



SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

ABOUT ELECTION CONDUCT AND EXPECTATIONS

NDI Georgia
November 2016

Methodology

- Fieldwork dates: November 21-28
- Carried out by CRRC for NDI
- 3 groups per city: Group of GD supporters, group of UNM supporters and a group of non-voters (people who didn't vote in the last elections) - 15 FG discussions overall
- Where: Zugdidi, Batumi, Tbilisi, Gurjaani, Marneuli
 - Difficulty recruiting women and non-voters in Marneuli
- +/-10 participants in each group
- Mixed age, gender, employment status
- Not statistically representative (!)

Selection of participants

CRRC coordinators go to several central places in these cities, randomly stop people and recruit them. Participation is voluntary.

- Did you participate in the last elections? (Answers must be Yes or No; the latter would join a non-voter group)
- Do you watch news coverage at least three times a week? (answer must be yes)
- Which party did you vote for?

Areas of Research

- Perfect Georgia and expectations
- Expectations towards the new parliament
- Expectations towards female MPs
- Knowledge on MPs' duties and responsibilities
- Sexual harassment

LEADING THEMES (ALL GROUPS)

- Economic struggle - across the board
- Disappointment and apathy (among non-voters and UNM supporters and less so among GD supporters)
- Difficulty visualizing future (among non-voters and UNM supporters)
- Disconnect between citizens and elected officials
- The parliament not viewed from the gender lens
- Demand for more women in the parliament

Imagine you wake up tomorrow and Georgia is perfect...
What is it like? What would be different from the way it
is now?

Democracy
Stability
Strong-economy
Better-healthcare
United-Georgia
Better-education-system
Everybody-employed
Stable-currency
Good-Infrastructure
Less-credits
Peace
Happy-people
High-pensions
Better-relations-with-neighbours

Major findings (ALL GROUPS) - pre-election environment

- Pre-election period described as relatively calm - across the board
 - Marneuli was the only city where groups described pre-election period as chaotic and violent; Participants talked about ethnic based provocations and intimidation
- Participants said 2nd round was more tense than the first one
- Door to door was sometimes regarded as an attempt to intimidate people
- Party coordinators job and receiving salary from the party was regarded as bribery (GD and UNM supporters mentioned)



ELECTIONS

Quotes

- “There was a complete chaos because local population was divided in two. People had been confronting one another for supporting 41 or 5. Total chaos it was,” - Marneuli, no vote, female, 21, employed
- “In the first round many Azerbaijani went to vote, but not in the second round. They were afraid. It was dangerous for people, no one was leaving homes,” - Marneuli, no vote, female, 21, employed
- “The UNM candidate and they were attacking and cursing Georgian Dream candidate on TV, on Facebook and on the internet. The Azerbaijanis who supported the Georgian Dream were blamed for not being true believers, not being Azerbaijanis, that they were Svanetians, traitors of Georgian land, they were cursing and so on,” - Marneuli, Georgian Dream, male, 26, unemployed
- “We have heard from Azerbaijani people that they were intimidated and blackmailed. Otherwise, there were no incidents with ethnic Georgian population.” - Marneuli, Georgian Dream, female, employed

Quotes

- “My friend’s mother is a school teacher. She attended Imam Kuliev’s public meeting in the village. Next day she was called in by the principal and was fired for attending the meeting a day before,” - Marneuli, UNM, male
- “[The pre-election period] was peaceful in every aspect” - Batumi, UNM, male, 42, employed
- “Ahead of October 8 the situation was good. People were excited to vote for UNM. Later on, however, in the leadup to October 30 they started intimidating people and people were afraid...” - Gurjaani, UNM, female, 26, employed
- “The environment was peaceful but there were facts of bribery. I know that my co-worker’s daughter-in-law was paid 600 GEL and one of my clients told me that she was given 450 GEL... They were doing door-to-door... I wish it was like during Communists: if I go to the elections I will vote whomever I want, there should be no such thing as asking questions like who I am voting for, if I am going [to the elections] or not,” - Tbilisi, UNM, female, 66, employed

Major findings (ALL GROUPS) - Campaigns and promises

- Participants said all parties had similar promises
- Most participants in all groups had difficulty linking promises to the parties
- Majority of participants couldn't recall solutions towards solving problems offered by the parties

Most frequently mentioned promises

lower-retirement-age
more-jobs
fixing-infrastructure
cutting-taxes
introducing-minimum-wage
no-block-status
improving-healthcare-system
better-relations-with-Russia
higher-pensions

