A hand is holding a smartphone in the foreground, with a computer monitor in the background. The monitor displays a grid of various social media icons, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and others, in different colors. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the text overlay.

MEDIA AND DISINFORMATION IN GEORGIA

Patterns of Consumption, Public Perceptions,
and Fact-Checking Practices

2025

MEDIA AND DISINFORMATION IN GEORGIA: PATTERNS OF CONSUMPTION, PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS, AND FACT- CHECKING PRACTICES

2025

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INTRODUCTION

The spread of disinformation and propaganda is considered one of the primary factors driving democratic backsliding worldwide.¹ Authoritarian leaders actively use disinformation to influence public opinion, fuel political polarization, and suppress opposition groups.² Both traditional mass communication tools and modern technologies, such as social media, are used to disseminate disinformation and propaganda.

Alongside the spread of disinformation, in authoritarian states there are continuous attacks on free media in various forms, which result in increasing bias of media aligned with the ruling regime, censorship and the self-censorship of independent outlets. As a result of disinformation and restrictions on media freedom, the information environment becomes one-sided, closed, and polarized, making it significantly more difficult for citizens to access reliable and verified information. Thus, restrictions on media freedom and the spread of disinformation are often linked to consequences such as declining trust in the media and political institutions, political nihilism, and acute political polarization.³

According to the 2023 Information Barometer, access to quality information in Georgia is partly restricted due to an information environment saturated with disinformation and hate speech, which affects both the shaping of public discourse and the public's ability to detect disinformation. Moreover, the level of media literacy remains critically low due to insufficient government efforts in this direction.⁴ At the same time, researchers often note that Georgian media is characterized by a high level of political polarization and bias.⁵

In recent years, one of the main challenges of the Georgian information environment has been the government's deliberate and organized attempts to manipulate it, encompassing both television and social media, and manifesting primarily in the systemic and coordinated dissemination of anti-Western narratives.⁶ This situation has especially deteriorated in 2024–2025, after the government, alongside disinformation campaigns, began actively targeting free media through violence and repressive legislative changes.⁷

Considering this situation, it is important that empirical research identifies how Georgian citizens assess the country's information environment, as well as their abilities to seek, evaluate, and verify information. The results of such research will help democratic actors respond appropriately and effectively to the challenges of the Georgian information ecosystem and to the real needs of its citizens.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection Method

The aim of this study is to examine Georgian citizens' perceptions of the country's information environment and to assess their abilities to search for, evaluate, and verify information.

1 Nord, Marina, David Altman, Fabio Angiolillo, Tiago Fernandes, Ana Good God, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2025. Democracy Report 2025: 25 Years of Autocratization – Democracy Trumped? University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Institute, 38.

2 Ibid

3 Sanchez, Gabriel, and Keesha Middlemass. "Misinformation Is Eroding the Public's Confidence in Democracy." Brookings, The Brookings Institution, 26 July 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/misinformation-is-eroding-the-publics-confidence-in-democracy>.

4 Media Advocacy Coalition. "Information Environment Barometer." 14.10.2024. mediacoalition.ge/informaciis-sicockhlisunarianobis-barometri/.

5 UNDP Georgia. "Georgian Media Is Pluralistic and Polarized." 23.04.2021. www.undp.org/ka/georgia/press-releases/kartuli-media-pluralistuli-da-polarizebulia.

6 Social Justice Center. "Disinformation in Georgia: Challenges and Solutions." 2024. socialjustice.org.ge/ka/products/dezinformatsia-sakartveloshi-gamotsvebi-da-gamosavlebi. CRRC-Georgia. "Spread of Anti-Western Narratives by the Government on Facebook." 2024. https://crrc.ge/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/sjc-facebook-monitoring-report_21oct2024.pdf.

7 Civil Georgia. "GD Rubber Stamps FARA, Broadcasting Law Changes, Revives Treason, Removes Gender, Excludes CSOs" 01.04. 2025. <https://civil.ge/archives/672937>.

For this purpose, CRRC Georgia conducted three surveys:

1. A telephone survey of the Georgian-speaking population (February 2025).
2. A face-to-face survey of the population of Adjara and of ethnic Armenians and Azerbaijanis living in the regions of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli (June 2025).
3. A follow-up telephone survey of the Georgian-speaking population (December 2025).

For the telephone surveys, respondents were selected using a simple probability design through random digit dialing. For the face-to-face survey, a multi-stage stratified cluster sampling method was applied. Within the Georgian-speaking telephone survey conducted in February 2025, a total of 2,311 respondents were interviewed, while in the survey conducted in December, 2,240 respondents were interviewed. The analysis of the survey results is based on weighted data and can be generalized to the Georgian-speaking population.

For the face-to-face survey, 879 respondents were interviewed: 220 in Adjara, 332 ethnic Armenians, and 327 ethnic Azerbaijanis, all Georgian citizens. The face-to-face survey data were weighted and can be generalized to the population of Adjara and, in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli, to the Armenian- and Azerbaijani-speaking populations.

In addition, prior to the quantitative surveys, two focus groups were conducted with consumers of pro-government and opposition media. A total of 16 adults residing in Tbilisi participated in the focus groups. Each group consisted of 8 participants, balanced by age and gender. At the recruitment stage, pro-government and opposition media consumption was determined by the question: “Which TV channel do you mainly use to get news and information?” The focus group guide was developed on the basis of a review of previous studies on the topic and the objectives of the current research. The guide included questions on media consumption habits, trust in media and other information sources, perceptions of disinformation, and its influence on social relations and political processes.

Data Analysis Method

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics include simple frequencies and cross-tabulations. For cross-tabulation analysis, the study’s key variables were compared across gender, age, type of settlement, and party affiliation.

In the report, numerical data and their illustrations are presented according to the following principles:

1. The results of the telephone surveys and the face-to-face regional survey are presented separately, and in each case it is indicated which survey the specific numerical data are based on.
2. As for the telephone surveys only, unless otherwise specified, the data and their visualizations are primarily based on the survey conducted in February 2025.
3. If the data obtained in the follow-up survey conducted in December 2025 differ by more than $\pm 5\%$ from the results of the February 2025 survey, this information is additionally noted.
4. If a question was asked only in the survey conducted in December 2025, this information is additionally indicated both in the text and in the illustration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of disinformation refers to false or misleading information that is deliberately disseminated in order to deceive others and gain political or social influence.⁸ It differs from misinformation, which describes the unintentional spread of false information, and malinformation, which refers to the dissemination of accurate information in a distorted context with the intent to cause harm.

⁸ Wardle, C. & Derakhshan, H. (2017). Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making. Council of Europe.

