

Results and Analysis of the Opinion Poll

Conducted by the Analytical Centre on Globalisation and Regional Cooperation (ACGRC) in Armenia in 2018 on the Attitude of the Armenian Society to International Organizations, the EU, EEU, CSTO and NATO

In June-September 2017, in Armenia, the Analytical Centre on Globalisation and Regional Cooperation (ACGRC) conducted surveys in order to reveal the public opinion on foreign and domestic policy. The survey, in particular, focused on the relations with international organizations, the EU, Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization), and NATO. The ACGRC also surveyed the stance of Armenian political parties on the same issues.

The surveys conducted by the ACGRC were supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

In the first phase of the project implemented in June-August 2017, by means of a questionnaire compiled by project experts and ACGRC, an anonymous survey was conducted in Yerevan, Gumry, Vanadzor, Yegegnadzor and Martuni. 900 Armenian citizens were surveyed, including 497(55.2%) women and 403(44.8%) men (for details, see “Analysis of Policies of Political Parties and Public Sector in Armenia Regarding the EU, NATO, CSTO as well as EEU and Results of the Public Opinion Poll”, Yerevan 2018).

We would like to point out that the survey results gained resonance among the public both in Armenia and abroad. Thus, to the question, “Do you consider Russia an ally?”, only 34.33% responded positively; 35.11% consider Russia an ally only partially; and 30.56% do not consider Russia to be Armenia’s strategic partner at all. To the question on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, 56.33% of the respondents noted that Russia’s impact on the settlement is negative, and 40.11% mentioned Russia’s positive impact. To the question whether the Collective

Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) dominated by Russia ensures Armenia's security, 15.78% of the respondents answered positively, and 41.33% responded that the CSTO does not ensure Armenia's security. And to the question whether the CSTO will help Armenia in case of war with Azerbaijan, 31.22% responded "Yes", the CSTO will help, and 63.44% responded negatively.

Naturally, the responses of Armenia's citizens undermine the popular stereotypes in the international community that, ostensibly, positive attitudes towards Russia and Russia's policy in the region dominate in Armenia. Also obvious is the distrust towards integrational organizations initiated by Russia (e.g., the CSTO). Serious discussions took place, both in Armenia and in other countries, on the results obtained by the ACGRC (there were numerous references to this data), especially that it showed the critical mood in the Armenian society towards the policy of Russia with respect to Armenia.

78.67% of the surveyed citizens negatively responded to Armenia's refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the EU in 2013, and 20.56% responded positively. 88.67% of the surveyed citizens positively responded to the intensification of Armenia-EU relations, while 10.67% responded negatively. To the question, "Do you associate Armenia's future with EU membership?" 58.89% of the citizens responded positively, and 38.22% responded negatively. The answers to these questions entirely dispelled the popular belief that, ostensibly, in Armenia there are no European integration moods. Moreover, obviously, the citizens of this country associate the future of Armenia with European integration and hope very much for close cooperation with the EU in order to build a democratic development model. The subsequent Armenian Velvet Revolution in April 2018 was, inter alia, the result of the unwillingness of the former authorities of this country to fulfill these hopes, and the citizens rejected the authorities.

Thus, citizens of Armenia were surveyed in the first phase of the 2017 project implementation. A similar survey was conducted among parliamentary and non-parliamentary political parties. Survey results reveal to what extent the opinion of citizens matches that of political parties.

For this purpose, the ACGRC in September 2017 applied to the factions of the National Assembly of Armenia and non-parliamentary parties with a suggestion to fill out a questionnaire. On the whole, we applied to 22 political parties, including the ones that participated in the parliamentary election of April 2, 2017 (for details, see "Analysis of Policies of Political Parties and Public Sector in Armenia Regarding the EU, NATO, CSTO as well as EEU and Results of the Public Opinion Poll", Yerevan 2018).

Here we also obtained results that sparked serious debate in Armenia. Thus, about 32% of the parties responded that the CSTO ensures Armenia's security, whereas, as it was mentioned above,

only 15.78% of citizens concur with that. As we can see, the mood in the society and in the political elite differs more than twice! Another example: to the question, “Do you associate Armenia’s future with EU membership?” 41% of surveyed political parties responded positively, whereas, as it was mentioned above, 58.89% of citizens believe that Armenia shall associate its future with EU integration.

Such stark differences in the stances of Armenia’s political elite obviously indicated the need for drastic changes in this country. They indicated that the political elite including the one represented in the National Assembly of Armenia failed to express the attitudes of Armenian citizens. Hence, no wonder, after the survey, in 2017 we rightly predicted the revolutionary transformations that have started in this country since April 2018.

The results of our survey in 2017 prompted the need to continue similar surveys in order to obtain more objective information on the dominant moods in the Armenian society, and to study the processes underway in the political domain of Armenia. That is why in the summer of 2018 we continued our survey on the same subjects and questions in order to reveal the mood in the Armenian society shortly after the Armenian Velvet Revolution of April 2018.

The survey was conducted in Armenia, in particular, in Yerevan, Gumry, Vanadzor, Vayk and Yegegnadzor in August-September 2018. 796 respondents were surveyed in these cities. The purpose of the survey was to study the attitude of Armenian citizens to international organizations, such as the EU, EEU, CSTO and NATO. Also, we added questions to the questionnaire that became topical after the Armenian Velvet Revolution of April 2018. The survey conducted by the Analytical Centre on Globalisation and Regional Cooperation (ACGRC) was supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

During the survey, the citizens answered to 19 questions. Please find below the obtained results and comments. In addition, we will compare the new data obtained in 2018 with the data from 2017 surveys.

Question 1. Do you consider Russia as Armenia's ally?