Quotes

- “They promised cutting the salary bonuses for public officials. I don’t understand why are they receiving salary supplements when they have such high salaries? Natelashvili was talking too much, saying he would increase pensions up to 1000 GEL but this seems unbelievable,” - Gurjaani, Georgian Dream, male, 60, employed
- “Everybody was promising the jobs,” - Tbilisi, UNM, female, 45, employed
- “Seems like United National Movement had a written plan, however, the details were not public,” - Batumi, no vote, male, 21, unemployed
- “In Gurjaani we have a large canning factory. We were promised they would reopen it and create 200-300 jobs,” - Gurjaani, Georgian Dream, female, 43, unemployed
- “Almost everyone had the same electoral program...” - Gurjaani, Georgian Dream, female, 42, employed
- “They were only promising without explaining how they would deliver on their promises, they didn’t have solutions,” - Gurjaani, UNM, male 28, unemployed

Major findings (ALL GROUPS) - Comparing 2012 and 2016 election cycles

- Most participants said people were so hyped for the change in 2012 that nothing would stand on its way

Identified differences:

- GD supporters mentioned oppression in 2012
- Non-voters and GD agree that there was more self-censorship in 2012
- All groups say people were extremely hyped for a change in 2012
- All groups say people were more enthusiastic about voting in 2012
- All groups say there were more promises by parties in 2012

Major findings - GD voters' profile



Most GD supporters disappointed with the previous parliament (for “they didn’t fulfill promises”)

Why voted for GD?

Intensity of GD support was not strong:

- Voted because there was no better option
- Voted because they are giving GD a last chance
- Voted to protest other opposition parties
- Voted to support the reforms GD started over the past four years

GD and non-voters give credit to the new GD team

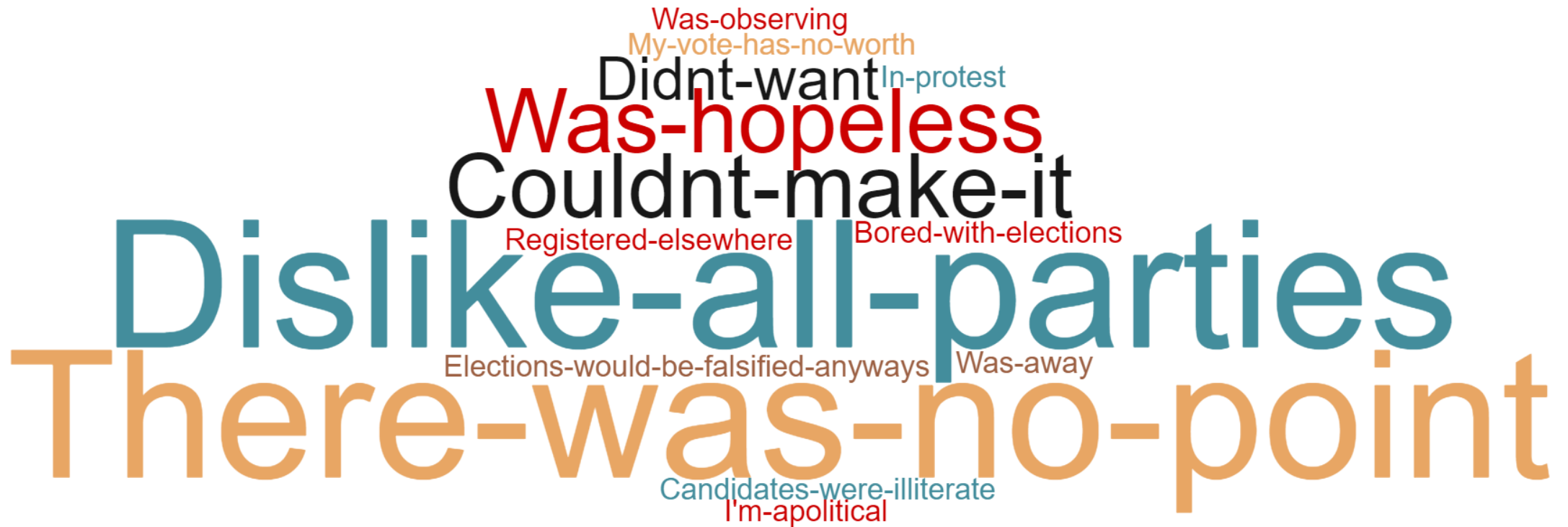
- New faces: Young and educated
- More polite

Major findings: UNM voters' profile



- No expectations
- Difficulty visualizing future
- Did not undermine GD's new leadership's knowledge and capacity but said:
 - They are not decision makers hence can't make changes ("unless Ivanishvili tells them to do so")
 - They are all self-gain-oriented
- Most of participants were hard-core UNM supporters

WHY DIDN'T YOU VOTE?



