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CAUCASUS BAROMETER 2015 RESULTS

Special Editor: Natia Mestvirishvili

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Public Opinion on Public Opinion: How Does the Population of Georgia See Public Opinion Polls?

Tinatin Zurabishvili, Tbilisi

Abstract

Although 6% of the population of Georgia reported not knowing anything about public opinion polls in 2015, polls—especially those focused on political issues—have become a visible part of the political landscape of the country. However, decision makers most often use the results with a specific agenda in mind. As CRRC’s 2015 Caucasus Barometer data suggest, attitudes towards poll results are ambivalent. However, there is a clear expectation that the government should consider the results of public opinion polls when making political decisions.

Following tense debates over the trustworthiness of the findings of public opinion polls in contemporary Georgia, CRRC’s 2015 *Caucasus Barometer* survey (CB) asked for the first time a series of questions concerning people’s attitudes towards poll results. In this article, we will first discuss the reported level of trust in the results of public opinion polls in Georgia and then analyze assessments of specific statements about public opinion polls, with the eventual goal of understanding whether the population perceives the results of public opinion polls as representing their own voice or, rather, as yet another tool in the hands of those in power.

Assessing Trust

With, on the one hand, a lack of knowledge of the population *en masse* concerning representative surveys in general and, on the other hand, often biased, contradictory and/or unprofessional reporting of poll results by the media¹, unsurprisingly, the population finds it difficult to assess their trust in public opinion poll results in Georgia. A large share, 41%, either report “don’t know” or choose middle positions (codes ‘5’ and ‘6’) on the 10-point scale that was used to assess people’s level of trust. When asked whether, in their opinion, “most of the people around them” trust or distrust poll results, the respective share increases to 57%, with an understandably high positive correlation between the answers to the two questions (Spearman’s correlation coefficient is .626).

The answers to the questions about people’s own trust in public opinion poll results and that of the “others” are rather similar, with a mean of 5.82 of a 10-point scale in the case of assessment of personal trust and a mean of 5.39 in the case of the assessment of “others” trust

(Table 1). Interestingly, people are more likely to report having trust in polls (26% choosing codes 8, 9 and 10, corresponding to high levels of trust according to the survey instructions) than they are to report “others” having such trust (12%), suggesting that they have heard more negative than positive attitudes towards poll results during the discussions that took place around them.

Table 1: Personal Vs. “Others” Trust in Poll Results in Georgia (% and Mean)

	To what extent would say you trust or distrust the results of public opinion polls conducted in our country?	And to what extent, in your opinion, do most of the people around you trust or distrust the results of public opinion polls conducted in our country?
Trust	27	13
Tend to trust	16	17
Tend to distrust	32	34
Distrust	17	12
Don’t know	8	24
Mean	5.82	5.39

Source: CRRC 2015 Caucasus Barometer Survey

Note: A 10-point scale was used to measure the level of trust, with code ‘1’ corresponding to the response “Do not trust at all” and code ‘10’ corresponding to the response “Completely trust.” For this paper, the responses were recoded into a 4-point scale, with original codes 1, 2 and 3 corresponding to “Distrust,” codes 4 and 5 corresponding to “Tend to distrust,” codes 6 and 7 corresponding to “Tend to trust,” and codes 8, 9 and 10 corresponding to “Trust.”

While answering the first of these questions, 6% reported, “I don’t know anything about polls”; they have been excluded from the analysis.

As the findings in Table 1 demonstrate, overall, the population does not report any convincing level of trust in

1 Making Public Opinion Matter in Georgia, <<https://www.esomar.org/uploads/public/knowledge-and-standards/documents/ESOMAR-WAPOR-guideline-on-reporting-pre-election-poll-results.pdf>>

the results of public opinion polls conducted in Georgia. Slightly more than one-quarter of those who answered this question (27%) report trust, with an additional 16% who, arguably, tend to trust but are nevertheless reluctant to report trust.

According to the theory of the “spiral of silence,” the answers to the question assessing the trust of “people around” an individual rather than respondents themselves represent a more accurate indicator of the attitudes that are prevalent in a given society. As this theory would suggest, the level of trust in public opinion poll results should be assessed as rather low in Georgia, with less than one-third of the population believed to trust polls at least slightly. This level of trust is comparable² to the reported level of trust in the local government, banks, or the Ombudsman and is, in fact, higher than that in the Parliament, executive and political parties. Statistically, of a number of social and political institutions that CB asked about, reported trust in poll results correlates most, although still rather moderately, with trust in NGOs, the media, the EU, the UN and the Ombudsman (Table 2).

Table 2: Correlation Between Reported Trust in Poll Results and Selected Institutions (Spearman’s Correlation Coefficients)

“To what extent would you trust or distrust the results of public opinion polls conducted in our country?” by “How much do you trust or distrust ...”	
NGOs	.239
EU	.205
Media	.203
UN	.200
Ombudsman	.186

Source: CRRC 2015 Caucasus Barometer Survey

These findings may help to suggest important areas for the future study of the nature of (dis)trust in public opinion polls and their results in Georgia. On the one hand, most of the people do not trust poll results, the main goal and role of which should be voicing the people’s views and attitudes. It is important to know which factors

2 Different scales were used during the survey to measure the level of trust in the results of public opinion polls, on the one hand, and major social and political institutions, on the other hand; hence, the results on the reported level of trust are not directly comparable but are instead indicative.

lead to distrust. On the other hand, the relatively high correlation of trust in poll results with trust in NGOs, the Ombudsman, the EU and the UN—i.e., the institutions that are not viewed as a part of the traditional system—may suggest that the population regards polls as something alien, and although people are more or less informed about them, people lack an understanding of both the nature of polls and how to assess their trustworthiness.

How Does the Population View Polls?

The following six statements about public opinion polls were assessed during the survey, using a 10-point scale³:

- [1] Public opinion polls help all of us get better knowledge about the society we live in.
- [2] Ordinary people trust public opinion poll results only when they like the results.
- [3] Public opinion polls can only work well in developed democratic countries, but not in countries like Georgia.
- [4] The government should consider the results of public opinion polls while making political decisions.
- [5] Politicians trust public opinion poll results only when these are favorable for them or for their party.
- [6] I think I understand quite well how public opinion polls are conducted.

Starting with the last of these statements, 14% of the population did not know how to answer this question, i.e., could not assess their own understanding of how public opinion polls are conducted. Approximately one-third chose middle positions on the scale (codes ‘5’ and ‘6’), while 16% “completely agreed” with the statement. Overall, although only slightly over one-third of the population claims to understand “quite well” how public opinion polls are conducted, the share of those who answered positively (codes ‘7’ through ‘10’) is twice as large than the share of those who answered negatively (codes ‘1’ through ‘4’), 37% to 18%. Of course, this is a person’s self-assessment, and specifically focused experiments or exercises would be needed to determine the extent to which this self-assessment corresponds to reality.

Assessments of statements [1] and [4] indicate whether people find survey results valuable. Although one would expect these two statements to measure rather similar aspects of attitudes towards polls, the answers to these two questions are surprisingly different. Compared to the share of those who claim that polls help us to better understand society, a considerably larger

3 Code ‘1’ on this scale corresponded to the response “Completely disagree” and code ‘10’ corresponded to the response “Completely agree.”

share agrees that the government should consider the results of public opinion polls when making political decisions—47% report “completely agreeing” (code 10) with this statement.

Table 3: (Dis)Agreement with Statements about Polls (% and Mean)

	Public opinion polls help all of us get better knowledge about the society we live in.	The government should consider the results of public opinion polls while making political decisions.
Agree	46	69
[In the middle]	30	18
Disagree	13	5
Don't know	12	8
Mean*	6.72	8.20

Source: CRRC 2015 Caucasus Barometer Survey

* To calculate means, the option “Don't know” was excluded.

Note: A 10-point scale was used to record answers to these questions, with code ‘1’ corresponding to the response “Completely disagree” and code ‘10’ corresponding to the response “Completely agree.” For this paper, the responses were recoded into a 3-point scale, with original codes 1 through 4 corresponding to “Disagree,” codes 5 and 6 to “[In the middle],” and codes 7 through 10 to “Agree.”

The share of those who disagree with the opinion that “Public opinion polls can only work well in developed democratic countries, but not in countries like Georgia” is nearly twice as large as the share of those who agree with it—41% and 22%, respectively—with one-quarter of the population choosing middle positions and another 13% answering “Don't know.”

