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How European Are We?

Explaining Georgia's Westward Aspiration

Working Paper

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Content

Abstract

Georgia's European foreign policy choice is often claimed to be the reflection of its national identity, more specifically its self-perception as a European nation striving to return to the European family. The following paper analyses this claim. More specifically it explores the extent to which mass attitudes conform to this officially voiced stance of the country. First, it explores Georgian society's concurrence with aspirations of Euro-Atlantic integration and seeks to scrutinize the extent to which these aspirations stem from shared values, that is to say to what extent European identity is embedded in Georgian society. For this purpose, I refer to a thin version of European identity implying universal values. Based on the analysis of mass attitudes via public opinion polls, I argue that, although official aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration are massively shared, some of the basic values of European identity have a weak support in Georgian society. Low awareness of Europe in terms of its values, institutions and policies is pointing to the fact that Georgians have an abstract idea of Europe. Thus this paper suggests that general support for European integration in Georgia is better explained by the anticipation of economic benefit than it is by Georgia's sharing of European values. Moreover, the analysis suggests that Westward aspirations are mainly a project of the political elite.

Introduction

The following paper discusses the notion of "Europeanness" embedded in the foreign policy choice of Georgia. The repeatedly claimed European identity of Georgia is believed to be source of prevailing Euro-Atlantic aspirations in Georgia's foreign policy orientation. By examining mass attitudes I intend to demonstrate a number of ways in which Georgian culture is inconsistent with what is perceived as a thin version of "European identity." The analysis suggests that the shared value explanation for Georgia's officially stated Westward aspirations is weak.

Departing from Graham Fuller's observation that "foreign policy expresses not only what one wants, but what one is" (Kakachia, 2012, p.6), some believe that Georgia's foreign policy is identity-driven rather than compelled by national interests. This interpretation suggests that the role of national identity in foreign policy reflects societally embedded political culture. In turn, it determines the perceptions that Georgians hold towards foreign states.

In the post-Soviet space, political culture is considered as a principal explanation for political behaviour, in view of the peculiarity of transformation process in the former Soviet republics. After gaining independence most of the newly established states re-ideologized their politics with an emphasis on liberal and democratic values. This process was reflected in foreign policy, as well as was an instrument for shaping elite legitimacy and state identity (Jones, 2003, p.84). The interpretation of foreign policy in its evolving cultural context provides a more complete understanding of political behaviour.

The increased focus on political culture in political science stems from early studies conducted in the 1950s and 1960s (Jones, 2003, p.83). Political culture is a collection of "political codes, rules, recipes and assumptions" that shape dominant conceptions in the political environment (Johnston, 1995, p.45). The relevant studies claim that cross-cultural differences might actually result in important political consequences (Inglehart, 1988, p.1205). When related to strategic decisions in politics, political culture is mainly referred to as "strategic culture" or the "ideas about strategic matters" that derive from the intersection of intellect and emotions when blended in experience (Gray, 1999, p.60). Strategic culture is not given, but rather socially constructed, not only by the people but by institutions as well, and it derives its character from the larger

national culture (Gray, 1999, p.50). Different states are characterized by different strategic cultures that develop from their early formation periods and "are influenced to some degree by the philosophical, political, cultural and cognitive characteristics of the state and its elites" (Johnston, 1995, p.34). Theories on strategic culture claim that political behaviour is always affected by strategic culture as decision-makers, being human beings, cannot help but be cultural agents (Gray, 1999, p.58).

Keeping in mind these theoretical implications, this paper intends to examine Georgian foreign policy in the cultural or national identity context. Its focus falls on the European identity Georgia claims to possess and its impact on 2003-2012 foreign policy of Georgia, with particular emphasis on the aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration as a means of realizing its belonging to Europe.

Georgia's "Europeanism" is not a new phenomenon and has occasionally appeared throughout its history. Since the nineteenth century, after the creation of the image of Muslims as the "other" Georgia's belonging to Europe has constantly been underlined (Jones, 2003, p.87). This identification was further reinforced by the Soviet system. This time, Islam was replaced by communism which was perceived as an "oriental backwardness" vis-a-vis the West. After independence, Georgia declared Western principles as the basis for the country's development (Jones, 2003, pp.91-93). But this declared Western belonging as a major drive for foreign policy has been particularly stressed in 2003-2012 since the Rose revolution. Throughout the two terms of President Mikheil Saakashvili, Euro-Atlantic integration has been the top priority of foreign policy. In the "Foreign Policy Strategy" (2006-2009) this priority was justified by Georgia's belonging to Europe in terms of "geography, political, cultural and value system". This time the "other" was Russia. The democratic principles, that Georgia's future was dedicated to, were identified with the West and that is where Georgia belonged. Despite the fact that this belonging was present in Georgia's political discourse before, it has been emphasized with this intensity only since the Rose Revolution when it became directly reflected in the foreign policy orientation.

It is in this context that this paper aims to answer the question whether Georgian foreign policy is truly driven by the national identity as stated officially and correspondingly how deeply Georgia possesses a European identity.

This is a question not only of elite culture, but of mass culture. I concentrate on mass culture and thus ask, first, whether Georgian society aspires to "return to Europe" in congruence to the officially stated goals and, second, if "what it wants is what it is" or if Georgian society is culturally consistent with the European identity notion.

On the basis of an overview of the academic literature on European identity and analysis of public attitudes in Georgia through opinion polls, this paper argues that although Georgian society shares the official westward aspiration, when scrutinized deeply Georgian attitudes are less compatible with some basic "European" values relevant to the thin version of European identity. Weakness of the value orientation raises a question about validity of approach discussing Georgia's genuine Westward aspiration from the cultural perspective.

Context of Georgia's "Europeanness"/Westward orientation

Initially it is worth mentioning that the terms "West" and "Europe" have been interchangeable in Georgia with a minor distinction between "the European and American models of 'Westernness' (Nodia, 1998, p.13). Georgian "Europeanness" is not a recent phenomenon for the country. Identification with the West (Europe) has roots even before the nineteenth century, and intensified after gaining independence in 1991. From then onwards, Georgia declared its commitment to the Western values as primary and aspired to membership of the Western institutions.

Georgia's pro-Westernism is usually understood in terms of one or both of two underlying rationales: cultural affiliation and instrumental gains. According to Ghia Nodia (1998), historically the bottom line of Georgia's quest for a patron in the West was its perception of itself as a western nation. Georgia considered itself to be unlucky, being surrounded by Muslim neighbours and identified itself to the "center of goodness" (Europe) (Nodia, 1998, p.13). Linking Europeanness to the church, in contrast of the Muslim-other, the concept of Georgian as "Christian, European and a warrior-martyr" was consequently constructed (Jones, 2003, p.87). Relying on this link, the West was perceived as a patron. The expectation of the West as a potential rescuer first from the Muslim neighbours and later on from Russia became permanent in Georgian politics. Immediately after gaining independence, Georgia declared western principles as the basis for the country's development (Jones, 2003, pp.91-93). In this process of

self-establishment as a sovereign state, the westward conviction was based on the assumptions that the West should care about Georgia because "the latter intrinsically belongs to the former" and as "the West was seen as an embodiment of fairness, by definition it was obliged to support just cases and Georgia's claim to independence was clearly just" (Nodia, 1998, p.20). Since gaining independence, Georgia has become a member of western institutions such as the OSCE, World Bank, IMF, PfP, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), and the Council of Europe. It has signed numerous agreements with Western powers. It has declared its commitment to western values and aspiration to join NATO and the EU. Yet, despite this stated objective, Georgia's foreign policy in the early post-independence period was reactive and uncertain, mainly as a result of disappointment with the West's passivity (Jones, 2003, p.94).

A drastic change occurred after the Rose Revolution. Even though the idea of Georgia's European identity was always floating around in Georgian political discourse, from 2003 onwards it was directly reflected in foreign policy. Georgia's foreign policy was starkly defined as pro-Western. Throughout the two terms of President Mikheil Saakashvili, Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration was set as a top priority. Drawing from the narrative of Georgia's belonging to the West, these aspirations were based on country's traditional quest for its place in the European family. In the document of "Foreign Policy Strategy" (2006-2009) the priority of Euro-Atlantic integration was justified by Georgia's belonging to Europe in terms of "geography, political, cultural and value system". In official documents Georgia's belonging to the European family is constantly underlined: "historically, culturally, politically and geographically Georgia is a part of Europe, we fully share European values" (Foreign Policy Strategy of Georgia, 2003, p.21). During his inaugural address in 2004, Mikheil Saakashvili, with the banner of the European Union along with the Georgian flag in the background, declared:

> [The European] flag is Georgia's flag as well, as far as it embodies our civilization, our culture, the essence of our history and perspective, and our vision for the future of Georgia...Georgia is not just a European country, but one of the most ancient European countries...our steady course is towards European integration. It is time Europe finally saw and valued Georgia and took steps toward us (Saakashvili, 2004).

Keeping in mind these officially stated aspirations to integration, the question arises to what extent this orientation stems from the identity affiliation as claimed above. As Nodia (1998) claims, the development of pro-Western orientation associated with the Western values for its own sake, rather than with instrumental purposes (protection) in mind was only starting by the end of the 1990s (p.42). He suggests that the West no longer refers to the Christian world but the combination of values including "ideal of the free, autonomous, self-sufficient human individual", but is still perceived as a potential protector for Georgia. It is interesting to see whether the assumption of seeing the West as just a patron has changed and if this stated "belonging" reflects congruent societal values particularly in the context of state officials constantly underlining the role of identity whilst choosing main vectors of Georgian foreign policy. Therefore the main question this inquiry attempts to answer is whether "Europeanness" is truly rooted in the society/if it refers to the shared values with European culture reflected in European identity. But prior this, an in-depth understanding of European identity concept is essential.

Different versions of European identity

There is hardly a less contested concept in the academic literature than identity and particularly such a wide and complex notion as European identity. There is not only a debate on the essence of the European identity but on its existence as well. Scholars differ in their adherence either to the concept of 'European people' picturing Europe as a whole with unique characteristics or visualising Europe as just a political community uniting different people. Correspondingly, some claim that 'Europeanism' refers to universal values of 'Westernism' and others see the concept as extending beyond universal values and including additional norms and values.

Those who question whether European identity is a tangible concept share the approach of Europe as a community of diverse cultures and people who are united by political and economic concerns rather than by a shared value system. Whilst examining the idea of European unity, they question the possibility of existing genuine European identity. For them Europe is hardly more than just the sum of national identities, as Europeans differ from each other in all aspects despite some shared heritage and traditions. The idea of European unity, although shared among elites in the European capitals, is hardly embedded in the European population as a whole (Smith, 1992, p.72). European identity and unity are hardly perceived so by the masses.

Although these scholars acknowledge the attempt of elites to cement European unity by promoting common culture, they call the idea of common identity into question; calling Europe "an elite-driven project" with its institutions mostly noticeable in political and social elites (Risse, 2005, p.297). Since the beginning of European integration, the ideology of 'Europeanness' as a reflection of common culture was constantly promoted, but was accompanied with difficulties as European history is "plural history of divergences and convergences" (Pocock, 1994, p.332). Europe is still a composite of different states and with different meanings for different people "busy deconstructing one another's meanings' (p.333). Laffan claims that Europe is just a coexistence of various identities and in fact all the decisions are made based on national interests rather than values (1996, p.93). In the hierarchy of multiple identities "Europeanness" can only refer to the weakest one as Europe is hardly a unity of European people but rather an accord of European peoples (Laffan, p.98). A rather optimistic perspective is taken by Risse, relying on Haas's multiple loyalties concept. Risse argues that, although peoples of Europe feel belonging to their national states, this will not be an obstacle for the increase of European identity, as possession of multiple identities is feasible. A socialization process gradually embeds Europeanness in national identities, but its success strongly depends on institutional performance (Risse, 2005, p.295).

Proponents of the European identity also differ in characterizing the concept, although they share the idea of common values among Europeans. There are two major notions of the concept 'thin' and 'thick' depending on whether it contains minimal set of possibly universalizable values or has a more exclusive character.

Thin identity comprehends the values associated with 'moral universalism', referring to the founding principles of democracy, tolerance, and individualism. This universalistic understanding of Europe is very similar to the idea of western liberal values (Delanty, 2002, p.347).

Thick identity includes not only liberal and democratic values, but some particular features of the European life. It refers to cultural heritage as a basis for European identity. Greek, Roman, and Christian notions compose this identity, which is accomplished with the Enlightenment (Delanty, 2002, p.349). Furthermore, the thick version of identity goes beyond the normative appeal of the concept and embraces practical ways of European life including the institutional system (p.351).

Lowenthal (2000), arguing that "Europe has always been more a mental construct than a geographical or social entity," underlines three distinctive features before the eighteenth century: Christianity, the rise of the mercantile economy and pan-European expression in art. According to him, later on the consciousness of 'Europeanness" started to extend beyond this base embracing ideals of freedom and progress (p.316).

In his paper "The West Unique, not Universal" Samuel Huntington suggests a comprehensive list of characteristics of the Western civilization stemming from Europe which compose overarching thick identity implying universal values within itself. These characteristics can provide a lucid vision for both types of identities.

Huntington (1996) considers the **classical legacy** as the basis for the Western civilization, characteristics of which stem from classical earlier legacies such as Greek philosophy and rationality, Roman law, the Latin language, and Christianity.

Western Christianity, first Catholicism and then Protestantism, is another essential, which contributed to developing a sense of community in the Western Europe and later on had a huge impact on political and intellectual life, different from the Eastern Orthodoxy.

Another distinguishing factor for the Western civilization is the number of languages relevant to its development. Unlike eastern cultures that developed on the basis of one major language, western civilization is characterized by a **multiplicity of languages** as each nation progressed speaking their own languages. After the sixteenth century Latin gave way to local languages based on which cultural advancement of each nation took place.

Separation of spiritual and temporal authority or secularity is another factor which Huntington considers as unique for the Western civilization and which consequently contributed to development of freedom.

Rule of law, inherited from the Romans, became the basis for constitutionalism and the protection of human rights. Even though breaking the law was a common practice in Europe, the idea of human power submissive to external restraint was maintained.

Social pluralism and civil society developed from the peculiar class system of Europe. A historically distinctive feature of Europe was found in its diverse autonomous groups not based on blood relationships. Those groups served as the basis for associational pluralism later on.

Consequently **representative bodies** descended from this tradition of social pluralism. These bodies "in the course of modernization evolved into the institutions of modern democracy" (p.33).

All the above features separately contributed to developing a sense of **individualism** and individual liberties starting from the fifteenth century, and quite different from the collectivism that prevailed elsewhere (Huntington, 1996, pp.30-33).

Examination of existence of the European identity is beyond the scope of this inquiry. Contemplating the abovementioned approaches, this paper assumes the existence of the European identity based on the fact that all the basic documents of all the European institutions such as Council of Europe, EU, OSCE do reflect the same core of values. Those are the universal values that, as Huntington suggests descend from European heritage and represent a constitutive part of a "thin" identity. I acknowledge that these values constitute an ideal type of identity, which hardly finds complete consistency with practice even in fully acknowledged European states (members of the EU for instance). But this is the identity perceived as a uniting factor for "Europeans" (another notion to be defined), and accepted as a basis and further goal for their community (meaning above mentioned institutions). Adherence to these values is a requirement for membership. These values voiced in the official documents will be discussed in the next paragraph.

Thin European identity –institutional outlook

This section intends to identify the values relevant to the European identity and reflected in the basic documents of the European institutions. In this way I refer to the institutional definition or discursive embrace of Europe, as an abstract idea voiced in the declaratory constitutive parts of the institutions. The idea of "Europeanness" embedded in the institutions of the European states can provide a general picture of the concept that was the implicit basis for their creation. Whether this identity is truly evident at the practical level is a different matter.

Major European institutions include the European Union, the OSCE and the Council of Europe. I furthermore include NATO in the analysis as no doubt it belongs to the Western civilisation and is a target of Georgian foreign policy aspiration. The fact that the values in those documents overlap suggests that common sense of Europeanness can be found in the parts that coincide.

The European Union can be considered as the most comprehensive organization among these institutions. But, even in this context, as the Union corresponds to more of a political community nowadays and "history cannot glue a political community" (Priban, 2005, p.151), it exceeds the concept of a shared heritage. This is why Habermas and other Euroenthusiasts advocate for a more 'thin' identity, "established by European law, politics, the public sphere and civil society institutions" (p.151). Therefore the EU as a project is contemplated as an institution of "heterogenous people" (p.150).

