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Policy, Advocacy, and Civil Society Development in Georgia (G-PAC)

საჯარო პოლიტიკის, ადვოკატირებისა და სამოქალაქო საზოგადოების  
განვითარება საქართველოში

## Development of e-communication in Georgia – access to the internet

Research was prepared in the frames of project “Development of e-Participation in Georgia”

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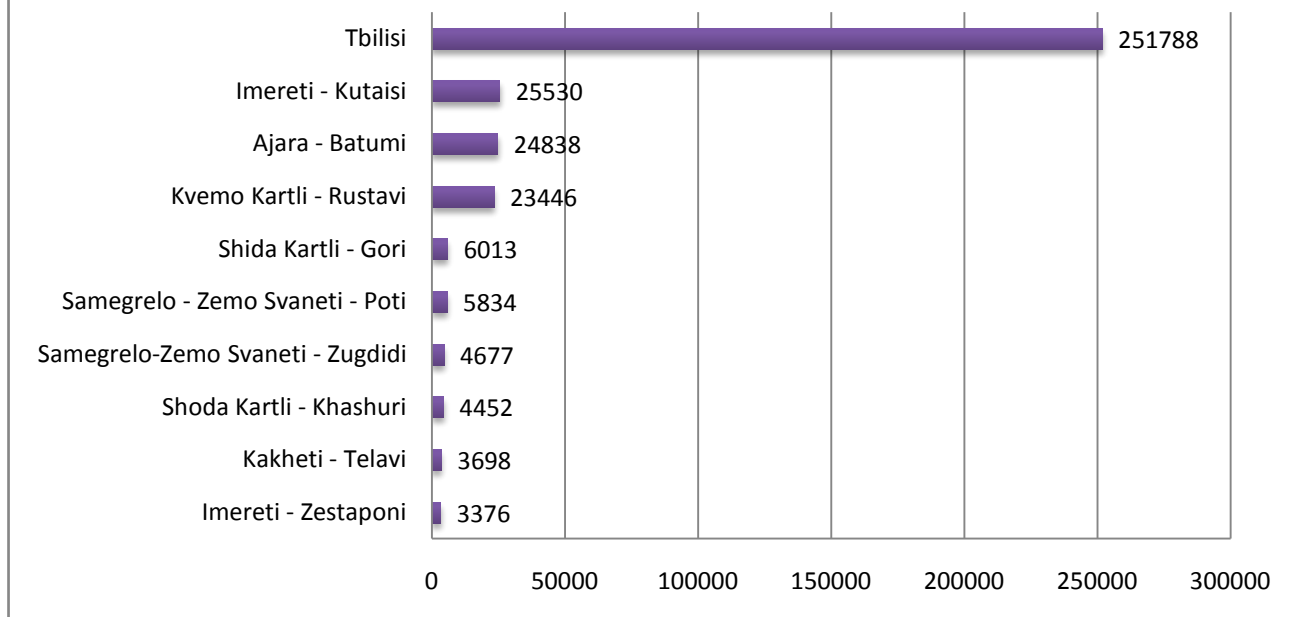
## STATISTICS OF INTERNET USERS IN GEORGIA

Modern technologies and internet have simplified communication and access to information like never before. Governments actively use the internet as means of communicating with citizens. Most importantly, in order to increase the accountability of governments, attention has focused on providing detailed information about their activities. In the case of efficient internet resource usage, it is possible to simplify bureaucratic procedures, construct direct communication, and exchange views which finally result in the openness of governments. Regardless of the above mentioned advantages, the precondition of this process is the widespread availability of the internet and access. Otherwise, only a limited number of citizens will benefit from using these e-resources.

According to the 2012 report published by the Georgian National Communication Commission, the number of broadband internet users as of 2013 was 483 000. Compared to the results of the end of 2011, the number of users increased by 27,4% (103 900). As for the number of wired broadband (DSL and fiber-optic) users, their amount reached 329 000 by the end of 2012. The majority of these users are accumulated in Tbilisi – 64,1%, Kutaisi – 6,5%, Batumi – 6,3, Rustavi – 6,0%, Poti – 1,5%, while in the rest of the country – 15,6%. The same document emphasizes that WiFi service is the most dynamically developing technology in the country. “It is mainly used in rural areas where wired internet is less available. In five big cities of the country – Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi, Rustavi and Poti number of WiFi users is just 6,2%” – states the report.

