

August 2012

# UNM Maintains Strong Lead in Georgian Race

To: Interested Parties

From: Dr. Jeremy D. Rosner, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner

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## Summary

- A new survey from Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research (GQR)<sup>1</sup> shows that among likely voters, after allocating those who are undecided, don't know, or refuse to answer, the UNM leads by 55-33 percent – our best estimate of the race at this point.
- United National Movement (UNM) in the Republic of Georgia leads with a strong 46-24 percent among all voters over the leading opposition party, Georgian Dream.
- These results are broadly consistent with polling by NDI and IRI, both of which show the UNM with a double-digit lead.
- The only survey showing a different result (a 42-41 percent Georgian Dream lead among likely voters), by Penn Schoen Berland (PSB), attributes the difference to a “secret ballot” methodology, in which respondents indicate their vote preference on a “ballot,” which they insert into a sealed “ballot box.” Yet the new GQR survey shows that methodology cannot account for PSB's outlier result. The GQR survey conducts a controlled experiment, with half the sample indicating their vote preference verbally, the other half by a secret ballot technique. The secret ballot approach produces no statistically significant difference in the vote margin.
- The GQR survey finds many indicators showing relative satisfaction with the country's direction and leadership – which bolsters findings showing a lead for the ruling party.
- A strong 69 percent majority expects the 1 October election to be conducted in a free and fair manner; this is a much higher share than before the 2008 and 2010 elections.

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<sup>1</sup> The data in this survey comes from a survey of 1,500 adult Georgians, based on face-to-face interviews conducted 1-6 August. The survey also includes a sub-sample of 699 “likely voters,” corresponding to a 58% turnout level; likely voters are identified using a combination of five different questions. While it is difficult for surveys to predict turnout levels, this figure would represent a 5 point increase in turnout from the 2008 parliamentary elections – a reasonable assumption. The margin of sampling error on the results from the total sample is +/-2.8%; and the margin on results for likely voters is +/-3.7%. Greenberg Quinlan Rosner designed and analyzed the survey, under the direction of Dr. Jeremy D. Rosner; fieldwork was conducted by the Georgian firm ACT. The survey was sponsored and funded by the United National Movement.

