

A Democratic Optimisation Analysis:
Connecting Citizens' Hope and Electoral Processes in
Georgia

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Abstract

In this report, we analyse in detail the hearts and minds of the Georgian polity and its attitudes towards and behaviour in elections and its national democracy. Our study is based on a very large face-to-face survey of a random sample of 2021 respondents.

The study shows that Georgian voters have universally positive and optimistic attitudes towards democracy and the electoral process. It analyses the – largely positive – emotions that they associate with voting, including excitement, happiness, pride, and a sense of optimism. We show that unlike most citizens in the rest of Europe, a majority of Georgian voters see their role as that of a ‘supporter’ rather than a ‘referee’ in elections but that they also tend to vote in a sociotropic way and to feel a sense of responsibility as voters. We assess citizens’ satisfaction with democracy but also compare the forms of protest they would envisage when they are politically dissatisfied. We compare those results with our findings from our studies in other countries. The study shows that unlike many other countries, Georgians have a predominantly cultural definition of their national identity; however, it also shows that they are developing a collective civic memory of elections that anchors their shared political experience. Finally, the study demonstrates that voters resolutely relate the future of Georgia to the goal of ultimately joining the European Union and are expecting that future generations will live an increasingly happy life.

It concludes with a set of possible directions for future empowerment and education and to reinforce the quality of democracy and further democratic trust and satisfaction in Georgia.

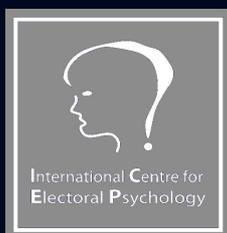
Some of the findings further developed in this report include:

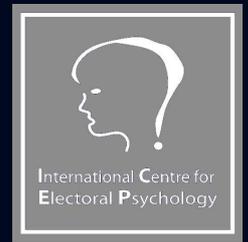
- The main words that come to Georgian citizens’ minds when they think of “elections” are ‘hope’, ‘future’, ‘choice’, ‘fairness’, and ‘peace’;
- 67% of Georgian voters feel proud when they vote, 57.8% feel happy, and 40% have already cried because of an election;
- 84.4% of Georgian voters cast their vote based on the parties which they find best for their country rather than the party which they think will be best for them personally;
- The main qualities Georgian voters want from their Presidents are common sense, strength, intelligence, and experience;
- 70.8% of voters believe that society has improved over the past 30 years and
- 82.6% believe that their children will live a happier life than them;
- However, 23.5% would consider taking part in a revolution if they were unhappy with political outcomes in their country;
- 77.5% of Georgians want the country to join the EU within the next 20 years

○ *Georgian voters have universally positive and optimistic attitudes towards democracy and the electoral process.*

○ *Georgian voters feel a sense of responsibility and have a predominantly cultural definition of their national identity.*

○ *Georgian voters relate the future of Georgia to the goal of ultimately joining the European Union*





Methodology

This report is based on a large-scale mass survey of the Georgian population that was conducted in November 2013, just after the Presidential election, which is methodologically extremely innovative in a number of ways. We conducted a face-to-face survey of a random sample of 2021 respondents aged 18 and over. We used a unique method of “collaborative survey fieldwork” originally elaborated by Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison, trained some local partners provided by the Center for Electoral Systems Development and Reforms and Trainings, who both carried out the survey on our behalf and input the data on our web platform under our supervision.

Collaborative Survey Fieldwork is a unique model of survey fieldwork designed by Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison which aims at getting the ‘best of both worlds’ between traditional survey company-conducted fieldwork and “in house” fieldwork. Typically, surveys come in two main forms: those conducted by survey companies, and those conducted ‘in house’ by stakeholders themselves. The former are carried out by professionally-trained people, but who might not have a high level of knowledge of the specific field in which they are operating and its specificities, especially if they need to conduct surveys on certain populations (a local community or a specific type of people, e.g. young voters, people who live in inner cities, doctors, etc.) or in countries they are not primarily rooted in, to the point that it may become difficult for them to envisage the most representative bases, which essentially should always depend on the type of survey designed and population targeted. The latter are conducted by stakeholders who know their field extremely well – often better than anyone – but may not have the competence in designing, conducting, and analysing survey data. Both models are therefore scientifically and materially sub-optimal and may result in studies that are either based on poor questionnaires and improper analysis, or fieldwork which is not conducted as efficiently as possible and on populations which are sampled (or whose representativeness is evaluated) on an erroneous basis. Our “collaborative survey fieldwork” model thus combines the highest scientific rigour in the conception, supervision, and analysis of surveys, and the use of inside knowledge in its conduct. Questionnaires are scientifically designed and analysed by our team, which also trains members of neutral partners within stakeholder teams to conduct fieldwork. Those partners are rooted locally and know the field. We then create random samples using census or electoral data and the trained local teams conduct the survey and input responses using our unique web-based platform. This model ensures the highest quality of survey fieldwork is combined with the highest quality of sample (random samples¹) and the highest quality of survey design and analysis. Further details on the methodology can be obtained from the International Centre for Electoral Psychology.

The 15-minute questionnaire included a mixture of open-ended, close-ended, and background questions. We confirmed the representativeness of the sample in terms of basic demographics and geographical spread (controlled by region) as well as the data reliability which was very high.

- ***Our “collaborative survey fieldwork” model combines the highest scientific rigour in the conception, supervision, analysis and surveys.***
- ***Our “collaborative survey fieldwork” model ensures the highest quality of survey fieldwork is combined with the highest quality of sample and the highest quality of survey design and analysis.***

○ ***Most aspects of voter psychology are not part of the conscious knowledge of respondents, e.g. the constitution of identity.***

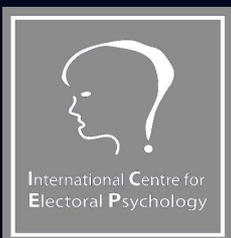
○ ***In the survey it could not be asked directly what constitutes the identity of Georgian voters because identity is not something we think of analytically.***

In the survey, we went through great length to ensure that it would be possible to capture the psychology, preferences, and behaviours of Georgian voters, both directly, by asking them questions, and indirectly. This is because in many ways, most aspects of voter psychology are not part of the conscious knowledge of respondents. As an example, if we want to understand what constitutes the identity of Georgian voters, it is not enough to ask them directly how they would define Georgian identity, precisely because identity is not something that we think of naturally in analytical terms. As a result, we also include questions that lead respondents to reveal crucial information about their hearts and minds. We then cross-validated explicit and implicit information on fundamental psychological traits of Georgian voters.

Unlike most commercial surveys, we also used multiple indicators that enabled us to finely evaluate voters' psychology by superimposing and indexing their answers to apparently different questions that have been scientifically paired to optimise measurement.

We also used a subtle combination of close-ended and open-ended, quantitative and qualitative measures, which we adapted to specific deductive and inductive aspects of citizens' psychology.

Finally, as mentioned above, our unique "collaborative survey fieldwork" strategy enabled us to put together a very thorough field study (more thorough than is typically the case for most surveys) with extremely high quality and detailed data while remaining efficient and competitive.



Organisation of the report

In the next few pages, we tackle a number of key questions aiming at understanding the democratic mind of the Georgian voters, their hopes, attitudes, and worries. In particular, we focus on:

- Voters' spontaneous perceptions of elections and democracy
- Voters' emotions in the electoral context
- Citizens' sociotropism and sense of responsibility
- The psychological determinants of their vote
- Citizens' efficacy, democratic satisfaction, and forms of protest
- Citizens' perceptions of Georgian national identity
- Future projections and perceptions of Georgia's future in Europe and beyond

The report then finishes with a democratic diagnostic of the country and recommendations for further initiatives and future research to optimise democratic and electoral procedures and processes which are based on the findings of this preliminary study.

About the International Centre for Electoral Psychology

The International Centre for Electoral Psychology is the leading research organisation focussing on...

- **Bespoke studies in voters' psychology**
- **Solutions to optimise voters' trust and satisfaction**
- **Constitutional reform and design**
- **Optimisation of electoral procedures and technologies**

The International Centre for Electoral Psychology (ICEP) is a research-oriented organisation which focuses on the understanding of the psychology of voters and the optimisation of the ergonomics of electoral mechanisms to best fit the profiles of the voters of specific countries with the objective of making elections as effective, trusted, and democratically fulfilling for citizens as possible.

Our leading team of academics and practitioners have received numerous awards and acclaims, and provided bespoke studies and practical solutions to numerous Governments, Electoral Management Bodies and Commissions, and International Organisations.

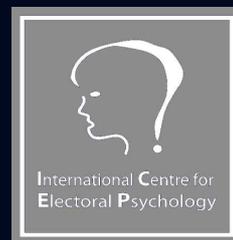
ICEP's key services and solutions are tailor-designed for each individual problem or situation, taking into account cultural, legal, and institutional specificities and include:

Bespoke solutions to understand voters' psychology and optimise democratic legitimacy, participation, and satisfaction:

- Research, evaluation, and practical solutions in voters' psychology, perceptions of democracy, trust enhancement, systems transparency
- Support for civic education and communication campaign
- Support for registration and electoral participation protocols

“Bespoke solutions to understand voters' psychology and optimise democratic legitimacy, participation, and satisfaction”





Support for constitutional and electoral reform:

- Legal and political audit of current systems and their shortcomings
- Studies of constitutional reform acceptability, and mapping of ranges of constitutional alternatives compatible with local citizens' specific social, cultural, and psychological profile
- Optimisation of electoral systems
- Electoral simulation (projected consequences of system changes in terms of groups' representation, etc.)

