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Political Change and Public Opinion in Georgia: 2002-2003

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FOREWORD

This report was prepared within the framework of the extensive research project of the Institute of Policy Studies, generously supported by the Local Governments Initiative (LGI) of the Open Society Institute and the Open Society – Georgia Foundation, and partly by the USAID/Save the Children - USA.

Here are presented some findings related to public attitudes and expectations, as well as political profiles of the Georgia's electorate made during the first two rounds of the panel survey, which was carried out in October-November 2002 and June 2003 on most of the territory of Georgia, with exception of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and supplemented by some data from the survey of the Tbilisi population conducted in the aftermath of the November 2003 failed parliamentary election and the dramatic resignation of President Shevardnadze.

While two authors, Nana Sumbadze and George Tarkhan-Mouravi, actually wrote this report, many other persons contributed to actual research and the fieldwork, preparation of the questionnaire, interviewing respondents, and processing the results. We would like to acknowledge the especially valuable contribution and support provided by IPS research assistants – Ana Kitiashvili and Ekaterine Pirtskhalava, to whom we extend our sincere gratitude. While interviewers involved in the fieldwork are too numerous to be listed here, all of them deserve our sincere gratitude for their devotion and hard work. Tinatin Eristavi did excellent job of entering complicated statistical data, and Erekle Kereselidze assisted with logistics.

While this report reflects various contributions to the survey, the authors are fully responsible for all its drawbacks and mistakes.

INTRODUCTION

Paraphrasing John Stuart Mill we could say that the focus of our research is to find out toward what ultimate point is Georgian society tending by its political process, and in what condition is this process to leave our society. Indeed, knowledge and understanding of popular attitudes, behaviour patterns, perceptions, understandings and aspirations of the population is crucial for effective public policy planning, which should be necessarily based on reliable and objective data. Systematic, regular surveys should permit to monitor dynamics of societal changes in response to changes in the environment and to relate such changes to specific policies or decisions. Only diachronic perspective poses possibility to identify reasons for the observed behaviour and, when change is needed, to work out an effective policy. Equally necessary is the measurement of the reaction of the population to the changes that take place in the environment, connection of these changes to the concrete policies and decisions.

Economic and social transition, which Georgia has experienced during last decades caused dynamic of change not only in political but also generational, gender and family patterns, gradually shifting them towards western norms and lifestyle, and respectively influencing the process of transition. There is increasing cultural gap between different cohorts of the population, but also dividing the generations themselves. What is surprising, however, not the change but rather inertia and the continuity in values characterising the population. In general, resistance of traditional values is still very strong among the poorer, rural and small-town communities. Social institutions such as the kinship system experienced little damage and continue to play an important role in the communities. Traditionalism is gaining force among the educated layers as well, as a reaction to the threats of globalisation. Seemingly, what is emerging as a new pattern of social dynamic and texture is closely related to that in South-East Europe rather than observed in the North. Changes have accelerated as compared to previous circumstances, probably a temporary trend with the pendulum moving back in the case of both disappointment with changes and the new cohorts approaching the social scene. Within the limitations of our approach, our results show that the Georgian society shows trends somewhat different from observed in the western countries. In some cases it is clear that there is certain time lag, and the forces of globalisation along with economic

development will bring change in the same direction. Nevertheless, it seems that the Georgian society will not become fully westernised in foreseeable future but preserve to significant extent its cultural identity, and like other social phenomena here, continue to show specific mixed characteristics of both East and West. It is clear that in the short term at least, strong continuity in values will take place, and the tradition of close emotional relationships within extended family, the importance of kinship, and ethnic sensitivities will stay for longer time, influencing behavioural stereotypes and political preferences.

The main goal of the surveys carried out by the Institute for Policy Studies was to study the public opinion, perceptions and patterns of behaviour of population, and to provide decision-makers and policy designers with the information about how the population reacts to important events and policies. Recently many surveys have been carried out with the main goal to obtain ratings of the political parties and their leaders in the anticipation of forthcoming parliamentary elections. Our objective was more general and more focused on the study of variables that change slowly and depend less on immediate political events.

In general the surveys served the purpose to study: the estimations that population make on issues of political, economic, public and cultural life; identification of the main problems that the country faces; foreign orientation of the country; attitudes towards other countries and international organizations; democracy and the rule of law; attitude towards the payment of taxes; tolerance towards different ethnic and religious groups; attitudes toward a number of economic and social policies, trust towards different branches of the government; appraisal of political parties and their leaders; estimation of the quality, equality and availability of social services; availability and trust towards different media sources.

COUNTRY BACKGROUND

In November 2003 – January 2004 Georgia has moved to what is now wittingly labelled as post-post-Soviet era, marked by the landslide election of the young new president – Mikhail Saakashvili, along with Nino Burjanadze and Zurab Zhvania - one of the triumvirate of young politicians who played the key role in the peaceful but dramatic transition of power. Not only the new generation of politicians have come afore, but the events have shattered the very basement of post-Soviet establishment, symbolized here by the ever-present figure of internationally renown, wise and experienced but controversial and already aging Eduard Shevardnadze, under whose 11-year rule Georgia after first short-living successes gradually slid to economic disaster and failed statehood. Indeed, the failed parliamentary elections in Georgia of November 2, 2003 have been no ordinary event in the political life of the country. In fact, these elections marked the emergence to power of the new generation of politicians, those not burdened by Soviet legacy, and often speaking better English than Russian.

These dramatic events have marked a pivotal change that was symbolized by the downfall of the monumental figure of Shevardnadze, but the roots of the drama lay much deeper. While first years of his rule, especially 1995-1998, were the years of increasing stability, growth and development, from 1998 the overall situation worsened, triggered by the general economic crisis in Asia and Russia. Political authority and legitimacy of the leadership started to erode. While poverty remained widespread, a few accumulated great wealth, these few either belonging to the immediate family circle of the President, or - enjoying his overt protection or pragmatic permissiveness for some political reasons. Energy crisis made the cold and dark winter months unbearable for the majority of the population. Finally, international financial institutions got frustrated with the absence of progress in economic reform and suspended their assistance programmes, bringing the financial system of the country overburdened by internal and external debts to catastrophic consequences.

Corruption became rampant, as was the organized crime, often perpetuated by those public servants who were supposed to fight it. The economy became more and more dependent on external assistance, which, while often misappropriated and misused, at the same time imposed on the government the necessity of pro-Western orientation, certain political tolerance and liberalism, freedom of media and strengthening of the civil society, mainly in the form of NGOs located in the capital city of Tbilisi. At the same time, ongoing pipeline projects (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Shah-Deniz/Baku-Erzurum) and the developments in the Middle East increased hugely the geopolitical and strategic importance of Georgia for the West.

The November 2 parliamentary elections stood to be the key test for the willingness of the country's government to proceed further in the democratic transition process, the key test for Georgia's state-building efforts. International pressures mounted, demanding the elections to be held fairly, with unending sequence of high-

profile political visitors reiterating this demand. At the same time it became clear that if the elections were to be held fairly, the ruling elites had next to no opportunity to win, so that they had either to resort to fraud or be ready to say goodbye to accumulated privileges and power. In a year and a half Shevardnadze's term was coming to end, and there was no clear scenario for power succession that could leave the general status quo if the parliamentary elections were to be lost.

Under such conditions the incumbent president tried on one hand to secure at least Russia's political support for his rule, on the other allowed the electoral fraud to be prepared and implemented. Inability or unwillingness on the part of the government to prepare effective voters' lists became the first strong reason for public dissatisfaction, ignited by oppositional rhetoric and media. Highly effective protest activities by youth movement "Kmara" (Enough) formed along the Serbian model (and allegedly supported from the West) supplemented the well-planned and rather aggressive campaign by the two leading opposition forces – National Movement led by Michael Saakashvili and United Democrats under the leadership of former parliament speaker Zurab Zhvania whose party moved to leading position after joining forces with Nino Burjanadze, incumbent speaker of the Parliament. Rustavi 2 TV station played an extremely important role in propagandising the opposition's views and western values, and at crucial points serving as a real-time communication channel.

On November 2, Georgian voters went to the polls to elect the new legislature. However, elections, when they finally got held, were universally perceived as rigged, and the opposition led by Saakashvili, Burjanadze and Zhvania appeared able to transform the frustration caused by electoral fraud together with the general dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in the country and the government's corruption into mass manifestations that ultimately led to the resignation of President Shevardnadze.

Results of Parallel Count Conducted by the Fair Elections Society

'On November 4, at the "Tbilisi Marriot" hotel Zurab Chiaberashvili, the chairperson of the non-governmental organization "Fair Elections" (ISFED) held press conference, where he presented the results of parallel count of the votes. According to the results of the parallel count, the political bloc "Saakashvili - National Movement" received 26.26% support, the governmental bloc "For the New Georgia" received 18.92%, another oppositional party "Labours" received 17.36%, next was the political bloc "Burjanadze-Democrats" 10.15%, the political bloc "Democratic Revival Union" received 8.13%, the political organization "New Rights" received 7.99% and the "Industry will Save Georgia" received 5.2%.'

Data Released by the CEC

'The Central Electoral Commission announced on November 20 the election results, as it is required to do so, 18 days after polling day on November 2, meeting the deadline by just one hour. The pro-government party For New Georgia came first, followed by Abashidze's Revival block and Saakashvili's National Movement. They won 21.32, 18.84 and 18.08 per cent of the votes, which translated into 38, 33 and 32 seats respectively. Three other parties were declared to have passed the seven-per-cent barrier giving them representation in parliament. These are the left-wing Labour Party, the Burjanadze-Democrats block led by two former speakers of the Parliament Nino Burjanadze and Zurab Zhvania, and the moderate pro-Shevardnadze New Rights party. They won 12.04, 8.79 and 7.35 per cent of the votes, which translated into 20, 15 and 12 seats respectively.'

One of the most interesting phenomena observed during and especially after the elections was the role of media, and particularly international media, and its impact on human minds. The CNN syndrome found its good illustration in the frequency with which Michael Saakashvili would repeat again and again that the whole world through CNN was watching the events in Georgia. Another interesting moment was the permanent effort on all sides to follow the letter if not the soul of the Georgian Constitution, or at least to demonstrate legalistic respect toward its provisions. Finally, it was the first time that the West, and the USA in particular, explicitly demonstrated its dissatisfaction with the incumbent leadership and supported the victorious opposition from the very start of its rule.

On January 4, 2004 the new presidential election were held, and subsequently the parliamentary elections will be held on 28th of March. While in the presidential elections there was an obvious favourite in the person of Saakashvili who actually enjoyed a landslide victory, there is more time for regrouping forces before the parliamentary elections, and their expected outcome is still not fully clear. Under such conditions, it is particularly interesting to observe and understand voters' attitudes toward the recent and forthcoming events, their assessments and interpretations or related developments. Our surveys were designed with exactly this aim

to record public opinion in this particular transitional period, which will influence developments for months and years to come.

Political events that took place throughout November-December 2003 appeared to be of enormous importance for Georgia's future. Although there are many reasons to say this, here it would be more appropriate to speak about the changes in the popular attitudes, actually by themselves serving as the main factor of the dramatic political transition.

Whatever other political developments, it is evident from the results of our surveys that there was a sea change in human minds – in the readiness for and confidence in civil participation, in optimism, self-confidence, pro-democracy and pro-western orientation of the population.

SURVEYS

The first wave of the panel survey was carried out in the period of October-November 2002 (further in the text – Panel 1) and the second in June 2003 (Panel 2), in 9 regions of Georgia, Ajara, and in the capital Tbilisi, including both rural areas, 58 settlements and the following 21 towns: Abasha, Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, Akhmeta, Ambrolauri, Batumi, Bolnisi, Borjomi, Chiatura, Gori, Khashuri, Kutaisi, Lanchkhuti, Marneuli, Mtskheta, Rustavi, Tbilisi, Telavi, Tsageri, Zestaphoni, Zugdidi. In each wave, the total of 1100 persons were interviewed, respondents were selected to correspond to the distribution of the population according to the settlement type, gender and age, so as to be a representative sample of the Georgia's population. The rotation among respondents was 16.3% (179 persons), as these were unavailable for the second survey wave, which we take here as a basis for discussion. With slight difference between waves, about 57% of selected respondents were living in urban and 43% - in rural setting, among them c. 45% were males and 55% females, divided into five age groups (17-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 65+). 32.1% of respondents considered themselves to be poor, while 67.9% claimed to be either wealthy or of medium condition, further designated as “non-poor”.

Almost a half of respondents (46.2%) are university students or have university degree (25.6% of rural and 61.4% of urban population), 27.2% have tertiary – high school (41.3% of rural and 16.8% of urban population), 21.6% has vocational (25.6% of rural and 18.7% of urban population), 4.9% has incomplete school education (5.8% of rural and 2.7% of urban population), and 0.9% have undergone only 4 classes of primary schooling (1.7% of rural and 0.3% of urban population). The level of education of the urban, non-poor and young respondents is higher than of rural, poor and older ones.

In many areas covered by the survey, the difference in the level of education between the rural and urban population is statistically significant, as is significant the statistical difference between the poor and the non-poor (by self-assessment), and between the age groups.

Table 1. Age and gender structure of respondents in the June 2003 survey

	Age group	Males %	Females %	Total share of the age group %	Share of males in the age group %	Share of females in the age group %	Total %
1	17-24	16.4	11.2	13.6	55.0	45.0	100
2	25-34	22.6	15.9	18.9	54.3	45.7	100
3	35-44	19.2	21.4	20.4	42.9	57.1	100
4	45-54	14	17.2	15.7	40.5	59.5	100
5	55-64	11.6	15.2	13.5	38.9	61.1	100
6	65 and more	16.4	17.8	17.8	41.8	58.2	100
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

In general, 64.4% of respondents were married, 23.1% have never been married, 9.8% were widowed and 2.7% - divorced. 72.7% of respondents reported from 1 to 7 children, with the mean value of 1.6. On average rural respondents have more children (M=1.8), than the urban respondents (M=1.4). Besides that families are bigger in villages and comprise on average of 4.8 persons, while in towns families on average have 4.1 members. The majority of respondents (91.7%) are ethnic Georgians, 3.1% are Armenians, 2.8% are Azeri and 2.4% are of other ethnicity. 93.9% have been interviewed in Georgian, 4.8% in Russian, 0.9% in Azeri and 0.5% in

Armenian. 45.9% estimated their health as neither good nor bad, 34.5% as good, and 19.6% as bad. The rural and urban population did not differ in regard to the estimation of health. The difference in regard to health was significant between the poor and non-poor. Much bigger share of the poor - 33%, than the non-poor - 13.5%, reported poor health status. It is not at all surprising that with the age increases the share of the people who have health concerns (such is 3.9% of 17-34 years olds, 19.8% of 35-64 years olds and 48% of the senior, more than 64 years olds respondents).

For a number of reasons we had to limit our last survey to the city of Tbilisi. The capital city, notwithstanding its outstanding role in the political life of the country, as well as its demographic dominance – having accumulated about one third of the whole population, - does not represent the total population of Georgia, extremely diversified in its conditions of life, cultural traditions and political preferences. Still, inasmuch as it was in Tbilisi that crucial changes took place, and it is here that the population has observed the process of radical transition, it is particularly interesting to interpret processes and changes in public opinion here. The survey was carried out in Tbilisi, between November 27 and December 5, 2003 in all 10 districts of the city. Hierarchical sampling has been used - respondents were selected to represent age and gender structure as well as geographic distribution of the population of Tbilisi by districts. The total of 902 respondents (45% of males and 55% of females) in the age range 18-88 years olds have been interviewed.

The majority - 60.1% of respondents were married, 23.4% - were single, 11.6% were widows and 4.9% were divorced. Family size varied from 1 to 12 members, while an average family was comprised of 4 members (SD=1.6). Educational status of the respondents was rather high - 63.4% claimed university education, 7% were students, 27.6% had received high school or vocational education, and only 1.9% had lower levels of education.

44.9% of respondents reported to be employed, 18.0% defined themselves as unemployed, 14.4% were pensioners and the same amount, 14.4% - housewives, 8.3% were students (respondents could check more than one option for defining their employment status, as a result 984 answers have been checked). Among respondents, 39.1% reported having no regular income, while 37.9% enjoyed regular monthly income, and 23.1% - irregular income. Against the general background of a high incidence of overall poverty and unemployment, low income of respondents is not surprising - 39.4% reported of family income in October less than 100 Georgian lari (1 GEL equals to c. 0.46 US dollar), 38.3% from 100 to 300 GEL, 13.1% from 300 to 500 GEL, and only 9.2% had monthly income higher than 500 GEL. Still, due to the subjectivity and comparative dimension of such definition, 60.8% defined their families as of medium affluence, 38.3% as poor and only 0.9% as affluent. It seems that average income between 100 and 300 GEL is a reason for the majority (45.3%) of respondents to define the family as of medium affluence, however 21.3% of those considering to be of medium affluence claimed less than 100 GEL monthly, i.e. less than subsistence level, which means such claims should be considered critically.

The majority of respondent stated that during the last 5 years the economic status of their families either did not change (43.9%) or worsened (41.0%), and only 15% stated that it had improved. Still, the hope for future improvement of the situation is considerable - 75.9% expect positive change in the economic status of their family in coming 5 years, 20.7% do not expect any significant changes, while only 3.4% are pessimistic. It is interesting to note that improvements experienced in the past and those expected in the future are not correlated. Among respondents, 7.9% belonged to a political party. Out of these, 29.7% were members of the National Movement, 23.4% of the Labour Party, 12.5% were members of United Democrats, 6.3% belonged to the Union of Democratic Revival, 6.3% to the Industry Will Save Georgia, and 3.1% to the Communist Party.

In order to track changes that have taken place during the last year, we have used for comparison our two country-wide opinion surveys of November, 2002 and June 2003, and the latest December 2003 survey in the city of Tbilisi, having singled out from the older surveys the data for 250 respondents living in Tbilisi. Although the difference in sample size does not permit us to make conclusive remarks, still in many cases comparison of data points to some obvious changes considered as interesting enough to be present in this paper.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

When analysing survey data, a number of variables play a key role in interpreting the structure and dynamic of the public opinion. Such independent variables include the economic status of a household, respondent's age, and the type of a settlement (urban/rural). However, in some cases we have also used for analysis such characteristics as external orientation (West/Russia). A few other variables that would be interesting to explore,

although have not been elaborated, include education and gender. However, for certain technological reasons this was not easy to do.

Age & Gender

Transition to new political, economic and social systems has to a considerable degree affected the society. Georgian national culture, although male-dominated, strongly values respect to a woman, and rude or indiscreet attitude towards a woman is strongly disapproved. At the same time, women were supposed to fit to there predominantly subordinate roles, concentrate on family-related duties.

Our particular interest in the role in younger generations is justified by their increasingly important role in political and social developments taking place in Georgia. The young, in many cases appear to be more flexible and active in the labour market than their less dynamic parents. The numbers of young people who actually get involved in politics, or even more so in various radical or other potentially destabilising groups is very small, while young people are absent from many areas of social and political life. But behind those who actually join up is a much larger disaffected group that sees little hope in the future, except through migration. At the same time, the potential for radicalisation of youth is already visible, as demonstrated by recent political events after and before the parliamentary elections of November 2003. The attitudes and abilities of young people remain to be a critical political issue in Georgia.

Now, while the juvenile phase is expanding in the West, the opposite trend is observed in Georgia, as the young acquire independent social identity at an earlier age. Many factors lead to earlier transition to different value system, in addition to economic independence, and especially important are the cultural differences between different generations. While the elder were brought up under Soviet regime, and the legacy of the Communist ideology and socialist life experience have formed their value orientations and habits, the young generation knows little about that time, and cares even less. Such gap between life experiences makes the transition to adulthood somewhat different from what it was in the past, with more inertial and conservative society, were transition meant simply aging and acquiring the culture of the adults, their rules of the game and their values. Now the new cohorts bring the totally new culture along with them to the early adulthood, squeezing out the old culture and the older people from their dominant position. Even the language skills of the new adults are different, and the knowledge of Russian is no more a social indicator, English gradually occupying its place.

New generations until recently were not only much more westernised, business oriented, and sexually liberated, but also more politically indifferent than the previous one. One may expect the young to be increasingly intent on pursuing non-material and emancipatory goals, as this happens in societies with longer democratic tradition.

In order to assess generational differences, respondents in all surveys were divided into three age groups – 18-34, 35-64, and 65+.

Age as an independent variable

Age plays an important role in determining policy preferences, and there were significant differences between various generational cohorts. According to the June 2003 survey, the spheres where age revealed its influence were attitudes toward social services, in the first place healthcare and social security. Not surprisingly, self-estimated health status deteriorates with the age, causing more concern toward healthcare system, and with age there is also a decrease in involvement in sports. Older respondents value more an opportunity for visiting a good doctor, and having undisturbed life. Young respondents adhere to equalitarian distribution of pensions, while older respondents opt for the definition of the amount of pension according to the length of work experience.

