

1 Recent trends in emigration from Georgia

This chapter examines recent trends in emigration from Georgia to the main OECD and non-OECD destination countries. As in many post-Soviet countries, the scale and nature of emigration from Georgia have been shaped by the complex economic and political transitions faced by Georgia in the 1990s resulting from the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Therefore, in order to better understand the recent evolution in emigration flows, this chapter first traces the historical context of emigration from Georgia since its independence. The chapter then examines recent emigration flows from Georgia to the main OECD destination countries and analyses the nature of these flows, using data on categories of residence permits issued to Georgian nationals. Finally, the last section examines emigration intentions among the Georgian population and the main determining factors of the desire to emigrate.

In Brief

Key findings

- Annual legal migration flows from Georgia to OECD countries have significantly increased since 2000 from about 1 400 persons to almost 12 300 in 2010 and to more than 30 000 in 2019.
- In 2019, Turkey and Germany attracted the largest flows of Georgian nationals in the OECD area, with more than 8 000 Georgian nationals migrating to Turkey and more than 7 000 to Germany that year. The next main OECD destination countries for Georgian nationals included Poland (4 200), Greece (3 000), and the United States (1 500).
- Women are overrepresented in recent migration flows of Georgian nationals to main OECD destination countries, with especially high shares of women in migration flows to Greece, Italy, and Turkey (respectively 85%, 73%, and 73% in 2019). However, the share of women in Poland is particularly low (17%).
- In 2019, the majority of first residence permits issued by European countries to Georgian nationals were issued for work reasons, while 25% were issued for humanitarian reasons and 13% for family reasons.
- 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.
- The number of annual asylum claims by Georgian nationals in European countries substantially increased following the 2017 authorisation to travel visa-free to the Schengen area, especially in France (8 000 in 2019).
- Close to one in five Georgians living in Georgia expressed the intention to emigrate permanently between 2010 and 2019, a slightly higher share than the average of selected neighbouring countries. However, these intentions rarely materialise in the short or medium-term: only 5% of Georgians intending to emigrate permanently consider doing so within a year.
- In 2019, about 50% of the Georgian population indicated an intention to emigrate temporarily, reflecting the importance of temporary labour migration flows from Georgia to countries such as Poland or Turkey.
- Emigration intentions are higher among young (30%) and unemployed individuals (26%). The high unemployment rates prevailing since 1991 have pushed Georgians to seek better employment situations abroad and partly drive emigration intentions among the Georgian population.

Historical context of Georgian emigration

Before Georgia's independence in 1991, emigration from the country beyond the USSR was heavily controlled by the regime and, therefore, extremely limited (OECD/CRRC - Georgia, 2017^[1]). Following the collapse of the USSR, Georgia, as most former Soviet states, went through complex political and economic transitions. The resulting severe political instability facing the country in the 1990s triggered the first important emigration wave. In the early 1990s, conflicts and ethnic violence in South Ossetia and Abkhazia provoked the internal and international displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Therefore, between 1991 and 1995, emigration flows were mainly composed of refugees fleeing the conflicts. Furthermore, a substantial number of individuals from ethnic minorities left the country to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Greece and Israel. (Komakhia, 2008^[2]).

Civil war, political instability, corruption and the difficult transition to a market economy caused a catastrophic economic crisis in Georgia in the early 1990s. GDP per capita plummeted (by 45% between 1991 and 1992), and inflation soared to unprecedented levels, making the collapse of Georgia's economy the most severe of all Caucasus and Central Asian countries. This economic situation prompted the second emigration wave. From the mid-1990s to 2004, high unemployment and inflation rates, as well as severe poverty, triggered massive economic permanent and temporary migration flows from Georgia (Makaryan and Chobanyan, 2014^[3]). These flows, combined with low birth rates and the ageing of the population, played a major role in the decline of the Georgian population in the 1990s (Makaryan and Chobanyan, 2014^[3]). As a result, emigration and especially that of young working-age Georgians became increasingly concerning to the Georgian Government.

Because of the geographical and linguistic proximity, thousands of Georgian emigrants migrated to the Russian Federation annually in the 1990s. However, the introduction of a visa regime in 2000 and the growing tensions between the two countries, heightened during the 2008 war, led to a significant decline in migration flows to this country in the 2000s and onwards.

A large number of Georgians also migrated to Greece. It is estimated that approximately 15% of Georgian emigrants went to Greece between the end of the 1990s and the early 2000s. These migrants had, for the most part, Greek origins (ICMPD, 2019^[4]). Georgian emigrants also migrated to neighbouring countries such as Armenia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan. Germany, Turkey, the United States, and some West European countries also became, during the 2000s and 2010s, important destination countries for Georgian emigrants.

Following the Rose Revolution in November 2003, which led to the resignation of President Eduard Shevardnadze, the Georgian Government focused on economic policy and lifted visa requirements to attract investments. Foreign citizens from 98 countries can thereby stay in Georgia for 360 days without a visa. As a result, while remaining lower than migration outflows, immigration flows to Georgia increased and Georgia became a transit country. From 2004 onwards, the new government implemented many economic reforms, and Georgia entered a phase of economic development, with an average of a 9.6% GDP growth rate between 2003 and 2008 (Marouf, 2013^[5]).

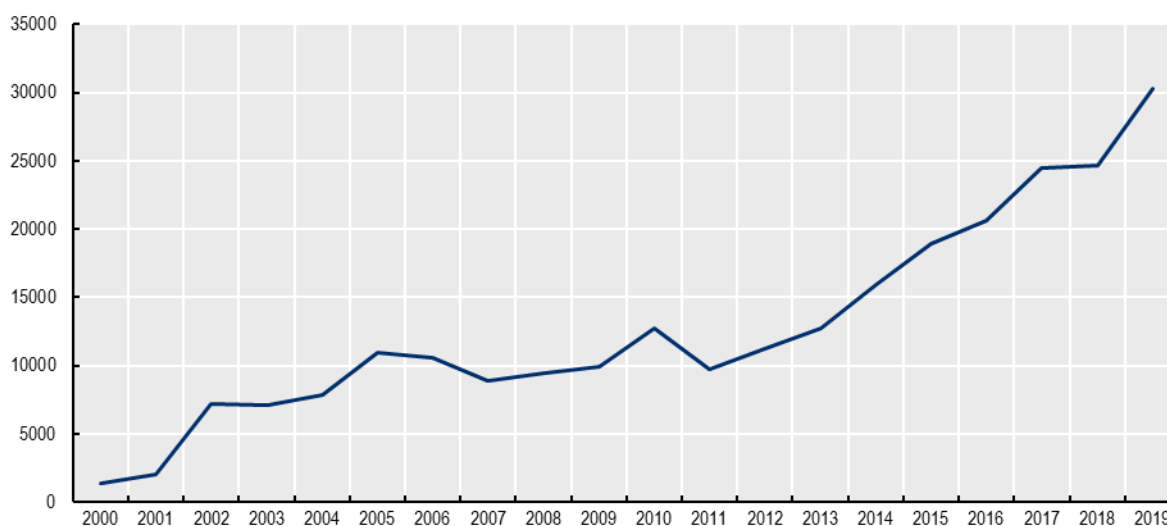
Recent migration flows to OECD countries

Flows from Georgia have considerably increased since 2000

According to the *OECD International Migration Database* (Annex A), annual legal migration flows from Georgia to OECD countries have increased since 2000 from about 1 400 persons to almost 12 300 in 2010 and to more than 30 000 in 2019 (Figure 1.1). Growth in migration flows to the OECD area was especially strong between 2000 and 2005 when flows increased almost eightfold (from 1 400 to about 11 000). Between 2011 and 2019, the number of Georgians migrating to OECD countries tripled, while flows fluctuated between 9 000 and 13 000 persons between 2005 and 2011.

