



CAUCASUS
RESEARCH
RESOURCE
CENTER

CRRC Georgia

Report

Covid-19 Monitor: Wave 5

Tbilisi, Georgia

June, 2020

About CRRC Georgia

CRRC-Georgia is a non-governmental, non-profit research organization, which collects, analyzes and publishes policy relevant data on social, economic and political trends to strengthen social science research and public policy analysis in the South Caucasus.

Rights and Permissions

© CRRC-Georgia. All rights reserved.

The material in this work is copyrighted. Copying and/or transmitting portions or all of this work without permission may be a violation of applicable law.

Support for this project

This project was made possible through the financial support of the Embassy of the Netherlands in Georgia. The views expressed herein represent the views of the authors alone.



Kingdom of the Netherlands

CRRC – Georgia

1 Liziko Kavtaradze Street | Entrance III-IV, First Floor | 0179 Tbilisi | Georgia
crrc-geo@crrccenters.org | +995 32 250 52 90
crrc.ge | crrc-caucasus.blogspot.com | caucasusbarometer.org

Table of contents

Key Findings	3
Introduction	4
Institutional Performance	5
Policy approval.....	6
Attitudes towards vaccination	7
Consumer confidence and the economy	10
Practices	11
Democracy and threat perceptions	12
Conclusions	15
Appendices.....	16
Appendix 1: Methodology	16

Key Findings

Institutional Performance

- Institutional performance remains high, with only minor declines in approval of the police, local government, and the Ministry of Education's performance assessments.

Policy approval

- Policy approval remains high for all questions asked about on the current survey. The least approved of policy is keeping the ban on groups of 10 or more people (78% approve).

Attitudes towards vaccination

- Meaningful shares of the public express either uncertain or negative attitudes towards vaccines. For instance, a quarter of the public (25%) thinks "vaccines aren't worth the risk" and one in five (19%) think that vaccines cause autism. A further 52% were uncertain whether vaccines caused autism.
- The public is split in whether or not they would want to receive a vaccine six months from now if it was available for the Coronavirus;
- Attitudes towards vaccines are strongly associated with whether or not someone would want to get a vaccine, suggesting anti-vaccine attitudes could prevent immunization efforts down the line.

The economy and Consumer confidence

- One in eleven (9%) report resuming work and 2% report starting a new job within the last week.
- Consumer confidence remains low, though there are some indicators of improvement over the last three weeks.

Practices

- Almost half of the country reports leaving the house to socialize in the last week (46%), up by 11 percentage points compared with a week prior.

Democracy and threat perceptions

- The public is increasingly likely to view Georgia as a democracy and more people think democracy is an ideal form of government compared with October 2019;
- The public expresses somewhat inchoate attitudes towards democratic governance;

Introduction

Covid-19 has led to wide ranging changes in societies around the world. The response in Georgia has been particularly effective to date. In order to provide the Government of Georgia and the international community with an evidence base to support decision making, CRRC Georgia is conducting the Covid-19 Monitoring Project. The project is supported by the Embassy of the Netherlands in Tbilisi. Within the project CRRC will carry out six nationally representative telephone surveys focused on knowledge, attitudes, and practices surrounding the crisis. This document provides the results of the second wave of the survey.

The survey was conducted over cell phone between May 28 and 31. The results are nationally representative, with a margin of error of 3%. Overall 1,036 individuals responded to the survey. The response rate was 35.1%. Respondents were selected using random digit dialing to ensure that a representative sample was taken. The data was then weighted to population characteristics using census data. The details of the survey methodology are provided in Annex 1 of this report.

The data analysis below uses frequencies and cross tabulations. Cross tabulations provide differences between different groups and a chi-square test or t-test is used to test for statistical significance of apparent differences. Tests for differences between the following groups were conducted within the study:

- Settlement types (Tbilisi, other urban, rural);
- Age groups (18-34, 35-54, 55+);
- Education levels (Secondary or vocational, tertiary);
- Sex (Male versus female);

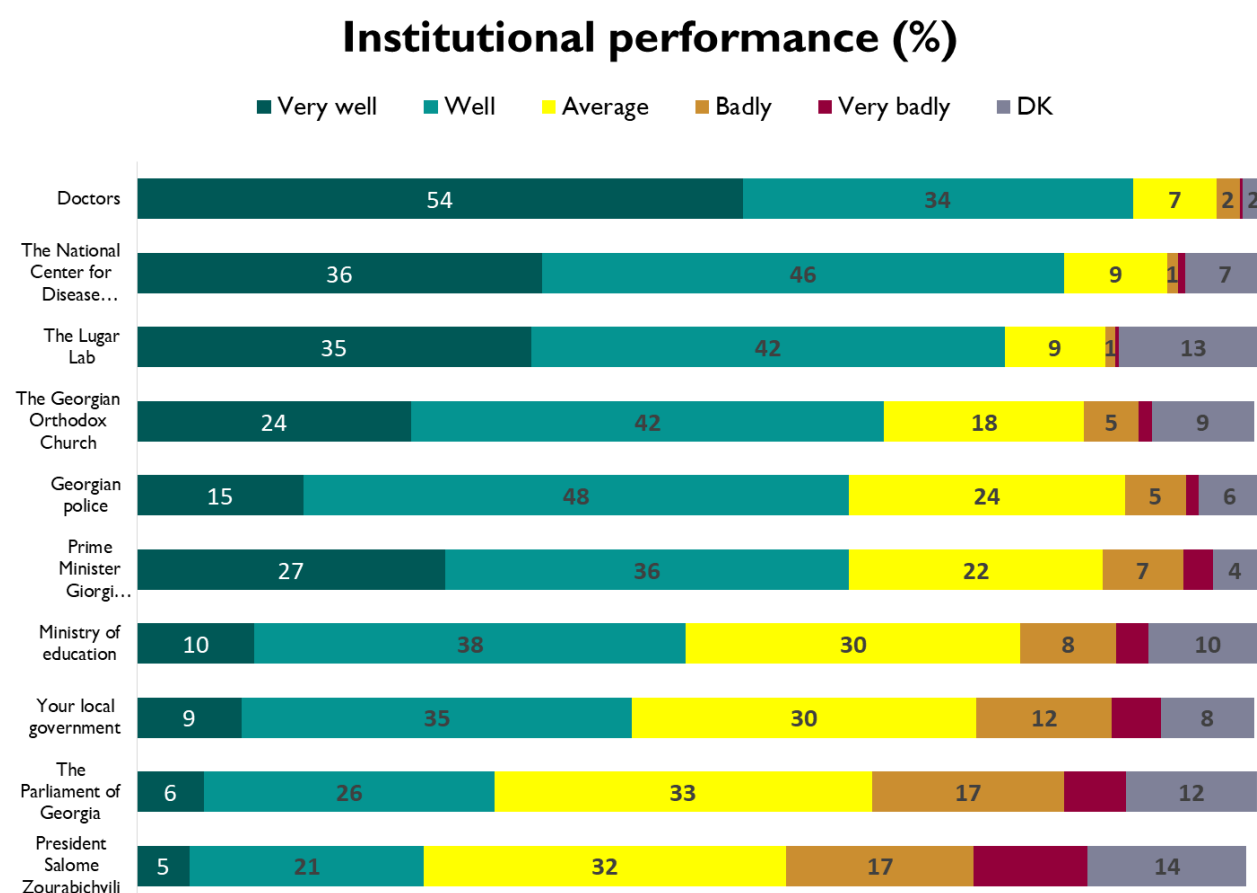
In some cases, the sum of percentages presented does not equal 100%. This stems from rounding error.

