



DEMOCRACY LEARNING PUBLIC ASSOCIATION

REPORT

ON THE SITUATION WITH THE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

IN AZERBAIJAN

Prepared on the basis of the survey of citizens' awareness, attitude and experience.

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FOREWORD

The idea of establishment of a strong civil society was many times officially and unofficially voiced as one of the main calls of the democracy building in the years of the Azerbaijan independence and occupied one of the leading positions among the international commitments of the country. Citizens' rights to association, participation in the state and public governance are the integral part of the citizens' rights and freedoms and is reflected in the Constitution and laws of the country. However, a strong civil society is possible not only by the rights provided by the laws but at the condition when enjoying these rights freely the people may participate in the life of the society, influence it and put forward initiatives. A number of such associations and their types are considered as an indicator of democratic stability.

Such associations traditionally include political parties, non-governmental organizations, religious associations, trade-unions, community-based organizations. According to the official statistics a number of the political parties is 55, NGOs – over 2,700, religious communities – 570, trade unions – 18,610. However, the official data may not be sufficient to describe the situation with civil society, its efficiency. In general, possibilities to get accurate data for assessing activity of the civil society organizations (CSOs) are very limited.

In the past period various types of researches were conducted to assess activity of civil society institutions in Azerbaijan, mainly NGOs and political parties. Those researches allow to come to certain conclusions on situation with the CSOs, legislative basis that regulate their activity, political environment in the country. At various times there were also attempts to learn attitude of the society towards these organizations through public opinion surveys conducted by various institutions.

Unfortunately, such researches and observations demonstrate that a role and significance of the political parties and CSOs in enhancement of democratic values and traditions in Azerbaijan is not properly understood and assessed by the wider population. Such a situation arises also from the fact that the official policy, campaigns in most of which the mass media participate demonstrates the authorities as the only trustworthy institute, instead political parties and civil society organizations are represented from a negative point of view. So it becomes impossible to make sufficient use of the contributions which CSOs could make to organization of good governance and sustainable development by working hand-in-hand with the government.

In order to change the current situation it is essential to assess the real situation with the political parties and SC organizations, determine in particular, to what extent the population is aware of these organizations, what is their attitude to them and at which level is their cooperation with

these organizations. This report presented by “Democracy Learning” PA can be considered as an attempt to assess freedom of association in the country and structure of the civil society organizations from citizens’ point of view. The research is based on the results of the public surveys conducted among the citizens.

In our opinion, as a result of restriction of the opportunities for activity of these organizations an identified table of public and political passivity gives a ground to think about the serious steps that need to be taken to change the current situation both at the government as well as CSOs level.

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this research is to learn about citizens' awareness of the civil society organizations, population's attitude towards these organizations and experience of participation in their activity. The main feature of the research is that it targets all the leading civil society organizations (NGOs, trade unions, religious communities and community based organizations) including political parties. The reserach group tried to identify the society's views on the following aspects based on the survey conducted among the citizens:

- ✓ Level of awareness of CSOs
- ✓ Sources of information about the SCOs
- ✓ Activity of CSOs
- ✓ Trust to CSOs
- ✓ Efficiency of the activity of CSOs
- ✓ Factors that influence activity of CSOs
- ✓ Membership in CSOs and participation in their activity
- ✓ Necessary conditions for future cooperation with CSOs

We believe that the survey results will be another attempt to investigate the issue, will be useful for official and unofficial institutions that are engaged in freedom of association and development of the civil society and will contribute to preparation of recommendations to improve policies in this area.

B. METHODOLOGY AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

This Report is prepared on the basis of the survey conducted among the citizens. The survey was conducted by “Democracy Learning” Public Association in November-December 2011. 12 questions of the survey were grouped in 3 sections: the first section included citizens’ awareness level of the political parties and CSOs, the second section included attitudes towards political parties and CSOs, the third section included questions directed at learning about citizens’ participation experience in the activity of those institutions. When preparing questions we took into account people’s caution when answering political questions and avoidance of giving sincere answers, that’s why names of the institutions were not included in a list of possible answers. The respondents were asked to provide their attitude towards all forms of the organizations although that does not allow to come to clear conclusions. For example, when expressing their attitude, they expressed it not regarding a certain political party or non-governmental organization but regarding the political parties and NGOs in general. That’s why we don’t exclude that some of the conclusions to which we came as a result of the survey may have some errors.

The survey was conducted at random in the residence areas among the citizens who are over 18 years old. After annulment of the questionnaires that were filled in by violation of the routing sample that was used to ensure randomness the statistical analysis were based on the remaining 414 questionnaires.

The survey was conducted in 11 regions of Azerbaijan (Baku – 113 persons; Sumgayit – 35 persons, Ganja – 36 persons, Jalilabad – 24 persons, Barda - 31 persons, Lankaran – 33 persons, Guba – 26 persons, Imishli – 29 persons, Sheki – 30 persons, Oguz – 15 persons, Agstafa – 17 persons, Beylagan - 25 persons) taking into account to the best possible extend the main demographic indexes (sex, age, education, occupation and a type of housing) that characterize Azerbaijan according to the results of 2009 census of the population. The percentage of the respondents in the following 3 age groups were as following: 18-35 years old - 38,5 %, 35-55 respondents - 45,5 %, 55 and above - 16 %. 54,4 % of respondents were men, 45,6 % were women. The educational level was following: respondents with higher education - 40,5%, secondary education - 59,5%. 53,2% had permanent or temporary job; 46,8% were unemployed. 34,9% of respondents were rural population, 65,1% were urban population.

C. MAIN FINDINGS

1. From the general analysis of the results we see that the level of *awareness* of the political parties and CSOs in the society is low. With limited opportunities to enjoy freedom of association and *experience* of participation in the work of CSOs it could be said that the *attitude* towards these institutions is more positive and demanding. Although the citizens have some information about the role of CSOs, their significance in development of the society, in particular establishment of democratic values, they find it difficult to understand its philosophy, its real essence. We think that the reason why respondents found it difficult to answer most of the questions or refused to answer them is that they do not have deep knowledge of the essence of CSOs and do not have experience of participation in the structures of the CSOs.
2. The analysis of the survey results show that the political parties and CSOs do not have opportunities to present their opinions and ideas, information about their activities to a large part of the society. One third of the population is absolutely unaware of all the political parties and CSOs. Although a part of the society that is fully or partially aware of the political parties and CSOs is relatively higher, about 40% of the population do not receive any information about these organizations. Situation with the religious associations, trade unions and community based organizations is even worse. The percentage of people who are unaware of them is about 60-70.
3. Although the awareness level of the NGOs is tiny in comparison with the previous years but from the quality aspect that should be positively assessed. If a few years ago the population had more information about the international and foreign NGOs, currently that is substituted by a bit increasing awareness of the local NGOs. NGOs in comparison with the other CSOs making use of their relative superiority in terms of self-expression and their funding opportunities managed to present information about themselves and their activities to the majority of the population.
4. The survey results showed that the majority of the population does not share the impression of activation of the religious groups and enhancement of the religious radicalism which is established in the public opinion. Despite hot discussions in the mass media (in particular, print and Internet media), the fact that 62% of respondents are unaware of the activities of the religious associations and that only one fifth of those who are aware of the religious associations said that they trust them, show that the religious associations are not accepted well.

