

Information Needs of the Public and Their Satisfaction by the Regional Mass Media¹

Introduction

This Report was compiled and published on the basis of the findings of a sociological survey carried out by the “Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression” non-governmental organization under the “Advocacy through Empowerment of Regional Media and Journalistic Organizations” Project (implemented with the support of the Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation Armenia and the Government of the Netherlands). The objective of the survey was to assess the development of the Armenian regional mass media and their capacity in satisfying the information needs of the regional population. To this end, a public opinion survey covering a total of 600 respondents was carried out in six regions (“*Marzes*”) of Armenia (Shirak, Lori, Tavush, Gegharkunik, Armavir, and Syunik) during February-July 2008 (one month per region).

Table 1H. Sex and Age Composition of Respondent Sample Universe

Sex	Age	Region												Total	
		Shirak		Lori		Tavush		Gegharkunik		Armavir		Syunik			
Fem.	18-29	13	17.8	12	16.4	14	19.2	13	17.8	14	19.2	7	9.6	73	
		13.0		12.0		14.0		13.0		14.0		7.0		12.2	
	30-39	12	19.4	10	16.1	6	9.7	12	19.4	11	17.7	11	17.7	62	
		12.0		10.0		6.0		12.0		11.0		11.0		10.3	
	40-49	13	17.3	12	16.0	13	17.3	10	13.3	11	14.7	16	21.3	75	
		13.0		12.0		13.0		10.0		11.0		16.0		12.5	
	50-59	10	28.6	5	14.3	4	11.4	6	17.1	5	14.3	5	14.3	35	
		10.0		5.0		4.0		6.0		5.0		5.0		5.8	
	60 and above	8	10.4	15	19.5	17	22.1	13	16.9	11	14.3	13	16.9	77	
		8.0		15.0		17.0		13.0		11.0		13.0		12.8	
	Sub-total female		56	17.4	54	16.8	54	16.8	54	16.8	52	16.1	52	16.1	322
			56.0		54.0		54.0		54.0		52.0		52.0		53.7
Male	18-29	12	16.9	12	16.9	10	14.1	12	16.9	12	16.9	13	18.3	71	
		12.0		12.0		10.0		12.0		12.0		13.0		11.8	
	30-39	9	15.5	9	15.5	8	13.8	10	17.2	11	19.0	11	19.0	58	
		9.0		9.0		8.0		10.0		11.0		11.0		9.7	
	40-49	10	17.2	10	17.2	8	13.8	9	15.5	11	19.0	10	17.2	58	
		10.0		10.0		8.0		9.0		11.0		10.0		9.7	
	50-59	5	16.7	4	13.3	6	20.0	5	16.7	4	13.3	6	20.0	30	
		5.0		4.0		6.0		5.0		4.0		6.0		5.0	
	60 and above	8	13.1	11	18.0	14	23.0	10	16.4	10	16.4	8	13.1	61	
		8.0		11.0		14.0		10.0		10.0		8		10.2	
	Sub-total male		44	15.8	46	16.5	46	16.2	46	16.2	48	17.3	48	17.3	278
			44.0		46.0		46.0		46.0		48.0		48.0		46.3
Total		100		100		100		100		100		100		600	

¹ Sociologist Vardan Gevorgyan conducted the survey, processed the findings, and prepared this Report.

Executive Summary

The main findings of the survey are as follows:

1. The three most prevalent sources of information for respondents are:
 - a. The Public Television (over 85%);
 - b. Local television stations (about 52%); and
 - c. Friends and acquaintances (over 38%).
2. The top three sources are followed with some lag by national newspapers, which are a primary source of general information for over one quarter of the respondents.
3. Foreign mass media are the next most popular source (over 20%). Equally important sources of general information for respondents are the Public Radio, local newspapers, the Internet, and colleagues (each of these sources is important for about 17-18% of the respondents).
4. Local radio stations are the least popular (only 7.3%), which is presumed mostly or quantitatively to be due to the lack or inadequate coverage of the local radio network.
5. Each of the most prevalent sources of **general information** is important for both female and male respondents.
6. *As to settlements*, local television stations are equally preferred by rural and urban residents, while the Public Television is slightly more popular amongst the rural respondents. Informal sources of information, such as friends and acquaintances, are much more important for this category of respondents.
7. In contrast, the Internet was expectedly cited as a primary source of information by twice as many urban as rural respondents.
8. The choice of information sources rather strongly correlates to the respondents' level of education:
 - a. The higher the level of education, the higher the percentage share of respondents citing the Internet as a primary source of information (the trend is stronger amongst the male population, which is most probably due to the fact that the Internet is still more accessible for male than female respondents);
 - b. The higher the level of education, the lower the percentage share of respondents deeming informal sources of information (friends and acquaintances) as primary (the trend is stronger amongst the male population).
9. The primary sources of information on **regional life** are the Public television, local television stations, and friends and acquaintances. Here, though, the "leader" is local television, followed by informal sources (friends and acquaintances), while Public Television is the third (64%, 62.8%, and 50.5%, respectively).
10. While informal sources (friends and acquaintances) are the preferred primary source of information on regional life for male respondents, female respondents prefer local television more (by over 4 percentage points).
11. Local newspapers are the next most significant source of information on regional life (for over 25% of the respondents), followed with a large gap by national newspapers (11%).
12. Public and local radios are equally insignificant for respondents: they were cited as a primary source of information by only 7-8% of the respondents.

(The sources of general and regional information, ranked as per their importance to respondents, are presented in summary table 1 below.)

Summary Table 1. Information Sources for Respondents

Sources of general information	#	Sources of information on regional life	#
Public television	1	Local television	1
Local television	2	Friends and acquaintances	2
Friends and acquaintances	3	Public television	3
National newspapers	4	Local newspapers	4
Foreign mass media	5	National newspapers	5
Colleagues	6	Other sources	6
Local newspapers	7	Local radio	7
Public radio	8	Public radio	8
The Internet	9		
Local radio	10		
Other sources	11		

13. **As to the information interests of respondents**, female respondents were found to have a stronger interest in the social issues affecting the population of their region (including health care, social security, education, and culture), human rights, community problems, the activities of local self-government bodies, and the like.