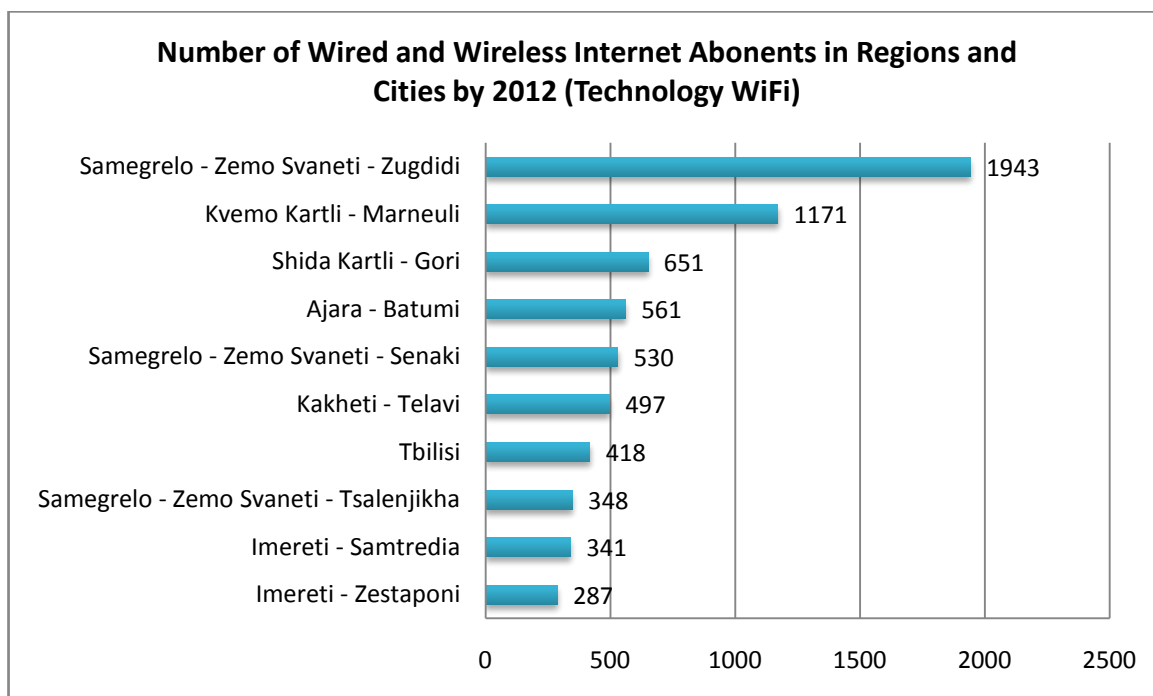
At the same time on April 12 IDFI (Institute for Development of Freedom of Information) appealed to the Georgian National Communication Commission to request public information. Along with other information, the institute requested the number of wired and wireless internet users in context of regions and cities as of 2012. Based on the answers received, we offer a graphic displaying data of 10 cities with the most internet users.

### Number of Wired Internet Users in Regions and Cities by 2012

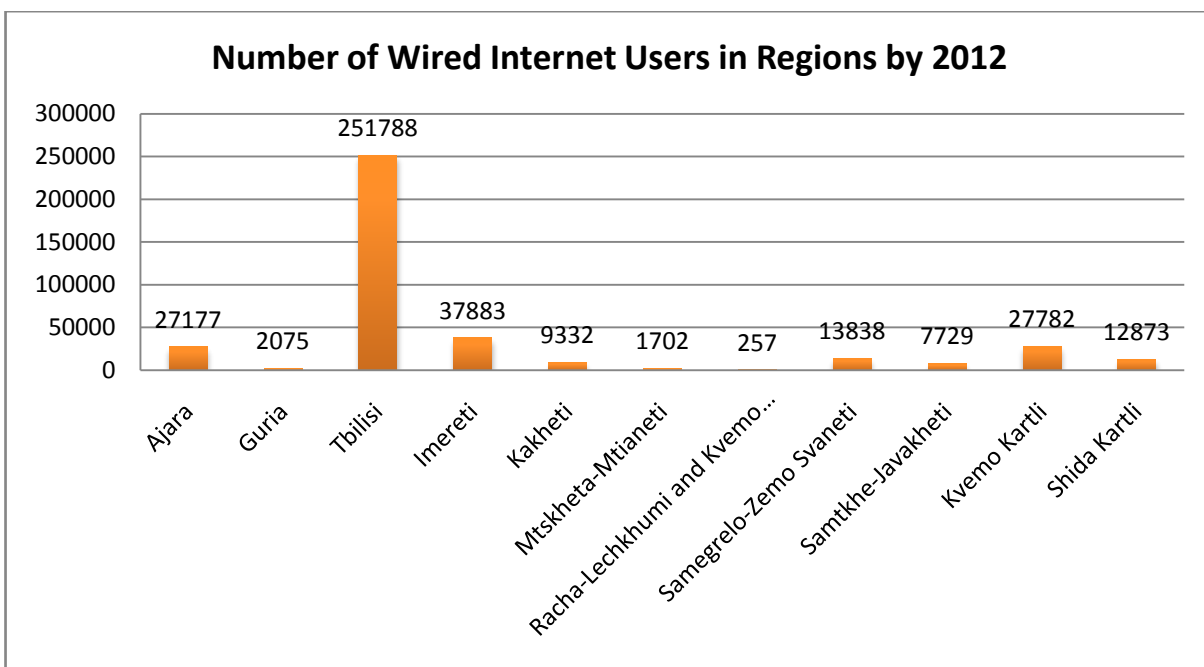


The number of wired internet users in Tbilisi is considerably higher compared to other cities, such as Kutaisi, Batumi, and Rustavi.

