

A Dozen Daggers: How Georgia's 2024 Elections Were Systematically Rigged

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Executive Summary

There is sufficient evidence to conclude that the Georgian Parliamentary Election of 2024 was systematically rigged and does not represent the will of the Georgian people. This policy brief outlines the multi-pronged assault on electoral integrity, including unprecedented vote-buying, mass intimidation, and direct manipulation that led to the result announced by the Central Election Commission of Georgia.

The Georgian Dream's declining popularity since the last election, exit polls conducted to international standards, corroborated by pre-election surveys, further underscore the implausibility of results announced by the Central Election Commission.

In all this, democracy was taken down by a dozen daggers, not a single smoking gun. This report offers a forensic analysis of how the authorities rigged the election, drawing also on the work of other researchers. Statistical analyses, including matched comparisons, reveal a consistent pattern of irregularities in this election.

These analyses indicate widespread anomalies in voter turnout and party vote shares for the ruling Georgian Dream party, aligning with many reports of electoral malpractice. Precincts with reported violence saw a significant increase in Georgian Dream votes, while opposition votes declined. Next to bribery and intimidation, this pattern alone could account for shifting tens of thousands of votes to the ruling party. Similarly, compromised voter secrecy and restricted observer rights correlated with substantial losses for opposition parties. These findings, alongside other statistical irregularities, show that the election results announced by the CEC cannot be seen as reflecting the will of the Georgian people.

This report is based on the author's analysis and does not necessarily reflect the views of associated organizations or institutions.

Introduction

There is sufficient evidence to conclude that official results of the Georgian Parliamentary Election do not reflect the will of the Georgian people. The elections were systematically rigged to ensure an overwhelming majority for the ruling Georgian Dream Party in the next parliament. A result that would reflect the will of the Georgian people is likely closer to the exit poll by Edison Research and HarrisX, that originally put the vote share of the Georgian Dream party at around 42% of the total tally.

The elections were rigged through a systematic, multi-pronged assault on the integrity of the election to secure the result intended by the Georgian Dream leadership. This assault relied on vote buying, mass intimidation, and direct electoral manipulation. The election rigging needs to be seen in the context of a broader capture of key state institutions, especially since 2021, that has also been reflected in downgrades of Georgia's democracy scores across all respectable rating efforts. In recent years, Georgia's *Freedom in the World* score has declined from 64 to 58, on a 100 point scale.¹ In the Economist Intelligence Unit's *Democracy Index*, Georgia went from a 5.5 to a 5.2, on a 10 point scale.² The *Bertelsmann Transformation Index* notes a decline of Georgia's democracy scores from 6.36 in 2020 to 5.65 in 2024, on a 10 point scale, as well as a fall from position 43 to 54 in its overall transformation rating.³

This policy brief is a synthesis of the available analysis; draws on credible direct reports; seeks to provide quantification wherever possible; and adds independent statistical analysis. It is informed by decades of working on Georgian elections in various capacities. Statistical experts contributed to this analysis.

Deviation from Previous Results and Trendlines

To start with, the officially announced results of the parliamentary elections in the fall of 2024 defy basic plausibility. According to official results, the Georgian Dream supposedly improved its 48.2% electoral result from 2020 to 53.9% in 2024. This meant that it claims to have mobilized an additional 191,942 voters, adding 11% to their previous vote.⁴

	2020	2024
Georgian Dream %	48.22	53.93
Georgian Dream votes	928,004	1,119,946

All credible evidence at this point suggests that results should have gone in the opposite direction, towards a reduction of Georgian Dream support. Bidzina Ivanishvili, the founder and chairman of

¹ 2024: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/georgia/freedom-world/2024>

² 2023: <https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/Democracy-Index-2023-Final-report.pdf>

³ <https://bti-project.org/en/index/political-transformation>

⁴ 2020 official results: https://archiveresults.cec.gov.ge/results/20201031/#/ka-ge/election_43/dashboard
2024 official results: https://results.cec.gov.ge/#/ka-ge/election_57/tr/dashboard

the Georgian Dream party, perhaps best expressed that sentiment in an interview a few days before the election:

“People have probably grown tired of the Georgian Dream over these 12 years - it's very difficult in democratic states to keep electing the same government. I myself have grown weary of hearing my own surname so frequently. People no longer want to hear the same names over and over, and you can understand them feeling this way.”⁵

Ivanishvili's view that the public had grown tired of the Georgian Dream is corroborated by surveys that show extensive dissatisfaction. Multiple focus groups confirmed that Georgian Dream support is exhausted across the country. The divisive rhetoric of the Georgian Dream does work to shore up some of the residual support the party still has. It does not, however, explain a supposed surge of additional votes above the 2020 results.

To anyone who follows Georgian elections, the suggestion that there would be a strong surge for the Georgian Dream in 2024 seems removed from any credible context. In 2020, the Georgian Dream had enjoyed a solid run. It was led into the elections by Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia, a politician popular both in the country and among the people he was leading. In 2024, Gakharia headed one of four opposition parties.

In 2020, Prime Minister Gakharia had managed the first months of the pandemic better than most other countries, with daily infection rates in the low dozens while fatalities stacked up around the planet. In 2020, Georgian Dream was opposed by opposition parties that struggled to campaign with pandemic restrictions and offered much less of a choice than was available in 2024.

By 2024, as acknowledged by Bidzina Ivanishvili, deep problems had set in for the ruling party, especially with rapidly expanding corruption (described by Ivanishvili as “human temptation” affecting his team) and nepotism, keenly felt at the local level throughout the country.⁶ From this comparison of 2020 and 2024, the results announced by the Central Election Commission (CEC) simply do not make sense.

Exit Polls by International Firms Put Opposition Parties Ahead

The results announced by the CEC defy the facts, not just common sense. The results announced by the CEC are at stark variance with two exit polls conducted by international companies. Both these exit polls, one by Edison Research and the other by HarrisX, put the Georgian Dream in the 41-44% range, well short of a majority claimed by the CEC's results.

