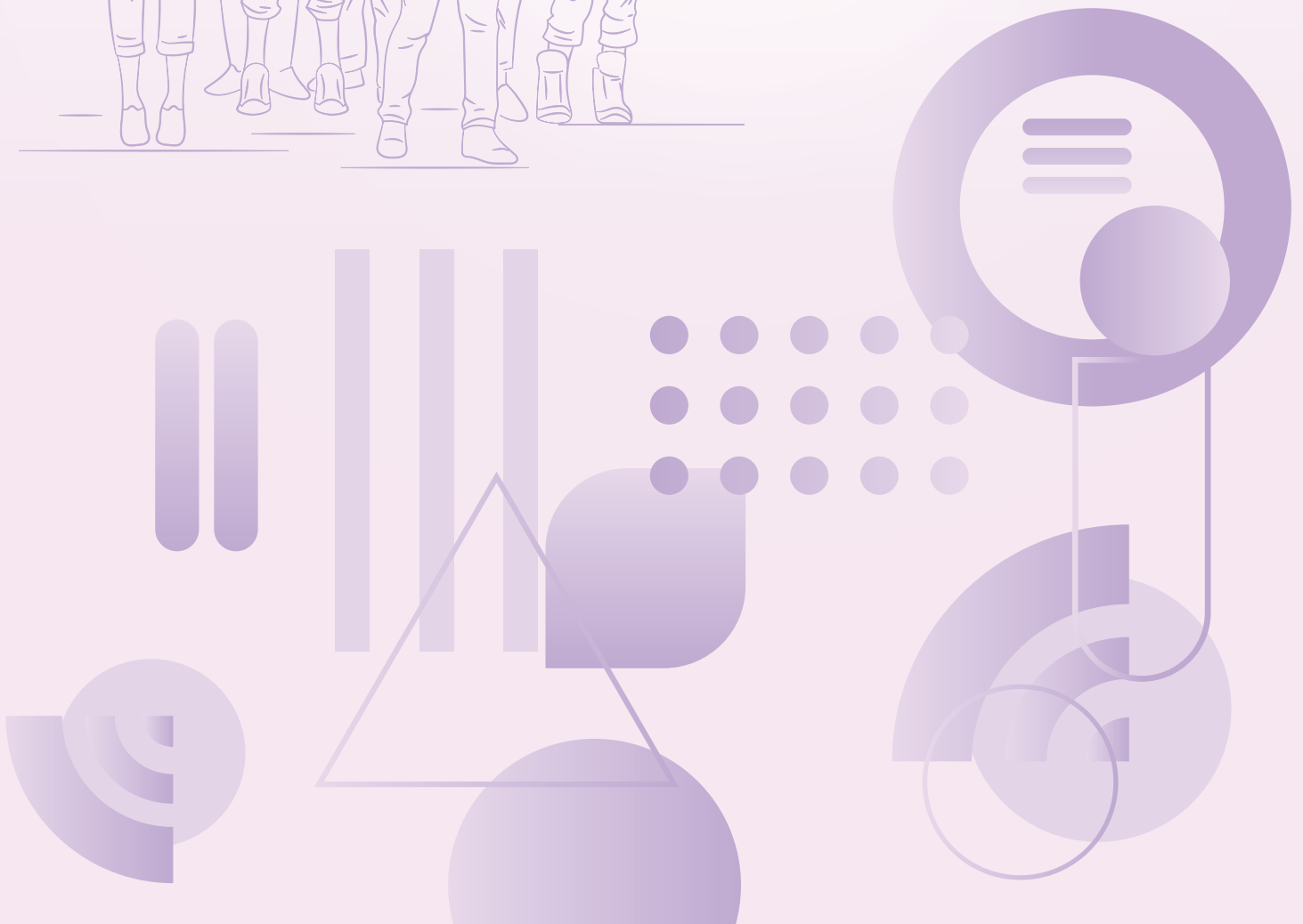
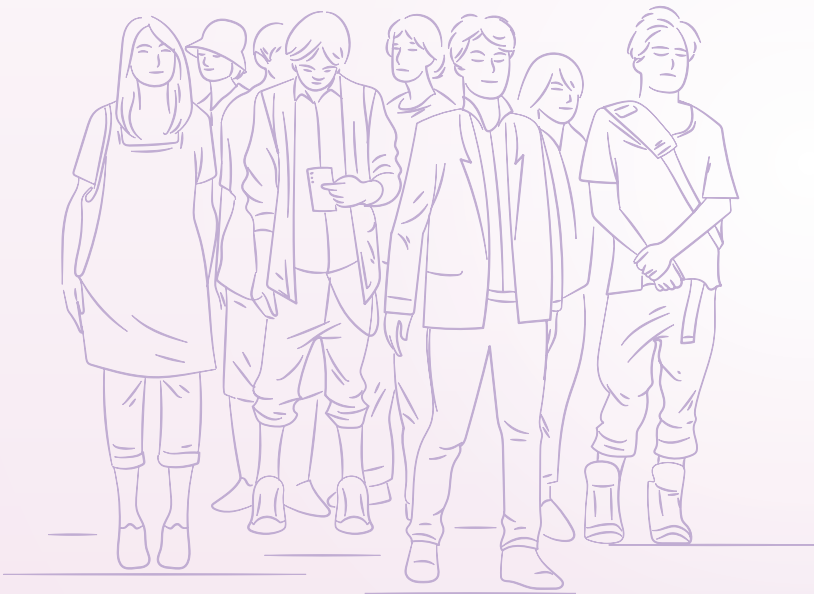




ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS AND ATTITUDES OF WOMEN, YOUTH, AND LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NEW POLITICAL AND LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENT





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2025



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ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women)
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights – OSCE
WHO	World Health Organization
LGBT(j)o	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer
MSM	Men who have Sex with Men
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
MVA	Manual Vacuum Aspiration - Clinical method of safe abortion
UN	United Nations
EU	European Union
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
TV	Television indicated as source of information
FB / IG / TikTok	Facebook / Instagram / TikTok – Social media platforms, as source of information
Ministry of Health	Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
UHSS	Universal Healthcare State Service (<i>informal, but often implies state-funded healthcare in the text</i>)
CSO	Civil Society Organization (<i>also referred in the text as “civil organization”</i>)
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
PHC	Primary Health Care

I. INTRODUCTION

In 2024, Association HERA XXI conducted a study aimed at assessing the needs and attitudes of women, young people (aged 14–29), and local civil society organizations in the context of the new political and legislative environment. Specifically, the study focused on the following legislative changes: Order No. 75/N of the Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, on “Approval of the Procedure for Performing Induced Abortions”, the “Foreign Influence Transparency Act” (commonly referred to as the “Russian Law”) and the “Law of Georgia on the Protection of Family Values and Minors” (commonly referred to as the “Anti-LGBT Law”).

These laws not only alter the legal framework but also have a significant impact on people’s everyday lives and fundamental rights. Therefore, the aim of the study is not only to assess the existing level of knowledge or attitudes, but also to identify the direct and indirect effects these laws have on the target groups — including in terms of health, education, social inclusion, and access to services.

As part of the study, a qualitative research method was used — specifically, the World Café methodology for group discussion. This is a participatory approach based on collaborative dialogue. The World Café method enables the identification of shared perspectives, exploration of attitudes, and potential solutions through open dialogue and discussion.

Group discussions were conducted in three cities of Georgia: Tbilisi, Shida Kartli (Gori), and Imereti (Kutaisi). In each selected location, participants represented diverse socio-demographic and geographic groups, including: ethnic minority representatives, rural women, communities living near conflict zones, young people, representatives of the NGO and CSOs, as well as vulnerable groups such as women with penitentiary experience and internally displaced persons (IDPs). A total of nine in-person and one online discussion were held. In each region, three discussions were organized, with 12 to 15 participants in each. The total number of research participants was 95.

The fieldwork for the study was carried out in November and December 2024, while data processing and analysis were conducted in January 2025.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

In 2023 and 2024, the Government of Georgia initiated several legislative regulations that have raised numerous concerns within society. To this day, no comprehensive justification has been presented regarding the necessity of these changes. Moreover, there has been an insufficient assessment of the potential harm these changes could cause to fundamental human rights, including the right to health.

As part of the study, the discussions were originally planned to focus on the following legislative acts: the Order on the Procedure for Performing Induced Abortions, the Foreign Influence Transparency Act, and the Law on the Protection of Family Values and Minors. However, participants also brought up additional concerns, such as the abolition of gender quotas in the Electoral Code, and the Order on the Implementation of Opioid Substitution Therapy Programs, which has undergone multiple changes recently and currently requires beneficiaries to visit clinics daily.

According to the study participants, these laws have a direct impact on their lives and well-being.

In addition to individual risks, these legislative changes are negatively affecting Georgia’s long-standing process of European integration, which has included significant political, economic, and legal reforms aimed at aligning with the European Union. The recent legislative initiatives are inconsistent with the principles of the rule of law and democratic society — a concern supported by: a judgment of the European Court of Human Rights regarding a similar law in Russia¹, a ruling by the Court of Justice

1 <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#%7B%22itemid%22%3A%5B%22001-217751%22%5D%7D>

of the European Union concerning a comparable law in Hungary² and the opinion issued last year by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) on the draft law initiated in the Parliament of Georgia³.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH – ORDER ON THE APPROVAL OF THE PROCEDURE FOR PERFORMING INDUCED ABORTIONS

The first regulation introduced by the government addressed the provision of abortion services, specifically the Order issued by the Minister of Health on October 26, 2023.⁴ An amendment was made to the Order No. 01-74/N of October 7, 2014, issued by the Minister of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, titled “On the Approval of the Procedure for Performing Induced Abortions.” This amendment was approved by the Order of the Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia. The change fully entered into force on January 1st, 2024.

