

Focus Group Findings on Perceptions of Women in Georgian Politics

An Assessment of Perceptions of Women as Political Candidates and Elected Officials

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International Foundation for Electoral Systems



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I. RESEARCH OVERVIEW & METHODOLOGY

From June 18 to June 21, 2012, IFES contracted and supervised the Institute of Social Studies and Analysis (ISSA), a Tbilisi-based research organization, to conduct eight focus groups across Georgia, each with between seven and 10 participants. One female-only and one male-only focus group were held in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi and Marneuli. These locations were selected as an attempt to reach a cross-section of the Georgian population, representing rural and urban areas in the east and west of Georgia. The **overall objective** was to understand the perceptions, opinions and perceived obstacles toward women as political candidates and elected officials.

To meet these objectives, IFES developed a tailored discussion guide of various questions, follow-ups and probes, which the moderator used to lead the group over the course of between one and two hours. The findings in this report are intended to be used to inform a public information campaign about women in politics ahead of the 2012 parliamentary elections.

To recruit focus group participants, respondents were randomly selected for interview and were asked questions from the participant recruitment questionnaire. Based on responses to these questions, participants were invited to be focus group participants only if they met IFES' required participant criteria. Male-only and female-only groups were held and within each group participants consisted of a mix of age groups; education levels (primary level and above); residents of urban and rural areas; and of those at least moderately aware of/interested in politics and elections. Due to the ethnic diversity of the area, the Marneuli focus groups contained participants of Armenian, Azeri and Georgian ethnic backgrounds. Due to the religious diversity of the area, the Batumi groups consisted of Orthodox and Muslim participants. Below is a snapshot of the focus group dates, locations and participant numbers.

Focus Group Details			
Date of Focus Group Discussion	Location of Focus Group Discussion	Female/Male Group	Number of Participants
June 18, 2012	Marneuli	Female	7
June 18, 2012	Marneuli	Male	9
June 18, 2012	Batumi	Female	10
June 18, 2012	Batumi	Male	8
June 19, 2012	Kutaisi	Female	9
June 19, 2012	Kutaisi	Male	8
June 20, 2012	Tbilisi	Female	9
June 21, 2012	Tbilisi	Male	8

II. STRUCTURE OF REPORT

This report presents the conclusions of the eight focus groups with findings presented by topic area. The focus group participants will be referred to as “participants” throughout the report. Direct quotations from participants will also be presented, identifying the quoted person by demographic characteristics:

--**Gender, focus group location, age group**, resident of an **urban or rural** area; **educational attainment level; ethnic group** (Marneuli only); and **religion** (Batumi only).

Quotations and participant demographic information will appear as shown in the following example:

“In my opinion”

-Female, Tbilisi, 36-49, rural, secondary

III. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The focus group findings reveal citizens' opinions, perceptions and perceived obstacles to women in politics. Focus group participants identify both opportunities and challenges for those working toward increasing the number of female elected officials in Georgia.

While both men and women are generally open to voting for either men or women candidates based on their qualifications, findings indicate greater participation of women in Georgian politics is challenged by societal assumptions on the role of women. Focus group participants cite various obstacles to women becoming elected officials: society's "traditional mentality" that women's primary role is to care for the family; the view that women are not suitable for politics or that politics are within a man's domain; the impression that women themselves are not interested in becoming elected (for various reasons, including that politics is a dirty game for anybody involved); and that women are less likely to possess some qualities desirable in elected officials. In order for women to play a greater role as political candidates and officials, these perceived obstacles should be addressed by public information campaigns and other development programs.

Other findings reveal women elected officials are viewed to possess many positive characteristics that can be a focus for civic education campaigns aiding this effort. While focus group participants often express negative impressions of Georgian politics, they mention several positive qualities they believe women can bring to the process. Of traits participants find important for elected officials to possess, women elected officials are thought of as more diplomatic, better at ensuring consensus, less aggressive in imposing their will on fellow officials or citizens, more reliable by keeping promises and less corrupt. These are qualities male politicians are perceived to be less likely to possess and can be important in distinguishing the core competencies female elected officials can deliver. Highlighting these positive traits could form the basis of efforts to educate Georgians on the changes women could bring to political affairs in the country – a way to improve the political status quo.

