

Study of the Participation of Ethnic Minority Representatives in Political Life



2019

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1. Introduction

Civic, political and social integration of ethnic minorities remains as one of the most problematic aspects of the development of Georgian Democracy. Despite many projects and initiatives implemented in this direction in the recent years, no significant progress has been made in terms of integration and inclusion of ethnic minorities in political life (Public Defender's Office, 2018).

Currently, representatives of ethnic minorities make up approximately one sixth of the country's population (large part – mainly ethnic Armenians and Azeris – densely populate the Southern (Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions) and the Eastern parts of the country (Kakheti region), while small ethnic groups live in various regions of the country) (Legislative Herald of Georgia, 2015). Despite the above noted, as per numerous reports, their level of engagement in the public life of Post-Soviet Georgia is low and this is especially evident in regards to the participation of minorities in political life, as well as their representation in elected bodies and governmental agencies (Center for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism, 2018). Exclusion of ethnic minorities from political life and their low level of integration in the public political field hamper the development of the democratic and stable state in Georgia.

Ethnic minority representatives do not have a sense of political identity with the state; their majority is in fact distanced from the Georgian public and leads somewhat autonomous or, in a worst case scenario, excluded life. The above noted has various reasons among which the language barrier is the leading one: absolute majority of ethnically non-Georgian citizens in densely populated areas do not know the state language (National Democratic Institute - NDI, 2018). Russian language, which was the only communication language with other ethnic groups in the Soviet period, significantly lost positions during the last fifteen years. Accordingly, representatives of ethnic minorities cannot receive full information on the processes going on in the country and more often, they are formally present in the higher legislative body.

One more reason for weak political inclusion is the passive attitude from the side of political parties. Political subjects superficially discuss or do not pay sufficient attention to the issues important to ethnic minorities in the programs of their political parties. In addition, the parties in the regions which are densely populated by ethnic minorities do not have strong party infrastructure, do not have contact with their potential electors, and fail to provide them with information on the programs and main strategies of the parties (Center for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism, 2018).

The condition of women who are representatives of ethnic minorities is especially notable in the process of political alienation and exclusion, as the Georgian society is characterized with the generally low level of political participation of women both at local and national levels (UN Women, 2014). The level of political activity of ethnically non-Georgian women is even lower. This is partially supported by the political system as well. As per the current legislation, the Parliament of Georgia, as well as the local self-governments are formed based on the mixed electoral system (proportional-majoritarian). In practice, there is some

interrelationship between the electoral system and the representation of women in politics. The type of the electoral system often has a substantial influence on the representation of women. The countries with proportional electoral system are far ahead of the countries with majoritarian system in terms of the representation of women in politics (United Nations, 2005).

Therefore, reasons for low levels of participation of the representatives of ethnic minorities in political life vary and it is important to study them. Problem analysis, as well as study into the institutional barriers for political participation must be conducted from the perspective of the representatives of ethnic minorities. Therefore, it is important to focus not only on micro, but also macro level factors in order to fully identify all the indicators of the political participation of the representatives of ethnic minorities as per the specific characteristics of target groups and regions.

2. Research methodology

The **goal** of the research was to study the engagement of the representatives of political minorities in political life with a special emphasis on the political participation of women from ethnic minority groups.

The following objectives were set to reach the research goal:

- Conducting secondary data analysis, the so-called desk research which included studying and analyzing state policy documents, data from the National Statistics Office, as well as the studies conducted by other nongovernmental and international organizations;
- Identifying main characteristics and indicators of participation of the representatives of ethnic minorities in political life through qualitative sociological research (focus groups);
- Developing a quantitative study tool to measure the factors and incentives for political participation of ethnic minorities;
- Conducting a mass survey on the political participation of ethnic minorities in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti, Tbilisi and Batumi;
- Developing a consolidated analytical report in Georgian, English, Armenian and Azerbaijani languages reflecting the attitudes of the population in the region (quantitative study outcomes) as well as the findings from the secondary data analysis;
- Conducting the so-called workshop with experts and representatives of political parties, local and central government, as well as nongovernmental organizations to acquaint them with the outcomes of the study and to engage them in the discussion to support the development of the policy document;
- Based on the study and the so-called workshop, developing a policy paper in Georgian, English, Armenian and Azerbaijani languages.

Both *qualitative* and *quantitative* methods of sociological research were utilized to reach the goal and objectives of the study.

2.1 Qualitative study

The present research utilized the method of secondary data analysis, the so-called “**desk research**” which included the analysis of the existing official statistical information, as well as studies and documents related to the issues of engagement of ethnic minorities in politics.

In addition, qualitative study was conducted using a **focus group** method to identify the variables and indicators of participation in political life by ethnic minorities in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti (Pankisi Gorge, Azeri villages of Kakheti) and Tbilisi (i.e. the qualitative study had the function of supporting the quantitative study). In particular, 9 focus groups were conducted with the noted purpose: 2 focus groups in each of the regions - Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti (settlements of Ossetian and Kist groups), as well as 1 focus group in Tbilisi. Various ethnic minority representatives took part in these focus groups. The number of each focus group participants was 7-8. Balance in terms of gender and age was considered in their recruitment. Group discussions were held in urban (5 group discussions) as well as in rural settlements (4 group discussions).

The focus group guidelines included open or semi-closed questions around the topic of discussion. The guidelines consisted of 15-20 main questions; however, additional questions were asked within the discussion topics in the process of discussion as this method aimed at identifying new issues and aspect. It was also important for focus groups to reveal the universal/general issues which would be relevant for all ethnic minority group, as well as those issues which would be important for only specific groups. The process of discussions is audio and video taped.

2.2 Quantitative study

The **target groups** of the quantitative study include the representatives of ethnic minorities 18 years of age and older from the regions of Samtskhe-Javakheti (Armenians), Kvemo Kartli (Azeris), Kakheti (Kists from Pankisi, and Ossetians), as well as Tbilisi (Yezidis, Romas and Russians) and Batumi (Russians);

Sampling size: 1314 respondents;

As per the sampling size noted, the study outcomes are representative for ethnic minorities in Georgia with 2.7% sampling error and 95% confidence interval. The data are also representative in regards to **gender**, with 3.7% error in case of women and 4% error in case of men. It has to be noted that the outcomes are

representative with 6% error (95% confidence) for ethnically Armenian, Azeri, Kist, Ossetian and small urban ethnic groups (Russians, Romas, Kurds/Yezidis) (see table #1):

Table N1

	Ethnic minority group	Settlement	Number of face-to-face interviews	Sampling error (for 95% confidence)
1.	Armenian	Samtskhe-Javakheti	268	6%
2.	Azeri	Kvemo Kartli	267	6%
3.	Kist	Pankisi Gorge	264	6%
4.	Ossetian	Lagodekhi Municipality	244	6%
5.	Russian/Kurd/Yezidi and Roma	Batumi and Tbilisi	271	5.9%
	Total		1314	2.7%

Survey tool: formalized questionnaire;

Survey method: face-to-face interview;

Sampling frame: statistical data from the census (2014) conducted by the National Statistics Office of Georgia;

Sampling design: sampling models varied as per the specific characteristics of the settlements of ethnic minorities.

1. Multistage stratified (cluster) sampling was utilized to study ethnically Armenian population in Samtskhe-Javakheti and ethnically Azeri population in Kvemo Kartli;

Stratification was conducted as per territorial units, such as:

- a) Urban and rural settlements
- b) Administrative raions (districts) within the target regions

Electoral districts which are defined for both urban settlements (for urban territorial units) and villages (villages in themselves are electoral districts) served as **clusters** (i.e. polling stations). Primary, secondary and final sampling units were identified in the process of clusterization:

Primary sampling unit (PSU): electoral districts in urban and rural settlements;

Secondary sampling unit (SSU): household (family). Within each primary sampling unit, **secondary sampling units** were sampled using the so-called “random walking” method. Interviewers selected the primary point/family presented at a specific address. Interviewers then started moving from this address and selected every next family with a specific interval. If any of the respondents were not home, interviewers took a note

of the address and visited the family later. Interviewers replaced the address with a new one only after conducting two unsuccessful visits;

Final sampling unit (FSU): an individual 18 years of age and older. Final units were randomly sampled in families out of the family members using the so-called Kish Table.

2. In case of Kists and Ossetians, the sampling design was different. As these groups live only in several specific villages, therefore, their settlements were sampled in a targeted manner (i.e. using non-probability sampling). The survey was conducted in all of the villages populated by these groups. Like the previous sampling model, secondary and final sampling points were the same in this case as well using the same principles for recruiting respondents.

3. In case of Russian and Kurd/Yezidi or Roma groups in Tbilisi and Batumi, the sampling model was different as these people do not live densely in specific districts. In particular, respondents (individual 18 years of age and older) were recruited using the “snow ball” method.

Study tool: The study tool was developed based on the indicators revealed through focus groups as well as the context identified as a result of the secondary data analysis. After the development of a questionnaire, it was piloted. At the stage of piloting the questionnaire, 15 face-to-face interviews were conducted. The goal of the pilot was to check the logical links between the questions as well as the relevancy of specific questions. The specific issues revealed were reflected in the questionnaire and the finalized version was integrated into the ODK (Open Data KiT) program on a tablet computer.

Field work: Training of supervisors and interviewers was held before the launch of field work. At the training, they were provided with detailed instructions in regards to the specific issues related to the study tool. The study was conducted with the involvement of 6 supervisors and up to 30 interviewers. Field work was launched on October 9th and was completed on October 20th of 2018.

Control over field work: in parallel with field work, control over field work was also executed. 10% (130 interviews) of the questionnaires from the total sample underwent field control.

Data analysis:

At the preparation stage of the data analysis, the data were cleansed and weighted. Weighting was conducted as per the gender/sex and age data of the total population. The study data were analyzed using the following programs: SPSS and Statistics R/R Studio. The data were analyzed using the following methods: one dimensional frequency distribution, cross tabulations, correlation, regression, etc. 2017 data from Caucasus Barometer were also discussed in regards to the study outcomes¹. The noted survey covered 2379 respondents throughout Georgia in 2017. Therefore, it provides an opportunity to identify the social, political and

¹ Caucasus Barometer Georgia - <https://caucasusbarometer.org/ge/>

economic trends in the country which are interesting for the comparative analysis of the outcomes of the study of ethnic minority groups.

Policy paper: on the basis of the study outcomes and recommendations, a Policy Paper was developed including intervention models which will support enhancement of the level of participation of ethnic minority groups and their representatives in political processes.

3. Literature review

“Where a small number of people take part in the decision making process, there is little democracy; whereas the more people are involved in these processes, the higher the quality of democracy” (Verba & Nie, 1972, p. 1). Democracy is regarded as an inclusive type of governance as it stands for “the rule of the people, by the people, and for the people” (Taylor, 1998, p. 144). The concept of inclusion includes participation of minority groups in political processes actual opportunities for which should be ensured in a democracy. Implementation of democracy has specific difficulties associated with it and significant challenges are revealed in terms of understanding groups with different political culture or identity, as well as their engagement in governance. However, identification and recognition of these groups are pre-requisites for their engagement (Taylor, 1998). It has to be noted that an ideal type of democracy is implemented in the current practice with significant gaps. Current democracies are characterized with constant tension between the dynamic of inclusion and exclusion of different groups (Taylor, 1998; Taylor, 2001). Moreover, authors note the lack of democratic institutions in a number of countries and they criticize the principle of consociationalism² which, in their opinion, serves as a facade and masks the reality claiming that the needs of ethnic minorities are considered and integrated in politics – when, in practice, the interests/needs of small groups are left beyond politics (Lijphart, 1969; Kohli, 2014). It is thought that in reality “the social, economic and political inequality in the existing democratic countries is being enhanced which enables the individuals/groups in power to utilize the formally democratic processes to promote injustice or retain privileges” (Young, 2000, p. 17).

The existence of diverse groups in the modern societies is an irreversible and at the same, a desirable process. Attitudes towards their identity are political and the modern policy should be based on the understanding of difference which emphasizes the special identity of each group and does not aim at their assimilation with the dominant identity (Taylor, 1994). It is important to implement the “politics of difference” in the country which implies recognition of various groups and their integration within the structural arrangement. However, state policy should not focus only on the recognition of the noted groups and their identity;

² Consociationalism is a type of a democratic system that is based on power sharing between elites from different social groups. Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/consociationalism>

political approaches towards ethnic minority groups should be based on the principles of justice, equal opportunities and political inclusion (Young, 2000, p. 107). The concept and approach of homogenous citizenship has to be recognized and the differences between citizens have to be utilized as the basis for the policy of equality (Young, 1990). However, when a society has a privileged dominant group, there is always a risk for the approach of equality to lean towards the dominant group. The reason for the noted is that “the dominant groups tend to strive towards hegemony and influence other groups” (Taylor, 1994, p. 66). Therefore, it is important to implement the politics of recognition of equal identity in the country based on the principles of justice and equality of value (Taylor, 1992); it is also necessary to support these groups to have access to public goods and to participate in politics.

The necessary pre-condition for implementing democracy in a country is political engagement of its citizens. Generally, political participation implies a type of citizens’ activity which impacts politics. It is hard to find one all-inclusive definition for political participation/engagement as authors operationalize this concept in differing ways (Conge, 1988; Brady, 1998; van Deth, 2001; Fox, 2013.). Definitions of political participation vary between individual participation of citizens and mobilization of a social movement. These definitions start with citizens’ operation in the public space with the goal to make small non-systemic changes (Verba & Nie, 1972), and end with a more general understanding of political participation as a demonstration of power of the citizens which aims at influencing the structures in power (Arnstein, 1969). It has to be noted that with the development of technology and the civil society, the forms and levels of engagement in politics are enhanced. Internet has an important role as it expanded the opportunities for social mobilization which, in most cases, is an important precondition for political participation (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Today researchers face challenges in regards to activities they should regard as political and non-political. For example, gardening or purposefully refusing to use a product of a certain brand do not fall under traditional types of political participation; however, the goal may be political. Therefore, the question arises whether such activities should be regarded as political engagement (van Deth, 2014). However, the present study covers more traditional forms of political participation of ethnic minority groups and focuses on the types of participation such as: participation in elections, membership in a political party, participation in implementing local self-governance, etc.

Sandel (Sandel, 1996) identifies political groups/communities and citizens as those who can mobilize for public goods. Mobilization for public goods and participation in decision-making require a democratic context reflected in the democratic environment at the level of community and neighborhoods. Local democracy should be developed by ensuring certain autonomy to small cultural and political groups; this autonomy should, of course, be reinforced by the democracy at the state level. A fundamental part of the participation in public processes is the functioning of self-governments which provides all the members of the social community the opportunity for participation in governance (Sandel, 2004). Through strengthening neighborhoods and community institutions, various different groups including ethnic minorities will be able to better express their differences or needs (Young, 2000).

In general, democratic political participation has instrumental and non-instrumental (independent) value. (Young, 1995). The demonstration of instrumental value is that if marginalized and vulnerable groups have an opportunity to participate in political processes, the public space becomes more heterogeneous. Participatory democracy should provide a guarantee to these very groups to participate in the decision making within public policy, state agencies and work places (Young, 2000). On the other hand, the demonstration of non-instrumental (independent) value of self-expression by diverse groups is that “it helps us unveil the reality and objective nature of the world in which these groups live” (Young, 2000, p. 112).

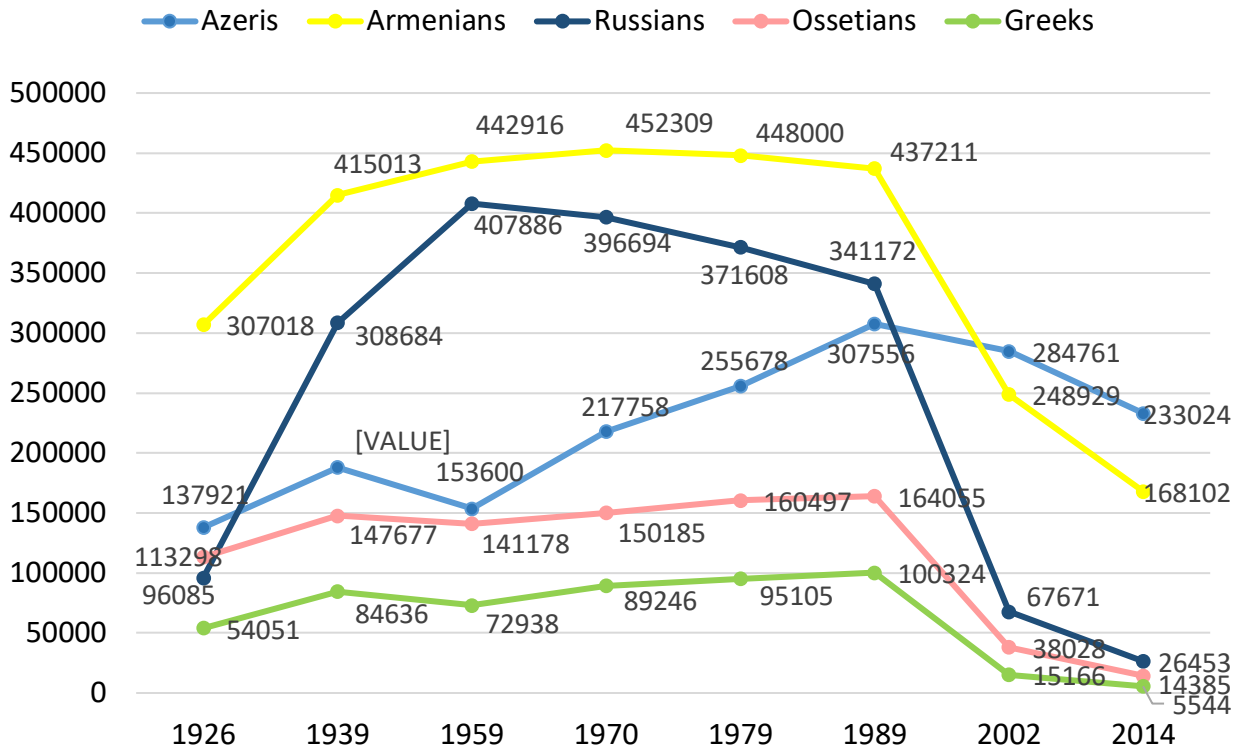
The phenomenon of identity is also important to discuss in terms of the mobilization of ethnic minority groups and the political activity of their representatives. Individuals in social communities have their identity, as well as “self”. The “self” is not superficially selected by the individuals and has foundation deeply rooted in the society (socium) (Sandel, 1982). According to Kasfir (Kasfir, 1979), ethnic identity, as well as other identities can become an incentive for political activity; however, political participation developed on the basis of ethnicity is necessarily framed by objective indicators, such as, for example, language, territory, culture, etc. Individual’s subjective perceptions on engagement in various political activities are more important than objective factors for political participation. In order for the political activity to be formed and articulated, specific opportunities, as well as political situation need to be in place in the political environment. Whether ethnic identity is regarded as an objective or a subjective characteristic, both aspects are important preconditions for analysis. According to Kasfir (Kasfir, 1979), on the one hand, it is important to analyze subjective perceptions, i.e. how an individual perceives him/herself in relation to the ethnic group and on the other hand, objective indicators (education, employment, income, etc.) also need to be discussed. The difference between formal and informal recognition of ethnic identity also needs to be noted (Nagel, 1994). Whereas the informal nature of the individuals’ ethnicity is expressed in their everyday practices, the formal ethnic label and policy are more powerful sources for identity formation, social experience and political activity. An important role is played by the political context and political approaches through which the limits/borders of ethnic groups and the patterns of ethnic identity are established. Nagel (Nagel, 1986) thinks that ethnicity and ethnic identity are “politically constructed” as the state is the dominant institution which defines policy, as well as economic and social processes which, in their turn, include ethnic minority groups as well. The role of the state is important in terms of its attitudes towards ethnic minority groups and the content of the policy related to ethnicity, as well as the access of these groups to the public goods.

4. Secondary data analysis

Introduction

Georgia is a multicultural state with a traditional population of ethnic and cultural groups with various ethnic, linguistic and religious characteristics. The ethnic composition of the country has undergone continuous transformation over the years. Analysis of ethnic statistics reveals a trend towards evident homogenization; therefore, ethnic diversity is being lost over time.

Diagram 1: Dynamic of the ethnic composition of the Georgian population (source: Center for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism)



As per the last census conducted in 2014, approximately 13.2 percent of the total population belongs to an ethnic minority³ with the largest groups being Azeris (6.2 percent) and Armenians (4.5 percent) who are populated densely in the Southern regions (Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions) of the country; other ethnic groups rarely live in densely populated settlements, but rather are spread out in various regions and urban centers. The presence of ethnic minorities and culturally diverse communities in the country has become one of the important challenges for the Georgian government; the main challenge is the implementation of an adequate and effective civic integration policy. This policy will play a significant role in determining whether the Georgian political body is able to develop a state based on inclusion, participation and pluralism.

Formation of the institutional framework of the policy for management and civic integration of ethnic minorities

A proper institutional mechanism is critically important for protecting national minorities and implementing effective civic integration policy. The noted mechanism and the institutional framework underwent

³ Official census data from the National Statistics Office of Georgia www.geostat.ge

numerous changes during the last years impacting the sustainability and effectiveness of the general policy on integration. The first important systemic steps in this direction were taken in 2015 when the office of State Minister on Civic Integration was established within the government and Zinaida Bestaeva (Ossetian by origin) was appointed as the State Minister. This appointment was a step forward from the side of the Government on the issue of national unity and also indicated goodwill towards Ossetians and all non-Georgian ethnic group representatives living in Georgia. The newly established Office was tasked with the development and implementation of the policy on civic integration and inclusion of ethnic minorities; its authority also included elaboration of the legal framework. However, despite assigning these authorities to the Office of the Minister on Civic Integration (and even though this step from the Government undoubtedly instilled hope in terms of addressing problems of integration), it was unable to become an active and effective body which would fully coordinate the integration policy. Instead of the main duty defined within the mandate, this office was mainly occupied with studying the issues related to the internally displaced Ossetians from Southern Ossetia and other Georgian territories in the 1990s and creating relevant conditions for their return.

The ineffectiveness of the office of the State Minister in terms of the integration of national minorities was partially due to the minimal funding provided (yearly budget was 200,000 GEL). At the same time, in addition to the limited financial capacity, unsuccessful work of the office of the State Minister is explained by its rather symbolic nature which in fact revealed only theoretical readiness from the state to work on the problems related to ethnic minorities and to secure positive attitude from the minorities. Appointment of the Minister of Ossetian nationality played a positive role in this regard, but it was clear from the very beginning that Zinaida Bestaeva who had no political power would not be able to lead the integration policy and develop a stable institutional framework. As a result, the Minister's Office was abolished in November, 2007.

After the State Minister's Office was abolished, the problems related to the civic integration of ethnic minorities were not under the responsibility of any office/agency of the executive government until June, 2008 when the responsibility over the noted issue was assigned to the newly established position of the Minister on Reintegration Issues. This office was established in February 2008 and replaced the former office of the State Minister on Conflict Resolution which functioned until January, 2008.

The office of the State Minister on Reintegration Issues, unlike its predecessor, had a significantly wider mandate in terms of the civic integration of ethnic minorities. This was revealed in the structural arrangement of the office as well. Two administrative units (the Division on Civic Integration and the Division on the Issues of Ethnic Minorities) were established on the basis of the Ministry which were directly tasked with the responsibility over cultural diversity and integration policy. The main achievement of the Ministry includes important steps towards development of a unified state policy in regards to ethnic minorities. In particular, in 2009, the Government adopted the first comprehensive document which regulated policy towards minorities and defined the state institutional framework. This document is the Governmental Decree on "The National Concept of Tolerance and Civic Integration"; it defines general governmental goals and objectives in regards to the protection and integration of minorities. Most importantly, a five-year

governmental action plan was developed which assigned relevant responsibilities and obligations to various agencies. In addition, with the initiative and coordination of the office of the State Minister, the State Interagency Commission was established which unites all relevant ministries and agencies with the goal to ensure effective implementation of the activities defined in the action plan.

Certain changes took place in terms of the protection and civic integration of ethnic minorities after the change of the government as a result of the 2012 Parliamentary elections. The changes related to the institutional management mechanisms in regards to minorities. The name of the leading structure in the noted area was also changed, as the Office of the State Minister on Reintegration Issues was renamed as the Office of the State Minister on Reconciliation and Civic Equality. However, despite changes in the name, no significant changes were implemented in terms of the policy and principles related to ethnic minorities. The new government continued implementation of the activities defined in the Concept and the Action Plan adopted in 2009. After the expiration of the term of validity of the Concept, the Government issued the Decree on Adopting the National Strategy on Tolerance and Civic Integration and the new 5-year Action Plan in 2015. Also, the State Interagency Commission was retained, its composition was expanded and the number of meetings was increased. As per the new state vision, strategic goals are set around four main directions: ensuring equal and full participation in civic and political life; creating equal social and economic conditions and opportunities; ensuring access to quality education and enhancing the level of knowledge of the state language; retaining ethnic minority culture and ensuring a tolerant environment⁴. The Action Plan of the Strategy identifies a list of various specific activities to be carried out over the course of five years by indicated responsible agencies. The Strategy also includes an obligation to develop a one-year action plan at the end of each calendar year to be carried out the next year. The document also defines mechanisms for reporting on and assessing implementation of the Strategy which are utilized to prepare a report on the implementation each year. The document also includes an obligation to prepare an interim assessment.

The adopted strategic document provides opportunities for more interaction with the majority, as civic integration is a process in which the whole society and each one of its members are involved. An important novelty in the Strategy is the coverage of issues, such as supporting small sized and vulnerable ethnic minorities. The document obliges the state to meet the educational and legal needs of small sized and vulnerable ethnic groups, as well as to implement the system of teaching the languages of these groups in educational institutions. One more important novelty in the Strategy is consideration of gender related aspects; namely, the state is obliged to protect the rights of ethnic minority women, as well as to meet their needs and ensure their integration.

An important decision within the area of institutional management of minorities in the period of governance of the current government of Georgia was to distinguish politics towards ethnic minorities from politics towards religious minorities. As noted, the component of integration of ethnic minorities is coordinated by

⁴ State Strategy on Civic Equality and Integration and 2015-2020 Action Plan, Government of Georgia, 2015

the State Minister on Reconciliation and Civic Equality. Other governmental agencies also work under the coordination of this agency. As for religious diversity and the problems of religious minorities, this area is led and coordinated by the State Agency on Issues Related to Religion which was established in 2014 with the decree of the Government and which is tasked with managing the state policy on religion. During 2015, the main activities of the Agency covered the following topics: ensuring interreligious engagement, providing financial assistance to partially and symbolically compensate for the harm caused to religious minorities during the Soviet totalitarian regime, as well as studying the issues of transferring religious buildings to religious minorities and making relevant decisions.

As we can see, there have been numerous changes in the institutional management policy regarding minorities since the 2000s. There is a trend towards institutional sustainability and effectiveness, as well as a distinct governmental vision which is reflected in the relevant legislative and legal regulations. In addition, interagency coordination and collaboration has significantly improved. However, the effectiveness of the policy is impacted by the limited funding from the side of the government to implement the relevant policy. The declared priority of the policy for the protection and civic integration of ethnic minorities is not reflected in the provision of the funds at the budgetary level. As in the previous years, currently as well, implementation of a number of governmental obligations and responsibilities depends on international support.

Problems of civic and political engagement of ethnic minorities

Different results and trends may be revealed in the noted direction if we differentiate civic and political aspects of this area. In terms of civic participation, the practice from the last several years shows that ethnic minorities have adequate opportunities for participation in civic processes; the state also supports institutional mechanisms for communication, consultation and advocacy. In regards to the last point, we have to note the consultation body (the Council of Ethnic Minorities) established at the Public Defender's Office which has been operating since 2005 as a communication and consultation channel between the government and ethnic minorities. The Council unites public organizations of ethnic minorities despite the number and geographical location of their members. The Council is also authorized to voice any problems related to ethnic minorities and to develop political recommendations. The purpose and the mandate of the Council increased even more in the last years and it was equipped with the monitoring and assessment functions. Yearly involvement of the Council in the monitoring of the implementation of the National Strategy on Tolerance and Civic Integration is especially important in this regard.

In terms of the civic engagement of ethnic minorities, there is also an important mechanism at the level of the local self-government; namely, as per the 2016 Governmental Action Plan, in 2017, a consultation mechanism was enacted on the basis of regional administrations in which the representatives of ethnic minorities living on the territory of both the local self-government and the relevant regional administration take part.

Also, an important consultation mechanism is the agency focusing on the civic engagement of ethnic minorities in Achara Autonomous Republic – “Friendship House” which was funded by the Batumi Mayor’s Office in 2006 and it unites all ethnic associations registered in Achara Autonomous Republic. In contrast with the Council of Ethnic Minorities at the Public Defender’s Office, Batumi Friendship House is funded from the local budget; the main part of its activities is focused on the demonstration of the diversity of ethnic minorities and protection of their cultural identity in Achara. The importance of the agencies aimed at ensuring consultation and engagement of ethnic minorities in both Tbilisi and the regions is also revealed in their engagement in the development of alternative reports for various international mechanisms on the condition of the minorities in Georgia. Such reports have already been developed for a universal periodic review and the Committee on Eradication of Racial Discrimination (CERD); a similar report is also being developed on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Georgia.

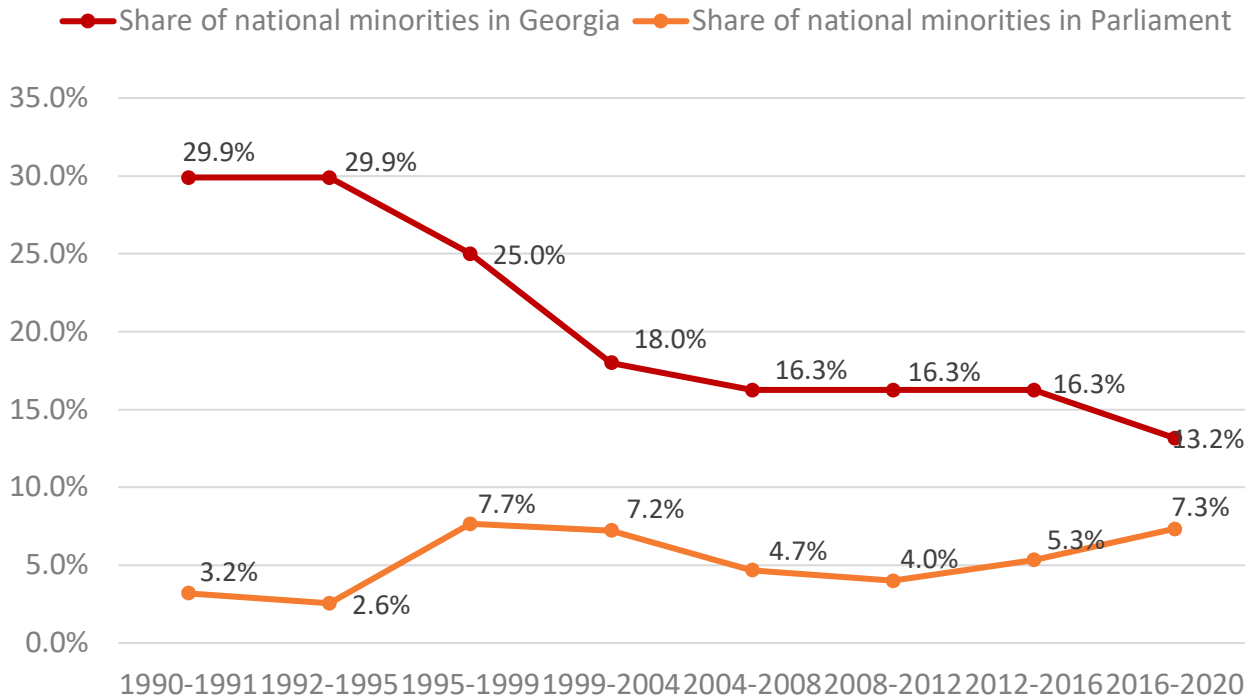
As we can see, the ethnic minorities in both the capital and the regions of Georgia have opportunities for civic activism, as well as voicing and advocating for their problems and current challenges, and the state guarantees the relevant institutional mechanisms for the noted; however, despite such positive background, the main challenge remains to be lack of sustainability of ethnic minority organizations and community associations, as well as their insufficient preparation to independently conduct civic activism, namely, advocacy, monitoring and lobbying. Civic participation of ethnic minorities is largely dependent on the funding from outside in case of the lack of which the noted organizations would not be able to self-mobilize. The best example in the last several years is the factual extinction of the consultation network for ethnic minorities in Javakheti (Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda municipalities). Starting from 2005, community mobilization of ethnic minorities in Javakheti took an intensive form which was expressed at the local level by establishing a consultation forum for citizens. This forum effectively voiced and advocated for the local problems, as well as conducted work in terms of the protection of the rights of minorities during several years; however, after the relevant funding was limited for the forum from the side of international donors starting from 2012, it stopped functioning. The major hampering factor for the civic activity of ethnic minorities was instability and constant dependence on external funding. Such lack of stability is also characteristic to the above noted Council of Ethnic Minorities at the Public Defender’s Office. The Council activities are mainly supported by an international donor organization. In case this funding stops, its effectiveness and impact may significantly decrease.

As for the political aspect of the participation of ethnic minorities, the situation is different from the aspect of civic engagement. If ethnic minority civic organizations have mechanisms to carry out civic activity, political interests of ethnic minorities and their participation in the public and political life are significantly limited. Even though the noted is named as one of the priorities in the National Concept and Action Plan on Tolerance and Civic Integration, in reality the integration of ethnic minorities is not adequately implemented in Georgian politics. As was noted above, the political course selected by Georgia in regards to the protection and integration of ethnic minorities is in line with the concept of multiculturalism; however, the same approach is shared only in a fragmented manner in the context of political engagement. Majority of the

countries which recognize multiculturalism have a number of practical mechanisms in place to ensure engagement of minorities. These mechanisms often take a form of positive discrimination. They may include the following: existence of the political parties expressing the interests of ethnic minorities, guarantees for having ethnic minorities represented in both the Parliament and the local representative bodies by establishing quota practice, establishment of incentives and exemptions for political parties in case they include ethnic minority candidates in their electoral lists, etc.

The legislative and political practice in Georgia during the last years has not been focused on initiating such exemption activities; therefore, participation and inclusion of ethnic minorities in political processes of general public interest depend on the decisions made by political parties and various political leaders (which, in turn, depend on their goodwill) and not the established institutional mechanisms and the exemption policy. If we look at the representation of ethnic minorities in the political arena, we will see that only political will is insufficient in terms of representing political interests of minorities in various state branches. If we consider participation of minorities in the Parliament and the Executive Government as an indicator defining the political participation of ethnic minorities, the situation is not desirable. Ethnic minorities are represented in each Convocation of the Parliament, but their numbers and percentages always vary. Considering the general numbers of ethnic minorities in the country, the Parliament of Georgia elected in 2016 has the most adequate and proportional representation. The Parliament elected in 2016 has 11 members who represent ethnic minorities (7.3% of the total number of deputies – this figure, unlike the figures associated with the previous Convocations of the Parliament, is relatively closer to the total percentage of ethnic minorities in the country which is 13.2 percent as of 2016). However, it is still early to make conclusions on whether the noted is part of a positive dynamic or has happened by chance.

Diagram 2: Dynamic of the representation of ethnic minorities in the Parliament of Georgia (source: Center for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism)



Considering the current legislative framework, election of ethnic minorities as Members of the Parliament depends on the following: in case of a proportional system, enlisting candidates from ethnic minorities in electoral lists by political parties; while in case of a majoritarian system, similarly, presenting ethnic minorities as majoritarian district candidates by political parties or initiative groups. The established practice indicates that leading political parties are less focused on attracting ethnic minority representatives which is afterwards reflected in the small number of ethnic minorities in the party electoral lists. A similar problem arises in the elections in case of a majoritarian system as well: the practice from the elections from the previous years shows that ethnic minorities had guaranteed representation only in two electoral districts – Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda districts. Election of ethnic minorities from other districts densely populated by the minorities depended on whether specific political parties chose representatives of ethnic minorities. As per the amendments of the 2015 Electoral Code which resulted in expanding and unifying relatively smaller electoral districts through the majoritarian system decreased the probability of electing ethnic minorities even more, as unification covered several districts from which ethnic minorities could previously elect several candidates; namely, after uniting Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda electoral districts in 2016, one less ethnic minority representative has since been elected from the region.

