



TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL GEORGIA PUBLISHES RESULTS OF PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

- **Citizens have little information about the activities of parliament**

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Tbilisi, Georgia – Transparency International Georgia (TI Georgia) published the results of a public opinion survey on the Georgian parliament that was conducted by the Caucasus Research Resources Center on behalf of TI Georgia. The survey was based on representative sampling and was carried out throughout the country between 25 March and 2 April 2008. In total 1,538 people were surveyed.

Confidence in institutions

Voters do not trust in parliament as an institution, though the level of trust has risen slightly since October 2007. The public defender tops the list of trusted officials and institutions (32.2 percent), followed by the president (24.4 percent). The judiciary and the Central Electoral Commission are the least trusted institutions with 36.7 percent and 36.2 percent of the respondents respectively expressing complete distrust in them. Only 9.4 percent of the respondents have full trust in parliament. It has to be noted, however, that parliament did better than other institutions in terms of "average" trust (the mode was three on a scale of one to five) - 36.2 percent.

It is worth noting that the level of confidence in all five institutions changed significantly over the last year. The confidence in the public defender increased by the biggest margin: While only 14.4 percent of respondents declared complete trust in him in 2007, a third of the respondents trust him completely in 2008. In contrast, there has been an increase in the number of people who completely distrust the judiciary (from 22.2 to 36.7 percent) and the president (from 16.5 to 24.4 percent). Interestingly, the number of people with a neutral attitude toward the government and parliament increased, while the level of complete distrust in both institutions remained unchanged and the level of complete trust increased.

Unawareness of parliament's activities

One of the main reasons for citizens' lack of trust in parliament's activities is due to the insufficient information about parliament's activities. The respondents also knew little about citizens' rights vis-à-vis parliament. About a quarter of respondents thought that voters are entitled to recall their majoritarian MP (voters cannot recall a majoritarian MP). Approximately 14 percent think that they have right to make a speech at the plenary session (citizens do not have the right to make a speech on plenary sessions)

Citizens believe that parliament's main duties are to elaborate and adopt laws and that it performs this well. However they think that parliament is ineffective in protecting the interests of citizens.

In terms of parliamentary activities, citizens are more interested in vote records for approving the president's cabinet, parliament's budget and expenditures, draft laws, and MPs' financial declarations.



Citizens are dissatisfied with the activities of the majoritarian MPs. Many of them do not even know the name of their majoritarian MP. It turned out that only 53.2 percent of the respondents could name their majoritarian MP correctly, while 41.8 percent could not name their majoritarian MP at all and 4.5 percent named him or her incorrectly.

Citizens believe that a majoritarian MP can help them resolve their problems but do not really expect him/her to do it. According to 27.2 percent of the respondents, a majoritarian MP is unlikely to reply to any question. Only 13.8 percent of them thought that they would definitely get a reply. 88 percent has never known a person who appealed to parliament for a certain reason. A large majority of the voters (93.7 percent) had never met an MP.

Voters believe that MPs are only active during election campaigns when they are trying to obtain support. Approximately two thirds of the respondents thought that MPs are only active before elections, while only 6.8 percent shared the view that MPs are active throughout their term of office.

The respondents thought that both the voters and the MPs need to become more active in order for the communication between parliament and the public to improve. The respondents identified several causes of the communication problems with MPs. The lack of willingness to communicate with voters on the part of MPs was cited as the most significant problem (39 percent). The inability of MPs to resolve problems was also mentioned as a serious problem. However, respondents were also self-critical, with 30 percent saying that voters do not know when to address MPs, which leads to communication problems.

As to the general political views, 53.5 percent of respondents said that they are completely or somewhat disinterested in politics. In March-April (when the survey was conducted) the election date had already been announced. Approximately 75 percent of citizens were determined to participate in parliamentary elections. 31.9 percent believed that the elections would be falsified and they would not take part. 20 percent refused to participate due to indifference. 17.6 percent did not trust the political parties. 6.9 percent thought that only president plays important role in politics.

According to the survey when electing a majoritarian MP they give their priority to honesty (70.7 percent). 52.6 percent assesses MP according to his activities in his/her respective region/district. 49.6 percent thinks that MPs influence in the region is important. 45.9 percent thinks that they pay attention to the pre-election promises.

According to citizens the most important aspect in electing the political party is: leader (58.6 percent), pre-election program (57.7 percent), and the composition of the party list 53.1 percent).

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