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

IMPRINT

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1

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 those 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 have only 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 believe 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.

2

INTRODUCTION



Young people are key to a country's socioeconomic and cultural development. Starting from the teenage years, they are slowly becoming engaged with social life in one way or another and will eventually be fully involved once the youth period ends and they become adults. While they can develop in many different directions, it currently seems that their tastes, lifestyle, values, views and attitudes differ in many ways from those of older generations. They are the ones to bring change and innovation. Therefore, it is essential to study their conditions and perceptions on a number of issues to better understand what the future might bring once these young people become full members of society.

While government documents recognise the importance of young people's engagement in political, economic and civic life¹ and institutions are places that should promote the greater participation of young people², many aspects of youth life lag behind. Youth unemployment is considerably high, with a large gender gap³. Previous studies show that young people feel disengaged and frustrated with political life, which leads to low political and civic participation.

The goal of this study is to present a comprehensive outlook on the lives of young women and men in Georgia. Grounded on the results of the previous study by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in 2016, "Generation in Transition,"⁵ this report⁶ summarises the findings of a quantitative and qualitative study of the opinions of young people in Georgia. Based on a nationally representative survey and four focus group discussions with young people, the study explores young peoples':

- socioeconomic situation,
- political and civic participation,
- democratic and public life,
- foreign policy attitudes,
- issues of identity, values and the perception of recent historical memory,
- attitudes towards climate change and
- future aspirations and concerns.

Within the study, "youth" or "young people" refer to young adults between 14 and 29 years old and living in Georgia, excluding the occupied territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali / South Ossetia.

This report proceeds as follows. First, a brief methodological note is presented. Following are substantive chapters that look at young peoples' household and living situations, education and employment, attitudes towards democracy and governance, views on foreign policy and issues of revisiting the recent past. In subsequent chapters, issues such as identities, participation and values, attitudes toward climate change and young peoples' concerns and aspirations are explored. The report concludes with reflections on the major findings of this study.

3

METHODOLOGY



The methodology of the study was developed by R-Research Limited of the United Kingdom at the request of and in consultation with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) South Caucasus Regional office. The study makes use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the attitudes, perceptions and opinions of young people aged 14-29 in Georgia.

The detailed sample plan and data collection protocol was developed by R-Research with input from Dr Félix Krawatzek of the Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS), Berlin and approved by FES. The questionnaire was prepared in English in consultation with FES offices in Tbilisi and Berlin. The fieldwork of the quantitative study was administered between 30 May 2022 and 16 June 2022. A nationally representative sample of 1,206 respondents aged 14-29 was collected by Tbilisi-based firm IPM Research. Respondents were selected using a multi-stage stratified cluster sample. Respondents in households were selected using an age and gender quota. On average, the completed interviews took about 45 minutes, with a standard deviation of 14.38 minutes.

The analysis below uses elements of exploratory and confirmatory statistical analysis. Unless indicated otherwise, differences are statistically significant and identified using appropriate regression models controlling for basic demographics. For convenience purposes, differences between groups are presented as crosstabulations. In some cases, proportions might not add up to 100 or have 1% discrepancies with actual and reported data due to rounding errors.

As for the qualitative part of the study, four focus group discussions were conducted in Tbilisi among young people aged 14-29 years. The focus groups were organised and conducted by IPM Research under the direct supervision of R-Research. Research instruments including discussion guides and prompts were developed in collaboration between FES, Dr Félix Krawatzek and R-Research. These discussions explored multiple themes such as personal life and the COVID-19 situation, perceptions of politics, democracy and today's challenges for societies across the world, while views on the collapse of the Soviet Union and belonging to Europe and Emigration were also discussed. Focus groups were observed online by researchers from R-Research and FES. Focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed. During focus group discussions participants also answered a short online survey that provided additional information for qualitative data analysis. In this report, insights from the qualitative study are presented thematically alongside the results of the quantitative part of the study.

Note: The data is presented in accordance with the relevant rounding rules. In some cases original values would not add up to 100% without arbitrary determination, so original values were thereby kept instead. This explains eventual deviations in the graph.

4

PART ONE: HOUSEHOLD AND LIVING SITUATION

INTRODUCTION

This section presents an analysis of the livelihoods of young people. It focuses on aspects that are usually overlooked in economic research but have been proven to be associated with multiple socioeconomic outcomes and attitudes.⁷ The chapter below specifically analyses various measures of subjective well-being and sources of monetary income.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Almost two-thirds (65%) of young people say that they have enough money for food, clothing and shoes, while one-third are worse off. Young women and those aged 25 or older tend to evaluate their situation worse than young men and Georgians from younger age cohorts.
- The majority of young people in Georgia think that their material situation is similar to that of those within their communities (70%) and, broadly, in the country (61%).
- When it comes to income sources, most young people in Georgia depend on others, with close to two-thirds saying so. A distant second (38%) source is personal income, while one in ten depends on state support.
- Young men, those living in Tbilisi and those with higher education are more likely to have personal income, while younger respondents and unemployed young people in Georgia depend on others, such as parents or partners, for their income.

FINANCIAL AND HOUSEHOLD CONDITIONS

How do young people in Georgia evaluate their socioeconomic situation? Subjective well-being is a theoretical construct that looks beyond the monetary measures of well-being and evaluates one's self-perception of material well-being. Respondents were asked how they would evaluate the state of their households in terms of access to primary resources and services to measure their subjective well-being. Overall, about a quarter (26%) said that their households could afford appliances, although they could not

purchase a new car. An almost similar proportion (23%) said that they only had enough money for basics, while close to one-fifth (22%) noted that while they could purchase clothes, they did not have enough money for large household items. About 17% were at the top of the socio-economic rung, saying they could afford a car (10%) or an apartment (7%) if they wanted. Only 2% said that they didn't have enough money for food, while 7% could afford food but not clothing.

Respondents' gender, age and education predict their subjective evaluation of their economic status (Figure 1). To ease the interpretation of findings, the variable was turned into a seven-point scale, with one corresponding to the lowest socioeconomic standing and the answer "Money is not enough for food". Seven corresponds to the highest socioeconomic standing and the answer "We experience no material difficulties". Overall, the average score of the scale was 4.08, with boys scoring higher (4.22) than girls (2.94). Respondents from the oldest age cohort (ages 25-29) scored the lowest (3.64) when compared to those in the 14-17 (4.35) and 18-24 (4.31) age groups. This could be explained by the fact that older respondents are more likely to be living outside their parental households

Respondents were further asked to compare their material situation first with those residing in the same community (city, town or village), and then with other Georgians (Figure 2). Overall, the majority of young people in Georgia believe that, materially, they are in the same condition as others in the same community (70%) and other Georgians (61%). Fourteen percent believe that they are doing worse than others in their communities, while about a quarter thinks the same compared to other people in Georgia. Only about one in ten thinks that they are doing better or significantly better than other people in their communities (13%) and Georgia (10%) (Figure 2).

Notably, respondents from the capital and those older than 24 are more likely to say that they are worse off within their communities. Respondents with complete or incomplete secondary education are also more likely to agree. Compared to other Georgians, those from outside Tbilisi and those in older age cohorts are more likely to evaluate their standing as worse off. Rural youth are also less likely to consider their socioeconomic standing as better than other Georgians.

FIGURE 1: MEAN VALUES OF THE PERCEIVED ECONOMIC SITUATION BY THE LARGER POPULATION (complete sample except those who said "Don't know" or refused to answer the question, 98%)

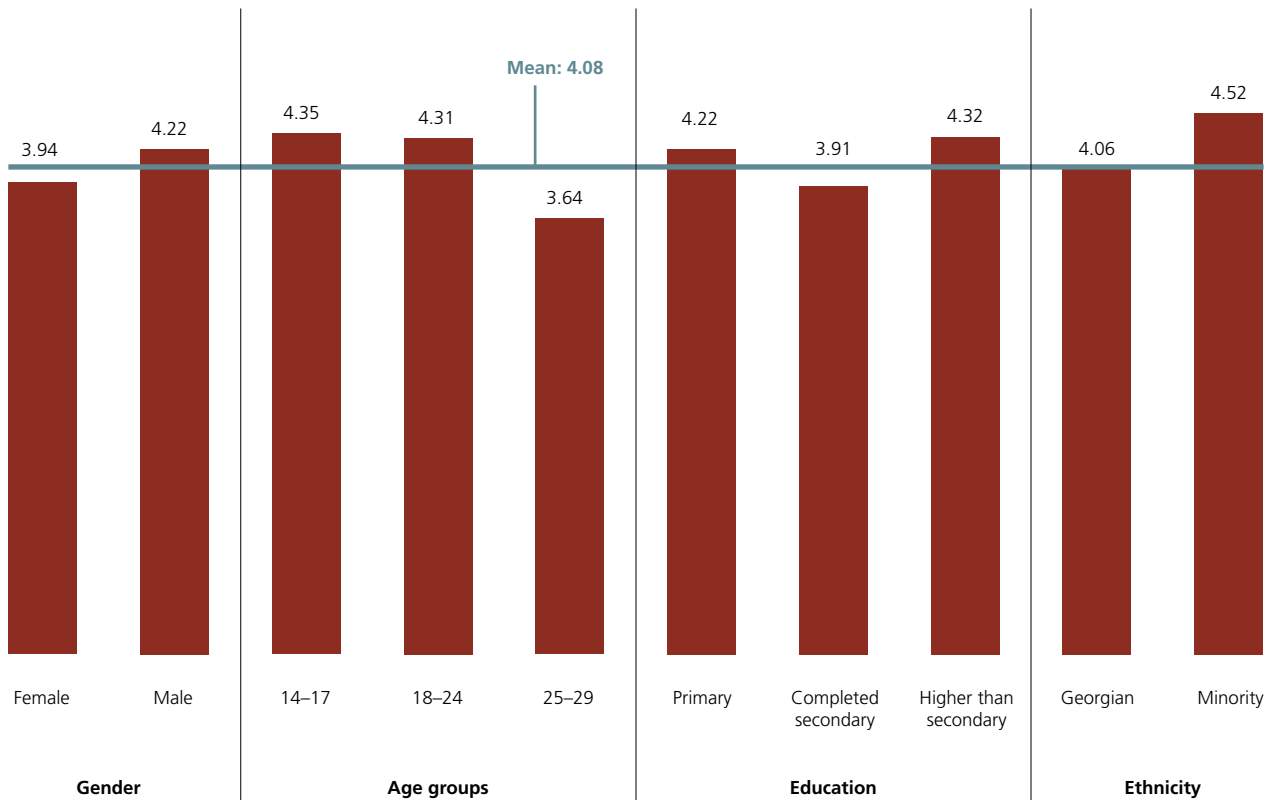
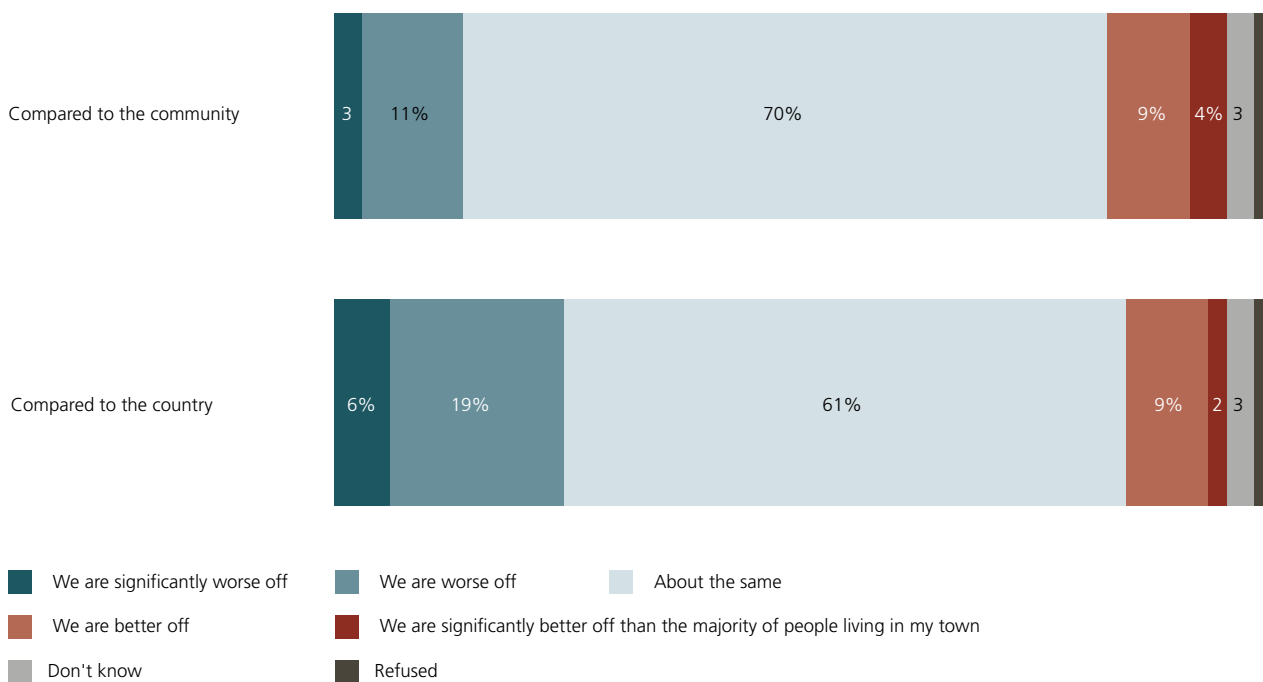


FIGURE 2: THINKING ABOUT THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE LIVING IN ..., HOW DOES THE MATERIAL STATUS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD COMPARE? (%)



LIVELIHOOD SOURCES

Next, we examined the sources of livelihood reported by young people in Georgia (Figure 3). The plurality of respondents (46%) say that they are supported by their parents, followed by 37%, who have their own personal income. Close to one in ten (12%) are supported by partners, while the same proportion received financial assistance from parents/relatives. Fewer named government support (7%) and a family pension (5%), while 1% or fewer received income from rent, grants or student loans.

To further gauge young people in Georgia's dependence on different livelihoods, three separate variables were generated that measured whether they support themselves, depend on someone or receive state assistance. Given that one might have multiple sources of income, proportions do not add up to 100. Overall, 38% of young people in Georgia had some personal income (salary, rent, grant or loan), while 65% were supported by others such as parents or partners and 10% received state assistance (pension, state support, Figure 4).

Respondents' gender, age, geographic location, education and employment status predict whether or not

one has personal income. More young men (49%) than women (28%) have some form of personal income, as do respondents from older age cohorts. More than half of those 25 or older have personal income (52%), compared to 43% of those aged 18-24 and only 6% among those 17 or younger. Respondents with higher education (65%) and employed young people (96%) in Georgia are more likely to have their own income. Those outside Tbilisi, including 33% of young people in other urban areas and 32% of young people in rural areas, are less likely to have their own money.

When it comes to dependents, an absolute majority of respondents under 18 depend on someone, including two-thirds of young people between 18 and 24 and close to half of those 25 and older. Similarly, respondents with primary or incomplete secondary education are more likely to be dependent than those with complete secondary or tertiary education. Employed respondents are also less likely to be dependent on others.

As for state assistance, there are small yet significant differences in terms of age, with those aged 25 to 29 being more dependent on such sources of income. Fewer employed respondents name state help as a source of income when compared to unemployed young people in Georgia.

FIGURE 3: WHAT ARE YOUR PERSONAL INCOME SOURCES? (% , multiple choice, full sample)

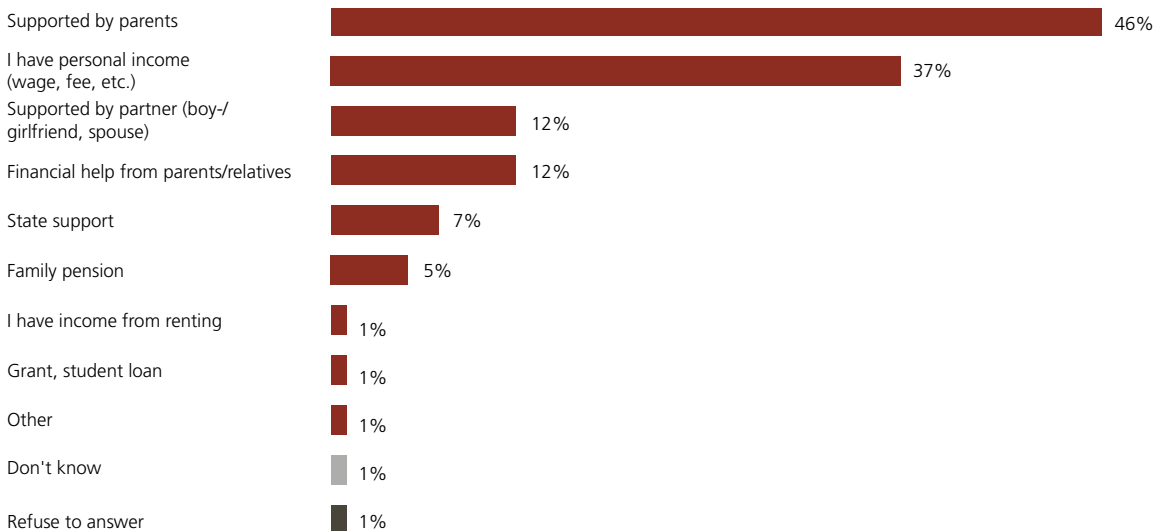
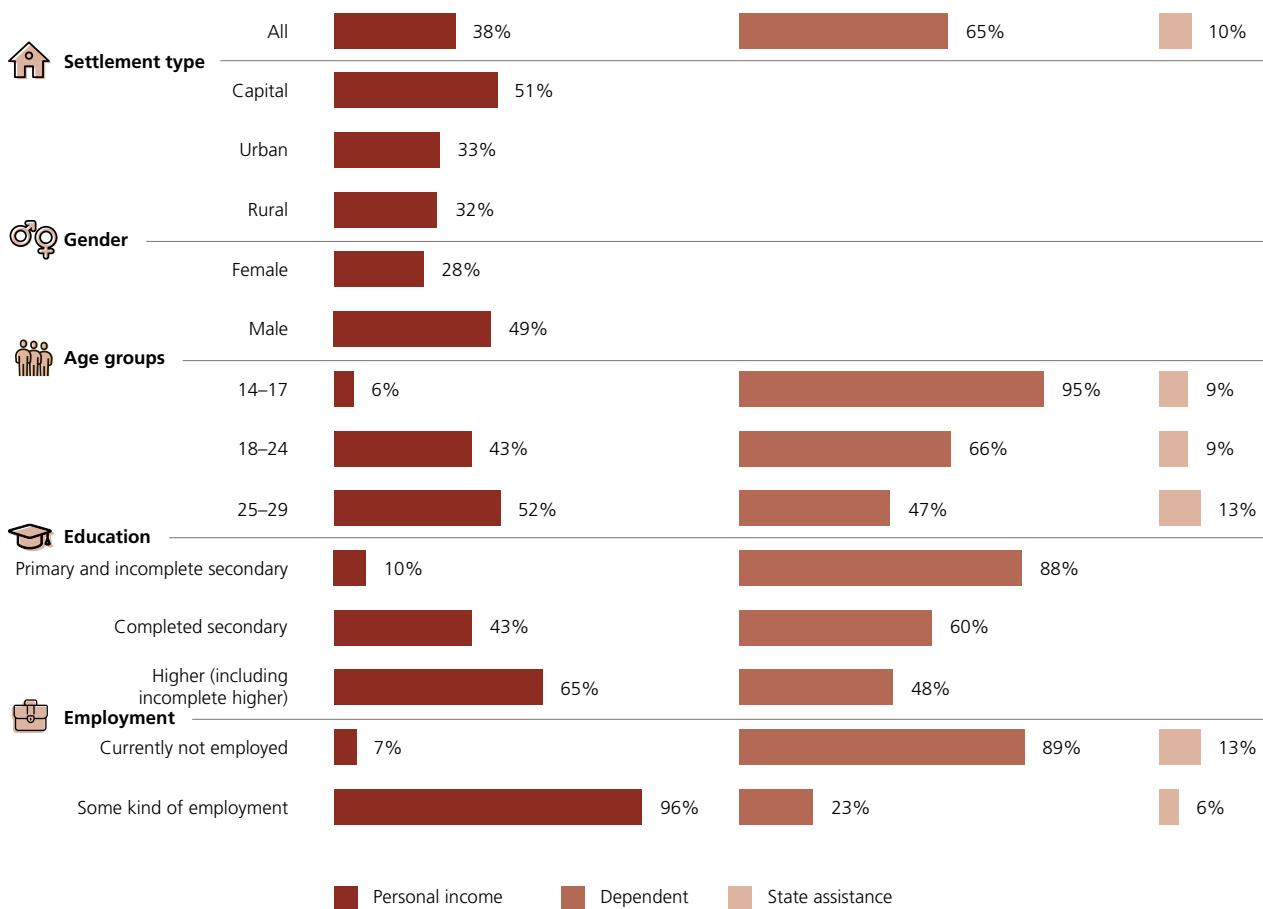


FIGURE 4: SOURCES OF INCOME BY MAJOR POPULATION GROUPS (% , only statistically significant differences are shown, full sample)



DISCUSSION

Overall, the data shows that most young people feel confident that their households can cover basic expenses such as food and clothing, with a significant portion of those who report the ability to afford large appliances. Close to one-fifth believed that they could afford costly purchases such as apartments or vehicles. While the median standing on the socioeconomic ladder equals four on a seven-point scale, young women as well as those aged 25 or older, tend to evaluate their situation worse than young men and Georgians from younger age cohorts.

When it comes to the subjective evaluation of their material situation compared to either their own community or the country, most young people in Georgia think it is similar. As for income sources, most young people in Georgia depend on others with close to two-thirds agreeing. A distant second (38%) is personal income, with one in ten depending on state support. Young men, those living in Tbilisi and those with higher education are more likely to have personal income compared to young women, respondents residing outside Georgia's capital and those with lower educational attainment. In the same vein, younger respondents and unemployed young people in Georgia depend on others for income.

5

**PART TWO:
EDUCATION
AND
EMPLOYMENT**

INTRODUCTION

The economic empowerment of young people is one of the five key national priorities laid out in the youth policy concept of the Georgian government, outlined for 2020-2030.⁸ Specifically, among its declared policy outcomes, the government aims to reduce youth unemployment and the share of those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), tackle gender inequality and other malpractices that exist when employers hire young workers and incentivise youth entrepreneurship. Moreover, a programmatic government document, “For Building a European State,” recognises the importance of youth economic empowerment.⁹

Nonetheless, young people face challenges when trying to access education and employment. Close to a third of young people between the ages of 15 and 29 were NEETs, almost five times as much as the average for member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).¹⁰ The gender gap among employed youth aged 15-29 is enormous, with almost twice the share of young men employed, compared to only 35% of young women. Very few young people have tried to start their own businesses.¹²

Inequalities exist in terms of access to education and employment. Rural youth are less likely to continue their studies in higher educational institutions and are over-represented among those who have stopped their education when compared to their peers in urban areas. In 2014, a plurality of unemployed young people (42% among the 30% who were unemployed) were looking for their first jobs, while 31% were unemployed for a year or longer.¹³

This section provides greater context for the above administrative data. It identifies key factors associated with the quality of education, NEET status and attitudes toward career development. Additionally, it looks at volunteerism, which is a key factor in the development of civil society.¹⁴

MAIN FINDINGS

- Overall, the majority (57%) of young people in Georgia between the ages of 14 and 29 are not in school, while 43% study in some educational institution.
- Differences exist for age and gender, with slightly more young women attending school (45%) than men (41%). Young people in the capital (47%) and urban areas (42%) are more likely to be in schools than their peers in rural areas (40%).
- Most young people in Georgia seem to be satisfied with the quality of education in the country, with close to three-quarters (72%) of respondents being satisfied with the education they are receiving now or have received at school.
- Many young people believe that their education prepares them well for the labour market. More than two-thirds of respondents who attend school are confident that their education prepares them well for the labour market.
- Those who are in school and work are less satisfied with how the education system prepares them for the labour market than those who are unemployed.
- The majority (58%) of young people report not having a job. Close to one in five (21%) are actively seeking a job, while 38% report that they are not looking for a job.
- Tbilisi residents and representatives of older age cohorts are more likely to be employed.
- About 31% of young people between the ages of 14 and 29 are neither in education, nor employment or training.
- Young women are more likely to be NEETs compared to young men. Only close to one in five (22%) young people in Tbilisi are NEETs, while almost one-third outside the capital neither work nor are in training.
- Almost half of young people between the ages of 25 and 29 are neither employed nor attend school.
- About a quarter of young people (24%) have done unpaid volunteer work in the last twelve months.
- Young men, those in jobs and single respondents were slightly more likely to report that they have done some volunteer work.

GENERAL EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Overall, the majority (57%) of Georgian youth between the ages of 14 and 29 are not in school, while 43% study in some educational institution (Figure 5). When looking at different age cohorts, significant differences can be observed: an absolute majority of respondents whose age coincides with that of secondary school attend a formal educational institution. The proportion drops among those who are between the ages of 18 and 24, while only 5% of young people in the 25-29 age cohort are studying. Young women are slightly more likely than men to be in school. Similarly, more young people in the capital are studying in a formal educational institution than those outside Tbilisi. More than half of unemployed respondents attend school, as opposed to close to one in four among those who work. Notably, eight times more single respondents are in school compared to those who are married (Figure 5).

We also examined how young people in Georgia perceive the quality of education that they received or are receiving now. Notably, 72% of young people are mostly (47%) or very (25%) satisfied. Respondents who are in school were asked a follow-up question about the quality of their current education, while those out of school were probed about the education they previously obtained. Close to a quarter of respondents in both groups (27% among non-students, 25% among students) said that they were not satisfied at all or mostly dissatisfied with the quality of their education. Seventy percent of non-students and almost three-quarters of students were satisfied with the quality of their education.

Respondents' age, geography and educational attainment predict whether or not they are satisfied with the education they received or are receiving in school (Figure 6). The majority of respondents across all major demographic groups report satisfaction with the education they are receiving. Still, those in the capital are slightly less likely to be happy with the quality of education than those outside Tbilisi. Respondents who are not in school do not differ across age groups in terms of satisfaction with their education. A total of 80% of those under 17 years of age who are in school are happy with their education, compared to slightly more than two-thirds among those aged 18 to 24. Notably, respondents who have only attained primary or

incomplete secondary education and are not currently in school are far less likely to be happy with their education compared to those who have completed secondary education or attended higher education (either complete or incomplete). Those currently attending a higher education institution are significantly less likely to be happy with their education than those with complete secondary or primary education.

As young people in Georgia seem to be satisfied with the quality of school education, the majority also think that the education system prepares them well for the labour market. More than two-thirds (69%) of respondents currently in school are confident that their education prepares them well for the labour market. A similar proportion (66%) among those who are not currently in school think that schools have prepared them for the labour market either rather well or very well.

Similar to satisfaction with the education system, youth outside Tbilisi are more likely to say that schools they attend prepare them for the labour market. Those outside Tbilisi who are not in school also believe that schools prepare students for employment. Notably, those who are in school and work are less confident than the unemployed that the education system prepares them for the labour market.

FIGURE 5: PROPORTION OF THOSE WHO ARE IN ANY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION BY MAJOR POPULATION GROUPS (%)

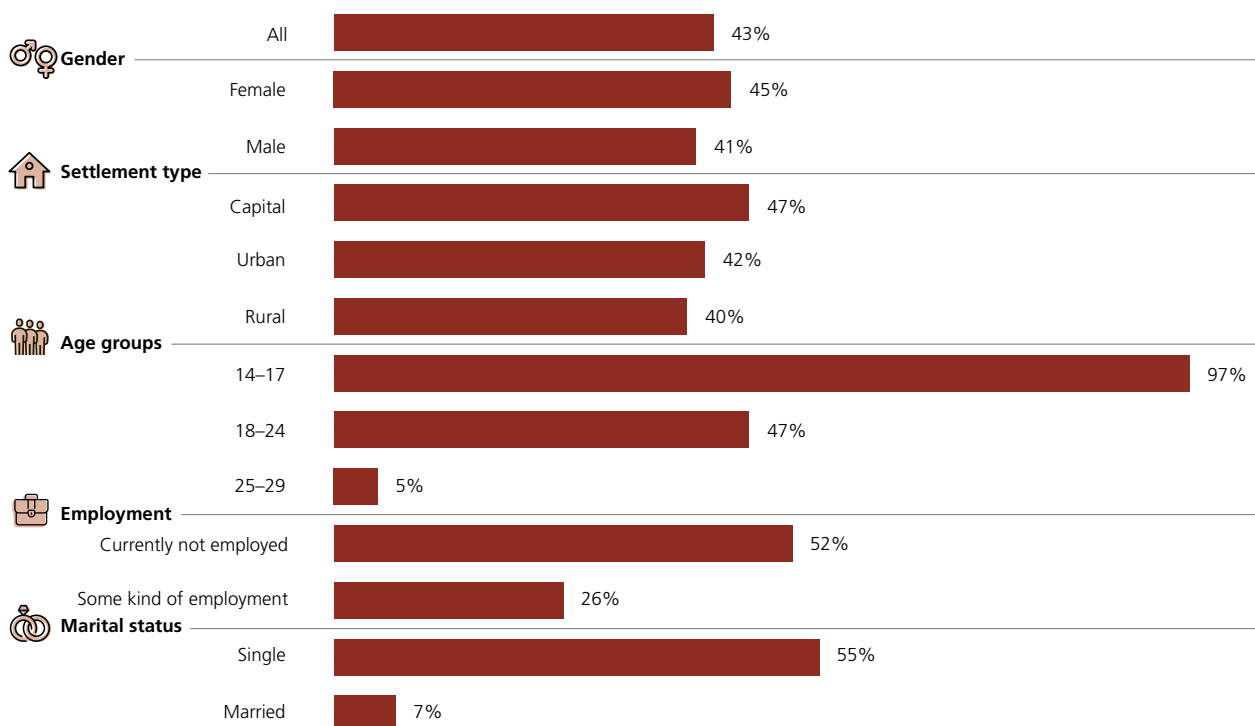
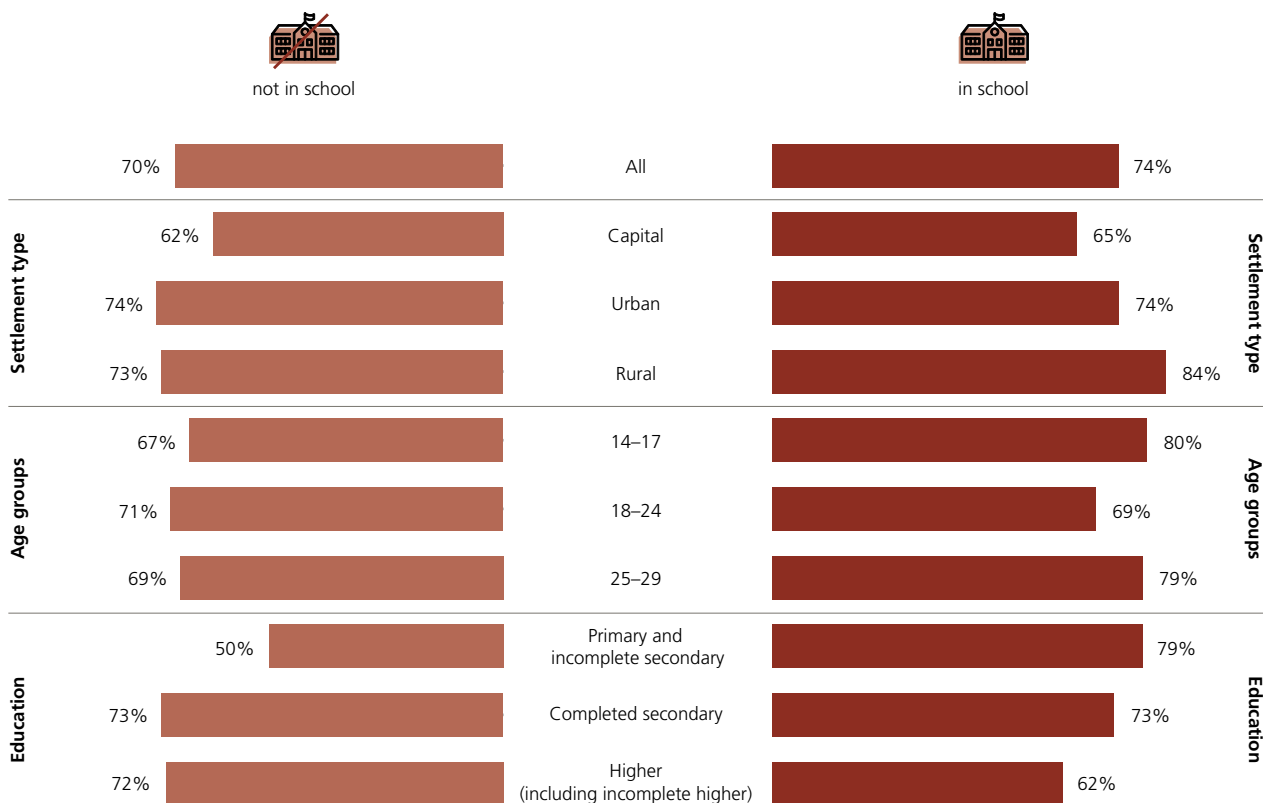


FIGURE 6: ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION YOU ARE RECEIVING / YOU HAVE RECEIVED? (% of very satisfied and somewhat satisfied, by major population groups, full sample)



EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Close to a third of young people in Georgia (35%) between the ages of 14 and 29 are employed, with 20% having a full-time job, 4% working part-time, 2% employed in occasional jobs and 9% self-employed. The majority of those who are employed work in the private sector (72%), with 16% in state-run jobs and the remainder employed in workplaces with other types of ownership.

About 58% of young people in Georgia are unemployed. Thirty-eight percent of young people are neither working or looking for a job; close to one in five (21%) are actively seeking a job, while the rest named another option or did not want to answer the question.

Respondent’s gender, geography, age, educational attainment and marital status predict whether or not one is working (Figure 7). Young people in Tbilisi are more likely to be working (45%) compared to those living in urban areas other than the capital city or rural areas (30% each). More young men are in jobs (43%) compared to only one in four (26%) young women. Younger respondents are less likely to be employed, as are those with primary and incomplete secondary education. Married respondents are slightly more likely to be employed than single respondents.

When it comes to skills that are required by their current employers, most employed respondents say that the necessary skills are in line with their achieved level of formal

education (59%). Slightly more than a quarter of employed respondents (27%) feel that their job requires a lower level of education than they have achieved to date, while only 12% think that their current job requires a higher level of education than the one they have obtained so far.

About 31% of young people in Georgia are neither in education, nor employment or training (Figure 8). Gender, geography, age and marital status predict respondents’ NEET status. Young women are more likely to be outside of education and employment than young men. Close to just one in five (22%) young people in Tbilisi are NEETs, while almost one-third of respondents outside the capital neither work nor are employed. Importantly, almost half of young people between the ages of 25 and 29 are neither employed nor attend school. Married young people are more likely to be NEETs than single respondents.

Additionally, we examined which factors youth in Georgia believe are necessary to land a job. Respondents were presented a set of statements and were asked to evaluate their importance using a four-point scale. Overall, meritocratic values such as education (94%), previous experience (89%) and education or work experience abroad (77%) were ranked the highest. Still, more than half of respondents ranked non-meritocratic values such as family wealth (73%), friends and relatives (68%) and connections with those in power (66%) as important or very important to land a job. Close to one in five (22%) rated membership in a political party as a very important or important factor in landing a job.

FIGURE 7: PROPORTION OF EMPLOYED YOUNG PEOPLE BY MAJOR DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS (%)

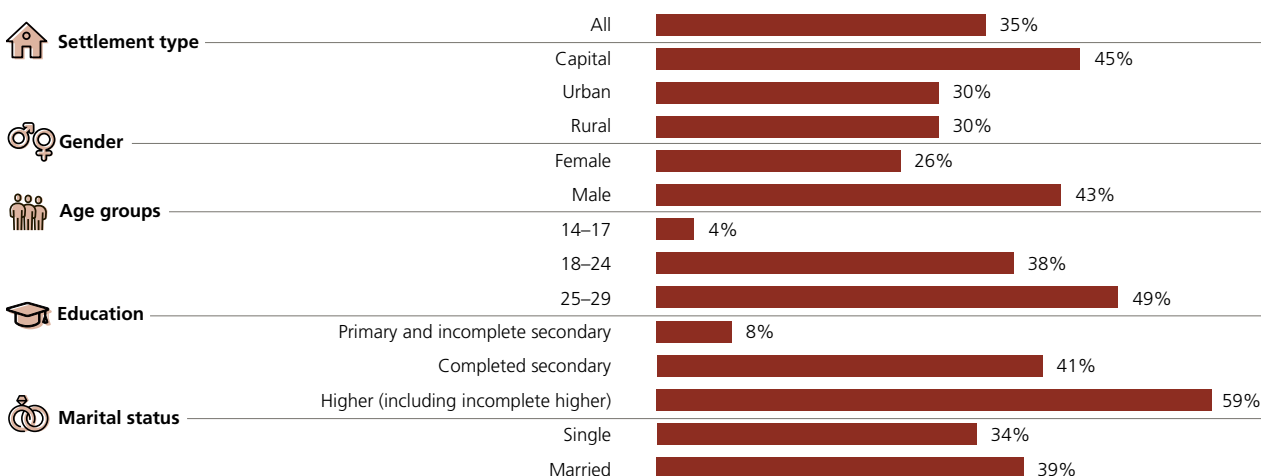
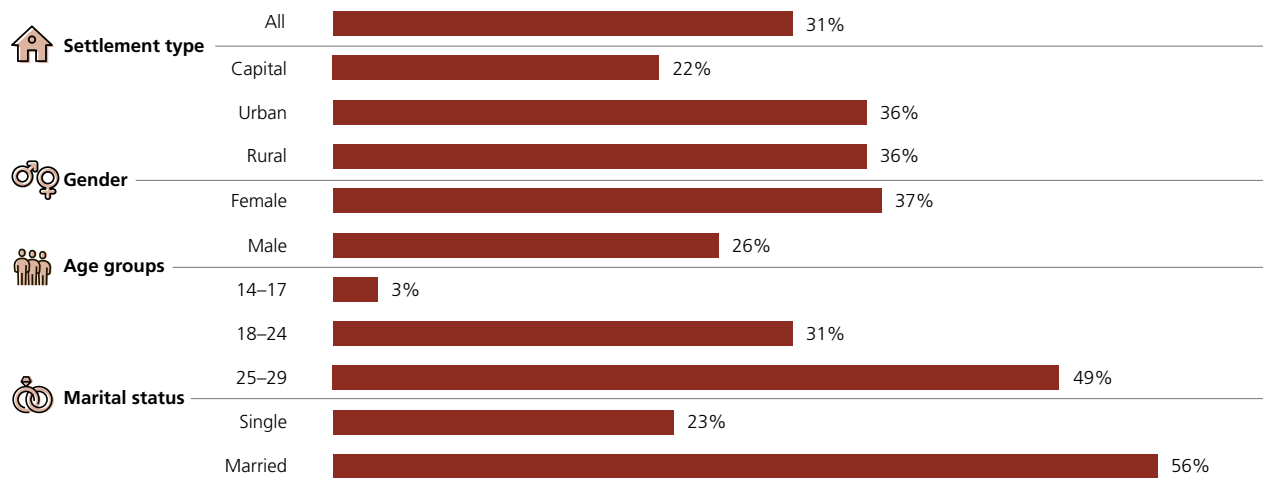


FIGURE 8: PROPORTION OF NEETS (NOT IN EDUCATION, NOT IN EMPLOYMENT) BY MAJOR POPULATION GROUPS (%)

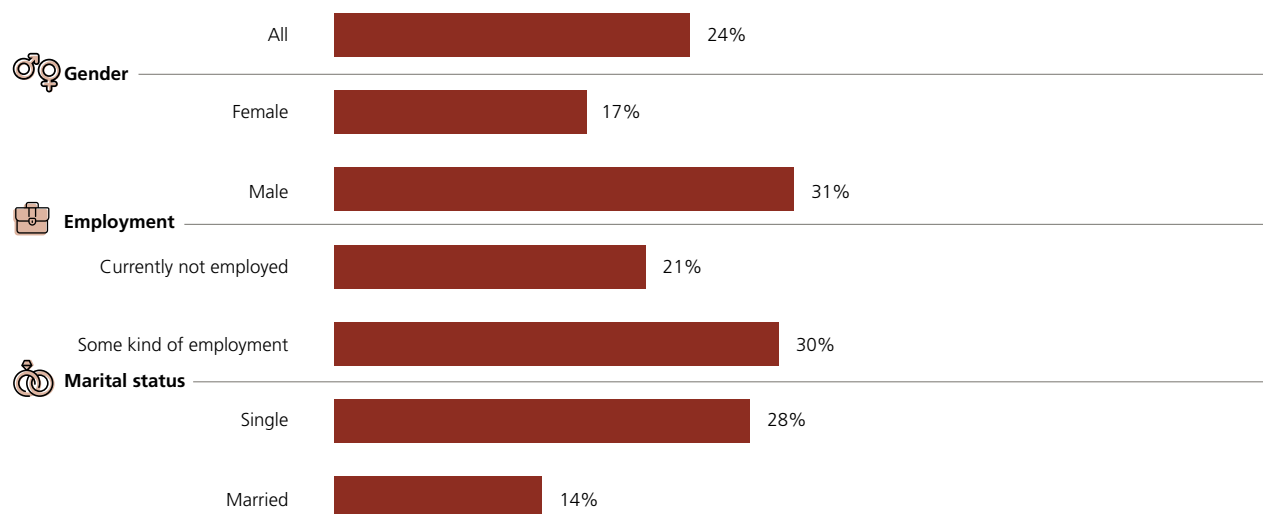


VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Overall, about a quarter of young people (24%) have done unpaid volunteer work in the last twelve months (Figure 9). Young men, those in jobs and single respondents were slightly more likely to report that they have done some volunteer work.