The order designates stationary medical facilities as the only locations authorized for performing surgical abortions. It also mandates two radiological examinations (pre- and post-procedure) and compulsory pre-abortion consultations with a social worker and psychologist. These requirements may pose additional barriers to accessing safe abortion services, particularly due to the limited availability of such facilities in regional areas, the increased financial and time burdens of extra examinations and consultations, and the shortage of qualified specialists. These factors are recognized by organizations working in sexual and reproductive health and rights as critical challenges⁵. Moreover, prior to the adoption and publication of the amendment, the content was not communicated to the public, which left those in need of abortion services facing the uncertainty in the new regulatory environment.

It is important to emphasize that governments have a responsibility to protect women’s and girls’ rights to a free and safe reproductive life, without discrimination or coercion. However, individuals continue to face barriers that threaten their safety, dignity, and freedom. According to the **European Abortion Policy Atlas**, Georgia ranked 40th out of 52 countries. Alongside Russia, Georgia received the lowest score among post-Soviet states regarding abortion policies.

Under the current legislative framework in Georgia, voluntary termination of pregnancy is permitted up to 12 weeks of gestation upon the woman’s request. Abortions between 12 and 22 weeks are allowed on medical grounds, subject to conditions established by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Social Affairs. Termination after 22 weeks requires the approval of a three-member medical committee.

In 2023, the national protocol on induced abortion was updated to include telemedicine options and a revised patient consent form. However, changes introduced in October 2023 to the order regulating abortion procedures contradict the protocol’s provisions. These restrictions were implemented without consultation with healthcare experts and are inconsistent with World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations, particularly regarding pre-abortion counseling.

Despite the legality of abortion on request up to 12 weeks, biased interpretations, inconsistencies between laws and subordinate regulations, and various procedural barriers - such as mandatory counseling, compulsory waiting periods, refusals of service based on unregulated beliefs, and a lack of evidence and transparency - limit the realization of optimal health standards.

2 <https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=227569&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=256071>

3 https://legislationline.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/2023-07-25%20FINAL%20Note%20on%20foreign%20agents%20legislation_Georgia_ENGLISH%20%281%29.pdf

4 <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5946555?publication=0>

5 <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32676417.html>

Although national and international frameworks exist, including CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), access to sexual and reproductive health services and information remains restricted in Georgia. The government does not consistently provide scientifically accurate and timely information regarding safe abortion as a medical service.

Furthermore, the Law on Healthcare prohibits abortion advertising but lacks a clear definition of what constitutes abortion-related advertising. Consequently, there are no accessible online platforms or websites providing necessary information on safe abortion procedures. Informational materials are also unavailable to patients in clinical settings as well.

Despite the availability of safe abortion methods such as medical abortion pills and Manual Vacuum Aspiration (MVA), a significant proportion of abortions in Georgia, especially in regions, continue to be performed using invasive and more complex procedures like curettage. In these areas, curettage remains the dominant abortion method due to limited access to alternative, safer procedures. Although official abortion rates have declined, contraceptive use has not increased correspondingly. Nearly half of the abortions performed in Georgia are registered as spontaneous abortions, resulting in inconsistencies within official data.

Safe abortion services are not financially covered under Georgia's universal health care package nor included in private insurance plans. The lack of financial accessibility to safe abortion services remains a critical barrier for women and girls, particularly marginalized groups and those with low income, who cannot afford necessary reproductive health services due to cost constraints.

Following the recent ministerial order, patients seeking abortion are now subject to mandatory consultations with a social worker, psychologist, and obstetrician-gynecologist. This requirement contradicts two key World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations:

- Regarding abortion counseling, WHO states that pre- or post-abortion counseling should be accessible, client-centered, but voluntary (WHO, 2022). Mandatory consultations may increase financial costs, necessitate additional travel and waiting times, require extra clinic visits, and cause emotional distress.
- WHO also recommends against regulations that strictly define who can provide and manage abortion services, as such regulations often do not align with evidence-based guidelines (WHO, 2022). The requirement for specific healthcare professionals, such as psychologists—especially in regions where these specialists are scarce—creates significant access barriers. These mandates lack an evidence-based rationale regarding who bears the associated costs.

The National Protocol for Safe Termination of Pregnancy and Order №75/n are in conflict with each other (2023).

MANDATORY ULTRASOUND EXAMINATIONS

Clients seeking safe abortion services are now required to undergo multiple mandatory ultrasound examinations, contradicting expert recommendations. The WHO advises that ultrasound should not be a prerequisite for abortion services, as it is not clinically necessary. Despite the 2023 National Protocol on Safe Termination of Pregnancy not mandating repeat ultrasounds, the ministerial order compels patients to undergo a second ultrasound after a five-day interval, significantly increasing service costs.

TELEMEDICINE SERVICE ACCESSIBILITY

The updated national protocol, approved by the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs in 2023, recommends telemedicine as an alternative for medical abortion services. However, the combined requirements of mandatory consultations and ultrasounds hinder the practical use of telemedicine as an accessible and alternative medical service. Furthermore, physicians face professional liability risks under Ministerial Order №75 if they do not comply with the mandatory five-day waiting period.

ONLY ONE TYPE OF MEDICAL FACILITY AFTER SEVEN WEEKS OF PREGNANCY

According to Order №75, abortions after seven weeks of pregnancy are permitted exclusively in inpatient medical centers under the supervision of a certified obstetrician-gynecologist. This regulatory measure not only restricts the geographical accessibility of abortion services but also limits the cadre of healthcare professionals authorized to administer them. Since such facilities primarily exist in major cities, this creates geographic and financial access challenges for people living in rural and regional areas. Paradoxically, the national protocol did not impose restrictions on the type of medical facility for abortions up to the tenth week of pregnancy. Without a clearly defined referral chain, these types of restrictions negatively impact women's health and well-being, especially in rural and regional locations.⁶

FOREIGN INFLUENCE TRANSPARENCY LAW (SO-CALLED 'RUSSIAN LAW')

In June 2024, the Parliament of Georgia adopted the law "On Transparency of Foreign Influence."⁷ the so-called "Russian Law," which was enacted on August 4, 2024, results in the public stigmatization of civil society organizations in the country, increased government surveillance over them, and the imposition of reporting requirements and other obligations that significantly hinder the activities of these organizations. Article 2 of the law defines non-commercial legal entities, broadcasters, and media organizations whose annual revenue sources include more than 20% from international donors as "organizations acting on behalf of foreign powers".

An organization is considered to be an influence of foreign power interests if it meets any of the following criteria:

1. A non-commercial (non-profit) legal entity that is not established by an administrative body, and whose total income during the calendar year exceeds 20% from a foreign power;
2. A broadcaster as defined by the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting, whose total income during the calendar year exceeds 20% from a foreign power;
3. A legal entity that solely or jointly owns a print media outlet operating in Georgia, and whose total income during the calendar year exceeds 20% from a foreign power;
4. A legal entity that solely or jointly owns or uses an internet domain and/or internet hosting designated for dissemination of mass information in the Georgian language, and whose total income during the calendar year exceeds 20% from a foreign power.⁸

6 <file:///Users/gvantsakvinikadze1/Desktop/%E1%83%A3%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%A4%E1%83%A0%E1%83%97%E1%83%AE%E1%83%9D-%E1%83%90%E1%83%91%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A0%E1%83%A2%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%A1%E1%83%94%E1%83%A0%E1%83%95%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%A8%E1%83%94%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%AE%E1%83%94%E1%83%91.pdf>

7 <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6171895?publication=0>

8 <https://publika.ge/qartulma-ocnebam-rusuli-kanoni-parlamentshi-ukve/>

Article 3 of the law defines “foreign power” indiscriminately as any foreign state body, any legal entity registered abroad, and any person who does not hold Georgian citizenship. According to the provisions of the law, funding received by civil society from international donors is considered a threat to national interests.⁹

Registration as a foreign influence agent in the public registry is the first mandatory step for non-governmental organizations under the law. The law provides fines on violators who avoid registration as a foreign influence agent organization or fail to comply with the relevant requirements defined by the legislation. The amount of these fines depends on the number of violations committed. The law also includes forced registration mechanisms of organizations in the public registry. According to the approved version of the law, its scope extends to individuals as well. An individual who fails to provide the requested information to the Ministry of Justice will be fined 5,000 GEL.

Furthermore, the final version of the law obliges organizations to submit both financial and personal information to the supervising authority. Articles 5, 6, and 7 of the draft law grant the Public Registry Agency the right to process personal data in order to verify the accuracy of information submitted by organizations classified as “agents of foreign influence.” However, the law does not specify the categories of data the Agency is authorized to process. Additionally, Article 8 of the draft law grants the Ministry of Justice monitoring powers, which include the processing of personal data. This may involve transferring personal information to the Agency, including data about employees, donors, beneficiaries, and founders, constituting a violation of privacy. Such data may include information on religious beliefs, political views, and sexual orientation. The law raises concerns about the confidentiality of services provided by non-governmental and community organizations and their overall effectiveness. Alongside service provision, this situation threatens the conduct of research as well. According to ethical committee standards, confidentiality of research participants is a mandatory prerequisite. In the current circumstances, researchers cannot guarantee the protection of respondents’ personal information. Should the Ministry of Justice decide to request such information, researchers will be obligated to provide all requested data; failure to comply would result in a fine of 5,000 GEL, as penalties also apply individuals associated with organizations.

Article 8 of the law grants the Ministry of Justice the authority to conduct monitoring in order to identify violations committed by organizations classified as “agents of foreign influence” or breaches of the provisions of this law. The draft does not specify the exact actions that monitoring may entail beyond the processing of personal data; however, it may include inspections of organizations and other forms of interference in their activities. Furthermore, the initiation of monitoring may be based not only on the decision of the Ministry of Justice but also on an anonymous complaint submitted in the form of a “reasonable indication”¹⁰.

During the evaluation of the draft law initiated in the Parliament of Georgia, ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights)¹¹ it was noted that the Parliament failed to provide an evidence-based assessment indicating specific risks existing within Georgian civil society. Furthermore, the requirements of the Strasbourg Court and the Court of Justice of the European Union stipulate that the authorities must provide evidence that democracy faces imminent threats, which, in this case, the authorities were unable to justify.