People rather confidently agree that politicians in Georgia “trust public opinion poll results only when these are favorable for them or for their party,” with 42% reporting complete agreement with this statement. When speaking about ordinary people, however, considerably fewer people—slightly less than half of the population—agree that people trust the results of polls “only” when they like the results, although the distribution of answers to these two questions follows a similar pattern (Figure 1 on p. 5).

Overall, the data suggest little certainty in Georgian society regarding public opinion polls. The majority of the population does not report trust in poll results, which obviously means that people do not regard poll results as reflecting their voice; however, people also do not clearly state their distrust. Moreover, there is a clear demand for the government to consider the results of public opinion polls when making political decisions.

There are a number of important questions that still need to be answered to understand the role that public opinion polls play in contemporary Georgian society. Some of these questions are highlighted below:

- What are the factors that lead to distrust in the results of public opinion polls?
- Who influences what people think about the polls, and how?
- How much does the population actually need to know about the polls to be able to make independent and qualified judgments about their quality and the reliability of their findings?
- What role do the media play in (a) informing the population about polls and (b) influencing people's trust in their results?

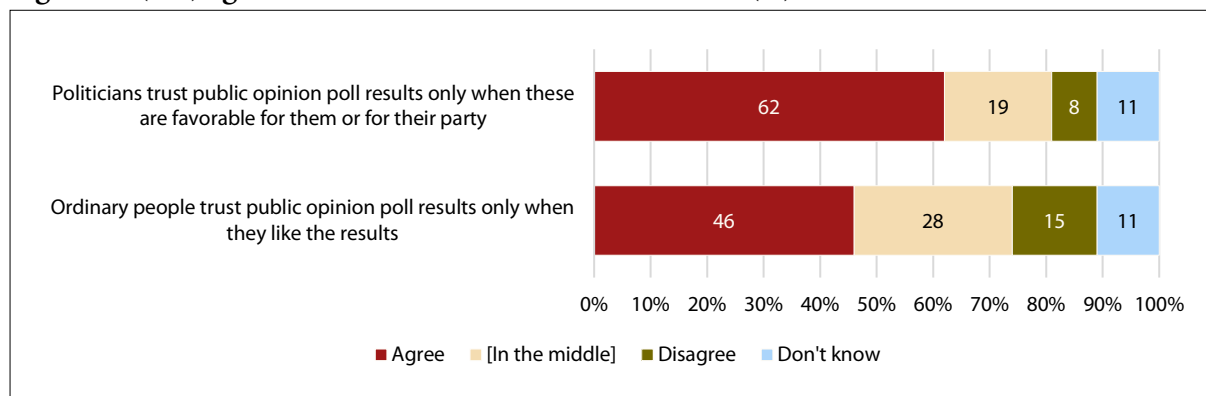
CRRC's 2015 Caucasus Barometer survey dataset is available at <http://www.caucasusbarometer.org/en/downloads/>.

About the Author

Tinatin Zurabishvili holds a PhD in Sociology of Journalism from Moscow M. Lomonosov State University. From 1994 to 1999, Tinatin worked for the Levada Center in Moscow. After returning to Georgia in 1999, she taught various courses in sociology, particularly focusing on research methodology, for BA and MA programs in Telavi State University and Tbilisi State University Center for Social Sciences. From 2001 to 2003, she was a Civic Education Project Local Faculty Fellow; from 2010 to 2012, she was a professor at the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA). In 2007, she joined the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) as Caucasus Barometer survey regional coordinator. Since 2012, she has worked as the CRRC-Georgia research director. Her research interests are focused on post-Soviet transformation, sociology of migration, media studies, and social research methodology.

Recommended Reading

- Making Public Opinion Matter in Georgia (2013). <https://www.esomar.org/uploads/public/knowledge-and-standards/documents/ESOMAR-WAPOR-guideline-on-reporting-pre-election-poll-results.pdf> (Accessed June 6, 2016).
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Figure 1: (Dis)Agreement with Statements about the Polls (%)

Source: CRRG 2015 Caucasus Barometer Survey

Note: A 10-point scale was used to record answers to these questions, with code '1' corresponding to the response "Completely disagree" and code '10' corresponding to the response "Completely agree." For this paper, the responses were recoded into a 3-point scale, with original codes 1 through 4 corresponding to "Disagree," codes 5 and 6 to "[In the middle]," and codes 7 through 10 to "Agree."

Evaluation of the Georgian Government's Performance Through the Lens of Public Trust

Rati Shubladze, Tbilisi

Abstract

Using time-series survey data from the Caucasus Barometer (CB) conducted annually from 2008 to 2015 in Georgia, this article explores how the outcomes of (a) general political events and (b) policymaking can influence the formation of trust in key political and social institutions. If political actors or institutions realize high levels of performance in their policymaking and achieve results (measured in economic indicators), grateful citizens will repay them with a high level of political trust. However, in the event of unsatisfactory performance by political actors or institutions, a decrease in citizens' trust in institutions can be expected.

Introduction

The concept of political trust can be defined as the public's belief that political actors and public institutions would not perform any action that will deceive or harm society (Levi & Stoker, 2000). Political trust is particularly important in countries such as Georgia, where the presence of democratic institutions is relatively novel and the previous authorities left a legacy encouraging distrust. The lack of institutional memory and of experience in democratic governance could cause legitimacy problems for public institutions—i.e., in the capacity to maintain the confidence that those institutions are reliable, trustworthy and suitable for citizens (Słomczynski & Janicka, 2009).

Hence, it is important to understand the factors that shape political trust. For this purpose, this paper uses

institutional theories of political trust that claim that trust in institutions is rationally generated as a result of a citizen's evaluations of institutional performance and reactions to ongoing social events. When studying established democracies and developed countries, institutional theories typically emphasize the importance of economic performance. However, in post-Communist countries such as Georgia, where human rights and the rule of law have been violated for years, neglecting the rule of law and human rights are no less important. Therefore, while explaining changes political trust, we will be employing both economic indicators and political performance, suggesting that citizens' evaluation of public institutions are based on two different criteria: outcomes of political events that shape the politi-

cal environment and outcomes of policymaking for citizens as performed by state institutions¹.

Focusing on the citizens' trust in key public and governmental institutions—(1) courts and the police; (2) executive government, the President and the Parliament; (3) the healthcare system and (4) banks—this paper investigates what political, social and economic events shape Georgians' thinking on public institutions. The piece compares the fluctuations in public trust before and after important events in Georgian social life and public policy. To evaluate the level of trust in political actors or institutions, the article employs time-series survey data from the Caucasus Barometer (CB) conducted by Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC). The paper uses the data for the years 2008–2015 for Georgia, specifically on questions that evaluate Georgians' level of trust in the major political and public institutions of their country.² The indicators of policymaking outcomes in Georgia are based on the National Statistics Office of Georgia (GeoStat), The National Bank of Georgia (NBG) and the Ministry of Finance of Georgia (State Budget).

Courts and Police

Courts and police are associated with the rule of law, which was considered the Achilles heel during the emergence of the modern Georgian state. The Heritage Foundation's corruption index for Georgia from 1996 until 2000 was one of the worst in the world. However, by 2012, the country's performance on this indicator had improved remarkably and the country was considered entirely free from low-level corruption³. This was achieved by prioritizing the reform of law enforcement bodies, such as the unpopular and corrupt police. As a result, a high level of trust in the police has been achieved—by 2011, 67% of Georgians trusted the police, making it the third-most trusted institution, after the Georgian Orthodox Church and the Georgian Army. By contrast, another important body of law enforcement—the courts—has never received such a high level of public trust, neither during the United National Movement (UNM), nor during the governance of the Georgian Dream Coalition (GD). Unlike the police, which was perceived as an institution protecting ordinary citizens,

the courts' decisions were not and are not perceived to be independent. A number of Georgian NGOs working on this topic highlight that courts are biased in favor of the ruling party. As TI Georgia reported in 2011, the judiciary “lacks independence and is incapable of effectively fulfilling its important role of executive branch oversight⁴”.