Those who volunteered were asked a follow-up question on the nature of the volunteer work. About one in five (21%) have volunteered at a school or a university, while 17% participated in citizens' initiative, 13% volunteered in a youth organisation, 11% in some self-organised project and 7% contributed to the work of an NGO. Six percent or less volunteered at life-saving services such as the fire department or ambulance, with political parties or with an association. Thirty-two percent named some other form of volunteering.

FIGURE 9: HAVE YOU DONE ANY UNPAID WORK VOLUNTARILY IN THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS? (% by major demographic groups)



DISCUSSION

The Georgian government has named youth economic empowerment as its policy priority for the next decade. Nonetheless, the current levels of youth participation in education and employment are alarming. Overall, the majority (57%) of young people between the ages of 14 and 29 are not in school and 43% study in some educational institution. Differences exist along age and gender lines, with more young women attending school than men. Additionally, young people in the capital and urban areas are more likely to be in schools than respondents in rural areas.

While international test rankings indirectly hint at a rather dire state of the quality of Georgia's educational system¹⁵, and none of the Georgian universities rank among the top 1,000 universities globally¹⁶, surprisingly, most young people in Georgia seem to be satisfied with the quality of education in the country. More than half of the respondents said that they are happy with the education they are receiving now or have received at schools. Only about a quarter of respondents were dissatisfied.

With youth unemployment running high, surprisingly, many young people believe that their education prepares them well for the labour market. This also comes in contrast to studies that claim that there are significant gaps in terms of the knowledge and skills of the workforce and employer-side demand.¹⁷ When faced with the demands of higher education and employment, however, many youth in Georgia change their opinion: those who are in schools and work are less satisfied with how the education system prepares them for the labour market than those who are unemployed.

The majority of young people (58%) in Georgia are unemployed. Close to one in five (21%) are actively seeking a job, while the remainder are in school or have some other reason for not being employed. As expected, Tbilisi residents and the representatives of older age cohorts are more likely to be employed. In line with various administrative data, more young women are unemployed than men. Marriage status is also predictive of employment status, with the obvious reason of supporting the family.

Yet another challenge for Georgia's youth is an extremely high proportion of NEETs, with about 31% of young people between the ages of 14 and 29 being neither in education nor employment. Young women are more likely to be NEETs than young men. Close to one in five (22%) young people in Tbilisi are NEETs, while almost one-third outside the capital neither work nor are employed. Importantly, almost half of young people between the ages of 25 and 29 are neither employed nor attend school.

Employment and education aside, the survey also evaluated young people's engagement in volunteerism. Overall, about a quarter of young people (24%) have done unpaid volunteer work in the last twelve months. Young men, those in jobs and single respondents were slightly more likely to report that they have done some volunteer work.

6

PART THREE: DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

INTRODUCTION

Georgians are enthusiastic about democracy. In 2021, close to two-thirds of respondents believed that it is preferable to other forms of governance, including the same share of people under age 35.¹⁸ While Georgia is often characterised as a hybrid regime, similar to neighbouring Armenia,¹⁹ the population of the latter is less likely to perceive democracy as the preferred model of governance.²⁰

An important component of democracy is political participation. While it is shown that participation contributes to positive views of democracy, especially among young people,²¹ other studies from Georgia attest that only a small share of young people in the country are engaged in political and civic affairs. Moreover, self-assessment of readiness to participate in politics and the government's openness to its citizens as measured by internal and external political efficacy is low,²² despite the fact that politically active urban youth are usually at the forefront of political protests in Georgia.²³

Self-reported partisanship is the lowest among young people, which could be explained by a general frustration with politics and a lack of political participation.²⁴ With increasingly polarised political discourse²⁵ and more Georgians recognising that the country is not a democracy anymore,²⁶ it is not a surprise that many, including young people, become disheartened.

The following chapter will explore how young people in Georgia view the subject of politics. Specifically, it will look at the perceptions of democracy as well as interest in and experience with political participation and evaluate how well young people in Georgia understand mainstream political ideologies.

MAIN FINDINGS

- A majority of young people in Georgia favour democracy. Three-quarters partially or fully support the idea that democracy is the best way to govern Georgia.
- A plurality sees the current practice of democracy in the country in a positive light (44%).

- Most young people associate democracy with liberty, freedom of speech and rule by the people. Liberty and freedom of speech are considered the most important values characterising democracy. Another view of democracy entails involvement in politics and active citizenship.
- When it comes to interest in politics, survey results show a general apathy among young people. Most young people in Georgia say they are not interested in politics. Even those who report at least some degree of interest in politics rarely discuss politics with peers and family members and are less engaged with political news.
- Most young people in Georgia think that their peers' interests are not represented in national politics. Sixty-three percent believe that young people's interests are not represented at all or are poorly represented in national politics.
- Very few young people in Georgia plan to take an active part in politics. When asked whether or not they would contemplate taking up a political function, only 17% said that they would gladly or maybe do so.
- Political and social engagement among young people in Georgia is very low. For each listed political, civic or volunteer activity, at least 3 out of every 4 participants say they have not been involved. A total of 63% of young people have not performed any of the listed activities. Those with higher education tend to be slightly more involved than those with only secondary education.
- Young peoples' civic and political engagement remains low. Only 17% have participated in resolving a problem in their own community or neighbourhood and 14% expressed an opinion in an online space or entered a debate. The same share of respondents volunteered at an NGO, while 9% stopped buying things for political or environmental reasons or donated to an organisation. Fewer signed a petition or participated in a demonstration (8%), while 7% worked for a political party or group. Interest in politics and receiving information on political matters is associated with higher engagement in civic and political activities.
- Economic issues are dominant among the major grievances of young people in Georgia. The plurality considers unemployment (42%) as the most important problem, followed by rising prices (30%), education (9%) and domestic political tension (7%).

- Left-right self-placement is extremely inaccurate in Georgia, given that many young people could not differentiate between right-leaning and left-leaning policies. Young people had difficulty placing themselves on the left-right spectrum, as the concepts are only vaguely understood.
- More respondents considered left-leaning policies such as a subsistence wage, government ownership of businesses, restricting consumption for environmental protection and the provision of free healthcare as right-leaning. Those interested in politics, having a history of civic or political engagement and respondents with higher education were more likely to score higher than other groups.
- Overall, 12% of the interviewees placed themselves on the left pole of the spectrum, while a plurality (34%) considered themselves centrists and 24% placed themselves on the right side of the ideological spectrum and 28% were unsure. Notably, 17% considered themselves at the extreme of the ideological pole.

three-quarters noted partially (35%) or fully (40%) that democracy is the best way to govern Georgia (Figure 10). Only 8% disagreed and 17% were unsure, including those who said they do not know. While there was a consensus across the major socio-demographic groups, those with higher education were more likely to support democracy, while ethnic minority respondents were more likely to say they do not know or that they are neither for nor against democracy.

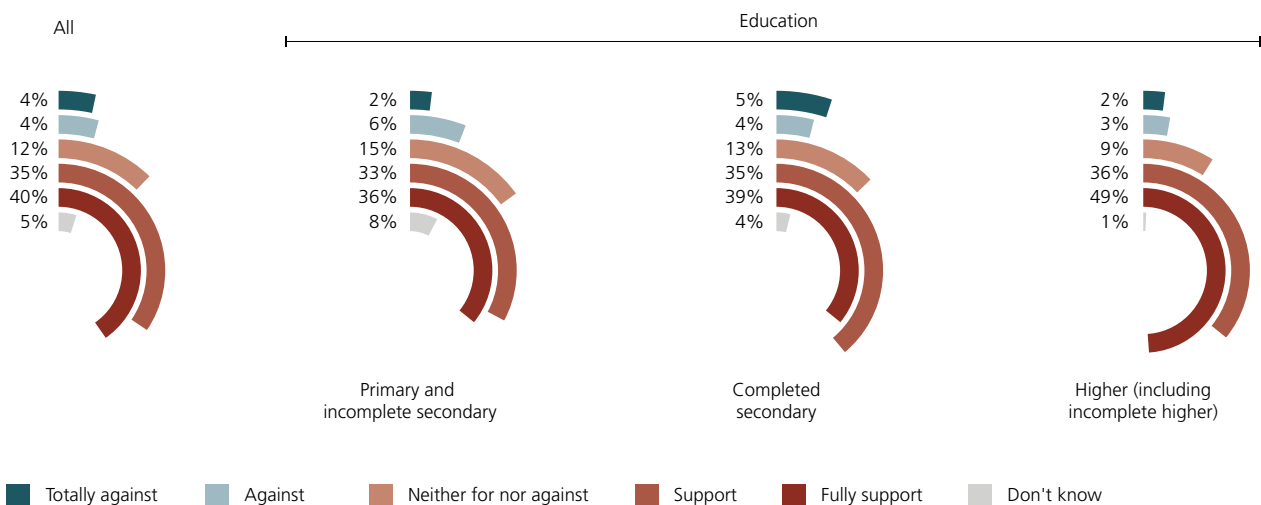
When it comes to how young people in Georgia evaluate the current practice of democracy in the country, the plurality (44%) views it in a positive light. About 29% evaluate the actual practice of democracy negatively, while 22% view it as neither positive nor negative. Notably, rural (50%) and urban youth (47%) are more likely to see the practice of democracy in Georgia in positive terms than those from Tbilisi (33%).

While young people in Georgia are generally positively predisposed toward democracy, focus group discussions offer greater context to these findings. In discussions, respondents were asked what democracy means to them. Most young people associate democracy with freedom, freedom of speech and rule by the people. Liberty and freedom of speech are considered the most important values characterising democracy.

PERCEPTION OF DEMOCRACY

The majority of young people in Georgia are in favour of democracy. When asked what they think about democracy being the best system for governing Georgia,

FIGURE 10: WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE IDEA THAT DEMOCRACY IS THE BEST SYSTEM FOR GOVERNING GEORGIA? (% , full sample)



“People need freedom, every person should be free and everyone should be able to express their opinion freely. When there will be liberty, then there will be peace... Freedom is when a person can express their opinion, can come out, express themselves, say if they dislike something. One should not have the fear of expressing one’s own opinion... Democracy means freedom...” (Male, 29 years old)

Another view of democracy envisages involvement in politics and active citizenship. Democracy means rule by the people, hence citizens should be actively involved in political and social life. They should also have the opportunity to decide their own destiny. Voting in elections is one form of political participation; therefore, people are obliged to vote, even if they have to choose “between bad and worse” political parties.

Some informants associate democracy with human rights and equal rights for all.

“The first thing that really comes to my mind about democracy is equal rights and in this democratic country, no one should be above someone else. Everyone should have equal rights. Even if he is poor, or a millionaire – that should not matter. Truth should always be a priority, in my opinion, in a democratic country. Hence – equal rights.” (Male, 21 years old)

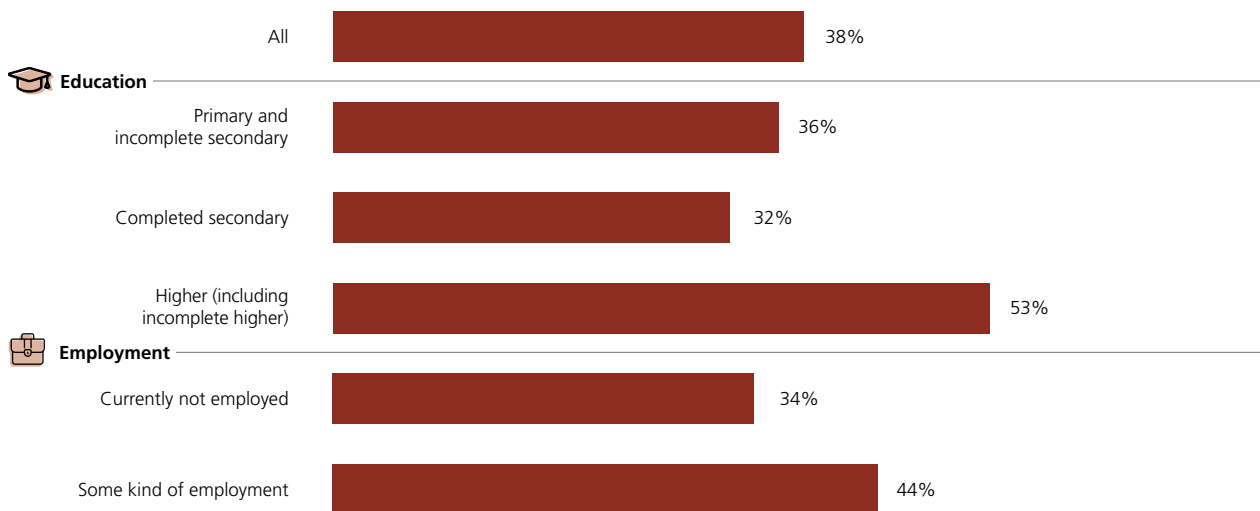
For others, democracy means that people listen and “respect the opinions of others” (Male, 16 years old). For some, democracy means a high quality of life. When substantiating their argument, these respondents named countries that they believe are democracies. Since the United States and European nations are the most frequently named examples of democracies, respondents in all age groups named Germany.

“In my opinion, Germany is closest [to a stable democracy]. Because of the ideology of the people, self-consciousness and humanity. I often get in touch with the Germans and the people in general are like that... They have what the purpose of democracy is, standing together and unity.” (Male, 19 years old)

INTEREST IN POLITICS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Survey results show general apathy among young people, which is line with the findings of comparable studies in Georgia.²⁷ Most young people (62%) in Georgia say they are not at all interested in politics. Even those who report at least some degree of interest in politics rarely discuss the subject with peers or family members and are less engaged with political news. Sixty-two percent of young people in Georgia say that they are not at all interested in politics, while 10% are not very interested, a quarter somewhat interested and only 4% very interested.

FIGURE 11: SHARE OF RESPONDENTS WHO REPORT AT LEAST SOME DEGREE OF INTEREST IN POLITICS (“not very interested,” “somewhat interested,” or “very interested” in politics, %, by major population groups)



Notably, respondents' socioeconomic status predicts whether or not they report having at least some degree of interest in politics (Figure 11). Close to one-third of young people (38%) were classified as such, that is, those who said that they are not very interested, somewhat interested or very interested in politics. About half of young people in Georgia with higher education say that they are interested in politics. The share of employed young people reporting some interest in politics (44%) is greater than unemployed respondents (34%). More young people in Tbilisi say that they are interested in politics (43%) than those outside the capital city.

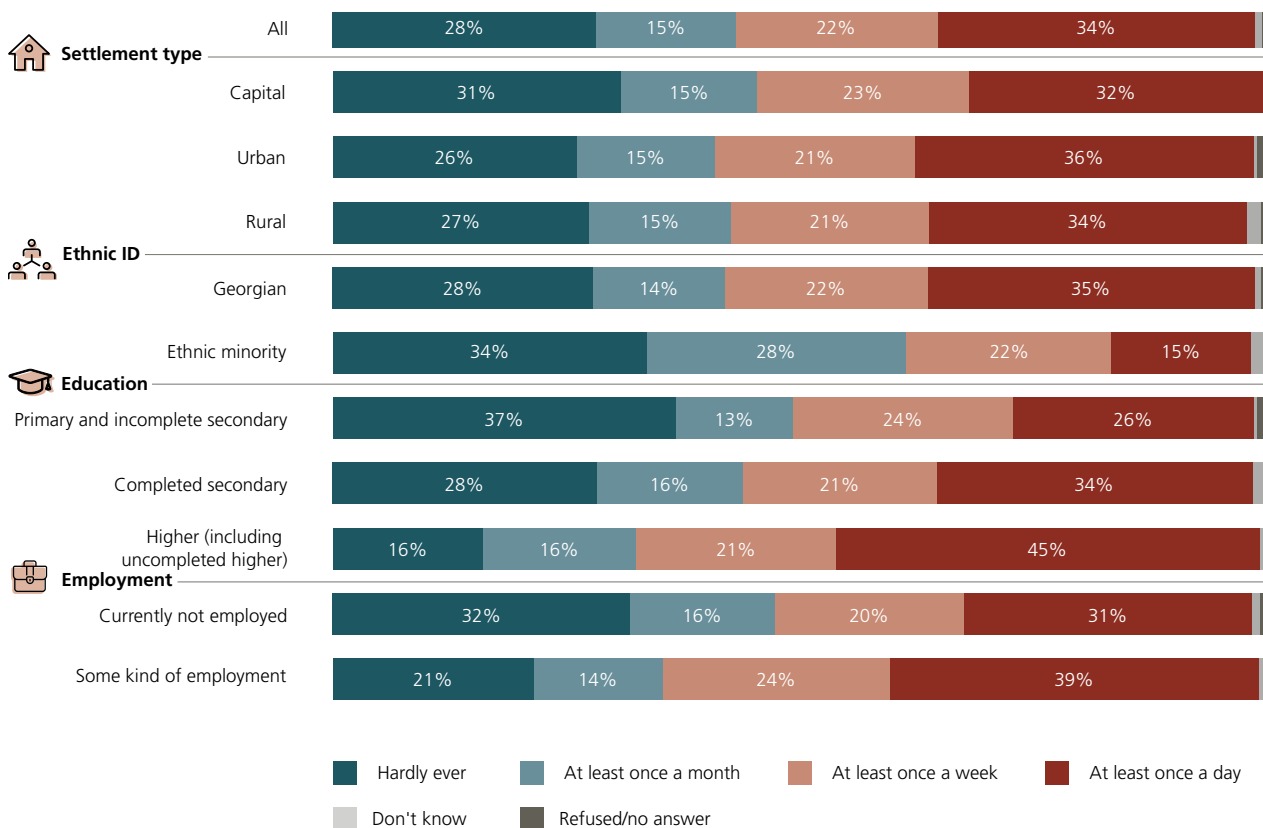
The above-mentioned subset of young people in Georgia were asked follow-up questions on the frequency of discussing politics. Nearly three-quarters of young people in Georgia (who claimed to be very, somewhat or not very interested in politics), have never (25%) or rarely (51%) discussed politics with their friends. One in five say that they often discuss politics and 4% discuss this subject very often. The same pattern holds when it comes to discussing politics with parents. About a quarter (24%) never discuss

politics with parents, while more than half (55%) rarely discuss politics, 16% discuss this subject often and 4% discuss politics with parents very often.

Despite the reported apathy towards politics, more than half of young people in Georgia access information on political events (Figure 12), with one-third (34%) doing so daily and close to one in five (22%) at least once a week. Still, 28% hardly ever follow political news and 15% do so occasionally, at least once a month. Ethnic Georgians, those outside Tbilisi, employed respondents and those with higher education are more likely to follow political news (Figure 12).

Most young people in Georgia think that their peers' interests are not represented in national politics. Sixty-three per cent believed that young people's interests are either not represented at all or are poorly represented in national politics. Only 2% think that their interests are well represented and close to a quarter (24%) believed that youth interests are quite well represented in national politics. Notably, close to one in ten (11%) are unsure (Figure 13).

FIGURE 12: HOW OFTEN DO YOU ACCESS INFORMATION ON POLITICAL EVENTS? (% , full sample)



Nonetheless, not many young people in Georgia plan to take an active part in politics. When asked whether or not they plan to take up a political function, only 17% said that they would gladly or maybe take up a political function (Figure 13). The majority (80%) either would not (62%) or would probably not (18%) take up a political function. Notably, those with higher education are more likely to say that they would take on a political function than those with lower educational attainment. In the same vein, ethnic Georgians are more likely than minorities to enter politics.

Young people's civic and political involvement remains low (Figure 14). Only 17% of respondents have participated in resolving a problem in their own community or neighbourhood, 14% expressed an opinion in an online space or entered a debate, an equal proportion volunteered at an NGO, while 9% stopped buying things for political or environmental reasons or donated to an organisation. Just 8% have signed a petition and participated in

a demonstration, while 7% worked for a political party or group. Even fewer seriously considered participating in any of the activities listed above.

To obtain a complete picture of who is more or less likely to engage in political and civic activities, a compound index was created to show how many civic or political activities a respondent reported. If a respondent did not take part in any activities described above, they were assigned the value zero. Those who reported participating in all eight civic and political activities were assigned the maximum score of eight.

Overall, close to two-thirds of young people in Georgia (63%) have not participated in any civic or political activities as measured by the participation index, with an average value of 0.82 and a median²⁸ of 0. Only 15% of respondents scored one, meaning that they have done at least one of the above-mentioned actions.

FIGURE 13: WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO TAKE ON A POLITICAL FUNCTION? (% , full sample)

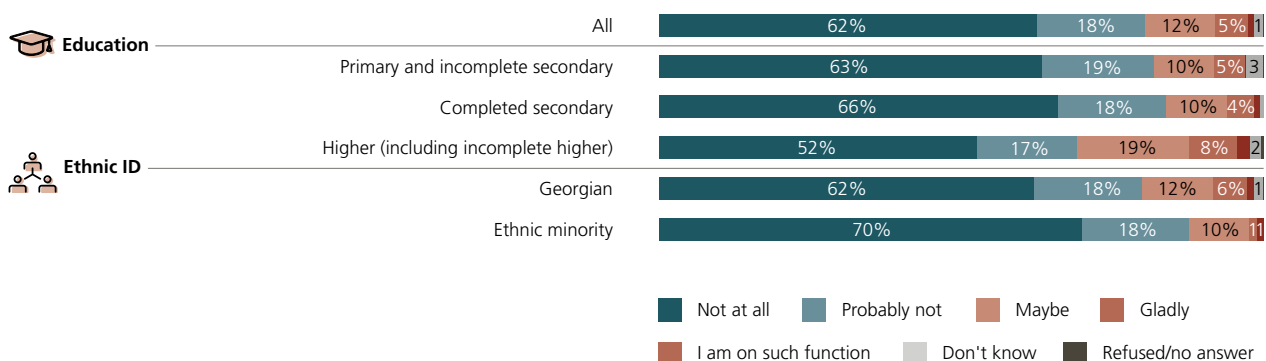


FIGURE 14: THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS TO SHOW POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT. HAVE YOU DONE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS, OR WOULD YOU SERIOUSLY CONSIDER DOING IT? (%)

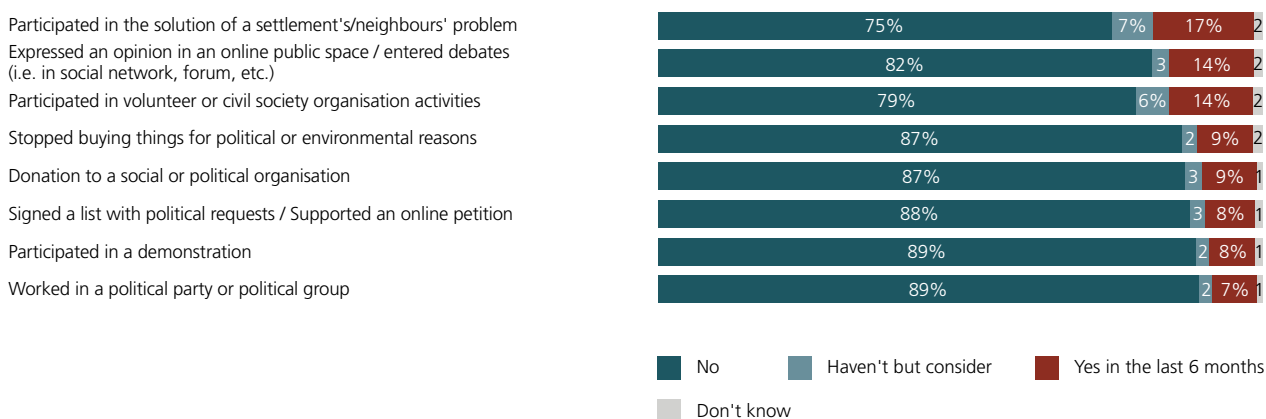
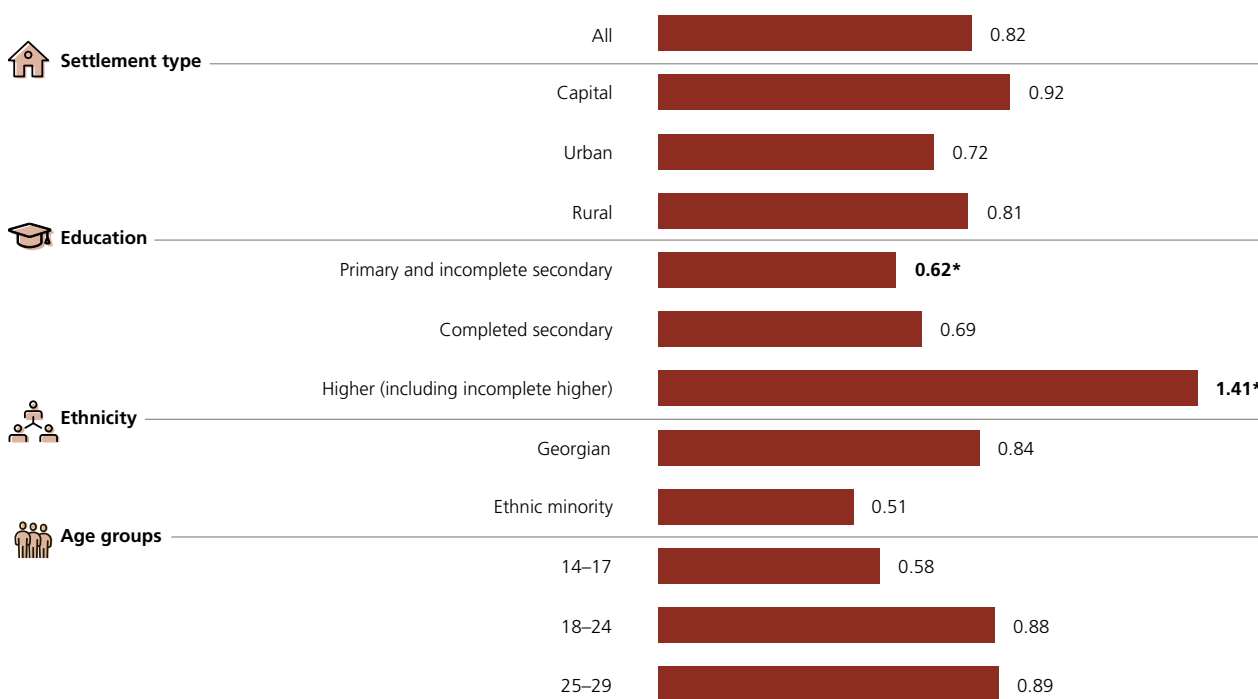


FIGURE 15: AVERAGE VALUES OF THE PARTICIPATION INDEX BY MAJOR DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS. ASTERISKS DENOTE STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES.



None of the demographic variables except education are predictive of the level of engagement in civic and political life (Figure 15), with higher education degree holders being slightly more active. The predicted score of the index for respondents with higher education totalled 1.41, as opposed to about 0.69 for those with primary education and 0.62 for those with completed secondary education.

Interest in politics and receiving information on political matters is associated with higher engagement in civic and political activities. Those who say that they are at least somewhat interested in politics score about 0.7 points higher on the engagement index and so do those who receive political information at least once a day.

Political and social participation was also discussed by focus group participants. As already mentioned above, political participation is considered an important part of democracy. Besides voting in elections, young people also talked about different forms of protests and rallies, which, according to them, can be an effective way to push the government to take some action. Even though quantitative data shows that the majority have not participated in demonstrations, many focus group participants mentioned that they have participated in protest actions

when it came to a violation of human rights and justice (e.g. protests after the murder of Davit Saralidze²⁹) and Russian-related issues (e.g. Gavrilov’s Night³⁰). Young people claim that these protest actions should be peaceful and should bring a certain topic to the government’s attention, however, they should not be centred around a certain political party’s interests:

“Any type of protest makes sense and is productive for the government, because they become aware of what problems there are in the country. When these protests start to go beyond regularity, that’s where I disagree. The government is trying to support all protests, right? If one decides to protest, the government allows it and provides police and security for everything to be peaceful. Different political parties who miss the dictatorship that we had before manipulate these protests. For example when there was a rally against Gavrilov, young people were gathered to protest this man’s appearance, but soon this protest grew into a rally to overthrow the government and half of the people left because the point of the original protest changed. Other protest actions were also like that and people left then, too.”
(Male, 26 years old)

Another part of the focus group participants claims that attending protest actions is pointless and does not change anything. This is particularly true for specific protest actions. For example, young people mentioned that protests for gay rights are “very meaningless”. According to one of the participants, **“Yes, they [homosexuals] are individuals, but no one is doing anything wrong to them, they are the ones doing bad for themselves... No one is bothering them and they alone create aggression in me.”** (Female, 16 years old)

GEORGIA’S BIGGEST CHALLENGES

The survey shows that young people in Georgia do not differ significantly from the general public when thinking about the most important issues and challenges the country faces.³¹ Economic issues are dominant among the grievances of young people in Georgia (Figure 16). A plurality considers unemployment (42%) as the most important problem, followed by rising prices (30%),

education (9%) and domestic political tension (7%). It is important to note that environmental problems (2%) and climate change (less than 1%) were massively neglected. The overall picture was more or less the same for the second most important problem in Georgia, with minor discrepancies (Figure 16).

When comparing responses to the question about the most important problems facing Georgia, there are not many differences among different subgroups of young people (Figure 17). It seems, however, that the older cohort of young people (ages 25-29) are slightly more concerned with unemployment and rising prices than younger groups. Moreover, unemployment is seen as the most important problem by more rural youth (49%) than those living in the capital (32%). Young people in the capital (15%) are more concerned with educational issues than other urban (8%) or rural (5%) youngsters. Education was a more prevalent answer for those under 25 years of age, perhaps due to the fact that many among this cohort are currently enrolled in either secondary or higher education institutions.

FIGURE 16: WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT / SECOND MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM FOR OUR COUNTRY RIGHT NOW? (% , full sample)

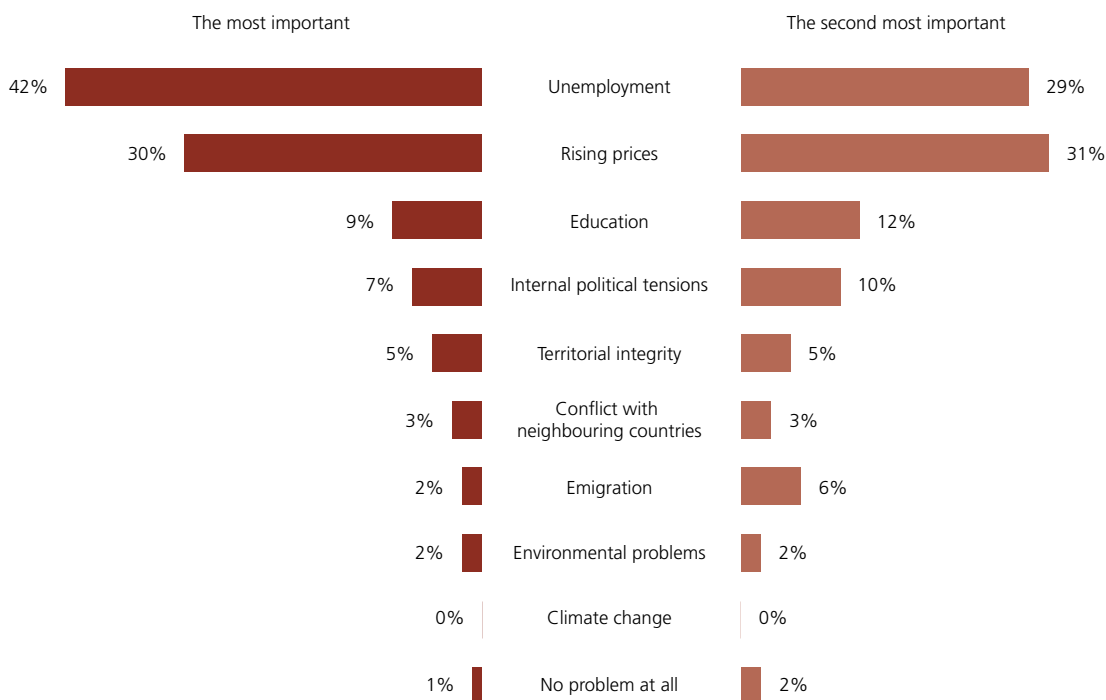
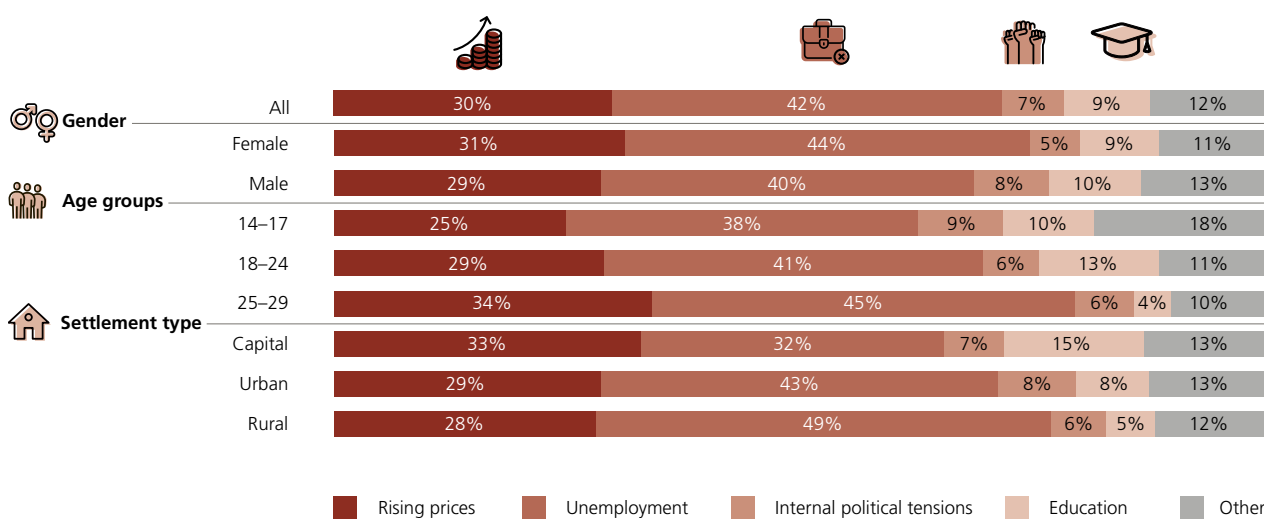


FIGURE 17: WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM FOR OUR COUNTRY RIGHT NOW? BY GENDER, AGE GROUP AND SETTLEMENT TYPE (% , full sample, single choice)



Focus group participants were also asked about the biggest challenge facing Georgia. All age groups mentioned the country's economic issues. Participants talked about the financial crisis in Georgia and about issues related to economic crises, such as unemployment, homelessness, low salaries, incorrect distribution of the state budget, high prices and hunger. Participants mentioned that while economic issues were partially caused by the pandemic, "the economy wasn't strong before the pandemic either." (Female, 29 years old)

Besides economic issues, young people mentioned the low level of education as an important issue facing the country. Young people are mostly dissatisfied with the education system, claiming that the government should help more with tuition. Overall, they are worried about the level of education the educational system provides:

"The future depends mostly on these two areas [economy and level of education] and what education we, the students, receive today, that will be reflected in the following years. How we will learn in the beginning, how we will continue, how diligent we will be, what education we will receive and then how all of this is manifested in our professionalism. Also, everything depends on the economy." (Female, 22 years old)

Young focus group respondents also mentioned the COVID-19 pandemic and the general healthcare system as a major issue in Georgia. Because of the pandemic,

the normal lifestyle stopped, many programmes and projects that were interesting for young people were paused and the economy has been heavily affected. According to one of the respondents: "[...] this pandemic absolutely destroyed everything, even if we take one product, we can see from there how the economy has been impacted." (Female, 27 years old)

In addition, management and control of the pandemic became a big challenge for the Georgian government, as in the rest of the world. Young people mentioned that the healthcare system was an issue before the pandemic, as well, which obviously only made it worse. Some mentioned the lack of professional staff in hospitals:

"Georgia does not have much [medical] staff. My mother was hospitalised in one of the clinics. She asked for medicine in the morning and it was brought to her in the evening. In terms of paying attention, if the patient needs water, it is not that they do not want to help them or pay attention, but they cannot pay attention to everyone." (Female, 27 years old)

Finally, when talking about the biggest challenges facing the country, focus group participants also talked about the high number of emigrants and emigration (which is also discussed in the emigration chapter of this report), no perspective for youth, peoples' lack of self-awareness, lost territories, as well as incompetence and a lack of patriotism among government employees.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

Respondents were asked about their ideological self-placement on the left-right spectrum (Figure 18). The analysis shows that left-right self-placement is extremely inaccurate in Georgia, given that many young people are unable to differentiate between right-leaning and left-leaning policies. Importantly, focus group discussions further attest to this observation. In focus groups, young people had a hard time placing themselves on the left-right spectrum, mainly because the concepts were unclear. Many had a very vague understanding of the differences between left-wing and right-wing politics. Some focus group participants understood “leftists” as the opposition.

According to the quantitative survey findings, 12% of respondents placed themselves on the left side of the spectrum,³² while a plurality (34%) considered themselves

centrists³³ and 26% placed themselves on the right side of the ideological spectrum³⁴. Twenty-eight percent were unsure. Notably, 17% placed themselves at the extremes of the ideological pole. There were no detectable differences across socio-demographic groups, with the sole exception of ethnic minorities, who were more likely to say that they lean to the right (Figure 18).

To further gauge how young people in Georgia understand the left-right divide, respondents were presented a set of statements describing left-leaning and right-leaning policies. They were asked to evaluate where they would place these statements in ideological terms. Overall, data show that young people in Georgia do not have a coherent understanding of what policies are considered ideologically left or right. More respondents considered left-leaning policies such as a subsistence wage, government ownership of businesses, restricting consumption for environmental protection and the provision of free healthcare as right-leaning (Figure 19).

FIGURE 18: HOW WOULD YOU PLACE YOUR OWN POLITICAL VIEWS ON THIS SCALE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, GENERALLY SPEAKING? (% , full sample)

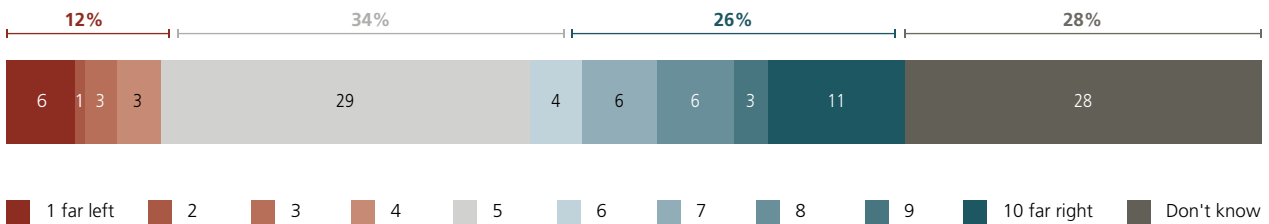
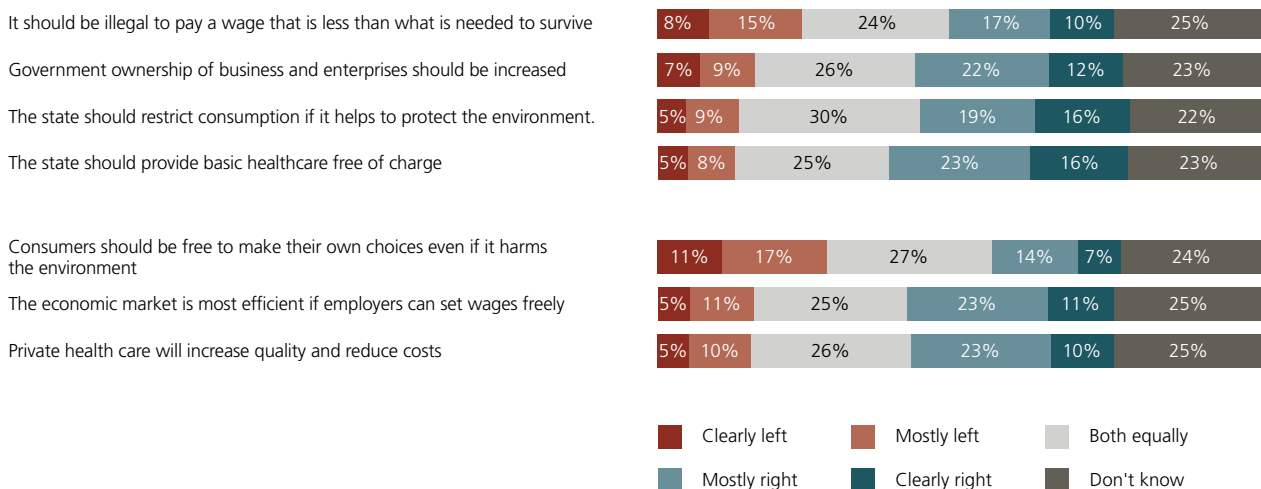


FIGURE 19: WHEN PEOPLE TALK ABOUT THEIR POLITICAL BELIEFS, THEY OFTEN SPEAK ABOUT LEFT-WING AND RIGHT-WING. IN YOUR VIEW, FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST, WHICH POSITION IS CLOSEST TO THE LEFT OR THE RIGHT? (% , full sample)



To further understand which groups of young people were more or less likely to correctly place ideological statements on the ideological spectrum, a separate index was created. This index counts how many statements out of seven was a respondent able to correctly classify in terms of ideological placement. Overall, 40% of respondents failed to place any of the statements on the correct ideological pole, while only 0.6% (seven respondents) correctly placed all statements. On average, each respondent identified only 1.5 statements correctly (median 1), further confirming the findings of the study's qualitative component.

