

2023

YOUTH STUDY GENERATION OF INDEPENDENT GEORGIA: IN BETWEEN HOPES AND UNCERTAINTIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Most young people in Georgia think that their material situation is similar to those within their communities and, broadly, within the country. Almost two-thirds (65%) of young people say they have enough money for food, clothing and shoes. Young women and those aged 25 to 29 evaluate their condition as more precarious than men and 24 and younger.
- As for income sources, about two-thirds (65%) of respondents say they depend on other people (e.g. parents, partners, relatives), while 38% say they have some personal income such as salaries, loans and grants or income from rent. Young men, those aged 25-29, those living in Tbilisi and those with higher education are more likely to have personal income compared to women, those up to 24 years old, those living outside Tbilisi and those with only secondary education.

- Almost three-quarters of young people (72%) say they are mostly or very satisfied with the quality of education in Georgia. More than two-thirds of respondents (69%) are confident that their education will prepare them for the labour market. Despite the high rate of satisfaction, 58% of young people say they do not have a job. Men (43%), Tbilisi residents (45%), representatives of older age groups (49%) and those with a higher education (59%) are more likely to be employed than women (26%), those living outside the capital (30%), 18 to 24 year-olds (38%) and those with only secondary education (41%).
- About 31% of young people between the ages of 14 and 29 are Neither in Education nor Employment or Training (NEET). Women, young people between the ages of 25 and 29 and respondents residing living outside Tbilisi tend to be NEETs.
- About a quarter of young people (24%) have done unpaid work voluntarily in the last twelve months. Young men, those with jobs and single respondents were slightly more likely to be engaged in voluntary activities.
- Quantitative and qualitative data suggest that young people in Georgia perceive democracy to be the best system of governance. The plurality (44%) evaluates the current practice of democracy in Georgia positively. Compared to Tbilisi (33%), where the assessment of the practice of democracy in Georgia is lower, positive attitudes prevail in other urban (47%) and rural (50%) areas.
- Focus groups show that young people associate democracy with freedom, freedom of speech and the rule of people. Liberty and freedom of speech are considered the most important values of democracy. Furthermore, democracy is understood as involvement in politics and active citizenship, as well as the rule of people and respecting others' opinions. Young people see the United States and European countries as examples of democracies.
- Most young people in Georgia report having no interest in politics. About 38% reported a low level of interest, while respondents with higher education and those who are employed tend to be more interested than those with secondary education and those who are unemployed.
- Despite reported apathy towards politics, more than half of young people in Georgia access information on political events, with one-third (34%) doing so every day. Close to one in five (22%) access political news at least once a week. Ethnic Georgians, those outside Tbilisi, employed respondents and those with higher education are more likely to follow political news.
- Sixty-three percent of young people believe that their interests are not represented at all or are poorly represented in national politics. Nonetheless, the majority (80%) say that they would probably not (18%) or would not take up a political function (62%) themselves.

- Reported political participation of young people is also low, with at least 75% of young people saying that they have not taken part in any of the listed political activities (e.g. volunteering, donation, signing petitions, participating in demonstrations, etc.) during the last six months. Participating in resolving a problem that a settlement or a neighbour faced were the most frequently named (17%).
- Survey participants consider unemployment, increasing prices and education to be the most important issues facing Georgia. This is partially confirmed by focus group discussions, where along with economic issues and low levels of education, young people also identified the Covid-19 pandemic, issues with the healthcare system and migration as problems that the country is confronting now.
- Quantitative and qualitative data shows that young people in Georgia do not fully understand the concepts of left-wing and right-wing political beliefs. Many young people could not differentiate between right-leaning and left-leaning policies during the survey. While 34% considered themselves to be centrists, 28% found it hard to answer this question. These findings were also confirmed during focus groups, where participants had difficulties placing themselves on the left-right scale.
- Almost two-thirds (62%) of young people in Georgia agree that Georgia is a European country. Young people who are older than 25 or who only have secondary education are slightly less likely to think so. During focus groups, those participants who did not feel Georgia was a part of Europe claimed that Georgian culture is completely different from European culture. For some young people, Georgia is not yet part of Europe as it lacks self-awareness and development in many fields.
- Young people in Georgia have a predominantly positive opinion of Europe. Forty-five percent identify Europe as a place of democracy and the rule of law, while for 38% Europe is associated with cultural and scientific achievements. Close to one-third (35%) characterised Europe as a place of economic prosperity and wealth. Only a negligible share associates Europe with negative sentiments, such as it being an unwelcoming place (3%) characterised by moral decline and the loss of traditional values (5%), or being hostile to Georgia (3%).
- One in five respondents believes that no country is a close friend of Georgia. Those who mentioned a specific country most frequently named Ukraine (28%), the United States (18%) and Turkey (11%), while Russia is perceived as the most important threat to Georgia's statehood (84%), national security (78%), economic system (74%) and national values (72%). Notably, ethnic Georgians are more likely to think so as a smaller share of ethnic minorities name cooperation with Russia as a threat to Georgia's economic system (40%), statehood (41%), national security (34%) and values (36%).
- The European Union (79%), international organisations (75%), international financial institutions (73%) and NATO (73%) are believed to play a positive role in Georgia. According to discussions in focus groups, respondents associated Georgia joining the EU with financial and other benefits.

