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EMC

Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center



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Knowledge and Attitudes of the Population of Georgia towards Judiciary: Results of the public opinion survey

(Executive summary)

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Introduction

Within the project “Facilitating Implementation of Reforms in the Judiciary” (FAIR), implemented by Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC) in cooperation with the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) and Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC), CRRC-Georgia conducted a survey among Georgian-speaking adult residents of Georgia regarding population’s perception of justice and its attitudes towards judges, the court system and knowledge of it. The survey took place between August 30th and September 15th of 2018.

During recent years, reforms started in the court system. Reforms were implemented in several waves. Changes that were brought through by the reforms included change of the structural composition of the High Council of Justice, strengthening the role of the conference of judges, lifetime appointment of judges and three-year trial period for that.

Methodology

The survey of the population of Georgia about their knowledge of the court system and their attitudes to it was carried out by CRRC-Georgia between August 30th and September 15th 2018. The survey consisted of several stages. On the first stage, the research topic was identified and questionnaire was developed in close cooperation with EMC and IDFI. High Council of Justice of Georgia was involved in the questionnaire development stage and had an opportunity to provide feedback, which was reflected in the questionnaire.

On the next stage, the sample was drawn, pilot interviews were conducted and afterwards the

The third wave of reforms that was enacted in February 2017, electronic distribution of cases in courts was introduced, the institution of an independent inspector was formed to conduct preliminary study of disciplinary complaints against judges. Significant effort was made to develop a long-term strategy of the court system (2017-2021) and the action plan of its implementation. Due to these changes and a number of events related to the court system that took place recently, it is particularly important to learn what the views of wider public is towards the court system, what are the patterns in their knowledge and attitudes.

The report presented today summarizes results of the population survey conducted in September 2018. In certain cases, where possible, data is compared to the public opinion survey conducted by CRRC-Georgia in 2014.

fieldwork began. The sampling applied the stratified cluster design. Primary sampling units, clusters, were selected with probability proportional to size. Households in selected clusters were selected with the so-called random walk method. Respondents in each household were selected using the Kish table selection method.

The survey comprised adult, Georgian speaking population of Georgia, excluding people in breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Overall, 2,080 people were interviewed with the CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) method. The sample was

representative of Georgia (excluding the occupied territories and settlements densely populated with ethnic minorities), as well as the capital, other urban and rural settlements. The margin of error on the national level was 2.2%.

Collected data was processed in the Stata program: the dataset was cleaned and weighted

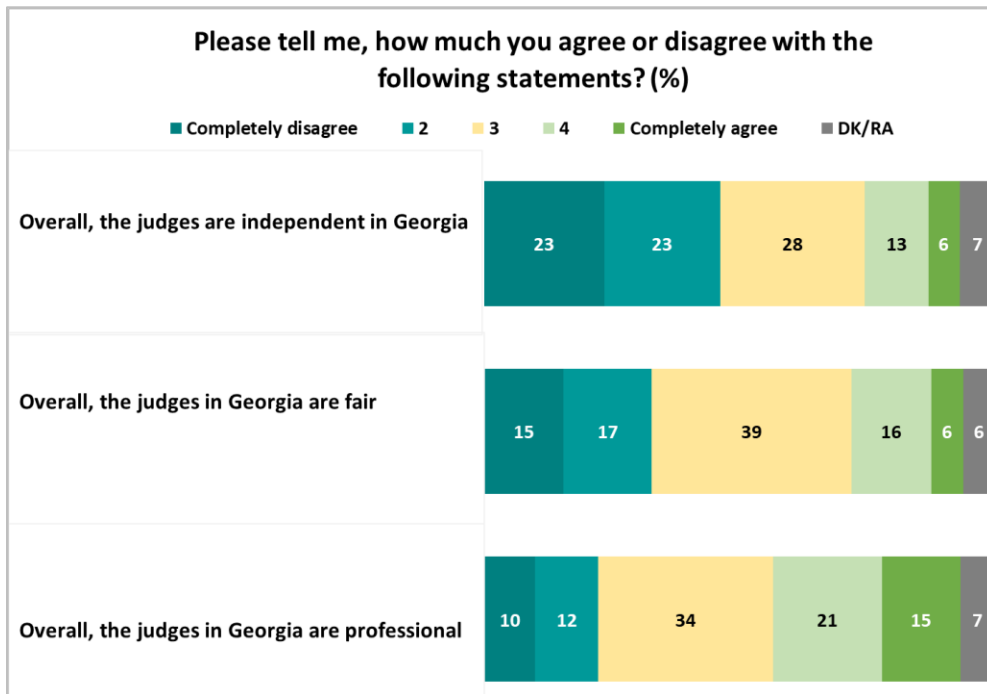
based on the sampling probability and distribution of respondents in demographic groups. Multinomial logistic regressions were used to assess statistical significance of correlation among variables. All statistically significant differences are reflected in the report.

