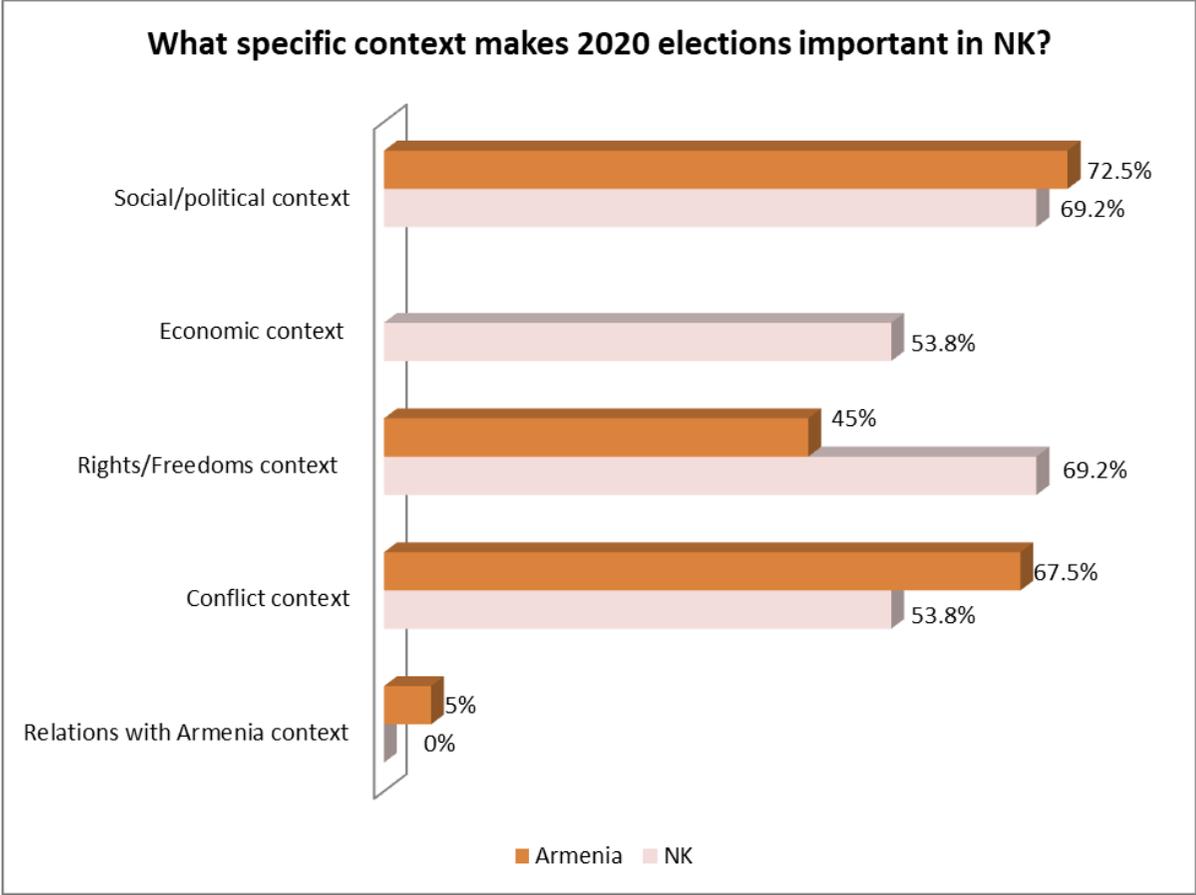


However, there are differences in the answers of the groups from Armenia and Karabakh, when considering priorities.

The graph below shows that **in the group from Armenia** the number of those who prioritized the elections in the context of the conflict was larger than that in the group from Karabakh. And on the contrary, the number of those who spoke in favour of the rights and freedoms context in the group from Karabakh exceeding the representatives of the group from Armenia by 24.2%.

Only the representatives of the group from Armenia (5%) prioritized the 2020 elections in the context of relations with Armenia.

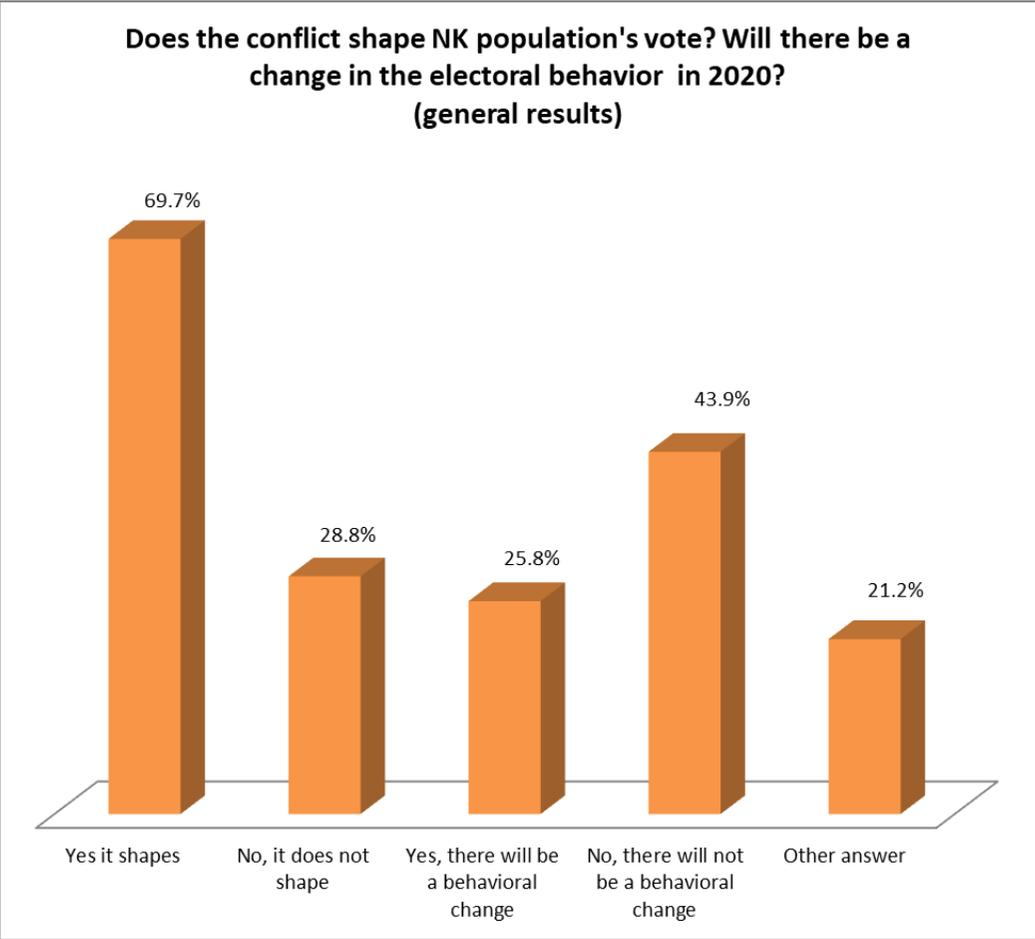
See the graph below.