9 <https://socialjustice.org.ge/ka/products/ratom-etsinaaghmdegeba-rusuli-kanoni-adamianis-uflebata-evropul-konven-tsias-da-kanonis-uzenaesobis-printsipebs> (583.)

10 <https://socialjustice.org.ge/ka/products/ratom-etsinaaghmdegeba-rusuli-kanoni-adamianis-uflebata-evropul-konven-tsias-da-kanonis-uzenaesobis-printsipebs> (9 83.)

11 https://legislationline.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/2023-07-25%20FINAL%20Note%20on%20foreign%20agents%20legislation_Georgia_ENGLISH%20%281%29.pdf

LAW OF GEORGIA ON THE PROTECTION OF FAMILY VALUES AND MINORS (SO-CALLED “ANTI-LGBT LAW”)

The third initiative, presented by the government on June 4, 2024, that entails restrictions on LGBT rights is registered under the title of the “Law of Georgia on Family Values and the Protection of Minors”¹², but commonly is referred as the “Anti-LGBT Law.” LGBT human rights organizations have also labeled this law a “fascist law.” The legislative package introduced 18 amendments to various codes and laws in Georgia, including the Civil Code, the Labor Code, and the Law on Education, among others. The law was approved by Parliament in its third reading on September 17, 2024, and came into force on December 2, 2024.

According to human rights organizations, the law effectively strips LGBT people of rights they scarcely had before, depriving them of fundamental personal, healthcare, educational, civil, and political rights. The law is particularly harsh and inhumane towards transgender individuals, criminalizing their bodies and lives. Moreover, it restricts freedoms of expression and assembly, imposing arbitrary censorship on opinions, art, literature, science, education, and more. In reality, the law affects a broad spectrum of people and reflects a totalitarian impulse to control and discipline bodies, opinions, and expression.¹³

The law prohibits:

1. Marriage and any form of civil partnership for non-heterosexual individuals;
2. Adoption or guardianship of minors by non-heterosexual individuals;
3. Trans-specific healthcare services and medical interventions;
4. Legal recognition of gender;
5. Assembly and holding of demonstrations on LGBT-related issues;
6. Dissemination of information on LGBT issues in educational institutions, by media, and in advertising.

Simultaneously, according to the law, LGBT issues are equated with incest.

The abovementioned legislative initiatives have already become the cause for public resistance in Georgia. Consequently, within the framework of the conducted research, we sought to examine the attitudes and experiences of women, youth, and representatives of civil society organizations residing in Tbilisi, Gori, and Kutaisi regarding these regulations. The research focused on assessing participants’ level of awareness, whether they had knowledge of the actual content of the laws, and identifying their primary sources of information. Participants were provided with an opportunity to safely share their opinions, attitudes, and experiences related to the abovementioned laws.

During the fieldwork, it became evident that the laws had a so-called “chilling effect,” even prior to the formal enactment of the laws. It is anticipated that the implementation of the anti-LGBT law will severely worsen the legal status of the community members, as it will leave one of the most vulnerable social groups without basic legal guarantees, making their daily lives insecure and hostile.

These laws contradict international human rights standards, violate the freedom of association protected by the European Convention and the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and impose disproportionate obligations. The provisions of these laws threaten fundamental human rights. Furthermore, they hinder the free activity and existence of civil society organizations and pose risks to the rights to privacy and the protection of personal data.

¹² <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6283110?publication=0>

¹³ <https://socialjustice.org.ge/ka/products/solidaroba-kviar-tems-fashisturi-kanoni-upiobod-unda-gaukmdes>

II. METHODOLOGY

Research objective:

The primary objective of this research is to assess the needs and attitudes of women, young people (aged 14–29), and local civil society organizations within the context of Georgia's newly emerging political and legislative landscape.

In order to fully realize the objective of the study, the following specific tasks have been outlined:

1. Assessing the Level of Awareness and Attitudes

To examine the extent to which the target groups are informed about recent legislative changes (specifically, the regulation on abortion, the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, and the Law on the Protection of Family Values and Minors).

To analyze public attitudes toward these legislative changes, focusing on how various social groups perceive their impact on quality of life.

2. Study the State of Human Rights and associated challenges

To assess the current state of human rights by identifying the barriers target groups face in exercising their rights under the new legislative environment.

To document personal experiences that illustrate how these legislative changes have affected participants' daily lives.

3. Exploring access to information and services, and identifying barriers

To analyze the accessibility of services related to human rights protection and compliance with legal requirements.

To identify unmet societal needs and support gaps, and evaluate the effectiveness of current support systems, highlighting areas in need of improvement.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative methodology, specifically employing the *World Café* method of focus group discussions. The *World Café* approach is participatory in nature and based on collaborative dialogue. It facilitates the identification of shared perspectives, the exploration of participants' attitudes, and the discussion of potential solutions through open and inclusive dialogue.

The research was carried out by a team of researchers, including:

- Salome Iobadze – Research Lead
- Gvantsa Kvinikadze – Research Assistant

Each discussion session was facilitated by three trained moderators who guided participants through discussions of the relevant legislation.

The research team was responsible for designing the research methodology, protocol, and questionnaire, as well as collecting and analyzing the data and developing corresponding recommendations. In total, 10 discussion sessions were held during the data collection phase – 9 in physical locations and 1 conducted online. The research was implemented over a two-month period, in November and December 2024.

The discussions were guided by a semi-structured question guide, developed in advance to reflect the main objectives and research questions. Participants were selected through **purposive sampling**, which allowed the researchers to deliberately engage individuals whose experiences are directly related to the topics under study. This method ensured the collection of in-depth and context-specific insights.

Data analysis was conducted using **thematic analysis**, enabling the identification of key themes and patterns emerging from participants’ narratives.

TARGET GROUPS

The research targeted a diverse range of individuals and organizations to ensure the inclusion of various social, demographic, and geographic perspectives. The primary target groups included.

- Young people aged 14 to 29;
- Local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based groups, including informal initiative groups;
- Women of reproductive age (up to 49 years old);
- Members of ethnic minority communities;
- Women residing in rural areas;
- Internally displaced women (IDPs);
- Women living in proximity to conflict-affected zones;
- Women living with HIV;
- Women with a history of imprisonment;
- Women who use drugs.

This broad selection of participants was intended to capture a wide range of lived experiences, especially those of individuals from vulnerable or marginalized communities, whose voices are often underrepresented in policymaking and public discourse.

TECHNICAL DETAILS OF GROUP DISCUSSION USING THE WORLD CAFÉ METHOD

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	NOTES / DETAIL
Research tipe	Qualitative	Qualitative Group discussion, verbal data
Methodology	World Café	Participatory, based on open dialogue
Selection strategy	Purposive Sampling	Selected based on relevant experience and involvement
Insttuments	Semi-structured questionnaire	Discussion guide with questions
Number of discussions	10 (9 in-person, 1 online)	Each discussion involved 12–15 people
Duration of discussion	Average 3 hours and 15 minutes	Each discussion was led by 3 facilitators
Number of participants	95	Representatives of different social and demographic groups
Data collection	November – December 2024	Field phase ended in December
Data analysis	Thematic analysis based on transcriptions	Completed in January 2025
Meeting places	Tbilisi, Gori, Kutaisi	Regional focus: East and West
Target groups	Youth (14–29), women, local organizations	Selected to ensure diversity
Vulnerable groups	Ethnic minorities, HIV positive, with penitentiary experience, IDPs	Included women living in rural areas and conflict zones
Civil organizations	Local NGOs, informal initiative groups	Participated in discussions and recruitment process

As part of the current study, focus group discussions were held in three cities of Georgia: Tbilisi, Gori, and Kutaisi. A total of 10 discussions were held, with 12-15 participants. The total number of participants in the study was 95 people.

DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

During the course of the discussions, audio recorders were used to document the sessions. Upon completion of the field work, the research team prepared transcripts based on the recorded material, which were then used for further analysis.

The analysis of the collected information was guided by the research objectives and specific tasks outlined. The data were systematically analyzed to identify key patterns relevant to the study's focus. Findings derived from this analytical process were interpreted into recommendations. The final output of the data analysis phase is presented in the form of this research report.

PROTECTION OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Informed Consent: Prior to initiating the study, the research team developed an informed consent form and study protocol. All participants were provided with a detailed explanation regarding the purpose of the study, potential risks, and the intended use of the collected data. Participants were given the opportunity to read the informed consent document and to discuss its contents with the research team before agreeing to take part. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and individuals retained the right to decline participation without any consequences. Informed consent was confirmed through signed consent forms from each participant.

Challenges During the Research Process: Several challenges emerged during the implementation of the study. In particular, the recruitment of organizational representatives was hindered by the tense political climate, ongoing protest movements, and widespread burnout within civil society. Representatives from participating organizations reported a noticeable outflow of staff following the adoption of the so-called “foreign influence law,” contributing to increased workloads and psychological stress.

Mobilization of other target groups was also challenging, especially in the regions of Shida Kartli and Imereti. Field mobilizers noted that, whereas in the past people were more open to engaging with non-governmental organizations, many are now reluctant to do so. According to local mobilizers, this trend can be attributed to the adoption of the foreign influence law and the growing stigmatization of NGOs within Georgian society.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The study was conducted between November and December 2024 and reflects the political and legislative reality during that period. Accordingly, the findings do not incorporate legislative initiatives announced or under discussion throughout 2025 that had impact on human rights, gender equality, civil society operations, the media, or the education sector.

Additional limitations included:

- **Geographic scope:** The participants were concentrated in only three cities/regions - Tbilisi, Gori, and Kutaisi - therefore, extrapolating conclusions to other regions would require further research.
- **Thematic scope:** Due to the study's focused agenda, certain broader legislative initiatives that were not directly relevant to the research objectives were not examined.
- **Methodological choice:** The use of a qualitative research design aimed to provide in-depth understanding, but it does not ensure representation across the general population.