Scholars focusing on the EU claim that the minimum European identity is expressed in the concept of European citizenship based on European constitutional law (Priban, Montero, Follesdal, Lehning). The concept is often considered as an expression of a "European soul, a shared feeling of belonging to Europe" (Follesdal, 2001, p.233). Citizenship is a concept combining two constitutive elements: rights and identity (Lehning, 2001, p.243). Montero sees a two-sided connection between identity and rights. Not only are rights grounded on specific identitarian perceptions, but rights also modulate, transform and re-create identity" (2001, p.366). Therefore, the citizenship concept not only expresses the shared identity but individual rights embedded in it are gradually capable of attuning with the mass identity.

The concept of EU citizenship introduced in the Maastricht Treaty (The Maastricht treaty, 1992) represents, or at least embraces the opportunity to achieve, the realisation of "European civic identity" (Montero, 2001, p.359). A quick glance demonstrates the democratic premise underlying the whole notion of a European identity based on universal values. The individual is the starting point for every entitlement. Empowerment entitlements for individuals prevail over the others, especially in terms of private activity such as protection from intervention from other persons. A basic value of tolerance furthermore is a priority. Economic, political and social entitlements are crowned by the duties towards others (Montero, 2001, p.370).

Besides the citizenship concept there are other EU documents where the "European soul" can be discovered. A major focus on such values as democracy, human rights and rule of law is apparent.

The Charter of European Identity (1995) discusses Europe not only in terms of its core values, but its policies and responsibilities claiming that European values stem from the fundamental principles of tolerance, humanity and fraternity that led to the development of "democracy, the recognition of fundamental and human rights and the rule of law". The Treaty on European Union (1992), Article six claims that the Union is founded "on principles of liberty, democracy, respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law". The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000) recognizes that the peoples of Europe are united by common values and these values place the individual "at the heart of [the EU's] activities by establishing the citizenship of the Union". The Union is founded on universal values such as "human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity, democracy and the rule of law". Universal values are recognized as the basis of the Union in the Lisbon Treaty (2007) as well. It states that these values are "common to the member states in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail". These common values are constantly voiced in the documents shared with other countries. For instance, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP, 2004) and Eastern Partnership (EaP, 2009) with Georgia, underline that all the objectives in the documents are based on commitment to shared values and Georgia's commitment to common values is the determinant of the type of future relationship between Georgia and the EU. These documents again list values such as "the rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights, respect for and protection of minorities and principles of the market economy and sustainable development" (EaP, 2009).

A wider, but still European, "spirit" is shared among the 57 members of the OSCE from Europe, Central Asia and North America. The Charter of Paris is a reflection of a new course for the OSCE, set at the Paris Summit in 1990. The Charter reflects major commitments and positions of the OSCE and is a good source for defining the organization's self-perceived identity or the principles embedded in the foundation of its institutions.

Recognizing democracy as the only system of the member nations, the Charter takes the principles of democracy, human rights and rule of law as a ground for the organization's

existence. Underlining the importance of the individual and recognizing human rights as irrevocable, the Charter stressed freedom of thought, conscience and religion of belief, freedom of expression, association, movement, etc. as well as economic, cultural and social rights. The protection of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities is also stressed. The Charter affirms that it is primarily committed to the principles and purposes of the United Nations (Charter of Paris, 1990).

The Council of Europe is another institution even more closely identified with Europe as its membership is open only to European states. The primary working area of the Council indicates its dedication to human rights, rule of law and democracy likewise. Human rights protection by the Council is considered through a Convention covering not only human rights generally but antiracism and tolerance, as well as rights of national minorities (European Convention of Human Rights, 1950).

The North Atlantic Treaty (Washington Treaty, 1949) upon which NATO is based repeats the same values. As claimed, NATO members strive to defend a common heritage and civilization "founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law".

The principles and values embraced by the abovementioned institutions echo the general values identified in documents such as the UN declarations and covenants or European Convention on Human Rights. The overarching concept of individualism is unanimously shared by all the institutions comprising European states. The obligation to respect human rights is the primary value defined. Freedom of thought, conscience, religion, expression are stated as vital, along with the fundamental right not to be tortured, the right to liberty and security, etc. Discrimination any kind of is starkly prohibited. These universal values correspond to the "thin" version of European identity which will be applied below to the Georgian context. In fact, in referring to the West/Europe, Georgia perceives it to be complementary with modernization and progress (Kakachia, 2012, p.6, Davitashvili), with the assumption that sooner or later all the countries will turn towards the West, as its values are universal (Davitashvili).

Actual "Europeanness" of Georgia

Not only is thin identity more relevant for the analysis of European/Westward aspirations of Georgia, but thick identity is difficult to apply in the Georgian context. For instance, based on

Huntington's criteria, classical legacy had a weak influence on Georgian culture. Religious difference is often considered as a main factor distinguishing the Georgian from the European mindset. The Orthodox Church was always active in politics in Georgia. Even now its influence is noticeable, even though the church is formally separate from the state. One similarity between Georgia and Huntington's model is the fact that Georgian culture has developed on the basis of the Georgian language, without significant impact from any other language (Davitashvili).

Correspondingly, thin identity with the premise of democracy and human rights will be measured for Georgia. The major values of liberal democracy are clearly illustrated in the above overview of the official documents of European institutions, but their measurement through public opinion requires a nuanced approach. Simply asking respondents whether they support democracy does not necessarily indicate support for the relevant values as this answer might be stemming from more instrumental reasons such as belief that democracy is about security and prosperity (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005, p.268).

There are various relevant measurements of the perception of democracy in public that are accepted among scholars. One of the most comprehensive studies was conducted by R. Inglehart with an emphasis on political culture conducive to democracy. Claiming that the causal arrow descends from mass values to democratic institutions, he emphasizes the importance of self-expression values or components of civic culture in contrast to survival or more traditional values (2005, p.246). Self-expression values characterize post-industrial societies with individualism as their basis (p.142). The rise of self-expression values indicates an increased emphasis on people-centered society or "humanistic transformation of modernity" (Inglehart andWelzel, 2005, p.3). This "syndrome" characterizes the process of "shifts from collective discipline to individual liberty, from group conformity to human diversity, and from state authority to individual autonomy" (p.2). These values focus on political and civil liberties with increased emphasis on freedom of expression and self-realization (p.3). After testing all the existing approaches of mass culture most conducive to democracy, Inglehart points out the values most relevant to assess democracy. After comprehensive analysis he underlines self-expression values as most conducive to the assessment and particularly such values as aspiration to liberty and emphasis on human choice (p.249), as well as elite-challenging activities such as signing petitions, tolerance of homosexuality and interpersonal trust (p.258). Testing these values

can demonstrate existence of a pro-democratic civic culture. I will discuss these values in detail below and examine them in the Georgian context.

Tolerance

Tolerance is one of the basic values conducive to democracy. In Inglehart's study, the idea of democracy embraces the values among which tolerance is one of the most applicable. The notion of tolerance includes such aspects as holding objective attitudes towards those who one disagrees with, emotional or attitudes towards someone with disagreement and behavioural non-interference (Korzhov, 1999, p.8). Korzhov, basing his research on Inglehart's findings, distinguishes two types of tolerance: ethnic tolerance towards ethnic groups, other nationalities, races and religious groups and social tolerance towards "various deviant and marginal groups". The accent on tolerance stems from consideration as a prerequisite for social solidarity. In point of fact, in comparison to Eastern states, Western societies demonstrate higher level of tolerance (p.17). This value is gaining increasing prominence in light of recent developments in Europe related to integration processes (p.17).

Even though Georgians historically claimed high level of ethnic and religious tolerance, data demonstrate that this is questionable. 25% of Georgians state that they would not want people of different race as neighbours and 37% would rather not live next to people with other religion (figure 1). When it comes to trust, the level of negativeness is higher. Almost two third of Georgians (61%) would not trust people belonging to another religion and 42% feel distrust towards people of another nationality (figures 2 and 3).

The Georgian population tends to demonstrate a high level of social intolerance, particularly towards homosexuals. 90% of respondents refer to homosexuality as never justified and only 1% as justified (Figure 4). Comparison of 1996 and 2009 data suggests that intolerance has in fact grown over time. In 1996, 77% expressed unwillingness to have homosexuals as neighbours (figure 5) whereas in 2008 92.6% of respondents mentioned them as unwanted neighbours (figure 1). In 1996, 71% of Georgians rejected the idea of living next to people who have AIDS (figure 6); by 2008 this number increased up to 85% (figure 8). In 1996, 10.9% would not like immigrants/foreign workers as neighbours (figure 7), in 2008 24.5% held this view (figure 1). Evidently Georgians go beyond keeping their attitudes to themselves and openly express

animosity to homosexuals. In spring, 2013 these attitudes were expressed in the large anti-gay protest rally which turned into physical clashes with the small number of gay rights activists.

Gender equality

Gender equality, along with tolerance of outgroups, constitutes an essential element of democracy nowadays. Movement towards compliance with these values is seen as a crucial aspect of modernization. Although gender equality is not inherently western, nowadays it is indeed emphasized in the West (Inglehart, 2005, p.273). As Inglehart's analysis demonstrates, polarization over gender roles represents one of the core components of self-expression values.

One of the highly relevant questions in this regard that Inglehart underlines is the gender preference for political leaders. In the countries where the equality idea prevails on this question, higher proportions of women get elected to the parliament. More than half of Georgian population spurns the idea of equality in this terms: 67% of Georgian respondents agree that men make better political leaders than women and the other 32% disagree (figure 8). This attitude is supported by the scarcity of women at the Parliament of Georgia (10% of total membership). Furthermore, 53% of Georgians consider employment for men more important than for women (against 26%) (figure 9).When it comes to access to education, Georgian society tends to be more open. When asked about their stance on the statement that university degree is more important for a boy than a girl, 76% disagree and only 24% consider this statement to be true (figure 10).Generally, gender equality is not strong in Georgia. According to international indices, a significant gender equality gap is demonstrated in political and economic participation and women are subject to discrimination in the family stemming from traditional attitudes (Bendeliani, 2012, p.31).

Interpersonal trust and life satisfaction

Another concept highly conducive to democracy seems to be related to interpersonal trust. Inglehart finds level of interpersonal trust higher in the stable democracies distinguished with civic culture. This correlation is explained by significance of trust for forming secondary associations and for the functioning of democratic rules (Inglehart, 1988, pp.1203-1204).

When it comes to trusting people generally, Georgians seem to demonstrate suspicion. Less than half of the population express trust in most of the people. In 2010 only 23% agreed with the statement that most people can be trusted and 41% chose a neutral position, whereas 31% disagreed (figure 11). The negative trend remains evident in 2011as well (figure 12).

Elite challenging activities

These activities are constitutive of the notion of a citizenship with the feeling of responsibility or ability to challenge governing elites in the country. Inglehart emphasizes one specific activity for this purpose -signing petitions. Corresponding Georgian data demonstrates that the society is quite reserved in this context. In 2008, 74% of Georgian respondents stated that they would never sign a petition, whereas 18% might do and 9% have done. 79% would never join boycotts and 55% would never attend lawful/peaceful demonstrations (figures 15, 21, 22). In 2010, CRRC data showed a different case. 36% said that people should participate in protests whilst 39% rejected the idea and 24% did not know (figure 16). Whereas Georgian society feels no high responsibility for challenging elite activities, challenging church which plays an influential role in Georgian politics is less expected. Level of trust toward religious institutions is not even comparable to trust of state institutions. 88% of Georgians express trust towards church, whilst only 39% trusts executive government, 36% - parliament and 31% - court system (figures 17-20). Considering the level of enrolment of the Orthodox Church in Georgian politics, its role is highly relevant to elite activities.

Attitudes towards the EU/NATO

Despite this low level of congruence in basic factors of thin European identity, Georgian society passionately aspires to membership in the European Union and NATO based on the belief of their importance for Georgia. More than half of the population (59%) supports membership in NATO (figure 24) and every fifth Georgian considers NATO membership as the most important issue facing the country (figure 25).

Georgian society has even more positive perception of Europe and the EU. Muller claims that Georgians are in “EUphoria” in terms of their aspiration for integration (2011, p.83). There is a high consensus about the desirability of EU membership. 81% agree that Georgia should be in the EU and only 3% disagree. Likewise 79% would vote for the membership if there was a

referendum tomorrow. In the EU survey 2009, 60% of Georgians name the EU as important for the country and 28% do not agree. This trend was more or less maintained in the 2011 as well (55%). 64% believe that Georgia should have the closest political cooperation with the EU (figures 26-29, 31). One out of every two Georgians agrees with former Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania's statement "I am Georgian and therefore I am European", with 54% (2009) and 59% (2011) agreement with the statement and one third disagreement (figure 30), the majority of Georgians tend to feel as if they belong to Europe. On the other hand, one third of the population (29%) believes that the EU threatens Georgian traditions (figure 32).

Muller's ultimate assessment, after examining the attitudes of the Georgian society towards the EU, emphasizes the point that Georgian society's support for the EU stems from expectations of economic benefits. Consequently, he considers the "EUphoria" process in Georgia to be volatile and dependent on the performance of the union (2011, p.83). This finding corresponds to the Hooghe and Marks assumption of two possible reasons for the EU preference: expectation for economic consequences and value and norm attachment. The EU support from the shared values and norms perspective is present in case citizens conceive their national identity in inclusive terms. Those who perceive their identity in exclusive terms are more Euroskeptical (Hooghe and Marks, 2004). In this context, even though half of Georgians agreed with Zhvania's statement discussed above, when asked about their self-identification only 13% identified themselves as both Georgian and European (figure 33). Although a high number of Georgians are supporting EU membership, when asked if the country's culture is threatened by western influences, 51% answer positively, 20% say no and 15% remain neutral. Likewise, 50% state that our way of life needs to be protected against European influences (figures 34, 35). This trend indicates that Georgians are not well-informed about the Union, perceiving it in the abstract, or that instrumental benefit is a primary reason for their support.

To judge from these results, the positive perception of the EU and aspirations for membership seem unrelated to in-depth awareness of the EU based on knowledge of the EU, its policies and institutions or actual experience with the institution. In 2009 when asked if Georgia was a member of the EU only 56% knew the answer, 21% thought that Georgia belonged to the EU and 22% did not know (figure 36). Weak knowledge of EU requirements results in unreasonable optimism regarding membership. 50% of Georgians believe that Georgia will acquire the EU

membership in the next 10 years or less (figure 37).As a matter of fact, despite the financial crisis in the EU from 2009 onwards, which made membership less desirable, the Georgian population steadily expressed support for integration, indicating that awareness of the institution and about expected results were largely absent. This corresponds to the claim that attitudes towards EU (and NATO) integration are constructed through socialization and political conflict driven by the elites. Thus elite consensus on the theme could be decisive in shaping mass attitudes (Hooghe and Marks, 2004). Rohrschneider, denouncing the importance of instrumental gains, also claims that in the post-communist states political views on integration is hardly affected by only economic, social or institutional or historic circumstances, but by the way elites undertake the issue or how they frame the integration (2006, p.143).This claim is compatible with the sequence in Georgia; although support for the West was always present, it has significantly increased since 2004, when the government set integration with the EU and NATO as a foreign policy priority.

Conclusion

The research examined the purpoted link between national identity and foreign policy orientation in Georgia. The long-established but recently further emphasized claim to European identity is believed by some to drive the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Georgia. As the examination of opinion polls show, Georgian society's aspirations for the EU/NATO integration is consistent with the officially stated direction, but this support hardly stems from the cultural (identity) affiliation with the West. The concurrence of Georgian attitudes with some of the basic European values is quite low.

Whilst examining concurrence of Georgian attitudes with European identity, this inquiry addressed two main questions: what values are associated with the concept of European identity and how accepted are these values in the Georgian context?

The first part of the paper explored the notion of European identity as discussed in the scholarly literature. It considered debates over the existence and essence of European identity. Some argue that Europe is a community with its distinct characteristics. Others claim that it is just a political community of different peoples. I presented evidence of the existence of "thin" European identity in the fundamental commitments of European institutions, based on the overview of

basic documents of European institutions from the identity perspective. All of them embrace the values constitutive of liberal democracy, with an emphasis on the individual as its core, from which are derived numerous other principles such as tolerance, freedom of expression, equality, etc.

In testing European "thin" identity in the Georgian context, I used Inglehart's list of values that are the most conducive to democracy and demonstrate society's commitment to the related principles. These include tolerance, gender equality, interpersonal trust and elite challenging activities. An overview of nation-wide opinion polls suggests that, Georgia demonstrates a weak commitment to almost all of these values and notably tolerance (especially towards sexual minorities), trust towards fellow citizens and holding elites to account).

Despite weak acceptance of fundamental European values, Georgians strongly endorse integration into the institutional espousing these values.