Major findings (ALL GROUPS) - Expectations

- GD supporters have faith in the new GD leadership, expecting delivery of positive changes starting from next year
- UNM supporters skeptical about the government and the new Parliamentary GD majority making changes that will matter for them
- Non-voters recognize that the new parliament and the government have all the resources to solve problems and improve living conditions but they don't believe elected officials will use their resources for good

Major findings (ALL GROUPS) - What do they want achieved in the first place?

peace
visa-free
higher-salaries
infrastructure-improved
healthcare-system-improved
education-system-improved
higher-pensions
lari-stabilized
new-jobs



Major findings (ALL GROUPS) - Composition of the new parliament

- **GD supporters expressed faith in the new parliament because of the new faces**
 - Criticized the previous parliament for not fulfill their initial promises
 - Many participants expected more parties and think having more parties would have been an added value for democracy
- **UNM supporters dislike current parliament (because of GD majority, Patriots' Alliance) and say having fewer parties is a setback**
- **Non-voters were not very opinioned about the new parliament but said more parties would have been better**

Major findings (ALL GROUPS) - Composition of the new parliament

Which parties would they add to the new parliament?

- Free Democrats, United Democratic Movement, Labor Party, Republicans
(The most frequently given responses)

Which party would they remove from the parliament?

- Patriots' Alliance (The most frequently given response)

Major findings (ALL GROUPS) - Constitutional Majority

- Most GD supporters support constitution majority although recognize:
 - Temptation to abuse this privilege exists
 - Nevertheless they are hopeful that the new parliament will not abuse power
- Most GD and non-voters said that the constitutional majority will be a litmus test for the new GD leadership giving them absolute power to deliver on their promises (Logic: In case of failure in the 2nd term, GD won't be able to justify it with lack of power and/or resources)
- UNM supporters said constitutional majority would be dangerous even for UNM led government (for every team will be tempted to abuse the power)

Quotes

- “I think that people have been voting for Georgian Dream since 2012 and have been waiting for immediate positive changes; but back then the Georgian Dream did not have the majority. Whenever they wanted to do something UNM would prevented it. Now, they [GD] have the majority and will easily deliver on their promises,” - Marneuli, Georgian Dream, male, 26, unemployed
- “Before when they wanted to adopt a new law others were hindering that process. Now, they will be able to bring in new laws and will deliver on their promises,” - Batumi, Georgian Dream, male, 32, unemployed
- “The example of the previous government has shown that the constitutional majority gave them power to decide matters in their own favor. I think this danger still exists. Well, not danger, but the temptation. We will see what happens, we have to observe the events,” - Tbilisi, Georgian Dream, male, 21, unemployed

Participants: 23 female MPs not enough!



- Majority of participants, across the board, says having 23 women in the parliament is not enough
- Idea of having at least 50 female MPs (or often mentioned 1/3) was dominant - among both genders

One of the biggest barriers to greater female participation seems to be the general mistrust in elected officials (Logic: who cares if it's a man or a woman, no politicians serve people)

Quotes

- “I support gender equality, I do not have anything against it. Let there be more women represented in the parliament, why not?” - Gurjaani, UNM, male, 29, employed
- “I think they [women MPs] are more diligent and hard-working. They will work more,” - Batumi, Georgian Dream, female, 39, unemployed
- “Women are always in the background. I believe women can do more, simply because they always manage families so well. For instance, during the election period, they assigned hard work to women but in the end men end up on the senior positions,” - Gurjaani, UNM, female, 43, employed
- “I think that there should be at least fifty women in the parliament... Women have their own concerns and they should work for women too,” - Marneuli, Georgian Dream, male, 40, employed
- “I am in favor of having more women [in the parliament]... They will take more intelligent approach towards the issues,” - Marneuli, Georgian Dream, female, 43, employed

Major findings (ALL GROUPS) - Expectations towards female MPs



The parliament is not viewed from a gender lens

- It takes several probes to make people think and articulate about women in the parliament. Although generally women politicians are perceived positively, these attitudes do not come up naturally and take some time to surface
 - Expectations towards female MPs don't necessarily differ from those towards male MPs
- “Men make a lot of compromises because either they are scared of someone, or that person is a relative and it is not manly to go against them. That does not work like that with women; they will do what needs to be done and will follow it until the end,” - Gurjaani, Georgian Dream, male, 60, employed
 - “Women are more humane and they will initiate necessary laws more easily,” - Batumi, Georgian Dream, male, 32, employed
 - “I would say that women always get more concerned about issues. Man sees problems from a different angle and he might not consider the problem as an important issue, as woman would... Even though I am a man and I would do everything I can, I still believe that a mother, a woman will approach the same issues differently,” - Batumi, no vote, male, 43, employed

Female MPs viewed as....



