Country-wide Representative Survey on Public Perceptions of the Territorial and Administrative Reform in Armenia (TARA): Analysis of Results

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Appendix
The appendix includes supplementary materials, results of data analyses, and other supporting materials. This is useful for specific data and graphical materials.

Tips:
1. First, read the main sections to understand the key findings.
2. Pay attention to the methodology to understand the scientific basis of the study.

3. Spend time on the analyses to delve deeper into the subject matter.
4. Finally, review the conclusions and recommendations to understand the next steps and policy suggestions.

1. Summary

This report presents the results of a comprehensive study on public perceptions and impacts related to administrative-territorial reforms in Armenia, conducted within the framework of the "Representative Study on Public Perceptions of Administrative-Territorial Reforms in Armenia" program (TARA),

Objectives and Scope

The main objective of the study was to assess public perceptions of administrative-territorial reforms and the decentralization of powers in the communities of Armenia. The study aimed to measure public awareness and satisfaction levels regarding the reforms, community services, and the quality of life of community residents. Additionally, the effectiveness of government communication strategies was also examined.

Methodology

A nationwide representative survey was conducted among residents of 64 consolidated communities in Armenia based on a multi-stage stratified probability sampling methodology. The sample size consisted of 1,200 respondents aged 16 and older, excluding those employed in the public administration system. The survey ensured high accuracy, with a 95% confidence level and a ±2.83% margin of error.

Key Findings

1. **Level of Public Awareness and Perceptions:** The study revealed that the level of public awareness varies across communities. While a significant portion of respondents are aware of the reforms, there is still a lack of knowledge, particularly in rural communities.
2. **Impact on Quality of Life and Economic Development:** The reforms have had varying effects on the quality of life in different communities. Residents have noted positive changes when evaluating both community services and factors contributing to the economic development of the communities.
3. **Satisfaction with Public Services:** The level of resident satisfaction with public and administrative services varies across different sectors. Although most residents did not report any services that have regressed because of community consolidation, some services still require improvement.
4. **Local Democracy**: The study has shown that residents do not actively participate in local self-government, and the level of recognition of community council members is quite low. In terms of transparency and accountability, there are also certain concerns. The study emphasized the importance of public communication for increasing transparency and trust. It is important to implement more inclusive and participatory governance mechanisms.
5. **Decentralization:** The majority of respondents are still not aware of the decentralization processes and conceptual directions. Respondents who received additional information about the processes have more positive expectations from the process.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of the study show that continuous public engagement and transparent communication are important for increasing trust in the reforms. It is necessary to strengthen the capacities of local self-government bodies and ensure equal access to services in all communities. Additionally, measures aimed at increasing public awareness about the advantages and steps of the decentralization process are essential for the success of the reforms.

2. Introduction

In 2015, the administrative-territorial reforms initiated in the Republic of Armenia (RA) were aimed at achieving more effective local self-governance in communities, with the goal of improving the management efficiency of local self-government bodies through the consolidation of communities, and increasing public trust in local self-governance bodies (LGUs) through the full implementation of powers and the provision of high-quality community services. These reforms also laid the groundwork for discussions aimed at the decentralization of public administration, including the decentralization of powers and finances.

The processes carried out within the framework of administrative-territorial reforms also include programs aimed not only at increasing LGUs' access to finances, infrastructure, human capital, and other resources, but also at developing their capacities, promoting transparent and participatory governance, and raising the level of accountability.

Several international and local organizations, in cooperation with the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (MTAI), have implemented programs aimed at both improving management efficiency and enhancing public services and infrastructure in communities as support for the successful progress of administrative-territorial reforms.

During this period, in order to reveal the progress of the reforms, interim results, and possible shortcomings, and to make appropriate decisions, studies and research have been periodically conducted at different stages of the administrative-territorial reforms. As of now, as a result of the implementation of 6 stages of community consolidation, instead of the previous 915 communities, there are now 71 communities (including Yerevan) in the RA, of which 64 are consolidated multi-settlement communities.

2.1 Purpose and Objectives of the Study

This study aims, through a nationwide representative study at this stage of administrative-territorial reforms, to determine public perceptions regarding the impact of administrative-territorial reforms and the decentralization of powers in the communities of the Republic of Armenia, as well as the public's expectations regarding the further course of the reforms. The results of the study, along with the conclusions and recommendations based on them, will assist policymakers and organizations involved in the process in planning and making decisions for the future course of the reforms.

- The objectives of the study are: To measure public perceptions regarding administrative-territorial reforms and their impact on communities in Armenia.
- To extract in-depth insights on public perceptions related to satisfaction levels and directions for improvement, both regarding the reform and the broader topics of decentralization and policy awareness.
- To assess the effectiveness of the government's communication strategy during the reforms.
- To broadly assess public expectations and the level of awareness regarding specific directions of decentralization.
- To highlight the differences and commonalities in perceptions among different communities.
- To identify the main directions for further improvement and provide recommendations.

2.2 Economic and Social Consequences of Local Community Consolidation: Approaches and Results in the Literature

The main goal of community consolidation is to make the services provided by local self-government bodies (LSGBs) more efficient. Consolidated communities, with their size and financial-technical capabilities, should be able to provide higher-quality and more comprehensive services. Communities should be able to ensure not only economies of scale but also coordinate the provision of services in their territory, making them more qualitative and accessible.

Community consolidation (merger) is a means of reducing public sector expenditures through the efficient use of resources saved due to scale. On the other hand, consolidation may negatively impact resident satisfaction due to the quality, accessibility, and efficiency of community services (Kushner and

Siegel, 2000; Poel, 2000). This, in particular, may reduce civic participation and somewhat undermine the social bond with the community (Reingewertz, 2012). The negative consequences of consolidation can be attributed to differences in preferences among the residents of (former) communities (Alesina and Rosenthal, 1997). Perhaps the greatest risk is associated with the so-called "proximity factor". In consolidated communities, the delivery of services may be discriminatory depending on the level of "proximity", for example, citizens in remote areas may face discriminatory treatment. As a result, the "proximity factor" may lead to corruption risks and reduce the expected positive impact of economies of scale. Overall, as a result of consolidation, newly established municipalities operate in a different format and environment.

As a result of community consolidation, the relationships between local self-government bodies (LSGBs) and territorial administration (TA) bodies change. In the case of small communities, state officials from TA bodies have broader control and monitoring functions over LSGBs due to the low level of service decentralization. Models of fiscal transparency predict that higher fiscal transparency and accountability increase the chances of local politicians being re-elected. On the other hand, there are strong incentives for communities to hide financial information if there is a risk of exposure to corruption (Khagram et al., 2013, and references therein). It is assumed that if state officials at the level of TA bodies aim to maximize social welfare, they should promote transparency and accountability in communities. The political motivation of state officialsm on the other hand, should align with the requirements for transparency and accountability of political power in communities. These relationships differ between small and large communities.

Scientific literature has developed various models and approaches regarding the presence of economies of scale in public services. Theoretical models suggest that economies of scale exist up to a certain threshold, after which efficiency declines. In these models, per capita costs exhibit an inverse U-shaped behavior: as community size increases, per capita costs decrease up to a certain threshold, after which they start rising (Breunig and Rocaboy, 2008). The existence of this non-linear relationship is explained by the fact that a sharp increase in LSGB size raises overload, and its negative consequences become more pronounced (Reiter and Weichenrieder, 1997).

3. Research Implementation Methodology

3.1. Structure of the Study and Methodology for Forming the Representative Sample

Structure and Issues of the Study

To conduct a nationwide representative study on public perceptions regarding administrative-territorial reforms and decentralization, the quantitative survey method was chosen.

Considering modern approaches, the CAPI (Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing) methodology was applied for data collection. Thus, the surveys were conducted using programmed tools on tablets. This ensured a logical and smooth flow of the survey.

During the implementation of the surveys, the database was generated immediately, increasing the efficiency of the data collection process.

Data Collection Method	Quantitative survey using CAPI (Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing) methodology (tablet-assisted personal interviews)
Average duration of one interview	29 minutes
Sample size	1,200 completed interviews
Age range of participants	16 years and older, excluding those employed in the public administration system
Number of surveyed communities	64 consolidated communities
Data collection period	23.05.2024 - 03.07.2024

Sample Composition for Quantitative Surveys

The construction of a representative sample was the cornerstone of the study. During the proposal submission phase, considering the keywords used to describe the depth of the study as a "nationally representative survey," a national sampling structure was proposed, including Yerevan, Gyumri, and 5 communities populated by national minorities. However, during the initial meetings held by the study team and the Client, GIZ, it became clear that it would be appropriate to target only the 64 consolidated communities during the design phase of the representative sample for the study, excluding the aforementioned 7 communities. Therefore, the results of the study are representative of the 64 consolidated communities in the Republic of Armenia.

For the clarified task, the sample size was set at 1,200 successful interviews with respondents aged 16 and older, who are not employed in the state and territorial administration, as well as in the local self-government system. A sample size of 1,200 ensures a high level of accuracy for the results, specifically a 95% confidence level and a ±2.83% margin of error.

The sample was designed using a multi-stage stratified sampling methodology, with the detailed procedure provided in Appendix 3 of this report. Through stratification, 32 communities were included in the sample, representing both rural and urban areas. Consequently, the survey results are representative of the 64 consolidated communities of the Republic of Armenia (RA).

The lower age limit was set at 16 years, considering the minimum age for participation provided by the RA "Law on Local Self-Government." Before conducting interviews with this group of minors, interviewers obtained verbal permission from their parents or guardians. No upper age limit was considered when recruiting participants for the survey.

The 1,200 interviews were distributed proportionally, taking into account the statistical data of the Republic of Armenia based on gender-age composition, region, and type of settlement.

The 1,200 respondents represent only those community residents who are not involved in the implementation of administrative-territorial reforms and are not employees of the governance system. This approach allows for an assessment of the pure opinions and perceptions of the public, as required by the task. Thus, the structure of the sample corresponds to the statistical indicators and the RA law on administrative-territorial division, as shown in the diagrams presented in Figure 1.

3.2. Sample Structure by Gender, Age, Education, Rural/Urban, and Household Member Characteristics:

In Figure 1, we have presented the distribution of the sample by gender, age group, marz (regions), and type of settlement as a percentage. As mentioned earlier, the representativeness of the sample is based on these indicators. The gender structure of the sample in the marzes is presented in Figure A2 (Appendix). The results of the Pearson Chi-2 test show[1] that the distribution of women and men in the marzes differs significantly.

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[1] Rejection of the null hypothesis of the Pearson Chi-2 test, when the possible P-value is lower than the significance levels (0.1, 0.05, 0.001), means that the distribution between the groups differs significantly.

Figure 1. Distribution of the Sample by Gender, Age Group, Marzes, and Type of Settlement (%)
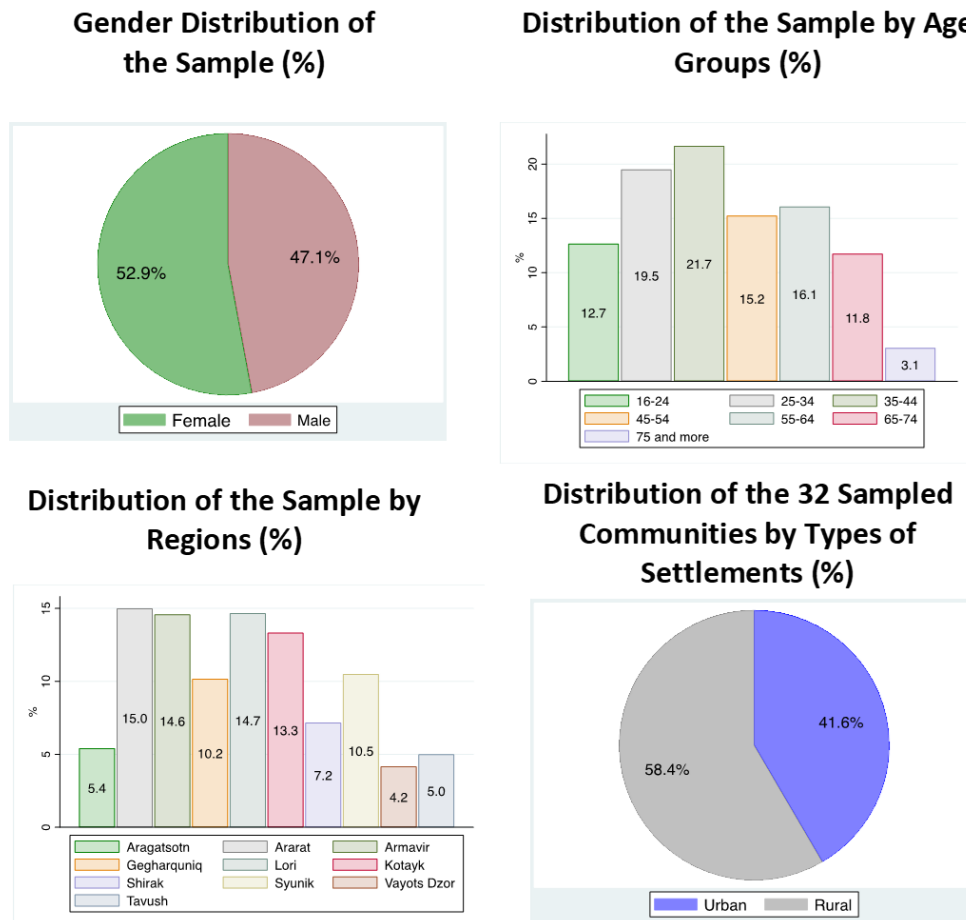
3.3. The Survey Questionnaire and the Description of the Fieldwork Process

Quantitative Survey Questionnaire

The quantitative survey questionnaire was developed with the study's objectives in mind. It consisted of six main sections:

- **Section 1:** Selection of the respondent
- **Section 2**: Awareness level regarding administrative-territorial reforms and general impact assessment
- **Section 3**: Accessibility and affordability of community services, improvement of infrastructure, and assessment according to criteria
- **Section 4:** Local democracy: awareness, trust, participation in the management processes of LSGBs
- **Section 5:** Perceptions regarding the decentralization of powers
- **Section 6:** Demographic data

The questionnaire was validated based on 30 pilot surveys, reviewed, and approved by the expert team of the study. Please refer to the Appendix 4 for the full version of the questionnaire.

Within the framework of the program, a separate section of the survey was dedicated to revealing perceptions about decentralization. For this purpose, the survey experiment design method was applied in the questionnaire, where 50% of the sample, selected randomly, were provided with additional information about the goals of decentralization, while the other 50% did not receive this information.

Statistically, such a structure allowed for a proper level of randomization and provided an accurate assessment of the impact of the information.

Interviewer Training and Briefing
The surveys are conducted face-to-face by professional and experienced interviewers from the department.

The interviewer training sessions included the following topics:
- The study's purpose and the criteria for forming the sample
- The flow and logic of the questionnaires
- Terms used in the questionnaire
- Explanation of difficult questions, such as tables, open-ended questions, etc.

During the training, interviewers received question-by-question instructions and were familiarized with the study's purpose and specific features.

Adherence to Ethical Standards
The interviewer operates in accordance with ethical standards. These are the rules that regulate the interviewer's conduct, the respondent's rights, and the procedures for protecting and ensuring the confidentiality of personal data.

Respondents were assured that:

- The confidentiality of the surveys is guaranteed.
- Personal data is required solely for quality control purposes, and only a limited number of people will have access to this information.
- Respondents should be offered to complete the survey in an environment away from third parties.
- No personal data will be reflected in the database.

Key Observations During Fieldwork

The fieldwork generally proceeded smoothly. Feedback was provided, and prompt solutions were offered regarding any obstacles encountered. As a result, the quality and timeline of data collection were not affected.

Below are the main considerations, as well as the factors that facilitated or hindered the fieldwork:
- **Survey Topic:** The topic of the survey was mainly of interest to the population. Thus, the survey topic did not hinder the organization of the survey process.
- **Survey Tool:** The structure of the questionnaire and the smooth operation of the electronic tool contributed to the data collection process.
- **Participation Rate:** The willingness to participate in the survey was 14%. The rate was negatively affected by the absence of the primary respondent at home or the presence of non-residential units.
- **Accessibility of Communities:** The condition of intercommunity roads, which in some places was not ideal, the incomplete information about the working schedule of intercommunity transport, and the underpopulation of residential units somewhat hindered the process. Natural disasters during the survey period made certain communities inaccessible, resulting in the replacement of 2 communities.
- **Gender Distribution Maintenance:** Male respondents were less accessible due to their involvement in agricultural work. Thus, the proportion of male respondents in the total sample was about 2% lower than the planned 49%.
- **Key Concepts and Terms:** The terms "community" and "settlement" caused confusion among respondents. There was a high level of awareness regarding community consolidation reforms. At the same time, knowledge about community management processes was relatively low. More detailed findings on the impact of the reforms and resident satisfaction are presented in the main report.

3.4. Multivariate Econometric Models Used in the Analytical Work

In the report, we evaluate several models that allow for the identification of potential causal relationships between exogenous and outcome variables.

The analysis uses probit models, which allow for the evaluation of discrete (0-1 structured) outcome variables by explaining them through various structured variables. Diagnostic test statistics are presented for each model to enable judgments about the qualitative criteria of the model. Additional regressions show that the estimates obtained from logit models are comparable, indicating that the choice of the probit model does not affect the accuracy of the estimates. The structures and applications of probit and logit models can be found in Wooldridge (2012).

We use the Seemingly Unrelated Regression (SUR) method for econometric model estimation. In our context, SUR is more appropriate than estimating equations separately (modeling equation by equation), as the variables characterizing the functioning of LSGBs and measured by residents' perceptions are interrelated. With this structure, SUR allows us to estimate the joint impact of respondents' characteristics on the effectiveness and transparency of LSGBs. Each equation in the SUR model has a linear structure, and the parameter estimates are the same as those obtained using the ordinary least squares (OLS) method. The differences lie in the standard errors, which are "corrected" in the case of SUR.

All models include the individual factors of the respondents: gender, age, marital status, education, labor market status, type of settlement (rural or urban), financial status, and relative deprivation. Relative deprivation is a good indicator for understanding how well members of society compare their financial status with the average financial status of society (Figure A9, Appendix). The deviations between the two variables reflect the gaps between different segments of society in terms of perceptions of social status. Relative deprivation can be considered as a unique indicator of social polarization, and its inclusion in the models neutralizes the potential correlation with other variables. In addition to these factors, additional variables are included based on the specific requirements of the model. Including individual factors in the model as explanatory variables allows for the identification of the factors "responsible" for the behavioral manifestations of the outcome variable. This helps identify the policy directions aimed at improvement. It is important to note that all models include binary variables for communities, which allow for the neutralization of the impact of all factors formed at the community level.

In selecting additional variables for the models, we prioritize their exogenous nature. Of course, it is difficult to have "absolutely" exogenous variables unless we are dealing with individual factors (even then, limited in number, such as gender and age), but we have tried to ensure a reasonable level of exogeneity so that our results are reliable.

4. Brief Description and Implementation Stages of Administrative-Territorial Reforms in the Republic of Armenia

During the development of the local self-government system in the Republic of Armenia (RA), the administrative-territorial structure of the country, particularly its high degree of fragmentation, has always been highlighted as a key issue. The majority of the administrative-territorial units formed in the initial stages were small rural communities with low populations, which were either incapable of providing community services at an adequate level or did not provide them at all.

The "Concept of Community Consolidation and Formation of Intercommunity Unions" adopted by the RA Government[2] on November 10, 2011, summarized the provisions aimed at improving the efficiency of the local self-government system through administrative-territorial reforms, including the principles and criteria for community consolidation. The concept envisioned communities that, as a result of administrative-territorial reforms, would have local self-government bodies capable of efficiently and accessibly exercising their delegated powers and services, as well as being endowed with sufficient natural, human, and financial resources and necessary infrastructure to ensure the socio-economic sustainable

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[2] https://www.e-gov.am/u_files/file/decrees/arc_voroshum/11/qax44-18_1.pdf

development of the community. Without these resources and capacities, communities are not prepared for the further deepening of decentralization, which primarily involves granting additional powers to local self-government bodies.

On May 22, 2014, the RA National Assembly approved the RA Government's program[3], which included the implementation of pilot programs for community consolidation, alongside the revision of legislation in the field of local self-government and the necessity of adopting a new RA law "On Local Self-Government."

The first phase of administrative-territorial reforms was launched on November 24, 2015, with the adoption of the RA Law on "Amendments and Additions to the RA Law on the Administrative-Territorial Division of the Republic of Armenia,"[4] which included the concept of multi-settlement communities and its definition, the principles and criteria for the consolidation or division of communities, the list of settlements included in the newly formed Tumanyan, Dilijan, and Tatev multi-settlement communities, and the description of their administrative boundaries.

In the following years, the process of community consolidation that began in 2015 continued within the administrative-territorial division system of the RA. In various stages of this process, there was also a "re-consolidation" of already consolidated multi-settlement communities, meaning that previously consolidated communities were included in new community clusters and further expanded. Administrative-territorial reforms gained significant momentum in 2017 and later in 2021-2022, resulting in the "restoration" of a significant portion of the former Soviet districts during the sixth and final phase of the reforms.

As of January 1, 2024, instead of the previous 915 communities, there are now 71 communities (including Yerevan), encompassing 1,002 settlements. Of these 71 communities, 64 are consolidated multi-settlement communities. The consolidation process did not include Yerevan, Gyumri, and 5 communities predominantly populated by national minorities.

A summary of the phased implementation of administrative-territorial reforms in the RA is presented in Table 1.

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[3] https://www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docID=90338
[4] https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=102849

Table 1. Administrative-Territorial Reforms in the Republic of Armenia by Phases (as of 01.01.2024)

Marz	Number of communities as of 01.01.2015	Phases of Community Consolidation						Total number of newly formed (consolidated) communities in the marz as of 01.01.2024	Number of non-consolidated communities in the marz	Total number of communities in the marz (including the number of non-consolidated communities)
		1st phase	2nd phase	3rd phase	4th phase	5th phase	6th phase			
		HO148N 24.11.2015*	HO100N 17.06.2016*	HO93N 09.06.2017*	HO227N 17.04.2020*	HO328N 24.09.21*	HO-266-N 09.06.2022*			
Aragatsotn	115	-	-	4	-	5	1	7	1	**8**
Ararat	97	-	1	-	-	4	-	4	1	**5**
Armavir	97	-	-	-	-	7	-	7	1	**8**
Gegharkunik	92	-	-	4	-	4	1	5	-	**5**
Lori	113	1	-	10	1	4	3	10	1	**11**
Kotayk	67	-	-	6	-	6	-	10	1	**11**
Shirak	118	-	4	3	-	4	-	5	1	**6**
Syunik	109	1	4	3	-	-	1	7	-	**7**
Vayots dzor	44	-	3	3	-	3	-	5	-	**5**
Tavush	62	1	3	1	1	1	-	4	-	**4**
Total	**914**	3	15	34	2	38	6	**64**	**6**	**70**

* According to the respective law on "Amendments and Additions to the RA Law on the Administrative-Territorial Division of the Republic of Armenia"

5. Residents' Awareness and Public Perceptions of Administrative-Territorial Reforms

5.1. Analysis of Indicators Characterizing Residents' Perceptions

Figure 2 shows that the main sources of information about administrative-territorial reforms are the media (41.5%) and information received from community residents (39.2%). The cases of awareness through community meetings and representatives have a much smaller share. Reliable sources of information play an important role in community members' participation. These are impartial, specialized sources that can be helpful to residents in making decisions about community processes and issues. Figure A10 (Appendix) presents the distribution of information sources on the community consolidation process by marzes. In the Aragatsotn marz, the media has a smaller share, and community meetings play a minor role.

Figure 2. Source of Information on the Community Consolidation Process*

*Pearson chi2 = 116.1477,   Pr = 0.000
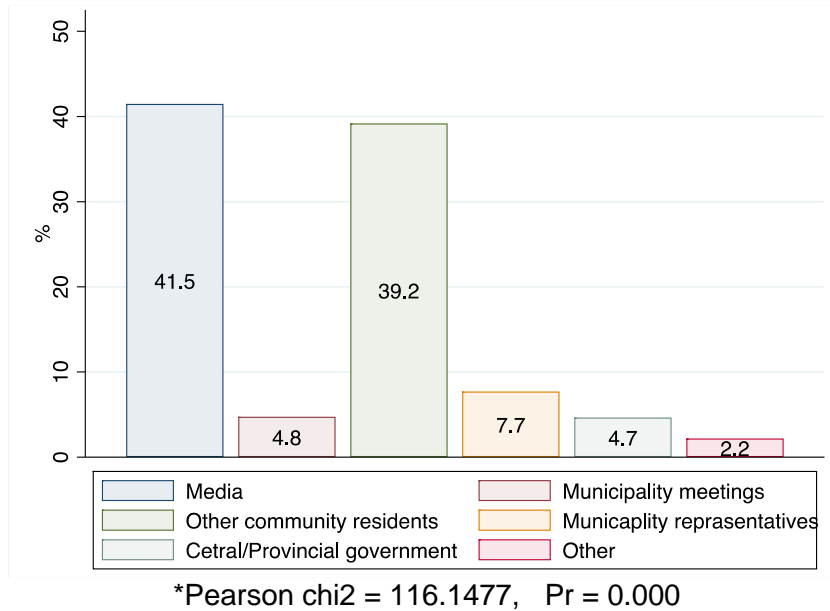
Figure 3 presents respondents' reactions to the purpose(s) of community consolidation as part of the administrative-territorial reforms. The first three purposes are correct, and the last two are incorrect. Almost 1/3 of the respondents mistakenly believe that reducing the number of community leaders is one of the reform's goals.

Figure 3. The Purpose(s) of Community Consolidation as Part of Administrative-Territorial Reforms (%)

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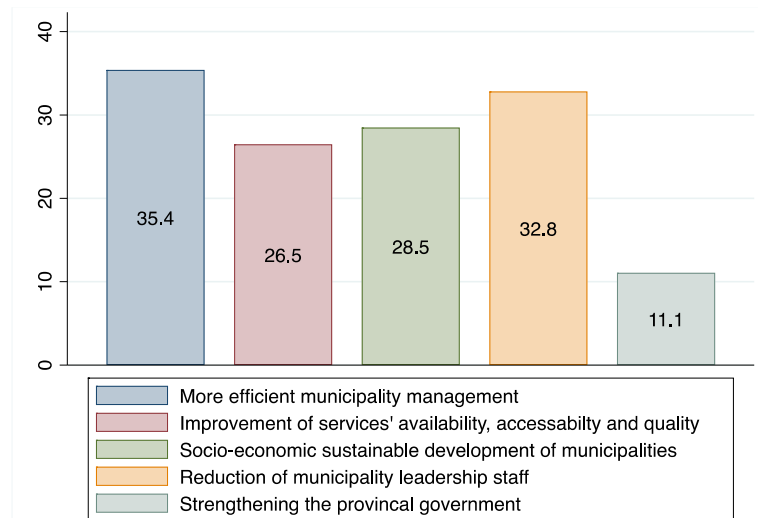
Respondents were asked the following question: "Are you aware of the community consolidation process? That is, the process by which communities and settlements were merged and became one large community?" to which they answered "Yes" or "No." 1,066 respondents or 88.3% answered positively, and 134 (11.7%) respondents answered negatively. The depth of awareness and knowledge can be measured by comparing the responses to this question with the knowledge of the goals of the administrative-territorial reforms.

Figure 4 presents the respondents' answers by groups. In the left figure, the distribution is based on the responses of those who answered positively to the awareness question. The right figure shows the results obtained from respondents who answered negatively to that question. The respondents' answers reveal that the distribution of answers between the two groups differs significantly in terms of incorrect answers, but in the opposite direction than expected. Those who answered positively to the awareness question more often chose incorrect answers regarding the goals of the administrative-territorial reforms. In other words, self-assessed awareness does not seem to have an adequate level of confidence.

The study of information sources (Figure 2) shows that there are two sources for obtaining information about community consolidation: the media and information received from community residents. We also include the awareness indicator in multivariate models to determine its net effects on the outcome variables.