In the autumn of 2012, the pre-election environment in Georgia was shaken by the release of tapes depicting the torture and maltreatment of prisoners by law-enforcement officials. The so-called “prison scandal” had a markedly negative effect on the public opinion of and trust in the ruling party. Additionally, trust in the police and the courts decreased by 17% and 13%, respectively (see Figure 1 on p. 8). The videos of the prisoners being tortured intensified the tension in the pre-electoral environment and had a substantial impact on the outcomes of the election. After winning the election, the GD-led government introduced a mass amnesty in late 2012. The amnesty was prepared by the special commission within the Parliament that granted the status of political prisoner to many individuals serving sentences in Georgian prisons. As indicated in Figure 2 on p. 9, after the sharp decrease in the number of prisoners, the level of public trust in the courts increased.

Executive Government, the President and the Parliament

In the autumn of 2012, the new parliamentary majority under the leadership of Georgian billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili formed a new government. The change in government, especially after the prison abuse scandal, generated positive expectations for the new government. However, the level of trust in the new government began to decrease in 2013. The first possible explanation for the loss of popular trust is the intensified discussion on informal governance. The resignation of Bidzina Ivanishvili from the position of Prime Minister and his uncertain role in the government might have caused the decrease in trust in the Parliament and the government. According to Figure 3 on p. 9, the trust in the executive fell from 39% to 20% immediately after the above-mentioned events. Moreover, NDI's November 2013 survey showed that 45% of Georgians agreed with the statement that the resignation of Bidzina Ivanishvili would not have much of an impact, as he would continue to play an active role in political and governance decisions.⁵ Another NDI poll conducted in April 2014

1 “Input,” or procedural performance, and “output,” or policy performance, based on the conceptual approach developed with regard to the European Union by Scharpf cited in Hakhverdian, A., & Mayne, Q. (2012). Institutional trust, education, and corruption: A micro-macro interactive approach. *The Journal of Politics*, 74 (03), 739–750.

2 The Caucasus Barometer was conducted annually from 2008 to 2015, except for 2014 when the survey was not conducted.

3 Source: <<http://www.heritage.org/index/visualize?cnts=georgia>>

4 Urushadze, Erekle. “National Integrity System—Georgia”. Transparency International—Georgia. 2011. <<http://www.transparency.ge/nis/2011/judiciary>>

5 Source: <<https://www.ndi.org/files/Georgia-Public-Attitudes-Poll-121813-ENG.pdf>>

showed that 62% of Georgians agreed that Ivanishvili continued to be a decision-maker.⁶

The decline in the trust in the executive and Parliament likely not precipitated solely by the political event discussed above. A negative economic development, namely increased inflation, also had a negative impact on the trust in public institutions. When comparing core inflation (calculated by excluding the following groups of goods and services from the consumer basket: food and non-alcoholic beverages, energy, regulated tariffs, transport⁷) parameters from October, to coincide with the CB surveys conducted in mid-Autumn, with the rating of trust in the executive and the Parliament reveals that with the increase in the core inflation indicator, the trust in the executive and the Parliament decreased (See Figure 4 on p. 10).

In contrast to the executive and Parliament, the President has shown the opposite trends. Trust in the office suffered a 31% decrease in 2012, as the incumbent President Mikheil Saakashvili belonged to the former ruling party, and hence, people believed he shared the responsibility for the prison abuse. However, the trust in the President increased by 10% after the election of the new President, Giorgi Margvelashvili. Margvelashvili had support from Ivanishvili, but soon after the inauguration, the former confronted the government. This helped to increase trust in the President. Figure 3 on p. 9 depicts the 10% increase in trust in the presidency after the tension between Margvelashvili and the government occurred.

Healthcare

In addition to increased healthcare financing, another change affected the level of public trust in the healthcare system. In 2012, the Ministry of Healthcare was allocated 23% of the government budget; however in 2015, it increased to 31%. A universal healthcare program was launched in February 2013. It provided every citizen with basic healthcare services.⁸ The money spent on the universal healthcare program also increased from 70 million Georgian Lari (GEL) in 2013 to 566 million GEL in 2015⁹. The data from the state budget of Georgia suggest that expenditures and non-financial assets from the state budget allocated to healthcare increased steadily after 2012, alongside the public trust in the

healthcare system.¹⁰ Moreover, trust in the healthcare system also increased, from 39% in 2012 to 55% in 2015 (see figure 5 on p. 10).

Banks

Although banks are private institutions, their performance and the public trust in them give insights into the overall socio-political and economic situation in the country. The data show that from 2008 to 2011, banks enjoyed a relatively high level of public trust, with nearly half of Georgians trusting them. However, starting in 2012, trust in the banks declined. A potential reason for the declining trust in the banks is the worsening economic and financial situation in the country, namely the rising exchange rates of the major foreign currencies against the GEL. The Georgian economy is characterized by a high level of dollarization. According to NBG in 2016, national currency denominated loans represented only 30% of total loan volume¹¹. Moreover, durable goods such as real estate and cars are usually priced in USD. Given problems related to both domestic and foreign factors, the exchange rates of foreign currencies increases, as did the number of unpaid consumer loans. Simultaneously, the level of trust in the banks began to decline, from 46% in 2011 to 27% in 2015.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that trust in different institutions can increase or decrease depending on the ongoing political events and government actions as people react to positive or negative changes (Levi & Stoker, 2000). Trust in important political and social institutions in Georgia changes along with important political events and policy changes. The evidence that public trust is related to political and economic performance has valuable implications for public policy. By measuring the public trust in specific institutions, governments can evaluate their performance. If the government adjusts its actions based on citizens' trust, this will create a win-win situation in which both government and society receive the most preferable outcomes.

See overleaf for information about the author and further reading.

6 Source: <https://www.ndi.org/files/Georgia_April_2014_Survey_English.pdf>

7 Source: <http://www.geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=128&lan_g=eng>

8 Except for individuals already enrolled in the private health insurance programs. Source: <http://ssa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=889>

9 <<http://factcheck.ge/article/jandatsvashi-dakharjuli-thankharris-pirdapiri-investitsia-ekonomikashi/>>

10 It includes the following expenditures and non-financial assets: medical products, appliances, and equipment; outpatient services; hospital services; public health services; and other health expenditures. Source: <<http://www.mof.ge/en/4563>>

11 <<https://www.nbg.gov.ge/index.php?m=340&newsid=2837&lng=eng>>

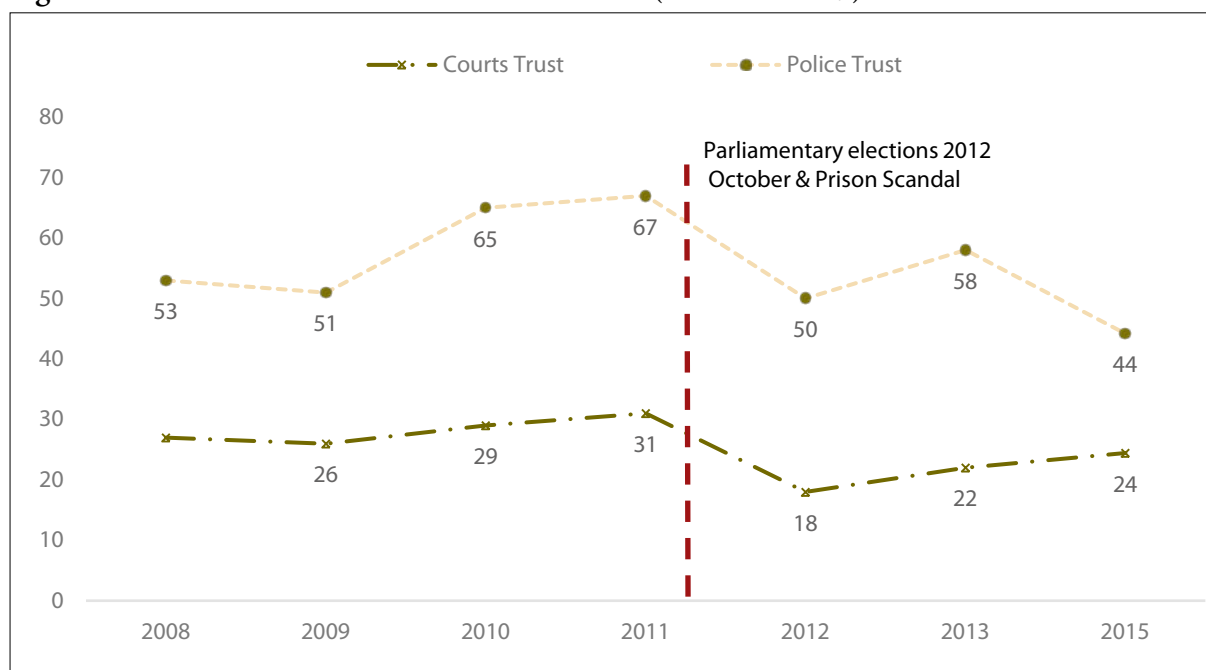
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Rati Shubladze is a researcher at CRRC-Georgia. He holds an MA in Social Sciences from Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU) and currently is pursuing a Ph.D. degree at the Department of Sociology at TSU. His doctoral research is related to electoral behavior in Georgia. Rati also teaches various courses in research methods at TSU.