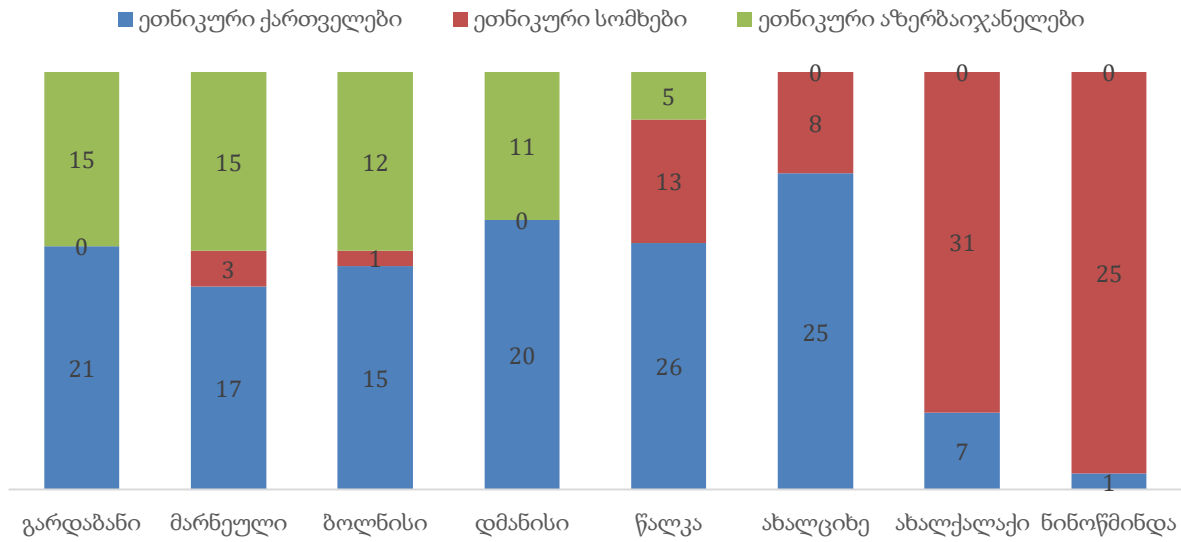
At the moment, the main responsible organizations who can make a positive contribution to the process of political participation of ethnic minorities are political parties, but their effectiveness is limited due to various reasons. One of the main problems is that there is no legislative incentive for political parties which would encourage their proactive action with the goal to increase the representation of ethnic minorities. For example, the Organic Law of Georgia on the Political Associations of Citizens which regulates party politics,

funding and other issues does not include a mechanism which would encourage political parties to recruit ethnic minorities. However, the law includes two important clauses the first of which prohibits promotion of ethnic enmity and calls to violence by political parties, while the second clause prohibits limitation of membership by parties based on the region or territory. This condition, of course, does not lead to the low level of political participation of ethnic minorities, but the lack of legislative incentives obviously will have no positive impact on the issue. For example, if we consider supporting enhancement of women's political participation, the law on the Political Associations of Citizens contains positive incentives in the form of financial motivators: basic funding is increased by 30 percent for the political parties which enlist women as candidates – 30% within the first, second, third and each subsequent set of ten members in the list of their candidates. Another issue, of course, is whether these incentives are sufficient to achieve real results; however, in case of ethnic minorities, even such a symbolic attempt is not in place in terms of establishing legislative norms which would support the principle of increasing the representation of ethnic minorities.

The noted gaps of the Georgian party politics were revealed to a great extent within the results of the 2017 local elections which were analyzed by the Center for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism in terms of party politics.⁵ The numbers of ethnic minorities in the local elected bodies as a result of the 2017 local elections are the following: at least one candidate from an ethnic minority community has been elected in 21 out of 64 municipalities. A total of 165 representatives belong to ethnic minorities in these 21 municipalities. The diagram provided below shows the ethnic composition of the Sakrebulo/local elected bodies which have at least 20% of the members who belong to ethnic minorities. There are a total of eight such municipalities and they are located in the regions where ethnic minorities are densely populated.

⁵ Competing for Votes of Ethnic Minorities in Georgia: the 2017 local elections, Policy Paper; Center for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism, Tbilisi, 2018.

Diagram 3: Representation of ethnic minorities in Sakrebulo / local elected bodies (source: Center for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism)



However, this diagram does not reflect the ethnic composition of these regions proportionally. According to the 2014 census, there are a total of six municipalities in Georgia where ethnic Georgians represent a minority: Akhalkalaki, Bolnisi, Dmanisi, Marneuli, Ninotsminda and Tsalka (see diagram 4 below); however, there were only three municipalities as per the results of the 2017 elections – Marneuli, Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda – where ethnic Georgians are not in majority in the Sakrebulo/local elected bodies. Ethnic Georgians represent a majority in Bolnisi, Dmanisi and Tsalka Sakrebulo/local elected bodies. The noted does not reflect the ethnic composition of these municipalities proportionally. All of the above stated reveals that the Sakrebulo/local elected bodies in these municipalities are represented excessively by ethnic Georgians and insufficiently by ethnic minorities.

Diagram 4: Ethnic composition of eight municipalities (source: Center for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism)

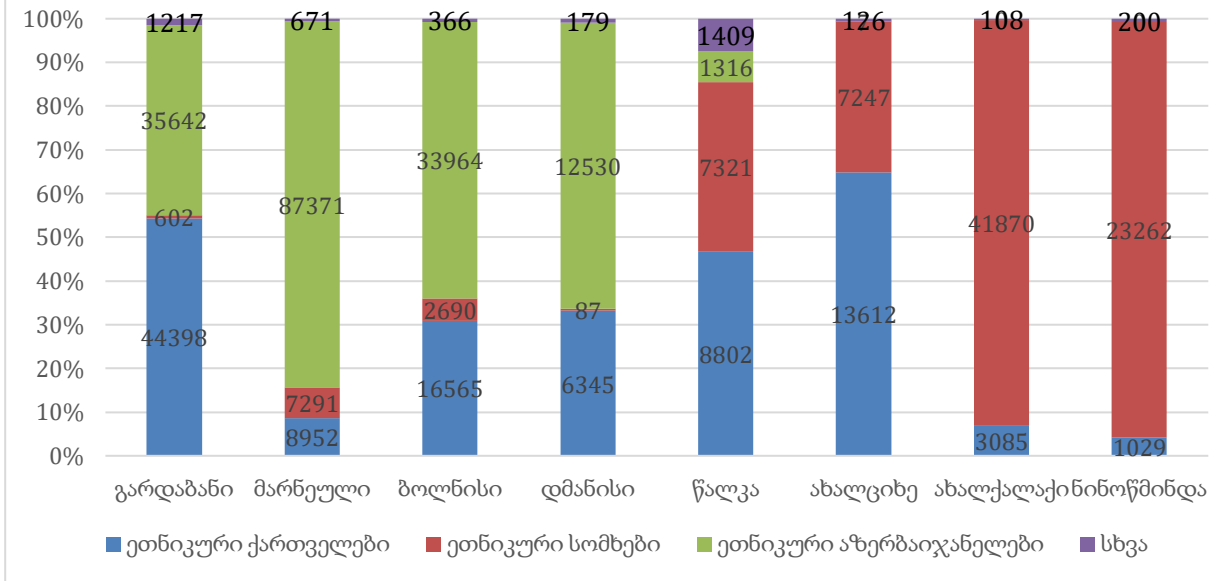
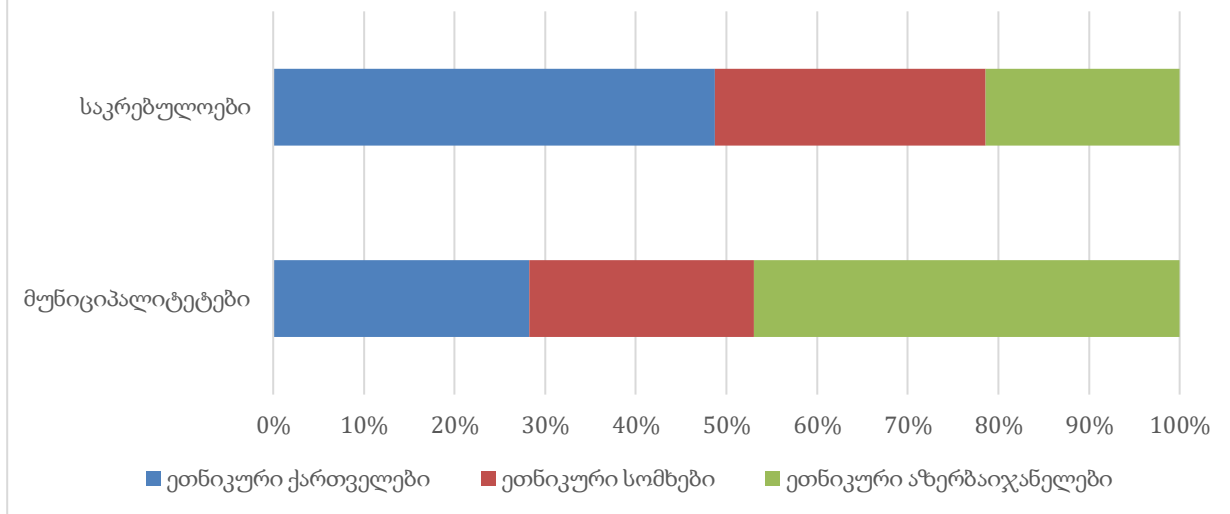


Diagram 5 shows that 102,788 ethnically Georgians, 90,370 ethnically Armenians and 170,830 ethnically Azeris live in the given eight municipalities; however, these three communities received, respectively, 132, 81 and 58 seats in the eight Sakrebulo/local elected bodies. This means that on average 779 ethnically Georgians have one representative in the Sakrebulo/local elected body, whereas 1,116 ethnically Armenians and 2,945 ethnically Azeris also have one representative (per each group) in the Sakrebulo/local elected body. These figures indicate that the minorities in general are far less represented in Sakrebulos/local elected bodies in comparison with Georgians. In addition, the condition of the ethnically Azeri population is worse in comparison with the ethnically Armenian population. One of the explanations for the noted fact could be that the ethnically Armenian population is more densely populated (the percentage of the Armenian population is higher) in its settlement area in comparison with the ethnically Azeri population.

Diagram 5: Comparison of the ethnic compositions of eight municipalities and their Sakrebulo/local elected bodies (source: Center for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism)



Therefore, based on the above data, it becomes evident that ethnic minorities are insufficiently represented at the local level in Georgia. As a result, an impression is formed that proportional representation of the ethnic composition of their electors may not yet be the main priority for the Georgian political parties.

As for the executive government at the central level, there is virtually no representation at this level which would ensure that the interests of minority communities are voiced. Ethnic minorities only occupy political posts at the medium and lower levels. A different situation is revealed in the regions and municipalities densely populated by ethnic minorities. In cases of Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda municipalities, governance is fully in the hands of the local Armenian ethnic group representatives who occupy the following positions: Governor (Gამგებელი), Deputy Governor and other key posts. In case of Kvemo Kartli region, the local ethnically Azeri community participates in the local governance only in a fragmented and insufficient manner. Unlike Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda, no ethnically Azeri individual has ever taken the post of the Governor (Gამგებელი) in Kvemo Kartli municipalities; similarly, except for rare exceptions, all the key posts are occupied by non-Azeris.

At the same time, some positive trends are also revealed which point to the steps taken by the government to strengthen the civic and political inclusion of ethnic minorities. Program activities carried out by the Central Elections Commission are especially notable in this regard. Namely, the Central Elections Commission conducts the following activities: training of ethnic minorities who are members of the district elections commissions on the topic of elections procedures, translation of elections related documentation to Armenian and Azeri languages, development of informational and promotional videos in Armenian and Azeri languages and broadcasting them via the Public Broadcaster and the regional television channels, implementation of educational programs for the electors from ethnic minorities, holding informational

meetings, as well as hiring ethnic minority representatives in the elections period within the staff of the Central Elections Commission. It has to be noted that the Central Elections Commission defines the directions of funding for a grant competition on a yearly basis including grants aimed specifically at the target groups of electors from ethnic minorities. LEPL – Electoral Systems Development, Reforms and Training Center (Training Center of the Central Elections Commission), similarly to the experience of the previous years, in 2016 as well provided targeted grants in this direction to 8 local nongovernmental organizations and the total budget of the funded projects exceeded 200 000 GEL.

The initiative of the State Minister on Reconciliation and Civic Equality on the implementation of the practice of internships for ethnic/national minorities in the public sector aims at enhancing the civic and political inclusion of ethnic/national minorities. Within the frames of the program, young people from ethnic/national minorities will be employed as interns in various public institutions (ministries, local regional offices, Public Defender's Offices, etc.) on a competitive basis. Implementation of this pilot project has been launched.

Education and the state language

In addition to ensuring political inclusion of ethnic minorities, during the last years, provision of quality education to ethnic minorities has remained a very important problem. The problem of education is directly linked with the effectiveness of political participation. The main challenge for the policy in this regard is related to spreading the knowledge of Georgian language among minorities and at the same time, fully retaining the linguistic peculiarities of ethnic minorities. The Ministry of Education and Science has the main responsibility over the implementation of the policy and the relevant action plan in this field. The Ministry prioritized issues related to education for ethnic minorities in 2004 when it launched conceptual and program based approaches on various issues related to ethnic minorities. However, the major gap of the noted policy was its lack of sustainability and stability revealed through frequent changes in the approaches and methods utilized, as well as their inconsistency. Currently, the Ministry is finishing a comprehensive policy paper on education for ethnic minorities which covers all the major aspects of education for minorities.

Considering the activities implemented, the Ministry's priorities include professional re-training of teachers. In this regard, we have to note the Professional Development and Career Advancement Support Program for the teachers at the general educational schools in the regions densely populated by national minorities developed and approved in 2015 by the National Center for the Professional Development of Teachers. The program already trained thousands of Azeri, Armenian and Russian-speaking teachers.

Unlike other areas related to the civic inclusion and integration of ethnic minorities, the Ministry of Education and Science actively utilizes exemption practices and the so-called positive discrimination in the field of education. Part of the exemption policy is the practice of enrolling university applicants from ethnic minority groups into universities which has been in place since 2012. This practice includes only an aptitude exam in the language of the relevant minority which is the basis for enrolling the applicant into a one-year

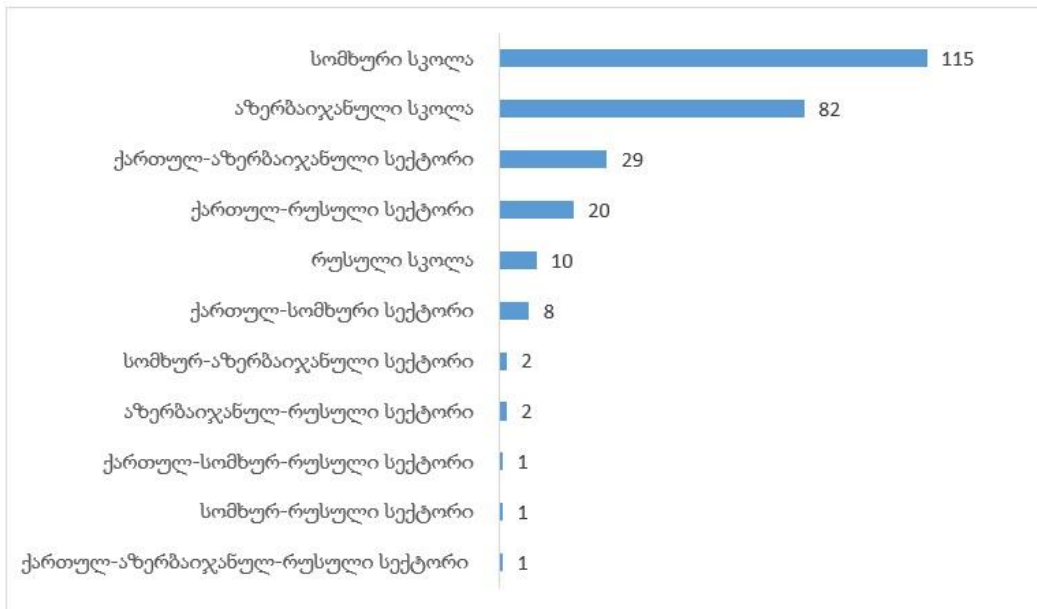
preparatory course in the state language. After successful completion of this course, the applicant is able to receive full Bachelor's level education in Georgian language at a Georgian higher education institution. If we look at the numbers and the dynamic of students from minority groups enrolled at higher education institutions since 2012, there is a significant increase in the number of ethnic minority students at these institutions. For example, on the basis of the results of Azeri and Armenian-language general aptitude tests administered in 2015 as part of the general national exams, 522 applicants gained the right to study at a higher educational institution in Georgia by passing Azeri-language tests and 219 applicants gained the same right by passing Armenian-language tests.⁶ However, despite the noted, experts think that this exemption practice has gaps as well; namely, the following are noted: the one-year preparatory course is insufficient to fully study the Georgian language and to study the university program in Georgian; another reason for criticism is the environment in which ethnic minority students are put into during this one-year course, as the program does not ensure the applicants' interaction with Georgian students and the public in general.

In addition, the results of the general aptitude exams of Armenian and Azeri-speaking university applicants and their comparison with the results of Georgian and Russian-speaking university applicants also provide an interesting picture for analysis. Despite the fact that the general aptitude exam is conducted in the native language of the university applicants, their general scores are significantly lower than those of Georgian and Russian-speaking university applicants; the noted clearly indicates the problems related to the quality at the level of general education.

The educational policy of the Government of Georgia in regards to ethnic minorities is clearly in line with the general concept of multiculturalism one of the indicators of which is supporting school education of ethnic minorities. Within the frames of this policy, the government continues support to non-Georgian schools and non-Georgian sectors. Although numerous non-Georgian schools (especially, Russian-language schools) were closed as a result of the process of optimization, the government retains such schools in the places where there is increasing demand on them. As per the 2018 data, there were 271 non-Georgian and mixed sector public schools in Georgia the majority of which (115) were Armenian language schools, whereas 82 were Azeri-language schools and 10 – Russian-language schools. Out of the non-Georgian sectors at schools, 20 are Georgian-Russian, 29 are Georgian-Azeri, and 8 are Georgian-Armenian. See below a more detailed table #.

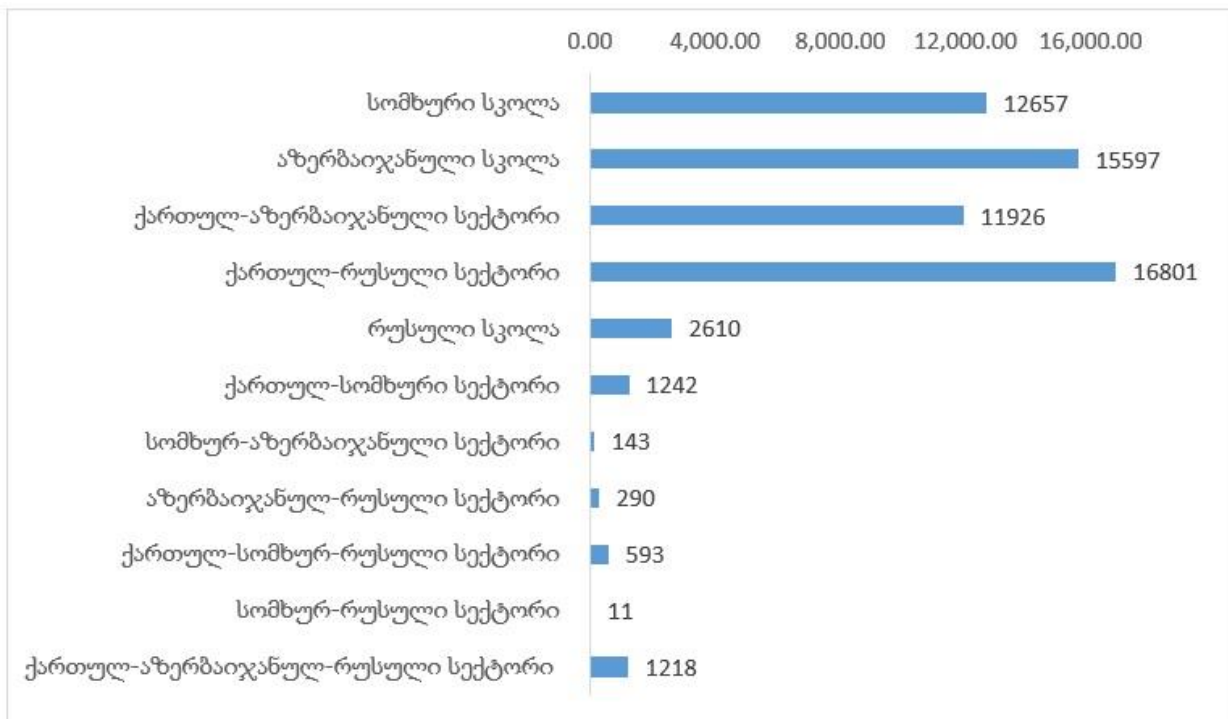
Diagram 6: Non-Georgian and mixed sector public schools as of 2017-2018 academic year (source: interactive web map of the Center for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism: www.csem.ge/interactivemap. The data are based on the official data of the Ministry of Education and Science)

⁶ Report on the Implementation of the State Strategy on Civic Equality and Integration and the 2015 Action Plan, Government of Georgia, State Interagency Commission, February, 2016



The number of students in the noted 271 schools is 63,088. The numbers of students as per the school categories are the following:

Diagram 7: Non-Georgian and mixed sector public schools as of 2017-2018 academic year (source: interactive web map of the Center for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism: www.csem.ge/interactivemap. The data are based on the official data of the Ministry of Education and Science)



In parallel to non-Georgian and mixed schools, the Ministry of Education and Science still has the project on implementing multilingual education on its agenda. This process was initiated by the Ministry years ago when a program supporting multilingual education was developed with the participation of international experts,

40 pilot schools were selected and relevant dual language textbooks were developed with 70% of the content material included in the language of ethnic minorities and 30 percent – in the Georgian language.

The practice of multilingual education, including implementation of the principle of bilingual education is an approved method in culturally and linguistically diverse societies and is implemented in the educational systems of many countries. As per numerous local and international experts' opinions, bilingual education may become one of the effective tools for spreading quality and easily comprehensible education for ethnic minorities in Georgia. However, despite this shared opinion, the process of implementation of bilingual education has numerous gaps in Georgia. The major gap, as per the experts' assessment, is inadequacy of textbooks which are not based on well-defined methodological principles and real needs; in addition, the reform process did not include sufficient investment into the training of bilingual education teachers. Majority of teachers do not know the state language; therefore, the content of the 30 percent of the material in Georgian is not comprehensible for them. Even though in 2015 the Ministry of Education and Science conducted monitoring of the pilot schools in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti and the program was evaluated by the invited expert, the Ministry has not yet made a final decision on the prospects of bilingual education.

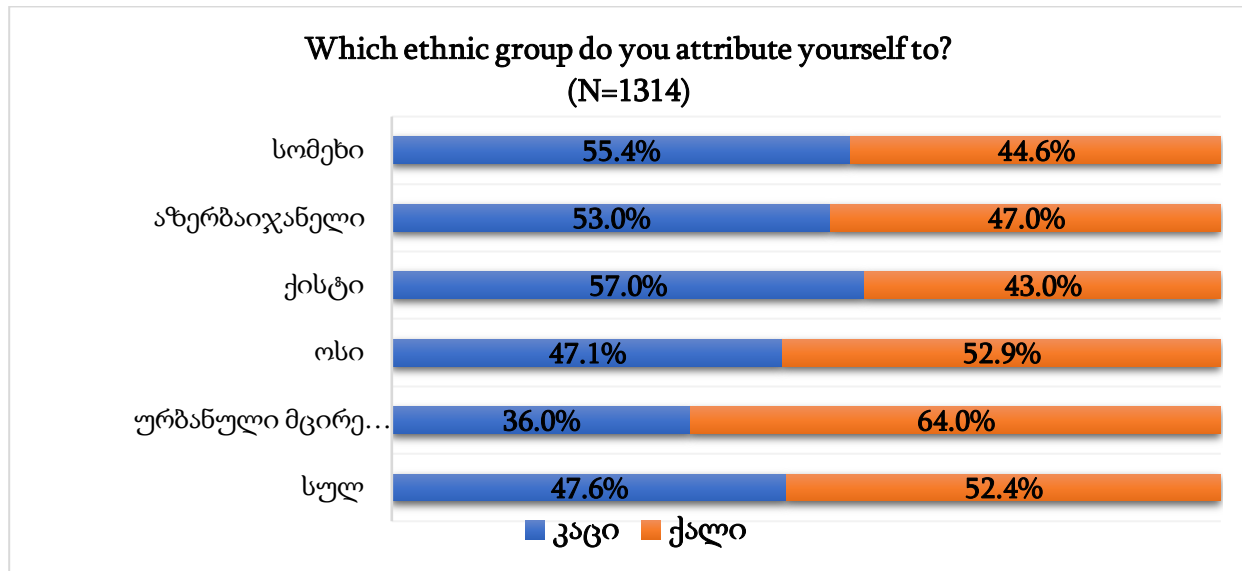
In terms of education and language, it still remains to be an extreme challenge for the government to implement a balanced policy which would support teaching of the state language to all citizens, on the one hand and ensure teaching of minority languages, on the other hand, in order to retain and support the linguistic diversity of the country. Teaching of the languages of large ethnic groups (Armenian and Azeri languages) has a continuous tradition in Georgia; there are relevant standards and methodology in place. Therefore, the Georgian educational system can easily implement the program of teaching native languages to Armenian and Azeri-speaking students. Problems arise in regards to teaching small sized ethnic groups in Georgia. In Soviet and Post-Soviet Georgia, there was a tradition of teaching several languages (for example, Greek, Ossetian and Kurd); however, currently, the practice of teaching these languages is not in place; problems relate to standardization and proper methodology. An important change in this regard was made in 2016 when the Ministry of Education made a decision on the implementation of teaching of the languages of small sized ethnic groups in public schools. At this stage, the noted decision covers the following languages: Assyrian, Avara, Kist (Chechen), Udi, Kurmanji (Kurd) and Ossetian languages. In the same context, the adoption of the 2015 law on State Language is also important. The law defines the status of a state language, as well as its utilization and measures for its protection. The law is important because it contains a set of clauses on the utilization of the languages of national minorities as well. The law defines the national minority language as a non-state language which is traditionally used by the citizens of Georgia densely populated on a specific territory of Georgia.

5. Quantitative study results

5.1. Socio-demographic profile of the study participants

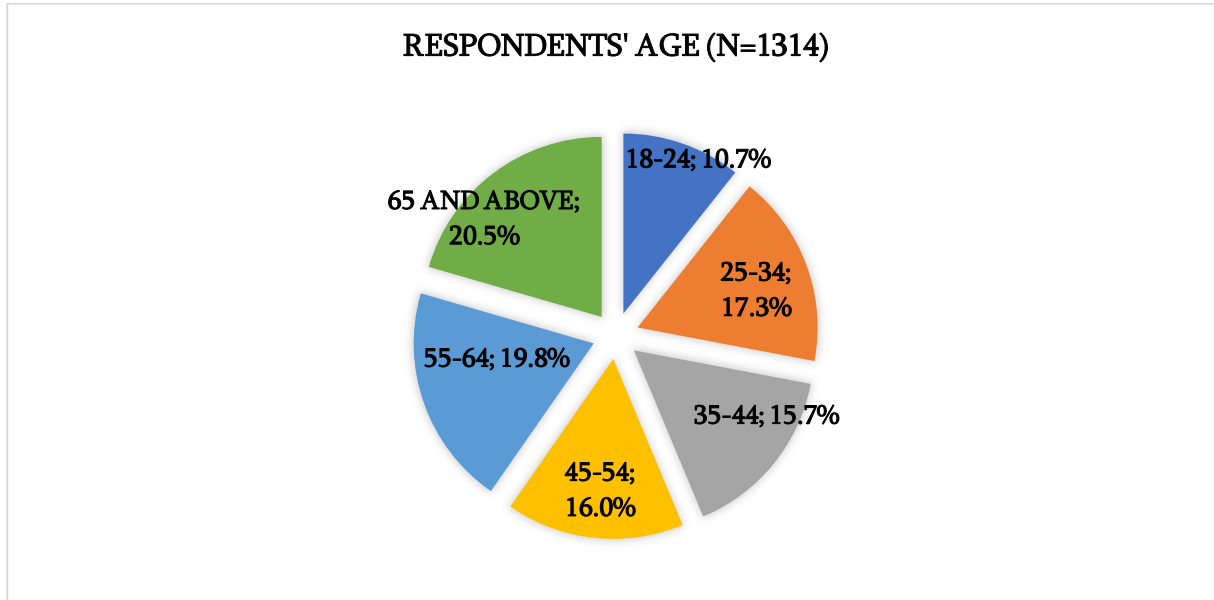
The study covered various ethnic minorities living in Georgia. 20.5% of the respondents attribute themselves to the Armenian ethnic group, 20.2% - to the Azeri ethnic group, 20.1% - to the Kist ethnic group, 18.6% - to the Ossetian ethnic group and 20.7% - to small urban ethnic groups: Russian-speaking, Kurd/Yezidi or Roma communities. 47.6% of the respondents are men and 52.4% are women (see Diagram N6).

Diagram N6:



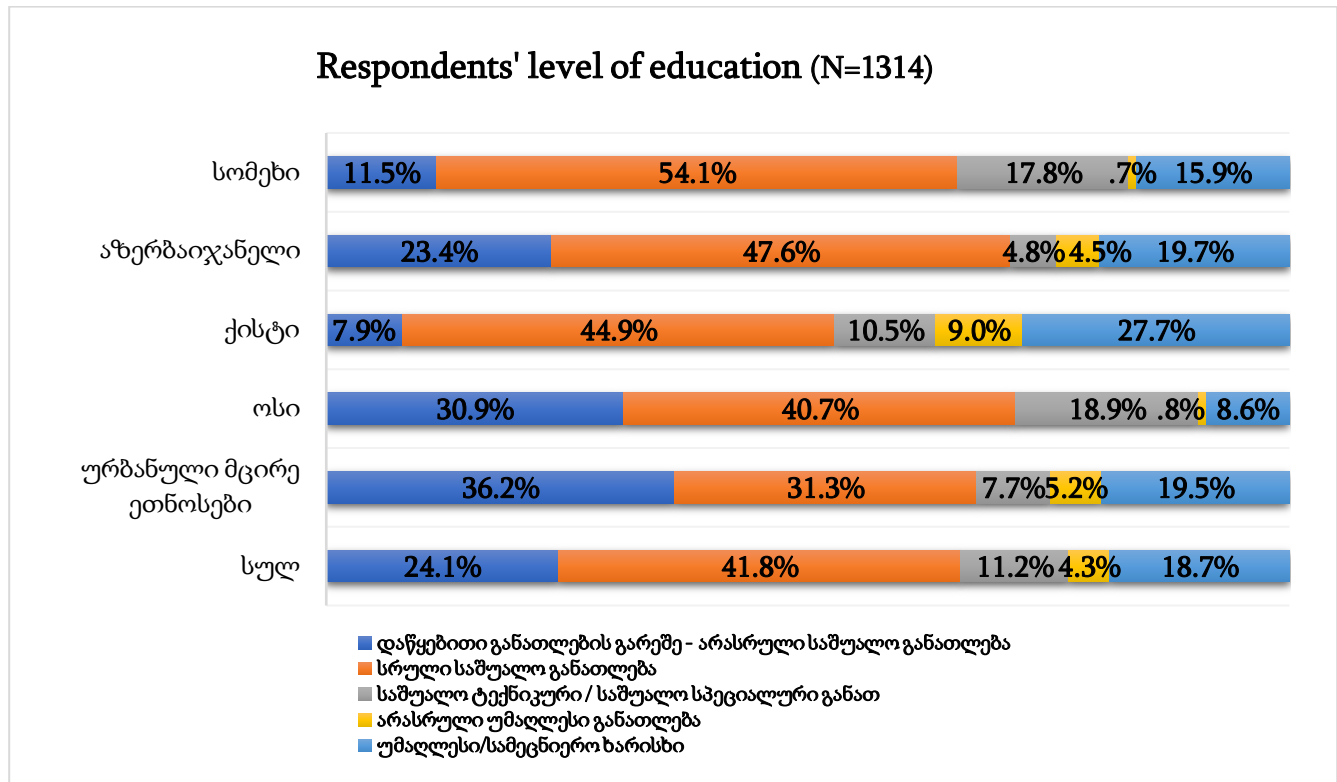
As for the age of the study participants, 11% of the respondents are in the age range of 18-24, 17% - in the age range of 25-34, 16% - in the age range of 35-44, 16% - in the age range of 45-54, 20% - in the age range of 55-64, and 20% - 65 and above (see Diagram N7).

Diagram N7:



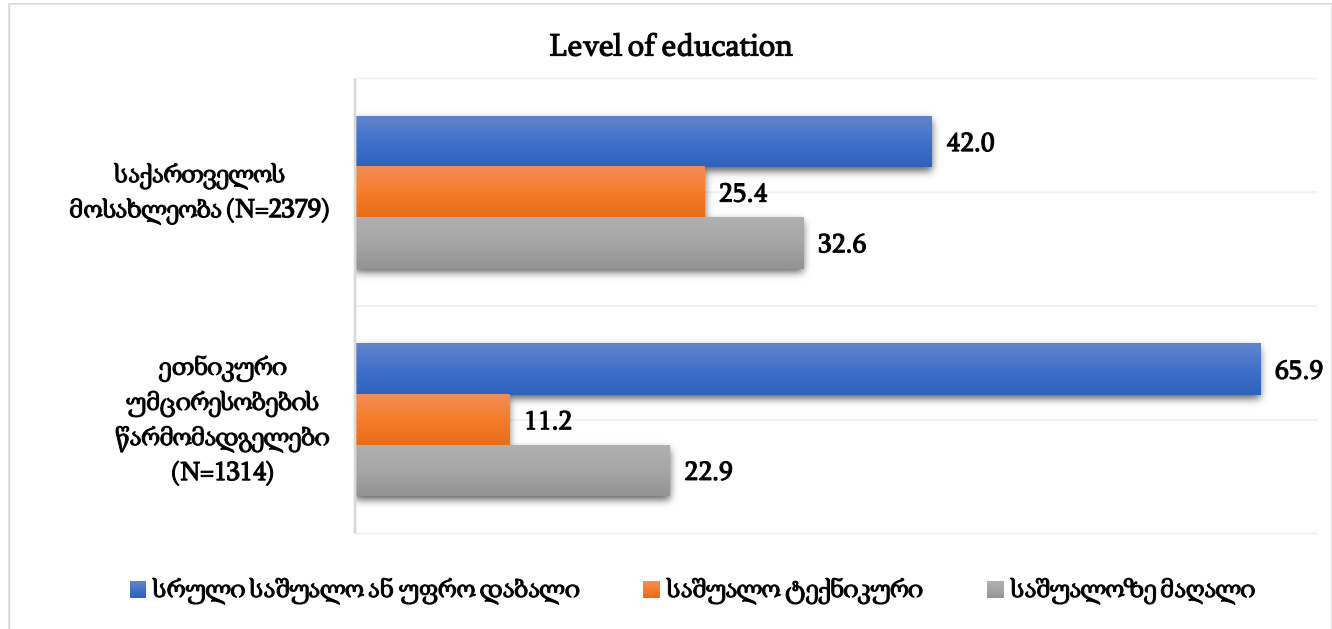
24% of the respondents have only incomplete secondary education (lacking elementary education – 2.2%, elementary education – 5.5% and incomplete secondary education – 16.4%). 41% of the respondents have complete secondary education, 11.2% - special/vocational education, 4.3% - incomplete higher education and 18.6% - complete higher education (Bachelor's, Master's or Specialist's Diploma or scientific degree). It has to be noted that **a larger percentage of women (27.2%) have incomplete secondary education in comparison with men (20.6%)**. The numbers of men and women with higher education are almost equal. When analyzed as per the ethnic minority groups, it is revealed that **the problem of acquiring secondary education is especially acute in small urban ethnic groups with Ossetian and Azeri communities being the next in this regard: 36.2%** of the representatives of small sized ethnic groups living in urban settlements, 30.9% of Ossetians, 23.4% of Azeris, 11.5% of Armenians and 7.9% of Kists have received incomplete secondary education. 27.7% of ethnically Kist respondents, 19.7% of Azeri respondents, 19.5% of the representatives of small sized urban ethnic groups, 15.9% of Armenian respondents and 8.6% of Ossetian respondents have higher education degree (Bachelor's, Master's or Specialist's Diploma) (see Diagram N8).

Diagram N8:



It is interesting to look at the total population of Georgia in regards to the educational level achieved. The 2017 survey of the Georgian population by the Caucasus Barometer provides a holistic understanding on various issues. The level of education of the country's population is notable in this regard. It turns out that 42% of the population has only complete secondary or lower level of education, 25.4% - secondary vocational education, and 32.6% - higher than secondary education (Caucasus Barometer, 2017). Considering the noted, the level of education among ethnic minorities is significantly lower: 65.9% of the representatives of ethnic minorities have secondary or lower level of education which exceeds the indicator for the population of Georgia, whereas only 22.9% have higher than secondary education which is lower than the indicator for the total population of the country (see Diagram N9).