Figure 4. The Purpose(s) of Community Consolidation and Awareness of the Process (%)*

Legend:
- More efficient municipality management
- Improvement of services' availability, accessabilty and quality
- Socio-economic sustainable development of municipalities
- Reduction of municipality leadership stuff
- Strengthening the provincal government
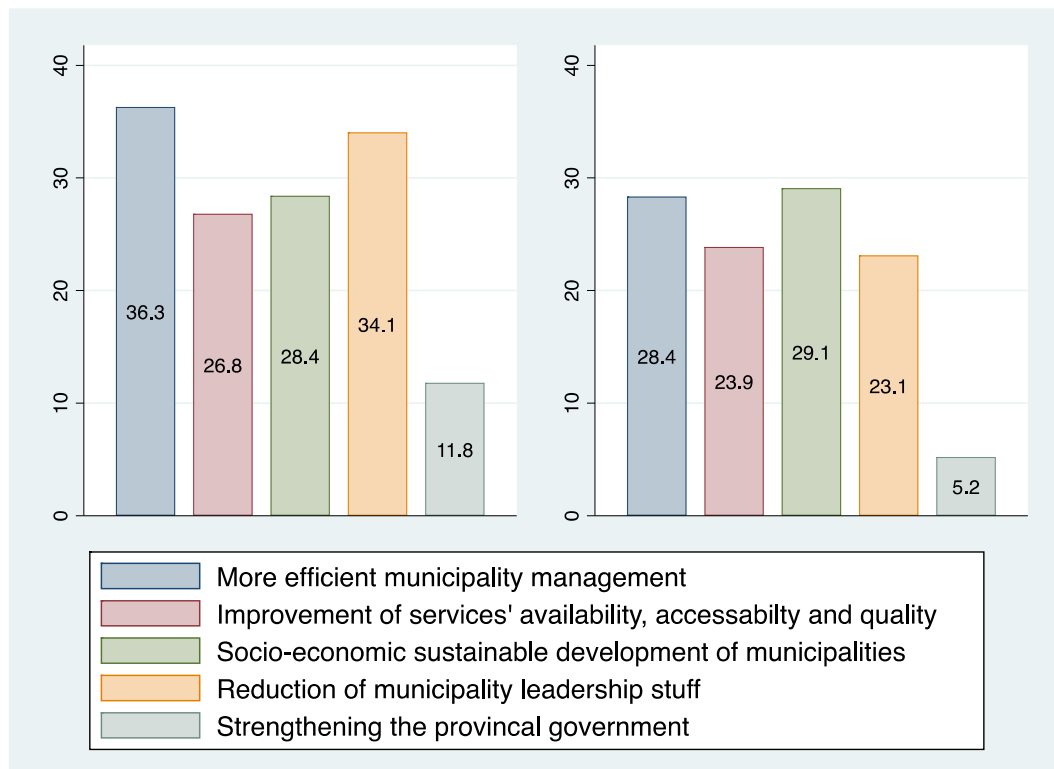
6. The Impact of Administrative-Territorial Reforms in the Context of Community Service Delivery

6.1. Impact on the Quality of Life of Community Residents

The impact of the community consolidation process on people's quality of life is measured on a scale of 1 to 5 (Figure 5). The average value is 3.51. Only 9.2% of respondents answered negatively, and only 0.92% had difficulty answering the question.

Figure 5. The Impact of the Community Consolidation Process on People's Quality of Life
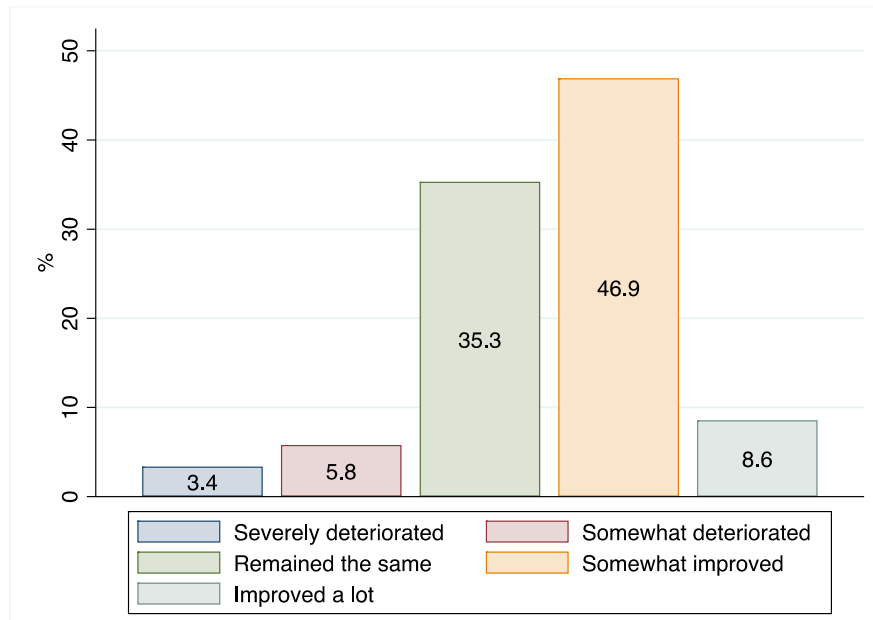
Figure 6 presents the impact of the community consolidation process on people's quality of life by region. In 5 regions, more than 50% of respondents answered "Somewhat improved." The lowest average value was observed in the Lori region at 3.38, while the highest average was in the Aragatsotn region at 3.74.

Figure 6. The Impact of the Community Consolidation Process on People's Quality of Life by Region
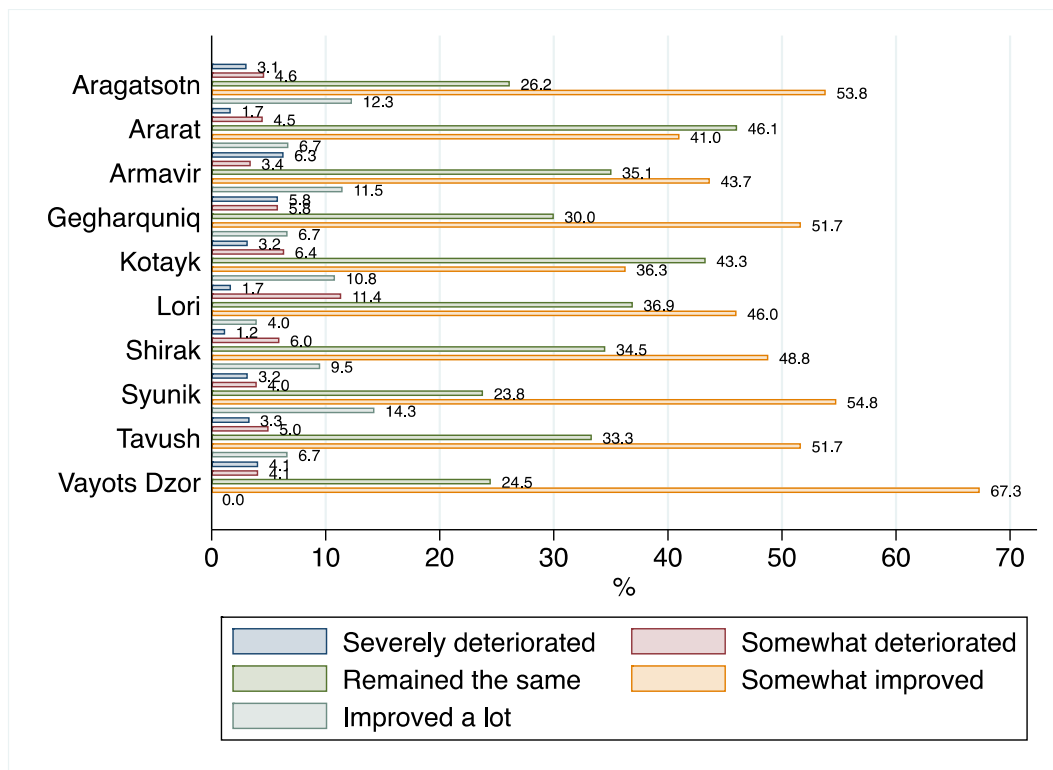
6.2. Residents' Satisfaction Levels with Public and Administrative Community Services by Sector

The quality assessments of sectoral services provided/implemented by the community, as presented by respondents, are shown in Figures 7-8. The general trend is that respondents gave the highest weight to the responses "Provided/implemented before consolidation, but the quality has improved since consolidation" and "Remained the same, unchanged." However, there are significant differences in response distribution across sectors. According to respondents, quality improvements were recorded in the sectors of road maintenance, waste collection, sanitary cleaning, street lighting, culture, youth, sports, preschool education, and extracurricular education. In some sectors, this response accounted for more than 50%.

Figure 7. Evaluation of the Quality of Economic Services Provided by the Community
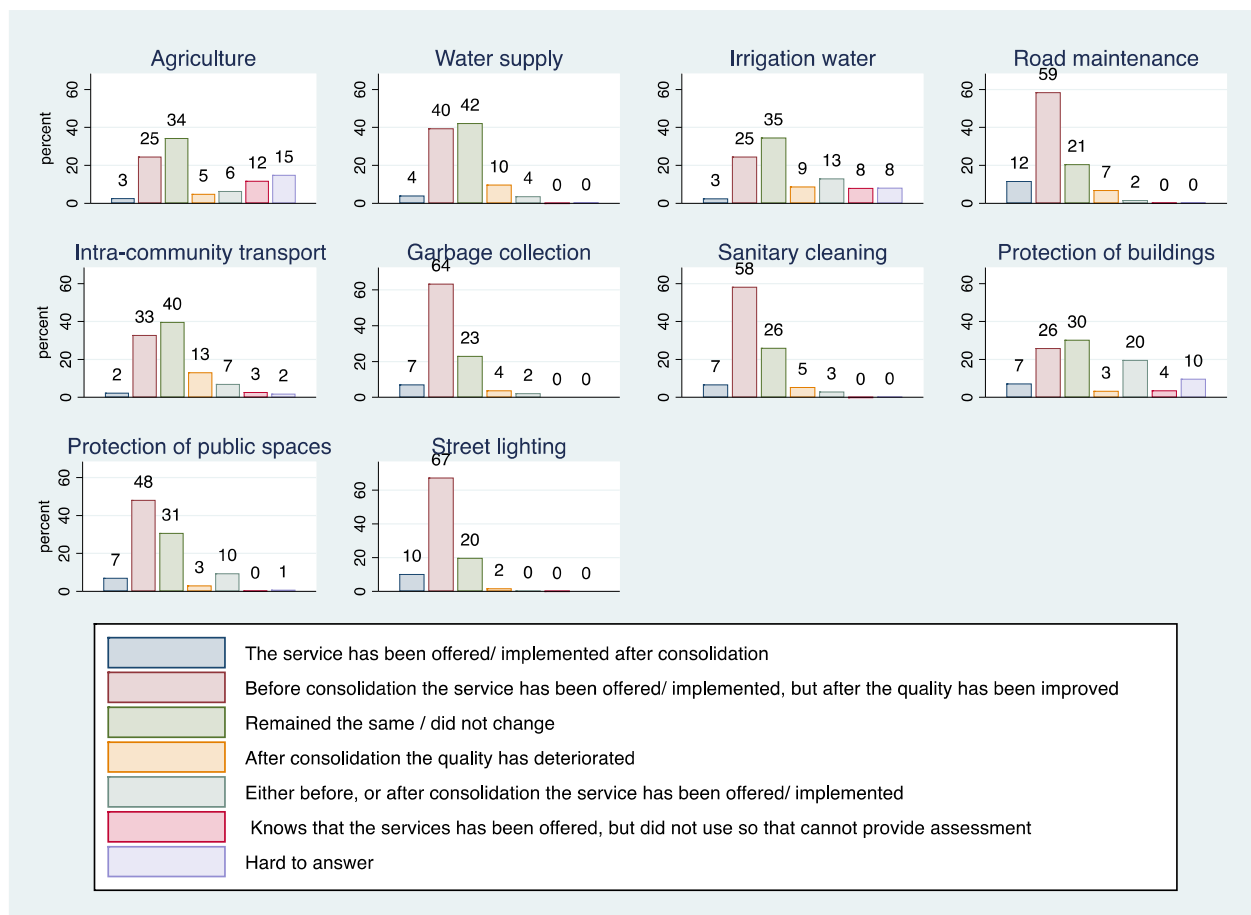
In evaluating agricultural (veterinary and agricultural machinery provision services), water supply and drainage, irrigation water supply, and primary health care services, the response "Remained the same, unchanged" was more frequently recorded. The Appendix (Figures 11-19) also presents respondents' reactions regarding the quality of services in each sector.

The evaluation scale (1 - deteriorated, 2 - remained the same, unchanged, 3 - yes, improved) allows for an assessment of each service. The figures confirm the observation that most respondents believe that the provision of sectoral services has improved after the community consolidation.

Figure 8. Evaluation of the Quality of Social and Administrative Services Provided by the Community
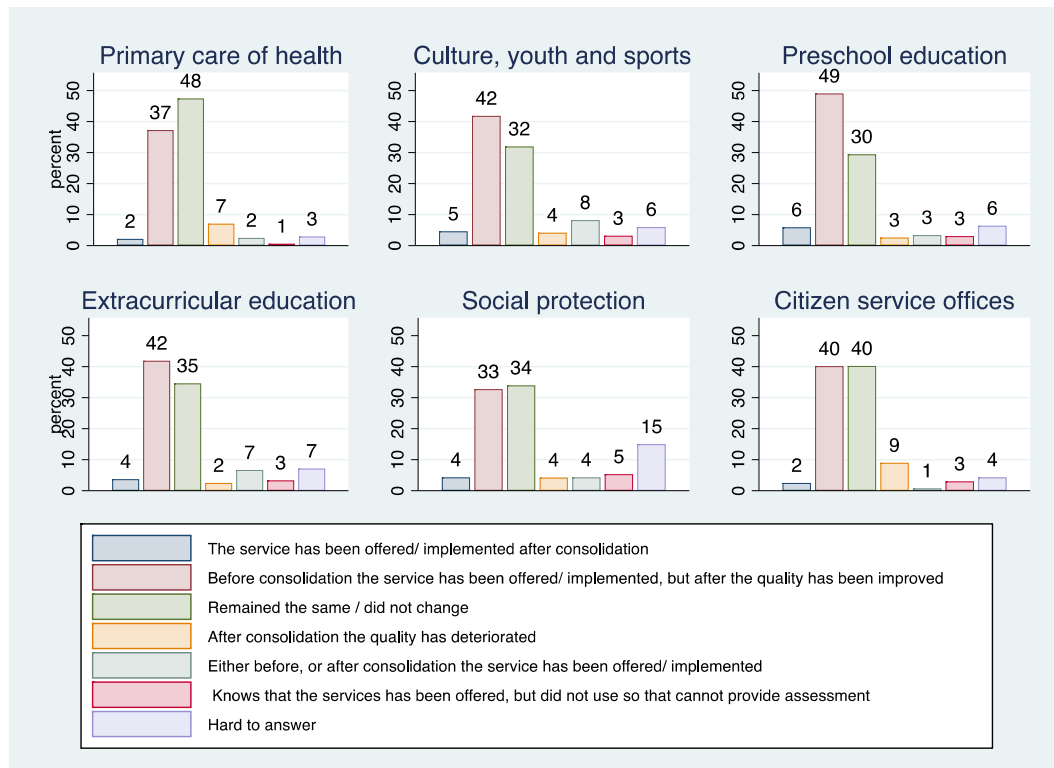
6.3. Residents' Satisfaction with Public and Administrative Community Services by Service Criteria

Residents also evaluated their satisfaction with community services based on specific service criteria, with the results presented in Figures A11-A19. In the agricultural sector, respondents gave positive ratings to the quality of veterinary services, while in the case of drinking and irrigation water supply services, drinking water supply received a more positive evaluation. In the context of road maintenance and intra-community transport services, residents were particularly satisfied with the improvement, maintenance, and equipment of inter-settlement roads. Some positive changes were also noted in waste collection and sanitary cleaning services, particularly regarding the cleanliness around trash bins, the frequency of waste collection, and the cleanliness of public areas. In contrast to the maintenance and service of multi-apartment buildings, residents saw greater progress in street lighting, landscaping, and the improvement of public areas. Primary healthcare services (PHC) have not changed significantly since the consolidation, while services in the fields of culture, youth, and sports have seen small but positive progress. Residents were particularly satisfied with the conditions of preschool educational institutions (PEIs), the quality and variety of food, and the educational and developmental programs for children. However, issues related to the ease of access and affordability of kindergartens remain problematic. Residents observed more progress in extracurricular education services than in social services. Respondents also noted some positive changes in the improvement of the quality of various administrative services provided by civil service offices in communities.

It is noteworthy that residents of consolidated communities did not indicate any services that have deteriorated as a result of the community consolidation.

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6.4. The Impact of Administrative-Territorial Reforms on Local Economic Development Processes

The impact of the community consolidation process on economic development is also measured on a scale of 1 to 5 (Figure 9). The average value is 3.49. Only 6.5% of respondents answered negatively, and only 1.75% had difficulty answering the question. The regional analysis in Figure 10 shows that in 2 regions, more than 50% of respondents answered "Somewhat improved." The lowest average value was observed in the Lori region at 3.32, while the highest average was in the Syunik region at 3.73.

Figure 9. Progress in Economic Development in the Community After the Community Consolidation Process
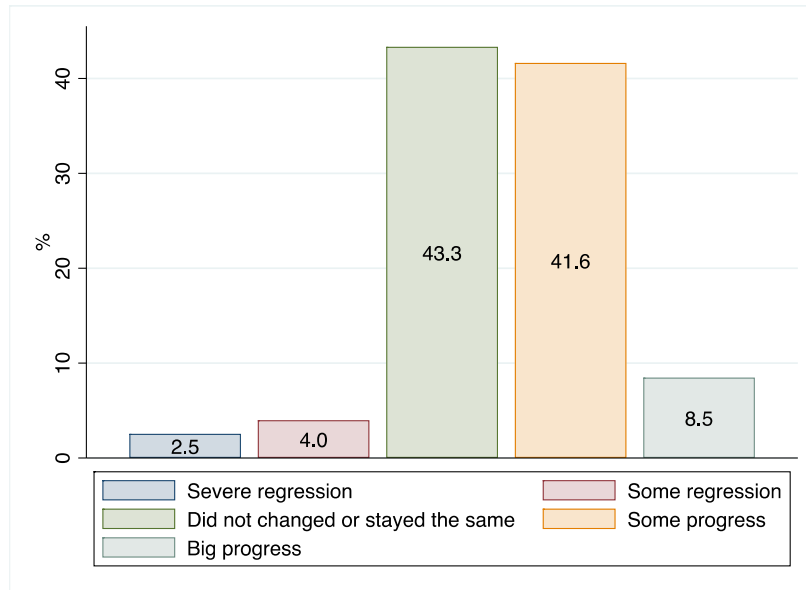
Figure 10. Progress in Economic Development in the Community After the Community Consolidation Process, by Region

16
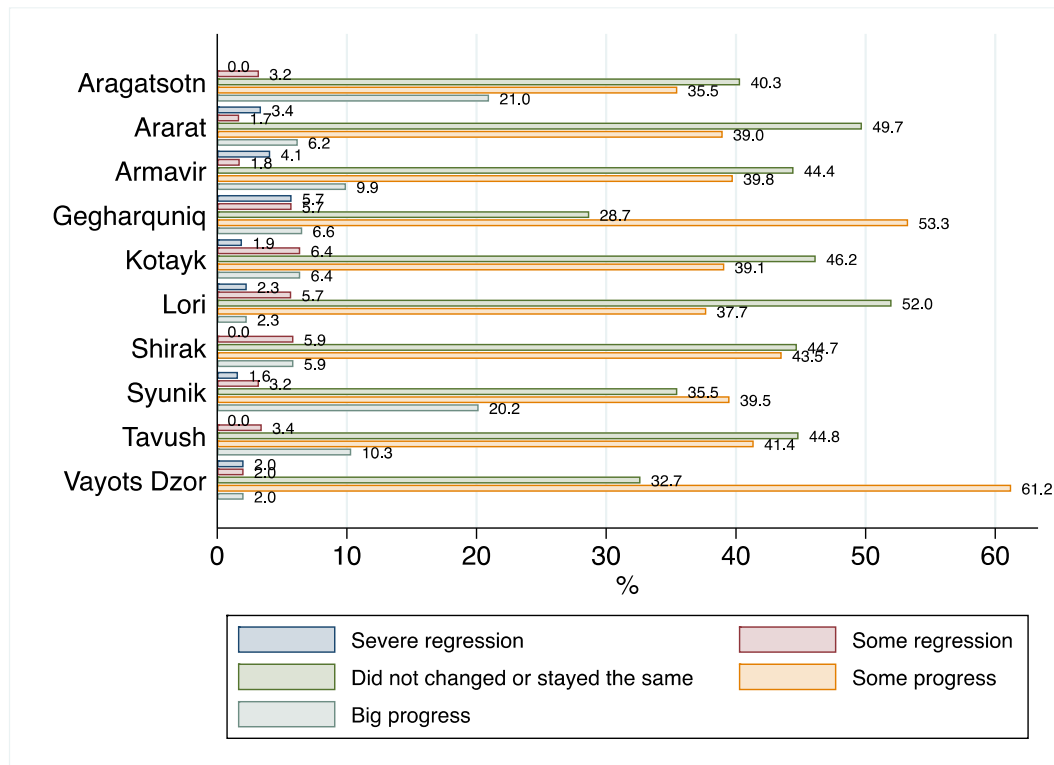
Respondents also assessed changes in factors affecting the community's economic development, particularly access to the labor market and financial resources, with three possible options (deteriorated, remained the same, improved). Figure 11 shows that respondents most often chose the "remained the same" option. The second most common response was "improved," indicating that on a scale of 1 to 3, the average value in all cases is above 2. This means that, on average, respondents are more inclined to give a positive response rather than a neutral or negative one.[5]

Figure 11. Evaluation of Factors Affecting Economic Development in the Community
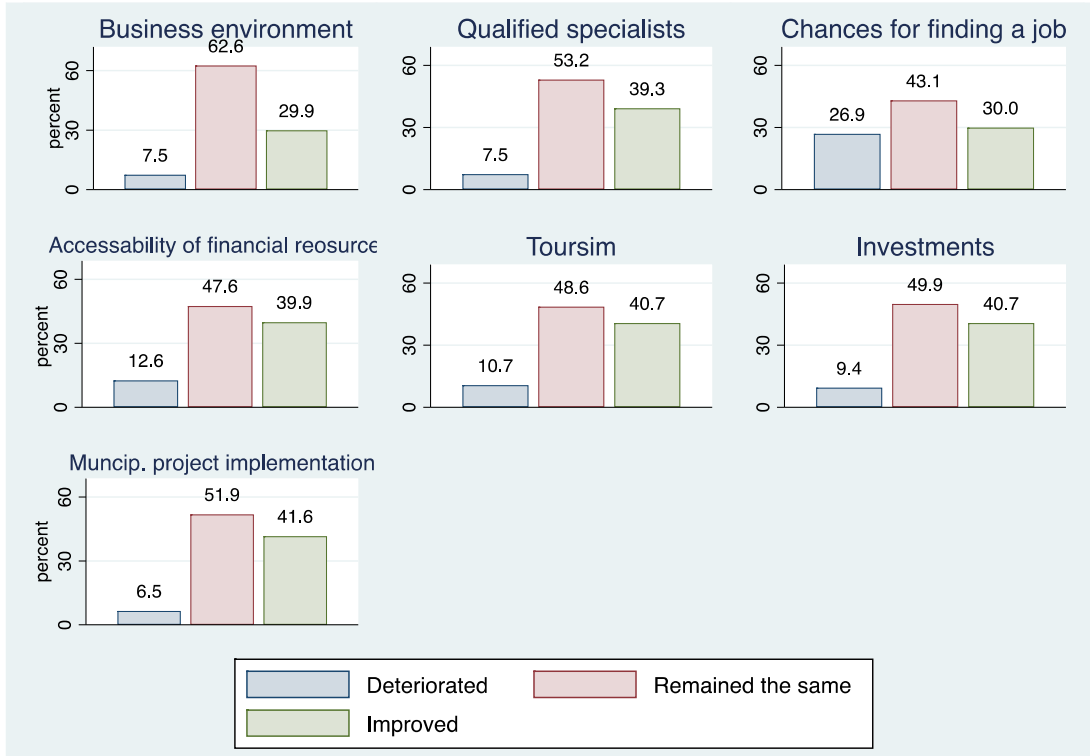
Figure 12 presents the breakdown of the same indicators for rural and urban settlements. It turns out that the observations mentioned above are more characteristic of rural settlements, while more positive responses were recorded among the urban population. The weight of the negative ("deteriorated") responses has generally not changed, while the weight of neutral responses has decreased.

Overall, our observation is that respondents are generally inclined to view the changes in factors affecting community economic development after the community consolidation in a positive light. Interestingly, the distribution of responses across different factors remains stable, indicating that, overall, there are no factors that have significantly lagged behind or developed at a relatively faster pace.

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[5] In all cases, the average value tests confirm that the average values of the indicators differ significantly from the midpoint of the scale.

17

Figure 12. Evaluation of Factors Affecting Economic Development in Urban and Rural Settlements
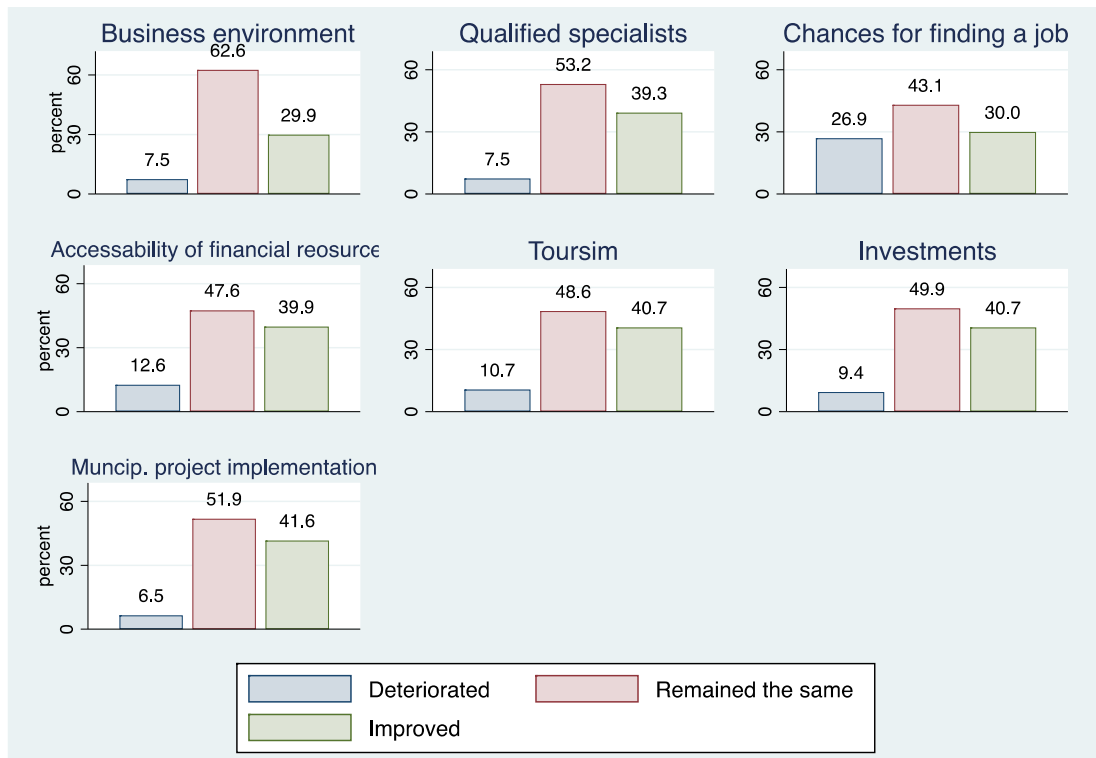
6.5. Multivariate Analysis

Next, through multivariate analysis, we explore which individual, settlement-specific, and awareness-related factors can explain respondents' assessments of sectoral development. For this purpose, we estimate probit models for the factors affecting community services and economic development.

Community Services

The results for community services are presented in Table 2. As discussed in the methodology section, the individual variables selected for the models in this study include gender, age, marital status, education, employment status, type of settlement (rural or urban), financial status, and relative deprivation. We also add awareness of community consolidation, which is where we begin our analysis.

Awareness is significant in only two of the 16 services (both positive): road maintenance and sanitary cleaning services. For example, **in the case of sanitary cleaning services, respondents who were aware of the reforms rated the quality of these services 13.5% higher compared to those who were not aware after community consolidation.**

Overall, the estimated coefficients for awareness are large in absolute value, but with large standard deviations, the coefficients mostly become insignificant. The low reliability of awareness is also reflected here in its mostly insignificant nature. Broadly speaking, respondents' awareness does not significantly alter their assessments of services in either a positive or negative direction.

Older respondents rated the quality of services more positively for 4 out of 16 services after community consolidation and negatively for only one. However, the magnitudes of the effects are quite small, not exceeding the 3% threshold[6]. The age distribution in communities may have a determining

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[6] It is important to note that the potential non-linear relationship between age and service evaluation becomes insignificant when introducing the square of the age variable, rendering both the linear and non-linear relationships insignificant. The same phenomenon is observed for education as well.

significance for the assessment of service quality. The demographic trend of an "aging" population, which is more pronounced in rural and remote areas, may create a more loyal environment for evaluating service quality in communities. Older residents may have lower expectations for the improvement of community services compared to younger residents, resulting in higher ratings. Another possible scenario is that older residents may be more engaged in community processes and, based on the information and knowledge they receive, may more effectively identify positive changes. The positive relationship between age and participation reflected in Table 4 makes this channel possible.

Respondents with higher educational attainment give lower ratings in the service sector. For example, **respondents with one level higher education rate the quality of agricultural services 4.4% lower on average after community consolidation.** Even in sectors where the ratings are not significant, they remain negative. This observation is concerning because residents with higher educational attainment should be able to provide a more comprehensive and objective assessment of events occurring in the community. The education factor may also influence assessments indirectly.

Khachatryan and Grigoryan (2022), for example, show that education is an important factor in explaining various forms of deprivation in the labor market in Armenia. In the work by Antinyan, Baghdasaryan, and Grigoryan (2022), which is based on representative data from Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, respondents with higher education have a lower level of trust in state institutions (parliament, president, and executive power). In this regard, our result is comparable: in both cases, individuals with higher education exhibit a more critical approach. Despite the challenges of differentiated quality and levels of education in post-Soviet countries, they remain important factors for explaining economic phenomena based on people's living standards and perceptions.

Women, in contrast to men, give more positive ratings for the quality of services. The largest difference is observed in the case of preschool education services, at 13%. The difference in ratings between the two genders can be explained by differences in education, employment status, approaches to established institutions, social statuses of women and men in urban and rural settlements, and other factors. The literature offers theories that can explain social and economic gender differences based on the different approaches, roles, and influences of men and women in social environments. Such theories include Social Role Theory and Institutional Theory. Of course, additional analyses are needed to uncover and interpret the factors that shape the differences in ratings between men and women.