14. The topics of primary interest to **male respondents** included the Karabakh issue, human rights, the activities of the army, and domestic politics.

15. Both the survey universe (i.e. all the respondents surveyed in the six regions) and the male and female population of the individual regions *did not demonstrate any interest* in topics such as the activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church and, especially, other religious organizations, science and technology sector issues, and the activities of opposition political parties.

16. The male and female respondents generally demonstrated average interest in the activities of key institutions such as the President of Armenia, the National Assembly, the Government, and the regional authorities. Even the male respondents, for whom the activities of the President were of relatively greater interest, the topic did not rank higher than 7th in the list.

(The 10 topics of greatest interest for male and female respondents, ranked by importance to them, are presented in summary tables 2 and 3 below, respectively.)

Summary Table 2.

10 topics of greatest interest to female respondents	Rank of preference
Health and social security issues of the region	1
Education and culture issues of the region	2
Issues related to human rights	3
Issues of the local self-government bodies and community problems	4
The Karabakh issue	5
The population morale	6
Political events of the region	7
Activities of the regional authorities	8
Activities of the Government and Prime Minister of Armenia	9
Issues related to the national economy of Armenia	10

Summary Table 3.

10 topics of greatest interest to <u>male</u> respondents	Rank of preference
The Karabakh issue	1
Issues related to human rights	2
The army	3
Domestic politics in general	4
Health and social security issues of the region	5
Issues of the local self-government bodies and community problems	6
Activities of the President of Armenia	7
Political events of the region	8
Activities of the Government and Prime Minister of Armenia	9
Issues related to the national economy of Armenia	10

(Summary table 4 presents the 10 topics most frequently covered by the regional mass media in the order of the coverage frequency.)

Summary Table 4.

10 topics most frequently covered by the regional mass media	Rank as per coverage frequency	Number of times topic was covered during the monitoring period
International affairs	1	114
Education and culture issues of the region	2	88
Other topics (not cited in the questionnaire)	3	69
Domestic politics in general	4	50
Local self-government activities and community problems	5	40
Health and social security issues of the region	6	35
Activities of the Government and Prime Minister of Armenia	7	28
Accidents and Police activities	8	24
Agricultural and environmental issues of the region	9	19
Activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church	10	11

17. There is an obvious mismatch between the topics of interest to the respondents and the topics most frequently covered by the regional mass media. The following topics were clearly ignored by the mass media:

- a. Issues related to human rights (ranked as 2nd and 3rd, respectively, in the list of topics of interest to male and female respondents): they not only were absent from the top-ten list of the most frequently covered topics, but were not covered by the regional mass media at all;
- b. The Karabakh issue, which was the topic of greatest interest to male respondents and was in the top five most interesting topics for female respondents;
- c. Politics in the region;
- d. The army, which was the third most important topic for the male respondents; and
- e. Important topics for female respondents, such as the public morale, the activities of regional authorities, and others.

18. Instead, the mass media excessively covered the following topics of no primary interest to the respondents:

- a. International affairs;
- b. Accidents in the region and the Police activities;
- c. Activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church; and

d. Activities of law-enforcement authorities, including the judiciary.

19. As for the duration of watching regional television stations, the largest share of the respondents watched regional television for 3-5 hours: female respondents prevail within this group, especially among those watching regional television for 3-4 hours (female respondents were 57.4%). About 30% of all viewers watched regional television for 1-3 hours (female respondents accounted for the majority of this group, as well).

20. The findings concerning mass media impartiality were as follows:

a. Over 42% of the respondents thought that the commentaries by national television stations (“NTSs”) were severely biased, while 48.5% considered them largely biased, and only 8.5% thought them to be balanced. Male respondents accounted for the majority of the respondents that considered NTSs “severely” and “largely” biased (i.e. all those that considered NTSs “not impartial”).

b. Respondents considered regional television stations (“RTSs”) to be relatively more impartial. While over 90% of the total number of respondents considered the commentaries by NTSs “not impartial,” slightly more than half of the respondents considered the commentaries by RTSs “not impartial.” Quite a few of the respondents had difficulty assessing impartiality, mostly due to their inability to watch the programs of RTSs.

c. Only about half of the respondents read regional and local newspapers. They considered regional newspapers more impartial than the television stations. Newspapers were the only medium the commentaries of which were generally considered impartial by more respondents than not.

(The general impartiality assessment of the commentaries by the mass media is presented in Summary Table 5 below.)

Summary Table 5.

Mass Media	Impartiality Assessment			Difficulty assessing	Total
	The opinion of one side only	The opinion of one side more	Everyone’s opinions in a balanced manner		
National television stations	42.3	48.5	8.5	0.7	100.0
Regional television stations	12.0	40.2	30.8	17.0	100.0
Regional newspapers	3.0	22.0	27.0	48.0	100.0

Survey Methodology

The Survey was carried out using questionnaires. The questionnaire included 13 questions, which were divided into several sections.

The questions in the first section (introduction) were designed to identify the main sources of information on events taking place in the country and the region for the regional population (“respondents”). From a list of different types of mass media, respondents were to select the three sources from which they most frequently sought the information of interest to them. Another question was designed to find out from which sources respondents obtained information about events in their region.

The second section included one question comprising 26 sub-questions designed to measure the respondents’ level of interest in various political and social institutions of significance, events, and

issues occurring in the life of Armenian society. Respondents were offered a scale of 10 where “10” meant the highest degree of interest and “1” the absolute lack of interest.

The third section contained questions designed to assess the degree to which respondents used the regional mass media (whether they watched local or regional television stations, the frequency and duration of watching, and whether they read regional newspapers).