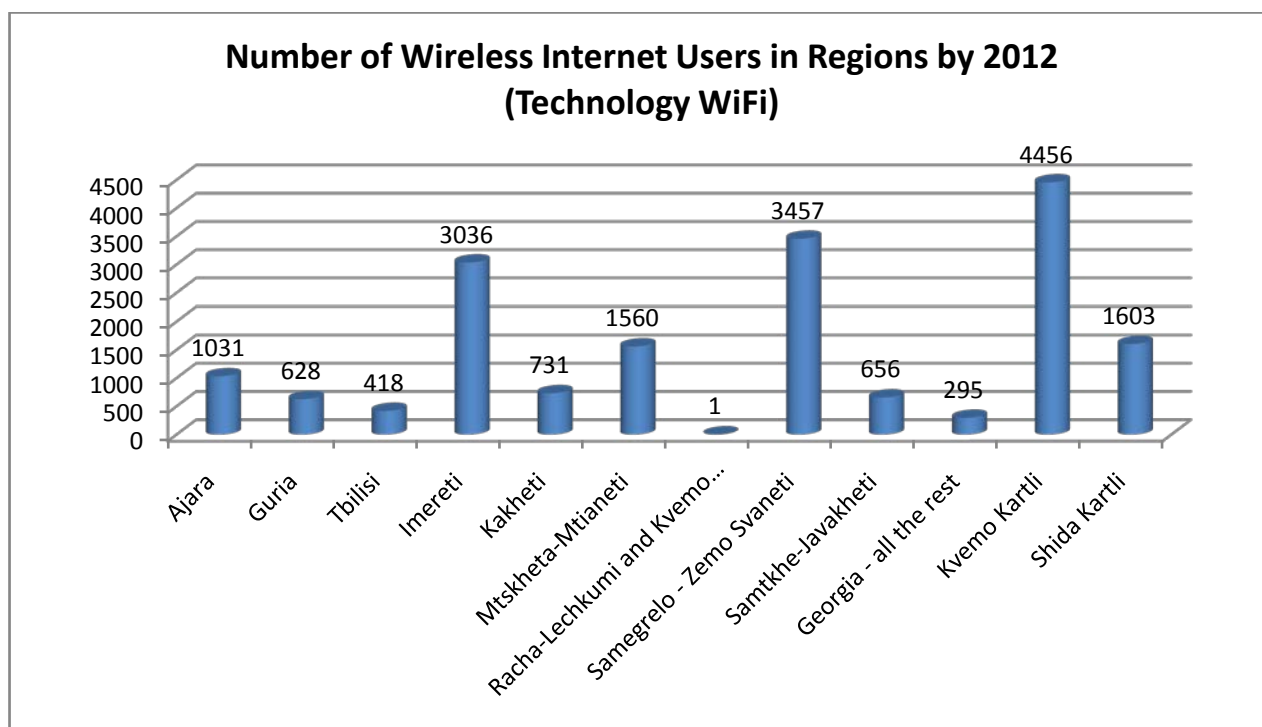
### Number of Wired and Wireless Internet Abonents in Regions and Cities by 2012 (Technology WiFi)



According to the obtained data, the following towns are the leaders of the number of wireless internet users: Zugdidi, Marneuli, followed by Gori, Batumi and Senaki.

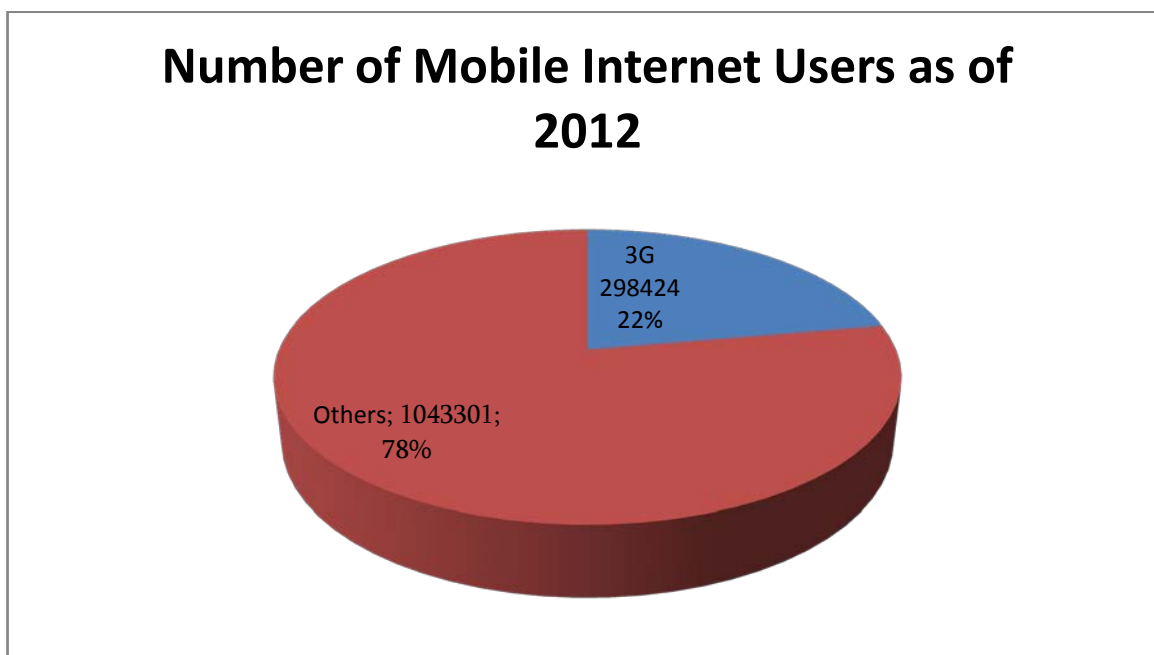


The result of the regions also deserve interest.



The total number of Georgian wired internet users is 392 436, while WiFi users are 17 872. The statistics of wired internet users is quite interesting in terms of technology. Obtained information displays that DSL is used by 211 440 users, while optic internet is used by 180,640 people. Georgian National Communication Commission also provided information about the number of wired internet users in context of operators with general authorization. Silknet is the leader with 199 736 users, followed by Caucasus Online – 121 842 users, and “AkhaliKselebi” (New Networks) – 30 601 users

As for information about mobile internet users, according to the obtained data, there are 298 424 users of 3G, others – 1,043,301. The number of 3G users is especially important as this figure displays the real index of mobile internet usage.

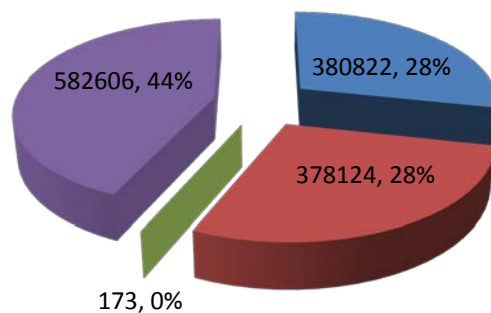


Number of mobile internet users according to technologies as of 2012

Received statistical data also display that Geocell has the largest number of users among mobile operators, totaling 582 606. It is followed by Magticom with 380 822 users, while Mobitel has 378 124 users.

