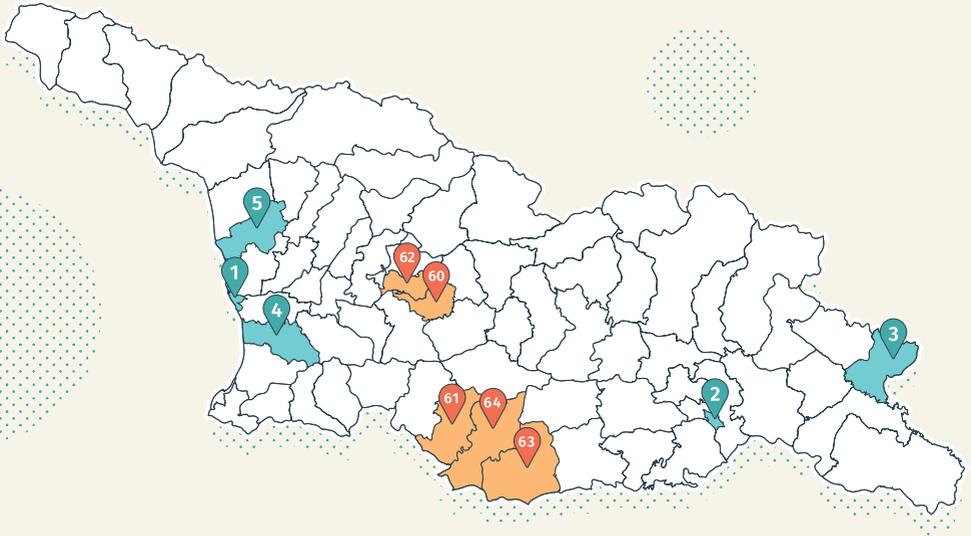


NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF GEORGIAN MUNICIPALITIES (2021)



www.lsgindex.org



1	POTI MUNICIPALITY	70%	60	ZESTAFONI MUNICIPALITY	6%
2	RUSTAVI MUNICIPALITY	66%	61	ASPINDZA MUNICIPALITY	6%
3	LAGODEKHI MUNICIPALITY	61%	62	TERJOLA MUNICIPALITY	5%
4	OZURGETI MUNICIPALITY	58%	63	NINOTSMINDA MUNICIPALITY	5%
5	ZUGDIDI MUNICIPALITY	55%	64	ADIGENI MUNICIPALITY	4%



MUNICIPALITIES WITH HIGHEST IMPROVEMENTS COMPARED TO 2019

+ 46%

POTI MUNICIPALITY

+ 16%

BORJOMI MUNICIPALITY

+ 14%

ABASHA MUNICIPALITY

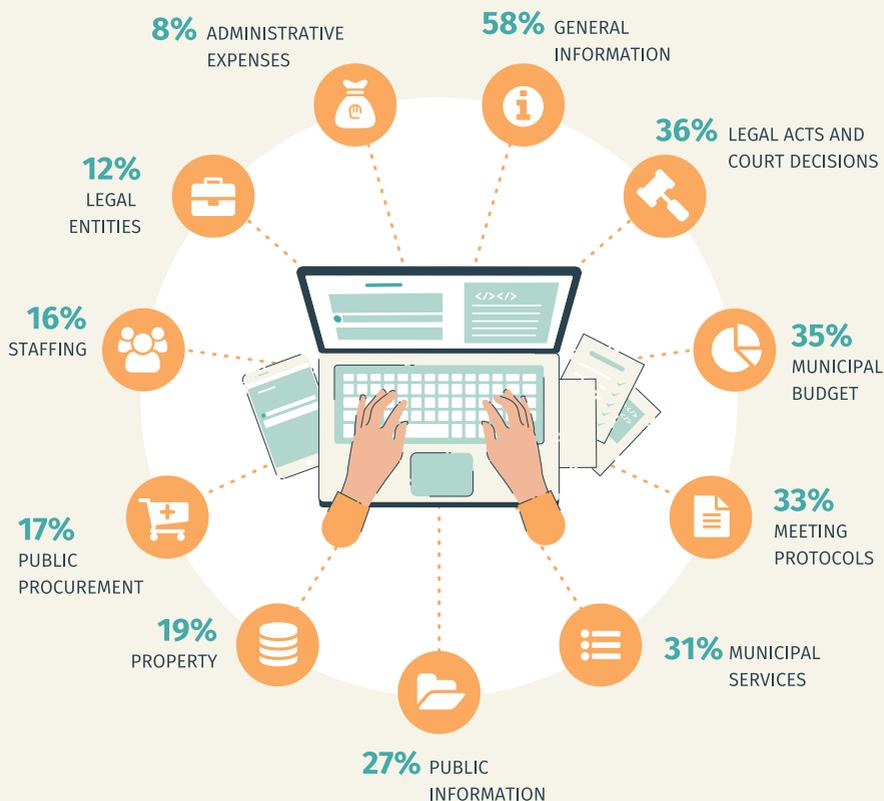
+ 12%

SHUAKHEVI MUNICIPALITY

+ 12%

AKHALKALAKI MUNICIPALITY

PROACTIVE PUBLICATION OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

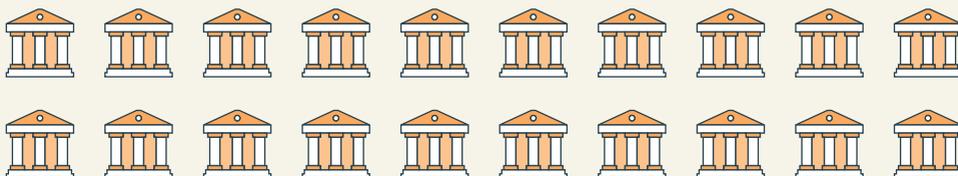


E-GOVERNANCE



PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Meetings of the Council of Civil Advisors of Mayor were held only in **20 municipalities**



Only **18 MAYORS** held a hearing on their activities



Majority of members of only **9 MUNICIPAL COUNCILS** held a public hearing on their performance reports

Batumi Municipality is the only municipality that envisages programs to support citizen participation in the budget

Participatory/citizen budget is implemented in **9 municipalities**



Citizens applied to the Municipal Council with **petitions** only in **8 municipalities**

The indicator for periodically informing the population about the projects of the municipality **decreased slightly** (from 66% to 63%)



LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT INDEX: Main Findings and Recommendations

The Local Government Index was developed by the Center for Training and Consultancy (CTC), the Institute for the Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), and the Management Systems Development Center (MSDC).

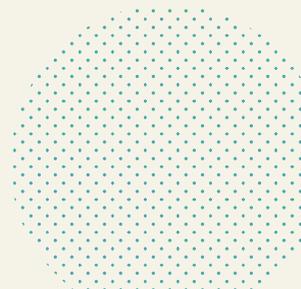
See the report on the website: www.lsgindex.org

The Local Self-Government Index was prepared with the support of the Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF). The views expressed in this report may not necessarily reflect the views of the Foundation.

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ABOUT THE INDEX

In 2016-2017, the **Local Self-Government Index** was created by the Center for Training and Consultancy (CTC), Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), and the Management Systems Development Center (MSDC). The Index aims to establish transparent and accountable self-governance through a unified national evaluation of municipalities in Georgia, and to increase the level of public participation in local issues. The Open Society Georgia Foundation supports the initiative.

The assessment of municipalities is carried out every two years. The first and second national assessments were conducted in 2017 and 2019. The main findings, trends, and recommendations of the third assessment of 2021 are presented in this report.

Index Structure and Evaluation Process

The Local Self-Government Index consists of three thematic blocks, which combine 101 evaluation criteria.



BLOCK I - PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

INCLUDES 11 SUB-BLOCKS AND 53 CRITERIA.



BLOCK II - ELECTRONIC GOVERNANCE

INCLUDES FOUR SUB-BLOCKS AND 27 CRITERIA.



BLOCK III - CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

INCLUDES TWO SUB-BLOCKS AND 21 CRITERIA.

The index uses different methodologies when evaluating different blocks. Pro-active disclosure of public information by municipalities (block 1) and electronic governance (block 2) were evaluated based mainly on the monitoring of their official websites. Citizen participation and accountability (block 3) was evaluated by analyzing public information requested from municipalities and observing the practice of citizen participation on the ground. Municipalities that failed to provide the requested information during the evaluation received the minimum score in the corresponding criteria.

In addition, the following means were used to obtain and verify information:

-  Communicating with the municipal body by telephone.
-  Studying legal acts published through the Legislative Herald of Georgia.
-  Using other official (online) sources that contain relevant information for the evaluation of specific criteria.

The index evaluates both the executive and the representative body of the municipality.

The third national assessment of transparency and accountability of municipal bodies was conducted between April 5, 2021, and June 11, 2021. All municipalities of Georgia except Ajara, Akhlagori, Eredvi, Tighvi, and Kurta municipalities were evaluated. 19 representatives of 7 regional public organizations participated in the process as assessors.

The evaluation was carried out using the online platform - WWW.LSGINDEX.ORG.

