

Aragvi Protected Landscape from the point of view of local inhabitants



Baseline study for measuring of the impact of the project Implementation of Sustainable Forestry for the Aragvi Protected Landscape, Georgia

With funding from

 Austrian
Development
Cooperation



CZECH REPUBLIC
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION



prepared by:
Agora CE, o.p.s.
www.agorace.cz

2022



1. Introduction:

In this report we present the results of our survey focused on the perception and attitudes of the local population towards the Aragvi Protected Landscape (hereafter APL), local development projects and planned reform of Forestry Law.

The results of our survey are a baseline study for measuring the impacts of the project Implementation of Sustainable Forestry for the APL implemented by the Forest Management Institute of the Czech Republic. The project is part of a broader Development Programme of sustainable development of the area of APL and the local communities (hereafter Programme) implemented by the Czech Development Agency.

There are now three main projects implemented in the area as parts of the Programme. Beside the above mentioned there is the project of Ensuring sustainable management of the APL implemented by the National park Krkonoše (Czech Republic) and Sustainable community development implemented by People in Need Czech Republic.

The data for the survey was collected in the summer of 2022 among the population in the area of APL as part of the project activities undertaken by the Czech NGO Agora CE as service for Forest Management Institute of the Czech Republic.

prepared by:
Agora CE, o.p.s.

www.agorace.cz

2022



AGORA
CENTRAL EUROPE

2. Conclusion of the study:

Most of the interviewed respondents live permanently in the valley, and those who do not, have been returning for many years during the cold season, mainly to Tbilisi, similar to many other rural settlements in Eastern Georgia.

Households are characterized by partial similarity with the rest of Georgia. The number of residents in the family, the cohabitation of 2 generations, and the source(s) of income typical for such types of settlements. Although there is a clear age difference, the data points to a sharp ageing of the region's residents and the draining of the region's youth.

As we interviewed representatives of 181 families by stratified sampling method we can state that we explored the situation representative of all the households and population of APL (see more methodology).

We cannot fully confirm the hypotheses of *“Those who know about APL are worried about the restrictions of using the natural resources that will make their lives even more difficult than before.”* The positive perception of APL prevails slightly among those who know about it.

More than one half (54%) of those who have heard about APL have a rather neutral attitude toward APL. It is recognized that there are both positive effects, primarily in terms of environmental protection, and negative effects, such as the ban on acquiring/collecting wood and stone materials.

Our further hypothesis stating that *“Local inhabitants know more about some specific program’s project’s features and about the donors than about APL itself”* is confirmed.

Despite living in a protected area, most of the respondents (54%), do not know about its existence. And among those who claim they have heard about APL, a third of them do not know whether their village (settlement) is a part of the protected area and another one tenth of them are persuaded their settlement is not in APL. It means that **almost ¾ of the population of APL are not aware that they are living in it.** Even for those who are aware, the leading source of information was their neighbor and not an official institution!

Only one part (36%) of the respondents have heard about foreign organisations’ projects. Moreover, **only a few respondents (3%) are aware that APL was founded as part of a foreign country project!** Though inhabitants are aware of some foreign organizations working in Aragvi they know mostly only some other parts of the program’s project’s activities, mostly these implemented by Local Action Group Aragvi. Unquestionably, the population did not see the projects as parts of the bigger development program.

Our hypothesis *“The more distant settlement the people live in, the more they ignore the policies for wood harvesting and processing”* was partly confirmed.

As we have seen in cross tabulation, in bigger settlements (with more than 10 inhabitants), the legal methods of acquiring the wood (buying, logging with or without paid help) is used more often, while **in small and mostly distant settlements without solid roads, illegal logging is higher.** This hypothesis was confirmed only partially since cross tabulation is not statistically significant due to the small numbers.

We can also add that $\frac{3}{4}$ of local people do not know about the reform of the Forest law planned from the beginning of next year (2023). Those who have heard are afraid that expenses and the price will increase.

Our hypothesis “*It is highly ineffective to treat wood as an energy resource.*” was in a certain way confirmed. **Vast majority of inhabitants do not let the firewood dry before its consumption.**

3. Methodology of the survey:

- The source of our data were personal face-to-face structured interviews (PAPI) undertaken among the entire area of APL.
- The population we examined were the inhabitants of the Aragvi territory who live in the territory permanently or during the season. Since there is only a rough estimation of the population of the APL area based on the census 2014, we constructed the sample for the survey on the data that we received from the Aragvi Local Action Group in 2022.
- The sample consists of the representatives of **181** households from the entire area of APL. That is an almost complete number of households in the area. We used stratified sampling. Sampling variables are the number of inhabitants of the settlements. There was a balanced representation of every settlement in the sample.
- Sample in the chosen village or settlement was created using a random walk. In cases where it was possible every second household was questioned. To get an answer from the randomly chosen member of the household, i.e. to avoid speaking with the dominant member, we asked to speak with the adult who was the one who's birthday was the last.

4. Analysis

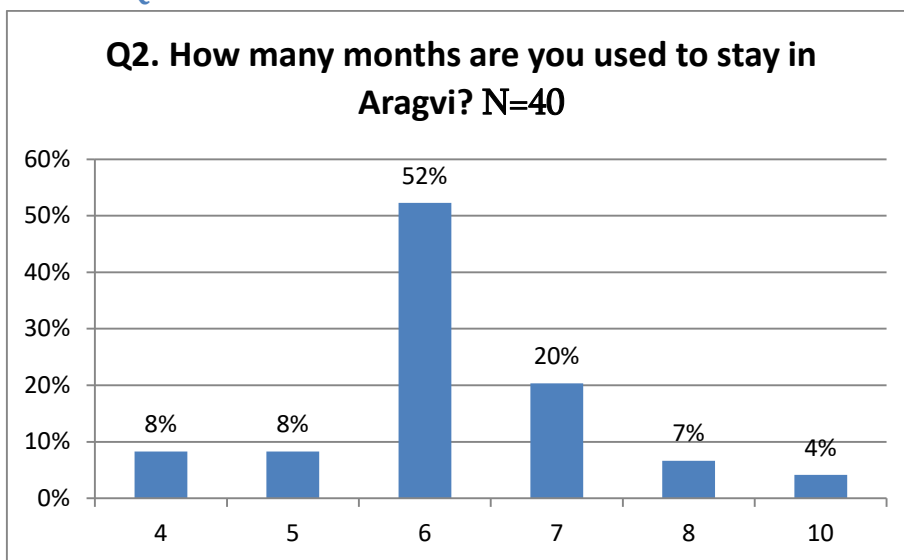
Below is a descriptive analysis of the survey results. The total number of completed interviews was 181.

Table #1 Q1

N=181	Q1. Permanent Live
Yes	78%
No	22%
Grand Total	100%

From the first question, we can see that 78% of the respondents live in the valley permanently, while the rest live periodically.

Chart #1 Q2



In the following question, we interviewed only those who do not live there permanently; it should be noted that these people make up only 1/5 or 22% of the total number of respondents. Therefore, **N=40**.

Among the people who do not live in the region permanently but stay there for a few months, more than half of them said they remain in the valley for 6 months.

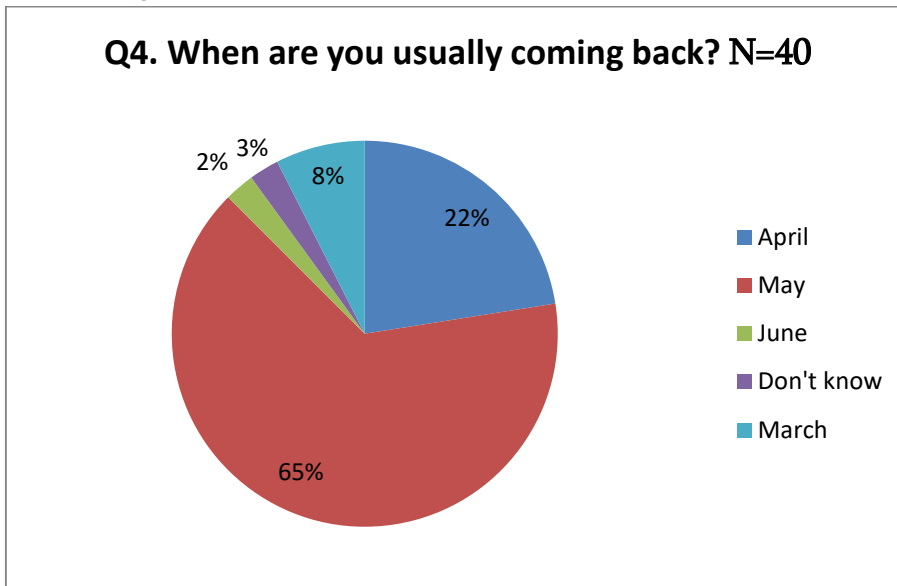
Table #2 Q3

N=40	Q3. Where during Winter
Tbilisi	43%
Dusheti	13%
Fasanauri	10%
Gardabani	3%
Jinvali	13%