Evaluation and support for electoral procedures and technology choices:

- Audit and expertise of existing electoral procedures and/or technologies
- Advice and expertise on the choice, optimisation and tailoring of new electoral procedures and/or technologies
- Advice on the design of electoral procedures and/or technologies for specific target groups (young or elderly voters, illiterate voters, etc)
- Ergonomic and political psychological experiments

Ad hoc support and training of in house research teams:

- Support of institution for their in-house research and evaluations (support for institutional research initiatives, surveys design and analysis, interviews, etc.)
- Training of election officials (voters' psychology, in-house research, electoral education and communication, etc)

Our team includes some of the most internationally recognised experts and practitioners with decades of expertise in the field of electioneering, who have won some of the most prestigious awards in the field and have conducted consultancy work for multiple governments, electoral commissions and authorities, European and international organisations, among others.

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To contact us, please write to: contact@electoralpsychology.com or consult our website: www.electoralpsychology.com

“Evaluation and support for electoral procedures and technology choices”

“Ad hoc support and training of in house research teams”

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Context

On 31 March 1991, 99.5% of voters supported the restoration of Georgia's independence in a referendum that mobilised over 90% of voters. After the three Baltic republics, it was the first former Soviet state to organise an independence referendum. Since that time, Georgia has experienced six presidential elections, seven parliamentary elections, three local elections, and three more referenda (including two held concurrently).

Georgia has universally been recognised as one of the most successful democratic transitions within the former Soviet Union. Over time, political *alternance* has occurred multiple times, and the Georgian Central Election Commission (CEC) has been widely seen as a model of independence and transparency in the area.

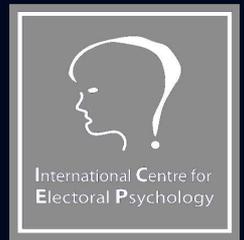
One specificity of Georgian voters so far is that they have often given very strong majorities. While the Georgian electoral system requires an absolute majority of the vote for the winners and the organisation of a run-off (similar to the French system) if no candidate gets 50% of the vote in the first round, no such run-off has been needed so far. In fact, until the 2008 election, candidates had always been elected with well over three-quarters of the vote in the first round. 2008 was the first slightly more disputed election with President Saakashvili still being reelected easily in the first round with 54.7% of the vote. Referenda have been equally straightforward with majorities always well over three-quarters of voters while Parliamentary elections have historically been more disputed. A typical example is the 2003 election which led to a very tight result.

In that context, the 2013 presidential election was organised on 27 October (there was no need for a run-off) following over a year of 'cohabitation' between President Saakashvili, from the United National Movement (UNM), and Prime Minister Ivanishvili from the Georgian Dream movement, which defeated the UNM in the 2012 elections. President Saakashvili could not run again in the 2013 election because of term limits (two consecutive terms), and Prime Minister Ivanishvili also announced a few months before the election that he would not run for President. As a result, the Presidential race opposed Giorgi Margvelashvili (Georgian Dream), Davit Bakradze (United National Movement), Nino Burjanadze, Shalva Natelashvili, Giorgi Targamadze, Koba Davitashvili, Zurab Kharatishvili, Levan Chachua, Nino Chanishvili, Sego Javakhidze, Giorgi Liluashvili, Akaki Asatiani, and a further eleven candidates who obtained under 0.1% of the vote.

The election was won by Giorgi Margvelashvili with 62.2% of the vote with a relatively low turnout (47%). The organisation and democratic standards of the election was universally praised by the European Union, the USA, Russia, and many other world leaders.

- ***A specificity of Georgian voters is that they give very strong majorities.***





In that context, the Georgian Central Election Commission, in association with the Center for Electoral Systems Development and Reforms and Trainings, decided that it was crucial to continue to reinforce Georgia's status as a model of free, fair, and efficient elections in the region and to further look into voters' hopes, worries, and electoral habits in order to optimise the electoral process and make the country a world leader in putting voters at the heart of the electoral process. This is why the CEC commissioned a project aimed at better understanding the motivations and psychology of national voters using a mass survey. This cutting-edge initiative led to the current project and report, which, over 20 years after Georgia's initial democratic transition, is aimed at giving Georgian electoral institutions the knowledge and toolbox that will be needed to ensure that voters are fully trusting, satisfied, and electorally fulfilled by electoral processes and organisation.

- *The CEC Georgia in association with the Center for Electoral Systems Development and Reforms and Trainings decided it is crucial to reinforce Georgia's status as a model of free, fair and efficient elections in the region.*

- *They decided to further look into voters' hopes, worries and electoral habits in order to optimise the electoral process.*

Voters' spontaneous perceptions of elections and democracy

Across the Eastern part of Europe, democracy was a fundamental aspiration of millions of citizens for decades and the Western model was often seen as an ideal to aspire to. When transition occurred, however, while the establishment of free and fair democracy represented tremendous and cherished progress, it was not long before some citizens started developing the cynical, critical, and disaffected attitudes that are a characteristic of public opinion in most advanced democracies at the start of the 21st century. In some new democracies, levels of democratic disillusion are in fact so high as to become worrying, and it therefore seemed important to first assess whether Georgian voters still see democracy and elections with hope and positivity.

In order to understand the general perception of democracy and elections by Georgian citizens, we used a series of open-ended questions that allowed us to measure the values that they associate with those two words. The results are presented in two word clouds.

What is striking from the results is that unlike what has happened in many other new democracies, Georgian citizens retain overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards democracy and elections and convey a great deal of hope about them. While this is usual with regards to the concept of democracy, it is particularly important to note that citizens feel equally hopeful and positive about 'elections' themselves. 'Hope', 'future', 'choice', 'fairness', and 'peace' are the main ideas that come to citizens' minds when they think of elections. Of course, it is important to note that the study took place in election period when perceptions of elections and democracy tend to be more positive than otherwise, but the balance here is certainly exceptionally supportive. When it comes to democracy itself, 'freedom', 'fairness', 'equality', 'peace' and 'people' are the main points of reference.

The results are presented in two word clouds which we use to represent the prominence of various words in citizens' answers to open-ended questions. We compiled total lists of answers and the size of the words in the word clouds is in exact proportion of the number of respondents who mentioned them in our survey. This allows a clear visual perception of the most frequent answers coming to people's minds when asked about concepts such as 'democracy' and 'elections'.

The main ideas that come into Georgian citizens' minds when they think of elections are:

"Hope"

"Future"

"Choice"

"Fairness"

"Peace"



What are the first words that come to your mind when you think of the word 'democracy'?



What are the first words that come to your mind when you think of the word 'elections'?



They survey conducted by ICEP showed that:

- *Over 40% of Georgian citizens have already cried because of an election.*
- *Voting makes 79,6% of Georgian citizens feel optimistic.*
- *76,9% of Georgian citizens feel close to their fellow countrymen when they vote.*
- *68,7% feel reassured*
- *67% feel proud*
- *And 57,8% feel happy*
- *Only one in seven voters feels worried in relation to elections*

Elections and emotions

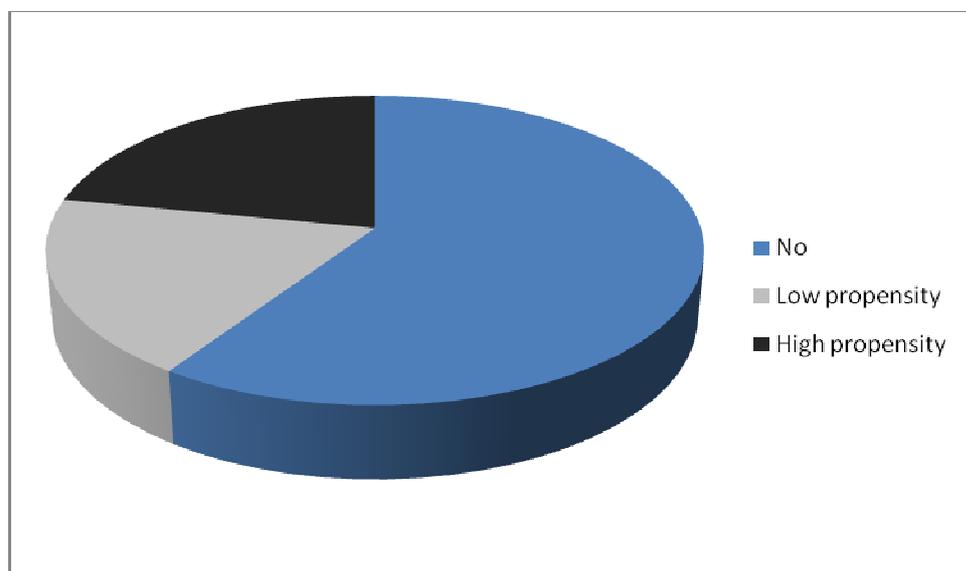
We investigated the emotions that Georgian voters associate with the act of voting. Across our research, we have found that voting is a highly emotional act for most citizens, and typically triggers relatively intense and positive emotions.

