

Youthful Perspectives: National Identity Trends in Georgia's Gen Z

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Abstract:

This article delves into the nuanced fabric of national identity among Georgian Generation Z, unraveled through a multifaceted exploration employing secondary data analysis of quantitative information, qualitative content analysis, and in-depth interviews. Situated within the broader context of Georgian Nationalism and international trends in generational perspectives, the research unveils both shared elements and distinctive characteristics shaping the identity landscape of Georgian iGen'ers.

The findings illuminate a generational shift, emphasizing the dynamic nature of how Georgian youth perceive their national identity. Generation Z, born into a world saturated with the Internet and global connectivity, exhibits similarities and differences compared to international trends. Commonalities include a heightened sense of equality, commitment to inclusivity, skepticism toward political institutions, and a preference for libertarian ideology. Despite growing up in the Internet and social media era, Generation Z exhibits cautious trust in the media, reflecting an acute awareness of misinformation and the imperative of verification. The generational cohort displays a global outlook, with increased trust in international organizations and a desire to join NATO and the European Union while maintaining a significant focus on the nation-state.

Noteworthy trends within Generation Z include a decline in religiosity and fatalism, an embrace of civic activism and protest, and a nuanced understanding of the distinction between Georgianness and Georgian citizenship. Ethnic minorities are recognized as integral parts of the nation, departing from ethnic nationalism.

Distinct national markers identified through civil demonstrations include a solid attachment to the Georgian people, a pronounced enemy image directed at the Soviet Union and Russia, and emotional connections with national symbols such as the map, flag, Georgian banquets, and the history of the fight for independence.

In conclusion, this study enriches the discourse on national identity formation by offering a constructive narrative that navigates beyond primordial perspectives. The identified national markers, manifest in civic activism, enemy imagery, and emotional connections with symbols, collectively contribute to a materialised expression of national identity and a source of pride among Georgian Generation Z.

Introduction

The concept of the nation-state has traditionally held a central position in social and political sciences. However, since the 1990s, a pivotal question has arisen: Are nation-states losing their influence, authority, and capacity to manage population movements while maintaining social cohesion within their borders in the modern era (Feinstein, 2023)? This inquiry has underscored the growing significance of national identity, the very essence of the nation, and its relevance to the contemporary global landscape. This shift is partially attributed to the dissolution of national borders in numerous countries under the influence of global, macro-regional, and micro-regional pressures, as well as the transformation of conventional systems of moral values. Consequently, exploring our identity, deeply rooted in subconscious perceptions, assumes particular relevance (Parekh, 1995).

The discourse on national identity and nationality within the context of Georgia presents a multifaceted perspective. Foremost, the post-Soviet experience in Georgia is noteworthy, wherein Georgian nationalism took shape against the backdrop of the Russian Empire and, later, the Soviet Union. During this period, Georgia existed without a formal nation-state structure, and the attainment of political unity remained largely a conceptual aspiration. Consequently, language, religion, and culture emerged as pivotal determinants of Georgian identity, imbuing nationality with a distinct ethnic character. The ethno-cultural dimension was further solidified by Soviet policies that anchored nationality within ethno-cultural models of nationhood (Brubaker, 1994; Karklins, 1989; Mataradze, 2015).

In the post-Soviet era, Georgia experienced a shift in its approach to nationality, particularly in response to the adverse consequences of ethnic nationalism. Religion assumed prominence as a basis for nationality due to the state's inability to ensure its citizens' physical and material security in recent years. Consequently, the church acquired a central role in fostering nationalism due to its ability to provide stability and identity (Zedania, 2010).

From a contemporary standpoint, Georgia has witnessed significant demographic shifts over the past decade, marked by emigration and immigration (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022). Additionally, Georgia exhibits a diverse multi-ethnic profile²². Notably, most Georgians primarily identify as citizens of Georgia, displaying a strong interest in national issues and a high level of national pride (98%). However, ethno-nationalist and ethnocentric attitudes surface (CRRC, 2021).

Despite the significance of "Georgia" as an ethnocultural identity, several noteworthy trends emerge:

Georgian citizenship, a key component of Georgian identity, holds greater importance for the younger generation than older citizens. The older generation tends to exhibit more ethnocentric attitudes, expressing a heightened sense of pride in their homeland relative to students²³ (Bogishvili et al., 2016).

Notably, despite the clear ethno-cultural connotations associated with Georgian identity, discernible intergenerational differences in values and attitudes influence perspectives on national identity. Young Georgians, in particular, prioritise values such as freedom, development, democracy, human rights, and freedom of expression. Their tolerance toward ethnic minorities is rising (Heinrich Boll Stiftung (2021). Furthermore, following the protest demonstrations in Georgia in March 2023²⁴, in which young people played a prominent role, a lively discourse has emerged regarding evolving perspectives on nationality and national identity among Generation Z, characterised as civic nationalism (Koberidze, 2023).

Consequently, this article examines the perception of national identity among Georgian Gen Z and identifies the determinants within this context, employing a theoretical framework rooted in nationalism. Following the research objective, the tasks for this study are outlined as follows: (1) to ascertain how Georgian Gen Z perceives the nation-state, (2) to unveil the markers of national identity, and (3) to determine the factors influencing the identification of Georgian Gen Z with Georgia/nationality. The research question addressed in this study is: Is the national identity of Georgian Gen Z characterised by signs of civic nationalism?

This article employed a triangulation approach, integrating diverse methods to explore the research question comprehensively²⁵.

²² Refer to Geostat (2018) for data of the 'Main Results of the 2014 General Population Census of Georgia.' According to this source, approximately 13.2% of the nation's population comprises various ethnic groups."

²³ For more details, Refer to the study (2016) titled 'Georgian National Identity: Conflict and Integration.' According to this research, most individuals within the 18-30 and 31-35 age categories do not believe the world would improve if other nations resembled Georgians. Additionally, the study indicates an increasing prevalence of beliefs in national superiority and dominance within the 56+ age group." Further information can be found in Heinrich Boll Stiftung (2021), page 89.

²⁴ We are referring to the protest demonstrations that took place from March 6 to March 10, 2023, in opposition to the 'Foreign Agents Law.'

²⁵ The article is based on research conducted by Anna Kapanishvili as part of her undergraduate thesis under the supervision of Teona Mataradze at the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs Social Sciences Program.

This study leveraged secondary quantitative data from the CRRC 2021 database ²⁶to conduct a comprehensive analysis. The initial step involved re-coding and ranking variables, facilitating the identification of prevailing trends within our targeted research group, individuals aged 18 to 26. Our analytical approach employed bivariate methods, particularly through crosstabulations, to explore relationships among variables. Only crosstabulations demonstrating statistical significance at a predetermined alpha level of 0.05 were included in the subsequent discussion. The determination of significance relied on the chi-square test, with p-values below 0.05 considered indicative of a meaningful association between the variables under investigation. This meticulous approach aimed to focus our examination on relationships that reached a statistically significant threshold, thereby enhancing the reliability and relevance of our study.

Secondly, qualitative content analysis was conducted on participants' speeches in the civil demonstrations held in Georgia on March 8-9, 2023²⁷. Specifically, a sample of 20 students was considered. The choice of this method was rooted in the significance of the March 2023 events and the emerging trends. Given the prominent role played by young individuals during these events, the analysis focused on the messages, perceptions, and overall trends expressed during the demonstrations. Transcripts were generated for analysis, and specific codes and categories were developed to identify key thematic trends.

The primary research method involved qualitative interviews with eight respondents. Considering the intricate nature of defining national identity, qualitative interviews were deemed most effective in capturing young individuals' nuanced perceptions and attitudes on this matter. The selected method facilitated a comprehensive analysis of Georgian youth attitudes and the motivating factors influencing their national identity. Interview transcripts were subjected to coding, leading to the development of broad categories for interpreting the gathered information.

The principal limitation of this study lies in its inability to encompass the entire age category of Generation Z due to ethical considerations regarding the survey of minors. Moreover, the intricacies of the research topic further constrain the study, leading to a focus solely on adults aged 18-26 as respondents. The in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives of a homogeneous generation, ensuring a balance in gender and age. While valuable in highlighting specific trends, this approach does introduce a limitation by restricting the broader representation of diverse perspectives from specific groups, such as ethnic and religious minorities, rural residents, etc., within the targeted demographic. Additionally, complete documentation of the March 2023 demonstration could not be obtained during the research process.

²⁶ Caucasus Barometer is an annual survey about socio-economic issues and political attitudes conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) in the three countries of the South Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Caucasus Barometer 2021 Georgia was conducted from December 17, 2021, to January 31, 2022. The survey population is Adults (18 years old and over), excluding populations living in territories affected by military conflict (South Ossetia and Abkhazia). Sample Design is multi-stage cluster sampling with preliminary stratification. The sample Size is 1,540 respondents.

²⁷ The speakers' texts were obtained from the public channel's website. Georgian Public Broadcaster. (2023, March 9). #Moambe at 21 o'clock. 9th of March, 2023 #[Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzfiA0yvfJM>

Literature Review

The literature pertaining to national identity stands out for its intricacy, encompassing both the complexity of the concept itself and the vast array of perspectives found within the literature. Furthermore, many scholars have pointed out that despite our active role in creating, ascribing sacred meanings to, utilising, propagating, and even making national symbols the central credo and life purpose, we often lack a precise understanding of the seemingly straightforward term "national identity" (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015). Consequently, each author approaches national identity with distinct classifications and interpretations. The literature review navigates through this complexity, dividing its focus into three key areas: national identity within politically and territorially organised communities, the roots of Georgian nationalism, and the emerging identity of Generation Z.

Conversely, the term "nation" is characterised by its intricacy, as its comprehension is contingent upon numerous contexts, interpretations, and perspectives. This complexity has resulted in the absence of a specific, universally accepted definition of a nation as a multifaceted phenomenon. Nevertheless, this study predominantly adopts the Western perspective of the nation, which views a nation as a manifestation of political unity (Davitashvili, 2003). In this context, a nation comprises individuals who share common traits and exhibit a desire to collaborate and unite under a common authority (Mill, 1977).