Korsha	3%
Misakieli	3%
Rustavi	5%
Sartichala	3%
Telavi	5%
Vaziani	3%
Grand Total	100%

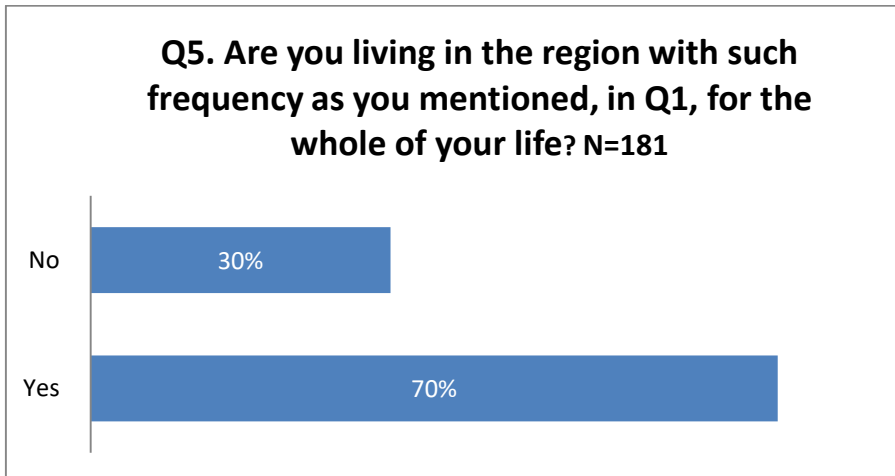
We asked those who do not stay in the valley permanently where they spent the rest of the year. As expected, almost half lived in Tbilisi, and the next places were Dusheti and Zhinvali, within this municipality.

Chart #2 Q4



These 40 people who do not live permanently in the region had to choose from the options when they are usually returning to the area. Apparently, 2/3 arrive in the valley in May, followed by April. The spring period is ideal for starting agricultural work and also in terms of temperature.

Chart #3 Q5



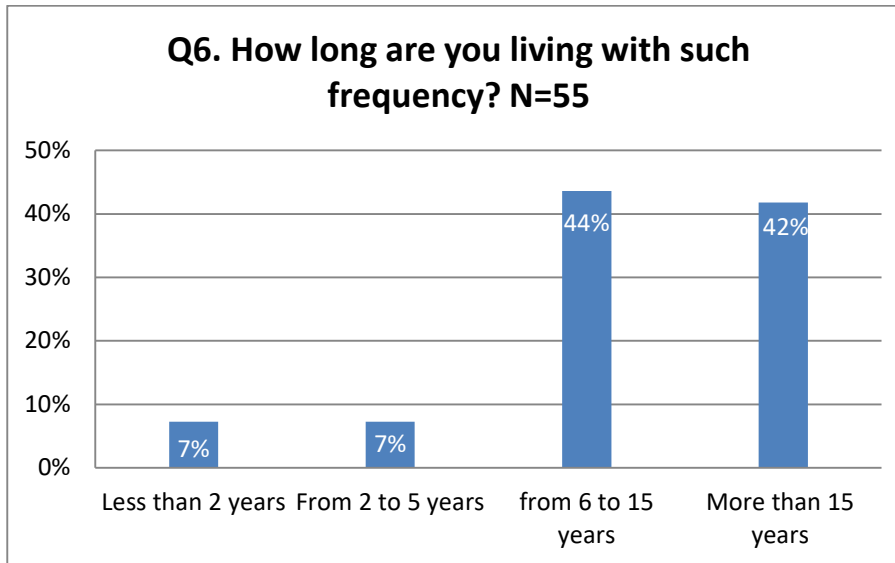
70% gave a positive answer to the next question, which means that they usually live in the Aragvi region with such a frequency, N=181.

Crosstab #1; Q1 & Q5

Q5 such frequency	Q1 permanently live		Grand Total
	Yes	No	
N=181			
Yes	81%	30%	70%
No	19%	70%	30%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%

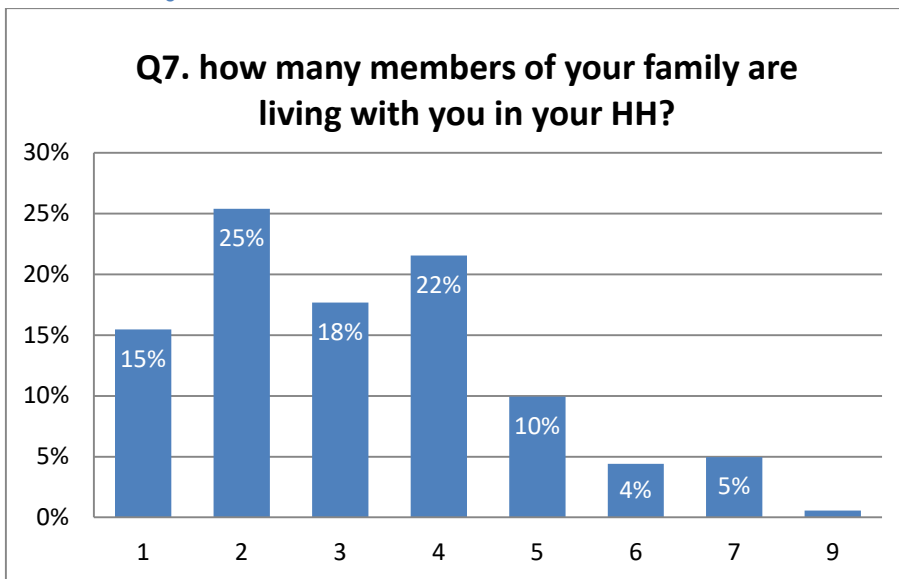
As we can see, the majority of those who live permanently in the region, 81%, have always lived this way. But 70% of those who do not live permanently in the area say it was not always like that. Apparently, these people came later from the valley.

Chart #4 Q6



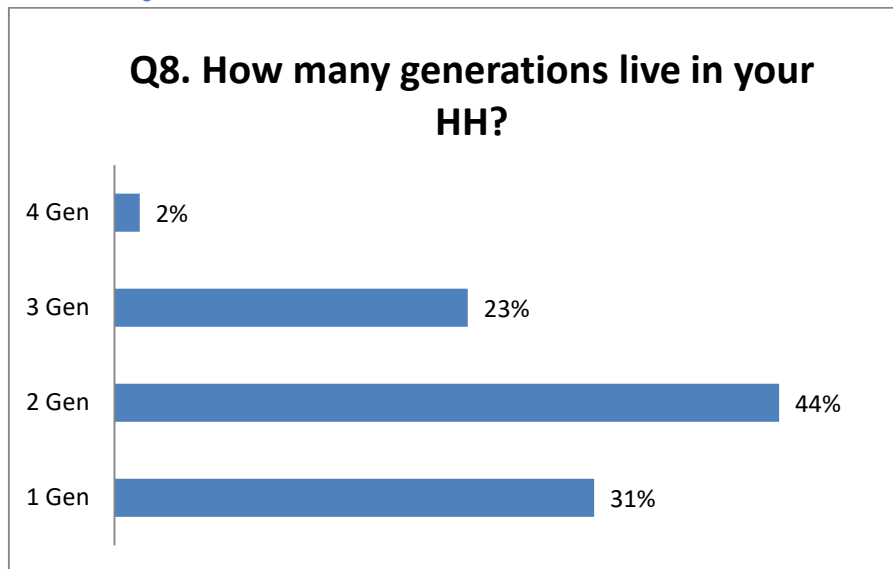
Of the 55 people interviewed, most have lived in APL for a long time with such periodicity, as 86% of the respondents have lived for at least 6 years.