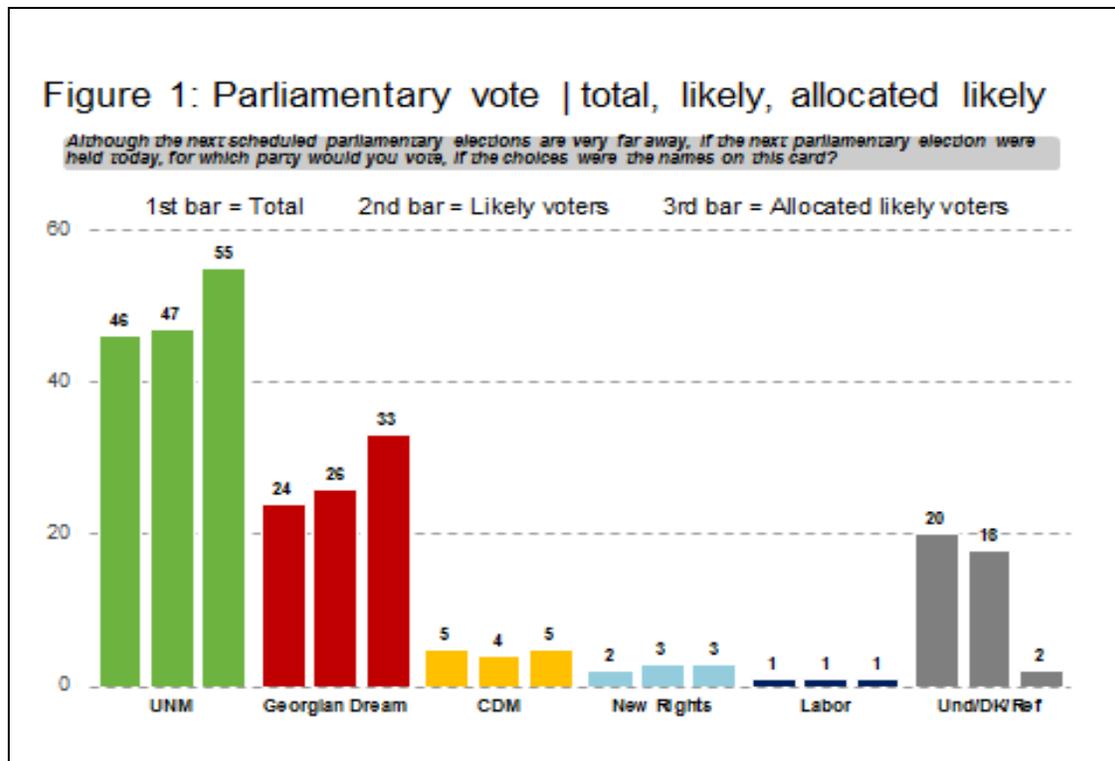
## GQR polling in Georgia

GQR, which has conducted opinion research in over 80 countries, including for global leaders such as Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Nelson Mandela, and Ehud Barak, has carried out public opinion research in Georgia on behalf of the United National Movement since late 2007. GQR has accurately predicted more elections in Georgia than any other polling firm. In advance of the 2008 presidential election, using the same methodology as in the current survey, GQR publicly predicted that President Saakashvili would receive 52 percent of the vote; he received 53 percent of the vote. Ahead of the May 2008 parliamentary vote, GQR publicly predicted that the UNM would receive 54 percent; the UNM received 59 percent. Ahead of the 2010 local elections in Tbilisi, GQR predicted that Mayor Gigi Ugulava would receive 59 percent of the vote; he received 55 percent. GQR also predicted the UNM would earn 48 percent of the Sakrebulo (city council) vote in Tbilisi; it won 52 percent.

## UNM Leads in Parliamentary Ballot

As Figure 1 shows, in the August GQR survey, among the total electorate, the UNM receives 46 percent of the vote, Georgian Dream receives 24 percent, and the Christian Democratic Movement (CDM) receives 5 percent, New Rights receive 5 percent, Labor gets 1 percent, while 20 percent are undecided, do not know, or refuse to answer. Among likely voters, (58 percent of the sample) the UNM receives 47 percent of the vote to Georgian Dream's 26 percent.

As it has in prior research, GQR also allocates those likely voters who say they are undecided, do not know, or refuse to answer, based on a number of other questions in the survey; as in our past research, we view the resulting figures as the best estimate of the vote, were the election held today. Among likely voters, with undecided, don't know, or refuse to answer voters allocated in this way, the UNM receives 55 percent of the vote, while Georgian Dream receives 33 percent, and CDM gets 5 percent.



### Public Relatively Satisfied with Country Direction and Leadership

The UNM's lead reflects a modestly favorable public view of the country's material progress, as well as net favorable views of the UNM, President, and Prime Minister. Currently a 51-31 percent majority feel the country is heading in the right direction. The share of people who expect their own financial situation to be better rather than worse 12 months from now is 38-16 percent.

Moreover, the electorate gives strong marks to its current leadership. President Saakashvili's job approval is at 73 percent while new Prime Minister Vano Merabishvili's is 72 percent. A 51-28 percent majority give the President favorable rather than unfavorable personal ratings. A 44-34 percent plurality give the UNM favorable rather than unfavorable ratings.

By contrast, a plurality of the public gives opposition leader Bidzina Ivanishvili unfavorable ratings, by a 39-32 percent margin.

Taken as a whole, such figures do not indicate a strong public desire for a political change of direction. Indeed, a 56-33 percent majority says, "I want Georgia to continue in the direction that President Saakashvili has been going" (rejecting the alternative statement, "I want Georgia to go in a very different direction than Georgia has gone under President Saakashvili").

### Secret Ballot Technique Produces No Significant Difference in Vote Margin

The new GQR vote estimates are broadly consistent with the polls recently published by NDI and IRI, both of which show double digit leads for the UNM.

There is only one set of figures that diverge from these other published polls. Penn Schoen Berland (PSB), whose staff has stated the firm is working for Ivanishvili, published figures purporting to show Ivanishvili's Georgian Dream party leading the UNM by 42-41 percent.

PSB asserts their results are comparable to those of NDI – if one assumes that all 18% who refuse to answer the vote question in the NDI survey are secretly planning on backing Ivanishvili. The new GQR survey shows this is not a reasonable assumption, since only 4 percent of likely voters who refuse to answer the vote question in the GQR survey give Ivanishvili a higher favorability rating than Saakashvili. If all of these voters were actually secret Georgian Dream voters, that figure would undoubtedly be far higher. Indeed, Saakashvili's average favorability rating with these "refuse to answer" voters is actually *higher* than Ivanishvili's.<sup>2</sup>

More important, PSB has asserted that their outlier result can be explained by their use of different methodology to assess voting intentions – a "secret ballot" procedure, in which respondents are given a paper "ballot," and asked to write down their vote intention (rather than telling the interviewer verbally), seal it in an envelope, and drop it in a sealed "ballot box." PSB has argued that many voters in Georgia are uncomfortable revealing their political preferences to a pollster and will only reveal their true voting preferences in this manner.

