

## **DATA INITIATIVE – 2008**

### **Fieldwork Report**

#### **Introduction**

In Fall 2008, Wave 5 of the annual Data Initiative survey was conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (a program of the Eurasia Partnership Foundation) in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Data Initiative survey was designed in 2003 in order to collect reliable representative data on a wide range of social, political, economic attitudes of the population of the South Caucasus, as well as information on household composition and household economic behavior. From the very beginning, the data collected by CRRC was meant to be open to all interested researchers and/or policymakers both from the region and from other parts of the world.

First Wave of the Data Initiative survey was conducted in 2004, in the capital cities of the South Caucasus countries only. In 2005, in each of the countries one region was added to the capital, and the survey was conducted in Yerevan and Kotayk region in Armenia, Baku and Aran region - Mugan zone in Azerbaijan and Tbilisi and Shida Kartli region in Georgia. In 2006, country-wide representative sample was polled for the first time in all three countries. Through 2004-2006, there was an attempt to keep panel of the respondents, but it was abolished in 2007.

The present report covers DI 2008 sampling, survey instrument, and the process of fieldwork.

#### **1. SAMPLING METHODOLOGY**

The target population of DI 2008 encompasses all households in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.<sup>1</sup> The survey sampling followed a stratified two stage sampling design. To ensure representativeness and to preserve comparability with previous Waves of the survey, the 2008 DI survey used 9 strata. Each country was divided into 4 geographical quadrants and the capital. Each of the 4 non-capital quadrants were divided into urban and rural strata. The number of PSUs in each stratum were selected proportional to the population of each stratum, according to census data in Azerbaijan and Georgia, and electricity records in Armenia.

The original goal for the survey was to have sample sizes sufficient for estimates (for binary variables) with margin of errors of  $\pm 5\%$  with 95% confidence intervals in each “macro-strata”, defined as rural, urban, and capital households.

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<sup>1</sup> The survey was not conducted in the territories affected by military conflicts.

For Armenia and Georgia, sufficient number of PSU's and households were sampled to achieve this goal. In Azerbaijan, however, the sampling design only allowed the desired level of precision at the national level, not for each "macro-strata".

Simulations showed that for the design effects estimated for Armenia and Georgia (roughly 2.5), approximately 85 PSU's with 20 completed interviews per PSU would give sufficient precision. 87 PSUs were sampled in Armenia, and 85 PSUs – in Georgia. For Azerbaijan, because of the significantly higher design effects, the required number of PSU's would be roughly 115, with 20 completed interviews per PSU. However, because of the large number of PSU's required for Azerbaijan, it was decided to only sample 90 PSU's, which would still allow for a high degree of precision at the national level.

The primary sampling units are voting precincts in the cases of Azerbaijan and Georgia, and electricity grid groups in Armenia. In Azerbaijan and Georgia, the precincts were selected with probability proportional to the number of registered voters assigned. In Armenia, PSUs were all basically equal in size, so simple stratified random sampling was used.

Taking into account expected levels of nonresponse, 30 households have been sampled in each PSU. Because of the expected accuracy of the electricity lists in Armenia, households were sampled randomly directly from the sampled electricity grid records. In Azerbaijan, due to the challenges to organize the fieldwork (interference of the local government, availability of the interviewers), households were sampled using "random walk" method in the sampled precincts. In Georgia, after PSUs were selected, enumerators block listed selected precincts using hand-drawn maps when necessary. As a result of block listing, enumerators created a sample frame of households in each PSU comprising all households living in the PSU. From this sample frame, households were randomly sampled.

In each of the sampled household, Kish Table was used to select the respondent.

## **2. FIELDWORK**

### **Conduct of fieldwork**

- **Working days and hours of interviews**

Main phase of the fieldwork<sup>2</sup> lasted for approximately four weeks. During this period, interviewers were instructed to work during the entire week, and to visit the sampled households at different times; they were especially encouraged to work in the evening (after the working hours) and during the weekends, in order to make sure that the employed respondents participate in the survey.