The OECD International Migration Database data refer to the annual legal migration flows from Georgia to OECD countries. Although irregular migration flows from Georgia exist, it is challenging to measure them as no reliable and comparable data is available on irregular entries of foreign nationals in OECD countries. Migrants who legally entered destination countries and later become irregular can hardly be identified. It is, for example estimated that the introduction of the visa-free regime to the Schengen area for Georgian nationals in 2017 has led to an increase in irregular migration flows to European countries in the recent years (Medium Migration Profile, 2019^[6]). Therefore, the data on actual migration flows to OECD countries and on the number of Georgian emigrants might be underestimated.

Figure 1.1. Migration flows of Georgian nationals to OECD countries, 2000-19

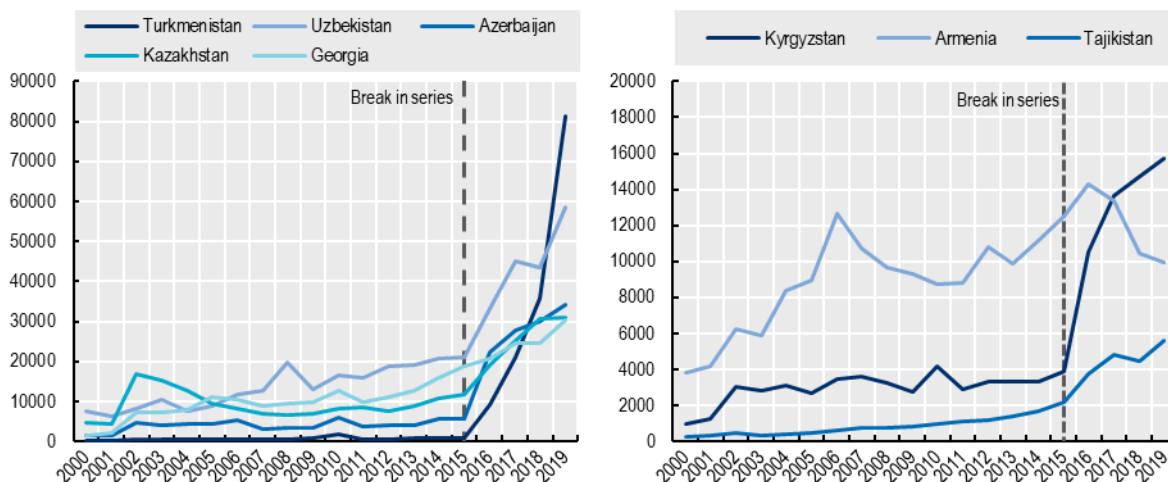


Note: All figures are obtained as the sum of standardised gross flows for countries where they are available.

Source: OECD International Migration Database (2021).

Figure 1.2 indicates a break in the data series in 2015 resulting from the unavailability of data on annual migration flows to Turkey before 2015 for all selected origin countries. Until 2015, migration flows from Georgia were higher than flows from Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Tajikistan (Figure 1.2). Out of the selected neighbouring countries, only the flows from Uzbekistan to OECD countries were higher than flows from Georgia during that time. From 2016 onwards, the data include the annual migration flows to Turkey, and therefore emigration flows from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to OECD countries exceeded flows from Georgia. Specifically, flows from Turkmenistan reached more than 80 000 people in 2019. Yet on average, over the past 20 years, Georgia has been the second-largest sending country to the OECD in terms of overall flows out of these selected Caucasus and Central Asian countries (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2. Migration flows from Georgia and selected Caucasus and Central Asian countries to OECD countries, 2000-19



Note: The vertical line indicates a break in the series resulting from the missing data on annual migration flows to Turkey before 2015. Data on flows to Turkey are only available from 2016 to 2019.

Source: OECD International Migration Database (2021).

More than half of Georgia's recent migration flows to OECD countries are directed to Turkey and Germany

In 2019, Turkey and Germany attracted the largest flows of Georgian nationals in the OECD area, with more than 8 000 Georgian nationals emigrating to Turkey and more than 7 000 to Germany that year, representing together more than 50% of Georgian nationals migrating to OECD countries that year. (Figure 1.3). While migration flows from Georgia to Poland remained below 200 per year until 2014, they considerably increased from about 500 in 2015 to more than 4 200 in 2019, making Poland the third OECD destination country for Georgian nationals (Figure 1.3). This surge in migration flows to Poland is partly due to the introduction in January 2018 of a simplified procedure of access to the Polish labour market for Georgians willing to work temporarily in Poland (Radlińska, 2019^[7]) and to the implementation of visa-free travel to the Schengen area for Georgian nationals in 2017. The fourth and fifth OECD destination countries were Greece (3 000) and the United States (1 500). The number of Georgian nationals emigrating to France and Italy was around 1 000 in 2019.

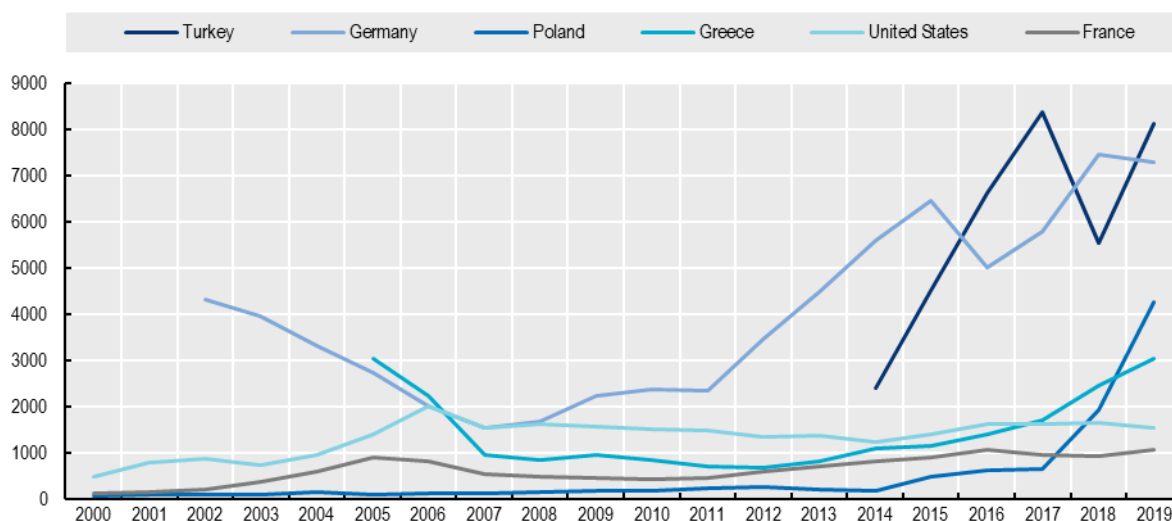
The lack of data on flows in the beginning of the 2000s prevents from painting a very clear and precise picture of the main OECD destination countries for Georgian nationals at that time. The data on migration flows to Turkey and Greece are for instance not available until 2010 and 2005 respectively. While Israel hosts a large number of Georgian emigrants (see Chapter 2), migration flows from Georgia to Israel almost exclusively took place directly after 1991. The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics provides an estimation of 1 400 Georgians migrating to Israel in 1990. That number increased to almost 3 800 in 1993. As a result, between 1990 and 2001, about 21 000 Georgian nationals migrated to Israel. Migration flows to Israel then decreased in the 2000s and only 200 Georgians arrived in this country in 2010.