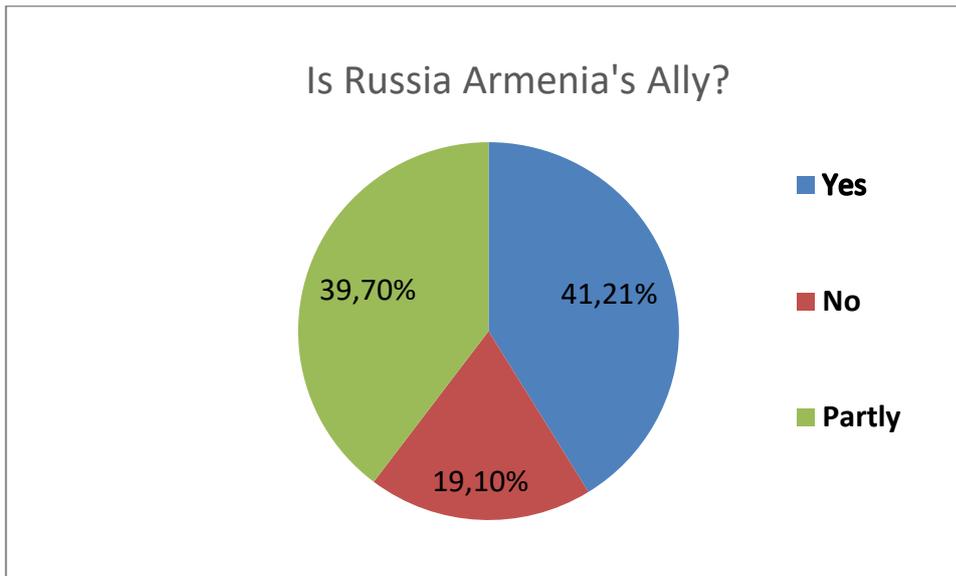


Fig.1

If we compare the answers to Question 1 with 2017 results, one can see that the attitude of Armenian citizens to Russia has become more positive. Thus, in August 2017, Russia was considered an ally by 34.33% of respondents (this survey in 2017 triggered serious resonance both in the Armenian society and in the international community, as there was a stereotype that no matter what the vast majority of Armenian citizens consider Russia their ally. Instead, only one third of the citizens believe so!), whereas in 2018, according to Fig.1, 41.21% believe so. Obviously, even this figure is not high for Russia that is believed to be Armenia's ally.

In addition, the number of people who do not consider Russia Armenia's ally has also diminished. Thus, if in 2017 about 30.56% of Armenian citizens did not consider Russia to be their ally, in 2018 this figure dwindled to 19.10%. The number of people who considered Russia to be Armenia's partial ally has remained at the same level. Thus, in 2017, 35.11% of citizens believed so, and in 2018, according to Fig.1, about 39.70%.

This change in the mood of the Armenian society over the past year can be accounted for by a number of facts. First, over the period of the Velvet Revolution in Armenia, Russia exercised restraint, despite fears that the Russian authorities might try to support the disgraced Armenian authorities as represented by Serzh Sargsyan. And when this did not happen, the Armenian society reacted positively to Russia. Secondly, Armenian Velvet Revolution in April 2018 did not have a geopolitical dimension (i.e., was not oriented to European integration), but was focused on domestic problems. In addition, the leader of the revolution, Nikol Pashinyan did not use anti-Russian rhetoric during rallies and speeches. Moreover, he sent positive messages to Russia. This, undoubtedly, had an impact on the shaping of such a view on Russia in the Armenian society.

Question 2. Does Russia ensure Armenia's security?

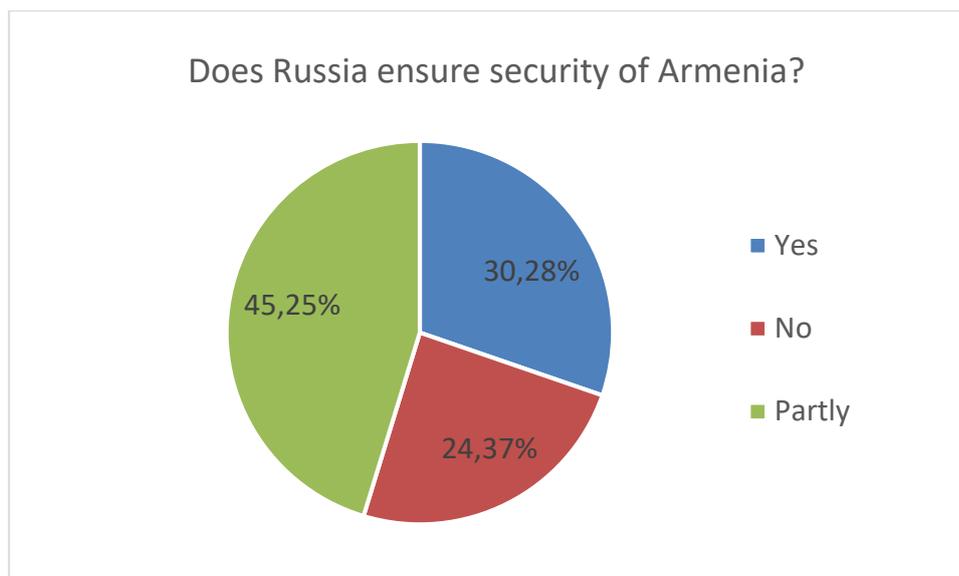


Fig. 2

As we can see, there is also positive dynamics in the attitude of the Armenian society to Russia in the answers to Question 2. Thus if in 2017, only 25.67% of the respondents believed that Russia ensured Armenia's security, in 2018 this figure grew to 30.28%, as shown in Fig. 2. Moreover, if in 2017, 30.56% of the respondents did not consider that Russia ensured Armenia's security, then in 2018 this figure decreased to 24.37%. The percentage of those who believed in 2017 that Russia only partially ensured Armenia's security was 43.67%, and in 2018 it insignificantly grew to 45.25%.

These changes in the attitude of the Armenian society over the past year can be accounted for by the same factors as in the case of answers to Question 1 in the questionnaire. First, during the Velvet Revolution in Armenia, Russia exercised restraint, despite fears that the Russian authorities might try to support the disgraced Armenian authorities as represented by Serzh Sargsyan. And when this did not happen, the Armenian society reacted positively to Russia. Secondly, Armenian Velvet Revolution in April 2018 did not have a geopolitical dimension (i.e., was not oriented to European integration), but was focused on domestic problems. In addition, the leader of the revolution, Nikol Pashinyan did not use anti-Russian rhetoric during rallies and speeches. Moreover, he sent positive messages to Russia. This, undoubtedly, had an impact on the shaping of such a view on Russia in the Armenian society.

Question 3. Is Russia an obstacle for close relations between Armenia and EU?

