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Civic Engagement Index of Kazakhstan: Critical Review on Methodology, Measurement, and Empirical Results

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ABSTRACT
The post-Soviet region is experiencing sustained political transformation, reflected in power transitions within several Central Asian states, the escalation of the Russia-Ukraine military conflict, the growing relevance of the Afghan factor, and other regional challenges. These developments contribute to a volatile and rapidly evolving political environment. Competition among collective identities and alternative future-oriented narratives shapes this transformation and significantly influences the developmental trajectories of post-Soviet states. Under these conditions, civil society plays an increasingly important role. In particular, citizens' participation in decision-making and the level of national social capital are key determinants of states' capacity to formulate, pursue, and safeguard their strategic interests. The study aims to assess the level of civic engagement in Kazakhstan in the context of ongoing socio-political transformation. Drawing on official statistical indicators and sociological survey data, the paper develops the Civic Engagement Index of Kazakhstan, an integrated measurement tool designed to capture both the structural characteristics and temporal dynamics of public participation in core decision-making processes. The empirical results demonstrate the robustness and analytical utility of the proposed index as an instrument for systematic monitoring of civic engagement and for evaluating the effectiveness of institutional and governance reforms.

KEYWORDS
Civic engagement index; civil society; political participation; social capital; citizens; decision-making; institutional reform; identity

INTRODUCTION

Within contemporary conceptual frameworks, civic engagement is regarded as a key indicator of institutional maturity and the functional capacity of political systems. The level and forms of civic participation reflect the extent to which citizens are involved in decision-making processes, society's capacity for self-organization, and the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms between the state and the public. Under conditions of political and socio-economic transformation, civic engagement acquires additional significance as a factor contributing to political stability, modernization, social cohesion, and national consolidation (Chong & Tsubota, 2023; Tarman & Kilinc, 2023).

To establish a rigorous theoretical foundation, this study employs a critical review to substantiate the article's core conceptual framework. The purpose of this critical review is to evaluate existing models for measuring civic participation and identify their operational limits. The scope encompasses both established international frameworks (e.g., International IDEA Indices, CIVICUS Monitor) and national index-based assessments (such as the Civil Society Development Index of Astana). Its coverage systematically addresses the five key dimensions of civic engagement: social activity, civic engagement, political participation, state support and the role of non-governmental organizations, and digital civic activity. By critically interrogating these approaches, the review justifies the multi-dimensional structure and empirical results of the proposed Civic Engagement Index presented in subsequent sections.

For states undergoing institutional reforms while simultaneously embedded in complex geopolitical configurations, the systematic measurement of civic participation becomes particularly important. Kazakhstan, which is implementing an extensive agenda of political modernization and public governance reform, requires analytical tools that can assess both the dynamics and qualitative characteristics of civic engagement. Such tools can help identify levels of public participation, institutional trust, citizens' willingness to engage, and the effectiveness of existing mechanisms of interaction between society and public institutions (Assyltayeva et al., 2024; Baikulova et al., 2024; Gerfanova et al., 2025).

At the same time, important conceptual and methodological gaps remain in measuring civic engagement. Civic engagement is a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing diverse forms of participation, including community volunteering and environmental civility (Ajaps & Obiagu, 2020; Clabough et al., 2026; Russell et al., 2026). Given this multidimensionality, international instruments such as the International IDEA Global State of Democracy Indices and the CIVICUS Monitor capture important aspects of participation and civic space, but they operationalize different dimensions of the phenomenon and are therefore not fully interchangeable. Methodological research also indicates that cross-national measurement is affected by differences in conceptual definitions, survey designs, data availability, and approaches to aggregating diverse forms of participation (International IDEA, 2025; CIVICUS, 2025; Dore & Jackson, 2020). Thus, existing measures provide valuable comparative evidence

but do not fully integrate behavioral, institutional, attitudinal, social, and digital dimensions of civic engagement within a single framework.

This gap is particularly relevant in the Kazakhstani context. Although Kazakhstan has developed formal mechanisms for public participation, including public councils and other consultative institutions, previous research has identified challenges related to inclusiveness, citizens' awareness, transparency, and the effectiveness of feedback between public authorities and society (OECD, 2020). Recent empirical research in Kazakhstan also demonstrates that civic participation takes diverse forms, including electoral, community-based, institutional, and digital activities, while actual participation and citizens' willingness to participate represent distinct dimensions. These findings indicate the need for a multidimensional and context-sensitive approach to measuring civic engagement in Kazakhstan.

Accordingly, this study aims to develop and substantiate a Civic Engagement Index for Kazakhstan that integrates behavioral, institutional, attitudinal, social, and digital dimensions of civic engagement. The proposed index is intended to complement existing international measures by providing a context-sensitive framework for assessing not only citizens' actual participation but also the conditions and attitudes that shape their engagement. In doing so, the study seeks to contribute to the measurement of civic engagement and to provide an analytical tool for examining citizen – state interaction within the context of Kazakhstan's ongoing public governance transformation.

Existing research in Kazakhstan addresses specific forms of civic engagement, including electoral behavior, the activities of non-governmental organizations, and volunteering. However, a comprehensive index reflecting the multidimensional structure of civic engagement has not yet been developed. At the same time, the country has accumulated experience in index-based assessments of civil society. Since 2019, the Civil Society Development Index of the city of Astana has been implemented, within which civic activism constitutes one of the key dimensions. The methodological foundation of this index draws on the CIVICUS approach, incorporating measurements of civic participation, organizational resources, values, and perceptions of social impact.

Nevertheless, existing indices are predominantly oriented toward institutional and organizational parameters of civil society and do not fully capture everyday practices of civic participation, informal forms of engagement, or their interconnections with political and social processes. In this context, the development of an independent Civic Engagement Index represents a methodologically and practically significant task, enabling a transition from fragmented assessments toward a more systematic analysis of civic activity.

In the context of Kazakhstan's political modernization, the Civic Engagement Index can be considered not only as an analytical instrument but also as an indicator of reform effectiveness. Levels of civic participation reflect society's capacity for adaptation, mobilization, and articulation of collective interests – an issue of particular relevance amid intensifying competition of identities in the Eurasian region and the transformation of the global

architecture of international relations. Accordingly, a systematic assessment of civic engagement contributes to a deeper scholarly understanding of participatory processes and supports the development of evidence-based policy in the field of civil society development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In international research practice, civic engagement is widely conceptualized as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing social participation, political involvement, civic action, institutional interaction, and, increasingly, digital forms of participation (Clabough et al., 2026; Kilinc & Tarman, 2022; Perales et al., 2025; Russell et al., 2026). Accordingly, its measurement relies on a range of conceptual and methodological approaches that differ in the dimensions examined, data sources employed, and levels of analysis.

The conceptualization of civic engagement in this study draws on several complementary theoretical perspectives and conceptual approaches. First, the Civic Voluntarism Model developed by Verba et al. (1995) explains political participation through the interaction of individual resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment or mobilization. This perspective is particularly relevant for distinguishing citizens' capacity and motivation to participate from their actual participation. Second, the social capital perspective emphasizes the role of social networks, trust, reciprocity, and associational life in facilitating collective action and civic participation (Putnam et al., 1993; Putnam, 2000). Third, the concept of political efficacy highlights citizens' perceptions of their ability to understand and influence political processes and has been widely incorporated into empirical research on political participation (Craig et al., 1990). Finally, contemporary research on political participation has expanded the conceptual boundaries of civic engagement to include digital and other emerging forms of participation, such as online mobilization and social media activity (Boulianne, 2015; Demir et al., 2026; Pushpanadham et al., 2023; Theocharis & van Deth, 2018).

