



Presidential Social and Personnel
Reforms in Public Opinion
REPORT



SOCIAL
RESEARCH
CENTER



**“...Our economic power should
directly affect the social sphere...”**

*Ilham Aliyev
The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan*



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**Presidential Social and
Personnel Reforms in Public Opinion**
ANALYTICAL REPORT

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Introduction

Important socio-economic reforms have been implemented by the state in recent years to enhance the well-being of the population. The decrees signed by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, since the beginning of the year, carry a republican and nationwide character, reflecting their significant social and political implications.

It is noteworthy that the post-oil era has ushered in significant changes globally and within our country. This has prompted the identification of new trends and challenges, necessitating the implementation of sustainable strategies to address them.

It is important to highlight that a 3-4 times decrease in oil prices on the world market in 2015 created certain stresses in Azerbaijan's financial market, leading to a nearly twofold loss in the value of the manat against foreign currencies and various challenges to the financial well-being of the population. To mitigate these negative impacts, the state outlined the main directions of socio-economic policy and initiated a comprehensive reform package. The decisions made significantly diverged from those of previous years in terms of their financial structure, volume, and comprehensiveness.

According to the decrees signed by President Ilham Aliyev on June 18, 2019, the minimum wage is scheduled to increase to 250 manats from September 1, and the minimum pension to 200 manats from October 1. Additionally, a 20-50% increase in salaries will be provided for employees across various sectors, including teachers, personnel of state-budget-funded organizations, military personnel, customs employees, and others.

The minimum wage will exceed the living wage for the first time in Azerbaijan. In general, whenever the lower limit of salaries in the public and private sectors is increased, the upper limits will also increase gradually. Even so, according to the level of minimum and average monthly wages, Azerbaijan will be equal to the regional states in terms of similar parameters and it will also move forward in some cases.

The relevant decrees signed by the head of state regarding law enforcement and power structures inform about the complex reforms carried out in the country. This is an indicator that the strengthening of social security is at the center of the state's attention along with the social welfare of the population.

While the reforms will play a decisive role in the social welfare of the population, they will have a positive impact on the rapid restoration of economic activity until 2015, as well as on the further improvement of the spiritual and psychological environment in the society. The decisions made play an important role in increasing the population's confidence in the state and strengthening the influence of the country's leader, maintaining social stability, and in eliminating the problems arising in the financial condition of the population after devaluation.

A study of people's attitude on the policy imple-

mented by the head of state, the reforms carried out, the signed decrees and its impact on the well-being of the society are very important to further strengthen the effectiveness of the work carried out.

A public opinion survey was conducted nationwide to study the population's attitude towards the reforms implemented during the post-oil period. The survey focused on the decrees signed by the relevant departments of the Social Research Center on June 18 and 20, 2019.

Goals and Objectives of the Survey

The main objectives of the conducted public opinion survey are the following:

To study the level of awareness of the population about the decrees signed by the head of state in June;

To determine the main sources of information of the population about the decrees;

To study the attitude of the population to the signed agreements;

To determine the reaction and level of satisfaction of the population to the social reforms implemented by the President;

To reveal the expectations about the results of salary and pension increases based on decrees;

To study the level of awareness and attitude among the population about personnel changes based on decrees;

To study expectations related to personnel reforms;

To determine the attitude, trust and confidence of the population towards the state and power structures;

To study the level of influence of citizens on the reforms implemented.

Methodological principles of the survey

Selection of Respondents:

❖ 1212 respondents participated in the public opinion survey conducted. Geographical, gender and age balances were maintained among respondents.

❖ A multi-step cluster selection method was used during the process of selection of respondents. 1212 people were generally selected from cities, district centers and villages as per 101 clusters. One out of every three houses and a respondent from each house were selected by the "last birthday principle" by a systematic random selection method. A statistical error coefficient is 2.8%.

❖ A study has been conducted in 25 cities, 76 regions and villages in Baku-Absheron and 7 economic districts (Ganja-Gazakh, Sheki-Zagatala, Lankaran, Guba-Khachmaz, Aran, Daglig Shirvan, Yukhary Garabagh and Kalbajar-Lachin).

❖ A test survey was conducted among 80 respondents representing different social and demographic groups of the population before a widescale survey in

Baku and 3 regions. Necessary amendments have been made to the questionnaire as a result of the test.

A survey questionnaire

The survey questionnaire consists of 26 questions (21 specific and 5 socio-demographic). The questions have been prepared in the direction of studying the attitude to the relevant decrees signed by the President.

Instruction

- ❖ Guidelines for interviewers have been prepared.
- ❖ Before the interviewers started working, training was organized for them by the Center employees.
- ❖ The interviewers were thoroughly familiar with the questionnaire and instructions during the training and were fully prepared to conduct the survey.
- ❖ Extensive explanations were given for each question in the survey questionnaire and a test survey was conducted by the interviewers.

The way of conducting a survey

A face-to-face interview method was used in conducting the survey. Modern technologies were used in conducting the survey. Thus, the surveys were not conducted in the paper format, which is a traditional method, but were conducted through tablets. The SurveyToGo program, which is more widely used in the United States and Great Britain, and is accepted as a modern survey program, has been used in recent years. This program has many advantages in terms of monitoring site work in large areas, providing online observation of the survey process and receiving reliable information.

Site work

The site work was conducted from July 7 to 14, 2019. Interviews among the population were conducted in the conditions of the household. Anonymity was strictly ensured in all interviews. The respondents were fully assured that their answers would be used only in aggregated form. This factor caused the high reliability of the information collected in the results of the survey.

Data processing and analysis

The data collected for each questionnaire was included in the database after completing the survey and analyzed using a special program SPSS - Statistical Package for Social Sciences (Statistical Program Package for Social Sciences). The number of correlations (relations) between the variables was determined in addition to descriptive analysis.

Analysis of survey results

Demographic indicators

In the survey, 50.6% of the 1212 respondents were men, while 49.4% were women. The respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 87, with an average age of 49. Regarding education, 50.1% of participants had completed secondary education, 23.3% held higher education degrees, 20.3% were vocational/college graduates, and 4.7% had incomplete secondary education. Additionally, 1.6% of respondents had no formal education.

The survey also considered various employment criteria. Among the respondents, 32.7% worked in the state sector, 23.5% were laborers, and 6.6% were employed in the private sector—approximately five times less than those in the state sector. Furthermore, 12.3% were engaged in self-employment, 8.3% were unemployed, and 14% were housewives. The survey also included 1.6% students and 0.2% temporary unemployed individuals.

Regarding income levels, the average personal income of the 1212 respondents was 292 manats, while the average income level of their families was 462 manats.

*Grouping of respondents
according to different criteria*

Criteria	Number of respond	Per cent (%)
Gender		
Male	613	50,6
Female	599	49,4
Level of education		
Complete secondary education	607	50,1
Higher education	282	23,3
Vocational education / college	247	20,3
Incomplete secondary education	57	4,7
Uneducated	19	1,6
Occupation		
Student / educated person	19	1,6
Employee – public sector	396	32,7
Employee – private sector	80	6,6
Temporary unemployed	3	0,3
Individual labor activity	149	12,3
Retired	285	23,5
Unemployed	101	8,3
Housewife	170	14
Other	9	0,7
Economic districts		
Baku and Absheron	313	25,8
Sumgayit	72	5,9
Ganja-Gazakh	168	13,9
Shaki-Zagatala	87	7,2
Lankaran	119	9,8
Guba-Khachmaz	72	5,9
Aran	276	22,9
Daglig Shirvan	33	2,7
Yukhari Garabagh and Kalbajar-Lachin	72	5,9

Average monthly income level (AZN)	
Individuals	292
Families	462

**A STUDY OF PUBLIC OPINION TO
PRESIDENTIAL DECREES REGARDING
INCREASE IN SALARY, PENSION AND
MINIMUM MONTHLY WAGES**

In the survey, about half (46.1%) of the respondents noted that they had a lot of information about the Presidential decree signed in June regarding the increase in the minimum pension amount up to 25%, reaching 200 AZN.

Moreover, more than 40% of the respondents reported having a lot of information about three other decrees: 42.5% were aware of the increase in the minimum monthly salary, which became 250 manats; 40.9% were informed about the 20% increase in teachers' salaries; and 40.3% were aware of an average 40% increase in monthly salaries of individuals working in organizations funded from the state budget (government officials, law enforcement employees, etc.).

Similarly, over 40% of respondents reported having some information about all four decrees: 42.5% knew about the increase in the minimum monthly salary, 40.4% were aware of the increase in teachers' salaries, 40.2% knew about the increase in salaries of state-funded organization employees, and 40.4% were informed about the increase in the minimum pension amount.

