



Facebook

as a Campaign Platform in Armenia

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FACEBOOK IN RA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS: PRIOR TO OFFICIAL CAMPAIGN

On December 1, 2012, Region Research Center resumed its study of Facebook social network as a campaign tool in Armenia in the context of the upcoming Presidential elections to be held on February 18, 2013.

Facebook Statistics on Armenia

- On January 21, 2013, marked by the launch of the RA Presidential elections official campaign, the number of Facebook social network users in Armenia amounted to 376 820, according to the data published by Socialbakers.com.
- The same company testifies that in the 6 months prior to the official campaign launch date (the months that coincided with the period between the two elections in Armenia – the Parliamentary in May 2012 and the Presidential in February 2013) the number of Facebook users increased by 65560 users (<http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/armenia>).
- Armenian users' age group indicators, published by Socialbakers.com and a few arithmetical actions will make it clear that on the day of the official Presidential elections campaign launch the vast majority of Facebook users in Armenia – 84% (316.528 users) of all users – are representatives of the age group “18 and above” and enjoy suffrage.

This study aimed:

- To identify the ways of using Facebook social network as a campaign tool by political forces and parties, political party members and supporters, as well as Presidential candidates; to evaluate the volume and content of messages, addressed to the general public through the quantitative and qualitative analyses of published content.
- To detect the Armenian Facebook community's attitude towards various developments related to the Presidential elections, and the Presidential elections, in general, through the quantitative and thematic analyses of content, posted on the network.

Brief overview of the methodology employed

In order to clearly react to and appropriately perceive content trends on Facebook in the period preceding the launch of the official campaign (January 21, 2013), a number of quantitative and content standards were set to help reveal the following:

Activity

- The degree of Facebook activity of political figures, presidential candidates and supporters of certain political forces
- The degree of activity was revealed through the comparison of the quantitative and content indicators, materials on election processes shared on the above-mentioned figures' pages provided, along with their own statuses, and the discussions they participated in.

Messages

- What the main messages addressed to public via Facebook were?
- This objective was achieved by constructing figures and charts on the issues raised in election materials and by establishing clear and measurable codes for analysis. The quantitative indicators of these 'issue-codes' have made it possible to identify the main messages addressed to the public in the monitoring period.

Attitude

- The attitude of the Facebook community to these messages
- This attitude was revealed through the study of the intensity and content of such comments.

We monitored:

December 1, 2012 –January 20, 2013: the pages of 11 members of RPA, ANC, PAP, the Heritage Party, ARF, along with 3 official pages of the above-mentioned parties, the pages of 5 supporting groups, the timelines of 4 users who claim to be a political force supporter, as well as the «Ֆեյսբուքյանակտիվիստներ» (“Facebook Activists”) pages that may be considered a digest of Facebook content.

A TOTAL OF 20 PAGES

INCLUDING the pages of ArmenAshotyan and Karen Avagyan from RPA; HrantBagratyan and NikolPashinyan from ANC; VartanOskanyan, VahanBabayan and VaheEnfiayyan from PAP; StyopaSafaryan and David Sanasaryan from the Heritage Party; GiroManoyan and LilitGalstyan from ARF. We also monitored the pages of RPA and ANC supporters TigranKocharyan (Pigh/Elephant), TaronParsamyan, HrantTer-Abrahamyan, and VilenGabrielyan (NavakChochogh/Boat Swayer).

The official pages of the Armenian National Congress - <http://www.facebook.com/armnatlcongress>, the Republican Party of Armenia - <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Republican-Party-of-Armenia-hhkam>, and theHeritage Party - <http://www.facebook.com/Heritage.am?ref=ts&fref=ts>.

The pages of Facebook groups supporting the above-mentioned parties:

Նախագահական ընտրություններ 2013 (Presidential elections 2013)
(<http://www.facebook.com/groups/273414682775031/?fref=ts>),

Քաղաքացիական հասարակությունը (Civil Society blog)
(<http://www.facebook.com/qah.has.blog?ref=ts&fref=ts>),

Heritage Party – Ժառանգություն և կուսակցություն
(<http://www.facebook.com/groups/heritagepartyinarmenia/?ref=ts&fref=ts>),

Քվեում է (The vote is power) (<http://www.facebook.com/qven.uje?fref=ts>).

As well as the “Facebook activists” webpage as a digest of content posted onto users’ pages (<http://www.facebook.com/face.activists?ref=ts&fref=ts>). This page was started in November 2012. Currently, it collects content not only from the pages of the so-called ‘ordinary users,’ but also those of outstanding political and public figures.

From among all the aspects of the Facebook representation of the above-mentioned political forces (official pages, pages and groups of members and supporting activists) we have selected the active ones (intensive content updates) in the monitoring period. For example, the official pages of RPA (Republican Party of Armenia hkh.am Հայաստանի Հանրապետական Կուսակցություն) had not been studied since its latest update September 26.

The selection of these Parties and these users from among other political forces represented on Facebook was conditioned by the expectation that these political forces would play a major role in the Presidential elections and would play a similarly important role on Facebook in terms of bringing down their perceptions of the political trends in the elections to the Facebook community. This was conditioned by the stable activity of some of the above-mentioned political figures and especially that of supporter users, displayed in the Parliamentary elections and the post-election period.

January 4 – 20, 2012: In this time period, along with the above-mentioned pages, we studied the pages of 7 out of the actually 8 Presidential candidates, coming from the fact of their representation on Facebook and applying the criteria described above.

Those were Raffi Hovannisian – The Heritage Party leader, Hrant Bagratyan – the Liberty Party leader, Paruyr Hayrikyan – the Union for National Self-Determination Party leader. We also monitored the pages of candidates nominated by civil initiatives – Vardan Sedrakyan, Arman Melikyan, and Andrias Ghukasyan. Besides, we studied the «Վարդան Սեդրակյան» (“Vardan Sedrakyan”) Facebook group page of the Presidential candidate Vardan Sedrakyan.

The incumbent President of the RA does not have a page on this social network.

8 MORE PAGES

Thus, our quantitative and content indicators reflect the results of our two-month uninterrupted studies of 28 Facebook pages.

It should be mentioned right away that since the Presidential candidates introduced themselves in this new status on Facebook at different times in the monitoring period, the rating tables charted were based on the content on their pages and should be perceived as tools revealing the main correlations, rather than offering final statements. For example, the ANC deputy HrantBagratyan's page was monitored in the period of December 1 – 31, at that time only as a page of an ANC representative; he announced of his intention to become a Presidential candidate in the last 10 days of December. The RA Presidential candidate Aram Harutyunyan joined Facebook on January 9, whereas AndriasGhukasyan and VardanSedrakyan, nominated by civil initiatives, actively promoted the content on their Facebook pages and announced of their intentions to be nominated as Presidential candidates in December.

Hence, it is right to perceive the study of the results of Presidential candidates' Facebook pages from the following perspectives: the size of Facebook audiences at home positions, prior to the launch of the official campaign; the degree of interactivity with these audiences; and the possibility of communicating different electoral messages. We considered that the launching happened on January 4th, when only 8 candidates were left out of the 15 claiming nomination in December.

Let us remind that our first analogous study was during the 2012 Parliamentary elections. As a result we found that with only a few reservations political figures and their organizations used Facebook mainly as a means of limited dissemination of information, rather than as a channel to contact potential electorate and to initiate discussions on the occasion of various events and election cases. With this regard, in some cases Facebook was a major campaign tool, while in other cases, it was perceived as just another tool that needed to be used in order not to lag behind.

FACEBOOK ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENTS

In the course of the past 6 months either the so-called ordinary citizens continued to be the main agents on Facebook, who acted as participants in various civil initiatives, or the so-called Facebook community authorities who organized and directed the protesting moods, fermenting in the Armenian public.

We should also underline the fact that, as a result, Facebook was the only medium in Armenia which showed a more diverse picture of public opinion.

In the time period between the two elections the Facebook discourse and initiatives started to be perceived as if not a major, then at least an important unit of measurement for the moods shaping up in the Armenian public. As a result, the significance of this or that process underway in the country was started to be measured by the degree of attention it got by the Facebook community.

The more intense and extensive the discussions on various developments were on Facebook, the larger was the number of references to them by different ruling structures in real life.

On December 20 Yervan Mayor TaronMargaryan met active Facebook users and reported on the work done by the municipality and the plans for the refurbishment of the capital. This meeting took place

against the background of the wave of sarcastic criticism of the festive decoration of Yerevan. By the way, a number of statues previously installed in the streets of Yerevan (statues of penguins and flamingos which, as the Facebook community held, had nothing in common with our climate) were soon dismantled and removed.

The Facebook discourse continues to impact on the information provided by traditional media (here we ascribe also online media outlets), too. In the Armenian media it has become common to come across the name of some Facebook user and see the reprints of different social and political figures' Facebook comments.

This might be accounted for by the fact that presidential candidates, too, started to make use of the so-called organizational capacity of Facebook.

A Political Organizer

Thus, the RA presidential candidate **HrantBagratyan** made the first statement on his nomination via Facebook. By the way, a user wrote on this occasion: "This is a time... when people share their intention to be nominated for president first via Facebook. And then some claim that Facebook is not a serious platform" (Isabella Abgaryan, "Facebook Activists," December 20, 2012).

VardanSedrakyan and **AndriasGhukasyan**, nominated by civil initiatives, made themselves known as presidential candidates, opening special pages for this purpose and actively promoting their content on Facebook. Announcements on Party consultations may be found also on the PAP members' pages. Before that they were not known to public at all.

Announcements on upcoming party meetings (venue, time and so on) can also be found on PAP members' pages.

Through with the paperwork required for nomination, another candidate, **Aram Harutyunyan**, joined Facebook on January 9.

