



ИЗБИРАТЕЛЬНАЯ КОМИССИЯ НИЖЕГОРОДСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ

RESEARCH
of Nizhny Novgorod oblast
election commission on
“Disabled Persons’ Attitude
to Implementation of Their Voting Rights”

Nizhny Novgorod
2014



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On September 14, 2014, the unified voting day, the elections of the Governor of Nizhny Novgorod oblast were held in the territory of Nizhny Novgorod oblast, and the elections of deputies of municipalities' representative authorities were held in 40 municipal districts and two urban districts of Nizhny Novgorod oblast.

In order to ensure the voting rights of disabled and aged citizens, election commissions of Nizhny Novgorod oblast conducted the relevant activities both to inform this category of voters about the elections, namely:

- individual invitations to elections made in Braille type,
- sms messages to members of society of the Deaf with invitation to elections,
- TV programs with sign language interpreter participation;
- placement of information materials in print mass media;
- social leaflets issue;
- making of "Disabled Voter Reminder",
- various events,

and to equip the polling stations with additional means for various categories of disabled voters (Annex 1).

An important phase in the work of election commissions of Nizhny Novgorod oblast to ensure the voting rights of disabled and aged citizens was signing of the Agreement on Cooperation between the Ministry of Social Policy of Nizhny Novgorod oblast and Nizhny Novgorod oblast election commission in July 2014, main provisions of which are as follows:

- holding of joint consultations on issues of disabled citizens' voting rights;
- creation of conditions necessary for disabled persons, conduct of various activities aimed at ensuring their voting rights and the right to participate in referendum;
- joint participation in implementation of the project of the CEC of Russian Federation "The Road to Polling Station";
- conduct of disabled persons' joint interviewing about implementation of their voting rights.

According to the Agreement, Nizhny Novgorod oblast election commission took part in the video conference, organized by the Ministry of Social Policy of Nizhny Novgorod oblast, with directors of departments for social protection of the population and heads of stationary and non-stationary social services for aged and disabled citizens in Nizhny Novgorod oblast. The main issue of the video conference was the issue of

interaction of election commissions of Nizhny Novgorod oblast with social protection and care authorities on issues of ensuring the voting rights of citizens with disabilities and limited mobility during the period of preparation and holding of elections set on the unified voting day of September 14, 2014.

As a result of the preparatory work made by election commissions of Nizhny Novgorod oblast, the polling stations were ready to receive the voters with disabilities, and on the voting day members of the precinct election commissions were counting voted electors of this category (Annex 2).

In order to improve the work of election commissions of Nizhny Novgorod oblast on issues of disabled citizens' voting rights, in 2014 a research was conducted in Nizhny Novgorod oblast on "Disabled Persons' Attitude to Implementation of Their Voting Rights" which involved disabled citizens who have reached the age of 18 and live in Nizhny Novgorod oblast.

The research had to find out:

- the attitude of disabled citizens, who live in Nizhny Novgorod oblast, to the role of electoral system in life of society and to participation in electoral process;
- the public opinion of disabled citizens, who live in Nizhny Novgorod oblast, on conditions and possibilities of implementation of their voting rights;
- notion of how the persons with disabilities, who live in Nizhny Novgorod oblast, appraise the work of election commissions to ensure unimpeded implementation of disabled citizens' voting rights;
- the problems which exist in Nizhny Novgorod oblast upon implementation of disabled voters' voting rights.

To conduct the interview, a questionnaire was made (Annex 3), printed in normal type and in Braille type, which was distributed through public organizations of disabled persons, the library for blind persons, and was placed on the Internet.

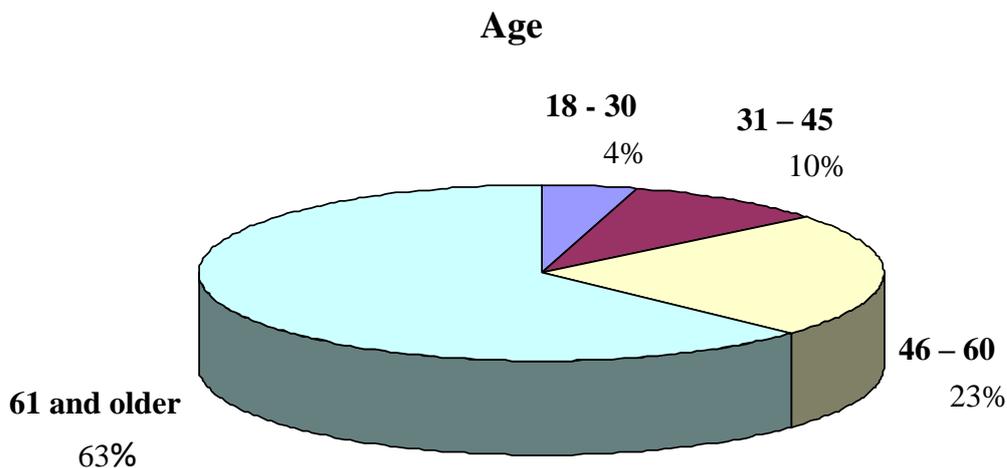
In accordance with the Agreement on Cooperation concluded between the Ministry of Social Policy of Nizhny Novgorod oblast and Nizhny Novgorod oblast election commission, the questionnaire poll among disabled voters in districts and cities of Nizhny Novgorod oblast was implemented by "Departments for Social Protection of the Population of districts (cities) of Nizhny Novgorod oblast, the city of Nizhny Novgorod."