Four out of five Georgians support EU membership and two thirds NATO membership. The contrast between support for institutional integration and ambivalence towards basic values espoused by these institutions, may suggest that Georgia's embrace of Europe is based not so much on a feeling of belonging to Europe, but, instead, on anticipated instrumental gains. This recalls the proposition that, historically, Georgia saw the West as more of a patron capable of providing either security protection or economic benefits. Further examination of opinion polls demonstrate low level of public awareness of the EU which points at high probability that political elites shape public expectations as suggested by some scholars of EU integration.

These conclusions have a number of limitations. The analysis of Georgian perspectives is based on quantitative public opinion data. A more comprehensive study of the topic would require supplementary qualitative research and analysis. Moreover, exploring differences between mass and elite attitudes would provide a clearer picture to what extent they play a role in shaping foreign policy.

My objective was to examine the identity approach for explaining orientation of Georgia towards European integration. An overview of opinion polls provided a general picture of the extent to which European values are embedded in Georgian mass attitudes. That overview demonstrated that widely held foreign policy aspirations are rather weakly backed by shared values among the

majority of Georgians. This gap should be taken into account in political and foreign policy decision-making.

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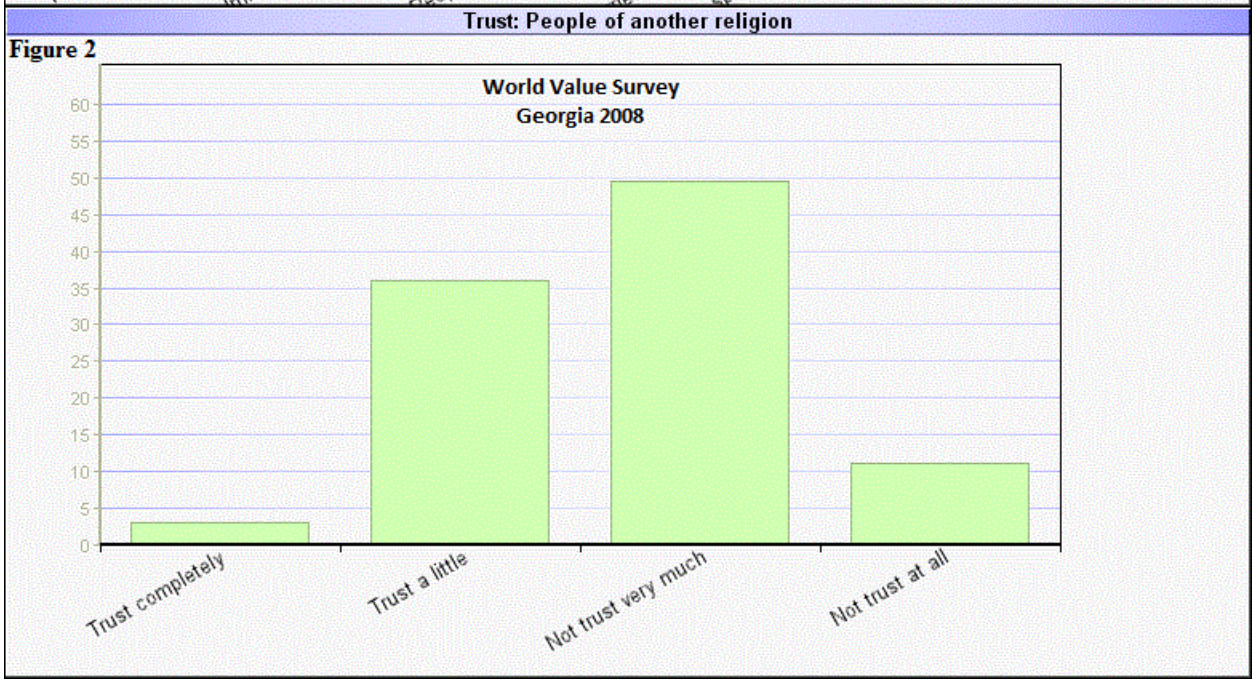
Appendices

Figure 1

Figure 2



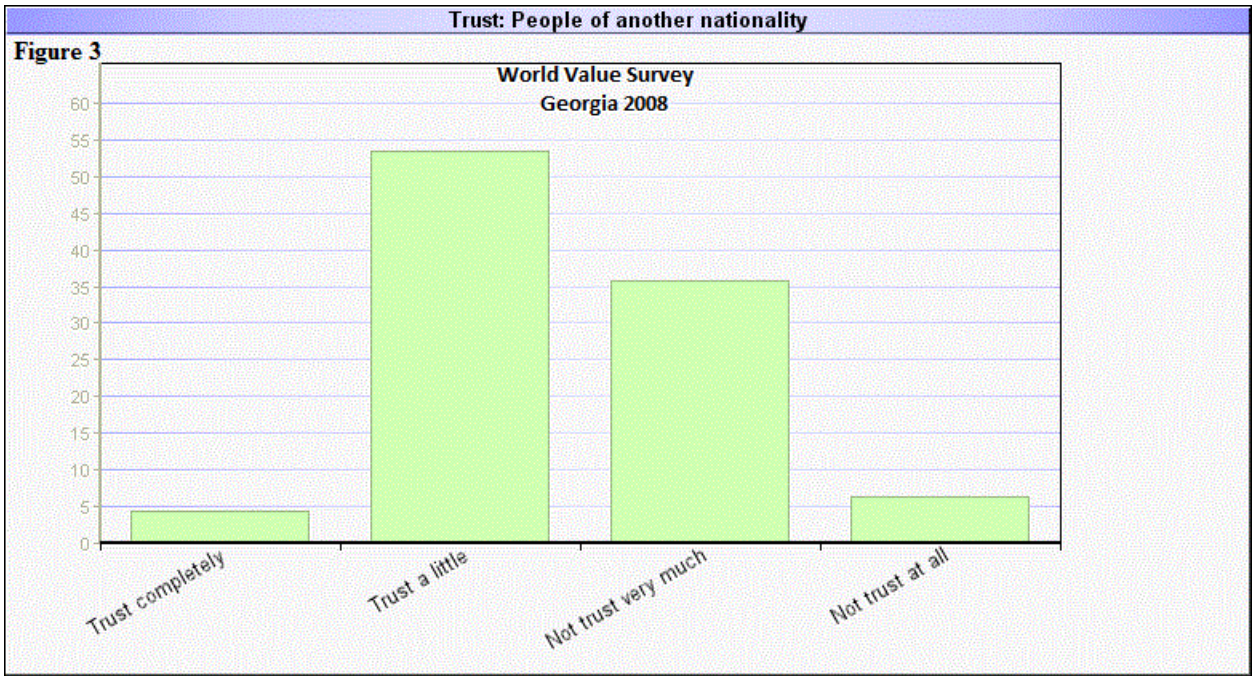
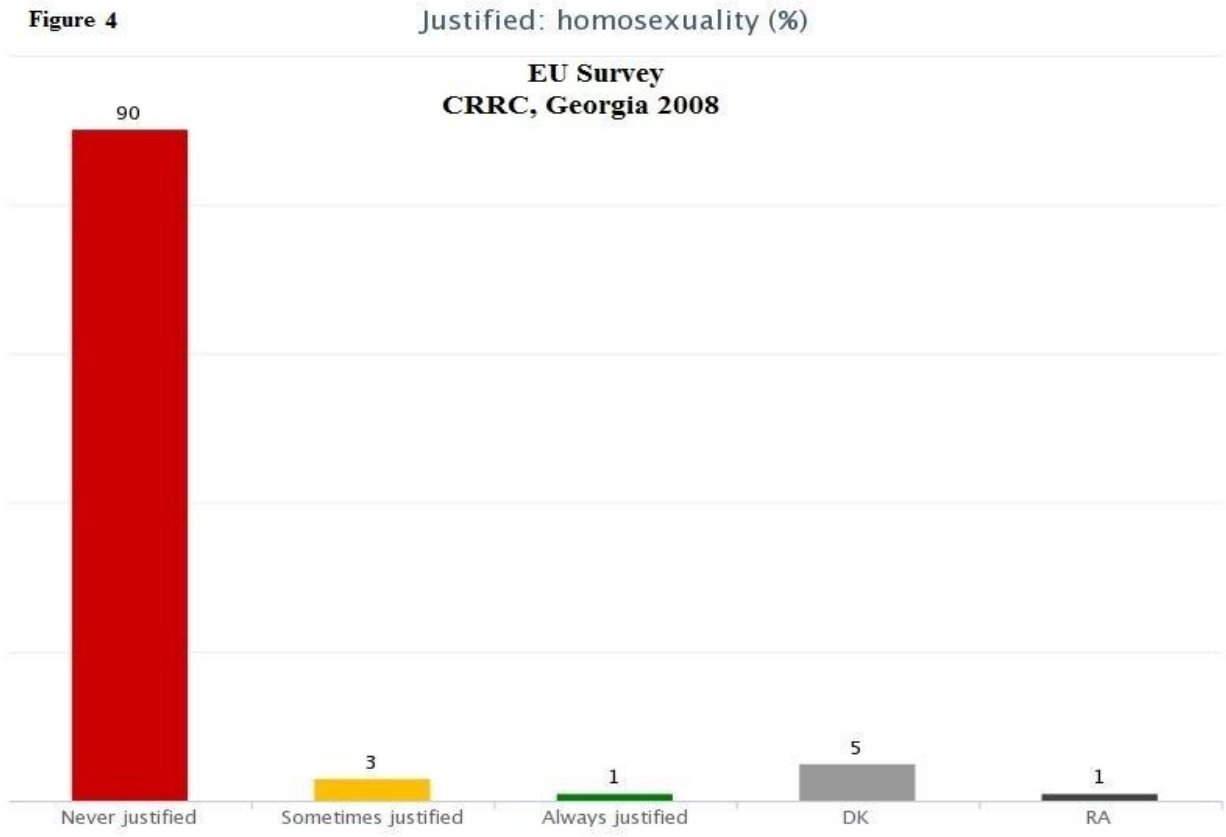
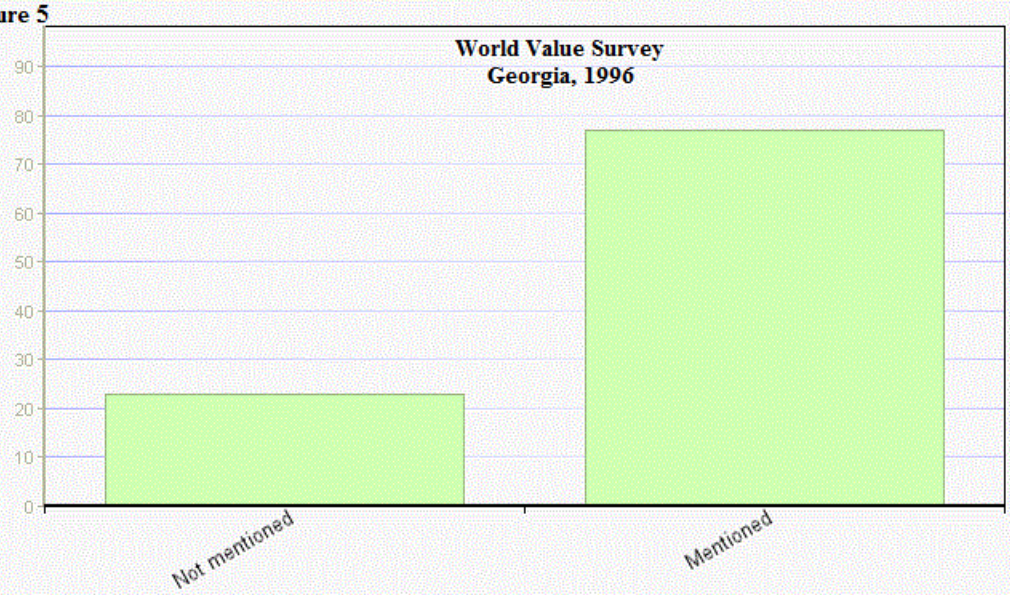

Trust: People of another nationality
Figure 3
World Value Survey
Georgia 2008
60
55
50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
Trust completely
Trust a little
Not trust very much
Not trust at all

Figure 4


Justified: homosexuality (%)
EU Survey
CRRC, Georgia 2008
90
3
1
5
1
Never justified
Sometimes justified
Always justified
DK
RA

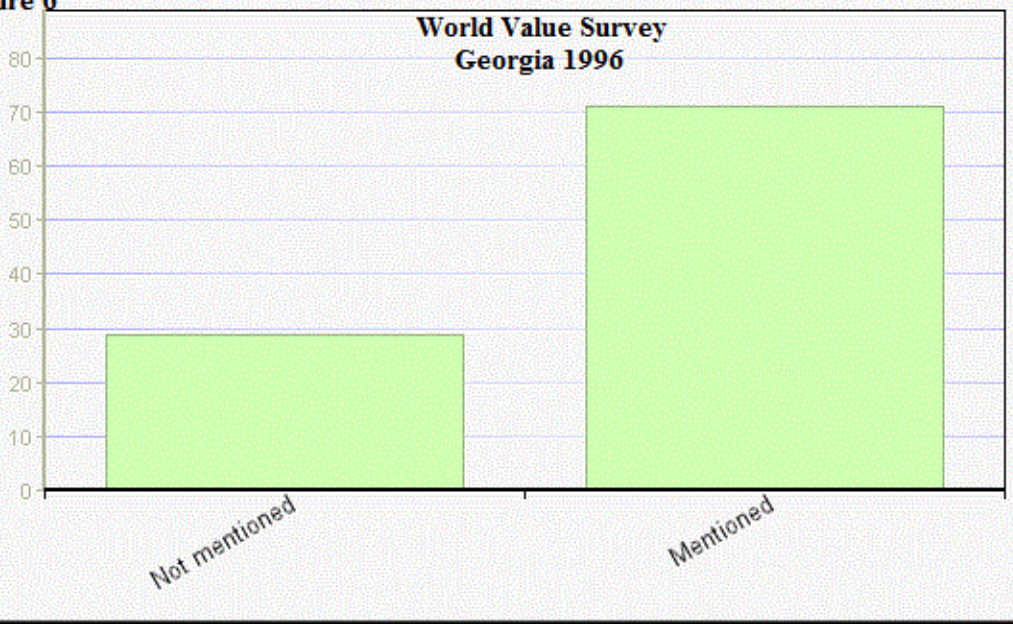
Neighbours: Homosexuals

Figure 5



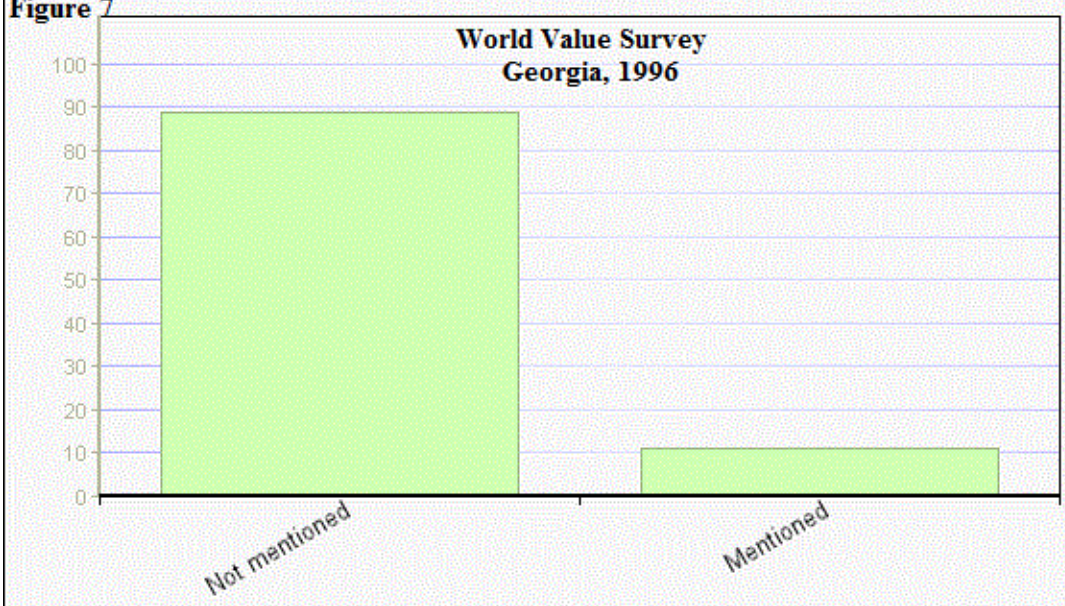
Neighbours: People who have AIDS

Figure 6



Neighbours: Immigrants/foreign workers

Figure 7



Men make better political leaders than women do

Figure 8

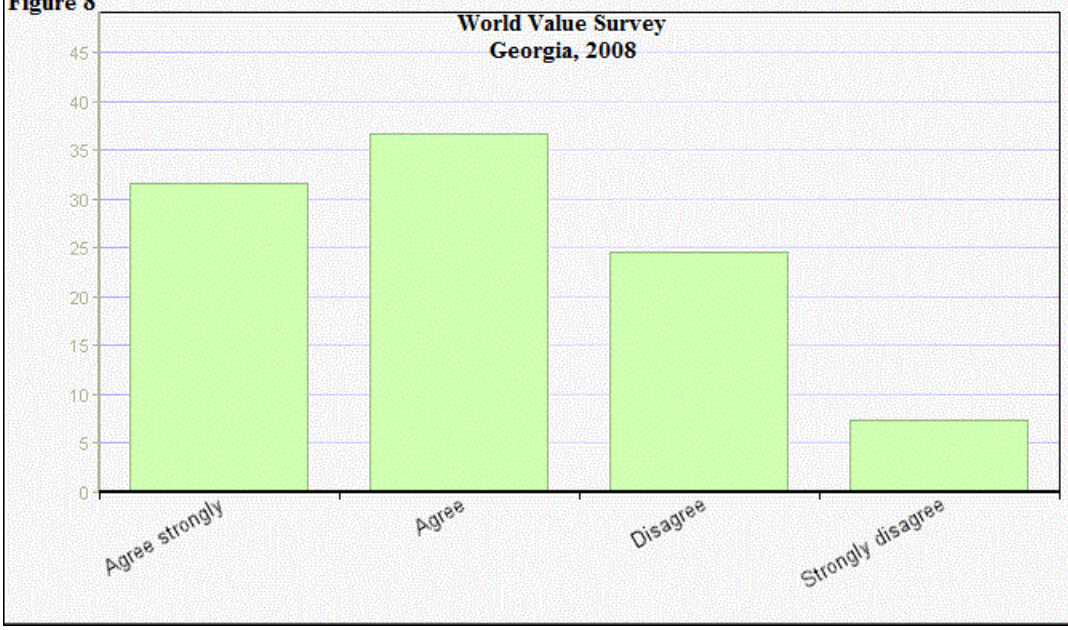


Figure 9

Figure 10 University degree more important for a boy? (%)