Further Reading / Bibliography

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- Levi, Margaret, and Laura Stoker. 2000. "Political Trust and Trustworthiness." *Annual Review of Political Science* 3 (1): 475–507.

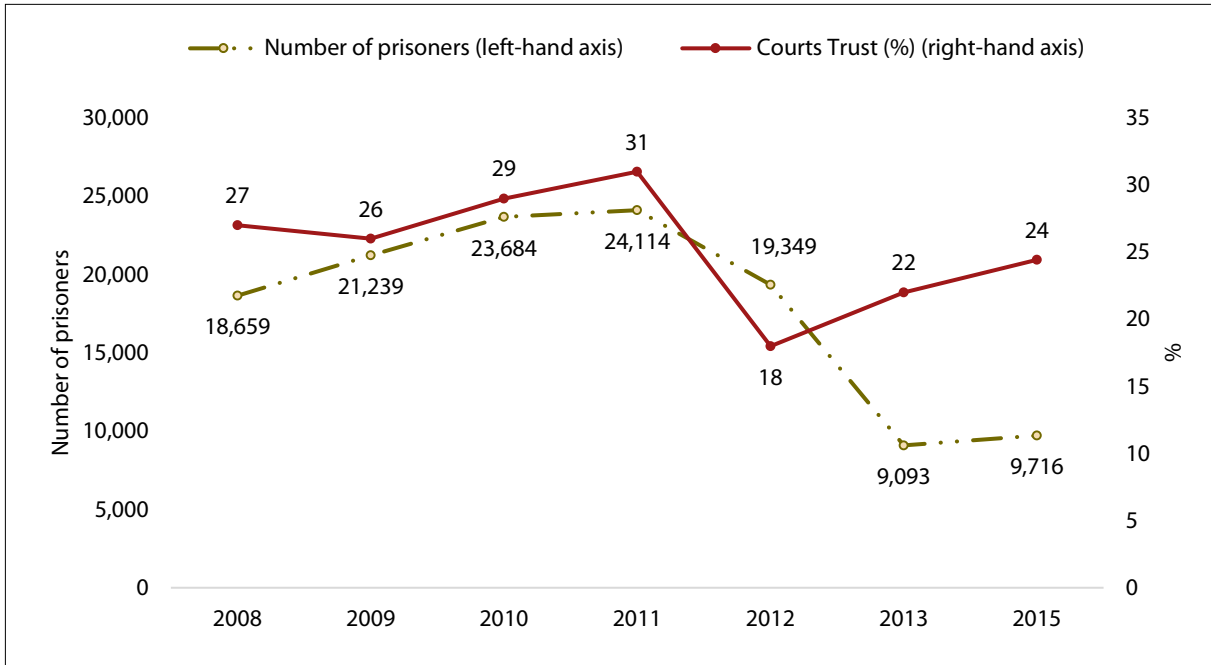
Figure 1: Trust Towards the Courts and the Police (CB 2008–2015)



Source: CRRC 2008–2015 Caucasus Barometer Surveys

Note: All of the trust questions have been recoded from a 5-point scale into a 3-point scale. Only the Trust option (5—Fully trust and 4—trust) is shown in the graphs.

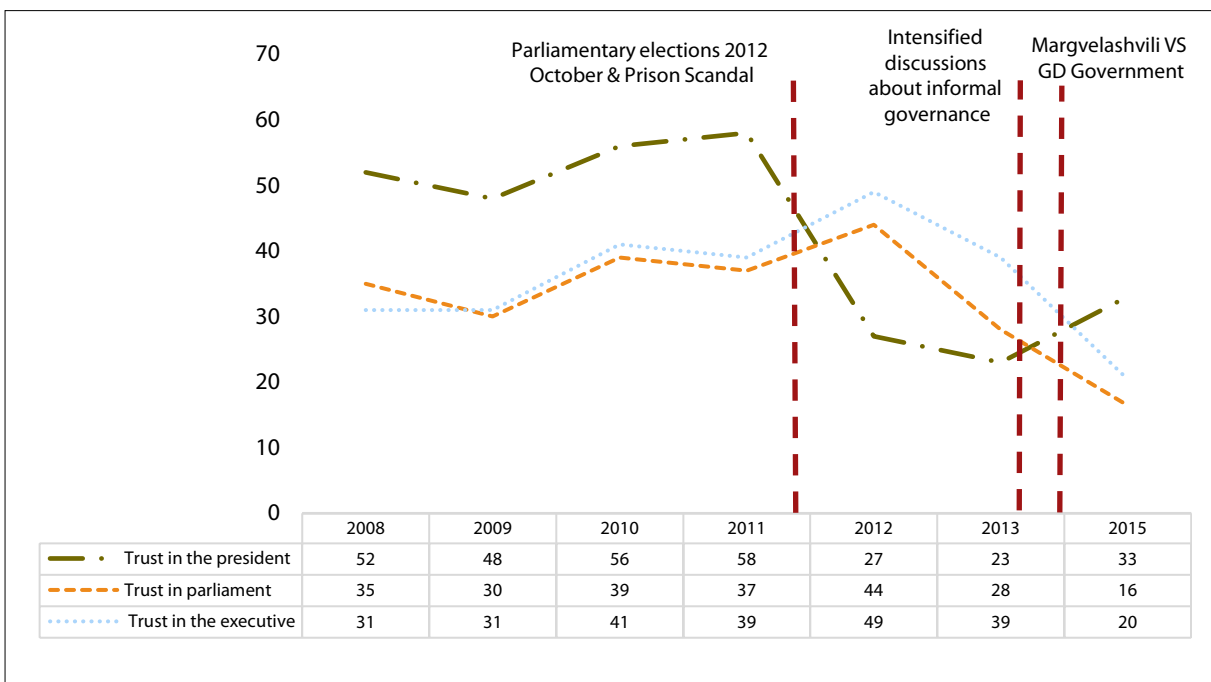
Figure 2: Trust Towards the Courts Vs. Number of Prisoners (CB 2008–2015 / Geostat)



Sources: CRRC 2008–2015 Caucasus Barometer Surveys and Geostat.

Note: All of the trust questions have been recoded from a 5-point scale into a 3-point scale. Only the Trust option (5—Fully trust and 4—trust) is shown in the graphs.