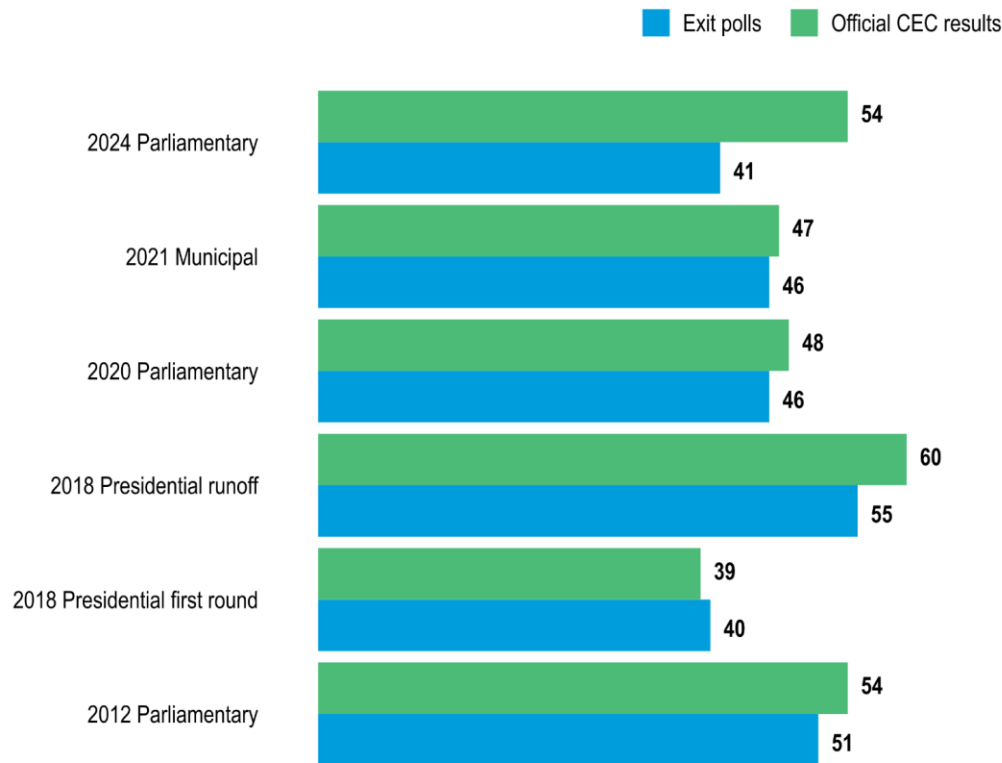
While both efforts were funded by the opposition, Edison Research has a solid track record, as the chart below shows. Edison Research also conducted an exit poll in 2012 and correctly

⁵ <https://sakartvelosambebi.ge/en/news/ivanishvili-on-banning-opposition-parties-one-who-is-an-enemy-of-the-people-should-be-banned>

⁶ <https://civil.ge/archives/576198>

predicted the result of every recent Georgian election it has worked on up to now. The stark discrepancy only comes in 2024, with an upward deviation of 13% for the Georgian Dream.

In 2024, the difference between official CEC results and Edison Research exit polls was the largest recorded, reaching 13 points, while average absolute difference in previous years was only 2.4 points



Reproduced from: <https://www.edisonresearch.com/edison-research-2024-republic-of-georgia-exit-poll/> and <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33174447.html>

After the election, Edison Research noted in a statement that the “exit poll models used in Georgia in 2024 are the same models used in previous Georgian elections. They are also the same models Edison Research will use in the upcoming U.S. election exit polls for ABC, CBS, CNN, and NBC.”

A post-election analysis by HarrisX, adjusted for actual turnout figures, put Georgian Dream at 44%, well short of a majority and 10% under the official results. HarrisX offered a detailed analysis, district by district, and concluded that its comparative vote analysis

“has identified unusual vote shifts between the 2020 and 2024 elections, and between our Exit Poll and the 2024 CEC final results, which appear far out of line with what could be explained by statistical variance or non-response bias. Even when the Exit Poll data is adjusted to reflect the full data parameters published by the CEC, the final election result placing Georgian Dream at 53.96% is, simply put, statistically impossible.”

HarrisX comes to this conclusion from extensive experience. The firm describes itself as “a leading public opinion research, data analytics, and strategy consulting company in the United

States”, adding that it was “the most accurate pollster of the 2020 U.S. presidential election as rated by the Washington Post.”⁷

Credible Pre-Election Surveys Show Georgian Dream Around 40%

The plausibility of the Edison and HarrisX exit polls is underlined by various surveys in the run up to the election. In the months prior to the election, there were at least five separate research efforts, most of whom undertook repeated surveys. Several of these surveys were published. Others were made available for this preliminary review.

Taken together, these polls show that the Georgian Dream was on track to receive the vote share that was predicted by the Edison Exit Poll, around 42%. As one analyst put it, “the results of Edison for the opposition parties match the average of all credible polls *within the margin of error*, except for Georgian Dream, which is entirely outside the scope of any reasonable range.” Along the same lines, Edison Research noted that its multiple pre-election polls in 2023 and 2024 “suggested that Georgian Dream would under-perform their 2020 vote by around 10 points. Instead, Georgian Dream exceeded their 2020 numbers by 6 points.”

Informing Bidzina Ivanishvili’s realization that people were exhausted with his rule, what is widely believed to be an internal Georgian Dream poll from October 2024 put the party’s predicted result just under 40%, with all likely voters taken into account. The research put the total vote share for the opposition parties just above 50%. In other words, it seems that Georgian Dream’s internal polling predicted an opposition victory. (As the slide may be configured to trace leaks, it is not reproduced.) If the Georgian Dream wants to counter the claim that they were on track to lose a competitive election, they should make the raw data of their internal polling since December 2023 available to analysts and researchers.

A Multi-Pronged Assault on Free and Fair Elections

The actual rigging was undertaken at a municipal level, leading to diverse patterns of interference. Overall, the rigging relied on bribery on an unprecedented scale, mass intimidation, and some electoral manipulation. There is not necessarily a single story to the rigging, as responsibility for its execution was with regional and district coordinators, who at the precinct level seem to have been referred to as “captains.” As one commentator put it, “you will not find a single smoking gun if democracy was done in with a dozen daggers.” Through hundreds of reported violations, next to many other violations that will have gone undetected or unreported, certain patterns nevertheless emerge.

⁷ <https://www.harrisx.com/posts/harrisx-releases-final-georgia-2024-exit-poll-analysis>

Vote-Buying at Unprecedented Scale

A major feature of this election was vote buying on an unprecedented scale. For this, the mechanisms used in previous elections were resourced with a multiple of the earlier funds. Credible reports suggest that the money on offer, sometimes in the form of vouchers, was double or triple what was offered in previous elections. In marginalized villages, vote buying was the main means for voter mobilization. “Not every voter received money in our village, but many did,” is how one interlocutor from Western Georgia described it.

The funding for this bribery was disbursed through election coordinators and sometimes also through offices dedicated to social services. Tight parallel control by Georgia’s State Security Service (*sakhelmtsipo usaprtkhoebis samsakhuri*, referred to as “Susi”) ensured that not too much of the cash was bleeding into the pockets of Georgian Dream coordinators. (There are, however, direct reports of some coordinators in Imereti taking more than half the money they were supposed to give to voters, causing aggravation.)

Reports of vote buying are detailed and specific. In upper Adjara, up to 300 GEL were paid for a vote, likely combined with a payment for attending a pre-election rally in Tbilisi. In Kvemo Kartli, there are detailed reports of cash and fuel vouchers being offered. These vouchers, typically for 200 GEL, were primarily for gas stations and for a pharma chain. People who have watched this election closely say that most of the votes were bought for around 120-150 GEL. For many people in rural areas this is about the range of what they could expect to earn in a week, though teachers and some officials may enjoy better salaries.

In Azeri and Armenian minority areas, public reports say that typically 100 GEL was paid to voters. Georgian Dream coordinators also offered opposition voters 100 GEL for staying at home, confiscating ID cards to ensure compliance. Respected local people describe being flattered by friends or acquaintances into signing up as neighborhood Georgian Dream coordinators, and report insulted reactions when they refused to join.