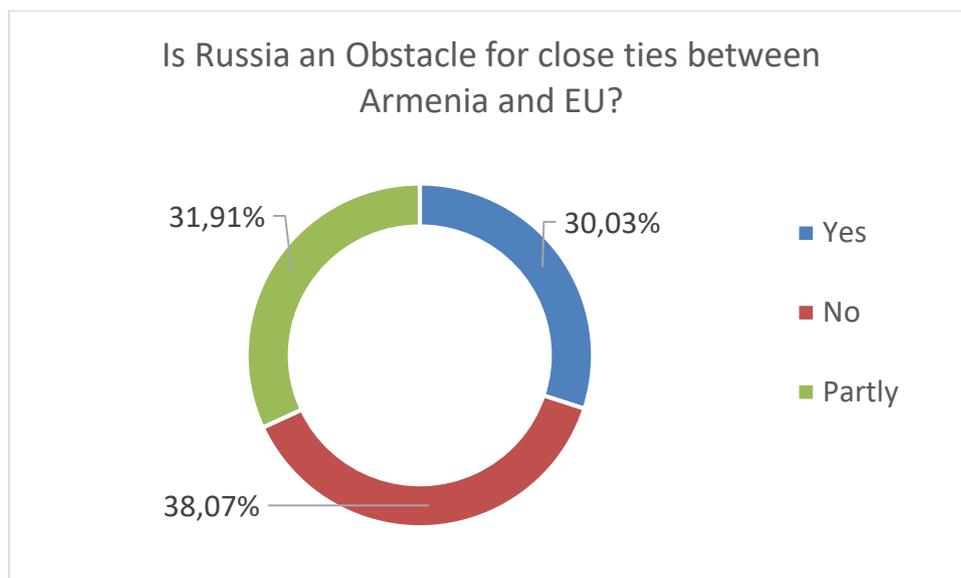


Fig. 3

The answers to Question 3 also demonstrate that now Russia is to a lesser extent perceived as hindrance to cooperation between Armenia and EU. Thus, if in 2017, 40.22% of Armenian citizens believed that Russia hindered the cooperation between Armenia and EU, in 2018 only 30.03% believed so. In addition, if in 2017, Russia was not considered to be hindrance to cooperation between Armenia and EU by 29.67% of the citizens, in 2018 this figure grew to 38.07%. The number of citizens who believed that Russia can be just a partial hindrance to cooperation between Armenia and EU did not significantly change: 29.67% in 2017 and 31.91% in 2018, as can be seen in Fig. 3.

Question 4. What is the influence of Russia on the negotiations over Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?

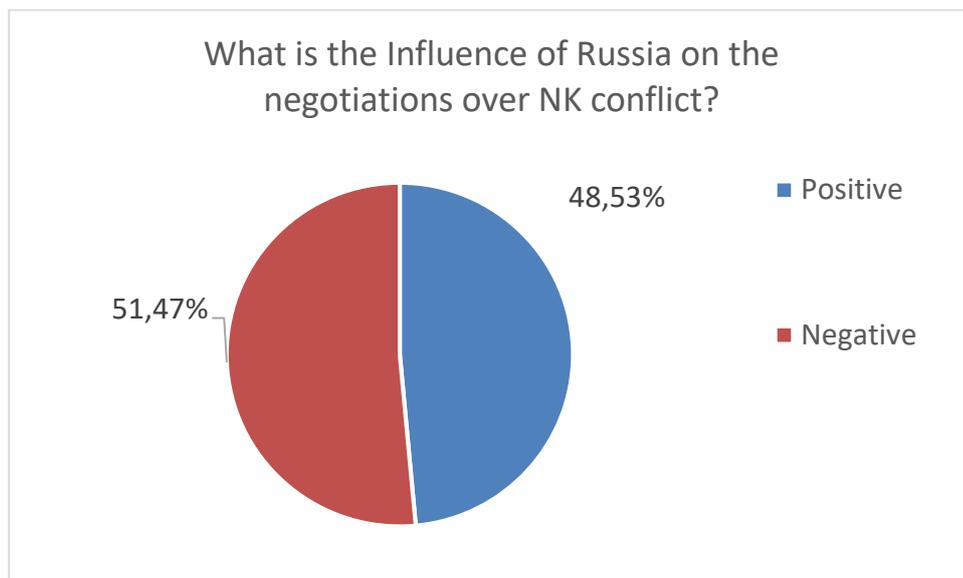


Fig. 4

Also in the answers to Question 4, we can see positive dynamics in the attitude of the Armenian society to Russia, inter alia, with respect to the Karabakh problem. Thus if in 2017, only 40.11% positively perceived Russia's role in the negotiations over the Karabakh issue, in 2018, according to Fig. 4, 48.53% positively perceive Russia's role. These changes in the attitude of the Armenian society over the past year can be accounted for by the same factors as in the examination of responses to the first three Questions. It is another matter, how positive this tendency will be in the future, taking into account numerous regional factors and the development of bilateral Armenian-Russian relations.

Question 5. Do you think the CSTO ensures Armenia's security?

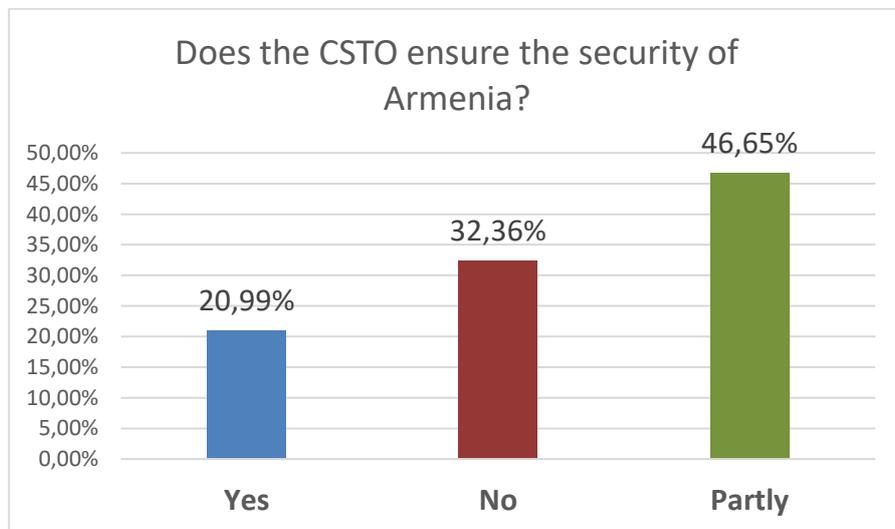


Fig. 5

Over the past year, the positive dynamics in the attitude of the Armenian society to Russia has also been partially extended to the CSTO which is dominated by Russia. Thus, one can see that if in 2017 only 15.78% of Armenian citizens believed that the CSTO ensured their security, in 2018 it reached 20.99%. And, correspondingly, if in 2017 41.33% of the citizens did not consider that the CSTO ensured Armenia's security, in 2018 this number decreased to 32.36% (see Fig. 5). The number of Armenian citizens who believe that the CSTO only partially ensures Armenia's security reached from 42.44% in 2017 to 46.65% in 2018.

Question 6. Do you think the CSTO will support Armenia in case of war between Armenia and Azerbaijan?