Another presidential candidate, **ArmanMelikyan**, opened a special page (Presidentialelection2013-նախագահականընտրություններ2013) in addition to his personal one in order to receive information on RA citizens living abroad (and to clarify issues with the electoral register). "RA citizens who have the right to vote but are away from Armenia can visit this page and leave a comment on their inability to participate in the elections. Thus, they will support fair and legitimate elections and prevent probable forgery of their votes," the page says.

(<http://www.facebook.com/messages/1251552163#!/pages/Presidentialelection2013>)

HrantBagratyan stands out in terms of maintaining contacts with potential voters and making them the participants of his electoral campaign via Facebook. He used Facebook to introduce the members of his campaign headquarters, published their phone numbers and suggested that in case anyone had questions they should address the appropriate official in charge of that issue. Another Facebook know-how promoted by HrantBagratyan was that he organized a Facebook vote to select his campaign slogan.

Facebook users came up with 89 different slogans. Currently, one of the two slogans used by the candidate is “Armenia is not only Yerevan,” proposed by a Facebook user.

Facebook Media Projects

Different media projects are currently implemented on Facebook or by using the technical possibilities of Facebook. For example, different media outlets request the Facebook audience to ask questions to the guests they invite onto the set. This is what ArturKirakosyan, the author and anchor of the “The Question of the Country” program series on Yerkir Media TV has started to practice since January 2013. On his page he informs users on who the next guest of the program to go on air will be, and during the interview among other questions of his, he voices the questions asked by the Facebook community.

After a certain pause, Radio Liberty resumed its “Facebook Press Conferences” series in December 2012. 5 press conferences were held (with the NA ANC Deputy NikolPashinyan, the RA Presidential candidates RaffiHovannisian and HrantBagratyan, the RA Minister of Healthcare and an RPA member DerenikDumanyan) in the period of our monitoring. The format of this program, too, rests upon the maintenance of contacts with Facebook users: political figures answer Facebook users’ questions on the radio station set. By the way, this format enables better interactivity than the political figures’ own Facebook pages. During the above mentioned press conferences the political figures were asked from 30 (RaffiHovannisian’s press conference, December 15, 2012) to 70 questions (HrantBagratyan’s press conference, December 11, 2012).

Last November the *zham.am* Internet newspaper also opened a Q&A page on Facebook. It tries to find the answers to questions asked by Facebook users from authorities, in charge of specific and relevant fields. Even though the volume of the content posted on this page did not considerably change over the past months and was not widely known in the period of our monitoring, it is still worthwhile to mention as another Facebook phenomenon and another attempt to interact with the audience.

INTERACTIVITY

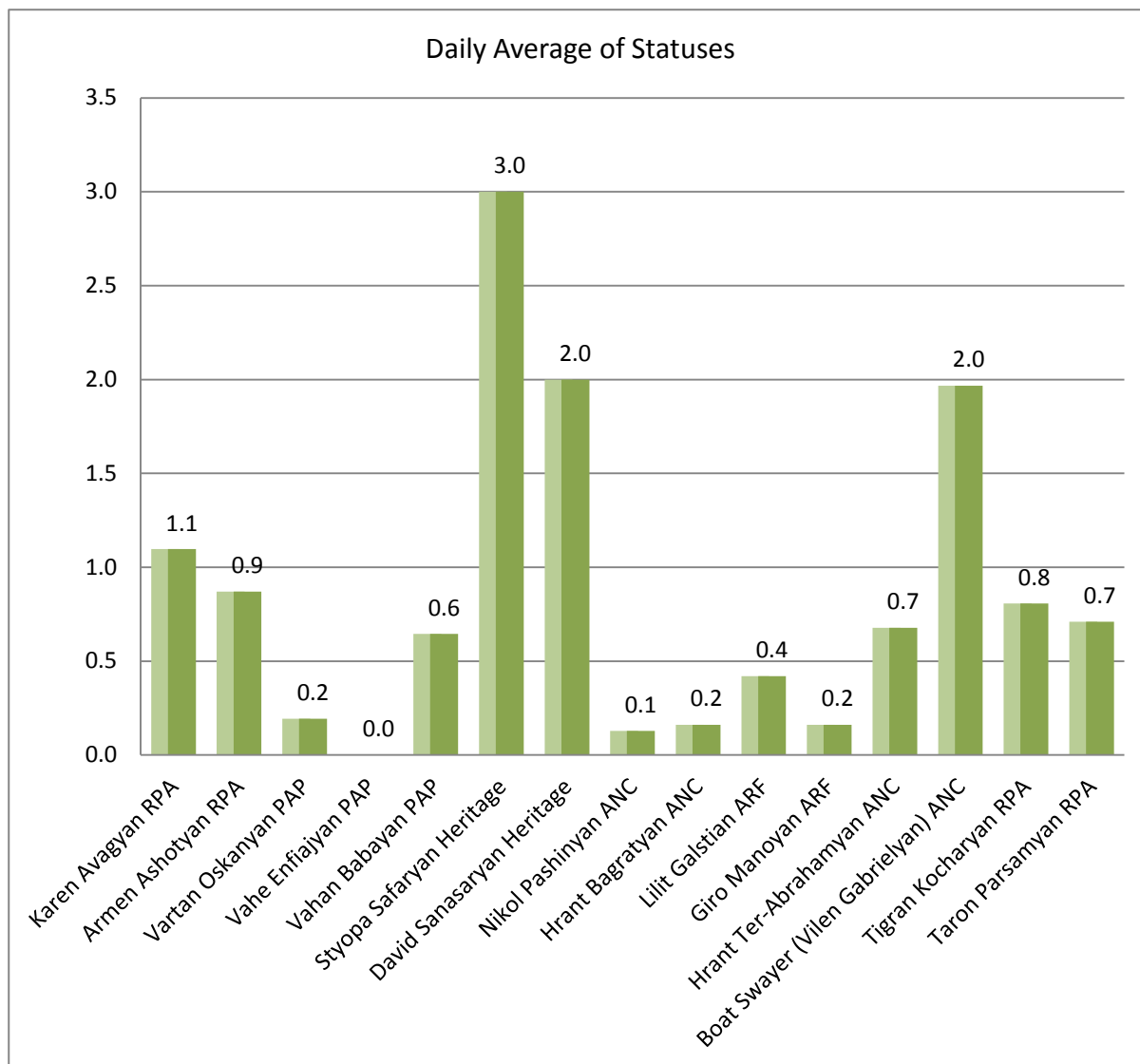
The above-mentioned users have direct audiences of varied sizes consisting of those who liked the page/or users' friends and followers. Among the users who published these indicators, the largest audience is that of an RPA member and the RA Minister of Education and Science ArmenAshotyan (over 12500 users), at that his followers outnumber his Facebook friends. The Facebook audiences of the other users (including the active supporters of this or that force) do not outnumber 6000 (**See Appendix, Tables 1 and 2**).

Regardless of the fact that in the case of different users the number of comments on the materials posted onto their pages varies, the indicator of interactivity of these 11 users is higher than that of the official pages of political parties and the number of comments on the Facebook groups' pages that support these political parties (**See Appendix, Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6**).

To put it differently, in the time period between December 1, 2012, and January 20, 2013, the comments on the users' individual pages were more numerous, and the interaction with other users through questions and answers was more intensive than in the groups started especially for that purpose or on the official pages of political forces, participating in the elections.

StyopaSafaryan, Secretary of the Heritage Party, stands out against the general background due to his activity (number of materials on elections, sharing his own statuses, number of comments on his wall, and the comments made by political figures considered in this study). All these indicators on his page are comparable with the other Facebook activist users' indicators. For example, the degree of activity of the well-known blogger and Facebook user TigranKocharyan (Pigh/Elephant), ANC supporters HrantTer-Abrahamyan and VilenGabrielyan (Boat Swayer). The degree of interest in the materials of these users is rather high, and the number of comments to these materials is quite high, too.

Level of activity of political figures and supporter users
(Only the materials with independent content posted in the appropriate column
on the timeline are viewed as statuses.)



Even though the Secretary of the Heritage Party S. Safaryan was not elected into the National Assembly in the by-elections, held on December 2, the Facebook community acclaimed him “Facebook deputy,” his Facebook activity was renowned as real elections, because he was actively covering his campaign in Avan and Nor Nork districts in Yerevan, shared his daily interaction with people, his impressions, and so on.

By the way, the “real elections” expression began to circulate on Facebook in the course of our monitoring, underlining also the necessity for this or that candidate to get the approval of Facebook Armenians.

The degree of interactivity on the Facebook pages of the 7 presidential candidates varies. For example, the number of materials posted and commented on by users on AndriasGhukasyan’s, VardanSedrakyan’s

and ParuyrHayrikyan's pages is considerably higher (10, 10 and 8 respectively) than the number of similar materials on the pages of the other 4 candidates. But only ArmanMelikyan out of all the 7 candidates participated in the discussions on his page. Such cases have not been registered at all on the pages of the other candidates in the period of January 4 – 20, that is to say, up to the eve of the official campaign (See **Appendix, Tables 7 and 8**).

The degree of interest in the so-called newly-appeared candidates is not surprising. This was manifest by the number of comments to the materials posted on their pages. Thus, for example, in the first period the number of comments to AndriasGhukasyan's materials reached 99 (an indicator that is characteristic of activist users, well known to the Facebook community), whereas the maximum number of comments to HrantBagratyan and ParuyrHayrikyan's materials was 20 and 15 respectively.

