



CAUCASUS RESEARCH  
RESOURCE CENTER



# STUDY OF YOUTH CIVIC AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN PEACEBUILDING IN GEORGIA

Study Report

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAPI	Computer-Assisted Personal Interviews
CRRC Georgia	Caucasus Research Resource Center - Georgia
UN	United Nations
NGO	Non-governmental organization

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The positive role of young people in building sustainable peace has long been universally recognized. Still, little is known about the political participation of youth and the effectiveness of steps taken for their increased engagement in the context of Georgia's conflicts.

CRRC-Georgia carried out a study about youth civic and political engagement and participation in peacebuilding for Caucasian House. The organization surveyed young people aged 18-29 to learn about their engagement in social, economic, and political life, as well as their attitudes towards, and experiences of, participation in the peace process. Fieldwork was carried out in July-August 2021. In total, 1,116 respondents were interviewed.

The data from the study lead to the following primary findings:

### Values

- Trust towards social and political institutions, the government, as well as state and non-state institutions, is quite low. Trust in institutions is higher among young people that name the ruling party as closest to their views.
- Young people are fairly distanced from people of different nationalities and ethnicities, including Abkhazians and Ossetians.
- Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government for the majority of youth, but alternative views are also present. Attitudes towards a preferable political system are associated with the level of education received and economic condition.
- A substantial share of young people believe that women's increased political participation will promote gender equality, although not everyone is in total agreement. Young men are more skeptical about this issue, compared to young women.

### Civic and Political Participation

- Georgia's or their settlements' local news are more interesting for young people than the country's politics. Interest in local news, as well as in politics, is higher among youth who have received higher education.
- The majority of young people think that Georgia is moving in the wrong direction. Economic issues such as unemployment and poverty are most frequently named among the most important issues facing the country.
- Young people are inactive in civic and political life. Engagement is low with both local governments and in the activities of political parties. Youth internal and external political efficacy is also low – a substantial share of young people believe that political changes are unlikely and that an individual citizen is less capable of making a change.
- Around a third of young people state that none of the political parties in Georgia hold views similar to their own, while more than a tenth has no fixed opinion about this. Trust towards political parties is also very low.

### Conflicts and Peacebuilding

- Young people are more interested in local news than in the politics of Georgia's breakaway regions. The majority of young people get most of their information about the breakaway regions from Facebook, Georgian TV broadcasting, and local online media.

- Young people are ready to participate in the peace process, but they are skeptical that they are capable of making a change regarding the conflicts. Receiving higher education and experiencing internal displacement due to conflicts are two factors associated with the perception of one's potential and possibilities to participate in the peace process.
- Very few young people have experienced any kind of relationship or personal contact with people living in Abkhazia or the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. Young people who have experienced internal displacement due to conflicts have more contact with people living in Abkhazia, but not with people living in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.
- Most young people think that the conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali
- Region/South Ossetia should be resolved through negotiations.
- A significant share of young people (44%) think that women's increased participation in the peace process will have a positive effect, which is most often associated with the prospect of sustainable peace.
- The majority of young people find it important for all sides of the conflict to forget what happened and think about a shared future with Abkhazians and Ossetians. However, the opinion that Abkhazians and Ossetians should be the first to apologize to Georgians for war crimes committed is more popular than the opinion that Georgians should be the first to apologize.
- Conflict resolution models associated with the restoration of territorial integrity are the most acceptable for most young Georgians. Federal and confederal models do not have many supporters, although young people are more frequently undecided, rather than resistant to these models. When it comes to granting these regions independence or supporting their integration with Russia, such conflict resolution scenarios are unacceptable for most respondents.

## INTRODUCTION

In the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Georgia proper, young people are a largely marginalized group with no considerable influence on social, economic, and political life, and their prospects to participate in peace processes are limited. The role of youth in sustainable peacebuilding in post-conflict settings is globally acknowledged by entities such as the UN Security Council, among others. However, in its resolutions (2250<sup>1</sup> and 2419<sup>2</sup>) on youth, peace, and security, little is done in the context of Georgia's conflicts. The Georgian National Youth Policy Document reaffirms the importance of youth involvement in the decision-making processes in social, political, economic, and cultural life, but does not touch upon the issue of youth participation in the peace process.<sup>3</sup> The issue of youth participation in peace processes is also omitted from the renewed Concept of Georgian National Youth Policy for 2020-2030 adopted in 2020.<sup>4</sup>

The study of youth civic and political engagement and participation in peacebuilding was commissioned by Caucasian House and carried out by CRRC-Georgia using quantitative methods. The survey aimed at studying young people's attitudes towards, and experience of, engagement in social, economic, and political life and peace processes. This report analyses the quantitative data collected within the study.

Within the study, data was collected on young people's experiences and attitudes towards the following issues:

- Civic values and trust towards institutions;
- Experiences of, and attitudes towards, civic and political participation;
- Experiences and perceptions of conflicts and attitudes towards peace processes.

The study was carried out in July and August 2021. The survey is nationally representative of Georgian youth (aged 18-29), excluding those residing in the occupied territories of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. Overall, 1,116 respondents were interviewed. The average margin of error is 2.4%.

This report proceeds as follows. The next section provides the study's methodology. The subsequent section provides the study findings and is broken down into three subsections focusing on (1) values, (2) civic and political participation, and (3) conflicts and peacebuilding. The report ends with the study's main conclusions.

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1 UNSCR 2250 (2015)

2 UNSCR 2419 (2018)

3 Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia (2014)

4 Parliament of Georgia (2020)

## METHODOLOGY

To address the previously mentioned research topics, CRRC-Georgia carried out a quantitative study. Face-to-face interviews were conducted using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) in Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani between July 7th and August 17th, 2021. Sampling was conducted using stratified multistage cluster random sampling.

CRRC-Georgia interviewed 1,116 respondents within the study. The data is nationally representative of Georgia's young adult (aged 18-29) population, excluding those residing in the occupied territories of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. The survey data is also representative of major demographic groups and the capital, other urban areas, and rural settlements. The average margin of error is 2.4%, while the response rate is 31%. The data presented in the report are weighted according to the 2014 general population census results.

Together with demographic information, the survey covered the following topics: Civil values and trust towards institutions; Experiences of, and attitudes towards, civic and political participation; Experiences and perceptions of conflicts, and attitudes towards the peace processes.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The distribution of respondents' answers was studied to observe the general trends, while regression analysis was used to test for significant differences between groups. Regression models include variables such as sex, age, settlement type, ethnicity, employment status, educational attainment, parents' educational attainment, the influence of COVID-19 on employment, frequency of attendance of religious services, perceived economic condition, social-economic condition measured by an asset ownership index, the experience of internal displacement due to conflicts, and party affiliation. Differences between groups are described in this report only when statistically significant.

# FINDINGS

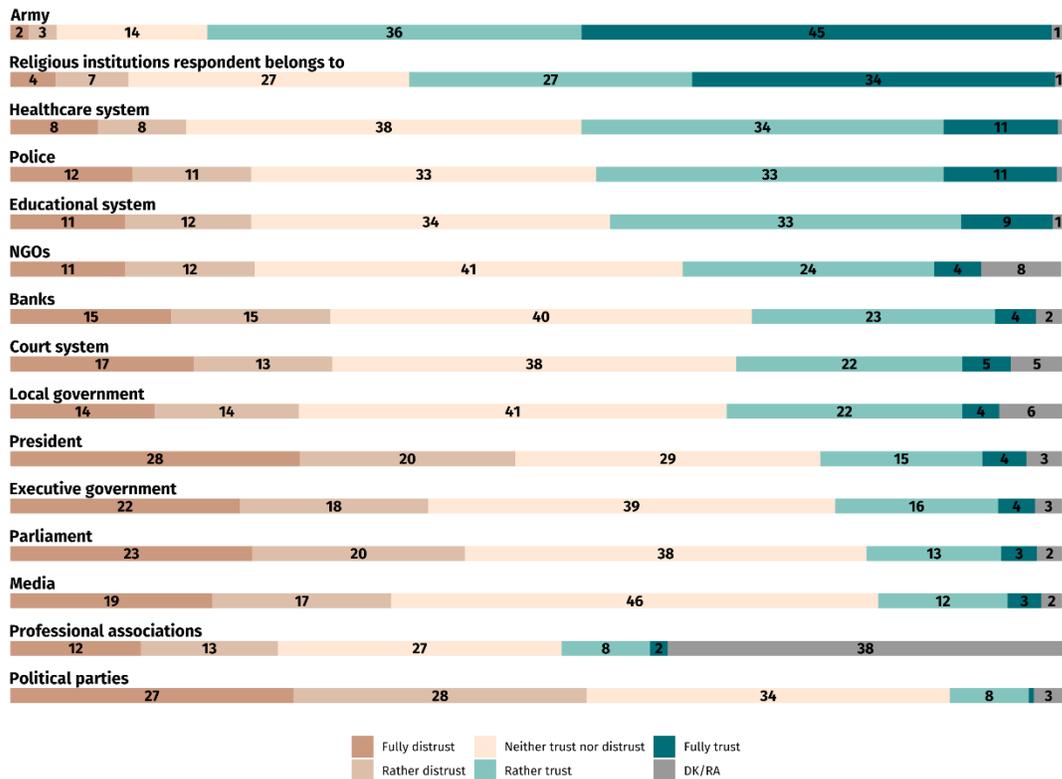
This section presents the findings on the following topics: young people’s values, their civic and political participation, their opinions on the conflicts, and peacebuilding. Study findings on each of these topics are presented in respective sub-sections.

## Values

### Institutional Trust

Young people’s trust levels towards the government, state, or non-state institutions differ markedly across institutions (Figure 1).<sup>5</sup> Trust level is highest towards the army (81%) and the religious institution the respondent belongs to (61%), while it is lowest towards political parties (8%). Overall, young people have relatively formed attitudes towards different institutions, as only a small share either find it hard to evaluate their level of trust or refrain from answering. The only exception is professional unions, with 38% of young people having no fixed attitude towards these institutions.

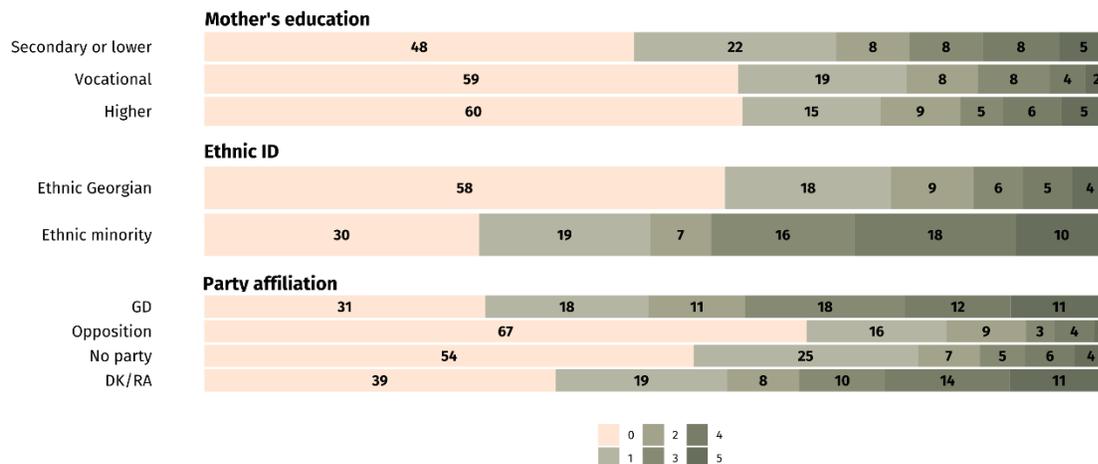
Figure 1: Please tell me how much do you trust or distrust ...(%)



5 Here and below, proportions in the charts might not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding error.

Cumulative indexes were constructed to understand how trust in the government, state, and non-state institutions differs across major demographic groups.<sup>6</sup> Statistically significant differences were mostly found across settlement type, ethnicity, parents' level of education, and political party affiliation.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 2: Trust index towards government institutions (%)



More than half (55%) of young people living in Georgia do not trust any government institutions, and only 5% trust all five institutions either fully or partially. Ethnic Georgian youth trust government institutions less, compared to youth representing ethnic minorities (Figure 2). While trust does not vary by level of education, social class<sup>8</sup> appeared to be an important factor. Those whose mothers' received a lower level of education were more likely to have more trust in government institutions. Minor differences are found across political party affiliations. Those who find the governing party - Georgian Dream - to hold views closest to their own trust government institutions more than those who either prefer the opposition parties or no other party.