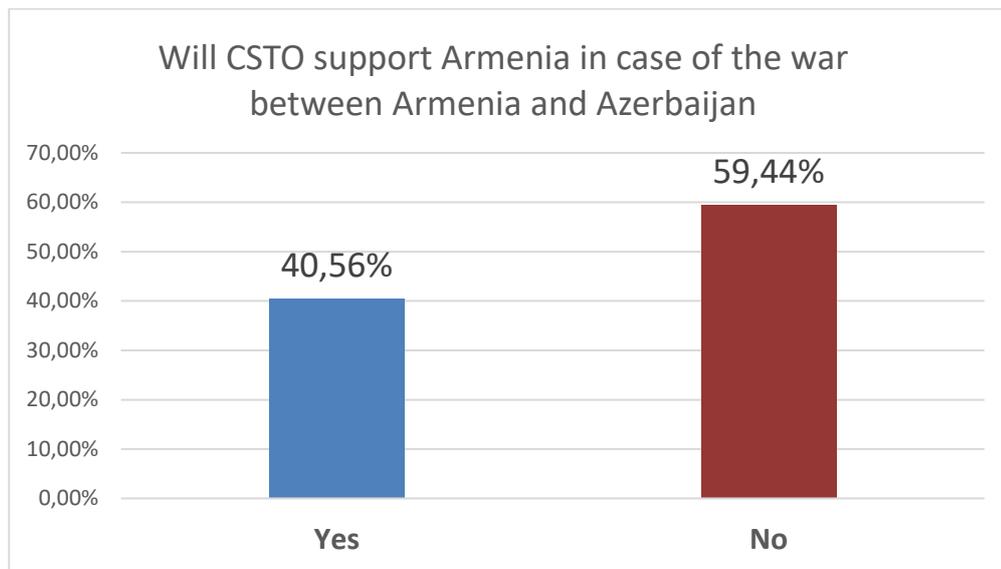


Fig. 6

This is an exceptionally sensitive question in the Armenian society, as within the framework of the CSTO Armenia faced problems including the ones related to Armenia's security. Thus, in April 2016, during the Four Day Armenian-Azeri War, the CSTO not only failed to help Armenia but made a belated and meaningless statement. That is why there is a rather critical attitude towards the CSTO in Armenia. Hence, no wonder, when responding to this question in 2017 only 31.22% of this country's citizens were sure the CSTO would help Armenia in case of Azerbaijan's aggression. In 2018 the trust in the CSTO increased, and in Fig. 6 we see it reached 40.56%, which was explained above by the increase in trust towards Russia in the Armenian society shortly after the Armenian Velvet Revolution. Also the number of people who disbelieved that the CSTO would support Armenia in case of Azerbaijan's aggression decreased from 63.44% to 59.44%.

Question 7. Do you think the new authorities of Armenia shall restart negotiations with Azerbaijan?

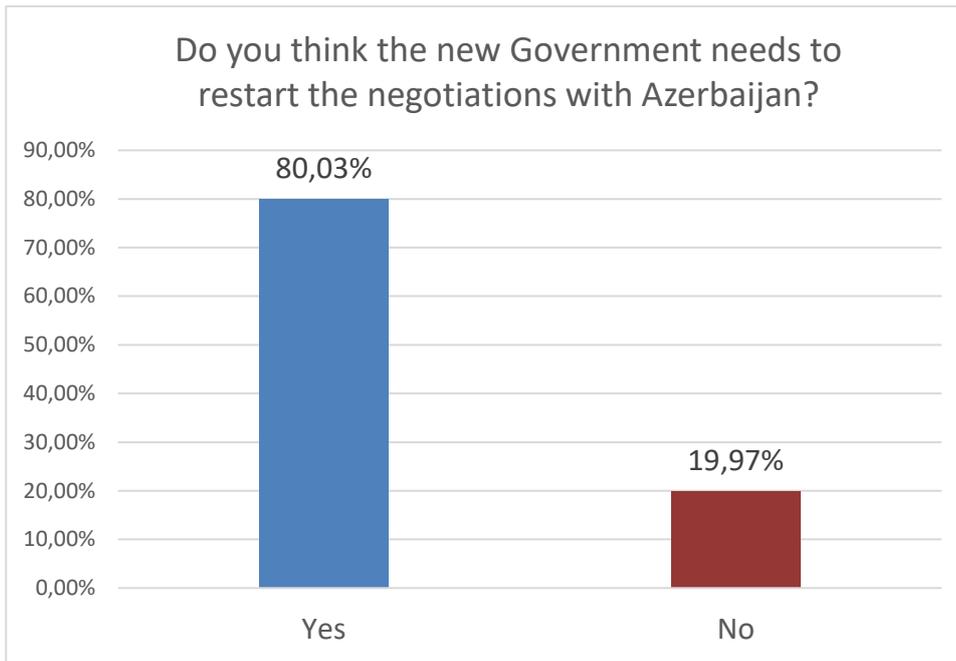


Fig. 7

This question was not included in the 2017 surveys. However, it was included in the 2018 survey, as serious changes took place in Armenia which probably opened new opportunities for the positive dynamics in the settlement of regional conflicts and cooperation in the South Caucasus. It seems positive that even after the Four Day Armenian-Azeri War in April 2016 about 80.03% of the citizens positively responded to the need to resume negotiations with Azerbaijan, and only 19.97% responded negatively. This also goes to show that the Armenian society has positive expectations from the activities of the new government.

Question 8. Would you like to establish cooperation with Azerbaijanians in business and other spheres?

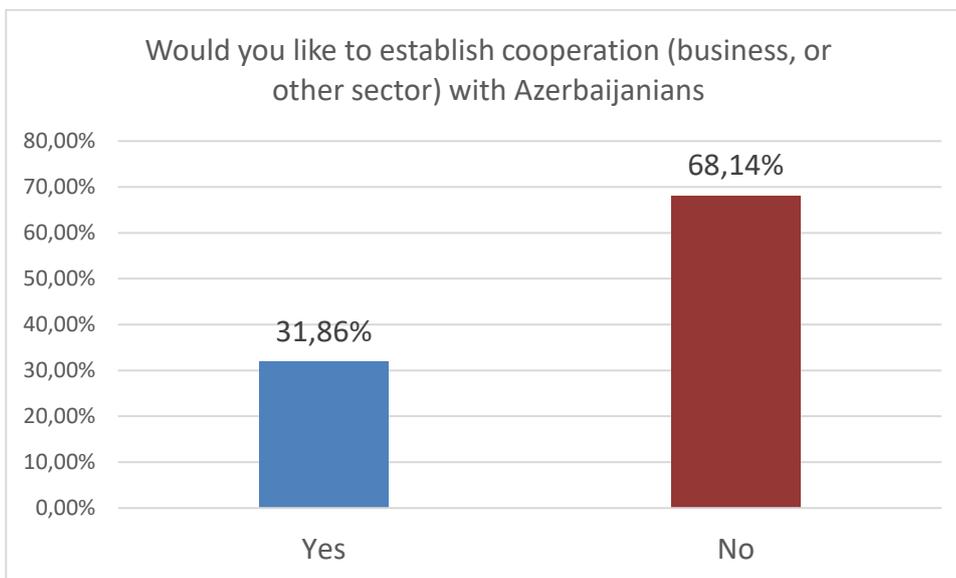


Fig. 8

This question was not included in the 2017 surveys. However, it was included in the 2018 survey, as serious changes took place in Armenia which probably opened new opportunities for the positive dynamics concerning issues of South Caucasus cooperation. It seems positive that even after the Four Day Armenian-Azeri War in April 2016, 31.86% of Armenian citizens would like to start cooperation, also in business, with Azeri colleagues. This also goes to show that the Armenian society has positive expectations from the activities of the new government.