These theoretical perspectives provide the conceptual basis for examining how civic engagement is operationalized in empirical research. Existing approaches can be broadly grouped according to their primary data sources into four categories: (1) population-based sociological surveys, (2) standardized individual-level scales and measures of civic capacity, (3) expert and mixed-method approaches, and (4) aggregated statistical and administrative indicators. These approaches capture different dimensions of civic engagement and should therefore be viewed as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Survey-based measures primarily capture citizens' attitudes, perceptions, intentions, and self-reported behaviors; expert assessments provide contextual and institutional perspectives; mixed-method approaches combine different forms of evidence; while aggregated indicators focus on observable and comparable manifestations of participation.

Population-based surveys represent one of the most widely used approaches. A prominent example is Gallup's Global Civic Engagement Report, which uses a limited number of standardized survey items to examine individuals' involvement in community life and helping

others (Gallup, 2016). Similar survey-based approaches are employed in the United Kingdom through the Community Life Survey, which examines civic engagement and social action using representative population data (United Kingdom Government, 2024). At the subnational level, survey-based civic indices have also been developed in the United States, including the North Carolina Civic Index and the Vermont Civic Health Index. Academic research has likewise used survey data to examine multiple dimensions of civic and political participation (Keeter et al., 2002). The principal advantage of this approach is its ability to capture subjective dimensions of engagement that are not observable in administrative statistics. Its main limitation, however, is reliance on self-reported behavior, which may not fully reflect actual participation or the institutional conditions that facilitate or constrain it.

A related measurement tradition uses standardized psychometric scales to examine particular dimensions of civic engagement. The Civic Engagement Scale developed by Doolittle and Faul (2013), for example, distinguishes between civic attitudes and civic behaviors, while the Activism Orientation Scale developed by Corning and Myers (2002) examines individual orientations toward social action. These instruments provide a more differentiated understanding of the attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of engagement than many composite indices. However, because they are primarily designed to assess individual-level characteristics, their applicability to population-level composite measures that incorporate institutional and structural conditions is more limited. A related perspective is found in approaches focusing on civic capacity and opportunities for collective action. The Civic Action Scorecard developed by the Institute for Civic Engagement and Democracy at Miami Dade College, for example, organizes possible forms of civic action and emphasizes opportunities for participation rather than measuring participation alone (Miami Dade College, Institute for Civic Engagement & Democracy, 2025). Such approaches highlight an important distinction between actual engagement and the capacity or opportunity to engage, suggesting that a comprehensive framework should consider both participation and the conditions under which participation can occur.

Expert-based approaches provide a different perspective by incorporating assessments of the institutional and social environment. In Russian research, Frolov (2016) proposed an approach to measuring regional civic activity based on assessments from representatives of government, non-governmental organizations, business, and the media. The main strength of expert assessment is its ability to incorporate contextual characteristics that may be difficult to capture through population surveys. At the same time, the subjective nature of expert judgments may reduce reproducibility and comparability across regions and periods. Expert assessments are therefore more appropriate as a complementary source of evidence than as the sole basis for measuring civic engagement. Other studies also emphasize the multidimensional nature of civic engagement, including its digital dimension, with research on Hong Kong youth finding a significant relationship between online civic participation and offline political and social engagement (Chong et al., 2021).

Mixed-method approaches seek to overcome some of these limitations by combining different types of evidence. For example, the Civic Participation Index developed by the Civic Participation Forum in cooperation with the Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law integrates legal analysis, population surveys, omnibus studies, and expert assessments. Its indicators cover the institutional environment, participation practices, and the impact of civic engagement. The methodological advantage of this approach lies in linking individual participation to the institutional environment in which it takes place. However, integrating heterogeneous data sources requires explicit methodological decisions regarding indicator selection, normalization, weighting, and aggregation.

Another important measurement tradition relies on aggregated statistical and administrative data. The Engaged Citizen Index developed by Jacobsen and Linkow (2012), for example, examines civic and political engagement using multiple indicators. The Civic Information Index similarly incorporates observable forms of participation such as voter turnout, volunteering, association membership, and charitable giving (The Civic Information Index, 2024). Comparable multidimensional approaches can be found in the European Active Citizenship framework (Hoskins et al., 2006), the Indices of Social Development (International Institute of Social Studies, 2020), and the Civic Empowerment Index (Civil Society Institute, 2023). The major advantage of aggregated indicators is their potential for systematic comparison across regions and over time. Their limitation is that standardized statistical measures may underrepresent informal participation, individual motivations, perceptions, and less institutionalized forms of civic action.

Taken together, the literature reveals a fundamental methodological trade-off. Measures based on population surveys are particularly effective in capturing subjective attitudes, intentions, and self-reported practices, but provide limited information about institutional conditions. Expert assessments add contextual depth but introduce greater subjectivity. Aggregated statistical indicators offer more objective and comparable measures of observable participation, but may overlook informal and perception-based forms of engagement. Mixed-method approaches provide greater analytical breadth by combining these perspectives, although they require more complex procedures for integrating heterogeneous indicators. Thus, the literature does not point to a single universally superior method; rather, it suggests that the measurement strategy should reflect the multidimensional character of civic engagement and the specific research context.

This comparison also reveals a conceptual and methodological gap relevant to the present study. Although existing instruments recognize civic engagement as multidimensional, they differ substantially in the combination of behavioral, attitudinal, institutional, and contextual dimensions they incorporate. Many measures emphasize either individual participation or observable institutional indicators, while fewer approaches systematically integrate citizens' subjective readiness to participate with objective manifestations of civic activity and the institutional conditions that shape participation. This gap is particularly relevant

in contexts where formal and informal forms of civic participation coexist and where digital channels increasingly mediate public engagement.

On this basis, the present study adopts a mixed-method conceptualization of civic engagement. This choice does not imply that existing international indices are insufficient in general. Rather, it reflects the complementary strengths identified in the literature: population surveys provide information on citizens' attitudes, perceptions, readiness to participate, and self-reported practices; official statistics and administrative data capture observable manifestations of civic activity; and institutional indicators provide information on the conditions and organizational infrastructure supporting participation. The integration of these sources allows civic engagement to be examined as a multidimensional phenomenon rather than as a single behavioral outcome.

The critical synthesis of the literature therefore provides the conceptual foundation for the Civic Engagement Index of Kazakhstan. Rather than replicating one existing international model, the proposed index combines elements from several measurement traditions and adapts them to the institutional, social, and digital context of Kazakhstan (Bokayev et al., 2026; Zholdybalina et al., 2026). The index comprises five domains: social activity, civic engagement, political participation, state support and the role of non-governmental organizations, and digital civic activity. These domains were selected to capture complementary dimensions of participation, including individual behavior, collective action, political involvement, institutional support, and emerging forms of digital civic engagement. In this sense, the Kazakhstan case serves not as the sole basis for defining the concept of civic engagement, but as the empirical context in which a conceptually grounded and literature-informed measurement framework is operationalized.

The proposed index is not intended to replace existing international measures or to claim universal applicability. Its contribution lies in integrating multiple types of evidence and dimensions that are often examined separately, while maintaining sensitivity to the institutional and social context in which civic engagement occurs. This approach provides a basis for assessing not only the level of public participation but also the relationship between citizens' willingness to participate, actual participation practices (Bokayev et al., 2024), and the institutional opportunities available for such participation.