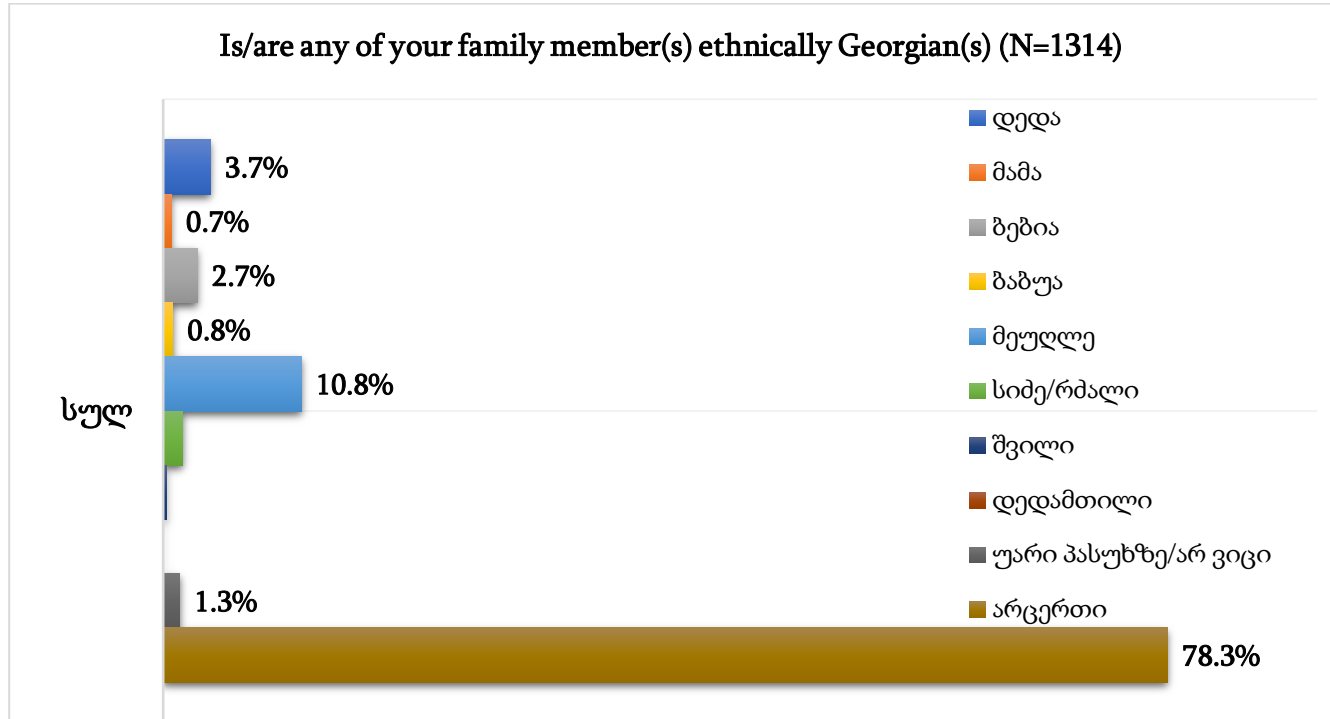
Diagram N9:



Note: The data on the population of Georgia are utilized from the outcomes of the 2017 survey of Caucasus Barometer Georgia.

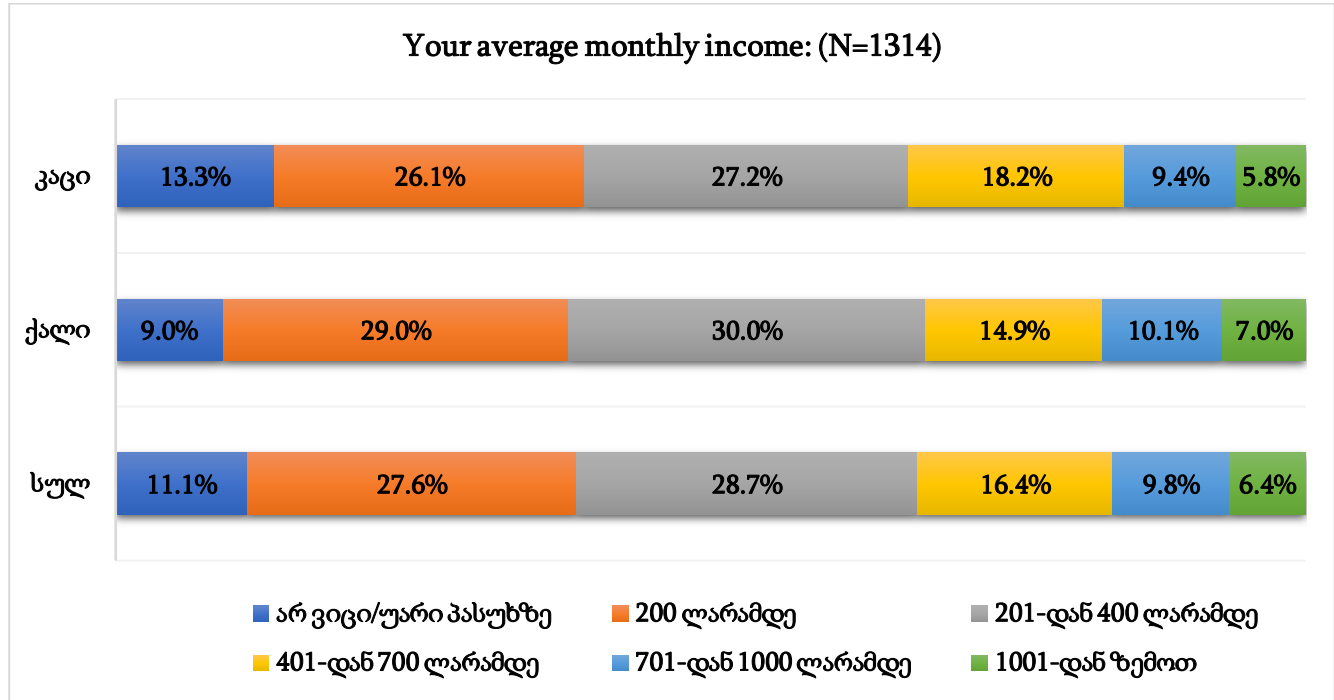
21.7% of the respondents have at least one ethnically Georgian member in the family. The Georgian-language (Georgian-speaking) member of the family is mainly (in case of 10.8%) a spouse (out of whom there are twice as many women than men), with a mother (3.7%) and a grandmother (2.7%) occupying the next positions. 46.5% of the Ossetian community respondents, 33.7% of the representatives of small sized urban ethnic groups, 7.1% of the Kists, 3.3% of the Armenians and 2.7% of the Azeris have a Georgian-speaking member of the family (mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, spouse, sister/brother-in-law / daughter/son-in-law, child, mother-in-law) (see Diagram N10).

Diagram N10:



As for the **income** of the respondents, 27.6% of the respondents have an average monthly income of 0 to 200 GEL. Considering that the subsistence minimum is 180 GEL and 21.9% of the population of Georgia lives below this minimum (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2018), these figures indicate that **ethnic minorities are poorer**. 28.7% of the participants have lower than average income (201-400 GEL), 16.4% - average income (401-700 GEL), 9.8% - more than average income (701-1000 GEL) and 6.4% - high income (more than 1001 GEL). 11.1% of the respondents refused or had difficulty providing the amount of their income. In terms of gender distribution, almost equal trends are revealed in regards to income with a slightly higher percentage of women with the income of 0-400 GEL (59%) in comparison with men (53.3%) (See Diagram N11). **The percentage of the respondents with the average monthly income up to 200 GEL is the highest in the Kist community.**

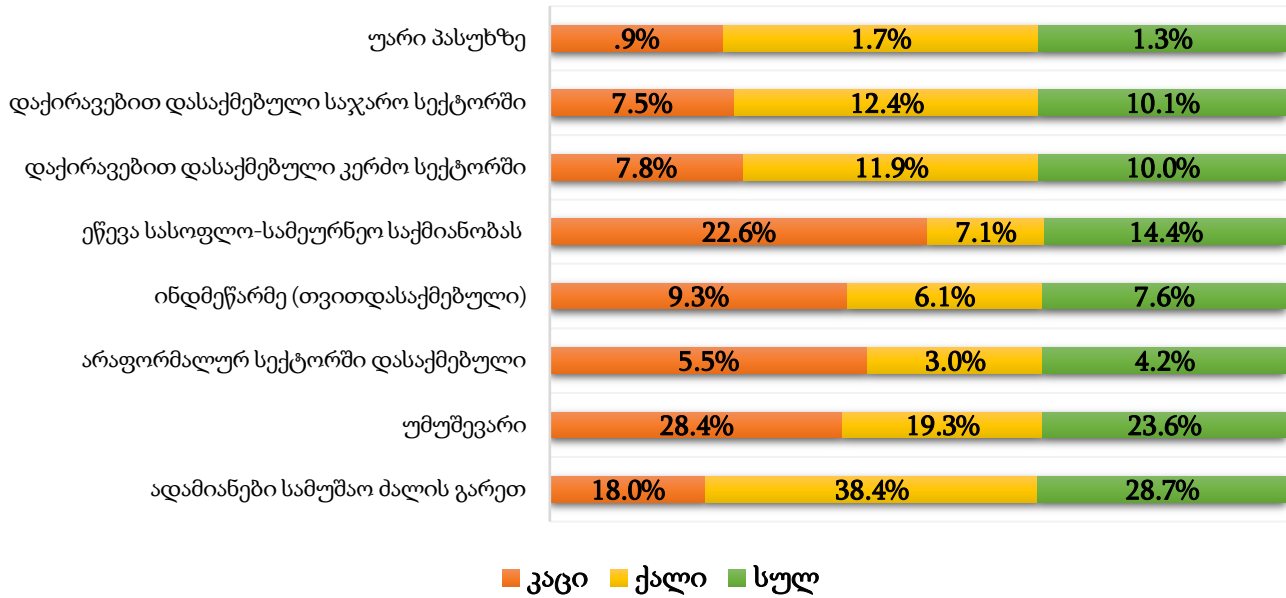
Diagram N11:



28.7% of the respondents are not economically active and 23.7% of them are unemployed – a figure higher than the percentage of the unemployed population in Georgia. According to the National Statistics Office of Georgia, 13.9% of the population was unemployed in 2017 (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2017). We regarded the persons who were not working at the time of the survey and who had been looking for a job for the last 4 weeks prior to the survey as unemployed. We regarded those who were not looking for a job as economically not active – for example, pensioners, housekeepers, students, etc. 10.1% of the respondents are employed in the public sector, 10% - in the private sector and 4.2% - in the informal sector. 22% of the respondents are self-employed (are individual entrepreneurs or undertake agricultural work). Large part of women respondents (38.4%) said that they are not economically active, i.e. they are not looking for a job, while 19.3% regarded themselves as unemployed. As for the men, 28.4% say they are unemployed and 22.6% say they are involved in agricultural work. 18% of men regard themselves to be outside of the workforce (see Diagram N12). An interesting trend is revealed in regards to the employment status within ethnic groups. Agricultural activity is undertaken by mainly Ossetian respondents (34.9%); representatives of the Armenian community (23%) and the Azeri community (18.5%) come next. 35.2% of the Kist respondents regard themselves as unemployed and 19.3% - as economically not active, whereas in other ethnic groups this proportion is reversed and a larger part of the respondents regard themselves as being beyond the workforce compared to those who regard themselves as unemployed.

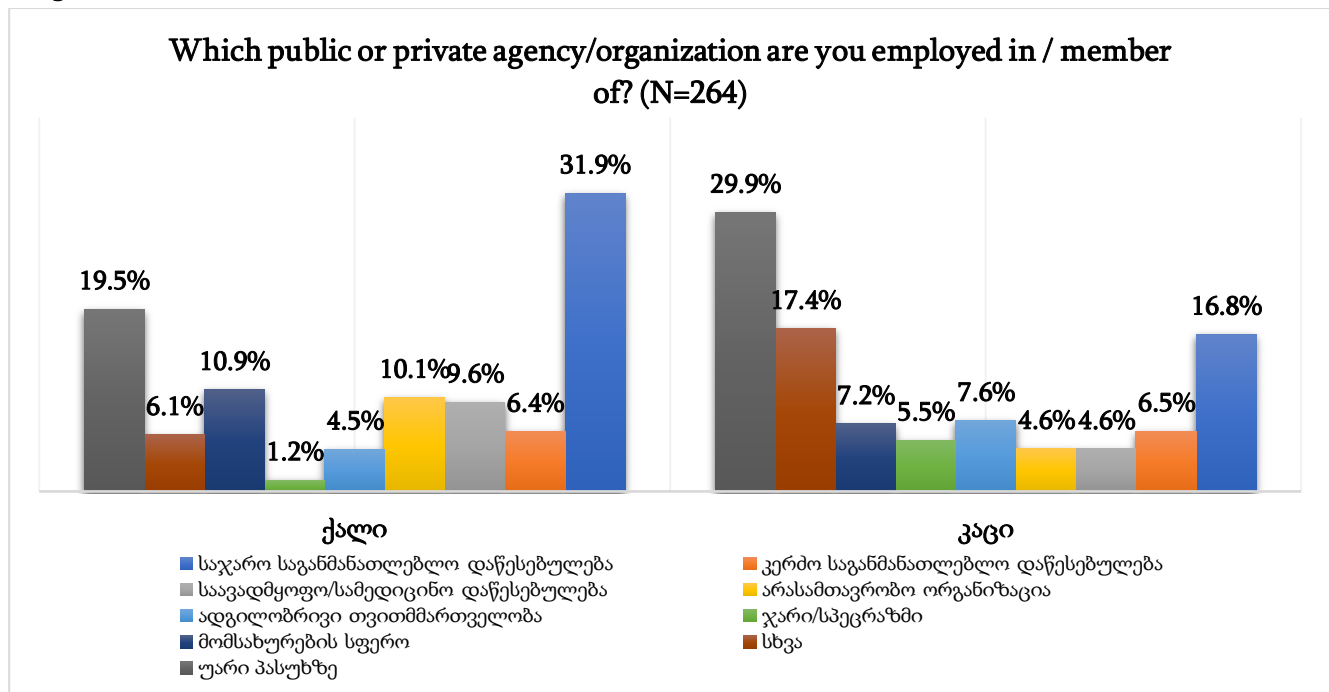
Diagram N12:

Employment status (N=1314)



As for the work places of the employed respondents, a larger part (26.7%) is employed in public educational institutions. 16.8% of men and 31.9% of women work in these institutions (see diagram N13). 8.1% of the survey participants work in nongovernmental organizations and 5.7% of the participants – in local self-governance. It is notable that 23.4% of the respondents refused to name their place of work.

Diagram N13:



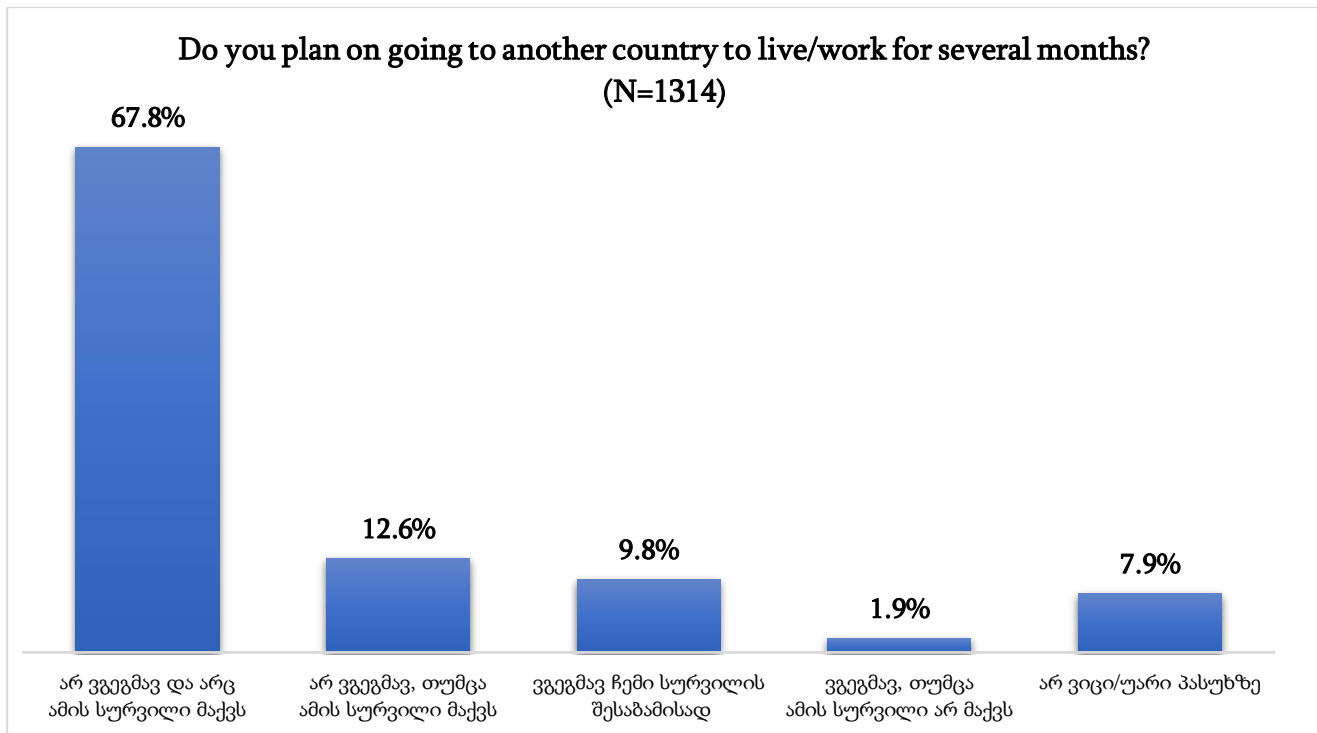
In terms of ethnicity, it was revealed that a relatively larger part (34.7%) of the respondents from the Armenian community is employed in medical institutions, while 50.9% of respondents from the Azeri

community and 37.6% of respondents from the Kist community are employed at public educational institutions. Out of the representatives of other groups, relatively low percentage are employed in public educational institutions; however, public employment is relatively significant in cases of the Ossetian community (24.9% of the respondents) and small sized urban ethnic groups (14.4% of the respondents). It has to be noted that a large part of the employed Ossetians and representatives of small sized urban ethnic groups (33.4% and 29.3% respectively) refused to name the area of employment.

Employment related questions also included a question on whether any family member is employed in the following bodies/organizations: local self-government, central government, political party and/or nongovernmental organization. The survey reveals that the percentage of the respondents whose family members are employed in any of the listed bodies/organizations does not exceed 3%.

In terms of the dynamic of migration of ethnic minority representatives, it is notable that 10.7% of the respondents had to leave Georgia to live or work in another country and to afterwards return to Georgia during the last 2 years. Majority of the respondents (67.8%) are not willing and therefore, are not planning to migrate within several months after the interview; whereas 12.6% of the respondents are willing to leave the country but have no specific plan. In terms of gender analysis, 75% of women do not plan and are not willing to migrate from the country; whereas 60% of men are willing to migrate. In terms of ethnicity, almost homogenous trends are revealed in regards to the willingness and plans to migrate; however, in Armenian and Azeri communities the willingness to live in Georgia is slightly higher than in other ethnic groups. 22.4% of the respondents are willing to leave the country and 9.8% out of these are planning to migrate. 6.9% of the respondents refuse to answer this question (see Diagram N14).

Diagram N14



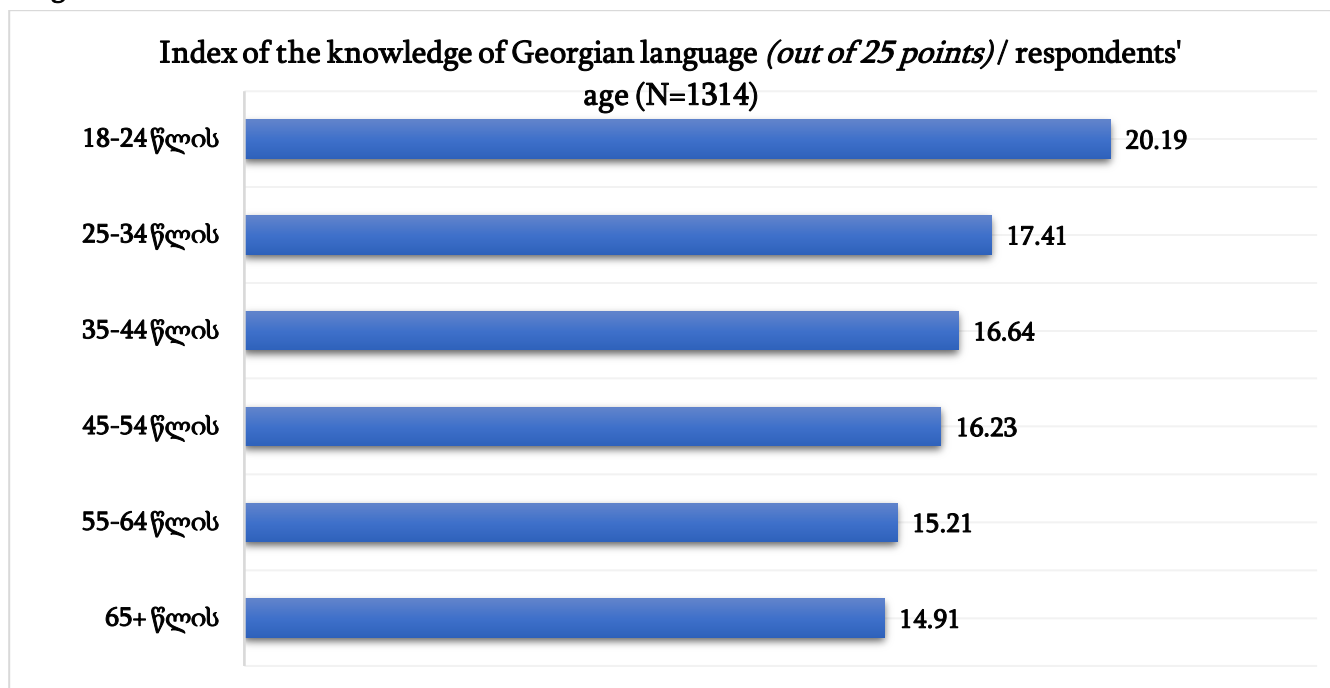
The respondents who are willing to migrate and/or plan on leaving the country, name the following major reasons for the noted: poverty (40.5%) and lack of work places (25.9%). The significance of the problem related to work places is emphasized as a reason for migration by a higher percentage of men (66.8%) than women (55.4%). The problems related to poverty and work places as provoking factors for migration are significant in all ethnic groups; however, these problems are even more acute in the Azeri community (the figures are 83.1% and 86.6%, respectively); the problems related to work places are also significant in the Kist community (79.6%), whereas poverty is a significant problem in small sized urban ethnic groups (65%) and Ossetian community (62.3%).

Knowledge of Georgian as a state language is an important parameter of integration into the dominant society. Various aspects of integration include the following: acquiring higher education, self-realization in career, participation in political life, etc. In order to establish the level of knowledge of Georgian language by ethnic minorities, we developed an index with the following variables: 1) knowing Georgian alphabet and reading words; 2) establishing communication with a person speaking in Georgian; 3) reading Georgian literature and comprehending the content of the text; 4) understanding information broadcast through Georgian television channels; and 5) argumentation and expressing one's opinion in Georgian language. Each parameter was rated by respondents on a 5-point scale as per their ability to implement each of them. On the scale, 1 point stood for "very badly", 3 points – „on an average level”, and 5 points – "very well" (Responses – "I have difficulty answering the question" and "I refuse to answer the question" – were not included in the index). It was revealed that ethnic minorities are best at establishing communication with a person speaking Georgian (mean score of 3.48 on a 5-point scale) and understanding information broadcast through Georgian television channels (mean score of 3.47). Their abilities are weakest in terms of reading Georgian literature and

comprehending the content of the text (mean score of 3.02). We analyzed the index of the knowledge of Georgian language in relation to different variables in order to see the linkage between this and other factors more clearly.

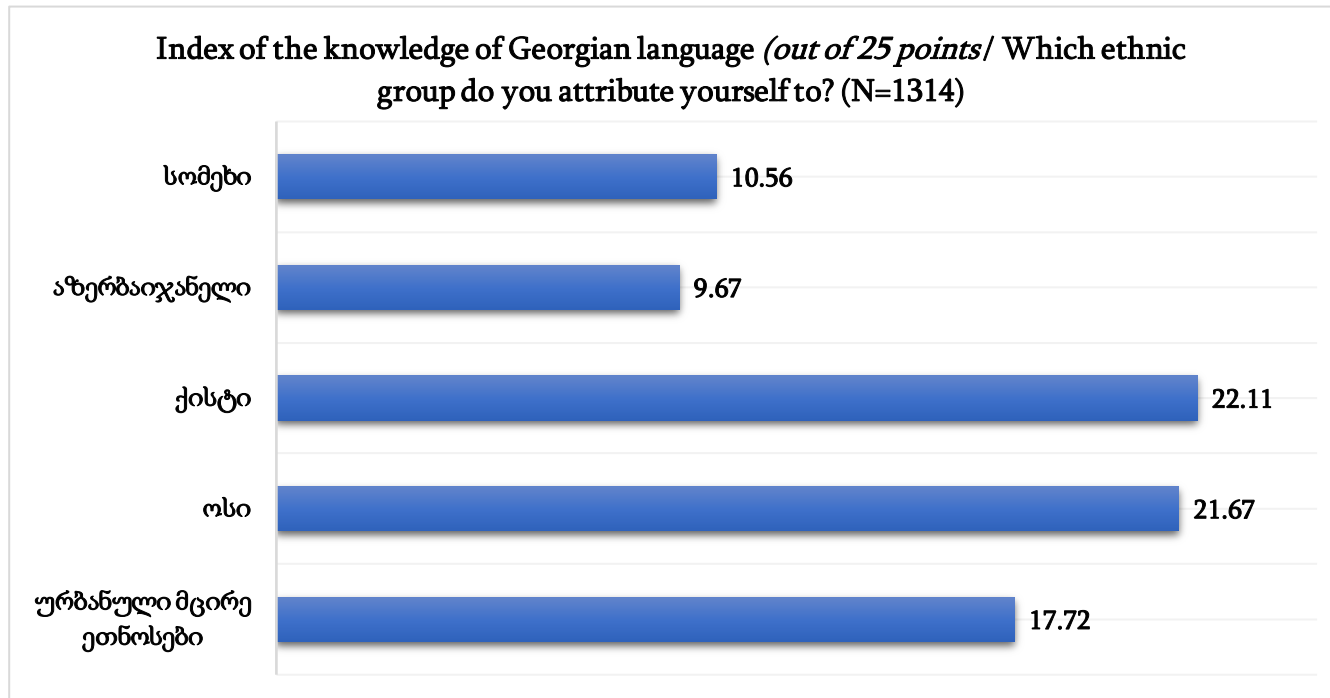
It has to be noted that the level of the knowledge of Georgian language is the highest among the respondents in the age range of 18-24 (mean score on the index is 20.19 out of 25) and decreases with the increase in the age: for the age range of 25-34 – the mean score on the index is 17.41, for the age range of 35-44 - 16.64, for the age range of 45-54 - 16.23, for the age range of 55-64 - 15.21, and for persons 65 years old and older - 14.91 (see Diagram N15). The mean score on the index of knowledge of Georgian language is somewhat higher in case of women (16.8) in comparison with men (16.0).

Diagram N15:



As for the level of knowledge of Georgian language within ethnic minority groups, the mean indicator of the index on the knowledge of the state language is the highest among the Kists (out of 22.11-25 points), with the next positions occupied by the Ossetians with the mean score of 21.67, and, within small urban ethnic groups, the Armenians with the score of 10.56 and the Azeris with the score of 9.67 (see Diagram N16).

Diagram N16:

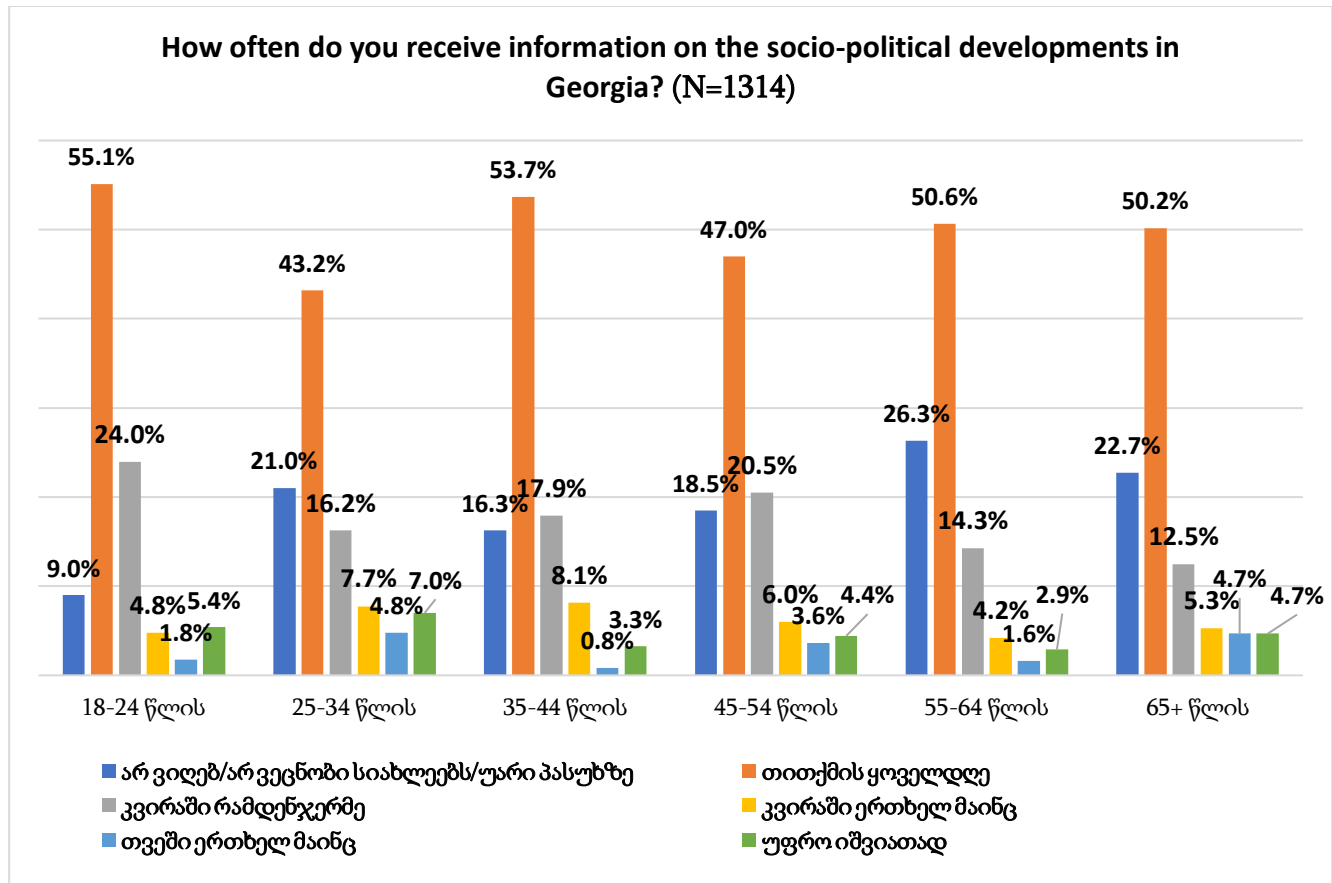


5.2 Role of Mass Media

Media plays an important role in enhancing political participation of ethnic minorities as it serves as a medium between the public and the government/local self-government/political parties. It is interesting whether the ethnic minorities living in Georgia have access to media, which sources they receive various types of information from, whether they trust the information received from the existing media, whether media supports enhancement of political participation of ethnic minorities, etc. The study revealed that the level of trust towards media is not high among representatives of ethnic minorities. Only 28.3% trust (fully or mostly) mass media.

Initially, it was interesting to find out the frequency with which information is received by ethnic minorities on the socio-political developments in Georgia. Almost every second respondent (49.7%) receives such information on an almost daily basis, 17.1% - several times a week, while 17.8% do not receive/do not get acquainted with socio-political news at all. Analysis in terms of ethnicity reveals that 83.9% of the Ossetian respondents receive information on the developments in the country almost daily, whereas the relevant figure in case of the Kists is 80.5%, in case of small sized urban ethnic groups - 51%, in case of Armenians - 21.4% and in case of Azeris - 13.7%. In terms of the analysis in regards to the age of respondents, it is notable that the percentage of respondents who do not at all receive information on the processes going on in the country is the lowest in the age group of 18-24 (9%), whereas 21% of the respondents in the age range of 25-34 do not get acquainted with such news (see Diagram N17).

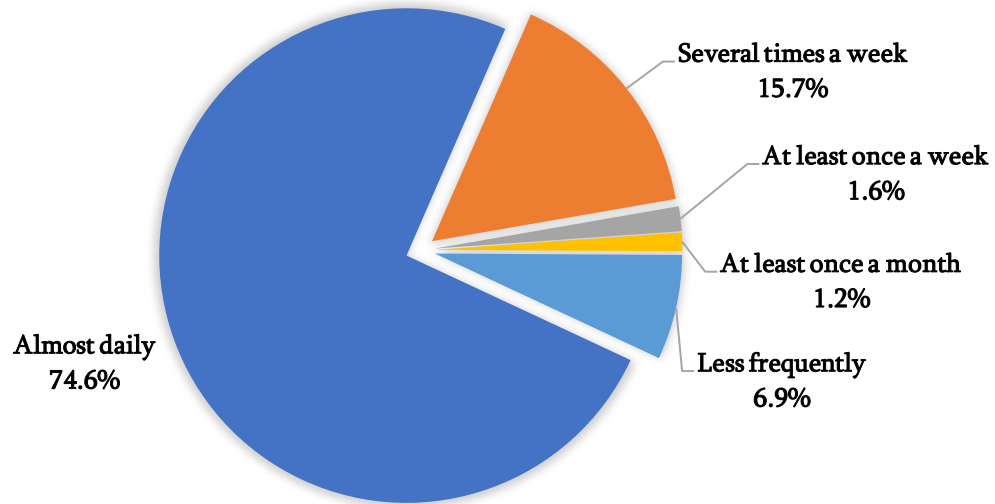
Diagram N17:



As for the frequency with which respondents receive information on the socio-political developments in Armenia, 12.9% receive such information almost daily, 10.1% receive such information less frequently than once a month, whereas the majority of respondents (64.7%) do not receive/do not get acquainted with such news. 74.6% of the Armenian-speaking citizens of Georgia receive information on the developments in Armenia almost daily, 15.7% - several times a week, while 8.1% do not receive information at all on the processes going on in Armenia (see Diagram N18).

Diagram N18:

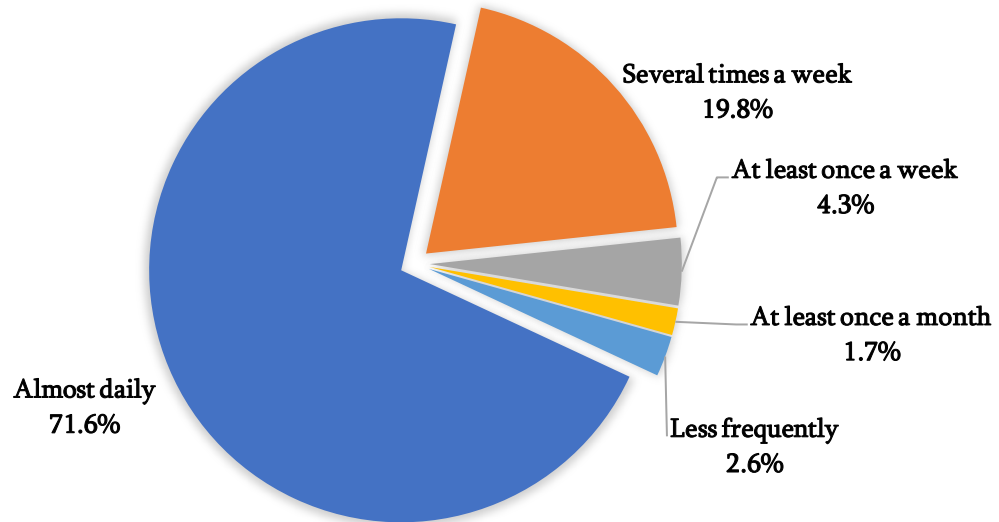
How often do you receive information on the socio-political developments in Armenia? (only Armenian-speaking respondents) (N=1052)



11.0% of the respondents receive information on the socio-political developments in Azerbaijan almost daily, 9.7% - less frequently than once a month, while 64.4% do not receive/do not get acquainted with the information on the developments in Azerbaijan. It is interesting to analyze the situation in this regard among the Azeri-speaking population. 71.6% gets acquainted with the socio-political processes in Azerbaijan almost daily, 19.8% - several times a week, while 13.8% do not receive information on these developments (see Diagram N19).

