

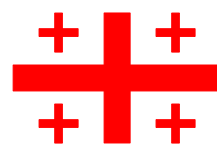
# Structure of the report



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# 1. Introduction



Georgia, like many other countries of Eastern Europe, is currently affected by strong social and political polarisation. Since 2020, this process has intensified significantly, and the sources of this escalation should be sought in Georgia's difficult geopolitical position. The need for rapid economic development and the search for guarantors of sovereignty and enhanced security—threatened by the aggressive policy of the Russian Federation—have resulted in a widespread hope among Georgian citizens that their country would join the European Union. Preparations by the Georgian government to make this a reality had been underway since 2020. For unclear reasons, however, in 2024 there was a noticeable shift in the policy of the government led by Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili, which began to adopt increasingly explicit anti-EU and pro-Russian rhetoric. As a result, relations between the Georgian government and the EU deteriorated significantly, and the prospect of Georgia's formal accession to the European community moved further away.

Observing this process, Georgian society became divided into supporters and opponents of the newly emerging political vision. As part of a grassroots civic initiative and with the active involvement of the political opposition, mass protests and demonstrations in support of continuing a pro-EU policy were organised (and, at the time of writing this report, are still ongoing), accompanied by demands for the resignation of the current government, which is accused of corruption and electoral fraud. It appears, however, that these civic actions have not yet produced the desired effects and are officially subjected to strong criticism by the government itself, pro-government media, and the segment of Georgian society supportive of the current authorities. The aforementioned expressions of pro-EU sentiment and calls for resignation are portrayed in pro-government rhetoric as unrepresentative of the majority of Georgian society and have on numerous occasions resulted in the arrest of demonstrators.

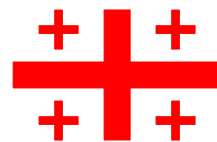
The social and political situation in Georgia is therefore dynamic and multifaceted. The political struggle between pro-government and anti-government forces contributes to the creation and deepening of social divisions, destabilising Georgia's further development and rendering any predictions regarding the future of Georgian society uncertain.



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## 2. Method



In response to the ongoing developments in Georgia, a Polish research team led by Professor Piotr Sula, DSc (project coordinator), from the University of Wrocław, together with a Georgian team led by Professor Bakur Kvashilava from GIPPA University, carried out a research project aimed at identifying the opinions and motivations of Georgian citizens with regard to the European Union. Additional diagnostic modules were designed to provide context for a better understanding of Georgian opinions and motivations, focusing on social capital (Putnam 1993, 2000; Fukuyama 1995, 1999; Woolcock & Sweetser 2002), clientelism (Katz & Crotty 2005), affective polarisation (Tworzecki 2019; Röllicke 2023), nationalism (Agerval et al. 2017), and basic demographic data (gender).

The inspiration for diagnosing Georgian citizens' opinions about the EU was drawn from the tools and attitude models proposed by the European Commission and operationalised by the Eurobarometer.

The opinions and motivations of Georgian citizens were examined using diagnostic survey methods and interviews. By employing a diagnostic survey in the form of a CAPI questionnaire and collecting a representative random–quota sample (N = 1100), modelled on samples used by the Eurobarometer, it was possible to reliably capture general statistical trends, indicating primarily whether Georgians are broadly positively or negatively disposed towards the EU. Thanks to the additional informational components collected in the survey, it was also possible to observe how these general trends vary depending on significant social, political, and ideological factors. The interview method, conducted through individual in-depth narrative interviews, provided insights into respondents' personal perspectives not only on the EU, but also by exploring the viewpoints of both declared supporters and opponents of the current Georgian government.

This report focuses exclusively on presenting the results of the diagnostic survey.

The planned research activities were fully funded by the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA) under the so-called Intervention Grant (**grant number to be inserted**).



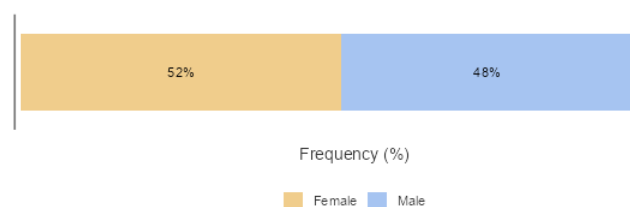
### 3. Research sample



The diagnostic survey was conducted on a sample of 1,100 adult Georgian citizens, differentiated by age. The respondents included 52% women and 48% men. A slightly higher proportion of participants (63%) came from urban areas. The sample was dominated by individuals in the lowest income bracket (46%) and those with upper secondary education (46%). The sample was diverse in terms of regional origin, with respondents from Tbilisi constituting the largest group (31%).

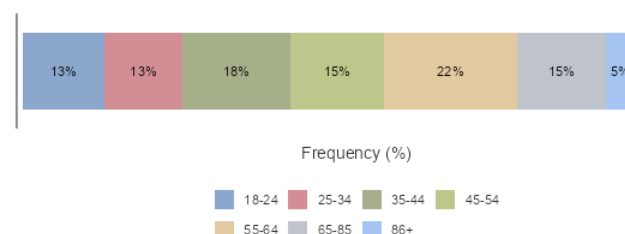
#### Gender

D1. Gender



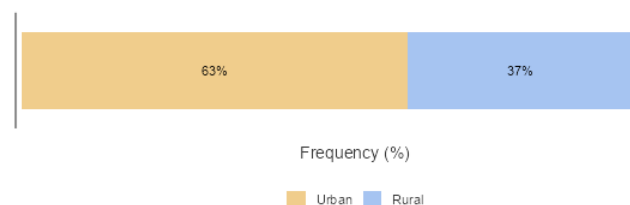
#### Age

D2. Age



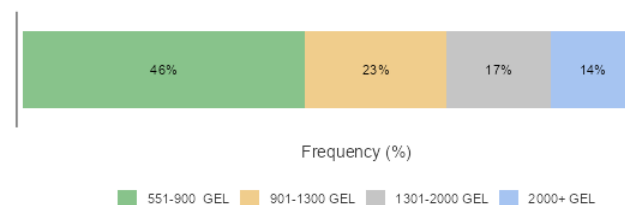
#### Residence

D3. Residence



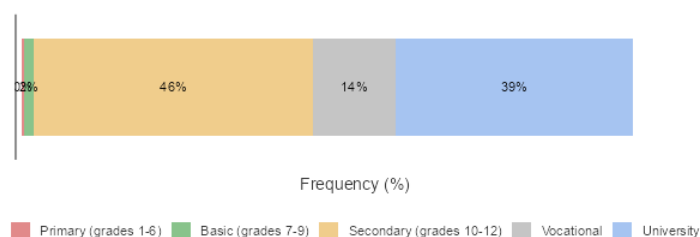
#### Income

D4. Salary (per month, excluding taxes)



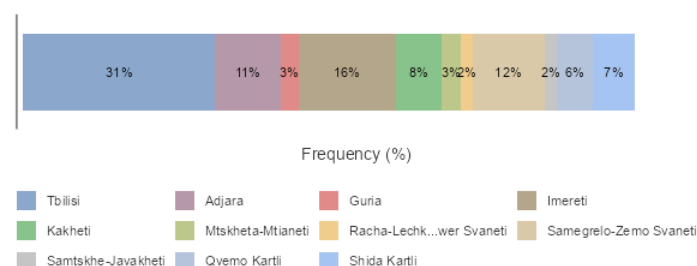
#### Education

D5. Education (obtained diploma)