METHODOLOGY FOR CONSTRUCTING THE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT INDEX OF KAZAKHSTAN

The Civic Engagement Index (CEI) was developed as a composite indicator integrating measurable behavioral, attitudinal, institutional, social, and digital dimensions of civic participation. The Civic Engagement Index of Kazakhstan was calculated for 2024 using a two-stage procedure based on objective and subjective data. The methodological framework included conceptualization, expert assessment, indicator selection, normalization, weighting, and aggregation, following general principles for composite-indicator construction outlined in

the Handbook on Constructing Composite Indicators: Methodology and User Guide (OECD/European Union/European Commission, 2008).

Development of the Index Structure

At the first stage, an online expert survey was conducted with 31 participants, including NGO leaders, representatives of relevant state authorities, and researchers specializing in civil society and public participation. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions assessed the relevance and importance of the proposed dimensions, while open-ended questions allowed experts to identify missing aspects and suggest modifications.

The final structure was determined by considering both quantitative and qualitative responses. The procedure is therefore characterized as a structured expert consultation, rather than a formal Delphi procedure, since it did not include repeated Delphi rounds or a predefined statistical consensus threshold.

The resulting index consists of five domains:

1. social activity;
2. civic engagement;
3. political participation;
4. state support and the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs);
5. digital activity and engagement.

Data and Indicators

The CEI comprises 25 indicators. Eight objective indicators were derived from official statistical and administrative data, while 17 subjective indicators were based on a nationwide online sociological survey of 1,200 respondents conducted in October 2024.

The survey included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Closed-ended responses were used to construct quantitative subjective indicators, while open-ended responses provided additional qualitative information.

The combination of objective and subjective indicators was intended to capture observable institutional and behavioral conditions as well as attitudes, perceptions, reported practices, and readiness to participate. The online survey design may involve self-selection and reporting biases; therefore, the sample size of 1,200 should not by itself be interpreted as establishing statistical representativeness.

Aggregation and Weighting

The CEI was calculated using weighted linear aggregation, consisting of indicator normalization, within-domain weighting, domain weighting, and aggregation.

Inter-domain weighting

The five domain weights were established through expert consultation:

1. Social activity – 30%;
2. Civic engagement – 30%;
3. Political participation – 15%;

4. State support and the role of NGOs – 10%;
5. Digital activity and engagement – 15%.

The highest weights were assigned to the domains of social activity and civic engagement, which capture direct forms of citizens' participation in public life. Political participation and digital activity are treated as distinct dimensions of civic participation, while the domain of state support and the role of NGOs reflect the institutional conditions under which civil society operates.

The sum of the weights assigned to the five domains equals 1 (100%). Domain weights are not used in calculating the intra-domain weights of the indicators included within each domain. First, each domain is calculated as an independent measure ranging from 0 to 1, based on the normalized values of its indicators and their respective intra-domain weights. The weight of the corresponding domain is applied only at the final stage, when the five domain scores are aggregated into the overall Civic Engagement Index.

Example of Intra-Domain Weight Calculation

Domain G1, "Social Activity," includes three structural indicators, four behavioral indicators, and one value-based indicator. The sum of the priority coefficients is calculated as follows:

$(3 \times 0.5) + (4 \times 1.0) + (1 \times 0.75) = 6.25$.

Therefore, the intra-domain weight of each structural indicator is:

$0.5 / 6.25 = 0.08$;

of each behavioral indicator:

$1.0 / 6.25 = 0.16$;

and of the value-based indicator:

$0.75 / 6.25 = 0.12$.

The sum of the intra-domain weights of the eight G1 indicators is:

$0.08 + 0.08 + 0.16 + 0.16 + 0.16 + 0.16 + 0.08 + 0.12 = 1.00$.

Thus, at the stage of calculating domain G1, the intra-domain weights of 0.08, 0.16, and 0.12 are used. The weight of domain G1 itself, equal to 0.30, is applied only after the final domain value has been obtained.

Rationale for Determining Upper and Lower Bounds

To establish a common scale ranging from 0 to 1 for the original indicators, a lower and an upper normalization bound are defined for each indicator. The method used to determine these bounds depends on the nature of the underlying indicator.

For statistical indicators expressed as growth rates, a fixed normalization range from 0 to 10% average annual growth is used. The lower bound corresponds to zero growth, while the upper bound corresponds to an average annual growth rate of 10% or higher. Fixing these bounds ensures a consistent scale for subsequent annual calculations of the Index.

For statistical indicators expressed in absolute or relative terms, the upper bound is determined based on actual data and the projected value of the indicator over a three-year

horizon. To reduce the risk of the upper bound being reached too quickly, a 20% buffer is applied to the projected value.

The upper bound is determined using the following formula:

$$x_{\max} = x_{cur} \times (1 + g_{avg})^{M} \times (1 + \delta)$$

where:

$x_{current}$ – denotes the current value of the indicator per 100,000 population;

g_{avg} – represents the average annual growth rate over the previous two years;

M – indicates the projection horizon of three years;

δ – denotes a buffer parameter set at 20%.

The use of the Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) is driven by the need to forecast upper bounds of indicators based on sustainable, rather than one-time growth. Unlike the simple average, this method accounts for the cumulative nature of growth, where each subsequent value builds upon the previous one. This is particularly important for institutional indicators, such as the number of volunteer organizations, where development occurs progressively and is dependent on the existing base. Applying the CAGR ensures the avoidance of overestimation caused by temporary spikes and guarantees the comparability of indicators over time. This makes the calculation of the upper bound ($x_{\max}$) statistically sound and reproducible. Such an approach is consistent with practices adopted by international organizations (UNDP, OECD), which use geometric averaging to forecast components of index systems.

The formula for calculating the **CAGR** is as follows:

$$g_{avg} = \left(\frac{x_{cur}}{x_{prev}}\right)^{\frac{1}{n}} - 1$$

where:

x_{cur} – the current value of the indicator,

x_{prev} – the value of the indicator at the beginning of the period,

n – number of years in the period of observation.

This methodology ensures that the upper bound reflects a realistic and sustainable rate of growth, rather than an inflated or outlier value.

The minimum values ($x_{\min}$) for all indicators are defined as the lower bound, representing the null or minimally observable level of the phenomenon. For objective indicators, $x_{\min}$ is set to zero, indicating the complete absence of institutionalized forms of civic engagement (e.g., lack of registered organizations or participants). For subjective indicators, measured using survey scales, the minimum value corresponds to the lower limit of the response scale.

Indicators of Structural Diversity (Shannon Index)

To assess the diversity of organizational distribution across activity sectors, the Shannon index (H) is employed. This index, widely used in statistics, ecology, and sociological research, measures the evenness of distributions. In the context of the Civil Engagement Index, it quantitatively assesses the balance in the representation of various forms or sectors of public activity (e.g., types of volunteering or NGO domains).

Calculation Formulas:

1. For each sector iii, the proportion of organizations is calculated:

$$p_i = \frac{n_i}{N}$$

where:

- n_i – the number of organizations in sector i;
- N – the total number of organizations in the considered sector.

2. The Shannon index is calculated:

$$H = \sum_{i=1}^{k} - p_i \ln(p_i)$$

where:

- k – the number of activity sectors.

3. To ensure comparability across years, the indicator is normalized relative to the maximum possible value:

$$H_{max} = ln(k)$$

4. The normalized value of the index:

$$I = \frac{H}{H_{\max}}$$

5. Calculation of the indicator weight value.

Interpretation:

Values of III range from 0 to 1.

I<0.5– strong concentration in a limited number of sectors, low diversity.

0.5≤I<0.80– moderate level of diversification.

I≥0.8– high degree of balanced distribution across sectors.

