



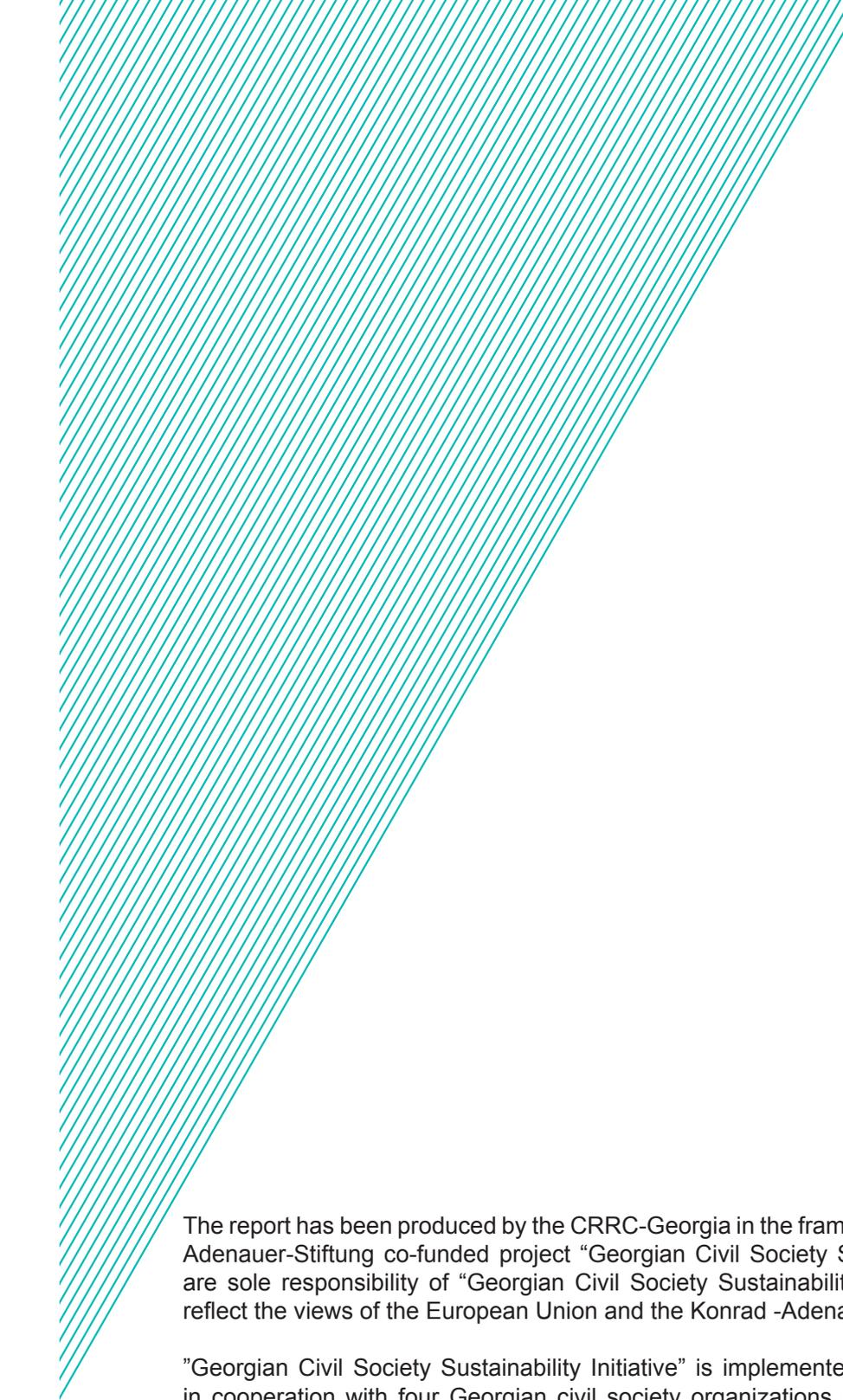
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The European Union for Georgia



GEORGIAN CIVIL SOCIETY SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

**ATTITUDES OF THE POPULATION OF GEORGIA
TOWARDS CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS,
EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND
BUSINESS ENTITIES**

Tbilisi, 2018



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”Georgian Civil Society Sustainability Initiative” is implemented by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in cooperation with four Georgian civil society organizations Civil Society Institute (CSI), Center for Training and Consultancy (CTC), Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSRDG) and Education Development and Employment Center (EDEC).



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between October 27 and November 19, 2017, CRRC-Georgia conducted a representative survey of the population of Georgia for the EU funded Georgian Civil Society Sustainability Initiative (CSSIGE) project. Four post-survey focus groups were also conducted in Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Zestaponi in March, 2018. The research aimed to investigate the attitudes of the population of Georgia towards civil society organizations, the European Union, and to business entities and their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes. The main findings of the research are summarized below.

- Whilst institutionalized civic engagement is not characteristic of the population of Georgia, people attempt to contribute to improvements in public life, without being involved in the work of a formal union, club, organization or association. However, forms of noninstitutionalized engagement are diverse: people reported having cleaned a public space, having planted a tree outside their property or plot, having attended a public meeting or having signed a collective letter or petition.
- There is relatively high noninstitutionalized engagement, as well as a reported willingness to join formal civil society organizations, which indicates the potential for increased institutionalized engagement. People in Georgia are much more likely to want to work on specific issues such as environmental protection or food safety, rather than the more nebulous 'issues important to Georgia'. It will be particularly difficult, though, to engage the ethnic minority population, where there is notably low interest in formalized civic engagement.
- The population of Georgia have rather inconsistent attitudes towards non-governmental organizations (NGOs).¹ Only 2% of the population stated that NGOs should not exist, or they should not be doing anything. This indicates that the population sees the need for NGOs to be active in Georgia. Furthermore, more than half of the population believe NGOs have a positive impact on the development of Georgia. Whereas, much of the population believe that the Georgian government does not need to consider the stances of NGOs. During the focus group discussions, it was voiced that the government should control NGOs' work.
- NGOs are often perceived as 'Western', funded by, and therefore potentially beholden to, 'the West' (the EU and the USA). People question the Western donors' reasons for funding NGO activities in Georgia, as well as the motivations of NGO employees themselves.
- There is a mid-strength, statistically significant positive correlation between the variables measuring trust towards the EU and trust towards NGOs. Those who trust the EU reveal more positive attitudes towards NGOs. At the same time, people report higher trust

¹ Since the term 'civil society organization' is relatively new in Georgia, based on consultations with experts, the term 'non-governmental organization' was used in the questionnaire as it is clearer to typical respondents. This report subsequently uses the term- 'non-governmental organization' and its abbreviation 'NGO'.



towards the EU than towards NGOs. Crucially however, positive attitudes towards the EU are not unconditional. Approximately an equal proportion of the population agrees and disagrees with the statement that the EU is a new form of an empire (33% and 36% respectively). Some people also have the impression that the EU threatens Georgian traditions.

- The vast majority of the population (90%) is simply not informed about corporate social responsibility. When describing a 'good company', vitally people do not identify criteria like transparency, professionalism or implementation of community projects. There is, at present, almost no demand for corporate social responsibility in Georgia.
- People are very practical when describing a 'good company' (one which produces quality products at affordable prices, while, at the same time, employs citizens of Georgia and uses local raw materials in production). The population, however, refuses to buy Georgian products if they are more expensive than imported products of comparable quality.
- A minority within the Georgian population believe that business entities are interested in taking care of social issues, specifically a reduction in unemployment and the development of Georgia's economy.



INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of research into the attitudes of the population of Georgia toward NGOs and their work. Additionally, the report reveals such opinions relating to business entities, with a focus on corporate social responsibility (CSR); and the populace's attitudes towards the European Union and Georgia's integration into the EU.

This research was commissioned by the EU funded Georgian Civil Society Sustainability Initiative (CSSIGE). The CSSIGE project is implemented by the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation in cooperation with four civil society organizations: the Civil Society Institute (CSI), the Center for Training and Consultancy (CTC), the Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSRDG) and the Education Development and Employment Center (EDEC).

Between October 27 and November 19, 2017, CRRC-Georgia conducted a representative survey of the population of Georgia in order to investigate prevailing, widespread opinions, as well as to understand the perspective behind such views. Four post-survey focus groups were also conducted in Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Zestaponi in March, 2018, with the aim of better understanding the rationale behind certain opinions.

Research carried out prior to this project suggests that, by and large, the level of trust towards non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is low in Georgia. Data from CRRC's *Caucasus Barometer* reveals that, from 2008 to 2017, Georgian trust of NGOs decreased from 35% to 23%.²

Chapter 1 of this report discusses forms of civic engagement, as reported by the population of Georgia, and seeks to explore the reasons behind low levels of engagement. **Chapter 2** presents the information concerning attitudes towards NGOs- in particular, knowledge of NGOs and the sources of information regarding them, people's experience of communication with NGOs, the understanding of their functions, and the level of trust towards them. **Chapter 3** identifies attitudes toward the European Union, and how they correlate to the trust reported in NGOs. **Chapter 4** discusses views of the population of Georgia towards business entities, with a focus on corporate social responsibility (CSR). A detailed description of the data-collection methodology precedes the analysis of the empirical findings.

² <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb-ge/TRUNGOS/>

METHODOLOGY

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were used in conducting the research: a representative survey of the adult population of Georgia and post-survey focus groups in three settlements of Georgia.

1. REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY

Representativeness

The survey results are representative of the adult Georgian populace, excluding the population of the occupied territories. The results are also characteristic of the population of the five main strata:

- The Capital
- Other large urban settlements³
- Small urban settlements
- Rural settlements
- Settlements mostly inhabited by representatives of ethnic minorities

In addition, it is possible to analyse the results with better precision by age and by gender.

Sampling and Response Rate

The list of electoral precincts in Georgia, updated for the 2016 Parliamentary elections, was used as the sampling frame. A multi-stage cluster sampling was then used to select respondents. During the first stage of sampling, macro-geographic areas (strata) were identified, of which the sampling is representative. Proportional to the number of registered voters within each stratum, the primary sampling units (PSUs), the electoral precincts, were selected randomly. The households were then sampled in each PSU through the 'random walk' procedure.

CRRRC's interviewers subsequently visited the sampled households and selected respondents (adult members of a household) using the Kish Table.⁴ If a household member refused to be interviewed, they were not substituted. A total of 2,853 respondents were interviewed between October 27 and November 19, 2017. The average margin of error for the entire sample, with a 95% confidence interval, does not exceed +/-1.35%. However, the margins of error may be higher when considering the findings from the smaller subgroups.

³ 'Other large urban settlements' are cities (excluding Tbilisi) with a population, according to the 2014 Population Census, exceeding 40,000.

⁴ This is the most reliable method for selecting household members for a survey interview. The method was developed by Hungarian-American statistician Leslie Kish and is best described in his book: Leslie Kish. 1965. *Survey Sampling*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

In instances of non-response, in most cases (1,296 contacts), the household member who opened the door refused to allow the interviewer entry. While in 629 instances, the interviewers found no one at home over three attempts. In a further 435 cases, the respondents were selected, though they were not at home, and in 185 cases the respondents simply refused to participate in the survey. A detailed distribution of the response rate by strata is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Response Rates Countrywide and by Strata

Strata	Response	Non-response	Response rate	Total number of contacts
The Capital	642	1898	25%	2540
Other Large Urban	501	279	64%	780
Small Urban	499	220	69%	719
Rural	661	239	73%	900
Ethnic Minority	550	188	75%	738
Countrywide	2853	2824	50%	5677

The data presented in the report is weighted. The weights were calculated based on demographic characteristics of the Georgian population, as well as on the non-response rate in each stratum. This approach complies with the standards set by the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR).⁵

The Questionnaire and Interview Language

The questionnaire was developed in Georgian by CRRRC in cooperation with CSSIGE.⁶ It was subsequently translated into the Armenian and Azerbaijani languages, which are spoken widely within ethnic minority settlements. The interviews were conducted in Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani. In the primary sampling units with a higher expected share of non-Georgian speakers, the respondents had the opportunity to choose their preferred language before the interview began. Of the total number of completed interviews, 2,378 were conducted in Georgian, 307 in Azerbaijani and 168 in Armenian.

