

PECULIARITIES OF THE PERCEPTION OF THE PHENOMENON OF THE
ARMENIAN GENOCIDE ON PUBLIC OPINION
(Comparative Analysis of Sociological Survey Results)

Abstract

The research study was conducted in two stages, in 2015 and 2016 from March 15 to April 15 utilizing the method of formalized interview. Each phase of the survey involved 560 Yerevan residents.

As the results of the research come to prove, the mosaic of the public perception and the psychological reflection of the phenomenon of the Armenian Genocide is very sophisticated. The moods of regret, pain, depression, declining moods, complaint, wrath, revenge, hope and optimistic views for future are intertwined and bound together. These moods and feelings appear next to each other and quickly alternating.

According to the results of both 2015 and 2016 surveys the moods of overcoming pain, faith and hope, optimistic attitude towards the future (91.4%) are dominant over complaint, anger, revenge, struggle for compensation (85.5%) and regret, pain, depression, declining moods (69.6 %).

The indicators of the moods and feelings of the first and second groups are generally stable. In this connection both studies in 2015 and 2016 recorded similar results. However, the indicators of the following moods decreased from 76.2% to 69.6%: regret, pain, depression, declining moods, the manifestations of the complex of a victim. The indicator of more intense expression of such moods dropped from 47.2% to 35.6%.

The authors explain such change by the influence of three internal and external political factor groups.

Keywords: genocide committed against Armenians, public perception, moods, feelings and positions ways, changes in public opinion, overcoming and lightening the consequences of the genocide, ways to overcome the consequences of the genocide.

(I)

THE METHODOLOGICAL BASES OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Public opinion is a unique sphere of transformations taking place in social system with the respective moods, positions, stereotypes and dynamics. The experience testifies that the projects and policy which are being implemented without the proper examination of the public opinion regarding vital problems and consideration of the existing dynamics, often lead to mistakes and unwanted results, bring forth the public's

mistrust and discontent. Meanwhile the policy and tactics based on the studies of public opinion have a desirable productivity and positive consequences.

The genocide committed against Armenians living in the areas of historical Armenia and Ottoman Empire has left an indelible trace in the mentality and public consciousness of the Armenian people. The genocide that in its various manifestations, particularly repudiation of the fact, blockade of the Republics of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, military aggression against the latter, falsification of history, anti-Armenian propaganda policy, is being committed even up to nowadays. Memories and the aftermaths of Armenian Genocide have become a vital part of the collective identity of Armenians.

International recognition, condemnation of the Armenian Genocide and the factor of elimination of its consequences really have crucial role in the agenda of the foreign policy of the Republic of Armenia. In this regard, it is essential to reveal and examine the viewpoints formed in public opinion regarding this phenomenon.

The Purpose of the Research:

- to bring forth the spectrum of moods and positions existing in the public opinion regarding the fact of the Armenian Genocide planned and committed by the authorities of the Ottoman Empire in the beginning of the 20th century,
- to highlight the spectrum regarding the possible ways of easing and alleviating its consequences,
- to prepare an analysis based on the received data that can be actionable for the official bodies pursuing certain policy in the sphere.

The Problems of the Research:

- to bring forth the spectrum of perception of the Armenian Genocide, the moods, emotive responses and reasonable viewpoints regarding this historical event among the citizens of Yerevan,
- to reveal the dynamics of transformation of the mentioned viewpoints and moods,
- to analyze the positions of the public opinion and their changes on a number of different options discussed in the political circle regarding the elimination and alleviating of the consequences of the genocide,
- to evaluate the positions of public opinion as well, regarding the Armenian Genocide and the countries and political bodies which play or have played any role in the process of its recognition and condemnation.

The target audience and tools of the study

The study has been conducted in two stages in 2015 and 2016, in Yerevan (among Yerevan citizens). The target audience has been made up with the method of multivariate lamination according to the data of the census of 2011. The conglomerate of the target audience has been formed according to *a) gender, b) four age groups (18-30, 31-45, 46-60, 61 and older), c) three levels of education (incomplete secondary, secondary and secondary vocational, high education)* and has been divided into 24 groups with the principle of proportional representation. Each research had 560 Yerevan citizens as participants of the survey.