The respondent's age and education predict how well one fared when linking policy statements to their corresponding ideological poles. Surprisingly, the older the respondent, the fewer the number of correct answers. Those with higher education, on average, correctly placed two statements, while those with completed primary education correctly placed 1.3 statements.

Notably, those respondents who reported an interest in politics and those who had a history of civic or political engagement scored higher in terms of how correctly they classified ideological statements. Those who were at least to some degree interested in politics scored slightly better (1.7 correct statements) than those with no interest in politics (1.4 correct statements). Respondents who had no history of civic or political participation got 1.4 statements correct, while those with the highest level of political participation correctly placed 2.44 statements on the ideological spectrum.

DISCUSSION

The majority of young people in Georgia are in favour of democracy, with three-quarters believing that democracy is the best way to govern Georgia. Values such as liberty, freedom of speech and rule by the people are seen as the key merits of democracy.

Such findings are in line with findings from surveys that show similar attitudes among the country's general population. Notably, despite the flaws in Georgia's democracy and rising authoritarian tendencies,³⁵ the country's population is enthusiastic about democracy and perceive it as a viable form of governance.

Despite such a positive outlook for democracy, most young people are apathetic towards political participation. The majority of respondents are not interested in politics, do not discuss the subject with others and are not engaged with political news. The majority also refrains from even contemplating taking on a political role. Very few respondents participate in civic or political activities, further affirming the observation of general apathy towards politics and social life.

Importantly, these patterns reflect general disenchantment. The most recent Caucasus Barometer survey showed that the share of Georgians who are interested in domestic politics declined by 25 percentage points between 2008 and 2021, while the share of those interested in international politics has shrunk by 18 points.³⁶ Meanwhile, low political efficacy both among adults and young people³⁷ hints that most Georgians are either frustrated with politics or do not see it as a tool of change.

Economic issues are dominant among the grievances of young people in Georgia, with more than half naming an economic issue as the main problem the country currently faces. Significantly, both young people and the general public agree on the importance of economic problems. Cross-sectional time series studies such as the Caucasus Barometer and polls for the National Democratic Institute (NDI)³⁸ consistently rank economic problems among the top concerns of Georgians, similar to the studies looking at the attitudes of young people.³⁹

The lack of political knowledge among young people is profound. The majority could not correctly identify left-wing and right-wing political ideas and a plurality tended to place themselves at the centre of the left-right ideological pole.

Overall, this chapter hints at a greater problem plaguing Georgian politics. Political theory argues that in advanced democracies, growing up in the era of political polarisation yields more political engagement.⁴⁰ Evidence from Georgia shows the opposite. While Georgia's political system has been described as polarised,⁴¹ this seemingly refers to the country's ruling political class rather than the general population.

While young people in Georgia believe that democracy is the best way to govern, analysis shows that many are reluctant to participate. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that young people in Georgia lack political knowledge – a concept that is considered to be a precondition of greater political participation and the acceptance of democratic values.⁴² Additional evidence from other contexts indicates that young peoples’ political knowledge is nurtured by their environments such as schools, families and communities.⁴³ Georgia’s educational system has already experimented with the introduction of subjects such as civic education, which has proven to be somewhat successful.⁴⁴ Therefore, greater political learning at educational institutions could lead to young peoples’ civic and political activism.

7

PART FOUR: YOUNG PEOPLE AND FOREIGN POLICY VIEWS

INTRODUCTION

Foreign policy plays an important role in the Georgian public discourse, even playing a central role in the formation of the Georgian national identity.⁴⁵ At its outset in the 19th century, Georgia's national imaginary was nurtured by the ideals of Western national projects. During the short-lived Democratic Republic of Georgia (DRG, 1918-1921) "Europe or the West in general [...] [served] as the provider of a larger (framework) identity, as the role model and [a] presumed ally."⁴⁶

As Georgia reclaimed its national sovereignty following the collapse of the Soviet Union with the blessing of its political and cultural elites, the country's foreign policy postulates were based on four major pillars: A pro-Western orientation, highlighting that Georgia is an ancient Christian nation, a distant and undefined identification with the Caucasus and mostly negative sentiments toward Russia. Changing intensities of explicit confrontation and cautious behaviour had shaped key foreign policy narratives in Georgia.⁴⁷ Since then, the perception of the West and Europe as facilitators of democracy and economic prosperity as well as security guarantors has been equally dominant both in the official elite discourse and public opinion.⁴⁸

Recent studies confirm that Georgians' foreign policy preferences overwhelmingly favour the West,⁴⁹ with the majority in Georgia agreeing that the West can provide the best support to Georgia.⁵⁰ Young people also view the integration of Georgia into Western institutions as important.⁵¹

A plurality (44%) of young people living in Georgia believe that the country's foreign policy currently favours the West and that Georgia's existing policy towards Russia is viewed by a majority of respondents as accommodating (52%) and unacceptable (68%).⁵² Furthermore, while for many a penultimate foreign policy goal is integration into the EU, some voice mild precautions towards the West regarding losing sovereignty or weakening national values.⁵³

This finding indicates that attitudes towards the contemporary foreign policy of Georgia are not one-dimensional and straightforward. While the majority (57%) of Georgians aged 18-34 claimed that Georgia's foreign policy should be pro-Western, a quarter (25%) believed that it

should be pro-Western, but simultaneously maintaining good relations with Russia.⁵⁴ At the same time there is no consensus among young people whether Georgia should deepen economic relations with Russia (24%), leave them as-is (30%) or limit them (34%).⁵⁵ Considering the importance of foreign policy attitudes and recent developments⁵⁶ regarding Georgian foreign policy and societal reactions to it, this study provides a thorough outlook of young peoples' attitudes towards this subject.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Almost two-thirds (62%) of young people in Georgia agree that Georgia is a European country, while about one-third (36%) disagree. While the majority across all socio-demographic groups agree that Georgia is European, those who are older than 25 or have only secondary education are slightly less likely to agree.
- During the focus group discussions, young people explained that they feel European based on their values, points of view, mentality, mindset and daily routines. Those who do not feel as if they are part of Europe claim Georgian culture to be completely different from European culture. For some young people, Georgia is not yet a 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 rule of law, while for 38% Europe is associated with cultural and scientific achievements. Close to one-third (35%) characterise Europe as a place of economic prosperity and wealth.
- Only a negligible share of respondents associate 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 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%). None of the European or EU countries scored higher than 2% when respondents answered this question. Cumulatively, only 8% mentioned European states when naming a close friend of Georgia.

- EU countries and the United States are predominantly perceived as the most important actors that could contribute to Georgia’s economic growth, the protection of human rights in Georgia and Georgia’s national security. Ethnic minority Georgians are less likely to support these ideas than their ethnic Georgian counterparts.
- Young people in Georgia see Russia 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 hold these beliefs.
- The European Union (79%), international organisations (75%), international financial institutions (73%) and NATO (73%) are believed to play a “rather positive role” or “clearly positive role” in Georgia. Younger cohorts (14-17 age group) and those with higher education tend to agree with these ideas a bit more frequently than other groups.
- A positive attitude towards Europe and the European Union was confirmed during focus group discussions, in which young people talked about the financial and other benefits Georgia would gain from joining the EU. Even though some were sceptical of integration with the EU straining relations with Russia, others believe that Georgia will be welcomed to the European Union after fulfilling the necessary requirements.

WHAT DOES EUROPE REPRESENT?

Young people mostly associate Georgia with Europe. When asked whether they agree or disagree with the statement that Georgia is a European country, close to two-thirds (62%) agreed, while slightly more than one-third (36%) disagreed (Figure 20). Age and educational attainment are predictive of whether young people agree that Georgia is a European country. Young people between the ages of 14 and 17 (68%) and 18 and 24 (65%) are more likely to agree with the idea that Georgia is a European country when compared to those aged 25 to 29 (54%). Level of education also associated with the likelihood of agreement that Georgia is a European country.

Those who have completed secondary education (57%) are less likely to agree with this statement than those with complete or incomplete higher education (69%). There are no statistically significant differences among settlement types (between the capital, other urban or rural areas, Figure 20).

Focus group discussions help explain why young people believe that Georgia either is or is not a European country. Those who say that Georgia is part of Europe link their thinking to shared values, points of view, mentality, mindset as well as daily routines. Those who do not feel part of Europe claimed that the European and Georgian cultures are completely different. Another argument is the lag in development. Supporters of this claim believe that Georgians lack self-awareness and although they want to be part of the European family, the country has many years ahead before it becomes a European country.

Some young people who had no aspiration to be part of Europe noted that European culture is different from Georgian culture. An illustrative quote from this argument came from a 17-year-old boy who claimed that **“We are part of Europe geographically. So, no [I do not feel part of Europe], I feel Georgian... I mean, I have nothing against Europe, but I certainly do not want to be called a European... I am Georgia.”** (Male, 17 years old)

Still, the predominant opinion is that Georgia should be part of Europe, which is perceived to be more “developed” than Georgia in many ways.

We also analysed what Europe represents for young people. In the survey, respondents were given a set of statements and asked to pick those that reflected their personal opinions of Europe. Respondents were more likely to name positive statements, such as “democracies and rule of law” (45%), “cultural and scientific achievements” (38%) and “the wealthiest and most prosperous region” (35%). Those with higher education were more likely to mention “democracies and rule of law” (60%) and “cultural and scientific achievements” (49%) when compared to the whole sample and those with primary or completed secondary education. Importantly, very few picked negative statements (Figure 21). Only a handful of respondents selected abstract or neutral descriptions.

FIGURE 20: TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE THAT GEORGIA IS A EUROPEAN COUNTRY? BY SETTLEMENT TYPE, GENDER, AGE GROUP AND EDUCATION LEVEL (% , full sample)

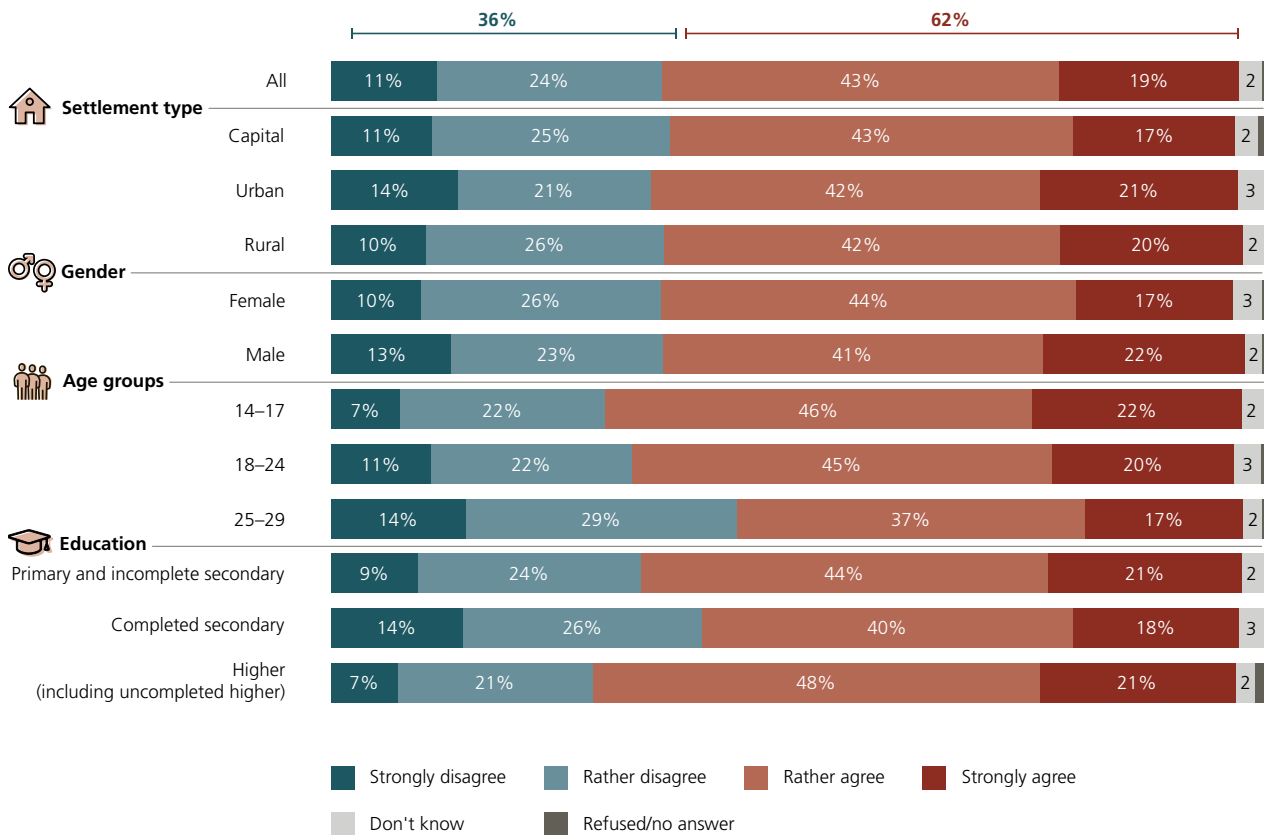
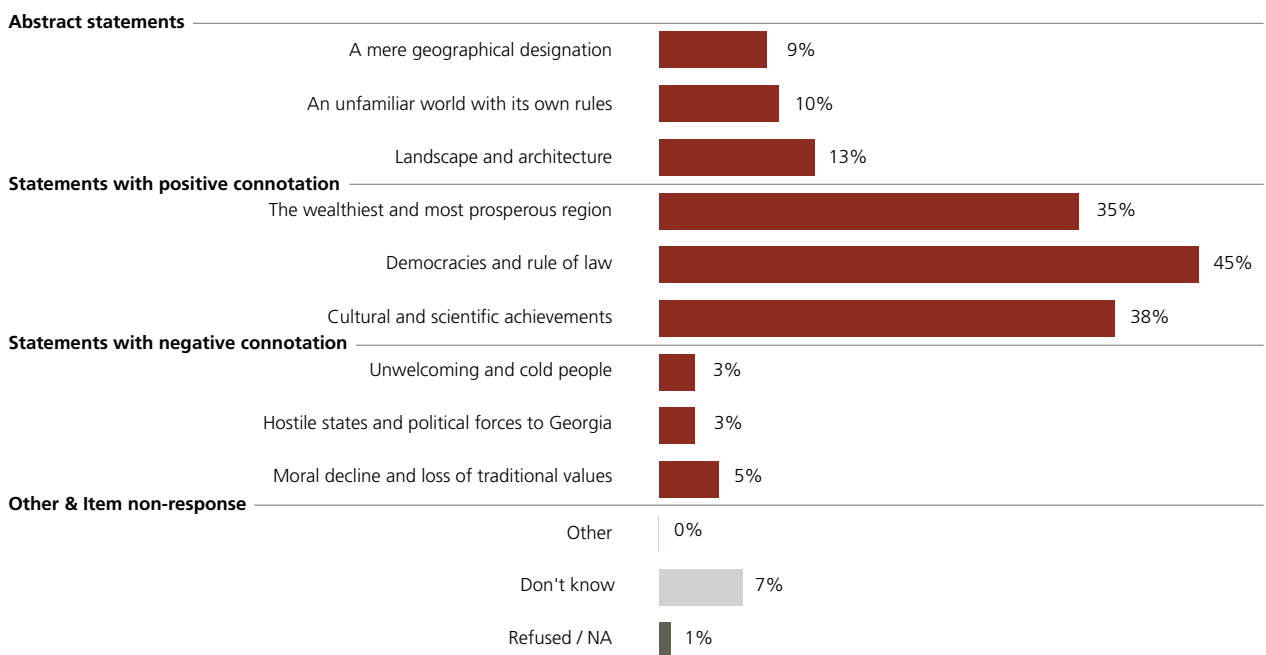


FIGURE 21: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING VIEWS MOST CLOSELY MATCH YOUR PERSONAL OPINION OF EUROPE? (% , full sample)



FRIENDS AND THE FOES OF THE NATION

Young people in Georgia have diverse views regarding national security issues and attitudes toward foreign countries. When asked to name one specific country they believe is Georgia's closest friend, the most frequent answers were regional and neighbouring countries and the United States (Figure 22). A plurality named Ukraine (28%), followed by the United States (18%) and Turkey (11%). None of the European countries separately received higher than two percentage points. European countries such as France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland and Spain were named by 8% of respondents, cumulatively. When mentioning the countries separately, around one-third of young people either

cannot name a specific friendly country (10% does not know) or does not believe there is one (19%).

Follow-up questions were asked regarding how young people view the role of foreign nations in facilitating Georgia's economic growth, protecting human rights and ensuring national security. While no EU country separately made the top of the list of friends of Georgia, according to young people they are seen as the most important actors when it comes to contributing to Georgia's economic development (58%), human rights (64%) and national security (59%). The second most important country in this regard was the United States. Very few picked neighbouring countries as anticipated partners for Georgia's development or security. The only minor exception in this regard is Turkey: 12% think that cooperation with Turkey is beneficial for Georgia's economic growth (Figure 23).

FIGURE 22: FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, WHICH COUNTRY IS GEORGIA'S CLOSEST FRIEND? (% , single choice, full sample)

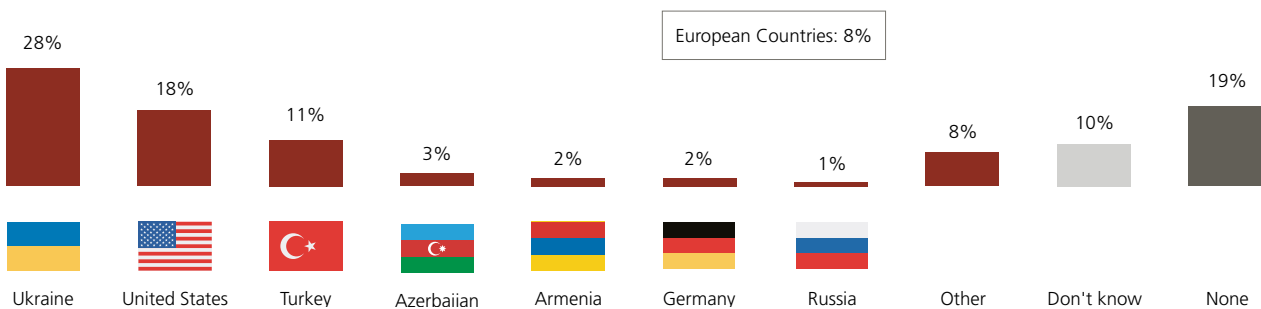
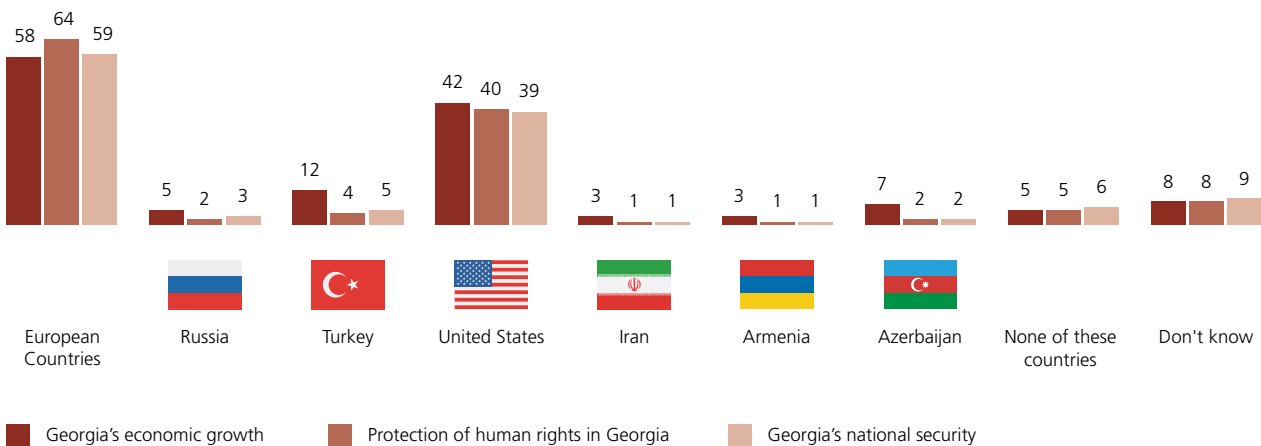


FIGURE 23: GEORGIA'S COOPERATION WITH WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES WILL CONTRIBUTE TO... A) GEORGIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH, B) THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN GEORGIA AND C) GEORGIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY (% , multiple choice, full sample)

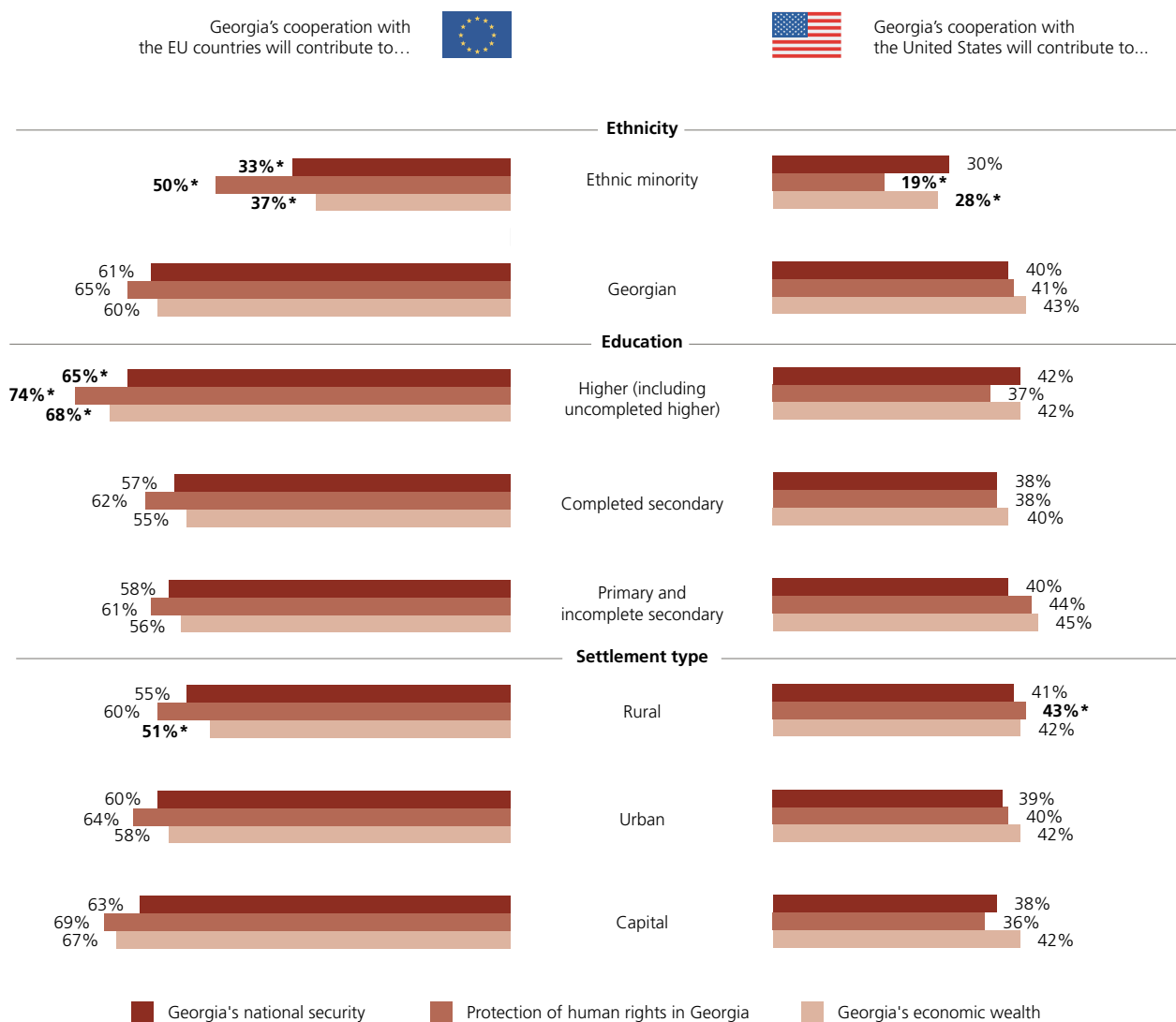


Young people differ across ethnic, educational and geographic lines when it comes to how they view the benefits of Georgia's cooperation with various international actors. Young people from ethnic minority communities are less likely to say that cooperation with EU countries could lead to better economic growth,

the protection of human right or improved national security (Figure 24). Minority respondents have the same opinion on Georgia's collaboration with the United States (Figure 25). Those having higher education were more likely to pick EU countries as an important factor for Georgia's development.

FIGURE 24 (LEFT): **GEORGIA'S COOPERATION WITH THE EU COUNTRIES WILL CONTRIBUTE TO...** A) GEORGIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH, B) THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN GEORGIA AND C) GEORGIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY. (% , multiple choice, full sample. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)

FIGURE 25 (RIGHT): **GEORGIA'S COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED STATES WILL CONTRIBUTE TO...** A) GEORGIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH, B) THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN GEORGIA AND C) GEORGIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY. (% , multiple choice, full sample. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)



Besides the potential positive impacts of foreign countries on Georgia, respondents were asked about cooperation with countries that would threaten Georgia's national values, national security, statehood and economic system. Close to three quarters of young people in Georgia see Russia as a threat to Georgia's national values (72%), national security (78%) and economic system (74%). An even higher proportion (84%) view Russia as a threat to Georgia's statehood. No other country received higher than 10% (Figure 26).

The perception of Russia as the biggest threat to Georgia's national values, security, statehood and economic system is equally shared across different socio-demographic

groups of young people. However, there are a few exceptions: **ethnic Georgians tend to perceive the Russian threat to a higher degree than ethnic minorities for all discussed topics.** Those topics include the economic system (ethnic Georgians 76% vs ethnic minorities 40%), Georgia's statehood (ethnic Georgians 86% vs ethnic minorities 41%), national security (ethnic Georgians 81% vs ethnic minorities 34%) and national values (ethnic Georgians 74% vs ethnic minorities 36%) (Figure 27). Settlement type was also linked with the perception of Russia as a threat: young people living in Tbilisi (77%) are slightly more likely to name Russia as a threat to Georgia's national values when compared to those living in other urban (71%) or rural (68%) areas (Figure 27).

FIGURE 26: GEORGIA'S COOPERATION WITH WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES WILL THREATEN... A) GEORGIA'S NATIONAL VALUES, B) GEORGIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY, C) GEORGIA'S STATEHOOD AND D) GEORGIA'S ECONOMIC SYSTEM (% , multiple choice, full sample)

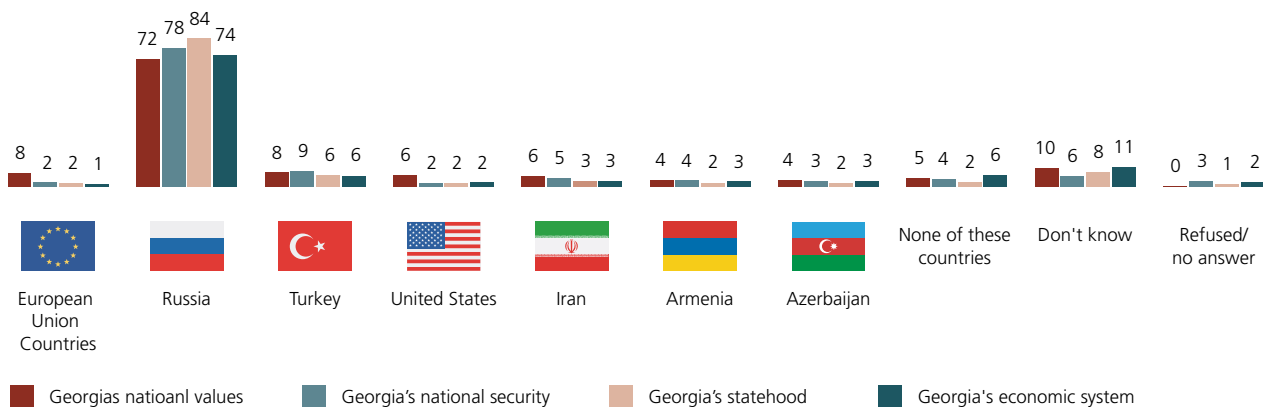
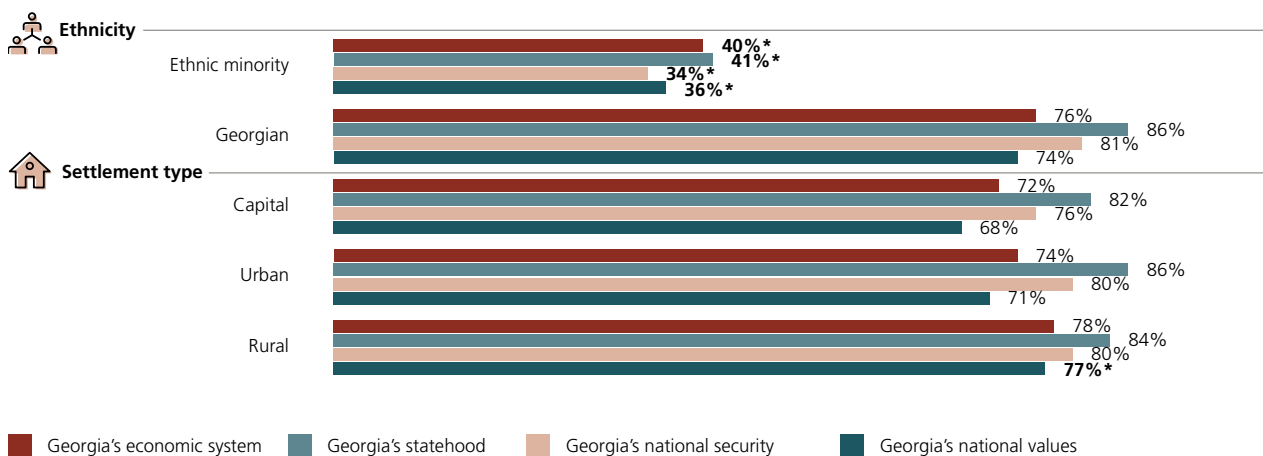


FIGURE 27: GEORGIA'S COOPERATION WITH RUSSIA WILL THREATEN... A) GEORGIA'S NATIONAL VALUES, B) GEORGIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY, C) GEORGIA'S STATEHOOD AND D) GEORGIA'S ECONOMIC SYSTEM (% , multiple choice, full sample)



ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EU, NATO AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

To further gauge respondents' foreign policy attitudes, they were asked to evaluate the roles of international political, military and financial institutions. Notably, young people in Georgia have positive opinions of all entities (Figure 28). The majority (79%) believes that the European Union plays a positive or rather positive role in Georgia. Three quarters of respondents think the same about international financial institutions such as the IMF

and the World Bank (73%), NATO (73%) and international organisations such as the UN (75%) (Figure 28).

Although the perception of international institutions is remarkably positive among youth in Georgia, it is not evenly distributed across all socio-demographic groups. In general, young women tend to evaluate the role of international organisations and institutions slightly more positively than young men (Figure 29). Representatives of the youngest age cohort assess international organisations and institutions slightly more positively than respondents in older age groups. Those with higher education are also more likely to see the role of international institutions in a positive light (Figure 29).

FIGURE 28: TO WHAT EXTENT DO THE ENTITIES LISTED BELOW PLAY A POSITIVE OR A NEGATIVE ROLE IN GEORGIA? (% , full sample)

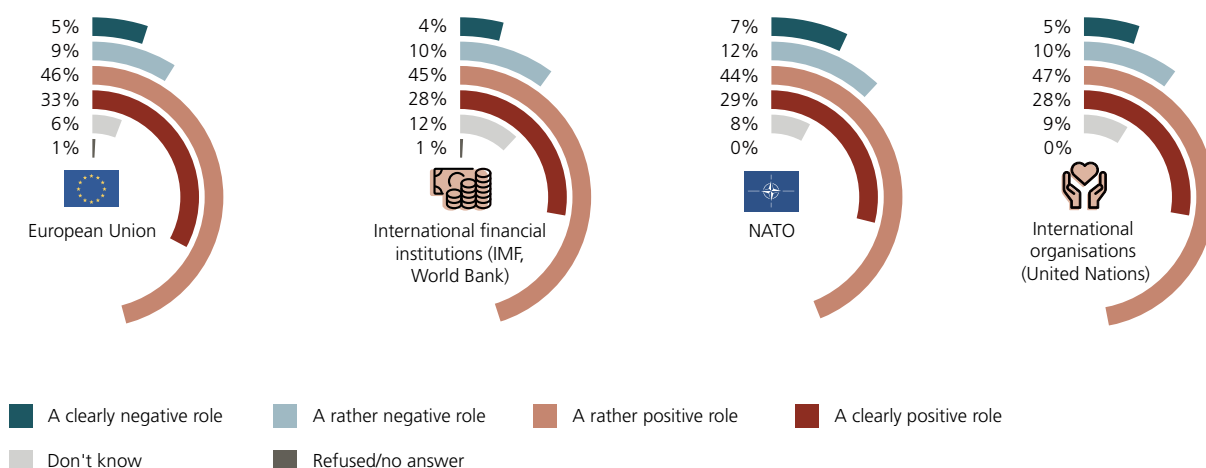
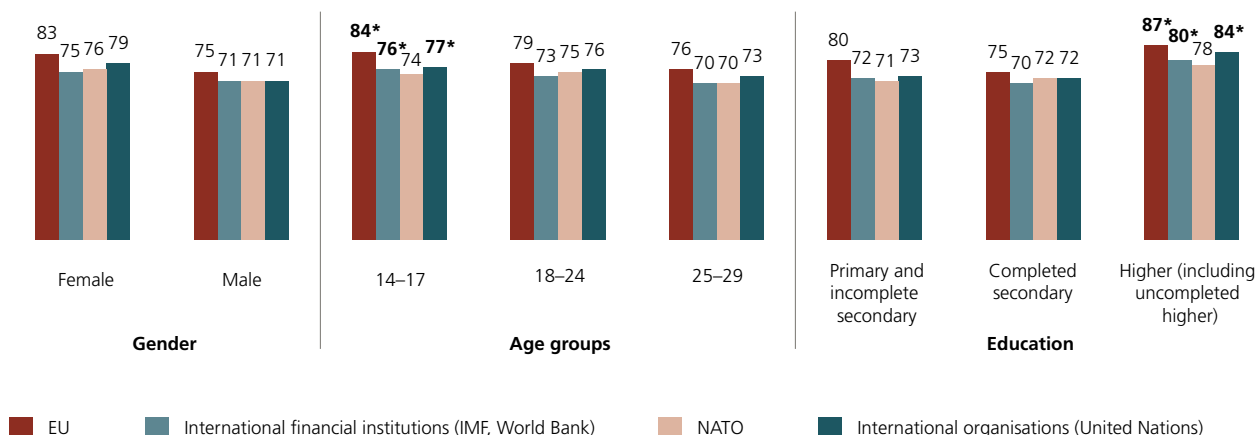


FIGURE 29: TO WHAT EXTENT DO THE ENTITIES LISTED BELOW PLAY A POSITIVE OR A NEGATIVE ROLE IN GEORGIA? (ONLY THE SUM OF THE "A RATHER POSITIVE ROLE" AND "A CLEARLY POSITIVE ROLE" ANSWERS PROVIDED (% , full sample. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)



Keeping this data in mind, it is not surprising that during the focus group discussions many young people argued in support of Georgia joining the EU. According to this view, Georgia has always had the EU's back both financially and morally. Therefore, Georgia would only benefit if it became part of the European Union: **"In my opinion, [after joining the EU,] Georgia would breathe a sigh of relief financially and in every other way."** (Male, 19 years old)

Respondents also mentioned Russia in this context and claimed that Russia stands in the way of Georgia joining Europe. Because Georgia is in conflict with Russia, becoming part of the European Union is impossible. Some recalled the 2008 war with Russia and noted that Europe stood with Georgia during those hard times. In contrast, others stated that Europe would not risk its' relations with Russia because of Georgia and even though many Georgians want to become part of the west, Europe would not oppose Russia unless Georgia was worth it. According to one of the respondents, some serious changes need to be made in Georgia in order for Europe to accept the country:

"...We have a contract with clauses that we must fulfil on our end. They are asking for a free court, which our government doesn't implement because it doesn't match someone's personal agenda... What should we do? We cannot do anything...The solution is to change the government, to make serious changes in the parliament and to get an independent court. Our relationship with the European Union will benefit the country now and probably in the future, so that Russia will not step all over us when it wants." (Male, 20 years old)

DISCUSSION

Europeanness and the theme of European identity occupies a special position in Georgia's political and cultural discourse. Highlighting the country's geographic location on the edge of Europe, popular discourses among Georgian elites always stressed their "Europeanness".⁵⁷ Concerning popular opinion, according to a recent study young people (aged 18-35) overwhelmingly (73%) agree with the statement from a prominent Georgian politician "I am Georgian and therefore I am European."⁵⁸ According to the same study, the majority (62%) also believe that Georgia is a European country.

While Georgians overwhelmingly consider themselves European, another matter is how they understand what Europe is, or what it stands for. For many this is a place of economic prosperity, progress and rule of law. This is not an isolated observation, but rather relevant to the broader Georgian society. The study on the knowledge of and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia in 2021 revealed that 77% would support EU membership (81% among 18-35 year olds), and the main reason (56%) is the improvement of the country's economic conditions (55% among 18-35 year olds).⁵⁹ These findings are also noted in another study conducted among Georgian school children.⁶⁰

Besides the positive framing of Europe and its charming economic prosperity, the idea of being European was often perceived as the opposite of "being Asian," or something that could serve as a counterweight to Russia and Russophile attitudes.⁶¹ The contrast of Europe versus Russia is not novel, as Georgian foreign policy discourse has for many years been dominated by West versus Russia debates.⁶² Young people in Georgia have clear views on this: the EU and the United States positively contribute to Georgia's development, while Russia is perceived as a threat to Georgia's values, economic system, state and security.

These findings, besides being the reflection of an objective reality and personal perceptions, are also linked to the general "enemy" image of Russia and the "us versus them" dichotomy of an uneasy Russo-Georgian relationship.⁶³ Since Georgia has experienced violence from Russia in recent years, studies argue that exposure to such violence is associated with an elevated level of perception of threat and anger toward Russia.⁶⁴

Despite recognising the positive contribution of EU countries and the United States in the development of Georgia, for a plurality of respondents (28%), the closest country to Georgia is Ukraine, followed by the United States (18%). While interpreting this result, it is important to note that the fieldwork of the study coincided with the start of full-scale Russian military aggression against Ukraine in February 2022. Such an opinion could be the result of cross-national solidarity with a friendly country at war. The 2021 Caucasus Barometer survey by CRR-Georgia administered right before the war indicated that for young people in Georgia under 35, the country's main friend was the United States, followed by Ukraine.⁶⁵

Cumulatively, EU countries were named by just 6% of respondents.