The average length of interview was 29 minutes. The first section of the interviews collected information about civic engagement. The second part asked questions about NGOs, which enabled the study of respondents' knowledge of and attitudes towards these organizations. The following short block of questions was dedicated to issues relating to the European Union. The last thematic section of the questionnaire concerned knowledge of and attitudes towards businesses, with a focus on corporate social responsibility. The questionnaire concluded with questions about the respondents' basic demographic characteristics.

⁵ <http://www.aapor.org/Standards-Ethics/Best-Practices.aspx>

⁶ The questionnaire and show cards are presented in Annex 1.

2. FOCUS GROUPS

After the collection and preliminary analysis of the quantitative data, four focus groups were conducted. The aim of the focus groups was to gain an in-depth understanding of the survey's findings. The topic of the two focus groups was their attitudes toward NGOs. One of the two focus groups was held in Kutaisi on March 7, 2018, with male participants from 22 to 38 years old with a tertiary or secondary technical education. The second focus group was held in Tbilisi on March 9, 2018, with female participants from 22 to 38 years old with a tertiary or secondary technical education.

The focus groups about business entities and CSR were conducted in Zestaponi on March 7, 2018, with female participants from 25 to 40 years old with a secondary technical education, and in Tbilisi on March 9, 2018, with male participants from 25 to 40 years old with a secondary technical education. It is highly recommended for the focus group participants to represent a homogeneous group, therefore the focus groups were conducted separately. The participants' ages were also controlled to avoid significant age gaps. Participants between the ages of 22 and 40 were invited, since they were expected to be relatively well informed regarding the issues discussed. Professional recruiters selected the focus group participants through purposeful sampling. Before inviting the potential respondents to participate, the recruiters briefly interviewed them (on an issue unrelated to the topic of the focus group) to ensure that their verbal competence was adequate.

CHAPTER 1

VOLUNTEERISM AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN GEORGIA: EXPERIENCES AND ATTITUDES

Confirming the results of previous surveys, the majority of Georgians are not involved in the work of institutionalized civil society organizations, unions or associations. The CSSIGE survey results identified just 4% of the population as member of any type of union, club, organization or association.⁷ The majority of members within organizations or unions stated they do not receive any monetary income from these organizations. Although, some reported receiving non-monetary benefits such as travel, excursions or gifts.

However, in regard to noninstitutionalized forms of engagement, and more individual efforts, the picture changes dramatically.⁸ Thirty-six percent of the Georgian population said that during the last two years they had planted a tree outside their property. Almost one third of the population (30%) participated in cleaning a public space, such as an apartment block entrance, a school or a church yard. Almost one quarter (23%) attended a public meeting in the last two years and around the same figure (22%) called or visited a local government office. Fifteen percent said that they had signed a collective letter or petition, including online petitions, demanding the resolution of an important public issue.⁹ Thus, a section of the population does engage in social matters, suggesting there is a significant community of civic-minded people who may in the future provide the bedrock for establishing institutionalized forms of civic engagement.

Notably, young people, i.e. 18 to 24 year-olds, reported lower levels of noninstitutionalized engagement, excluding engagement with NGOs, than people in their 30s, 40s or 50s. For example, only 18% of young people reported having attended a public meeting in the last two years, unlike 29% of 45 to 54 year-olds. Only 24% reported having helped clean a public space, whilst 34% of 45 to 54 year-olds had done so. Nevertheless, 10% of 18 to 24 year-olds, and 9% of 25 to 34 year-olds, reported having contacted an NGO's office, compared to only 4% of 35 to 54 year-olds; and 15% of 18 to 24 year-olds participated in training or another event organized by an NGO, in contrast to 7% of 25 to 34 year-olds and only 6% of 35 to 54 year-olds. Young people also stated they were more likely to join a formalized civil society organization. Approximately half of those aged 18 to 24 said they would join an organization that worked on the resolution of significant Georgian issues, compared to just over a third of the general population (Table 1.1).

7 For example, a book lovers' club, theatrical union, dance or sports fans, or an online union, with common interest members. A union could have been formal or informal. The question did not ask, though, about memberships in professional or trade unions. Since 4% is a very small proportion, this group cannot be analyzed further by age, gender, settlement type or any other characteristic.

8 The list of such activities was not exhaustive in the questionnaire. It does, however, allow one to see a rather comprehensive picture.

9 As for other questioned activities, 11% said a local government representative had visited their home or work place, 6% participated in training or another event organized by an NGO and 5% called or visited an NGO's office.

Table 1.1

Would you become a member of an organization which, upon its own initiative, works on solving important issues for Georgia? By Age (%)

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Nationwide
Yes	51	47	38	35	29	28	18	37
No	43	49	56	61	65	69	79	58
Don't know	6	4	6	4	6	3	3	5

The population of Tbilisi is also more prepared to consider institutionalized participation than people living in the rest of the country. Half of Tbilisi residents state they would join an organization that worked on the resolution of issues important to Georgia.

As to why people might be unwilling to join an organization that worked on the resolution of issues important to Georgia, the most common response was that people would prefer to look after their own or their family affairs (34%).¹⁰ This was mentioned by 21% of the population of Tbilisi, who state they would not join such an organization. Nationwide, 18% of those who said they would not join explained it was due to their age or a health condition, and 13% named a lack of time. Relatively few named overtly negative reasons: 9% said it would be a waste of time and 5% said that they would not be able to change anything.

Vitally, while only 37% expressed a readiness to join an organization that works on solving issues that are important to Georgia, a much larger extent of the population (63%) said they would join an organization or union that works for the protection of the environment. The same proportion, 63%, would become members of an organization or union that works on ensuring food safety in Georgia. The correlation coefficient of responses to these two questions is significant and is rather high (.758), thus, very similar groups reported a willingness to join these two types of organizations. These findings indicate that people in Georgia are much more likely to want to work on specific issues, such as environmental protection or on food safety, rather than the more nebulous 'issues important to Georgia'. The share of the ethnic minority population who expressed a willingness to join an organization either working on environmental or on food safety issues is much smaller compared to the national average.

The survey also explored people's attitudes to different forms of social and political engagement. The questions sought to gain an understanding of which type of engagement people believe have a chance of improving the country. The attitudes toward the following forms of engagement were studied: people participating in protests; showing initiative resolving existing issues; contributing to the work of political parties; partaking more actively in presidential and parliamentary elections; participating more actively in local elections; and people getting involved in the work of non-governmental organizations.

¹⁰ This question was asked only to those who would not join an organization, i.e. 58% of those surveyed. It was an open question, and the respondents could only name the single most important reason.

Of these forms of engagement, democratic political participation, namely voting in elections, is the engagement viewed with the most optimism by the population of Georgia. Almost three quarters of the population believe that life in Georgia would improve if people participated more actively in presidential/parliamentary and local elections (73% and 75% respectively). Sixty-three percent said life in Georgia would improve if people showed more initiative in resolving the existing problems; for example, demanding the construction of new roads. According to around half of the population, life would improve in Georgia if more people were involved in the work of NGOs and political parties (53% and 46% respectively). Of the six forms of social and political engagement discussed during the survey, people were the most sceptical regarding participation in protestations. Only 38% of the population suggested that life in Georgia would improve if there was more participation in protest actions. However, when the question was asked in a different manner, 58% agreed that ‘people should participate in protest actions against the government, as this shows the government that the people are in charge.’ The difference between the results can be explained by the wording of the two questions, though this suggests that opinions about participation in protests are not yet firm in Georgia.

Nationwide, 53% of the respondents believe that life would improve if people were involved in the work of NGOs. People living in Tbilisi in particular answered this question notably differently compared to the ethnic minority population (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2

Do you think or not that life in Georgia will improve if people get involved in the work of non-governmental organizations? By Settlement type (%)

	The Capital	Large urban settlements	Small urban settlements	Rural settlements	Ethnic minority settlements	Nationwide
Will improve	53	52	55	57	37	53
Will not improve	36	25	22	22	22	26
Don't know	10	23	21	20	41	20

The focus group participants were well aware of disengagement in Georgia. They explained this by the assumed pointlessness of engagement, on the one hand, and people’s laziness, on the other:

“[If you] [d]emand [what you need] and speak out, go out and hold a rally, [the government] will come and bring the police or military and dissolve [the rally], kick you home. There is no point in demanding [anything]. [...] People are tired and are going with the flow; they only care about being able to support their family.”

[Focus group, March 7, Kutaisi]

“We [people] generally like being in an ostrich’s position [ignoring]. It is very bad. We should truly take others’ problems to our heart. Most importantly, we do not even have a culture of voting. The only thing we know is winning. [...] If you want to change something, you need to do something, and laziness is a very serious disease of ours. We are not willing [to change things]. [...] Want changes? Go and vote, go to a rally.”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

Thus, extremely low levels of institutionalized civic engagement in Georgia is, to a certain extent, counterbalanced by much higher levels of noninstitutionalized engagement and, even more so, by the quite impressive levels of reported readiness to join certain types of non-governmental organizations. People living in the capital more eagerly report their willingness to join such organizations, as do young people. The latter, however, are characterized by their current lower than average levels of civic engagement.

Therefore, it seems that if NGOs were focused on specific, clear issues that are relevant to the everyday lives of people (such as environmental or food safety issues), this would help mobilize the population, who, otherwise, prefer to look after their own affairs. Whereas, engaging the ethnic minority population, who reported the lowest interest in civic engagement, will represent a very significant challenge.

CHAPTER 2

ATTITUDES TOWARDS NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

2.1 The Sources of Information Relating to and Knowledge about NGOs

It is often assumed that scepticism towards NGOs in Georgia is partly related to a lack of knowledge concerning both what NGOs are and what they do. The CSSIGE survey results reveal that while about half the population of Georgia possesses some knowledge of NGOs, only 16% can be said to be well informed.

In order to estimate the level of knowledge relating to NGOs, ten different organizations were named during the survey interviews. Some of these were NGOs, others were parts of the government, business entities and so on, while at the time of the survey, two of these organizations did not exist in Georgia (Table 2.1).¹¹ The findings presented in Table 2.1 are designed to paint a broad picture revealing the patterns of knowledge of NGOs in Georgia.

While much of the population (87%) correctly stated that the Parliament of Georgia is not an NGO, other examples are more equivocal. The Labor Party was correctly identified as not being an NGO by approximately two thirds (67%) of the population, and most respondents (59%) also correctly identified that the Georgian Young Lawyers Association was an NGO (Table 2.1). However, the number of the population who provided ten correct answers is less than 1%.

Table 2.1

Is this an NGO, or not? (%)¹²

	Is an NGO	Is not an NGO	Never heard of it	Don't know / Refuse to answer
United States Agency for International Development (USAID) **	32	11	33	24
Georgian Young Lawyers' Association *	59	10	12	19
Parliament of Georgia **	5	87	2	6
Labor Party **	15	67	4	14
Aldagi **	16	46	11	27
Association of the Unemployed ***	20	13	44	23
Transparency International Georgia *	43	9	27	21

¹¹ Similar questions are widely used in survey practice, because direct questions about people's knowledge often fail to provide reliable information.