Chart #5 Q7



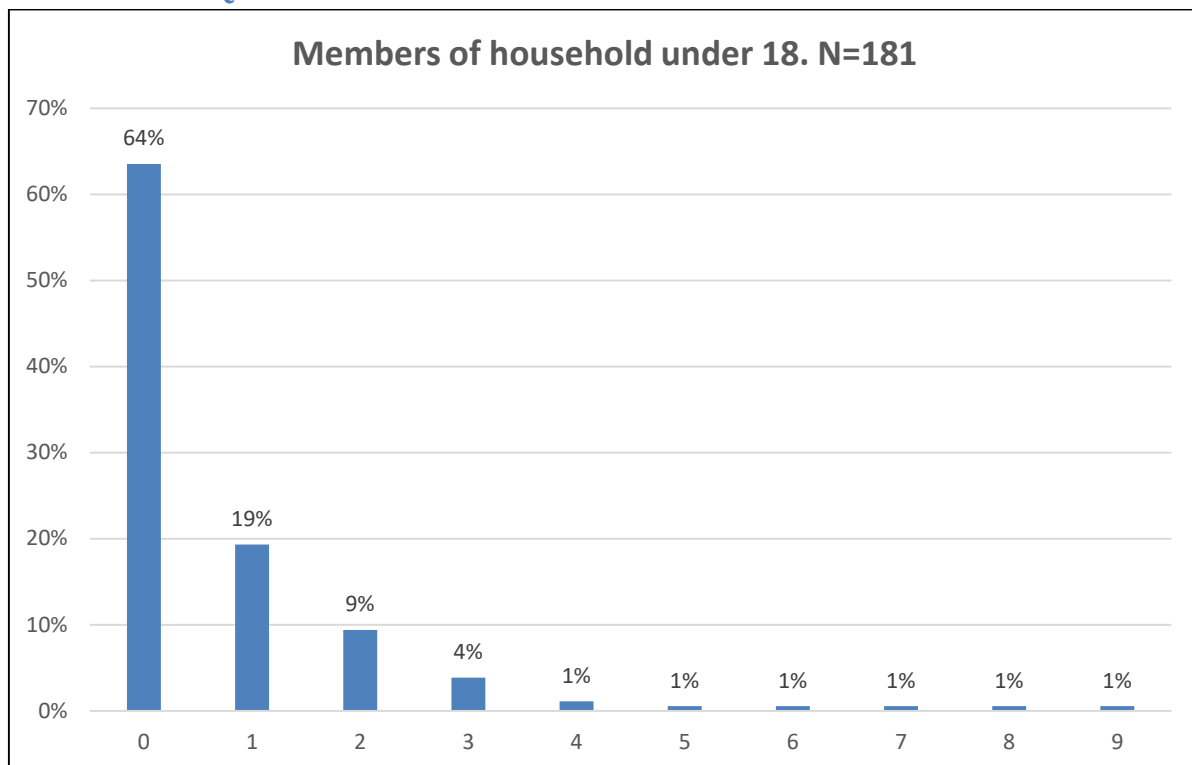
¼ of respondents (N=181) live with 2 other people in the household, followed by answers, living with 4 and 3 with other people. The average number of family members is 3. These answers coincide with the general household statistics of the country.

Chart #6 Q8



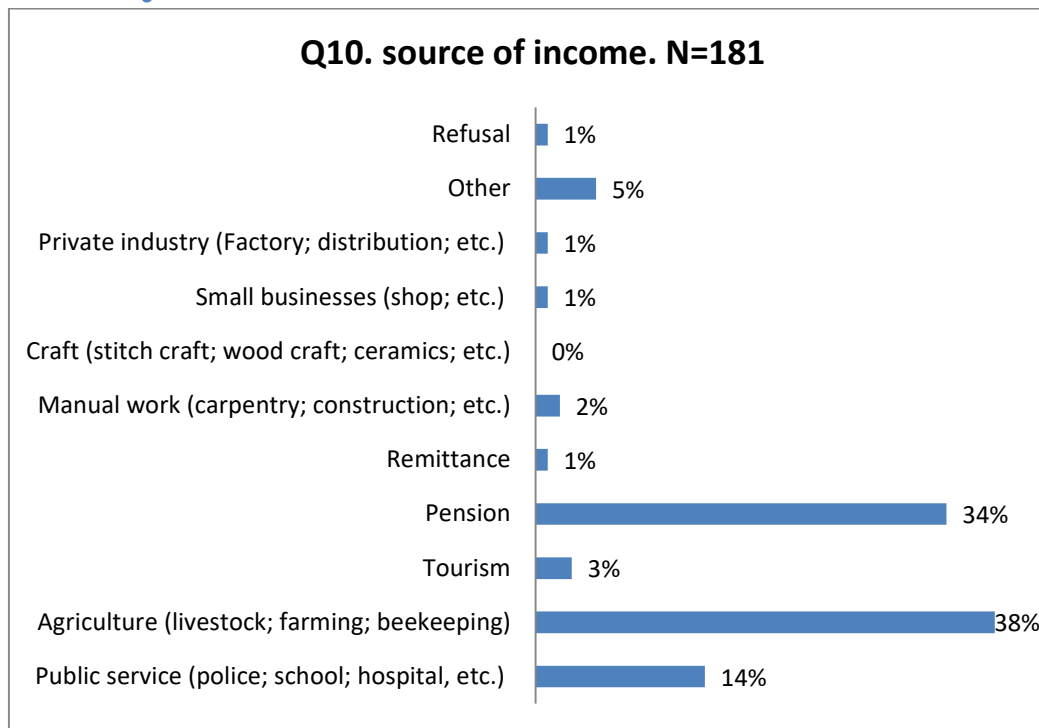
In the household, the distribution of these members between generations is mainly done in 2 generations. However, we have 23% of cases when even 3 different generations live together, which is common to Georgian culture in general, especially in the regions.

Table Chart #7 Q9



However, young people under 18 are rarely found in these generations. 64% of respondents said that no one under 18 lives with them, which indicates the aging of the population in the region. It means that, for example, in the house are living 40 years old, middle age person(s) and their parent(s).

Chart #8 Q10



We asked APL residents what their source of income is, and they could give up to 2 responses. The most frequent answer is agriculture and pensions, followed by the state sector, the only formal employer in the region. N=181

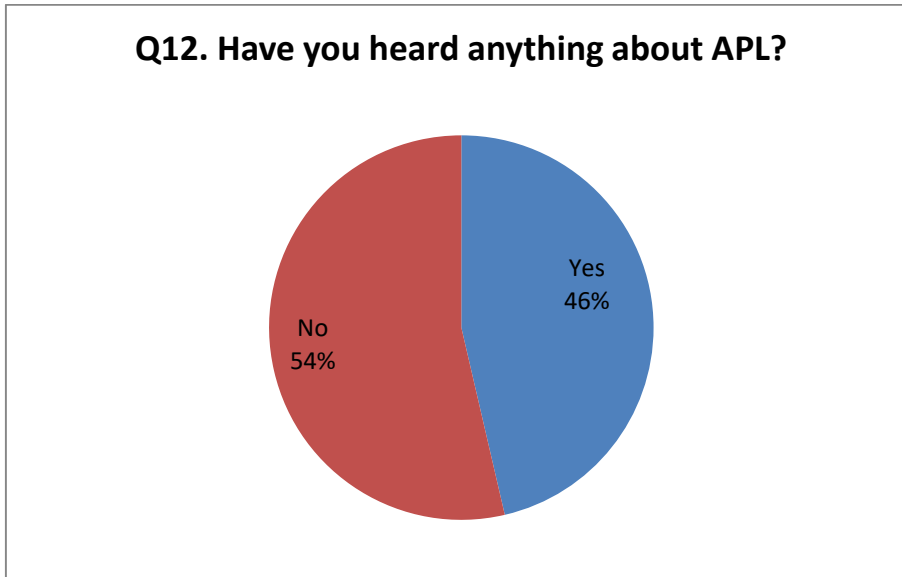
Table #4 Q11

N=181	Q11 Income number
0	82
Don't Know	63
Refusal	7
200	1
300	2
450	1
500	3
550	2
600	1
700	2
1000	4
1200	1
1250	1
1500	4
2000	2

3000	3
3500	1
Grand Total	181

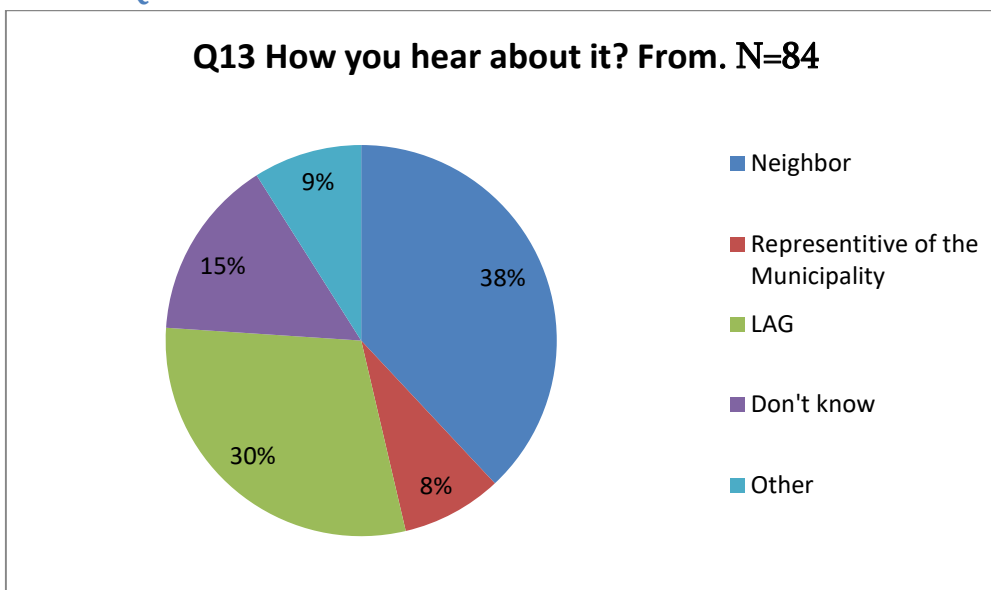
For most respondents, this question turned out to be irrelevant, or they refused to answer. It might be caused by cultural attitudes when jobs and income in Georgia are mainly called only hired official employment and salary from it.