The fourth section included one question aimed at discovering the respondents’ opinion about the impartiality and balanced nature of mass media activities. The respondents were asked to assess the impartiality and balanced nature of each of national and regional television stations and regional newspapers under one of the following three descriptions:

1. “The opinion of one side only is presented”;
2. “The opinion of one side is presented more”; and
3. “The opinions of all the sides are presented in a balanced manner.”

The last section was aimed at collecting social demographic information on the respondents (sex, age, education, region, and type of settlement (urban vs. rural)). The survey was anonymous.

For comparative analysis purposes in tabulating the results of the Survey, the findings of the monitoring of regional mass media carried out by the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression were used, as well, with a view to discovering the topics of information interest to the respondents versus the topics actually covered by the regional mass media, i.e. the supply-demand match in the information domain.

In view of the fact that the Survey addressed the same issue in the different regions, 100 respondents were chosen in each region regardless of the percentage share of such region in Armenia’s total population. However, the regional samples were compiled in line with the demographic (sex and age) features of each region.

Section 1. Main Sources of Information for Respondents

Through this section, we tried to identify the main sources of information for the respondents on:

1. Events occurring in the world and in Armenia (“general information”); and
2. Life within their region.

Sources of General Information

The respondents were offered 10 different sources of information, including the public and local television and radio stations, national and local newspapers, foreign (including Russian) mass media, the Internet, and informal sources of information (colleagues, friends, and acquaintances).

The Survey revealed the following three as the most common sources of information for the respondents:

1. Public Television (over 85%);
2. Local television stations (about 52%); and
3. Friends and acquaintances (over 38%).

The top three sources are followed with some lag by national newspapers, which are a primary source of general information for over one quarter of the respondents. Foreign mass media are the next most popular source (over 20%). Equally important sources of general information for respondents are the Public Radio, local newspapers, the Internet, and colleagues (each of these sources is important for about 17-18% of the respondents). Local radio stations are the least popular (only 7.3%), which is presumably due to the inadequate coverage of the local radio network.

Each of the primary sources of general information was significant for both female and male respondents. Public Television was mentioned by both groups of respondents as a primary source of

information. As to the remaining two sources, local television and colleagues were slightly more important for female respondents. Instead, the share of male respondents citing the Internet as a primary source of information was 3.5 percentage points greater than that of female respondents, which is most probably due to the fact that the Internet is still more accessible for male than female respondents.

As to settlements, local television stations are equally preferred by rural and urban residents, while the Public Television is slightly more popular amongst the rural respondents. Informal sources of information, such as friends and acquaintances, are much more important for rural respondents: the share of rural respondents that cited friends and acquaintances as a primary source of information was over 1.6-fold greater than the share of the respective urban residents. In contrast, the Internet was cited as a primary source of information by twice as many urban as rural respondents.

The choice of information sources rather strongly correlates to the respondents' level of education. If viewing Public Television can be considered an indicator (given that it is the most popular source of information for the respondents regardless of their place of residence and education level), the following inverse correlation is observed:

- The higher the level of education, the higher the percentage share of respondents citing the Internet as a primary source of information (the trend is stronger amongst the male population); and
- The higher the level of education, the lower the percentage share of respondents deeming informal sources of information (friends and acquaintances) as primary (the trend is stronger amongst the male population).

Sources of Information on Regional Life

In contrast to the list of potential sources of general information, the list of potential sources of information on regional life did not provide options such as the Internet, foreign television stations, and colleagues. This decision was based on the following assumptions: a) there is objectively a very low likelihood that information on regional life would be obtained through the Internet and regional television stations; and b) there are very few large organizations in the regions (especially in villages), which severely lowers the likelihood of the respondents either having colleagues or regularly obtaining information through colleagues.

The top three sources of information on regional life, similar to the sources of general information, include public and local television stations and friends and acquaintances. Here, though, the absolute "leader" is local television, followed by informal sources (friends and acquaintances) (the share of local television is 64%, that of informal sources 62.8%, and the share of Public Television 50.5%). While informal sources (friends and acquaintances) are the preferred primary source of information on regional life for male respondents, female respondents prefer local television more (by over 4 percentage points).

Local newspapers are the next most significant source of information on regional life (for over 25% of the respondents), followed with a large gap by national newspapers (11%). Public and local radios are equally insignificant for respondents: they were cited as a primary source of information by only 7-8% of the respondents.

The trends were virtually the same in almost all the age groups (for details, see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. Main Sources of Information on Regional Life

Sex	Age	Public TV		Public Radio		National newspapers		Local TV		Local radio		Local newspapers		Friends and acquaintances		Other	
		31	43.0	6	9.0	6	9.0	50	69.0	3	4.5	17	24.0	43	59.0	5	7.0
Female	18-29	20.0		29.0		17.0		24.0		11.0		21.0		23.0		21.0	
		31	50.0	4	7.0	8	14.0	42	68.0	8	14.0	14	23.0	37	60.0	7	12.0
	30-39	20.0		19.0		23.0		20.0		30.0		18.0		20.0		30.0	
		38	18.0	5	7.0	9	12.0	54	72.0	9	12.0	24	32.0	46	62.0	7	10.0
	40-49	24.0		24.0		25.0		26.0		33.3		30.0		24.0		30.0	
		14	40.0	1	3.0	8	23.0	20	58.0	4	12.0	12	35.0	21	60.0	3	9.0
	50-59																