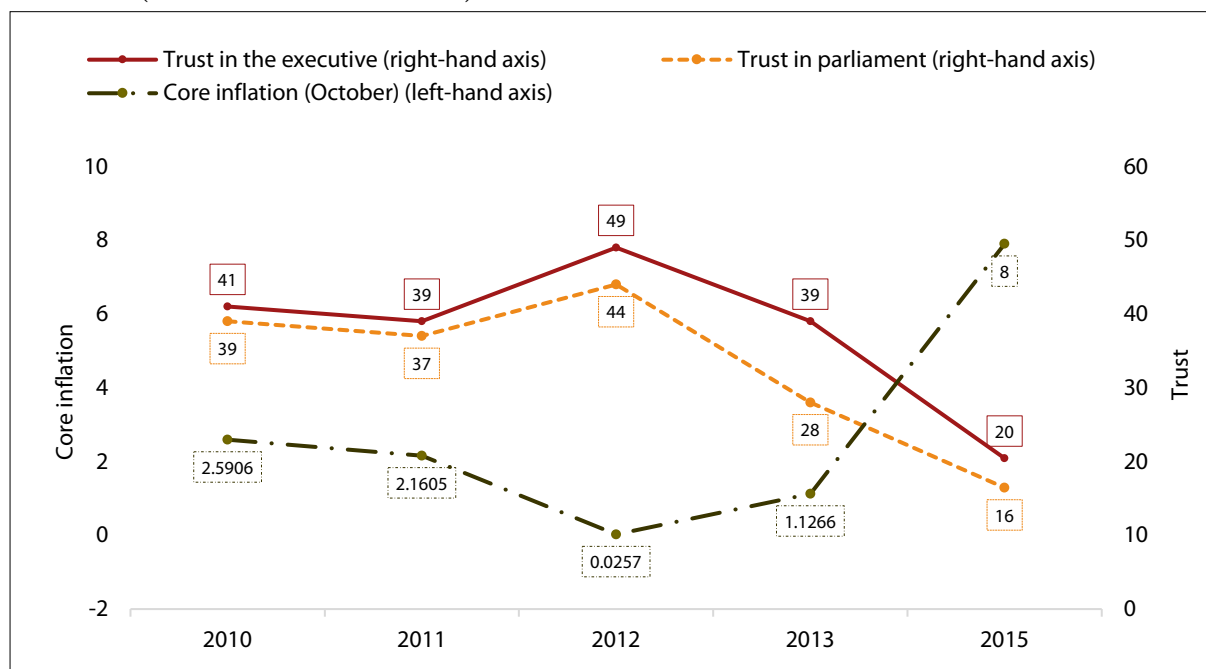
Figure 3: Trust Towards the President, the Parliament and the Executive (CB 2008–2015)



Source: CRRC 2008–2015 Caucasus Barometer Surveys

Note: All of the trust questions have been recoded from a 5-point scale into a 3-point scale. Only the Trust option (5—Fully trust and 4—trust) is shown on the graphs.

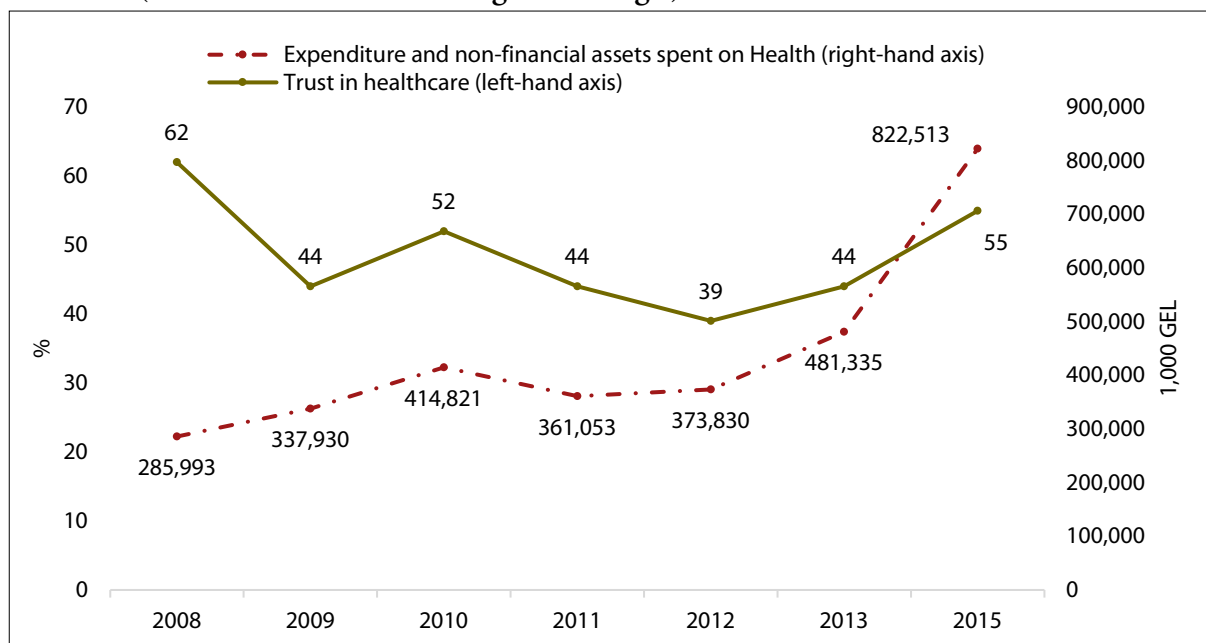
Figure 4: Trust Towards the Parliament and the Executive Vs. Core Inflation
(CB 2008–2015 / Geostat)



Sources: CRRC 2008–2015 Caucasus Barometer Surveys and Geostat.

Note: All of the trust questions have been recoded from a 5-point scale into a 3-point scale. Only the Trust option (5—Fully trust and 4—trust) is shown on the graphs.

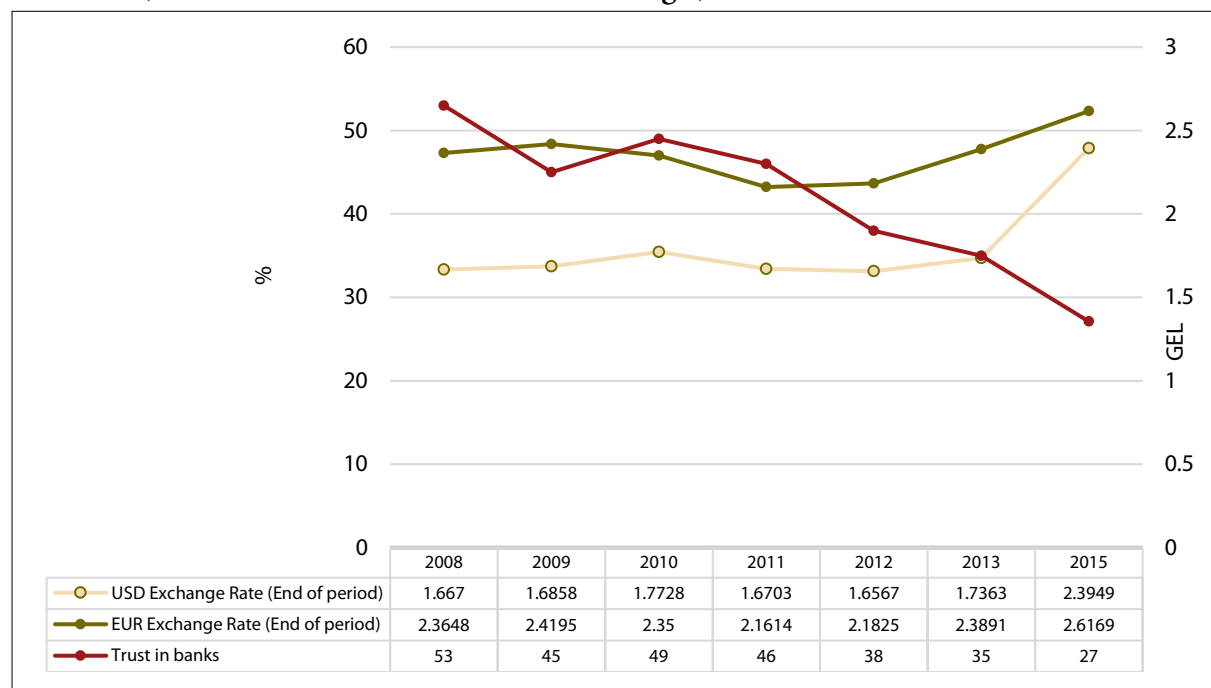
Figure 5: Trust Towards Healthcare Vs. Budgetary Expenditure for Healthcare (1,000 GEL)
(CB 2008–2015 / State Budget of Georgia)



Sources: CRRC 2008–2015 Caucasus Barometer Surveys and State Budget of Georgia.

Note: All of the trust questions have been recoded from a 5-point scale into a 3-point scale. Only the Trust option (5—Fully trust and 4—trust) is shown in the graphs.