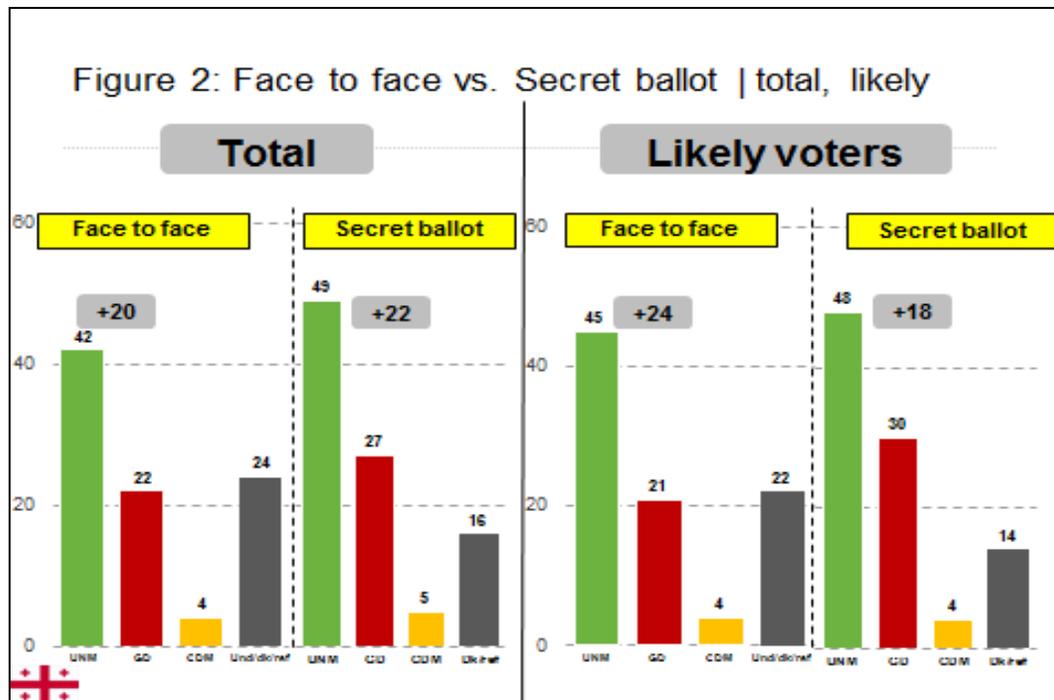
GQR's most recent poll shows this is also not a credible claim. In the current survey, GQR randomly asks half of the sample the parliamentary vote question verbally, as in GQR's past surveys in Georgia. The other half provides their vote preference only through the same secret ballot procedure PSB used – asked to mark their vote on a secret ballot, place that ballot into an envelope, seal the ballot, and drop it into a sealed container. (The vote results we show in Figure 1 reflect a combination of both half samples and both ways of asking the vote question.)

A comparison of the results between these two randomly assigned half samples reveals no statistically significant differences in the vote margin. Among all respondents receiving the question verbally, UNM leads the Georgian Dream 42-22, a 20 point margin. The margin is actually slightly larger – 22 points – for those answering by secret ballot, but it is not a statistically significant difference. The secret ballot technique does lead slightly more voters to reveal their views, as the share who are undecided/don't know/refused drops from 24 to 16 percent. But the additional votes benefit *both* parties; they do not all transfer to Georgian Dream.

The story is largely the same among likely voters. The UNM's margin is 24 points among respondents who answer verbally, compared to 18 points among those who answer by secret ballot. This difference is also not statistically significant, nor do the figures support PSB's contention that the race is close to even.

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<sup>2</sup> Among likely voters who "refused to answer" on the vote preference question, the average favorability (on a 0-100 degree "thermometer-type" favorability scale) for Saakashvili is 56 "degrees," compared to 47 degrees for Ivanishvili. In Georgia's 2008 and 2010 elections, GQR's allocation of likely voters who refused to answer the vote question produced accurate predictions of the actual election results, and in most of those cases, more of the likely voters who refused to answer the vote question split toward Saakashvili and the UNM – not toward the opposition. That is true even though those elections – particularly in 2008 – also took place at moments of high political tension. There is no reason to believe voters are less willing to freely express their true vote intentions to pollsters now than they were then. It is therefore not credible to assert that *all* of the "do not refuse" is actually a hidden Georgian Dream vote.