¹² The full text of the question was: 'I will now name several organizations. Please tell me whether it is an NGO or not. If you have not heard of any of these organizations, tell me you have not heard of them.'

	Is an NGO	Is not an NGO	Never heard of it	<i>Don't know / Refuse to answer</i>
Rustavi 2 **	23	57	3	17
Open Society – Georgia Foundation *	30	10	33	27
Society for Spreading Literacy ***	16	13	45	26

Note: NGOs are marked with one asterisk *. Organizations that are not NGOs are marked with two asterisks **. Organizations that did not exist in Georgia at the time of the fieldwork are marked with three asterisks ***.

The results show that approximately half of the Georgian population can be considered to be more or less well informed about NGOs; i.e. the share of those who correctly identified at least one of the organizations. Once again, the ethnic minority population tends to be considerably less well informed about NGOs compared to the rest of the population. For example, only 13% of people living in ethnic minority settlements identified the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association as an NGO, compared to 65% in other settlements. Twenty-three percent of the ethnic minority population suggested they were unsure whether the Parliament of Georgia is an NGO, and only 5% of them correctly recognized Transparency International Georgia as an NGO.

Of the ten organizations, people showed advanced knowledge relating to the following six: the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), Parliament, the Labor Party, Aldagi (an insurance company), Transparency International Georgia and the TV company, Rustavi 2. Nevertheless, the proportion of those who gave correct answers in six cases is only 16%. Subsequently, this report will refer to this subset as the 'well informed' group. While the well informed constitute 16% nationwide, only 1% of the ethnic minority population can be said to be well informed. Countrywide, the youngest participants (18 to 24 years old) failed to demonstrate greater knowledge in this regard, with only 12% in this age group correctly answering all six questions about the better known organizations.

The majority of the population of Georgia (76%) named television as their main source of information on NGOs. At the same time, 12% claimed to receive no information at all on the activities of NGOs. Once again, ethnic minorities reported to being less well informed: 30% said they received no information about NGOs, whilst only 6% of people in the capital revealed the same.

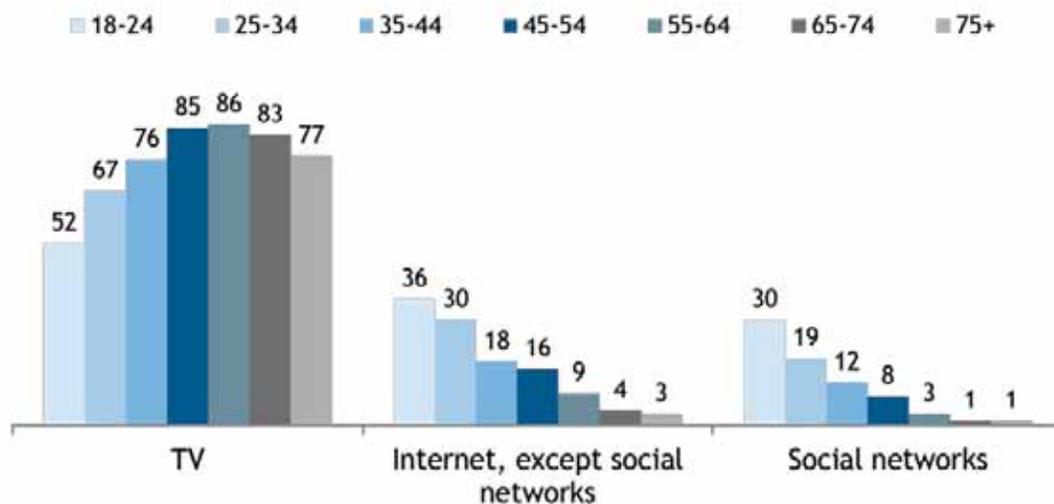
After television, the internet (excluding social networks) was often identified as a source of information on NGOs (18%), followed by social networks (12%). It is important to note that personal acquaintances represent a more common source of information over newspapers, the radio or NGO representatives. Particularly often, the ethnic minority population named acquaintances (22%) as a source of information concerning NGO activities.

For the 18-24 year-olds, the most frequently used sources of information about NGOs are ultimately the same as with the overall population: TV, followed by the internet and by social

networks. The percentages of people of different ages using those sources are, however, different. If for instance, nationwide, television was named six times more often than social networks, where young people, 18-24, identified television only 1.7 times more often than social networks (Chart 2.1). There are also differences according to settlement type: where 12% of the population nationwide showed social networks as the most common source of information on NGO activities, while in the capital this increases to 22%, but in rural settlements it holds at just 5%.

Chart 2.1

From which sources do you most often receive information about NGOs' activities in Georgia? By Age (%)



Note: Only the sources of information named most often are shown in Chart 2.1.

Of social networks, only Facebook can be considered a relatively widespread source of information about NGO activities. Facebook was named by 11% of the population of Georgia (and by 29% of 18 to 24 year-olds). While other social networks such as Instagram, Twitter and Odnoklassniki were identified by less than 1% of the population.

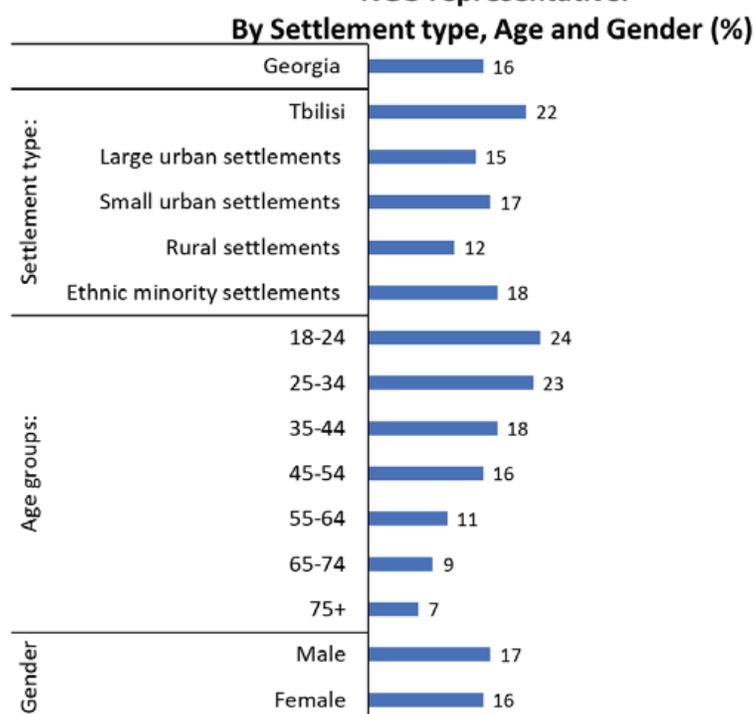
Regardless of the source of information most often used concerning NGO activities, the reported level of trust toward NGOs remains the same. Nationwide, 28% of the population trust NGOs, and 29% of the people who receive information about NGOs from TV also reported trusting them. Among those who receive information about NGOs from the internet, 25% reported trust. Whilst of those who named social networks as their most frequently used source of information regarding NGOs, 29% suggested trust, as did 33% of the participants who receive their information from acquaintances. These differences are all within the expected margin of error. Trust toward NGOs will be discussed in more detail in Section 2.4.

2.2 Experiences of Communication with NGOs

Only a small section of the Georgian population suggested they had any direct experience of communication with NGOs: 11% of the population stated that an NGO's representative had visited their house or workplace in the last 2 years; 6% had participated in training or an event organized by an NGO; and 5% had called or visited an NGO office. Merging these three variables, 16% of the population can be said to have communicated with an NGO over the last two years. Chart 2.2 shows how this section varies by settlement type, age and gender. While the proportion of the ethnic minority population on this chart is quite significant, a larger margin of error for this relatively small group should be considered, which can be up to +/-5%.

Chart 2.2

The share of the population who either contacted an NGO office, participated in an event organized by an NGO and/or was visited by an NGO representative.



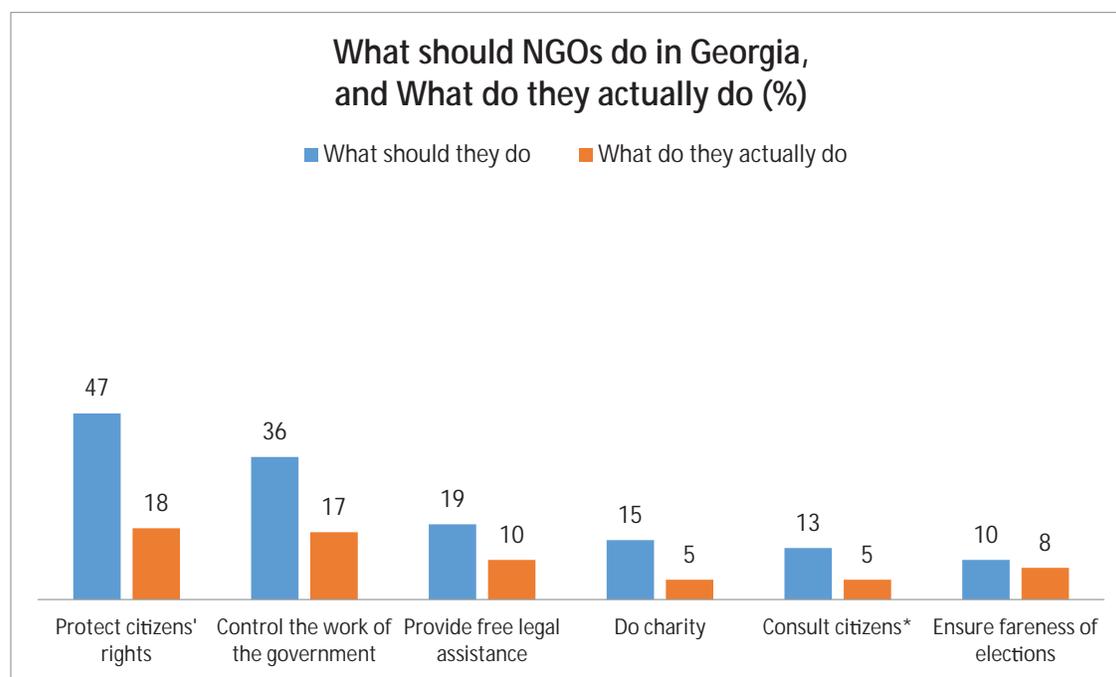
Significantly, people who have had direct experience of communicating with NGOs are more likely to feel positively about NGOs in general. Those who have had some form of contact with NGOs respond more often than people similar to them who have benefited from the work of NGOs' (25%) than those who have not had such an experience (15%). Also, in the first group, 68% stated that NGOs have a positive impact on the development of Georgia, while in the second group, 54% believed the same. Those who have had some contact with NGOs also tend to trust NGOs slightly more (35%) in comparison to people without such an experience (27%). Thus, increased NGO outreach, awareness raising activities and communication on the part of NGOs are likely to have a beneficial effect on how they are perceived by the population.