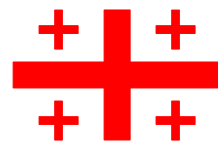


#### Region

Region

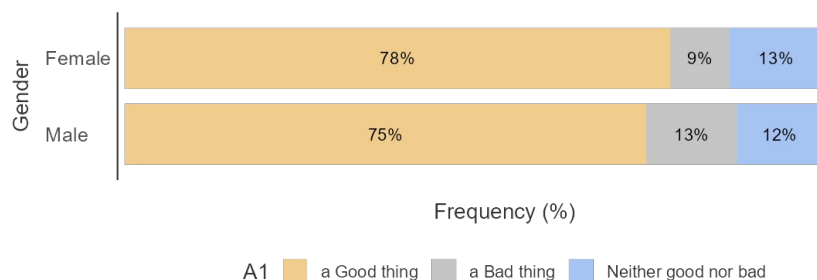


## 4.1.1 Georgian citizens' attitudes towards the EU – Part I



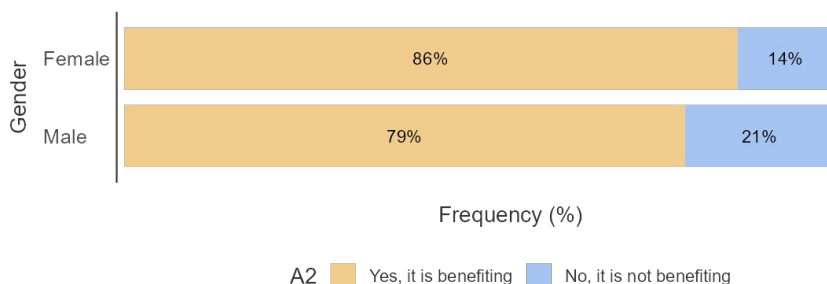
Based on the results presented below, it can be concluded that the vast majority of Georgians believe that their country benefits from cooperation with the EU and that EU membership would be something positive and beneficial for Georgia.

A1 Generally speaking, do you think that a future Georgian membership of the European Union would be...?



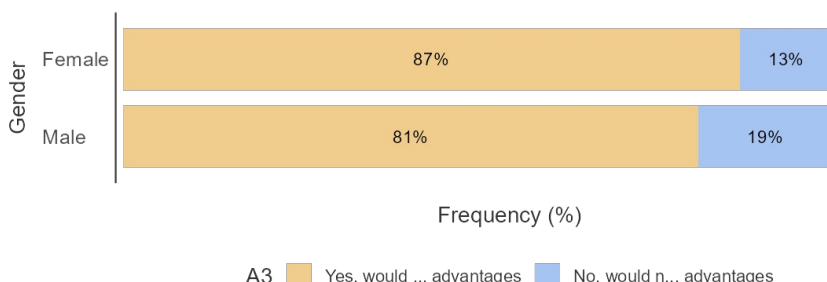
A clear majority of Georgians (77%) believe that future membership of the EU would be a positive development.

A2 Taking everything into consideration, would you say that generally Georgia is benefiting or not from cooperation with European Union?



A clear majority of Georgians (83%) believe that Georgia benefits from cooperation with the EU.

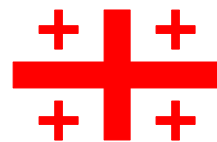
A3 Taking everything into consideration, would you say that generally Georgia would gain advantages or not from cooperation with European Union?



A clear majority of Georgians (84%) believe that Georgia would benefit from cooperation with the EU.

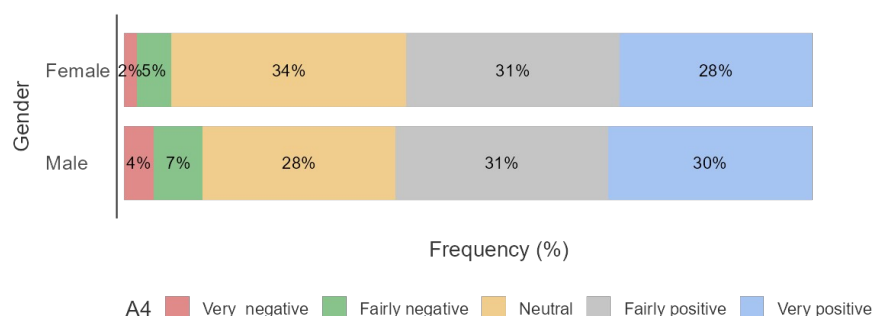


## 4.1.2 Georgian citizens' attitudes towards the EU – Part II



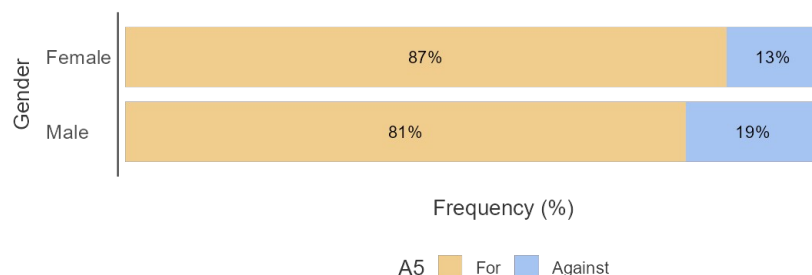
Based on the results presented below, it can be concluded that the image of the EU is generally positive in the eyes of most Georgians. Regarding the potential membership of Georgia in the EU, a clear majority of Georgians support accession and would vote 'in favour' in the event of a referendum

A4. In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?



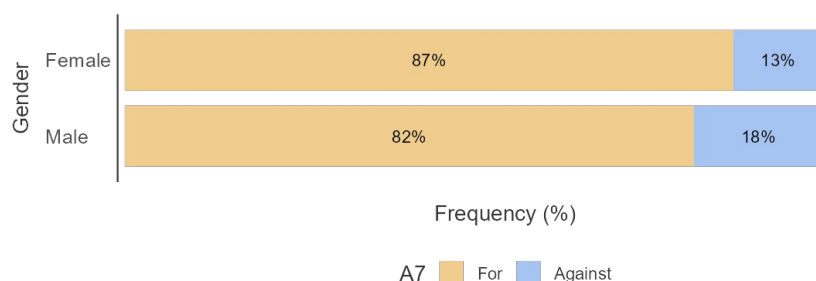
The majority of Georgians (60%) believe that the EU has a generally positive image.

A5. Are you for or against Georgia becoming a member of the European Union?



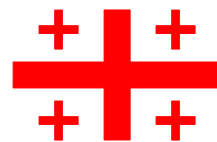
A clear majority of Georgians (84%) support their country becoming a member of the EU.

A7. If there would a public vote about Georgia's entering in to European Union, you would vote for or against?



A clear majority of Georgians (84%) would vote 'in favour' of Georgia joining the EU in the event of a referendum on membership.

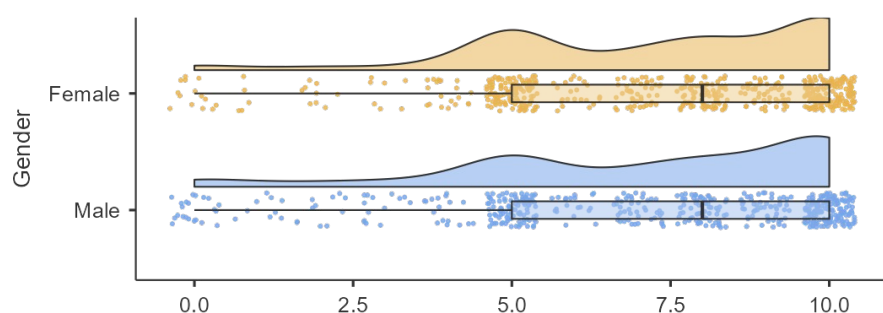
### 4.1.3 Georgian citizens' attitudes towards the EU – Part III



Based on the results presented below, it can be concluded that, in the opinion of Georgians, the EU plays a positive role in maintaining world peace, combating terrorism, and strengthening the global economy.