The conflict and the electoral behavior of NK population

The majority of all respondents mentioned that the conflict preconditioned the electoral behavior of the NK population, and that there was not going to be any behavioral change in the course of the upcoming elections.

See the graph below.



However, again we can note differences between the answers provided by the group from Armenia and that from Karabakh.

Unlike the group from Armenia, there were more respondents from Karabakh who mentioned that the conflict did not condition the behavior of Karabakh electorate, besides, there were more mentions of the electoral behavioral change in the upcoming elections.

“The conflict conditions/ does not condition electoral behavior” claims were justified by the following explanations:

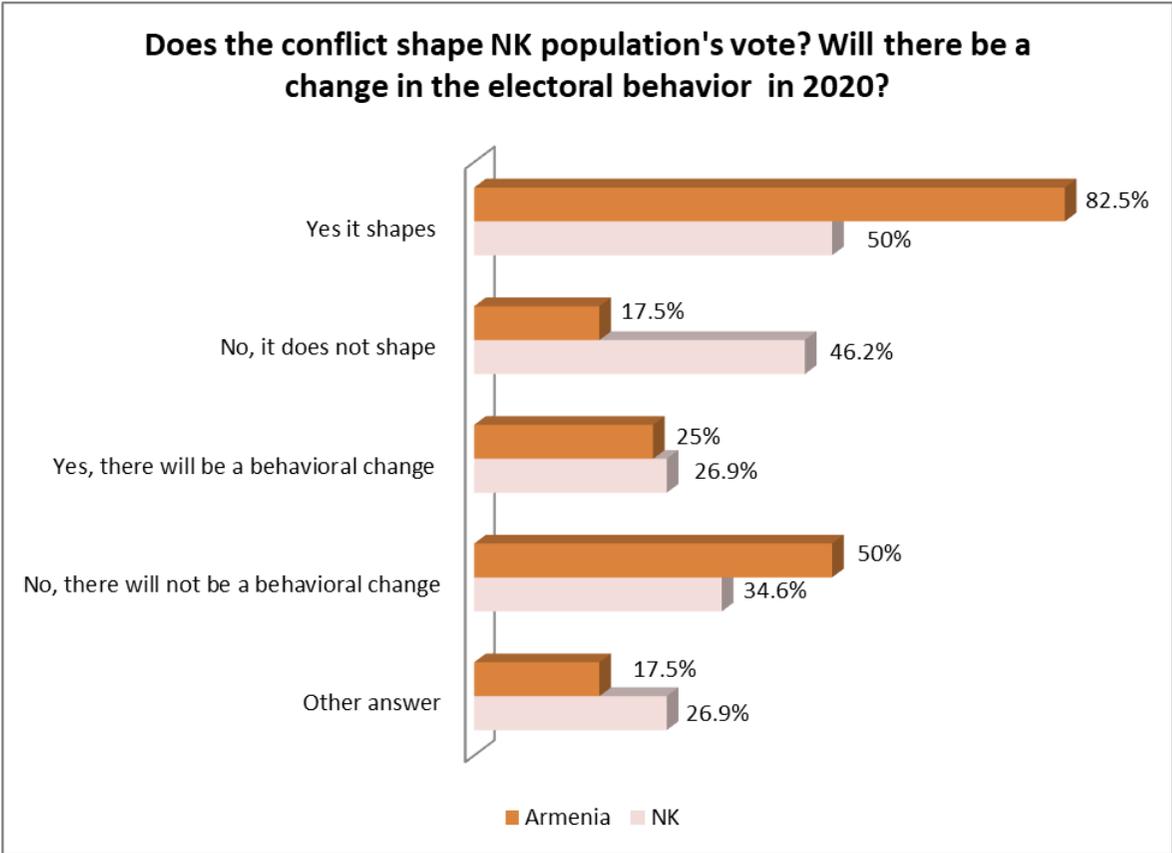
It does not condition behavior, because

- The conflict and the war situation have been there for so long that they fail to have any significant impact on the behavior of the electorate any more.
- The positions of the candidates and adversary teams are the same in fundamental issues, hence other factors are decisive when choosing from among the actors.

It conditions behavior, the conflict definitely dictates a concrete electoral behavior in NK, since

- Karabakh has always elected a Commander in Chief, and the choice has always been led by security issues, and this will be the case again. Existing phobias predetermine electoral behavior.
- The society in Karabakh is a society that is isolated and is not internationally recognized, its elections are not recognized either, and the highest bar for elections was set to have better elections than those in Azerbaijan. But they have not thought about anything more.

See also the graph below.



Pluralism in terms of conflict resolution in the elections

The majority of all respondents gave a negative answer to “**Do you expect pluralism in terms of conflict resolution during the elections?**” question, stating that there was not going to be any pluralism on the conflict during the elections. No difference was marked between the collective answers provided by the groups from Armenia and Karabakh.

Those, who think that different views on the conflict resolution are going to be expressed during the elections, answered that

- There would be a debate on the main methods, but there was consensus in relation to the participation in the negotiations and the recognition of independence,
- The views would diverge in only one question: “shall we go for unification today, or shall we wait for independence, and join afterwards?”.

Those who claimed that there would be no pluralism substantiated their views as follows:

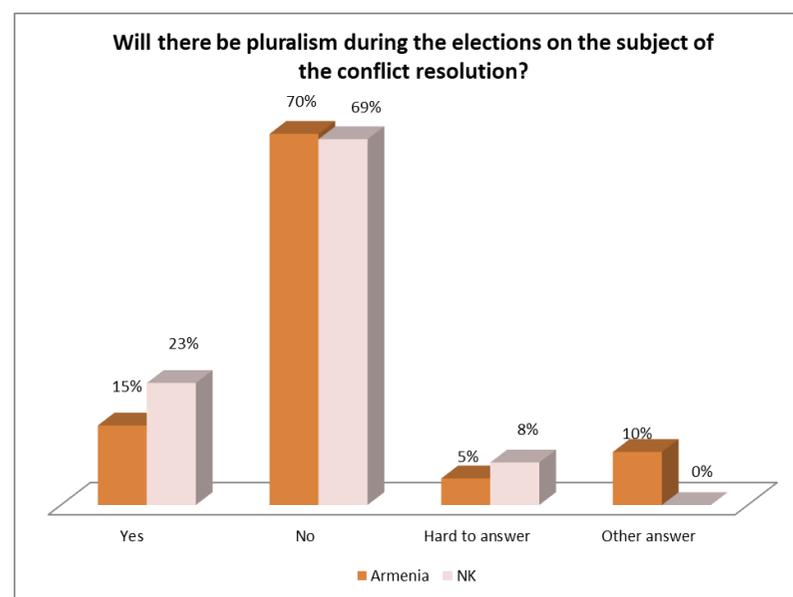
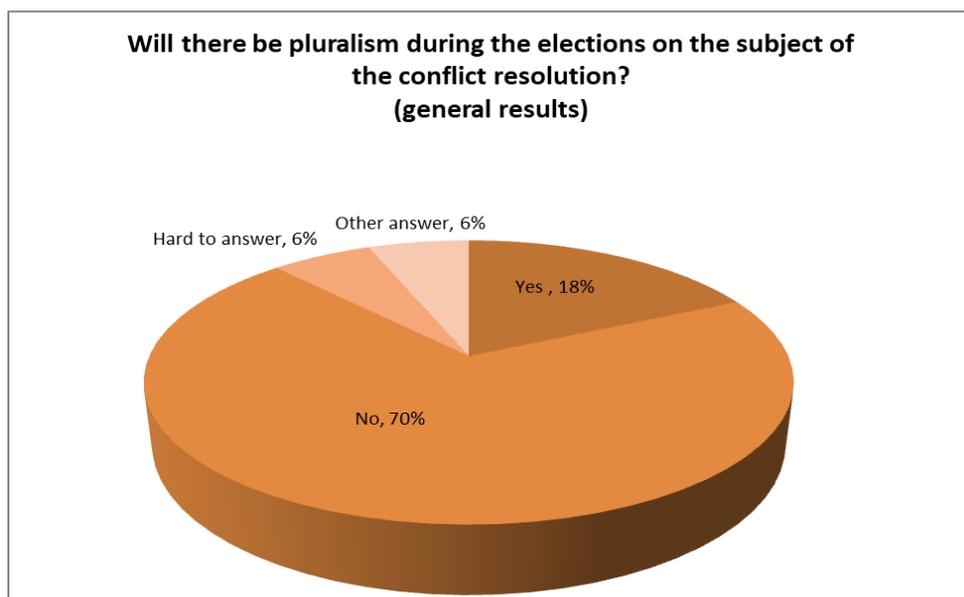
- There is not a lot to say on this topic, there is no large difference among those who hold seemingly divergent approaches (“Artsakh is Armenia, no other way” and “Artsakh has a right to self-determination”) since there is a “foundational understanding that Artsakh ought to be protected at any cost”. And this understanding does not assume any pluralism.
- “... our people do not allow any pluralism on this matter. A few months ago Samvel Babayan’s attempt was a very good lesson to all. After harsh criticism he does not voice the idea of Russia’s protectionism any more,” “the topic of resolution is not even going to be in top three, rather the topic to be discussed will be ‘unification or independence’.”