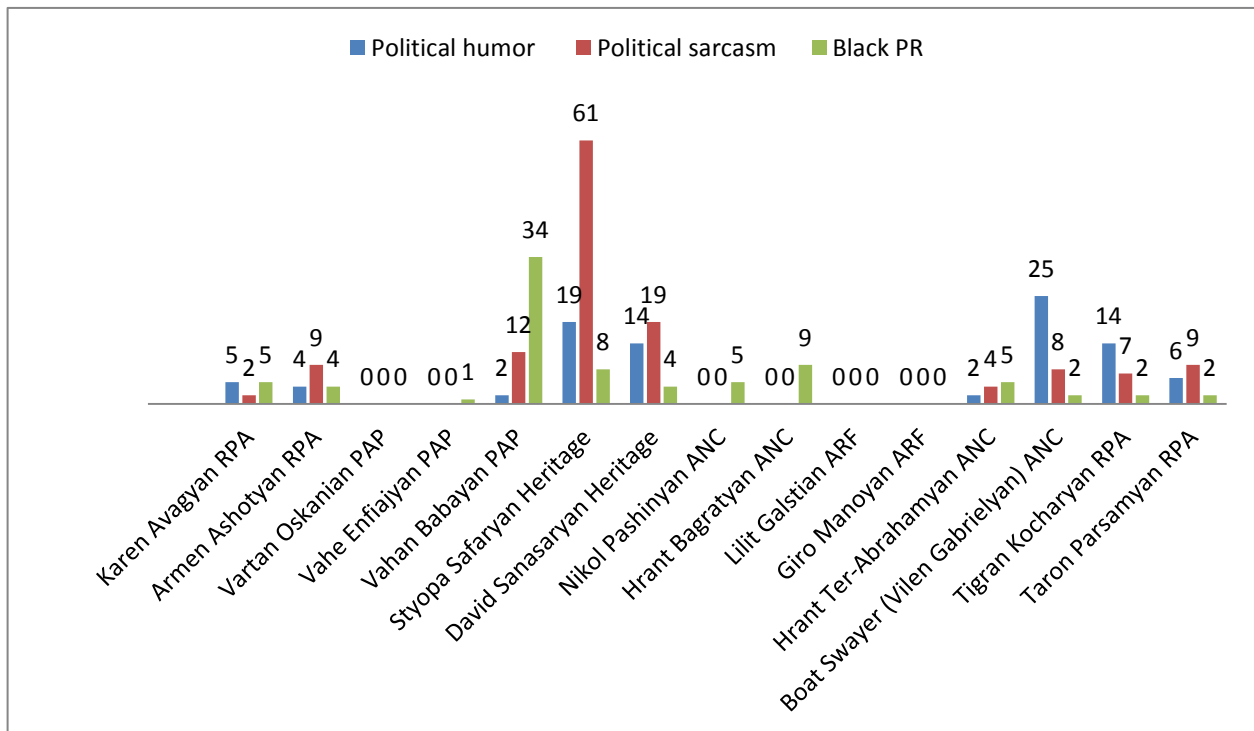
Political Humor, Sarcasm and Black PR as a Pre-Electoral Leitmotif

In December we witnessed the dissolution of all predictable scenarios of participation in presidential elections. Besides the ruling RPA and the oppositional Heritage party, the other four Parliamentary forces – PAP, ANC, ARF and Free Democrats announced that they would not nominate any candidates, but they would not officially support any other candidate either.

The intrigue of the nomination process became the series of the so-called 'self-nominations.' The Facebook community reacted to the matured political crisis, which was reflected in the unprecedented happenings and unprecedented non-happenings in the election processes. This brought about a wave of political humor, sarcasm and Black PR on Facebook. By the way, if the main locomotive for that negatively marked campaign in the Parliamentary elections were the so-called anonymous users, this time almost everyone, from political figures to regular users, was humorous about the situation.

In the volumes of caricatures, collages and simply witty statuses with wordplay that come as reactions to different stories it was possible to come across pages, specifically opened for political sarcasm purposes (Harlequin, Scissors, Political Joke). However, those are fewer than the materials of the same genre by identified users.

Political Humor, Sarcasm and Black PR



This time, too, some expressions started to pretend for becoming political memes (content that rapidly transmit from one person to another and becomes popular in the internet). For example, the word “brother-in-law” that was constantly used by the Heritage party member StyopaSafaryan throughout December: he used this word when he referred to or commented on various electoral frauds and the development of appropriate mechanisms by the ruling RPA in the course of presidential elections. In this way he also drew a parallel between the December 2 NA by-elections and the presidential elections. We should remind that in the December Parliamentary elections StyopaSafaryan’s contender in Avan and Nor Nork constituencies in Yerevan was the brother of Yerevan Mayor TaronMargaryan’s wife.

The sarcastic expressions, wordplays, statuses understandable for Facebook users well-aware of in-depth political contexts made by S. Safaryan are numerous on Facebook. For example, calling T. Margaryan ‘Your Taroncelency’ (wordplay: Taron+ Excellency), referring to the head of CEC as “Elethicos of All Armenians” (wordplay: Elections+Catholicos), “TigranMukuchyan and Co” Ltd. and so on.

Numerous examples of humor, sarcasm and Black PR can be found on various topics circulated in December:

Humor and sarcasm on the nomination of candidates

On the nomination of 15 RA presidential candidates: “A recommendation to CEC: replace the requirement of an election pledge by that of a certificate of sanity.”

“A recommendation to banks: offer a new loan – PRESIDENTIAL. Let people borrow from the banks and nominate themselves for elections” (“Facebook activists,” December 24, 2012)

Tigran Kocharyan (Elephant) on the already nominated 8 presidential candidates: “The Wolf and Seven Goats”. Or his comment : “The end-of-the-world event series is launched, Bagratyan nominated for President” (December 20, 2012).

Throughout December, the concept of the “epic novel scholar” was circulated with especially distinct sarcasm, with reference to the unemployed presidential candidate Vardan Sedrakyan, who introduced himself to the public as the epic novel scholar. In reply to the journalists’ questions on how an unemployed citizen could have the money to pay the 8 million election pledge, he claimed that he could pay the other candidates’ pledges, too.

By the way, on the occasion of this new negative connotation of the term “epic novel scholar” and the context it was used in on Facebook, the RPA activist Taron Parsamyan appealed to everyone, asking not to replace Vardan Sedrakyan’s name with the term ‘epic novel scholar’ and not to discredit this serious scientific branch.

Another story that gained momentum in December was the disrespectful behavior of the RPA Parliamentary faction member Mher Sedrakyan towards the correspondent of A1+. This scandal gave rise to strong criticism and a new wave of political sarcasm.

On this occasion there were numerous quotes from President Serzh Sargsyan’s speech at the RPA Congress where he spoke of the eradication of violence against journalists and instilling practices, ensuring freedom of speech. The following quote and the expression spat at the journalist by the RPA Deputy only a few days after “Yallah, I will break your jaw” circulated on Facebook, in the form of wordplays and as the leitmotif of caricatures and materials that underline the divide, or to put it mildly, the inadequacies between the official statements of the ruling party and its leader, incumbent President S. Sargsyan and the practical actions of the members of this party.

M. Sedrakyan’s caricatures were put into circulation. For example, Sedrakyan was depicted in a boxer’s outfit, or his photo came with captions: “It does not look nice, dismantle.”

“Serzh Sargsyan apologized to Mher Sedrakyan for his speech on the freedom of reporters and impunity at the RPA Congress.” “You will live in a safe Armenia. Only get a firm grip on your jaws and try to avoid speaking in cafes. Serzh Sargsyan, Election Platform” (by ‘Facebook Activists,’ December 19, 2012)

The first reaction RPA members gave to this scandal was on Facebook. A. Ashotyan, the RA Minister of Education and Science said he was sorry for what had happened and could apologize to the journalist, and the NA Deputy Margarit Yesayan expressed her pain on Facebook for not being next to the journalist at the moment and thus being unable to ask his RPA colleague to behave properly.

This issue was also touched upon by political party representatives who since the second half of December wrote about elections considerably less than others due to the refusal of their organizations to participate in the upcoming presidential elections. For example, the ARF member Giro Manoyan wrote on his page: “I hope that the apologies expressed by other RPA members instead of the RPA Deputy Mher Sedrakyan (he means the RPA member, Minister of Education and Science Armen Ashotyan’s statement on Facebook about his readiness to apologize to the journalist) show that the RPA will discuss Mher Sedrakyan’s behavior. Otherwise, it seems to aim at a *lien doux*, without the guilty person admitting his guilt. Or is this just another imitation?” (December 19, 2012)

PRE-ELECTORAL REARRANGEMENTS AND MESSAGES ADDRESSED TO THE PUBLIC

“I missed VartanOskanian’s messages on Facebook. The first political comment I am making this year is a follow-up on Oskanian’s mini-analysis.

Now being dissatisfied with this country, has he chosen to struggle? To abandon the Motherland? Or not having the opportunity to abandon it, does he display complete indifference to the processes happening or not happening in the country? Make up your mind, Mr. Oskanyan,” the RPA member and the RA Minister of Education and Science ArmenAshotyan wrote on Facebook at the beginning of the year (January 9, 2013), referring to VartanOskanyan’s long silence on Facebook. However, this PAP member was not the only one to display an uncharacteristic passivity on Facebook since the second half of December.

In the first half of December, a number of scenarios on the formats of various Armenian political forces’ participation in the presidential elections, on the probable and improbable alliances and support spread in the political and analytical discourse.

The manifestations of all these obvious scenarios could be found in the content of political figures’ Facebook pages monitored in December. See their general political indicators on **Appendix, Figure: Topics Covered in Materials on Elections and Number of References to Them.**

A total of 85 different issues were dwelt upon in the materials on various electoral processes and developments posted on the pages of 11 political figures and 4 political party supporters in December – January. The vast majority of these materials dealt with election participation formats, nomination of candidates, boycotting the elections and other tactical issues. **For details see Appendix Tables 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.**

Back at the beginning of December we noticed the RPA and PAP affiliated figures’ Facebook debates and clashes on the probable alliance between PAP and ANC or on the occasion of PAP’s probable participation in the elections with its own candidate.