Diagram N19:

How often do you receive information on the socio-political developments in Azerbaijan? (only Azeri-speaking respondents) (N=1052)

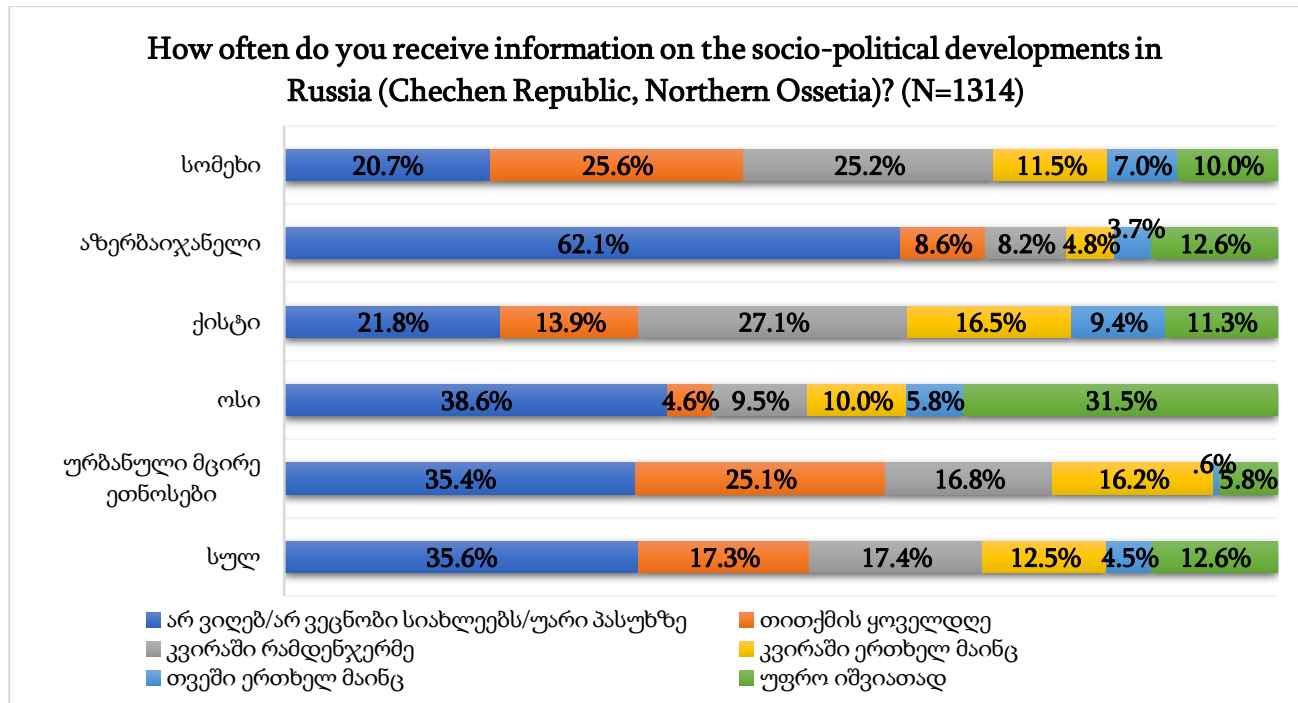


Statistically important interrelation is established between the variables of the knowledge of Georgian language and the receipt of the information on new developments. The respondents whose level of

knowledge of Georgian language is the highest (mean score on the index of the knowledge of Georgian language – 20.35) receive information on the socio-political developments in Georgia on a daily basis, while those respondents whose level of knowledge of Georgian language is low mainly receive information on the socio-political developments in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey on an almost daily basis (the mean indicators on the index are, respectively, 10.32, 9.59 and 10.48). For example, those who receive information about Azerbaijan almost daily have a mean score of 9.59 on the index of the knowledge of Georgian language, whereas the index score increases as the frequency of the receipt of this information decreases. Those respondents who receive the above noted information on socio-political developments less frequently than once a month have a mean score of 21.27 on the index of the knowledge of Georgian.

It was also important to find out the frequency with which respondents receive information on the socio-political developments in Russia (Chechen Republic and Northern Ossetia). 17.3% of the total number of respondents receive such information almost daily, 17.5% - several times a week, 12.5% - at least once a week, whereas 33.3% do not receive/do not get acquainted with such news/information at all. Within ethnic groups, every fourth representative of Armenian (25.6%) and small urban ethnic groups (25.1%) gets acquainted with the processes going on in Russia almost daily, whereas other groups receive information about this country even more rarely (see Diagram N20).

Diagram N20:

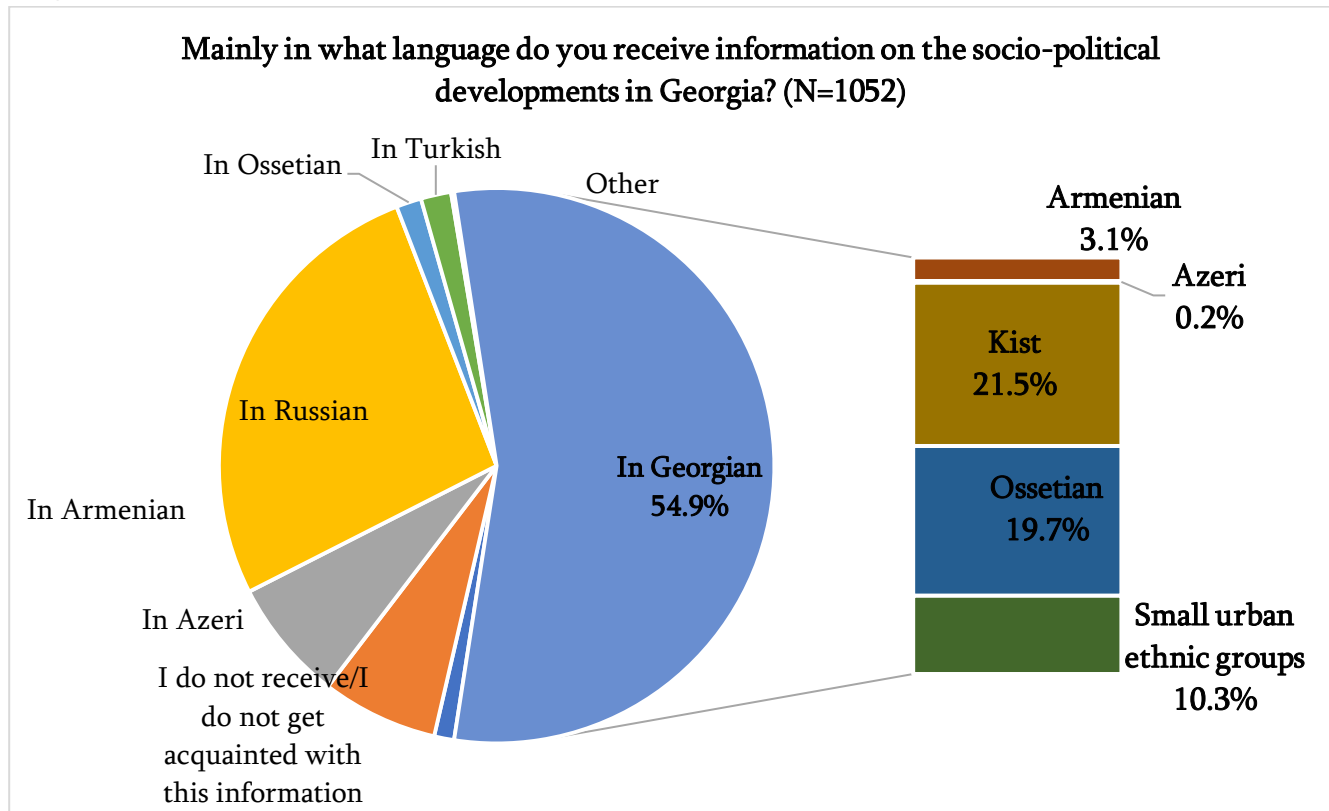


14% of respondents receive information on the socio-political developments in the self-declared Southern Ossetia one a month or more rarely, whereas 75.5% do not receive/do not get acquainted with such news. It also has to be noted that the frequency of receiving information on Russia (Chechen Republic and Northern Ossetia) is less related to the knowledge of Georgian language, as there is almost the same mean indicator on

the knowledge of Georgian language with almost all responses related to the frequency of receiving information. Finally, as for the socio-political developments in Turkey, 12.6% of the respondents get acquainted with this information once a month or more rarely, while 68.5% do not get acquainted with/do not receive this information. Mainly only Azeri population gets acquainted with the information on this country. 22.3% get acquainted with these news almost daily and 20.4% - several times a week.

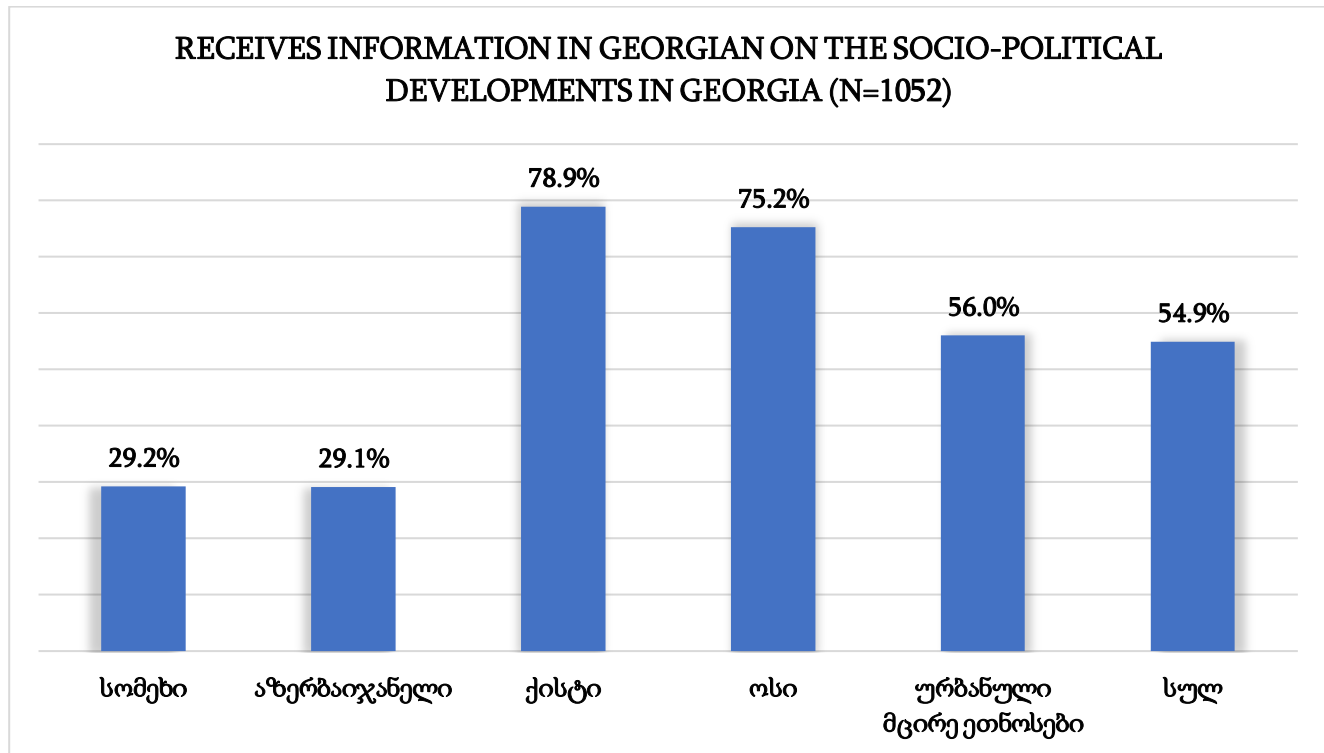
Respondents receive information on the developments in Georgia in several languages. Georgian was named as the first language for receiving information (85.6%), with the next positions held by Russian (40.8%), Armenian (10.9%), Azeri (10.4%), Turkish (2.7%) and Ossetian languages (2.2%). 54.9% of the respondents receive information on the socio-political developments in Georgia in the Georgian language, 26.6% - in Russian, 7.1% - in Armenian, 6.8% - in Azeri, 1.8% - in Turkish and 1.5% - in Ossetian (see Diagram N21).

Diagram N21:



Georgian was named as the main language for receiving information on the processes going on in Georgia among Kists (100%), Ossetians (99.6%) and representatives of ethnic groups living in urban settlements (89.5%). Practices of receiving information in Georgian are less common among Armenian (48.9%) and Azeri-speaking (60.9%) respondents. In total, 78.9% of Kist respondents receive information on the socio-political developments in Georgia in the Georgian language; this figure is 75.2% among Ossetians, 56% among small sized urban ethnic groups, 29.2% among Armenians and 29.1% among Azeris (see Diagram N22).

Diagram N22:

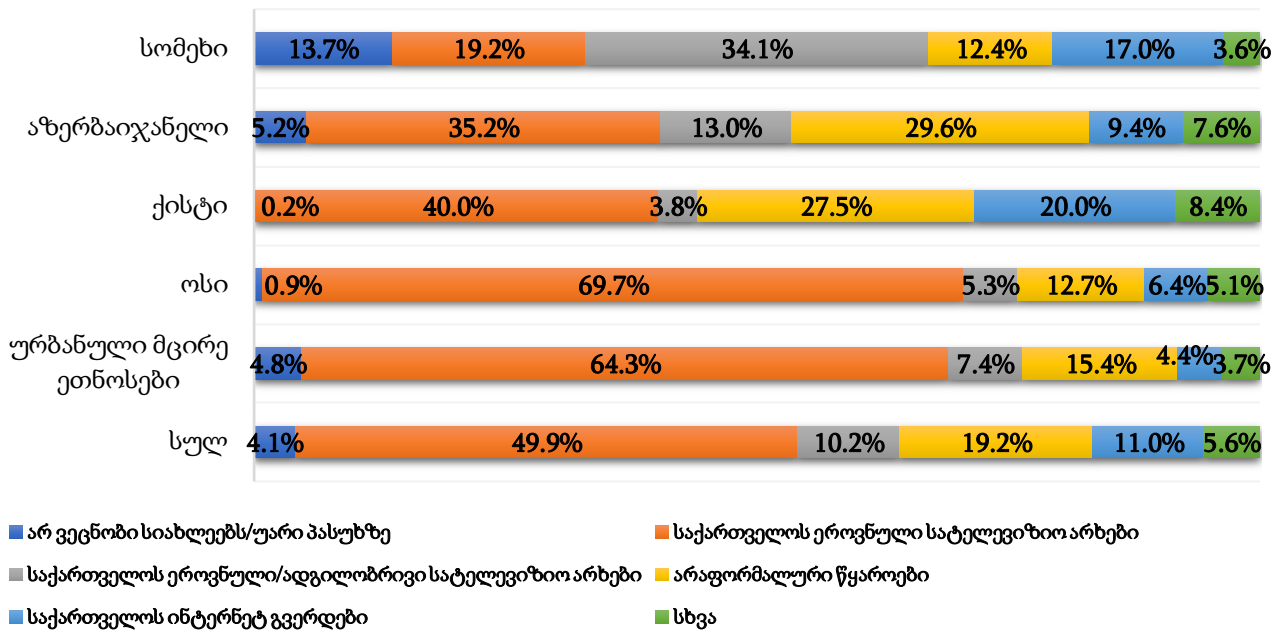


As for the sources from which respondents receive information on the socio-political developments in Georgia, the most popular ones are television channels of Georgia (83%), Georgian web pages (23.5%), Russian media channels (23.3%), Armenian media channels (10.0%) and informal sources (family members, acquaintances, neighbors, etc. - 12%). Large part of Ossetians (63.9%), Kists (45.4%) and small sized urban ethnic group representatives (54.5%) receive information from the television channels of Georgia. Percentages of such Armenian (28%) and Azeri (32.1%) respondents are relatively lower.

As for the sources of information on the developments in the regions of ethnic minorities, national television channels of Georgia (73.4%), informal sources (28.2%) and local television channels (15%) are the most popular and accessible sources in this case as well. 69.7% of the Ossetian respondents, 64.3% of small sized urban ethnic group representatives, 40% of Kists, 35.2% of Azeris and 19.2% of Armenians receive information on the political developments in their region from the national television channels of Georgia. Every third person (34.1%) out of the Armenian respondents receive information from the local television channel(s), while a lower percentage - only 13% do the same in the Azeri community (see Diagram N23). 29.6% of the respondents from the Azeri community and 27.5% of the respondents in the Kist community receive information from informal sources.

Diagram N23:

Mainly which sources do you receive information from on the socio-political developments in your region? (N=1314)



It was important to find out which information channels the study participants were watching. 41% of respondents most often watch Rustavi 2, 31% - Imedi, and only 4.5% - the Channel #1. As for the Georgian newspapers and magazines, they are not popular among the respondents. Only 6.5% of them read “Kviris Palitra” (Weekly Palette) and 1.8% read “Asaval-Dasavali” (The Whereabouts).

In addition, the level of popularity of radio channels is low when it comes to receiving information on the socio-political developments in Georgia. It is notable that 25.6% of respondents do not have access to radio, 4% listen to radio “Imedi” and 2.1% listen to radio “Fortuna”. Slightly significant position out of the Georgian web pages is held by “ambebi.ge” which is used by 8.7% of respondents.

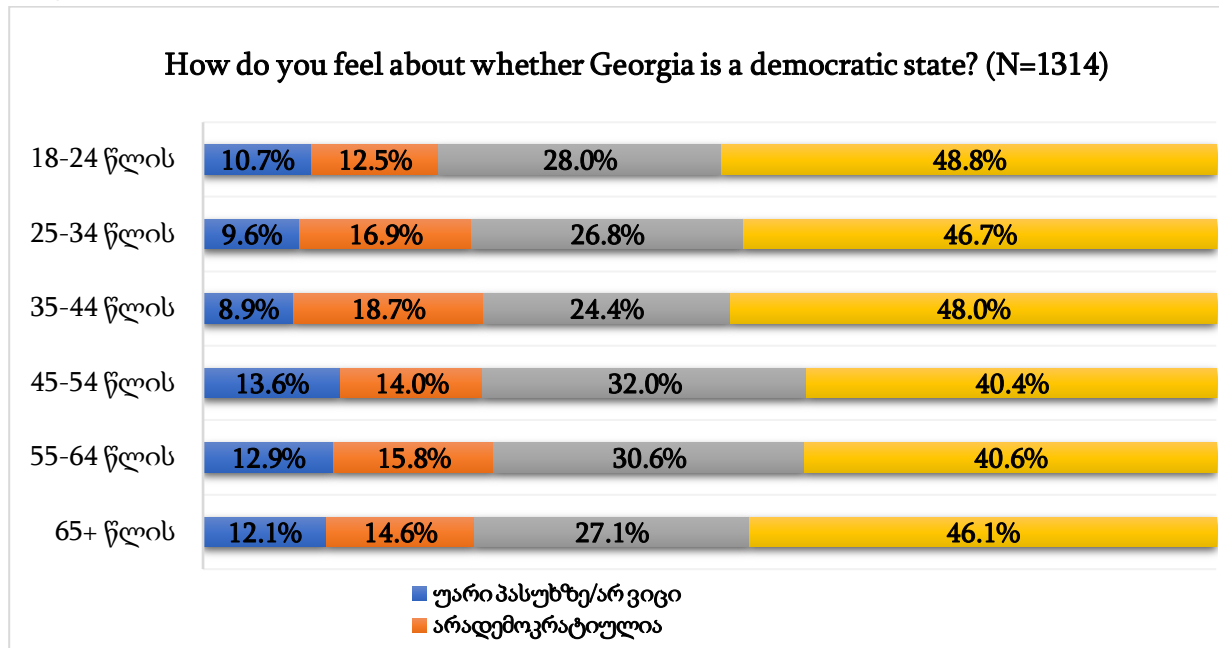
In addition, respondents also assessed the level of trust towards three media channels which they watch/listen to/read to find out information about the socio-political developments in Georgia: the mean score for the assessment of Georgian television channels is 3.15 (standard deviation - 0.83, median - 3) on a 5-point scale; the mean score for Georgian web pages is 3.67 (standard deviation - 0.75, median - 3), while the mean score for Russian media channels is 3.3 (standard deviation - 0.73, median - 3).

5.3 Assessment of the political system and developments

It is important to study how various ethnic group members assess the direction of the development of the country and its level of democracy, as well as how they understand participation and need for their engagement in implementing democracy.

Assessments of ethnic minorities are in line with Georgia’s international image as a state with hybrid democracy. 44.7% of the respondents think that Georgia is a democratic state (“fully democratic” or “rather democratic than not”). 28.2% think that it is just as democratic as not democratic, while 15.7% think that Georgia is not democratic (“absolutely not democratic” or “rather not democratic than democratic”). 11.4% of the respondents have difficulty assessing the level of democracy of the country. Respondents in the age ranges of 45-54 and 55-64 are rather critical when assessing democratic nature of the Georgian state. Smaller percentage of these groups think that Georgia is democratic or rather democratic than not in comparison with the representatives of other age groups (see Diagram N24).

Diagram N24:

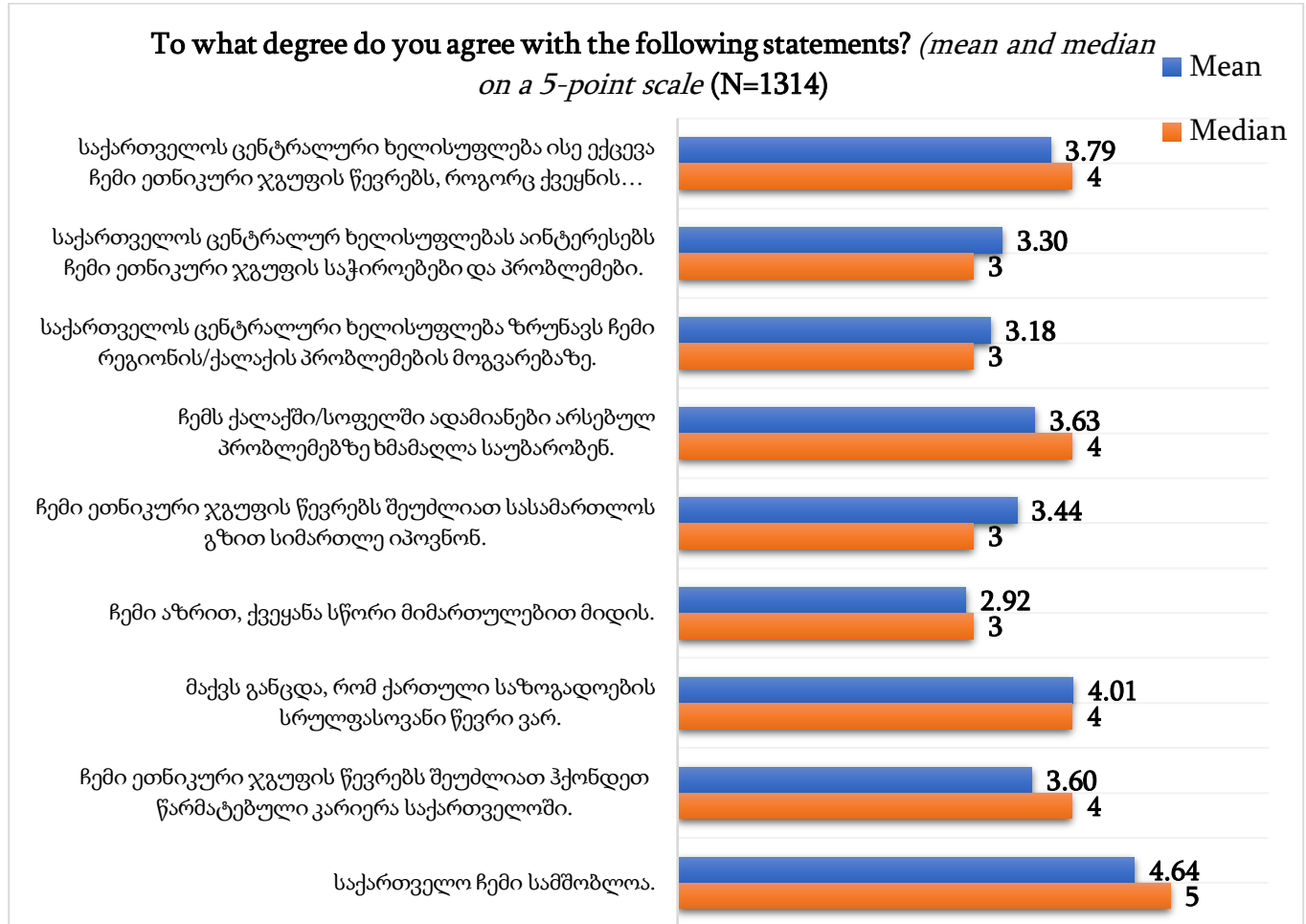


Note: Category – „democratic” has two responses incorporated in it: “absolutely democratic” and “rather democratic than not”; whereas category – “not democratic” has the following responses incorporated in it: “rather not democratic than democratic” and “totally not democratic”.

Respondents assessed various statements to express their opinions on their individual and their ethnic group’s integration in the Georgian society, as well as on the democratic nature and approaches from the side of the government. In the end, these statements reveal the level of the cultural-political identity of ethnic minority groups with Georgia and Georgian society. Each statement was assessed on a 5-point scale where 1 point stands for - “I totally disagree”, 3 points – “I agree as much as I disagree”, and 5 points - „I totally agree”. The mean score of over 3 for the assessment of the statements is regarded as a positive assessment and the score of under 3 is regarded as a negative assessment. The following two statements received the most positive assessments: (1) “Georgia is my homeland” – mean assessment score is 4.64 (standard deviation - 0.77, median

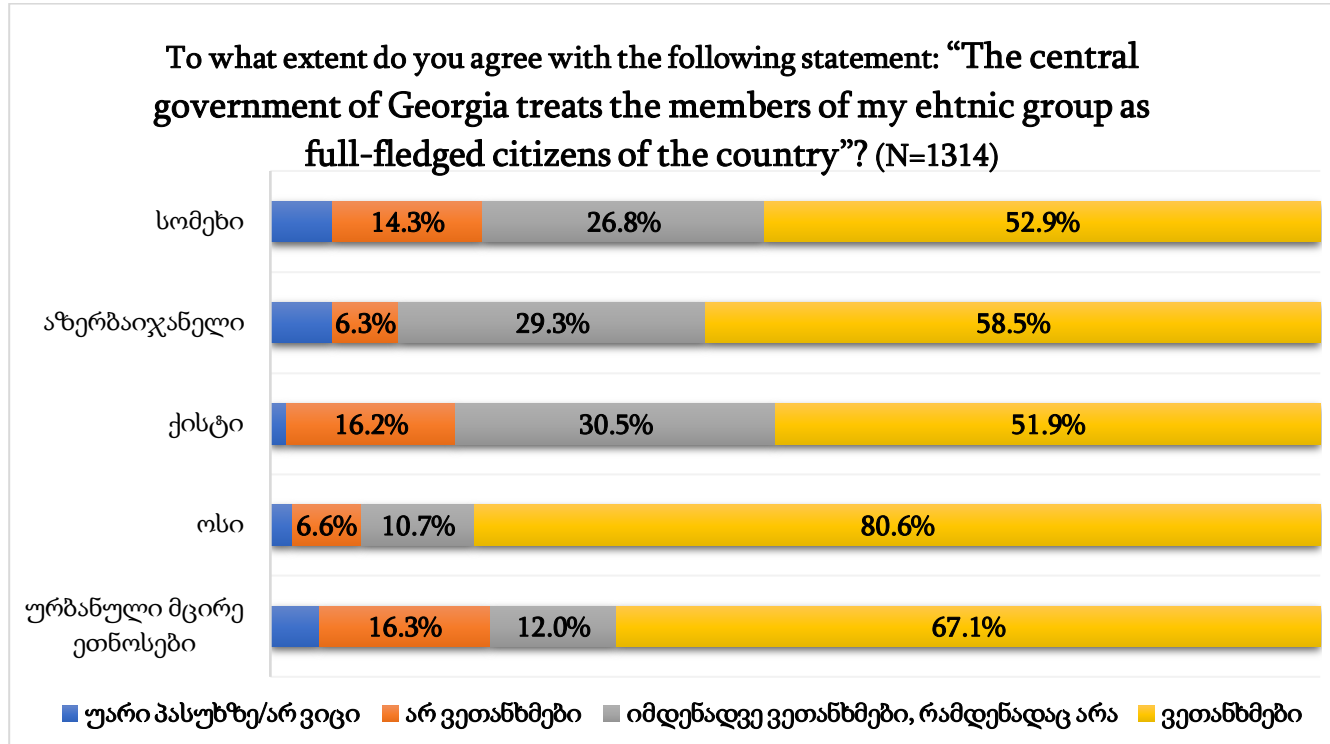
- 5) and (2) “I have a feeling that I am a full-fledged member of the Georgian society” – mean assessment score - 4.01 (standard deviation - 1.2, median - 4). The following statement received negative assessments: “I think that the country is heading in the right direction” – mean assessment score of 2.92 (standard deviation - 1.14, median - 3). In regards to the first statement, the highest figures indicating agreement with it are revealed in the Ossetian community (mean - 4.95, standard deviation - 0.295, median - 5). Members of the Azeri community agree with the second statement rather rarely when compared with the general average assessment; the second statement may be emphasizing the level of the integration and the cultural-political identity of minority groups with the Georgian society (mean - 3.49, standard deviation - 0.92, median - 3). Representatives of the small sized urban ethnic groups most rarely agree with the third statement on the progressive development of the country (mean - 2.66, standard deviation - 1.28, median - 3) (see Diagram N25).

Diagram N25:



The respondents' perceptions are notable in terms of the attitudes expressed by the central government of Georgia towards their ethnic group. 80.6% of the representatives of the Ossetian community, 67.1% of the representatives of small sized urban ethnic groups, 58.5% of the Azeris, 52.9% of the representatives of the Armenian community and 51.9% of the Kists agree with the following statement: "The central government of Georgia treats the members of my ethnic group as full-fledged citizens of the country" ("fully agree" or "mostly agree") (see Diagram N26).

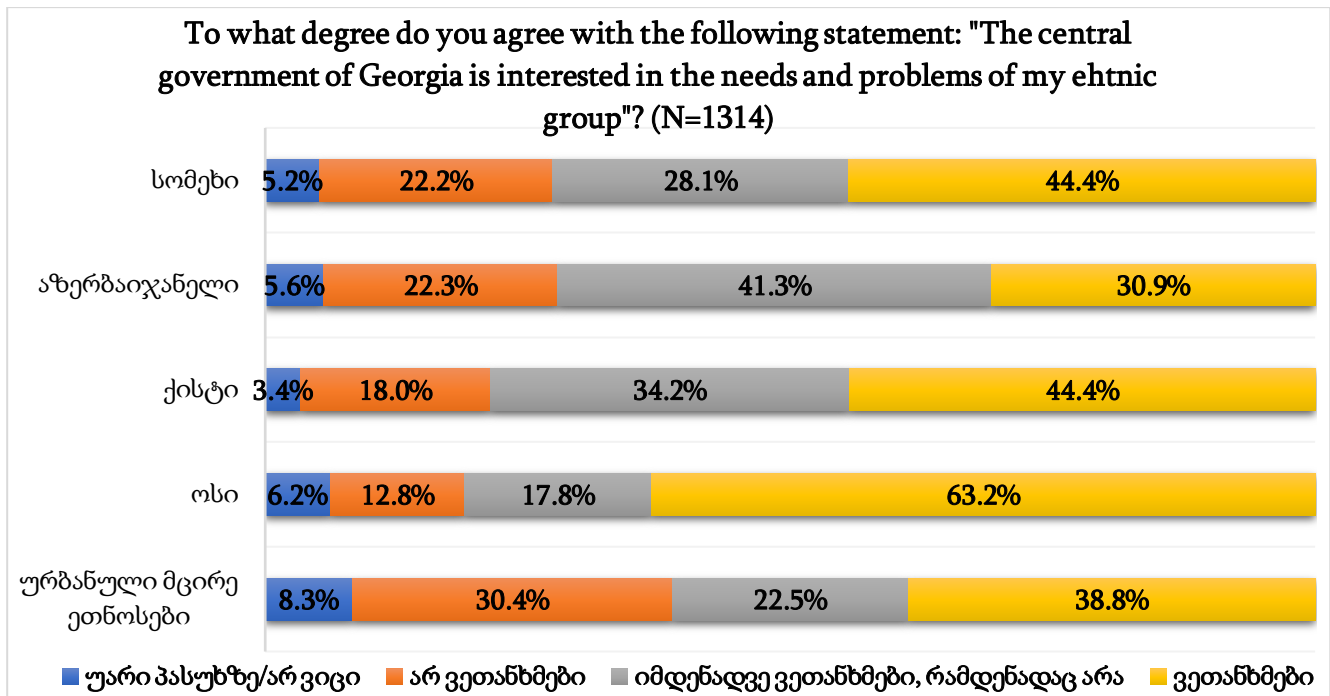
Diagram N26:



Note: the category “agree” includes the following responses: “fully agree” and “mostly agree”; while the category “do not agree” includes the following responses: “mostly disagree” and “fully disagree”.

In total, 43.1% of the respondents agree with the statement that the central government of Georgia is interested in the needs and problems of their group (“fully agree” or “mostly agree”). Within ethnic groups, 63.2% of Ossetian respondents, 44.4% of Armenian and Kist respondents, 38.8% of representatives of small sized urban ethnic groups and 30.9% of Azeris agree with the above statement (see Diagram N27).

Diagram N27:

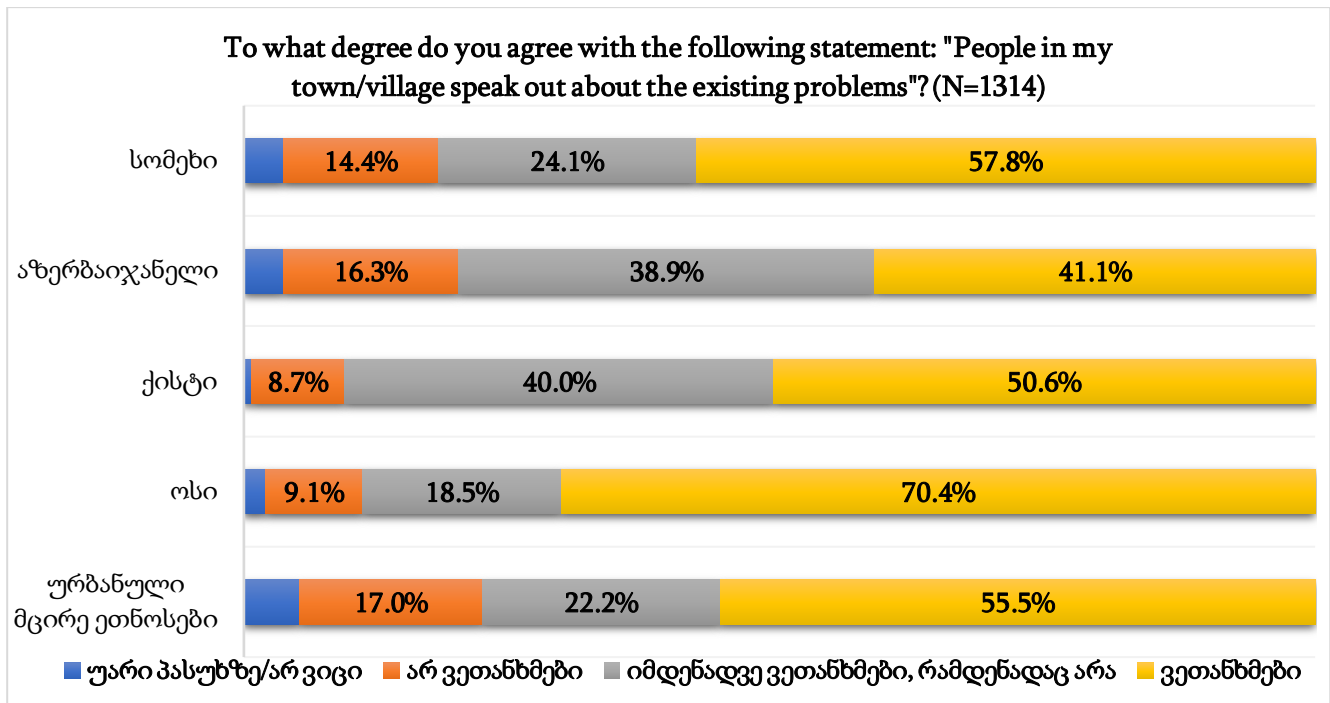


Note: the category “agree” includes the following responses: “fully agree” and “mostly agree“, while the category “do not agree” includes the following responses: “mostly disagree” and “fully disagree”.

As for the respondents’ opinions on whether the Government works to address the problems in their region/settlement, only 36.7% of the respondents agree with the relevant statement (“totally agree” or “mostly agree”). When analyzed in terms of ethnic groups, 43.8% of the Armenian and Kist respondents, 43.2% of the Ossetians, 29.9% of the representatives of urban ethnic groups and 29.4% of the Azeris agree with the statement (“totally agree” or “mostly agree”).

Discussion of the topic of freedom is also important when talking about democracy. One of the statements related to whether respondents think the people in their settlement can freely speak about the existing problems publically. 54.8% of the study participants totally or mostly agree with this statement. However, the attitudes vary across ethnic groups. 70.4% of the Ossetian community respondents, 57.8% of the Armenian-speaking respondents, 55.5% of the representatives of small sized urban ethnic groups, 50.6% of the Kists and 41.1% of the Azeri-speaking community representatives agree with the statement: “People in my town/village speak out about the existing problems” (“totally agree” or “mostly agree”) (see Diagram N28).