The first thing is that for Georgian voters as for many others, elections are indeed a highly emotional act. Over 40% of citizens have already cried because of an election (40.6%) which is slightly higher than the proportion found in most Western democracies.

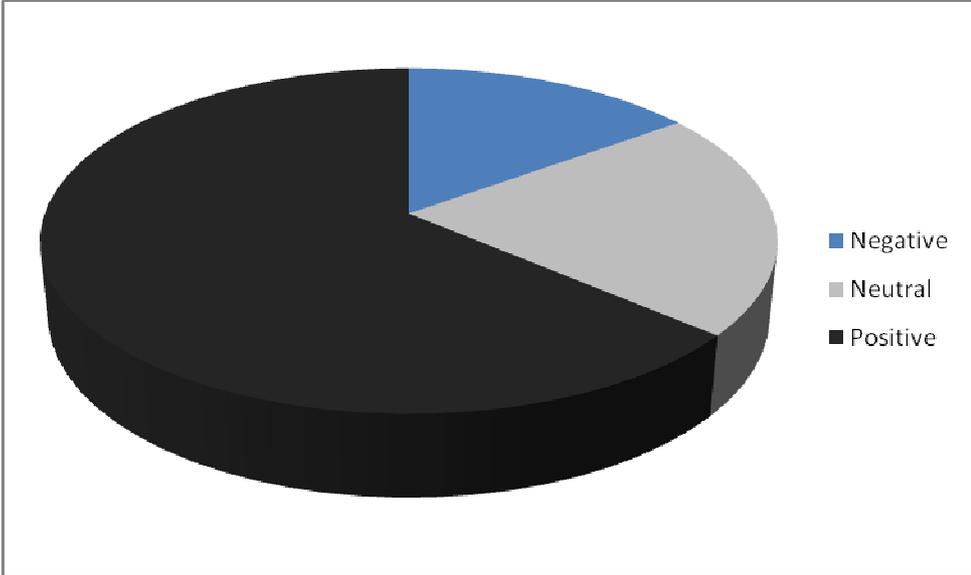
Elections are also experienced as mostly positive, and we find that nearly two thirds of voters like the atmosphere of the polling station (63.8%). This confirms the findings expressed earlier that elections are essentially seen in a positive light by voters.

This is also confirmed by the detail of emotions expressed by Georgian citizens in association with elections. Voting makes them feel optimistic (79.6%), close to fellow countrymen (76.9%), reassured (68.7%), proud (67%), excited (57.9%), and finally happy (57.8%). Negative emotions are particularly scarce in the Georgian context and it is interesting to note that only one in seven voters feels worried in relation to elections, which is a much lower proportion than in most other European countries.

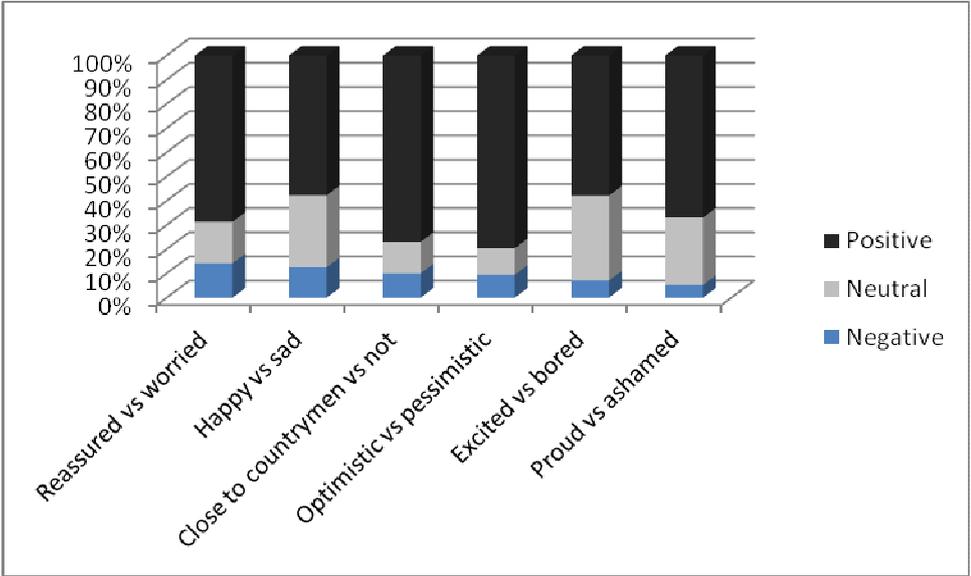
Proportion of Georgian Voters who have already cried because of an election



Proportion of Georgian voters who like the atmosphere of the polling station



Emotions associated with the vote



Electoral identity, citizens' sociotropism and sense of responsibility

Directly related to emotions and to the issue of the democratic 'spirit' of citizens and the role of elections is the question of how Georgian citizens see their role as voters. This question refers to the model developed by Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison of 'electoral identity', which shows how in most societies, voters tend to split between 'referees' and 'supporters'². This question is also related to issues such as the extent to which people feel their 'responsibility' as citizens when they vote, and the extent to which they make sociotropic³ projections in the polling booth, that is, the extent to which they vote according to what is best for their country rather than what is simply best for themselves.

Those two indications are critical measures of democratic maturity for a nation. In immature democratic societies, citizens only see their voting right as an individual benefit without any societal responsibility and do tend to think that it is fair for every individual to pursue their own goals without empathically considering the interest of the nation as a whole.

Under both diagnostics, Georgia clearly presents itself as a mature and responsible polity. Firstly, citizens are highly conscious of their responsibility whilst voting, with 83% of citizens expressing the perception of a social and civic responsibility, while only 8.5% do not feel a strong responsibility when voting.

Similarly, citizens clearly focus on the general interest when they vote. We diagnosed that sociotropic attitude both directly and indirectly and both tests gave consistent results. Overall, sociotropic voting is dominant for 84.4% of Georgian voters while only 6.6% vote in a predominantly egocentric way and 9.1% using a mix of both evaluations. This provides an important insight into the types of messages the Georgian polity is most sensitive to and on which voters are most likely to make their electoral decision.

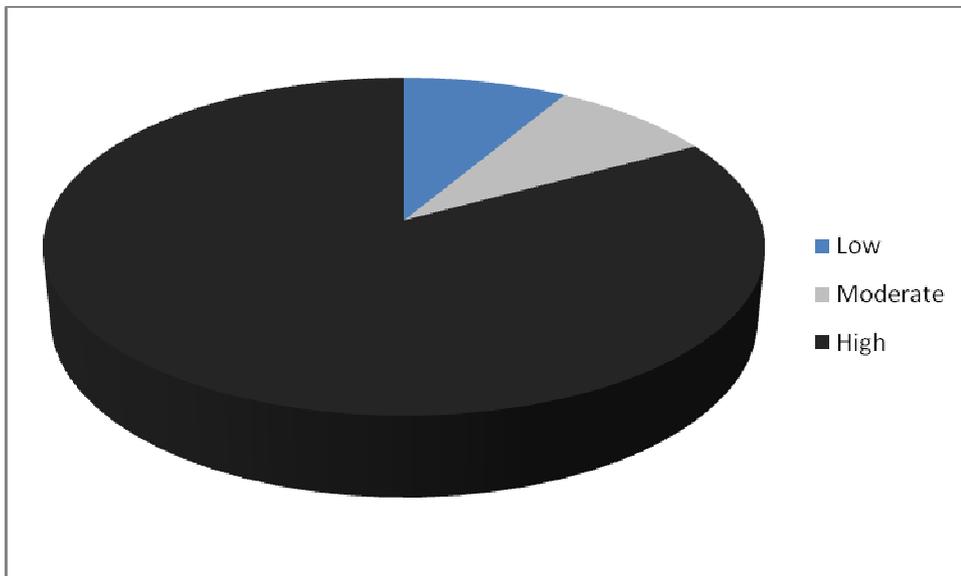
By contrast, the Georgian electorate significantly differs from most Western counterparts in terms of electoral identity. While most West European and North American countries show a very strong preponderance of voters who see themselves as 'referees' rather than 'supporters' within the electoral context, in Georgia, over half of respondents (50.2%) would describe themselves as supporters and only 14% as referees. This shows a perception that voters are supposed to engage in some form of adhesion to candidates and parties, which is increasingly unusual in Western countries. It also shows that whilst in most of the West, parties and candidates are now often perceived as 'in demand' in times of elections with the voters perceiving their own power vis-à-vis them, in Georgia the candidates and parties are still seen as benefiting from a stronger position as opinion leaders.