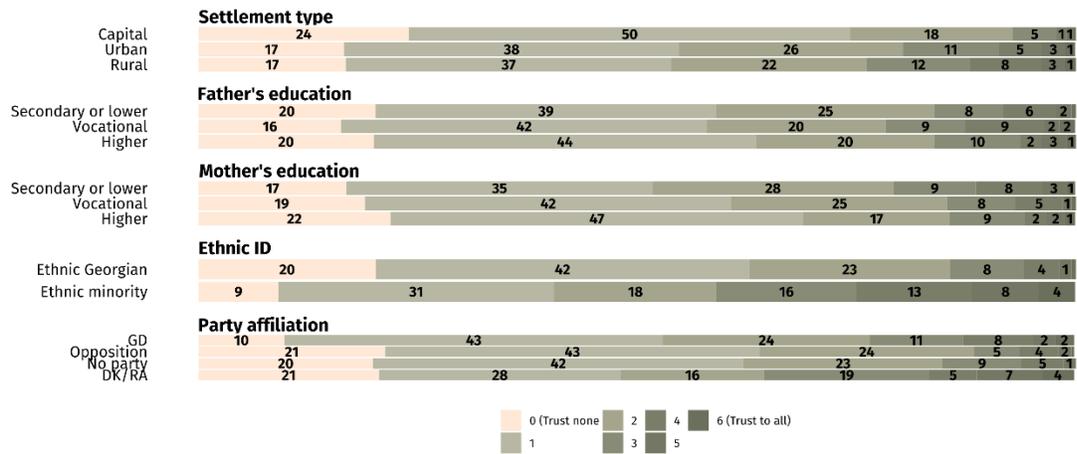
Young people trust state institutions, such as healthcare, education, army and police, more than government institutions (courts, parliament, ministers, president, local government). Only 13% of youth trust none of the state's institutions. Statistical differences were found across political party affiliations. Here again, those who find the ruling party - Georgian Dream - closest to their views, trust state institutions more than those who either prefer opposition parties or no other party.

6 To develop indexes, first, factor analysis was used, based on which three sets of institutions – government, state, and non-state - were identified. The trust index towards government institutions covers the trust levels towards the court system, parliament, executive government, president, and local government. The trust index towards state institutions covers the trust levels towards the healthcare system, educational system, army, and police. The trust index towards non-state institutions covers the trust levels towards banks, NGOs, political parties, media, the religious institution one belongs to, and professional unions. To simplify the data analysis, if a respondent fully or partially trusts each of the institutions included in the index, one point is added to the index scores. 0 points on the index signifies trust towards none of the institutions.

7 Differences were identified using a Poisson (count) regression model.

8 Although there are many different methods to measure social class, Dutton's (1985) approach, which uses parents' level of education, is used in this report. For more details, see Dutton (1985).

Figure 3: Trust index towards non-state institutions (%)



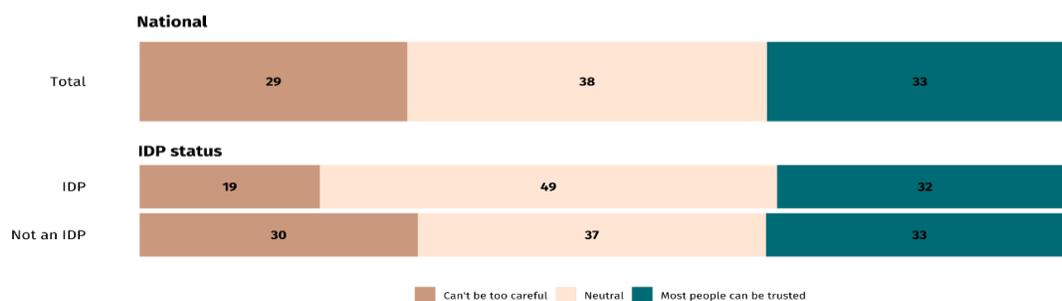
Almost one fifth of young people do not trust any non-state institutions. A plurality (42%) trusts only one institution, while only 1% of young people trust all six non-state institutions. Minor statistical differences were found across groups (Figure 3). Young people living in urban and rural areas trust non-state institutions slightly more, compared to young people living in the capital. Young people representing ethnic minorities trust non-state institutions slightly more, compared to ethnic Georgian youth. Parents' level of education is also statistically significant, although with small variations. Those who find the ruling party - Georgian Dream - to hold views closest to their own trust state institutions more than those who either prefer opposition parties or no other party.

### Generalized Trust

Generalized trust<sup>9</sup> towards fellow citizens is rather low among young people in Georgia. A third (33%) believe that most people can be trusted, while 29% believe one cannot be too careful when dealing with people (Figure 4). Thirty-nine percent of young people seem to be more neutral – neither too trustful nor distrustful of fellow citizens.

<sup>9</sup> Generalized trust is an important concept in sociology, measuring the extent to which people trust others. Based on studies (for example, according to Putnam), generalized trust is linked to the concept of social capital - a citizens' willingness to work with others to solve different societal issues. For more details, see Frederiksen (2019).

Figure 4: Generally speaking, would you say that most people in Georgia can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? (The question was recoded from a 10-point scale into a 3-point scale, %).



The generalized trust index does not differ much across major demographic groups, with the exception of young people who have experienced internal displacement due to conflicts. Taking a more neutral stance, youth with such experiences seem to be less distrustful of others, compared to youth with no such experience. Nearly the same share of youth who have been internally displaced and those who have not been internally displaced say that most people can be trusted.

### Social distance along ethnic lines

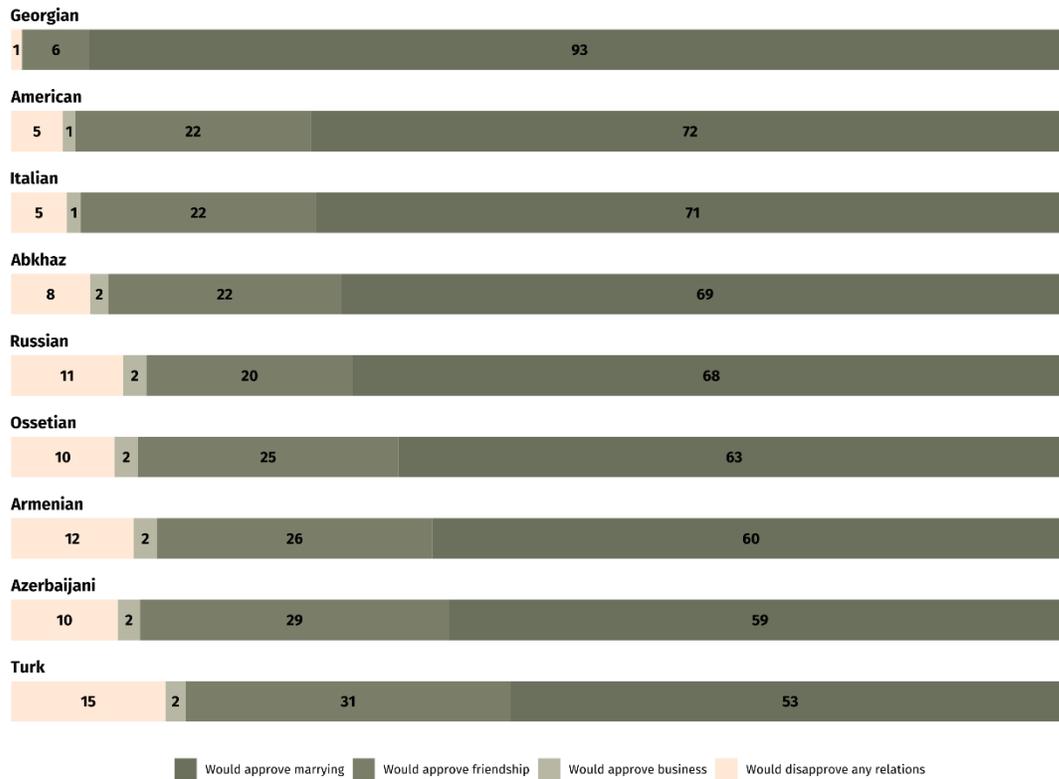
To understand young people's attitudes towards ethnic groups living in the breakaway regions of Georgia, as well as towards representatives of different ethnicities, a modified version of the Bogardus social distance scale<sup>10</sup> was used, measuring social distance, i.e. the willingness of respondents to have different types of relationships with other social groups. Attitudes towards each ethnic group or nationality is assessed with index points from 0 to 3, where 0 is indicative of negative, and 3 of a positive attitude.<sup>11</sup>

Young people's attitudes towards different ethnicities or nationalities differ markedly (Figure 5). The majority of young people (93%) have a positive attitude towards doing business with, being friends with, or marrying Georgians. Only 1% would not approve of people of their ethnicity having any kind of relationship with Georgians.

10 Geisinger (2010).

11 Three measures of social distance – approval of doing business with, having a friendship with, and getting married to someone from another ethnic group – were used in this study. The major characteristic of the Bogardus scale is that different points are assigned to different kinds of relationships. For example, if a person only approves of business relationships with a member of the other group, s/he gets just 1 point. Approval of friendship equals 2 points, while approval of marriage equals 3 points. Another assumption of the Bogardus scale is that a relationship of a “lower degree” is automatically acceptable for a respondent. For example, if s/he approves of friendship with members of a different group, then s/he also presumably approves of engaging in business with that group.

Figure 5: Social distance scale (%)



Approval of all three kinds of relationships with people of other ethnicities or nationalities is relatively low. Following Georgians, all three kinds of relationships with different ethnicities or nationalities are approved of as follows: Americans (72%), Italians (71%), Abkhazians (69%), Russians (68%), Ossetians (63%), Armenians (60%), Azerbaijanis (59%), and Turks (53%).