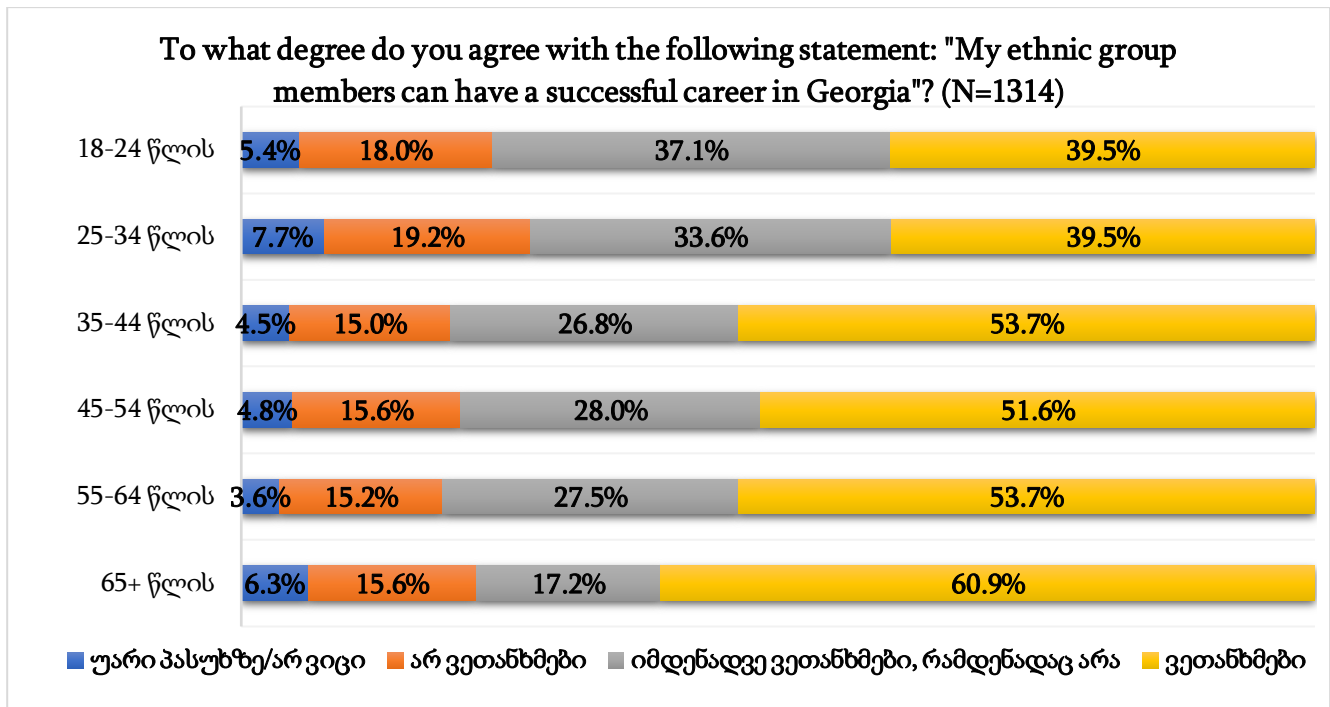
Diagram N28:



Note: the category “agree” includes the following responses: “fully agree” and “mostly agree“; while the category “do not agree” includes the following responses: “mostly disagree” and “fully disagree”.

Age-based analysis of the opinions on the above statements is notable. A trend is revealed that the respondents in the age ranges of 18-24 and 25-34 are rather critical when assessing the statements. The most notable differences are found between various age groups in regards to the following statement: “My ethnic group members can have a successful career in Georgia”. 39.5% of the respondents in the age ranges of 18-24 and 25-34 totally or mostly agree with this opinion, whereas the relevant percentage is over 50% in case of other age groups (see Diagram N29). Accordingly, there is less sense of cultural-political identity with the Georgian society in the younger generation.

Diagram N29:

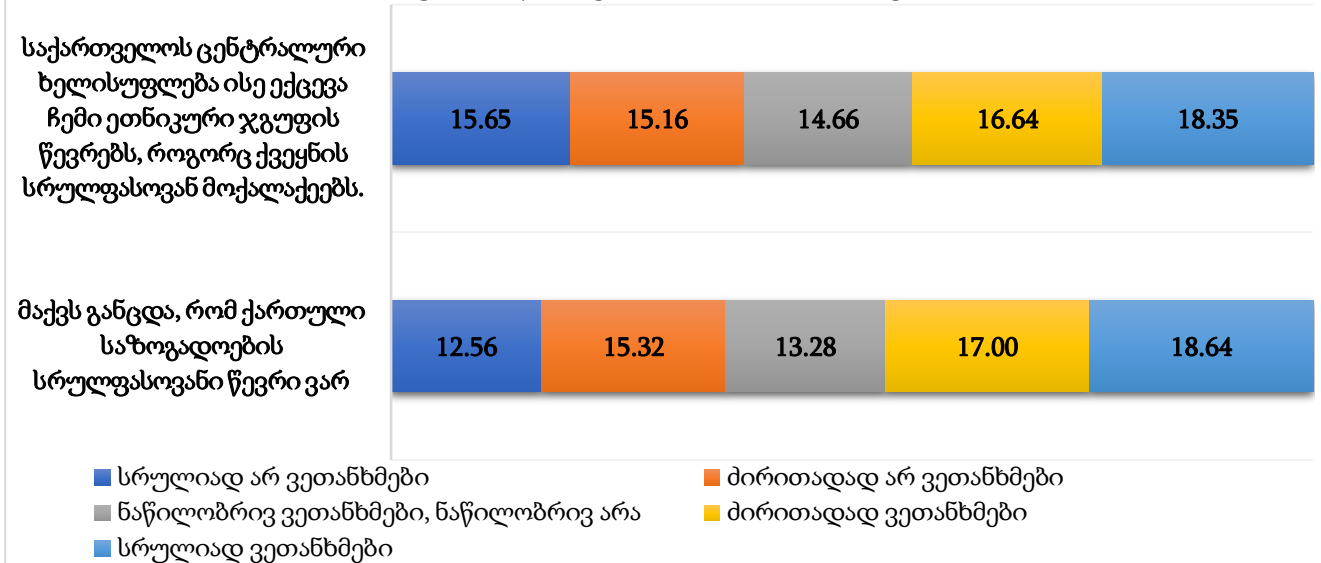


Note: the category “agree” includes the following responses: “fully agree” and “mostly agree“; while the category “do not agree” includes the following responses: “mostly disagree” and “fully disagree”.

The trend is almost similar in case of the following statement as well: „I have a feeling that I am a full-fledged member of the Georgian society“. 63.7% of the respondents in the age range of 18-24 and 60.7% of the respondents in the age range of 25-34 share this opinion (i.e. they “fully agree” or “mostly agree” with the statement). In other age groups, the same opinion is shared by at least 70% of the respondents. The perceptions of the study participants in regards to the full membership of the Georgian society are interrelated with the knowledge of Georgian language. The mean score on the index of the knowledge of Georgian language is low among the respondents who fully (mean score – 12.56) and mostly (mean score – 15.32) disagree with this statement; whereas the level of knowledge of the state language is higher among the study participants who mostly (mean score – 16.2) or fully (mean score – 18.64) agree with the statement (see Diagram N30).

Diagram N30:

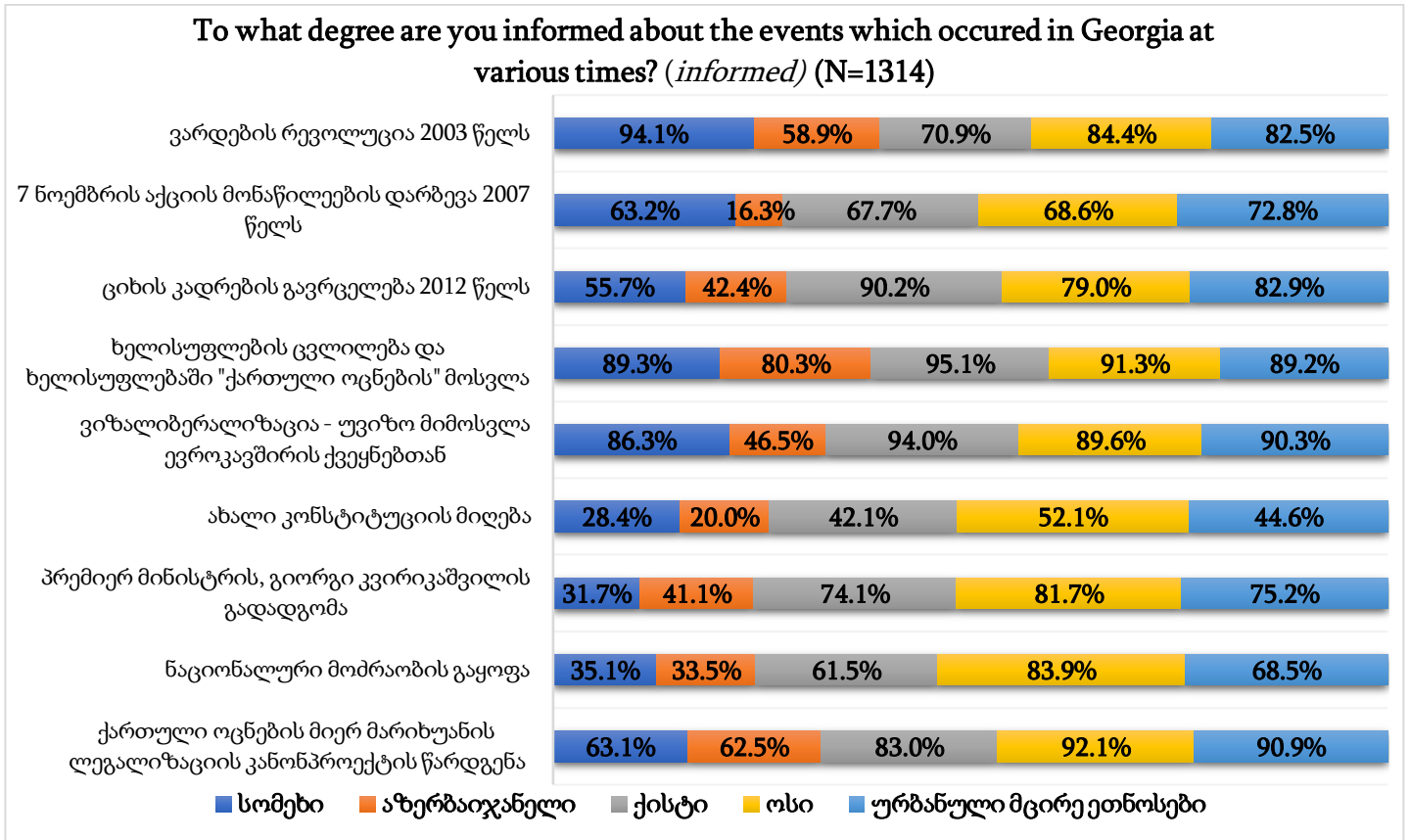
Index of the knowledge of Georgian language (out of 25 points) / To what degree do you agree with the following statements? (N=1314)



Having **information about the events taking place in the country** is important for political involvement. To find out the extent to which ethnic minority representatives are informed about the events taking place in the country, we selected the most important/crucial events which took place in the country at various times and asked the respondents to assess the degree to which they were informed about these events on a 4-point scale. On this scale, the score of 1 stood for “fully uninformed”, the score of 2 for – “rather uninformed than informed”, the score of 3 for – “rather informed than uninformed” and the score of 4 for – “fully informed”. As a result of changing the scale, we created the following categories: “uninformed”, “informed” and “have difficulty answering”. The highest level of awareness is revealed about the following events: war in August, 2008 (91.6% are informed/aware), change of the government and “Georgian Dream” coming to the government (89% are informed/aware), visa liberalization (82.5% are informed/aware), presenting the draft law on marijuana legalization by the “Georgian Dream” (80.1% are informed/aware) and Rose Revolution of 2003 (78.7% are informed/aware). Certain events have been identified about which less than half of the respondents are informed. 30.5% of the respondents are not informed and 9.7% of the respondents have difficulty answering or refuse to answer the question on the dispersal of the participants of the November 7th demonstration in 2007. Only 38.4% of the respondents are informed about the adoption of the new Constitution and 23.3% have difficulty answering or refuse to answer on this topic. When analyzed in terms of ethnic minorities, it has to be noted that the lowest level of awareness on each of the listed events is revealed in the Azeri community, with the Armenian community being the next in line. The level of awareness in these communities, in some cases, is significantly lower than the level of awareness of other group representatives. For example, 42.4% of the Azeri respondents and 57.7% of the Armenian respondents were informed (“fully informed” or “rather informed than not informed”) about the distribution of the prison footage in 2012; whereas a clear majority of the respondents in other groups knew about the noted event

(Kists - 90.2%, Ossetians - 79%, representatives of small sized urban ethnic groups - 71.8%) (See Diagram N31).

Diagram N31:

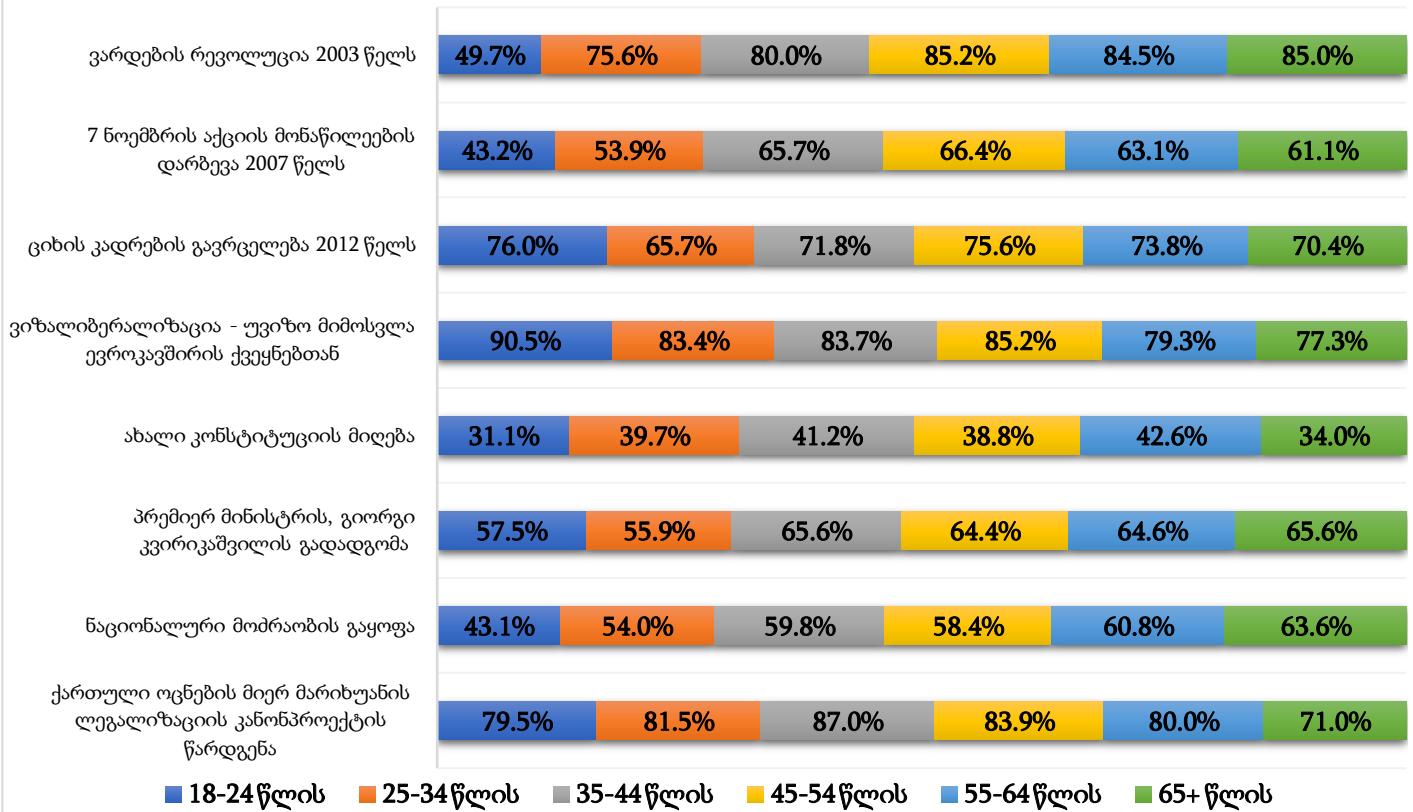


Note: category „informed” includes the two following responses: “rather informed than not informed” and “fully informed”.

Interesting trends are revealed when analyzing the data according to age groups as well. Among the respondents in the age range of 18-24, when compared to other age groups, the percentage of respondents who are informed (“fully informed” or “rather informed than not informed”) on the following events decreases: Rose Revolution in 2003 (49.7%), dispersal of the participants of the November 7th demonstration in 2007 (43.2%), and division of the National Movement (43.1%). The noted can be explained by the objective factor related to the age. In comparison with others, the level of awareness about visa free travel with the EU countries is relatively higher (90.5%) among these respondents (in the age range of 18-24); whereas the level of awareness about this event decreases with the increase in age: among the respondents over 65, the percentage of the respondents informed (“rather informed than not informed” or “fully informed”) about this event is 77.3% (see Diagram N32).

Diagram N32:

To what degree are you informed about the events which took place in the country at different times? (*informed*) (N=1314)



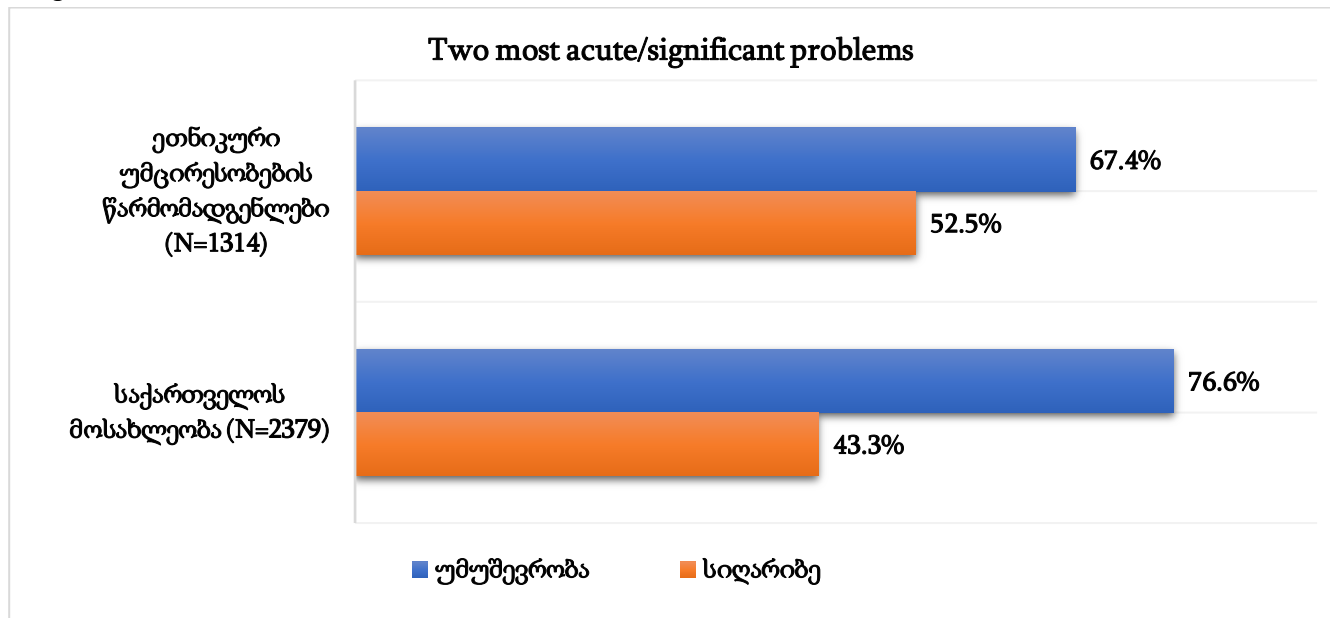
Note: category „informed” includes the two following responses: “rather informed than not informed” and “fully informed”.

It is also important to note that with the increase of the mean score on the index of the knowledge of Georgian language, respondents’ level of awareness increases about each of the above noted event. For example, the mean score on the index of the knowledge of Georgian language is 11.15 among the respondents who are fully unaware about the resignation of the Prime Minister, Giorgi Kvirikashvili. 14.85 is the mean score among the respondents who are rather informed than uninformed about this event; 16.71 is the mean score among those who are rather informed than uninformed, whereas 20 is the mean score of those who are fully informed.

The **socio-economic problems** that are important for the ethnic groups which the respondents represent have to be noted. The main problems named were the following: unemployment (67.4%) and poverty (52.5%). The problem of unemployment is emphasized as a more significant problem by men (73.9%) than women (61.4%). Within ethnic groups, the problem of unemployment is revealed as an important problem in the communities of Kists (85.9%), Armenians (84.7%) and Azeris (80%). The problem of poverty is almost similarly revealed in all ethnic groups, with special emphasis in the Azeri (65.3%) and Ossetian groups (61.2%).

It is interesting to study whether the major problems identified by the country’s population are in line with the concerns expressed by ethnic minority groups. As per the 2017 survey of Caucasus Barometer, the most important problem for the population in the country is unemployment (76.6%), followed by poverty (43.3%) (Caucasus Barometer, 2017). Therefore, we can conclude that the problems of unemployment and poverty are not exclusive for ethnic minority groups and they are significant across the whole country. However, it is interesting that **the problem of poverty is revealed more among ethnic minority groups** (see Diagram N33).

Diagram N33:



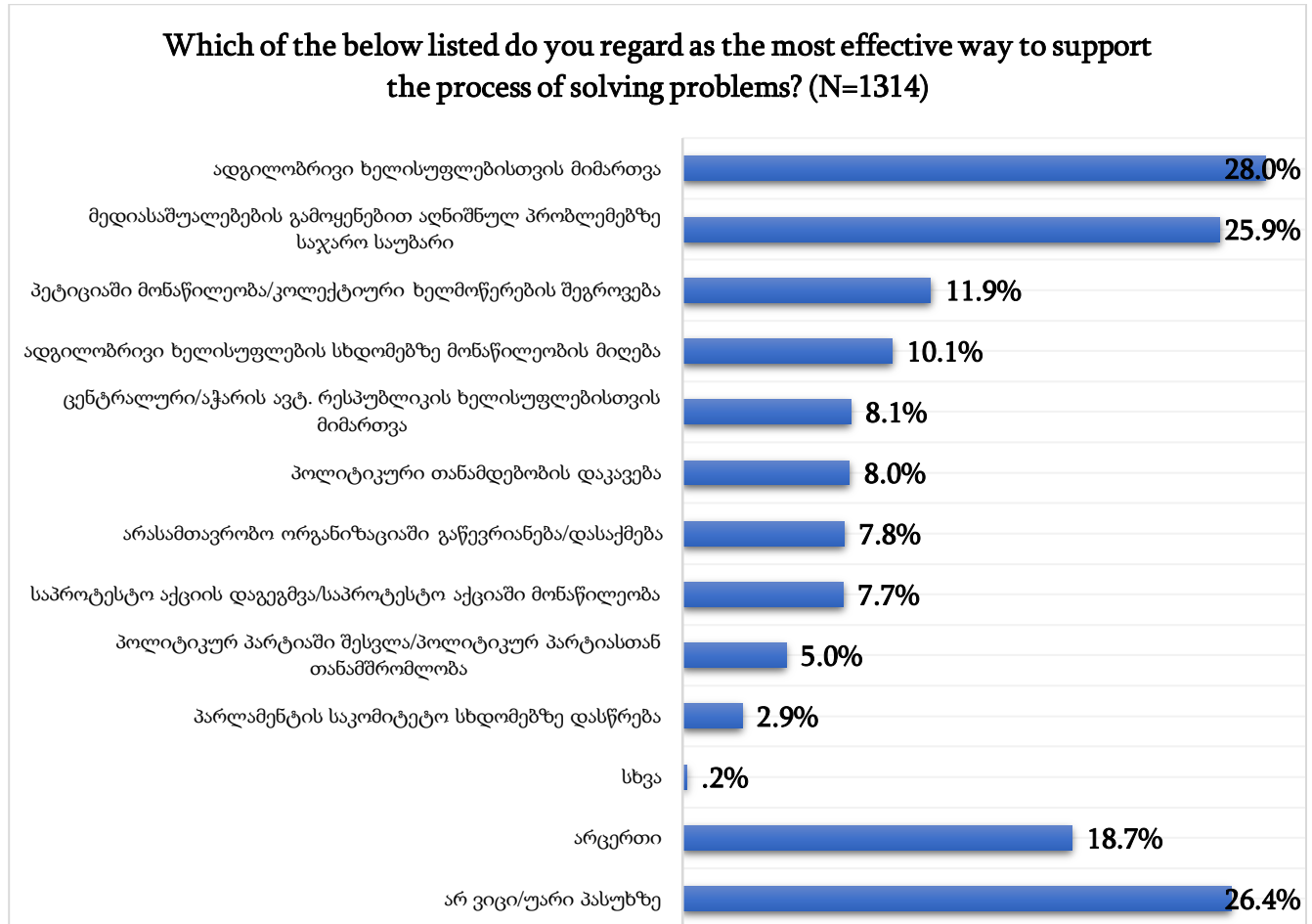
Note: Data on Georgian population is utilized from the results of the 2017 survey by Caucasus Barometer Georgia.

The study also reveals the significance of the problem related to the knowledge of the state language, especially, in the Azeri community. This problem is especially revealed by ethnically Azeri (43.5%) and Armenian (20.2%) respondents. Other acute problems are revealed within ethnic groups: in addition to the noted problems, access to healthcare (18.8%) and legalization of land plots (16.7%) are also problematic to the Azeri community. The Kist community reveals the following important problems for them: low quality of involvement in the public and political life of the country (19.4%), violation of the rights of their ethnic group representatives (18.5%) and problems related to the legalization of plots of land (18.3%). The following problems are revealed in the Ossetian community: the topic of legalization of plots of land (22.1%) and access to healthcare (19.5%). In case of small ethnic groups living in urban settlements, the problems of unemployment (42.5%) and poverty (42.1%) are mainly revealed.

In terms of **addressing the above noted problems, the respondents who indicated the existing problems also named the most effective ways to solve them.** The following ways were mainly identified: a) addressing the local government; and b) publically speaking about the noted problems through media (25.9%). It has to be noted that 14.8% of the respondents do not know which method can be effective; whereas 11.6% of the

respondents think that none of the listed methods can bring about changes. In addition to the listed ways of solving the problems, within ethnic groups, the following methods of solving problems were prioritized: participation in the meetings of the local government in the Armenian community (21.3%), and participation in a petition/collecting joint signatures in the Azeri community (35.8%) (See Diagram N34).

Diagram N34:

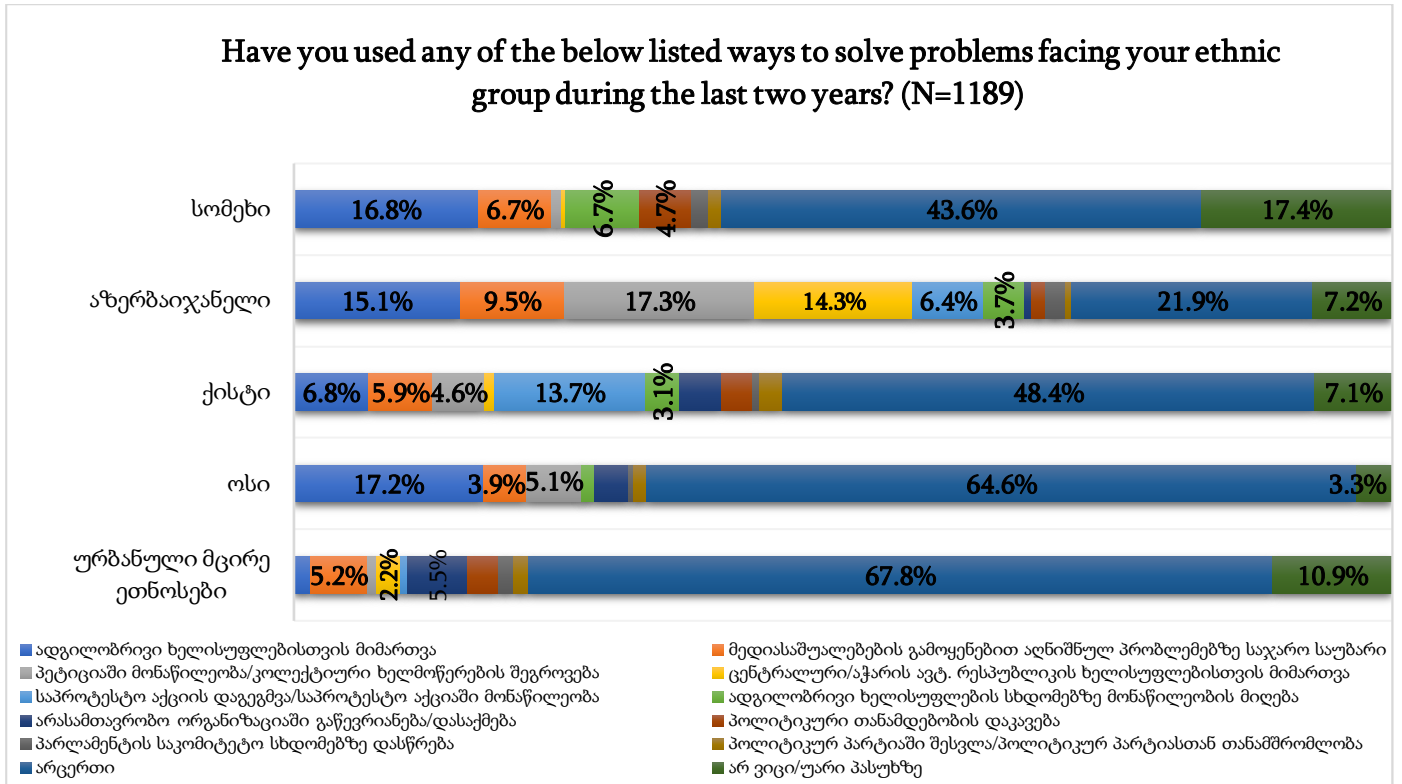


Note: More than one response could be selected for this question; therefore, the sum of data frequencies on the diagram exceeds 100%.

The survey also revealed **methods used by the respondents for advocating for/solving problems during the last two years. Approximately half of the respondents (47.1%) had not used any method of political participation in this time period.** In sum, **only 11% of the respondents had addressed the local government, 6.5% had spoken publicly about problems via media and 6.5% had taken part in collecting joint signatures.** 8.1% of the respondents say that they did not have information about these methods of political participation. The situation is the following in the specific ethnic groups: 16.7% of the respondents from the Armenian community have experience of addressing the local government; whereas this figure is 15.1% in the Azeri community, 6.9% among Kist respondents, 16.9% among Ossetian respondents, and 1.5% among the respondents from small urban ethnic groups.

It also has to be noted that in some ethnic groups, unlike the main trend, alternative methods are also revealed. For example, 13.7% of the respondents in the Kist community have tried to plan/participate in protest demonstrations to solve problems, and 17.3% of the respondents in the Azeri community have participated in collecting joint signatures (see Diagram N35).

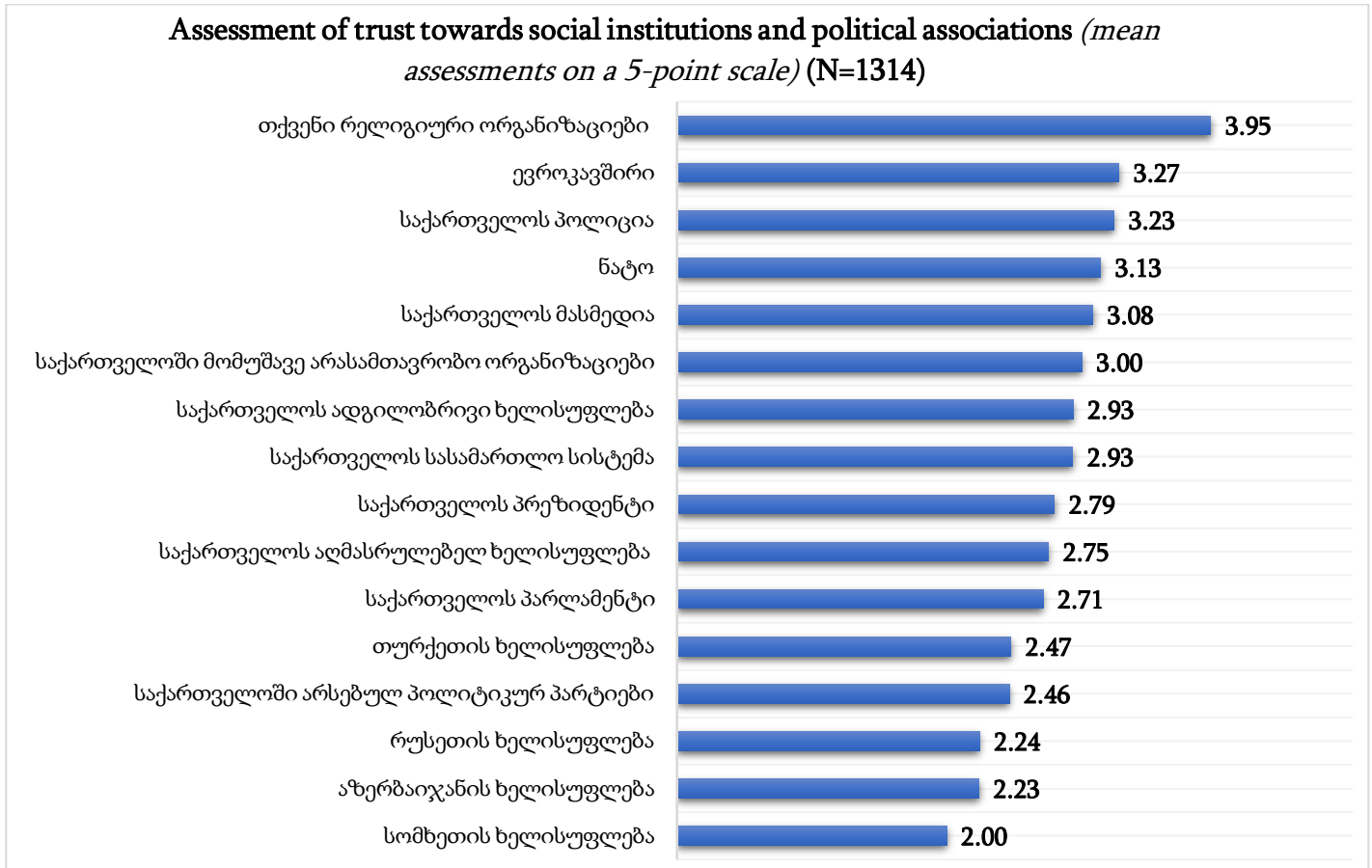
Diagram N35:



An important issue to study is **the study participants' trust towards political systems, organizations and countries**. Respondents assessed each of the listed agency/country/organization on a 5-point scale of trust. 1 on this scale stands for: “fully distrust”, 3 – trust as much as distrust and 5 – “fully trust”. The score of 3 is a neutral assessment, whereas a mean score under 3 is considered a negative assessment and a mean score over 3 is considered a positive assessment. As per the study outcomes, especially high level of trust is revealed from respondents towards their religious institutions (mean score on a 5-point scale - 3.95, average standard deviation - 1.233, median - 4). The Armenian community representatives (4.46) and the Kist respondents (4.4) have especially high level of trust towards the religious organizations in their community. The following organizations/systems are also distinguished by the positive level of trust: European Union (mean - 3.27), Georgian police (mean - 3.23), NATO (mean - 3.13) and mass media (mean - 3.13). The following institutions/systems also enjoy positive level of trust: European Union (mean - 3.27) and the Georgian Police (mean - 3.23). The following institutions are the closest to the neutral point, but on the positive side: NATO (mean - 3.13) and mass media (mean - 3.13). Ethnic minorities revealed evident distrust towards the governments of Armenia (mean - 2), Azerbaijan (mean - 2.23) and Russia (mean - 2.24). The following institutions also fell on the side of distrust: political parties in Georgia (mean - 2.46), the government of

Turkey (mean - 2.47), the Parliament of Georgia (mean - 2.71), the Government of Georgia (mean - 2.75) and the President of Georgia (mean - 2.71) (see Diagram N36).

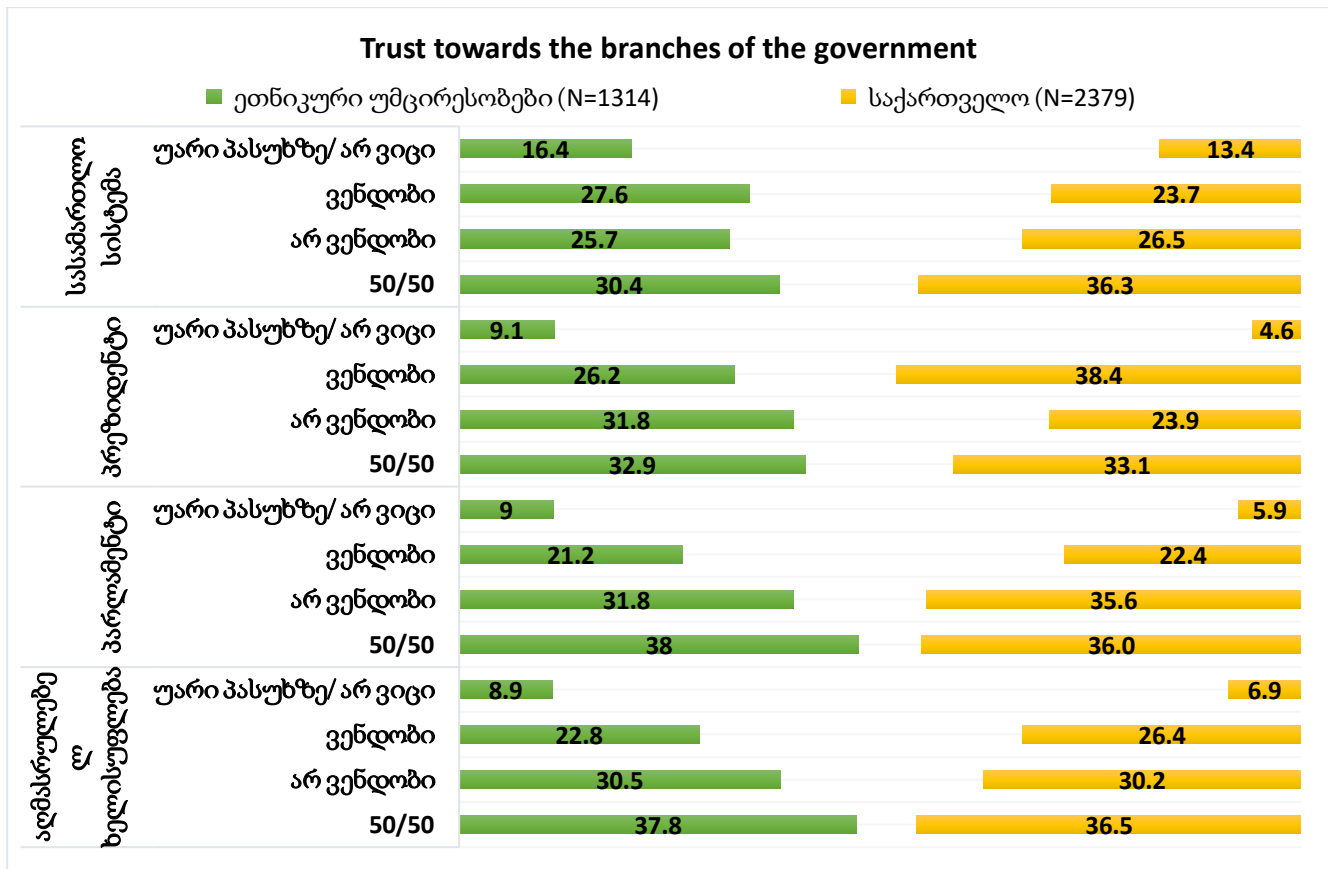
Diagram N36:



The attitudes of the respondents towards the branches of the Government of Georgia are negative and almost equal: the mean score is in the interval of 2.7-2.95. The level of trust towards these branches is relatively positive (i.e. mean assessment is slightly higher than 3) among Armenian and Azeri respondents.