This document proceeds as follows. In the next section, the results of the survey are presented, first discussing institutional performance assessments. In the subsequent section, approval of several policies real and potential is discussed. Next, data on attitudes towards vaccination is provided. Thereafter, consumer confidence data is provided. The next section looks at socializing and hoarding behavior. The final findings section provides data on attitudes towards democracy and threat perceptions. The report finishes with conclusions based on the data. In Annex to the report, the study methodology is provided.

Institutional Performance

The four previous waves of this study have demonstrated that the general public strongly approves of the performance of medical and governmental institutions on responding to the Coronavirus. The last wave also showed that general performance assessments have risen dramatically, suggesting a rallying around the flag effect.¹ This week the survey continued to measure general institutional performance for the institutions, with little change between this week and last.

The data suggest that the share of the population reporting a positive performance assessment (well or very well) has remained constant for most institutions. The exceptions are the police, local government, and the Ministry of Education. Local government's approval rating declined by five percentage points and the police and the Ministry of Education's approval ratings declined by six percentage points. All other institutions' performance assessments changed within the margin of error.



There is relatively little variability in performance assessments between different social and demographic groups. Therefore, this data is not presented, but available upon request.

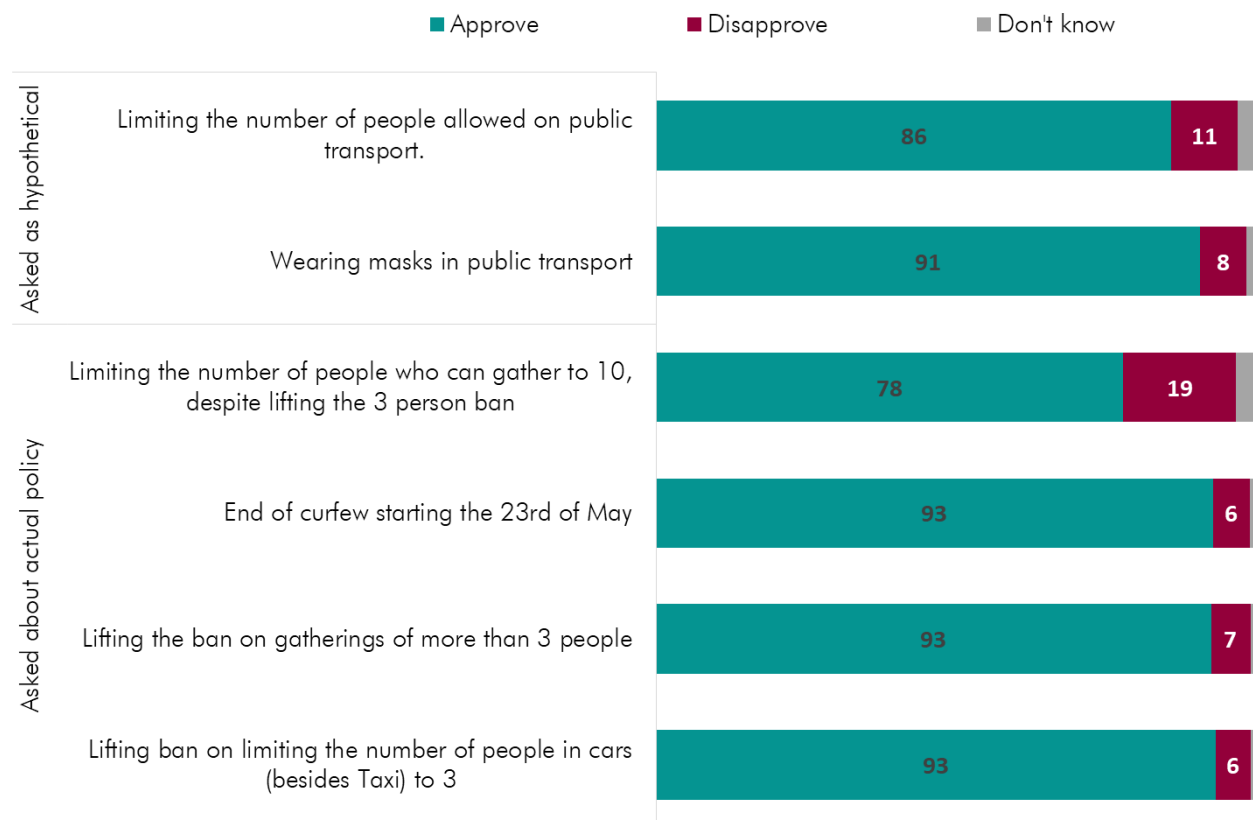
¹ In times of crisis, public opinion is known to shift in favor of the governing party.