Emphasizing women's competencies and showcasing politics as an arena for both genders may be the most feasible avenue to persuade Georgians that greater representation of women in politics would be beneficial for the country. While participants feel men have more privileges than women in society, they do not believe women are discriminated against per se. And despite the fact that nearly all participants think the number of women in elected bodies is too low, many participants oppose the introduction of gender quotas as a means of increasing this number. Those against quotas oppose them because they view quotas as an infringement on the rights of voters – an artificial imposition on voter's choice. These responses suggest idealistic appeals or rights-based arguments related to women's entitlement to greater representation may not be as effective as one that emphasizes positive qualities women candidates could contribute to the Georgian political landscape.

IV. DETAILED FINDINGS

Interest and Opinions Regarding Politics & Elections

To begin, focus group participants were asked about their interest in politics and elections. Most focus group participants are interested in politics, but not all follow politics closely. Some participants think that men discuss politics more than women.

“As a Georgian citizen, I should not stand aside; everybody has to be actively involved in the political processes.”

-Male, Kutaisi, 36-49, rural, university

“Women participate more actively but I have heard that men discuss the matters more, they worry about it, they often talk about it when they get together.”

-Female, Kutaisi, 18-25, urban, secondary

Those who follow politics gather information from television primarily and Internet secondarily. Internet usage was mentioned among both rural and urban participants and in younger age groups. Radio is only used by a few participants.

Many participants believe voting is their right and civic duty and they must vote to try to make their voice heard. Many participants say they have voted in past elections and plan to vote in the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections. Despite a sense of civic duty in voting, some participants voice negative sentiments in the fairness of elections and are skeptical of their impact as voters. Additionally, a few participants say some voters feel they must vote a certain way to protect their jobs – especially government workers – and a few participants mention the prevalence of vote-buying.

“As for me, I don’t like the government or the opposition. I don’t know what to do, but I am still going to vote since it’s my duty and I must defend my vote.”

-Female, Tbilisi, 18-25, urban, technical

“We all must defend our votes to not allow falsification. I hope this day will come.”

-Male, Batumi, 26-49, rural, technical, Muslim

Role of Women in Georgian Society

Nearly all participants view women's primary role in Georgian society as raising children and caring for family. Many participants across different focus groups mention the "Caucasian" or "Georgian mentality," which places women in the role of family caretaker and women as secondary to men. Some participants accept this role for women, but others believe the mentality should be changed.

"Whatever you say, Georgians still have the Caucasian mentality. It is true for me also, and I think a woman's role is to run the family and be a mother."

-Male, Kutaisi, 36-49, rural, technical

"In the first place it is the family, then doing other things if they manage, but family comes first."

-Male, Tbilisi, 50-65, urban, technical

"If we are speaking about the society here, they certainly consider the family first."

-Female, Marneuli, 36-49, urban, secondary, Azeri

Some women participants speak about how women are not often involved in social life and are disconnected from society. This was discussed as a prevalent problem in Marneuli, where participants say women are generally not involved in social life when they stay at home to take care of the family. They blame this on a patriarchal mentality and lack of education in their area.

Working is mentioned as a secondary role for women and many discussions covered the changing nature of women in the Georgian workforce. It was acknowledged that more women are in the workforce today and have also become migrants working in other countries. Many participants say women can find work more easily than men, women are becoming more active outside the home, and they have been more resilient than men in the current economic situation. Nearly all respondents say there are more jobs for women and many of these are jobs men are not interested in doing, such as working in a restaurant or cleaning. No respondents spontaneously mention the field of politics and government as a role for women in Georgian society.

Meanwhile, most participants say it is understood that even if the woman works, she is still responsible as family caretaker, what is commonly known as the "double burden." Many women in Marneuli and Kutaisi discussed the expectation that the woman takes care of the family, but also mentioned that it is important that the woman work and have adequate education. Some participants also believe a woman cannot be fully realized if she does not pursue her career in addition to family responsibilities. On the other hand, a few participants – both men and women – feel it is a luxury for a woman to stay home and not work if the husband can support her. However, other participants disputed this, on the grounds that the woman is disconnected from society and may not fully realize her potential.