		9.0		5.0		23.0		10.0		15.0		15.0		11.0		13.0	
	60 and above	44	58.0	5	7.0	5	7.0	47	61.0	3	4.0	14	19.0	46	60.0	2	3.0
		24.0		24.0		14.0		22.0		11.0		18.0		24.0		9.0	
	Sub-total female	158	49.0	21	7.0	36	12.0	213	67.0	27	9.0	81	26.0	193	60.0	24	8.0
		53.0		49.0		58.0		56.0		56.0		51.0		48.0		49.0	
Male	18-29	33	47.0	3	5.0	7	10.0	43	61.0	6	9.0	16	23.0	54	76.0	3	5.0
		24.0		14.0		26.0		26.0		28.0		21.0		26.0		12.0	
	30-39	35	61.0	8	14.0	7	12.0	39	68.0	2	4.0	15	26.0	37	64.0	7	12.0
		25.0		37.0		26.0		23.0		9.0		19.0		18.0		28.0	
	40-49	28	49.0	4	7.0	6	11.0	34	59.0	5	9.0	23	40.0	36	62.0	7	12.0
		20.0		19.0		23.0		20.0		23.0		30.0		17.0		28.0	
	50-59	11	37.0	1	4.0	2	7.0	17	57.0	3	10.0	12	40.0	18	60.0	5	17.0
		8.0		5.0		8.0		10.0		14.0		16.0		9.0		20.0	
	60 and above	35	58.0	6	10.0	5	9.0	38	63.0	6	10.0	13	22.0	33	54.0	3	5.0
		25.0		28.0		19.0		23.0		28.0		17.0		16.0		12.0	
	Sub-total male	142	51.0	22	8.0	27	10.0	171	62.0	22	8.0	79	29.0	215	78.0	25	9.0
		47.0		51.0		42.0		44.0		44.0		49.0		52.0		51.0	
Total		300		43		63		384		49		160		408		49	
		50.0		7.2		10.5		64.0		8.2		26.7		68.0		8.2	

Slightly more of the rural respondents (over 52%) cited Public Television as a primary source of information on regional life, similar to general information. In contrast, more urban respondents (about 53%) cited local television as the primary source of information on regional life.

Friends and acquaintances are an equally significant source of information on regional life for both groups (for details, see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2. Primary Sources of Information on Regional Life

Sex	Settlement	Public TV		Public Radio		National newspapers		Local TV		Local radio		Local newspapers		Friends and acquaintances		Other	
Female	Urban	70		13		24		117		28		48		97		16	
		44.0		62.0		66.0		55.0		85.0		61.0		50.0		67.0	
	Rural	90		8		12		98		5		31		97		8	
		56.0		38.0		34.0		45.0		15.0		39.0		50.0		33.0	
	Sub-total female	160		21		36		215		33		79		194		24	
	53.0		49.0		56.0		56.0		59.0		49.0		53.0		50.0		
Male	Urban	59		13		19		86		19		36		88		13	
		42.0		59.0		66.0		51.0		83.0		44.0		49.5		55.0	
	Rural	83		9		10		84		4		46		90		11	
		58.0		41.0		34.0		49.0		17.0		56.0		50.5		45.0	
	Sub-total male	142		22		29		170		23		82		178		24	
	47.0		51.0		44.0		44.0		41.0		51.0		47.0		50.0		
Total		302		43		65		385		56		161		372		48	
		50.3		7.2		10.8		64.2		9.3		26.8		62.0		8.0	

As the education level increases, the number of respondents citing newspapers (especially local newspapers) as a primary source of information on regional life grows, while the share of those citing “friends and acquaintances” as a primary source of information on regional life decreases (for details, see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3. Primary Sources of Information on Regional Life

Sex	Education	Public TV	Public Radio	National newspapers	Local TV	Local radio	Local newspapers	Friends and acquaintances	Other
Female	Elementary	6	0	1	3	0	1	5	0
		4.0		3.0	2.0		1.2	2.7	
	Incomplete secondary	8	2	3	12	3	4	16	0
		5.0	10.0	9.0	6.0	12.0	5.0	9.0	
	Secondary or vocational	85	12	14	96	13	29	102	9
		53.0	58.0	39.0	45.0	52.0	37.0	53.0	38.0
University	62	7	18	103	11	45	71	15	
	39.0	34.0	50.0	49.0	44.0	57.0	37.0	62.0	
Sub-total female	161	21	36	214	25	79	194	24	
	54.0	49.0	55.0	56.0	54.0	53.0	52.0	49.5	
Male	Elementary	3	2	0	3	0	0	6	0
		2.3	9.0		2.0			4.0	
	Incomplete secondary	9	2	4	8	4	3	18	0
		7.0	9.0	14.0	5.0	19.0	4.2	10.0	
	Secondary or vocational	65	12	10	84	9	28	91	15
		46.0	55.0	33.3	49.5	41.0	39.0	50.0	60.0
University	65	6	16	75	9	41	68	10	
	46.0	28.0	54.0	45.0	41.0	57.0	38.0	40.0	
Sub-total male	142	22	30	170	22	72	183	25	
	46.0	51.0	46.0	44.0	46.0	47.0	48.0	50.5	
Total		303	43	66	384	47	151	377	49
		50.5	7.2	11.0	64.0	7.8	25.2	62.8	8.2

The general picture of the respondents’ sources of general information and information on regional life is reflected in table TA-1 below.

Table TA-1. Respondents’ Sources of Information

	Sources of general information	Share of respondents citing as primary (%)		Sources of information on regional life	Share of respondents citing as primary (%)
1	Public television	86.0	1	Local television	64.0
2	Local television	51.8	2	Friends and acquaintances	62.8
3	Friends and acquaintances	38.2	3	Public television	50.5
4	National newspapers	24.0	4	Local newspapers	25.2
5	Foreign mass media	20.3	5	National newspapers	11.0
6	Colleagues	18.2	6	Other sources	8.2

7	Local newspapers	18.0	7	Local radio	7.8
8	Public radio	17.8	8	Public radio	7.2
9	The Internet	17.3			
10	Local radio	7.3			
11	Other sources	0.8			

Section 2. Information Interests of Respondents

This Section reviews the information interests of respondents regarding the activities of various political and public institutions, events occurring and problems existing in different spheres of life (hereinafter, “topics of interest”).

The respondents were offered 26 topics, including the activities of public administration institutions such as the President of Armenia, the Government, the Prime Minister, the National Assembly, law-enforcement authorities, including the judiciary, domestic politics in general, issues related to human rights, international affairs, the Karabakh issue, regional and cultural life in the country, the army, issues in the economy, science, and technology, the activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church and other religious organizations, the population morale, political events occurring in the region, agriculture, industry, trade and services, health care and social security, transport and communications, education and culture, accidents in the region and Police activities, and finally, the activities of local self-government bodies and community problems.