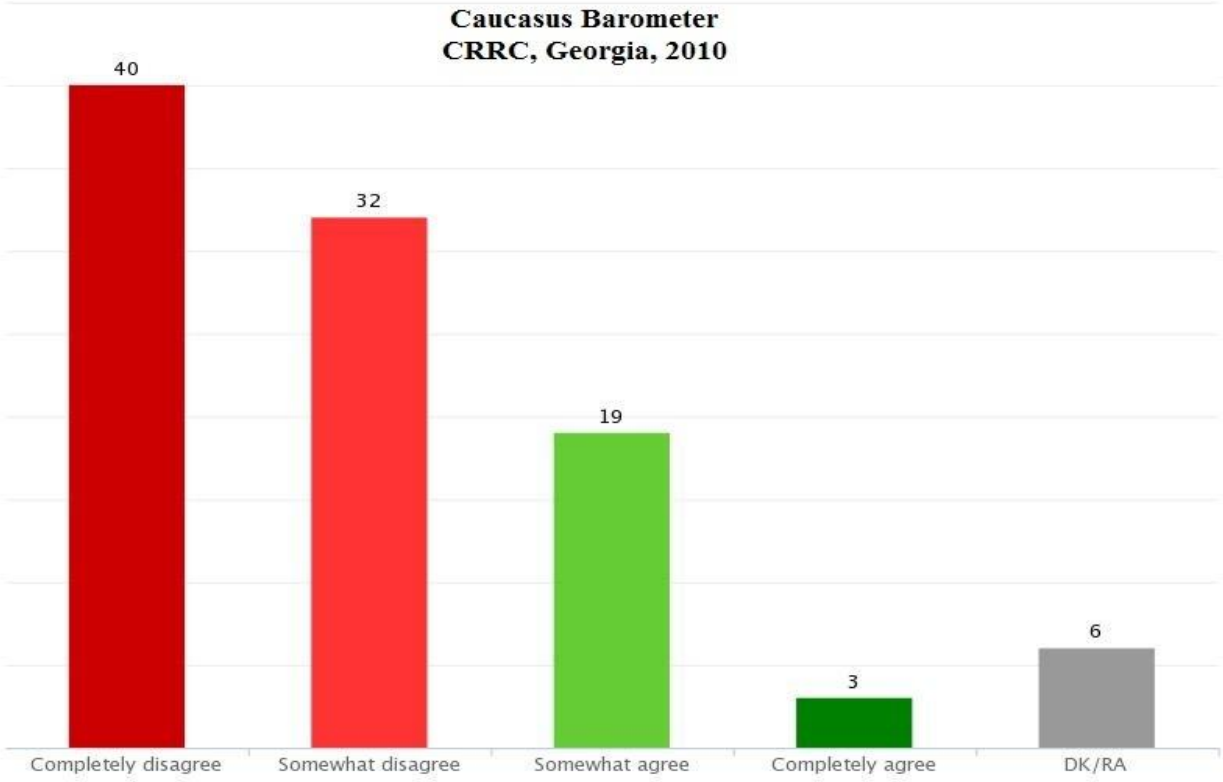


Figure 11

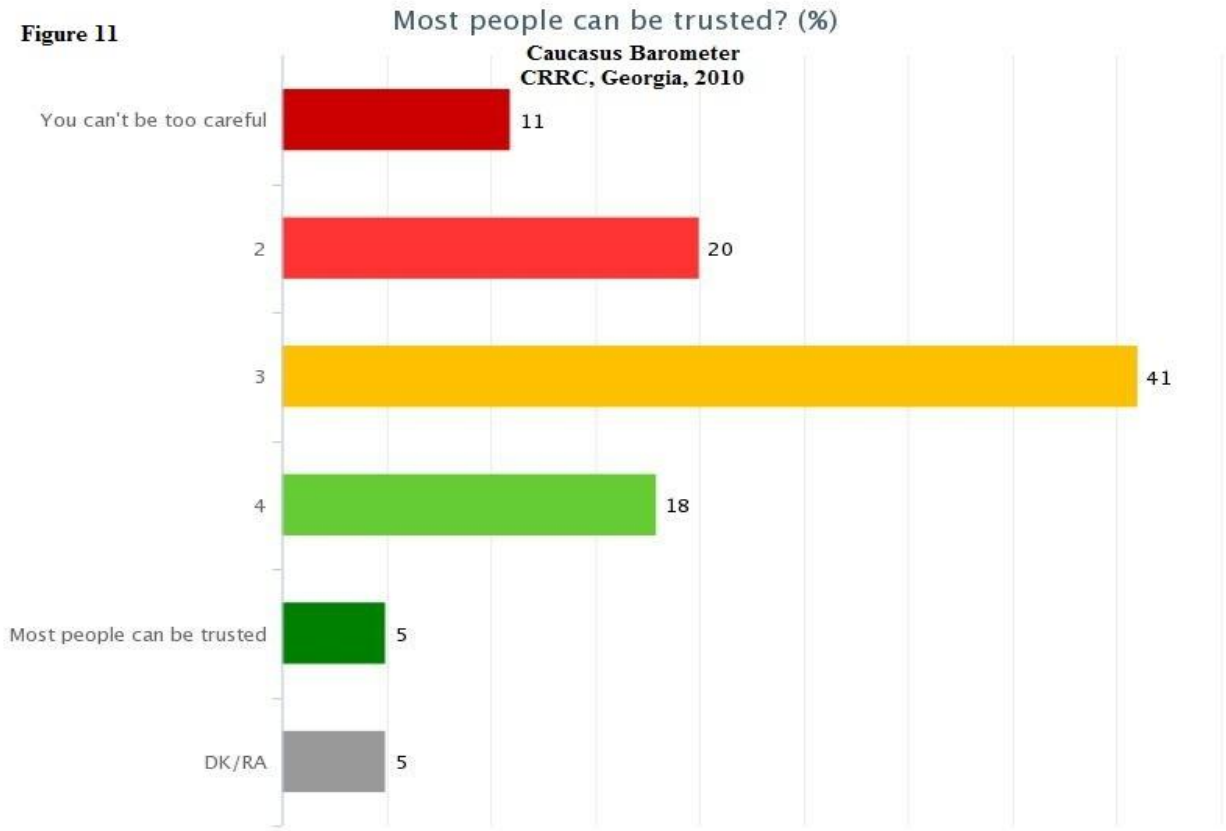


Figure 12

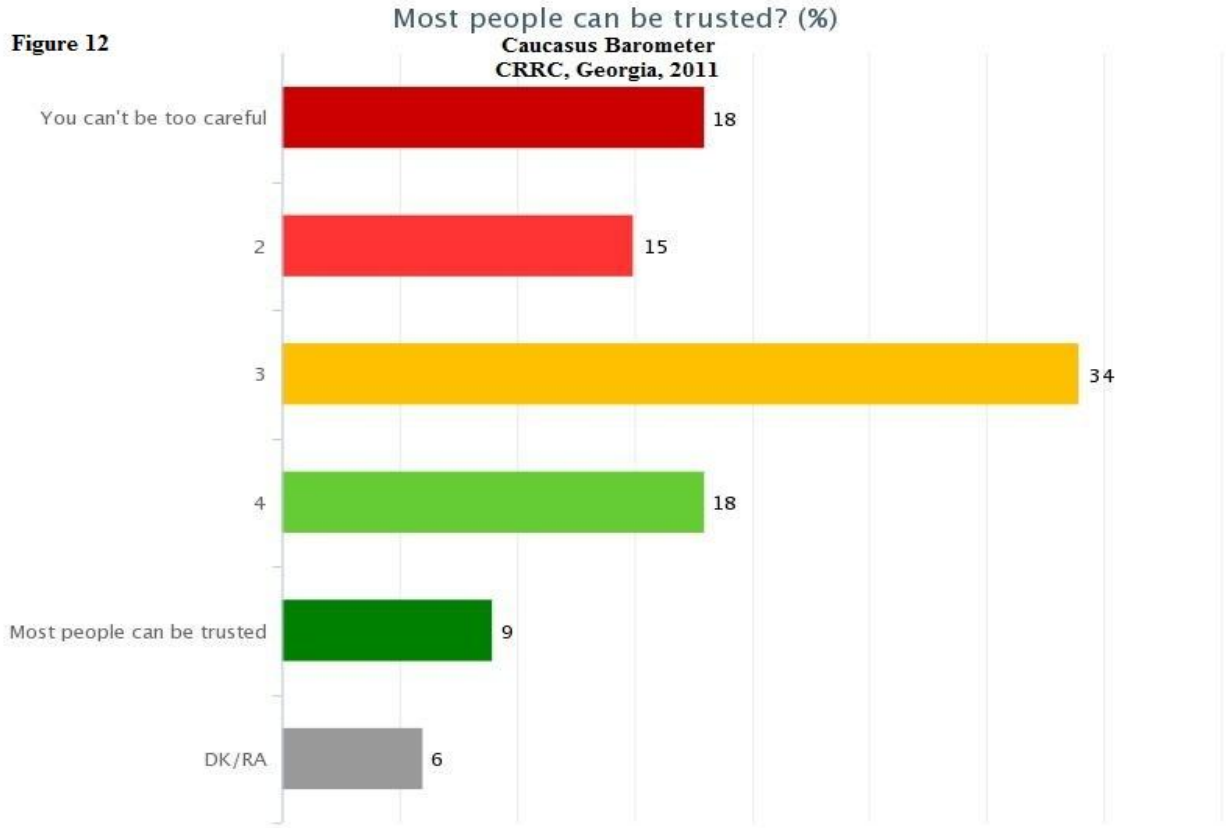


Figure 13

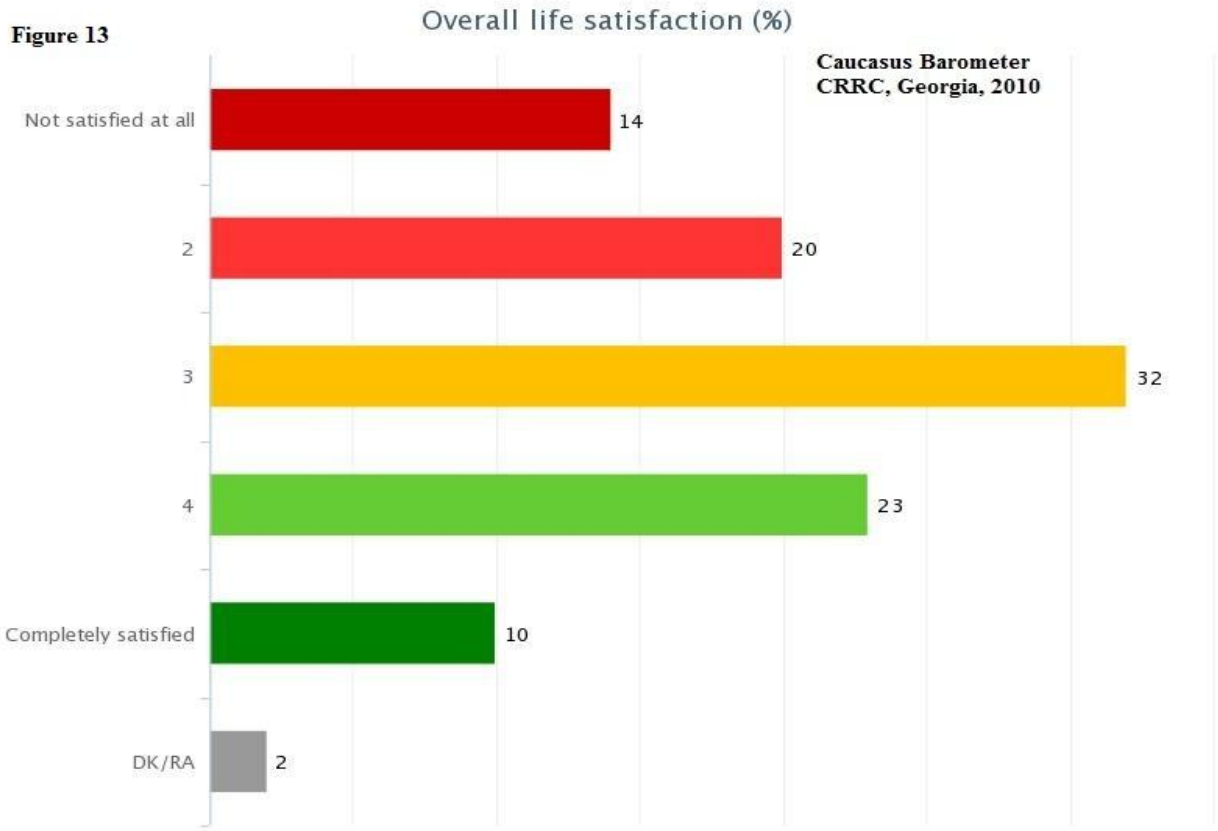
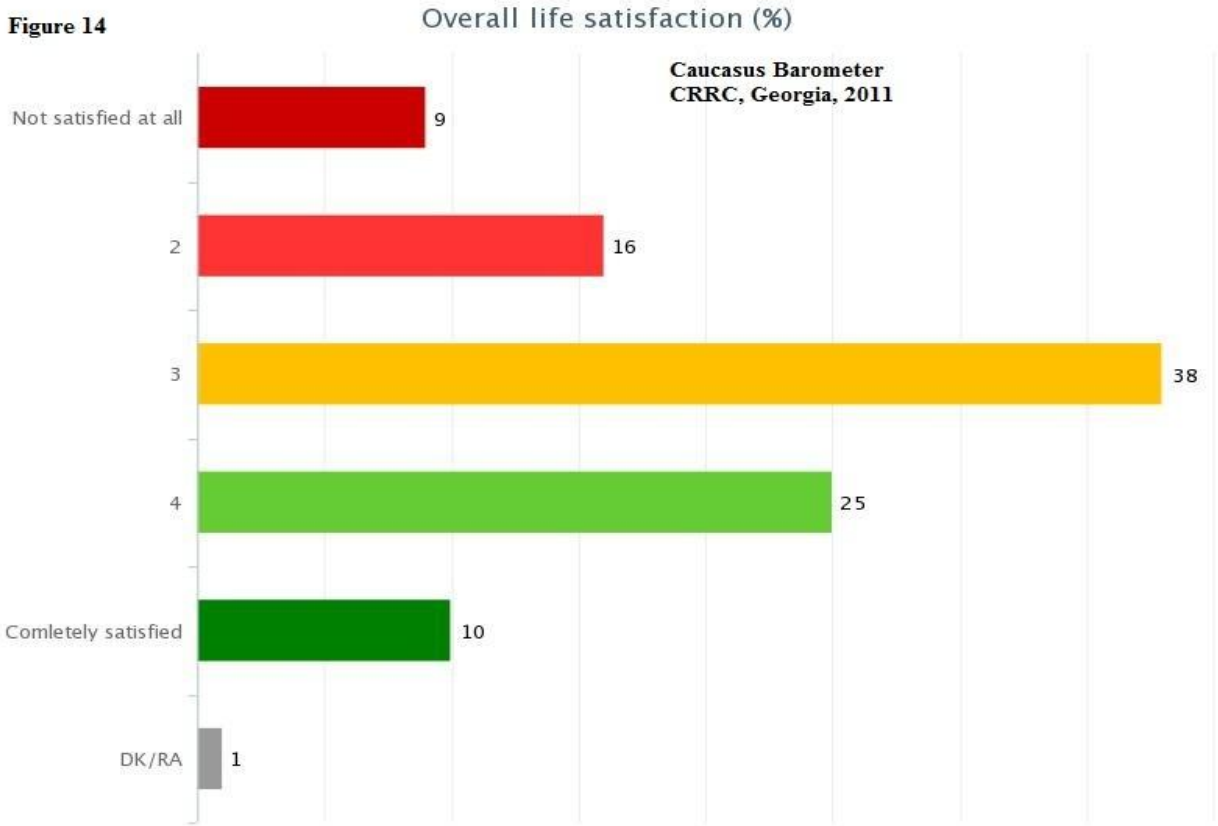