Table 2. Priority tasks for the Georgian government, by age groups (June 2003)

Problem	Total %	17-34	35-64	65 +	Chi-square, p
Increase in salaries, pensions, social security benefits	70.2	66.9	67.4	83.2	19.3 p<.001
Accessibility of medical services	35.4	29.7	34.4	48.5	19.2 p<.001
Defence of human rights	13.3	18.2	11.9	8.2	12.9 p<.005

It can be said in general that not only the recent events demonstrated the generational change in Georgian politics, the new cohort of politicians, more determined and radical, also were mostly supported and pushed on by the younger people, who are more pro-western, more optimistic and open-minded. However, contrary of our expectation, age was not found to be a determinant of political preferences or expressed readiness to participate in public life. Still, according to the December 2003 Tbilisi Survey, young adults proved to be more active in the rallies after the elections - 48.3% of them as compared to 40.2% of people in the middle and 24.7% those in late adulthood, - took part in rallies (*Chi Square* 35.6, *df*.4, *p*<.001). As already mentioned, difference was found in the preferred external orientation of Georgia - more older adults (53.1%) than young ones (32.4%) or persons in the middle adulthood (36.4%) opted for Russia and not USA (*Chi Square* 18.1, *df*.2, *p*<.001) when offered a choice.

According to the same December 2003 Survey, youth (at least urbanite) is more optimistic indeed - difference was quite pronounced in regard of the prospects of economic improvement in the next five years (*Chi Square* 21.7, *df*.4, *p*<.001) – young adults (83.4%) were most convinced in the future improvement of the situation, while less - 75.0% of middle and 63.5% of older adults have expressed expectation of such improvement. The young people are also more to the right in their social standing. Indeed, different generations revealed different attitude toward rich people (*Chi Square* 29.2, *df*.8, *p*<.001). Soviet legacy seems to have played a role too as the negative attitude shows increase with the age - 5.8% of people of young, 11.2% of middle and 20.7% of older age have expressed dislike for the rich. Satisfaction with life in its turn has decreased with the age. Young people were more satisfied with their life (23.6%), than persons in the middle (16.6%) or late adulthood (11.3%) (*Chi Square* 33.8, *df*.4, *p*<.001). At the same time respondents in middle adulthood revealed the most internal orientation - 63.4% of them believed that what one reaches in life mainly depends on him/her rather than on others, while such attitude was shared by 61.7% of old and 52.4% of young adults, natural for those who feel more dependent.

Some aspects of generation and gender

In the same June 2003 Survey we asked respondents to assess 14 personal qualities or skills that would characterise an average person 18-25 years old, as compared to a person aged 45-60. The strongest difference showed itself in such qualities as “lack of moral principles”, “drug addiction” and “sexual freedom”, these characterising mostly the younger generation. The older generation was perceived as “respecting authority”, and “knowing own business”. The most stable qualities that would not change with age appeared to be “friendship”, “independence” and “addiction to alcohol”.

Table 3. Ranking of personal qualities by generation (June 2003)

Quality	Characterises the age		Difference
	18-25	45-60	
Computer literacy	93.9	39.7	54.2
Drug addiction	94	37.4	56.6
Sexual freedom	93.9	39.7	54.2
Knowing foreign languages	95	51.2	43.8
Violence	90.4	50	40.4
Lack of moral principles	83.9	46.5	37.4
Respect toward authority	70.2	96.6	26.4+
Knowing own business	80.2	97.2	17+
Respect toward parents, elderly	80.1	96.8	16.7+
Supporting gender equality	93.7	77.3	16.4
Patriotism	78.2	93.2	15+
Addiction to alcohol	96.4	90.4	6
Independence of character	89.6	83.8	5.8
Loyalty toward friends	93.9	97.3	3.4+

Note: + sign shows that the elder age is more characterised by respective quality.

Respondents were requested to select (out of a 3-item list) one most important aspect of life for an average male and a female. Well-paid job appeared to get highest scores for both genders, although it was perceived as the most important for a male by higher percentage of respondents (65.1% vs. 52.5%), while university education got higher scores as most important for women (39.4% vs. 31.1%).

Table 4. Importance of various aspects of life (June 2003)

	For males %	For females %
Well-paid job	65.1	52.5
University education	31.1	39.4
Acquisition of an apartment/home	1.1	2.9
Don't know	2.7	5.2
Total	100	100

Economic Status & Rural-Urban Divide

Environment, group identity and opportunities or deprivations play equally significant role in determining attitudes, values and preferences. Among respective variables economic status and urban/rural environment seem to play the most role, and when possible we tried to check existing differences as dependent on these.

Economic Status

Economic status is one of the strongest determinants of public opinion, both due to the difference in life conditions and due to different social identity as such. However, it is not easy to operationally define economic status of a household that could be measured by a survey, as intentionally or unintentionally the household income is commonly not reported accurately. Indeed, as a rule, official income differs greatly from the real one - irregular character of the income, its often paralegal nature and hence unwillingness to report, high share of in-kind inputs, make it difficult to select a reliable measure of economic status. Hence, in our surveys, we chose to rely mainly upon the self-identification of the respondents of the economic status of their families. While well aware of the subjective and conditional character of such an evaluation, this is still the best measure available. At the same time, many respondents with the monthly family income of about 100 lari described their families as of medium affluence. However, it is exactly the subjective perception of one's economic status that exerts influence on the behaviour of an individual, his or her feeling of life satisfaction or hope, even if it diverges from such objective measures as cash monthly income.

Indeed, perceived economic status was found to determine quite a number of attitudinal and behavioural patterns. So, it reveals the most dramatic influence that poverty has on health status, healthy life style and access to medical services. Much more (self-identified) poor than non-poor respondents evaluate their health as bad, subsequently more poor than non-poor report being ill in recent past, and much less poor than non-poor go in for sports and healthy diets. Poor respondents also more frequently link their hopes with the development of small enterprises, while the non-poor see the solution of the current economic crisis in the development of big industry. The poor are also more supportive of the re-privatising of unjustly privatised property. The non-poor are more supportive, compared to the poor, of Western military assistance and presence.

The non-poor are more concerned with the IDP problems, reduction of corruption and the restoration of territorial integrity (Abkhazia). The poor, in their turn, prioritise accessibility of healthcare, development of agriculture and industry, and the rule of law.

Residence type

Like economic status, settlement type where a respondent lives is an important variable strongly correlating not only with the lifestyle, social capital or educational opportunities, but also with political sympathies and preferences, or attitudes toward various policies. In both Panel Surveys we have studied the influence of the settlement tupe on various political preferences and attitudes of the population.

The urban respondents are more concerned with the rule of law, development of business and industry, solving IDP problems, reduction of corruption and the return of Abkhazia. The rural respondents, in their turn, prioritise accessibility of healthcare, development of agriculture, and the increase in salaries and social benefits.

Generally the difference in preferences between the rural and urban population in regard to their political orientation (Chi-square=13.4; $p < .05$) is quite interesting and sometimes unexpected. According to the Panel 2 survey, the rural respondents paid more attention to political programmes of parties (27.9% compared to 21.9%

of urbanites) and the past achievements (43.5% among rural and 41.7% among urban population). For urbanites more important is the overall attitude towards the leader (7.7% among the urban and 7.2% among the rural population) and his/her eloquence in public speeches (6.6% of urban and 4.9% of rural population).

Similar differences between urban and rural respondents have been revealed also in regards to various orientations and attitudes. So, the bigger share of urban population (32.8%) compared to rural (22.8%) support Georgia leaving the Commonwealth of Independent Countries (Chi-square=15.6; $p<.001$). More urbanites (67.2% as compared to 58.2% of rural respondents) support as well the closure of Russian military bases in Georgia (Chi-square=11.4; $p<.05$). The rural population is somewhat more optimistic towards the resolution of ethnic conflicts - 78.2% of rural, compared to 66.6% of urban respondents, thinks it is possible to solve the conflict with South Ossetia (Chi-square=17.7; $p<.001$), while in the case of Abkhazia such opinion is expressed by 75.9% rural and 64.8% urban respondents (Chi-square=15.5; $p<.001$). At the same time, urban respondents tend to be more radical in thinking that the force can be used for resolving the conflicts.

External Orientation and Values

While economic and demographic data like age, gender, education, economic status and residence type as independent variables are of great importance for analysing survey data, frequently it is very helpful to consider some other variables as the focus of the analysis. Selecting such focal variables is based on considering fundamental values or attitudes that are strongly correlated to other more dynamic factors and political preferences. So, internalisation of democratic, liberal, western values is expressed through political orientation toward US or Europe rather than Russia, and this to considerable extent determines political attitudes and behaviours.

Orientation toward the West/Russia

We have grouped the respondents by their choice of Russia or the US as the orientation point of the country. It was interesting to analyse various attitudes of respondents in accordance to their such dichotomic orientation. Reviewing the data from such a perspective revealed that those choosing US were generally more optimistic, relied more on themselves than on the others. The foreign priorities of the two groups also differed.

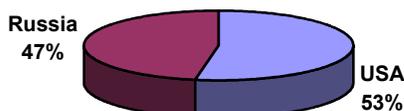


Figure 1. Respondents' preference for either the USA or Russia as a main foreign partner. (June 2003)

Panel 2 demonstrated a major division between those who considers Russia as the most important foreign partner and those who are looking in the direction of the USA. Statistically significant difference between these two groups was found as related to many issues. E.g., the economic condition of the US-oriented respondents' families had improved during the past 5 years (Chi-square=19.7; $p<.001$). US supporters also maintained more active civil position, they thought that the problems faced by Georgia could only be solved through active participation of ordinary citizens (Chi-square=3; $p<.05$), more of them believed they could influence the government decisions (Chi-square=6.8 ; $p<.05$), more of them planned to take part in the November 2003 parliamentary elections (Chi-square=6.2; $p<.05$), and thought that what one achieves in life more depends on himself/herself than on others and on the circumstances (Chi-square=5.5; $p<.05$). More members of this group looked into the future with optimism (Chi-square=3.3; $p<.05$), more of them thought it possible to lead a decent life by honest work in today's Georgia (Chi-square=7.5; $p<.05$), and more supported the idea that for the success in elections, unification of opposition parties was necessary. It is not at all surprising, of course, that the US supporters liked President G.W. Bush (Chi-square=28.5; $p<.001$), while pro-Russian respondents preferred V. Putin (Chi-square=43.5; $p<.001$). Equally natural was the difference in attitude toward withdrawing of Georgia from the CIS membership (Chi-square=74.5; $p<.001$), and joining instead NATO (Chi-square=62.2; $p<.001$) as

well as the EU (Chi-square=16.5; $p<.001$). US-oriented respondents would also support the closure within five years of all Russian military bases (Chi-square=88.2; $p<.001$) and equally disapproved the idea of prolonging the mandate of Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia during future 10 years (Chi-square=17.1; $p<.001$). Finally, they approved the US intervention in Iraq (Chi-square=36.3; $p<.001$) and the support expressed by the Georgian government toward these actions (Chi-square=57.9; $p<.001$).

Recent events have one more time demonstrated how sensitive Georgia is to external influences. This is as well realised by the population, as by experts. According to the relative majority of respondents (42.9%) in the December 2003 Tbilisi survey, the fate of Georgia depends equally on her and on other countries. 37.5% still think that it depends mostly on Georgia, while according to 19.6% - mostly on other countries. The increased realisation of importance of the external world becomes evident by comparing latter data with previous results - in June 2003 as many as 57.8% respondents believed that the future of Georgia mainly depended on Georgia herself, 33.5% thought that it depended to equal extent on Georgia and other countries, and 8.8% - mainly on other countries.

In order to assess the general political value orientation of respondents, a standard instrument¹ was used in all surveys. Respondents were presented a set of four values - two "Materialist" and two "Post-materialist" - and asked to choose the two most important ones. In both surveys, the majority - (56.4% in June 2003, 54.0% in November 2002) - revealed mixed value orientation, choosing one Materialist - most often "Order in the country", and one Post-materialist value - most often "To have a say on decisions". Less than half of respondents - (41.0% in June 2003, 43.0% in November 2002) chose Materialist values ("Order in the country" and "Preventing the rise in prices"), while two Post-materialist values ("To have a say on important political decisions" and "Freedom of speech") were checked out by only (2.6% on June 2003, 3.0% in November 2002).

In June 2003, more of rural respondents compared to urbanites (45.6% vs. 33.8%) chose Materialist value orientation (Chi-square 15.8 df 1 $p<.001$), while in case of mixed orientation there was reversed pattern (42.5% vs. 57.5%; chi-square 11.4 df 1 $p<.001$). Equally significant was the age factor with regards to Materialist and Post-materialist value orientations (Chi-square 8.9 df 2 $p<.05$ and Chi-square 8.1 df 2 $p<.05$, respectively). The importance of Materialist values grows with age (35.3% for age range 17-34, 37.9% for age range 35-64, and 48% above 64) while Post-materialist values lose attraction (4.2% for age range 17-34, 2% for age range 35-64, and 0.5% above 64).

However, it is interesting to note that in December 2003 Tbilisi Survey, unexpectedly, almost half of respondents - 49.5%, chose Materialist values, while two Post-Materialist values were checked out by 3.4%. The rest - 47.1% - revealed mixed value orientation, choosing one Materialist and one Post-materialist value. Also, the majority of respondents (72.3%) were convinced that the solution of the problems that Georgia currently faces is possible only through public participation. Comparing this result to the answers Tbilisi respondents in the national surveys of November 2002 and June 2003 - revealed the gradual increase in the recognised importance of civil participation (in Nov 2002 - 62.6%, in June 2003 - 65.6%, in December 2003 - 72.3%).

The absolute majority of respondents (79.6%) expressed preference to democracy as a governance system, while only 8.7% expressed preference for authoritarian rule (11.8% were not able to make the choice). Also, according to slightly more than a half of respondents (50.4%), there should be rich and poor people in a society, while the remaining 49.6% appeared to support more egalitarian opinion that everyone should live roughly in equal conditions. Still, paradoxically enough, the majority of respondents expressed a positive attitude toward the rich, 76.0% of them solely to those who had earned their wealth by honest activities.

¹ Ronald Inglehart, (1977). *The silent revolution: changing values and political styles among Western publics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton

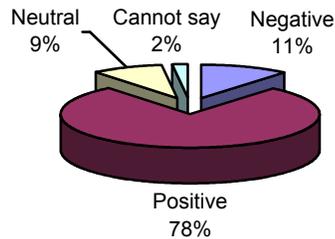


Fig. 2. Attitude toward the rich (Dec 2003)

Slightly less than the half of respondents have stated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their life, while 34% were dissatisfied and only 18.1% - satisfied. At the same time, there is little effort noticed to blame the external circumstances - 76.5% have stated that what one achieves in life mostly depends upon oneself (according to 23.5% this mostly depends on others). The majority of respondents have expressed optimism. 68.4% expected that their life would develop in desired direction, while remaining 31.6% of pessimists believed that good things most likely would not happen. At the same time, 59.5% of respondents stated that most of the people could be trusted, against 40.5% of those who doubted this.

Profiles of the Supporters of Change: December 2003, Tbilisi

In December 2003, the absolute majority of the respondents living in Tbilisi, - 83.6% - positively assessed Shevardnadze's resignation, against 11.6% of those who did not have a definite attitude and 4.8% of those who estimated it negatively. We have tried to find out the difference between those with positive viewpoint ("Pros") and those with neutral and negative ("Cons") assessments on a number of other issues. Statistically significant differences were found in the following areas:

"Pros" were found to be more optimistic - 78.8% of them believed that the economic condition of their families would improve in the coming five years, while such belief was shared by 61.9% of "Cons" (*Chi square* 19.2, *df.2*, $p < 001$). 73.6% of "Pros" compared to 36.1% of "Cons" believed that it would become possible to earn for decent living by the honest work (*Chi square* 108.1, *df.2*, $p < 001$). More "Pros" (77.7%) than "Cons" (70.1%) supported the idea that what one achieves in his life depends more on himself than on the others (*Chi square* 3.9, *df.1*, $p < 05$). The optimism of "Pros" covered not only the future of the respondents and their families, but also the future of Georgia. 82.1% of them compared to 30.8% of "Cons" believed that the situation in the country would improve (*Chi square* 175.4, *df.3*, $p < 001$).

Most obvious was the difference on issues referring to participation. 75.8% of "Pros" were sure that the solution of the acute problems that the country is facing was possible only through civic participation. So thought 53.8% of "Cons" (*Chi square* 29.4, *df.1*, $p < 001$). More "Pros" (81.2%) than "Cons" (71.4%) expressed preference to democracy over dictatorship (*Chi square* 10.7, *df.2*, $p < 005$). In general "Pros" also have expressed more trust in people - 61.8% claimed that the majority of people could be trusted, while 47.6% of "Cons" did not think so (*Chi square* 10.2, *df.1*, $p < 005$). 52.6% of "Pros" compared to 19.7% of "Cons" believed that in the nearest future ordinary persons would have more say on government decisions (*Chi square* 75.1, *df.2*, $p < 001$).

Less "Pros" than "Cons" believed that the fate of Georgia mainly dependent on other countries (17.3% against 31.7% (*Chi square* 16.5, *df.2*, $p < 001$)). Also less of "Pros" (34.1% against 59.1%, *Chi square* 29.5, *df.1*, $p < 001$) thought that the country should be orientated more on Russia than on US.

EXPECTATIONS & FEARS

Perception of the present and the past situation in the country is one of the key general characteristics of the political orientation of citizens. Throughout the 2003, the majority of respondents, despite their rather critical perception of the current situation, looked into future with certain hope. Present was indeed perceived in very dark colours. Still, about half of respondents expressed generally optimistic view of future, notwithstanding their political preferences. As it will be seen elsewhere, different was actually the source of their optimism, not that

much its rate. In any case, against the background of dire present, revealed optimism evoked the surprise and hope, and got further strengthened since November 2003 political events.

Against the background of such optimism, of special interest are the perceptions by respondents of the threats that the country may face in the coming five years. As in November 2002, in June 2003 respondents have been presented by a list of 11 possible dangerous developments with the request to estimate how likely these were to happen in the coming 5 years. As can be seen from the Table 7, the population expects in the first place the increase of diseases, contamination of the environment, increase in corruption and criminality, and anti-governmental riots, while expects the least - Russian military aggression (the expectation of which was particularly high in the fall of 2002 after several bombings by Russian military aircraft in the Pankisi Gorge plus various open threats expressed, and fell since), and armed ethnic and confessional conflicts. Likewise, the population fears less losing Georgian traditions and increase of corruption, however there is increased expectation of the contamination of environment, spread of diseases, and the popular riots.

Table 7. Perception of the threats Georgia may face during the next 5 years

N	Threat	June 2003 %	November 2002 %	Difference %
1	Increase of diseases (AIDS, TB, cancer, etc.)	77.1	72.5	4.6
2	Contamination of environment	75.0	65.0	10.0
3	Increase in corruption	72.1	73.7	1.6+
4	Increase in violence and criminality	67.6	65.5	2.1
5	Increase of poverty	69.7	71.4	1.7+
6	Popular riots against the government	64.3	62.6	1.7
7	Spread of religious sects	59.3	59.6	0.3+
8	Loss of cultural traditions	56.6	65	8.4+
9	Religious conflict	45.6	50.8	5.2+
10	Ethnic conflict	32.6	43.6	11+
11	Russian military aggression	27.9	40.9	13+

+ In June 2003 the perceived threat has diminished, as compared to November 2002

In the wake of dramatic events of November 2003, public attitudes underwent many changes both in the assessment of past events and in the anticipation of future developments. Political future of the country is now related to certain political developments. Forthcoming parliamentary elections to be held in March 2004 are considered to be the second important step after the presidential elections of January 4th and electing Mikhail Saakashvili the new president of Georgia. The recent events, however, continue to occupy minds, while their interpretation and reassessment is still taking place. Among the questions of concern are those related to whether there were better options to be taken, and what will be the ultimate outcomes of current developments.

As demonstrated by the December 2003 Tbilisi Survey, reflecting on what actions would have been appropriate to carry out by the government and the president after the November 2003 elections and the subsequent turmoil, the majority of respondents, - 68.1% pointed to the abolition of the disputed election results and holding new Parliamentary elections as the most appropriate decision. 24.7% considered the general idea of finding compromise with the opposition, 3.9% would have suggested to having taken firmer position not allowing opposition rallies to take place, 3.3% could not answer.

In the similar manner, respondents estimated the appropriateness of actions by different political forces after the elections. The strong majority of 81.2% positively evaluated the actions of Burjanadze-Democrats, equally high (80.2%) was support for Saakashvili-National Movement. The smallest portion (5.5%) positively evaluated actions of the Union of Democratic Revival (which angered the population of Tbilisi by highly unpopular decision to organise alternative rallies in front of the Parliament, not to allow Saakashvili to take ground there. Equally low was positive assessment of actions by For the New Georgia (6.6%). The overwhelming majority, - 83.6% estimated positively the stepping down of President Shevardnadze on November 23, when mass protest reached culmination, and the first session of the new Parliament got disrupted. 11.6% expressed neutral attitude toward this fact and 4.8% evaluated it negatively.