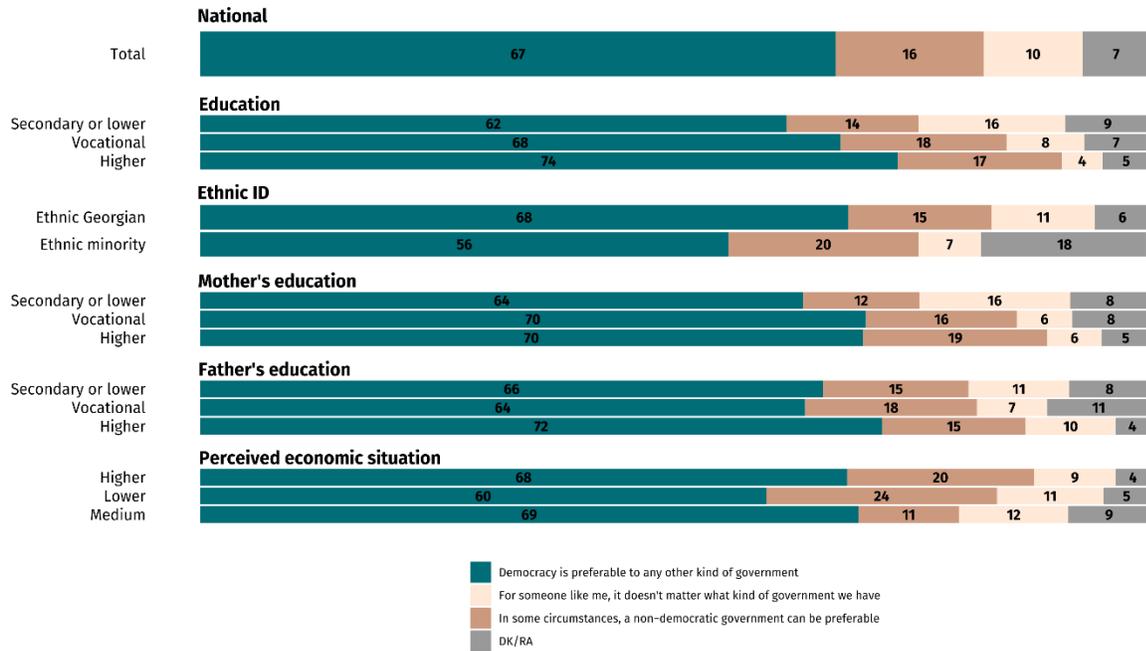
Approval of doing business, having a friendship, or getting married to people of different nationalities and ethnicities differs across major demographic groups. Women, those who are between 18-23 years old, those living in the capital, ethnic Georgians, and those with higher than secondary education are more open to all three kinds of relationships with other nationalities. In certain cases, frequency of attendance of religious services is also an important factor. For example, those who never attend religious services are more open to all three kinds of relationships with Azerbaijanis, compared to those who attend religious services more or less frequently.

Overall, young people living in Georgia would approve of people of their ethnicity being friends or doing business with people of other ethnicities or nationalities, rather than approve marriage, since the latter implies a more immediate and close relationship.

## Attitude towards democracy

The majority of young people living in Georgia (67%) believe that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government. Only 16% believe that, in some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable (Figure 6). Only a small share of young people are indifferent towards the political system: only one tenth state that it does not matter what kind of system a country has.

Figure 6: Which of these statements is closest to your own opinion? (%)

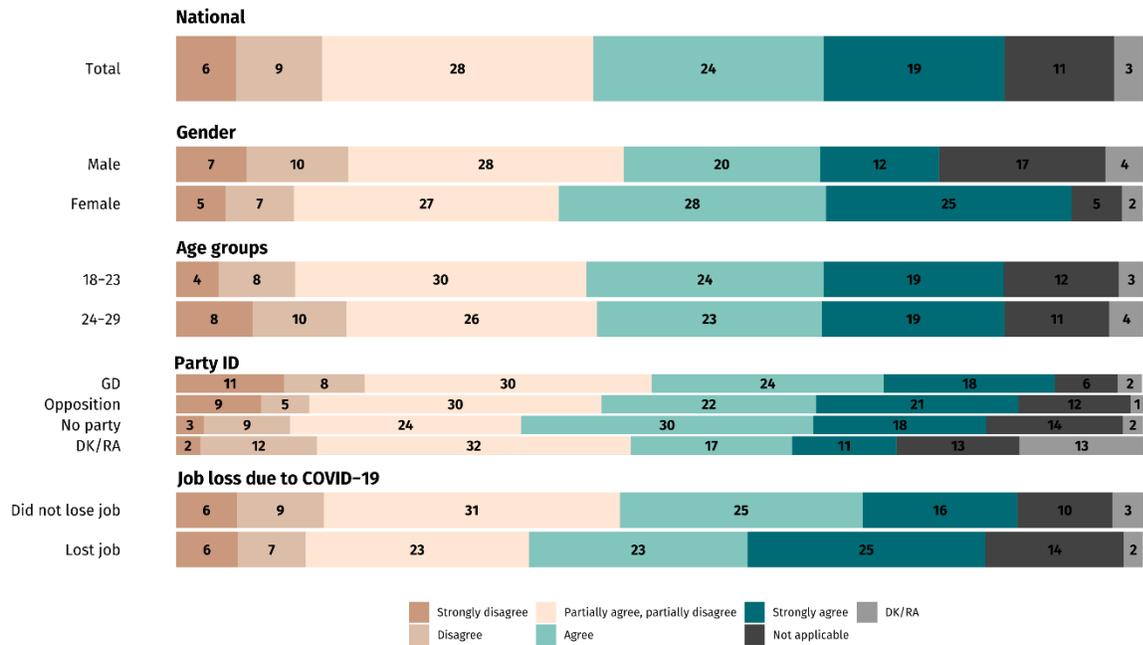


Young people with higher than secondary education, those with parents who have higher than secondary education, those who perceive their economic condition as average or high, and ethnic Georgian youth are more likely to believe that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.

## Attitudes towards women's political participation

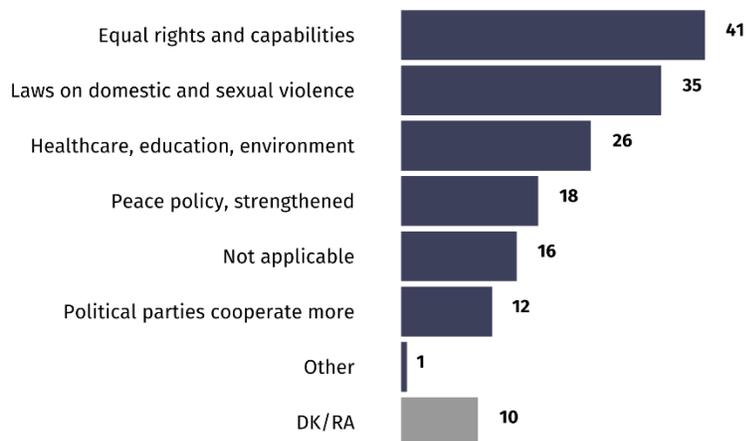
Young people in Georgia do not hold unanimous views on the issue of women's political participation (Figure 7). 43% of youth agree, and only 15% disagree, that there should be more women in Georgian politics. More than a quarter take a somewhat neutral stance - either partially agreeing or partially disagreeing with women's increased political participation, while 11% state that it does not matter whether there will be more women in Georgian politics.

Figure 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that there should be more women in Georgian politics? (%)



There are certain differences across major demographic groups. Men, those between 24-29 years old, those whose family members did not lose a job due to the coronavirus pandemic, and those who find the governing party to hold views closest to theirs, are more skeptical about women’s increased political participation.

Figure 8: What major changes will women’s increased political participation bring to the country? (Respondents could choose a maximum of three answers, %).



Young people who agree that there should be more women in Georgian politics identified the changes that this would bring to the country (Figure 8). The issue of equality is the most common outcome to be identified, with 41% of young people stating that women’s increased political

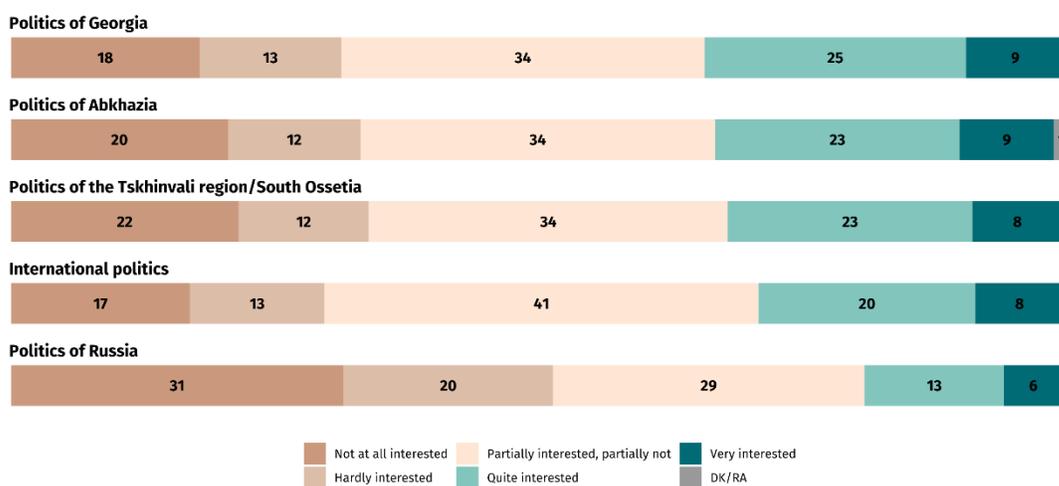
participation will bring about equal rights and opportunities for both men and women. The next most frequently named outcome associated with women’s increased political participation refers to the rule of law, with 35% of young people stating that laws against domestic violence and sexual harassment will be better enforced. 26% of young people say that women’s increased political participation will contribute to prioritizing healthcare, education, environmental protection, and other social issues, while 18% believe it will contribute to establishing and strengthening peace policy. The least mentioned changes were related to party politics, with 12% of young people reporting that women’s increased political participation will cause political parties to avoid confrontation and increase cooperation.

## Civic and political participation

### Attitudes towards social and political affairs

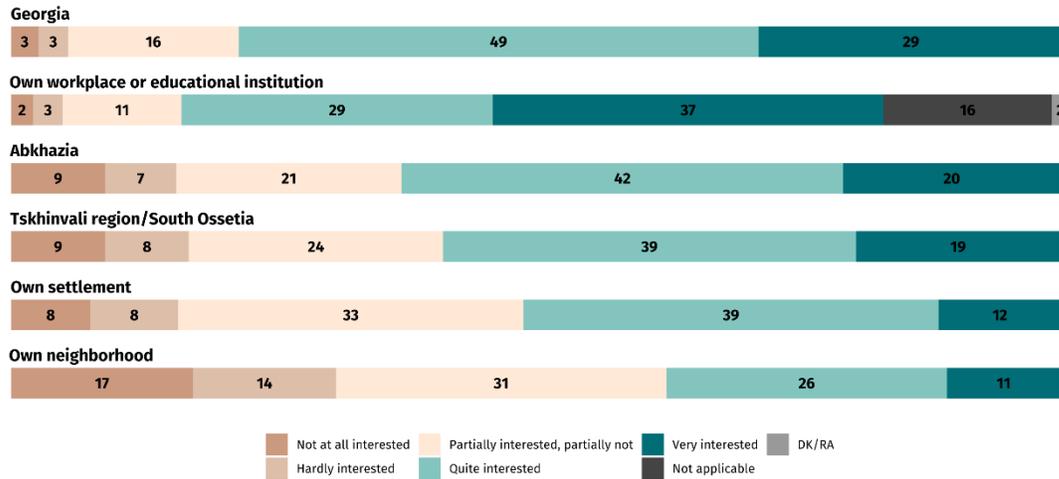
Youth in Georgia are only minimally interested in politics and social issues. 34% of youth are interested in Georgian politics, 32% in Abkhazian politics, and 31% in the politics of the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetian. Only 28% of young people are interested in international politics, and 19% in Russian politics (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Please tell me to what extent are you interested in the following: (%)



Young people are more interested in local news in Georgia (78%) and their respective settlements (51%, Figure 10). Local news in their neighbourhood or district is less interesting for young people (37%), while interest in news at their workplace and educational institution is quite high (66%). In this regard, young people’s interests are not focused only on local issues.