Step 1. Calculation of Normalized Indicator Values

To correctly rescale the indicators to a unified scale, the individual minimum and maximum values for each indicator must be fixed, reflecting its lower and upper limits of development. Each indicator is scaled to a range from 0 to 1, where 1 represents the maximum possible, reference level of civic engagement, according to the formula:

$$I_G = \frac{x - x_{min}}{x_{max} - x_{\min}}$$

where:

- *I* – the normalized value of indicator G;
- x – the actual value of the indicator;

- $x_{\min} x_{\max}$ fixed lower and upper bounds of the range (expert-determined for survey data).

Step 2. Calculation of the Indicator Weight Value

$G_i = I_i \times w_i$

where:

- G_j – the weight value of the indicator;
- I_G – the normalized value of the indicator;
- w – the absolute weight of the indicator.

Step 3. Calculation of Domain Values

The value of each domain is calculated as the sum of the weighted values of the indicators included in the domain:

$D_j = \Sigma(I_i \times w_i)$

where:

- D_j – the value of the domain;
- I_i – the normalized value of the indicator;
- w_i – the intra-domain weight of the indicator.

Step 4. Calculation of the Final Civic Engagement Index

After the individual values of the five domains have been calculated, the predefined weight of each domain in the structure of the Civic Engagement Index (CEI) is applied. The final Civic Engagement Index is calculated using the following formula:

$CEI = (D_1 \times 0.30 + D_2 \times 0.30 + D_3 \times 0.15 + D_4 \times 0.10 + D_5 \times 0.15) \times 100$

where:

- D_1–D_5 – the values of the respective domains, ranging from 0 to 1;
- 0.30, 0.30, 0.15, 0.10, and 0.15 – the predefined weights assigned to the five domains.

In summary, the calculation is performed sequentially at two levels. First, the intra-domain weights of the indicators are determined and the individual value of each domain is calculated. The domain values are then aggregated using their respective weights in the structure of the Civic Engagement Index.

Multiplying the resulting aggregate by 100 converts the Index value from the 0–1 range to a scale of 0–100 points:

- 0–25 – low level of civic engagement;
- 26–50 – moderate level of civic engagement;
- 51–75 – above-average level of civic engagement;
- 76–100 – high level of civic engagement.

Sensitivity Analysis

A sensitivity analysis was conducted to examine the effect of alternative weighting assumptions for the five domains. The analysis compares the baseline domain-weighting structure with alternative configurations and evaluates changes in the aggregate CEI.

The intra-domain coefficients of 1.0, 0.75, and 0.5 constitute a fixed baseline methodological assumption and were not empirically estimated. Their potential influence is therefore acknowledged as a limitation; the present sensitivity analysis focuses on the domain-level weights.

Missing Data, Reliability, and Validity

The available data were analyzed in their original form, and no statistical imputation was applied to generate synthetic observations.

The subjective indicators G1.6, G2.3, and G5.2 are composite measures constructed from survey responses. At the current stage of index development, their reliability was assessed primarily through their conceptual alignment with the corresponding domains and the expert consultation process. As a separate internal-consistency analysis was not included in the research design, statistics such as Cronbach's alpha are not reported.

The five-domain structure was developed on the basis of the conceptual framework and structured expert consultation. Although exploratory factor analysis or principal component analysis was not included in the present study, the proposed structure provides a theoretically grounded basis for organizing the 25 indicators. Future applications of the CEI may further examine the empirical relationships among indicators and assess the stability of the proposed domain structure using multivariate statistical techniques.

Similarly, an external or convergent validity assessment was not included in the initial research design because an independently measured construct with sufficiently comparable conceptual coverage was not available within the study framework. Future research may strengthen the validation of the CEI by comparing its results with independently established measures of civic participation, social capital, institutional trust, or related constructs.

These methodological considerations are acknowledged as part of the ongoing development and refinement of the CEI. Consistent with the OECD/JRC recommendations for composite-indicator construction, transparency concerning indicator selection, normalization, weighting, aggregation, and data quality is essential for assessing the robustness and interpretability of composite measures (OECD/European Union/European Commission, 2008).

Methodological Scope

The CEI is designed as a context-sensitive instrument for assessing the structure and dynamics of civic engagement in Kazakhstan. It integrates objective indicators of observable activity with subjective measures of attitudes, perceptions, and readiness to participate.

The index does not seek to replace existing international measures or claim universal applicability. Rather, it operationalizes a multidimensional framework adapted to the institutional, social, and digital context of Kazakhstan. The results should therefore be interpreted together with domain scores and individual indicator contributions.

RESULTS OF THE CIVIL ENGAGEMENT INDEX

This section presents the results of the Civic Engagement Index developed to assess the level and multidimensional structure of civic engagement in Kazakhstan. The results are reported across the five dimensions of the index: social activity, civic engagement, political participation, state support and the role of non-governmental organizations, and digital civic activity. The analysis first presents the overall index results and subsequently examines the contribution and distribution of each dimension. Particular attention is given to differences across the dimensions in order to identify areas of relatively higher and lower civic engagement and to examine how individual, institutional, and digital forms of participation are reflected in the overall index. The findings are presented descriptively and are intended to provide an empirical basis for the subsequent discussion of the results in relation to existing research and the institutional context of Kazakhstan.

Domain G1. Social Activity

Social activity is one of the key indicators of civic engagement, reflecting the extent of citizens' involvement in addressing socially significant issues and fostering mutual aid within society. This component measures the population's readiness to take initiative in the social sphere – participating in volunteer and charitable projects, providing support to others, and sharing time, resources, and professional expertise. The weight of this domain accounts for 30% of the overall Index and includes eight indicators, covering both objective and subjective aspects of civic participation (Table 1):

Table 1.

Results of the Calculation for the "Social Activity" Domain

Code	Type	Indicator Weight	Included in Index	Normalized Value of Indicator (I)	Weighted Indicator Value (Gj)
G1.1	Structural	0.50	0.08	0.7267	0.0581
G1.2	Structural	0.50	0.08	0.9181	0.0734
G1.3	Behavioral	1.00	0.16	0.2270	0.0363
G1.4	Behavioral	1.00	0.16	0.3860	0.0618
G1.5	Behavioral	1.00	0.16	0.1640	0.0262
G1.6	Behavioral	1.00	0.16	0.2880	0.0461
G1.7	Structural	0.50	0.08	0.6571	0.0526
G1.8	Value-based	0.75	0.12	0.3110	0.0373
Domain Total			1.00		0.3919

G1.1 Number of volunteer organizations (indicator weight: 0.025);

G1.2 Distribution of volunteer organizations' activities across sectors (indicator weight: 0.025);

G1.3 Number of volunteers (indicator weight: 0.05);

G1.4 Social engagement of the population (indicator weight: 0.05);

G1.5 Forms of material and resource assistance (indicator weight: 0.05);
G1.6 Mentoring activity and professional support (indicator weight: 0.05);
G1.7 Number of charitable organizations (indicator weight: 0.025);
G1.8 Financial engagement of citizens in charitable initiatives (indicator weight: 0.038).

Given the composition of the domain, the sum of the priority coefficients is 6.25. The weights assigned to the structural, behavioral, and value-based indicators are 0.08, 0.16, and 0.12, respectively.

The calculated value of domain G1, “Social Activity,” is D1 = 0.3919. Given the domain weight of 0.30, its contribution to the overall Civic Engagement Index (CEI) is 11.76 points on the CEI scale.

