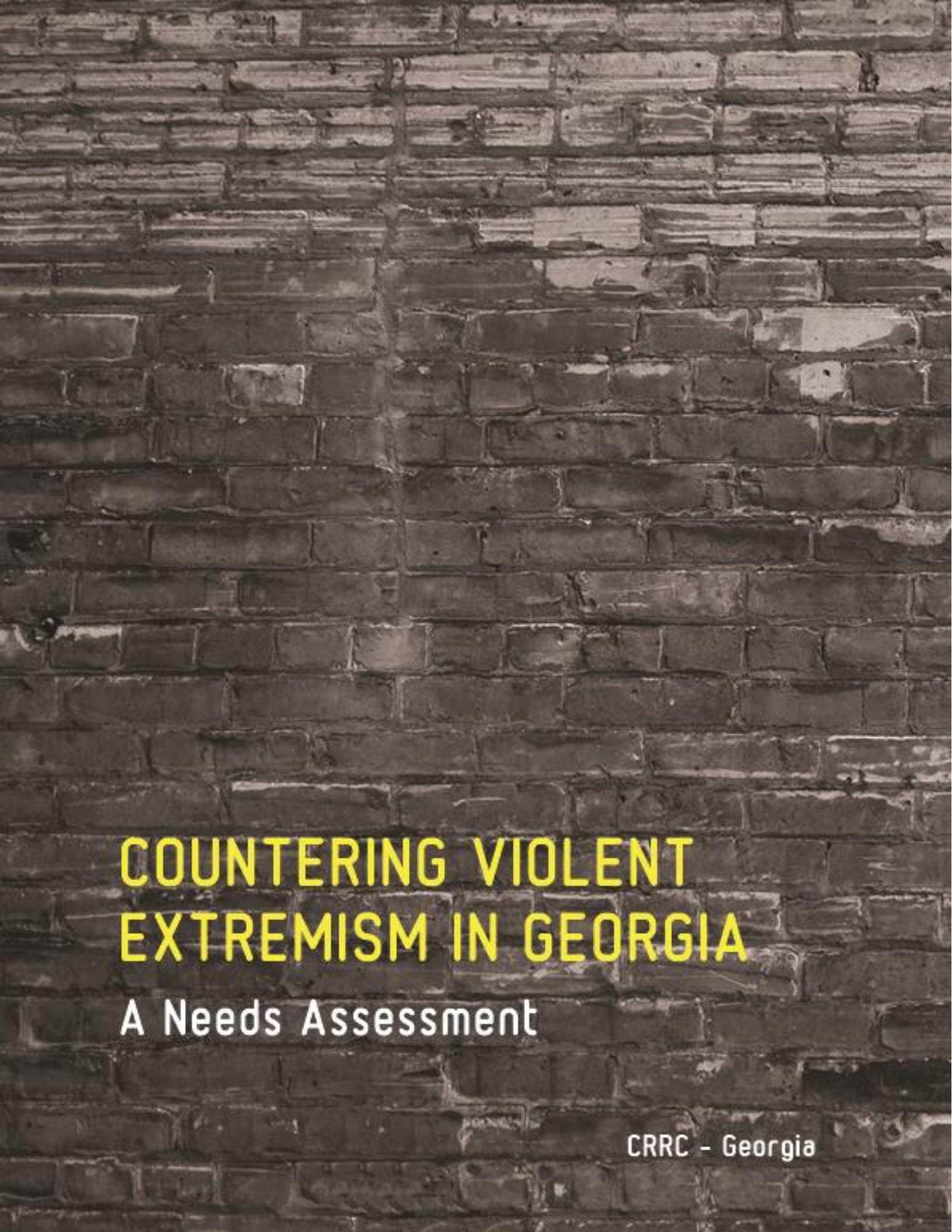

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN GEORGIA

A Needs Assessment

CRRC - Georgia

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2018

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Contents

Executive Summary

A significant number of citizens of Georgia travelled to fight in the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, for the Islamic State as well as for other terrorist groups and militant organizations. On a per Muslim population basis, Georgia had the second highest rate of foreign fighter travel to Syria and Iraq in the former Soviet space (Benmelech and Klor 2014, 2018). At least 41 individuals went to fight in the conflict, however, the numbers are likely higher since one of the primary forms of confirming that an individual went to fight in the conflict is through reports of their death. Indeed, one estimate placed the number at over 200 individuals who had at least attempted to go to fight (Barrett 2017). Besides the individuals that traveled to fight in Syria and Iraq, Georgian citizens have also gone to fight in the conflict in Ukraine. Moreover, there is a growing problem with violent far right extremism in Georgia, as evidenced by the recent murder of Vitali Saparov and medium sized far-right rallies.[1] Clearly, Georgia has an issue with violent extremism.

When it comes to jihadist extremism, two primary types of communities have lost individuals to the conflict in Syria and Iraq: the villages of the Pankisi Gorge and Adjaran eco-migrant communities. The Pankisi Gorge is located in north eastern Georgia, and is populated primarily by ethnic Kists, a Vainakh ethnic group. The total Kist population is relatively small, numbering around 5000 individuals. However, an outsized share of this population has gone to fight in the conflict (~1% of the ethnic group's population in Georgia)[2]. Adjara, located in Georgia's south-west, is historically home to a substantial ethnic Georgian Muslim population. Some of Adjara's high-mountainous communities migrated from the region to other parts of the country, as well as within Adjara, due to environmental issues during the course of the last 200 years. Their new settlements throughout Georgia are often referred to as "eco-migrant communities." Besides Adjaran eco-migrant communities and people from the Pankisi Gorge, several ethnic Azeris from Georgia's Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions have travelled to fight in the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts.

The literature on radicalization provides many definitions of the term. This study follows the simple dictionary definition of "the action or process of causing someone to adopt radical positions on political or social issues."[3] The literature on radicalization also suggests several factors that push and pull individuals towards radicalization, which are also defined in a number of ways. For the purposes of this study, a push factor is something which makes people want to leave a place, while a pull factor is something which attracts them to another place. An issue paper by the Radicalization Awareness Network (2016) identified the following key types of drivers:

[1] See http://oc-media.org/georgian-rights-activist-s-murder-was-a-hate-crime/

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[3] https://www.google.hu/search?q=definition+of+radicalization&oq=definition+of+radicalization&aqs=chrome.0.69i59j0l5.3404j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

- Individual socio-psychological factors;
- Social factors;
- Political factors;
- Ideological/religious factors;
- Culture and identity crisis;
- Trauma and other trigger mechanisms;
- Group dynamics;
- Radicalisers/groomers;
- Social media.

While there are numerous factors that the literature has identified as potential drivers of radicalization, these factors are often overlapping, making it difficult to attempt to parse out cause and effect. Indeed, as an expert in the field highlighted, the causes of radicalization often resemble a "kaleidoscope" of factors (Ranstrop and Hyllengren 2013). Major debates over the nature of what "radicalization" entails stem from disagreements between those who believe that it can be measured by changes in belief (cognitive radicalization) and those who prefer to assess changes in behavior (behavioral radicalization). When narrowed down to single-country test cases, scholars and analysts find that there are rarely single profiles of radicalized individuals; no single socio-economic, religious, social, or political factors seems to apply to a majority of individual cases (Neumann 2013). Thus, many analysts arrived at a consensus that a litany of these factors, rather than any in isolation, shape radicalization (Horgan 2008; McCauley and Moskalenko 2014).

Partially as a result of the kaleidoscope nature of the drivers of radicalization, the literature, at least when it comes to Georgia, has not been able to parse out community level drivers of radicalization that are distinctive to the specific communities that have lost people, and not present in the communities that have not. The potential exception is a handful of studies on foreign fighters from Georgia, which found that the presence of family, friendship, and kinship networks served as *de facto* recruiting networks, convincing clusters of individuals within tight-knit communities to join jihadist groups in Syria and Iraq (Cecire 2016, Clifford 2017, Pokalova 2018). Indeed, a recent needs assessment carried out for USAID (2018) found no community level predictors of radicalization that were distinct to the communities that lost people, compared with similar communities that have not.

Part of the reason for this is likely that previous studies of radicalization in Georgia have been qualitative, with one exception,[4] and to a certain extent, without a rigorous identification of comparison communities. To fill this gap and test for several potential community level drivers of radicalization, CRRC-Georgia carried out a mixed methods study of communities that have lost members to the conflict and similar communities that have not. The study made use of a combination of participant observation research and a matched sample survey. While the participant observation was used primarily to develop the survey instruments, the matched sample survey was mainly used to a) identify the most similar communities in the country to the ones that have lost members to the conflict, and b) test for differences at the community level between communities that have and have not lost members.

[4] See http://issa-georgia.com/en/foreign-entity/hedaia/study-of-relationship-of-different-socio-cultural-parameters-education-and-violent-extremism-in-youth-2017/38?fbclid=IwAR3B_9N99kyPuK4jVKRCKsO8OWwY8zjjZg7ekx6NmVSc2hDKm2BLZRybO_0

Although the study aims to support the identification of drivers of radicalization as well as community resilience, the survey was conducted in the summer of 2018. Therefore, many of the observed differences in communities could be a result of the consequences of losing members to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq (e.g. increased police presence or greater donor programming). Moreover, radicalization takes many forms, and this study only considers one manifestation of behavior associated with radicalization: travel to participate in a foreign conflict. In this regard, the results of the study cannot be definitely said to identify causes or consequences of radicalization or resilience to it. However, it does aim to contribute to the identification of a number of potential factors, on the basis of which future research can be conducted.

Besides attempting to contribute to understandings of the drivers of radicalization, the study also aims to understand what some of the consequences have been for the communities that have lost members to the conflict. One of the clearest consequences is likely the state's securitization of the communities. In this regard, the study looks at how individuals perceive their relationship to security-related institutions.

Identification of cause and consequence aside, the question that has potentially the most importance is what do the communities that have lost members need to prevent future radicalization and what makes a community resilient? In this regard, the analysis is based on two assumptions. First, the study assumes that whatever is needed, nothing will be effective in the absence of community support for the changes. To identify the specific needs of the communities in question, the study has asked a number of questions about what people report they want for their communities. Second, we assume that differences at the community level in terms of a variety of different sociological factors (e.g. inter-ethnic relations) are potentially drivers of radicalization or sources of resilience against it. In this vein, the report provides recommendations that are based on the idea that some differences between the communities that have and have not lost members may be important for the prevention of future radicalization.

The data and analysis within the report lead to a number of conclusions and recommendations.

First, after controlling for a number of factors, religion (i.e. being a Christian or Muslim) is not associated with deep religious belief or a sense of distance from the national community, two factors that may reasonably be believed to be associated with radicalization. Hence, to speak only of Islamic radicalization in Georgian society misses the mark. Rather, the data suggests that there is a larger problem with radicalization in Georgia that likely affects a meaningful share of society. Indeed, recent events with the far right in Georgia suggest that the country is likely to face problems with violent extremism from a variety of different ideologies. Hence, it is recommended that:

- Efforts at countering radicalization in Georgia focus on all forms of extremism rather than solely on jihadist extremism.

Second, a sense of religious persecution is not associated with the communities that have lost members to the conflict after controlling for a number of factors. However, it is associated with Muslim faith. The sense of persecution that Muslims feel in Georgian society, while not unique to communities that have lost individuals to the conflict, is a potential driver of radicalization. This suggests a clear need for Georgian society to develop a greater acceptance of Islam. While not the only path towards increasing tolerance, a number of studies have shown that inter-group contact increases acceptance between groups (see Allport 1954). This includes a number of studies in Georgia (See CRRC 2017; Mestvirishvili et. al. 2017). Hence, it is recommended that:

- Programming encourage inter-faith dialogue across Georgia;

This recommendation is particularly important given the fact that Muslims in communities that lost members to the conflict are significantly less likely to have friends that are not their religion or ethnicity compared with Muslims in similar communities that have not lost members to the conflict. Hence, it is recommended that:

- Programming encourage inter-ethnic dialogue;
- Programming with young people should encourage their interaction with different ethnic groups (particularly in the case of Pankisi) and different religious groups (particularly in the case of Adjaran eco-migrant communities);

The communities which have lost members perceive the securitization of their communities. This fact is reflected in the data, which suggests that people in communities that have lost members are significantly less likely to trust security related institutions. Moreover, individuals in these communities are significantly more likely to report they are hesitant to speak with the police and to think that the police have too much power in their communities. This likely suggests a problem with policing in communities that have lost members. Without trust in the police, individuals will be less likely to report suspicious activities to the authorities. Moreover, the negative interactions with authorities have the potential to further drive radicalization. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the Ministry of Internal Affairs:

- Consider a community policing strategy in communities that have lost members to the conflict;
- Give preference to community members when hiring police;
- Carry out religious sensitivity training for police officers throughout the country.

With access to government services, the study finds that a significant share of the public have not used a large number of government services. However, this is not unique to the communities that have lost members to the conflict. This suggests that a lack of access to government services is not driving radicalization. However, it does suggest that the government should likely increase awareness among the public of the services they have access to. Hence, it is recommended that both local and national government:

- Increase awareness of government services among the population.

When it comes to what people want from different institutions, the data suggests that community expectations of NGOs are unlikely to match what NGOs can reasonably be expected to deliver. Healthcare, unemployment, and poverty eradication were named as the issues people are most interested in seeing NGOs work on. However, these issues are rarely the explicit domains of NGOs, particularly outside of humanitarian contexts. Despite this, these interests suggest a community demand for NGO-led economic development projects. One of the main types of programming that people reported they wanted from international actors was support for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, buttressing this conclusion. When it comes to what sectors of the economy there is most interest in developing, agriculture came in first and in Pankisi tourism second. Hence, it is recommended that:

- Projects aimed at supporting micro, small, and medium sized enterprises, particularly in the agriculture and tourism sectors, continue to be supported and/or scaled in Pankisi;
- Projects aimed at supporting the above be developed for Adjaran eco-migrant communities.

Even though economic development is the main issue that community members want NGOs to work on, there is also significant demand for programming on other issues. The most common issue people in Pankisi see NGOs working on is education. At the same time, a quarter of the public reported they would like to see NGOs do more education related activities. This suggests that there is likely a demand for scaling and/or diversifying NGO educational programming in Pankisi. Besides existing programs, people in Pankisi express strong interest in vocational education and training; entrepreneurship training for young people; and skills training more broadly. In Adjaran eco-migrant communities that had lost members to the conflict, the demand for educational programming was also present, and particularly for English language education. Based on these findings it is recommended that:

- Additional funding be directed to scaling existing educational programming in Pankisi;
- Vocational education and training programs be established that residents of the Pankisi Gorge will have greater access to (e.g. through scholarships, another form of preferential access to already existing VET institutions; or the establishment of a VET institution in Pankisi itself);
- Additional educational support programming be provided for Adjaran eco-migrant communities, particularly in the field of English language education.

When it comes to infrastructure, there were a number of issues distinctive to the communities that had lost individuals to the conflict. In Pankisi, the water supply was the most commonly mentioned issue. However, residents of Pankisi also clearly noted a lack of entertainment and cultural facilities such as sports fields, playgrounds, and museums. Such facilities are particularly important for young people. Indeed, young people in the Pankisi Gorge were significantly more likely than older people to point to sports as something they would like to see NGOs do with young people. Based on these findings, it is recommended that:

- Facilities and funds are provided for young people to participate in sports and cultural activities in Pankisi;

Among a number of the experts spoken to during the expert validation workshop, concerns over violent sports such as wrestling and boxing were brought up and extensively discussed. The research team considers this a reasonable concern. In addition, some research suggests that team sports help young people develop social skills and build social capital (CRRC 2011). Hence, it is recommended that:

- Activities aiming to engage young people in sports activities focus on team sports.

