



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NDI POLL: GEORGIANS MIXED ON STATE OF DEMOCRACY AND UNDECIDED ABOUT THEIR POLITICAL CHOICES

TBILISI – Poll results released today by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and CRRC Georgia show that Georgians give mixed assessments on the country’s state of democracy, although freedom of speech, free and fair elections, protection of human rights receive net positive evaluations at 51 percent, 35 percent, and 36 percent, respectively. One-third of citizens reported a positive condition of the rule of law; less than one-third of respondents also reported a positive condition of citizen participation in public life, curbing corruption, and government responding to citizen concerns.

On a related topic, 72 percent of Georgians are aware of the case of Azerbaijani journalist Afghan Mukhtarli who was kidnapped from Tbilisi two months ago and ended up in prison in Azerbaijan. Only 14 percent of those who are aware believe the government should not take responsibility for this, while 78 percent believe the government must take responsibility because they could not stop the kidnapping and 82 percent believe the government is responsible because it should protect human rights.

“As a country that has prioritized human rights, it is essential that the government continues to serve as a beacon in the region and a place of refuge for those who are facing political repressions,” - said Laura Thornton, NDI senior director.

A few months away from local elections, Georgians report that bribing, harassment, and misuse of the state budget are the biggest barriers to free and fair elections, although most believe the Central Election Commission (CEC) will perform average (47 percent) or well (29 percent). Georgians are divided on whether it is important to have a balanced representation of male and female candidates in the upcoming election, and believe that increasing the number of women sakrebulo members would have either a positive impact (43 percent) or no impact (42 percent).

When asked which party is closest to you, almost half of Georgians say “no party” or “don’t know”. When specifically asked if they were decided or undecided about how they would vote, 62 percent of respondents are undecided -- 68 percent among younger Georgians -- including half of those who are likely to vote. “This large number of undecided voters presents both a challenge and opportunity for parties. With weeks until the elections, they have plenty of work to do to inspire and motivate citizens, offer relevant policies, and demonstrate meaningful contrast with their opponents.”

Of those few citizens with an opinion, 23 percent select Georgian Dream (GD), 9 percent United National Movement (UNM), 4 percent for both Bakradze, Ugulava - European Georgia (EG) and the Alliance of Patriots (AoP), and 3 percent for Labor Party. When asked which party would they vote for if elections were tomorrow, the numbers do not significantly change: 22 percent GD, 7 percent UNM, and 3 percent EG, with these numbers for likely voters: 27 percent GD, 8 percent UNM and 3 percent EG.

For the Tbilisi mayoral race, 30 percent support GD candidate Kakha Kaladze, 19 percent independent candidate Aleko Elisashvili, 18 percent UNM's Zaal Udumashvili, 5 percent EG's Helene Khostaria, and 3 percent to the Labor Party candidate (not identified at time of poll).

“With the campaign yet to begin and such a small number of decided voters, these poll numbers cannot possibly predict future outcomes, but rather serve as indication that the playing field is still wide open and unpredictable,” - said Thornton.

NDI surveys public opinion to help Georgian stakeholders diagnose and address issues of public concern by providing accurate, unbiased and statistically-sound data. This poll aims to capture the most relevant information to foster the development of responsive policies and governance. A wide range of leaders from across the political spectrum have reported that the polls are important to their work and encourage continued polling. The results reflect data collected from June 18 to July 9, through face-to-face interviews with a nationwide representative sample of Georgia's adult population, excluding occupied territories, that included 2,261 completed interviews. The average margin of error is +/- 2,2 percent.

NDI's survey work is funded with UK aid from the British people and carried out by the CRRC Georgia.

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NDI is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. More information is available at www.ndi.org.

CRRC-Georgia is a non-governmental, non-profit research organization with a mission to promote evidence based debates on policy issues by providing reliable, up-to-date and accessible data and analysis. More information is available at <http://www.crrc.ge>