Between 8% to 13% of respondents indicated having no information about the decrease: 8% knew about the increase in the minimum monthly salary, 11.8% were informed about the increase in teachers' salaries, 12.7% were aware of the increase in salaries of state-funded organization employees, and 8.3% knew about the increase in the minimum pension amount.

Overall, the survey revealed a high level of awareness among the population regarding these increases. Analysis using the statistical method (T-test) indicated that respondents who benefited from these increases were more informed about them. Additionally, male respondents were more aware of the increases compared to females, indicating a gender disparity in information acceptance. Awareness levels about the increases were higher in Baku and Absheron regions compared to other areas. Furthermore, a positive correlation was found between income level and respondents' awareness, showing that individuals with higher incomes were more informed about the reforms.



**More than
80% of respondents
were aware of increases
done in June.**

Level of awareness about decrees

Table 1. How much are you aware about the following decrees signed by the President in June 2019?

	I have a lot of information	I have some information	I have very little information	I have no information
Increasing the minimum monthly salary to 250 manats	42,5	42,5	7	8
20% increase in teachers' salaries	40,9	40,4	6,9	11,8
An average 40% increase in the monthly salaries of employees in a number of organizations financed from the state budget	40,3	40,2	6,8	12,7
Reaching 200 manats after increasing the minimum pension amount by 25%	46,1	40,4	5,2	8,3

* Respondents were allowed to mark/select several answer options.
Therefore, the total percentage of the obtained responses was more than 100%.

Table 2. What sources do you get the information about these decrees from?

	TV	Website prezident.az	Other websites	Social networks	People around me	The institution where I work
Increase in minimum monthly salary and becoming 250 manats	80,2	2,2	5,7	29,5	18,3	7,3
Increase in teacher's salary up to 20%	75,4	2,1	5,4	27,7	20,8	5,5
An average of 40% increase in monthly salaries of people working in some of the organizations funded from the state budget (government officials, employees of law enforcement agencies, etc.)	75,8	1,9	5,5	27,3	17,6	5,8
Increase in minimum pension amount up to 25% and becoming 200 AZN	78,6	1,8	5,2	26,2	18,6	5,1

* Respondents were allowed to mark/select several answer options. Therefore, the total percentage of the obtained responses was more than 100%.

Respondents received information about the decrees from different sources and the "specific gravity" of those information sources was significantly different from each other (Table 2).

First of all, the respondents get information about the decrees mainly from the television. This indicator is more than 75%. In other words, three out of every four respondents get information from this source:

80.2% that the minimum monthly salary increased and became 250 manats;

75.4% that teacher's salaries increased by up to 20%;

75.8% that monthly salaries of the people working in some organizations funded from the state budget (government officials, employees of law enforcement agencies, etc.) increased up to 40%;

78.6% that the minimum amount of the pension increased up to 25% and became 200 manats.

Social networks are in second place after television as a source of information about the above-mentioned decrees according to the degree of importance. Every fourth respondent has the same opinion (between 26-30%):

29.5% that the minimum monthly salary increased and became 250 manats;

27.7% that teacher's salaries increased up to 20%;

27.3% that monthly salaries of the people working in some organisations funded from the state budget (government officials, employees of law enforcement agencies, etc.) increased up to 40%;

26.2% that the minimum amount of the pension increased up to 25% and became 200 manats.

Microenvironment, i.e. the people around him (family members, business partners, relatives) is in third place after social networks according to the level of importance, it is 18-21%.

18.3% that the minimum monthly salary increased and became 250 manats;

20.8% that teacher's salary increased up to 20%;

17.6% that monthly salaries of the people working in some organisations funded from the state budget (government officials, employees of law enforcement agencies, etc.) increased up to 40%;

18.6% that the minimum amount of the pension increased up to 25% and became 200 manats.

The way people obtain information varies depending on their place of residence, age, and level of education. For instance, those who reside in rural areas, elderly people, and individuals with a low level of education rely on TV for updates, while those who live in the urban area of Baku-Absheron, young people, and those with a higher education level prefer to use the internet to stay informed. This finding highlights the importance of tailoring the state's communication policy to meet the needs of different groups. The government should prioritize delivering policies through TV channels, as many outside Baku rely on it as their primary source of information.

60% of respondents get information only from one source, 35% of respondents get information from two sources, and the remaining 5% of respondents get in-

formation from three or more sources. People living in regions compared to those living in Baku get information about increases mainly from TV and the people around them. The rate of receiving information from the Internet decreases as the age of people increases. On the other hand, people with a high level of education prefer to get information from the Internet. In general, it should be noted that the family and social micro-media play a rather large and special role in the process of providing information to the respondents. Respondents often get the necessary information about social processes mainly in this way.



More than 75% of respondents get information about increases from TV.

Attitude towards decrees

According to a survey, 92.9% of respondents had a positive attitude towards increasing the minimum monthly salary to 250 manats. Out of this number, 57% of respondents rated the idea as "very good" and 35.9% rated it as "good". Similarly, 93% of the respondents had a positive attitude towards increasing the teacher's salary by 20%. Out of this number, 55% rated the idea as "very good" and 38% rated it as "good". Additionally, 91.9% of the respondents had a positive attitude towards increasing the monthly salaries of government officials, employees of law enforcement agencies, and other organisations funded from the state budget by up to 40%. Out of this number, 55.1% rated the idea as "very good" and 36.8% rated it as "good".

Furthermore, 93.1% of respondents had a positive attitude towards increasing the minimum amount of the pension by 25% and making it 200 manats. Out of this number, 56.8% of respondents rated the idea as "very good" and 36.3% rated it as "good".



More than 90% of respondents have positive attitude about increases.

According to the results of the T-test, the attitude towards the increase in the minimum monthly salary ($p < 0.05$) and the minimum amount of the pension ($p < 0.05$) are better than the attitude towards the increase in teacher's salary and salaries of the people working in several organizations funded from the state budget.

Although support for the increase was observed, a part of the population said during the survey that the increase in percentage in teacher's salaries was low compared to other government officials. So, the respondents think that the teacher's salary level directly

affects the quality of their work. The higher salary level can directly increase the level of education and training. Moreover, teachers constitute a significant part of the employed population. That is why it is desirable to increase the teacher's salary level from a socio-political point of view. The attitude of retired people and

those working in the public sector towards decrease about increases is better compared to other categories (private sector, housewife, unemployed). In general, most of the respondents support the decrees signed in June by the President regardless of people's occupation and coverage with increments.



DIAGRAM 1.

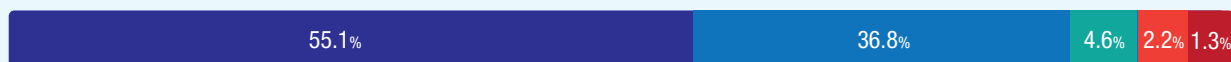
WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS DECREES SIGNED IN JUNE BY THE PRESIDENT?

Very good Good Neutral Bad Very bad

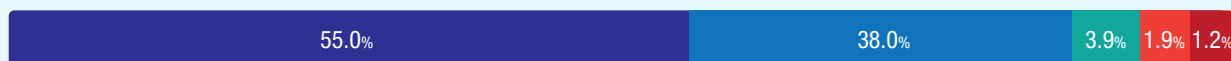
Increase in minimum monthly salary by 25% and becoming 250 AZN



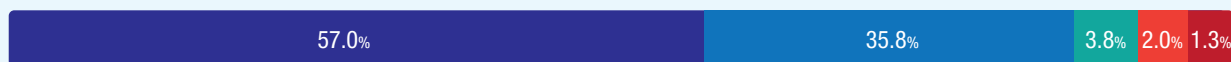
An increase in salaries of people working in a number of the organizations funded from the state budget



An increase in teachers' salaries by 20%



An increase in the amount of minimum monthly salary and becoming 250 manats

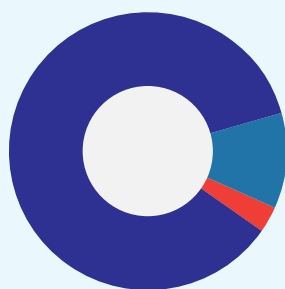


Importance of social reforms



DIAGRAM 2.

DO YOU CONSIDER IT IMPORTANT TO IMPLEMENT THESE SOCIAL REFORMS?



87.5% Very important

11.2% Important to some extent

1.3% Not important

A study of society's attitude to the importance of social reforms is of exceptional importance to determine priorities in the state's reform strategy.

An absolute majority (87.5%) of the respondents participating in the survey consider the implementation of these social reforms to be very important.

In addition, every tenth respondent (11.2%) noted that reforms are important to some extent. Only 1.3% of the respondents think that reforms are not important. The majority of the respondents who consider the implementation of social reforms important is a clear indicator of a positive approach to the steps

taken by the head of state. The respondents covered by increases consider the implementation of social reforms to be more important. Anova's test shows that unemployed people consider the implementation of social reforms less important.