We have to note the general attitudes of the Georgian population and their contrast with the attitudes of ethnic minority groups in terms of the level of trust towards various bodies/organizations. The 2017 survey of Caucasus Barometer also reveals that the level of trust towards the branches of the government is generally low in the country. Only 22% of the population trust (“mostly trust” or “fully trust”) the Parliament, 26% trust the executive government, 24% trust the court system, and 62% trust the institution of the President (high level of trust is revealed in case of the President) (Caucasus Barometer, 2017). As per the study of ethnic minorities, 21.2% of the respondents trust (“mostly trust” or “fully trust”) the Parliament, 22.9% trust the executive government, and 27.5% trust the court system. The level of trust is clearly low towards the President among ethnic minority groups compared to the general population – only 26.2% of the respondents from ethnic minorities trust the institution of the President (see Diagram N37).

Diagram N37:

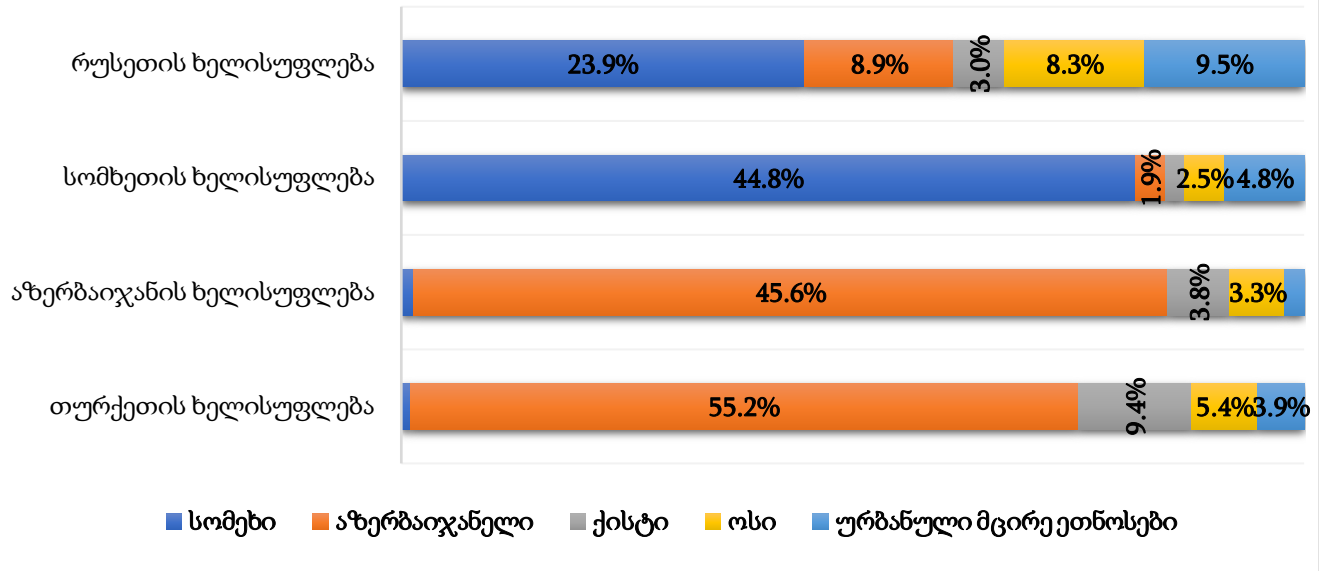


Note: The data on the population of Georgia is utilized from the results of the 2017 survey of Caucasus Barometer Georgia.

The lowest level of trust and therefore, the highest level of distrust is expressed by the respondents towards the governments of Armenia (mean - 2, on a 5-point scale), Azerbaijan (mean - 2.23) and Russia (2.24). Slightly different trends are revealed towards the noted systems/organizations/country governments within ethnic minority groups. Representatives of the Armenian community express significantly low level of trust towards the government of Turkey (mean - 1.59, standard deviation - 0.986, median - 1). Respondents from the Azeri community express negative opinions and the lowest level of trust towards the government of Armenia (mean - 1.41, standard deviation - 0.734, median - 1). Kist respondents trust the government of Russia the least (mean - 1.41, standard deviation - 0.849, median - 1). Representatives of the Ossetian community have the lowest level of trust towards the governments of Armenia (mean - 1.44, standard deviation - 0.94, median - 1) and Azerbaijan (mean - 1.49, standard deviation - 1.04, median - 1). The representatives of the small urban communities have the lowest level of trust towards the government of Azerbaijan (mean - 1.42, standard deviation - 0.89, median - 1) (see Diagram N38).

Diagram N38:

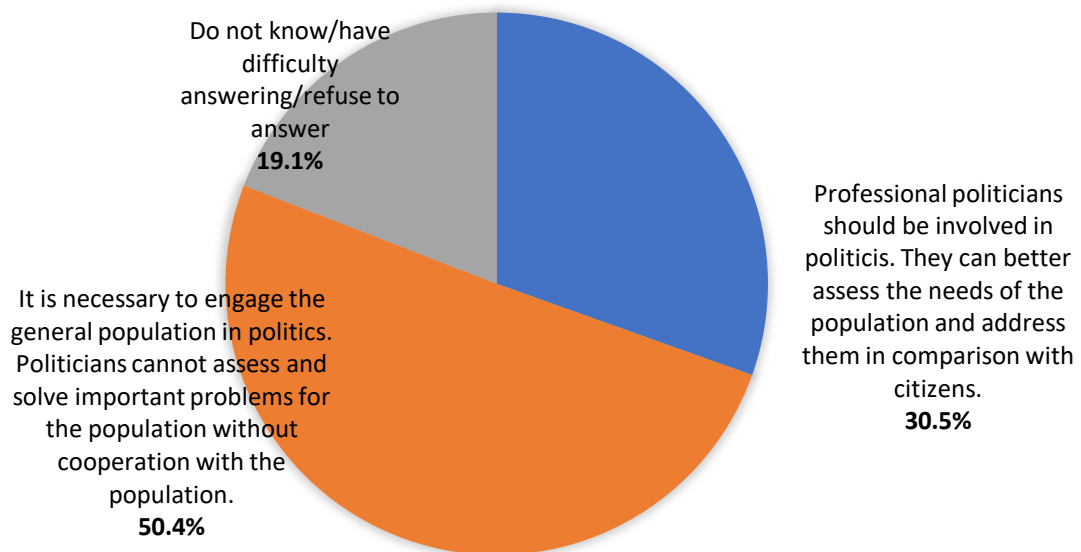
Assessment of trust towards social institutions and political associations
(mostly trust and fully trust) (N=1314)



Perceptions towards the role and obligations of politicians are also interesting. We offered two statements to the respondents about the relationship between citizens and politicians out of which they had to name the one which they agreed with more. The study showed that **every second respondent declares that they support political inclusion**, as 50.4% share the following opinion: “It is necessary to engage the general population in politics. Politicians cannot assess and solve important problems for the population without cooperation with the population”. About a third of the respondents support political elitism, as 30% agree with the following alternative statement: “Professional politicians should be involved in politics. They can better assess the needs of the population and address them in comparison with citizens“. It has to be noted that 18.6% of the respondents had difficulty stating their opinion on which statement they agree with more (see Diagram N39).

Diagram N39:

Out of the two statements provided, which one do you agree with? (N=1314)

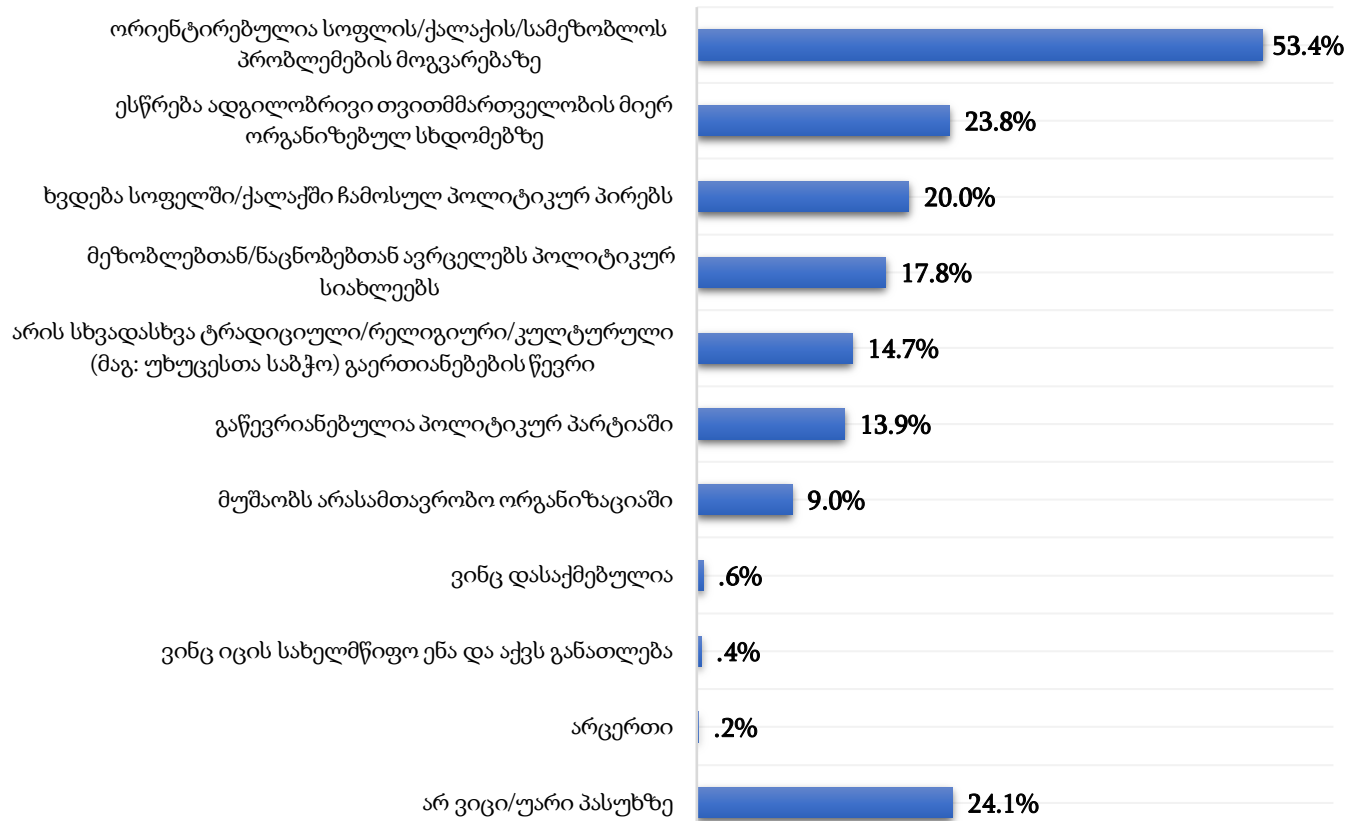


It is important to understand **how respondents operationalize the concept “active citizen”**. The respondents regard the focus on addressing problems in their settlement as the main criterion for an active citizen (53.4%). Next positions were taken by the following characteristics: attending meetings organized by the local self-government (23.8%) and meeting with the politicians visiting the settlement (20%) (See Diagram N40). It has to be noted that 12.4% of the respondents had difficulty answering the question. If analyzed in terms of ethnicity, 41.6% of the respondents from the Ossetian community, 32.4% from the Azeri community, 27.3% out of the Kist respondents, 26.9% of the representatives of the small sized urban ethnic groups and 22.7% of the representatives of the Armenian group think that the main criteria of an active citizen is being focused on addressing the problems in their settlement. Other criteria are also revealed in various ethnic groups: 22.9% of the respondents from the Armenian community regard people who are members in a political party as active citizens, whereas 16.2% of the respondents in the Kist community think that people who are members of various traditional/religious/cultural unions/associations (for example, the council of elders) are active citizens.

Diagram N40:

Who can be called an "active citizen"?

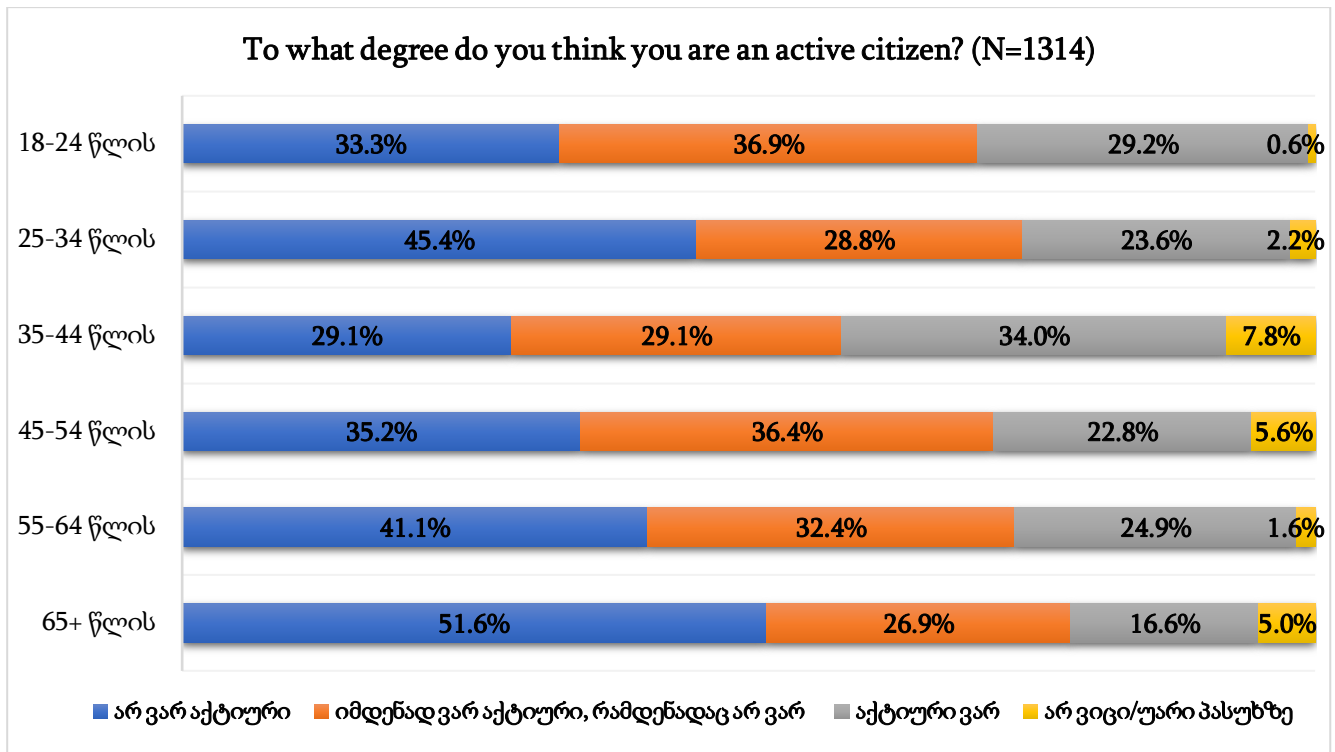
(N=1314)



Note: More than one response could be provided to this question; therefore, the sum of frequencies of the data presented on the diagram exceeds 100%.

It is interesting how **the respondents perceive themselves in terms of political participation and whether they perceive themselves as active citizens**, as per their own definition. The largest group of the study participants (40.3%) thinks that they are not active (“I am not active at all” and “I am rather not active than active”); a quarter of the respondents (24.5%) perceive themselves as active citizens (“I am rather active than not” and “I am very active”). Within ethnic minority groups, Kist respondents (36.1%) perceive themselves as active citizens to a larger extent in comparison with other groups (“I am rather active than not” and “I am very active”). In terms of age, it has to be noted that the respondents in the age ranges of 18-24 (29.2%) and 35-44 (34%) perceive themselves as relatively active, whereas the respondents who are over 65 and in the age range of 25-34 are the most critical towards their own level of activism (see Diagram N41).

Diagram N41:



Note: The category “I am active” includes the following two responses: “I am very active” and “I am rather active than not”; whereas the category „I am not active” includes the following responses: “I am rather not active than active” and “I am not active at all”.

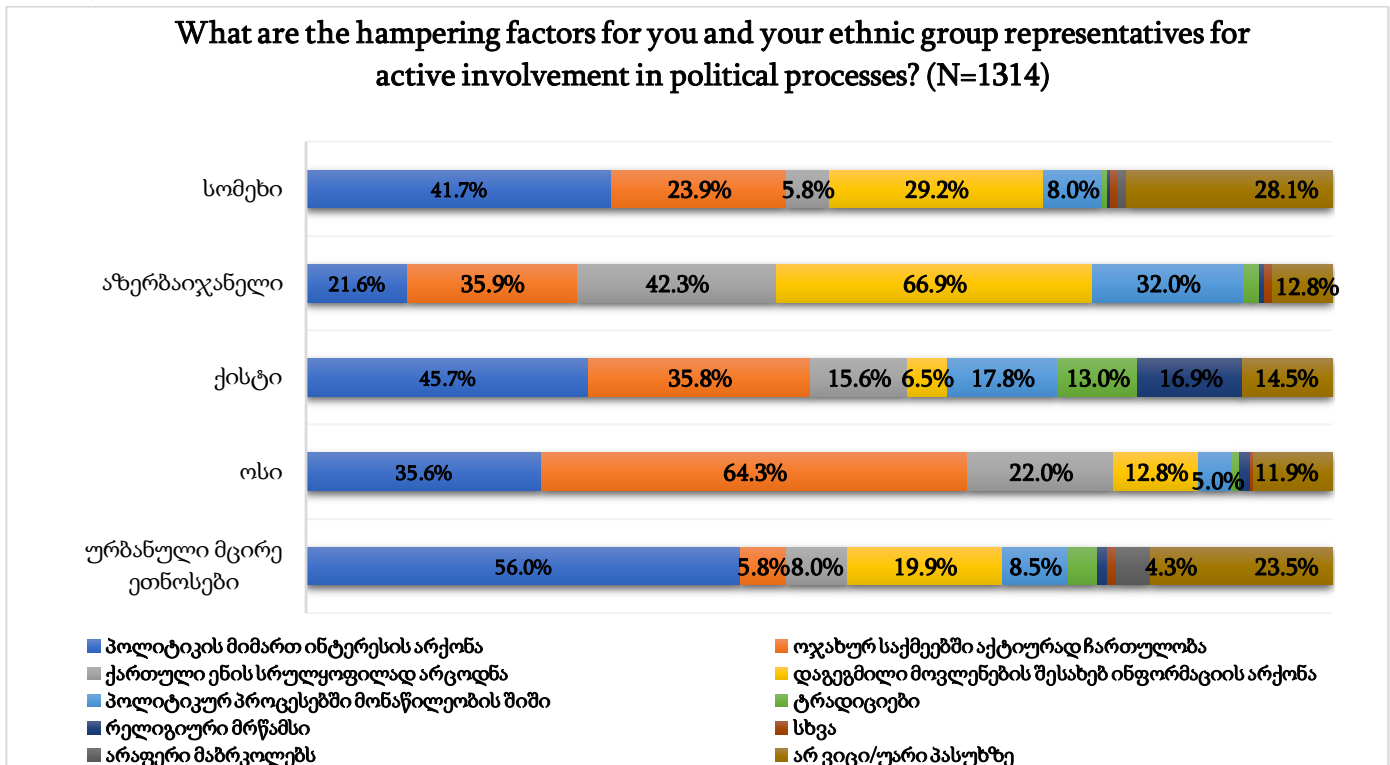
The statistical analysis, namely, **the logistical multi regression model reveals that perception of oneself as an active citizen is interrelated with the respondents’ gender, educational level achieved, amount of income and level of knowledge of Georgian language.** As for the difference between gender categories, it was revealed that **in case of women, the coefficient is negative** in terms of identifying oneself as an active citizen which means that the chances of perceiving oneself as an active citizen are different in case of men. Moreover, the noted chances are lower in case of women (chance coefficient - 0.79, Signif. code=0.001). In terms of education, it has to be noted that the coefficient of this variable is positive which shows that perception of oneself as an active citizen increases with the increase in the educational level (Signif. code=0). Such interrelation is revealed also in regards to the variables of income and knowledge of Georgian language: with the increase of these variable, respondents’ attitudes in terms of perceiving themselves as active citizens also increase (Signif. code=0).

In addition, it is important to consider **the factors which may hamper respondents from active participation in political activities** (such as, for example, local self-government meetings, political party membership, participation in demonstrations, participation in the elections campaigns, etc.). The following factors were revealed to be the main hampering factors for political participation: lack of interest towards politics (42.7%), active engagement in family affairs (28.3%), and incomplete knowledge of Georgian language (26.2%). It is interesting to see how these hampering factors are distributed among ethnic minority groups: the factor –

“lack of interest towards politics” – is especially relevant to the small sized urban ethnic groups (56%); the factor – “active engagement in family affairs” – is especially relevant to the Ossetian community (64.3%); while the factor – “incomplete knowledge of Georgian language” is especially relevant to the respondents in the Azeri community (66.9%).

In addition, the respondents of the Azeri community reveal another hampering factor – lack of information on the planned events (42.3%). As for the traditions and religious beliefs as barriers to political participation, these factors are less important in almost all ethnic groups except for the Kist community where there are relatively high figures revealed in regards to religious beliefs (16.9%) and traditions (13%). In terms of gender analysis, it is interesting that almost identical trends are revealed in case of both groups in regards to the hampering factors to political participation; i.e. hampering factors to political participation do not differ in regards to gender (see Diagram N42).

Diagram N42:

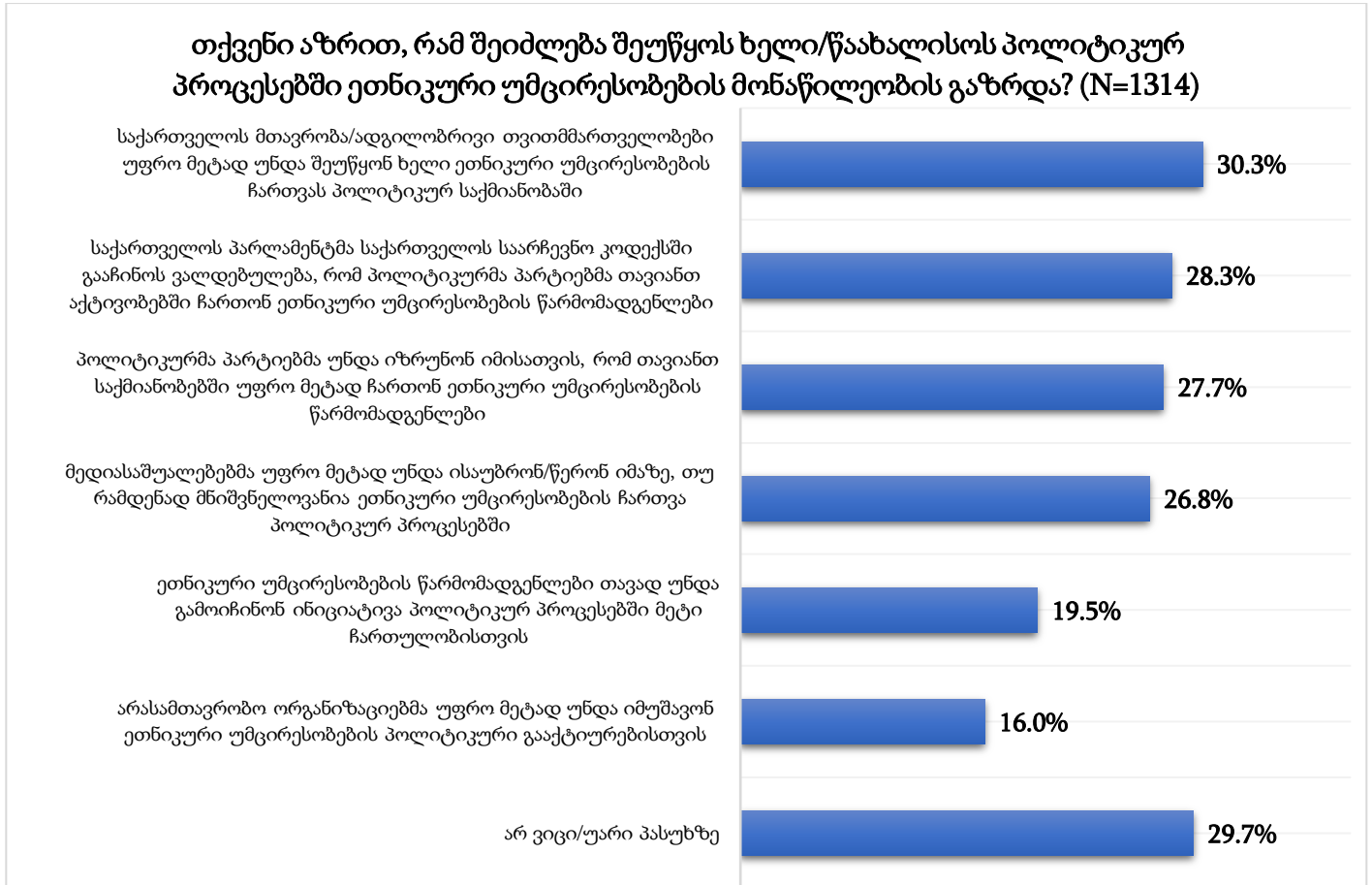


Note: More than one response could be provided to this question; therefore, the sum of frequencies of the responses presented on the diagram exceeds 100%.

Respondents spoke about the factors which, in their opinion, can **support/encourage enhancement of participation of ethnic minorities in political processes**. Respondents agree on all the statements offered in the questionnaire almost equally. A trend should be noted according to which a larger part of women (33%) had difficulty naming the needed supporting factors compared to men (22.4%). The following two factors were mainly supported in the Armenian and Azeri communities: 1. Georgian government/local self-governments should support engagement of ethnic minorities in political activity more (43.6% and 47%); and 2. Political parties should work to better engage ethnic minority representatives in their activities (45% and 44.5%). Kist

respondents share the following opinion to a greater extent: in order to enhance political engagement, it is necessary for the Parliament of Georgia to include an obligation in the Electoral Code of Georgia for political parties to include ethnic minority representatives in their activities (59.9%). The following opinion is quite popular in the Ossetian community (40.8%): if media sources talk/write about the importance of the engagement of ethnic minorities in political processes more actively, this will enhance the political participation of ethnic minorities (see Diagram N43).

Diagram N43:



Note: More than one response could be provided to this question; therefore, the sum of the frequencies of the responses presented on the diagram exceeds 100%.

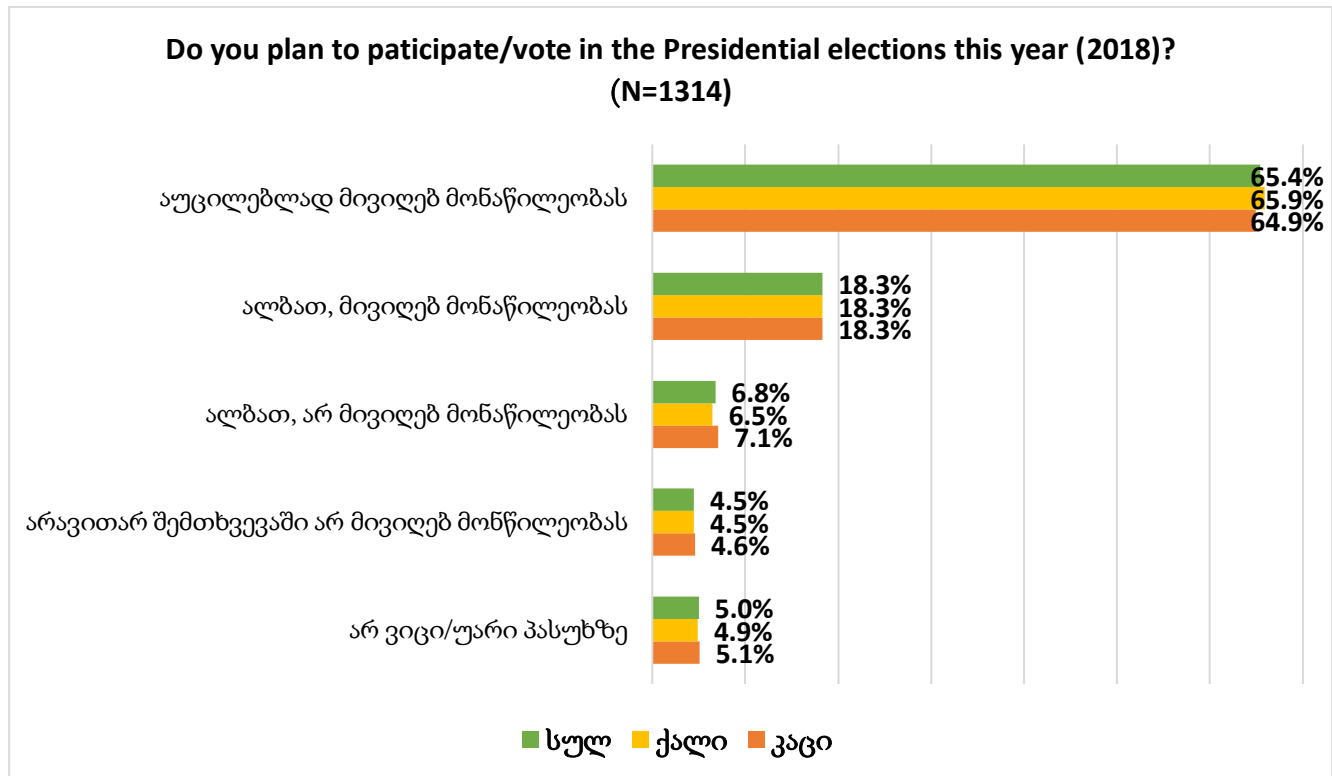
5.4 Participation in the elections

The electoral system is an important constitutional and legal institution which plays one of the most important roles in the political participation of ethnic minorities. Therefore, it is interesting to find out whether they are involved in the electoral process, how active their involvement is, where they receive information about parties and candidates from, etc.

In response to the question on whether they plan to vote in the Presidential elections of 2018, 65.5% of the respondents surveyed during field work said that they were necessarily planning on voting in the elections,

whereas 18.3% said that they would probably vote in the elections. There are no gender differences in terms of the readiness/willingness to vote in the elections.

Diagram N44:

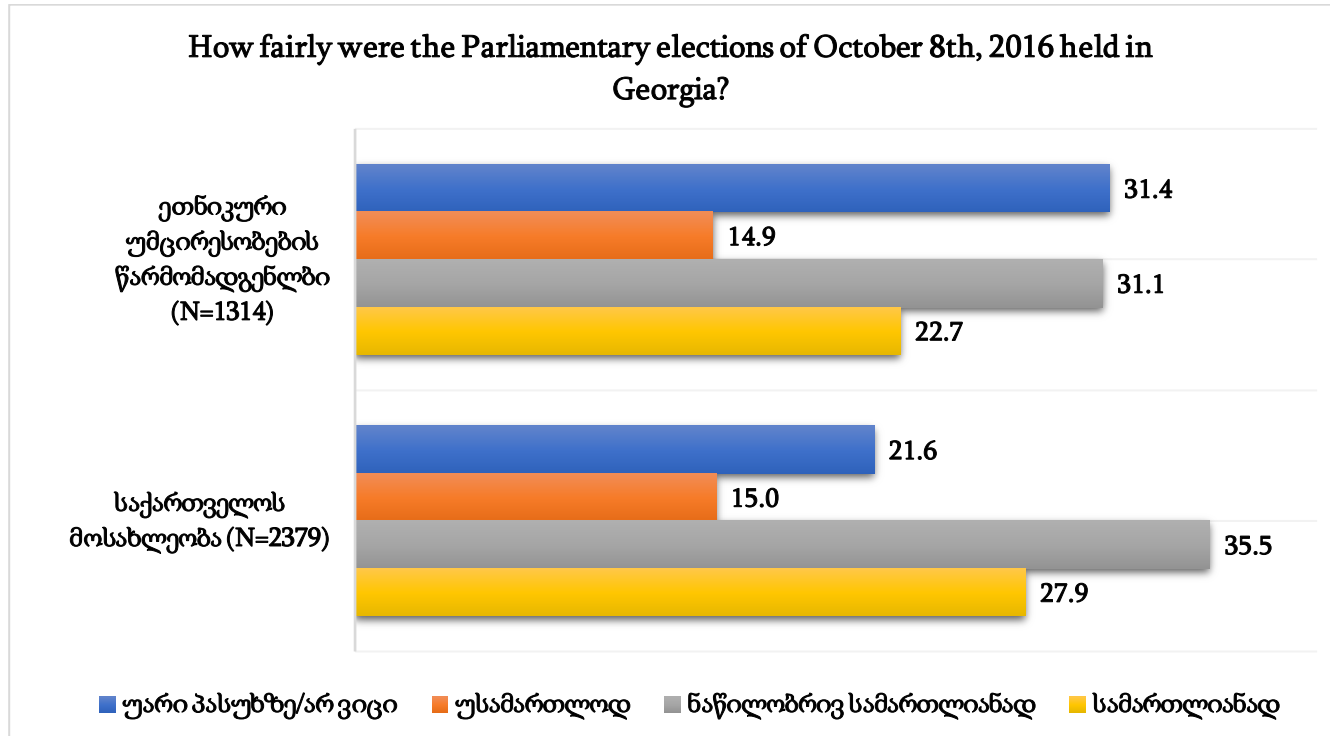


It was also important to find out whether the respondents participated/voted in the elections held on the October 8th, 2016. Majority of the respondents - 74.5% stated that they took part in the elections, whereas 20.7% stated that they did not. These data are in line with the 2017 survey results by the Caucasus Barometer in which 74% of the population of Georgia stated that they had taken part in the elections on the October 8th, 2016, whereas 25% stated that they had not (Caucasus Barometer, 2017). However, these data are not in line with the reality, as 51.94% of the population took part in the elections in 2016 (The Elections Administration of Georgia, 2016). Practices of voting are interesting in various ethnic minorities. This information is available for various municipalities on the website of the Elections Administration of Georgia; however, discussion of these statistical data is irrelevant towards the groups studied within the survey, as the data are not related to the specific ethnic groups which are the target groups of the present study.

In addition to the participation in the elections, it was also interesting to find out the attitudes of respondents towards the elections held in 2016. In response to the question on whether the Parliamentary elections of 2016 were held in a just and fair manner, 29.8% do not know the response, 14.9% think that the elections were held in an absolutely unfair manner, 31.1% think that they were held partially in a fair manner, whereas 22.7% think that they were held in an absolutely fair manner. These assessments are also almost in line with

the results of the 2017 survey of the population by the Caucasus Barometer where 15% of the respondents said that the last Parliamentary elections were held in an absolutely unfair manner, 35.5% noted that they were held in a partially fair manner, whereas 27.9% said that they were held in a fair manner (Caucasus Barometer, 2017) (see Diagram N45).

