



Improving voter list RA Presidential Elections 2013

Yerevan 2013

The report was prepared based on the analysis of study results implemented within the framework of “2013 Presidential Elections: Improving Voter Lists” project. The project was implemented by “Advanced Public Research (APR) Group” NGO with the financial support by the National Endowment for Democracy.

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INTRODUCTION

“RA Presidential Elections: Improving Voter Lists” project was launched in December 2012 with the financial support by the National Endowment for Democracy. Within the framework of the project APR Group conducted sociological sampled research in advance of Presidential Elections on February 18 2013. The goal of the research was to identify the level of citizen awareness on voter lists, detect inaccuracies within voter lists, as well as provide information and consultations to respondents on mechanisms and procedures of correcting inaccuracies through interviews.

The research was conducted based on sociological research methodology through application of representative sampling. The research included all marzes of Armenia, including capital Yerevan.

Research justification

During 2012 Parliamentary elections mass media and majority of political parties sounded issues connected with voter lists. The issues were connected with the artificial increase of the number of voters when comparing it with 2008 Presidential elections (according to Police data the number of voters before Parliamentary elections was 2.5 million, for 170 thousand more than during 2008).

Taking into account increasing level of migration many urge that that the real number of voters is less than announced by the Police. According to role players in the sphere of electoral processes (mostly NGOs and opposition political parties) about 500-700 thousand voters live abroad. There is no exact data on voters living outside Armenia and according to different sources this number ranges from 500 thousand to 1.2 million and they can't vote through diplomatic and consular services of Armenia located in other countries (according to the Electoral Code only employees of Armenian diplomatic and consular services and their family members with suffrage, as well as Armenian employees of foreign offices of Armenian companies registered in Armenia and their family members with suffrage can vote during national elections through electronic voting). Moreover voters with Armenian citizenship living abroad are not removed from voter lists (there is no legal mechanism for doing that) and according to reports this circumstance creates a space for abuse (e.g. multiple voting, issuing fake passports etc).

Another issue voiced during elections was registration of unknown persons in apartments. During pre-election campaign there was a case when 101 voters were registered in one apartment. There are similar cases also connected with buildings/apartments that don't exist/were destroyed as a result of earthquake. At the same time they live in temporary shelters/houses and have registration in those places as well. This also creates a risk of multiple voting.

Besides that, mechanisms of updating population register are not formed yet, as there are also cases of deceased people in voter lists. This is mostly connected with the low efficiency of working relations between different state structures and relatives of deceased persons should submit necessary documents. Voters are not motivated and are unaware of procedures of voter list update.

Taking into account the above mentioned circumstance a need for research aroused which would help to identify the level of existing inaccuracies within voter lists and voter list related shortcomings and develop recommendations aimed at improving lists. This becomes more important as no such initiative was launched during 2012 Parliamentary elections.

Taking into account the circumstance that many of citizens were unaware of problems, as well as means of their solution it became relevant to also conduct awareness raising among citizens.

Research methodology

The clarification of voter lists was conducted through quantitative sociological survey. The semi-standardized interviewing method with closed and semi-closed questions was applied with the use of special methodology.

Goal of the Research

Main goals of the research were:

- Improve voter lists through collection information on inaccuracies within voter lists,
- Increase the level of awareness of RA citizens on voter lists.

Objectives of the Research

Objectives of the research are following:

1. Identify the level of awareness of citizens on voter lists:
 - 1.1. Identify which RA regions and to which extent citizens are aware of procedures detecting and correcting inaccuracies within voter lists,
 - 1.2. If necessary, provide information and consultation to respondents on mechanisms and procedures of correcting inaccuracies.
 - 1.3. Provide information to respondents on issues related to electoral processes, as well as their electoral rights.
2. Reveal inaccuracies within vote lists, summarize and compile the list of inaccuracies mentioned by RA citizens,
 - 2.1. Develop recommendations for voter list improvement,
 - 2.2. Provide information on issues and inaccuracies within voter lists to RA Police Visa and Passport department.

“List to Householders” methodology of checking voter lists

“List to Householders” methodology means interviewing RA citizens with suffrage, which were selected based on voter lists published on January 9 through random systemized sampling. Due to this methodology it became possible to collect information on one person, but all members of the household. “List to Householders” method helps to clarify information on persons of living and registered in the household included in the research sampling and people of the household mentioned in the voter list.

In practice “List to Householders” methodology is implemented in the following way: interviews are conducted through face-to-face interviews with respondents at addresses included in sampling. Respondents were selected from voter lists for all RA regions/marzes (including Yerevan). Interviewer fills in one questionnaire when visiting each address. During interview the interviewer uses voter lists to compare the date received from respondent with the list jointly with the respondent.