The sociological study has been implemented with the method of formalized interviews. Preserving the methodology and tools of the study gives an opportunity to spot and follow the changes in the research subject. The initial collecting of the sociological information has been done from 15 March to 15 April, in 2015 and 2016.

(II)

WHAT MOODS AND FEELINGS DO THE RECOLLECTION OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AND THINKING ABOUT IT AWAKE AMONG THE RESPONDENTS?

The participants were presented a list of probable moods and feelings comprising twelve variants and they were offered to mark the ones they experience and how much they do that while speaking about the Armenian Genocide.

In 2015 and 2016 surveys recorded stable results in terms of eight components of the moods and feelings list. But in terms of four components of the list there are changes in comparison with the study done at the same time period in 2015.

As the results of both 2015 and 2016 study come to prove, the mosaic of the public perception and psychological-axiological reflection of the Armenian Genocide as a phenomenon is very sophisticated. The moods of regret, pain, depression, declining moods, complaint, wrath, revenge, hope and optimistic views for future are intertwined and bound together. The moods and feelings included in those groups appear next to each other alternating quite fast. *See Graph 1.*

As in 2015, in 2016 as well the feeling of regret and pain of loss are on the first place with 97.5%: The 26.1% of the participants experience this feeling considerably strong, while the 71.4% sense the feeling much stronger. Moreover, the existence and strength of this feeling is not only nearly the same for both men and women but also for all the age groups.

Moreover, the presence and the strength of the feeling is almost the same both in case of women and men, and in case of all the four age groups. In terms of prevalence of the feeling of regret and pain of loss is nearly the same for both the respondents whose ancestors personally suffered from genocide or had to live their homeland and the citizens of Yerevan who did not have such losses. However, the respondents of the first group had most intense expressions of the feeling, which was significantly (17.1%) higher than the indicators of the second group respondents.

By the way the psychological-ideological expressions of the public perception of the genocide that will be presented later stand out with their intensity among the Armenian Genocide victims and descendants and relatives of the dispossessed.

The second one is the feeling of hatred against the ones who organized and committed the genocide. This has been marked by 94.5% of the participants. Moreover, the indicator of this feeling is nearly the same for all the age groups. It decreases slightly with the simultaneous increase of the educational qualification:

- the ones with incomplete secondary education - 95%
- the ones with secondary, secondary vocational education - 96.3%
- the ones with incomplete high and higher education - 91.7%.

The third one is the feeling of endurance and the determination to live despite the catastrophe of genocide – 93.3%. This mood is nearly the same for both males and females for all the age groups and it is more expressed among the respondents who are heirs and descendants of genocide victims.

On the fourth place is the feeling of determination to get the loss back at least partly – 92.2%.

This mood is a bit more noticeable among the 40-60 year old respondents – 95.8%. Among 18-30 year olds it makes up 90.8%.

Based on intensity on the ***fifth place is the mood of improving and making Armenia powerful with everyday work – 91.1%***. This indicator rises based on the levels of education: the ones with incomplete secondary education - 85.0%, and the ones with incomplete high and higher education – 91.3%.

On the sixth place are the moods of struggle for demand and compensation – 90.9%. These moods are more expressed among 31-45 year old respondents (95.1%) and the ones who have higher education (93.3%).

The seventh is the feeling of hope for the future and optimism – 88.9%. The indicator of these moods is more expressed among women – 91.3% (for men - 86.0%) and it is nearly the same for all the age groups and is slightly rising according to rise of the educational level.

On the eighth place are the moods of wrath and revenge– 88.4%. This feeling is more expressed among the representatives of older generation (61 and older) – 91.7%, than among younger people (18-30 year olds) – 84.2%. This feeling is strongly expressed among the victims of genocide and their descendants who lost their homes.

