



## LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT INDEX: Key Findings and Recommendations

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

The complete report can be found at:  
[www.lsgindex.org](http://www.lsgindex.org)

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### Authors:

Giorgi Toklikishvili  
Teona Turashvili

Koka Kighuradze  
Tamar Naskidashvili

Goga Tushurashvili  
Vakhtang Natsvlishvili

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## EVALUATION OF THE 2017 LOCAL SELF- GOVERNMENT INDEX WAS CONDUCTED BY:

Nino Khukhua	Local Democracy Agency Georgia (LDA)
Davit Salaridze	Local Democracy Agency Georgia (LDA)
Maka Tsertsvadze	Local Democracy Agency Georgia (LDA)
Marika Nanitashvili	Association DEA
Bakur Gogokhia	Association DEA
Giorgi Andghuladze	Union of Democratic Meskhs (UDM)
Jaba Natenadze	Union of Democratic Meskhs (UDM)
Levan Gegeshidze	Public Union Bridge of Friendship Kartlosi
Arina Tavakarishvili	Public Union Bridge of Friendship Kartlosi
Giorgi Abuladze	Green Caucasus
Zura Akhmeteli	Green Caucasus
Beburi Belashvili	Regional Development Center (RDC)
Giorgi Mosidze	Regional Development Center (RDC)
Natia Apkhazava	Civil Society Institute - Batumi (CSI)
Nino Chkhaidze	Civil Society Institute - Batumi (CSI)
Iago Pasandze	Saunje
Mari Shonia	Saunje
Maia Bidzinashvili	Community Organization Nukriani
Makvala Jokhadze	Community Organization Nukriani
Levan Khintibidze	Democratic Development Union of Georgia
Irakli Papava	Democratic Development Union of Georgia
Nana Saneblidze	Management Systems Development Center (MSDC)
Ana Gagua	Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)

## INTRODUCTION

Strengthening local self-government and decentralization in Georgia is one of the most important parts of public administration reform. The Public Administration Reform Roadmap 2020 contains a separate chapter on local self-government. According to the document, the goal of the reform is to improve the decentralization process and achieve better governance at the local level.<sup>1</sup>

The latest wave of reform took place in 2014 and involved the adoption of a new Local Self-Government Code. The code introduced direct election of mayors and governors,<sup>2</sup> clear separation of duties between the central and local authorities, as well as executive and representative organs on municipal level, creation of guarantees for the increase of financial independence of local authorities and establishing solid financial and legal grounds for continuous training of municipal officials.

Also important was the inclusion of a separate chapter on the mechanisms of self-governance, which introduced new mechanisms (general assembly of a settlement, council of civil advisors) and further refined existing ones (petition, participation in meetings of representative bodies, hearings of public official and municipal council member reports).

Despite the general legal framework, the mentioned forms of participation were introduced in municipalities incoherently. There are several reasons for this, including lack of technical-material capabilities, experience and political will of municipalities. Awareness, willingness and skills of the local population to engage in political processes and contribute to solving local problems are equally important. According to recent polls, only 7% of the population is aware of the activities of their municipality.<sup>3</sup> Also, the number of people who have information about newly introduced participation mechanisms is insignificant.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Administration of the Government of Georgia, Public Administration Reform Roadmap 2020, 2015, <http://bit.ly/2no21en>

<sup>2</sup> Note: The terms relevant for the monitoring period (as of July, 2017) are used in this report. As it is known, after the 2017 local elections the term Municipal Administration is not used. Since then, all local executive bodies are headed by Mayors.

<sup>3</sup> Caucasus Research Resource Center, Public Policy Research, 2015, <http://bit.ly/2kg07ej>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

In response to these challenges, the Local Self-Government Index was created with the joint efforts of the Center for Training and Consultancy (CTC), Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) and the Management Systems Development Center (MSDC). It aims to establish transparent and accountable self-governance in Georgia, increase public participation in self-governance and reduce corruption risks. The project was implemented with financial support of Open Society Georgia Foundation.