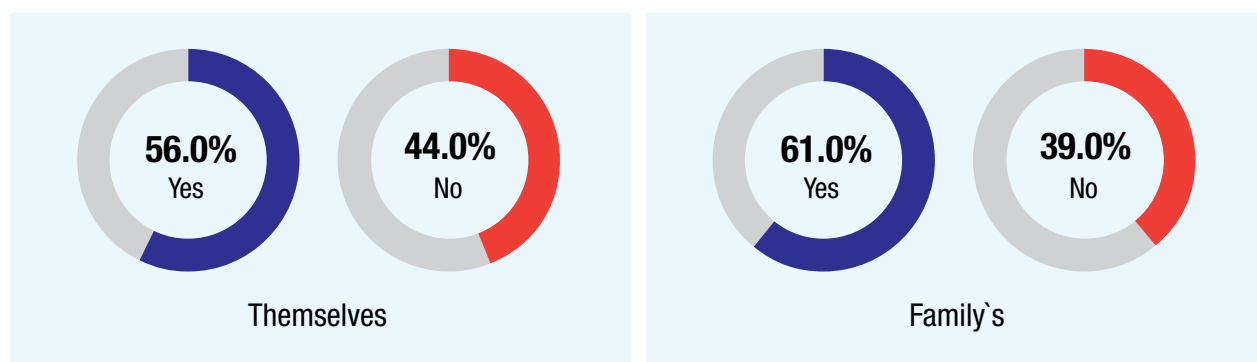
87% respondents consider social reforms to be important

Coverage of respondents increases



DIAGRAM 3.

WILL THE MINIMUM MONTHLY SALARY, MINIMUM AMOUNT OF PENSION AND AN INCREASE IN SALARY COVER YOU OR YOUR FAMILY



Minimum monthly salary, minimum pension amount and increase in salaries covered 56% of respondents themselves and 61% of their families.

While the increases covered both 38% of the respondents themselves and their families, they did not cover 21% at all.

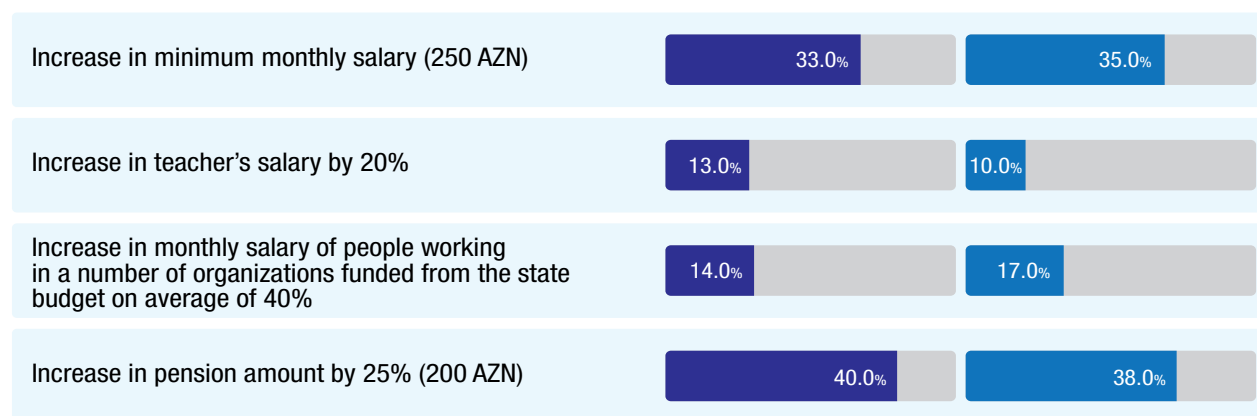
The form of coverage



DIAGRAM 4.

"HOW WILL THE INCREASES PROVIDE COVERAGE FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY?"

■ Themselves ■ Family's



The orientation of presidential decrees to different target groups makes it necessary to determine its scope.

The increase in the minimum monthly salary and

its becoming 250 AZN covers 33% of the respondents themselves and 35% of their families. An increase in teacher's salaries by 20% covers 13% of teachers themselves and 10 % of their families. An increase in

monthly salary on average 40% of people working in several organizations funded from the state budget covers 14% of those workers themselves and 17% of their family members. An increase in minimum pen-

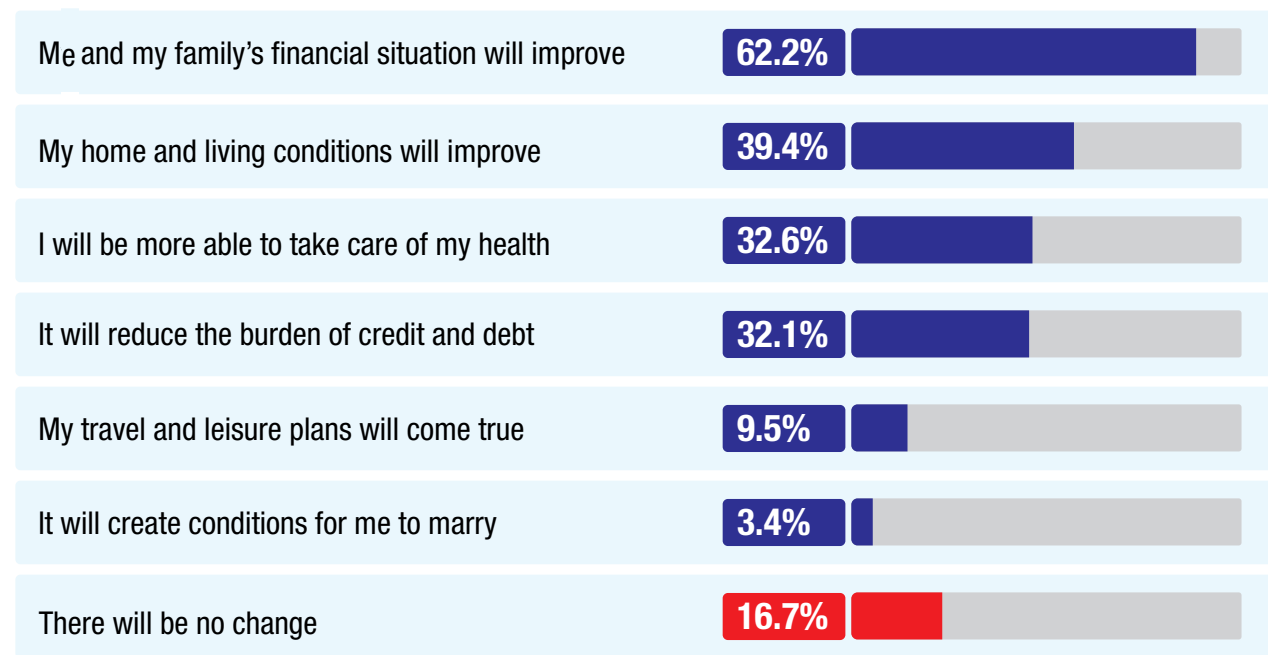
sion amount by 25% and becoming 200 manats will cover 40% of the retired themselves and 38% of their families.

Increases cause positive changes



DIAGRAM 5.

TO WHICH POSITIVE CHANGES DO THE INCREASES CAUSE IN YOUR LIFE AND YOUR FAMILY'S LIFE?



Respondents were given the opportunity to mark/select several answer options. Therefore, the total percentage of the obtained responses was more than 100%.

The survey revealed that the majority of respondents (62.2%) expressed the expectation that "the financial situation of themselves and their families will improve" as a result of the increases.

Approximately 40% of respondents anticipated that "their housing and living conditions will improve" due to the increases. Furthermore, one in three respondents (32.6%) indicated that they believed "they will be better able to take care of their health" as a consequence of the increases, while a similar proportion (32.1%) expressed that "it will alleviate the burden of credit and debt".

