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Social Exclusion in Georgia and Azerbaijan

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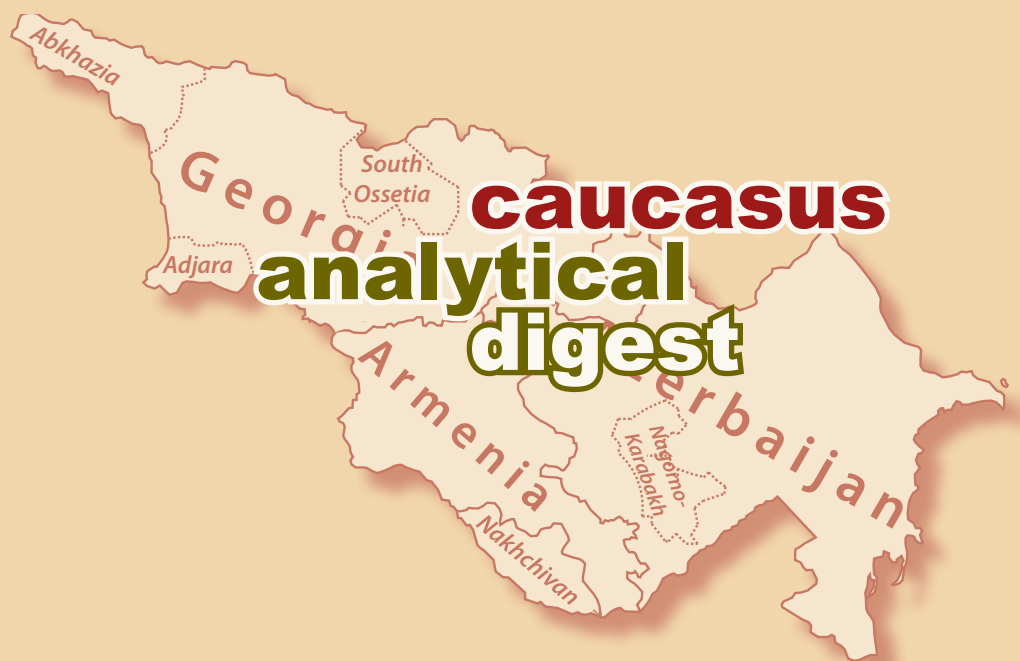
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SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN GEORGIA AND AZERBAIJAN

Special Editor: Robia Charles

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Social Exclusion in Georgia: Perceived Poverty, Participation and Psycho-Social Wellbeing

By Natia Mestvirishvili, Tbilisi

Abstract

This article examines the extent of perceived poverty in Georgia and shows how it relates to participation in a wide range of social activities, as well as individuals' physical and psycho-social health. It uses quantitative data from an annual nationwide survey conducted by Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) in 2011 to explore: 1. the general situation in terms of people's economic well-being in Georgia based on subjective and objective indicators, 2. the relationship between people's perceived economic situation and their participation in socio-cultural activities, as well as political perceptions and 3. the relationship between perceived poverty and individuals' physical and psycho-social health. The data show that the subjective feeling of poverty in Georgia is negatively associated with an active and healthy lifestyle and psycho-social well-being.

Introduction

A socially inclusive society is usually defined as a society in which all members feel valued, their basic needs are met and their differences are respected (Cappo, 2002). The notion of social exclusion is closely linked to the concept of participation; a socially inclusive society provides its members with equal opportunities for participating in ongoing economic, political and social activities. Poverty is often understood as a primary reason of social exclusion, yet two issues need to be mentioned here. First, it is important to acknowledge that poverty can be not only the cause of social exclusion, but may also be its result. People who live in poverty are often at risk of social exclusion. On the other hand, people who are socially excluded from society based on their ethnicity, education, religion, sexual orientation or other factors are at a greater risk of poverty. Second, the measurement of poverty is oftentimes based on objective indicators which do not accurately reflect a subjective feeling of poverty or perceived poverty by individuals. Being poor does not always mean feeling poor and vice versa.

This article examines social exclusion in Georgia with a particular focus on perceived poverty and its relationship with social participation and psycho-social well-being in three sections. The first section gives an overview of the general situation in Georgia in terms of poverty. The second section is focused on social activities and how they are related to individuals' perceived poverty and the third section looks at the relationship between perceived poverty and physical and psycho-social health. The article employs data from the 2011 Caucasus Barometer (CB) survey conducted by Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) in Georgia. The CB is based on a representative nationwide sample excluding territories affected by military conflicts and uses multistage cluster sampling with preliminary stratification on nine geographically defined units. The num-

ber of primary sampling units in each stratum is proportional to the population of these strata. In 2011 the number of individual interviews in Georgia was 2,287.

Poverty in Georgia

Since independence in 1991, the transition to a market economy in Georgia has been painful and dramatic. Even though economic growth in Georgia has been impressive during the last five years, it has not had the desired effect on employment and poverty thus far.

According to CB data, 27 percent of households in Georgia do not have enough money for food. 38 percent of households report having enough money for food but not for clothes, and 29 percent said they had enough money for food and clothes but not for expensive durables (e.g., a washing machine or refrigerator). Only 5 percent of the households in Georgia can afford to buy expensive durables and 1 percent has enough money for everything.

CB also asks Georgians how often they did not have enough money to buy food for themselves or their families during the last year. 2 percent of Georgians say this has happened every day, 4 percent—every week and 18 percent—every month. 41 percent of Georgians say this happens less often and 35 percent have not experienced this during the last year.

Speaking in terms of more objective measures of poverty, 11 percent of Georgian households report their monthly monetary income in 2011 to be less than 50 USD. Over half of households in Georgia (53 percent) say their monthly monetary income is between 51 and 100 USD, 31 percent—101–400 USD and only for 4 percent of Georgian households the income is more than 400 USD. However, it should be mentioned that this is a very sensitive and personal question (9 percent refused to answer) and these numbers may not accurately reflect the reality. This picture is not much dif-

ferent from what we get using the indicators discussed above: 24 percent of Georgians find themselves in a situation when they do not have enough money to buy food for themselves and their families at least once a month and over half of Georgian households cannot afford to buy food and clothes.

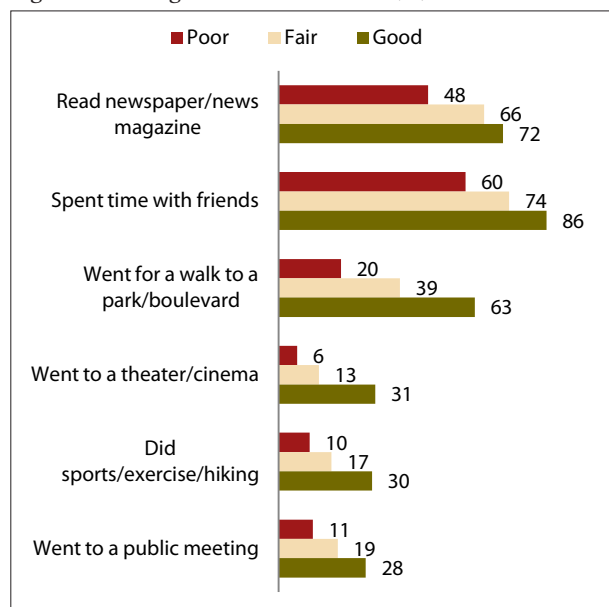
The economic variable considered in this study is a household's perceived economic situation. The CB asks Georgians, "Relative to most of the households around you, would you describe the current economic condition of your household as...?" Respondents can choose between five options: very good, good, fair, poor and very poor. 24 percent of Georgians rate their households' economic condition relative to most households in Georgia as poor or very poor, 68 percent say it is fair and only 8 percent rate it as good or very good. This question is distinct from others as it measures perceived relative poverty based on social comparison. Thus, it refers to the subjective dimensions of poverty which cannot be captured by objective indicators. In other words, with the same objective indicators (e.g., income) individuals may feel different about their economic state. Since this question asks about the relative perceived economic condition of the household compared to most households in Georgia, the answers reflect this subjective feeling of poverty better than questions that ask for a household's monetary income or other objective indicators (which also include a high risk of inaccuracy). Moreover, since the question measures relative poverty the answers are meaningful even without knowing the general economic context in the country. Perceived poverty may reflect objective poverty to a certain degree but they are not necessarily the same.

Inability to access basic necessities (e.g., food and clothes) is only one of many effects poverty has on individuals. Other consequences may include limited participation in political, economic and social activities as well as worsened health and psycho-social well-being.

Perceived Poverty and Participation

Perceived poverty is negatively associated with a wide range of social and cultural activities such as spending time with friends, going for a walk, visiting a cinema or theater, participating in sports or attending a public meeting. CRRC data show that Georgians, who perceive themselves as poor compared to most other households in Georgia, are less likely to spend time with friends, participate in different social and cultural events or follow a healthy life style (sports, exercise, hiking, etc.) than those who describe their economic condition as fair or good (Figure 1). However, it is important to consider the general picture in Georgia in terms of these activities while interpreting these results. Even though a majority

Figure 1: During the Past 6 Months... (%)



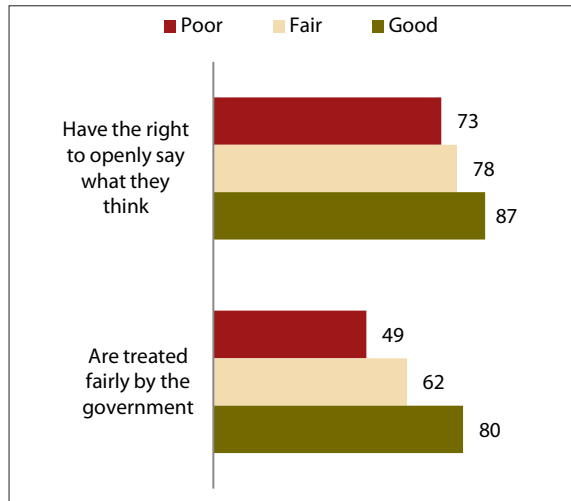
Source: CRRC

of Georgians spend time with their friends, they are not involved in cultural, public and sports events very much. Thus, CB data show that people, who perceive their economic condition as good, are forerunners in adopting a healthy life style and are much more involved in social and cultural activities than their co-nationals who perceive themselves as poor. In the case of going to a theater or cinema, the low level of activism among Georgians who perceive themselves to be poor can be attributed to limited material resources. Yet many other activities, such as going for a walk, visiting with friends or exercising, require less money. Moreover, exclusion from these activities may have important consequences on an individual's physical and psycho-social health which will be examined in the next section.

CB data show that people who perceive themselves as poor are less likely to read newspapers and/or news magazines. Only 48 percent of those who feel themselves poor compared to most households in Georgia read newspapers or news magazine. This share increases to 66 percent for Georgians who describe their household's economic situation as fair and to 72 percent for those who think their households are doing good in terms of economic condition (Figure 1).

The CB also asked Georgians whether they agree or not with the statements that, "Today in Georgia people like myself have the right to openly say what they think" and "Are treated fairly by the government". The data show that people who perceive themselves as poor are more likely to disagree with both statements (Figure 2). In the first case regarding the freedom of expres-

Figure 2: People Like Myself in Georgia... (%)



Source: CRRC

sion, the difference between the three groups is not very big—overall, most people in Georgia agree that they can openly say what they think, but those who consider themselves as economically strong compared to others are slightly more likely agree.

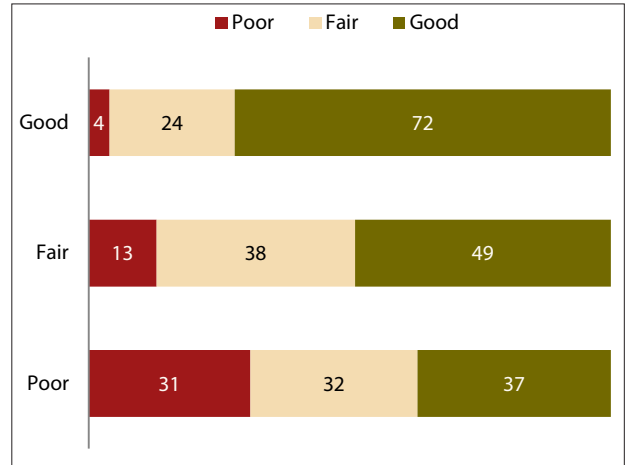
On the other hand, there is a larger difference between these three groups in terms of how they feel they are treated by the government. Nearly half of Georgians (49 percent) who feel they are in poverty agree with the statement that people like themselves are treated fairly by the government, while this share significantly increases (to 62 percent and 80 percent, respectively) among those Georgians who perceive their economic state as fair or good. These results indicate that even though a majority of people in Georgia think that they can openly say what they think (irrespective of their level of perceived poverty), many Georgians who do not perceive themselves as poor view the government as more just.

Perceived Poverty and Psycho-Social Well-being

The CB data indicate that perceived poverty is negatively associated with physical health and psycho-social well-being in Georgia. One third of Georgians with a subjective feeling of poverty rate their health as poor. This share decreases to 13 percent and 4 percent in Georgians with fair and good economic condition (Figure 3).

Perceived poverty is negatively associated not only with physical health, but also individuals' psycho-social state. Unsurprisingly, Georgians who consider themselves as poor are far less likely to be happy and satisfied with their life as a whole (Figure 4 and 5). They have also low levels of interpersonal trust and tend to believe that one cannot be too careful in dealing with people (Figure 6).

Figure 3: Overall, How Would You Rate Your Health? (%)

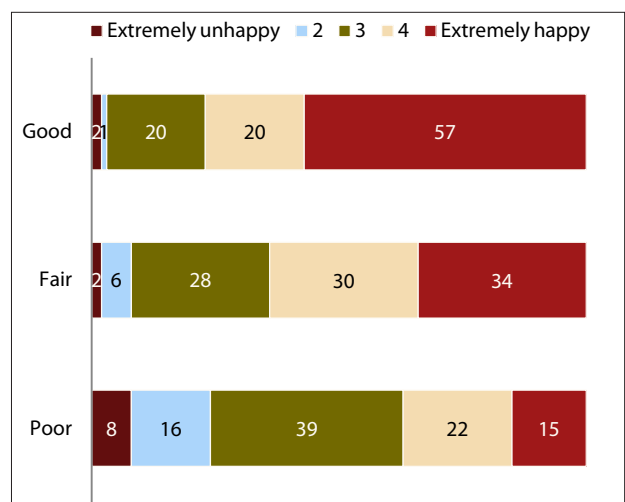


Source: CRRC

The differences in psycho-social wellbeing between “poor” and “rich” are further confirmed by the following data: CRRC asked Georgians about whether or not they agree with the following statements: 1. “There are enough people to whom I feel close” 2. “There are plenty of people I can rely on when I have problems” 3. “There are many people I can trust completely” 4. “I experience a general feeling of emptiness” 5. “I often feel rejected”. The analysis revealed that perceived poverty is negatively associated with having enough people to whom one feels close and can trust and rely when having problems. Respectively, it is positively associated with the feeling of emptiness and feeling of rejection.

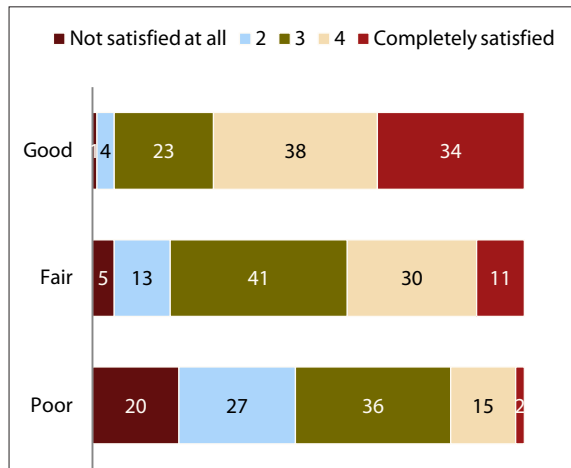
The 2011 CB data show that 34 percent of Georgians who perceive their households as poor say they

Figure 4: Overall, How Happy Would You Say You Are? (%)



Source: CRRC

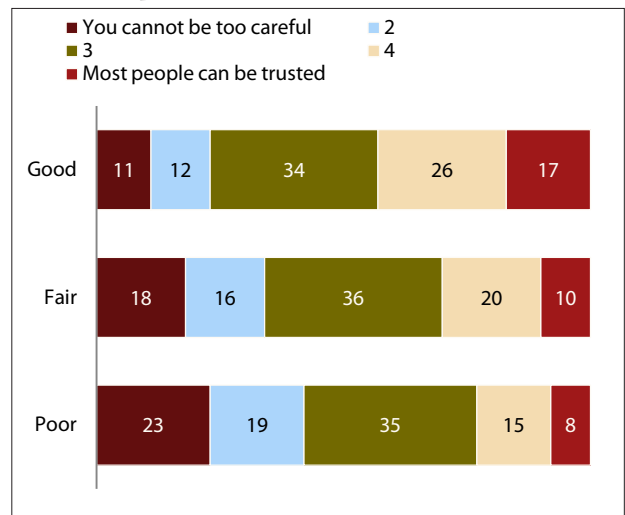
Figure 5: Overall, How Satisfied Are You With Your Own Life As A Whole Nowadays? (%)



Source: CRRG

have many people to whom they feel close. This share increases to 56 percent in individuals who perceive their households' economic situation as good. Likewise, 29 percent of those who describe their households as poor agree with the second statement while this share is higher in the second and third groups (39 percent and 48 percent). Also, Georgians who consider themselves as poor are less likely to agree that they have many people they can trust completely. Moreover, the general feeling of emptiness is reported only by 7 percent and 10 percent of Georgians who do not consider themselves as poor, while this share doubles in those who have the subjective feeling of poverty (20 percent). And finally, perceived poverty is positively associated with the feeling of being rejected. 14 percent of Georgians who feel poor compared to most households in Georgia say that they

Figure 6: Most People In Georgia Can Be Trusted Versus You Can Not Be Too Careful In Dealing With People (%)



Source: CRRG

often feel rejected. Even though this is not a high number in itself, it is higher compared to the second (5 percent) and third (2 percent) groups (Figure 7).

To sum up, the 2011 CB data show that nearly a quarter of Georgians perceive themselves as poor or very poor compared to most households in Georgia. This part of Georgian society is less likely to participate in a wide range of socio-cultural activities and enjoy good physical and psycho-social health. They have stronger feelings of being rejected and treated unfairly by the government than those who perceive their economic state as fair or good. These are all indicators of social exclusion and reinforce a cycle of poverty in Georgia.

Information about the author is overleaf.

Figure 7: Trust in People



Source: CRRG

About the Author:

Natia Mestvirishvili is a Research Fellow at the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) regional office as part of the Open Society Foundations and Think Tank Fund Internship Program. She recently graduated with a M.Sc. in Social Research from the University of Edinburgh and is a PhD candidate in the department of Social, Cultural and Political Psychology at Tbilisi State University.

Social Exclusion of Women in Azerbaijan

By Severina Müller, Baku

Abstract

This article discusses the issue of female social exclusion based on two nationally representative surveys conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) in Azerbaijan in the years 2011 and 2012. The surveys provide insight into Azerbaijani attitudes towards gender roles, division of labor and the participation of men and women in domestic and public life. The results show that women in Azerbaijan are more limited in their opportunities to get involved in social, economic and political spheres than men.

Introduction

As in some other parts of the world, social exclusion of women is pervasive in the South Caucasus. Azerbaijan has been characterized as a country where women are systematically excluded from participation in some social activities, as well as economic and political life. The absence of the female population in these areas has implications not only for women themselves, but also for society as a whole, thus exacerbating poverty and maintaining disparities in health, education, and economic achievement. Beyond that, Azerbaijan has the third highest rate of sex-selective abortion in the world.¹ These forms of marginalization makes it difficult to achieve society-wide goals, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) identified by the United Nations as a benchmark for recognition to women's rights in 1995.

Women's status and rights in Azerbaijan are underlined by the interaction of gender, traditions and culture. Patriarchal traditions and patterns persist in Azerbaijan, thus affecting attitudes about the division of roles among women and men in the domestic and public spheres.² In this respect, male predominance may become grounds for unequal treatment and social exclusion of women. These factors contribute by establishing an unequal power distribution between men and women and in creating a strong basis for female social exclusion.

It is important to note that Azerbaijan is set apart from other predominately Muslim countries around the world that may exhibit different aspects of female social exclusion in a variety of ways. Azerbaijan is one of the predominately Muslim countries (along with the five Central Asian countries) that was a part of the Soviet Union and which has a secular state. Thus, modern-day Azerbaijan has been influenced by its history of Soviet education, formally-atheistic Soviet state ideology, and various other social, political and economic campaigns intended to sculpt Soviet citizens.³ While this past has arguably provided advantages and disadvantages for the country, today education plays an important role for both girls and boys and school attendance is mandatory for everyone in Azerbaijan.⁴

Exclusion appears in many of the obstacles adolescent girls encounter during the transition to adulthood, including finding work, learning life skills or participating in civic life. By denying women access to resources, markets and decision making, social exclusion may maintain poverty at the individual and household levels.⁵

1 Economist, 2010. Gendercide: The worldwide war on baby girls. *The Economist*, March 4, 2010.

2 Azerbaijan Human Development Report. (2007). *Gender Attitudes in Azerbaijan: Trends and Challenges*.

3 Martin, Terry. (2001). *The Affirmative Action Empire. Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

4 Thus, female participation in tertiary education is high, as 46% of the students in Azerbaijani universities are women; cf. The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2010/11). Retrieved from <http://www.azstat.org/statinfo/education/en/index.shtml> on 06/06/2012.

5 Hills, John; Le Grand, Julian & Piachaud, David. (eds.) (2002). *Understanding Social Exclusion*. Oxford: University Press.

In addition, expectations and actual experiences of exclusion and discrimination can cause feelings of powerlessness among those left out, which may in turn lead to low self-esteem and diminished aspirations for the future. The work of Caspi et al. (1998) has shown that these feelings can result in lower achievement among members of excluded groups.⁶ Moreover, social exclusion of women may lead to consequences at the individual and the household levels, but also at the country level—excluded groups can be left behind when national economies grow. Social isolation and relative economic deprivation are often associated with poorer mental health, especially among females, and can further reduce the ability of excluded individuals to be productive members of society.⁷

This article discusses the topic of female social exclusion in Azerbaijan based on the results of a survey entitled “Social Capital, Media and Gender in Azerbaijan” conducted by CRRC in February 2012 and funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The study draws on 998 completed face-to-face interviews. The survey used multi-stage cluster sampling with representation from the capital, as well as outlying urban and rural areas. In addition, there will be data presented from the Caucasus Barometer 2011, another nationally representative survey with a sample of 1,481 respondents.⁸ The first section of this article will discuss gender roles and the of labor in Azerbaijan. The follow section outlines attitudes in the realm of education, labor market and politics. The third section provides data regarding exclusion on social activities.

Gender Roles and Division of Labor

Some scholars, such as Somerville (2000), argue that the core meaning of social exclusion is bound up with social isolation and social segregation, and therefore claim that social mobility (or the lack of it) is crucial to understanding the content and extent of social exclusion.⁹ Social mobility expresses the equality of opportunities and in this connection, gender division of labor between non-market and market work plays an impor-

tant part. It reflects prevailing patterns of social exclusion and can either mitigate or reinforce those patterns.

In assessing attitudes towards the gender division of labor within private spheres of life, the results of the Social Capital, Media and Gender Survey show that much of the Azerbaijani population holds traditional views about gender roles. According to the data, over half of the Azerbaijani population considers the main task of a woman to take care of her family. 67% of the adult Azerbaijani population thinks that a woman’s most important role is to take care of the home and cook for her family (68% of men and 66% of women). Moreover, 57% agree with the statement that being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay (68% of men and 51% of women), and 61% think the children suffer when a mother works for pay (63% of men and 60% of women). With regard to who should be the main decision maker in the family, 77% of Azerbaijanis think men should have the final word about decisions in the home (87% of men and 66% of women).

The socialization patterns of Azerbaijanis support this type of gender-specific division of labor within the home. When asked about what tasks they were taught when they were children or teenagers, 96% of Azerbaijan women mentioned routine domestic chores, such as cooking and cleaning (32% of men said the same). In contrast, 74% of the men said they were taught how to fix home appliances (21% of women said the same). Thus, the data indicates that the attitudes about gender roles as well as the actual behavior within the family are rather traditional.

Education, Labor Market and Politics

The results point to less female participation within public spheres of life. 58% of the Azerbaijani men (and 28% of women) consider themselves to be employed, and there are slightly more men (23%) than women (16%) who hold a Bachelor’s degree or higher.¹⁰ With regard to foreign language and computer skills, the vast majority of both men (75%) and women (77%) reported having no basic knowledge of English. However, fewer men (19%) than women (37%) say they have no basic knowledge of Russian language, and also fewer men (65%) than women (76%) say they have no basic knowledge of computer skills.

When asked about attitudes towards job-related skills, 63% of the Azerbaijani population said that on the whole, men make better business executives and political leaders than women do (71% of men and 55%

6 Caspi, Avshalom; Wright, Bradley R. Entner; Moffitt, Terrie E. & Silva, Phil A. (1998). Early failure in the labor market: Childhood and adolescent predictors of unemployment in the transition to adulthood. *American Sociological Review*, 63, 424–451.

7 Patel, Vikram & Kleinmann, Arthur. (2003). Poverty and common mental disorders in developing countries. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 81(8): 609–615.

8 Caucasus Research Resource Centers. (2011). *Caucasus Barometer*. [dataset] Retrieved from <http://www.crrccenters.org/caucasus-barometer> on 06/06/2012.

9 Somerville, Peter. (2000). *Social Relations and Social Exclusion: Rethinking Political Economy*. London: Routledge.

10 Employment was defined in the survey as follows: “This employment may be part-time or full-time, officially employed, informally employed, or self-employed, but it brings you monetary income.”

of women). Furthermore, 58% agree to the statement that men should have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce (68% of men and 47% of women). However, 43% believe that having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person (34% of men and 52% of women).

Nevertheless, 83% of the Azerbaijanis say they would vote for a woman candidate in the next parliamentary elections (all things being equal), and 59% think that the current number of women members of the parliament (19 out of 125) is too few. This reveals that the Azerbaijani population is not generally disinclined to have women in important positions, yet men are still more represented in politics and the labor market.

Surprisingly, just over half of the population thinks that gender equality in Azerbaijan has already been achieved for the most part (59% of men agree with this statement while 45% of women say the same). The findings thus show that the population's attitudes towards gender equality are a bit ambiguous. Many people believe a man's role should be as breadwinner and a woman's role should be to perform housework and look after the children. Yet, much of the population also thinks gender equality has already been mostly achieved. This indicates that the perception of gender equality differs from the actual distribution of gender roles.

Social Activities

Data from the 2011 Caucasus Barometer show that women participate less in a variety of social activities than men. When asked about different kinds of activities people have been involved in during the past

six months, 70% of the Azerbaijani men (and 43% of women) reported having spent time with friends at their own place or at their friend's place. Another 70% of men (and 2% of women) said they had spent time in a tea house during this period.¹¹ Azerbaijani men also indicate a higher level of involvement in sporting activities as well; 33% of men say they have participated in sports compared to 8% of women who say the same. With respect to civic engagement, more men (21%) than women (13%) say they performed volunteer work during the past six months. Furthermore, 45% of men (and 13% of women) said they had discussed politics with friends or colleagues during the past six months.

Conclusion

The results of these two surveys reveal that there is a certain degree of social exclusion in a variety of arenas for many women in Azerbaijan. Compared to men, women have less access to opportunities for participating in social, economic and political life. Due to a traditional gender division of labor, women are more likely to be absent from the labor market as many people consider a woman's main role to perform housework and take care of the family. This leads to less mobility outside the domestic sphere and makes women more prone to social exclusion. Furthermore, women participate less in a variety of social activities than men and their professional skills, such as knowledge of foreign languages and computer abilities, are lower. General public opinion shows that there is an unequal distribution of power between men and women in Azerbaijan.

About the Author:

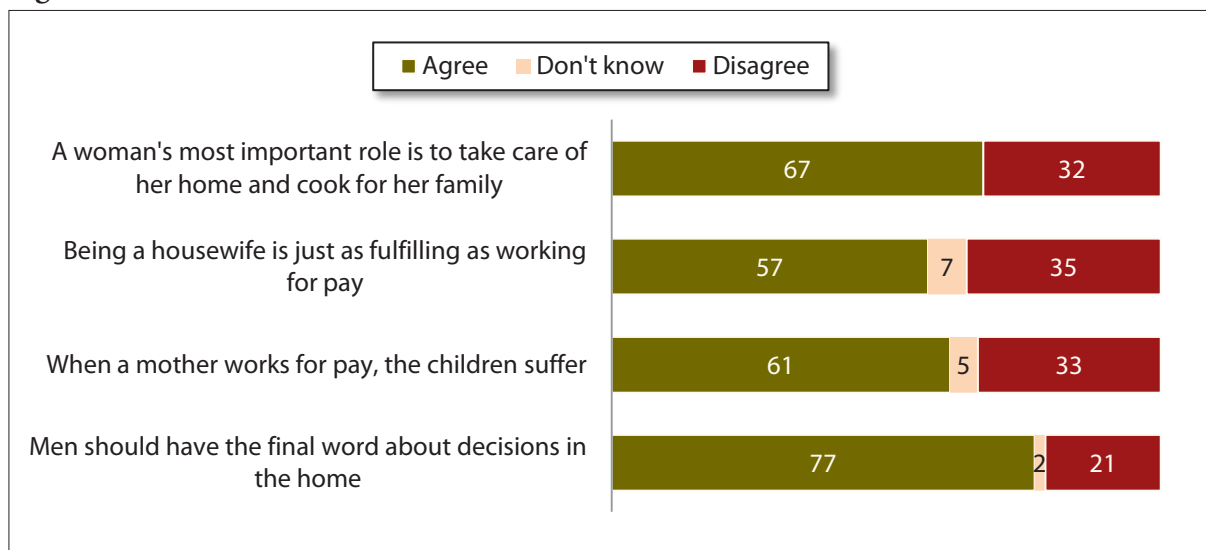
Severina Müller holds a Master's degree in Sociology and Russian Studies from the University of Zurich and is currently an International Fellow at the Caucasus Research Resource Center, Azerbaijan.

11 Visiting a tea house is generally reserved for men in Azerbaijani culture.

OPINION POLL

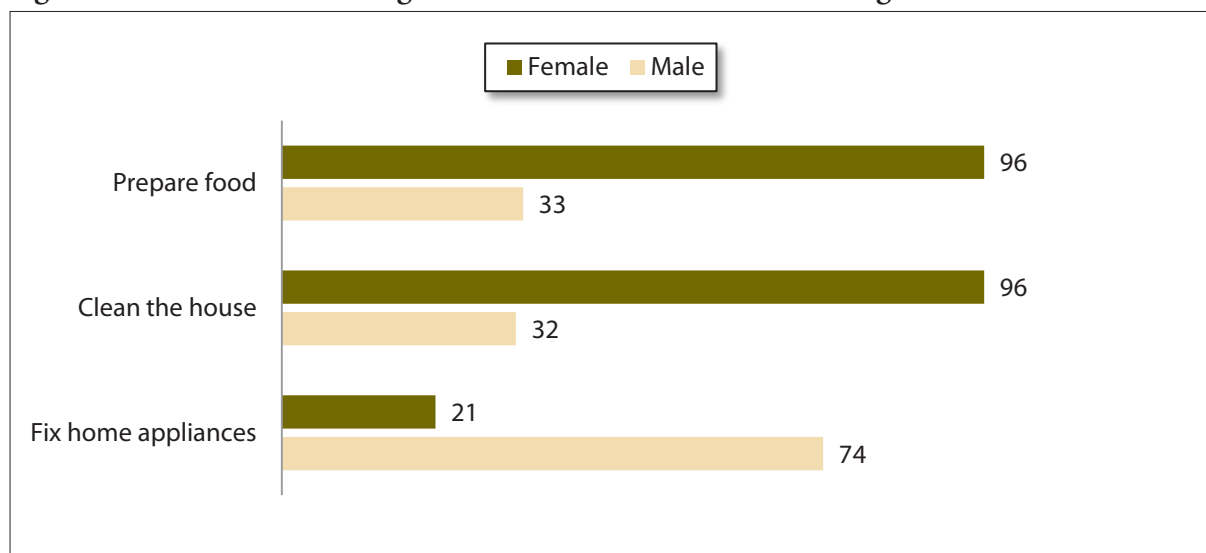
Azerbaijani Views on Gender Roles

Figure 1: Attitudes On Gender Roles and Division Of Labor, %



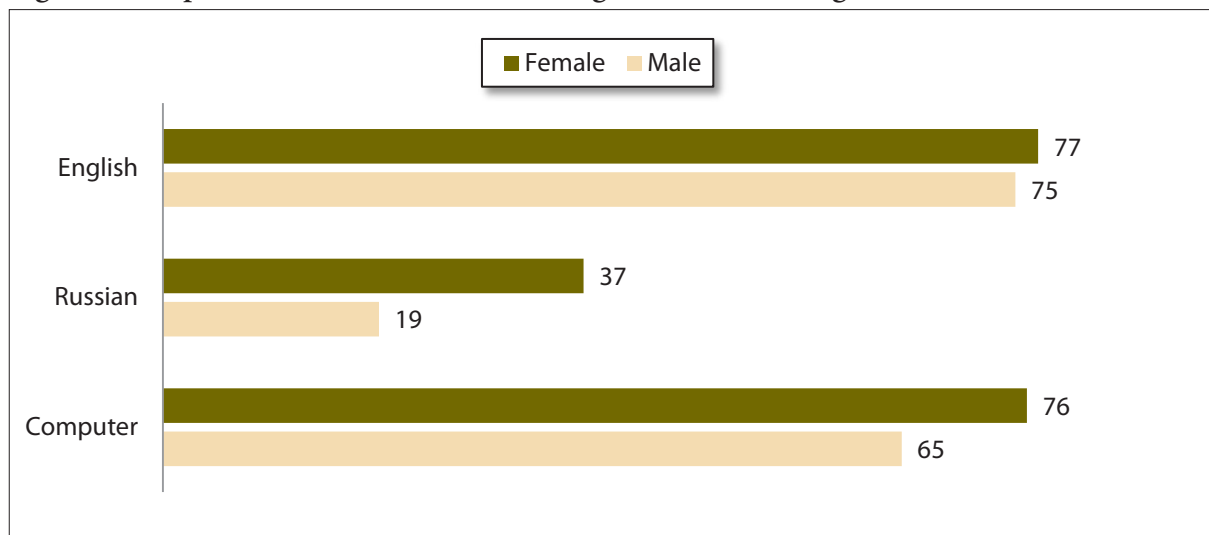
Source: *Social Capital, Media and Gender in Azerbaijan, 2012*

Figure 2: Tasks You Were Taught When You Were a Child or Teenager, %



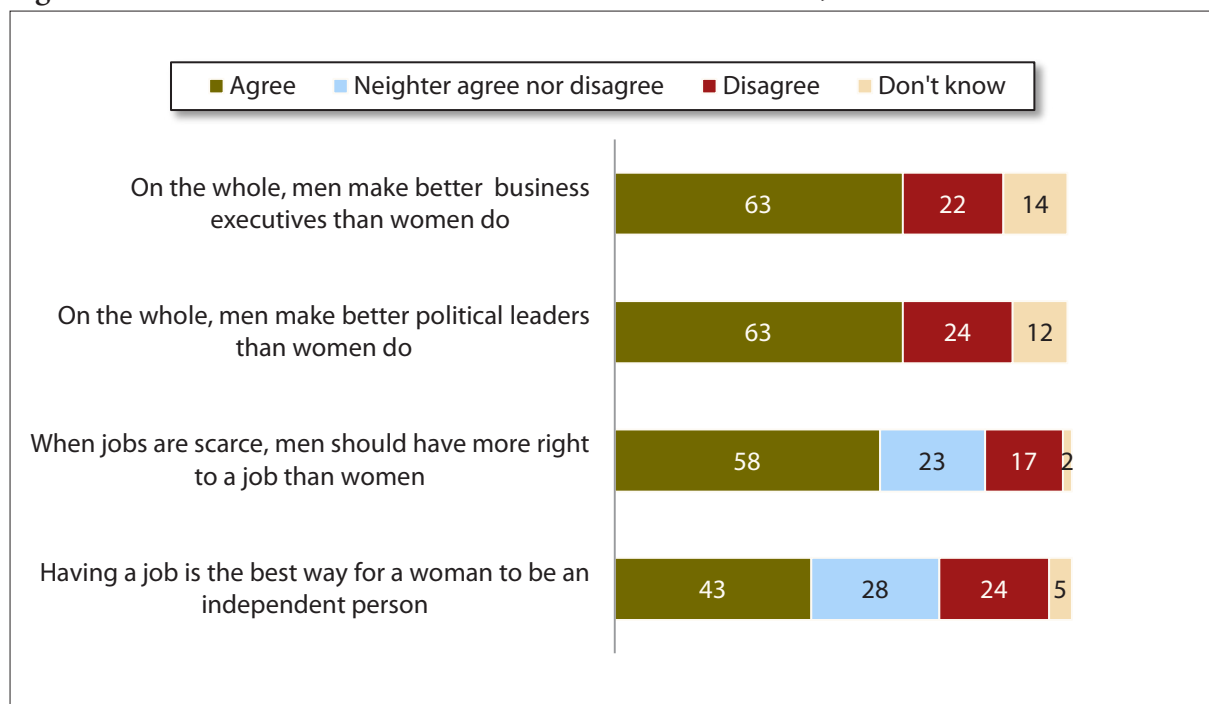
Source: *Social Capital, Media and Gender in Azerbaijan, 2012*

Figure 3: Respondent Has No Basic Knowledge Of the Following Skills, %



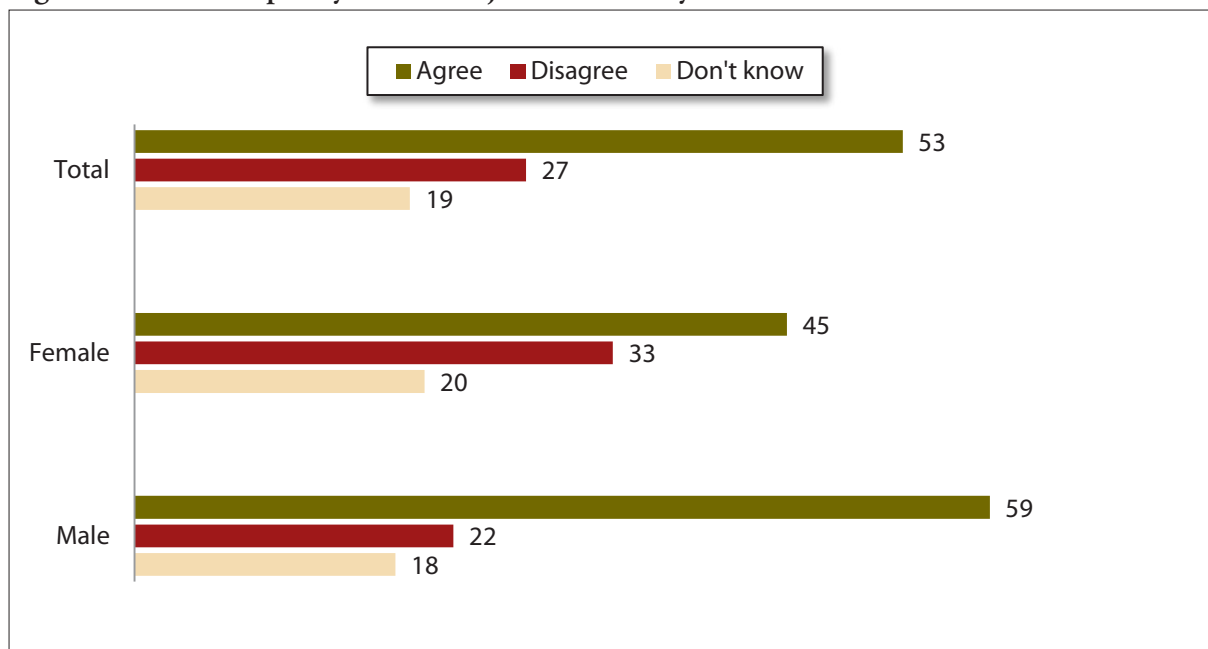
Source: Caucasus Barometer, 2011

Figure 4: Attitudes on Gender in the Labor Market and Politics, %



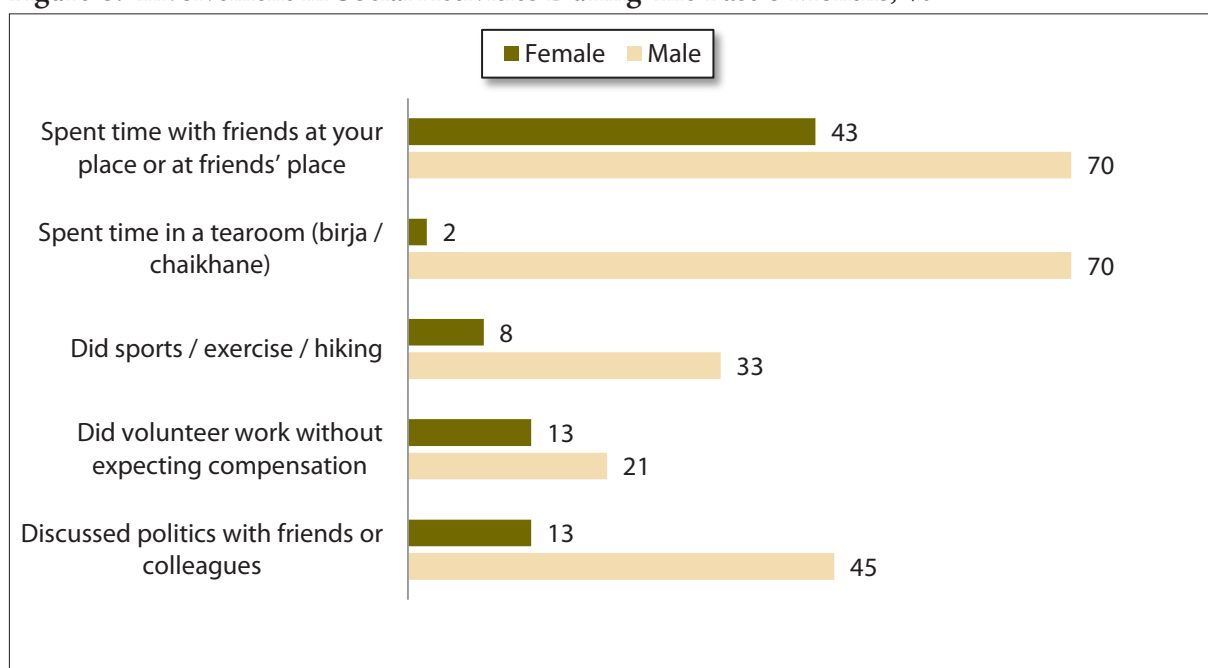
Source: Social Capital, Media and Gender in Azerbaijan, 2012

Figure 5: Gender Equality In Azerbaijan Has Already Been Achieved For the Most Part, %



Source: *Social Capital, Media and Gender in Azerbaijan, 2012*

Figure 6: Involvement in Social Activities During The Past 6 Months, %



Source: *Caucasus Barometer, 2011*

CHRONICLE

From 19 May to 27 June 2012

19 May 2012	NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen says that the conduct of the parliamentary elections in Georgia this year will be a very important test for the country's NATO aspirations
20 May 2012	Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili meets with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliiev on the sideline of the NATO Summit in Chicago to discuss a recent controversy over a portion of the border between Georgia and Azerbaijan in the David Gareji monastery
21 May 2012	Azerbaijani opposition parties held an unsanctioned demonstration in Baku to protest against human rights abuses in the country on the eve of the Eurovision song contest
22 May 2012	A Russian citizen is sentenced to four years in prison by a court in Yerevan for creating a computer virus that infected about 30 million computers
22 May 2012	The Georgian Parliament passes a constitutional amendment to reduce the minimum age for becoming MP to 21
23 May 2012	The leader of the breakaway region of South Ossetia Leonid Tibilov appoints opposition presidential candidate Alla Jioyeva as deputy prime minister
25 May 2012	A military parade is held in Georgia's second largest town of Kutaisi to mark Independence Day
29 May 2012	About 60 employees of the Georgian Education Ministry's examinations center make their resignations public during a news conference to protest the dismissal of the center's director Maya Miminoshvili, who had been hailed as a model of incorruptibility by Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili
30 May 2012	Azerbaijan recalls its ambassador to Iran for "consultations" following Iran's decision to recall its ambassador to Baku, also for consultations
30 May 2012	The Azerbaijani National Security Ministry says that terrorist attacks targeting the Eurovision Song Contest to be carried out by a terrorist group with links to Al-Qaeda were thwarted by the country's secret services
30 May 2012	British Petroleum says that the flow of Azerbaijani natural gas to Turkey was halted due to an explosion that hit the line near the village of Sarikamis in Turkey
31 May 2012	Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili meets with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Istanbul on the sideline of the Partners Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations to discuss bilateral cooperation as well as issues related to the stability and security of the region
4 June 2012	The European Union and Georgia launch a visa liberalisation dialogue aimed at addressing all requirements for visa-free travel for Georgian citizens to the EU
4 June 2012	The Tbilisi City Hall announces a wireless network plan to cover the entire city of Tbilisi with free WiFi access before the end of 2012
4 June 2012	US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton begins a tour of the three South Caucasus states in Armenia and expresses concern over the danger of escalation in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, warning that force should not be used to resolve the conflict
5 June 2012	US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton backs the US training of Georgian coastal defence forces and urges Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili to hold free and fair parliamentary elections in 2012 during an official visit to Tbilisi
5 June 2012	The Azerbaijani Defence Ministry says that five Azerbaijani soldiers were killed in a shootout with armed men who allegedly tried to infiltrate Azerbaijan from Armenia
6 June 2012	US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton says that the United States will recognize the status-neutral document issued by the Georgian government to allow residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to travel to Western countries
6 June 2012	The Defence Ministry of the disputed enclave of Nagorno Karabakh declares that one of its soldiers was killed and two wounded during shootouts with Azerbaijani forces
8 June 2012	No progress is reported after the twentieth round of the international Geneva talks focusing on the non-use of force and international security arrangements, with all the parties agreeing to a next round of talks after four months
8 June 2012	The Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey meet in the Black Sea Coast city of Trabzon to sign a declaration on priority areas of cooperation for the three countries, including mutual support in international organizations and energy and transport projects

10 June 2012	The Georgian Dream opposition coalition, led by billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili, rallies in Georgia's second largest town of Kutaisi with Ivanishvili saying in front of thousands of supporters that education, health and agriculture will be among the priorities in the state budget if the coalition comes to power
11 June 2012	Russian President Vladimir Putin signs a decree to create a new directorate in his office that will be responsible for relations with the CIS member states as well as the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia
11 June 2012	The Tbilisi City Court imposes a 90.9 million dollar fine on opposition politician Bidzina Ivanishvili for violating Georgian electoral and party funding laws
11 June 2012	The Georgian state auditing agency says that a member of the ruling National Movement Party and Deputy Chairman of the Rustavi City Council violated the law on political parties by distributing wine and sheep to some local residents
11 June 2012	The state statistics office Geostat says that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Georgia increased by 55% year-to-year in the first three months of 2012
11 June 2012	An Azerbaijani journalist working for an Iranian television channel is sentenced to two years in jail for possessing illegal drugs in Baku
12 June 2012	The chairman of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Eamon Gilmore calls on Azerbaijan and Armenia to refrain from violence amid a recent upsurge of incidents in the disputed region of Nagorno Karabakh
13 June 2012	The Azerbaijani Parliament amends the law on "commercial classified information" saying that corporate information can only be revealed with the permission of all individuals named in the records in a move that Azerbaijani activists say is designed to protect the family of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev from investigative reports into its business dealings
13 June 2012	The leader of the opposition movement Georgian Dream Bidzina Ivanishvili says that he will not pay the fine of 90.9 million dollars imposed on him by the Tbilisi City Court at the request of the state audit agency Chamber of Control
14 June 2012	The Russian Federal Migration Service says that there are more than 9,000 Georgians staying in Russia illegally
18 June 2012	The United States, France and Russia issue a joint statement to call on Armenia and Azerbaijan to "take decisive steps" to solve the conflict over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh
19 June 2012	The Georgian education ministry announces that it will provide university grants in Georgia and abroad for those residents of the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia who possess neutral identification and travel documents
22 June 2012	Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev signs a decree pardoning 66 prisoners, including activists convicted of participating in opposition rallies in 2011
22 June 2012	The Iranian embassy in Baku says that the Iranian ambassador has returned after he was recalled for consultations in Tehran
26 June 2012	Turkey and Azerbaijan sign a deal to build a 7 billion dollar Trans-Anatolian natural gas pipeline (TANAP) in the Turkish capital of Ankara to carry Azerbaijani gas to Europe bypassing Russia and Iran
27 June 2012	Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili visits Brussels and meets with the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton

Compiled by Lili Di Pippo

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ABOUT THE CAUCASUS ANALYTICAL DIGEST

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