Among the most important external players that influenced the direction of political events after elections were international media, US and Russia. It is only too symbolic in the age of globalisation that the highest number of the respondents, - 79.8% pointed to the important role that international media (CNN in the first place and some other) played in the post-election developments (only 9.7% considered media role as unimportant and 10.5% did

not have any opinion). At the same time, 63.4% of respondents evaluated the role of Russia in the regulation of the after-election crisis as very important (17.3% considered Russia's role as unimportant and 19.4% did not have definite opinion). However, US role in the regulation of the crisis was appreciated by even higher proportion of respondents - 79.6% thought it was important (according to 7.3% it was not important and 13.0% had no definite opinion).

The change of power brought both new opportunities and new threats for Georgia. Respondents were asked to check the list with eight items describing new opportunities and hopes that arose for the country after Shevardnadze's stepping down. It is highly indicative that the most popular item checked was decrease in corruption.

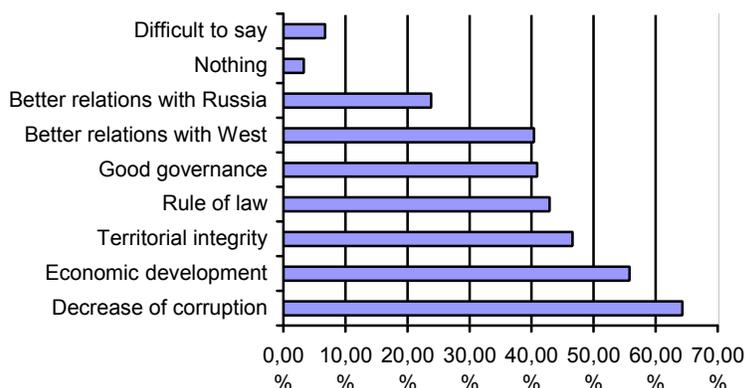


Fig. 3. Opportunities and hopes following Shevardnadze's resignation (Dec 2003).

When asked about new or increased threats, respondents demonstrated euphoric optimism – the highest rating got the “No new threats” item. Political destabilization as a possible consequence was named by 29.4% of the respondents, taking the second place. The least probable seems worsening the relations with the West.

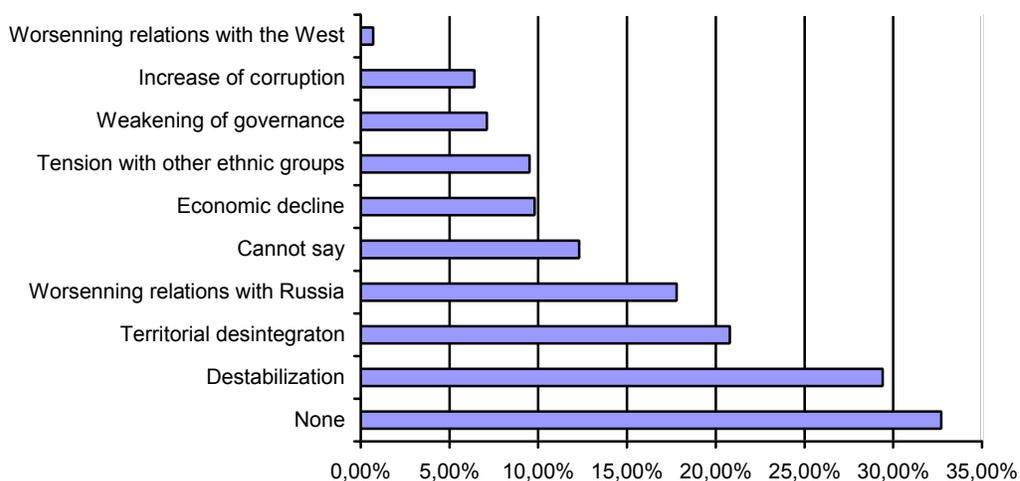


Fig. 4. Increase in immediate threats following Shevardnadze's resignation (Dec. 2003)

However, in longer perspective respondents were more realistic, when assessing potential threats that Georgia may face in the nearest five years time. For the majority such threat first of all was associated with the health conditions of the population. 36.6% feared the possibility of increase in incidence of illnesses such as AIDS/HIV, tuberculosis, oncological and cardiovascular diseases.

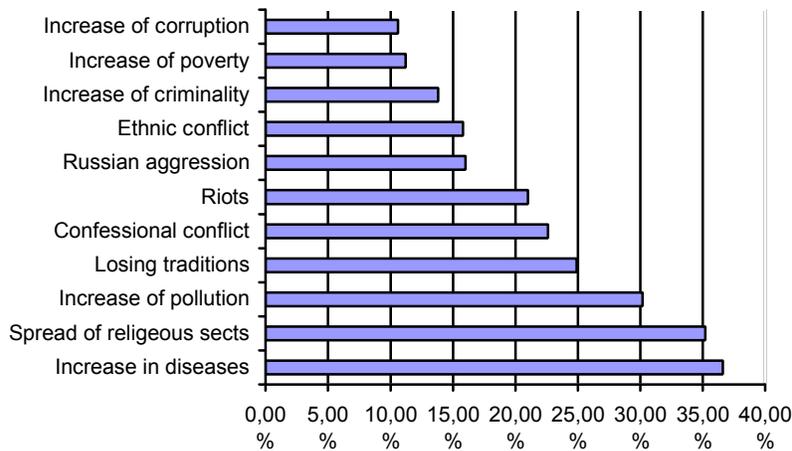


Fig. 5. Threats that Georgia may face during the five-year period (Dec. 2003)

In general, respondents expressed great optimism regarding the future - 73.6% were confident of the general improvement of the situation and expected positive changes; 12.8% were not sure how things would develop, 11.1% expected nothing would change and only 2.4% of pessimists believed that situation would deteriorate.

Such optimism finds its manifestation in other areas as well. About the half of the surveyed (47.2%) expressed opinion that now an ordinary citizen would have more influence on government decisions (22.9% do not think so, and 29.9% cannot answer). There is also more optimism regarding the possibility to lead a decent life by the honest work - 67.0% stated that this would become possible (as compared to 18.8% in November 2002 and 19.1%) against 11% of pessimists, while 21.1% have shown difficulty in answering the question. Such increase in optimism is obviously related to the recent political events, as demonstrated by the comparison of data on improvement of economic status of respondents' families.

Table 8. Expected improvement of the economic status of a household in next 5 years, in %

Survey	Will improve	Will remain the same	Will worsen
Nov. 2002	55.8	24.9	19.3
June 2003	56.6	32.3	11.2
Dec. 2003	75.9	20.7	3.4

In some areas, public optimism has a longer tradition. Notwithstanding the obvious impasse in the resolution of conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, respondents in June 2003 expressed non-abating optimism: 71.5% (72.1% in November 2002) believed it was probable (the rest of 28.5% considered it less plausible) to resolve the conflict within five years time in South Ossetia, while slightly less expressed similar hopefulness regarding Abkhazia - 69.5% (68.1% in November 2002), and 30.5% doubted this.

Analogously, relative majority of respondents (34.2%) expressed in June 2003 their belief that if the government would be committed to fighting corruption, the latter could be radically reduced in 5 to 10 years, 24.0% believed it was possible in 1-2 years, and only 5.3% of pessimists thought rather of 20-40 years needed (27.8% gave no answer to this question).

POLICIES

Internal policies

Before the November 2003 parliamentary elections, although the majority of politicians had not presented any consistent political agenda, their policies and plans, still some key attitudes had been voiced, influencing the electorate and its preferences. Respectively, to significant extent the political choices of the population are determined by their own attitudes towards the foreign and interior politics. Although these attitudes are not always consistent and frequently are ambiguously defined.

A good example of such discrepancies was the need to reform the executive government through introducing the cabinet of ministers instead of existing President's Chancellery. In June 2003, such approach was advocated by

32.4% of respondents, 18.6% thought that no such reform is needed, while almost the half of the respondents - 49.0%, had no definite opinion in this regard. At the same time, respondents' position was more clear-cut and unambiguous with regard to curbing presidential power - 42.3% of respondents stated that it should be confined, 33.2% had no position and 24.5% were against the restriction.

Increasing defence potential remains to be among the key issues of the state building. Although it did not go high on the list of priorities as seen by respondents, occupying 15th place out of 21, we still inquired about the vision how the army should be organised in the country. The absolute majority of respondents - 76% in June 2003, 81.4% in November 2002 – supported the idea of a professional army and rejected conscription as a principle for recruiting.

Especially important was the ranking of priority issues that the government had to solve, made by respondents (above we have seen these priorities as distributed by demographic variables). Respondents were asked to choose 5 most pertinent problems out of the list of 21 issues. Obtained ranking is in line with the generally understood priorities for societies in transition. It is clear that solution of economic and social problems is an absolute priority for the population. Among the priority issues are also the reduction of corruption, equality before the law and the problems of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the places of their current residence. At the same time, environmental problems as well as those related to foreign policy orientation are much less in the focus of the population.

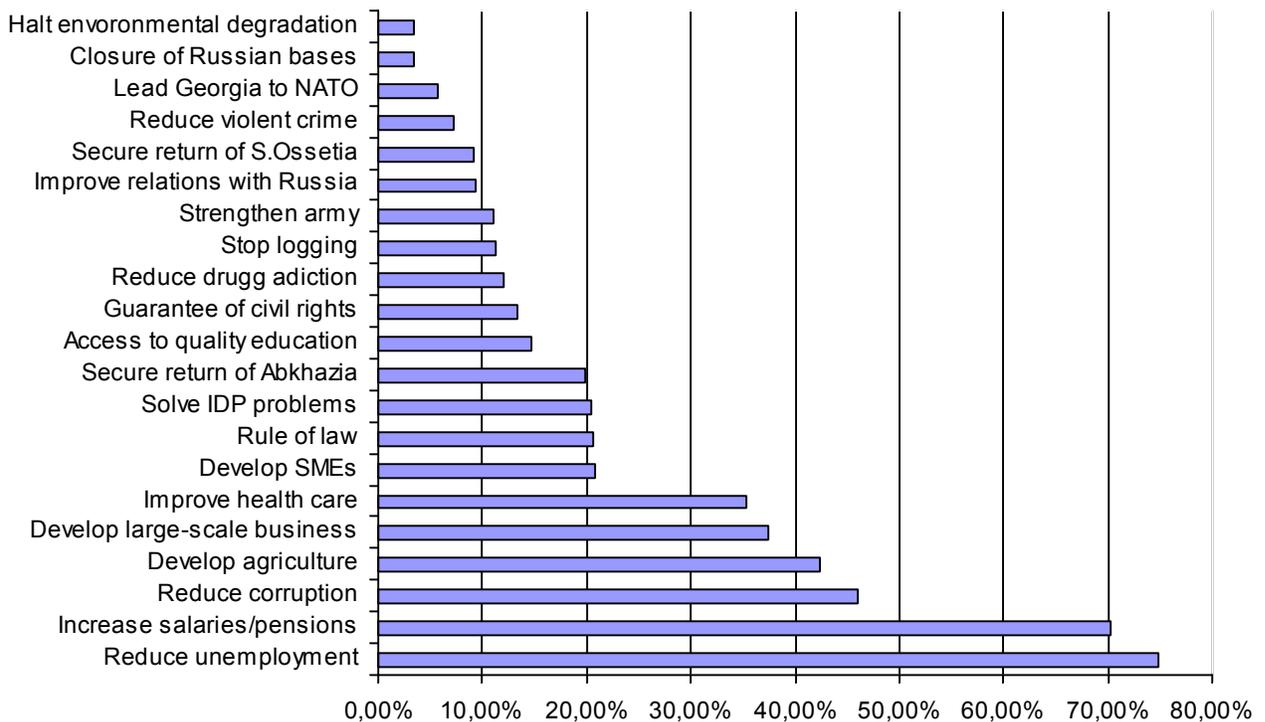


Figure 6. Priority tasks for the Georgian government (June 2003)

Accordingly, in December 2003 Tbilisi Survey, respondents were again requested to choose from the listed fifteen - three of the most burning problems that Georgia now faces. Along the same lines as previously, unemployment got the highest rank (72.4%), followed then by corruption (48.2%), then low salaries, pensions and social security benefits (41.4%).

Table 9. Problems Georgia faces (December 2003)

Rank	Problem	%
1	Unemployment	72.4
2	Corruption	48.2
3	Low salaries, pensions and social benefits	41.4
4	Territorial disintegration	41.0
5	Acquisition of state property by mafiotic clans	22.4
6	Inaccessibility of health service	18.5
7	Human rights violations	11.8
8	Tbilisi-Ajara relations	11.1
9	Crisis in education system	7.4
10	Bad governance	6.7
11	Uncontrollability of power structures	4.7
12.5	Living conditions of internally displaced persons	4.5
12.5	High level of criminality	4.5
14	Unsatisfactory work of courts	2.7
15	Lack of freedom of expression and media	0.4

It was natural to complement this list of problems through the next question asking respondents to prioritise issues that the new Georgian government should solve in the first place. Again unemployment was considered by the majority as the first problem to be dealt with, checked by 63.5% of respondents. There is slight difference with the previous ranking in the ordering of the second, third and fourth most burning problems. While respondents considered corruption as the second in rank and low salaries the third, when it comes to actions precedence is pragmatically enough (the same as in the nationwide survey of June 2003) given to the increase in salaries, checked by 41.7%. However, the re-establishing of territorial integrity was now the third issue in rank, checked by 38.1%.

Although correcting mistakes made during privatisation process occupies the last rank in the list of problems to be solved, 73.9% still think that the new owners who had privatised enterprises with violations should be deprived of property rights (9.8% thinks that everything should stay as it is, and 16.3% does not have a definite answer). Along the same lines, 91.3% of the population would support state control over strategically important sectors of economy, such as energy production, water supply, and railway transportation (2.7% state that it should be in private hands and 6.0% do not have a definite opinion).

It was naturally more difficult to formulate how the concrete policies should be planned, and answers may sound naïve, but still indicate the important state of emotional attitude. When asked as how to achieve the improvement of the general situation, the highest proportion (43.8%) of respondents suggested the punishment of corrupt persons and all those who had misappropriated state property. The second rank was allocated to the improvement of legislation, as chosen by 43.6%.

Table 10. Ranking of the actions for improving the situation (respondents chose two answers) (December 2003)

Rank	Action	%
1	Arrest and punishment of corrupt persons and those who misappropriated state property	43.8
2	Improvement of legislation	43.6
3	Decrease of taxation	39.4
4	Support of small business	31.0
5	Decrease of import, protecting local producers	21.5
6	Developing industry through attraction of foreign investment	13.4
7	Strengthening local governments	7.3
8	Other	0.8

It is interesting to observe that back in June 2003 answering to certain extent similar question regarding corruption, the most popular suggested approach to fighting corruption was replacing the president (39.4%), followed by improvement of legislation (37.6%) and strengthening civil responsibility and activism (34.6%).

Respondents in general supported less regulations by authorities imposed on personal freedom. So, one of the issues supported by the majority - 60.4% (61% in November 2002) implied allowing Georgian citizens possessing multiple citizenship, not possible under current legislation. 24.8% of respondents (27.3% in

November 2002) opposed this opinion, while 14.8% (11.7% in November 2002) would not express their opinion.

Conflicts

We have seen that such issues as solving IDP problems, or restoration of sovereignty over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, all linked to ethno-territorial conflicts in Georgia, got high ranking on the list of priorities (prioritised by 20.5%, 19.9 and 9.2% of respondents correspondingly, in June 2003 survey).

At the same time, the majority of respondents were against the federal territorial arrangement of the country after the restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity (incorporating back Abkhazia and South Ossetia). In June 2003, according to the opinion of 50.7% of respondents, no region of Georgia should have the right to pursue policies independently from the centre. 32.3% support symmetrical federalism - in their opinion Ajara, Abkhazia, South Ossetia along with all other regions of Georgia should have equal rights and level of autonomy; 12.7% has expressed no opinion in this regard, 2.4% state that Abkhazia alone should have the special rights (more autonomy), while according to 1.9% - both Abkhazia and South Ossetia should enjoy special rights.

The majority of respondents were against the use of force as means for re-establishing central authority in the breakaway regions of South Ossetia (in June 2003 - 54.2%, in November 2002 - 47%) and in Abkhazia (51.8% in June 2003, 44.0% - in Nov. 2002) demonstrating thus the increase in number of supporters of the peaceful resolution. It is also interesting to observe that the rural respondents tend to be more peacefully oriented – in the case of Abkhazia 55.5% of rural against 49% of urban respondents were against violence (Chi-square=4.6, df= 1, $p<.05$), while in the case of South Ossetia the picture is similar - 58.9% vs. 50.6% (Chi-square=7.5, df= 1, $p<.005$). There is certain economic dimension also at play – the poor are more supportive of any approach including forceful resolution of conflict in Abkhazia, that the non-poor respondents (50.3% vs. 43.9%; Chi-square=3.9, df= 1, $p<.05$). Age is also important (Chi-square=9.2, df= 2, $p<.05$). Support of violence in Abkhazia decreased with age (age group 17-34 - 54.4%, 35-64 - 46.6% , and 65+ - 41.8%), while the South Ossetian issue in general attracted less attention and showed less differences.

At the same time, the majority of respondents (55.8%) expressed their negative attitude toward prolonging for 10 years of the mandate for the Russian peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia (no position - 32.8%, and positive attitude - 11.3%). However, higher proportion of 67.7% would positively assess the agreement between presidents Putin and Shevardnadze about the restoration of the railway connections via Abkhazia as coupled with the issue of IDP return (no position - 27.2%, negative - 5.1%)

Opinions were divided in relation to the distantly related but sensitive issue of IDPs squatting in various state-owned buildings. According to the 40.3% of respondents, the government should allow IDPs to stay, 21.8% called for their withdrawal, and 37.9% did not express any opinion.

Local problems and local governments

As it is well known, the greatest part of peoples concerns and expectations are realised at local level. It is also worth mentioning, that until November 2003, the local elections of 2000 were considered to be relatively fair, having brought to power persons that most of the population knew well and had some confidence. Indeed, local governments enjoyed higher trust as compared to other branches and segments of power. Also, problems that feed public concern, are different at local level, although such issues as unemployment never lose their leading position.

In both our surveys, respondents have been repeatedly asked to rank local problems by selecting three priority issues out of the list of 19 items.

Table 11. The most burning problems at a regional/local level

Rank	Problem	June 2003 %	Nov. 2002 %	Difference
1	Unemployment	84.7	75.6	9.1
2	Electricity shortages	27.8	19.5	8.3
3	Crime	24.4	14.5	9.9
4	Corruption	21.9	18.5	3.4
5	Low remuneration of labour	19.7	*	-
6	Low social benefits and pensions	19	29.4	10.4+
7	Delay in payment of salaries, pensions and social benefits	16.4	*	-
8	Drug addiction	16.2	18.4	2.2+
9	Condition of roads	14.1	12.3	1.8
10	Health status	11	11	0.0
11	Environmental pollution	9.5	8.9	0.6
12	Shortage and poor quality of piped water	9.4	7.9	1.5
13	Logging of forests	8.6	9.6	1.0+
14	Education	5.2	6.4	1.2+
15	Quality of land resources	2.6	0.8	1.8
16	Lack of opportunities for leisure activities	2.2	*	-
17	Poor irrigation / amelioration, swamping	1.5	1.7	0.2+
18	Lack of information	1.1	*	-
19	Insufficient agricultural land resources	0.8	0.5	0.3

*This entry was lacking in November 2002 questionnaire

While indeed unemployment got by far the highest score, along with the problem of crime it was felt more acutely in June 2003, a harbinger of rapidly growing dissatisfaction with the general situation, even if the issue of pension rears seemed to be slightly improved.

At the same time, there was little confidence in the ability of local governments to influence the situation in any positive way, as maintained by 74.6% of respondents (66.3% in November 2002). The perceived reasons for this differ – 51.4% would argue that everything is decided in the centre, 14.3% blamed lack of resources, and 8.9% - poor legislation. While 13.3% had no clear opinion on the issue, only 12.2% were still hopeful.

The relative majority of 45.2% of respondents (but less than 55.5% in November 2002) expressed dissatisfaction with the work of the local councils (“sakrebulo”), while only 22% (17.5% in November 2002) approved their performance. In general there is a positive sign of growing satisfaction with the work of *sakrebulo*-s against the background of realistically decreased expectations.

Public opinion was divided with regards to a controversial issue of presidential representatives in regions², who serve as the strong instruments of central authorities. One third of respondents - 33.9% - expressed opinion that such a position should exist (in November 2002 the number of supporters was slightly higher - 35.2%); almost the same number - 33.3% (40.1% in November 2002) consider it as irrelevant, while as many as 32.8% (24.7% in November 2002) have no clear-cut opinion.

Foreign policy orientations

Foreign policy issues, although until recently less in the focus of public attention, were still quite important from the viewpoint of their impact on political preferences. Here significant dynamic can be observed during the last year period, mainly reflecting the change of external environment and pressures. The general trend shows the decrease in supporters of CIS membership for Georgia, and the overall increase of pro-western attitudes, of the approval of integration into NATO and EU, at the account of falling pro-Russian attitudes.