Furthermore, fieldwork was completed before initiation of significant legislative changes anticipated in 2025, such as proposals to eliminate the legal recognition of gender, restrict media, or introduce new laws on grants and “foreign agents.” Although these issues were not explicitly reflected in the participants' discussions, they remain crucial for contextualizing the study and require further research and analysis.

III. RESEARCH FINDINGS

1. AWARENESS OF LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

The findings of the study reveal significant gaps in public awareness, which contribute to the dissemination of misinformation and have a negative impact on the rights and well-being of the target groups. The results underscore the urgent need for the dissemination of objective information regarding the implications of recent legislation, as well as the creation of safe and inclusive communication spaces for various affected communities.

1.1 KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAWS

Discussions conducted as part of the research included the regulation of termination of pregnancy, Russian law, and anti-LGBT law. Participants were provided with background information on the relevant legislation in advance. One of the study's objectives was to assess how well participants were informed about the recent legislative changes, what were their main sources of information, and whether they considered their knowledge sufficient.

Following the information session, the majority of respondents indicated that they had insufficient knowledge of the laws. Their understanding was often general, vague, and in some cases, inaccurate or inconsistent with the actual content of the legislation.

“I don't know where laws are published—after all, not everyone can be a law student to know that. Everyone should be engaged in politics for the country to function properly. We need to be informed in advance, before a law is even initiated, about what Parliament is doing, so that we can also be engaged.” (Tbilisi, Youth)

Participants noted that despite having an interest, it was not easy to access information or to analyze it adequately.

KEY FINDINGS ON TARGET GROUPS' LEGAL KNOWLEDGE

REGULATION ON ARTIFICIAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY	LAW OF GEORGIA ON THE PROTECTION OF FAMILY VALUES AND MINORS	FOREIGN INFLUENCE TRANSPARENC ACT
<p>Limited and fragmented information regarding abortion, reproductive health issues, and the legislative framework related to accessible services.</p> <p>High level of interest in reproductive health topics; however, participants were unable to access relevant information when needed.</p>	<p>After receiving information regarding the law, participants noted that media coverage did not accurately reflect the actual restrictions imposed by the legislation, such as the prohibition of hormone therapy.</p> <p>The law was associated with censorship, the Soviet regime, and authoritarianism by many participants.</p>	<p>The highest levels of interest and awareness were observed in this area.</p> <p>Participants' knowledge was superficial, and they lacked understanding of many aspects of the law's actual content.</p> <p>The fragmented knowledge about the law was largely influenced by its perceived similarity to Russian legislation and its punitive mechanisms, which include the discrediting of non-governmental organizations and their staff. For many participants, the scale and severity of the penalties and fines prescribed by the law were unfamiliar and surprising.</p>

1.1.1 ORDER ON THE ARTIFICIAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY

The study participants were least familiar with the recent changes to the abortion law. This topic was new to most of them. Regarding the question of how well participants knew the recent legislative changes concerning abortion regulations, responses were similar across regions. Despite the high level of interest in such topics, the degree of awareness remained low both in Tbilisi and other regions. It was revealed that only individuals professionally engaged in reproductive health and rights, or involved in volunteer activism in this field, were adequately informed about the regulation of artificial termination of pregnancy.

During the discussion on abortion regulations, it became evident that the study participants had very limited and fragmented knowledge not only about the new regulations but also about the broader legislative framework related to abortion, reproductive health issues, and available services. Participants expressed a high level of interest in topics related to reproductive health; however, they were often unable to obtain the necessary information. Their primary sources of information were non-governmental organizations, along with training and informal meetings conducted by these organizations.

Some of the participants expressed negative attitudes toward abortion services, reflecting the high levels of stigma and stereotypes present in society. However, during the discussion, participants noted that creating barriers and complicating the procedure would only reduce access to safe services, which, in their opinion, should not be the goal of the state. Additionally, participants emphasized that the healthcare and education systems should jointly work to **“minimize the number of unwanted pregnancies and increase knowledge about reproductive health” (Gori, women)**. Youth, women, and representatives of civil society organizations considered schools to be an appropriate place for disseminating knowledge related to reproduction. Alongside the existence of relevant programs, they believed that teachers should be able to freely answer students’ questions and provide information on sensitive topics.

“When we ask teachers about these topics, they tell us that we are still too young and won’t understand. If we try to talk about these issues, it will definitely provoke a reaction from the school administration.” (Gori, youth)

During discussions on reproductive health, participants also addressed issues related to the human papillomavirus (HPV), screening, and vaccination. Only a small portion of participants possessed information about the virus and vaccination. Among the participants, there was a very small number of vaccinated individuals. Throughout the discussion, concerns were raised regarding inconsistent and contradictory information provided by healthcare professionals themselves, which negatively influenced decisions related to vaccination. Additionally, the spread of certain myths was identified, sometimes perpetuated by those who should be responsible for informing young people and their parents about the benefits of vaccination; medical personnel were also named among those spreading misinformation and inconsistent explanations.

It should be noted that the youth group was the least informed about abortion-related issues. Such information was marked by adults as “unnecessary” and “premature” for them. It also emerged that reproductive health services tailored to young people do not exist. According to the youth, if their peers require access to these medical services, they would face significant difficulties in finding services, mobilizing funds, obtaining support, and accessing confidential care.

1.1.2 FOREIGN INFLUENCE TRANSPARENCY LAW (SO-CALLED ‘RUSSIAN LAW’)

Among the above mentioned laws, the greatest interest and level of awareness were observed regarding the so-called Russian law. In discussions held in Tbilisi, participants demonstrated the highest degree of familiarity with the content of this law. Additionally, those who collaborated with non-governmental organizations, regardless of their region of residence, reported having access to information but still expressed a need for further update. Even though some participants had information about the Russian law, during the discussion, they mostly associated it with financial and informational transparency. They were unaware of the law’s actual purpose and the potential consequences.

“Reliable information might be available in the media, but it is necessary to verify this information because while reading these articles, I had many questions that remained unanswered,” noted a participant. (Kutaisi, women)

It should be noted that, according to the participants, prior to the informational session, their knowledge was, to some extent, false, and they had no knowledge at all about many aspects of the law.

The participants’ partial understanding of the law was related to its perceived similarity with Russian legislation and its punitive actions, which included the discrediting of non-governmental organizations and the individuals working within them. The participants were unaware of the similarities between the law passed in Russia and its Georgian version. Additionally, the scale of punitive measures and fines proposed by the law was also new information for them.

“Who would like to be labeled an agent and live with that title in their own country? I think it should be done differently and sanctions should not be imposed. When the fine for sexual violence is 5,000 GEL, and for NGOs it’s 25,000 GEL just because they refuse to register as agents—that’s neither right nor proportionate.” (Youth from Tbilisi)

1.1.3 LAW OF GEORGIA ON THE PROTECTION OF FAMILY VALUES AND MINORS (SO-CALLED “ANTI-LGBT LAW”)

When asked about their knowledge of the anti-LGBT law, participants noted that they were unfamiliar with the law by its official title. What they did know was referred to as the “LGBT propaganda law,” and their knowledge on this law was very little. The highest level of awareness was found among young people in the Tbilisi group. Older participants mainly had information disseminated through government-aligned media, which emphasized banning LGBT propaganda and the protection of family values.

After receiving accurate information about the law, participants pointed out that the information spread through media did not reflect the actual restrictions imposed by the law. In government media, the main focus was placed on issues like “homosexuality and changing sexual orientation,” which the law was supposedly designed to eliminate. Young participants also noted that certain media outlets and government representatives tried to link LGBT propaganda and issues of sexual orientation with Europe, which contributed to the formation of negative perceptions and fears, especially among the older population.

In addition, during the discussion about the anti-LGBT law, the opinion was expressed that this is an attempt to relate sexual orientation with the sanctity of the family and traditional values.

“What I knew about the anti-LGBT law is that it’s ‘hiding behind’ the idea of family sanctity—to basically cover up real problems.” (Women, Tbilisi)

Participants who were more informed about the law stated that the government justified its introduction by claiming it was necessary to ban LGBT propaganda. However, in their view, a ban is not an appropriate response to propaganda, and if the government truly wants to empower its citizens, it should focus on improving the educational system and foster critical thinking. It was stated that the law can only lead to negative consequences.

***“What outrages me most about this law is the censorship—it’s literally a Soviet-style law.”
(Youth, Tbilisi)***

Among participants, the law was associated with censorship, the Soviet Union, and authoritarianism.

1.2 THE SOURCES OF THE INFORMATION

The main sources of information, regarding the laws, were social media, digital platforms, acquaintances, and in some cases – television. Common trends emerged based on age groups and regions. Across all regions, young people primarily received information through social media; specifically, TikTok and Instagram were the most widely used platforms. Facebook was the least popular among them. As for traditional media, young participants mentioned that they almost never watch television, unlike their older family members.

The discussions revealed that young people often shared information about the new laws with friends, who were mostly like-minded individuals. However, they frequently became targets of criticism from family members and older people for their opinions. Among the older generation, the most popular platforms were Facebook and Instagram, occasionally TikTok, and also traditional media. Participants who held critical views of the laws noted that their opponents were mostly people who watched government-affiliated TV channels and were influenced by propaganda.

When it came to sharing information about the laws, a certain taboo became apparent. Young people mentioned that teachers avoid answering questions about the topic, as censorship is in place in schools, and teachers are not free to express their opinions. According to participants, traditional media failed to adequately cover the laws, creating an information vacuum and confusion within society.

“What’s really bad is that the media covers all these topics very poorly... both opposition and government channels—really poorly! They don’t communicate the facts accurately.” (Women, Tbilisi)

Information sources - Main findings

The main sources of information are social media, digital platforms, acquaintances, television.

- Young people received information from social media – primarily TikTok and Instagram.
- Among older participants, the main sources were Facebook, Instagram, and traditional media.
- Participants noted that they did not have timely access to accurate and reliable information through official state channels (such as the Parliament website or the Public Broadcaster), which are responsible for informing citizens.
- Training and informational sessions serve as an important alternative source of information.
- Taboo, self-censorship, and fear are dominant.