5. The low level of awareness of the community based associations that are closer to their place of residence and community problems shows that the experience of participation in a form of community in solution of the community, local and neighborhood problems is very low. However, a fact that a small but stable group of respondents demonstrate trust to this kind of initiative groups, that they consider their work as satisfactory and that they even actively participate in their activities show that in case of expansion of this experience, a role of the efficient associations of the citizens in the society may increase.
6. The country population has very limited opportunities to receive information about the political parties and CSOs through traditional media means. Inability to protect impartiality of the current electronic media means, in particular TVs, a weak public and political aspect of the broadcasting policies, or its complete lack do not allow to cover activities of the CSOs. These media sources do not play any role as a source of a quality information about the CSOs. Internet being a new means for receiving information about the CSOs leaves behind such traditional media means as radios and newspapers. Apart from that, it is also regarded as a source providing sufficient and diverse information about the CSOs. The CSOs that have limited opportunities to disseminate their information through traditional media consider direct contact with the population as a more effective means.
7. One third of the population cannot obtain information about the political parties and CSOs from any source. Among that group of the population the dominance belongs to the unemployed rural population with secondary education and that shows that information environment especially in the remote areas is closed and the citizens have limited opportunities to obtain information.
8. The large majority of the population does not consider the CSOs as active. A percentage of those who consider the CSOs of various forms as active is 8-26%. The vast majority (56%) of those who do not consider the CSOs as active assess a lack of the favourable legal and political environment in the country as a main hindrance to the activity of those institutions. 21% of them connect the inactivity of the CSOs with the public support and 23% with a low level of professionalism.
9. The political parties although have more activity in comparison with the other CSOs, only one fourth of the population consider them as active. If to take into account that the oppositional parties have very restricted activity opportunities, then this index is

reasonable. However, the ruling party that has sufficient resources, has majority seats in the Parliament and municipalities, does not have any problem with access to the media and claiming that has hundred thousands of members could have a positive impact on the opinion of inactivity of the parties in the public survey. The public survey shows that the ruling party that became rather a common structure with the authorities than just a party has serious problems in communicating with the citizens.

10. The trade unions failed to play an active role in protection of labour and other social rights of the working population and regulation of employer-employee-state relations. Regardless their certain historical traditions, organizational structures and resources these organizations that are far from implementing their classical missions and functions are not considered as active by the majority of the population.
11. NGOs are considered comparatively active CSOs in the regions. The reasons why NGOs are leading among the other CSOs and could be regarded as active as political parties is their relative independence in fulfilment of activities and diverse activity directions. The NGOs were the only institutions in the survey that enjoyed a higher level of trust (20%) opposed to those who do not trust them (16%). If to take into account that 37.5% of the respondents expressed partial trust to the NGOs we may say that they formed a positive opinion about themselves, managed to inform the society more about their mission and roles.
12. Although the political parties have difficulties in presenting their ideas and opinions in the society, the fact that over 60% of the survey participants show a high or some degree of trust to the political parties can be assessed as a belief of the majority of the population in the multi-party system and understanding of the essence of the parties in the political system. In general, more trust shown to the political parties and NGOs in comparison with the other CSOs can be regarded as a proof that the Azerbaijani citizens believe more in the role of these institutions in establishment of the democratic society.
13. The religious associations enjoyed the least trust to this survey. A number of those that do not trust the religious associations is four times higher than the number of those who have trust to those organizations. The conclusion to which one can come is that although they have a wider communication opportunities with the population, the religious communities could not find ways to implement their legal functions and present their missions to the society in a proper way.

14. The results of the survey allowed to state that the majority of the population does not consider activities of the political parties and CS organizations as satisfactory. In terms of satisfaction with the activities NGOs (27%) in comparison with the others have better results. Those who are satisfied with the activities of the political parties is 17.5%. 9.8% of the population consider activities of the religious communities, 7.5% consider activities of the trade unions, 8.2% consider activities of the religion-based organizations as satisfactory. 48% of those who showed a considerable ? trust to the political parties found their activities as unsatisfactory and 38% of those who showed a considerable ? trust to the NGOs found their activities unsatisfactory.
15. The significant majority of the population does not enjoy freedom of association as a fundamental political right. According to the results of the survey, 71% of the country population even formally have not joined any political party or CSO. The vast majority (45%) of those who have not joined any association is cautious about the authorities' pressures. The level of citizens' participation in the work of the CSO is also quite low. The survey results suggest that membership in some parties is formal, the large majority of their activists is not represented in the parties. Approximately 6-7% of the population can benefit from the programmes (services or assistances, awareness raising and competence building skills) implemented by the active NGOs or participate in their events.
16. Among the religious population a majority prefers to carry out their religious duties without being connected to the religious associations. The religious associations must take steps to eliminate the concerns existing about them in the public opinion and obtain a positive image, turn into participants who have a positive role in meeting individuals' spiritual demands.
17. One third of the respondents showed scepticism in realization of their wishes and desires at the current situation through the existing CSOs. However, those who are from this group do not consider joining the civil society organizations as a negative thing and in the perspective if this meets their public, political and social needs, they do not exclude that they will join the associations.

D. THE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY RESULTS

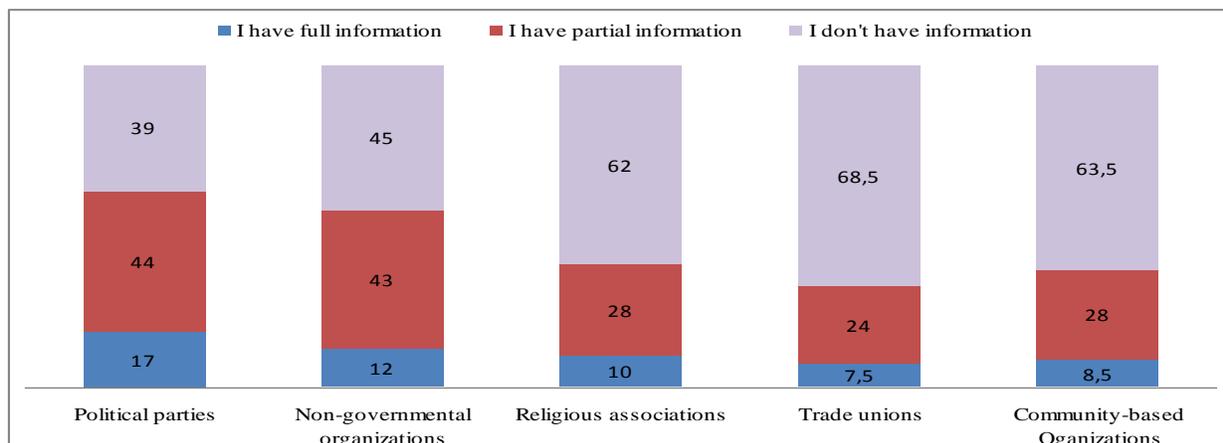
I. INFORMATION ABOUT CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Purpose of this section is to determine level of population's awareness of the Civil Society Organizations. The survey was not aimed at learning what the respondents know about the particular political parties and Civil Society Organizations, how they perceive those organizations. The section included mainly questions on how knowledgeable the respondents think they are, on which institutions they can get more information and on determination of the sources they can get information from. The question on the attitude towards activities of the association was also included in the section what gave another opportunity to learn about the level of awareness of the political parties and CSOs.