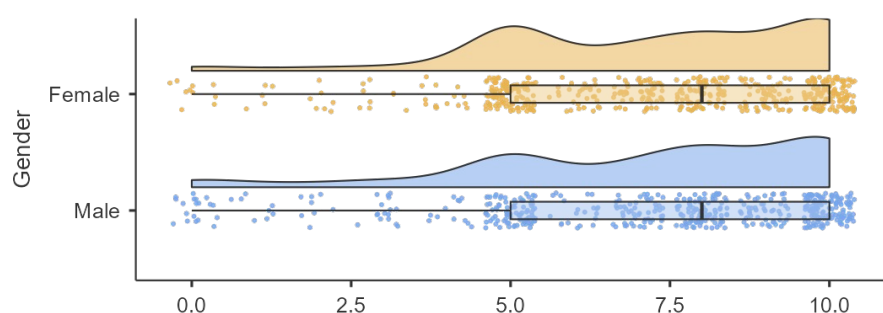
*Q: In your opinion, does the European Union tend to play a positive role, a negative role or neither positive nor a negative role regarding...*

A8.1. Peace in world



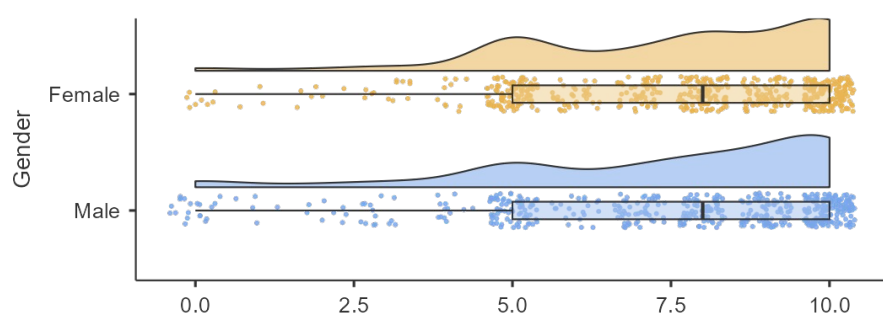
The majority of Georgians view the EU's role in maintaining world peace positively.

A8.2. Fight against terrorism

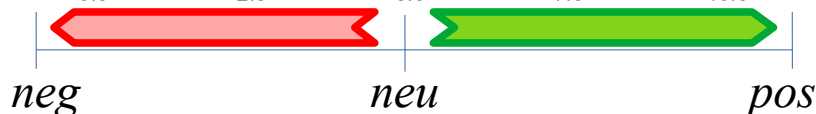


The majority of Georgians view the EU's role in combating terrorism positively.

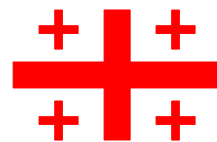
A8.3. Growth of world economy



The majority of Georgians view the EU's role in strengthening the global economy positively.



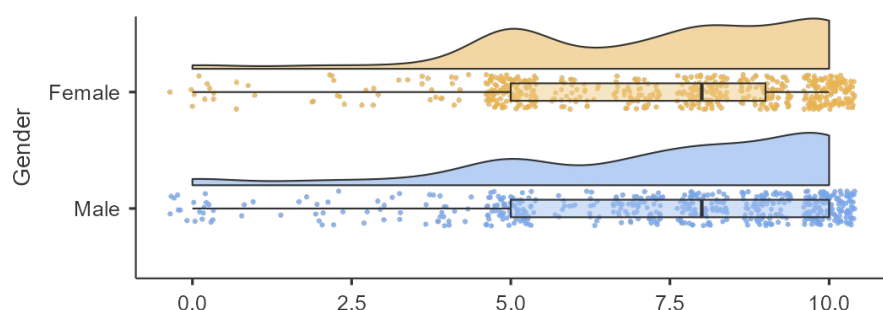
#### 4.1.4 Georgian citizens' attitudes towards the EU – Part IV



Based on the results presented below, it can be concluded that, in the opinion of Georgians, the EU plays a positive role in combating global poverty and protecting the environment.

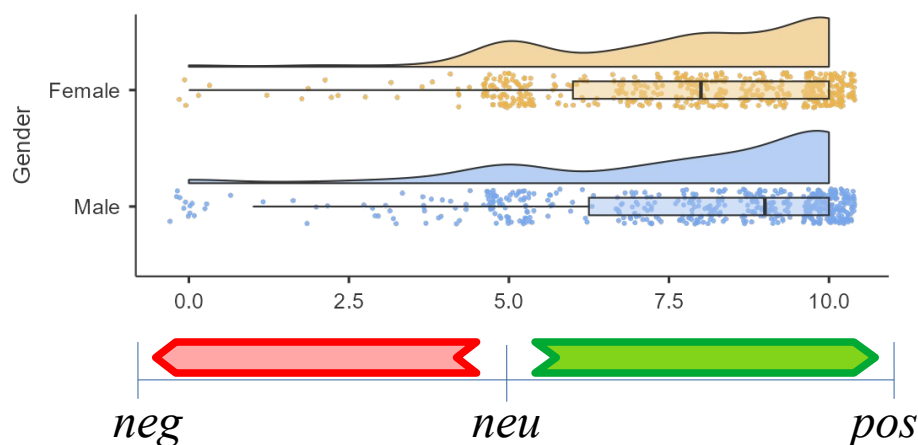
*Q: In your opinion, does the European Union tend to play a positive role, a negative role or neither positive nor a negative role regarding...*

A8.4 Fight against poverty in the world



The majority of Georgians view the EU's role in combating global poverty positively.

A8.5. Protection of the environment

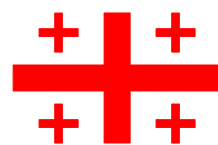


The majority of Georgians view the EU's role in environmental protection positively.





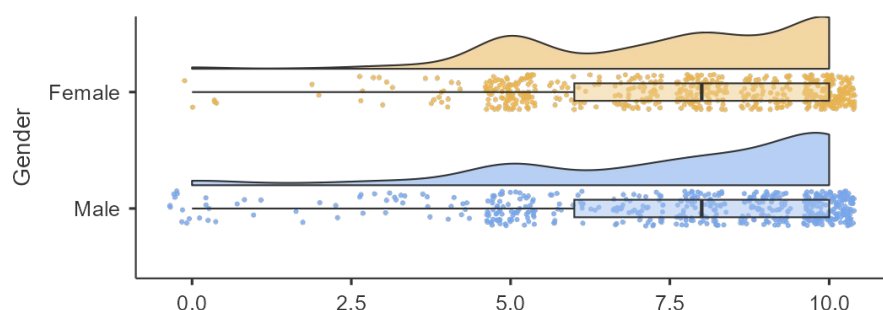
## 4.1.5 Georgian citizens' attitudes towards the EU – Part V



Based on the results presented below, it can be concluded that, in the opinion of Georgians, Georgia's accession to the EU would improve their average standard of living, the level of international security, and the quality of Georgian democracy.

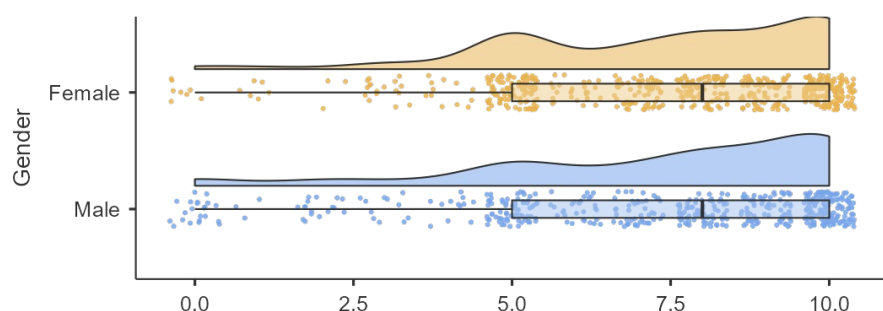
*Q: In your opinion, Georgia's entering in to European Union will have positive, negative or neither positively nor negatively impact on ...*

A9.1. Average life conditions of most Georgian citizens



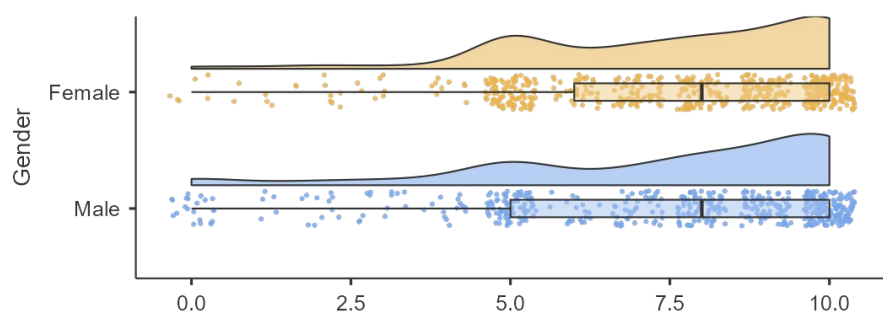
The majority of Georgians believe that joining the EU would have a positive impact on raising their average standard of living.