Question 9. What is the impact of Armenia’s membership in the EEU on Armenia?

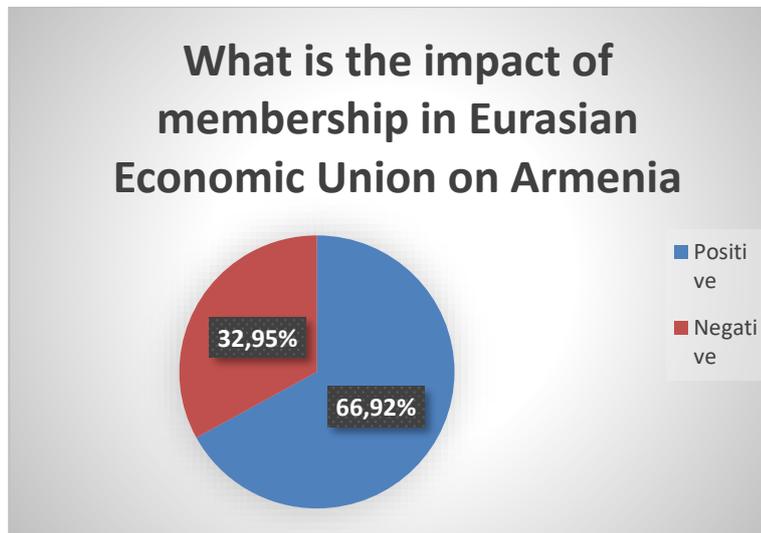


Fig. 9

As follows from the answers to Question 9, the positive attitude to the EEU has increased in Armenia. Thus, if in 2017, only 45.33% positively perceived Armenia’s membership in the EEU, in 2018 this percentage grew to 66.92%. Here we see the same effect as in the case of the CSTO, i.e. increase in trust towards Russia in Armenia automatically raises trust in those organizations where Russia dominates. In addition, let’s note that the leader of the Armenian Velvet Revolution, Nikol Pashinyan has repeatedly emphasized the country’s readiness to continue its membership in and cooperation with the CSTO and EEU.

Question 10. Do you think the new Armenian authorities shall deepen relations with the EU?

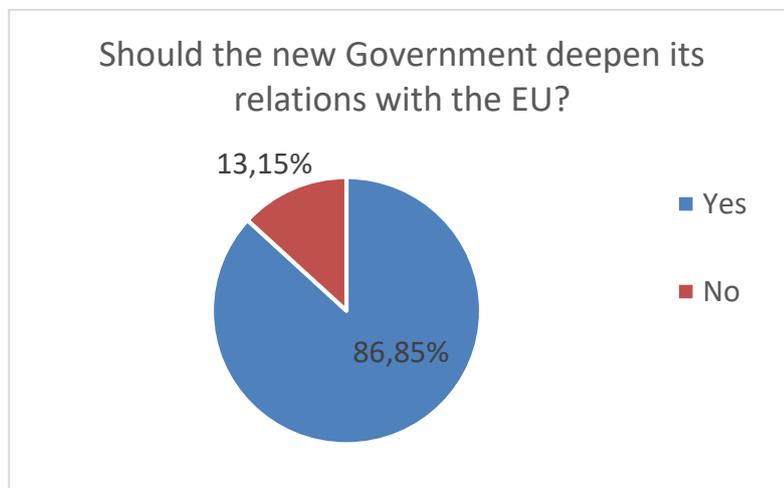


Fig. 10

In 2017, 88.67% of this country's citizens supported the intensification of relations with the EU which did not change in 2018. Indeed, Fig. 9 indicates that after the Armenian Velvet Revolution, the number of supporters of intensified relations with the EU amounted to 86.85% in Armenia.

Question 11. Do you think the EU helps Armenia in implementing economic and political reforms?

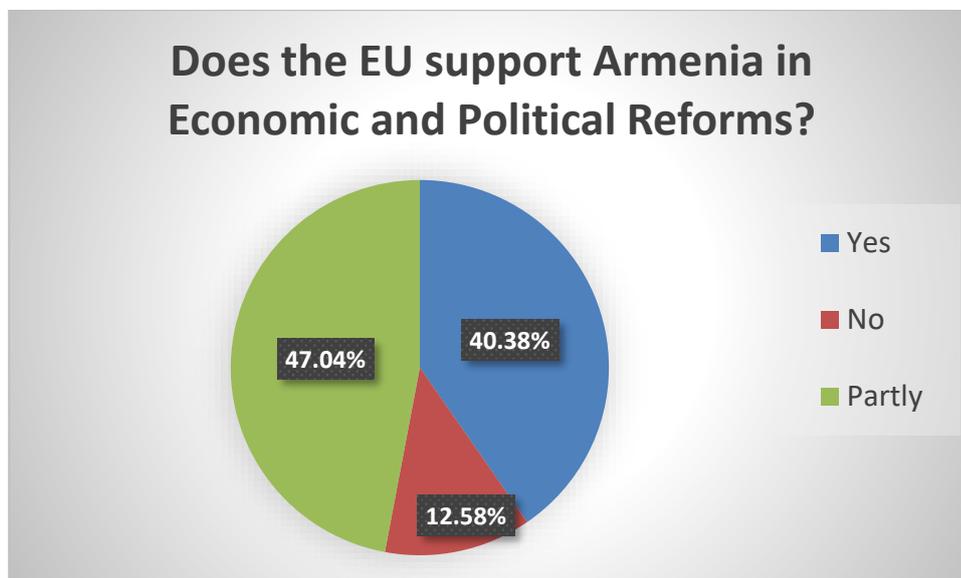


Fig. 11

In 2017, 35.22% of Armenia's citizens positively appraised the role of EU in economic and political reforms in Armenia. As Fig. 11 shows, in 2018 there was a tangible increase in the number of people who positively appraised the role of EU in Armenia. And this figure now amounts to 40.38%. In 2017, 14.11% had a negative attitude to the role of EU, and in 2018, only 12.58%. As we can see in Figs 9-11, in Armenia there is also a growth of positive attitudes to EU. Although the Armenian Velvet Revolution was not *colored*, i.e., it did not have a geopolitical dimension, the increase in positive attitudes towards the EU is visible. There are many reasons for that. It is also due to the fact that EU has rather actively worked in Armenia all throughout independence years, providing solid support in various spheres. In addition, EU and European countries provide serious support to the civil society of Armenia. It's common knowledge that NGOs, analytical centers, expert community and mass media play a fairly active role in this country's life. And practically all of them are developed and supported by European or Western institutions. Also, Georgia's positive experience in cooperating with EU and NATO has had a positive impact on the public opinion in Armenia. Georgia's progress in all the spheres of economy (most visibly, in tourism) and successful anti-corruption activities are associated, for the Armenian society, with Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

Question 12. Do you connect Armenia's future with EU membership?