Taken together, a rough estimate is that the Georgian Dream spent about 45 million GEL on paying voters. This estimate relies on a model and may be too conservative. The model assumes that there were more than 330,000 unwilling Georgian Dream voters in total (an added 190,000 new Georgian Dream voters; 100,000 unwilling voters from the previous election; a hemorrhaging in Georgian Dream support of 6% in line with polling, though still generous to the ruling party); that about two thirds of these needed to be induced to vote at an average of 150 GEL; that 50,000 opposition voters were bought off, and a 20% overhead going to the coordinators handling the cash.⁸

Given the scale of the spending, there will be extensive evidence, including increased cash withdrawals from banks and companies associated with the ruling party, as well as increased

⁸ <https://open.substack.com/pub/hansgutbrod/p/estimating-georgian-dream-bribery>

purchases of vouchers. List experiments in surveys will make it possible to establish the approximate scale of the vote buying.⁹

Mass Intimidation Before and During the Vote

Intimidation played a major role in Georgia's elections. The ruling party intimidated voters, opposition party representatives, and observer organizations. In recent years, the Georgian Dream has consolidated its control and aligned authority with party loyalty.

For the most recent elections, intimidations started at scale in the context of the adoption of the so-called law on "transparency of foreign influence" in April and May. Dozens of citizens were beaten, and hundreds were harassed by phone. Using Facebook, independent-minded citizens were often easy to identify. In the regions, civil servants associating with figures representing the opposition or their relatives were threatened with dismissal. Groups engaged in civic education reported that teachers in the regions who sought to add education on the EU to their curriculum, or even teaching on the model aspects of Georgia's First Republic, felt threatened, and that this teaching had to be terminated in early summer 2024. In this way, the passing of the so-called transparency law served also to go after pockets of potential dissent outside Tbilisi.

Opposition party representatives have reported in detail how some of their regional offices were semi-operational or entirely defunct as local representatives seemed too scared to conduct an active campaign. This was especially the case in minority areas. In the absence of a functioning regional structure, opposition parties struggled to reach voters.

Opposition party members were put under pressure over their private lives, with compromising private recordings resulting in public defections. Opposition representatives in polling stations were pressured into voting for the ruling party (or stay home). In many instances, even though opposition parties had two representatives in precincts, their party received zero votes. The representatives explained that "we will still have to live in this village after the election."

Some of the most fine-grained polling in Georgia from September 2024 onward seems to have picked up a tendency of still-undecided likely voters to cave to this mix of intimidation and bribery. (Similarly, some distortions in the eventual exit poll results result from the impact of bribery and intimidation. The larger deviation of the Edison Research exit poll from official results in the second round of 2018 is reflective of larger levels of pressure during that election.)

Observer organizations say they lost some of their observers in the run-up to the election. Many observers reported harassment during the day, often in stark testimonials. In contrast to the claim that the ruling party preserves traditional values and gender roles, women were also harassed by Georgian Dream-aligned groups, sometimes with cameras running.¹⁰

⁹ Given that this is mixed in with spending on advertising, meetings and rallies, the impact of vote buying can probably not be easily measured in the overall economy.

¹⁰ https://x.com/Publika_ge/status/1851256803700416726

Georgia's State Security Service/Susi played a significant role in the pre-election intimidation. Since 2020, Susi has a much-expanded presence also in educational and cultural institutions, which in the meantime are partially subordinated to its control. The overall pattern of election interference of Susi is now well understood, after Soso Gogashvili, its former deputy head, outlined earlier manipulations in detail.¹¹

On election day itself, the intimidation was mostly carried out by groups of street criminals, referred to as *dzveli bichebi*, old boys. Other than in a few inner-city districts of Tbilisi, their presence was near-ubiquitous throughout the country. Their threats and violence have been captured in footage that has circulated widely.

In all this mobilization, Georgian Dream money was flowing freely. The regional election headquarters of the Georgian Dream typically were headed by party grandees, some of them former senior police commanders. At least one regional campaign headquarters of the Georgian Dream resided in one of the country's premier 5-star hotels, with all bills settled in cash.

Compromising the Principle of Voter Secrecy

By default, the vote in the parliamentary elections in the fall of 2024 were not secret. Across approximately 2,225 polling stations (~75% of the total stations and 89% of voters, with 1,816,276 of 2,040,054 votes, excluding special voter list voters) ballots had to be put into the so-called vote counting devices (VCD, also referred to as electronic counting machines) in an open sleeve rather than a closed envelope, as previously was customary.

Many photographs show that the mark on the ballot was transparent when used with the heavy felt marker that was supplied by the CEC. The black mark is visible through the ballot in photos showing President Salome Zourabishvili carrying her ballot; in a picture of Giorgi Gakharia, one of the leaders of an opposition party, feeding his ballot into the vote counting device upside down; and in countless other photographs or reels. The see-through aspect of the ballot seems to have escaped notice of many international Office of Democratic Elections and Human Rights (ODIHR) observers, as only 6% highlighted it.

As a consequence, the confidentiality of the vote was compromised across more than 2,000 polling stations. With coordination and aptitude, voters could keep their party choice a secret. Without such dexterity, election staff and bystanders could identify who one had voted for while helping or watching voters unsheathe their ballot from its sleeve. According to ODIHR observers, in more than half of all voting stations voters experienced problems feeding their ballot into the vote counting device.

The thinness of the ballot compromised voter secrecy on principle, not just in select cases. The secrecy of the vote is a core requirement for any election to be considered free and fair. This principle is also enshrined in Georgia's Electoral Law in Article 3 (d).

¹¹ <https://oc-media.org/watchdogs-back-ex-security-chiefs-claim-of-large-scale-electoral-fraud-in-georgia/>

As an aggravating factor, the Georgian Young Lawyers Organization (GYLA) on September 17, several weeks before the election, had warned the Central Election Commission about the flimsy ballot. The problem thus had been registered as a major concern. On September 28, 2024, the chairman of the Central Election Commission assured GYLA that the ballot paper used in previous test meetings “is a test version and accordingly, the quality of the ballot paper used on polling day will change, to protect confidentiality.”¹² As is now evident, this promise was not kept.

So far, the CEC has produced no evidence that better ballot papers had been prepared or that they took other significant measures to protect the secrecy of the vote. Given that this weakness had been identified in advance, it is a credible charge that the head of the CEC knowingly misled the Georgian public about the secrecy of their upcoming vote.

This failure to ensure the secrecy of the vote may have long term consequences. Civil society organizations had assured citizens that their vote was secret and that, as the year’s signature song had it, they should not be afraid. Instead, with many cameras watching over precincts, usually pointed at voters, a dystopian expectation has been borne out. Given the CEC’s inability or unwillingness to protect the secrecy of the vote, any future assurance will lack credibility, too.

Multiple Voting, ID Confiscation and Snowball Schemes

For these elections, there are extensive allegations of multiple voting combined with voter ID fraud. The CEC invited this concern by removing a key safeguard to prevent multiple voting in early August 2024, with its decree that the key roles in the precinct would be assigned a week in advance with no observers present, rather than by lot on the morning of the election as previously was the norm for more than two decades.¹³ This tweak allowed the ruling party to put its members in the most critical roles in each precinct, including the marking and checking of voters’ fingers, and as registrars to identify the voter and hand out ballot paper.¹⁴

Georgian Dream representatives were therefore ideally placed to usher in their supporters to vote multiple times. This pivotal change fits with another key development. Prior to election day, numerous opposition-leaning voters were being intimidated into and/or being paid to hand over their IDs.¹⁵ These schemes involved employers in both the public and private sector. *Novaya Gazeta* reported that an employee of the Ministry of Interior was told that he would need to provide the IDs of family members’ who did not support Georgian Dream to keep his job.¹⁶ Large private sector employers also engaged in transferring IDs to Georgian Dream coordinators. An employee of Rich Metals Group (RMG) reported that his superiors instructed workers that they needed to

¹² https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/uploads/files/pasuxi-cesko.pdf - a few days before the vote, Kalandarishvili saw the mark shining through a ballot on Formula TV. He deflected the concern.

¹³ <https://transparency.ge/en/post/misuse-administrative-resources-parliamentary-elections-2024-interim-report>

¹⁴ <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-pace-election-monitoring/33175230.html>

¹⁵ <https://civil.ge/archives/631251>

¹⁶ <https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2024/10/24/recurring-dream-en>

vote for the ruling party, confiscated some employees' ID cards, and threatened consequences if they did not comply.¹⁷

A third critical component was that authorities knew exactly who to target. Using a snowball scheme, civil servants especially were asked to report on ten people in their personal surroundings. With more than 320,000 people working in the public sector in the country, constituting about 22% of the country's formal workforce, a few iterations of this snowball data collection provided extensive coverage across Georgia.¹⁸

As it appears, the data was aggregated systematically, with the newspaper *Batumelebi* reporting in mid-October that Georgian Dream offices were processing the personal information of at least tens of thousands of individuals.¹⁹ This information was assembled without voters' consent and used personal data from government agencies. The data seen by *Batumelebi* included information on health issues, drug addiction, participation in past elections, votes in past elections, and voting intention for every person in the target region.

While snowball mobilization schemes were previously used, the "bring or at least identify 10 people" seems to have been a core pillar of the mobilization effort for this election. Here are, by plausible accounts, their main targets.

Targets for Snowball Mobilization	
Public sector employees	320,000
Adult Recipients of Targeted Social Assistance	415,000
Voters in areas with majority ethnic minority population	340,000
Incarcerated people	9,800
People on probation	22,000

Not every person in these groups will have been contacted, but it seems that these categories were priority targets for Georgian Dream coordinators, next to private sector firms that are aligned with the government. With this snowball scheme as a major feature, the supposed mobilization of tens of thousands of additional voters is explicable, though the distribution across the target groups is not yet clear.

¹⁷ Corroborated by other sources, see also <https://www.facebook.com/100063463873729/posts/1113498067442312/>

¹⁸ <https://civil.ge/archives/612748>

¹⁹ <https://batumelebi.netgazeti.ge/news/548144/>

Next to schemes that are best described as election rigging, there are indications that there was straight-out fraud. Many believe that confiscated IDs were used to vote for the ruling party. There also seems to have been an effort to identify which voters were abroad and not registered to vote in a consulate. Between 2021 and 2023 alone, 158,806 citizens left Georgia. As the Ministry of Foreign Affairs limited the opening of polling stations abroad, many of these emigrants effectively struggled to participate in elections. Some reports suggest that the ID numbers of émigré voters were written into paper slips that were brought in passports, allowing people to use another person's ID number to vote.

While the pattern of multiple voting is established, evidence about its scale is still emerging.²⁰ Intent, however, is manifest: taken together – removing safeguards around the assigning of personnel; taking ID cards from opposition voters; micro-targeting citizens – the Georgian Dream put all the measures for multiple voting in place.²¹ A key step was the removal of the pivotal safeguard in how roles in the precinct are assigned back in mid-August 2024.

The scheme for multiple voting was apparently understood by precinct election commission members. In upper Adjara a voter who was denied a ballot as her ID had already been used to vote was asked, “Maybe your sister voted with your ID?” to which the upset voter responded, “Even if someone stole and tried to use it, would you let that happen?”²²

The Georgian Dream put effort into targeting the country's most vulnerable populations.²³ An analysis of socio-economic status against electoral returns suggested higher returns for the ruling party in economically disadvantaged areas.²⁴ At least some predatory practices were at work. People with family members in jail or on probation were singled out and told to bring ten voters in exchange for relief.

With about 10,000 prisoners, or close to 0,3% of the population, Georgia has the second highest incarceration rate in Europe, as a recent Council of Europe report found.²⁵ Another 22,000 people are listed as being under probation, bringing the total of the judicially vulnerable population to 1%, which with a snowball multiplier can reach a significant number of voters.²⁶

Some of these tactics are reflected in OSCE/ODIHR's preliminary assessment. That assessment, however, does not seem to highlight the concern of multiple voting. The preliminary report notes improper marking (noticed in 4% of ODIHR observations) or not checking voters' fingers (noticed by 7% of reports).

²⁰ <https://isfed.ge/en/gantskhadebebi/saqartvelos-parlamentis-2024-tslis-26-oqtombris-archevnebis-dghis-dakvirvebis-shemadjamebeli-gantskhadeba>

²¹ <https://transparency.ge/en/post/my-vote-midterm-evaluation-voting-process-1930>

²² https://x.com/Batumelebi_ge/status/1850856040625033667

²³ <https://netgazeti.ge/life/747280/>

²⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10228026205059984&set=a.1117047325931>

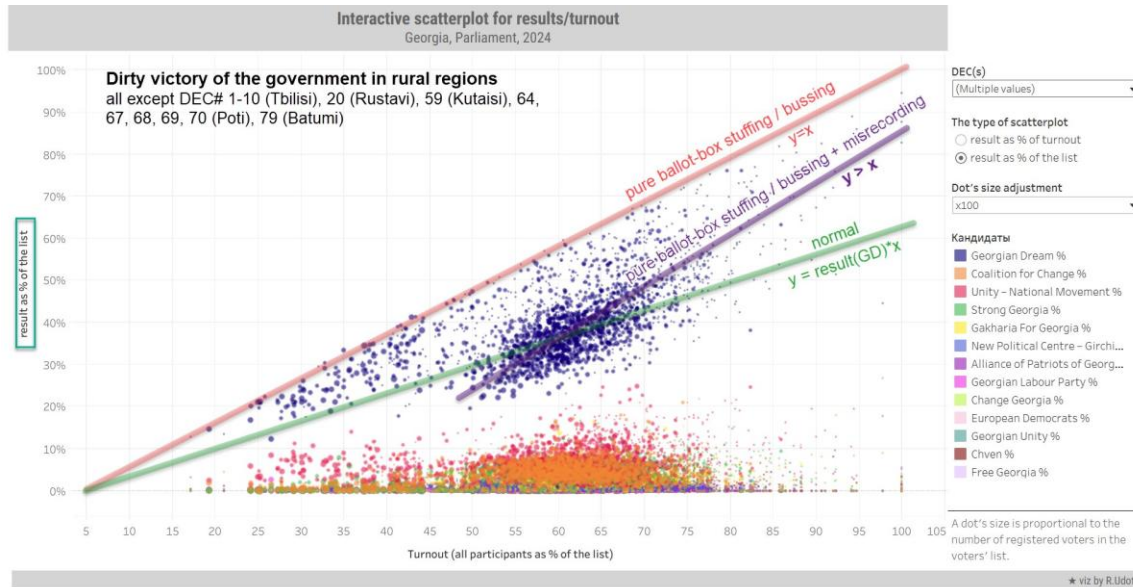
²⁵ <https://civil.ge/archives/551000>

²⁶ https://wp.unil.ch/space/files/2023/06/230626_Key-Findings-SPACE-I_Prisons-and-Prisoners-in-Europe-2022.pdf