Chart #8 Q12



More than half of the respondents have yet to hear about the APL, which indicates the challenge of insufficient dissemination of information.

Chart #9 Q13



Most of those who have heard N=84 know about APL from a neighbour or LAG, and the fewest from a municipality representative. In the category of other prevails Facebook or don't remember.

Responses to this and subsequent questions include only those who answered positively to the previous question, that they had heard about APL Q12. There are 46% of sample population as you can see it on the chart below, #9.1.

Chart # 9.1 Comparison Q9-14/all respondents

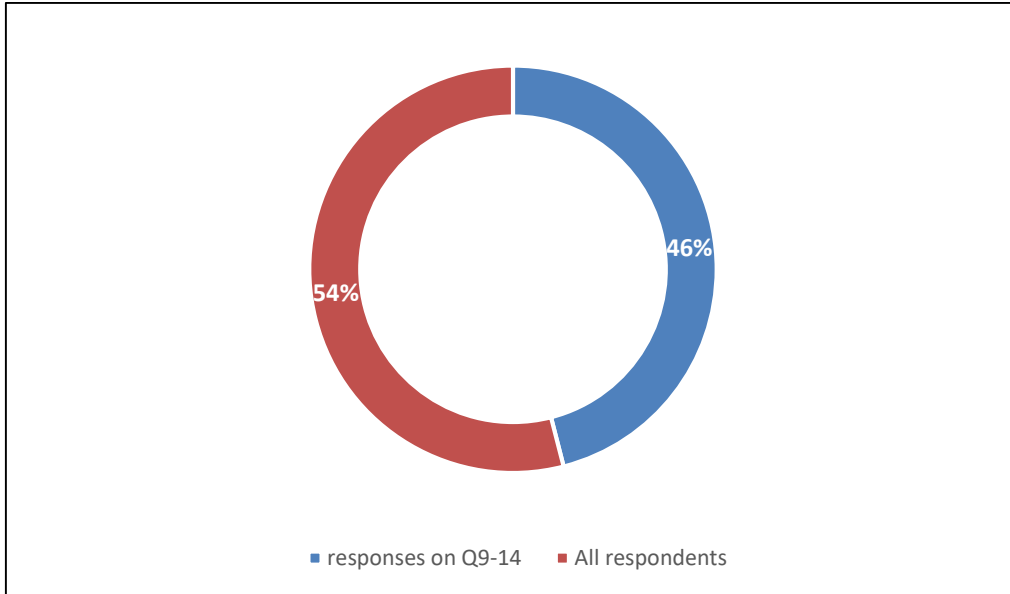
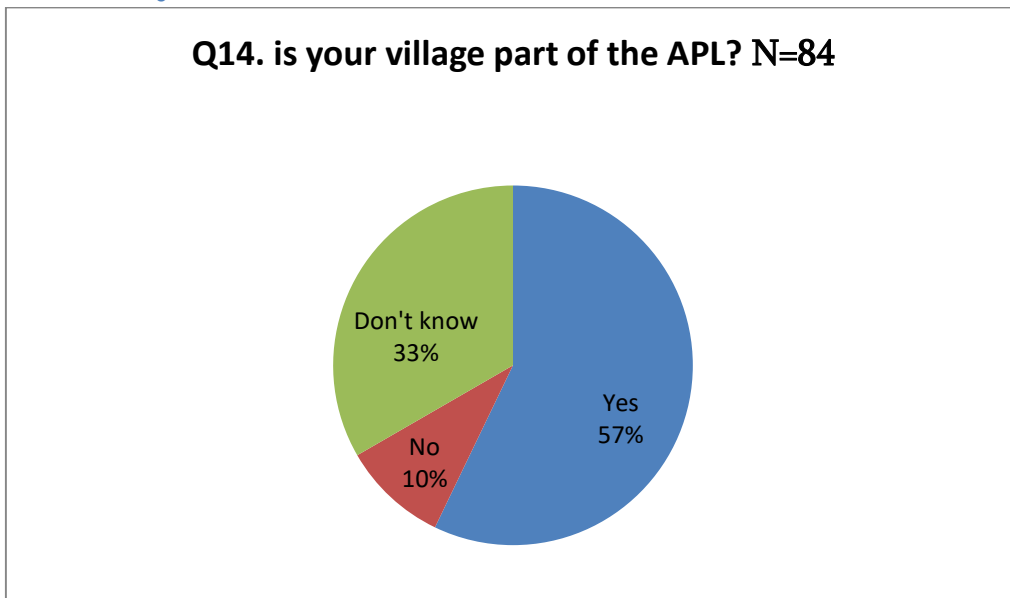


Chart #10 Q14



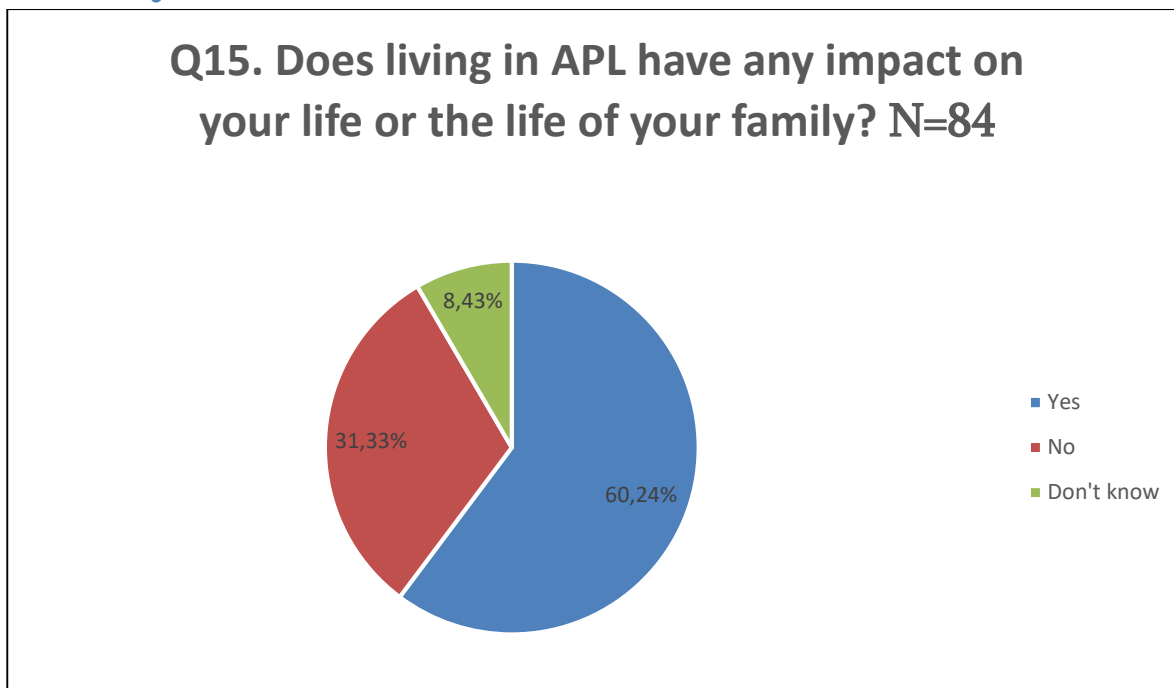
Most of those who have heard (N=84) confirm that their village is part of APL, but 1/3, even those who heard, still need to find out if their village is part of a protected area.

