

Georgia

EMN COUNTRY FACTSHEET

2020

MAIN DEVELOPMENTS IN MIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION, INCLUDING LATEST STATISTICS



OVERARCHING CHANGES

The fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in Georgia was launched a month before the first confirmed case (26 February 2020). On 28 January 2020, the government established [an Interagency Coordination Council](#) and approved [the Emergency Response Plan](#). On 21 March 2020, a state of emergency (SoE) was [introduced](#) and later [extended](#) until 22 May 2020, establishing a number of restrictions (inland mobility, international travel, gatherings, educational process, certain types of business, etc.). The end of the SoE resulted in the lifting or easing of most restrictions, with some remaining in force throughout 2020 (e.g. international travel with certain conditions). In parallel, [various e-services](#) were launched for foreigners intending to visit Georgia for study, business, remote work or family reasons, establishing [special rules and conditions](#) on entry and stay.

The State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) worked actively on the development of a new Migration Strategy (MS) for 2021-2030. Despite the pandemic, work on the MS and Action Plan 2021 (developed in the framework of the EU-backed Public Administration Reform) proceeded with no delays. Relevant partners included the European Union (EU) institutions, United Nation (UN) agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the Public Defender's Office and the Human Rights Secretariat. [The MS was adopted](#) on 30 December 2020 by Government Ordinance #810. It is based on the cross-cutting approach of 'Migration and Development' and focused on channelling the efforts

KEY POINTS



The Migration Strategy of Georgia 2021-2030 was adopted, based on the cross-cutting approach of 'Migration and Development'.



New agencies and structural units were established within the Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, with responsibility for labour migration and integration/reintegration issues.



Amendments to the Law on the Rules for Georgian Citizens on Leaving and Entering Georgia were adopted to address the emerging challenges of the visa-free regime with the EU/Schengen countries.

of state to boost the benefits of migration while minimising its negative effects. The MS defined key sectoral priorities, such as enhancement of the migration management system, facilitation of legal migration, fight against illegal migration, engagement of diaspora in national development, reintegration of returned migrants, development of asylum system and integration of foreigners.



LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

WORK-RELATED MIGRATION

The state employment and active labour market policy prioritised the expansion of legal opportunities for

temporary employment abroad. The Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia (MoH) made substantial efforts to strengthen cooperation with partner countries, reach agreement on labour migration schemes, and develop and improve the state regulatory system of labour migration.

Georgia signed bilateral agreements establishing labour migration schemes with [France](#) (signed in 2013, in force since 2019), [Bulgaria](#) (signed in 2019), [Germany](#) (signed in 2020). Negotiations/consultations with other EU Member States are underway.

Measures were taken to strengthen MoH and its relevant structures, including a Division for Labour Migration Issues to manage labour migration (at policy level) and cooperation with foreign counterparts. The State Employment Support Agency (LEPL) [was established in 2020](#) under the MoH to promote employment in the local labour market and temporary employment of Georgian citizens abroad.

STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS

Within the Horizon 2020 framework programme, the [EURAXESS Georgia national portal](#) was created and integrated into the [EURAXESS Pan-European portal](#). The goal of the Portal is to support research mobility, career development and international scientific cooperation at national level. The bilingual (ENG, GEO) Portal consists of information for PhD students, postdocs and established researchers coming to work in Georgia, as well as for those leaving for a foreign country. It includes information on entry conditions and visas, residence and work permits, accommodation, daily life, recognition of qualifications, Georgian diaspora, higher education and admission terms, departure conditions and formalities.



INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

The following legal acts of the Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia (MoIA) were adopted or amended to enhance legislation on asylum and related procedures: (1) [Order No 33](#) on the asylum procedure; (2) [Order No 34](#) on the form of the asylum-seekers notification, the rule of its issuance and amendment; (3) [Order No 79](#) on the rule of receipt of fingerprints of the asylum seeker and processing of this personal data; (4) [Order No 78](#) on the rule determining the dates of personal data processing based on the Law of Georgia on International Protection; (5) [Order No 99](#) on the rule on identification of the request on international protection

of foreigner or stateless person at the border of Georgia and exchange of information among the Migration and Patrol Police Departments and the Border Police State Sub-Agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA).

Targeted training sessions were conducted for employees of the Migration and Patrol Police Departments of the MIA, as well as lawyers and NGOs.

In 2020, 864 asylum seekers from 45 countries requested international protection in Georgia, 30% less than in 2019. The decrease was likely caused by COVID-19 mobility restrictions. As of 1 January 2021, there were 1 188 international protection status holders in Georgia (494 refugees and 694 humanitarian status holders). In 2020, 128 asylum seekers from 19 countries benefitted from accommodation services at the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers.



MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

No significant developments in 2020.



INTEGRATION

OVERARCHING DEVELOPMENTS

The Division on Reintegration and Integration was established within the IDPs, Ecomigrants and Livelihood Agency (Agency) of the MoH. From 1 July 2020, the Division is responsible for managing the [State Integration Programme and the Integration Centre](#). The Programme consists of four components: Georgian language courses; sociocultural awareness-raising; civic education; and consultancy services. The main beneficiaries are: persons under international protection (refugees, humanitarian status holders, asylum seekers) and stateless persons.