1.2.1 ORDER ON THE ARTIFICIAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY

Only those participants who were employed in the field of sexual and reproductive rights, or who had experience collaborating with NGOs working on related issues, were aware of the regulation regarding the artificial termination of pregnancy. However, this information became publicly known only later—after the signed amendment was uploaded to the official portal “Matsne.”

“We really had no information about the abortion issue; we learned about it later through our organization. It was truly unexpected.” (Tbilisi, SRHR field)

For this group, the main sources of information were informational sessions conducted for professional groups and publications related to the regulation. For all other groups, the updates regarding abortion services were unknown and became accessible only through the informational session held during the research process.

1.2.2. RUSSIAN LAW

Information related to the Russian law was known to participants through both traditional and social media. Since the law became a topic of public discussion, there was a general perception that public interest had been satisfied in terms of access to information. However, the main association participants made with the Russian law was the concept of “transparency,” which in some cases was seen as a justification for the law and perceived positively. These interpretations were promoted by government-affiliated media and politicians.

The most well-informed individuals were those who had connections with non-governmental organizations or had attended informational sessions. In these cases, the main sources of information were sessions conducted by lawyers and representatives of civil society. However, participants emphasized both the importance of such sessions and their limited availability.

1.2.3. ANTI-LGBT LAW

Knowledge about the so-called anti-LGBT law was extremely limited. The primary sources of information were social media, information shared by acquaintances, and in rare cases, government TV channels. When presented with the official title of the law, most participants were unable to identify which law was being referred to. Upon hearing the term “LGBT propaganda law,” they said they had heard of it but were unfamiliar with its content. Some participants noted that they wanted to learn more about the law but found the information inaccessible.

“When you Google the name of the law, plenty of publications come up, but they’re mostly people’s personal opinions, and do not seem reliable.”(Gori, youth)

When discussing social media, young participants said they primarily received information from Facebook and Instagram. TikTok, which they used most frequently, mostly provided access to personal experiences, and did not circulate informative content related to the law.

Young people participating in the study also raised concerns about restrictions and censorship in schools, which left students’ questions unanswered.

***“When I’ve asked teachers a question, they’ve answered—but very briefly. They’re afraid to express their real opinions. Maybe they’re worried about the school administration, maybe censorship. Principals and teachers are ‘apolitical.’ But in reality, they should be nonpartisan, not apolitical. Students should get trustworthy and accurate information from them.”
(Gori, youth)***

Participants from all groups noted that the public campaign regarding the laws was neither comprehensive nor objective. Comparing the information they received from media to that provided during the informational sessions held within the scope of the study, it became clear that the media coverage was often biased. This, in their view, contributed to confusion and uncertainty among the public.

Thus, social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok), traditional media, and informational campaigns conducted by non-governmental organizations served as the primary sources of information for most participants. However, it should be noted that the sources varied depending on the target group. Civil society and local organization representatives received information from online media, government sources, analytical reviews, and Facebook. Meanwhile, for young people, the sources were Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. Women of reproductive age mainly used Facebook, various TV channels, and in rare cases TikTok (in Tbilisi and Kutaisi) to search for information. Among ethnic minorities, the language barrier was named as an additional obstacle to accessing information.

Study participants mentioned that the legal and technical terminology used in the laws made it difficult to understand the content. Even representatives of civil society organizations - who were themselves targets of the so-called Russian-style law - stated that the complexity, ambiguity, and various interpretations of the law made it difficult to understand what to expect once it was enacted.

One of the important observations that emerged across all groups was related to the official names of the laws under which they were registered. Participants were familiar with the laws by the names used in media and by politicians, such as the “LGBT propaganda law” and the “transparency law”; however, they struggled to identify the laws by their official registered titles.

2. GENERAL PERCEPTION OF LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

2.1 GENERAL ATTITUDES

The research examined participants' attitudes regarding the legislative changes that have been implemented. In addition, during the discussion, expectations were observed on how these laws might affect representatives of different groups.

After becoming familiar with the content of the laws, participants in the focus group discussions noted that all three laws are discriminatory and do not provide protection of human rights. **"This law is not in accordance with the Constitution,"** one participant mentioned.

Despite the varying attitudes towards abortion, the LGBT community, and the Russian law, all study participants agreed that the discussed laws violate rights of certain people, stigmatize and discriminate against them, and encourage hate. According to the participants, human rights are universal and applicable to everyone. They believed that the existence of discriminatory laws worsens the overall human rights situation in the country and is not limited solely to the oppression of LGBT people. Participants also noted that all three laws give the authorities the ability to control the private lives of citizens.

These views were expressed by participants across all regions, and similar attitudes were observed among representatives of various groups.

General Perception of Legislative Changes – Main findings

- The laws are perceived as discriminatory, unconstitutional, and incompatible with human rights.
- The legislation discriminates against non-governmental organizations, which will hinder the provision of services.
- The so-called "anti-LGBT law" encourages hatred, legalizes oppression, and poses a threat to society as a whole.

2.1.1 ORDER ON THE ARTIFICIAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY

There were mixed attitudes toward abortion, as a medical procedure, among participants, and the issue was often discussed through religious, traditional, and demographic lenses. However, during discussions on changes related to abortion, some research participants noted that, while citizens lack adequate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights and do not have access to contraceptives, the state is attempting to create additional barriers to accessing safe abortion services.

***"If we want to reduce the amount of abortion, we should not impose barriers, but rather increase access to contraception – both in terms of information and financial accessibility."
(Kutaisi, organizations)***

Even those who, due to religious or cultural reasons, viewed abortion services controversially, emphasized that a ban is not a solution - rather, it can lead to serious health risks and encourage the spread of unsafe services. When discussing possible solutions, participants highlighted the importance of prevention of unwanted pregnancies. Many suggested the introduction of educational programs on sexuality and reproduction to achieve this goal:

***"Young people need information on how to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies. This information should be provided by schools - and by competent individuals. Sexual education should be taught in schools."
(Kutaisi, organizations)***

However, participants also acknowledged the challenges regarding comprehensive sexuality education.

“This topic is not considered to be a priority in schools. I have children of the relevant age - interest but simply hearing the words ‘sexual education’ causes fear and discomfort. It’s a taboo. Hard to imagine, but it causes fear, avoidance, shame. Some even question why they have an interest regarding these topics.” (Kutaisi, women)

Thus, when discussing abortion services, participants - regardless of age, group, or region - agreed that a ban is not a solution. It worsens the situation for patients, makes the service more expensive, pushes people toward unsafe services, and increases health risks.

“I have four children myself, and there have been times when I’ve made the decision to have an abortion. Restricting this is more than just limiting human rights! People still know where to buy the medication - they buy and use it. This law doesn’t eliminate abortion; it just moves it from clinics to the underground. The state tells me to give birth - fine, I will. But how does it support me?” (Tbilisi, women)

According to the research participants, the solution to this issue is to cancel the amendment, provide proper education on reproduction at the formal level, and increase access to contraceptives.

2.1.2 RUSSIAN LAW

Research participants noted regarding the Russian Law that, on the one hand, the law disrupts the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), but on the other hand, it also violates the right to personal data protection. It raises concerns about safeguarding anonymity and confidentiality, which discourages potential beneficiaries from collaborating with NGOs - organizations that often serve as crucial providers of services and knowledge for vulnerable groups. FDG participants also discussed the role of NGOs and the work they carry out.

“Ethnic minorities ‘didn’t exist’ before the NGOs came in. It was NGOs who taught people that discrimination is not something good.” (Tbilisi, youth)

Young people and NGO representatives involved in the research said the law has already had a negative impact on NGOs, damaging their reputations, which has led to a reduction of their activities. In Gori and Kutaisi, participants noted that NGO activities are no longer as visible as they once were. Several activities were canceled - that was viewed by participants as the consequence of the Russian law.

“For example, in one organization we had written a project that included an exchange program in France. But as soon as the law was announced, the French organization immediately contacted us and said we should suspend cooperation for a while. The law hadn’t even come into force yet, and such a great opportunity was already lost.” (Gori, organizations)

2.1.3 ANTI-LGBT LAW

Participants in the discussion on the anti-LGBT law noted that the law clearly violates the rights of LGBT groups - rights that were already limited even before the law was passed.

“This law could encourage some people to harm LGBT individuals, because its goal seems to be elimination of LGBT people. This law will intimidate some, but others will be driven to resistance - that’s why it is not a solution.” (Gori, youth)

According to participants, the law normalizes the oppression of certain people in our society, which was seen during the discussions as a threat not only to specific groups but to society as a whole. At the legislative level, labeling LGBT people as a group with deviant behavior and equating homosexuality with incest was considered by participants to be an unfair and dangerous practice. In their view, on the one hand, the law will increase the scale of stigma, cases of abuse, and violence; on the other hand, it will also negatively affect people who do not belong to the LGBT community. During the discussions related to the anti-LGBT law, a participant raised concerns about communicable diseases:

“...when LGBT community members, as any other key population, are more vulnerable to certain communicable diseases, we’ll have to remove this group from health related documents and programs - and as a result, we won’t talk about them at all. Then how will this affect the fight against communicable diseases?” (Tbilisi, organizations)

This research participant evaluated the current laws in the context of public health and pointed to specific risks, particularly under conditions where stigma and discrimination are increasing. According to research, men who have sex with men (MSM) and trans women are considered high-risk groups for communicable diseases. These groups are categorized separately because of the disproportionately high prevalence of STIs and HIV among them - especially in countries where discrimination, social exclusion, and limited access to healthcare services are problematic.

Moreover, Georgia’s 2023-2025 National HIV/AIDS Strategy and Action Plan identifies MSM as a key target for HIV prevention interventions. Trans communities are also singled out, since a 2021 behavioral and biomarker prevalence study found that this group had an especially high rate of HIV - 23.8%¹⁴. Under the National Strategy, the years 2023–2025 were set to focus on expanding the reach of HIV prevention programs, enhancing the capacity of service providers, and developing new outreach strategies. It is expected that implementing discriminatory policies and enforcing the anti-LGBT law will have a negative impact on the health and well-being of these vulnerable groups and will further exacerbate the challenges they face¹⁵.

2.2 IMPACT ON VARIOUS SOCIAL GROUPS

Within the framework of the survey, when asked, who would be affected by the laws, the participants focused on the negative consequences and did not emphasize the positive aspects regarding the laws.

2.2.1 ORDER ON THE ARTIFICIAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY

When discussing abortion regulations, it was noted that despite the existing demand for this medical service, there are numerous barriers, such as the high cost and lack of public funding, a shortage of service providers, stigma, the mandatory five-day waiting period, and more. These barriers can become major obstacles for young people and members of vulnerable groups, potentially leading to increased demand for unsafe abortions.

“In my opinion, the more inaccessible abortion becomes for people, the more they’ll turn to risky methods. In Georgia, we’re putting minors in an even worse situation.”
(Tbilisi, youth)

Thus, when discussing the law’s impact, it became clear that young people, those living in rural areas, and representatives of vulnerable groups are likely to be more affected by its negative impact.

2.2.2 RUSSIAN LAW

When discussing the Russian law, research participants - including women, youth, and representatives of vulnerable populations - identified themselves as potential targets of its negative impact. Young participants noted that NGOs, which previously ran awareness-raising campaigns and helped them develop new skills and acquire knowledge, had significantly scaled back their activities - that became vivid immediately after the law was introduced.

The specific groups identified as particularly affected included: young people, women, ethnic minorities, women with experience of the penitentiary system, and LGBT individuals.

¹⁴ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19317611.2021.1902893>

¹⁵ საქართველოს 2023-2025 წლების აივ/შიდსის ეროვნული სტრატეგია და სამოქმედო გეგმა (20 გვ.)

“I don’t feel protected; I have no guarantee that a law won’t be passed that would expose my medical records.” (Tbilisi, youth)

According to discussion participants, the law violates the principle of confidentiality for citizens. As a result, no one is protected from the negative impact of this law, since the protection of personal and sensitive information becomes impossible.

“Even now, I think our beneficiaries don’t fully grasp how much the laws, including the Russian-style law, have affected our organization.” (Tbilisi, PWD [people with disabilities], organizations)

NGO representatives believe that because the law has not yet been enforced, some members of the public - including people who previously received services from NGOs - are not yet fully aware of the reality they may face once the law comes into force.

2.2.3 ANTI-LGBT LAW

While discussing the negative aspects and impact of the law, participants highlighted the specific risks faced by the LGBT community. However, they noted that within the targeted group, gay men and trans individuals are likely to be the most vulnerable. According to participants, these groups had already encountered significant obstacles in the past, and now the government has effectively legalized their oppression.

“I think this particular law will have a major impact on daily life - there will be more cases of violence and restrictions, especially on freedom of expression.” (Kutaisi, organizations)

Participants emphasized that the anti-LGBT law will impose restrictions on everyone – including professional groups, students, women, broadcasters, and artists.

“It will affect all of us in the sense that the current practice of surveillance is being encouraged.” (Tbilisi, women with penitentiary experience)

It was observed by the research participants, that under the framework of the anti-LGBT law, the rights of transgender individuals are explicitly violated, with this group likely to bear the most severe consequences. Trans-specific healthcare services, in particular, are at risk of being effectively criminalized. Participants further emphasized that the law’s broad and punitive language may also endanger anyone who expresses themselves outside of binary gender norms, as it effectively legitimizes hatred and could fuel increased incidents of abuse and violence against the broader LGBT community.

In addition to the identified target groups who could be affected by the law, participants mentioned that the new legislation intrudes restrictions of various professional fields, by limiting their ability to operate freely and fulfill their professional duties. The affected groups include doctors, human rights defenders, educators, artists, journalists, and others.

Young people noted that their right to education is also being restricted, as certain topics are being tabooed. According to their opinion, this will not eliminate interest in the banned subjects or reduce the need for related services - on the contrary, it may increase curiosity among youth toward taboo and prohibited topics. In their view, restrictions will affect both formal and non-formal education, which has been an important alternative source of knowledge. The absence of accurate, qualified information and relevant responses may be harmful in the long run.

“After the LGBT community, this law will probably affect young people the most. It will impact education too - you can’t teach human rights without discussing topics like these.” (Tbilisi, youth)

Participants also expressed that censorship is unacceptable and that the government should not dictate what kind of information adults can access. The regulation of media' activities, as outlined in the law, reminded many participants of practices from the Soviet Union.

“I think the government’s decision to pass this law is a political manipulation targeting older generations, because many of them still retain a Soviet mentality and believe these people [LGBT] threaten Georgian identity.”
(Tbilisi, youth)

On the issue of restrictions on protest and public expression, participants pointed out that giving the government legal authority to suppress one group’s right to expression is not only unjust toward that group but also extremely dangerous for the rest of society. The same tools could be used against anyone who dares to protest or criticize the ruling power.

One participant put it this way:

“This law affects me too, because I have friends who are part of the sexual minority. If they are being oppressed, then this law affects me as well.”
(Tbilisi, women)

Some participants believed that the law intentionally attempts to foster negative sentiments toward LGBT people, using terms that provoke negative associations and promote homophobia.

“What struck me the most is that it says adoption by ‘same-sex’ (LGBT) individuals is banned, and in the same section, incest is banned too. What kind of connection is that?”
(Tbilisi, PWD, organizations)

As we can see, according to the research participants, these laws are expected to have particularly harmful effects on vulnerable groups - but potentially, they may negatively impact any citizen of Georgia.

3. HUMAN RIGHTS

3.1. TRENDS REGARDING HUMAN RIGHTS

When discussing the general state of human rights, participants noted that in recent years there has been an impression that the legislative framework regarding human rights in the country was improving. A major indicator of this progress was cited as the steps taken toward eliminating violence against women, gender-based violence, and discrimination. However, the participants pointed out that the laws being adopted were not properly implemented in real life. As proof of this, they mentioned the high number of femicides, cases of violence against women and gender-based violence.

Additionally, discussions clearly underlined that, when talking about the protection of human rights, participants associate this primarily with non-governmental organizations and they had expectations of assistance from them. Despite the fact that, according to participants, new laws significantly damage the reputation of NGOs, those who have experience collaborating with civil society organizations still rely on NGOs.

Therefore, discussions revealed that while the state's formal and declared position used to be the protection of individuals, recent legislative initiatives now openly restrict human rights through laws.

“If the rights of any group are violated, it makes me feel unsafe as well. It increase migration due to hopelessness in the country.” (Gori, youth)

In the opinion of participants, the current situation in the country may push certain segments of the population to leave the country, so that LGBTQ+ individuals can maintain a safe environment. Escape from the country may become the only viable way to survive. Participants believed that forced migration is not only a concern for LGBTQ+ individuals, but could become a major issue for the general population as well, if human rights are not protected in the country. According to them, this would further hinder the country's development.

3.2. PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES

When discussing their personal experiences, a high number of negative incidents was particularly evident among the youth group. They mentioned that, due to restrictions present in educational institutions, they often do not receive answers to their questions and are forced to seek information in alternative spaces. Additionally, expressing their personal opinions may lead to verbal attacks and harsh criticism.

“I have personally experienced when, during a protest, an older person came up to me and my friends and insulted us just because we were standing there. The police did not react at all. In my opinion, this is the result of well-packaged propaganda, the goal is to portray us as uneducated and immature people.” (Tbilisi, youth)

Young people noted that non-binary gender expression has often been the reason for them being attacked. Clothing style, hair color, or accessories that are stereotypically associated with a particular behavior or gender identity can provoke aggression among certain groups of society.

“Last year I dyed my hair green, and when I went outside, older men in the yard said, ‘Oh, are you getting married now?’ It’s humiliating for me to be spoken to dismissively about such things. It’s my choice - I like it. I got bored of having blonde hair. My male friend had black hair. He dyed it blonde, and the family made him shave his head. He didn’t go outside anymore because of the things people were calling him.” (Gori, youth)

Under the current legal framework, where homophobia is used as a political tool, there is an expectation that cases of discrimination and violence will further increase. According to the youth, ***“the law - by its very nature - encourages both physical and psychological violence”***.

4. THE IMPACT OF THE NEW POLITICAL AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

Among the discussion participants, there were individuals who held mixed opinions regarding abortion services. However, throughout the discussion, all participants agreed that bans and the creation of artificial barriers are not the solution. Moreover, the majority of participants had no information about abortion regulations or recent changes made in this area. Participants expressed frustration that the government makes decisions and implements changes affecting their health without informing the public. The lack of prior information is viewed by some groups as a deviation from democratic governance principles.

At the same time, participants spoke about the importance of non-formal education and the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). According to them, NGOs that have been involved for years in advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns among youth and vulnerable groups may be forced to stop operations. Women and young people emphasized that they received most of their information about sexual and reproductive health through non-formal education. This includes information on reproductive services covered by state programs, such as screening and vaccination initiatives.

“Everything I know about sexual and reproductive health and rights, I learned from the NGOs! These topics are not really taught in schools, there is no focus on them. If these organizations are restricted, our access to accurate information will also be limited. Women living in rural areas, who already have limited access to services, will be particularly affected.” (Gori, youth)

When discussing the connection between the anti-LGBT law and sexual and reproductive health and rights, participants noted that by inciting hatred toward LGBT individuals, the law encourages violence and discrimination. This will lead to the exclusion of this group from public spaces and push them toward isolation. According to participants, this development could have a negative impact on their mental health, result in social exclusion, and limit access to education and employment - ultimately affecting their physical health as well.

4.1 ACCESS TO SERVICES AND BARRIERS

The research participants represented various age and social groups. Among them, access to services and knowledge related to them varied geographically. The majority of young participants had no information about the human papillomavirus (HPV), had not been vaccinated, and did not know where they could access reproductive services, including those related to termination of the pregnancy. Participants discussed the need for contraception and the high cost of reproductive services.