Following the initial evaluation, representatives of municipal bodies were given an opportunity to register on the platform, view their preliminary results, and leave comments. The project team took all substantiated comments into consideration in the final evaluation report.

It should also be noted that in early 2021, a self-administered e-learning course on index evaluation methodology and criteria was established, which was then successfully completed by representatives of more than 20 municipalities.

Changes in Index Criteria

In 2021, the index was updated, with the primary goal being to harmonize the methodology and criteria of the index with the changes in the legislation of Georgia during the last four years.

The changes resulted in the adjustment of several criteria indicators as well as the addition of three new criteria. The following criteria were added to the index: 1.1.6. Contact information about the administrative units of the municipality and the representative of the mayor in the administrative units; 3.1.16 Participatory budget (civil budget); 3.1.17 Gender Equality Council. Other changes made to the index are mainly terminological.

It should be noted that in 2021, the new criteria evaluated only municipalities that had a positive score in the relevant indicators. For the rest of the municipalities, the new criteria were excluded from the evaluation and did not affect their overall score. This approach is explained by the need of a certain period of time to adapt to innovations. In 2023 the new criteria will be applied to the evaluations of all municipalities.



CHANGES IN LEGISLATION AND POLICIES OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN 2019-2021

For the analysis of the evaluation process of municipalities and its results, it is important to review the environment and development trends of local self-government in Georgia in the evaluation year, which was implemented in the field of local self-government in 2019-2021.

First of all, it should be noted that in the first half of 2019, the Parliament of Georgia ratified an additional protocol, the European Charter of Local Self-Government's "Citizens' Right to Participate in Local Government Activities" (the so-called Utrecht Protocol), which further strengthened the legal guarantees of citizens' participation in local self-government.

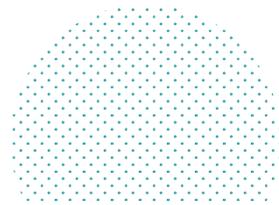
On December 31, 2019, the Government of Georgia approved the Decentralization Strategy 2020-2025 and the Strategy Implementation Plan 2020-2021. The strategy identified three main goals of decentralization: increase the role of the self-governing unit in resolving a significant part of public affairs; Provide local self-government with adequate material and financial resources; and establish credible, accountable, transparent, and results-oriented local self-government.

Given the objectives of the Index evaluation, it is important to focus on the joint objectives and activities under the Third Strategic Objective, which includes promoting the Open Government Partnership Program; Revising the legislative framework to introduce high standards of transparency and accountability; Promoting high-quality involvement in the decision-making and implementation process by local governments; Improving the legal framework and mechanisms to ensure a high degree of involvement; Public participation in the implementation of the decentralization strategy.

In 2020, more than a hundred sectoral legislative acts were harmonized with the Local Self-Government Code. In 2020-2021, several new legal powers were defined for local self-government.

In 2020, based on an international competition, three Georgian municipalities - Akhaltsikhe, Ozurgeti, and Khoni - were selected as members of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Local Program (OGP Local). These municipalities have already submitted an action plan developed within the framework of OGP Local.

Despite the positive steps taken through the ratification of the Additional Protocol on the Right of Citizens to Participate in Local Government Activities, the implementation of legal harmonization, and the adoption of a decentralization strategy, significant challenges remain in the area of local self-government. In particular, financial decentralization reform, including the formation of an effective and equitable financial equalization policy; Completing the process of transferring non-agricultural and agricultural lands to the municipality; Informal political control over municipalities; Reviewing existing mechanisms in the field of citizen participation, and developing new mechanisms. It should also be noted that the decentralization strategy covers most of the issues listed above, although achieving real results depends on the rapid and effective implementation of tasks and plans.





2021 ASSESSMENT OF TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF MUNICIPALITIES - KEY FINDINGS

According to the results of the 2021 National Assessment of Transparency and Accountability of Georgian Municipalities, the average score of municipalities is 28% (on a 100% rating scale), which is equal to the 2019 assessment score. It can be thus said that, according to the data of 2021, the rate of transparency and accountability of municipalities has remained practically unchanged.

Based on the results of the 2021 assessment, the score of the first block - proactive disclosure of public information - compared to the results of 2019, improved by 2% (from 25% to 27%), the result remained the same in the second block - Electronic Governance (32%), and in the third block - Citizen Participation and Accountability - the score decreased significantly, by 6% (from 29% to 23%).

According to the evaluators involved in the evaluation process, these results were influenced by several factors.

First, the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of the assessment, a significant proportion of employees had switched to remote work mode or were unable to perform their duties due to illness. Due to these circumstances, the process of timely receipt of information from municipalities, management, and updating of electronic platforms was often delayed. Restrictions imposed by the pandemic also significantly reduced the ability to communicate directly with the population, which was a major contributing factor in the deterioration of the performance in the third block. To summarize, a large part of the municipalities failed to adapt quickly and effectively to the pandemic situation, which was possible even with more emphasis on e-government tools. The unchanged score of the e-government block in the 2021 assessment and the substantial deterioration of the result of the third block confirm this.

The second factor was the fact that 2021 was the year of local elections.

There have been instances where the heads of municipal bodies who no longer participated in the next election have been less enthusiastic about managing current municipal issues, including issues of accountability and transparency. However, in some municipalities, the new leadership that emerged from the by-elections did not share the responsibility for the actions taken by the predecessor, such as submission of activity reports.

The third factor is the unsustainable personnel policies in municipalities.

Some municipalities have changed staff who worked in the municipality in 2017-2019 and were familiar with the index and the specifics of the assessment. New employees found it relatively difficult to manage the process, which was reflected in the results.

Moreover, the results of the assessment indicate that geographical (highland) and demographic (ethnic minorities) factors have an impact on the degree of transparency and accountability of municipalities. The results of municipalities with these characteristics are significantly lower than the average of other municipalities. Additionally, the dynamics of improving their results is drastically small. Interestingly, the municipality of the capital of Georgia, where about 1/3 of the population of Georgia lives, lags behind almost all other self-governing cities in terms of the transparency and accountability index.

The positive impact of individual donor support programs and individual initiatives/projects of NGOs on the outcomes of municipalities, including the municipalities involved in the Open Government Partnership (OGP), should also be noted. As a rule, such municipalities show a positive trend in their results.

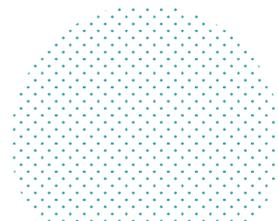
At the same time, based on the results of all three (2017, 2019, 2021) national assessments, municipalities with consistently high results and positive dy-

namics were identified (examples are Rustavi, Lagodekhi, Zugdidi, Ozurgeti), indicating their readiness and positive institutional attitude towards transparency and accountability.

There is a growing trend in the awareness and use of the index in both the governmental and non-governmental sectors. For example, the index is used as an indicator of achieving one of the strategic objectives in the government's Decentralization Strategy for 2020-2025 and the Highland Settlement Development Strategy for 2019-2023. At the same time, when assessing the degree of accountability and transparency of municipalities, local NGOs or international organizations often utilize the index figures in their activities.

Despite the availability of the evaluation methodology, there was a lack of knowledge about the index standards/requirements in the municipalities. In response to this challenge, a self-managed distance learning course on index methodology was developed in 2021 (www.tvitmmartveloba.ge). The course is free and can be accessed by any interested person. It will significantly assist municipalities with relevant staff in better understanding the index standards and ensuring that they are met. However, the course can be easily used as a guide at any time.

Below are the significant results of the 2021 Index evaluation by thematic blocks, indicators, municipal authorities, and municipalities.





PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

ACCORDING TO THE RESULTS OF THE 2021 EVALUATION OF THE INDEX:

- ◆ The average score of proactive disclosure of public information in municipalities is 27%, which is slightly (2%) higher than the figure for the 2019 assessment.
- ◆ Only 32 municipalities improved the proactive disclosure rate of public information. A reduction was observed in 30 municipalities.
- ◆ 23 municipalities could not pass the 20% threshold for proactive disclosure of information, and only 7 municipalities exceeded 50%.
- ◆ The highest score of proactive disclosure of information was 81% (Poti Municipality), which is 20% higher than the best assessment rate of 2019 (61% - Batumi Municipality). The lowest results (0%) were obtained by the municipalities that disconnected or did not have a website at all (Adigeni, Aspindza, Zestaponi, and Terjola municipalities). In the previous, 2019 assessment, the situation was similar only in the case of Aspindza Municipality.
- ◆ The highest improvement of proactive disclosure of public information (increase by 55%) was observed in Poti Municipality.
- ◆ According to the sub-blocks, compared to the results of the index of 2019, the highest improvement was observed in publishing general details about municipalities (increase by 8%) and municipal services (increase by 5%). While the scores for the availability of information on most staffing (decrease by 4%), as well as legal acts and court decisions (decrease by 4%) deteriorated.
- ◆ As in the previous assessment, the worst practice is the non-disclosure of information on municipal administrative expenditures (8%) and equity-based or governing entities (12%). Complete data on administrative

expenditures is usually only available in budget execution reports, which does not meet the standard of proactive disclosure of information. It is noteworthy that the results of the evaluation of both sub-blocks, compared to previous evaluations, show little progress (an increase of 1%).