Figure 14



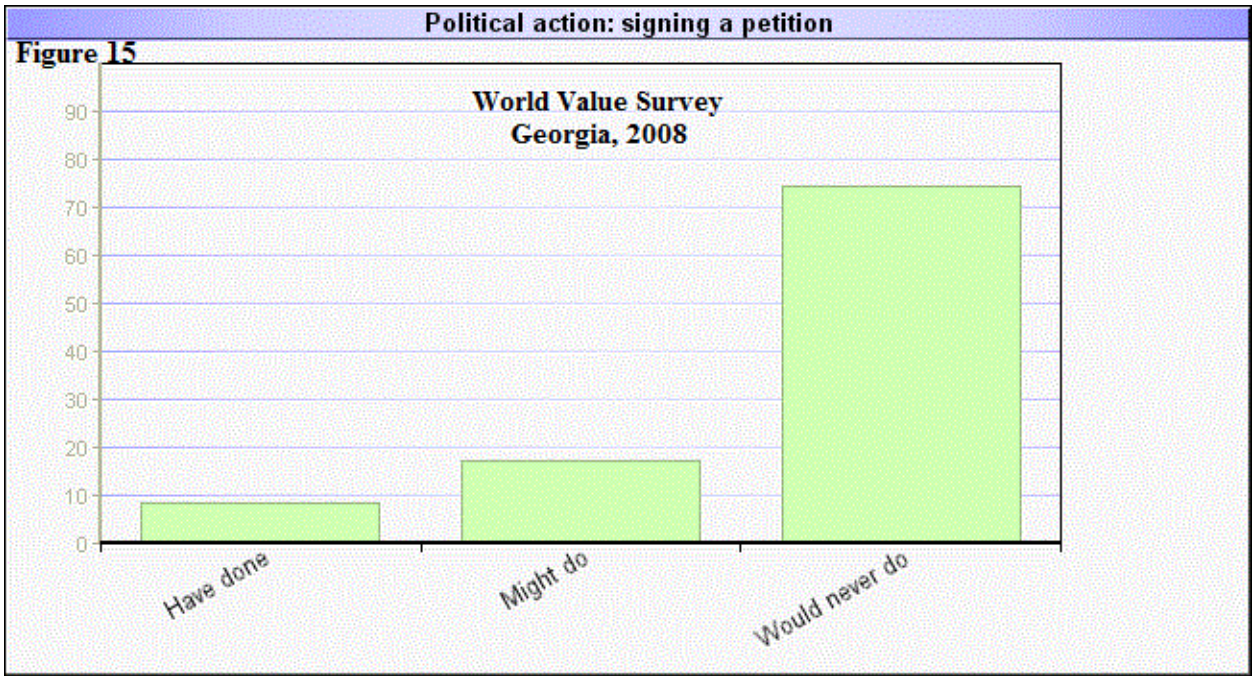


Figure 16 Should people participate in protest actions? (%)

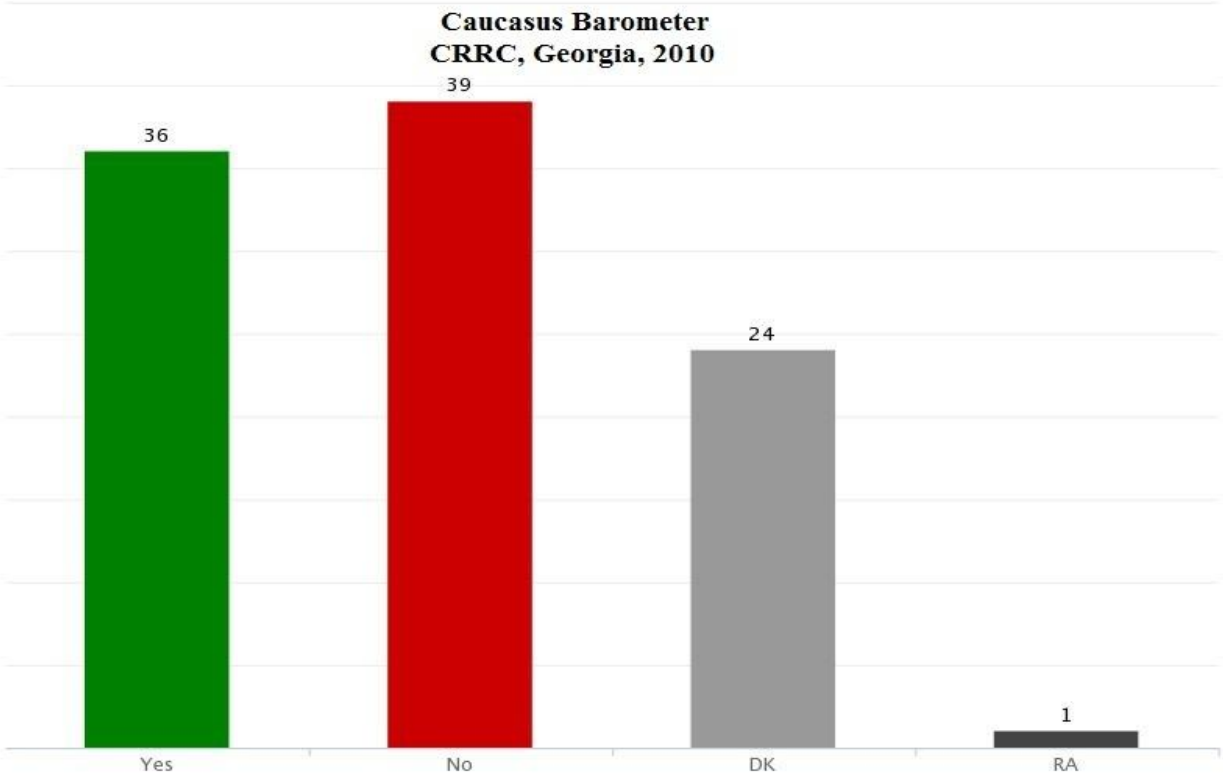


Figure 17 Trust – Religious institutions respondent belongs to (%)