Perceptions associated with the nation and national identity can generally be categorised into three prevalent perspectives. On the one hand, the primordial view posits that a nation is inherently defined by ethnic and national attributes such as language, religion, community, and kinship ties. It emphasises emotions and influences, viewing the nation as a political expression of ethnicity (Davitashvili, 2003). In contrast, constructivism underscores the socially constructed nature of nations and highlights the significance of cultural, social, and political factors in shaping national identity (Brubaker, 1996).

Anthony Smith (2006) challenges the prevailing dichotomy of nationhood, identifying two distinct notions. He critiques the 'Western' civic definition characterised by delineated territory, legal-political community, standardised legal systems, mass participation, and nationalist ideologies. In contrast, he highlights 'ethnic' nations in non-Western contexts, emphasising common descent, vernacular culture, ethnohistory, and popular mobilisation (Smith, 2006, p. 173).

Smith proposes an idealised nation as a self-defined human community with shared myths, memories, symbols, historic territory, common communication codes, distinctive public culture, and shared customs and laws (Smith, 2006, p. 175). This definition, intended to bridge Western and non-Western divides, introduces new challenges for 'new-old' nations like Armenians or Jews. Despite acknowledging pre-19th-century features of nations as ethnic communities, Smith contends that the era of nationalism united these communities for political purposes, driven by politicised ideals of popular sovereignty and cultural authenticity (Smith, 2006, p. 177).

Gellner (1983) opposes the concept of nationhood and nationality as self-generated phenomena, contending that general social conditions give rise to a standardised, homogeneous culture upheld by a central government, encompassing the entire populace (p. 55). John Stuart Mill also underscores the role of social solidarity in forming a nation. He defines a nation as a collective of individuals bound together by numerous shared characteristics, driven by the desire to cooperate, coexist, and unite under a joint government. These shared traits include identity of origin, linguistic and religious affinity, geographical boundaries, national history, collective memories, and shared pride in the historical legacy (Tyndal, 2013).

Furthermore, a modernist approach emerges, challenging the primordial perspective that posits nations as rooted in cultural and ethnic identities spanning centuries. According to the modernist viewpoint, a modern political construct arises from a sense of unity and solidarity among a diverse population within the context of a modern state. It accentuates the state's pivotal role in defining the nation by fostering a shared language, culture, and political identity (Brubaker, 1996; Davitashvili, 2003). This modernist perspective is also shared by Hobsbawm (1990), who regards the nation as an unchanging social unit intrinsically tied to the modern territorial state. Additionally, he argues that the concept of the nation as an innate, self-classifying entity is a myth, asserting that nations are not creators of the state but rather creations of the state, with national identification evolving over time. A nation-state is not formed by blood or language; linguistic unity often arises from previous political associations over a broader geographical area (Turenko, Derevyanko, Ivanov, Hrudnytskyi, & Rudenko, 2020).

The conceptualisation of a nation by Smith (2006) aligns with the description of the Georgian nation. Smith's idea of continuity, transitioning ethnic communities into nations through nationalism, aptly characterises the historical development of the Georgian nation. Georgian nationalism emerged in the late 19th century, notably with Ilia Chavchavadze's efforts to establish a national ideology (Tarkhan-Mouravi & Smite, 2007. P. 9).

Chavchavadze's key ideas, encapsulated in slogans like "We should belong to us!" and the significance of language, faith, and homeland as ancestral treasures, formed the foundation for the Georgian nationalist movement. Applying Gellner's theory, Chavchavadze utilised these elements as "raw material" from the pre-nationalist world to shape the nationalist doctrine for Georgian nationhood (Gellner, 1983 p. 49). Despite being recognised as a developed nation, Georgians, influenced by Soviet policies, pursued political independence through ethnic nationalism, emphasising language, faith, and land while sidelining other national minorities (Mataradze, 2015, p. 116).

In the late 1980s, ethnic-nationalist solid movements resurged, reinvigorating the three treasures as the credo of the nationalist movement. The leaders, focused on countering 'Russian imperialism,' overlooked the diverse linguistic and religious landscape within Georgia. The establishment of an independent Georgian state in 1991 marked a turning point. However, the government's strong nationalist stance, advocating 'Georgia for Georgians,' posed challenges for non-ethnic Georgians.²⁸

²⁸ Although some authors argue that President Zviad Gamsakhurdia had never said it directly (Firalishvili, 2007: 18).

Despite a liberal citizenship regime in the constitution, the early years of state-building witnessed tensions, leading to the departure of some non-ethnic Georgians.

The aftermath of ethnic conflicts prompted shifts from ethnic to civic nationalism, with policies erasing nationality from identity documents and fostering inclusivity. However, ethnic nationalism persisted among Georgians during the post-socialist era. Anthropologist Florian Mühlfried contends that the Georgian state struggled to provide sufficient social citizenship, leading to the growing importance of ethnic and religious affiliations among the population (Mühlfried, 2014. P. 120).

The historical evolution has undeniably shaped Georgian identity, prompting an exploration of how the latest generation, Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2015), perceives and experiences Georgian nationality. To contextualise this discussion, we delve into the sociological perspective on generations, a concept pioneered by Karl Mannheim, who asserted that individuals belonging to the same generation share a common historical location, influencing their attitudes and beliefs (Mannheim, 1972 [1928]:105). This concept has been instrumental in identifying and understanding generational shifts, often manifested as a 'generation gap' or distinct historical labels like 'lost generation' or 'generation X' (Giddens & Sutton, 2017).

When examining the Baby Boomer generation, the advent of television marked a transformative generational experience, shaping a new youth culture. In contrast, Generation Z faces an era of rapid and pervasive change, characterised by their status as digital natives—born into a world saturated with the Internet and mobile phones. The impact of the Internet and global networks on their identity surpasses the influence of previous generations (Broadbent et al., 2017).

Jean M. Twenge identifies Generation Z as iGEN, attributing the 'I' to the individualism ingrained in their identity. This individualism forms the bedrock for their sense of equality and rejection of traditional social norms. Financial insecurity is a notable concern, driving a focus on becoming economically successful. Twenge highlights ten trends shaping iGen'ers, emphasising their irreligious stance, insulation from civic engagement, commitment to inclusivity, and independent mindset, manifesting in scepticism toward political institutions and a preference for libertarian ideology (Twenge, 2017).

In "Generation Z Goes to College," Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace characterise American Gen Z as a diverse group with political ideologies ranging from liberal to moderate on social issues and moderate to conservative on financial matters. Their religious participation reflects a high level of spirituality. The authors emphasise the contextual factors shaping Gen Z, such as access to information, technological connectivity, creative entrepreneurship opportunities, exposure to diversity, and experiences with disasters and tragedies (Seemiller & Grace, 2016).

A global survey indicates that young people worldwide share common concerns and impatience for governmental solutions. Despite political shifts in some developed countries, young people express

optimism in technological advancements and increased communication, fostering greater cooperation between diverse populations (Broadbent et al., 2017).

These perspectives offer a comprehensive understanding of Generation Z's identity, encompassing individualism, technological immersion, diverse political ideologies, and a global outlook. The evolution from earlier generations to Generation Z highlights the dynamic nature of identity formation within the context of historical and technological changes.

In synthesising the diverse literature on national identity, this review unveils the intricate and multifaceted nature of the concept. Scholars from McCrone and Bechhofer to Anthony Smith have illuminated the complexities inherent in understanding and national identity. The journey through the roots of Georgian nationalism, the varied perspectives on the nation, and the evolving identity of Generation Z underscores the dynamic interplay between historical, societal, and technological forces. As the narratives of continuity and change unfold, it becomes evident that national or generational identity is a fluid construct responsive to the ever-shifting landscapes of socio-political contexts and individual experiences. The tapestry woven through these scholarly voices invites a nuanced understanding of identity formation, urging us to explore where we have been and are headed in the complex realm of national identity.

Research Results

Generational Dynamics in Tolerance, Marriage Preferences, and Sociopolitical Views among Georgian Youth (18-26)

The secondary data analysis in this study is based on the CRRC (2021) Caucasus Barometer dataset. The secondary data uncovered crucial trends illuminating generational differences, potentially leading to distinct markers and perceptions of national identity among Georgian youth. Notably, differences emerged between the so-called Generation Z and Millennials, emphasising the relevance of the chosen age group (18-26) for this study.

We employed a tolerance index to gauge intergenerational tolerance levels (refer to Chart 1), unveiling consistently high acceptance levels toward individuals of diverse nationalities across all ages. Nevertheless, a noticeable trend suggests a decline in tolerance with age progression across generations. Notably, a difference is observed between Generation Z and Millennials (see Chart 2), suggesting that the national marker is less perceived as a barrier during business relations within the 18-26 age group. Nevertheless, cultural factors, particularly the acceptance of Iranians, Indians, and Arabs, influence various types of relationships across all age categories.

The influence of living in Georgia on the tolerance index for these generations is minimal in specific cases (see Chart 3 and Chart 4). Furthermore, acceptance towards sexual and religious minorities, such as homosexuals and Jehovah's Witnesses, decreases with age, with Generation Z exhibiting the highest

level of tolerance (see Chart 5). As age falls, there is a rising trend of acceptance towards interethnic marriage (see Chart 6).

An intriguing trend is observed in the case of Generation Z, where over half (65.9%) express willingness to marry an ethnic Azerbaijani. This suggests that cultural and religious factors may be less perceived as barriers in this age group, and the high acceptance of Azerbaijanis may be attributed to their strong integration into Georgian society (see Chart 7 and Chart 8).

As the age categories decrease, the collapse of the USSR is perceived positively (see Chart 9), and the desire to join NATO and the European Union intensifies, particularly among young people (see Chart 10 and Chart 11). Trust in international organisations, such as the European Union is highest among respondents aged 18-26 (see Chart 12). Additionally, trust in the media increases with the age of the generations (see Chart 12), indicating a heightened emphasis on the reliability and verification of disseminated information among young people.

With decreasing age categories, there is a trend of increasing trust in the Ombudsman institution, non-governmental organisations, and international organisations. Notably, differences between Generation Z and Millennials are evident in these cases (see Chart 12). Despite a high level of trust in religious institutions across age categories, a decline is observed as age categories decrease, both in trust in religious institutions and the perceived role of religion in everyday life (see Chart 13).

A noteworthy observation is the decrease in fatalism as generations age, with young people, especially Generation Z, believing that individuals are in charge of their destiny (see Chart 14). Additionally, a significant trend is noted wherein young people are more inclined to believe in the importance of participating in protests (see Chart 15).