Policy approval

As in the past waves of the survey, there have been numerous policies implemented and discussed during the past weeks. This wave of the study looked at a mix of lifting bans on particular activities and attitudes towards two potential policies around public transport. As with past waves, the public is also generally approving of policy measures.

The ending of the curfew, lifting the ban on gatherings of more than three people, and ending curfew are all approved of by 93% of the public. Notably, support for keeping the ban on gatherings larger than 10 people is supported by fewer people. There are no significant differences between different demographic groups on approval of this policy.

Approval of different policies (%)



At the time the questionnaire was developed, wearing masks in public transport and limiting the number of people allowed on public transport were potential though not confirmed policies. Hence, the survey asked about them as hypotheticals. The data indicate that 91% of the public support wearing masks in public transport, and that 86% would support limiting the number of people allowed on public transport.

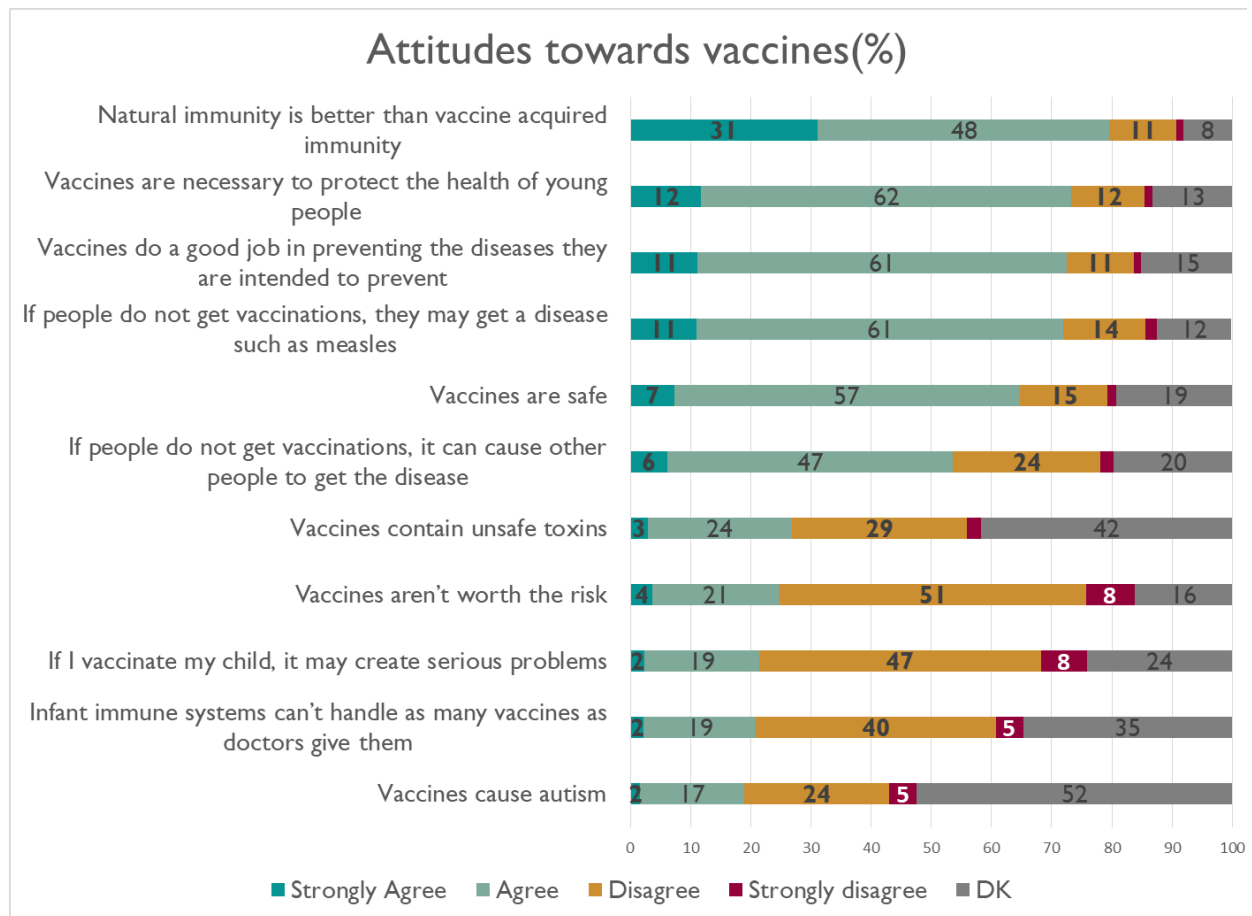
Attitudes towards vaccination

If and when a vaccine for the Coronavirus appears, a key aspect of whether it will be effective in preventing the emergence of future waves of outbreak will be uptake. Globally, anti-vaccine attitudes have spread, with numerous conspiracies and widespread misinformation about them. To understand attitudes towards vaccinations in Georgia, the survey asked a set of questions about attitudes towards vaccines and interest in receiving a Coronavirus vaccine if one were to emerge. Overall, there is relatively low levels of anti-vaccine attitudes in Georgia at present, however these attitudes are more common among a number of groups.