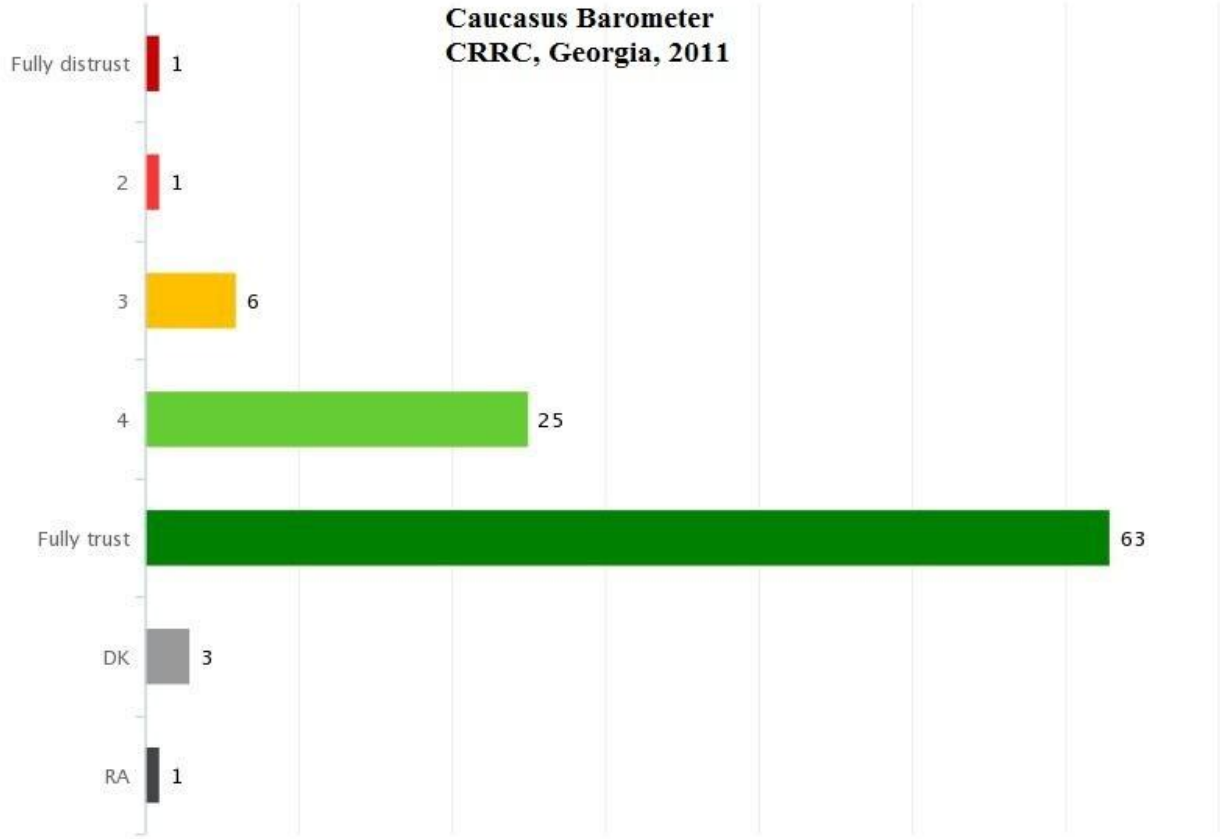


Figure 18

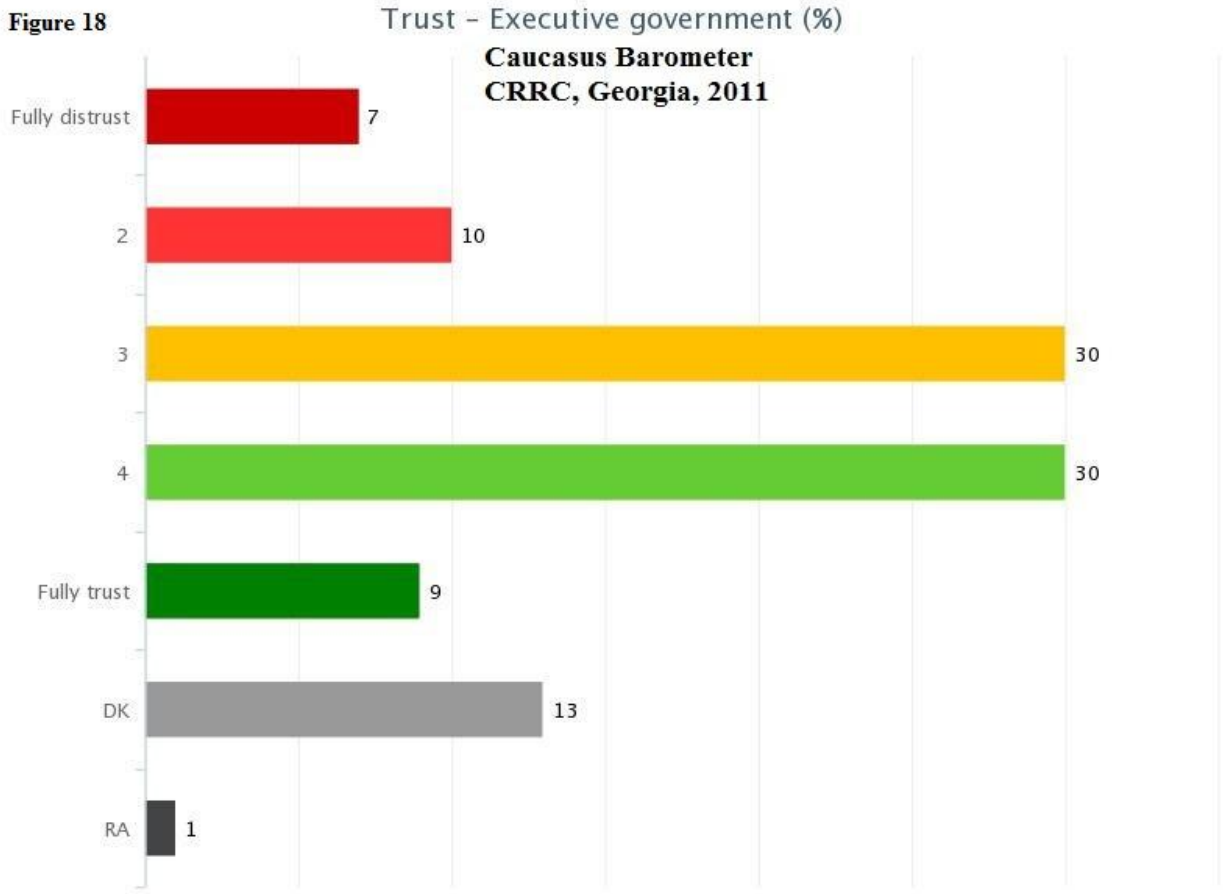


Figure 19

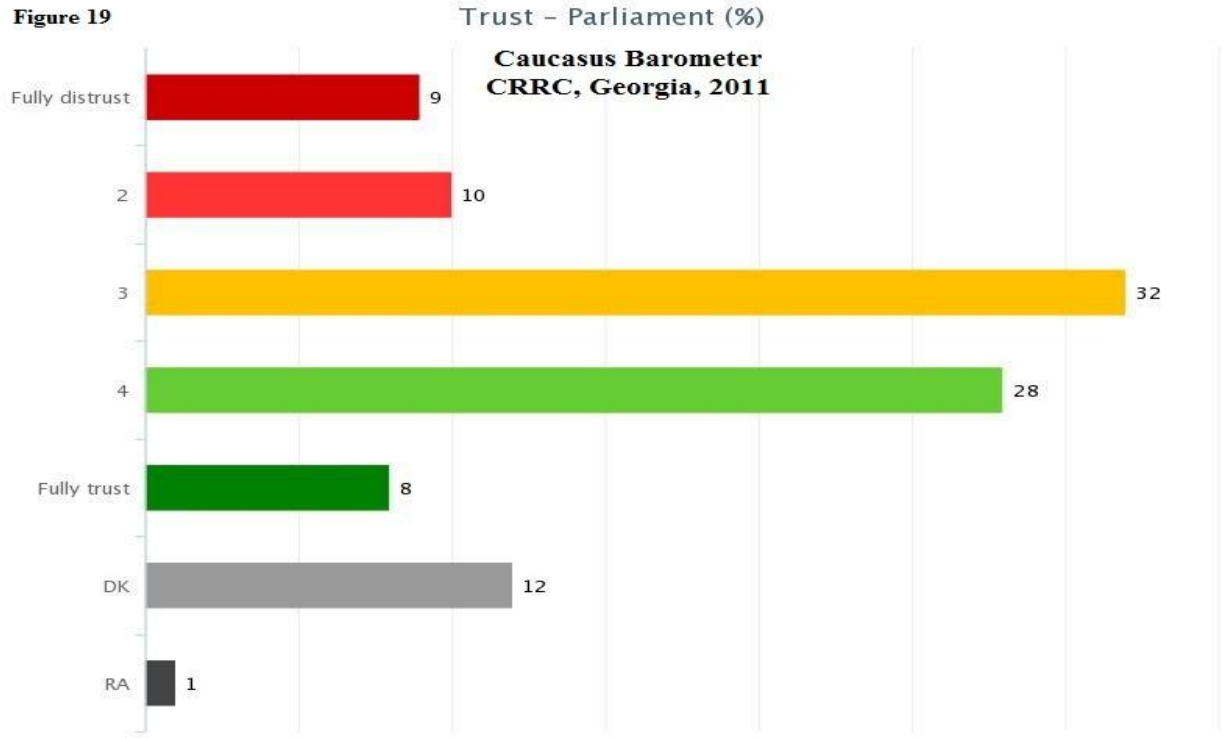


Figure 20

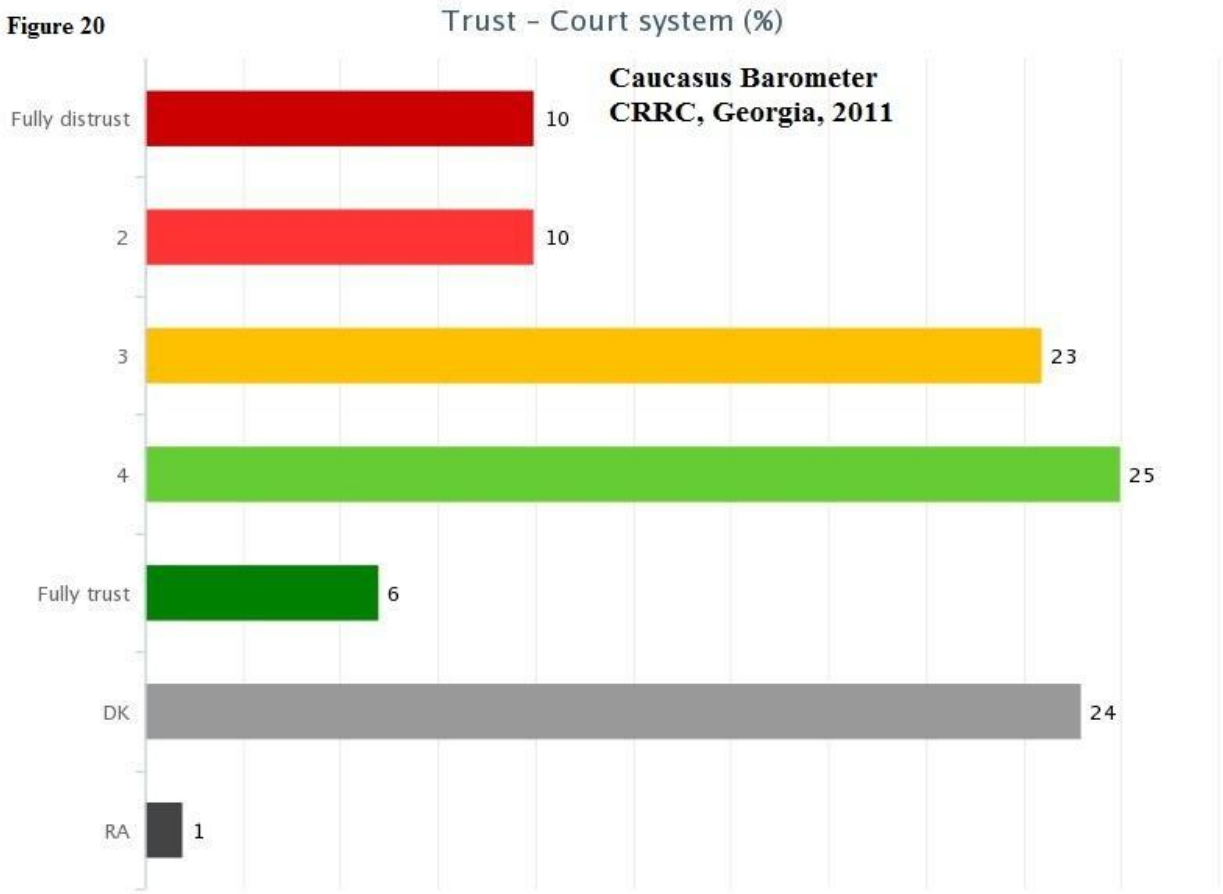
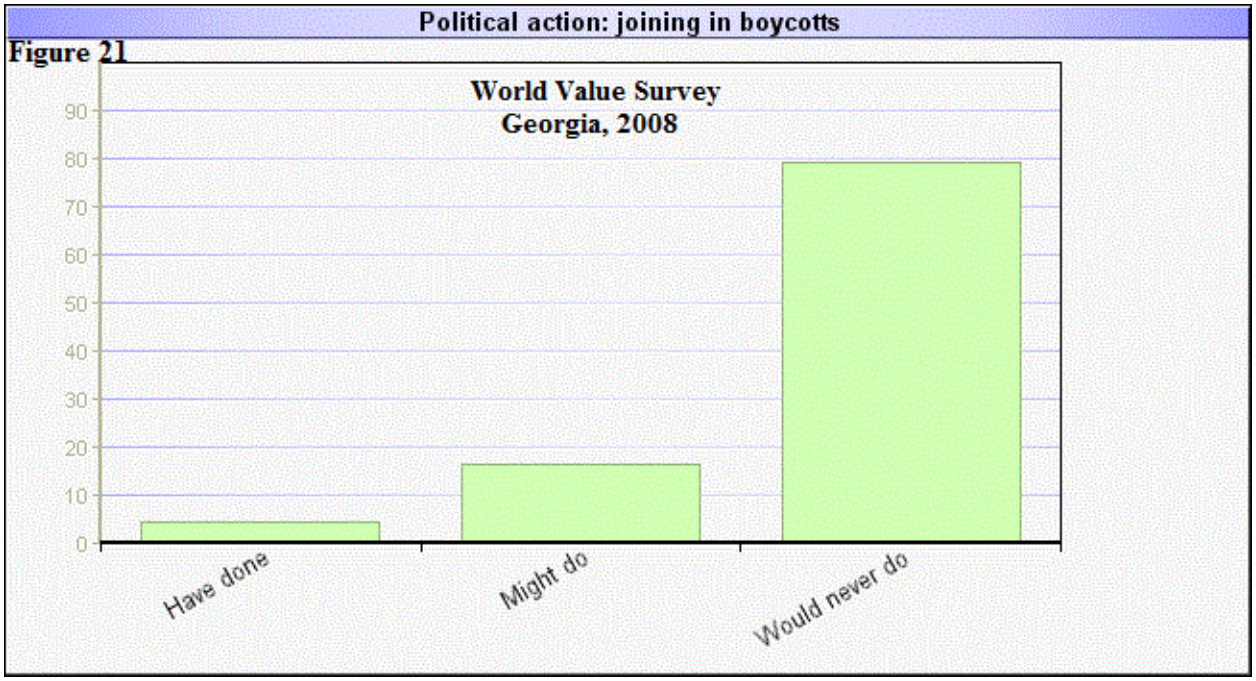


Figure 21



Political action: attending lawful/peaceful demonstrations

Figure 22

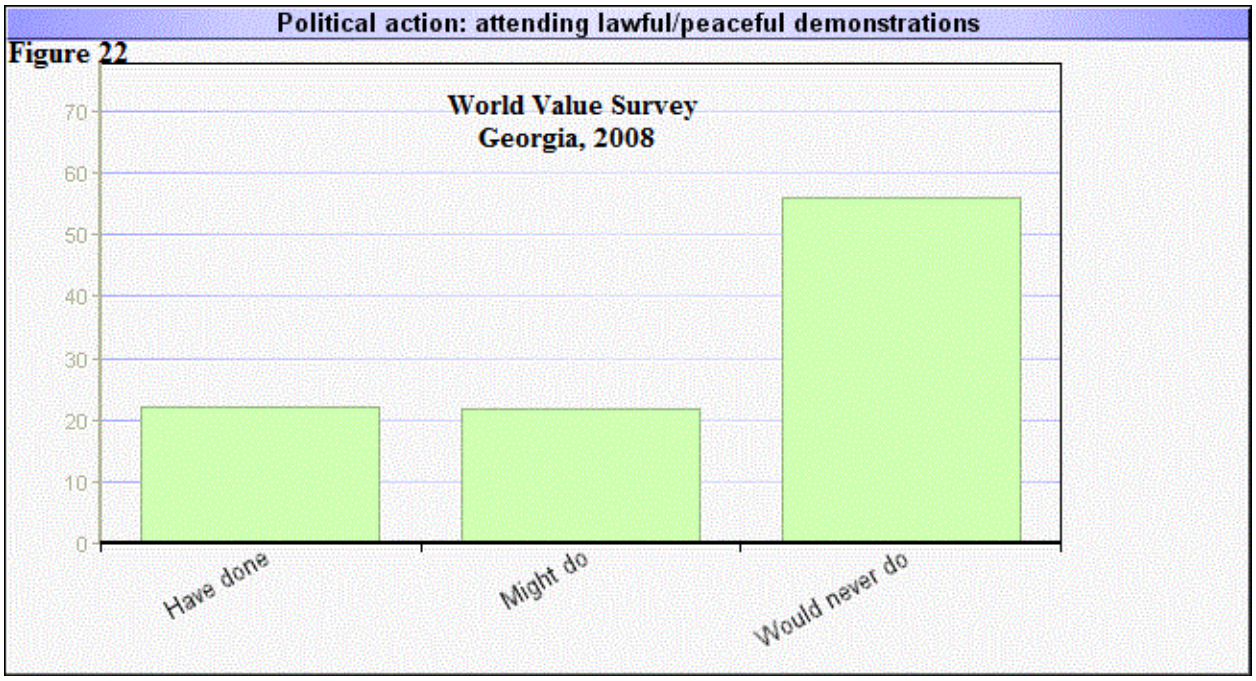


Figure 24

Support of Georgia's membership in NATO (%)

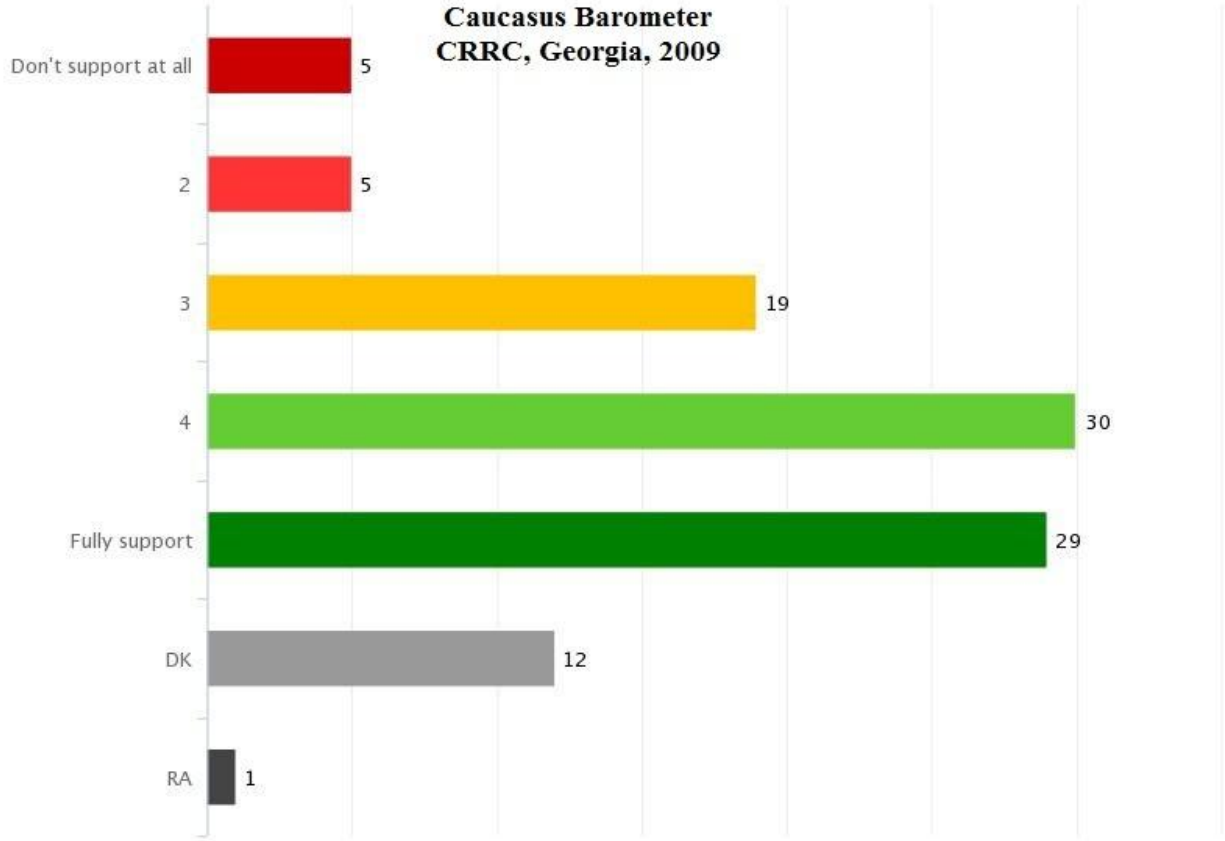


Figure 25 Most important issue: NATO membership (%)

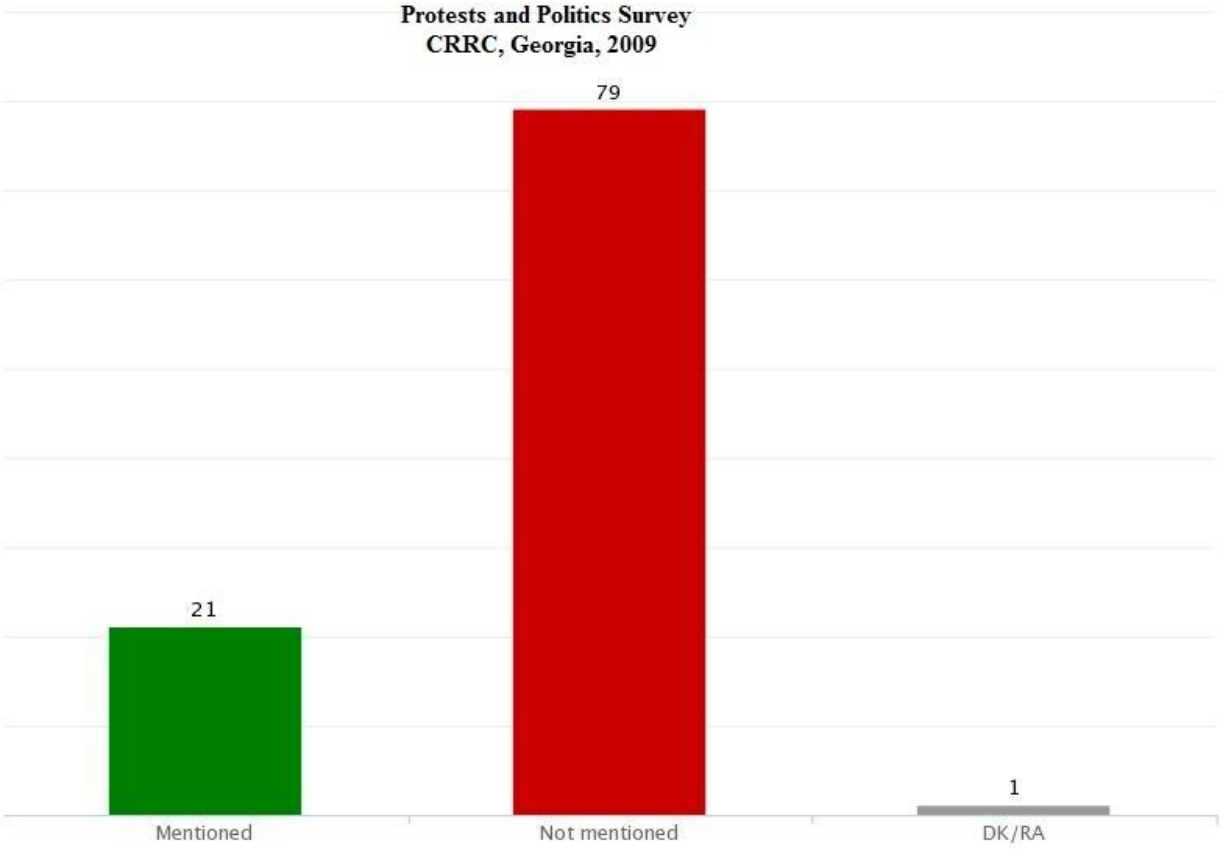
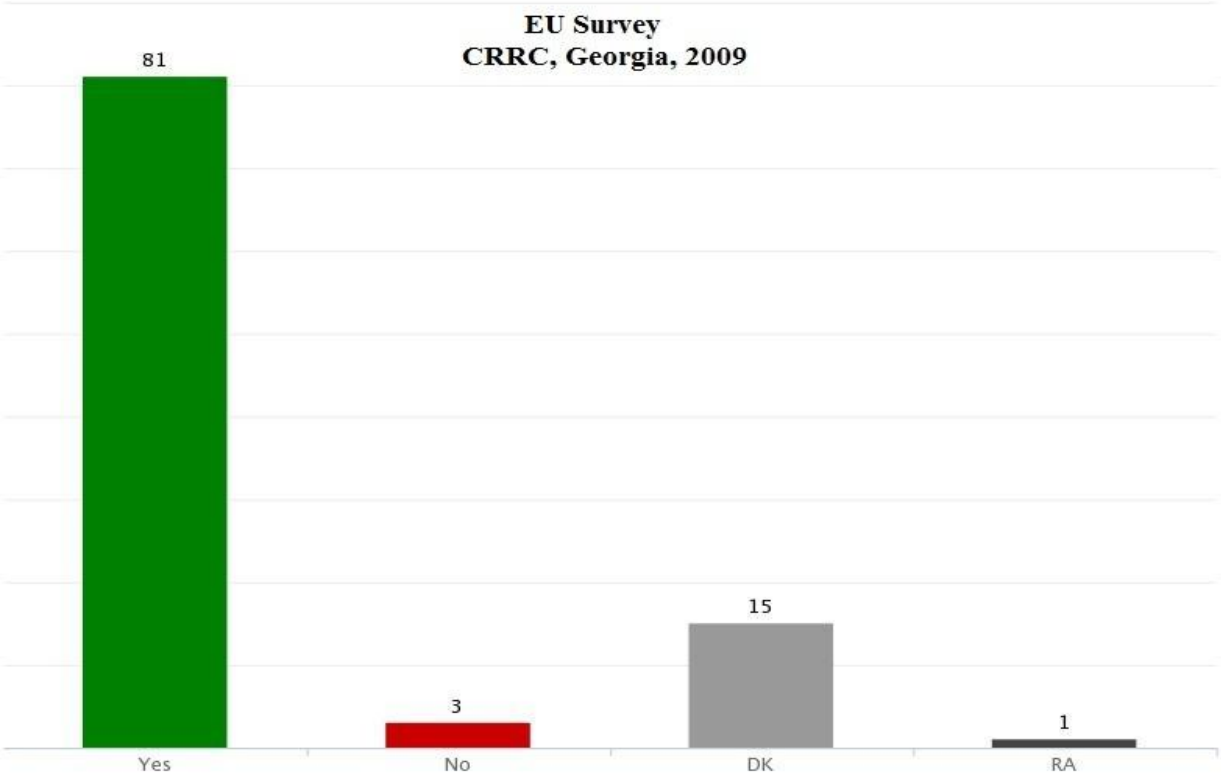