A9.2. Georgia's level of international security

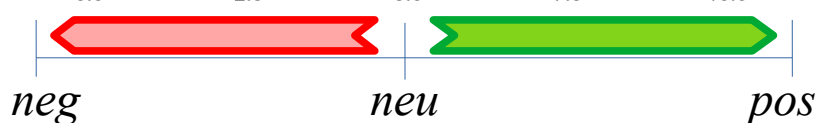


The majority of Georgians believe that joining the EU would increase their country's level of international security.

A9.3. Quality of Georgian democracy



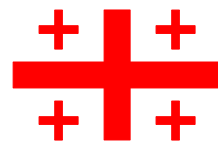
The majority of Georgians believe that joining the EU would improve the quality of Georgian democracy.



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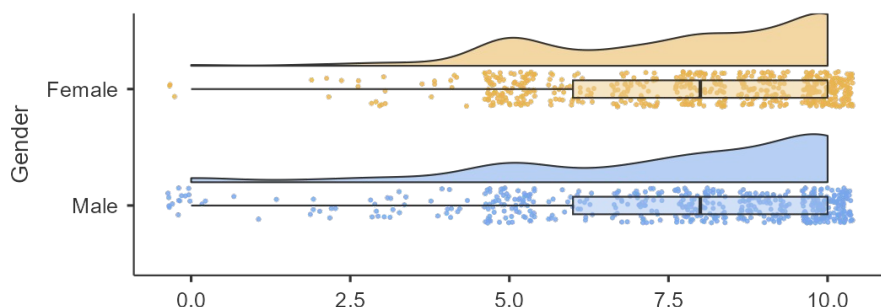
## 4.1.6 Georgian citizens' attitudes towards the EU – Part VI



Based on the results presented below, it can be concluded that, in the opinion of Georgians, Georgia's accession to the EU would have a positive impact on the country's economic development, domestic politics, and cultural diversity.

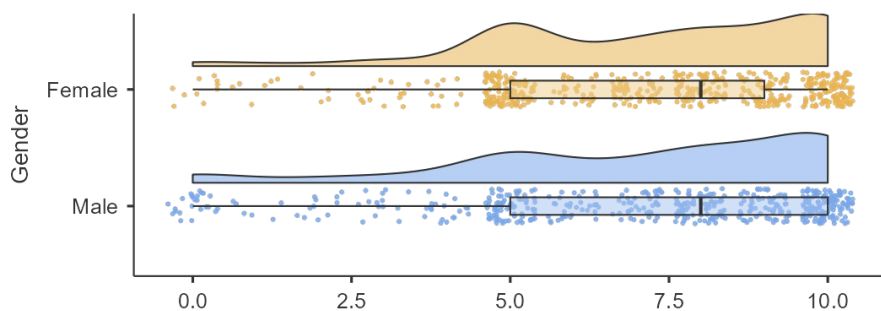
*Q: In your opinion, Georgia's entering in to European Union will have positive, negative or neither positively nor negatively impact on ...*

A9.4. Economical development of Georgia



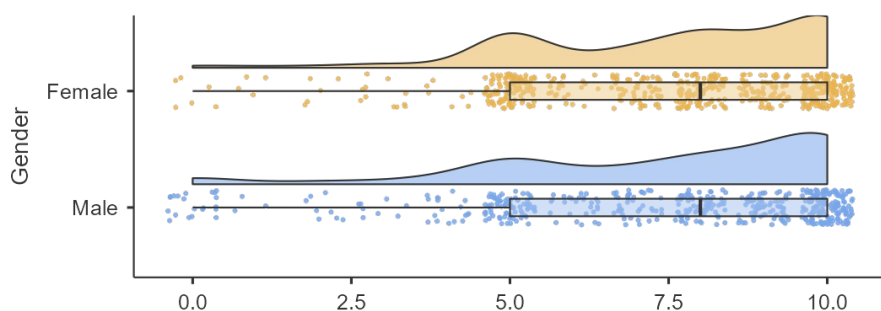
The majority of Georgians believe that joining the EU would have a positive impact on their country's economic development.

A9.5 Internal political affairs in Georgia



The majority of Georgians believe that joining the EU would have a positive impact on Georgia's domestic politics.

A9.6. Cultural diversity in Georgia



The majority of Georgians believe that joining the EU would have a positive impact on cultural diversity.

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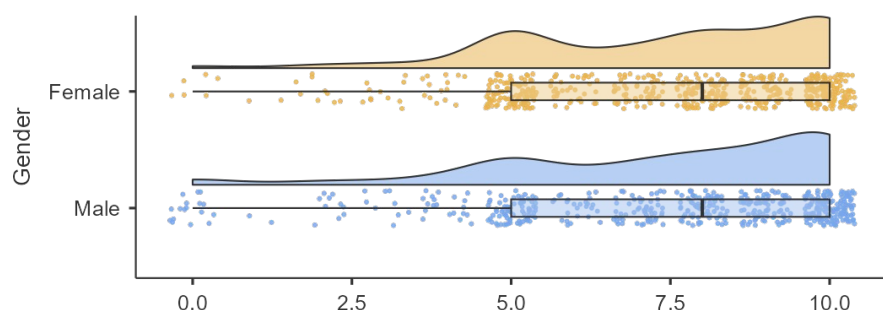
## 4.1.7 Georgian citizens' attitudes towards the EU – Part VII



Based on the results presented below, it can be concluded that, in the opinion of Georgians, Georgia's accession to the EU would reduce social inequalities in their society, accelerate technological development, and enhance the country's standing on the international stage.

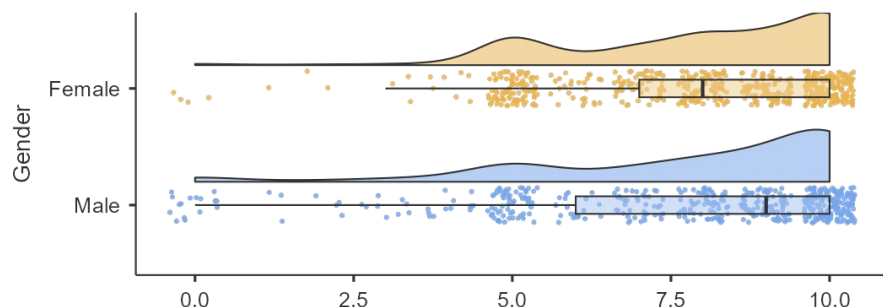
*Q: In your opinion, Georgia's entering in to European Union will have positive, negative or neither positively nor negatively impact on ...*

A9.7 Social equality in Georgia



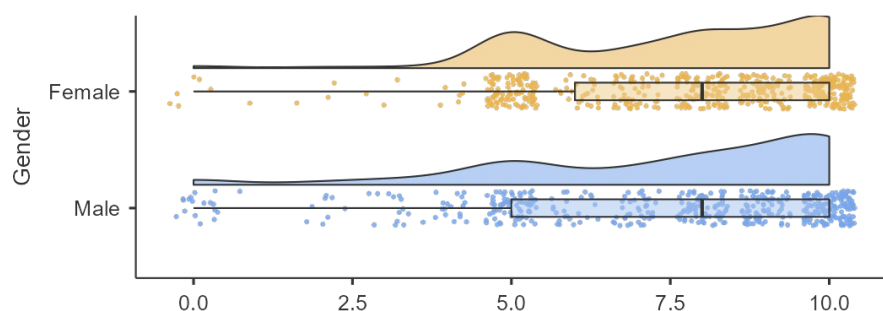
The majority of Georgians believe that joining the EU would reduce social inequalities in their country.