In the absence of the type of randomized split sample experiment conducted here, it is not credible to assert that a secret ballot methodology can account for the different outcome in the PSB survey, since there is no control group on which to base such a claim. Indeed, once this kind of rigorous test is conducted, as in the GQR survey, it shows that a secret ballot technique cannot possibly account for such a difference. Moreover, given the past record by GQR and polling by non-partisan NGOs of accurately predicting election outcomes in Georgia – including at times of high political tension – there is no basis for the claim that major shares of the electorate are uncomfortable to tell opinion research interviewers their vote intentions.

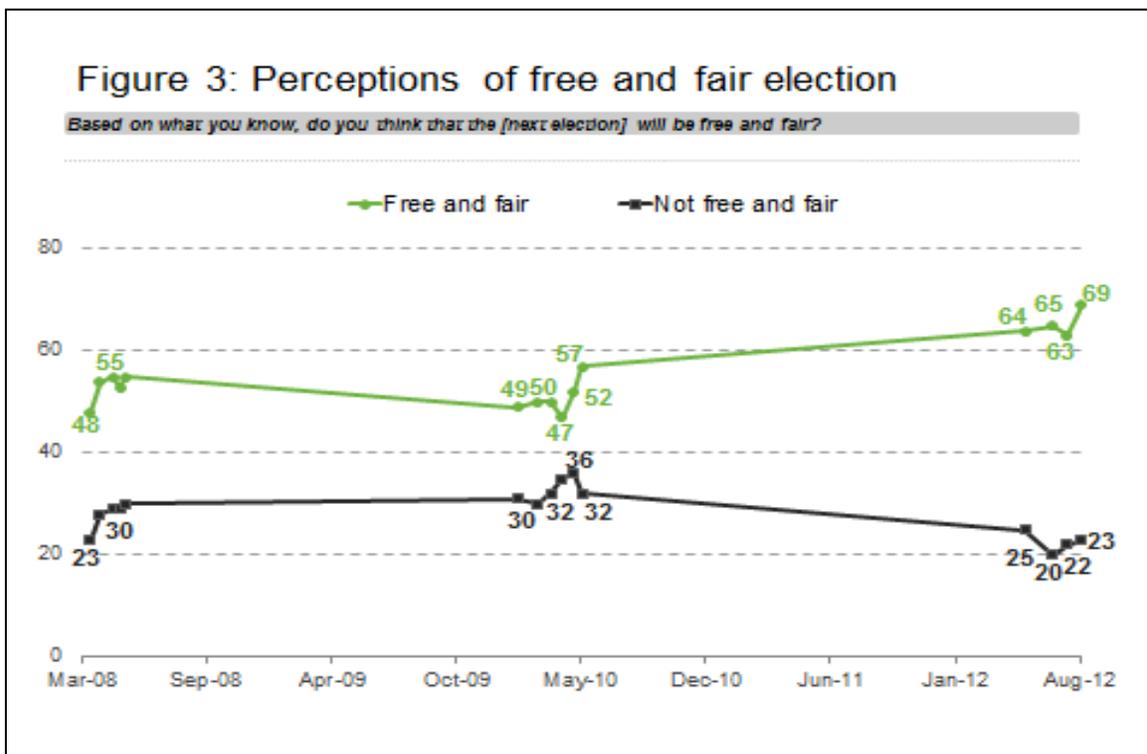
There are other reasons to question the recent PSB figures and the firm's suggestion that the vote is tied; for example:

- In response to the question *“In the last parliamentary elections in 2008, for whom did you vote,”* PSB claims that only 14 percent of respondents say they voted for UNM, and 3 percent for opposition parties, while 79 percent say they don't know or refused to answer. In the more than 20 polls GQR has conducted in Georgia since that election, there has never been more than 25 percent saying “don't know” or refusing to disclose who they voted for, and the respondents in our surveys who disclose their vote include significant shares for both the UNM and the various opposition parties. GQR knows of no country in the world in which only 14 percent can recall their past vote. Indeed, in a review of all our international political polling in the past 10 years – covering 64 different elections in over 30 different countries – we can find no case in which the share who could not recall their vote in that country's last election even reached even 50 percent, much less 79 percent. (It goes without saying that this applies to the US as well: imagine the reaction to a US poll today claiming that the vast majority of respondents could not recall whether they voted for John McCain or Barack Obama in 2008.)