The interviewers were instructed to visit the household up to three times if the selected respondent was not at home.

11 fieldwork supervisors and 60 interviewers were employed in Armenia, 8 supervisors and 83 interviewers were originally employed in Azerbaijan (but later on some interviewers quit the

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<sup>2</sup> In Georgia, there were two stages of fieldwork: block listing (during which all inhabited households were listed in each of the sampled PSUs), and interviewing (during which the interviews were completed in the sampled households). In this document, we refer to the second part of the fieldwork in Georgia. In Armenia and Azerbaijan, no block listing was performed, so the fieldwork consisted of the interviewing stage only.

job and there were some replacements; 78 interviewers finished the job in this country); and 9 supervisors and 85 interviewers were employed in Georgia.

Table 1 below provides information about date and time of the interviews stored in the data set:

Table 1.

**Variables on Date and Time of Interviews**

<i>Variable</i>	
ADATE1	Date of first interview attempt (DD.MM.YY)
ATIME1	Time of first interview attempt (hh.mm.ss)
ADATE2	Date of second interview attempt (DD.MM.YY)
ATIME2	Time of second interview attempt (hh.mm.ss)
ADATE3	Date of third interview attempt (DD.MM.YY)
ATIME3	Time of third interview attempt (hh.mm.ss)
INTDATE	Date of the interview (DD.MM.YY)
INTTIME	Time the interview started (hh.mm.ss)
TIMEFIN	Time the interview finished (hh.mm.ss)

**Timing of fieldwork**

- **Events in the countries at the time of fieldwork that might have affected responses**

Dates of fieldwork were:

November 1 through December 13 in Armenia,<sup>3</sup>

November 14 through February 5 in Azerbaijan,<sup>4</sup> and

October 24 through November 15 in Georgia.

Different events might have affected the responses in the three countries, namely:

**In Armenia**, the responses might have been affected by presidential elections on February 19, 2008, and the turmoil of March 1, 2008. According to the opinion of CRRC-Armenia experts, these events, although happening several months before DI 2008 fieldwork, could have caused respondents' fear to be interviewed, vigilance to any arrangements, non-willingness to answer questions concerning political issues.

**In Azerbaijan**, the fieldwork also took place after the presidential elections. A number of political events took place during the very process of fieldwork here. The political environment in Azerbaijan was still tense; in addition, the government made decision to discontinue transmission of foreign radio channels. The respondents felt suspicious of the survey and tried to avoid participation (particularly – in the capital and in other urban settlements), because they

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<sup>3</sup> Main part of the fieldwork in Armenia took place November 1 through December 1. Due to high non-response rate, it resulted in low number of interviews (about 1700, which was considered insufficient for being representative for the country and the three macro-strata, urban, rural, and the capital); hence additional sampling was required. 20 PSU have been sampled in addition to the originally sampled 87 PSUs, and the fieldwork in these PSUs took place on December 1-13.

<sup>4</sup> Due to the mistakes discovered in the work of several interviewers, fieldwork period has been extended in 6 PSUs of Azerbaijan until February, 2009. In the rest of the PSUs, however, the interviewing ended on December 19, 2008.

reported that this will not change the situation. In the rural areas they were also more afraid to talk to the interviewers.

**In Georgia**, the fieldwork started less than 2 months after the war between Georgia and Russia that took place from August 8 through August 12. The country has not yet fully recovered after the August events, and the number of IDPs had been increased in several regions of the country.

Like it was the case in Armenia and Azerbaijan, national elections (both presidential and parliamentary) took place in Georgia earlier in 2008 (respectively, in January and in May), official results of which have been causing suspicion in fraud. Discussions of the fairness of elections may still have been vivid in the minds of the respondents.

Elections of Achara Supreme Council and repeated elections of Majoritarian MPs in two precincts in the capital were held in Georgia during the period fieldwork, on November 2, 2008.

It was also a period of intensive agricultural work in the rural settlements of Georgia, but no specific problems were reported by the supervisors and/or interviewers in this respect.