Furthermore, young people tend to view moving to another country as a short-term plan (see Chart 16), while considering leaving Georgia permanently less frequently (see Chart 17), which may indicate a high attachment to the state, notably Georgia. This is supported by the finding that interest in domestic politics surpasses international politics across all age categories.

This study, delving into the CRRC (2021) Caucasus Barometer dataset, provides a comprehensive understanding of national identity among Georgian youth aged 18-26. The distinctions observed between Generation Z and Millennials emphasise the flexible nature of how young people perceive their national identity. Cultural influences shape relationships, as seen in trends like the heightened acceptance of ethnic Azerbaijanis, reflecting a blend of cultural understanding and integration dynamics. Changes in political views, increased trust in non-governmental and international institutions, and a solid attachment to Georgia reveal significant shifts within the younger generation. Moreover, the analysis indicates that among young people, mainly from Generation Z, discernible trends are aligning with the perspective of civic nationalism in national identity. These findings contribute valuable insights for both academic discourse and practical considerations, illustrating the multifaceted factors shaping the evolving landscape of national identity among Georgian youth.

Perception of the Nation-State

Drawing insights from in-depth interviews, two discernible trends emerge in how respondents perceive the nation-state. Many view the state as an authoritative institution endowed with substantial power, likening it to associations such as a policeman, lion, lawyer, or educator. This perspective emphasises the characteristics of justice and the maintenance of order. Conversely, another group regards the state as an equal instrument, drawing associations like friend, worker, human body, or football referee. This perspective underscores that the state employs power delegated by the people to formulate strategy, ensuring harmonious functionality among its constituent parts, a feat unattainable individually. A respondent articulates this viewpoint: "The parent has... let us call it a stick, that means 'power' where you cannot talk to him. However, at some point, you can oppose with your friend, talk, enter into a human discussion with each other and maybe decide something for the better" (23 years old).

Simultaneously, fundamental state characteristics such as principle, activity, health, and the existence of a control mechanism between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches are highlighted. Notably, respondents express an existential acknowledgement of the state's importance, yet a prevalent theme is low trust attributed to the institution's considerable discretion and power. As one respondent notes, "The power was given to us by the people, right, at some point, but the people also forget about it, and in the end, the state also forgets the primary source.. Authority blinds us..." (24 years old).

Diverse perceptions of Georgia as a state also emerge. Some portray Georgia as a reckless, cheerful Georgian man, leading an unhealthy lifestyle, constantly bothered by neighbors and dissatisfied with his job. Others present Georgia as "an anxious and confused child who could not understand what she wants and does not allow others to help her," reflecting characteristics such as instability and lack of orientation. Additionally, respondents depict Georgia alternately as a "young, mature, slightly inexperienced person" with a sense of pride for its sovereign statehood formed in the 20s of the XX century or as an elderly individual needing assistance from Georgian politicians for development and orientation.

In summary, these associations reveal Georgia as a state perceived as unstable, passive, and reliant on external support, marked by low trust and growing nihilism. Root causes identified include a perceived absence of democratic values, feelings of insecurity, fear of abusive state power, limited freedom of expression, transparency issues, dysfunctional judicial and legislative bodies, economic challenges, and instability stemming from the arbitrary will of individual political figures.

Who is Georgian?

When contemplating the concept of the nation, respondents primarily adopt a constructivist-modernist perspective. On the one hand, the nation is viewed as a convergence of individuals sharing common national values, culture, territorial location, collective memory, and language. On the other hand, it is perceived as a collective of individuals bound by a shared social responsibility. As one

respondent (21 years old) aptly put it, "People know, without explicitly agreeing, that they are part of one society with an unwritten social contract to live together peacefully and help each other."

In addition, some respondents consider the nation from the lens of civil nationalism. This perspective emphasises the nation as a unity of people united by civil responsibility, with a key characteristic being statehood. According to another respondent (26 years old), "The concept of the state is crucial. The nation, different from an uncivilised unity, is created by citizens. In my interpretation, citizenship is part of civil responsibility, not just documentation."

Associative perceptions related to the Georgian nation span three dimensions. Firstly, it is predominantly understood in a state context. Secondly, socio-economic characteristics, expressed through migration and dispersion worldwide, form a crucial part. Lastly, cultural attributes based on common traditional and historical experiences play a significant role. For instance, one respondent (25 years old) described their associations, "First, I envision a map of Georgia, followed by a map of the world with Georgians scattered across various corners of the globe... The second association is tied to Georgian banquets and toasts... Subsequently, historical moments might come to mind."

The interpretation of "Georgia" itself for Gen Z reveals an interesting perspective. For the majority, Georgianness and Georgian citizenship appear as mutually exclusive concepts. Georgianness is intricately tied to cultural and value aspects, while Georgian citizenship is seen strictly in a political-instrumental context. Notably, some respondents associate Georgian citizenship with political factors, state institutions, work, and the geopolitical environment, distancing it from the cultural essence of Georgianness. This perspective is influenced by the challenges associated with the status of a developing country, as one respondent (23 years old) notes, "Being a citizen of Georgia means living in a developing country, always under various risks due to political and geographical situations."

Moreover, citizenship is not merely a formal status or a specific document; it is seen as a social role. This role involves individual civil responsibility, active participation in important processes, expressing opinions, and contributing to daily actions for the country's development. Citizenship, in this context, becomes a determinant of Georgianness, driven by a lack of trust in state institutions among Gen Z. According to a respondent (21 years old), "Citizenship means taking responsibility when there is something to protest, defend, or applaud a decision that benefits the country. It's about contributing to the development of that particular country, as the country also helps you meet your needs."

The defining criteria of "Georgianness" perceived by Gen Z are multifaceted. Birth factor alone is not considered necessary, as Georgian upbringing, experiences of living in Georgia, proficiency in the Georgian language, and active citizenship play pivotal roles. Feeling nationalism, participating in political processes, and expressing protest emerge as indicators of Georgianness. The respondents stress the need for integration of ethnic minorities into Georgian society, rejecting the notion that Georgian identity is solely tied to bloodline. As one respondent (21 years old) vehemently expresses, "This is an

ugly way of thinking. If you don't have Georgian blood, you can still be Georgian, and maybe even better."

The generalised portrait of a "Georgian" encompasses socio-economic influence, behavioural traits, and cultural aspects. While globalisation has been perceived to dilute specific attributes over time, respondents emphasise the importance of upbringing in shaping relationships, character, and collective memory: "In our interactions, we subconsciously absorb each other's behaviour patterns so frequently that it becomes a part of our subconscious," notes a respondent (21 years old).

National Identity Markers:

Analysing speeches at demonstrations provides insights into how Gen Z perceives the state from a democratic standpoint. Contrary to viewing the state as an overarching institution dictating an individual's future, it is seen as an executor of the people's will. Unity and independence emerge as pivotal values attributed to the state. However, diverse perceptions of the state of Georgia exist akin to in-depth interviews. Notably, there is a nihilistic stance towards Georgia's state institutions, particularly the executive and legislative authorities, driven by a lack of trust and a perception of anti-people values by the government. This sentiment is illustrated by a speaker under 18-22 years old, a student, stating, "They [Members of Parliament] do not have the moral right to give lectures in universities, they do not have the moral right and public support to have mandates in the parliament."

A significant trend is observed where the nation is symbolised by the youth participating in rallies, portraying citizenship as an avenue for individual civic responsibility to shape political processes and discourse, especially when core state values such as sovereignty are endangered. Rally speakers emphasise values like unity and the expression of civil positions, presenting unity as a demonstration of people's power. This is encapsulated by a speaker (18-22 years old, student) declaring, "This system wants to obey us. No! You must obey every person standing here! It is the duty of every citizen not to allow this and to preserve the unity with which we stand here."

Expressions related to fellow citizens during the rallies equate individual civic responsibility with heroism, fostering a sense of pride. Ancestral belonging is also highlighted, particularly to historical figures known for civil responsibility and anti-Russian discourse. Characteristics attributed to young rally participants include physical strength, readiness for political engagement, legislative awareness, and a strong emphasis on freedom. Freedom is considered the paramount value, stemming from the growth in a sovereign state, as articulated by a speaker (18-22 years old, student), "We are citizens born in free Georgia, and we are not going to give up this freedom."

Actions at demonstrations are viewed not merely as emotional outlets but as forums for analysing positions and the critical assessment of situations. The ability to react swiftly in critical moments is evident, demonstrated by simulated professional roles and their redistribution during actions. A problem-solving focus rather than despair characterises young people. Their orientation towards Western values is pronounced, linking their future and the country's future to Europe. A speaker (18-

23 years student) laments, "Today I should have been at the university, I should have studied Shakespeare, I should have studied European values, but I have to stand here, and my voice is muffled."

The Gen Z portrait outlined above underscores their civic nationalism and a Western vision of the nation, emphasizing a shared civic culture marked by specific civic responsibilities and critically evaluated actions. Distinct national markers identified through civil demonstrations encompass a solid attachment to the Georgian people, emphasizing social ties due to the country's small size. Protest emerges as a means of expressing individual civic responsibility, with a generational difference in the forms of expression. The "enemy image" phenomenon, encompassing the Soviet Union and Russia, stimulates national identity, questioning the Georgianness of individuals not aligned with statehood. National symbols, particularly an emotional connection with the flag, serve as markers of national identity, embodying a materialised expression and a source of pride.

Conclusion

The exploration into the national identity of Georgian Generation Z has unveiled a rich tapestry of evolving perspectives, highlighting the dynamic nature of how the youth conceptualize their connection to the nation. The insights, derived from a triangulation approach involving quantitative analysis, qualitative content examination, and in-depth interviews, provide a nuanced comprehension of civic nationalism within the younger generation.

Comparing international trends, Georgian Gen Z exhibits both commonalities and distinctions. Similarities include an elevated sense of equality and a dedication to inclusivity towards vulnerable and diverse groups, a reevaluation of traditional norms and skepticism toward political institutions (reflected in a relatively low level of trust - refer to Chart 12), and a preference for libertarian ideology (Twenge, 2017). Moreover, their access to global information, heightened awareness of global disasters and tragedies (e.g., War in Ukraine), increased cross-border communication with peers, amplified trust in international organizations, and the aspiration to join NATO and the European Union signify a global outlook. However, as revealed in the qualitative study, this does not imply a decrease in the importance of the nation-state; rather, it is perceived as a necessity to seek support for a young, inexperienced state.