9.5% of respondents believe their travel and leisure plans will come true, while only 3.4% believe

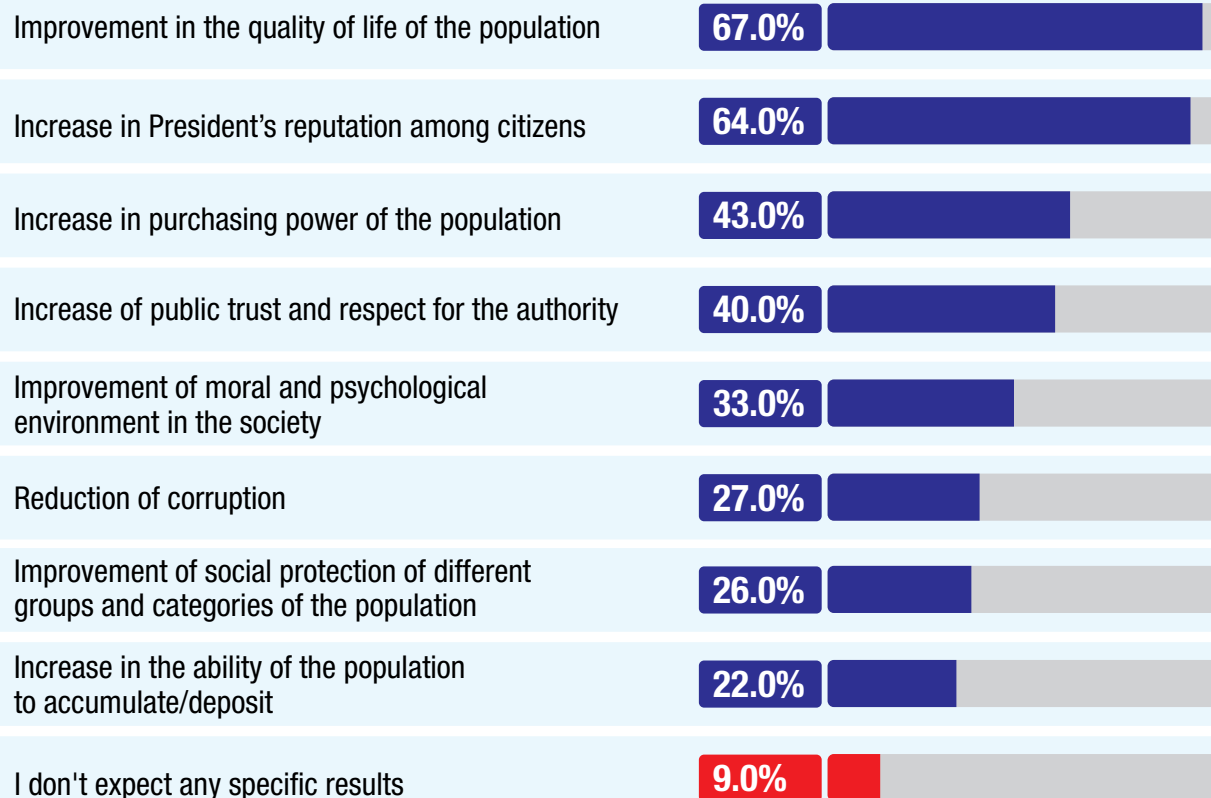
the increases will facilitate marriage. It shows that the population thinks that increases will mainly solve their current problems. Only 16.7% of respondents (203 people) said that "there will be no change". 75% of 203 respondents (152 people) who or whose families were not covered by the stated increases said that there would be no change.



62,2% of respondents believe that increases will improve the financial situation of them and their families.



DIAGRAM 6.

WHICH POSITIVE RESULTS DO YOU EXPECT FROM THESE SOCIAL REFORMS?


Respondents were given the opportunity to mark/select several answer options. Therefore, the total percentage of the obtained responses was more than 100%.

The survey indicates an abundance of optimistic expectations regarding social reforms among respondents. The main expectations revolve around the "increase in the level of the population's life" (67%) and the "enhancement of the President's reputation among citizens" (64%). Interestingly, individuals from regions predominantly expressed the opinion that the President's reputation was strengthened among citizens due to the increases.

A significant portion of respondents (43%) believe that the population's purchasing power will increase, with trust and respect for authorities also expected to rise (40%). One-third of respondents hope for an improvement in the moral and psychological environment in society (33%). Moreover, one out of every four respondents who participated in the survey believed that the increases would lead to a reduction in corruption (27%) and an enhancement in social protection for various groups and categories of the population (26%).

One-fifth of respondents are confident that the increases will increase the population's ability to accumulate or deposit (22%). Only 9% of respondents do not have any specific expectations related to social reforms. Notably, the opinion that the increases will not cause any positive change is somewhat widespread among the population residing in Baku and Absheron compared to other regions of the Republic. This is mainly attributed to the higher cost of living in Baku and Absheron, which may weaken the perceived impact of increases on the improvement of respondents' living conditions in these areas.



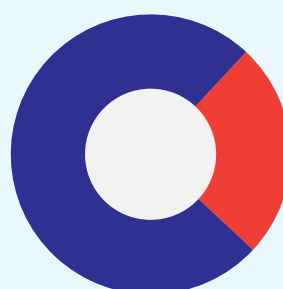
Expectations of respondents from the increases:
"Improvement of people's living condition" (67%)

Negative impacts of increase in salaries and minimum monthly wages



DIAGRAM 7.

DO YOU THINK THAT THERE WILL BE ANY NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF INCREASE IN SALARIES AND MINIMUM MONTHLY WAGES?



75.0% No

25.0% Yes

Artificial inflation will occur

92.0%

It will affect the inflation growth

29.0%

It will lead to an increase in unemployment

19.0%

Tax evasion will increase

18.0%

The number of employees with an employment contract will decrease

16.0%

Respondents were given the opportunity to mark/select several answer options. Therefore, the total percentage of the obtained responses was more than 100%.

The majority of respondents (75%) stated that the increases would have no negative impact. These figures can be noted as a very positive indicator. 25% of the respondents who said that increases would have a possibility of a negative impact, were asked about what those negative impacts could be.

During a survey, 92% of the 298 respondents who were concerned about the negative impacts of increases stated that they believed it would increase prices. Many people are also complaining about the increase in prices in the market. These negative perceptions affect the effectiveness of the reforms, making the already complicated process of regulating the market economy even more challenging. However, most of the respondents who expect prices to increase are hopeful that anti-monopoly and competition mechanisms will be strengthened.

In a consultation held on July 31st regarding the socio-economic sector, President Ilham Aliyev highlighted the issue of artificial price increases despite low inflation rates.

The head of state emphasized the importance of taking appropriate measures to prevent this and called for the economic and financial institutions to be seri-

ously engaged in the matter. It means that every third respondent (29%) expected inflation.



Majority of 25% respondents thinking about the negative impacts believe that an artificial increase in price will happen.

It means that every fourth respondent thinks that increases will cause unemployment (19%) and an increase in tax evasion (18.1%). Finally, only 16% of the respondents expressed the opinion that "the number of employees with an employment contract will decrease".

Expectations towards the indicated directions bring to the fore the work of the respondents within a stronger and more mobile coordination framework towards an increase in the effectiveness of the reforms with the relevant state institutions.

Impact of increases on the socio-economic condition of the population

An overwhelming majority (90%) of the respondents participating in the survey believed that an increase in salaries would have a positive impact on the socio-economic status of the population. Among them, 54% answered "very positive," while 36% answered "mainly positive."

An absolute majority (91%) of the respondents participating in the survey stated that an increase in minimum monthly salary would have a positive impact on the socio-economic status of the entire population (53% answered "very positive" and 38% answered "mainly positive").

An absolute majority (91%) of the respondents participating in the survey stated that an increase in pensions would positively impact the socio-economic status of the population (54% answered "very positive" and 37% answered "mainly positive").

The T-test indicates that respondents believe increases in pensions and minimum monthly salaries will have a more positive impact on the socio-economic

status of the population compared to increases in their salaries.

The T-test between independent variables shows that the population living in the regions compared to those living in Baku and Absheron expects more positive results from the increases conducted in all three directions.

According to the Pearson correlation, the belief among the elderly population in the positive impact on the socio-economic status of the population is higher.



70% of respondents think that increases give a positive response to the opinion of the country's leader that "the human factor is at the center of state policy in Azerbaijan"

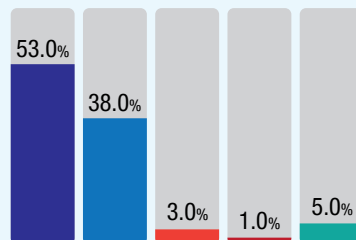


DIAGRAM 8.

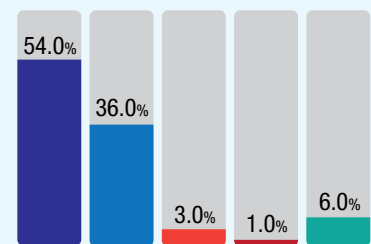
DO YOU THINK THAT THERE WILL BE ANY NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF INCREASE IN SALARIES AND MINIMUM MONTHLY WAGES?

Very positive Mainly positive
Mainly negative Very negative No impact

Increase in minimum monthly salaries



Increase in salaries



Increase in pensions

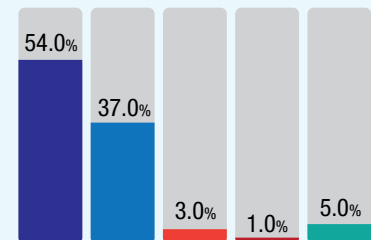




DIAGRAM 9.