Available data shows that the majority of Georgian nationals migrating to OECD countries until 2005 went to Germany. Greece was another important destination with 28% of Georgian nationals migrating to the OECD area went to Greece in 2005. However, the share of Georgian nationals migrating to these two countries gradually decreased, notably as migration flows to the United States, Spain, France and Italy increased. Especially, flows to Spain rose from about 400 in 2000 to more than 2 600 in 2007. This

diversification of destinations in the early 2000s can partly be explained by the progressive decline in migration flows to the Russian Federation.

After a decline in flows to Germany and Greece, and a relative stagnation of overall flows from Georgia to the OECD area, migration flows to Germany increased, while flows to the United States stagnated around 1 500 per year. Migration flows to Turkey increased, reaching 8 400 Georgians in 2017. The elimination of visa requirements for Georgian nationals migrating to Turkey in 2006 contributed to the increase in flows to Turkey (Figure 1.3). Between 2017 and 2018, following the introduction in March 2017 of visa-free travel to the Schengen area for Georgian citizens, migration flows to Poland and to Greece increased by almost 200% and 45% respectively. Flows from Georgia to Italy and to Germany increased by almost 30% that same year, while flows to Turkey decreased by 34% and flows to the United States remained the same.

Figure 1.3. Migration flows of Georgian nationals to the main OECD destination countries, 2000-19



Note: Data on flows to Germany between 2000 and 2002, to Turkey between 2000 and 2013 and to Greece between 2000 and 2004 are not available. Inflows to Turkey in 2015 are based on an estimation from the Secretariat.

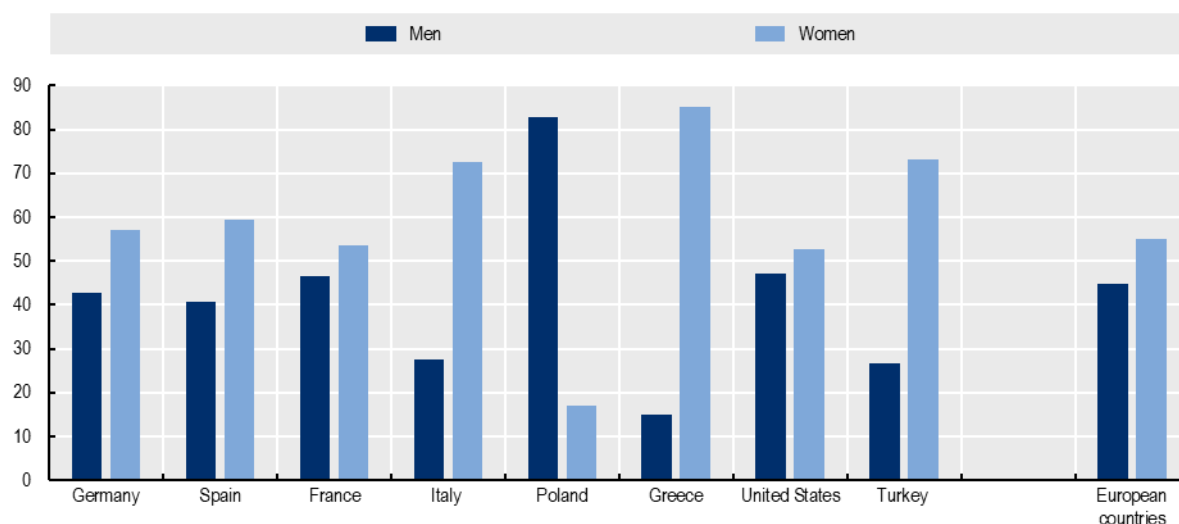
Source: OECD International Migration Database (2020). Data on annual inflows to Greece from 2012 to 2019 and flows to the United Kingdom come from Eurostat database ("First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship", 2020). Data on flows to Turkey in 2014 come from GeoStat (2020).

Women are overrepresented in Georgian emigration flows to European countries

Women are overrepresented in recent emigration flows from Georgia to the main OECD destination countries. According to the data collected by Eurostat on the number of first permits delivered to Georgian nationals (Annex A), women accounted for 55% of all Georgian nationals who received a residence permit in the European Union in 2019 (Figure 1.4). This share was even higher in the early 2010s, when about 60% of residence permits were granted to women.

The gender composition of Georgian emigration flows varies across destination countries, with especially high shares of women in migration flows to, Greece, Italy, and Turkey (respectively 85%, 73%, and 73% in 2019). However, the share of women in migration flows to Poland is particularly low (17%). Although women remained overrepresented, the gender composition of flows to other OECD countries was somewhat more balanced: between 41% and 46% of Georgian nationals migrating to Germany, Spain, France, and the United States in 2019 were men (Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4. Emigration flows from Georgia to the main OECD destination countries, by sex, 2019

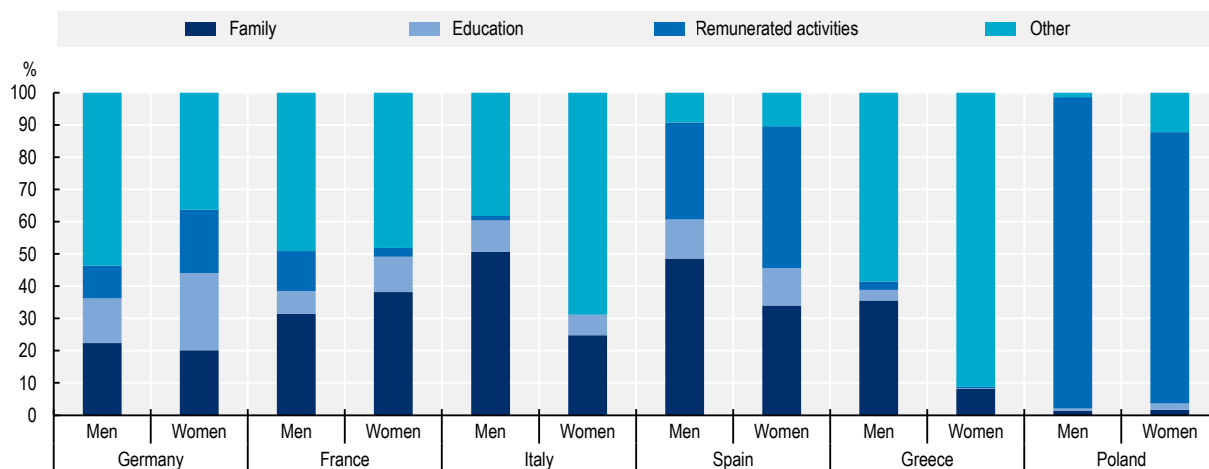


Note: The data for European countries correspond to the first residence permits issued to Georgian nationals for all durations and all reasons. Source: For European countries: Eurostat, 2020 (database “First permits by reason, age, sex, and citizenship”). United States: OECD International Migration Database (2020). Turkey: Turkstat, 2019 (“Foreign population by sex, country of citizenship and the first year of residence in Turkey”).