- ◆ According to the criteria, municipalities still have the highest results in the sub-block of publishing general information about municipalities: information about officials (65%), contact information (61%), contact information for the mayor and representative of the mayor in administrative units (59%), organizational structure and the description of functions (57%).
- ◆ In relation to the results of the evaluations, municipalities improved the proactive access to information on municipalities' annual reports, strategies and action plans, budget execution reports, permits and individual municipal services, and worsened access to current auctions and tenders, list of employees, and contact information.
- ◆ Various municipalities continue to publish information on their websites that was presented on the websites of none of the municipal bodies during the first 2017 assessment. For example, the register of public information, the costs of advertising, representation costs, the annual activity and financial report of the legal entities of the municipality, court decisions, and others.
- ◆ Imereti, Shida Kartli, Adjara, and Mtskheta-Mtianeti were the regions where the overall proactive publication rate of municipalities deteriorated compared to previous performance. The largest decline (-3%) was observed in Shida Kartli.
- ◆ 26 municipalities do not proactively provide citizens with information about even one municipal service.

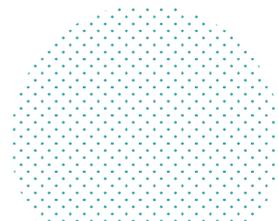


ELECTRONIC GOVERNANCE

ACCORDING TO THE RESULTS OF THE 2021 EVALUATION OF THE INDEX:

- ◆ The average e-government rate for municipalities is 32%, which is exactly the same as the 2019 assessment rate (32%).
- ◆ Only 25 municipalities have improved e-governance. Regression was observed in 34 municipalities.
- ◆ The highest rate of e-government observed in municipalities was 67% (Ozurgeti Municipality), which is 4% higher than the best indicator of 2019 (63% - Lagodekhi Municipality). The lowest results were obtained by the municipalities that disconnected or did not have a website at all (Ninotsminda, Adigeni, Aspindza, Zestaponi, and Terjola Municipalities). In the previous, 2019 assessment, the situation was similar only in the case of Aspindza Municipality.
- ◆ The highest improvement in e-governance (43% increase) was observed in Poti Municipality.
- ◆ According to the sub-blocks, e-participation has slightly improved compared to the results of the index in 2019 (an increase of 1%). The same result is repeated for the Compliance with Technical Requirements of the Municipal Websites, while the results of the following sub-blocks have deteriorated: Information about Forms of Participation (decrease by 3%), Use of Social Networks (decrease by 1%).
- ◆ According to the criteria, compared to the results of the previous evaluation, the municipalities improved the availability of registered petition information (increase by 27%) and adaptation of websites to mobile platforms (increase by 10%). The results of the evaluation of the criteria for planning the budget (decrease by 15%), online survey (decrease by 8%), and information on forms of citizen participation (decrease by 3%).

- ◆ Municipalities still have the highest results in the social network sub-block: municipal activity on social networks (Facebook) (83%), the ability to leave comments on social networks (100%), the ability to send private messages on social networks and the quality of response (71%)
- ◆ Municipalities have started adding activities to their websites that were not featured on any of the municipalities' websites during the first 2017 assessment, such as the Civic Initiative. The use of SMS also increased significantly (from 1% to 15%).
- ◆ According to the criteria, as in the previous evaluation, the worst practices are recorded in terms of publishing information about the meetings of the Council of Civil Advisors (10%). The availability of information in several languages (14%) and access to information on forms of citizen participation (12%) also remain a problem. Compared to the previous assessment, the situation regarding the publication of information about the meetings of the Municipal Council and the Municipal Council Commission has worsened.
- ◆ Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Imereti were the regions where the overall e-government of the municipalities deteriorated compared to the 2019 results. The largest setback (-5%) was observed in Mtskheta-Mtianeti.
- ◆ One municipality was identified (Aspindza Municipality) that did not have a website during any of the index evaluations. Only one municipal council (Kareli Municipality) does not have a website and instead uses social networks to publish information.





CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

ACCORDING TO THE RESULTS OF THE 2021 EVALUATION OF THE INDEX:

- ◆ The average rate of citizen participation and accountability in municipalities is 23%, which is 6% less than the same indicator for the 2019 assessment.
- ◆ Citizen participation and accountability rates have improved in only 11 municipalities. A decrease was observed in 52 municipalities.
- ◆ 27 municipalities do not exceed the 20% threshold for the assessment of citizen participation and accountability, and 50% was exceeded by only one municipality (Batumi Municipality).
- ◆ The highest rate of citizen participation and accountability observed was 55% (Batumi Municipality), which is 24% behind the best assessment result of 2019 (79% - Rustavi Municipality). The lowest assessment result is 3% (Bolnisi Municipality), which is 9% lower than the lowest assessment rate of 2019 - 12% (Mestia Municipality).
- ◆ The highest improvement in the average assessment rate (increase by 19%) was observed in Poti Municipality, while the largest regression (decrease by 32%) was observed in Rustavi Municipality.
- ◆ The average result of municipalities in the sub-block of citizen participation is 18%, which is significant - 7% behind the results of 2019. In the accountability sub-block, the average score of municipalities is 33%, which is also a significant 9% drop compared to the 2019 results.
- ◆ The highest results of citizen participation and accountability were found in the following criteria: petition (86%), periodic public awareness about municipal projects (63%), access to public information (53%), and public awareness activities and campaigns (33%).

- ◆ A 0% score was observed in the results of the following two criteria: submission of mandatory issues for consideration by the municipal bodies to the general assembly of the settlement and material-technical support of the general assembly of the settlement by the municipality. It should be noted that the average evaluation results for these criteria in the 2019 evaluation results were 10% and 7%, respectively.
- ◆ Significant reductions of more than 10% were observed in the evaluation of the following criteria: ensuring citizen participation in Municipal Council and Council Commission sessions (12-12%), the composition of the Council of Civil Advisors (16%), informational support of the Council of Civil Advisors (10%), holding public hearings on issues of high public interest (11%) and access to public information (11%). It should be noted that the improvement according to the criteria is recorded only in the results of one criterion - adherence to the procedures for reviewing petitions (an increase of 40%). It should be highlighted, however, that the percentage is based only on the average result of the positive evaluation of 8 municipalities.
- ◆ The vast majority of municipalities still do not provide citizen support programs in the budget planning process. It should be noted that the municipality of Batumi is the only one where such a budget program is provided for in the 2021 budget.
- ◆ Two new criteria added to the bloc - Participatory Budget (Civic Budget) and Gender Equality Council - were evaluated positively in 9 and 14 municipalities, respectively.
- ◆ Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region is the only one where, compared to the 2019 assessment, the average result of municipalities in the citizen participation and accountability block has improved.

We will separately highlight the findings and trends that are directly related to the executive and representative bodies.

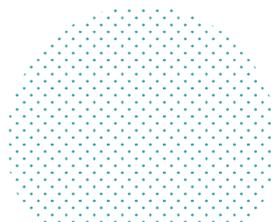
EXECUTIVE BODIES/INSTITUTIONS (MAYOR/CITY HALL)

ACCORDING TO THE RESULTS OF THE 2021 EVALUATION OF THE INDEX:

- ◆ Only 15 of the City Halls published (albeit, in most cases, incomplete) information on certain types of administrative expenses in the municipality. Among these, labor costs were reported by 12 City Halls, expenses for business trips and maintenance of vehicles - 11, fuel costs were presented in the case of 10 City Halls. Representation expenses were made by 9 City Halls, while only 7 of them made telecommunication expenses available proactively.
- ◆ The rate of proactive disclosure of information on legal entities by municipalities has slightly improved - in 2017, the average rating of municipalities in this category was 8%, in 2019, the figure increased to 11%, and in 2021 - 12%. However, proactive access to legal entities' annual reports, procurement, audits, and employee information remains problematic.
- ◆ 72% of City Halls did not publish information about current tenders on their websites. The score of municipalities in this criterion decreases every year: in 2017, 40% of City Halls/Municipal Administrations did not publish information on current tenders; by 2019, their share has increased to 66%.
- ◆ One-third of the City Halls do not publish the mayor's annual reports and strategic documents of the municipality. Progress is being made on these criteria, as more than half of the City Halls did not publish these documents in previous years.
- ◆ The availability of the protocols of the meetings of the Council of Civil Advisors on the website of the City Halls has relatively improved (from

22% to 32%), although the average rate of proactive publication of the protocols of the general assemblies of the settlement (from 30% to 24%) has decreased.

