



GEORGIAN
YOUNG
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CONSCIOUSNESS
GROUPS
PARTICIPATION
IDENTITY
MUNICIPALITY
VULNERABLE
ACTIVE
IDENTITY
PROTECTION
REPRESENTATION
ELECTIONS
RIGHTS
ELECTIONS
VULNERABLE
PARTICIPATION
POLITICAL
MINORITY
RIGHTS
EQUALITY
CITIZEN
REPRESENTATION
MUNICIPALITY
CONSCIOUSNESS
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MINORITY
IN GEORGIA
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LEGITIMACY
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PARTICIPATION
CONSCIOUSNESS
POLITICS
VULNERABLE
REPRESENTATION
GOVERNMENT
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ELECTIONS
CITIZEN
GENDER

POLITICAL EQUALITY INDEX IN GEORGIA

SHORT OVERVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of creating the Political Equality Index is to evaluate the level of political equality in Georgia. The index concept combines the following elements: involvement, representation, outcome proportionality and legitimacy. Political equality is measured through inclusion and representation of non-privileged and marginalized groups in political processes. Additionally, this involves assessment of the proportionality in distribution of public goods. For the purposes of evaluation political equality, the attitude of marginalized groups towards rules enabling the realization of their political rights is also essential.

According to Robert Dahl, a democratic regime is best suited to achieve political equality, as compared to other regimes, it better establishes possibilities of involvement and representation.¹ Even so, not every democracy can ensure proportional distribution of public goods equally.² Differing levels of equality create differing quality/type of democracies.³

In a political system where the degree of equality is high, all citizens should also have an equal opportunity to participate in the decision-making process.⁴ According to the theory of complex proceduralism, such effects are possible in cases when procedures for democratic involvement are just and reasonably acceptable for all citizens, meaning that no one has reasonable basis to go against them.⁵ According to Bates, three aspects assess equality.⁶ The first relates to the object which assesses the just nature of involvement procedures.⁷ The second is relatively subjective and looks at these procedures through the lens of citizens.⁸ The third is content based. It evaluates whether the rules governing the political lives of ordinary people take their interests into consideration. Additionally, no one must be left without a political voice.⁹ According to Verba, the main question when defining equality is “what do we make equal”? to which the answer must undoubtedly be “political voice”.¹⁰ Accordingly, this explanation concerns the ability to influence the decision-making process. Verba points out 5 components of involvement,¹¹ although they may also be grouped in two. The first includes determinants and concerns (1) the right of citizens to participate; (2) capacity and (3) opportunity.¹² This group of determinants is formal in nature and includes institutions. The second group deals in the outcomes of participation and includes two components: (4) acceptance (to what extent government officials acknowledge citizens’ participation, for example, whether they read letters) and (5) responsiveness (how equally government decisions apply to all citizens).¹³ Verba’s Conceptualization is important precisely because of the components of the second group. It is one thing that a citizen can participate in decision-making, and another is whether someone responds to his requests. In addition, is there a practice accord-

¹ Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.

² Coppedge, Michael, Gerring, John, Altman, David, Bernhard, Michael, Fish, Steven, Hicken, Allen, Kroenig, Matthew, Lindberg, Staffan, I., McMann, Kelly, Paxton, Pamela, Semetko, Holli, A., Skaaning, Svend-Erik, Staton, Jeffrey, Teorell, Jan. “Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: A New Approach.” *Perspectives on Politics* 9(2), (2011): 247–262.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Charles R. Beitz, *Political Equality: An Essay in Democratic Theory*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990; Ben Saunders, “Democracy, Political Equality, and Majority Rule”, *Ethics* 121, 2010, 148-177.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Sidney Verba, “Would the Dream of Political Equality Turn out to Be a Nightmare?”, *Perspectives on Politics* 1(4), 2003, 663-79.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

ing to which the government considers the interests of one group of citizens more than the other? Therefore, Verba's approach covers not only formal but also informal practices.