On 28 October 2020, the Agency and the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) Office in Georgia [signed a Partnership Agreement](#) to support the integration of refugees and stateless persons residing in Georgia. It will facilitate access to nationally certified vocational training, employment counselling and other State services and programmes to promote integration of refugees and stateless persons within Georgian society.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOS)

The [SCMI Working Group on Integration](#) (WG) met on 13 October 2020 to discuss ongoing and planned activities. These WG meetings serve as an effective platform for minimising thematic overlaps and duplication between different programmes and [projects](#), establishing business contacts among NGOs and IOs implementing EU- and/or other donor-funded projects; as well as for the state agencies to get detailed updates on the actions carried out by partner organizations in the field of migrant integration and thus to coordinate the joint action.



CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

STATELESSNESS

On 23-24 July 2020, an ad hoc meeting of the SCMI Working Group on Statelessness discussed the activities planned on statelessness and reviewed the Public Defender's recommendations on Statelessness in its overall report.



BORDERS, SCHENGEN AND VISAS

BORDER MANAGEMENT

In 2020, Georgian Border Police (GBP) renovated the infrastructure of four Land Border Sectors (LBS), with a fifth ongoing. It finalised installation of a Video Surveillance System on a segment of the Georgia-Azerbaijan state border. The GBP fully equipped seven LBSs with incident detection, interdiction and communication capabilities. It also enhanced detection capabilities through two additional mobile surveillance systems.

The GBP aviation fleet was upgraded to support search, rescue and aerial fire-fighting operations. It completely upgraded coastguard (GCG) communications, as well as vessel maintenance and repair capabilities. For maritime security purposes, GBP developed underwater inspection capabilities through provision of diving equipment.

GCG Vessel Boarding Search and Seizure (VBSS) teams successfully passed step three (SEL 2) of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) evaluation process. In order to ensure effective border control, around 300

Border Crossing Point employees of Patrol Police Department were trained on border management.

VISA POLICY

[Georgia signed international agreements](#) with Grenada on visa exemptions (up to 90 days) for holders of ordinary, diplomatic, service and official passports. Agreements with Nepal and Republic of Ecuador on visa exemption for holders of diplomatic and official/service passports also entered in force.



IRREGULAR MIGRATION INCLUDING MIGRANT SMUGGLING

MISUSE OF LEGAL MIGRATION CHANNELS

In order to prevent misuse of legal migration channels and in response to the emerging challenges related to visa-free regime with the EU/Schengen countries, on 2 September 2020, the Parliament of Georgia adopted amendments to the law on the [Rules for Georgian Citizens on Leaving and Entering Georgia](#), which entered into force on 1 January 2021.

The MIA (as the responsible authority for the implementation of activities under the amendments) undertook measures to ensure successful administration of related tasks. [Order No 176](#) of the MoIA on adoption of rules on crossing the State border for citizens of Georgia and appeals procedure against the denial to cross the State border rendered for citizens of Georgia travelling to the EU/Schengen countries was adopted on 21 December 2020. The Order includes the list of required documents, both general Schengen requirements and specific conditions set by individual EU/Schengen countries, and applies to passengers travelling to the EU/Schengen countries directly or in transit from a third country. It defines the procedures to inspect documents and an appeals procedure against refusal to depart.

MIGRANT SMUGGLING AND PREVENTION OF IRREGULAR STAY

In order to effectively prevent irregular migration and detect migrant smuggling, infrastructure and capacity-building activities were carried out on the State border.



TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

On 2 December 2020, a new [Anti-Trafficking National Action Plan \(NAP\) for 2021-2022](#) was adopted by the Inter-Agency Council on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, with the active involvement of civil society.

On 29 September 2020, the Parliament of Georgia adopted the [Law on Labour Inspection](#), establishing the Labour Inspection Service (LIS) (succeeding the Labour Inspectorate Department). The LIS is mandated to supervise labour rights and sanction employers for failure to comply with obligations.

In October 2020, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), in cooperation with International Organisation for Migration (IOM), conducted an information campaign on children in street situations, '[Danger might be invisible at first](#)'. Face-to-face and/or online information meetings were held for the general population, as well as targeted capacity-building training for public servants and other stakeholders.

On 26 May 2020, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) adopted the [Manual on Trafficking in Human Beings for Consular Officers](#) (Minister's order No. 01-95).. The Manual was developed by IOM, with the support of the EU, and in close cooperation with the MFA. Designed for consular officers posted abroad, it contains information on the crime of trafficking in human beings, legal framework, referral mechanisms, and detailed description of protocol activities.



RETURN AND READMISSION

MAIN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

In 2020, reconstructive works (including extra adapted room for people with disabilities) were carried out at the Temporary Accommodation Center (TAC). Also, additional infrastructure for outdoor activities of the persons accommodated in TAC is being constructed.

On 23 May 2020, the MoIA issued [Order No 74](#) on the provision of certain services to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and determine different rules in the field of international protection and/or combating illegal migration. COVID-19 prevention measures were introduced at the TAC, including procedures for admitting a detained person.