There are a number of contradictory answers within the groups from both Armenia and NK, but with the same substantiation that the conflict is generally a vulnerable topic during the elections.

Yes, there will be pluralism, since the candidates will use this as a blow against their adversaries. The conflict is a vulnerable topic.

No, there will not be pluralism, since it will undermine the image of the candidate who speaks of concessions. It is a vulnerable topic.

See the graphs below.



PART III. Specificities of Electoral Processes in NK

Campaign? Through what media?

The respondents who are inclined to ascribe **major or some importance** to the campaign processes during the elections were quite a large number in both Armenia and NK. They grounded their opinion by the following:

- In this manner people will understand that they can determine their fate without any external pressures, influences, people will thus understand that their voice matters,
- Campaign is important especially in the regions and villages,
- Campaign influences even those who have already made their decision on who they are going to vote for,
- If this were not the case, the campaign would not actually have started before its official launch, just is the case now.

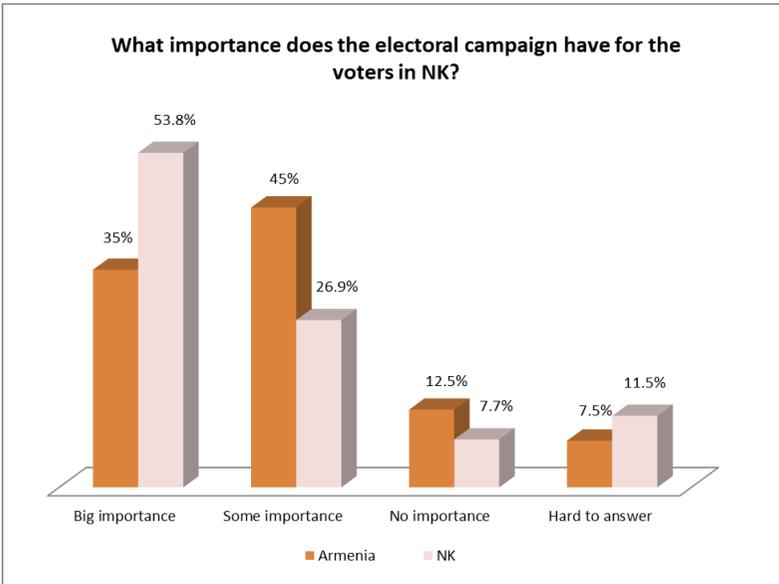
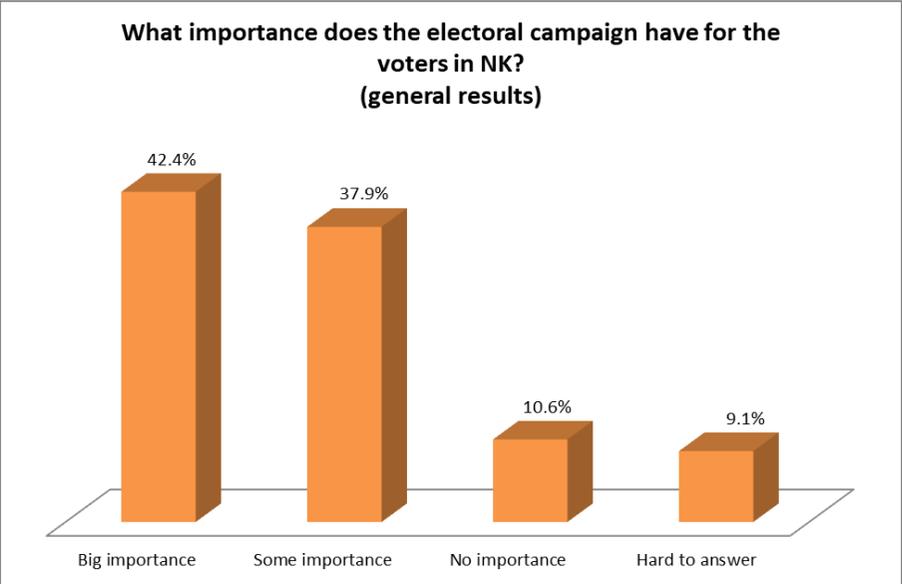
In the group of respondents from Nagorno Karabakh, those who ascribed major significance to the campaign process were more in number than the **respondents from Armenia** who gave more cautious assessments to the effectiveness of the campaign in NK with all its specificities (a small society, where everyone knows everybody else, a constant context of the conflict, experience with past electoral processes and so on).