Respondents living in rural settlements generally give lower ratings to changes in service quality after community consolidation compared to urban residents. For some services (agriculture - 11.3%, roads - 13.4%, maintenance of public areas - 24.8%, culture/youth/sports - 17.2%)[7], the magnitude of the differences is quite high. This result raises concerns about the comparability of efforts by local self-government bodies (LSGBs) to improve services in rural and urban settlements. The more positive perceptions of changes in service quality among urban residents (compared to rural residents) reflect systematic differences in those efforts, if people in cities and villages have formed similar or at least comparable expectations from the reforms.

The significant impact of respondents' financial status and relative deprivation is limited to a few sectors. Notably, respondents in worse financial situations rate the likelihood of improving the quality of social protection services lower. The work of Grigoryan and Khachatryan (2024) shows that there are serious shortcomings in identifying target groups in Armenia's main social protection program (family benefits). Regarding relative deprivation, it is significant in the models for road maintenance and building maintenance services. A respondent with one additional level of relative deprivation rates the quality of building maintenance services 10.5% lower after community consolidation.

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[7] City residents naturally make less use of agricultural services, as is the case with roads connecting settlements to the community center, which are primarily used by residents of rural settlements.

*Table 2. Assessment of economic, social and administrative services**

	(1) Agricul-ture	(2) Water supply	(3) Irrigation	(4) Roads	(5) Inter-community transport	(6) Garbage managem ent	(7) Sanita-tion	(8) Building protec-tion	(9) Protectio n of public spaces	(10) Street lighiting	(11) Primary health care	(12) Cutlure, youth and sport	(13) Pres-chool edication	(14) Extracurri cular educatin	(15) Social protec-tion	(16) Citizen service offices
Variables																
Informed	0.076	-0.009	0.001	0.108**	0.063	0.023	0.135***	0.057	-0.022	0.053	0.022	0.043	0.083	-0.061	0.051	0.035
	(0.072)	(0.052)	(0.063)	(0.050)	(0.057)	(0.048)	(0.052)	(0.066)	(0.055)	(0.044)	(0.054)	(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.059)	(0.065)	(0.056)
Age	**0.001**	**0.002****	**0.002**	**0.000**	**0.003****	**0.003****	**0.001**	**0.000**	**0.002**	**0.002****	**0.001**	**-0.002**	**0.002**	**0.001**	**-0.002***	**0.000**
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Female	**0.082****	**0.065****	**0.031**	**0.055***	**0.020**	**0.023**	**0.006**	**0.049**	**0.085****	**0.057****	**0.040**	**0.126*****	**0.130*****	**0.093*****	**0.101*****	**0.040**
	(0.039)	(0.032)	(0.037)	(0.031)	(0.034)	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.041)	(0.034)	(0.028)	(0.032)	(0.036)	(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.038)	(0.033)
Married	-0.035	0.015	0.020	-0.010	-0.005	0.048	-0.008	0.004	-0.036	-0.045	0.021	0.031	0.050	0.043	0.064	0.063
	(0.047)	(0.040)	(0.046)	(0.038)	(0.042)	(0.036)	(0.038)	(0.051)	(0.041)	(0.033)	(0.039)	(0.043)	(0.041)	(0.043)	(0.046)	(0.040)
Education	**-0.044*****	**-0.024***	**-0.039*****	**-0.036*****	**-0.024***	**-0.010**	**-0.051*****	**-0.019**	**-0.016**	**-0.026****	**-0.023***	**-0.034****	**-0.021**	**-0.039*****	**-0.016**	**-0.020**
	(0.015)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.016)	(0.013)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.013)
Unempoyed	-0.004	0.031	0.157**	0.036	-0.037	0.014	0.063	0.117	-0.012	0.061	0.043	0.025	-0.003	0.021	-0.006	0.069
	(0.066)	(0.057)	(0.064)	(0.054)	(0.062)	(0.050)	(0.055)	(0.072)	(0.059)	(0.048)	(0.057)	(0.062)	(0.059)	(0.062)	(0.067)	(0.059)
Rural	**-0.113****	**-0.013**	**0.016**	**-0.134*****	**-0.048**	**-0.036**	**-0.095*****	**-0.122*****	**-0.248*****	**-0.083*****	**-0.019**	**-0.172*****	**0.007**	**-0.076****	**-0.083****	**-0.014**
	(0.044)	(0.035)	(0.041)	(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.046)	(0.038)	(0.031)	(0.035)	(0.038)	(0.037)	(0.038)	(0.041)	(0.036)
Financial state	0.018	0.008	0.018	-0.001	-0.001	0.025	-0.012	-0.049	0.012	0.025	0.021	0.009	0.022	0.021	0.074***	0.039*
	(0.027)	(0.024)	(0.027)	(0.023)	(0.026)	(0.021)	(0.023)	(0.031)	(0.025)	(0.021)	(0.023)	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.023)
Relative deprivation	0.052	0.022	0.036	0.060**	0.011	-0.003	0.042	0.105***	-0.001	0.014	-0.010	0.006	0.027	-0.001	0.022	-0.014
	(0.033)	(0.028)	(0.032)	(0.028)	(0.031)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.035)	(0.029)	(0.025)	(0.027)	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.028)
Observations	760	1,084	801	1,011	972	1,058	1,062	697	975	1,022	1,085	926	962	935	838	1,057
Log pseudolikelihood	-457.9	-696	-480.4	-586.8	-554.7	-563.7	-616.7	-427.7	-604.6	-537.5	-680.9	-598.5	-595.9	-602.7	-533.3	-695.7
Wald test	85.87	88.18	85.17	92.55	170	152.5	137.5	84.92	108.6	63.95	95.23	72.81	93.52	85.16	89.47	61.56
P-value	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.000	0.0052	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0158
Pseudo R-square	0.0946	0.0627	0.0885	0.0757	0.139	0.131	0.103	0.106	0.0849	0.0583	0.0711	0.0640	0.0761	0.0676	0.0777	0.0441

* Marginal effects are reported; in all models municipality dummies are included; standard errors are robust; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Local Economic Development

The results of the assessment of factors affecting economic development in the community are presented in Table 3. For some variables, the estimated results for these factors are similar to the results for services. Awareness is significant for only two indicators, with positive coefficients. Respondents who are aware of the reforms rate the improvement in the business environment in the community 13.4% higher after community consolidation. Older respondents do not have the same positive approach as we observed in the services sector. The picture here is mostly mixed.

We obtain a positive and highly significant coefficient for access to financial resources (3%). Access to financial resources in communities (especially rural and remote ones) is an important prerequisite for local economic development, and in this regard, the obtained result deserves attention. It is important to note that this result can also be interpreted as follows: younger residents of the community have lower expectations for the improvement of access to financial resources after community consolidation. Here, it is important to uncover the socio-economic interaction channels between age and financial resources, which is a subject for further study.

Female respondents, compared to male respondents, rated the changes in factors contributing to community economic development, such as access to financial resources (9.9%), attractiveness of the community for investors (6.9%), and implementation of programs by LSGBs (6.0%), more positively. Continuing with the topic of access to financial resources, it is important to emphasize the significance of the obtained result. It suggests the possibility of reducing the gender gap in access to financial resources because of community consolidation, which could be a significant achievement at this stage of the community consolidation reforms. As in the context of services, there may be other factors here as potential interaction channels.

In the case of rural settlements, respondents are also more negatively inclined, as was the case with services. In other words, the differences between rural and urban settlements, favoring urban areas, are widespread, covering both services and economic development perspectives. This is particularly concerning and leads to serious conclusions. According to the results, as a continuous process[8], community consolidation leads urban residents to more frequently provide positive "improved" responses regarding the improvement of services and economic development factors compared to rural residents, thus expressing their differentiated attitude towards the reforms.

Respondents with a better financial situation tend to give higher ratings across all sectors. The effect is significant for four variables. It is possible that respondents in a better financial position have successfully benefited from improvements in those sectors. Relative deprivation is significant only for the business environment.

Table 3. Assessment of economic development dimensions*

Variables	(1) Business environment	(2) Qualified specialists	(3) Chances for finding a job	(4) Accessibility of financial resources	(5) Tourism	(6) Attractivity for new invest-ments	(7) Municipa-liy project implement ations
Informed	**0.134****	**0.087***	**0.027**	**0.073**	**0.047**	**0.100***	**0.041**
	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.048)	(0.054)	(0.058)	(0.057)	(0.058)
Age	-0.001	0.001	-0.002*	0.003***	0.001	-0.001	-0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Female	**0.018**	**0.022**	**-0.022**	**0.099*****	**0.030**	**0.069****	**0.060***
	(0.030)	(0.032)	(0.029)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.034)

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[8] Remember that our sample included respondents from 36 communities, and the communities began to merge in different years after 2015.

Married	0.003	-0.035	0.059*	-0.013	0.013	0.043	-0.052
	(0.036)	(0.038)	(0.035)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.041)	(0.041)
Education	-0.004	-0.011	-0.018	-0.003	-0.030**	0.010	-0.008
	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Unempoyed	0.004	-0.098*	-0.118**	-0.051	-0.077	-0.110*	-0.099
	(0.052)	(0.056)	(0.053)	(0.059)	(0.061)	(0.064)	(0.063)
Rural	**-0.078****	**-0.112*****	**-0.099*****	**-0.145*****	**-0.216*****	**-0.215*****	**-0.208*****
	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.032)	(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.037)	(0.038)
Financial state	0.007	0.048**	0.068***	0.057**	0.029	0.039	0.063***
	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.021)	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.025)	(0.024)
Relative deprivation	0.045*	-0.006	0.004	-0.004	0.023	-0.021	-0.032
	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.025)	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Observations	1,049	1,105	1,144	1,049	1,077	991	972
Log pseudolikelihood	-611.9	-694.2	-633.2	-650.6	-617.2	-596.3	-610.2
Wald test	52.64	89.13	126.1	106	189.2	123.6	99.38
P-value	0.0711	1.32e-05	0	4.16e-08	0	9.98e-11	5.82e-07
Pseudo R-square	0.0442	0.0622	0.0959	0.0781	0.152	0.110	0.0766

* Marginal effects are reported; in all models municipality dummies are included; standard errors are robust; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

7. Local Democracy

7.1. The Level of Awareness and Involvement of Community Residents in Local Self-Governance

The "Law on Local Self-Government" of the Republic of Armenia defines residents' participation in local self-governance as a "process implemented in the community, through which residents, without discrimination, are informed about the activities of LSGBs and can have a direct or indirect influence on LSGBs' decisions." Every resident of the community who is 16 years or older has the right to participate in local self-governance.

The legal framework ensuring residents' participation includes both international documents[9] ratified by Armenia and the RA Constitution[10] and laws. Specifically, according to Article 183 of the RA Constitution, residents of a community can directly participate in the management of community affairs by resolving public issues of community importance through a local referendum. Moreover, residents can participate both personally and through public associations and civic initiatives. The involvement of residents in the decision-making process makes local authorities more open and accessible, raising both the accountability and responsiveness levels of LSGBs.

To ensure residents' participation, LSGBs are vested with the appropriate powers, which are implemented through various tools, including the relevant procedures approved by community councils. Such procedures include the "Procedure for Residents' Participation in Local Self-Governance in the Community," the "Procedure for the Formation and Functioning of Advisory Bodies Adjacent to the Community Head," the "Procedure for Organizing and Conducting Public Open Hearings and Discussions," and others.

In the multi-settlement communities formed because of administrative-territorial reforms, the existing tools that ensure residents' participation in community governance likely need to be reviewed and refined. Due to factors such as the expansion of the community's geographical domain, an increase in population, and several other factors, there is a need to improve the mechanisms and procedures that ensure residents' participation.

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[9] Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the Right to Participate in the Affairs of Local Authorities, 16.11.2009, Utrecht
[10] RA Constitution, Article 183, Part 2

7.2. Multivariate Analysis Characterizing Residents' Awareness and LSGBs' Responsiveness to Their Issues

Figure 13 reflects respondents' answers to the question of whether they know the members of the community council. The indicator is measured on a scale of 1 to 5. Overall, the level of recognition is low, with an average value of 2.15. A total of 38.7% of respondents do not know the members of the council, and only 0.59% had difficulty answering the question. The low level of recognition of community council members is present in all marzes (Figure 14), although the communities in Aragatsotn and Vayots Dzor may be considered partial exceptions. The Pearson Chi-2 test confirms that the distribution of recognition differs significantly between the marzes.

Figure 13. Do You Know the Members of the Community Council?
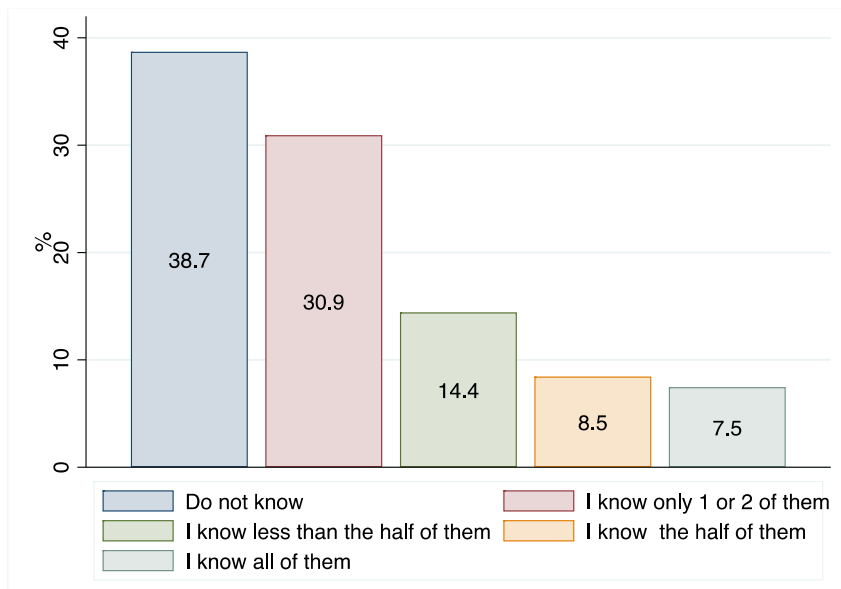
Figure 14. Do You Know the Members of the Community Council? (By Marz)
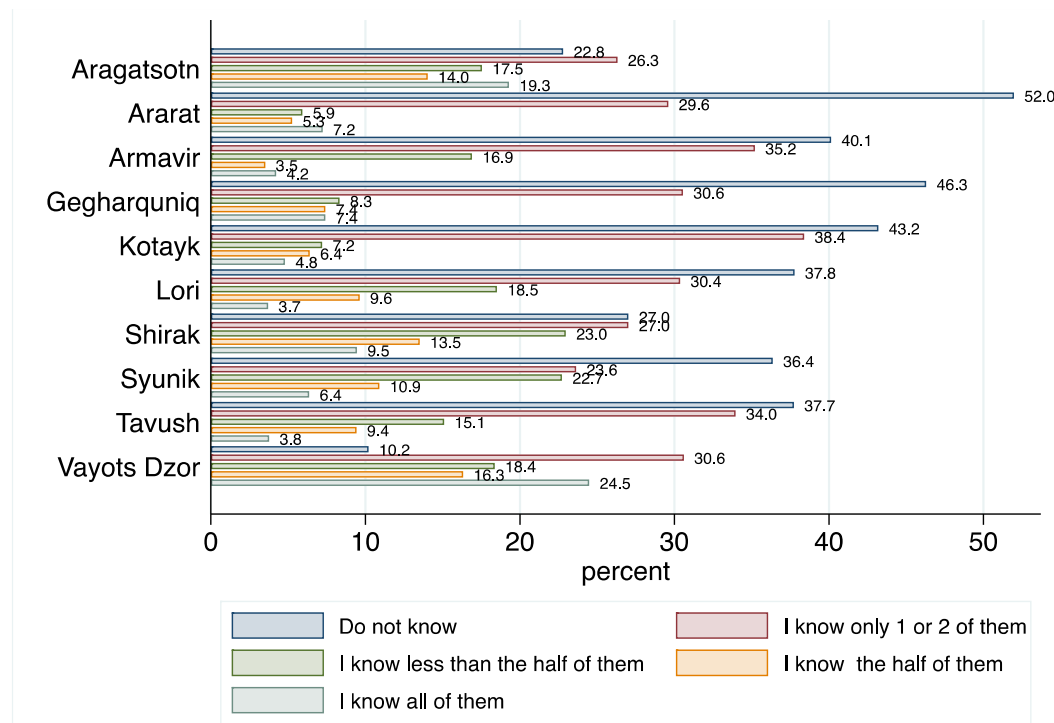
*Pearson chi2 = 138.0374   Pr = 0.000

After the community consolidation process, if the new community institutions operate more transparently and ensure greater inclusiveness among community residents, the level of awareness regarding the activities of LSGBs should increase. In Figure 15, we present the corresponding distribution for the entire sample. More than half of the respondents believe that the level of awareness regarding the activities of LSGBs has not changed since their community's consolidation. However, more respondents indicated that they "have started to become informed or are informed after consolidation" than those who said they are "less informed or not informed at all." This pattern is largely maintained in both rural and urban communities (Figure 16).

Figure 15. How Has the Level of Residents' Awareness of LSGBs' Activities Changed After the Community Consolidation Process?
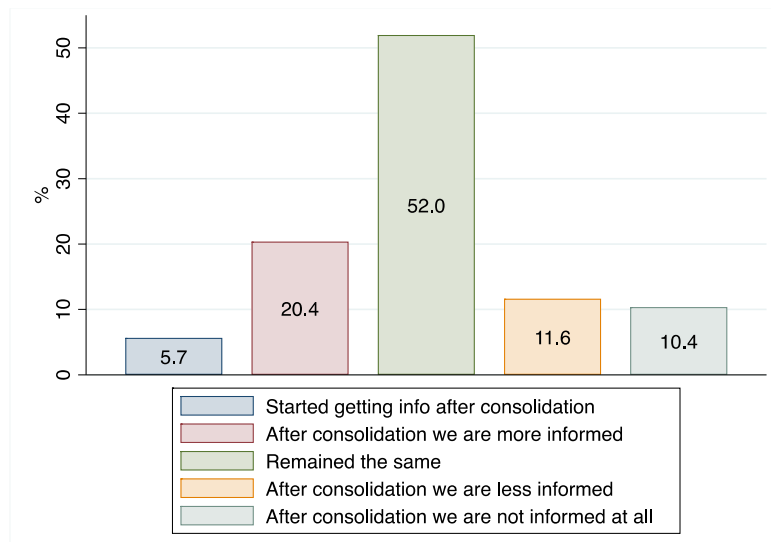
Figure 16. How Has the Level of Residents' Awareness of LSGBs' Activities Changed After the Community Consolidation Process (in Urban and Rural Settlements)?*
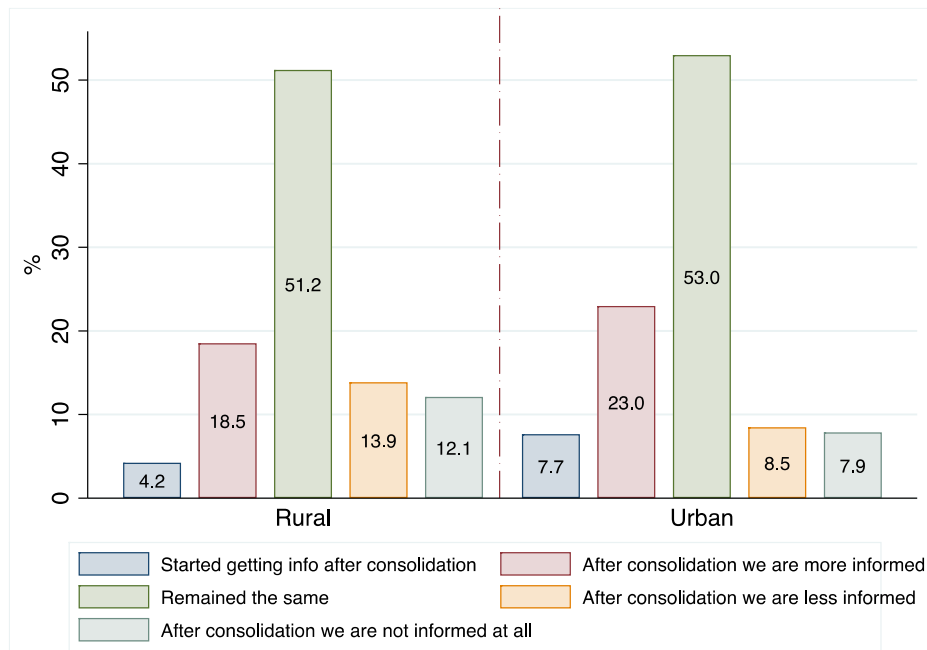
* Pearson chi2 = 21.7019, Pr = 0.001

Figure 17 shows the speed at which residents' issues are resolved by various institutions (community leader, council members, NGO, state administration body, etc.). It is interesting to note that the distribution

of the speed of problem-solving remains stable when transitioning from one institution to another.[11] In all cases, except for the "Other" category, the issues were resolved either somewhat or quickly.

Figure 17. How Quickly Was the Issue You Raised Resolved by Any Leadership Body or Organization?*
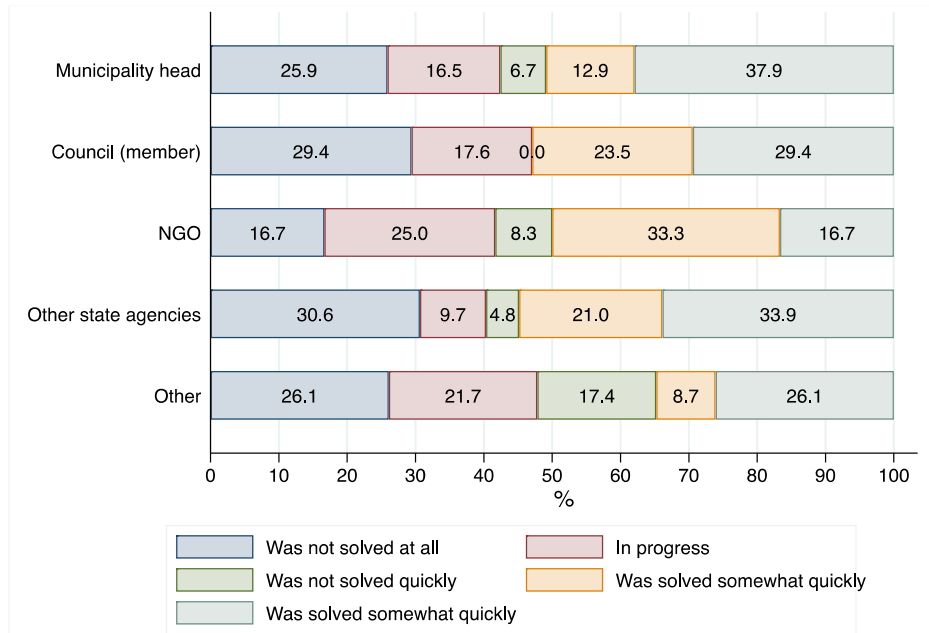
*Pearson chi2 = 17.3854,   Pr = 0.361

Respondents also selected the factors (a maximum of 3) that they believe can help community residents the most in getting their issues resolved by LSGBs (Figure 18). It is noteworthy that "awareness of one's rights" was chosen by 51.8% of respondents. The second most common response was "professional skills." Bribes or gifts were selected as responses by 11.3% of respondents. Overall, responses based on skills, efforts, and knowledge, such as "professional skills," "perseverance," "awareness of one's rights," and "adherence to the law by LSGBs," were most frequently chosen by respondents. This is a positive signal of the proper level of trust in LSGBs by the public.

Figure 18. A Maximum of 3 Factors That Can Help Community Residents the Most in Getting Their Issues Resolved by LSGBs

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[11] The Pearson test statistic is not significant.

Next, respondents directly revealed their trust in individuals representing LSGBs and the marzpetaran (regional administration) (Figure 19). In all cases, the most frequently received response was the highest level of trust. The community head and administrative head are fully trusted by 49.3% and 46.2% of respondents, respectively. The lowest trust ("Do not trust at all" or "Do not trust") was recorded towards community council members, at 18.9%. More than 50% of respondents expressed their trust ("Trust" or "Fully trust") in the community head, community staff, and administrative head, but not in community council members or the marzpet, for whom the weight of the "Hard to answer" option is also high.

Figure 19. Overall, How Much Do You Trust the Following Individuals?
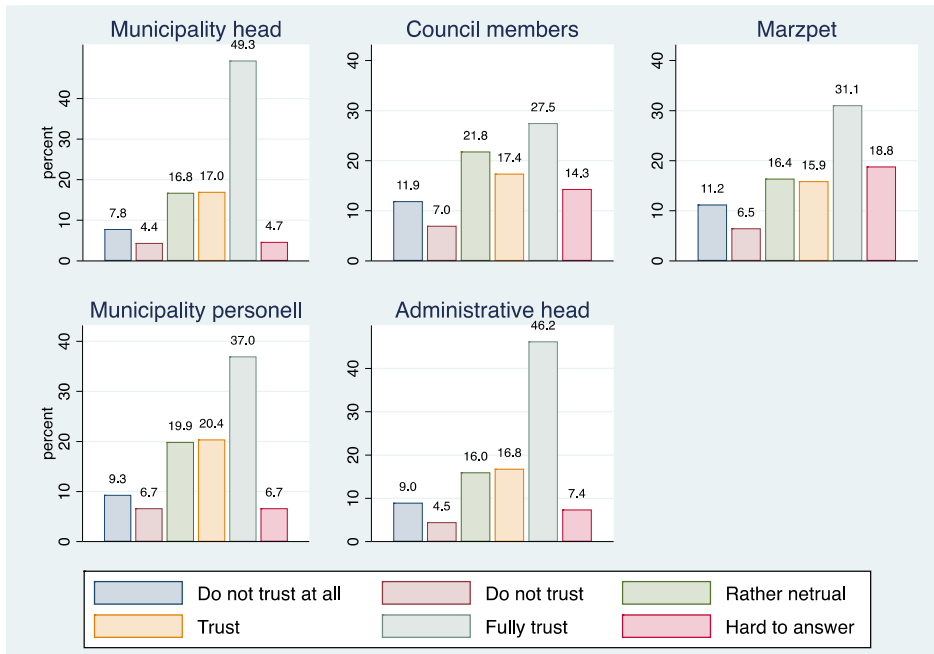
Most respondents believe that after the community consolidation, political life in the community has become more active, governance and decision-making have become more inclusive, the range of participants in governance and decision-making has increased, and decisions have become more qualitative, understandable, and acceptable (Figure 20). The number of non-respondents regarding participation is quite high at 12.2%. Overall, respondents' perceptions of these indicators are more positive than negative. The question remains whether the observed positive picture is sufficient to achieve the policy's target indicators, which requires further study.

Figure 20. Do You Agree That After the Community Consolidation
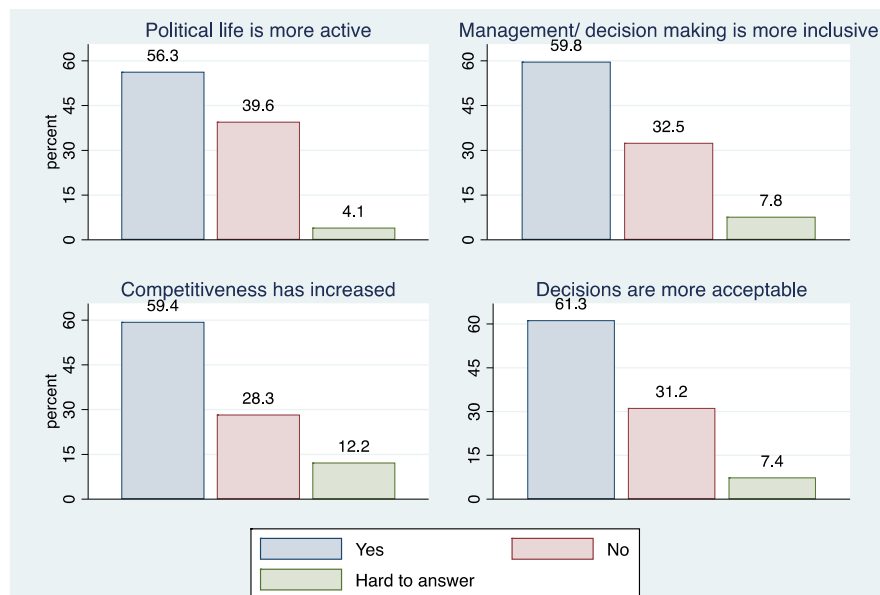
Regarding the transparency of LSGBs' operations, the most frequently encountered option was the neutral response (Figure 21). All other responses, except for "Rather not transparent," have comparable weights. This observation allows us to argue that respondents indeed find it difficult to take a clear position on the transparency of their community's operations. While the responses related to trust show a predominantly positive picture, such a picture is absent in the case of transparency. The results indicate that trust in individual officials is not correlated with the transparency of the institution's operations.