Additional medical staff were hired to improve healthcare effectiveness (24/7) for persons accommodated at the TAC, and new health examination and record-keeping systems were introduced. From the end of 2020, the Migration Department provides those accommodated at the TAC with appropriate medical examination for the prevention of viral hepatitis, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

Global COVID-19 restrictions made it necessary to repatriate Georgian citizens stranded in different countries and/or provide them with on-site assistance. From 1 February to 28 July 2020, 25 198 Georgian citizens were repatriated by air, land and sea, with State assistance. 116 (government-funded) special charter flights were arranged from 35 countries.

COOPERATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

Effective implementation of the Readmission Agreements is a key priority. The [Protocol between Georgia and Czech Republic](#) on implementation of the EU-Georgia agreement entered into force on 1 July 2020. Georgia now has readmission agreements with the EU, Iceland, Belarus, Denmark, Moldova, Norway, Switzerland and Ukraine, and has concluded readmission implementing protocols with Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Austria, Belgium, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Slovak Republic, Germany, Romania and Czech Republic.

The MIA processed the readmission applications of 2 539 persons, issuing 2 511 positive decisions. It participated in 10 collecting return operations coordinated by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), returning 468 persons from Member States to Georgia.

COVID-19 restriction partially suspended administrative proceedings related to the expulsion of foreigners from Georgia. However, 63 decisions on expulsion were issued and 49 decisions were executed.



MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

On 24-25 November 2020, [Georgia hosted](#) a regional conference ([organised](#) with IOM and Norway). The [event focused](#) on emigrants and diaspora engagement in private sector development (skills development and transfer, establishment of trade networks and investment, institutional structures and networks required to establish and manage migration policy).

Georgian embassies in 17 countries introduced the new [diaspora web portal](#). The portal is based on the one-

stop-shop concept and serves as an effective platform for communication between the State, private sector and diaspora.

The MFA launched the grant programme, [Support for Diaspora Initiatives](#), funding 45 projects from 19 countries. The programme supported Georgian citizens, diaspora organisations and cultural centres affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

On 8 July 2020, the MFA presented the '[Guideline on Migration Legislation in Italy](#)' as a live-stream event on its Facebook page, in cooperation with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). The Guideline served as a practical handbook for Georgian migrants living in Italy and facing certain challenges (e.g. obtaining legal residence status, work permits, healthcare and education opportunities, protecting labour rights).

On 15-16 July 2020, a [webinar was held](#) (in cooperation with ICMPD) [for Georgia's Young Ambassadors](#). The topics reflected the Implementation Review of Georgia's Young Ambassadors Programme in 2019. Part of the training focused on basic principles of event planning and management, with a special focus on organisational and logistical issues.

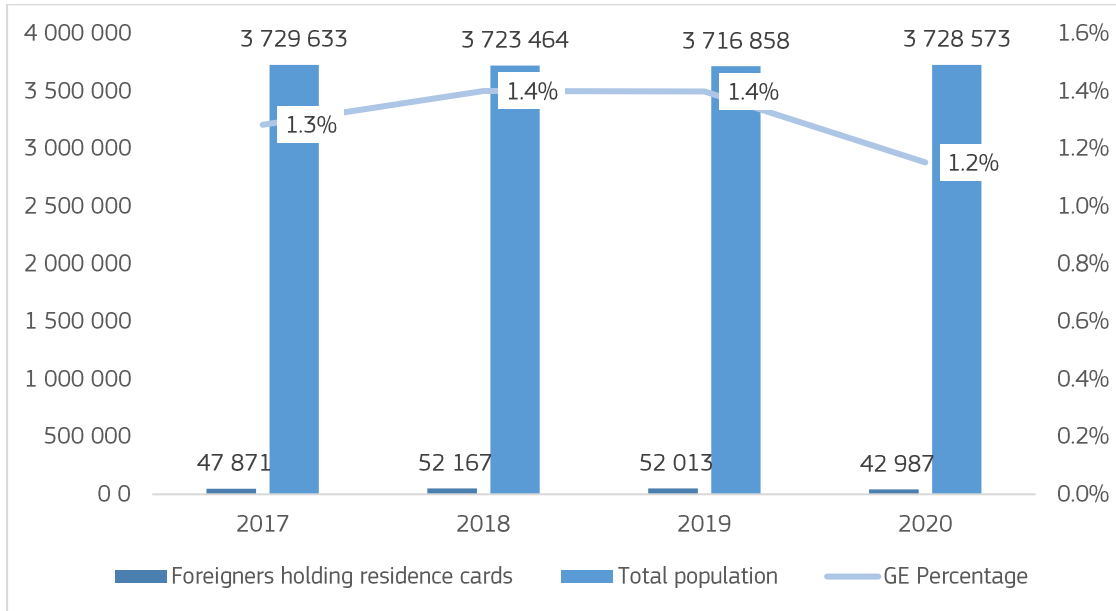
STATISTICAL ANNEX

The Statistical Annex was prepared by the EMN NCP Georgia and the EMN Service Provider and provides an overview of the latest available statistics for Georgia on aspects of migration and international protection (2017-2020), including legal residence, asylum, unaccompanied minors irregular migration, return and visas. Where statistics were not available at the time of publication, this is indicated in the Annex as 'N/A'.



LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

Figure 1: Foreigners holding residence cards as a share of total population in Georgia



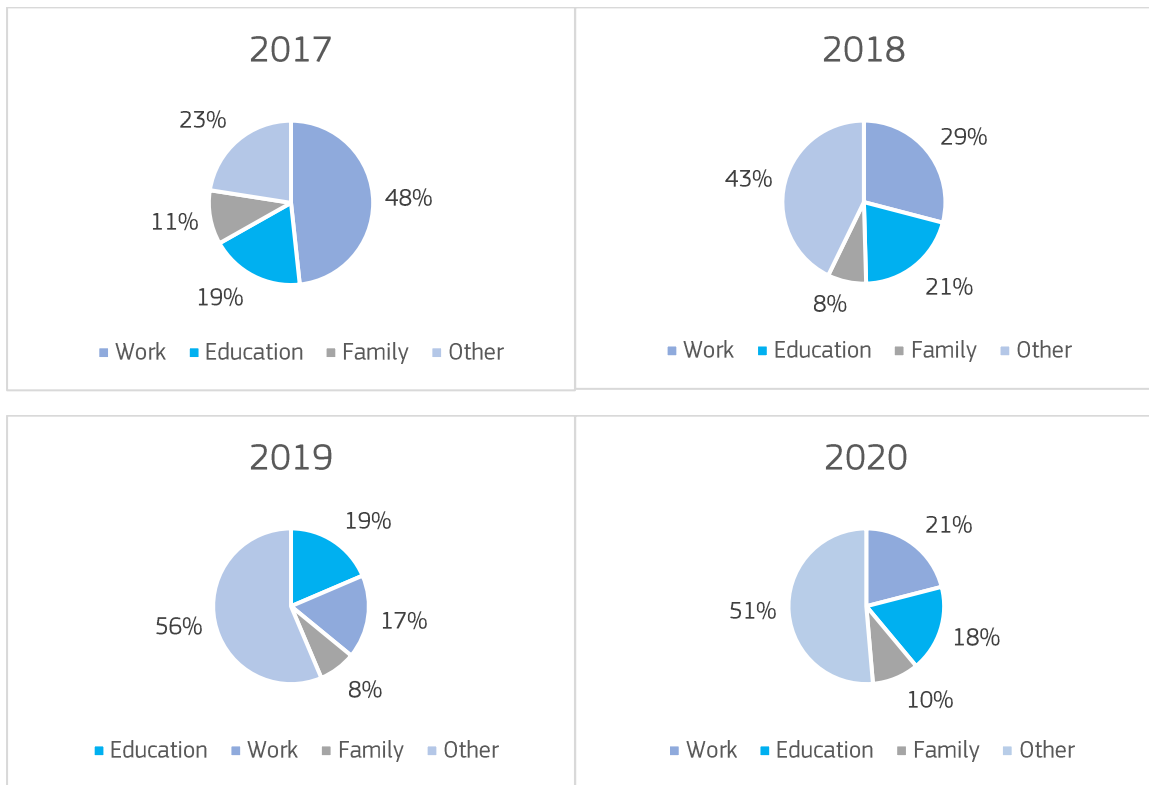
SOURCE: National Statistics Office of Georgia / Public Service Development Agency of Georgia

Table 1: Top 5 nationalities of number of first residence permits annually issued: number of permits per nationality and % of total annual permits

2017			2018			2019			2020		
Country	Number	Percentage	Country	Number	Percentage	Country	Number	Percentage	Country	Number	Percentage
Iran	3 572	26%	Iran	7632	45%	Iran	4707	37%	Russia	1600	21%
India	2 723	20%	India	2826	17%	India	1918	15%	India	843	11%
Turkey	1 811	13%	Turkey	1187	7%	Russia	1179	9%	Iran	766	10%
China	1 227	9%	Russia	1044	6%	China	1051	8%	Turkey	693	9%
Russia	870	6%	China	978	6%	Turkey	657	5%	China	617	8%