2.3 Functions of NGOs

The Georgian populace is not well informed about the activities NGOs complete throughout the country: one third of the population could not answer the respective question, while 13% stated that NGOs simply do nothing. The two forms of NGO work most often identified, the protection of citizens' rights (18%) and controlling the government's work (17%), were named by less than one fifth of the population.¹³ People, on the other hand, have clearer expectations of what NGOs should be doing: crucially, they are most expected to protect citizens' rights (47%) and to control the work of the government (36%).¹⁴

Despite the potential ambivalence and lack of awareness, almost no overt hostility towards NGOs was reported during the survey. Overall, only 2% of the population said that NGOs should not be doing anything at all or that NGOs should not exist. This indicates that the population sees the need for NGOs to be active in Georgia. However, the picture becomes more complicated when people's notion of what NGOs are doing does not correspond with expectations of what they should be doing (Chart 2.3).

Chart 2.3



* '[Should] provide consultations for citizens about how to resolve the issues that are important to them.'

Note: Only the most frequently named answer are shown in Chart 2.3.

¹³ It was an open question and the number of responses was not limited.

¹⁴ A show card was used for this question, and up to two responses were accepted. Using a show card could have influenced the percentage of answers.

A certain level of suspicion towards NGOs could be discerned during the post-survey focus group discussions:

“In my opinion, NGOs’ outlook should be more positive, rather than that of controlling someone.”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

Overall, though, the general attitude of the focus group participants towards the work of NGOs was quite positive and the respondents specifically mentioned the positive role that NGOs play in monitoring the government:

“Non-governmental organizations contribute a lot [to the solution of problems in Georgia]; I even think more so than the [political] opposition.”

[Focus group, March 7, Kutaisi]

“It can be said that non-governmental organizations are the voice of the people. [...] They will not make things worse, at the very least.”

[Focus group, March 7, Kutaisi]

However, NGOs are not thought of as the best possible agencies to handle important Georgian issues. During the survey, the attitudes towards NGOs were also measured by discovering who might best handle the following issues:

- Protecting human rights;
- Fighting corruption;
- Creating a favourable environment for businesses;
- Employing the unemployed;
- Protecting the rights of the employed;
- Ensuring the rule of law;
- Protecting the environment;
- Repairing and constructing new roads;
- Assisting the socially vulnerable population;
- Raising civic awareness.¹⁵

There were various potential answers provided in the respective show cards for each of these ten issues. The most frequent response was that the central Government of Georgia would best handle these issues, followed by the local government and then by ‘the people’. NGOs were rarely named, with the greatest proportion (8%) suggesting that NGOs could raise civic awareness. However, even in this issue, NGOs were only in the fourth place: according to 48% of the population, the central Government of Georgia would best raise civic awareness; while 13% stated they do not know and 10% believe that the people themselves best can raise awareness.

¹⁵ A show card was used during the interviews with the following options: local government (city hall, Sakrebulo); the central government of Georgia; Georgian non-governmental organizations; international organizations; the church; people; business companies; professional unions; and other. The respondents could choose only one answer per issue.

'The people' were also mentioned far less often than the government, and only in three of these cases was the answer chosen by at least one-tenth of the population: the protection of the environment, the protection of human rights and raising civic awareness (Table 2.2). These findings suggest that highly paternalistic attitudes persist throughout much of the population.

Table 2.2

Who do you think can best resolve [issue] in Georgia? (%)

	The Central Government of Georgia	The Local Government	NGOs	The People	Don't know
The protection of human rights	47	10	6	13	4
Fighting corruption	65	6	3	9	5
Creating a favourable environment for businesses	62	8	2	2	6
Employing the unemployed	66	11	2	2	3
The protection of employees' rights	58	8	6	3	5
Ensuring the rule of law	73	5	3	4	6
The protection of the environment	40	15	2	37	2
Road repair, construction of new roads	56	38	1	1	2
Assisting the socially vulnerable population	68	21	2	1	3
Raising civic awareness	48	8	8	10	13

Note: Only five answers are presented in Table 2.2.

Other survey questions furthermore reveal a lingering paternalistic attitude towards the government, especially regarding the 'forced volunteerism' of the Soviet period, known as 'subbotnik(s)'. 'Subbotniks' were Soviet-era campaigns of 'forced volunteerism', which saw workers, school children, university students and other groups of the population forced to give up their Saturdays for officially mandated good causes, such as tree planting. Seventy-two percent of the population of Georgia agreed with the statement- 'The situation in Georgia would be better if the government forced us to participate in [subbotnik-like] activities.' Among those, almost half of the population (47%) strongly agreed with this declaration. While the respondents who agreed with the opposing statement, 'Thankfully, the government does not force us to participate in such activities', were in the minority (20%). Surprisingly, there were no notable differences amongst the ages, including those in the youngest and the oldest age groups.

Because state organized, compulsory ‘subbotniks’ stand in direct contrast to self-organized civic engagement, support for them indicates a certain level of paternalism, or a lack of motivation to civic engagement.¹⁶ Thus support for ‘subbotniks’ indicates both the paternalistic attitudes regarding the state, and the challenges to fostering civic engagement in Georgia (see Chapter 1).

Such paternalistic attitudes were also documented during the focus group discussion in Tbilisi. The participants mentioned that one of the most important ways to improve the current situation would be to ensure that people follow the law. One way to achieve lawful behaviour would be by ensuring that people have better knowledge of their rights and duties. The opinions of the focus group participants on who should conduct such educational work are noteworthy and illustrate a certain level of suspicion toward NGOs:

“Training should be conducted in different organizations and schools, [...] universities [in order to teach people about their rights and duties].”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

“I think the Ministry of Internal Affairs [should take care of such training] but the third sector¹⁷ should control [the Ministry]. It is truly needed, [NGOs and the MIA should be] controlling each other, so that something works out in this country.”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

“I think, the third sector has the right to control, [...] but, of course, this control should be limited, [because the NGOs] are funded by the private sector and, well, may fall under certain influences.”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

With these attitudes in mind it is surprising that, according to the survey results, most people believe NGOs have a positive impact on the development of Georgia. This impact was assessed as ‘fully’ or ‘mainly’ positive by 17% and 39% of the population respectively. Only 14% viewed NGOs’ impact as negative, while 18% found it hard to answer the question. Interestingly, 11% said NGOs have no impact on the development of Georgia and this share is similar in all settlement types. As is the case with many other questions, a relatively large section of the ethnic minority population (38%, which is around twice as much as nationwide) found it hard to answer the question. The population of Tbilisi stands out with a higher proportion of negative responses (24% of Tbilisi dwellers assessed NGOs impact as ‘fully’ or ‘mainly’ negative), which further contributes to the picture of a more critical capital city.

When analysing the results by age group, the oldest group, 75 years and older, found it far harder to answer this question than others, rarely giving positive responses and more often providing negative answers.

¹⁶ The very wording of the show card statements during the survey made it clear that the ‘subbotnik’ was of a forced nature: ‘...the government forced us to participate in such activities.’ The civic engagement, on the hand, is in no way dependent on the government forcing people to do what they believe needs to be done.

¹⁷ Focus group participants often referred to NGOs as ‘the third sector.’

When discussing NGOs' roles in Georgia, the focus group participants noted that life in Georgia would not become better if there were no non-governmental organizations in the country:

“Of course, [the situation] would be worse [if there were no NGOs]. [...] I am far from thinking that [people working in NGOs] lose any sleep over our problems, but when they do their job, our issues get taken care of too.”

[Focus group, March 7, Kutaisi]

“What would be bad [if there were no NGOs in Georgia] is that we would not be able to see many problems. Or, better to say, we would see but we would close our eyes to them. [NGOs] do not let us do this.”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

2.4 Trust towards NGOs

Prior surveys have revealed that the population of Georgia, with only rare exceptions, does not report high levels of trust toward social and political institutions.¹⁸ It is hard to determine which levels of trust should be considered relatively 'high' or 'low' in the country. In order to contextualise the place of public trust toward NGOs, twelve questions were asked to measure trust toward several key political and social institutions: the Georgian army, courts, non-governmental organizations, the President of Georgia, the Prime Minister, Parliament, political parties, the police, local government bodies, religious institutions, the European Union and the Eurasian Union. A show card was used to measure the corresponding levels of trust.¹⁹

Of the institutions named, the highest trust was reported toward religious institutions and the army, 83% and 79% respectively. In both cases, only 4% of the population reported distrusting these institutions (see Chart 2.4). Religious institutions enjoy particularly high levels of trust, with 54% of the population reporting fully trusting them. Relatively high levels of trust were also expressed toward the police and the President of Georgia.

The lowest trust, and therefore the highest distrust, was expressed toward political parties and the Eurasian Economic Union, with 14% and 16% of the population reporting trust in them, whilst only 4% fully trust them. Thirty-seven percent state they do not trust political parties, including 17% fully distrusting them, while 45% distrust, including 24% fully distrusting, the Eurasian Economic Union.²⁰

In terms of trust towards NGOs, the population of Georgia can best be described as ambivalent: 28% of the population reported trusting NGOs. Only 7% said they fully trust them, while the other 21% mainly trust NGOs. It is noteworthy that, of the institutions the survey asked about,

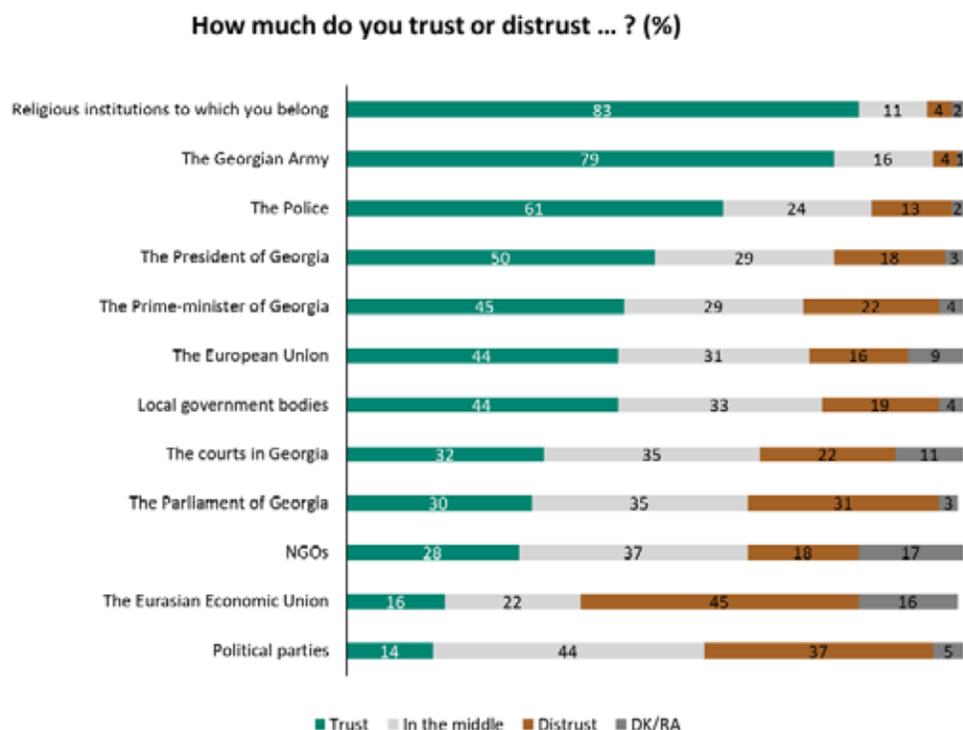
18 See CRRC-Georgia's blog post on this topic: <http://crrc-caucasus.blogspot.com/2016/06/changes-in-level-of-trust-in-social-and.html>

19 The show card had five potential answers: 'Fully distrust'; 'Mainly distrust'; 'Partially trust, partially distrust'; 'Mainly trust'; and 'Fully trust'.