The respondents were asked to rank the topics of interest to them on a scale of 10 (“10” meant the highest degree of interest and “1” the absolute lack of interest). For purposes of analyzing respondents’ interests in various topics, the rankings are divided into the following three groups:

1. Respondents ranking 8-10 will be considered the group with a strong interest (“the strongly interested”);
2. Respondents ranking 4-7 will be considered the group with average interest (“average interest”); and
3. Respondents ranking 1-3 will be considered the group with low interest (“the uninterested”).

The analysis of the survey findings revealed the following.

Female respondents have a stronger interest in the social issues affecting the population of their region (including health care, social security, education, and culture), human rights, community problems, the activities of local self-government bodies, and the like.

The topics of primary interest to **male** respondents included the Karabakh issue, human rights, the activities of the army, and domestic politics.

Both the survey universe (i.e. all the respondents surveyed in the six regions) and the male and female population of the individual regions *did not demonstrate any interest* in topics such as the activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church and, especially, other religious organizations, science and technology sector issues, and the activities of opposition political parties.

In the greater universe, male respondents were also uninterested in topics such as the population morale and trade and service sector issues in the region.

Female respondents were uninterested also in the activities of law-enforcement authorities and sports and cultural events in the country. Interestingly, the activities of key institutions (the President of Armenia, the National Assembly, the Government, and the regional authorities) were generally of average interest to both male and female respondents. Even the male respondents, for whom the activities of the President were of relatively greater interest, the topic did not rank higher than 7th in the list. This topic was not even in the “top ten” of topics for the male and female respondents in the Armavir Region, the male respondents in the Gegharkunik Region, the female respondents in the Lori and Shirak regions, and the greater universe of female respondents (detailed information on the ten topics of greatest interest to respondents is presented in Summary Table 4).

In the context of reviewing the topics of interest to respondents from the individual regions, comparative analysis of some findings of the mass media monitoring carried out in different regions will be presented below. The monitoring was carried out by the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression during January-August 2008. The purpose of this approach is to draw a comparison between the information interests of the regional population (information demand) and the reporting offered by the regional mass media. The aim is not to analyze the substance or quality of the regional mass media content. The objective is simply to use the available information to demonstrate the quantitative mismatch between information demand and supply. The 10 topics of greatest interest to respondents in each region are presented below in combined tables (“combined tables of information demand and supply) together with the topics of publications and broadcast reporting monitored in the regional media (see Tables TPA 1-6).

Situation in the Regions

Female respondents in the **Lori Region** demonstrated strong interest in the population morale, as well as the social problems of the region and human rights issues. The population morale ranked 9th among the topics of interest to male respondents in the Lori Region. The latter demonstrated the strongest interest in the army, human rights, activities of the Government, and international affairs. Like the greater universe, the respondents in this region showed the least degree of interest in the activities of other religious organizations. Female respondents were least interested in sports and cultural events in the country, science and technology, and regional trade and services. The topic of regional trade and services, together with the topic of the Armenian Apostolic Church and the activities of local self-government bodies, were the least interesting to male respondents.

(The topics of interest to respondents in the Lori Region are presented in Table TPA-1 below.)

Table TPA-1 (**Lori**)

Mass Medium; topic covered or broadcast	Number of times	10 topics of greatest interest to respondents	Rank of preference	
			Male	Female
<i>Loru Marz newspaper, one issue of January 2007 and another of January 2008</i> “Lori TV” television station’s “Munetik” news program (07.11.2008 to 11.01.2008) Alaverdi “Ankyun+3” television station’s news block, five programs				
Activities of the Government and Prime Minister of Armenia	2	Health care and social security issues in the region	1	
Activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church	2	Human rights	2	2
Politics in the region	5	Activities of the Government	3	10
Agriculture and environmental issues in the region	2	International affairs	4	7
Health care and social issues in the region	12	Agriculture and environmental issues in the region	5	1
Transport and communications issues in the region	1	Domestic politics in Armenia	6	6
Education and culture issues in the region (including sports)	10	Activities of the National Assembly of Armenia	7	
Activities of local self-government bodies and community problems	7	President of Armenia	8	
Domestic politics in Armenia in general	8	Morale of the Armenian public	9	3
Accidents in the region and Police activities	1	Politics in the region	10	8

International affairs	2	Education and culture issues in the region	4
Trade and service sector issues in the region	1	The army	5
OTHER TOPICS	11	Activities of the regional authorities	9

Respondents in the **Gegharkunik Region** were more curious in various topics than those in the other surveyed regions. Respondents from Gegharkunik demonstrated a strong interest in the vast majority of the topics: over half of the male respondents in Gegharkunik indicated the strongest interest in 22 of the proposed 26 topics, with over 80% of the same group demonstrating the strongest interest in 15 topics.

Female respondents in Gegharkunik also demonstrated a strong interest: over half of them indicated strong interest in 19 of the proposed 26 topics. Despite such strong interest, however, all the respondents in Gegharkunik (both male and female) demonstrated the strongest interest in the activities of local self-government bodies and community problems (this topic was the most interesting for 95.5% of male and 98.1% of female respondents). Interestingly, male and female respondents in this region attached equal importance to the same topics, which is possibly an indication of the actual relevance and acuteness of those problems. The second most important topic for both male and female respondents in Gegharkunik was health care and social security in the region.

The positions of male and female respondents on the topic of the third greatest interest somewhat differed: for female respondents, it was education and culture sector issues in the region, while male respondents cited the army. Interestingly, both male and female respondents equally treated agriculture issues of the region as a topic of great importance.

Both groups were uninterested in the same topics: the topics of the least interest to both female and male respondents were the activities of other religious organizations, opposition parties, and law-enforcement authorities, as well as science and technology sector issues.