Research tool (questionnaire)

The research questionnaire consists of following parts:

1. **Title Page** – The title page contains questions on the address and identification of respondent (region, community, precinct electoral commission, availability of the address, agreement of respondent, interview accomplishment or reasons for failing to interview etc). Title pages were filled in for both accomplished and failed interviews. That enabled to reveal households that are not populated or where inhabitants are not registered at that address. .
2. **Call-** Call is a message to respondent which contains information on names of organization implementing and funding the project, the goal, objectives of the project etc.
3. **General information** – “General information” section contains questions on persons with suffrage registered at that address (name, surname, patronymic and date of birth), followed by comparison of respondent’s opinion and voter lists. Information on mismatched was also collected.
4. **Accuracy of data** – The section on data accuracy contains questions enabling to identify what kind of inaccuracies are existing within the voter list, what they are conditioned with etc.
5. **Awareness-** The awareness section includes questions that aim at identifying whether respondents – RA citizens with suffrage – have done in case of inaccuracies, what inaccuracies they have faced and what actions they have undertaken and what results have they achieved.

The final part of the questionnaire contains a question allowing respondent to voice questions that he/she has in connection voter lists and solution of voter list related issues.

Research Sampling

The research sampling was compiled based on preliminary voter lists published by the Police Passport and Visa department on January 9 2013. Lists served as a sampling basis for selection of interviewees.

The calculation of sampling conglomerate is based on the following formula:

$$n = \frac{t^2 NPQ}{(d^2 (N-1) + t^2 PQ)}$$

where

- n is the sampling conglomerate;
- N is the size of the main conglomerate. The main conglomerate are RA citizens with suffrage,
- P and Q are constant values and are equal to 0.5 (availability or lack of any parameter),
- T equals to 1,96 in case when it's necessary to ensure 95% of reliability of results;
- d is the value of statistical error which makes up $\pm 2.7\%$.

Thus when building the research sampling the size of the value made up 1300 persons in order to ensure 95% reliability of results. The formation of the sampling combination was conducted based on the multi-level self-weighted sampling method according to which the probability of selecting territorial unit is proportional to its size. The value of the sampling conglomerate was calculated proportionally for each marz.

In the next stage of building the sampling 127 electoral precincts were selected through systemized random steps. At the final stage of the sampling names of people were separated where interviews were to be conducted. 8-12 persons were separated for each electoral precinct depending on the size of the precinct and addresses were separated that corresponded to selected respondents. For each electoral precinct equal number of additional sampling lists was separated as well.

The number of respondents and electoral precincts according to marzes are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. Number of respondents and electoral precincts according to marzes		
Marz	Number of respondents	Number of electoral precincts
Yerevan	430	43
Aragatsotn	56	7
Ararat	110	10
Armavir	110	10
Gegharkunik	90	9
Lori	128	11
Kotayk	120	10
Shirak	120	10
Syunik	56	7
Vayots Dzor	24	3
Tavush	56	7
Totally	1300	127

When visiting these 1300 addresses interviewers once more again clarified the relevance of respondent's participation in the research. If the respondent couldn't participate in the research due to any reason that was recorded and if possible, that respondent was replaced by another living and registered at the same address. The circumstance of replacing the respondents from the same address didn't have any impact on research results, as the goals of the research was not to reveal respondent's position or opinion, but objective data (name, surname, patronymic, date of birth etc). 3 main factors were outlined for the selection of respondent which are:

- age – respondents (male or female) should be over 18,
- citizenship – only RA citizens can become respondents,
- registration address – persons are interviewed only if they are registered in that address.

Thus interviews were conducted with RA citizens over 18 and with suffrage who were registered in the given household. Moreover as “List to Householders” methodology means collection of information also people registered at that address the age, citizenship and registration standards were also applied for their case. Thus during interviews respondents provided information only on RA citizens over 18 registered at that address.

Research preparation and implementation

Preparation stage of the research

During the preparation phase following activities were undertaken:

- Preliminary voter lists were downloaded from the website of RA Police Passport and Visa department. Preliminary voter lists were placed at the website of RA Police and Visa department. Lists were downloaded for sampling development and its use during the research.
- Update and improvement of the research methodology. “List to Householders” methodology was developed. This methodology enabled to collect information not one person but all members of the household.
- Development of the research sampling – multilevel sampling and 1300 interviews.
- Development of the research tool – questionnaire;
- Questionnaire test and improvement;
- Development of guidelines on filling in questionnaire, check of collected data, data processing and data input into electronic databases;
- Development of information materials on steps of revealing inaccuracies in voter lists, as well as electoral processes;
- Preparation of statistical databases for input and analysis of received information; Excel and SPSS databases were developed;
- Finalization of the methodology, sampling and questionnaire with National Endowment for Democracy;
- Development of instructions on selecting respondents, grouping main and additional addresses separated by the sampling;
- Printing of sampling units, questionnaires, necessary voter lists, instructions and information materials;
- Selection and training of interviewers (training topics – legal basis for compiling, checking and correction voter lists, research methodology, principles of filling in questionnaire, mechanisms for revealing sampling units and identifying respondents, ethical requirements of interviewers etc). 48 interviewers were trained. After the training interviewers were contracted.
- Training of field work supervisors; 7 supervisors, 2 field work quality controllers and 3 field work monitoring specialists were trained (training topics – legal basis for compiling, checking and correction voter lists, research methodology, principles of filling in and questionnaire, principles of field work supervision, mechanisms for revealing sampling units and identifying respondents and ethical requirements of interviewers and supervisors);
- Training of data processing and input specialists; 6 specialists were trained (training topics - legal basis for compiling, checking and correction voter lists, research methodology, requirements for data processing and input, ethical requirements, familiarization with Excel and SPSS databases).