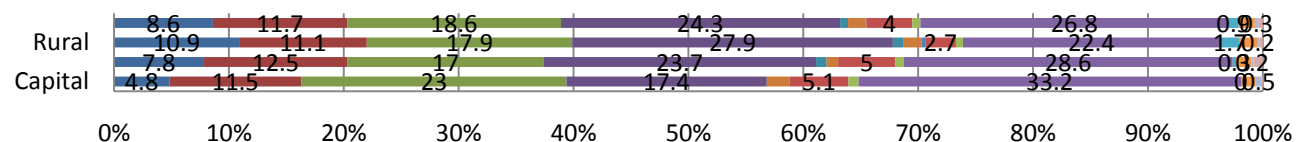
### Number of Mobile Internet Users according to Operators, by 2012

■ Magticom ■ Mobitell ■ Silknet ■ Geocell



In order to display the main tendencies and challenges of this sphere, it is important to specify the main reasons which cause the low number of internet users in Georgia. According to CRRC data, this result is caused by following factors: Less need of internet among society(26,8%), high price of computer equipment (24,3%), less interest (18,6%) and the lack of internet skills (11,7%). It is noteworthy that there's a significant gap in terms of computer accessibility between Tbilisi and the rural areas. In particular, computer access is unavailable for 17,4% of the Tbilisi population, while this number increases up to 27,9% in regions.

### What is the main reason why you do not use the Internet?



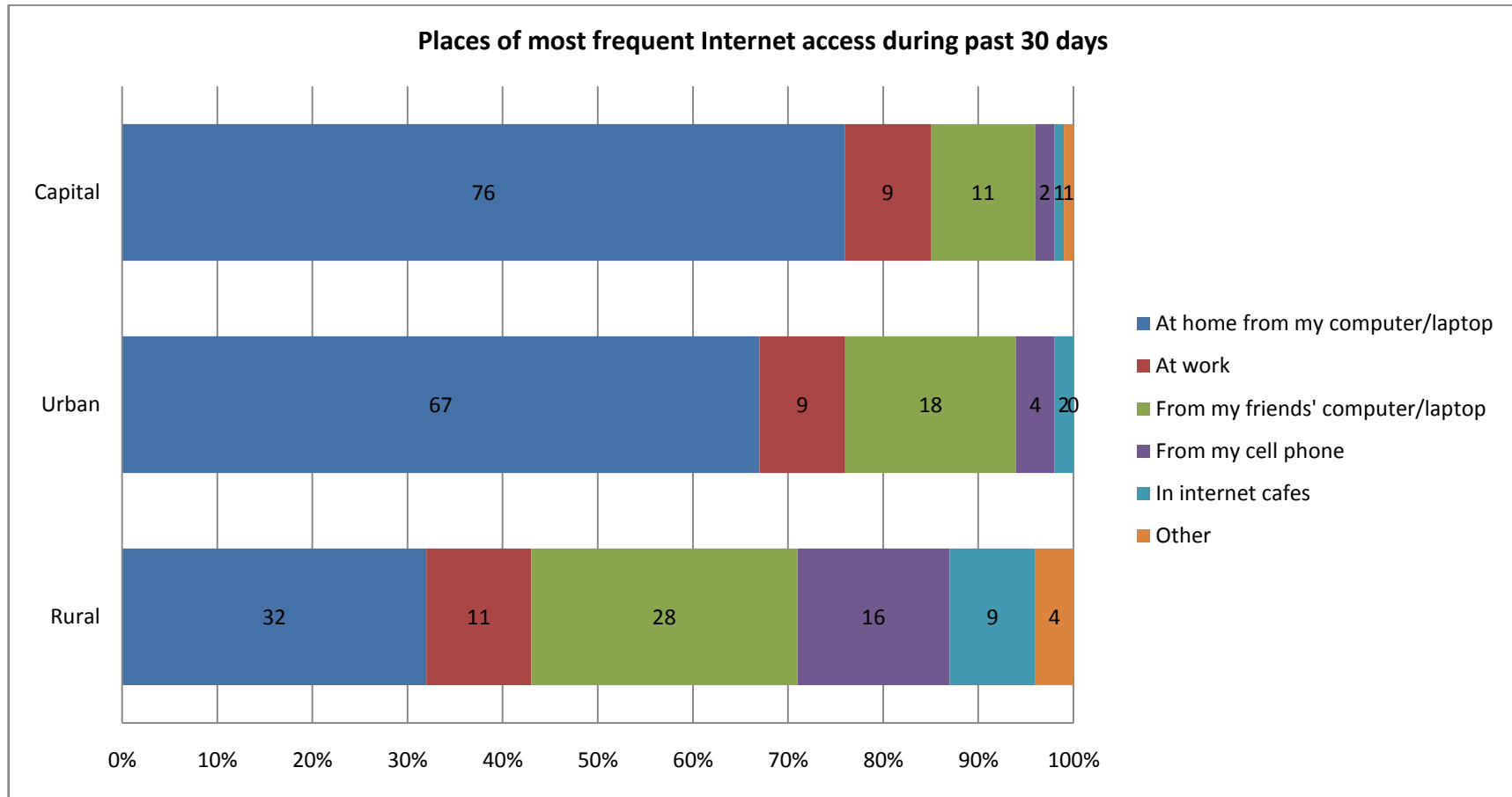
	Capital	Urban	Rural	Georgia
I don't have a phone line or modem or way to connect	4.8	7.8	10.9	8.6
I do not know how to use it	11.5	12.5	11.1	11.7
I am not interested in/I do not want to use the Internet	23	17	17.9	18.6
I do not have access to computer	17.4	23.7	27.9	24.3
I am concerned using the Internet would be a threat to my privacy	0	0.9	0.9	0.7
The Internet is too expensive	2	1	1.6	1.5
Connection is too slow in my settlement	0	0	0.3	0.1
I do not have time	5.1	5	2.7	4
The Internet is distasteful or immoral	0.9	0.7	0.6	0.7
I do not need Internet	33.2	28.6	22.4	26.8
There is no access to the Internet in my settlement	0	0.3	1.7	0.9
Other	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.4
DK	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.3
RA	0.1	0.8	0.3	0.4

Source: “The Caucasus Research Recourse Center”, “Caucasus Barometer 2012 – Georgia”.