There was some difference between male and female respondents regarding the “uninteresting” topics: male respondents considered the population morale an uninteresting topic, while female respondents in Gegharkunik, as well as in the majority of the surveyed regions, demonstrated average interest in this topic.

(The topics of interest to respondents in the Gegharkunik Region are presented in Table TPA-2 below.)

Table TPA-2 (**Gegharkunik**)

Mass Medium; topic covered or broadcast	Number of times	10 topics of greatest interest to respondents	Rank of preference	
			Male	Female
Sevan newspaper (16.04.2008) “Kyavar” television news program (12.04.2008 and 16.04.2008; 23.08.2008 and 27.08.2008) “STV1” television “Hamaynkapatker” Sunday news analytical program (13.04.2008), “Lratu” news program (12, 14, 15, and 17 April 2008, and 21-23 and 25-26 August 2008)				
Activities of the Government and Prime Minister of Armenia	1	Activities of local self-government bodies	1	1
Domestic politics in Armenia in general	1	Health care and social security issues in the region	2	2
Activities and issues of the army	1	The army	3	
Activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church	1	Agriculture issues in the region	4	4
Agriculture and environmental issues in the region	8	Education and culture in the region	5	3

Education and culture issues in the region (including sports)	28	Activities of the Government of Armenia	6	9
Accidents in the region and Police activities	2	Domestic politics	7	
Activities of local self-government bodies and community problems	15	The Karabakh issue	8	5
Trade and service sector issues in the region	2	Regional authorities	9	6
Health care and social issues in the region	5	Transport and communications in the region	10	7
OTHER TOPICS	2	President of Armenia		8
		Human rights		10

In the **Shirak Region**, the activities of local self-government bodies and community problems were cited as the topic of greatest interest to both male and female respondents. However, the opinions of male and female respondents on the topics of second and third greatest importance differed. While the topics of second, third, fourth, and fifth greatest interest to male respondents were domestic politics in Armenia (ranked number five in case of female respondents), health care and social security issues in the region, economic development, and culture and sports in the country, respectively, female respondents were most interested in international affairs, domestic politics in the region, and Police activities in the region, respectively.

In this region, too, both female and male respondents were least interested in the activities of other religious organizations, the activities of law-enforcement authorities in Armenia, and the like. Male respondents were the least interested in the population morale, which was not of particular interest (ranked number 20) to female respondents, either.

(The topics of interest to respondents in the Shirak Region are presented in Table TPA-3 below.)

Table TPA-3 (**Shirak**)

Mass Medium; topic covered or broadcast	Number of times	10 topics of greatest interest to respondents	Rank of preference	
			Male	Female
<i>Kumayri newspaper</i> , 1 issue of 2008 (March 21-27). <i>Tsayg</i> television station's "Azdarar" news program (21, 22, and 24-27 March 2008) <i>Gala television station's "Gala News" news program</i> (21, 22, and 24-27 March 2008)				
Activities of the President of Armenia	3	Activities of local self-government bodies and community problems	1	1
Activities of the National assembly of Armenia	1	Domestic politics	2	5
Activities of the Government and Prime Minister of Armenia	12	Trade and service sector issues in the region	3	
Issues related to the national economy	2	Economy of Armenia	4	8
Activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church	5	Culture and sports in Armenia	5	
Agriculture and environmental issues in the region	1	Activities of the Government of Armenia	6	9
Issues related to industry in the region	1	Activities of the National assembly of Armenia	7	
Trade and service sector issues in the region	2	Police activities in the region	8	4
Health care and social issues in the region	7	Activities of the President of Armenia	9	

Education and culture issues in the region (including sports)	19	Human rights	10	7
Domestic politics in Armenia in general	18	International affairs		2
International affairs	75	Domestic politics in the region		3
The Karabakh issue	1	Industry in the region		6
Sports and culture in Armenia	3	Activities of opposition parties		10
Army activities and problems	2			
Activities of other religious organizations	1			
Activities of opposition parties	6			
Accidents in the region and Police activities	15			
Activities of local self-government bodies and community problems	12			
Activities of law-enforcement authorities, including the judiciary, in Armenia	7			
Human rights	6			
Population morale	1			
OTHER TOPICS (mostly freedom of expression, the events around GALA TV, and international sports)	47			

In the **Tavush Region**, the topics of interest to male and female respondents largely coincided. Three of the five topics of greatest interest to both female and male respondents were the same (social security in the region, education and culture, and community problems and activities of local self-government bodies). The five topics of greatest interest to male respondents included also human rights and the Karabakh issue, whereas female respondents were most interested in the army and economic development of Armenia. Both male and female respondents in this region were least interested in the activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church and other religious organizations.

(The topics of interest to respondents in the Tavush Region are presented in Table TPA-4 below.)

Table TPA-4 (**Tavush**)

Mass Medium; topic covered or broadcast	Number of times	10 topics of greatest interest to respondents	Rank of preference	
			Male	Female
Kamut television station's news program (4-6 and 8-9 May, 6-11 September 2008)				
Activities of the Government and Prime Minister of Armenia	1	Health and social security in the region	1	5
Activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church	1	Human rights	2	9
Agriculture and environmental issues in the region	2	Education and culture in the region	3	2
Education and culture issues in the region (including sports)	2	Activities of local self-government bodies	4	1
Trade and service sector issues in the region	1	The Karabakh issue	5	
OTHER TOPICS (honoring the dead, human destiny, and the like)	3	Government of Armenia	6	
		President of Armenia	7	10
		The army	8	3
		Domestic politics	9	
		Economy of Armenia	10	4
		Sports and culture in Armenia		6

		Regional authorities		7
		Politics in the region		8

In the **Armavir Region**, too, respondents were most interested in social and economic topics: male respondents were most interested in the national economy and agriculture in their region. The next three topics of interest for this group were political and included human rights, the activities of regional authorities, and domestic politics in the region.

Three of the five topics of greatest interest to the female respondents were social/economic, as well (including social security in the region and agriculture). The second most interesting topic for female respondents was the public morale (a topic of average interest to male respondents) and, perhaps in relation thereto, Police activities in the region. The latter happens to be a topic of primary interest to female respondents in other regions, as well.