Crosstab #2; Q13 & Q14

How Heard Q13	Part of APL Q14			
	Yes	No	Don't Know	Grand Total
N=84				
Neighbor	50%	9%	41%	100%
Representatives of the Municipality	57%	14%	29%	100%
LAG	72%	16%	12%	100%
Don't know	33%	0%	67%	100%
Other	56%	0%	44%	100%
Grand Total	67%	0%	33%	100%

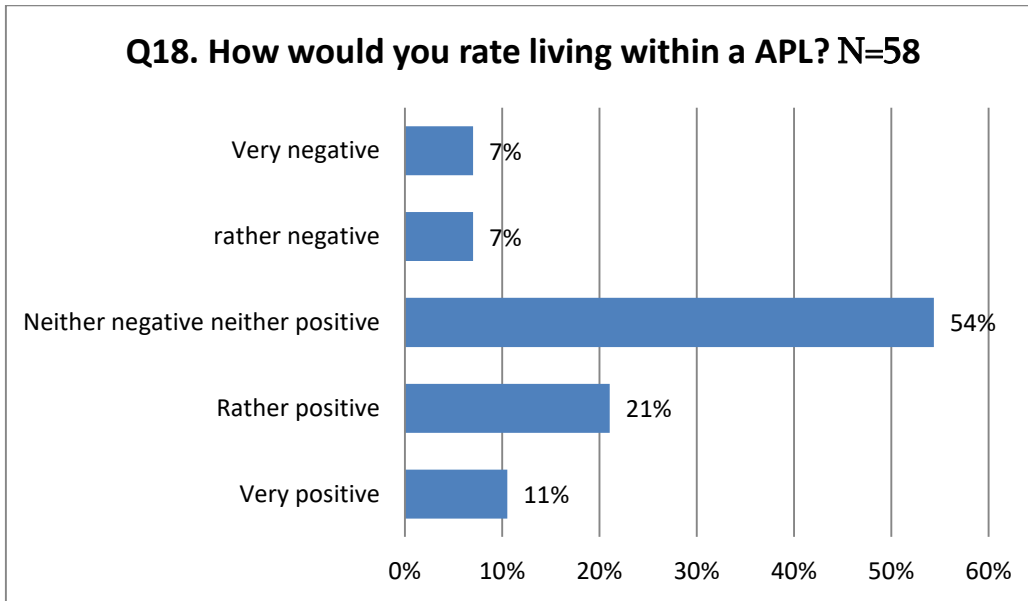
As we see, the most precious source of information is LAG, while category other prevails Facebook. Also, people who don't know how they were informed have the highest, don't know responses. Neighbours are almost as correct as an incorrect way to get information about the protected valley.

Chart #11 Q15



We can see that 60% of these respondents (N=84) think that living inside APL impacts them and their family members, whether positively or negatively. I.e. 27,9 % of the population, that it close to the number of people who really know something about APL.

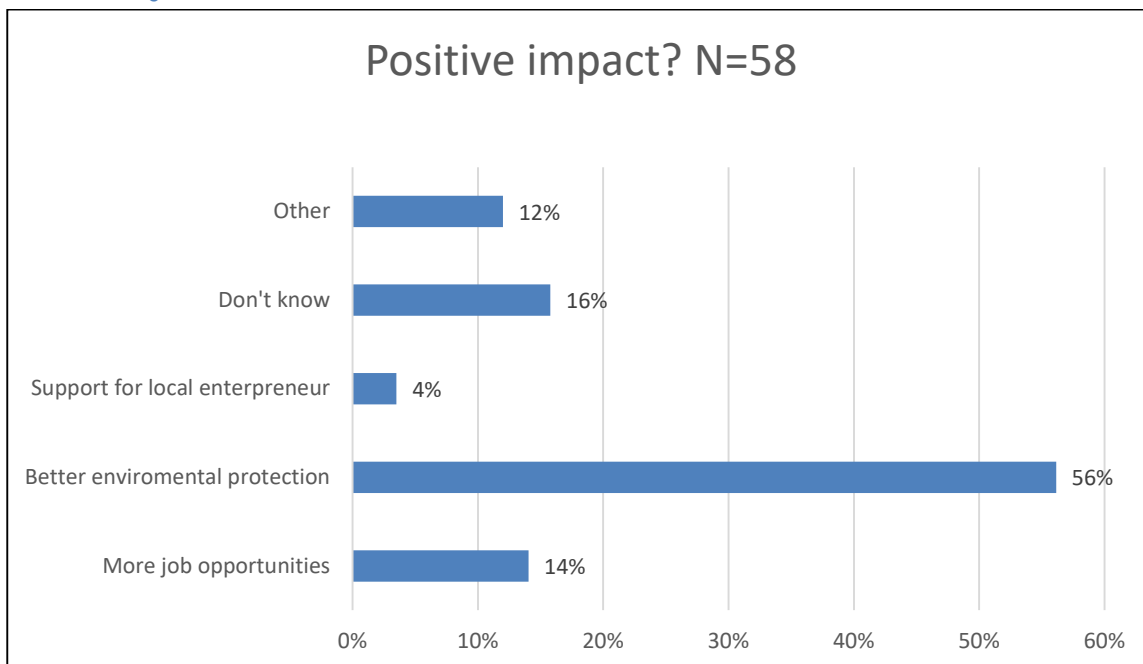
Chart #12 Q18



Respondents were asked to rate their overall experience living in APL from positive to negative. More than half (N=58) chose a neutral position that living in the protected area of Aragvi is neither positive nor negative.

Responses to this and subsequent questions do not include those who answered that living within APL does not impact them, in the Q15.

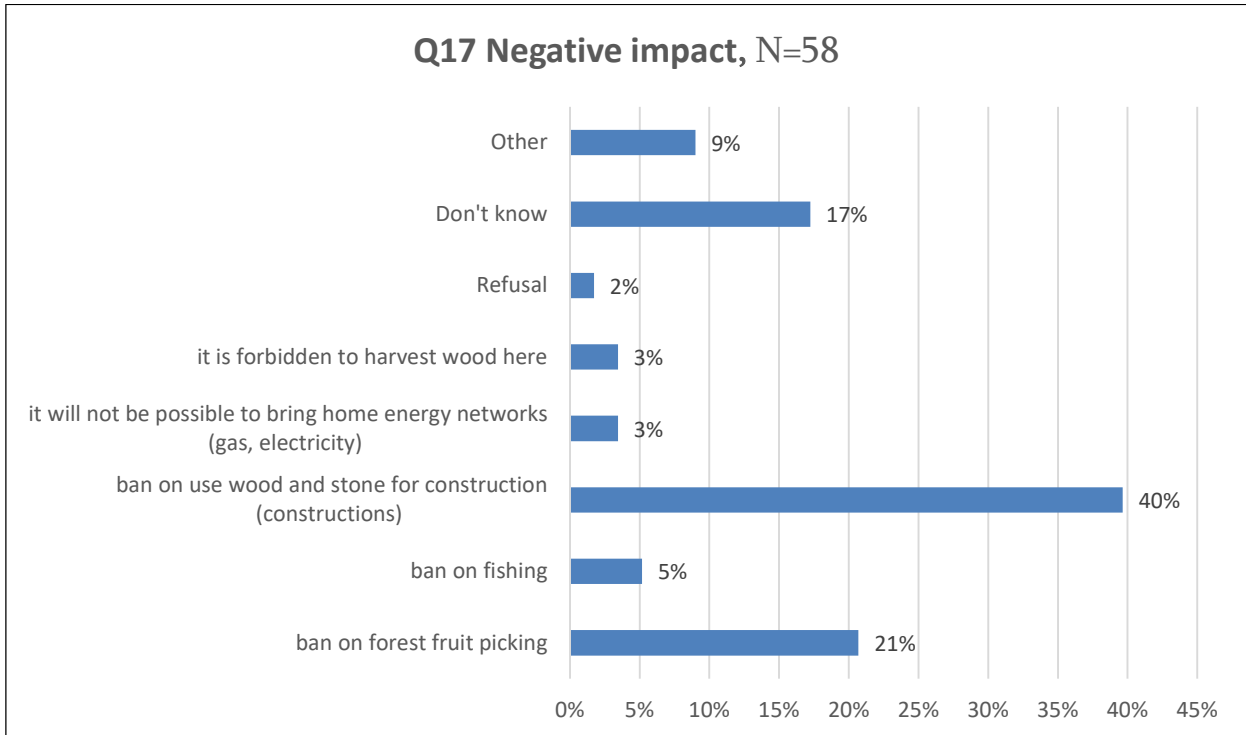
Chart #13 Q16



The environmental protection argument prevails most for those who think it will have a positive effect. 56% of them believe that APL protects the environment. Although the category "other" is 12%, nothing like a trend

has emerged. In some cases, there are various answers that do not correspond to APL, e.g., "retaining wall was made on the bank of the river."

Chart #14 Q17



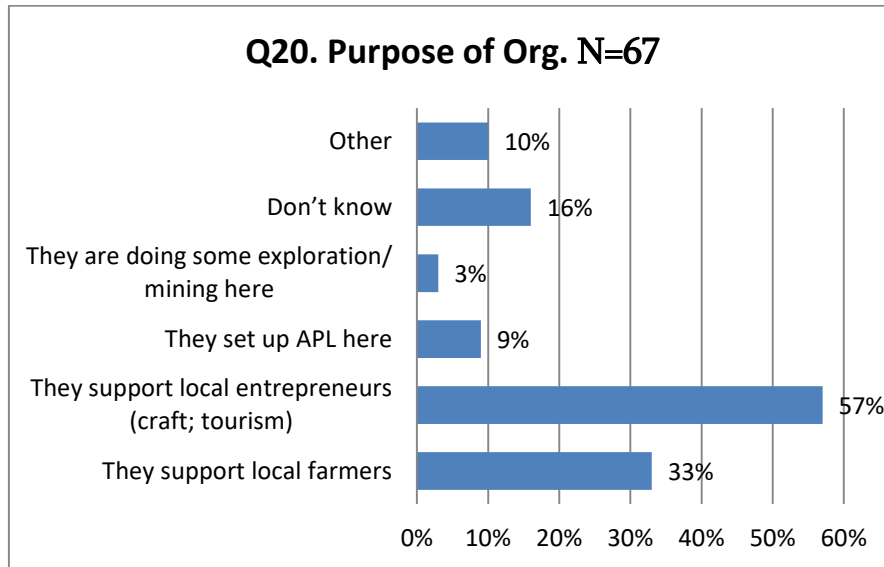
And in the negative effect, 40% and 21% respectively (N=58) mention the ban on using wood material and restrictions on picking fruits in the forest. No trend was revealed in the category „Other“.

