IN BRIEF

UN JOINT PROGRAMME FOR GENDER EQUALITY

# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS IN GEORGIA

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## RESEARCH GOAL AND METHODOLOGY

A national survey on the violence against women in politics in Georgia was conducted by CRRC-Georgia with the initiative of UN Women. The survey aimed at examining the experiences of women in politics in Georgia. Namely, the survey focused on studying the factors that facilitate and/or obstruct women's engagement in politics, including the forms of violence against women in politics, women's experiences with seeking support, and the impact of violence on women's engagement in politics and leadership.

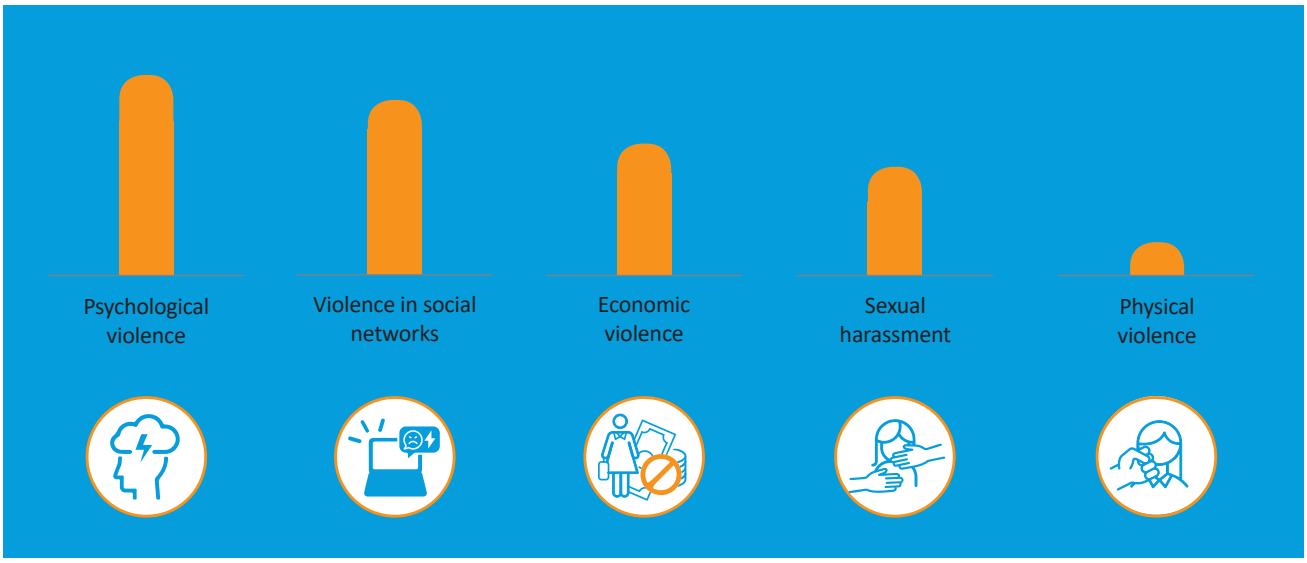
The survey used qualitative as well as quantitative methods to better study women's experiences and evaluate the situation evolving around women in terms of violence. In total, during the years 2020–2021, 10 interviews were conducted with experts under the qualitative research component, as well as 15 interviews with women in politics who experienced violence during their career. In total, 151 women took part in the survey, 104 of whom represented the city assemblies *(sakrebulo)* or local governments elected for the period 2017–2021; nine women were Members of Parliament between 2016 and 2020; and 50 women ran for office in the 2020 parliamentary elections. In order to better interpret the findings of this stage of the survey, 12 participants of the survey and three high-level appointed officials took part in the in-depth interviews, which gave them the opportunity to speak about their own experiences of violence. This brief presents the main research findings and recommendations.

## VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN IN POLITICS

**More than half of the respondents (54 per cent) have experienced some form of harassment or violence during their tenure as an appointed official or during their campaign work.**

Less than half (48 per cent) of the representatives of the local governments remarked that they have been experiencing some form of harassment or violence during their tenure, while this share increases by up to one third among the women who ran for office in the 2020 parliamentary elections. In addition, almost all women Members of Parliament (except for two) highlighted that they have experienced at least one form of harassment. The most common forms of violence against women in politics are psychological violence and violence on social media (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1:
The most widespread forms of violence against women in politics[1]

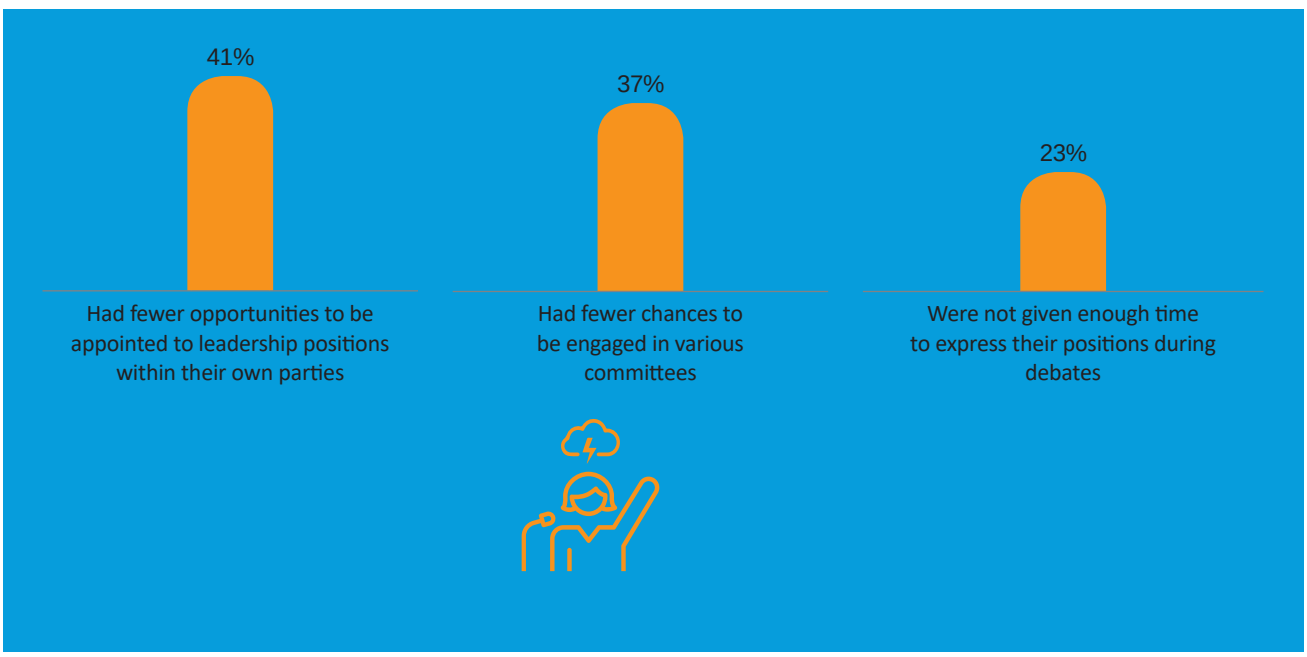



Note: Economic violence implies denying any funds or other resources to which one is entitled or intentionally destroying one's property.

**Single or divorced women who are actively engaged in politics are more likely to become the targets of violence than other women.**

Almost one third of the respondents believe that threats, intimidation, harassment and hate speech are more significantly used against women politicians. More than half of respodents (56 per cent) have personally experienced violence at work, in addition to experiencing various forms of discrimination (Figure 2).

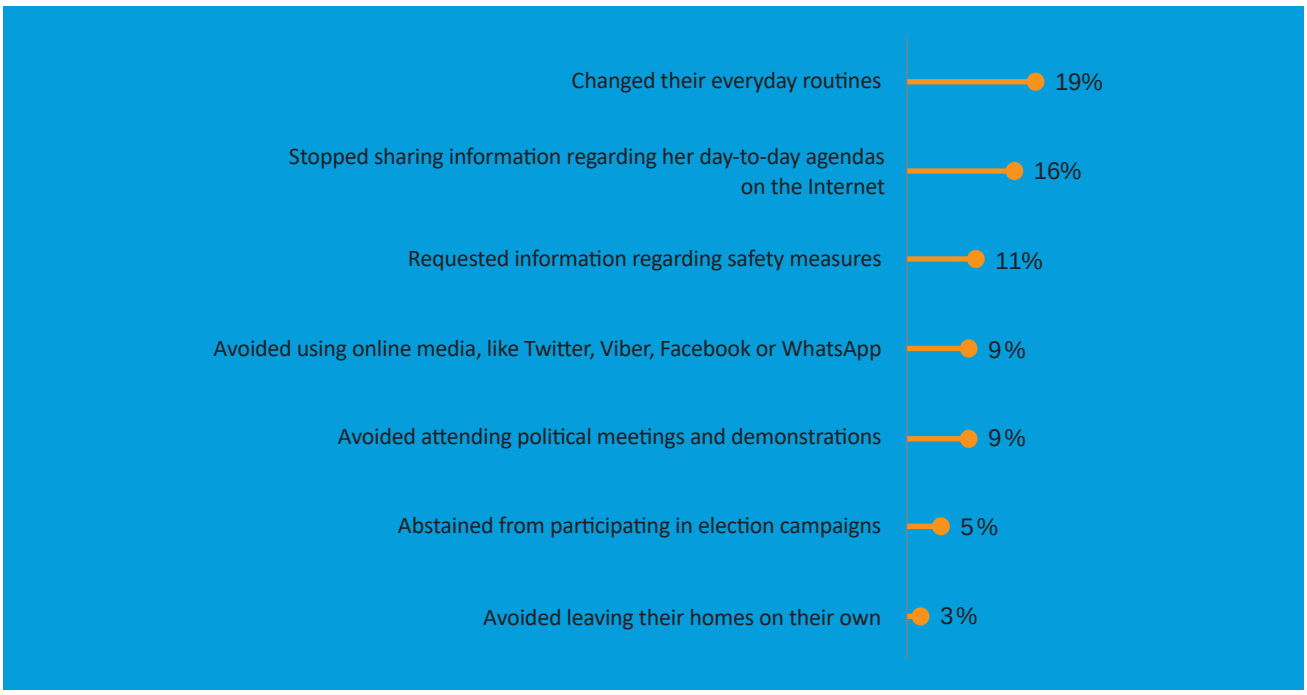
FIGURE 2:
Women's experiences of discrimination during the course of their political career



## THE IMPACT OF VIOLENCE ON WOMEN IN POLITICS AND THE WAYS THEY SEEK SUPPORT

Violence experienced women, switched in politics (41 per cent), have taken certain measures to protect themselves. As a result of having experienced violence, women in politics often take certain measures to protect themselves (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3:
Protective measures taken by women in politics




**Both the qualitative and quantitative studies show that when women raise their voices against violence, it empowers other women politicians too.**

