

Perceptions of the Prosecutor's Office

On January 19, 2020, Studio monitor and Radio Liberty released an investigative journalism film called “The Winner’s Justice.” It focused on accusations that prosecutors had not investigated the seizure of a luxury watch shop, the Albatros, from businessman David Begiashvili in 2011.

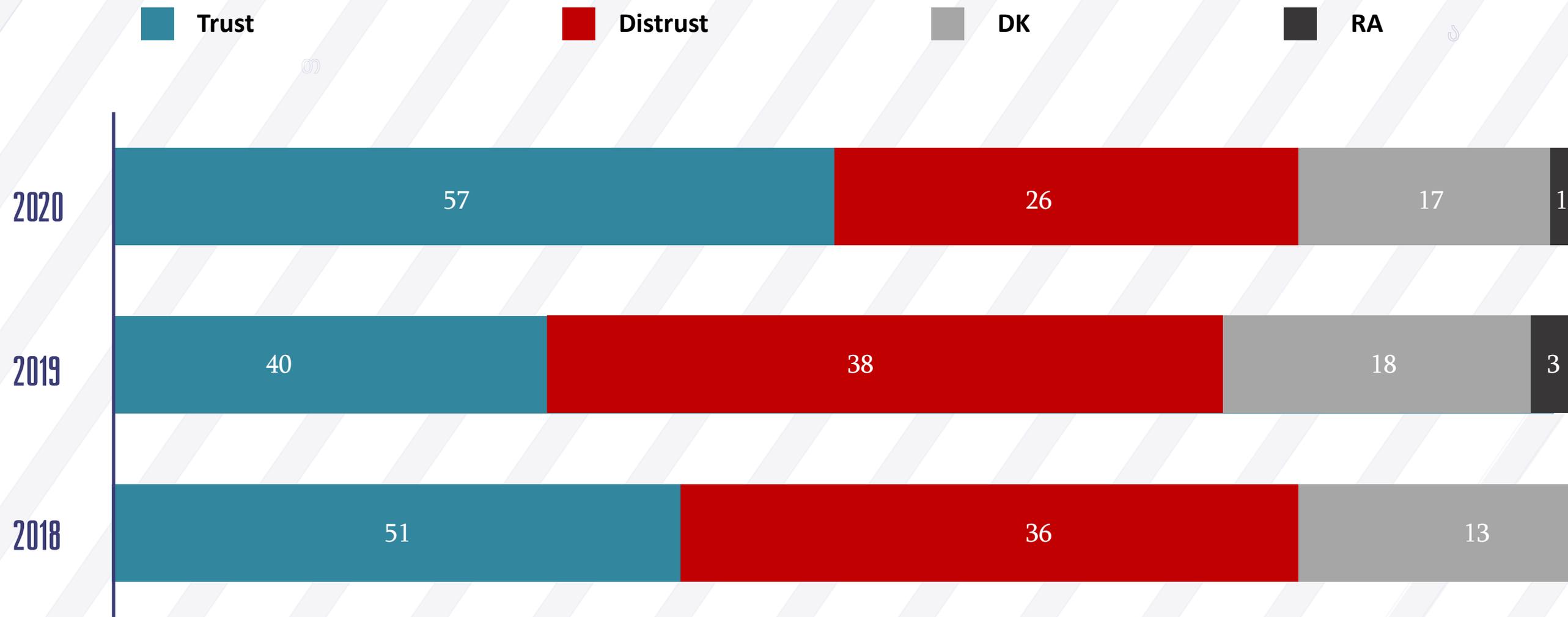
On March 4-23, 2020, CRRC-Georgia conducted a phone survey to find out attitudes towards the prosecutor’s office and whether people watched the film. The survey specifically focused on:

- How much people trust or distrust the Prosecutors Office of Georgia;
- How often people think prosecutors abuse power and make deals with judges or government;
- To what extent the restoration of justice investigations were accomplished.

Only 2% of the adult Georgian-speaking population of Georgia reported watching the film. The majority of those who viewed the film could not recall where they watched it. The rest of the respondents watched it either on Facebook or Radio Liberty’s website and found the film convincing or partially convincing.

Public opinion on the Prosecutor’s Office in Georgia tends towards trust. About half the public (57%) reported trusting the Prosecutor’s Office (19% fully trust and 38% trust more than distrust), 26% not trusting it, and 17% reported ‘don’t know’. This is an increase in trust compared with 2019. However, it is similar to results from 2018.