Aside from the above, there is clear evidence that NGOs are not working with Adjaran eco-migrant communities at any scale. The vast majority of eco-migrant community members do not see this type of organization in their community. The same is true with regard to international organizations. This suggests that particular attention should be given to programming in these communities. While the relative and absolute number of people from these communities that have gone to fight in Syria and Iraq is relatively small compared with Pankisi, there is still a clear need to attempt to prevent radicalization from spreading to these communities. Hence, it is recommended that:

- The donor community dedicate funding to NGO and development related activities in Adjaran eco-migrant communities.

When it comes to who should implement programming, the data suggests that local organizations have a clear advantage over Tbilisi based ones. In Pankisi, trust was significantly higher in local NGOs than either international or Tbilisi based organizations. At the same time, international NGOs were relatively well trusted. In general, local organizations will also have lower overhead than either Tbilisi based organizations or international ones. Given these factors, working with local organizations is likely to deliver more for less. Hence, it is recommended that:

- Prioritize funding local NGOs, based in Pankisi;
- When donors anticipate difficulties in dispersing funds to local NGOs or with local NGO grant administration capacity, prioritize partnerships between international NGOs and local NGOs or Tbilisi based NGOs and local NGOs.

In Adjaran eco-migrant communities, the lack of NGOs presents a barrier to implementing the above recommendation. In this regard, NGOs that have experience working with similar communities are likely to be the best available actors. Hence, it is recommended that:

- Pankisi based organizations be consulted when setting up programing for Adjaran eco-migrant communities.

Finally, while this study has attempted to provide an overview of community level factors that may be drivers of radicalization and resilience to it as well as to provide an understanding of what the communities that have been affected want, programming should continue to be evidence based, through evaluating what is working and what is not. Moreover, new problems emerge and priorities change. Hence, it is recommended that programs working on preventing radicalization in Georgia:

- Carry out effective monitoring and evaluation of their programming, including:
    - Using rigorously selected control groups of communities (e.g. through matching as done in this study) and;
    - Surveys representative of the communities or target populations that program activities are carried out in.

Besides the straightforward operational benefits of strong monitoring and evaluation, this also has the potential to further enhance understandings of what drives radicalization, ultimately informing efforts to prevent it.

Introduction

A significant number of citizens of Georgia travelled to fight in the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, for the Islamic State as well as for other terrorist groups and militant organizations. . On a per Muslim population basis, Georgia had the second highest rate of foreign fighter travel to Syria and Iraq in the former Soviet space (Benmelech and Klor 2014, 2018). At least 41 individuals went to fight in the conflict, however, the numbers are likely higher since one of the primary forms of confirming that an individual went to fight in the conflict is through reports of their death. Indeed, one estimate placed the number at over 200 individuals who had at least attempted to go to fight (Barrett 2017). Besides the individuals that traveled to fight in Syria and Iraq, Georgian citizens have also gone to fight in the conflict in Ukraine. Moreover, there is a growing problem with violent far right extremism in Georgia, as evidenced by the recent murder of Vitali Saparov and medium sized far-right rallies.[5] Clearly, Georgia has an issue with violent extremism.

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- Individual socio-psychological factors;
- Social factors;
- Political factors;
- Ideological/religious factors;
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Identification of cause and consequence aside, the question that has potentially the most importance is what do the communities that have lost members need to prevent future radicalization and what makes a community resilient? In this regard, the analysis is based on two assumptions. First, the study assumes that whatever is needed, nothing will be effective in the absence of community support for the changes. To identify the specific needs of the communities in question, the study has asked a number of questions

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about what people report they want for their communities. Second, we assume that differences at the community level in terms of a variety of different sociological factors (e.g. inter-ethnic relations) are potentially drivers of radicalization or sources of resilience against it. In this vein, the report provides recommendations that are based on the idea that some differences between the communities that have and have not lost members may be important for the prevention of future radicalization.

Besides attempting to contribute to understandings of the drivers of radicalization, the study also aims to understand what some of the consequences have been for the communities that have lost members to the conflict. One of the clearest consequences is likely the state's securitization of the communities. In this regard, the study looks at how individuals perceive their relationship to security-related institutions.

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The report proceeds as follows. The next section of the report lays out the methodology used to attempt to answer the research questions provided above. Findings are presented in the following section, which first discusses causes and consequences of radicalization in affected communities and then what people from affected communities want for their communities as well as who they want to do it. The report ends with conclusions and recommendations.

Methodology

The study has used a mixed methods methodology, consisting of participant observation research and a matched sample survey. While the participant observation was used primarily for informing the design of the survey, it is also used to inform the analysis of the quantitative data. The specifics of the methodology are described below.

Matched sample survey

For quantitative data collection, a cluster-matched survey was carried out. Cluster matched surveys are used to identify territories that are largely similar along a number of dimensions, except for one characteristic to the extent possible. In the present case, the main difference of interest was whether or not the communities had lost members to the conflict in Syria and Iraq. Using open-source reporting, interview data, and consultation with outside experts, the research team compiled a list of 14 communities that were known to have lost members to the conflict. Of the 14 communities, eight were selected. Other communities were excluded, because the specific village or part of the settlement was unidentifiable. To identify similar communities, multivariate matching with genetic weighting was used.[9] The list of election precincts in Georgia were used as the sampling frame. All communities that could not be confidently identified as containing a significant Sunni Muslim population were removed from the sampling frame. Next, communities in Pankisi were matched with communities that had not lost people based on the following characteristics:

- Education level (Share of population with Higher Education);
- Population size;
- Number of women in the community;
- Distance from a regional center, a proxy for access to markets and different cultural opportunities;
- Elevation;
- Population Density;
- Distance from a primary road, a proxy for access to markets.

Adjaran eco-migrant communities that had lost people to the conflict were matched separately from the Pankisi Gorge. In addition to the above characteristics, similar communities were identified using a variable for whether they were or were not eco-migrant communities. To attempt to identify potential community level predictors of losing people to the conflict, matching was carried out using data from 2014 due to increased data availability from the census. Researchers used two-to-one matching, identifying two communities for each community that lost members to the conflict, to ease fieldwork.

Following selection of areas to carry out the survey, households were selected for interviews using systematic random walk. Respondents were selected using a Kish table. In total, 1180 respondents participated in the survey. In terms of survey design, the survey should be considered a systematic stratified sample. Weighting was not carried out due to a lack of available demographic data on the communities considered within the study.

[9] For more on this method, see https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/10.1162/REST_a_00318

Measurement

To answer the research questions above, the survey instrument included blocks on the following subjects:

- Quality of life in the communities and the main issues they face;
- Social capital (trust in institutions and people);
- Migration;
- Media consumption;
- National government performance;
- Local government performance;
- Attitudes towards NGOs, international organizations and their activities;
- Social distance;
- Deep religious belief;
- Sense of persecution of one's own religion;
- Identity with the national community;
- Demographics and household economic situation.

When it comes to deep religious belief, sense of persecution of one's own religion, and identity with the national community, slightly modified scales from a number of sources (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007; Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2012) were used. For the questions on social distance, a slightly modified version of the Bogardus Social Distance Scale (1925) was used. Standard questions used to measure the above in Georgia were used to address the other issues within the study.

Data analysis

The study makes use of a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics like frequencies and crosstabs are used to describe the overall situation, while inferential statistics are used to test whether differences between communities are significant, while taking into account other factors. In general, the report uses multivariate logistic or ordinary least squares regression analyses.

Participant observation

Prior to quantitative data analysis, participant observation was carried out in four communities. These communities included one Adjaran eco-migrant community that lost individuals to the conflict and one that had not, and the Pankisi Gorge and an Avar community in Eastern Georgia. The communities were selected as comparative case studies, as they are relatively similar communities in many respects, yet had differing outcomes in terms of whether individuals from them have and have not left to fight in the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. Researchers spent two weeks in each type of community, and kept detailed fieldwork diaries. The qualitative data was then used to inform the design of the survey questionnaire, and to inform the analysis of the quantitative data.

Limitations

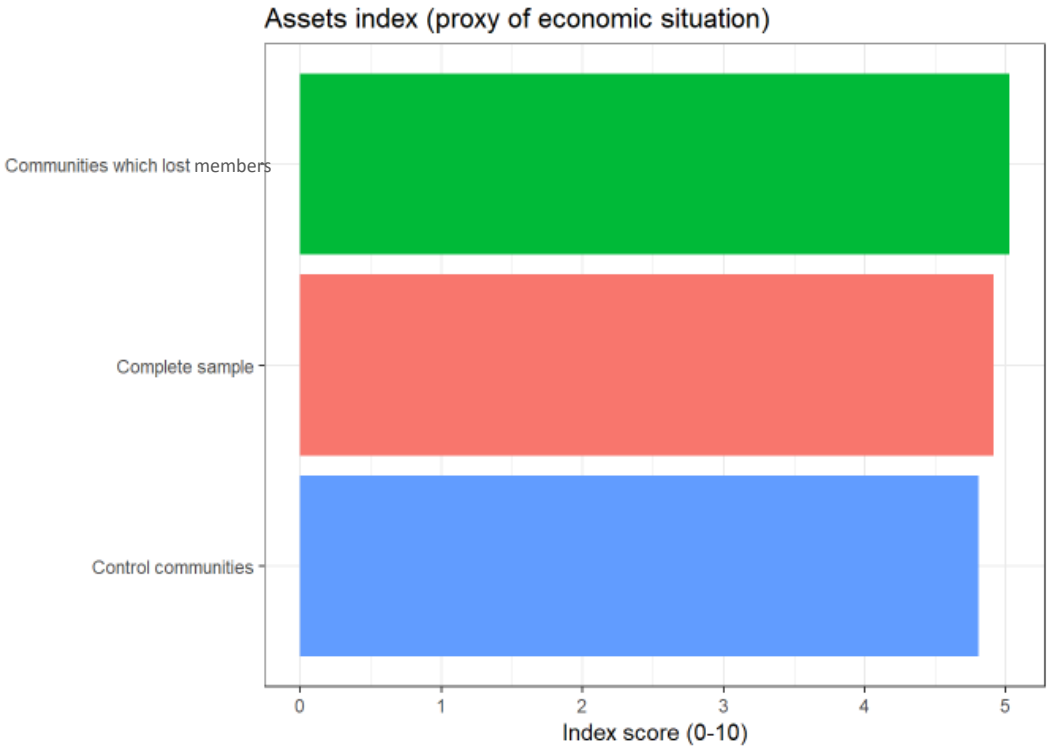
The study has several clear limitations. First and foremost, correlation is not causation, and the study is clearly observational. To deal with this issue, the research was designed as a most similar case study design. Through looking at very similar communities, and using a theory informed data analysis strategy, the study does make some limited attempts to parse out cause and effect. Nonetheless, the study's findings should be taken with the appropriate caution of an observational study that attempts to parse out the causes and consequences of any phenomenon.

Causes and consequences of losing community members to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq

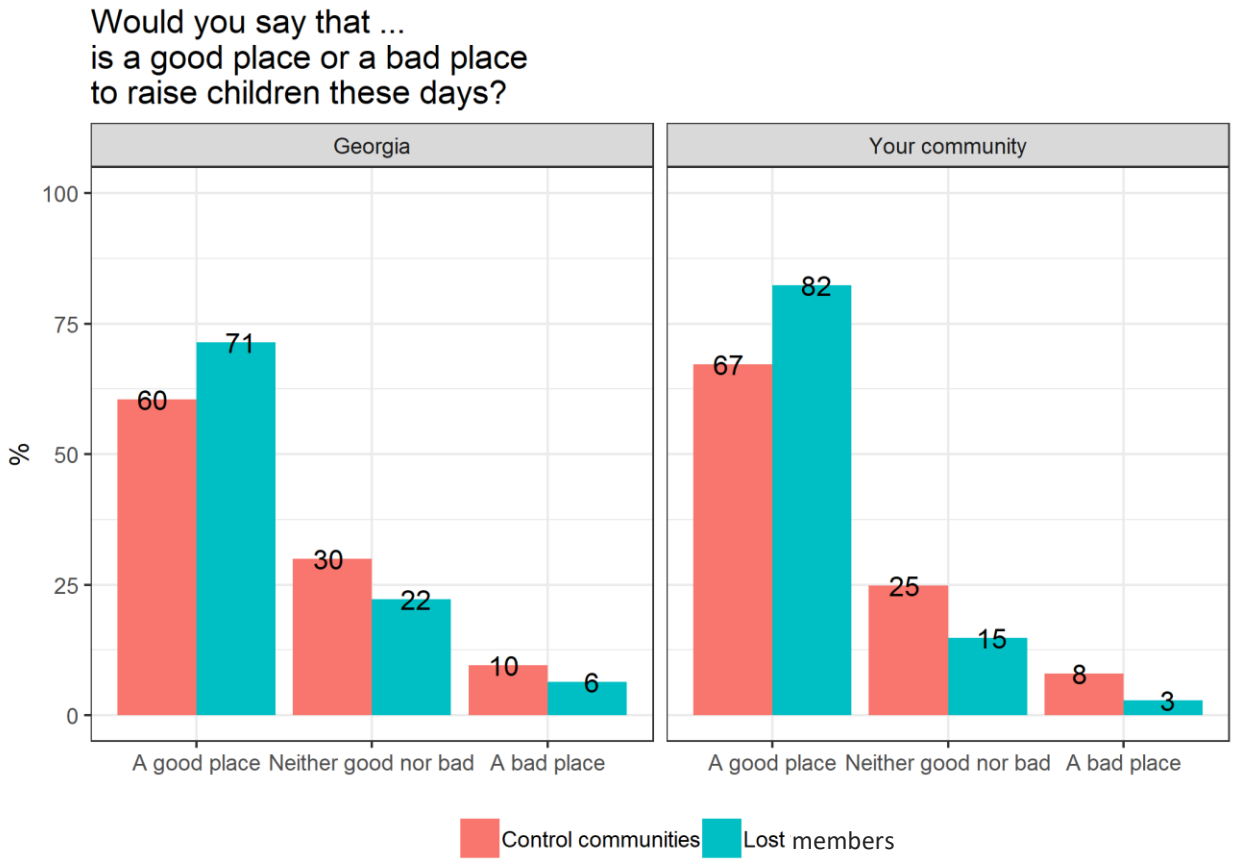
As noted in the introduction to this report, a significant number of factors have been identified as potential drivers of radicalization. However, few if any, studies have rigorously tested whether there are any significant predictors of radicalization or resilience to it at the community level in Georgia. This section attempts to identify differences between communities that may be drivers of radicalization or resilience to it. Besides looking at a number of potential causes, the study also looks at one of the consequences of losing community members to the conflict in Syria and Iraq: the securitization communities have experienced.