- In the PSB survey, only 81 percent of the sample is familiar with Saakashvili, including 89 percent of UNM voters. These numbers are remarkable, given Saakashvili's ubiquitous profile. In GQR's poll, 97 percent of respondents can identify Saakashvili, including 99 percent of UNM supporters.

### Large Majority of Voters Expect Elections to be Free and Fair

Over two thirds of Georgians, 69 percent, now expect the October 2012 election will be free and fair – an increase of 6 points since July. As Figure 3 shows, in advance of the 2008 parliamentary and 2010 local elections, only about half of all voters expected free and fair elections. Voters approach the 2012 elections with a significantly higher expectation of a free and fair vote. Our focus groups suggest this expectation stems from such factors as the recent cleaning of the electoral lists by the Central Election Commission of Georgia, the expected presence of a large number of international election observers, and the fact that voters recognize the current election is more competitive than earlier elections, due to the creation of the Georgian Dream coalition.



**Appendix – Full wording of questions from the GQR August 2012 survey cited in this memo (apart from question wordings already provided in graphs above):**

Q.6 Generally speaking, do you think that things in Georgia are going in the right direction, or do you feel things are going in the wrong direction?

	<b>Total</b>
Right direction .....	51
Wrong direction .....	31
(Neither/Both) .....	11
(Don't know/Refused) .....	7

Q.9 Thinking about your own household's economic situation, do you expect your economic situation 12 months from now to be better, worse, or about the same?

	<b>Total</b>
Much better .....	5
Somewhat better .....	32
About the same .....	42
Somewhat worse .....	11
Much worse .....	5
(Don't know/Refused) .....	4
<b>Total Better .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Total Worse.....</b>	<b>16</b>

Q.10 Now, I'd like you to rate your feelings toward some people, things, and organizations, with one hundred meaning a VERY WARM, FAVORABLE feeling, zero meaning a VERY COLD, UNFAVORABLE feeling; and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold. You can use any number from zero to one hundred, the higher the number the more favorable your feelings are toward that person or organization. If you have no opinion or never heard of that person, thing, or organization, please say so.

		%	%	%	%	%	<b>Warm</b>
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Warm<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Cool<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>&gt;75</b>	<b>&lt;26</b>	<b>ID</b>	<b>- Cool</b>
Mikheil Saakashvili.....	59	51	28	40	24	97	<b>23</b>
United National Movement.....	52	44	34	33	29	96	<b>10</b>
Bidzina Ivanishvili.....	47	32	39	26	31	90	<b>-7</b>

<sup>3</sup> Figures for "warm" equal the percentage of respondents giving that person or party a rating from 51 to 100; figures for "cool" equal the percentage giving ratings from 0 to 49; 50 is a neutral midpoint.

Q.55 Do you approve or disapprove of the job being done by Mikheil Saakashvili as president of Georgia in recent weeks and months?

	<b>Total</b>
Strongly approve .....	35
Somewhat approve.....	39
Somewhat disapprove .....	12
Strongly disapprove.....	12
(Don't know/Refused) .....	2
<b>Total approve.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Total disapprove.....</b>	<b>24</b>

Q.56 Do you approve or disapprove of the job being done by Vano Merabishvili as Prime Minister of Georgia?

	<b>Total</b>
Strongly approve .....	32
Somewhat approve.....	41
Somewhat disapprove .....	10
Strongly disapprove.....	9
(Don't know/Refused) .....	8
<b>Total approve.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Total disapprove.....</b>	<b>20</b>

Q.81 Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. For each one, I want you to tell me which choice comes closer to your point of view. Here is the first/next pair of statements.

	<b>1st Stmt Much</b>	<b>1st Smwt Smwt</b>	<b>2nd Stmt Smwt</b>	<b>2nd Stmt Much</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Nei- ther</b>	<b>DK/ Ref</b>	<b>Total 1st Stmt</b>	<b>Total 2nd Stmt</b>	<b>1st - 2nd</b>
I want Georgia to continue in the direction that President Saakashvili has been going.										
I want to go in a very different direction than Georgia has gone under President Saakashvili.....	37	19	11	22	3	2	5	56	33	23