To what degree do you trust or distrust the Prosecutor's office of Georgia? (%)



Note: the question was recoded from 4-point scale into a 2-point scale. The answer options "Fully trust" and "Rather trust than distrust" were recoded as "Trust"; the answer options "Fully distrust" and "Rather distrust than trust" were recoded as "Distrust".



The public is divided in how objectively the Prosecutor's Office investigates and prosecutes cases about confiscating property. Slightly more than a quarter of people (28%) say that the Prosecutor's Office objectively deals with cases about confiscating property. A similar share (26%) reports that cases are not investigated and prosecuted objectively. The plurality (43%) report 'don't know' to the question.

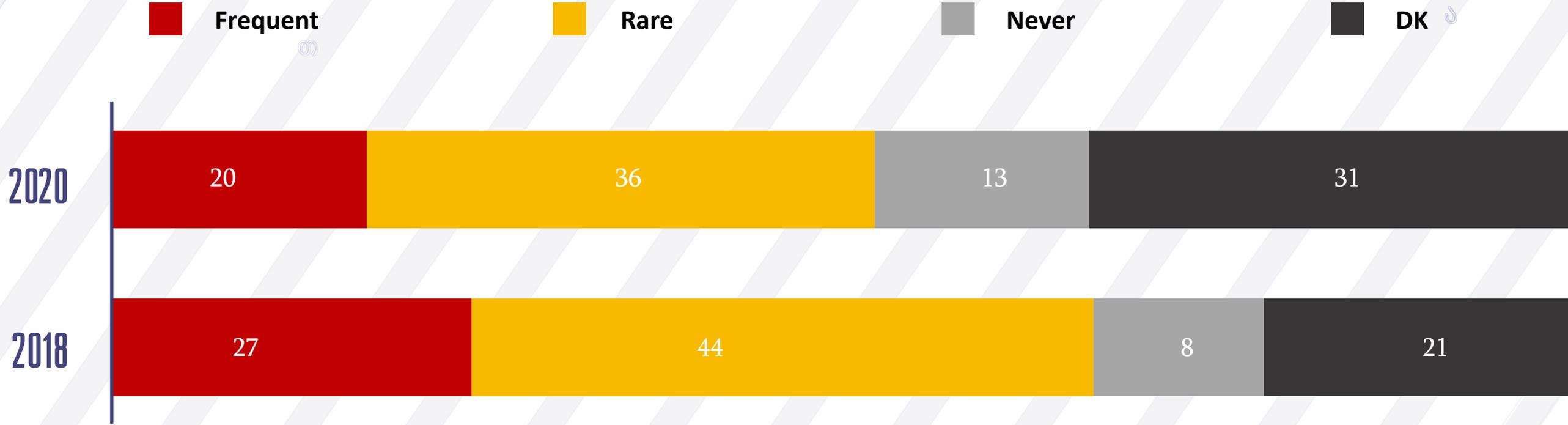
Respondents were asked if prosecutors abused power frequently, rarely, or never. A plurality (36%) reported that abuse of power was rare, 20% said it was frequent, and 13% reported it never happened in Georgia. The rest of the respondents (31%) replied 'don't know' to the question.

The same scale was used to ask how often prosecutors make deals with government. The plurality (39%) reported 'don't know' to the question. Among the remainder of the public, 29% reported that prosecutors making deals with government representatives was rare, 20% said that it was frequent, and 12% reported that it never took place in Georgia.

The questions about abuse of power and deals with judges were also asked in a November, 2018 survey. The results about abuse of power have slightly changed between waves of the survey, with a decline in the share of people responding that prosecutors' abuse of power is frequent and a decline in the share of people responding that it happens rarely. The share of people who reported that it never takes place in Georgia has slightly increased. More people also became uncertain.