Potential drivers of radicalization/resilience

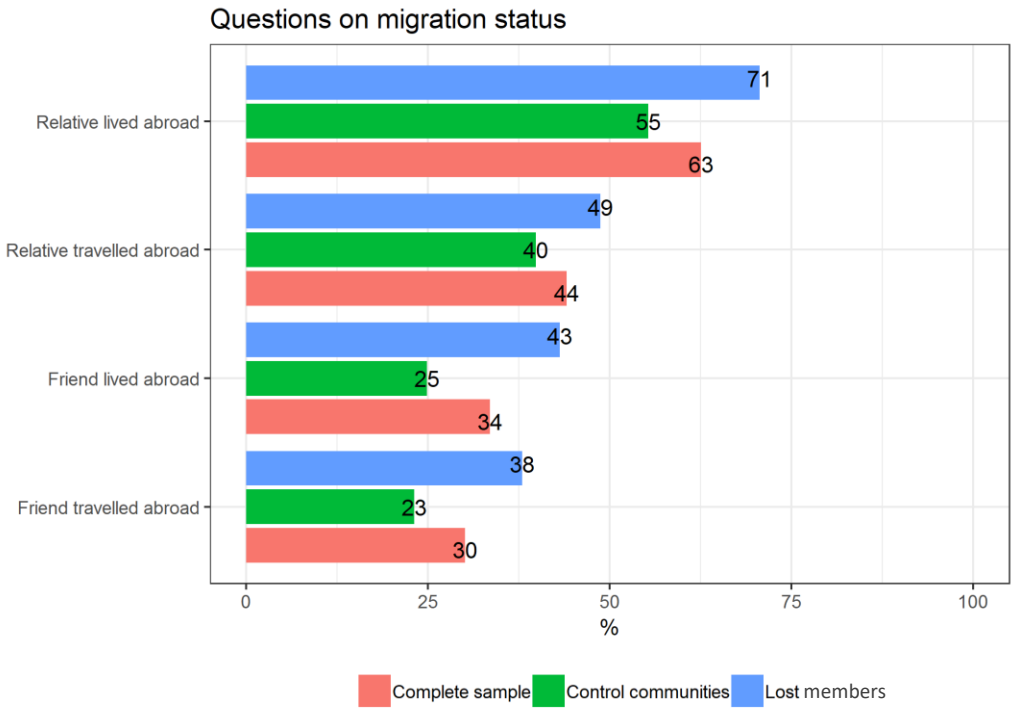
One commonly heard hypothesis about radicalization is that it is driven by a lack of economic opportunity. This type of hypothesis argues that young people without economic opportunity are attracted to radical ideologies, in part, because they seek out the financial benefits of becoming a fighter; or because they are angry with the society that has not provided them with the opportunity to make a decent living. If true, we would expect greater levels of economic deprivation in communities that have lost individuals to the conflict and/or the perception that there is not good enough economic opportunities in the community. In contrast to this expectation, the data suggests that households in communities that have lost members are actually slightly wealthier than in the comparison communities. To measure household wealth, the survey asked questions about ownership of 11 different durable goods, a common proxy for household economic well-being in developing countries. The data suggest that households own slightly over 5 assets on average compared with the comparison communities, in which households own slightly under five of the eleven assets asked about on average.



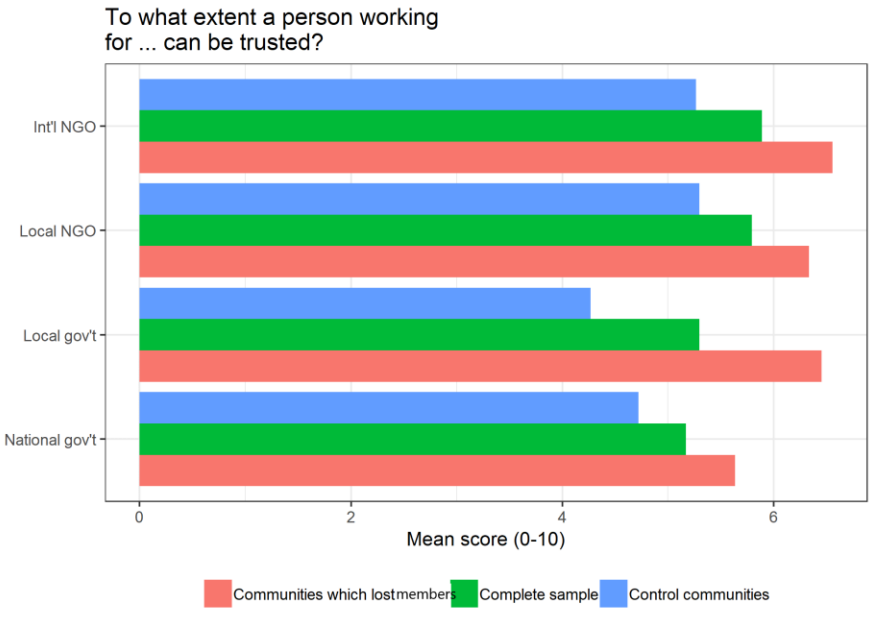
From the above, one might expect that the communities that have lost individuals are perceived as worse places to live more generally. To test this hypothesis, the survey asked whether Georgia and the specific community that respondents lived in was a good place to raise children in. The data suggests that contrary to expectations, people in communities that have lost members to the conflict are significantly more likely to report that their community is a good place to raise children in.



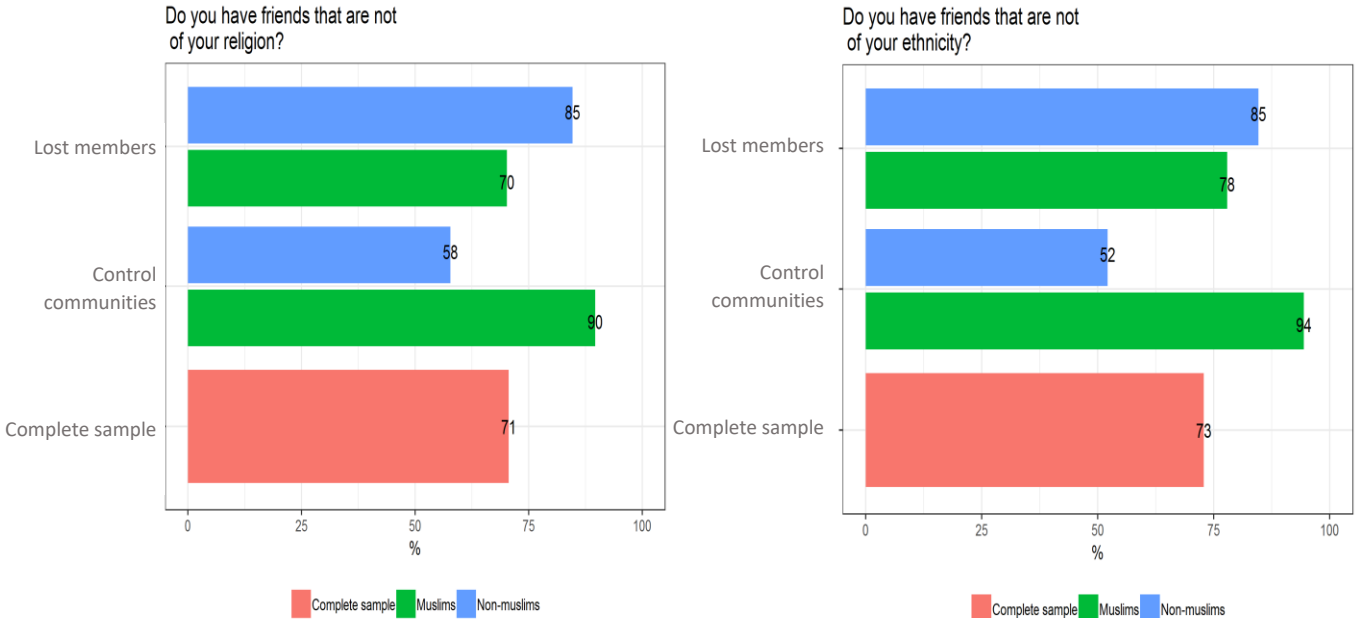
A second common hypothesis is that individuals are radicalized through individuals they are familiar with, often who have previously traveled or lived abroad or that individuals themselves radicalize through experiences abroad. If this was the case, there would likely be higher rates of migration in communities that have lost people to the conflict. To attempt to measure this, the survey asked a number of questions about whether people had friends and family who lived or traveled abroad. The data suggests that both living and traveling abroad are significantly more common in communities that have lost members to the conflict, as depicted on the chart below. This finding in particular should be taken with some caution. In the communities that have lost members to the conflict, and particularly in the Pankisi Gorge ties are quite strong. Reasonably, many people will know the individuals that have been lost to the conflict, and hence will have friends or family that have gone abroad. The study did not ask about whether people had such ties prior to the start of the conflict. Hence, this finding should be taken as moderate support of the network based hypothesis.



A sense of alienation from society is another common hypothesis about why individuals radicalize. Reasonably, one may expect that this factor would be found at the community level in communities that lose individuals to violent conflict due to radicalization. To test this hypothesis at the community level, the survey looked at interpersonal trust in general as well as trust in individuals who work in local and national government. If true, the expectation would be that interpersonal trust would be lower in communities that have lost individuals to the conflict. In contrast to this expectation, we find that interpersonal trust, in government officials, NGO workers, and regular people, is higher in communities that have lost members to the conflict.



A final community level factor that may be either a driver of radicalization, or alternatively a sign of resilience to it, is interpersonal contact between different ethnic and religious groups. This hypothesis stems from Allport's contact theory (1954). The theory posits that individuals who know members of opposing groups and interact with them are less likely to have interpersonal problems with them. The study finds support for this hypothesis. In communities that have a lost members to the conflict, Muslims are significantly less likely to know members of different ethnic groups and different religious groups.

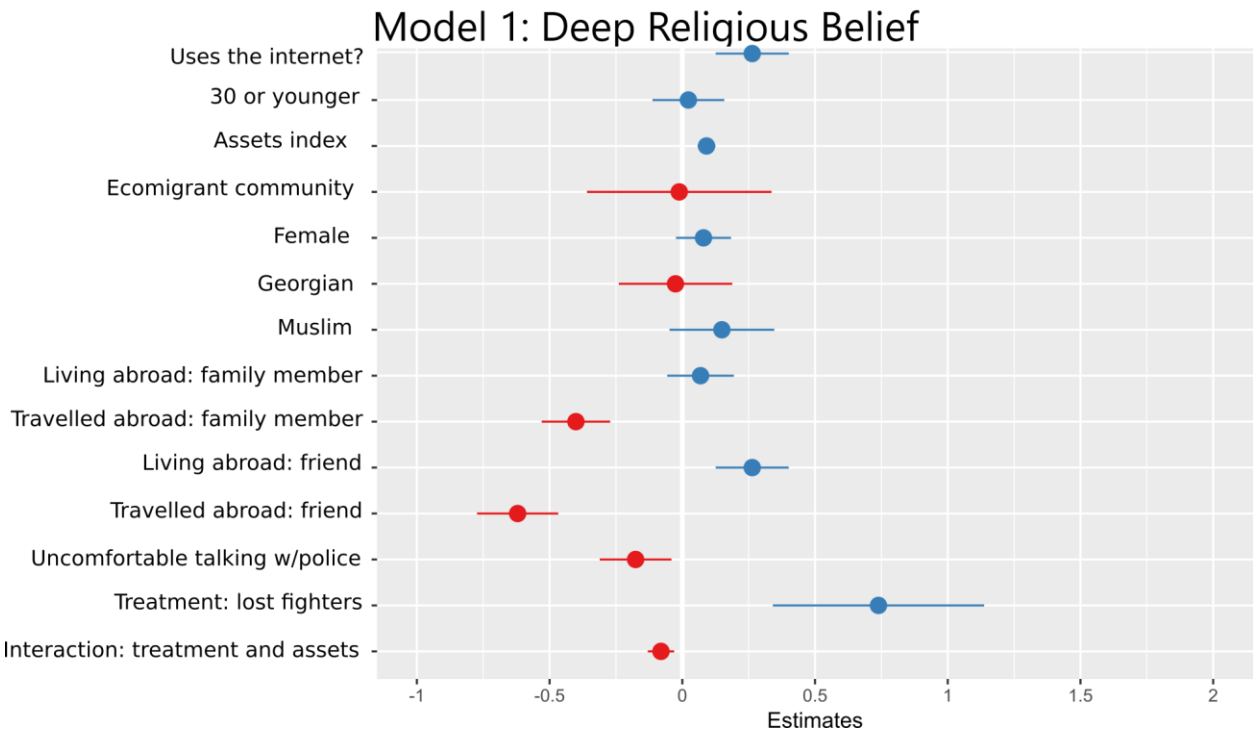


Factors that may predict radicalization

Psychologists have attempted to develop a number of ways of measuring radicalization. For the present survey, a scale was used which attempts to measure three different factors that might be expected to be associated with, but not be direct measures of, radicalization, including deep religious belief; a sense of one's religion being persecuted; and lack of identification with the national community. To measure these factors, the survey used 24 questions, which were then combined using factor analysis to generate scores on each of these dimensions for each participant in the study. To understand whether any other factors predicted these attitudes that are potentially associated with radicalization, multivariate regression analysis was carried out.

When it comes to deep religious belief, the data suggests that deep religious belief is significantly more common in communities that lost individuals to the conflict than in communities that did not. Hence, this factor is associated with radicalization. Besides living in a community which has lost members to the conflict, the study also suggests a number of other factors associated with deep religious belief. First, individuals that use the internet are more likely to report deep religious belief. Second, individuals that are better off are also slightly more likely to report deep religious belief, on average. However, in communities that have lost people to the conflicts, people who are better off report a slightly lower level of deep religious belief on average. Having friends or family that ***traveled*** abroad is associated with a relatively lower level of deep religious belief. By contrast, having a friend who ***lived*** abroad is associated with significantly higher levels of deep religious belief. Deep religious belief is not significantly different

between Christians and Muslims, Georgians and non-Georgians, men or women, or younger and older people.

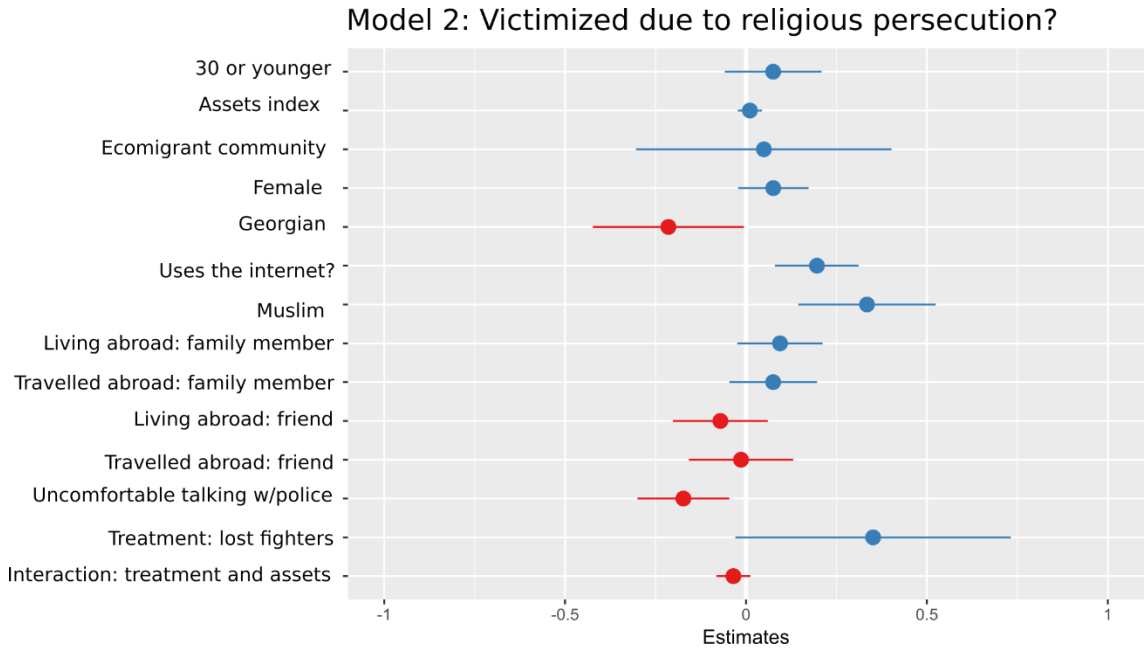


The above findings have a number of implications. First, deep religious belief is more prevalent among individuals in communities that have lost members to the conflict. This suggests that this factor may be associated with the development of extremism. At the same time, Christians and Muslims and Georgians and non-Georgians express comparable levels of deep religious belief. One interpretation of this finding is that, if radicalization is indeed associated with deep religious belief, then Christians in Georgia may also be radicalized to a certain extent. This would suggest that the problem with radicalization may not limited to the Muslim community in Georgia. Indeed, recent events involving violent far right extremism support this conclusion. However, this finding requires further research. Specifically, a lab or survey experiment looking at priming these features and measuring their impact on attitudes would be useful.