1.1. Level of awareness of CSOs

When answering the question “**How aware you think you are of the CSOs in Azerbaijan?**” the respondents had to show how knowledgeable they are of the various CS organizations (political parties, NGOs, religious associations, trade unions and community-based organizations). 17% of the respondents said that they have full information about the political parties, about 44% said that they were partially informed. Only 12% of the enquired had full information about the country NGOs. 43% of them said that they have a partial information about the non-governmental organizations. Only 10% of the enquired said that they have full information about the religious associations. The level of awareness of the trade unions and community based organizations is almost the same (Diagram 1.1.). In general, while 30% of the respondents said that they have no information about any of the organizations, only 0.5% said that they have information about all the organizations.

Diagram 1.1. Level of awareness of CSOs



The political parties are the institutions of which the population is comparatively more knowledgeable. But along with that, if to take into account that the parliamentary elections were conducted about a year ago, that the main political forces participated in these elections and that in the post-election period there was an increase of the political activity, the fact that 39% of the respondents had no information about the political parties, 44% had partial information, gives a ground to state that the political parties have serious problems in presenting their views and ideas.

The local and foreign organizations have stated numerous times that after the abolishment of the proportional election system a role of the parties as actors of the political process became significantly lower. If to add to that, existence of the serious problems with the freedom of assembly, and problems for the oppositional parties to establish contacts with the population, air time restrictions for the parties and their leaders we may find another explanation to such a low and complete lack of awareness of the parties of such a large number of the respondents.

Although if compared to the previous years a level of awareness of **NGOs** is **just** slightly higher it can still be positively assessed qualitywise. According to the researches in this area conducted a number of years ago the awareness of the population of the NGOs were more related to the assistance to the population that suffered from the war and other humanitarian aid (in particular, related to the activities of the international NGOs). Currently the international humanitarian mission directed at elimination of the war effects is almost completely stopped and issues of democracy, protection of human rights, social and economic development became the areas in which the local NGOs became active. That's why it is possible to say that this level of awareness stemming from the survey results is directly related to the activities of the local NGOs. From the other point of view today NGOs in comparison with the other types of the CS have a relative advantage in terms of self-expression and funding opportunities and that's why they managed to present information about themselves and their activities to over half of the population.

At the same time 45% of the respondents said that they were completely unaware of the NGOs. From this group a number of the respondents who find the NGO activities as unsatisfactory is high (one fifth) and that proves the idea that the false opinion about those organization that is sometimes formed in the society results from the lack of awareness.

Although during the last year the events (especially objection of the religious group to a ban on wearing hijab at schools) taking place around the religion created an impression that a religious group is formed and the religious radicalism is strengthened the survey showed that the majority of the population does not share this impression. Therefore the fact that 62% of the respondents

were unaware of the activities of the religious groups show that either this part of the population does not think that the acts of the religious radicalism are related to the religious associations as it is sometimes presented by the media or in general they do not have such a warm attitude towards the religious associations. Even only one fifth of the people knowledgeable (38% of all the respondents) about the religious associations said that they have a positive attitude towards these associations and assessed their activities as satisfactory.

However, like with the political parties also with the religious association we may see the problems with self-presentation and access to the media. So almost one third of those unaware of the religious associations mentioned TVs as a source of information and at least half of them said that they do not receive information about the religious associations from anywhere.

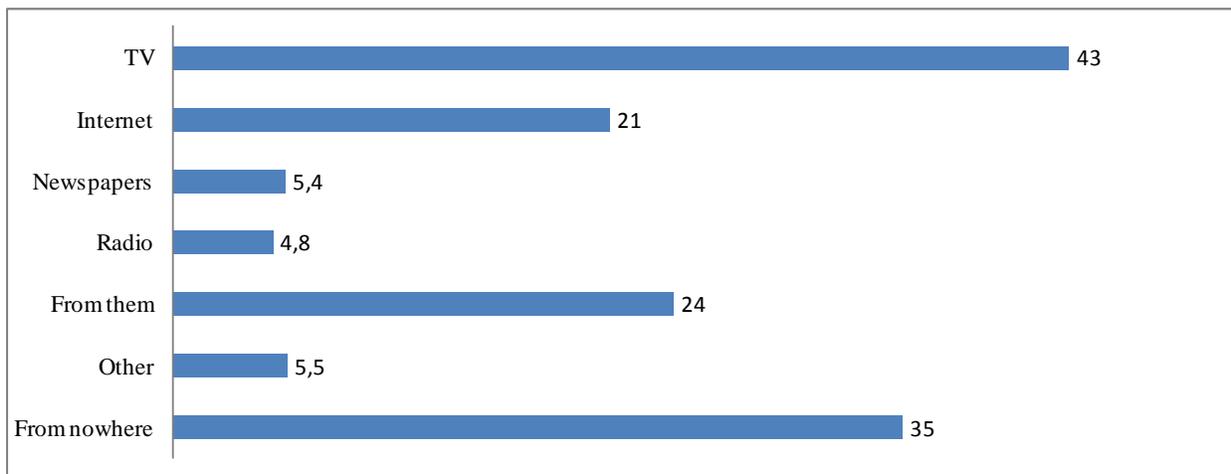
The trade unions are the CS institutions of which the population is least aware and that is connected with the formal nature of their activities. However, even so 31.5% of the population that said they are fully or partially aware of the trade unions must be considered as a high number for an institution whose activities are invisible. We presume that is connected with the fact that over half of the survey participants were employed and have in one or another way contacts with the trade unions.

As for the community based organizations, although we consider here the communities, neighbourhood committees, initiative groups and other types of the local level associations of the citizens, they are not so popular among the population. The low number of the population that is aware of them is not an indicator of their inactivity but in general an indicator of a low spread of the community work, an experience of participation in a form of communities in solution of local and neighbourhood problems.

1.2. Sources of information about the CSOs

In order to learn from where the society receive information about the activities of the CSOs we asked the respondents ``**From where do you most receive information about the CSOs?**``. The respondents could indicate a number of sources. From the results of the survey we saw that the leading sources are TV (43 %), Internet (21 %) and CSOs themselves (24 %). The number of respondents that named radio and newspapers was too low. (Diagram 1.2.)

Diagram 1.2 The information sources about the CSOs



If to take into account that the accessibility to TVs is high, the high figure for TV was expectable. However, as it was seen above the low level of awareness of the population of the CSOs demonstrates that TVs do not use their capacities to cover the activities of the NGOs. Only 29% of the respondents that showed TVs as an information source said that they have full information about the NGOs. A number of those who said that they have full information about the political parties and religious associations is even lower (23.3% and 12.8% respectively). If we take into account that 57% of all the respondents did not show TVs as their information source, we may more clearly imagine a role of those media means, as information sources. The reason for that is that TVs, especially their news policies have a very weak public and political context or do not have it at all.

Internet as a new source for receiving information about the CSOs received 21% and left well behind such traditional media sources as radio and newspapers. That index may correspond to the official data about increase of the Internet users in the country. Of course, the urban population has a better access to the Internet. The number of the rural population that showed the Internet as an information source was 10%. The interesting point is that the majority of the

respondents of this group said that they have full or partial information about the CSOs (mainly political parties, NGOs and religious organizations). That could be considered as an indicator of ability to receive full and at the same time varied information about the CSOs through the Internet.