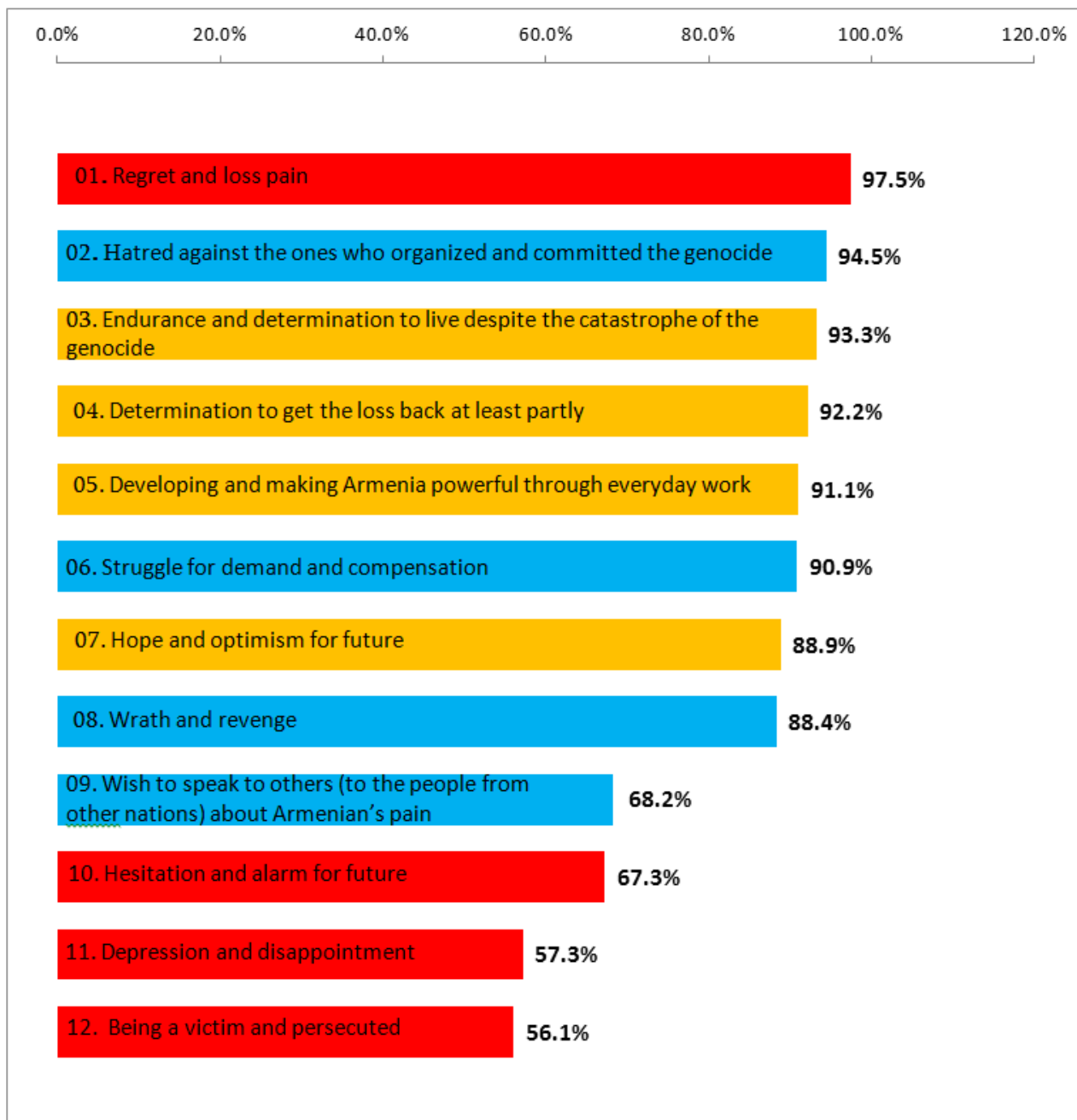
The ninth one is the wish to speak to others (to the people from other nations) about Armenian’s pain – 68.2%. (Compared to last year this figure dropped to 8.8%). Among women the indicator is - 70.3 % and 65.6% for men. Moreover, with the rise of age, the number of people with this mood increases (18-30 age group – 60.3%, 31-45 age group – 69.8%, 46-60 and older – 71.3%).