20 The full wording of the respective question was: 'Please tell me how much you trust or distrust the Eurasian Economic Union, established by the Russian Federation?'

people found it the hardest to assess their trust toward NGOs. With 17% finding it hard to answer this question, while the respective proportion in the case of Parliament was just 3%. This may partially indicate that people do not have a clear understanding of what NGOs are (Chart 2.4).

Chart 2.4



Note: The shares of people who answered ‘Fully trust’ and ‘Mainly trust’ are combined in the chart above, as are the shares of people who answered ‘Fully distrust’ and ‘Mainly distrust’.

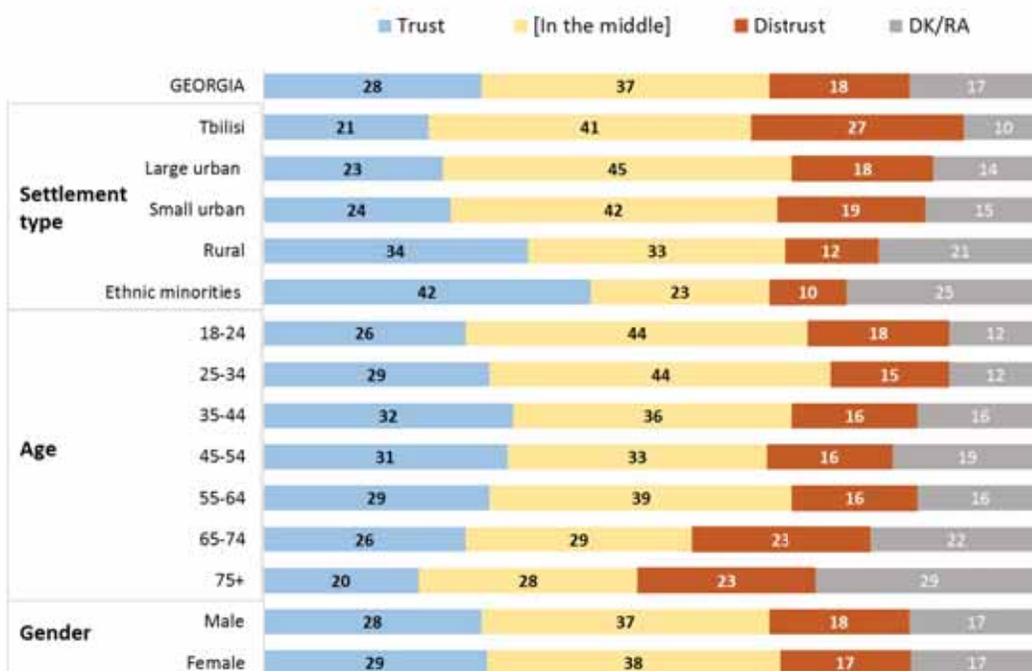
Despite the relatively low level of trust, the population of Georgia did not express particularly high levels of distrust toward NGOs. Of the 18% who reported not trusting NGOs, 8% fully distrust them. This extent of distrust is comparable to the level of distrust toward the President, the European Union and to local government bodies.

Men and women recorded similar levels of trust towards NGOs. There were certain differences according to their age group, in particular, older people found it harder to respond than young people (Chart 2.5). Whilst the middle-aged population was more likely to report trusting NGOs. Moreover, people living in rural areas and principally the ethnic minority population reported the highest levels of trust (34% and 42% respectively), although they also found it the hardest to answer the question.²¹ The lowest trust towards NGOs was reported in the capital (21%).

²¹ It should be noted that, generally, ethnic minority representatives and rural population tended to give socially acceptable answers and refrained from expressing critical views. The population of the capital, on the other hand, was bolder in expressing criticism.

Chart 2.5

How much do you trust or distrust NGOs? By Settlement type, Age and Gender (%)



Note: Similarly to Chart 2.4, the percentage of people who answered ‘Fully trust’ and ‘Mainly trust’ are combined in the chart above, as are the shares of people who answered ‘Fully distrust’ and ‘Mainly distrust’.

The CSSIGE survey results demonstrates that both trust and distrust in NGOs is relatively low, and there are almost no differences in the reported levels of trust according to the major demographic characteristics of the population, including their level of education and their household’s economic condition, or by the frequency of internet use.

During the focus groups, various opinions were expressed that may help explain the lack of trust toward NGOs in Georgia:

“Those who fund [NGOs], they spend so much money- and why they do this, we do not know. [...] Why, what is [their] goal? To help? Why? They [the funders] may die without ever coming here [to Georgia].”

[Focus group, March 7, Kutaisi]

“You know what other problem I see generally in regard to the non-governmental sector? That they have ‘shining moments’ and then they disappear. Their engagement should be permanent, they should not appear only during elections, for example, [...] it’s very bad [to do so]. Because people then do not perceive their attitude seriously enough. [...] They should not just ‘shine’ briefly and then disappear.”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

The following quote from the Kutaisi focus group sums up certain people's lack of trust toward NGOs and their preference for more 'established' institutions:

“God forbid that I need to rely on [NGOs]. [...] Well, they will probably not harm me, I think, but if I need [legal help], I will hire a lawyer that will do the same. [...] I hope to be able to find a lawyer that will be educated; [...] lawyers have more legal power than non-governmental organizations, in my opinion.”

[Focus group, March 7, Kutaisi]

2.5 Attitudes towards the Activities of NGOs and their Members

The survey also points to a high level of ambivalence and scepticism in relation to the population's attitudes towards the activities of NGOs. Approximately a quarter (27%) of the people do not believe NGOs serve the interests of ordinary Georgian people. NGOs are seen as self-serving, with 52% suggesting NGOs work mostly benefits their own employees or members. Furthermore, people do not believe that it is necessary for the government to take NGOs' positions on specific policy issues into account. NGOs are also seen as Western institutions funded by Europe and America. This perceived 'foreignness' of NGOs is likely to contribute to people's suspicions of position and their motives.

When asked in which spheres of policy should the stances of NGO be considered by the Georgian government, 10% found it hard to answer the question, with 4% responding that the government should take the stances of NGOs into consideration in all spheres, while 1% stated their stance should be considered 'In no spheres'. Table 2.3 lists the frequency in which specific spheres were named; the population's responses are also compared to the responses of the 'well informed' group (see Section 2.1).

Table 2.3

In your opinion, in which spheres should the Georgian government consider the stances of NGOs?²² (%)

	All	Well informed group
Healthcare	37	33
Social protection	30	30
The protection of human rights / minority rights	25	39
Education / Science	22	23
Agriculture	16	13
Economics / Entrepreneurship / Tourism / Employment	13	13
Democracy / Good governance / Rule of law / Elections	10	18
Ecology / Protection of the environment	10	16
The development of civil society	10	15
Youth	8	8
Conflict resolution / IDP issues	6	7
Other	10	10

Significantly, those who are better informed about NGOs largely identified the same spheres, with a similar frequency, to the rest of the population. Not accounting for minor variations, which fall within the margin of error, the one sphere in which the better informed give more ‘weight’ to the stances of NGOs is the protection of human rights and minority rights. While this area was named by 25% of the population nationally, among the better informed, this increased to 39%.

As revealed by the aforementioned quotes from the focus group discussions, there is a degree of suspicion towards the funding of Georgian NGOs and the donors’ motivations for doing so. The survey also asked who currently funds NGOs in Georgia and, subsequently, who should be funding them. The question about NGOs’ sources of funding measures, to a certain extent, knowledge about NGOs, but crucially it provides information about people’s attitudes. The results revealed that NGOs are mostly perceived as ‘Western’, as they are funded by, and therefore potentially indebted to, ‘the West’.

Considering the diversity of NGOs and their sources of funding, finding one main source of funding is no simple matter, and 41% of the population found it hard to answer the question.²³ As for the rest, foreign countries (18%), the United States in particular (14%), were named the most frequently as the main source of funding of NGOs.²⁴ While, the Government of Georgia was also named by 9%. When grouping answers by ‘Georgian’ and ‘Western’ sources of funding,²⁵ the following picture emerges (Table 2.4):

²² A show card was used, on which it was possible to choose up to three answers.

²³ This increases to 50% in rural settlements and to 54% in ethnic minority settlements. However, the smallest grouping of those who found it hard to answer the question was in the capital (24%).

²⁴ No answers were suggested during the interviews. Only one answer was accepted.

²⁵ Russia was named by less than 1% of the population.

Table 2.4**Who do you think currently mostly funds NGOs in Georgia? (%)**

Sources of funding from Georgia	Sources of funding from the West
<i>In particular: the Government of Georgia; the opposition; Georgian businessmen; ordinary citizens of Georgia; members of non-governmental organizations themselves.</i>	<i>In particular: foreign countries; foreign businessmen; the United States; the European Union; international organizations.</i>
13	45

When questioned as to who should be funding Georgian NGOs, the picture was completely different. Only 3% said that there is no need to fund NGOs, while slightly more than a third (37%) of the respondents stated that they are unsure who should be funding them.

The responses to this and to the previous question cannot be directly compared since when naming, in the respondent's opinion, the sources that should be funding Georgian NGOs their number of answers was not limited.²⁶ When grouping responses by local and foreign sources of funding, it is possible to see that 43% named local sources and 27% identified foreign sources. The distribution of responses is provided below in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5**Who do you think should provide funding for NGOs in Georgia? (%)**

The Government of Georgia	30
Georgian businessmen	8
Foreign countries	8
International organizations	7
The United States	6
The European Union	3
Members of NGOs themselves	3
Foreign businessmen	3
The Opposition	1
Ordinary citizens of Georgia	1

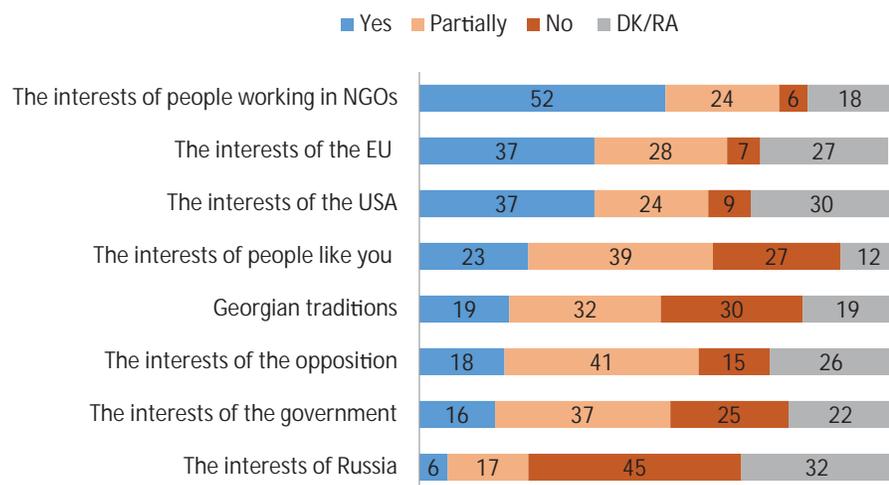
The data reveals that NGOs in Georgia are therefore largely perceived as more 'foreign' than 'our' native organizations. The perception as to whose interests NGOs serve in Georgia (Chart 2.6) also indicates that these organizations are representing the 'West' (chiefly the

²⁶ However, it is noteworthy that very few people actually took this opportunity.

United States and the European Union). Interestingly, despite the media coverage of several prominent Russian-funded NGOs operating in Georgia, only 23% agreed that NGOs partially or fully protect Russian interests, whereas 45% disagreed.