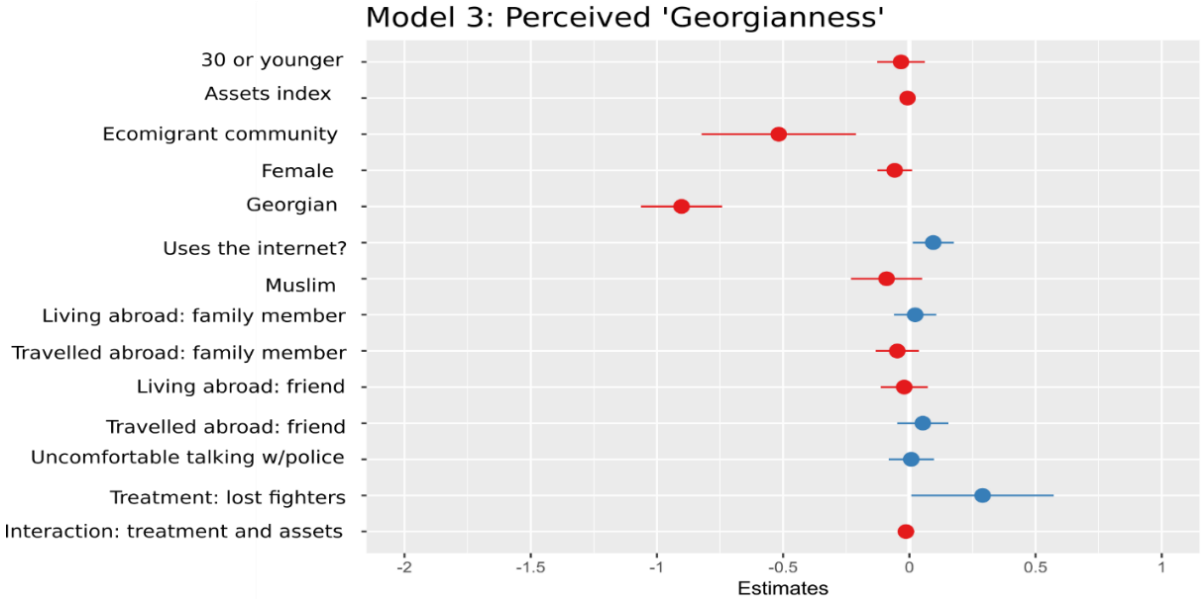
Second, individuals that are wealthier on average have a deeper sense of religious belief. This runs in contradiction to the hypothesis that the lack of economic opportunity available to individuals drives radicalization. However, since better off individuals in communities that have lost individuals to the conflict are less deeply religious, caution is warranted in interpreting this finding in a strong manner. A number of different interactions could be at play, with other untested environmental factors leading to the observed pattern.

Although deep religious belief is associated with communities that have lost members to the conflict, significant caution is warranted when translating this into policy prescription. Religious freedom, including the freedom to deeply believe in one's religion should not be persecuted. Indeed, the (perceived) persecution of one's religion is the second factor that the study looked at in terms of attitudinal differences between communities.

The study finds that controlling for other factors, communities that have lost members to the conflict are not significantly more or less likely to view their religion as persecuted. However, Muslims are more likely than Christians to believe that Islam is persecuted. Among individuals who use the internet, the sense of religious persecution is stronger. No other factor was a significant predictor of whether or not an individual was more or less likely to have a higher or lower sense of religious persecution.



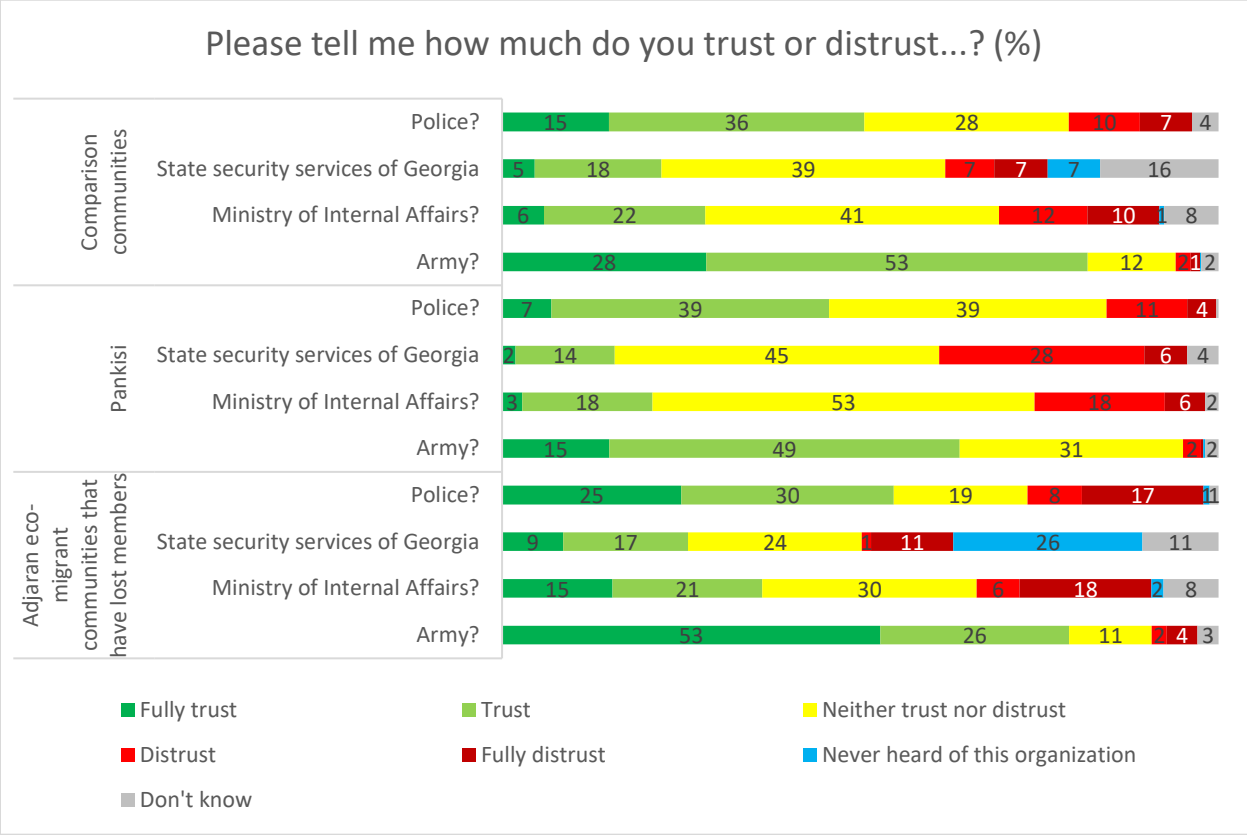
The third factor that potentially predicts radicalization is distance from the national community, with lower levels of identification being expected to be associated with radicalization. The data suggest that there is no significant difference between the communities that have and have not lost members to the conflict. Rather, Georgian ethnicity and eco-migrant community status are the only statistically significant predictors of whether or not individuals identify with the Georgian community. Both variables are associated with greater closeness to the national community.



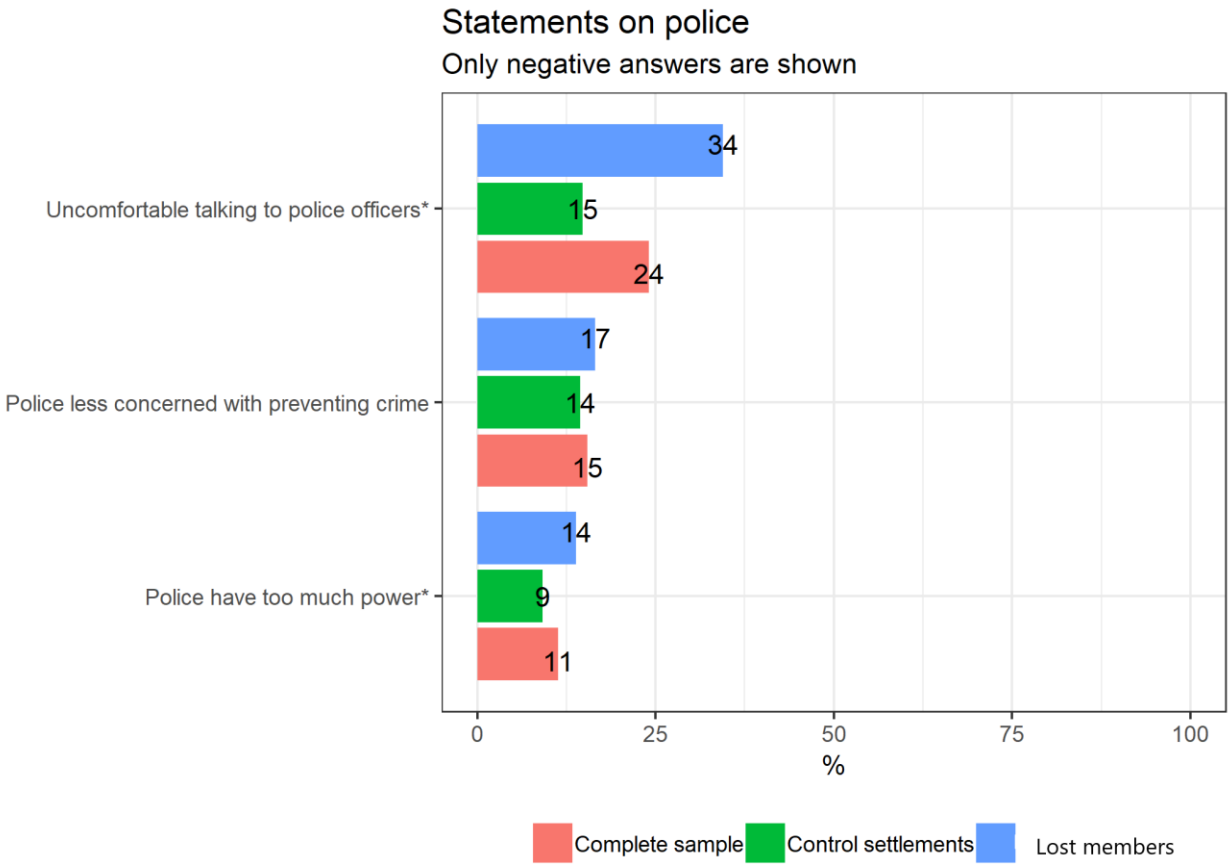
Potential consequences

Since losing members to the conflict in Syria and Iraq, affected communities perceive their communities to be more heavily policed and monitored. This report is agnostic on the effectiveness of security measures at preventing more individuals from becoming foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq. However, if security measures are overbearing, they have the potential to nudge individuals towards radicalization through increasing the sense of estrangement from the national community and sense of persecution of Muslims in Georgia.

To understand attitudes towards the security related institutions, a number of questions were asked to the participants of the study, including their trust in the police, MIA, and Army. The results suggest that people in Pankisi are significantly less likely to trust these institutions than individuals in the comparison communities.



Besides looking at whether people trust the above security related institutions, the survey looked at attitudes specifically towards police. The results suggest that people are significantly more likely to be uncomfortable talking to the police in communities that have lost individuals to the conflict and to think that the police in their communities have too much power. The results do not suggest a significant difference when it comes to whether people think that the police are more focused on finding radicals than preventing crime.



The above data suggests that there is clearly a problem with the relations between security related institutions and the communities that have lost members to the conflict. As in other contexts, trust between security related institutions and the public is critical, because communities are the first line of defense in efforts to combat crime – including violent extremism. While the likely cause of the issue is the policing efforts of these communities, the data also suggest several solutions. During the qualitative data collection, a number of individuals brought up the fact that local people were not hired to work in the police force, even though there was a strong interest in the communities in working in the police. Given the lack of trust, a community policing approach also likely has the potential to improve relations between the communities that have lost individuals to the conflict. Finally, a general sensitivity training for members of the police is likely to improve the situation, given that Muslims generally feel a sense of persecution in the studied communities, whether or not they lost members to the conflict or not.

What people from communities that have lost members want

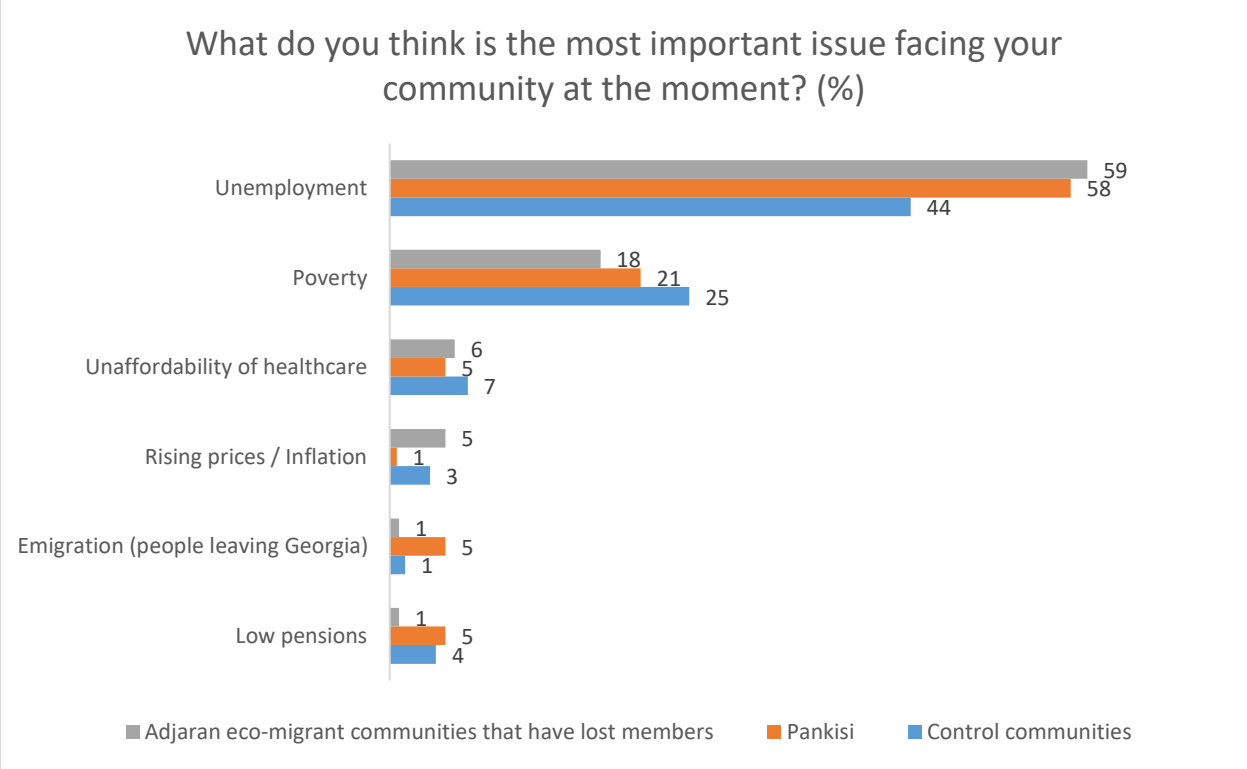
Although there are multiple potential community level push and pull factors that deserve the attention of actors working towards preventing and countering violent extremism in Georgia's Muslim communities, any intervention aimed at preventing further radicalization should be supported by the community affected. Hence, this section attempts to answer two questions:

- What do people from affected communities want and how is this different from otherwise similar communities?
- Which organizations/entities do people from affected communities want to address these needs?