A9.8. Technological development of Georgia



The majority of Georgians believe that joining the EU would have a positive impact on the technological development of their country.

A9.9. World-wide political importance of Georgia



The majority of Georgians believe that joining the EU would enhance their country's standing on the international stage.

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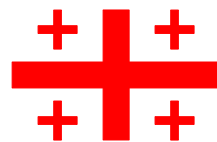
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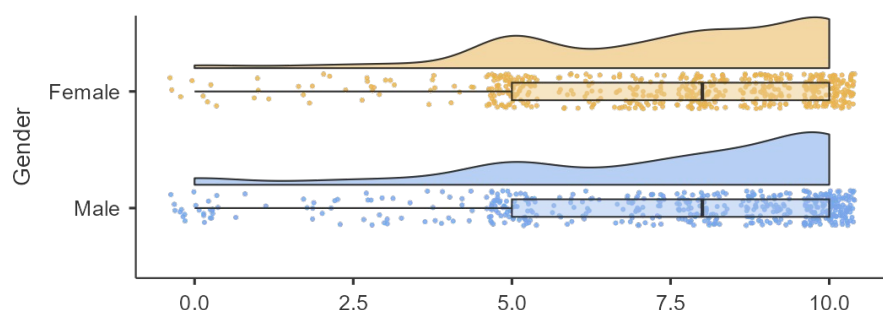
## 4.1.8 Georgian citizens' attitudes towards the EU – Part VIII



Based on the results presented below, it can be concluded that, in the opinion of Georgians, Georgia's accession to the EU would safeguard sovereignty and increase media and press freedom in their country.

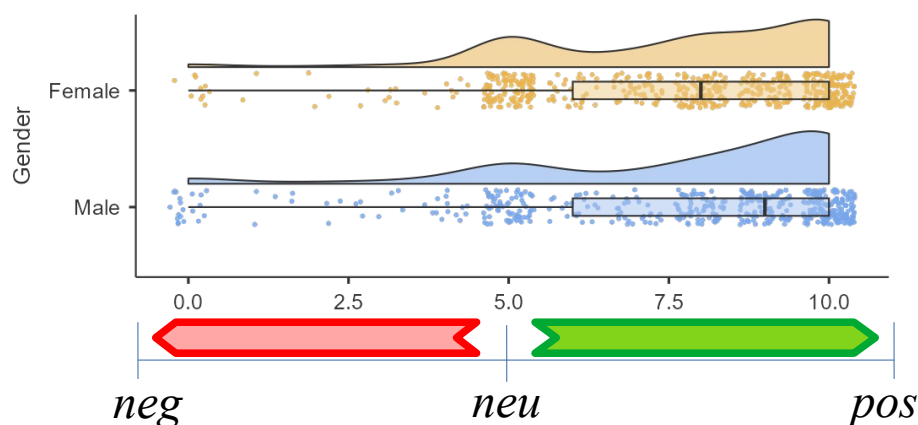
*Q: In your opinion, Georgia's entering in to European Union will have positive, negative or neither positively nor negatively impact on ...*

A9.10. Sovereignty of Georgia



The majority of Georgians believe that joining the EU would safeguard their country's sovereignty.

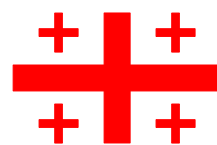
A9.11. Freedom of public media/press in Georgia



The majority of Georgians believe that joining the EU would strengthen media and press freedom in their country.



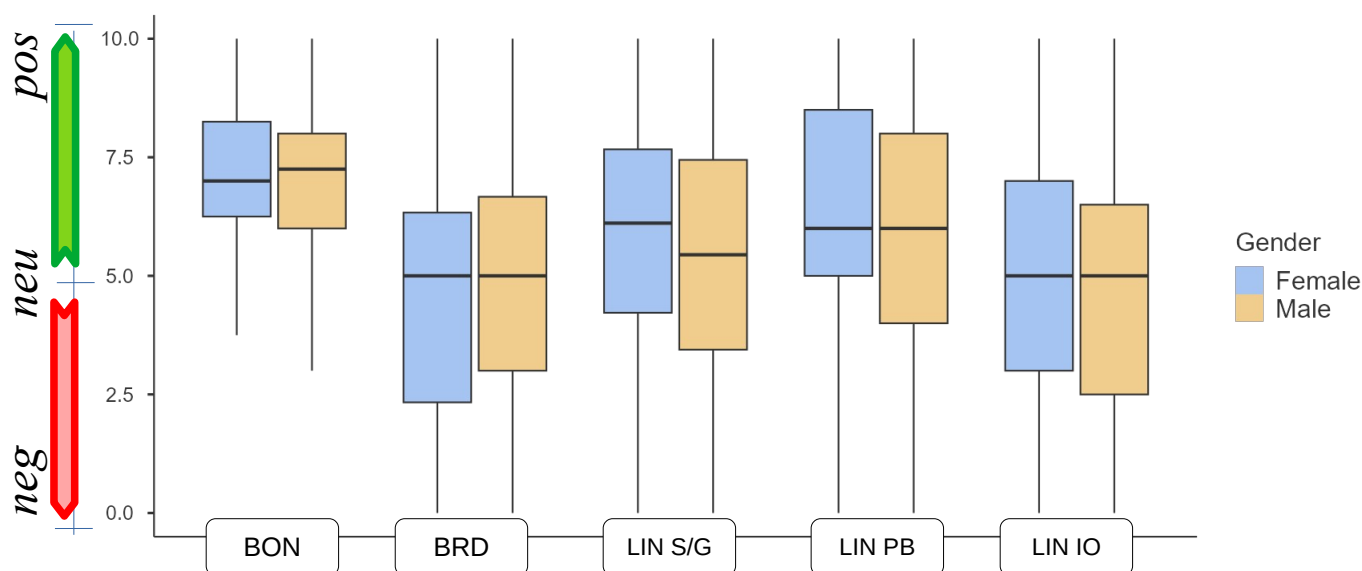
## 4.2 Georgian citizens' attitudes towards the EU from the perspective of individual social capital



Social capital was understood as the level of trust expressed across three dimensions: bonding (close family, acquaintances, friends), bridging (others, strangers), and linking (institutions and organisations). The latter was further divided into three subdimensions: state and governmental institutions and organisations (justice system, police, military, political parties, public services, government media, the Georgian Orthodox Church, the education system, and regional local authorities), public benefit organisations (private media, non-governmental organisations), and international organisations (NATO and the UN).

Respondents were asked to rate their level of trust in all selected entities on a scale from 0 (complete lack of trust) to 10 (complete trust). The ratings provided by respondents were aggregated within each dimension as arithmetic means.

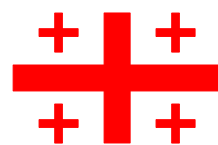
At the level of overall results, it can be concluded that Georgians have a positive attitude towards friends and relatives, a neutral attitude towards strangers, state institutions and organisations, and international organisations, with no significant differences observed between genders.