Public organizations of disabled persons also rendered active assistance in conducting the questionnaire poll: Nizhny Novgorod oblast organization of the all-Russian public organization of disabled persons "All-Russian Society of the Blind",

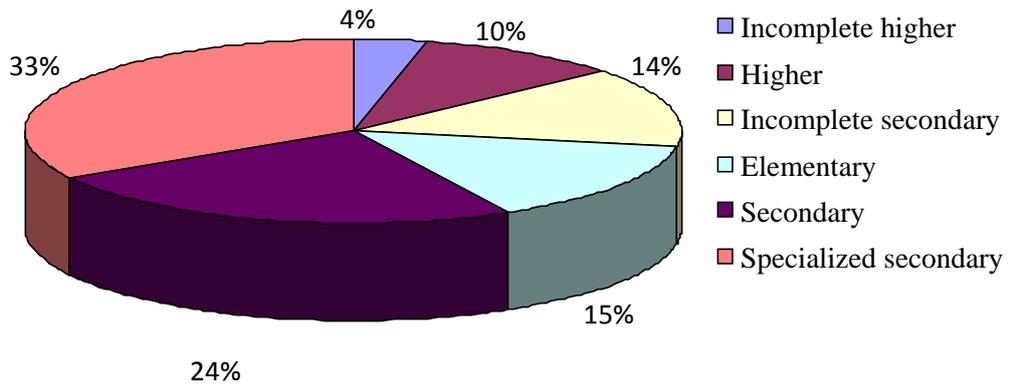
Nizhny Novgorod regional department of all-Russian public organization of disabled persons “All-Russian Society of the Deaf”, Nizhny Novgorod oblast organization of all-Russian organization “Russian Society of Disabled People”, Nizhny Novgorod regional organization of all-Russian public organization of disabled persons of war in Afghanistan, Nizhny Novgorod regional public organization of cultural, social and labor rehabilitation of disabled persons on supports and wheelchairs “Invatur”, Nizhny Novgorod oblast Center for Social, Labor and Psychological Rehabilitation of Visually Impaired Persons “Camerata”, as well as Nizhny Novgorod central special library for blind persons.

To process the results, as well as to analyze the information obtained during the interview, Nizhny Novgorod oblast election commission engaged Nizhny Novgorod oblast Center for Social, Labor and Psychological Rehabilitation of Visually Impaired Persons “Camerata” in partnership with the candidate of sociological sciences and the head of Tifloinformation Center of Nizhny Novgorod State University named after N.I. Lobachevsky.

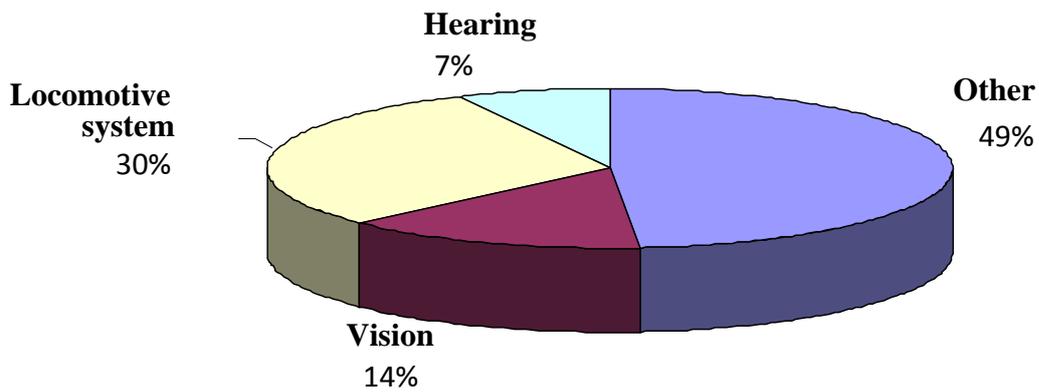
During the Research, 5736 disabled persons, who live in the territory of Nizhny Novgorod oblast and reached the age of 18, including 1902 men and 3834 women, were polled. General characteristics of sample by age, education, nosologies and disability groups are represented in the following diagrams:



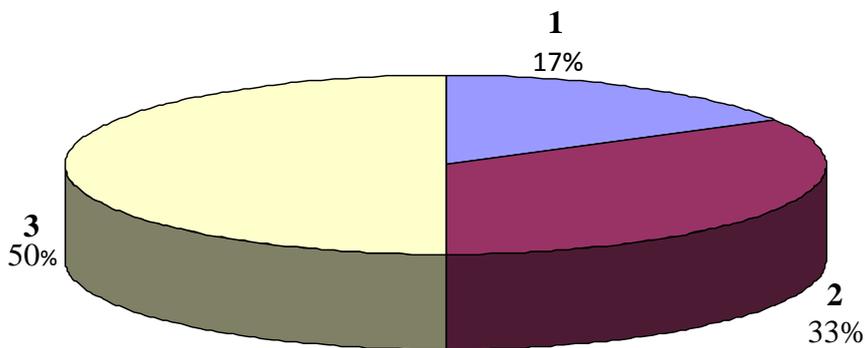
Education



Nosology



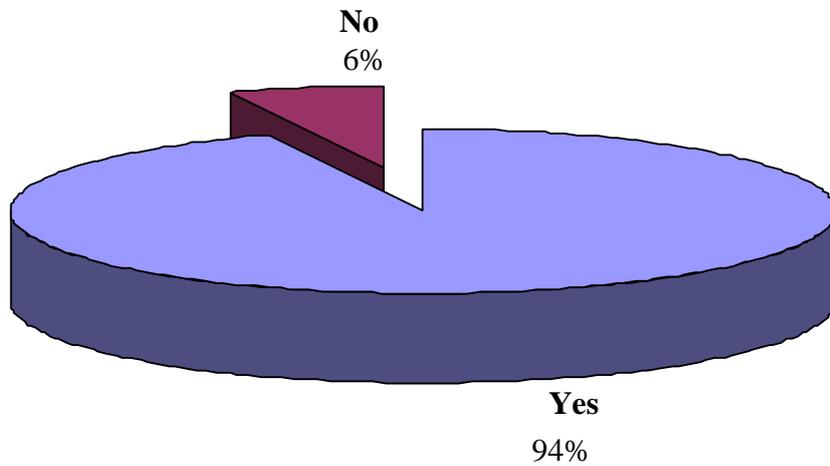
Disability group



General attitude of the interview participants to the role of electoral system in life of society and to participation in electoral process are demonstrated in the following results.

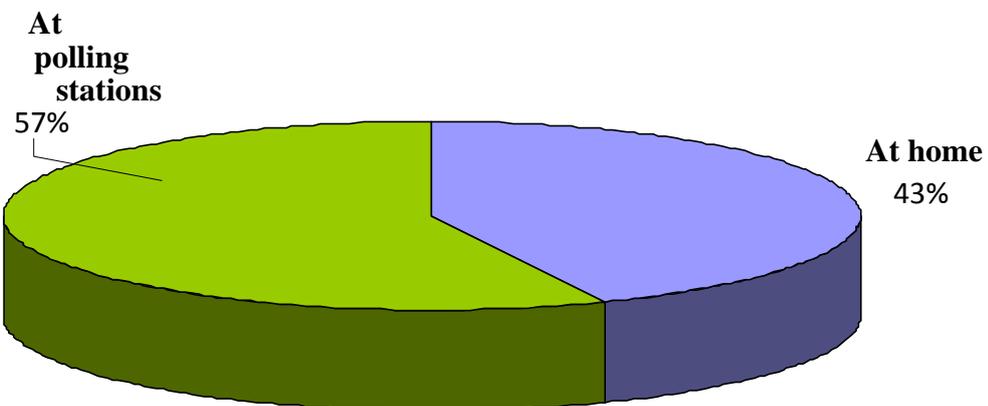
1. 5382 respondents took part and 354 did not take part (93.8% and 6.2%, respectively) in the elections on September 14, 2014.

Participation in the elections



2337 persons voted at home, 3045 – at polling stations (43.4% and 56.6%, respectively). High percentage of voters at home shows that disabled persons use this opportunity to participate in the electoral process rather actively.

Place of voting



However, analysis of reasons for not participating in the elections on September 14, 2014 (Table 1), as specified by respondents, shows that the most frequent from them is disease; this reason was specified by 81 persons (37.8% of the total number of respondents who specified the reasons for their non-participation in the elections). Perhaps, some of these respondents were not able to participate in the elections because they were not aware of the possibility of voting outside polling station (at home or

at health care facility) or of the mechanism of implementation of such possibility. The same may be attributed to 15 respondents who specified as the reason for not participating in the elections the difficulties of visiting polling stations, as well as to three who referred to poor weather. In our opinion, it shows the necessity for performing additional work to explain the possibilities of voting outside polling station.

The next reason by significance is unwillingness to participate in the elections, lack of confidence in them. 53 persons specified this reason (less than 1% of the total number of respondents). Another two persons refused to participate in the elections in protest.

8 persons connect their non-participation in the elections with insufficient work of precinct election commission (PEC): they did not vote because PEC members did not come to them, because they were not informed about the PEC transfer, they did not know PEC's telephone number (Semyonovskiy urban district, Vetluzhskiy district).

Table 1. Reasons for non-participation in the elections on September 14, 2014.

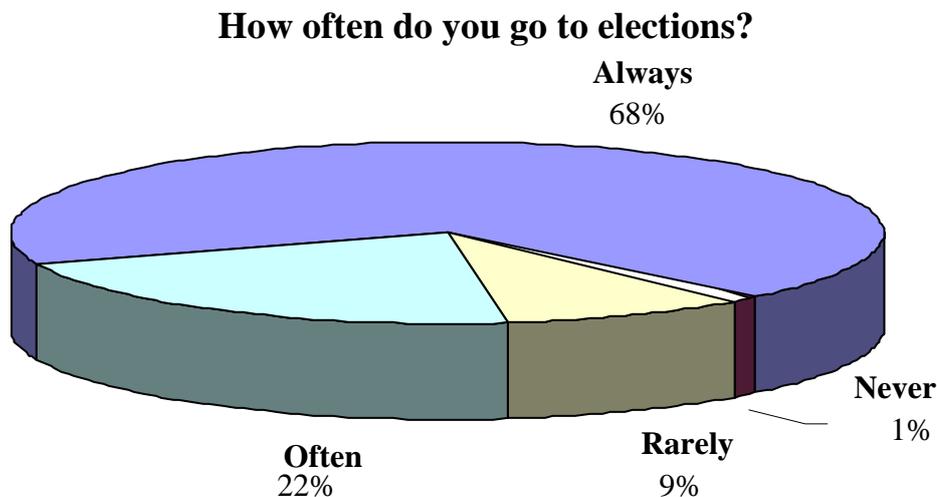
(in order of significance descending)

Reason for non-participation	persons	%
Disease	81	37.85%
Lack of confidence in the elections, unwillingness to participate in them	53	24.77%
Was absent, was in another city	25	11.68%
Was busy, was working	17	7.94%
Difficult to get to the station	15	7.01%
PEC members did not come at home	5	2.34%
For family reasons	4	1.87%
Have forgotten	3	1.40%
Poor weather	3	1.40%
For religious reasons	2	0.93%
The polling station was transferred to another place and the person did not know about it	2	0.93%

Reason for non-participation	persons	%
In protest to refusal to register the Communist Party of the Russian Federation	2	0.93%
Did not know telephone number	1	0.47%
No water in the water-supply line	1	0.47%
Grand total	214	100.00%

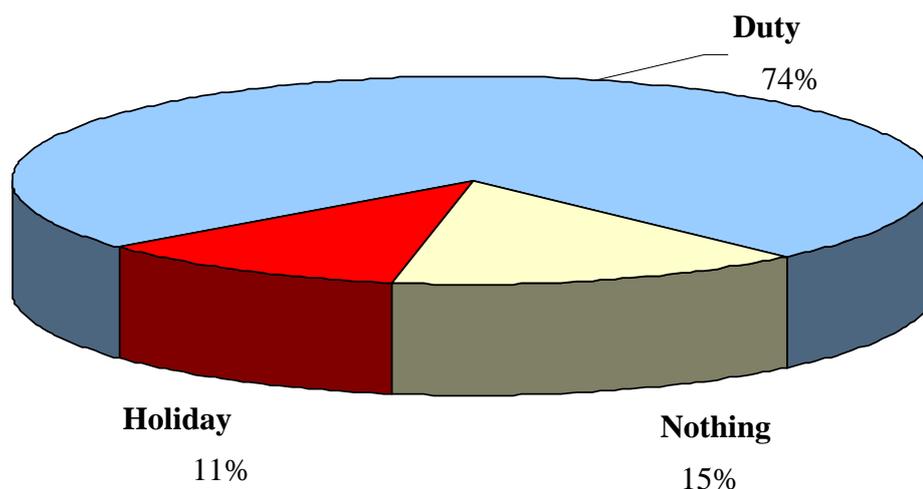
2. The question “How often do you go for elections?” received the following result: 3899 respondents answered “always”, 1243 – “often”, 522 – “rarely”, and 61 – “never”.

Answers, which may indicate low importance given to the role of electoral system in the life of society and participation in electoral process (“rarely” and “never”), amounted to only 10.2% of the total amount.



3. Answers to the question “What are the elections for you” were as follows: 628 respondents chosen “Holiday” answer, 4254 – “Duty”, and 836 respondents answered “Nothing”.

What are the elections for you



Analysis of dependence of these three results on age, education, nosology and disability group showed that education, nosology and disability group have no significant impact on them, the most significant sign here becomes the age.

Table 2 shows that percentage of persons who voted in the elections on September 14, 2014 increases with age groups from 83.9% in the group of “18 - 30” to 95.1% in the group “61 and older.”

Table 2. Dependence of participation/non-participation in the elections on the age

Age	Participation in the elections					
	Yes		No		Total	
	persons	%	persons	%	persons	%
18 - 30	208	83.87%	40	16.13%	248	100.00%
31 – 45	512	90.62%	53	9.38%	565	100.00%
46 – 60	1225	93.65%	83	6.35%	1308	100.00%
61 and older	3437	95.08%	178	4.92%	3615	100.00%
Grand total	5382	93.83%	354	6.17%	5736	100.00%