One fourth of the respondents to the question “**Where do you mostly get information about the CSOs?**” answered “*From them*” and if to exclude TVs this is a higher indicator than the ones showed for the other media sources and Internet. That demonstrates that the CSOs (excluding the trade unions) that have limited opportunities to disseminate information about their activities through the mass media, find a direct contact with the population as a more effective means for information dissemination.

Although in comparison with TVs and radios the *newspapers* allocate more space to the CSOs on their pages, present diverse political preferences and interests, only 5.4% of the respondents found the media as their information source. I think we do not have to think much about the causes as it is clear that those stem from the sale and distribution problem of the *newspapers*.

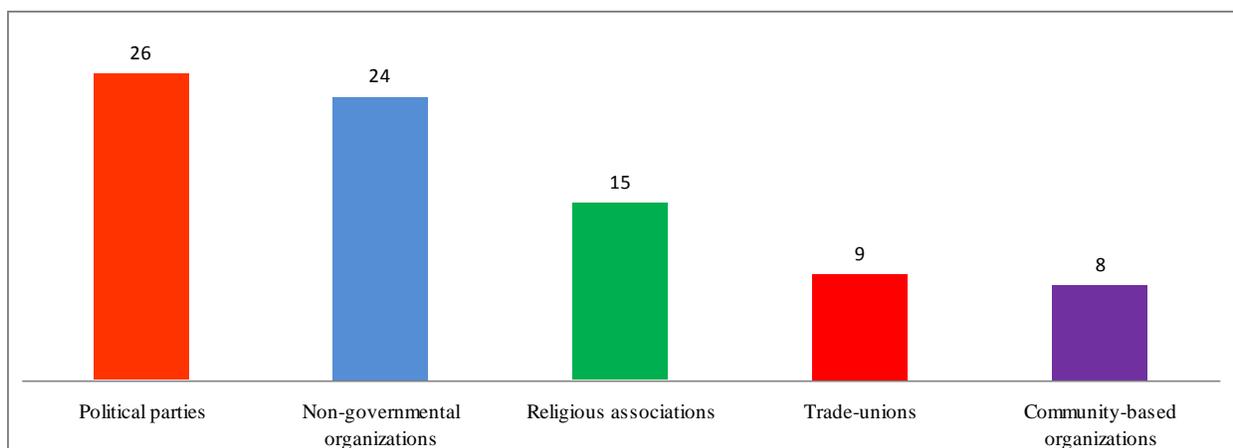
The fact that 34.5% of the population as their information sources about the CSOs did not mention *any* of the media sources draws a special attention. If we take into account that this group of the population also found it difficult to answer the other questions and had a low level of awareness then we can consider this group as the one not interested in public and political issues. However, if we try to give demographic characteristics of the respondents we'll see that at least half of them are secondary educated non-working rural population. This aspect of the issue confirms that the information environment especially in the regions is closed and people's ability to receive information is restricted.

1.3 Activities of the CSOs

Most of the respondents think that the CSOs are not active in the areas where they live. When answering the question “**Are the CSOs active in the region you live?**” the respondents could separately assess activities of the political parties, NGOs, religious associations, trade unions and community-based organizations and to choose a number of answers.

Of those enquired only 26% think that the political parties (with prevailing urban population) are active in their regions, 24% think NGOs are, 15% found the religious associations as active. A small number of the respondents find the trade unions (11.5 %) and community based organizations as active.

Diagram 1.3 Respondents’ attitude towards CSOs on the basis of the regions they live



26% that characterizes a regional activity of the political parties could be considered as a high index. The current political conditions significantly reduce the regional activity of the parties, including their election to the bodies of the local and central authorities. Along with that for the last 1 year some activation of the political parties and establishment of the regional organizations of their coalitions, administrative support to the activity of the ruling party, lack of obstacles in the activities of the parties that support or are loyal to the authorities may be considered as factors confirming the results of the survey about the activity of the political parties. However, three fourth of the population either do not consider the parties as active or just could not answer the question. This index could be considered understandable if to think of the oppositional parties whose activities are very restricted. However, the ruling party that has sufficient resources, does not experience any problem with the media access could not impact the public opinion on the non-activeness of the political parties. This public opinion survey shows that the ruling party

which is considered more as an institution that is completely unified with the authorities rather than a political party has also serious problem with establishing contacts with the citizens.

As for the NGOs, with 24 % index, these are considered as active CSOs in the regions. The fact that NGOs leave behind other CSOs and having almost the same index as the political parties could be linked as it was mentioned before to their comparatively independent activity.

The opinion that was formed in the media recently that the religious associations became more active and that the region has a special weight in the society is not confirmed. So only 15% of the respondents (with dominance of those from the capital) consider those associations as active and that could be considered as exaggeration of the opinion about increase of the religious activeness.

The low index (11.5%) of the activity of the trade unions that are not attracting attention of the society as active institutions was expectable. Even though the majority of the respondents (53.8%) are employed it did not have any impact on the index. The result is that these associations could not become representatives of the labour and other social rights of the working stratum of the society and play an active role in regulation of the employer-employee-state relations. In general in comparison with the other civil society organizations these organizations regardless of their historical traditions, certain organizational structures and resources have a formal function.

36% of the respondents answering the question “**Are the CSOs active in your region?**” said that they do not know, 6.5% said that none of the CSOs is active.

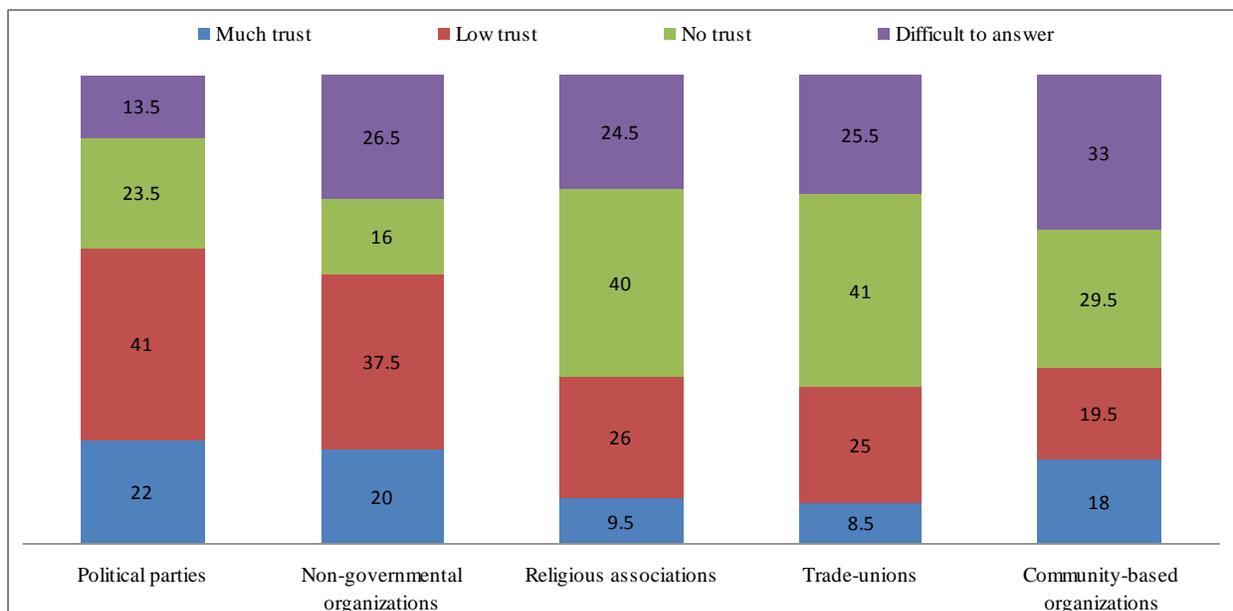
II. ATTITUDE TOWARDS CSOs

The purpose of this section was to learn about the citizens' attitude towards political parties, NGOs, religious associations, trade unions and community based organizations, how much they trust them, whether they find their activities satisfactory, what is on their opinion factors that have impact on their activity.