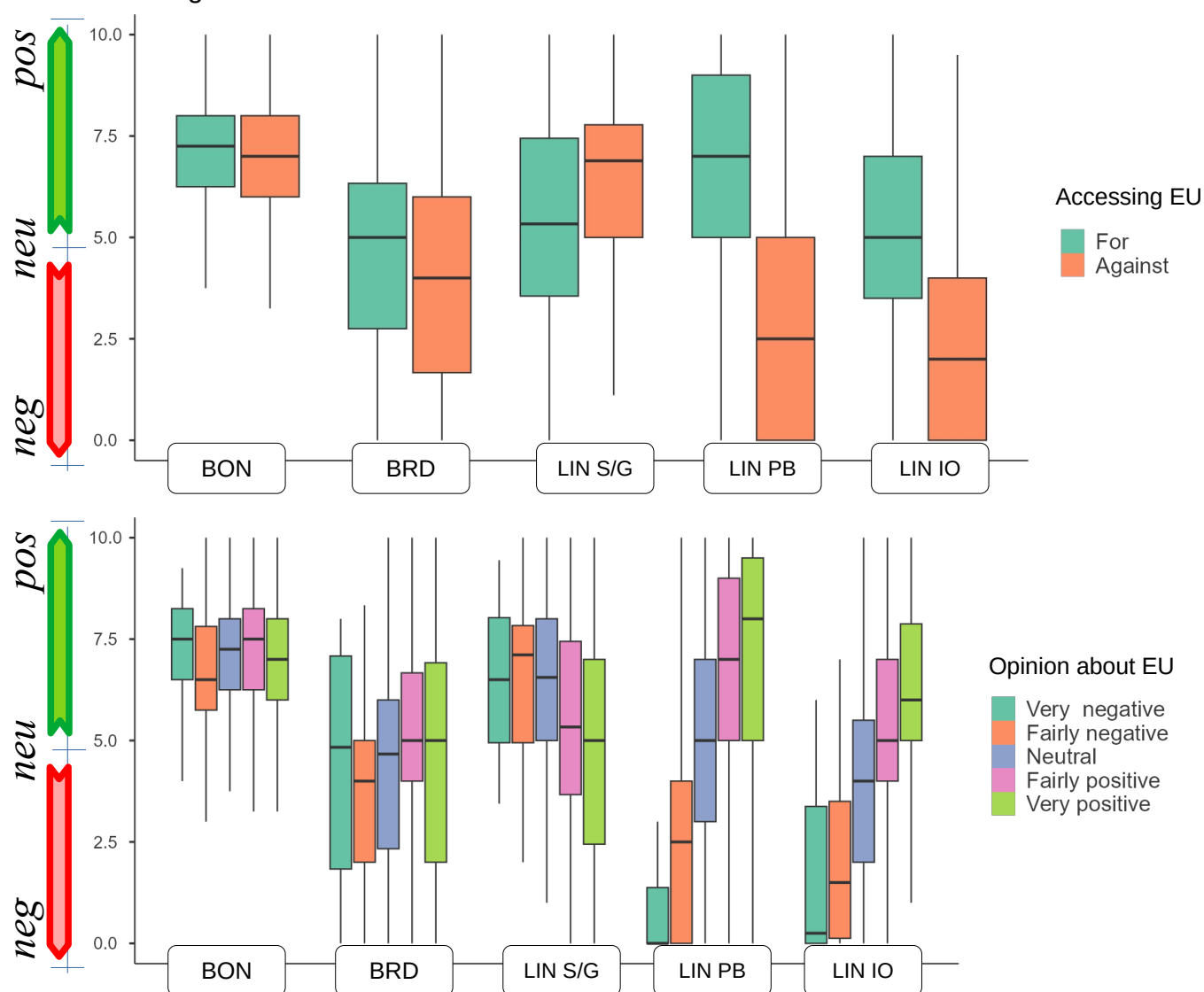
BON – bonding social capital, BRD – bridging social capital, LIN S/G – linking social capital to state institutions and organisations, LIN PB – linking social capital to public benefit organisations, LIN IO – linking social capital to international organisations.



## 4.2.1 Georgian citizens' attitudes towards the EU from the perspective of individual social capital



A comparative analysis of social capital, based on respondents' declarations regarding whether they would vote in favour of their country joining the EU and how they assess the current image of the EU, revealed that Georgians who are opposed to accession and hold a negative view of the EU's image generally exhibit lower bonding social capital in relation to public benefit organisations and international organisations.



BON – bonding social capital, BRD – bridging social capital, LIN S/G – linking social capital to state institutions and organisations, LIN PB – linking social capital to public benefit organisations, LIN IO – linking social capital to international organisations.



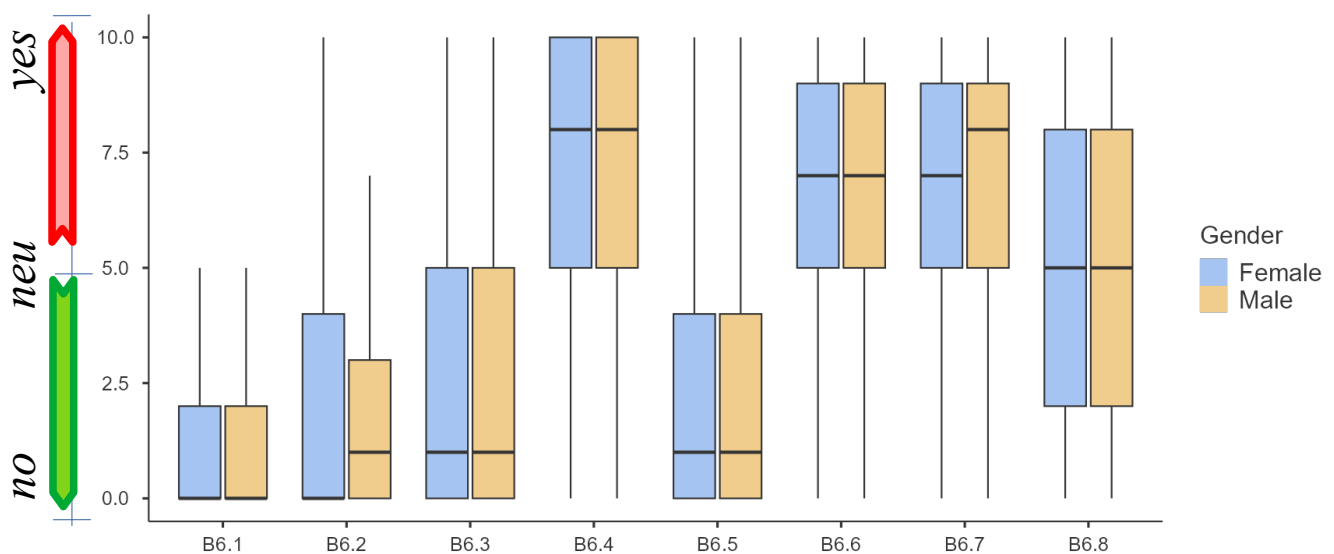
## 4.3 Georgian citizens' attitudes towards the EU from the perspective of acceptance of clientelistic practices



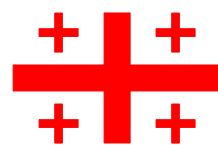
Clientelist practices were understood as intentional actions undertaken by the government or political parties toward potential or actual voters, which were characterised by asymmetry, favouritism, and instrumentalism. Respondents were asked whether the government should give money only to its supporters (B6.1), whether it should explain public expenditures to its citizens (B6.2), whether political parties should act solely for the benefit of their supporters (B6.3), whether one should support parties that fulfil their electoral promises (B6.4), whether one should refrain from criticising a government that has failed to keep its electoral promises (B6.5), whether politics is a zero-sum game (B6.6), whether it is worthwhile to support parties that act in the respondent's particular interest (B6.7), and whether voting is an investment based on a calculation of gains and losses (B6.8).

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the above statements on a scale from 0 (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree).