Overall, situation in all three countries had been politically tense during the fieldwork, following earlier national elections; it was especially difficult in Georgia, due to the recent military conflict with Russia.

### **Permission to conduct fieldwork and Survey interference**

- **Was there any interaction with the government?**

In none of the countries was the official permission needed to conduct fieldwork. Hence, no interactions with the central government had to take place in either Armenia, Azerbaijan, or Georgia. In most of the cases in rural areas, however, local (village) authorities have been informed by the supervisors about the survey and, when needed, the local authorities helped to locate the sampled addresses.

The interviewers in all countries have been provided with badges and with letters to respondents (signed by CRRC Country Directors), explaining about the goals of survey and ensuring the respondents' anonymity. In Armenia, supervisors were also supplied with letters to village mayors.<sup>5</sup>

In a number of PSUs in Azerbaijan, special letters have been submitted to the local authorities informing them about the survey. In spite of such a measure, in three PSUs in South-East, the survey has been interrupted by the local authorities for a short period; in one case, the sampled cluster had to be replaced with an adjacent cluster.

### **Attitudes of respondents**

- **What did interviewers say about respondents' attitudes toward the survey?**

In the end of each interview, interviewers were required to fill **Interviewer Assessment Form**, where they evaluate respondents' behavior during the interview. Respective variables are

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<sup>5</sup> The letters are provided in the **Appendix** to this report.

stored in the dataset, and listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2.

**Variables on Respondents' Attitude toward Interview**

<i>Variable</i>	
RESPATT	Respondent's attitude toward interview
RESPINT	Respondent's attitude: Interested, involved
RESPFRN	Respondent's attitude: Friendly
RESPIMP	Respondent's attitude: Impatient
RESPWOR	Respondent's attitude: Worried, nervous
RESPHOS	Respondent's attitude: Hostile
FRQCLAR	Frequency of clarifications needed
FRQDIST	Frequency of distractions during the interview
FRQKNOW	Frequency of lack of knowledge
DIFQUES	Difficult questions
FRQRLCT	Frequency of reluctance to answer
RESPSIN	Rating of respondent's sincerity
RESPCOM	Rating of respondent's comfort
RESPINTL	Rating of respondent's intelligence
RESPATTR	Rating of respondent's attractiveness

Respondents' attitude toward the survey varies by country and by type of settlement. Overall, the interviewers report the respondents being mostly friendly during the interview (Table 3). In total of 21% of all cases we have reports on negative attitudes of the respondents (impatient, worried, nervous, hostile).

Table 3.

**Respondent's attitude toward interview** (*all countries; % of the completed interviews*)

Interested, involved	29
Friendly	56
Impatient	14
Worried, nervous	7
Hostile	0,5

In Azerbaijan, respondents in rural clusters doubted about the confidentiality of the survey and were reported to be less sincere about their thoughts. They could not imagine any relationship between improvement of their lifestyle and the survey.

In general, people in rural areas in all three countries were less aware of some of the topics covered in the questionnaire. In both urban and rural areas, respondents showed lower awareness about the EU issues, but still they tended to answer these questions because they thought they could be understood as illiterate by interviewers. Respondents tended to avoid answering political questions, especially in Azerbaijan.

In both Armenia and Azerbaijan, the respondents treated questions on EU or its policies, NATO and war questions irrelevant and seemingly got discouraged to continue the survey. The same is true for Georgia, with the exception of the questions about the war (O1 through O6). The respondents were much more responsive with regard to internal issues rather than external and particularly to non-political questions, and least sincere about political views and income.

## Completed Interviews by Visit

- **Of the completed interviews, what percent were made on the first, second, and third attempt?**

Table 4 provides information on the number and percentage of the completed interviews by visit:

Table 4.