## METHODOLOGY

The Local Self-Government Index consists of 3 thematic blocks, which combine 100 evaluation criteria.

**Block 1. Proactive Disclosure of Public Information -**

includes 11 sub-blocks and 52 criteria.




**Block 2. Electronic Governance -** includes 4 sub-blocks and 29 criteria.

**Block 3. Citizen Participation and Accountability -**

includes 2 sub-blocks and 19 criteria.

Proactive disclosure of public information by municipalities (block 1) and e-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 were given the minimum evaluation for the relevant criteria.

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

-  Telephone communication with a municipal body.
-  Studying documents published through the Legislative Herald.
-  Use of other official (online) sources that contain relevant information.

The Local Self-Government Index evaluates executive as well as representative municipal bodies.

The evaluation of the transparency and accountability of municipal bodies in Georgia was carried out from May 15 to July 15, 2017. All Georgian municipalities, except for Azhara, Akhlagori, Eredvi, Tighvi and Kurta, were evaluated. The evaluation was carried out with the involvement of 21 representatives of 10 regional civil society organizations.

The evaluation was made using the online platform - [WWW.LSGINDEX.ORG](http://WWW.LSGINDEX.ORG).

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

## 2017 EVALUATION OF THE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF MUNICIPALITIES – KEY FINDINGS

The overall results of the 2017 evaluation of Georgian municipalities were low. On the scale of 0 to 100%, the average result of all municipalities was only 21% (19% for city halls / municipal administrations and 24% for municipal councils). This means that important steps need to be taken by Georgian municipalities in order to establish high standards in transparency and accountability.

The following key findings were identified as a result of the evaluation:

### 1. Proactive Disclosure of Public Information

- Georgian municipalities often fail to meet the minimum standards of proactive disclosure of public information that they themselves have determined.
- The highest result for proactive disclosure of information is only 47% (Ozurgeti Municipality). 60% of municipalities fail to reach even 20% in proactive disclosure.

- In most cases, information proactively published by municipalities on their websites is not organized thematically, making it difficult to navigate.
- Neither executive nor representative municipal bodies proactively publish information about their administrative expenses. This information can often only be found in budget execution reports, which does not satisfy the principle of proactive disclosure.
- The amount of information published about legal entities of public / private law owned or managed by municipalities is very low.
- No municipality provides citizens with detailed information about all existing municipal services proactively.
- Municipalities publish most information in the general category, such as contact information (59%), information about public officials (54%), organizational structure and functions (50%).

## 2. Electronic Governance

- Most local self-governing bodies do not use their websites to provide information to the population about the forms of participation made available by law.

The practice of using electronic forms of participation is limited. Apart from a few exceptions, municipal services are not available online.

- The quality of technical characteristics of municipal websites is below average (32%). Municipalities did relatively better with social network integration (63%), use of the official state agency domain ([www.\[municipality\].gov.ge](http://www.[municipality].gov.ge)) (60%) and development of mobile versions for their websites (55%). However, in most municipalities, public servants do not use e-mail addresses with ending with the official state domain.
- Local self-government bodies use social networks more actively than websites. Apart from Tsageri, Akhalkalaki and Tsalka municipalities, all local self-government bodies have their own official Facebook page. However, the quality of responses to citizen messages is relatively low (55%).

## 3. Citizen Participation and Accountability

- Absolute majority of municipalities do not include citizen participation in the budget planning process.
- Municipal rules of procedure and material-technical base do not provide

opportunities for efficient citizen participation in the meetings of Municipal Councils and their Commissions.

- In most cases, the Council of Civil Advisors of a Governor / Mayor is a formality. Although the creation of the council is mandatory according to Georgian law, in some municipalities they have not yet been created. In cases where such councils exist, for the most part, Governors / Mayors do not submit the legally required documents to them and neither does the council itself present initiatives. The councils also lack material-technical and information support.
- Municipality Governors / Mayors seldom call general assemblies voluntarily and discuss issues with them that are obligatory by law.
- Citizens have the opportunity to freely submit their petitions, in some municipalities even electronically. However, the issue of publicity of deliberations on these petitions still remains a problem.
- Municipalities have not adopted legal acts on holding public discussions or public hearings of reports. Practice in

this regard is also weak and is limited only to formal meetings that do not serve as substitutes for public meetings and hearings.