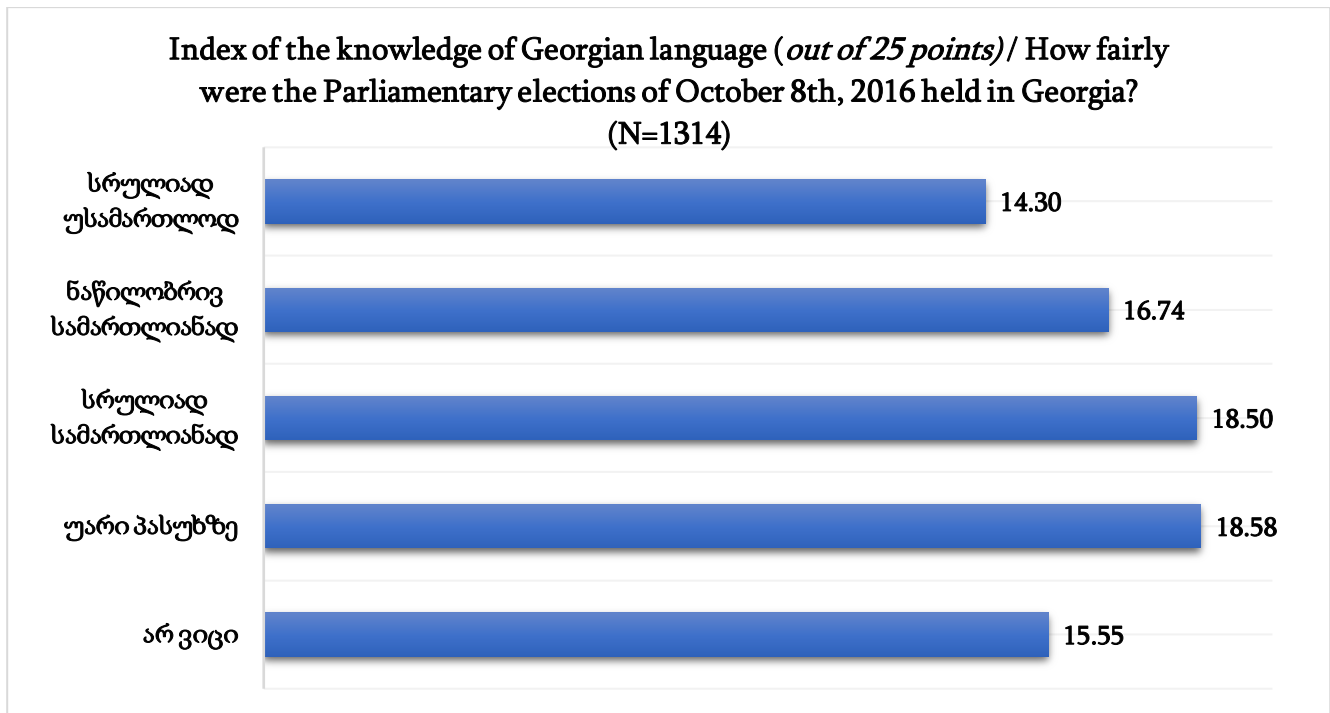
Diagram N45:



Note: The data on the population of Georgia is utilized from the 2017 survey results by the Caucasus Barometer.

It is important that the variable of the knowledge of Georgian language is interlinked with the perception of fairness of the elections. The mean score on the index of the knowledge of Georgian language is high (18.5) among the respondents who think that the Parliamentary elections of 2016 were held in an absolutely fair manner in comparison with those who think that the elections were held in a partially (mean - 16.74) or absolutely unfair manner (mean - 14.3) (see Diagram N46).

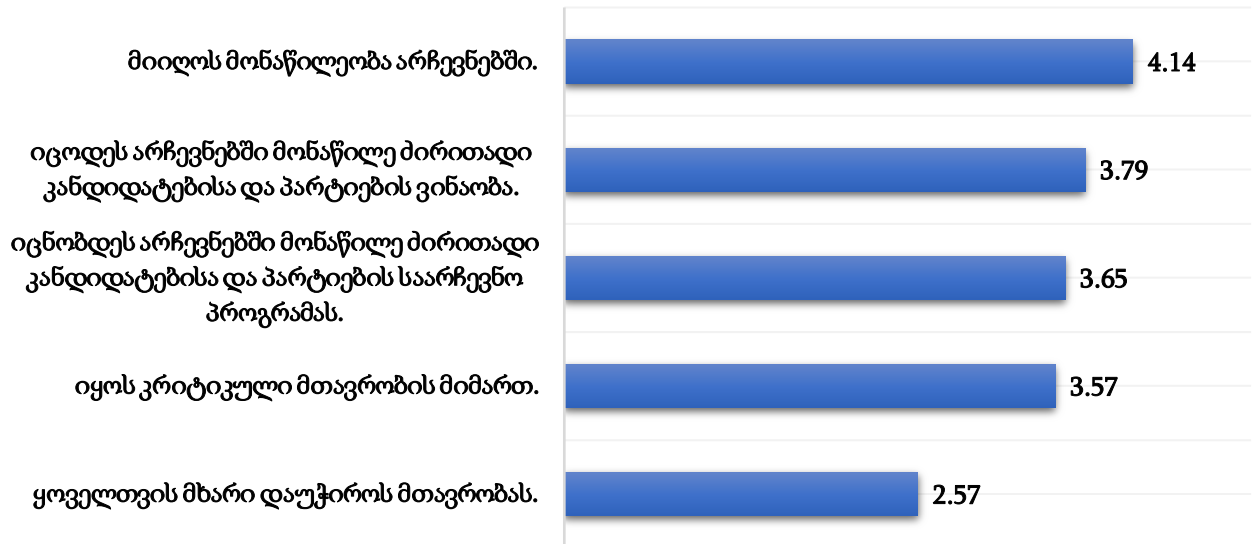
Diagram N46:



Respondents were read out loud the statements on **what a good citizen's behavior should be like in regards to the elections**. The study participants assessed the statements on a 5-point scale on which 1 stood for “fully disagree”, 3 – “agree as much as disagree” and 5 – “fully agree“. The neutral score is 3; the mean assessment over 3 is regarded as positive, whereas the mean score lower than 3 is regarded as negative. It is revealed that respondents most often agree with the statement that “a good citizen should take part in the elections” (mean - 4.11, standard deviation - 1.09, median - 4). As for the statement according to which “a good citizen should know who the main candidates and parties in the elections are“, mean score is 3.83 (standard deviation - 1.10, and median - 4). As for the statement on whether “a good citizen should know the electoral program of the main candidates and parties participating in the elections”, the mean figure for the responses provided by the respondents is 3.63 (standard deviation - 1.13, and median - 4). Respondents agree with the statement that “a good citizen should be critical towards the government” with relatively less enthusiasm. The mean score of the agreement with this statement is 3.49 (standard deviation - 1.17, and median - 3). **Respondents have negative attitudes towards the opinion that “a good citizen should always support the Government” (mean - 2.59, standard deviation - 1.22, and median - 3)** (see Diagram N47).

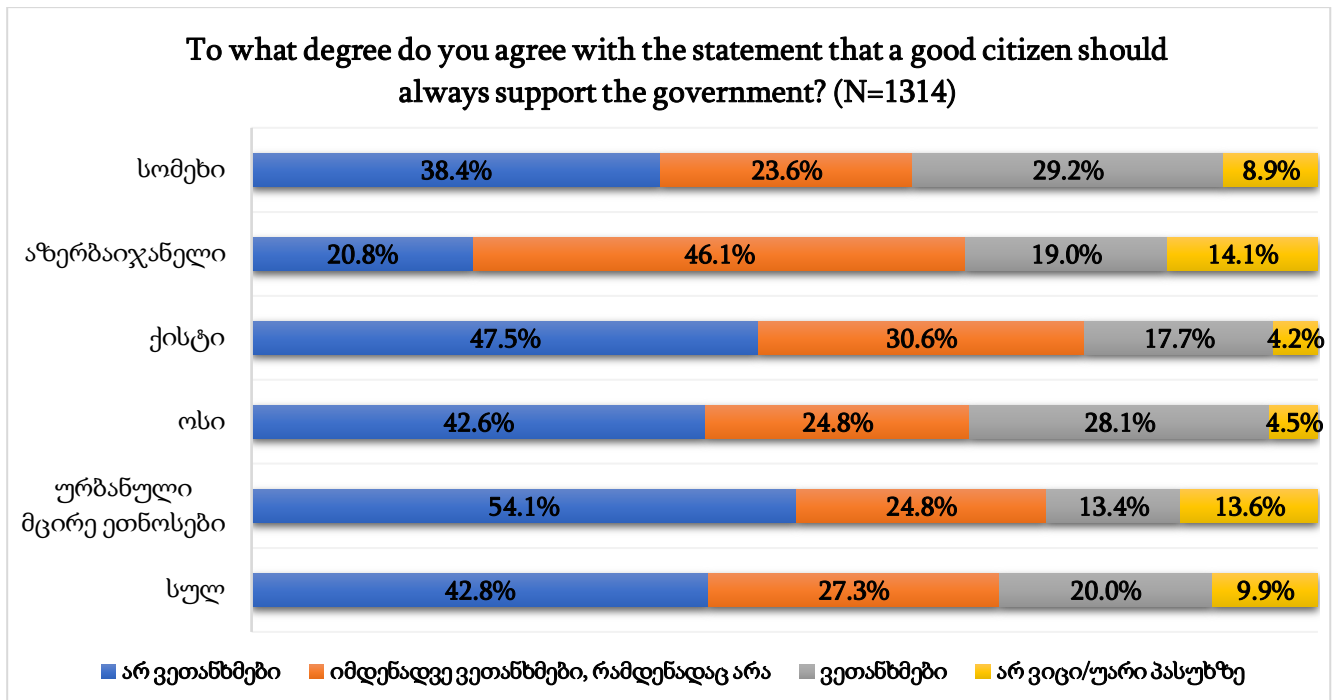
Diagram N47:

To what extent do you agree with the below listed statements on what a good citizen's behavior should be like (mean score on a 5-point scale) (N=1314)



The last statement is especially interesting as there is a stereotype in regards to ethnic minorities that they always support the government which provides a good opportunity to the governing party to avoid spending resources and to win in the elections. In order to better illustrate this statement, it's interesting to analyze the data in terms of ethnic minority groups. 38.4% of the respondents from the Armenian community do not agree ("do not agree at all" or "mostly disagree") with this statement; whereas the same figures are 20.8% in case of the Azeri community, 47.5% in case of the Kists, 42.6% in case of the Ossetians, and 54.1% in case of the representatives of small sized urban ethnic groups (see Diagram N48).

Diagram N48:



Note: The category „agree” includes the following two responses: “mostly agree” and “fully agree”; whereas the category “disagree” includes “mostly disagree” and “fully disagree”.

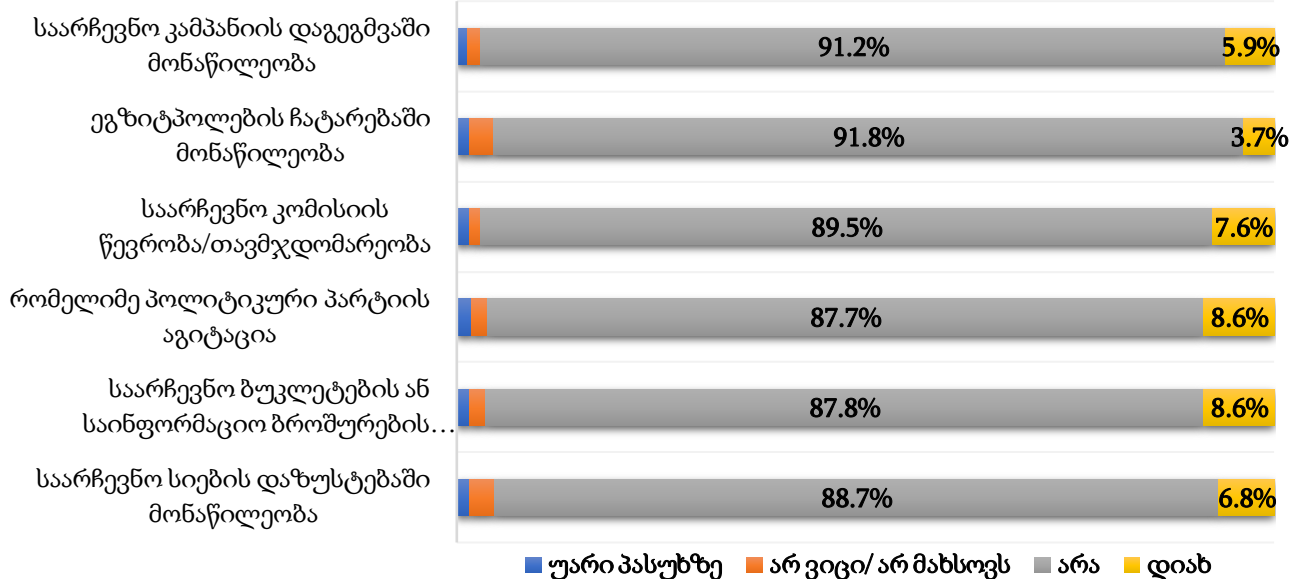
In order to measure the level of participation in political processes, it was important to find out whether the respondents were engaged in the election campaigns or in the elections directly.

The survey reveals that 91.2% of the respondents have never taken part in the planning of the elections campaign, while only 5.9% of the respondents have done so. Only 3.7% of the respondents have taken part in conducting exit polls, whereas 91.8% have not done so. As for the membership/chairing of the elections commission, 7.6% of the respondents have been involved in the commission, whereas 89.5% have not done so. Relatively higher percentage of the respondents – 8.6% have been involved in promotion of the political party, whereas 87.7% have not done so. As for participation in the distribution of the informational flyers on the elections, 8.6% of the respondents have also been involved in this process, whereas 87.8% have not done so. Finally, 6.8% of the respondents have taken part in checking the elections lists, whereas 88.7% have not done so (see Diagram N49).

Diagram N49:

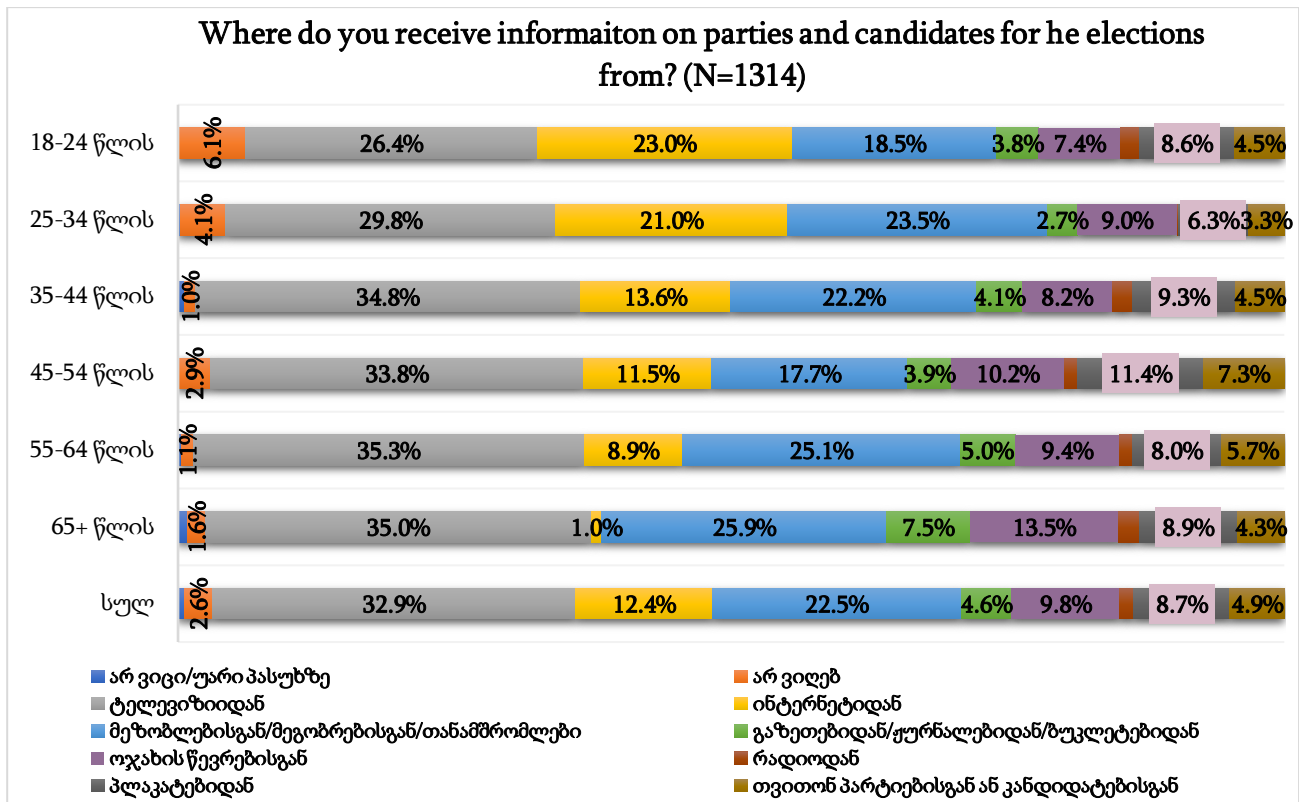
Have you been involved in the following activities related to the elections?

(N=1314)



In order to find out the level of awareness on the electoral system and parties, it was important to find out **where the respondents get information about parties and candidates for the elections from**. The respondents named several sources of information: 32% receive this information from television, 22.5% - from neighbors/friends or co-workers, 9.8% - from family members, and 8.7% - from billboards. It has to be noted that only 12.4% make use of internet materials to find information on parties and candidates in the elections. Only 2.6% do not receive this information at all. Similar trends are revealed when gender analysis is conducted in terms of using information sources on the electoral systems and parties; i.e. the sources for receiving information do not vary in terms of gender. It has to be noted that the respondents who are 35 and older receive information from television more compared to the respondents who are younger than 35. In addition, the youth in the age range of 18-34, in comparison with other age groups, use internet more actively to receive information on the elections (see Diagram N50).

Diagram N50:



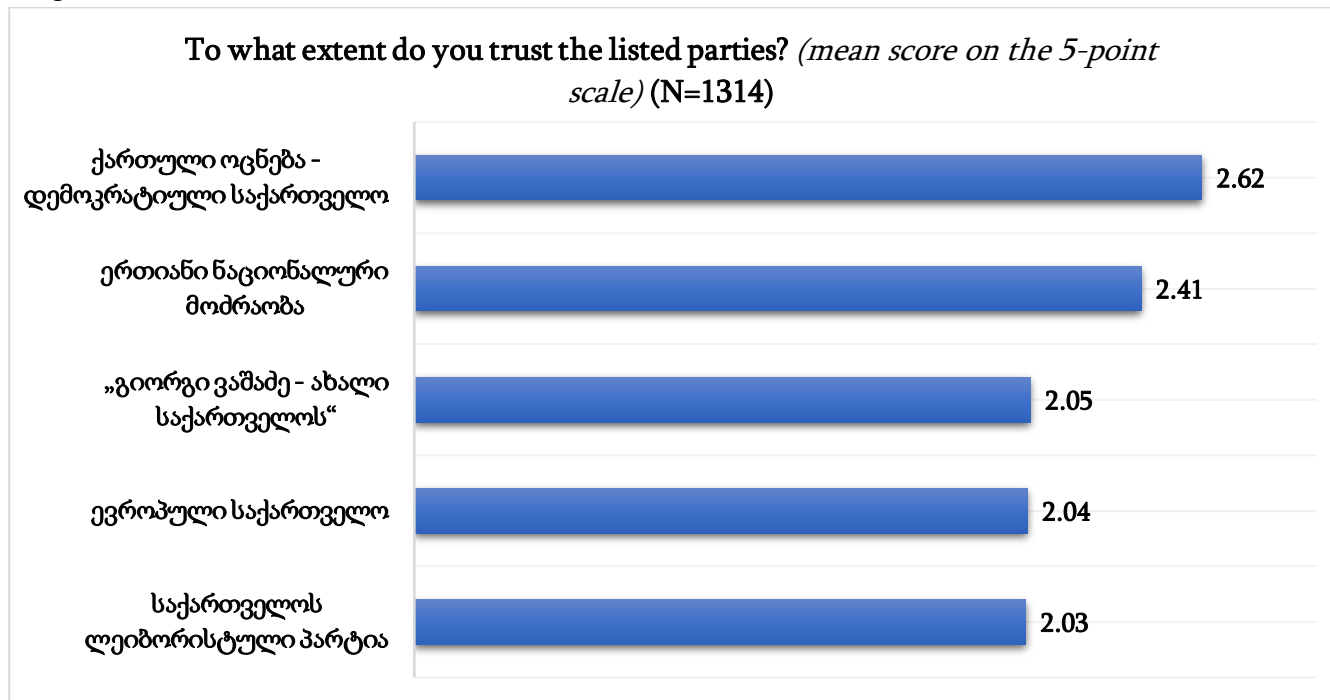
5.5 Role of political parties

When assessing the participation of ethnic minorities in political processes, the decisive role is played by political parties as they form executive and legal branches of the government, opposition, etc. Therefore, it was important to measure to what extent **the respondents trust political parties**. 10 political parties were focused upon in the study process by the representatives of ethnic minorities at focus groups. The study revealed that, in sum, the level of trust towards political parties is low. Only 12.6% of the respondents trust them (“mostly trust” or “fully trust”).

Trust towards political parties was assessed by the respondents on a 5-point scale on which 1 stood for “fully distrust”, 3 – “neither distrust nor trust”, and 5 – “fully trust”. Mean score of 2.62 of trust was revealed towards **“Georgian Dream”** (standard deviation - 1.48, and median - 3). The figures are the following within ethnic groups: mean score for the respondents of the Armenian community is 2.85, for Azeris - 2.84, for Kists - 2.99, for Ossetians - 2.83, and for small sized urban ethnic groups - 2.1. The general mean score of trust towards **the United National Movement** is 2.41 (standard deviation - 1.37, and media - 2). Mean scores are distributed in the following manner within ethnic groups: Armenian community - 3.17, Azeri community - 2.94, Kists - 1.68, Ossetians - 2.21, and small sized urban ethnic groups - 2.28. As for the **European Georgia**, the mean total score of trust is 2.04 (standard deviation - 1.20, and media - 1). The mean total score of trust towards **the**

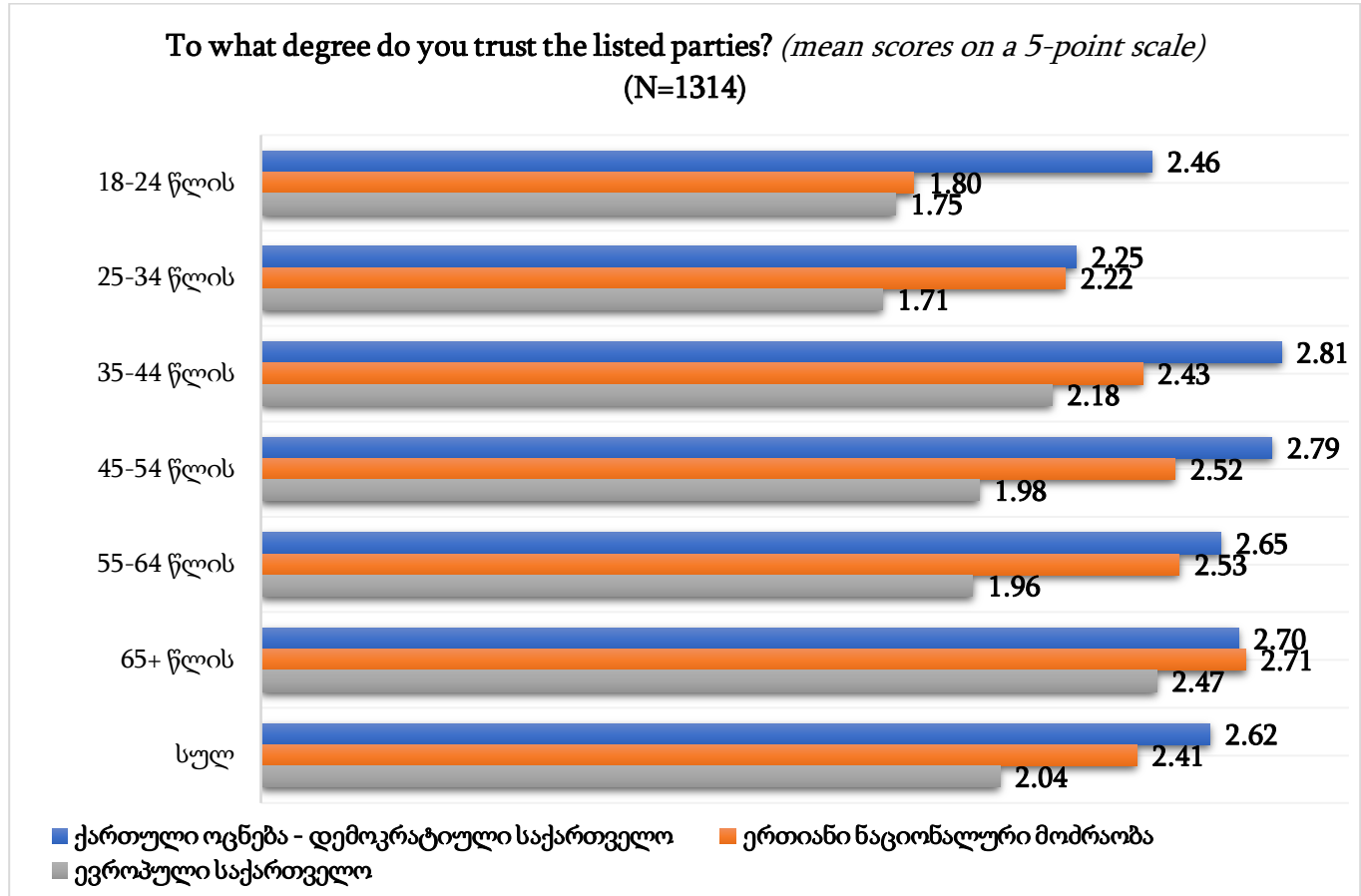
Alliance of the Patriots of Georgia is 1.83 (standard deviation - 1.10, and median - 1). The mean score of trust towards the **Labor Party of Georgia** is 2.03 (standard deviation - 1.35, and median - 1). The mean score of trust towards “Democratic Movement – United Georgia (Nino Burjanadze)” is even lower – 1.61 (standard deviation - 1.10, and median - 1). The mean score of trust toward the party “Free Georgia” is 1.61 (standard deviation - 0.96, and median - 1). The mean score of trust towards the Republican Party is about the same - 1.60 (standard deviation - 0.97, and median - 1). The mean score of trust towards “Giorgi Vashadze – New Georgia” is 2.05 (standard deviation - 1.32, and median - 1). The mean score of trust towards the political party “Girchi” is 1.87 (standard deviation - 1.22, and median - 1) (see Diagram N51).

Diagram N51:



Trust towards political parties is significantly low among the respondents in the age range of 18-24 in comparison with other age groups. The mean score of trust towards “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” is 2.46 among the respondents in the age range of 18-24 and 2.25 - in the age range of 25-34; whereas the mean score of trust is 2.81 among the study participants in the age range of 35-44, 2.79 in the age range of 45-54, 2.65 in the age range of 55-64, and 2.70 for the respondents who are 65 and older. Similar trend is revealed in age groups in terms of the trust towards the United National Movement. Those in the age range of 18-34 are the most distrustful towards this party, whereas the respondents who are 65 and older are most trustful towards it (however, the mean score of trust is still on the negative side - 2.71). Among the respondents who are 65 and older, in comparison with other age groups, there is a higher level of trust towards “European Georgia” as well (the mean score of trust is 2.47, whereas the same score is 1.75 in the age range of 18-24 and 1.71 - in the age range of 25-34 (see Diagram N52).

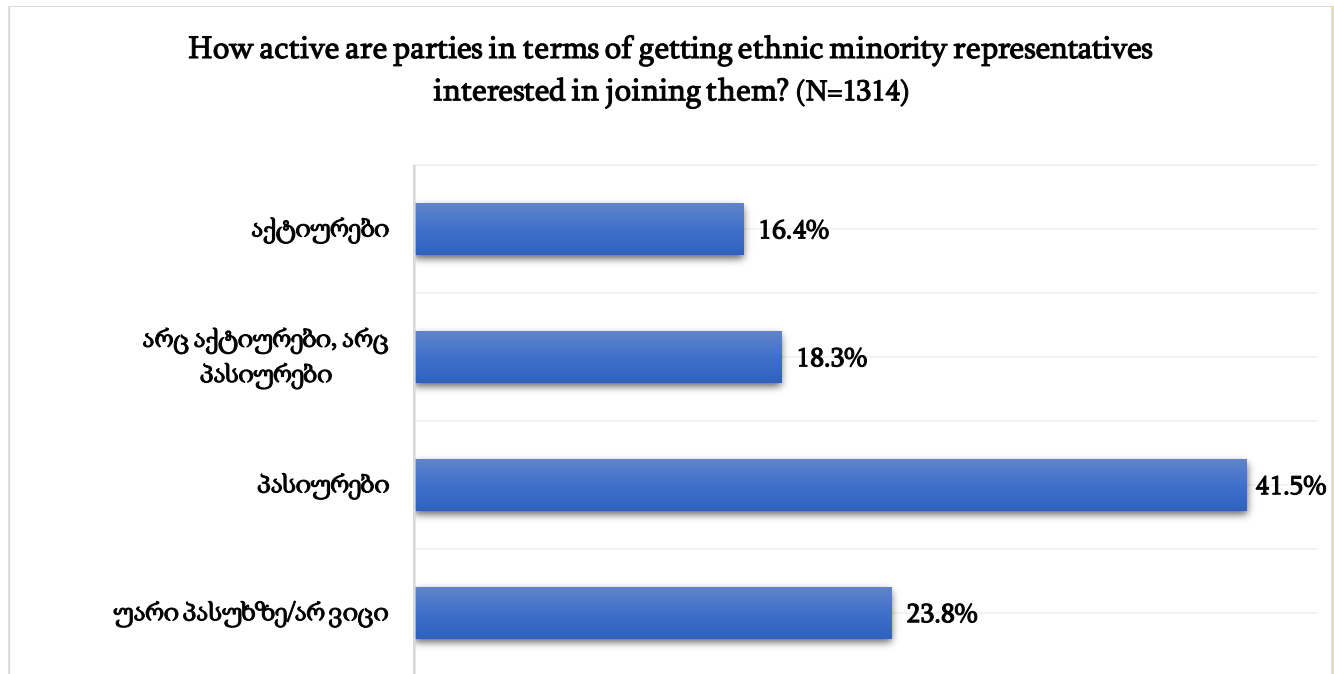
Diagram N52:



The knowledge of Georgian language plays an interesting role in terms of the trust towards specific parties as well: it is revealed that the variables of trust towards parties and level of knowledge of Georgian language are statistically interrelated. The mean score on the index of knowledge of Georgian language is higher among the respondents who trust the political party “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (“rather trust than distrust” – mean score of 15.87 and “trust” – mean score of 18.47), than among those who trust the political party “United National Movement” (“rather trust than distrust” – mean score of 14.72 and “trust” – mean score of 13.85).

After the general assessment of the parties, it was important to find out the respondents’ opinions on **how active the parties are in terms of getting ethnic minority representatives interested in joining them**. 41.5% of respondents think that the parties are passive (“very passive” or “rather passive than active”), 18.3% think that they are equally passive and active, and only 16.4% of respondents think that political parties are active in terms of attracting ethnic minorities (“very active” or “rather active than passive”). 23.8% of the respondents had difficulty answering this question (see Diagram N53). Within ethnic minority groups, there are slightly different attitudes towards the noted issue: relatively larger parts of Armenian (25.9%) and Kist (19.5%) respondents think that parties are active (“very active” or “rather active than passive”) in this regard compared to other ethnic group representatives.

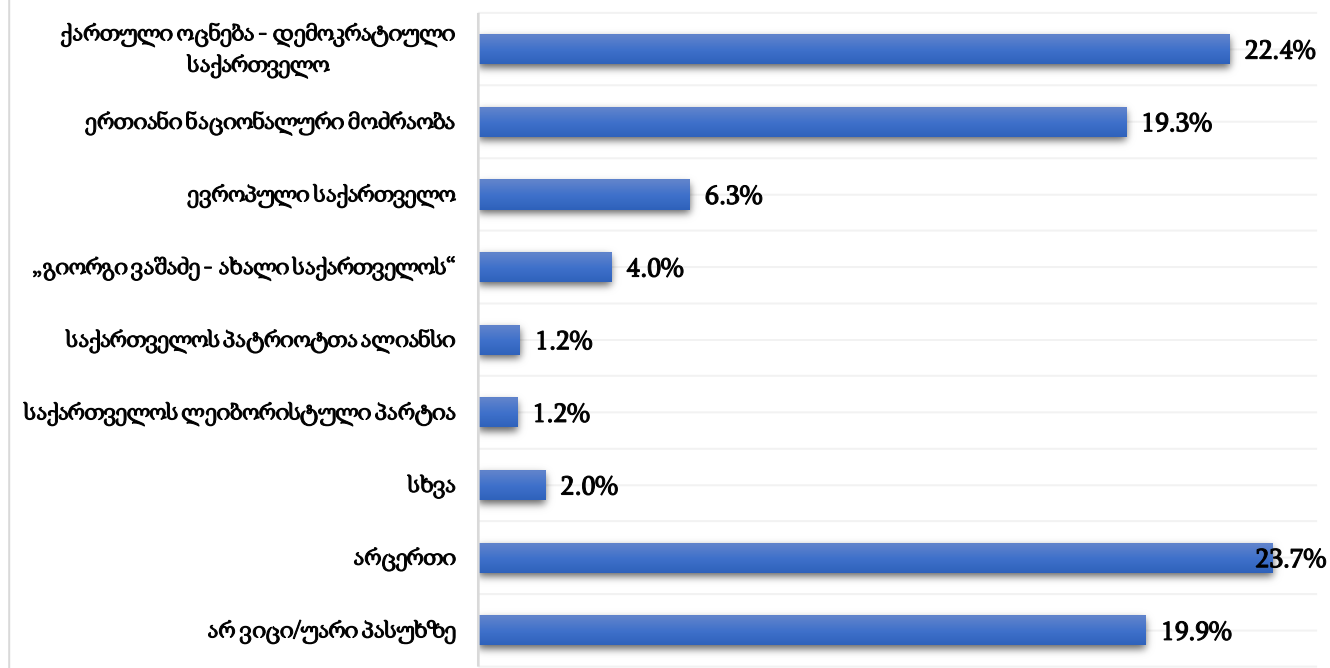
Diagram N53:



Considering the above question, it was interesting to find out **specifically which parties work, more or less, to attract and get ethnic minority representatives interested in joining them**. Respondents replied to this question in the following manner: 22.4% think that “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” works on getting ethnic minorities interested and attracting them to join the party; 19.3% think that the “United National Movement” works to attract ethnic minorities as its members; 6.3% think that “European Georgia” also does so; whereas 23.7% think that no single party works in the noted direction. Within ethnic groups, respondents say that these parties work to attract and enlist, first of all, Armenian, then Kist and Azeri-language groups (see Diagram N54).

Diagram N54:

Mainly which parties work on raising the interest of ethnic minority representatives to join them? (N=1314)



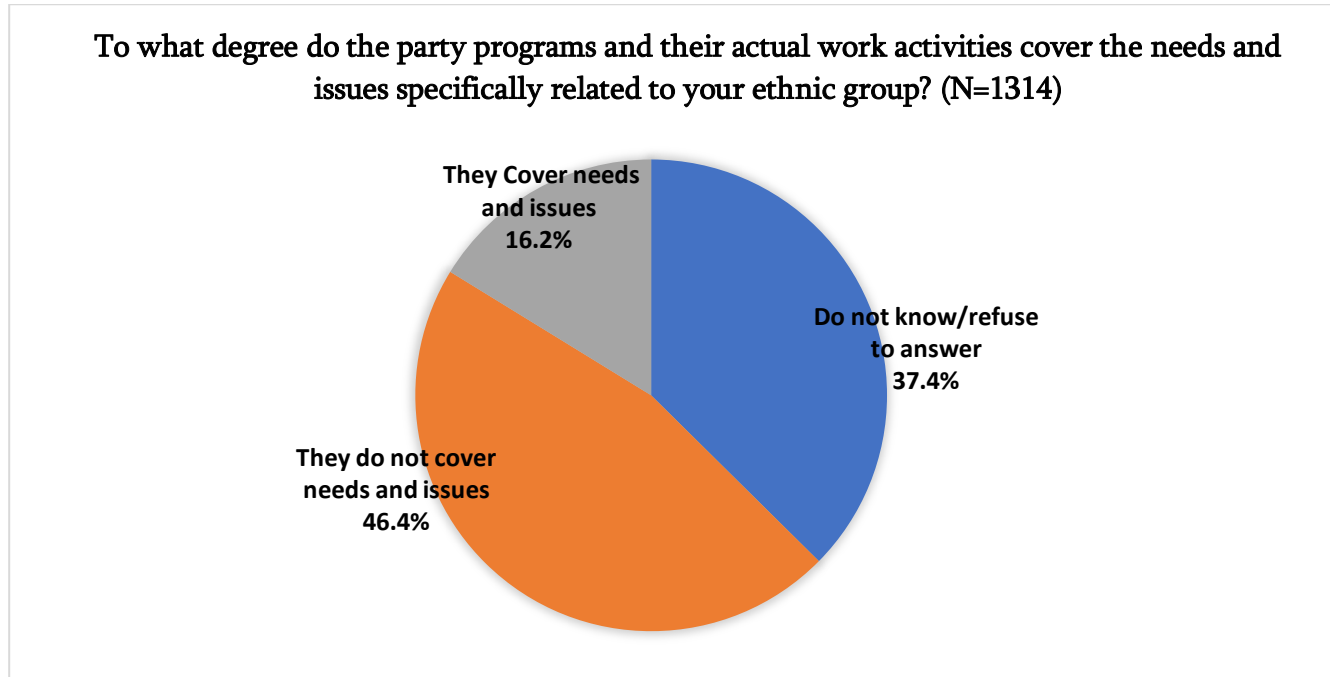
In response to the question on whether the respondents get acquainted with the electoral programs of political parties, their majority - 55.7% note that they do not get acquainted with the programs (“do not get acquainted” or “rather do not get acquainted than get acquainted”). Only 22.2% are interested in getting acquainted with the programs (“rather get acquainted than not” or “get acquainted”); whereas 20.2% of the respondents get superficially acquainted with the electoral programs of parties. It is interesting to analyze the issue within ethnic minority groups: 14% of the Armenian community respondents, 1.1% of the Azeris, 4.9% of the Kists, 1.2% of the Ossetians and 4.3% of small sized urban ethnic groups get acquainted with the electoral programs of political parties (“rather get acquainted than not” or “get acquainted”). In terms of the gender analysis, in this regard, the behaviors of men and women are similar.