Since November 2002, the number of those, who thought that the membership in NATO and the European Union was very useful for the country, has increased. Generally inclination toward Russia has decreased, while the general orientation toward the West has strengthened. It should be noted, that there is certain logical inconsistency between striving to join Euro-Atlantic structures and staying in the CIS, this probably related to

² Which is not a constitutionally defined territorial unit, but was introduced by a decree of the then Head of State Shevardnadze back in 1995.

the general ambiguity of the official position of Shevardnadze's government and the limited awareness regarding geopolitical realities.

So, paradoxically, in June 2003 - 44.9% (39.0% in November 2002) of respondents thought that Georgia should not withdraw from the CIS (according to 16.6% of these, Georgia's participation in CIS should even increase), while only 28.5% (29.5% in 2002) stated that Georgia should leave CIS; 26.6% (31.5%) of respondents did not have a position. At the same time, much more clear-cut was the respondents' attitude toward joining NATO and European Union - 62.0% of respondents (55.4% in 2002) stated that Georgia should strive to acquire NATO membership, 29.4% (31.8% in 2002) did not have a position, and only 8.6% (12.8%) thought that Georgia should not strive for NATO membership. Even more (increasingly) numerous were the supporters of Georgia's membership in the EU - 72.2% (69.5% in November 2002). 23.3% (24.9% in 2002) did not have an opinion and only 4.5% (5.6%) were against membership.

Respondents in June 2003 survey were presented with the list of 13 foreign states and were requested to choose from the list - three countries that Georgia could rely upon. The majority (76.6%) choose USA, while much less supporters had the second most often chosen country - Russia (49.6%). At the same time, when respondents were forced to choose between USA and Russia as a focus of foreign orientation, the difference between the supporters of these two countries significantly decreased, once again revealing certain inconsistency of attitudes; Still, the majority - 52.9% (43.9% in 2002) made their choice in favour of the USA, while the remaining 47.1% (56.1% in 2002) chose Russia.

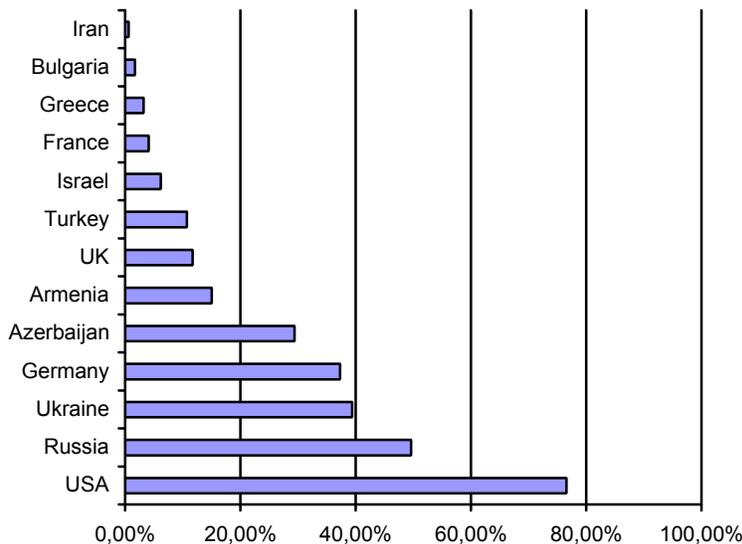


Figure 7. Countries that Georgia can rely on (June 2003)

Recent change of power marked significant increase in pro-western orientation, and the rapid decrease of pro-Russian sympathies. When in December 2003 Tbilisi survey respondents were requested to choose two countries that in their opinion were the best friends of Georgia, as well as two who they considered as hostile to the country - the most frequently named friends appeared to be the US (99.9%) and the European Union (40.2%), while Russia (72.7%) and Armenia (50.1%) were considered to be more hostile. However, with regards to the US there was certain ambivalence, as a number of respondents chose US both as a friend and as an enemy. The choice of the second hostile country was problematic for many respondents. When asked to choose between Russia and USA as a better potential partner for Georgia, 62.2% made choice in favour of the US (in November 2002 respective rate was 53.7%, while in June 2003 it rose to 55.1%, showing stable increase).

Table 12. Countries perceived as friendly or hostile toward Georgia (December 2003)

Country	Friendly %	Hostile %
USA	99.9	8.0
Azerbaijan	19.4	10.9
Eurounion	40.2	5.3
Turkey	2.0	26.3
Russia	14.3	72.7
Armenia	5.8	50.1
Ukraine	36.6	3.8

While the opinion regarding the justification of US military operation in Iraq was divided (in June 2003 36.3% of respondents approved the operation, while exactly the same proportion disapproved, with 27.3% uncertain), higher proportion of respondents (39.6%) considered as correct the support of the operation by the Georgian government before the actual war (31.5% disapprove, while 28.9% uncertain).

Along with the positive attitude toward joining NATO, there was equally positive opinion regarding US and Turkish military assistance – in June 2003 84% (82.3% in November 2002) of respondents approved American “Train and Equip” programme of assistance in building Georgian army, while 11% (17.7% in November 2002) disapproved it (5% uncertain). Somewhat less respondents - 66.9% (62.6% in November 2002) - approved military assistance provided by Turkey.

The absolute majority of respondents 63.3% (60.7% in November 2002) express their opinion that within next 5 years all Russian military bases should be closed down, with 23.9% undecided (22.6% in November 2002) and 12.8% (16.8% in November 2002) against the closure. It is interesting to note that urban respondents more frequently (67.2%) supported the closure of bases, as compared to rural respondents (58.2%; Chi-square=11.4, df=2, p<.005). Economic status was also statistically significant (Chi-square=10.3, df= 2, p<.05), as the opinion was somewhat different between the poor and the non-poor – almost twice as many of the non-poor (64.8%) than the poor (35.2%) want the bases to be closed down. Interestingly, difference between the age groups was insignificant.

However, the majority of respondents (64.1%) maintained opinion that the restoration of the no-visa regime with Russia would be beneficial for Georgia (17.6% indifferent outcome, 11.2% were uncertain, while 7.1% thought it would be detrimental for Georgia’s interests).

Health

Health stays to be a major concern for the Georgia’s population, due to relatively high morbidity caused by poverty and unhealthy lifestyle, farther aggravated by limited accessibility and high costs of the quality medical services. Although there is little reliable information about such important indicators of health condition such as infant and maternal mortality or disaggregated morbidity, on the overall the situation is much worse than it used to be in Soviet times. The state health system is impoverished, while price tags on medical services provided private institutions (and in many cases also by public ones) are formidable for the majority of the population. Our survey has once more demonstrated low accessibility of quality health services, the main reason of which is its relatively high price or in other terms the poverty of the population. It is clear that if a proper solution to the problem is not found in near future, one should expect farther worsening of the health condition of the population. The scarcity of sporting facilities, and the low culture of healthy lifestyle, aggravate the situation.

Respondents in the sample (June 2003, results very similar to those in October, 2003) demonstrated how bad the situation is - 36.45.9% of them estimated their health as medium, 34.5% claimed it to be good and as many as 19.6% as bad. No surprise, there is a relation of the health status to age - 59.9% of the young adults, 28% of the middle-aged and only 6.1% of the senior respondents estimate their health as good. However, it is the strong correlation of health with poverty that is alarming. Being in good health has been claimed by 40.2% of non-poor and by only 22.7% of poor. Correspondingly 33.0% of poor and 13.5% of non-poor estimate their health as bad. Statistically significant difference in health status is found not only for different age groups of respondents (Chi-square 256.4, p<.001, df .4) but also depending on their economic status (Chi-square 67.4, p<.001, df .2). However, notably, the difference between the urban and the rural respondents is not significant.

It seems that the main reason for high morbidity is unhealthy lifestyle, this in its turn due to poverty, ignorance or the lack of opportunity/time. Very small part of the respondents expressed concern with the idea of healthy life style: 71.2% almost never do physical exercise, while 27.4% smoke which is probably among the most serious causes for high morbidity. The age is correlated with smoking (Chi-square 18.6, $p < .001$, $df.2$) in rather unexpected way - with age the number of smokers decreases: 37% of young, 27.2% of the middle aged and 10.7% of elder respondents have admitted smoking. At the same time, among the smokers, a person would smoke on average around a package per day ($M=18.6$, $SD=9.4$), with the range of 1 to 60 cigarettes daily.

It was interesting at the same time to understand the perception of the respondents themselves of the factors having impact on their health and illnesses. Respondents have been asked to evaluate a list comprising of 11 items, from the viewpoint of their positive influence upon their health. As is evident from the Table below, the respondents consider calm, undisturbed life, healthy food and the treatment and advice by a good doctor as the main prerequisites of good health.

Table 13. Rank order of activities according to their influence on health (June 2003)

	Activity	Importance%
1	Calm life	91.1
2	Healthy food	90.9
3	Having a good doctor	88.0
4	Good care	86.9
5	Receiving medicines	74.4
6	Sports	55.4
7	Not smoking	54.3
8	No excessive drinking	49.6
9	Other	38.8
10	Physical work	37.3
11	Treatment in the hospital	30.6

The influence of age is important in assessing the treatment provided by a good doctor (Chi-square 10.4, $p < .05$, $df.4$). Its perceived importance increases with the age. It is perceived as important by 83.5% of young, 90.0% of people in middle age and 90.7% of elder respondents.

Economic status has an impact on the importance of calm life (Chi-square 7.7, $p < .05$, $df.2$). It is perceived as important by 94.8% of poor and 89.7% of non-poor. The importance of this factor also varies with the age (Chi-square 16.1, $p < .005$, $df.4$), it increase with the age. 83.5% of young, 90.0% of people in middle age and 90.7% of elder respondents consider it important.

It is worth noting that in fact no difference was found in health between rural and urban respondents, while the difference among the age groups and people of different economic status is evident. Indeed, the young and better off enjoy much better health than the poor and the old. But, although younger and the well-to-do go in for sports more frequently than respondents who are old an/or poor, still even their involvement in physical activity is low.

Poor health in its turn shows itself in frequent illness. During the past three months slightly less than half of respondents (47.6%) admitted getting ill at least once, while in this case again there is obvious impact of **age** and **economic status** (Chi-square 42.2, $p < .001$, $df.2$) - the young compared to older citizens less frequently got ill (30% of young, 50.7% middle-aged and 70.9% of the older respondents got ill during reported period; while 58.9% of the poor as compared to 42.7% of the non-poor respondents reported getting ill).

Getting frequently ill is only one side of the problem, another one being the inadequate response. Out of the 523 respondents who reported having been ill during the last three months, only slightly above half, 51.1% had visited a doctor. The main reason named by those who did not do this was the lack of money (63.7%) rather than the perception that the illness was not serious (34%). Self-treatment is becoming quite common. During the past 6 months, 65.5% of respondents have purchased medicine for themselves. Out of these 707 respondents who had purchased medicine, only 53.9% did this based on doctor's advice, while 52.2% were guided by their own experience, 13.3% did it according to a friend's advice, 7.4% acted based on a pharmacist's advice, and 2.1% followed an advertisement.

In the situation when funds are scarce, it is important to determine priorities, and public opinion is important in this regard. Respondents have been asked to choose one sector of healthcare system, which they considered as most important to be free of charge. 50.7% of respondents chose regular treatment at a hospital, 24.1% -

emergency treatment, 12.8% - providing prescribed medicines and 12.3% - primary health service at polyclinics. Respondent were also asked to prioritise population groups that should be entitled for free health service: 24.1% of respondents argue that free service should be provided to persons with low income, 19.7% - to those with severe chronic diseases, 18.1% - to pensioners, 15.1% - to handicapped persons, 13.7% - to children under 16, 8% - to families with many children, and 1.3% were not able to choose any option.

High prices are perceived by 38.0% of respondents as the main flaw of current healthcare system. According to 19.7%, low qualification of medical doctors is the problem; 17% prioritise corruption, 10.2% - bad service, 7.9% - dishonesty of medical personnel, 2.7% - remoteness from the healthcare facilities, 1.5% claimed that basically current healthcare system was good, and 3.0% finds difficult to answer the question.

Social Security

It is well established that the elderly, particularly when lacking support of the kin, are most vulnerable group of the population. Hence the pension, whatever miniscule its size, is in many cases the main source of income, and issues related to social security system and pension are of crucial importance. A few questions in the survey referred to pension and social assistance related policies, and respondents were asked to express their assessment and preferences regarding these.

According to 59.3% of respondents in June 2003 survey, the size of the pension should be determined by what is locally denoted as “stazh”, i.e. the number of years at work, normally referring to the governmental job. 18.1% of respondents, in their turn, argued that everyone should have the same pension that should not take into account either work record or received salary. At the same time, 17.0% were of opinion that the pension level should reflect the salary earned previously, while 5.7% have expressed no opinion on the principles of determining pension. Attractiveness of different pension schemes depended upon age (Chi-square 24.5, $p < .001$, df.6). The proportion of respondents who had no opinion decreased with age (9.6% among young, 4.4% among the people of middle age and 2.1% among old). The difference was significant also regarding the principles of determining the pension amount: the egalitarian principle found more supporters among the younger respondents (21.4% among the young, 17.1% among the middle-aged and 14.9% among the elderly respondents). Correspondingly, the proportion of those who argued that the pension size should be determined in accordance with the years at work grew with the age (52.1% among young, 62.4% among middle and 63.9% among older respondents have supported this option).

Respondents were also requested to chose one out of three pension schemes, on the assumption that their monthly salary was 200 GEL. The majority of 80.8% chose: a) to pay 20 lari of pension payment monthly in order to get a pension of 100 GEL (c. the current subsistence minimum); 11.6% chose the option: b) to pay 10 GEL monthly and receive a 50-lari pension; only 6.8% of respondents preferred: c) not to pay anything and to get a pension of 14 lari (c. current amount). Economic status influenced the preference toward a pension scheme (Chi-square 14.2, $p < .01$, df.2), although the interpretation is not straightforward: higher proportion of the poor (87.7%) compared to the non-poor (78.3%) were supportive of the scheme a) – i.e. to pay 20 lari and get 100 lari of pension. This is probably due to at least two leading factors – more sense of insecurity regarding their future among the poor, on one hand, but also due to more ease at spending the assumed sum which they do not have in reality.

Other questions referred to the principles of the distribution of a state allowance. According to the majority of respondents (67.2%), allocating an allowance should be determined by the poverty status of a potential beneficiary; 19.0% argued that targeting should be based upon belonging to a vulnerable group (e.g. lonely pensioner, internally displaced person, orphan, etc.), while 13.8% had no opinion. Out of those (737 respondents) who have argued that getting allowance should be determined by the poverty status, 33.0% stated that the poverty status should be proved by the certificate of income, 23.7% - that a local community should itself make the selection, 20.3% - that it is the task for a local government, 11.9% - that a social worker should be responsible for the task of targeting. Seemingly, there were no other options to be considered, as only 0.8% stated that some other criterion for targeting the beneficiaries should be used, while 10.2% have expressed no opinion.

Procedures for targeting beneficiaries are quite a controversial issue. According to the opinion of 30.3% of respondents, determining of as to who is entitled for some kind of state assistance (e.g. handouts, subsidised payments for gas, electricity, etc.) should be based on a formal state-issued document (in October 2002 this

option was chosen by 34.1%), 22.9% - targeting should be done by local governments (28.4% in October), 18.3% - by a local community (13.9% in October 2002), 15.4% - by the international organization that actually provides resources for such assistance (23.6% in October 2002), and according to 13.1% (8.9% in October 2002) - by the ministry that distributes the assistance.

Education

While education was not among the central focuses of our surveys, still we asked the respondents to choose from a list two main obstacles that hinder receiving good education by pupils at school. It is noteworthy that the majority - 28.4% - named the lack of interest on the part of pupils in acquiring knowledge, while the second leading factor was the low salary received by teachers (26.5%), followed by their poor qualification (16.9%). It seems that all other factors not only directly influence the quality of teaching, however even more important is their impact through causing the lack of pupils' motivation, although other factors (such as e.g. influence from peer groups, or family) also contribute to this factor, even if not acknowledged by respondents.

Table 14. Obstacles for obtaining quality education (June 2003)

	Obstacles	Chosen % N=2123
1	Lack of interest in acquiring knowledge	28.4
2	Meagre salary received by teachers	26.5
3	Low qualification of teachers	16.9
4	Corruption	12.6
5	Lack of textbooks	7.1
6	Poor quality of textbooks	5.6
7	Poor condition of school buildings	2.9
	Total	100

Economy

Respondents have revealed their understanding of priorities or economic development that demonstrate certain legacy of industrial past under Soviet regime. The majority of the respondents (66.5%) in June 2003 considered the development of large-scale industry as the most important factor of economic growth. At the same time, only 33.2% have argued that the economic future of Georgia depends more upon the development of small enterprises. The economic status of respondents (Chi-square 6.7, $p < .05$, df.1) as well as the residence type (Chi-square 14.9, $p < .001$, df.1) have influenced the vision of the economic development priorities: higher proportion of the non-poor (69.2%) compared to the poor (61.3%) opted for the development of the big scale industry. At the same time, more rural respondents (73.3%) rather than urbanites (61.7%) support the development of large-scale industry.

Wild privatisation of the early post-independence years caused certain sense of bitterness among respondents. As many as 61.0% of respondents have supported the idea of re-privatising anew the previously unjustly privatised industrial enterprises (9.4% were against such a measure, while 29.6% did not have a clear-cut position on the issue). Economic status of respondents obviously correlated with the position (Chi-square 7.6, $p < .05$, df.2) - higher proportion of the poor (66.9%) compared to the non-poor (58.1%) supported re-privatisation.

As far as poverty was recognised as the key problem by many respondents, it was interesting to see what are the policy options in their opinion. Respectively, respondents were requested to select two items out of a list of 9 actions, which in their opinion were the most effective tools for overcoming poverty. Respondents have most frequently named the eradication of corruption, increase of the amount of minimum salary, and decrease of taxation rates.

Table 15. Means for overcoming poverty (June 2003)

	Means	Choices % N=2108
1	Eradication of corruption	40.6
2	Increase of minimal amount of salary	27.9
3	Decrease of taxation	15.6
4	Decrease of import	3.5
5	Difficult to answer	3.5

6	Attraction of foreign investments	3.3
7	Increase of international assistance	2.7
8	Decrease of state interference in economics	1.8
9	Increase of the prices on imported goods	1.1
	Total	100

The majority of respondents (68.2%) have assessed positively the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline (in October 2002, 62.8% had expressed such opinion), 7.0% estimates it negatively (2.9% in October 2002) and 24.7% (34.3% in October 2002) were neutral. It is obvious, that although the support for BTC has definitely increased, public opinion in July 2003 have also demonstrated increased polarisation of viewpoints, which can be attributed to the active debate around some controversial pipeline-related issues (mostly rooted in environmental concerns) in media.

SOCIAL COHESION

20th century was a difficult one for the Georgian society, destroying its traditional fabric but instead creating deeply rooted suspicion toward any official authority, the civil cynicism, and the lack of civil responsibility. Now the situation is rapidly changing, as recent events have created certain confidence in own capacity to influence political developments, new search for ideals and positive examples, and new civil activism. It is only too dangerous to encounter again frustration and disappointment, as this will be a terrible blow for Georgia's state building and democratic transition.

Trust

It is universally acknowledged that trust is the propensity to co-operate which determines the performance of societal institutions. The stronger is the trust within a community or a society, the more stable and integrated it is, this strongly correlated with such variables as economic development or political stability. While the Georgian society with its strong kinship systems and extended families is characterised by rather high level of mutual trust, decades of authoritarian rule developed very strong mistrust toward governments and official institutions in general, this tendency only aggravated during difficult post-independence years.

Demonstrated unanimity in the evaluation of private interest among public servants is the indicator of the great deficiency of the trust toward the previous government, and could be qualified as its legitimacy crisis. A number of questions referred as to what extent the different branches of government acted in the interests of the country, region, towns or the village as compared to the preoccupation with personal or group interests. According to the respondents personal and group interests motivate most of all the members of the Parliament – expressed by 91% of respondents (90.2% in November 2002), than President of Georgia – 80.5% (76.2% in November 2002), regional authorities – 79.8% (75.4% in November 2002) and the least - members of local councils – 68.7% (61.3% in November 2002).

