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PERCEPTIONS OF CIVIL SERVANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

The presented report “Perceptions of Civil Servants on Human Rights and Gender Equality” exhibits the findings of quantitative and qualitative research conducted in Georgia.

Civil servants play a crucial role in the policymaking processes at all levels by exercising powers granted under public law. These powers make them agents of change. **Civil servants’ knowledge, experience and sensitivity are essential for implementing policies and introducing services in accordance with international standards and founded on human rights-based approaches.** Therefore, it is crucial to study the working environment of civil servants on the one hand and, on the other hand, to examine their attitudes and perceptions on fundamental human rights, such as gender equality and women’s rights, rights of persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ rights, rights of ethnic and religious minorities.

In total, 103 public institutions participated in the study. The research, combining quantitative data from 1,162 interviews and opinion polls, as well as qualitative insights from 20 in-depths interviews with civil servants across Georgia.

The research shows that civil servants generally hold positive attitudes towards human rights and gender equality, both in and outside the workplace.

Overall, respondents reported that the working conditions in the civil service are based on the principle of equality, which is also reinforced by the regulatory framework. **However, a more in-depth analysis revealed gaps beyond formal equality. There are significant differences in work experiences of men and women civil servants.** Specifically, men civil servants report higher levels of satisfaction in various work-related aspects, including salary, flexible working hours, working conditions, physical working environment, and career advancement opportunities.

Overall, civil servants express the highest level of dissatisfaction with their salaries and inflexible work schedules. Overtime work, compensated irregularly, is often viewed as a sign of diligence or a good tone rather than a sign of poor time management. However, agencies differ in their practices regarding this matter. **Informal policies encouraging overtime work put women at a disadvantage compared to men because of their domestic and caring responsibilities.** The latter [unpaid care work] is one of the contributing factors to the gender pay gap.

The study shows that both men and women in civil service receive family support for career advancement, but the perception of “support” differs by gender. **Women define “support” as the distribution of household duties with other family members, while men perceive “support” as the elimination of family responsibilities at once.** Reflecting this gendered difference in attitudes towards household duties, the civil service offers more flexibility at work to women. Although this is a positive practice, men employees do not receive the same flexibility, which could have encouraged them to also take on family responsibilities. An equal number of respondents believe that the work of women and men in civil service is equally visible. However, relatively fewer believe that they have equal influence and power.

Women civil servants tend to participate in knowledge building activities more frequently and show greater interest in improving their skills, despite having family responsibilities.

Additionally, compared to men, women civil servants tend to be more sensitive to human rights and the needs of vulnerable groups. Research indicates that women have a better understanding of ethnic minorities, the LGBTQI+ community, women, and persons with disabilities as well as challenges related to the human rights situation.

Overall, the study reveals that civil servants are mostly aware of human rights. Though the level of awareness varies depending on the issue and the levels of the public institution. For instance, the survey found that a small number of respondents from national level agencies rely on the media as their primary source of information on gender equality. They have not received any training on this topic at their workplace, nor have they sought information on their own. Therefore, respondents are unaware of the relevance of the information they possess, and they do not rate their gender awareness highly.

Differential practices for accessing knowledge, information and means of capacity building lead to professional asymmetry within the civil service. The research shows that despite several initiatives aimed at increasing civil servants' sensitivity to human rights, negative prejudices against various groups, including ethnic and religious minorities, continue to persist. Regarding gender equality, although fewer civil servants justify violence against women and more people support women's participation in public life, there is still a need to overcome gender role stereotypes. A large proportion of civil servants believe that it is unacceptable to display aggression and violence towards LGBTQI+ people, opinions are divided about the freedom of expression. Overall, women and young people tend to be more sensitive towards LGBTQI+ rights than men.

Below are the key quantitative findings of the study:

- 57.9% of men civil servants and 44.2% of women civil servants consider that gender equality has mostly been achieved in Georgia.
- 30.4% of men civil servants and 15.9% of women civil servants believe that men are better political leaders than women.
- 66% of women civil servants and 43.1% of men civil servants believe that women face more barriers to career advancement than men.
- 36.1% of men and 83.1% of women believe that increasing women's representation in politics would have a positive impact on the country.
- Respondents consider state institutions (78.2%), international organizations (73.4%), and the Public Defender (71.4%) as the most reliable sources of information on human rights. A smaller proportion of respondents trust social media (41.9%), politicians (39.1%), and television (38.4%).
- According to the respondents, in Georgia, the most frequently violated rights are the right to equality (40%), the right to live in a healthy environment (32%), the right to life (31%), inviolability of private and family life (25%), and inviolability of honour and dignity (25%).
- The survey respondents identified the LGBTQI+ community (44.6%), individuals employed in hazardous occupations (44.4%), and single mothers (32.2%) as the most vulnerable groups.

- The respondents believe that increased participation of persons with disabilities in public life can increase awareness and break stereotypes towards the community (82.8%).
- Two fifths of the respondents (41.4%) agree with the opinion that “discrimination against persons with disabilities is a widespread problem in Georgia.”
- 44% of respondents believe that ethnic minorities do not face any issues regarding civil service employment, while 24% believe that challenges do exist.
- Those who believe that ethnic minorities face barriers in civil service employment see the insufficient level of knowledge of the state language as the main challenge, which in turn is linked to other problems such as career advancement opportunities, employer’s attitudes, access to education and capacity building opportunities.
- 33% of women and 27% of men agree with the statement that the “LGBTQI+ community is one of the most discriminated groups and its members often face discrimination, physical and psychological violence.”
- 20.9% of respondents reckon that the state does not adequately respond to violence and discrimination against the LGBTQI+ community. Another 20.5% evaluate the state response as more or less appropriate. Further 38% of respondents believe that the state’s response is appropriate (including 45.7% of men and 34% of women civil servants).
- 50% of women civil servants and 36% of men civil servants agree with the opinion that “abortion is a woman’s right.”
- 56% of respondents believe that comprehensive sexuality education should be included in the school curriculum. Furthermore, 86.9% of respondents living in Tbilisi share this opinion.



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