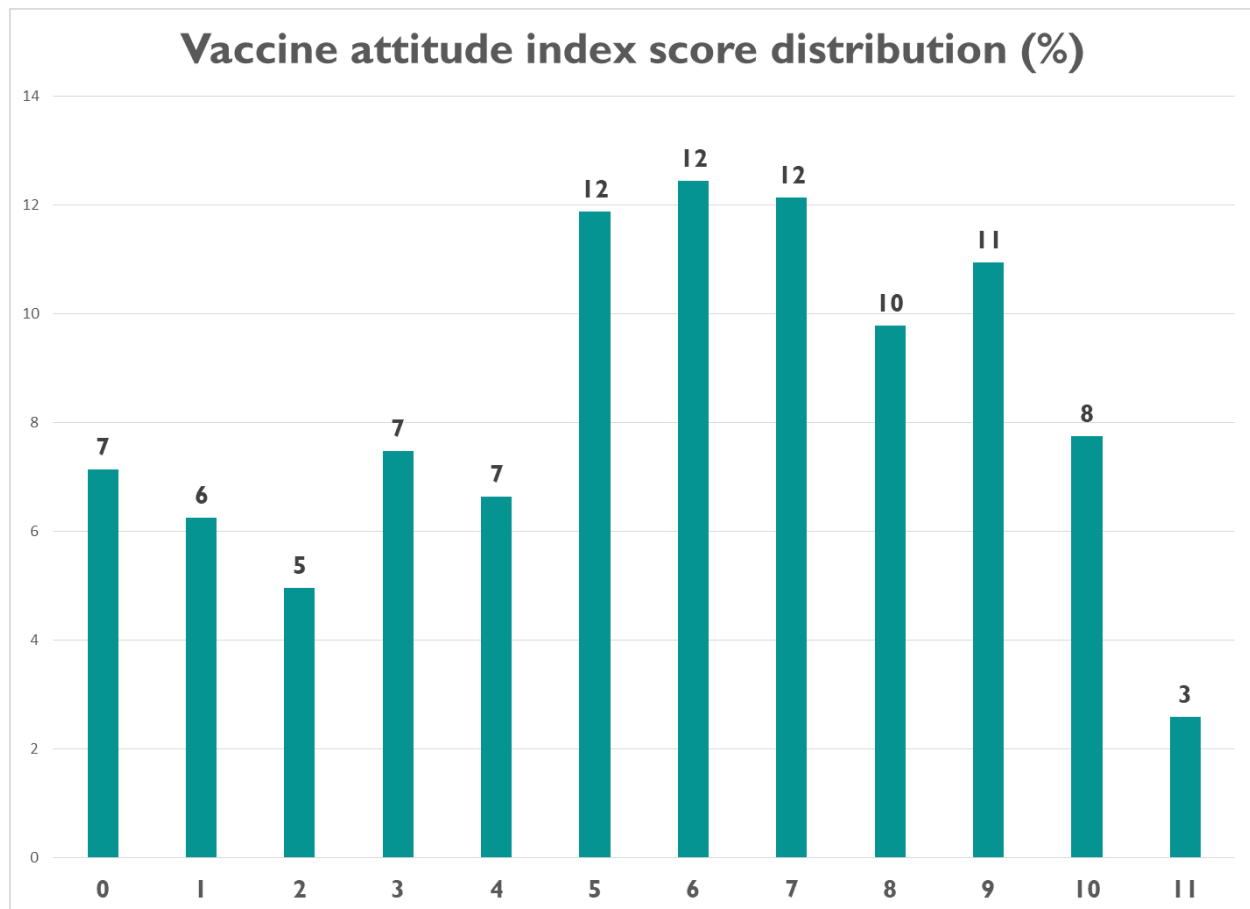
Many people in Georgia have positive attitudes towards vaccines along some measures, yet very large shares of the public have either uncertain or a negative attitude towards vaccines.² Most people think that vaccines are necessary to protect the health of young people, that vaccines are safe, that vaccines do a good job at preventing the diseases they are intended to, and that if people do not get vaccines, they are more likely to get a disease.

At the same time, there are large numbers of negative attitudes and high levels of uncertainty about vaccines. Most people (79%) believe that natural immunity is better than vaccine acquired immunity. A quarter of the public (27%) believe that vaccines contain unsafe toxins and a further 42% of the public is uncertain on this question. Similarly, 25% of the public believe vaccines aren't worth the risk and 16% are uncertain on this question. A fifth of the public (21%) believe that if they vaccinate their child, it may create serious problems, and that infant immune systems can't handle as many vaccines as doctors give them. A quarter and a third of the public are uncertain on these questions, respectively. One in five (19%) also believe that vaccines cause autism, and half the public (52%) are uncertain over this question.

² The items in the scale are taken from two scales used in the public health literature, and slightly modified to the Georgian context. For full scales, see Gilkey et. Al. 2014 available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4418546/>. Also see Wallace et. al. 2019 available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6534746/>