Field work phase

- 48 interviewers worked in the field. Visits were paid to respondents' addresses separated by the sampling, selection of respondent was made, face-to-face interviews were conducted or title pages were filled in case of failure to conduct interview.
- Activities of interviewers were coordinated by supervisors. Each supervisor monitored the work of average 6 interviewers. Supervisors supported interviewers in revealing addresses, selection of respondents and solution of issues aroused during filling in the questionnaire. They checked interviewers' actions through following means:
 - They were present at the interview together with interviewer (during filling first few questionnaires), checked whether the interviewer had correctly selected the respondent, understood the questionnaire, whether he/she was correctly asking questions and correctly filling in the questionnaire and was following ethical norms etc,
 - Check all filled questionnaires, make clarifications in case of any issue with interviewer or through making a call to the respondent,
 - Check at least 2 interviews from electoral precincts assigned to each interviewer.
- During interviews interviewers provided information to respondents procedures defined for cases of revealing inaccuracies within voter lists and in case of facing similar problems; all respondents were provided with information materials;
- In case when interviewer couldn't answer respondents' questions, he/she called to APR Group's expert on electoral issues and solved issues on spot.
- During field work data quality specialists checked questionnaires submitted by supervisors and compared them with voter lists. 10% filled in questionnaires filled in by each interviewer was checked through phone calls.
- Monitoring of field work and checking collected data; field work monitoring specialists compared collected data with voter lists as well.

Problems during field work

Main issues that interviewers faced during field work were connected with impossibility to find addresses included in the sampling.

- Some addresses were not residential spaces, but husbandly lands owned by municipality and a huge number of persons were registered on those addresses. This was observed mostly in rural communities which usually didn't have any addresses. In such cases the situation became tenser as not the owners of those lands but other persons from the village were registered at that land/address. Moreover some of family members were registered at one address and some were registered in other

addresses. To solve the issue interviewers tried to find respondents according to their names/surnames through mayor and/or villagers.

- Mismatch of the address (number of building) and the address mentioned in citizens' passports. In such cases interviewers tried to find respondents not according to addresses, but name/surnames/passport data.
- Lack of address in citizens' passport. Particularly in rural areas there were cases when the address wasn't mentioned in the passport. In such cases interviewers considered respondents' answers as a ground.
- Addresses that don't exist. To meet respondent interviewers visited addresses where selected voters are registered and found out that such buildings/houses don't exist. It was obvious particularly in Shirak region where even after earthquake addresses of destroyed buildings with their residents are still included in voter lists. In such cases title pages were filled in as a case of failed interviewed and replaced it with a visit to the other address.
- When interviewers tried to find persons registered at the address of their visit separated by the sampling interviewers faced situations when former owners of the house/apartment had sold their apartments but still remain registered at same address. In other words voter lists included names of both former and present residents.

Data processing, input, analysis and reporting

- The check of questionnaires was followed by data input into Excel and SPSS databases. Data input was conducted by 6 specialists who also compared information of questionnaires with voter lists;
- The compiled databases were checked and inaccuracies were corrected;
- The analysis of results was followed by separation of addresses where mismatches with voter lists were detected; these lists were sent top RA Police Passport and Visa Department;
- Inaccuracies separated by APR Group were checked by the RA Police Visa and Visa department and appropriate actions were undertaken¹;
- Based on the analysis of research results a report was compiled that was submitted to the National Endowment for Democracy, RA Police Passport and Visa department and public.

¹ Police Visa and Passport department undertook actions to check inaccuracies revealed during the research and main results were generated base on the Police feedback and comparison of preliminary and final voter lists.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Data collected during the research are based on the information provided by respondents. If possible interviewers tried to prove obtained information with appropriate documents.