Chart 2.6

In your opinion, do NGOs in Georgia protect or not ... (%)



The focus group participants raised the issue of NGO funding, and they drew direct links between the financing and the type of work NGOs carry out. The focus group discussions confirmed, once again, that people are very sensitive towards certain aspects of NGOs' work, particularly when it comes to gender and LGBT issues:

“Why should a Georgian person want, a [normal] person, [...] to fund such an organization [that protects LGBT rights]? This is, I don’t know, this [...] diminishes the Georgian nation and no normal [person] would want this. There are many ‘agents’ like that. [...] The biggest money is invested in that.”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

“These non-governmental organizations have these opinions about the kindergarten issue, that girls and boys should be using the same toilets, for example, because they have not determined their gender yet, what will they be when they grow up? I would be really against having non-governmental organizations enter the education sphere. I truly would not want that; I do not agree. [...] This is what they introduce into Georgia nowadays, I hear of only that topic. Nothing good.”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

Whilst the survey’s results reiterates a decisive opinion that NGOs mostly protect the interests of their own members and their employees. Nationwide, 52% agreed with this belief. Whilst crucially, 66% of those who are better informed about NGOs also agreed with this notion, which indicates that further knowledge about NGOs does not necessarily equate to a higher opinion of an NGO’s motives. There were no significant differences amongst age groups, excluding the oldest, 75+, who most often found it hard to answer the question.

The picture of the self-serving NGOs is also supported by the answers to the question, ‘In your opinion, who benefits most from the work of non-governmental organizations in Georgia?’²⁷ According to the most frequent responses, it is the employees of NGOs themselves. Approximately one third of the population, 35%, and 48% of those who are well informed, chose such a response. While twenty-two percent of the population found it hard to answer the question (Table 2.6). The responses this question elicited indicate that NGOs are regarded as elitist: they are organizations that serve either their own interests or the interests of the powerful, before the welfare of ordinary people.

Table 2.6

In your opinion, who benefits most from the work of the NGOs in Georgia? (%)

People working in NGOs	35
Donors	17
Ordinary people	16
Politicians, officials	12
Rich people	6
Entrepreneurs	5
Don't know / Refuse to answer	23

Similarly, there are elitist views about the benefits of NGOs in the capital versus the rest of the country: 44% of the population believe that NGOs benefit those in Tbilisi and only 12% said they benefit people in the regions. Fifteen percent of young people, 18-24 year-olds, suggest that the work of NGOs brings more benefits to people in the regions. Surprisingly, the differences by settlement type, as well as by other major demographic variables, are almost non-existent (Table 2.7).

Table 2.7

In your opinion, where do people like you benefit more from the work of NGOs- in Tbilisi or in the regions? By Settlement type (%)

	The Capital	Large urban settlements	Small urban settlements	Rural settlements	Ethnic minority settlements	Nationwide
In Tbilisi	46	42	56	44	41	44
In the regions	12	10	8	15	10	12
People benefit equally in Tbilisi and in the regions	11	7	9	9	9	9
Neither in Tbilisi nor in the regions	12	11	6	5	10	8
Don't know	18	30	21	26	39	25

²⁷ It was an open question and the respondents could name up to two responses.

In spite of the relatively widespread suspicion toward NGOs, when asked about the main goal of NGOs' members, people expressed more positive opinions. The most common response showed their goal is helping the population of Georgia to solve problems (27%). In total, 21% identified the goals 'Protect human rights in Georgia' (13%), 'Ensure justice in Georgia' (5%), and 'Promote the development of democracy and civil society in Georgia' (4%).²⁸ However, the second most common response once again pointed to the idea of a self-serving organization, as 16% of respondents stated the main goal of NGO members is to receive grants or funding. The differences by settlement type can only be observed by the option 'Receive grants, funding', where the population of Tbilisi is far more sceptical about NGOs than the rest of the country (Table 2.8). There were, though, no notable differences by age groups.

Table 2.8

**In your opinion, what is the main goal of the members of NGOs in Georgia?
By Settlement type (%)**

	The Capital	Large urban settlements	Small urban settlements	Rural settlements	Ethnic minority settlements	Nationwide
Help the population of Georgia to solve their problems	20	26	28	34	23	27
Receive grants, funding	30	15	20	10	1	16
Protect human rights in Georgia	12	13	15	15	10	13
Ensure justice in Georgia	8	5	3	6	1	5
Don't know	6	22	19	17	50	19

Note: Only the answers named by more than 5% of the population of Georgia are presented in Table 2.8.

Notably, the 'well informed' group of the population were again the most sceptical: 24% of the relatively better-informed population responded that members of NGOs are primarily driven by the desire to receive funding and grants, compared to 16% of the overall population.

Nationally only 14% reported either knowing someone who has received help from an NGO in Georgia or has personally received an NGO's assistance. Eighty-two percent of the respondents do not know of a person who has received aid from a Georgian NGO. The difference in responses is insignificant both by settlement type and by age group, which is an unexpected finding.

Given the aforementioned discoveries, it is not surprising that only 22% of the population stated that they trust people who are actively involved in the work of NGOs, of which only 4% report full trust.²⁹ Significantly, a smaller section reported distrust toward the people involved in NGO work (15%). The majority, though, stated that they equally partially trust

²⁸ A show card was used for this question and only one answer could be selected.

²⁹ This question was not asked to those who, in the previous question, reported that they have no contact with such people (11%).

and partially distrust active ‘NGO-ers’ (54%), suggesting that they do not have any firm opinions on this issue.

When asked about the characteristics of people who are most active in the work of NGOs, 10% stated they had not had any contact with NGO workers, and 14% found it hard to answer the question.³⁰ Almost a quarter of the population (23%) named people ‘who try to improve the situation in the country’; 21% identified people who know English and know how to use a computer, and 16% stated ‘someone who wants to help people like me’. The proportion of those who think that NGO workers ‘want to solve their own problems’ (15%), are ‘grant-consumers’ (12%) or are ‘careerists’ (9%) is relatively small. When grouping the positive, negative and neutral responses, no clear positive or negative attitudes toward the people active in NGO work can be determined (Table 2.9).

Table 2.9

In your opinion, in today’s Georgia, what type of a person is most likely to be active in NGO activities? (%)

Positive qualities	Neutral qualities	Negative qualities
<i>In particular:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Someone who wants to help people like me. Someone who is trying to improve the situation in the country. 	<i>In particular:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Someone who knows English and how to use computers. Someone who supports the opposition. Someone who supports the government. 	<i>In particular:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‘Grant-consumers.’ Someone who pokes his/her nose in other people’s business. Someone who wants to solve his/her own problems. Careerists. Modern day ‘Komsomolets’-s.³¹ Intriguers.
39	30	43

The term ‘grant-consumers’ was mentioned several times during the focus groups when speaking about representatives of NGOs:

“The biggest problem [for NGOs] is getting a grant but then they will grab half of it for themselves. [...] Yes, they spend [the gain from the grants] but they are benefitting more from it.”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

“Generally, there is a view [in Georgia], I have heard from many people that these are the people who, so to say, have nothing else to do than stand up and shout. [...] They take money for talking.”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

“It is more laundering ‘black money’, I think, at these non-governmental organizations.”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

The participants of the focus group also expressed strong reservations as to whose interests Georgian NGOs serve. Despite the fact that there is a belief, to some extent, that certain NGOs

30 A show card was used for this question and the respondents could choose up to two answers.

31 Meaning careerists.



are trying to help people, the focus group participants did not believe that every NGO shares this desire. However, there is a substantial belief that NGOs would not exist if the Georgian government was against them:

“[NGOs] work in agreement with the government; otherwise, they would not gain so many rights, I think.”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

Thus, the current attitudes toward NGOs and to their employees and activists are highly equivocal. NGOs are not wholly trusted by the majority of the population, while, at the same time, neither are they particularly distrusted. Despite certain positive views, the prevailing attitudes towards NGOs and their associated personnel tends to be critical, negative, less trusting, and even suspicious. The findings strongly suggest that the NGOs are not largely believed to be in the service of ordinary people, rather, their members and employees pursue their own interests, including financial benefits.

CHAPTER 3

ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN UNION

The population of Georgia reports trusting the European Union more than it trusts NGOs (see Chart 2.4). Across the respondents, 44% stated they trust the European Union, of which 12% fully trust the EU. While, 31% of the population reported partially trusting and partially distrusting the EU. Sixteen percent of the population distrusts the EU (of which 7% fully distrust), thus there is a comparable level of distrust towards the EU as towards NGOs.

Crucially, there is a mid-strength statistically significant positive correlation between the variables measuring trust towards the EU and trust towards NGOs (Spearman correlation .286). While nationwide, 12% of the population fully trust the EU, and this increases to 41% among those who fully trust NGOs. Whereas, nationwide, 7% of the population suggested they completely distrust the EU, and this rises to 29% amongst those who wholly distrust NGOs.

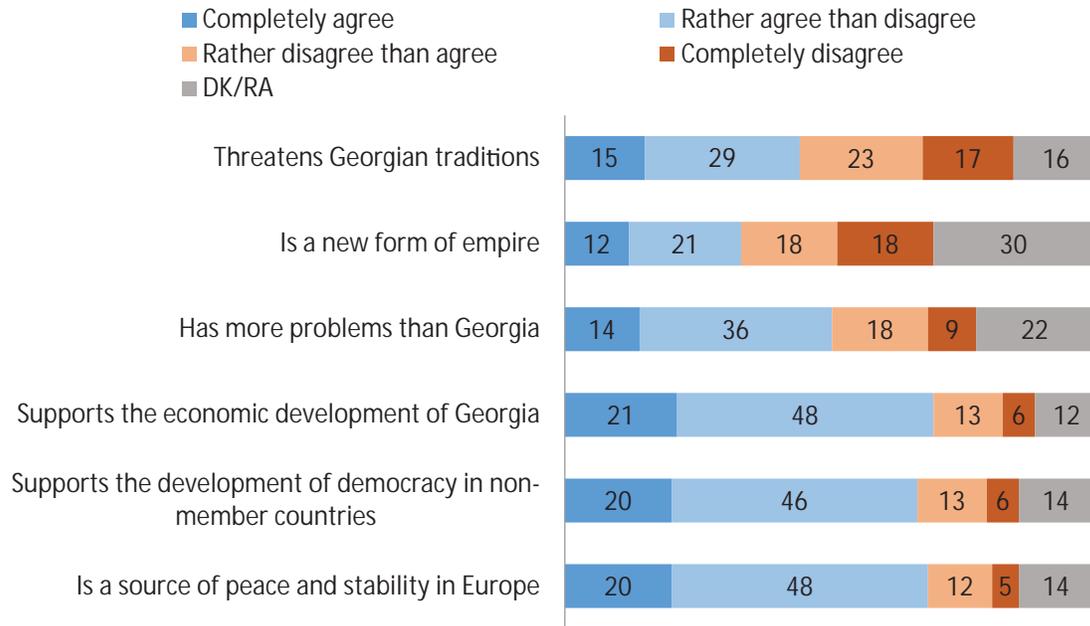
Those respondents who trust the EU also reported more favourable opinions about NGOs in general. Furthermore, those who trust the EU believe more strongly that NGOs are making a positive impact on the development of Georgia. There are several indicators that reveal similarities in the attitudes of people who trust the EU and people who trust Georgian NGOs.

The CSSIGE survey results once more confirms that the population of Georgia remains very pro-EU. The majority of the population, 71%, stated they would support Georgia joining the EU in a referendum. As demonstrated by numerous previous surveys, young people support European integration the most (79%), and as age increases, the number of supporters gradually decreases; 57% of people over 74 would support Georgia's EU membership.