Major findings (ALL GROUPS) - understanding of MPs' duties and responsibilities



- Majority of participants lacked a detailed understanding of MPs' duties and responsibilities
- Participants believe that the primary duty of a MP should be creating laws and proposing initiatives based on people's needs and opinions (assuming that they invest time on efforts learning public opinion)
- Most participants believe that no parliament in the past managed to deliver on this issue and that no previous parliament managed to embrace policy making based on public opinion

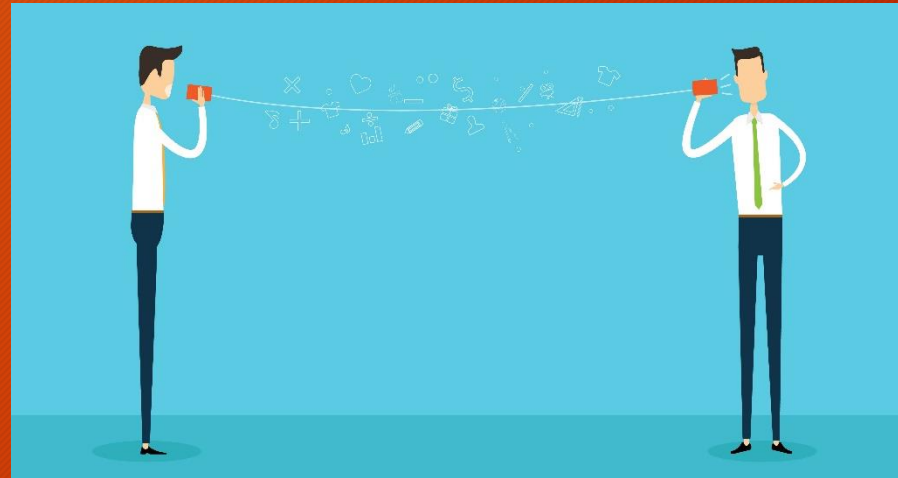
Thinking of the parliament, what do you think are the main functions/responsibilities of MPs?

A word cloud visualization of responses to the question 'Thinking of the parliament, what do you think are the main functions/responsibilities of MPs?'. The words are arranged in a roughly rectangular shape, with 'Writing-laws' being the largest and most central word. Other prominent words include 'communicating-with-people', 'Listening-to-public-opinion', and 'caring-for-people'. Smaller words scattered throughout include 'fulfilling-promises', 'representing-people', 'being-ethical', 'being-hardworker', 'learning-issues', 'ruling-country', 'voting', and 'being-awake'. The colors of the words vary, with red, orange, teal, and black being the most visible.

communicating-with-people
Listening-to-public-opinion
Writing-laws
fulfilling-promises
representing-people
caring-for-people
being-ethical
being-hardworker
learning-issues
ruling-country
voting
being-awake

Major findings (ALL GROUPS) - disconnect between the citizens and elected officials

- Nonexistent communication system in place to guarantee effective communication between citizens and MPs
- All participants say they want face to face communication (office hours, public meetings)
- All participants want the same level of communication as in the pre-election period



Other Issues

- Direct elections of the president
- Making sexual harassment an administrative offence

Major findings (ALL GROUPS) - Who should elect the president?

- Most participants - across the board (with the exception of very few GD supporters) - believe the president should be directly elected by the citizens

Arguments against direct election of the president:

- President currently holds no power so doesn't matter who he/she will be or how will he/she be elected
- MPs know better and have a proper knowledge to make such high level decisions

Arguments in favor of direct election of the president:

- There should be a system of checks and balances
- President currently can dissolve the parliament. If elected by the legislative body parliament won't be accountable to anyone
- Due to lack of trust in parliamentary institute (UNM and non-voters) participants do not want to grant it additional power

Major findings (ALL GROUPS) - Attitudes towards sexual harassment

- Lack of understanding on what sexual harassment means
- Often confused with sexual minorities, sexual violence or domestic violence
- After giving a definition, most participants condemn such behavior

Major findings (ALL GROUPS) - Making sexual harassment an administrative offence

- After giving a definition and learning that there is no legal framework for protecting sexual harassment victims at the working place, majority of participants expressed support for the parliament to continue working on relevant legislation.
 - Majority of participants claimed making it an administrative offence is not enough and it should be punished under the criminal law.
 - This topic gained particular support in Marneuli
 - Male participants admitted that they know of such cases
 - They said it's one of the reasons they fear letting women participate in the public life

Some participants fear that potential victims might take advantage of such regulation and blackmail their employers. They suggested that this legal norm should contain thorough investigation mechanism to avoid such cases.