SOURCE: Public Service Development Agency of Georgia

Figure 2: First Residence permits annually issued by reason

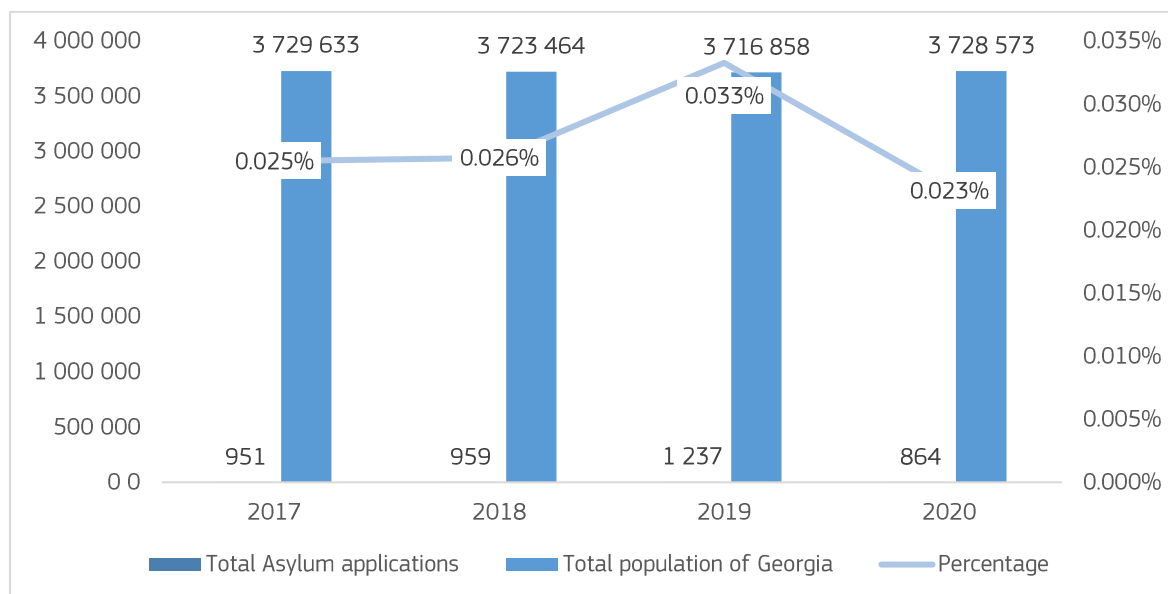


SOURCE: Public Service Development Agency of Georgia



INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

Figure 3: First-time asylum applications: total number and as % of population in the country



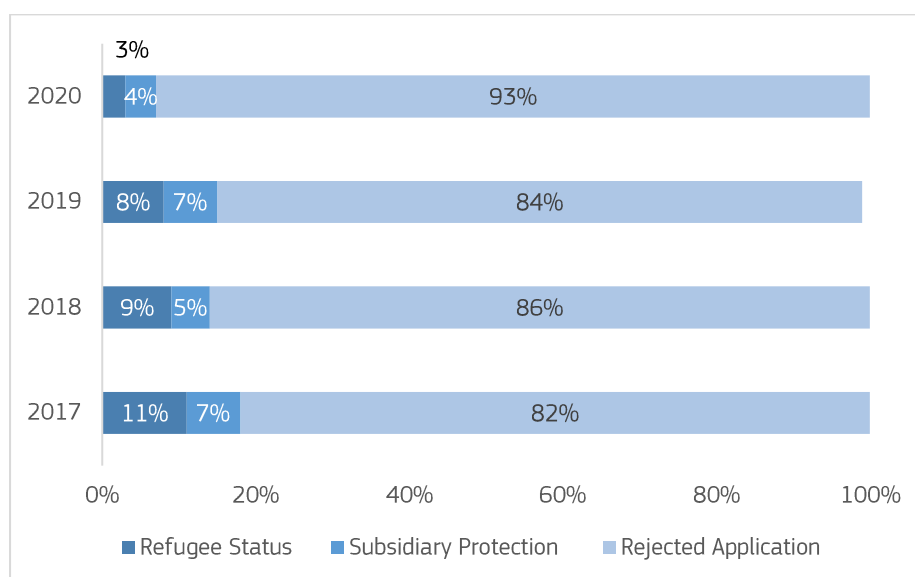
SOURCE: National Statistics Office of Georgia / Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

Table 2: Top 5 nationalities of asylum applications: number of applications and % of total asylum applications

2017			2018			2019			2020		
Nationality	Nr	% of total	Nationality	Nr	% of total	Nationality	Nr	% of total	Nationality	Nr	% of total
Egypt	105	11%	Iran	225	23%	Iran	470	38%	Iran	267	31%
Iraq	93	10%	Turkey	78	8%	Egypt	113	9%	Turkey	94	11%
Iran	90	9%	Yemen	76	8%	India	101	8%	Russia	64	7%
Eritrea	69	7%	Iraq	75	8%	Russia	79	6%	Jordan	56	6%
Turkey	67	7%	Egypt	70	7%	Turkey	64	5%	India	52	6%

SOURCE: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

Figure 4: Number of asylum decisions by outcome (% of total decisions)



SOURCE: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

Table 3: Top 5 nationalities of asylum applications granted: number of positive asylum decisions and % of total asylum applications

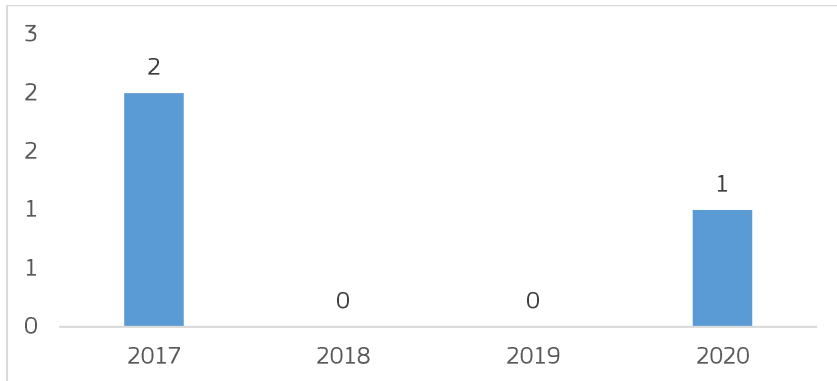
2017			2018			2019			2020		
Nationality	Nr	% of total	Nationality	Nr	% of total	Nationality	Nr	% of total	Nationality	Nr	% of total
IRAN	20	2.10%	EGYPT	26	2.71%	YEMEN	24	1.94%	YEMEN	8	0.93%
UKRAINE	17	1.79%	IRAQ	24	2.50%	EGYPT	18	1.46%	EGYPT	4	0.46%
EGYPT	11	1.16%	YEMEN	22	2.29%	AFGHANISTAN	8	0.65%	IRAN	4	0.46%
IRAQ	10	1.05%	IRAN	6	0.63%	RUSSIA	6	0.49%	IRAQ	3	0.35%
SYRIA	7	0.74%	UKRAINE	3	0.31%	IRAQ	5	0.40%	UNKNOWN	3	0.35%

