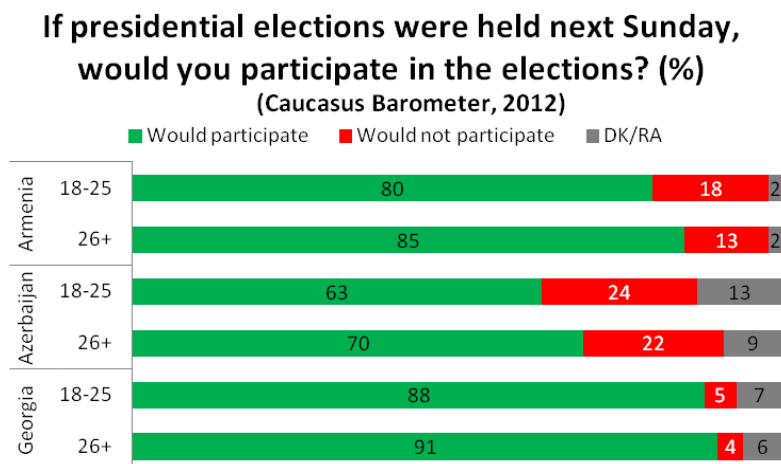


Youth Activism in the South Caucasus

Over the last two years, CRRC Georgia has been actively measuring the perceptions of Georgian youth on history and activism as part of a pan-European project called [MYPLACE](#). The first results for Georgia should be ready in the coming months. Using results from the 2012 Caucasus Barometer (CB), this blog assesses the state of youth activism throughout the South Caucasus. Views related to political and civic participation are analyzed among Georgians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis between the ages of 18 to 25 years old in comparison to people over 25 years old.

For many people in the South Caucasus, voting in elections is their main form of political participation. The 2012 CB shows that the majority (all ages) of Georgians (91%), Armenians (84%) and over half of Azerbaijanis (68%) say they would participate in presidential elections if they were held next Sunday. Similarly, when asked if they voted in the last national election, well over half in all three countries said yes - 86% in Georgia, 80% in Armenia, and 61% in Azerbaijan.

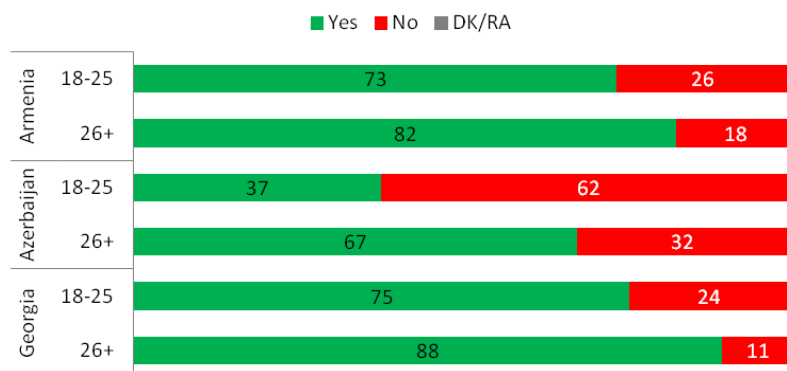
Opinions on whether or not people would vote in upcoming presidential elections are similar between those 18-25 and 26+ years old in Armenia and Georgia. However, in Azerbaijan, youth 18-25 (63%) are slightly less likely than the rest of the population (70%) to say they would vote in an upcoming presidential election.



Considering that presidential elections and other national elections are different (e.g., parliamentary elections), a higher proportion of Georgian (75%) and Armenian (73%) youth said they voted in the last national election, compared to 37% of Azerbaijanis 18-25 years old who said the same. Interestingly, more youth said they would vote in a future presidential election than those who said they voted in a previous national election—a difference of 7% in Armenia, 13% in Georgia, and 26% in Azerbaijan.

Did you vote in the last national election? (%)

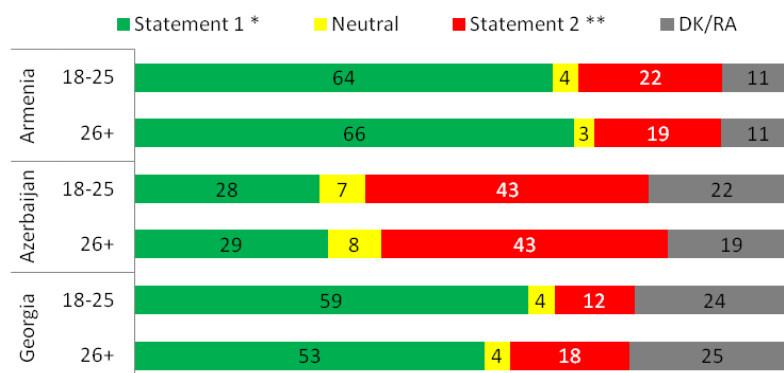
(Caucasus Barometer, 2012)



Extra-parliamentarian participation (often called contentious politics) is harder to measure via a survey. Nevertheless, respondents of the CB 2012 had to indicate whether they agreed with the statement that “People should participate in protest actions against the government, as this shows the government that the people are in charge” (Statement 1) or “People should not participate in protest actions against the government, as it threatens stability in our country” (Statement 2), or neither. Although this is a question about intentions and not actual contentious political activism, it still allows us to better understand how protest actions are perceived in the South Caucasus. Among the total population, over half of Armenians (66%) and Georgians (54%) prefer the first statement—although almost a quarter of Georgians said they did not know or refused to answer. More Azerbaijanis prefer the second statement that people should not participate in protest actions against the government (43%), than the first statement (29%). There is also very little difference between answers from youth and the rest of the population.

With which statement do you agree? (%)

(Caucasus Barometer, 2012)



* Statement 1: People should participate in protest actions against the government, as this shows the government that the people are in charge.

** Statement 2: People should not participate in protest actions against the government, as it threatens stability in our country.

In some contexts, young people’s involvement in civil engagement, via such activities as volunteering, participating in a charity organization and attending public meetings, have been proven to increase their chance of also becoming politically active. In the survey, respondents were asked to mention if they had participated in various activities during the previous 6 months. Contributing to charity and giving to churches/mosques are the most popular activities.

Volunteerism attracts more young people in Armenia. Furthermore, activities that are closer to the political sphere such as attending public meetings are less popular –although higher in Georgia.

Which of these activities have you been involved in during the past 6 months? (% 18-25 year olds)

(Caucasus Barometer, 2012)

■ Armenia ■ Azerbaijan ■ Georgia