The tenth one is hesitation and alarm for the future – 67.3%. (Compared with last year’s results this indicator has decreased with 5.8%). It is comparatively more expressed among older generation (46-61 and older) – 72.1%, than among younger generation (18-45) – 63.4%. This mood is expressed more considerably among the participants with a low educational qualification (incomplete secondary) – 85.0% (among respondents with secondary education – 70.5%, higher education – 61.0%).

The eleventh one is the feeling of depression and disappointment – 57.3%. Compared to last year’s results this year it decreased with 9.5%. The feeling of depression and disappointment is more considerably expressed among the 24.5% of the respondents. With its intensity it is more expressed among the age group of 61 and older respondents (considerably expressed among their 27.8%). For example for the age group of 18-45 this feeling is generally expressed among the 52.9% of the participants, more considerably among the 19.3%. This feeling significantly decreases along with the increase in educational level.

The final mood summing up the list of the moods and feelings connected with the genocide is the feeling of a victim and persecuted – 56.1%, the indicator for which last year was higher with 11.7%). By the way, the indicator of this feeling is higher among women (29.4%) than men (20.4%). This feeling is more considerably expressed among 25.4% of the participants. This feeling more considerably exists among the participant of 61 and older age group - 63.9% and the most considerably among 37.0% of them. For comparison, it is of note that this indicator makes up 21.9% among 18-45 year old people and 24.0% among 46-60 year olds.

Graph 1: A table of the existing moods and feelings in the public opinion regarding the Armenian Genocide.



The worldview shifts in psychological peculiarities of the perception of the phenomenon of genocide becomes more evident when the moods and feelings from the questionnaire are grouped in three clusters:

1. regret, pain, depression, declining moods,
2. complaint, wrath, revenge, struggle for the compensation moods,
3. reliving, belief and hope for the future, optimism feelings.

The indicators of moods and feelings of the second and third groups are generally the same as the results of the research conducted in 2015. However, it is noticeable that the indicator of regret, pain, depression, manifestations of a victim identity and other declining moods decreased from 76.2% down to 69.6%. The indicator of more intense expression of such moods dropped from 47.2% to 35.6%. See *Graph 2*.