“I think contraception should be funded by the state because it allows you to protect yourself, helps you avoid unwanted pregnancy and need for an abortion.” (Gori)

Another barrier to accessing services was identified as poor communication between stakeholders.

“In the past, we were fighting against the five-day mandatory waiting period and were advocating for change. Now, additional barriers have been introduced - barriers that no one even knew about. Not just the NGOs - even those who were supposed to be in the council to provide approval for the regulations were shocked. They said it was done without any consultation with them.”
(Tbilisi, SRHR, organizations)

As we can see, participants were identifying problems, the sources of these issues, and discussing practical solutions.

4.2 SUPPORT NEEDS

When identifying support services, a small number of participants mentioned that the state's positive obligation is to ensure citizens' basic needs. However, based on the content of the above-mentioned laws, they did not expect that the government had any intention to protect, support and empower its citizens. As a result, participants' primary expectations and reliance were on the non-governmental organizations.

Another source of support identified by participants was **“society and solidarity among people.”** According to them, the indifference of certain social groups toward marginalized communities could lead to increased violence. Therefore, public awareness and empowerment were marked as both a need and a key solution.

“I would say that, first of all, the most important thing is for us to survive physically, to be safe. Secondly, we need to somehow, individually or as a group, maintain our mental health so that we can continue the work. I'd also say it would be really helpful if these kinds of gatherings could continue periodically, even online. It doesn't have to be in a physical space. It would be great to share experiences with each other - that would be a real expression of solidarity.” (Tbilisi, SRHR organization)

Participants emphasized that reliable, qualified, impartial, and needs-based information campaigns should be designed and implemented by non-governmental organizations to inform the public about legislative changes. In their view, people have the right to receive comprehensive information—otherwise, they will not be able to contradict propaganda and disinformation.

4.3 THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Additionally, the discussions clearly revealed that, when it comes to talking about human rights protection, participants immediately associate this with non-governmental organizations and primarily expect support from them. Although participants believed that the new laws significantly damage the reputation of NGOs, those with experience working with civil society organizations still believe that improvement is possible - and they place a major responsibility on these NGOs to make that change happen.

Young participants from the regions spoke about projects implemented by NGOs, which included non-formal education, various educational activities, and exchange programs - initiatives that may now be jeopardized under the current legislative framework.

Women from all regions who participated in the study discussed issues with accessing reproductive services. They emphasized that NGOs play a critical role in helping the most vulnerable groups overcome these challenges. The organizations' role was especially highlighted in terms of informing the public about free programs and services.

5. KEY FINDINGS BY GROUPS

5.1 YOUTH

The study revealed that most young people have insufficient information about ongoing legislative changes, and that both the sources and quality of information vary significantly across regions. Although young people expressed a desire to be involved in legislative processes, their opportunities for participation are limited - both due to lack of access to information and the government's restricted communication and engagement efforts. Participants noted that they do not have access to comprehensive sexuality education, which they view as a violation of their rights. The lack of information on such topics constitutes a major barrier to making informed decisions. Under the new laws, access to education is further restricted, and new barriers to services have emerged.

“By May 2024, the issue of the ‘Russian Law’ was already unfolding. Several participants who had been selected for the cooperation for the project decided to withdraw, citing concerns about this law. They felt it might cause problems for them and chose to step away for safety reasons.”
(Tbilisi, SRHR organizations)

Young people also pointed out that teachers tend to avoid answering certain questions, which they believe is a result of growing censorship. They expect that schools are the source of information, a place where they can access sensitive and important knowledge from competent professionals - knowledge that may not be available elsewhere.

- Young participants emphasized the lack of sexual education in schools, which forces them to rely on social media for information - often encountering unverified or misleading content.
- In Gori and Kutaisi, youth stated that after the adoption of the “Russian Law,” teachers frequently avoided responding to students’ questions out of fear and censorship. According to participants, the new laws have deepened censorship among teachers and further limited discussions on topics that, while not formally included in the curriculum, are of high interest among students.
- A large portion of participants had not been vaccinated against the human papillomavirus (HPV), even though some had basic awareness. Others had no information at all about the virus or the vaccine.
- Young people believe the Russian Law jeopardises NGO activities and, as a result, eliminates non-formal education spaces - which were vital to their learning and skill development.
- Participants noted that non-binary gender expression may lead to attacks. Clothing style, hair color, or accessories - stereotypically associated with certain behaviors or gender identities - can provoke negative reactions from parts of society. Recent laws reinforce gender stereotypes and therefore increased homophobic attitudes and hate.
- In the view of young people, the anti-LGBT law was used as political propaganda targeting older generations. They believe the law contradicts human rights principles. Although it explicitly limits the freedom of expression and speech for LGBT individuals, it could potentially be used against anyone.

YOUTH	TBILISI	KUTAISI	GORI
Awareness of laws on „Foreign Influence Transparency“, „Protection of Family Values“, and abortion orders	Relatively high - with critical thinking skills	Average - mostly superficial	Low - fragmentary knowledge
Sources of information	Social media, university, NGOs	TV, family, friends	School, Internet, Local Community
Civic Activism	Active - participating in demonstrations, signing petitions	Moderate - Local problems	Limited - Due to Public Pressure

5.2 WOMEN

All women’s groups agree that the new laws—particularly the “Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence” - undermine confidentiality, the safety of women who are survivors of violence, and the rights of people with disabilities. In Gori, these fears were strongly expressed: women stated directly that the law could lead to the disclosure of beneficiary data, which could pose a threat to their safety. In Kutaisi, particular concern was raised over the risk of increased aggression toward LGBTQ+ allies. In Tbilisi, formerly imprisoned women emphasized the lack of systemic support. They noted that creating an environment where reintegration and safety are increasingly difficult to attain in the context of the new laws.

Women living in urban areas more frequently pointed to the financial costs and barriers of accessibility related to reproductive health services; rural women emphasized geographic inaccessibility and the burden of stigma. Most women expressed concern over abortion regulations. Regardless of their personal opinion on abortion, all participants agreed that such regulations would create even more problems for women.

Urban women were generally informed about the state screening programs.

- Women emphasized that the government has a duty to properly inform the population about new laws and explain their purpose and rationale.
- They believe that women face numerous daily challenges, and that the adopted laws are out of touch with their actual needs, giving the impression that public attention is being deliberately diverted from real issues.
- Women stated that it is unacceptable to criminalize medical services or create artificial barriers, as this endangers people’s health and lives.
- They also stressed that legalizing oppression is unacceptable. Even if women are not explicitly targeted in these laws, they believe the laws still carry a risk of being used against them.

The high cost of services, stigma, and new abortion-related regulations were named within the women’s groups as significant challenges.

“Women living near the occupied territories face transportation issues. Even a one-way trip is quite expensive. That’s why many women avoid traveling.” (Gori, women)

While this issue was evident across all groups, it was especially problematic in small towns, among women living in rural areas, and near conflict zones. Multiple clinic visits, transportation costs, increased service prices, the lack of trust of service providers, and additional consultations or procedures created an overwhelming burden for them.

Low awareness and misinformation among women

Most women received information about the new laws from social media, family, and acquaintances. Women of reproductive age primarily rely on Facebook, various TV channels, and occasionally Tik-Tok (especially in Tbilisi and Kutaisi). In rural areas and among housewives, TV remains the dominant source of information. However, these sources were often unreliable, and participants frequently encountered misinformation. Among women living in Tbilisi and formerly incarcerated women, the issue was even more problematic - they often lacked access even to the training and informational sessions that other participants referenced.

WOMEN	GORI	KUTAISI	TBILISI / FORMER CONVICTS
Information sources	Social media, family; rarely NGOs.	TV, social media; often false formation.	Information is mostly based on personal experience, they rarely attend training.
Personal risk assessment	Fear that personal information of victims of violence will be breached.	The risk of increased bullying, stigma and psychological violence.	Fear due to social stigma and lack of institutional support.
Access to services	Insufficient medical services in rural areas, distance from a service provider.	They are aware of the existence of services, but they do not trust them.	Obstacles to accessing services after leaving the penitentiary system.
Relationship to legislative changes	The law is perceived as a threat to organizations and beneficiaries.	Opinion is divided; some believe the law is provocative for some people.	Laws are perceived as barriers to realizing reproductive freedom and safely accessing essential services.
Gender-based violence and safety	A case was reported where a woman was saved from the attempt of burning.	Women's groups have underlined violence against breastfeeding and pregnant women at rallies.	Women do not feel safe - the law does not protect them.

5.3. ETHNIC MINORITIES

Women from ethnic minorities, particularly representatives of the Azerbaijani community (Kvemo Kartli), emphasized the language barrier as a critical issue. In their view, the lack of knowledge of the Georgian language often becomes a major obstacle - it goes beyond communication difficulties and keeps them in dependence. A young Azerbaijani woman spoke about the state's role and its responsibility to address the needs of ethnic minorities. The language barrier was identified as one of the main reasons ethnic minorities are unable to access information about legislative changes or ongoing processes in the country, and as a result, struggle to defend their rights.

“I speak Georgian and try to be an active citizen, but in my region (Kvemo Kartli), the education system is pretty bad even critical thinking and reasoning are difficult to develop. Laws shouldn't just be translated - they need to be explained in simple terms. When you don't have access to information, you are forced to do whatever you are told. Either information should be provided in one's native language, or the teaching of Georgian should be improved.”
(Tbilisi, youth)

5.4 WOMEN WITH PRISON EXPERIENCE

Women with penitentiary experience spoke about the specific challenges faced by their group. Their case is unique in many ways. There are women among them who inject drugs and those living with HIV. During the discussion, these women noted that they regularly face discrimination in medical institutions. Myths and stereotypes about HIV remain unresolved problems, which can lead to denial of medical services. Women living with HIV stated that discriminatory attitudes and confidentiality concerns affect their motivation to continue treatment.