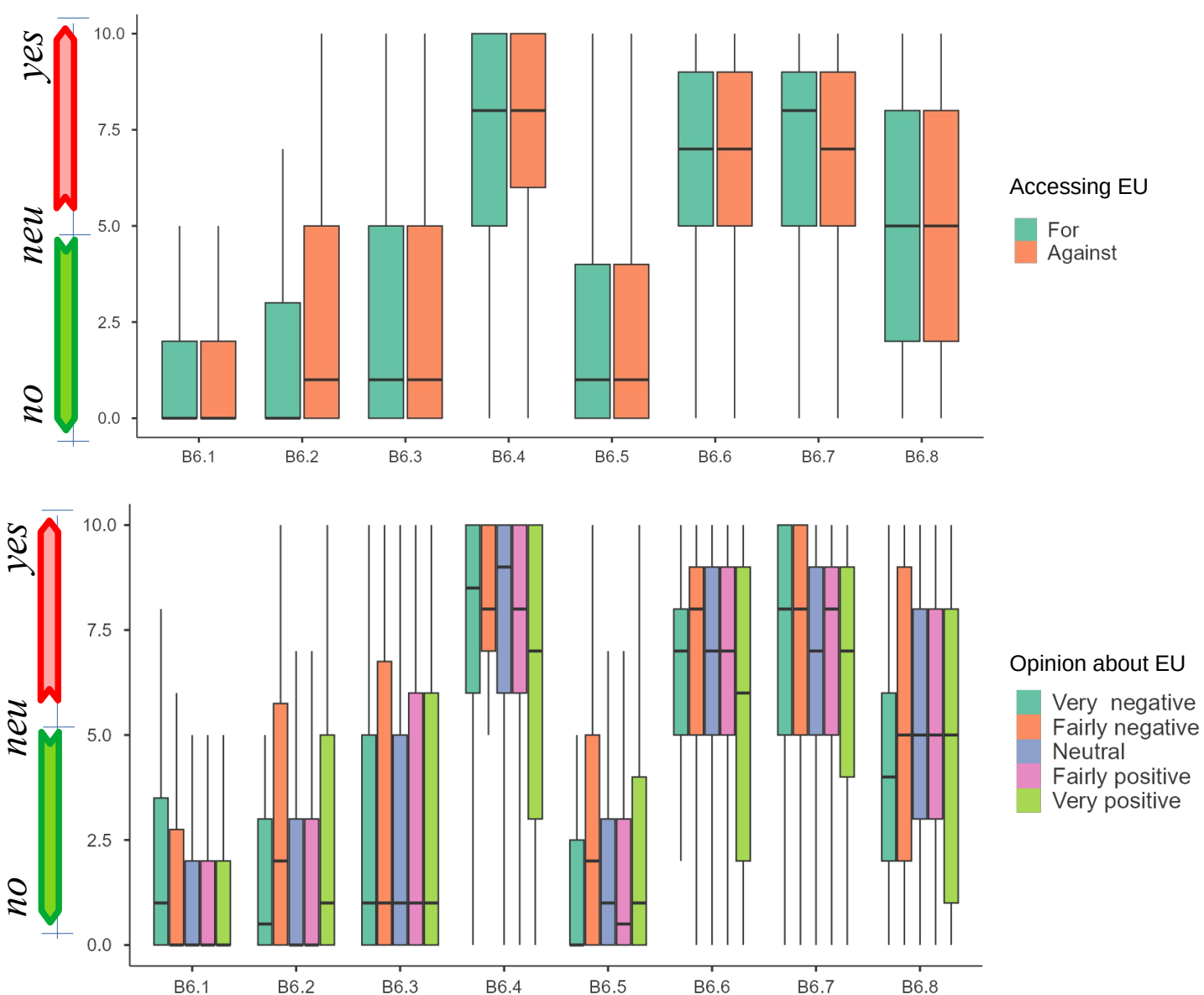
Based on the overall results, it can be concluded that Georgians exhibited favourable attitudes towards practices such as supporting parties that fulfil their promises, viewing politics as a zero-sum game, and supporting parties that act in particular personal interests, with no significant differences observed between women and men.



### 4.3.1 Georgian citizens' attitudes towards the EU from the perspective of acceptance of clientelistic practices



A comparative analysis, based on respondents' declarations regarding whether they would vote in favour of their country joining the EU and how they assess the current image of the EU, revealed that in both cases there is no significant variation in the level of acceptance of clientelist practices.





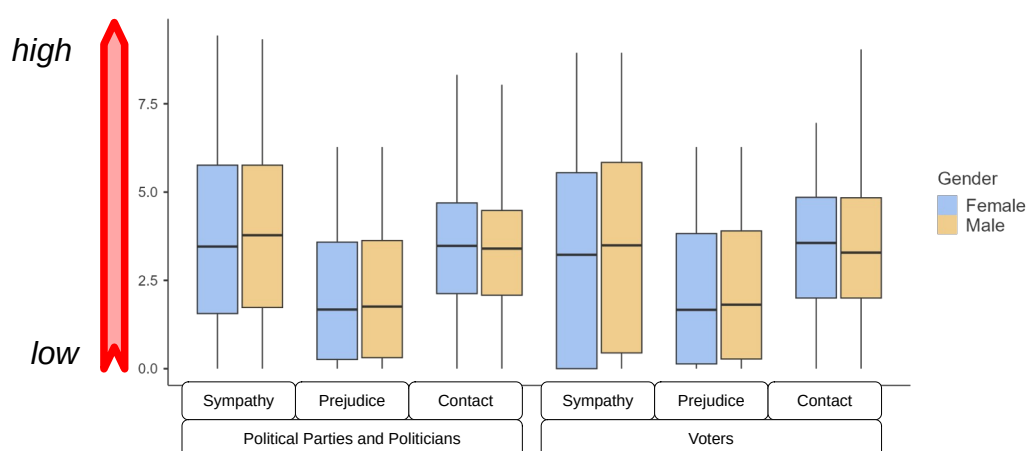
## 4.4 Georgian citizens' attitudes towards the EU from the perspective of affective polarisation



Affective polarization was defined (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Tworzecki 2018; Wagner 2021; Röllicke 2023) as an attitude comprising both positive sentiments towards parties and voters with whom an individual identifies, and negative sentiments towards parties and voters with whom the individual does not identify. These sentiments are experienced across three levels: subjectively felt sympathy and antipathy towards a given party and its voters, positive and negative stereotyping of politicians from that party and its voters, and the desire to seek out or avoid contact with the party's politicians and its voters.

Respondents were asked to rate on a scale from 0 to 10 how much they like particular political parties and their voters, to assess the extent to which politicians of a given party exhibit specific positive and negative traits and behaviours, and to indicate how strongly they feel the need to intentionally meet or actively avoid contact with politicians of a given party and its voters. The ratings were aggregated by averaging within each dimension and expressed as a weighted distance (Wagner 2019), reflecting the degree of variation in assessments. The greater the variation, the more affectively polarized the individual was (0 representing no polarization and 10 representing maximum polarization).