Similar to global trends, Georgian iGen'ers exhibit a decline in religiosity and fatalism, although religion remains one of the most reliable institutions for this generation, akin to American Gen Z (see Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Notably, Orthodoxy as a marker of nationality is no longer prominent, indicating a shift towards civil nationalism. In contrast to global trends, Georgian Gen Z does not tend to disengage from civic involvement; on the contrary, they consider civic activism and protest as essential tools in serving the nation-state. The nuanced understanding of the distinction between Georgianness and Georgian citizenship underscores citizenship as a social role involving active participation and responsibility.

Despite being born into an era dominated by the Internet and intense social media, their trust in the media is not exceptionally high, underscoring their awareness of the ease with which misinformation spreads and the necessity for verification.

In the narratives of young people, a more constructive approach emerges, contrasting with the primordial perspective that characterises modern nationalism and rejects the unequivocal primacy of national identity formation based solely on blood and origin. While they generally consider Georgianness with a single ancestor to be important, they view ethnic minorities living in Georgia as integral parts of the country.

Distinct national markers identified through civil demonstrations encompass a profound attachment to the Georgian people, a notable phenomenon of portraying the Soviet Union and Russia as adversaries, and emotional connections with national symbols such as the map, flag, Georgian banquets, and the history of the fight for independence. These markers signify a materialised expression of national identity and a source of pride.

In conclusion, Georgian Generation Z's national identity is characterised by a blend of cultural inclusivity, civic responsibility, and a solid connection to national symbols. The findings contribute valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on national identity and illuminate the multifaceted factors shaping the evolving landscape among Georgian youth.

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ახალგაზრდული პერსპექტივა: საქართველოს თაობა Z-ის ეროვნული იდენტობის ტენდენციები

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აბსტრაქტი

მეორეული რაოდენობრივი მონაცემების, 2023 წლის მარტის აქციების მოხსენებების და სიღრმისეული ინტერვიუების ანალიზის საფუძველზე წარმოდგენილ სტატიაში განხილულია თაობა Z-ის (18-26 წწ-ის ფრაგმენტი) ეროვნული იდენტობის მახასიათებლები. ქართული ნაციონალიზმის განვითარების კონტექსტისა და თაობათაშორისი განსხვავებების საერთაშორისო ტენდენციების განხილვის შემდეგ, სტატიაში წარმოჩენილია ინტერნეტითა და გლობალური კავშირით გაჯერებულ სამყაროში დაბადებული თაობის მიერ ქართველობის, საქართველოს მოქალაქეობის და ერი-სახელმწიფოს აღქმა.

კვლევა ავლენს თაობათა ცვლის პარალელურად ნაციონალიზმის სახეცვლილებას და ახალი თაობისთვის დამახასიათებელ ეროვნულ მარკერებს. Z თაობისთვის გლობალურად დამახასიათებელი ტენდენციების მსგავსად, ქართველ ახალგაზრდებში ვლინდება თანასწორობის გამლიერებელი განცდა, ინკლუზიურობისადმი მიდრეკილება, პოლიტიკური ინსტიტუტების მიმართ სკეპტიციზმი და ლიბერტარიანული იდეოლოგიისთვის უპირატესობის მინიჭების ტენდენცია. ინტერნეტისა და სოციალური მედიის ეპოქაში გაზრდილი Z თაობა ნაკლებად ენდობა მედიას და ფართოდ გავრცელებული დეზინფორმაციის პირობებში ხაზს უსვამს ინფორმაციის გადამოწმების აუცილებლობას. თაობა Z იზიარებს გლობალურ მსოფლმხედველობას, გამოირჩევა საერთაშორისო ორგანიზაციების მიმართ ნდობითა და ერი-სახელმწიფოს მნიშვნელობის გააზრების კვალდაკვალ ხაზს უსვამს NATO-სა და ევროკავშირში გაწევრიანების მნიშვნელობას.

მსოფლიოს ახალგაზრდების მსგავსად, ქართველ თაობა Z-ში მცირდება რელიგიურობის დონე, თუმცა რელიგიური ინსტიტუტები კვლავ ახერხებენ ნდობის მანდატის შენარჩუნებას. მიუხედავად ამისა, მართლმადიდებლობა აღარ აღიქმება ეროვნულობის მარკერად. ეთნიკური ნაციონალიზმიდან სამოქალაქო ნაციონალიზმისაკენ გადახრის მაჩვენებლებია: სამოქალაქო აქტივიზმის, პროტესტის მნიშვნელობის, ქართველობისა და საქართველოს მოქალაქეობას შორის განსხვავების შემცირების და ეთნიკური უმცირესობების ერის განუყოფელ ნაწილად აღიარების ტენდენციები.

სამოქალაქო დემონსტრაციების დროს გამოვლენილი ცალკეული ნიშნებია: ქართველი ხალხისადმი მყარი მიჯაჭვულობა; საბჭოთა კავშირისა და რუსეთის მტრის ხატი; ემოციური კავშირი ისეთ ეროვნულ სიმბოლოებთან, როგორებიცაა რუკა, დროშა, ქართული ეროვნულ განმათავისუფლებელი გმირები და დამოუკიდებლობისთვის ბრძოლის ისტორია.

ამდენად, წარმოდგენილი სტატია ემსახურება ქართული იდენტობის ფორმირების შესახებ დისკურსის გამდიდრებას პრემორდიალისტურიდან კონსტრუქტივისტული ტენდენციების გაჩენაზე ხაზგასმით. გამოვლენილი ეროვნული მარკერები - სამოქალაქო აქტივიზმის მნიშვნელობა, რუსეთის მტრის ხატი და საქართველოს სიმბოლოებთან ემოციური კავშირი - თაობა Z-ის ეროვნული იდენტობის მატერიალიზებული გამოხატვაა და მათთვის სიამაყის წყაროს წარმოადგენს.

Annexe:

Chart 1: Tolerance Index Indicator Across Generation



Chart 2: Receptivity to Business Relationships with Representatives of Different Nationalities Across Generations: “I would not have a business relationship with...”

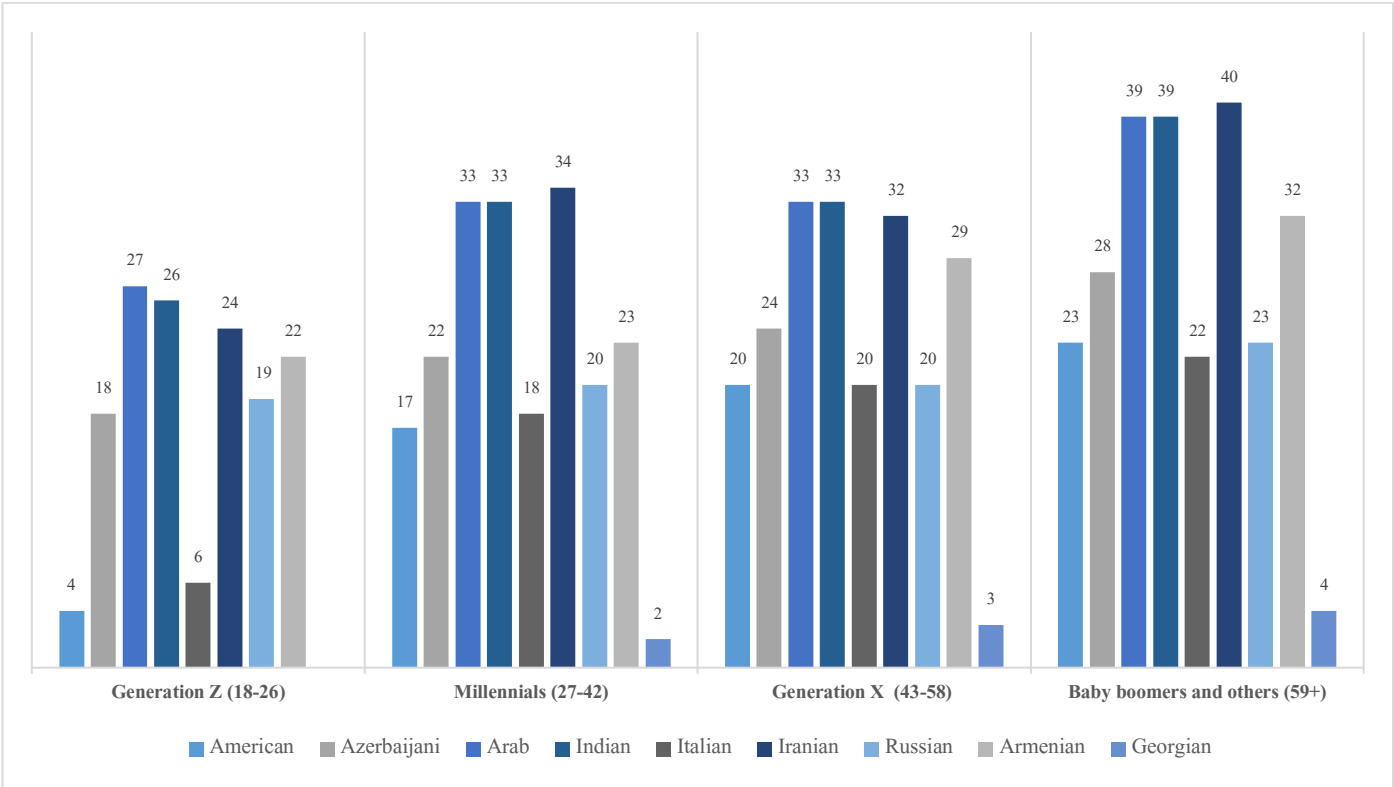


Chart 3: Willingness to Cooperate with Azerbaijanis and Azerbaijanis Living in Georgia Across Generations

