

PRESS RELEASE

Yerevan, 25 January 2013

Armenians take elections seriously, despite clear lead of incumbent

Today, *TNS opinion* is presenting the results of its survey "Poll: A Snapshot ahead of Armenia's Presidential Elections", which describes the moods, voting preferences and motivations of the Armenian voters just before the beginning of the official electoral campaign period. For this *TNS opinion* poll, implemented together with their local partner *IPSC*, 1,607 face-to-face interviews were conducted in all 10 regions (marzes) and 12 communities of Yerevan between 15 and 20 January 2013, using the highest possible standards and extensive quality control measures, as outlined below. The poll was commissioned by European Friends of Armenia (www.EuFoA.org) in order to contribute to a factual debate ahead of the elections (see below for more details about our motivation and the organisations involved).

"This was a poll conducted to the highest standards and the data is indeed very reliable. I think the most striking result was that 69% of the respondents are already certain to take part in the elections. This is an encouraging surprise, as three out of six parliamentary forces did not present or support any candidate. Our poll shows that more than half of the supporters of these parties feel that this was a wrong decision, but apparently most of them still take the elections seriously and intend to vote" comments Dr Steve Schwarzer, Director for Methods and Statistics at *TNS opinion*, Brussels.

Starting from a high basis, the incumbent Serzh Sargsyan seems to have profited from the non-nomination of political opponents and enters the official campaign period with 68,6% of valid votes (valid responses are without "Don't know" and "Refuse to answer"; raw data with "Don't know" and "Refuse to answer": 44,0%). Raffi Hovhannisyanyan has established himself as the key challenger and multiplied his electoral base compared to the results of his party "Heritage" in the parliamentary elections of May 2012. If presidential elections took place last week, he would have scored 20,8% of the valid votes (raw data: 13,3%). While Paruyr Hayrikyan and Hrant Bagratyan each gain almost 5% of the valid votes, the remaining four of the eight official candidates are largely unknown to the poll respondents and altogether score less than 1,5% of valid votes (raw 0,9%).

The design of the random sample, fieldwork monitoring, survey implementation and quality control were developed together by *TNS opinion* and *IPSC*. Quality control measures were a particular focus, including call-backs and parallel visits, as well as extensive database consistency checks. For more details about this, please confer the background information below.

EuFoA has commissioned the poll for several reasons. In particular we want to:

- Raise public awareness about the elections, issues important to the people, and public attitudes towards politics, political parties and their leaders.
- Compare the findings of the poll on socioeconomic and political issues with those of the pre-electoral polls of March and April 2012.
- Contribute to a more meaningful debate, based on political content more than party political propaganda and myths.
- Increase public transparency and trust in a realistic picture of political life in Armenia.
- Increase pressure for a good technical conduct of the elections by providing comparative data for the assessments of international observers.

The complete poll report can be found in Armenian and in English on our website at www.eufoa.org/en/publications.

EuFoA is happy to provide commentary or background analysis in English, German, French, Italian, Polish, Russian and Armenian. Members of the Europe-Armenia Advisory Council may also be available for comments; for enquiries please contact our secretariat.

For more information on EuFoA and the Europe-Armenia Advisory Council, please visit our website at www.EuFoA.org.

High resolution picture material is always available on our website and upon request. It is free to use with a reference "Copyright: www.EuFoA.org".

Background on the poll:

Methodology

- A multi-stage, random (probability) sampling design was used. In the first stage, primary sampling units (PSU) were selected from each of the administrative regional units. This was agreed as best methodology between TNS opinion and IPSC.
- 1,607 interviews conducted face to face between 15 January - 20 January 2013.
- Interviews were conducted in all 10 regions (marzes) of Armenia and in all Yerevan communities. The sample was distributed proportionally to reflect the population distribution in Armenia, with 34.1% of interviews conducted in Yerevan and 65.9 % in the marzes.
- Interviewers selected households using the random walking method to ensure that there is no selection bias. To ensure a random selection, the person interviewed in each household was the adult whose birthday was closest to the day of the interview.
- If a respondent was not immediately available, 1 to 2 call-back visits were done to conduct the interview later. If a call-back visit was not successful or if a respondent could not take part for other reasons, the interviewer approached the next randomly selected household according to the random walking method.
- The sampling procedure was monitored by using a detailed contact sheet for each interviewer. The data base was analysed by TNS opinion in order to ensure that interviewers followed the instructions.
- The data was weighted according to age and gender and is accurate to a maximum margin of error of $\pm 2.4\%$ for the overall sample.

Quality control

- The design of the random sample, fieldwork monitoring, survey implementation and quality control were developed together by TNS opinion and IPSC.
- 20% of the interviews conducted were accompanied by IPSC quality control coordinators to ensure high quality and compliance with the standards agreed. All questionnaires were monitored by IPSC specialists to check the individual quality and logical consistency of the data. 6% of the questionnaires were checked by return visits. 25% of the entered paper questionnaires were double-checked in the database to ensure accuracy of processed data. Following all these checks, 58 interviews were rejected (3.6%) resulting in the aforementioned valid sample of 1,607 cases.
- Route records were checked by TNS opinion and IPSC independently to ensure that interviews had been selected randomly.

- 36% of the sample was called back by IPSC to confirm demographic details and that the interview took place in the conditions recorded. Additionally, 15% of interviews were randomly selected by TNS opinion and called back to confirm key demographic information and two opinion questions. This consistency check-back resulted in the required compliance level with the originally collected data.
- Extensive checks were conducted on the data file by TNS opinion to see if there were any logically inconsistent or inaccurate interviews, data points or invalid information. This was assessed positively and no case exclusions were made.

Background on the organisers:

TNS (www.tnsglobal.com) is the world leader in opinion research and custom/ad hoc research, has wholly owned subsidiaries or majority shareholding in companies in over 70 countries, with more than 150 offices across five continents. They provide market measurement, analysis and insight in over 110 countries. Their objective is to supply market and opinion research, applying the strictest technical standards through high-quality services and property-owned products. **TNS Opinion's** expertise in the field of political and social research and opinion polling is founded on more than 35 years of experience, expressed notably through their work on the Standard and Flash Eurobarometer, the two largest general public opinion polling contracts in the world, which they conduct on behalf of the European Commission and the European Parliament. **TNS Opinion**, in its capacity as a co-ordination center for multi-country opinion research, has undertaken numerous public opinion surveys in Europe, Africa and other regions of the world, covering different target groups, ranging from general public to elite surveys and business leaders and using different methodologies, such as face-to-face, telephone or online interviewing.

IPSC – Institute for Political and Sociological Consulting (www.ipsc.am) is a research institute in Armenia, specialized in Public opinion polls, market research, monitoring and evaluation surveys, omnibus research, consulting and trainings. IPSC uses the following advanced methods for implementing surveys and researches: computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI), computer assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), computer assisted web interviewing (CAWI), focus group discussions, qualitative interviewing, and mystery shopping. By 2013, IPSC has implemented around 140 surveys in the fields of business, social-economics, politics, election monitoring, market, education, healthcare, etc. covering Yerevan as well as all regions having interviewed about 200,000 respondents as of January 2013.

EuFoA – European Friends of Armenia (www.EuFoA.org) is an established and registered non-governmental, non-profit organisation founded in Brussels as an AISBL (Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif) and operating mainly from there across Europe since May 2009. Besides, EuFoA's Armenia branch is a registered NGO in Armenia and implements our activities in Armenia. EuFoA seeks to build bridges between Armenian and European decision makers in the fields of politics, business and culture, and supports Armenia's further integration into European political, economic, and social structures. Our goals include furthering European democratic values in Armenia, encouraging people to people contacts between key members of civil society, raising public awareness of Europe in Armenia, as well as raising the awareness of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh in Europe.