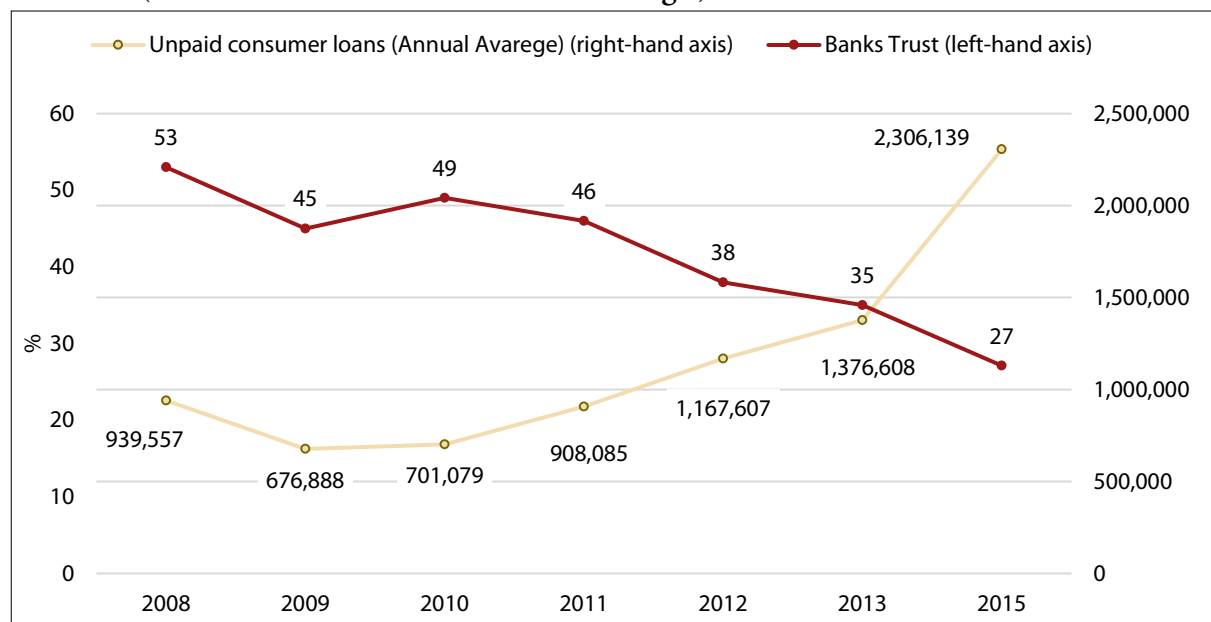
Figure 6: Trust Towards the Banks Vs. Exchange Rates of USD and EUR
(CB 2008–2015 / National Bank of Georgia)



Sources: CRRC 2008–2015 Caucasus Barometer Surveys and National Bank of Georgia.

Note: All of the trust questions have been recoded from a 5-point scale into a 3-point scale. Only the Trust option (5—Fully trust and 4—trust) is shown in the graphs.

Figure 7: Trust Towards the Banks Vs. Amount of Unpaid Consumer Loans
(CB 2008–2015 / National Bank of Georgia)



Sources: CRRC 2008–2015 Caucasus Barometer Surveys and National Bank of Georgia.

Note: All of the trust questions have been recoded from a 5-point scale into a 3-point scale. Only the Trust option (5—Fully trust and 4—trust) is shown in the graphs.

Who Wants to Emigrate from Georgia?

Tamuna Khoshtaria, Tbilisi

Abstract

Using CRRC-Georgia's Caucasus Barometer 2015 survey results, this article examines the characteristics of people who want to leave Georgia for a certain period of time and examines whether and how they differ from those who do not want to leave the country. Specifically, it examines the (democratic) values of Georgians interested in emigration and their attitudes towards foreigners and foreign institutions. The analysis shows that compared to others, those who want to leave Georgia to live somewhere else for a certain period of time are more open to democratic values and more tolerant; generally have a more positive attitude of and are more open to foreigners; exhibit stronger support for Western institutions (NATO and the EU); and have more positive opinions on the visa liberalization process.

People who travel substantially are thought to be more open-minded towards and tolerant of different people and opinions. As Mark Twain said, "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness." People who travel get out of their shell, explore different viewpoints and see the world from a different perspective, while people who do not travel see the world through a narrow lens. However, how, if at all, are people who desire to travel different from those who do not want to travel? Are potential emigrants also more likely to be open-minded and tolerant?

According to CRRC-Georgia's Caucasus Barometer (CB) 2015 survey, only 11% of Georgians say they would leave Georgia permanently to live somewhere else if they had the opportunity, but the share of those who say "Yes" to the question "If you had a chance, would you leave Georgia for a certain period of time to live somewhere else" is much higher, at 51%. **Who are the people who want to leave the country for a certain period of time and how are they different from those who do not want to leave?** What are their attitudes and perceptions, and how, if at all, do they differ from those who are not interested in temporary migration?

According to the findings of the CB 2015 survey, Georgians who want to emigrate to another country for a certain period of time, (1) generally have a more positive attitude towards democracy; (2) are more tolerant of and more open to foreigners; (3) show stronger support for Western institutions; and (4) have more positive perceptions of the visa liberalization process, which is currently a subject of debate in Georgia.

Demographics

Considering first the demographic characteristics of these two groups, CB findings show that the share of those who want to leave the country for a certain period of time is higher among men (58%) than among women (44%). Moreover, age is a significant indicator of temporary emigration, as 70% of young people between

the ages of 18 and 35 want to leave the country temporarily in contrast to older age groups of 36 to 55 (55%) and 56 or older (24%).

Willingness to leave the country relates to the data on the employment status of the respondents. When comparing Georgians willing to migrate with those who are not, clear differences can be observed. Fifty-nine per cent of Georgians who want to migrate are not working (of those individuals, 33% say they are unemployed, 14% say their primary activity is being a housewife and therefore not working, 8% are retired and not working and 5% are students and not working). In contrast, 69% of those who do not want to migrate do not work, of whom 36% are retired and therefore not working, 20% are unemployed, 13% are housewives and only 1% are students and not working. The data also confirm that being young is an indicator of a willingness to travel abroad for a shorter period of time.

In terms of residential status, people living in Tbilisi and other urban areas tend to be more open to travel (55% and 54%, respectively) than are residents of rural settlements (46%).

Knowledge and Skills

The survey findings revealed that those who want to emigrate have more knowledge of foreign languages. Seventy-six per cent of those who want to go abroad for a certain period of time report having advanced or intermediate knowledge of Russian, while this share is lower (65%) among those who do not want to travel. While 49% of those willing to temporarily emigrate say they have no basic knowledge of English, this percentage is substantially higher (71%) among those who do not want to travel. In addition, one-fourth of those who want to migrate know another foreign language, while this share is lower (18%) among those who do not want to migrate.

Georgian citizens who want to travel abroad also have a higher level of computer skills. While the majority

(63%) of them have some level of knowledge (beginner, intermediate or advanced) of computers, only one-third (33%) of those who do not want to travel reported having any knowledge. Consequently, those who are eager to travel, use the internet much more frequently (48% use it every day) than do those who do not wish to travel (22%).

Democratic Values and Perception of Democracy

The findings also reveal that those who are open to travel support democratic values more than those who do not want to leave the country. More than half (54%) of the former group say that democracy is preferable to any other type of government, while 41% of those reluctant to travel said the same. Furthermore, those who want to travel view the state somewhat differently from those unwilling to travel: They regard the government more like an employee than like a parent that should take care of its citizens. Forty-seven per cent of those willing to travel agree with the following statement: “the government is like an employee and that people should be the bosses who control the government”, while only 35% of those unwilling to travel state the same.

The CB 2015 data reveal that the share of Georgians who think that people should participate in protest actions against the government, as this shows the government that the people are in charge, is slightly higher among those willing to travel (60%) than among those who are not willing to travel (54%).

People who want to temporarily emigrate evaluate the current state of democracy in Georgia slightly differently from those who do not. While more than half (52%) of the former group say that Georgia is a democracy with major problems, the same view is shared only by 41% of the latter group. In addition, the share of people who do not know how to evaluate the current state of democracy in Georgia is higher among the latter group (22% compared to 8%).

Those willing to travel also have a slightly higher share of people (56% vs. 50%) who believe that the court system in Georgia favours some citizens over others, rather than treating all citizens equally. Therefore, those who want to travel are more in favour of democracy but are simultaneously more sceptical of the state of democracy in Georgia at present.

Tolerance of Other Nations

Apart from supporting more democratic values, Georgians willing to travel abroad are more tolerant of and open to foreigners. Thirty-one per cent of Georgians who want to travel abroad report having a good or very good attitude towards foreigners, while this share is lower

(18%) among those who do not want to travel. Furthermore, the share of people who responded that foreigners who come to live in Georgia would contribute to the economic development of the country is higher among those who want to travel (25%) than among those who do not want to leave the country (18%).