Figure 26

Should Georgia be in the EU? (%)



If there was referendum tomorrow, would you vote for or against EU membership? (%)

Figure 27

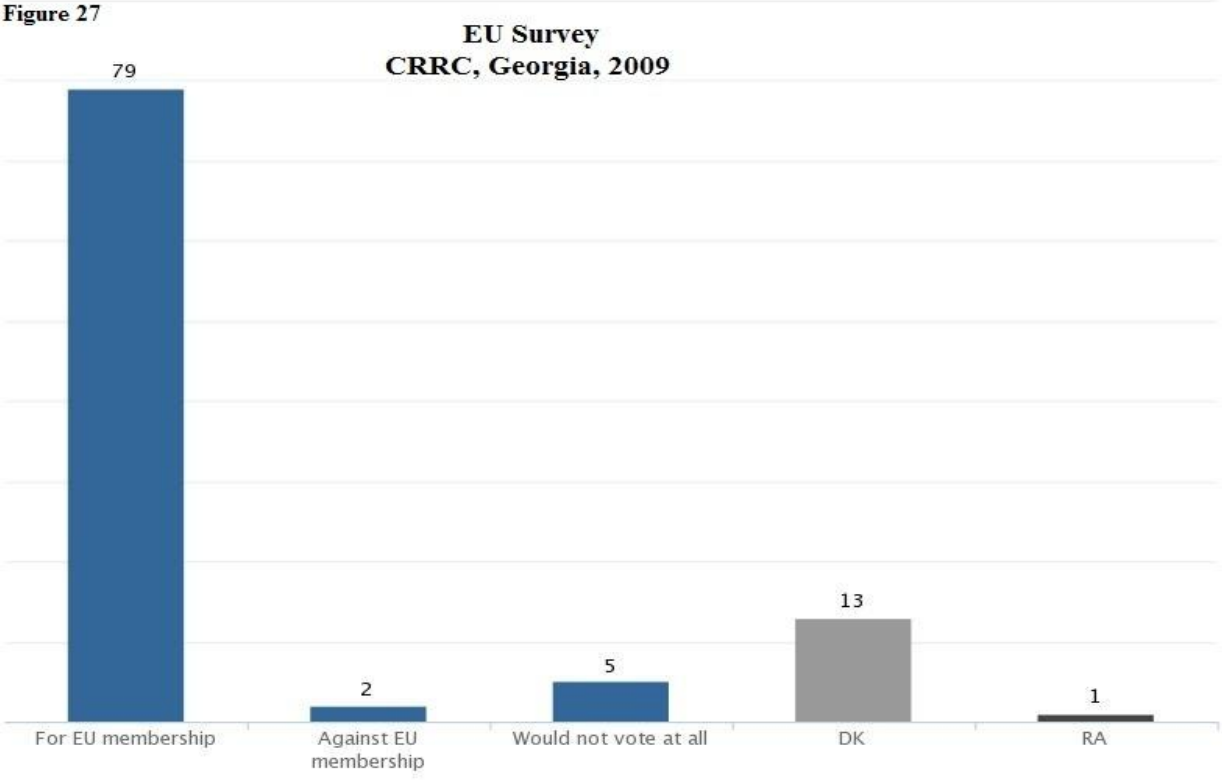


Figure 28 Important for Georgia: EU (%)

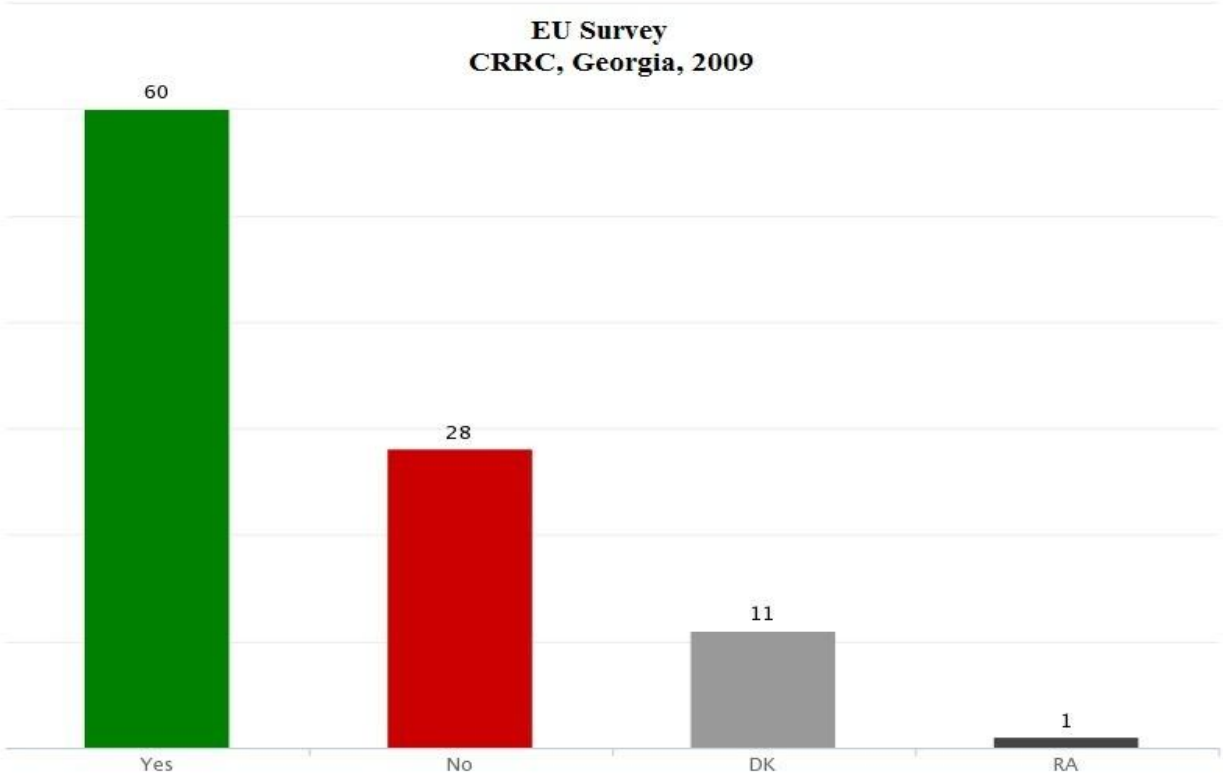


Figure 29 I am Georgian, and therefore I am European (%)

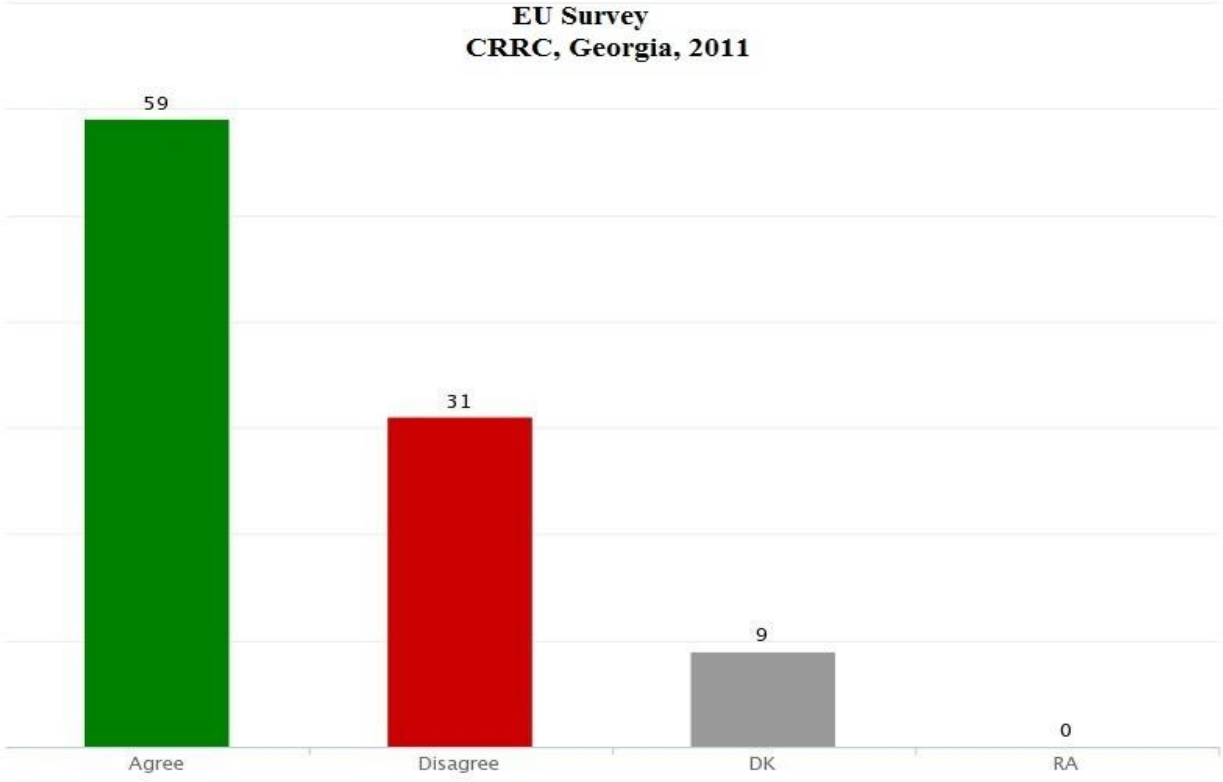


Figure 30 I am Georgian, and therefore I am European (%)

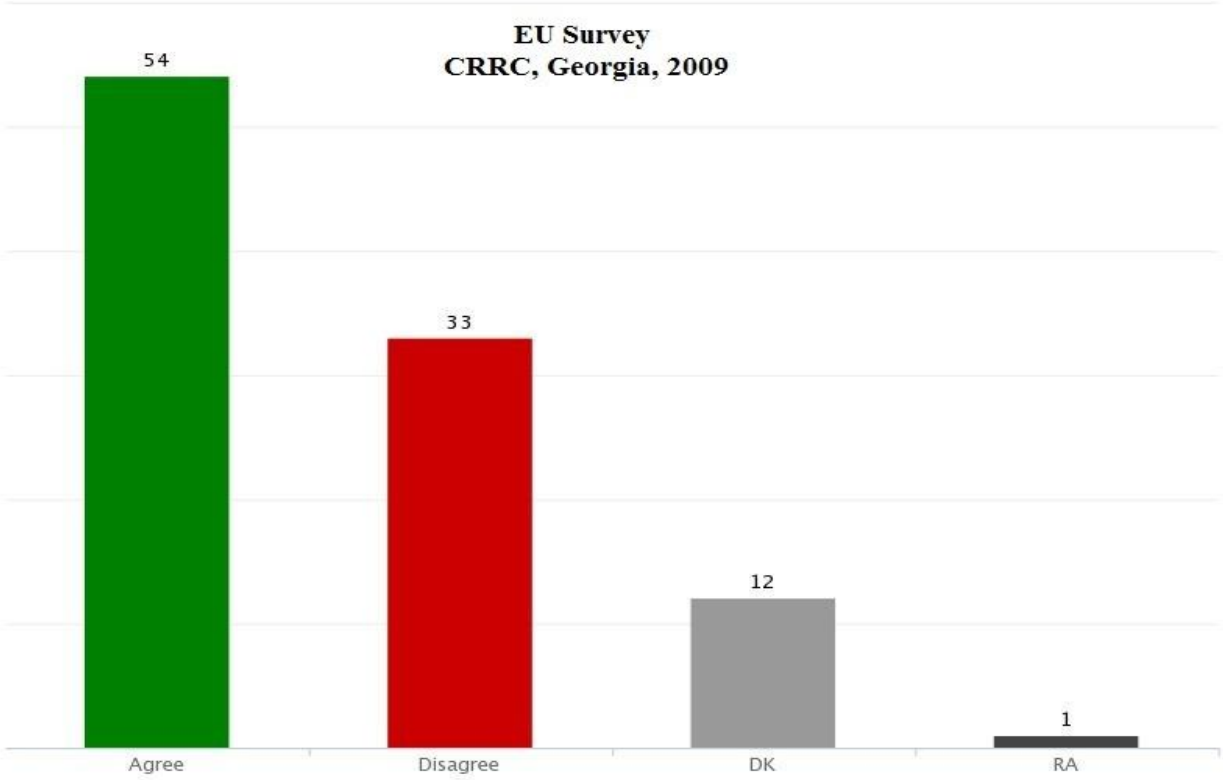


Figure 31 Georgia should have closest political cooperation with EU (%)

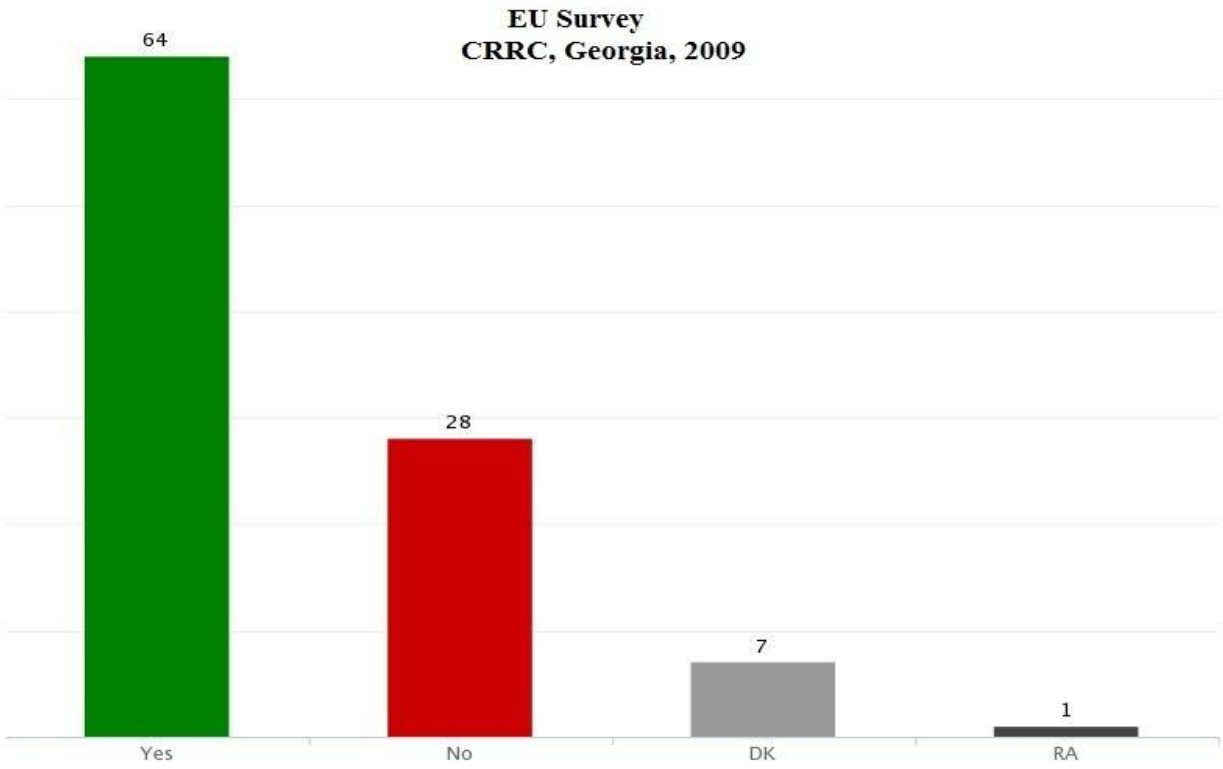


Figure 32

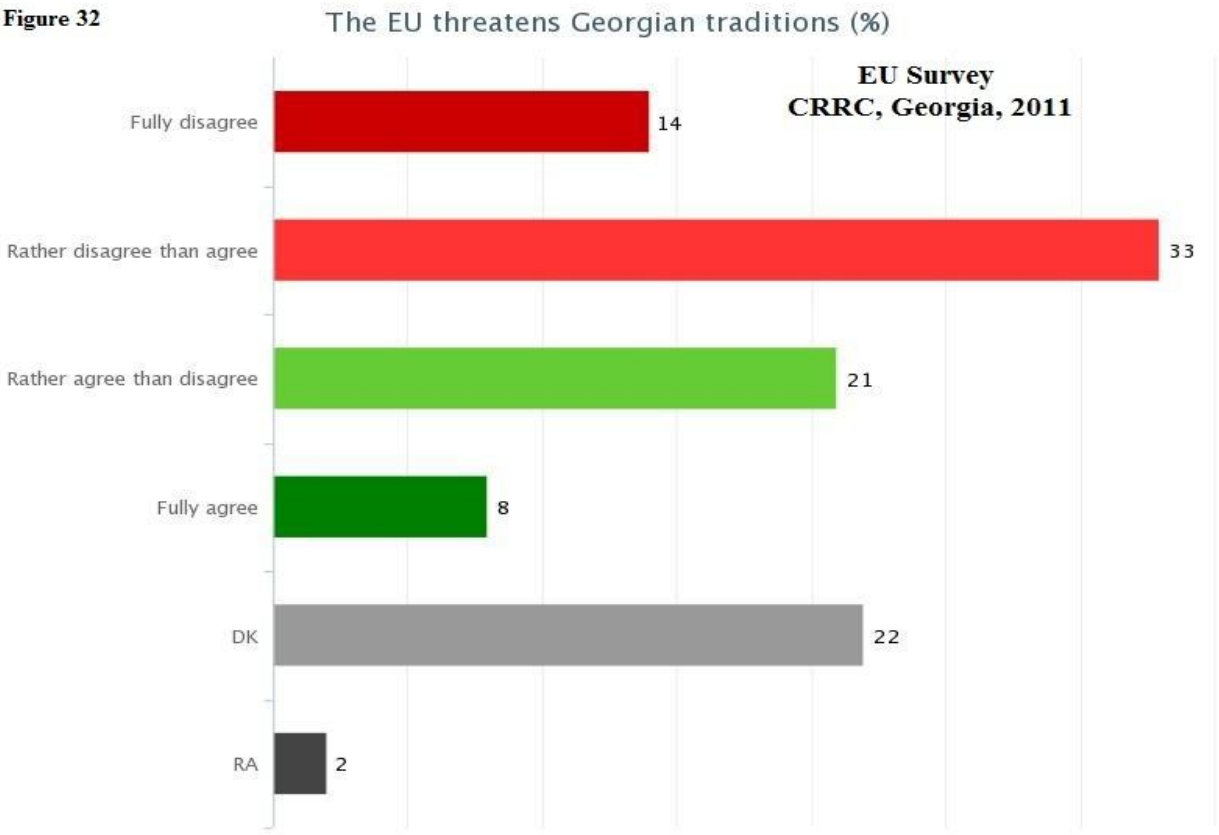


Figure 33

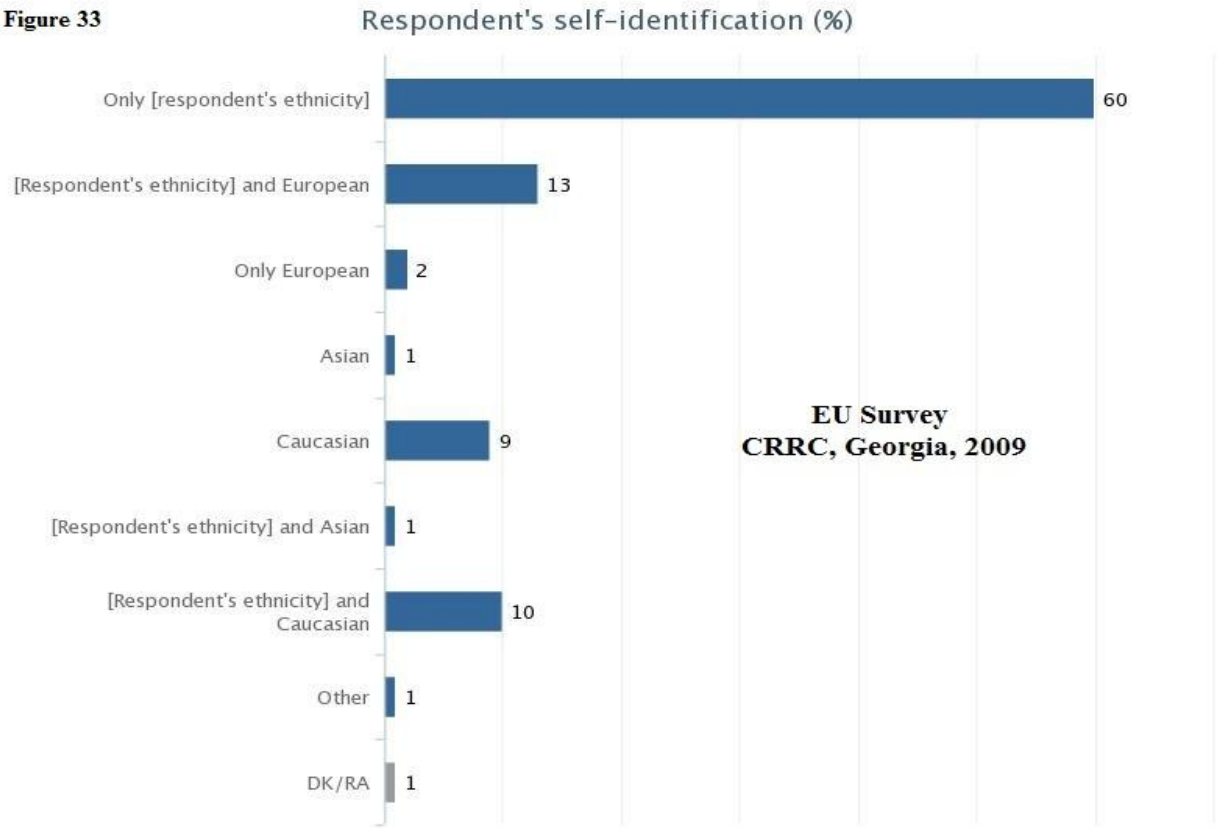


Figure 34 Our way of life needs to be protected against European influences (%)

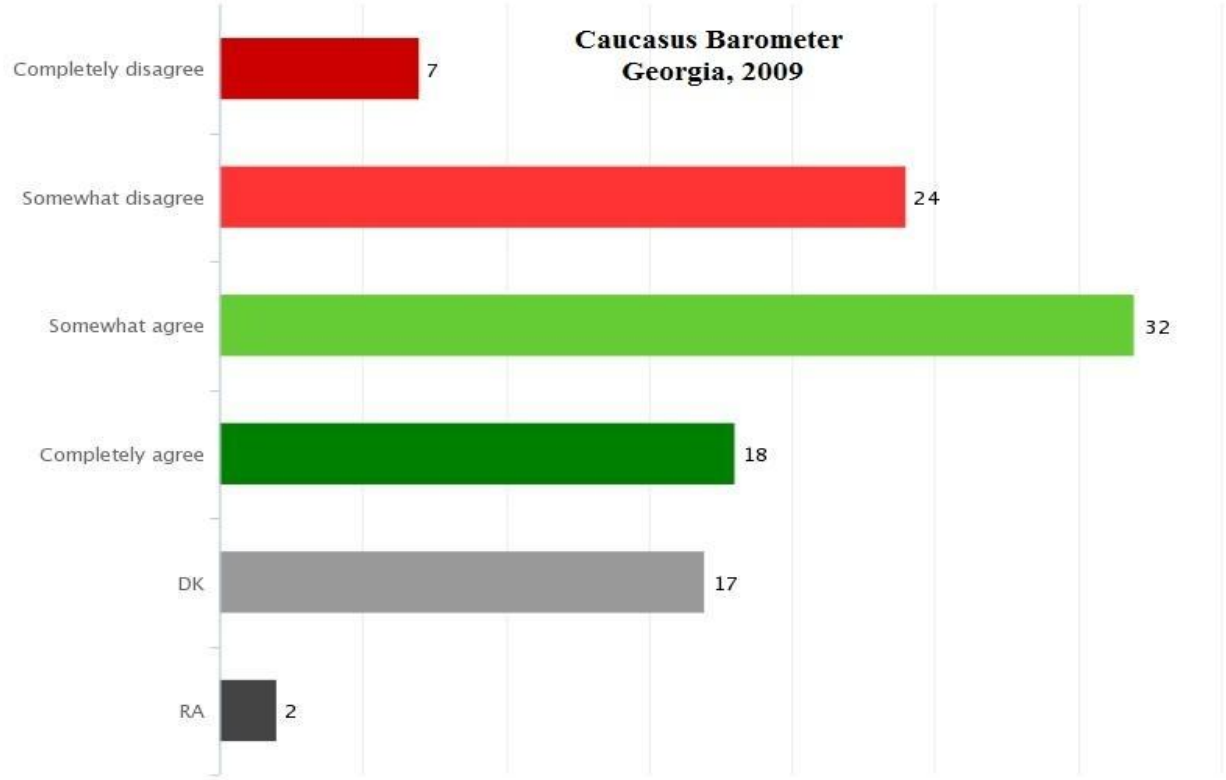


Figure 35 Country's culture is threatened by Western influences (%)
(Experimental question)

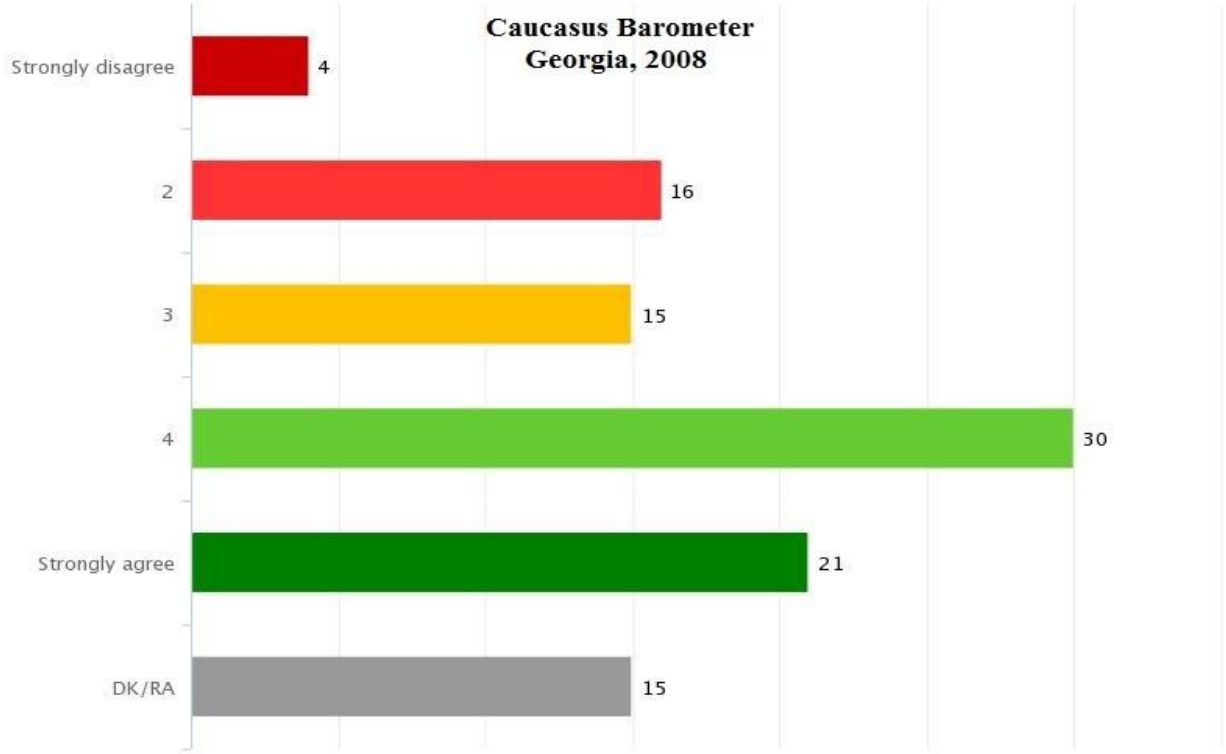


Figure 36 Is Georgia a member of the European Union? (%)

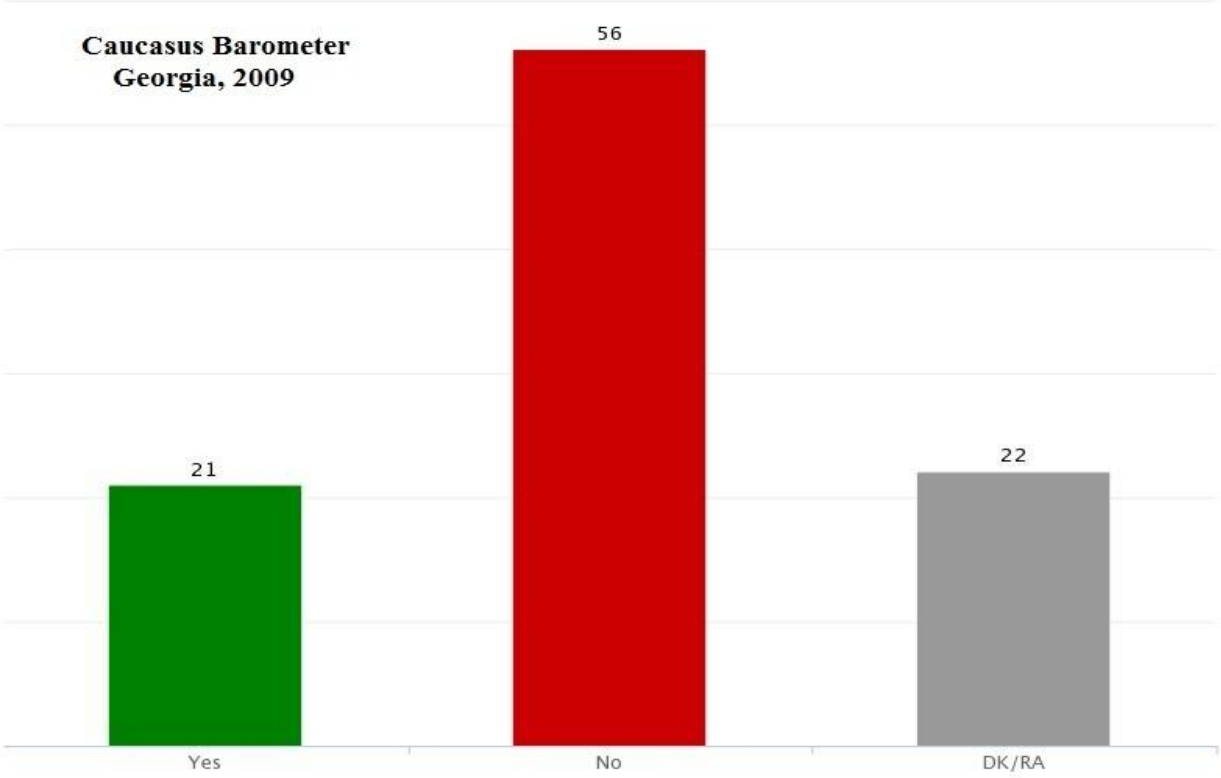


Figure 37 When will Georgia join the EU? (%)