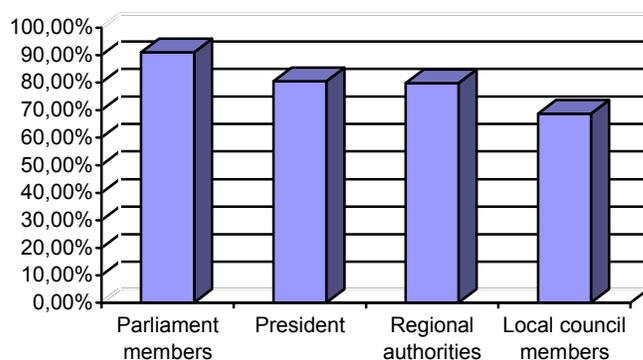


Figure 8. Authorities perceived to be motivated in their actions by personal or group interests (June 2003)

Corruption is perceived by the population as one of the gravest problems of the country. Large share of the population (62.1%) is convinced that the all three branches of state authority - legislative, executive and judicial are closely interlinked and immersed in corruption (24.2% had expressed no opinion in this respect and

according to 13.7% did not agree). At the same time many respondents have admitted that during past 6 months they were either demanded to give a bribe or/ and actually had given bribes. The biggest proportion of the respondents (10.4%) had to deliver illegal payments at healthcare facilities (In November 2002 this item was not present), 6.9% - to police (7.0% in 2002), 6.1% (5.2% in 2002) - at educational institutions, 5.5% (4.8% in 2002) – at the taxation office, 3% (3.9% in 2002) to the customs officers, 1.8% (1.2% in 2002) – at *gamgeoba* or town hall/local council. The biggest source of corruption as perceived by respondents is the customs service, as indicated both in June 2002 and November 2003, and what is really disturbing - according to 72.3% (72.9% in November) of respondents economically the most profitable job position is at custom’s office. All other agencies fall far behind in such assessment: police scored 10.3% (9.1% in November 2002), prosecutor’s office - 7.3% (6.2% in 2002), courts and judiciary - 7.0% (7.4% in 2002), hospitals - 3.2% (4.4% in 2002).

Information

Free information flows are a necessary prerequisite for democratic transition, and it should be said that it is the most developed aspect of such transition in Georgia. Still, it is important to understand what are the main sources of political information used by the population. .

Table 16. Ranking of informational sources by residence type, economic status and age, December 2003 (%)

Rank	Source	Total	Urban	Rural	Diff.	Non-poor	Poor	Diff.	17-34	35-64	64+
1	TV	91.2	93.8	87.6	6.2	91.9	88.7	3.2	93.5	91.4	85.7
2	Newspaper	59.2	60.0	58.0	2.0	63.6	45.1	18.5	63.3	60.7	47.4
3	Acquaintances	36.0	30.6	43.2	12.6+	38.1	30.7	7.4	38.4	37.5	27.5
4	Radio	24.8	23.2	27.0	3.8+	27.4	19.1	8.3	28.8	24.9	17.3
5	Family members	21.0	15.6	28.3	12.7+	23.2	16.1	7.1	22.1	20.5	20.4
6	Internet	2.4	2.7	1.9	0.8	3.1	0.8	2.3	4.5	1.8	0
7	Other	1.7	1.3	2.3	1+	2.3	0.3	2.0	3.1	1.5	0

As it can be seen from the above table, television is the most powerful source of information, used by 91.2% of respondents. Printed media is also quite important (59.2%), unlike Internet. Informal sources such as acquaintances and family members continue to play a very significant role in providing information (summarily 57%), particularly in rural communities with frequent electricity shortages and shortage of printed periodicals. Economic status is an important variable, poverty being a serious obstacle to access to information. And, of course, the young people are much more frequently using Internet as a source of information.

Participation

Civil participation is the cornerstone of a democratic society. Hence it is important to observe public attitudes toward participation and civil engagement, as indicators of democratic transition.

When in June 2003 respondents were asked whether in their opinion an ordinary person might have influence on government’s decisions, only 15.3% admitted such a possibility (11.6% were not sure, and the remaining 73.1% did not believe in such a possibility). However, now in the end of November when respondents were asked the same question, but directed toward the future, asking if in ordinary person will have a say, the proportion of people believing in such a possibility actually tripled reaching 47.2%, while only 22.9% did not believe in such possibility and 29.9% had no definite answer.

When in June 2003 respondents were asked whether in their opinion an ordinary person might have influence on government’s decisions, only 15.3% admitted such a possibility (11.6% were not sure, and the remaining 73.1% did not believe in such a possibility). However, half a year later in December 2003 when respondents were asked the same question, but directed toward the future, asking if in ordinary person will have a say, the proportion of people believing in such a possibility actually tripled reaching 47.2%, while only 22.9% did not believe in such possibility and 29.9% had no definite answer.

Thus, until very recently, the majority of the population understood the importance and desirability of civil participation in the governance, but felt themselves incapable of actually influencing the situation. It was not surprising, thus, that only about one third of respondents admitted the possibility of civil engagement. The actual involvement of respondents in any form of political action was extremely low. In June 2003 only 4.6% (3.7% in November 2002) claimed having addressed an MP, the parliament or a ministry during the last 6 months, 8% (6.8% in 2002) reported contacting local authorities, and 4.1% (3.9% in 2002) took part in any form of collective action.

The situation has radically changed since. In fact, 40.2% of the surveyed (in December 2003) respondents claimed having participated in protest rallies after the November 2 elections, while only 12.3% had taken part in any type of collective action from the beginning of the year until elections. At the same time, participation is mainly understood as a confrontational action. So, the most acceptable form of participation with the goal of influencing the government was stated to be the attendance of a protest rally, 57.3% of respondents claiming their readiness to engage in this activity. The next best preferred activities are attending a meeting (44.8%) and appealing/complaining to the local authorities (36.2%). It is interesting to note that in November 2002 only 26.9% expressed readiness to attend a protest rally, even less so in June 23.3%, but in December 2003 respective rate more than doubled reaching 57.3%.

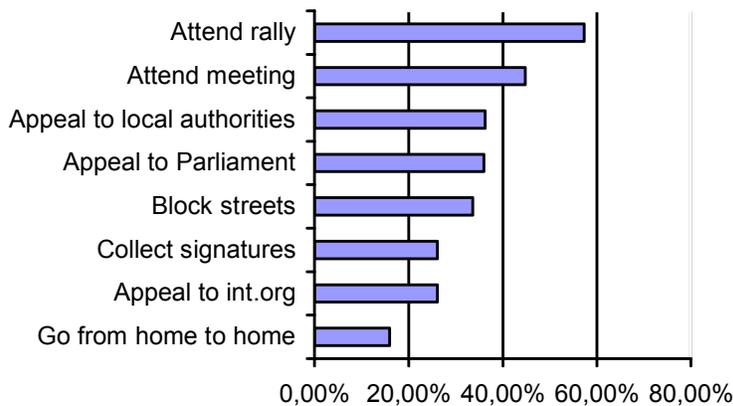


Fig. 9. Readiness to engage in activities aimed at influencing governmental decisions (Dec. 2003 Tbilisi).

Respondents showed more readiness to act in the case when their rights had been violated, but even in this case their approach would be either acting through relatives and friends, or get involved in mass protests. Such confrontational attitude is closely related to the general mistrust toward officialdom, and reluctance to use legal ways of protecting their rights, although such approach may gradually become more popular. Indeed, according to respondents, in case of the violation of their rights they would appeal to friends (77.1%) or relatives (71.8%). But even in December 2003, and in the capital city of Tbilisi, only 46.4% of respondents claimed they would appeal to courts.

Table 17. Whom to appeal in case of the violation of rights, December 2003 (%)

Rank	Whom to appeal	Dec. 2003	June 2003
1	Friends and acquaintances	77.1	77.8
2	Relatives	71.8	76.1
3	Court	46.4	38.5
4	MP	41.3	29.4
5	Ombudsman	33.7	32.8
6	Local authorities	31.5	39.2
7	Media	28.9	16.9
8	Police	28.2	26.6
9	Executive authority (e.g. ministry)	27.0	21.1
10	Non-government organizations	23.5	17.9
11	International organizations	19.5	13
12	Criminals	9.4	16.7

[Kinship networks](#)

As seen in previous paragraph, the network of relatives and friends plays an extremely important role in forming social fabric of interactions, cushioning hardship and providing moral, economic or any other support needed by an individual. The operational value of such networks is maintained through ritualised gatherings and events such as weddings, funerals and baptizing. While respondents did not show much involvement or commitment to any form of civil engagement or activism, social interactions with kinship networks are much more frequent.

In June 2003 survey 79.1% (69.3% in November 2002) respondents claimed that during last three months at least once had attended funeral rites - 3.5 times on average, SD 4.5 (in 2002 - 3 times, SD 3.7); 63.1% (52.4% in November 2002) attended gatherings related to a wedding, baptizing, birthday party or the like, - 2.1 times on average, SD 3 (in November 2002 - 3.3 times, SD 4.3). While the type of residence had insignificant influence upon the frequency of attendance, economic status was much more important - (F=51.7, p<.001). ANOVA calculation revealed that the non-poor attended twice as many gatherings as the poor (M=1.2, SD=2 in case of poor and M=2.6, SD=3.3 for the non-poor). Age, in its turn is also important, and elderly people tend to be less socially active.

Respondents not only reported attending various gatherings and rites, there is also significant exchange of mutual assistance in the framework of such networks. Respondents have admitted both receiving and providing assistance - providing it 7.3-times, SD 22.7, (7-times in 2002, SD 10), and receiving on average 4.5 times, SD 16.5 (6.1, SD 11 in 2002).

Ethno-confessional dimension

Georgia is a multi-ethnic country with a sad record of ethno-territorial conflicts and tensions. Hence, this dimension is very important for understanding societal processes here. Although the brief period of heightened nationalism of the first post-independence years is already left behind, ethnicity, confession and language continue to be sensitive issues.

The overwhelming majority of respondents 91.9% (94% in November 2002) have expressed their opinion that all citizens of Georgia must know the Georgian language, while only 4.6% (3.8% in 2002). maintained the opinion that such knowledge should be obligatory only for public servants (3.6% did not think such knowledge was a must at all). At the same time the same majority 91.8% (91.7% in 2002) insisted that the indication of national identity should be included in the passport/citizen's identity card (this issue was extensively debated in media).

In June 2003 4.7% of respondents (4.2% in November 2002) indicated that during the last 6 months they had experiences discrimination due to their ethnic identity, and 2.7% mentioned this with regards to confession. This of course should be considered taking into account who actually have reported discrimination, as the majority of those who admitted being discriminated appeared to be ethnic Georgians themselves.

There is significant increase in attending religious ceremonies, quite natural for a post-Soviet society where religious life was very much suppressed. More than a half of respondents (54.5% in June 2003, 50.5% in November 2002) had attended at least once a religious service during the last three months. It is also indicative that the urban respondents demonstrated significantly higher attendance compared to rural inhabitants (47.5% vs. 34.8%; Chi-square 17.8 df 2 p<.001), non-poor compared to the poor (59.1% vs. 44.6%; Chi-square 20.4 df 2 p<.001), and that attendance fell with age (51.4% of those of age range 17-34, 40.8% - 35-64, and 29.1% - of elderly 65+ who grew up in Soviet times; Chi-square 45.6 df 4 p<.001).

There is certain division of opinions regarding the wave of construction of churches throughout Georgia. More than a half of respondents (54.8%) would prefer that the ancient churches (currently in dire condition) to be renovated rather than the new ones built. Still, 35.2% support building new churches, while 9.9% had no opinion.

Strong majority of respondents (42.5%) expressed their opinion that the state and the church should not be divided (38.8% were of opposite viewpoint, and 18.7% had no position on the issue). At the same time, respondents demonstrated significant although highly selective intolerance toward confessional minorities and their right to pursue collective religious rituals and practice religion.

Table 18. Ranking of confessions by acceptability of their religious rituals (whether they should be allowed to practise) excluding respondents unable to identify respective confession, June 2003 – November 2002

Rank	Confession	Yes % June 2003	Yes % Nov. 2002	Difference %
1	Greek Orthodox	98.8	98.9	0.1+
2	Catholics	69.2	67.6	1.6
3	(Armenian) Gregorians	55.4	51.8	3.6
4	Moslems	47.1	50.6	3.5+
5	Judaists	40.6	43.4	2.8+

6	Baptists	13.9	10.5	3.4
7	Other religious minorities	11.7	11.4	0.3
8	Pentecostals	8.7	8.2	0.5
9	Jehovah's Witnesses	8.2	7.5	0.7

The least tolerant respondents were with regards to Jehovah's Witnesses and Pentecostals, and although tolerance slightly increased since November 2002, still the level of intolerance is very high. This is aggravated by the approval by more than one third of respondents (37%) of violence against some religious sects (36.3% disapproved, 26.7% had no opinion). Such aggressive attitude is particularly noticeable among rural respondents as compared to urbanites (43.4% vs. 32.3%; Chi-square 18.8 df 2 p<.001), while economic status or age show no statistically significant difference.

PROFILES OF THE ELECTORATE (JUNE 2003)

Below are presented the data concerning mainly politics and politicians, as such data acquire special interest in the period around the elections. It should be noted that the structural changes in the composition of political forces that took place since June 2003 should have had significant impact on the ratings of specific parties and their leaders, but would however have much lesser effect upon the social profiles and the value system of their respective supporters. Still, the personalities of leading political figures representing each party continue to stay much more important than any party programmes are. Hence, ratings of the leading political figures by their popularity and the trust towards them and as well as the evaluation of their political perspectives, acquire special importance for understanding political processes.

Despite the fact, that political landscape is rapidly changing, the attitude of population towards important political issues changes much slower. It is possible to distinguish three main groups of factors that influence the political preferences of the public: social status, external orientation (Russia/West), and the personality characteristics.

Social and economic profile: Rural-urban, education, self-assessment of economic status.

Such politicians, as Zurab Zhvania, Gogi Topadze, David Gamkrelidze, Nino Burjanadze were mainly supported by urban population, people with the university education and with relatively high income.

At the same time supporters of Jumber Patiashvili, Mikheil Saakashvili, Aslan Abashidze and Shalva Natelashvili first of all belonged to rural population, with lower educational level and low income. Although there were some surprises as well – Gamkrelidze was also relatively popular among the poor, Saakashvili - among the non-poor.

External orientation. Relying on Russia or on the USA/West. Respective variables include the assessment of the military operations in Iraq, US military assistance to Georgia, attitude towards the closure of Russian military bases, and the direct choice between Russia and USA.

The most significant trend observed was the increase of the orientation towards the West. Respectively, the most pro-American are supporters of Gamkrelidze, but also supporters of Zhvania, Natelashvili, Saakashvili, as well as some of Topadze supporters. Clearly pro-Russian orientation was found among the supporters of Abashidze and Patiashvili. Burjanadze supporters orient more toward the US, but they also do not ignore the importance of Russia.

Personality features. E.g. - optimism. Supporters of Burjanadze, Topadze and Gamkrelidze look at the life with more hope and optimism, are more ready to take the responsibility for it in their hands; Among the supporters of Patiashvili, Saakashvili and Natelashvili there are more socially passive, relying on external involvement, they have less hope and optimism.

Who was liked by whom: general rating of political leaders

The rating of political figures is a popular topic, various ratings and polling activities are particularly frequent before the elections. However, apart from rating the lists of names, it was important to know what are the factors that determine choices. In the survey, respondents were asked to choose from the listed eight personal qualities two, which they considered as the most important for evaluation of politicians. It is worth noting that against the background of overwhelming mistrust and corruption, honesty became the leader among such qualities, the most

valued as most probably the scarcest (it was chosen by 42.4% of respondents, i.e. about by two and a half times more than those who choose the second feature - managerial skills and three times more than the third one – record of past achievements). At the same time concern may be caused by modest importance ascribed by respondents to the attractiveness of party programmes.

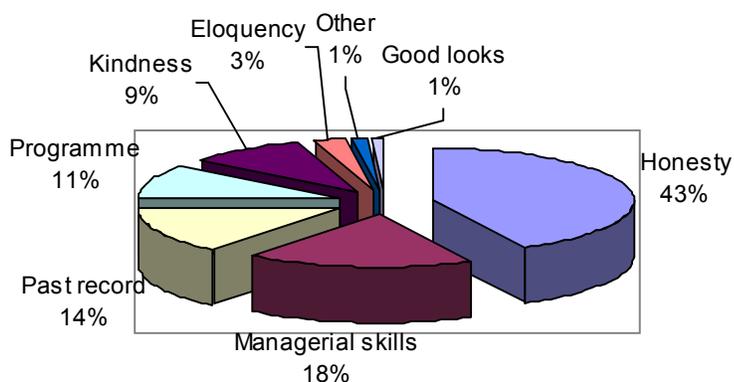


Figure 10. The importance of the features of politicians for their evaluation (June 2003)

Keeping such preferences in mind, it is particularly interesting to look at the ranking (according to their being liked) of individual politicians, especially in dynamics comparing of the June 2003 ratings with those obtained in November 2002³.

³ In November 2002 respondents also evaluated politicians, but at that time the list consisted of 16 persons. One person, namely Zviad Dzidziguri, had been removed from that list due to the decrease of his political significance. Instead, a few other names had been added, including the incumbent President, Eduard Shevardnadze.

Table 19. Attitude of respondents towards leading Georgian politicians, June 2003
(Excluding respondents who had not expressed their attitude)

Rank	Politician	Liked by %	Indifferent %	Disliked by %	Total %
1	Nino Burjanadze	60.7	25.9	13.3	100
2	Gogi Topadze	49.3	33.6	17.1	100
3	Shalva Natelashvili	47.1	30.2	22.7	100
4	Mikheil Saakashvili	35.7	34	30.3	100
5	Levan Gachechiladze	34.3	40.8	24.9	100
6	Jumber Patiashvili	32.6	37.8	29.6	100
7	Aslan Abashidze	28.7	35	36.3	100
8	Guram Sharadze	25.5	40.6	34	100
9	David Gamkrelidze	24.8	45.1	30.2	100
10	Irakli Batiashvili	22.4	45.2	32.4	100
11	Mikheil Machavariani	21.9	45.1	33	100
12	Giorgi Baramidze	21.3	47.3	31.5	100
13	Temur Shashiashvili	21.1	36.4	42.5	100
14	Zurab Zhvania	19.6	38.9	41.5	100
15	Akaki Asatiani	15.2	47.2	37.6	100
16	Vazha Lordkipanidze	14.6	43.4	42	100
17	Eduard Shevardnadze	13.6	28.8	57.6	100
18	Vakhtang Rcheulishvili	13.5	28.4	58.1	100
19	Avtandil Jorbenadze	12.2	28.1	59.7	100
20	Irina Sarishvili	10.5	35.2	54.3	100
21	Akaki Zoidze	8.8	39.7	51.5	100
22	Igor Giorgadze	7.9	28.1	64	100
23	Vitali Khazaradze	3.5	25.4	71	100

Among those respondents who know these politicians (party leaders were known by practically all the respondents), the most popular were Nino Burjanadze (60.7%), Gogi Topadze (49.3%) and Shalva Natelashvili (47.1%). The least liked were: Vitali Khazaradze (71%), Igor Giorgadze (64%) and Avtandil Jorbenadze (59.7%). Respondents were the most indifferent towards Giorgi Baramidze (47.3%), Akaki Asatiani (47.2%) and Irakli Batiashvili (45.2%).

As is seen from the Table 16, since November 2002 the popularity of Nino Burjanadze, Mikheil Saakashvili, Shalva Natelashvili and David Gamkrelidze had significantly increased. Instead, the liking of Vakhtang Rcheulishvili, Irine Sarishvili, Jumber Patiashvili and Vazha Lordkipanidze had fallen to significant extent.

Table 20. Comparison of the approval rate of politicians in November 2002 and June 2003

	Politician	November	June	Difference
1	Nino Burjanadze	41.6	60.7	19.1*
2	Gogi Topadze	49.4	49.4	0
3	Shalva Natelashvili	41.2	47.1	5.9*
4	Mikhail Saakashvili	28.5	35.7	7.2*
5	Levan Gachechiladze	35.7	34.3	1.4
6	Jumber Patiashvili	39	32.6	6.4
7	Aslan Abashidze	26.6	28.7	2.1*
8	David Gamkrelidze	20.3	24.8	4.5*
9	Zurab Zhvania	16.6	19.6	3*
10	Akaki Asatiani	18.2	15.2	3
11	Vazha Lordkipanidze	18.5	14.6	3.9
12	Vakhtang Rcheulishvili	25.9	13.5	12.4
13	Avtandil Jorbenadze	14.7	12.2	2.5
14	Irina Sarishvili	17.5	10.5	7
15	Igor Giorgadze	11.3	7.9	3.4

*In June 2003 support was higher

Profiles of supporters: who supported whom

It is very interesting to reveal the social profiles of those respondents who supported this or that politician, i.e. what was the demographic and economic status of a supporter, place of residence or general political orientation.

Geography of support

It is quite natural that the liking of a politician and the respective political support have definite geographical dimension. So, some politicians were more liked in Imereti, others were more liked in Kakheti. Political taste varies also across the settlement type, i.e. rural vs. urban.