- ◆ Meetings of the Council of Civil Advisors of Mayor were held in only 20 municipalities. In the municipalities where the meetings of the Council of Civil Advisors of Mayor are established and held, the rate of submission of initiatives by the Council to the Mayor has increased by 6% compared to the 2017 estimate and by 4% compared to the 2019 estimate. As for the score for issues submitted to the council by the mayor, compared to the 2017 estimate, it has increased by 3%, while compared to the 2019 estimate, there has been a 6% decrease. This data is based only on the data of the municipalities where the council meetings were held.
- ◆ The practice of holding a public hearing by the mayor is critically low. Such hearings were held in only 9% of municipalities. Compared to 2017, it has decreased by 14% and compared to 2019, it has decreased by 8%.
- ◆ The form of the civil budget leads to the use of additional forms of citizen participation established beyond the bounds of the law.
- ◆ The rate of publishing updated information on projects implemented by the municipality has increased by 19% compared to the 2017 assessment, but has decreased by 3% compared to the 2019 assessment.



REPRESENTATIVE BODIES – MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

ACCORDING TO THE RESULTS OF THE 2021 EVALUATION OF THE INDEX:

- ◆ Only 15 of the municipal councils published (also incompletely) information on certain types of administrative expenses. Out of this, only 7 of them made public the expenses for the representation and maintenance of vehicles. Remuneration expenses were available in the case of 8 municipal councils, telecommunication expenses in 9 cases, fuel expenses in 10 cases, and business trip expenses in 10 representative bodies. This situation is slightly lower than similar indicators for the 2019 assessment.
- ◆ 29 municipal councils have published the protocols of the sessions held in the last year, the same result as the 2019 evaluation index. Only 16 of them made the protocols of all sittings available online, while in the rest of the documents of the separate sittings were missing.
- ◆ In most municipalities, only minimal, formal guarantees are created for the participation of citizens in both Municipal Council and Municipal Council Commission sessions. In the vast majority of municipalities, it is not possible to participate remotely in the meetings of the Municipal Council and the Municipal Council Commission, as well as in the submission process of the report of a Municipal Council member. Opportunities for citizen participation in Municipal Council sessions have increased by 7% compared to the 2017 result, although they have decreased by 12% compared to the 2019 result. The low motivation of citizens to attend Municipal Council and Commission sessions remains a problem.
- ◆ Public hearings on the reports of Municipal Council members remain a problem. The performance in this criterion is critically reduced and fell to 7%, which is a 17% decrease compared to the 2017 estimate and an 8% decrease compared to the 2019 estimate.
- ◆ The number of municipalities (8 municipalities) where citizens appeal to the Municipal Council has been reduced.

RESULTS OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT INDEX OF 2021

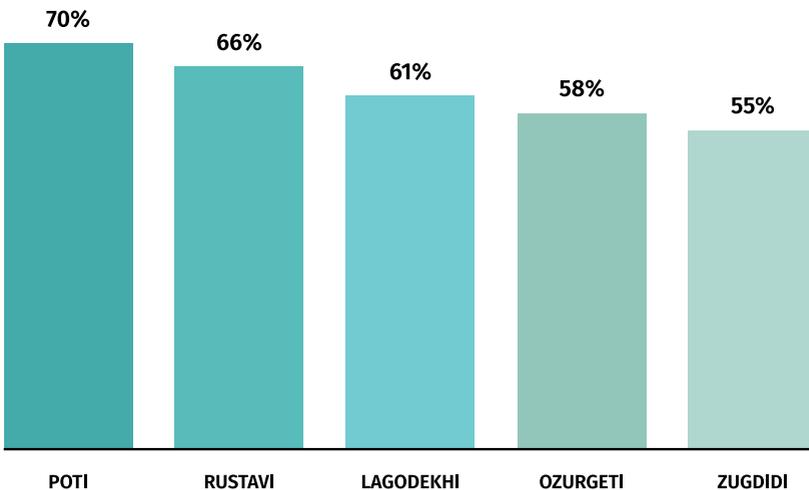
Ranking by Municipalities

The average score for transparency and accountability of municipalities in 2021 remains low - 28%. The average result of the City Halls is 26%, while that of the Municipal Councils is 31%. These results are not significantly different from the figures from 2019.

According to the evaluation results, Poti Municipality has been identified as the municipality with the best indicator of 2021. On a 100% rating scale, it has a 70% result, which is 9% higher than the City of Batumi with the best result of 2019, and 20% higher than the best result of 2017 - the City of Rustavi (50%).

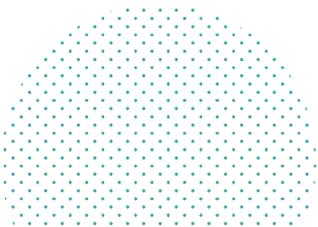
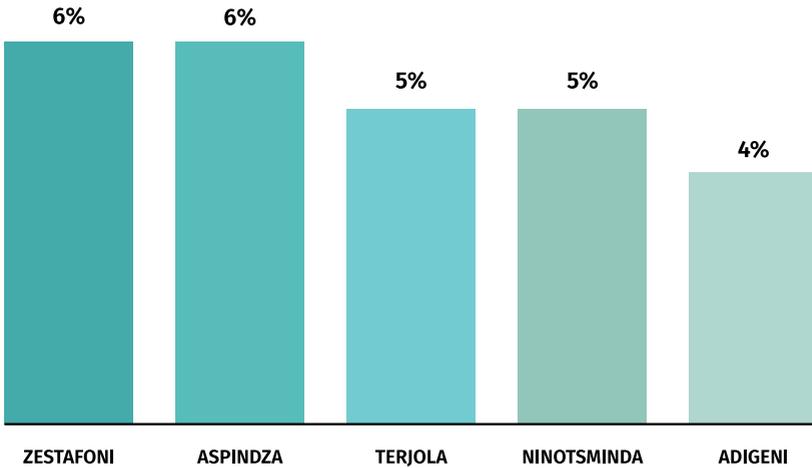
Along with Poti Municipality, Rustavi (66%), Lagodekhi (61%), Ozurgeti (58%) and Zugdidi (55%) municipalities are in the top five of the transparency rating.

Municipalities with the Highest Results in 2021

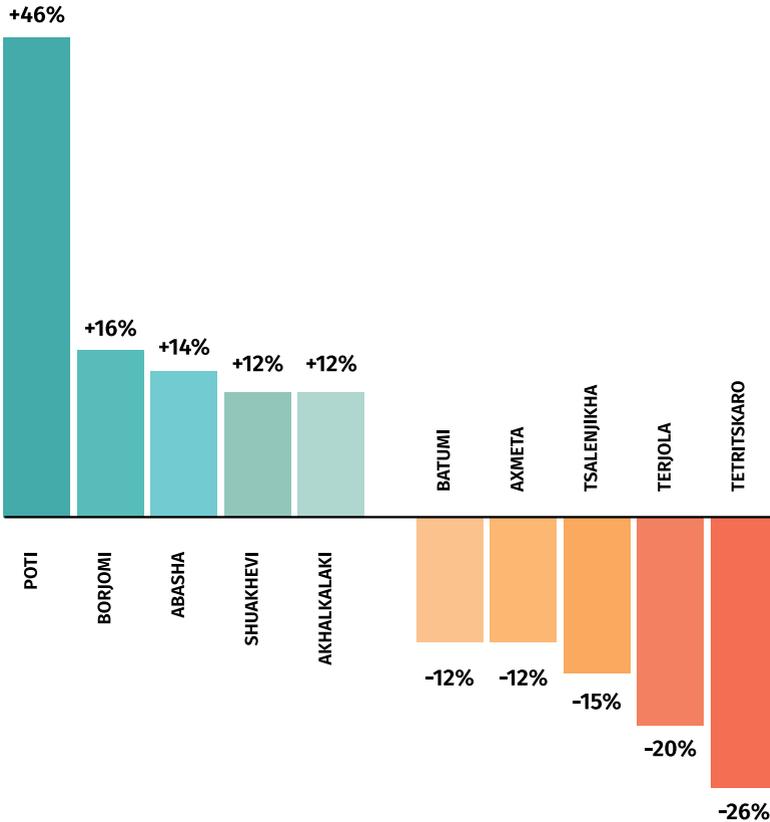


The municipalities with the lowest ratings in 2021 are Adigeni (4%), Ninotsminda (5%), Terjola (5%), Aspindza (6%), and Zestaponi (6%). Three municipalities also failed to cross the 10% rating threshold: Tianeti (7%), Samtredia (7%), and Kaspi (9%).

