

A Democratic Optimisation Analysis:

Connecting Citizens' Hope and Electoral Processes
in Georgia

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Introduction



Key questions aiming at understanding the democratic mind of the Georgian voters, their hopes, attitudes, and worries. In particular, we focus on:

- Voters' spontaneous perceptions of elections and democracy
- Voters' emotions in the electoral context
- Citizens' sociotropism and sense of responsibility
- The psychological determinants of their vote
- Citizens' efficacy, democratic satisfaction, and forms of protest
- Citizens' perceptions of Georgian national identity
- Future projections and perceptions of Georgia's future in Europe and beyond

Methodology



- We conducted a face-to-face survey of a random sample of 2021 respondents, just after the Presidential election in November 2013
- Implemented unique method of “collaborative survey fieldwork – working with local partners provided by the Centre for Electoral Systems Development and Reforms and Training, who carried out the survey on our behalf and input the data on the web platform we created for this purpose
- The 15-minute questionnaire included a mixture of open-ended, close-ended, and background questions, quantitative and qualitative measures, which we adapted to specific deductive and inductive aspects of citizens’ psychology.

Elections and emotions



- Over 40% of voters claim to have already cried because of an election (slightly higher than in most Western democracies)
- 2/3rds of voters like the atmosphere of the polling station (63.8%).
- Voting makes Georgian citizens feel optimistic (79.6%), close to fellow countrymen (76.9%), reassured (68.7%), proud (67%), excited (57.9%), and finally, happy (57.8%).
- Only 1/7 voters feels worried in relation to elections - much lower proportion than in most other European countries.

Voting as a 'social act'

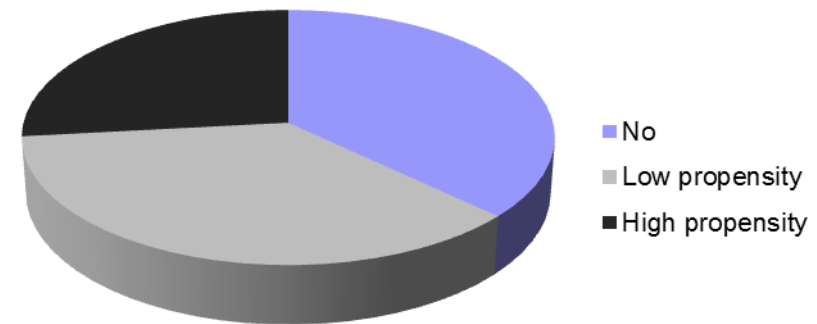


- 83% of citizens express the perception of a social and civic responsibility.
- Socio-tropic voting is dominant for 84.4% of Georgian voters, while only 6.6% vote in a predominantly egocentric way and 9.1% using a mix of both evaluations.
- In Georgia, 50.2% of voters describe themselves as supporters and only 14% as referees.

Voting Volatility

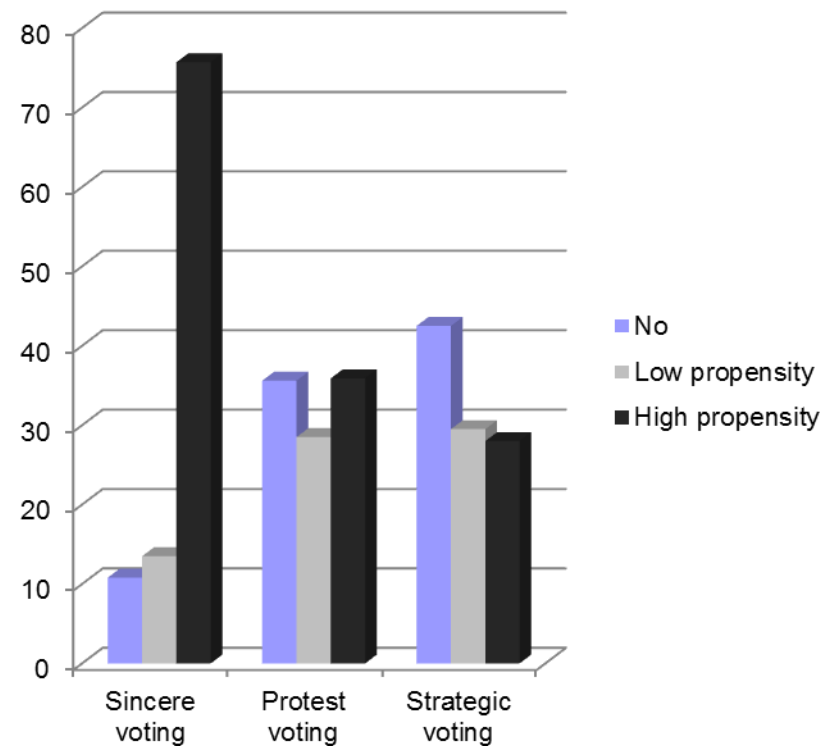


- 49.5% occasionally change their minds over the course of an election, nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ of voters (22.3%) have a high propensity to change their minds throughout the election campaign.
- Only 37% report voting for the same party throughout their life. 63% have changed their partisan choices over time, including over $\frac{1}{4}$ who have a strong propensity to change.
- Symptomatic of a new democracy that has gone through multiple party system changes over the past quarter of a century.