Although men were largely overrepresented in migration flows during the first emigration waves following Georgia’s independence, a shift in the gender composition of Georgian emigrants occurred during the early 2000s. In the early 2000s, as Georgian emigrants started to diversify their destination countries, they increasingly turned to Europe and North America. More specifically, Georgian women increasingly migrated to these regions as “primary migrants” where they mainly worked as domestics (Zurabishvili, 2017^[8]). This shift in the gendered migration pattern also occurred in the context of a global trend of feminisation of migration and the increasing demand for “female” occupations (Vanore and Siegel, 2015^[9]). In that regard, the high shares of women in Georgian emigration flows to Greece, Italy or Turkey can be explained by the high demand for female migrant workers in sectors such as care services and domestic work. In contrast, migration flows to Poland are mostly characterised by temporary seasonal migration flows composed of men working in agriculture (Radlińska, 2019^[7]).

The disaggregation of residence permits issued to Georgian nationals by grounds of admission suggests that in countries where they are overrepresented – such as Italy, Germany, and Spain – women are more likely to receive residence permits for work reasons. Furthermore, Figure 1.5 shows that in Greece, Spain, and Italy men are much more likely to be issued a permit for family reasons. In 2019, 36% of Georgian men in Greece and half of Georgian men in Italy were issued a permit for family reasons against 8% and 25% of women respectively. Women mostly received permits for humanitarian reasons. However, among Georgian nationals receiving permits for family reasons in European countries, more than half were women.

Figure 1.5. Residence permits delivered to Georgian nationals by the main European destination countries, by sex and reason, 2019



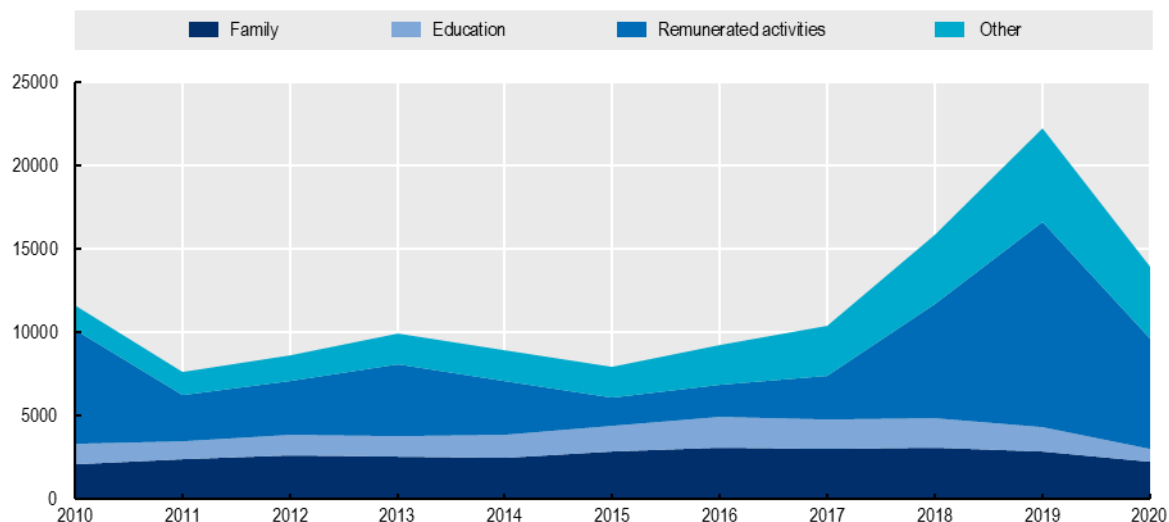
Source: Eurostat, 2020 (database “First permits by reason, age, sex, and citizenship”).

Categories of residence permits issued to Georgian nationals by OECD countries

The majority of permits issued to Georgian nationals by European countries are issued for professional reasons

Over the past ten years, European countries have issued the majority of first residence permits to Georgian nationals for work reasons. In 2019, 55% of Georgian nationals received a permit for remunerated activities reasons, 25% received a permit for “other” reasons – a category including mostly permits for humanitarian reasons, 13% were issued a permit for family reasons and only 7% of them were granted a permit for educational reasons (Figure 1.6). This distribution evolved over time. In 2010, the share of permits issued for professional reasons was even higher (60%) and slowly declined, accounting for 20% of all permits in 2016 (from 6 900 permits for work reasons in 2010 to 1900 in 2016). This decline occurred alongside a rise in the number of permits issued for humanitarian and family reasons. The number of permits issued for humanitarian reasons continuously increased from about 1 400 in 2010 to a peak at 5 600 in 2019. The number of permits for family reasons grew by 46% between 2010 and 2016 representing more than one-third of all permits issued to Georgian citizens that year and slowly decreased until 2020. The share of permits delivered for education reasons remained relatively stable.

Figure 1.6. Residence permits issued by European countries to Georgian nationals by reason, 2010-20



Note: The data correspond to the first residence permits issued to Georgian nationals for all durations.

Source: Eurostat, 2020 (database "First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship").

The nature of residence permits received by Georgian nationals varies significantly across destination countries (Figure 1.7). Flows from Georgia to Poland are almost exclusively issued for work reasons: the latter accounted for 78% of all permits issued to Georgian nationals in 2017 and this share reached 94% in 2020. As detailed above flows to Poland only started increasing in 2017 with the introduction of visa-free travel to the Schengen area for Georgian nationals. The number of permits issued by Poland to Georgian nationals significantly increased in 2018 and in 2019, following the simplification of the employment procedure for Georgian seasonal migrant workers in Poland in 2018 (Radlińska, 2019^[7]). In 2018, more than 60% of permits issued to Georgian nationals for work reasons were seasonal workers' permits. These seasonal work permits were mostly issued in agriculture or services of board and accommodation (Radlińska, 2019^[7]). Therefore, flows from Georgia to Poland are mainly characterised by temporary migration. In 2019, 56% of the permits issued by Poland to Georgian nationals were valid for three to five months and 20% for six to 11 months. Only 24% of permits were valid for more than 12 months.

Georgian seasonal temporary migration is also widespread in Turkey. If Georgian migrant women are mostly domestic workers in Turkey, most men are employed in tea and hazelnut plantations, in factories or in construction (OECD/CRRC - Georgia, 2017^[1]).

In contrast, residence permits issued to Georgian nationals by Greece in the early 2010s were mostly for family reasons as they represented 74% of all permits issued by Greece in 2012. However, this share gradually decreased as the number of humanitarian permits increased. The latter grew from 300 in 2013 to more than 2 600 in 2019, accounting for 90% of all permits issued by Greece to Georgian nationals that year (Figure 1.7).