Table 21. Approval rate of politicians across regions, June 2003, in %
(respondents who did not recognize a politician excluded)

Poilitician	Tbilisi	Ajara	Guria	Racha	Samegrelo-Svaneti	Imereti	Kakheti	Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Samtskhe-Javakheti	Kvemo Kartli	Shida Kartli
Burjanadze	69.2	81	52	28	59.2	52.3	53.5	60	66.7	53.3	69.4
Abashidze	19.5	85.2	10.9	2	46.9	22.6	12.8	20.8	44.2	23.3	33.7
Gamkrelidze	23.9	21.9	15	16	16.9	23.6	20.6	38.2	58.8	22.2	35.2
Topadze	45.1	64	47.8	60	31.9	41.1	44.4	39.6	84.2	58.1	59.6
Zhvania	28.5	27.8	13.6	14	9.2	8.7	18.8	14.6	41.3	10.3	24.5
Natelashvili	45.1	50	33.3	32	42.7	30.5	63.1	75.5	60.5	48.2	59.8
Patiashvili	28.5	50	24.4	6	43.3	23.4	21.7	46.9	47.7	34.9	42.9
Saakashvili	31.3	58.2	15.2	18	30.6	29	47.1	44.9	59.5	26.1	48.5

As it appears, certain politicians were particularly popular, in relative terms, in certain regions:

Nino Burjanadze in Ajara, Tbilisi and Shida Kartli

Aslan Abashidze in Ajara, Shida Kartli and Samtske-Javakheti

David Gamkrelidze in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, and Shida Kartli

Gogi Topadze in Samtskhe-javakheti, Ajara and Racha

Zurab Zhvania in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Tbilisi and Ajara

Shalva Natelashvili in Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Kakheti and Samtskhe-Javakheti

Jumber Patiashvili in Ajara, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Mtskheta-Mtianeti

Mikheil Saakashvili in Samtskhe-javakheti, Ajara and Shida Kartli

If the viewpoint is reversed, a look at political preferences from the regional perspective would demonstrate that the following politicians were best liked in respective regions:

Tbilisi - Burjanadze, Topadze and Natelashvili

Ajara - Abashidze, Burjanadze and Saakashvili

Guria - Burjanadze, Topadze and Natelashvili

Racha - Topadze, Natelashvili and Burjanadze

Samegrelo - Zemo Svaneti – Burjanadze, Patiashvili and Natelashvili

Imereti – Burjanadze, Topadze and Natelashvili

Kakheti – Natelashvili, Burjanadze and Topadze

Mtskheta-Mtianeti – Natelashvili, Burjanadze and Patiashvili

Samtskhe-Javakheti – Topadze, Burjanadze and Natelashvili

Kvemo Kartli – Topadze, Burjanadze and Natelashvili

Shida Kartli – Burjanadze, Natelashvili and Topadze

As already noted above, there is difference in popularity was found not only between the regions, but also depending on the settlement type - the political taste among rural and urban respondents was different in most cases. Nino Burjanadze, David Gamkrelidze, and Levan Gachechiladze enjoyed equal approval both among the rural and the urban respondents, however among the supporters of Zhvania and Topadze there was much higher proportion of urbanites (difference 8.25 and 3.6%), while there was more approval among rural respondents for Shalva Natelashvili (difference 9.2%), Jumber Patiashvili (9.2%), Mikhail Saakashvili (7.8%), Aslan Abashidze (7.7%) and Irakli Batiashvili (2%).

Table 22. Approval rate of politicians among the urban and rural respondents (June 2003)

Approved politician	Urban %	Rural %	Total %
Burjanadze N=637	59.3	40.7	100
Abashidze N=295	50.5	49.5	100
Gamkrelidze N=228	56.3	43.7	100
Topadze N=497	59.8	40.2	100
Zhvania N=203	68	32	100
Natelashvili N=479	52.8	47.2	100
Patiashvili N=334	50.3	49.7	100
Saakashvili N=368	51.9	48.1	100

Social and demographic profile of supporters

Statistical profiles of the supporters of various politicians differ in many respects. Especially interesting is the impact of such factors as education, gender and age.

Burjanadze, Abashidze and Patiashvili were more popular among women, while men prevail among the supporters of Gamkrelidze, Natelashvili and Topadze.

Table 23. Approval rate of politicians vs. respondents' gender (June 2003)

	Approved politician	Male %	Female %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=637	42.2	57.8	100
2	Abashidze N=296	42.2	57.8	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=229	48.5	51.5	100
4	Topadze N=497	46.5	53.5	100
5	Zhvania N=203	42.9	57.1	100
6	Natelashvili N=479	46.8	53.2	100
7	Patiashvili N=334	42.2	57.8	100
8	Saakashvili N=368	43.2	56.8	100

While gender is an important factor, age paradoxically enough has much more limited influence upon political taste. This observation contradicts the expected difference between generations, being correlated with other important factors such as education level, and it seems various factors were pushing the situation in different directions, leading to eventual balance.

Table 24. Approval rate of politicians and respondents age (June 2003)

	Approved politician	18-34 years olds %	35-64 years olds %	65 +years olds %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=636	30.2	50.0	19.8	100
2	Abashidze N=296	34.1	46.6	19.3	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=229	31.4	52.4	16.2	100
4	Topadze N=497	33	48.9	18.1	100
5	Zhvania N=203	27.6	52.7	19.7	100
6	Natelashvili N=478	27.2	52.9	19.9	100
7	Patiashvili N=333	23.7	51.4	24.9	100
8	Saakashvili N=367	29.4	50.4	20.2	100

Indeed, as generations differ by educational level, it is interesting to observe the influence of education on political taste. The proportion of people with university education was the highest among the supporters of Zhvania, Topadze and Gamkrelidze and was the lowest among the supporters of Patiashvili, Saakashvili and Abashidze.

Table 25. Approval rate of politicians and the education of respondents (June 2003)

	Approved politician	Primary %	High school / Vocational %	University / high unfinished %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=636	4.4	50.0	45.6	100
2	Abashidze N=295	7.1	53.6	39.3	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=228	4.4	48.7	46.9	100
4	Topadze N=495	3.8	48.9	47.3	100
5	Zhvania N=203	4.4	48.8	46.8	100
6	Natelashvili N=477	4.4	55.1	40.5	100
7	Patiashvili N=333	5.1	58.8	36.0	100
8	Saakashvili N=367	6.0	56.4	37.6	100

Economic dimension

Economic status of respondents obviously influences political choice, as is demonstrated in the Table 23. Theoretically the easiest way of describing economic status of a respondent is by evaluating his/her monthly income. As noted above, respondents seldom give accurate answers when asked about their total monthly income, which may contain a very significant in-kind component, is often irregular and in any case its reported amount is rarely fully trustworthy. Nevertheless, such data is still useful for comparisons, and the overall picture is quite eloquent. According to the family incomes in May 2003, the proportion of families with the lowest income was highest among the supporters of Patiashvili, Natelashvili and Abashidze. The proportion of respondents with the highest income was concentrated among the supporters of Burjanadze, Zhvania and Saakashvili.

Table 26. Approval rate of politicians and the family income in June 2003

	Approved politician	100-300 GEL %	300-700 GEL %	700 and more GEL %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=634	86.6	10.1	3.3	100
2	Abashidze N=295	89.5	9.8	1.7	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=229	82.5	15.8	1.7	100
4	Topadze N=496	86.7	11.7	1.6	100
5	Zhvania N=202	85.1	12.4	2.5	100
6	Natelashvili N=478	90.8	8.6	0.6	100
7	Patiashvili N=333	93.1	6.3	0.6	100
8	Saakashvili N=367	88.5	9.0	2.5	100

Another characteristic factor influencing political choice was estimation by respondents themselves both of their present economic status and of its dynamic. Here we have a slightly different picture, although general trends were similar. Natelashvili, Patiashvili and Burjanadze have the highest proportion of those respondents who described their families as “poor”, while the biggest proportion of “non-poor” can be found among the supporters of Abashidze, Topadze and Gamkrelidze.

Table 27. Approval rate of politicians vs. economic status of respondents in June 2003 (according to self-assessment)

N	Approved politician	Poor %	Non-poor %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=633	32.4	67.6	100
2	Abashidze N=293	29.4	70.6	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=227	31.3	68.7	100
4	Topadze N=496	30.8	69.2	100
5	Zhvania N=201	31.8	68.2	100
6	Natelashvili N=478	37.9	62.1	100
7	Patiashvili N=333	36.9	63.1	100
8	Saakashvili N=366	31.4	68.6	100

At the same time, the proportion of the respondents who have reported that the economic condition of their families had improved during the past five years was the highest among the supporters of Zhvania, Abashidze

and Topadze. Those, whose economic conditions declined, prevail among the supporters of Patiashvili, Natelashvili and Gamkrelidze.

Table 28. Approval rate of politicians vs. change in economic conditions during past 5 years (June 2003)

N	Approved politician	Improved %	Did not change %	Deteriorated %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=631	25.4	42.9	31.7	100
2	Abashidze N=291	27.5	39.5	33.0	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=225	19.1	47.6	33.3	100
4	Topadze N=494	26.3	41.1	32.6	100
5	Zhvania N=202	29.2	39.1	31.7	100
6	Natelashvili N=474	21.7	43.2	35.0	100
7	Patiashvili N=331	23.6	40.8	35.6	100
8	Saakashvili N=365	24.7	43.0	32.3	100

Political optimism and fears of supporters

Perception of the present and the past situation in the country was one of the key general characteristics of the political orientation of citizens. For the sake of brevity it is labelled here as “political satisfaction”. The majority of respondents, despite their rather critical perception of the current situation, look into future with certain hope. Present was indeed perceived in very dark colours, in fact, by supporters of every single politician. But the difference still exists, and the highest proportion of dissatisfied with the current situation in the country was observed among the supporters of Gamkrelidze, Topadze and Natelashvili. In their turn, Zhvania, Patiashvili and Abashidze were supported by those who were more satisfied.

Table 29. Approval rate of politicians vs. satisfaction with the situation in the country (June 2003)

N	Approved politician	Dissatisfied %	Neutral %	Satisfied %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=628	83.4	11.3	5.3	100
2	Abashidze N=294	77.9	16.0	6.1	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=229	85.2	9.6	5.2	100
4	Topadze N=495	83.8	11.7	4.4	100
5	Zhvania N=201	80.6	11.9	7.5	100
6	Natelashvili N=474	83.8	11.2	5.1	100
7	Patiashvili N=330	83.3	10.3	6.4	100
8	Saakashvili N=365	83.3	10.7	6.0	100

Such dissatisfaction becomes easy to understand if we look at its foundation - all respondents unanimously declare that currently it was impossible to lead a decent life through honest work.

Table 30. Approval rate of politicians vs. perceived possibility to secure decent life by the honest work (June 2003)

N	Approved politician	Possible %	Not possible %	Difficult to say %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=635	25.0	55.4	19.5	100
2	Abashidze N=295	26.8	55.3	18.0	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=228	22.8	53.5	23.7	100
4	Topadze N=496	21.2	58.5	20.4	100
5	Zhvania N=202	24.3	60.4	15.3	100
6	Natelashvili N=477	24.1	61.8	14.0	100
7	Patiashvili N=333	24.0	59.8	16.2	100
8	Saakashvili N=366	24.9	58.2	16.9	100

About half of respondents expressed generally optimistic view of future, notwithstanding their political preferences. As it will be seen elsewhere, different was actually the source of their optimism, not that much its rate. In any case, against the background of dire present, revealed optimism evokes the surprise and hope. Although there were many optimists among respondents, still their highest proportion can be found among the

supporters of Burjanadze, Topadze and Gamkrelidze, and the smallest among the supporters of Patiashvili, Saakashvili and Abashidze.

Table 31. Approval rate of politicians vs. general optimism (June 2003)

	Approved politician	Mostly things will happen as I would like them to %	What I want is less likely to happen %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=626	52.7	47.3	100
2	Abashidze N=292	46.6	53.4	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=229	52.0	48.0	100
4	Topadze N=490	52.4	47.6	100
5	Zhvania N=200	46.0	54.0	100
6	Natelashvili N=471	48.2	51.8	100
7	Patiashvili N=327	46.2	53.8	100
8	Saakashvili N=363	44.6	55.4	100

Political orientation of supporters: economics and internal policies

It is only too natural that the supporters of different politicians ranked differently the policy priorities. Such differences were especially obvious regarding economic issues. It is worth noting that notwithstanding such differences, the majority of respondents see the development of big scale industry as the priority issue, probably viewing this as a source of sustainable employment opportunity. Advocates of large-scale industry development can be seen more frequently among the supporters of Abashidze, Saakashvili and Burjanadze, while the supporters of Zhvania, Topadze and Patiashvili have more positive attitude towards the development of a SMEs.

Table 32. Approval rate of politicians and the priorities of economic development (June 2003)

	Approved politician	Development of the SMEs %	Development of big-scale enterprises %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=636	33.6	66.4	100
2	Abashidze N=295	29.5	70.5	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=228	32.9	67.1	100
4	Topadze N=496	34.9	65.1	100
5	Zhvania N=202	37.6	62.4	100
6	Natelashvili N=479	33.8	66.2	100
7	Patiashvili N=333	33.9	66.1	100
8	Saakashvili N=368	31.5	68.5	100

Consequences of past privatisation of enterprises present an especially sensitive issue. Here the importance of populist slogans and different interpretations of what social justice is were revealed in full. Significant part of supporters of Natelashvili, Patiashvili and Gamkrelidze think that the unfairly privatised enterprises should be re-privatised anew, while more supporters of Topadze, Abashidze and Zhvania were against such re-privatisation.

Table 33. Approval rate of politicians and attitude towards re-privatisation (June 2003)

θ	Approved politician	Enterprises should be re-privatised %	Enterprises should not be re-privatised %	Difficult to answer %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=635	67.6	8.5	23.9	100
2	Abashidze N=296	65.5	10.1	24.3	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=228	68.4	11	20.6	100
4	Topadze N=497	65.2	10.5	24.3	100
5	Zhvania N=203	68.0	9.9	22.2	100
6	Natelashvili N=478	72.6	8.2	19.2	100
7	Patiashvili N=333	69.7	9.0	21.3	100
8	Saakashvili N=368	67.1	9.8	23.1	100

External orientation of respondents: foreign policy

Foreign policy issues, although less in the focus of public attention, were still quite important from the viewpoint of their impact on political preferences. Here some dynamic can be observed during the one year period, mainly reflecting the change of external environment and pressures.

Differences were revealed among the supporters of different politicians regarding varying level of confidence in their home country. So, significant share of supporters of Abashidze, Patiashvili and Gamkrelidze think that Georgia's fate depends more on other countries than Georgia itself; according to the supporters of Gamkrelidze, Topadze and Natelashvili Georgia's fate depends equally on Georgia and other countries; while according to Abashidze, Zhvania and Burjanadze supporters, it depends on Georgia mostly.

Table 34. Approval rate of politicians vs. confidence in Georgia's possibilities (June 2003)

№	Approved politician	Fate of Georgia depends more on other countries %	Fate of Georgia depends equally on Georgia and on other countries %	Fate of Georgia depends more on Georgia itself %	Total
1	Burjanadze N=634	14.2	33.3	52.5	100
2	Abashidze N=295	21.4	22.7	55.9	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=228	17.1	37.3	45.6	100
4	Topadze N=495	14.7	35.6	49.7	100
5	Zhvania N=202	15.3	29.2	55.4	100
6	Natelashvili N=477	14.3	33.8	52.0	100
7	Patiashvili N=332	19.0	31.6	49.4	100
8	Saakashvili N=367	15.8	33.2	51.0	100

The differences in foreign orientations of respondents got reflected in their political preferences – orientation on Russia was chosen by supporters of Abashidze, Patiashvili and Saakashvili, while US-oriented respondents preferred of Gamkrelidze, Topadze and Natelashvili.

Table 35. Approval rate of politicians vs. foreign orientation (June 2003)

	Approved politician	Priority - relationship with Russia %	Priority - relationship with USA %	Total
1	Burjanadze N=626	45.7	54.3	100
2	Abashidze N=295	55.6	44.4	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=223	43.5	56.5	100
4	Topadze N=490	43.9	56.1	100
5	Zhvania N=201	45.8	54.2	100
6	Natelashvili N=471	45.4	54.6	100
7	Patiashvili N=328	54.3	45.7	100
8	Saakashvili N=364	46.7	53.3	100

These differences were also reflected through the assessment by respondents of the military operation in Iraq – most of all it was justified by the supporters of Gamkrelidze, Zhvania and Saakashvili, and it was the least accepted by the supporters of Patiashvili, Abashidze and Natelashvili.

Table 36. Approval rate of politicians and the attitude toward military operation in Iraq (June 2003)

N	Approved politician	Justify the operation %	Do not justify %	Difficult to answer %	Total
1	Burjanadze N=635	41.1	31.7	27.2	100
2	Abashidze N=294	37.4	39.8	22.8	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=229	49.3	25.8	24.9	100
4	Topadze N=494	42.5	34.2	23.3	100
5	Zhvania N=202	48.5	28.7	22.8	100
6	Natelashvili N=477	39.6	37.1	23.3	100
7	Patiashvili N=333	37.2	41.4	21.3	100
8	Saakashvili N=366	45.6	30.3	24.0	100

The fate of Russian military bases in Georgia was a sensitive issue. The most critical attitude toward Russian bases was expressed by supporters of Gamkrelidze, Natelashvili and Zhvania, the most positive – by supporters

of Abashidze, Patiashvili and, paradoxically, again Zhvania; the most numerous undetermined respondents were among the supporters of Topadze, Abashidze and Patiashvili.

Table 37. Approval rate of politicians and attitude towards the closure of Russian military bases (June 2003)

	Approved politician	Bases should be closed %	Bases should not be closed %	Difficult to answer %	Total %
1	Burjaandze <i>N</i> =634	68.5	12.5	19.1	100
2	Abashidze <i>N</i> =295	54.6	22.7	22.7	100
3	Gamkrelidze <i>N</i> =228	73.2	11.8	14.9	100
4	Topadze <i>N</i> =495	65.5	11.7	22.8	100
5	Zhvania <i>N</i> =202	68.3	14.9	16.8	100
6	Natelashvili <i>N</i> =476	69.1	12.0	18.9	100
7	Patiashvili <i>N</i> =334	62.0	17.4	20.7	100
8	Saakashvili <i>N</i> =365	65.2	14.8	20.0	100

Not less problematic was the issue of military assistance. Most positively the US assistance was evaluated by the supporters of Zhvania, Saakashvili and Gamkrelidze, most negatively by the supporters of Patiashvili, Abashidze and Burjanadze.

Table 38. Approval rate of politicians and the attitude towards US military assistance (June 2003)

	Approved politician	Positive %	Negative %	Difficult to say %	Total %
1	Burjanadze <i>N</i> =635	85.7	9.6	4.7	100
2	Abashidze <i>N</i> =294	79.9	11.9	8.2	100
3	Gamkrelidze <i>N</i> =227	86.8	7.9	5.3	100
4	Topadze <i>N</i> =496	86.3	8.7	5.0	100
5	Zhvania <i>N</i> =202	92.1	5.0	3.0	100
6	Natelashvili <i>N</i> =477	86.8	8.4	4.8	100
7	Patiashvili <i>N</i> =330	80.9	13.3	5.8	100
8	Saakashvili <i>N</i> =364	87.6	8.2	4.1	100

Whom the population of Georgia knew and whom it did not know

It is worth noting that the population knew much better those politicians who led bigger political parties or are MPs than the representatives of the executive power, even such as Deputy State Minister Akaki Zoidze, who was virtually unknown to the majority of respondents. Below are ranked various political figures by their public visibility, i.e. by how well were their names known by respondents.

Table 39. Ranking of politicians by the level of public recognition (June 2003)

	Politician (official position in June 2003)	Do not know who (s)he is %
1	Akaki Zoidze (Deputy State Minister)	53.9
2	Vitali Khazaradze (Leader of CUG ⁴ faction in the Parliament)	14.5
3	David Gamkrelidze (Leader of the New Rights party)	13.2
4	Igor Giorgadze (Former head of the State Security, currently fugitive)	11.8
5	Vazha Lordkipanidze (MP, one of the leaders of CUG, currently Christian-Democrat)	11
6	Levan Gachehiladze (Leader of New Rights party)	9.9
7	Irakli Batiashvili (Chair of Defence Committee of the Parliament)	9.5
8	Guram Sharadze (MP, of radical nationalist orientation)	9.3
9	Giorgi Baramidze (One of the leaders of the United Democrats)	8.5
10	Mikhail Machavariani (One of the leaders of the United Democrats)	8.4
11	Akaki Asatiani (Leader of the Union of Traditionalists)	7.3
12	Temur Shashiashvili (Mayor of Kutaisi)	7.0
13	Gogi Topadze (MP, businessman, leader of Industry Saves Georgia)	5.7
14	Vakhtang Rcheulishvili (MP, leader of Socialist Party)	5.1
15	Irina Sarishvili (MP, leader of National Democratic Party)	4.3
16	Shalva Natelashvili (Leader of the Labourist Party)	4.3
17	Jumber Patiashvili (Former 1st Secretary of the Communist Party of Georgia)	3.8
18	Avtandil Jorbenadze (State Minister, leader of CUG)	3.8
19	Aslan Abashidze (Head of Ajara autonomy, leader of the Democratic Revival)	3.7
20	Mikhail Saakashvili (Head of the Tbilisi Council, leader of the National Movement)	3.4
21	Zurab Zhvania (Former Speaker of the Parliament, leader of the United Democrats)	3.0
22	Nino Burjanadze (Speaker of the Parliament)	2.1
23	Eduard Shevardnadze (President, until 23 November 2003)	1.6

At the same time it seems interesting to compare the public visibility of politicians with that of other public figures, among whom were listed some representatives of executive power, as well as MP and businessman Gogi Topadze who enjoyed a multiple public image.