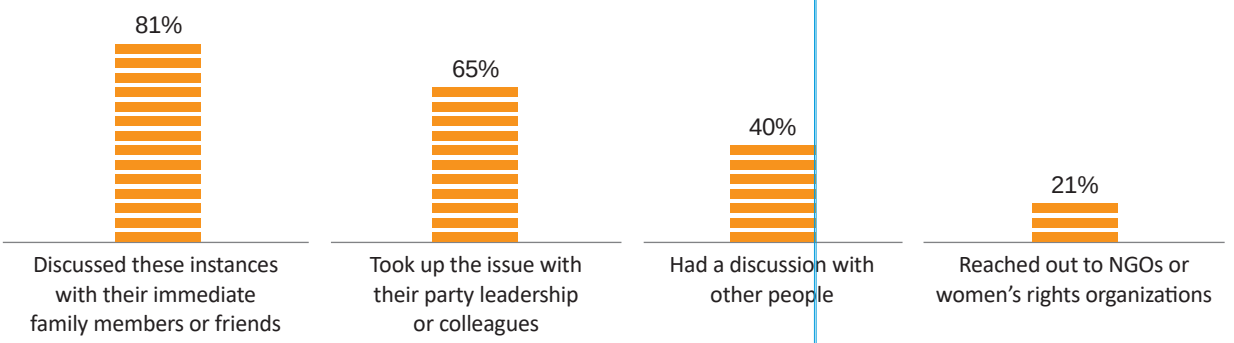
Experiencing violence negatively impacts the psychological well-being of women in politics, with 37 per cent of respondents noting that their mental health has deteriorated as a result.

The largest share of the women politicians that participated in the study (60 per cent) agrees or fully agrees with the statement that speaking out about the harassment and intimidation that they experience helps other women engaged in politics and encourages them to also speak up.

**More than half (52 per cent) of the respondents who had experienced violence have never reported the case to the authorities.**

When experiencing violence, women mostly talk about this experience with their family members and friends (Figure 4).

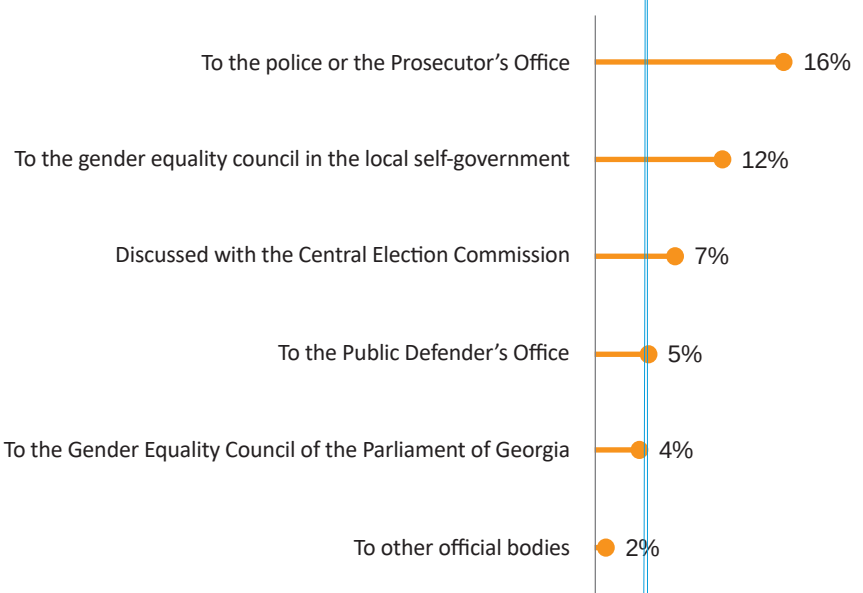
FIGURE 4:
Help-seeking behaviour taken by women in politics




Note: This question was asked to only those respondents who noted that they felt like victims of any instances of violence.

Those who reported an incident of violence did so to a variety of official entities (Figure 5). Those who did not report an incident of violence explain their inactivity with the argument that their case required a political response and not legal proceedings (43 per cent) or remarked that they were able to tackle the issue themselves (36 per cent), while 21 per cent did not consider the incident relevant or serious enough.

FIGURE 5:
Authorities to which women have reported a case of violence




**The qualitative study shows that the factors obstructing reporting on violence are the lack of trust towards the respective authorities, the fear of disrupting the overall image of the party and the fear that women's stories will not be taken seriously enough.**