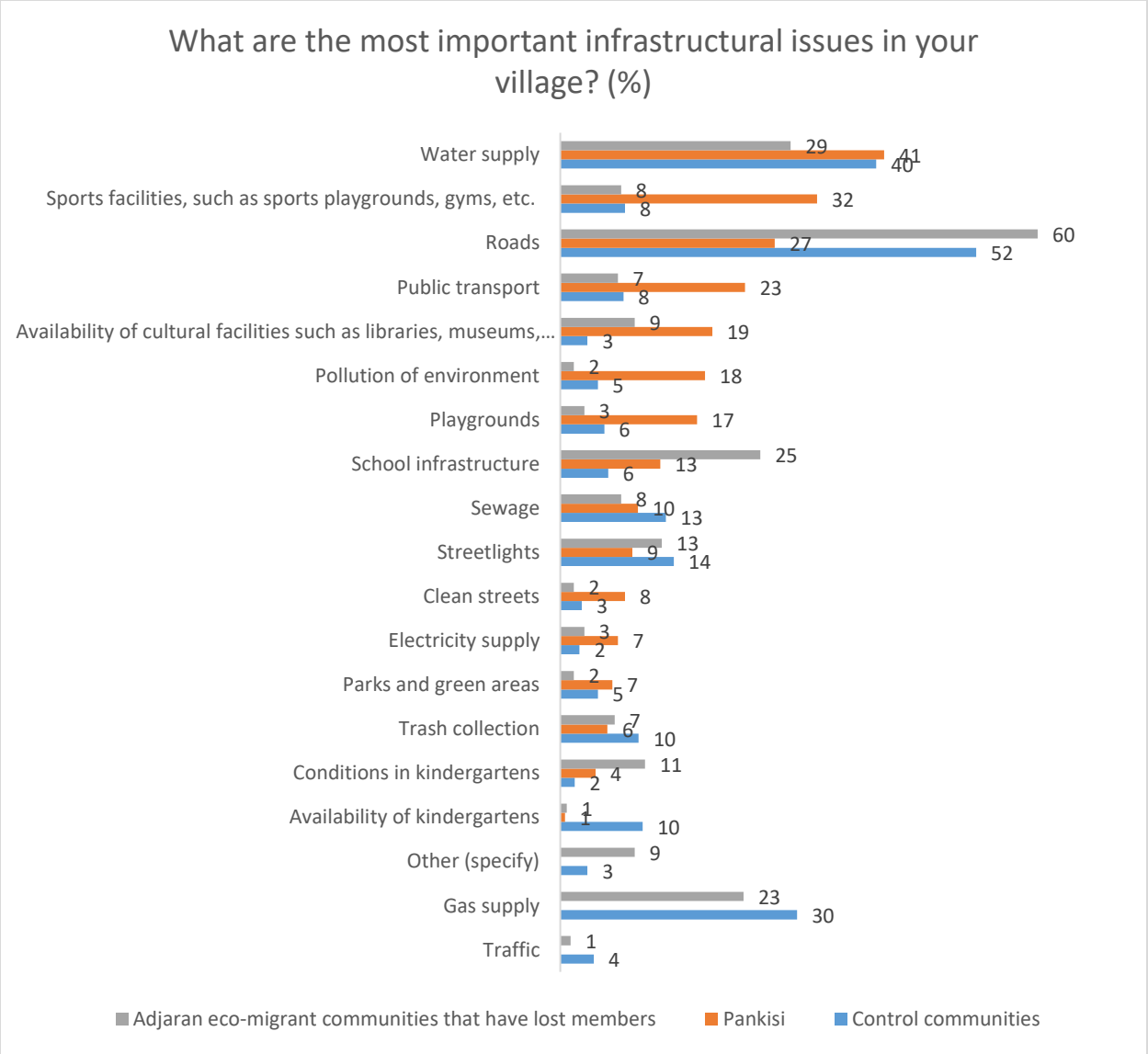
In general, it is important to note that the issues discussed in this section should not be thought of as drivers of radicalization/resilience, unless otherwise noted.

Problems in communities

To start to answer the above questions, the survey asked people what the largest issue was in the country and within their community specifically. Like almost everywhere in Georgia, the most common responses were related to the economic situation. Unemployment was named by 59% of respondents in Adjaran eco-migrant communities that lost people to the conflict and by 58% of the population of Pankisi. In contrast, only 44% of comparison communities reported the same. Instead poverty was named slightly more often in comparison communities.



In terms of infrastructural issues, people in Pankisi are most likely to identify the water supply, followed by the availability of sports facilities, and roads as the most significant infrastructural issues in their community. By comparison, roads were named most often in the Adjaran eco-migrant communities that lost members and comparison communities.



Note: The percentages on the above chart do not sum to 100%, because respondents were allowed to select up to three issues from the list presented to them.

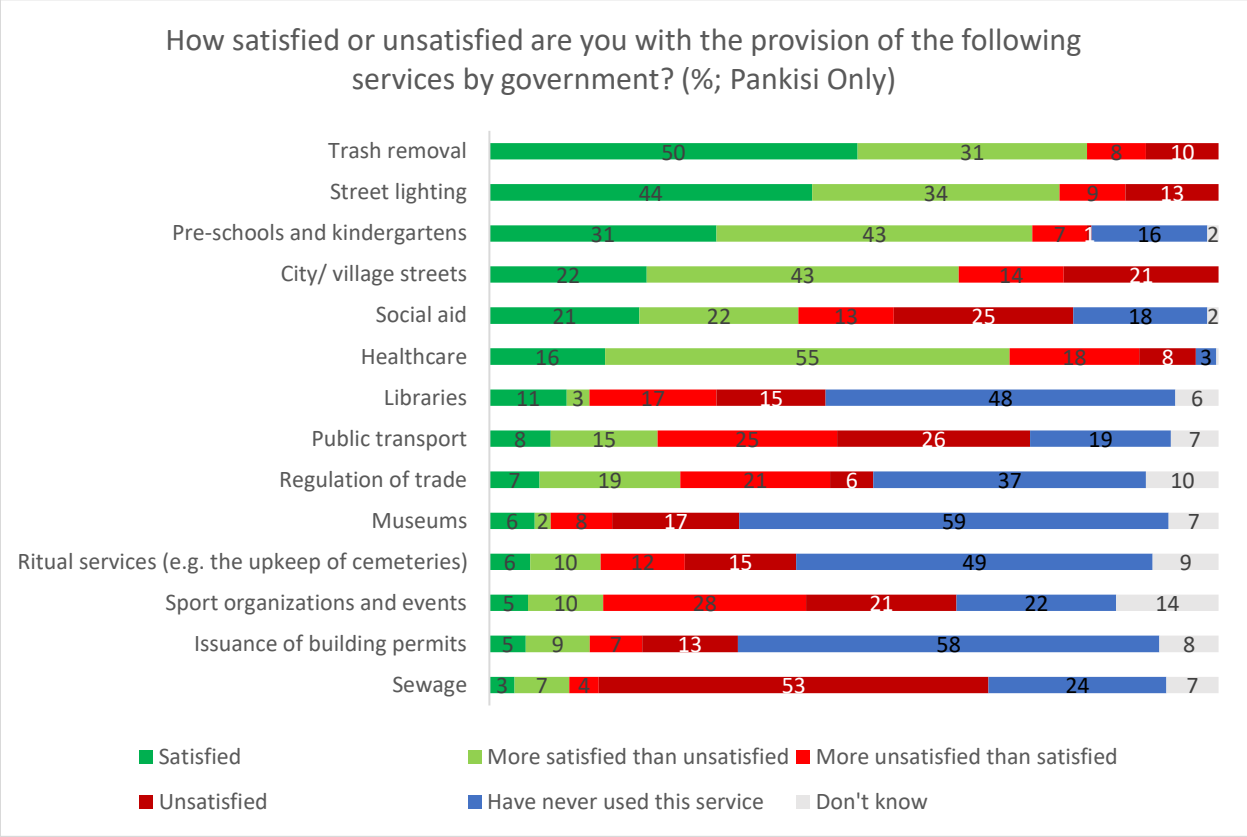
Besides these main issues, communities that have lost people to the conflict note a number of infrastructural issues significantly more often than in communities that have not lost people to the conflict. People in Pankisi are significantly more likely to highlight a lack of sports and cultural facilities. One third of Pankisi residents (32%) reported that the lack of sports facilities was one of the most significant infrastructural issues in their community. A further 19% named the availability of cultural facilities such as libraries and museums, and 17% mentioned playgrounds. Clearly, a lack of entertainment facilities in Pankisi distinguishes it from both similar communities that did not lose people to the conflict and other communities that did lose people to the conflict. In contrast to Pankisi, the other communities that have lost people to the conflict more closely resemble the communities that have not. The only distinctive issue they note at a significantly different rate than in control communities is school infrastructure: while 25% of Adjaran eco-migrant communities that have lost people to the conflicts note

school infrastructure is one of the most significant infrastructural problems in their community, only 6% of people in comparison communities note the same and 13% in Pankisi.

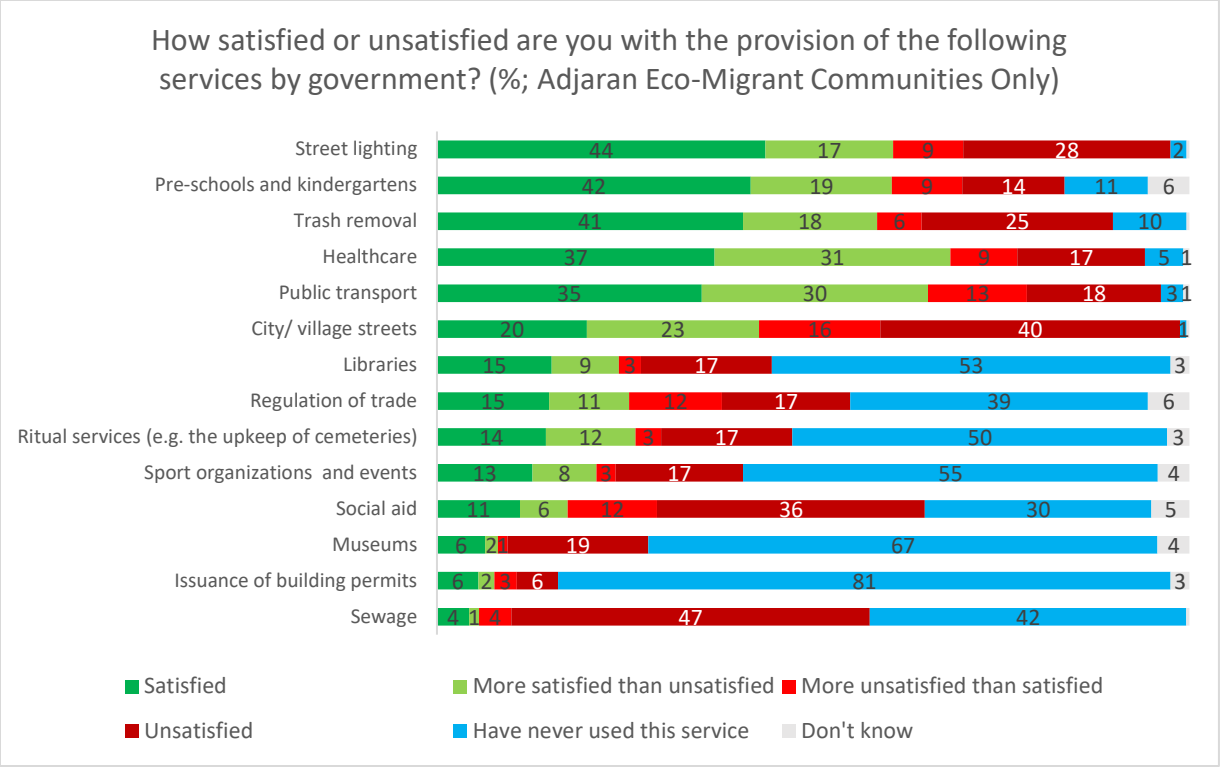
Satisfaction with government services

Government services play an important role in citizens' lives. From organizing some parts of public transport to dealing with trash removal, government effectiveness is crucial to quality of life. To understand government performance on the survey, respondents were asked about fourteen different government services.

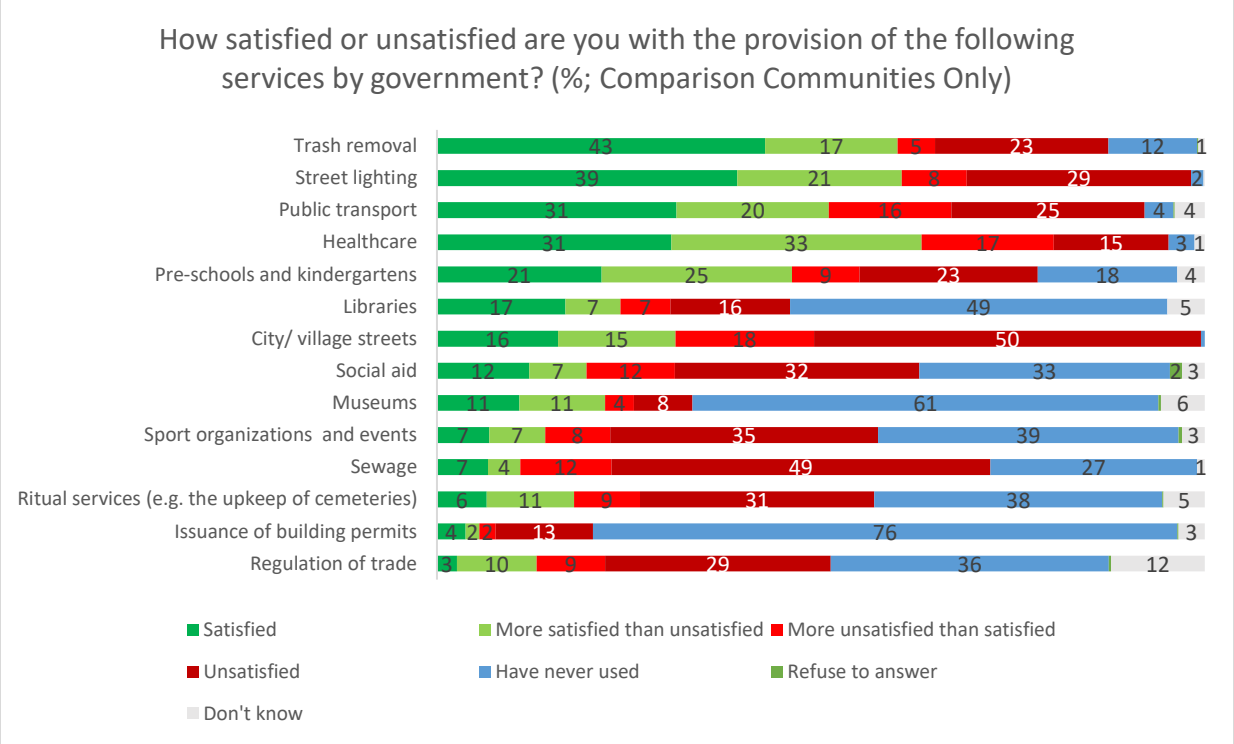
In Pankisi, the results suggest that a large share of citizens have not used a large share of government services. At least 15% of citizens have not used 10 of the 14 services asked about. Among those who report they have used the government services asked about, people are relatively satisfied with trash removal, street lighting, pre-schools and kindergartens, and streets. By comparison, people are relatively dissatisfied with social aid, libraries, public transport, museums, ritual services, the organization of sports events, and sewage.