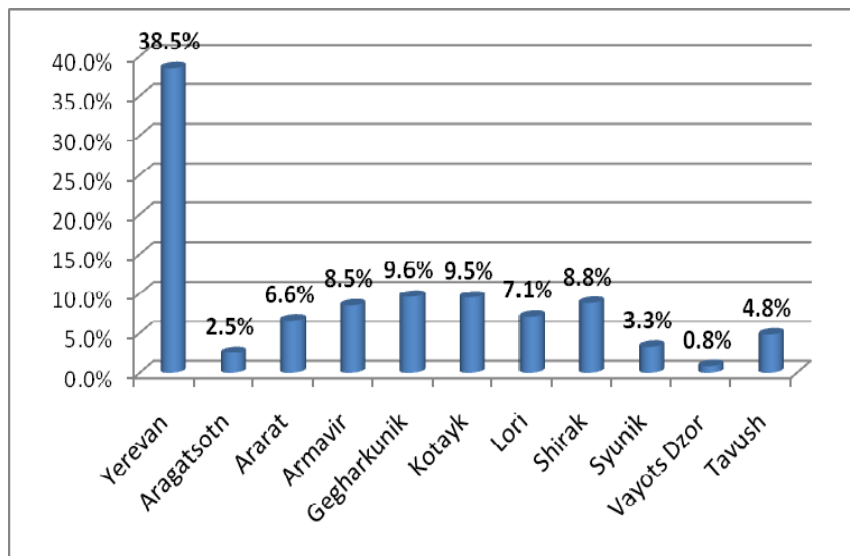
Cases of interview failure

Interviews were conducted in all RA marzes and Yerevan. Interviewers visited 1903 addresses 1300 of out of which were successful in terms of interviews and in case 603 addresses it wasn't possible to conduct in interviews due to several reasons (in the projected sampling 1300 main and equal number of additional addresses were separated). Reasons for interview failure were following: 1. The address didn't exist/couldn't be found; 2. Rejection by the respondent or household; 3. Unavailability of the household residing in the selected address; 4. The address is not used as a residential apartment, it's a shop, office and/or respondent was absent from the residence; 5. There are no permanent residents and are living abroad etc; 6. There no people with suffrage living in the selected address; 7. Persons registered in that address live in another place within the territory of RA. The distribution of reasons for interview failures according to marzes is presented in the Table 2.

Community	Address didn't exist/couldn't be found	Rejection	HH residing in the address is unavailable	Is not a space for residence.	HH members are absent/ there are no permanent resident in that address	No RA citizen with suffrage was living in HH	Persons registered in that address live in another address in RA	Total
Yerevan	34	61	81	5	31		20	232
Aragatsotn	7		5		3			15
Ararat		25		1	14			40
Armavir	11	14	22		44			51
Gegharkunik		5	6		47			58
Lori	9	2	9	3	20			43
Kotayk			19	2	28	1	7	57
Shirak	22	2			28	1		53
Syunik	1	8			10		1	20
Vayots Dzor		1			4			5
Tavush	1	16			11	1		29
Total	85	134	142	11	200	3	28	603

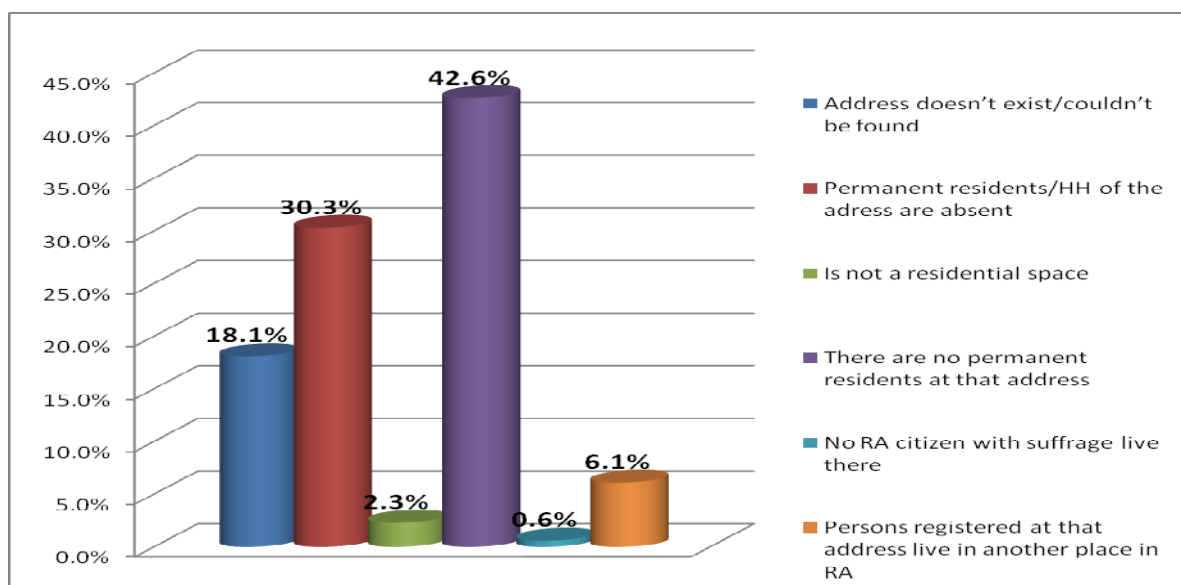
The highest number of interview failure cases was registered in Yerevan, Gegharkunik, Kotayk, Shirak, Armavir and Ararat.