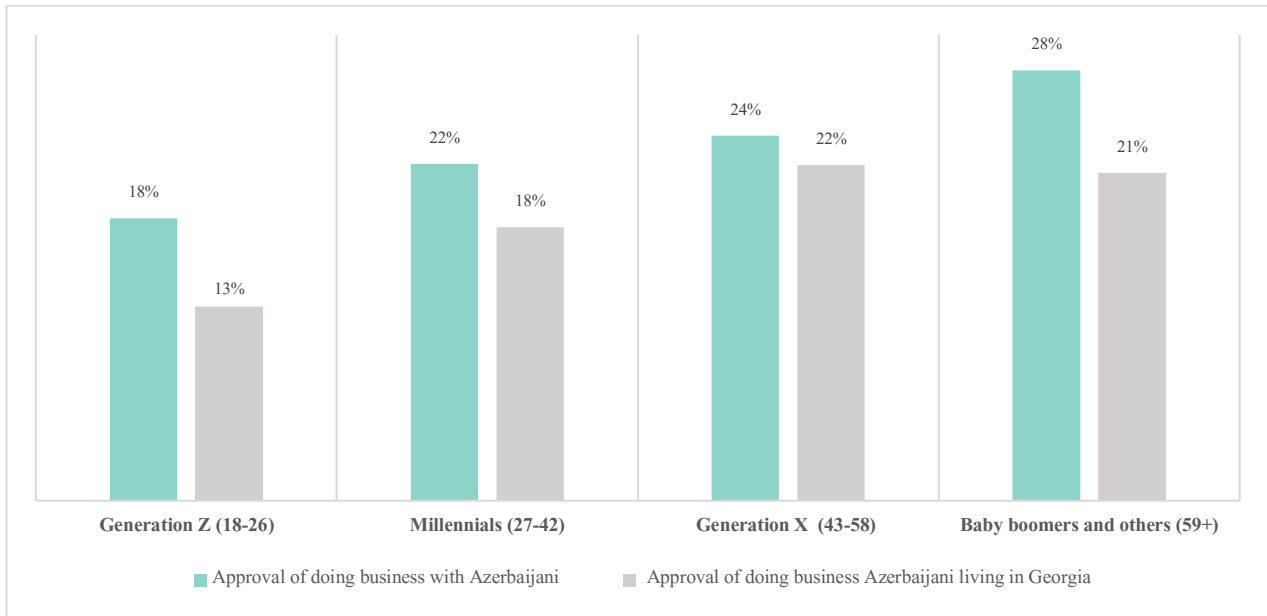


Chart 4: Willingness to Cooperate with Armenians and Armenians Living in Georgia Across Generations

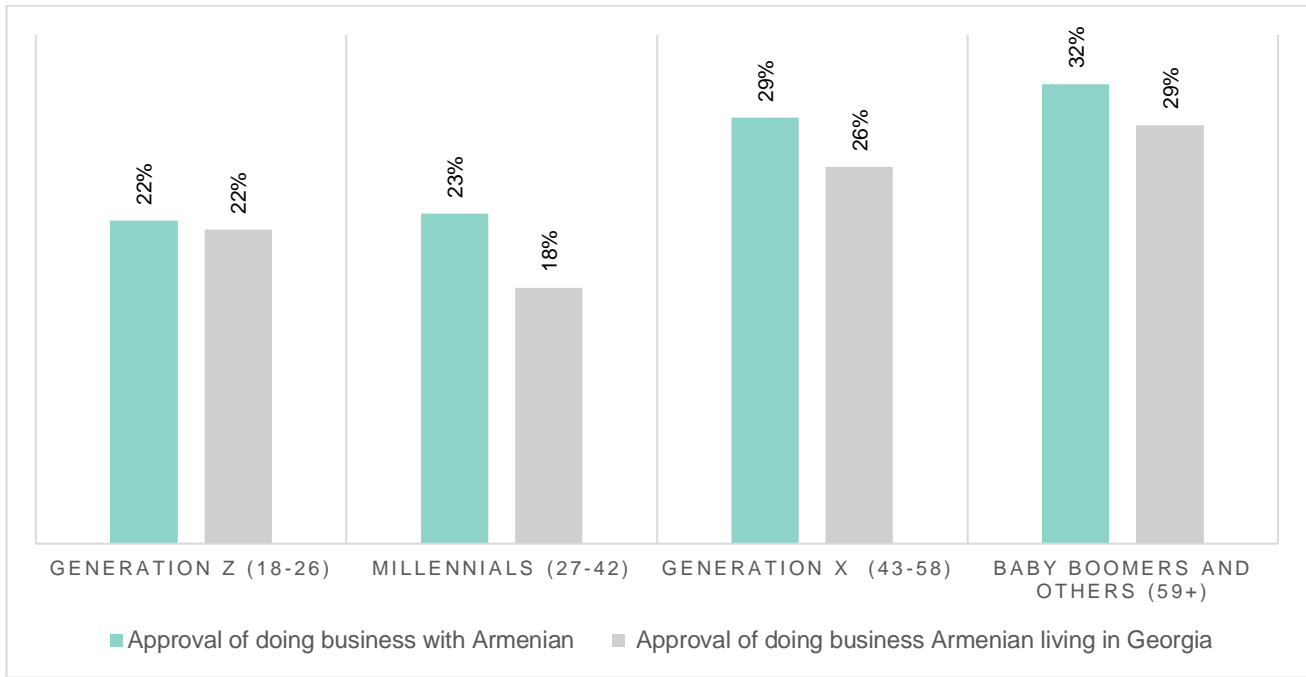


Chart 5: Willingness to Cooperate with Homosexuals and Jehovah's Witnesses Across Generations

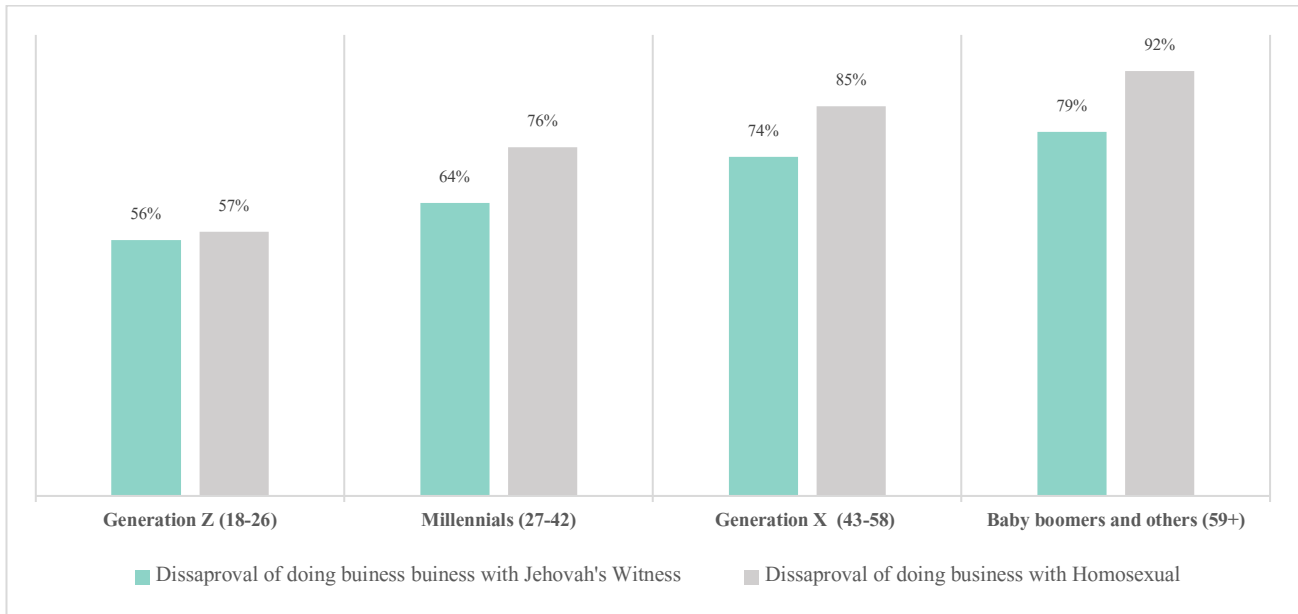


Chart 6: Receptivity to Marriage with Representatives of Different Nationalities across Age Groups

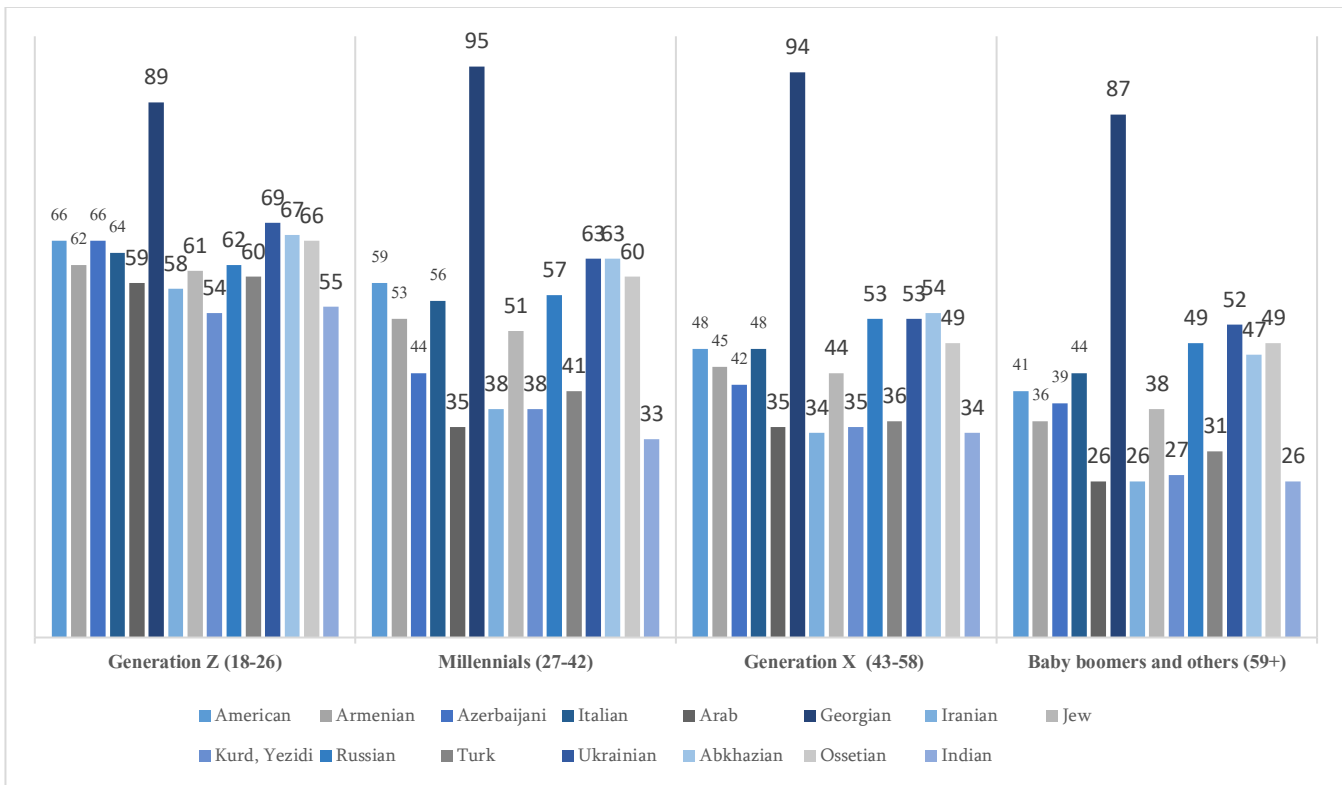


Chart 7: Acceptance of Marriage between an Azerbaijani and an Azerbaijani Living in Georgia Across Generations

