

## [The May 17th Events in Tbilisi Revisited](#)

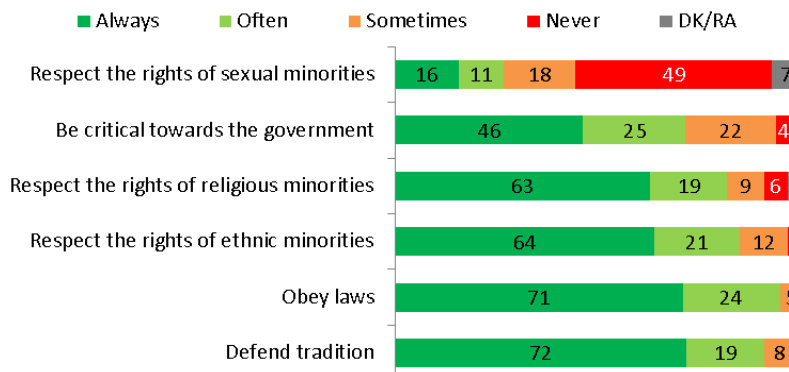
May 17th has become a reference in Tbilisi for the violent protests against LGBT activists that occurred during the rally for the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) held on that day. Thousands of people, priests among them, took to the streets and attacked the rally of about 50 activists, causing several [injuries](#). From May 18th to June 30th, CRRC conducted a survey in Tbilisi on attitudes towards these protests. This blog presents three main results of the survey. First, tolerance of homosexuality remains low. Second, most respondents disapprove of the use of physical violence, unless traditional or national values are at stake. Third, in general, respondents felt that the presence of priests was justified at the protests, although their confrontational actions were not.

The majority (97%) of survey respondents were familiar with the May 17th events, and most received their information from television (94%), with acquaintances, social networks and newspapers being far behind. However, the purpose of the event was not well understood. When asked whether a gay parade or a peaceful demonstration for the IDAHOT had been planned, 45% said the former, 40% said the latter, and 15% didn't know.

Several questions in the survey provide information about general attitudes towards homosexuality. When asked if sexual minorities should have the same rights as everyone else, 60% said yes. However, about half (49%) agreed with the statement that a good citizen should never respect the rights of sexual minorities. Only 16% said a good citizen should always respect their rights. Women and Tbilisi residents 18 to 37 years old are slightly less intolerant than men (47% of women vs. 52% of men say "never"), and those 58 years and older (38% of 18-37 year olds vs. 61% of those 58+ say "never"), respectively. It should also be noted that intolerance towards sexual minorities is several times higher than intolerance towards ethnic and religious minorities.

### To what extent should a good citizen...?(%)

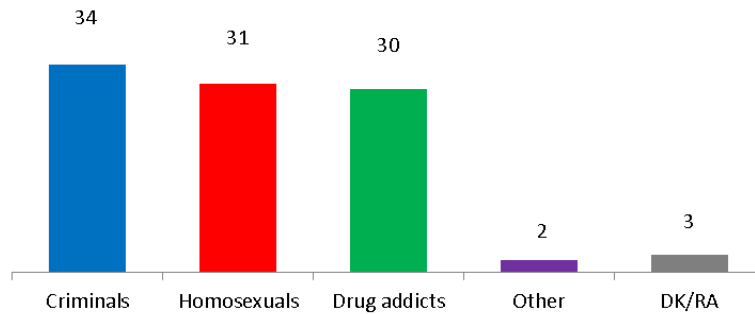
(May 17, 2013 Survey, Tbilisi)



When asked to decide which type of person is least desired as a neighbor—between criminals, homosexuals and drug addicts—31% of respondents said they would least prefer a homosexual. Similar to before, women (24%) have a more tolerant view than men (43%), but those 58 years and older appear to be the most tolerant (24%), compared to 30% of those 18 to 37 years old and 37% of those 38 to 57 years old. This may be explained by the fact that 45% of older people perceive a neighbour who is a criminal as the worst option.