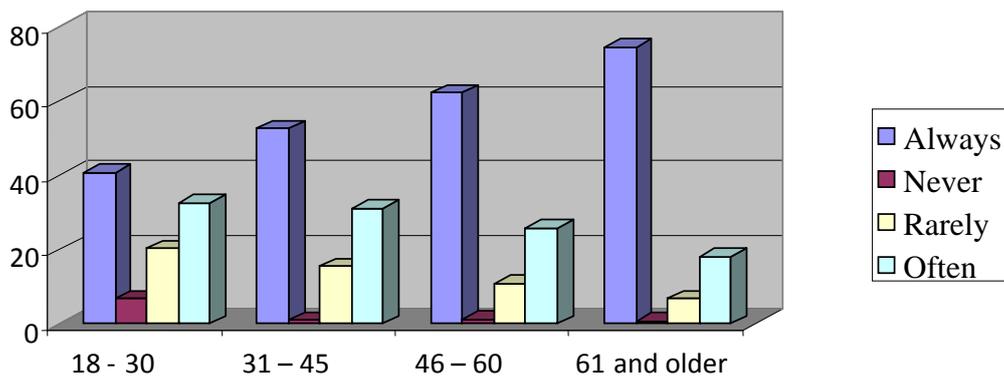
The following table shows that the frequency of participation in elections increases with the age. So, the percentage of respondents who always participate in

elections increases from 40.74% in the younger age group to 74.49% in the older one, and the percentage of those who never participate in elections in the younger group is 6.58% and significantly exceeds that rate in other age groups.

Table 3. How often do you go to elections

Age	Always	Often	Rarely	Never
18 – 30	40.74%	32.5 1%	20. 16%	6.58 %
31 – 45	52.57%	31.1 5%	15. 40%	0.88 %
46 – 60	62.25%	25.8 8%	10. 80%	1.07 %
61 and older	74.49%	18.0 0%	6.7 8%	0.72 %
Grand total	68.10 %	21.7 1%	9.1 2%	1.07 %

How often do you go to elections



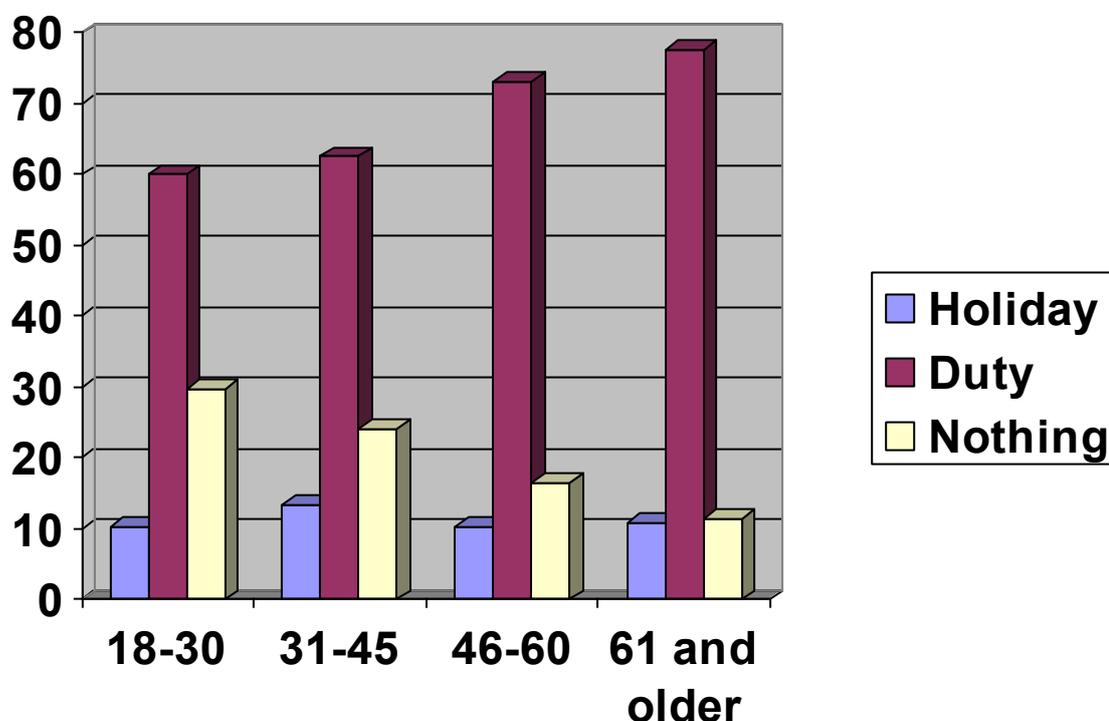
The following table demonstrates that percentage of respondents, who consider that participation in the elections is their duty, increases with age.

Table 4. What are the elections for you

Age	Holiday	Duty	Nothing
18 – 30	10.20%	60.0	29.8

		0%	0%
31 – 45	13.50%	62.5 2%	23.9 8%
46 – 60	10.41%	73.2 0%	16.3 9%
61 and older	10.85%	77.6 6%	11.4 9%
Grand total	10.98%	74.4 0%	14.6 2%

What are the elections for you



Lower activity of voters in group from 18 to 30, demonstrated by the research results above, confirms, in our opinion, necessity for work aimed at increasing the civil activity of youth and its involvement in electoral process.

The following table represents the respondents' appraisal of quality of informing on the issues of preparation and conduct of election campaign. Majority (more than 90%) of respondents think that they had received enough information about the date and time of voting, the candidates and political parties participating in the elections, and on the procedure of ballot completion. However, in our opinion, it deserves

consideration that 8% of the respondents to this question (483 persons) think that the information about the candidates and political parties is insufficient (Moscow district of Nizhny Novgorod, Sarov city, Vyksa city urban district).