2.1. Trust to CSOs

From the respondents' answer to the question ``How much do you trust the CSOs?`` we see it clearly that trust of the population to the political parties and CS organizations is proportional to their activeness and their awareness of those institutions. (Diagram 2.1.)

Diagram 2.1. Respondents' trust to the various CS organizations



The political parties also lead in the trust index in comparison with the other subjects of the CSOs. However, along with that only 22% of the respondents said that they have a lot of trust to the political parties. A number of those who do not trust the political parties is a bit higher than that (23.5%). That is also an effect of the above-mentioned little or lack of any space/air time allocated for the activities of the parties in the mass media (in particular, TVs) to which people have more access or in most cases presentation of the political parties from a negative point of view.

Despite the obstacles the political parties have in presenting their ideas and opinions in the society, the fact that more than 60% of the survey participants said that they have much or some trust to them could be assessed as belief of the majority of the society in the multi-party system and significance of the parties in the social system.

Among the listed institutions, NGOs were the only institutions where the number of those who trust them (20%) exceeds the number of those who do not trust them (16%). The fact that the NGOs could gain trust of a larger population shows that during the previous years they could manage to form a positive opinion about themselves, could better inform the society of their mission and roles. As it is seen also from the previous questions the trust to NGOs is also a result of a better awareness of them by the population and that they consider them as more active.

The fact that a number of those that have some trust to the CSOs is not so low (41% to the political parties, 37.5% to the NGOs) gives a hope that the situation may change for a better. The higher index of trust to the political parties and NGOs in comparison with the other civil society institutions could be a proof that the Azerbaijani citizens believe more in the role of those institutions in establishment of the democratic society.

The index of trust in relation to the other subjects of the civil society is a bit worse. As it is seen from the diagram, a number of those who do not have any trust to the trade unions and religious associations is 4 times more than a number of those who have much trust in those organizations. Only 9.5% of the respondents said that they have much trust in the religious associations, the number of those who have much trust in the trade unions is even less – 8.5%.

In general, religious associations enjoy the least trust in the society. On our opinion, that is because in the social consciousness religious associations are connected with the missionistic organizations, and assumptions that the religious associations are run from the foreign countries. The observations show that strengthening the opinion happens also as a result of the official propaganda and attitude of the mass media to this issue. On the other hand, the result that was determined by the survey could be understood as a caution of the society about the risk of politicization of the religion. Here, the conclusion could be drawn that although the religious associations have wider communication opportunities with the population, they have not found correct ways to implement their legal functions properly or explain their mission to the society.

As for the trade unions, the fact that one third of the respondents said that they have low or much trust to those institutions is the index too high to be expected for this type of the CSOs

whose activities are not so visible in the mass media and in general not having enough place in the public opinion.

Although the level of awareness of the community based organizations is low, the trust to these organizations among the citizens was comparatively higher. 18% of the respondents said that they have much trust to the community based organizations, 19.5% said that they have some trust to them.

Depending on the types of the CSOs 13-33% of the population found it difficult to answer this question, the number of those who are unaware is prevailing among the respondents in this group.

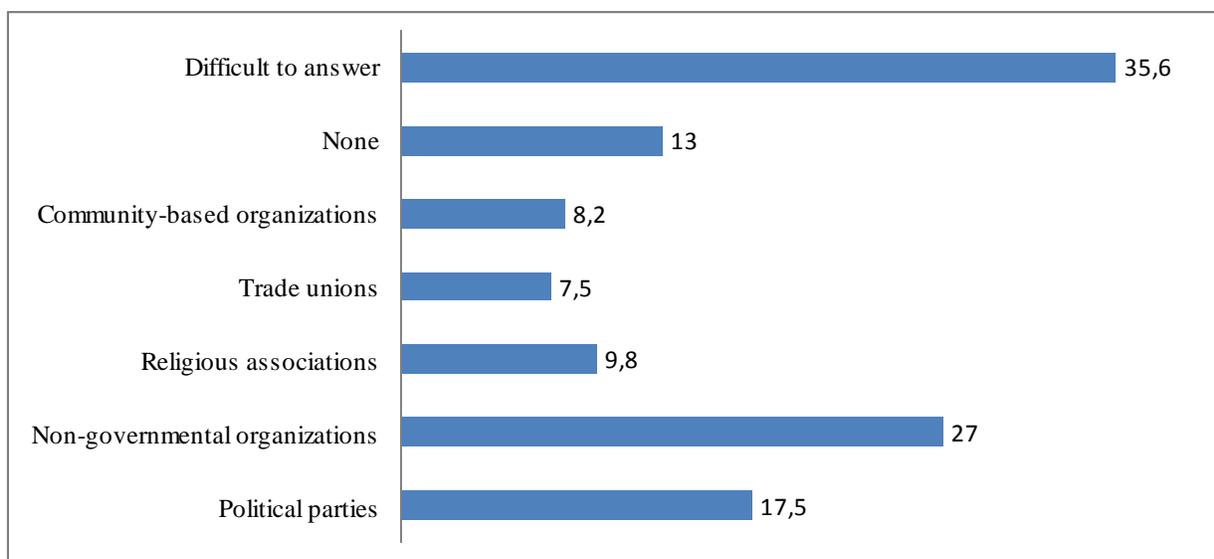
2.2. Efficiency of the activity of CSOs

To learn the situation in this area a question “**Which types of the CSOs do you consider satisfactory in Azerbaijan?**” was added to the questionnaire. As it is seen from the diagram even more that one third of the respondents do not have any opinion whether activities of the political parties and CS organizations are satisfactory or not.

From the satisfactory activity point of view it is again the NGOs with 27% that are leading. Those who found the activity of the political parties as satisfactory is 17.5%.

Activities of the religious organizations are considered as satisfactory by 9.8% of the population, activities of the trade unions by 7.5%, activities of the community based organizations by 8.2%. (Diagram 2.2)

Diagram 2.2. Attitude towards satisfactory activity of the CS organizations



The relative prevalence of the NGOs in comparison with the other CSOs from the effective point of view is on one hand a result of their successful public relations, contact with people and increased opportunities for the mutual cooperation, on the other hand a diversity of the activities of the NGOs of the different profiles. We can say that the NGOs are participants in almost all parts of the public life and influence the numerous structures of the society. The CSOs (religious, political or labour right) that represent a certain public area lose the multi-profiled NGOs in this area. However, it is worth noting that once again this prevalence is seen only in comparison with the other CS organizations. The fact that over 70% of the population did not give a positive

answer to the question about satisfaction with the activities of the NGOs raises a lot of questions.