Regarding migration flows to Germany, the share of permits issued for work reasons progressively declined from 46% in 2010 to 30% in 2020, whereas the share of family permits remained relatively stable, fluctuating between 24 and 31% of all permits. Among the main European destination countries for Georgian emigrants, Germany is the country issuing the highest share of permits for education reasons: between 2010 and 2018, they accounted for 20 to 28% of all permits. In 2019, Germany granted about 1 000 authorisations to Georgian nationals for study, a number substantially higher than in any other

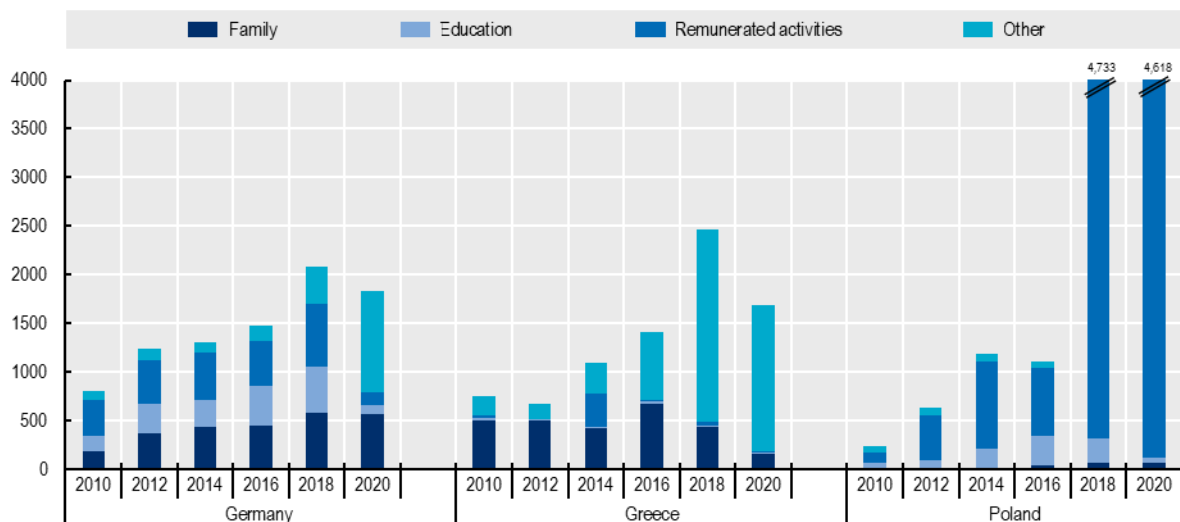
European country. A qualitative and quantitative survey suggests that the majority of Georgian emigrants residing in Germany had migrated for educational reasons. This partly stems from the fact that most students in Georgia learn German as a first or second language, thereby facilitating access to German higher education (ICMPD, 2014_[10]).

Data provided by the United States Office of Immigration Statistics indicate that 58% of permanent residence permits for Georgian nationals in 2019 were issued for family reasons, the majority of them being issued to immediate relatives of the United States citizens. Furthermore, temporary residence permits granted to Georgian nationals were mostly student permits.

In the early 2010s, Georgian nationals migrating to Spain mostly received residence permits for work reasons. On average, more than 40% of those who migrated to Spain between 2010 and 2020 received professional residence permits and 28% were issued permits for family reasons.

In France, permits issued for humanitarian reasons account for the majority of permits received by Georgian nationals: almost 50% of all permits issued by France over the past ten years on average were issued for humanitarian reasons. In 2018 and 2019, the number of Georgian asylum applicants in France significantly increased, partly explaining the increase in the number of humanitarian permits.

Figure 1.7. Residence permits issued by Germany, Poland, and Greece to Georgian nationals by reason, 2010-20



Note: The data correspond to the first residence permits issued to Georgian nationals for all durations.

Source: Eurostat, 2020 (database "First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship").

A recent surge in Georgian asylum applicants in France

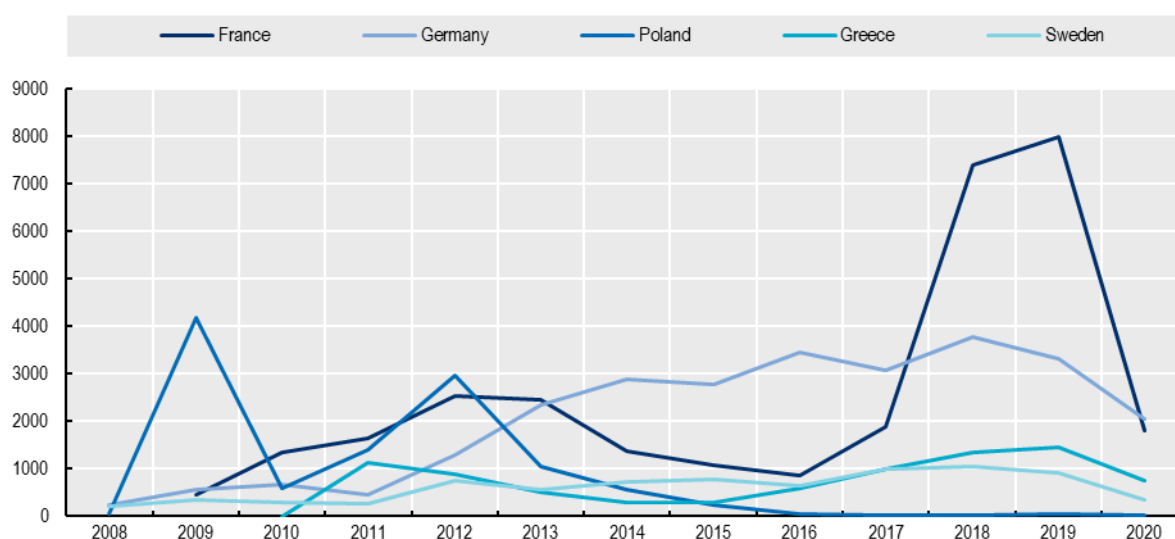
The number of Georgian first-time asylum applicants in European countries grew fourfold over the past decade, from 5 000 in 2010 to more than 20 000 in 2019. As illustrated in Figure 1.8, in the late 2000s, Georgian first-time asylum applicants in Poland significantly increased, from less than 100 in 2008 to about 4 200 in 2009 before progressively declining over time. Most of these Georgian citizens claiming asylum in Poland were reported to be Yezidi-Kurds, a minority who faced declining economic and social conditions in the 1990s, and increasingly migrated to the Russian Federation (ECMI, 2009_[11]). However, the growing difficulty for Georgians to migrate to the Russian Federation in the late 2010s pushed them to choose European destinations. In 2009, Yezidi-Kurd Georgian migrants considered Poland as a transit country where asylum would later allow them to settle in Western European countries. Almost all asylum claims in

Poland have in fact been rejected every year since 2008. The observation that asylum was never granted to Georgians in Poland led to the decline in Georgian asylum claims in the country.

Later on, the number of first asylum claims by Georgian nationals in Germany also progressively increased from 700 in 2010 to 2 900 in 2014 and reached almost 3 800 in 2018. The number of asylum claims decreased in every country in 2020, a decline attributable to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2017, the European Union allowed Georgian citizens to travel visa-free to the Schengen area, triggering a rise in legal emigration flows, but also in the number of Georgian asylum seekers in European countries. The number of first-time asylum applicants from Georgia in France soared from about 1 800 in 2017 to 7 400 in 2018 and to almost 8 000 in 2019 (Figure 1.8). Therefore, in 2019, almost 40% of Georgian first-time asylum applicants in Europe went to France.