The issue of the means of connecting to the internet is also interesting. According to CRRC data, the majority of population of Tbilisi and other cities mainly use their own computers to access the internet (76% and 67% respectively). In rural areas people largely use their own (32%) or their friend's (28%) means of accessing the internet. It is noticeable that unlike the population of the capital and other cities, the rural population actively uses following tools: mobile phone (16%), computer at work (11%), internet cafe (9%).

It seems that internet usage in Georgia faces several obstacles, including technical (for example broadband internet network) as well as social (financial problems, lack of internet skills) challenges. It is also noteworthy that the problem is much more complicated in regions. 67% of regional populations have never used internet.

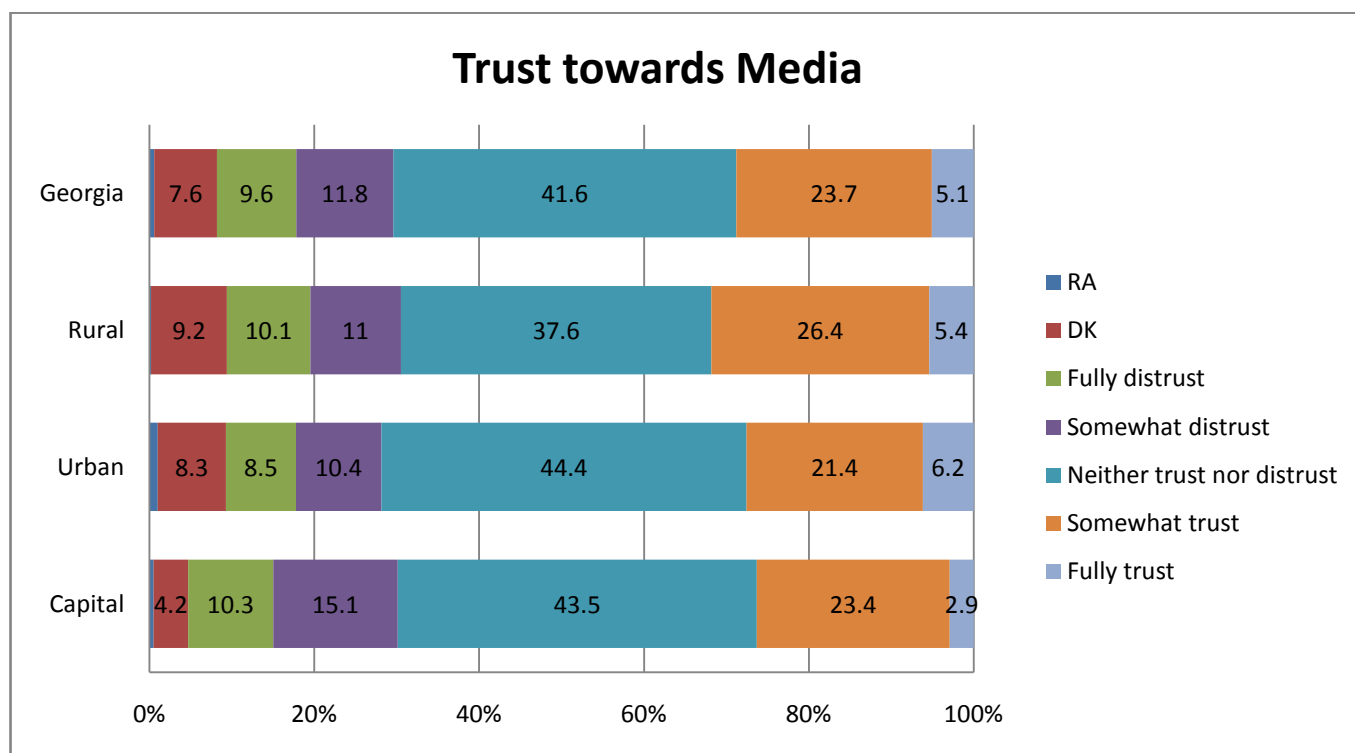


Source: “The Caucasus Research Recourse Center”, “Caucasus Barometer 2012 – Georgia”.