"A woman should be a mother and the head of a family. Due to present life conditions, Georgian women have fled from Georgia. They work a lot to make some money to send their families. Men are sitting at home since there are no jobs. All this is at the expense of women's work. Men cannot find any jobs."

-Male, Batumi, 36-49, urban, technical, Orthodox

"In my opinion, women must be able to take care of both her family and her work. I don't have a family of my own yet, but I would like to be able to do both."

-Female, Marneuli, 18-25, urban, technical, Armenian

"[Women are] not only the breadwinner. A woman makes a lot of decisions now...a woman's role is much greater. She is resilient, diligent."

-Female, Tbilisi, 18-25, urban, technical

"The main function of a woman is in the first place being a mother, but unemployment is so high that everybody needs work—be it a man or a woman."

-Female, Batumi, 50-65, rural, technical

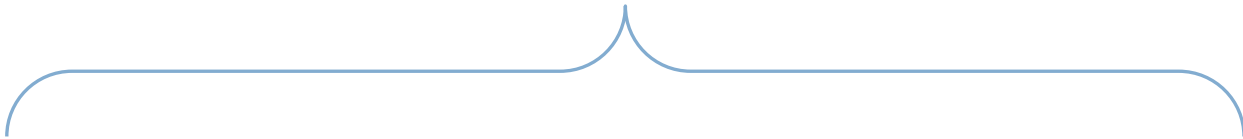
"I have money to support her. Why should she work?"

-Male, Tbilisi, 50-65, urban, technical

Status of Men and Women in Georgian Society

When discussing whether men and women enjoy equal status in Georgian society, most participants agree gender equality does not exist, but they do not necessarily believe women are actively discriminated against. Many men, and even some women, think it is appropriate that there is a lack of gender equality. They justify this belief with their perceptions that women are weaker than men, men can do certain jobs better, and men can restrict women.

While it is agreed that men have more privileges and advantages in society, participants believe women have more access to employment opportunities today. Some participants also feel that during the Soviet period there was more support and more equality for women. They say the government would promote women and was obliged to give them jobs; they contrast that with today where they believe women are tasked with promoting themselves.



"In reality men and women don't have equal status. There is still not balance; men's status is higher..."

-Female, Tbilisi, 18-25, urban, secondary

"We are still a patriarchal society and a man plays more or less a more important role but I don't think women feel suppressed because of this...Although a man is still dominant."


-Male, Tbilisi, 18-25, urban, secondary

"Due to our mentality, men think that a woman has no right to be more involved in different activities."

-Male, Marneuli, 50-65, rural, university, Georgian

"The role of women is belittled and they call them the weaker sex."

-Female, Batumi, 26-35, rural, university



Support for Women in Politics & Government

When beginning the discussion on women in politics and government, it was revealed that many participants view this as a man's domain. Some participants say 'society' believes women have fewer skills, are not suited for politics and should prioritize the home. Some participants note that even if women are in politics, they are still expected to care for their family.

"Politics is still considered to be men's domain today, and very few people think that this is a woman's business, despite the fact that no physical strength is required, but it is still considered a man's job, you can often hear such a slogan 'Woman has nothing to do with politics.'"

-Female, Tbilisi, 18-25, urban, secondary

"What is better for the country, that a woman brought up a child or that she got involved in politics? If we want to bring benefit to our country, then it is better if a woman raises the children."

-Male, Kutaisi, 36-49, rural, university

"Any man can say that a woman should be active, involved in politics—but that's just what they would say, although at the same time a man will not like to see his own mother or wife being very active."

-Male, Batumi, 36-49, rural, technical, Muslim

Nonetheless, many participants call politics a "dirty business" that taints the reputation of anyone who becomes involved. They view it as a risky profession, and some believe men are more willing to take that risk.

"Politics is a dirty business. Politics in Georgia does not allow you to be honest and do what you want to do with all your heart..."