The variety of questions asked about foreign policy attitudes and opinions showed that settlement type in most cases is not associated with the opinions of young people. Educational attainment and ethnicity were more frequent and significant predictors, however, the context of the study and the relationship between education, ethnicity and geographic factors in Georgia should be considered. A study conducted by the World Bank in 2014 showed that those residing in rural regions and belonging to ethnic minorities were frequently left out of the educational system, including higher education. The same research also highlighted a lack of systematic social inclusion policies, making the situation even worse.⁶⁶

Another significant takeaway is that nearly one-third (29%) of young people in Georgia cannot give a specific answer to this question or believe that there are no friendly countries to Georgia. Such indication of “remoteness,” “isolation” or “uniqueness” is observed in other studies. The 2015 Caucasus Barometer survey revealed that Georgians across generations could not name another country resembling Georgia in terms of traditional⁶⁷ or modern culture.⁶⁸ Speculatively, such opinions might stem from the established historical narrative that Georgians are “distinct people without traced links with any of the large linguistic families,” historically encompassed by conflicting states and trying to retain its ethnic and religious identity⁶⁹. As a study by Shubladze and colleagues revealed, such attitudes might be a response to how Georgian historiography works. Georgia’s history textbooks present this subject in an isolationist manner and rarely discuss events in the context of regional or world history.⁷⁰

8

PART FIVE: REVISITING THE RECENT PAST

INTRODUCTION

How do young people in Georgia reflect on their past? While discussions on Georgia's tumultuous recent history often open up fresh wounds, Georgians, especially the younger generation, are keen to learn more about their ancestry. A recent study of Georgian high school students revealed that close to three-quarters (76%) considered the Soviet era and post-independence period as one of the most interesting times in Georgian history.⁷¹

Interest in history aside, reminiscence of the Soviet past is often associated with sentiments about material welfare and the possibilities of social mobility. Still, many Georgians associate state welfare to Soviet rule,⁷² an attitude that often finds its way in Soviet nostalgia. For instance, the 2021 Caucasus Barometer poll showed that 38% of adults in Georgia, including 19% aged 18-34, believed that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was bad for Georgian society.⁷³ When asked about the reasons, the majority cited deteriorating economic conditions.⁷⁴

Today, the trauma of socioeconomic and political transition induced by the dissolution of the Soviet Union still affects the general discourse within Georgian society. The decade following the collapse of the Soviet Union was a largely unstable, tumultuous and often unpredictable period, impacted by the transition to a capitalistic, market-based economy with many societal discontents and problems.⁷⁵ Not surprisingly, many Georgians associate this era with failure. When asked about the largest success of the Georgian government from 1992 to 2003, the most common answer (34%) was that the government had no successes. Major failures were associated with economic collapse and stagnation.⁷⁶ In this light, the following section offers a comprehensive outlook of how young people in Georgia reflect upon the events of the past century in their country.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Sixty-three percent of young people in Georgia consider that the end of the USSR was a good thing for Georgia. Those with higher education and living in Tbilisi are more inclined to hold this position. In contrast to ethnic Georgians (64%), young people from minorities (44%) expressed a less positive assessment of the Soviet Union's dissolution.
- Focus group discussions revealed that youth do feel as though the Soviet Union's dissolution and Georgian independence was eventually a good thing leading to more freedom of expression. Despite this belief, some participants highlighted negative consequences of the Soviet Union's dissolution, including a worsened socio-economic situation and Georgia's lost special status within the USSR.
- Participants' attitudes regarding the end of the Soviet Union and their opinions toward contemporary Russia are somewhat related. Those perceiving Russia as a threat to Georgia's national security and statehood today more positively evaluate the downfall of the USSR.
- In contrast to the positive evaluation of the end of the USSR expressed by participants, the post-independence 1990s are negatively perceived by young people. Negative attitudes are the highest among males, those with higher education and ethnic Georgians.
- The majority of those feeling the end of the USSR was a good thing believe that the last decade of the twentieth century brought Georgia "more bad things rather than good."
- While comparing the current situation in Georgia to that of the 1990s, the vast majority of young people believe that the situation has drastically improved in many aspects. Now it is easier to express yourself, to decide your own religious life, to live independently, to receive competent medical care, to feel safe, to participate in political life and to earn money.
- A negative evaluation of the 1990s is associated with a slightly higher appraisal of improvements tied to certain aspects of quality of life. This is true in the case of feeling safe, receiving qualified medical care, earning money and participating in political life.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE SOVIET UNION

The majority of young people (63%) believe that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was beneficial to Georgia (Figure 30). Positive sentiments regarding the end of the USSR are on average higher in the capital city Tbilisi (73%) when compared to other urban (60%) or rural (58%) areas. Education was an important factor for shaping these positions. Those with higher education (77%) tended to agree that the end of the Soviet Union was a good thing when compared to those who only completed secondary (61%) or primary (57%) school. Among different subgroups, youth ethnic minorities were least positively inclined to the USSR's dissolution: only 44% (though, still a plurality) believe that the end of the Soviet Union was a good thing, while 28% think that overall, it was a bad thing. Notably, this was the highest negative assessment among all researched subgroups (Figure 30).

Opinions regarding the Soviet Union and its dissolution were further examined during focus group discussions. Even though some focus group participants think that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a negative event, most participants still think that it is a good thing that Georgia gained independence. Several of those who felt the Soviet Union's collapse was a bad thing recalled stories of their parents or grandparents and claimed that there was historically more discipline, that people used to live well and could afford things they wanted. Some claimed that the Soviet Union was a strong country with a strong economy. However, they also acknowledged this came at the price of political freedom:

“As far as I know, according to my parents and grandparents, it was a very strong country and it was a good country, life in Georgia was good, it was just a big disadvantage that we were not a free country. We were a republic, a Soviet republic... I will say that it [the collapse] was both good and bad. It is good because we gained freedom, but it is bad because, after it, life was ruined and you know how much hardship Georgia went through... It was good that people lived well in the country, but of course it was not free...” (Male, 17 years old)

Young people who claim that the collapse of the Union was a negative event mentioned that during the Soviet era, *“everything cost pennies”* (Male, 29 years old) and that after the break-up, the economic situation worsened and the country lost its charm: *“During the Soviet era, we were the coolest country in the Soviet Union after Russia, we were almost in first place. But, now, who knows, we are probably at the bottom...”* (Male, 16 years old)

On the other hand, young people seem to value the freedom that Georgia gained after independence. Many mentioned that the collapse of the Soviet Union is important because the country became independent and free, more developed and more modern. Young people stated that during the Soviet era, people lived in fear and *“did not even have the right to express their opinion”* (Female, 14 years old). They felt that even though Georgia had to go through hardship in the 1990s after the collapse, the most important thing is that the country gained independence.

Positions regarding the end of Soviet Union are somewhat related to attitudes toward contemporary Russia. As indicated in the above foreign policy chapter, Russia is seen by young people in Georgia as the major threat to their country's national security and statehood. Young people with such strong opinions more frequently mentioned the positive aspects of the Soviet Union's downfall (Figure 31). Furthermore, for the 59% who named Russia as being simultaneously a threat to Georgia's economic system, statehood, national security and national values, 68% believe that the USSR's collapse was a good thing, while the same figure for those not mentioning Russia as a threat simultaneously on all statements is 56% (Figure 31).

FIGURE 30: THE USSR DISSOLVED SOME 30 YEARS AGO. IRRESPECTIVE OF HOW MUCH YOU KNOW ABOUT THE USSR, DO YOU THINK THAT THE END OF THE USSR WAS A GOOD OR BAD THING? (% , full sample)

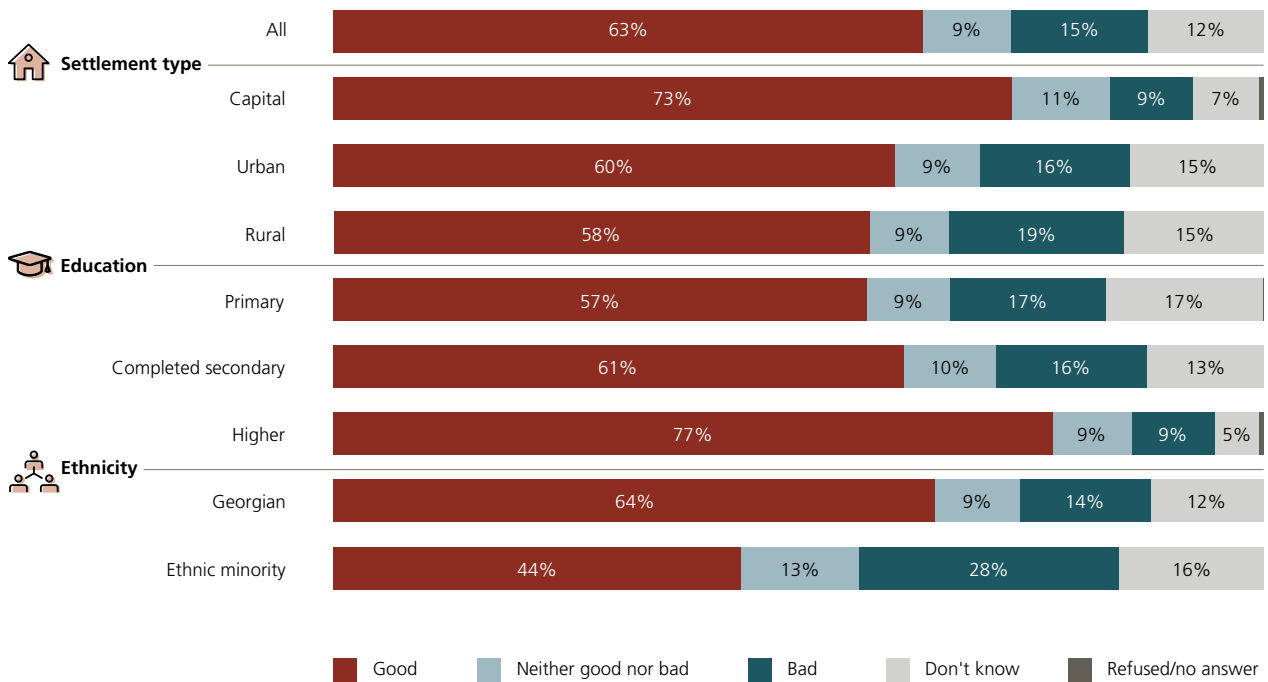
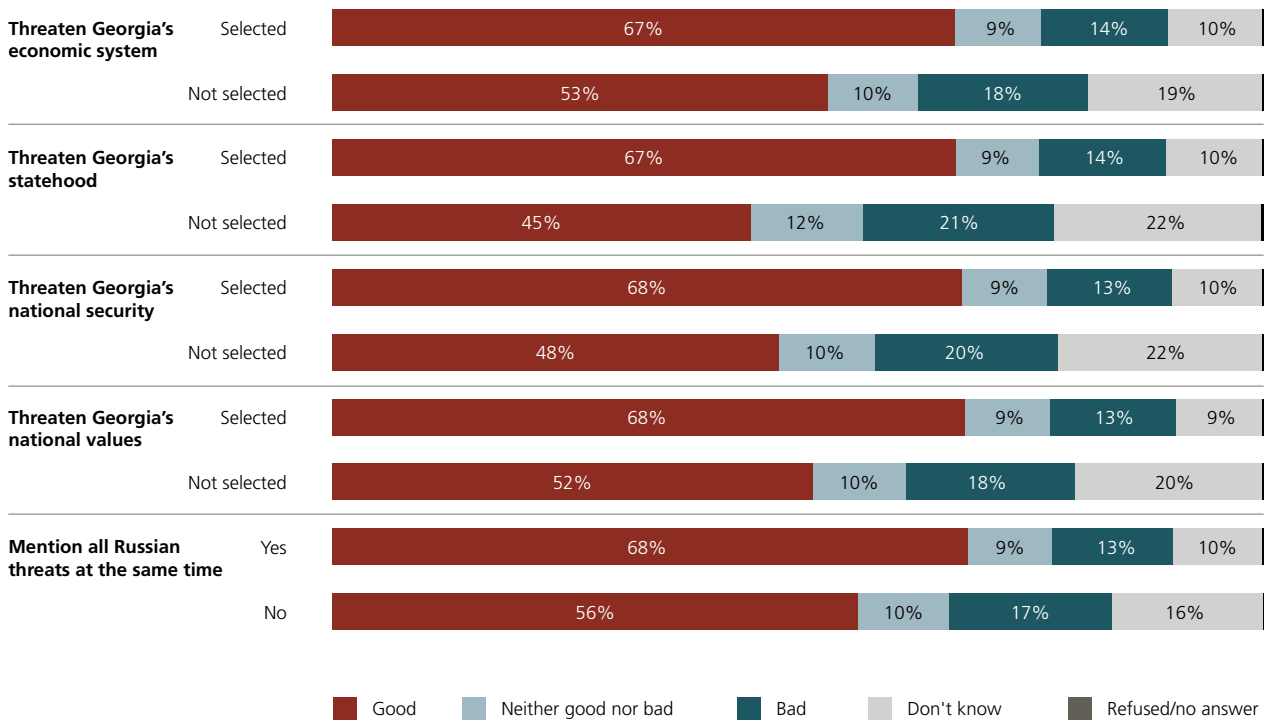


FIGURE 31: DO YOU THINK THAT THE END OF THE USSR WAS A GOOD OR BAD THING? (% , only those who have mentioned that cooperation with Russia is threatening... A) Georgia's national values, B) Georgia's national security, C) Georgia's statehood and D) Georgia's economic system)



REVISITING THE “DARK YEARS”: MEMORIES OF THE 1990s AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN GEORGIA

Young people mostly negatively evaluate the 1990s in Georgia. Only one-quarter of respondents (26%) feel that the decade just after the dissolution of the Soviet Union brought positive things to their country. Interestingly, these views are close to being equally widespread among different age cohorts, regardless of their personal experience (Figure 32). Females (31%) are slightly more inclined to assess the 1990s positively when compared to males. While differences among geographic areas are mostly negligible, there are also some differences when it comes to level of education: youth with higher education tend to assess the 1990s more negatively than those with lower education levels. Respondents from minority groups positively evaluated the 1990s more frequently, yet also tended to report more frequently that they “don’t know”

the answer to this question (35%) when compared to ethnic Georgians (15%, Figure 28).

Positions regarding the impact of the 1990s seem to be associated with views regarding the dissolution of the Soviet Union, perhaps in a counterintuitive manner (Figure 33). Among those who felt that the end of the USSR was a good thing, 23% also thought that the 1990s brought Georgia rather good things, while the remaining 68% felt the 1990s brought rather bad things.

Compared to the 1990s, those surveyed felt that life became a lot more trouble-free in Georgia. For them, it is now much or somewhat easier to say whatever they want (83%), to make decisions on their religious life (80%), to live independently (79%) or to receive qualified medical care (79%). For the majority, things have also improved with respect to participating in political life (74%) and earning money (73%). Despite these results, these options cumulatively received the lowest endorsement and a slightly higher proportion of negative assessments when compared to other discussed statements (Figure 33).

FIGURE 32: DO YOU THINK THAT THE 1990S BROUGHT THE COUNTRY MORE GOOD OR MORE BAD? (% , full sample)

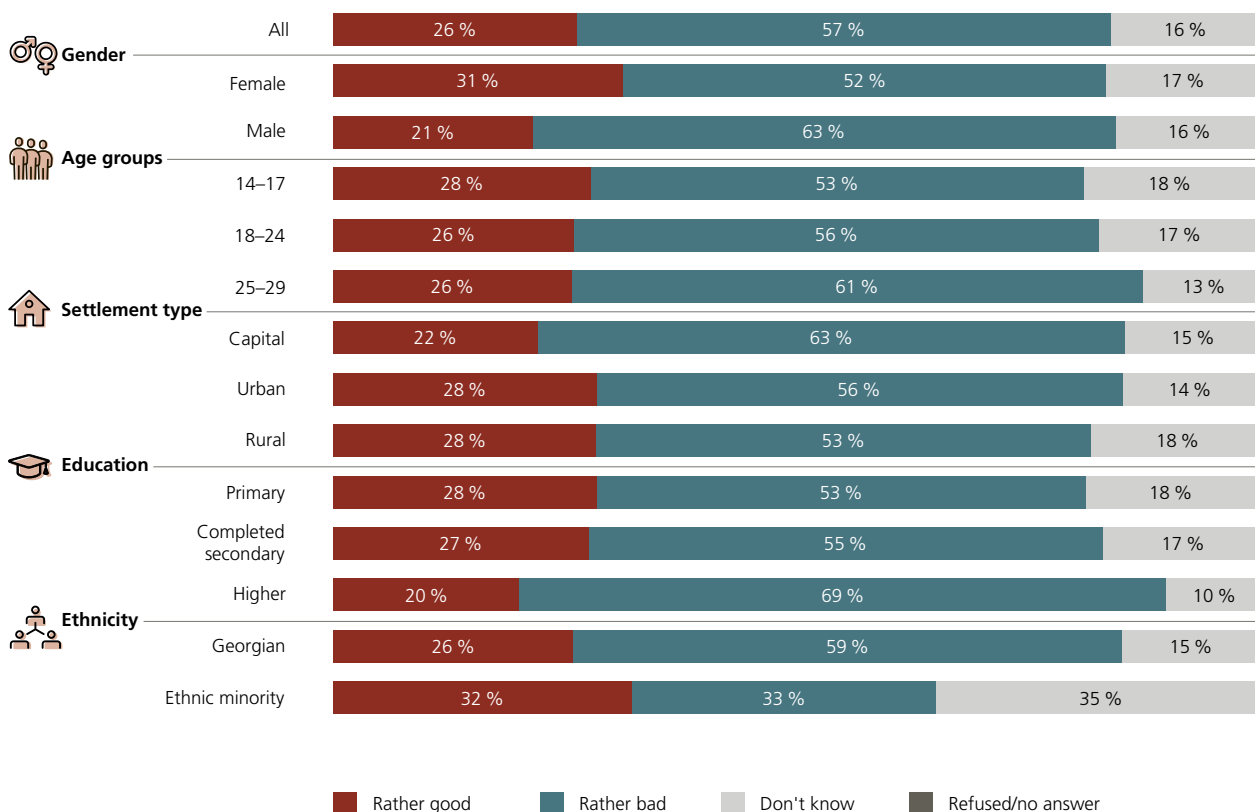
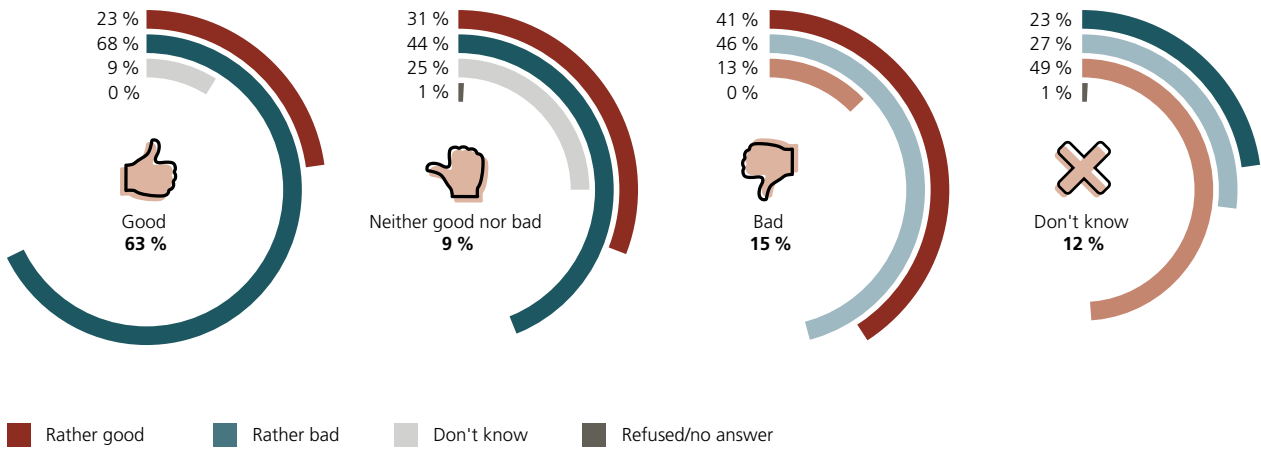


FIGURE 33: ASSESSMENT OF THE 1990S BY WHETHER THE END OF THE USSR WAS A GOOD OR BAD THING (% , full sample)

Do you think that the end of the USSR was a good or bad thing?



Even though a vast majority of those surveyed gave preference to today over the 1990s, such inclinations were even higher in certain cases. For example, an assessment of the 1990s impact on Georgia was associated with how young people compare the present with the last decade of the twentieth century. Though the differences are not great, there is at least a 10-percentage point difference

with respect to feeling safe, receiving qualified medical care and participating in political life. Those thinking that the 1990s brought negative outcomes to Georgia tended to have a higher appraisal of our current times over the 1990s when compared to those who believe that the 1990s had rather positive consequences (Figure 34).

FIGURE 34: WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT TODAY AND WHAT YOU KNOW OR IMAGINE ABOUT THE 1990s, HAS IT BECOME EASIER OR MORE DIFFICULT TO... (% , full sample)

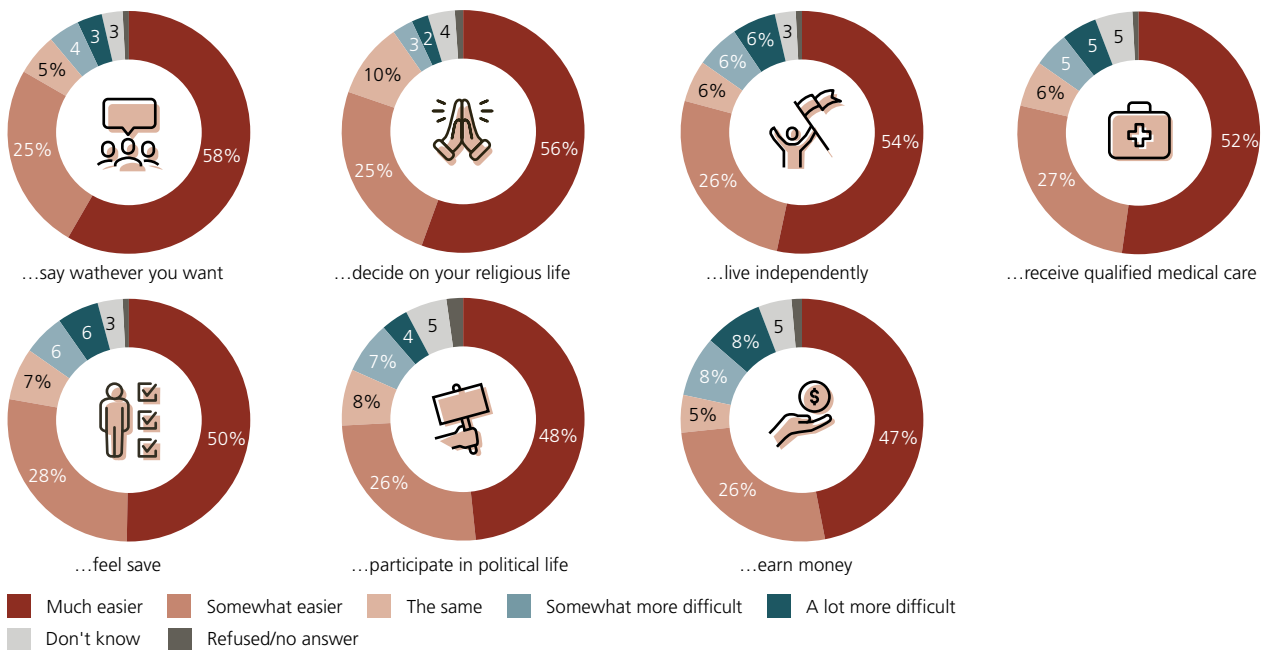
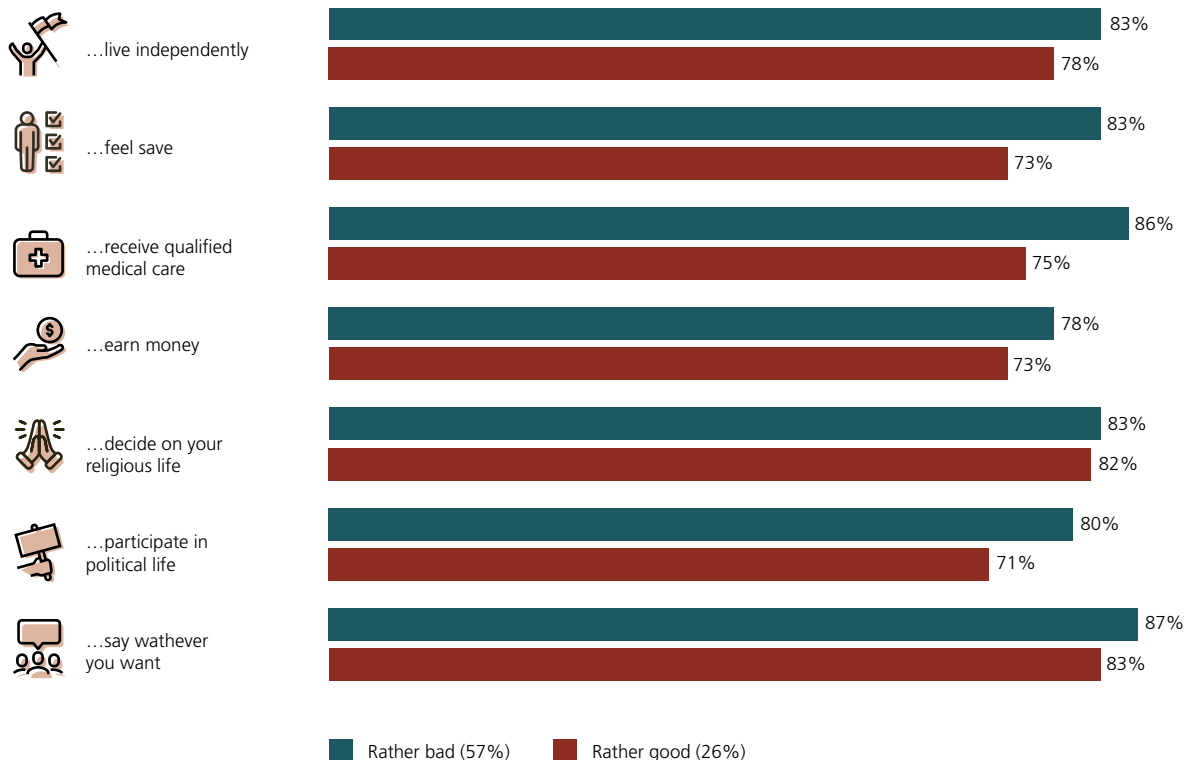


FIGURE 35: COMPARISON OF THE PRESENT DAY WITH 1990s: GOOD (ONLY “SOMEWHAT EASIER” AND “MUCH EASIER” ANSWERS,) BY WHETHER THE 1990s BROUGHT RATHER BAD OR RATHER GOOD (% , full sample)

When you think about today and what you know or imagine about the 1990s, has it become easier or more difficult to



DISCUSSION

Attitudes of youth in Georgia regarding their country's recent past are divided. While the majority of respondents positively assess the dissolution of the Soviet Union, by contrast the 1990s are considered a troubling period for Georgia. While the former is mostly associated with gaining independence, the latter reminds respondents of failed states and stagnant economic situations. This aligns with existing scholarship. Studies on the collective memory of the Georgian population have indicated that positive attitudes and “heroes” from the recent past are usually associated with those believed to facilitate independence and oppose the USSR, while “villains” or antagonists are associated with the Soviet Union or troubling 1990s.⁷⁷ As reported in our survey, attitudes toward Georgia's recent history and the Soviet Union rarely

differ due to the pure economic characteristics separating the two periods. Instead, they are mostly related to the respondent's educational level, the settlement type (urban, rural) and ethnicity.

While attitudes regarding the more recent past have not been investigated within this study, research on this topic shows that the Georgian public has two-fold attitudes toward the 2003-2012 period. It was a period of economic growth, fighting crime and establishing law and order, but altogether associated with human rights abuses, the war in 2008 and neglecting public opinion.⁷⁸ Despite the ambiguous attitudes regarding that period, the Rose revolution in 2003 is still perceived by the majority (68%; 70% among those aged 18-34) as an overall positive event for Georgia.⁷⁹ Though this subject was not investigated in this wave, it will be extremely interesting to include this topic in a future iteration of this study.

Public discourse on collective memory and history is likely an important factor in the formation of respondent opinions. One of the legitimate sources of discourse formation is schools and educational institutions – especially important in the case of young people as they have currently or recently been exposed to this source of socialisation. The educational reforms and official education policies introduced in Georgia during the last few decades have aimed at creating a highly standardised national curriculum with a universal understanding of history.⁸⁰

Another important factor impacting collective memory in Georgia is oral history and information exchanged through families and across generations. The results of focus group discussions suggested that one of the most important factors influencing young peoples' opinions of the Soviet Union and 1990s is family discussions. The relative insularity of Georgian ethnic minorities and so-called "language barrier" of non-Georgian speaking citizens traditionally excluded or alienated these groups from mainstream Georgian discourse and education.⁸¹ Hence, the country's ethnic minorities would have developed their own, alternative interpretations of recent history, ones not necessarily aligned with mainstream "ethnic Georgian" or even state discourse.

Contemporary politics and political agendas also influence opinions of the past. An example is the above-mentioned link between the perception of contemporary Russia and attitudes toward the USSR, where we observed that a negative description of Russia's role today is associated with a positive evaluation of the Soviet Union's historical dissolution. This correlation could be logical, as many in Georgia see a parallel in the two in terms of distancing their country from Russia. Though the Georgian school curriculum clearly distinguishes differences between the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia, many young people in Georgia still conflate the two and perceive both entities in an equally negative light.⁸² This mirrors broader trends across the Georgian society. For example, a study on "Attitudes and Perceptions Towards Russia in Georgia" commissioned by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS) indicated that, to a certain degree, the public draws comparisons of the current Russian state to the Soviet Union.⁸³ Though further research is needed to fully investigate these links, this current study represents a starting point for this endeavour.

While most youth in Georgia welcome the end of the Soviet Union, their perceptions about the subsequent decade are gloomy. Not only did "objective" indicators showing the collapse and downfall of economic and socio-political life indicate how bad things were in Georgia during the 1990s (for example, depicted in the World Bank reports), the general perception of society was one of instability, worsened economic conditions, injustice and few prospects of development. This ethos of the 90s is deep-rooted in the Georgian conscious and this period is perceived as an era of no achievement and a loss for the economic, political and security fields.⁸⁴ Similar to attitudes toward the Soviet Union, collective memories and perhaps family experience and trajectories can enhance our understanding of these issues. Contemporary academic research lacks fundamental studies on the impact of the 1990s experience on contemporary Georgia, as well as how this period is evaluated and perceived by young people.

9

PART SIX: IDENTITY, VALUES AND RELIGION

INTRODUCTION

Our values, identities and beliefs largely shape our personal behaviour and attitudes. They can therefore be used to understand, explain or predict certain patterns of societal development. In this regard, an inquiry into the values of young people is particularly important as youth are still shaping and acquiring their personal values and self-identification through both upbringing and socialisation. The formation of values and identities is an ongoing process; hence values naturally differ over time and across generations. Generational gaps contribute to the discrepancies between values and beliefs identified in societies, often causing inter-generational strains or misunderstandings. Although the values and identities of young people may not be fully impactful until they reach voting age, in the future they have the potential of transforming into mainstream standards. Therefore, it is important to have a vigorous and comprehensive understanding of these values and identities.

A strong attachment to ethnic affiliation is one of the most important markers of Georgian identity, along with an emphasis on traditional family values, conservative sexual values and religiosity.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, studies show that young people in Georgia are gradually shifting away from collectivistic, family-oriented and traditional values toward so-called post-materialistic values, manifested in increased support for gender equality and a wider acceptance of minorities.⁸⁶ Additionally, when investigating the differences between young people and the older generation, even though both still value tradition and “self-transcendence,” young people welcome societal changes and new challenges. They are also relatively more open-minded about minority inclusion in their country.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, homophobia and the predominance of negative attitudes toward non-dominant groups are widespread, even among young people.⁸⁸

Another feature of youth in Georgia is the tendency to absorb external or “modern” values and blend them with traditional values. A recent study has shown that while young people in Georgia tend to perceive themselves in the context of “European values” and consider themselves European, they still prioritise and appreciate “national Georgian” values.⁸⁹ The combination of local and external values, norms and identities into something hybridised,

where native Georgian sentiments are dominant, has been a distinct feature of youth in other surveys.⁹⁰

One more characteristic of young people in Georgia is the detachment from participatory values and sporadic engagement in formal or informal activities. According to activists and government officials, the low rate of civic participation and activism in the country is attributed to widespread social nihilism and social apathy.⁹¹ This could also be related to the general pattern of outside-group scepticism and institutional distrust expressed by the extremely low rates of association memberships, involvement in social gatherings and disbelief in social institutions.⁹² The previous wave of this study⁹³ “Youth Study – Generation in Transition” conducted in 2016, as well as other research projects focused on youth in Georgia, endorse these observations.⁹⁴

Considering the impact of the above-mentioned topics on youth in Georgia, this chapter explores values, identities, participation and trust among young people. Among other things, this includes an examination of opinions related to issues such as social distance, religious views, family and family environment. Altogether, they help to produce a full profile of youth in Georgia.

MAIN FINDINGS

- When it comes to identity, the majority of young people in Georgia perceive themselves as citizens of Georgia (94%), part of their town, village or region (77%), belonging to their ethnic group (62%) and belonging to the Caucasus region (59%). Relatively less frequently, young people also see themselves as citizens of the world (50%) or as European (41%). The idea of being a world citizen is supported more by the youngest age cohort (14-17), ethnic minorities and young people living in urban areas. Seeing oneself as European was also most frequent in urban areas, with the exception of Tbilisi.
- During focus groups young people explained that the reason they do not feel European is that Georgian culture is completely different from European culture. For some young people, Georgia is not yet a part of Europe as it lacks self-awareness and development in many fields. Those who feel European explain that their values, points of view, mentality, mind-set, as well as daily routines feel European.

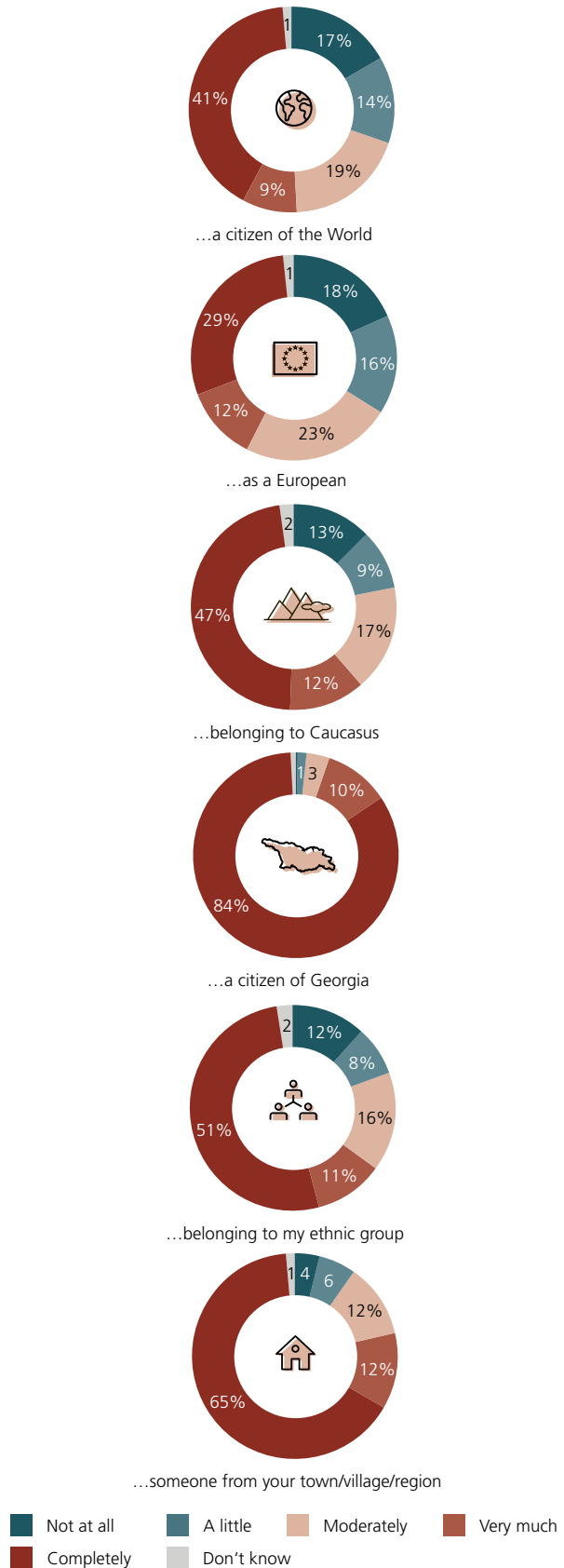
- The majority of young people (81%) acknowledge that individuals shouldn't depend on the government and embrace the concept of self-autonomy. The bulk of youth (79%) also believe that ethnic minority children should be allowed to learn their native language.
- Most young people in Georgia view religious organisations as somewhat sacred and unquestionable. Many think they occupy a special role within society (71%) and oppose the notion that freedom of speech entitles one to the possibility of criticising all religions (69%). In contrast to the capital, this latter opinion is more common in rural and other urban areas.
- Youth in Georgia tend to be very protective and rather conservative regarding their culture, however, their attitudes toward diversity and tolerance are not straightforward. On one hand, a minority (41%) supports the idea that a mixture of different cultures and religions will be beneficial for Georgia and the majority (66%) backs the idea that immigrants should adapt to Georgian cultural traditions. The last statement is supported more in rural (70%) and urban (67%) areas than in Tbilisi (58%).
- At the same time, an almost similar proportion of young people approve and disapprove of the concepts of homogeneity and tolerance to different cultures: 53% agree and 47% disagree that uniformity of customs and traditions is positive for Georgia, while 51% agree and 49% disagree that the cultural characteristics of many other nations are shared by Georgian society and it should be receptive to their impact. The first statement has more support among young people with only primary or incomplete secondary education (59%), while the second statement has more support among ethnic minorities (75%).
- The values associated with personal virtues and honesty seem to be the most important for young people. Nearly everyone claims that being faithful to their partner (95%), being responsible (95%), independent (95%) and having a successful career (93%) are important. The second most widespread values were associated with well-being. Health-related issues like healthy eating (91%), looking good (88%) and playing sports (82%) are more shared values than enrichment (67%). Furthermore, values related to family, like having children (88%) and getting married (77%), are named as very or rather important. Family-related values are more important to males and young people aged 25-29. In addition, young people outside the capital value marriage more than those living in Tbilisi.
- Values related to political and civic engagement, like 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) when compared to other age cohorts.
- 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".
- When it comes to sexuality, more than half (55%) of youth think that sexual abstinence should be a value for both genders, while one-fourth of respondents think that it is an outdated concept. More young people in Tbilisi (35%) believe this is an outdated concept when compared to other urban (20%) and rural (22%) areas. Young people with higher education also tend to have a more critical view of sexual abstinence when compared to those with primary, incomplete secondary and complete secondary education.
- 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 and critical, claiming that queer folks need treatment. In this regard, females and young people in the capital have more tolerant attitudes.
- The most highly trusted institutions are the army (74%) and church/religious institutions (67%), followed by the police (48%) and courts (39%). The army and church are more trusted outside the capital, while the church is more trusted by young people with primary and secondary education when compared to those with higher education.
- Among the least trusted institutions are political parties (79% distrust), the media (74% distrust), the President (71% distrust), trade unions (67% distrust) and the national Government (66% distrust). These institutions are the least trusted in Tbilisi, while females tend to report a slightly higher level of trust than men.
- Survey findings show the 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 entry into the country. On the other hand, the most welcomed groups of people are mothers with many children, religious persons, IDPs and refugees.

- Most young people have not left their parental home. Just 3% of respondents reported living alone and around a quarter of respondents (24%) reside with a partner or spouse. As a rule, young people have cordial relationships with their parents (58% report getting along very well and another 38% getting along most of the time).
- A quarter (25%) of young people reported being married, however this figure is not evenly distributed among the sexes. More females (36%) reported having a spouse, while the same figure is 14% among males. Nearly everyone married also reports having children. Those who currently do not have children plan to have children in the future (77%). When it comes to the preferred gender of the child, a majority of respondents (58%) are indifferent.

IDENTITY AND BELONGING

When youth in Georgia are asked how they see their identities in terms of ethnic, nationalistic or cosmopolitan affiliations, civic national self-identification is dominant, as nearly everyone (94%) very much or completely perceives themselves as a citizen of Georgia (Figure 36). Seeing oneself as belonging to a certain town/village or region is also very common (77%, sum of “completely” or “very much”) for young people in Georgia, however, to a lesser degree than citizenship. It is important to note that ethnic affiliation is also relatively high (62%), however, one in five respondents (20%) report that they do “not at all” or to “a little” degree consider themselves as part of their ethnic group (Figure 36). Supranational self-identification is less widespread, however, on a different scale. The perception of belonging to the Caucasus (59% very much or completely) is more prevalent than the perception of being European (41%). In reality, European self-identification was the least supported idea assessed by young people in this segment of the survey (41%) – even abstract and more global statements of seeing oneself as “a citizen of the world” received somewhat higher support (49%, Figure 36).

FIGURE 36: HOW MUCH DO YOU SEE YOURSELF AS...? (% , full sample)



Young people living in the capital less enthusiastically recognise themselves as citizens of the world compared to the rest of the country. At the same time, this idea is relatively more popular among the 14-17 age group (54%) compared to the older 25-29 age group (45%). The world citizenship idea is also more supported by ethnic minorities (62%) than by ethnic Georgians (48%). While neither age group nor ethnicity determines the level of support for the idea of being European, young people living in urban settlements (other than the capital city) are a bit more sympathetic to this idea than young people in rural areas and the capital (Figure 37). In addition, young people with higher education (49%) are more prone to say that they see themselves as Europeans than respondents

with primary (38%) and complete secondary education (39%) (Figure 37).

When it comes to national, ethnic and local self-identification, settlement type shows the greatest variety. Though being a citizen of Georgia is a universally shared idea, it is more pronounced in the capital (97%) when compared to rural areas (91%). The sense of belonging to one's town/village/region is more frequently observed among urban (86%) and rural (78%) youth than the capital (70%). Differences are also observed among age groups: the 25–29 year-old age group leans more toward local self-identification (82%), compared to the youngest age category (72%) (Figure 38).