- **83% of Georgian citizens' feel a strong social and civic responsibility when voting.**
- **8.5% feel no strong responsibility when voting.**
- **84.4% of Georgians vote sociotropic;**
- **6.6% vote egocentric;**
- **9.1% use a mix of both.**

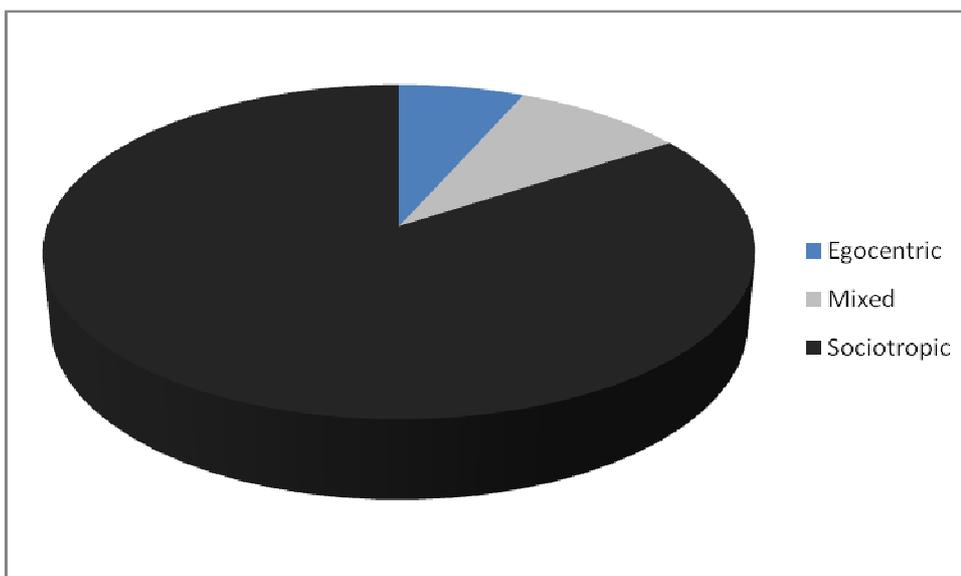
Within the electoral context

- **50.2% of respondents see themselves as supporters.**
- **14% as referees.**

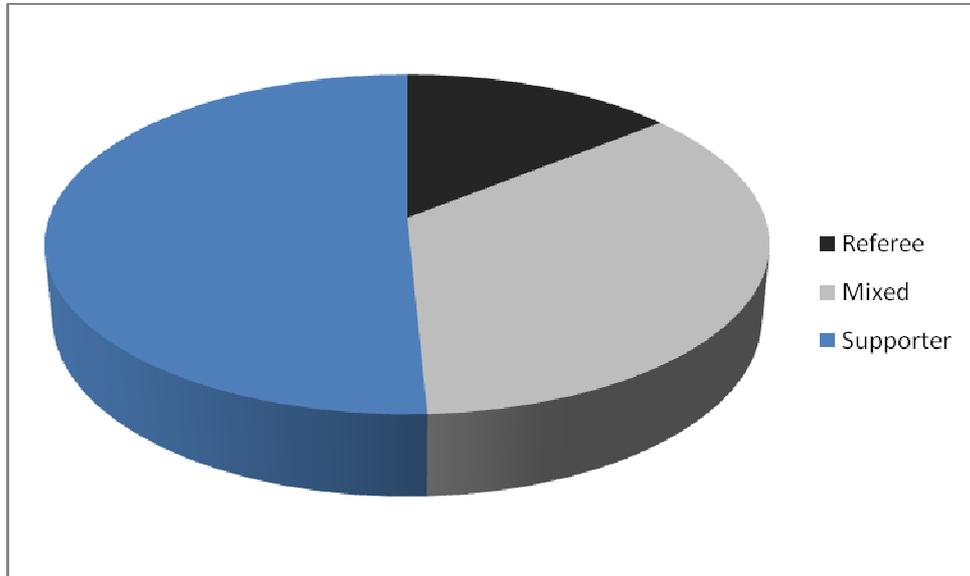
Feeling a sense of responsibility whilst voting



Sociotropic vs egocentric voting



Referees vs supporter



The psychological determinants of the vote

Much research on the determinants of the vote has focused on sociological and economic determinants as well as contextual determinants. However, none of these routes has been entirely successful in explaining recent voting behaviour in Georgia. By contrast, in this study, we focus on the psychological determinants of the vote in order to try and better understand underlying characteristics of Georgian voters, such as the stability of their vote over time – both in the run up to a given election and across elections, whether they tend to use sincere, strategic, or protest voting, and what they seek in the personality of a leader.

These elements are very important because they will enable us to understand both the level of electoral sophistication of Georgian voters, the extent to which they are managing to ‘own’ the electoral system and procedures, and their attitudes towards potential leaders.

First, we consider the stability of the vote during election cycles and the propensity of voters to change their minds over the course of the campaign period. Overall, nearly half of Georgian voters occasionally change their minds over the course of an election (49.5%). This shows greater volatility than in most advanced democracies, and nearly one in four voters (22.3%) have a high propensity to change their minds through the election campaign.

The phenomenon is even more accentuated when it comes to the stability of partisan choices over time. Only a third of voters (37%) have always voted for the same party over their democratic electoral history. By contrast, 63% have changed their partisan choices over time, including a quarter of voters (26.7%) with a high propensity to change. These figures need to be interpreted with caution, as they are quite symptomatic of a new democracy that has gone through multiple party system changes over the past twenty years. However, together with our finding on instability over campaign cycles, it suggests that Georgian voters are still potentially vulnerable to important partisan choices and open to campaign reactivity.

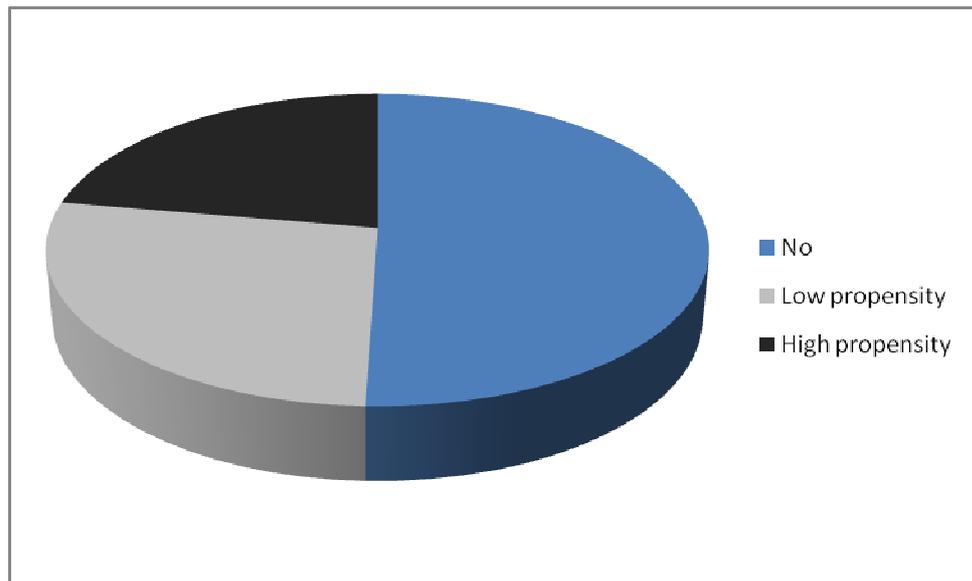
A third important point of reference is the understanding of whether voters only vote sincerely⁴ or have come to own the electoral system and procedures in such a way as to use elections to express strategic and protest votes. Compared to most Western countries, we find that Georgian voters have already diversified their voting modes quite significantly, with 64.2% being amenable to using protest voting (including over a third of voters – 35.9% – having a high propensity to do so) and 57.5% strategic voting (including over a quarter of voters – 28% – having a high propensity to vote strategically). Sincere voting is of course the dominant mode of electoral expression (89.2%).

However, while the Georgian public shows high levels of sophistication from the points of view of using multiple voting modes, they are proving more distinct from their Western counterparts when it comes to defining their desired attributes from a political leader.

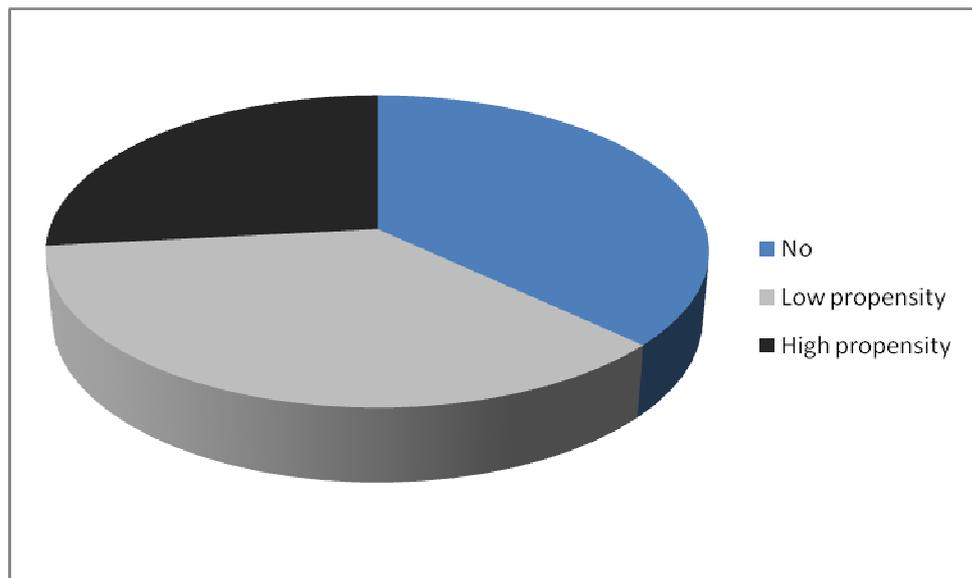
- *49.5% of Georgian voters occasionally change their minds over the course of an election.*
- *22.3% have a high propensity to change their minds through the election campaign.*
- *37% have always voted for the same party.*
- *63% have changed their partisan choices over time.*
- *64.2% are amenable to protest voting.*
- *57.5% to strategic voting.*
- *The dominant mode of electoral expression is sincere voting with 89.2%.*

Indeed, when asked about the main qualities they want from a Georgian president, the top answers chosen – common sense, strength, intelligence, and experience – point to a highly personalised, and somewhat “heroic” portrait of the ideal president. While this is partly a natural artefact of the presidential system, it also corresponds to a relatively patrimonial model of power compared to many Western countries where values like honesty, creativity, and empathy would be rated more highly.