Disinformation often appears in diverse forms such as fake news, manipulative headlines and images, decontextualized facts, fabricated or AI-generated photos and videos, conspiracy theories, and information campaigns carried out through “bots” and “trolls”.⁹

While media outlets traditionally served as the primary channel for the spread of disinformation, in the digital era social media has become the main mechanism of its dissemination. This transformation has given disinformation a far more large-scale and chaotic character, since its disseminators are no longer limited to traditional media outlets or politically motivated actors but may also include any user. In addition, due to the accessibility of the internet and social networks and the design of their algorithms, disinformation spreads much more quickly and easily. This becomes especially problematic when citizens’ media literacy levels are low or when a culture of fact-checking is underdeveloped.¹⁰

According to an international survey conducted by Ipsos in 2019, disinformation is considered a “global pandemic”: 86% of people had encountered false information online at least once. Of these, almost the same proportion (86%) admitted that at least once, at least only initially, they believed a fake story to be true.¹¹ Meanwhile, the results of the OECD’s 2024 Searching for the Truth study indicate that although people generally express confidence in their ability to detect fake information online, in reality they still struggle to distinguish between true and false information: the overall score for truth-recognition ability was 60/100, meaning respondents correctly identified true and false news items only 60% of the time.¹²

Research shows that individual resilience to disinformation depends on three interrelated factors: the frequency of doubt - how often citizens suspect that the information they encounter might be false; verification behavior - how frequently they attempt to check the accuracy of questionable information; and verification strategies and sources - what criteria and resources they rely on when assessing the credibility of information.¹³ Frequency of doubt, combined with consistent and effective verification methods, significantly improves one’s ability to register disinformation. At the same time, however, existing studies show that frequent exposure to disinformation reduces trust in the media, which in the long run diminishes the motivation to fact-check and increases vulnerability to disinformation.¹⁴

Therefore, disinformation is a global challenge, and citizens’ media literacy plays a decisive role in addressing it, since it influences both the frequency and quality of doubt and verification. For this reason, research that examines citizens’ habits regarding in what manner, how often, and on what basis they question news stories; how they verify information; and which sources they consult is also critically important for Georgia. Such research will enable relevant stakeholders to think in an evidence-based and informed way about strategies to empower citizens in the fight against disinformation.

RESULTS

This section of the report presents the research findings. It is divided into subsections that address media consumption habits, factors influencing trust in the media, and general perceptions related to disinformation.

9 Tucker, J. A., Guess, A., Lyons, B., et al. (2018). Social Media, Political Polarization, and Political Disinformation. Hewlett Foundation.

10 Guess, A., Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2020). *Exposure to untrustworthy websites in the 2016 U.S. election*. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 4(5), 472–480.

11 Ipsos & Centre for International Governance Innovation. (2019). Fake News is seen as a global epidemic – CIGI-Ipsos Global Survey. Ipsos. <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-polls/cigi-fake-news-global-epidemic>

12 OECD. (2024). *The OECD Truth Quest Survey: Methodology and Findings*. OECD Digital Economy Papers, 369. Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/92a94c0f-en>

13 Ibid.

14 Altay, S. (2025). Exposure to Higher Rates of False News Erodes Media Trust: A Panel Study of Misinformation and Media Trust in Chile. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 27(2), 353–373. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2024.238277>

Media consumption habits

According to the results of the Georgian-language telephone survey, the Georgian public actively follows news on an array of topics (e.g., sports, weather, politics) through different mediums such as print media, television, radio, and social networks. Among respondents, 70% reported that they follow the news frequently, 7% sometimes, and 24% rarely. The results of the regional face-to-face survey show a similar trend: 66% of respondents said they frequently follow the news, 12% sometimes, and 23% rarely.

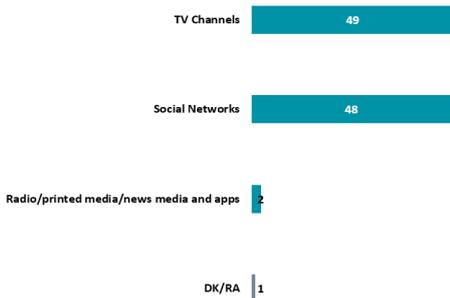
How frequently do you follow news? (%)
Georgian-language telephone survey



Chart 1: How frequently do you follow news? (%)

Citizens use various channels to access news. According to the results of the Georgian-language telephone survey, 49% of respondents get their news primarily through television, while 48% rely on social networks. A similar trend is observed in the regional face-to-face survey; however, in this case, social media is slightly more popular: 45% of respondents mainly use television channels to receive information, while 51% rely on social networks.

What is the main way you follow the news most often?(%)
Georgian-language telephone survey



What is the main way you follow the news most often? (%)
Regional face-to-face survey

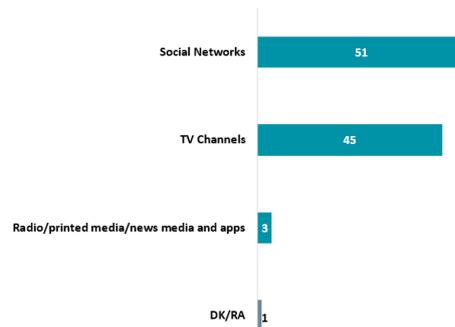
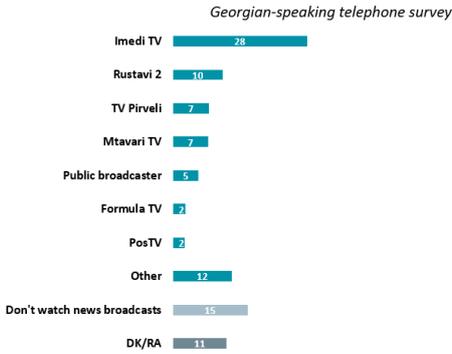


Chart 2: What is the main way you follow the news most often? (%)

It is noteworthy that news consumption through television is quite diverse. According to the Georgian-language telephone survey, 40% of respondents prefer TV channels affiliated with the ruling Georgian Dream party (“Imedi,” “Rustavi 2,” “PosTV”), while 34% prefer other television channels, among which “Mtavari Arkhi” and “TV Pirveli” lead with 7% each. Meanwhile, 26% of respondents either do not watch any television channels at all or declined to provide information about their TV-watching habits.

Which TV channel do you use most frequently to watch news? (%)



Which TV channel do you use most frequently to watch news? (%)

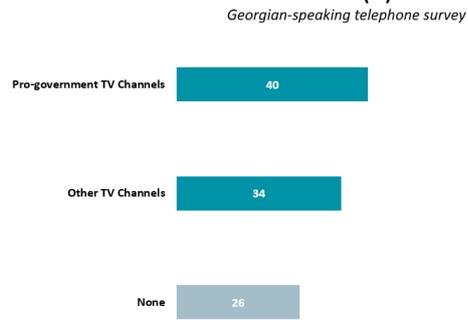


Chart 3: Which TV channel do you use most frequently to watch news? (%)

As for the results of the regional face-to-face survey, the most popular television channels overall are Imedi (29%), AzTV (11%), and Rustavi 2 (9%). Looking at specific regions, Imedi is the most popular channel in Adjara (49%), Armenia TV among the Armenian-speaking population (35%), and AzTV among the Azerbaijani-speaking population (49%).

Which TV channel do you use most frequently to watch news? (%)

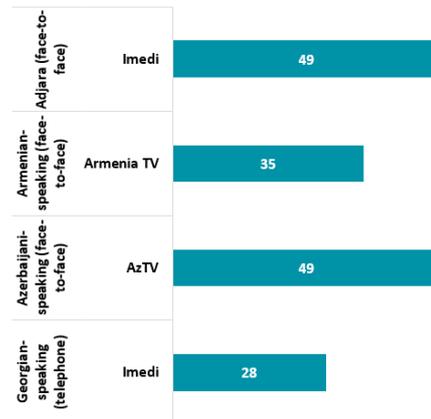


Chart 4: Which TV channel do you use most frequently to watch news? (%)

Since the frequency of media consumption does not in itself indicate trust in or a positive attitude toward the media, the study also asked citizens to describe the primary emotion they experience when following the news on particular television channels. In the Georgian-language telephone survey, 26% of respondents named sadness as their primary emotion, 19% reported satisfaction, and 11% reported anger. Notably, among viewers of the most popular channel, Imedi, the leading emotions are satisfaction (30%) and no emotion at all (24%). Among viewers of the most popular non-government channel, TV Pirveli, the predominant emotions are sadness (45%) and anger (23%). As for the audience of the Public Broadcaster, the leading emotions are no emotion at all (35%) and sadness (26%).