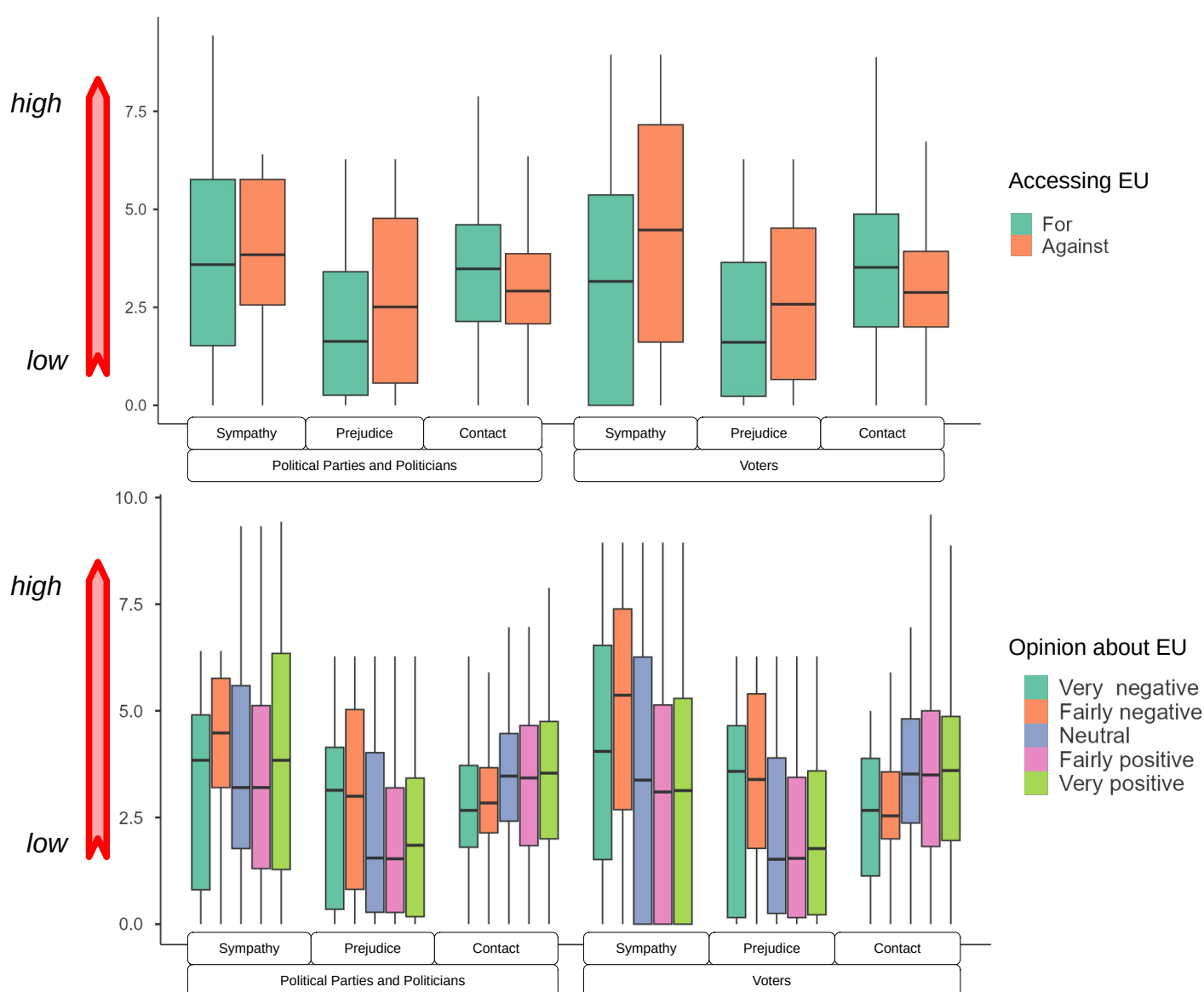
Based on the overall results, it can be concluded that the level of polarization in Georgian society was low to moderate, with the greatest polarization observed in the domain of contact with politicians of particular parties and their voters.



## 4.4.1 Georgian citizens' attitudes towards the EU from the perspective of affective polarisation



A comparative analysis, based on respondents' declarations regarding whether they would vote in favour of their country joining the EU and how they assess the current image of the EU, revealed that in both cases there is no significant variation in active polarization. The only exception appears to be the dimension of sympathy/antipathy towards voters, where Georgians who are opposed to accession and hold a negative view of the EU exhibited significantly stronger affective polarization compared to those in favour of accession and with a positive view of the EU.

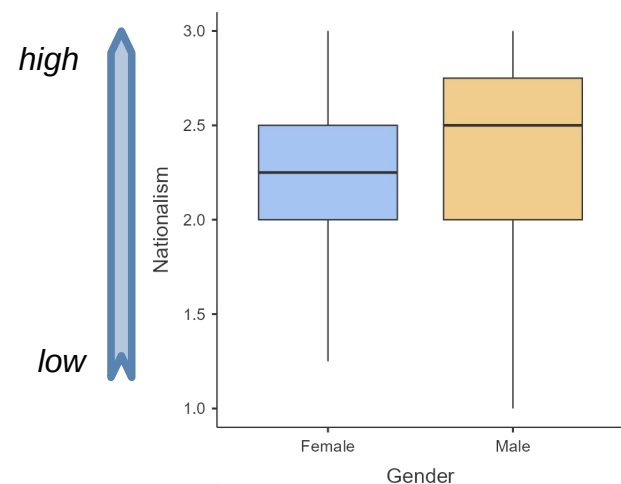


## 4.5 Georgian citizens' attitudes towards the EU from the perspective of nationalist views

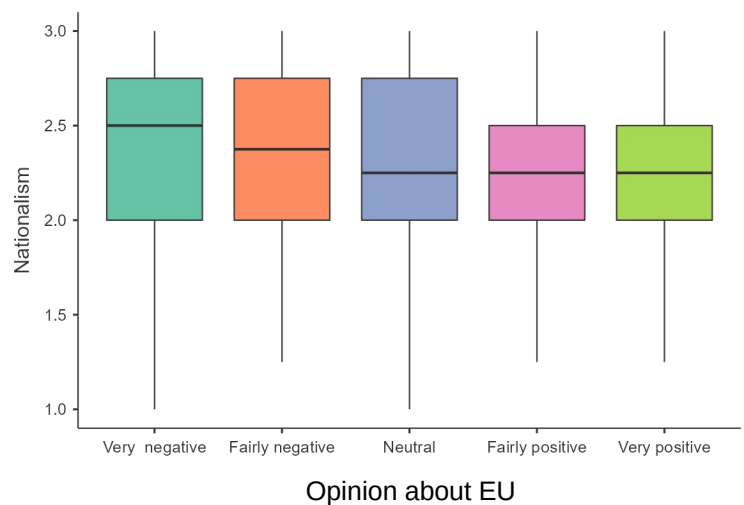
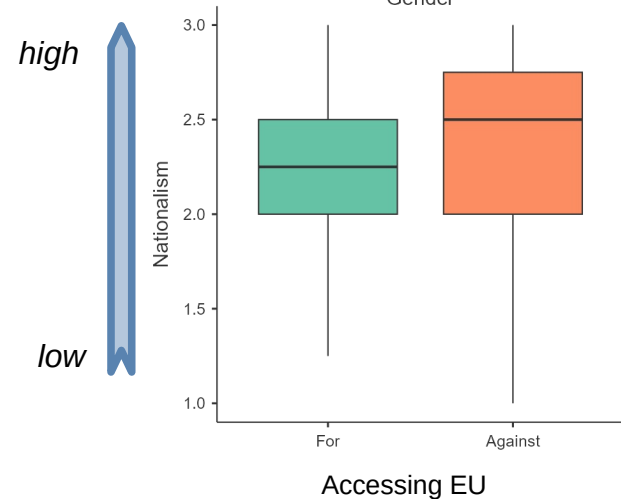


Nationalist views were defined (Agarwal et al. 2017) as a sense of national pride, a specific prioritisation of one's country's developmental goals (militarisation/security), and an individual's willingness to fight for their country.

Respondents were therefore asked to rate how strongly they feel pride in being a citizen of Georgia, what they believe should be the country's immediate development priorities, how much trust they have in the military, and whether they would be willing to go to war for their country. According to the scale developers' guidelines, respondents' answers were converted to a scale from 1 (weak nationalist beliefs) to 3 (strong nationalist beliefs) and aggregated into a single index.



Both the overall and comparative results revealed that Georgians exhibit a relatively high level of nationalism, which does not significantly change depending on their opinions regarding EU accession or their perception of the EU's image.



## 5. Summary

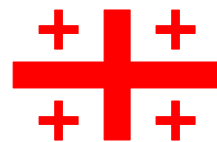


A multidimensional analysis of attitudes revealed a very positive disposition among Georgian respondents towards the EU. Georgian society desires their country to become an EU member, believes that membership would have a positive impact on all key areas of life, and generally holds a positive view of the organisation.

Regarding variations in attitudes towards the EU influenced by social and ideological factors, significant effects were observed for social capital and affective polarization. Individuals who are opposed to Georgia's accession to the EU and hold a negative view of the EU exhibit lower linking social capital in relation to public benefit organisations and international organisations, and experience stronger affective polarization in terms of felt sympathy/antipathy towards voters.



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