Table 40. Ranking of public figures by their (non)recognition by respondents (June 2003)

	Public figure (position at the time of the survey)	Do not know who (s)he is %
1	Ghia Nodia (Political scientist, one of the leaders of the CIPDD, NGO)	58.4
2	Guram Akhvlediani (Businessman, father-in-law of E. Shevardnadze's son Paata)	56.2
3	Zaza Okuashvili (Businessman)	52.9
4	Zurab Tkemaladze (Businessman, MP, deputy leader of Industry Saves Georgia)	41.1
5	Giga Bokeria (Journalist, one of the leaders of the Liberty Institute, NGO)	38.3
6	Bidzina Ivanishvili (Businessman, banker, philanthropist)	37.6
7	Tedo Japaridze (Diplomat, Secretary of the Security Council)	32.6
8	Levan Berdenishvili (Civil activist, head of the National Library)	32.5
9	Mamuka Khazaradze (Businessman, banker)	30.7
10	Vano Chkhartishvili (Businessman, former minister of economy)	24.6
11	Ghia Jokhtaberidze (Businessman, son-in-law of E. Shevardnadze)	24.4
12	Ghia Chanturia (Head of GIOC – Georgian International Oil Corporation)	22.2
13	Nugzar Shevardnadze (Businessman, nephew of E. Shevardnadze)	18.4
14	Temur Chkonia (Businessman)	17.8
15	Akaki Gogichaishvili (Investigative journalist, TV host)	16.3
16	Roin Metreveli (Rector of Tbilisi State University, historian)	14.3
17	Eka Khoperia (TV hostess)	11.9
18	Niko Lekishvili (Businessman, former State Minister)	11.3
19	Irakli Menagarishvili (Foreign Minister)	9.5
20	Koba Narchemashvili (Minister of Interior)	8.2
21	Badri Patarkatsishvili (Businessman, philanthropist)	8
22	Gogi Topadze (MP, businessman, leader of Industry Saves Georgia)	5.5
23	Ilia II (Shiolashvili) (Catholicos-Patrarch of the Georgian Church)	2.4

⁴ Citizens' Union of Georgia, became the leading force in the governmental "For the New Georgia" alliance.

Also, respondents were requested to evaluate above-listed 23 public figures according to their positive contribution to the wellbeing of the nation. The Catholicos of the Georgian Orthodox Church Ilia II headed the list, followed by Gogi Topadze, while the President's nephew and businessman Nugzar Shevardnadze was at the bottom, preceded by the father-in-law of the President's son, businessman Guram Akhvlediani. It is also worth paying attention to the fact that among the top ten public figures, there were five businessmen (one more – Tchanturia - heads GIOC, Georgian International Oil Company) and two were TV hosts.

Table 41. Assessment by respondents of the past record of listed public figures in June 2003 (excluding answers by respondents who did not know the respective person)

Rank	Public figure	Has done much good for the nation %	Difficult to say %	Has not done good for the nation %	Total %
1	Ilia II	74	19.5	6.4	100
2	Gogi Topadze	72.9	22.2	4.9	100
3	Bidzina Ivanishvili	63.5	29.1	7.4	100
4	Akaki Gogichaishvili	59.1	31.8	9.1	100
5	Eka Khoperia	57.5	32.7	9.7	100
6	Badri Patarkatsishvili	52.7	36.9	10.4	100
7	Temur Chkonia	43.2	38	18.7	100
8	Ghia Chanturia	41.8	40.7	17.5	100
9	Mamuka Khazaradze	32.2	48	19.8	100
10	Levan Berdzenishvili	28.2	52.9	19	100
11	Roin Metreveli	27	40.2	32.7	100
12	Zurab Tkemaladze	26.5	52.5	21	100
13	Ghia Jokhtaberidze	24.3	37.5	38.2	100
14	Zaza Okuashvili	23.6	47	29.4	100
15	Niko Lekishvili	22.4	48.8	28.8	100
16	Irakli Menagarashvili	22.2	51.9	25.9	100
17	Tedo Japaridze	20.4	51.7	27.9	100
18	Ghia Nodia	18.4	53.2	28.4	100
19	Koba Narchemashvili	19.7	46.5	33.8	100
20	Giga Bokeria	17.8	45.2	37.1	100
21	Vano Chkhartishvili	11.1	41.8	47.1	100
22	Guram Akhvlediani	10.7	58.2	31.1	100
23	Nugzar Shevardnadze	8.4	33.3	58.4	100

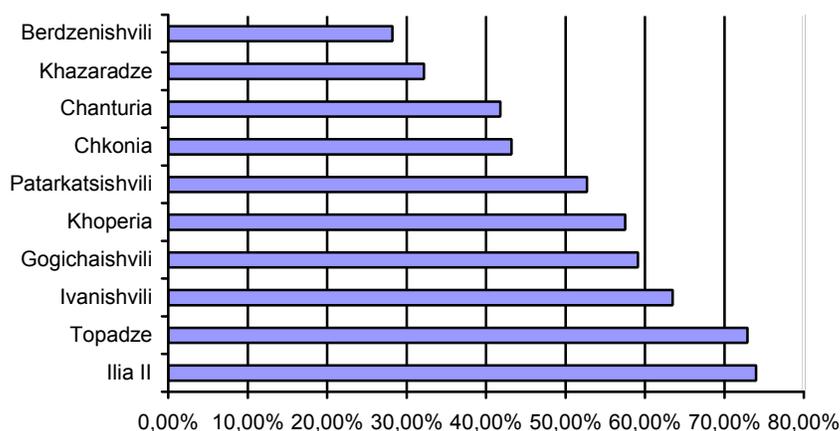


Figure 11. Ten public figures with the highest approval rate (June 2003)

[Shevardnadze and other presidents](#)

The June, 2003 survey unequivocally indicated that the political leadership of Georgia gradually loses the trust of the population. There was great support for the idea if restricting the powers of the president – 42.3%

supported such view, 33.2% were not certain, and only 24.5% maintained the opinion that his powers should not be restricted. President Shevardnadze was catastrophically losing public support, as became evident from the following:

Respondents were asked to express their attitude toward the presidents of five countries (Azerbaijan, USA, Armenia, Russia and Georgia) and also Georgian politicians with prospect of being elected for the presidency. Naturally, respondents did not know all the presidents equally well – 3.5% did not know who was Shevardnadze (sic!), 7.8% - Putin, 9.6% - Bush, 32.2% - Aliev and 38.1% - Kocharian. It should be noted that since November 2002 public opinion regarding presidents has formed more clearly, and they were better known. Primarily this concerned Armenia's President Kocharian (in November 2002 46.2% had nothing to say on him), probably attributed to the recent Presidential elections in Armenia and its coverage in the media, as well as Kocharian's visit to Tbilisi. The number of respondents who did not have opinion also fell in cases of Bush (from 14% to 9.6%), Aliev (from 4.6% to 3.5%), Putin (from 9.0% to 7.8%) and Shevardnadze (from 14.0% to 9.6%). The attitude has changed significantly in cases of Shevardnadze (liked on 2003 by 7.0% less respondents than in 2002), and Putin (popularity increased by 5.0% of respondents). The champion among presidents was Bush (liked by 43.0% in June 2003 and 44.9% in 2002), followed by Aliev (24.2% in June 2003 and 22.7% in 2002), then Putin (25.8% in 2003 and 20.9% in 2002), followed by Kocharian (14.2% in 2002 and 14.6% in 2002), and only then at the end was Shevardnadze (13.8% in June 2003 vs. 20.8% in November, 2002), whose popularity had dropped very significantly during the period between surveys.

Table 42 Attitude toward the presidents of five countries (2002-2003)

N	President	Mostly like %		Neutral %		Do not like %		Total %	
		November 2002	June 2003						
1	G. W. Bush	44.9	43	32.7	37.5	22.4	19.5	100	100
2	H. Aliev	22.7	24.2	36	44.7	41.3	31.2	100	100
3	V. Putin	20.9	25.8	35.8	33.8	43.3	40.3	100	100
4	E. Shevardnadze	20.8	13.8	20	29.4	59.2	56.7	100	100
5	R. Kocharian	14.6	14.2	31.9	43.7	53.5	42.1	100	100

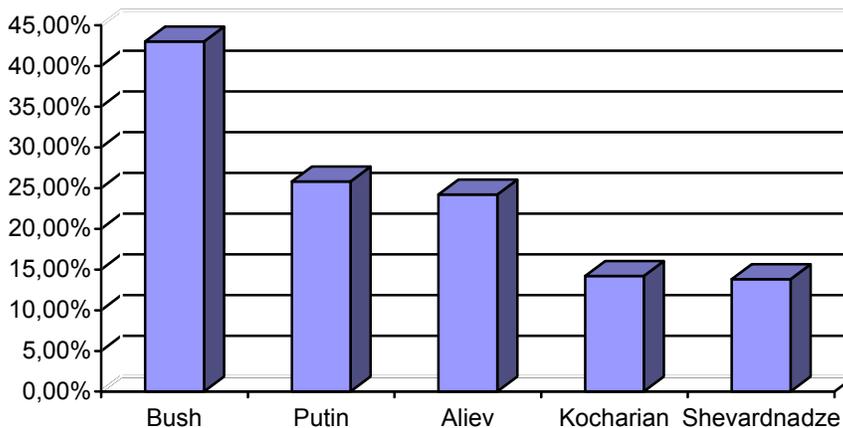


Figure 12. Popularity of the presidents

BEFORE AND AFTER THE NOVEMBER 2, 2003 ELECTIONS

[Voting in the November 2003 Parliamentary Elections](#)

While the roots of public dissatisfaction leading to the radical political reshuffle were numerous, it was how the parliamentary elections of November 2, 2003, were (mis)handled by the government that served as a final straw causing universal protest and mass manifestations that culminated in Shevardnadze's resignation. Hence, it is

important to understand how the voters report their participation in elections, their attitudes and their choices in this regard. However, when interpreting the answers by respondents to some of more sensitive questions, it should be kept in mind that the interviews were carried out very soon after the new leadership came to power, which on one hand caused certain euphoria and high expectations linked to this leadership, on the other hand - reluctance to admit when the “wrong” (as perceived today) choices had been made by respondents. It should also be noted that the picture that is formed based on sampling the population in the capital Tbilisi is quite different in detail from the overall pattern countrywide.

Among those who have admitted that they had actually voted, the majority of 37.3% claimed they gave their vote to Saakashvili-National Movement, 20.1% - to Burjanadze-Democrats, 14.1% - to Georgian Labour Party and 11.9% - to the New Rights. Only 2.2% reported voting for the Union of Democratic Revival (chaired by the controversial Ajarian leader Aslan Abashidze), the miniscule 1.8% - for the governmental New Georgia block, 1.3% for the Industrialists, while 2.2% voted for all other parties. 9.2% had either crossed out all the parties or refused to reveal their choice. It seems that these latter include respondents who may regret their choice after the subsequent change of political preferences and now refuse to admit their actual vote – this may partly account for somewhat too low percentage of votes reported for the New Georgia. However, in the case of the Union of Democratic Revival, its low figure is less surprising as the party had naturally gathered most of its vote in Ajara, not in Tbilisi.

Table 43. Official and independently counted results of the November 2, 2003 parliamentary elections

Party/block	Official results	Parallel count by independent Fair Elections Society
For New Georgia	21.32%	18.92%
Union of Democratic Revival	18.84%	8.13%
Saakashvili - National Movement	18.08%	26.26%
Labour Party of Georgia	12.04%	17.36%
Burjanadze - Democrats	8.79%	10.15%
The New Rights	7.35%	7.99%

According to our survey of December 2003, the overwhelming majority of the Tbilisi population (92.4%) was convinced that the election results had been rigged (interestingly, already in June 2003 61.0% of respondents had expressed expectation that the results would be rigged), and the majority of these is confident that it was the incumbent government who was responsible for rigging - 83% stated that they believed that elections were rigged by the central government, according to 47.2% this was done by Central Election Committee and by local governments (28.9%), while only 8.3% pointed to opposition. It could have seemed that the voting enthusiasm among the electorate was moderated by the early expectation of fraud or general disillusionment – only 62.1% of respondents indicated that they had actually voted (although such turnout may not seem too low in an established democracy). However, among those 37.9% who did not take part in elections, 33.9% did not do so as they were not on the voters’ list.

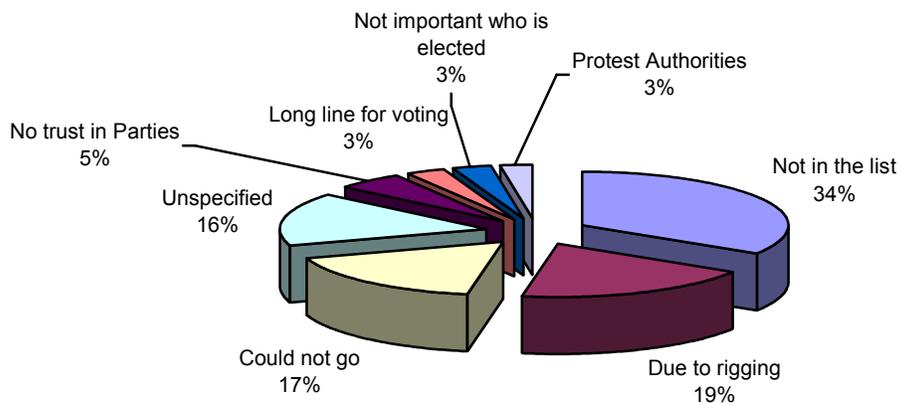


Fig. 13. Main reasons for not voting (December 2003, Tbilisi)

It is interesting to compare actual results with earlier expectations and preferences. The forthcoming November 2, 2003, parliamentary elections evoked a great deal of interest among the population. In June 2003, the majority of respondents – 60.3%, intended to take part in elections (20.5% had not made the decision by the time of the survey, 19.3% did not intend to vote). The readiness to participate was higher among the rural (65.2%) than urban (56.7%) respondents, while the difference between the groups with different economic status and age was not significant.

In June 2003, answering the question as to for which party they would vote if the elections were to be held that day, 46.3% stated they had not decided as yet; 25.5% declared that would not vote for any party; 10.3% would render their vote for the Labour party, 4.2% - for the Revival, 4.1% - for National Movement, 3.1% - for the New Rights, 2.6% - for the Citizen's Union, 1.5% for United Democrats (NB - formation of party blocks and the unification of Burjanadze and Democrats took place after the June survey). As to which party or block would obtain the majority of seats in November 2 elections, the majority of respondents (51.2%) could not answer the question. In the opinion of 12.4% Labour party would win the elections, of 11.4% - Citizen's Union, 8.4% - National Movement, 5.1% - Revival. Especially meaningful is the difference between the preferences and expected outcomes regard the Citizens Union, pointing to certain political fatalism and to the importance that the population ascribe to so called "administrative resource" (exploiting opportunities available to the ruling elite) in elections. Also is worth noting that almost half of respondents (49.2%) expected the results of the elections to be rigged (39.4% had no position on this issue, 11.3% expected the elections to be held fair). The urban and rural respondents, as well as the representatives of different age groups did not differ in their support of different parties. On the other hand, significant differences were found between the poor and the non-poor.

Table 44. Political parties whom respondents expected, and whom they wanted to win elections (June 2003)

N	Parties	Expect to win %	Will vote for %
1	Labour Party	12.4	10.3
2	Citizen's Union	11.4	2.6
3	National Movement	8.4	4.1
4	Revival	5.1	4.2
5	New Rights	4.1	3.1
6	For New Georgia	2.8	0.6
7	United Democrats	3.6	1.5
8	Industry will save Georgia	0.5	0.6
9	Socialist Party	0.2	0
10	Unity	0.1	0.3
11	Traditionalist Party	0.1	0.2
12	People's Party	0.1	0.1
13	Christian-Democratic Union of Georgia	0	0.4
14	Communist Party	0	0.2
15	Strong Svaneti	0	0.2
16	"Mdzleveli" (Victorious)	0	0.1
17	Georgian League	0	0.1
18	Iliia Chavchavadzed Society	0	0.1
19	Cannot answer	51.2	46.3
20	Nobody		25
	Total	100	100

Formation of Political Preferences and the Pre-election Campaign

For many months, political debates in Georgia almost exclusively focused on such issues as compilation of voters' lists, new election code and the composition of election commissions. Fearing attempts from the government to manipulate the vote, opposition parties and civic organizations insisted that the opposition be granted greater representation in election commissions at all levels. However, during the last two months parties had activated their electoral campaigns, extensively using TV adverts, posters and meetings with voters.

There were several new features that have marked the electoral campaigns if compared to previous years. The most striking novelty was the total shift of the focus from purely political issues to those related to economic development. Even the political programmes and agendas of parties were actually economic development programmes, while most of accusations or promises by the opposition were related to the economic policies and failures by the government. Another outstanding factor was the active role of media, Rustavi 2 TV station in the

first place, in consolidating public opinion around the radical opposition. Finally, pre-electoral campaign was marked by explicit targeting of various groups by more successful contenders for political victory.

If previous electoral campaigns by opposition movement were totally based on negative rhetoric, dominated by criticism of the incumbent government (paradoxically enough, the best illustration of such approach was the National-Democratic Party, which in these elections joined forces with the same ruling party it used to criticise so bitterly), the latter usually attempted to concentrate on its past achievements and forthcoming successes. Now, all parties while criticizing corruption and inefficiency of the government tended to focus on the future, on promises of positive changes and concrete policies. The clear message by the opposition was – current reality is unbearable, and there is obvious need to move to something radically new, but the old elites are blocking any positive development and need to be disposed of. Other messages stressed unequivocal integration with Europe and West, and in the case of Saakashvili-National Movement mixed with slight flavour of moderate nationalism.

Political sympathies were rapidly changing. Only half of the respondents (46.7%) reported that in summer they already had made the decision as for whom to vote, while 21.1% of them made such decision in September-October, and 32.2% - in pre-election days. The Georgian Labour Party enjoyed the most stable electorate - 75.0% of those who cast a vote for them had made such decision by summer. The biggest share of electorate - 36.7% was attracted in September-October by Burjanadze-Democrats (boosted by the Parliament Speaker Nino Burjanadze joining forces with Zurab Zhvania of United Democrats), while immediately before the elections governmental for New Georgia was able to attract the highest proportion of voters, 37.5%, which however is statistically insignificant due to low support making only 3 respondents. Overall it can be said that the biggest proportion in absolute numbers, 33.7% have been given their support to Saakashvili in pre-election days, as related by good timing and efficiency of his rather aggressive and confrontational electoral campaign. It should be added that while Burjanadze often enjoyed more public sympathy, it is the symbolic figure of young Saakashvili who demonstrated strong will and uncompromising position that created ground for public confidence in ultimate victory of the opposition and attracted support in decisive moments.

Supporters of different parties based their preferences on a number of factors. Respondents were asked to choose two items from the presented six, describing the reasons for their support of a party. The leading determinant of preference for a party was based on general trust toward the party and the liking of its leader. Among those who cast the vote 55.2% did so due to the belief that this party possessed both the will and the potential to change the current situation, while 45.2% were motivated by the liking and trust toward a party leader, one more demonstration of dissatisfaction by the political status quo and longing for change, on one hand, and the focus on individual attractiveness of leaders characteristic for transitional societies, on the other.

Table 45. Reasons for voting preference (Tbilisi, June-December 2003)

Rank	Reason	Dec 2003 (%)	June 2003 (%)
1	Belief, that supported party has will and potential to change current situation	55.2	-
2	Liking of and trust toward the party leader	45.2	15.6
3	Party program / action plan	24.1	24.4
4	Party's record / actions in the past	10.8	42.4
5	Public speeches of the party leader	9.6	5.9
6	Other reason, unspecified	3.8	4.1
7	Advertising	3.3	-

It is interesting to compare with previous results of the June survey (although some reasons did not coincide) – at that time the main criterion for the evaluation of the attractiveness of a political party for the majority of 42.4% was the record of past achievements of the party in question, while party programme and personal attitude toward the leader lagged far behind.

We have tried to determine those factors, as perceived by respondents, which had impact on the results of the November elections. Of course, the governmental block needed to be treated separately, due to different conditions and factors at play in its case. Respondents were asked to select two reasons (from the listed eight) that in their opinion determined the voting outcome for the block For the New Georgia. The most frequently chosen answers were the distrust as a result of corruption (62.3%) and the personal features of a leader/leaders (40.2%), even if in this case the personality of the block leader was somewhat ambiguous – Vazha Lortkipanidze was the first on the electoral list, but he kept low profile throughout the whole campaign period as well as

afterwards, as compared to the State Minister Avtandil Jorbenadze and some others, including formally non-represented but obvious guru of the block Shevardnadze.

Table 46. Factors that determined the results of elections for the governmental block “For the New Georgia” (December 2003, Tbilisi)

Rank	Reason	Yes %
1	Distrust ensued from corruption	62.3
2	Personal features of the leader	40.2
3	Ineffective policy	35.8
4	Weak pre-election campaign	11.2
5	Weakness of position	8.6
6	Wrong external political orientation	8.4
7	Promises of situation improvement by opposition	7.5
8	Cannot say	4.7

In the case of all other leading parties (although For the New Georgia was also included for comparison), respondents were asked to rate the shorter list of six factors that had influenced the voting outcome for each party: Personal characteristics of a leader, past actions of a party, pre-election promises, pre-election ads, radicalism and strength of position, opposition to the government.