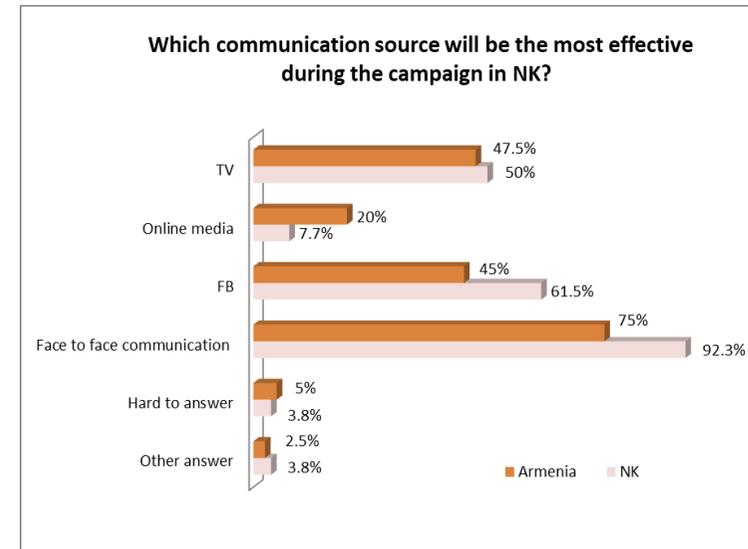
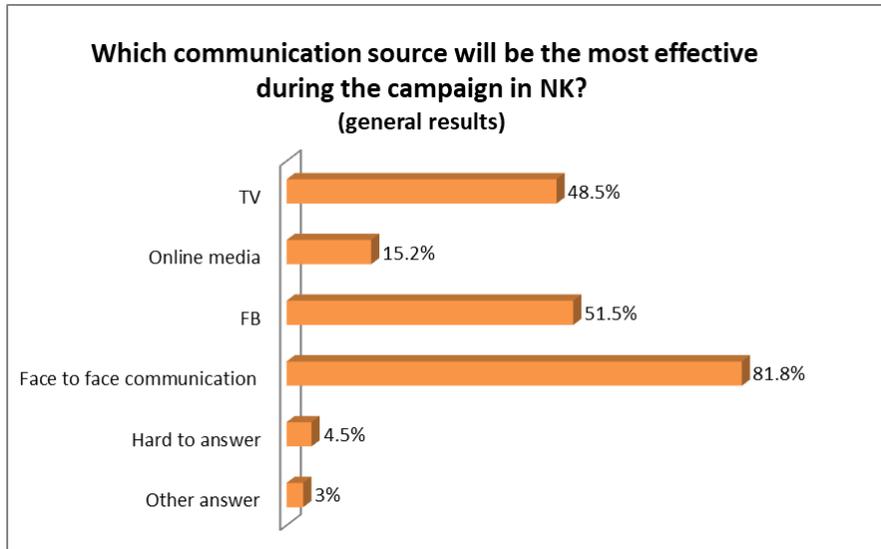
In both Armenia and Karabakh groups the number of respondents who mentioned that the upcoming campaign was not going to have significant influence on the outcome of the elections was considerably smaller.

Besides, when considering both overall results and the answers of the groups from Armenia and Karabakh separately, the sets of priorities were the same. Face-to-face interaction, especially in the rural areas, was considered the most effective mode of campaigning, followed by TV campaign.

The group from Karabakh mentioned that they also meant TV companies in Armenia, and generally the role of the Armenian media, too, that could play a major role in the promotion of campaign processes.

See the graphs below.





Topics to be circumvented during the campaign

27.5% of respondents from Armenia, and 23% from NK believe no such topics are going to be there in the upcoming elections. Both the majority of respondents in Armenia (62,5%) and almost half of those surveyed in NK (46%) mentioned the so-called taboos:

- Conflict resolution, Madrid principles, concessions,
- Relations with Armenia, Unification,
- Evaluation of the previous leadership, political evaluation of the past,
- Corruption,
- Some issues on the army and security,

- Repatriation,
- Sexual minorities,
- Issues related to youth and women.

Key factors for winning the vote

Views diverge also on what are going to be the key factors for winning the vote in the upcoming NK elections. The total results indicate that the connections and resources owned by the candidates are going to be more decisive, to be followed by their role in the conflict and the fact that they are newcomers and are out of the system.

However, again a difference can be noted in the emphasis laid by the groups from Armenia and NK. The opinions of the groups from Armenia and Karabakh on connections and resources coincide, but the role one played in the Karabkh conflict was mentioned by the group from Armenia as a decisive factor more often than by the group from Karabakh. And on the contrary, being a newcomer was prioritized by the group in Karabakh more than by the group from Armenia.

Apart from the options for factors proposed by us, the respondents mentioned 4 more additional factors which could be important or could play a significant role for winning the vote in the elections.

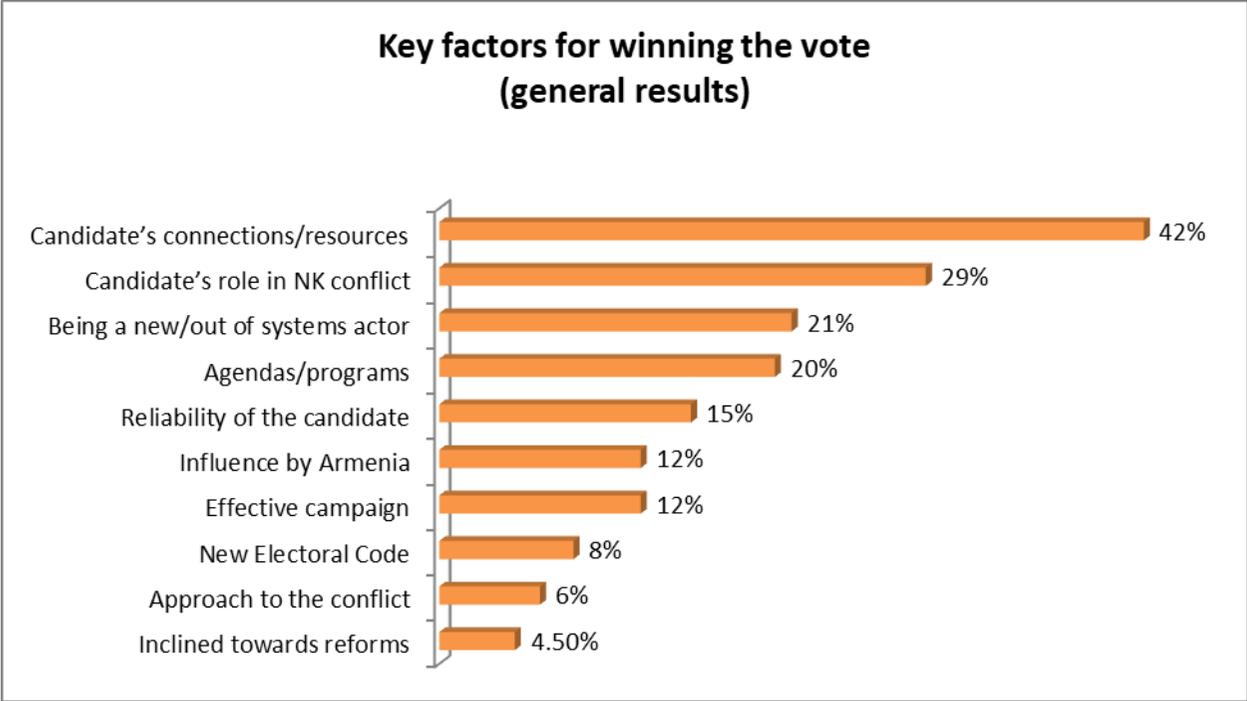
Thus, by influence from Armenia, the respondents meant the support provided by the RA leadership, the proposal of an effective formula for interacting with the RA leadership. The group from Armenia chose this option more often than the group from NK.