Figure 1.8. First-time Georgian asylum applicants in main European destination countries, 2008-20



Source: Eurostat, 2021 (database "Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age, and sex").

In 2019, the number of first-time asylum claims in France by Georgian nationals was the highest after Afghan and Albanian nationals. Comparatively, Georgians were the 11th largest first-time asylum applicants group in France in 2010. Studies show that recent Georgian asylum seekers' choices to emigrate to France or to Germany rather resulted from the wish to acquire better socio-economic conditions than from a situation of urgency (Chachava, 2020_[12]). The surge in asylum claims in France, therefore, reflects Georgian migrants' will to seize the opportunity given by the visa liberalisation process. Indeed, many factors explain France's attractiveness for Georgian asylum seekers, including significant social networks, higher welfare benefits for asylum seekers, and easier access to information regarding asylum procedures (Chachava, 2020_[13]). Yet, the unfoundedness of asylum claims can further explain the very low rates of positive asylum decisions by France and Germany: only 1% and 4% of asylum claims by Georgian nationals were accepted in France and Germany respectively in 2019. Overall, around 95% of first-time asylum claims by Georgian nationals in European countries have been rejected since 2010 according to the data collected by Eurostat on asylum decisions.

Overall, men are overrepresented among Georgian asylum seekers in Europe (60% in 2019). It is the case in most of the main European destination countries except in Italy and Greece. Until 2018, 70% of Georgian asylum seekers arriving in Greece were women. After 2018, women accounted for the same share as their male counterparts. Regarding Italy, a shift in the gender composition of Georgian asylum seekers occurred

in 2016 when the number of women asylum applicants became much higher than the number of men. In contrast, women accounted for 42% of Georgian asylum applicants in France, 33% in Germany, and 46% in Spain.

Migration flows from Georgia to selected non-OECD destination countries

While the Russian Federation has long been the main destination country of Georgian emigrants, flows from Georgia to this country have decreased over the past 20 years. This decline stems from the introduction of a visa regime for Georgian nationals and from the growing tensions between the two countries, heightened during the 2008 war.

Before November 2019, foreigners could only obtain permanent residence permits after holding a temporary residence permit in the Russian Federation for at least one year. Temporary residence permits are valid for up to three years. Therefore, the annual number of temporary residence permits, highlighted in Figure 1.9, reflects annual migration flows from Georgia. In 2011, almost 5 000 temporary residence permits were issued to Georgian citizens. This number declined by 35% to 3 000 in 2019 and to 1 400 in 2020, following the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, it is estimated that during the 1990s, around 20 000 Georgian citizens migrated to the Russian Federation each year (Medium Migration Profile, 2019^[6]). Overall, flows declined by 14% between 2004 and 2019. If this decrease in migration flows results from the visa requirement and the conflicts between the two countries, it also stems from the decline in the attractiveness of the Russian Federation labour market.

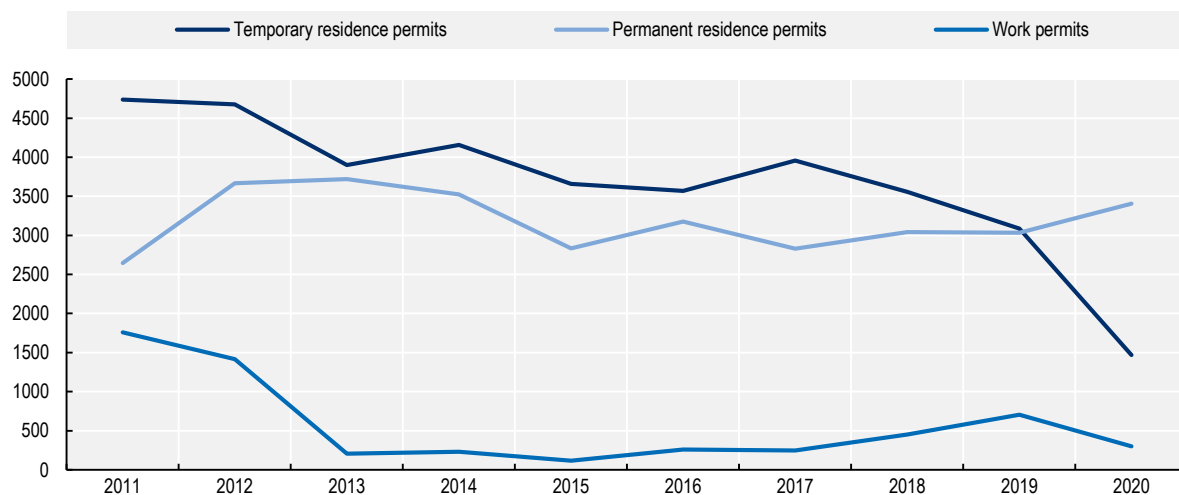
In addition to temporary residence permits – which allow foreign citizens to access the labour market – the Russian Federation issues work permits for a duration of up to three years. The number of work permits issued to Georgian citizens declined by 60% between 2011 and 2019 (from approximately 1 800 in 2011 to 700 in 2019) (Figure 1.9). This decline in labour migration flows has occurred along with an increase in Georgian migration to countries such as Turkey, where the access to the labour market is easier and more attractive.

Nonetheless, the comparison with the annual number of residence permits issued by OECD countries to Georgian nationals shows that the Russian Federation remains among the four main destination countries for Georgian nationals behind Turkey and Germany, and more recently behind Poland. The number of permanent residence permits issued to Georgian citizens have remained relatively stable over the past decade, fluctuating between 2 600 and 3 600 per year (Figure 1.9).

Over the past 20 years, the majority of residence permits issued to Georgian citizens by the Russian Federation have been issued for family reasons. The number of work permits issued to Georgians has been much lower than the number of residence permits since 2000 and has further fallen since 2013. In 2019, only 300 work permits were issued to Georgian nationals. The weight of labour migration in flows from Georgia is therefore relatively marginal. However, Georgian nationals holding a permit on family grounds of admission are also allowed to work in the country.

On average between 2014 and 2019,¹ 20% of temporary residence permits issued to Georgian citizens were based on quotas, which refers to mixed categories permits for individuals who do not have immediate relatives. Quota-based temporary residence are often delivered to long-term migrant workers who have indirect relatives in the Russian Federation. Quota-free residence permits are composed of permits related to family, repatriates, and other permits. On average between 2014 and 2019, 72% of residence permits issued to Georgian citizens in the Russian Federation were issued for family reasons. Out of about 3 500 temporary permits issued annually to Georgian citizens since 2014, 2 500 were issued for family reasons and about 2000 were issued to spouses of Russian citizens residing in the Russian Federation.

Figure 1.9. Annual number of temporary and permanent residence permits and work permits issued by the Russian Federation to Georgian citizens, 2011-20



Note: Before November 2019, Georgian citizens needed a temporary residence permit in order to apply for a permanent residence permit. From November 2019, Georgians can receive a permanent residence permit without already detaining a temporary residence permit. The data for 2021 only concerns the three first quarters. The number of work permits is not available for 2021.

Source: The Russian Federation's Federal Migration Service / Main directorate for migration (since 2016).