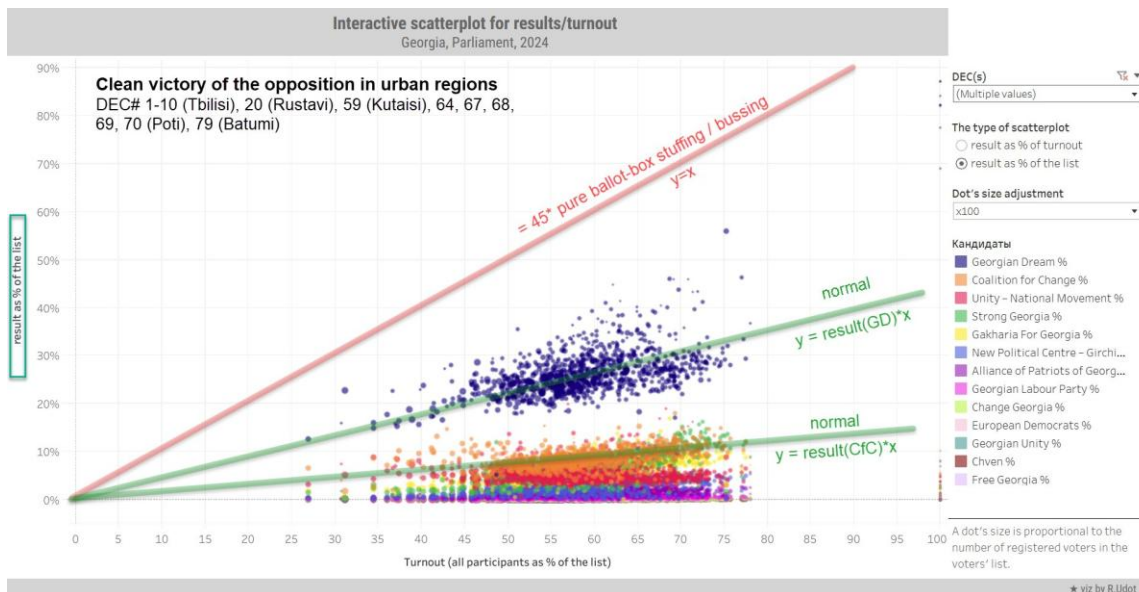
Statistical Analyses Challenge Official Results

A statistical analysis conducted by Levan Kvirkvelia and Roman Udot shows that as turnout increased, there was a larger increase in the share of votes that went to the Georgian Dream.

This pattern is consistent with vote buying, intimidation, bussing of voters to a precinct, multiple voting, and/or other efforts which would cause anomalously high vote shares in specific precincts.²⁷ No credible evidence has been provided to date to suggest that these results were primarily delivered through legitimate tactics such as block voting.

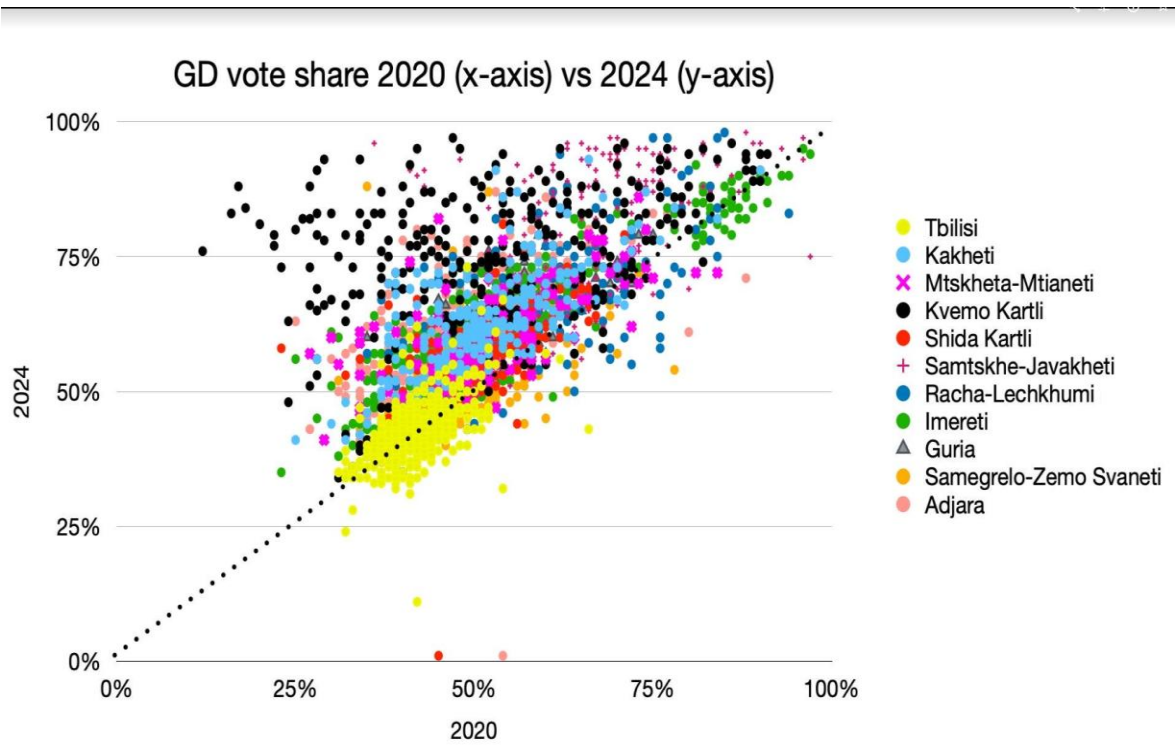


Udot's analysis shows the sharp contrast between key urban regions and other parts of Georgia.



²⁷ <https://theins.press/en/news/275735>

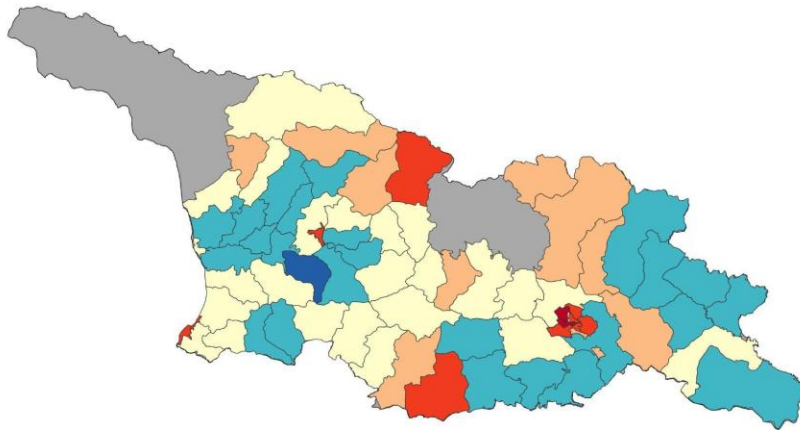
In some contexts, the unprecedented vote buying and mass intimidation brought many additional voters for the Georgian Dream. In others, voters massively shifted from opposition parties to the Georgian Dream. These overall trends are illustrated by the chart below.



Source: Analysis by DataPraxis

The turnout story, however, is nuanced. In some regions, turnout decreased. In large parts of Kakheti in eastern Georgia, where the main coordinator of the Georgian Dream was a feared former security official, turnout declined while support for the Georgian Dream went up, suggesting vote suppression against the opposition parties.

In other areas, turnout increased greatly, such as in Tbilisi where support was mostly leaning to opposition parties, and in some more remote areas, where support was overwhelmingly for the Georgian Dream.



Data source: CEC

The closer analysis thus shows diverse sharp edges at work that served to undercut the competitiveness of the election.

Fingerprints on a Rigged Election

Election forensics point to consistently suspicious election results. These statistical tests look for deviations from naturally occurring patterns in data. Such deviations are akin to fingerprints left at a crime scene.²⁸

Three tests on turnout data show a pattern consistent with a rigged vote. The results for the Georgian Dream's vote share show a similar number of suspicious patterns. In total, six tests were conducted on voter turnout counts at the national level, vote counts for Georgian Dream and for **each** opposition party and/or candidate for elections since 2020 (leading to a total of 24 tests

²⁸ The tests specifically reported on in this section include:

1. **Mean of second digit:** looks at whether the second digit in a number follows Benford's law as applied to the second rather than the first digit. This tool is commonly used in tax accounting to detect fraud, as numbers that occur under normal circumstances tend to follow this pattern, while those that have been tampered with often do not.
2. **Skew:** measure of how symmetrical the distribution of turnout is. If the distribution is not symmetrical, this can imply various types of illicit voting strategies - in fairly conducted elections, the distribution of turnout tends to approximate a bell curve (or normal distribution).
3. **Kurtosis:** measure of how spiky or flat a distribution is. In the current context, if the number is significantly higher than expected, it suggests a suspiciously high level of high turnout precincts.
4. **Diptest:** test for whether or not there is more than one peak in the distribution of turnout. If this test suggests this is the case, it can suggest that turnout was artificially high in a set of voting precincts.
5. **Zero-five percent mean (count):** similar to the last digit mean test in its logic, however, it specifically looks for excess zeros and fives, which are particularly common for people to round to or for goals for party coordinators to be set at (e.g. bring 100 voters or increase the vote share to 70%). This version of the test looks at the number of votes reported.
6. **Zero-five percent mean (percent):** same test as noted above, however, conducted with the percentages of votes for each party at the precinct level.

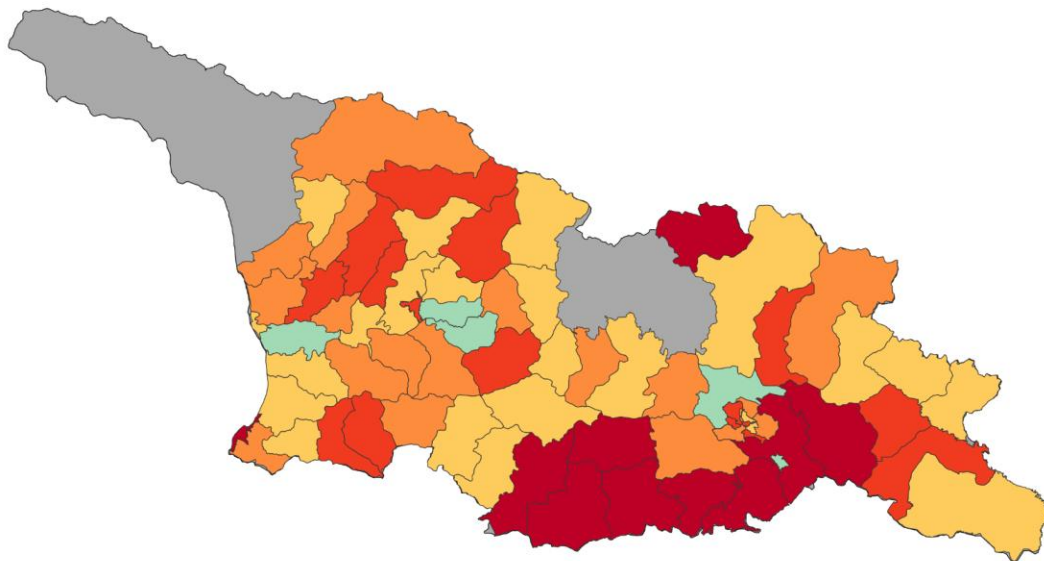
for the 2020 parliamentary elections and 24 tests for the 2024 parliamentary elections, and showing that while 2020 had its problems, 2024 definitely was worse). Tests on opposition votes suggest their vote share has consistently been illicitly pushed downward.

Number of election fraud tests with suspicious results by election and variable tested (count)		
	2020 parliamentary elections (4 opposition parties)	2024 parliamentary elections (4 opposition parties)
Turnout	2	3
GD/candidates	3	3
Opposition/candidates	17	18

Tests at the district level for the 2024 parliamentary elections provide support to the widely reported suspicions of geographically concentrated electoral manipulation. The map below shows the total number of statistical anomalies registered for turnout and party vote counts.

Total number of tests failing for all checks (turnout and vote counts for 5 major political subjects)

Count number of tests ■ 1-3 tests failed ■ 4-5 tests failed ■ 6-7 tests failed ■ 8-9 tests failed ■ 10+ tests failed



Electoral districts in the southern Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions show ten or more anomalous results, as do Sagarejo (south-east), Stepantsminda (north), and Batumi (west). Dmanisi in the Kvemo Kartli region has the highest number of flags, indicating 15 deviations from normal statistical behavior.

Sharp Impacts at the Precinct Level

The analysis above shows that the election was rigged. A further statistical exploration shows that **election day** violations alone could have affected tens or even hundreds of thousands of votes. This conclusion results from comparing similar locations that observers did and did not report issues at, using a statistical tool called *matching*.

Matching enables an estimate **at the precinct level** of the minimum impacts on Georgian Dream and opposition vote counts from specific forms of electoral malfeasance such as violence and intimidation, violations of voter secrecy, and obstruction of voters **on election day**.²⁹

In precincts where observers reported physical violence and intimidation, Georgian Dream gained an additional 30 votes, and the main four opposition parties lost 41 votes. That is to say, violence worked: in precincts where it was employed, Georgian Dream intimidated and beat 71 votes out of voters on average. Because observers were not in every location, it is not possible to determine how large an effect fear had on the election day overall.