The uninteresting topics for both male and female respondents were the activities of the Armenian Church and, especially, other religious organizations, the activities of law-enforcement authorities, science and technology, and sports and culture in Armenia. The activities of the President of Armenia ranked 18th among the topics of interest to both male and female respondents. Respondents (especially male respondents) in this region were least interested in the activities of the Government and the National Assembly.

(The topics of interest to respondents in the Armavir Region are presented in Table TPA-5 below.)

Table TPA-5 (**Armavir**)

Mass Medium; topic covered or broadcast	Number of times	10 topics of greatest interest to respondents	Rank of preference	
			Male	Female
ALT television station's <i>Munetik</i> Saturday news-analytical program (16.02.2008 and 22.06.2008), and Munetik news program (14-20.02.2008 and 16.06.2008-21.06.2008)				
Activities of the President of Armenia	3	National economy	1	8
Activities of the Government and Prime Minister of Armenia	7	Agriculture of the region	2	3
Domestic politics in Armenia in general	22	Human rights	3	6
International affairs	37	Activities of regional authorities	4	
The Karabakh issue	1	Politics in the region	5	
Activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church	2	Police activities in the region	6	5
Sports and culture in Armenia	6	Health care and social security issues in the region	7	1
Army activities and problems	1	The Karabakh issue	8	10
National economy	3	The army	9	
Population morale	2	Domestic politics in Armenia	10	
Politics in the region	7	Public morale in Armenia		2
Agriculture and environmental issues in the region	3	Education and culture in the region		4
Trade and service sector issues in the region	3	Transport and communication issues in the region		7
Health care and social issues in the region	7	Activities of local self-government bodies and community problems		9
Transport and communication issues in the region	1			
Education and culture issues in the	14			

region (including sports)				
Accidents and Police activities in the region	2			
Activities of local self-government bodies and community problems	1			
OTHER TOPICS	5			

The **Syunik Region** differed from other regions in terms of the level of interest in various topics: in contrast to the Gegharkunik Region, the respondents in Syunik were clearly less interested in the majority of the topics. The Karabakh issue was the only topic of great interest to respondents in Syunik (cited by about 80% of the male and about two thirds of the female respondents). Other than the Karabakh issue, there were only three other topics that interested slightly more than half of the male respondents in the Syunik Region, including international affairs (58.1%), the activities of the Government of Armenia (54%), and human rights (54%). Female respondents were much more “indifferent”: besides the Karabakh issue, the activities of the Government of Armenia were the only topic to interest at least 30% of the female respondents.

Male respondents in Syunik were least interested in social infrastructure of the region and the activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church and other religious organizations (like all the other regions). Female respondents were least interested in the industry and agriculture of the region. Unlike female respondents from other regions, the female respondents in Syunik were not very interested in the public morale.

(The topics of interest to respondents in the Syunik Region are presented in Table TPA-6 below.)

Table TPA-6 (**Syunik**)

Mass Medium; topic covered or broadcast	Number of times	10 topics of greatest interest to respondents	Rank of preference	
			Male	Female
Syunyatz Yerkir newspaper , 24 July 2008 Zangezour newspaper , 25 July 2008 LAST television station (Goris) news program (22.07.2008) SOSI television station (Kapan) news program (21-25.07.2008)				
Activities of the President of Armenia	1	The Karabakh issue	1	1
Activities of the Government and Prime Minister of Armenia	5	International affairs	2	
Activities of the National Assembly of Armenia	1	Activities of the Government of Armenia	3	2
Domestic politics in Armenia in general	1	Human rights	4	7
The Karabakh issue	1	Activities of regional authorities	5	6
Sports and culture in Armenia	2	Activities of the National Assembly of Armenia	6	4
National economy	1	Activities of the President of Armenia	7	9
Activities of opposition parties	1	Domestic politics in the region	8	5
Activities of regional authorities	1	Domestic politics in Armenia	9	
Politics in the region	2	Activities of opposition parties	10	
Agriculture and environmental issues in the region	2	Army activities		3
Industry issues in the region	3	Science and technology issues		8

Health care and social issues in the region	4	Activities of local self-government bodies and community problems		10
Transport and communication issues in the region	4			
Education and culture issues in the region (including sports)	15			
Activities of local self-government bodies and community problems	5			
Army activities and problems	2			
Accidents and Police activities in the region	3			
OTHER TOPICS	2			

The findings of the monitoring carried out by the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression and the findings of this Survey reveal a rather serious quantitative and substantive mismatch between the key information needs (topics of interest) to the population and the information products offered by the mass media (content supply). Separate thorough analysis would be required to identify the reasons for this situation.

Section 3. Degree of Use of Regional Mass Media

This Section presents the findings regarding the following two questions:

1. How long do respondents use regional mass media (especially television)? Which television stations do they watch and on average for how many hours per day?
2. What do the respondents think about the impartiality of regional and national mass media?

Watching Television

As for the duration of watching regional television stations, the largest share of the respondents watched regional television for 3-5 hours: female respondents prevail within this group, especially among those watching regional television for 3-4 hours (female respondents were 57.4%). Considering that not all respondents watch regional television, the percentages cited here refer to those that watch regional television, rather than the whole universe of respondents.

About 30% of all viewers watched television for 1-3 hours (female respondents accounted for the majority of this group, as well).

Viewers watching television for more than six hours accounted for less than 8% of all viewers. 19-29 year-old respondents accounted for a relatively larger percentage of those watching television for 1-2 hours (female respondents prevailed within this group), while over-60 respondents accounted for the largest share of viewers watching television for 2-3 hours (within this group, the share of female respondents was about 1.5-fold that of male respondents). 40-49 year-old female respondents were the “leaders” (15.5%) among viewers watching television for 3-4 hours. Younger women (19-29 year-old) led the group of viewers watching television for 4-5 hours (over 15%). 40-49 year-old male respondents accounted for the largest percentage (14.2%) of male viewers watching television for 4-5 hours.