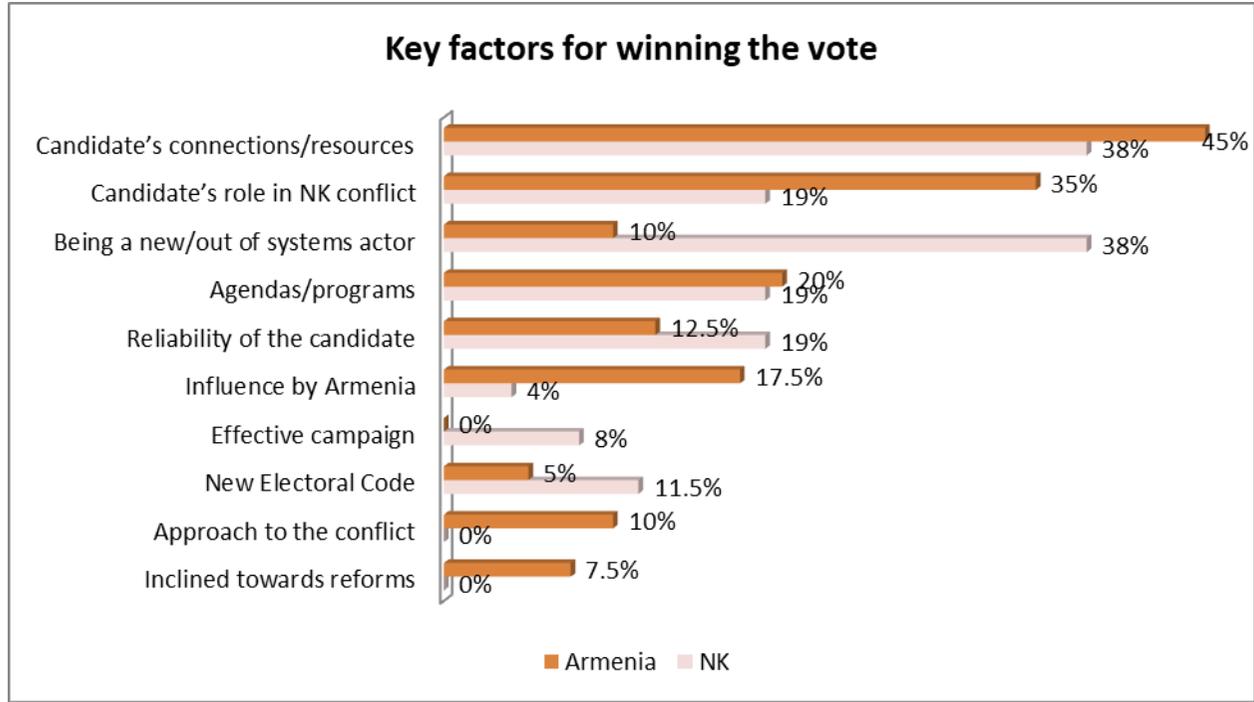
By reliability of the candidate, they meant the candidates' biography, the positive reputation they had in the society, the fact that they are not part of any corruption-related mechanism. The majority of respondents who chose this option represented the NK group.

Approach to the conflict was to denote the attitude to the conflict resolution, sincere communication with people on this matter with a realistic and long-term program for border protection.

Inclination towards reforms was selected by respondents who underlined the social demand for change by the Karabakh population, their strength to overcome the burdens inherited from the past and other circumstances.

See the graphs below.

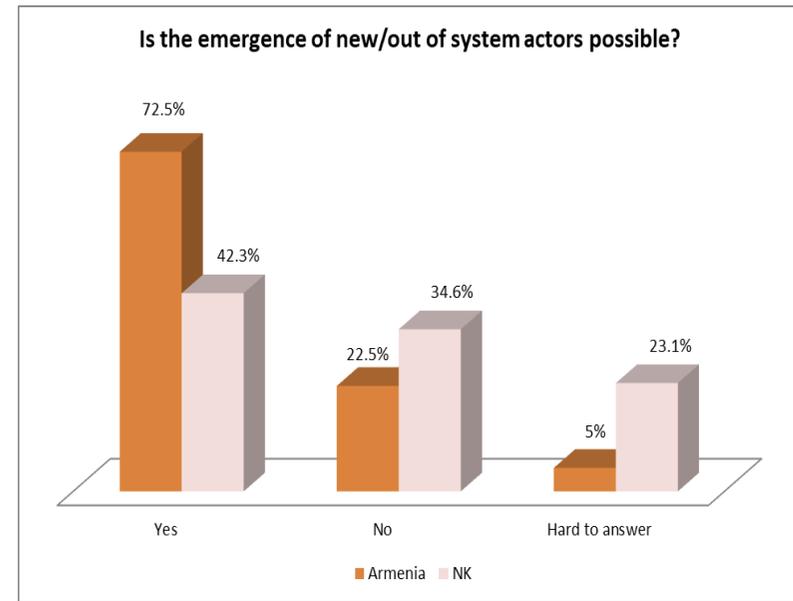
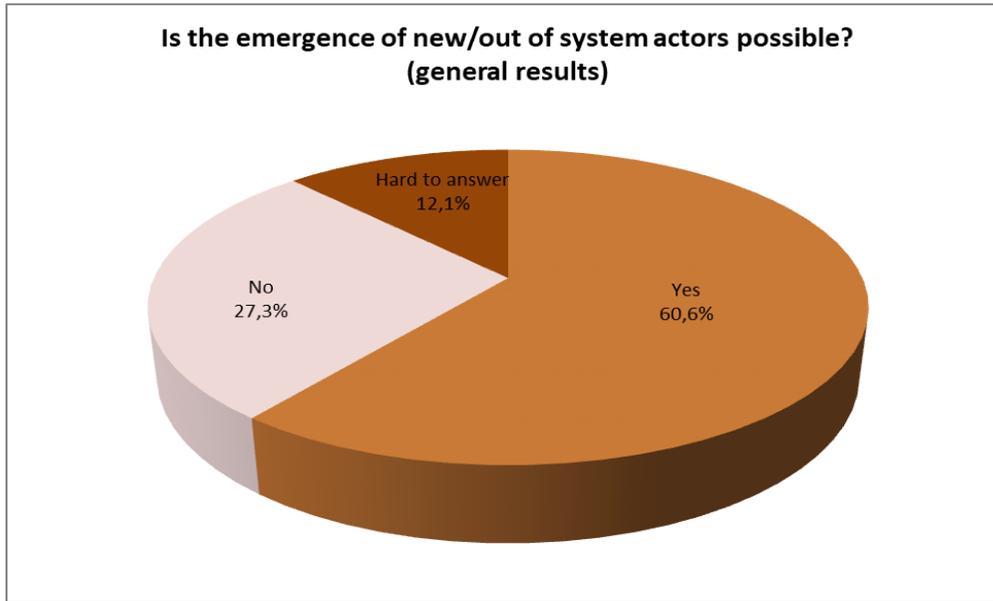




Probability/Possibilities for new, out-of-system actors

According to the overall results, respondents who believe that new, out-of-system actors may appear in the NK elections are almost twice as many as those who claim otherwise. By the way, in Armenia the majority of respondents gave a positive answer to this question, whereas in Nagorno Karabakh negative answers prevailed.