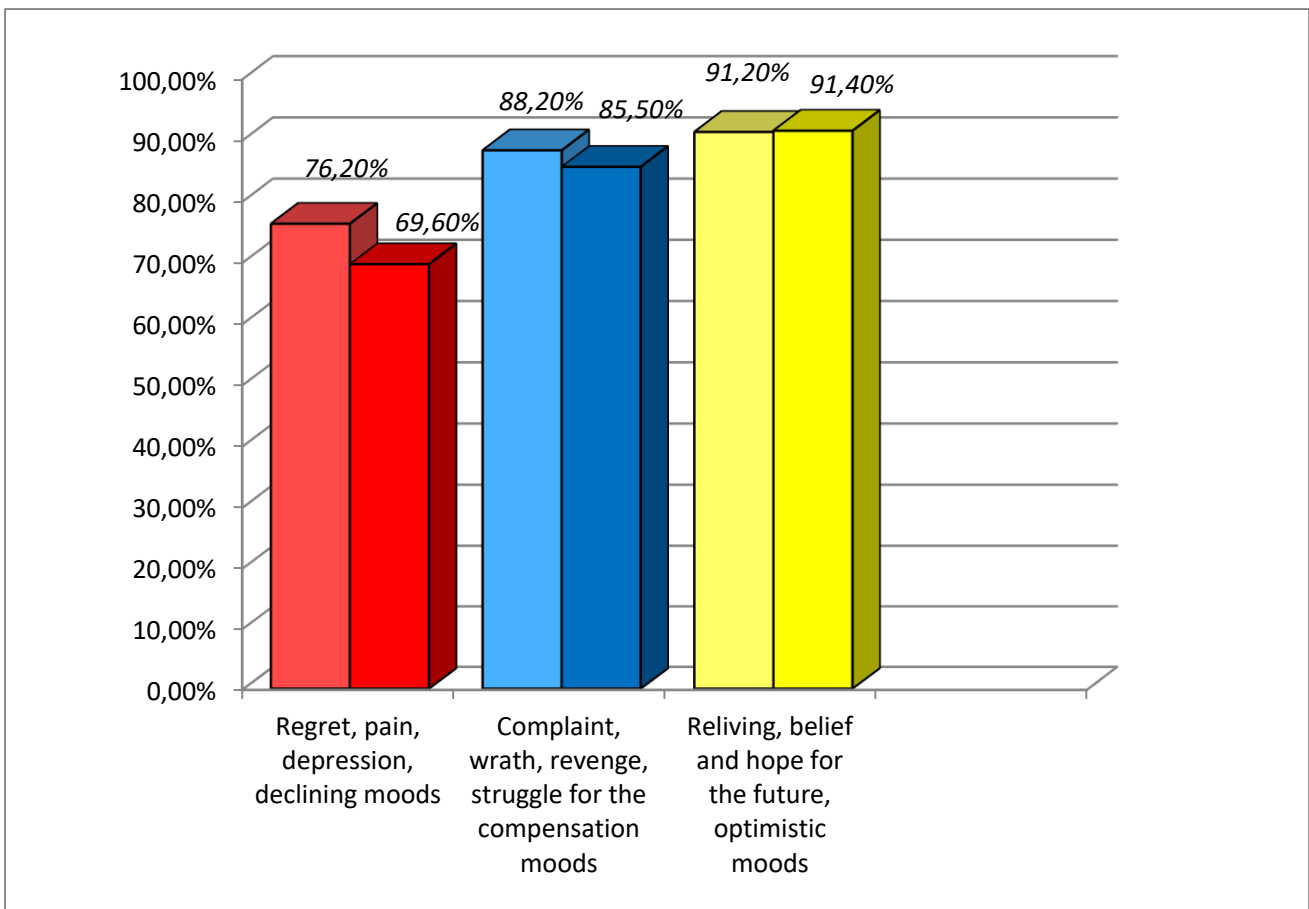
Such changes can be explained by several factors:

1) The cultural policy of getting rid of the complex of a victim, the discussions and propaganda undertaken by many politicians and organizations that stress its importance.

2) The ongoing process of recognizing and condemning the Armenian Genocide by different countries and international organizations. Aside from political this is as significant moral and psychological support for Armenians and an additional guarantee of security and protection.

3) The four-day unbridled war started by the Republic of Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh in April 2 and lasted up to April 5, 2016. It is known that in critical and marginal situations the individual and the social collective entity as well is able to mobilize its potential to shed inhibitions and uncertainty, in order to display appropriate behavior and rational thinking according to the situation. The four-day war of 2016 was such a sobering and motivational drive for self-determination for Armenia and Karabakh citizens. Thousands of volunteers went to the zone of military operations in order to support the soldiers. Millions of Armenians took part in material-financial support programs for the army and its soldiers. These moods perhaps are reflected in the results of the survey, the "field" works of which were accomplished from March 15 to April 15, 2016.

Graph 2: A comparative table of the existing moods regarding the Armenian Genocide in the public opinion. 2015 and 2016 (From each three pairs of columns shown below the first bars from left represent the results of 2015, and accordingly the second ones reflect the results of 2016 survey)



(III)
THE VARIETIES OF THE ALLEVIATION OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE GENOCIDE
ACCORDING TO THE PARTICIPANTS
OF THE SURVEY

The participants of the survey were offered to choose from 10 options which are being studied in political and experimental circles, and also from the ones which appear in Mass Media choosing the most realistic and useful utmost 2 options.

As in 2015, in 2016 as well on the first place is getting the areas of Historical Armenia back – 60.9%.

On the second place is the recognition and condemnation of the fact of Genocide by Turkey committed against Armenia – 47%.

The third option according to the public opinion can be the resettlement of the victims, their relatives and heirs in the historical homeland – 30%.