Against the background of the general speeches on PAP and ANC alliance, the passive and awaiting moods of ANC figures and supporters were obvious on Facebook, too.

Thus, in the first half of December A. Ashotyan, K. Avagyan and the activist T. Parsamyan began to post one status after another on their pages where they criticized or mocked at the PAP Leader for his statement made in Brussels on the impossibility to fight corruption in Armenia since there was a coalescence between the ruling party and oligarchs. The PAP and RPA figures (VahanBabayanyan – Karen Avagyan) began to reciprocally blame the representatives of competitor parties in wealth accumulation in an unclean manner. The representatives of ANC we studied did not participate in this debate. The main leitmotif of their struggle against the ruling authorities has traditionally been the struggle against gangster state and the dismantlement of that kind of a state.

The culmination of all debates on the probable rearrangement of political forces was the appearance of the bugged café conversation between L. Zurabyan and V. Oskanyan on Facebook, consequently, PAP

leader G. Tsarukyan's statement on his non-participation in the elections in any format, followed by ANC leader L. Ter-Petrosyan's analogous statement. The ARF and the Free Democrats made similar statements, too.

At the end of December the presidential candidates nominated by political parties or by themselves provided various substantiations for their decisions. Thus, the leader of Liberty Party H. Bagratyan explained his decision on Facebook, saying he was going to participate in the elections because there was a need for a candidate with liberal views.

Judging by their interviews published in mass media and on their Facebook pages, the main goal of the nomination of Aram Harutyunyan, the leader of National Consensus Party and that of AndriasGhukasyan, was to hinder the predetermined outcome of the elections. The difference between them is that as a candidate, AndriasGhukasyan from the very beginning turned to CEC with a demand to annul the candidacy of the RPA leader and incumbent President S. Sargsyan, while A. Harutyunyan appealed to all the candidates to reclaim their candidacies 10 days prior to the elections and thus hinder the legitimacy of S. Sargsyan's reelection.

Boycott became one of the major points in the January messages on Facebook, criticized by the RPA and Heritage party members, with understandably different substantiations.

On his Facebook page StyopaSafaryan, the Secretary of the Heritage Party, underlined many times that in that case boycott would not be effective, and this was proven by the course of NA by-elections in two blocks in Yerevan at the beginning of December. "In case you boycott, the Brother-in-Law gets elected. Those who boycott make a gift to S. Sargsyan. I would not think this way if those who boycotted the elections would invite the electorate onto Liberty Square on February 18, rather than pushing them into lumber-rooms in the kitchens." (December 29, 2012)

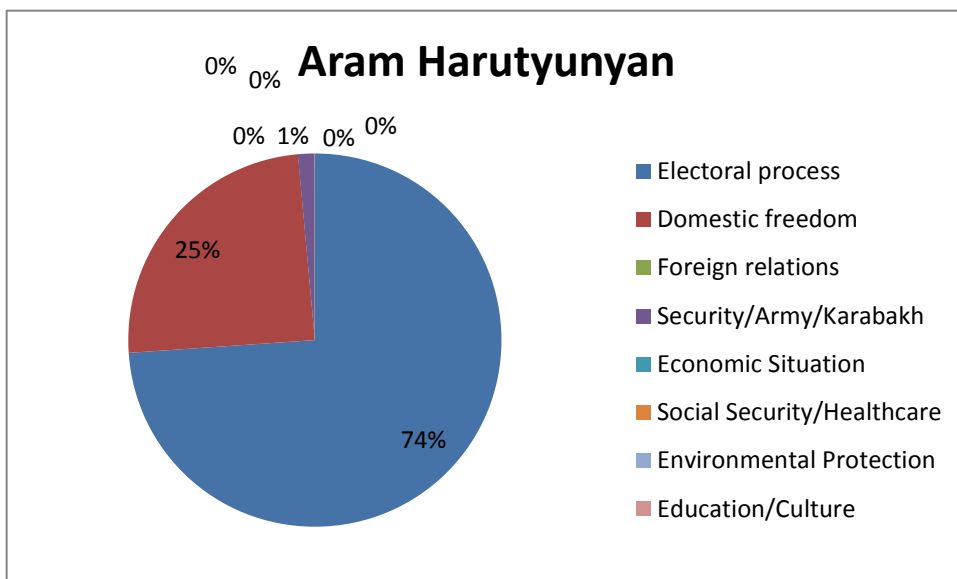
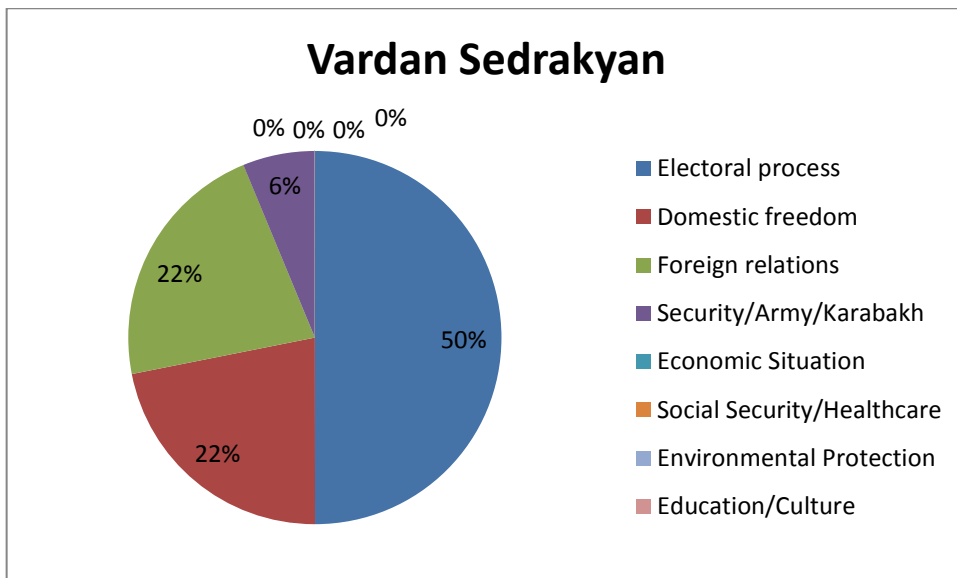
The member of the same party D. Sanasaryan, wrote on his page: "If you do not want to vote for Raffi (The Heritage Party leader R. Hovannisan – L.B.), at least vote for this man (H. Bagratyan – L.B.). Together with Raffi he will add seriousness to this campaign." (December 29, 2012)

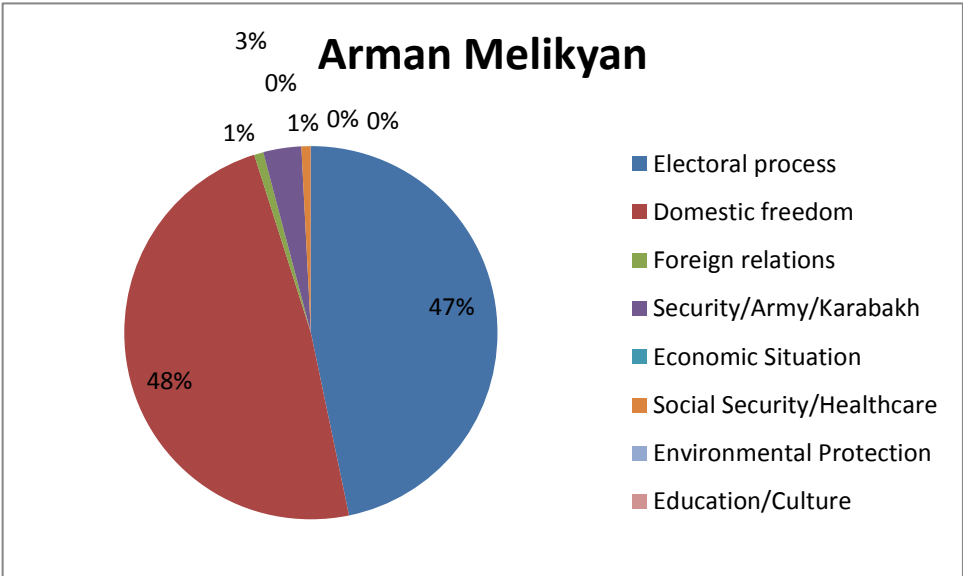
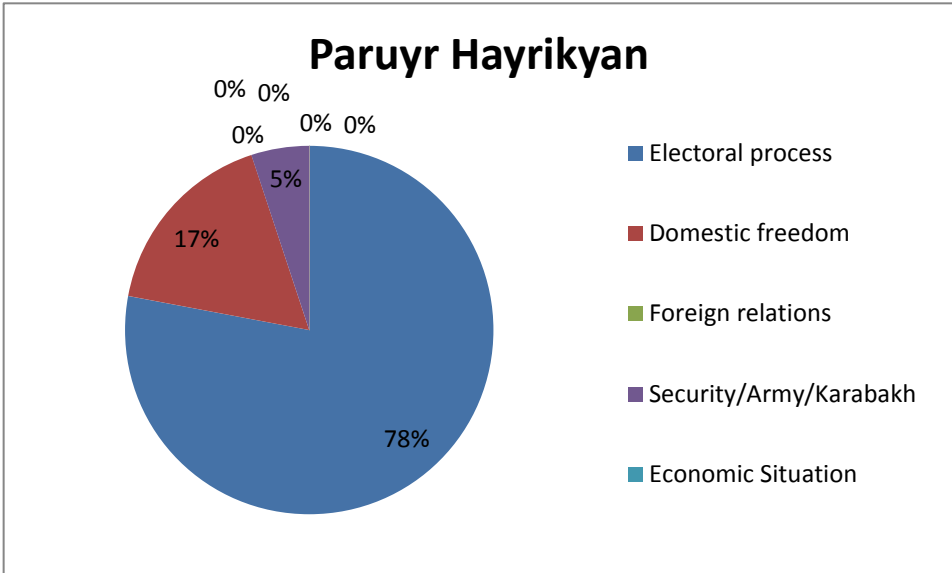
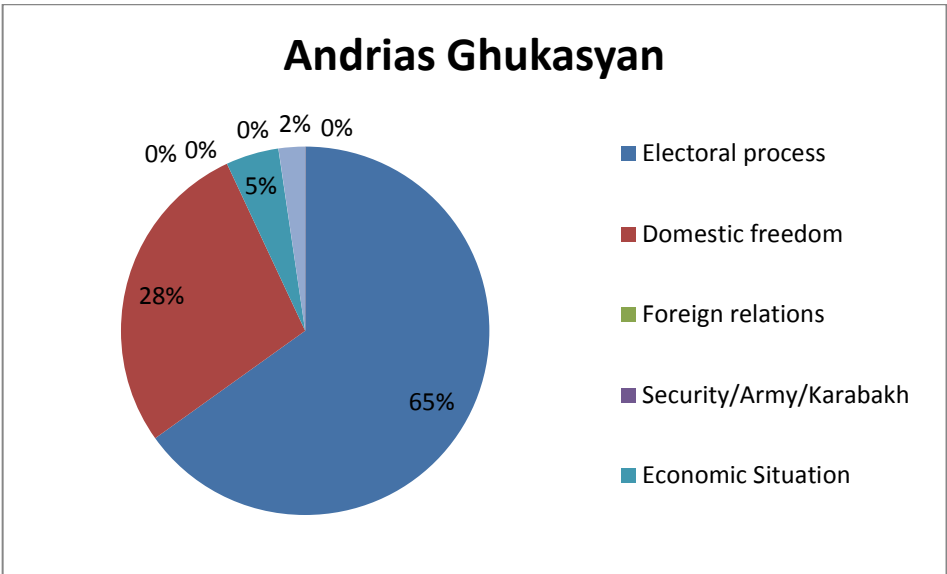
ArmenAshotyan, a member of the RPA, reacted to the boycott topic on his page, mentioning that those who called others to boycott were either short-sighted or ill-wishers. They were short sighted, because they did not understand that those who would cast their votes against SerzhSargsyan, would be the political anchor and resource of the new and strong opposition to come in the future.