Table 5. Obtaining complete information related to preparation and conduct of election campaign

Information	Yes		No		Grand total	
	persons	%	persons	%	persons	%
On the date and time of voting	5545	97%	192	3%	5737	100%
On the candidates, political parties participating in elections	5254	92%	483	8%	5737	100%
On the procedure of ballot completion	5204	91%	533	9%	5737	100%

The following table describes the sources from which the respondents received the information on elections.

Table 6. Sources of information related to preparation and conduct of election campaign

Source of information	persons	%
Mass media (newspapers, radio, television)	3999	69.71 %
Election commissions	1476	25.73 %

Authorities for social protection of the population	2305	40.18 %
Internet	54	0.94%
Activities of public organizations, authorities, cultural institutions and others	441	7.69%
Others	5	0.09%

We consider it necessary to note the great number of respondents who reported their information sources to be the authorities of social protection of the population (2305 persons) and election commissions (1476 persons).

The leading positions as the information source among the social protection authorities are taken by Lyskovskiy district (90.1% of the number of respondents in this district), Sokolskiy urban district (80.4%), Diveyevskiy district (79%), Sosnowski district (75.8%).

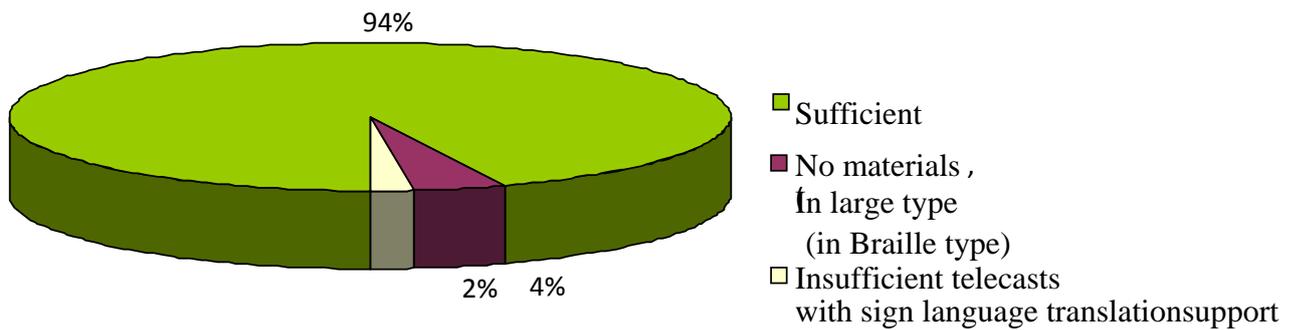
Among election commissions - Kniagininskiy (70.9%), Bolshemurashkinskiy (62.9%), Voskresenskiy (61%), Tonshaeviskiy (60%) districts.

The following table shows that the majority of respondents (93.9%) consider sufficient the total amount of information about election campaign, but there is a need for materials made in enlarged type and Braille type, as well as TV programs with sign language translation support.

Table 7. Is the information sufficient

Appraisal	persons	%
Sufficient	5302	93,99
No materials made in enlarged type (Braille type)	227	3,96
Insufficient TV programs with sign language translation support	112	1,95

Is the information sufficient



The vast majority (97.6%) responded positively to the question “Do you know where your polling station is?”, 134 persons answered that they do not know (Volodarskiy and Avtozavodskiy districts of Nizhny Novgorod).

The following table illustrates the difficulties faced by disabled persons interviewed upon visiting polling stations.

Table 8. Difficulties upon visiting polling stations

Difficulties	persons	%
Polling station is far from the place of residence	1355	23.62 %
Polling station is not on the first floor	407	7.09%
Polling station does not have a ramp	335	5.84%
Orientation difficulties (insufficient signs, color indication of steps, etc.)	331	5.77%
Other	11	0.19%

The most frequent difficulty is that “Polling station is far from the place of residence” (it was specified by 1355 persons).

However, it seems reasonable to analyze in more details the option of “orientation difficulties (insufficient signs, color indication of steps, etc.),” as overcoming of these difficulties is within the competence of election commissions

(making arrow signs, up-down, movement pointers, stairs, etc.)

Orientation difficulties are observed in cities of Dzerzhinsk, Nizhny Novgorod, Vyksa (urban district).

The following table represents the respondents' use of means for ensuring availability (stencils, sign language translation, etc.) upon voting.

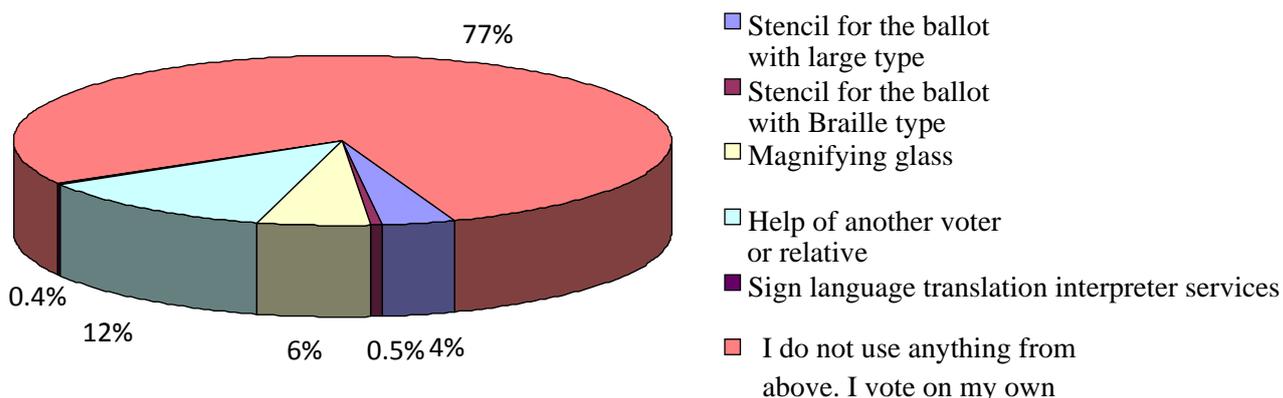
Table 9. Respondents' use of means for ensuring availability