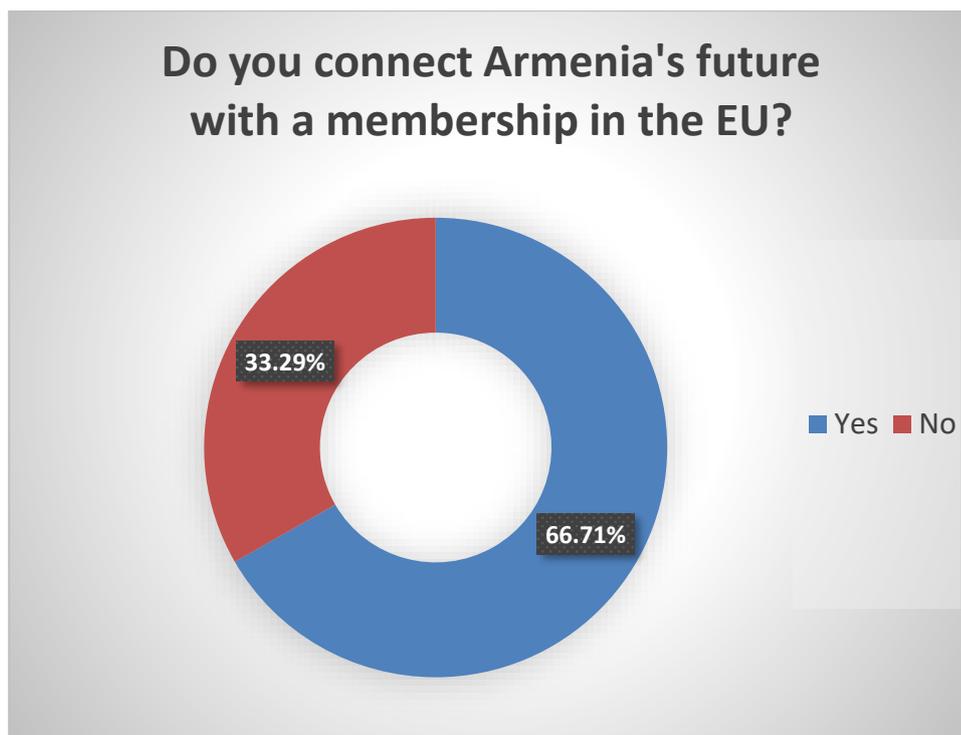


Fig. 12

Fig. 12 shows that 66.71% of Armenia's citizens in the future see Armenia in the EU. In 2017, the percentage was 58.89%. Also, the number of European integration opponents decreased in Armenia. Thus, if in 2017, 38.22% were opposed to Armenia's integration in EU, in 2018 the percentage was just 33.29%.

As we can see, the 2018 survey shows similar increased interest and trust of the Armenian society in both Russia and EU. It can be accounted for by the popularity of the idea of multi-vector foreign policy in Armenia, i.e., active parallel work with Russia, EU, USA, China and other leading global players. Political parties, including Nikol Pashinyan's party Civil Contract, also put forward this development route for this country.

Question 13. What's your attitude towards Armenia's future NATO membership?

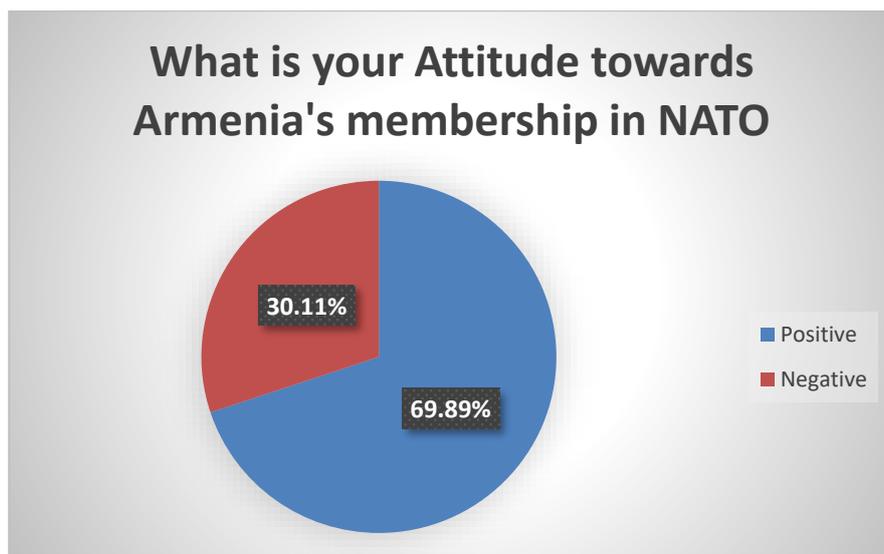


Fig. 13

Back in 2017, during the survey, about 61.67% of Armenian citizens had a positive attitude to the country's future NATO membership. Understandably, because of Armenia's complicated geopolitical situation, this subject is not high on the foreign policy agenda of the country. However, in terms of long-term perspective, the country's NATO membership is positively evaluated in Armenia. Moreover, as Fig. 13 shows, in 2018 the number of Euro-Atlantic integration supporters increased, reaching 69.89%. Correspondingly, the number of those who had a negative attitude decreased in Armenia from 35.89% in 2017 to 30.11% in 2018. We would like to note that such a high percentage of supporters of European and Euro-Atlantic integration in Armenia in 2017 raised serious debates in the Armenian society. However, the new survey confirms the obvious and continuous positive attitude to EU and NATO in the Armenian society.

As we can see, the 2018 survey demonstrates parallel increased interest and trust of the Armenian society in Russia, EU and NATO. It can be accounted for by the popularity of the idea of multi-vector foreign policy in Armenia, i.e., active parallel work with Russia, EU, USA, China and other leading global players. Political parties, including Nikol Pashinyan's party Civil Contract, also put forward this development route for this country.

Question 14. Can Armenia’s close cooperation with EU and NATO contribute to the peaceful settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?