-Male, Tbilisi, 36-49, urban, university

Most participants across different focus groups say men and women can be equally qualified for political positions, in terms of education, etc., but women often lack the appropriate professional experience as men. Participants also mention there are few examples of women in politics who can destroy stereotypes and show an example of a good female leader.

“In my opinion, the problem is that there are no individuals whom we could imagine being a woman diplomat and who can destroy this stereotype. We have never had or seen such a person and consequently, we do not know.”

-Male, Batumi, 36-49, urban, university

In local politics in Marneuli, some participants mentioned they lack women local leaders and that village problems are decided by men. Some men in Marneuli feel local residents would not approach a woman leader to discuss local issues, but some women participants in Marneuli believe having a woman local leader would allow women residents to air grievances when they may not feel comfortable going to meet with a male leader.

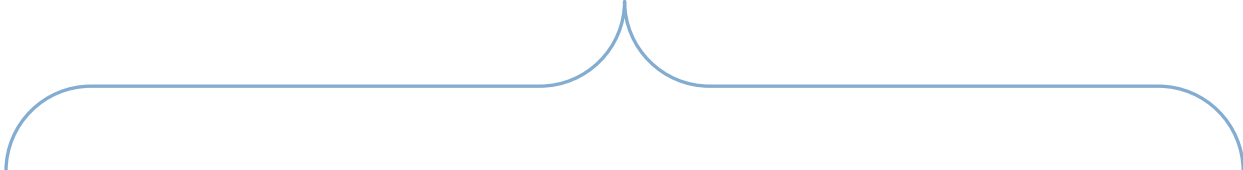
“Women never appear at the meetings in villages at all. Where there is a gathering of men, women cannot appear there, it’s forbidden by our religion.”

-Male, Marneuli, 26-35, rural, secondary, Azeri

“It is true; women often say that they cannot go to the local government office because there is a man. It is especially important for our region to have women in the local government.”

-Female, Marneuli, 18-25, urban, technical, Armenian

Framing the discussion in terms of supporting family members, some participants say they would encourage women they know to enter politics, but most say they would not encourage such a pursuit. A few participants who would support a family member in politics make the distinction between supporting their friends, daughters or sisters, but not their wives, noting it may take time away from their family. Another reason for not supporting a family member is that politics is viewed as an abnormal and difficult career – one where you need to be strong to withstand the many problems encountered in such a field.



"Personally, I think that family should be a priority for a Georgian woman ... and then other things. It is difficult to combine family with politics..."

-Male, Tbilisi, 18-25, urban, secondary

"I would encourage a daughter or a wife, as long as they were not mine."

-Male, Marneuli, 36-49, rural, secondary, Georgian

"A woman who is married and spends all day in the Parliament, who will do her duties in the family, her husband? So it depends on the family, it should support a woman and share her obligations."


-Female, Marneuli, 50-65, rural, technical, Azeri

"I think I would support my relative, or a friend if I saw she was the right type of person to take this burden upon herself and be perfect in her sphere. Yes I would support her... if I see the potential, why not, but I don't want my wife to be in politics."

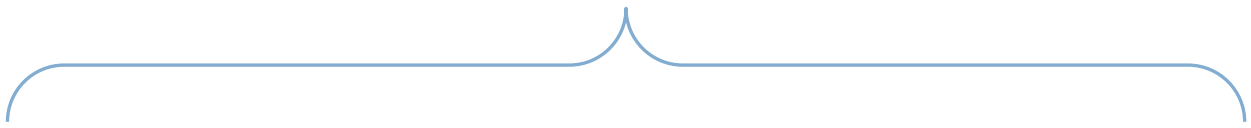
-Male, Tbilisi, 18-25, urban, secondary

"It would be hard for me to encourage the family member... especially in this period. Twenty years have passed and I can see it is a dirty business, she might be honest but taking into account what's going on today, no..."

-Male, Tbilisi, 36-49, urban, university



However, some male and female participants say if their wife or daughter wanted to be involved in politics, they would allow her. Only one participant expressed an interest in becoming an elected official herself, but noted that her family was not supportive of this desire.