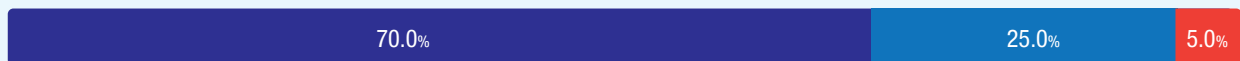
TO WHICH EXTENT DO THE RESPONDENTS AGREE WITH THE ABOVE-MENTIONED, DIFFERENT OPINIONS REGARDING THE REFORMS MADE?

■ Fully agree ■ Mainly agree ■ Disagree

The reforms serve the interest of the people



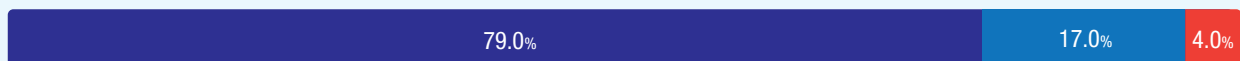
The reforms are a manifestation of the strong and sustainable social policy of the country's leader



The increases correspond to the opinion of the country's leader that "the human factor is at the center of state policy in Azerbaijan"



The state has the power to carry out continuous reforms



Implementation of reforms will cause to an increase of people's confidence in the state



Reforms are an indicator of government's concern and care for the population



The public's perception of the fundamental principles underlying the reforms is crucial in understanding the driving forces behind policy decisions. It helps gauge how the reforms are generally perceived by the population.

An overwhelming majority (94%) of the respondents in the survey agree with the notion that "Reforms are an indicator of the government's concern and care for the population" (with 74% completely agreeing and 20% mainly agreeing).

Similarly, a vast majority (93%) of the survey participants agree with the idea that "Implementation of reforms will lead to an increase in people's confidence in the state" (with 71% completely agreeing and 22% mainly agreeing).

Furthermore, 96% of the respondents agree with the perspective that "The state can execute continuous reforms" (with 79% completely agreeing and 17% mainly agreeing).

Moreover, 93% of the survey respondents agree with the statement that "Increases serve as confirma-

tion of the state leader's belief that 'the human factor is at the center of state policy in Azerbaijan'" (with 70% completely agreeing and 23% mainly agreeing).

The absolute majority (95%) of the respondents participating in the survey agree with the opinion that "The reforms are a manifestation of the strong and sustainable social policy of the country's leader" (70% answered "completely agree" and 25% answered "mainly agree").

The absolute majority (more than 94%) of the respondents participating in the survey agree with the opinion that "The reforms serve the interest of the people" (74% answered "completely agree" and 20% answered "mainly agree").

The T-test shows that the level of agreement of the population living in the regions with the opinions listed above is higher than that of the people living in Baku. In addition, it shows itself in the increase in covering people. Thus, those who and whose families were covered with these increments mostly agree with these opinions.

A STUDY OF PUBLIC OPINION TOWARDS PRESIDENTIAL DECREES IN THE DIRECTION OF STRUCTURAL AND PERSONNEL REFORMS

The success of socio-economic reforms and the ability to have a significant impact on the global challenges of today largely depends on structural and personnel policies. A thorough analysis of how society has responded to the changes implemented this year would provide a comprehensive evaluation of the reforms and their effectiveness.



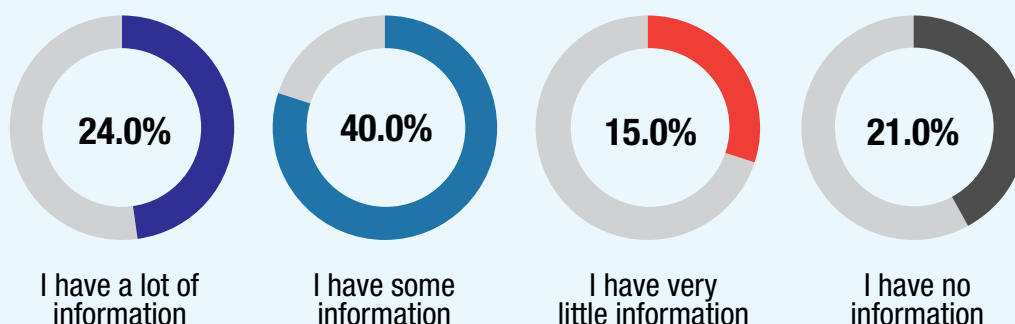
It was determined that **36%** of respondents have little information about personnel change.

Awareness about personnel changes in law enforcement and security systems



DIAGRAM 10.

TO WHAT EXTENT ARE YOU AWARE OF THE PERSONNEL CHANGES HAPPENED IN THE LAW ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM WITH THE PRESIDENTIAL DECREE SIGNED ON JUNE 20



A notable portion of the respondents (79%) had general information about personnel changes in the law enforcement and security system, with 24% possessing full information. However, 21% of the respondents indicated a lack of information on this matter. Thus, there appears to be a necessity for ongoing analyses, discussions, and commentaries in the mass media concerning the aforementioned issue. The T-test for dependent variables revealed a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.01$), indicating that a smaller number of respondents

had information about the personnel changes in law enforcement and security systems compared to the decrees regarding increments.

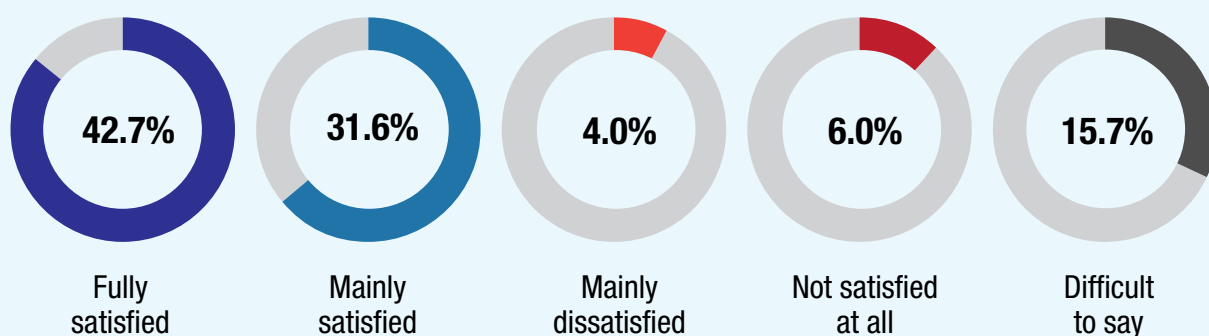
The main reason for that is related to the preservation of the previous positive traditions in the law enforcement system, the feeling of confidence in strengthening the public security system and acceptance of the personnel change in that context. On the other hand, respondents with higher education levels were more aware of personnel changes.

Satisfaction with personnel changes in law enforcement and security systems



DIAGRAM 11.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU SATISFY WITH THE PERSONNEL CHANGES IN LAW ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM DONE ACCORDING TO THE DECREE SIGNED BY THE PRESIDENT?



Among all survey respondents, a significant majority (74.3%) expressed satisfaction with the personnel changes that occurred in the law enforcement and security system. Notably, 42.7% of those satisfied respondents indicated being highly satisfied. However, a small fraction (10%) expressed dissatisfaction with the changes, with 4% stating they were "mainly dissatisfied" and 6% indicating they were "not satisfied at all".

It is noteworthy that 15.7% of respondents chose the response "It is difficult to say." Various factors may contribute to this response, including a lack of awareness about the system, insufficient information about the newly appointed officials, concerns about confidentiality regarding sensitive systems, and individuals' reluctance to openly express their opinions.

Two prevalent opinions emerged among respondents regarding this question: "If the President appointed them, then most probably it is right" and "I do not get involved in politics."

Correlations determined between several variables gave grounds to say that people at the family level with lower income levels were less likely satisfied with personnel changes occurring in law enforcement and security systems. In addition, a correlation between the type of respondent's employment and his attitude towards personnel changes occurring in the law enforcement and security system has been determined. So, the retired and the people working in the public sector were more satisfied with the above-mentioned changes. Citizens living outside of Baku and Absheron expressed greater satisfaction with personnel changes based on regional correlations.



16%-i of respondents found it difficult to express their attitude about personnel changes.

Expectations from Personnel Reforms



DIAGRAM 12.

WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS FROM PERSONNEL REFORMS OCCURRED BASED ON THE CORRESPONDING PRESIDENTIAL DECREE

Safer living

57.0%

Increase in the military strength of our country

51.0%

Further strengthening of political and social stability

42.0%

Strengthening the fight against corruption

40.0%

Further increase in security provision of the state and citizens

37.0%

Further consolidation of democratization in the political and social sphere

26.0%

The beginning of reforms in the law and judiciary spheres

24.0%

I have no expectations

11.0%

Respondents were given the opportunity to mark/select several answer options. Therefore, the total percentage of the obtained responses was more than 100%.