Main findings

The population of Georgia perceives an independent judiciary to be an issue of lesser importance and considers poverty and unemployment as the most important problems in the country. However, almost half of the population is interested in what is happening in Georgian courts. Television is named as the main source of information regarding the same. Despite this, the population of Georgia is less informed about the court system and the ongoing reforms. Often, the majority of the population does not know the hierarchy of authority and the goal of court reforms. For

example, the main part of Georgia’s population does not know correctly or does not know at all who appoints judges, who is legally allowed or not allowed to dismiss the judges of the Supreme Court of Georgia, what the primary goal of the introduction of the electronic system of case distribution is and what the main function of the independent inspector is. At the same time, the survey results showed that the majority of people in Georgia are informed about the High Council of Justice.

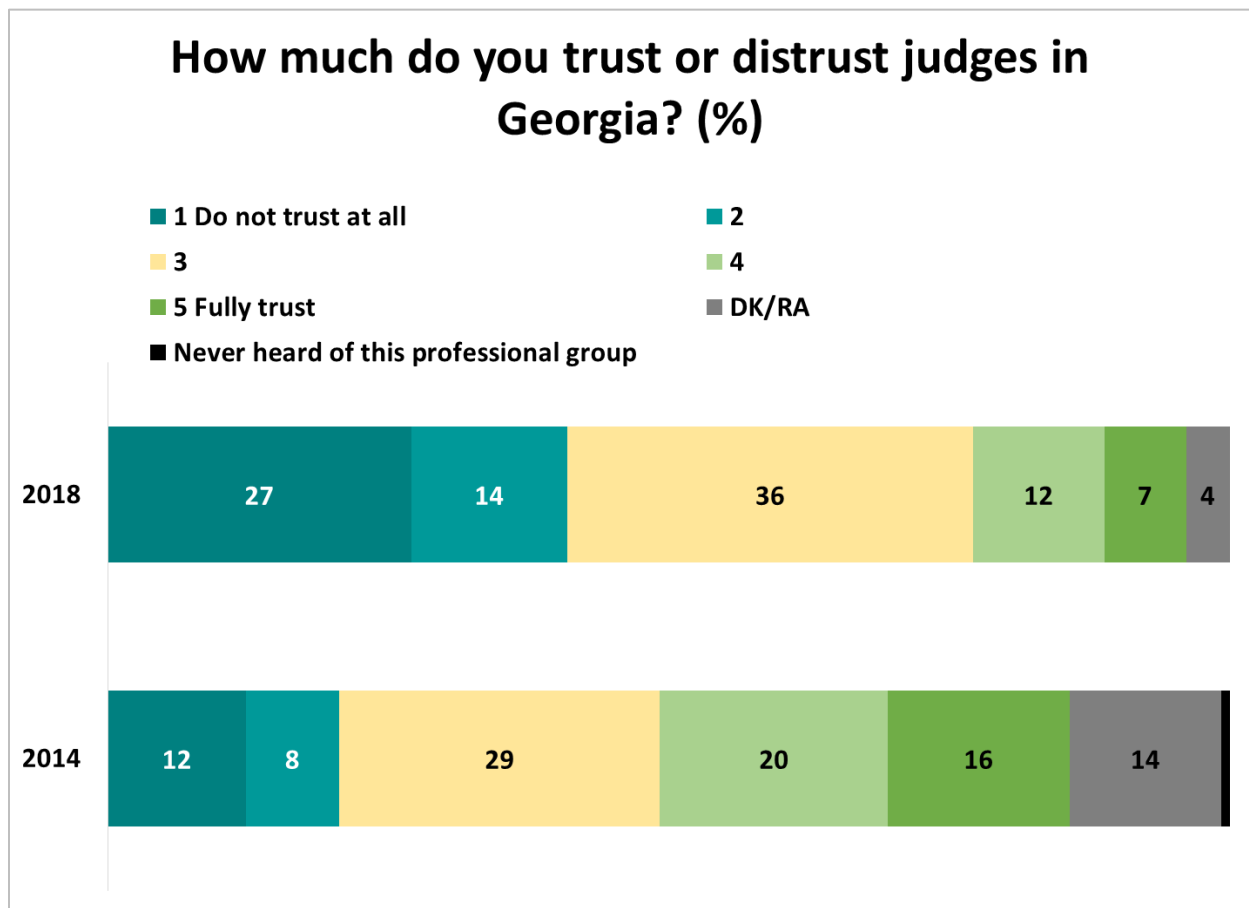
In the opinion of more than one third of the population of Georgia, judges in Georgia are professional and fair.