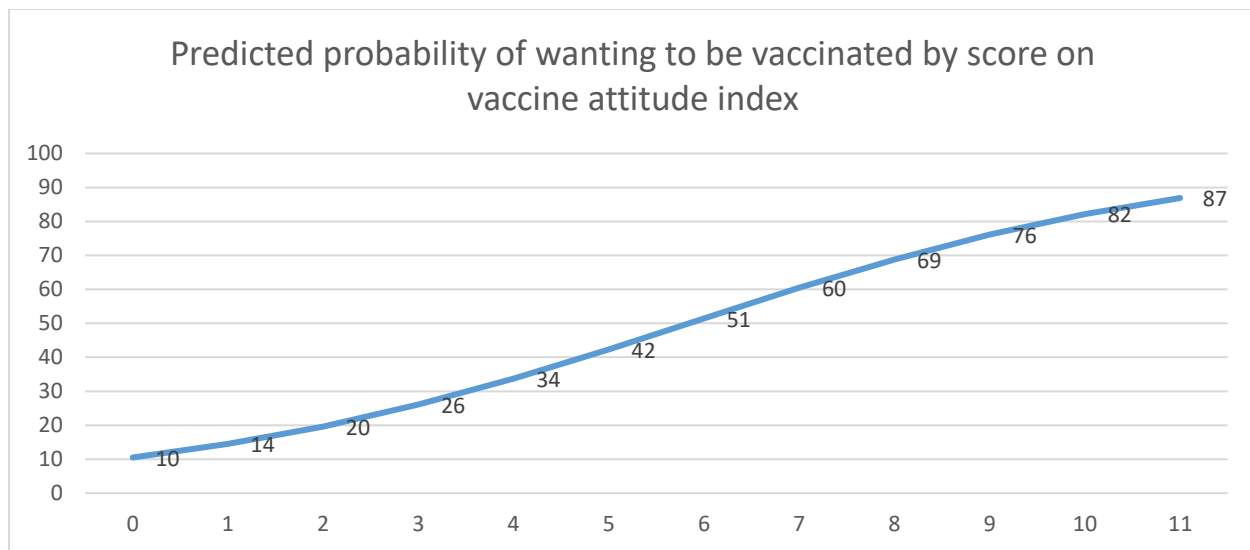


To understand which groups of people are more and less positive about vaccines, the above statements were grouped into a simple additive index. The index varies from 0, meaning entirely uncertain or negative about vaccines to 11, meaning holds only certain and positive views about vaccines. The average score was 5.7 and the median score was 6. The distribution of scores is provided in the chart below. About half of the population has more negative/uncertain views than positive about vaccines (scores 0-5) and about half has more positive/certain than negative views (scores 6-11). No matter the tendencies, the data suggests that the vast majority of people in the country have at least some doubts or a negative attitude towards vaccines.



The results show relatively small differences between groups, but several which are nonetheless statistically significant. Women and people with children in their household are more positive towards vaccines by approximately one point, while older people are more uncertain and/or negative, again by approximately one index point.

Aside from the above, the survey also asked respondents whether or not they would want to get a vaccine or not for the Coronavirus if it was available in six months, and if not, why not. The results suggest that people are split on the issue, with 42% reporting they would want the vaccine and 43% reporting they would not. A further 15% were uncertain. Women (34%) are less likely to report that they would want the vaccine compared with men (51%). Above and beyond demographics, the strongest predictor of whether or not someone would want to be vaccinated six months from now attitudes towards vaccines index is the strongest predictor of interest in receiving the vaccine. A person who has entirely uncertain or negative attitudes towards vaccines has a 10% chance of wanting to receive a vaccination, while someone who has a completely positive attitude towards vaccines has an 87% chance of wanting to receive a vaccine, controlling for age, sex, education level, whether or not the person lives in a household with minors, and settlement type.



The survey also asked individuals who would not want to be vaccinated why they would not. The main reason people cited was that the vaccine would not be thoroughly tested six months from now (40%). Other commonly mentioned responses included vaccines create larger health problems for those that receive them than the benefit (14%), and vaccines are not effective (11%). A third of people (31%) not interested in receiving vaccines reported another response. Most of these people reported that they do not trust vaccines, that think their immune system is strong enough to deal with the virus, or that they think Coronavirus is an exaggerated threat. Aside from these, some more conspiratorial responses are present, with several respondents reporting that vaccines would be used to insert microchips in them.

Consumer confidence and the economy

The key secondary impact of the Covid-19 crisis has been economic, with the world having entered recession. To understand a key component of the economic outlook, CRRC collected questions on whether people had resumed work or started a new job as well as consumer confidence, using the standard set of questions for doing so. This data was also collected in early April on CRRC Georgia's Omnibus Survey and in the second wave of the survey.

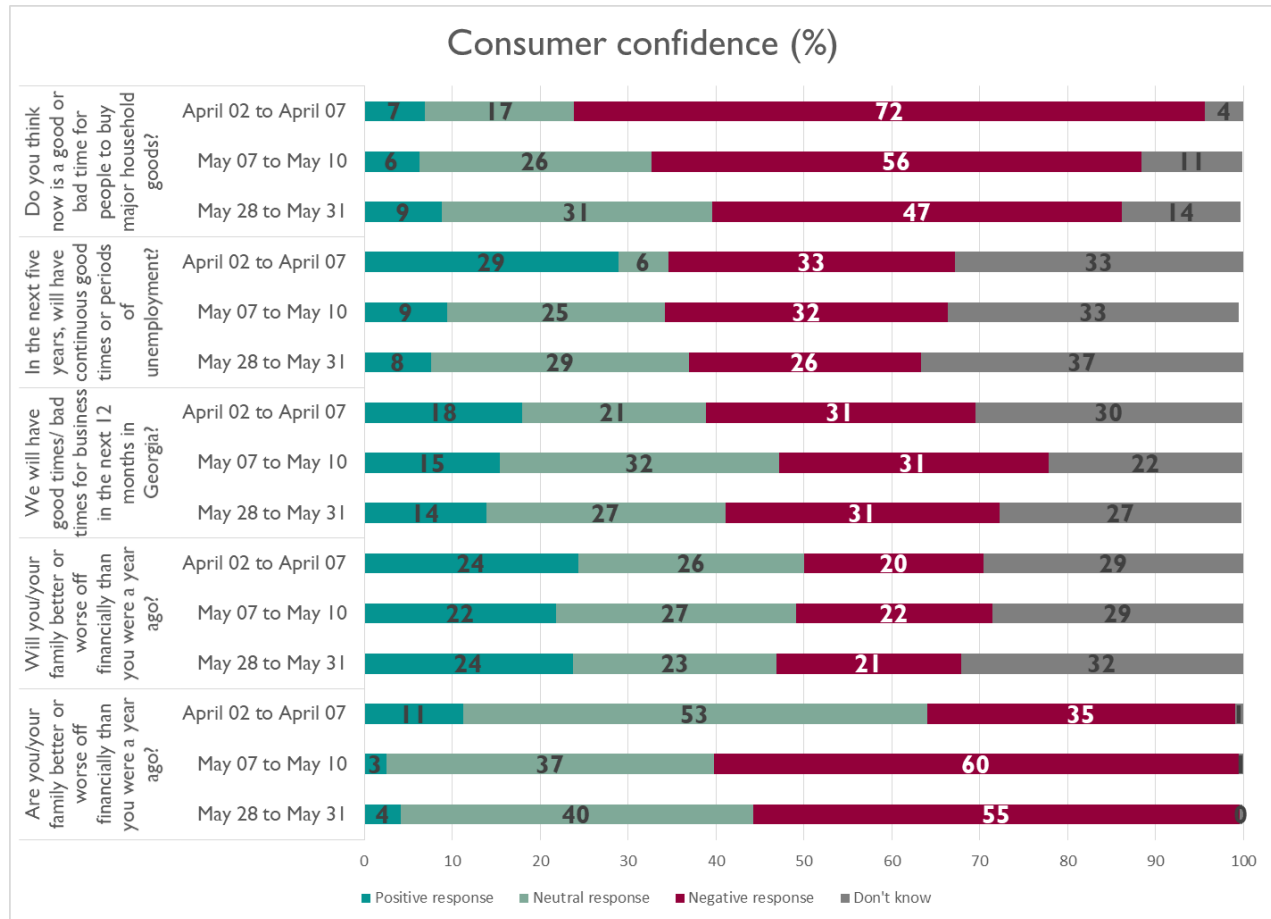
When it comes to starting a new job, the data indicate that 2% of the population did so in the week prior to the survey. A further 10% report resuming work after having temporarily halted. These numbers are slightly higher than in past waves of the survey, but not different beyond the margin of error.

When it comes to consumer confidence, compared with early April and early May, the situation is still negative, with declines along certain dimensions. Still there are improvements in others. Nonetheless, a high level of uncertainty and pessimism remains.

People tend to report that it is a bad time to purchase a durable goods, however there has been a clear improvement in consumer confidence on this issue, with only half now reporting that it is a bad time (April: 72%, early May: 56%, late May: 47%). At the same time, attitudes have not changed from negative to positive, but rather negative to neutral, with (April: 17%, Early May: 26%, Late May: 31%).

The share of people reporting that their family is worse off than a year ago has improved by five percentage points compared with early May (55% versus 60%). Still, this share nearly doubled from April (35%). People's assessments of the next five years have also become more uncertain and neutral as opposed to negative between early and late May.

For the remaining questions in the consumer confidence index, there have been limited changes, with the outlook mixing uncertainty and pessimism. The chart below provides the breakdown of responses to the above questions.



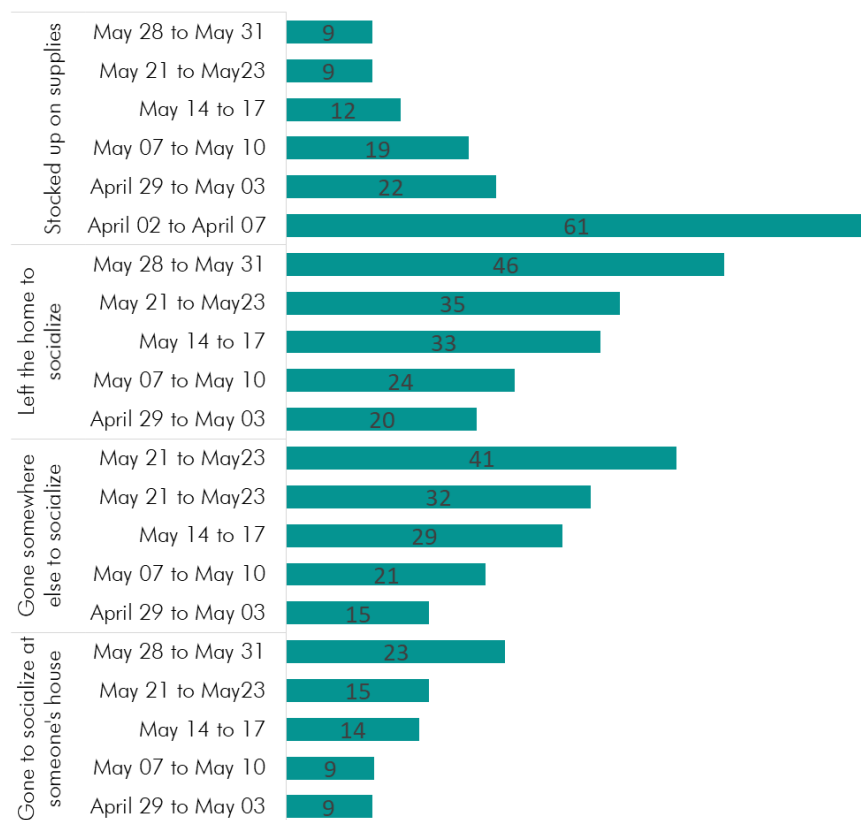
Practices

The study has also looked at a number of behaviors over the course of the survey, including socializing and hoarding. The data suggest a clear increase in the level of socializing and decline in hoarding since the survey first started collecting data on these issues.

In total, 23% of people have gone to someone's house to socialize and 41% have gone somewhere else to socialize. Almost half (46%) reported doing one or the other. In the first wave of the survey, the same figures stood at 9%, 15%, and 20%. This is a rough doubling of the share of people reporting they are going out to socialize over the last six weeks and a nine percentage point increase in the last week. Though

somewhat small, this is an increase of over 300,000 additional people socializing in the last week. As in the past wave of the survey, men, young people, and those with higher levels of education are more likely to report leaving the home to socialize.

In the last week have you? (%)



The study also asked about whether people were purchasing more food and supplies than normal. Overall, 9% report they have, similarly to the last wave of the survey.