Protest, strategic and Sincere voting

- 64.2% would use protest voting (incl. over 1/3 of voters retaining a high propensity to do so)
- 57.5% would use strategic voting (incl. over 1/4 reporting a high propensity to do so).



Qualities of an 'ideal' President

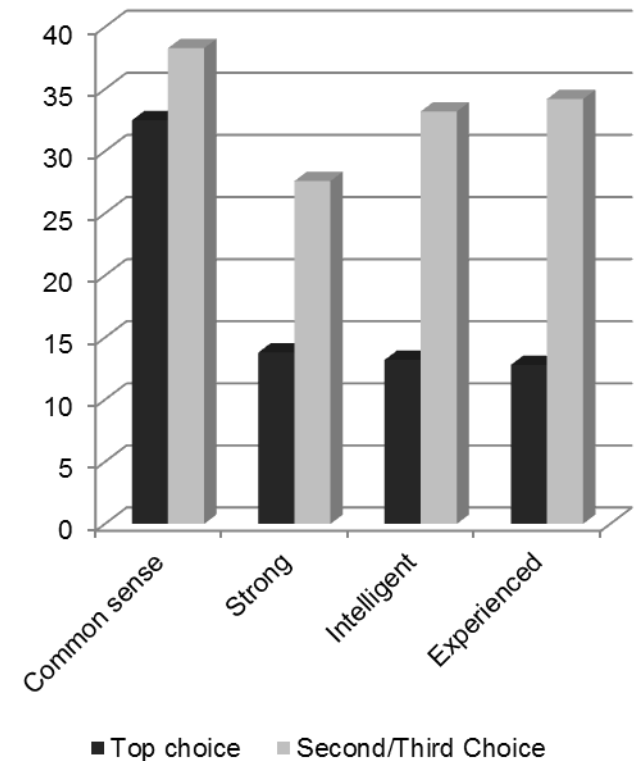


Main personality characteristics:

1. Common sense,
2. Strength
3. Intelligence,
4. Experience

■ Personalised, “heroic” portrait of the ideal President - natural artefact of the system.

■ Patrimonial model of power compared to many Western countries where values like honesty, creativity, and empathy are rated as the top characteristics of a leader.

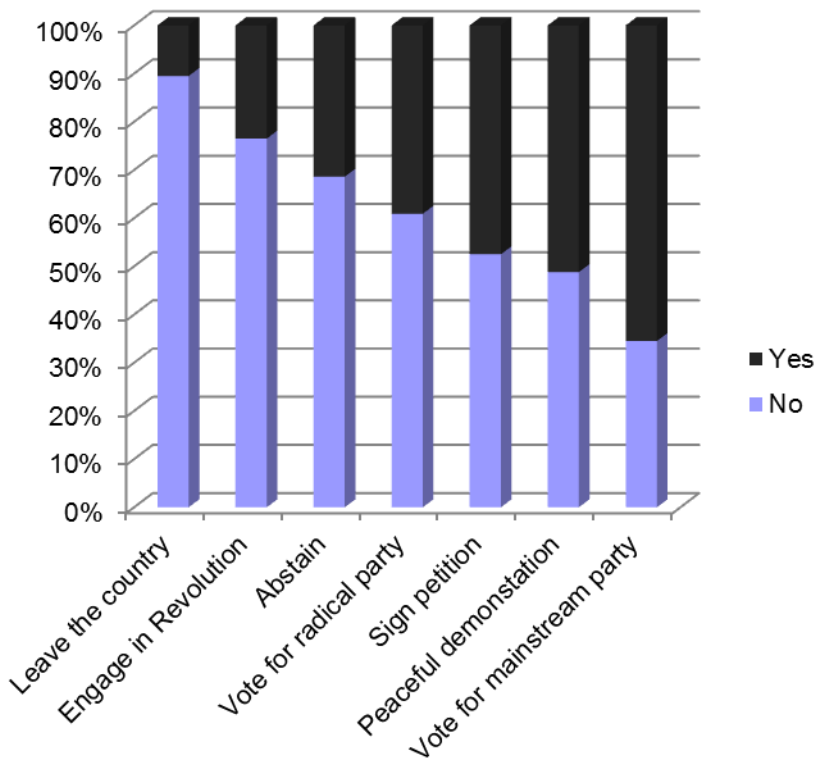


Democratic efficacy



- Levels of efficacy and projected efficacy are very high - 81.1% & 84.3% – substantially higher levels than in most other countries.
- Citizens' satisfaction with democracy is also very high compared to many other European countries.
- 52.8% believe that democracy works well in Georgia (only 22.2% state it does not), and an overwhelming 70.8% agree that society has improved over the past 30 years (12.8% who believe that it has not).

