



The Data Initiative

Program Goal - *to provide a unique set of comparable, rigorous and open-source data about the South Caucasus.*

The Data Initiative (DI) seeks to increase understanding about knowledge, attitudes and practices in the South Caucasus and promote evidence-based decision making. Through its outreach activities, CRRC disseminates findings to both the international development and business community as well as to local researchers. CRRC data has also been used in development publications put out by organizations such as UNICEF and UNDP. By training local staff to carry out the survey, CRRC aims to increase local capacity to carry out methodologically rigorous survey work.

An Introduction to the Data Initiative

The central component of the Data Initiative (DI) is a yearly household survey containing over 120 questions that is conducted simultaneously in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. First coordinated in 2004, the survey aims to provide publicly accessible, consistent raw data on a wide range of issues related to demography, education, migration, economic behavior, health, political activities, social institutions and crime. Such publicly available, yearly data was sorely lacking in the South Caucasus before the creation of the DI.

The survey is unique because it joins experts from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to ensure that all data-collecting methods, polling, interviewing and archiving are in sync. Not only does the survey promote cooperation and coordination within the South Caucasus, it also adheres to the highest international standards for household surveys. For instance, unlike most surveys in the South Caucasus, the Data Initiative uses a process of actualization, through which the accuracy of residential records is verified, yielding a more representative sample of the population surveyed.

History of the Data Initiative

CRRC began the Data Initiative in 2004. In the first year, CRRC surveyed 4,500 households—1,500 each in the capital cities of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. By the second year, the survey was expanded to include 750 households in each capital city and 750 households in another region of each country. Continuing this growth, the DI was expanded in 2006 to include over 2,000 households in each country of the South Caucasus, surveying a total of over 6,800 households and covering all regions of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan controlled by the central governments (excluding Nakhichevan in Azerbaijan).

The survey now paints a very comprehensive picture of attitudes and behavior throughout the South Caucasus. The data present researchers and policymakers with a sample size large enough to provide statistically valid comparisons among age groups and gender, between urban and rural populations, and between capitals and regions.

The Future

In 2007, CRRC seeks to maintain the same sample size, while revising and adding new questions. If additional funding can be raised, CRRC hopes to expand the size of the survey to 4,000 respondents per country, which would provide a sample size large enough to allow for comparisons across regions. CRRC is also looking to make the DI a more flexible instrument that is able to respond to emerging policy concerns and to find new partners interested in adding questions to the survey.

The Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) is a network of resource and training centers established in the capital cities of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia with the goal of strengthening social science research and public policy analysis in the South Caucasus. A partnership between the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Eurasia Foundation, and local universities, the CRRC network offers scholars and practitioners stable opportunities for integrated research, training and collaboration in the region.