- Innovative and additional citizen participation practices are weak.
- Publishing public information in municipalities is an unorganized process, which negatively reflects on the timing and quality of published or proactively published information.
- Municipalities do not use all of the available means of communication to inform the population about the implemented programs and projects.

There are several important trends in terms of transparency and accountability of executive and representative bodies of Georgian municipalities.

## **EXECUTIVE BODIES –**

### **City Hall/Municipal Administration**

- In the past two years, of the 71 municipal administrations / city halls only 8 published (incomplete) information about the administrative expenses of the municipality. Only 5 of them published information about labor remuneration and fuel expenses.

- Information about annual reports, public procurements, audits and employees of legal entities were published in only a few cases.
- More than 40% of executive bodies do not publish any information on ongoing tenders on their website.
- More than 50% of executive bodies do not publish annual reports, strategic documents and contact details of persons responsible for issuing public information.
- Very few executive bodies use modern technologies to provide municipal services: from 71 municipalities, only 2 issue online permits, only 1 offers SMS alerts and 6 do online surveys.
- Absolute majority of executive bodies do not provide information to the population (in easy to understand language) about the forms of citizen participation in local self-governance.
- Only two municipalities (Marneuli and Gori) had included citizen participation programs in their budget.
- In the last year, more than 85% of municipalities have not held a single general assembly of a settlement; more than 60% have not held a session or

public meeting of the council of civil advisors.

- More than 50% of executive bodies do not take measures to increase public awareness.

## REPRESENTATIVE BODIES – Municipal Council

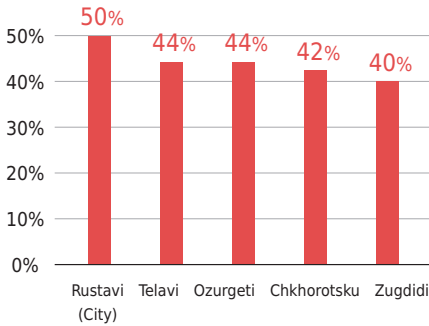
- Only 7 out of 71 municipal councils reported (incompletely) information about municipal administrative expenses during last two years. Out of these, only 3 published information on remuneration, fuel and working visit expenses.
- More than 70% of municipal councils do not inform citizens about their scheduled sessions in advance, and the majority of the remaining 30% do it inadequately.
- 70% of councils do not publish session protocols, and more than half of the remaining 30% do so only partially.
- The online petition system has not been introduced in more than 70% of councils.
- Only 6 municipal councils ensure live broadcasting of sessions with relative stability.



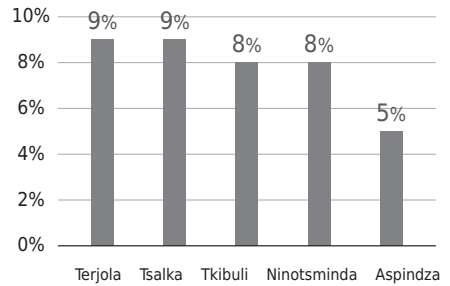
- In most municipalities only minimal and formal guarantees are made for citizen participation in both council and, in particular, commission meetings.
- More than 60% of municipalities do not practice the hearing of performance reports of municipal council members.