Graphic 1



Subjective reasons for interview failure were: “Rejection by respondents or household”. If we don’t take into account this option the picture will be following:

Graphic 2



The address didn't exist or couldn't be found mostly in cases when several people were registered in lands but who lived in another address. That was mostly obvious in case of rural

villages. There were cases of impossibility to find address when the given building/house was destroyed. Such cases were recorded particularly in Shirak. For instance: 2nd building of Koshtoyan street didn't exist, 4th building of Khanjyan street was destroyed, and the only apartment block on Hovsepyan street is N 4 and all other buildings simply didn't exist.

Voter List Accuracy

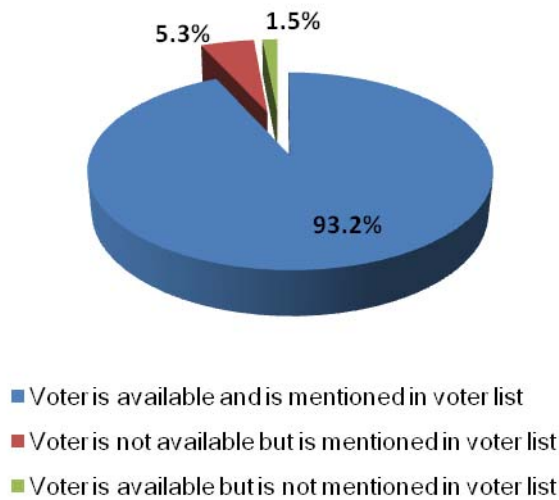
The number of accomplished interviews is 1300. Through 1300 interviews with respondents information on 6392 persons were clarified.

As a result of the research it became clear that there were 434 cases of mismatches of data presented by respondents and voter lists. In 95 cases the voter was available but his/her data was missing from the voter list, in 339 cases data mentioned in the voter list didn't correspond to reality. It's worth mentioning that a part of inaccuracies is a consequence of incorrect addressing in communities. Issues connected to with addresses were following:

1. Mismatches of building/block and addresses mentioned in citizens' passports as a result of re-addressing;
2. As a result of address changes registration of citizens in other addresses. For instance interviewer visited the selected address but people living in that address even didn't recognize persons mentioned in the voter list and thus a person living nearby was mistakenly registered in another address.
3. There were cases when people sold their apartment thus becoming former owners of the apartment and changed their registration but their names are still mentioned in front of those addresses.
4. There are small houses which now have certain addresses, for instance 40a, 40b, 40c etc but only 40 is mentioned in passports of people living there and the 40th house had 40 people registered there.
5. In villages there were cases when no address was mentioned in passports.
6. In some cases in the addresses of registration of several persons "street" was mentioned, and some other cases – "passageway" which didn't exist.

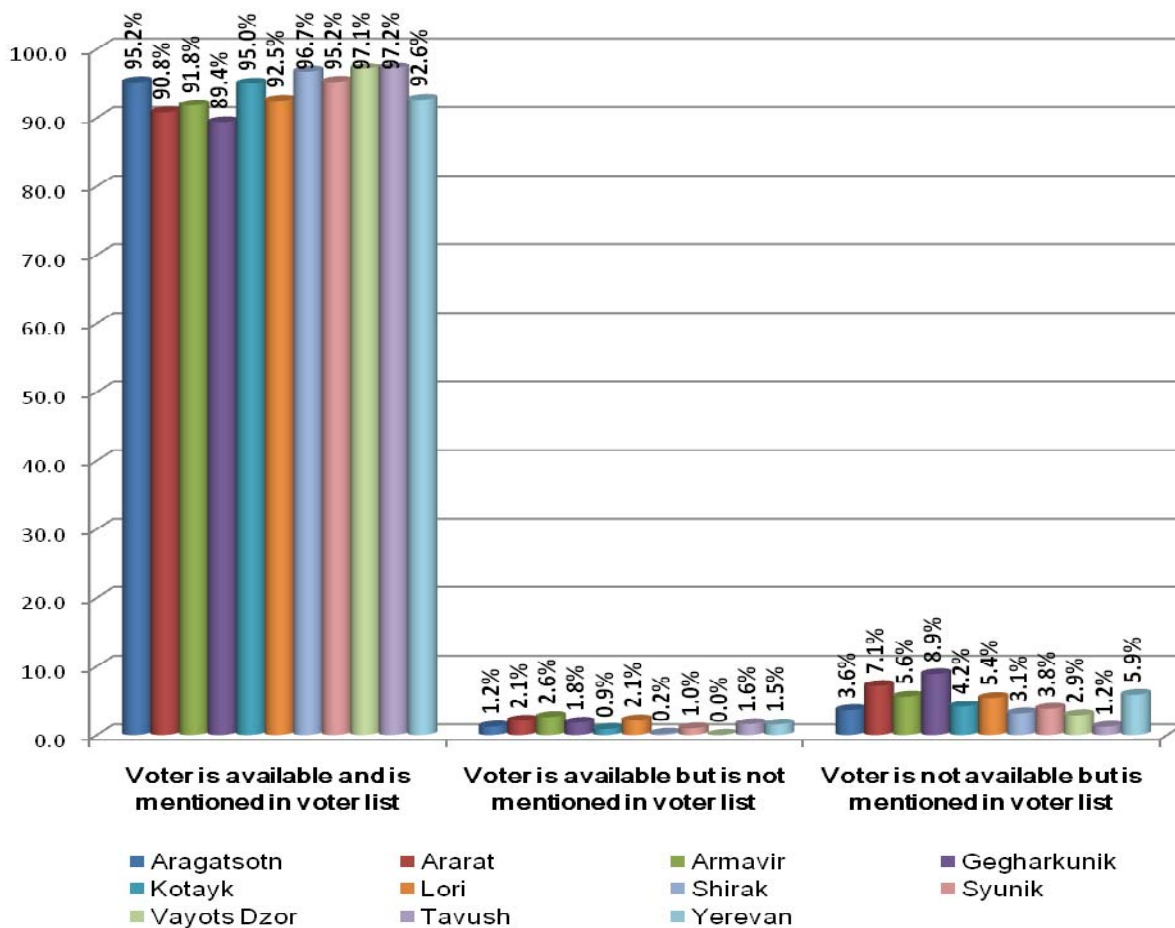
Thus collected information **availability or absence of household members within the voter list** is presented in the Graphic 3.