According to the results of the regional telephone survey, the most common emotions are no emotion at all (26%), satisfaction (24%), and anger (19%). In Adjara, the most widespread emotion is satisfaction (34%); among the Armenian-speaking population it is anger (33%); while among the Azerbaijani-speaking population it is no emotion at all (44%).

In conclusion, the presented data shows that the population of Georgia actively follows the news. The main sources of information are social networks and television channels, with the regional face-to-face survey highlighting an even stronger popularity of social networks. According to the Georgian-language telephone survey, the most frequently watched channel is Imedi (28%). The regional face-to-face survey also shows Imedi in the lead with 29%. However, the

picture differs across regions: among the Armenian-speaking population, the leading channel is Armenia TV (35%); among the Azerbaijani-speaking population, it is AzTV (49%); and in Adjara, Imedi dominates with 49%.

As for the emotions associated with watching television channels, in the Georgian-language telephone survey the leading emotion is sadness (26%), while in the regional survey the most common response is no emotion at all (26%). The emotions of viewers of individual channels also differ: according to the telephone survey, viewers of Imedi most often feel satisfaction (30%), whereas viewers of TV Pirveli mainly experience sadness (45%). In the regional survey, emotional reactions vary by region: in Adjara the most common emotion is satisfaction (34%); among the Armenian-speaking population it is anger (33%); and among the Azerbaijani-speaking population it is no emotion at all (44%).

Thus, both the telephone and regional survey data show that the public widely uses both television channels and social networks to receive news; however, their priorities and accompanying emotions differ significantly from one another.

Trust in media

After examining media consumption habits, one of the main objectives of the study was to assess the key factors that determine trust in the media. It should be noted that, according to the results of the December 2025 survey, a fairly widespread general distrust toward various sources of information is observed among Georgian citizens. When asked which source they trusted most for information related to social and political developments, 31% of respondents stated that they did not trust any source. The sources most frequently identified as trustworthy were family members, relatives, friends, or colleagues (27%), government representatives (16%), and the Church/religious figures (12%).

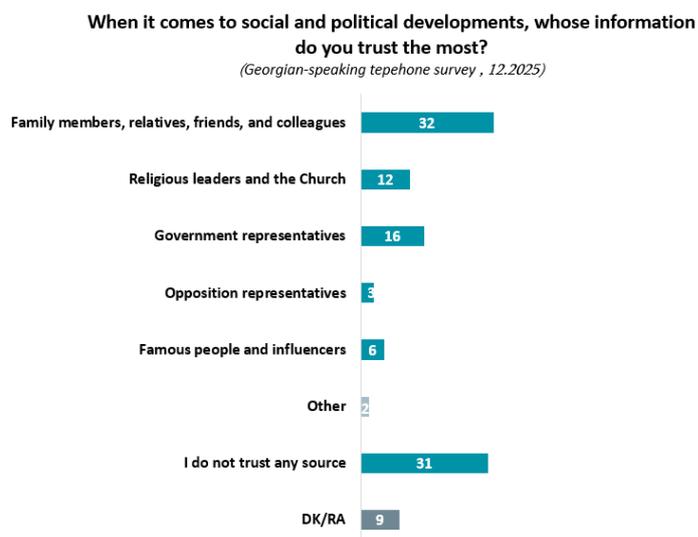
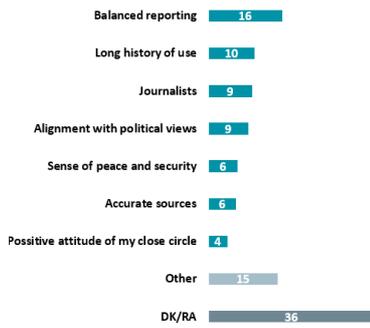


Chart 5: When it comes to social and political developments, whose information do you trust the most? (%) December 2025 Georgian-speaking telephone survey.

When it comes to the trust in media sources, respondents were asked to identify the main reasons that shape their trust toward the information source they rely on the most. Notably, according to the Georgian-language telephone survey, more than one-third of respondents (36%) had no opinion on this issue. For 16%, the most important factor for trust was balanced presentation of news. Another significant factor influencing media trust was a long history of use (10%). The results of the regional face-to-face survey likewise show that the most frequently mentioned factors of trust are a long history of use (25%) and balanced/bipartisan coverage (25%).

What is the main reason you trust the media you follow most frequently? (%)

(Georgian-speaking telephone survey)



What is the main reason you trust the media you follow most frequently? (%)

Regional face-to-face survey

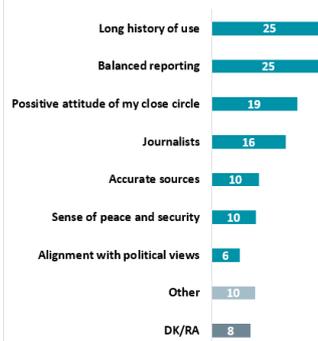


Chart 6: What is the main reason you trust the media you follow most frequently? (%)

As noted, according to the Georgian-language telephone survey, the most frequently mentioned factor of trust is balanced presentation of news, which is equally important across all age groups. This factor proved to be slightly more significant for women, residents of Tbilisi, and supporters of opposition parties (19% among Georgian Dream supporters and 23% among supporters of other parties). It is also noteworthy that a long history of media use becomes increasingly important with age (6% in the 18–34 age group, 13% in the 55+ group). This factor is relatively more important for Georgian Dream supporters than for supporters of other parties (13% vs. 8%).

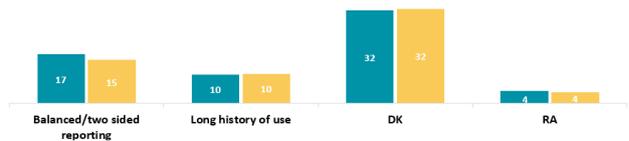
Main reason for trusting media X Age

■ 18-34 ■ 35-54 ■ 55+



Main reason for trusting media X Sex

■ Female ■ Male



Main reason for trusting media X political parties

■ Georgian Dream ■ Other parties ■ None

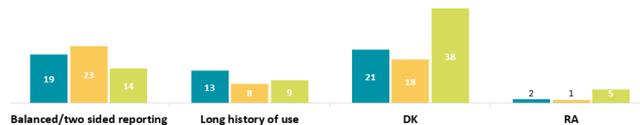


Chart 7: What is the main reason you trust the media you follow most frequently? (%) Cross-tabulation by gender, age, type of settlement, and party affiliation)

Perceptions of information credibility are influenced not only by content but also by the form of communication. Both the Georgian-language telephone survey and the regional face-to-face survey show that, in both cases, 62% agree with the view that the style of speech, emotions, and tone of voice are often just as important as the accuracy of the story itself.

Another important component in the perception of credibility is the role of the author. In the Georgian-language telephone survey, 55% of participants believe that the identity of the person delivering the news is often just as important as the content itself, while in the regional survey this figure is even higher (64%).

A significant difference emerges, however, when it comes to the demand for evidence. In the Georgian-language telephone survey, only 19% agree that a credible media outlet does not always need to provide evidence, whereas in the regional survey nearly half of respondents (49%) share this opinion.

The focus groups conducted in Tbilisi also revealed that pro-government media is trusted almost unconditionally by its consumers. Participants in this group emphasized that the most important factors in selecting a source of information and using it over the long term are the style of presentation and the sense of emotional comfort they experience while receiving the information (e.g., “I have watched since childhood, and that’s why I trust it”; “When I watch I don’t get too anxious”). By contrast, consumers of opposition media highlighted the need to obtain information from multiple sources (e.g., “None of them are fully objective, but opposition channels try harder to show us the truth”; “If I watch one, I then watch another as well, so I can compare and verify”).