Municipalities with the Lowest Results in 2021



Municipalities with the Most Significant Progress and Backsliding

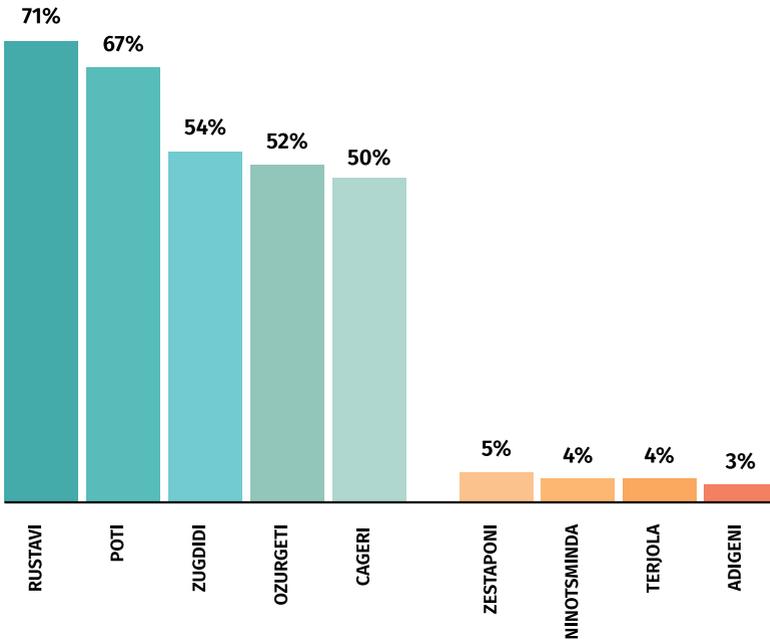


The sharpest increase of 46% is observed in Poti Municipality. The improvement score is higher than 10% in Borjomi, Abasha, Shuakhevi, and Akhalkalaki municipalities. Tetrtskaro and Terjola municipalities have sharp, 26 and 20%, deterioration, respectively. There is also a noticeable drop of 12-15% in Tsalenjikha, Akhmeta, and Batumi municipalities.

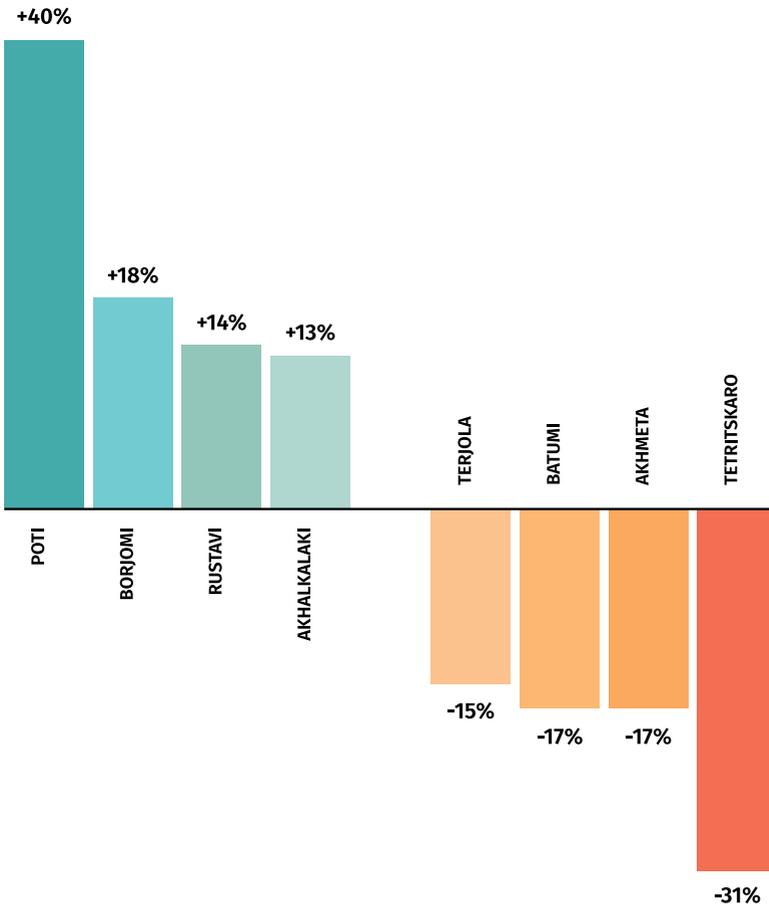
Ranking by Municipal Authorities

The average result of City Halls is 26% on a 100% ranking scale, which is slightly higher than the respective result of 2019. Rustavi City Hall has the best score among executive bodies - 71%. This is followed by the City Halls of Poti (67%), Zugdidi (54%), Ozurgeti (52%) and Tsageri (50%). Zestaponi (5%), Ninotsminda (4%), Terjola (4%), and Adigeni (3%) City Halls have the lowest results.

City Halls with the Highest and Lowest Results 2021

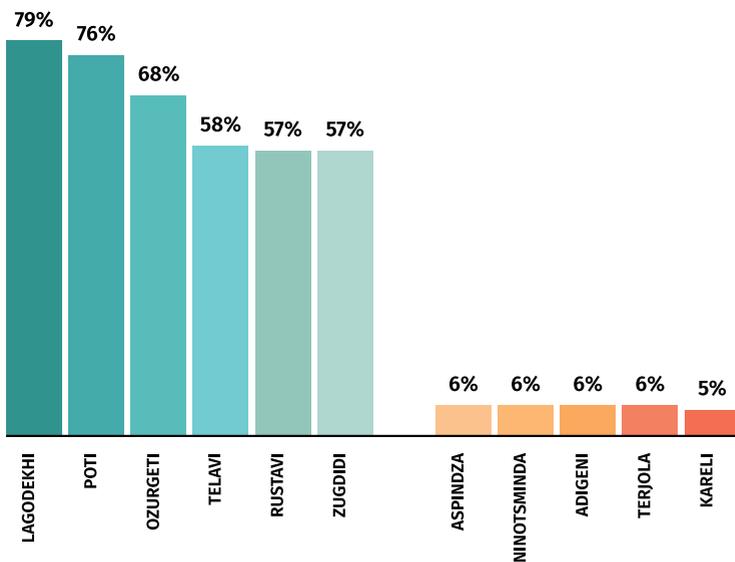


City Halls with the Most Significant Progress and Backsliding

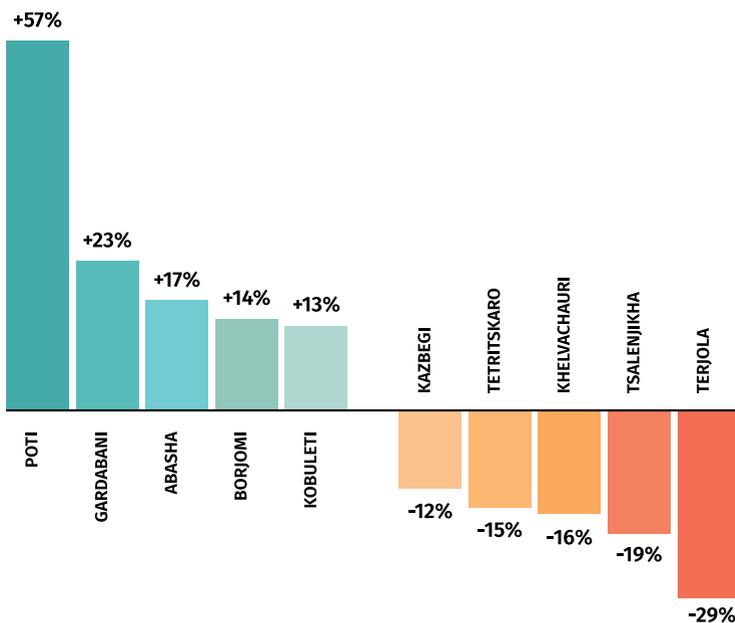


The average rating of the councils on the 100% rating scale is 31%, which is 4% higher than the average rating of the municipal executive bodies. The average result of the evaluation of councils actually coincides with the score of 2019 (31%). In terms of transparency and accountability, Lagodekhi Municipal Council showed the best results - 79%, followed by Poti (76%), Ozurgeti (68%), Telavi (58%), Rustavi (57%), and Zugdidi (57%). The lowest results were observed in Aspindza (6%), Ninotsminda (6%), Adigeni (6%), Terjola (6%), and Kareli (5%) councils.

Municipal Councils with the Highest and Lowest Results in 2021



Municipal Councils with the Most Significant Progress and Backsliding



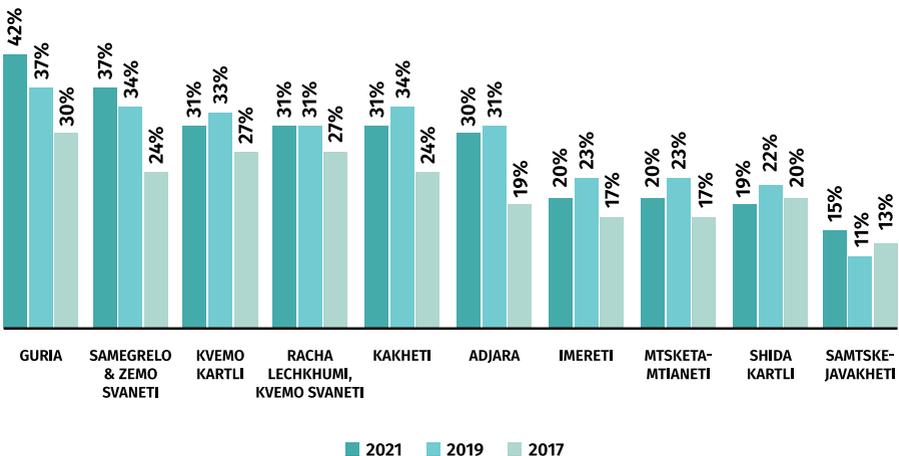
Average Results of Municipalities by Regions

For the purposes of presenting the results of the assessment, the areas of action of the State Representative and the Autonomous Republic of Adjara (9 regions in total) are considered as regions.