The former group has a larger share of people who say they have a close relative currently living abroad (76% vs. 58%). In addition, 62% of those willing to travel have a close friend currently living abroad, while this share is much lower among those not willing to travel (36%). The connections with people who are residing abroad could raise a person's motivation to travel abroad and could contribute to being open to foreigners.

Further findings from the CB 2015 data also confirmed that people who want to migrate temporarily to another country are more tolerant of and open to foreigners, as well as other ethnic groups. When asked if they approve or disapprove of doing business with different nationalities and ethnic groups, the share of Georgians who approve is higher among those who want to emigrate than among those who do not. This finding is true for all ethnic groups asked about the subject during the survey. For example, 82% of those who want to emigrate temporarily say they approve doing business with Ukrainians, while this percentage is lower among those who do not want to emigrate (67%). For further differences between the two groups concerning other ethnic groups, please see Table 1 on p. 14.

Compared to openness to doing business with different ethnic groups, the share of those Georgians who approve of women of their nationality marrying representatives of other ethnic groups or nationalities is significantly lower. However, similar to the previous question, the share of those who approve of marriage with other nationalities or ethnic groups is still higher among those who want to emigrate temporarily, compared to those who do not wish to do so. For example, the share of those who approve of woman marrying Ukrainians is higher among those willing to emigrate (55%) than among those who do not wish to leave the country (40%). These differences are also significant in regard to other ethnic groups and nationalities (see Table 2 on p. 15).

Attitudes Towards Western Institutions and Visa Liberalization

Apart from supporting more democratic values and being more open to foreigners, Georgians willing to travel abroad also show stronger support for Western institutions. According to the CB 2015 findings, 45% of those who want to emigrate temporarily say they support (sum of “fully support” and “somewhat support”) Georgia's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organi-

zation (NATO). In contrast, only 30% of those who do not want to emigrate temporarily support this membership. Similarly, while over half (52%) of Georgians who want to emigrate temporarily say that they support (sum of “fully support” and “somewhat support”) Georgia’s membership in the European Union (EU), this share is much lower (31%) among those Georgians who do not want to emigrate temporarily.

Regarding support for the country’s membership in the Eurasian Economic Community, 40% of Georgians willing to travel abroad say that they would not support (sum of “would not support at all” and “would rather not support”) such membership. In contrast, only 29% of those not willing to travel would not support (sum of “would not support at all” and “would rather not support”) Georgia’s membership in the Eurasian Economic Community.

Finally, those Georgians who are willing to travel have more positive attitudes of the visa liberalization process, which is currently a subject of debate in Georgia, as the government of Georgia is working on this issue with the EU. Forty-three per cent who wish to temporarily immigrate to another country agree with

the statement that the successful completion of the visa liberalization process will benefit ordinary people living in Georgia. In contrast, only 22% of those not interested in leaving the country state the same.

To summarize the findings obtained through CRRC-Georgia’s survey CB 2015, men, young people and people living in urban areas tend to be more open to leaving the country for a certain period of time compared with women, older people and those living in rural areas. Moreover, when comparing those who are eager to travel abroad for a certain period of time with those who do not want to travel, the former tend to be more supportive of democratic values, more tolerant of and open to different ethnic groups, more supportive of Western institutions, and more interested in the visa liberalization process. In addition, they report having higher levels of knowledge of foreign languages and computer skills and use the internet more frequently. Although the study cannot determine the direction of causality between travel and tolerance, the belief that people who travel become tolerant may be challenged by the assumption that people willing to travel are already more likely to be broadminded and open to Western values.

About the Author

Tamuna Khoshtaria is a researcher at CRRC-Georgia, where she has worked since 2009. Tamuna is also a PhD student at Tbilisi State University, where she teaches quantitative and qualitative research methods. She holds a B.A. and an M.A. in Social Science from Tbilisi State University. During her M.A., she was awarded a scholarship and studied at Humboldt-University Berlin for one year, where she conducted qualitative research in family sociology. Her research interests are the values of young people, social and religious issues and intercultural comparisons.

Table 1: Approval of Doing Business with... (%)

	Wants to emigrate temporarily	Does not want to emigrate temporarily
Ukrainians	82	67
Russians	81	69
Americans	77	61
Azerbaijanis living in Georgia	74	66
Armenians living in Georgia	73	62
Italians	72	58
Abkhazians	71	61
Azerbaijanis	69	63
Jews	69	57
Ossetians	68	59
Armenians	64	54
Turks	64	58
Iranians	59	53
Kurds, Yezidis	56	49

Source: CRRC 2015 Caucasus Barometer Survey

Table 2: Approval of Women Marrying... (%)

	Wants to emigrate temporarily	Does not want to emigrate temporarily
Ukrainians	55	40
Russians	54	41
Italians	49	34
Americans	49	35
Abkhazians	49	33
Armenians living in Georgia	44	35
Ossetians	43	33
Armenians	40	32
Jews	37	27
Azerbaijanis living in Georgia	37	33
Azerbaijanis	33	31
Turks	29	25
Iranians	28	23
Kurds, Yezidis	27	21

Source: CRRC 2015 Caucasus Barometer Survey

Attitudes Towards Immigrants in Georgia: Myths of Tolerance and Empirical Evidence

Mariam Chumburidze, Tamar Zurabishvili and Tinatin Zurabishvili, Tbilisi

Abstract

This paper is based on CRRC's 2015 Caucasus Barometer survey findings and analyzes attitudes reported by the population of Georgia towards immigrants. The authors argue that behind the manifested tolerance, there is empirical evidence of rather ambivalent attitudes towards immigrants. Immigration is becoming increasingly visible in Georgia's social, economic and cultural life, and attitudes towards immigrants may serve as a proxy for attitudes towards "others" in general. Specifically, negative attitudes towards immigrants may indicate a specific manifestation of a deeper fear of "others".

As little academic or policy work has been done in this direction in Georgia, the conclusions the authors derive, beyond their academic importance, may have highly important practical policy implications, as they may help to shape policies addressing tolerance among the population of Georgia in general.

Introduction

Stereotypically, Georgians are portrayed as overly hospitable, friendly, respectful and open towards their guests from abroad. However, existing studies of the situation of immigrants in Georgia and attitudes towards them¹ suggest that this hospitality and openness towards foreigners could be selective, i.e., it could differ across representatives of different nationalities. It is also sometimes the case that the attitudes are positive towards those who are believed to be short-term visitors, i.e., proper "guests", but not towards long-term residents, i.e., those who choose to stay in Georgia for a long time, or even forever.

There is still no definitive answer to the question of what factors condition attitudes of the Georgian population towards foreigners. Based on CRRC's 2015 Caucasus Barometer survey findings, this paper attempts to fill this gap, identifying an important factor that may influence the attitudes that the population of Georgia reports having towards immigrants, defined in the questionnaire as "foreigners who come to Georgia and stay here for longer than three months".

Generally, three major theoretical approaches are used to explain what determines the attitudes of local populations towards "others"—be they representatives of different ethnic, religious, racial or sexual groups. These are contact theory, group conflict theory and economic competition theory.² In the present paper, we will focus only on the first, contact theory, as the CRRC's Caucasus Barometer survey provides relevant indicators

to test it. "Contact theory holds that sustained positive contact (i.e. friendships) with members of other ethnic, religious, racial, or national groups produce more positive attitudes toward members of that group."³ Although we will not be able to specifically assess friendship, we will attempt to obtain empirical evidence regarding whether the fact of personally knowing an immigrant(s) does or does not have an impact on reported attitudes towards immigrants. Before we do so, however, we will provide an overview of reported attitudes towards immigrants in Georgia.

General Attitudes Towards Immigrants in Georgia

Overall, the reported attitudes of the Georgian population towards immigrants lean towards "neutral" (61%), with only 5% defining their attitudes as "very bad" or "bad" (Table 1), compared to almost 25% who characterize their attitudes towards immigrants as "very good" or "good".