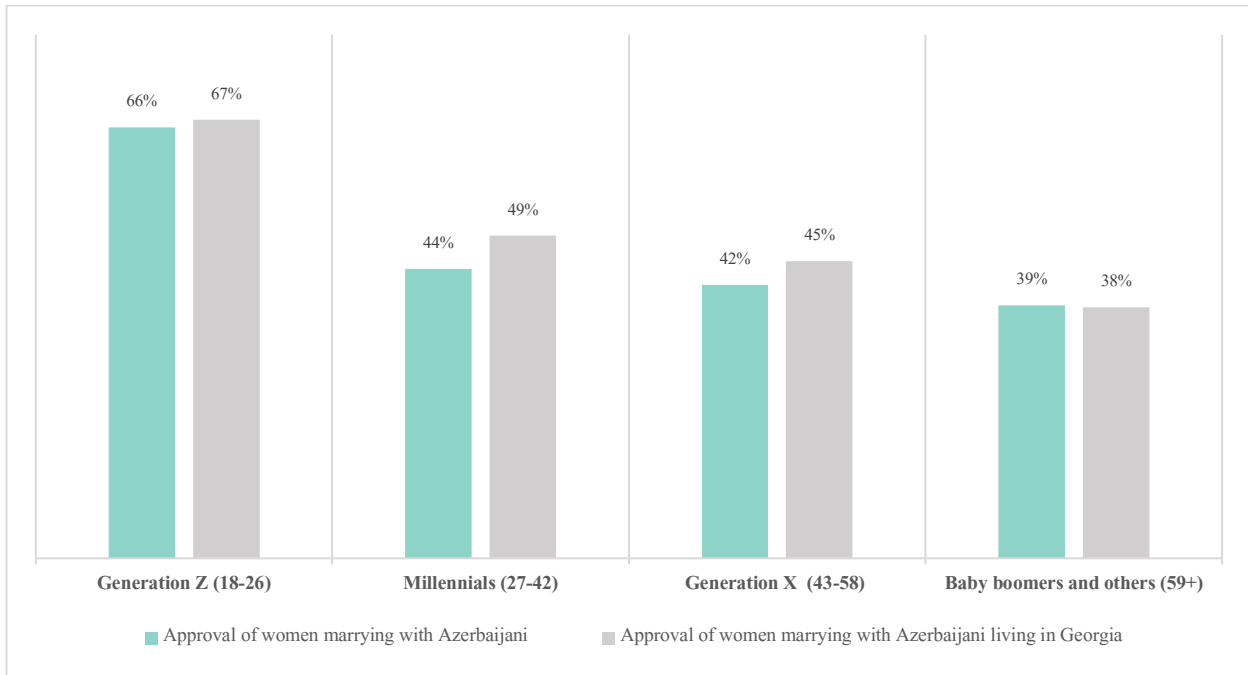


Chart 8: Acceptance of Marriage with an Armenian and an Armenian Living in Georgia Across Generations