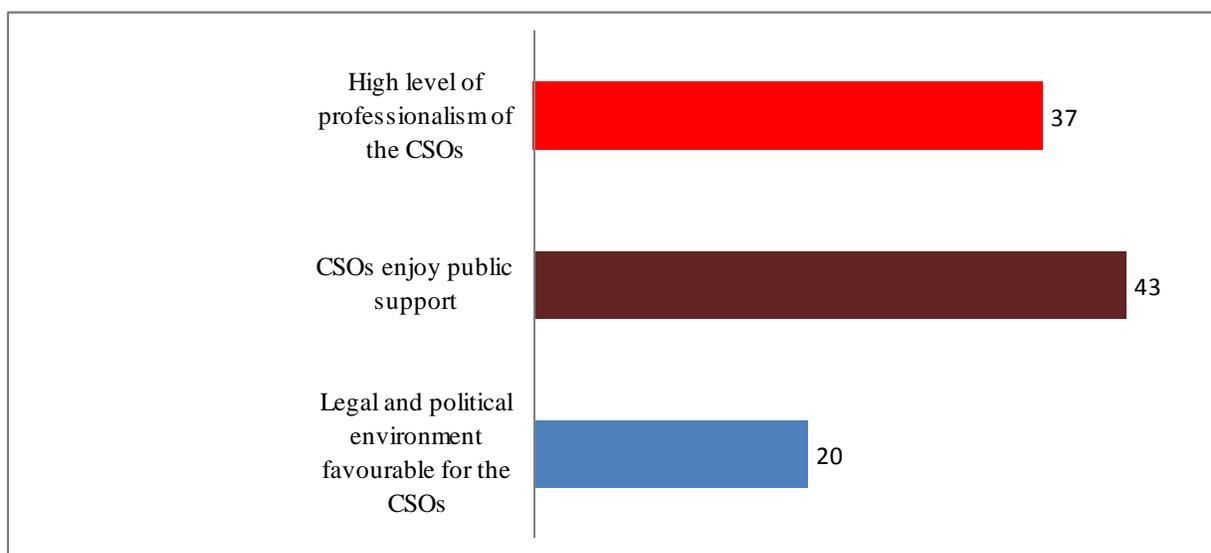
The results of the survey allow to say that the majority of the population do not consider the activities of the political parties and CS organizations as satisfactory. If we try to do correlations (make connections) with the answers on the question of trust to the CSOs and try to look at the issue from a positive perspective we can understand that also as higher expectations and demands from the CSOs. It is also seen from the following: the trust level to the political parties and NGOs was 64% and 47% respectively from those did not find the activities of the political parties and NGOs as satisfactory. This index was a bit low among the religious organizations and trade unions (about 30%).

2.3. The factors that have an impact on the activities of the CSOs

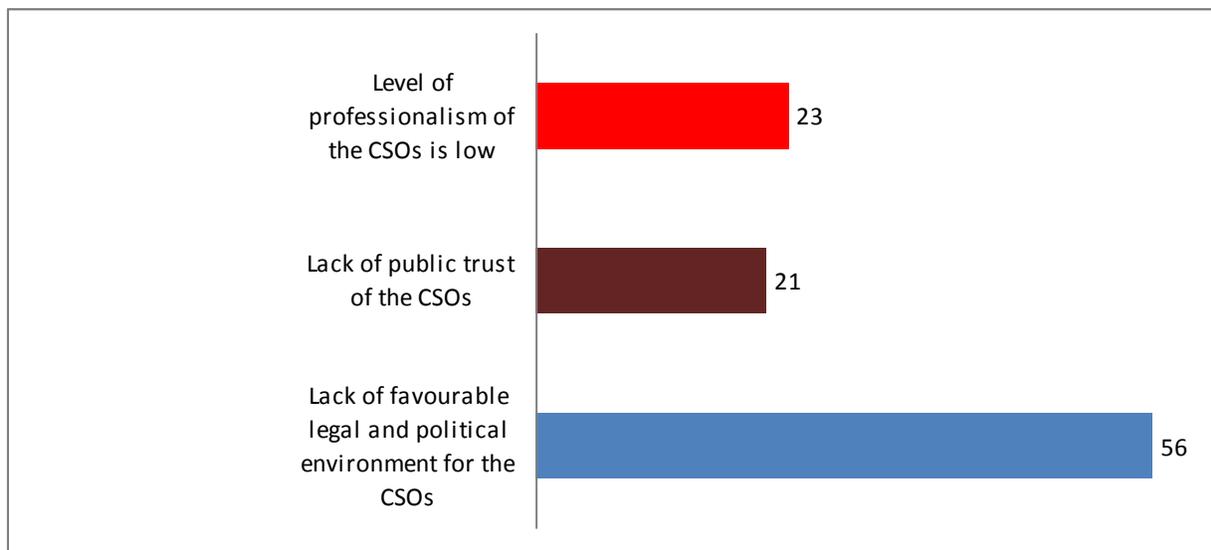
To learn about the respondents' opinion about the factors that had an effect on the activity of the CSOs in the country, the survey group offered them to choose among 3 main factors: a) existence of favourable legal and political environment for independent activity of the CSOs; b) public support to the CSOs; 3) professionalism of the CSOs. Only half of the respondents provided their opinion.

A bit less than half of the respondents said that these factors have a positive role in the activities of the CSOs in the country. 43% of those respondents think that activeness of the CSOs is related to having public support. While 37% of the respondents relate activeness of these institutions to their professionalism, only 20% of the respondents explained it as existence of favourable legal and political environment in the country. (Diagram 2.3.1.)

Diagram 2.3.1 CSOs are active because...



One out of 2 respondents that participated in the survey explained the reasons of a low activeness of the CSOs as a lack of those factors. 56% of the respondents who think like that believe that there is no favourable legal and political environment in the country, 21% of them believe that the reason is a lack of public support and 23% of the respondents connect that with the low level of the professionalism. (Diagram 2.3.2.)

Diagram 2.3.2 CSOs are not active because...

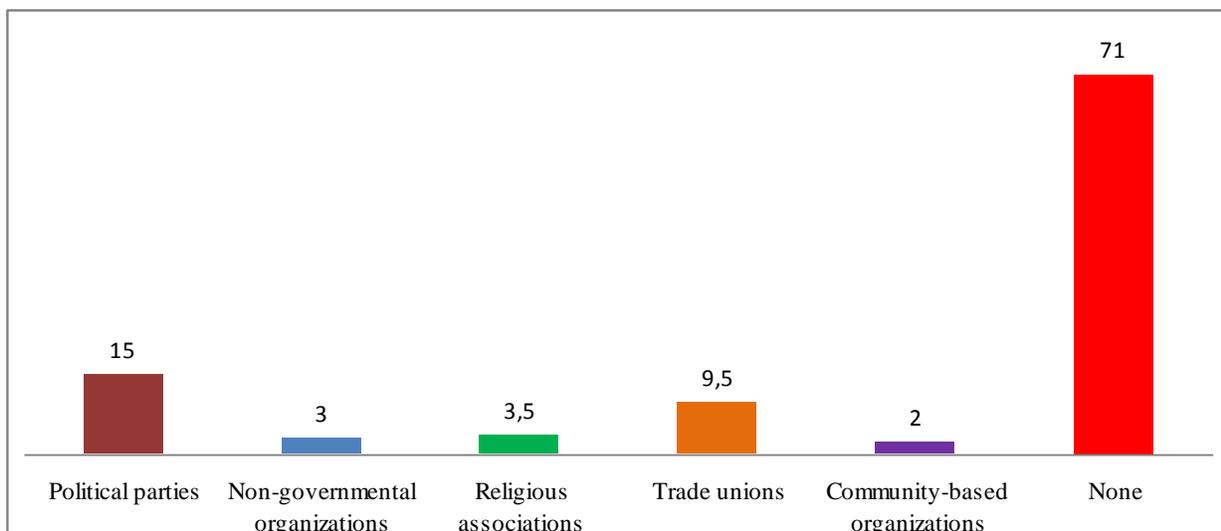
III. PARTICIPATION IN THE CSOs

The questions that were included in this section were directed at learning the level of use of the right to association, in which form the citizens participate in the work of the CSOs and what conditions and factors they think are necessary for joining the CSOs.