SOURCE: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia



UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

Figure 5: Unaccompanied Minors applying for asylum in Georgia

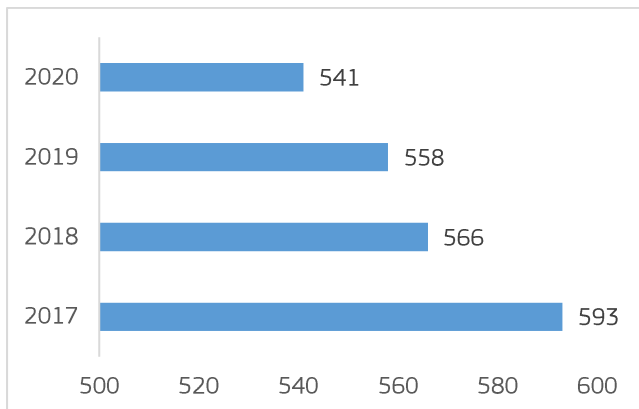


SOURCE: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia



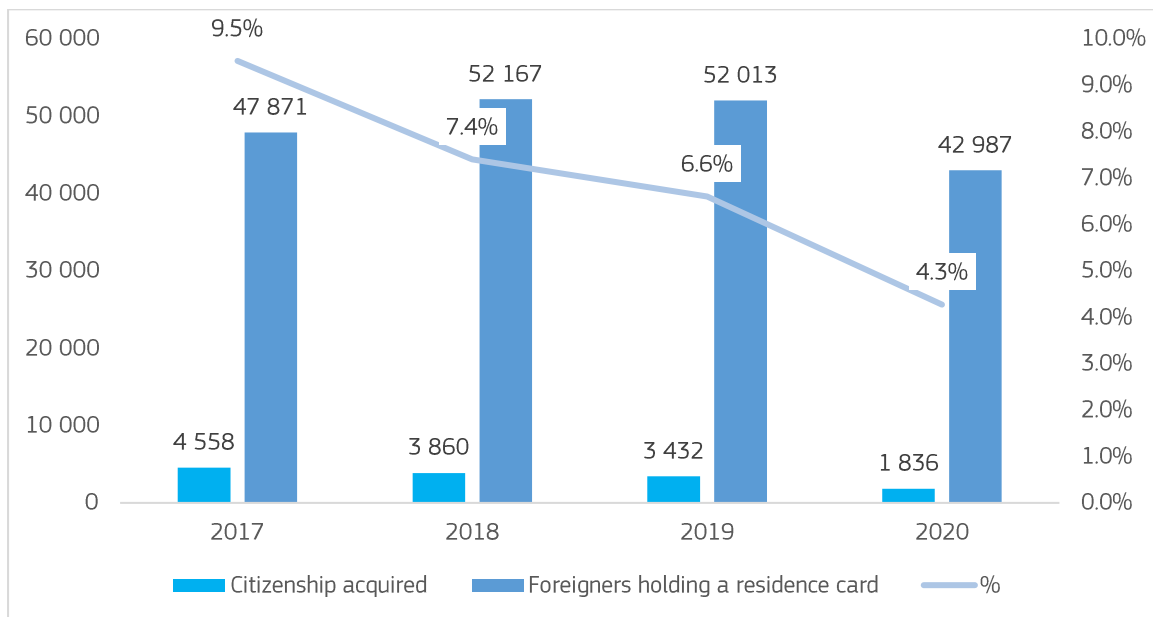
STATELESSNESS

Figure 6: Number of stateless persons in Georgia per year



SOURCE: Public Service Development Agency of Georgia

Figure 7: Foreigners who have acquired Georgian citizenship as a share of total foreigners holding a residence card in the country



SOURCE: Public Service Development Agency of Georgia

Table 4: Top 5 nationalities by number of citizenship acquisition: absolute number and % of total acquisitions in the country by Foreigners