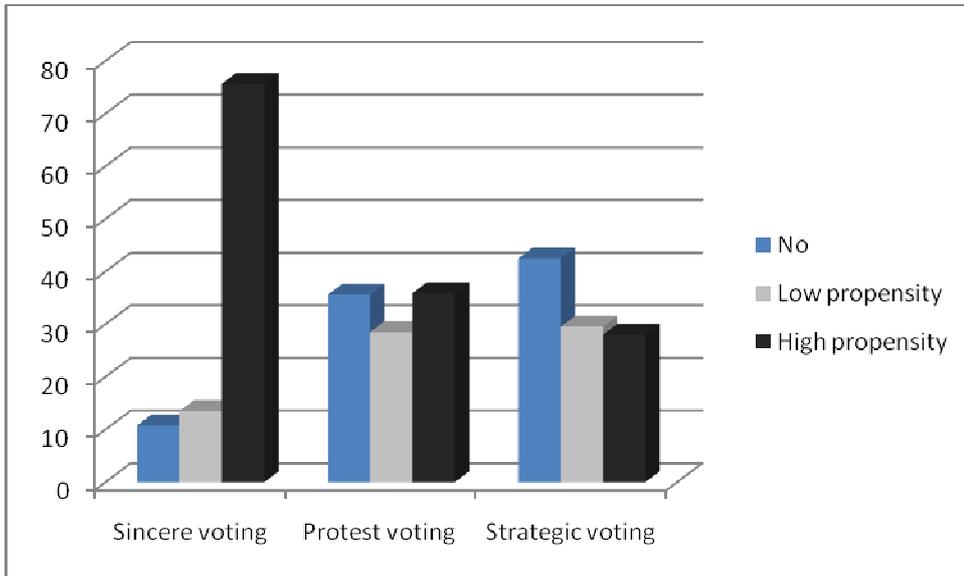
Propensity of voters to change their minds within the election cycle



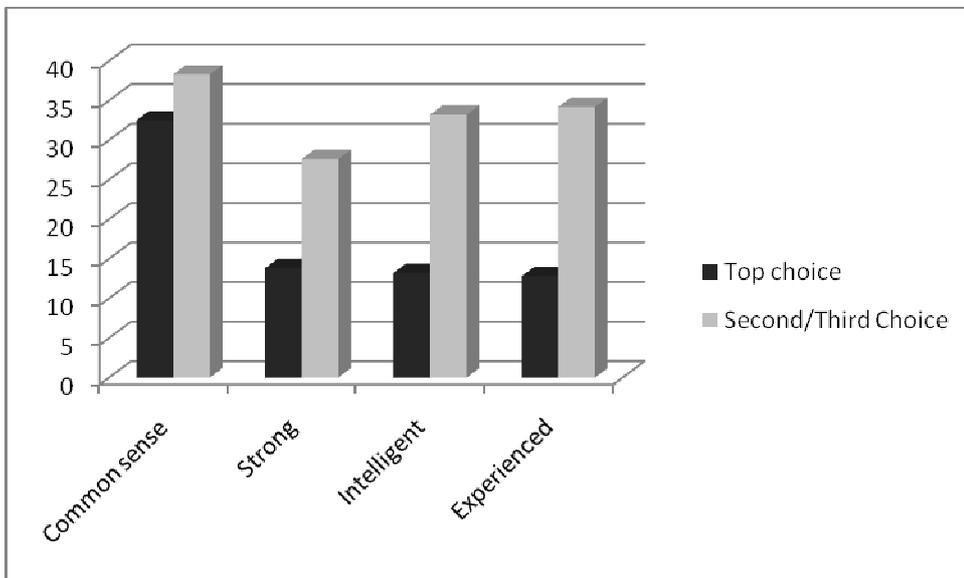
Propensity to vote for different parties over time



Sincere, protest, and strategic voting in Georgia



Principal qualities wanted from a Georgian President



“Efficacy is a political science concept, which measures a citizen’s perception of where they ‘fit’ within their political system”

- ***52,8% of voters believe that democracy works,***
- ***22,2% believe it does not work.***
- ***40,5% think that democracy makes life better for citizens,***
- ***25,4% think it makes life worse for citizens.***
- ***52,8% of Georgian citizens claim to be satisfied with politicians.***

Favoured protest modes:

- ***Peaceful demonstration 51,2%***
- ***Petition 47,5%***
- ***Vote for a radical party 39.1%***
- ***Engaging in a Revolution 23,5%***

Efficacy, democratic satisfaction and protest modes

Having studied the way in which Georgian voters make their electoral decisions, it is important to look at the extent to which they feel efficacious within their political system. We also look at citizens’ levels of democratic satisfaction, and the way in which they would consider engaging in protest if dissatisfied with political outcomes within their country.

To start with, we note that levels of efficacy⁵ are apparently very high, significantly more so than in most of the Western world. This is true of both efficacy and projected efficacy, which respectively reach 81.1 and 84.3% of high levels. This is also a lower difference between individual and collective efficacies than in most other countries.

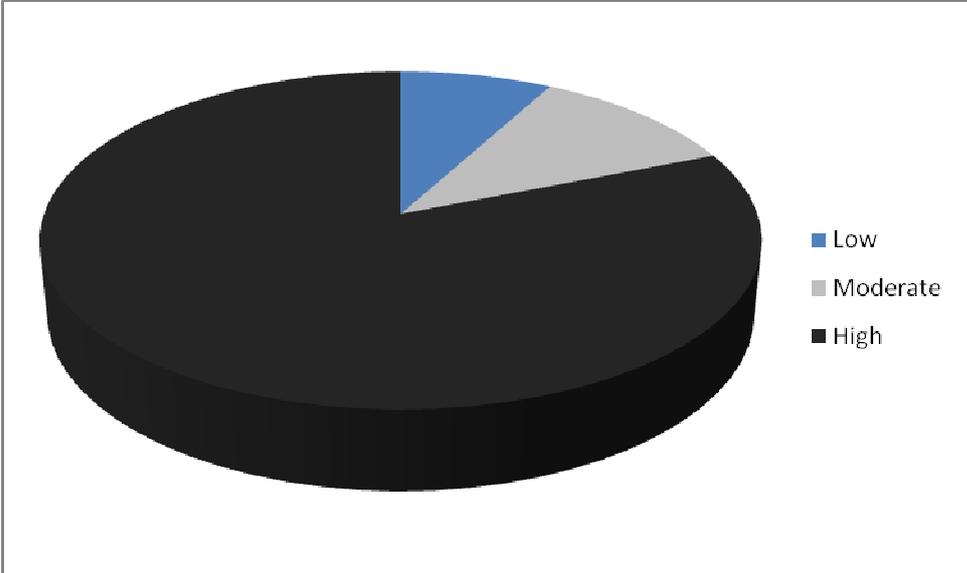
We also look at citizens’ satisfaction with democracy which is typically very high compared to many other European countries. For instance, 52.8% of voters believe that democracy works well in Georgia (against 22.2% who believe that it does not), and an overwhelming 70.8% agree that society has improved over the past 30 years (against only 12.8% who believe that it has not). There are, however, a few limitations to this overall satisfaction, which include a certain defiance towards administration⁶ with a quarter of Georgians believing that it makes life worse rather than better for citizens (25.4% against 40.5% who think the contrary). Similarly, 33.2% believe that parties are all the same (43.9% disagree). However, 52.8% of Georgian citizens claim to be satisfied with politicians, which is far more than in most Western countries.

Finally, we looked at the forms of protest that Georgian citizens would consider when they are dissatisfied with political outcomes. While unsurprisingly, the main modes of protest that would be considered include voting for mainstream parties that are not in power (65.5%), engaging in a peaceful demonstration (51.2%) and signing a petition (47.5%), it is worth noting that radical forms of protest score significantly more highly than in most other European countries. For example, 39.1% say that they would consider voting for a radical party, and even nearly a quarter of voters (23.5%) would consider engaging in an outright Revolution.