## RESULTS OF THE 2017 LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT INDEX

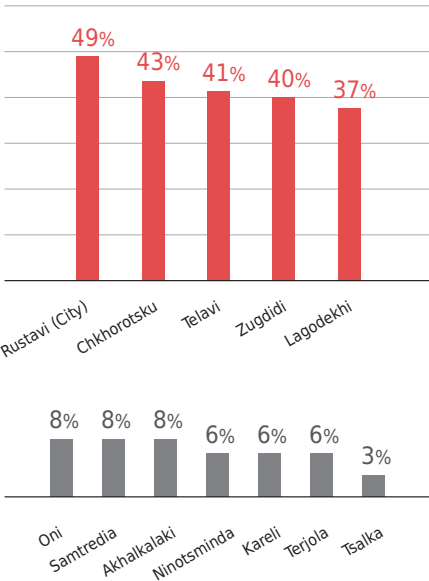
Municipalities with the highest results



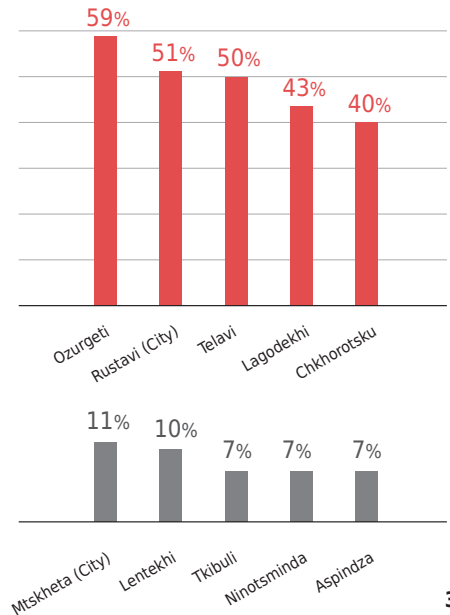
Municipalities with the lowest results



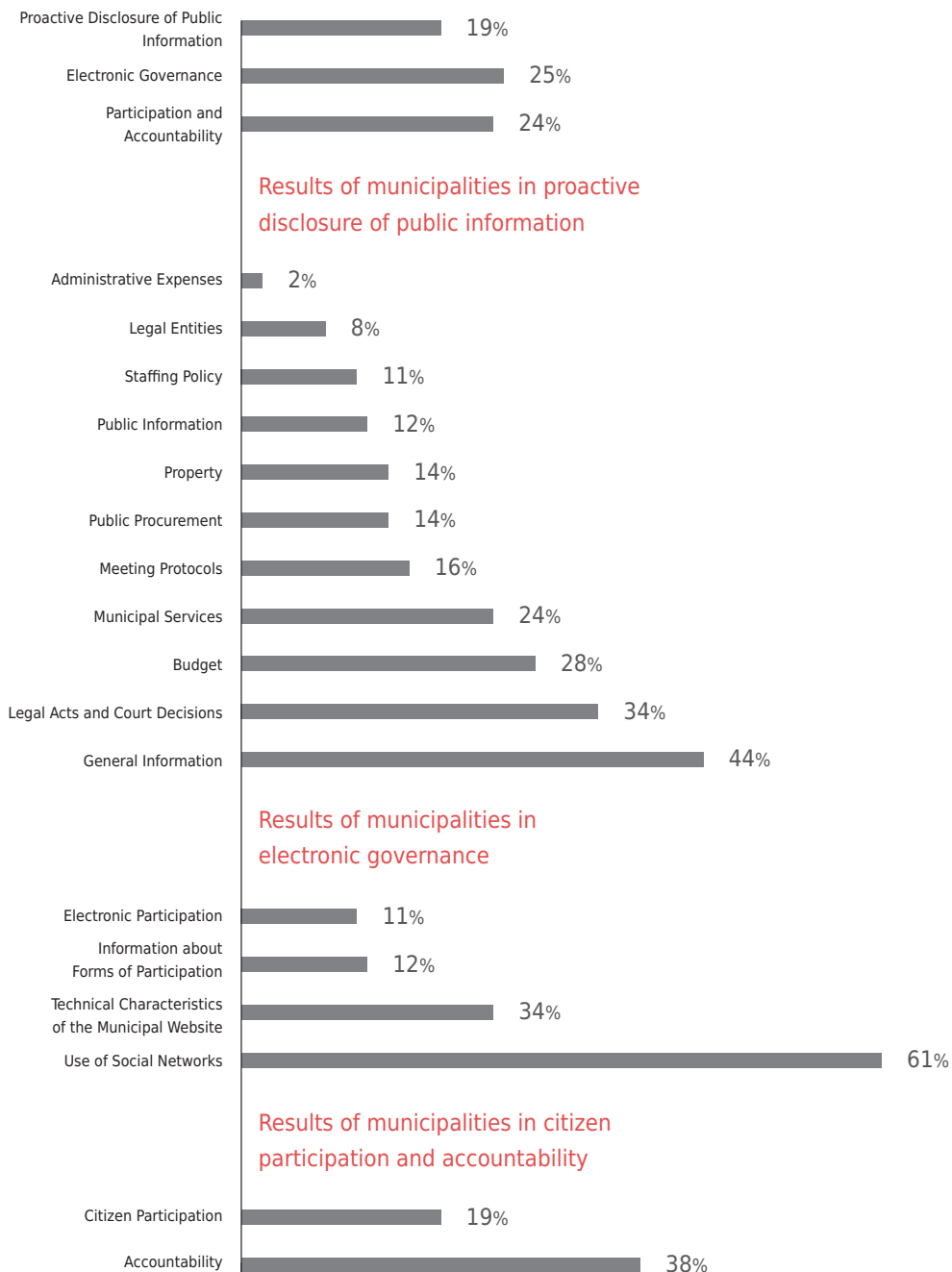
City Halls / Municipal Administrations with the highest and lowest result