According to the evaluation results, the municipalities of Guria region have the highest average result of transparency and accountability (42%) among the regions of Georgia, which is almost three times higher than the average result of the municipalities of the region with the lowest score (15%).

Steadily increasing dynamics are observed only in the case of the average of the municipalities of Guria and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region. However, it should be noted that the drop between the 2021 assessment average and the 2017 average was not observed only in Shida Kartli (-1%). The average scores of municipalities in the Guria region have the highest growth rate (5%), while an equal 3% decrease is observed simultaneously in 4 regions (Kakheti, Imereti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, and Shida Kartli).

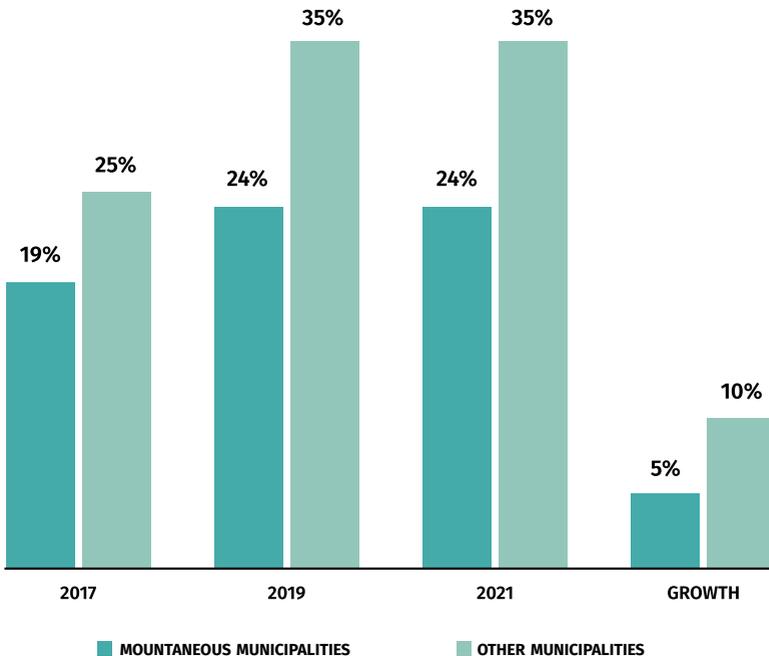
Average Results of Municipalities by Regions



Municipalities of Mountainous Regions

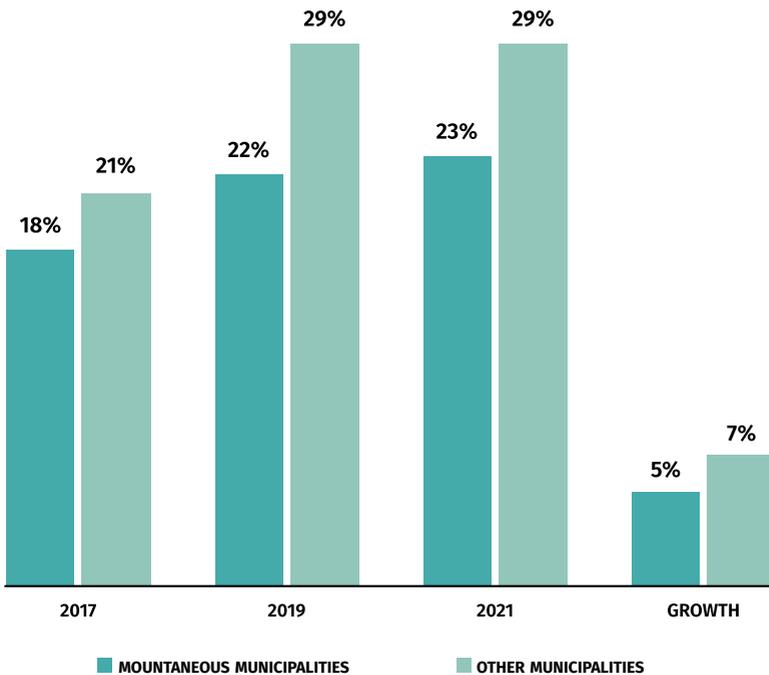
In the 2019-2023 Strategy for the Development of Mountainous Settlements of Georgia, the Local Self-Government Index is one of the indicators of the increase in access to public services. Depending on the goals of the strategy, a mountainous municipality can be considered as a municipality with at least one highland settlement (44 municipalities in total). According to the results of 2021, the total average of mountainous municipalities is 24%, which is 11% lower than the average of other municipalities (35%) (20 municipalities in total), and the improvement rate from the 2017 assessment to date is about twice lower than in other municipalities.

Results of Mountainous Municipalities



As mentioned previously, the above data is based on the results of municipalities with at least one highland settlement and covers about 3/4 of Georgia's municipalities. Accordingly, the results of the municipalities, almost all settlements (more than 90% of the settlements) of which are mountainous (a total of 16 municipalities), were processed separately. Based on the results of the 2021 assessment, the total average of these municipalities is 23%, which is 6% less than the average of the other municipalities (29%) (48 municipalities in total). The improvement rate compared to the results of the 2017 estimate is still 2% lower than in non-highland municipalities.

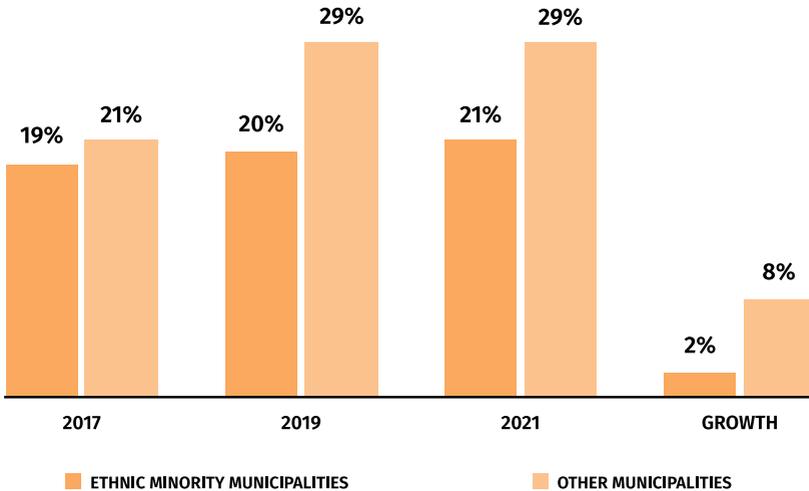
Results of Municipalities where at least 90% of Population is Highlander



Municipalities Densely Populated by Ethnic Minorities

The report separated out the results of the index for municipalities densely populated by ethnic minorities. For the purposes of the assessment, municipalities with more than 50% of the ethnic minority population were considered. According to the 2014 state census, such municipalities are: Akhalkalaki, Ninotsminda, Tsalka, Bolnisi, Dmanisi, Marneuli and Gardabani. According to the results of 2021, the total average score of these municipalities is 21%, which is 8% lower than the average of the other municipalities (29%, 57 municipalities). The rate of improvement from the 2017 assessment to date is about 4 times lower than in other municipalities.

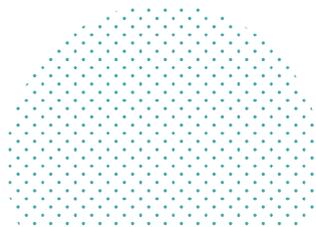
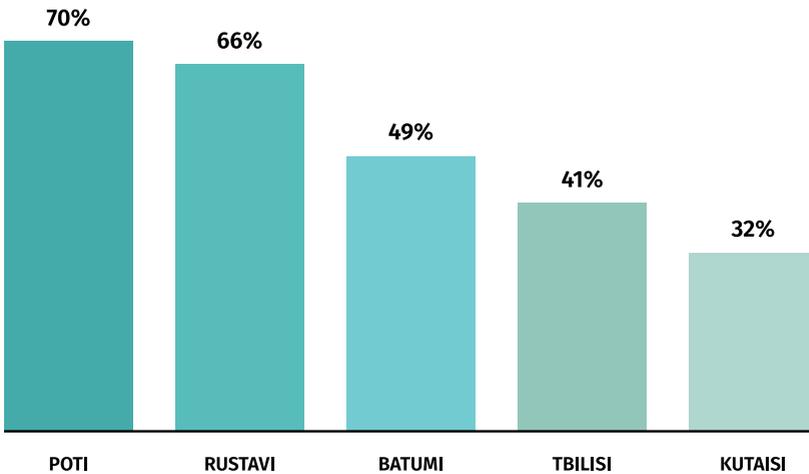
Municipalities Densely Populated by Ethnic Minorities



Self-Governing Cities

According to the results of 2021, Poti (70%) and Rustavi (66%) have the best rates among self-governing cities. They are substantially ahead of the rest of the cities. It should be noted that the result of the capital Tbilisi Municipality (41%) exceeds only the index of Kutaisi (32%).