Graphic 3



Availability of household member in the voter list according to marzes is presented in the Graphic 4.

Graphic 4



As it becomes obvious from the chart “the voter is not available but is mentioned in the list” option was the most frequent case for Gegharkunik (8.9%), Ararat (7.1%), Yerevan (5.9%) and Lori (5.4%). “Voter is available, but is not mentioned in the list” option was most frequently met in Armavir (2.6%), Ararat (2.1%) and Lori (2.1%). Cases when voter was available and mentioned in the voter list were most frequently met in Tavush (97.2%) and Vayots Dzor (97.1%), and the lowest cases were recorded in Gegharkunik (89.4%) and Ararat (90.8%).

In cases when the voter wasn’t available but was mentioned in voter lists (the number of such cases was 339) the reasons for mismatches were found out. Those are mentioned in the Table 3.

Table 3. Reasons of mismatches	
Persons registered in that household didn’t recognize him/her/them	31.9%
The voter had changed his registration address	28.9%
Persons registered in that household know him/her/them but he/she/they weren’t ever registered at that address	23.9%
The voter died	3.8%
The voter changed his/her citizenship and is not RA citizen any more	5.9%
The voter is a military conscript	5.3%
The voter is arrested	0.3%
Total	100.0%

As it becomes clear from the table the most of reasons for mismatches (31.9%) were cases when members of the Household didn’t recognize people registered in that address. In 28.9% of cases voters had changed their registration address but still continued to be registered in their previous registration address. In 23.9% of cases inaccuracies were connected with address mistakes, in 5.9% voters had changed their citizenship, in 5.3% of cases voters were military conscripts, in 3.8% of cases voters deceased and 0.3% was arrested.

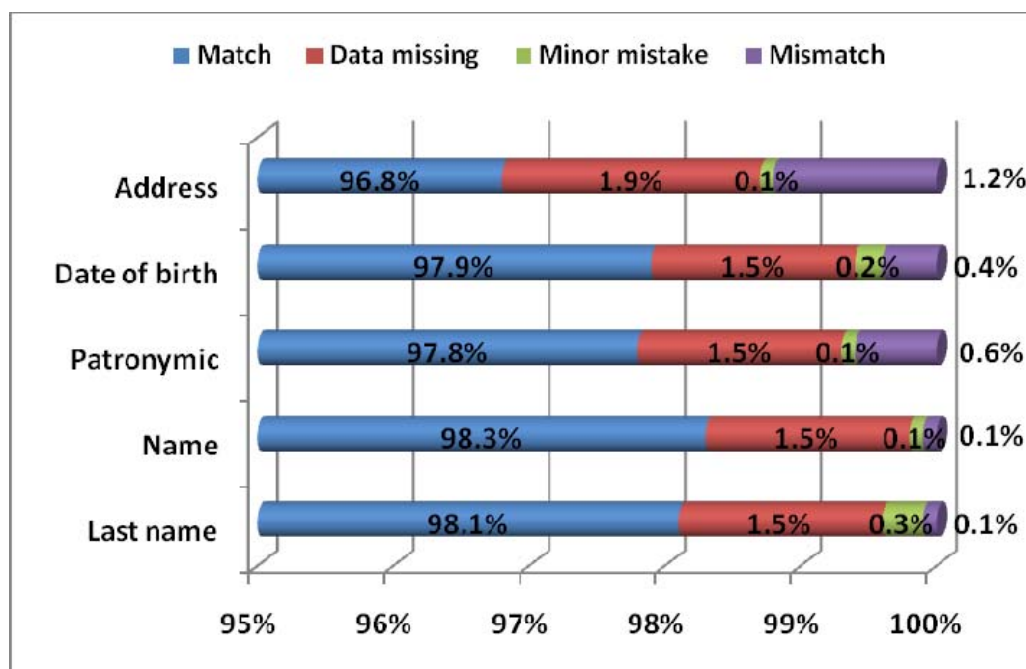
It’s worth mentioning the case of RA voters living abroad. During the calculation of inaccuracies **only people were calculated that live abroad and had changes their citizenship**. Persons with RA citizenship living abroad still remain in the voter list and can’t be removed from it because of the article – of the Law on the State Register of Population.