Emigration prospects among the Georgian population

Data on emigration intentions among the population born and living in Georgia provide a better understanding of the scope and drivers of Georgian emigration flows. Furthermore, emigration intentions can provide valuable insights into future trends in these flows. The Gallup World Poll (see Annex A) collects information on the emigration intentions of the population born and residing in Georgia aged 15 years or older. Data on the characteristics of these individuals make it possible to analyse correlations between intentions to leave the country and various socio-economic variables such as education level and employment status.

Close to one in five Georgians expresses the desire to emigrate

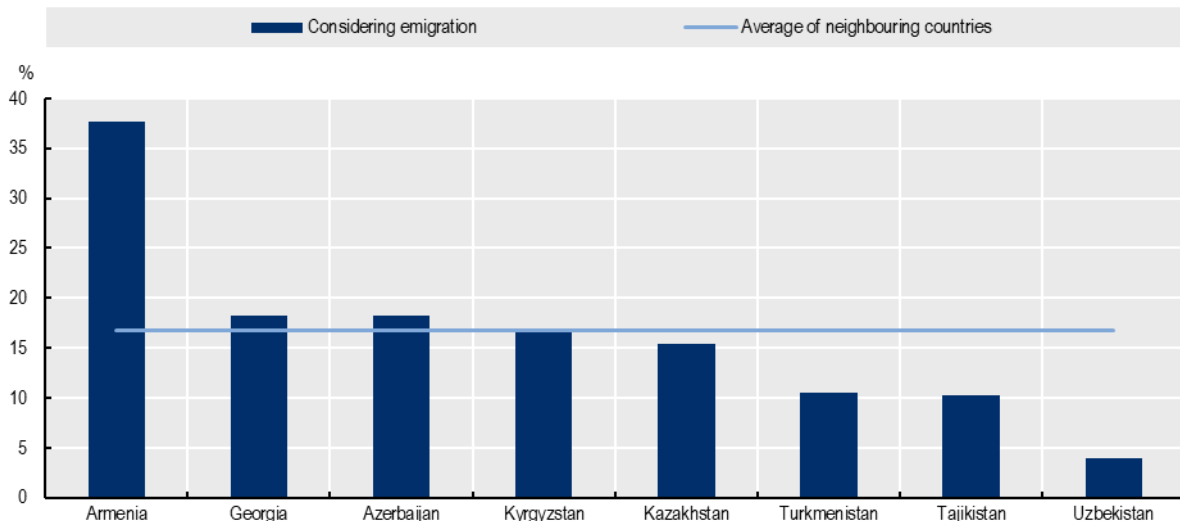
Emigration intentions in Georgia are slightly higher than the average of selected neighbouring countries. Between 2010 and 2019, 18% of persons living in Georgia aged 15 or older expressed the wish to emigrate. As shown in Figure 1.10, only Armenians expressed higher emigration intentions: 38% of the Armenian population indicated a wish to leave the country permanently. If the population of Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan expressed similar emigration intentions as Georgians, intentions to migrate from Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were much lower (respectively 11%, 10%, and 4% of the population). The reported favourite destinations of Georgians intending to migrate in 2019 were the United States (24%), Germany (16%) and France (9%). While Turkey and Greece rank among the first destination countries of Georgian nationals, they are relatively rarely designated as desired destinations (only 1% and 3% respectively). Therefore, these countries seem to represent more of a step in the migration experience rather than destinations where Georgian emigrants intend to settle permanently. Moreover, Georgian migrants in Turkey are typically temporary seasonal workers.

The Caucasus Barometer Survey (see Annex A) also provides information on the emigration intentions of individuals aged 18 or older living in Georgia. Additionally to the Gallup World Poll, this survey provides information on both the wish to emigrate permanently and temporarily. In 2019, 10% of Georgians reported wishing to emigrate permanently and about 50% of the population indicated wanting to leave the country

temporarily. This significant difference between the desires to leave permanently and temporarily notably reflects the importance of temporary labour migration flows from Georgia to countries such as Poland or Turkey.

Figure 1.10. Emigration intentions in Georgia and in selected Caucasus and Central Asian countries, 2010-19

Share of the population (aged 15 years and over) born and living in the country who consider emigrating permanently



Note: Considering emigration means answering “yes” to: “Ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you like to live permanently in another country?”

Source: Gallup World Poll (2021).

However, these intentions rarely materialise in the short or medium-term. In the Gallup World Poll, the question “Do you plan to move permanently to another country in the next 12 months” allows assessing whether the desire to emigrate is likely to be translated into action within a defined period. The responses to this question reveal, for Georgia and neighbouring countries, a significant gap between the intention to emigrate and the probability of this intention materialising in the short term. While 18% of Georgians wish to emigrate, only 5% of them considered doing so within a year. This share is the lowest out of all selected Caucasus and Central Asian countries (9% on average). Although emigration intentions were especially high in Armenia (38%), only 13% of those wishing to emigrate considered leaving the country within 12 months.

Emigration intentions are higher among young and unemployed Georgians

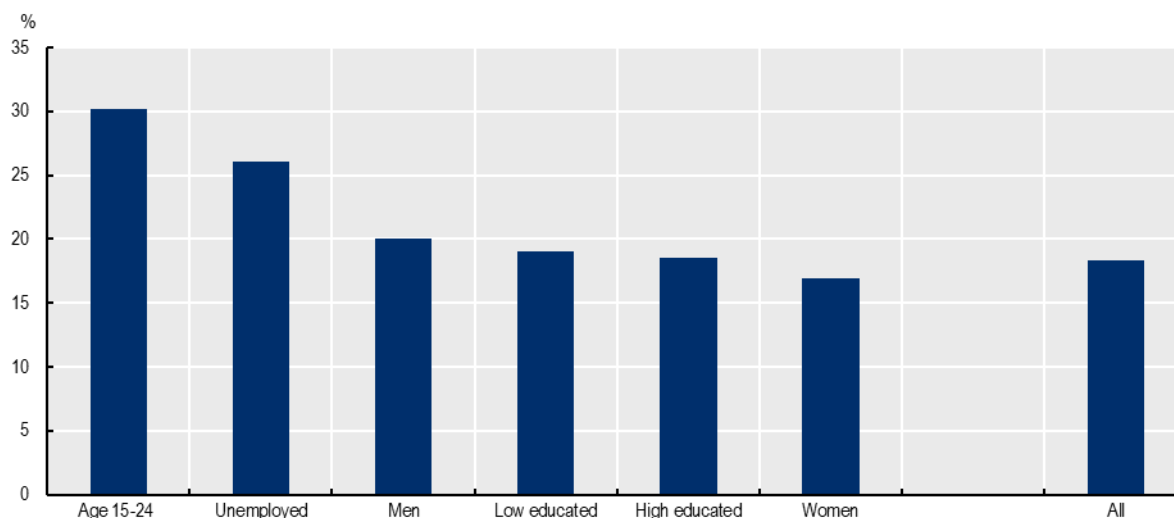
Emigration intentions can significantly vary according to socio-demographic characteristics such as age, education level, and labour market status. In Georgia and its neighbouring countries, emigration intentions are particularly high among young people (aged 15-24). As shown in Figure 1.11, 30% of Georgians aged 15-24 express the desire to emigrate. This share is 12 percentage points higher than among the overall population, which is the highest difference of all selected neighbouring countries. The Caucasus Barometer Survey data highlight the same trend regarding temporary migration intentions: almost 80% of Georgians aged 18-24 expressed the intention to temporarily leave the country, which is 20 percentage points higher than the overall population.