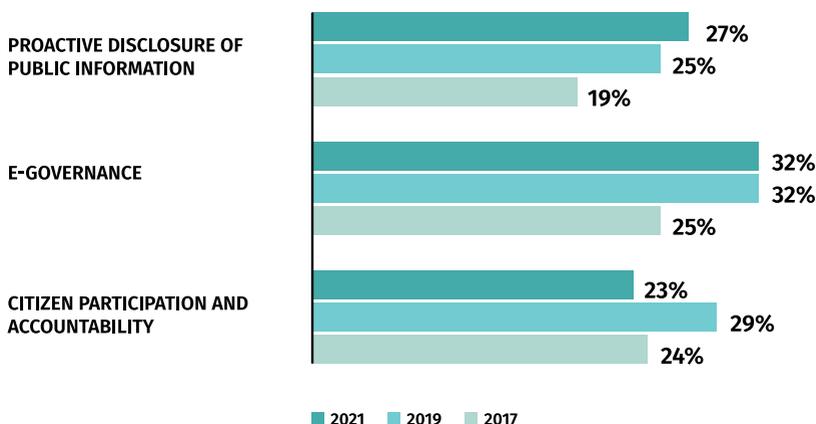
Self-governing City Rankings 2021



AVERAGE RESULTS OF MUNICIPALITIES BASED ON TOPICS

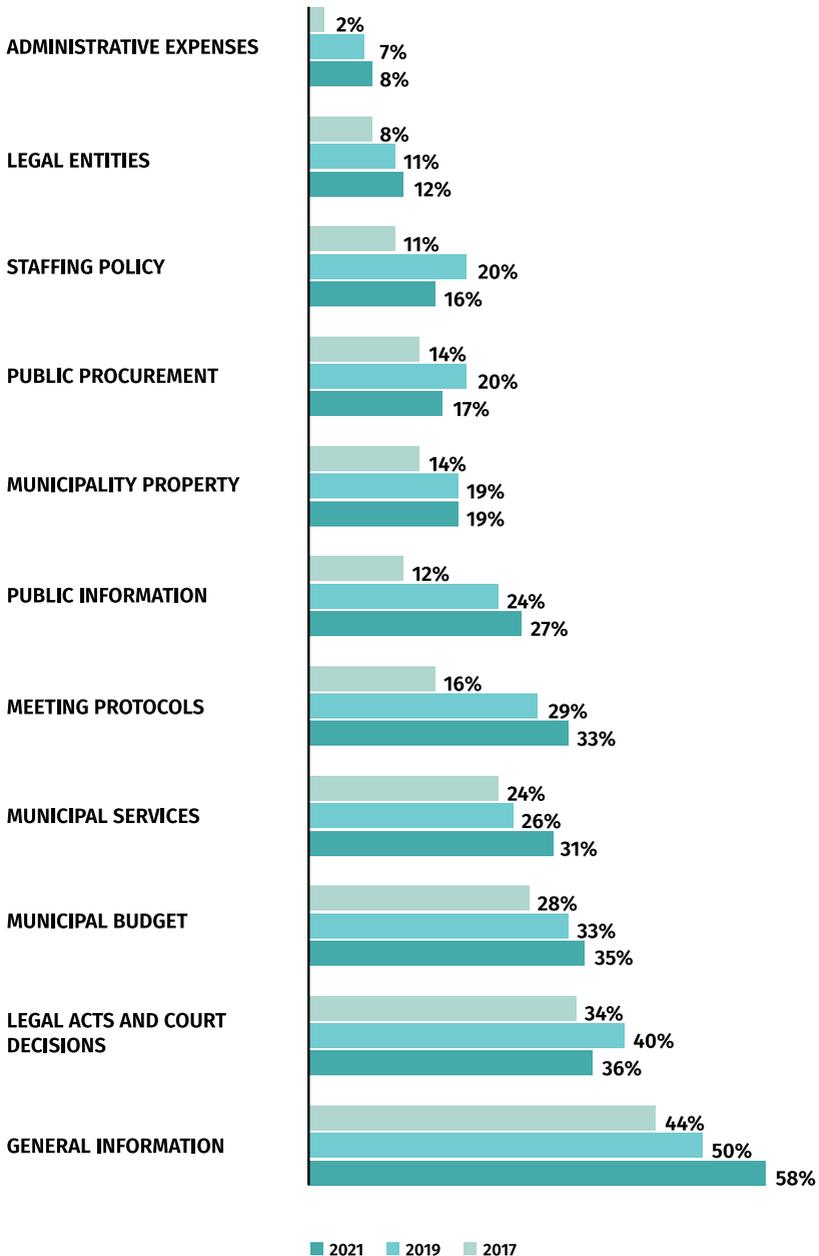
The average result of the municipalities according to the 3 thematic blocks of the evaluation was distributed as follows: Proactive disclosure of public information - 27%; Electronic governance - 32%; Citizen participation and accountability - 22%. Compared to the results of the previous 2019 assessment, a small (+2%) improvement was observed only in the direction of proactive disclosure of information.

Average Results of Municipalities Based on Topics



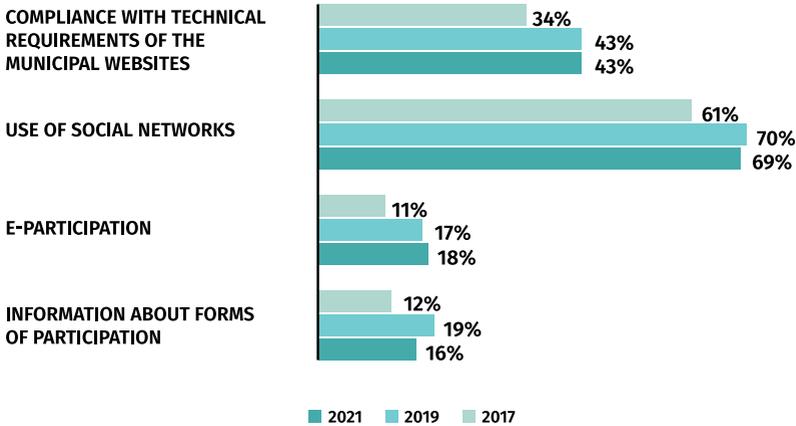
Similar to the 2019 assessment, the results of the assessment in the thematic block of proactive disclosure of information had a significant negative impact on the low rates of proactive disclosure of information on various administrative expenses and municipal legal entities (8% and 12%, respectively). The picture is relatively better in terms of proactive publication of general information about the municipality (58%) and municipal acts (36%) in this block. The highest rate of improvement was observed in the availability of general information about the municipality (+8%) and information about municipal services (+5%), while, on the other hand, the scores of access to information on municipal acts (-4%) and staffing (-4%) deteriorated the most.

Average Results of Municipalities Based on Topics



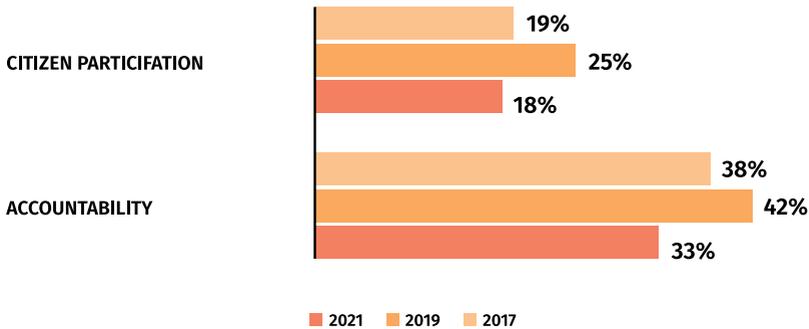
Of the other two thematic blocks, the highest average score was observed in the field of electronic governance - 32%.

Average Results of Municipalities - Electronic Governance



In 2021, citizen participation scores fell by 7% and accountability scores by 9%.

Average Results of Municipalities in Citizen Participation and Accountability



RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2021, the overall average score of transparency and accountability of Georgian municipalities is 28%, which means that the indicator has not improved since 2019. The average municipalities' result of 28% on a 100% rating scale is still unsatisfactory and low.

The formula for improving outcomes remains unchanged for each municipality, namely the clear political will and active action by the municipality's senior officials to ensure greater transparency and accountability.

The recommendations below are based on the views of the expert-appraisal team, many years of work experience, and the successful practice of a particular municipality. Adherence to the recommendations will help interested municipalities meet the standards set by the index, which is an important contributor in achieving a high degree of transparency and accountability.

Some of the recommendations, due to their relevance, repeat the recommendations given in previous reports.



PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

- ◆ Municipalities must update the list of public information to be disclosed proactively. It would be beneficial to use the Local Self-Government Index, as well as follow the best practice standards of good governance and transparency of public institutions when creating the list.
- ◆ Each municipality must create a public information section on their website, where relevant public information will be published thematically and in open data formats.
- ◆ Municipalities should not be limited to proactive disclosure of information required by Georgian law. It is desirable that any other public information of public interest be posted on the website. This would include the data on pandemic management and its consequences.

