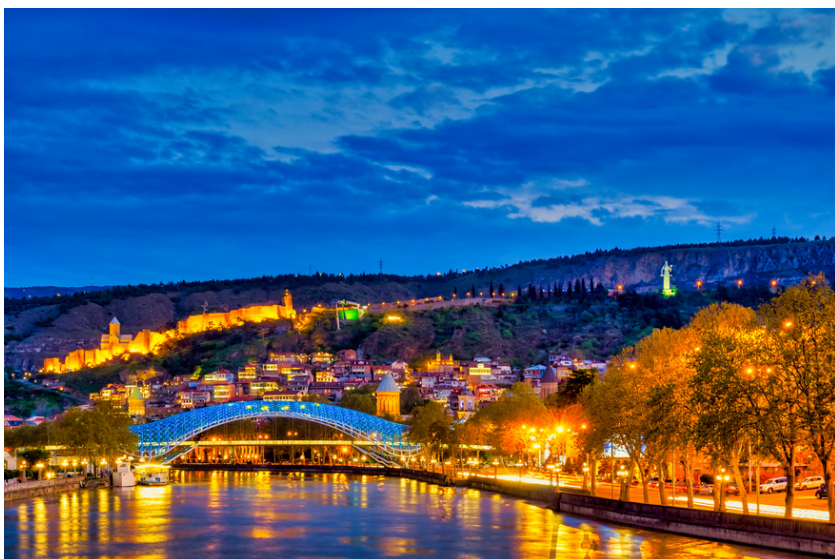


# Georgia's Youth: A Path to Electoral Engagement



*As Georgia stands at the crossroads of Eastern Europe and Western Asia, striving for stability and European integration, the youth's engagement through tailored initiatives and comprehensive voter education programs emerges as a pivotal force in shaping its political landscape.*



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Nestled at the crossroads of Eastern Europe and Western Asia, Georgia is set to elect a new parliament in October 2024. Although 20% of the country's territories are illegally occupied by Russia, Georgia pushes through this struggle to acquire political stability and economic progress as a relatively new democracy. So much so that, in December 2023, the European Union granted Georgia candidate status for membership, action which will influence the elections more than ever, especially among the younger Georgian generations, who are clearly the most pro-European in the country.

Young people in Georgia comprise 18-20% of voters, presenting smaller leverage at the election booth but nonetheless important. As Georgian youth show a high propensity to participate in voting, the country is actively promoting youth participation in democratic processes through the "Concept of Georgian Youth Policy for 2020-2030." [1] Adopted by the Parliament in 2020, this non-binding guideline directs youth initiatives that aim to ensure the participation of young people as full-fledged members of society, decent employment, health care, and equal access to information, resources and opportunities for development. [2] Although there are no

youth laws, the State Youth Agency and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth are the institutions leading the development of youth policies and action plans, aiming to realize these goals. Currently, Georgia has a comprehensive youth policy and action plan in place until 2026.

In Georgia, citizens aged 18 or above have active voting rights according to the Election Code and are automatically included in voters' lists without prior registration. In general, the numbers of youth participation in elections are acceptable; for example, a 2020 survey showed that 84% of youth were very likely to vote in the parliamentary elections. [3] Georgian law also allows youth to participate passively in elections and engage in political activities, including forming youth wings in parties, usually as informal groups. Eligibility to run starts at age 21 for City Council, and at age 25 for positions as Mayor and for Parliament, with no youth quotas. In Tbilisi's City Council, 22% of representatives are young, while in the 2020 Parliament, 3 out of 150 members were young. Presidential candidates must be over 40. [4]

Although all branches of the government work towards implementing the respective

policy documents and the concept, they do so in their capacities. The Election Administration of Georgia had adopted a multifaceted and thorough approach to civic and voter education, characterized by a range of strategic initiatives as outlined in their action plans. These initiatives were geared towards fostering deeper civic engagement, increasing voter participation, and enhancing overall awareness about the electoral process. [5]

A key element of this approach was the "Electoral Development School," initiated in 2015 in collaboration with the Central Election Commission (CEC) Training Center.

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This project, focusing specifically on young people, aimed to boost their involvement in elections and was successfully rolled out in various districts, becoming a recurring annual program.

[1] <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/4936402?publication=0>  
[2] <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC199989/>  
[3] [https://pjp.eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/58896112/Chapter+5\\_Georgia\\_2023.pdf/077b827-6c5a-e0b1-793c-12d07d168a03?i=168381938393](https://pjp.eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/58896112/Chapter+5_Georgia_2023.pdf/077b827-6c5a-e0b1-793c-12d07d168a03?i=168381938393)  
[4] <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/1557168?publication=79>  
[5] <https://cesko.ge/en/amomrcheveli/akhalgazrda-amomrcheveli>



## #CASTINGTOMORROW

Further supporting youth engagement, the "Election and Young Voter" program collaborated with the Ministry to provide educational courses for 11th and 12th graders, particularly in ethnically diverse and mountainous regions. This program was designed to draw youth into more active roles in public and political life. Complementing this, the "Courses for Election Administrators" project focused on developing professionally skilled personnel, with a strong emphasis on the intricacies of voting procedures.[6]

In addition to these programs, a "Legal Clinic" had been operating at the CEC Training Center since 2010, aimed at enhancing the knowledge and skills of law students in election law, civic awareness, and practical applications. Furthermore, the CEC Training Center offered a "Learning Course in Election Law at High Education Institutions" for students in law, political science, and social science faculties.

This course was part of a broader educational agenda to deepen understanding of electoral systems and processes. The CEC Training Center had also developed a "Distance Learning Program," accessible to all

interested parties, which sought to expand the general public's understanding of electoral processes.[7] CEC representatives, including chairpersons, often visit universities to meet with student self-government members and conduct workshops and lectures on the youth's role in the electoral process.[8]

In 2022, the CEC initiated the "Youth Camps" educational election project, offering a four-day learning course for individuals aged 21-29. The program covered various electoral topics, including democratic principles, electoral systems, procedures, history, administration models, inclusive environments, electronic means of voting, absenteeism, and more. Participation in the project was fully funded by the CEC.[9]

To sum up, increasing young people's engagement in elections will emerge as a key factor in the upcoming 2024 Parliament election. While there are no formal quotas for youth in political parties or parliament, their participation indicates a growing engagement in the political sphere, which may be a decisive factor in shaping Georgia's near future.



[6] <https://www.electionreforms.ge/res/docs/1679a763020030283.pdf>

[7] <https://cesko.ge/en/amomrchevlebi/akhalsazrda-amomrchevlebi>

[8] <https://cesko.ge/en/siakhlebi/res-relebi/singleview/1032256-tseskom-tbilisi-sakhelmtifo-universitetis-studenteb-umaspindzla>

[9] <https://electionreforms.ge/enp/list/show/348-tseskos-akhalsazruli-banakebi-msurveita-mjehabas-itkebs>