In conclusion, trust in the media is a complex phenomenon shaped by multiple factors. Both the Georgian-language telephone survey and the regional face-to-face survey identified balanced/bipartisan coverage and a long history of media use as the most important factors. For participants in both studies, the style of news delivery was equally important (62%). However, the role of the presenter was emphasized more strongly in the regional survey than in the Georgian-language telephone survey (64% vs. 55%). Expectations regarding evidence were much stricter among participants in the Georgian-language telephone survey: only 19% agreed that credible media do not necessarily need to provide additional evidence, compared to 49% in the regional survey.

The focus groups conducted in Tbilisi further demonstrated that trust in pro-government media is determined by emotional comfort and long-term consumption habits, whereas trust in opposition media is shaped by the diversity of sources and the ability to cross-check information.

General perceptions of disinformation

To assess perceptions regarding the spread of disinformation, respondents were asked which medium they believe most often disseminates false or misleading news in Georgia. Among participants in the Georgian-language telephone survey, 46% identified social networks as the main source of disinformation, while 38% pointed to television channels. In the regional survey, 58% of respondents likewise considered social networks to be the primary medium through which false or misleading news spreads, while 29% attributed it to television channels. The role of social networks was highlighted especially often by Azerbaijani-speaking participants in the regional face-to-face survey (75%).

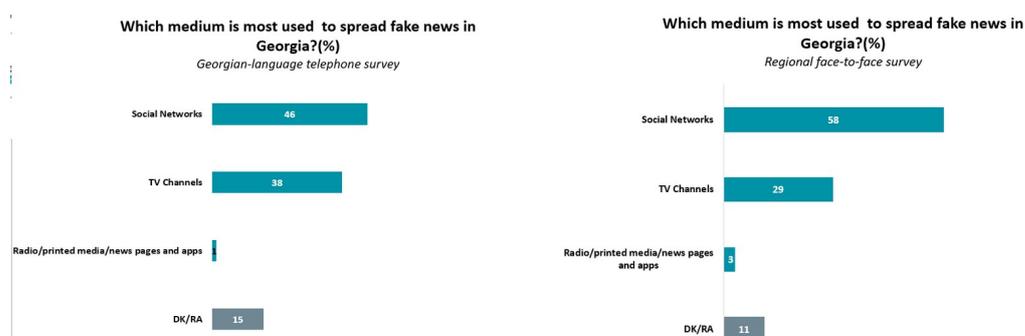


Chart 8: Which medium is most used to spread fake news in Georgia?(%)

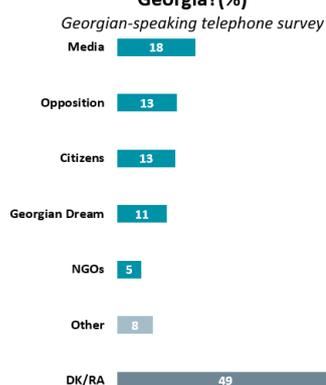
To assess perceptions of the credibility of news sources, participants in the Georgian-language telephone survey were also asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: (1) “ In general, lies spread faster than the truth in Georgia” and (2) “There are media outlets in Georgia, whose reports do not require extra checking.”

The majority of respondents (83%) fully or partially agreed with the statement that lies spread faster than the truth in Georgia. Only 19% of respondents fully or partially disagreed with the statement that there are media outlets in Georgia whose reporting does not require additional verification.

Nearly half (49%) of participants in the Georgian-language telephone survey either did not know or refused to identify specific actors responsible for spreading disinformation. Among those who did respond, the most frequently named actors were: the media (18%), the opposition (13%), citizens (13%), and Georgian Dream (11%). The share of respondents who did not know was also high in the regional face-to-face survey (36%). Among those who were able to identify specific actors, the most frequently mentioned were citizens (28%), the media (17%), and the opposition (11%).

Looking at individual regions, the most frequently cited actors were: the media in Adjara (24%), citizens among the Azerbaijani-speaking population (54%), and Russia among the Armenian-speaking population (13%).

Who is most responsible for spreading fake news in Georgia?(%)



Who is most responsible for spreading fake news in Georgia?(%)

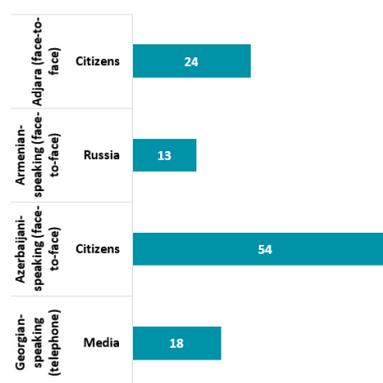


Chart 9: Who is most responsible for spreading fake news in Georgia?(%)

In the Georgian-language telephone survey, perceptions of actors responsible for spreading disinformation differ somewhat by age. Across all age groups, it is more or less equally difficult for respondents to name a specific actor. After this, the most common response is “the media,” which younger people mention slightly more often than middle-aged or older respondents. Older people are more likely to consider the opposition as the main disseminator (17%). “Citizens” are perceived as a threat equally by young (16%) and middle-aged respondents (15%), though the figure is lower among those aged 55+ (9%). By gender, the answer “don’t know” is more common among men (50%) than women (43%). The opposition is more often identified as a disseminator by women (16%) than by men (12%). “Citizens” were mentioned slightly more often by men (15%) than by women (11%). By settlement type, the answer “don’t know” is less common among Tbilisi residents (40%) compared to other urban areas (49%) and rural settlements (50%). “Georgian Dream” is more often identified as the main disseminator in Tbilisi (15%) than in other cities (11%) or rural settlements (9%). Perceptions of actors responsible for disinformation also vary clearly by party affiliation. Supporters of “Georgian Dream” most frequently name the opposition (32%). In comparison, 17% of other party supporters and 8% of unaffiliated citizens name the opposition. Conversely, “Georgian Dream” is most often identified as the main disseminator by supporters of other parties (37%), followed by unaffiliated citizens (11%), and least by Georgian Dream supporters themselves (3%). The “don’t know” response is especially common among unaffiliated citizens (52%), less so among Georgian Dream supporters (37%), and least among supporters of other parties (25%).

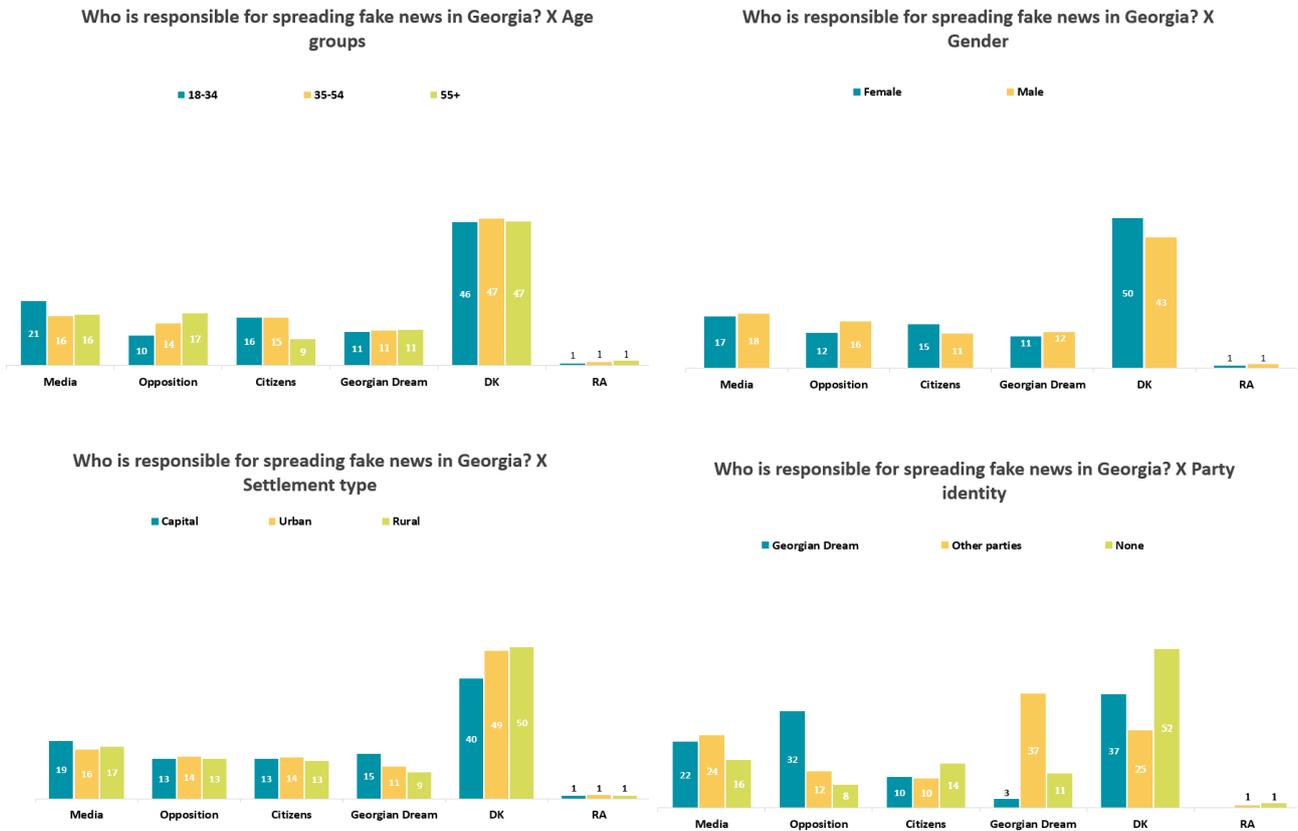


Chart 10: Who is most responsible for spreading fake news in Georgia?(%) Cross-tabulation by gender, age, type of settlement, and party affiliation)

Despite the public’s difficulty in identifying the main actors responsible for spreading disinformation, 91% of participants in the Georgian-language telephone survey believe that false or misleading news has a harmful impact on political events.

In overall, how does fake news influence Georgia?(%)
Georgian-speaking telephone survey

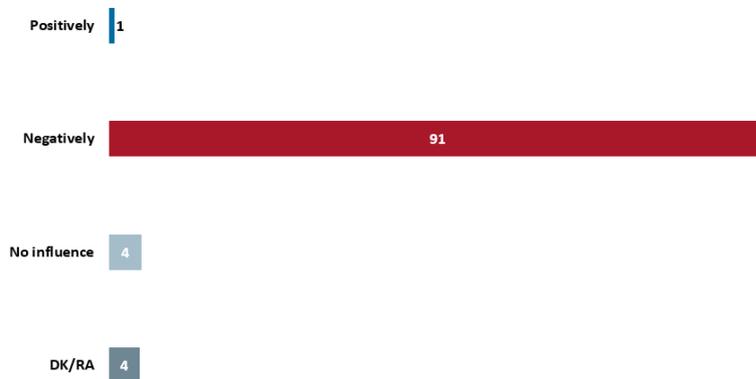
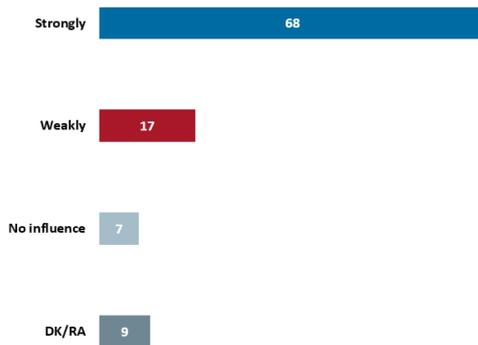


Chart 11: In overall, how does fake news influence Georgia (%)*(This question was not asked in the regional face-to-face survey.)*

According to the Georgian-language telephone survey, false or misleading news is perceived to have a strong impact both on political events (68%) and on interpersonal relations (73%). The regional face-to-face survey points to a similar trend: 54% of respondents believe that false or misleading news has a strong impact on political events, while 59% consider its impact on social relations to be strong as well.

How does fake news influence political events in Georgia?(%)

Georgian-speaking telephone survey



How does fake news influence social relations in Georgia?(%)

Georgian-speaking telephone survey

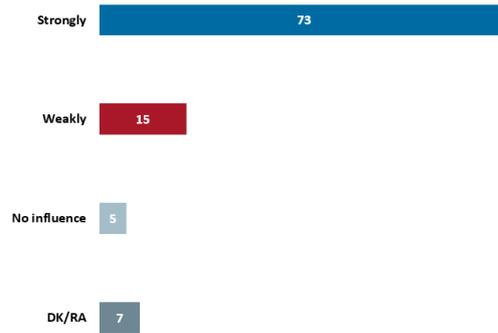


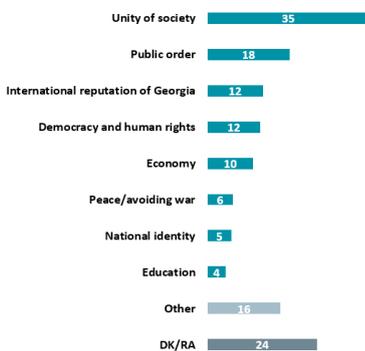
Chart 12: How does fake news influence political events and social relations in Georgia?

Of particular interest is the examination of what citizens mean when they speak about the negative effects of false or misleading news. To this end, respondents were asked which issues they believe are most harmed by the spread of such content. In the Georgian-language telephone survey, the most frequently mentioned area of harm was social cohesion/interpersonal relations (35%), followed by maintaining public order within the country (18%), Georgia’s international reputation (12%), human rights and democracy (12%), and the economy (10%). It is noteworthy that nearly one-fifth of participants (24%) either did not know or did not wish to specify which issues are most negatively affected by the spread of disinformation.

Participants in the regional face-to-face survey found it even more difficult to identify specific issues (36%). Among those who were able to do so, the most frequently mentioned were: social cohesion/interpersonal relations (25%), maintaining public order within the country (21%), human rights and democracy (19%), Georgia’s international reputation (18%), the economy (16%), EU integration/visa liberalization (11%), and peace/avoidance of war (10%). Looking at specific regions, the most frequently named issues were: maintaining public order within the country in Adjara (35%), Georgia’s international reputation among the Armenian-speaking population (29%), and social cohesion/interpersonal relations among the Azerbaijani-speaking population (22%).

Which issue is most affected by fake news?(%)

Georgian-speaking telephone survey



Which issue is most affected by fake news?(%)

Regional face-to-face survey

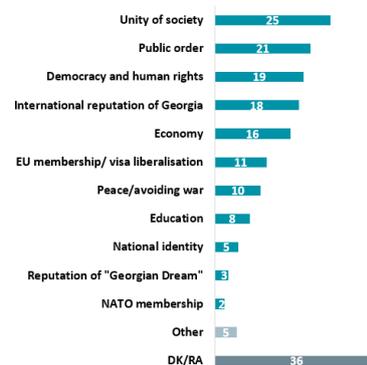


Chart 13: Which issue is most affected by fake news? (%)

Cross-tabulation analysis shows that there are no significant differences between age groups or settlement types regarding which issues are considered to be most harmed by false or misleading news. It is also noteworthy that the share of “don’t know” responses is slightly higher among young people (25%) compared to older age groups (19% among those aged 35–54 and 22% among those aged 55+), as well as among residents of rural settlements (19% in Tbilisi, 21% in other cities, and 25% in villages). By partisan identity, supporters of Georgian Dream placed greater

emphasis on social cohesion (40%) than did supporters of other parties or unaffiliated voters (34% and 34%, respectively).