Table #5 Q19

N=181	Q19. Heard about foreign Org
Yes	36%
No	64%
Grand Total	100%

Residents' awareness of foreign organizations working in the region was assessed in the following few questions. As it turned out, 2/3 of the respondents had no information about such an organization.

Chart #15 Q20



And those who had such information found that in more than half of the cases, they believe that the goal of the foreign organization is to support local entrepreneurs (57%) and to support local farmers in 33% of cases. N=67 and could choose multiple answers.

Responses to this and subsequent questions include only those from the whole who responded "Yes" to the Q19, that they had heard about foreign organization operating in the region. As it shown in the chart below, 15.1 responses on these question consist around ¼ of sample population.

Chart #15.1 Comparison Q20-22/all respondents

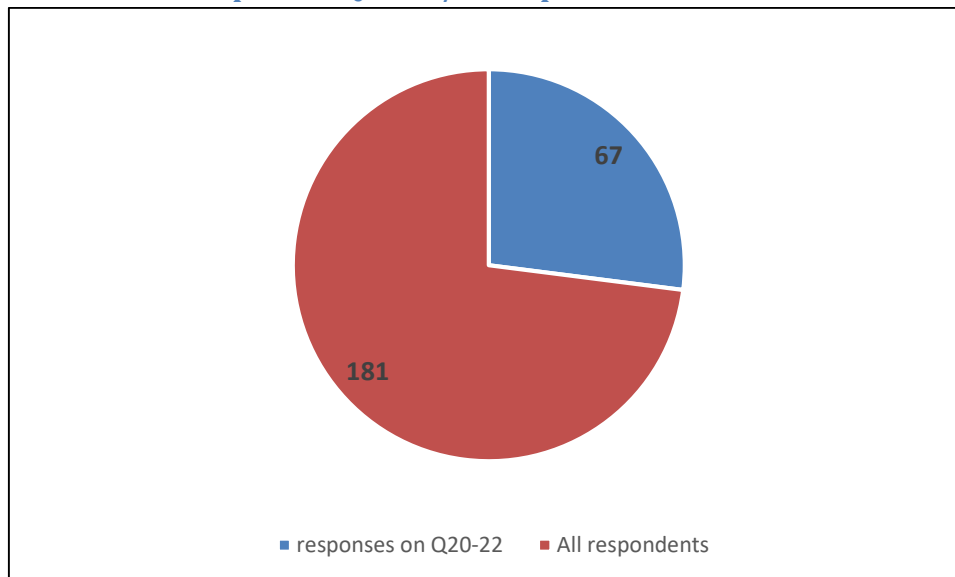
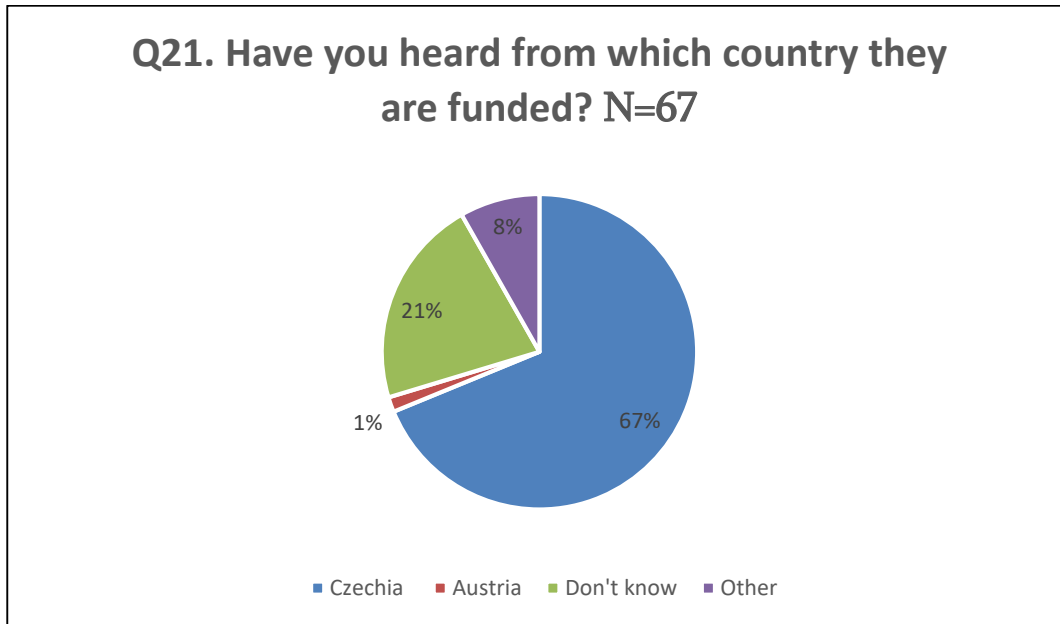
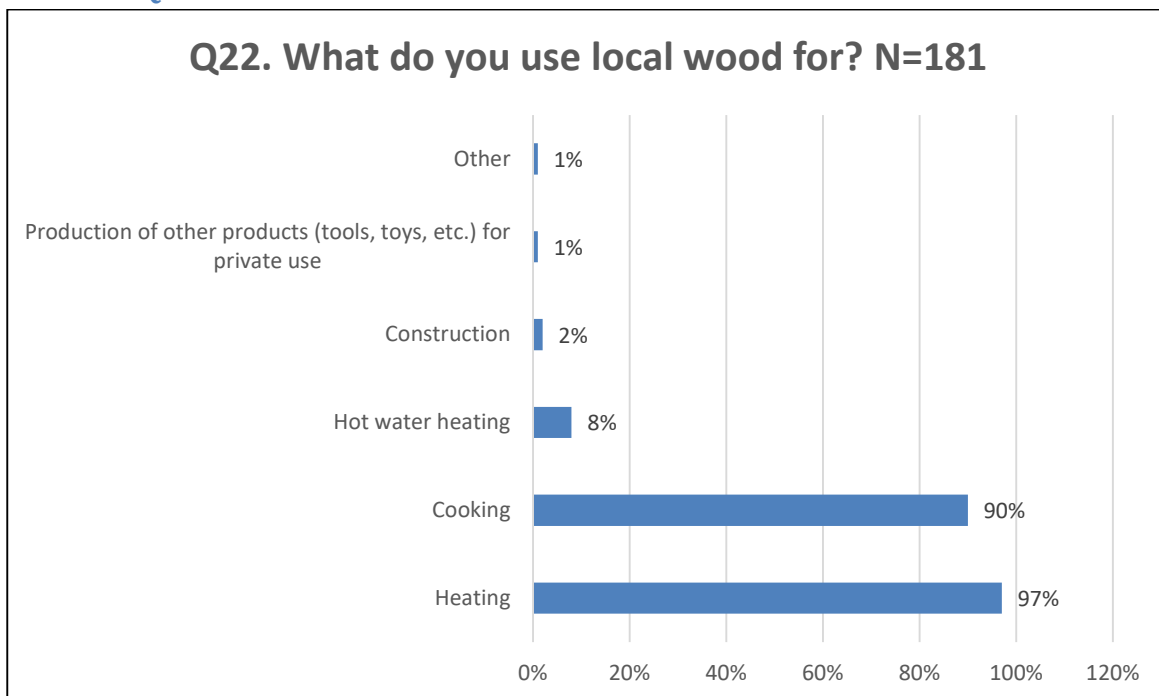


Chart #16 Q21



When asked which country this foreign organization is financed by, the majority gave answers shown in chart #16, respondents named the Czech Republic 67%, but 1/5 of the respondents (N=67) needed information about it. Category “other” contains various countries, like Germany, the US, China, etc.

