



Georgia's 2020 Parliamentary Elections



Here's What You Can Expect: Free, Fair and Transparent Elections

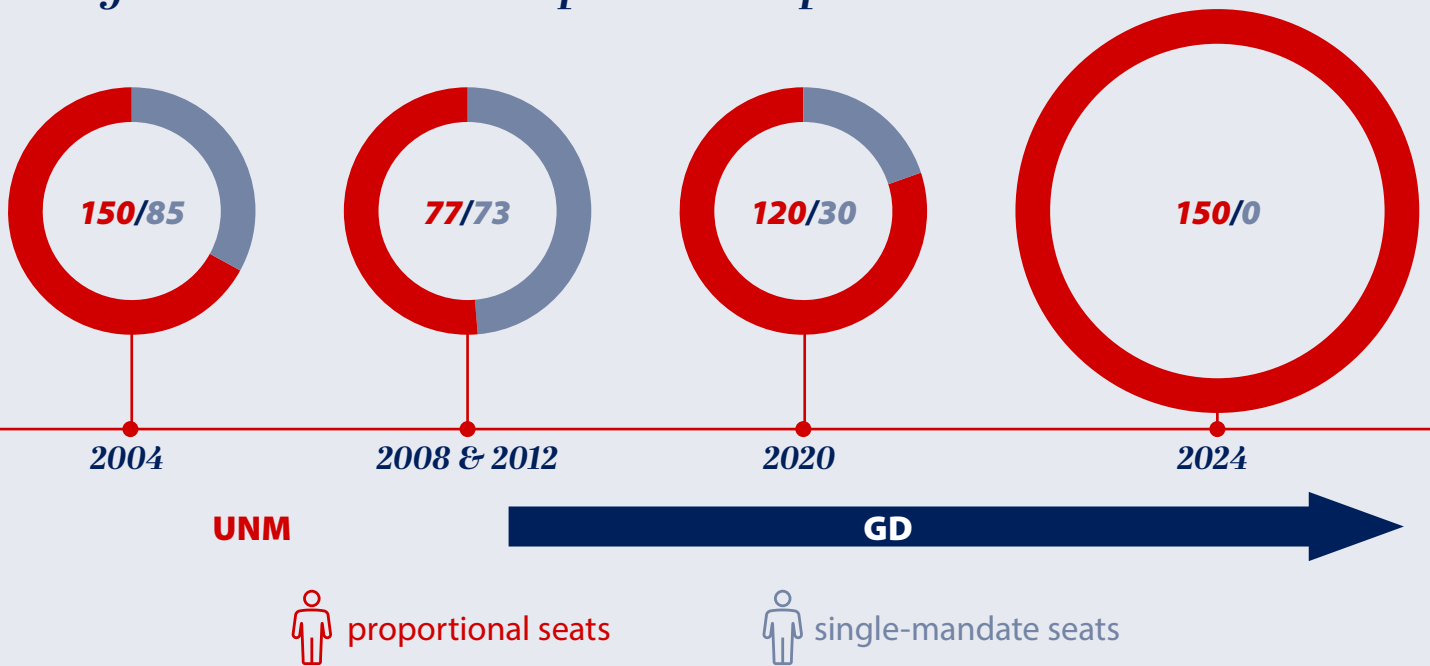
Georgia is gearing up for parliamentary elections on October 31, 2020, which will mark another milestone in Georgia's democratic development. Recent constitutional reforms will result in the most democratic election ever held in Georgia. This election will ensure more proportional representation in parliament and greater political pluralism than ever before.

The governing Georgian Dream party is the only ruling party in Georgia's history to replace the mixed electoral system, which is more favorable to incumbent parties, with a more proportional one, thereby increasing the chances of opposition parties gaining representation in the parliament. Over 65 parties have registered to participate in the election.