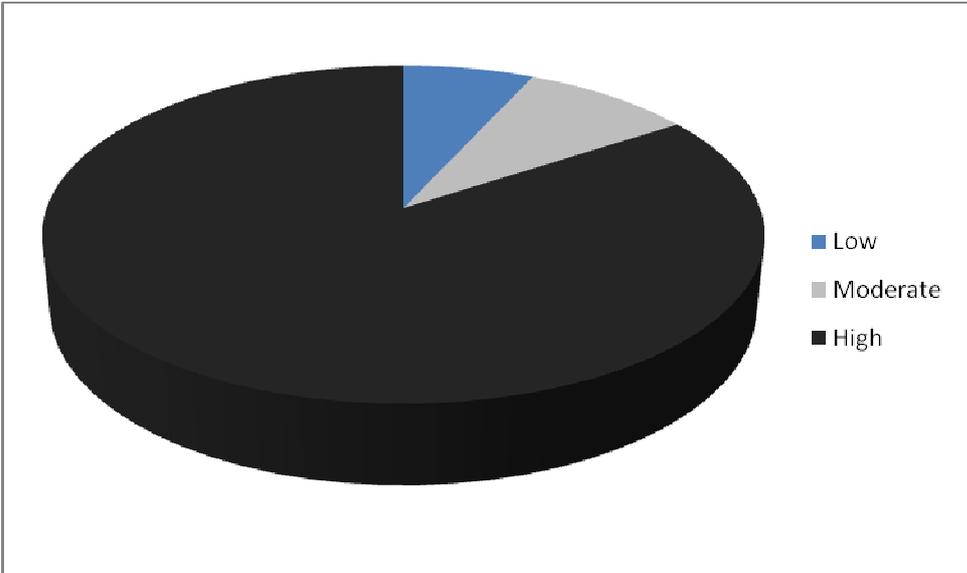
When we put all those elements together, we find that Georgian voters are both claiming higher levels of efficacy and democratic satisfaction than many other Europeans but also refuse to dismiss the possibility of engaging in radical protest such as voting for radical parties or engaging in a revolution. This shows that while Georgia is in every way a major example of democratic success in Europe, a small part of the population is still expressing a certain fragility that will need to be addressed in the coming years.



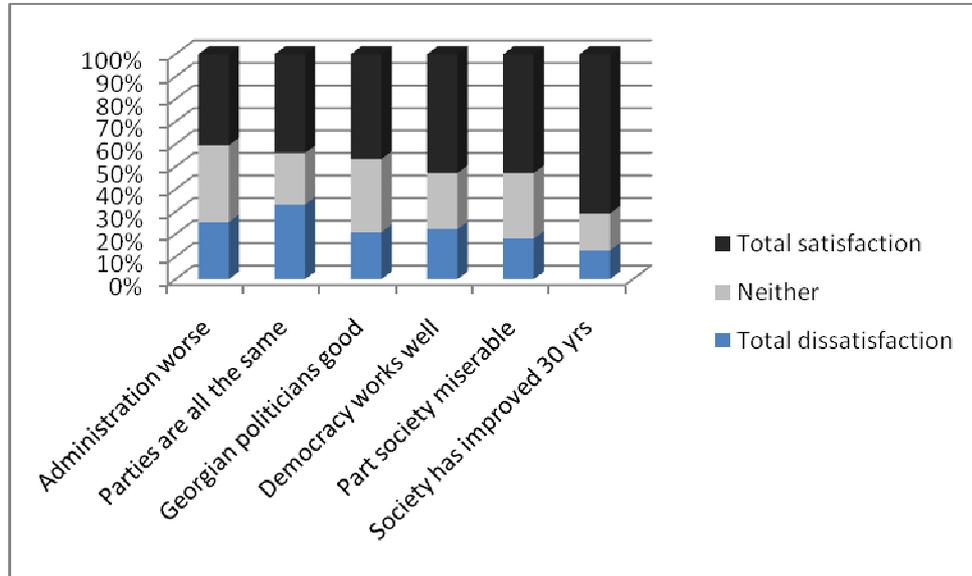
Efficacy



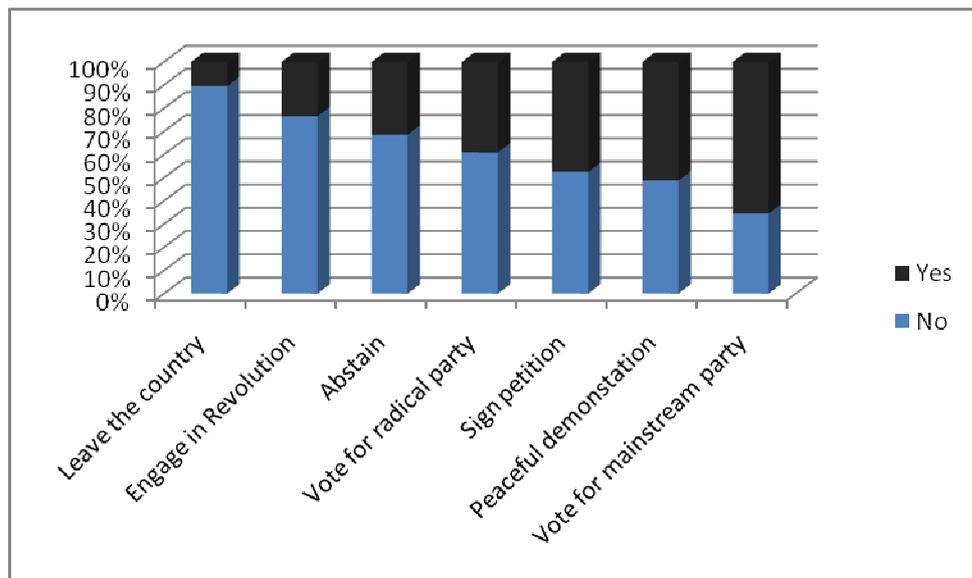
Projected Collective Efficacy

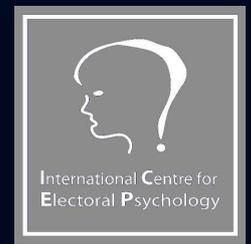


Democratic Satisfaction



Forms of protest considered





Perceptions of Georgian Identity

An electoral community is, first and foremost, a polity. It seemed particularly important to us to understand how the Georgian population perceive the foundations of Georgian identity, but also how a civic collective memory is emerging around key political and electoral moments.

Firstly when it comes to perceived pillars of Georgian identity, we note that unlike the vast majority of Western European countries, a majority of citizens refer to 'cultural' rather than 'civic' components of identity as per the categories defined by Bruter (2005)⁷ For most citizens, Georgian identity is first and foremost based on language (80.3%) and religion (71.9%). Then, secondary dimensions of identity are a common history (31.2%) and common values (23.7%). After that, a series of less important identity references include civic items such as the Constitution (17.2%), the democratic system (14.8%) and the flag (12.9%) as well as elements of cultural patrimony such as wine (14%) and food (10.2%) and finally ethnicity (12.4%). No other reference is mentioned by 10% or more of the population.

This highly culturally perceived definition of identity is perhaps what explains why a large majority (over 70%) of respondents do not find any resemblance between Georgia and any other major country or area. However, among those who do, the greatest affinities are by far with the European Union (11.2%) followed by Russia (7.3%) and Ukraine (5.2%). Other countries only appear as marginal references on the national identity matrix.

Finally, we have found that elections play an important role in shaping a civic collective memory. While recent elections – such as the 2012 Parliamentary elections and the 2008 Presidential elections – are present in most people's memories, it is worth noting that many people do remember the country's first democratic election and their own first election. Slightly less but still important proportions also remember childhood elections and elections from the Soviet era. It should be underlined that the important memory of key elections such as Georgia's first democratic vote is noteworthy in line with the relative youth of the Georgian population which means that a significant proportion of our respondents would have been very young when it took place. These results show how elections are starting to play a role in the building of a common civic reference that can peacefully unite all Georgians.

The majority of Georgian citizens define their identity as constituted of cultural components:

80,3% language

71,9% religion

31,2% common history

23,7% common values

civic components and elements of cultural patrimony:

17,2% the constitution

14,8% the democratic system

14% wine

12,9% the national flag

12,4% ethnicity

10,2% food

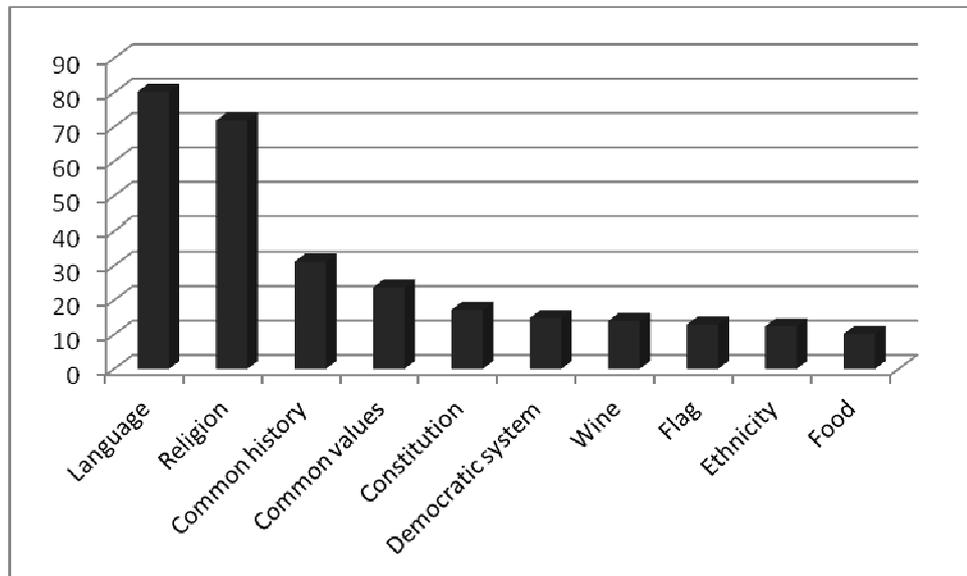
○ 70% of respondents do not find any resemblance between Georgia and any other major country.