Indicator G1.1. “Number of Volunteer Organizations” reflects the institutional development of the volunteer sector. Between 2020 and 2024, the number of registered and active volunteer organizations in Kazakhstan increased from 224 to 745, indicating a gradual expansion of institutional forms of civic engagement. When recalculated per 100,000 population, the figure reaches 3.72, which, against the established upper bound of 5.1 organizations, corresponds to a normalized value ofI = 0.727. This suggests that by 2024, the volunteer infrastructure had reached approximately 73% of the target development level used in the Index calculation. The average annual growth rate for 2022-2024 was 4.7%, indicating a stable development phase following the sector's initial establishment. The results demonstrate a high level of institutionalization of the volunteer movement in the country. Volunteering has become a stable component of social life, though significant potential for further growth, including at the regional level, remains.

IndicatorG1.2. “Distribution of Volunteer Organizations by Sectors” assesses the structural diversity of the volunteer sector. The Shannon index is used to measure the evenness of organizational distribution across activity types. In 2024, volunteer organizations in Kazakhstan were registered in 16 sectors, including social, environmental, educational, cultural, medical, inclusive, online, and corporate volunteering, among others. The resulting I=0.918 indicates a high level of sector balance, with most sectors represented proportionally and no dominant area. This suggests that the volunteer movement in Kazakhstan is developing not only quantitatively but also qualitatively, covering a wide range of socially significant areas and ensuring institutional stability. Such distribution reflects the maturity of the sector and the creation of a sustainable social space for civic initiatives.

Indicator G1.3. “Number of Volunteers” captures individual citizen engagement in volunteering. A positive response was reported by 22.7% of respondents, corresponding to a normalized value of I = 0.227. This figure reflects the presence of a stable core of active citizens engaged in socially useful practices. While participation levels remain moderate, the indicator signals the development of a culture of volunteerism that extends beyond symbolic actions and is becoming a social norm, particularly among youth and urban residents.

Indicator G1.4. "Social Engagement of the Population" reflects citizen involvement in social assistance, such as caring for children, the elderly, or the sick, and providing transport or household support. A total of 38.6% of respondents answered affirmatively, corresponding to I = 0. 386. The relatively high share of engaged individuals demonstrates the prevalence of horizontal mutual-aid practices, confirming that a substantial portion of social activity in Kazakhstan remains informal and is realized within local communities and family networks.

Indicator G1.5. "Forms of Material and Resource Assistance" captures specific practices of material support, including delivering food, clothing, medicine, and other necessities. Survey responses show that 16.4% of respondents engaged in such activities over the past year. Although lower than other forms of participation, this indicator reflects tangible practices of solidarity. Material assistance remains a fundamental form of engagement, especially during economic or humanitarian crises.

Indicator G1.6. "Mentoring Activity and Professional Support" reflects non-material forms of assistance, including moral, psychological, professional, and legal support. Respondents could select multiple options: providing advice or moral/psychological support (16.5%), offering professional consultations, lectures, or lessons (6.2%), assisting with official institutions (2.9%), and providing legal support (3.2%). Collectively, these forms account for 28.8%, reflecting widespread practices of mentoring, knowledge transfer, and experience sharing. Such activities indicate the development of social capital and horizontal networks, which underpin trust within civil society.

Indicator G1.7. "Number of Charitable Organizations" indicates the institutional dynamics of the charity sector. Official statistics report 1,371 registered charitable organizations in Kazakhstan in 2024, a 28% increase compared to 2023 (1,071). Charitable organizations strengthen the institutional base of civic participation but remain dependent on external resources and government support.

Indicator G1.8. "Financial Engagement of Citizens in Charitable Initiatives" reflects the degree of citizen participation through donations, collections, and material contributions. Survey results show that 27.8% of respondents provided goods, and 34.4% contributed financially in the past year. Considering potential overlaps, an average value of 31.1% was used. This level of engagement indicates that a culture of philanthropy is gradually taking root and becoming part of everyday civic practices.

The value of domain G1 reflects a combination of well-developed and diverse organizational infrastructure and various forms of direct assistance provided by citizens. Assistance to people in vulnerable situations, charitable activities, and moral and professional support are particularly prominent. This suggests that social activity is a multidimensional sphere of civic engagement in which, alongside organized volunteering, everyday forms of helping others that are readily accessible to citizens also play an important role.

Domain G2. Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is one of the key components of civil activity, reflecting the population's willingness to participate in societal life, initiate public change, and interact with other citizens, communities, and authorities to address significant issues. The weight of this domain in the Index structure is 30%, highlighting its importance in shaping the civic potential of society. The domain includes four subjective indicators (Table 2):

G2.1 Willingness to participate in civic initiatives;

G2.2 Involvement in public initiatives;

G2.3 Readiness for collective action and civic interaction;

G2.4 Participation in protests and collective actions.

Table 2.

Calculation Results for the "Civic Engagement" Domain

Code	**Type**	**Indicator Weight**	**Included in Index**	**Normalized Value of Indicator (I)**	**Weighted Indicator Value (Gj)**
G 2.1	Value-based	0.75	0.2000	0.5805	0.1161
G 2.2	Behavioral	1.00	0.2667	0.3830	0.1021
G 2.3	Behavioral	1.00	0.2667	0.0780	0.0208
G 2.4	Behavioral	1.00	0.2667	0.1165	0.0311
Domain Total			1.0000		0.2701

Indicator G2.1. "Willingness to Participate in Civic Initiatives" captures the population's interest in political and public affairs at both national and local levels. Two survey questions were used for analysis:

"How interested are you in politics?"

"Are you interested in the public life of your village/town?"

Results indicate differing levels of engagement: 32.6% of respondents reported being "very" or "somewhat" interested in politics, while 55.2% expressed interest in the public life of their locality. This reflects a moderate but stable interest in public processes. Citizens are more engaged in local issues, where participation has practical significance, than in national politics. Such patterns are typical for societies where civic activity develops "bottom-up," through personal and territorial experience rather than institutionalized political channels.

Indicator G2.2. "Involvement in Public Initiatives" assesses citizen participation in specific local actions, such as improving yards, buildings, entrances, playgrounds, and other public spaces. Survey results indicate that 38.3% of respondents participated in such initiatives. This value reflects an average level of practical engagement, suggesting that collective forms of self-organization exist but are not yet widespread. Participation in local improvement projects is often a response to immediate neighborhood needs rather than part of sustained civic

communities. Nonetheless, such practices are important for fostering a sense of responsibility for shared spaces and can be considered a fundamental form of civic participation.

Indicator G2.3. "Readiness for Collective Action and Civic Interaction" reflects citizens' willingness to collaborate on socially significant issues and interact with public authorities. This indicator is based on combined survey responses:

- Contacting government agencies to address public issues: 14.6%
- Interacting with initiative leaders to discuss solutions: 5.7%
- Contributing personal funds to solve a public problem: 5.2%
- Assisting in resource collection to address a problem: 5.9%

The average value was 7.8%, indicating a low level of horizontal civic interaction. This suggests that willingness to cooperate and engage in practical collaboration remains limited, with participation in public matters largely individual rather than collective.

Indicator G2.4. "Participation in Protests and Collective Actions" measures both actual and potential engagement in public forms of expressing opinions, including rallies, demonstrations, pickets, and strikes. Survey data show:

- Participation in rallies, demonstrations, pickets: 5.1% participated, 9% could potentially participate
- Participation in strikes: 3.6% participated, 5.6% could potentially participate

The resulting average was 11.65%, indicating a low level of protest activity while highlighting a significant portion of citizens open to participating in collective actions. This demonstrates that, despite cautiousness in open forms of expression, there is potential for deliberate civic mobilization given trust in institutions and transparent channels for expressing public interests.