Municipal Councils with the highest and lowest result



## Average results of municipalities by thematic category



# RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the problems and challenges identified as a result of this evaluation, important steps must be taken towards raising the standards of transparency citizen participation in political processes. We believe that the following recommendations will significantly improve openness and accountability at the local government level in Georgia.

## 1. Proactive Disclosure of Public Information

- Municipalities must update their list of information to be disclosed proactively based on the standards of the Local Self-Government Index and best practices of good governance and transparency of public institutions.
- Each municipality must create a public information section on their website, where thematic public information will be posted.
- Municipalities must use their website to publish information about municipal services, ongoing tenders, auctions and other issues of high public interest.

- Municipalities should not limit themselves to the official list of proactively published information, and should strive to disclose all public information that is of interest to the public. This will reduce the frequency of freedom of information requests and increase the overall level of transparency.

## 2. Electronic Governance

- In order to increase citizen participation in political processes, they must be provided timely information about the forms of participation. Therefore, municipalities must employ their websites, social networks and mobile applications as primary means for sharing information with the public in an effective and timely manner.
- In order to ensure information security, municipalities must start using the state domain (gov.ge) and public officials must start using the official email for work purposes.
- Municipalities must introduce online services and inform the public about them. This will reduce financial and time-related expenses and increase the level of citizen satisfaction.