Table 47. Proportion of respondents evaluating positively the impact of respective issues on voting preference, by party, in % (December 2003, Tbilisi)

	Issue	New Rights	New Georgia	Burjanadze-Democrats	Democratic Revival	National Movement	Labour party	Industry Saves G.
1	Leader’s personality	36.6	10.9	85.2	10.3	80.8	35.8	28.2
2	Past actions	14.1	5.7	33.9	8.3	58.7	43.3	22.3
3	Pre-election promises	39.6	9.6	69.2	10.6	80.5	36.5	24.1
4	TV ads	35.5	15.3	52.8	6.5	57.6	16.6	16.1
5	Strength of position	17.6	4.3	77.3	8.1	84.8	26.5	10.1
6	Opposing authorities	22.1	6.4	79.2	7.8	84.6	29.7	10.3

According to respondents’ opinion, personal characteristics played the most important role in the cases of Burjanadze-Democrats (85.2%) and Saakashvili – National Movement (80.8%), as ascribed to the popularity of both Nino Burjanadze and Michael Saakashvili, while they were the least important in the case of to the Union of Democratic Revival (10.9%), with the popularity of Aslan Abashidze falling to its lowest after the post-elections events.

The evident success of Saakashvili-National Movement was explained by respondents as influenced by: past record of a party (58.7%), pre-election promises (80.5%), TV ads (57.6%), and the radicalism of position (84.8%) along with the opposition to government (84.6%). As compared to these, For the New Georgia and the Democratic Revival got the lowest scores in virtually each of these dimensions. As can be seen from the Table 5, Saakashvili-National Movement and Burjanadze-Democrats are leading in all features, with only one exception - past actions of a party, where Labour Party is on the second place. On the last places in all cases is the block For New Georgia with the only exception of pre-election ads where the lowest appraisal has the Union of Democratic Revival.

Considering the data from party perspective demonstrates that the strongest point of the New rights is pre-election promises (39.6%), of the New Georgia - pre-election TV ads (15.3%), of Burjanadze-Democrats - opposition to the authorities (79.2%), of the Union of Democratic Revival pre-election promises (10.6%), Saakashvili-National Movement - strength of position (84.8%), the Labour Party - past actions (43.3%) and of the Industry Will Save Georgia - personal features of the leader (28.2%).

Lack of differentiation between various factors demonstrates certain influence of emotional attitude of respondents - overall liking or dislike towards a party on the assessment of its qualities, rather than their ability to reflect on, analyse and distinguish factors of political success or failure.

Media, “Kmara” and Elections

Although the majority of respondents do not fully admit the importance of media campaign and adverts, there role is not to be underestimated. Actually, as already said above, local and international media played extremely important role both before the elections and after them, particularly the TV. At some points, both the opposition and the government communicated with the population through respective TV channels, calling for this or that urgent action. Equally important role was played by electronic media in communicating pre-electoral messages to future voters, forming and influencing rapidly changing political preferences.

In the survey, respondents were asked to check if they saw and remembered electoral advertisements of the parties on TV and to express their assessment of them. In general, respondents demonstrated high acknowledgement of remembering electoral TV ads, actually of virtually every leading party. Still the highest proportion of respondents (87.4%) saw the ads of the New Rights, who spent significant resources on advertising on TV, while the smallest share of 69.6% saw ads of the Union of Democratic Revival, which was mainly using Ajara TV, less popular in Tbilisi (the ads of the Democratic Revival were also the least liked by respondents, only 7.6% having mentioned liking them). The most liked ads were those of Saakashvili-National Movement, approved by 46.3%.

The demise of Shevardnadze’s rule marked also the change in the status, as well as perception, of leading TV channels. Now Rustavi 2, traditionally perceived by public as in permanently opposing the government, enjoys the support of the interim government and can hardly be described as oppositional. The survey attempted to pay attention to the new disposition of perception structure by TV audience. Respondents were asked to indicate two channels on which they predominantly watched news after the elections. The majority, 97.2% - mentioned the state-owned Channel I of Georgian TV. However, while this channel may enjoy the biggest audience, the picture is different in regard to the trust factor regarding news programmes. As is evident from Figure 2, Channel I is watched but not trusted. The majority of respondents (69.9%) would rather trust Rustavi 2, while the least trusted is Ajara TV (3.3%).

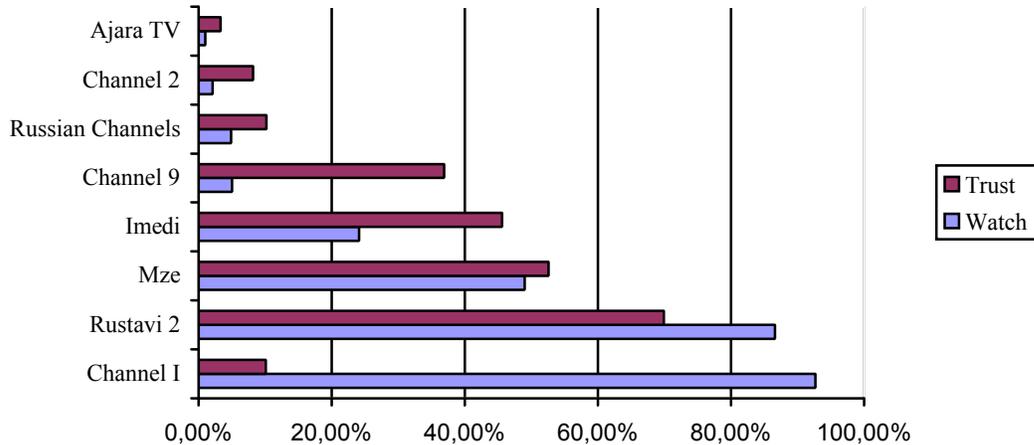


Fig. 13. Viewing TV channels after the November 2003 elections (December 2003, Tbilisi)

Another media-related component of the pre-electoral struggle was the activity of the youth movement “Kmara”, actively involved in sharp criticism and demonstrative protest (high-profile, if sometimes controversial) against the incumbent government. The majority of respondents, - 59% - positively evaluated the actions of “Kmara”; among these, 25.6% or less than half believed that “Kmara” was useful and approved its conduct, while 33.4% disliked the methods but liked the goal. 15.3% of respondents expressed a negative attitude, 12.1% - were neutral, while 13.6% would not answer the question.

Politicians through Voters’ Eyes

Respondents were asked to evaluate twenty-one politicians and public servants by indicating approval, dislike or neutral attitude to them, as well as general awareness regarding this or that person. Respondents have demonstrated relatively high level of “who-is-who” awareness – while respondents were the least aware of

Akaki Asatiani's personality, still only 5.0% did not know who he was. Nino Burjanadze was known by the biggest number of respondents - only 0.2% did not know her. She was also the most liked politician on the list - being liked by 83.6% of those who knew who she was. The least of approval respondents have expressed towards Levan Mamaladze, the controversial supporter of Shevardnadze - only 1.4% liked him. However, it is not only the approval of politicians that may be of interest, but also the balance of neutral and negative attitudes as well, presented on the Table 9. The most neutral respondents were towards David Tevzadze, as expressed by almost half of respondents (46.2%), while Mamaladze has deserved the most negative attitude (88.5%).

Comparison of the results with the data of June, 2003 and November 2002 (possible in 14 cases) reveal drastic changes in the structure of public approval. Many of attitudes got formed or changed during the last month after November 2 elections, caused e.g. by much despised position or action, as in the cases of Aslan Abashidze, Irakli Batiashvili, Gogi Topadze, Irina Sarishvili or Vakhtang Rcheulishvili, whose approval plummeted. At the same time Nino Burjanadze, Mikhail Saakashvili and Zurab Zhvania demonstrated high gains in public approval.

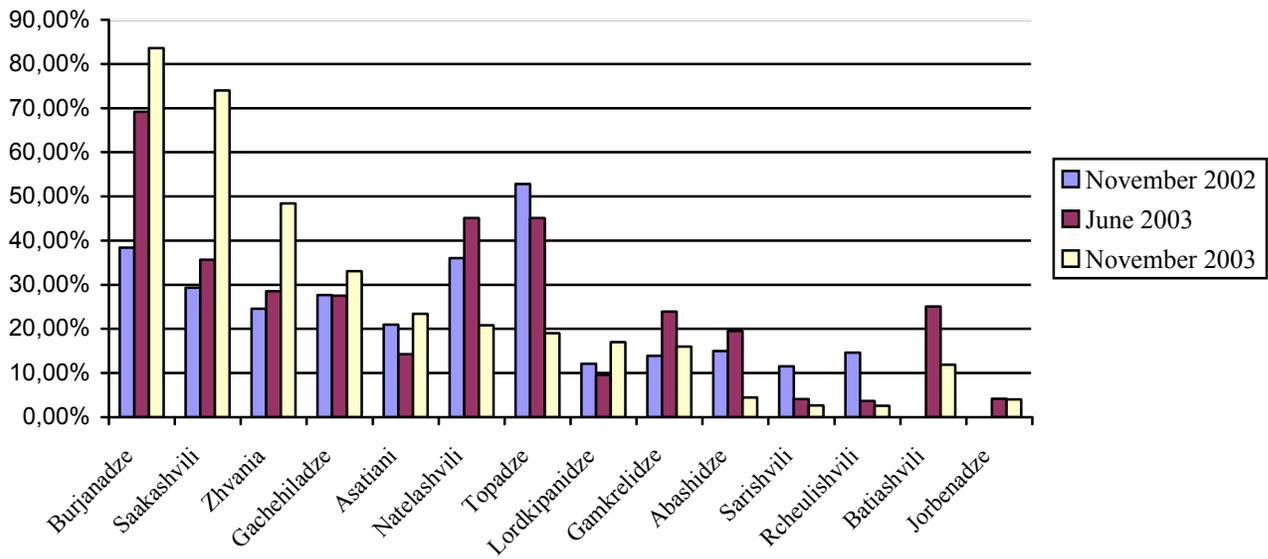


Fig. 14. Approval of politicians and public servants over the last year (2002-2003)

Ahead of the presidential elections, it was of great interest to understand what are the opinions and expectations related to leading political figures in this regard. Mikhail Saakashvili was most often nominated as the desired president of Georgia - 48.7% of respondents want him to become the president. Nino Burjanadze was named by 35.7%, Shalva Natelashvili by 3.1%, Igor Giorgadze by 1.9%, Jumber Patiashvili by 1.9%, Zurab Zhvania by 1.0%. Besides them, 24 persons were named by 7.7% of respondents, although none of these proposed candidates have reached 1% of support. (NB It should be noted that the survey was conducted before the formal nomination of presidential candidates for January 4 elections, won by Saakashvili with overwhelming majority of vote – 96%). However, the list of politicians who are expected to become the next president of the country was much shorter. It contained only eight names. Saakashvili was leading again, but with much higher proportion of respondents (96%) convinced in his victory. 2.5% expected that Burjanadze would be the president, while 0.9% thought of Igor Giorgadze to take the post. Jumber Patiashvili, Akaki Asatiani, Shalva Natelashvili, Zurab Zhvania and Aslan Abashidze were considered as a probable president only by 0.1%, i.e. by one respondent each.

Respondents were also asked to rate four most influential politicians of current reality - Aslan Abashidze, Nino Burjanadze, Mikhail Saakashvili and Zurab Zhvania, according to ten personal qualities.

Table 48. Personal qualities characterizing politicians in December 2003, Tbilisi
(% of respondents ascribing respective quality)

Qualities	Abashidze	Burjanadze	Saakashvili	Zhvania
Vision	19.6	73.5	71.5	59.1
Thoughtfulness in decision-making	34.9	84.5	24.1	66.6
Strong will, energy	34.4	78.4	84.2	54.1
Moral principles, uncompromising	44.3	77.6	85.9	51.1
Justness	3.3	68.9	71.4	35.8
Realism in judgement	9.0	73.4	58.1	54.6
Balanced in viewpoints and actions	15.4	76.3	32.2	60.5
Priority of country's over private interests	5.6	62.1	69.8	36.2
Honesty	2.7	67.2	70.1	33.8
Cooperative skills	15.0	78.3	63.9	60.6

Saakashvili, compared to other politicians, is perceived as the most strong-willed, moral, honest and just person, guided by country interests. Burjanadze is perceived as characterized more than the others by vision, thoughtfulness in taking decisions, realism in judgements, moderate views and actions, and cooperativeness. Zhvania is also perceived by respondents as characterized by thoughtfulness in taking decisions, moderation in attitudes and actions, while in other qualities he lags behind both Saakashvili and Burjanadze. In contrast, the perception of Abashidze is rather negative, the majority of respondents deny him possessing such qualities as honesty, justness, concern for the country's interests, and sound judgments.

It is very interesting to compare these data with the previous results. In June 2003 the most favourable positions considered as possible future presidents had three politicians - Mikhail Saakashvili, Shalva Natelashvili and Nino Burjanadze. It is important to pay attention to the difference between those, whom respondents believe might become elected as president of the country, and whom they personally wished to be elected as such (but possibly do not consider this realistic). Such discrepancy was best revealed in cases of Mikhail Saakashvili and Nino Burjanadze, although in different directions: more respondents wanted Burjanadze to become the president, while the less believed this would happen; Saakashvili, on the contrary, was wanted by less respondents, but more were convinced that he would be elected. Difference is also significant in the case of the then incumbent president Shevardnadze, who was prohibited by the constitution to be elected any more – still, 13.0% of respondents expected this to happen. In cases of Natelashvili, Burjanadze and Patiashvili the numbers of their “supporters” was higher than of “believers”, while in cases of Saakashvili, Shevardnadze and Zhvania the opposite tendency was evident. Such differences stemmed probably from the perception of their political skills and career potential as compared to other positive qualities.

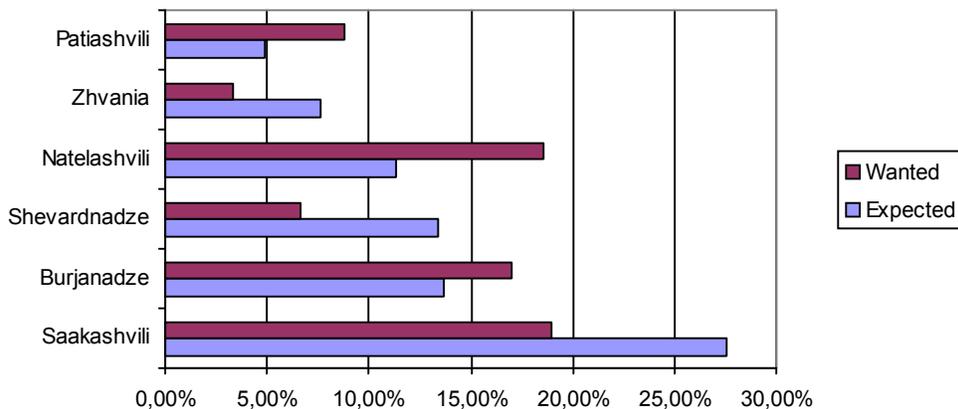


Figure 15. Politicians expected to become or preferred as future presidents (June 2003)

[Political parties after the November 2003 parliamentary elections](#)

Parliamentary elections are considered to be the second important step after the presidential elections of January 4th. Respondents have named the party whom they most likely would vote for if the elections were held

tomorrow. Again the preference was given to Saakashvili - National Movement (44.3%) and Burjanadze – Democrats (20.6%). It is interesting to compare these preferences with reported vote in elections. As can be seen from Fig. 13, the support for Saakashvili - National Movement have increased since elections by 7%. There is a small increase in 0.5% of the support for Burjanadze-Democrats. The group of supporters for the Industry Saves Georgia is small and stable, while support for all other parties has decreased, in particularly dramatic way for the Georgian Labour Party - they lost 10.8% of their electorate, - as well as for the New Rights, who lost 8.8% of supporters.

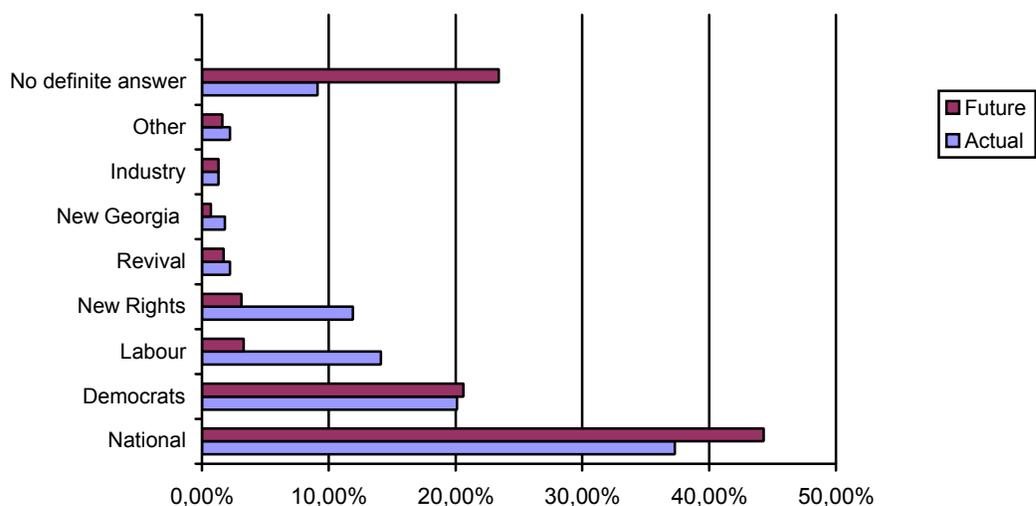


Fig. 16. Reported vote cast on November 2, 2003 vs. expressed future preferences one month after elections (Tbilisi, December 2003).

Not only the forthcoming parliamentary elections (to be held in March 2004) are important as a political event, even more important is how the future parliament will work and what decisions it will make. Respondents were asked to choose from the listed thirteen - three issues which the future Parliament should discuss in the first place. Interestingly, notwithstanding the seemingly evident preoccupation with economic matters, the majority choose “regulation of the conflict with Abkhazia”, and only then “increased employment” and the “decrease in corruption”.

CONCLUSIONS

The year 2003 appeared to be fateful for the Georgia's state building. During this short time Georgian political landscape gradually changed, culminating in November 2003 in failed parliamentary elections, mass protest and finally the forced resignation of president Shevardnadze, dubbed by its leading actors as the "revolution of roses". It is very fortunate that during this period we were able to conduct two countrywide panel surveys of public opinion (in November 2002 and June 2003), followed by Tbilisi survey closely after the abovementioned events, in the first days of December 2003. It should be noted that the dynamics of public opinion, as revealed through the survey results, demonstrated the imminent change to be expected, although of course the actual events developed in somewhat unexpected way.

Although it is not easy to sum huge amount of qualitative information gathered in these studies, there are a few points we would like to stress.

- Political events that took place throughout November 2003 appeared to be of enormous importance for Georgia's future.
- During the last few years, incumbent president Shevardnadze was rapidly losing popularity, due mainly to inability to secure improvement economic condition for the population, which was blamed on overwhelming corruption.
- While Burjanadze was extremely popular throughout the pre-election period, the majority of voters still gave their vote to Saakashvili and the National Movement, a force that was in their opinion more capable of radically changing the situation.
- Two opposition groups, and the triumvirate of leaders – Saakashvili, Burjanadze and Zhvania, have carried out particularly effective political campaign that led to their victory. Saakashvili played particularly important role through his image of a man of action, and his decisive role in the key moments of the power change. However they were much helped by erroneous and ineffective strategy both of the governmental political forces and other opposition groups.
- Media campaigns, especially carried out by Rustavi 2 TV channel, played crucial role in mobilising the population, discrediting the government and actually broadcasting real-time messages of the opposition. Equally important role during November 2003 was played by international media, and particularly by CNN, by demonstrating the concern, interest and support of the opposition by the world community and especially the USA.
- The new generation of politicians came to power, bringing afore their pro-western leaning, western education and western values. This is mirrored by general change of generations in all spheres of political and social life, with the activation of the young people who have little memory of Soviet past. At the same time, there is surprising continuity in political preferences and approval rates across generations, - all generational cohorts seem to change their preferences in strongly correlated way.
- Special attention is needed to handle the alarming tendency toward the lack of tolerance toward ethnic and religious minorities, unacceptability of federalist principles in territorial arrangement - not only in dealing with secessionist Abkhazia and Ossetia, but also toward Ajara.
- Unemployment continues to be the greatest concern of the population, followed by such issues as low salaries and corruption. If the new political elites appear incapable of coping with these challenges, public support may get eroded and replaced once again by frustration, civil passivity, and ultimately the risk of explosion.
- While just a year ago the majority of the population was politically passive and showed little hope for improvement and little sense in civil participation, opposition appeared able to mobilise public support and change this pattern. As a result, there was an amazing increase in the readiness for and confidence in civil participation, in optimism, self-confidence, pro-democracy and pro-western orientation of the population. If this trend is not reversed, we are observing how democracy is maturing in Georgia, not so much through formal transformation and structural change inasmuch through liberation of human minds.

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