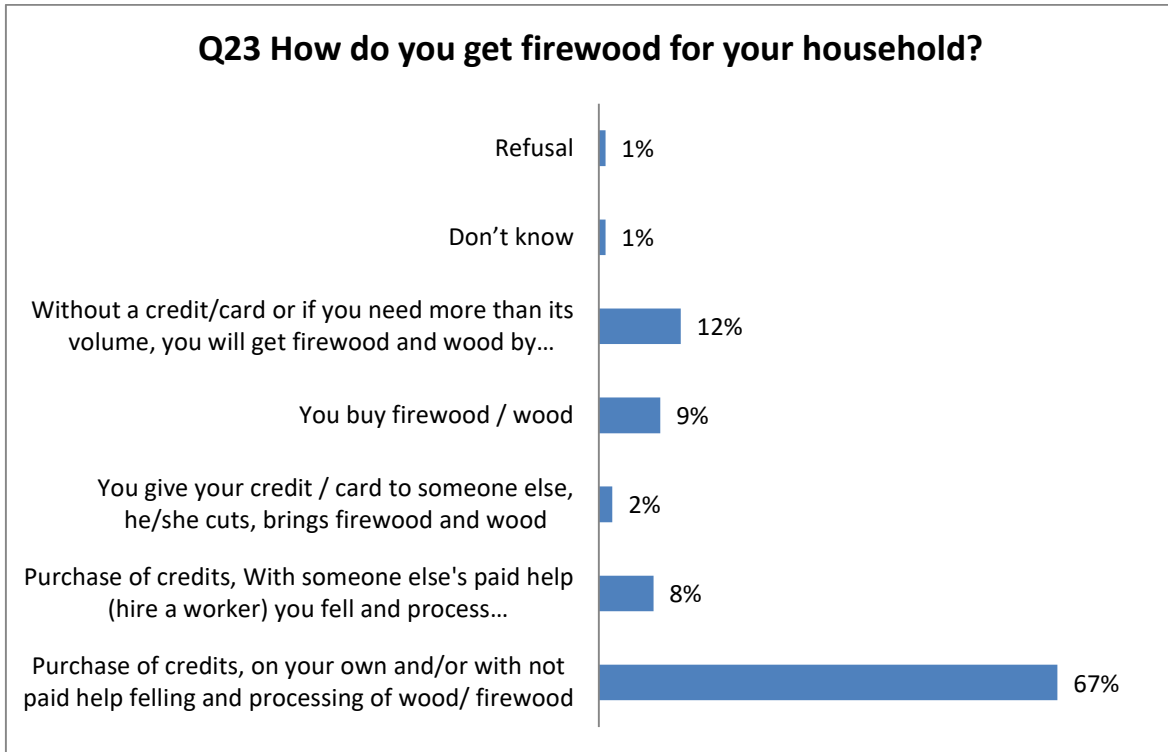
Chart #17 Q22



In the new block of the survey, the respondents were asked for what purpose they use wood, and with the right to choose a few listed answers, the respondents identified the use of heating and food preparation as

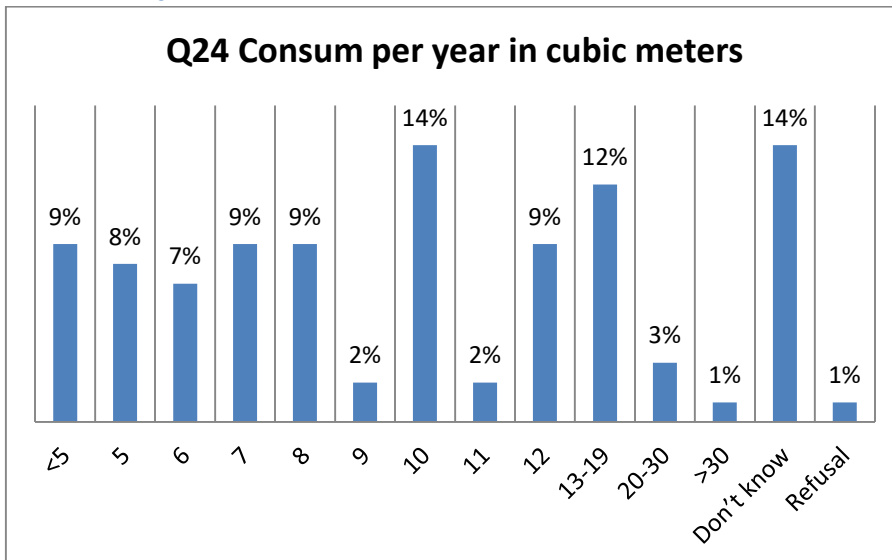
the main reasons. Almost all of the respondents or 9 out of 10 people use firewood for both heating and cooking.

Chart #18 Q23



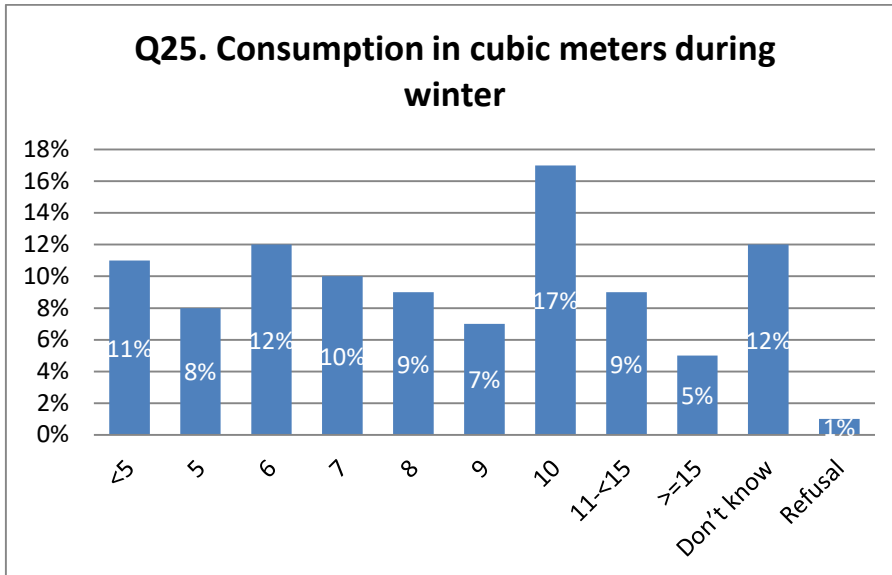
As can be seen in this graph, 67% of the respondents say that they get firewood through a designated voucher and then bring it to their home or with a relative's help. However, 12% of the respondents (N=181) state that they find it illegally in the forest if they need timber.

Chart #19 Q24



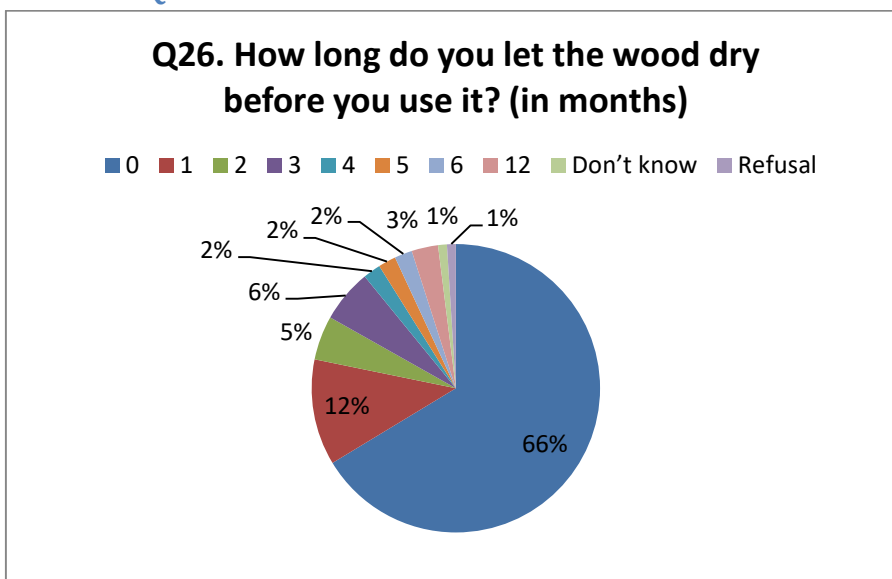
The answers on the amount of annual firewood consumption vary widely from 1-2 cubic meters to 30 + cubic meters. However, most cases are clustered between 5-10 cubes. N=175

Chart #20 Q25



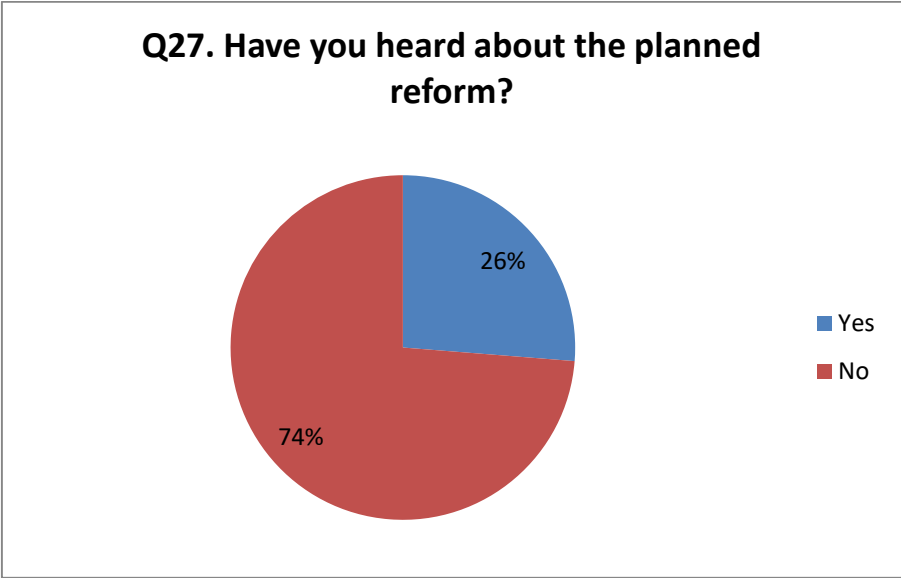
Winter consumption is not significantly different from annual consumption, and the primary consumption of firewood comes in this period. Most of the 149 respondents, 17%, say that they spend 10 cubic meters in winter. It should be noted that, as in the upper graph, the answer of not knowing about this item is relatively high.