Main modes of protest



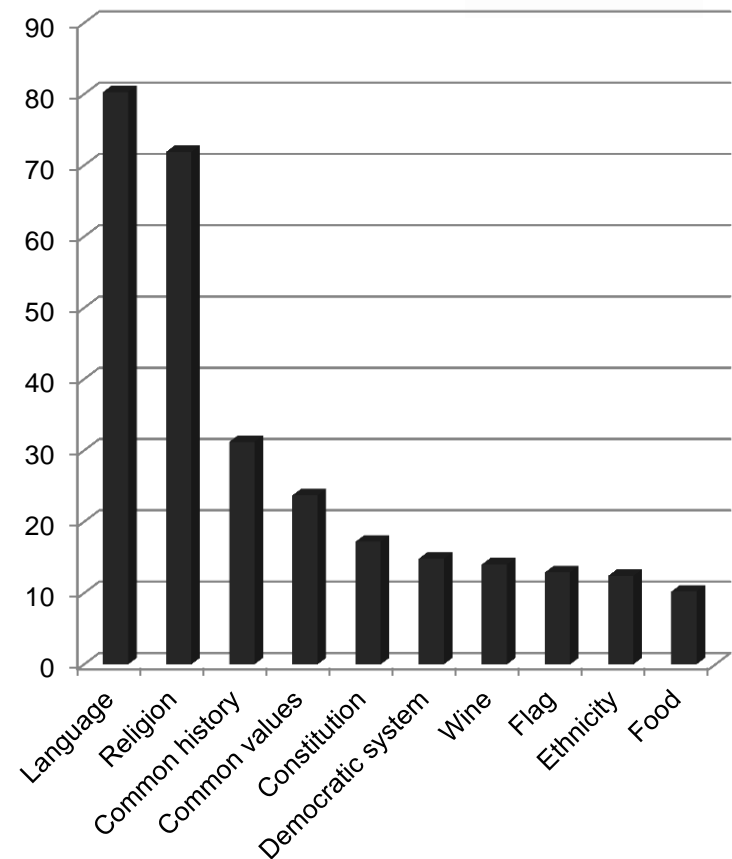
Main modes of protest that Georgians would consider if unhappy with political outcomes include voting for mainstream opposition (65.5%), engaging in a peaceful demonstration (51.2%), and signing a petition (47.5%),

However, 39.1% say they could vote for a radical party, and nearly 1/4 voters would consider engaging in a Revolution.

Georgian identity



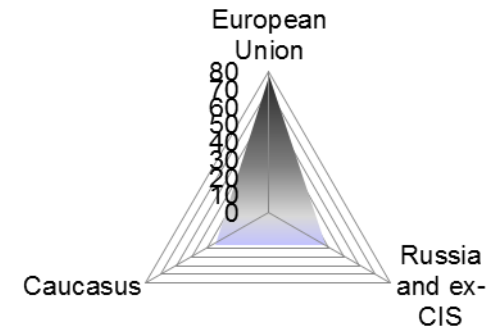
- Georgian identity is culturally based on language (80.3%) & religion (71.9%). a common history (31.2%) & common values (23.7%).
- Civic references i.e. the Constitution (17.2%), democratic system (14.8%) & the flag (12.9%) are lower
- Cultural patrimony i.e. wine (14%) & food (10.2%) & ethnicity (12.4%).
- The greatest affinities are by far with the European Union (11.2%) followed by Russia (7.3%) and Ukraine (5.2%).



An optimistic future



- Future projections are overwhelmingly positive. 82.6% believe that the generation of their children will live a happier life than them
- General optimism about democracy, elections, and their future.
- Overwhelming support for future membership of the European Union - 77.5% of Georgians wish for the country to join the European Union within the next 20 years (in contrast to only 1/3 interested in possible Caucasus or CIS-organisations).



Summary of results

- Georgia is a strong and proud democracy, with fair, efficient, and transparent elections at the heart of citizens' trust towards their system. Georgian voters have universally positive and optimistic attitudes towards democracy and the electoral process.
- They associate largely positive emotions with voting: excitement, happiness, pride, and a sense of optimism. However, their vote remains relatively changing.
- Unlike most of Europe, a majority of Georgian voters see their role as that of a 'supporter' rather than a 'referee' in elections, but they also tend to vote in a socio-tropic way and to feel a sense of responsibility as voters.
- Georgians have a largely cultural definition of their national identity, but are building a collective memory of elections that anchors their shared civic experience.
- Fragilities include a leadership conception that emphasises heroic values, and a strong minority that would consider radical vote or even a Revolution if politically dissatisfied.
- Georgians relate the future of their country to the goal of joining the European Union and are expecting that future generations will live an increasingly happy life.

Paths for progress

ICEP has identified six steps for democratic optimisation:

- Build on Georgia's strong democratic credentials to strengthen civic education
- Research to optimise electoral ergonomics and procedures
- Fine tune campaigning legislation and supervision
- Optimise registration and welcome procedures for first-time voters
- Assess the roots of dissatisfaction of the minority who consider radical protest
- Prepare the European Union future of Georgia