FIGURE 37: HOW MUCH DO YOU SEE YOURSELF AS...? (ONLY THE SUM OF THE "VERY MUCH" AND "COMPLETELY" ANSWERS PROVIDED (%), full sample. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)

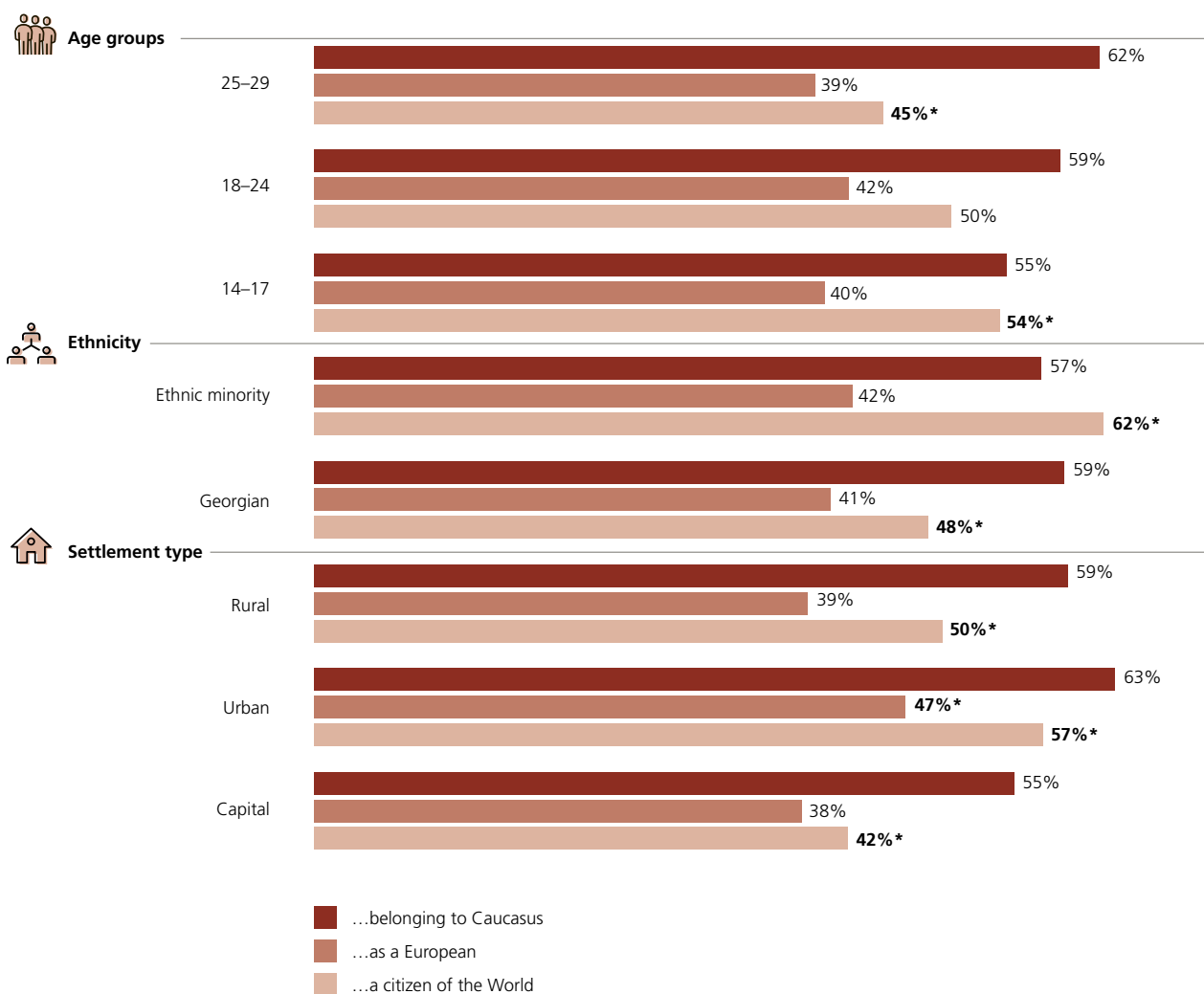
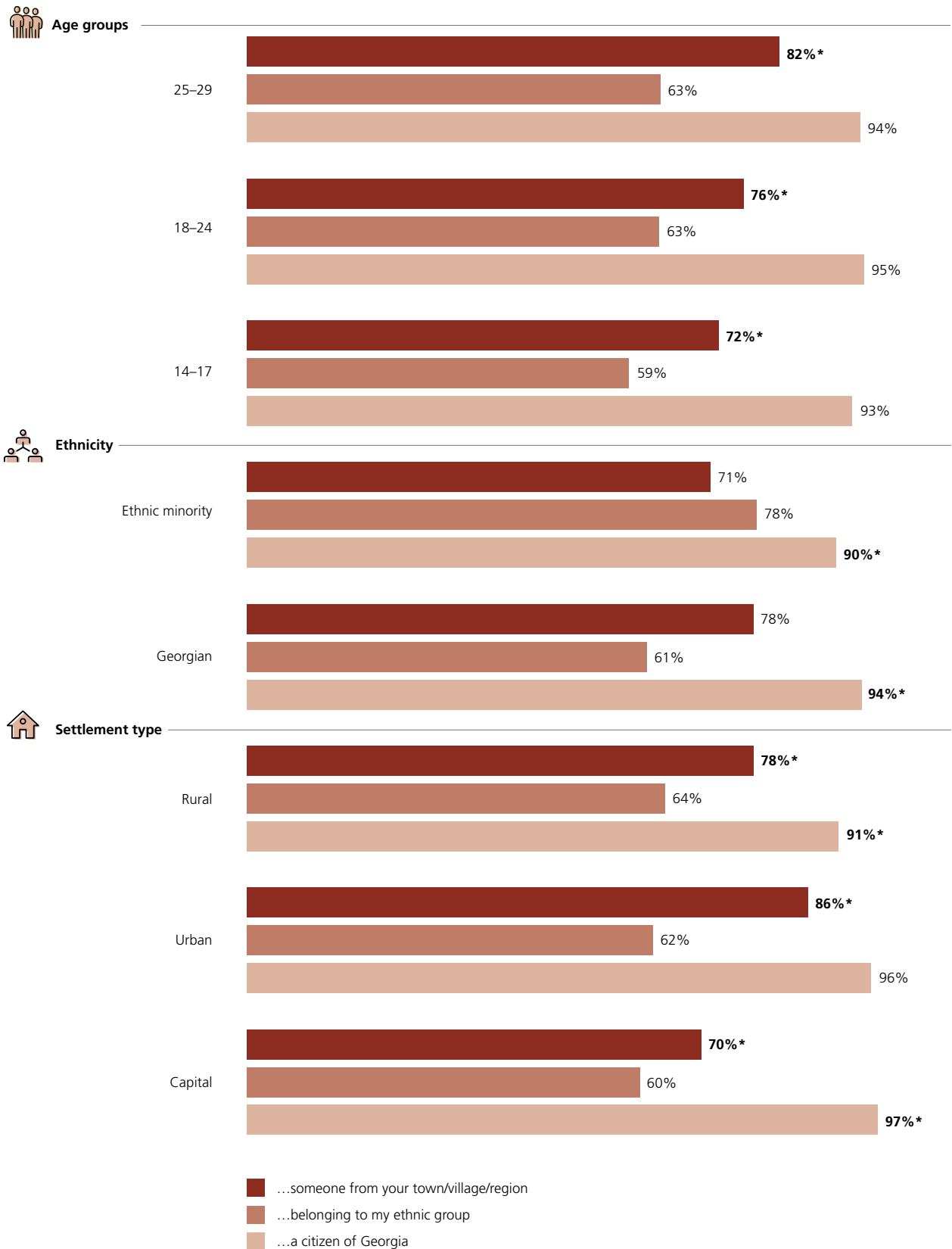


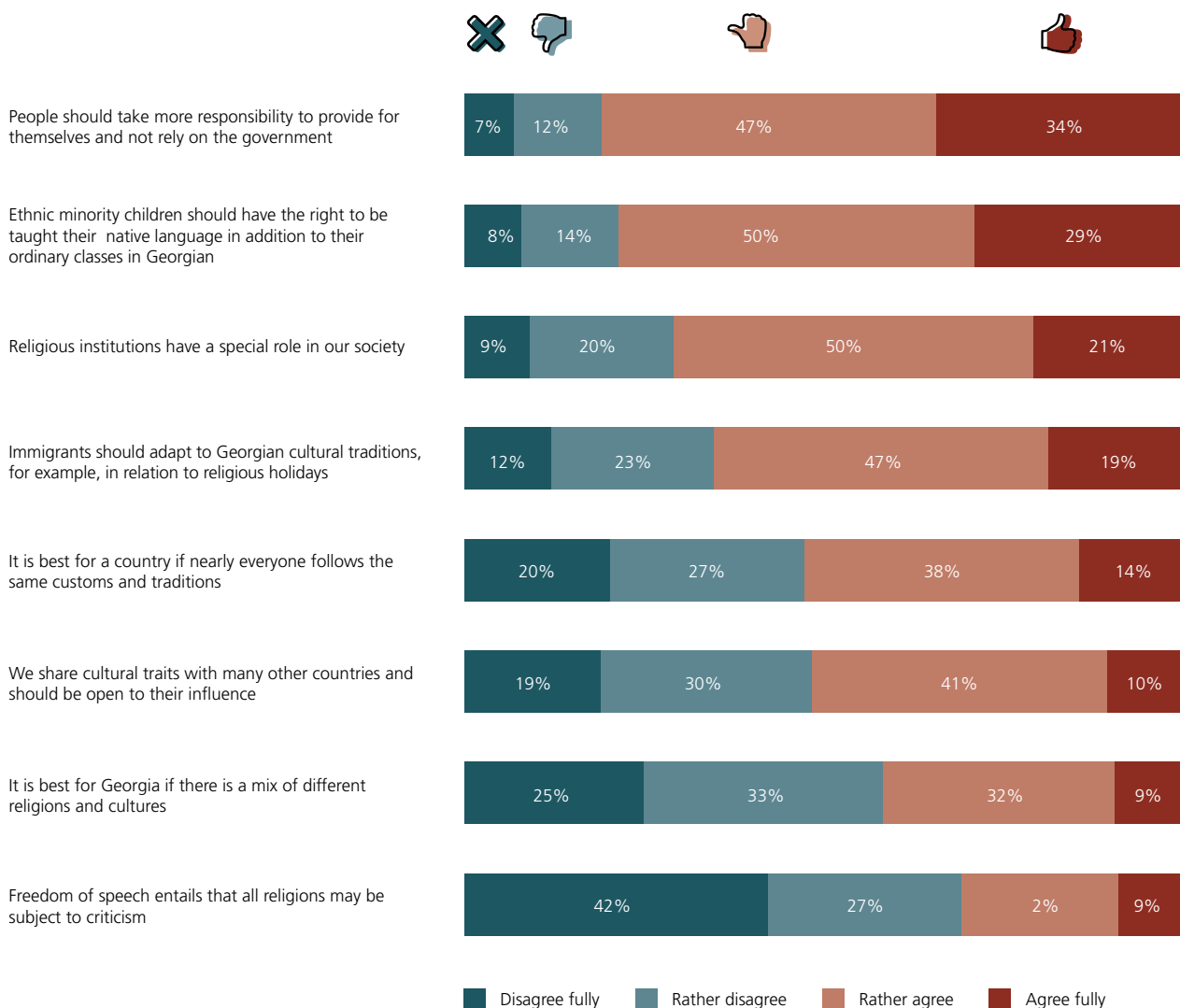
FIGURE 38: HOW MUCH DO YOU SEE YOURSELF AS...? (ONLY THE SUM OF THE “VERY MUCH” AND “COMPLETELY” ANSWERS PROVIDED (% , full sample. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)



Youngsters in Georgia were asked to provide their opinions on several statements ranging from attitudes toward the government, immigration, minorities, religion and culture. The data analysis shows that youth in Georgia have diverging positions on these topics. Provided answers indicate that the vast majority (81%) rather or fully agree with the idea that “people should take more responsibility to provide for themselves and not rely on the government”. Nearly the same portion of respondents (79%) rather or fully agrees that “ethnic minority children should have the right to be taught their native language in addition to their ordinary classes in Georgian”. Young people value religious institutions a lot. Nearly two-thirds (71%) of young people believe that religious institutions play a special role in the society and nearly the same

portion (69%) fully or rather disagree that freedom of speech entails potential criticism of religions. Young people in Georgia are very protective and rather conservative when it comes to their culture: the majority (66%) support the idea that immigrants should adapt to Georgian cultural traditions, while 58% disagree that a mix of different religions and cultures will be best for Georgia. Despite these opinions, nearly equal shares of young people both agree and disagree with the ideas of cultural openness and homogeneity: 53% agree that nearly everyone following the same traditions is best for the country, and 51% believe that Georgian society shares cultural traits with many other countries and we should be open to their influence (Figure 39).

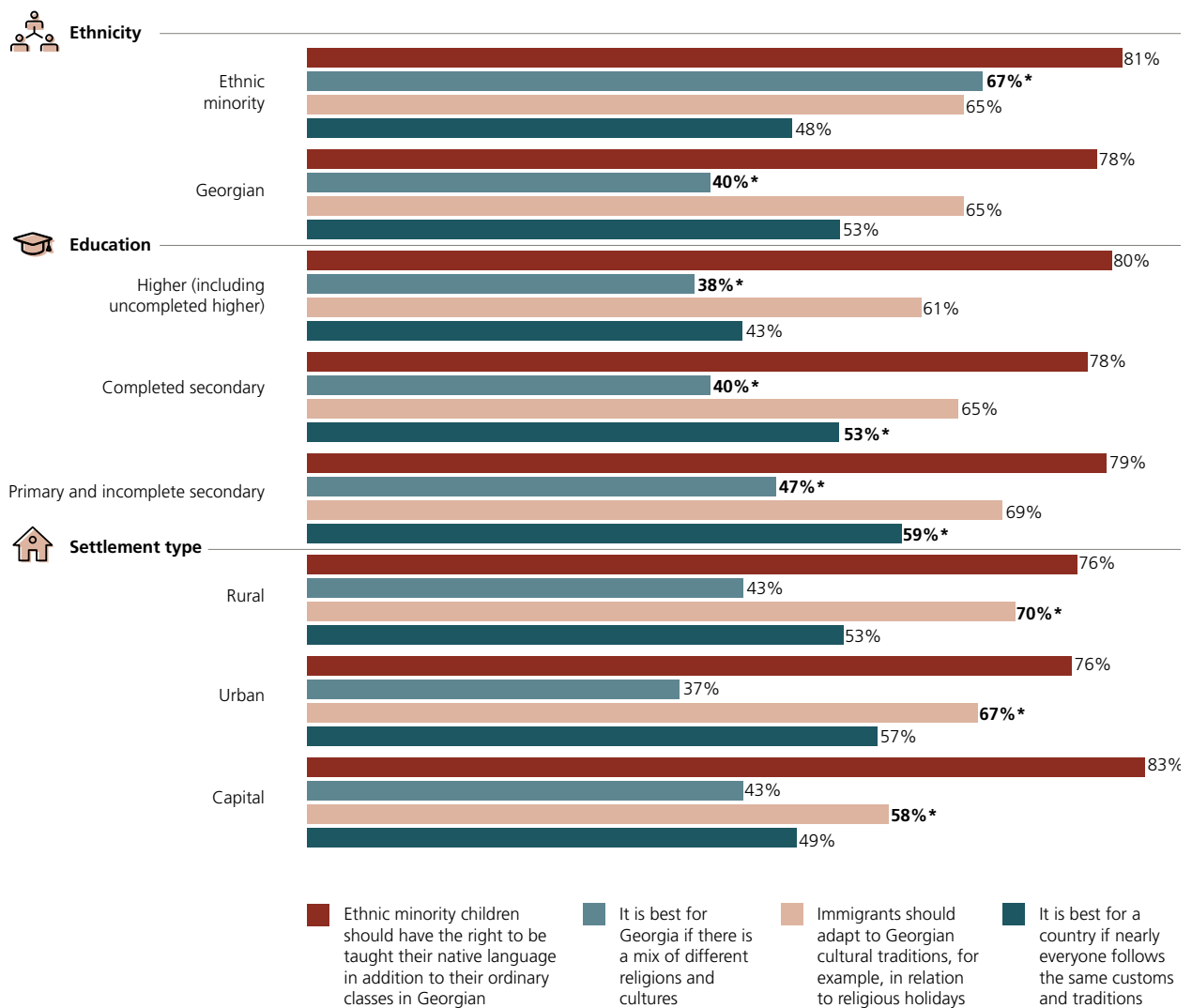
FIGURE 39: IN YOUR VIEW, FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST, WITH WHICH STATEMENTS DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE? (% , full sample)



When analysing the degree of acceptance of those statements across different socio-demographic groups, differences by settlement type and educational attainment are noticeable (Figure 40). For example, the number of those who rather or fully agree with the idea that “it is best for Georgia if there is a mix of different religions and cultures” is lowest among young people with higher education (38%) and highest among those with primary and incomplete secondary education (47%). This idea is supported by a significant majority of ethnic minority youth (67%), while the same position is shared only by 40% of ethnic Georgians. Simultaneously, most of the youth with

primary and incomplete secondary education (59%) agree with the idea that it is best for Georgia if nearly everyone follows the same customs and traditions, while only 43% of young people with higher education think the same. As for positions regarding immigration, discrepancies are remarkable by settlement type. While in the capital, 58% support the idea of immigrants adapting Georgian cultural traditions, the same number is 70% among rural youth. Differences were not observed in the case of attitudes regarding ethnic minority children learning their native language – this idea is highly supported among all discussed socio-demographic groups.

FIGURE 40: IN YOUR VIEW, FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST, WITH WHICH STATEMENTS DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE? (Only the sum of the “rather agree” and “fully agree” answers provided (% , full sample. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)

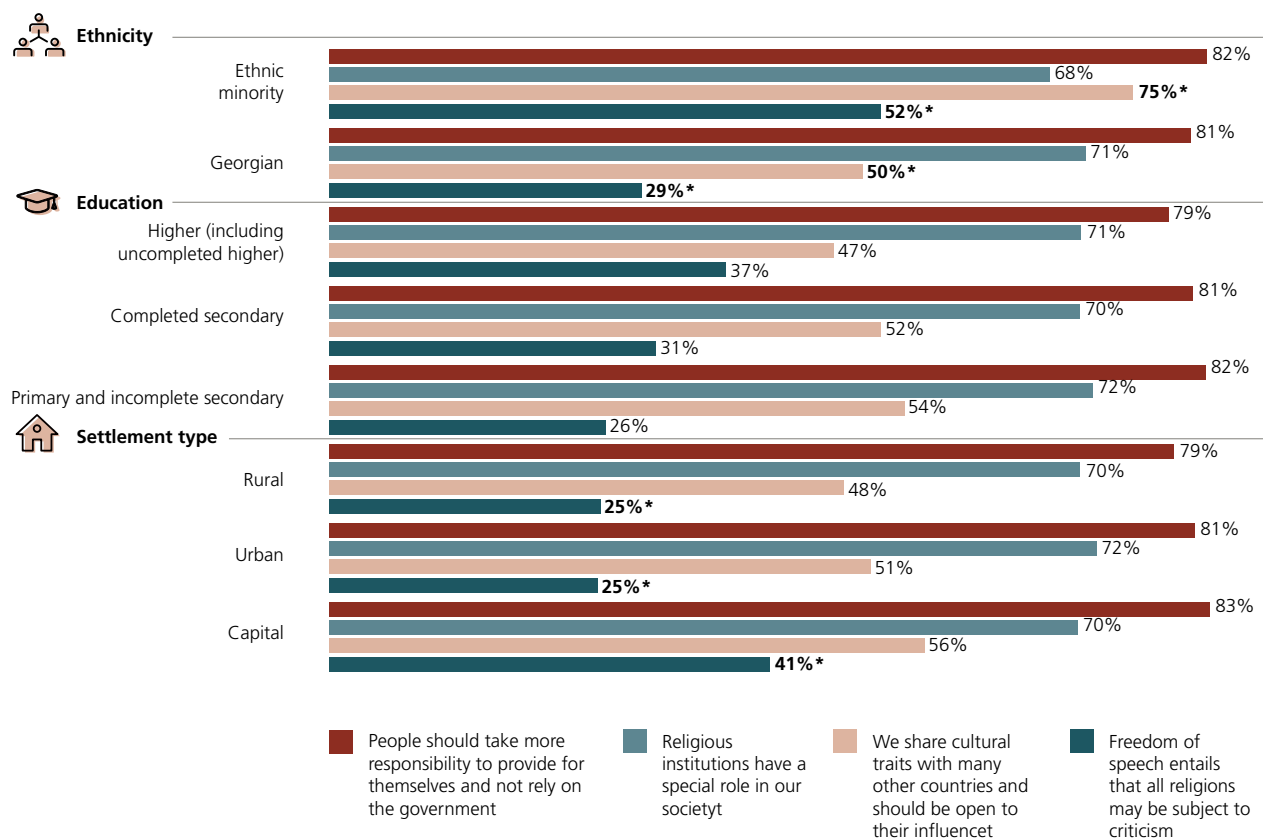


Ethnic minorities are more prone (75%) to agree with the idea that Georgian society shares cultural traits with many other countries and that society should be open to their influence when compared to ethnic Georgians (50%). Ethnic minorities also differ from ethnic Georgians in terms of attitudes toward freedom of speech and religion. While 52% of ethnic minority youth agree that freedom of speech entails criticism of religion, this index is 29% for ethnic Georgian youth. Differences in this statement were also observed by settlement type. Youth in the capital (41%) are more supportive of freedom of speech than other urban (25%) or rural (25%) settlements. As for the other statements, religious institutions are important for young people across all major socio-demographic groups. Young people are also overwhelmingly supportive of the idea that people should rely less on the government and take on more responsibility for themselves (Figure 41).

To summarise, when it comes to accepting other cultures, young people in Georgia tend to lean toward traditional and conservative values. The majority is predisposed to cultural homogeneity as well as due to recognising the

unique and special status of religion. Nevertheless, attitudes toward acceptance, tolerance and diversity are not one-dimensional. Positions are nearly equally split regarding the benefits of the universality of traditions and openness to the influence of other cultures. The complexity of young peoples' values is further intensified when exploring the predominance of the above-described values among different socio-demographic subgroups. Living outside the capital is associated with a stronger likelihood of having conservative-leaning attitudes, while those living in the capital are relatively more accepting and open to diversity. Another dividing factor is ethnicity. Compared to ethnic Georgians, ethnic minority youth tend to support cultural diversity and exposure to other cultures to a higher degree. Nevertheless, there is caveat: such attitudes among minorities might be associated with the fact that they would like to see their own culture alongside the dominant Georgian culture. If this is the case, it does not necessarily mean that ethnic minorities are more tolerant or prone to acceptance and diversity than their ethnic Georgian peers. One way or another, this topic is the subject of further research and investigation.

FIGURE 41: IN YOUR VIEW, FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST, WITH WHICH STATEMENTS DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE? (ONLY THE SUM OF THE "RATHER AGREE" AND "FULLY AGREE" ANSWERS PROVIDED (%), full sample. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)



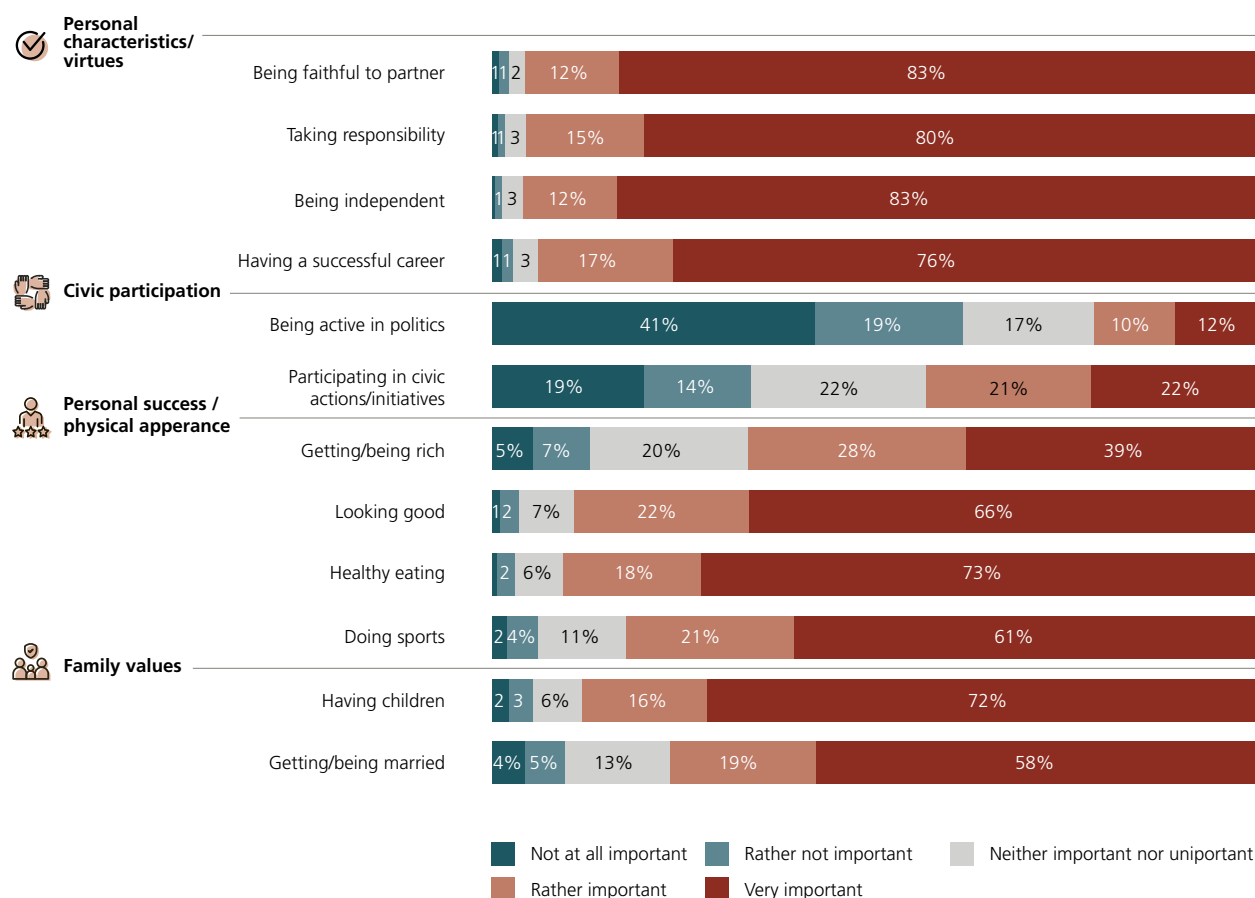
THE VALUES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people were asked about the importance of different values and ideals. Twelve discussed items were grouped into 4 loosely defined categories using the factor analysis technique (the approach that aims at dimension reduction and latent variable identification). The first and the most important set of values can be broadly defined as a personal virtues or characteristics group. It unites values like being faithful to partners, being independent, taking responsibility and having a successful career. Those are the most important values for young people, as a vast majority of them report that they are very important (Figure 42). Civic participation activities are the least shared values: only 22% claim that it is rather or very important to be active in politics. While the same figure for civic participation is a bit higher (43%), it is still

significantly lower than all other evaluated statements. These findings are aligned with what has been discussed in the civic participation subchapter indicating very low levels of political or civic activism. The third identified factor deals with physical appearance/well-being values that turned out to be very important for most youngsters (Figure 42).

More than 80% reported that it is important to look good, eat healthy or participate in sports. Another value from this group, getting or being rich, is perceived as a bit less important than other values, but for a large majority of respondents (67%) it is still rather or very important. The last set of values, having children and getting married, were united in the family values group. In general, both are important for the vast majority of young people, however, if comparing “very important” answers only, having children (72%) is relatively more important than getting/being married (58%).

FIGURE 42: WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT SOME OF YOUR OPINIONS AND ATTITUDES. HOW MUCH ARE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IMPORTANT TO YOU IN GENERAL? (% , full sample)

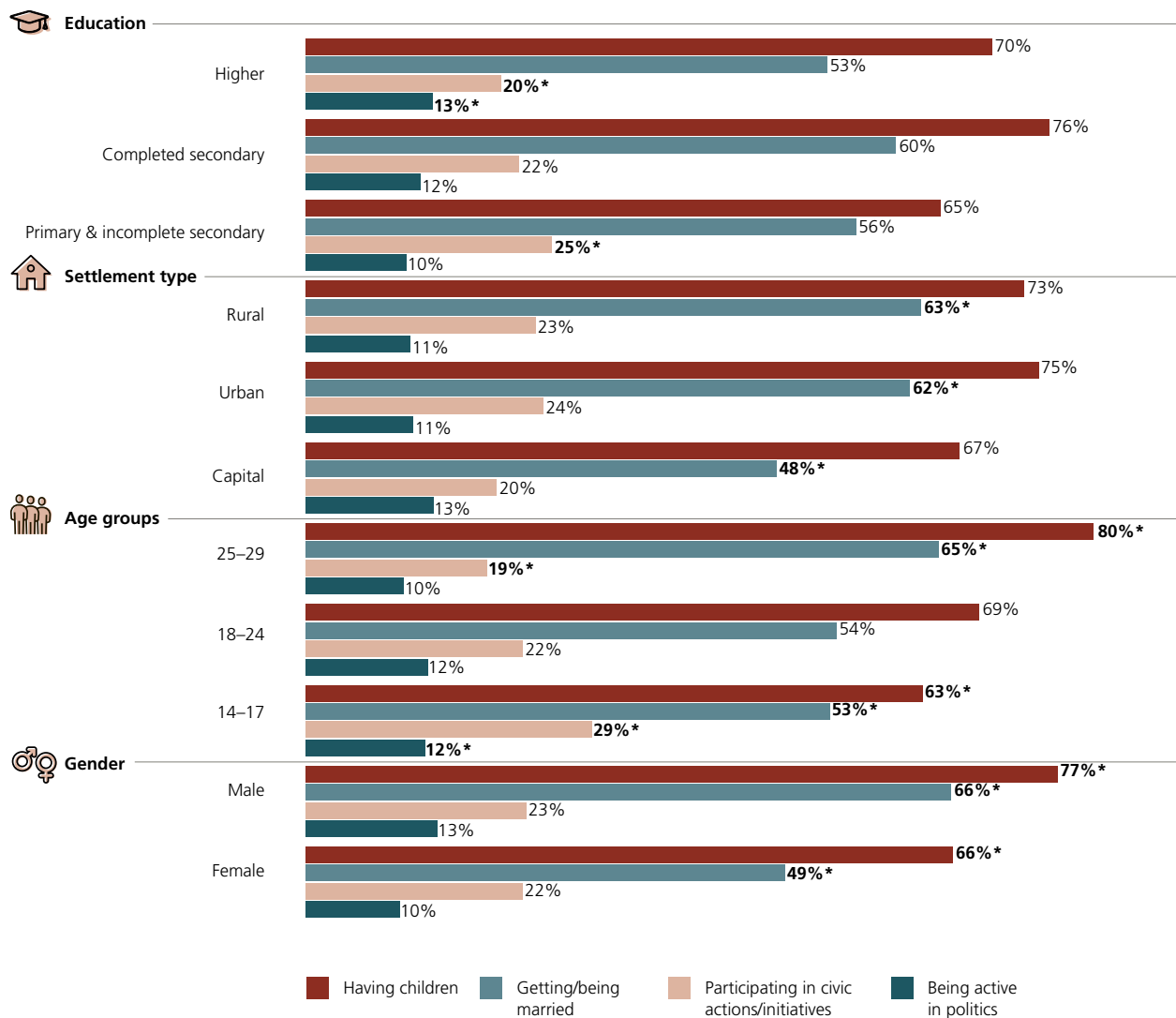


When comparing differences among different groups, significant differences were identified for family and participation values questions. Family values-associated statements seem to be related to age and gender (Figure 43). amely, males (77%) report that having children is “very important” more frequently than females (66%). At the same time the youngest cohort (63%) is less enthusiastic about this matter than the oldest age group (80%). Despite this difference, for the majority of respondents, regardless of gender or age, having children remains very important. As for marriage, males (66%) again tend to value this more than females (49%) and the difference is quite significant. In addition, 48% of young people from

the capital think that getting/being married is “very important”, whilst in the urban (62%) and rural (63%) areas the percentage is considerably higher.

As indicated, both actions and values regarding civic and political participation are generally not endorsed by young people, however, certain discrepancies are observed among generational and educational groups. In general, those representing the lowest age cohort (14-17 age group) value participating in civic actions or initiatives more than older youngsters. Nevertheless, the attested differences are marginal and have a small effect on the overall figures.

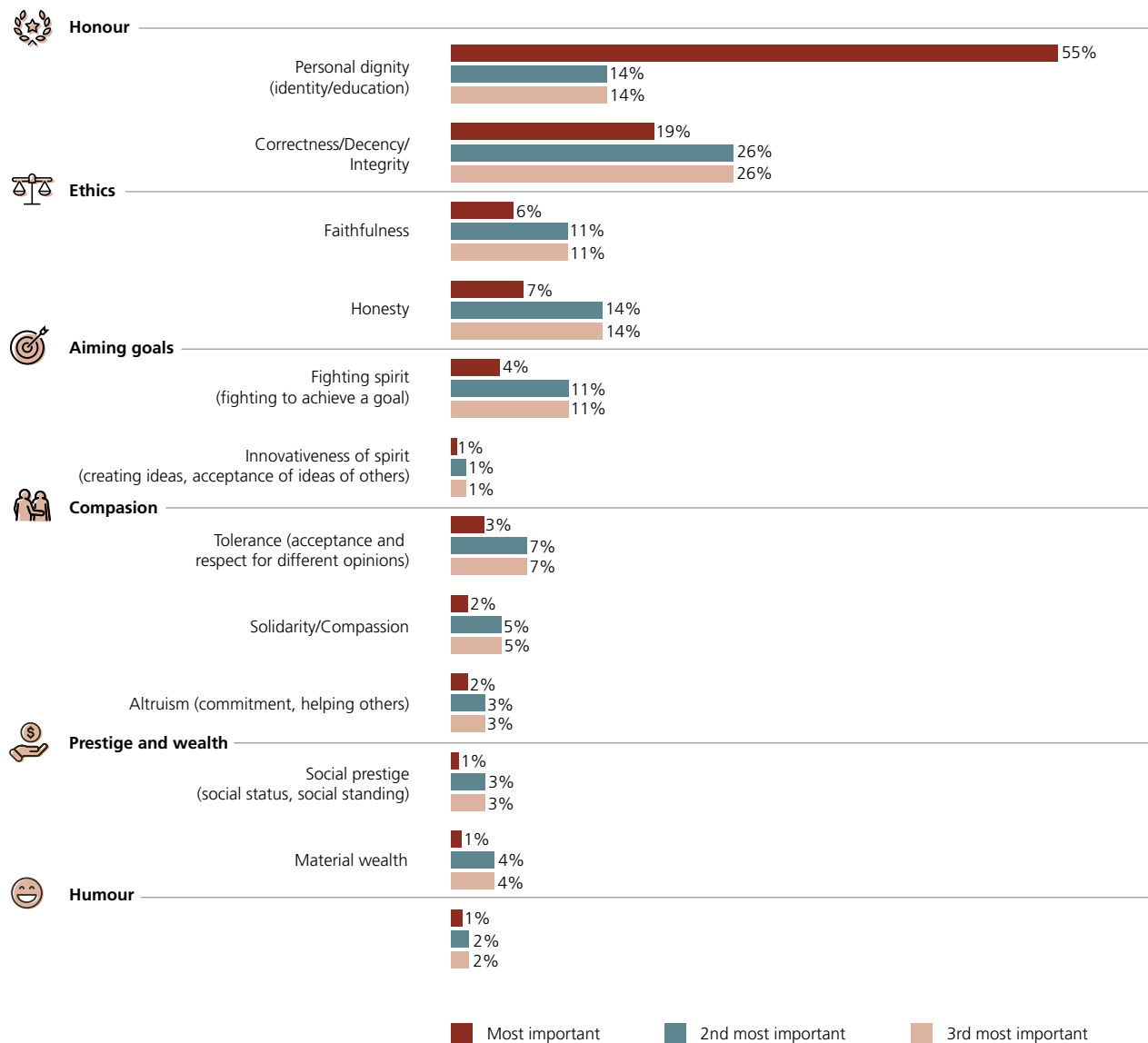
FIGURE 43: WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT SOME OF YOUR OPINIONS AND ATTITUDES. HOW MUCH ARE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IMPORTANT TO YOU IN GENERAL? (ONLY “VERY IMPORTANT” ANSWERS PROVIDED (% , full sample. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)



Youngsters were also asked about their most important values (Figure 44). From a provided list of 12 different values, those associated with dignity and honour were the most frequently selected. Personal dignity (55%) was named by more than half of young people as the most important value, while nearly one-fifth (19%) felt that correctness/decency/integrity is their most important value. These two values were also named as the second most important values most frequently. Ethical, compassion or prestige-oriented values were rarely selected as the first-choice answers. As for the second and third options, being faithful, honest and having a fighting spirit to achieve one's goals were mentioned relatively often,

but still behind the values of personal dignity and decency. When it comes to the compassion-related values, like tolerance, solidarity and altruism, as for the most important answers, they were neglected as the second and third choices (Figure 44).

FIGURE 44: WHICH THREE OF THE OFFERED VALUES DO YOU VALUE MOST? (% , full sample)



The study also investigated the opinions of young people regarding their views about sexuality. One of the investigated topics was the attitudes of youth towards the concept of sexual abstinence. More than half (55%) of youth think that sexual abstinence should be a value for both genders, while one-fourth of respondents think that it is an outdated concept. When comparing attitudes on this topic among different social-demographic groups, there are certain discrepancies. Namely, in the capital, there are more young people (35%) who believe that this is an outdated concept, when compared to other urban (20%) and rural (22%) areas. Young people with higher education also tend to have a more critical view of sexual abstinence when compared to those with primary/incomplete secondary and secondary education. Interestingly, there were no statistically meaningful differences between females and males while reflecting on this topic (Figure 45).

Besides sexual abstinence, adult young people (i.e. 18 years and older) were also asked to state their positions and views on sexual orientation. Although 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 and critical. For example, three-quarters of respondents (74%) believe that queer folks should never be able to hold parades in the streets, and nearly one-third of youth (32%) believe queer people always need treatment because of

their sexual orientation. A plurality (38%) also believe that “Condemnation of homosexual behaviour is our responsibility/obligation towards our children” (Figure 46).

Though young people in Georgia have a negative opinion of sexual minorities, these attitudes are not uniform across different groups. Those with higher education, living in the capital and female are more decisively against physical or verbal abuse and aggression towards queer folks and more frequently answer “never” when assessing aggression related statements when compared to their peers in other urban and rural areas, with lower educational attainment or young men (Figure 47). As for the right to freedom of expression, manifested in holding demonstrations, males (78%) again are a bit more negatively inclined to this idea than females (70%). Youth outside the capital and aged 25-29 also hold constraining views on this topic. Males also hold more conservative and sometimes discriminatory opinions in the case of the statement “Homosexual people need treatment because of their sexual orientation”. Young people in the capital and those with higher education more frequently report opinions against this statement when compared to their peers in other urban and rural areas, as well as primary and secondary education. Young people from the capital are also less likely to support the idea of condemnation of homosexual behaviour – nearly half of them (47%) report “never” when assessing this statement, while in rural areas the index is 26% (Figure 47).

FIGURE 45: WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT SEXUAL ABSTINENCE IN THIS DAY AND AGE? PLEASE SELECT ONE ANSWER. (% , full sample)

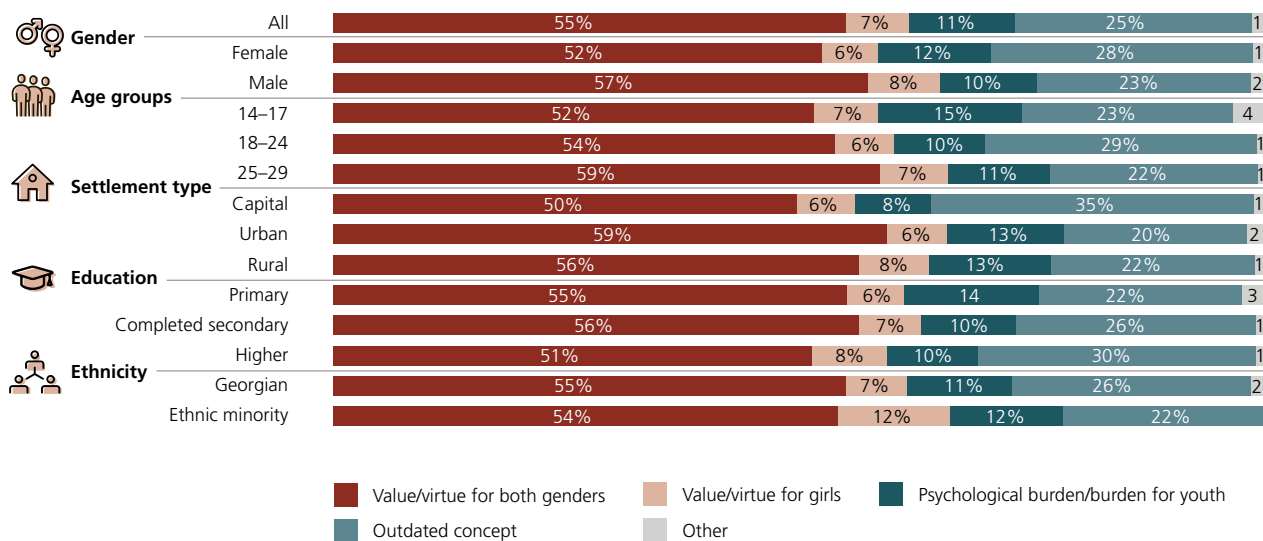


FIGURE 46: DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS? (% , only those respondents aged 18 and above).