Domain G3. Political Participation

Political participation reflects the degree of citizen involvement in the formation and implementation of public policy, as well as their interest in the political life of the country. This domain allows assessment of how informed the population is about political events, how engaged they are in political processes, and their participation in representative democratic procedures. The domain indicators cover both value-based and behavioral aspects of political activity, ranging from interest in politics and information-seeking to participation in political campaigns and voting. The weight of this domain in the overall Civil Engagement Index is 15%. The domain includes the following indicators (Table 3):

Table 3.

Calculation Results for the "Political Participation" Domain

Code	Type	Indicator Weight	Included in Index	Normalized Value of Indicator (I)	Weighted Indicator Value (Gj)
G 3.1	Value-based	0.75	0.2000	0.7170	0.1434
G 3.2	Behavioral	1.00	0.2667	0.1970	0.0525

G 3.3	Behavioral	1.00	0.2667	0.0990	0.0264
G 3.4	Behavioral	1.00	0.2667	0.4360	0.1163
Domain Total			1.0000		0.3386

G3.1 Interest in politics
G3.2 Information-seeking about politics and political events
G3.3 Involvement in political campaigns
G3.4 Participation in elections at various levels

The final domain value is 0.3386, indicating a relatively low level of political activity among citizens and highlighting the need to strengthen civic education and mechanisms for public participation in political processes.

Indicator G3.1. "Interest in Politics" measures the proportion of citizens expressing interest in political events and state affairs. Analysis was based on responses to the question: "For each of the following sources, please indicate whether you use it daily, weekly, monthly, less than once a month, or never". Only respondents who reported any frequency of accessing political information sources were included. This accounted for 71.7% of respondents, indicating a high level of exposure to political content. The results suggest that political topics are present in the daily information environment, but interest is primarily expressed through news consumption rather than discussion or practical engagement. Therefore, passive awareness prevails over active participation.

Indicator G3.2. "Information-Seeking on Politics and Political Events" reflects active interest in political processes, including obtaining and disseminating political information via various channels. Survey responses indicate that 19.7% of respondents actively sought such information. This low proportion shows that only a minority of citizens take initiative in independent information-seeking, while the majority limit themselves to passive consumption. The results confirm that engagement in the political sphere remains superficial and does not translate into active participation.

Indicator G3.3. "Involvement in Political Campaigns" evaluates citizen participation in electoral and political campaigns, such as canvassing, signature collection, and election organization. Responses included:

- Participation in election campaign activities (e.g., collecting signatures): 13.7%
- Advocating political issues to others: 6.1%

The average value was 9.9%, indicating low levels of engagement in political activities beyond voting. This reflects limited channels for participation and low levels of trust in political processes.

Indicator G3.4. "Participation in Elections at Various Levels" measures the regularity of citizens' voting in presidential, parliamentary, local council (maslikhat), mayoral (akim), and referendum

elections. The analysis considered the proportion of respondents who reported voting “every time.” Results were as follows:

- Presidential elections: 63.9%
- Parliamentary elections: 42.7%
- Maslikhat deputies’ elections: 39.8%
- Referendums: 47.3%
- District mayoral (akim) elections: 35.4%
- Rural mayoral (akim) elections: 32.9%

The average participation rate was 43.6%, indicating a moderate level of electoral activity. Citizens are more likely to vote in national elections than in local ones, reflecting weak connections to local governance institutions and limited perception of their significance.

Domain G4. State Support and the Role of NGOs

The domain “State Support and the Role of NGOs” reflects the development and sustainability of the non-profit sector, as well as the degree of citizen and civil society institution involvement in decision-making processes and the implementation of socially significant initiatives. This component assesses the extent to which the state contributes to the institutional strengthening of NGOs, their financial sustainability, and citizen participation in the activities of civil society structures.

The domain includes both structural and behavioral indicators characterizing the development of the non-profit infrastructure, the availability of support mechanisms, and the level of civic engagement. The weight of this domain in the overall Civil EngagementIndex is 10%. The domain comprises the following indicators (Table 4):

G4.1 Number of registered and active NGOs (indicator weight 0.011)

G4.2 Citizen involvement in NGO activities (indicator weight 0.022)

G4.3 Availability of grants for NGOs (indicator weight 0.011)

G4.4 Volume of NGO funding (indicator weight 0.011)

G4.5 Citizen participation in public councils (indicator weight 0.022)

Together, these indicators allow assessment of the dynamics of state–civil society interaction, the level of institutionalization and financial support for the non-profit sector, and citizen activity within public advisory bodies.

Table 4.

Calculation Results for the “State Support and the Role of NGOs” Domain

Code	Type	Indicator Weight	Included in Index	Normalized Value of Indicator (I)	Weighted Indicator Value (Gj)
G 4.1	Structural	0.50	0.1429	0.2618	0.0374
G 4.2	Behavioral	1.00	0.2857	0.1940	0.0554
G 4.3	Structural	0.50	0.1429	0.6368	0.0910
G 4.4	Structural	0.50	0.1429	1.0000	0.1429

G 4.5	Behavioral	1.00	0.2857	0.1763	0.0504
Domain Total			1.0000		0.3770

Indicator G4.1. "Number of Active NGOs" reflects the development of the civil sector through the dynamics of NGOs that are actively operating. Unlike the total number of registered organizations, only NGOs engaged in projects, submitting reports, and providing socially significant services are considered. Between 2022 and 2024, the number of active NGOs increased from 16,861 to 17,964, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of 2.2%. Although the growth rate is moderate, its stability indicates sustainable development of the civil society institutional base. The increase demonstrates gradual strengthening and diversification of the sector, including participation in social, human rights, environmental, and educational initiatives. The normalized value, I = 0.2618, reflects a low-to-medium growth level with a trend toward stability, indicating the sector's capacity to adapt to changes in social and regulatory environments while maintaining activity and resilience.

Indicator G4.2. "Citizen Involvement in NGO Activities" measures the degree of public participation in NGO initiatives. Survey data were used: "Have you participated in the activities of public organizations (human rights, charitable, environmental, etc.)?" Positive responses amounted to 19.4% of respondents. This indicates a moderate yet stable level of citizen engagement in the nonprofit sector. The most active areas remain charity, volunteering, and human rights initiatives. Although participation is not widespread, a significant portion of the population contributes to socially oriented forms of civic activity, fostering a culture of mutual support and public responsibility.

Indicator G4.3. "Availability of Grants for NGOs" assesses the sector's access to state and grant support mechanisms. Due to the lack of data on the number of NGOs submitting applications, a relative indicator was used: the share of funded projects (state orders and grants) relative to the total number of active organizations. In 2024, 2,288 projects were implemented for 17,964 active NGOs, accounting for 12.7%. Between 2022 and 2024, the indicator remained stable (~13%), corresponding to a normalized value (I = 0.64). This reflects a medium level of accessibility to government funding tools. While institutional support exists, only one in eight organizations has access to funded initiatives. The sector requires further decentralization of grant programs and reduction of administrative barriers, particularly for small and regional NGOs.

Indicator G4.4. "Volume of NGO Funding" captures the total amount of government and grant financing allocated to socially significant projects. In 2020, the total funding amounted to 16.9 billion KZT, rising to 36.4 billion KZT by 2024, more than doubling over the period. The average annual growth rate was 10.6%, corresponding to the maximum scale value (I = 1.0). This trend indicates a significant strengthening of state support for the sector, especially in 2023, when funding growth reached nearly 60%. The results point to a sustainable state-civil society

partnership model, where NGOs become key implementers of social programs. However, reaching the upper threshold of the index may indicate a saturation phase, where further growth is possible primarily through efficiency improvements rather than increased funding volumes.