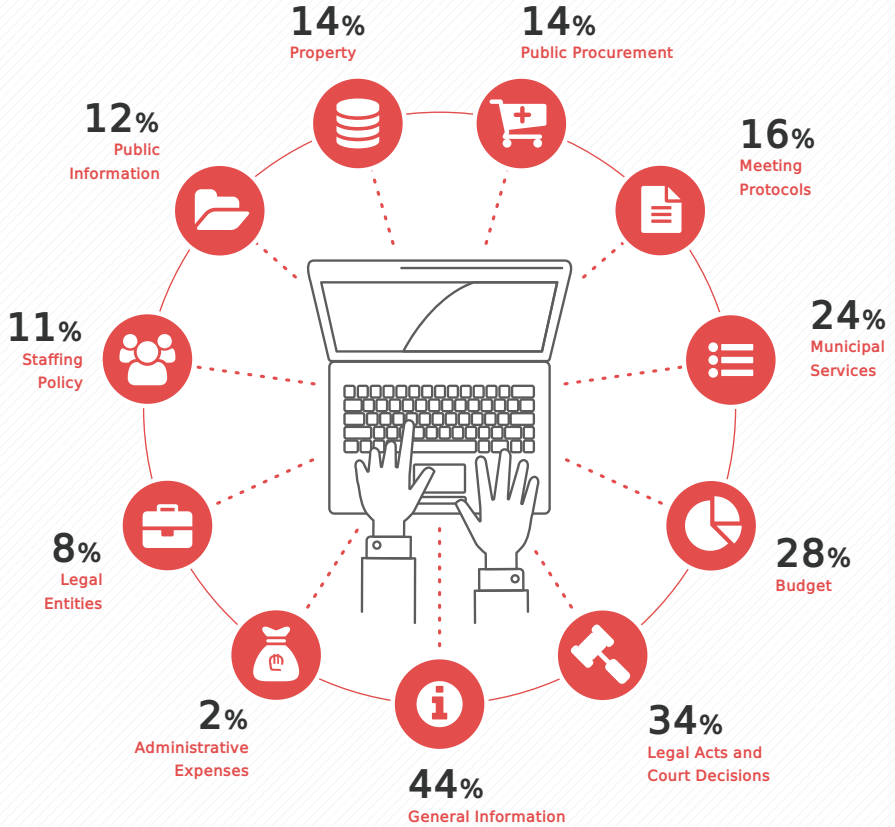
### 3. Citizen Participation and Accountability

- Municipalities must develop budgetary programs that support citizen participation in local self-governance.
- Municipal councils must better inform the public about their sessions (including commission sessions). This will increase the transparency of municipal councils and participation of public groups.
- Municipalities must take greater effort to strengthen the practice of using general assemblies of a settlement and civil advisor councils as legal mechanisms of citizen participation. These mechanisms must gradually become the main methods for involving citizens in the local decision-making process.
- The degree of accountability of elected mayors and municipal council members to voters must be increased. This means that public discussions and hearings of their reports must be held with the frequency that is set by law.
- Municipalities must introduce a quick and effective procedure for issuing public information. This will demonstrate their willingness to become more transparent and improve communication with citizens, media, business and civil society.
- Municipalities must use the news channels that are most frequently used by the local population to consistently inform them about existing challenges, alternatives, achievements, and planned and ongoing projects.

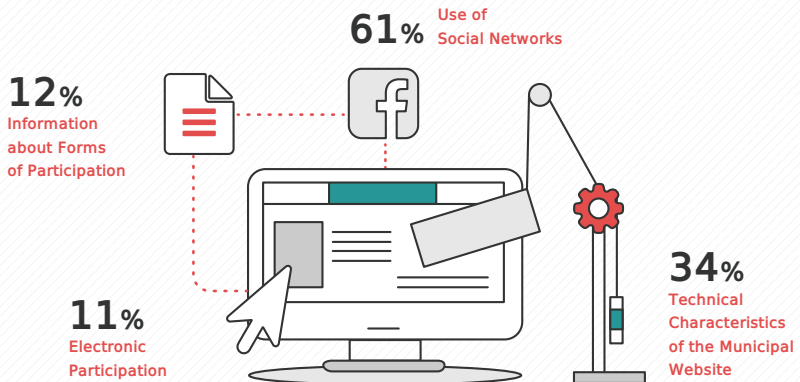
N	MUNICIPALITIES	AVERAGE RESULTS	CITY HALLS / MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATIONS	MUNICIPAL COUNCILS
1	Rustavi City Municipality	50%	49%	51%
2	Telavi Municipality	44%	41%	50%
3	Ozurgeti Municipality	44%	35%	59%
4	Chkhorotsku Municipality	42%	43%	40%
5	Zugdidi Municipality	40%	40%	39%
6	Lagodekhi Municipality	39%	37%	43%
7	Tbilisi City Municipality	34%	35%	34%
8	Sighnaghi Municipality	32%	30%	36%
9	Marneuli Municipality	30%	32%	27%
10	Kharagauli Municipality	30%	28%	32%
11	Gori City Municipality	29%	34%	22%
12	Chokhatauri Municipality	29%	26%	34%
13	Tetritskaro Municipality	28%	30%	25%
14	Zugdidi City Municipality	28%	24%	34%
15	Batumi City Municipality	27%	24%	32%
16	Gardabani Municipality	27%	27%	26%
17	Tsalenjikha Municipality	26%	27%	24%
18	Khobi Municipality	25%	22%	30%
19	Ozurgeti City Municipality	25%	19%	33%
20	Ambrolauri Municipality	24%	21%	29%
21	Gurjaani Municipality	24%	23%	24%
22	Telavi City Municipality	24%	17%	35%
23	Keda Municipality	24%	24%	24%
24	Baghdati Municipality	24%	21%	28%
25	Khashuri Municipality	23%	15%	38%
26	Bolnisi Municipality	23%	22%	26%
27	Akhaltsikhe Municipality	23%	20%	28%
28	Dmanisi Municipality	23%	24%	21%
29	Chiatura Municipality	23%	22%	25%
30	Kutaisi City Municipality	22%	23%	21%
31	Lanchkhuti Municipality	22%	18%	27%
32	Khelvachauri Municipality	21%	18%	26%
33	Gori Municipality	21%	18%	26%
34	Dusheti Municipality	21%	18%	25%
35	Sagarejo Municipality	21%	17%	26%
36	Kazbegi Municipality	20%	19%	21%