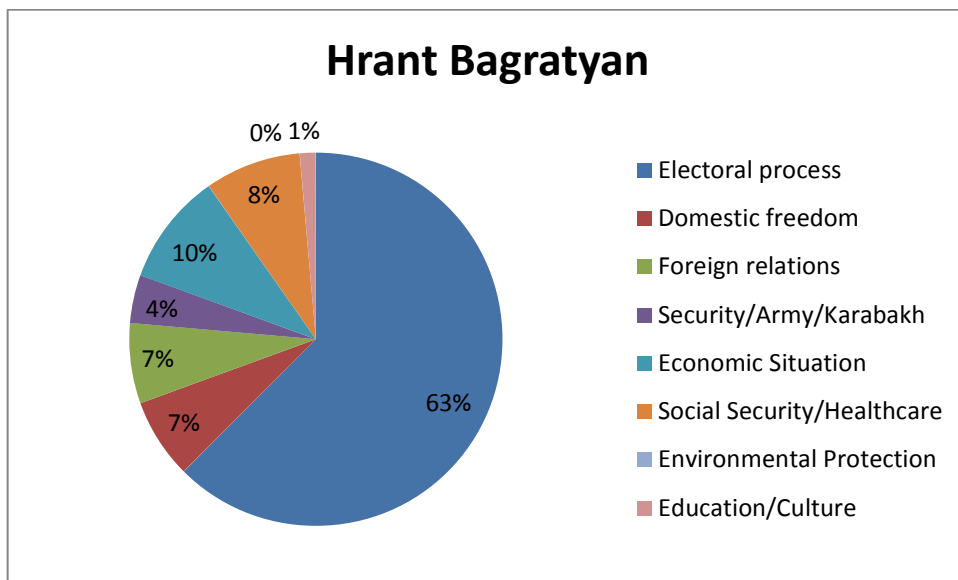
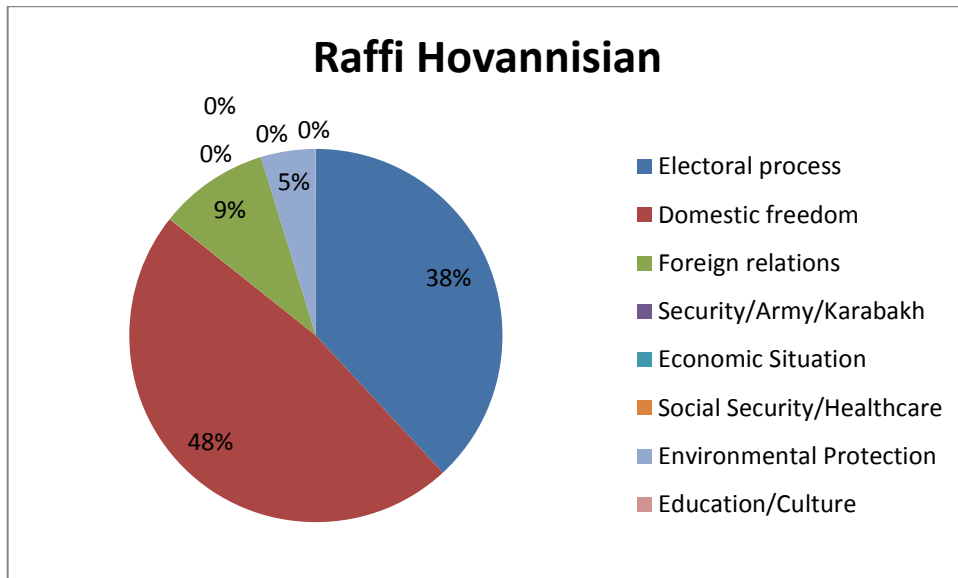
As his page (Ընտրություններ 2013. Ծրագիր ՀՀ նախագահի ընտրության / Elections 2013: A Platform for the RA President) states, AndriasGhukasyan was nominated to impede the re-election process of the incumbent President and to turn the Presidential elections into a confidence referendum. This approach began to be perceived as a theoretically rational, but at the same time, practically irrational tactics to change the situation in the country. "The presidential candidate AndriasGhukasyan appealed to the other candidates to give up the electoral struggle. I am concerned with another matter. I wonder if someone who is making his first steps in politics has a right to put forth such ultimatums to figures with great political experience – RaffiHovannisian and HrantBagratyan. Well, let's assume that this question really bothers him. Wouldn't it be better to meet the above-mentioned political figures and to share his views with them? Even more so, since both Raffi and Bagratyan are open and easy to socialize with. Or is this a way to self-PR?" a Facebook user wrote about this candidate on his page.

The presidential candidates touched upon different issues on their Facebook pages in the period of January 4 – 20. See the results below.

**Issues Raised on Candidates' Pages
(January 4-20, 2013)**









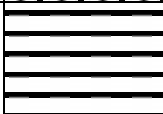

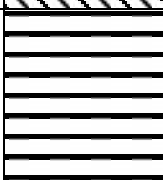


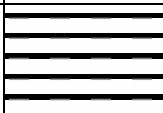



We continue our study into the official campaign. At this stage, we aim to follow RA presidential candidates' campaign methods, specificities and public reaction on Facebook and mass media that have a relatively high rating.

See the results in the following issue of our electronic bulletin.

APPENDIX

**Table 1. Facebook Audiences of Political Figures and Possibility for Interactivity on Their Pages
(December 1, 2012 – January 20, 2013)**

Political figure	Likes		Friends		Subscribers		Data on the page
	01.12.12	20.01.13	01.12.12	20.01.13	01.12.12	20.01.13	
Karen Avagyan RPA	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Armen Ashotyan RPA	-	-	5000	4987	5726	7142	
Vartan Oskanian PAP	5800	5875	-	-	-	-	
Vahe Enfiayyan PAP	-	-	-	-	202	83	
Vahan Babayan PAP	-	-	1341	1380	-	-	
StyopaSafaryan (The Heritage Party)	-	-	4167	4524	-	-	
Davit Sanasaryan (The Heritage Party)	-	-	-	-	241	261 (Indices until January 10)	
Nikol Pashinyan (ANC)	-	-	3309	3546	-	-	
HrantBagratyan (ANC, Liberty Party)	1171	1589	-	-	-	-	
Lilit Galstyan (ARF)	-	-	5121	5083	494	663	
Giro Manoyan (ARF)	-	-	4866	4983	449	468	

The page is closed for other users' materials

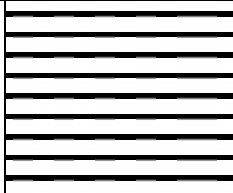
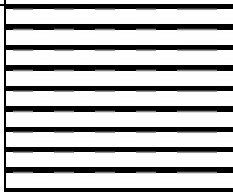
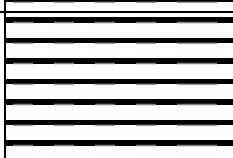
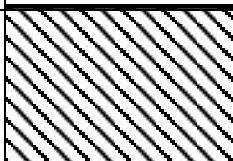


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Table 2. Audience of Users Who Are Political Force Supporters and the Possibilities of Interactivity on Their Pages

(December 1, 2012 – January 20, 2013)

Supporter users	Likes		Friends		Subscribers		Other data on the page
	01.12.12	20.01.13	01.12.12	20.01.13	01.12.12	20.01.13	
HrantTer-Abrahamyan (ANC supporter)	-	-	2907	2981	57	100	
Boat Swayer (VilenGabrielyan, (ANC supporter)	-	-	-	-	172	212 (Indices until January 12)	
TaronParsamy an (RPA supporter)	-	-	-	-	320	350	
TigranKochary an (RPA supporter)	-	-	4650	4818	648	703 (Indices until January 14)	