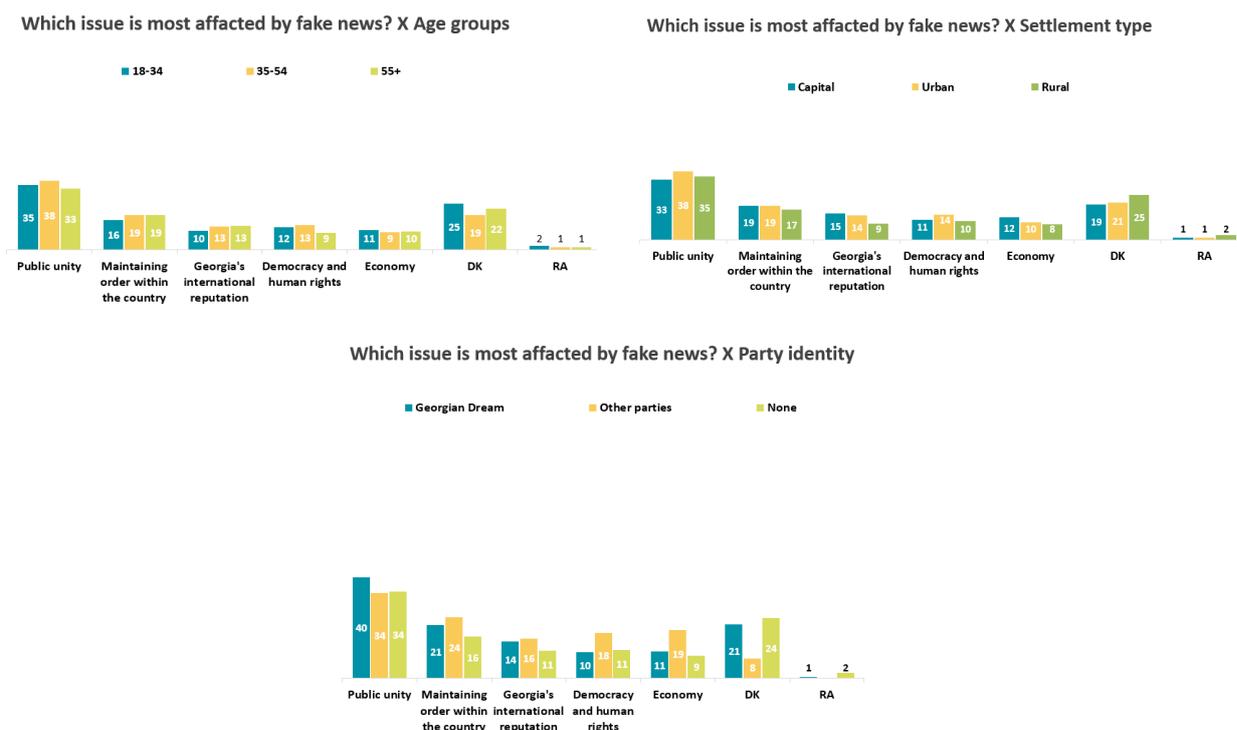


Chart 14: Which issue is most affected by fake news? (%) Cross-tabulation by age group, type of settlement, and party affiliation)

In conclusion, respondents consider social networks to be the main medium through which disinformation spreads (46% in the Georgian-language telephone survey; 58% in the regional face-to-face survey). Perceptions of disinformation’s impact are widespread and strongly negative. At the same time, it is particularly difficult for the population to identify specific actors responsible for spreading disinformation (49% answered “don’t know” in the Georgian-language telephone survey; 36% in the regional survey).

In the Georgian-language telephone survey, the most frequently identified actor was the media (18%), while in the regional survey the most frequently mentioned were citizens in Adjara and among the Azerbaijani-speaking population (24% and 54%, respectively) and Russia among the Armenian-speaking population (13%). The issues most often cited as being harmed by disinformation were social cohesion/interpersonal relations (35% in the Georgian-language telephone survey; 25% in the regional survey).

Thus, this picture shows that while there is broad consensus in society about the wide and negative influence of disinformation, perceptions differ significantly when it comes to identifying the actors responsible and the specific issues most affected.

Habits of fact-checking

The study also assessed the frequency of fact-checking and related skills among citizens. According to the results, 49% of participants in the Georgian-language telephone survey always or often suspect that news may be false or misleading, while 46% rarely or never have such doubts.

Among participants in the regional face-to-face survey, 27% reported that they always or often suspect news to be false, whereas 68% rarely or never do. By regions, in Adjara 31% of the population always or often expressed such suspicion, while 63% rarely or never did. Among the Armenian-speaking population, 34% reported always or often

doubting the accuracy of news, while 52% rarely or never did. In contrast, among the Azerbaijani-speaking population, only 6% frequently or always had such suspicion, whereas 92% rarely or never did.

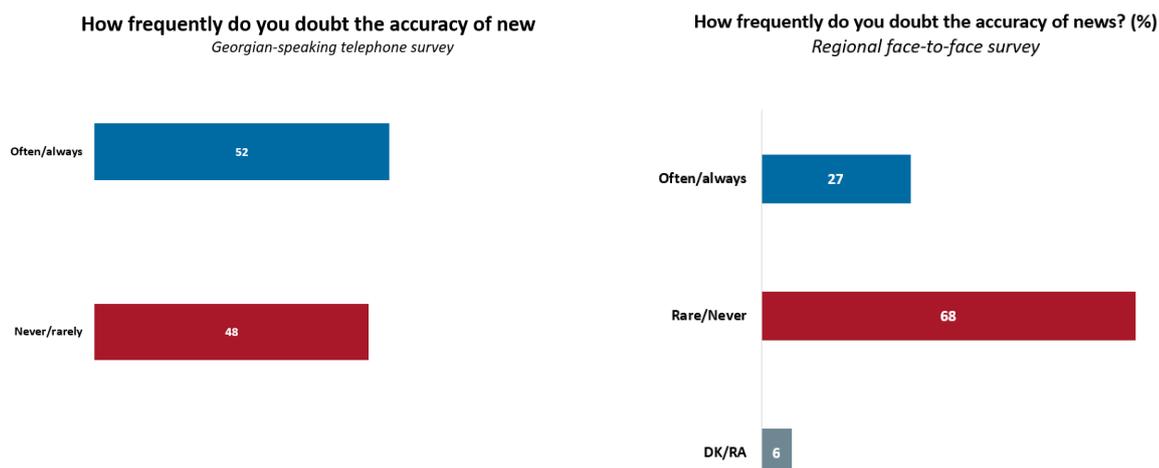


Chart 15: How frequently do you doubt the accuracy of news? (%)

In the survey conducted in December 2025, respondents were additionally asked how well or poorly they believe they are able to distinguish false information disseminated in the media from true information. A total of 69% of citizens assessed their skills positively in this regard, while only 16% assessed them negatively.