Over-60 respondents accounted for the largest share of viewers watching television for 6-8 hours. This is the only group with twice as many men as women. It is perhaps due to the fact that, after turning 60, people have more spare time.

Mass Media Impartiality

A key objective of the Survey was to find out the respondents' assessment of mass media impartiality.

Respondents were asked to grade the impartiality of the most popular three types of mass media (national television stations (NTSs), regional television stations (RTSs), and regional newspapers (RNs)) in a three-tier system. Respondents were to assess whether the coverage of each of the NTSs, RTSs, and RNs reflected:

- The opinion of only one side ("severely biased");
- Mostly the opinion of one side ("largely biased"); or
- The opinions of all sides in a balanced manner ("balanced").

Impartiality of National Television Stations

The Survey revealed that over 42% of the respondents considered the programs of NTSs severely biased, 48.5% largely biased, and only 8.5% thought the programs of NTSs to be balanced. While in the Armavir and Tavush regions, respondents grading NTSs as "severely biased" accounted for no more than 40% of all respondents, their average share in the other four regions exceeded 44%.

Male respondents accounted for the majority of the respondents that considered NTSs "severely" and "largely" biased (i.e. all those that considered NTSs "not impartial"). Older respondents were more likely to grade NTSs as "not impartial," especially amongst the urban population. In the Armavir and Tavush regions, for instance, 50% of over-60 female and male respondents considered NTSs' programs "severely biased." 40-49 year-old male respondents from those two regions were the most dissatisfied: none of them considered NTSs' programs "balanced" (53% of them graded NTSs' programs as "severely biased"). A large share of the respondents grading NTSs' programs as "balanced" were women, especially in the Armavir and Tavush regions, where the number of such female respondents was 3.5-fold the number of male respondents grading NTSs' programs as "balanced" (in the other four regions, the shares of female and male respondents grading NTSs' programs as "balanced" were equal).

An interesting correlation was observed between the NTS impartiality grading and the respondents' level of education. Contrary to what was expected, respondents with a higher level of education, albeit not considerably, were less likely to consider NTSs' programs severely biased. The respondents that were the most critical of NTSs' programs had incomplete secondary education, regardless of sex and settlement type. Respondents with secondary education prevailed among those grading NTSs' programs as "balanced."

Impartiality of Regional Television Stations

Considering that not all respondents watched RTSs' programs, the impartiality of the latter was graded by only 87.5% of the total number of respondents. Hence, the percentages cited below are against the group of respondents that did grade the impartiality of RTSs' programs. Here, the situation differed quite significantly from the case of the NTSs. The percentage of respondents grading RTSs' programs as "severely biased" was three-fold smaller (13.7%) than in case of NTSs. The percentage of respondents grading RTSs' programs as "largely biased" declined by a small amount. The share of respondents grading RTSs' programs as "balanced" increased sharply (over four-fold). Respondents in the Tavush and Armavir regions were particularly satisfied with the impartiality of programs (44.4% of female and 47.1% of male respondents). In both of these regions, only 3.2% of the respondents considered RTSs' programs "severely biased" (most of them were male respondents). The higher the education level, the greater the percentage of respondents grading RTSs' programs as "largely biased." A similar trend was observed amongst respondents grading RTSs' programs as "balanced."

In the other four regions, RTSs' programs were considered "severely biased" by about 20% of the respondents. Over 47% considered them "largely biased," and one third were satisfied with the impartiality of the programs. In these regions, the share of female respondents grading RTSs' programs as generally "not impartial" exceeded that of male respondents by over 13 percentage

points. Older urban male respondents were more likely to consider RTSs' programs "not impartial." An opposite trend was observed amongst rural male respondents: younger respondents were more critical than older ones. Middle-aged urban and rural women were the most critical amongst female respondents grading RTSs' programs as "not impartial."

Amongst the middle-aged urban male respondents, critical views declined with age. Young and elderly respondents accounted for the largest shares of rural respondents grading RTSs' programs as "not impartial." The trend was generally the same amongst women grading RTSs' programs as "largely biased." The only correlation with the level of education was observed in the group of male respondents grading RTSs' programs as "balanced": the higher their level of education, the greater the percentage of respondents satisfied with the impartiality of programs.

Impartiality of Regional Newspapers

About 73% of the respondents read regional newspapers. In the Armavir and Tavush regions, 51.5% of the respondents read RNs. The readership among respondents from the other four regions was 83.5%. Surprisingly, rural respondents accounted for the largest percentage of RN readers (58.3% in Armavir and Tavush, and 52.3% in the other four regions). Very young and elderly respondents accounted for the largest shares of RN readers in the Armavir and Tavush regions. The following trends were observed in the other four regions:

- 18-29 year-old readers of RNs accounted for the vast majority of urban male respondents;
- Rural young male respondents accounted for slightly more of the respondents;
- 40-49 year-old readers accounted for a relatively large percentage of the urban female respondents;
- There were relatively more elderly and 30-39 year-old rural female respondents among the RN readers.

As to the impartiality of RN publications, the Survey revealed that 21.3% of the respondents considered them "severely biased," 51.3% "largely biased," and 28.4% "balanced." In the Armavir and Tavush regions, the share of respondents considering RN publications "severely biased" was about five-fold smaller than the indicator in the other four regions. In Armavir and Tavush, male respondents were more critical of the impartiality of RN publications, whereas female respondents outnumbered male respondents 1.5-fold amongst the respondents grading RN publications as "largely biased." In the other four regions, women were generally more critical of RNs (over 55% of the respondents grading RN publications as "severely biased"). The same trend was observed amongst the respondents grading RN publications as "largely biased." The percentage shares of female and male respondents grading RN publications as "balanced" were approximately equal.

Urban respondents outnumbered rural respondents about three-fold amongst the most critical group. Respondents with a higher level of education were more likely to grade RN publications as "balanced," especially amongst male respondents.