3.1. Membership in the CSOs

To learn which part of the society enjoys the right to association the membership in the civil society organizations was chosen as a main indicator. The vast majority (71 %) of the respondents answering the question “**Members of which CSOs you are?**” said “**None**”. The below diagram allows to see what part of the population joined various CS institutions (Diagram 3.2.). 15% of the respondents said that they are members of the political parties. Although in the other indicators the trade unions are lagging behind, 9.5% of the population are members of the trade unions. A number of the NGO members is 3%. The number of those represented in the religious organizations is 4%. The number of those represented in the community-based organizations is 2%.

Diagram 3.1. Membership in the CSOs



On our opinion, although 15% membership in the political parties correspond to the figures disclosed by the political parties themselves, it cannot be regarded as a real quality indicator. Here we have to take into account organization of administrative membership at least in the ruling party and parties close to it, namely the claim that we often see in the mass media about the mandatory membership for those who work in the state institutions. That is also confirmed by the fact that 45.7% of those who are members of the party said that they do not participate in the

activities of the parties. In general if we describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents with party affiliation we'll see that it is the middle aged, higher-educated urban residents.

As for the NGOs the situation here is a bit different. The survey showed that the NGOs could unite a very small number of the population (3%). Some researches also showed that the number of those represented in the most active NGOs of the country is even less than 0.1%. However, if we take into account that there are various vocational and creative associations, associations of the youth, invalids, women, war veterans that although formal but function on a wide membership basis, we may see that the index that was received showed a number of the population that joined the NGOs not from the quality but from the quantity point of view.

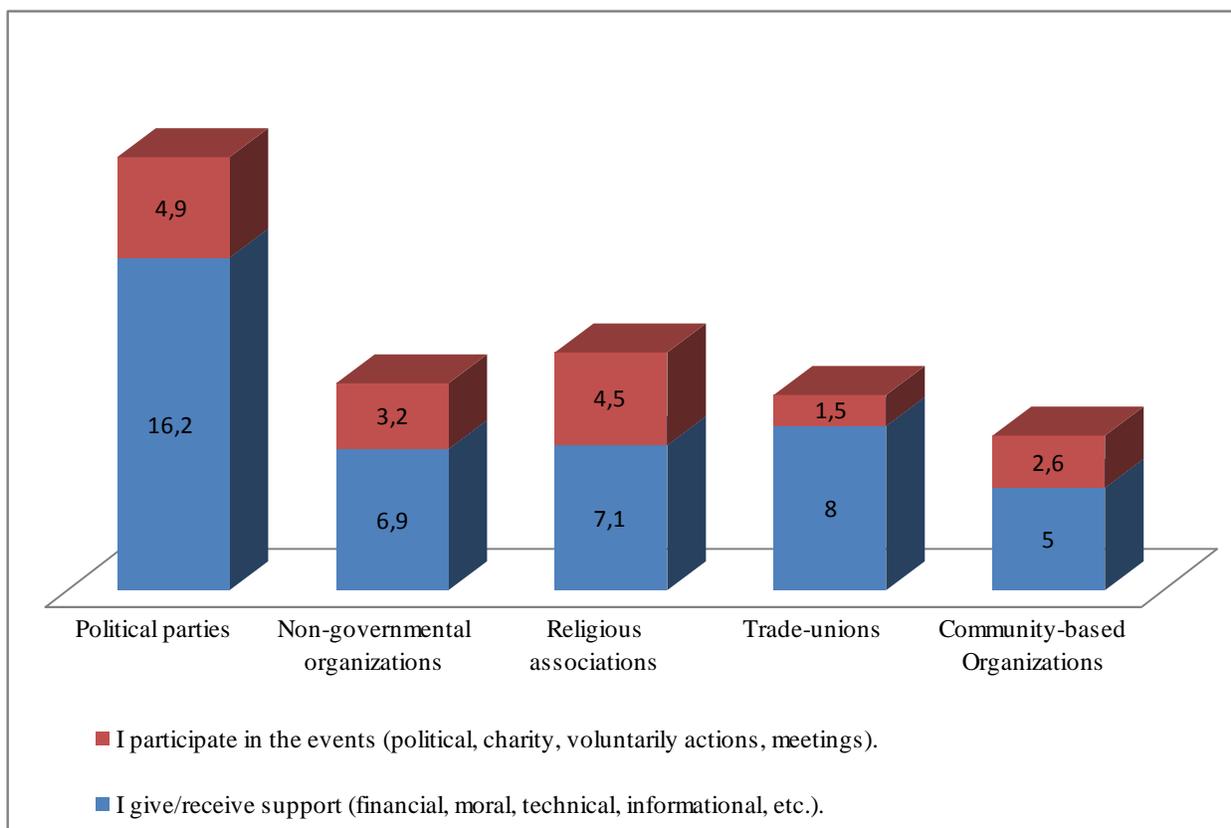
As membership in trade unions is formal we do not see a need to interpret the figures. The figure of membership in the trade unions (9.5%) whose activities are not so visible leaves behind the respective figures of the other CS organizations, except for the political parties. Along with that it shows that a large part of the working population of the country is not represented in the trade unions. Opposite, a number of members in the religious associations that have a higher index in the activity index than the trade unions was only 4% both according to the public opinion and the results of this survey.

The results of the survey show that the vast majority of the population do not enjoy the right to association as a fundamental political right. That indirectly shows that a level of the citizens' participation in the public and political processes is very low. We can give various reasons for creation of this situation. However, on our opinion, the most important here is a lack of the favourable legal and political environment in the country and we saw above that the large part of the respondents agreed with the above. And that confirms that a lack of the free and democratic election experience, existence of the bureaucratic and political obstacles that prevent the right to association and other political rights, serious problems related to criticism for the political activities, freedom of expression and freedom of media also have a negative impact on the level of representation in the CSOs.

3.2. Participation in the activities of the CSOs

Respondents' answers to the question **“In which form do you participate in the activities of the CSOs?”** allow to determine a level of contacts and communication nature with these institutions. To this end, 3 criteria were determined: 1) I give/receive support (financial, moral, technical, informational, etc.); 2) I participate in events (political, charity, voluntarily actions, meetings); 3) I participate in making decisions and governance. (Diagram 3.2.) Of course, here we should also bear in mind that citizens' support and participation is demonstrated in different forms depending on a type of the CSOs.

Diagram 3.2 In which form do you participate in the activities of the CSOs?