Emigration intentions also differ according to labour market status: 26% of self-reported unemployed individuals expressed the desire to leave the country (Figure 1.11) against 17% of employed individuals and 17% of individuals out of the workforce. These relatively high emigration intentions partly stem from the very high unemployment rates, especially among young and highly skilled people, that have been prevailing in Georgia since the fall of the USSR in 1991. If the country's economic situation largely improved in the 2000s, high unemployment and the mismatch between labour supply and demand have remained significant and have pushed young people to consider seeking a better employment situation abroad.

The Gallup World Poll data however does not reveal differences in emigration intentions across education levels. About 18% of highly educated people intend to emigrate and it is the case of 19% of people with low levels of education. Although women have been overrepresented in recent migration flows, men express slightly higher emigration intentions than women, though the difference is only 3 percentage points.

However, emigration intentions do not always match actual emigration decisions, especially for certain demographic groups. Employed or highly skilled individuals are more likely to have the necessary economic and social capital to emigrate than the young or unemployed, who may face higher difficulties making concrete plans to leave the country. The factors determining emigration intentions and the possibility of making concrete plans to emigrate are, however, numerous, linked to both structural and cyclical constraints, but also to individual characteristics, attitudes towards migration, family context, transnational networks, and perceived quality of life.

Figure 1.11. Emigration intentions among various groups in Georgia, 2010-19



Note: Low education refers to completed elementary education or less (up to eight years of basic education). A medium level of education is between some secondary education and up to three years of tertiary education (9 to 15 years of education). High education refers to at least four years of completed education beyond high school, or a four-year college degree.

Source: Gallup World Poll (2021).

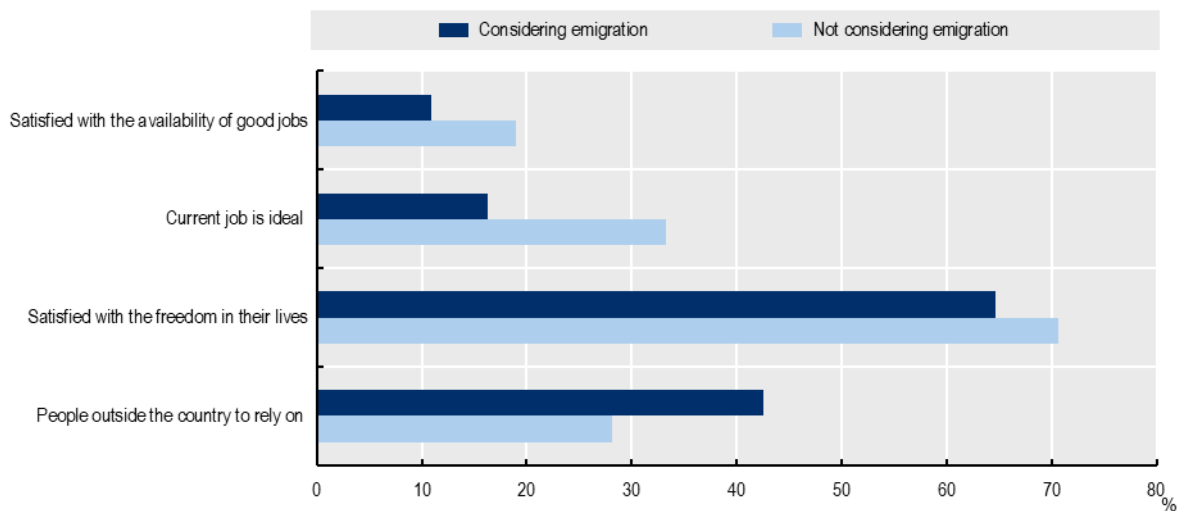
Economic and employment difficulties are the main drivers of emigration intentions in Georgia

Available data on the subjective well-being of Georgians wishing to emigrate shed light on the determinants of emigration intentions, and, indirectly, on the factors that drive actual migration flows. The unavailability of good jobs and the lack of satisfaction with the currently occupied job seem to be an issue faced by the entire Georgian population. Yet, only 10% of people considering emigration declared being satisfied with the availability of good jobs, compared to 20% of Georgians who did not wish to leave the country (Figure 1.12). Similarly, one-third of individuals who do not consider emigrating declared that their current job was ideal

whereas only 16% of Georgians intending to migrate agreed with that statement. Furthermore, although the share of those who report being satisfied with the freedom in their lives is relatively high, it is still lower for those intending to emigrate (64%) than for those who do not consider emigration (71%). In addition, those expressing a desire to emigrate are more likely to have a network of friends or family to rely on: 43% of them declared having people outside the country to rely on, against only 28% of those who do not wish to emigrate.

Thus, the difficulty experienced by Georgians with regard to the employment situation seems to be one of the main drivers of the intention to leave the country. The Caucasus Barometer Survey confirms these results: when asked what the most important issue facing Georgia is, almost half of Georgian respondents willing to emigrate mentioned unemployment, a share only slightly higher than among those who do not wish to emigrate (46%). Poverty is the second most mentioned issue: 21% of those who do not wish to emigrate consider poverty to be the most important issue in Georgia (against 17% of Georgians who wish to migrate). Other issues include unsolved territorial conflicts, inflation, and low quality of education.

Figure 1.12. Emigration intentions and opinions of persons born and living in Georgia, 2009-20



Note: Data on the satisfaction with the availability of good jobs and on the satisfaction with the current job are only available between 2010 and 2012.
Source: Gallup World Poll (2021).

Conclusion

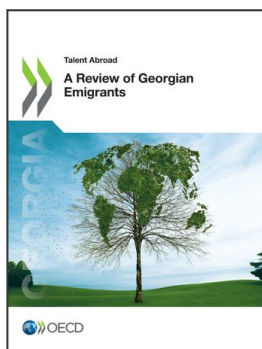
The crises prompted by the complex economic and political transitions faced by Georgia in the 1990s after the collapse of the USSR provoked large emigration flows of Georgians fleeing the deteriorating economic situation. If Georgian nationals first mostly migrated to neighbouring countries, they diversified their destination countries in the 2000s and increasingly migrated to OECD countries. In recent years, the leading OECD destination countries of Georgian nationals have been, by far, Turkey and Germany, followed by Poland, Greece, and the United States. In parallel, flows to the Russian Federation have gradually declined. The majority of Georgian nationals migrating to European countries receive permits for work reasons. Furthermore, women are overrepresented in migration flows from Georgia to OECD countries, especially in Greece, Turkey, and Italy, where they mostly work in care services and domestic work. Emigration intentions are higher among the Georgian population than among most populations of selected neighbouring countries. If one in five Georgian expresses the desire to leave permanently the country, half of them indicate an intention to emigrate temporarily, reflecting the importance of temporary labour migration flows from Georgia. Emigration intentions are especially high among young and unemployed Georgians and mainly result from the difficult employment situation in the country.

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Note

¹ The disaggregation of the number of residence permits by grounds of admission is only available from 2014 to 2019.



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