Unlike Verba, Griffin and Newman believe that the concept of political equality should also assess the frequency of meeting the demands of non-dominant (vulnerable) groups.¹⁴ Griffin and Newman's conceptualization, while largely tailored to the United States, includes an important additional dimension that Verba and Beitz do not. Griffin and Newman define three standards for evaluating political equality.¹⁵ (1) The first standard refers to proportionality of representation, which, in turn, includes two subcategories: proportionality of influence on decisions; Proportionality of benefits resulting from policy implementation. The latter roughly overlaps the response component of Verba. (2) Race-conscious egalitarianism belongs to the second standard. This standard requires more than just proportional representation and implies that the benefits received by disadvantaged groups from government decisions must exceed their proportional share. This means that the government should allocate more resources to the vulnerable group in the numerical minority than it would have proportionally if these resources were distributed equally to all members of society. (3) The third standard refers to pluralism, which asserts that the special needs of citizens must be represented even when these citizens are in the minority. The pluralism component is related to Verba's response part and assesses the political weight of the subjects or interest groups that make up society.¹⁶ The elements of positive equalization mechanisms and pluralism contained in this conceptualization make it particularly valuable.

Following the review of relevant literature, the subsections provide a conceptualization of political equality. Also, the components and sub-components of the conceptualization tree are explained. The sub-chapters in the Index include data on the institutions that have been evaluated to determine political equality and present the classification of vulnerable groups.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF POLITICAL EQUALITY

Political equality is conceptualized through consistent theoretical deduction. Based on the above analysis, political equality is defined as having four components. According to this approach, citizens' participation, representation and proportional distribution of the results created by this system are protected in an equal political system. And the rules and procedures established on equality are considered legitimate. These four components show how evenly the power is distributed among all citizens so that their actions are given political significance.¹⁷ According to the "fundamental axiom of pluralism", there should be several centers of power in the political system, and no one should possess absolute sovereignty.¹⁸ Accordingly, the will of citizens, the desire should be presented even if they belong to the minority.¹⁹

Additionally, it is important to present the formal (*de jure*) and essential (*de facto*) sides of equality. Formal equality does not imply absolute equalization of individuals or groups. Its purpose is to

¹⁴ John D. Griffin, and Brian Newman, *Minority Report: Evaluating Equality in America*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Roland Czada, "Pluralism", *The SAGE Handbook of Political Science*, Dirk Berg-Schlosser, Bertrand Badie, and Leonardo Morlino, eds., London: SAGE, Volume 2, 2020.

¹⁷ Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.

¹⁸ Robert A. Dahl, *Pluralist Democracy in the United States: Conflict and Consent*, Chicago: Rand McNally, 1967.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

treat those who are essentially equal - equally, and those who are essentially unequal - unequally.²⁰

In addition to the protection of formal equality, the state has an obligation to take positive measures. This may involve the introduction of special legislative mechanisms (for example, gender quotas, pensions, social benefits, etc.) that ensure legal and social equalization between dominant and vulnerable groups, i.e. to eliminate inequality, the state replaces formal equality with substantive equality.

To achieve substantive equality, it is necessary to develop an effective strategy for equality between dominant and non-dominant (vulnerable) groups, which includes increasing the representation of vulnerable groups, equal distribution of resources and power.²¹ Substantial equalities can be assessed through both qualitative and quantitative indicators, including: The degree of rights realization, employment, income, ability to make decisions, political participation, living in an environment free from violence. Both formal and substantive equality should be analyzed for research purposes.

It is worth noting that the index reveals discriminatory elements that may exist between dominant and disadvantaged groups. The index does not measure how equally the political system treats dominant and disadvantaged groups collectively, since its purpose is not to examine the degree of democracy of the political system.

1. Participation

Equal participation promotes separation of powers and improves the quality of democratic governance. Direct and indirect participation differ from each other.²²

In cases of direct participation, citizens have the right to influence the decision-making process.²³ Examples of such influence are nominations for elective and appointed positions; Changing unfavorable decisions using constitutional and legislative mechanisms, as well as lobbying and/or advocacy for favorable ones. This is crucial, as there are mechanisms on the part of privileged groups and economic elites, through which they reverse attempts to influence citizens.

2. Representation

Equal representation involves the existence of a legal framework that ensures the proportional representation of disadvantaged groups in the legislative, executive, judicial branches as well as local government bodies. These very groups should be able to present their interests and position and mobilize to solve politically, socially and economically stressing issues. This subcomponent involves quantitative representation.²⁴

²⁰ For example, "The Government must act similarly towards persons in objectively similar settings, and must not let substantially unequal be treated equally and vice versa", see. Constitutional Court of Georgia 2008, 31 March decision №2/1-392.

²¹ General Recommendation No. 25, Article 4, Paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on Temporary Special Measures, Available: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch>, accessed: 01.07.2021.

²² Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Lena Wängnerud, "Women in Parliaments: Descriptive and Substantive Representation", *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2009, 51-69.

At the same time, substantial representation is considered an important sub-component, in which case both the satisfaction of the legitimate demands of citizens by the representatives and the results of the representation of vulnerable groups in various political institutions are evaluated.²⁵

3. Proportionality of Outcome

Proportionality of outcome is determined by two main sub-components. The first relates to the equal distribution of welfare, while the second concerns the equal distribution of wealth. Welfare distribution refers to the access of disadvantaged groups to education, health and security. Ronald Dworkin points out that in the case of equal distribution of public goods, citizens satisfy different demands (for example, both political and non-political desires or aspiration to be successful. Success is defined individually for each citizen).²⁶

Access to quality education within and outside the country enhances the representation of groups/citizens and increases their chances of employment in leadership and/or lucrative positions. Access to health care indicates the strengthening of their physical and mental abilities, which is a prerequisite for any political action. Equally important is the opportunity to live in a safe environment so that citizens are able to realize their goals. Security refers to a peaceful environment in the state and in households (for example, how often demonstrations are dispersed, conflict occurs, or how often members of vulnerable groups become victims of violence in their own families or workplaces).

The second sub-component concerns the equal distribution of wealth. This includes equal access to income and private property, fair employment contracts between the employee and the employer, which in case of inequality, according to Dworkin, manifests itself in the following form - "minimum wage and maximum working time".²⁷ Having private property is important both in terms of gender and in relation to vulnerable groups.

4. Legitimacy

Legitimacy refers to the perceptions or evaluations of vulnerable groups in society regarding the level of fairness they believe existing rules and procedures to have. Additionally, it refers to the justification of their evaluations in relation to the realization of their own interests. According to Beitz, legitimacy is important in the analysis of equality, as it emphasizes public consent and shows how acceptable the rules of political game are intended for each individual.²⁸ An essential sub-component of legitimacy is the openness of information on rules and procedures (for example, access to public information for any appointment to a position through competitive selection or tendering).²⁹

²⁵ Ibid.

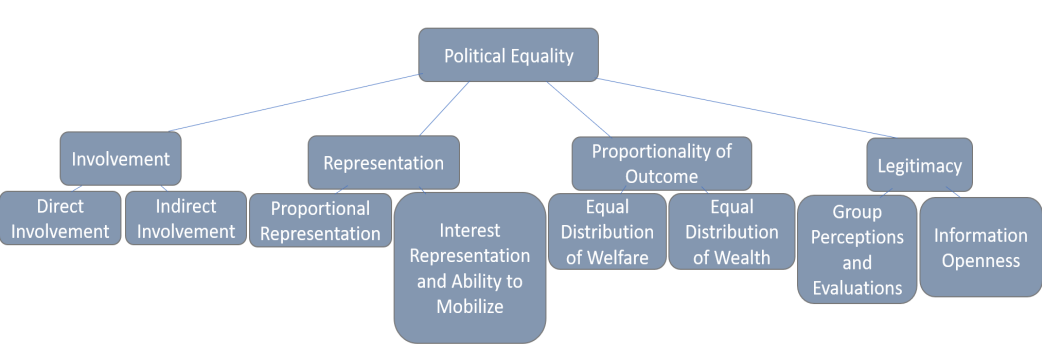
²⁶ Ronald Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue, The Theory and Practice of Equality*, Harvard University Press, 2002.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Charles R. Beitz, *Selected Piece*.

²⁹ Engler, Sarah, Lucas Leemann, Tarik Abou-Chadi, Heiko Giebler, Karima Bousbah, Daniel Bochsler, Marc Bühlmann, Miriam Hänni, Lea Heyne, Andreas Juon, Wolfgang Merkel, Lisa Müller, Saskia Ruth, and Bernhard Wessels, *Democracy Barometer, Codebook, Version 7*, Aarau: Zentrum der Demokratie, 2020.

CONCEPTUAL TREE OF POLITICAL EQUALITY



CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

State bodies and public-political institutions are considered political institutions. Accordingly, considering the theoretical framework of classification and role of a specific political institution in ensuring equality, state (legislative, executive and judicial) bodies and public-political institutions in the form of political parties were selected. Political participation and representation of specific social groups was measured within these institutions. In addition, passing the electoral threshold was defined as an additional criterion for the selection of parties. As a result, the focus was on the parliamentary parties considering their role in the political process and the exercise of public authority.³⁰

Equal involvement of vulnerable groups in politics is hindered by the existence of various social or systemic barriers. Access to public goods, socio-economic vulnerability, and experiences of discrimination and violence prevent vulnerable groups from engaging in politics or decision-making processes. For the purposes of this study, the following criteria were defined to identify vulnerable groups: (1) legislative and institutional barriers; (2) cultural barriers; (3) geographic factors; (4) structural barriers; (5) multilateral equality; (6) access to education; (7) equality in labor relations; (8) economic equality; (9) access to health care and medical services; (10) violence; (11) international obligations on human rights; (12) Age.³¹

DEFINED CATEGORIES AMONG VULNERABLE GROUPS:

| N | Category | Sub-Category |
|---|---------------------------|---|
| 1 | Women | 1. Women living in regions densely populated by non-dominant ethnic, religious, linguistic groups;; 2. Emigrant Women. |
| 2 | Forcibly Displaced People | 1. Refugees; 2. Eco-migrants. |

³⁰ For detailed criteria of theoretical conceptualization and selection of theoretical institutions, see the Research Coding Book (Data Collection Methodology Book).

³¹ Ibid.

| | | |
|----------|--|---|
| 3 | Place of Residence (Birth) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Urban settlements (city and township); 2. Capital, big cities, administrative centers of municipalities; 3. Village-type settlement; 4. Highland regions; 5. Conflict zone (border regions). |
| 4 | Persons with Disability | |
| 5 | Non-dominant Religious, Ethnic and Linguistic Groups | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Muslim community; 2. Christian religious groups (Georgian Catholic Church, Armenian Apostolic Church, Baptist churches, Jehovah's Witnesses); 3. Jewish Community; 4. Christian religious groups (Georgian Catholic Church, Armenian Apostolic Church, Baptist churches, Jehovah's Witnesses); 5. Abkhazians; 6. Ossetians; 7. Azerbaijani community; 8. Armenian community; 9. Kist people 10. Other ethnic groups. 11. Azerbaijani language group; 12. Armenian-speaking group; 13. Abkhaz language group; 14. Ossetian language group; 15. Other linguistic groups. |
| 6 | SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lesbian; 2. Gay; 3. Bisexual; 4. Transgender; 5. Other Queer People. |
| 7 | Social and Economic Poverty | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Socially vulnerable persons; 2. persons beyond the (absolute) poverty line; 3. The unemployed; 4. Persons employed in the service sector (nurses, sanitary workers, cashier-consultants, couriers). |
| 8 | Labor Exploitation | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. self-employed; 2. Persons involved in informal work; 3. Street vendors; 4. Manual labor workers (miners, miners, builders) |
| 9 | Age | <p>Women and Children</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aged 18 to 29; 2. Over 60 Years of Age. |

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As part of this study, data was collected for qualitative research. In particular, as a result of 63 in-depth interviews and 23 focus group meetings, a total of 136 respondents belonging to 9 vulnerable groups were interviewed. These groups are represented according to the following characteristics: women, internally displaced persons, place of residence (birth), persons with disabilities, religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities, sexual orientation and gender identity, social and economic vulnerability, labor exploitation and age.³²

The collected data were processed using the quantitative research method, as per following procedure:

1. The group of experts developed a questionnaire for both interviews and focus groups. Questionnaires were filled by each respondent;
2. Qualitative interviews were conducted over the phone, and focus groups - online. The available transcripts allowed for the completion of a questionnaire developed by the research team for the quantitative study;
3. For each question of the quantitative research, a five-point system for evaluating respondents' attitudes was established (1 point means a completely positive assessment, and 5 points - a completely negative one);
4. In total, 43 indicators were developed for quantitative research. Each indicator was evaluated using the above-mentioned five-point system;
5. An aggregated index was developed for these indicators. It used factor analysis, which allowed the researchers to derive a single index containing these 43 indicators. This index was normalized between 0 and 1 with the regression model. The index is equal to 0 when parameter 43 takes the minimum value, and to 1 when parameter 43 takes the maximum value.

$$y = \sum_{i=1}^{43} a_i x_i ; y(x_{min}) = 0; y(x_{max}) = 1$$

The values of the a_i coefficients were determined using a linear regression model (SPSS26 Linier Regression, Factor Analysis, Cluster Analysis was used for the analysis). The obtained index was divided into five groups by means of hierarchical cluster analysis. In addition, secondary sources such as legal acts, court decisions, reports, commentaries and academic articles were analyzed.

SELECTION AND GENERALIZATION OF DATA TO TARGET GROUP

Sampling frame: The sampling frame includes databases of non-governmental organizations operating in Georgia, which actively work with vulnerable groups. Also, the database was filled by researchers visiting the field and making direct contact with individuals. About 1,000 vulnerable people's contact information was collected using this method. At the next stage, 136 of these 1000 respondents were randomly selected.

The data can be generalized to the sampling frame (per 1000 respondents).

³² See the description of the selection in the attached methodology book, which is prepared as a separate document.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Within the framework of this study, statistical databases, which are state property and are considered personal information, were not available. As part of research, communication was established with state structures regarding the use of databases but did not yield results.

For the interpretation of all the charts presented in the study, it is important that they show the dependence of the index in relation to a given indicator. The coefficient of determination R^2 shows how intensive and strong the relationship is between the index introduced by the research group and the given parameter. The maximum value of R^2 is 1, and the minimum value is 0. When $R^2 > 0.25$, the relationship is considered significant. The closer R^2 is to 1, the stronger the relationship.

POLITICAL EQUALITY INDEX VALUE

The Political Equality Index, as an aggregate of 41 indicators, is 0.29,³³ which indicates that, according to perceptions of vulnerable groups, political equality in Georgia is significantly weak. Indicator analysis shows that the following sub-components have the strongest impact on the participation component in determining political equality: real exercise of the right to vote by vulnerable groups; Participation of eligible voters (vulnerable groups) in elections; Ability of vulnerable groups to nominate their preferred candidates for decision-making positions; Actual implementation of passive electoral rights;³⁴ nomination of vulnerable groups to elective positions and the number of candidates elected from the nominated candidates; the possibility of vulnerable and non-dominant groups to submit legislative initiatives, proposals and petitions to the Parliament; The opportunity to submit proposals to the government on issues important to them, including the government's initiation of draft laws in the parliament; The number of proposals, specific solutions, put forward and shared by vulnerable groups before the parliament and the government; the possibility of submitting petitions to self-governing bodies; Number of petitions, proposals and specific decisions submitted and shared by vulnerable groups to local self-government bodies; Possibility of participating in preparation of local self-government budgets; consideration of the needs these groups have in local self-government budgets; Opportunity to participate in City Council sessions and Commissions as a recourse through which to advocate for needs of the group ensure involvement in decision-making. The following indicators in the participation component have little to no influence in determining political equality: The number of candidates nominated and/or nominated by vulnerable groups to elected and/or appointed positions (decision-making positions), and the number of candidates unacceptable to vulnerable groups to elected and/or appointed positions.

As for the representation component, analysis of indicators shows that the strongest effect is shown with substantial representation of vulnerable groups by both elected (macro-level) and appointed officials. The following sub-components have a significant influence in leveraging the political equality index towards a positive direction: substantial representation of vulnerable groups by persons holding elective positions (at the micro level); access to media; Freedom of expression and assembly. The freedom of political organization and association of vulnerable groups, their quantitative representation in appointed and elective positions has relatively weak effect. As for institutional barriers in court, little positive effect has been shown in.

³³ As indicated in the paragraphs on methodology, the Political Equality Index was assessed on a scale of 0-1, where 0 indicates non-existence of equality, while 1 represents a high level of equality.

³⁴ According to factorial analysis, this indicator has the highest causal effect in determining the Political Equality Index.

Sub-components with a strong effect in the proportionality of result component are health care programs and allocated funds for vulnerable groups; sensitivity of health and social security budgets to the needs of these groups; educational programs for vulnerable groups; Providing labor guarantees and the possibility of employment. The following sub-components have little to no effect: ownership and inheritance of vulnerable groups; Government subsidization of their private or business initiatives, access to the Covid-19 vaccine.

In terms of legitimacy, acceptability of rules in political play has the greatest effect in determining the political equality index towards a positive direction. Compared to this sub-component, the internal consistency of vulnerable groups is characterized by less importance. As for the reasonableness of the evaluation of justice, the evaluation of justice by community organizations, the availability of the Internet, the materials on the results of contests and tenders, and the availability of public information, these indicators have little weight in determining the political equality index in a positive direction.

Political Equality Index of Vulnerable Groups

| Group Name | Median | Count |
|---|--------|-------|
| 1. Women | .2595 | 12 |
| 2. Forcibly Displaced People | .3010 | 7 |
| 3. Persons with Disabilities | .1706 | 11 |
| 4. Non-dominant Religious, Ethnic and Linguistic Groups | .3611 | 5 |
| 5. SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) | .2242 | 12 |
| 6. Labor Exploitation | .3239 | 7 |
| 7. Social and Economic Poverty | .2868 | 32 |
| 8. According to Residence/Place of Birth | .2673 | 8 |
| 9. Men / Women Aged Between 18-29 and Over 60 | .3649 | 38 |
| 10. Others | .3560 | 4 |
| Total | .2975 | 136 |

Table 2. Political Equality Index by Select Vulnerable Groups

Cross-group analysis shows that women aged 18-29, socially and economically vulnerable, labor-exploited and non-dominant religious, ethnic and linguistic groups have a significant share in determining satisfaction among vulnerable groups. This result can be explained by the confrontational fear among these groups, since they are most dependent on the state for security and welfare.

Identification of issues preventing the achievement of political equality in Georgia can be considered as an important finding within the scope of the Political Equality Index research. Geographical barriers, including for vulnerable groups living in conflict regions, limit their political participation ability. In addition, limited access to resources is a significant obstacle. Vulnerable groups are equally distrustful of political processes because existing rules and deliberative mechanisms are more formal than beneficial outcome oriented towards them. It should be noted that political equality of certain groups (for example, SOGI and women) is hindered by conservative and reli-

gious attitudes of society. However, support from international actors is an important factor for the resilience of these groups. Another impeding circumstance is the lack of adequate knowledge and experience, which makes vulnerable groups additionally conformist towards the state and other powerful political players.

According to the research results, central government is less efficient than local governments. This is due to the fact that, taking into account social factors and spatial density, there are greater risks of reputational damage for state officials and representatives of vulnerable groups in the regions. In the context of state responsibility, it is important to note that both appointed and elected officials are inadequate in representing vulnerable groups, a leading factor in determining political equality to be insufficient. At the same time, it is worth noting the weakness of a connection between vulnerable groups and community organizations as well as the fragility of trust in the latter by the former. Since neither the state nor community organizations duly represent vulnerable groups, accountability towards them is low.

Thus, the responsibility for ensuring political equality of vulnerable groups lies with the executive and legislative authorities of the state, both at the central and local levels, as well as with their respective community organizations. As for the support of international actors, it should be equally distributed to vulnerable groups identified within the research, which will be an additional guarantee of their political equality.