Figure 10: Please tell me to what extent are interested in ongoing events in... (%)



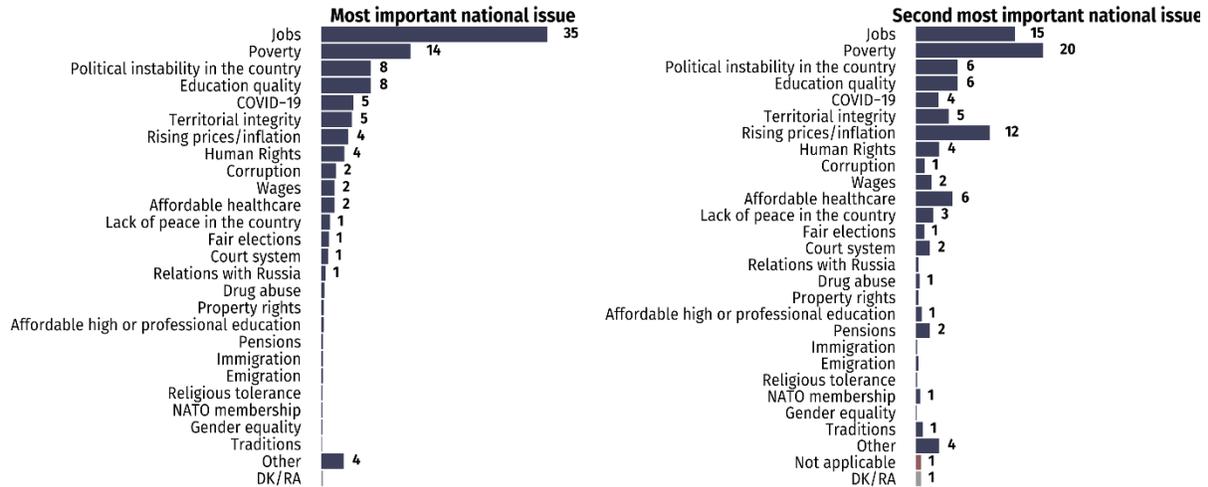
Young people who have received higher education and those who state that opposition parties are closest to their views are more interested in Georgian and international politics. Ethnic minorities are more interested in international politics compared to ethnically Georgian youth. More factors are associated with interest in Russian politics. Young people with higher education, those with experiences of internal displacement due to conflicts, and those who rarely attend religious services are more interested in Russian politics.

When it comes to local news, the differences between groups increase. The interests of men, youth living in rural areas, and ethnic minorities are more localized as these groups are more interested in local news about their neighbourhoods, districts, or settlements. When it comes to news in Georgia, employment status and religiosity seem to be important factors, although, regardless of the statistical significance, differences are small. Young people who have received higher education are also more interested in Georgian news, compared to peers with secondary or vocational education.

### Perception of challenges facing the country

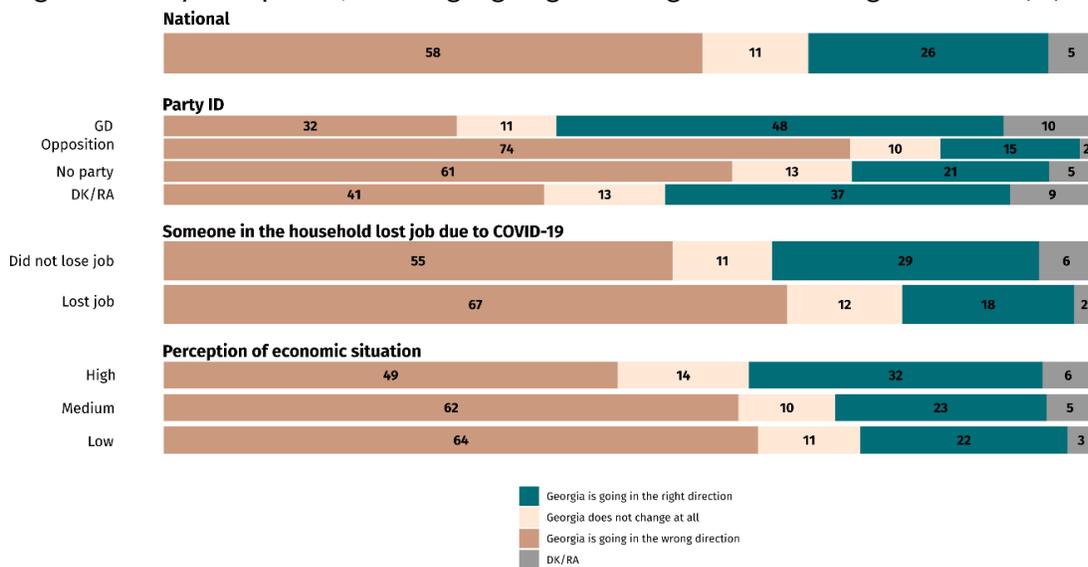
Economic issues are usually among the most commonly named issues facing Georgia (Figure 11). Unemployment (35%) and poverty (14%) are the most commonly named issues, while quality of education (8%), political instability in the country (8%), coronavirus (5%), territorial integrity (5%), and rising prices/inflation (4%) are among the least commonly named issues. The other major issues facing the country are again mostly economic: poverty (20%), unemployment (15%), and rising prices/inflation (12%).

Figure 11: What do you think is the most important issue facing Georgia at the moment? And what is the second most important issue? (%)



Given these challenges, it is no surprise that the majority of young people have a negative or ambivalent attitude towards the direction in which Georgia is going. More than half of young people think that Georgia is either fully or partially going in the wrong direction (58%), only a quarter think that Georgia is fully or partially going in the right direction, while 11% think that Georgia is not changing at all (Figure 12). Young people with a family member who lost a job due to the coronavirus pandemic, who perceive their economic condition as medium or low, and those who prefer either the opposition or no other party, are more likely to think that Georgia is going in the wrong direction.

Figure 12: In your opinion, is Georgia going in the right or the wrong direction? (%)

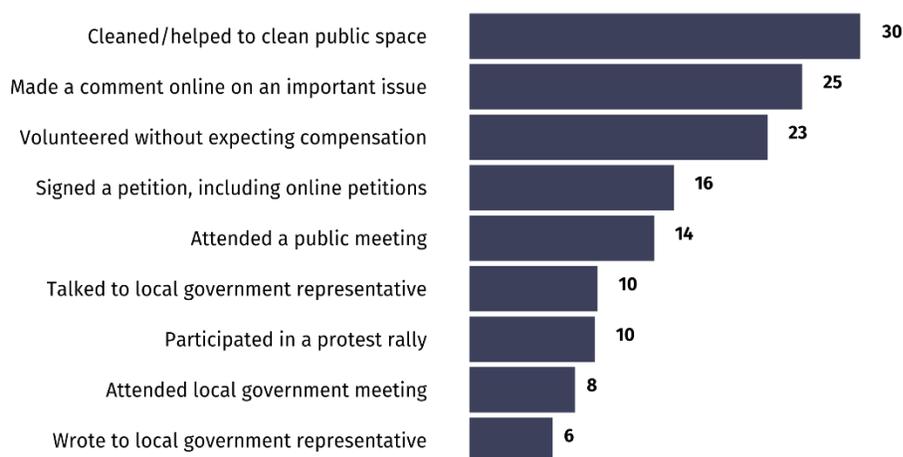


## Experience of civic and political participation

Only a small share of young people living in Georgia are engaged in the country's political and civic life (Figure 13). During the last six months, slightly less than a third of young people (30%) have participated in cleaning public spaces, a quarter have made a comment online regarding an important issue, while more than a fifth (23%) have volunteered, meaning they have done community work without expecting compensation. 16% of young people have signed a petition (including an online petition) in the last six months, while 14% have attended a public meeting (a gathering to discuss issues important for the community).

One in ten young people has participated in a protest action or demonstration. Even fewer have participated in local government. Only a tenth have discussed issues facing communities with local government officials, 8% have attended a meeting with local government officials, and 6% have written to local government officials about issues facing the community.

Figure 13: Could you please tell me which of these activities you have been involved in during the past six months? (%)



To understand how youth civic participation differs across major demographic groups, a cumulative index was used, where engagement in each of the previously described activities was assigned one point. Index points range from 0 to 9, where a higher value is indicative of engagement in more activities. The distribution of index points shows that a plurality of young people (45%) have not participated in any of the above-mentioned activities during the last six months, and less than 1% have engaged in all nine activities.

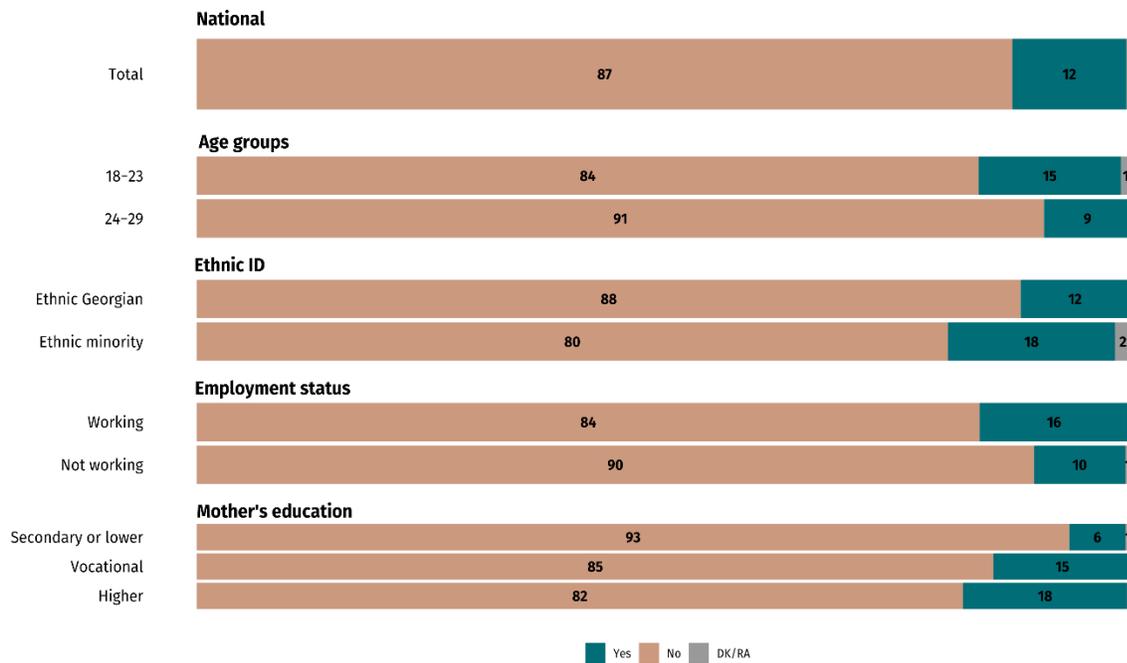
Statistically significant differences were found across age groups, those with experiences of a family member losing their job due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and political party affiliation. 18-23 years old respondents whose family members lost a job due to the pandemic, and those who prefer opposition parties, are more engaged in civic activities.

Only 12% of young people are members of an union, club, organization, or association.<sup>12</sup> The likelihood of being a member of such a club or organization is higher among those who are 18-23 years old, employed, and an ethnic minority (Figure 14). Social class, specifically the level of

<sup>12</sup> This includes any kind of union, professional union, book club, theatre, dance or sport union, online union, Facebook group, etc.

education the respondent's mother has received, is also an important factor. The higher the mother's education, the higher the likelihood a young person will be a part of such an association.

