

# Executive summary

## Migration flows from Georgia to OECD countries have significantly increased since 2000

The crises prompted by the complex economic and political transitions faced by Georgia in the 1990s after the collapse of the USSR provoked large emigration flows of Georgian nationals, to the Russian Federation and to neighbouring countries mainly. In the 2000s, the increasing difficulty to migrate to the Russian Federation and the rising tensions between Georgia and the Russian Federation led to a diversification in destination countries. Annual legal migration flows from Georgia to OECD countries increased from about 1 400 persons in 2000 to 12 300 in 2010 and to more than 30 000 in 2019. Turkey and Germany now attract the largest flows of Georgian nationals in the OECD area (8 000 and 7 000 respectively in 2019). The other main OECD destination countries for Georgian nationals include Poland (4 200), Greece (3 000), and the United States (1 500).

## The majority of residence permits issued by European countries are issued for work reasons

In recent years, more than half of residence permits issued by European countries to Georgian nationals have been issued for work reasons, while 25% were issued for humanitarian reasons and 13% for family reasons. However, the nature of migration flows from Georgia varies across destination countries. While Poland mostly issued seasonal work permits to Georgian nationals in 2019, Greece and Italy issued a substantial number of permits for humanitarian and family reasons. Furthermore, the 2017 authorisation to travel visa-free to the Schengen area led to a significant rise in the number of annual asylum claims, especially in France (8 000 in 2019).

## Close to one in five Georgians express the intention to emigrate permanently

Among the Georgian population, 18% expressed the intention to emigrate permanently between 2010 and 2019, a share slightly higher than the average of selected Caucasian and Central Asian countries. However, about 50% of the Georgian population intended to emigrate temporarily, reflecting the importance of temporary labour migration flows from Georgia to countries such as Poland or Turkey. These emigration intentions are partly driven by the high unemployment and underemployment rates that have been prevailing since the fall of the USSR, which has pushed Georgians to seek better employment opportunities abroad.

## Almost 300 000 Georgian emigrants live in the OECD area

The Georgian diaspora remains highly concentrated in the Russian Federation, which accounts for about 50% of the total emigrant population. The OECD area hosts only one-third of the total Georgian emigrant population, and more than 75% of Georgian emigrants in this area are concentrated in five countries – Greece, Israel, Turkey, the United States and Spain. Between 2000 and 2020, the number of Georgian emigrants living in OECD countries more than doubled, with the largest absolute increase observed in Greece, but mostly stagnating after the 2008 Global Recession. Turkey is set to gain prominence as a destination, registering the largest percentage increase in the same period, particularly after the elimination of a visa requirement in 2006.

## The Georgian diaspora living in OECD countries is mostly composed of women of working age

In 2015/16, six out of ten Georgian emigrants in the OECD area were women, the second-highest share among Caucasian and Central Asian countries. Moreover, the share of Georgian emigrant women increased by 15% between 2000/01 and 2015/16. Georgian women are in high demand in the elderly care and domestic sectors of OECD countries. The increased difficulties to emigrate to the Russian Federation, a traditional destination for men, have also incentivised the emigration of Georgian women. In Turkey and Italy, women account for more than 80% of the Georgian emigrant population.

## Georgian emigrants are on average less educated than the overall population of Georgia

In 2015/16, more than one-third of Georgian emigrants had a tertiary education. While the average educational attainment of Georgian emigrants increased between 2000/01 and 2015/16, it is still below the level of Georgia's population. The United States hosts the largest share of tertiary educated emigrants from Georgia. The OECD area is also an important destination for international students from Georgia: in 2019, 4 200 Georgian students were enrolled in a tertiary-level programme abroad and eight out of ten chose an OECD country. Germany hosts approximately half of all international students from Georgia and Turkey is gaining prominence as an educational destination.

## Georgia has a high female emigration rate compared to other countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia

While Georgia had the third highest emigration rate among Caucasus and Central Asian countries, at 6.4% in 2015/16, it held the highest female emigration rate at 7.5% in the same year. The emigration rate among the low-educated (12.9%) is about twice the rate among the highly educated (6%, respectively), suggesting that emigration from Georgia to some OECD countries is not primarily composed of high-skilled workers but responds to the demand for lower-skilled labour. This pattern is particularly noticeable in the cases of Greece and Turkey.

## Only 55% of working-age Georgian emigrants living in OECD countries were employed in 2015/2016

The employment rate of Georgian emigrants in the OECD area is 55%, 12 percentage points lower than that of the overall foreign-born population in OECD countries. This vulnerability among Georgian emigrants

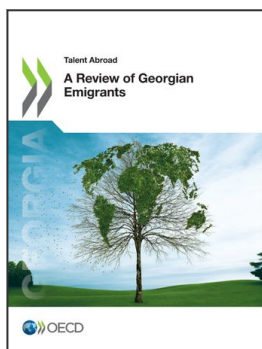
in the labour market is reflected in high unemployment rates: one out of five active emigrants is unemployed, more than twice the rate for the foreign-born and the native-born populations in OECD countries. However, employment rates vary significantly across destination countries. While over 70% of Georgian emigrants were in employment in Israel, the United States and Italy, the rates were below 50% in Greece and France.

### **Georgian migrant women face more difficulties in accessing employment than men**

Among Georgian emigrants in OECD countries, men present a higher employment rate than their female counterparts, although this gender gap is much narrower than that for the native-born population. In 2015/16, almost 60% of highly educated Georgian emigrants were employed in occupations that required a lower skill level.

### **Substantial over-qualification rates translate into a high concentration of Georgian emigrants in low-skilled occupations**

In 2015/16, 59% of Georgian emigrants in the OECD area were employed as services and sales workers or held elementary occupations, mainly as personal care workers or cleaners and helpers. Whereas Georgian emigrants are more overrepresented in these occupations in Greece, Spain and Italy, approximately one out of three Georgian emigrants in France and Israel was employed in high-skilled jobs.



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