Figure 21. Transparency of Local Self-Government Bodies' Activities
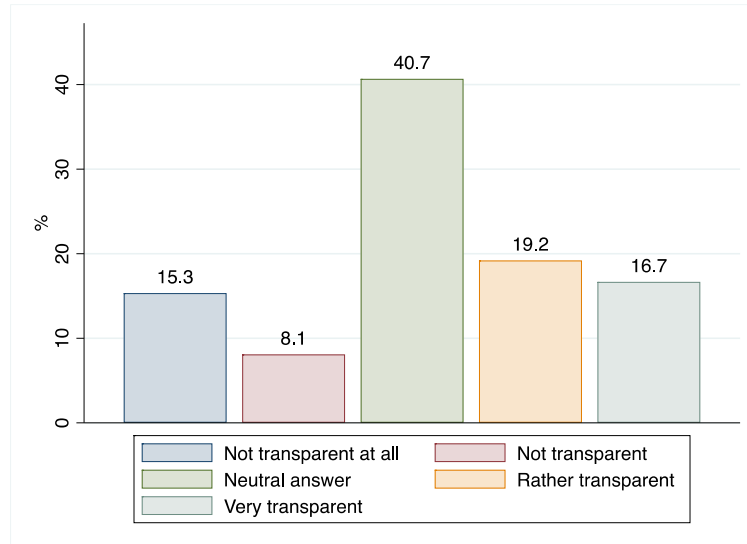
A similar distribution pattern is observed at the marz (regional) level (Figure 22). In the case of the communities in Ararat and Tavush marzes, a larger portion of respondents believe that LSGBs' operations are not transparent at all. Figure A20 shows that the average trust indicator is also low in these communities. Overall, there is a significant correlation of 0.356 between transparency and average trust indicators, with the highest value recorded in Syunik at 0.536.

Figure 22. Transparency of Local Self-Government Bodies' Activities (By Marz) *
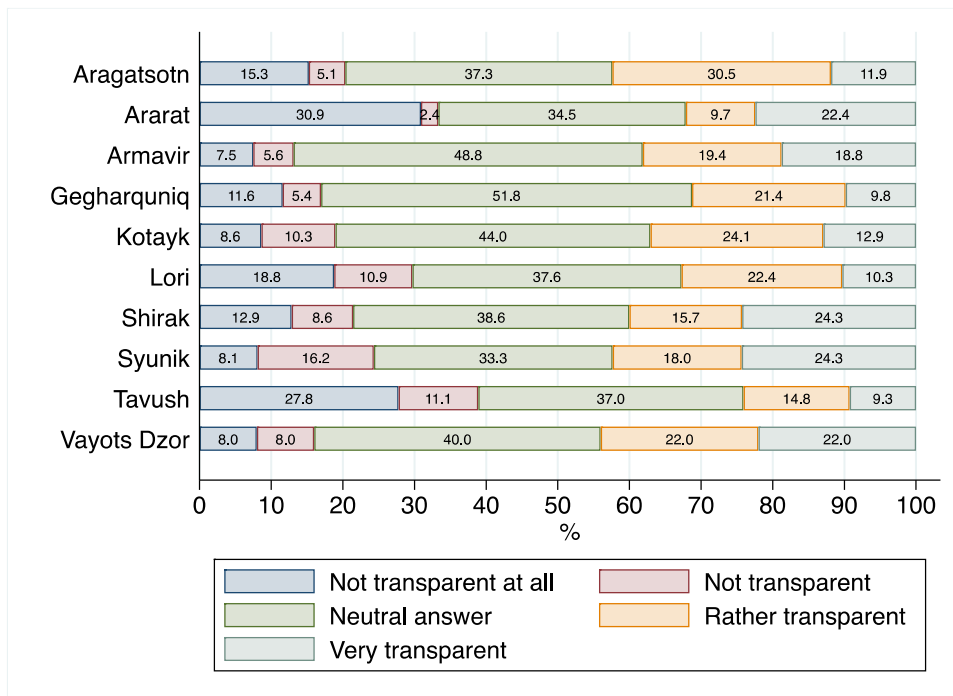
*Pearson chi2 = 118.2050, Pr = 0.000

7.3. Multivariate Regression Analysis

In this subsection, we evaluate econometric models for respondents' participation, visits to LSGBs' official websites, and LSGBs' responsiveness. Community residents' participation is more than crucial for all directions of community development, from economic development to human rights and democracy. The effective functioning of LSGBs in all areas is directly dependent on the involvement of community members and their direct and indirect participation in the decision-making process. On the other hand, the ability and actions of LSGB representatives in responding to community members' issues are largely determined by the availability of financial and human resources to LSGBs and parameters that characterize the institutional environment. It is expected that political power, which has taken a democratic path at the community level, should be interested in increasing LSGBs' responsiveness as an important component of reforms.

The participation indicator is constructed based on the following question: "Which of the following activities have you carried out in the last 12 months?" Possible responses are multiple, ranging from attending council meetings to participating in LSGB discussions online. If there was participation in any format, the variable is assigned a value of 1; otherwise, it receives a value of 0 (zero participation). The LSGBs' official website variable is constructed based on the question: "Have you visited the LSGBs' official website in the last 12 months?" Finally, the LSGBs' responsiveness indicator is constructed based on the following question: "In your or your circle's experience, do LSGBs properly respond to issues and suggestions raised by community residents when making decisions?" Possible answers are "Yes" and "No," with values of 1 and 0, respectively.

To the standard list of explanatory variables, we have added a variable that reveals whether the respondent had an issue or problem they approached any leadership body or organization within in the last 12 months. In the case of a positive response, the variable is assigned a value of 1; otherwise, it receives a value of 0. Our hypothesis is that respondents who approached with a private issue or problem should have differentiated participation, more frequent use of the LSGBs' official website, and, based on their experience, different perceptions of LSGBs' responsiveness.

Table 4 presents the results of the estimated models. Notably, respondents who approached a private issue have lower levels of participation (6.6%). On the other hand, they are more likely to use the LSGBs' official website. The perception of LSGBs' responsiveness does not change for respondents in these two groups. It is important to note that the coefficients of many explanatory variables have opposite signs in the models for participation and using LSGBs' official websites. For example, older individuals have higher participation but are less likely to use the LSGBs' website. In the case of education, the picture is the opposite: respondents with higher educational attainment prefer to use the website rather than participate directly in community processes. Financially more vulnerable respondents are more likely to participate in some form and less likely to use the LSGBs' website.

In this regard, using the LSGBs' official website is mainly seen as an "alternative" to participating in community-level events and processes. It is possible that the community resident receives some information about these processes from the website, which is sufficient, and there is no need to participate in the events and processes. Interestingly, the relative deprivation indicator is not significant in any of the models. For example, respondents with a higher sense of relative deprivation do not try to engage in community-level activities that could be useful for improving their social status (e.g., by attending training or professional development programs).

In the LSGBs' responsiveness model, only two variables are significant: awareness and age. Older people have greater expectations and expect more attention from LSGB representatives. This is an important result for ensuring inclusiveness in LSGB activities.

Table 4. Multivariate regression model for participation, municipality website and responsiveness*

Variables	(1) Participation	(2) Municipality website	(3) Municipality responsive-ness
Private question/ problem	**-0.066***	**0.063***	**0.005**
	(0.025)	(0.020)	(0.036)
Informed	-0.061	0.145***	0.158***
	(0.041)	(0.043)	(0.052)
Age	**0.003***	**-0.004***	**-0.002***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Female	-0.040*	0.009	0.019
	(0.023)	(0.019)	(0.033)
Married	0.051*	0.032	0.002
	(0.026)	(0.024)	(0.040)
Education	**-0.031***	**0.025***	**-0.002**
	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.013)
Unemployed	**0.159***	**-0.039**	**-0.021**
	(0.048)	(0.039)	(0.061)
Rural	0.031	-0.036	-0.024
	(0.026)	(0.022)	(0.036)
Financial state	**-0.052***	**0.049***	**0.022**
	(0.017)	(0.015)	(0.023)
Relative deprivation	0.011	0.017	0.002
	(0.020)	(0.016)	(0.027)
Observations	1,139	1,138	1,025
Log pseudolikelihood	-465.2	-408.6	-629.7
Wald test	168.8	194	96.94
P-value	0	0	1.99e-06
Pseudo R-square	0.196	0.206	0.0809

* Marginal effects are reported; in all models municipality dummies are included; standard errors are robust; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

7.4. Multivariate Analysis of the Efficiency and Transparency/Trust of LSGBs' Activities

As mentioned earlier, the consolidation of LSGBs can have dual socio-economic outcomes: (i) positive, largely driven by the scale effect, and (ii) negative, which has several causes, such as the "proximity" factor, political preferences, new structures of political "relations" with central authorities, and reduced competitiveness. The latter is due to the fact that the previous competition among LSGBs for state funds and to offer a wide range of services to consumers no longer exists, and LSGBs stop investing in becoming more competitive (Tiebout, 1956). In Armenia, in this context, there is significant competition among communities for receiving subsidies (targeted allocations) from the state. The consolidation of resources (human, financial, and infrastructure) under the control and management of a single unit has played a larger role.

In this chapter, we estimate an econometric model that allows us to uncover the perceptions of community residents regarding the potential positive and negative consequences of community consolidation in Armenia. The model has two outcome variables. The first is the impact of community services on the quality of life, which allows for the assessment of the economic impact of services. As an alternative variable, we use the change in economic development in the community after the consolidation. The second variable of the model is related to the transparency of LSGBs' activities, which allows for the assessment of the potential presence of the "proximity" factor, among other things. Due to

the potential overload caused by consolidation, the strength of the connection with community representatives may decrease, or the flow of information about the community's activities may be restricted for political reasons. As an alternative variable, we use the trust indicator towards LSGB representatives, which is constructed as an average trust index based on trust indicators towards the community head, council members, community staff, and administrative head.

The variables included in the model cover the individual data of community residents (age, gender, marital status, education, employment), place of residence, as well as three variables related to awareness and civic activity. In all versions of the estimated models, the regional affiliation of the settlements is included.

We estimate a Seemingly Unrelated Regression (SUR) model, which allows us to evaluate the joint impact of respondents' characteristics on the effectiveness and transparency of LSGB activities. For example, the results of the model estimation may reveal whether more educated people have a more positive evaluation of the impact of community consolidation on the quality of life, but at the same time express dissatisfaction with the level of transparency. In this case, the estimated coefficients in the two equations of the model will have different signs—one positive, the other negative.

The results of the model are presented in Table 5. The awareness indicator regarding administrative-territorial reforms has a positive impact on the outcome variables, with a high level of significance in some cases. Recall that 88% of respondents consider themselves informed about the consolidation process, and according to the regression model, they rate the quality of life 0.26 points higher because of LSGB consolidation than those who are not informed about it. Although 0.28 points on a scale of 1-5 is not a large number, it may have a marginally decisive significance considering that the average value of the "impact of community consolidation on the quality of life" indicator is 3.51. The corresponding impact on the transparency of LSGB activities is 0.26. This indicator increases the impact of LSGB operations by raising the average value of transparency (3.14) to 3.40, further distancing it from the midpoint (3.0). This analysis shows that the awareness indicator has a positive effect on the evaluation of LSGB activities in terms of both significance and impact magnitude. However, being informed does not explain the degree of awareness, which is why we include the next variable that measures the level of recognition of council members. As we see, in all models and equations, a higher level of recognition of council members leads to a higher evaluation of LSGB activities.

Respondents who participated in community elections rate the activity of communities in terms of economic activity more highly. They also trust community representatives more and rate the transparency of communities more highly. It is understandable that participation in elections is a decision that needs to be established, and the corresponding variable is difficult to consider as an exogenous variable. In this regard, it is difficult to assert that participation in community elections has led to more positive evaluations. Here, the connection is likely bidirectional and reflects the fact that positive expectations in the welfare and economic fields, differentiated higher evaluations of transparency and trust, are accompanied by a higher level of participation in community elections.

Compared to men, women rate the activities of communities more highly and trust community representatives more. The more positive perceptions among women, which were observed in terms of services and economic development, are also maintained in this case. Regarding trust, this result is comparable to the findings of Antinyan, Baghdasaryan, and Grigoryan (2022), according to which women, compared to men, have greater trust in state institutions.

We obtain similar results for rural/urban residents as observed in the case of services and economic development factors. Respondents from rural settlements rate LSGB activities as less transparent and have lower levels of trust compared to respondents from urban settlements. In other words, systematic differences between rural and urban settlements also exist in the areas of LSGB transparency and trust towards them, which further reinforces the conviction that the efforts directed towards community development after consolidation have not been evenly distributed between urban and rural settlements.

The variables of financial status and relative deprivation are positive in all cases and significant in some cases. The literature shows that a higher level of relative deprivation reduces trust in state institutions. In our case, the trust indicators towards LSGBs are comparable to the trust indicators towards RA state institutions presented in Antinyan, Baghdasaryan, and Grigoryan (2022).

Regarding the possible trade-off, the model results do not allow us to conclude that the positive impact of community activities on quality of life and economic development after consolidation is accompanied by a decrease in transparency or trust. This is a very important result in terms of effective reforms and policies.

Table 5. SUREG regression results.

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	The impact of consolidation on the quality of life	Transparency of municipality	The impact of consolidation on the quality of life	Trust towards municipality	Economic development after consolidation	Transparency of municipality	Economic development after consolidation	Trust towards municipality
Informed	0.275**	0.256*	0.164	0.392**	0.086	0.207	0.072	0.345**
	(0.127)	(0.153)	(0.133)	(0.173)	(0.112)	(0.154)	(0.117)	(0.175)
Kowing Council members	0.049*	0.166***	0.049*	0.124***	0.051**	0.174***	0.047*	0.126***
	(0.027)	(0.038)	(0.028)	(0.034)	(0.024)	(0.038)	(0.024)	(0.035)
Participation in local election	0.078	0.191**	0.048	0.279***	0.116**	0.181**	0.096	0.257***
	(0.061)	(0.088)	(0.065)	(0.087)	(0.057)	(0.088)	(0.060)	(0.087)
Age	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Female	0.178***	0.067	0.152**	-0.076	0.215***	0.069	0.163***	-0.084
	(0.059)	(0.085)	(0.062)	(0.080)	(0.053)	(0.085)	(0.055)	(0.080)
Married	-0.114	-0.035	-0.133*	-0.022	-0.103	-0.057	-0.107	-0.010
	(0.071)	(0.102)	(0.076)	(0.092)	(0.065)	(0.101)	(0.067)	(0.093)
Education	-0.048**	-0.005	-0.058***	-0.093***	-0.031	-0.001	-0.038*	-0.091***
	(0.022)	(0.031)	(0.022)	(0.030)	(0.021)	(0.031)	(0.021)	(0.030)
Unemployed	-0.115	-0.249	-0.132	0.015	-0.083	-0.225	-0.078	0.017
	(0.111)	(0.158)	(0.118)	(0.161)	(0.103)	(0.157)	(0.110)	(0.161)
Rural	-0.243***	-0.189**	-0.265***	0.091	-0.259***	-0.180**	-0.253***	0.090
	(0.064)	(0.089)	(0.068)	(0.088)	(0.060)	(0.089)	(0.062)	(0.089)
Financial status	0.074	0.088	0.065	0.128**	0.106**	0.090	0.108**	0.130**
	(0.045)	(0.061)	(0.048)	(0.055)	(0.047)	(0.061)	(0.050)	(0.056)
Relative deprivation	0.084	0.101	0.081	0.032	0.100**	0.087	0.113**	0.019
	(0.056)	(0.072)	(0.058)	(0.066)	(0.050)	(0.072)	(0.052)	(0.067)
Constant	2.811***	3.212***	3.040***	2.760***	2.823***	3.287***	4.830***	2.806***
	(0.221)	(0.269)	(0.223)	(0.305)	(0.183)	(0.269)	(0.209)	(0.306)
Observations	891	891	828	828	880	880	820	820
R-squared	0.118	0.137	0.119	0.144	0.171	0.137	0.174	0.137

*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

8. Perceptions Regarding Decentralization of Powers

8.1. Conceptual Approaches, Goals, and Planned Measures in the Field of Decentralization of Powers

Decentralization of powers is a crucial component of the process aimed at the sustainable development of the local self-governance system, which can be viewed in Armenia as a subsequent phase following administrative-territorial reforms.

The justification for decentralization of powers for the effective resolution of public issues is primarily set forth in the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which states that the exercise of public powers should generally be entrusted to the authorities closest to the citizens. Moreover, when delegating any of these powers to other authorities, the scale of the problem and the requirements for economy and efficiency should be considered.[12]

In this context, the Armenian government views the broader strategic goal of deepening local democracy and strengthening and sustainably developing communities as part of the local self-governance system reform agenda. Expanding the powers and capacities of LSGBs to solve public issues of local significance and improving the quality and accessibility of community services will significantly enhance the quality of life and living standards in communities.

The decentralization policy is emphasized in the Armenian government's 2021-2026 program[13]. Specifically, the government has planned measures to be implemented primarily in the areas of primary healthcare, maintenance and operation of inter-community and inter-settlement roads, maintenance and operation of public-school buildings, and the organization and implementation of comprehensive social services. For this purpose, the decentralization concept was approved by the Armenian Prime Minister's Decree N 1111-A[14], which defines the principles, challenges, and objectives of decentralization, proposed solutions aimed at possible decentralization of powers, expected results, and sources of funding. The concept also outlines the scope of possible actions and measures to be undertaken in the coming years, presenting the main areas (sectors) of powers that will be decentralized as part of the decision-making and legislative processes following the adoption of the concept.

8.2. Multivariate Analysis of Perceptions Regarding Decentralization Based on Experimental Surveys

A separate section of the surveys conducted within the program is dedicated to uncovering perceptions regarding decentralization. For this purpose, a survey experiment design method was applied, which allows for revealing respondents' expectations about decentralization when they are provided with additional information. From a statistical perspective, such a structure ensures an adequate level of randomization and allows for an accurate assessment of the impact of information.

Figure 23 reflects respondents' awareness of the decentralization process. To clarify what process is being discussed, respondents were provided with the definition of decentralization, namely, the transfer of broader powers from state government bodies to local self-government bodies. It turns out that nearly 60% of respondents were hearing about this process for the first time, and only 16.2% believed they were sufficiently informed about it. It is evident that there is a significant gap in public awareness about the decentralization process, and targeted efforts must be made to raise the level of awareness.

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[12] "European Charter of Local Self-Government," Article 4

[13] "On the Government Program of the Republic of Armenia," RA Government Decree N1363-A, dated 18.08.2021

[14] "On Approving the Concept of Decentralization of Powers in the Republic of Armenia," RA Prime Minister's Decree N1111-A

In the next step, additional information about the decentralization process is randomly provided to 50% of the respondents to measure how much this information influences or changes their expectations regarding the decentralization process.

Figure 23. Awareness of the Planned Decentralization Process in Armenia
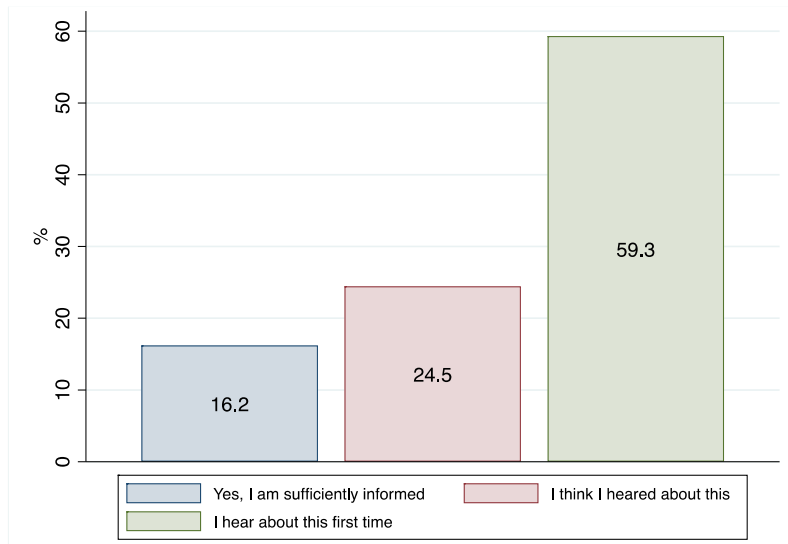
Figure 24 presents respondents' expectations about the decentralization process for two groups: (i) the treatment group, which received additional information, and (ii) the control group, which did not receive additional information. The distribution of responses is quite similar; however, the Pearson Chi2 test rejects the null hypothesis that the distributions do not differ. Moreover, the mean values of responses based on the 1-5 scale for the two groups differ significantly (at the 5% level). The mean values for the treatment and control groups are 3.65 and 3.50, respectively. This observation allows us to conclude that additional information creates positive expectations among respondents. In other words, respondents perceive the information about the process in a positive light and form more optimistic expectations. To some extent, they approve of the program by expressing greater expectations.

To measure the impact of information on expectations more accurately, we estimate causal models by introducing additional variables that can make the impact assessment more reliable.

Figure 24. Expectations of Outcomes from the Decentralization Process*
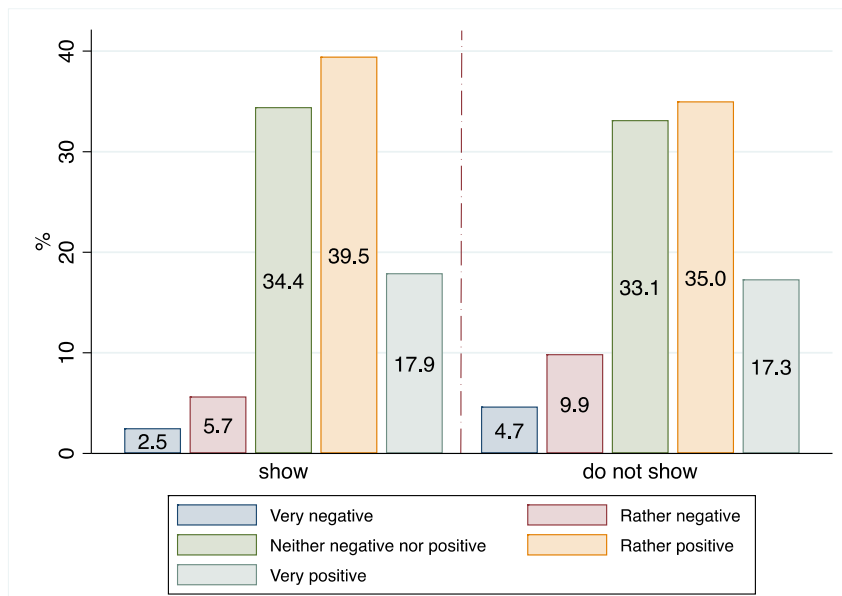
*Pearson chi2= 12.3610   Pr = 0.015

Table 6 presents the results of the estimated models. In the first model, the only variable is information (0 if the respondent did not receive information, and 1 if they did). Respondents who received additional information form more positive expectations about the decentralization process by an average of 0.14 points. The remaining models introduce additional variables. In the fourth model, all standard variables used in the previous regression models are included, as well as the prior awareness indicator presented in Figure 23. In all models, the additional information has had a significantly positive impact on the formation of expectations. From the estimation of probabilistic models, it becomes clear that respondents who received additional information are 5-10% more likely, on average, to choose the "rather positive" or "very positive" options. This result is highly important from a policy perspective: increasing awareness of the decentralization process could be a decisive factor for the successful implementation of the process.

Table 6. Regression results from survey experiment results*.

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	**0.1416****	**0.2042*****	**0.2215*****	**0.1733****
	(0.0578)	(0.0604)	(0.0656)	(0.0675)
Informed about decentralization in advance		**0.2026*****	**0.1661*****	**0.1652*****
		(0.0403)	(0.0439)	(0.0438)
Knowing council members			**0.0529****	**0.0566****
			(0.0265)	(0.0277)
Informed about consolidation				0.0420
				(0.1173)
Participation in the last local election				0.0769
				(0.0686)
Age				-0.0028
				(0.0022)
Female				**0.1768*****
				(0.0658)
Married				0.0223
				(0.0752)
Education				**-0.0791*****
				(0.0241)
Unemployed				0.1541
				(0.1144)
Rural				**-0.1782****
				(0.0701)
Financial status				**0.1102****
				(0.0497)
Relative deprivation				0.0379
Constant	3.5047***	3.5931***	2.5066***	2.4950***
	(0.0447)	(0.0753)	(0.0932)	(0.2382)
Municipality dummy	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,173	1,165	977	961
R-squared	0.0111	0.0322	0.0378	0.0793

* Dependent variable is . 1-very negative, …, 5-very positive: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

9. Conclusions from the Multivariate Analyses

Sectoral Measures
- The low level of reliability in awareness is reflected in most of the regression models, largely being insignificant. In many cases, respondents' awareness does not significantly alter their evaluations of service sectors.
- The age distribution within communities plays an important role in evaluating the quality of services. A higher proportion of elderly residents in rural and remote settlements can skew the evaluation of service quality in a positive direction. Older community residents may have lower expectations for improvements in community services, resulting in higher evaluations.
- Respondents with higher educational qualifications tend to give lower evaluations in the service sector. This group of respondents is expected to provide more comprehensive and objective assessments of the changes occurring in the community. The impact of education on evaluations may also be mediated through factors such as gender, age, and/or conditions in the labor market.
- Women, in contrast to men, tend to give more positive evaluations regarding the quality of services. The greatest difference is observed in the preschool education sector. This can be explained by differences in education, employment status, approaches to established institutions, and the different social statuses of women and men in urban and rural areas, among other factors.
- Respondents living in rural areas generally give lower evaluations of the quality of services after the community consolidation. This raises concerns regarding the adequacy of efforts and investments by LSGBs in the service sectors in rural versus urban areas. The more positive perceptions among urban residents about changes in service quality reflect systematic differences in these efforts compared to rural areas.
- Financially more vulnerable groups are inclined to evaluate measures implemented in the social protection sector more negatively. This indirectly confirms the findings of Grigoryan and Khachatryan (2024) that there are shortcomings in identifying target groups in social protection policies.

Economic Development
- For some variables, the estimated results for economic development factors in the community are like those for services. However, there are differences.
- Older respondents do not have the same positive attitude as observed in the services sector. However, a positive and highly significant coefficient is obtained for financial resource availability. The availability of financial resources in communities (especially rural and remote ones) is an important precondition for local economic development, and in this regard, the obtained result deserves attention.
- The results also suggest the potential for reducing the gender gap in financial access following community consolidation. This could be a significant achievement at this stage of community consolidation reforms.

Participation and LSGB Responsiveness
- It is notable that many of the explanatory variables have coefficients with opposite signs in the models for participation and using LSGBs' official websites. In this regard, using LSGBs' official websites is primarily seen as an "alternative" to participating in community-level events and processes.
- The relative deprivation indicator is not significant in any of the models. Respondents with a sense of relative deprivation do not attempt to engage in community-level activities that could be beneficial for improving their social status.

- In the LSGB responsiveness model, only two variables are significant: awareness and age. Older individuals have higher expectations and anticipate more attention from LSGB representatives. This is an important result for ensuring inclusiveness in LSGB activities.

Well-being and Transparency/Trust

- Respondents who participated in community elections rate the impact of communities on economic activity more highly. They also trust community representatives more and rate the transparency of communities more highly. This relationship is likely bidirectional and reflects the fact that positive expectations in the welfare and economic fields, as well as differentiated higher evaluations of transparency and trust, are accompanied by a higher level of participation in community elections.
- The more positive perceptions among women, observed in the case of services and economic development factors, are also maintained here.
- We obtain similar results for rural/urban residents as observed in the case of sectoral services and economic development factors. Respondents from rural settlements rate LSGB activities as less transparent and have lower levels of trust compared to respondents from urban settlements. In other words, systematic differences between rural and urban settlements also exist in the areas of LSGB transparency and trust, which further reinforces the belief that efforts directed towards community development after consolidation have not been evenly distributed between urban and rural settlements.
- The variables of financial status and relative deprivation are positive in all cases and significant in some cases. It is known from the literature that a higher level of relative deprivation reduces trust in state institutions.
- The model structure allows for the evaluation of whether the positive impact of community activities on quality of life and economic development after consolidation is accompanied by a decrease in transparency or trust. The results allow us to conclude that such a trade-off does not exist.

Decentralization

- In the decentralization section of the questionnaire, the survey experiment allowed for the identification of respondents' expectations regarding decentralization, influenced by additional information flow. Statistical evaluations suggest that increased awareness raises the probability of positive expectations by 5-10 percentage points. It can be concluded that respondents perceive the information about the process in a positive light and form more optimistic expectations. This observation is also confirmed in the models when additional variables are included in the model.

10. Conclusions and Recommendations

10.1. Conclusions

Based on the analyses conducted and the results obtained, the following conclusions are presented:

- Most survey participants, or 88.3%, consider themselves informed about the administrative-territorial reform processes, with the main source of information being the media. However, despite considering themselves informed, about one-third of them have a misconception about the goals of the administrative-territorial reforms. It can be concluded that some residents do not associate the positive changes they observe in their communities with the administrative-territorial reforms.
- Most respondents believe that the consolidation of communities has generally had a positive impact on people's quality of life. In this context, the quality of economic services provided by communities has mainly improved. The most significant progress has been recorded in street lighting, waste management, road maintenance, and sanitary cleaning services. Agricultural services, particularly those related to the availability, affordability, and operational procedures of

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community agricultural machinery, have seen little improvement. Irrigation water supply and the maintenance and servicing of multi-apartment buildings have also seen minimal improvements or remained unchanged. Perhaps the least positive changes have been observed in public transportation services, especially in the organization of regular passenger transportation between the community center and settlements.

- As a result of the administrative-territorial reforms, the quality of services in the fields of preschool education, extracurricular education, culture, sports, and youth affairs has improved the most among social services. Meanwhile, the services in primary healthcare and social protection have seen little improvement or are provided in the same manner, according to residents.