See the graphs below.



Why? The answers were substantiated with the typical statements below:

Yes, it is possible	No, it is impossible
<p>Respondents in Armenia and NK who gave positive answers held different notions about a new, out-of-system actor. From their point of view, there are out-of-system actors involved already, namely those who</p>	<p>Respondents in Armenia and NK who gave negative answers justified their claim, stating that Karabakh is a small society where everyone knows everyone else. Or they stated that there had been no opportunities for new political figures</p>

were not part of the government, or even if they were in and worked for the government and other formal structures, they did not participate in various electoral transactions, were not among decision makers, were not in the corruption system; or these are new, out-of-system actors known to the public due to their occupations that are not political (former military, war veterans). The emergence of new, out-of-system actors is possible in NK. It is a different matter that they will have hardly any chance to win.

and generation change in all previous elections, and even though there are new faces in the public arena, they lack the political experience and resources to run for office.

The level of interest in the upcoming elections and an evaluation of previous elections

Upcoming NK elections

The groups from Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh gave identical answers to the question "**What will the level of interest among the population of Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia be in the 2020 elections and what will the level of participation by the NK population be on the election day**"? The level of interest will be high, the turnout will be higher than during the previous elections. However, there will also be a large number of citizens who will not turn up.

Here are examples of typical answers

- "There will be greater interest than in the previous years. But there will be people who will not vote, and that number will be quite large. Interest in Armenia has grown, too, and it is still growing. Everyone is interested in what's going on in Artsakh. The number of those who will not participate in the elections has to do with skepticism, they believe everyone is sold. And the increase in turnout is due to people starting to realize the value of their votes. "

- “The interest is great already now. It is enough to keep an eye on the news releases of the Armenian media and the comments on the pre-election processes. During the 2019 local government elections, an unprecedentedly large number of independent observers from Armenia participated in the processes. But no electoral activity boom shall be expected.”

Previous NK elections

The group from Armenia provided quite diverse evaluations of the previous elections, namely:

- “pre-arranged, prescribed”,
- "free but not fair",
- "very good, at least better than the elections in Azerbaijan",
- "The previous elections were very good, and the positive feedback of international organizations testifies to this",
- "At least they were better than the elections in Armenia, they ran without violence."

Whereas the question on the level of interest in the previous elections was answered by the respondents in Armenia mainly unequivocally. That is, only the political and public figures and circles were interested in those elections, the Armenian media reported the previous elections as news, and the general public held no interest in the former elections.

The responses of the Nagorno Karabakh group were diverse.

Thus, none of the 26 respondents from Karabakh gave an unequivocally positive evaluation to the previous election, coming up with predominantly negative and critical assessments.

- Voting was a process of legitimizing the already pre-determined composition of the parliament and the pre-determined presidential winner-candidate,
- The elections were held through pressure and use of administrative resources, regardless of the presence of observers.

Some said that there were competitive elections in the past, too, such as the first elections for the Supreme Council, the 2007 and 2012 presidential elections. As for the parliamentary elections, as a rule, they were not competitive, the level of interest in Parliamentary elections was even lower.

Respondents in Nagorno-Karabakh made no comparisons with the Armenian and Azerbaijani elections, and their assessments were based on democratic criteria of how active the population was, whether resources were used to influence voters, and so on.

Armenia's influence and involvement in the 2020 elections

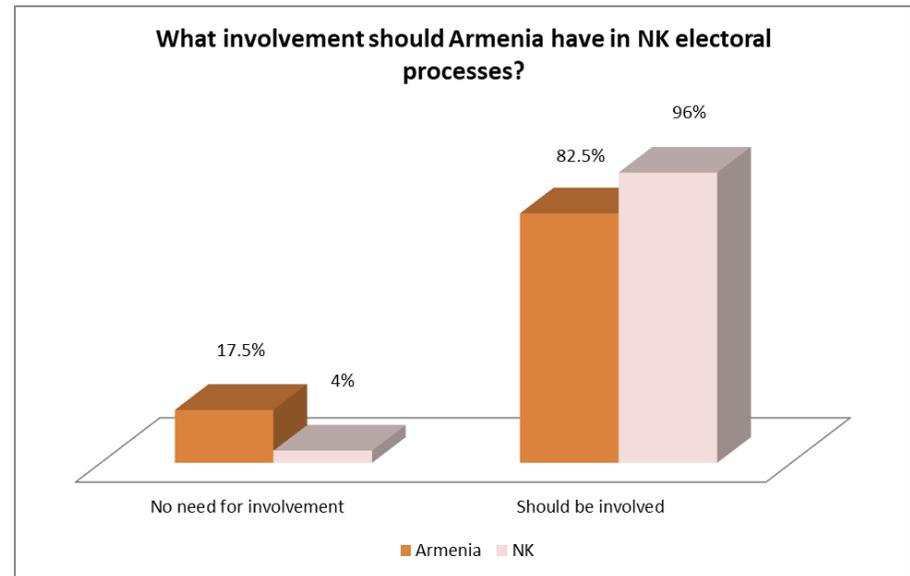
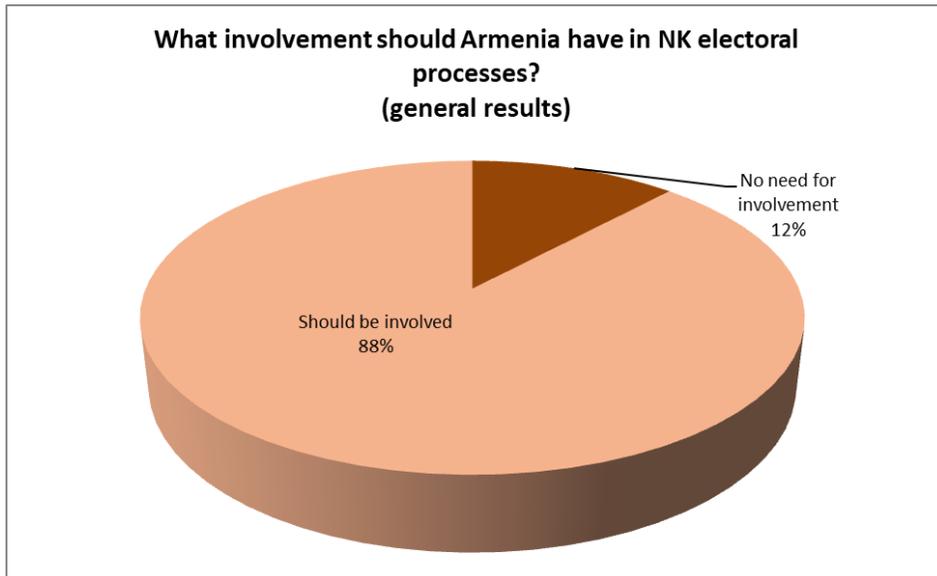
According to the respondents from Armenia and Karabakh, the processes taking place in the Republic of Armenia influence the internal political life in NK. And they will be reflected in the 2020 electoral processes, too. This influence is primarily explained by the degree of integration between Armenia and NK.