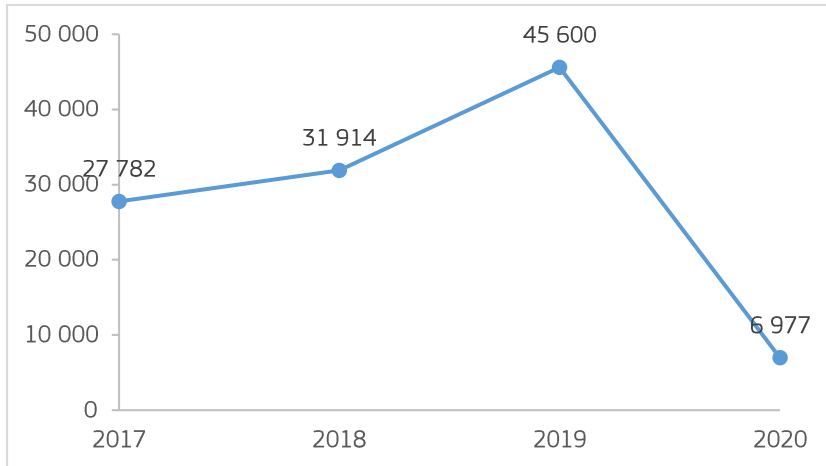
2017			2018			2019			2020		
Nationality	Nr	% of total	Nationality	Nr	% of total	Nationality	Nr	% of total	Nationality	Nr	% of total
Russia	2,720	60%	Russia	2,481	64%	Russia	2,457	72%	Russia	1,189	65%
Armenia	340	7%	Armenia	254	7%	Armenia	215	6%	USA	125	7%
USA	327	7%	USA	232	6%	Ukraine	143	4%	Armenia	92	5%
Ukraine	212	5%	Ukraine	188	5%	Israel	118	3%	Ukraine	88	5%
Greece	140	3%	Greece	98	3%	USA	116	3%	Israel	67	4%

SOURCE: Public Service Development Agency of Georgia



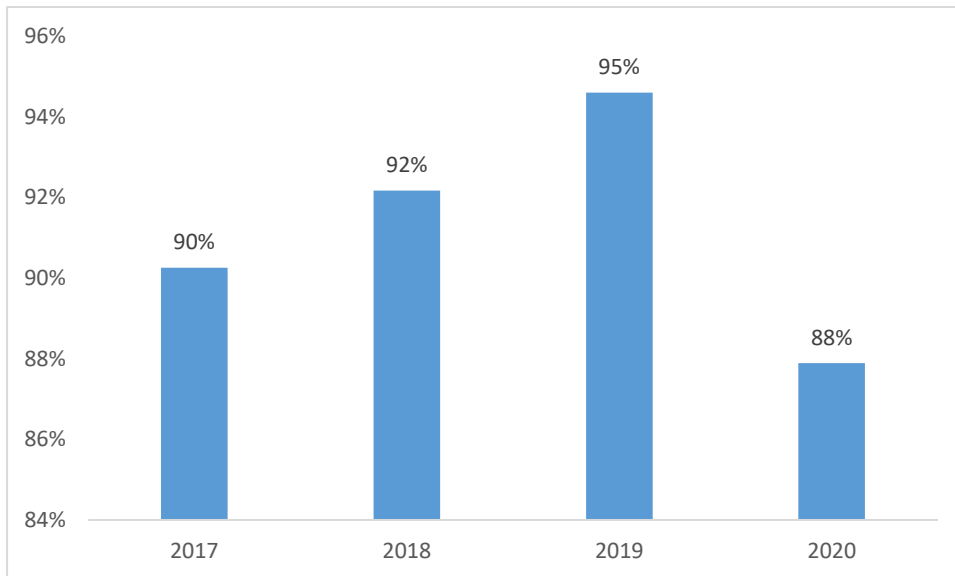
BORDERS, SCHENGEN AND VISAS

Figure 8: Short-term visas annually issued



SOURCE: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

Figure 9: Short-term visas issued (% of total visas issued)



SOURCE: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

Table 5: Top 5 nationalities by number of short-term visas issued: absolute number and % of total short-term visas issued