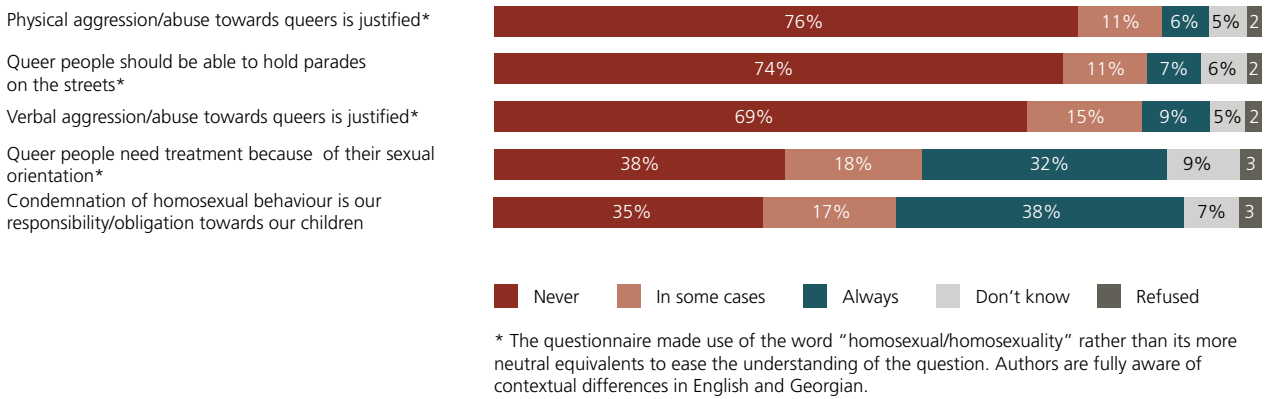
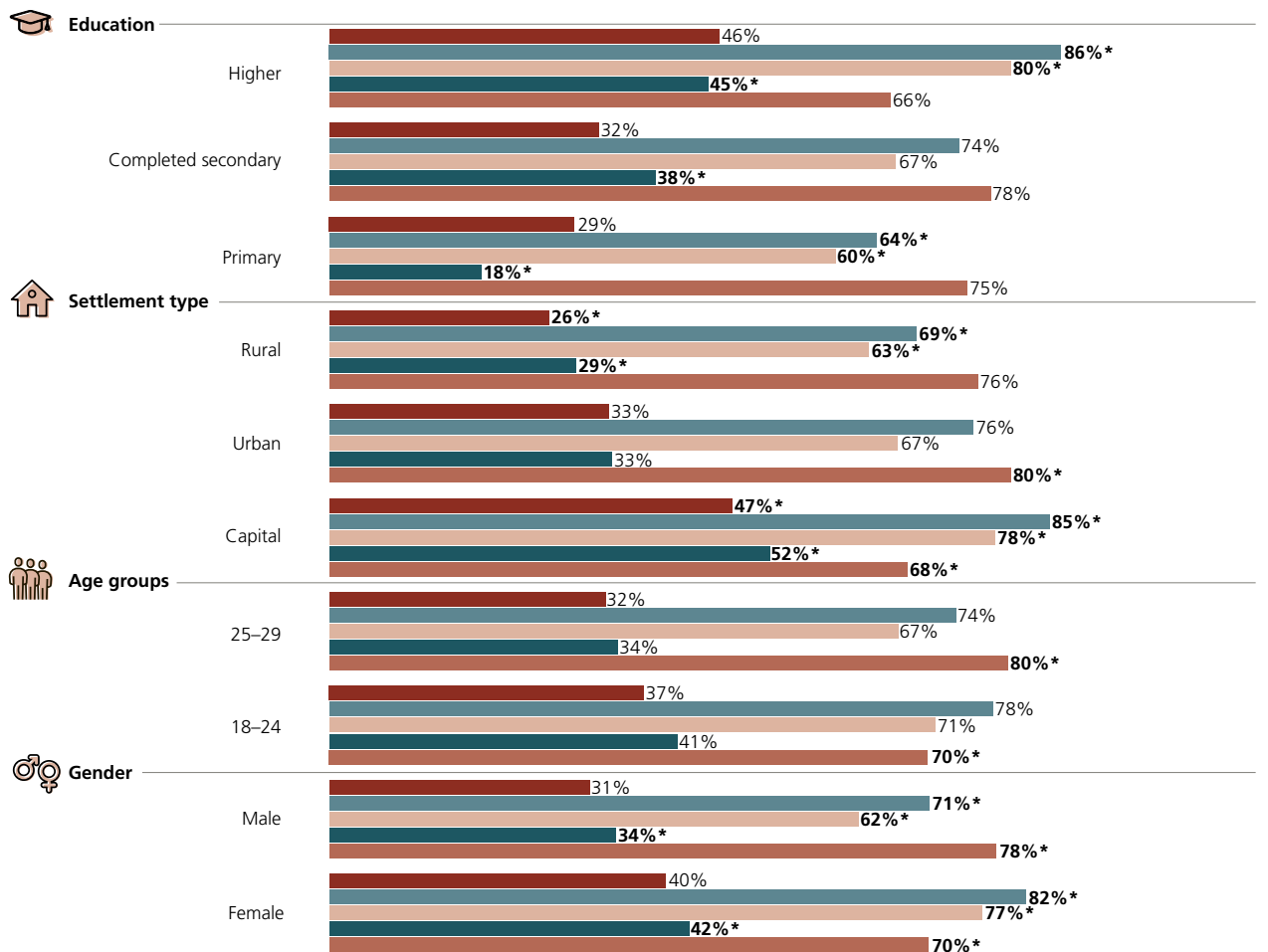
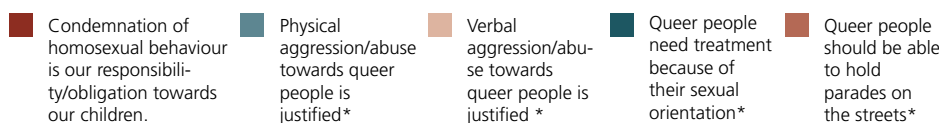


FIGURE 47: DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS? ("never" answers, asked to respondents aged 18 and above. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)⁹⁵



* The questionnaire made use of the word "homosexual/homosexuality" rather than its more neutral equivalents to ease the understanding of the question. Authors are fully aware of contextual differences in English and Georgian.



TRUST, DISTRUST AND SOCIAL DISTANCE

Youngsters in Georgia report exceptionally diverse levels of institutional trust, which varies from elevated levels of confidence to distrust or even a lack of information about specific institutions. Traditionally, the army and religious institutions are among the most trusted institutions in Georgia and youth follow this trend. Cumulatively, 74% “fully” or “quite a lot” trust the army and 67% trust the church/religious institutions. Law enforcement institutions (48%) and the judiciary (39%) are the next institutions in order of trust. Civil society organisations, the national government, the president and the media have the trust of less than one-third of young people in Georgia. Among the least trusted institutions are trade unions (17%) and political parties (15%). However, it is important to note that when answering questions about trade unions

almost one-fifth of respondents (17%) found it difficult to answer this question, probably because of a lack of information about trade unions (Figure 48).

The levels of institutional trust are not evenly redistributed among different socio-demographic groups. In general, those living in the capital are more critical of nearly all investigated institutions (Figures 26 and 27). Even in the case of the army and the church, fewer young people in the capital (63% and 54%) trust those institutions compared to other urban (82% and 69%) and rural (79% and 77%) settlements. When it comes to the church, differences are also observed across educational attainment levels. Those with higher education (58%) trust the church and religious institutions less than those with secondary (70%) or primary (70%) education. Another peculiarity in the data is associated with low levels of trust in 18-24 year-olds, when compared to other younger or older age groups in the case of the church, police and national government (Figure 49).

FIGURE 48: HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THE ENTITIES LISTED BELOW? (% , full sample)

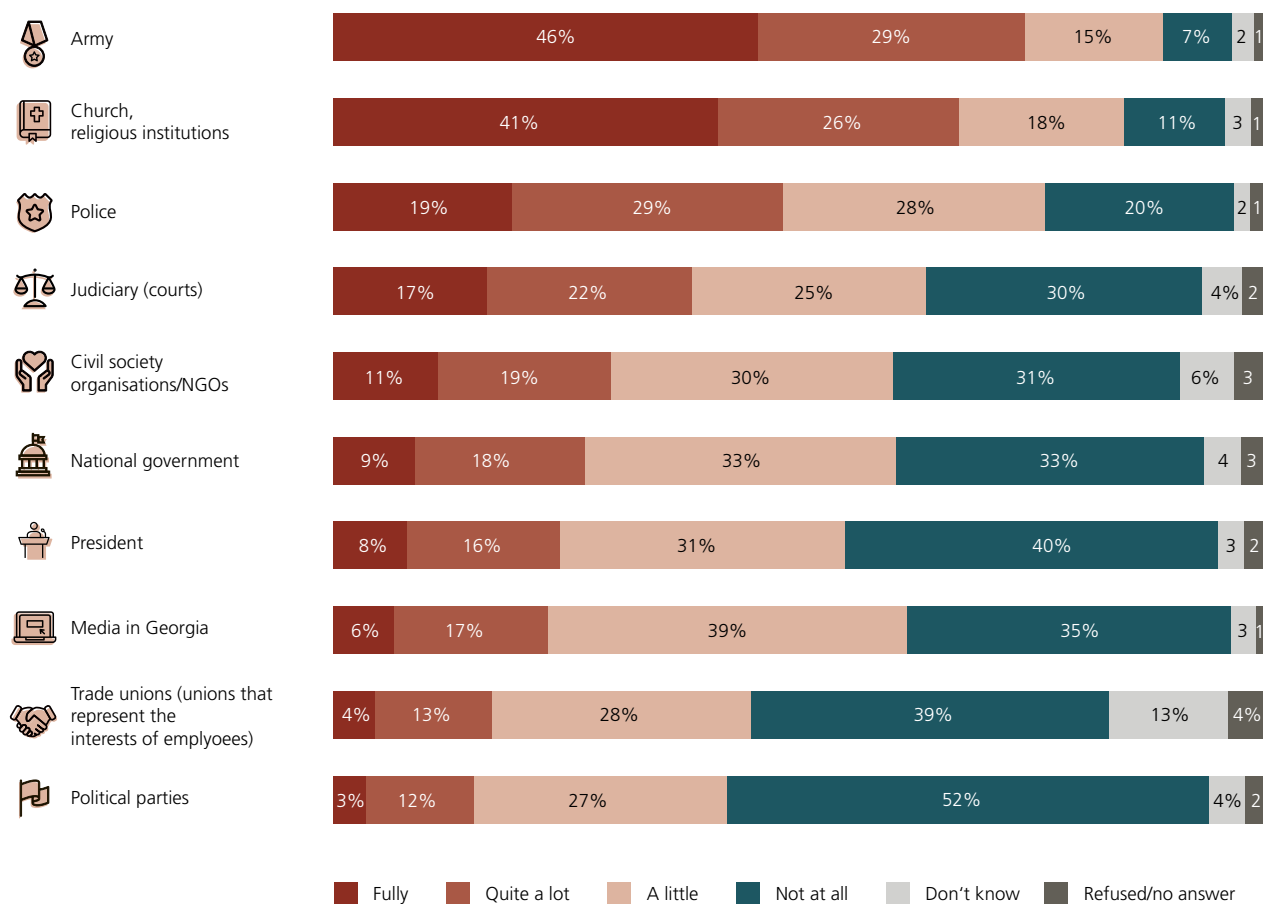


FIGURE 49: HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THE ENTITIES LISTED BELOW? (Only “quite a lot” and “fully trust” answers. Full sample. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)

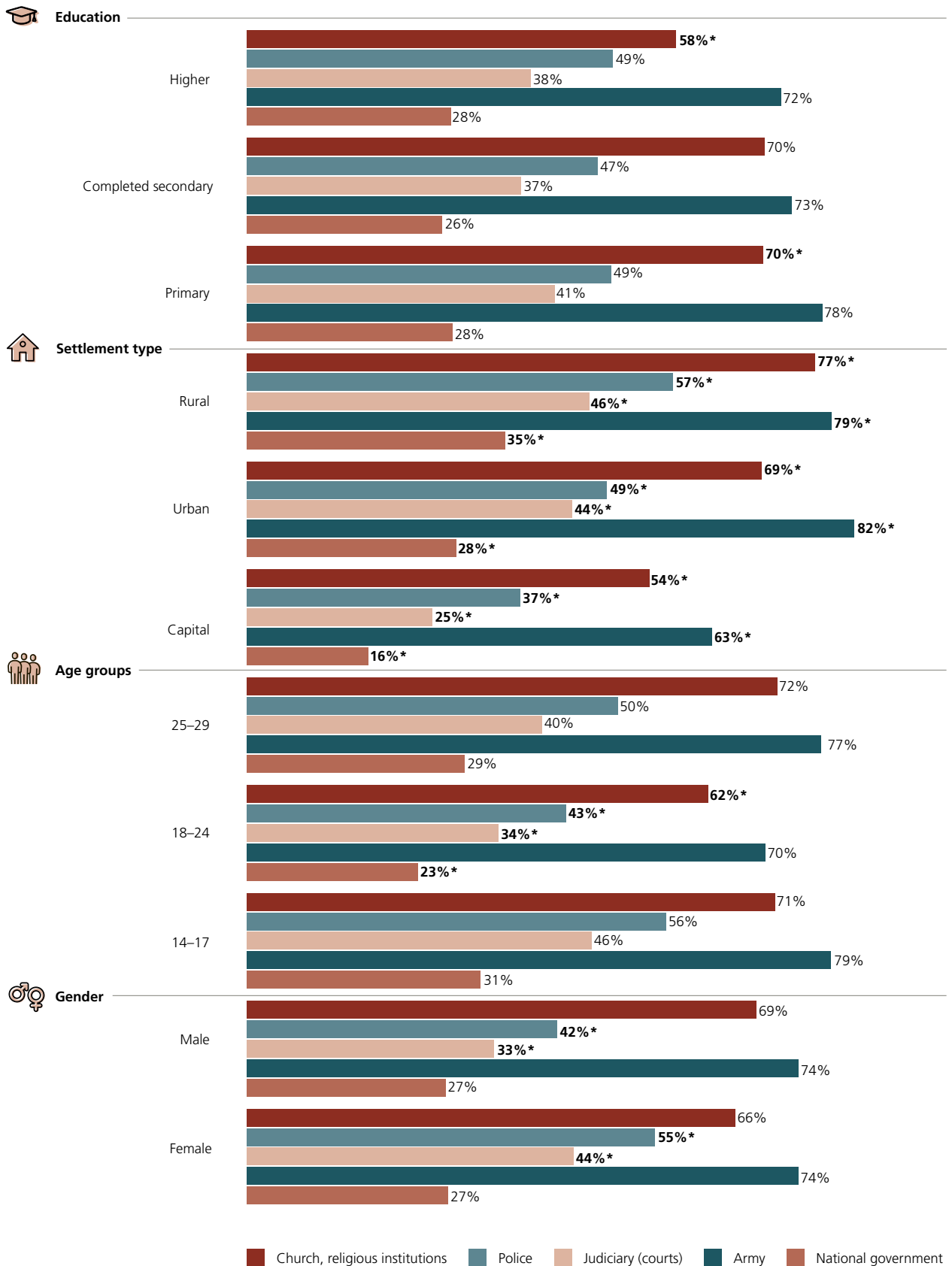
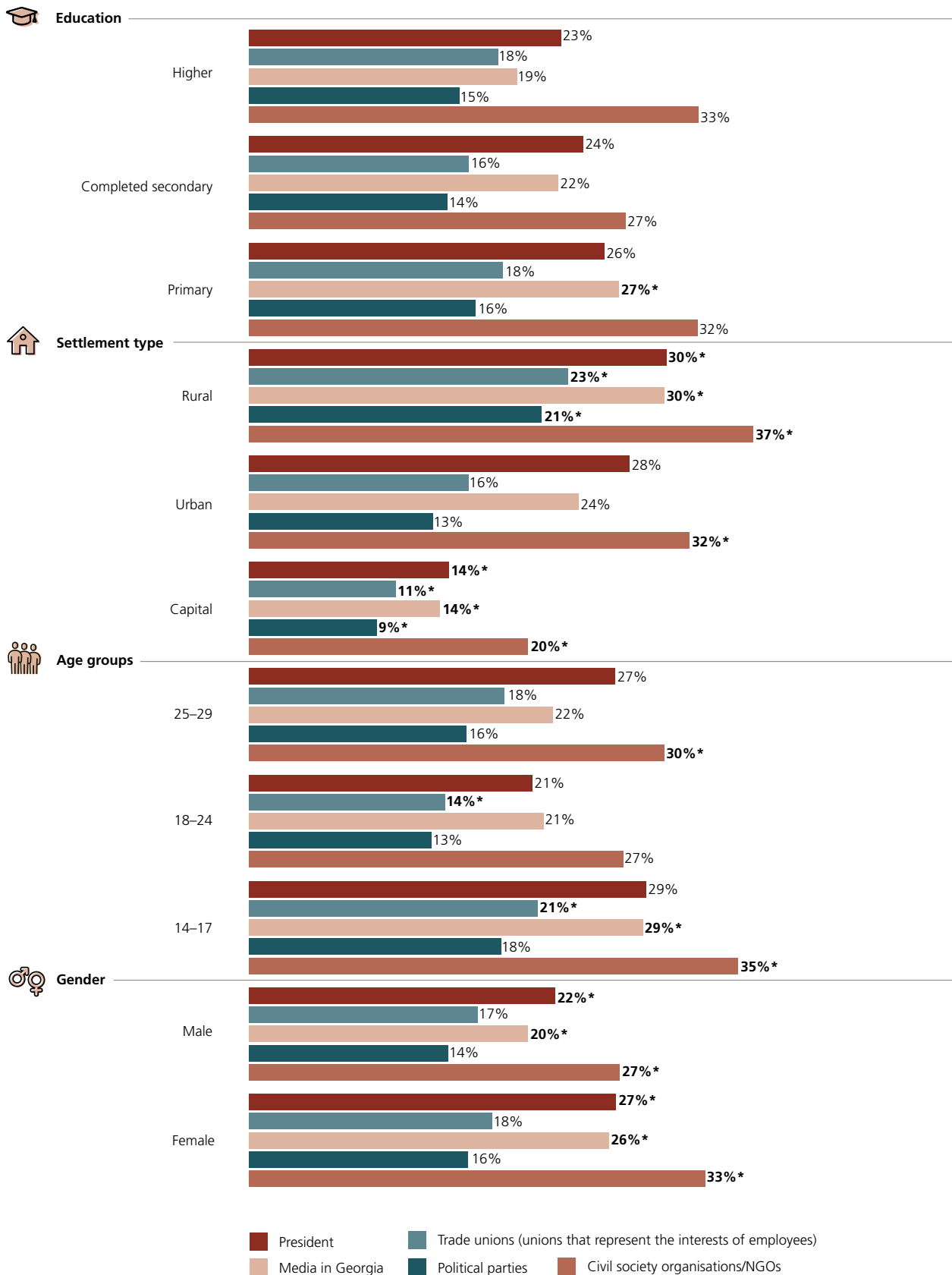


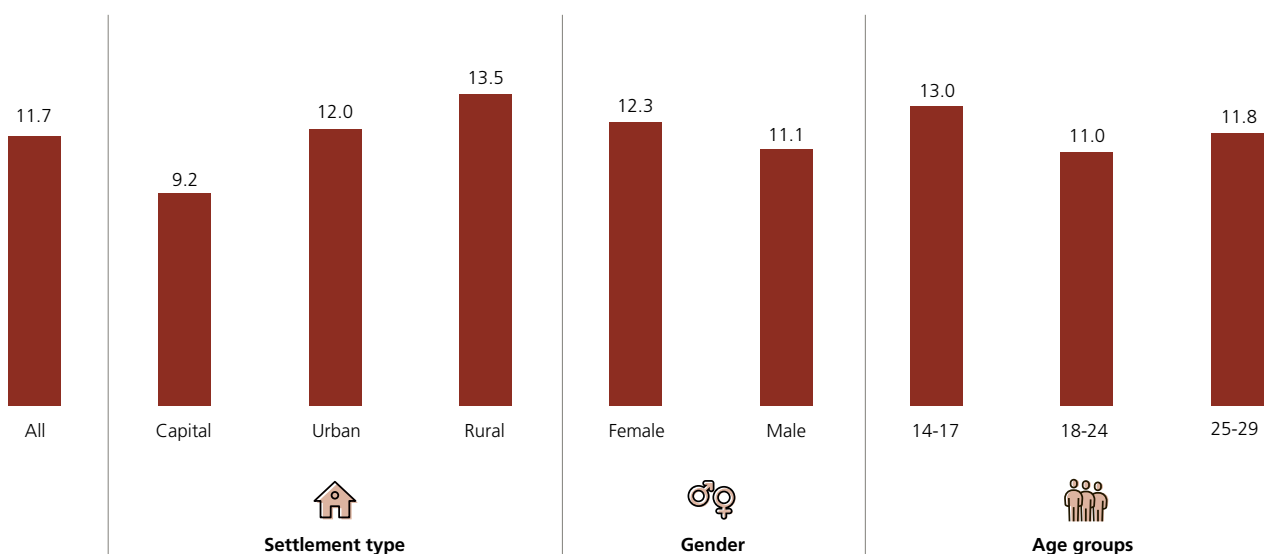
FIGURE 50: HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THE ENTITIES LISTED BELOW? (Only “quite a lot” and “fully trust” answers, %. Full sample. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences.)



Young peoples' attitudes also differ in the case of the least trusted institutions, like the President, trade unions, media, political parties or civil society organisations. Youth from the capital trust the mentioned institutions less than their peers from other urban or rural areas (Figure 50). Political parties have the lowest level of trust among youth residing in the capital (9%), while rural young people report a bit higher level of trust (21%). Civil society organisations also have more trust in rural (37%) and other urban areas (32%) when compared to the capital (20%). As a rule, females tend to report a bit higher level of trust than men. For instance, 26% of young women trust media in Georgia compared to 20% of males. Those with primary education also tend to have higher levels of trust (27%) in the media than those with completed secondary (22%) or higher education (19%). In any case, trust for media in all categories is low.

To better understand the nature of institutional trust in Georgia, an index was created. Where the index equals zero the respondent had either no trust in or no position on any of the institutions, while 30 is the highest possible value, indicating full trust in all institutions. Hence, the higher the index, the higher the level of overall institutional trust. The average of the index is 11.7, lower than the median theoretical meaning of the index (Figure 51). As in the case of trust in institutions, overall, young people in rural (13.5) and other urban (12.0) areas trust institutions more than in Tbilisi (9.2). Young women (12.3) also tend to be a bit more trusting of institutions than men (11.1).

FIGURE 51: INSTITUTIONAL TRUST INDEX BY MAJOR POPULATION GROUPS



Besides institutional trust, respondents were asked about their positions on interpersonal affairs. They were asked to indicate in which types of social relationships they were willing to participate in with representatives of ten distinct social groups. The basis for measuring the level of social distance or acceptance was based on the classical scale suggested by Bogardus: from entire exception to willingness to accept the person as a family member. The survey showed that there are three types of individuals young people boldly reject: drug addicts (61%), queer folks (46%)⁹⁶ and people from Russia (44%), who young people report they are unwilling to let into their country (Figure 52). A significant share of young people would also exclude former convicts (23%) and Jews (13%) from entry into Georgia. On the opposite spectrum of the acceptance scale, welcoming as a close friend, were foreign students (14%), very religious people (11%) and single mothers with many children (11%), followed by refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs, both 9%).

While analysing results by reporting simple frequencies can be illustrated, there is a specific approach applied to interpret key findings of the Bogardus scale.⁹⁷ Each of the seven degrees of acceptance is assigned points from 1 to 7. On this

continuum, lower scores indicate the highest possible level of acceptance, while the highest scores indicate detachment and exclusion.⁹⁸ For example, if a person is accepted at the “part of my family” level, they would receive 1 point, however, if the response is “would exclude from entry to my country”, that person would receive 7 points. As the selection of any given item on the scale involves agreement with the previous item, we can treat it as a cumulative scale (i.e. if a person accepts the person as a family member we can presume that person is automatically accepted as a close friend).⁹⁹ Based on these theoretical assumptions, a social distance scale was constructed for each type of investigated individual (Figure 53). When looking at the scale on a national level, it appears that drug addicts (6 points out of 7 possible) are the most alienated group, followed by a person from Russia (5.7) and a queer person (5.5). The lowest levels of social distancing were observed for single mothers with many children (4.0), very religious persons (4.3), internally displaced persons (4.3) and refugees (4.3). Regardless of relative proximity to the highest level of social acceptance, all investigated groups are above the median point of the scale, thus indicating overall trends of social distancing or even ostracism for certain groups (drug addicts, people from Russia, queer people).

FIGURE 52: IN WHAT CAPACITY CLOSEST TO YOU WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO ACCEPT THE FOLLOWING PERSONS...? (% , full sample)

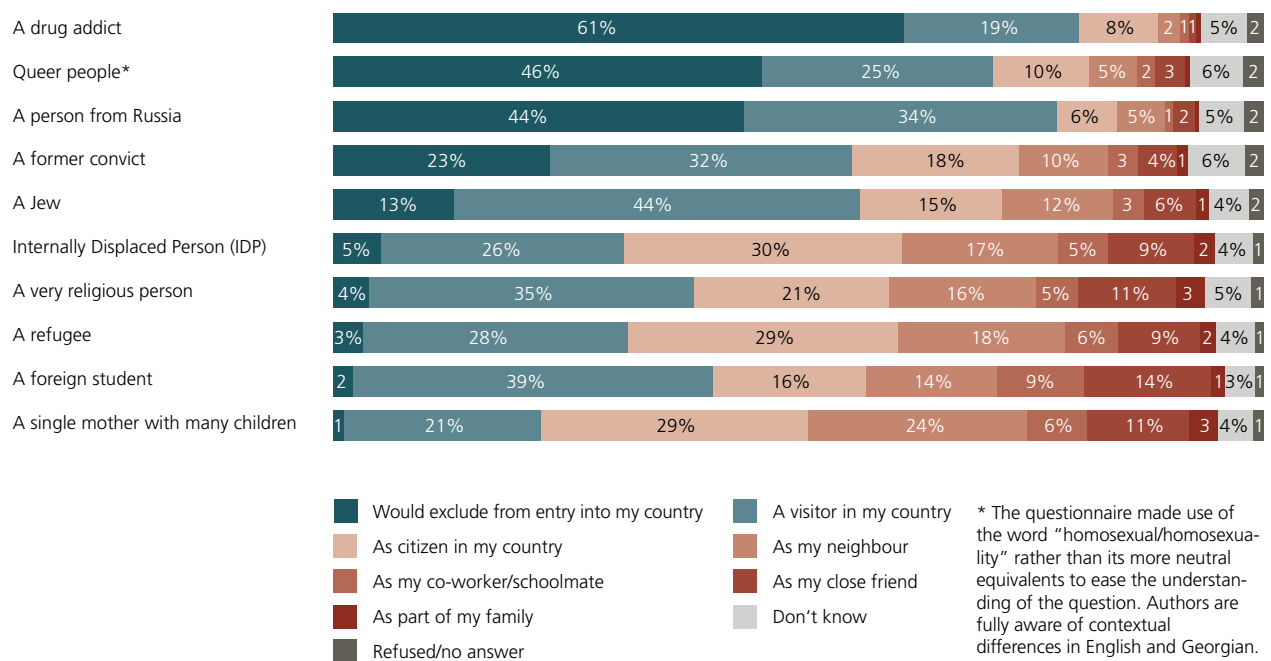
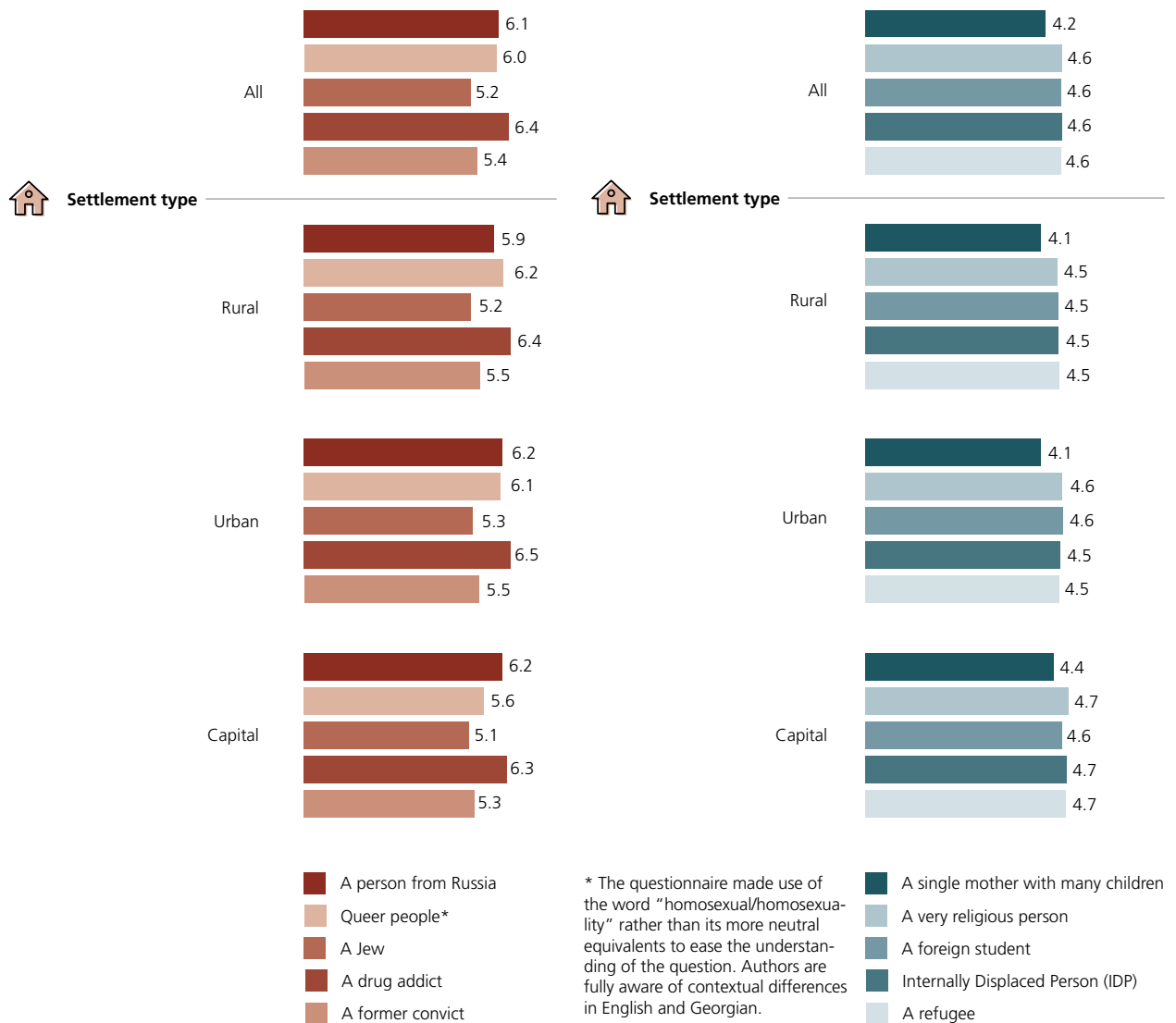


FIGURE 53: AVERAGE VALUES OF SOCIAL DISTANCE SCALE FOR EACH GROUP BY NATIONAL-LEVEL DATA AND SETTLEMENT TYPE (1 means highest acceptance and 7 means lowest acceptance of the groups)



Nevertheless, different levels of social distance are observed among young people in the capital, other urban and rural areas (Figure 53). Young people from the capital report marginally higher levels of social distancing for refugees, internally displaced, very religious people and single mothers with many children. At the same time in the capital (5.6) young people are more willing to accept queer people

compared to other urban (6.1) and rural (6.2) areas. While other socio-demographic factors do not play significant roles in predicting different levels on the social distance scale, there is one exception: ethnic Georgians (6.1) report significantly higher scores on the social distance scale when assessing their positions regarding a person from Russia when compared to young ethnic minorities (4.7).

FAMILY ENVIRONMENT, MARRIAGE AND COHABITATION

Findings from the survey indicate that the family plays an important role in the lives of young people. Most young people live with their family members, while only 3% indicated living alone (Figure 54). Sixty-four percent indicated living with their mother, which is 9 percentage points higher than the number of those living with their father, suggesting that there is a significant share of families with absent fathers. Another insight from the data is that around a quarter of respondents (24%) live with their partner or spouse, while 22% also report living with their child or children. These figures suggest that a fair share of young people in Georgia are already engaged in family life.

Regardless of the type of family, the majority of youth report having a very good relationship with their parents. These attitudes are universally widespread across all settlements and age groups, as well as among young male and female respondents with higher or secondary education (Figure 55).

More than half of young respondents (57%) reported being single, while a quarter (25%) indicated being married. Marital status differs among males and females, with 36% of females reporting that they are married and 14% of male youth indicating the same. Most married young people are in the 25-29 age group and the mean age of married youth was 26 years. One-fourth of young respondents have children (25%). As for those who report not having children, 77% answered that they for sure intend to have children in the future. The mean age for having children for respondents intending to have children (but who currently have no children) was 27 years, while for a plurality the ideal number of children was 2 (39%), followed by 3 children (24%). As for the preferred gender of the future child, the majority (58%) indicated that they are indifferent.

FIGURE 54: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONS LIVE WITH YOU IN THE SAME HOUSEHOLD? (% , full sample)

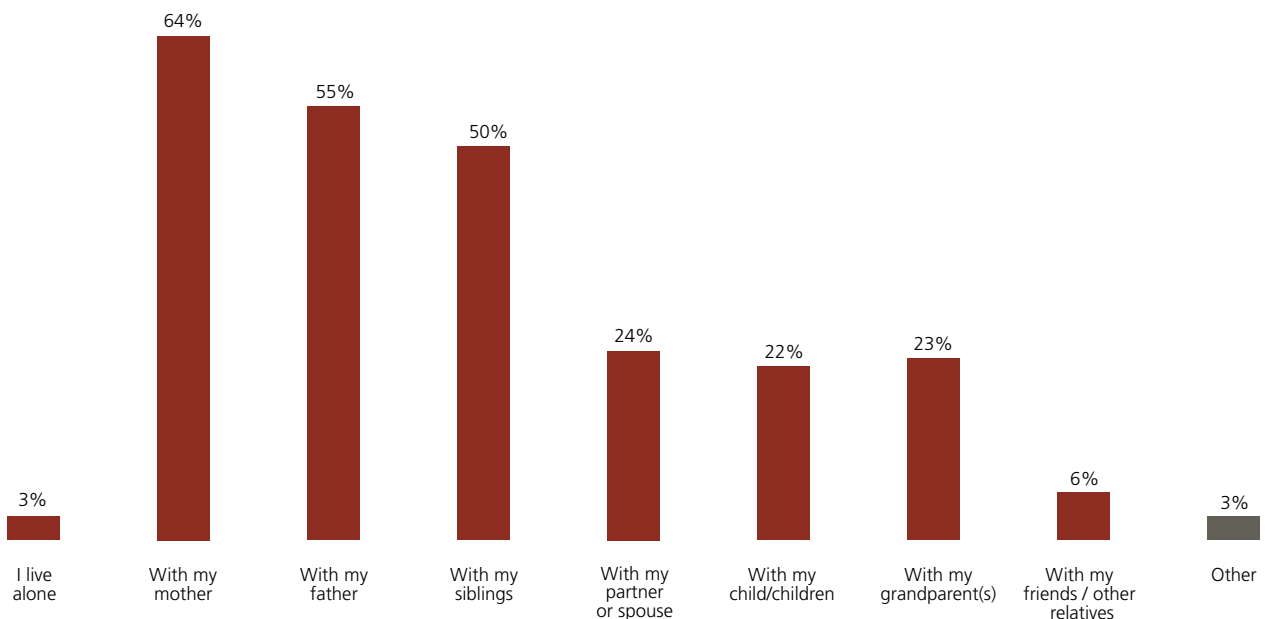
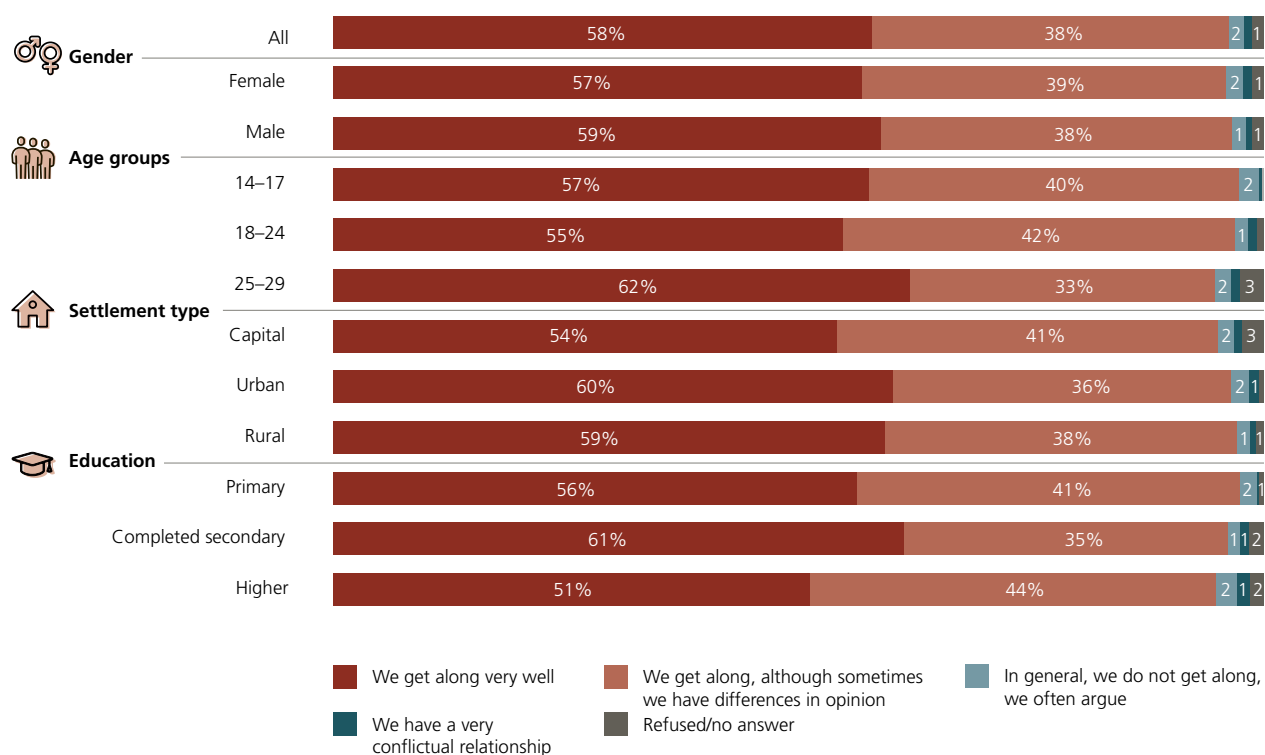


FIGURE 55: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS BEST DESCRIBES YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR PARENTS? (% , full sample)



DISCUSSION

On the latest Inglehart-Welzel world cultural map released in 2022, Georgia leans toward traditional and survival values. In this regard, the country represents an outlier, as it looks different from its immediate neighbours and other European countries.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, since the inclusion of Georgia in the study in the mid-1990s, Georgian values have gradually become more traditional. At the same time, slowly but steadily, Georgian citizens have progressed from survivalist values towards self-expressionist values.¹⁰¹ Our current study of young people in Georgia partially reaffirms the Inglehart-Welzel observations as youth in Georgia predominantly fit the same description. Young people acknowledge the unique role of religious institutions and see criticism of those institutions as above freedom of speech. Moreover, young people in Georgia are very attentive to and quite traditional about their national culture. Nevertheless, approximately equal fractions of young people are both supportive and non-supportive of the idea of cultural openness and homogeneity. The fact that young people simultaneously attach a great deal of

importance to the factors of personal success, prosperity and family values while neglecting the importance of civic participation suggests that their immediate concerns and personal aspirations are more important than serving a collective or national cause.

While young people in Georgia report a great deal of social distance and a low tolerance for minorities, thus bringing their values to the extreme spectrum of traditional and survival values, in certain cases young people show more alignment with secular and self-expressionist concepts. These include sceptical attitudes toward sexual abstinence, indifference toward the preferred sex of the child or fully supporting the idea of ethnic minorities getting education in their native language. Even amidst the predominantly hostile attitudes toward sexual minorities, a clear majority of participants are against any type of aggression or abuse (physical or verbal) towards those of different sexual orientations. Moreover, nearly one-third of young people reject the idea that the condemnation of homosexual behaviour is their duty. Another inclination of a modest trend toward increasing the support for secular values is youths' positions regarding their personal

identification, where civic nationalism, or being a Georgian citizen, suppresses ethnic or local-regional identity. These findings largely repeat the conclusions of the previous iteration of this study conducted in 2016. Back then, youth in Georgia were even more inclined toward traditional and survival values. But some values showed an obvious tendency toward supporting self-expressional and secular-rational values. As in 2016, today this trend is more visible in urban-type settlements, especially in the capital. Such diversity in value orientations can possibly be explained by youth creating their own mix of local and external values and identities.¹⁰²

As the literature suggests, institutional trust is essential for the proper functioning of the state and society.¹⁰³ The high rates of institutional trust in Georgia have been linked to and associated with civic activity and participation.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, like the low rates of participation, institutional trust is also at a modest level among young people in Georgia. This is not a unique feature of youth in Georgia – the general public also showed trends of declining institutional trust in recent years.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, when comparing the results of this study to the one conducted in 2016, young people in 2016 largely had similar positions regarding trust in social institutions. The top three most trusted institutions, i.e., the army, religious institutions and the police, maintained their rank across the two waves of this study. It is interesting to note that all three institutions represent strong and traditional authority-associated entities. Moreover, the comparative study (including Georgia) investigating the link between values and religiosity showed that religiosity is an important explanatory factor for individual beliefs, specifically decreasing support for liberal values.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, support for and the importance of religion is yet another contributing factor to the formation of young people's values.