### Completed interviews by visit, by country

	1 <sup>st</sup> attempt		2 <sup>nd</sup> attempt		3 <sup>rd</sup> attempt		Total:
Armenia	1814	87,1%	217	10,4%	51	2,4%	2082
Azerbaijan	1834	91,1%	137	6,8%	43	2,1%	2014
Georgia	1546	84,2%	247	13,4%	44	2,4%	1837
<b>Total:</b>	<b>5194</b>	<b>87,5%</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>10,1%</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>2,3%</b>	<b>5933</b>

## Number of household members participating in the interview

- **Where there any problems in getting multiple interviews from the same household?**

According to the survey instrument, the questionnaire was designed to be filled by the sampled respondent. The latter, however, could involve other (more knowledgeable) household member(s) while filling sections A (“Household Passport”) and/or C (“Household Economic Conditions and Behavior”). In Armenia and Georgia, no violations have been reported in this respect, while in Azerbaijan most of the interviewers reported massive interference by older, predominantly male members of their household, especially when a female was sampled as a respondent. In most of the rural areas of Azerbaijan, heads of household did not allow the interview with the female member in private, and they themselves were present during the interview. This suggests interviews with female respondents in rural PSUs of Azerbaijan are not reliable.

## 3. QUESTIONNAIRE

### Length of Interviews

- **Report quartiles and interquartile range as well as median and mean**

58,7 minutes are recorded as the mean length of the interviews in all three countries,<sup>6</sup> with mean 49,7 minutes in Armenia, 70,9 minutes in Azerbaijan and 55,9 minutes in Georgia.<sup>7</sup> Table 5 below summarizes more data on the length of the interviews:

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<sup>6</sup> Length of 5605 interviews has been analyzed here, since in a number of cases time the interview started and/or time the interview finished were not recorded correctly, and the variable on the length of the interviews resulted either in a negative figure, or in an unrealistically long time. Hence, this figure does not take into account information on the total of 326 cases.

Table 5.

**Length of interviews (min.)<sup>8</sup>**

	Mean	Median	Percentiles			Interquartile range
			25	50	75	
Armenia	49,7	48	40	48	55	15
Azerbaijan	70,9	75	55	75	87	32
Georgia	55,9	55	45	55	65	20
<b>All countries</b>	<b>58,7</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>25</b>

**Issues with survey instrument**

- **Problems with particular questions**

Overall, the questionnaire has been reported as being rather long and, at some point, boring for the respondents. Respondents found questions N15 through N22 particularly boring, mostly because they are too specific, and go in too much detail about information covered in question N14.

Questions about EU and its institutions (through the P and EU sections)<sup>9</sup> were both difficult and unwelcome by the respondents, mostly because they did not, as a rule, have enough knowledge to answer these questions, yet they were feeling pressure to answer (in order to look smart enough). Also, as reported by the interviewers, the respondents did not find the questions on EU relevant for their country, were reluctant and less sincere while answering these questions.

Questions P13, P14, P15, P18, P19 often caused respondents' suspicion and fear, especially in Azerbaijan, and the answers, according to the interviewers' reports, were often insincere and artificial.

In Armenia and Azerbaijan, the respondent did not show interest in respect to the questions about the war in Georgia. They did not have much to say about it as, according to the country reports, they were not interested in the events happening outside the country and did not have much information about this war.

Yet, 40% of the respondents in all countries, according to the interviewers, never asked for clarifications of the questions asked, and additional 39% asked for clarification of less than 10 questions.

**Response rate and No responses**

In the process of fieldwork, the initial sampling frame had been adjusted in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

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<sup>7</sup> The presented figures are based on 2033 interviews in Armenia, 1863 interviews in Azerbaijan and 1709 interviews in Georgia.

<sup>8</sup> Based on 5605 cases.

<sup>9</sup> Most difficulties have been reported in respect to questions P9, P10, P22, EU4, EU5, EU9.

**In Armenia**, the sampling of 2610 households resulted in 1696 completed interviews, i.e. 10% less than expected (about 65% VS 75% of the targeted sample size),<sup>10</sup> and 20 more clusters were sampled additionally to arrive to the number of interviews that would ensure representativeness of the results. With 2082 completed interviews in Armenia, the response rate is 66%.