Indicator G4.5. "Citizen Participation in Public Councils" reflects public engagement in advisory bodies attached to executive authorities. Between 2022 and 2024, the number of council members increased from 253 to 262, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of 1.8% and a normalized value (I = 0.176). This indicates stable but limited development of public participation mechanisms. The dynamics suggest an institutional basis for state-society dialogue, while highlighting the need for expansion of citizen representation, transparency, and public reporting of council activities. Although the indicator weight is low ((G4.5 = 0.004)), it holds qualitative significance for evaluating government openness and citizen involvement in decision-making.

Domain G5. Digital Activity and Engagement

Amid rapid digitalization of public life, forms of civic participation are increasingly shifting to the online sphere. The domain Digital Activity and Engagement captures this transition by measuring the extent to which citizens employ digital technologies to express their positions, engage in public initiatives, and interact with governmental institutions.

This domain integrates indicators reflecting not only the frequency and scale of online participation but also the diversity of its forms, ranging from signing petitions and sharing public campaigns to participating in electronic appeals and digital consultations. It encompasses both behavioral and value-based components, characterizing the development of online citizenship and the potential of digital environments as instruments for civic interaction. The domain accounts for 15% of the overall Civil Society Development Index and comprises the following indicators (Table 5):

G5.1 Number of signed online petitions (indicator weight: 0.043)

G5.2 Personal involvement in online civic activism (indicator weight: 0.043)

G5.3 Support for civic online activism (indicator weight: 0.032)

G5.4 Engagement via digital platforms and electronic appeals (indicator weight: 0.043)

Table 5.

Calculation Results for the "Digital Activity and Engagement" Domain

Code	**Type**	**Indicator Weight**	**Included in Index**	**Normalized Value of Indicator (I)**	**Weighted Indicator Value (Gj)**
G 5.1	Behavioral	1.00	0.2667	0.3060	0.0816
G 5.2	Behavioral	1.00	0.2667	0.1680	0.0448
G 5.3	Value-based	0.75	0.2000	0.1380	0.0276
G 5.4	Behavioral	1.00	0.2667	0.1770	0.0472
Domain Total			**1.0000**		**0.2012**

Indicator G5.1. "Number of Signed Online Petitions" captures the proportion of citizens participating in public initiatives through signing online petitions on official and civil platforms. The analysis was based on the survey question: "Have you ever signed a petition, would you consider doing so, or would you never do it under any circumstances?"

Respondents who had already participated or expressed willingness to do so were included in the calculation. Their cumulative share amounted to 30.6%, indicating a notable interest in digital forms of civic participation, although actual engagement remains limited. This measure reflects a transition from passive perception of public initiatives to readiness to utilize online tools for expressing civic positions, albeit without consistent patterns of regular participation.

Indicator G5.2. "Personal Involvement in Online Civic Activism" assesses citizen participation in various forms of digital activism, including interaction with initiative organizers, financial support, and information dissemination. Data were collected via three survey items:

- Interaction with organizers to discuss problem-solving strategies (5.7%);
- Personal monetary donations (5.2%);
- Assistance in resource collection (5.9%).

The cumulative value amounted to 16.8%, indicating limited but diverse digital civic engagement. These forms signify a transition from symbolic support to substantive actions, including communication, resource contribution, and online coordination of initiatives. Although the share of engaged respondents is low, the presence of such practices reflects the emergence of a digital culture of solidarity and mutual aid.

Indicator G5.3. "Support for Civic Online Activism" measures user activity on social media, including likes, comments, and reposts related to public initiatives. Respondents reported the following activities:

- Liking activists' content (18.8%);
- Commenting on content (13.8%);
- Sharing publications on personal profiles (8.8%).

The average value was 13.8%, calculated to avoid double counting, as individual users could engage in multiple activity types. Results indicate that symbolic forms of support remain the most common type of digital participation. While these actions perform an important function of public solidarity, they seldom translate into more active engagement.

Table 6.

Results of the Civic Engagement Index

Domain Code	Weighted Domain Value (D)	Domain Weight	Contribution to Index
G1. Social Activity	0.3919	0.30	0.1176
G2. Civic Engagement	0.2701	0.30	0.0810

G3. Political Participation	0.3386	0.15	0.0508
G4. State Support and the Role of NGOs	0.3770	0.10	0.0377
G5. Digital Activity and Engagement	0.2012	0.15	0.0302
The Civil Engagement Index	-	1.00	**0.3173**

Indicator G5.4. "Engagement via Digital Platforms and Electronic" Appeals reflects the use of official online services, such as e-otinish, ikomek, 109, and others, for submitting appeals, petitions, or participating in discussions. Survey data indicate that 17.7% of respondents had used such platforms. This figure demonstrates a limited level of citizen engagement with digital channels for government feedback. Contributing factors may include insufficient public awareness, procedural difficulties, and perception of appeals as ineffective.

The final value of the Civil Engagement Index (CEI) is 31.73 points, corresponding to a medium level of civic activity. This result indicates that institutional and value-based foundations for citizen participation in public life are gradually developing in Kazakhstan; however, the overall level of engagement remains limited and uneven.

DISCUSSION AND LIMITATION

The findings of the Civic Engagement Index (CEI) reveal a differentiated structure of civic participation in Kazakhstan. Social activity represents the most pronounced dimension, whereas participation in formal civic, political, and institutional processes is comparatively less developed. Citizens appear more inclined to engage in activities involving direct social support, volunteering, charitable initiatives, and mutual assistance than in forms of participation requiring sustained interaction with public institutions or direct involvement in decision-making. Overall, civic engagement in Kazakhstan thus has a strong social foundation that is less consistently reflected in formal and institutional forms of participation. This finding supports the multidimensional conceptualization of civic engagement adopted in previous research, which distinguishes among social, civic, political, and institutional forms of participation (Keeter et al., 2002; Hoskins et al., 2006).

The overall CEI score of 31.73 indicates a moderate level of civic engagement within the reference scale established in this study. International evidence provides a useful contextual benchmark; however, direct numerical comparisons should be treated with caution because existing instruments differ in their definitions, indicator composition, sampling procedures, measurement scales, normalization, and aggregation methods. For example, the UK Community Life Survey defines civic engagement as participation in at least one form of civic participation, civic consultation, or civic activism. In 2024/25, 41% of adults in England reported at least one such activity during the previous 12 months; within this measure, 34% participated in civic participation, 19% in civic consultation, and 8% in civic activism (Department for Culture, Media

and Sport, 2025). Another relevant international reference is the Active Citizenship Composite Indicator developed by Hoskins and Mascherini (2009), which combines four dimensions – Protest and Social Change, Community Life, Representative Democracy, and Democratic Values – and applies the framework to 19 European countries. These approaches demonstrate that civic engagement is multidimensional and that different forms of participation may vary substantially within the same population. Against this background, the CEI value of 31.73 can be interpreted as an intermediate level within the Kazakhstan-specific reference scale, while the domain-level results provide insight into the internal structure of civic participation.

The high level of Social Activity (G1) indicates that volunteering, charitable initiatives, mutual assistance, and other socially oriented practices constitute an important component of civic life in Kazakhstan. These forms of activity provide citizens with relatively accessible opportunities to contribute to their communities and address immediate social needs. This interpretation is consistent with international approaches that identify community involvement, helping others, volunteering, and social action as important manifestations of civic engagement (Gallup, 2016; United Kingdom Government, 2024). The relative accessibility of such activities may be associated with their direct connection to everyday needs and their potential to generate relatively immediate and visible outcomes. At the same time, the high level of social activity is not accompanied by a comparable level of engagement in formal decision-making processes.