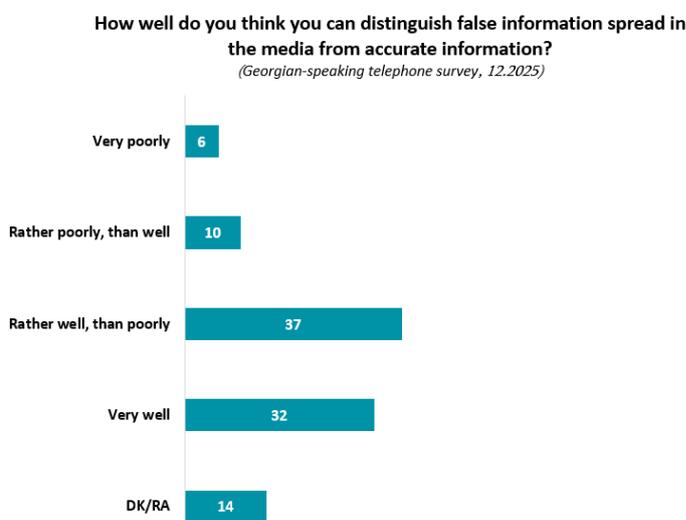


Chart 16: How well do you think you can distinguish false information spread in the media from accurate information? (%) Georgian-speaking telephone survey, 12.2025.

Although doubts about the accuracy of information arise for different reasons, nearly one-third (27%) of participants in the Georgian-language telephone survey had no opinion on what might cause them to question the accuracy of information. For 26%, information appears suspicious if it contradicts what they have previously learned. For 16%, doubt arises when information counters with personal experience. Thirteen percent consider information suspicious if it is presented in an unbalanced or biased manner; 12% cite the author's identity; 11% point to the absence of a source; and 10% refer to the author's apparent intentions or personal interests. According to the regional face-to-face survey, the main reasons for doubting the accuracy of news are it contradicting previously known information (22%), conflicting with the opinions of social media users (17%), or the absence of a source (15%).

What makes you suspect that the news might be fake?(%)

Georgian-speaking telephone survey



What makes you suspect that the news might be fake?(%)

Regional face-to-face survey

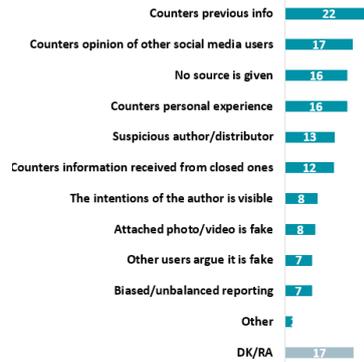
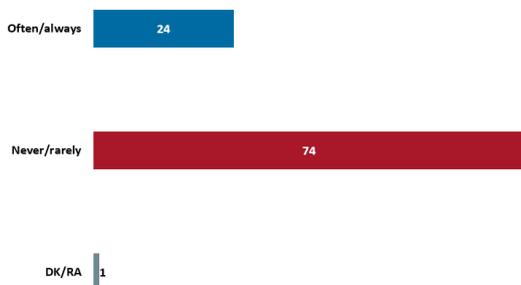


Chart 17: In general, what makes you suspect that the news might be fake? (%) (This question was asked only to those respondents who reported doubting the credibility of news with some frequency.)

It is noteworthy that among participants in the Georgian-language telephone survey who reported having doubts about the credibility of news, only 24% always or often verify its accuracy, while 74% rarely or never do so. According to the results of the regional face-to-face survey, among those who expressed doubts about news credibility, 14% frequently or always verify information, whereas 83% rarely or never do so. By regions, 14% of respondents in Adjara frequently or always verify information, compared to 30% among the Armenian-speaking population, and only 4% in Azerbaijani-speaking regions.

How often do you check the accuracy of news?(%)

Georgian-speaking telephone survey



How often do you check the accuracy of news?(%)

Regional face-to-face survey

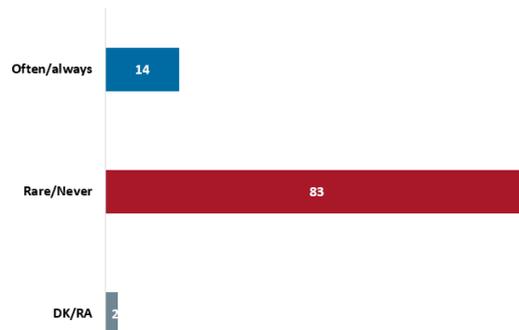


Chart 18: How often do you check the accuracy of news? (%) (This question was asked only to those respondents who reported doubting the credibility of news with some frequency.)

Among those who verify information, according to the Georgian-language telephone survey, 39% do so by consulting another Georgian media outlet. Twenty-six percent check accuracy with acquaintances (friends, family members, relatives), another 26% use Google or other search engines, 20% attempt to access the original source of information, and 10% turn to foreign media. According to the regional survey, the most common methods of verification are checking information with acquaintances (42%) and consulting authoritative figures (38%).

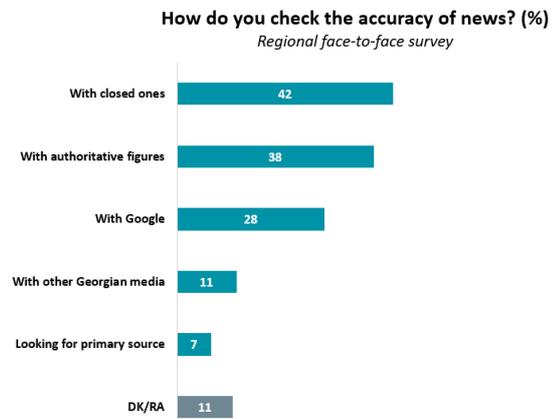
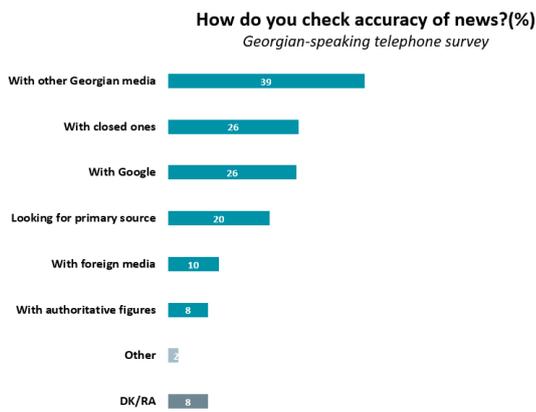


Chart 19: When you think that a news story might be suspicious, how do you check its accuracy? (%) (This question was asked only to those respondents who reported doubting the credibility of news with some frequency.)

According to the Georgian-language telephone survey, among those who had doubted the credibility of information and verified it, 56% reported that they always or often discovered the information to be indeed false. In the case of participants in the regional face-to-face survey, 36% reported having such an experience.

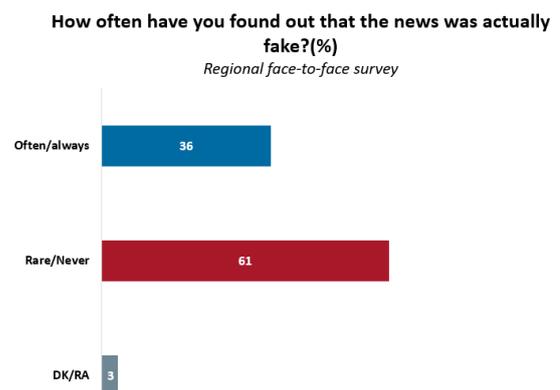
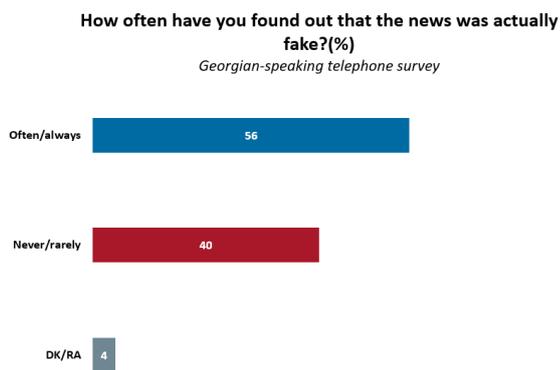


Chart 20: As a result of verification, how often have you found that a news story was indeed false or misleading? (%) (This question was asked only to those respondents who had verified the accuracy of news with some frequency.)