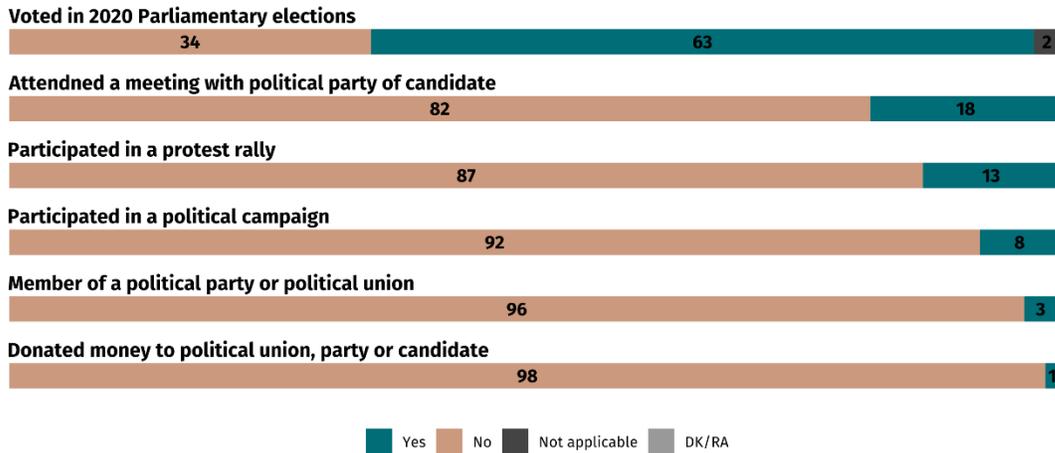
Figure 14: Are you a member of any union, club or association at the moment? (%)



Direct participation in party politics is quite low among young people in Georgia, although indirect participation is relatively higher (Figure 15). Only 3% of young people are members of a political union or a party, and only 1% have donated money to a political union, candidate, or party. A slightly larger portion of young people (8%) report having participated in a political campaign (for example, distributing flyers, putting up posters, etc.) or having attended meetings with political parties or party candidates (18%).

When it comes to other forms of political engagement, only 13% of young people have participated in protest action or demonstration. The most common form of political participation is voting in elections. 63% of young people report having voted in either the first or second round of the 2020 parliamentary election (3% of young people did not yet have the right to vote).

Figure 15: Please tell me, have you/are you... (%)

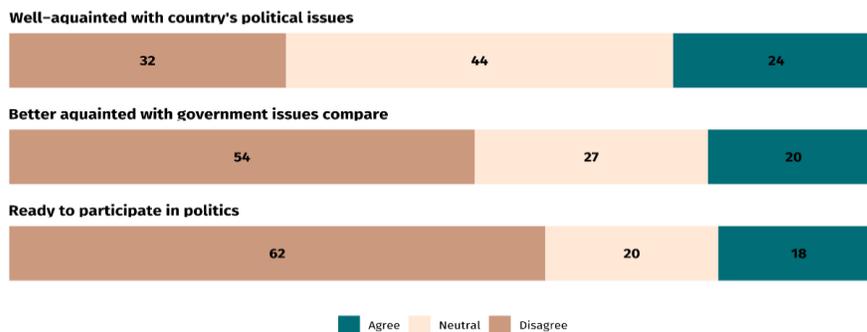


To understand how direct or indirect participation in party politics differs among different groups of young people, a cumulative index was constructed. The experience of participating in each aforementioned activity was assigned 1 point. Points on the index range from 0 to 6, where high values indicate higher involvement in party politics. The distribution of points on the index shows that around a third (31%) of young people have not participated in any of the aforementioned activities, while less than 1% have participated in all six of them. Men, young people with higher education, and those who name a party close to their views, be it governing or the opposition party, are more likely to have participated in political activities.

### Political efficacy

To understand young people’s political efficacy, in particular internal or external political efficacy, respective cumulative indexes were used.<sup>13</sup> Internal political efficacy refers to belief in the importance of one’s political participation, to what extent one believes that s/he understands politics and can participate in it. In this study, internal political efficacy is measured with the three statements presented below (Figure 16).

Figure 16: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Answer options “don’t know” and “refuse to answer” were grouped in a neutral category, %).

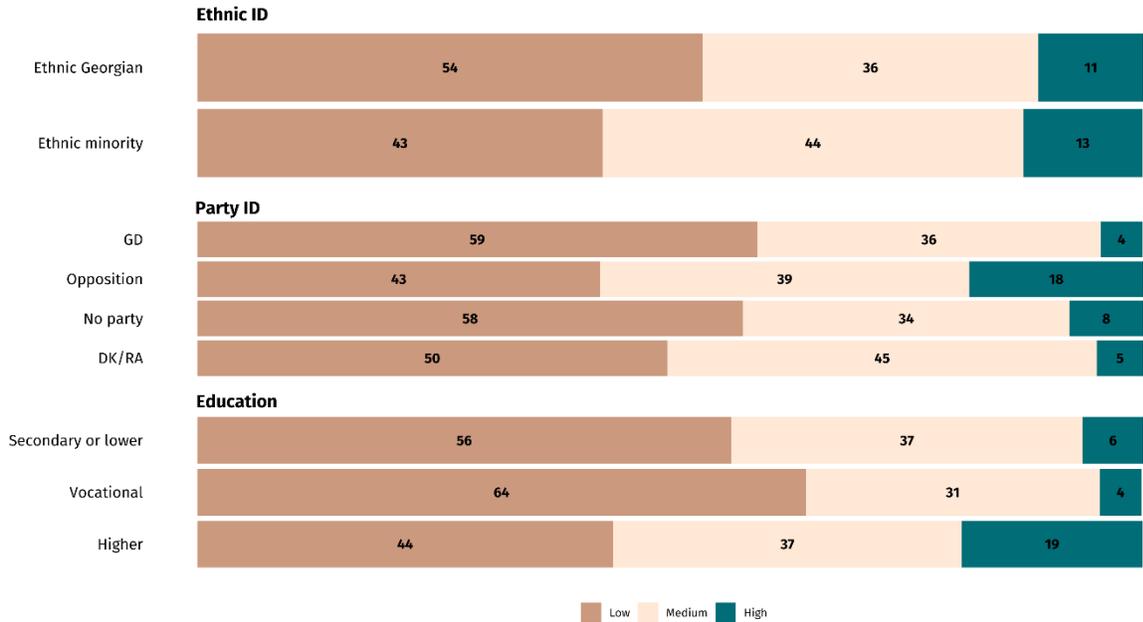


13 Groskurth et al. (2021)

Youth internal political efficacy is quite low. That is, the majority of young people in Georgia believe that they are not well-acquainted with politics and are not ready to participate in it. Around a fifth of youth (24%) believe that they are well-acquainted with important political issues facing the country. A little less (20%) believe that they are better acquainted with political and government issues, compared to their peers. Around the same share of young people (18%) believe that they are ready to participate in politics.

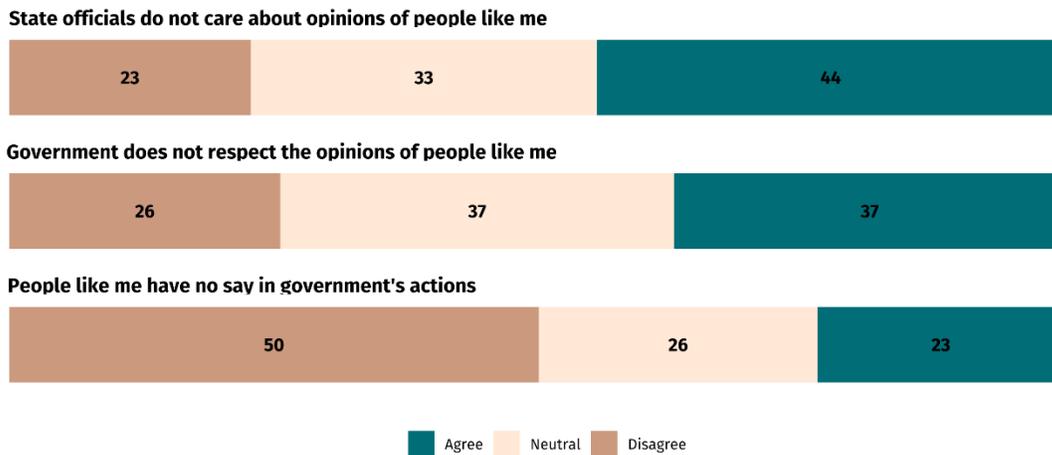
The internal political efficacy index is the sum of answers to the aforementioned questions, where points range from 0 to 12. Higher index points are indicative of higher internal political efficacy. The distribution of index points shows that the majority of young people (62%) have low internal political efficacy (0-4 points). Only a small share of young people (7%) are characterized with high internal political efficacy (9-12 points). Young people representing ethnic minorities, those with higher education, and those who find opposition parties to be closest to their views are characterized by higher internal political efficacy (Figure 17). It is noteworthy that high points on the internal political efficacy index among young people from an ethnic minority are most likely due to the high frequency of answering “don’t know.”

Figure 17: Internal political efficacy index by major demographic groups. (Values from 0 to 4 were grouped as “low,” from 5 to 8 - as “medium,” and from 9 to 12 - as “high,” %).



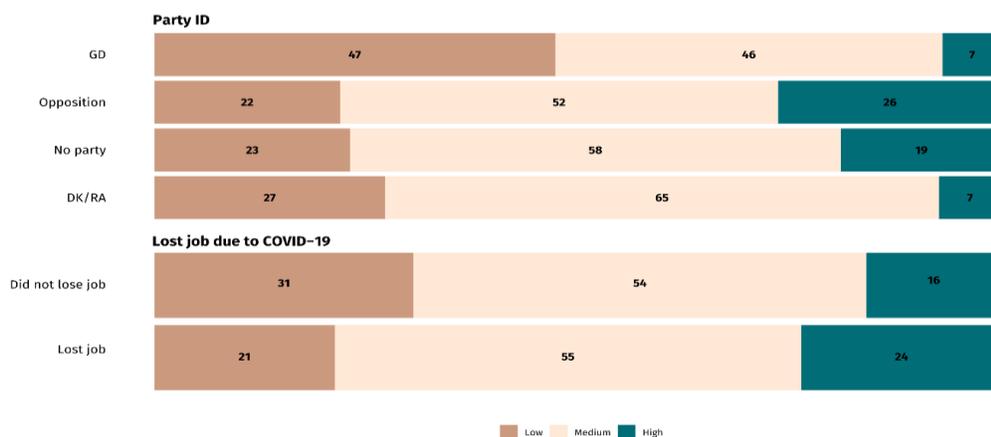
External political efficacy refers to one’s belief in the government’s openness to citizens’ demands (Figure 18). Similarly to internal political efficacy, youth external political efficacy is also quite low in Georgia. Around a quarter of young people (23%) believe that people like them have no say in the government’s actions. Even more common is the belief that the government usually does not respect the opinions of people like them (37%), and an even higher share of young people (44%) believe that state officials do not care about the opinions of people like them.

Figure 18: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Answer options “don’t know” and “refuse to answer” were grouped in a neutral category, %).



The external political efficacy index is the sum of answers on aforementioned questions, where points range from 0 to 12, although considering the wording of the statements, higher index points here are indicative of lower external political efficacy. The distribution of index points shows that only 28% of young people are characterized by high external political efficacy (0-4 points). A fifth (18%) of young people are characterized by relatively low external political efficacy (9-12 points). Young people whose family members have lost a job due to the coronavirus pandemic and who find the opposition or no party closer to their views are characterized with relatively low external political efficacy.

Figure 19: External political efficacy index by major demographic groups. (Values from 0 to 4 were grouped as “high,” from 5 to 8 - as “medium,” and from 9 to 12 - as “low,” %).