“When people diagnosed with HIV lose motivation for the treatment, they become a danger to those around them... We face lots of challenges... This is an asymptomatic disease that doesn't bother you from the beginning, and when you don't have money ... no food, and many other problems bother you, at that point HIV simply stops being a concern. This is basically the situation for all of us.”
(Tbilisi, women)

Participants also discussed challenges related to accessing opioid substitution therapy (OST). Due to recent changes, beneficiaries of the program are now required to visit the center daily for OST. Previously, beneficiaries were able to receive medication for a week at once, making the program more flexible and convenient for them. Under the current, stricter regime, daily visits represent a significant barrier and push some to leave this program.

Regarding reproductive health services, the group noted that during imprisonment, they did not have access to cervical and breast cancer screenings. On a positive note, women spoke about improvements in access to other medical services and the quality of care. However, currently, they face numerous barriers to accessing services - including stigma, discrimination, and lack of financial resources. Participants also expressed concern about potential changes following the implementation of Russian Law, since non-governmental organizations often play a supportive role and help them obtain necessary resources.

5.5 LGBT PEOPLE

When discussing the needs of LGBT people, participants noted that, in their view, the anti-LGBT law will intensify cases of discrimination and increase challenges related to physical safety. According to one participant, the oppression of the LGBT community leaves people no choice but to resist.

“Raising awareness starting from school could be a solution.” (Gori, youth)

Regarding transgender people, the criminalization of specific medical services was identified as an extremely alarming topic, which on one hand puts the well-being of this particular group at high risk, and on the other hand represents an interference in the professional activities of doctors. According to the study participants, restricting access to medical services is unacceptable because health and life are at stake.

“I don’t understand why these people are denied the right to live.” (Gori, youth)

During the discussion, as observations and experiences were shared, it became clear that the anti-LGBT law has a chilling effect, manifested in increased aggression towards the LGBT community. Moreover, members of this community feel forced to leave the country because they no longer feel safe under this law.

Civil Society Organizations:

Legislative changes significantly affect the activities of civil society organizations. Most respondents expressed concern about the new regulations.

- **Level of Awareness:** Knowledge about the content of the laws is fragmented - especially regarding the actual enforcement of the Foreign Influence Transparency law and its potential impact on the work of organizations. The laws are mostly known by their popular media nicknames rather than their official titles.
- **Main Sources of Information:** Remain NGO-organized meetings, Facebook and Instagram, and analytical and legal sources. Most participants noted that government media causes confusion and misinformation.
- **Attitudes and Perceptions:** All three laws are perceived as discriminatory. Organizations believe that the Russian law aims to discredit and control; the anti-LGBT law violates freedom of expression and increases stigma. There is a prevailing fear that the state’s goal is to suppress critical and alternative voices. ***“The Russian law is perceived everywhere as a threat to the independent and uninterrupted functioning of organizations.” “It is difficult to find and verify information about the laws.”***

Regional Similarities:

- The Russian law is perceived everywhere as a threat to the independent and uninterrupted functioning of organizations.
- Although organizations are somewhat informed about the content of the laws, there is less knowledge about details and enforcement mechanisms.
- Knowledge about abortion regulations is fragmented across all regions unless an organization works t on SRHR issue.
- A crisis of trust is observed in all regions, with beneficiaries withdrawing and trust declining.
- There has been a decrease in demand for the service.

Internal Challenges: Internal stress and burnout among staff have been recorded. In some cases, employees have left due to the risk of being labeled as “agents”.

International relations have become complicated, with terminated contracts and refusals of new collaboration opportunities

- Civil society representatives criticised the order on artificial termination of pregnancy, identifying it as a factor encouraging unsafe abortions. This issue is especially acute in Kvemo Kartli, particularly for women living near conflict zones, where financial and geographical barriers are more vivid.
- Representatives pointed out the need to raise awareness on reproductive issues but fear that the combination of adopted laws will make it impossible to conduct informational campaigns and events.
- Civil society representatives involved in the study stated that challenges existed in maintaining trust with beneficiaries due to increased control under the Foreign Influence law. In some cases, small organizations and initiative groups stopped implementing projects and faced financial difficulties.
- Representatives of organizations that continued their work emphasized significant changes in strategic goals and programs. Maintaining sustainability and survival was a key concern among participants. In the new environment, developing long-term plans is problematic.
- In some cases, participants highlighted the challenge of registration in the Foreign Influence registry. Those who decided to register described the process as extremely complicated, emotional, and exhausting. The main motive for the registration was to ensure the uninterrupted provision of services to beneficiaries while fearing fines and repression.
- Civil society representatives mentioned staff turnover as a significant loss of professionals and a factor that increases workload for remaining employees, potentially leading to their burnout in the future.
- Due to the ambiguity of the anti-LGBT law, many organizations experience numerous uncertainties and practice self-censorship. To ensure their own safety, organizations avoid working on certain topics and using certain terms, which might have potentially become grounds for legal disputes.
- For representatives of organizations, their work is increasingly perceived as dangerous and causes anxiety.

TOPICS	TBILISI	GORI	KUTAISI
Awareness of laws	Relatively high, especially on Russian law. Participants actively evaluate the content.	Fragmentary knowledge, frequent misinterpretations.	High interest, but often superficial knowledge. Russian law is associated with transparency.
Knowledge of anti-LGBT law	High among young people. Among adults - misconceptions shaped by the government narrative.	Often, they do not know the official name. It is perceived only as a ban on „LGBT propaganda“.	A similar situation, the influence of myths.
Regulation on Induced Abortion	Representatives of organizations are informed. The population often has no information.	The population often has no information. Changes are practically unknown, except for those who work directly in the field.	Little awareness, despite high interest. Low trust in doctors.
Attitudes regarding Russian law	The law is seen as an act aiming discreditation and control of NGOs.	It is perceived as a threat to organizations, but there is less awareness about personal data.	Organizations speak of interrupted cooperation at the international level. The practical impact is evident.
NGOs	There is a high level of employee turnover and a stressful environment. The wave of protests is one of the obstacles to mobilization. Beneficiaries refrain from participating in events	The activity of organizations has decreased, trust from the population has decreased. Beneficiaries refrain from engaging in activities. Several organizations have suspended their activities	Disruption of cooperation with foreign partners has been observed. The scale of events has been reduced. Beneficiaries refrain from engaging in events. Several organizations have suspended their activities
Sources of information	Partner NGOs and international networks and organizations are considered reliable sources.	The main source of information is social media and acquaintances.	The influence of TV is high. Social media and TV, networks and platforms
Trust in public spaces	Low. Participants often talk about censorship (municipality, school, media no longer cooperate).	Youth spaces are shrinking. School is considered a controlled space. Cooperation with public institutions is limited	The school is considered a controlled space. Cooperation with public institutions and is limited

Similarities:

1. **Limited access to verified information** about all three laws. The least information was available regarding the abortion-related order. The laws were mostly known by their popular media names (e.g., “Russian Law,” “Anti-LGBT Law”).
2. **Overall negative attitude** towards all the discussed laws. Expectations about their potential impact on human rights in Georgia were also negative.
3. **Access and barriers** to SRHR services.
4. **Reproductive services are not youth-friendly** – the youth group was the least informed about abortion-related issues. It became evident that reproductive services are not tailored to young people. Youth believe that if their peers need specific medical services, they will face serious difficulties in finding the services, mobilizing funds, obtaining support, and accessing confidential care.
5. **Interest and need for increasing awareness** and conducting informational campaigns.
6. **Criminalization of specific medical services related to trans people** was identified as an extremely alarming issue, which on one hand puts this specific group’s well-being at high risk, and on the other hand represents a severe interference in doctors’ professional activities. Participants believe that restricting medical services is unacceptable because it endangers health and life.
7. **High trust in the NGOs** and expectations that they will be the ones to solve existing problems.
8. **Main information sources are similar across all regions.**
9. **Correlation between government media influence and the perception of the laws.**
10. **Fears related to confidentiality** when receiving services from NGOs.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the conducted research, it emerged that although all three laws discussed within the scope of the study have come into effect, participants representing different groups did not have comprehensive information about them. None of the participants involved in the study stated that they had such a level of knowledge about the laws that would leave no room for doubt and thus make them feel protected in the current environment.

The study participants spoke about a lack of information and biased interpretations made during public discussions, which led to a distortion of the content of the laws. Despite their strong interest in finding additional information, they encountered obstacles. The complex language and ambiguity of the laws did not allow them to delve deeply into the details that could potentially affect their lives.

During the discussions, participants identified and assessed the real problems faced by society and evaluated from a critical point of view the declared goals of the authorities. In their opinion, the adopted laws do not serve to solve existing problems or improve the living conditions of the population.

Participants from all groups agreed that the informational campaign regarding the laws was neither sufficiently comprehensive nor objective. The information participants had from the media was often biased, which, in their opinion, created confusion and uncertainty among the population. Thus, social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok), traditional media, and informational campaigns conducted by non-governmental organizations were the main sources of information for the majority of participants. However, it should be noted that the sources of information varied by target group.

Representatives of civil society and local organizations obtained information from online media, government sources, analytical articles, and Facebook. For young people, the sources of information were TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. Women of reproductive age mainly used Facebook, various TV channels, and occasionally TikTok for information seeking. For ethnic minorities, language barriers were cited as an additional factor hindering information access.

According to the study participants, the technical and legal terminology-heavy language of the laws complicated its understanding. Even representatives of civil organizations, who themselves were targets of the Russian law, noted that the law's complexity, ambiguity, and inconsistent interpretation made it difficult to understand what expectations they should have had when the law was enacted. Additionally, it should be noted that participants did not know the official names under which these laws are registered.

Participants' attitudes toward the laws fundamentally changed once detailed information was provided. Even those who had strongly negative attitudes before the information session began to ask questions about the laws' purpose and benefits. All participants acknowledged that the lack of information was used against them as a tool to mislead society. Biased media provided society with incorrect interpretations or did not inform the population about the laws at all.