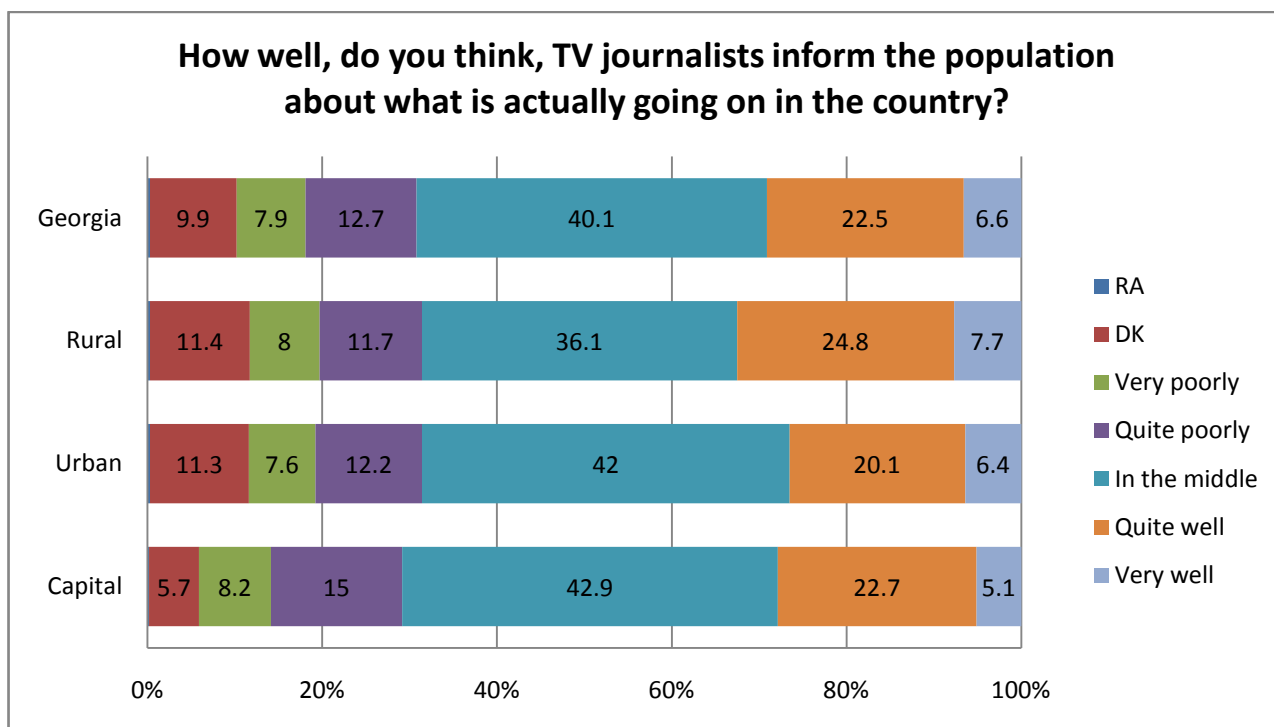
## THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNET ACCESSIBILITY IN GEORGIA

Providing access to the internet facilitates the dissemination of diverse and alternative information which reflects on the political choice of citizens. It is also important that modern technologies allow the development of political involvement mechanisms for citizens. For example, lately, active members of society often create e-petitions trying to reach decision-makers in government. Thus, among the traditional ways of communicating with the government (meetings, receptions), innovative tools (e-mails, online petitions, online chat) are becoming more and more utilized.

Mass usage of the internet is also important considering the low confidence towards the Georgian mass media. According to above mentioned surveys, the majority of the population (53,4%) distrust the media. There is very low confidence towards TV journalists – only 29,1% of the population is content with their work.



Source: “The Caucasus Research Recourse Center”, “Caucasus Barometer 2012 – Georgia”.



Source: “The Caucasus Research Recourse Center”, “Caucasus Barometer 2012 – Georgia”.

Considering the public distrust towards Georgian media outlets, it is necessary to broaden the access to modern technologies, especially in rural areas of Georgia. It is notable that e-resources are being actively developed in Georgia (web-pages, e-mail, Facebook accounts, various e-services, data bases and etc.). This factor creates an opportunity for social groups and individuals to share their problems with the government, and involving citizens in decision-making as well as the planning process without any bureaucratic procedures.

## INTERNET USAGE TENDENCIES

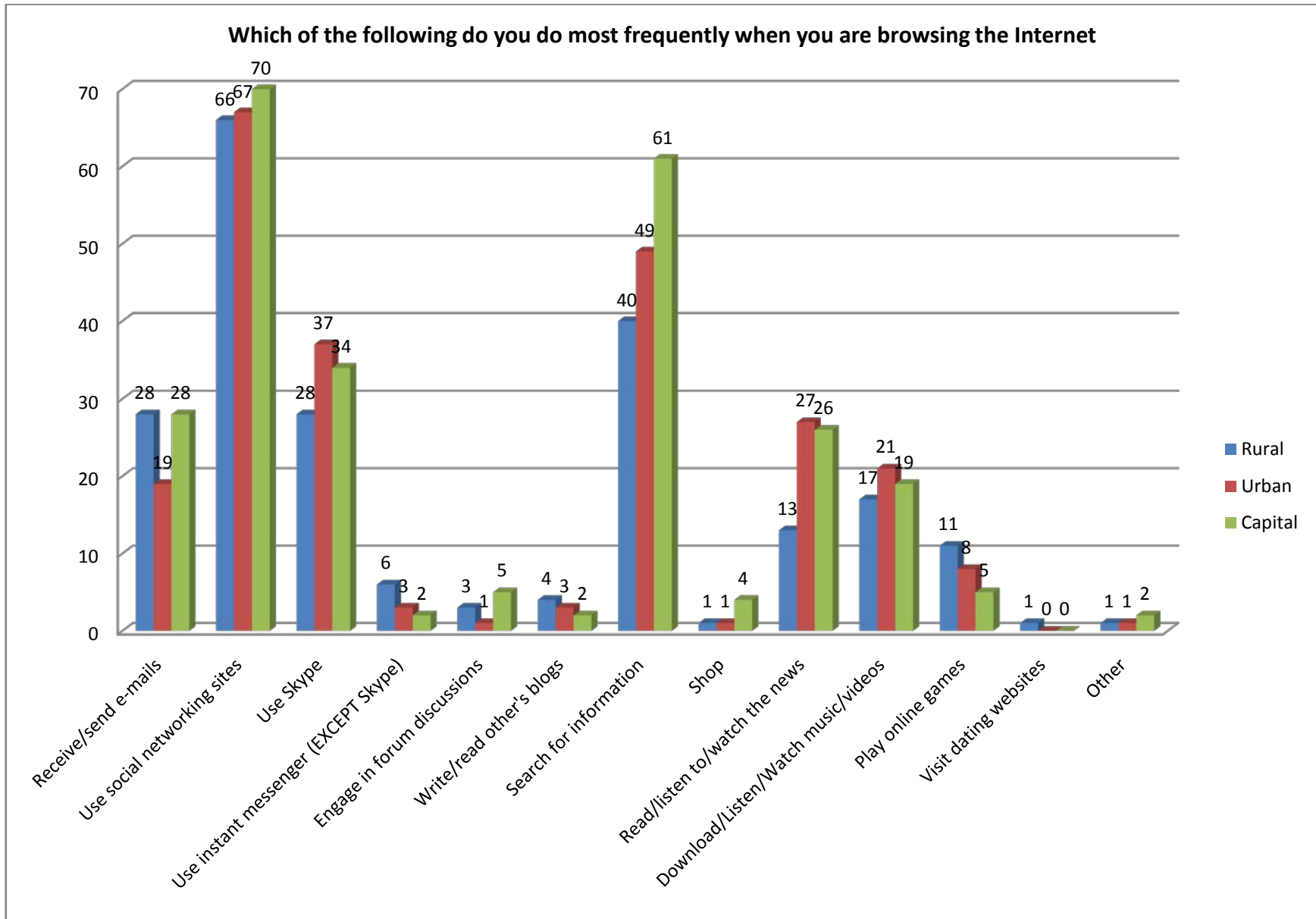
In order to ensure citizen activeness and participation through e-resources, it is necessary for citizens to express willingness. Citizens must consider constructive cooperation with the government and sharing their experience. Considering above mentioned, it is interesting how internet users utilize this resource. Graphic displays show that citizens use social networks, search engines for getting information and send/receive e-mails. However citizen activeness in terms of forums and blogs is very low. This identifies that internet users are mainly concentrated on getting information rather than interaction. Despite the abovementioned, surveys display that the population prefers to get information through internet rather than use it as means of entertainment.