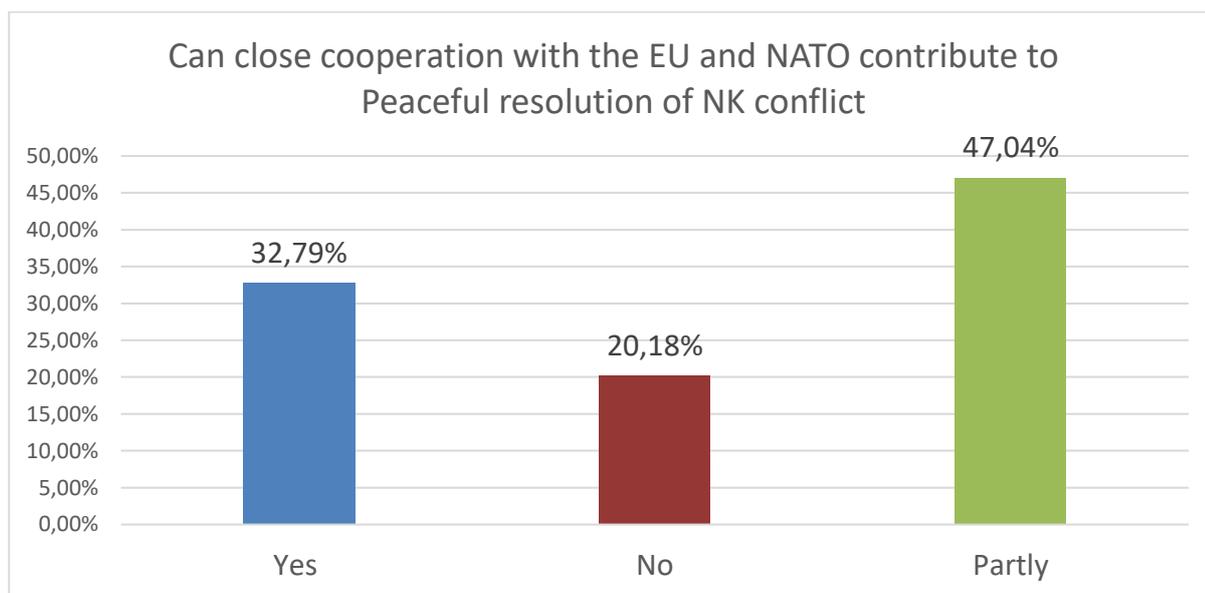


Fig. 14

We can see, both in 2017 and 2018, a rather high percentage of Armenian citizens who associate (or partially associate) the peaceful settlement of Karabakh conflict with cooperation with EU and NATO. Thus, in 2017, 35.44% believed, and 37.00% partially believed in the support of EU and NATO. In 2018, as can be seen in Fig. 14, 32.78% associated and 47.04% partially associated the peaceful settlement of Karabakh conflict with cooperation with EU and NATO.

Question 15. What is your attitude to Georgia’s possible NATO membership?

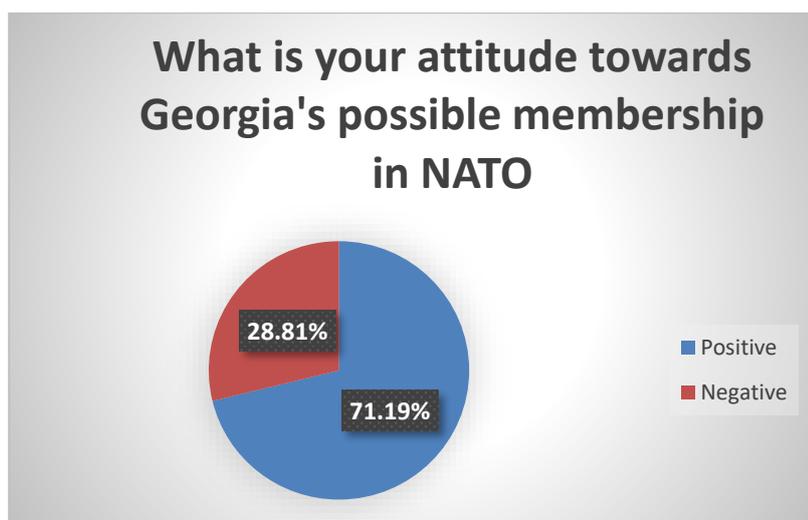


Fig. 15

It is a new question included in the 2018 survey due to the fact that after the Armenian Velvet Revolution, it was necessary to understand to what extent the Armenian society considered Georgia’s NATO membership important for Armenia’s security. In addition, to what extent Armenia’s NATO membership can become a topical subject in Armenia’s foreign policy? As can

be seen in Fig. 15, 71.19% have a positive attitude to Georgia's NATO membership, seeing no problem for Armenia.

Question 16. Do you think the Public Television of Armenia has changed its broadcasting style since the April 2018 revolution?

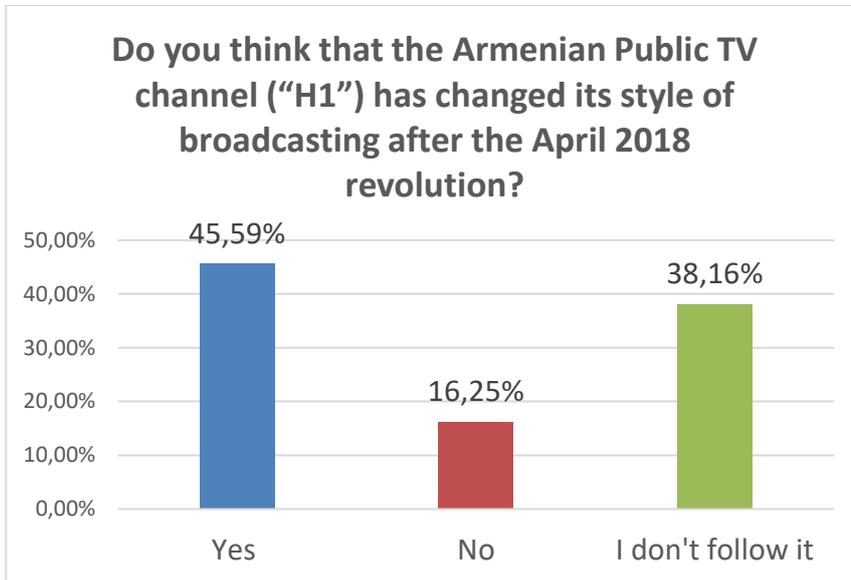


Fig. 16

This question was added to our questionnaires in 2018 due to fundamental changes in Armenia, and it was interesting to know the citizens' perception of the measures taken by the government of Armenia and Public Television of Armenia, as the Public Television of Armenia traditionally catered to the interests of the ruling party and did not express the stance of public at large (including political opposition). Naturally, it is premature to make final conclusions as short time has elapsed since the Armenian Velvet Revolution. However, 45.59% of respondents believe the Public Television of Armenia started positive changes in its information policy which is a sizable figure.

Question 17. Do you trust the anti-corruption actions of the new government of Armenia?