Means used	persons
Stencil for the ballot with large type	201
Stencil for the ballot with Braille type	30
Magnifying glass	319
Help of another voter or relative	673
Sign language translation interpreter services	23
I do not use anything from above, I vote on my own	4353
Grand total	5599

Although the vast majority of respondents does not use additional means at all, their presence is necessary because it provides opportunity to participate in voting for persons with the most severe physical disabilities. We consider it necessary to note the leaders in using stencils for the visually impaired (with enlarged type): it's the cities of Nizhny Novgorod and Dzerzhinsk, Shakhunya urban district, Sokolskiy urban district, Volodarskiy district.

Stencils for blind persons (Braille type) were used in the cities of Nizhny Novgorod and Lyskovo, Shakhunya urban district, Volodarskiy district.

Means used



The question “Do you know about the “Social taxi” service on the voting day (for disabled persons with locomotive system dysfunction)?” received positive answer of 2355 persons (41.2% of respondents), 3358 persons gave negative answer.

Appraising the help rendered by precinct election commissions, 1617 respondents answered that they do not need help, 3697 noted that the help is sufficient, 267 - the help is not sufficient, 114 - the necessary help is not available.

The absolute leaders in respondents’ appraisal of the help rendered became: urban district of the city of Bor, Bolshemurashkiy, Voskresenskiy, Krasnooktyabrskiy, Lyskovskiy, Sechenovskiy, Spasskiy, Tonkinskiy, Tonshayevskiy districts. Here all respondents are satisfied with the rendered help (among those who are in need of such help).

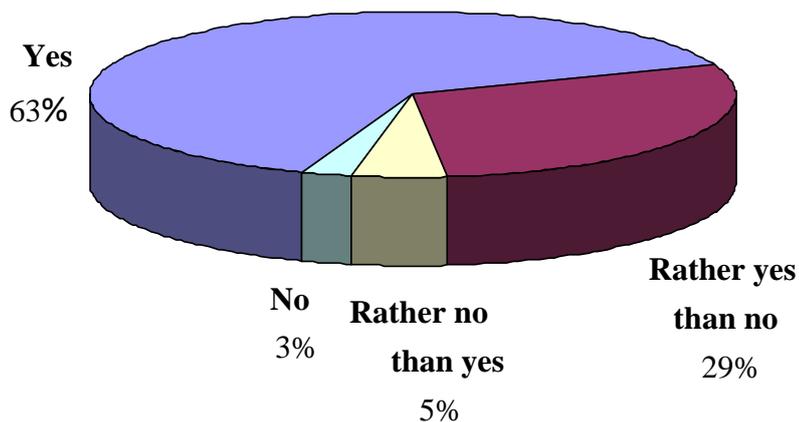
However, some think that necessary help is not available in Semyonovskiy urban district, in Kstovskiy and Vetluzhskiy districts. Moreover, respondents believe that the help is insufficient in Lukoyanovskiy and Pavlovskiy districts in Dzerzhinsk city, in urban district of Vyksa city.

The following table shows the respondents’ appraisal of completeness of Nizhny Novgorod oblast election commission’s (NNOEC) ensuring of the implementation of voting rights of disabled and aged citizens.

Table 10. NNOEC’s ensuring of the rights of disabled and aged citizens

Appraisal of ensuring	persons	%
Yes	3625	63.57%

Rather yes than no	1662	29.15%
Rather no than yes	268	4.70%
No	147	2.58%
Grand total	5702	100.00%



The vast majority of respondents answered positively on the question “Does, in your opinion, Nizhny Novgorod oblast election commission ensures implementation of the voting rights of disabled and aged citizens?”

The leaders in the answer “Yes” became Voskresenskiy, Dalnekonstantinovskiy and Lyskovskiy districts; in answer “Rather yes than no” - Krasnobakovskiy, Urenskiy districts and urban district of Pervomaisk city. The greatest number of negative responses “rather no than yes” and “No” are received in Pilninskiy and Bogorodskiy districts, Sarov city.

The question “Have you noticed violations of your voting rights?” received positive answer only from 55 respondents (less than 1%), but no one from them specified which violations he noticed.

Table 11 represents the generalized form of the respondents’ proposals for election commissions to ensure the voting rights.

Table 11. Respondents’ proposals for election commissions to ensure the voting rights

Proposals	
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More information on election campaigns, on candidates, adapted for disabled persons of different categories	82
To ensure availability of environment on the way to polling station and within it	28
To ensure voting at home	18
To pay more attention to disabled persons	9
To update voter registers	5

In order to improve the legal culture of voters with disabilities, their level of awareness of elections, election commissions conducted various activities:

The main activities, specified by the voters with disabilities, in which they took part:

- “Brain-ring” on the issues of voting rights and electoral process for the International Day of Deaf Person;
- Club of the Cheerful and Sharp-Witted “Elections through the Eyes of Youth”
- voting rights experts tournament;
- “Equal Rights – Equal Opportunities” contest;
- round tables on the voting rights issues;
- “Voter’s Voice” quiz;
- a series of regional activities dedicated to the history of development of voting rights in Russia “Looking through the centuries: the history of establishment of electoral system in Russia”;
- activities carried out in conjunction with societies of disabled persons and territorial election commissions.

The interview showed that only 247 respondents (4.4%) took part in activities dedicated to organization and conduct of elections. At that, 1987 respondents (34.8%) declared their desire to take part in such activities, which confirms their significance and topicality.

This research allowed to determine gaps in the work to ensure the voting rights of disabled citizens in each district (urban district) of Nizhny Novgorod oblast, as well as determined the future objectives made by the voters themselves.

**Information on polling stations' preparation for voting of disabled citizens in the elections
on the single voting day of September 14, 2014 in Nizhny Novgorod oblast**

The total number of polling stations	The number of polling stations located		The number of polling stations equipped for voting of electors with disabilities							The number of polling stations determined by decision of Election Commission of the Constituent entity of the Russian Federation, on whose information stands the materials made in large type and (or) using Braille alphabet will be placed	The number of polling stations determined by decision of ECSRFR where the stencils for self-completing the ballots will be used	The number of stencils for completing the ballots	
	on the 2nd floor	On the 3rd floor	Including									With cuts in large type	Using Braille alphabet
			for blind and visually impaired persons		for deaf and hearing-impaired persons		for persons with dysfunction of locomotive system						
Availability of additional lighting, magnifying glasses	Availability of helpers	Availability of sign language translation interpreters	Availability of helpers	Availability of ramps	Availability of booths	Availability of helpers							
2247	370	30	1668	1120	5	533	367	2	1036	314 PECs (with large type) 109 PECs (using Braille alphabet)	2233	2233	109

**Information on voting of disabled citizens in the elections on the single voting day
of September 14, 2014 in Nizhny Novgorod oblast**

The total number of electors included in the registers of the respective territory	The total number of disabled citizens (according to information of the Pension Fund of the Russian Federation in Nizhny Novgorod oblast) as of July 1, 2014	The number of electors with disabilities to be included in the voter registers					The number of electors with disabilities voted in the premises for voting of polling stations							The number of electors with disabilities voted outside the premises for voting			
		Total	of which				Total	Of which						Total	Of which		
			Blind and visually impaired persons	Deaf and hearing-impaired persons	Persons with locomotive system dysfunction	Other categories of deceases		Blind and visually impaired persons	including those who used information materials, stencils made in large type and Braille alphabet	Deaf and hearing-impaired persons	Including those who used the services of sign language translation interpreter	Persons with locomotive system dysfunction	Including those who used the services of social taxi		Blind and visually impaired persons	Deaf and hearing-impaired persons	Persons with locomotive system dysfunction
2813168	337551	301397	6563	2691	3708	15745	9545	3366	475	1951	200	4228	42	12640	3117	1925	7598

13. In what form have you received the information?

- information leaflets by telephone
 texts distribution on the sites of election commissions
 campaign materials (leaflets, banners, billboards, etc.). other (please, specify)
-

14. Is the received information on the election campaign (candidates) is sufficient?

- sufficient no information materials made in enlarged type (Braille type) insufficient telecasts with sign language translation

15. How often do you go for elections?

- always rarely
 often never

16. Do you know where your polling station is?

- yes no

17. What difficulties have you experienced when visiting the polling station?

- the polling station is far from the place of residence
 the polling station is not on the first floor
 the polling station does not have a ramp
 orientation difficulties (not enough signs, color indication of steps, etc.)
 other (please, specify)

18. What additional means do you use during the voting?

- stencil for the ballot with large type sign language translation interpreter services
 stencil for the ballot with Braille type I do not use anything from above, I vote on my own
 magnifying glass
 help of another voter or relative

19. Do you know about the "Social taxi" service on the voting day (for disabled persons with locomotive system malfunction)?

- yes no

20. Please, appraise the help rendered to you by precinct election commission

- the help is sufficient the necessary help is not available
 the help is insufficient I don't need help

21. Does, in your opinion, Nizhny Novgorod oblast election commission ensures implementation of the voting rights of disabled and aged citizens?

- yes rather no than yes
 rather yes than no no

22. Have you noticed violations of your voting rights?

- yes (please, specify) no

23. Your proposals for election commissions to ensure the voting rights

24. Have you taken part in the activities dedicated to organization and conduct of the elections? If yes, please, specify

25. Would you like to take part in such activities in the future?

- yes no

RESEARCH
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