As in Pankisi, in the Adjaran eco-migrant communities that lost people to the conflict, a significant share of people report that they have not used many of the services asked about. At least 30% had not used eight of the fourteen services asked about. Among those that had used the services asked about, people were more satisfied than not with street lights, pre-schools and kindergartens, trash removal, and public transport. By comparison, people were more unsatisfied than not with streets, social aid, museums, and sewage.



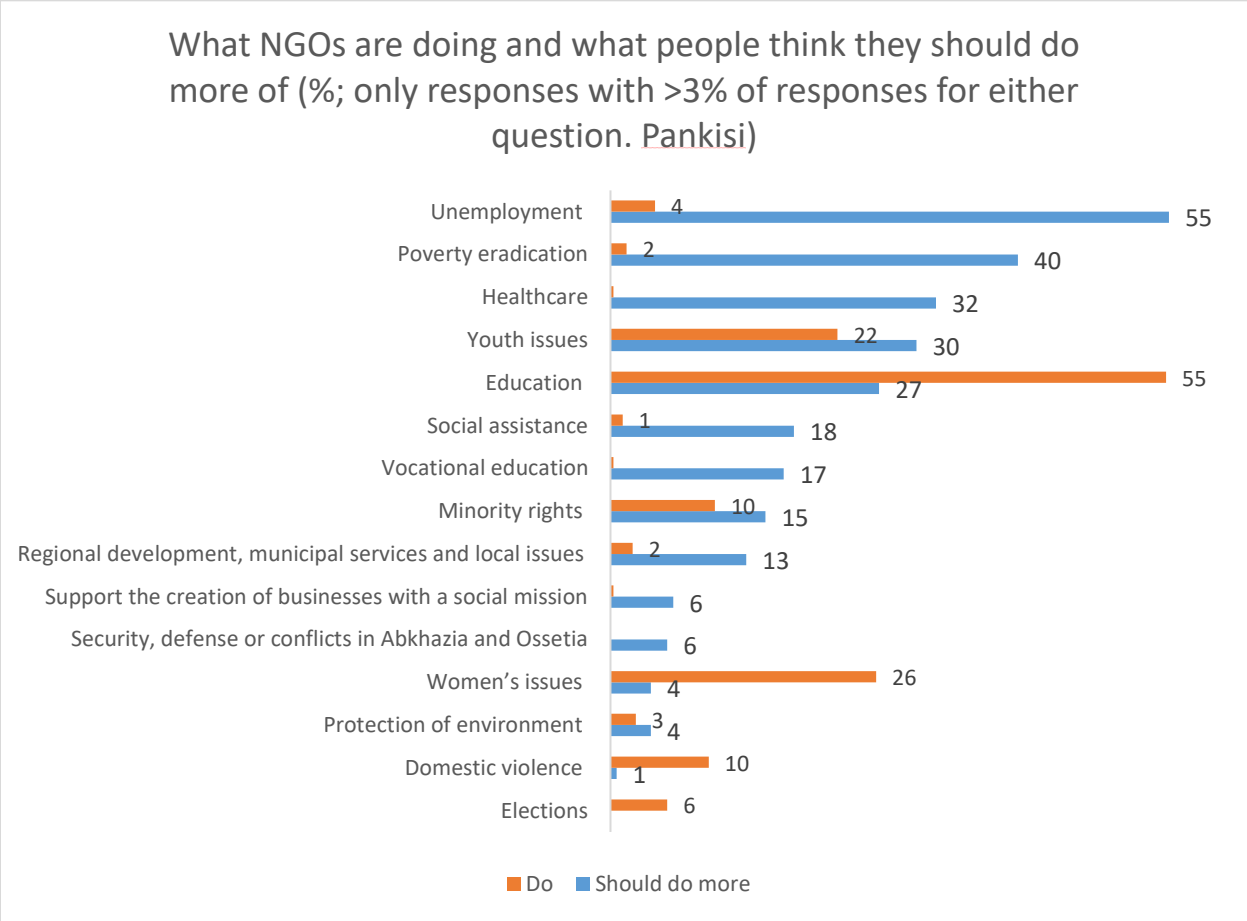
In the comparison communities surveyed within the project, a comparable share of respondents have not made use of government services, and satisfaction with services is broadly comparable, with the exception that more people are satisfied than dissatisfied with museums in comparison communities.



The above data leads to several findings. First, government service delivery appears to be relatively comparable in the comparison and affected communities. Second, a large share of people have not used a large share of the government services available to them. This may reflect a lack of knowledge of potential services the government provides or a lack of need. Third, people are generally dissatisfied with the provision of sewage, the regulation of trade, and sports related activities. By comparison, people are relatively satisfied with trash removal and street lighting.

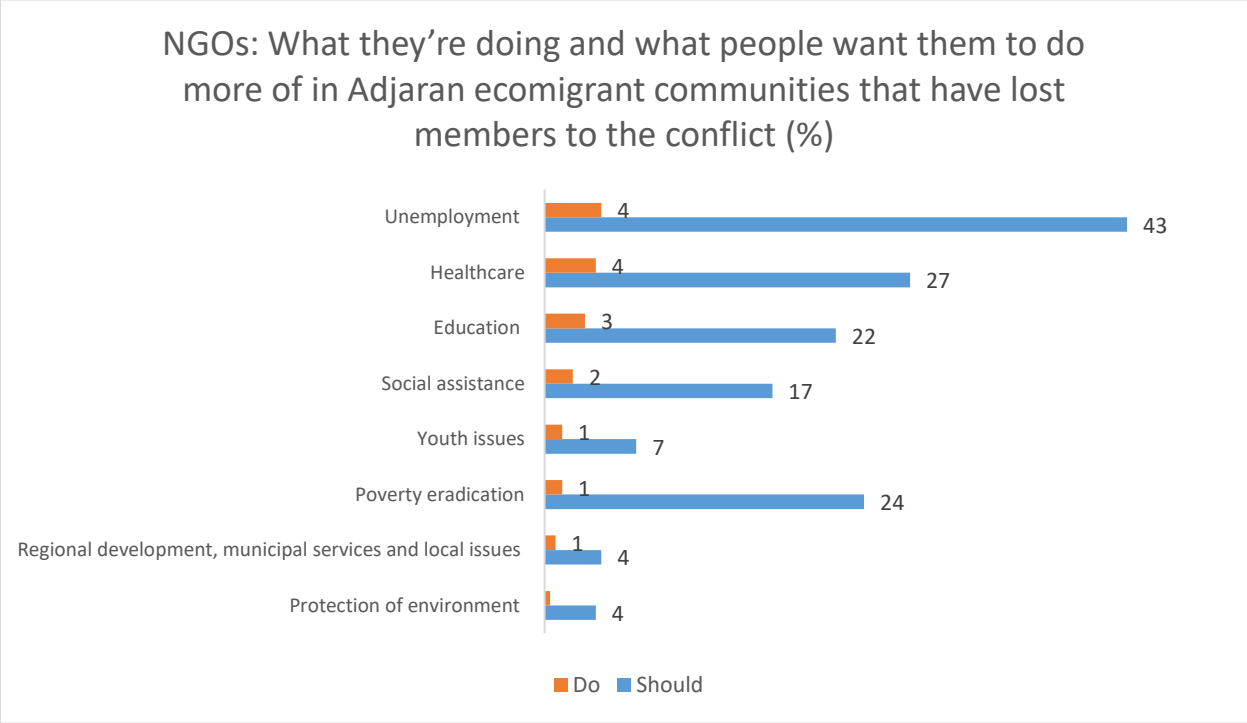
What people want from NGOs and international actors

Besides government, NGOs can play an important role in helping communities. To understand what people want from NGOs, two questions were asked on the survey – what do people want to see from NGOs in their community and what do they want to see NGOs do more of. The results suggest that in the Pankisi Gorge, the most common type of activities people see NGOs doing involve education (55%). This was followed by work on women's issues and youth issues. By comparison, the issues that people think NGOs should work on most often are employment, poverty eradication, and healthcare. Youth issues is the next most common response, followed by education, social assistance, and vocational training. Minority rights and regional development were also named by over 10% of the population.

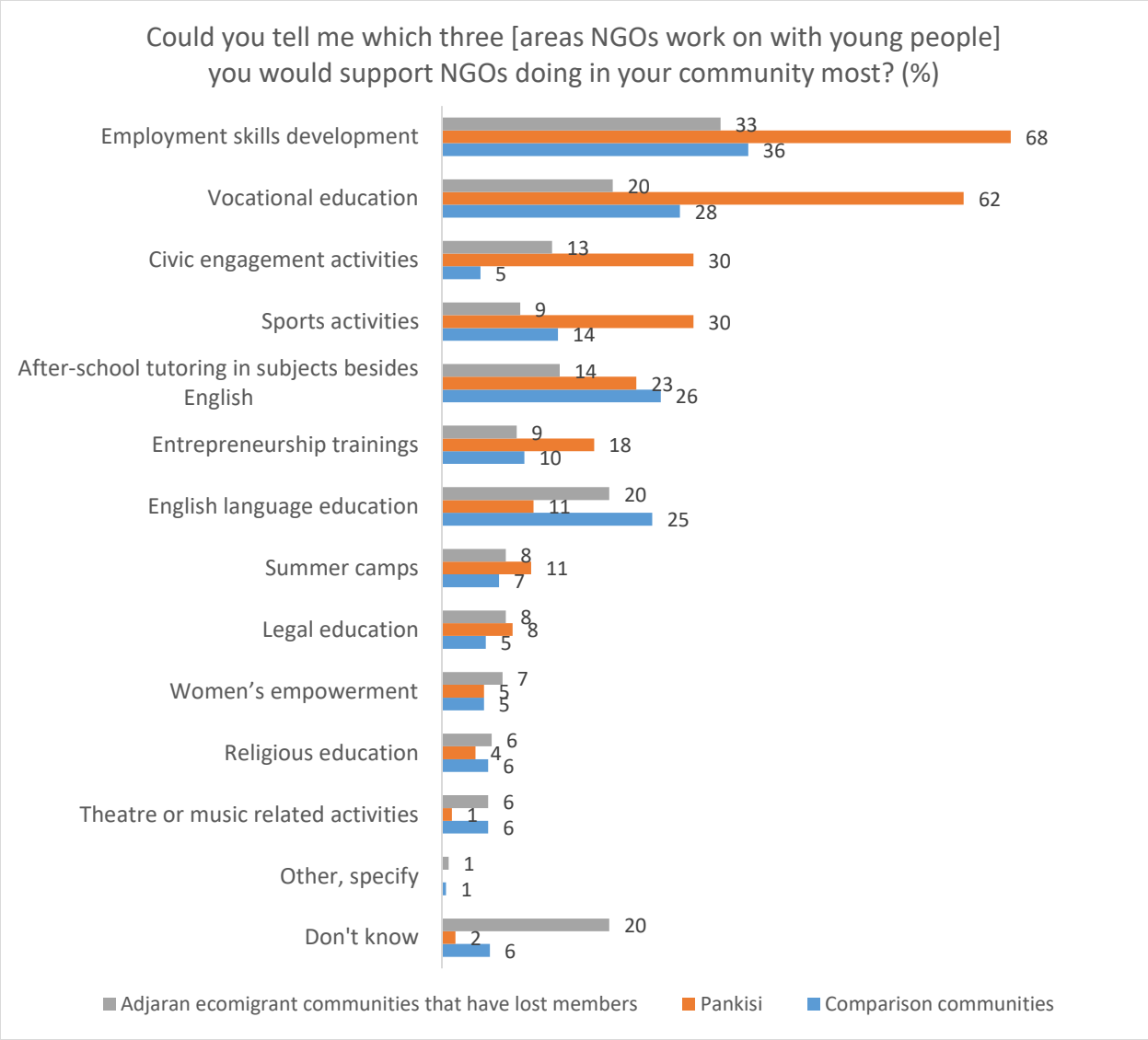


In contrast to the relatively clear results in Pankisi, the overwhelming finding from Adjaran eco-migrant communities that have lost members to the conflict is that they do not see NGOs working in their community. In total, 78% of people in Adjaran eco-migrant communities report that they don't know what

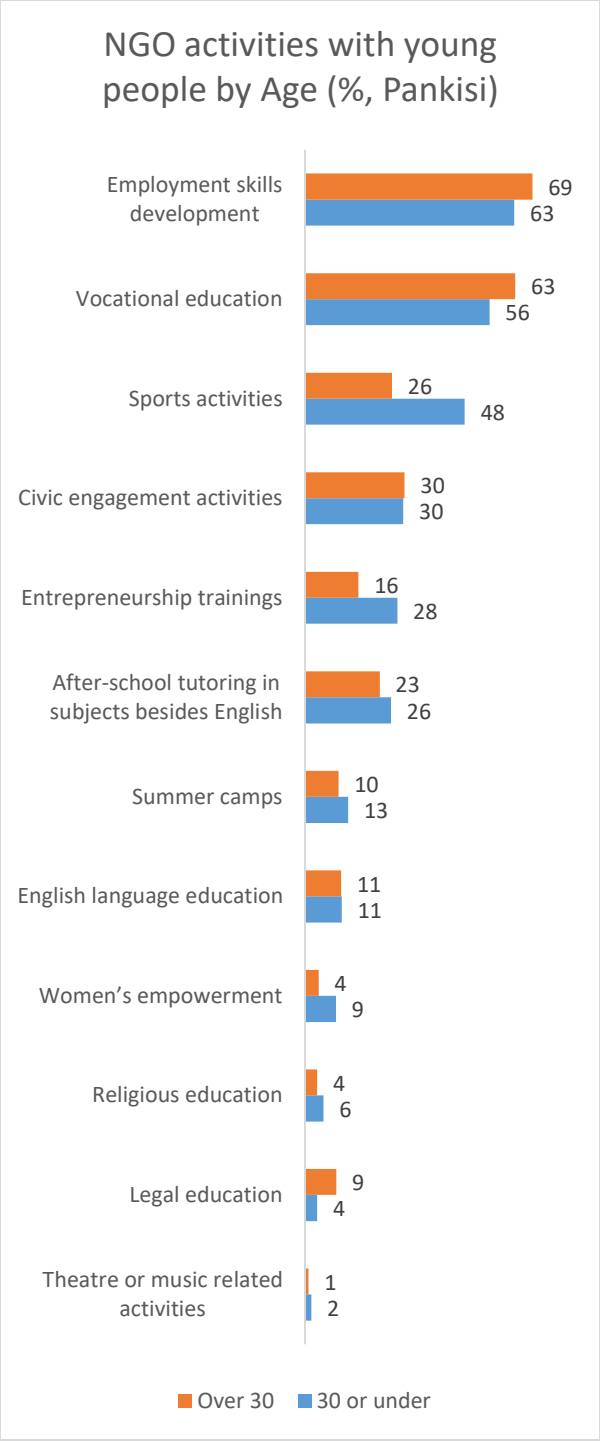
NGOs are doing in their community or that they do not see NGOs working in their community. No response option to the question about what NGOs do in their community received more than 4% of responses. However, there is a demand for NGO activities in these communities. The issues that people are most interested in resemble those that people are interested in in Pankisi with unemployment, healthcare, and poverty eradication at the top of the list, followed by education, social assistance, and youth issues.