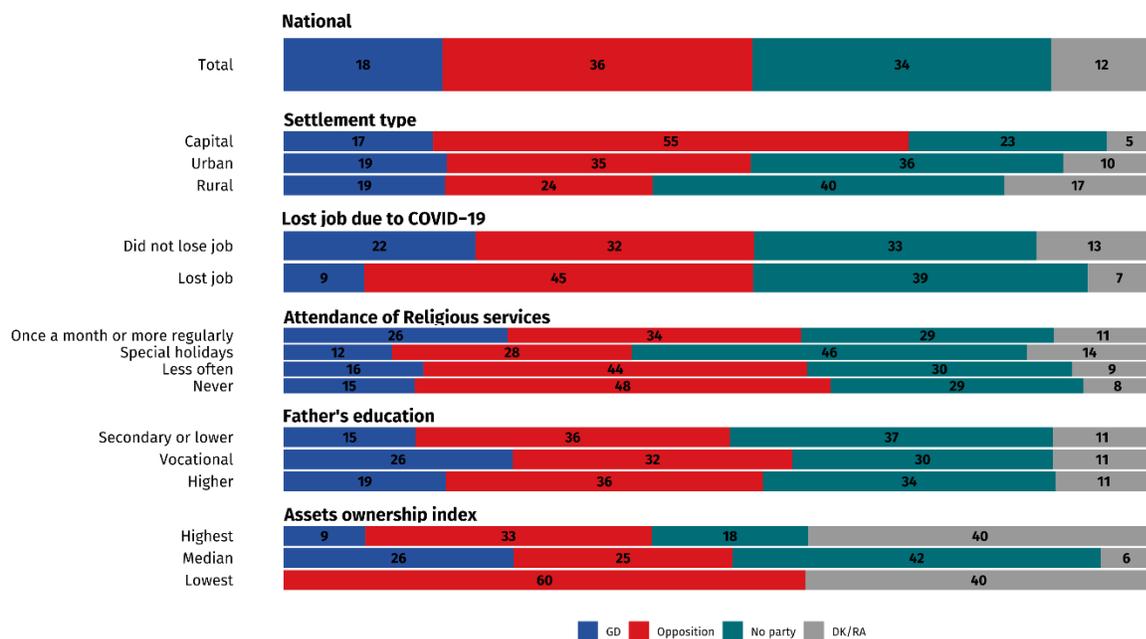
It is noteworthy that internal political efficacy is associated with youth civic and political participation. Higher internal political efficacy is associated with higher civic and political participation and vice versa.

## Sympathies for political parties

A third of young people in Georgia (34%) find no political party close to their views, while 12% are undecided or refuse to name such party. Around a fifth (18%) of young people find the ruling party, Georgian Dream - Democratic Georgia, to be the closest to their views, and more than a third (35%) prefer different opposition parties.

Those 46% of young people who either find no party to have views closest to their own, are undecided or refuse to name such a party, or do not name any party that they sympathize with to any extent were asked to name a party they sympathize with the most. The majority (72%) of these young people name no such party, while a quarter either refuse to answer or are undecided. Only 2% of young people name opposition parties, and 1% name the ruling party.

Figure 20: Political party affiliation by major demographic groups (answers to questions about party closest to one's views and party one sympathize with more were combined, %).



Statistical analysis shows that party affiliation differs across major demographic groups (Figure 20). Almost the same share of young people living in the capital (17%), other cities (19%), and rural areas (19%), find the ruling party to have views closest to their own. However, opposition parties are found to be preferable in Tbilisi (55%), other cities (35%), and rural areas (24%). Accordingly, young people living in villages most often (40%) find that no party holds views close to their own, say that they are undecided, or refuse to name a party (17%). Young people whose family members lost a job due to the COVID-19 pandemic, who rarely or never attend religious services, or whose economic condition is relatively low, less frequently find the ruling party to hold views close to their own.

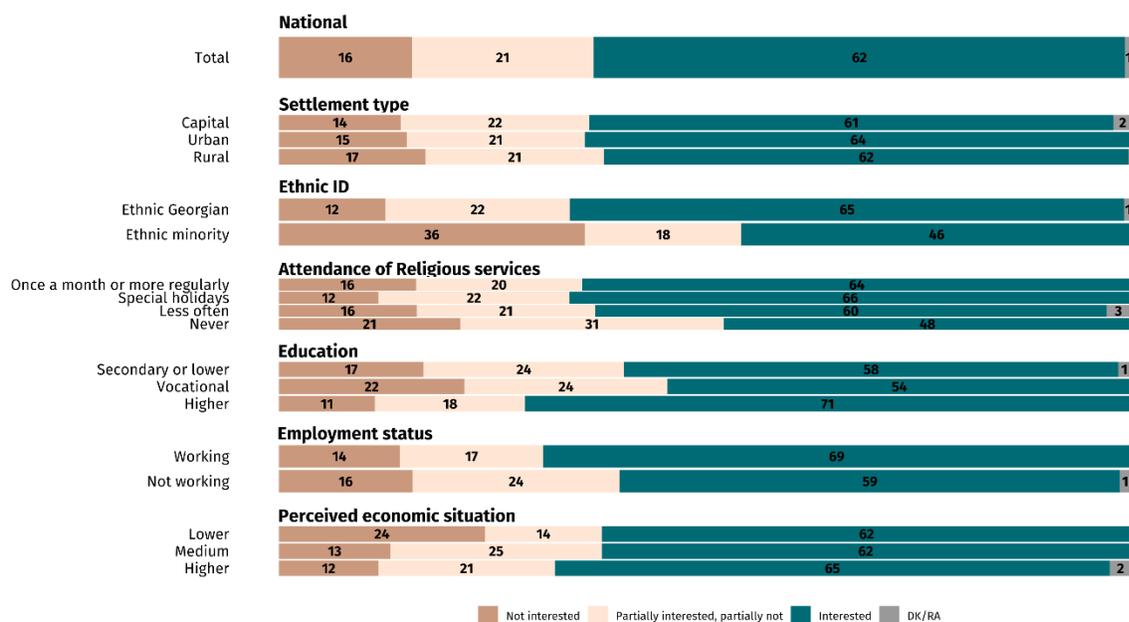
## Conflicts and peacebuilding

### Knowledge and experiences around conflicts

When it comes to local news and politics of the breakaway regions of Georgia, similarly to Georgia proper, young people are more interested in local news rather than politics. Alongside higher levels of interest, the probability of receiving information about local news in these regions is also high.

62% of young people living in Georgia are interested in local news in Abkhazia and 58% in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia (Figure 10). Ethnic Georgians, employed youth, and those with higher education, are more interested in local news in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. Religious and economic factors also play a role in generating interest in developments in Abkhazia. Young people who never attended religious services and whose perceived economic condition is low are less interested in local news in Abkhazia (Figure 10). With regard to the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, party affiliation appeared to play an important role. Young people who cannot or do not name a party close to their views are less interested in local news in this region.

Figure 21: To what extent are you interested in ongoing events in Abkhazia? (%).

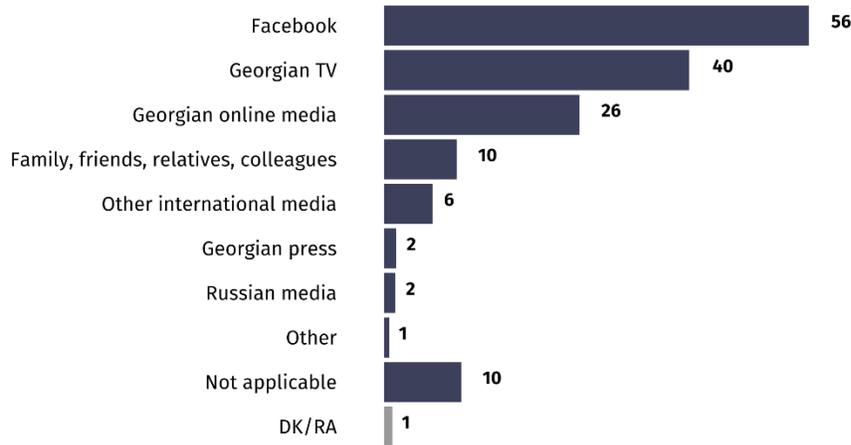


Similarly to the low level of interest in the country's politics, interest in the political life of these regions is also quite low. Almost a third of young people are interested in the politics of both Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia (Figure 21). Young people who have received higher education are more interested in the politics of the breakaway regions. Experiencing internal displacement due to conflicts appeared to be another important factor for generating interest in Abkhazian politics. Young people with experiences of internal displacement are also more interested in Abkhazia's politics.

A tenth of young people receive no information at all about local news in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia (Figure 22). Among the most commonly named sources of information on local news in the breakaway regions are Facebook (56%), Georgian TV channels (40%), and Georgian online media (25%). The next most commonly reported sources of news are family members, friends, relatives, and/or colleagues (10%). 6% of young people name

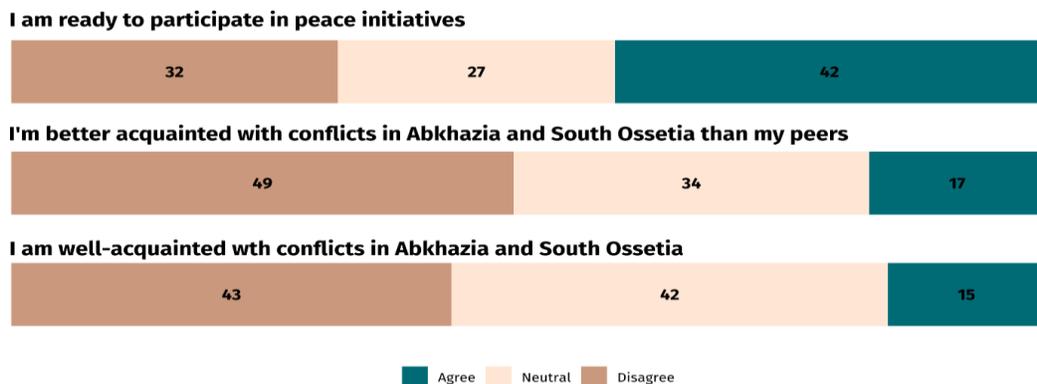
international media outlets as well. Georgian print media (2%) and Russian media (2%) are rarely mentioned.

Figure 22: What is/are your main source(s) of information on ongoing events in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia? (Responders could select multiple answers, %).



To understand youth political efficacy with regard to peace processes, questions developed by the analogy of internal and external political efficacy measures were used. The internal political efficacy index, tailored to the context of Georgian conflicts, measures individuals' awareness of, and readiness to participate, in peace processes based on three questions (Figure 23). In this regard, youth internal efficacy varies. Only 15% of young people living in Georgia believe they are well-acquainted with the conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, while 17% believe that they are better acquainted with these conflicts compared to their peers. In this regard, considerably more (42%) young people feel ready to participate in peace initiatives related to the conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, if they so desire.

Figure 23: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Answer options "don't know" and "refuse to answer" were grouped in a neutral category, %).