Democracy and threat perceptions

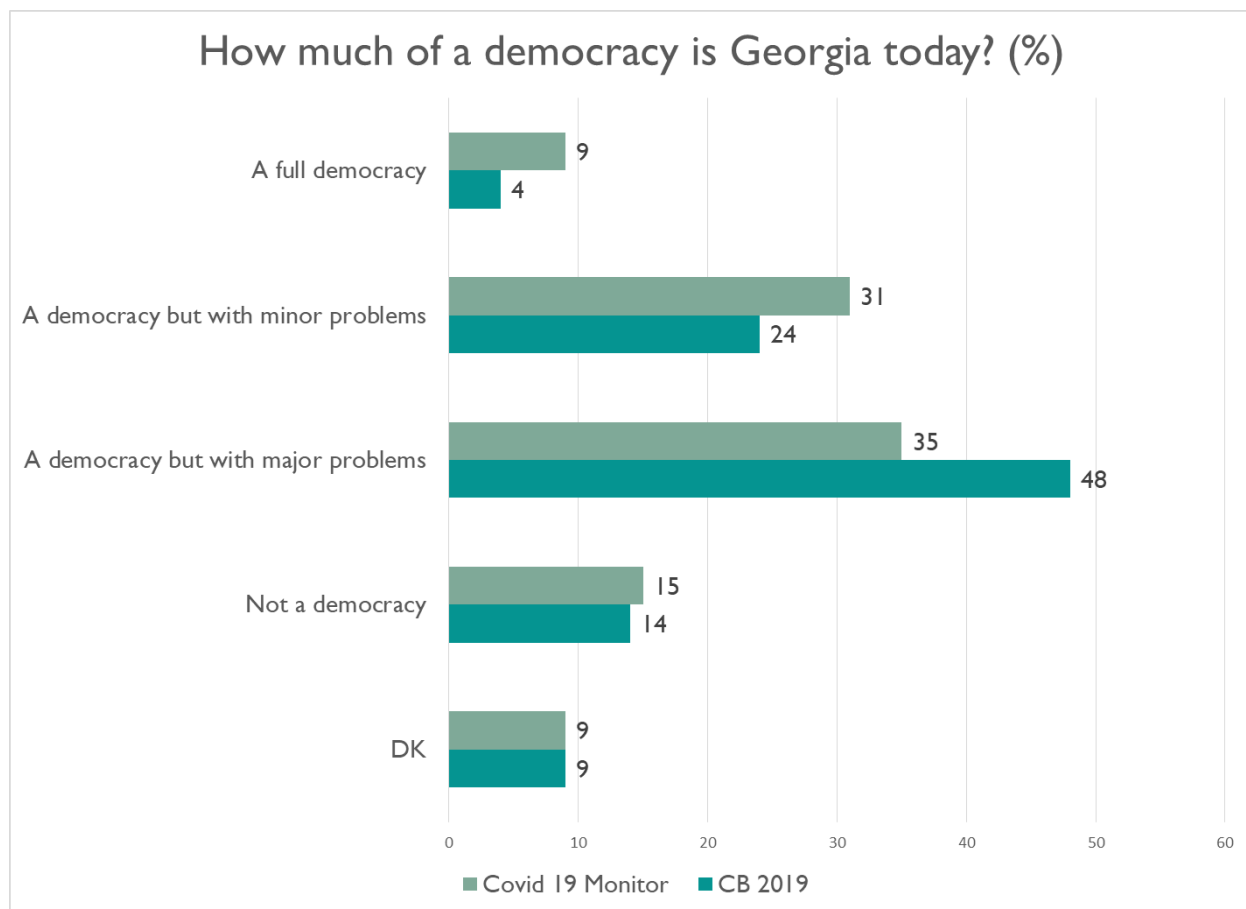
In recent years, democracy has been on the decline globally. In this context, many commentators have wondered whether the current crisis would be instrumentalized to further clamp down on democratic spaces. This is particularly dangerous if public opinion legitimizes anti-democratic actions which government takes. For example, the government of Azerbaijan has imprisoned opposition party members for supposed quarantine violations,³ and Hungary's Viktor Orban has made it possible for himself to rule by decree indefinitely.⁴ To look at this issue, the survey asked a number of questions which were also

³ See <https://oc-media.org/azerbaijan-re-arrests-opposition-activists-detained-for-quarantine-violation/>

⁴ See <https://www.euronews.com/2020/05/28/coronavirus-hungary-bid-to-end-emergency-powers-an-optical-illusion-say-human-rights-ngos>

asked on the 2019 Caucasus Barometer survey. The study further looked at whether priming economic and medical threats lead to increased support for reducing checks on government.