- The satisfaction levels of residents with community services vary between rural and urban settlements. According to respondents, services provided in rural areas have improved less compared to similar services in urban areas.

- In the evaluation of community services by criteria, most residents in consolidated communities did not point out any services that have deteriorated as a result of the community mergers. However, there are services where positive changes have occurred at a slower pace.

- According to respondents, progress has been made in terms of local economic development, with the most significant positive changes occurring in the improvement of the business environment and the implementation of economic development programs by LSGBs.

- Community council members are not well known in their communities, with more than two-thirds of respondents either not recognizing any council members or recognizing only one or two.

- The level of residents' awareness of LSGB activities has not significantly changed after the community mergers. However, more residents have become informed after the mergers than before.

- Residents trust the community head, community employees, and administrative heads of settlements more than they trust council members, with only about 19% of respondents expressing trust in the latter.

- After the community mergers, political life in the community has become more active, and governance and decision-making at the local level have become more inclusive. Respondents believe that the circle of participants in local self-government and decision-making has expanded, and the decisions have become more qualitative, understandable, and acceptable. However, the most common response regarding the transparency of LSGB activities was neutral, with negative responses in some communities of specific regions. The results show that trust in individual officials is not necessarily linked to the transparency of the institution's operations. Notably, residents of rural settlements perceive LSGB activities as less transparent and trust LSGBs less than residents of urban settlements.

- There is a significant gap in public awareness regarding the decentralization of powers, with nearly 60% of respondents hearing about this process for the first time. However, respondents who received additional information about the decentralization process during the survey have more positive expectations about the process.

- A higher level of recognition among council members leads to a higher evaluation of LSGB activities. Those who participated in community elections rate the impact of community activities on economic activity more highly, trust community representatives more, and evaluate the transparency of communities more positively. The results suggest that the positive impact of community activities on quality of life and economic development is not accompanied by a decrease in transparency or trust.

- Statistical evaluations suggest that additional information about decentralization creates positive expectations among respondents.

10.2. Recommendations

Based on the analyses conducted and the main conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are presented in the report:

1. Emphasizing the accurate communication of the objectives of administrative-territorial reforms within society, it is proposed to develop a comprehensive communication strategy aimed at consistent education through targeted communication channels regarding the goals of the reforms, highlighting their importance, and shaping desirable expectations within the public.

2. Emphasize the coverage of programs and activities aimed at the objectives of administrative-territorial reforms among a broad audience, in the context of positive changes recorded in communities, highlighting their causal relationships and interconnections.

3. Encourage and support communities through targeted allocations, grants, and other investments to implement programs aimed at improving community services where there are still fewer positive developments. Specifically, efforts should be made to improve services in community agricultural machinery operation, irrigation water supply, maintenance and servicing of multi-apartment buildings, public transportation, primary health care, and social protection sectors. Prioritize efforts to improve the quality of services provided in rural communities.

4. Emphasize a balanced approach between rural and urban areas in community development programs.

5. To support local economic development, continue programs and initiatives aimed at improving factors affecting community economic development.

6. Review the legal regulations governing the activities of the community council, implementing procedures that will contribute to increasing the role of the council and the level of trust residents have in it as a local self-government body.

7. Continue implementing successful programs and activities that encourage community residents' participation in local self-government. Expand the geographic scope of these programs and activities to include residents of rural areas. Use new technologies to enhance residents' awareness and communication possibilities with local self-government bodies.

8. Given the expansion of community geographic areas, increase in population, and other factors, review and improve the existing tools and mechanisms for ensuring residents' participation in community governance in multi-settlement communities.

9. Implement public oversight mechanisms at the local level that will promote greater transparency and accountability of local self-governments (LSGs).

10. Promote increased public awareness about the process of decentralization of powers and the formation of realistic expectations. Organize policy development processes in an inclusive and participatory manner.

11. In the causative analysis of accountability, individual and local factors have been identified that play a significant role in explaining the differences in people's perceptions of community merger reforms. These factors include the respondent's gender, age, educational level, type of settlement (urban/rural), and the characteristics of the community. The fundamental relationships of these factors with awareness and satisfaction ratings require further analysis, which will help to identify target factors for policy development.

Appendix 1 Proposed measures and actions

Matrix of proposed measures and actions based on the results of the "Representative Survey Measuring Public Perceptions of Territorial-Administrative Reforms in Armenia"

1. Short term- up to 1 year
2. Mid term- up to 2 year
3. Long term- up to 3 year

Proposition	Purpose	Activities	Expected Outcome	Performer	Time frame (Years)
1. Emphasizing the accurate communication of the objectives of administrative-territorial reforms within society, it is proposed to develop a comprehensive communication strategy aimed at consistent education through targeted communication channels regarding the goals of the reforms, highlighting their importance, and shaping desirable expectations within the public.	Increasing the effectiveness of cooperation between the state, society, and municipal governance levels and enhancing the awareness of being on a unified "page".	1.1 A broad communication campaign involving an effective mix of communication channels. 1.2 Workshops covering the potential of civil society and their multiplicative effect on influencing broader audiences. 1.3 Consider the use of influencer marketing tools by administrative bodies based on pre-developed communication protocols. 1.4 Conduct a survey at least once a year to research the dynamics of perceptions and satisfaction within society through quantitative representative sampling.	Clarification of objectives, clarification of perceptions among stakeholders, and shaping uniform expectations.	MTAI Donor community	Starting from 2025 continuous process
2. Emphasize the coverage of programs and activities aimed at the objectives of administrative-	Increase public awareness of the outcomes of	2.1 Promotion of programs, measures, and recorded positive changes aimed at the	Building trust and positive expectations regarding the outcomes	MTAI	1-2

territorial reforms among a broad audience, in the context of positive changes recorded in communities, highlighting their causal relationships and interconnections.	administrative-territorial reforms	goals of administrative-territorial reforms within a broad public audience.	of the reforms and their future progress, which will contribute to organizing future processes aimed at decentralization of authority in a more favorable environment.		
		2.2 Create platforms that allow sharing the completed and planned work with community residents on a periodic basis, thereby ensuring the inclusiveness of the processes. These platforms can be both centralized (such as seminars, reports) and decentralized, utilizing innovative technologies that enable community residents to monitor ongoing reforms in real time and express their opinions, thus becoming part of the processes.	The accessibility of digital information for community residents and effective communication through it will have a positive effect on raising financial literacy among the public. Specifically, it will allow community residents to manage data-driven informational flows and form accurate perceptions about the development of their community.		
3. Encourage and support communities through targeted allocations, grants, and other investments to implement programs aimed at improving community services where there are still fewer positive developments. Specifically, efforts should be made to improve services in community agricultural machinery operation, irrigation	Improve the funding policies for the development of economic and social infrastructure and services in communities, aimed at enhancing those community services and infrastructures that have seen less	3.1 Revision of the allocation of subsidies from the state budget to communities by sector, as established by the Government of the Republic of Armenia's Decision N1708-N dated 16.11.2006, encouraging communities to implement programs aimed at improving those infrastructures and services that have been	In communities, the infrastructure and services related to the operation of agricultural machinery, irrigation water supply, maintenance and servicing of multi-apartment buildings, public transportation, primary healthcare, and	MTAI Donor community	1-2

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water supply, maintenance and servicing of multi-apartment buildings, public transportation, primary health care, and social protection sectors. Prioritize efforts to improve the quality of services provided in rural communities.	improvement as a result of administrative-territorial reforms (as recorded by research results)	identified through research as having seen the least improvement.	social protection sectors will be improved.		
		3. 2 Development of advisory and guidance materials for international organizations, suggesting that during program planning in communities, priority be given to improving the infrastructure and services in sectors that, according to research results, need more improvement.	Directing the investments made by international organizations in communities towards sectors that need priority improvement will make the investments more targeted and effective.	MTAI Donor community	1
4. Emphasize a balanced approach between rural and urban areas in community development program.[15]	Ensure accelerated economic and social development in rural areas, which will, in the long term, help mitigate existing development disparities between rural and urban areas.	Outline in community development policies and local economic development strategies the components that will ensure a balanced approach between rural and urban municipalities.	Rural areas will receive better opportunities for economic and social development. This boost in prosperity and social security will alleviate the tendencies for socially vulnerable (and not only) households to emigrate and will serve as an additional incentive for them to live and thrive in their native communities.	MTAI Donor community	3
5. To support local economic development, continue programs and initiatives aimed at improving factors affecting community economic development.	Contribute to local economic development with a strong social focus.	5.1 Develop and implement programs and activities aimed at improving the factors that influence the economic development of the community. Define the development and	Improving the opportunities for community economic development and the factors affecting it, as well as developing and	MTAI	3

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[15] The proposal is based on the observation that people's perceptions of the community consolidation reforms are more negative among residents of rural communities compared to those living in urban areas.

		implementation of the "Community Economic Development Program" as the personal responsibility of the community leader by law.	implementing a local economic development program, will contribute to identifying and solving the community's socio-economic and environmental issues and will create favorable conditions for economic operators.		
		5.2 Implement a mechanism for the allocation of portions of taxes collected into the state budget, and legally establish the proportions of these allocations in the "Law on Local Self-Government" and/or the "Law on the Budgetary System of the Republic of Armenia."	As a result of financial decentralization, local self-government bodies will be more interested in creating new jobs and promoting local economic development in order to secure new revenues for the community budget.		
		5.3 Identification of the social component in every local economic development program and analysis of its social impact. Also, outline the channels through which the social component in the program connects with state social programs. Target socially vulnerable groups in local economic development programs, which will make the programs more effective through increased stakeholder inclusion and	As a result of implementing community economic programs, socially vulnerable groups will be the target beneficiaries. Consequently, local economic programs will have a significant impact on the well-being of these groups.	MTAI	3

		equitable distribution of the generated economic benefits.			
6. Review the legal regulations governing the activities of the community council, implementing procedures that will contribute to increasing the role of the council and the level of trust residents have in it as a local self-government body.	Promote the enhancement of the role of the community council and increase residents' trust in it as a local self-government body.	Develop and implement mandatory frameworks to ensure the fulfillment of the responsibilities of community council members as defined by Article 21 of the "Law on Local Self-Government" of the Republic of Armenia. Legally specify the frequency of meetings between community council members and residents and develop procedures and formats for council members to participate in public receptions and inform voters about the activities of the community council.	These legislative changes and mandatory procedures will contribute to improving the activities of community council members and increasing the level of trust residents have in them.	MTAI	1
7. Continue implementing successful programs and activities that encourage community residents' participation in local self-government. Expand the geographic scope of these programs and activities to include residents of rural areas. Use new technologies to enhance residents' awareness and communication possibilities with local self-government bodies.	Improve mechanisms that ensure resident participation in community governance	Revise the existing procedures that ensure resident participation in local self-government, considering the specific characteristics of multi-settlement communities. Specifically: 1. "Procedure for Resident Participation in Local Self-Government in the Community," 2. "Procedure for Organizing and Conducting Public Hearings and Discussions in the Community," 3. "Procedure for the Formation and Operation of Advisory Bodies Attached to the Community Head."	The revision of these procedures will enable residents of settlements within multi-settlement communities to also participate in community governance and be actively involved in community life.	MTAI	1

|					
8. Given the expansion of community geographic areas, increase in population, and other factors, review and improve the existing tools and mechanisms for ensuring residents' participation in community governance in multi-settlement communities.	Promote the participation of residents from rural areas in local self-governance.	Make changes to Article 14, Part 2 of the RA Law on Local Self-Governance. Specifically, allow residents of smaller settlements within the community to propose items for the agenda of the community council meetings with the aim of addressing issues related to their settlement.	Current regulations make it difficult for residents of smaller settlements within the community to propose initiatives related to issues in their settlements and to gather signatures from individuals aged 16 and over, as required by law.	MTAI	1
9. Implement public oversight mechanisms at the local level that will promote greater transparency and accountability of local self-governments (LSGs).	Introduce new frameworks for public oversight in the field of local self-government	9. 1 Legally establish the requirement for annual accountability of community council members and factions, and develop the appropriate procedures for reporting.	Community council factions and members will carry out their functions with greater responsibility, which will contribute to increased trust in local self-government bodies and transparent governance.	MTAI	1
		9. 2 Develop public oversight mechanisms for community budget expenditures, taking into account the results of implementing public oversight tools in state procurement. (As established by the Government of the Republic of Armenia's Decision N 526-N dated 04.05.2017, which repeals the Government Decision N 168-N dated 10.02.2011, on "Approving the Procedure for Organizing the Procurement Process")	Community budget funds will be used more purposefully, effectively, and economically, ensuring transparency and accountability in procurement.	MTAI Donor community	3
10. Promote increased public awareness about the process of	Increase public awareness of reforms	Present the processes and expected outcomes of decentralization of authority to	Awareness of public perceptions regarding	MTAI	1-2

decentralization of powers and the formation of realistic expectations. Organize policy development processes in an inclusive and participatory manner.	aimed at the decentralization of authority	the public through public discussions with the participation of professional organizations, NGOs, and other interested organizations.	the reforms and taking them into account will help the relevant bodies organize the decentralization of authority processes more smoothly and effectively.		
11. In the causative analysis of accountability, individual and local factors have been identified that play a significant role in explaining the differences in people's perceptions of the community merger reforms. These factors include the respondent's gender, age, educational level, type of settlement (urban/rural), and the characteristics [16]of the community. The fundamental relationships of these factors with awareness and satisfaction ratings require further analysis, which will help to identify target factors for policy development[17].	As a result of additional analysis of the fundamental links between individual/local factors and awareness/satisfaction ratings revealed in the analysis, develop a targeted policy document for each factor.	Within the framework of the program, conduct in-depth cause-and-effect analyses based on the data collected through various sources, including the household data database maintained by the Statistical Committee of Armenia, Caucasus Barometer and other digital data, as well as data gathered through interviews and focus groups with stakeholders. As a final outcome, develop a draft that includes legal regulations, measures, and actions.	Through in-depth analysis, identify the role of individual and local factors to develop targeted policies. In the long term, the implementation of such targeted policies will address the issues faced by identified groups of households and individuals, and improve their social conditions.	MTAI Donor community	1

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[16] The characteristics of the community are absent in this analysis; however, the evaluated models indicate that the community factor itself has a significant impact on perceptions. Additional information about communities can be gathered from supplementary (multiple) sources.

[17] Particularly, gender differences in perceptions can be explained by factors such as education, type of settlement, status in the labor market, migration trends in the community, economic sector structure, and other factors.
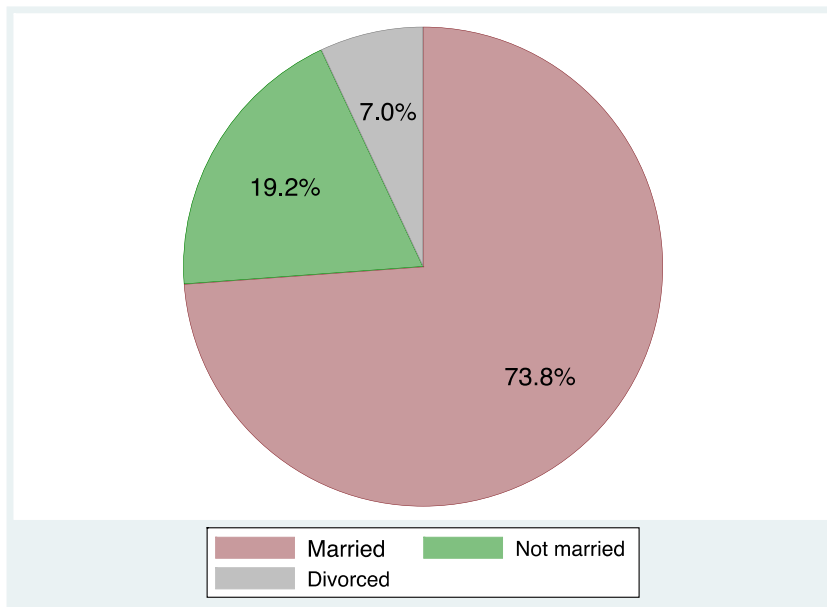
Appendix 2 Figures

Figure A1. Gender distribution of the sample in marzes (%)
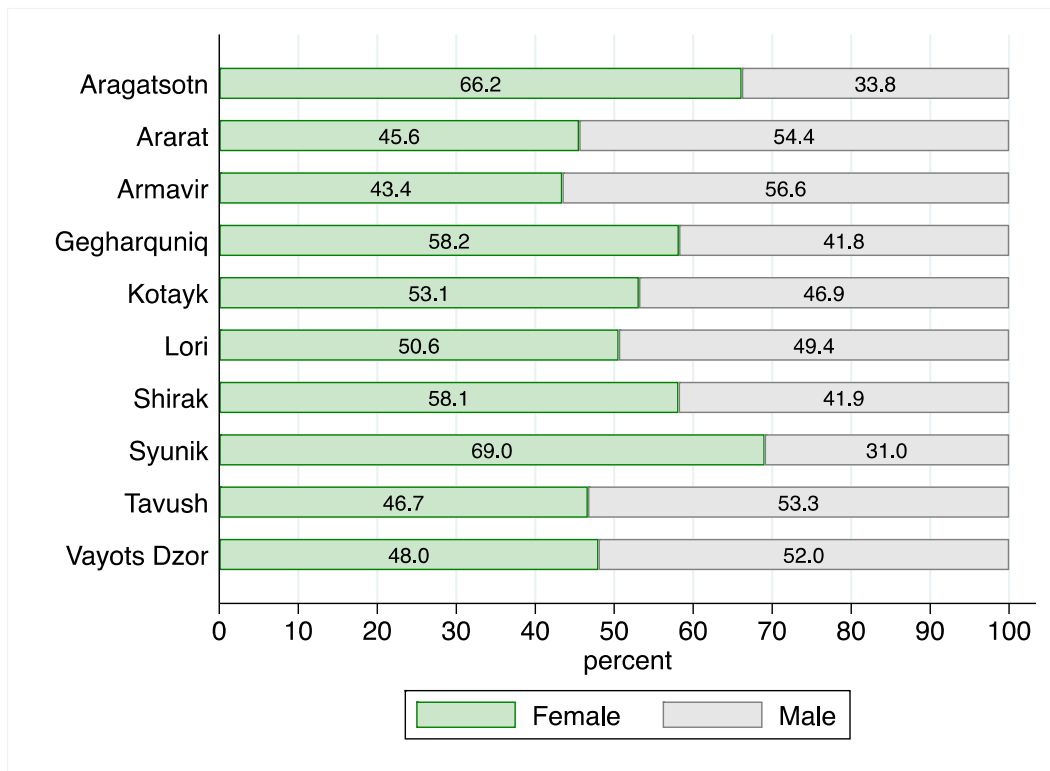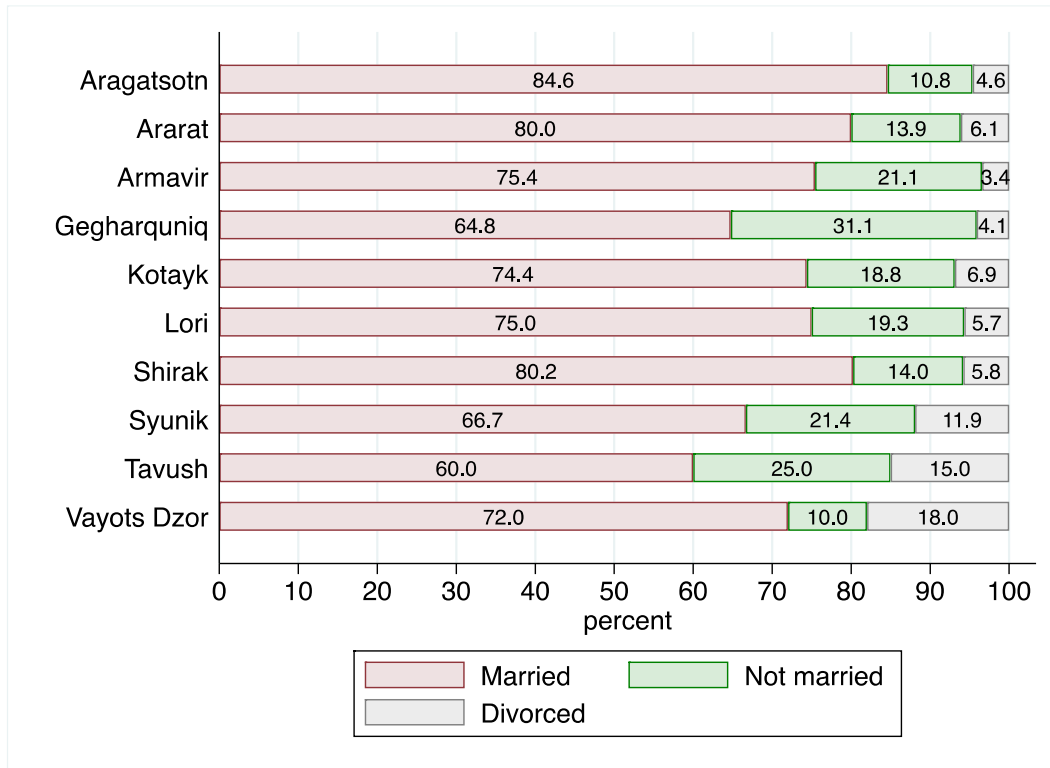

*Pearson chi2(9) = 32.0934,   Pr = 0.000.
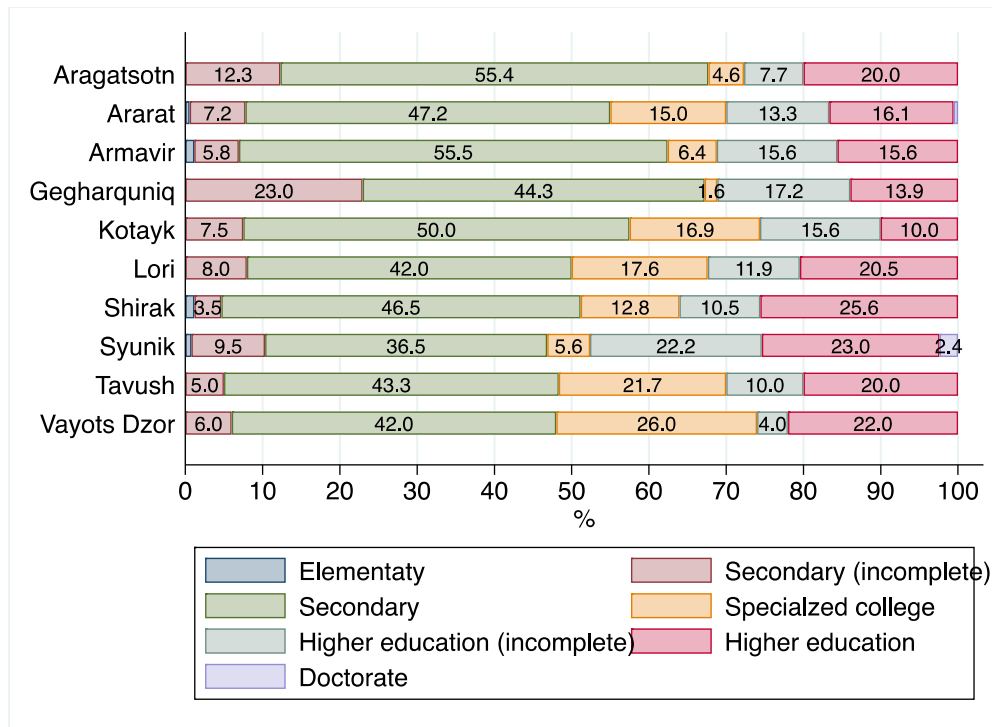
Figure A2. Marital status distribution in marzes

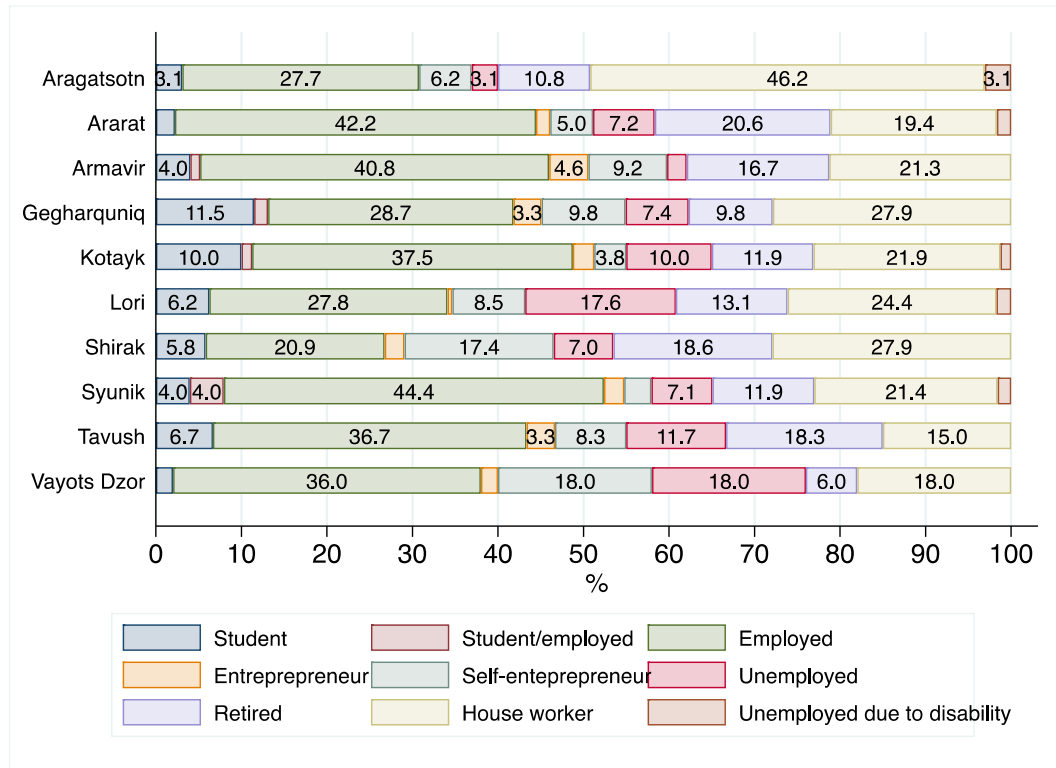**Figure A3. Marital status distribution in marzes (by marz)***

Marz	Married	Not married	Divorced
Aragatsotn	84.6	10.8	4.6
Ararat	80.0	13.9	6.1
Armavir	75.4	21.1	3.4
Gegharquniq	64.8	31.1	4.1
Kotayk	74.4	18.8	6.9
Lori	75.0	19.3	5.7
Shirak	80.2	14.0	5.8
Syunik	66.7	21.4	11.9
Tavush	60.0	25.0	15.0
Vayots Dzor	72.0	10.0	18.0

*Pearson chi2(18) = 50.1328   P-value = 0.000

Figure A4. Educational level distribution in marzes*

| Marz	Elementary	Secondary	Specialized college	Higher education (incomplete)	Higher education	Secondary (incomplete)	Doctorate
Aragatsotn	12.3	55.4	4.6	7.7	20.0		
Ararat	7.2	47.2	15.0	13.3	16.1		
Armavir	5.8	55.5	6.4	15.6	15.6		
Gegharquniq	23.0	44.3	1.6	17.2	13.9		
Kotayk	7.5	50.0	16.9	15.6	10.0		
Lori	8.0	42.0	17.6	11.9	20.5		
Shirak	3.5	46.5	12.8	10.5	25.6		
Syunik	9.5	36.5	5.6	22.2	23.0	2.4	
Tavush	5.0	43.3	21.7	10.0	20.0		
Vayots Dzor	6.0	42.0	26.0	4.0	22.0		

*Pearson chi2(54) = 142.7725   P-value = 0.000

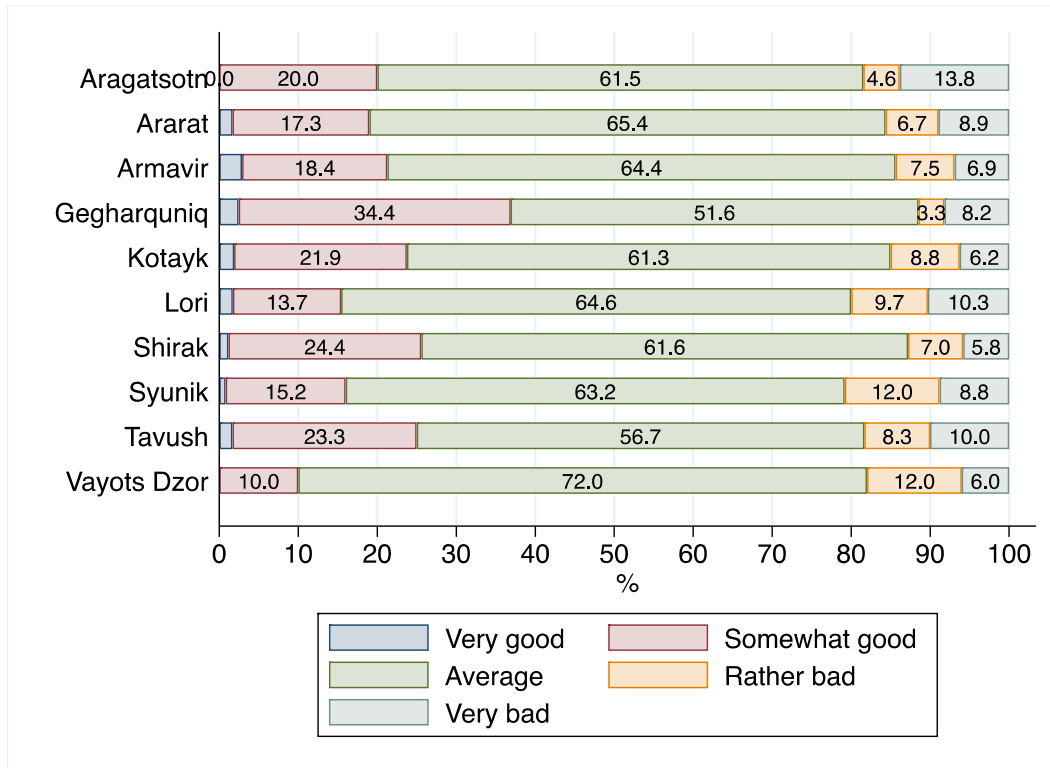**Figure A5. Employment status distribution in marzes***