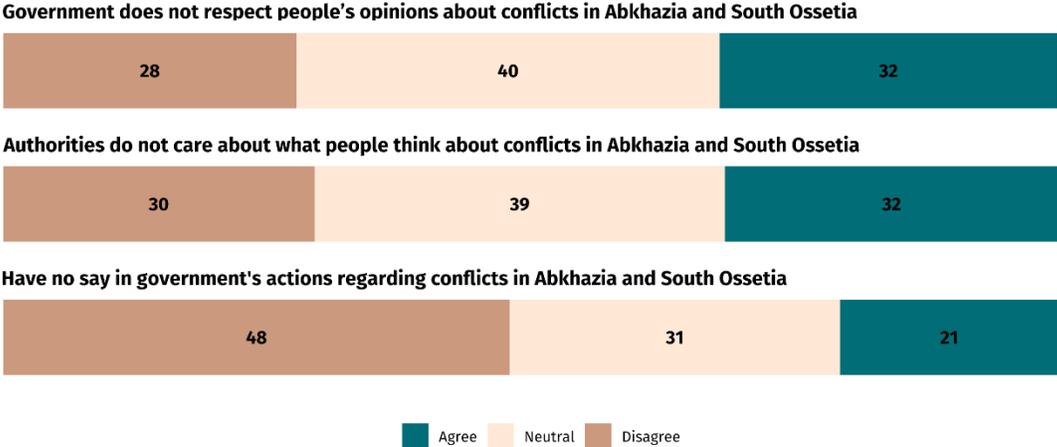


The internal political efficacy index is the sum of answers to the aforementioned questions, where points range from 0 to 12. Higher index points are indicative of higher internal political efficacy and vice versa. The distribution of index points shows that 39% of young people are characterized by low internal political efficacy with regard to conflicts (0-4 points). 51% of young people hold

neutral positions (5-8 points), while only a tenth of young people are characterized by high political efficacy (9-12 points). Statistical analysis shows that young men, those with higher education, and those with the experience of internal displacement due to conflicts, are characterized by higher internal political efficacy, meaning they are interested in learning about conflicts, well-acquainted with issues around conflicts, and consider themselves ready to participate in peace initiatives.

The external political efficacy index, tailored to the context of the Georgian conflicts, measures the extent to which an individual believes that, in general, citizens have the opportunity to participate in peace processes (Figure 24). Young people living in Georgia are not characterized by high external political efficacy around conflicts either. A fifth (21%) of young people believe that people have no say in the government's actions regarding the conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. Even stronger is the belief that the government usually does not respect people's opinions about conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia (32%), and that government officials do not care what people think about these conflicts (32%).

Figure 24: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Answer options "don't know" and "refuse to answer" were grouped in a neutral category, %).



The external political efficacy index tailored to conflicts is the sum of answers on the aforementioned questions, where points range from 0 to 12. Similar to the common external political efficacy index, higher index points are indicative of lower external political efficacy. The distribution of index points shows that around a third of young people (33%) are characterized by high external political efficacy with regard to conflicts (0-4 points), while 16% of young people are characterized by relatively low external political efficacy (9-12 points). Statistical analysis shows that young people who have been internally displaced due to conflicts, and those who consider the ruling party to be close to their views, are characterized with higher external political efficacy.

**Relations between conflict-divided societies**

The majority of young people (72%) do not know a person who currently lives in Abkhazia or the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. A fifth (22%) of young people say they have a personal

acquaintance currently living in Abkhazia, while only 5% state that they have acquaintances currently living in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.

Whether they have an acquaintance or not, the majority of young people (73%) have had no contact with people living in Abkhazia for the last ten years. Young people living in Georgia proper mostly communicate with people living in Abkhazia through the internet (social networks, forums, etc., 12%). A tenth of young people living in Georgia have met a person/people living in Abkhazia face to face in an informal situation (at dinner, in church, etc.), while 7% of young people have met a person/people living in Abkhazia face to face, for instance, for business. 7% have communicated through the phone.

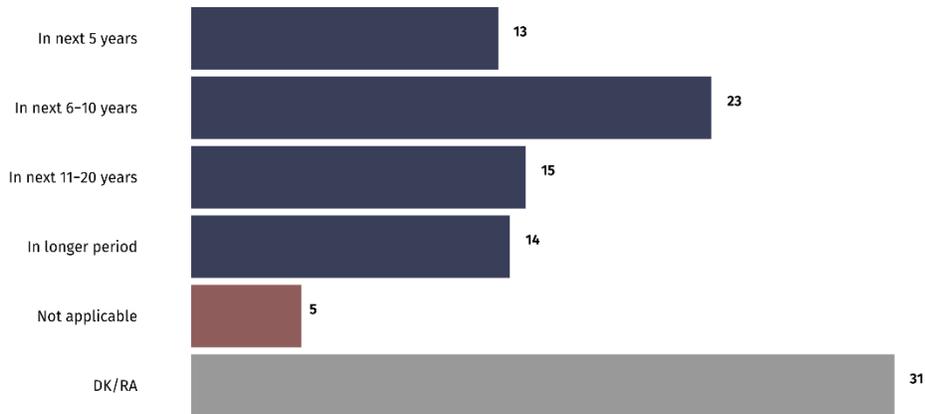
Having relationships with people living in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia is even rarer, with 87% of young people reporting no contact with people living there. The most common form of contact is through the internet (5%). Only 3% of young people have experienced informal contact, and 2% have experienced formal contact with people living in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. 3% have communicated through the phone.

To understand how experiences of interaction with people living in Abkhazia or the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia differ by major demographic groups, cumulative indexes were used. The indexes are sums of questions on different types of interactions with people living in Abkhazia on the one hand and in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia on the other. Index scores range from 0 to 5, where a higher score is indicative of a more diverse experience of interaction. Analysis shows no statistical differences in young people’s experiences of interaction with people living in Abkhazia or the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia across major demographic groups. The only exception are those who have experienced internal displacement due to conflicts. Young people who had such experiences have had more diverse interactions with people living in Abkhazia, but not with those living in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.

**Attitudes towards peace processes**

Young people living in Georgia unanimously (95%) believe that conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia should be resolved through negotiations, and only 2% are in favour of resolving conflicts by force.

Figure 25: In your opinion, when will conflict in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia be resolved? (%)



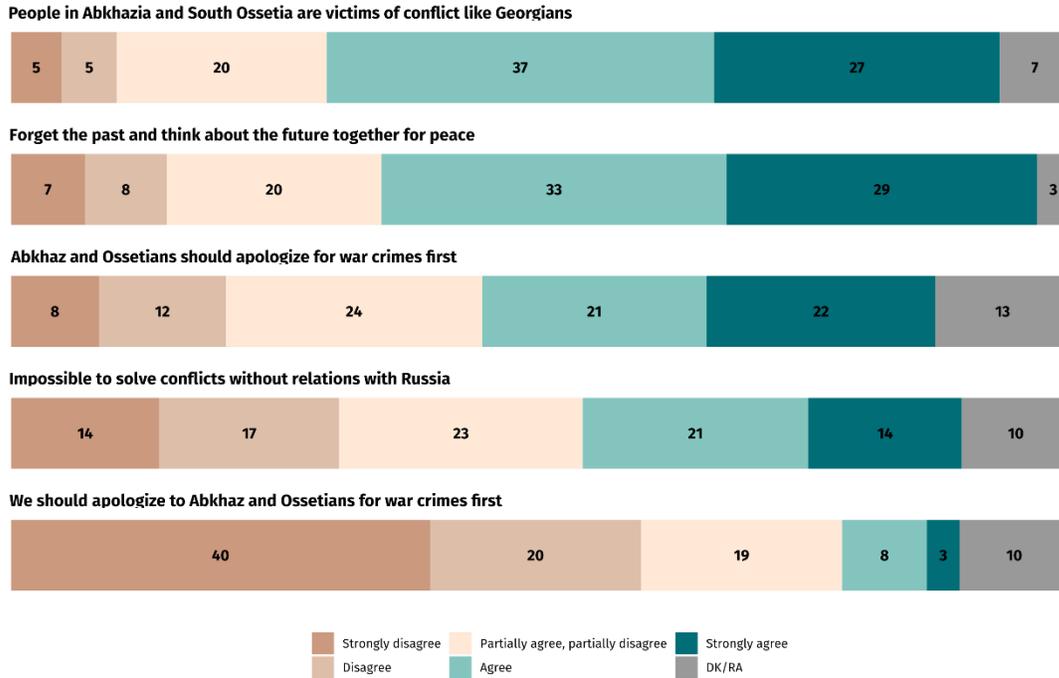
About a third of young people (31%) find it difficult to foresee when conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia will be resolved (Figure 25). Most commonly, young people believe these conflicts will be resolved in the next 6-10 years (23%), while 5% of young people are more pessimistic, stating that these conflicts will never be resolved.

44% of young people believe that women's increased participation in peace processes would have a positive impact on conflict resolution. 14% of young people believe that this would have a negative impact, while more than a fifth (28%) see no potential impact on women at all. A considerable share of young people (15%) are undecided about whether women's increased participation can influence peace processes.

Young people who believe that women can have a positive impact on peace processes most often link women's participation to achieving sustainable peace (56%). About a third of these young people believe that women's increased participation in peace processes will result in more assistance to women living in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia (33%), and that the population of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia will be able to benefit from more social programs offered by the Georgian state (32%). Meanwhile, a quarter of young people (26%) believe that women's increased participation will allow the population of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia to benefit from more social programs offered by the non-governmental sector.

Empathy for the parties affected by the conflict is quite high among Georgian youth. The majority (64%) believe that ordinary people currently living in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia are as much victims of the conflict as are Georgians (Figure 26). Only a tenth of young people do not agree with this opinion, while more than a quarter (27%) either hold a neutral position or are undecided. Although no significant association is found with the experience of internal displacement due to conflicts, those who have interacted with people currently living in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, men, people aged 18-23 years old, and young people representing ethnic minorities, are less likely to agree that people in the breakaway regions are as much victims of the conflict as are Georgians.

*Figure 26: Please tell me to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (%)*



Although, as noted above, the vast majority of young people (95%) are in favour of resolving conflicts through negotiation, attitudes towards the reconciliation process differ. No statistically significant association was found between attitudes toward the reconciliation process and either experiences of internal displacement due to conflict or experiences of interaction with people living in the breakaway regions.

The majority of young people (62%) agree with the opinion that it is necessary to forget about the past and instead think about a future together in order to have peace with Abkhazians and Ossetians. Notably, young people who have experienced internal displacement due to conflicts are less likely to agree with this approach.

Given this context, only a tenth of young people (11%) believe that it is important for Georgians to be the first to apologize to Abkhazians and Ossetians for the war crimes committed by the Georgian side, while around four times more young people (43%) believe that Abkhazians and Ossetians should be the first to apologize to Georgians for the crimes committed during the war. While ethnic Georgians and young people living in the capital are less likely to agree that Georgians should be the first to apologize, men and ethnic Georgian youth are more likely to agree that Abkhazians and Ossetians should be the first to do so.