- "Well-founded expectations for change have come afore in Artsakh, and this has led to greater public activism, which is currently being fueled by vigorous party building."
- "The influence will be reflected in the upcoming elections in the most direct matter. Election fraud will be minimized. "
- "There will be a freer and more competitive struggle."
- "The processes in Armenia certainly have a serious impact, otherwise we would not see such political activity today, and an illogical growth of parties and presidential candidates, too."

These are the typical descriptions of the impact the RA processes have had on the social and political life in NK.

The majority of respondents (88%) think that Armenia should be involved in the upcoming elections in NK. There were more respondents in the group from Armenia who believed that Armenia should have no involvement in the elections, whereas 96% of the Karabakh group thinks that such involvement is necessary.

See the graphs below.



The more typical views favoring Armenia's involvement in the upcoming elections range from a minimal amount of action to an extent that "Yerevan must stop staging the performance on Artsakh's Independence and restore the right of RA citizens residing in Artsakh to participate in the RA national elections."

A predominantly larger number of opinions stated that at the level of leadership political statements need to be made, while at other levels there should be media coverage, observation missions, awareness raising activities for NK population, lobbying before international organizations to ensure the participation of observation missions, assistance to the NK CEC in terms of the voter lists.

"Armenia can and must ensure transparent and fair elections as much as possible. The Armenian press is also obliged to create equal conditions, for the newly formed forces, too. We are usually skeptical of newcomers, but we should give them a chance. In addition, we would like the society in Armenia to see us, and this would validate our significance. The more observers come from

Armenia and different parts of the world, the better. It is desirable to observe polling stations as far from Stepanakert as possible because the elections in the city are more transparent,"said the representative of an NK party.

"If Armenia is negotiating the conflict instead of Artsakh, it has every right to participate in all the processes in Artsakh, including elections," said a figure who is going to run for office.

PART IV. NK Political and Civil Landscape on the Turn of 2020

What shapes the NK political landscape?

According to the overall answers to this question, the political landscape in NK is first and foremost shaped by individuals and business entities/business interests.

Most frequently, when saying “individuals”, the respondents referred to persons who had contributed to the war and were popular.

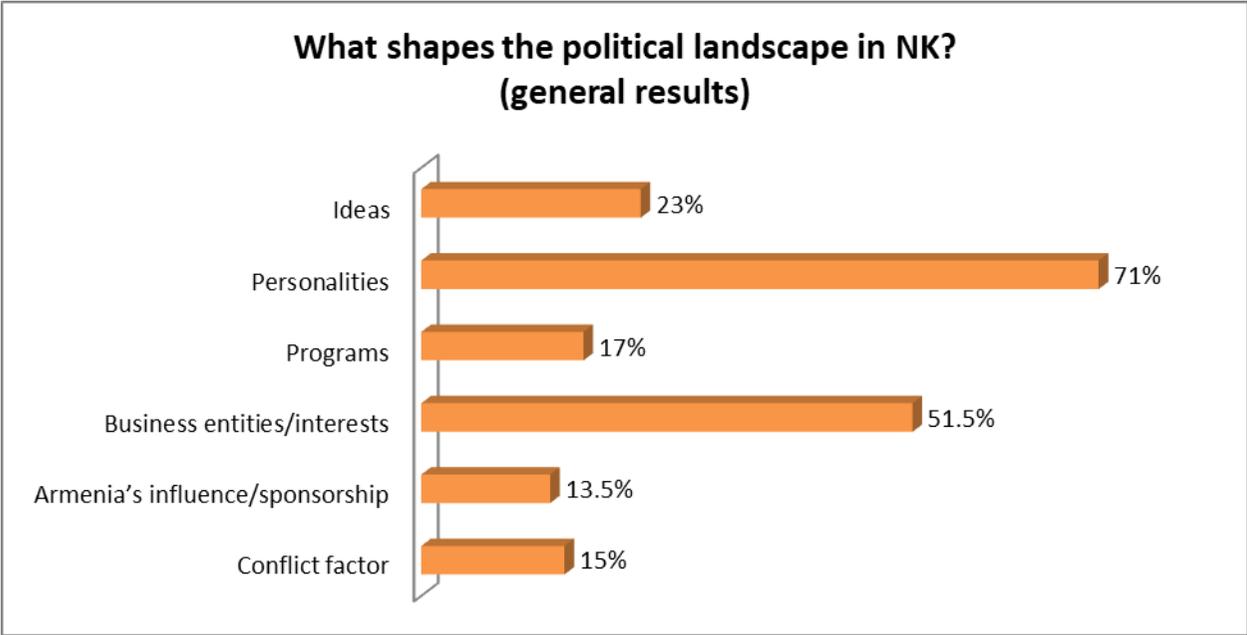
The important role played by business interests in this regard is explained as follows: “The heroes of the previous war were actively involved not only in political and army-building activities, but also in economic processes, in business. Over the years people have accumulated local interests that have become very important in political processes.”

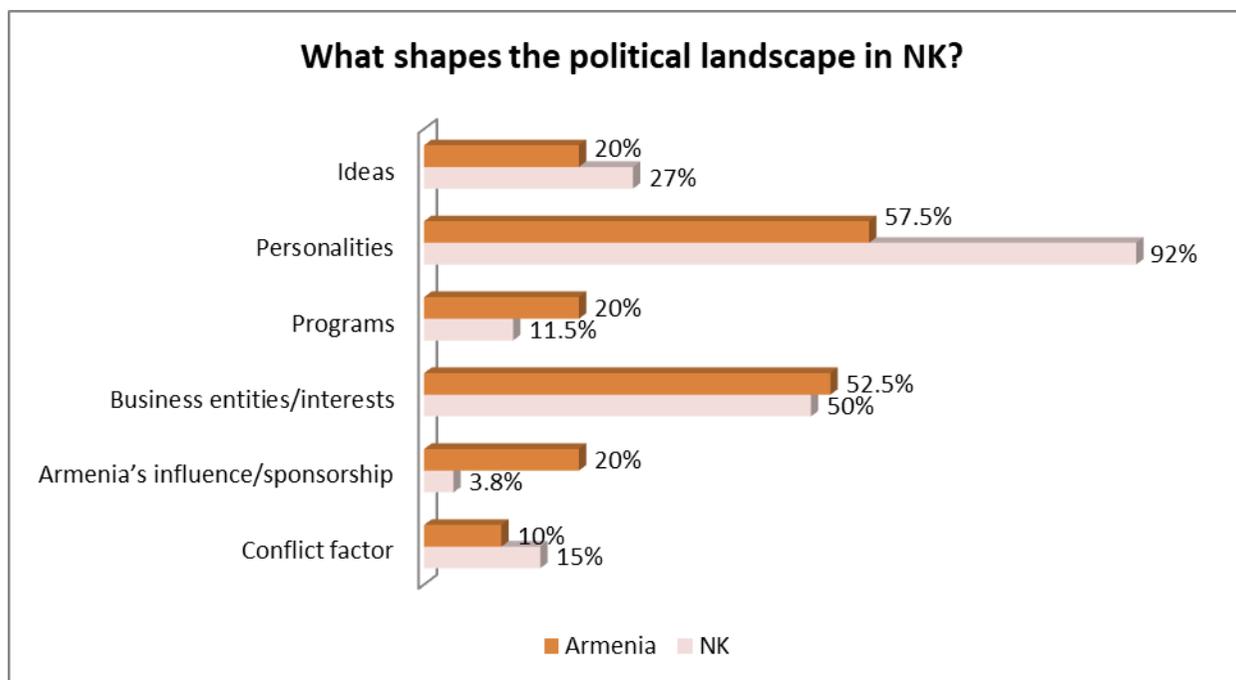
The number of people who spoke of ideas and programs was almost 2-3 times smaller. Ideas are referred to in the context of security and conflict, and this cannot be any different. That is why those who propose more effective solutions to these important issues are given a priority. The idea is formulated as "Unification vs. Independence", and forces are now consolidating around this idea.