If intimidation and a credible threat of imminent violence haunted one hundred precincts, it netted Georgian Dream 7,100 votes. If voters were actively terrified at 500 precincts, this resulted in 35,500 extra votes for the ruling party. Importantly, this number should be considered a floor -- intimidation in Georgia was widespread before election day and **this number only accounts for fear on election day**.

The breach of secrecy of the vote was widely reported by observers. In precincts where this was observed, the opposition lost an additional 53 votes due to this practice. If this practice was a problem at 24% of precincts, as reported by the ODIHR observers, the lack of secrecy gave Georgian Dream an advantage of 39,538 votes. If this problem prevailed at more than 2,200 precincts with the electronic vote counting devices, as widely reported, this number could approach 116,600 votes. As mentioned above, ODIHR observed difficulties feeding the ballot into the vote counting devices in more than half of polling stations.

In precincts with restricted observer rights, Georgian Dream gained an additional 20 votes, while the opposition lost 24 votes. If this took place in approximately 10% of stations, it translates to 13,640 votes; if in 30% of polling stations, it translates to 40,920 votes.

²⁹ The analysis used a statistical process known as matching. For this analysis, we used data from the CEC, GeoStat, geospatial data, and WeVote observer reports of election violations to identify statistically indistinguishable locations that did and did not have observer reports of issues. We used regression to estimate the impact at the precinct level. Matching was conducted on precincts with any named violation in the WeVote category (excluding the other) and then analysis of individual violation types was conducted to decompose the impact. The report only presents statistically significant effects; in general, most violations point towards advantage to GD and disadvantage to the main four opposition parties. Had the non-significant values been presented, the size of impacts would be substantially larger.

In addition to these bleak findings, the analysis showed that Georgian Dream gained votes from the following practices:

- Violations related to mobile ballot box gave Georgian Dream 50 votes per precinct;
- Falsification or improper correction of final protocol (a rare violation) led to Georgian Dream having 329 votes more on average.

The main four opposition parties also lost votes in precincts that experienced the following violations:

- Campaigning at the polling station, a practice which borders on intimidation in many cases, is associated with 57 votes fewer per precinct for the main four opposition parties;
- Not checking voter ID or using safeguard methods is associated with 49 votes fewer per precinct;
- Unauthorized people at the polling station caused there to be 42 votes fewer for the four main opposition parties at each precinct this took place at, on average;
- Voting with improper documentation is associated with 32 votes fewer for the opposition per precinct this was observed at.

While based on solid statistical calculations, these results are likely to substantially underestimate the impact of the various forms of electoral malpractice witnessed during election day. Observed vote buying was not present in the data, meaning that the impact of a widely reported violation could not be estimated. Data was also not available in time for publication on which electoral precincts were observed, but did not experience these violations. Therefore, the differences noted above are likely between precincts which experienced some electoral violations and precincts in which observers saw and reported particularly egregious violations.

Finally, this analysis can only explain practices on election day itself. Pre-electoral intimidation, vote buying, among other practices before election day account for a substantial number of Georgian Dream's votes, and the opposition lack of them.

Shy Engagement with Divisive Narrative

To preclude misunderstandings, the Georgian Dream does enjoy substantive support among the Georgian electorate. None of the analysis above contests this. Its support, however, does not constitute a 2024 majority that increases on the results of the 2020 election.

Are there many shy Georgian Dream voters who may mislead the polls, as expectations were famously misdirected prior to the re-election of John Major in 1992 by people in the United Kingdom hesitating to say they were voting Tory? From all available research, this currently seems a negligible phenomenon in Georgia, compared with the real intimidation of opposition party supporters.

Does the Georgian Dream war narrative explain the results announced by the CEC? This view is sometimes put forward by visitors who are impressed by the vividness of the posters contrasting the destruction of Ukraine with glossy photos of Georgia. The war narrative indeed explains why Georgian Dream, despite dismal views about its performance even from many of its own supporters, has residual traction.

Yet credible surveys from August 2024 seen by the team show that only 21% of the population saw the election as a referendum on war or peace. Though a bit more than one third of the population agree that “if the Georgian Dream loses, the risk of war increases,” only 10% strongly believe in this, with the rest agreeing somewhat with the proposition. This is not enough resonance to explain an enthusiastic surge to 54% – especially if only a tenth care strongly and only a fifth of the population believes the election to be about this issue at all. Subsequent polling suggests that for most Georgians the election revolved around bread-and-butter issues in later stages of the campaign also.

Where the Georgian Dream has support, it is more resigned than enthusiastic, as also evidenced by how Georgian Dream dwindles to the 10-15% range with voters outside the country, who cannot be misled, bribed, or intimidated.

Evidentiary Standards and Where Else to Look

The evidence that these elections were rigged through a multi-pronged assault – a dozen daggers – is solid. At the same time, some observers, usually those critical of President Zourabichvili and pro-EU opposition parties, have demanded “incontrovertible proof” to substantiate that charge. Underlying this demand is a fundamental misunderstanding. The purpose of high evidentiary standards is not to shield perpetrators of an authoritarian assault from accountability. Such standards of evidence are meant, instead, to protect individual citizens from exactly such an assault.

Overall, there is no substantial evidence to suggest that these elections were competitive. In recent years and months, the Georgian Dream authorities have undermined Georgia’s democratic institutions; captured the courts; constrained civil society and the free media; threatened opposition parties with prosecution; engaged in unprecedented bribery and mass intimidation.

Adding to the ruling party’s indictment, we have evidence of declining trend lines of support, as described by Bidzina Ivanishvili; feeble pre-election polling for the Georgian Dream; exit polls that show unexplainable discrepancies; the undercutting of core principles of free and fair elections, such as the secrecy of the vote; removal of electoral safeguards; statistical anomalies in official CEC data suggesting a rigged vote; and evidence on the effectiveness of intimidation, violence, and the violation of the secrecy of the vote causing higher vote counts for the government and lower results for the opposition. These issues are not fixed by a selective recount.

Within this context, if the CEC and the Georgian Dream government want to offer evidence in their defense, they should:

1. Provide all the information on who voted, to clarify that multiple voting and ID card misuse was indeed a marginal issue.
2. Offer a full account of the locations and activity, including phone records, of the personnel of Susi, the Georgian State Security Service, to demonstrate that they cannot be linked to mass intimidation prior to the election.
3. Provide a list of Georgian Dream regional coordinators, the agreements signed with them, honoraria transfer documents, and make them available for interviews.
4. Invite a comprehensive international audit of Georgian Dream and its associated accounts, especially at Cartu and Liberty Bank, to demonstrate that the Georgian Dream did not spend tens of millions of Lari in cash to bribe voters.
5. Publish the Georgian Dream’s raw pre-election polling data, before cleaning and weighing, to demonstrate it actually enjoyed the support that the party claims to have.
6. Open all CEC internal and external correspondence, to demonstrate that it took substantive steps to ensure voter privacy.
7. Welcome and support extensive quantitative and qualitative research, including advanced research techniques such as list experiments, undertaken by independent organizations.