The high number of social network users is important factor. It is notable that the most popular social network in Georgia is Facebook. According to Social Bakers, currently Facebook has 1 600 000 users in Georgia which is almost 22,89% of the whole population.<sup>1</sup> Of course, we should consider the factor of fake accounts, but other sources also confirm the tendency of growing number of Facebook users. In particular, according to the social media analytical web-page [www.quintly.com](http://www.quintly.com), compared to previous years, number of active Facebook users has increased by 45,75%.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Web-page of - <http://www.checkfacebook.com/>, last checked on 05.06.2013

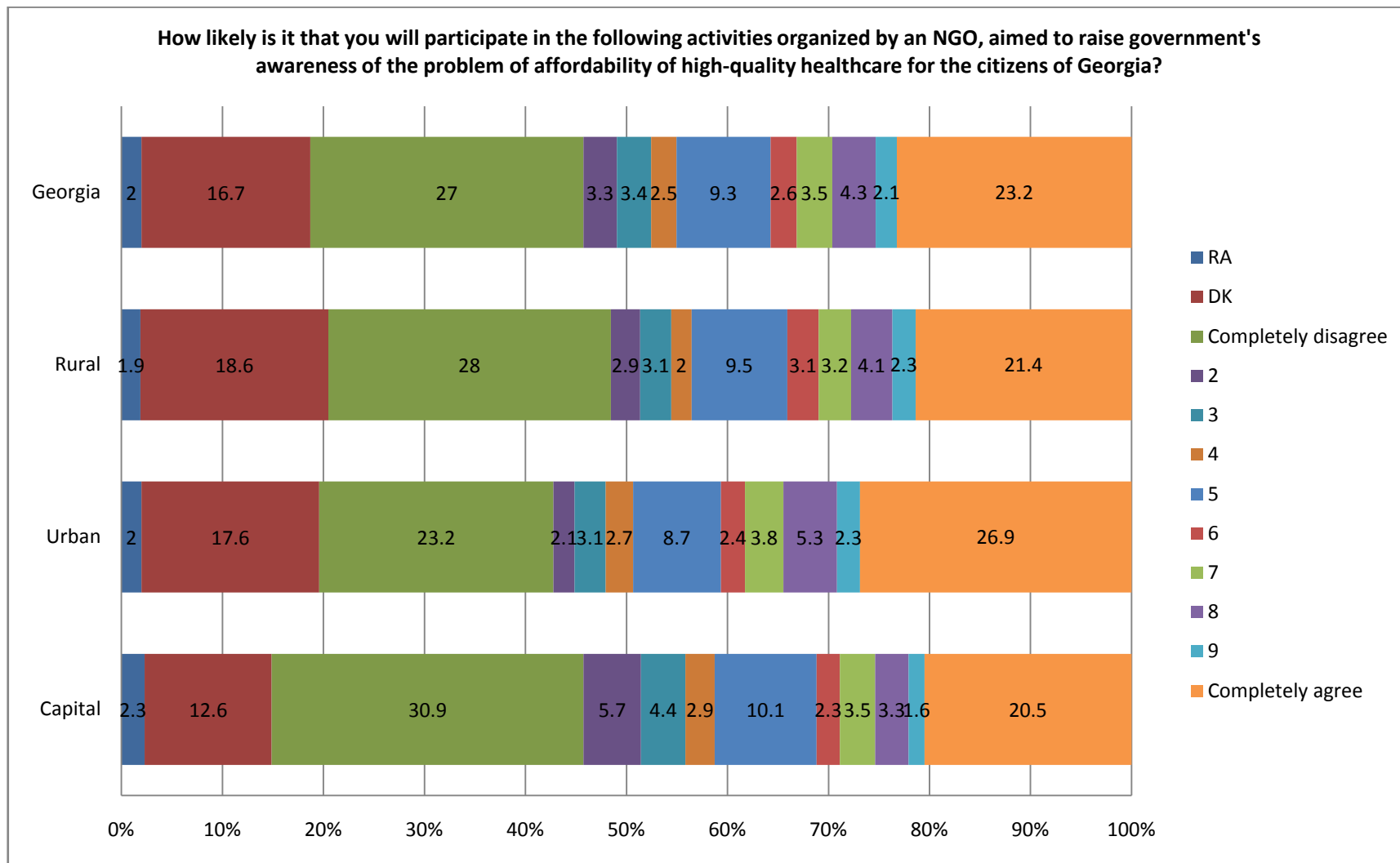
<sup>2</sup>Social media analytical web-page Quintly - <http://www.quintly.com/facebook-country-statistics/georgia/?period=1year>, last checked on 05.06.2013