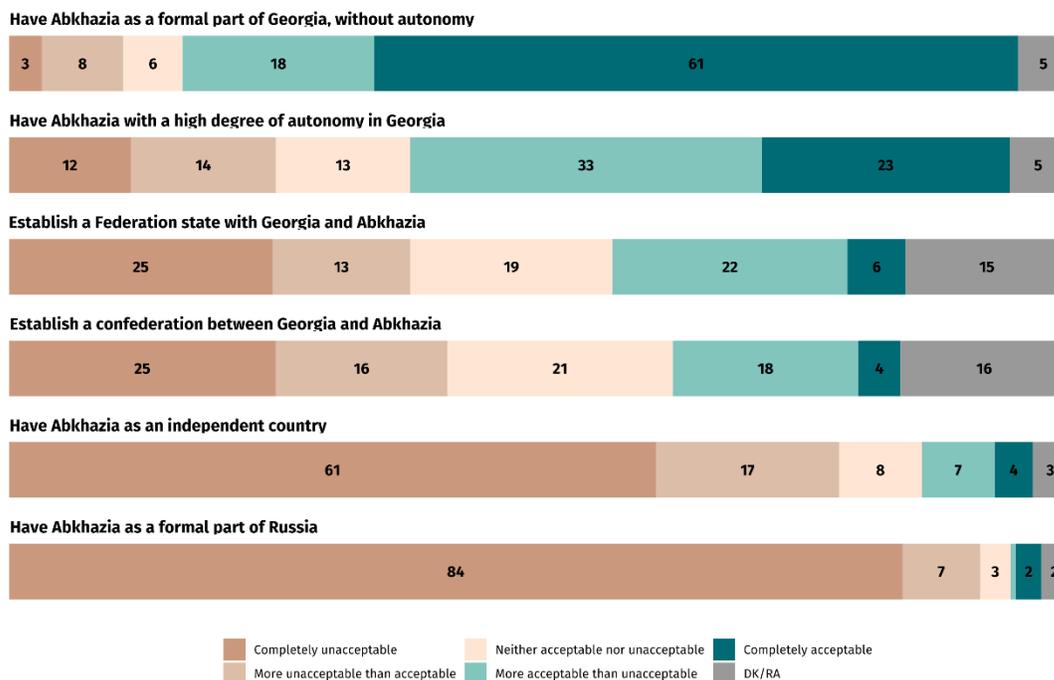
As for the geopolitical aspects of conflict resolution, the opinion of young people is rather evenly split. 36% believe that Georgia will not be able to solve its territorial problems without deepening relations with Russia, while 31% do not agree with this opinion. Young people aged 24-29, and those who find opposition parties to be closest to their views, are more likely to agree that Georgia must deepen relations with Russia in order to solve its territorial issues.

When it comes to different scenarios for resolving the conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, scenarios where territorial integrity is maintained are considered to be the most acceptable. Differences in responses between demographic groups are not straightforward. However, differences are mainly found across settlement types and ethnicities. The experience of

internal displacement due to conflicts and experience of interacting with people living in the breakaway regions are not associated with support for any specific conflict resolution scenario.

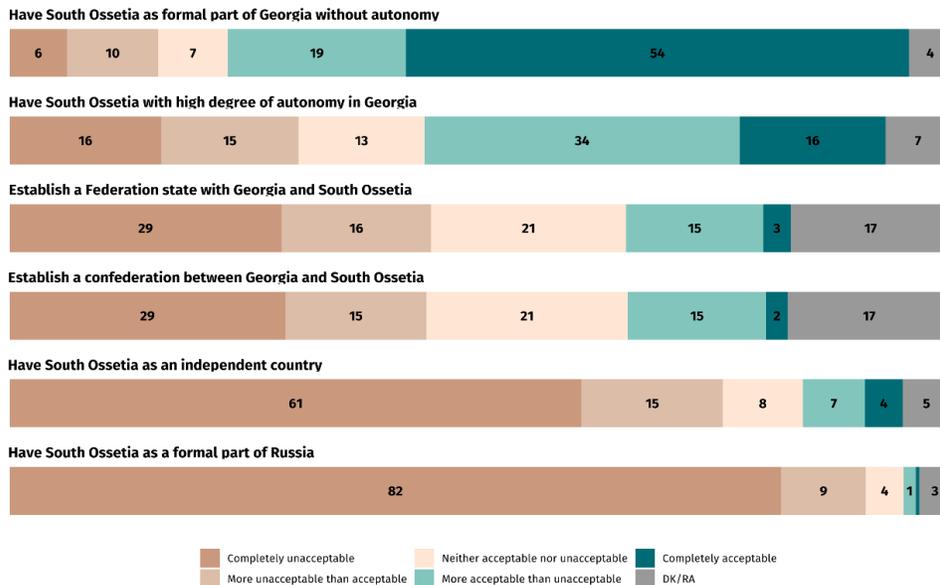
The majority of young people living in Georgia find it acceptable to have Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia as parts of Georgia without autonomy (79% and 73%, respectively, figures 27 and 28). Relatively less, but still the majority (56% and 50%), find it acceptable for Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, respectively, to be part of Georgia with considerable autonomy. Support for scenarios in which Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia have more autonomy and independence is quite low. 28% fully support and 18% partially support the transformation of Georgia into a federal state, with Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia joining as entities with considerable rights.

Figure 27: Various ideas have been proposed for the settling of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. Please tell me whether you would definitely favour, might accept under certain circumstances, or would never accept the following ideas: (%)



A fifth of young people find it acceptable to form a confederation uniting Abkhazia and Georgia on the one hand (22%), and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and Georgia (17%) on the other. However, it should be noted that these two scenarios might be the most confusing for youth since a higher share of young people hold a neutral position or are undecided about these models, compared to other models mentioned in this report.

Figure 28: Various ideas have been proposed for the settling of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. Please tell me whether you would definitely favour, might accept under certain circumstances, or would never accept the following ideas: (%)



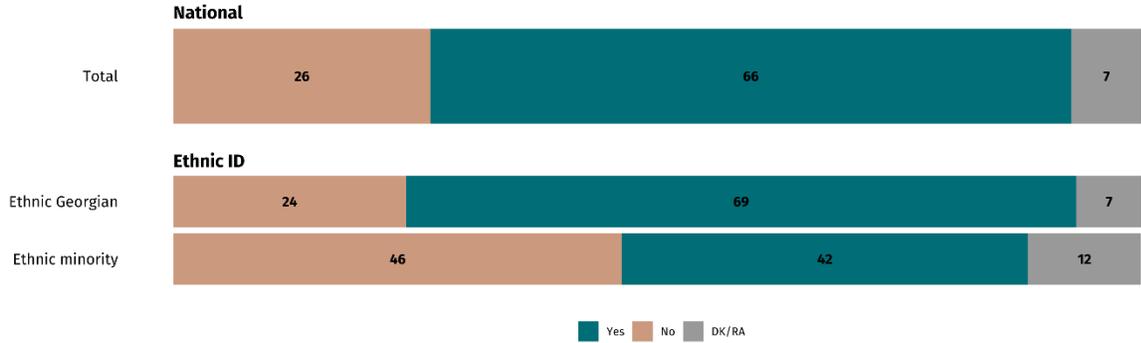
The independence of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia is acceptable for only a tenth of young people. Although this scenario is supported by a small share of young people, this small share is mostly represented by young people living in cities and young people from an ethnic minority. The most unacceptable scenarios for young people living in Georgia are those in which the breakaway regions would be a part of the Russian Federation.

### Interest in participation in peace processes

The majority of young people living in Georgia (66%) feel ready to participate in events aimed at reconciling with the population of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. Slightly more than a fifth (27%) would not participate in such events, while 8% are undecided.

The differences between groups are found only across ethnic identities. Ethnic Georgians feel more prepared to engage in the reconciliation process compared to youth from ethnic minority groups (Figure 28). No association is found with the experience of internal displacement due to conflicts, having acquaintances in Abkhazia or the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, or the experience of interacting with people living in the breakaway regions.

Figure 28: Would you participate in events aimed at reconciling with the population of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia? (%)



## CONCLUSIONS

This report explored young people's experiences of, and attitudes towards, participation in social, economic, and political life and peace processes in Georgia. Specifically, the report addressed attitudes towards different institutions, civic values, experiences of and attitudes towards civic and political participation, knowledge and experiences of conflicts, as well as attitudes towards peace processes.

The data from the study lead to the following primary findings:

The majority of young people do not trust any government institutions, while trust towards state and non-state institutions is relatively higher. Trust in the institutions mentioned in this report is relatively higher among young people who find the ruling party to be closest to their views, compared to those who either find opposition parties or no other party preferable. Similar to institutional trust, generalized trust is not high either.

Young people are quite distanced from people of different nationalities and ethnicities. Compared to the level of approval of doing business, friendship, and marriage with Georgians, approval of such relationships with other nationalities and ethnicities is quite low, including with ethnicities living in Georgia's breakaway regions.

Democracy is preferable to any other kind of system of government for the majority of youth. Those who are ethnic Georgians, highly educated, whose parents have higher than secondary education, and who perceive their economic condition as medium or high, are more likely to prefer democracy.

Young people living in Georgia do not unanimously agree on the issue of women's political participation. 43% of young people agree that women should be better represented in Georgian politics, while 11% of youth say that it would make no difference. Together with other demographic groups, young men are more skeptical about this issue compared to young women. Those who find women's increased political participation important believe that, together with other changes, this would enhance gender equality and enforcement of gender laws.

Local news in Georgia or in their settlement is more interesting for young people than the country's politics. Attitudes towards the breakaway regions are quite similar. Local news in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia is more interesting for young people, compared to the politics of these regions. Interest in local news, as well as in politics, is higher among youth who have received higher education.

The majority of young people think that Georgia is moving in the wrong direction. Those with family members who lost their job due to the coronavirus pandemic, who perceive their economic condition as medium or lower, and who find opposition parties or no party to most closely represent their views, are more pessimistic about the course of the country's development.

Economic issues such as unemployment and poverty are most frequently named among the most important issues facing the country. Only 5% of young people name territorial integrity among the most important issues facing Georgia.

A large share of youth (45%) are completely inactive in civic and political life. The most common forms of participation are volunteering and expressing one's views online on important issues. Engagement with the community and local governments, as well as union memberships, is very low.

Political participation is also quite low, with only a third of youth having such experience. Compared to direct participation in party politics, indirect engagement with political parties is

higher. Men, youth with higher education, and those who find at least one party to closely represent their views, are more likely to engage in political life.

The majority of young people living in Georgia are not confident in their understanding of political issues and ability to participate in politics. They are also not confident that state authorities understand citizens' concerns and are ready to consider them.

Around a third of young people state that none of the political parties in Georgia closely represent their views, while more than a tenth are undecided. Generally, only 8% of young people trust political parties.

Interest in local news in Georgia's breakaway regions is quite high, and the majority of youth get information about such news. The most common sources of information are Facebook, Georgian TV broadcasting, and Georgian online media.

Only a small share of young people believe that they are well-acquainted with issues around the conflicts, although a large share (42%) are ready to participate in peace initiatives. Even fewer young people believe that state authorities generally consider the opinions of people like themselves regarding the conflicts. Men and supporters of the ruling party are more likely to believe in the possibility of participation in peace processes, while receiving a higher education and experiencing internal displacement due to conflicts are two factors associated with both perceptions of one's potential and the possibilities of participating in the peace process.

The absolute majority of young people neither have any personal contacts with people currently living in Abkhazia or the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia nor have had any experience or any kind of relationship with people living in the breakaway regions during the last ten years. Young people who have experienced internal displacement due to conflicts have had more contact with people living in Abkhazia, but not with people living in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.

A major share of young people find it hard to assess when the conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia will be resolved, although only a small share (5%) believe that these conflicts will never be resolved.

The absolute majority of young people think that the conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia should be resolved through negotiations.

A significant share of young people (44%) think that women's increased participation in the peace process will have a positive effect, which is a factor most often associated with the prospect of sustainable peace.

Empathy for the parties affected by the conflicts is quite high among youth, and the majority (64%) also agree that ordinary people currently living in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia are as much victims of the conflict as are Georgians. The majority of young people find it important for all sides involved in the conflict to forget what happened in the past and to think about a future together with Abkhazians and Ossetians.

Considerably more young people hold the opinion that Abkhazians and Ossetians should be the first to apologize to Georgians for war crimes committed (43%), compared to young people who think that Georgians should be the first to apologize (11%).

Conflict resolution models that are associated with the restoration of territorial integrity are the most acceptable for the majority of youth. Federal and confederal models do not have many supporters, although young people are more frequently undecided, rather than resistant, to these scenarios. When it comes to the options of granting independence to the breakaway regions or having them integrate with Russia, such conflict resolution scenarios are unacceptable for the majority of youth.

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