16.2% of those who participated in the survey said that they supported or received support of the political parties. In the previous section we saw that less than half of those who said that they are members of the parties (15% of all the respondents) do not show any support to it. Opposite, 54.5% of those who said that they support the political party were those who are not members of

the political parties. We may conclude that while membership in some parties is formal, a significant majority of the active party supporters are not represented in the parties.

A small number of the respondents (only 4.9%) said that they joined the events (actions) and again half of those are not party members. Only 19% of the respondents who said that they are party members informed that they participated in a decision making process of the party.

As for the NGOs about 6.9% of the respondents said that they received from/gave support to these institutions and 3.2% said that they participated in their events. If we also take into account that only 3% of the population said that they are NGO members we may say that about 6-9% of the population could benefit from the programs (from its services and assistance, activities directed at awareness raising and capacity-building) implemented by the NGOs and participated in at least one in their events. Among the NGO members 17% said that they participated in the management of those associations and decision-making.

The situation in the trade unions is even worse. While 8% of the respondents said that supported or received support from these institutions, the fact that only 1.5% said that they participated in the events of these institutions and 0% participated in the management of those institutions gives a ground to say that the internal situation in these institutions does not differ much from the image formed in public opinion.

4.5% of the respondents said that they participated in the events of the religious associations and that is a little bit higher than the number of those who said that they are members of the religious association. If we refer only to the simple observations, we may say that a number of those who conduct the general religious ceremonies, join the religious ceremonies is higher. Taking into account both facts we may think that also among the religious part of the population, a large part prefers to conduct their religious duties without being a member of any religious association.

Along with that we should also take into account that in the public opinion in comparison with the other CSOs, hesitations around a role of the religious associations are stronger and this causes even the average people to approach the religious associations with caution. Caution towards the religious associations both in the public opinion and in the official political circles is connected with the increased protectionism in the society and perspectives of the political radicalism of such associations. The other thing is that existence of such associations is protected by such fundamental principles as freedom of conscience, freedom of association of those who share the same religious opinion. The experience of the developed secular societies shows that the

religious association satisfy not only spiritual needs of the individuals but also turn into inevitable participants of the democratic system as protectors of the social and legal interests.

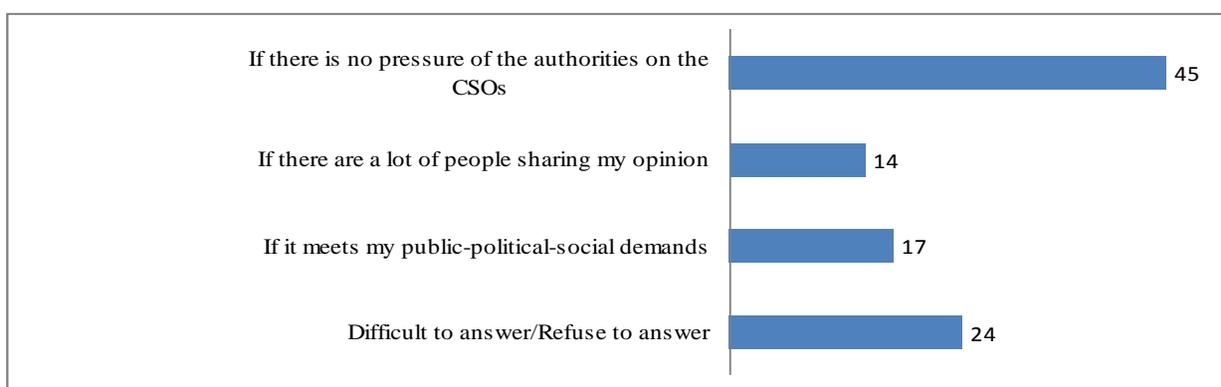
In this regard, the religious associations must take steps to eliminate the anxieties existing in the society and gain a positive image, in particular turn into participants that play a positive role in meeting the spiritual needs of the individuals.

The interesting results were related to the community-based organizations. Although they were lagging behind in the other indexes, in comparison with the other CS institutions almost the same number of the respondents were involved in these unofficial unions. 5% of the enquired said that they supported the community initiatives, 2.6% said that they participated in the events of such associations. As the experience is not so wide-spread, the level of participation in the community based organizations was unexpected. The reasons could be found in connections of the community organizations or initiatives with the local and neighbourhood problems, daily household issues. As it is seen although the citizens refrain from participation in the political, public or religious activities, they show more interest in the activities related to solution of their daily household problems. However, along with that the fact that over 80% of the population stay away from even this form of associations, do not join small community initiatives have also an impact on a low level of the general citizen participation.

3.3 Necessary conditions for participation (for membership or cooperation) in the CSOs

The respondents were asked what are the necessary conditions for them to join the associations. We would like to recall that 71% of the respondents said that they are not members of any CSO in section 3.1. 45% of those respondents said that they will join those institutions if there is no government pressure, 17% said if it meets its public, political and social needs, 14% if the number of those who share his or her opinion is high. 24% of them found it difficult to answer the question or refused to give answers. (Diagram 3.4.)

Diagram 3.3. Conditions which the respondents found necessary to participate in the CSOs



As we can see from the answers the large part of the respondents (45%) that did not join any association said that they are cautious of the authorities' pressures. This figure is close to the figure of those who think that there is no favourable legal and social environment in the country (54,5 %).

32% of the respondents answering this question as **“If it meets my public-political-social needs”** or **“If there are a lot of people sharing my opinion”** showed that they are sceptical that their wishes and desires can be implemented through the existing CSOs in the current situation. However, people from these 2 groups do not consider joining the CSOs as something negative and do not exclude that in the future may join them if they meet their interests.

The cause of concern is that 28% of the respondents did not answer this question. So the probability of them joining the CSOs on any condition in the future is low. The analysis show that this index is the same among the demographic subgroups except for the group with the secondary education. This figure among the group with the secondary education is comparatively higher. We could claim that the group does not have deep knowledge about the CSOs, do not understand the role and significance of the CSOs.

SUMMARY

From the general analysis of the results we may see that the level of *awareness* of the political parties and CS organizations is low in the society. In a situation when there are very *limited experience* of enjoyment of the right to association and participation in the CS institutions we may say that the *attitude* towards these institutions is more positive and demanding. Although the citizens have some information about the role of the CSOs, their significance in the development of the society, in particular in promotion of the democratic values, they find it difficult to comprehend the philosophy of the civil society organization, its real essence. On our opinion, the reason why they found it difficult to answer most of the questions or refused to answer the questions is their lack of knowledge of the essence of the CSOs and lack of habit to participate in the structures of the CSOs.

One of the conclusions we came is that the CSOs in Azerbaijan do not play a role of the effective buffer between the authorities and individuals. A vast majority of the citizens refrain from joining the associations and participation in its activities. The individuals do not believe that they can realize their political, public, social, religious wishes through the associations, through being their part. If this refrainment, non-involvement lasts long, then as times passes all the existing CSOs become in an isolated situation as “islets” that exist in the society but cannot get in contact with the wide population.

The fact that the authorities do not respect or do not hear them, keep them away from the governance and decision-making process, reduce to the minimum their possibilities for controlling and influencing the authorities and at best making imitation of all the above led to indifference and distrust to the civil society. Both the restricting repressive behavior of the political regime against the right to association as well as freedom of assembly and freedom of expression that are closely related, and gaps in the legislative framework completely reduce efficiency of the civil society and prevent creation of the traditions of the participatory democracy.