Youth in Georgia respect traditional family values. The data from the study indicates that regardless of whether they live with their parents or not, respondents rarely reported any disagreements or conflictual relationships with their parents. At the same time, a significant share of respondents still live with their parents, even after turning into adults. Such prevalence of living with a parent is typically observed due to socioeconomic deprivation. Nevertheless, it also has cultural and traditional origins. Living with one's parents as a phenomenon is certainly not a unique Georgian feature and is often observed in collectivistic

cultures that attach greater priority to the necessities of the family than to individual aspirations.¹⁰⁷ Further studies on the Georgian context could investigate the impact of living with one's parents on the development of youth values, especially the impact on the surge of traditional values. At the same time it is also important to understand which factors, besides obvious economic conditions, facilitate the probability of young adults remaining in the family home.

10

PART SEVEN: CLIMATE CHANGE

INTRODUCTION

Young people around the world are actively participating in climate change activities and environmental issues are among their top priorities.¹⁰⁸ However, green activism and attitudes toward climate change differ among developed and developing countries and Georgia is no exception. For example, while acknowledging the importance of climate change and potential threats, “social behaviours relevant to climate change, unlike the degrees of awareness and understanding, scored very low” in Georgia.¹⁰⁹ Historically, Georgian environmental activism has been focused on a negative reaction against big developmental or industrial projects, such as dams and mining.¹¹⁰ Genuine climate activism in contemporary Georgia is rare, of low intensity, does not attract mass mobilisation or support and, most importantly, though being environmental in name, mostly addresses social and economic issues rather than ecological issues.¹¹¹ Even during the most successful time for Georgian environmentalist movements on the eve of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, ecological issues were used as a pretext for political demands.¹¹² As for more recent activities, successful environmental movements have been associated with mobilising local populations, “extra-institutional actions” and applying traditional rituals.¹¹³ In such contexts, youth participation is either marginal or does not explicitly emphasise the youth nature of the activity. Moreover, representative studies about young peoples’ attitudes and positions regarding climate change in Georgia are infrequent. The current research is one of the rare attempts to understand youth sentiments towards these topics.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Climate change is not among the most pressing issues for young people in Georgia. Only 1% mentioned it when asked about the most important problems their country is facing.
- When directly asked whether climate change is a global emergency or not, however, more than three quarters (76%) answered positively. Females and those with higher education are more likely to support this claim than their peers.
- Survey results and focus group findings show that while some young people think climate change is a natural process (48%), others believe that it is driven by human activity (49%).
- Regardless of their slightly different opinions in causality, young people are in favour of introducing new measures to combat climate change. During the survey, such restrictions were more often supported by females, as well as by capital city and urban residents.
- During the focus groups, young people emphasised the need to introduce fines for littering in the street and polluting nature. According to these participants, they have personally changed their behaviour and no longer throw rubbish into the streets.
- Young people claim that when they hear about global warming and efforts to mitigate it, they mostly feel hope (61%) and confidence (51%). However, most of them also feel fear (51%).

CLIMATE ANXIETY OR CLIMATE INDIFFERENCE?

Climate change is not a major issue for young people in Georgia. When asked about the most important problems Georgia currently faces, less than 1% indicated climate change as the first or the second most important problem. However, when young people are directly asked if they think that climate change is a global emergency, 76% provided a positive answer (Figure 56). It seems that females (82%) are more prone to believe that climate change is a global emergency than males (71%). There are no significant differences across age groups or settlements, however, those with higher education (85%) tend to agree with this idea more frequently than those with primary (73%) or completed secondary (75%) education.

When speaking about the causes of climate change, a plurality indicated that human activities (49%) are responsible for climate change, but nearly the same share of young people (48%) attributed this event to natural causes. Regardless of the attitudes to climate change, the vast majority tends to support legislative restrictions to combat climate change – 77% absolutely or largely endorse this idea (Figure 57). Similar to the perception of climate change, restrictions are more supported by females (82%) than males (72%). As for settlement type, rural youth (71%) seem to encourage restrictions less often than residents of the capital (83%) and other urban (79%) areas.

FIGURE 56: DO YOU THINK CLIMATE CHANGE IS A GLOBAL EMERGENCY? (% , full sample)

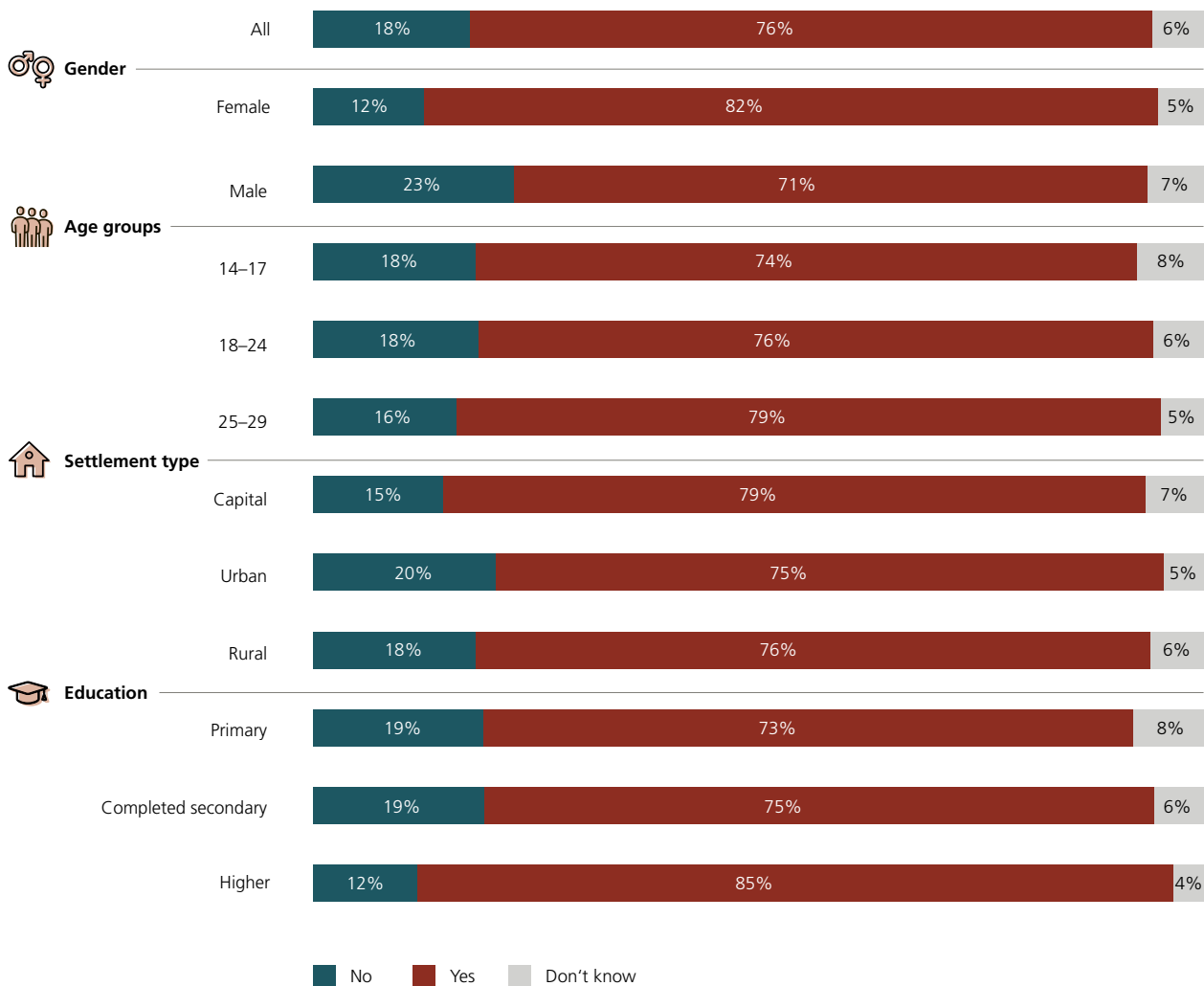
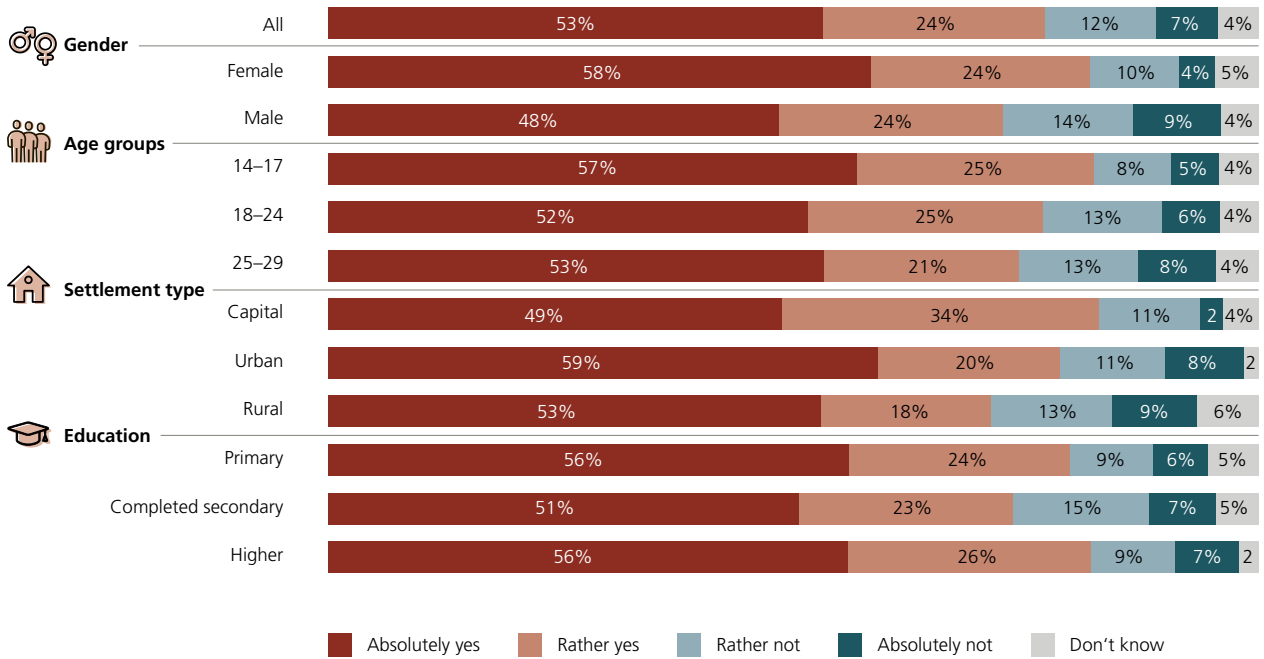


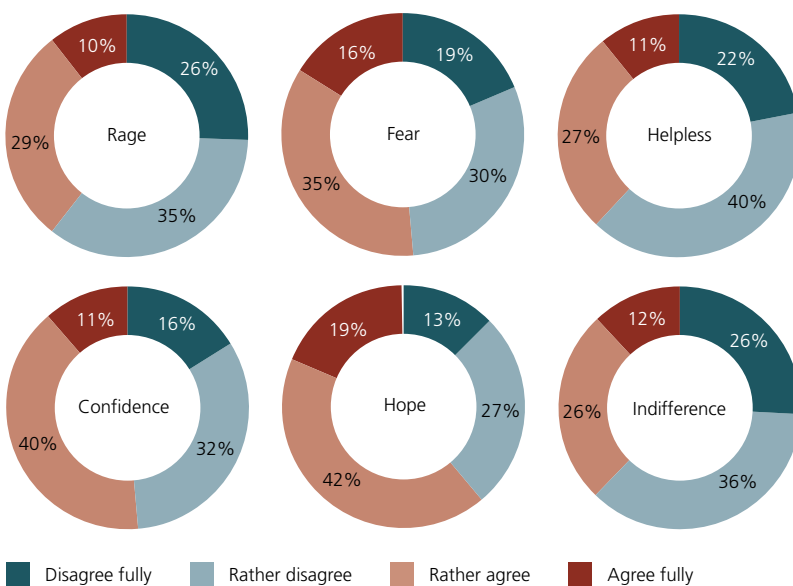
FIGURE 57: IN SOME COUNTRIES, GOVERNMENTS IMPOSE STRONG MEASURES TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE. FOR INSTANCE, OLD CARS POLLUTE THE ENVIRONMENT SIGNIFICANTLY AND NO LONGER BE USED SO PEOPLE HAVE TO BUY NEWER CARS THAT USE LESS PETROL. WOULD YOU AGREE WITH SIMILAR RESTRICTIONS IF THEY WERE INTRODUCED IN YOUR COUNTRY? (% , full sample)



When young people were specifically asked about their attitudes toward global warming, more than half feel hope (61%) and confidence (51%). On the other hand, 51% also reported feeling fear when thinking about global

warming and efforts to mitigate it. Up to 40% of young people report feeling rage (39%), helplessness (38%) or indifference (38%).

FIGURE 58: HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT? WHEN I HEAR ABOUT GLOBAL WARMING AND EFFORTS TO MITIGATE IT, I MOSTLY FEEL... (% , full sample)



Focus group discussions showed similar results regarding climate change. Even though climate change and ecology are very rarely mentioned by focus groups participants as the biggest challenge the world is facing, when they were asked directly about the effects climate change has on the world, young people talked about its impact, linking it with ecological and environmental problems in the world. Focus group participants talked about how it does not have (only) natural causes and that people are (foremost) to blame for environmental issues and climate change. According to the respondents, **“A natural phenomenon cannot harm as much as a person can harm.”** (Female, 14 years old)

People carry most of the blame, as they pollute the environment, throw garbage in the streets and in the rivers, drive cars that cause air pollution and do not take care of nature. As proof, several respondents mentioned the lockdown, during which the air was clearer as people stayed home: **“During this pandemic, when whole populations everywhere were in lockdown, our earth gained 50 years of life. The climate is already messed up. I live in Tskneti and I have a good view of Tbilisi and it is always under a huge cloud, that’s smoke right?”** (Male, 26 years old)

Other respondents talked about climate change as a natural process that cannot be caused or stopped by humans, however, they also agree that people intensify the process:

“[Climate change] is nature’s fault too, it’s just we people intensify all of this...Well [humans] are not the main cause, there’s definitely a natural process, but we’re just escalating it as humans.” (Male, 19 years old)

Few focus group participants claimed that they changed their behaviour to help climate change and environmental problems. For example, they reduced using polyethylene or plastic bags and are going to stores with reusable ones. Others say that they are no longer littering. In the past, they would throw garbage in the streets, but have now changed their behaviour:

“I was littering in the street, for example. When I opened an ice cream, I used to throw away the wrap in the street as a child and now it’s so unacceptable to me, when I see that someone else is doing it, I usually pick it up and throw it in the trash.” (Female, 15 years old)

Participants also discussed the introduction of fines and regulations to reduce environmental pollution. Participants were particularly in favour of the government introducing fines for littering in the streets: **“Governments should help to raise awareness, they need to pay more attention to pollution. Polluting should be fined, there’s a trash bin next to you and you shouldn’t litter in the streets.”** (Male, 21 years old) A few participants also talked about introducing electric cars or encouraging people to ride bicycles instead of cars running on petrol, however, not littering in the streets and nature was regarded as the main aspect for taking care of the environment.

DISCUSSION

Young people in Georgia have ambivalent attitudes toward climate change: while overlooking this issue as a top priority, when asked proactively about the topic, they acknowledge its importance. This way of thinking somewhat resembles broader Georgian attitudes toward the topic. A recent study investigating the opinions of the political elite regarding climate change in Georgia showed that politicians often question the relevance and priority of climate change to Georgia while acknowledging its broader importance.¹¹⁴ According to this study, climate change is not a mainstream topic for any political party and an environmentalist agenda is mostly imposed on political circles by foreign policy actors and obligations, like the EU and European integration.

Moreover, it has been shown that there are some structural obstacles to addressing climate change, such as the often-lacking political desire to treat the topic as a critical issue and to facilitate the involvement of civil society representatives in decision-making processes.¹¹⁵ A study on civic participation in climate policies in Georgia advocated for ensuring transparency in decision-making, encouraging participation and increasing the awareness of climate change and climate policy.¹¹⁶ These actions could be relevant for encouraging young people, too, as their current mindset toward this topic is rather superficial.

Young women are more concerned about climate change and more supportive of introducing measures to resist it than their male counterparts. More sensibility to this issue among Georgian women has already been investigated by a study on the rural population in Georgia, who are especially vulnerable to climate change and global warming. The study argues that climate change substantially enhances women's workload, even though they are already engaged in many visible and invisible jobs, as well as deprived of sufficient resources for empowerment.¹¹⁷ In the future, these circumstances could be crucial for planning and shaping the strategies of green movements in Georgia.

An in-depth investigation of the attitudes toward climate change during our focus groups revealed that young people have contrasting positions regarding the cause of climate change, varying from human intervention to natural processes. Despite such discrepancies, the majority support the introduction of measures to mitigate the negative consequences of climate change and global warming. There is an important caveat, however – when asked to evaluate their positions regarding existing efforts to mitigate global warming, many indicated indifference, a lack of hope and a lack of confidence. Based on this study, it can be argued that young people in Georgia lack coherence and a holistic view of climate change, alongside the actions designed to combat it.

Further steps should be taken to investigate the relationship between young people and climate change in Georgia. The key element in this regard should be revealing genuine rates of climate change awareness and concerns. The current study indicated that the social desirability factor could be a reason for higher rates of self-reported awareness, while an in-depth investigation showed that young people either have a limited understanding of the topic or are indifferent toward it.

11

PART EIGHT: CONCERNS AND ASPIRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

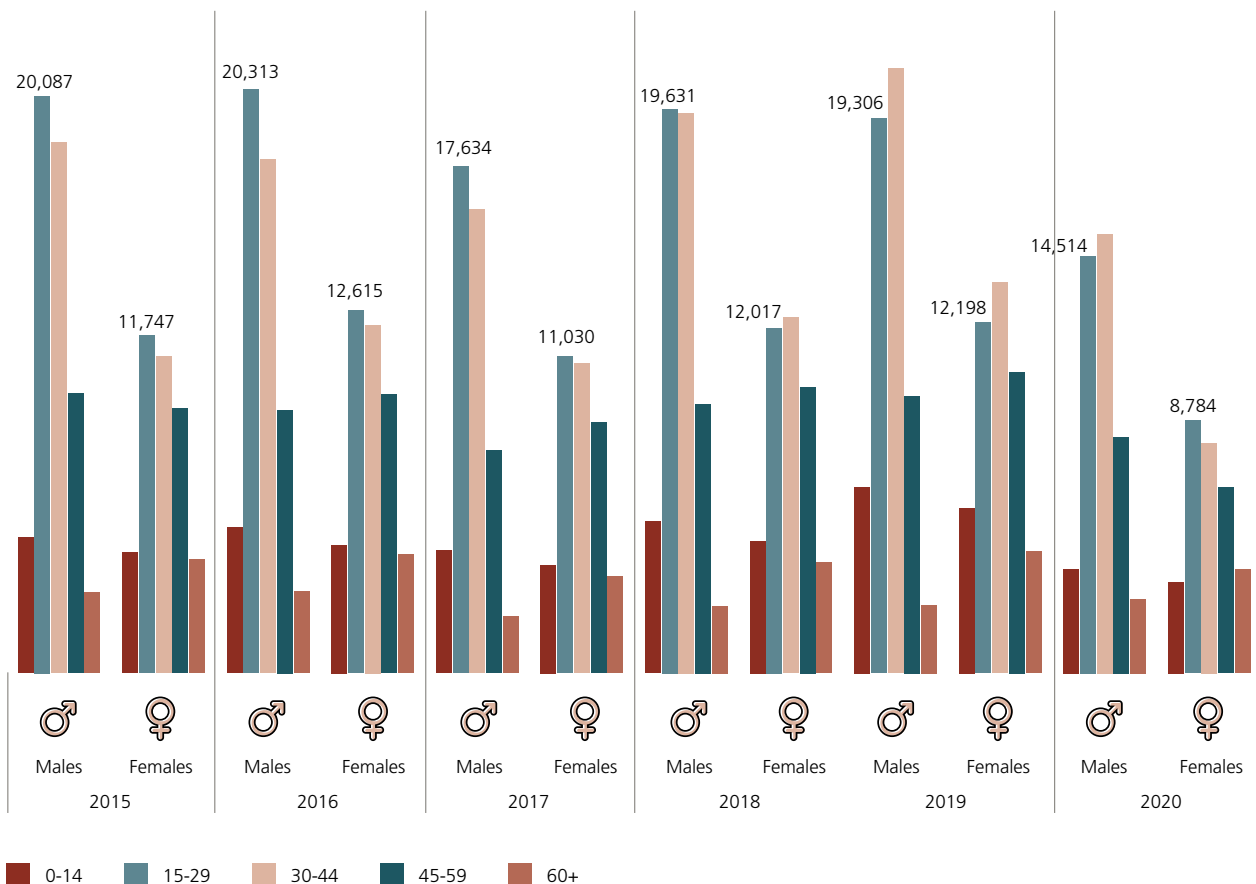
The last chapter of this study is dedicated to the concerns and aspirations of young people in Georgia. It is divided into two major subchapters: the first is focused on an investigation of intentions and youth mobility. The second aims to understand how young people see themselves in 5 years.

Getting insights about the reasons people migrate and what type of people are migrating where is a pivotal concern in contemporary Georgia. Georgian statistics office figures indicate that, starting from the 1990s, the Georgian population has significantly diminished because of rapid rates of emigration.¹¹⁸ The pattern of depopulating Georgia is ongoing. According to the Georgian migration commission's report, from 2016 to 2019, Georgia had a negative net migration rate, only reaching positive figures in 2020 because of COVID-19 pandemic-related reasons.¹¹⁹ Emigration in Georgia is firmly linked to youth-related topics, as figures from the National Statistics

Office of Georgia reveal that 15-29 year-olds are those who leave the country in the greatest numbers (Figure 59). Unemployment and a lack of future prospects have been identified as two of the most important factors for young peoples' exodus from Georgia.¹²⁰ In the long run, the exodus of the most vibrant and dynamic segments of the labour force and population could have negative impacts on the socio-demographic and economic conditions of the country.¹²¹

While economic preconditions are a major driving force for youth emigration, non-economic aspects also play an important role in encouraging young people to emigrate. For example, a study by Bryer and colleagues conducted in Lithuania,¹²² a country sharing the same recent historical experiences and emigration challenges as Georgia, indicated that future expectations and a current evaluation of the quality of life are significant predictors for emigration. Hence, during this study, positions about emigration and imagining one's future were linked and investigated in unison to shed light on how youth in Georgia perceive their future.

FIGURE 59: NUMBER OF EMIGRANTS BY AGE AND SEX (GEOSTAT, 2016-2020)



MAIN FINDINGS

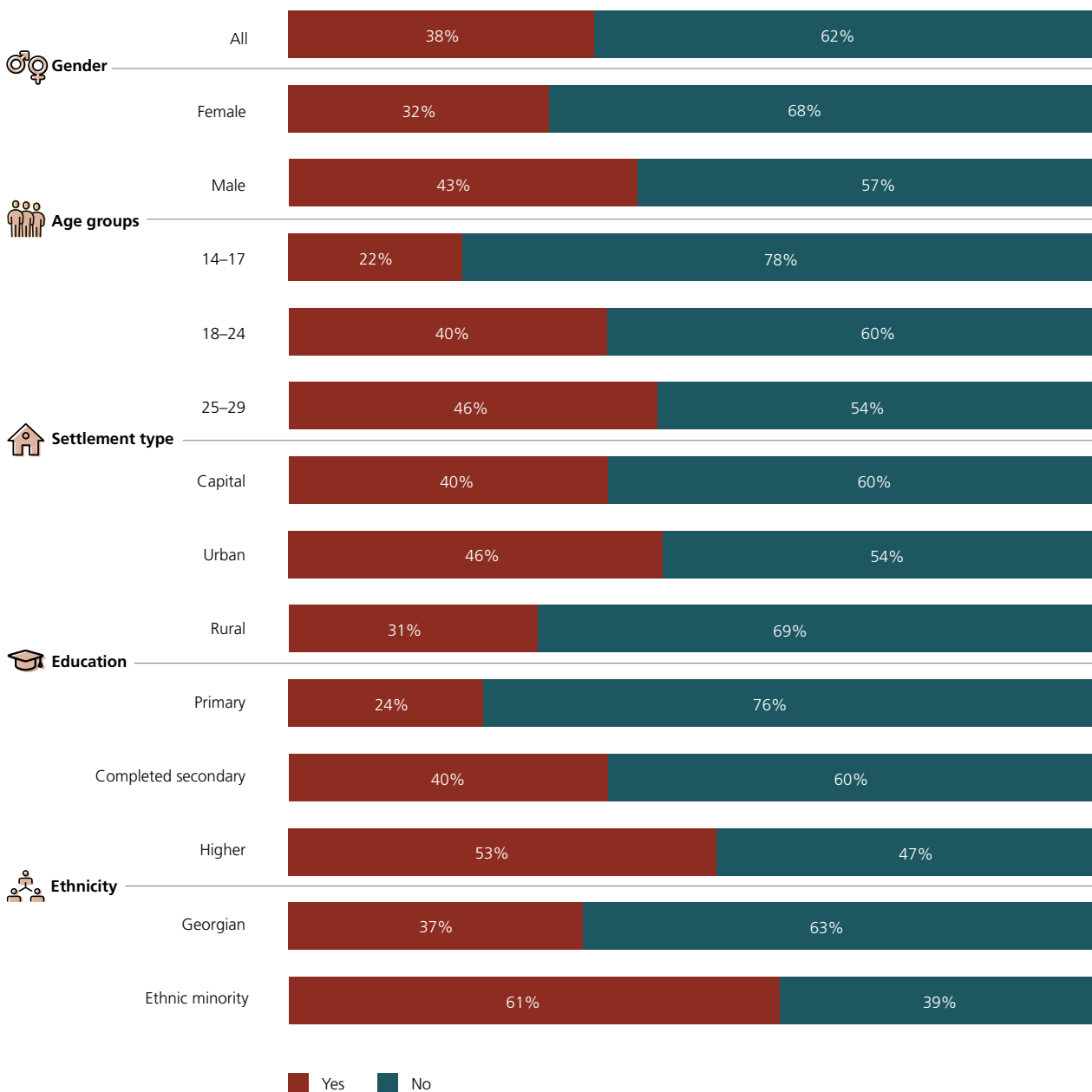
- Almost 40% of young people claim to have been abroad. More men than women have had such experience. Those aged 25-29 and living in urban areas are also more likely to have been abroad. Most importantly, ethnic minorities (61%) are way more likely to have such experience than Georgians (37%).
 - From those respondents who have been abroad, only about one-fifth claimed they stayed for longer than 6 months. Forty-six percent of young people with travel experience went abroad for study and/or work. More male, rural and urban residents, young people aged 25-29 and ethnic Georgians have had such experience.
 - From young people who reported spending time abroad for study or work reasons, most specified 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 go abroad for seasonal work more often.
 - Almost three-quarters of the young people who have not been abroad at all or who have been abroad, but not for study or work purposes, claim that they would like to go abroad to study or to work. Desire to go abroad is highest among 14-17-year-olds, those living in the capital, those having primary education and those who are single.
 - Young people name two main reasons why they would move to another country: higher salaries (57%) and better education (45%). The former is more important for males and 25-29-year-olds, while the latter is more important for females and younger age cohorts.
 - About one-third of young people would like to go abroad for one to five years. Another 37% want to go for less than a year. The latter response was more widespread in rural and urban settlements, while young people from Tbilisi and those aged 25-29 are thinking about leaving the country for longer periods. Ethnic minorities also strive to leave the country for a longer time: 5 to 10 years (19%) or for good (14%).
 - The most desired countries for emigration are the United States, Germany and other European countries. Cumulatively, for 52% of respondents, Europe is the preferred destination for emigration.
- Ethnic minorities tend to wish to emigrate to neighbouring countries like Armenia, Azerbaijan or Russia slightly more frequently than ethnic Georgians.
- During the focus groups, study participants named emigration as one of the most important issues in the country, claiming that young people leave Georgia because of the economic problems the country is facing. According to them, another reason for emigration is the low level of education, no prospect to develop personally or to achieve something in Georgia. Young people claim they want to leave the country to get a better education and a better life.
 - The vast majority (77%) of young people feel that their families' standard of living will improve in the next 5 years. Young people who have a higher education and those whose self-assessment of their households' current financial position is high, are the most optimistic. Young people are generally less optimistic, but still show hope when it comes to the country's standard of living in the next 5 years, with 59% claiming that the standard of living will "significantly" or "slightly" increase.

MOBILITY: MIGRATION AND EMIGRATION

A significant share of young people (38%) claimed that they have experienced being abroad, indicating high rates of external mobility among youth (Figure 60). Males (43%) report having been abroad more frequently than females (32%). Only 22% of 14-17 old youngsters have been abroad, while these figures double for 18-24 (40%) and

25-29 (46%) age cohorts. As for education, the higher educational attainment is, the higher the frequency of reporting experience abroad. Experience traveling abroad is not evenly redistributed among urban and rural areas. While in the capital (40%) and other urban (46%) areas figures are relatively high, only 31% of rural young people report having such experience. Ethnic minorities (61%) report higher rates of leaving Georgia when compared to ethnic Georgians (37%) (Figure 60).

FIGURE 60: HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ABROAD? (% , full sample)

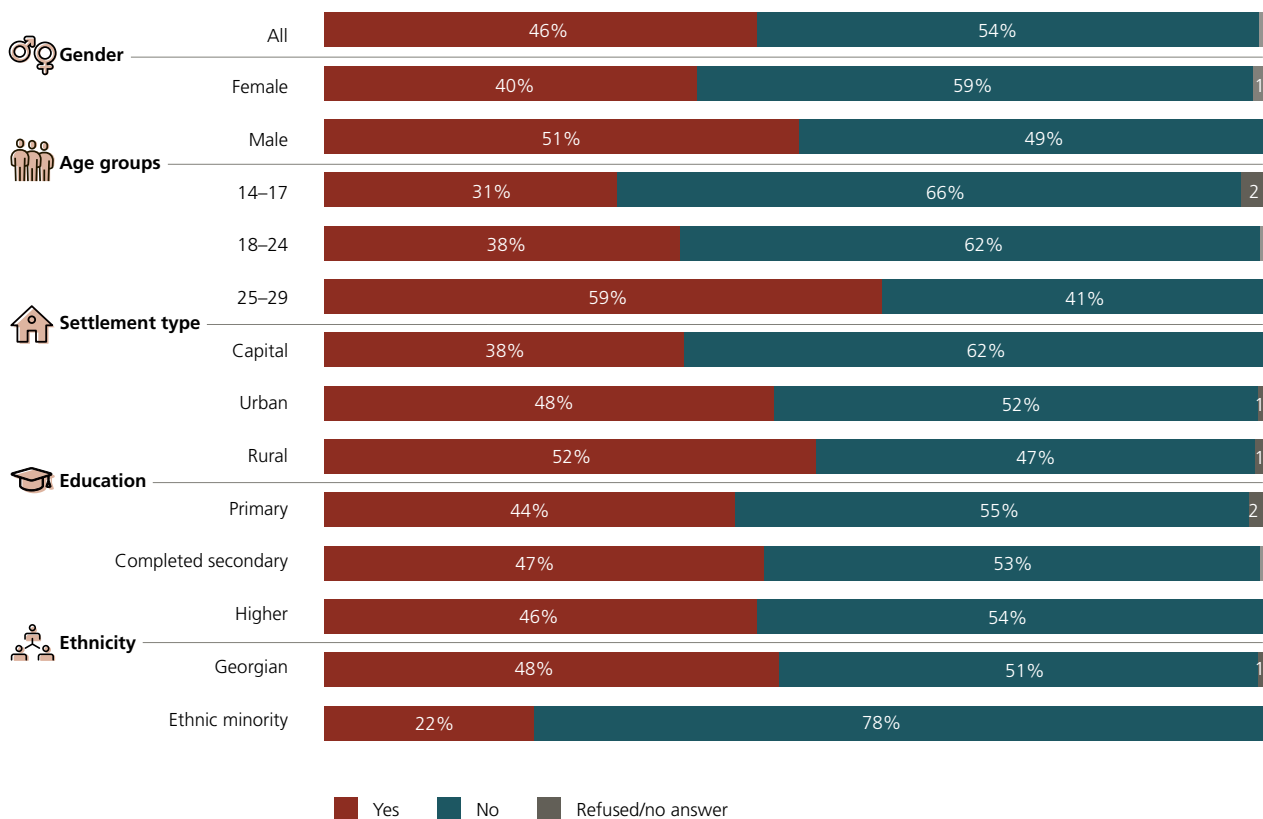


Though the number of young people with travel experience is relatively high, only 21% indicated that they stayed abroad for more than 6 months. Experience spending 6 months abroad is higher among males (24%) than females (17%). Nearly two times more youth in the 25-29 age group (29%) have spent more than 6 months abroad than the 14-17 (16%) and 18-24 (15%) age groups. When young people with travel experience were queried whether they went abroad for study and/or work, 46% answered positively. Compared to young females (40%), males (51%) were more likely to go abroad for study and/or work and those aged 25-29 also more frequently reported having such experience (Figure 61). While the education variable shows little to no variation, settlement type and ethnicity were predictive of overseas work and/or study experience. Namely, nearly half of rural (52%) and other urban (48%) youth with experience spending time abroad reported doing so for work and/or study reasons, while the same figure is 38% for young people from the capital. Ethnic Georgian youth (48%) also more frequently

reported spending time abroad for work or educational reasons than ethnic minority youth (22%).

When young people who reported spending time abroad for study or work reasons were asked to specify what exactly they did while abroad, the most common answer was work (62%). The education-related answer represented only up to one-fifth of the responses: higher education (7%), secondary education (5%) and vocational education and training (5%). About 20% said that they did “something else”. Because of the small number of observations, it is hard to draw statistically meaningful statements, however, in rural settlements a significantly higher number (82%) of young people claimed to work while abroad when compared to the capital (42%) and other urban (58%) settlements, where educational reasons were a bit more widespread. This indicates that the primary reason for spending time abroad for rural youth is likely seasonal work, while for urban youth getting an education or other reasons are more frequent.

FIGURE 61: DID YOU GO ABROAD TO STUDY AND/OR WORK? (% , only those respondents who went abroad)

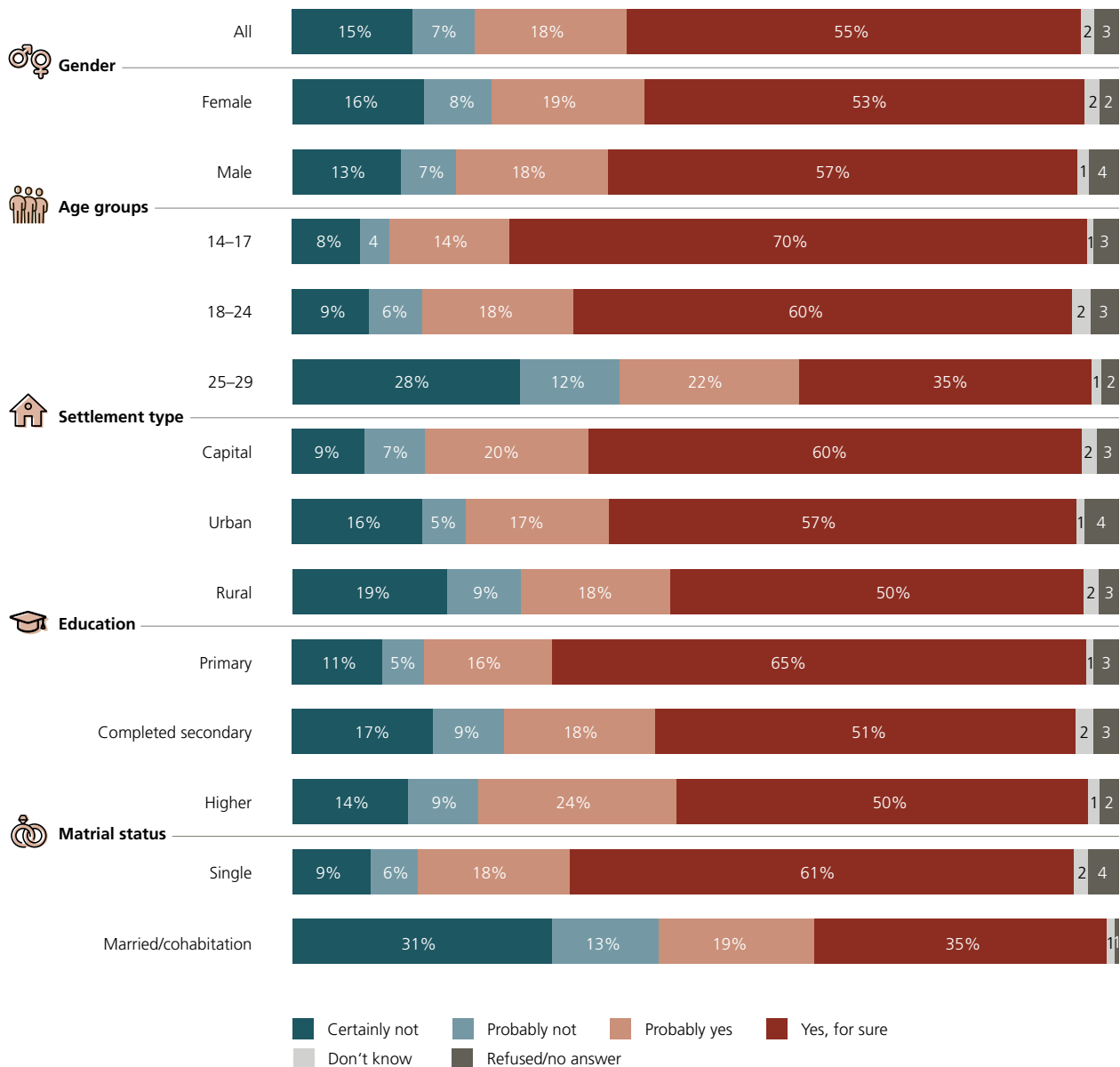


Note: The data is presented in accordance with the relevant rounding rules. In some cases original values would not add up to 100% without arbitrary determination, as such original values were kept instead. This explains eventual deviations in the graph.

Next we asked respondents with no overseas study and/or work experience (83% of the whole sample) hypothetical questions to determine if they would like to go abroad to study or work. A total of 73% responded positively (sum of “probably yes” and “yes, for sure” answers). While there are no significant differences according to gender, young people of different ages have different positions on study and/or work abroad. While those aged 14 to 17 (84%) or 18 to 24 (79%) show great enthusiasm for going abroad to study and/or work, those in the 25 to 29 age range (57%) were more reserved (Figure 60).

This could mean that since this particular group of young people reported the highest rates of going abroad for work and/or study purposes compared to their younger counterparts – hence, the majority of those who were motivated to go abroad have probably already done so. Roughly the same tendency is observed in the case of settlement type, where rural youth report lower levels of intent to study and/or work abroad. Another observation is related to the fact that more single people (79%) wish to go abroad than married respondents or those cohabiting with their partners (54%, Figure 62).

FIGURE 62: WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO ABROAD TO STUDY OR WORK? (% , only those respondents who have not been abroad at all or have been abroad, but not for study or work purposes)



When it comes to the motives for a potential move abroad, those who have either been abroad or wish to go abroad for work or study purposes most frequently indicate high salaries (57%) as the main reason (Figure 63). The second most frequently mentioned reason was better education (45%), followed by better opportunities to start one's own business (19%), experiencing different cultures (16%) and higher cultural diversity (15%). An analysis of the differences between different demographic groups shows that better education was mentioned as the primary factor more frequently by females (53%) than males (39%). Better education is also more important to those aged 14 to 17 (71%) and 18 to 24 (50%) than those aged 25 to 29 (20%). The reason of higher salaries showed the opposite trend. Males (61%) named this factor more often than females (52%) and young people between the ages of 25-29 (72%) tended to stress this factor more commonly

than those aged 14-17 (32%) or 18-24 (57%). No major or significant discrepancies were identified for other factors.

A plurality of young people prefer to leave Georgia short-term for other countries: cumulatively, 37% indicated less than a year (Figure 64). Nevertheless, nearly one-third (34%) would like to go abroad for a one to five year period, 11% indicated five to ten years, while 6% would leave forever. While there are no statistically significant differences by gender, education or age group, significant discrepancies are noted by settlement type and ethnicity. Namely, young people in rural areas (43%) and other urban areas (39%) prefer to go abroad short-term when compared to those living in the capital (30%). As for ethnicity, ethnic minorities wish for longer emigration from Georgia, including leaving the country forever (14%) when compared to ethnic Georgians (6%).