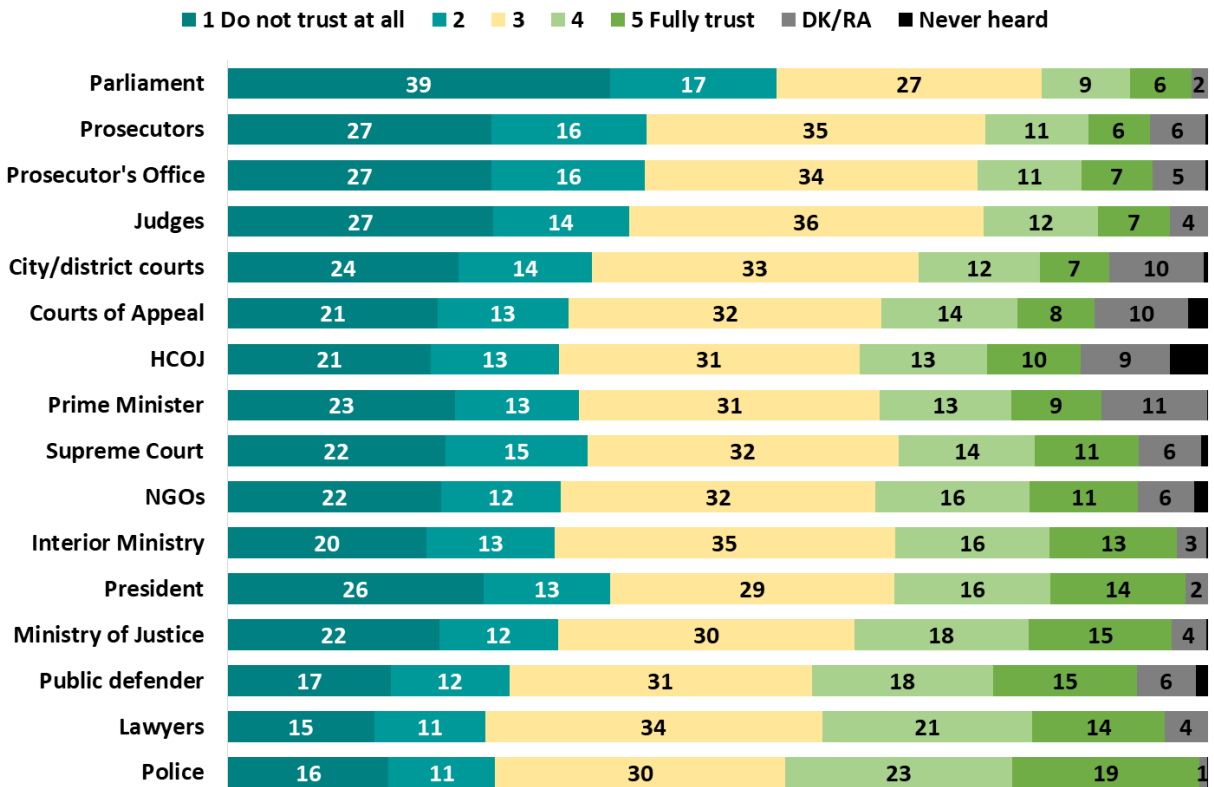
At the same time, the majority of the population evaluates performance of the court system as average and almost half of them agrees that everyone in Georgia is equal before the law. It is also noteworthy that large part of the population does not think taking a case to court will make things worse.