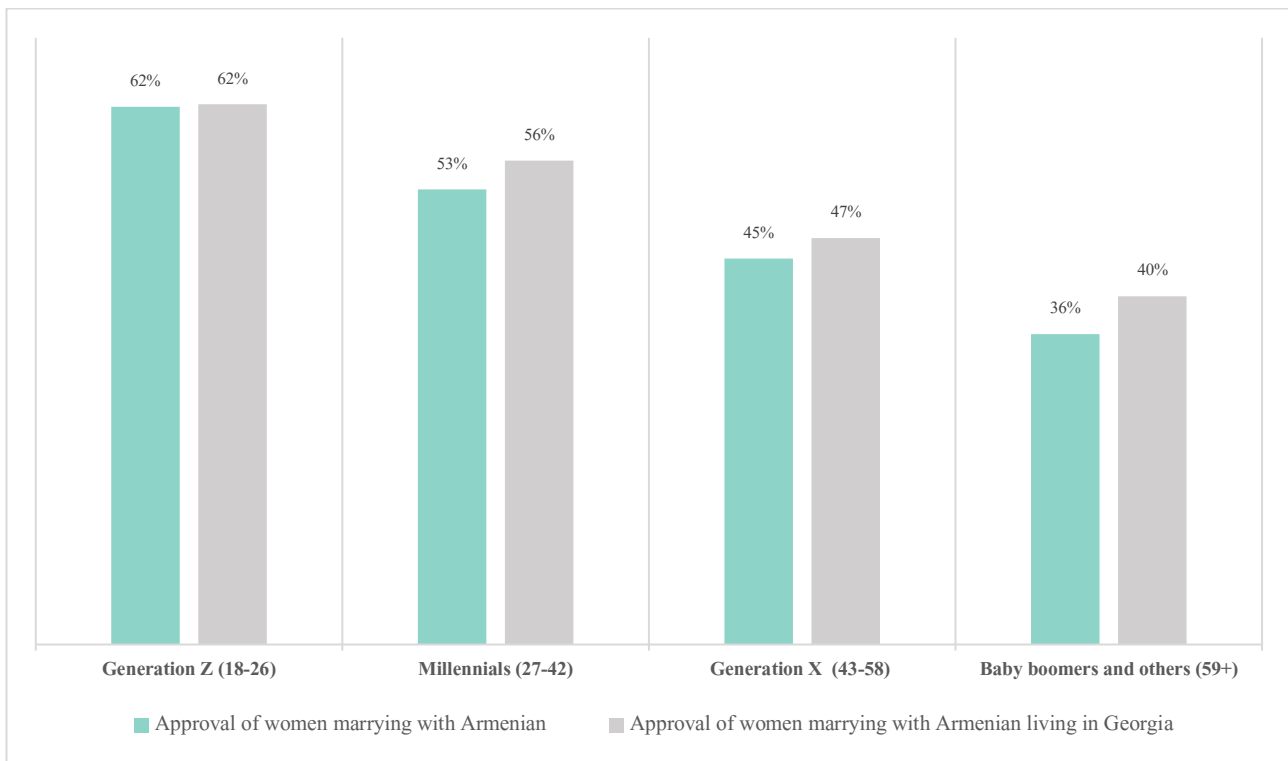


Chart 9: Attitudes Towards the Collapse of the USSR Across Generations

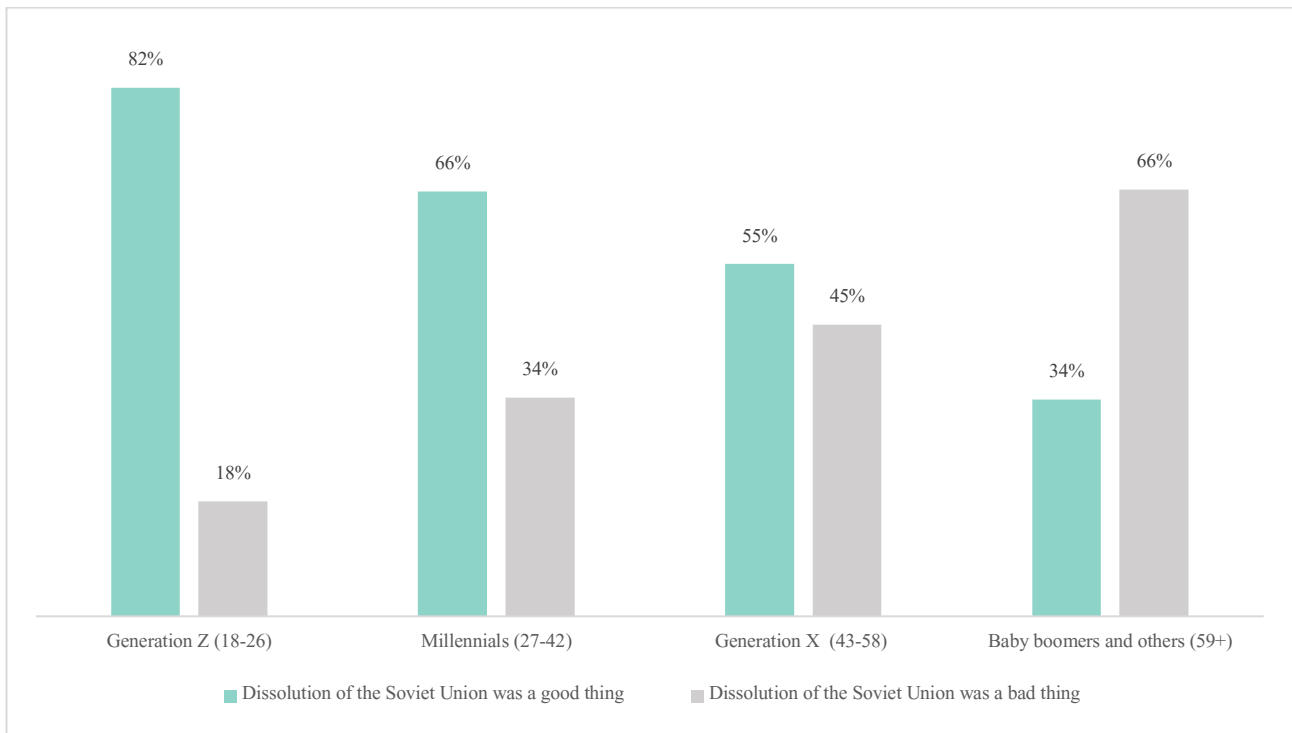


Chart 10: Willingness to Join NATO across Generations

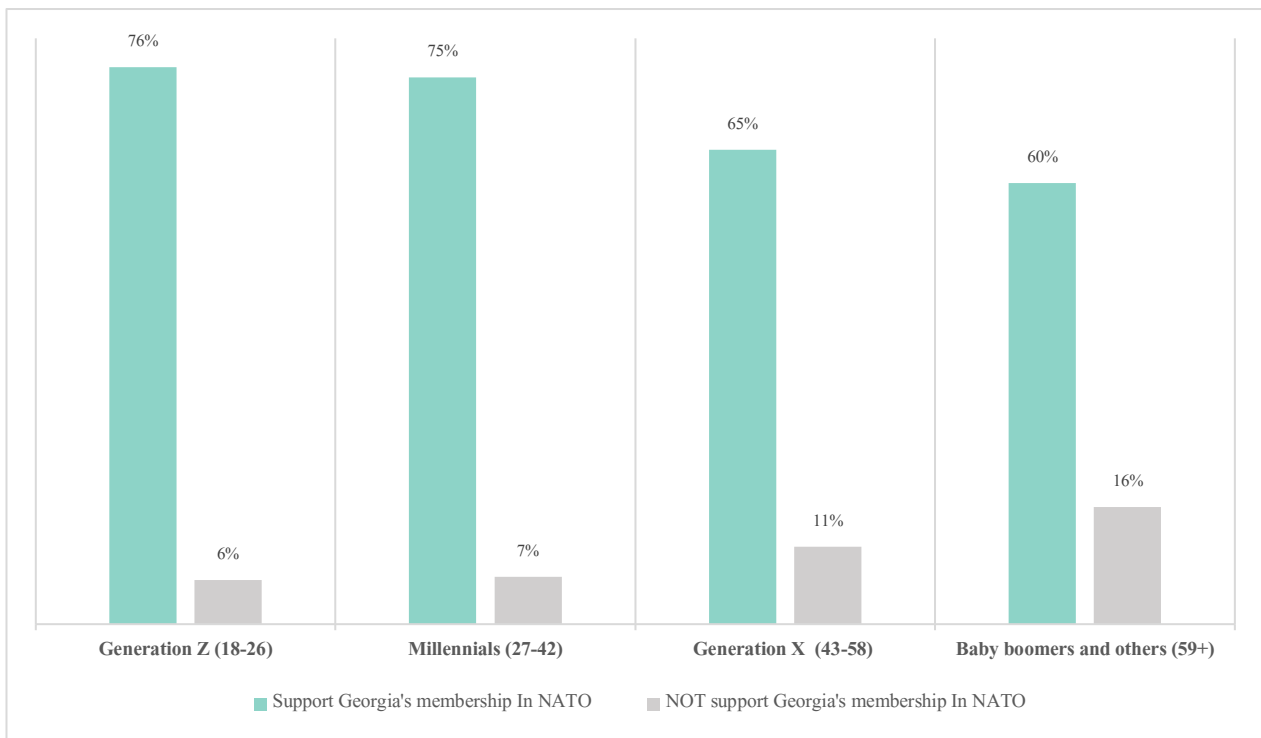


Chart 11: Willingness to Join the EU across Generations

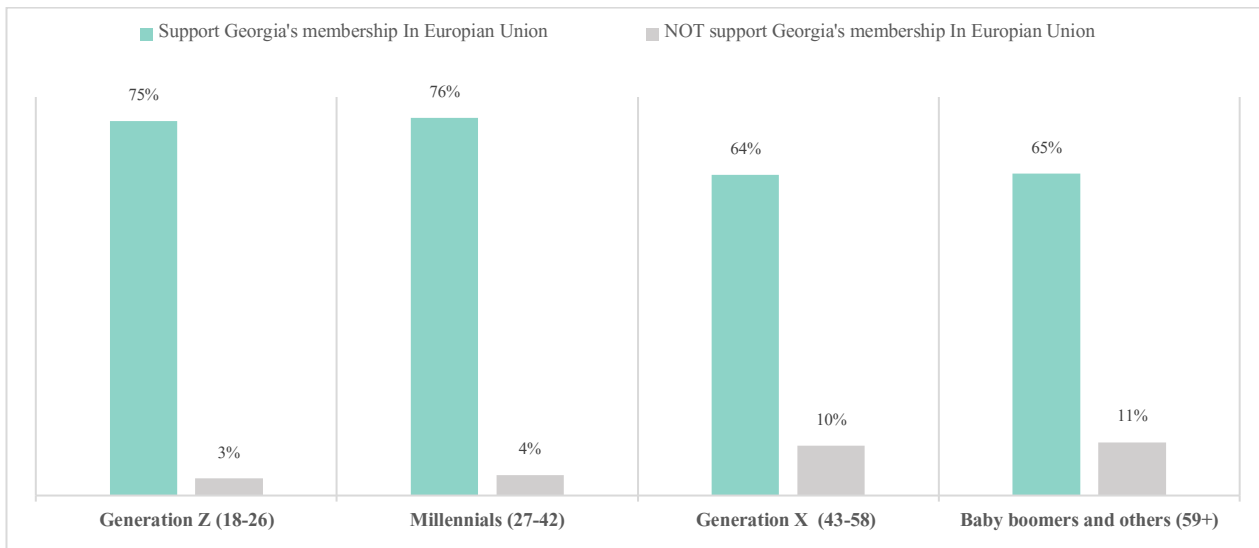


Chart 12: Dynamics of Trust in Institutions across Generations: “I trust in...”

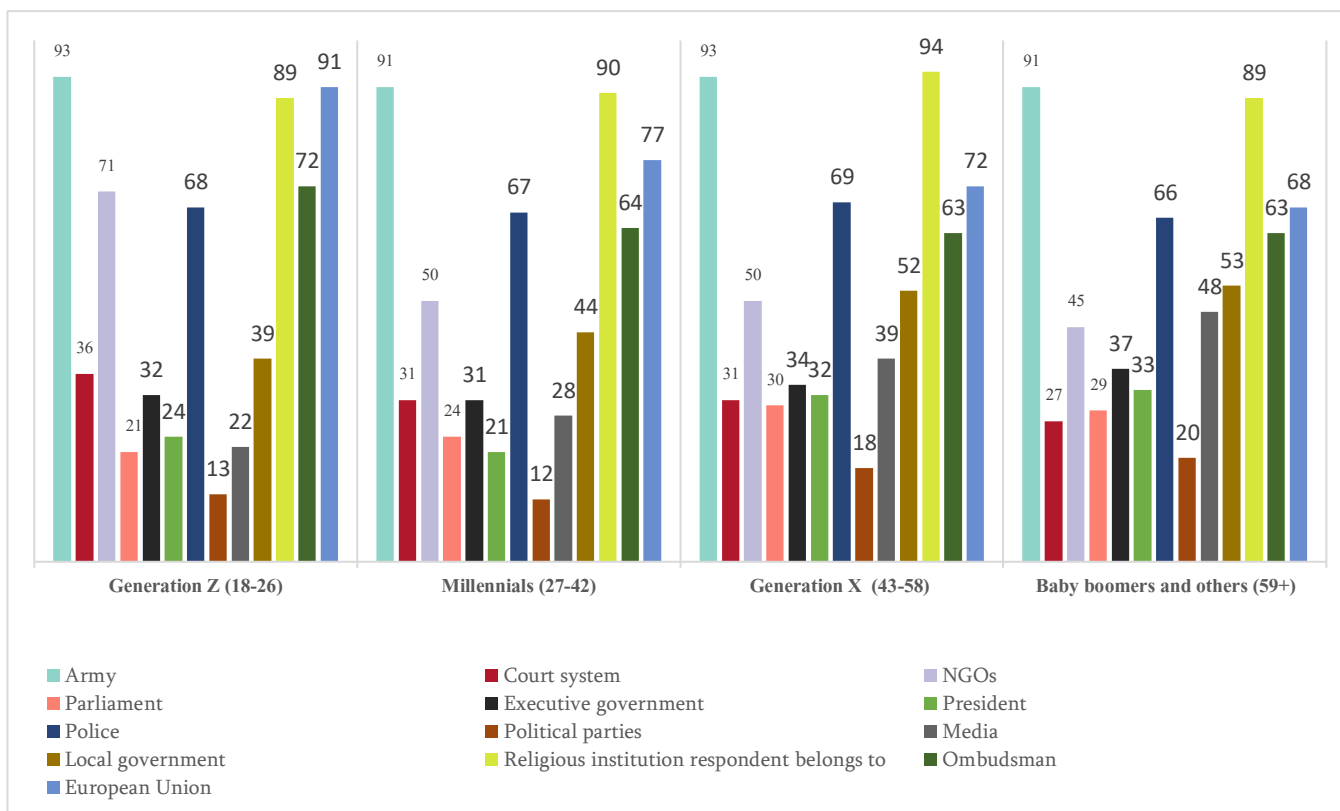


Chart 13: perspectives on the significance of religion in day-to-day life across generations