*Pearson chi2(72) = 169.2555   P-value = 0.000

Figure A6. Sectoral employment distribution in marzes*
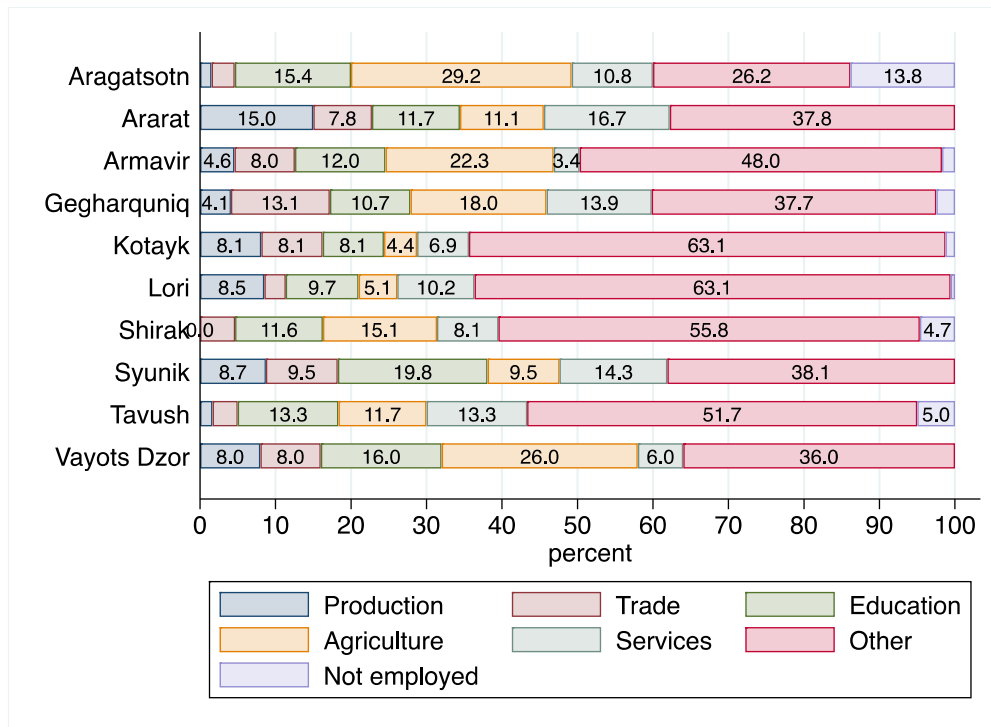
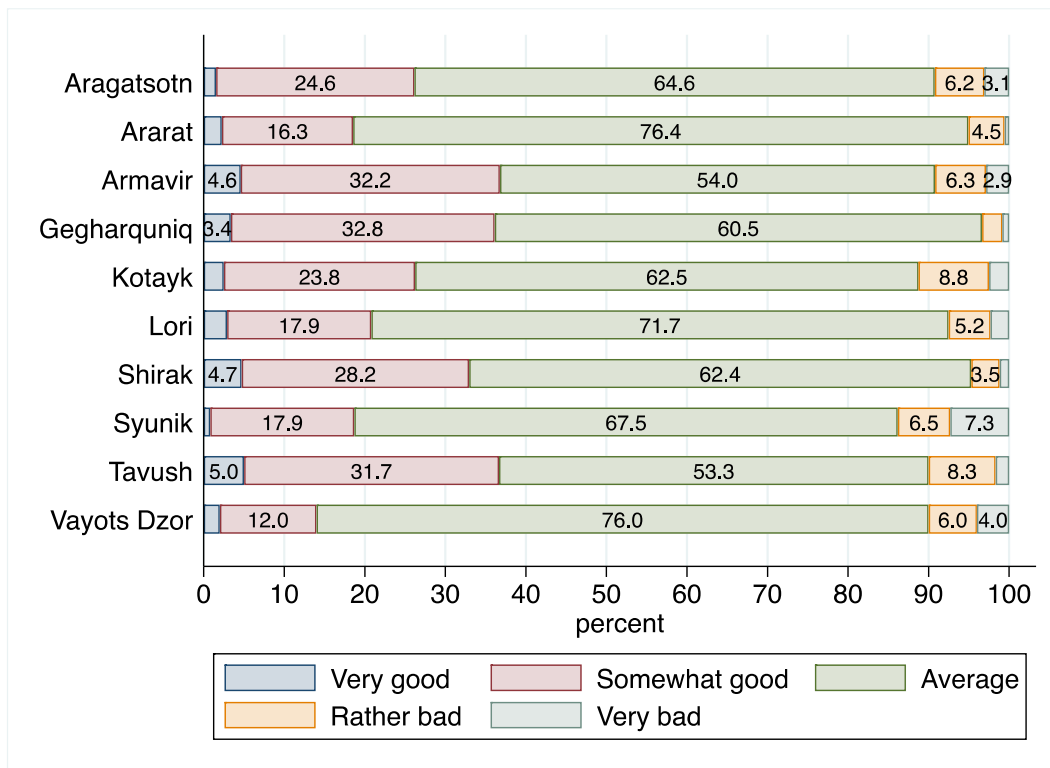*Pearson chi2(54) = 224.4886   P-value = 0.000

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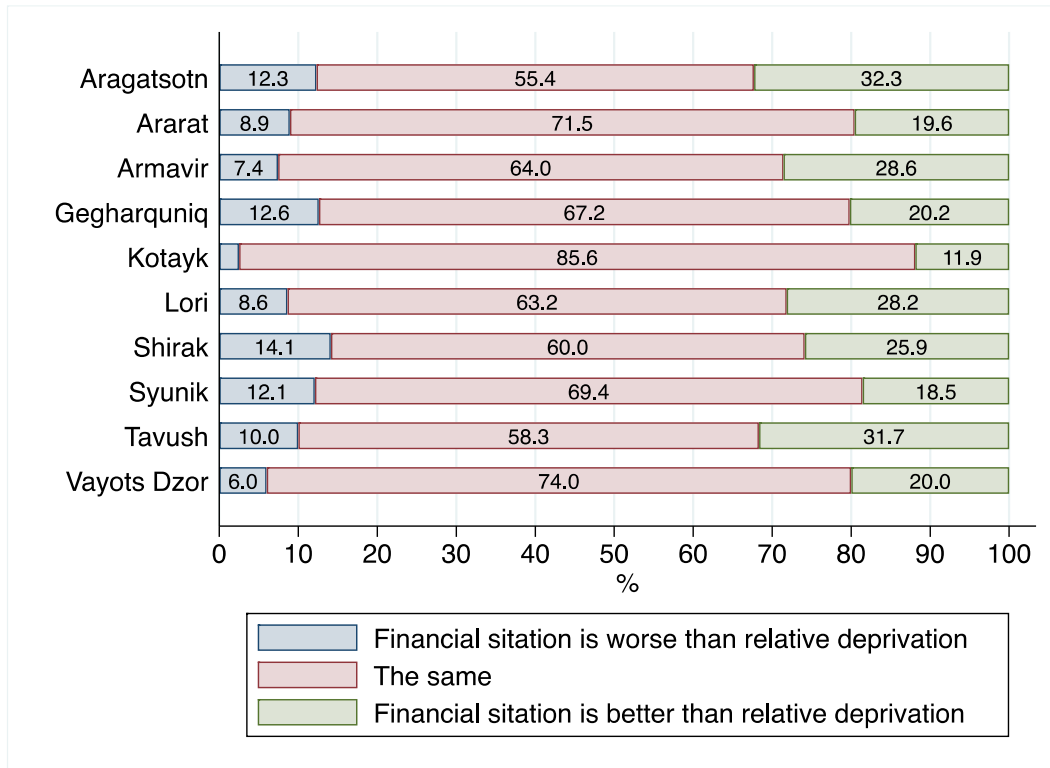## Figure A7. Financial status distribution in marzes*

*Pearson chi2(36) = 46.0877, P-value = 0.121
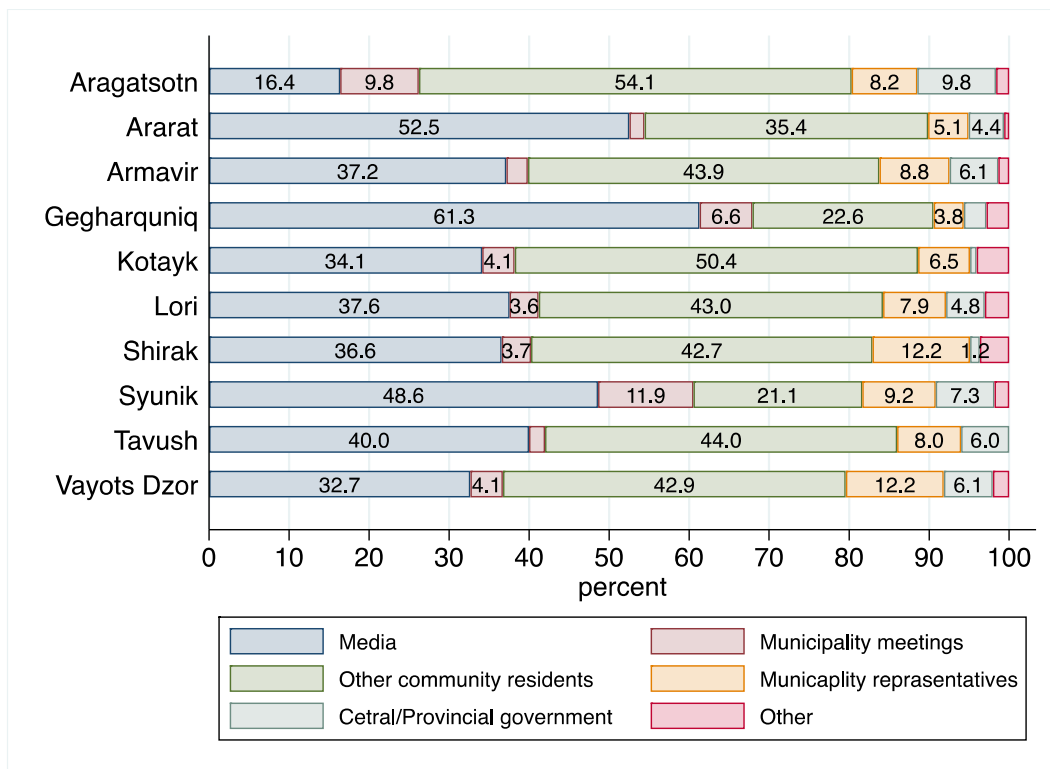
Figure A8. Degree of relative deprivation*

*Pearson chi2(36) = 63.8361, P-value = 0.003

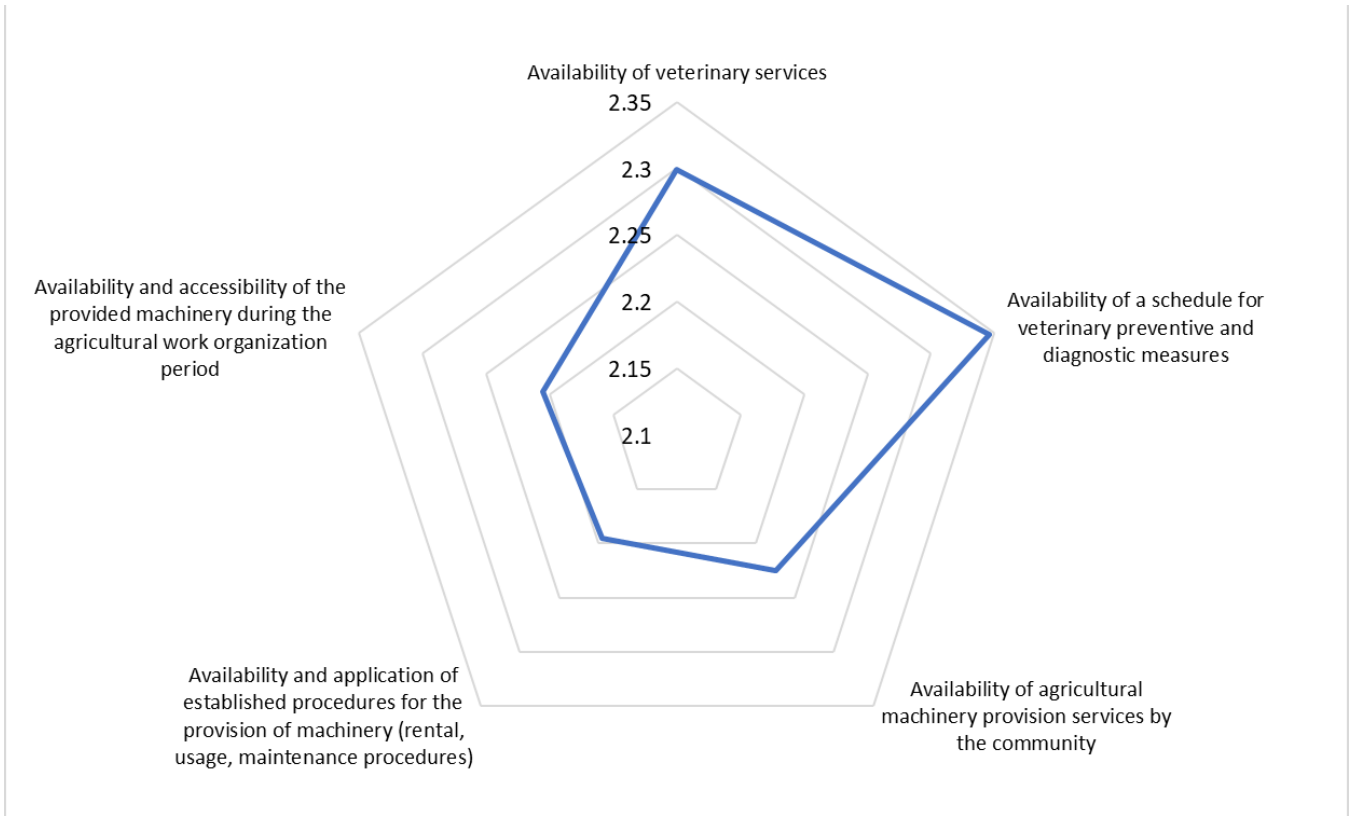**Figure A9. Difference between financial status and relative deprivation***

Marz	Financial sitation is worse than relative deprivation	The same	Financial sitation is better than relative deprivation
Aragatsotn	12.3	55.4	32.3
Ararat	8.9	71.5	19.6
Armavir	7.4	64.0	28.6
Gegharquniq	12.6	67.2	20.2
Kotayk		85.6	11.9
Lori	8.6	63.2	28.2
Shirak	14.1	60.0	25.9
Syunik	12.1	69.4	18.5
Tavush	10.0	58.3	31.7
Vayots Dzor	6.0	74.0	20.0

*Pearson chi2(18) = 47.3987   Pr = 0.000

Figure A10. Sources of information on the community consolidation process by marz*

| Marz	Media	Municipality meetings	Other community residents	Municaplity reprasentatives	Cetral/Provincial government	Other
Aragatsotn	16.4	9.8	54.1	8.2	9.8	
Ararat	52.5		35.4	5.1	4.4	
Armavir	37.2		43.9	8.8	6.1	
Gegharquniq	61.3	6.6	22.6	3.8		
Kotayk	34.1	4.1	50.4	6.5		
Lori	37.6	3.6	43.0	7.9	4.8	
Shirak	36.6	3.7	42.7	12.2	1.2	
Syunik	48.6	11.9	21.1	9.2	7.3	
Tavush	40.0		44.0	8.0	6.0	
Vayots Dzor	32.7	4.1	42.9	12.2	6.1	

*Pearson chi2 = 116.1477,   Pr = 0.000

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Figure A11. Assessment of agricultural services*

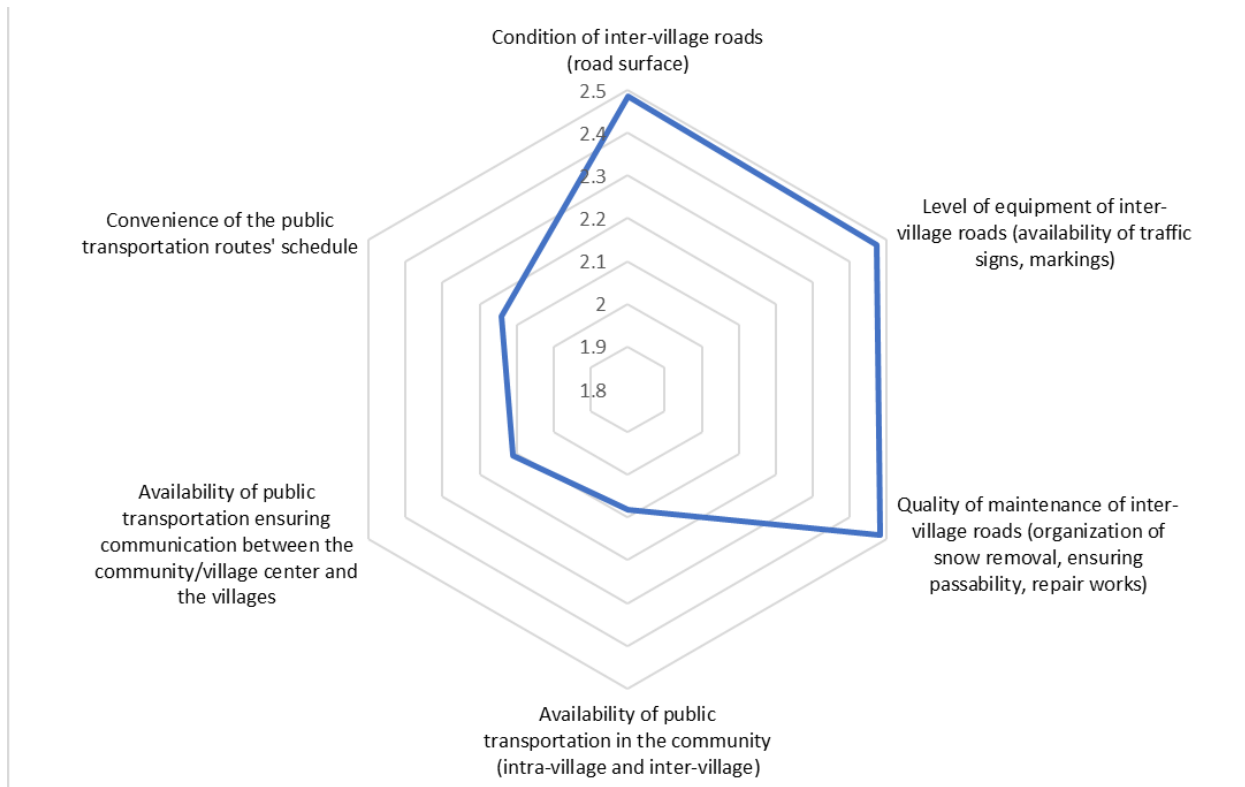Possible answers are: 1- worsened, 2- remained the same, did not change, 3- yes, improved.

Figure A12. Assessment of drinking and irrigation water supply services*
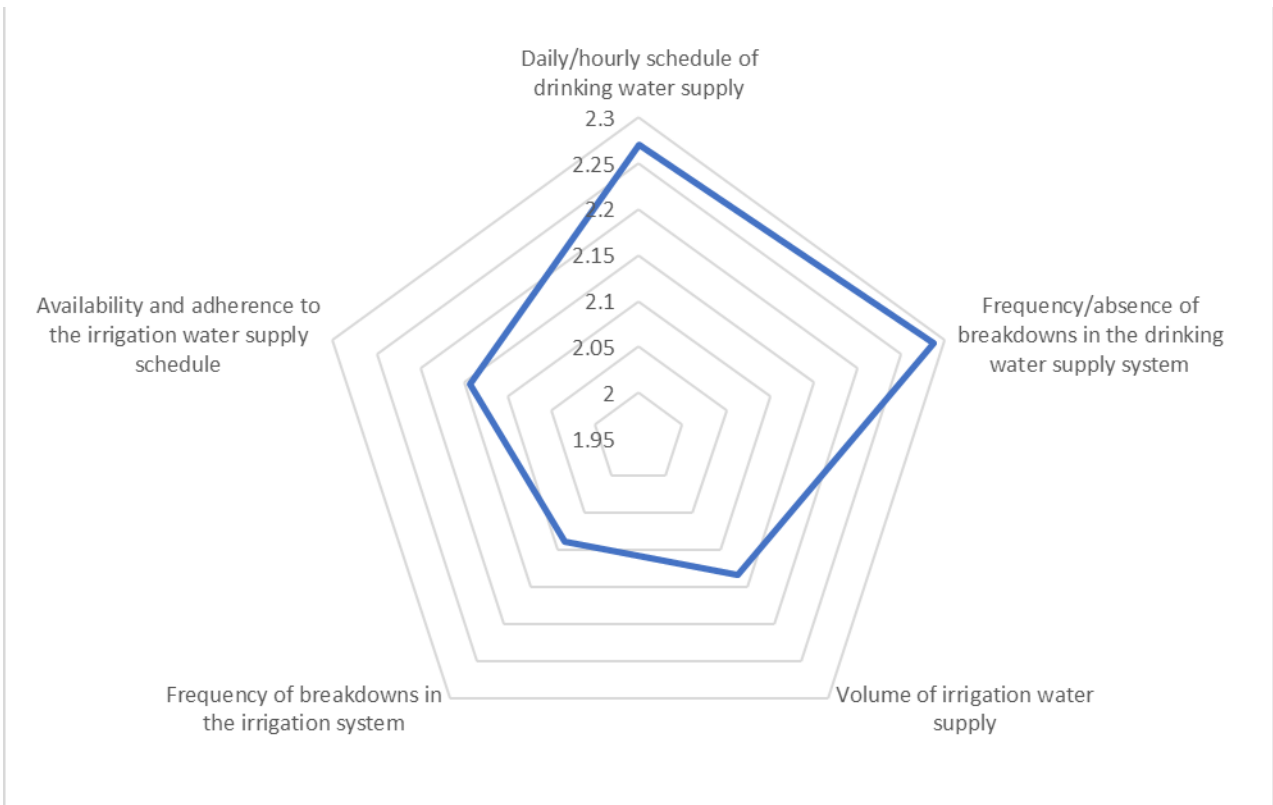
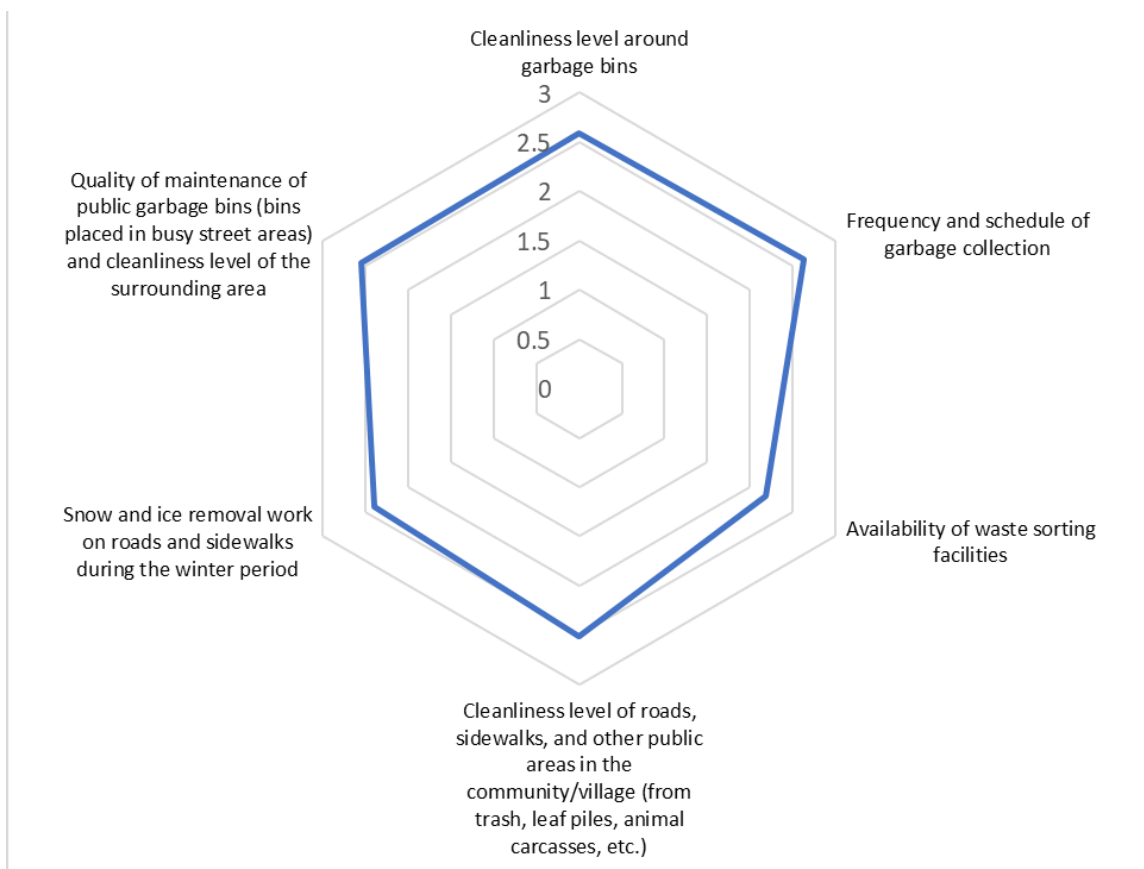Possible answers are: 1- worsened, 2- remained the same, did not change, 3- yes, improved.

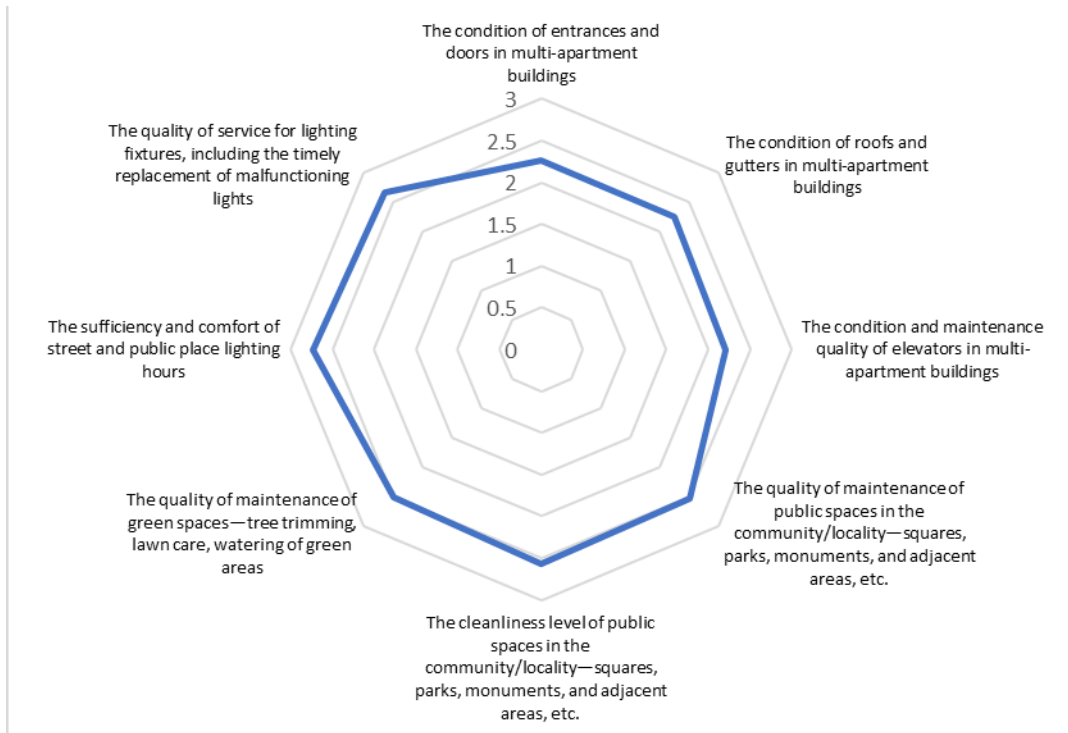**Figure A13. Questions regarding road maintenance and intracommunity transportation services***

Possible answers are: 1- worsened, 2- remained the same, did not change, 3- yes, improved.