The survey results also showed some negative views of the population of Georgia about issues

related to courts. Almost half of the people believe that judges in Georgia are not independent. At the same time, almost half also agrees that judges in Georgia serve interests of the current government. Trust to judges and courts of different instances is also quite low. Of various state institutions and public organizations, the lowest level of trust was expressed towards courts, Prosecutor’s Office and Parliament.



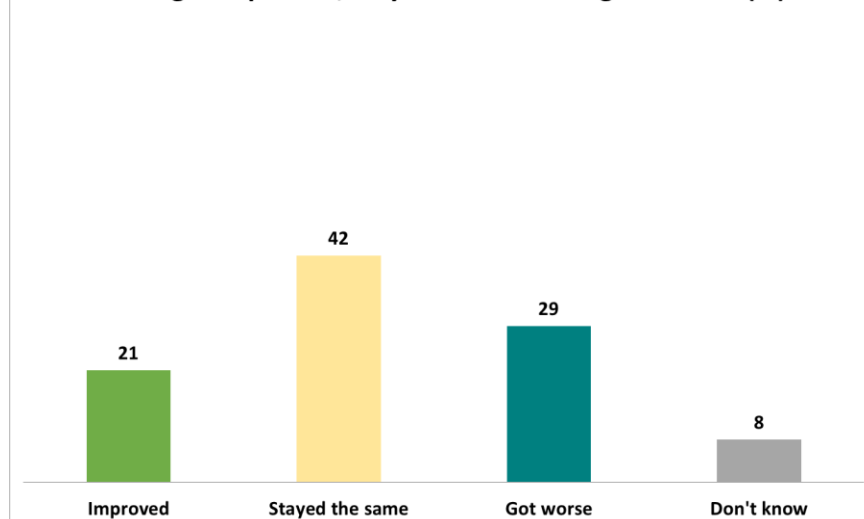
How much do you trust or distrust ...? (%)



It is considerably worthy to note that justice for the population prompts a negative association and the phrase "justice in Georgia" is most often referred to as "injustice". In addition, more than

a third of the population declares mistrust in judges and judicial instances and believes that the court system has not changed for the past five years.

In the last 5 years, do you think the court system in Georgia improved, stayed the same or got worse? (%)



According to the survey results, 14% of Georgia's population had some kind of direct or indirect court experience during the last 5 years. This is the share of respondents who told so to the interviewer, a stranger to them; thus, it could be different from actual numbers. The court

experience named by respondents was mostly related to real estate. This indicator is quite low and is not enough to check if the court experience has statistically significant influence on people's attitudes towards the court system.

**For the full version of the report, visit www.crrc.ge.*