Source: “The Caucasus Research Recourse Center”, “Caucasus Barometer 2012 – Georgia”.

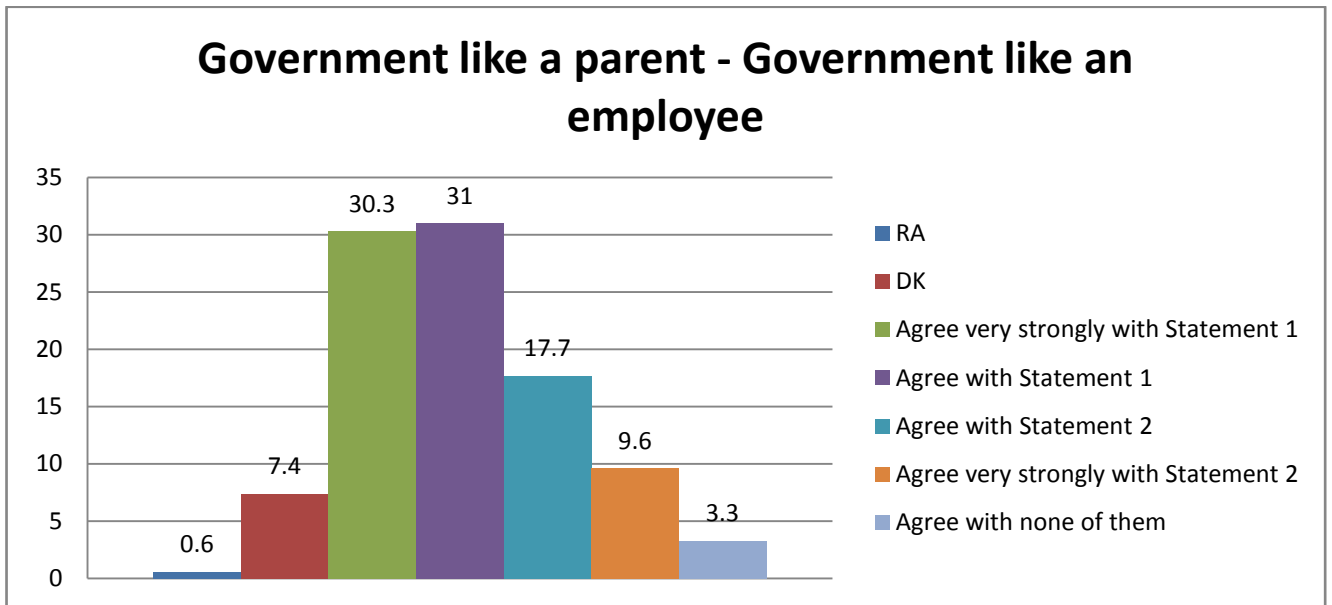
Another indicator of citizen participatory readiness is the result of the survey. The answers to the question “How likely is it that you will participate in the following activities organized by an NGO, aimed to raise government’s awareness of the problem of affordability of high-quality healthcare for the citizens of /country?” displayed that one third of the participants of survey are ready to sign the petition. However, broader segment of population (26,2%) answered that they were not likely to support this initiative. It is possible that these results were caused by emergence of NGO sector in this question. Unfortunately, the Georgian population has low confidence in the NGO sector of Georgia. According to CRRC survey, only 18% of the population trusts NGOs, while 23% expresses mistrust towards them. Despite considering this factor, it is clear that the part of the society expresses less enthusiasm for participating in civil initiatives.

The level of citizen activeness and readiness for getting involved in political processes may be connected to their attitude towards the government institutions. According to the 2012 survey the majority (61,3%) perceive the government as parent. For more than one fourth of the participants, executive government is associated with the employee (27,3%). This data indicates quite a negative tendency – only a small part of society thinks it’s worth controlling the government. Most of them are ready to accept government policy without criticism.



Source: “The Caucasus Research Recourse Center”, “Caucasus Barometer 2012 – Georgia”.





Source: "The Caucasus Research Recourse Center", "Caucasus Barometer 2012 – Georgia".

## TENDENCIES AND CONCLUSIONS

The online survey conducted by IDFI, in major aspects mostly coincided with the results of the bigger survey conducted throughout Georgia. By the combination of these results, IDFI came to the following conclusions:

Despite the growing number of internet users, the majority of the population has no access to internet. Especially serious problems are detected regionally;

Part of the Georgian population considers the internet as less of an important communication resource, while for others; there are main obstacles that prevent them from internet access: lack of computers, lack of computer skills and little interest. Network-connected problems are especially widespread in the regions.

Surveys have shown that the majority of the population use internet and social networks mainly for getting information; bilateral communication and expressing views is not a priority.

Citizen activity is very low in terms of petitions and initiating their ideas. However, the majority of persons that took part in the internet survey (the majority of respondents were socially active persons) expressed willingness for participating in decision making processes in case the necessary mechanisms become available.