○ 11,2% see the greatest resemblance with the EU

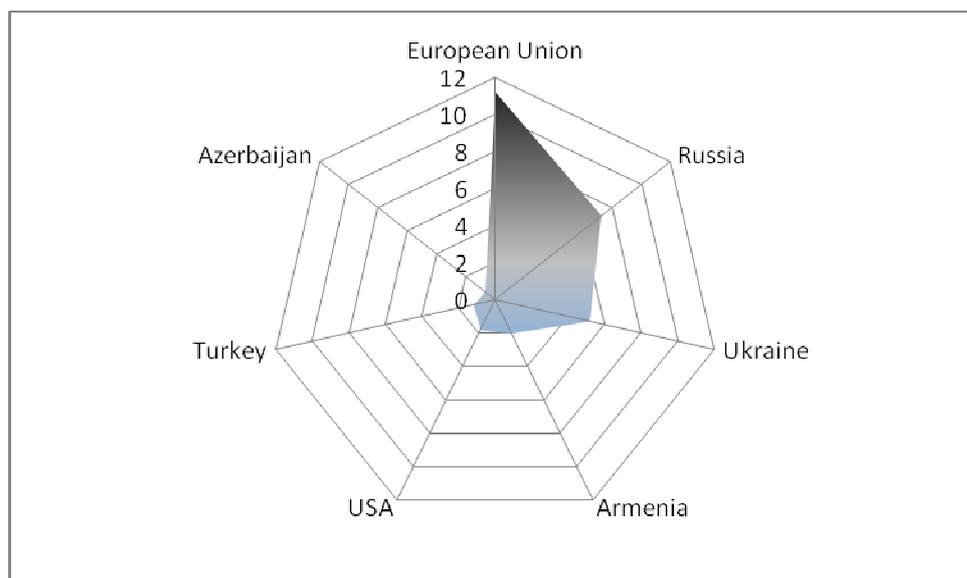
○ 7,3% with Russia

○ 5,3% with the Ukraine

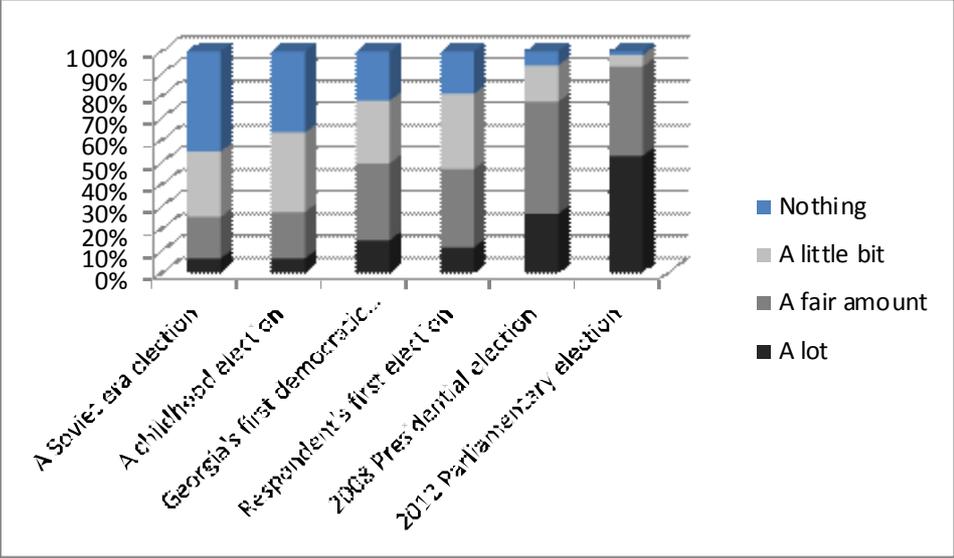
Perceived pillars of Georgian identity



Comparative similarity matrix



Building a collective national memory through elections



The European and local futures of Georgia

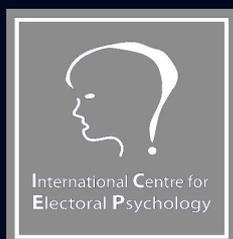
- *82,6% of respondents believe that the generation of their children will live a happier life than them.*

Finally, it seems important to look at the way Georgian citizens project themselves and their society in the future, both in terms of general democracy and happiness, and in terms of Georgia's place in Europe and in the rest of the world.

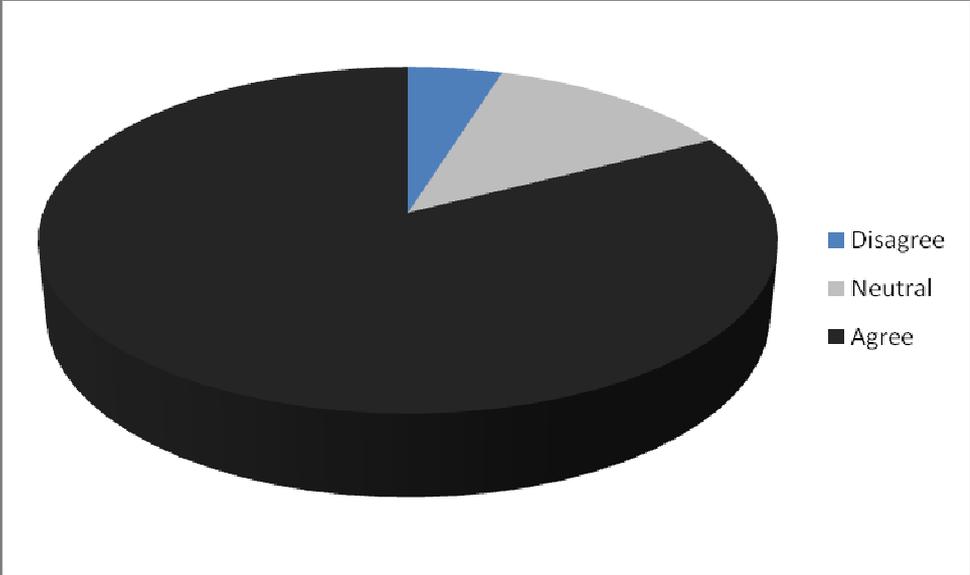
Firstly, we find that the future projections of Georgian citizens are overwhelmingly positive. For instance, 82.6% of respondents believe that the generation of their children will live a happier life than them, as opposed to only 4.8% who do not think so. This is overwhelmingly consistent with our broader findings relating to the population's general optimism about democracy, elections, and their future.

Secondly, we find overwhelming support for Georgia's future membership of the European Union, which clearly contrasts with a lack of interest in a membership of an organisation of Caucasus countries, membership of an organisation of former-CIS countries (including Russia), let alone membership of an association of countries led by Turkey. On the whole, 77.5% of Georgians wish for the country to join the European Union within the next twenty years (against only a third interested in possible Caucasus or CIS organisations).