Table 1: How Would You Characterize Your Attitude Towards the Foreigners Who Come to Georgia and Stay Here For Longer Than 3 Months? Is It ... (%)

Very bad	1
Bad	4
Neutral	61
Good	20
Very good	4
Don't know / refuse to answer	10

Source: CRRC 2015 Caucasus Barometer Survey

3 Ibid.

1 Innovations and Reforms Center. 2015. *Immigration to Georgia: Current State and Challenges*. Study Report.

2 The Migration Observatory. 2011. "UK Public Opinion towards Migration: Determinants and Attitudes" <<http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/uk-public-opinion-toward-migration-determinants-attitudes>>

Among those who report positive attitudes towards immigrants (sum of responses “very good” and “good”) there are larger shares of urban residents, representatives of households with relatively secure economic status (i.e., those reporting having enough money for food and clothes but not for expensive durables), and individuals with higher education. Among those who tend to report negative attitudes (sum of “very bad” and “bad”) towards immigrants, there is a larger share of individuals living in rural settlements and more people with secondary or secondary technical education. No manifested gender difference could be observed between the two groups. However, people’s attitudes tend to become more negative with age.

We presumed that it would have been logical to expect that those reporting a willingness to emigrate from Georgia “for a certain period of time” (51%) would hold more positive attitudes towards immigrants because they would be more open and tend to consider themselves “in the shoes” of the immigrants. As could be expected, this is a relatively young segment of the population, with men reporting such intentions slightly more often than women, as are those who have completed higher education. Those who report being interested in temporary emigration from Georgia indeed tend to report slightly more positive attitudes towards immigrants coming to their country.

Contact Theory: Explanations

CB does not ask a question specifically about friendship with immigrants; hence, to test the contact theory hypothesis, a more general question: “Have you had any form of contact with foreigners in Georgia who have stayed here for longer than 3 months?” will be used (Table 2). Slightly more than two-thirds reported never having had any form of contact with immigrants—indicating that, presumably, they form their attitudes towards immigrants based on indirect or secondary information, provided either by mass media or “word of mouth”. There is an above-average share of Tbilisi residents among those who tend to have had contact with foreigners; more often than on average, these are people with higher education and a relatively secure economic situation. Conversely, among those who report never having had any contact with foreigners, the share of the rural population is slightly higher, as is the share of those who are 65 years old and older.

Only approximately one-quarter of the population of Georgia has had some form of contact with immigrants. Nine percent state that they come into contact with them “often”, while 17% report such contact to take place “rarely”. As a simple cross-tabulation (Figure 1 below) demonstrates, such contact could indeed be a fac-

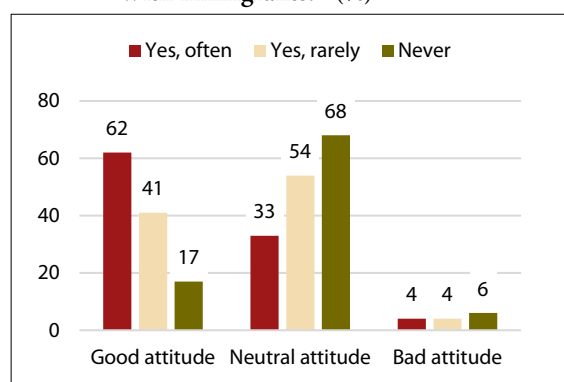
Table 2: Have You Had Any Form of Contact With Foreigners In Georgia Who Have Stayed Here For Longer Than 3 Months? (%)

Yes, often	9
Yes, rarely	17
Never	72
Don't know	2

Source: CRRC 2015 Caucasus Barometer Survey

tor contributing to more positive attitudes towards immigrants—and vice versa. Those who report having had contact with immigrants “often” exhibit the most positive attitudes (62%—sum of “good” and “very good”)⁴, while those who had never had any contact exhibit the least positive attitudes (17%—sum of “good” and “very good”). Spearman’s correlation between these variables is statistically significant, with negative value of $-.301$, confirming that there is statistical evidence that having contacts with foreigners is associated with better attitudes towards them.

Figure 1: “Reported Attitudes Towards Immigrants” By “Have You Had Any Form Of Contact With Immigrants?” (%)



Source: CRRC 2015 Caucasus Barometer Survey

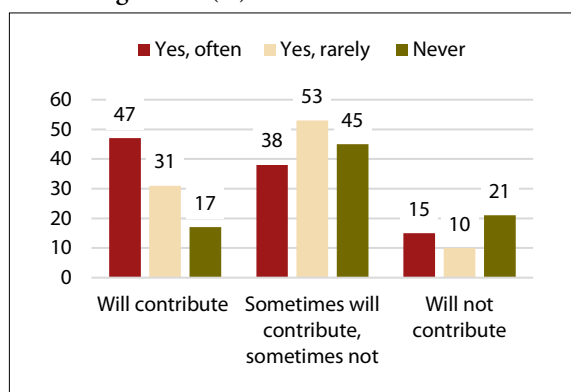
Note: Response options “Very good” and “Good” were combined to form the option “Good attitude”, and response options “Very bad” and “Bad” were combined to form the option “Bad attitude”.

Unsurprisingly, having or not having contact with immigrants is also statistically correlated with opinions on whether the latter will contribute to the economic development of Georgia (Spearman’s correlation coefficient is $-.267$; Figure 2 overleaf).

Hence, the empirical data support the contact theory hypothesis, suggesting that any form of contact with immigrants is correlated with positive attitudes towards them.

4 The margin of error is relatively higher for this group, due to its small size.

Figure 2: “Will the Immigrants Contribute To Economic Development Of Georgia?” By “Have You Had Any Form Of Contact With Immigrants?” (%)



Source: CRRG 2015 Caucasus Barometer Survey

If, again, we more closely examine potential temporary emigrants, their expectations regarding whether immigrants will contribute to the economic development of Georgia are quite similar to the average. Interestingly, however, those who are interested in temporary emigration from Georgia are also more likely to report having contact with immigrants, compared with the rest of the population (Table 3).

Concluding Remarks

With a rather limited share of the population having personal contact with foreigners, the attitudes of the majority of the population of Georgia towards immigrants are presumed to be formed based on secondary information about them. A lack of contact, according to contact theory, could be the reason that the majority tends to exhibit reserved, neutral attitudes towards immigrants.

The empirical data do not support the stereotypical image of Georgians being very hospitable and welcoming towards the foreigners who chose to remain in

Table 3: “Have You Had Any Form Of Contact With Foreigners In Georgia Who Have Stayed Here For Longer Than 3 Months?” By “If You Had A Chance, Would You Leave Georgia For a Certain Period Of Time To Live Somewhere Else?” (%)

Contact:	Interest in temporary emigration:		
	Yes	No	Don't know
Yes, often	11	7	5
Yes, rarely	21	12	31
Never	68	81	61

Source: CRRG 2015 Caucasus Barometer Survey

the country for the long term. Attitudes towards immigrants are, however, clearly more positive for the relatively small share of the population who has had any type of contact with them, thus supporting the contact theory hypothesis, even without controlling for whether the contact with the immigrants was positive or negative. Knowing an immigrant personally, even if this is just a superficial acquaintance, is an important factor contributing to positive attitudes.

Preliminary analysis also suggests that those willing to emigrate from Georgia temporarily are more open towards immigrants coming to their country, compared with the rest of the population.

Based on the presented data, obvious policy recommendations would be as follows:

1. create a welcoming environment contributing to direct contact between the local population and immigrants, as such contact tends to improve attitudes towards immigrants and both parties benefit from cooperation with one another; and
2. promote more balanced coverage of immigration-related stories in the media and, especially, TV, as the latter serves as a major source of information for the absolute majority of the population of Georgia.

About the Authors

Mariam Chumburidze holds a Masters' Degree in International Relations and International Management from London Metropolitan University and King's College London. She has been working on migration issues since 2011 in the capacity of government agency adviser on migration issues, as well as being expert in various migration-related projects led by a non-governmental organization. Currently, Mariam teaches a course in research methods at Tbilisi State University and a Georgian Institute of Public Affairs joint MA course in Migration Management and leads an EU-funded project related to linking Migration and Development effectively to one another at the NGO Innovations and Reforms Center.

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Recommended Readings:

- Innovations and Reforms Center. 2015. *Immigration to Georgia: Current State and Challenges*. Study Report. <http://irc.ge/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Immigration-to-Georgia_ENG.pdf>
- The Migration Observatory. 2011. "UK Public Opinion towards Migration: Determinants and Attitudes" <<http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/uk-public-opinion-toward-migration-determinants-attitudes>>

ABOUT THE CAUCASUS ANALYTICAL DIGEST

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