In addition to readiness to cooperate with political parties, it was also important to find out the directions in which parties cooperate with ethnic minority group representatives. 31.5% of the respondents say that they do not know about the existence of such cooperation; 37.4% say that parties do not cooperate with them in any direction. Respondents only indicated two forms of cooperation: 7.8% say that political parties work with the population to enlist new members in the party, while 15.5% say that the cooperation of parties with the citizens takes place in the form of tasking the citizens with party related activities.

Finally, this block of questions was completed with the question on whether **the party programs and their actual activities cover the needs and issues related to ethnic group minorities**. 36.9% of the respondents do not

have an answer to this question. 46.4% say that the party programs and activities do not cover (“do not cover” or “rather do not cover than cover”) their needs. Only 16.1% of the respondents think that the noted programs cover these issues („cover” or “rather cover than not”) (see Diagram N55).

Diagram N55:



Note: The category: „they cover needs and issues” incorporates the following two responses: „fully cover” and „rather cover than not”; whereas the category „They do not cover needs and issues” incorporates the following responses: “do not cover at all” and “rather do not cover than cover”.

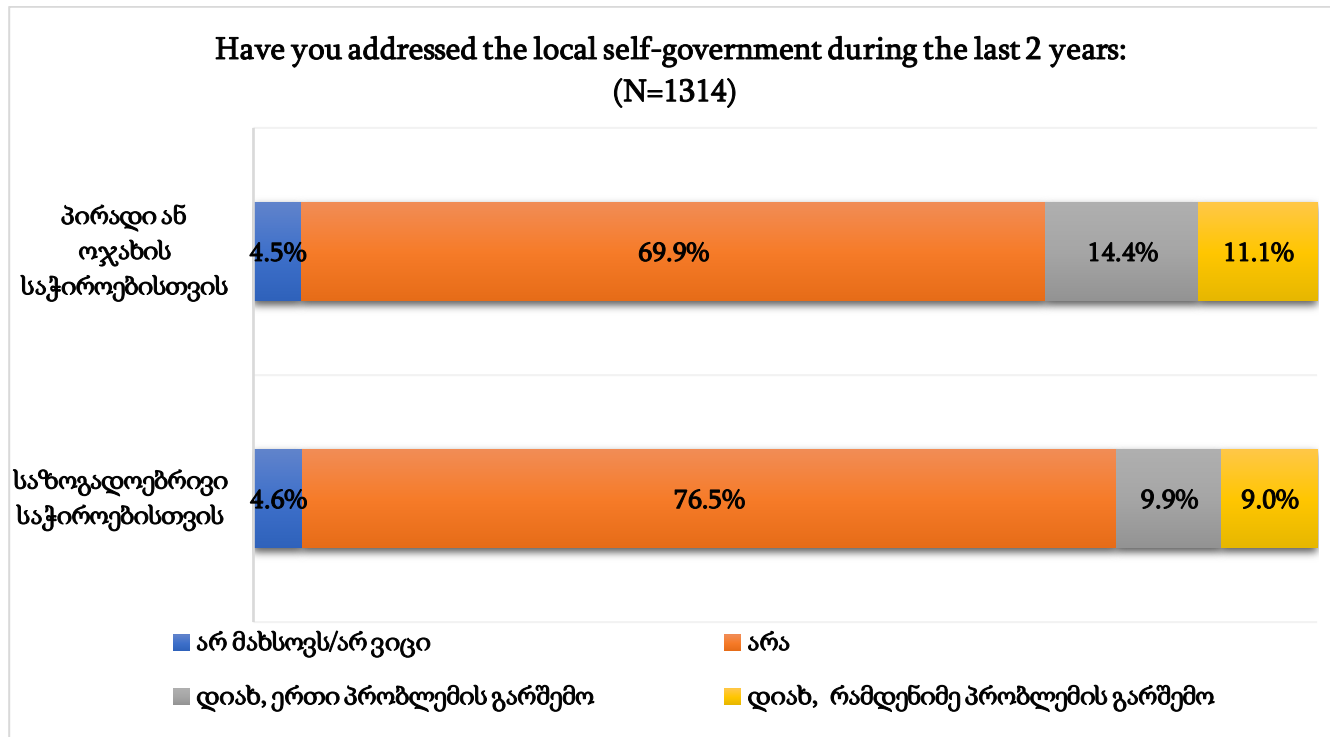
5.6 Participation in the local self-government

In addition to the political parties, the local self-government is also an important component in the process of democratization, as the existence and strength of the local self-government are the principles of the local democracy. It includes the right and responsibility of a citizen to take part in addressing the issues related directly to the individual citizen and his/her settlement. Therefore, the work of the local self-government bodies plays one of the important roles in political participation. In general, according to the study, 32.1% of the representatives of the ethnic minorities trust (“fully trust” or “mostly trust”) the local self-government.

Initially, respondents replied to the question on **whether they have addressed the local self-government on the matter of personal or family needs**. 69.9% of the respondents note that they have not addressed the local self-government on the noted matter; whereas only 14.4% have addressed the local self-government on a specific problem. As for addressing the local community on the matter related to a **public** need, the number

of respondents who do so is even lower: 76.5% have not addressed the local self-government on this matter; only 9.9% have addressed on the matter of, at least, one particular problem (see Diagram N56).

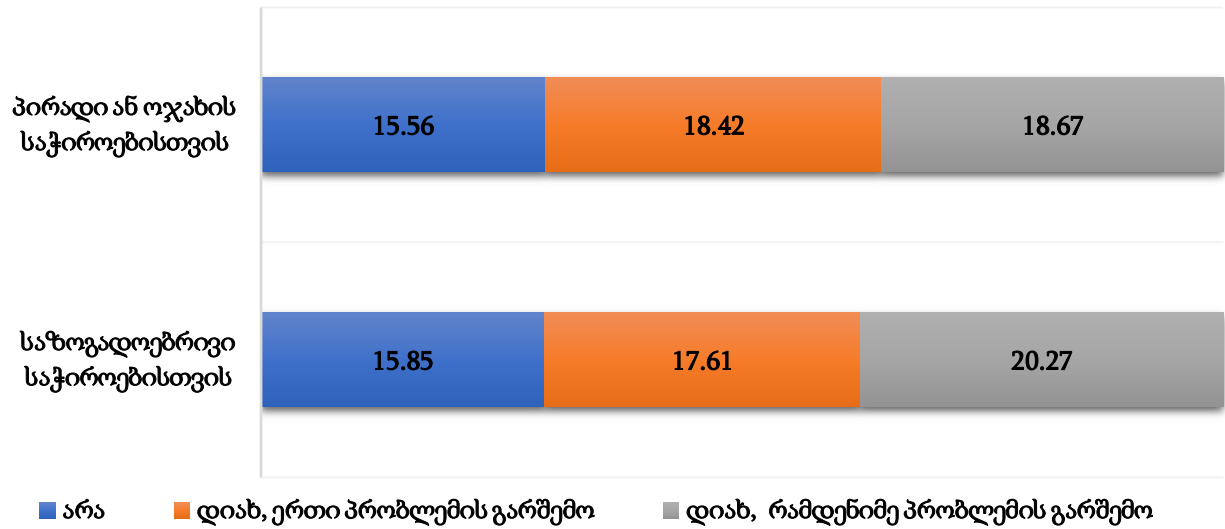
Diagram N56:



The interrelation between the variables related to addressing the local self-government, on the one hand, and knowledge of the Georgian language, on the other hand, is statistically reliable. The study reveals that for the respondents who have not addressed this body on matters of personal or public needs, the mean score on the index of the knowledge of Georgian language is lower (the mean score is 15.56 for those who have not addressed the local self-government on the matter of personal needs and the mean score is 15.85 for those who have not addressed the local self-government on the matter of public needs) compared to those who have addressed the local self-government at least once on the matter related to any needs (for example, the mean score is 18.42 for those who have addressed the local self-government on the matter of one personal problem, and the mean score is 20.27 for those who have addressed the local self-government on the matter of several public problems (see Diagram N57).

Diagram N57:

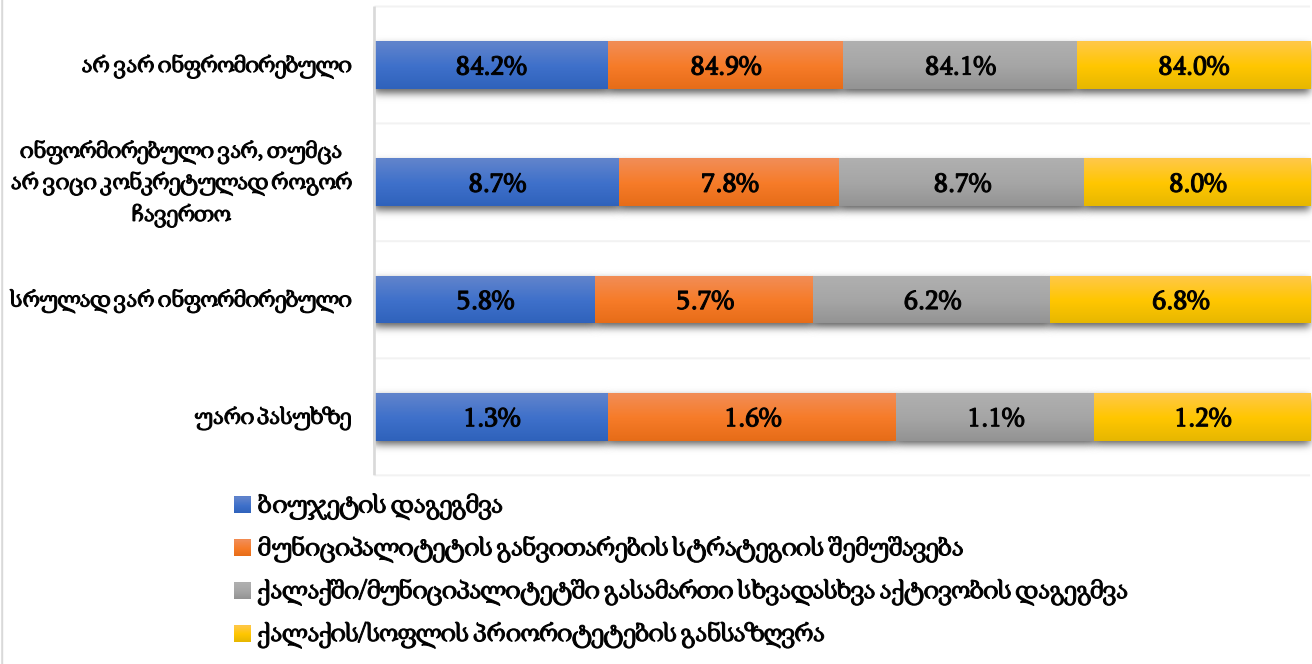
Index of the knowledge of Georgian language (out of 25 points)/ Have you addressed the local self-government during the last 2 years? (N=1314)



In order to understand the engagement in the activities of the local self-government, we had to also find out **to what extent the respondents were informed about their right to participate in the activities organized by the local self-government.** 84.2% of respondents say that they are not informed about their right to participate in the budget planning. Only 8.7% say that they are informed about this right; however, they do not know specifically how to participate in this process. As for the level of awareness on their right to participate in composing the municipality development strategy, large majority of the respondents (84.9%) say that they are not informed on the above noted. 7.8% are informed about this right; however, they do not know specifically how to participate in this activity. 8.7% are informed and 84.1% are not informed about the opportunity to participate in the planning of various activities to be conducted in the town/municipality. Also, the level of awareness on the opportunity to participate in defining the priorities for the town/village is very low: 8% are informed and 84% are not informed on the noted issue (see Diagram N58).

Diagram N58:

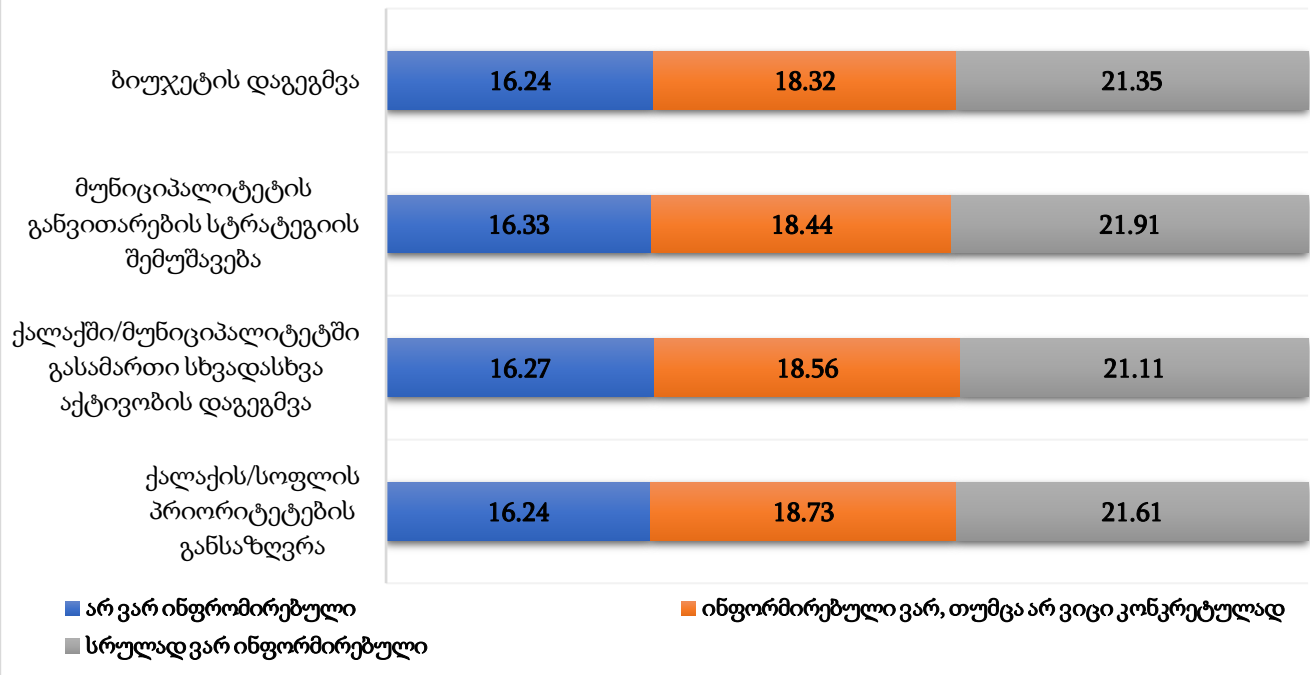
To what extent are you informed on your right to participate in the following activities organized by the local self-government?
(N=1314)



The interrelation of the level of awareness of respondents on the above issues and the variable of the knowledge of Georgian language is statistically reliable. It is revealed that the mean score on the index of the knowledge of Georgian language increases with the increase in the level of awareness. For example, the mean score on the index of the knowledge of Georgian language is 21.61 among the respondents who are fully informed about their right to participate in the definition of the priorities for the town/village; whereas the mean score on the index of the knowledge of Georgian language is 16.24 among the respondents who are not informed about the noted (see Diagram N59).

Diagram N59:

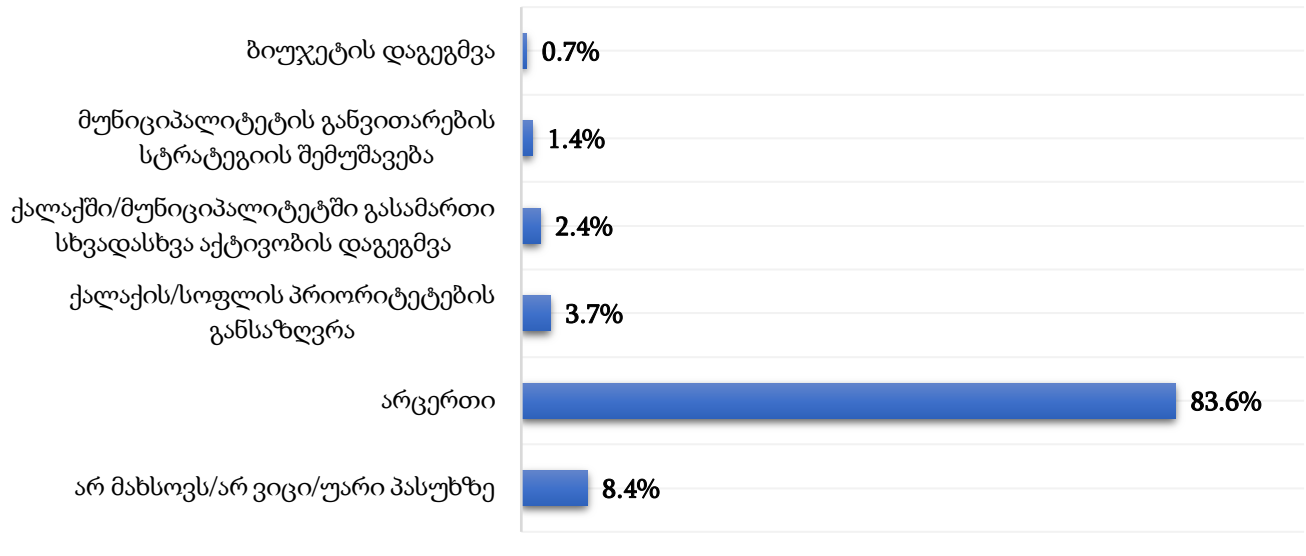
Index of the knowledge of Georgian language (*out of 25 points*)/ To what degree are you informed on your right to take part in the activities organized by the local self-government? (N=1314)



It is also interesting to find out **which activity/activities organized by the local self-government the respondents have taken part in**. 83.6% of the study participants have not taken part in any such activities. 7.2% of the respondents do not remember whether they have taken part in such activities, whereas very few participants have taken part in the budget planning (0.7%), development of the municipal development strategy (1.3%), planning of various activities to be conducted in the town/municipality (2.4%) and definition of the village/town priorities (3.6%) (See Diagram N60).

Diagram N60:

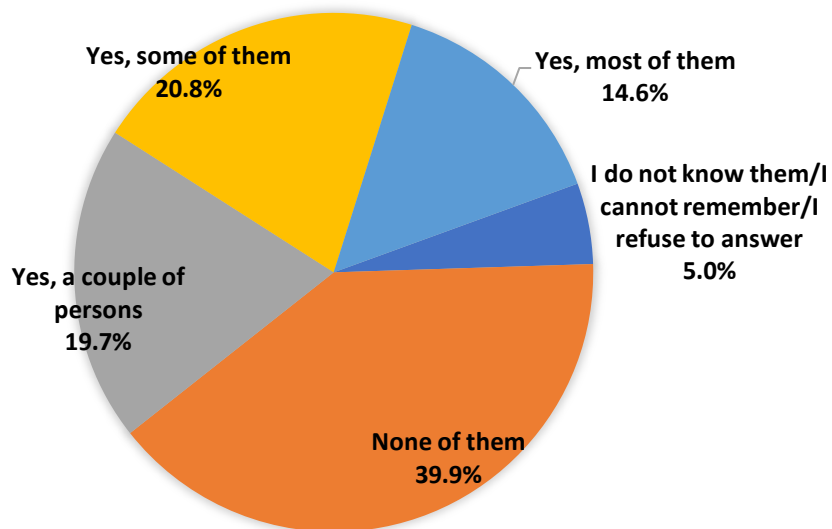
Have you taken part in the events/activities organized by the local self-government? (N=1314)



Having personal social contacts and even knowing the persons working in the local self-government increase the level of cooperation with the local self-government. The survey reveals that 39.9% do not know the persons working in the local self-government, 19.7% know a couple people from the staff, 20.8% know some people from the staff, whereas 14.6% know the majority of the staff (see Diagram N61).

Diagram N61:

Do you know the people who work in the local self-government? (N=1314)



As per the logistical regression model, statistically significant interrelation is revealed between **knowing the persons working in the local self-government, on the one hand, and gender and educational level of respondents, on the other hand**. It has to be noted that the coefficient in case of women is negative indicating that, compared to men, there are different opportunities for women to get to know the persons employed in the local self-government. Also, women's chances in this regard are lower in comparison with men (chance coefficient - 0.96, Signif. code=0.01); i.e. the chances for women to know the persons employed in this body are lower and more negative in comparison with men, whereas the coefficient of the variable related to education is positive meaning that the chances for getting to know the local self-government staff increase with the increase in the level of education (Signif. code=0).

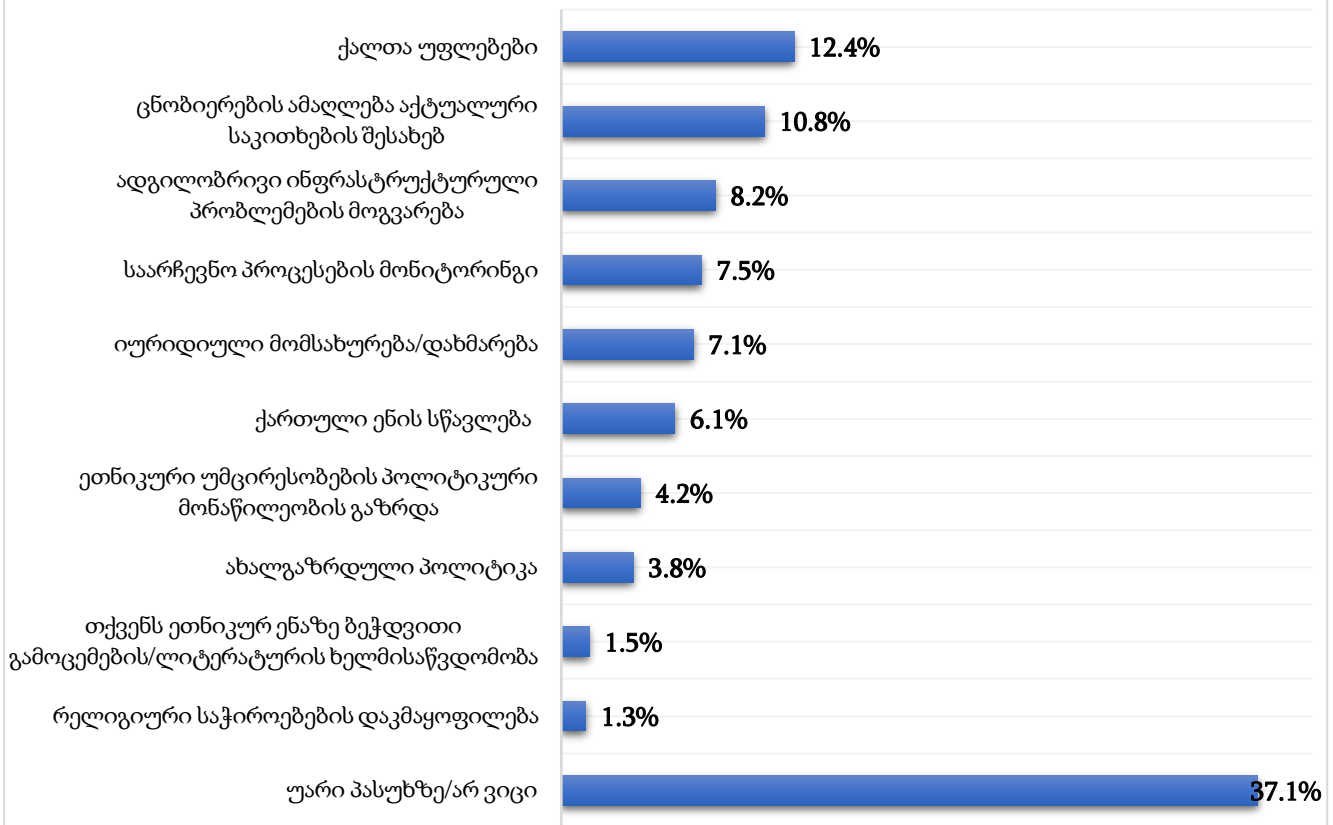
It was significant to find out the respondents' opinions on **the importance of having their representative in the local self-government**. For 65.2% of the respondents, the noted issue is important ("mostly important" or "very important"), for 18.1%, this issue is partially important and partially not important, whereas for 8.1%, this issues is not important ("not at all important" or "mostly not important").

5.7 Role of civic organizations

Nongovernmental organizations should play an important role in the current political processes in the country. They should be important players together with the media in terms of enhancing political activity and participation of ethnic minorities. Therefore, we asked the respondents **which main issues the nongovernmental organizations in their region/town work on** (according to the information they had). Large part (36.3%) does not know the topics the local nongovernmental organizations work on (or, in generally, they do not know about the existence of such organizations in the region). According to 12.4% of the study participants, nongovernmental organizations work on women's rights; 10.8% say that the nongovernmental sector works on various important issues in terms of awareness raising; 8.2% think that they work to solve infrastructure related problems; whereas 7.5% think that they work on monitoring the elections process (see Diagram N62). It was interesting to reveal the percentage of respondents (within various ethnic groups) who did not know the topics the local nongovernmental organizational work on. The percentage of such respondents is 38.2% of the study participants from the Armenian community, 45.5% of the Azeri-speaking study representatives, 8.1% of the Kists, 38.6% of the Ossetians and 50.2% of the representatives of small sized urban ethnic groups.

Diagram N62:

What issues do the nongovernmental organizations in your region/town work on? (N=1314)

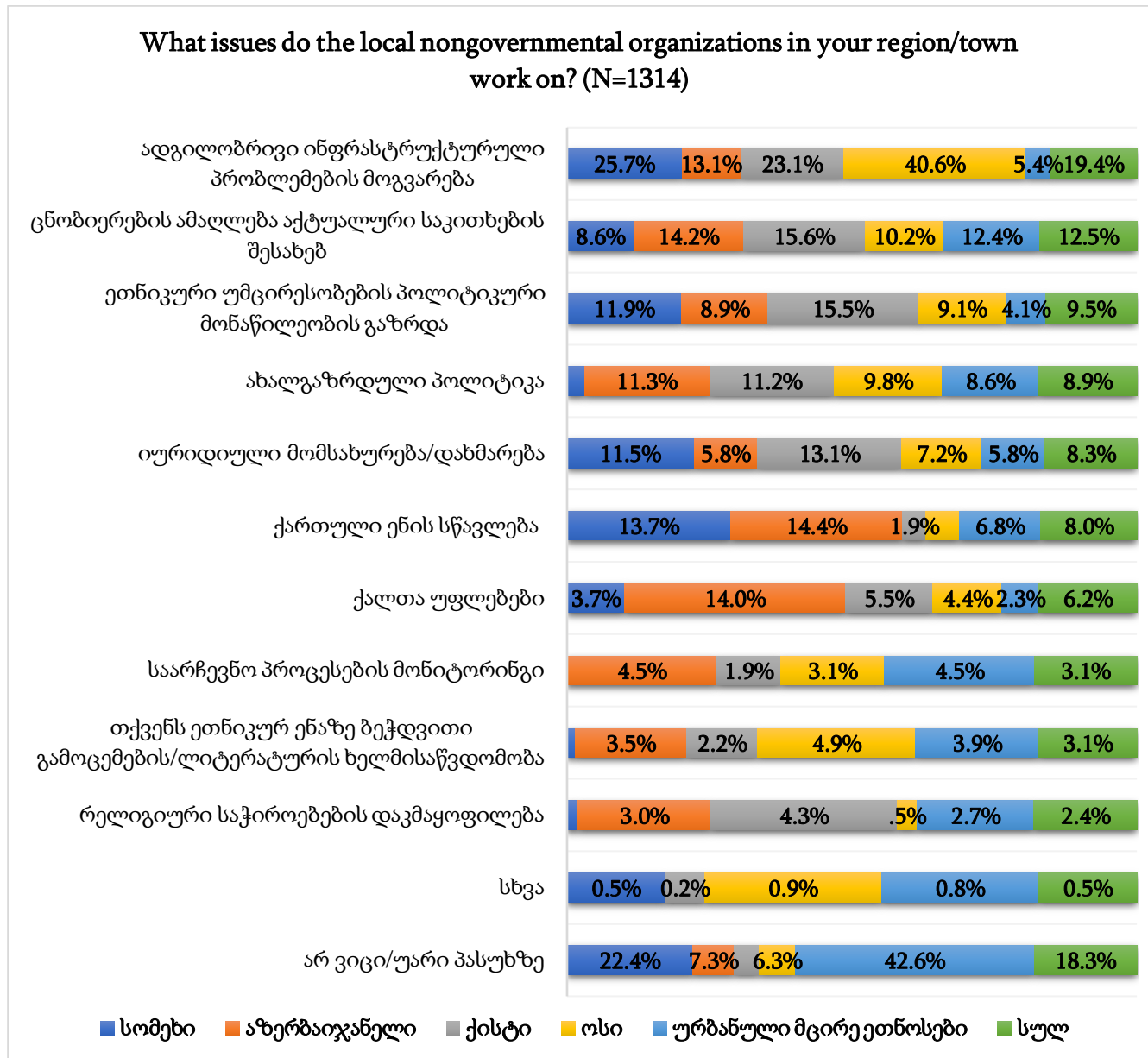


In addition to the above information, it was also important to find out the respondents' opinions on **the issues that should be prioritized by the nongovernmental organizations working in their community/town** in regards to their ethnic group. 17.4% of the respondents do not have an answer to this questions. However, a significant part (19.4%) thinks that the priority for these organizations should be working on settling the local infrastructure related problems; 12.5% think that nongovernmental organizations should work on raising awareness; 9.5% think that this work should be focused on enhancing the political participation of ethnic minorities; 8.9% think that they should start working in the direction of youth policy; 8.3% think that nongovernmental organizations should help them with legal services; whereas 8% think that teaching Georgian language should also be a priority.

40.6% of the respondents from the Ossetian community would like nongovernmental organizations to work on settling the problems of local infrastructure; about 14% of the Azeri-speaking respondents would like these organizations to work on women's rights and teaching Georgian language. 13.7% of the Armenian-speaking respondents would also like them to work on teaching Georgian language. 15.6% of the Kist respondents would like to see nongovernmental organizations work on awareness raising and 15.5% - on supporting political participation. No relatively significant desirable issues for nongovernmental

organizations to work on are identified within the small sized urban ethnic groups in this regard (see Diagram N63).

Diagram N63:



6. Conclusion

The state is the dominant institution which develops the policy agenda and the policy content in general in regards to ethnic minorities. Democracy principles also underline the importance of involvement of minorities in political life and ensuring equal opportunities for these groups. Existence of various groups in modern societies is inevitable and the challenges for democratic states are revealed in terms of ensuring equal opportunities for these groups' participation in political life. Georgia, as well as many other countries, is distinguished by the variety of differing groups out of which ethnic minority groups especially stand out. As per the 2014 census, 13.2% of the total population of Georgia belongs to ethnic minorities. It is important for the state to ensure a political environment which will support political participation of ethnic minority groups and their access to the public goods. The present study covered the issues of the involvement in political life in case of these very groups: Armenian, Azeri, Kist, Ossetian and small-sized urban ethnic groups: Russian, Kurd/Yezidi and Roma groups.

On the one hand, the steps taken by the state are interesting as they aim at enhancing the political participation of these groups and in general, their well-being. On the other hand, it is interesting to find out the behaviors, attitudes and perceptions of the members of these groups towards the noted issue. Despite the positive trends towards sustainability and effectiveness at the institutional level, the declared priority of the protection and civic integration of ethnic minorities is not reflected financially at the budgetary level. Therefore, implementation of state obligations is mainly dependent on international support. At the central government level, it has to be noted that the most adequate and proportionate representation of ethnic minorities is found in the Parliament of the 2016 convocation. Ethnic minorities are represented by 11 members which makes up 7.3 percent of the total number of deputies. As for the local level, there are local opportunities for civic activity, voicing own problems and current challenges, as well as advocacy which, in their turn, are guaranteed institutionally by the state; however, the main challenge remains to be the lack of sustainability and insufficient readiness on the side of ethnic minority organizations and community associations to independently lead civic activism. Other gaps also need to be noted which were revealed in the survey of ethnic minority representatives and which emphasize more general systemic and institutional problems.

The study covered traditional forms of political participation of ethnic minorities, namely: participation in the elections and in their implementation, membership in political parties and cooperation with them, participation in the local self-governance, membership in nongovernmental organizations and cooperation with them, participation in petitions and collection of joint signatures, planning of/participation in a protest demonstration, etc.

It is important to identify the social and economic condition of ethnic minority groups which may be related to the levels of political activism of the representatives of these groups. The study revealed that in comparison with the total population of Georgia (as per the 2017 survey results by the Caucasus Barometer), the level of

education is lower, while the levels of unemployment and poverty are higher within ethnic minority groups. We also have to note the level of the knowledge of Georgian language by the study participants. With the increase in the age, the level of the knowledge of Georgian language decreases. The lowest level of the knowledge of Georgian language is revealed in the Azeri community. As for the socio-economic problems revealed in these groups, the most acute problems are unemployment and poverty; however, the study reveals the significance of the problem of the knowledge of the state language as well (especially, in the Azeri community).

As for the forms of political participation, clear majority of the respondents have not used any of the following methods of political participation during the last two years: addressing the local government, speaking out publically about problems via media, collecting joint signatures, participating in protest demonstrations, etc. Only 8.5% of the study participants have spoken publically about problems via media; 8.4% have taken part in collecting joint signatures, 5.7% have been at a protest demonstration, 3.2% have cooperated with a nongovernmental organization, etc. However, on the other hand, these data may not be characteristic of only ethnic minorities, but may rather reveal the trends of the population in general.

In terms of the elections, we have to note the program activities conducted by the Central Elections Commission aimed at providing information and enhancing the participation of ethnic minority representatives in the elections. 74.5% of the study participants said that they took part in the 2016 Parliamentary elections and their 65.5% expressed readiness to vote in 2018 Presidential elections. However, it has to be noted that 91.2% of the respondents have never taken part in the planning of the elections campaign.

The study reveals that there are no political parties which would stand for the interests of ethnic minorities and no quota practice in place in the Georgian political sphere which would support enlistment of the representatives of these groups into parties. 43.8% of the respondents say that the party programs and activities do not cover their needs. In addition, about 70% of the respondents either have not heard about or say that the parties do not cooperate with ethnic minorities in any direction. In general, as per the study, the level of trust is low towards political parties within ethnic minority groups, as only 12.6% of the respondents say that they trust political parties.

Interesting trends are revealed, as well, in terms of the functioning of the local self-government. In the eight municipalities (Gardabani, Marneuli, Bolnisi, Dmanisi, Tsalka, Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki, and Ninotsminda) which are populated by large groups of ethnic minorities, on average, 779 ethnically Georgians have one representatives in Sakrebulo (the local elected body), whereas 1,116 Armenian and 2,945 Azeri group representatives have one representative each in this body. The survey revealed that during the last 2 years, only 14.4% of the respondents had addressed the local government to solve a problem. 70% of the respondents have never addressed this body due to personal/family needs, and 76.5% have never addressed this body due to public needs. Large majority of the respondents (more than 80%): a) are not informed on the ways of

cooperation with the local self-government, b) have not taken part in any of the activities organized by this body.

The role of nongovernmental organizations is also important in ensuring political participation of ethnic minorities; however, the study revealed that only 24.3% trust these organizations. As per the study, at least half of the respondents (54.8%) do not know what topics the local nongovernmental organizations work on or do not even know about their existence in their region/settlement.

The factors related to the quality of the respondents' political participation also have to be noted. One of the main factors is the level of knowledge of Georgian language which, as per the study, is interrelated with the awareness on the general events going on in the country, as well as with the participation in specific processes. Namely, the higher the level of knowledge of Georgian language, the higher the level of awareness of the respondents, as well as their participation in political processes. The main sources of information on the events going on in Georgia for ethnic minorities are Georgian television channels. Mainly similar trends are revealed in the respondents' attitudes in terms of gender analysis; however, there is still some difference at the level of actions. For example, men have more social capital and opportunities for involvement in the process of self-governance implementation. As for various age groups of the respondents, specific characteristics are revealed in case of the representatives in the age ranges of 18-24 and 25-34. They are more critical, aware and interested in a number of issues compared to other age group representatives. Therefore, it is important to study in-depth the characteristics of these groups and base the state policy on these characteristics. Different trends are revealed within ethnic groups as well. For example, the Azeri community especially reveals the problem of not knowing Georgian language which is a pre-requisite for other difficulties for this group. When comparing these groups, it is necessary to conduct an additional study as the differences between them may be due to cultural, religious, historical or other specific factors.

In conclusion, we can say that there is a high level of a sense of cultural-political identity towards Georgia and Georgian public within ethnic minorities; however, this level somewhat decreases in the younger generation and is the lowest in the Azeri community. Ethnic minority groups agree with the image of Georgia as a state with hybrid democracy. As for political engagement, majority of ethnic minority groups declare that they support political inclusion; however, about one third agree that politics is the business of elites (and not "usual/average" citizens). Beyond what is declared, only about one fourth of the respondents regard themselves as politically active citizens. Reasons for the low level of activism are named to be the following: having lack of interest towards politics, being busy due to family related issues, as well as having incomplete knowledge of Georgian language.

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