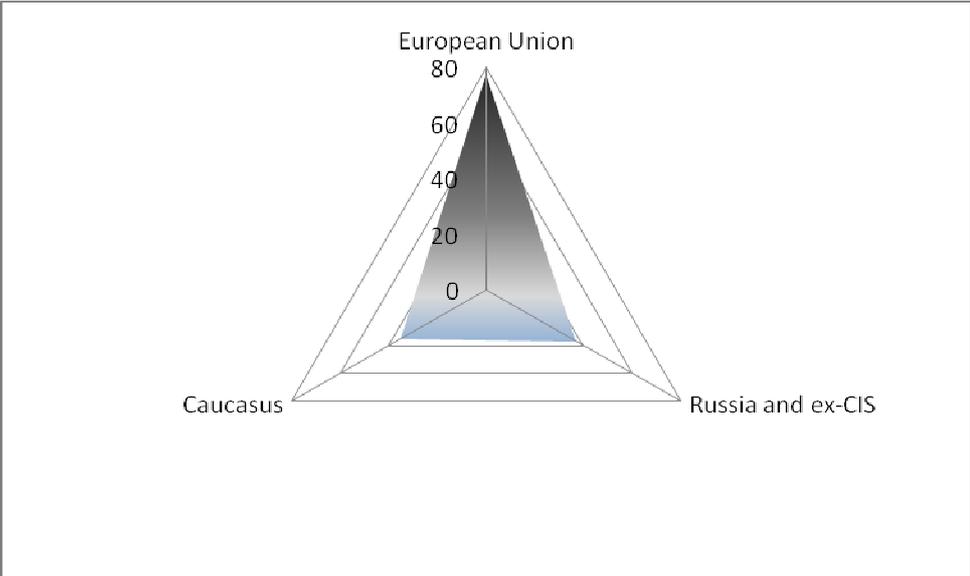
- *77,5% wish for Georgia to join the European Union within the next 20 years.*



Perception that children will live a happier life



Future membership matrix



- *The Georgian nation is generally optimistic about democracy and elections.*
- *Georgians take their role as citizens very seriously.*
- *They have a high awareness for their civil responsibilities.*
- *Georgians make voter decisions based on sociotropic rather than egocentric evaluations.*
- *Georgians seek their president to be strong, commonsensical and experienced rather than honest and competent.*

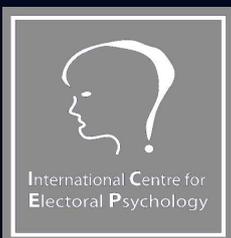
Conclusions and democratic diagnostic

Our report has provided evidence to show that the Georgian nation is generally optimistic about democracy and elections, feels strongly about its national unity and identity, and is democratically and procedurally mature. Clearly, Georgia can be seen as a strong and convinced democratic polity, which is certain of the absolute necessity of strong and transparent democratic processes and, while generally satisfied with democracy, is ready for it to be further refined and improved. Additionally, it is important to note that voters take their role as citizens very seriously, are highly aware of their responsibility, and are also very likely to make up their minds on the basis of sociotropic rather than egocentric evaluations.

At the same time, in some ways, what makes the strength of a democracy in terms of the spirit of its nation can also sometimes represent potential fragilities that need to be addressed or at least considered when evaluating the best ways to optimise electoral procedures and voters' education. Clearly, voting is still a highly emotional act in Georgia, and voters are also more likely to change their mind over time, both within election cycles and across elections. This is both an opportunity for democratic learning and debate and a potential risk for party system stability as it makes electoral campaigns of particular importance.

Moreover, this changeability is made all the more noticeable by two important elements. We first note that the qualities citizens seek from a President highlight fairly different bases of selection from what is typically seen in Western Europe, with the features of the ideal president being more characteristic of a 'providential' politician, seen as strong, commonsensical and experienced, rather than honest and competent. It is also important to mention the fact that significant minorities do not exclude the use of radical or very radical forms of protest if and when they are unhappy with political outcomes, including voting for radical parties (nearly 2 in 5 people) and even engaging in a revolution (nearly 1 in 4 people).

Nonetheless, while it is important to note these potential fragilities, the dominant picture is by far that of a strong, mature, and enthusiastic electoral democracy, which is ready to move to the next stage of a continued consolidation and refinement of its procedures and practices.



Recommendations for future improvements and further research

Our research has confirmed the fact that Georgian electoral democracy is clearly healthy. It underlines the continuously positive work of the Central Election Commission to maintain levels of trust and positive attitudes, and of the Center for Electoral Systems Development and Reforms and Trainings to educate and inform citizens. Those joint efforts have led to near universal praise, including a recent award on the engagement of young voters. This encouraging situation is of course not only an end in itself but it also represents the ideal context for any revisiting of electoral procedures and mechanisms.

Based on our diagnostic of Georgian democracy and voters' psychology, we particularly recommend the following potential avenues for further research:

- Voters' education. Voters have shown that the party system and voters' alignments have not reached complete stability as yet. Education is all the more important considering the fact that the population is young and still prone to considering voting for multiple parties.
- Electoral ergonomics of voting procedures. It is comparatively easier and least risky to improve electoral ergonomics when citizens are positive about democracy and elections. Georgia presents the ideal context for such improvements and our understanding of voters' general psychology would make it compelling to consider measures that could make voting procedures more ergonomic and more satisfactory and reassuring to citizens. The background work is now done, so it would now be possible to derive conclusions on which modifications to procedures would be acceptable or not, and positive or not.
- Legislation on and organisation of electoral campaigns. Voters' changeability and their definition of the ideal profile of a national leader highlights the critical need to think about how electoral campaigns should be organised and what the rights and duties of candidates should be in such a context to ensure high quality of democracy and electoral debate.
- Registration procedures and the welcoming of first-time voters into electoral democracy. Georgia is already leading in terms of initiatives facilitating the democratic insertion of young voters and should continue developing initiatives in this area because of the relative youth of the electorate.
- Assessment of the motivations and fears of the minority which considers the possibility of radical protest. It is crucial to ensure that they remain included in society, that dialogue between dissatisfied voters and the political system remains strong, and that their dissatisfaction remains channelled through non-radical protest modes.
- Preparation of the European future of Georgia. Clearly, Georgian voters strongly believe in the European future of their country, and this needs to be carefully prepared.

With these directions in mind, Georgia could remain an obvious example of 'best electoral practice' in Eastern Europe and the prediction of Georgian citizens that the future will deliver more happiness, greater strength, and more democratic cohesion to their compatriots and their country be upheld.

Notes on some of the concepts used in this report

¹ Random samples: Typically, surveys mean that a small proportion of a population is asked to answer questions so that researchers can infer information about the population as a whole. As a result, how the sample is designed will have tremendous implications on the validity of the assumptions underlying those inferences. Social scientists typically agree that whenever possible, the best possible samples are ‘random samples’ meaning that every person in the population has the same chance of being part of the survey sample. A random sample is what we use in this study. They are however increasingly rare as they are considered hard to come by and expensive. As a result, many survey companies use “targeted” samples such as stratified samples or quota samples instead. Unlike random samples, those samples pre-establish some conditions regarding who should be interviewed. The problem with those is that they make assumptions about which aspects of a person’s identity ‘matter’ or not. For instance, in the context of the quota sample, the designer might decide that it is important to have fair proportions of men and women but not care about the proportions of respondents from various social classes while the latter might matter more than the former for the models we want to test. Finally, many “in house” surveys simply use self-selected samples, which are typically considered to be the worst possible samples because the people who answer the survey are likely to be explicitly different from the population as a whole as they will typically be the most interested in a given issue.

²The model of electoral identity dividing voters into ‘referees’ and ‘supporters’ is an original model developed by Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison. It shows that when it comes to elections, voters can intuitively refer to their beliefs regarding their role and responsibility as voters in reference to sports events. We find that if we think of elections as sports competitions between various players (candidates) or teams (parties), voters typically define their role as voters either as ‘referees’ who have to arbitrate between the various competitors, or as ‘supporters’ who typically see themselves as affiliated with one of the camps. We find that this dichotomy is extremely powerful and lead to significantly different types of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. See the work of Bruter and Harrison for further details.

³Political science often refers to the dichotomy between ‘egocentric’ and ‘sociotropic’ perceptions notably when it comes to economic evaluations and the vote in the work of Erikson, McKuen, and Stimson. Those authors show that voters can alternatively evaluate the economic record of incumbents or the programmes of candidates either with regards to their own personal situation or with regards to the situation of the country as a whole. Here we go beyond the simple economic realm and test the extent to which people vote depending on their egocentric or sociotropic evaluations of candidates’ programmes.

⁴ Sincere, strategic, and protest voting are set terms corresponding to the three standards modes of electoral choice that we use in political science. A “sincere vote” is the most straightforward form of vote and means that a person vote for the party that they want to win. On the other hand, a “strategic vote” means that a voter votes for a party which is not the one they want to win because it is more effective to vote for another. For example, if three parties A, B, and C compete, and a voter really prefer voter C but know that that party has absolutely no chance of being elected because they have so little support within the country or the constituency and that the election will be won by either A or B, the voter might decide to vote for party B because out of the two ‘realistic’ contenders it is their favourite alternative. Finally, protest voting means that voters use their vote not to seek the election of a particular party but to signal dissatisfaction at other parties. For instance, in the example above, where A and B are the main contenders for power and C is a marginal party with no chance of gaining power, a voter might decide to vote for party C just to signal to parties A and B that he/she is not satisfied with their proposals.

⁵ Efficacy is another set political science concept which measures a citizen's perception of where they 'fit' within their political system. It is divided into 'internal efficacy' and 'external efficacy'. Internal efficacy is the perception by the voter that he or she is capable of understanding political debates and has a legitimate say in them. By contrast, external efficacy is the perception that the political system is attentive to the preferences of the voter and that such democratic preferences are taken into account by politicians. So a person with low internal efficacy would consider that he/she is not sufficiently knowledgeable to have informed opinions on important political questions, while a person with low external efficacy would consider that politicians and institutions do not care about his/her opinions.

⁶ This refers to an item that asked citizens whether they believe that 'administration makes life harder rather than easier for citizens'.

⁷The work of Bruter (2005) differentiates between 'civic' and 'cultural' components of political identities, whereby civic identity is an identification with the political system and consciousness of the importance of being a citizen of that political system, while cultural identity is the perception that one shares a lot with the members of the human community who constitute a nation.

GOVERNMENT GAZETTE