The results for Civic Engagement (G2) and Political Participation (G3) demonstrate a gap between interest and actual participation. In G2, citizens express interest in local and public issues and indicate a willingness to participate, but such willingness is not consistently translated into collective action. This gap is even more pronounced in G3. Although 71.7% of respondents report an interest in politics, only 19.7% indicate that they actively seek political information, while 9.9% report participation in political campaigns. Thus, political interest is substantially more widespread than direct political participation. This finding is consistent with Doolittle and Faul (2013), who distinguish between civic attitudes and civic behaviors, and with Corning and Myers (2002), who differentiate orientations toward social action from actual participation. In the Kazakhstani context, the findings therefore indicate substantial interest in public and political affairs alongside a comparatively limited intensity of active participation.

The findings for State Support and the Role of NGOs (G4) add an important institutional dimension to this pattern. Growth in the number of active NGOs, funding volumes, and grant mechanisms indicates the development of the organizational infrastructure of civil society. At the same time, relatively limited citizen participation in NGOs and advisory bodies suggests that the availability of institutional channels does not necessarily translate into their active use. This interpretation is consistent with multidimensional approaches to active citizenship that consider institutional conditions alongside individual participation (Hoskins et al., 2006), as well as with the regional perspective proposed by Frolov (2016), which emphasizes the importance of institutional and contextual factors in assessing civic activity. Further development in this

area may therefore depend not only on strengthening organizational capacity but also on expanding accessible mechanisms through which citizens can participate in public affairs.

Digital Activity and Engagement (G5) represents an additional channel of civic expression. However, participation is concentrated primarily in relatively low-cost online activities, such as liking, reposting, and expressing support for petitions, whereas more demanding forms of digital participation requiring sustained time and commitment are less common. This finding suggests that the availability of digital participation tools does not, by itself, lead to more intensive forms of civic engagement. Rather, digital platforms appear to expand the range of available participation channels. This interpretation is consistent with the Civic Action Scorecard, which conceptualizes civic action as a range of possible activities rather than as a single behavioral category (Miami Dade College, Institute for Civic Engagement & Democracy, 2025). In Kazakhstan, the significance of digital participation may therefore depend not only on access to digital platforms but also on whether citizens perceive them as effective mechanisms for communicating with public institutions and contributing to public decision-making.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that different forms of civic engagement in Kazakhstan vary substantially in their intensity. Socially oriented practices are the most prevalent, whereas forms of participation involving sustained interaction with political and institutional structures are less pronounced. This pattern reinforces the importance of a multidimensional approach to measuring civic engagement, since an aggregate indicator alone cannot fully capture differences between individual forms of participation. The CEI value of 31.73 provides an overall measure of civic engagement, while the G1-G5 domains clarify the specific dimensions that contribute to this aggregate result.

An important methodological consideration concerns the weighting of the five domains. Because the baseline weights were determined through expert assessment, the composite index depends to some extent on the relative importance assigned to individual dimensions. To assess the robustness of the findings to alternative weighting assumptions, a sensitivity analysis was conducted using three additional scenarios. The first assigned equal weights of 20% to each domain. The second placed greater emphasis on Political Participation and the NGO sector, assigning 25% to each. The third assigned greater weights to Digital Activity and Civic Engagement, with each receiving 30%. Under these alternative specifications, the absolute CEI value varied, while the overall configuration of the results remained broadly similar.

The sensitivity analysis indicates that changes in domain weights primarily affect the magnitude of the aggregate index, whereas the relative structure of the domains remains comparatively stable. Social Activity continues to make the strongest contribution, while political and institutional forms of participation remain less pronounced. This consistency suggests that the principal substantive findings are relatively robust to alternative weighting schemes. At the same time, variation in the aggregate score confirms the importance of interpreting the CEI in light of the methodological decisions underlying its construction.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that further development of civil society can build upon existing forms of social participation. Volunteering, mutual assistance, charitable activities, and community-based initiatives provide a potential foundation for expanding other forms of civic engagement. At the same time, accessible local participation mechanisms, NGO programs, and digital platforms may facilitate more regular citizen involvement when they provide clear opportunities to influence issues directly affecting local communities. Institutional feedback is particularly important in this context, as it can make the outcomes of participation more visible and strengthen the connection between individual engagement and collective decision-making.

Overall, the CEI value of 31.73 characterizes civic participation in Kazakhstan as heterogeneous in both form and intensity. Socially oriented practices play a prominent role, whereas political and institutional participation is less pronounced. The findings suggest that further development of civic engagement depends not only on the availability of participation channels but also on opportunities to connect existing social practices and public interest with more regular involvement in collective and institutional processes. In this respect, social activity, interest in public affairs, and digital forms of interaction can be understood as interconnected components of a broader, but still unevenly developed, structure of civic engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study developed and empirically applied a multidimensional Civic Engagement Index (CEI) designed to assess the structure of civic participation in Kazakhstan. The proposed framework integrates five dimensions – Social Activity, Civic Engagement, Political Participation, State Support and the Role of NGOs, and Digital Activity and Engagement – thereby combining behavioral, attitudinal, social, institutional, and digital aspects of civic engagement within a context-sensitive measurement framework.

The resulting CEI score of 31.73 indicates a moderate level of civic engagement within the reference scale developed for this study. More importantly, the results demonstrate that civic engagement in Kazakhstan is not uniform across its dimensions. The index captures a structure in which socially oriented forms of participation are more developed than forms requiring sustained political and institutional involvement. This finding demonstrates the analytical value of treating civic engagement as a multidimensional phenomenon rather than reducing it to a single form of participation.

The study makes two principal contributions. First, it provides an empirically grounded framework for measuring civic engagement in the specific institutional and socio-cultural context of Kazakhstan. Second, it demonstrates the value of distinguishing between the aggregate level of civic engagement and its internal structure. The CEI therefore serves not only as a summary indicator but also as a framework for identifying differences in the development of specific dimensions of civic participation.

The sensitivity analysis further indicates that the overall configuration of the findings remains broadly stable under alternative weighting schemes, although the absolute value of the composite index varies. This supports the robustness of the substantive structure identified by the study while confirming that the numerical value of a composite index remains partly dependent on methodological choices concerning weighting.

The study has several limitations, including reliance on self-reported and official data, the limited capacity of a quantitative index to capture informal and emerging forms of participation, and the use of expert judgment in determining domain weights. These limitations provide directions for further methodological development. Future research should test alternative weighting procedures, incorporate longitudinal, administrative, and digital data, and examine variations in civic engagement across regions and population groups.

Overall, the proposed CEI provides a basis for systematic assessment of civic engagement in Kazakhstan and for monitoring its development over time. Its principal value lies in making the multidimensional structure of civic participation empirically observable and providing a framework through which changes in the relationship between citizens, civil society, and public institutions can be examined.

Ethics Declaration

The study was based on an anonymous sociological survey conducted by an independent external research company. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the intended use of the collected data for research purposes, and their right to decline participation or withdraw at any stage. No personally identifiable information was collected, and the confidentiality and anonymity of all responses were ensured.

Formal ethical approval was not required because the study involved only adult participants in a non-interventional sociological survey and did not involve medical treatment, experimental procedures, psychological interventions, or vulnerable populations. In accordance with the applicable national legislation and institutional requirements in Kazakhstan, studies of this nature do not require review by an institutional ethics committee.

Informed consent was obtained orally from all participants prior to their participation. Written informed consent was not required under the applicable national legislation and institutional requirements, given the anonymous nature of the survey and the absence of any medical or psychological intervention. The study was conducted in accordance with applicable ethical standards, national legislation, and institutional requirements.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

During the preparation of this manuscript, generative AI tools were used solely for language editing, proofreading, and improving the clarity of the text. All substantive content, analysis, interpretation, and conclusions were developed and verified by the authors.

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