A government that has nothing to hide should not hesitate to be transparent about the conduct of its elections. Moreover, prosecution is the most compelling way for a government to demonstrate

that it does not condone the rigging of elections. So far, prosecutors have primarily summoned people who highlighted electoral shortcomings, rather than the perpetrators of bribery, intimidation and fraud.

Caveats of Preliminary Synthesis

While the overall conclusions are strong, particular findings may be preliminary. New details will emerge, for example with regards to multiple voting or ID card misuse. Some election data has not yet been merged. Issues such as many rogue pro-government observers, many voters' nervousness about cameras in the precincts operated by Georgian Dream-aligned personnel, or the low cut of the voting booths are omitted, to streamline this analysis.

The findings here have undergone internal peer review. A more comprehensive effort can add more reporting and data analysis. Given the overwhelming amount of evidence, the overall finding is unambiguous: these elections did not present the will of the Georgian people.

For updates on any findings, check <https://open.substack.com/pub/hansgutbrod/p/georgias-stolen-election-evidence>

Hans Gutbrod is a Professor at Ilia State University in Tbilisi, Georgia. He has written on politics and ethics and works as a consultant in policy research. He previously was the regional director of the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRRC). Hans has been working in the Caucasus region and observing elections in Georgia since 1999 and holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from the London School of Economics. He served as a Long-Term Observer for the ODIHR/OSCE mission in Georgia in 2003.

Two colleagues currently affiliated with other organizations and institutions contributed extensively and led on the statistical analysis. They bring a combined experience of more than 25 years on statistical analysis in the context of elections.

Multiple people kindly contributed details, insight, and analysis.

Key Readings on Georgia's Parliamentary Election

Here is a preliminary bibliography of select statements and reporting.

Selected Statements and Analyses

Transparency International, "Misuse of Administrative Resources in Parliamentary Elections 2024 - Interim Report", 21 October, 2024

Report describing multiple schemes that were put in place before the election, including mass data collection on civil servants and their families, and the removal of key safeguards against carousel voting. Most comprehensive report on pre-election measures, covering aspects so far not included/covered in the OSCE/ODIHR report. Essential reading, especially in retrospect.

<https://transparency.ge/en/post/misuse-administrative-resources-parliamentary-elections-2024-interim-report>

ISFED, "Summary Statement on Georgia's Parliamentary Election", 27 October 2024
Statement highlights that the results "regardless of the outcome, cannot be seen as truly reflecting the preferences of Georgian voters." While the parallel vote tabulation is consistent with CEC results, the statement highlights "fundamental flaws in pre-election and election day processes", which included vote buying, intimidation, confiscation of identity cards, and the breaches in the collection/processing of personal data of citizens.

<https://epde.org/?news=isfed-summary-statement-on-georgias-parliamentary-election-on-october-26-2024>

OSCE/ODIHR, "Georgia's Elections Marred by an Uneven Playing Field, Pressure and Tension", 27 October 2024

Detailed preliminary statement highlighting a range of concerns in a report covering all aspects of the election, including wheelchair access; mentions intimidation 15 times and pressure 12 times. Voting secrecy observed as compromised in about a quarter of all polling stations. More detailed assessment to follow.

<https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/579376>

WeVote, "Main Scheme of Large-Scale Election Fraud Unraveled", 28 October 2024

Summary of 900 reports of violations from 1131 polling stations, highlighting how key electoral procedures and observation were undermined, including the observation of voter registration, regular problems with voter marking and interruption/intimidation by observers of government aligned groups.

<https://www.wevote.ge/en/post/the-main-scheme-of-large-scale-election-fraud-has-been-unraveled>

HarrisX, "HarrisX Releases Final Georgia 2024 Exit Poll Analysis", 31 October 2024

Final analysis of exit poll of 12,000+ Georgian voters reveals a significant discrepancy of over 172,523 votes (8% of total votes) between their data and the official Central Election Commission (CEC) results, with ruling party Georgian Dream receiving 44.4% in exit polls versus the official

54%. Even after accounting for statistical adjustments, weighting, and non-response bias at a 95% confidence interval, the analysis identified 27 electoral districts with mathematically impossible variances, most notably in Marneuli where Georgian Dream's reported 80% victory contrasted sharply with the exit poll's 40%. The comprehensive data analysis, which included demographic breakdowns and time-of-day voting patterns, concludes that the CEC's final election results giving Georgian Dream 53.96% are "statistically impossible," raising serious questions about electoral integrity.

<https://www.harrisx.com/posts/harrisx-releases-final-georgia-2024-exit-poll-analysis>

Civil.GE: "Edison Research: 13-Percentage Point Difference Between Exit Polls and Official Election Results Suggests Vote Manipulation", 1 November 2024

Summary of Edison Research statement, pointing to likely "local-level manipulation of the vote" as the explanation for the large discrepancy between exit polls and results announced by the CEC.

<https://civil.ge/archives/633142>

Detailed Reporting, also from Georgia's Regions

Highlights of recent reporting on the elections, sorted by date:

Will Neal, "Fear and Loathing in Zugdidi: Dirty Tricks on the Georgian Campaign Trail", ByLine Times, 21 October 2024

Article highlights claims of vote buying, the misuse of administrative resources, and the spread of disinformation to stifle opposition, in run up to elections, also in broader context about the erosion of democratic practices and the Georgian Dream's increasing authoritarian tendencies.
<https://bylinetimes.com/2024/10/21/fear-and-loathing-in-zugdidi-dirty-tricks-on-the-georgian-campaign-trail>

Nicholas Pearce, "Recurring dream: Georgians face risk of a rigged election as the country's ruling party seeks to hold onto power indefinitely", Novaya Gazeta Europe, 24 October 2024
Article remarkable for precisely describing the contours of the rigging practices several days before the election, including the targeting of a socially vulnerable family with an offer of 1000 GEL additional support, and requesting a civil servant to report on family members' voting preferences, with a special emphasis also on Samegrelo and in the Gali district on the border with Abkhazia.

<https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2024/10/24/recurring-dream-en>

Aytan Farhadova, "Whoever will pay more, I will observe for him': the Georgian parliamentary elections in Iormughanlo", OC-Media, 30 October 2024

Article about the Georgian parliamentary elections in Iormughanlo, a minority settlement with a large Azerbaijani population, with detailed first-person reporting, hour-by-hour developments, including vote-buying and intimidation of reporter.

<https://oc-media.org/features/whoever-will-pay-more-i-will-observe-for-him-the-georgian-parliamentary-elections-in-iormughanlo/>

Atlantic Council, "Georgia's 2024 Parliamentary Elections: Analysis from the Atlantic Council"
Collection of expert analyses examines the contentious October 26 parliamentary elections in Georgia. Authors, including former US diplomats and on-the-ground election monitors, present compelling evidence of authoritarian consolidation. Particularly noteworthy is their analysis of sophisticated voter intimidation techniques, ranging from workplace coercion to surveillance systems at polling stations, highlighting the evolution of modern authoritarian electoral tactics.

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/experts-react-georgia-just-concluded-a-contested-election-with-the-countrys-future-at-stake-now-what/>