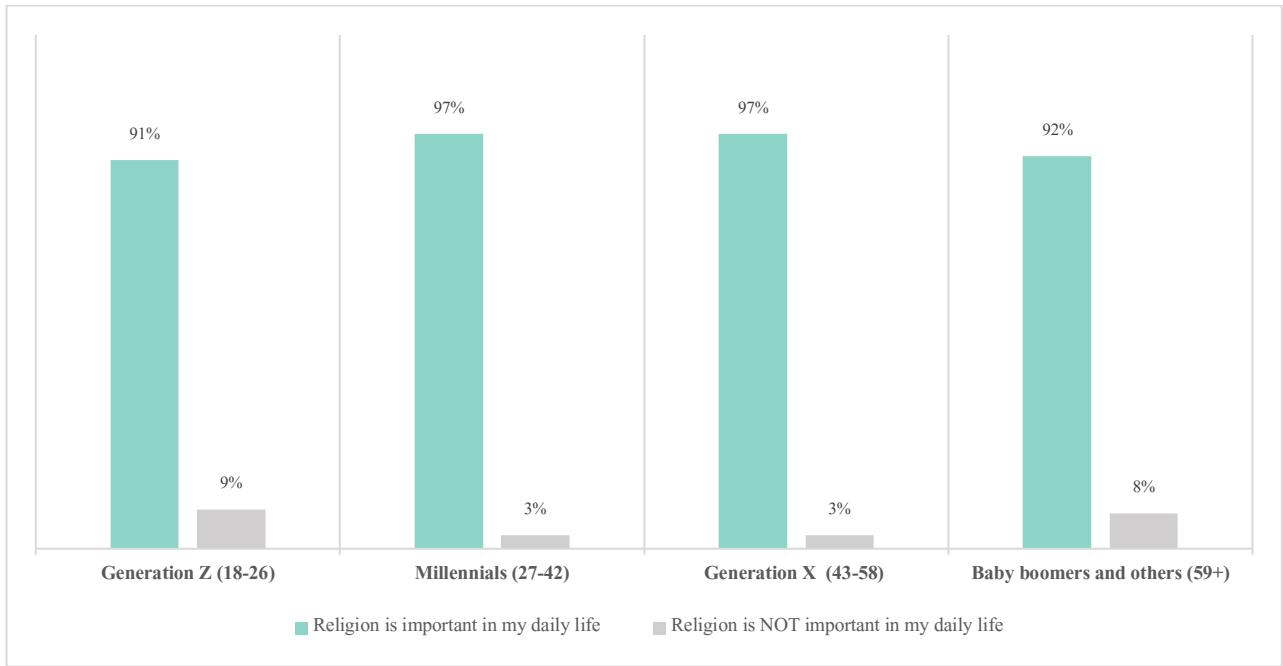


Chart 14: Perception of Fatalism Across Generations

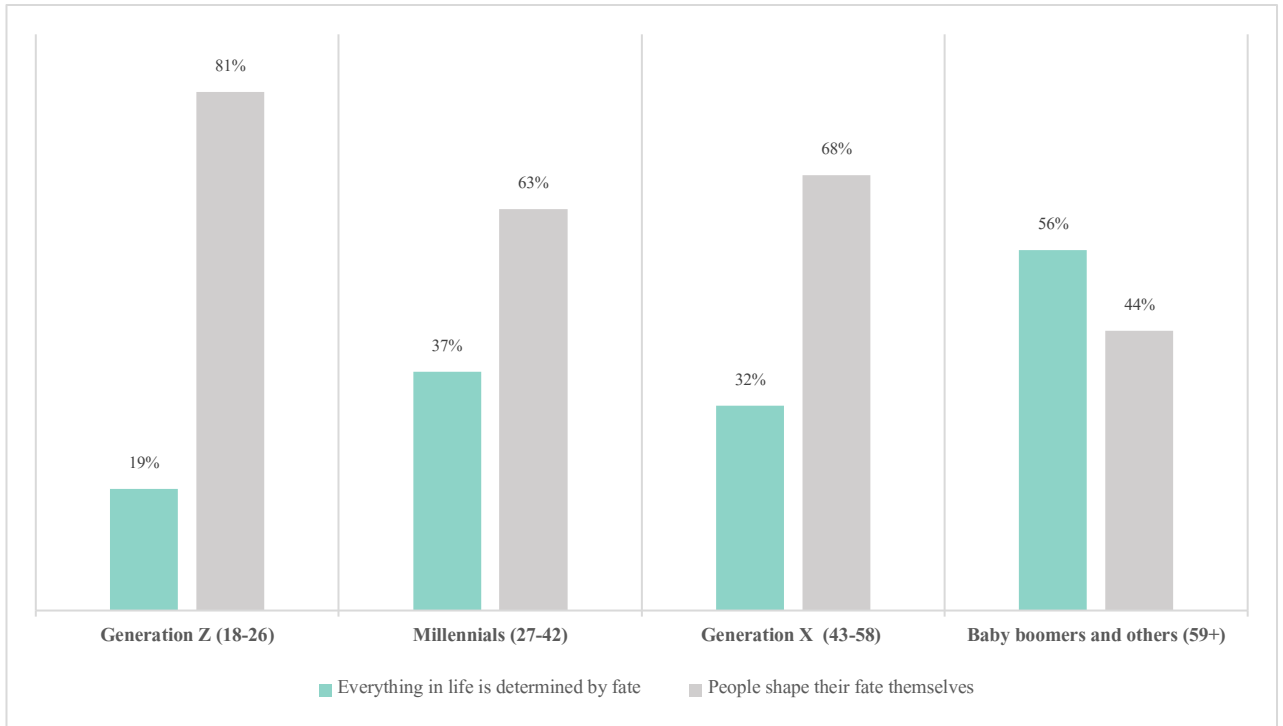


Chart 15: Perception of Protests Across Generations

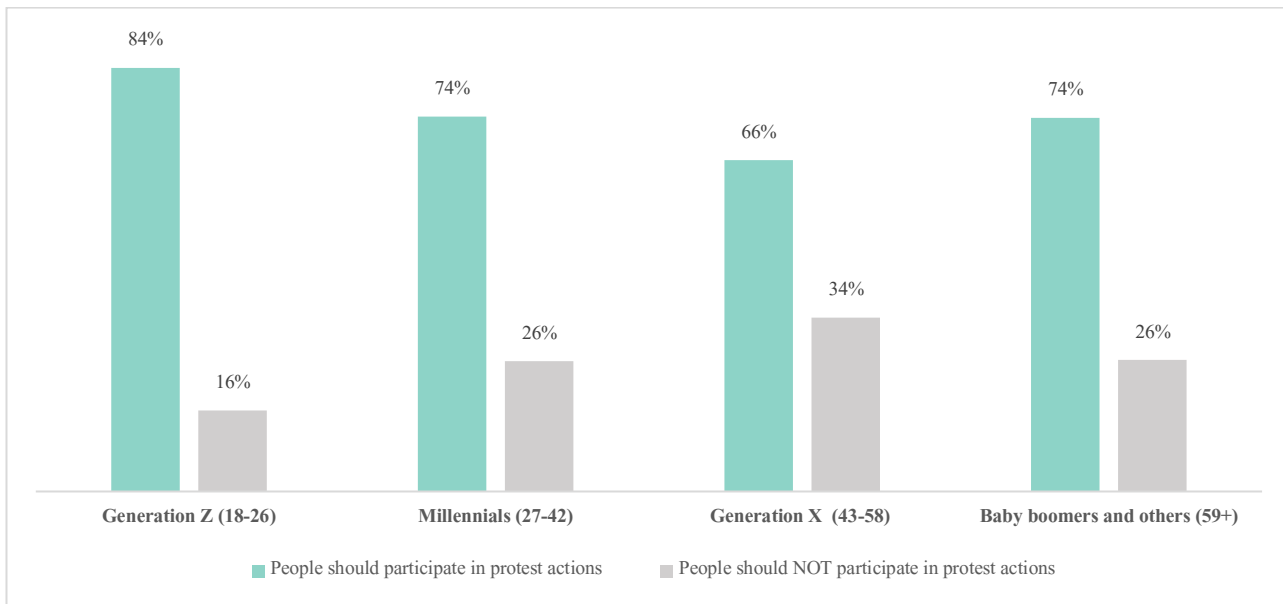


Chart 16: Interested in temporary emigration?

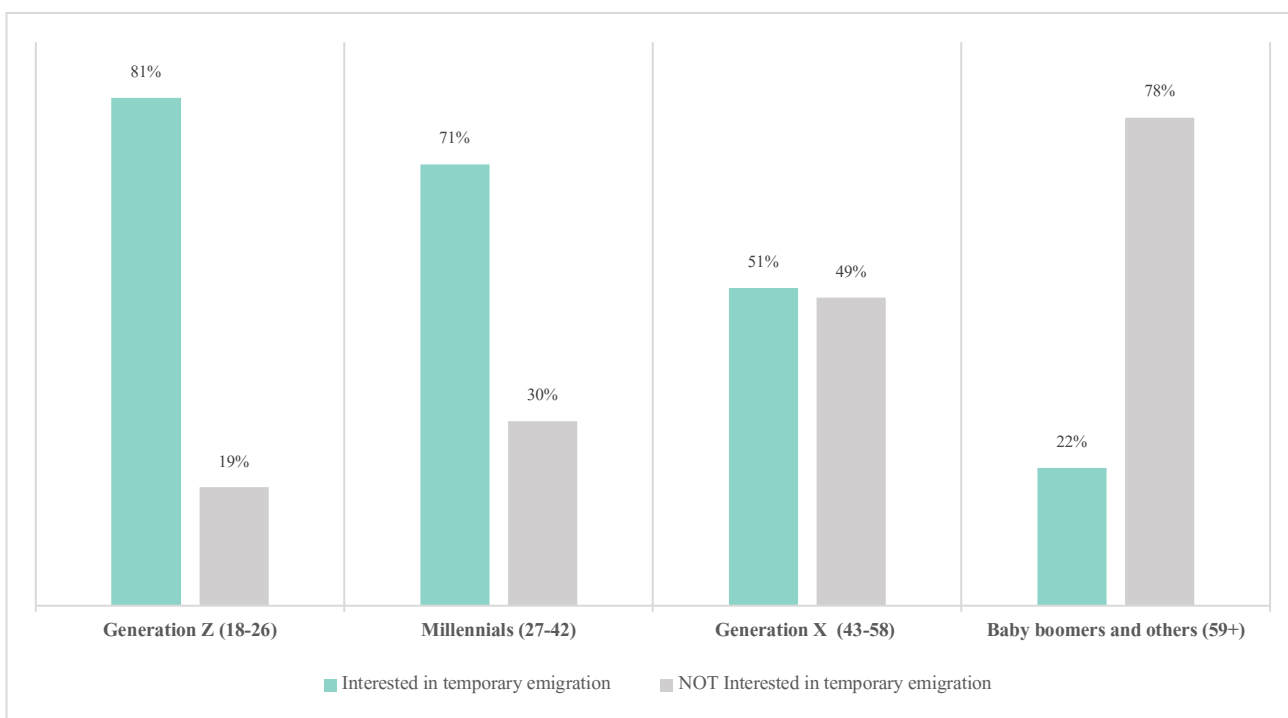


Chart 17: Interested in permanent emigration?