Much of the Georgian population agreed with the positive statements concerning the EU (Chart 3.1). Whilst, two-thirds (68%) agreed that the EU is a source of peace and security in Europe, and a similar proportion (66%) believe that the EU supports the development of democracy in non-member countries. Expectations of the EU are also mostly positive: 21% of the population fully agreed and a further 48% agreed rather than disagreed with the statement that the EU will support Georgia's economic development.

Chart 3.1

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the EU ... (%)



Nevertheless, positive attitudes towards the EU are not unconditional. Around an equal portion of the population both agreed and disagreed with the statement that the EU is a new form of empire (33% and 36% respectively), and 30% found it hard to answer the question. Half of the population agreed with the statement that EU countries themselves have no fewer problems than Georgia. Notably, 15% fully agreed and 29% rather agreed than disagreed with the statement that the EU threatens Georgian traditions. Thus, similarly to the attitudes towards non-governmental organizations in Georgia, a certain ambivalence can also be observed in the attitudes reported towards the EU. Although the latter are, overall, more positive and, importantly, the European Union is more trusted.

CHAPTER 4

ATTITUDES TOWARDS BUSINESS ENTITIES AND VIEWS ON CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Parallel to the assessments of the civic engagement of the population of Georgia and the work of NGOs, the CSSIGE survey further aimed to study how well informed the population is regarding business entities, with a focus on their current or potential corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes. Civil sector development and the establishment of CSR are both relatively new phenomena in Georgia. In this chapter, knowledge of and attitudes towards business entities will be presented first, followed by findings about people's understanding of what constitutes a 'good company'. The knowledge and views of the population on corporate social responsibility will be presented in the last section.

4.1 Business Entities: Knowledge and Attitudes

As is the case with many topics, television is the main source of information about businesses in Georgia. Almost three-quarters (71%) of the population said they receive information about business entities from television.³² The second most frequently identified source was the internet (excluding social networks), shown by 14%. Personal acquaintances and social networks were named by 9% and 8% respectively. Whilst, 13% responded that, excluding advertisements, they receive no information about business entities.

The sources of information about businesses follow a similar pattern to the sources for NGOs, both nationally, by age groups and by settlement type. Residents of the capital and young people (from 18 to 24 years old) utilize television relatively less often than their older peers. They also tend to receive more information from the internet and social networks, in comparison to older age groups. Newspapers were named by 1% of the Georgian population as a source of information about businesses, although they are further identified by 10% of the population aged 65 to 74 years old. While, the role of acquaintances is considerably higher among the ethnic minority population (24%).

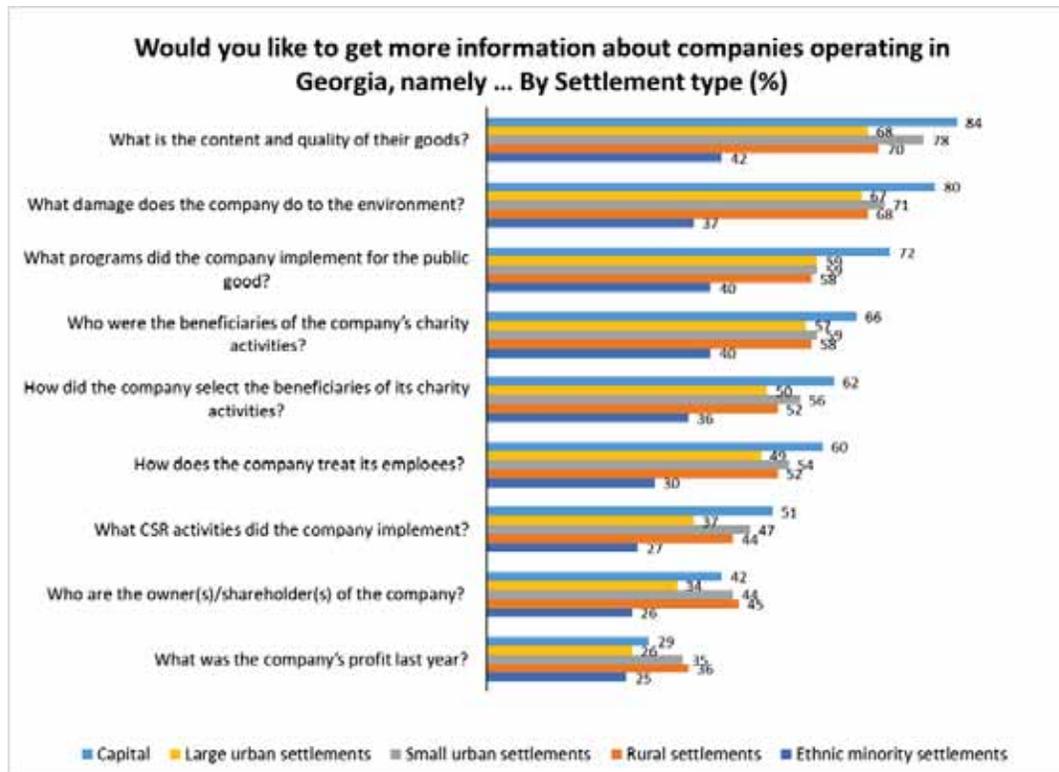
A large part of the Georgian population would like to receive more information about various aspects of business activity. The highest interest was expressed by the population of Tbilisi (see Chart 4.1). Unsurprisingly, people are most interested in aspects of business activity closely related to their everyday life.³³ Seventy-one percent of the population would like to know more about the composition and quality of the items produced or sold by businesses, and 68% would like to know more about the potential harm companies may be inflicting on the environment. Sixty percent are interested in knowing more about the programmes companies may have implemented for the public's benefit, 58% would like to know more about how companies have helped through charitable activities, and 52% wish to know how companies treat their employees. Information regarding the owners or share-holders of a company and

³² The instruction on the questionnaire, 'information about business entities' excluded advertisements of products or services.

³³ These aspects were listed in the questionnaire (question 34). For each, the respondents answered whether, or not, they wanted to receive more information about it.

on a company's prior profits are of slightly less interest to the population. Nevertheless, there is yet a strong appetite for this information, with 40% and 31% stating they wish to know more.

Chart 4.1



Note: The chart only shows the share of positive responses.

The people with higher levels of education are more likely to desire more information about all aspects of discussed business activities. The same is true for those under the age of 35. The ethnic minority population, on the other hand, tends to show far less interest.

The project's post-survey focus groups provided additional information regarding people's interest in the activities of businesses.³⁴ The discussions revealed both a lack of accessible information and a desire to know more. The participants of the Tbilisi focus group agreed that there is not enough reliable information about the composition and quality of food products, or about the impact a company's activities might have on the environment. Businesses are only scrutinized, the participants believe, when accidents happen:

“The state mechanism that exists, for example, the food safety service, [...] they practically do not check [products] and when they check, they do not do it upon their own initiative; someone has to declare and something horrible has to happen, someone always gets poisoned before something gets examined. If someone dies, then they will check the products.”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

³⁴ As a reminder, two focus groups were held on this topic, one in Tbilisi and one in Zestaponi, in March, 2018.

The focus group participants also described a similar situation with businesses' environmental protection activities, which are believed to be inadequate to truly protect the environment. The respondents were far from confident that the situation can be improved:

"I was in [Chiatura] about a year ago and you cannot enter the city; it stinks.³⁵ The river that flows there is completely black. [...] This river is totally black, polluted horribly and no one is held responsible for it in Georgia."

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

However, when there is reason to believe that a certain company is not doing enough for the environment, or for ensuring a high enough quality of food, people sometimes prefer not to be informed:

"The less we know [about the work of an environmentally non-friendly company] the better, since more knowledge will 'cause more fear'."

[Focus group, March 7, Zestaponi]

"What should I learn [about the composition of food products], even if I want it very much, I am not a detective and who will tell me, right? This is why I do not take interest in that; I am just full of indifference and nihilism when I buy food products because I know I can do nothing about it."

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

While the survey results revealed that two thirds of the Georgian people believe business entities only care about profit. In Tbilisi, as was the case with NGOs, there is more severe scepticism, as 73% agreed that companies only care about profit. Approximately half of the population (51%) do not believe businesses in Georgia care about the unemployed, with only a third (34%) believing that they care.

As is the case with NGOs, there is a great deal of ambivalence when it comes to businesses in Georgia. Almost half of the population (47-48%) agreed with the statements that Georgian companies protect the rights of their employees, and care about the development of the economy, about public good and about customers' interests.

However, only 30% of the population stated that companies operating in Georgia take care of the environment, while 48% believe they do not take care of the environment. Approximately one third of the population thinks businesses protect Georgian traditions, while one third said they do not, and the final third found the question difficult to answer. Additionally, 40% of the population believe companies enter corrupt deals with the government, with 43% finding it hard to answer the question.

The survey explored the extent to which people differentiate between the role of large, medium and small companies in the development of Georgia in general. For this purpose, three hypothetical enterprises (small, medium and large businesses) were described and the

³⁵ Chiatura is an industrial town in Western Georgia, famous for its manganese ores.

respondents assessed their role in the development of Georgia.³⁶ There is a clear trend showing as the size of an enterprise decreases, assessments of its importance for the development of the country also declines. The results showed that 77% of the population considered the role of large enterprises in development of Georgia as important, with 58% in the case of medium enterprises, and 41% with small enterprises.

Some negative views toward business were voiced during the focus group discussions. While the respondents considered it understandable and acceptable that companies focus on profit, the participants were clear that their profit should not be a business's only goal:

“First of all, a company should be required to protect people. This can be expressed by high quality products or having safe conditions for people working in construction or something else. [...] We have none of those in [in Georgia].”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

Furthermore, the focus group participants suggested the government should be responsible for ensuring business entities adhere to the rules:

“The population [of Georgia] still links social responsibility with the government, i.e. obliging the government to take care of people. It is not developed in Georgian society that private companies have some obligations and they put all responsibility on the government.”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

“In my opinion, we do not have the luxury of setting additional, additional and additional regulations to businesses because it harms the business environment; however, unfortunately, we have to.”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

4.2 What is a ‘Good Company’, and how Products/Services are chosen

It is rare for the Georgian population to protest a company's unpopular decisions or improper actions. Upon learning of a company's impropriety, only 17% of the population said they had refused to buy products from or use that company's services. Another 2% suggested that they had considered boycotting a company's products and services but had not physically done so. Around 20% of the participants stated they had never heard of any companies' unacceptable behaviour.

When deciding between two identical products, of the same quality and price, the population chose which to purchase using the following criteria:³⁷

³⁶ See question 39 from the questionnaire in Annex 1. For the classification of enterprises, the official criteria were used regarding the number of employees and annual turnout (as of January 2017).

³⁷ It was an open question with up to two possible answers.

- The product is produced in Georgia (52%)
- The product has more attractive packaging (14%)
- The product is produced by a company known for caring about the environment (8%)
- The product had an enjoyable or memorable advert (8%)
- The product was recommended by a relative or friend (7%)
- The product is produced abroad (6%)
- The product is produced by a company known for its charitable activities (6%)
- The product is produced by a company that implements projects for the good of the community-for example, the renovation of schools and roads, healthcare, etc. (4%)
- The product is produced by a company that cares about better working conditions for its employees (4%)
- The product is produced by a company where a relative or friend works (3%)
- The product is produced by a company that has never been involved in corruption (3%).

Less than a tenth (7%) of the population claimed they would buy any product they could 'get their hands on', while 8% found it hard to answer this specific question.