According to a recent survey, 57% of respondents stated that they expected "safer living conditions" as the primary outcome of the personnel reforms based

on the Presidential decree. The responses that followed were "increase in the military strength of our country" (50.8%), "further strengthening of political

and social stability" (42%), and "further strengthening of the fight against corruption" (40%). 11% of respondents did not have any expectations from the personnel reforms based on the Presidential decree.

This may indicate that 11% of the respondents do not think that personnel reforms would cause any innovation (positive or negative). Crosstabs analysis

showed that a significant part of the respondents who were not satisfied with the personnel changes had no expectations from these changes.

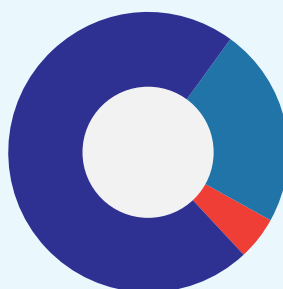


95% of respondents believe in success of reforms.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PERFORMED REFORMS



DIAGRAM 13.
TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE REFORMS PERFORMED BY THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL?



72.0% Strongly believe
23.0% Partially believe
5.0% Do not believe

71.5% of the respondents strongly believe in the success of the implemented reforms. 22.8% of respondents partially believe, and 5.5% of respondents do not believe. In general, those who believe in the success of the reforms among the respondents involved in the survey predominate. The measures taken to improve the welfare of the population by the government, as well as to improve the previous reforms have a more positive impact.

People and their families who benefited from the increments believe more in the successful future of reforms. Three factors (region, age, education) influence the successful future of reforms. So, people who live in regions compared to Baku and Absheron, elderly compared to young people, and those who have a lower level of education than those who have higher education levels believe more in the successful future of reforms.

Important factors in the success of reforms



DIAGRAM 14.
HOW DO YOU THINK WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING FACTORS ARE IMPORTANT IN THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF REFORMS?

The will and determination of the President

71.5%

Support from the population

63.7%

Civil solidarity

53.8%

Constant / continuous dialogue between government and society

43.8%

Political stability

42.6%

Effective promotion of reforms

30.0%

Carrying out public debates

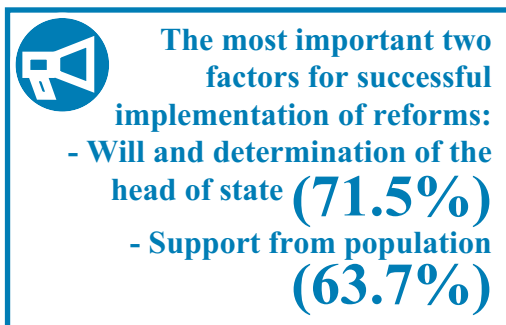
27.6%

The successful implementation of reforms is not solely determined by the issuance of decrees. Various factors play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of reforms. According to 71.5% of the respondents, the will and determination of the head of state are vital for the successful implementation of reforms.

The fact that the population sees the country's President as the main force in this issue is due to their trust in the head of state. The second factor is population support (63.7%). Moreover, 53.8% of the respondents expressed the importance of having civil solidarity. This is an indicator of the fact that the population considers itself to be the driving force of the performed reforms. Citizens began to see themselves more often in these processes compared to the previous years. There is a role of meetings held by the head of state among the population, as well as taking adequate measures regarding citizens' complaints.

In this regard, 43.8% of the respondents think that

a dialogue between the authorities and the society is necessary. Enlightenment plays a vital role in the successful implementation of reforms. Thus, a lack of awareness among the population often prevents them from enjoying these privileges. 30% of the respondents engaged in the survey state that an effective promotion of reforms is very important.

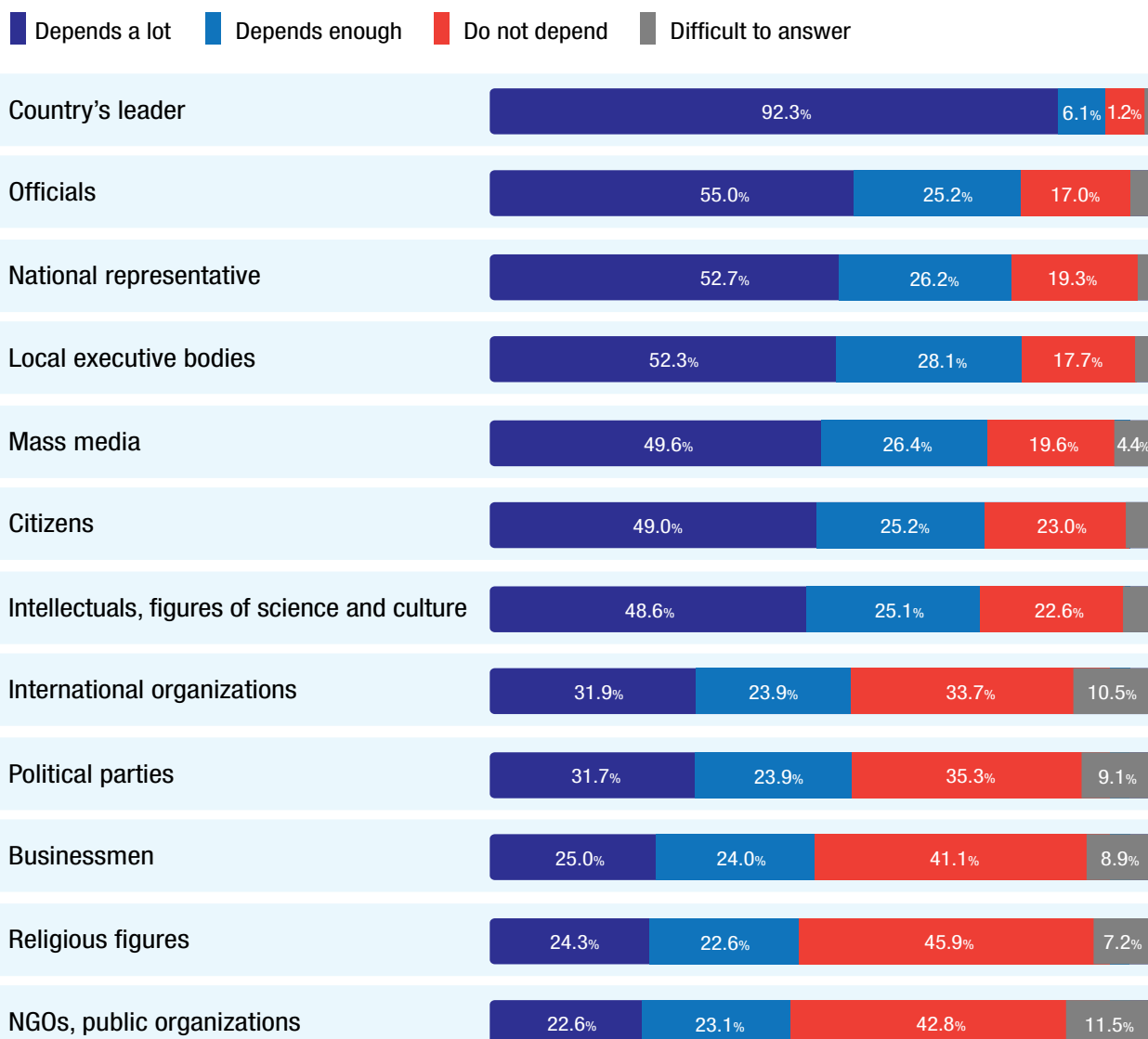


The role of responsible persons and organizations in the successful implementation of reforms



DIAGRAM 15.

TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL REFORMS DEPEND ON THE BELOW-MENTIONED?



Despite the issuance of continuous decrees and orders aimed at improving the socio-economic welfare of the population by the head of state, there are instances where these privileges, discounts, and increments fail to reach their intended recipients due to various reasons. This situation undermines trust in the state. The overwhelming majority of respondents (more than 98%) expressed that the successful implementation of social reforms in our country depends on the country's leader. Specifically, 92.3% answered "depends a lot," while 6.1% answered "depends enough."

The absolute majority of respondents (80.2%) especially emphasized the role of officials in the effective implementation of the reforms carried out in the country, as well as the work done in different directions (55% answered "depends a lot", 25.2% answered "depends enough").

An interesting dynamic is evident among the population, where officials are often blamed for their failure to address issues promptly and effectively. Many people hold the opinion that "The president makes decisions, and there are few officials who execute the decisions properly." This sentiment reflects a perception that while the president may initiate decisions, there are challenges in the proper execution of these decisions by officials. The absolute majority of the respondents (80.4%) noted that the successful implementation of reforms depends on the activities of local executive bodies (52.3% answered "depends a lot" and 28.1% "depends enough"). One of the main issues of people's concern in the regions is the prob-

lems they face from the local executive bodies and procrastination cases. It can be seen in many cases that officials of local executive bodies do not arrange their work with the people within high requirements.