"If she wanted and assured me, then why wouldn't I support..."


- Male, Tbilisi, 26-35, urban, university

"If I see that she has the ability to do it and she is able to do things that people will appreciate, then why not?"

-Male, Tbilisi, 26-35, urban, secondary

"In my opinion, parents allow the sons to be more active than daughters. They consider that a son should go into politics. When I told my parents I wanted to get involved in politics they almost went mad. They said - you are not a boy, are you?"

- Female, Batumi, 18-25, urban, secondary, Muslim



Perceptions of Current and Former Female Elected Officials

A few current and former female elected officials in Georgia are respected and viewed positively, but many others are viewed critically by both men and women participants. While they are not viewed as “token” females placed in power, they are not all viewed positively. This is sometimes attributed to politics being viewed as a man’s domain and men perceived as having more skills; sometimes general political ineffectiveness in the Georgian system is also blamed.

“When I look at female politicians, I see they are well-prepared. Our female politicians are a bit better than male but I think they have much in common.”

-Male, Marneuli, 50-65, rural, technical, Georgian

“Whatever good examples we remember about women politicians, men are still better.”

-Female, Tbilisi, 26-49, urban, university

“Generally, there are very few female politicians that are very good.”

-Female, Tbilisi, 18-25, urban, secondary

At least one participant in every focus group mentioned 12th century Georgian ruler Queen Tamar, known as “King Tamar,” as an example of Georgia having a successful woman leader. Yet, some participants argue this example is irrelevant for modern times.

“If we think about history, we had King Tamar. She was highly respected. There were a lot of good women politicians in the past.”

-Female, Marneuli, 36-49, rural, secondary, Georgian

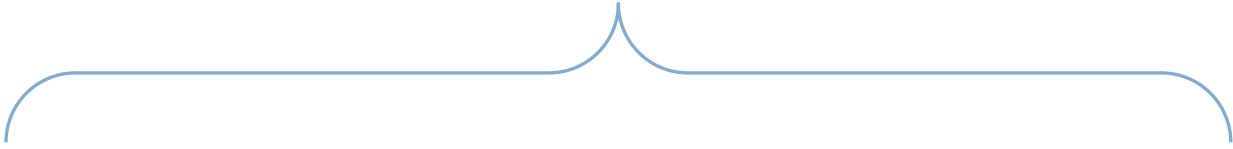
“Well there was a kingdom then and Tamar was the king, but parliament is completely different.”

-Female, Marneuli, 50-65, rural, technical, Azeri

“King Tamar was our king and she is still greatly respected.”

-Male, Batumi, 50-65, rural, technical, Muslim

When asked to assess modern female politicians, many participants view Nino Burjanadze negatively, yet some believe she was fairly powerful and influential. Some participants say Salome Zurabishvili and Magda Anikashvili made positive achievements in politics. While some would express positive sentiments for certain female politicians, many participants say they are not happy with Georgian female politicians overall. Without being prompted, some groups mentioned international officials such as Margaret Thatcher and Angela Merkel as positive examples of strong female leaders.



“Even though they say that Burjanadze is a male type of a politician, I do not agree with that. I like all female features in her but I do not like her much as a politician.”

-Female, Batumi, 36-49, urban, university, Orthodox

“I cannot say that I am happy with Georgian women politicians. There is Salome Zurabishvili who has achieved some important and efficient decisions. I think if there was a man instead of Salome, he would not have been able to do what she had done. Salome was a good diplomat with good education.”

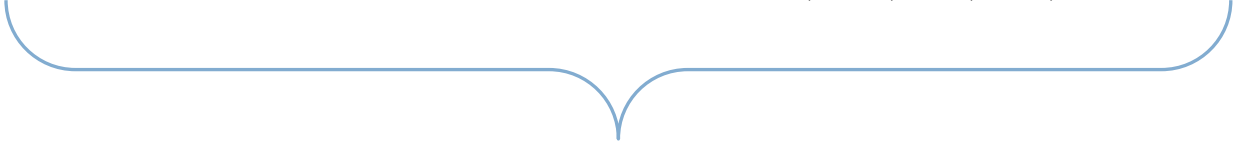
-Female, Batumi, 36-49, urban, university, Orthodox

“I think Magda did a good job regarding persons with disabilities, children between five and 13 will get insurance which they did not have till now.”