The page is closed for other users' materials



The page is open for other users' materials

Table 3.Indices for Interactivity of Pages (Political Figures)

(December 1, 2012 – January 20, 2013)

Political Figures	Total number of materials on elections		Number of commented materials without any comments by the owner of the page		Number of commented materials with comments by the owner of the page		Total number of commented materials		Commented materials made up the following percent of all materials on elections	
	01 - 31.12.12	01.- 20.01.13	01 - 31.12.12	01.01.13- 20.01.13	01 - 31.12.12	01.01.13- 20.01.13	01 - 31.12.12	01 - 20.01.13	01- 31.12.12	01- 20.01.13
Karen Avagyan RPA	60	9	17	3	6	1	23	4	38%	44%
Armen Ashotyan RPA	60	9	16	2	17	5	33	7	55%	78%
Vartan Oskanian PAP	9	0	5	0	0	0	5	0	56%	0%
Vahe Enfiayyan PAP	22	6	15	4	1	0	16	4	73%	67%
Vahan Babayan PAP	102	19	16	2	0	0	16	2	16%	11%
StyopaSafaryan The Heritage Party	221	62	35	3	76	22	111	25	50%	40%
Davit Sanasaryan The Heritage Party	96	12	27	2	42	7	69	9	72%	75%
Nikol Pashinyan ANC	24	6	9	2	0	1	9	3	38%	50%
Hrant Bagratyan ANC	34	33	8	10	0	0	8	10	24%	30%
Lilit Galstyan ARF	33	11	5	1	15	4	20	5	61%	45%
Giro Manoyan ARF	22	4	3	2	9	0	12	2	55%	50%

Table 4. Indices for Interactivity of Pages (Supporter Users)

(December 1, 2012 – January 20, 2013)

Supporter users	Total number of materials on elections		Number of commented materials without any comments by the owner of the page		Number of commented materials with comments by the owner of the page		Total number of commented materials		Commented materials made up the following percent of all materials on elections	
	01 - 31.12.12	01.- 20.01.13	01 - 31.12.12	01.01.13 - 20.01.13	01 - 31.12.12	01.01.13 - 20.01.13	01 - 31.12.12	01 - 20.01.13	01- 31.12.12	01- 20.01.13
HrantTer-Abrahamyan (ANC supporter)	39	20	4	3	28	12	32	15	82%	75%
Boat Swayer (VilenGabrielyan , (ANC supporter)	71	19	5	6	63	11	68	17	96%	89%
Tigran Kocharyan (RPA supporter)	29	5	4	0	24	5	28	5	97%	100%
Taron Parsamyan (RPA supporter)	37	10	7	0	14	2	21	2	57%	20%

Groups

Table 5. Indices of Page Interactivity (Facebook groups)

(December 1, 2012 – January 20, 2013)








Name of Group	Number of materials on elections		Materials that generated discussions		The discussed materials are the following percentage of the total number of materials on elections	
	01-31.12.12	01-20.01.13	01-31.12.12	01-20.01.13	01-31.12.12	01-20.01.13
The Heritage Party	47	14	6	0	13%	0%
Presidential elections 2013	929	179	17	13	2%	7%
Civil Society blog	246	111	3	3	1%	3%
The vote is power	113	38	19	3	17%	8%
VardanSedrakyan's group (Since January 4, 2013)	-	48	-	0	-	0%

Table 6. Indices of Page Interactivity (Official Pages of Political Parties/ Forces)

(December 1, 2012 – January 20, 2013)

Official pages	Number of materials		Number of materials that generated a discussion		(%)	
	01-31.12.12	01-20.01.13	01-31.12.12	01-20.01.13	01-31.12.12	01-20.01.13
Armenian National Congress	96	24	1	0	1%	0%
The Heritage Party	53	13	7	0	13%	0%

Table 7. Candidates' Facebook Audiences and Possibilities of Interactivity on Their Pages
(January 4 – 20, 2013)

Candidates	Likes		Friends		Subscribers		Other data on the page
	04.01.13	20.01.13	04.01.13	20.01.13	04.01.13	20.01.13	
Vardan Sedrakyan	4274	4528					
Aram Harutyunyan			393	451			
Andrias Ghukasyan	1293	2024					
Paruyr Hayrikyan	1533	1753					
Arman Melikyan					481	501	
Raffi Hovannisian	1767	1796					
Hrant Bagratyan	1357	1589					