N	MUNICIPALITIES	AVERAGE RESULTS	CITY HALLS / MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATIONS	MUNICIPAL COUNCILS
37	Dedoplistskaro Municipality	19%	18%	22%
38	Akhmeta Municipality	19%	14%	27%
39	Poti City Municipality	19%	15%	25%
40	Kvareli Municipality	19%	19%	19%
41	Sachkhere Municipality	19%	20%	17%
42	Zestaponi Municipality	19%	18%	20%
43	Tskaltubo Municipality	18%	20%	15%
44	Mestia Municipality	18%	18%	17%
45	Kaspi Municipality	17%	15%	21%
46	Abasha Municipality	16%	16%	17%
47	Khoni Municipality	16%	14%	19%
48	Mtskheta Municipality	16%	13%	22%
49	Borjomi Municipality	16%	14%	20%
50	Tsageri Municipality	16%	15%	18%
51	Khulo Municipality	16%	13%	20%
52	Tianeti Municipality	15%	14%	17%
53	Akhalsikhe City Municipality	15%	11%	21%
54	Shuakhevi Municipality	15%	13%	17%
55	Senaki Municipality	13%	12%	15%
56	Vani Municipality	13%	13%	13%
57	Martvili Municipality	13%	11%	16%
58	Ambrolauri City Municipality	13%	12%	15%
59	Adigeni Municipality	11%	11%	13%
60	Kobuleti Municipality	11%	10%	12%
61	Mtskheta City Municipality	11%	10%	11%
62	Kareli Municipality	10%	6%	17%
63	Oni Municipality	10%	8%	13%
64	Samtredia Municipality	10%	8%	13%
65	Akhalkalaki Municipality	10%	8%	12%
66	Lentekhi Municipality	9%	9%	10%
67	Terjola Municipality	9%	6%	13%
68	Tsalka Municipality	9%	6%	14%
69	Tkibuli Municipality	8%	9%	7%
70	Ninotsminda Municipality	8%	9%	7%
71	Aspindza Municipality	5%	3%	7%

## PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION



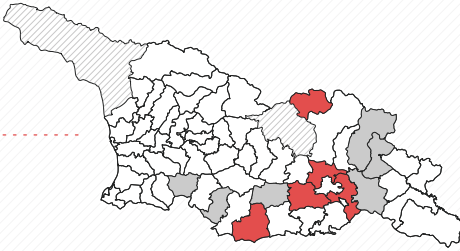
## ELECTRONIC GOVERNANCE



# PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

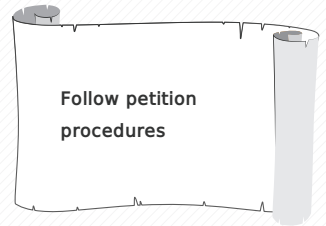
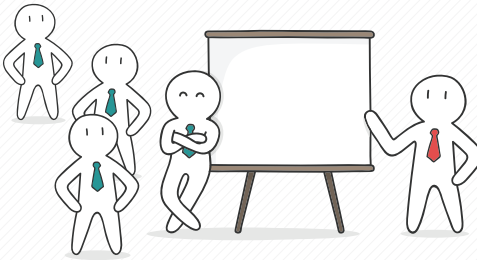
100%