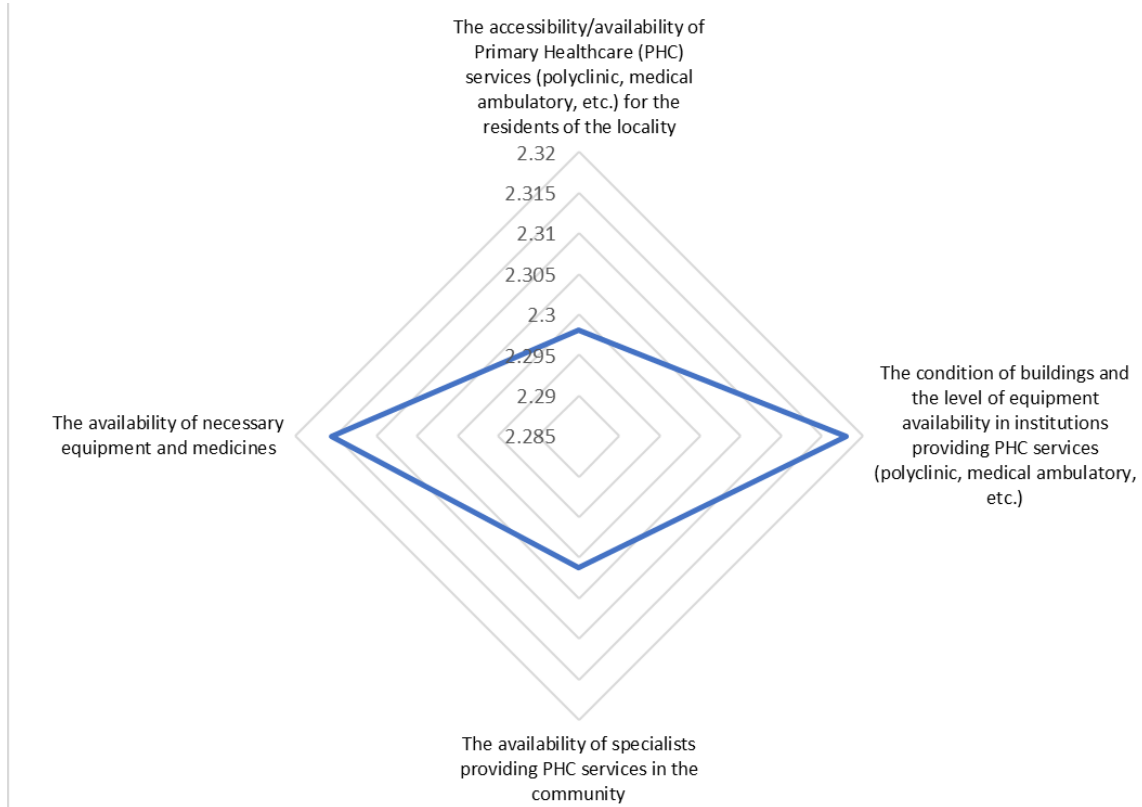**Figure A14. Waste management and sanitary cleaning services**

Possible answers are: 1- worsened, 2- remained the same, did not change, 3- yes, improved.

Figure A15. Services related to the maintenance of public spaces, landscaping, maintenance and servicing of multi-apartment buildings, and street lighting

Possible answers are: 1- worsened, 2- remained the same, did not change, 3- yes, improved.

Figure A16. Primary healthcare services (PHC)

Possible answers are: 1- worsened, 2- remained the same, did not change, 3- yes, improved.

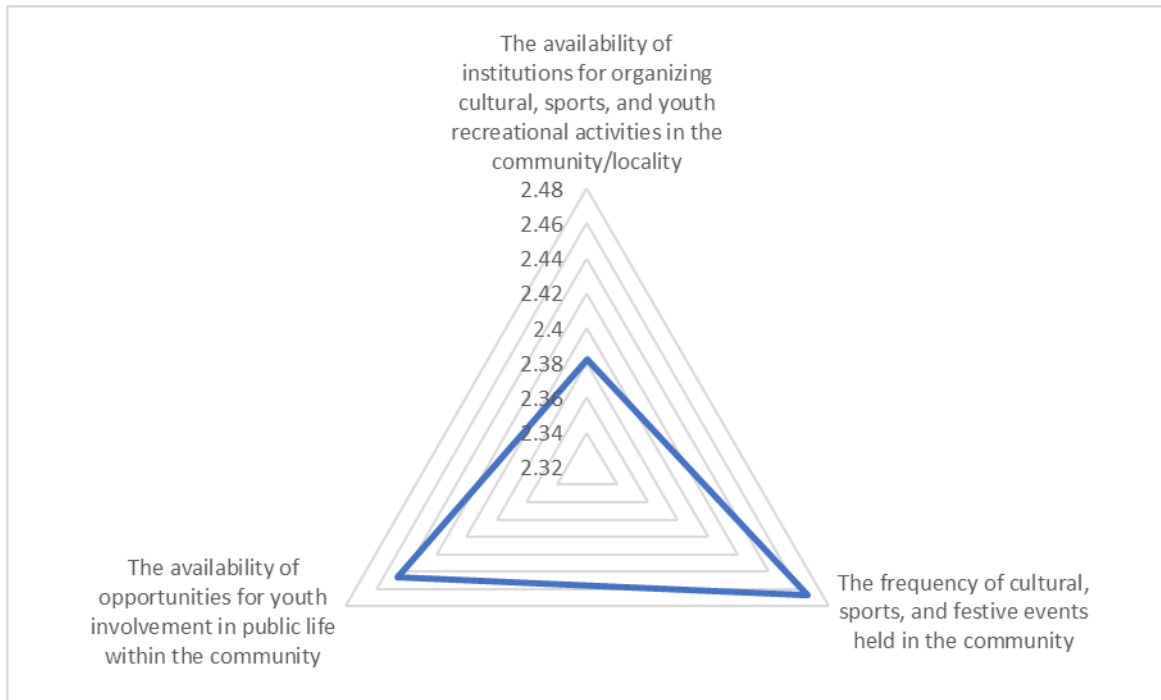**Figure A17. Services in the field of culture, youth, and sports**

Possible answers are: 1- worsened, 2- remained the same, did not change, 3- yes, improved.

Figure A18. Preschool education services

Possible answers are: 1- worsened, 2- remained the same, did not change, 3- yes, improved.

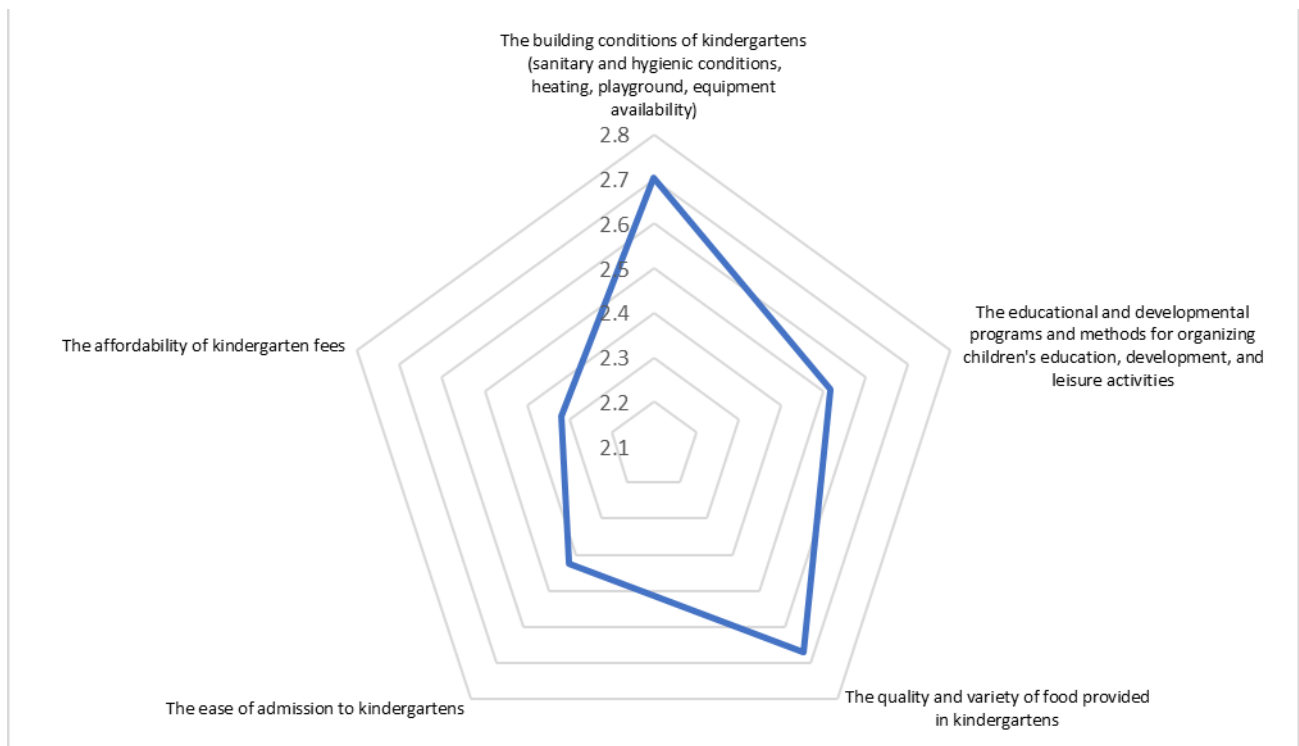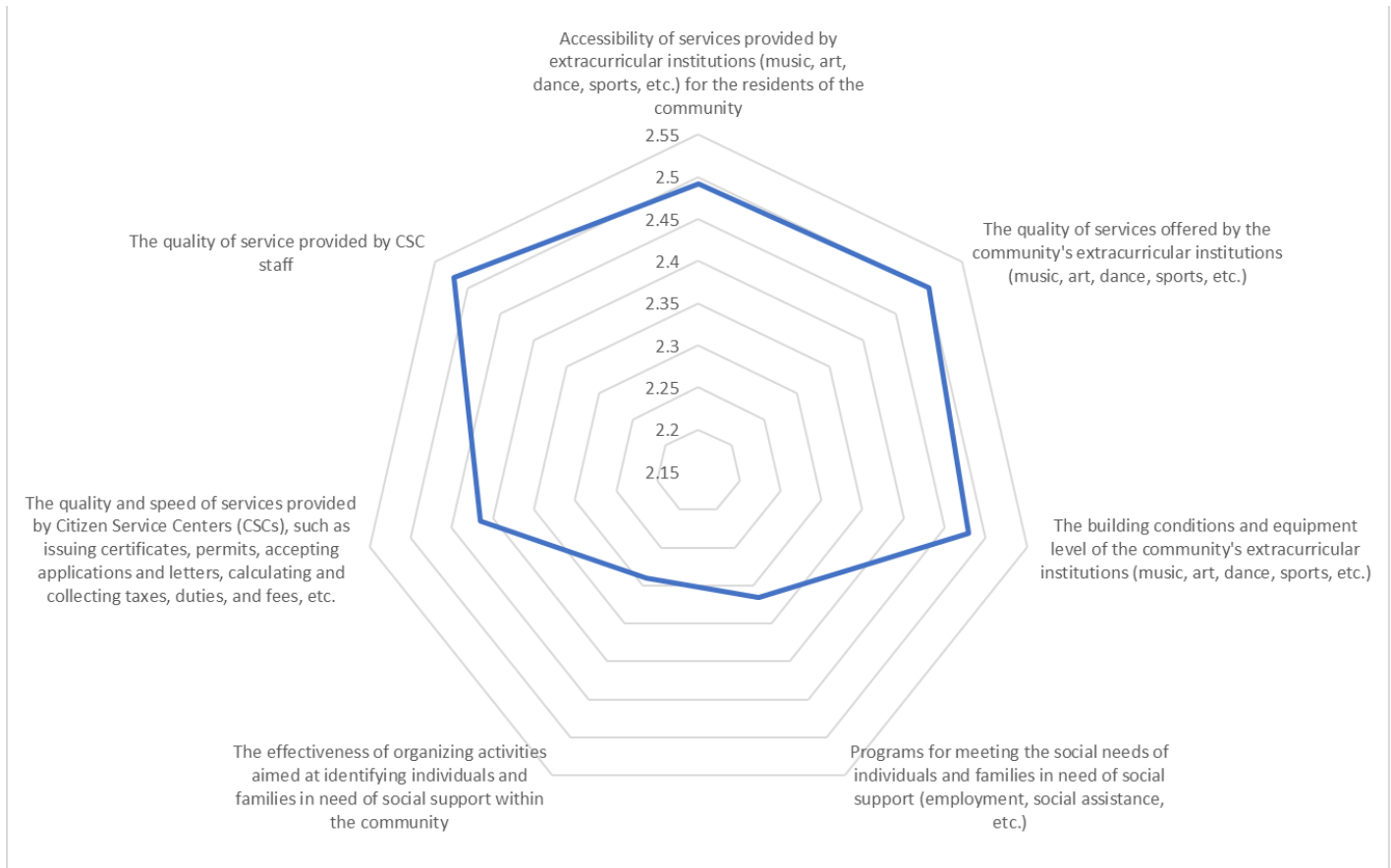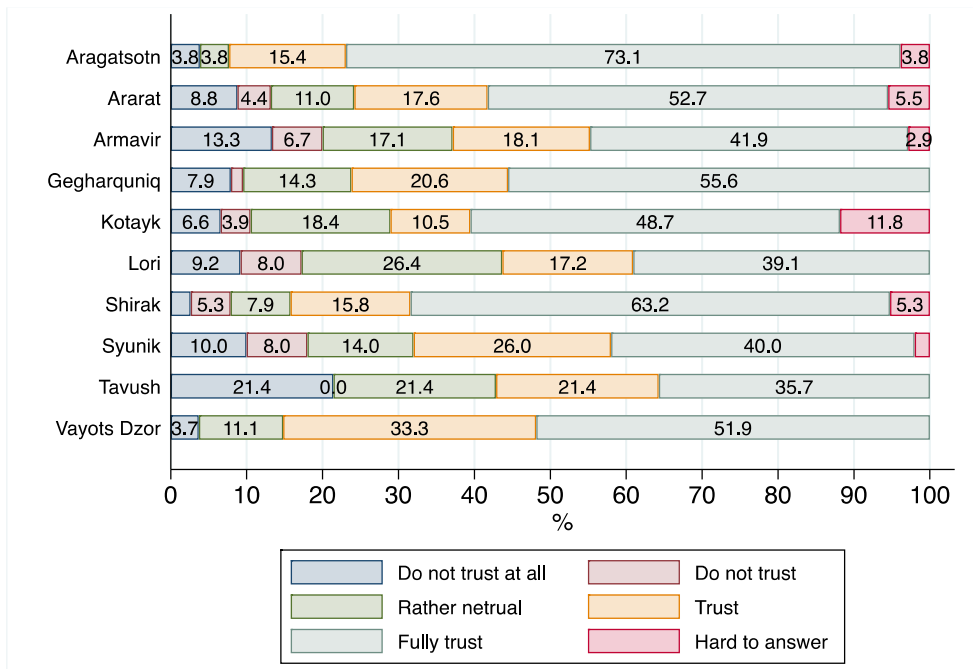**Figure A19. Services provided by extracurricular education, social protection sector, and civil service offices (CSO)**

Possible answers are: 1- worsened, 2- remained the same, did not change, 3- yes, improved.

Figure A20. Average trust index*

*Pearson chi2(180) = 249.2397   Pr = 0.000

Appendix 3 Sampling methodology

«Countrywide Representative Survey Measuring Public Perceptions on TARA, Decentralization, and Local Self-Governance (LSG)»

To conduct a comprehensive countrywide representative survey to measure public perceptions, opinions, and attitudes toward TARA and its impact on the LSG sector in Armenia the Consultant will use a multi-stage structure sampling, this will help to assess public perceptions of the specific directions of decentralization and general awareness of TARA's policy intentions all over country. Along with all this data collection and sampling techniques will be maintained high standards of quality and representation, providing a reliable basis for analysis.

1. For the first stage, a cluster sampling including both rural and urban type settlements. Thus, 32 communities were randomly selected from the 64 combined communities according to the following strata:
- Marz
- Community size upon number of settlements
- Community popoulation size
- Community type by settlement type: urban and rural or only rural settlement communities

At the stage of determining the size of the community according to the number of settlements, the communities were ranked, taking into account the number of settlements included in the latter, and then the quartiles were considered. The resulting 4 groups are presented below:

- **Rank 1:** micro communities with less than 7 settlements
- **Rank 2:** small communities with 8-12 settlements
- **Rank 3:** medium communities with 13-20 settlements
- **Rank 4:** large communities with more than 21 settlements

It is necessary to take into account that the name micro or large refers to the number of settlements included in the community and does not in any way express the number of natives in the given community.

Communities were then grouped by population size. According to the population, 4 more groups were formed:
- **Group 1:** communities with more than 60k popoulation
- **Group 2**: communities with 31-60k population
- **Group 3:** communities with 14-30k population
- **Group 4**: communities with less than 14k population

To determine the number of communities to be included in the sample, the necessary critical number of surveys in relation to the population was taken as a basis. Thus, the recommended number of surveys depending on the population of the community was:
- **communities with less than 60k popoulation:** 80-100 interviews
- **communities with 31-60k population:** 40-60 interviews
- **communities with 14-30k population:** 20-40 interviews
- **communities with less than 14k population:** 10-20 interviews

The settlements in the selected communities were selected according to the principle of being near and far from the center of the community, and at the same time, not adjacent to each other.

Due to the flood that occurred during the field work, the communities and settlements considered disaster zones in Tavush and Lori marzes were replaced by homogeneous units, taking into account the accessibility problem. The mentioned changes did not affect the representativeness of the sample. Therefore, Alaverdi was replaced with Spitak and Noyemberyan with Berd.

The selected 32 communities out of 64 are represented in the table 1.

#	Marz	Community	Settlement type	Rank per number of settlements	Poplation size	N of interviews
1	Aragatsotn	Talin	Urban and rural	Large	30,867	40
2	Aragatsotn	Metsadzor	Rural	Micro	264	15
3	Aragatsotn	Alagyaz	Rural	Small	3,465	15
4	Ararat	Masis	Urban and rural	Large	76,751	60
5	Ararat	Artashat	Urban and rural	Large	86,598	100
6	Armavir	Metsamor	Urban and rural	Large	64,976	60
7	Armavir	Khoy	Rural	Medium	26,263	30
8	Armavir	Baghramyan	Rural	Medium	15,240	20
9	Armavir	Armavir	Urban and rural	Small	50,135	60
10	Gegharkunik	Vardenis	Urban and rural	Large	35,265	40
11	Gegharkunik	Tchambarak	Urban and rural	Medium	12,597	20
12	Gegharkunik	Gavar	Urban and rural	Small	47,508	60
13	Lori	Spitak	Urban and rural	Large	38,037	40
14	Lori	Pambak	Rurak	Medium	12,112	20
15	Lori	Vanadzor	Urban and rural	Micro	84,552	125
16	Lori	Lori Berd	Rural	Small	5,044	15
17	Kotayk	Hrazdan	Urban and rural	Micro	52,283	60
18	Kotayk	Garni	Rural	Micro	12,311	20
19	Kotayk	Nairi	Urban and rural	Small	34,600	40
20	Kotayk	Nor Hajn	Urban and rural	Small	28,095	40
21	Shirak	Akhuryan	Rural	Large	39,988	40
22	Shirak	Ashotsk	Rural	Large	9,681	20
23	Shirak	Ani	Urban and rural	Medium	19,282	20
24	Syunik	Kapan	Urban and rural	Large	37,868	40
25	Syunik	Goris	Urban and rural	Medium	24,249	30
26	Syunik	Sisian	Urban and rural	Large	25,861	40
27	Syunik	Tatev	Rural	Small	5,239	15
28	Vayots Dzor	Vayk	Urban and rural	Medium	10,475	20
29	Vayots Dzor	Jermuk	Urban and rural	Micro	5,694	15
30	Vayots Dzor	Areni	Rural	Small	9,515	20
31	Tavush	Berd	Urban and rural	Medium	22,876	30
32	Tavush	Dilijan	Urban and rural	Small	22,552	30

2. Stratified sampling approach will be applied to select **primary sampling units**, so called PSUs within the clusters. Particularly, in urban areas, where landline addresses are existent, PSUs will be randomly selected out of the list of addresses. Rural areas, not having concrete address directories, will be perceived as one PSU.

The number of streets to be selected depends on the total number of interviews to be contacted in each settlement. Generally, 10 interviews will be prescribed per PSU. Thus, in total, 120 PSUs will be generated, given that 1200 interviews should be fulfilled among rural and urban general population in the framework of TARA assignment.

3. The Secondary Sampling Unit (SSU) is the household. Households within the selected PSUs will be sampled by Random Walk procedure. Meaning, starting from a particular PSU, the interviewer is instructed to knock at the first dwelling unit. Afterwards, leave 3 doors in case of successful interview, otherwise, keep knocking the doors until facing the desired TA representative. The interviewers keep right-side walking direction while coming across crossroads or end of the road.

4. The Final Sampling Unit (FSU) is the respondent. Respondents for the interview will be selected from all household members residing permanently in the given place according to quotas generated upon age and gender matrix per settlement. The quotas were developed for each community based on the gender-age proportional distribution of the population, referring to the statistical indicators, as presented in the "gender-age quotas" table.

Gender-age quotas table		
Age group	**male**	**female**
16-24	88	69
25-34	123	118
35-44	120	119
45-54	82	88
55-64	93	106
65-74	56	71
75+	26	41
Total	**588**	**612**
%	**49%**	**51%**

All the steps taken to select each respondent were collected using a routing form.

Rout list

Interviewer name_____

interviewr ID_____

PSU ID_____

1. Successful interview (leave 3 doors and knock on the 4th)	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10	
2. Out of age quota	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
3. Refused to participate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
5. Closed door/ none answers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
6. Not inhabitated unit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
7. Locked enterance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
8. Not-permanent inhabitant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
9. Occupied in the municipal sector	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
10. Interrupted interview	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
11. Other, please specify	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20

Appendix 4 Questionnaire

"Measuring Public Perceptions on the Territorial and Administrative Reform in Armenia (TARA)"
Face to Face questionnaire

The text in blue is intended for the script programmer and is not subject to modification or translation*.*

The text in red is intended for interviewers as instructions and clarifications. These notes will assist them during the interview.

F2F Questionnaire

19 March, 2024թ.

Assessment Study of the Impact of Territorial-Administrative Reforms in the Republic of Armenia Among the Public

Section 1: Selection of the Respondent

D0. Interviewer, enter your code
_____*code*
D1. Starting point code
code *numeric value*
Marz
1: Aragatsotn
2: Ararat
3: Armavir
4: Gegharkunik
5: Lori
6: Kotayk
7: Shirak
8: Syunik
9: Vayots Dzor
10: Tavush
D1.1. Community *text*
D1.2. Name of the settlement *text*
D1.3. Type of settlement
        1: Urban settlement
        2: Rural settlement
Read the appeal-application: Hello, my name is _____. I represent IMR, an independent research company. We are conducting a survey regarding territorial-administrative reforms, specifically the processes of community consolidation in the Republic of Armenia.
1,200 more people will participate in this survey.
Your opinion is extremely important for assessing the impact of community consolidation processes. Community consolidation is when communities merge and become a larger single community. Please allocate 30 minutes of your time.
Your responses will help identify the directions for improvement in your community.
Frequently Asked Questions: check as needed:

Anonymity Question: I want to assure you that the survey is anonymous. Your answers will be analyzed in an aggregated manner.

Age Threshold Question: We conduct the survey among the population aged 16 and above, considering the minimum age for participation set by the Local Self-Government law.

Content of Questions: This is a professional study whose methodology and questions have been developed by experts. However, please be assured that there are no right or wrong answers, and we are genuinely interested in hearing your free and unbiased opinion.

Address Selection Question: Your address was selected randomly.

Duration Question: Please be prepared to allocate 20-30 minutes. If you have any questions, I am ready to answer them within my responsibilities and competencies.

D2. Do you agree to participate?

      1: Yes

      2: No/ refuses to participate

Terminate if D3=6

Multiple responses

D3. You or any of your family members are currently working in any of the following fields

Read the options/display the screen, multiple answers possible

1. Manufacturing/ industry

2. Trade

3. Education

4. Agriculture

5. Services/ maintenance

6. In any governing body (regional administration, municipality, office of the administrative head) **FINISH**

7. none of the above

8: DO NOT READ unemployed

999: DO NOT READ refuses to answer

t for termination in case of D3=6: This research is conducted among the public who do not work in governing bodies, as it is a study of public opinion among the lay community. If you work for any government agency, you are considered an expert in terms of this research.

Among experts, the nature of research is different.

Thanks for your time, goodbye.

Terminate if D4=1

Single anaswer

D4. Please state your completed age: _____ *Enter the respondent's completed age, then encode it.*

1: Up to 15 years old – *end the interview*

2: 16-24

3: 25-34

4: 35-44

5: 45-54

6: 55-64

7: 65-74

8: 75 and more

D5. Respondent's gender, fill in without asking:.

1: Male
2: Female

Interviewer, **check the respondent selection quota before continuing the survey.**

Age group	Female	Male
16-24	69	88
25-34	118	123
35-44	119	120
45-54	88	82
55-64	106	93
65-74	71	56
75+	41	26
Total	**612**	**588**
%	**51%**	**49%**

Section 2: Level of Awareness Regarding Territorial-Administrative Reforms and Overall Impact

Single answer
A0. Are you aware of the community consolidation process? That is, the process where communities, settlements merged and became one large community?

1: Yes
2: No

Ask all
Text answer
A1. Can you name your community? (*Clarify if necessary:* the community in which your current settlement is located):

1: ─────────

Interviewer, **without prompting the respondent, select whether the respondent has mentioned the current correct name of the community or the old name. Check the community name against your task sheet.**

1: The community name is correctly mentioned.
2: Mentioned the old name of the community / incorrect name.

Ask if A0=1, aware of the consolidation process
Single answer

A2. Do you remember how you first heard or learned about the community consolidation process?

Read the options if necessary, only one answer

1: Through the media (television, radio, press)
2: During a community meeting/gathering
3: From other community residents
4: From the community leader/representative
5: From the government/regional administration
6: Other *(PLEASE SPECIFY)*
999: *Do not read* Unsure/Don't know

Ask if A0=1, aware of the consolidation process
Text answer
A3. In which year did your community consolidation take place?
Interviewer, **if the respondent is unsure about the exact year, suggest that they try to recall approximately how many years ago the consolidation process happened in their community. Then calculate and record the year.**
1: —————————

999: *Do not read* Unsure/Don't know

Ask all
Numeric answer
A4. How many settlements are there in your community, including your own settlement?
Interviewer, **prompt the respondent that they can also give an approximate number or a range.**

1: —————————*text answer*
999: *Do not read* Unsure/Don't know

Ask all
Single answer
A5. "Do you know who the leader of your community is?"
Read the options/display the screen, one answer
1: I know the name, familiar with their activities / I know them personally
2: I have heard the name
3: I have no information about the community leader
4: Other (*PLEASE SPECIFY*)
999: *Do not read* Unsure/Don't know

Ask all
Text answer
A6. In your opinion, what was the main goal of Community consolidation and administrative and territorial reforms?
Write down the respondent's literal answer
1: ————————————
999: *Do not read* Unsure/Don't know

Ask all
Multiple responses
Rotate responses
A7. In your opinion, which of the following options was or were the purpose(s) of the community consolidation, the territorial-administrative reforms:

1: More effective management of communities
2: Improving the accessibility, affordability, and quality of community services for the population
3: Ensuring the stable socio-economic development of the community
4: Reducing the number of community leaders
5: Strengthening the regional administrations
6: Other (*PLEASE SPECIFY*)
999: *Do not read* Unsure/Don't know

Section 3: Accessibility of Community Services, Affordability, Improvement of Infrastructure, and Evaluation Based on Criteria

Read aloud: **In this part of the survey, we will discuss the accessibility of services in your settlement, your satisfaction with these services, and your expectations.**

Ask all
Single response per service
Rotate services list
S1. Let's start. First, let's talk about the services provided/implemented by the community.
Please take a look at this list. I will also read it aloud one by one. For each service, please tell me how the quality has changed after the community consolidation process. To answer, use the following options.
Read the response options or display them on the screen for the respondent.
Only one answer per service.

Answer key

1: The service started being provided/implemented in your community after the consolidation
2: It was provided/implemented before the consolidation, but **the quality has improved** since
3: Stayed the same / **No change**
4: The quality has deteriorated after the consolidation
5: This service was not provided/implemented in our community, neither before nor after the consolidation
998: *Do not read:* Knows that the service is provided but has not used it, cannot give an additional evaluation
999: *Do not read:* Unsure whether the service is provided or not

Services list show 2-3 services per screen with the answer options under each service
Community-Provided/Implemented Services

1: Agricultural services (veterinary services, provision of agricultural machinery)
2: Water supply and sewage services
3: Irrigation water supply service
4: Road maintenance services (repair and equipment)
5: Intra-community transportation services (including between settlements and the community center)
6: Waste management services (household waste collection and removal)
7: Sanitary cleaning services (cleaning of streets, roads, public spaces, etc.)
8: Maintenance and servicing of multi-apartment buildings (e.g., roof repairs, entrance maintenance, etc.)
9: Maintenance and landscaping of public spaces (e.g., maintenance and landscaping of parks,

squares, monuments)
10: Street lighting service

Multiple answer
S2. Which entity provides the water supply and sewage services in your settlement?

Do not read the list immediately; multiple answers possible.

1: Provided by the community
2: Provided by "Veolia Water" company
3: Other *(PLEASE SPECIFY)*
999: *Do not read*: Unsure/Don't know

Multiple answer
S2.1 Which entity provides the irrigation water supply service in your settlement?
Do not read the list immediately; multiple answers possible.
1: Provided by the community
2: Provided by the Water Users Association (WUA)
3: Other *(PLEASE SPECIFY)*
999: *Do not read*: Unsure/Don't know

Ask all
Single response per service
Rotate services list
S3. Now let's talk about social services.
The response options are the same; I will remind you now.
For each service, please tell me how the quality has changed after the community consolidation process.