- ◆ In addition, it is recommended to make it mandatory to publish the information that was requested by 3 or more applicants from the public institution during the year. This practice, on the one hand, will reduce the number of requests for public information in the municipality, and, on the other hand, will increase the degree of transparency. This will significantly help municipalities to achieve the tasks of the third goal of the new decentralization strategy - credible, accountable, transparent, and results-oriented self-government.



ELECTRONIC GOVERNANCE

- ◆ To increase the level of public participation in local political processes, it is important to inform citizens in a timely manner about existing forms of participation. Municipal authorities should use their websites, social network, and mobile applications as the main platforms for effective and timely dissemination of information.
- ◆ It is important for municipalities to technically improve their websites, which is one of the main means of disseminating official information, and to allocate funds for the effective management of websites.
- ◆ For online payment services, the municipality can use existing electronic payment services and publish information/banners about this possibility on the website.
- ◆ The municipality should offer electronic services to citizen, which means creating its own electronic services or introducing/integrating existing electronic modules/services. The following e-services can be prioritized: administrative work, spatial arrangement, architecture and supervision, recreation, the status of living in a highland settlement, landscaping and cleaning, infrastructure and transport, property management, social and other services.

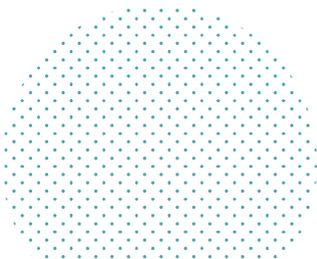


CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- ◆ To increase citizen participation in matters of local importance, in addition to the forms of citizen participation prescribed by law, municipalities should consider developing other additional forms that will be adapted to the local environment and requirements.
- ◆ To raise public awareness of the importance of citizen participation and increase confidence in the process, it is recommended that municipalities implement appropriate educational and other programs, for which they should ensure that funds are allocated from the municipal budget.
- ◆ Due to the limited mobility period caused by the pandemic, as well as the interests of settlements far from the administrative center and the needs of citizens with disabilities, it is critical that the municipality provide electronic forms of citizen participation, the transmission of sessions of the Municipal Council Commission and the Council of Civil Advisors, as well as ensure technical development for online participation (addressing, asking questions, and getting answers) in these meetings.
- ◆ In order to ensure public involvement in the work of the municipality's representative body, it is necessary to introduce regulations for members of the public to attend council sessions and participate. Citizens should have access to the details of scheduled sessions, as well as issues to be discussed, a week before the meeting.
- ◆ It is important to ensure that the mechanisms for citizen participation prescribed by law are increased and adapted to local conditions. In particular, it is recommended to reduce or delegate to the municipality the right to determine the minimum quorum (20% of the population) for holding general assemblies of the settlement and to delegate the discretion of the detailed regulation of the general assembly procedure to the municipality. This approach will create the possibility of maximum adaptation

of the procedure to local conditions. At the same time, the mayors of the municipality should review the rules for forming a mayor's council of civil advisors and establish open, transparent, and competitive procedures for its composition.

- ◆ Steps need to be taken to increase the accountability of the mayor and council members to the electorate. The above-mentioned officials of the municipality must hold meetings with citizens within the timeframes and in the manner prescribed by law. In the event of a pandemic or other “force majeure” situation, remote public reporting mechanisms should also be utilized. In order to ensure the interactivity of the reporting procedure, it is important to consider the good practice of some municipalities, which involves pre-publishing the text of the reports.
- ◆ Municipalities should share the good practice of having a civil (participatory) budget implemented in other municipalities of Georgia. At the same time, in order to ensure greater foresight of the procedure and public confidence in the city budget, it is important that civil budget issues be defined through a normative act of the Municipal Council, and that the decision made by the population when planning the city budget be implemented. However, for the sustainability of the city budget, it is important for the amount of the city budget to be tied to any indicator of the budget (for example, 2-5% of the volume of own revenues).



GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Municipal evaluation practice shows that part of the municipalities start taking steps to meet the index standards before the evaluation process begins or directly during the evaluation process, which is not enough to achieve a high degree of transparency and accountability. Thus, it is critically important for municipalities to plan improvement measures immediately after the evaluation process is completed, based on their own municipality's evaluation results and taking into account the positive practices of other municipalities (available in the full reports of National Assessment of Municipalities). This approach will give them enough time to prepare for change as well as to develop relevant human resources.
- ◆ Municipalities should approve improvement measures in the form of a written plan that will facilitate consistent change and sustainability of results. This recommendation is especially relevant for municipalities with low outcomes and low or negative dynamics of improvement. It is recommended to develop a plan of improvement measures for the Municipal Council and the City Hall separately. For this purpose, it is desirable to determine the responsible person through a decision of the Municipal Council chairperson and the mayor or to set up a working group to develop a plan to improve the quality of transparency and accountability and ensure its implementation after the plan is approved by the mayor/Municipal Council chairperson.
- ◆ In order for municipalities to maintain and improve the degree of transparency and accountability in a pandemic, it is critical to introduce innovative approaches. The municipality's electronic platforms need to be adapted to respond effectively to the needs for their increased involvement in communicating with citizens in a pandemic environment. For the purposes of communication with the population, in addition to the use of traditional mechanisms, electronic forms of communication should be introduced.

- ◆ It should be noted that one of the tasks of the Decentralization Strategy 2020-2025 was to introduce a high standard of transparency and accountability. A revision of the relevant legislative framework is planned for this purpose. Therefore, it is recommended to take into account the Index standards, evaluation results, and positive experience of different municipalities in this process. Moreover, in this strategy, the Index and its indicators are established as one of the indicators of achieving results.



APPENDIX - EVALUATION RESULTS BY MUNICIPALITIES

N	Municipalities	Final Assessment	City Hall	Municipal Council
1	Poti Municipality	70%	67%	76%
2	Rustavi Municipality	66%	71%	57%
3	Lagodekhi Municipality	61%	48%	79%
4	Ozurgeti Municipality	58%	52%	68%
5	Zugdidi Municipality	55%	54 %	57%
6	Telavi Municipality	51%	46%	58%
7	Batumi Municipality	49%	46%	53%
8	Tsageri Municipality	49%	50%	47%
9	Lanchkhuti Municipality	41%	35%	52%
10	Tbilisi Municipality	41%	34%	53%
11	Senaki Municipality	40%	35%	49%
12	Chkhorotsku Municipality	39%	43%	33%
13	Gardabani Municipality	39%	30%	53%
14	Ambrolauri Municipality	37%	37%	37%
15	Tsalenjikha Municipality	34%	31%	40%
16	Keda Municipality	33%	29%	40%
17	Abasha Municipality	33%	28%	40%
18	Kutaisi Municipality	32%	34%	29%

19	Akhaltsikhe Municipality	31%	31%	32%
20	Kharagauli Municipality	31%	28%	36%
21	Tskaltubo Municipality	30%	28%	32%
22	Tkibuli Municipality	29%	31%	25%
23	Khobi Municipality	28%	25%	35%
24	Akhmeta Municipality	28%	19%	42%
25	Kobuleti Municipality	28%	21%	38%
26	Chokhatauri Municipality	28%	27%	29%
27	Khelvachauri Municipality	28%	25%	33%
28	Borjomi Municipality	27%	27%	28%
29	Dusheti Municipality	27%	25%	31%
30	Shuakhevi Municipality	27%	30%	22%
31	Khashuri Municipality	27%	22%	36%
32	Kazbegi Municipality	27%	27%	26%
33	Dmanisi Municipality	27%	24%	32%
34	Tetritskaro Municipality	26%	25%	29%
35	Sighnaghi Municipality	26%	22%	34%
36	Tsalka Municipality	26%	22%	34%
37	Vani Municipality	26%	27%	25%
38	Gori Municipality	26%	25%	27%
39	Sagarejo Municipality	25%	24%	26%

40	Sachkhere Municipality	25%	22%	28%
41	Gurjaani Municipality	23%	25%	20%
42	Oni Municipality	23%	22%	25%
43	Marneuli Municipality	22%	21%	22%
44	Mtskheta Municipality	21%	23%	18%
45	Dedoplistskaro Municipality	21%	20%	22%
46	Baghdati Municipality	20%	21%	20%
47	Martvili Municipality	19%	15%	24%
48	Mestia Municipality	18%	14%	24%
49	Akhalkalaki Municipality	18%	17%	18%
50	Khoni Municipality	16%	12%	24%
51	Khulo Municipality	15%	15%	16%
52	Chiatura Municipality	15%	17%	12%
53	Kvareli Municipality	14%	10%	22%
54	Lentekhi Municipality	14%	11%	17%
55	Bolnisi Municipality	13%	14%	12%
56	Kareli Municipality	11%	14%	5%
57	Kaspi Municipality	10%	8%	13%
58	Samtredia Municipality	7%	6%	8%
59	Tianeti Municipality	7%	6%	8%
60	Zestaponi Municipality	6%	5%	7%

61	Aspindza Municipality	6%	6%	6%
62	Terjola Municipality	5%	4%	6%
63	Ninotsminda Municipality	5%	4%	6%
64	Adigeni Municipality	4%	3%	6%