Participants in the regional face-to-face survey were also asked an additional question about the factors that prevent them from verifying suspicious news. The most frequently mentioned reasons were: lack of time (41%), lack of motivation (28%), and perceived insignificance of the issue (14%).

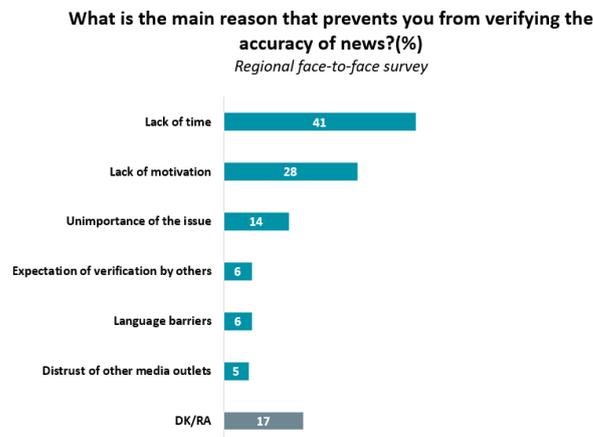


Chart 21: What is the main reason that prevents you from verifying the accuracy of news? (%)

Participants in the Georgian-language telephone survey also expressed their views on the responsibility of different actors in ensuring the dissemination of reliable information. Eighty-three percent agreed with the statement that it is the citizen’s responsibility not to blindly believe news and to verify its credibility. Ninety-five percent agreed that it is the media’s responsibility to disseminate only reliable and verified information, while 84% agreed that it is the state’s responsibility to ensure the dissemination of credible and verified news. These findings indicate that, overall, public perception frames the dissemination of reliable information as a shared responsibility of the media, citizens, and the state.

In the survey conducted in December 2025, the Georgian-speaking population was additionally asked which of the following statements they considered more justified: (1) the government should control the spread of false information even if this restricts citizens’ freedom of speech; or (2) the government should protect citizens’ freedom of speech even if this leads to the spread of false information. 38% supported the statement that the government should control the spread of false information even if it restricts citizens’ freedom of speech, while 43% believed that the government should protect citizens’ freedom of speech even if this leads to the spread of false information.

According to opinions expressed in the focus groups conducted in Tbilisi, viewers of pro-government media almost never verify news on their own initiative. Only one participant noted that information should be verified before being shared. For them, mechanisms for combating disinformation mostly meant restricting the spread of false news. They largely claimed that the dissemination of false news is facilitated by opposition media outlets and paid less attention to the importance of individual critical approaches in assessing the credibility of information. By contrast, consumers of opposition media described in more depth various strategies for evaluating the credibility of information. They explained in detail different methods of verification (e.g., identifying trolls and bots) and emphasized the individual responsibility of citizens in this process.

In conclusion, despite the fact that a significant share of the population (49% of participants in the Georgian-language telephone survey and 27% in the regional face-to-face survey) often doubt the credibility of news, the actual frequency of fact-checking is considerably lower: only 24% (telephone survey) and 14% (regional survey) report that they do so frequently or always. This inconsistency between suspicion and taking real action indicates that a critical attitude does not automatically translate into verification behaviors. Participants in the regional face-to-face survey most often cited lack of time (41%) and lack of motivation (28%) as the main reasons for not verifying information, pointing to the relatively low prioritization of the fact-checking process. At the same time, a significant portion of the population (27%) struggle to name concrete reasons for doubting the credibility of news, which underscores the need to strengthen media literacy skills.

Verification practices among the Georgian-speaking population are mostly based on consulting Georgian media outlets (39%), using search engines (26%), and seeking advice from acquaintances (26%), which indicates relatively limited

reliance on foreign sources or original sources. Similarly, during the process of verification, ethnic minorities rely most on the information received from closed ones (42%) and authoritative figures (38%). At the same time, the frequency of false information discovered after verification (56% in the Georgian-language telephone survey and 36% in the regional survey) points to the serious scale of disinformation.

The focus group results further highlight the importance of media pluralism and civic responsibility: consumers of pro-government media are less engaged in the verification process and tend to prioritize restricting the spread of disinformation, whereas consumers of opposition media emphasize individual responsibility.

CONCLUSION

This study clearly illustrates how Georgian society consumes media, how it perceives disinformation, and how it responds to threats related to disinformation. Against the backdrop of increasing media polarization and targeted propaganda campaigns, the findings highlight both the vulnerabilities and the elements of resilience present in Georgia's information environment.

In Georgia, citizens actively follow current events, with television and social networks serving as primary sources of information. The role of social media is even more pronounced in the regional survey. However, information consumption does not always imply trust. Part of the population trusts channels affiliated with the government, while another part relies on opposition television. In particular, pro-government media users often base their trust more on emotional comfort and long-term media consumption habits than on content itself. In Armenian- and Azerbaijani-speaking regions, the primary sources of information are foreign television channels, which reveals the existence of language barriers in these regions and a detachment from the Georgian-language information space.

It is also important to note that more than one-third of citizens cannot explain why they trust particular media outlets. This points to the presence of confusion and lack of resources within the information environment. The most frequently cited factors for trust are abalanced presentation of news and a long history of media use. The form of presentation and the authority of the person delivering the information have a strong influence on the assessment of credibility. The role of the presenter and the style of delivery are particularly pronounced in the regional survey. In addition, some participants in the regional survey are more likely to trust credible media even without supporting evidence, compared to participants in the Georgian-language telephone survey.

Disinformation is perceived as a significant threat in society. Ninety-one percent of respondents believe that false or manipulative information harms the country, particularly by undermining social cohesion and trust among people. Despite this, a large share of citizens struggle to identify specific actors responsible for spreading disinformation. Those who do assign responsibility tend to divide it primarily between the media and citizens.

This uncertainty points both to the complex nature of the issue and to a broader deficit of trust in institutions. Interestingly, perceptions of responsibility often align with party affiliation: supporters of the ruling party tend to blame the opposition, while opposition supporters hold the government responsible. Such divisions highlight political polarization and its influence on the way information is perceived.

The study points to a serious discrepancy between the existence of doubt and actual fact-checking behavior: although a significant share of the population often or always questions the credibility of information (49% in the telephone survey, 27% in the regional survey), only a small portion engage in systematic verification (24% and 14%, respectively). According to the regional survey, the most common barriers to verification are lack of time and lack of motivation. Moreover, nearly one-third of respondents are unable to name any possible reasons for doubting information, which points to a deficit in critical analysis and media literacy skills.

When verifying information, the majority rely on other Georgian media outlets, while reliance on foreign sources or original sources is rare, especially in the regions. Fact-checking tendencies are higher among young people, those with

higher levels of education, and residents of Tbilisi. The high rate of false information discovered during verification (56% in the telephone survey, 36% in the regional survey) also highlights the large scale of disinformation's spread.

The study demonstrates that Georgia's information ecosystem is chaotic, citizens' media literacy skills are unevenly developed, and there is a clear inconsistency between their attitudes and actual behavior. Although most citizens recognize the importance of the roles of the media, the state, and citizens themselves in creating a reliable information environment, a large share of their behavior reflects passive consumption and reveals risks of vulnerability to disinformation.