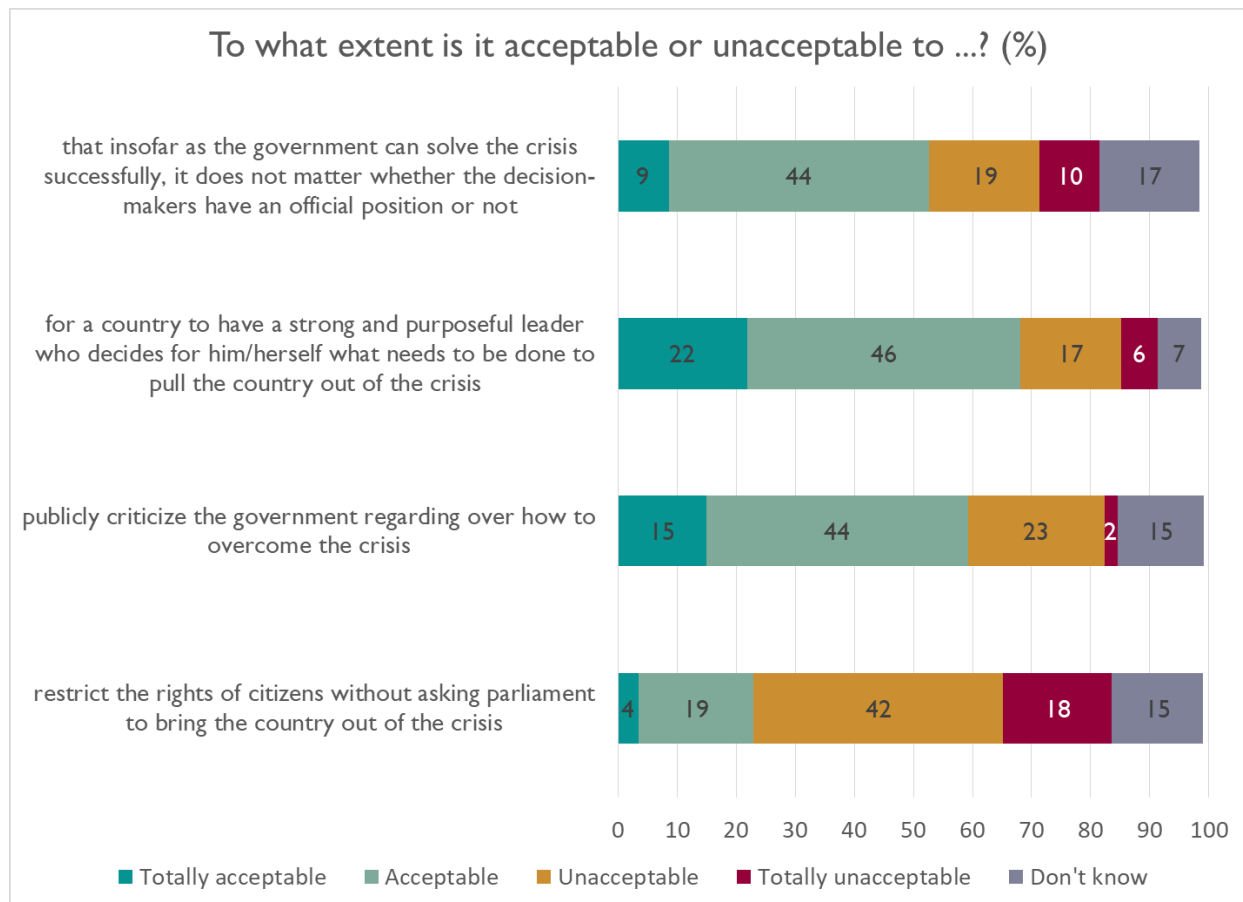
The survey asked about how much of a democracy Georgia is today. The results suggest that 9% of people in Georgia think that the country is a full democracy compared with 4% in October 2019. A third (31%) think that it is a democracy with minor problems compared with 24% in October 2019. The share reporting Georgia was a democracy with major problems declined from 48% in October to 35% in this wave of the survey.



At the same time, there has been an increase in the share of people who report that democracy is an ideal form of government. While in October of 2019, 49% reported that a democracy is preferable to all other forms of government, 59% reported the same in May 2020. The change primarily stems from fewer individuals reporting that in some circumstances a non-democratic government can be preferable (9% in May 2020 compared with 20% in October 2019).

To further explore this issue, the study contained an experiment. Respondents were primed to remember either the economic or medical consequences of the crisis or not primed at all. The goal was to test whether priming different threats would make people more tolerant of authoritarian governance. They

were then asked about how acceptable or unacceptable different means of governmental decision making were. The data suggest that on average, priming on either of these issues did not make a significant impact on people's attitudes. Hence, the responses are provided for the entire sample on the chart below.



The results are somewhat inconsistent. On the one hand, people are generally opposed to the restriction of rights of citizens without asking parliament and tend to think it is acceptable to criticize government over how they are overcoming the crisis. On the other hand, they also think it does not matter whether there is informal governance and think it is acceptable to have a strong and purposeful leader who decides what needs to be done by themselves.

Conclusions

The above data leads to a number of conclusions.

With regard to institutional performance, the data suggests slight declines between waves of the study of 5-6 percentage points for several institutions. Still, institutional approval remains high. Policy approval too remains high. There is relatively little support for continuing the ban on gatherings of ten or more people (78%), but support is still high.

The data indicate that Georgia has a somewhat large issue with vaccination. A large part of the public expresses skepticism and uncertainty in vaccines. This is reflected in the fact that the public is split over whether they would want to receive a vaccine if one was available six months from now. Anti-vaccine attitudes have a very large effect on whether or not someone would want to get a vaccine.

With regard to the economy, the data indicate that one in eleven (9%) have resumed working after having to stop because of the virus and a further 2% report starting a new job within the last week. Consumer confidence remains low, but does show some minor signs of recovery.

The public is increasingly socializing outside the home, with almost half of the country reports leaving the house to socialize in the last week (46%). An 11 percentage point rise, this is the equivalent of over 300,000 additional individuals leaving the household to socialize in the week prior to the survey.

When it comes to democracy and threat perceptions, an experiment testing whether priming people's threat perceptions economically and medically did not have significant effects. However, people expressed inchoate attitudes towards the acceptability of different practices within a democracy. This is in a context where more people think the country is a democracy and more people think this is the ideal type of government.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Methodology

The survey was a nationally-representative cell phone survey covering the adult population of Georgia (except the areas of Abkhazia and South Ossetia). Respondents are selected using the random-digit-dial (RDD) method and were interviewed through live interviewing.

The present wave of the survey was conducted between May 28 and 31, 2020. Overall, 1,036 completed interviews were collected, with a minimum response rate of 35.1%.⁵ Respondents were interviewed in Georgian, Armenian, Russian, or Azerbaijani.

Results are weighted. CRRG-Georgia used demographic information from the 2014 Georgian National Census for adjusting results based on respondents' gender, age, ethnic identity, education, and residence. This helps balance the proportions of those groups which might be underrepresented in the raw data. Overall, the theoretical margin of error for proportions does not exceed 30%.

⁵ According to the standards of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) minimum response rate is the ratio of the number of complete interviews and all interview attempts. This excludes non-existing phone numbers dialed as a part of the RDD process.