92%



**11** municipal bodies ignored our freedom of information request

63%



Follow petition procedures

50%

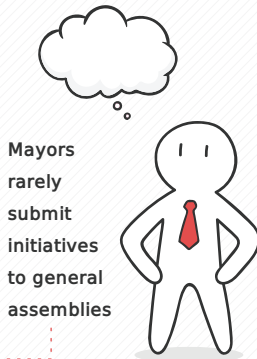
Participation of citizens in municipal council sessions is only a formality

36%

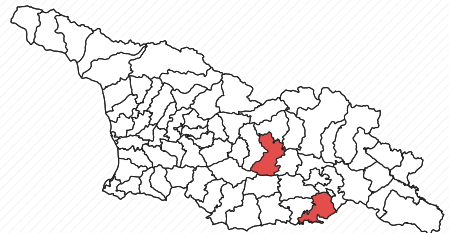


Support for the council of advisors is minimal

14%



Mayors rarely submit initiatives to general assemblies



Marneuli and Gori alone include citizen participation programs in their municipal budgets

5%

3%

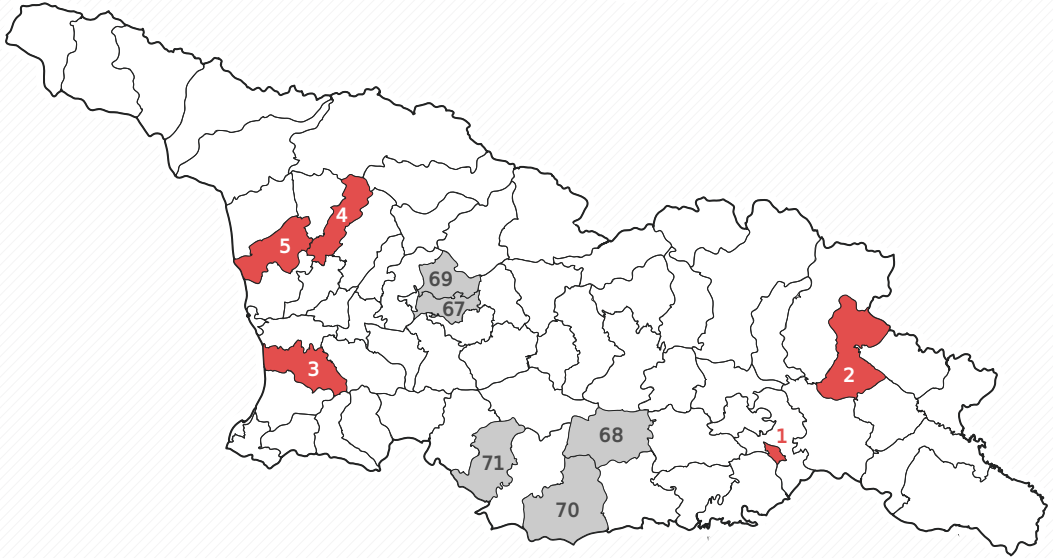




# LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT INDEX

RESULTS FOR 2017

1	50%	Rustavi	67	9%	Terjola
2	44%	Telavi	68	9%	Tsalka
3	44%	Ozurgeti	69	8%	Tkibuli
4	42%	Chkhorotsku	70	8%	Ninotsminda
5	40%	Zugdidi	71	5%	Aspindza



21%

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

AVERAGE SCORE

CITY HALL / MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION

24%

19%