**In Azerbaijan**, 90 PSUs have been sampled originally. We did not manage to work in 12 of these PSUs, however, due to various reasons (remoteness, intervention of the local authorities, unavailability of the interviewers), hence, the survey has been conducted in 78 PSUs. In addition, during the process of fieldwork, unprofessional work of the interviewers has been documented in 10 of these PSUs, and we re-carried out the survey in 6 of them (in the rest 4 PSU this was not possible). Hence, the completed number of interviews in a total of 78 clusters is 2014, i.e. 87%.

**In Georgia**, 1837 interviews were completed out of the targeted 2550 interviews in 85 sampled PSUs, hence, 72% response rate has been documented for the country.

5933 interviews have been completed out of the targeted 8004 interviews, which results in 74,2 response rate. Variable NONRES (Non-response) in the dataset accounts for non-response, while variables IRESUL1, IRESUL2, IRESUL3 and INR\_WHY report, respectively, result of the interviewer's first visit to the household, result of the interviewer's second visit to the household, result of the interviewer's third visit to the household, and the reason for uncompleted interviews in cases when the respondent refused to participate in the survey.

Table 6 provides information about response rate by countries:

Table 6.

**Response rate**

	<b>N of targeted interviews</b>	<b>N of completed interviews</b>	<b>% completed interviews</b>
Armenia	3128	2082	66,5
Azerbaijan	2326	2014	86,6
Georgia	2550	1837	72,0
<b>All countries:</b>	<b>8004</b>	<b>5932</b>	<b>74,1</b>

<sup>10</sup> The DI 2008 sampling design in Armenia was based on the assumption that the ratio between the completed interviews and non responses was about the same as in 2007: 75 to 25. Hence, it was expected that the original sample of 2610 households (87 PSUs) would result in about 2000 completed interviews. However, this assumption was made without taking into account the methodological changes made: Firstly, the 2008 survey was designed as a survey of adult population within sampled households, while the DI 2007 also included a separate questionnaire of households that might be answered by any knowledgeable HH member. Secondly, in 2008 the respondent selection was based on the Kish table approach without any replacement possibility, while a year ago the respondent was selected based on the closest birthday method, and in the case of his/her unavailability, it was allowed to interview another household member (with the next birthday). In addition, in 2008 the number of uninhabited/closed households was higher than in 2007. Obviously these affected (increasee) the non-response rate (NRR), which became evident during the fieldwork in 2008.

## Recommendations

- **How the survey can be administered better?**
- **How the survey instrument can be made better?**

Any changes in the survey methodology should be carefully considered, as every small change (such as respondent selection and replacement methodology) may affect the process of fieldwork. Also, a certain amount of funds should be reserved in the budget in case of unforeseen expenses.

More time and attention should be devoted to the training of supervisors and interviewers, in order to decrease the mistakes in the filled questionnaires. This is especially important in the regions where we have lack of qualified interviewers (special attention should be given to ethnic minority regions).

CRRC country offices should be encouraged to create supervisors' and interviewers' performance record, and to employ only those who have shown good results.

We should try to spend less time on interviewing, so that the fieldwork does not last for a period longer than 3 weeks. This will also decrease the effect of various effects happening in the country or worldwide on respondents' answers.

More attention should be paid to fieldwork control during the fieldwork, and not afterwards. Time the interview started and time the interview finished are among the variables where the most mistakes have been documented. So far, DI lacks an unified strategy for the fieldwork control, which should be implemented in all countries.

Information for the fieldwork report also should be collected from the interviewers and supervisors during the process of fieldwork, and not afterwards, and a specific questionnaire on the fieldwork process should be prepared.

In case if random walking is employed while sampling the households, the instructions should be made more understandable and clear.

We have to be very realistic in respect to our expectations, feasibility of our plans (provided the budget we have).

**The questionnaire** should be shortened and simplified, made it more understandable for the respondents. We have to make sure that the questions asked are relevant for the respondents. Also, more attention should be paid to translation, formatting, proof-reading of the questionnaire and the Show Cards. It would be highly recommended to share the questionnaire with the supervisors beforehand, so that their comments and suggestions can be taken into consideration.