Read the response options or display them on the screen for the respondent
Only one answer per service.

Answer key
1: The service started being provided/implemented in your community after the consolidation
2: It was provided/implemented before the consolidation, but **the quality has improved** since
3: Stayed the same / **No change**
4: The quality has deteriorated after the consolidation
5: This service was not provided/implemented in our community, neither before nor after the consolidation
998: *Do not read:* Knows that the service is provided but has not used it, cannot give an additional evaluation
999: *Do not read:* Unsure whether the service is provided or not

Services list show 2-3 services per screen with the answer options under each service
Social Services

1: Primary healthcare services (explain if necessary: polyclinics, health centers, medical centers, etc.)
2: Cultural, youth, and sports services (explain if necessary: activities related to engaging youth in community life, organizing leisure and sports activities, and other related areas)

3: Preschool education services (kindergartens)

4: Extracurricular education services (<u>explain if necessary</u>: community institutions with so-called "clubs" such as art (drawing), music, dance, sports, children's creative centers, etc.)

5: Social protection services (<u>explain if necessary</u>: provision of aid and support to socially vulnerable families, people with disabilities, and others in need through various social programs (employment, medical, referrals to other organizations, etc.))

Single response per service

S4. And how has the quality of services provided by the Civil Service Offices (CSO) changed after the community consolidation process?
CSO services include the provision of certificates, issuance of permits, acceptance of applications and letters, calculation and collection of taxes, duties, and fees, etc.
Remind the respondent of the answer options.

Answer key
1: The service started being provided/implemented in your community after the consolidation
2: It was provided/implemented before the consolidation, but **the quality has improved** since
3: Stayed the same / **No change**
4: The quality has deteriorated after the consolidation
5: This service was not provided/implemented in our community, neither before nor after the consolidation
998: *Do not read:* Knows that the service is provided but has not used it, cannot give an additional evaluation
999: *Do not read:* Unsure whether the service is provided or not

Ask for services with answer codes 1-4 in S1, S3 and S4
Must 5 responses, ranking 1-5 from most 1st important to 5th important

S41. As I understand, the following services are provided in your community. In your opinion, which of these are the <u>5 most important</u> services for the residents of your community?

I will now read these services one by one. You can also read them with me on the screen. Select the 5 most important services for your community, in descending order of importance. That is, the first one mentioned is the most important, the second is the second most important, and so on until you reach 5.

Services list with answer codes 1-4 in S1, S3 and S4

1: Agricultural services (veterinary services, provision of agricultural machinery)
2: Water supply and sewage services
3: Irrigation water supply service
4: Road maintenance services (repair and equipment)
5: Intra-community transportation service (including between settlements and the community center)
6: Waste management service (household waste collection and removal)
7: Sanitary cleaning service (cleaning of streets, roads, public spaces, etc.)
8: Maintenance and servicing of multi-apartment buildings (e.g., roof repairs, entrance maintenance, etc.)
9: Maintenance and landscaping of public spaces (e.g., maintenance and landscaping of parks, squares, monuments)

10: Street lighting service
11: Primary healthcare services (polyclinics, medical ambulatory, health centers, medical centers, etc.)
12: Cultural, youth, and sports services
13: Preschool education service (kindergartens)
14: Extracurricular education service
15: Social protection services (providing aid and support to socially vulnerable families, people with disabilities, and others in need through various social programs (employment, medical, referrals to other organizations, etc.))

Ask for services with answer codes 5, 998 or 999 in S1, S3 and S4, not available in the community
Max 3 responses

S42. Are there any services that are not provided or have low accessibility in your community/settlement but are very important for you and those around you? You can choose from the list on the screen or suggest your own option.
Services list with answer codes 5, 998 or 999 in S1, S3 and S4

1: Agricultural services (veterinary services, provision of agricultural machinery)
2: Water supply and sewage services
3: Irrigation water supply service
4: Road maintenance services (repair and equipment)
5: Intra-community transportation service (including between settlements and the community center)
6: Waste management service (household waste collection and removal)
7: Sanitary cleaning service (cleaning of streets, roads, public spaces, etc.)
8: Maintenance and servicing of multi-apartment buildings (e.g., roof repairs, entrance maintenance, etc.)
9: Maintenance and landscaping of public spaces (e.g., maintenance and landscaping of parks, squares, monuments)
10: Street lighting service
11: Primary healthcare services (polyclinics, medical ambulatory, health centers, medical centers, etc.)
12: Cultural, youth, and sports services
13: Preschool education service (kindergartens)
14: Extracurricular education service
15: Social protection services (providing aid and support to socially vulnerable families, people with disabilities, and others in need through various social programs (employment, medical, referrals to other organizations, etc.))
16: Other *(PLEASE SPECIFY)*

Read aloud: **Now let's talk about your needs and expectations regarding the services that are valued by the majority of community residents.**

Ask if S41 = 1
One answer per service
S5. Please tell whether the following agricultural sector services have improved after the process of community consolidation.

READ the criteria line by line, record the respondent's assessment, and only then move on to the next line.
You can also display the screen.

1: Accessibility of veterinary services
2: Availability of schedules for veterinary preventive and diagnostic measures
3: Availability of agricultural machinery provision services by the community
4: Existence and application of established procedures for the provision of machinery (procedures for leasing, use, and maintenance)
5: Accessibility and affordability of provided machinery during the agricultural work period

Answer key
1: Yes, it has improved
2: Stayed the same, no change
3: It has deteriorated
999: *Do not read* Unsure/Can't say/Has not encountered

Ask if S41 = 2
One answer per service
S6. Please tell whether the level of drinking water supply and drainage services has improved after the process of community consolidation according to the following indicators.

READ the criteria line by line, record the respondent's assessment, and only then move on to the next line.
You can also display the screen.

Key metrics, table format with answer key in columns
1: Schedule for drinking water supply (daily/hourly)
2: Frequency/absence of breakdowns in the drinking water supply system

Answer key
1: Yes, it has improved
2: Stayed the same, no change
3: It has deteriorated
999: *Do not read* Unsure/Can't say/Has not encountered

Ask if S41 = 3
One answer per service
S7. Have the following aspects of irrigation water supply services improved after the community consolidation?

READ the criteria line by line, record the respondent's assessment, and only then move on to the next line.
You can also display the screen.

Key metrics, table format with answer key in columns
1: Volumes of irrigation water supply
2: Frequency of breakdowns in the irrigation system
3: Availability and adherence to the irrigation water supply schedule

Answer key
1: Yes, it has improved
2: Stayed the same, no change
3: It has deteriorated

999: *Do not read* Unsure/Can't say/Has not encountered

One answer per service

S8. Have the road maintenance services (repair and equipment) improved after the community consolidation, according to the following criteria?

READ the criteria line by line, record the respondent's assessment, and only then move on to the next line.
You can also display the screen.

Key metrics, table format with answer key in columns
1: Condition of inter-settlement roads (road surface)
2: Level of equipment on inter-settlement roads (presence of traffic signs and markings)
3: Quality of maintenance of inter-settlement roads (snow removal, ensuring accessibility, organization of repair work)

Answer key
1: Yes, it has improved
2: Stayed the same, no change
3: It has deteriorated
999: *Do not read* Unsure/Can't say/Has not encountered

One answer per service

S9. Have the intra-community transportation services improved after the community consolidation, according to the following criteria?

READ the criteria line by line, record the respondent's assessment, and only then move on to the next line.
You can also display the screen.
Key metrics, table format with answer key in columns

1: Availability of public transportation in the community (intra-settlement and inter-settlement)
2: Availability of public transportation connecting the community/settlement center and the settlements
3: Convenience of the public transportation route schedules

Answer key
1: Yes, it has improved
2: Stayed the same, no change
3: It has deteriorated
999: *Do not read* Unsure/Can't say/Has not encountered

One answer per service

S10. Has the waste management service (referring to household waste collection) improved after the community consolidation, according to the following criteria?

Key metrics, table format with answer key in columns

1: Cleanliness level around garbage bins
2: Frequency and schedule of waste collection
3: Availability of waste sorting options

Answer key
1: Yes, it has improved
2: Stayed the same, no change
3: It has deteriorated
999: *Do not read* Unsure/Can't say/Has not encountered

Ask if S41 = 7
One answer per service
S11. Have the sanitary cleaning services improved after the community consolidation, according to the following criteria?

READ the criteria line by line, record the respondent's assessment, and only then move on to the next line.
You can also display the screen.

Key metrics, table format with answer key in columns

1: Cleanliness level of community/settlement roads, sidewalks, and other public spaces (free from garbage, leaf piles, animal carcasses, etc.)
2: Snow and ice removal from roads and sidewalks during the winter season
3: Quality of maintenance of public-use garbage bins (bins placed in busy street areas) and cleanliness level of their surroundings

Answer key
1: Yes, it has improved
2: Stayed the same, no change
3: It has deteriorated
999: *Do not read* Unsure/Can't say/Has not encountered

Ask if S41 = 8
One answer per service
S12. Have the maintenance and servicing of multi-apartment buildings improved after the community consolidation, according to the following criteria?
READ the criteria line by line, record the respondent's assessment, and only then move on to the next line.
You can also display the screen.
Key metrics, table format with answer key in columns
1: Condition of entrances and doors of multi-apartment buildings
2: Condition of roofs and gutters of multi-apartment buildings
3: Condition of elevators in multi-apartment buildings and quality of maintenance

1: Yes, it has improved
2: Stayed the same, no change
3: It has deteriorated
999: *Do not read* Unsure/Can't say/Has not encountered

S13. Has the public space maintenance and greening service improved after the community unification according to the following criteria?
READ the criteria line by line, record the respondent's assessment, and only then move on to the next line.
You can also display the screen.

Key metrics, table format with answer key in columns
Quality of public space maintenance in the community/residence — including squares, parks, monuments, and adjacent areas, etc.
Level of cleanliness of public spaces in the community/residence — including squares, parks, monuments, and adjacent areas, etc.
Quality of maintenance of green areas — including tree pruning, lawn care, and irrigation of green areas.

Answer key
1: Yes, it has improved
2: Stayed the same, no change
3: It has deteriorated
999: *Do not read* Unsure/Can't say/Has not encountered

S14. Has the street lighting service improved after the community consolidation according to the following criterias:
READ the criteria line by line, record the respondent's assessment, and only then move on to the next line.
You can also display the screen.

Key metrics, table format with answer key in columns
1: Sufficiency and comfort of hours of street and public lighting
2. Quality of service of lamps, timely replacement of failed lamps

Answer key
1: Yes, it has improved
2: Stayed the same, no change
3: It has deteriorated
999: *Do not read* Unsure/Can't say/Has not encountered

S15. Have the primary health care services (polyclinics, outpatient clinics, health centers, medical centers, etc.) improved after the community consolidation according to the following criterias:

READ the criteria line by line, record the respondent's assessment, and only then move on to the next line.
You can also display the screen.

Key metrics, table format with answer key in columns

1: Accessibility/Availability of primary health care services (polyclinics, outpatient clinics, etc.) for the community residents
2: Condition and adequacy of facilities (polyclinics, outpatient clinics, etc.) providing primary health care services
3: Presence of specialists providing primary health care services in the community
4: Availability of necessary equipment and medications

Answer key
1: Yes, it has improved
2: Stayed the same, no change
3: It has deteriorated
999: *Do not read* Unsure/Can't say/Has not encountered

Ask if S41 = 12
One answer per service
S16. Have the services in the field of culture, youth, and sports improved after the community union, according to the following criteria?
READ the criteria line by line, record the respondent's assessment, and only then move on to the next line.
You can also display the screen.
Key metrics, table format with answer key in columns

1.The presence of institutions for organizing cultural, sports, and recreational activities for youth in the community
2.The frequency of cultural, sports, and festive events held in the community
3.The availability of opportunities for youth involvement in public life in the community

Answer key
1: Yes, it has improved
2: Stayed the same, no change
3: It has deteriorated
999: *Do not read* Unsure/Can't say/Has not encountered

Ask if S41 = 13
One answer per service
S17. Has the preschool education service improved after the community union, according to the following criteria?

READ the criteria line by line, record the respondent's evaluation, and then move to the next line.
You can also display the screen.
Key metrics, table format with answer key in columns

1. The building conditions of kindergartens (sanitary-hygienic conditions, heating, playground, equipment)
2. Educational programs and methods for children's education, development, and recreation
3. The quality and variety of food provided in kindergartens
4. The ease of admission to kindergartens
5. The affordability of kindergarten fees

Answer key

1. Yes, it has improved
2. It has remained the same, unchanged
3. It has worsened

999: *Do not READ*, difficult to answer/has not been encountered

Ask if S41 = 14
One answer per service

S18. Has the out-of-school education service improved after the community union, according to the following criteria?

READ the criteria line by line, record the respondent's evaluation, and then move to the next line.
You can also display the screen.

Key metrics, table format with answer key in columns

1. The accessibility/opportunity to attend out-of-school institutions (musical, artistic, dance, sports, etc.) for people in the community
2. The quality of services provided by out-of-school institutions (musical, artistic, dance, sports, etc.) in the community
3. The level of building conditions and equipment of out-of-school institutions (musical, artistic, dance, sports, etc.) in the community

Answer key

1. Yes, it has improved
2. It has remained the same, unchanged
3. It has worsened

999: *Do not READ*, difficult to answer/has not been encountered

Ask if S41 = 15
One answer per service

S19. Have the social protection services improved after the community union, according to the following criteria?

READ the criteria line by line, record the respondent's evaluation, and then move to the next line.
You can also display the screen.

Key metrics, table format with answer key in columns

Programs for meeting the social needs of individuals and families in need of social support (employment, social assistance, etc.)

1. The effectiveness of efforts to identify individuals and families in need of social support in the community (home visits by the community social worker, helping them discover and use resources to overcome difficulties, directing them to territorial bodies providing social services or other specialized organizations)

1. Yes, it has improved
2. It has remained the same, unchanged
3. It has worsened
999: *Do not READ*, difficult to answer/has not been encountered
Ask if S4 = 1-4
One answer per service

S20. Have the services provided by the civil service offices (CSOs) (issuance of certificates, permits, acceptance of applications and letters) improved after the community union, according to the following criteria?

READ the criteria line by line, record the respondent's evaluation, and then move to the next line.
You can also display the screen.

Key metrics, table format with answer key in columns

The quality and speed of services provided by CSOs, including issuance of certificates, permits, acceptance of applications and letters, calculation and collection of taxes, fees, and payments, etc.

1. The quality of service by CSO staff

Answer key

1. Yes, it has improved
2. It has remained the same, unchanged
3. It has worsened
999: *Do not READ*, difficult to answer/has not been encountered

Ask all
Single answer
A8. Overall, how has the community union process affected the quality of life for people living in your settlement?
Read whether life in your settlement has improved significantly, somewhat improved, remained the same, somewhat worsened, or worsened significantly after the community union.
Read options/display the screen, only one answer.
1: It has improved significantly
2: It has somewhat improved
3: It has not changed or remained the same
4: It has somewhat worsened
5: It has worsened significantly
999: *Do not READ,* difficult to answer

Ask all
Single answer

A9. Have you noticed any progress in economic development in your community after the community union process?

Read options/display the screen, only one answer.

1: Significant progress
2: Some progress
3: No change, remained the same
4: Some regression
5: Significant regression
999: *Do not READ,* difficult to answer

A10. How have the following sectors changed in your community after the community union process?

READ the sectors line by line, record the respondent's evaluation, and then move to the next line.

List of sectors, table format with answer key in columns

1.Business environment (equal competitive conditions, simple, transparent, and low-cost procedures, etc.)
2.Presence of qualified specialists in various sectors
3.Opportunities to find employment
4.Accessibility of financial resources offered by financial institutions (banks, credit organizations)
5.Tourism activity in the community
6.The attractiveness of the community for investors
7. Implementation of economic development programs by local self-government bodies

Answer key

1: Yes, it has improved
2: Stayed the same, no change
3: It has deteriorated
999: *Do not read* Unsure/Can't say/Has not encountered

Section 4: Local Democracy: Awareness, Trust, Participation in Local Self-Governance Processes

Read ` In this part of our conversation, we will discuss your perceptions of the work of local self-governance bodies and your participation in these processes.

L1. In your opinion, which body or bodies govern your community?

Allow the respondent to answer without prompts first. When they can no longer specify an option, read the unmentioned options.
You can also display the screen.

Services list
1.Community leader
2.Council

3.Regional governor
4.Regional administration
5.Prime Minister
6: Other (*please specify*)
999: *Do not read* difficult to answer

Ask if L1≠2
Single an swer
L2. Are you aware that your community has a council?
1.Yes
2.No

Ask if L1=2 or L2=1
Numeric answer
L3. How many members does your community council consist of?
Interviewer, Prompt the respondent that an approximate number or range is acceptable.
If a number is given, record it first and then code it.
——— *Numeric answer*
1. Up to 4 members
2. 5-9 members
3. 10-15 members
4. 16-20 members
5. 21-25 members
6. 26-30 members
7. 31 members or more
999: *Do not read* difficult to answer

Ask if L1=2 or L2=1
Single answer
L4. Do you know the members of the council? Which of the council members do you know? I mean, do you know all of them, or just some? Choose the appropriate option from this list.

Read options/display the screen, only one answer.
1. All of them/most of them
2. Half of the council members
3. Less than half of the council members
4. Only 1-2 members
5. I do not know the council members
999: *Do not read* difficult to answer

Ask all
L41. What was the budget of your community for 2023?
open answer, text

Do not read the options immediately.
Read them if the respondent struggles to answer without prompting.

L6_recode
1.0-200 million AMD
2.201-400 million AMD

3.401-700 million AMD
4.701 million AMD to 1 billion AMD
5.1 billion AMD or more
999: *Do not read* difficult to answer

Multiple answer
Rotate the list

L5. In the past 12 months, have you heard about any actions carried out by your local self-government? I will read the options, and you tell me which of these you have heard about in the past 12 months.

Read the list item by item/display the screen, possible multiple answers

1. Decisions made by your local self-government (one or more)
2. An announcement by your local self-government inviting residents to review regulations they have adopted or to participate in discussions about their decisions/regulations
3. Decisions on local taxes, fees, permits (what people call licenses), and procedures for providing community services
4. Information about the community budget—public discussions, allocation of budgetary expenditures, presentation of reports, etc.
5. None of the above

Ask all
Single answer per touchpoint

L6. Usually, do you follow the news for a month to stay informed about…

Read options

Touchpoints
1.Events happening in Armenia
2.Events happening in the community
Answer key
1: Yes
2: no
999: *Do not read* not applicable/access unavailable

Ask if L6.1=1
Multiple answer
Rotate the list of channels

L7. Ususally, within a month, through which sources do you follow news and information about events in Armenia?

Pause to allow the respondent to list sources without prompting. Ask for others until the respondent exhausts their answers.

Read unmentioned options.

List of channels
1. Cable TV channels—Armenian channels
2. Local TV channels—Armenian channels
3. Russian TV channels
4. Foreign TV channels
5. Social networks (Facebook, Instagram)

6. Telegram channels
7. Influencers (bloggers, social media personalities)
8. Information received via Viber
9. YouTube channels
10. Radio
11. Online press
12. Print press
13. Other (*please specify)*

Multiple answer
Rotate the list of channels

L8. How do you find out about events happening in your community during the month?

Pause to allow the respondent to list sources without prompting. Ask for others until the respondent exhausts their answers.

Read unmentioned options.

1. Local TV channels—Armenian channels
2. Social networks—community administration's social media pages (Facebook, Instagram)
3. Community administration's official website
4. Online broadcasts of council meetings
5. Letters sent by the community administration (email, SMS)
6. Meetings organized by the community administration
7. From residents of our community/informed individuals
8: Other (*please specify)*

Ask all
Max 3 responses
Rotate the list of channels

L9. How would you prefer to be informed about events happening in your community?
Pause to allow the respondent to list sources without prompting. Ask for others until the respondent exhausts their answers.
Read unmentioned options.
Max 3 responses

1. Local TV channels—Armenian channels
2. Social networks—community administration's social media pages (Facebook, Instagram)
3. Community administration's official website
4. Online broadcasts of council meetings
5. Letters sent by the community administration (email, SMS)
6. Meetings organized by the community administration
7. From residents of our community/informed individuals
8. Other (*please specify)*

Ask all
Single answer

L10. How has your awareness of the activities carried out by self-governing bodies (local self-governance) changed after the community union process?
Read the list/ display the screen, only one answer

1. We started to learn about self-governing body activities after the community union
2. We are more informed about self-governing body activities after the union

3. It has remained the same/unchanged
4. We are less informed about self-governing body activities after the union
5. We are not informed about self-governing body activities at all after the union
999: ***Do not read*** difficult to answer—whether the service is provided or not

L11. Which of the following activities have you participated in during the last 12 months? Participation in…
Read the list sequentially/display on the screen, multiple answers possible.
1. Council meetings *Ask if L1=2 or L2=1*
2. Discussions on community policies and programs
3. Protest/demonstration
4. Meetings organized by public/international organizations
5. Workshops/professional trainings
6. Discussions/hearings related to your community's five-year development plan, budget, annual work plan, subvention programs, and/or other important documents
7. Interviews or programs related to local issues organized by media (radio, television, press, online media)
8. Online discussions with local self-government (online)
9. None of the above

L12. Have you visited the official website of the local self-government in the last 12 months?
1: Yes
2: No
999: ***Do not read*** difficult to answer

L121. Do local self-governing bodies <u>adequately respond to issues and suggestions</u> raised by community residents during decision-making, based on your or your surroundings' experience?
1: Yes
2: No
998: refused to answer
999: ***Do not read*** difficult to answer

L13. Have you personally had a question or issue that you addressed to any governing body or organization in the last 12 months?
1: Yes
2: No
999: ***Do not read*** difficult to answer

L13.1. In the last 12 months, when you had a question or issue, which governing body or organization did you address?

Read if necessary, multiple answers possible.

1. The community leader
2. The council or a council member
3. A non-governmental organization
4. State administrative bodies
5. Another community resident
6: Other *please specify*
998: *Do not read* did not address any body with a problem
998: *Do not read* refused to answer
999: *Do not read* difficult to answer

L14. Որքա՞ն արագ է լուծվել այդ խնդիրը, որով դիմել եք որևէ ղեկավար մարմնի կամ կազմակերպության:

Read the list or display on the screen, single answer.

1. Resolved very quickly
2. Resolved somewhat quickly
3. Not resolved very quickly
4. Still in process
5. Not resolved at all
6: Other *please specify*
999: *Do not read* difficult to answer

L15. How has the process of raising issues and their resolution changed after the community union?

1. Improved
2. Remained the same/unchanged
3. Worsened
999: *Do not read* difficult to answer

L16. Can you name 3 factors that could most help community residents in solving their problems with local self-governance bodies?

In other words, what measures do residents of your community take to increase the likelihood of their issues being resolved by local self-government?

Pause briefly to allow the respondent to name the factors independently. Ask for more if needed, until the respondent exhausts their answers.
Read the unmentioned options/display on screen
At least 3 answers required

1. Personal connections

2. Social status/position
3. Gift/material "thanks"
4. Bribery
5. Professional skills/opportunities
6. Persistence, consistency
7. Knowledge of one's rights
8. Adherence to the law by local self-governance bodies
9. Being successful (luck)
10. Age
11. Appearance
12: Other *please specify*
999: *Do not read* difficult to answer

L17. Overall, how transparent are the local self-governance bodies in your community? That is, do they provide understandable reports to the community residents regarding their decisions, actions, and expenditures?

Read the options/display on screen, one answer
1. Local self-governance is definitely transparent
2. More or less transparent
3. Neither transparent nor non-transparent, average
4. More or less non-transparent
5. Local self-governance is completely non-transparent
999: *Do not read* difficult to answer

L18. Overall, how much do you trust the following individuals?
Use a 5-point scale where "1" means you do not trust at all and "5" means you fully trust. You can choose any rating from 1 to 5.
Read the list of individuals one by one, wait for the respondent to give their trust rating, then move to the next person
Answer key
1: don't trust at all
2:
3:
4:
5: Fully trust
999: *Do not read* difficult to answer

List of people/ bodies, table with answer key as columns
1. Community leader (mayor)
2. Members of the community council
3. Regional leader (governor)
4. Community staff
5. Administrative head of your locality

L19. Have you participated in the following elections? I mean the most recent election. Now I will read the types of elections, and you answer whether you participated/voted or not.

Read the options/display on screen, multiple answers allowed

1. Community council elections
2. National Assembly elections
3: *Do not read* haven't participated in any election
999: *Do not read* refuses to answer

L20. Which of the following characteristics were most typical of the elections you participated in?

Read the options/display on screen, multiple answers allowed

Election type

1. Community council elections
2. National Assembly elections

statements

1. Transparent
2. Equal opportunities for candidates
3. High voter turnout
4. Competitive
999: *Do not read* refuses to answer

L21. Which of the following statements do you agree with?

Read the options/display on screen, multiple answers allowed

Thus, do you agree that after the unification of communities:

statements

1.Political life in your community has become more vibrant
2.Management and decision-making have become more inclusive, meaning more and different residents' opinions are taken into account
3.The scope of participants in management and decision-making has expanded
4.Decisions have become of higher quality, clearer, and more acceptable

Answer key

1: yes
2: no
999: *Do not read* refuses to answer

Section 5: Perceptions of Decentralization of Powers

DC1. Are you aware of the planned decentralization process in the Republic of Armenia? This involves the transfer of broader administrative powers from state management bodies to local self-government bodies (LSGs).
Read the options/display on screen, possible to select one answer
Read the options/display on screen, single answer allowed
1. Yes, I am quite informed
2. I think I have heard of it
3. I am hearing about it for the first time
999: *Do not read* difficult to answer

Text on a separate page **As a result of community unification, it is planned to implement decentralization of powers, which means that some powers, i.e., services, currently carried out by state management bodies, will be transferred to the communities. These services will include the following:**

- Primary health care
- Maintenance and operation of inter-community and inter-settlement roads
- Maintenance and operation of public school buildings
- Organization of social complex services

To better describe the decentralization process, a few examples are provided.
For instance, if your community's school needs repairs, under decentralization, the decision to repair will be made by local self-government bodies rather than the ministry. Additionally, the powers transferred to LSGs as part of decentralization will be financed by the LSGs. This will allow for faster decision-making and prompt resolution of issues on-site by the community.

Another similar example can also be provided regarding the process of road repairs. The decision-making and implementation of road repairs between settlements will also be managed by the local self-government.

Were you able to understand the decentralization process clearly? Do you have any questions about this section?

DC2. . In your opinion, what POSITIVE impact will the decentralization process have on your settlement?

Do not read the options immediately. First, let the respondent answer without hints.
If the respondent's answers are among our options, note them. If the respondent provides an option not listed, record it in the "other" field.
When the respondent has finished mentioning options, read the remaining options.

1. Speed of problem resolution
2. Increased awareness of community issues
3. Increased efficiency of budget expenditures
4. Enhanced community cohesion
5. Improved quality of services provided by the community
6. Opportunity for new services to be provided in the settlement

7. Other *please specify*
999: *Do not read* difficult to answer

Ask all
Multiple answer
Rotate the list of answers
DC3. What NEGATIVE impact might the decentralization process have on your settlement?

Do not read the options immediately. First, let the respondent answer without hints. If the respondent's answers are among our options, note them. If the respondent provides an option not listed, record it in the "other" field.
When the respondent has finished mentioning options, read the remaining options.
1. Lack of control over the situation
2. Inequality and inconsistency between communities
3. Risk of forming a clientelist system/corruption risks
4. Coordination challenges/insufficient capacity
5. Inefficiency and increased costs
6. Reduction in economic scale
7: Other *please specify*

999: *Do not read* difficult to answer

Ask all
Single answer
DC4. What overall outcome do you expect from the decentralization process?
Read the options/display on screen, single answer allowed
1: Very positive
2: Mostly positive
3: Neither negative nor positive
4: Mostly negative
5: Very negative
999: *Do not read* difficult to answer

Section 6: Demographic Data

Read` And finally, a few questions about you, for statistical purposes
Ask all
Single
D1. Please indicate your marital status.
READ if necessary
1: Married
2: Unmarried
3: Divorced/Separated

99: *Do not read* refused to answer

D2. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

0: Did not attend elementary school
1: Elementary (incomplete or complete)
2: Secondary (incomplete)
3: Secondary (complete)
4: Vocational
5: Higher education (incomplete)
6: Higher education (complete)
7: Academic degree
99: *Do not read* refused to answer

D3. What is your current occupation?

1: Student
2: Student who is working
3: Employed
4: Self-employed
5: Self-employed (freelancer)
6: Unemployed
7: Retired
8: Housewife/Househusband
9: Not working due to disability
99: *Do not read* refused to answer

D4. Please indicate which of the following best describes your family's socio-economic situation:

READ

1: We are in very good financial condition, able to afford expensive items including a home and a summer residence
2: Somewhat good
3: Average
4: Rather poor, barely affording food or clothing
5: Very poor, our resources barely cover food
98: *DO NOT READ* Refused to answer

D5. Compared to your neighbors, which of the following best describes your family's socio-economic situation:

READ

1: We are in very good financial condition

2: Somewhat good

3: Average

4: Rather poor

5: Very poor

98: *DO NOT READ* Refused to answer

D6. Interviewer's notes (text box**)**
D7. Respondent's name (text box)
D8. Respondent's phone number (write down**)**

Read when the interview is finished or interrupted: Thank you for your participation.

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