The page is closed for other users' materials



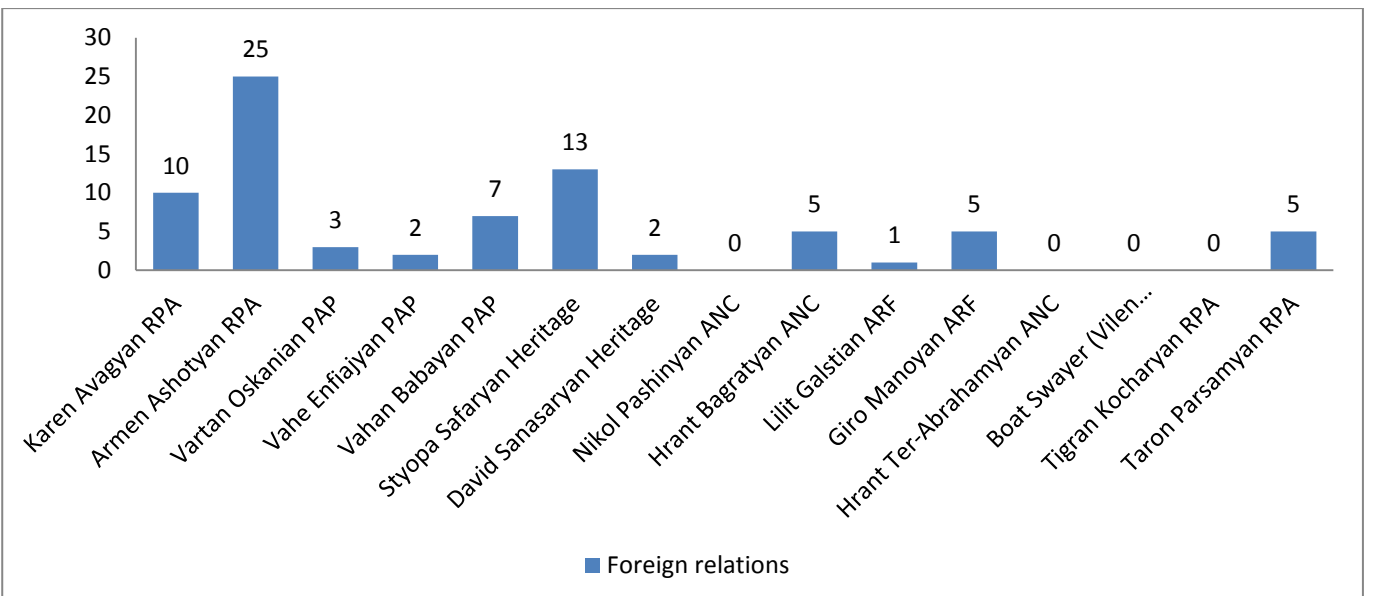
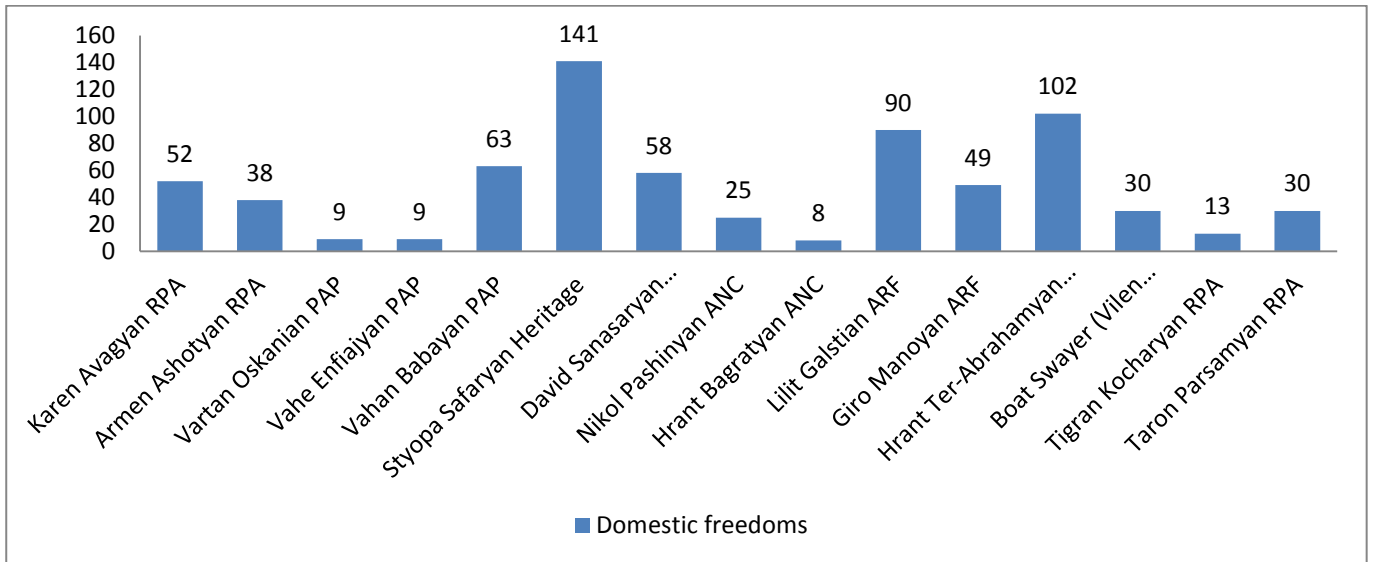
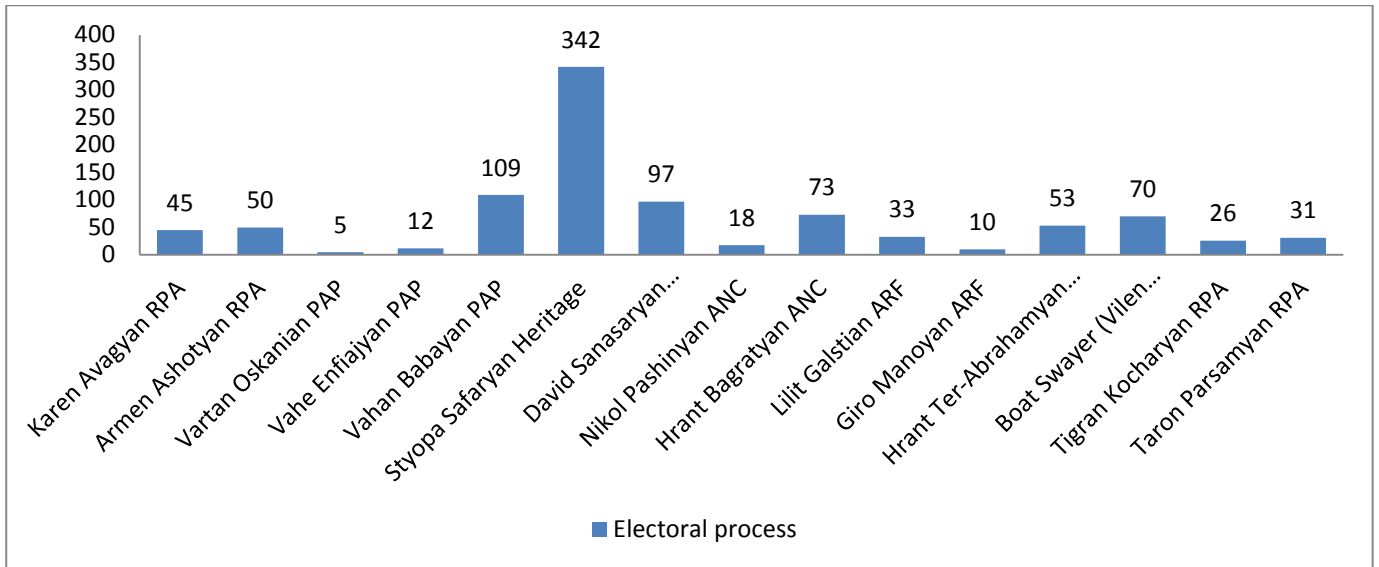
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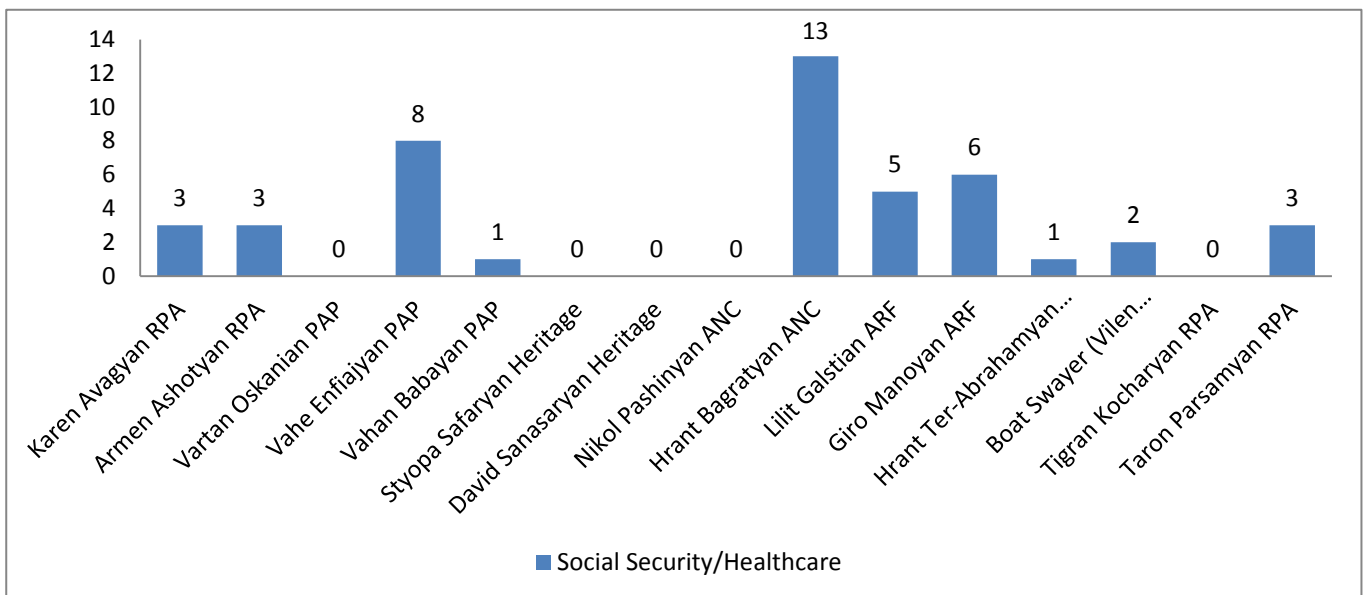
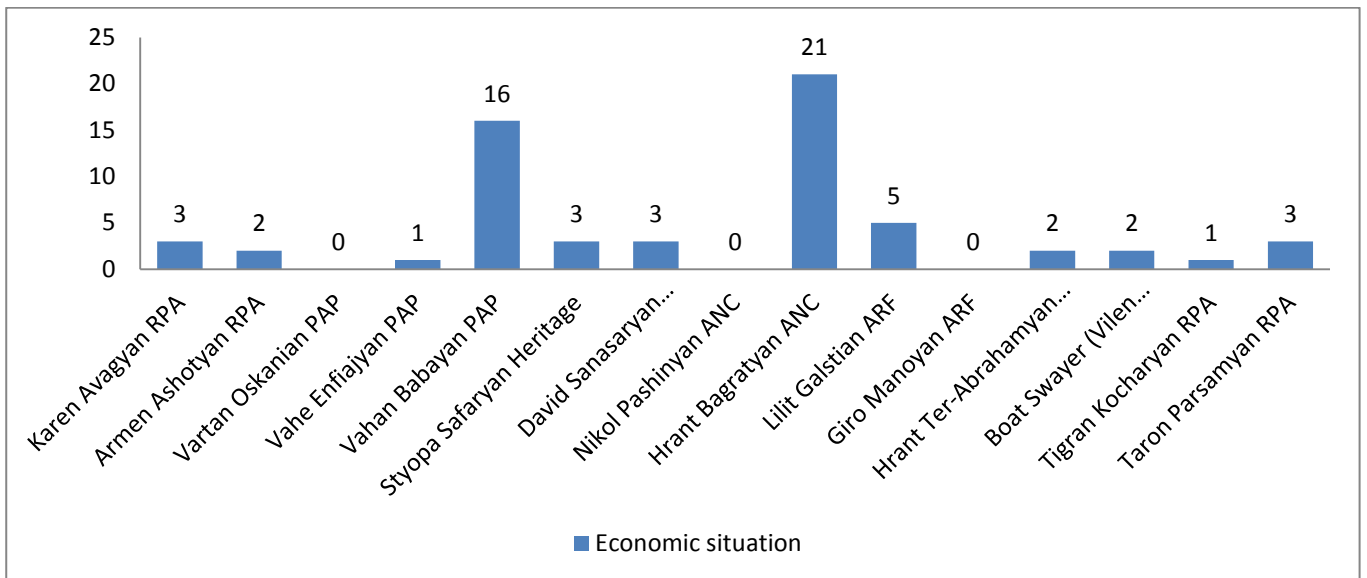
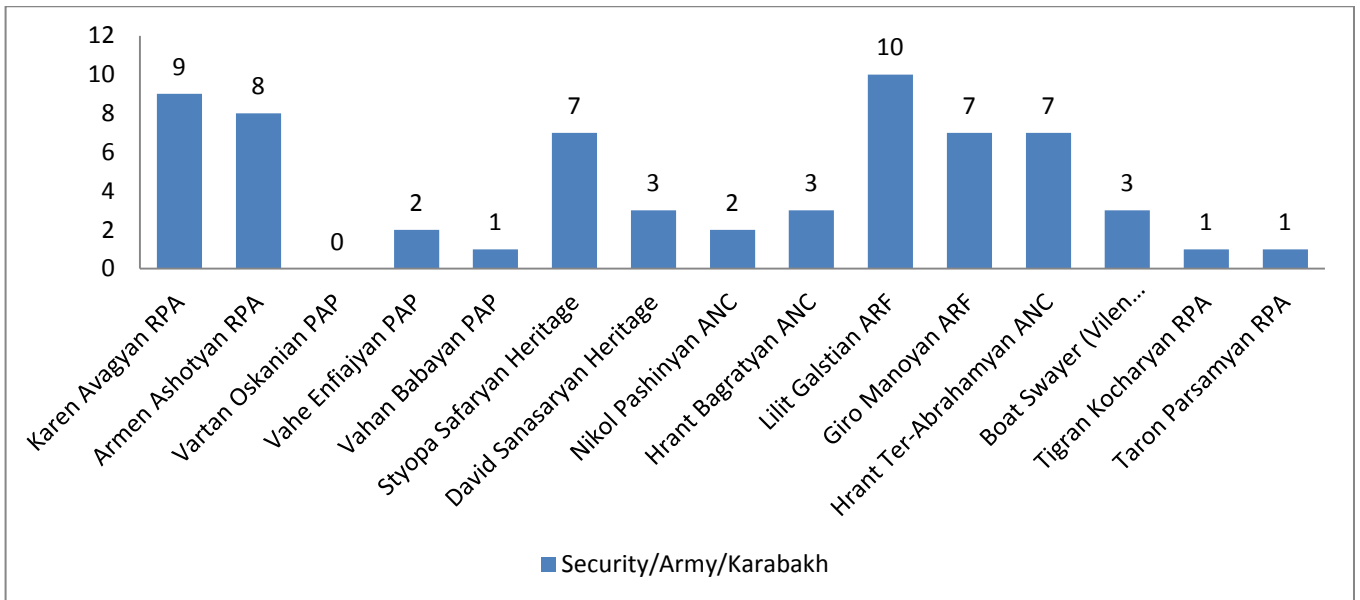
Table 8. Indices of Page Interactivity (RA Presidential Candidates)
(January 4 – 20, 2013)