78.9% of the respondents stated that the successful implementation of the reforms depends on the national representatives (52.7% answered "depends a lot" and 26.2% answered "depends enough"). However, the population stated that the national representatives were not properly interested in their problems, did not consider their appeals and did not conduct meetings. People are dissatisfied with the non-participation and carelessness of the elected national representatives whom they believed in delivering their voices to the appropriate places. Even the respondents did not know the names and surnames of the national representatives in many regions. Few people (45.7%) compared to others think that the successful implementation of reforms depends on NGOs. The reason for this is the lack of information about NGOs, especially among people living in regions. Another reason is the determination of people's opinion that "NGOs do not influence reforms where there is a state".



92.3% of the respondents especially emphasize the exceptional role of the country's leader in the success of the reforms.

Factors that hinder the success of the reforms



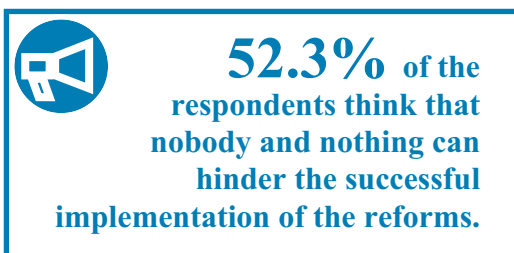
DIAGRAM 16.

WHO AND WHICH FACTORS CAN HINDER THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL REFORMS?

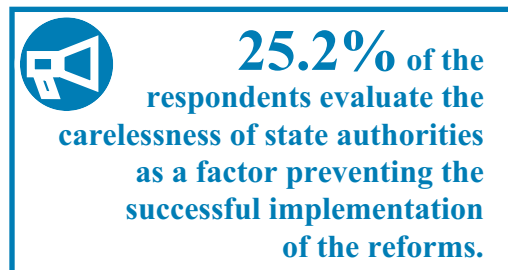


Implementation of reforms was covered not only with the satisfaction of the absolute majority of the society members in all periods but also by the resistance of certain forces, their sabotage or provocations. Thus, attempts to prevent the success of reforms by different means have also been indicated here.

52.3% of the respondents answered the question "Who and what can hinder the successful implementation of social reforms?" that "nobody and nothing" can prevent it. This is a sign of people's faith and trust in the head of state. People say: "If the President does it, other forces will not be able to prevent it". However, some respondents expressed different opinions. Thus, 25.2% of the respondents said that the careless approach of some state authorities could prevent the implementation of reforms. As it is mentioned above, the population is dissatisfied with the activities of different authorities; therefore, their carelessness causes concern. 19% said that weak public control, 18.9% said that a low level of awareness among citizens, 17.9% stated local government bodies / local officials, and 16.7% mentioned a lack of specialists in the appropriate field can prevent successful implementation of reforms.



A very small number of respondents (11.1%) stated that the activities of the political opposition could hinder the successful implementation of the reforms. The lack of this indicator informs about the lack of reputation, activities and opportunities for political opposition in the country compared to the government.



The impact of citizens on social reforms

The absolute majority of the respondents (80%) stated that the citizens had an impact on the implementation of social reforms (38.9% answered "quite a lot", 22.5% answered "enough" and 18.5% answered "somewhat").

A small number of respondents (14%) stated that there had no impact at all. The opinion of "the people's influence on the implementation of the reforms" is widely spread among the people living in the regions. This indicator informs about the opinion of citizens' influence on the processes taking place in the state.



DIAGRAM 17.

HOW DO YOU THINK TO WHAT EXTENT THE CITIZENS INFLUENCE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL REFORMS?

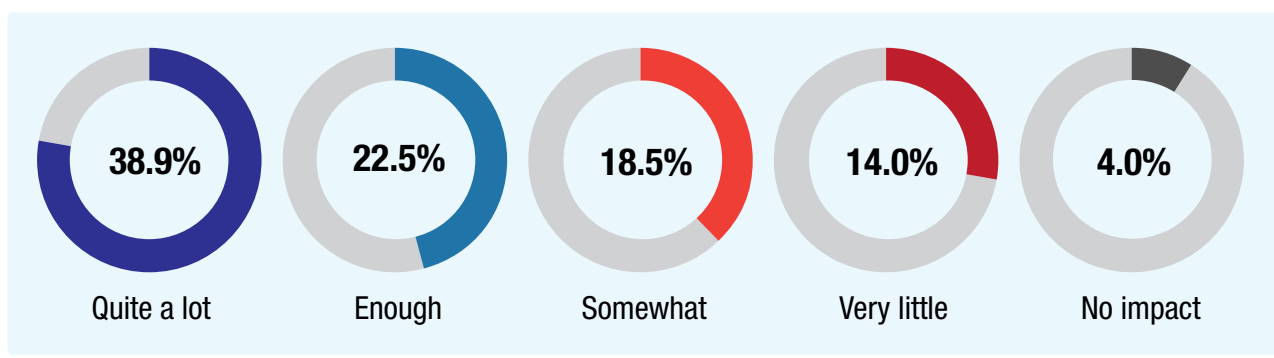
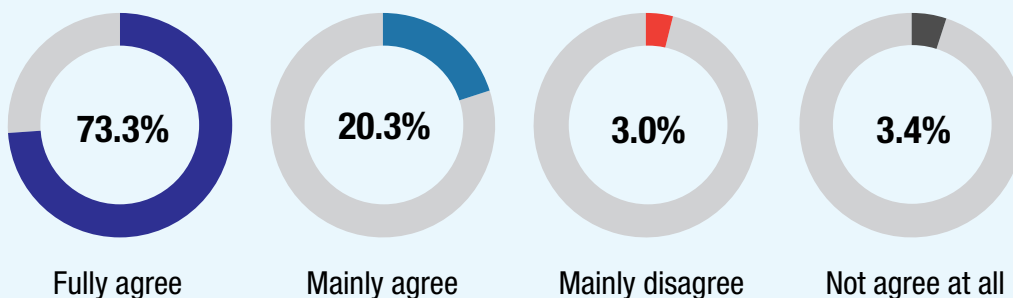




DIAGRAM 18.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE OPINION “THE COUNTRY PRESIDENT TAKES INTO ACCOUNT THE INTERESTS, NEEDS AND OPINIONS OF CITIZENS IN HIS ACTIVITIES”?



93.6% of the respondents agreed with the opinion that “The Country President takes into account the interests, needs and opinions of citizens in his activities” (73.3% answered “fully agree”, 20.3% answered “mainly agree”). In total, 6.4% did not agree with this opinion. The idea that the President listens to the citizens and takes into account their interests and needs is real among the population and people have repeated this many times during the whole survey process.



93.6% of the respondents agree to a significant extent with the opinion “The Country President takes into account the interests, requirements and opinions of citizens in his activities.

The results of the expert survey

Economists, national representatives, sociologists, psychologists and experts were interviewed in addition to the survey carried out among the population. They were asked both general and specific qualification questions. The questions were mainly in the direction of the impact of reforms on the socio-economic status of citizens, negative expectations regarding increments and the ways to prevent them, as well as the impact of increments on the socio-psychological status of the population.

Positive sides of the decrees

The experts characterized the positive sides of the decrees related to the increments within the framework of the survey conducted by the Center:

- Economists believe that the rate of increase in salary and pension levels after the devaluation in 2015 was lagging behind inflation (an increase was not indexed to inflation). As to their opinion, the government pursued a tighter fiscal policy with a cautious approach to wage increases through double-digit inflation was observed in 2016 and 2017. Experts took into account that the decree signed on June 18 caused the second similar increment within a year and believed that it helped to eliminate the economic and psychological damages of devaluation to a certain extent.

- Experts noted that the increments should be seriously seen in the improvement of the population's standard of living, affordability, recreation and living conditions. Economists particularly see the measures taken to strengthen the social protection of vulnerable groups - pensioners and the underprivileged as one of the positive sides of the above-mentioned decrees. There were opinions that increments in salary and pension levels would cause the revival of trade. One of the positive sides that economists were paying attention to was the financing of the known increments based on the surplus arising from the reforms carried out in the tax and customs.

- Experts evaluating the socio-psychological sides of the increments in the salary and pension levels noted that a salary increase would increase the work motivation of people and people's trust in the president. Sociologists and psychologists also evaluate the reduction of the existing social difficulties as the result of the positive impact of decrees.

- Though the majority of experts think that information about decrees signed on June 18 and 20, or even on other dates is delivered to the people promptly, others are for making certain changes in the communication strategy.