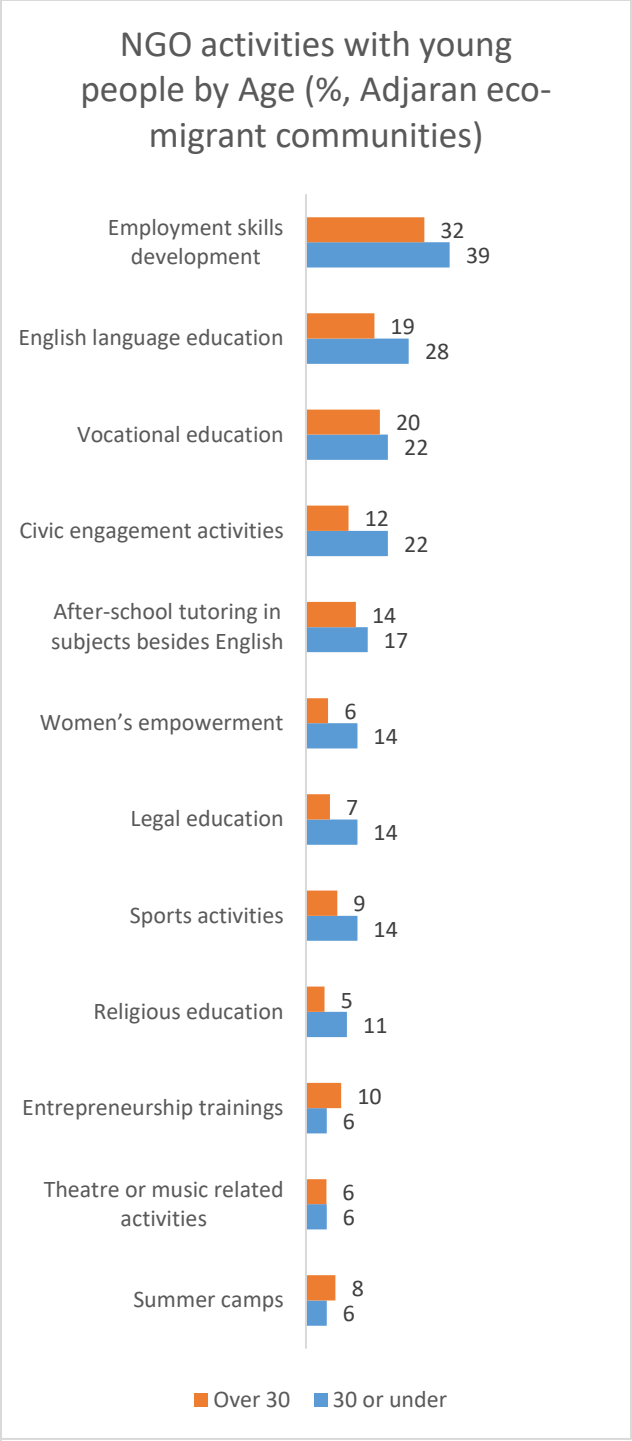


The survey also asked specifically about what types of programming people want to see NGOs carry out with young people. The results suggest that in Pankisi, the number one issue is skills development, followed by vocational education, civic engagement, and sports activities. In Pankisi, a relatively large share of people also reported that they think there should be entrepreneurship training for young people, compared to either control communities or Adjaran eco-migrant communities that have lost someone to the conflict. In Adjaran eco-migrant communities that have lost someone to the conflict, skills development for young people is also the most common response, followed by vocational and English language education.

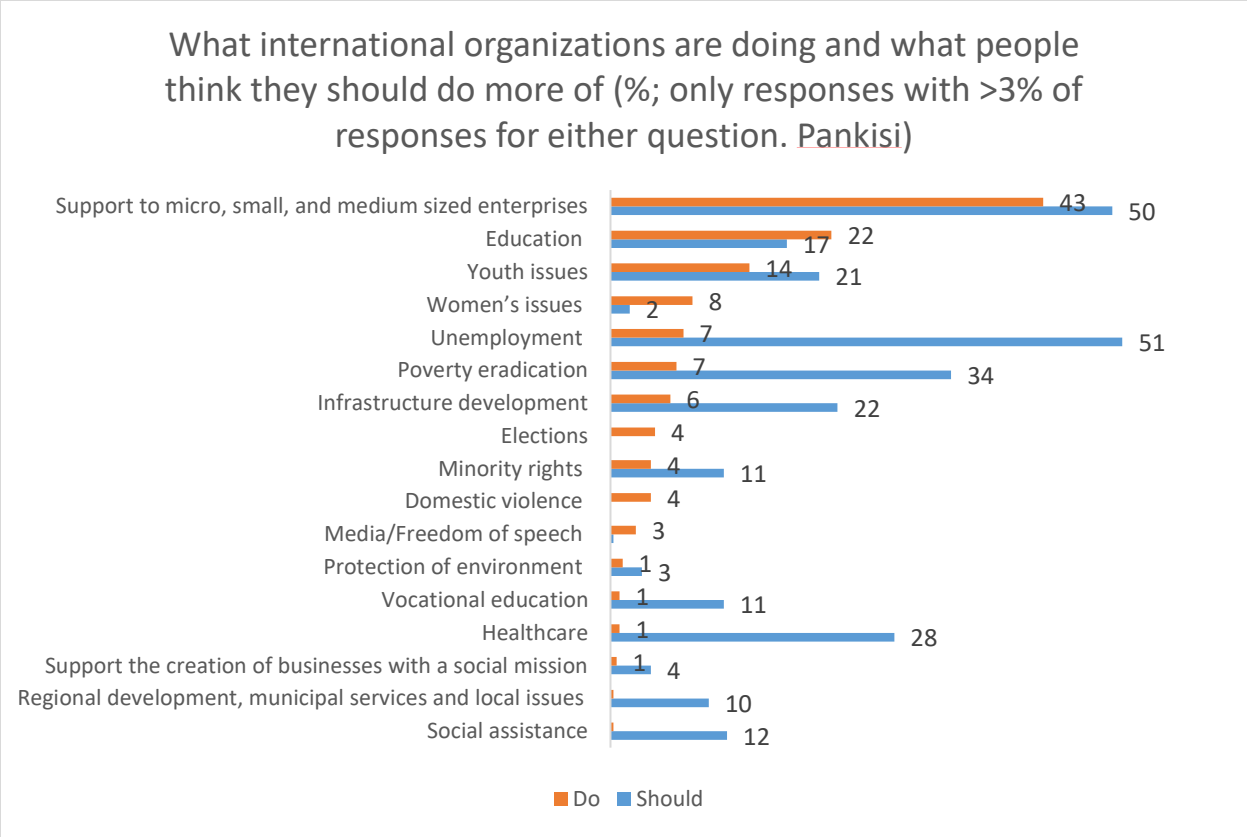


Younger (30 or under) people have similar views to older people in Pankisi and Adjaran eco-migrant communities that have lost people to the conflict when it comes to what they would like to see NGOs do with young people for the most part. However, there are several notable exceptions. A significantly larger share of young people in Pankisi would like to see NGOs host sports activities and have entrepreneurship trainings. In Adjaran eco-migrant communities that have lost members to the conflict, the data suggest a larger share of young people are interested in employment skills development, English language education, and civic engagement activities.

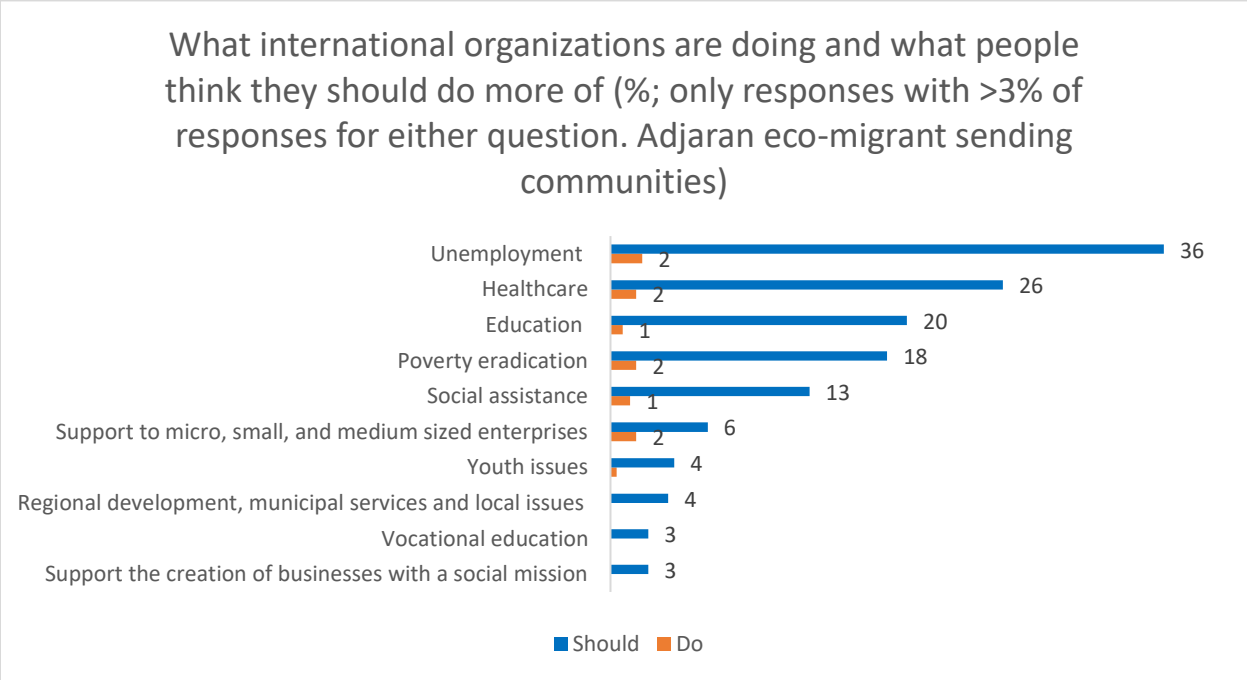




The survey also asked the same questions about what people see and want from international organizations. In Pankisi, the main thing people see international organizations working on is support to micro, small, and medium sized enterprises. This was followed by education, youth issues, and women's issues. The issues that people want international organizations to work on most include unemployment; support to micro, small, and medium sized enterprises; poverty eradication; healthcare; and youth issues.



In Adjaran eco-migrant communities, again it is clear that almost no one sees international organizations working in their communities. In terms of what people would like them to do, unemployment and healthcare again top the list. This is followed by education and poverty eradication.



The above results provide a number of insights into what the communities that have lost members to the conflict want from local and international actors besides the government. First, people's expectations of NGOs are unlikely to match what NGOs can reasonably provide. Healthcare, unemployment, and poverty eradication were the main issues that people want NGOs to work on more. None of these, in a very direct sense, are the issues that NGOs work on. However, they do hint at the fact that there is a demand for projects that improve the economic situation generally.

Second, there are issues that NGOs work on that people want to see more of. For example, about half of the population of Pankisi noted that they see NGOs working on education, and at the same time 27% report that NGOs should work more on this issue. This suggests that there is likely a demand for scaling and/or diversifying NGO educational programming in Pankisi. Similarly, NGOs commonly work on youth issues, and people in Pankisi see them working in this area. This again suggests there is a need to increase work on youth issues and education.

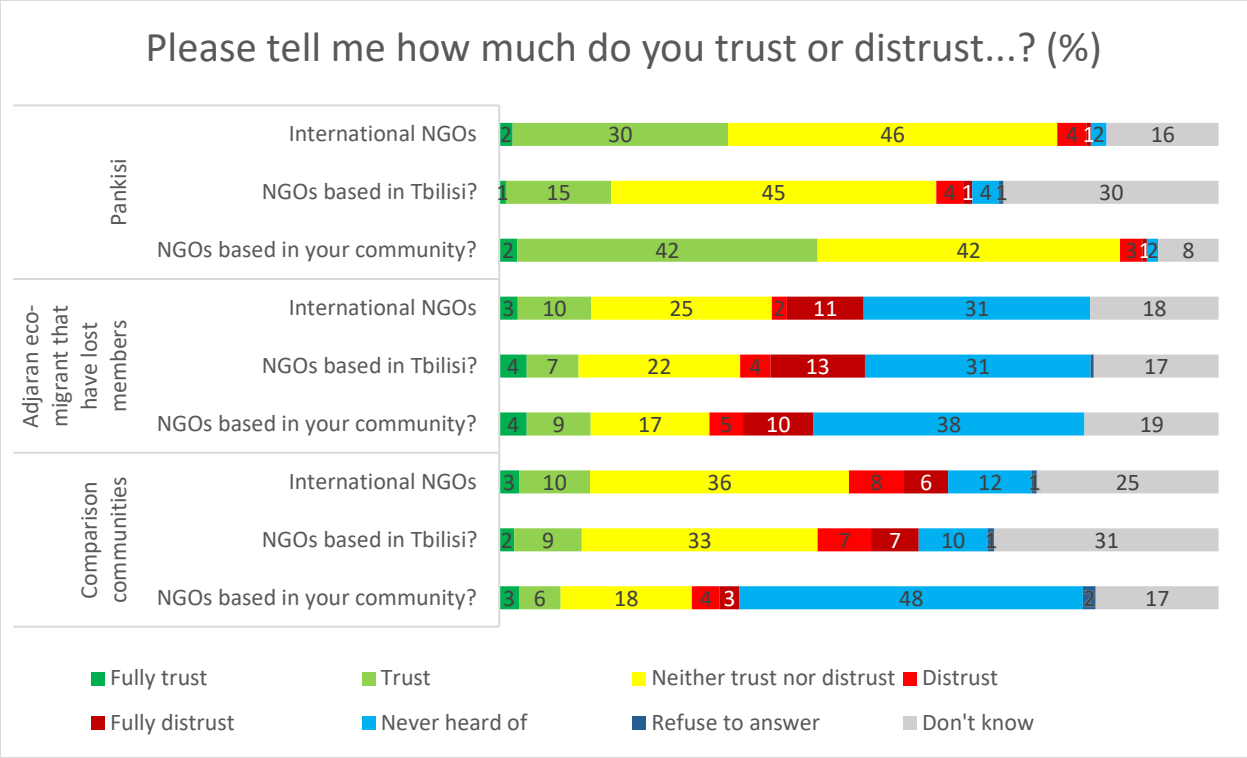
Third, there is relatively clear evidence that NGOs are not working with Adjaran eco-migrant communities, at least at any scale, given that a large majority of people were not aware of any NGO activities in their communities. This suggests a clear need to work with these communities given that there is evidence that some people in these communities are at risk of radicalization.