The rest of voting result is as follows:

4. The provision of material and financial compensation to the victims' heirs -29.3%.
5. The recognition of the Republic of Karabakh by Turkey – 22.5%.
6. The provision of a favorable location as a territorial compensation for the Armenian side, particularly provision of the exit to the Black Sea – 21.4% The supporters of this option are more common among men -24.8%, (among women it is – 18.7%), among the respondents with high education 22.9% and among the heirs of the genocide victims and dispossessed – 25.4%.
7. The provision of a financial compensation to the Armenian side (the republic, Panarmenian organizations) from Turkey – 18.9%.
8. The implementation of propaganda, cultural projects for the Armenian society which would shed off the psychology of a victim – 7.5%.
9. The implementation of some historical, cultural, propaganda projects which would shed off the denying and anti-Armenian moods – 7.1%.
10. Provision of some privileges (business, tax etc.) for Armenians in Turkey – 5.4%.

(IV)
THE ATTITUDE OF DIFFERENT COUNTRIES,
POLITICAL BODIES TOWARDS ARMENIA AND ITS
PROBLEMS ACCORDING TO THE PUBLIC OPINION AND THE ATTITUDE OF OUR CITIZENS
TOWARDS THOSE BODIES

The international recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide is an issue of vital importance to the foreign policy of the Republic of Armenia, which supposes close relationships and considerate work with different international organizations and countries.

What is the attitude of different countries and political organizations towards Armenia and its problems according to Yerevan citizens?

France was picked as the first country with a positive attitude among 24 organizations and countries both in 2015 and 2016 by the 79.6% of the survey participants.

Russian Federation is on the second place – 69.8%.

The third one is Greece – 54.3%.

Uruguay, the first country to officially recognize and condemn the Armenian Genocide (1965), is on the fourth place – 43.0%.

The fifth country is Italy – 41.4%.

Among the first ten countries and organizations with **positive attitude** towards Armenia and its problems are also included: *Germany – 44.1%, Syria – 40.9%, the United Nations – 39.6%, Eurasian Economic Union - 35.4%, Commonwealth of Independent States - 35.0%, Georgia – 35.0%, European Union – 33.8% and Council of Europe – 33.8%.*

Among the countries with **negative attitude** towards Armenia and its problems *Azerbaijan and Turkey are in the lead with 96.6% and 95.7% respectively.* The third one is the Islamic State – 60.9%, the fourth is Iran – 32.1% (though 24.3% of the respondents mentioned Iran as a friendly state as well), the fifth is Hungary – 21.8%.

What is the attitude and position of respondents towards different countries and organizations?

The most favorable country for the respondents is again France – 83.0%. The indicator¹ of the mutuality of the positive attitude in case of France according to the answers of Yerevan respondents is 0.96.

The second one is Russian Federation – 77.5%. The indicator of mutuality according to respondents' evaluation is a bit less than in case of France – 0.9. The results of the survey show that participants have more positive attitude for the countries (77.5%), than the country towards Armenia and its problems (69.8%).

Among the first ten countries and organizations which gained the goodwill and positive attitude of the respondents are also included *Italy – 61.2% (the indicator of the mutuality of the positive attitude – 0.67), Germany – 57.3% (the indicator of the mutuality of the positive attitude – 0.78), Greece – 57.1% (the indicator of the mutuality of the positive attitude – 0.95), the USA - 42.9% (the indicator of the mutuality of the positive attitude – 0.5), the UN – 41.1% (the indicator of the mutuality of the positive attitude – 0.9), Uruguay – 39.5% (the indicator of the mutuality of the positive attitude – 1.04), Belarus – 38.4% (the indicator of the mutuality of the positive attitude – 0.83).*

Azerbaijan leads the list of countries which received a negative attitude from the participants of the survey - 92.7%. Turkey is on the second place – 91.4%. The third one is Islamic State – 65.2%.

The truths and facts received through analyzing public opinion should not be perceived as expertise. Very often there are essential differences between them.

However, the acquired data based on public opinion regarding such vital problems create a huge fundament for further scientific studies, researches and analysis, as well as increase the productivity of similar projects and policy in a particular sphere.

¹ Shows the relation of the indicator of expressing the positive attitude to Armenia and its problems of that country according to the survey participants' attitude, to the indicator of the respondents' positive attitude towards that country.