The Vote and Structure of the Next Parliament

- Since Georgia's first peaceful transfer of power through elections in 2012, and following comprehensive democratic reforms since that election, Georgia has held five nation-wide elections: presidential (2013 & 2018), municipal (2014 & 2017), and parliamentary (2016). All were judged free and fair by international observers.
- In 2017-2018, the ruling Georgian Dream party led the effort to enact major constitutional reforms that transformed Georgia into a parliamentary republic in line with best European practices. These changes ensure increased accountability of the government to the legislature, improved parliamentary oversight, enhanced powers of the opposition, and fully proportional representation in the 2024 election.
- In March 2020, after extensive rounds of multi-party negotiations, facilitated by the US, EU, and German Ambassadors, all participating parties agreed to a phased transition to a fully proportional (party-list) system by increasing the number of proportional party-list seats from 77 to 120 and decreasing single mandate seats from 73 to 30 with 1% threshold for party lists in 2020. The agreement was widely praised by international partners and local NGOs.
- In June 2020, Georgia legislators from the ruling party and independent members passed these reforms through constitutional amendments designed to increase parliamentary pluralism and allow for more proportional representation in the legislature.

Georgia's Move Towards Proportional Representation



Commitment to Electoral Reform

Throughout 2020, the parliament together with non-parliamentary opposition parties, CSOs, international election experts as well as EU and US counterparts carried out a comprehensive review of the electoral legislation as per OSCE/ODIHR recommendations. This electoral reform – unprecedented in its scale in the history of independent Georgia – covers the following changes:



Professional Election Administration

The government will oversee a well-administered selection of election officials for 3,700 precincts with explicit guidelines to avoid conflicts of interests.



Allocation of Free Airtime

Free airtime for all qualified political parties ensuring equality among parties and providing citizens with a balanced, impartial and fair portrayal of party platforms.

Our elections will be even more open, more transparent and more democratic to show the world the progress that our country has made in recent years – even as we provide added public health measures to ensure a safe and democratic election.

Giorgi Gakharia
Prime Minister of Georgia



Strict Pre-Election Oversight

Strengthened regulations have created the framework to hold free, fair and transparent elections, including:

- Prevention of the misuse of administrative resources to safeguard against the potential misuse of state resources for partisan purposes.
- Criminalization of vote buying and prohibition of party donations from undocumented incomes.
- Electoral dispute resolution that is simplified and eliminates shortcomings related to dismissal of cases on formal grounds.
- New second round regulations explicitly state the timeline and rules for holding the second round, eliminating any possible tools for manipulation.
- Electoral Gender Quotas to encourage female politicians to actively engage in policymaking.
- Fair Party financing programs guarantee fair distribution of state funds to political parties and increased funding for small parties contributes to a more stable political system.
- Explicit formulation of criminal liability for voter intimidation and violation of the secrecy of vote.

Commitment to Safe Elections During COVID-19

The historic electoral changes took place while Georgia was successfully fighting against COVID-19. Despite lockdowns, the Government and the Parliament successfully approved constitutional reforms to guarantee more proportional representation in a transparent manner.

As Georgia's economy is re-opening, the fight against COVID-19 remains effective and public trust towards the government response is high. In order to further ensure the safety of election officers, voters and observers, lawmakers have adopted the following ***COVID-19 related regulations:***

- Polling stations will adhere to strict health and safety regulations issued by the relevant health agencies;
- Obligatory health and safety rules will be set at polling stations such as temperature-based screening, wearing of face masks, etc. Furthermore, special regulations will apply to polling station buildings to ensure safe voting;



- Accommodations have been made to ensure that anyone testing positive for coronavirus and those in quarantine zones can be safely cast their vote and have it counted;
- Clear guidelines, safety and testing protocols to ensure a safe environment for observers.

The new electoral reform, the adoption of international recommendations, and our work to guarantee that the COVID-19 pandemic does not hinder the political process in Georgia are all conduits toward Free, Fair elections.

Salome Zourabichvili
President of Georgia

The Government of Georgia has invited international organizations to send long and short-term observation missions. In view of COVID-19 challenges, Georgian health

authorities will implement special protocols to ensure the health safety of international observers. The government has expressed readiness to charter flights to Georgia for international election observation missions. NDI and IRI are already actively engaged in pre-election monitoring, through remote interviews with political party representatives, government, election commission, international missions, and local CSOs.

Amid strenuous challenges, fundamental reforms and steps toward Euro-Atlantic integration, Georgia is committed to holding transparent, fair, and democratic parliamentary elections through a substantially proportional system.

Archil Talakvadze
Chairman of Parliament of Georgia