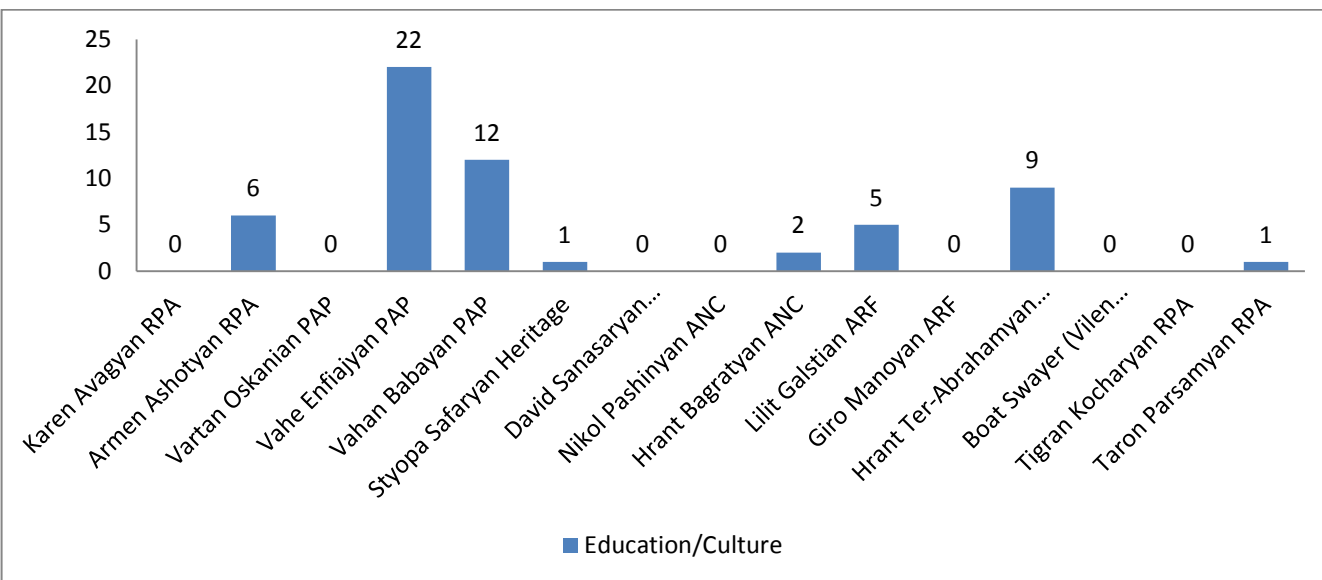
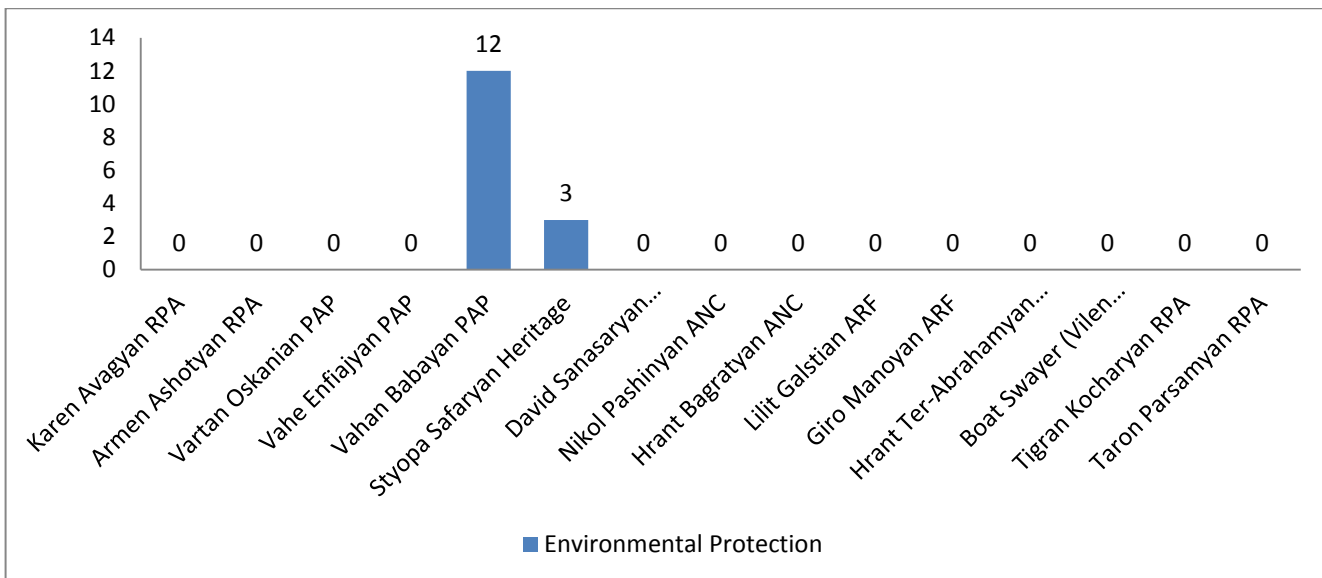
Candidate	Number of materials	Number of materials that generated a discussion	Including discussions with candidate's participation
	04.01.13-20.01.13	04.01.13-20.01.13	04.01.13-20.01.13
Vardan Sedrakyan	16	10 (63%)	0
Aram Harutyunyan	35	4 (11%)	0
Andrias Ghukasyan	13	10 (77%)	0
Paruyr Hayrikyan	31	8 (26%)	0
Arman Melikyan	17	2 (18%)	1
Raffi Hovhannisyan	7	1 (14%)	0
Hrant Bagratyan	32	10 (31%)	0

Graphics

Issues Covered in Materials on Elections and the Number of References to Them







**Table 9. Issues Covered in Materials on Elections and Number of References Made to Them
(December 1, 2012 – January 20, 2013)**

Issue	Number of references
Nomination of candidates	143
Participation format	80
Course of campaign	130
Forms of campaign	5
Electoral register	11
Proportional or majoritarian system	2
Assessment by other countries and international organizations (observing missions)	1
Support for this or that candidate by external forces	20
Public opinion polls and other surveys	9
Ratings of candidates and political forces	5
Electoral violations	44
Forged elections	8
CEC	5
Election bribe	28
Abuse of administrative resources	78
Questioning the legitimacy of election results	10
Admission of election results	1
Boycotting elections	14
Political struggle	1
Propaganda campaign	5
Presidential system of government	1

Table 10. Issues Covered in Materials on Domestic Freedoms and the Number of References to Them

(December 1, 2012 – January 20, 2013)

Issue	Number of references
State	13
Constitution	14
Legitimacy	51
Democratic development	16
Rights	57
Civil society	39
Independence of the judicial system	15
Corruption	19
Freedom of speech	31
Mass media	54
Regime change through elections	7
Regime change through a revolution	20
Justice	42
Impunity	31
Crime	25
Coalescence of power and business	27
Power	102
Opposition	112
Society	27
Trafficking	2
General evaluation of the political situation	12
Anti-revolutionary	1

**Table 11. Issues Covered in Materials on Foreign Relations and Number of References to Them
(December 1, 2012 – January 20, 2013)**

Issue	Number of references
Foreign policy orientations	3
Relations with different countries and various international organizations	64
The Diaspora	10

**Table 12. Issues Covered in Materials on Security/Army/Karabakh and Number of References to Them
(December 1, 2012 – January 20, 2013)**

Issue	Number of references
The force, figure ensuring security	1
Different security issues	3
Demographic situation	3
Migration	26
Resumption of the Karabakh war	4
Army	10
Karabakh conflict	17

**Table 13. Issues Covered in Materials on the Economic Situation and Number of References
(December 1, 2012 – January 20, 2013)**

Issue	Number of references
Fake indices of economic development	6
Taxes	5
Budget	28
Branches of economy	17
Monopolies	1
Small and medium sized business	3
Investments	1
Economic dependence	1

Table 14. Issues Covered in Materials on Social Security/Healthcare and Number of References to Them (December 1, 2012 – January 20, 2013)

Issue	Number of references
Basket of goods and poverty	16
Stratification of the society	2
Minimum wages	6
Bonuses	3
Pensions	6
Healthcare issues	7
Corruption in healthcare system	1
Price rise	4

Table 15. Issues Covered in Materials on Environmental Protection and Number of References to Them (December 1, 2012 – January 20, 2013)

Issue	Number of references
Environmental activity	4
Mines and use of material resources	3
Sevan	4
Protection of reservoirs	4

Table 16. Issues Covered in Materials on Education/Culture and Number of References to Them (December 1, 2012 – January 20, 2013)

Issue	Number of references
Cultural ties	5
Festivals	2
Ministry and Minister of Culture	1
Preservation of different cultural values	8
Ministry and Minister of Education	6
Higher educational institutions	5
Scholarships	4
Level of education and educational competitiveness	15
Armenians studying in other countries	1
Science	2
Politicization of education	9