Fourth, when working with youth, the main issue that people want to see NGOs working on is skills development. In Pankisi, there is a particular interest in vocational education. In Adjaran eco-migrant communities that have lost people to the conflict, there is a relatively large interest in English language education. In Pankisi there is also a strong interest in sports activities.

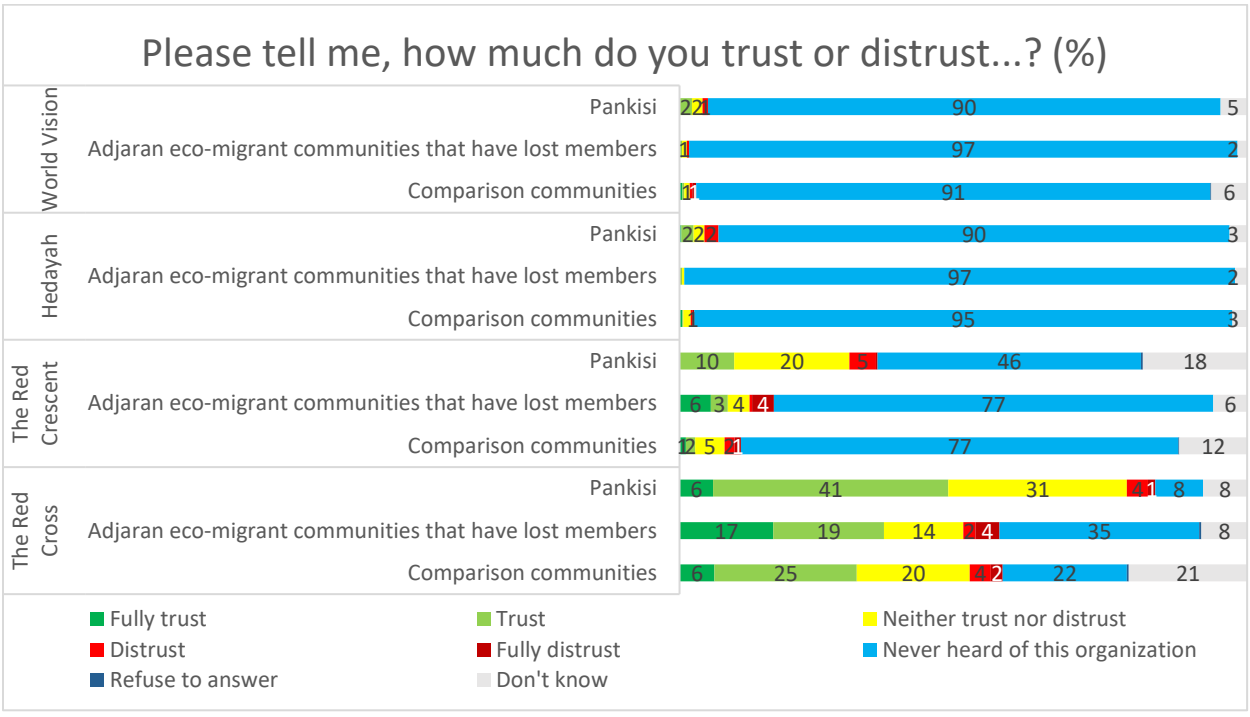
Who should supply what's demanded?

While it is relatively clear what people want, which entities and organizations do people want to provide it? To understand this issue, questions were asked about how much people trust a variety of actors, including NGOs, international organizations, and government institutions.

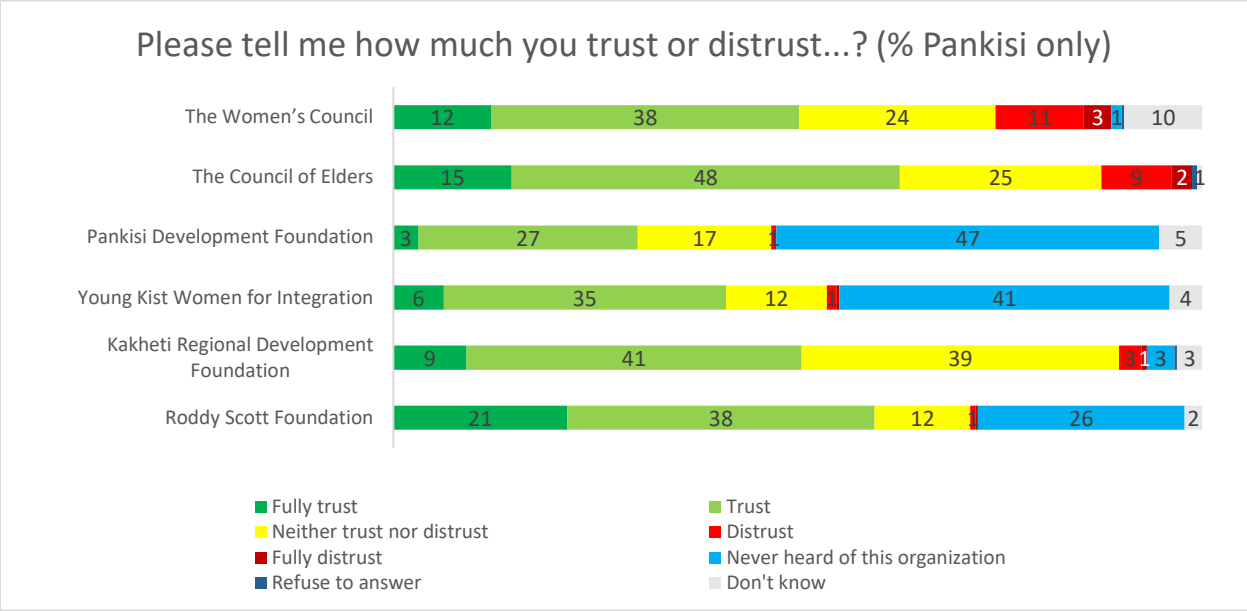
The results suggest that NGOs are generally trusted. However, trust is higher in local and international organizations compared with Tbilisi-based institutions in Pankisi. While 44% of Pankisi trusts NGOs based in their community, only 16% trust Tbilisi based NGOs and 32% trust international NGOs. In contrast, people in Adjaran eco-migrant communities that have lost people to the conflict appear to not distinguish between different types of NGOs. The same is true of the comparison communities. Notably, in Adjaran eco-migrant communities a large share of individuals report they have never heard of such organizations, reinforcing the point that such organizations are not working in these communities.



When it comes to specific non-governmental actors, the vast majority of individuals report they have never heard of them, with the exception of the Red Cross, no matter which community is considered. Importantly, as an individual in the Pankisi Gorge pointed out to the research team upon seeing this data, many in Pankisi think of all NGOs as in some way related to the United Nations. Hence, it can be concluded that in general, national level NGOs and international organizations are not so well known.



While national and international organizations are not well known, people in Pankisi are generally aware and trusting of the organizations that work in their community. The survey asked about attitudes towards six different Pankisi based institutions, including the Women's Council and the Council of Elders. The results suggest that almost everyone is aware of the Women's Council and Council of Elders. People are also generally aware and trusting of locally based NGOs.



Overall, when it comes to actors, it is clear that people in Pankisi are more trusting of local and international institutions than national ones. At the same time, relatively few people are aware of specific Tbilisi based institutions. In Adjaran eco-migrant communities, there is a low level of awareness of NGOs and international institutions in general, again reinforcing the lack of attention these communities get from such organizations.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The data and analysis within the report lead to a number of conclusions and recommendations.

First, after controlling for a number of factors, religion (i.e. being a Christian or Muslim) is not associated with deep religious belief or a sense of distance from the national community, two factors that may reasonably be believed to be associated with radicalization. Hence, to speak only of Islamic radicalization in Georgian society misses the mark. Rather, the data suggests that there is a larger problem with radicalization in Georgia that likely affects a meaningful share of society. Indeed, recent events with the far right in Georgia suggest that the country is likely to face problems with violent extremism from a variety of different ideologies. Hence, it is recommended that:

- Efforts at countering radicalization in Georgia focus on all forms of extremism rather than solely on jihadist extremism.

Second, a sense of religious persecution is not associated with the communities that have lost members to the conflict after controlling for a number of factors. However, it is associated with Muslim faith. The sense of persecution that Muslims feel in Georgian society, while not unique to communities that have lost individuals to the conflict, is a potential driver of radicalization. This suggests a clear need for Georgian society to develop a greater acceptance of Islam. While not the only path towards increasing tolerance, a number of studies have shown that inter-group contact increases acceptance between groups (see Allport 1954). This includes a number of studies in Georgia (See CRRC 2017; Mestvirishvili et. al. 2017). Hence, it is recommended that:

- Programming encourage inter-faith dialogue across Georgia;

This recommendation is particularly important given the fact that Muslims in communities that lost members to the conflict are significantly less likely to have friends that are not their religion or ethnicity compared with Muslims in similar communities that have not lost members to the conflict. Hence, it is recommended that:

- Programming encourage inter-ethnic dialogue;
- Programming with young people should encourage their interaction with different ethnic groups (particularly in the case of Pankisi) and different religious groups (particularly in the case of Adjaran eco-migrant communities);

The communities which have lost members perceive the securitization of their communities. This fact is reflected in the data, which suggests that people in communities that have lost members are significantly less likely to trust security related institutions. Moreover, individuals in these communities are significantly more likely to report they are hesitant to speak with the police and to think that the police have too much power in their communities. This likely suggests a problem with policing in communities that have lost members. Without trust in the police, individuals will be less likely to report suspicious activities to the authorities. Moreover, the negative interactions with authorities have the potential to further drive radicalization. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the Ministry of Internal Affairs:

- Consider a community policing strategy in communities that have lost members to the conflict;
- Give preference to community members when hiring police;
- Carry out religious sensitivity training for police officers throughout the country.

With access to government services, the study finds that a significant share of the public have not used a large number of government services. However, this is not unique to the communities that have lost members to the conflict. This suggests that a lack of access to government services is not driving radicalization. However, it does suggest that the government should likely increase awareness among the public of the services they have access to. Hence, it is recommended that both local and national government:

- Increase awareness of government services among the population.

When it comes to what people want from different institutions, the data suggests that community expectations of NGOs are unlikely to match what NGOs can reasonably be expected to deliver. Healthcare, unemployment, and poverty eradication were named as the issues people are most interested in seeing NGOs work on. However, these issues are rarely the explicit domains of NGOs, particularly outside of humanitarian contexts. Despite this, these interests suggest a community demand for NGO-led economic development projects. One of the main types of programming that people reported they wanted from international actors was support for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, buttressing this conclusion. When it comes to what sectors of the economy there is most interest in developing, agriculture came in first and in Pankisi tourism second. Hence, it is recommended that:

- Projects aimed at supporting micro, small, and medium sized enterprises, particularly in the agriculture and tourism sectors, continue to be supported and/or scaled in Pankisi;
- Projects aimed at supporting the above be developed for Adjaran eco-migrant communities.

Even though economic development is the main issue that community members want NGOs to work on, there is also significant demand for programming on other issues. The most common issue people in Pankisi see NGOs working on is education. At the same time, a quarter of the public reported they would like to see NGOs do more education related activities. This suggests that there is likely a demand for scaling and/or diversifying NGO educational programming in Pankisi. Besides existing programs, people in Pankisi express strong interest in vocational education and training; entrepreneurship training for young people; and skills training more broadly. In Adjaran eco-migrant communities that had lost members to the conflict, the demand for educational programming was also present, and particularly for English language education. Based on these findings it is recommended that:

- Additional funding be directed to scaling existing educational programming in Pankisi;
- Vocational education and training programs be established that residents of the Pankisi Gorge will have greater access to (e.g. through scholarships, another form of preferential access to already existing VET institutions; or the establishment of a VET institution in Pankisi itself);
- Additional educational support programming be provided for Adjaran eco-migrant communities, particularly in the field of English language education.

When it comes to infrastructure, there were a number of issues distinctive to the communities that had lost individuals to the conflict. In Pankisi, the water supply was the most commonly mentioned issue. However, residents of Pankisi also clearly noted a lack of entertainment and cultural facilities such as sports fields, playgrounds, and museums. Such facilities are particularly important for young people. Indeed, young people in the Pankisi Gorge were significantly more likely than older people to point to sports as something they would like to see NGOs do with young people. Based on these findings, it is recommended that:

- Facilities and funds are provided for young people to participate in sports and cultural activities in Pankisi;

Among a number of the experts spoken to during the expert validation workshop, concerns over violent sports such as wrestling and boxing were brought up and extensively discussed. The research team considers this a reasonable concern. In addition, some research suggests that team sports help young people develop social skills and build social capital (CRRC 2011). Hence, it is recommended that:

- Activities aiming to engage young people in sports activities focus on team sports.

Aside from the above, there is clear evidence that NGOs are not working with Adjaran eco-migrant communities at any scale. The vast majority of eco-migrant community members do not see this type of organization in their community. The same is true with regard to international organizations. This suggests that particular attention should be given to programming in these communities. While the relative and absolute number of people from these communities that have gone to fight in Syria and Iraq is relatively small compared with Pankisi, there is still a clear need to attempt to prevent radicalization from spreading to these communities. Hence, it is recommended that:

- The donor community dedicate funding to NGO and development related activities in Adjaran eco-migrant communities.

When it comes to who should implement programming, the data suggests that local organizations have a clear advantage over Tbilisi based ones. In Pankisi, trust was significantly higher in local NGOs than either international or Tbilisi based organizations. At the same time, international NGOs were relatively well trusted. In general, local organizations will also have lower overhead than either Tbilisi based organizations or international ones. Given these factors, working with local organizations is likely to deliver more for less. Hence, it is recommended that:

- Prioritize funding local NGOs, based in Pankisi;
- When donors anticipate difficulties in dispersing funds to local NGOs or with local NGO grant administration capacity, prioritize partnerships between international NGOs and local NGOs or Tbilisi based NGOs and local NGOs.

In Adjaran eco-migrant communities, the lack of NGOs presents a barrier to implementing the above recommendation. In this regard, NGOs that have experience working with similar communities are likely to be the best available actors. Hence, it is recommended that:

- Pankisi based organizations be consulted when setting up programing for Adjaran eco-migrant communities.

Finally, while this study has attempted to provide an overview of community level factors that may be drivers of radicalization and resilience to it as well as to provide an understanding of what the communities that have been affected want, programming should continue to be evidence based, through evaluating what is working and what is not. Moreover, new problems emerge and priorities change. Hence, it is recommended that programs working on preventing radicalization in Georgia:

- Carry out effective monitoring and evaluation of their programming, including:
  - Using rigorously selected control groups of communities (e.g. through matching as done in this study) and;
  - Surveys representative of the communities or target populations that program activities are carried out in.

Besides the straightforward operational benefits of strong monitoring and evaluation, this also has the potential to further enhance understandings of what drives radicalization, ultimately informing efforts to prevent it.

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