Chart #21 Q26



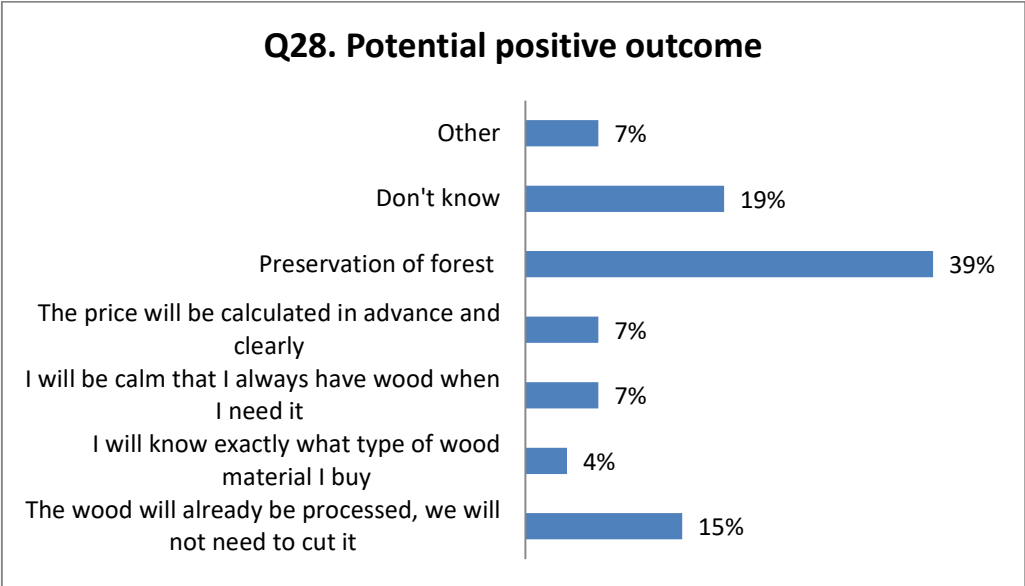
As it turned out, the valley's inhabitants need to use firewood efficiently and rationally, which is reflected in the fact that 66% do not dry the wood material and consume it immediately. It may be related to obtaining permits and other administrative processes.

Chart #22 Q27



Although substantial changes regarding the use of wood material started at the end of the year, only 26% of the 181 people interviewed had any information about it or had heard about it. It indicates the need for additional information campaigns.

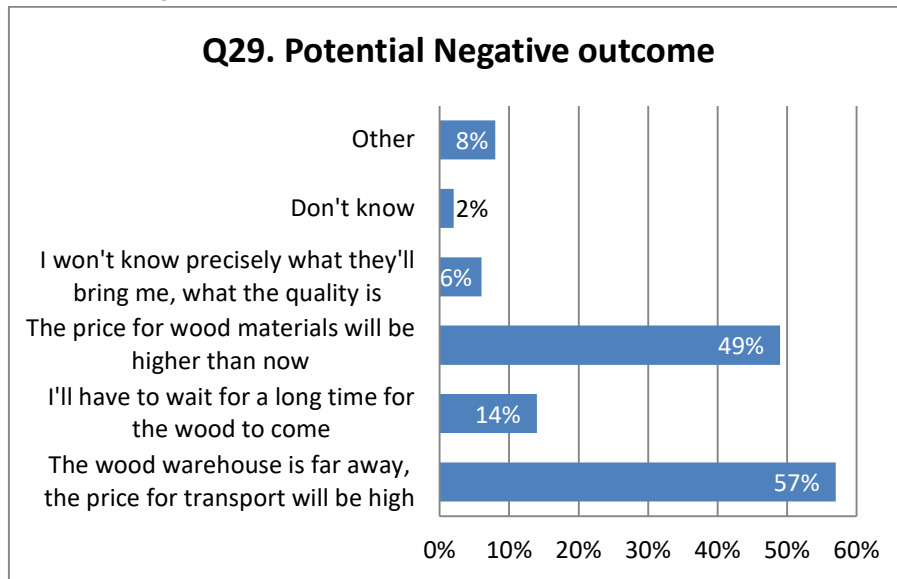
Chart #23 Q28



Those who had heard (N=49) were asked what they believed to be a possible positive effect of the reform, and they could choose several answers. 39% of the responses were for the option that this reform would

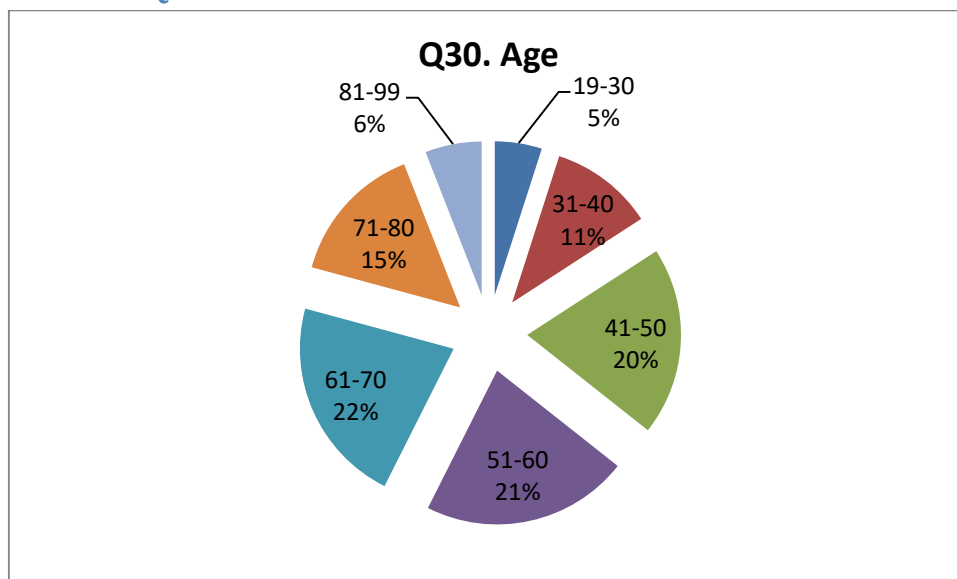
protect the forest and 15% for the chance that they will not have to cut the tree anymore and it will already be prepared. However, the number of people who have heard about it, but need to know the possible positive impact of these changes, is high, as we see for the option “Don’t know” with 19% from all responses.

Chart #24 Q29



The same people were asked what possible negative impact they see as a result of this reform. The most significant dissatisfaction is caused by the fact that, according to the respondents, the cost of transportation and wood materials will increase. In the category "Other," similar attitudes as in options were revealed. The service will become more expensive, private companies will profit, and it is also suspected that the new rules will be difficult to control.

Chart #25 Q30



1/5 of respondents are at retirement age. The next 1/5 are 51-60 years old. As we can see, respondents under the age of 30 are not proportionally to the country's data, which shows the probability of selection and the region's demographic situation, which has changed significantly from the youth.

Table #6, Type of Settlement

type of settlement	N=181
distant	98
not distant	83
Grand Total	181

The type of settlement was assumed according to the number of households in the territory. Less than 10 households were assigned distant, and more than 10 not distant.

Crosstab #3, Distant/Not distant settlements & how do you get firewood

Type of Settlement	Get wood					
Row Labels	Through credit without paid help	Through credit with paid help	Give permissions to someone else	Buy fire wood	Without Credit	Grand Total
Distant	64%	7%	3%	7%	18%	100%
Not distant	73%	8%	1%	12%	5%	100%
Grand Total	69%	8%	2%	10%	12%	100%

As was shown by cross-tabulation, logging legally without the help of everyone is applied in not-distant settlements more than in distant villages. In the same way, 18% of respondents in remote settlements confirm illegal logging, while only 5% in large villages. But here, it should be noted that the numbers are pretty low, which does not let us make significant conclusions with complete confidence; for example, 18% represent 17 cases, and 5% of respondents from not distant settlements represent only 4 respondents from large settlements. That is why the significant test equals 0.07, meaning that the cross tab might be statistically insignificant.