### From the following groups, which would you least like to have as your neighbour? (%)

(May 17, 2013 Survey, Tbilisi)

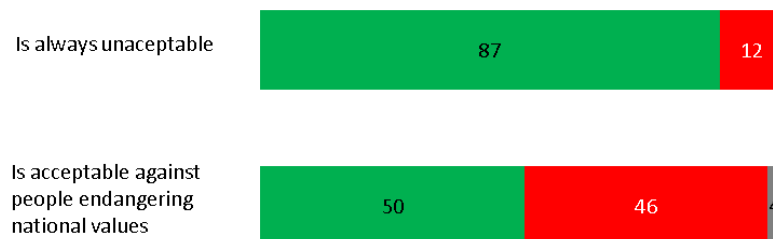


Another important feature of the May 17th protest was its brutal character. 87% of respondents felt that “physical violence is always unacceptable”. However, 50% agreed with the statement that “physical violence can be acceptable towards those people or groups who endanger national values” (46% disagreed). 57% of those interviewed also said that a successful peaceful celebration of the IDAHOT would have endangered Georgia.

### Do you agree or disagree that physical violence... ? (%)

(May 17, 2013 Survey, Tbilisi)

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ DK/RA



Finally, the role of the clergy at the protest was also widely discussed. The day before the protest, the patriarch called for a cancellation of the IDAHOT rally denouncing it as an [“encouragement” of “anomaly and disease”](#). Many Orthodox priests took part in the protest against the rally, and some were at the frontline of the confrontation. In the survey, a majority of people believed that, “The clergy should have gone to the May 17th demonstration” (71%), but only 26% agreed that “The clergy should have directly taken part in the confrontation”. Fewer women than men agreed that the clergy should have gone (68% vs. 76%), but they were almost as likely as men to think that they should have taken part in the confrontation (25% vs. 26%). When broken down by age, the data shows that younger and older people have similar views with 68% of the former and 66% of the latter agreeing to the presence of clergy at the protest, and 22% and 24%, respectively agreeing about their confrontational attitude. Middle-aged people (38-57) are more prone to agree with the clergy’s participation in the protest (77%) and in the confrontation (30%). Lastly, 31% of respondents thought that the clergy who participated in the confrontation should face trial, whereas 57% did not.

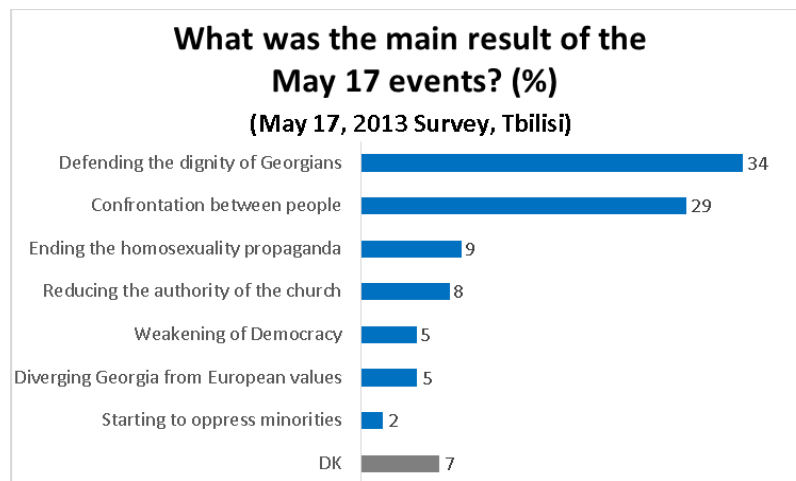
## Should the clergy have... ? (%)

(May 17, 2013 Survey, Tbilisi)

■ Yes ■ No ■ DK



To conclude, the survey also asked people to identify what they considered to be the main result of the May 17 events. Their two principal answers broadly sum up the findings of this blog; while 34% viewed the protests as “defending the dignity of Georgians”, 29% saw it as a “confrontation between people”.



For more information on the May 17th events in Tbilisi, see our [survey page](#).