Therefore, one can surmise that many corporate social responsibility (CSR) factors are reportedly irrelevant to Georgian consumers. Only 4% of the population pays attention to whether a company has any programmes that have the public good in mind, or which offer decent working conditions to its employees. This suggested that public demand for CSR does not yet exist in Georgia.

This conclusion is supported by the responses to the question regarding which factors are most important when considering if a company is 'good'. Just over a half of the population (54%) suggested quality products are the most important criterion. The second most frequent answer shows that a business can be considered a 'good company' if it employs Georgian citizens rather than foreigners (23%). Whilst 18% of the population hold that a good company should use local raw materials in their production.

Two other criteria were also mentioned relatively frequently: 19% of the population consider a business a 'good company' if it takes care of the environment, and 16%, if a company offers affordable prices to its customers. In each case, there is almost no difference amongst the main demographic groups.

The professionalism of company's employees was identified far less frequently (6%). Paying taxes honestly, implementing community projects, doing charity work, and being transparent were each named by just 3-4% of the population.³⁸ Only 1% of the population stated that a company should be considered 'good' if it has never been involved in corruption. The answers reveal that the population's priorities are practical. People are focused on product quality and

³⁸ A show card was used, from which the respondents could choose a maximum of three answers. It is important to note that the order of the listed criteria is relative, i.e. of the 17 options each respondent could choose a maximum of three considered more important **compared to the other criteria**. This type of questioning is significant given the context, since it was 'forcing' the respondents to make a choice, and thus gives the opportunity to view the most important factors. Had a different formulation of the question been used (for example, asking the respondents to rate the criteria independently), different results may have been discerned where the priorities may be identified less clearly or not at all.

certain 'patriotic' values (such as employing Georgian citizens, using local raw materials), and they have little concern for business integrity, including standards such as transparency, professionalism or caring for public welfare.

The focus group discussions also revealed significant support for Georgian companies. When asked to name a 'good company', the participants only recollected the names of various Georgian food companies. The participants of the Zestaponi group further concluded that a good company is chaired by a Georgian and employs Georgians. The other criteria mentioned included manufacturing quality products, safe working conditions, protection of the rights of employees and affordable prices.

However, support for Georgian companies is neither unconditional nor ubiquitous. The focus group participants are not ready to buy Georgian products if they are more expensive than imported products of comparable quality. They cited insufficient income to 'buy Georgian' and blamed the government for the situation:

"The authorities should think patriotically so that Georgian products are affordable for Georgians."

[Focus group, March 7, Zestaponi]

Thus, being a Georgian company does not automatically endow 'good company' status. Several Georgian companies were regarded as bad, either because they were believed to pose a threat to the health of their employees or to the local population; because they either produce or sell low-quality products; or because their products are unaffordable.

4.3 The Georgian Population's Knowledge and Views on Corporate Social Responsibility

The clear majority of the Georgian population, 90%, are not informed about corporate social responsibility (CSR). Therefore, investigating views on CSR is particularly challenging. As a new and little known topic in Georgian discourse, it was clarified to the respondents using the following explanation: 'CSR is associated with a company's responsibility that it not only pursues its own interests, but, beyond the legal requirements, gets involved in the process of solving certain social issues, helping people in need, protecting the environment and caring about its employees. According to this new model, businesses play a larger role in the development of society.' Even after being provided with this explanation, only 10% stated that they had heard about CSR.³⁹ Due to these limitations, only 10% of the respondents answered the following related questions. Therefore, one cannot claim that the findings, reported below, wholly reflect the opinion of the Georgian population. In addition, this slight percentage prohibits the study of the differences between the major demographic groups (for example, by settlement type or age).

³⁹ Only one of the focus group respondents had heard the term before, though one cannot generalize the information due to the non-representative nature of the sampling for focus-groups.

Seventy-one percent of those aware of CSR suggest that there are companies in Georgia performing activities that could qualify as CSR. Eighty-eight percent of those who have heard of CSR suggested large businesses are the most expected to be socially responsible. Whereas for medium businesses, this proportion is 40% and 20% for small businesses.

The individuals aware of CSR believe companies have practical reasons for caring about societal development and not simply considering their profits: using CSR, they attempt to build a good reputation (53%) and attract customers (48%).⁴⁰ As one of the focus group participants stated, *“what you give to others shall be given back to you”* [Focus group, March 7, Zestaponi]. Eighteen percent of these respondents believe that companies engage in CSR because they sincerely want to help solve people’s economic problems. Another 18% suggested they do so because they care for society. As for why some companies are not socially responsible, two opinions dominated: that companies think that investing in CSR will yield no profit (46%) and that companies have insufficient resources for CSR programmes (37%).

Within the group aware of CSR, there is no clear opinion as to whether either long or short-term CSR projects should be implemented in Georgia. Forty-six percent reported that the state should convince Georgian companies to engage in CSR projects. Whereas, 24% think that the initiative should come from the people and 13% stated that it should come from the company’s higher management. Whilst, according to 12% (which equates to 1% of the general population) NGOs should persuade businesses to implement CSR projects.

Therefore, the main conclusion that can be drawn is that the majority of the population is uninformed about CSR. In most cases, people learned the term for the first time during the survey interviews and in the focus groups. The assessment of the role and activities of businesses leads to the conclusion that there is presently very little ground for the principles of CSR to become an important criterion in the evaluation of Georgian businesses’ work. Placing the emphasis on issues like product quality and price, people care considerably less about whether companies are transparent, duly pay taxes, or engage in social or charity projects.

Remarkably, one participant of the Tbilisi focus group saw parallels between modern CSR and a historic example from Georgian business:

“David Sarajishvili was such a person.⁴¹ He had a lot of money, was not a bad guy, reasoned patriotically, cared for others, was a kind, responsible man who sent many people abroad to study and later left all of his wealth to the Society for Spreading Literacy. He was a good Georgian who ate well, drank well, lived well and did many good deeds.”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

The focus group respondents further revealed that a company’s CSR is predominantly linked to the personal traits of a business’s owners. Moreover, most participants believe widespread CSR in Georgia is yet a distant prospect.

40 As one focus group respondents said: “[A company] will win the trust and sympathy of the population and the customer, and will get its investments worth back.” [Focus group, March 7, Zestaponi]

41 David Sarajishvili was an industrialist and brandy magnate who died in the early 1900s.

“My grandchildren’s generation can hope to see it [Georgian business companies following corporate social responsibility model].”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

However, the focus group respondents certainly do not appreciate charitable donations or social projects that are financed by companies that ‘suck people’s blood’:

“[A company] sells its products at three times more expensive prices. If they screw me over, if they suck blood from five million people and then give two hundred lari to somebody, that is not charity [...] if they take from us and give to their employees, how is it going to be fair?”

[Focus group, March 9, Tbilisi]

Scepticism was also voiced about businesses’ contributions toward the development of the Georgian economy and to the overall development of the country:

“They may be contributing to the economic development, but you cannot see it when looking at Georgia.”

[Focus group, March 7, Zestaponi]

The general attitude of the participants, however, is that if a company has no desire to work on social issues, nothing will be able to force them to change their behaviour. Yet, some respondents believe that NGOs have the potential to play a positive role in enacting change:

“NGOs play a big role [...] They are active in this regard in absolutely all fields. [...] It is mostly on TV that we hear about some wrongdoings of a company and it is NGOs that are behind such ‘noise’.”

[Focus group, March 7, Zestaponi]

CONCLUSION

Attitudes towards NGOs, the European Union and business entities in Georgia are complex, often inconsistent, and are all best characterized as highly ambivalent. As a key example, approximately half of the population believe life in Georgia would improve if people were involved in the work of non-governmental organizations, however, less than one third of respondents report trusting NGOs. When measuring the population's attitudes during the direct survey questions, people often paint a rather positive picture, which, though, often emerges to be quite superficial and hardly reliable.

In contrast to the ambivalent attitudes towards NGOs and business entities in Georgia stands a clear lack of knowledge about these institutions. With just over half of the population able to correctly identify that a major Georgian TV network is not an NGO, and with 17% finding it difficult to assess their trust towards NGOs. The CSSIGE survey estimates that only 16% of the Georgian people can be regarded as well informed about NGOs, and 90% have not heard of corporate social responsibility in business. In terms of sources of information, television remains dominant, though the internet and social networks are becoming increasingly more important for young people and residents of Tbilisi. Quite clearly, increased outreach is needed to improve the populace's level of knowledge.

Considering specific attitudes towards NGOs, there is a profound disparity between the 'traditional' civic disengagement characteristic of the population and with what NGOs are truly attempting to bring to the country. Institutionalized civic engagement remains very low, consistent with the widespread belief that it provides no potential to improve the current situation. Georgia has a very brief history of civic engagement, and unsurprisingly, only 4% of the population are presently members of any form of institutionalized club or association, including online groups. With regards to noninstitutionalized engagement, such as planting trees or cleaning communal areas, the results are different: with between a quarter and a third of the population taking part in these activities, at least occasionally. This report argues that this base could be built upon, especially given that two thirds of the people stated they would be willing to join an organization that focused on a specific and widely shared goal, such as protecting the environment. With the younger generation reporting an even greater willingness to engage in civic minded activities. The population of Tbilisi is also more willing to participate, though equally, people living in the capital offer more critical and sceptical attitudes.

Considering the decades of underprovided civic engagement, the Georgian people are sceptical of NGOs, in particular their sources of funding and their members' ultimate motivations. It is possible that many of the negative feelings surrounding NGOs are connected to the widespread sense that they are 'foreign', 'alien' institutions run and staffed by people who are more concerned with their own interests than the interests of ordinary people. The feeling that NGOs are financed by the West may also be entrenching such views about foreign interference in Georgian affairs, thereby increasing the immediate level of distrust. Individuals who have had direct interaction with NGOs are much more positive towards them, though currently they are in the minority (16% nationwide).



Despite their general scepticism, 56% of people reported that NGOs have a positive impact on the development of Georgia. Moreover, only 2% of the population stated that NGOs either should not exist or should not be doing their work. Thus, it is quite clear that there is a public demand for NGOs in the country. If NGOs were focused on specific, clear issues that are understandable and relevant to the everyday lives of the people (such as environmental or food safety issues), it would help them mobilize the population. Without this focus the populace selects predominantly to care for their own and their family affairs. Currently however, the highly ambivalent attitudes towards NGOs in Georgia was summarized well by a focus group participant who claimed that while NGOs probably will not help them, nor will they cause them harm.

The survey results show that the population neither highly trusts nor highly distrusts NGOs, which contributes to the overall pattern of ambivalence. Whilst this is a relatively sanguine finding given the reported lack of trust towards institutions in Georgia, trust for and desire to join the EU remains high. The trust towards the EU is statistically correlated with trust towards NGOs, i.e. the high levels of trust to the EU correspond to the high levels of trust towards NGOs. Yet, EU support does not seem to be unconditional: 44% of the population agreed that the EU threatens Georgian traditions and 33% agreed with the statement that the EU is a new form of empire. These views, and the reasons behind such opinions, deserve further careful study.

Finally, there are similar levels of inconsistency when it comes to attitudes towards business entities. Certain 'patriotic' principles apply to what constitutes a 'good company': employing Georgian citizens and using Georgian materials were identified as vital criteria. However, that does not translate into a popular desire for business integrity. Only a handful of people thought paying taxes or not being involved in corruption made a good company. There is, at present, very little knowledge of and almost no demand for corporate social responsibility, or even for simple business integrity.