FIGURE 63: WHAT IS THE MAIN REASON YOU WOULD MOVE TO ANOTHER COUNTRY? PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY. (% , only those respondents who would like to move to another country for work or study purposes)

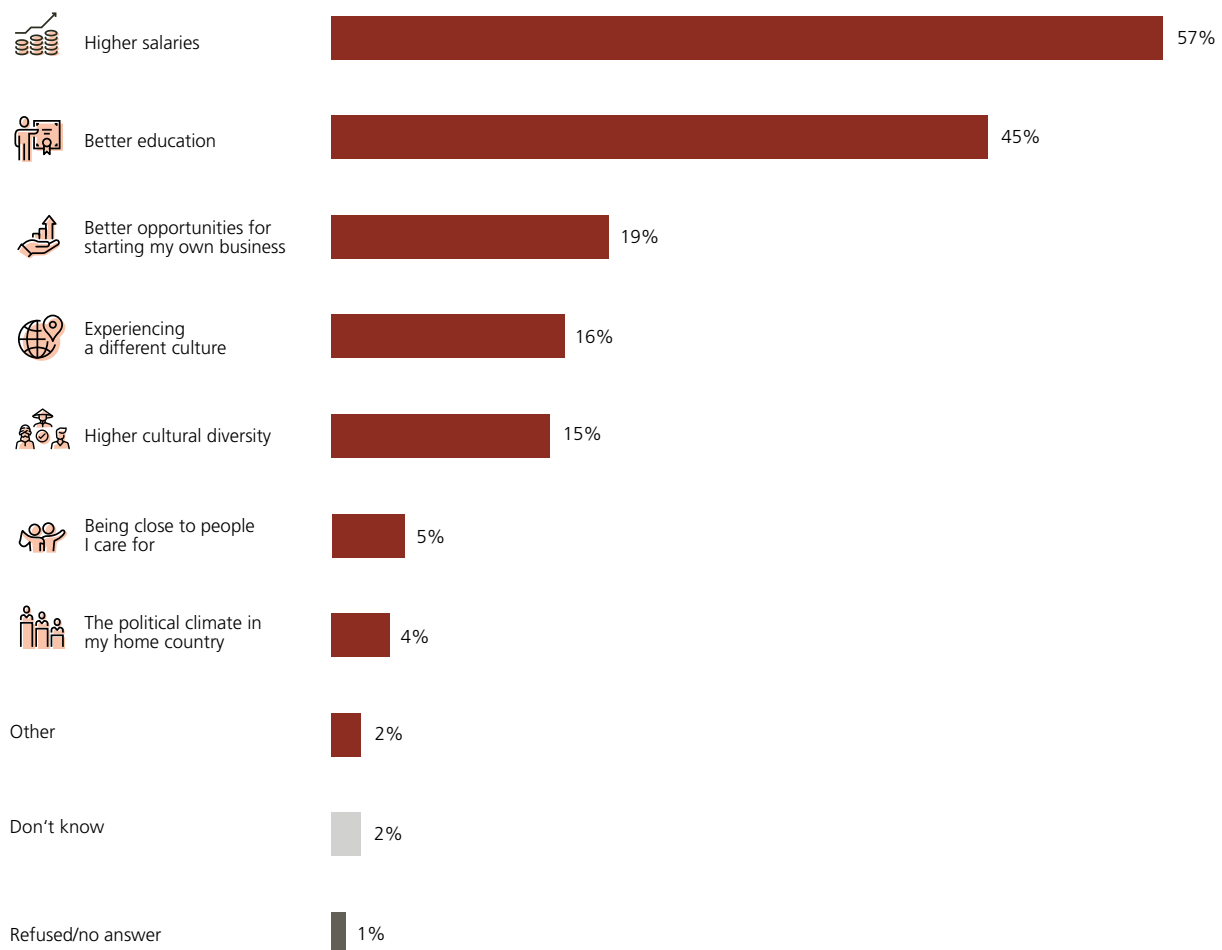
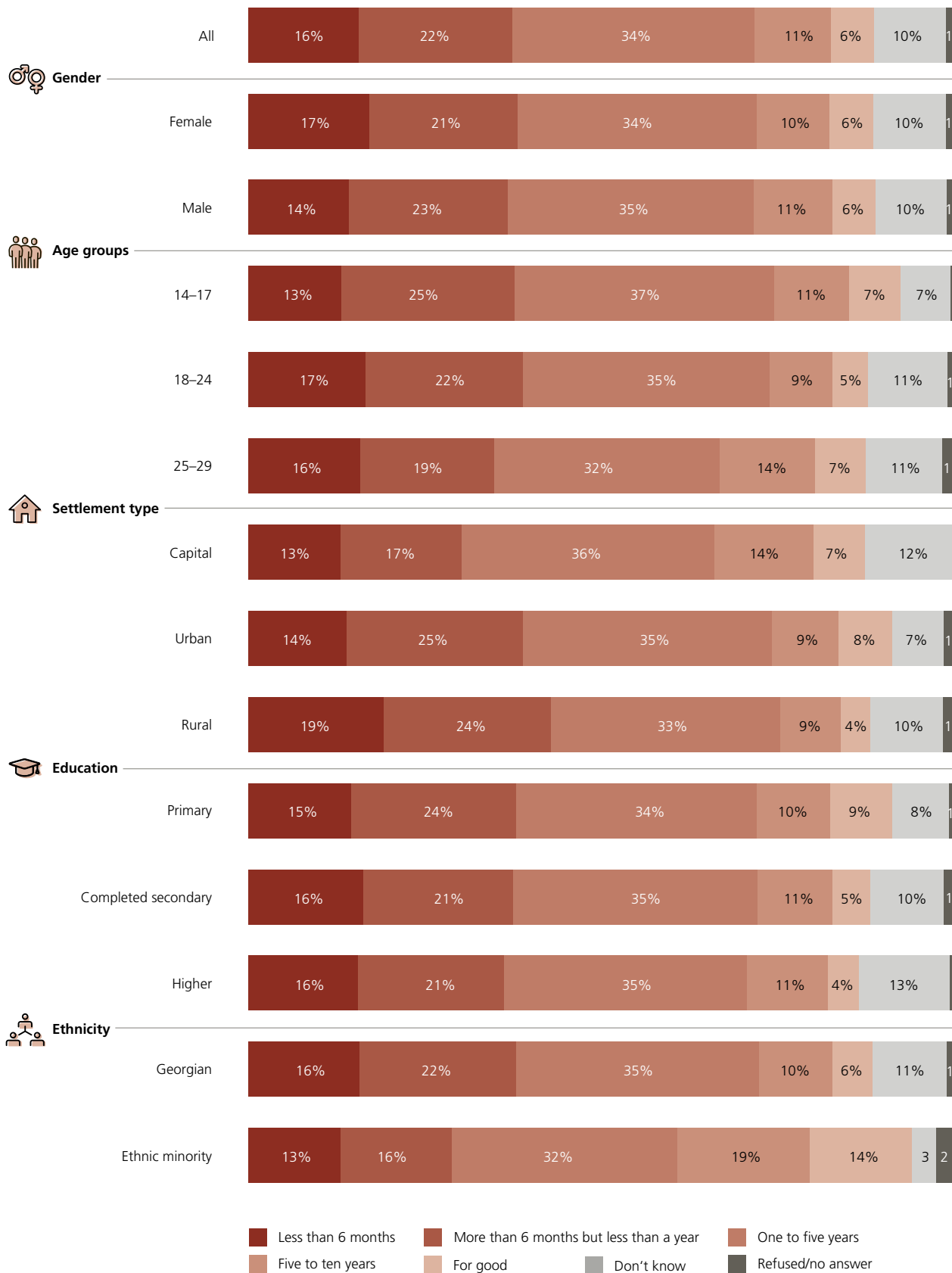


FIGURE 64: FOR HOW LONG WOULD YOU LIKE TO STAY ABROAD? (% , only those respondents who would like to go abroad for work or study purposes)



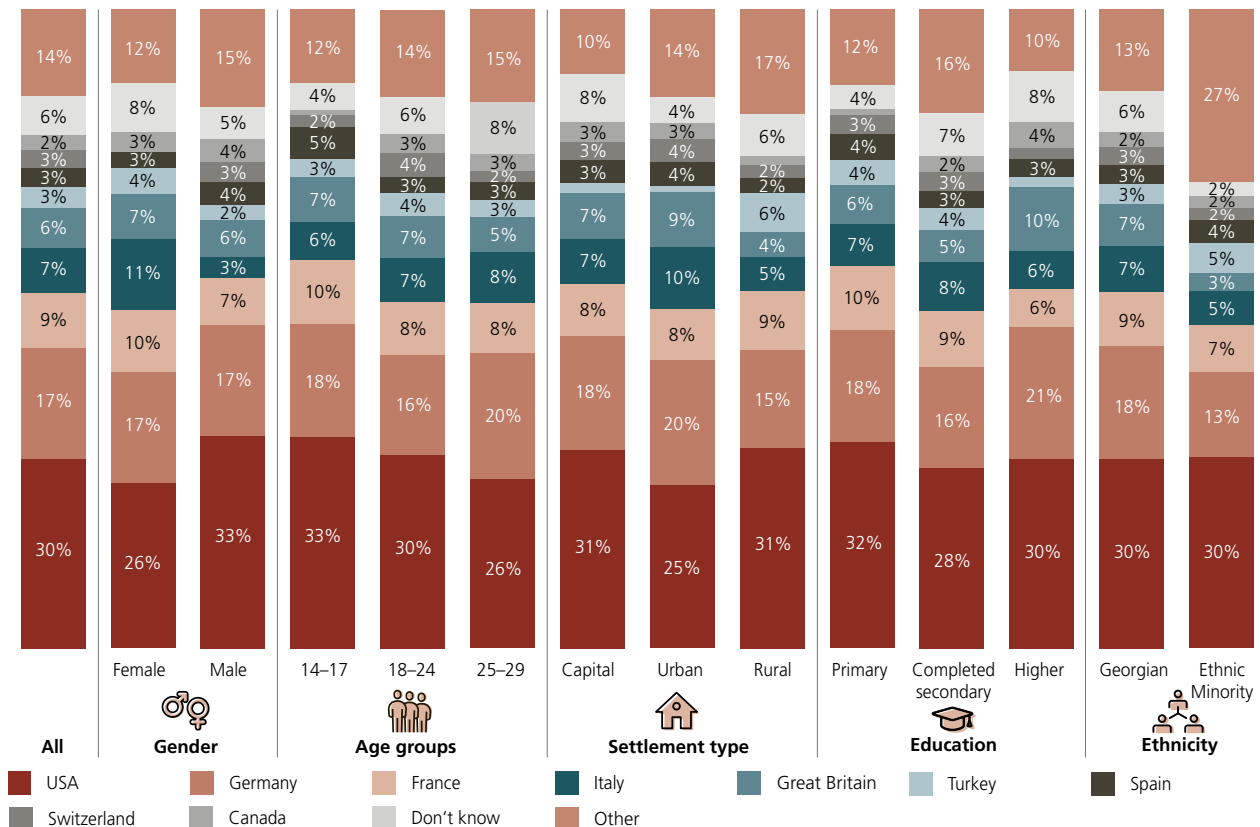
For a plurality of young people (30%), the United States is the country they would prefer to move to (Figure 65). It is followed by a number of European countries, notably Germany (17%), France (9%), Italy (7%) and Great Britain (6%). Overall, if we were to count all European countries (excluding neighbouring European countries) cumulatively, for 52% Europe is the preferred destination for emigration. From neighbouring states, only Turkey (3%) passed the 3% threshold, while Russia (presented in "other" in Figure 63) was named by only 1%. For males (33%), the USA is a more desirable country to move to when compared to females (26%). Those under 18 years of age (33%) also favour the United States, when compared to 25-29 (26%) year-olds. It is interesting to note that ethnic minorities (27%) more frequently chose other destinations like Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia when compared to ethnic Georgians (13%).

During the focus groups, young people also talked about emigration. When asked about the biggest challenge facing Georgia today, during all focus groups young people

mentioned emigration. According to young participants, emigration is mainly caused by economic problems in the country: **"Parents leave their children behind and go to work so that they can provide for them and I do not mean provide a life of luxury, but basic needs."** (Female, 29 years old) However, for young people, the main reason for emigration is the low level of education and no prospects for personal development or achievement:

"I think that there are no opportunities in Georgia. In addition to no self-awareness, there is a low level of education, because a person hears from childhood that there are no prospects in this country. That there is no point and with this I mean that no matter what you learn or do, there is no way to develop in Georgia and it makes no sense. That's why young people try to get away as early as age 15. Absolutely everyone wants to escape... I know many people who were smart and educated but could not do anything and therefore left the country." (Male, 17 years old)

FIGURE 65: WHICH ONE COUNTRY WOULD YOU PREFER TO MOVE TO? NAME THE ONE YOU PREFER MOST. (% , only those respondents who would like to go abroad for work or study purposes)

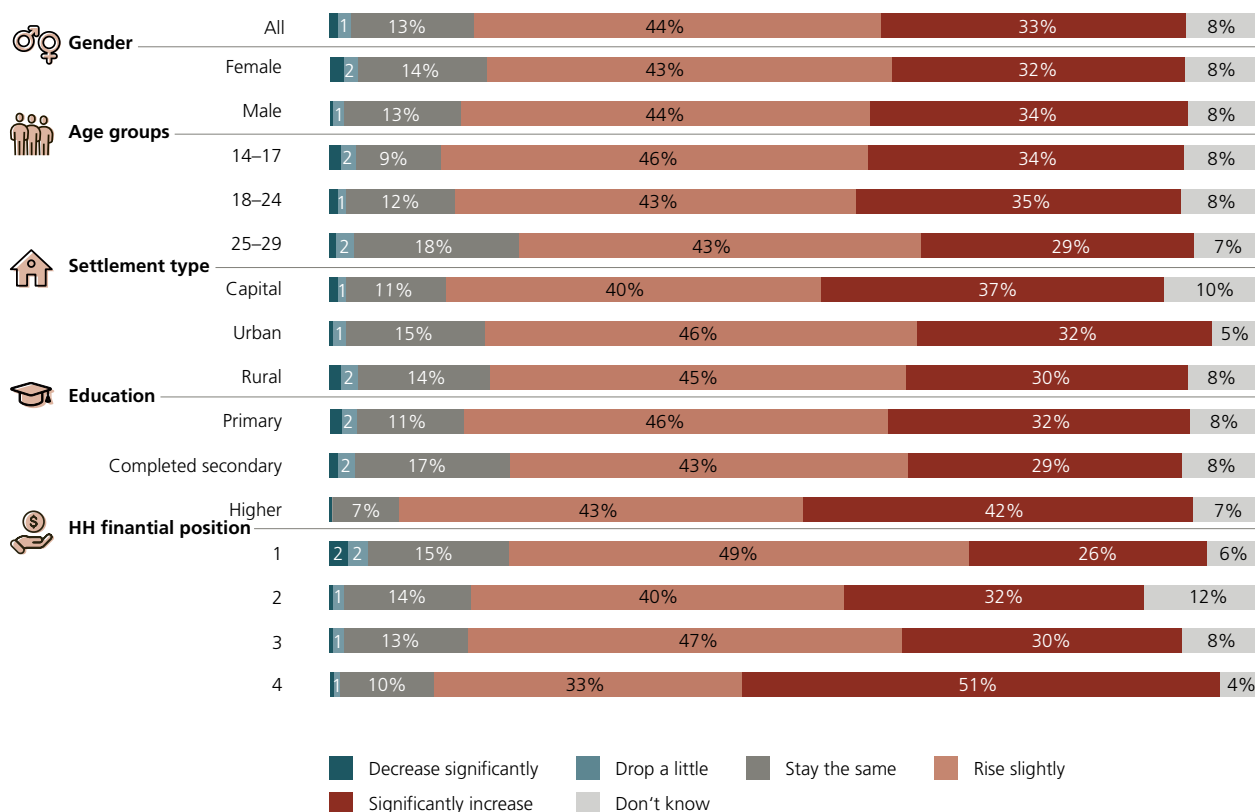


Many young people mentioned that they would like to leave the country. According to them, this is due to poor conditions in Georgia. For the government to stop the outflow of young people, it should improve education and create jobs. The main reasons provided for leaving the country are to get a better education and a better life. One of the countries mentioned by focus group participants is Germany, which is also frequently mentioned as a democratic country where the standard of living is high. Despite this trend, most young people claim to go for a limited period of time and would like to return to Georgia: **“I would also go to study and work for a certain period, such as a few years, but I would not go for the rest of my life.”** (Female, 24 years old)

IMAGINING THE FUTURE

A vast majority of young people feel that their families’ standards of living will improve within the next 5 years. For 33%, a significant increase is anticipated, while 44% believe that their quality of life will improve slightly (Figure 66). Such optimistic opinions are nearly equally distributed across gender, age and settlement type groups. Differences were only noticeable for education and the household financial situation assessments. Specifically, those with higher education (42%) report high levels of optimism, giving the “significantly increase” response more frequently than those who have primary (32%) or completed secondary (29%) education. In addition, the current state of households’ material conditions is also associated with future expectations – those with the highest level of household financial self-assessment (fourth stage)¹²³ are more optimistic and nearly half (51%) assume that their family’s standard of living will significantly increase, while the index declines nearly 20 percentage points among the third (30%), second (32%) and first (26%) stages (Figure 66).

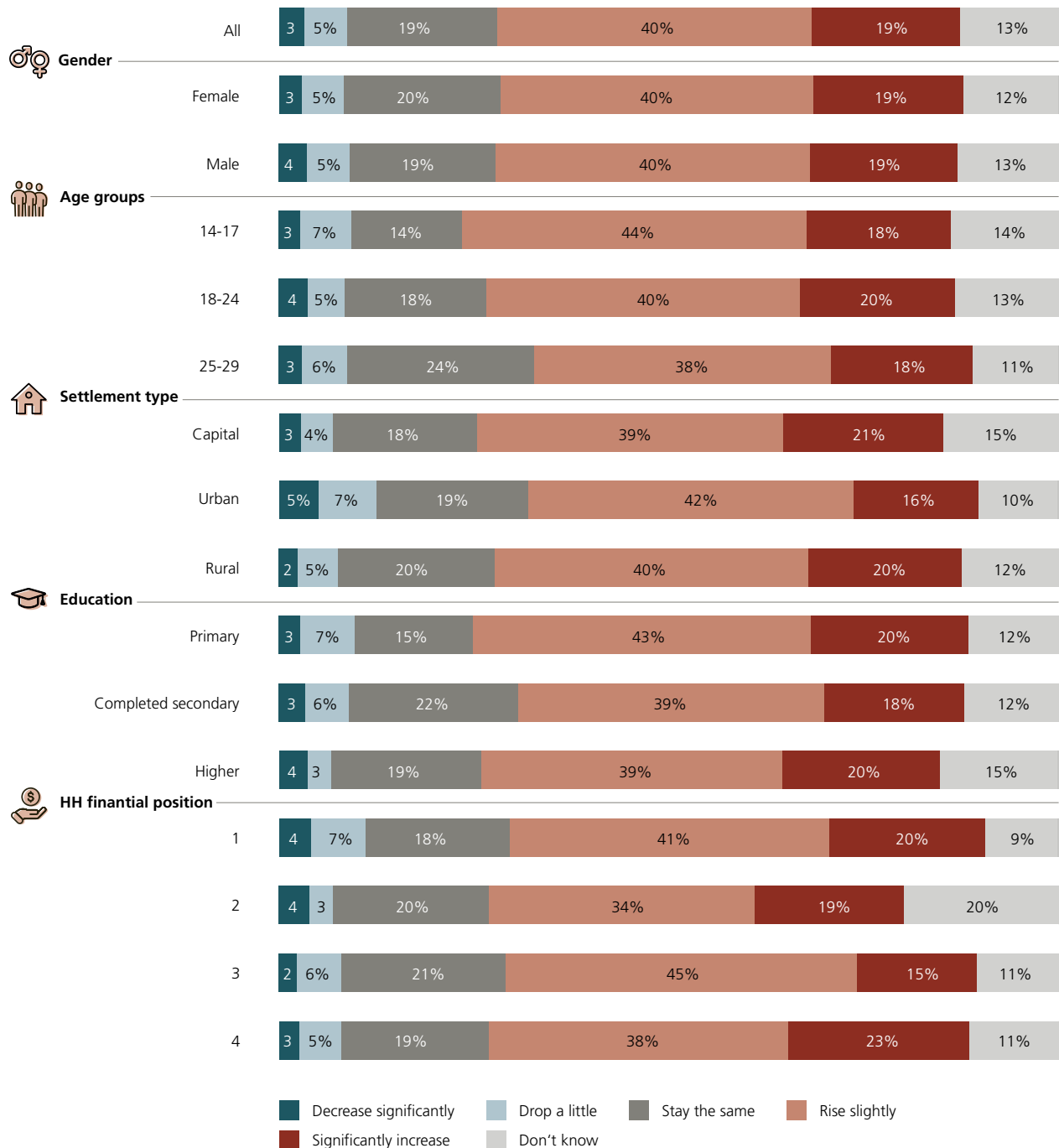
FIGURE 66: DO YOU THINK THAT IN 5 YEARS THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF YOUR FAMILY WILL... (% , full sample)



While young people are predominantly optimistic about an improvement in the standard of living of their families, they are more reserved when it comes to their assessment of the country's future standard of living. While general optimistic sentiments still prevail, there is a decrease in the

share of respondents who believe the country's standard of living will significantly increase (19%). General attitudes are more or less similar across the various socioeconomic variables and there are no statistically significant differences among them¹²⁴ (Figure 67).

FIGURE 67: DO YOU THINK THAT IN 5 YEARS THE STANDARD OF LIVING IN THE COUNTRY WILL... (% , full sample)



DISCUSSION

Youth in Georgia have shown significant rates of out-of-the-country mobility as more than one-third (38%) claim to have been abroad at least once in their life. While youth in Georgia generally have optimistic perceptions about an improvement of the quality of life in the foreseeable future, many would still like to move away from Georgia temporarily or permanently for various reasons. Studies on youth emigration in Georgia have shown that “individual capabilities, youth life aspirations and household capabilities are significant in youth migration aspirations”.¹²⁵ This research showed that the most frequent reasons for emigration are economic (high salaries, 57%), as well as seeking better educational prospects (45%). The latter factor is sometimes overshadowed by economics, since it has been shown that dissatisfaction with higher education quality among youth could be a driving component for student mobility and emigration.¹²⁶ This issue is one of the most important distinguishing aspects of generational differences in emigration aspirations in Georgia.

Intentions for emigration are particularly strong among ethnic minorities, as significant shares of them wish to leave the country either for 5 to 10 years (19%) or for good (14%) – this is the highest figure for all investigated subgroups. Besides socioeconomic reasons, ethnic discrimination is also believed to play a role in this process.¹²⁷ Among youth, however, another possible motive could be related to the desire to overcome institutional barriers to education minorities faced in Georgia. It has been argued that ethnic minorities have a number of obstacles to gaining access to vocational or higher education in Georgia.¹²⁸ In fact, getting an education was among the key reasons provided for emigration is another argument in support of this claim. Nevertheless, this is a topic for further research and investigation.

Things have changed since this study was last conducted in 2016. Though the wording was a bit different,¹²⁹ young people then were more optimistic about both their personal and general economic prosperity. In 2016, 95% of respondents thought that their personal conditions would improve and 75% thought the same about general economic prosperity. In 2022, a cumulative 77% believed that in 5 years, their family’s standard of living will increase and 59% of young respondents believed that the country

of Georgia will improve. Plans for emigration also shifted and now more youngsters want to go abroad. In 2016, 21% reported a strong desire to emigrate and an additional 19% indicated less strong intentions. In 2022, 55% of young people were determined in their wishes to go abroad for study or work, while another 18% indicated a less strong desire to emigrate. In spite of this increase, the reasons for emigration did not change. Improvements in living conditions (38%), better education (17%) and better opportunities for employment (13%) were the top three reasons provided in 2016, while higher salaries (57%), better education (45%) and better opportunities for starting one’s own business (19%) were the most frequent answers in 2022. A slight change occurred for the preferred destination: in 2016 the most desirable countries were the United States (27%), Germany (21%) and Russia (10%). In 2022, however, the United States (30%) and Germany (17%) still occupy the first two spots, while Russia’s figure diminished to a marginal 1%. One plausible explanation for this decrease is the current situation in Russia, which is engaged in a war with Ukraine and under heavy Western sanctions and isolation. The prevalence of the United States and EU countries in this list can be explained by the fact that the United States and EU are perceived as places of economic prosperity and development, hence young people believe they can fulfill their own aspirations for employment, improved quality of life and education in these countries.

To summarise, the emigration of youth is an important challenge for Georgia. In a globalised world, where mobility is getting easier, developed and prosperous countries attract young people. Economically struggling countries like Georgia are losing more and more young people, which are crucial elements for a properly functioning state and economy. While this study provided certain insights regarding the youth aspirations and objectives, further studies in this field should be focused on a deeper investigation of enabling and predicting the reasons for youth migration.

12

CONCLUSION



The aim of this report was to provide a comprehensive look at young peoples' lives in Georgia. The analysis shows a clear disconnect when it comes to the economic and political inclusion of young people, as well as a low level of civic and political participation. It also highlights the role of societal (mainstream elite-supported narratives of the country's pro-Western aspirations), structural (school curricula) and generational factors concerning young peoples' value orientation and perceptions of the historical past. The study also hints at shifting socio-cultural values, with simultaneously present isolationist and nativist attitudes. A lack of discourse can explain youth ambivalence towards looming climate change. While generally optimistic about the future in Georgia, a significant minority contemplate leaving the country permanently.

Concerning economic life, most young people in Georgia consider themselves at the middle of the perceived economic ladder and believe the state of their households is generally the same as most households within their communities and the country. Nonetheless, structural problems in Georgia's economy clearly show themselves when it comes to young peoples' employment and income status. The majority of young people depend on others for their livelihood, including those who are not currently studying.

With 58% of young people in Georgia not working and more than half not studying, Georgia scores drastically high in terms of the proportion of NEETs within its population of 14-29-year-olds. Rural areas have a higher share of NEETs than urban areas or Tbilisi, confirming the well-attested and structural nature of urban-rural inequality in Georgia. This most likely explains the domination of economic issues among young peoples' major grievances.

While an obvious disconnect exists between the requirements of the labour market and education, most young people are satisfied with the quality of their education. Many believe that education prepares them well for the labour market. Nonetheless, those who have faced the demands of higher education and employment have a more critical outlook.

Youth in Georgia have a generally positive view of democracy, although only a few are enthusiastic about participating in politics, which is the backbone of a viable democratic system. The majority of respondents are not interested in politics and do not discuss the subject with other people. Very few engage with political news or consider taking on a political role. The lack of political knowledge among young people is striking. While slightly more self-report engagement in civic activities such as volunteering, numbers are alarmingly low.

Young people's views of Europe and European identity generally follow the predominant discourses within Georgia's general public and elite. Georgia's belonging to Europe is explained by explicit factors such as culture and religion, as well as by the negative and problematic framing of "being not Asian."

Russia looms large in the foreign policy views of young people in Georgia. They have negative views of the Russian state and believe it to be an immediate threat to the country's very existence. Moreover, attitudes towards Georgia's largest neighbour seem to be framed within a "West versus Russia", or more precisely, "us versus them" dichotomy. Most notably, the presence of Ukraine among the country's friends could be explained by cross-national solidarity in the perceived common struggle against Russia.

The way young people in Georgia feel about the country's recent history reflects the complexity of national and subnational identities, as well as how the memories of the not-so-distant past is transferred across generations. Additionally, these feelings reflect predominant foreign policy narratives that see a continuation between the Soviet Union and Russia. Youth are divided when assessing the country's recent past. While the majority welcomes the dissolution of the Soviet Union and sees it through the lens of obtaining national independence, the struggles of the "dark 1990s" and the pains of the post-Soviet transition explain negative views of the first post-independence decade.

Evidence shows that young people in Georgia are divided in terms of their adherence to more traditionally-oriented values versus secular and rational attitudes. Since the last decade of the 20th century, Georgians, in general, became more traditional with an increased share adhering to self-expressionist values. In the same vein, many youngsters view national culture, religion and family values as important and rarely report that their opinions and attitudes are different from those of their parents. At the same time, many young people attach a great deal of importance to factors such as personal success and prosperity over more collectivist actions such as civic participation. This suggests that young people may be more individualistic and concerned with personal aspirations over collective and national causes.

Young people in Georgia are divided on the issues of cultural openness and homogeneity. Generally, they distance themselves from others and have a low tolerance for minorities. Regarding socially conservative values such as sexual abstinence or minority language education, there are clear shifts towards secular and self-expressionist views. Moreover, while generally negative views towards sexual minorities exist, a clear majority of respondents are against any abuse or aggression on the basis of sexual orientation.

Yet another takeaway is a slow yet steady reorientation from ethno-religious to civic self-identification. Such shifts are especially pronounced in urban areas, most notably in Tbilisi.

Young people's views on climate change hint at indifference rather than anxiety. While many consider it an important issue when explicitly probed about the issue, the plurality believes that it is a largely natural process. While young people in Georgia are in favour of introducing measures that mitigate the negative consequences of climate change, overall, they lack coherence and holistic views on the issue.

While young people are, in general, optimistic about Georgia's future, many still would prefer to move abroad either permanently or temporarily. The high share of those contemplating leaving Georgia among ethnic minority youth is especially alarming. This is likely linked to institutional barriers to minority inclusion in higher education and employment in Georgia.

While a majority of young people feel positive about the country's future, when compared to the 2016 wave, fewer are optimistic on personal and general economic prosperity. This shift offers a speculative yet plausible explanation for the increase in the share of young people who would like to emigrate.

13

FOOTNOTES



- 1 Parliament of Georgia, „2020–2030 წლებისთვის საქართველოს ახალგაზრდული პოლიტიკის კონცეფციის“ დამტკიცების შესახებ [On approving the 2020-2030 concept of Georgia on youth policy].
- 2 National Youth Agency, “ჩვენ შესახებ [About Us].”
- 3 Geostat, “Women and Men in Georgia.”
- 4 Sichinava and Zubashvili, “Study of Youth Civic and Political Engagement and Participation in Peacebuilding in Georgia.”
- 5 Omanadze et al., Generation in Transition.
- 6 This report was prepared by Rati Shubladze, Head of the Sociology Programme at the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA), David Sichinava, Research Director at CRRG Georgia and Adjunct Research Professor at Carleton University, Ottawa and Tamar Khoshtaria, Assistant Professor at Ilia State University and Senior Researcher at CRRG-Georgia.
- 7 Graham, “Subjective Well-Being in Economics.”
- 8 Parliament of Georgia, „2020–2030 წლებისთვის საქართველოს ახალგაზრდული პოლიტიკის კონცეფციის“ დამტკიცების შესახებ [On approving the 2020-2030 concept of Georgia on youth policy].
- 9 Government of Georgia, “სამთავრობო პროგრამა 2021-2024 „ევროპული სახელმწიფოს მშენებლობისთვის“ [Government Programme 2021-2024 ‘for Building a European State’].”
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- 11 Geostat, “Women and Men in Georgia.”
- 12 Parliament of Georgia, „2020–2030 წლებისთვის საქართველოს ახალგაზრდული პოლიტიკის კონცეფციის“ დამტკიცების შესახებ [On approving the 2020-2030 concept of Georgia on youth policy].
- 13 UNICEF, “ახალგაზრდების ეროვნული კვლევა საქართველოში [National Study of Youth in Georgia].”
- 14 Janoski, “The Dynamic Processes of Volunteering in Civil Society.”
- 15 Schleicher, “PISA 2018 Insights and Interpretations.”
- 16 Times Higher Education, “World University Rankings.”
- 17 Rutkowski, “Workforce Skills in the Eyes of the Employers: Results of the Georgia STEP Employer Skills Survey.”
- 18 CRRG-Georgia, “ATTDEM: Which of These Three Statements Is Closest to Your Opinion? Caucasus Barometer 2021 Georgia.”
- 19 The Economist, “A New Low for Global Democracy.”
- 20 CRRG-Armenia, “ATTDEM: Which of These Three Statements Is Closest to Your Opinion? Caucasus Barometer 2021 Armenia.”
- 21 Quintelier and van Deth, “Supporting Democracy.”
- 22 Sichinava and Zubashvili, “Study of Youth Civic and Political Engagement and Participation in Peacebuilding in Georgia.”
- 23 Kincha, “Georgia’s Youth Protesters Lead 2020’s Political Showdown.”
- 24 CRRG-Georgia, “PARTYSUPP: Which Political Party Is Closest to You? Caucasus Barometer 2021 Georgia.”
- 25 De Waal, “Georgian Democracy Is Dying By a Thousand Cuts.”
- 26 Silagadze, “Datablog | Most Georgians Believe That Georgia Is Not a Democracy.”
- 27 Sichinava and Zubashvili, “Study of Youth Civic and Political Engagement and Participation in Peacebuilding in Georgia.”
- 28 Median represents a middle value of a distribution. Median is a better measurement of central tendency than mean, especially in cases when outliers might affect averages
- 29 The murder of Davit Saralidze, or the Khorava Street murder case, was a highly publicised story of a teenager in Tbilisi. The acquittal of alleged perpetrators from group assault charges, which would have meant harsher prison sentences, caused large protest rallies in Tbilisi.
- 30 Gavrolov’s Night or the 2019 Georgia Protests were large-scale protest rallies conveyed in Tbilisi following the dispersal of an initial protest against the Russian MP Sergey Gavrilov. Protests led to protracted political crisis in the country.
- 31 CRRG-Georgia, “IMPISS1: Most Important Issue Facing the Country. Caucasus Barometer 2021 Georgia.”
- 32 Codes 1 to 4 on a 10-point scale, where 1 means “far left” and 10 means “far right”
- 33 Codes 5 and 6 on a 10-point scale, where 1 means “far left” and 10 means “far right”
- 34 Codes 7 to 10 on a 10-point scale, where 1 means “far left” and 10 means “far right”
- 35 De Waal, “Georgian Democracy Is Dying By a Thousand Cuts.”
- 36 Mzhavanadze and Sichinava, “Results of the 2021 Wave of the Caucasus Barometer Survey.”
- 37 Sichinava and Zubashvili, “Study of Youth Civic and Political Engagement and Participation in Peacebuilding in Georgia.”
- 38 NDI Georgia, “Taking Georgians’ Pulse: Findings from August 2022 Face to Face Survey.”
- 39 Khoshtaria et al., “Youth Values and Political Activism in Georgia.”
- 40 Grasso et al., “Socialisation and Generational Political Trajectories.”
- 41 Robakidze, “Political Polarisation and Media: Threats to the Democratic Process in Georgia.”
- 42 Galston, “Political Knowledge, Political Engagement and Civic Education.”
- 43 Wray-Lake, “How Do Young People Become Politically Engaged?”
- 44 NORC at the University of Chicago, “Impact Evaluation of USAID/ Georgia’s Momavlis Taoba (MT) Civic Education Initiative (CEI).”
- 45 Kakachia and Minesashvili, “Identity Politics.”

- 46 Nodia, "Components of the Georgian National Idea," 94.
- 47 Jones, "The Role of Cultural Paradigms in Georgian Foreign Policy."
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- 50 CRRC-Georgia, "Future of Georgia. Survey Report."
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- 52 Khoshtaria et al.
- 53 Tsuladze, "On Europeanisation, National Sentiments and Confused Identities in Georgia."
- 54 CRRC-Georgia, "Public Attitudes in Georgia, July-August 2022," 2022.
- 55 CRRC-Georgia, "Public Attitudes in Georgia, July-August 2022," 2022.
- 56 de Waal, "How Georgia Stumbled on the Road to Europe."
- 57 Minesashvili, "Europe in Georgia's Identity Discourse: Contestation and the Impact of External Developments."
- 58 CRRC-Georgia, "Knowledge of and Attitudes toward the European Union in Georgia."
- 59 CRRC-Georgia.
- 60 Shubladze et al., "საქართველოს ისტორია და ახალგაზრდები: გამოცდილების, დამოკიდებულებებისა და ღირებულებების კვლევა [History of Georgia and Young People : A Study of Experiences, Attitudes and Values]."
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122 Bryer et al., “Non-Economic Emigration Factors That Might Be Pushing Citizens out of Lithuania.”

123 The variable HH financial position is constructed from the original variable describing self-evaluated financial position of the household. In the first rank we grouped the following options - “There is not enough money even for food”, “We have enough money only for the most necessary things” and “There is enough money for food, but not enough to buy clothing and shoes”. The second rank – “There is enough money for clothing and shoes, but not enough to buy a large household appliance”, the third rank – “There is enough money for household appliances, but we cannot buy a new car”. In the fourth rank, the following options are merged: “There is enough money for a new car, but we cannot permit ourselves to buy an apartment or house” and “We experience no material difficulties, if needed we could acquire an apartment or house”.

124 The variable HH financial position is constructed from the original variable describing self-evaluated financial position of the household. In the first rank we grouped the following options - “There is not enough money even for food”, “We have enough money only for the most necessary things” and “There is enough money for food, but not enough to buy clothing and shoes”. The second rank – “There is enough money for clothing and shoes, but not enough to buy a large household appliance”, the third rank – “There is enough money for household appliances, but we cannot buy a new car”. In the fourth rank, the following options are merged: “There is enough money for a new car, but we cannot permit ourselves to buy an apartment or house” and “We experience no material difficulties, if needed we could acquire an apartment or house”.

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129 Important caveat: in 2016 situation in 10 years was evaluated, while in the 2022 wave respondents were asked to think 5 years ahead. In addition, the formulation was a bit different across the waves.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DRG	Democratic Republic of Georgia
FES	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
NEET	Neither in Education nor Employment or Training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

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ABOUT FES YOUTH STUDIES



This publication is a part of the FES International Youth Studies. Starting in 2009 FES has conducted numerous Youth Studies around the globe. Since 2018, Youth Studies focus specifically on Southern Eastern Europe, Russia, Central Asia, Eastern Central Europe and the Baltic States. Further studies are being planned for the Middle East and Northern Africa as well as in individual countries around the globe. The International Youth Studies are a flagship project of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in its endeavour to research, shape and strengthen the democracy of the future. It strives to contribute to the European discourse on how young generations see the development of their societies as well as their personal future in a time of national and global transformation. The representative studies combine qualitative and quantitative elements of research in close partnership with the regional teams aimed towards a high standard in research and a sensitive handling of juvenile attitudes and expectations.

A dedicated Advisory Board (Dr Miran Lavrič, Univ.-Prof. Dr Marius Haring, Daniela Lamby, András Biró-Nagy and Dr Mārtiņš Kaprāns) supports the methodological and conceptual design of the Youth Studies. The Board consists of permanent and associated members and provides essential expertise for the overall project.

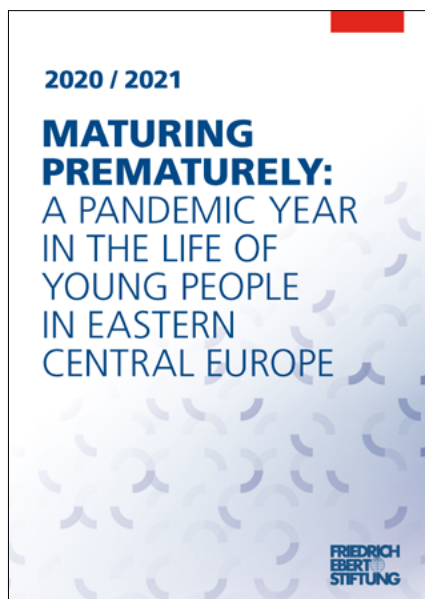
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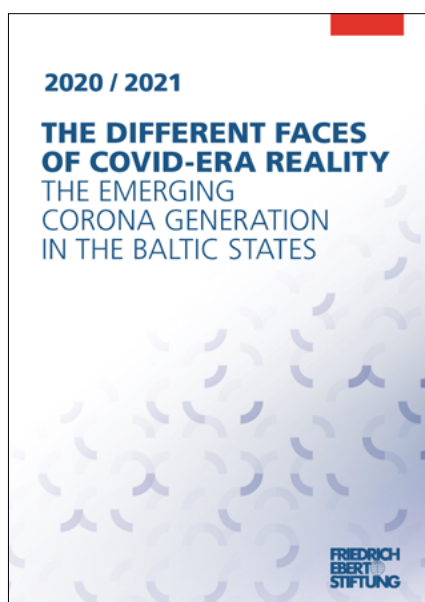


The coronavirus pandemic has been a great shock to societies in Central Europe. The restrictions it has brought about are extensive and must have been particularly new for the young generation that cannot remember the eras before the democratic regimes were established in this region. In this report youths' experiences of the first year of the pandemic were studied in four countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted in each country, in which young people talked about a variety of topics and issues that had impacted their lives. In the study, it is argued that in areas like healthcare, inter-generational relationships and education young people were pushed into becoming like adults, that is, into maturing prematurely.



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The goal of this research report is to explore the life of youth in the Baltic States during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021). The report focuses on how young people perceive and make sense out of social as well psychological changes caused by pandemic and how they position themselves in terms of these changes. The focus of this study lies on young people between the age of 14 and 29. The report is based on online interviews with 30 respondents that were conducted in April 2021 via the platform MS Teams. Ten respondents were interviewed in each of the Baltic States.



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