-Female, Batumi, 18-25, urban, secondary, Muslim

“Margaret Thatcher, the iron lady, was the best woman. She was exemplary.”

-Female, Tbilisi, 18-25, urban, technical



In terms of whether female politicians prioritize or raise different issues than male politicians, participants think they generally focus on the same issues as male politicians. However, a few participants mention the work of Elene Tevdoradze, who worked to improve conditions for female prisoners, and Guguli Maghradze as female politicians who focused on women’s issues specifically.

Ideal Qualities Found in Female vs. Male Elected Officials

When asked what qualities are found in ideal candidates and elected officials, most participants say they want candidates who are intelligent, charismatic, reliable, keep promises, not aggressive, diplomatic, a good communicator, patriotic, humble, democratic, trustworthy, honest, not corrupt, well-respected, well-balanced and a good family man or woman. A few participants mention they want candidates who clearly state goals, are not demagogic, are Orthodox and good-looking.

Initially, most participants in the focus groups say men and women are equally educated and both can have these qualities equally; that it depends on the individual.

"In my opinion, the qualities listed can belong to men and women equally, all people have equal opportunities. Simply, people should see these qualities. Simply in the Georgian situation, men have a stronger desire to do politics and express themselves."

-Female, Batumi, 18-25, urban, secondary

Yet, when probed further, participants identified qualities that women or men are more likely to possess. Of these ideal qualities, many participants say women are likelier to be diplomatic and work toward ensuring consensus. This was the primary characteristic participants mentioned that female candidates are likelier to possess and a quality many feel is lacking in Georgian politics today. Many participants also believe female candidates are less likely to be aggressive and will not be rigid in their views or forceful in imposing their will on fellow officials or citizens. Some also say women are generally more peace-loving, seeing women as more "soft-hearted" or willing to take people's concerns to heart. Additionally, many participants feel women would be better at keeping promises, not making false promises and being sincere. Many participants also think women are less likely to be corrupt and would be more honest than male politicians.

"A woman is more resilient, she can endure more than a man. A woman is more diplomatic as well."

-Female, Kutaisi, 26-35, urban, university

"Personally, I expect a woman to be more democratic than a man. A woman can't be corrupted either."

-Male, Marneuli, 50-65, rural, university, Georgian

"I think that when a woman makes a speech, she is more sincere and people believe her more."

-Female, Batumi, 36-49, urban, university, Orthodox

"I think that women are more honest and less corrupted than men."

-Male, Marneuli, 50-65, rural, high, Georgian

"Society trusts women more."

-Male, Marneuli, 36-49, rural, secondary, Georgian

"In my opinion, the qualities listed can belong to men and women equally, all people have equal opportunities. Simply, people should see these qualities. Simply in the Georgian situation, men have a stronger desire to do politics and express themselves."

-Female, Batumi, 18-25, urban, secondary

"I think women can organize the job better. Simply there has not appeared a strong woman in politics who would go through with it to the end. When there are two distinguished figures - a woman and a man, I think that a woman would manage to do the job better. But if we have no such precedent this does not mean such women do not exist."

-Female, Batumi, 18-25, urban, secondary, Orthodox

"A woman is more emotional and that's why she takes such things as giving help and similar problems close to heart more than others, she can spend two days on that but still help that one person..."

-Male, Tbilisi, 18-25, urban, university

"Everybody thinks that a woman is weak since she is a female, but she tries to do more than a man in order to prove her strength."

-Male, Marneuli, 18-25, urban, secondary, Azeri

On the other hand, male elected officials are thought to be better communicators, more charismatic, stronger and more experienced for politics. Men are viewed to be more assertive or aggressive and this was considered a positive trait by some participants, but a negative trait by others. Participants' distinction between assertive and aggressive was not always clear.

Some say men are riskier, and thus why they are more likely to be involved in politics. Some see politics as risking one's reputation, thus some participants believe women generally care more about their reputation (worrying about the impact on their children and family) and this makes them less likely to be drawn to politics. However, the sense that women are more cautious is also noted as a good contribution to politics.

"Sometimes men are more assertive and better speakers."

-Female, Tbilisi, 18-25, urban, secondary

"A man is more charismatic."

-Male, Kutaisi, 36-49, rural, technical

Preference in Voting for Female vs. Male Candidates

Similar to the view that both female and male candidates could technically possess the same characteristics, most participants say they would vote for either a male or female and that it depends on the qualifications of the individual candidate.

"The one I liked better, I would not differentiate them according to gender."

-Male, Tbilisi, 26-35, urban, university

"If they present different programs, I would vote for the one whose program I liked better."

-Male, Tbilisi, 18-25, urban, university

However, some participants say they support one gender over another. More men participants say they would vote for a male candidate, but some women say this as well. They justify this preference with reasons such as men are simply better in politics, better speech-makers, able to handle the responsibility, and that there are no been favorable examples of women in politics thus far.

"I will stick to my opinion and say that I would vote for a man. It is more acceptable for me to see a man in politics. I think a man is better at politics. When men and women politicians make their speeches I always like a man's speech more."

-Male, Marneuli, 36-49, rural, secondary, Armenian

"I would also vote for a man as I think a man is more able to take big responsibilities."

-Male, Marneuli, 36-49, urban, technical, Azeri

"What does a woman do in the parliament? I mean nothing in particular, so I would support a man."

-Female, Tbilisi, 18-25, urban, technical

Women participants were more likely to say they would vote for a woman, but some male participants say they would vote for a woman as well. Those who would vote for a female candidate say it is because women would be easier to talk to, women are warmer and they believe there should be more women in politics.

"I would vote for a woman. As it was mentioned, it is easier to talk to a woman."

-Female, Marneuli, 36-49, urban, secondary, Azeri

"I would also vote for a woman. A woman is more cautious, more intelligent, she has more warmth and I think there should be women in politics."

-Female, Marneuli, 18-25, urban, technical, Armenian

"Unfortunately politics in Georgia still remains as a man's job, I don't consider so, I think both have to have equal rights--that's why I would vote for a woman."

-Female, Tbilisi, 18-25, urban, secondary

"I would vote for a woman in both, local self-government and parliamentary elections and I'll tell you why. Two women were elected in the local self-governmental body in Marneuli. One of them was so active that she would outweigh all men. All meetings would start and end with her speech. She fought; she was daring, active, and selfless. Now there is a man in her place who is very shy and not pushy at all."

-Male, 36-49, rural, secondary, Armenian

Obstacles to Women Becoming Elected Officials

In order to work toward increasing the number of women elected officials, it is also important to understand what participants perceive as common obstacles. The most-mentioned obstacles are family obligations and the traditional mentality in society. Family obligations is viewed as an obstacle because participants say women are usually expected to care for the family regardless of their external employment situation, making it difficult for women to pursue politics. The other main obstacle is the traditional mentality that women are the weaker sex, they are not as capable as men in certain spheres and politics is a man's domain. In turn, due to the traditional mentality and expected familial obligation, society does not generally support women in politics.

"A family is the main barrier. I want to realize myself in order to help my children have a better future. I also want to show the society what I am able to do."

-Female, Kutaisi, 26-35, rural, secondary

"Unless we change our mentality and the way of thinking, it will be impossible to encourage women's involvement. We should assess women's abilities in the right way and should not consider that the only job for women is to look after the family."

-Male, Batumi, 18-25, urban, secondary, Orthodox

"A woman needs great energy. The fact that men do not recognize women as their counterparts creates the problem for women, it scares them and puts up obstacles and it is difficult, men are still more daring."

-Female, Batumi, 18-25, urban, secondary

"If we look at European countries there have been many women presidents or Parliament leaders. I think it is the mentality of a Georgian man that creates these hurdles. Any man can say that a woman should be active, involved in politics—but that's just what they would say, although at the same time a man will not like to see his own mother or wife being very active"

-Male, Batumi, 36-49, rural, technical, Muslim

"Politics is still considered to be men's domain today and very few people think that this is a woman's business, despite the fact that no physical strength is required, but it is still considered a man's job, you can often hear such a slogan 'Woman has nothing to do with politics.'"

-Female, Tbilisi, 18-25, urban, secondary

As was mentioned previously, another obstacle is the view that politics is a risky and undesirable profession – one where men are more willing to risk their reputations. Many participants believe women themselves are simply not interested in becoming elected officials. Others claim women do not have enough experience in the political realm and others feel they have not seen decent examples of female politicians that would change the stereotype that women are not good for politics. A couple of participants also think men block women and give themselves priority.

“It was mentioned that politics is a dirty business and if this is really true, that is why women are less involved, women will not take the risk of making money as much as men. Women won’t do it because there is a family and children behind them and women care more about it. A woman is more cautious and being cautious can sometimes be very beneficial for politics. Honest and patriotic people should come to the power who will take a good care of everything.”

-Female, Batumi, 36-49, rural, technical, Orthodox

“A woman needs great energy. The fact that men do not recognize women as their counterparts creates the problem for women, it scares them and puts up obstacles and it is difficult, men are still more daring.”

-Female, Batumi, 18-25, urban, secondary

“In my opinion, they can’t stand competition and in addition, men are more interested in politics.”

-Male, Batumi 18-25, urban, secondary

“As a rule, a woman watches soap operas at home, while a man watches politics.”

-Male, Batumi 36-49, rural, university

“The problem is that there are no individuals whom we could imagine being a woman diplomat who can destroy this stereotype. We have never had or seen such a person and consequently, we do not know.”

-Male, Batumi, 36-49, urban, university, Orthodox

“The politics of the state is structured in the way that no matter how great a woman’s desire is, everything is in men’s hands and it is hard for a woman to establish herself in politics. Men think they are so strong... and this is their greatest weakness, even if the worst woman becomes an MP I do not think she will take part in the fight.”

-Female, Batumi, 36-49, rural, technical, Orthodox

Opinion on Low Number of Women Elected Officials

Regardless of the aforementioned opinions on women in politics, nearly all participants agree that the current six percent of female parliamentarians is too low and there should be more women elected officials.

"We have many gifted women, that is why it is a small number and it will be good if it was higher."

-Male, Tbilisi, 26-35, urban, secondary

"Although I believe politics is a man's business, the number of women is still too low and I think it should be increased."

-Female, Marneuli, 26-35, rural, university

Nevertheless, there is disagreement on whether gender quotas as a mechanism to increase female representation should be used. Amongst participants, there is mixed support and opposition to introducing gender quotas in Georgia, however, more women participants support the idea than men. Those who support quotas believe this would help increase women's interest in becoming involved in politics and it will help change the status quo.

"If the law regulates this issue, the interest will rise too."

-Female, Kutaisi, 36-49, urban, technical

"If I learn that there has to be 75 women in the parliament, I might have a desire. This will be a great incentive."

-Female, Kutaisi, 18-25, urban, secondary

Those against introducing gender quotas say it is against their rights because it artificially imposes upon the voter who they must vote for on the basis of their gender, meaning it forces them to vote for a woman even if she is not the most qualified candidate. These participants believe candidates should be elected on basis of equal opportunity, not on gender. Other participants oppose quotas because they do not think there are enough women interested in being in politics and others think there are not enough qualified women to be elected.

"If it becomes compulsory to use quotas, then the seats might be filled with many unqualified candidates."

-Female, Tbilisi, 18-25, urban, technical

"I do not agree with regulating this issue through legislation. Since a man who is able to do more for the benefit of the country may not occur there because of a woman."

-Male, Batumi, 18-25, rural, secondary, Muslim

"I think that there should be a liberal approach to this issue. Women's involvement in politics should be a natural process. It is women's fault. If they create misbalance they should take care of its improvement. Why should a man do that?"

-Male, Batumi, 26-35, urban, university, Orthodox