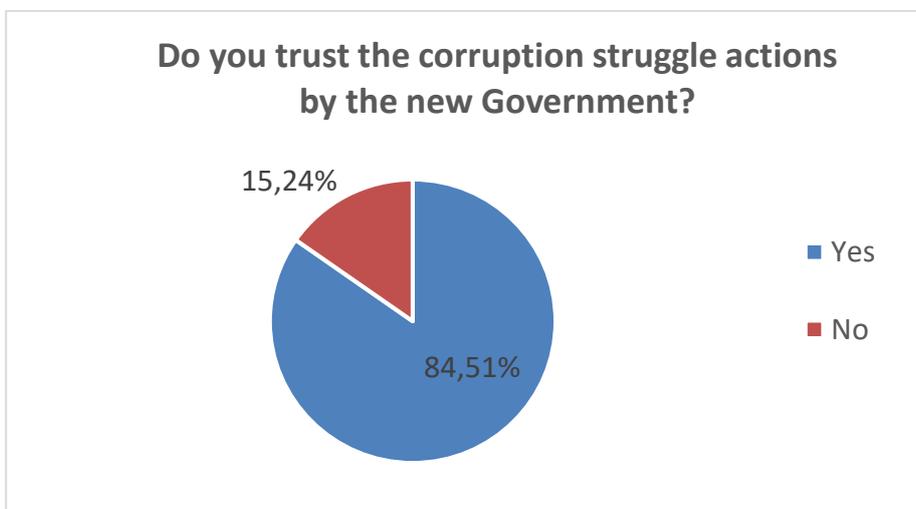


Fig. 17

This question was introduced to questionnaires in 2018 as radical changes took place in Armenia, and it was important to understand how the citizens perceive the measures taken by the new government headed by Nikol Pashinyan. As we can see, the level of trust in anti-corruption activities of the new government is high: about 84.51%, and only 15.24% do not trust the government.

Question 18. Do you think the new government of Armenia makes sufficient effort in the implementation of social and economic reforms?

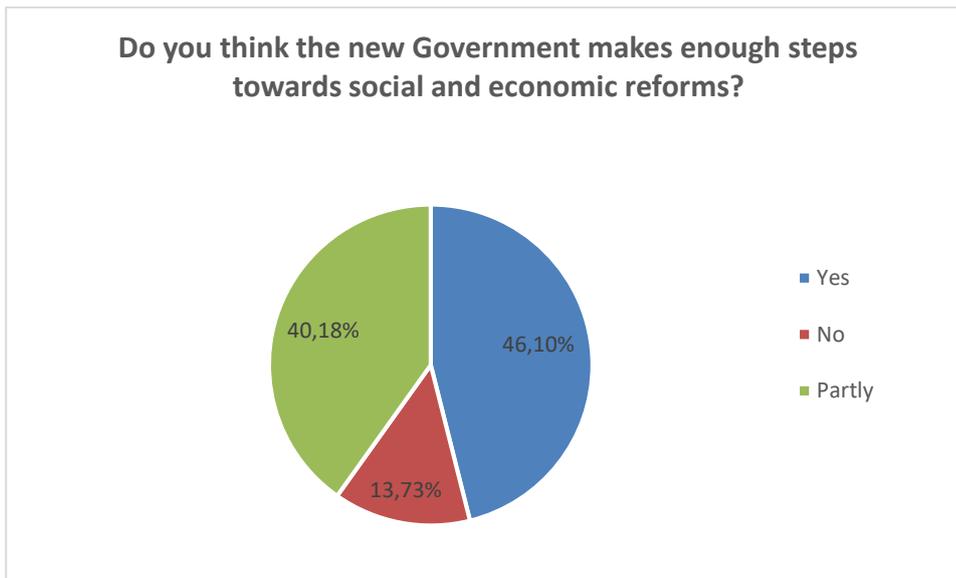


Fig. 18

This question was introduced to questionnaires in 2018 as drastic changes took place in Armenia, and it was important to understand how the citizens perceive the measures taken by the new government headed by Nikol Pashinyan. As we can see, the level of trust in the new government is rather high (46.10% approve of the government’s measures, and 40.18% partially approve!), which was reflected in December 2018 snap parliamentary election, when Nikol Pashinyan’s block “My Step” won more than 70% of votes.

Question 19. Do you trust information provided by the Russian mass media?

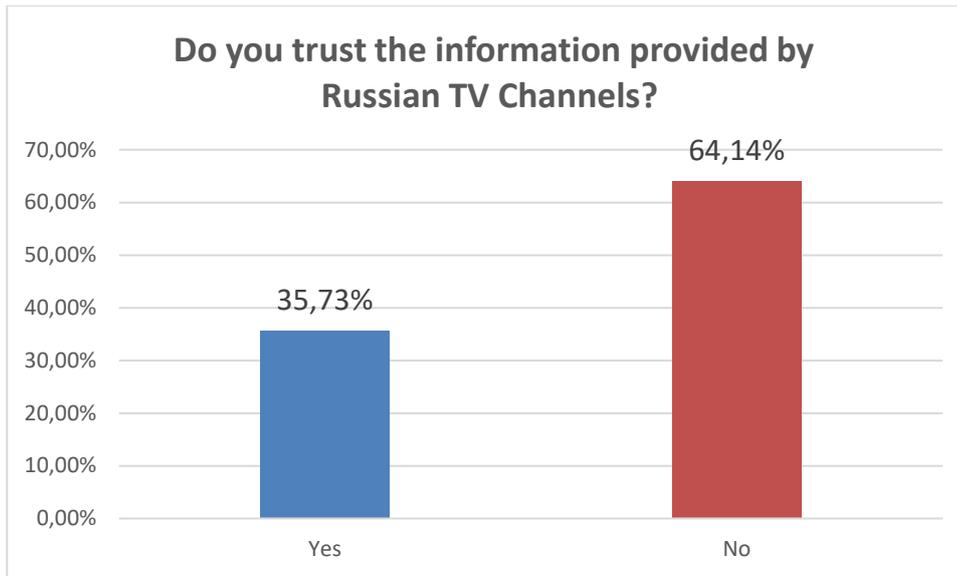


Fig. 19

This question was also introduced to questionnaires in 2018. Indeed, the impact of Russian TV channels was traditionally high in Armenia. That is why it was interesting to observe how revolutionary events in Armenia affected the trust of Armenian citizens in information provided by Russian mass media. As we can see, the level of trust in Russian mass media in Armenia is not high, and amounts to 35.73%, while 64.14% do not trust the information provided by the Russian mass media.

As you have noticed, a few new questions were added to the survey by the project experts as they became exceptionally topical for Armenia after the Armenian Velvet Revolution of April 2018.

In conclusion, let us note that after the snap parliamentary election of December 9, 2018 in Armenia, and after the establishment of the new parliament, and more precise definition of stances by political parties (i.e., the parties in the National Assembly of Armenia, non-parliamentary opposition, and newly born political parties) it is becoming topical to survey the standpoints of the main political players in the new context. It is interesting, how adequately they will reflect the attitudes recorded herein, in this survey conducted by the ACGRC in 2018. This survey reflects the attitudes present in the Armenian society shortly after the Armenian Velvet Revolution. However, it is important to also study the attitudes of the main players in the political domain of Armenia, and to compare them with these two surveys.