Calculation of people living outside Armenia is an object of a separate research, which should reveal migration data for given citizens. This issue is very important to be addressed.

Content of inaccuracies

During interviews it became clear what types of inaccuracies voter lists contained. The accuracy of name, surname, patronymic, registration address and date of birth were clarified. Information on 6392 persons was collected. The research revealed that the most of problems are connected with registration addresses. Thus data on address were missing in 1.9% of cases, and mismatches of addresses were detected in 1.2% of cases. The most minor problems were connected with citizens' names (98.3%) and last names (98.1%).

Graphic 5

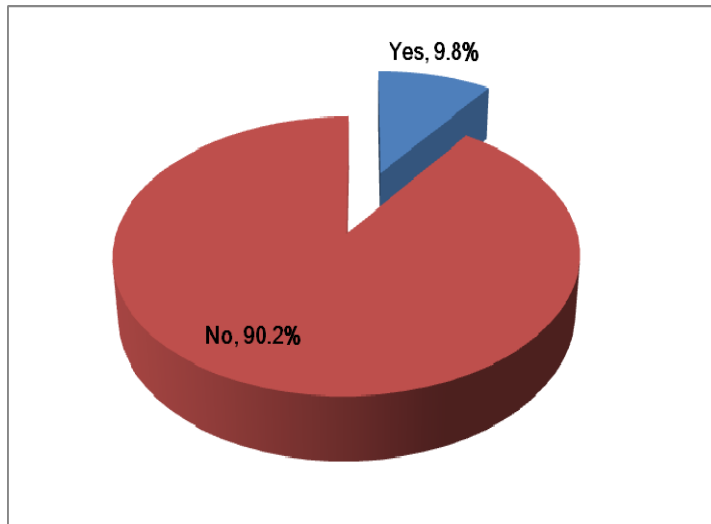


Inaccuracies detected during the research were submitted to the RA Police Passport and Visa department. As a result of department's actions 30 inaccuracies were corrected. A part of other issues were solved during the research by APR Group due to awareness campaigns conducted (several citizens undertook actions and made corrections after receiving information and consultation on means of correcting detected issues within the voter list) and the other part of issues was connected with mistakes by both the organizations and representatives of department.

Awareness

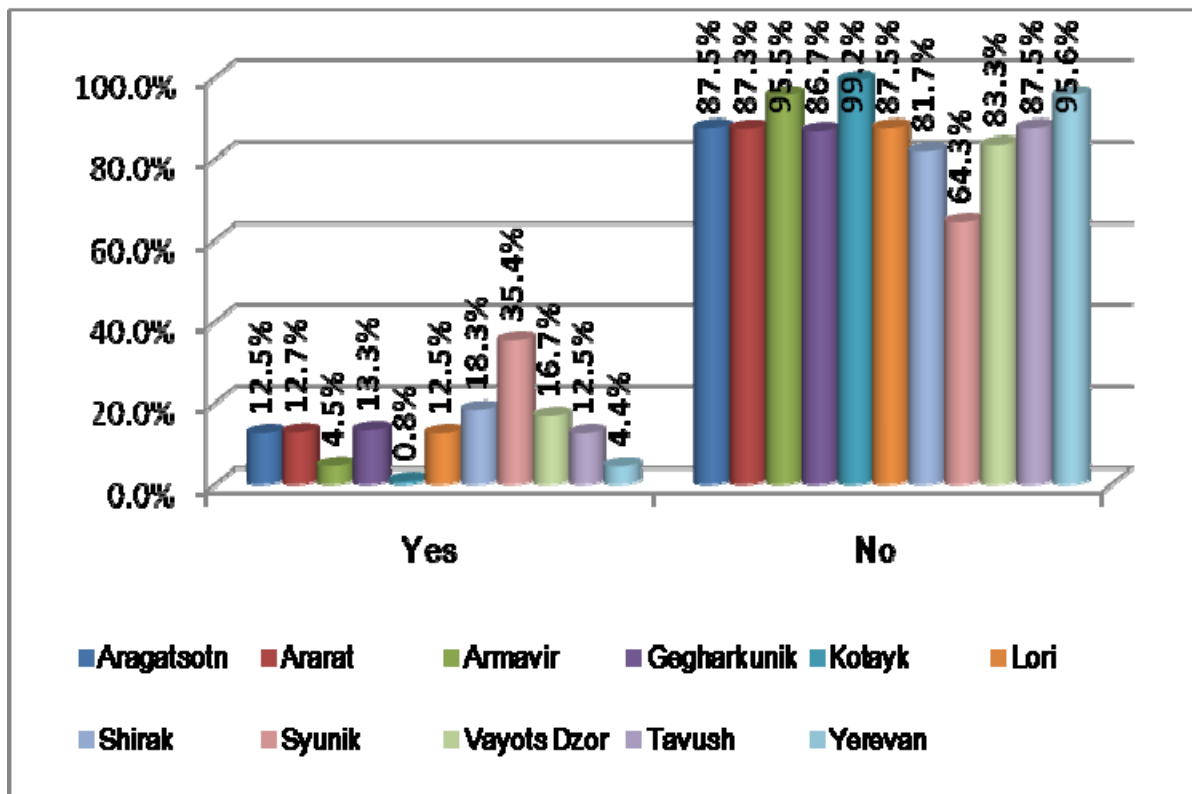
During the research it was found out how respondents are interested in checking data within voter lists.