The number of those who mentioned the conflict as a factor is not significantly different in the groups from Armenia and Karabakh.

The group of respondents from Armenia pointed to the influence of Armenia on the formation of the political landscape in NK 5 times more than the group of respondents from Karabakh did, meaning also the role of political forces operating in Armenia.

See the graphs below.





The role of NK civil society

In the responses of the groups from Armenia and Karabakh, an opinion prevailed that the level of civil society in NK is not high enough even though there were respondents in the group from Armenia who gave a more optimistic evaluation of the activities and potential of the NGO sector in Nagorno-Karabakh at present.

According to the consolidated data, there are some active individuals and groups in NK, but there is no civil society in institutional terms. This is due to a number of circumstances.

Isolation and separation from the international community, and therefore the lack of resources were mentioned more frequently. According to some respondents in the Karabakh group, connections with Armenian NGOs are weak, too.

The sense of security has a significant impact on the activity of the civil society, in almost all areas of activity the latter engages in. According to one of the respondents, the NK society is "like a lawn". "Through the efforts of the former authorities, a discourse was created that organizations funded by the West are western spies, as a result, they have started dealing with 'clean' issues - art school, aid to families of war victims and so on. Almost all civic initiatives end up forming a standard party, which I don't consider to be a very sound process given the size of our population and the number of parties here. With a population of 150 thousand people, we have about 25 parties. Such parties cannot establish themselves as a real force, so we lose the opportunity of establishing a civil society and improving the political arena."

The respondents were asked to identify areas where civil society could play an effective role. The unanimously explicit opinion was that civil society has nothing to do with the conflict. "In terms of the conflict, our society is more reserved because every single one feels the conflict personally. It is much easier to talk about elections than about the conflict," a representative of the Karabakh group said.

The following are the most frequently mentioned areas where the role of the civil society can be significant and unifying:

- protection of human rights,
- environmental protection
- oversight of public authorities,
- justice sector,
- protection of labor rights,
- military-patriotic upbringing,
- culture,
- electoral processes.

The level of women's and youth activism

There has been a consensus on the role of women and youth in the social and political life in NK. That is, youth activity has increased in the recent years. Women are more in the shadow, for a number of reasons. And in the upcoming elections, the number of young people participating will be larger than that of women. Even though some respondents indicated that there were also active young women, the latter are few, individual cases.

According to a respondent, "women and youth will more likely support any alternative candidate than the ruling party in the upcoming elections. These two groups are more eager for change than the older generation, which is connected to the system in different ways." And, in general, women's participation will be ensured due to the quotas, and participation no more than this shall be expected for now. "The role of the youth is exceptionally central in party building, there is a desire for political generation change. A large number of young people support Unification, which may also affect election results. Upcoming elections will confirm these changes, and as a result, we will witness the enhanced role of youth and women in the social and political arena."

It should be noted that during our survey the decision of the first female Presidential candidate in NK to be nominated was announced.

CONCLUSIONS

To conduct a survey on the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections in NK in the spring of 2020 we developed a representative list of different political and social circles in Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh.

Our interest in the subject and the selected questions were conditioned by several factors. First of all, they were conditioned by the greater public interest in the elections in Armenia and NK and, consequently, the topicality of the matter. This interest and topicality were manifested by the circulation of various pre-election discourses that had begun long before the elections and the official campaign: the pre-election processes and announcements made by various figures on Facebook and a few Armenian media outlets and messages from different forces addressed to one another and to the leaderships in Armenia and NK.

Overall, expectations and perceptions of the upcoming elections are generally optimistic, the majority of respondents believe they will be notable. Predictions or concerns on internal tensions and violence during the elections were not made, with the exception of a few respondents from Armenia.

As a result of this research we have identified a number of differences in the emphasis laid by the groups of respondents from Armenia and Karabakh, which allow us to conclude that:

- In NK the optimistic expectations regarding the upcoming elections are largely linked to improving the domestic situation, establishing social justice and strengthening public confidence, while in Armenia these expectations are linked more often to aligning the political environment with NK and enhancing security.
- The same approach, i.e. the tendency of the NK respondents to focus on internal problems, and the respondents from Armenia to focus on security and conflict issues was noted in a number of other issues that were wholly or partially related to the context of the conflict and security. The respondents in Karabakh more often highlighted the importance of the upcoming elections and democracy in the context of socio-political and economic improvement, rights and freedoms in NK. Whereas many respondents from Armenia emphasized the importance of elections in the context of the conflict.

- The conflict, as the respondents from NK noted, has been a reality for many years, affecting everyone, and there is no shortage of people who have contributed to the military action. This is why, for example, the respondents from Armenia mentioned “the role in the Karabakh conflict” as a decisive factor for winning the elections more often than those from Karabakh. In the same logic, newcomer candidates were given higher importance by the Karabakh group more than by the group from Armenia. Being a new, out-of-system figure from the point of view of respondents means not having been involved in corruption transactions, not belonging to the group of decision makers at any time before. According to the Karabakh group new and out-of-system figures are desired and likely to emerge.
- Despite the peculiarities of NK, i.e. a small society where everyone knows everyone else, the respondents from Karabakh believe that campaigning will be important in the upcoming elections, if the campaign is organized primarily in the form of face-to-face contacts, particularly in the rural areas. And it will also be important because people will thus understand that their voice and activity matter. In general, many believe that turnout rates in the upcoming elections will be higher than in any previous elections. However, there will also be quite a large number of citizens who will not go to the polls at all.
- Respondents from NK do not see any need for clarifying relations with Armenia and aligning the political environment with that in Armenia. Whereas, this issue was highlighted by the respondents from Armenia in their answers to a number of questions. The overwhelming majority in the Karabakh group believe that Armenia should be involved in the upcoming electoral process at different levels, and the opinions of the respondent in the group from Armenia vary, ranging from the widest to the least scope of involvement.
- From the point of view of all respondents, the processes taking place in Armenia definitely influence the social and political life in NK. And this testifies to the level of integration. In fact, the recent party-building efforts and activism in the public sphere on the eve of the upcoming elections in NK are a manifestation of this influence, too. At the same time, the political landscape in NK is rather formed on the basis of individuals than ideas and programs. And to note, these individuals are well-known figures whose approach to the conflict implies no key differences.