- Sixty-three percent of young people in Georgia consider that the dissolution of the USSR was a good thing for Georgia. Those with higher education, and those living in Tbilisi, are more inclined to think so compared to their peers in other places or with lower educational attainment. In contrast to ethnic Georgians (64%), young people representing Georgia's ethnic minorities (44%) are less enthusiastic about the Soviet Union's breakup.
- Focus group discussions revealed that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was seen as a positive event as Georgia regained its independence and people were more free to express their opinion. However, some highlighted the negative consequences of the Soviet Union's demise, for instance, a worsened socioeconomic situation, as well as losing the special place and role that Georgians had in the USSR.
- When it comes to identity, the majority of young people in Georgia perceive themselves to be citizens of Georgia (94%), part of their town, village or region (77%), belonging to their ethnic group (62%) and belonging to the Caucasus (59%). Relatively less frequently, young people also saw themselves as global citizens (50%) or as Europeans (41%).
- Being faithful to partners (95%), taking responsibility (95%), being independent (95%) and having a successful career (93%) are the most cherished values for young people in Georgia. Values related to well-being, for instance, healthy eating (91%), looking good (88%), doing sports (82%) and getting rich (67%) are also considered to be important by the majority of interviewees.
- Family values such as having children (88%) and getting married (77%) are considered very or rather important. Such values are more important for young men and young people aged 25-29. In addition, those outside the capital value marriage more than residents of Tbilisi.
- Values related to political and civic engagement, such as being active in politics (22%) and participating in civic actions (43%), are less important for young people. These values are slightly more important for the youngest age group (14-17) than other age groups. When young people had to select the most important values they chose "personal dignity" and "correctness/decency/integrity" most frequently, followed by "faithfulness" and "honesty." Values related to tolerance, solidarity/compassion and altruism were rarely (up to 7%) mentioned among those most important.
- Though a great majority of young people never justify physical (76%) or verbal (69%) aggression or abuse towards queer folks, in other matters their attitude toward sexual minorities is negative, even claiming that they need treatment. Young women and respondents based in Tbilisi have more tolerant attitudes. Physical aggression towards queer folks is never justified for 82% of women when compared to 71% of men.
- The most trusted institutions are the army (74%) and church/religious institutions (67%), followed by police (48%) and courts (39%), while the least trusted institutions are political parties (79% distrust), media (74% distrust), the President (71% distrust), trade unions (67% distrust) and the national government (66% distrust). Civil society organisations and NGOs are trusted by 30%, while about 60% of respondents claimed distrust. Overall, young people living in Tbilisi trust institutions the least, and young women trust institutions slightly more than men.

- Survey findings showed that there are three groups young people reject the most. These are drug addicts (61%), queer folks (46%) and people from Russia (44%), who young people would exclude from entering Georgia. On the other hand, the most tolerated groups of people are mothers with many children, religious persons, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees.
- Climate change is not among the most salient issues for young people in Georgia. Empirical findings show that while some think that climate change is a natural process (48%), others believe it has a human origin (49%).
- Young people are in favour of introducing measures to combat climate change (77%). In the survey, such restrictions were more supported by young women and residents of urban areas, including Tbilisi. In focus group discussions participants emphasised the need to introduce fines for littering the street and nature.
- Almost 40% of young people claim to have travelled abroad. More men, those aged 25 to 29, those living in urban areas and ethnic minorities have had more experience than their peers. Of those who have been abroad, only about one-fifth claimed they stayed for more than six months. Forty-six percent of young people with travel experience went abroad for study and/or work. A greater number of male, rural and urban residents, young people aged 25-29 and ethnic Georgians have had such experience.
- Among those who reported spending time abroad for study or work, the majority said that they were working (62%). In addition, a significantly higher number of young people from rural settlements (82%) reported work experience, indicating that youth from rural areas more often go abroad, presumably for seasonal work. Education-related answers represented only one-fifth of responses.
- Young people name the opportunity to earn higher salaries (57%) and obtain better education (45%) as the two main reasons they would move to another country. The former is more important for young men and those in the oldest age group (aged 25 to 29), while education is more important for women and younger respondents. The most frequently picked countries for emigration are the United States, Germany and other European countries.
- During the focus groups, study participants named emigration as one of the most important issues facing Georgia, explaining that young people leave Georgia due to the economic hardships the country faces. Another reason for emigration is the low level of education and lack of prospects for personal growth or achieving desired goals in Georgia.
- Respondents feel positive about the future. The vast majority (77%) feel that their family's standard of living will improve within the next five years. Young people are generally less optimistic when asked about the country's future prospects. Still, the majority (59%) believe that, in general, living standards in Georgia will increase within the next five years.

CONTACT

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung South Caucasus | Nino Ramishvili Dead End I, Bldg. 1, App. 7
0179 Tbilisi, Georgia | <https://southcaucasus.fes.de> | Email: georgia@fes.de