Graphic 6



90.2% of respondents gave a negative answer to the question whether they checked their and household members' data within the voter list during the last one month. Thus only 9.8% of respondents tried to check their or their household members' names in voter lists. People that mentioned that they have tried to check their names during last one month answered to the question whether they had detected any inaccuracy. Inaccuracies were detected by 7.9% of them.

Graphic 7



The research also tried to find out what actions were undertaken by RA citizens in case of detecting inaccuracy within the voter list. It revealed that 50 % (N=10) of respondents who detected inaccuracies didn't undertake any action mentioning that they weren't interested. 30% submitted application to the Police, 10% - to local self-government authorities, and 10% didn't submit any application but were going to apply to Police. Those who initiated actions to correct inaccuracies also answered to the question what was the status of the application. 40% mentioned that the issue was fully or partly solved, 10% mentioned that it was still in process and 40 mentioned that nothing was done.

Conclusion

Based on research results following conclusions were made:

- **Low level of voter awareness:** The majority of voters don't possess knowledge on main procedures for formation and updating voter lists. While putting aside detailed procedures (voters don't need to know them) in many cases voters didn't have the minimal picture on their role in formation of voters which may cause violation of their electoral rights.
- **Low motivation of voters:** Voters are not interested in becoming involved in checking and correcting voter lists which is probably conditioned with the low level of reliability in electoral processes.
- **Availability of absent voters in the voter list:** RA citizens that have migrated and don't live in Armenia still continue to be in voter lists.
- **Impossibility to vote abroad:** RA citizens living abroad didn't have any opportunity to participate in voting (except for cases defined by the law) through RA diplomatic/consular representations abroad.
- **Issues connected with re-addressing:** During re-addressing in communities inaccuracies were detected as a result of which many citizens were legally living in a new address but having old addresses mentioned in that passports (such problems become more important when re-addressing results only change of the number of building). In that case it's necessary to apply to the territorial department of the Cadastre office attached to the RA Government to get a new ownership certificate, as well as reference from municipality and register residents at that new address. As that process is conditioned with considerable financial expenditures that hinders the process of appropriate execution of documentation. As a result voters registered in that address have another registration address in their passports.

Recommendations

During the research and discussions following recommendations were generated:

- Continuing work with voters to increase their knowledge on and participation in correcting voter lists.
- Coordinate activities in correcting voter lists. It's necessary to intensify cooperation between the police passport and visa department and local, international organizations involved in correction of voter lists, as well as political parties/candidate teams. From the Police side the engagement of organizations and political parties should be promoted to improve voter list accuracy.
- Undertake appropriate legislative amendments to remove names of voters living abroad from the voter list (e.g. 1. to mention absent voters in voter lists; 2. to oblige voters from time to time visit the police passport and visa department and those voters who don't participate in national elections for at least twice will be removed from the list; 3. to remove names of those people who have been absent from Armenia for at least a year and add their names in the voter list based on their applications etc),
- Coordinate registration of RA citizens living abroad through Armenian diplomatic/consular representations located abroad to identify the number of RA citizens living abroad and removing names of deceased RA voters from voter lists;
- Restore the mechanisms of voting for RA citizens living abroad and add mechanisms within the Election Code that will enable them to vote through RA diplomatic/consular representations of the country of their residence and through electronic voting;
- Revise legal acts regulating state charges and decrease/eliminate as much as possible fees for issuing ownership certificate and registration;
- Develop legal mechanisms that would make territorial units of passport and visa department for communities with no offices there through involving local self-government authorities, as particularly in remote and socially vulnerable communities people don't have any opportunity to access the department to submit applications and make corrections within voter lists.

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