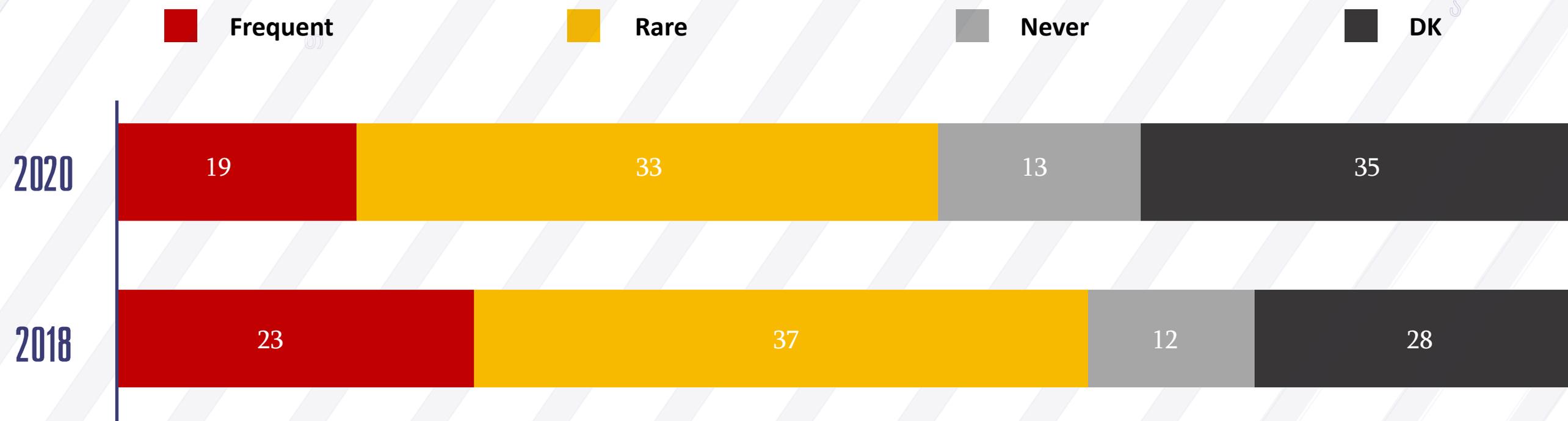


In your opinion, abuse of power by prosecutors in Georgia is a frequent case, a rare case, or never the case (%)



As for deals with judges for favorable decisions, the results have not changed substantively between the waves, with a slight decline in the share of people who reported that prosecutors making deals with the government to have decisions favorable for them is happening frequently and a slight increase in the share of people responding don't know.

In your opinion, prosecutors in Georgia making deals with judges in order to have decision favorable for them is a frequent case, a rare case, or never the case (%)



The survey also asked people how free or unfree large businesses are from political influence. According to the data, 42% reported that businesses are free from political influence, 33% said that they are not free from influence, and quarter of the population 25% reported 'don't know'.

The survey asked respondents about the "restoration of justice" that the Georgian Dream government initiated after coming to power in 2012. Officially, the process, among other objectives, was meant to return confiscated property. A plurality of respondents (36%) said that the restoration of justice was not accomplished. About a quarter (27%) reported that it was accomplished and 36% answered 'don't know'.



Overall, the public is relatively split or undecided in terms of attitudes towards the Prosecutor's Office. Even though more than half of the population trusts the Prosecutor's Office, more than a quarter think that they un-objectively investigate and prosecute cases about confiscated property and the plurality have no idea how objectively or un-objectively the Prosecutor's Office investigates and prosecutes cases. Approximately one third of the population reports that they don't know how often prosecutors abuse power, make deals with judges, or make deals with government to have decisions favorable for them. Almost half think it happens either frequently or rarely, and around one in eight think it never happens.

The analysis above is based on the full sample and represents the Georgian-speaking adult population of Georgia, regardless of whether they watched the film or not. The phone survey was conducted on March 4-23 2020. It included 755 completed interviews. Its results are representative of the adult Georgian-speaking population of the country.

The theoretical margin of error of the survey is 3.6% for estimates near 50%, 3.1% for estimates near 75% and 25%, and 2.1% for estimates near 10% and 90%. Results discussed in this blog are based on all completed interviews. The data are weighted to reflect the demographics of the population.



Note: The survey is part of [the Promoting Prosecutorial Independence through Monitoring and Engagement \(PrIME\)](#) project implemented by the Institute for Development of freedom of Information (IDFI) in partnership with [CRRC-Georgia](#) and [Studio Monitor](#) with the financial support of [the European Union](#) (EU). The contents of this blogpost are the sole responsibility of CRRC-Georgia and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union, IDFI, and Studio Monitor.