Problems that need attention

- A noteworthy point regarding the scope of the decree is its application only to teachers who have passed a diagnostic assessment. Increments are considered as a selective approach and taking into account that a ratio of the number of those who have

passed a diagnostic assessment to the total number of teachers is not high, this creates certain dissatisfactions. Additionally, another point is that doctors' wages were not increased. National representatives along with economists stated that teachers and doctors also need more care. They think that the people working in the fields of education and health are of high importance for society's development and health.

- Another dissatisfaction related to the scope of the decree is related to the characteristics of the current labour market. So, according to some economists, there are 1.5 million salaried employees although there are 5 million employed people in Azerbaijan. Experts noted that salary increments will impact one of every 3 people in the best case and they also noted that salaried workers cover only 30-35% of the employed population. They also stated that this figure is analogically around 80-85% in Europe. It was also noticed that the majority of non-salaried employees work in seasonal and casual jobs (for example, agriculture). There was the opinion that "those who worked without an employment contract would not be able to benefit from the increments".

- The experts did not expect a significant improvement in people's financial situation from September, despite the widespread opinion that "Increments would be able to improve people's social-psychological condition who suffered from inflation in the last 3 years". There is such an opinion that due to the strictly hidden unemployment in the country (e.g. people working without an employment contract, etc.), the impact of these increments on those people or a strict change in the political atmosphere does not seem realistic.

- Effects of increments on the market and entrepreneurs are noted among other problems caused by the increments. So, nearly all specialists emphasized the impact of increments on salary and pension levels to price increases in the market or that it has already influenced it. The economists indicated the fees paid to SSPF as a potential negative impact of the known increments on entrepreneurs. So, as to their opinions, a salary increase will increase entrepreneur's (especially micro-entrepreneurs) costs, because the funds paid to SSPF by them depend on the minimum salary level. In such a case, increments hurt the entrepreneur's profit margin. Some economic experts are currently paying attention to a price increase observed in agricultural products due to exports and shortages. In their opinion, the lack of availability of the products in the market that will exceed the domestic demand due to export will cause the price increase in the relevant products. One of the agricultural experts noted that a rise in price in the markets was a sign of serious problems in evaluation mechanisms despite the subsidies given to the agricultural sector. Another reason is the remaining exploitation of some agricultural products.

As can be seen, the population's attitude towards reforms compared to those of experts was based on optimistic views built on good fortune. Moreover, there is confidence that the measures taken by the state will be continuous.

CONCLUSION

Conclusions received from the survey conducted among the population regarding the decrees are described as follows:

- There is a need to strengthen awareness and publicity promotion activities among the population regarding the reforms implemented in the country. Although the level of awareness about the decrees signed in June by the head of the state is high, the level of awareness about personnel changes is relatively low. Though the information is given on television and social networks, which are the most widespread sources of information among the population, the essence of the processes that took place, the principles of decisions on increases, financing mechanisms, etc. are not correctly delivered to people's attention. In this case, the citizen is not able to have a complete idea of reforms.

- The attitude towards the increments is unequivocally positive among the citizens and they consider its continuation important. Thus, the majority of the respondents, especially the population category that is covered by these increments, consider these decrees to be significant. However, the unemployed do not consider them important.

- People need to get information about personnel changes compared to increments. The fact that the attitudes towards personnel changes did not form among some of the respondents is also related to this factor. On the other hand, the opinion that personnel changes will not directly impact the social well-being of the population also plays an important role here. The population's main expectations from the personnel reforms are related to safer living conditions and the increase of the country's military power.

- The impact of the increases on social well-being is mainly related to the improvement of household conditions. In general, the increments will have a serious impact on the financial condition of the population, the improvement of housing and living conditions, including the solution of other current problems. A belief in the rise of people's standard of living and the increase of the President's reputation among the citizens is also included in the expectations.

- The majority of the population thinks that the increments will not have any negative impact. In addition, the people who think that they will have negative impacts (25% of those participating in the survey) have concerns that there will be an increase in prices in the consumer market (artificial increase in prices).

- Successful implementation of reforms depends on the President's personal will and citizen participation in these processes. In general, there is a big trust in the reforms among the population. They think that the President's will and people's support are important for the success of reforms. However, they think that the carelessness of some state authorities and weak public control are the main obstacles to the successful implementation of reforms. On the other hand, the respondents, who are hopeless about the consequences of some state measures implemented in recent years, do not hesitate to express their opinions.

- In addition, it should be noted that one of the fre-

quently observed complaints during the survey was that the relations between citizens and officials, as well as between citizens and national representatives were not pleasant. This, in turn, requires an accurate diagnosis of relations between citizens and state institutions and this fact is also indicated in the results of the research.

- In general, the people support the reforms implemented in the country and believe in their success. The respondents think that citizens' influence on the positive result of the social reforms is sufficient to have a specific gravity. This indicator is higher in the regions compared to the center. The absolute majority of respondents think that the country's President takes into account the interests, needs and opinions of the citizens in his activities. In general, regions compared to the center, middle and old generation compared to young people have a more positive view of social reforms.

- There are comments on the methodology of calculating the minimum living wage. It is currently said that the mechanism of measuring the minimum living wage in our country is not perfect, it is not measured with the living standards of the advanced countries. Therefore, the importance of changing the calculation of the minimum consumption basket and level of minimum living standards is especially emphasized.

- Increasing the minimum wage level will increase the entrepreneurs' costs to a certain extent. This is because of the directly proportional relationship between the minimum wage level and social insurance to be paid to SSPF. As the minimum wage level has increased since September, this will also affect the entrepreneurs' expenses.

Results obtained based on observations

- Special attention should be paid to the improvement of the socio-economic situation of the population in the remote regions according to the observations. It is known that those engaged in individual labour activities in agriculture are considered a part of the informal economy, so they do not make payments to the SSPF and do not benefit from the increase in the minimum wage level. Therefore, it is not possible to change the living standards of those active people only by a salary increase.

- The lack of a sufficient number of irrigation water is a serious obstacle to the people's engagement in agriculture. There are serious problems with irrigation water in some places and drinking water in other places. Another issue is related to the gas supply of the population. In particular, the population do not have a gas supply in remote mountainous villages. This, in turn, leads to the destruction of alternative sources of fuel, especially greenery.

- The limit in the income level of an important part of the population living in rural areas decreases the opportunity for collection/deposit and makes the people depend on state aid programs. On the other hand, the monthly incomes of the population tend to cover only their minimum consumption. The lack of collections/deposits weakens the population's ability to meet investment and other force majeure expenses (lack of money in case of emergency, health problems, etc.)

PROPOSALS

- It is important to carry out effective promotion of enlightenment and reforms to stimulate the participation of the population in the processes. It is recommended to organize thematic discussions on television, broadcast short films and actively use social media to convey the essence of the reforms to the population properly. It is desirable to conduct lively dialogues, public discussions and meetings with the population in the regions, as well as to strengthen the measures related to the improvement of the Internet service to provide awareness and information more effectively.

- It is desirable to cover another population category in a phased and justified manner. It is important to widen the scope of reforms so that they would not be accepted as a selective approach effect of existing increments, and social pessimism among different population groups would not appear. In this respect, e.g. it is acceptable to provide the other remaining category with non-material benefits determined by specific parameters (for example, the application of seasonal discounts on public transport, utility services, etc.).

- It is recommended to investigate properly the comments of the citizens who are not covered by the increases and legalize those who work under the shadow economy.

- It is desirable to improve the mechanisms for determining the minimum wage, living wage standards and minimum consumption basket as tools for providing social welfare. It is recommended to apply a differentiation while determining a minimum wage (to regions, occupations and groups of population), to determine a minimum consumption basket based on an inflation basket and indexation of salary increase as per inflation rate.

- The applied model is adapted not only to the national economy but also will stimulate prosperity and welfare and strengthen the principles of ensuring equity in income distribution.

- The financial costs of the private sector should be taken into account while determining the level of the increases. The principle of ensuring macroeconomic balance plays a main role here.

- Modernization of management: It is desirable to create a new effective control mechanism providing an optimal implementation of reforms or to improve existing mechanisms.

- Increase in result-orientation of reforms by improving the relevant legislation: It is important to reconcile the normative legal framework about minimum wage, minimum living standard and consumption basket with other economic legislations. For example, it is reasonable to adopt the long-awaited "Competition Code" to prevent artificial price increases.

- The measures taken by the President for the provision of transparent, open and result-based management make the accountability of various government structures in front of the people and relevant authorities important. From this point of view, the defined objectives

create a need for increasing citizen and public control over the execution of the state budget within the real framework and they are measurable targets and goals. Moreover, strengthening the responsibility and accountability of responsible institutions in the implementation of reforms is also among the important duties.



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