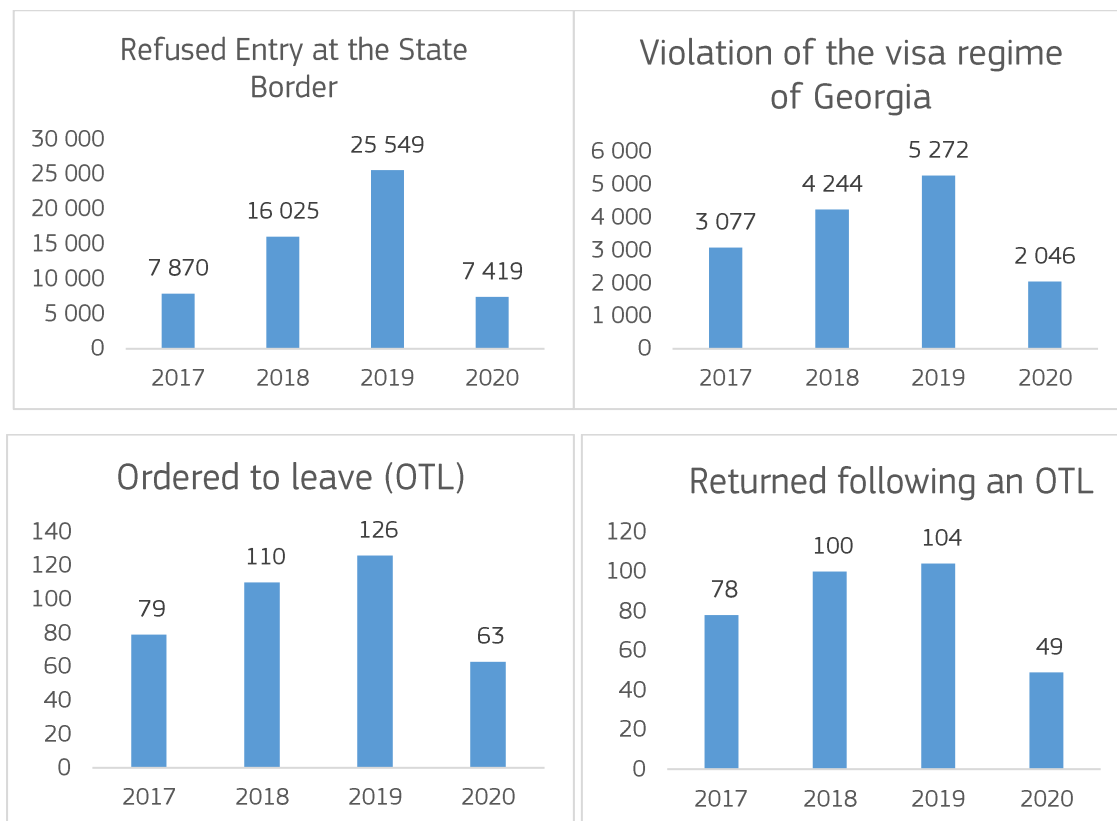
2017			2018			2019			2020		
Nationality	Nr	% of total	Nationality	Nr	% of total	Nationality	Nr	% of total	Nationality	Nr	% of total
China	12136	44%	China	21009	66%	China	30811	68%	China	3635	52%
India	9451	34%	India	4993	16%	India	8161	18%	India	1660	24%
Egypt	2957	11%	Egypt	1468	5%	Egypt	2017	4%	The Philippines	504	7%
The Philippines	848	3%	The Philippines	1010	3%	The Philippines	1601	4%	Egypt	452	6%
Indonesia	433	2%	Indonesia	513	2%	Indonesia	594	1%	North Macedonia	192	3%

SOURCE: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia



IRREGULAR MIGRATION INCLUDING MIGRANT SMUGGLING

Figure 10: Irregular migration data in Georgia

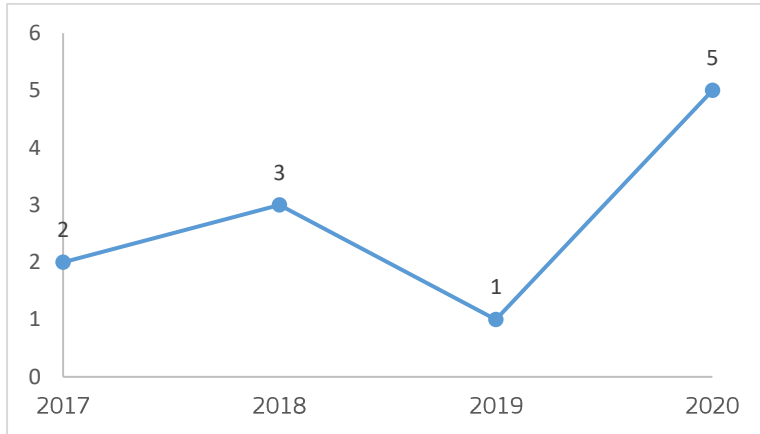


SOURCE: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia



TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Figure 11: Number of residence permits issued to victims/statutory victims of Trafficking in Human Beings

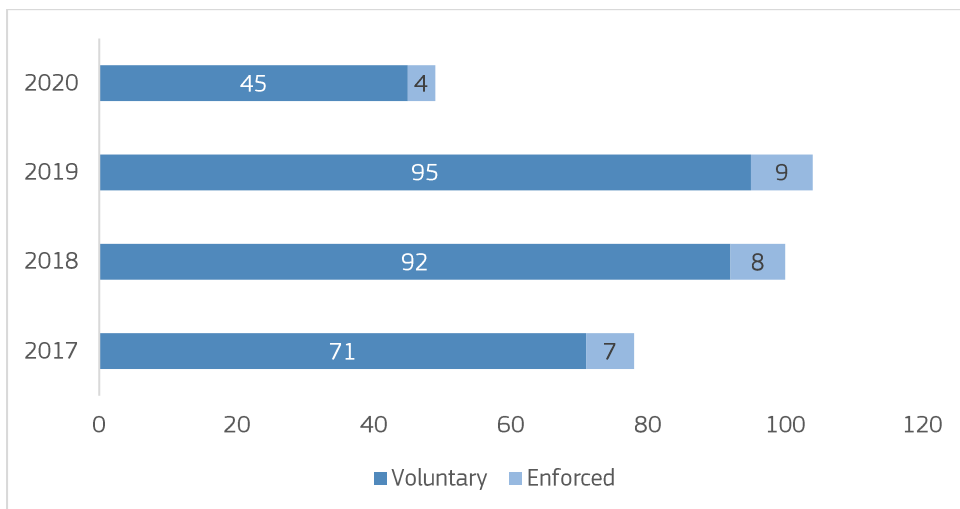


SOURCE: Public Service Development Agency of Georgia



RETURN AND READMISSION

Figure 12: Number of Foreigners who left the territory of Georgia following an OTL by type of return



SOURCE: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia