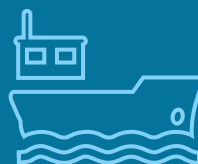


**State Commission on
Migration Issues**



2019 Migration Profile of Georgia



**2019
Tbilisi, Georgia**

Unofficial Translation



PUBLIC SERVICE
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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Contents

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations¹

	Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part
	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) between Georgia and EU
	“Enhancing Georgia’s Migration Management 2”
	European Migration Network /EC/
	Statistical Office of the European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
	National Statistics Office of Georgia
	Human Development Index
	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
	International Organization for Migration
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia
	Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia
	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture And Sport of Georgia
	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia
	Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
	National Agency of Public Registry
	Policy and Management Consulting Group
	Public Service Development Agency
	State Commission on Migration Issues
	State Security Service of Georgia
	Interagency Council on Combating Trafficking in Persons
UMAS	Unified Migration Data Analytical System
	United Nations
	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
	United Nations Development Programme
	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USA	United States of America
	EU-Georgia Visa Liberalization Action Plan

¹ On the SCMI website can also be found: the Glossary on Migration and the Glossary of Migration Related Acronyms, http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=129&clang=1 last accessed: 26.07.2019.

General Country Information



Georgia: Key Facts

Area	69,700 km ²
Land borders	1,839 km
Bordering countries	Armenia (224 km) Azerbaijan (446 km) Turkey (275 km) Russia (894 km)
Coastline	315 km
National currency	Georgian Lari (GEL)

GDP (at current prices, billion USD)	16.2 (Preliminary data for 2018)
GDP per capita (at current prices)	4,345.5 USD (Preliminary data for 2018)
Population	3,723,464 (as of 1 January, 2019)
Ethnic composition (2014 Census)	Georgians - 86.8% Azerbaijani - 6.3% Armenians - 4.5% Russians - 0.7% Other - 1.7%
Capital	Tbilisi
Population of Capital	1,171,079 (as of 1 January, 2019)
Official languages	Georgian, Abkhaz (in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia)
Natural Increase Rate (per thousand population)	1,2 (2018)
President	Salome Zourabichvili
Prime Minister	Giorgi Gakharia
Speaker of the Parliament	Archil Talakvadze

Introduction

The 2019 Migration Profile of Georgia is the third document of the Medium Migration Profile (MMP) format, elaborated within the framework of the State Commission on Migration Issues, and based on the existing experience of Migration Profile (MP) development.

The present document was developed on the basis of the data and recommendations provided by the member agencies of the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI),² thus helping to create a comprehensive picture of the ongoing migratory processes in the country.³

The main aim of the Profile is to offer updated information on the country's main migratory trends to all kinds of readers in a simple format through the collection and analyzing of official data and statistics, and by doing this, support the work of researchers and academics engaged in the field. Moreover, the document is intended to be used for evidence-based migration policy planning and implementation.

The 2019 Migration Profile primarily describes the international and internal migration-related statistical data for the period 2015-2018. Unlike the 2017 MMP, the data in the 2019 edition became more detailed and focused on visualization, thus making interpreting it easier for the increased number of diverse readers and leaving space for analysis and interpretation. The Migration Management chapter, which describes the legislative and institutional framework of the country's migration policy, is the most extensive textual part of the document and provides the reader with the context required to properly interpret the data presented in the profile. At the same time, the conclusion section of the MP allows the reader to get acquainted with the main migration trends of the country in a short period of time, without exploring the data in detail.

Similar to the 2017 MMP, this Profile is based predominantly on the data obtained from Geostat, Eurostat, the United Nations (UN), administrative data from various Georgian and foreign government entities, as well as the results of the studies commissioned by various state entities. It should be highlighted that the 2019 MMP used the data processed by the Unified Migration Data Analytical System (UMAS) for the first time and presented it in the immigration chapter.

In the process of Profile development, the SCMI also relied on the experience and recommendations of the representatives of international organizations, local civil society and academics involved in the migration management processes and possessing extensive knowledge in the field. Thus, we hope that the process of the development of the MMP has been improved and made the document a trustworthy source for interested stakeholders working in the spheres of academic research, education, policy design or management.

² Members of the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI): Ministry of Justice (MoJ); Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA); State Security Service (SSSG); Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA); Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoH); Ministry of Education, Science, Culture And Sport (MoE); Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MoESD); Ministry of Finance (MoF); National Statistics Office (Geostat).

³ The Profile was prepared by the experts of the SCMI Secretariat within the framework of the EU funded projects - "Support to Sustained Effective Functioning of the State Commission on Migration Issues" and "ENIGMA 2". The editing of the MMPs English version was supported by the IOM Mission in Georgia.

Migratory Trends in Georgia

Brief Summary

EMIGRATION

- In 2018, the number of emigrants from Georgia has increased. As before, the largest number of emigrants from Georgia reside in Russia;
- Since the introduction of visa-free travel to EU/Schengen countries, the number of visits of Georgian citizens to these countries has been increasing. In 2017-2018, top destination countries (by number of visits) for Georgian citizens were Germany, Italy and Greece;
- The number of Georgian citizens with valid residence permits in EU countries has been on the rise since 2015. In 2018 (compared with 2017), the number has increased by 8.5%. 60% of Georgian citizens holding EU residence permits reside in Greece, Italy and Germany. Majority of them possess residence permits for the family reunification reasons and labour (remunerated) activities;
- Since the introduction of visa-free travel to EU/Schengen area, these countries have seen a rapid increase in the number of asylum requests by Georgian citizens. The majority of Georgian citizens claiming asylum did so in France and Germany;
- A significant majority (approximately 95%) of asylum applications by Georgian citizens to EU/Schengen countries have been considered as unfounded and rejected by the relevant authorities;
- Since the introduction of visa-free travel to EU/Schengen countries, the number of cases of Georgian citizens being refused entry to these countries has increased significantly. Herewith, the number of refusals at the air border considerably exceeds refusals at the land and sea border. The most frequent reason for refusal of entry was failing in justification of purpose and conditions of stay;
- The number of Georgian citizens found to be illegally present in the EU/Schengen countries has considerably increased in 2018. The largest number of illegally present Georgian citizens were detected in Germany, France and Greece;
- In recent years, the number of Georgian citizens arriving in Russia has been decreasing, while the number of Georgian citizens leaving Russia has been increasing;
- The statistics of regular migration (permanent residence permits and naturalisation) to USA by Georgian citizens has been relatively stable. The majority of permanent residence permits to Georgian citizens were issued on the grounds of being immediate relative of a US citizen or due to winning in the Diversity Visa Lottery ("Green Card") program;
- The number of Georgian citizens holding residence permits in Turkey has been increasing. Primarily, Georgian citizens stay in Turkey on the basis of residence permits issued for work, family reunification as well as short-term residence permits;
- In the past four years, the volume of remittances to Georgia from foreign countries has increased by 32%. Moreover, in 2018, the total monetary value of remittances has exceeded Foreign Direct Investment. The largest amount of remittances to Georgia still come from Russia. However, the monetary value of remittances from Israel and EU member states has been increasing in recent years.



RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

- In 2018, the number of Georgian citizens returned from EU countries has substantially increased and it is anticipated that the trend will continue in the following years. The majority of migrants returned from Germany, Greece and France;
- In the past two years, the number of migrants returned in the framework of the IOM's Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme has surged. The majority of returnees, who took advantage of the AVRR programme came from Greece and Germany;
- Given the rising trend of return migration, the number of beneficiaries of the AVRR and state reintegration programme is increasing annually. This is expected to require an increase in funding for the state reintegration programme.



IMMIGRATION

- The analysis of data on immigrant flows using UMAS has allowed to identify groups of foreign citizens, arriving in Georgia for short-term visits and whose migration can be characterized as circular in nature. They return to Georgia on an annual basis and stay from 1 to 6 months during a year. The majority of them are citizens of neighbouring countries, primarily staying in the country from 1 to 2 months during a calendar year;
- The statistics of issued and valid residence permits (cards) indicate that immigration to Georgia is increasing. Foreigners are predominantly granted temporary residence permits. Permanent residence permits are mainly issued to citizens of Georgia's neighbouring countries;
- The largest group of immigrants either studies or works in Georgia. Since 2017, the cases of registration of ownership rights on immovable property by foreigners in Georgia have increased considerably as well as the number of short-term residence permits issued on those grounds. The short-term residence permits are issued primarily to citizens of Iran;
- The majority of foreigners who have arrived in Georgia for educational purposes study in one-cycle medical programmes. A large proportion of those are citizens of India and Azerbaijan;
- A large percentage of immigrants employed in Georgia are citizens of Turkey, India, China and Iran. The majority of foreigners are employed in Tbilisi in construction and wholesale or retail trade sectors;
- Compared to 2015, the number of asylum seekers in Georgia has decreased and remained stable in the past three years. Main countries of origin of asylum seekers have been changing in the last four years. The share of refusals to asylum applications in total number of yearly decisions has also been increasing;
- In 2018, compared to previous years, the number of cases of foreigners being refused entry to the country has doubled. The largest share of refusals are of citizens of Iran (20%) and India (14%);
- The number of registrations of the ownership right on immovable property (mainly apartments) by foreigners has considerably increased, while the number of registrations of the ownership right on agricultural land has decreased. 40% of the registrations of the ownership right on immovable property by foreigners in Georgia are carried out by Russian citizens;
- The dynamics of registrations of the ownership right on immovable property by foreigners corresponds to the dynamics of property and land taxes paid by the foreign citizens to the state budget;
- The number of business entities founded by foreigners has been rising. Predominantly, all founders of such entities are foreign citizens, with citizens of Iran, Turkey and Russia constituting more than half;

- The companies established by foreign citizens have been increasingly contributing to total turnover of the business sector. Moreover, the amount of taxes paid to the budget by foreign individuals and business entities founded by foreigners has also been on the rise;
- The number of foreign pupils in secondary schools has been increasing. The majority (62%) of foreign pupils in Georgia are registered in public schools. As for vocational education, only a small proportion of foreign citizens register for vocational educational programmes. The same trend can be observed in healthcare and social assistance programmes.

INTERNAL MIGRATION

- The large number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Tskhinvali Region reside in Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Shida Kartli, while IDPs from Abkhazia are primarily resettled in the Tbilisi and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region;
- In the past four years, the largest number of ecological migrants (eco-migrants/environmentally displaced persons) were registered in 2017. Moreover, the number of eco-migrants resettled annually significantly falls behind the number of eco-migrants registered in the same year. The majority of eco-migrants are registered in Adjara, Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, while most of eco-migrants are resettled in Adjara, Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti and Guria;
- The population of rural settlements in Georgia is steadily declining every year, which has manifested itself in changing urban/rural structure. According to the data of the past four years, the share of urban population in total population has increased from 57.7% to 58.7%. Unlike other regions of Georgia, the population of Tbilisi and Adjara autonomous republic has been on the rise.

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

- In recent years the crime statistics for human trafficking has not changed substantially;
- Victims/statutory victims of trafficking in persons are mainly citizens of Georgia and Uzbekistan. The most common form of human trafficking crime is trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Situation Analysis

In Georgia, as well as elsewhere, the factors contributing to emigration and immigration are complex, ranging from economic, social and political changes to individual decisions. There were period in Georgia's recent history, when emigration was mainly caused by political instability and security threats (e.g. armed conflicts). Since that time, economic and social factors have become more prominent in influencing increase in emigration flows. Along with the other factors promoting emigration, already established diaspora networks and migrant communities play a significant role and can also encourage migration.

Economic reforms implemented in the country during the past decade, along with increased political stability and security, have fostered an increase in immigration flows. However, this has not reduced the emigration level, presumably because in comparison with the main destination countries of Georgian migrants, the Georgian economy offers own citizens comparatively limited opportunities for employment, remuneration, social assistance and quality of life.

To combat this situation and improve the well-being of the population, significant economic reforms have been (and are still being) implemented in Georgia, aimed at simplifying entrepreneurial activity and creating a more attractive investment climate. The Georgian economy has been expanding steadily for the past decade and further growth is anticipated in the coming years. According to Geostat data, Georgia's GDP in 2018 exceeded 16.2 billion USD, with GDP per capita amounting to 4,345.5 USD.⁴

Georgia's external trade turnover has also been increasing, supported by concessionary external trade regimes and the country's liberal trade policies. *The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area* (DCFTA) agreement with the European Union entered into force in September 2014. It should also be mentioned that Georgia is the first country in the region to have signed a free trade agreement with China.

According to the World Bank's [Doing Business 2019](#) report, Georgia holds 6th place among 190 countries. In the "Economic Freedom of the World" 2018 report from [Fraser Institute](#), Georgia's ranking improved by two positions compared to last year – moving to 7th place among 162 countries. According to [The Heritage Foundation's](#) Index of Economic Freedom 2019, Georgia ranks 16th position among 180 countries, still with a "mostly free" status and 8th position within 44 countries of Europe. In February 2019, [Fitch](#) also improved the country's credit ranking and Georgia was granted a "BB" status with stable outlook.

The tourism sector is also undergoing dynamic development. From 2010 to 2018, Georgia enjoyed one of the highest visitor growth rates in the world. The total number of international visitors in 2018 exceeded 8.7 million. In the same period, income from international tourism increased significantly and foreign currency inflow exceeded 3.2 billion USD, a 19.1% increase compared to the previous year. In 2018, tourism related activities made up 7.6% of total GDP, compared to 6.8% in 2017.

In terms of public spending on healthcare, Georgia holds a relatively high position in the world. In 2018, the share of healthcare and social assistance spending amounted to 5.8% of GDP.⁵ In 2014, in the framework of health insurance reform, a state universal healthcare programme was introduced to make healthcare more affordable to socially vulnerable populations.

⁴ <https://www.geostat.ge/ka/modules/categories/23/mtliani-shida-produkti-mshp> last accessed: 26.07.2019.

⁵ <https://www.geostat.ge/ka/modules/categories/23/mtliani-shida-produkti-mshp> last accessed: 26.07.2019.

According to the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI), which is calculated based on three principal dimensions: life expectancy at birth, expected and mean years of schooling and GNI per capita,⁶ in the 2018 report,⁷ Georgia ranked 70th among 189 countries and belongs to the High Human Development Country group.

Compared to the previous year, in 2018 the unemployment rate in Georgia was reduced by 1.2 percentage point and reached 12.7%, according to Geostat.⁸ It is noteworthy that in the past nine years, there has been a decreasing trend in the unemployment rate, which has hit its lowest mark in 15 years in 2018. Furthermore, the economically active population reached 63.9% of the total working age population in 2018. Compared to 2017, the level of the population's activity has been reduced along with the level of employment. The employment rate has increased by 1.2 percentage point in urban areas and fell by 3.4 percentage point in rural areas.

⁶ http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018_human_development_statistical_update.pdf last accessed: 26.07.2019.

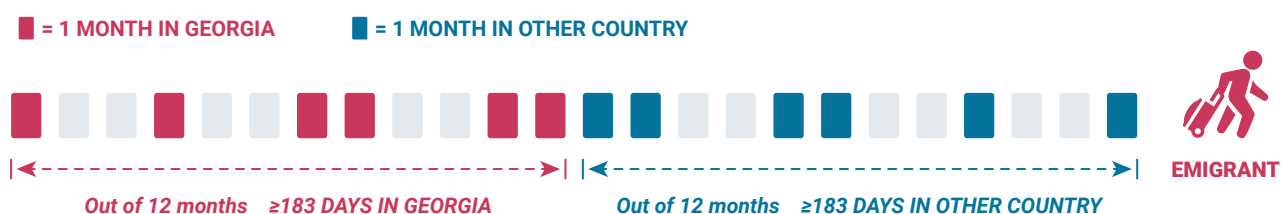
⁷ http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018_human_development_statistical_update.pdf last accessed: 26.07.2019.

⁸ <https://www.geostat.ge/media/23681/dasaqmeba-da-umushevropa-cliuri-2018-%28geo%29.pdf> last accessed: 26.07.2019.

Emigration

Several data sources exist regarding the number of emigrants from Georgia. The current chapter presents and analyses the data from Geostat, UN DESA as well as administrative data of main destination countries of emigrants from Georgia. It should be highlighted that the calculation methodologies used by the three sources vary, which explains the differences in displayed data.

Geostat uses the UN-recommended methodology to determine emigrant flows. Namely, **an emigrant is considered any person (regardless of citizenship)** who meets the following two conditions: 1. Left Georgia in the past 12 months and remained on the territory of another country for at least 183 days (this can be the cumulative sum of several departures) and 2. Georgia was the person's usual place of residence, i.e. before leaving the country the person spent at least 183 days (including through a cumulative sum of several stays) in Georgia in the 12 months preceding departure. Consequently, both Georgian and foreign citizens can be considered as emigrants.



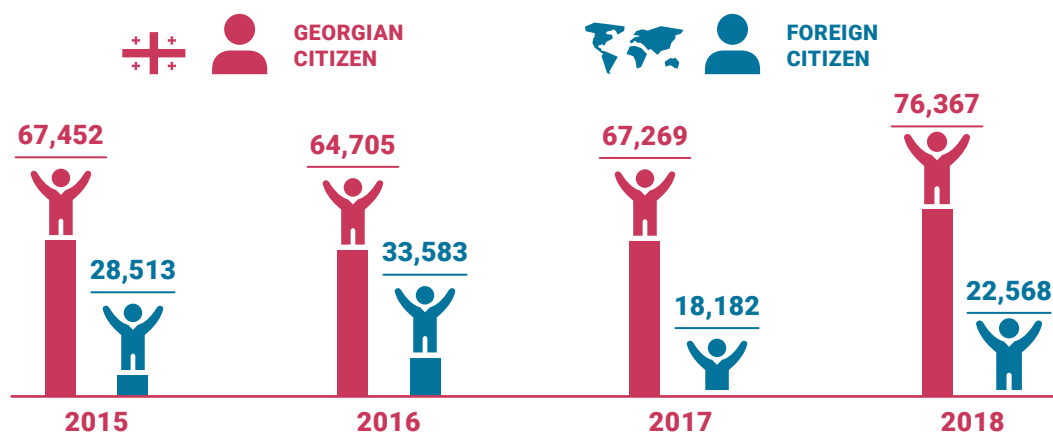
UN DESA calculates number of emigrants mainly based on “foreign-born population” category, therefore, reflects number of emigrant population⁹.

According to Geostat data for the past four years, the largest number of emigrants (including the largest number of Georgian citizen emigrants) were recorded in 2018. As for foreign citizen emigrants, the majority of them are citizens of Russia, Turkey and Armenia. 57% of emigrants, who left Georgia in 2015-2018, are male.



⁹ https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/docs/MigrationStockDocumentation_2017.pdf last accessed: 26.07.2019.

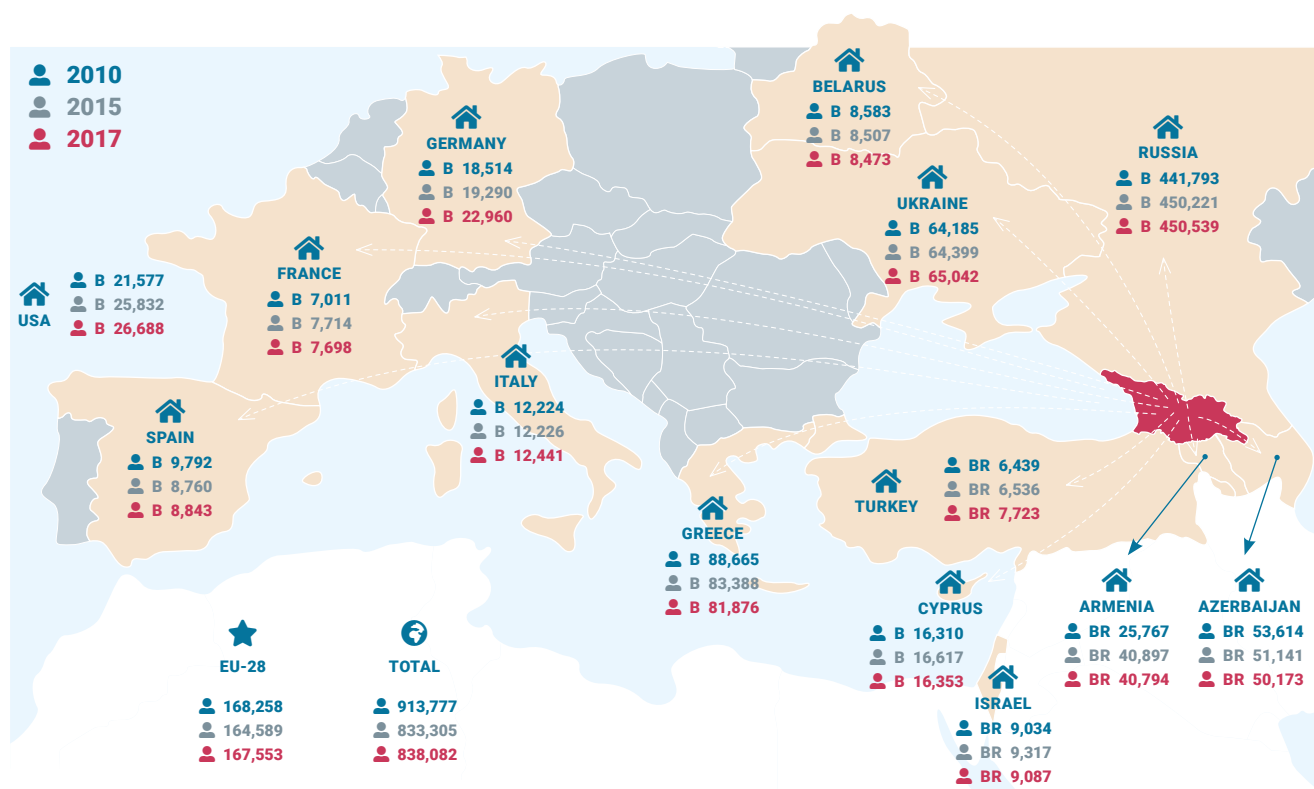
Number of emigrants by year and citizenship¹⁰



SOURCE: GEOSTAT

According to UN DESA data, in the foreign-born population category, Russia includes most of the emigrants from Georgia. Large number of persons born in Georgia are also present in Greece, Ukraine, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Emigrants from Georgia, by main countries of residence (2010-2017)



DATA TYPE: foreign-born population (B), UNHCR refugees (R).¹¹

SOURCE: UN DESA 2017; Includes the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. Estimates refer to 1 July of the reference years, namely, 2010, 2015, 2017.

¹⁰ The category - "Foreign citizen" combines citizens of other countries, stateless persons as well as category, where the citizenship has not been indicated.

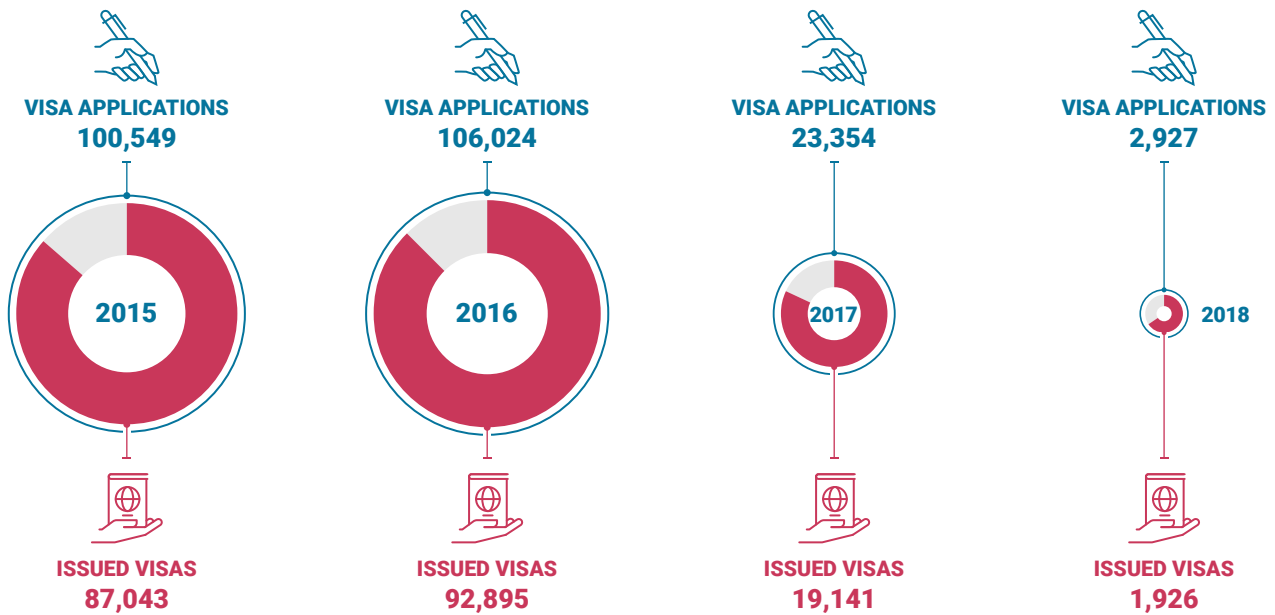
¹¹ The 2015 MMP, which was based on 2013 data, included the number of "foreign citizens" (C) as a type of data for some countries. Since 2015, the database has been updated and is now based only on B and/or R type of data, which accounts for the discrepancies between the pre-2015 data and the data in 2015 MMP and subsequent Profiles.

EMIGRATION TO EU

The period from 2010 to 2017 saw a growing number of Schengen visa applications by Georgian citizens. However, since the introduction of visa-free travel to EU/Schengen countries (28.03.2017), demand for Schengen visas has dropped considerably.



**Total number of applications for Schengen visa and number of issued visas
(including multiple-entry visas), by year**



SOURCE: EUROPEAN COMMISSION¹²

Since the introduction of visa-free travel to EU/Schengen countries, the number of visits of Georgian citizens to these countries has been increasing¹³. In 2017-2018, top destination countries (by number of visits) for Georgian citizens were Germany, Italy and Greece.

¹² Visa Statistics; https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-policy_en last accessed: 26.07.2019

¹³ The computation has been made based on persons who have traveled by air via direct flight to EU/Schengen countries or who have returned to Georgia from EU/Schengen state.

Number of Georgian citizens' visits to EU/Schengen states (by year and destination country)

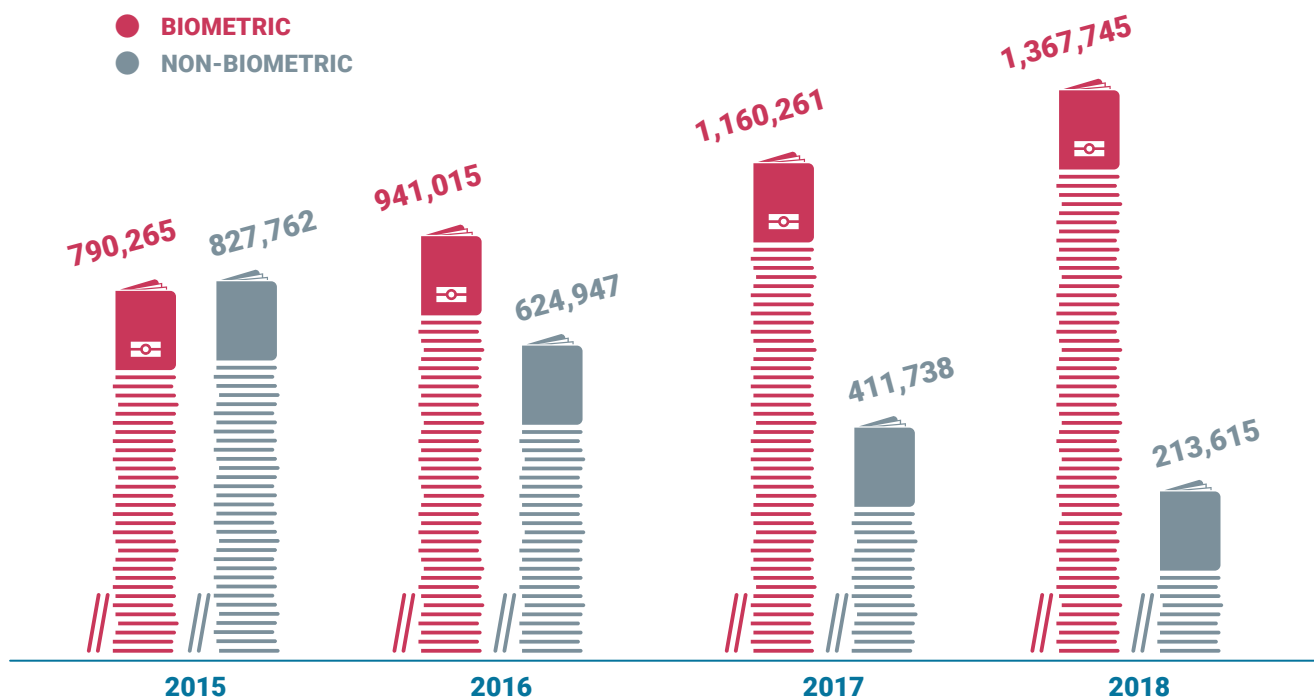
	2017 ¹⁴	2018	TOTAL
GERMANY	✈ 55,722	✈ 86,688	✈ 142,410
ITALY	✈ 27,003	✈ 56,476	✈ 83,479
GREECE	✈ 28,482	✈ 43,214	✈ 71,696
SPAIN	✈ 11,318	✈ 31,695	✈ 43,013
FRANCE	✈ 9,795	✈ 31,585	✈ 41,380
POLAND	✈ 15,304	✈ 29,483	✈ 44,787
HUNGARY	✈ 9,196	✈ 15,551	✈ 24,747
AUSTRIA	✈ 5,376	✈ 12,896	✈ 18,272
CZECH REPUBLIC	✈ 3,467	✈ 12,377	✈ 15,844
CYPRUS	✈ 7,513	✈ 11,347	✈ 18,860
NETHERLANDS	✈ 5,407	✈ 8,901	✈ 14,308
LITHUANIA	✈ 4,392	✈ 6,389	✈ 10,781
BELGIUM	✈ 2,234	✈ 6,195	✈ 8,429
LATVIA	✈ 3,129	✈ 5,937	✈ 9,066
SWITZERLAND	✈ 1,639	✈ 4,160	✈ 5,799
ROMANIA	✈ 683	✈ 3,629	✈ 4,312
SWEDEN	✈ 1,454	✈ 2,898	✈ 4,352
PORTUGAL	✈ 845	✈ 2,001	✈ 2,846
BULGARIA	✈ 737	✈ 1,536	✈ 2,273
ESTONIA	✈ 705	✈ 1,484	✈ 2,189
DENMARK	✈ 529	✈ 1,318	✈ 1,847
CROATIA	✈ 282	✈ 835	✈ 1,117
MALTA	✈ 422	✈ 807	✈ 1,229
FINLAND	✈ 233	✈ 681	✈ 914
NORWAY	✈ 253	✈ 616	✈ 869
SLOVAKIA	✈ 94	✈ 584	✈ 678
LUXEMBURG	✈ 127	✈ 359	✈ 486
SLOVENIA	✈ 126	✈ 299	✈ 425
ICELAND	✈ 66	✈ 114	✈ 180
LIECHTENSTEIN	✈ 4	✈ 3	✈ 7
NOT SHOWN	✈ 3,961	✈ 52	✈ 4,013
 TOTAL	✈ 200,498	✈ 380,110	✈ 580,608

SOURCE: MIA

¹⁴ The statistics has been calculated since the introduction of visa-free travel to EU/Schengen countries (28.03.2017).

Georgian citizens can travel visa-free to EU/Schengen states only by using biometric passports. It is notable that the number of active biometric passports of Georgian citizens has significantly increased in 2017-2018, while the number of non-biometric passports has respectively declined.






























Number of passports (biometric and non-biometric) of Georgian citizens, by years



SOURCE: PSDA

The number of Georgian citizens with valid residence permits in EU countries has been on the rise since 2015. In 2018 (compared with 2017), their number has increased by 8.5%. Georgian citizens, primarily, possess residence permits in these countries issued for labour (remunerated) activity and family reunification reasons.

**Number of Georgian citizens holding valid residence permits in EU/Schengen countries,
by year and reason (as of December 31st of each year)**

























	2015	2016	2017	2018
 FAMILY REUNIFICATION	 25,673	 26,828	 27,287	 28,203
 EDUCATION	 4,738	 4,872	 4,934	 4,692
 LABOUR (REMUNERATED) ACTIVITY	 18,457	 18,504	 18,128	 19,436
 INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION	 2,713	 2,973	 3,068	 3,261
 OTHER	 20,201	 22,201	 25,274	 27,748
★ TOTAL				
	 71,782	 75,378	 78,691	 85,358

SOURCE: EUROSTAT (LAST ACCESSED: 14.08.19)

Note: Presented figures do not include data from Denmark. Moreover, 2018 statistics is missing data from Finland, since the relevant data was not yet available on Eurostat website on the date of last access.

The number of first-time residence permits issued to Georgian citizens in EU member states has also been increasing. The growing trend is particularly visible in residence permits issued for the purpose of labour (remunerated) activity and “other” category.

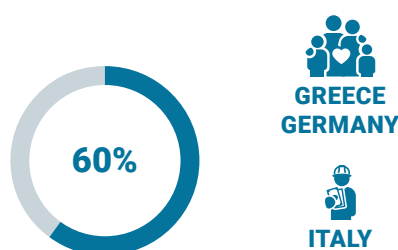
First-time residence permits issued to Georgian citizens in the EU/Schengen countries, by year and reason

	2015	2016	2017	2018
 FAMILY REUNIFICATION	 2,909	 3,125	 3,050	 3,148
 EDUCATION	 1,487	 1,835	 1,746	 1,550
 LABOUR (REMUNERATED) ACTIVITY	 1,706	 1,889	 2,598	 3,435
 OTHER	 1,893	 2,413	 3,021	 4,002
★ TOTAL				
	 7,995	 9,262	 10,415	 12,135

SOURCE: EUROSTAT (LAST ACCESSED 14.08.19)

Note: 2018 statistics is missing data from Switzerland, since the relevant data was not yet available on Eurostat website on the date of last access.

60% of Georgians holding valid residence permits in EU countries reside in Greece, Italy and Germany. The majority of owners of residence permits issued for the purpose of labour (remunerated) activity live in Italy, while holders of residence permits for the purpose of family reunification mainly live in Greece and Germany.



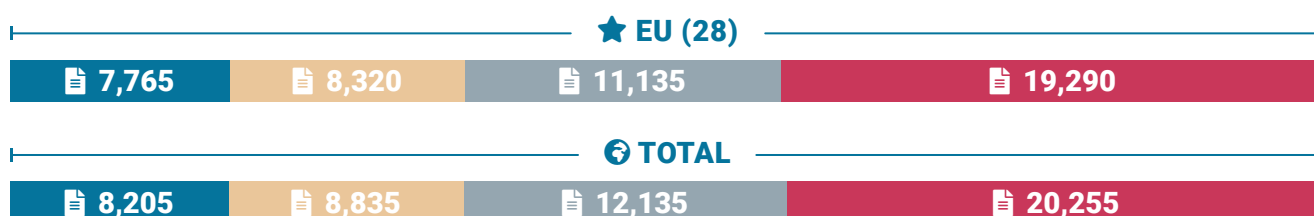
International Protection

Since the introduction of visa-free travel to EU/Schengen, these countries have seen a rapid increase in the number of asylum requests by Georgian citizens. The majority of Georgian citizens claimed asylum in France and Germany.



Number of Georgian citizens' asylum applications, by year and top destination countries



	2015	2016	2017	2018
FRANCE	1,325	1,165	2,100	7,000
GERMANY	3,195	3,770	3,460	4,160
GREECE	385	690	1,105	1,460
ITALY	135	195	540	1,165
SWEDEN	890	720	1,100	1,155
SPAIN	55	70	350	1,020
SWITZERLAND	405	465	670	875
BELGIUM	300	240	470	695
IRELAND	40	75	305	450
AUSTRIA	405	350	455	455
DENMARK	100	75	75	410
CYPRUS	15	20	85	395
NETHERLANDS	265	595	505	375
CZECH REPUBLIC	20	50	130	170
LUXEMBURG	25	65	140	140
OTHER	645	290	645	330



SOURCE: EUROSTAT (LAST ACCESSED: 20.06.2019)

In 2015-2018, the significant majority of asylum applications of Georgian citizens to EU/Schengen countries had been considered as unfounded and were rejected. It is noteworthy that in recent years, recognition rate for asylum applications filed by Georgian citizens has fluctuated around 3 - 5%, one of the lowest rates among the countries of origin of asylum seekers in EU.¹⁵

Number of positive decisions and rejections to Georgian citizens' asylum applications to EU/Schengen countries, by year

	2015	2016	2017	2018
 POSITIVE DECISIONS	✓ 380	✓ 450	✓ 485	✓ 695
 REJECTIONS	✗ 5,375	✗ 6,445	✗ 8,685	✗ 13,700

SOURCE: EUROSTAT (LAST ACCESSED: 20.06.2019)

It should be highlighted that out of 20 EU/Schengen countries, which have a list of safe countries of origin, Georgia has been recognized as such¹⁶ and added to the corresponding list by 15 states. A similar decision made by the Government of Germany in 2018 is awaiting final approval by the Bundesrat.

List of states, which have recognized Georgia as safe country of origin



SOURCE: SCMI WEBSITE¹⁷

Although Norway does not have a list of safe countries of origin, it uses the so-called concept of „safe countries of origin“, based upon which, Georgia is actually deemed a safe country.

¹⁵ <https://www.easo.europa.eu/asylum-trends-overview-2018> last accessed: 26.07.2019

¹⁶ A country where, on the basis of the legal situation, the application of the law within a democratic system and the general political circumstances, it can be shown that there is generally and consistently no persecution as defined in Art. 9 of Directive 2011/95/EU (Recast Qualification Directive), no torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and no threat by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict. *Glossary of Migration Terms*, p. 340, version 6.0, EMN http://migration.commission.ge/files/interactive_glossary_6.0_final_version.pdf last accessed: 26.07.2019

¹⁷ The information is presented as of September 2019 http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=229&clang=1 last accessed: 26.09.2019

Irregular Migration

Since the introduction of the visa-free regime to EU/Schengen states, the number of cases of Georgian citizens being refused entry to these countries has increased significantly. A record number of refusals at the border were registered in 2018, with Germany, Greece, France, Cyprus and Poland leading in this regard. These are the top destination countries (excluding Cyprus) for Georgian visitors, since the visa-free regime has taken effect ([see table on p. 16](#)).



Number of refusals of entry to EU Member States for Georgian citizens, by year and by top countries where the largest number of refusals were recorded in 2018




	2015	2016	2017	2018
GREECE	135	130	885	630
POLAND	505	200	335	590
FRANCE	25	105	235	460
GERMANY	25	40	130	440
CYPRUS	5	15	145	425
OTHER EU COUNTRIES	680	405	1,220	1,495
★ TOTAL EU				
	1,375	895	2,950	4,040

SOURCE: EUROSTAT (LAST ACCESSED: 20.06.2019)¹⁸

Prior to 2017, the majority of Georgian citizens were refused entry to EU countries mainly at land borders. However, since the introduction of visa-free travel, the picture has changed and in 2017-2018 refusals of entry at the air border have significantly outnumbered those at the land and sea borders.

¹⁸ Eurostat data used in this part has been rounded to the closest multiple of 5, which explains any difference between the sum of individual country figures and presented totals.









Georgian citizens refused entry to the EU countries by year and border type

	2015	2016	2017	2018
 LAND	975	490	1,180	1,130
 AIR	380	385	1,735	3,310
 SEA	20	20	35	20
★ TOTAL				
	1,375	895	2,950	4,040

SOURCE: EUROSTAT (LAST ACCESSED: 20.06.2019)

In 2017-2018, the most frequent reason for refusal of entry to Georgian citizens to EU was failing in justification of purpose and conditions of stay. Prior to 2017, the most common cause of refusal was no valid visa or residence permit.

Georgian citizens refused entry to the EU countries, by reason and by year

	2015	2016	2017	2018
 NO VALID VISA OR RESIDENCE PERMIT	965	420	310	185
 NO VALID TRAVEL DOCUMENT	30	95	245	235
 FALSE VISA OR RESIDENCE PERMIT	15	65	80	90
 FALSE TRAVEL DOCUMENT	15	10	10	15
 PURPOSE AND CONDITIONS OF STAY NOT JUSTIFIED	230	185	1,445	1,940
 PERSON ALREADY STAYED/USED 3 MONTHS WITHIN A 6-MONTHS PERIOD	25	25	50	120
 NO SUFFICIENT MEANS OF SUBSISTENCE	45	30	210	835
 AN ALERT HAS BEEN ISSUED	50	45	570	985

SOURCE: EUROSTAT (LAST ACCESSED: 20.06.2019)

The number of Georgian citizens found to be illegally present in the EU member states had been relatively stable (till the end of 2017), but has seen a major increase in 2018. The vast majority of Georgian citizens found to be illegally present in EU countries are male.









Number of Georgian citizens found to be illegally present in the EU member states, by year and gender

	2015	2016	2017	2018
	 4,005	 3,825	 4,315	 7,205
	 1,380	 1,355	 1,385	 1,910

SOURCE: EUROSTAT (LAST ACCESSED: 20.06.2019)

In 2018, the largest number of illegally present Georgian citizens were found in Germany, France and Greece.

Percentage distribution of Georgian citizens found to be illegally present in the EU countries in 2018, by top destination countries

1. GERMANY	39.7%	3,625	
2. FRANCE	15.8%	1,440	
3. GREECE	9.9%	900	
4. POLAND	7.6%	690	
5. SPAIN	5.4%	490	
6. ITALY	4.6%	415	
7. CYPRUS	3.4%	310	
8. OTHER	13.6%	1,250	
Total		9,120	

SOURCE: EUROSTAT (LAST ACCESSED: 20.06.2019)

EMIGRATION TO RUSSIA

Russia remains one of the top emigration countries for Georgian citizens; although in recent years, there was a downward trend in the number of Georgian citizens arriving in Russia, while the number of Georgian citizens leaving Russia has been increasing. Consequently, net migration of Georgian citizens to Russia has declined.



Dynamics of Georgian citizens' Migration to Russia











SOURCE: RUSSIA'S FEDERAL STATE STATISTICS SERVICE

EMIGRATION TO USA

Between 2015-2017, the statistics of permanent residence permits and citizenships granted to Georgian citizens in USA has been relatively stable.























Georgian citizens, who have received permanent residence permit and US citizenship through naturalization, by year

	2015	2016	2017
 PERMANENT RESIDENCE PERMIT	 1,410	 1,635	 1,629
 CITIZENSHIP	 1,027	 988	 889

SOURCE: US DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Between 2015-2017, the majority of permanent residence permits to Georgian citizens in USA were issued on the grounds of immediate family relationship to a US citizen or due to winning the Diversity Visa Lottery ("Green Card") program.

	2015	2016	2017
 FAMILY REUNIFICATION	 111	 142	 132
 EMPLOYMENT	 63	 82	 89
 IMMEDIATE RELATIVE OF US CITIZEN	 734	 900	 824
 WINNING GREEN CARD	 431	 445	 534
 REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER	 68	 64	 48
 OTHER	 3	 2	 2









SOURCE: US DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

EMIGRATION TO TURKEY

In 2017, the number of Georgian citizens holding residence permits in Turkey was 21,465, an increase compared to the previous year (18,511). Primarily, Georgian citizens stay in Turkey on the basis of residence permits issued for work, family reunification as well as short-term residence permits.



Residence Permits issued for work and family reunification, by year

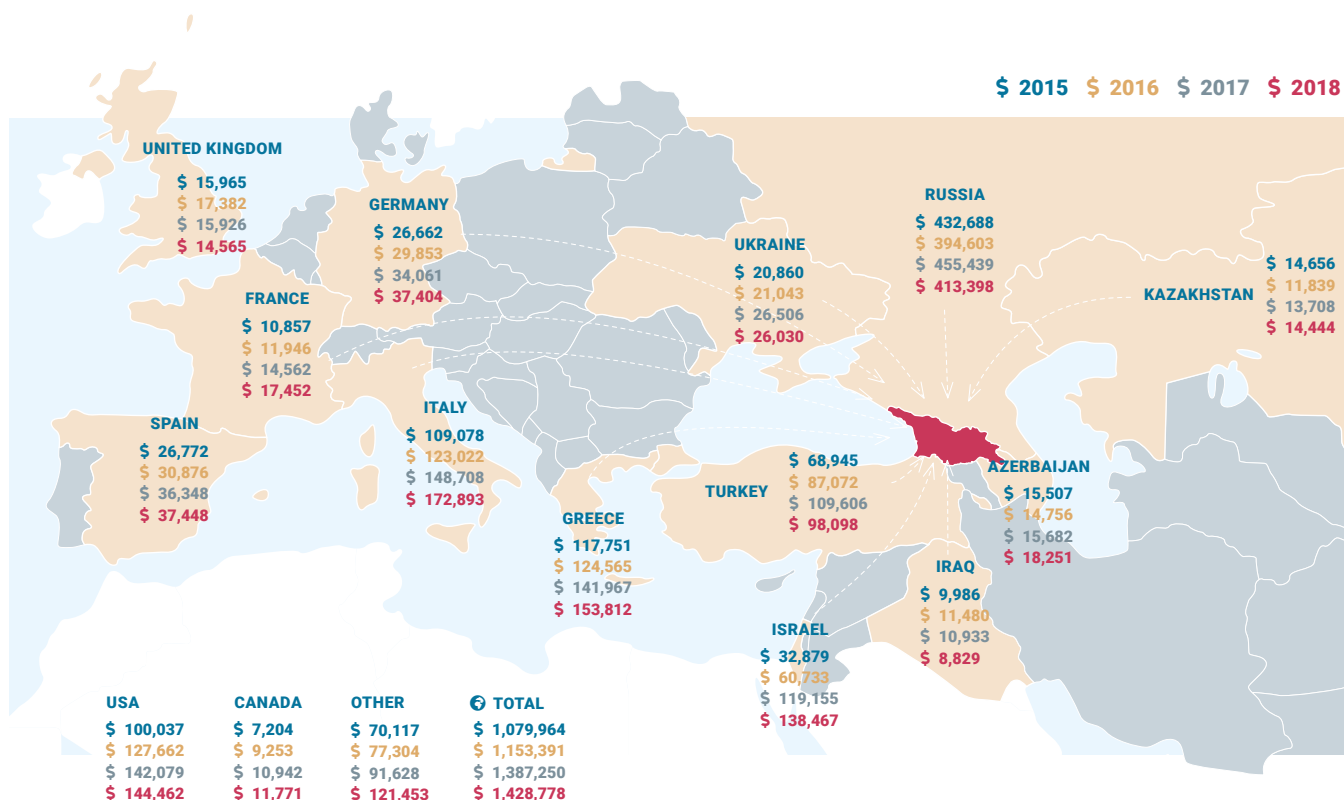
	2016	2017	2018
 FAMILY REUNIFICATION	 2,477	 2,520	 2,603
 WORK	 8,014	 7,287	 8,076

SOURCE: TURKEY'S MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

\$ Remittances

In the past four years, the volume of remittances to Georgia from foreign countries has increased by 32%. Russia remains to be the largest remittance-sending country to Georgia (by total volume of remittances). However, in 2018, compared to 2017, the volume of remittances received by Georgia from Russia has slightly decreased. In recent years, the volume of remittances from Israel has also surged. Moreover, the amount of remittances received from almost all EU member states has been growing.

Remittances to Georgia by major sending countries (in thousands of USD)

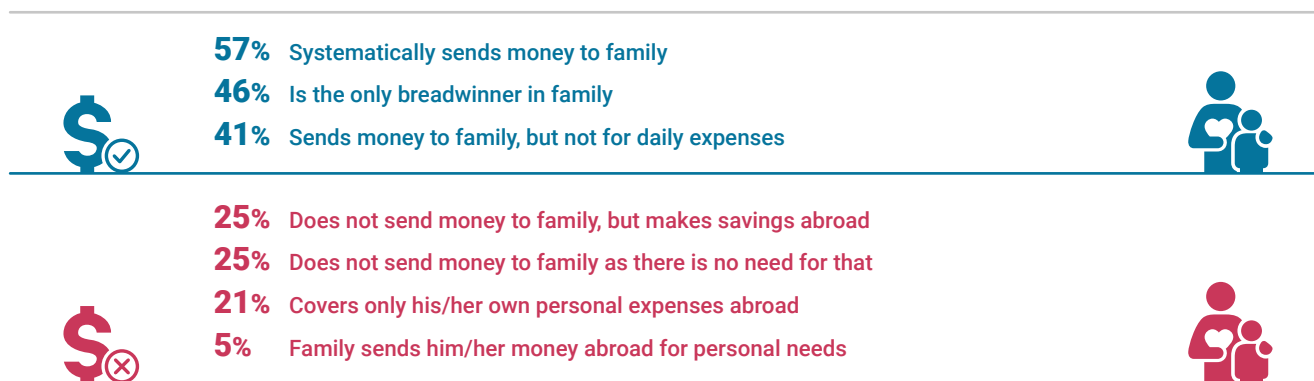


SOURCE: NATIONAL BANK OF GEORGIA

According to the study commissioned by SCMI Secretariat in 2019, almost half (46%) of households with at least one family member, who is currently living or has previously lived overseas, relied on this member as the only breadwinner of the family during his/her stay abroad. Furthermore, over half (57%) of the surveyed households, systematically receive/received money from a family member living abroad.¹⁹

¹⁹ Calculated based on 449 surveyed households.

Dependence of a family-member living overseas towards remittances²⁰



SOURCE: SCMI STUDY

The share of remittances in country's GDP has been increasing steadily since 2015. Despite large volume of remittances received by Georgia annually, the country's economy is not over-dependent on them.

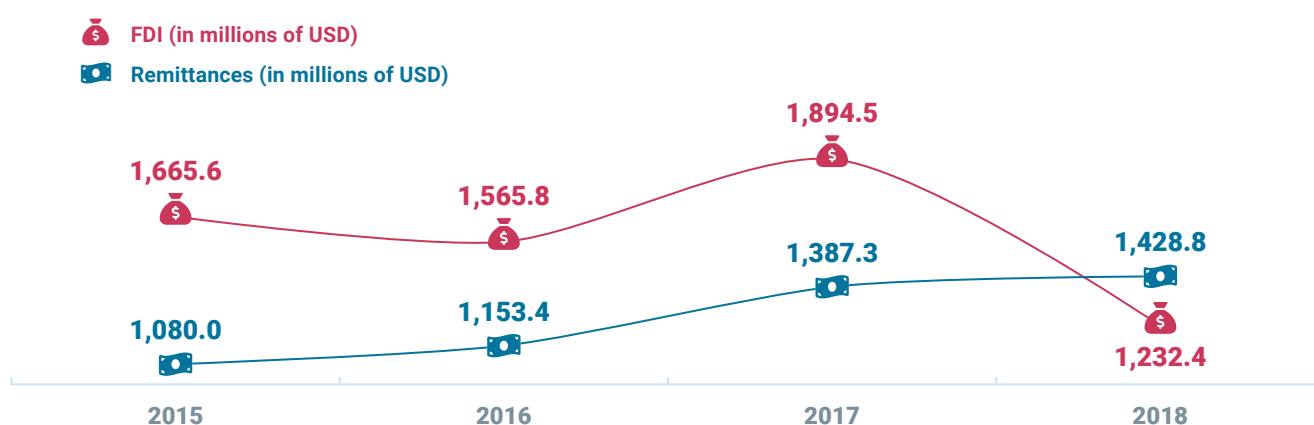
Percentage share of remittances in GDP, by year



SOURCE: NATIONAL BANK OF GEORGIA; GEOSTAT

The inflow of remittances to Georgia from abroad has been more stable than FDI inflow. In 2015-2017, the amount of FDI exceeded the volume of remittances received by the country, annually. However, in 2018, the trend reversed, when remittances surpassed FDI by almost 200 million USD.²¹

Inflow of Remittances and FDI in Georgia



SOURCE: NATIONAL BANK OF GEORGIA; GEOSTAT

²⁰ Given that respondents were allowed to select several answers simultaneously, responses do not sum up to 100%.

²¹ In 2018, the volume of FDI is calculated based on preliminary data.

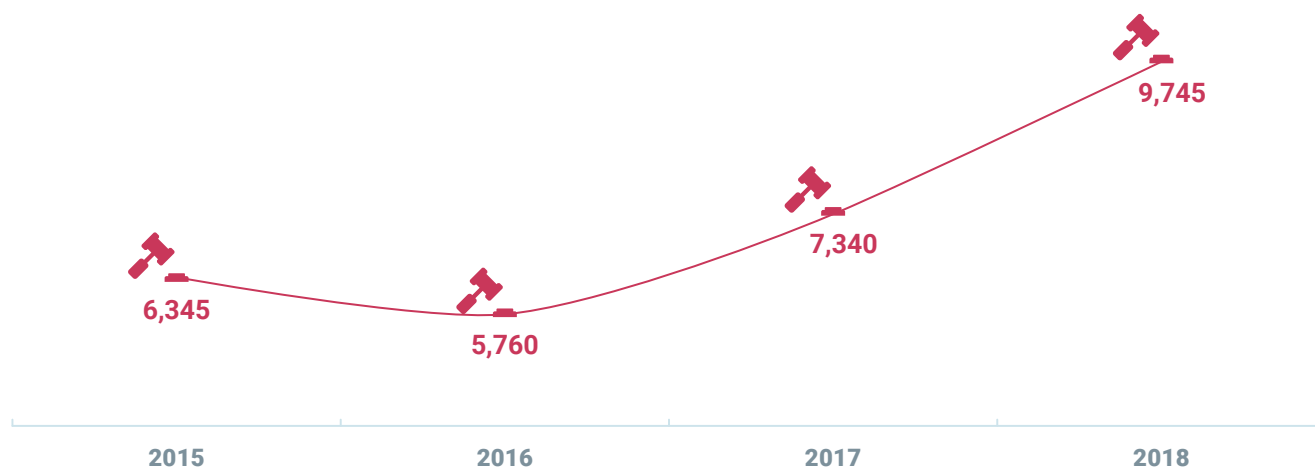
Return and Reintegration

The statistical data on return and reintegration in Georgia is collected from several sources, although the data is often overlapping, fragmented and does not provide a complete picture on return migration. The chapter reviews data of Eurostat, MIA, MoH and IOM. All of these sources register return cases of previously illegally present emigrants.

RETURN MIGRATION

According to Eurostat, in the past two years, the number of Georgian citizens, who were ordered to leave the EU member states, has increased significantly. Germany, France, Greece, Sweden and Poland topped the list of such countries in 2018.



































Number of Georgian citizens, ordered to leave from the EU member states



SOURCE: EURSOSTAT (LAST ACCESSED: 20.06.2019)

Moreover, the number of Georgian citizens forcibly or voluntarily returned from EU member states has also been growing from one year to another.

Georgian citizens returned from EU Member States, by year and major countries

	2015	2016	2017	2018
GERMANY	 760	 1,215	 1,740	 2,240
GREECE	 810	 690	 645	 660
FRANCE	 305	 240	 340	 600
BELGIUM	 180	 190	 365	 565
AUSTRIA	 65	 115	 275	 535
NETHERLANDS	 130	 165	 270	 175
POLAND	 75	 55	 90	 445
SPAIN	 160	 130	 115	 115
OTHER	 655	 565	 920	 1,290

TOTAL			
 3,140	 3,365	 4,760	 6,625

SOURCE: EURSOSTAT (LAST ACCESSED: 20.06.2019)

It should be mentioned that the forcible return of Georgian citizens from EU/Schengen countries is largely carried out in the framework of readmission agreements. The number of readmission applications received from EU/Schengen countries in the past four years has been growing. The largest number of applications were received from Germany, although, in recent years, applications from France, Austria and the Netherlands have also seen an increasing trend.

**Positive decisions on applications from EU/Schengen countries received within
framework of readmission agreement, by country and year**

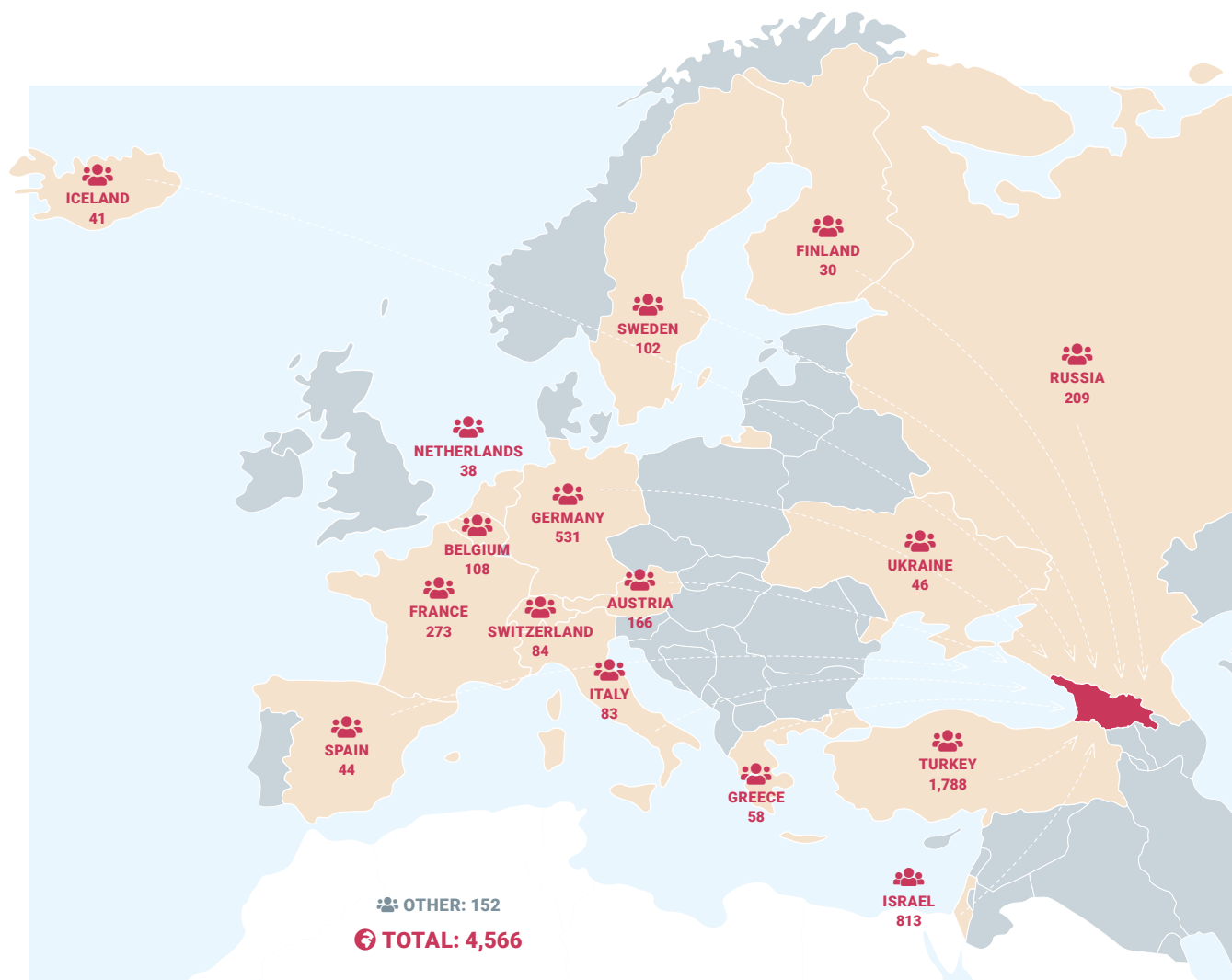
	2015	2016	2017	2018	TOTAL
GERMANY	411	793	1,167	2,085	4,456
FRANCE	196	164	173	337	870
GREECE	168	128	101	73	470
SPAIN	108	95	66	63	332
SWEDEN	94	87	82	60	323
AUSTRIA	24	80	177	213	494
NETHERLANDS	32	70	177	263	542
BELGIUM	61	64	60	32	217
ITALY	58	43	26	18	145
UNITED KINGDOM	18	33	25	16	92
POLAND	21	23	16	19	79
PORTUGAL	4	5	7	2	18
IRELAND	6	3	4	25	38
LITHUANIA	37	3	0	3	43
HUNGARY	4	3	4	1	12
BULGARIA	6	2	3	1	12
FINLAND	1	2	7	9	19
CZECH REPUBLIC	0	1	4	3	8
ROMANIA	2	0	0	1	3
SLOVAKIA	12	0	0	1	13
LUXEMBURG	0	0	2	9	11
SWITZERLAND	106	78	83	126	393
NORWAY	4	2	15	4	25
CYPRUS	2	1	1	0	4
DENMARK	0	1	8	59	68
TOTAL	1,375	1,681	2,208	3,423	8,687

SOURCE: MIA

Georgia annually agrees over 95% of readmission requests received from EU/Schengen countries, which is one of the highest readmission rate among third countries.

The number of forcibly returned (deported) Georgian citizens has increased not only from the EU but from other countries as well. In recent years, Turkey and Israel expelled notably large numbers of Georgian citizens. In 2018, over half of forcibly returned (4,566) persons to Georgia were deported from these two countries.²²

Cases of deportation of Georgian citizens by major countries (2018)



SOURCE: MIA

²² <https://info.police.ge/uploads/5c5ab62e1a0ee.pdf> last accessed: 26.07.2019

The number of migrants returned in the framework of the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme of IOM has also been increasing. The majority of returnees to Georgia came from Germany and Greece.

Number of citizens returned to Georgia, by country and year

	2015	2016	2017	2018	TOTAL
GREECE	636	553	557	575	2,321
GERMANY	2	2	972	1,104	2,080
BELGIUM	61	60	113	385	619
SWITZERLAND	39	19	36	94	188
FINLAND	5	17	28	32	82
POLAND	7	4	2	42	55
LUXEMBURG	0	5	4	39	48
NETHERLANDS	6	11	5	24	46
DENMARK	21	8	0	3	32
IRELAND	1	2	5	10	18
ITALY	1	0	0	14	15
UNITED KINGDOM	2	1	6	6	15
OTHER *	13	7	11	6	38
TOTAL	794	689	1,739	2,334	5,557

SOURCE: IOM (AVRR)

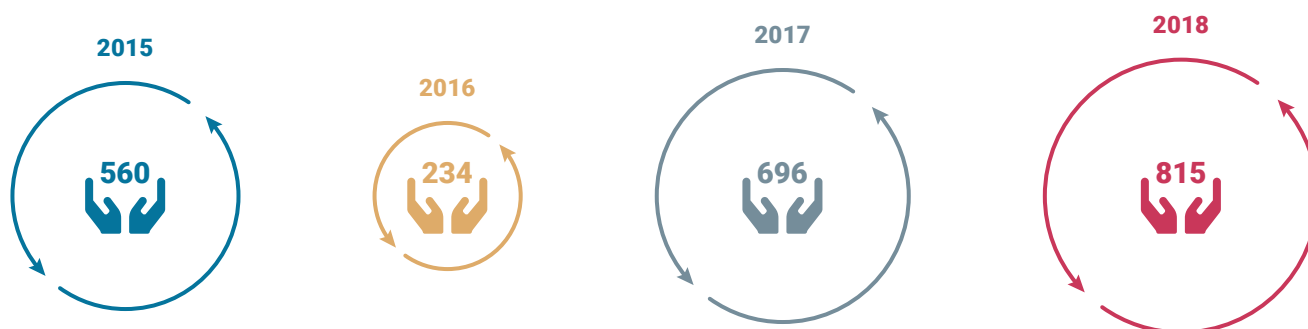
Note: The following countries have been combined in the “other” category: Austria, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Moldova, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Turkey, Ukraine.

REINTEGRATION

In the past four years, 2,305 returned migrants received various types of reintegration assistance within AVRR programme; among them, the largest number of beneficiaries were registered in 2017 and 2018.



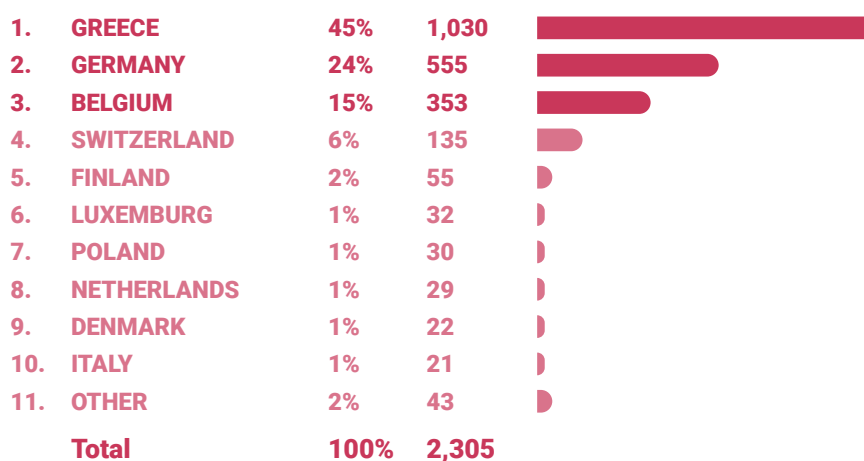
Number of returnees, who have received reintegration assistance, by year



SOURCE: IOM (AVRR)

The majority of returned migrants, who take advantage of reintegration assistance came from Greece, Germany and Belgium.

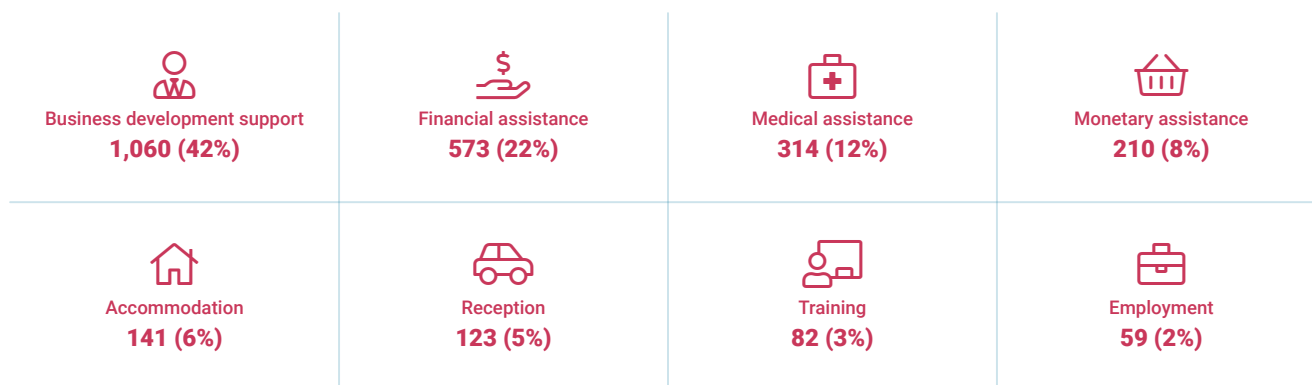
Percentage distribution of returnees (by country), who were assisted in 2015-2018



SOURCE: IOM (AVRR)

In the framework of the program, returned migrants primarily received financial and medical assistance as well as business development support.

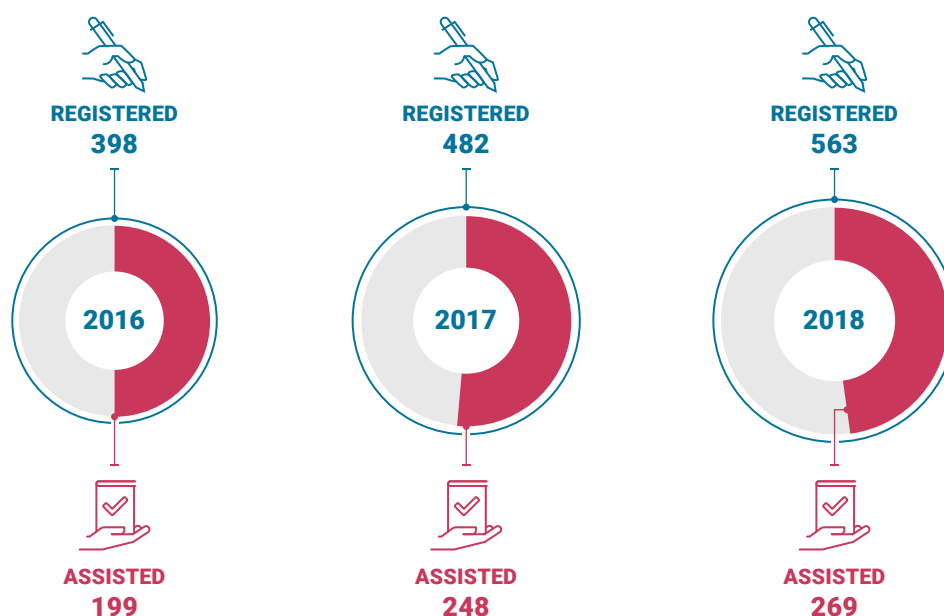
Reintegration assistance provided to returned migrants in 2015-2018, number of assistance cases and percentage distribution by type of assistance



SOURCE: IOM (AVRR)

To facilitate the reintegration of Georgian migrants returning to their homeland, the state has, since 2016, been systematically implementing targeted reintegration programmes and allocating funds from the state budget. In 2016, 600,000 GEL was allocated from the state budget, in 2017 – 590,000 GEL, while in 2018 and 2019 – 650,000 GEL. In the past three years, 1,443 beneficiaries registered in the state reintegration programme; of these, 716 persons met the programme requirements and were assisted.

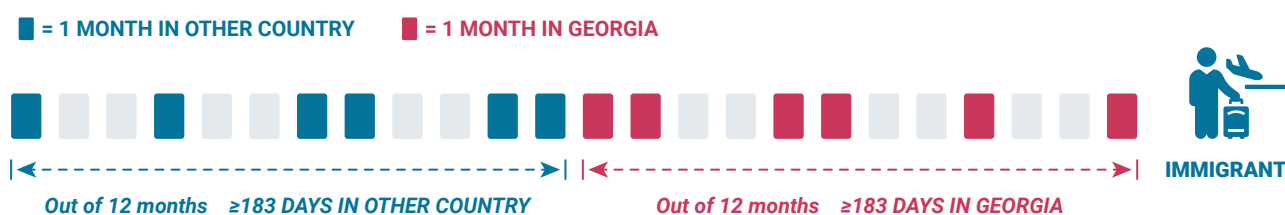
Assistance provided within the state reintegration program, by years



SOURCE: MOH

There are several data sources on the number of immigrants in Georgia. This chapter analyses data from Geostat, the UN DESA and administrative data of Georgian state agencies. The calculation methodologies used by the three sources vary, which explains certain differences in the data shown.

Since 2012, Geostat has been publishing annual data on immigrant flows based on border-crossing information. According to Geostat's methodology, **any person is considered as an immigrant (regardless of citizenship)** if s/he meets the following two conditions: 1. Has crossed a Georgian state border and stayed on the territory of Georgia for at least 183 days (can be the cumulative sum of several stays) in the past 12 months and 2. Georgia was not the person's usual place of residence, i.e. s/he spent at least 183 days abroad in the previous 12 months.²³



The UN DESA calculates the number of immigrants mainly based on the “foreign-born population” category.²⁴ This category may include a segment of population who were born in the countries of the former Soviet Union (during the Soviet Union period or after its dissolution), and who could potentially be citizens of Georgia.

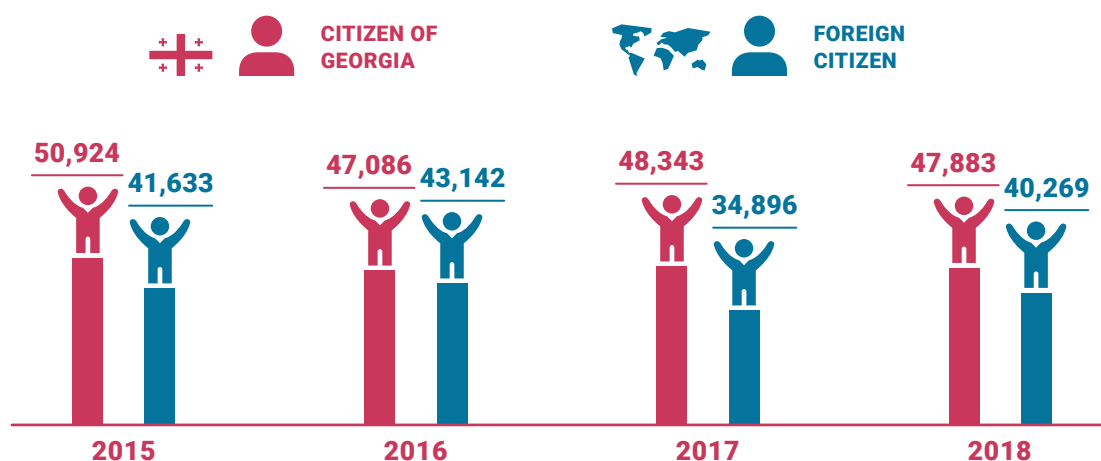
The PSDA issues residence permits to foreigners in Georgia. Residence permits issued for study, work or family reunification purposes, also permits issued to former Georgian citizens, and special and short-term residence permits all grant right of temporary residence for up to six years (initially issued for a one-year period with possible extension for another five years). In contrast, investment and permanent residence permits are issued for an unlimited period.

According to Geostat, there were 88,152 immigrants in Georgia in 2018, over half of them (47,883) being citizens of Georgia. The number of immigrants has seen a downward trend since 2015, but has increased again in 2018.

²³ https://www.geostat.ge/media/19529/Mqr_Population_External-migration_Geo.pdf last accessed: 26.07.2019

²⁴ https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/docs/MigrationStockDocumentation_2017.pdf last accessed: 26.07.2019

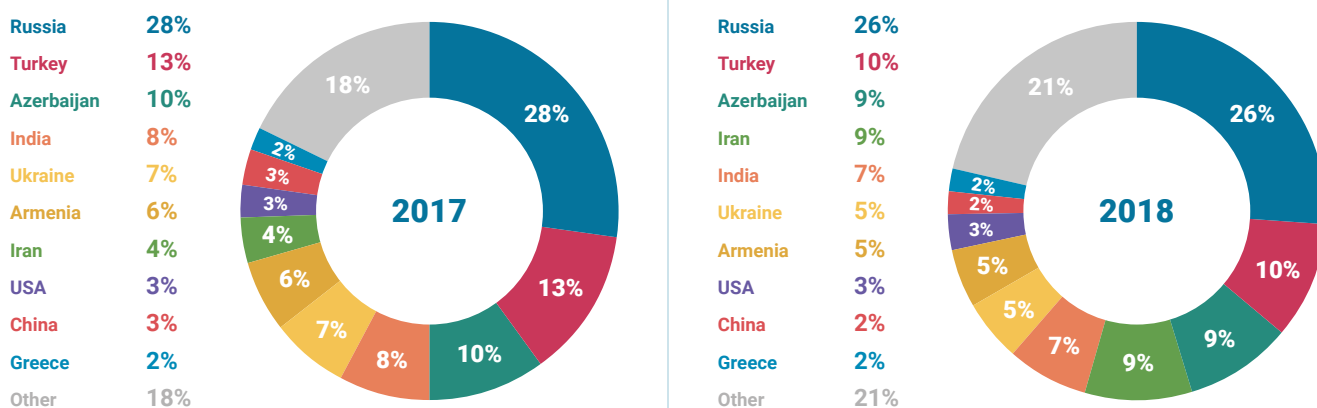
Number of immigrants by year and citizenship²⁵



SOURCE: GEOSTAT

If Georgian citizens are excluded from Geostat data, in 2017-2018 the recorded immigrants were primarily citizens of Russia, Turkey and Azerbaijan. It is noteworthy that in 2018, there was an increase in the number of Iranian citizens as well as their share in total number of immigrants.

Percentage distribution of foreign citizen immigrants by citizenship in 2017 and 2018²⁶



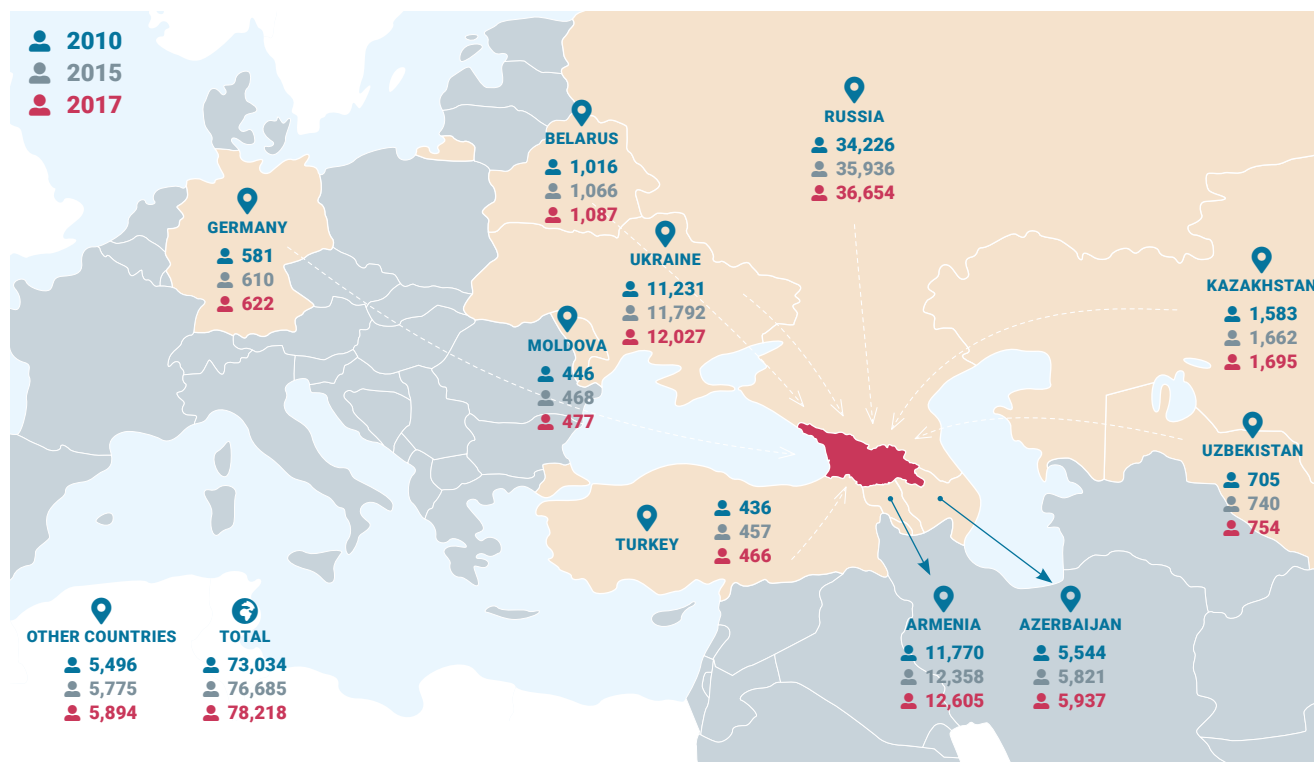
SOURCE: GEOSTAT

²⁵ "Foreign citizen" category comprises foreign citizens, stateless persons as well as category, where citizenship has not been indicated.

²⁶ The percentage has been calculated from the total number of immigrants, excluding Georgian citizen immigrants. The category "other" combines foreign citizens, stateless persons as well as category where citizenship has not been indicated.

According to UN DESA, the foreign-born population in Georgia has been growing since 2010. Over half of immigrants were born in Russia.

Number of immigrants, by country of birth



SOURCE: UN DESA²⁷






Immigration (D category) visa applications in Georgia are received via the Consular Case Management Electronic System (geoconsul.gov.ge). The number of D category visas issued to foreign citizens in the past four years has fallen. The decrease can be primarily attributed to visas issued for labour activities and to a lesser extent to visas issued for study purposes. This can be explained by the legislative changes that came into force in June 2015 and significantly altered visa and residence permit policies in terms of the simplification of procedures. In particular, citizens of 95 countries²⁸ were granted permission to enter the country visa-free and stay on the territory of Georgia for a one-year period. Moreover, it is no longer required to possess the relevant type of immigration visa prior to obtaining a residence permit.

Furthermore, in 2015-2018, D3 (study) type visas were issued primarily to the citizens of India. As for visas issued for labour activities (D1) and family reunification (D4) purposes, their number has decreased significantly since 2016 (due to above-mentioned legislative changes) and the majority of their recipients in the course of last three years were also citizens of India.

²⁷ International migrant stock by destination and origin. <https://bit.ly/2vBZ00j> last accessed: 26.07.2019

²⁸ http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=160&clang=0 last accessed: 26.07.2019

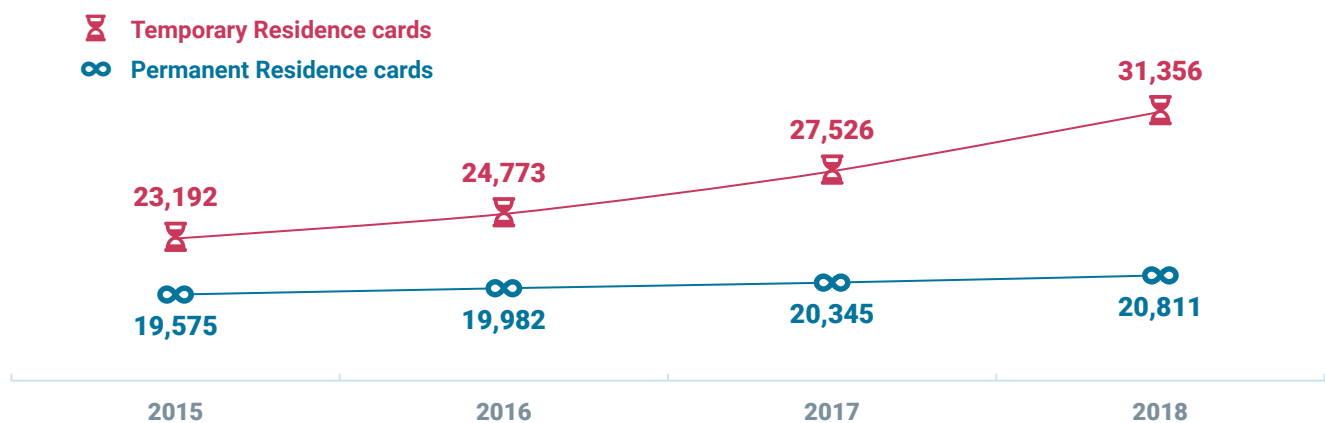
**D category visas issued through Consular Case Management Electronic System
(geoconsul.gov.ge), by visa type, year and citizenship**

				
D1 - Labour activities	D2 - Scientific, sports, cultural or educational activity	D3 - Study	D4 - Family reunification	D5 - Investment
2015: 7,253 VISAS				
TURKEY 943 CHINA 705 INDIA 298 IRAN 214 OTHER 1,246 TOTAL 3,406	CHINA 14 INDIA 13 OTHER 12 TOTAL 39	INDIA 598 AZERBAIJAN 318 NIGERIA 275 IRAQ 138 OTHER 167 TOTAL 1,496	AZERBAIJAN 702 RUSSIA 337 ARMENIA 288 UKRAINE 232 IRAN 166 OTHER 555 TOTAL 2,280	IRAN 10 RUSSIA 8 IRAQ 6 EGYPT 4 OTHER 4 TOTAL 32
2016: 1,741 VISAS				
INDIA 329 CHINA 160 OTHER 43 TOTAL 532	REPUBLIC OF CONGO 2 OTHER 5 TOTAL 7	INDIA 976 NIGERIA 50 NEPAL 30 SRI LANKA 20 OTHER 39 TOTAL 1,115	INDIA 33 EGYPT 13 OTHER 31 TOTAL 77	IRAQ 10 TOTAL 10
2017: 2,535 VISAS				
INDIA 64 CHINA 12 OTHER 31 TOTAL 107	CHINA 10 INDIA 3 TOTAL 13	INDIA 2,168 BANGLADESH 74 NEPAL 36 OTHER 98 TOTAL 2,376	INDIA 18 OTHER 21 TOTAL 39	
2018: 2,164 VISAS				
INDIA 62 CHINA 20 OTHER 37 TOTAL 119	CHINA 13 OTHER 4 TOTAL 17	INDIA 1,778 NIGERIA 81 OTHER 120 TOTAL 1,979	INDIA 30 OTHER 16 TOTAL 46	EGYPT 1 IRAN 1 FRANCE 1 TOTAL 3

SOURCE: MFA

As of December 31, 2018, there were 52,167 valid residence cards issued to foreign citizens in Georgia. In the past four years, number of valid residence cards has been growing annually, primarily due to increase in temporary residence cards.

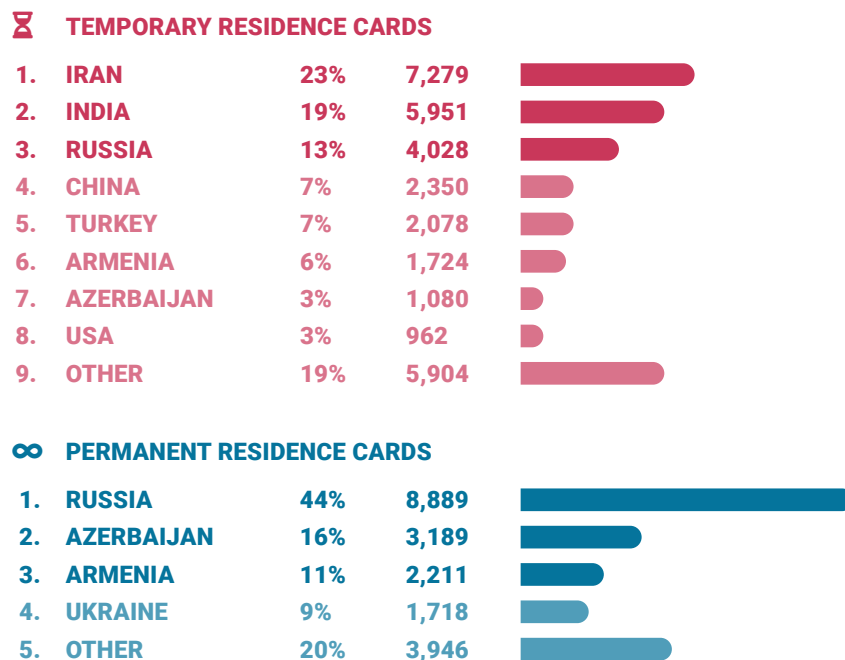
Valid residence cards by year and type (as of December 31st of each year)



SOURCE: PSDA

Mainly, citizens of Georgia's neighbouring countries (Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia) possess permanent residence cards, while citizens of Iran, India and once again Russia are primary holders of temporary residence cards.

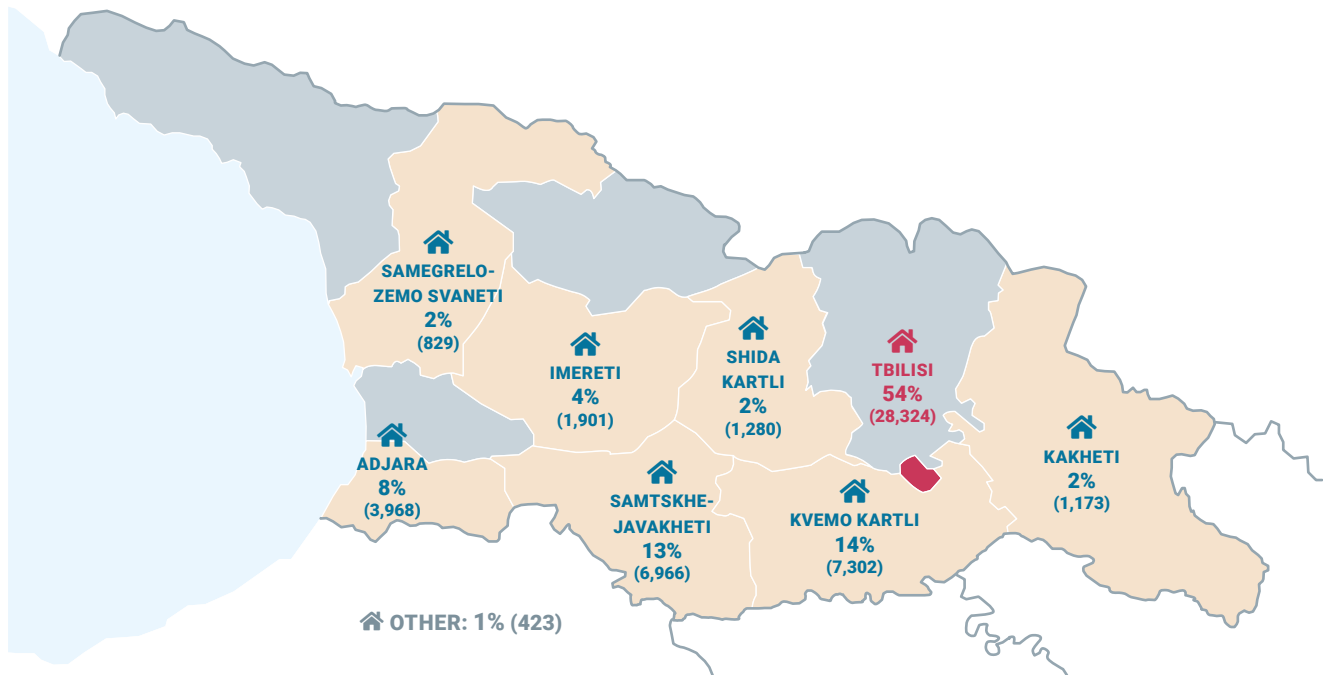
Number of valid residence cards by citizenship and type of residence (as of December 31, 2018)



SOURCE: PSDA

Over half of foreign residence card holders are registered in Tbilisi, while approximately 1/3 are registered in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions.

**Percentage distribution of valid residence cardholders by region of registration
(As of December 31, 2018)**





SOURCE: PSDA

In the past four years, the PSDA has granted 88,493 residence permits to foreign citizens for various purposes. Out of these, the largest number of residence permits was issued in 2015. The fall in the number of residence permits granted in 2016 can be explained by the legislative changes, which entered into force in June 2015 giving permission for visa-free entry and stay on the territory of Georgia for a one-year period to citizens of 95 countries. Regardless of the mentioned regulations, since 2016, the residence permit statistics has seen a growing trend.

Furthermore, the last four years have seen an increase in the number as well as proportion of refusals to grant residence permits. The share of refusals in total decisions has increased from 3% to 23%.

Number of residence permits issued by PSDA and refusals, by year

















































	2015	2016	2017	2018
 NUMBER OF RESIDENCE PERMITS ISSUED	✓ 29,360	✓ 17,223	✓ 19,332	✓ 22,578
 NUMBER OF RESIDENCE PERMITS REFUSED	✗ 889	✗ 1,659	✗ 4,256	✗ 6,598

SOURCE: PSDA

The largest share of residence permits granted in 2015-2018 were residence permits for work and study purposes, both of which belong to temporary residence permit category.

In 2018, the number of study and short-term²⁹ residence permits surged, while number of work residence permits decreased. Moreover, since 2015, the number of permanent residence permits and former Georgian citizen residence permits has also shown a downward trend.

Residence permits issued in 2015-2018, by reason and year

	2015	2016	2017	2018	TOTAL
 WORK	 9,440	 9,666	 9,765	 7,173	 36,044
 STUDY	 4,663	 2,901	 4,138	 6,051	 17,753
 FAMILY REUNIFICATION	 2,636	 1,694	 2,190	 1,876	 8,396
 INVESTMENT	 214	 95	 88	 114	 511
 FORMER GEORGIAN CITIZEN	 4,250	 360	 222	 119	 4,951
 PERMANENT RESIDENCE PERMIT	 7,077	 1,611	 1,537	 1,442	 11,667
 SPECIAL RESIDENCE PERMIT	 1,044	 587	 415	 457	 2,503
 SHORT-TERM RESIDENCE	 36	 309	 977	 5,346	 6,668

TOTAL: 88,493

 29,360	 17,223	 19,332	 22,578
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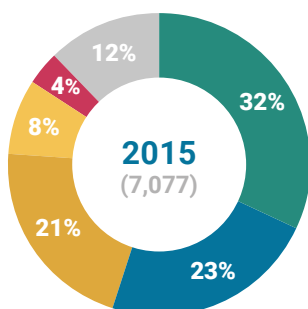
SOURCE: PSDA

²⁹ Short-term residence permits have been issued since June 2015 to foreigners who own immovable property (with the exception of agricultural land) on the territory of Georgia with a market price exceeding the GEL equivalent of 35,000 USD.

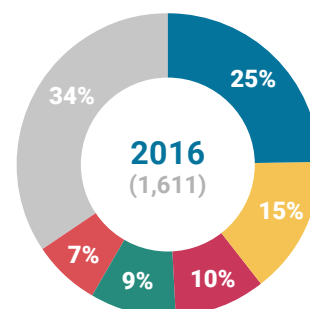
Permanent residence permit holders are mainly citizens of Georgia's neighbouring countries and Ukraine.

Percentage distribution of permanent residence permits by year and citizenship

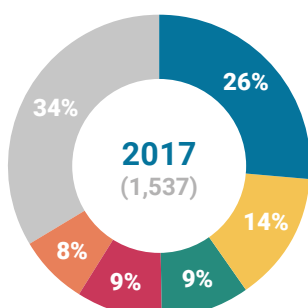
Azerbaijan (2,277)
Russia (1,628)
Armenia (1,500)
Ukraine (559)
Turkey (256)
Other (857)



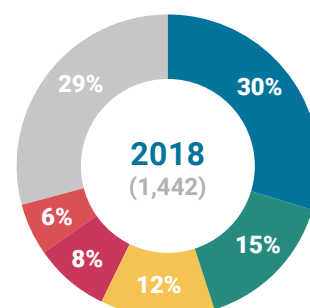
Russia (400)
Ukraine (236)
Turkey (157)
Azerbaijan (151)
China (113)
Other (554)



Russia (406)
Ukraine (216)
Azerbaijan (144)
Turkey (143)
India (114)
Other (514)



Russia (432)
Azerbaijan (218)
Ukraine (177)
Turkey (117)
China (79)
Other (419)











SOURCE: PSDA

The number of short-term residence permits had increased significantly since 2016 and reached 5,346 in 2018. These permits were primarily (87% in 2018) granted to citizens of Iran.

In 2015-2018, majority (66%) of residence permits were issued to male. Female foreign citizens prevail only in family reunification, permanent and special residence permit categories.

**Percentage distribution of persons, who were granted residence permits
in 2015-2018 by gender and residence permit category**

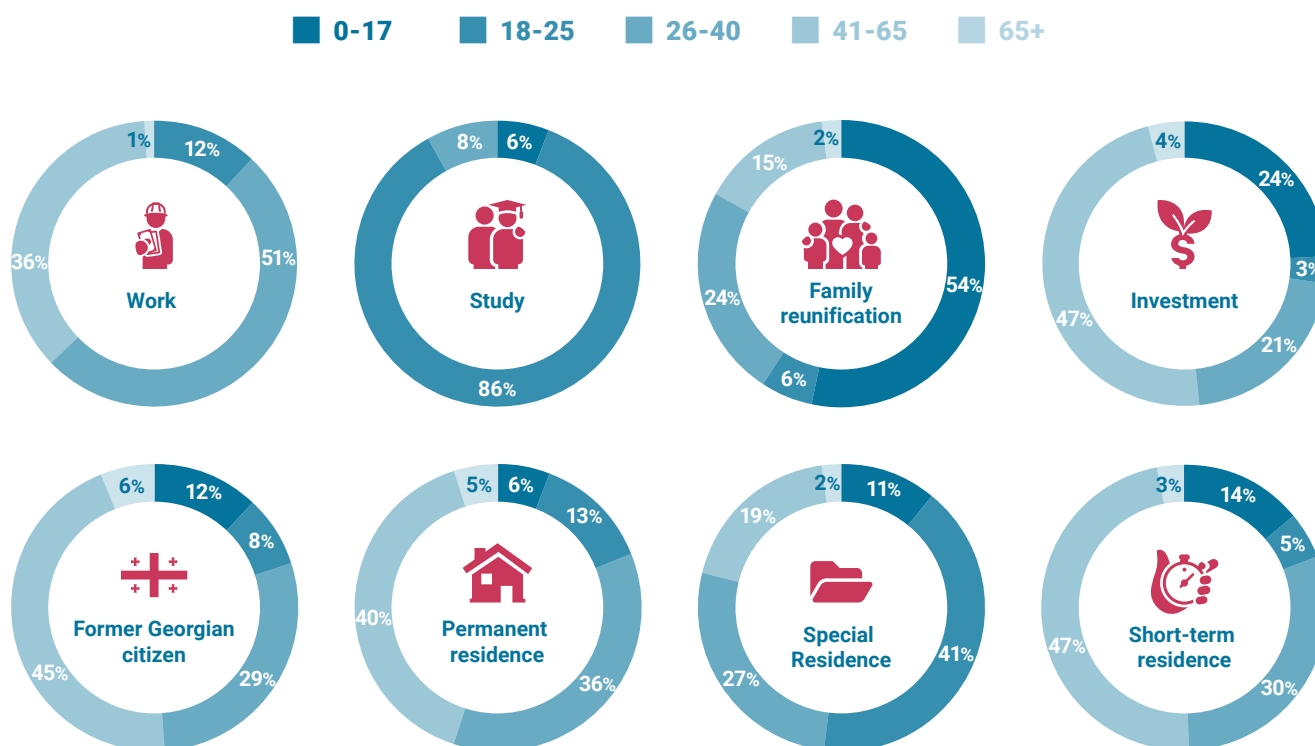
			
Work	Study	Family reunification	Investment
19% 81%	35% 65%	64% 36%	32% 68%

			
Former Georgian citizen	Permanent residence	Special residence	Short-term residence
33% 67%	53% 47%	52% 48%	38% 62%

SOURCE: PSDA

In 2015-2018, majority (89%) of residence permits were granted to persons aged 18-65. Holders of residence permits issued for study purposes primarily fall into 18-25 age category, while over half of residence permits for family reunification were issued to minors (under 18). More than half of work residence permits were granted to persons aged 26-40, while middle-aged persons (41-65) possess over 40% of residence permits in the following categories: Former Georgian citizen, permanent residence permit holder, investment residence permit holder and short-term residence permit holder.

**Percentage distribution of persons, who were granted residence permits
in 2015-2018, by age and residence permit category**



SOURCE: PSDA

Circular (short-term) immigrants

The analysis of the duration of stay of foreigners in Georgia between 2015-2018 shows a short-term, circular tendencies. For the purposes of this report, a foreign citizen is considered a short-term immigrant if s/he stays in Georgia from one to six months during a calendar year.

To study the trends of the circular migration of foreign citizens, cohorts of 2015 and 2016 short-term immigrants were selected. Each group was observed for the consecutive 2 years³⁰ and a person was considered to be a circular migrant if s/he stayed in Georgia from one to six months in each calendar year in the following two-year period (can be one-time merged stay or the cumulative sum of several stays).³¹

The (initial) short-term immigrant group included 138,142 persons in 2015 and 166,377 persons in 2016. In both groups, on average 34% of immigrants returned to Georgia for the same period in the following year. In the third year, for the third round of visits, on average 19% of these immigrants returned to Georgia for the same period. The majority of the circular immigrants are citizens of Georgia's neighbouring countries.



Circular immigrants, 2015 and 2016 groups

	2015 2 nd round	2016 2 nd round	2015 3 rd round	2016 3 rd round
RUSSIA	22,188	23,511	13,427	14,620
AZERBAIJAN	7,492	8,488	4,486	5,006
TURKEY	4,946	5,198	2,706	2,648
ARMENIA	4,358	4,496	2,460	2,468
UKRAINE	1,946	2,250	905	1,048
GREECE	1,060	1,096	619	665
USA	925	1,101	478	568
GERMANY	721	768	398	458
IRAN	509	947	308	464
ISRAEL	463	565	265	320
OTHER COUNTRIES	4,094	4,894	2,073	2,343
TOTAL	48,702	53,314	28,125	30,608

SOURCE: UMAS³²

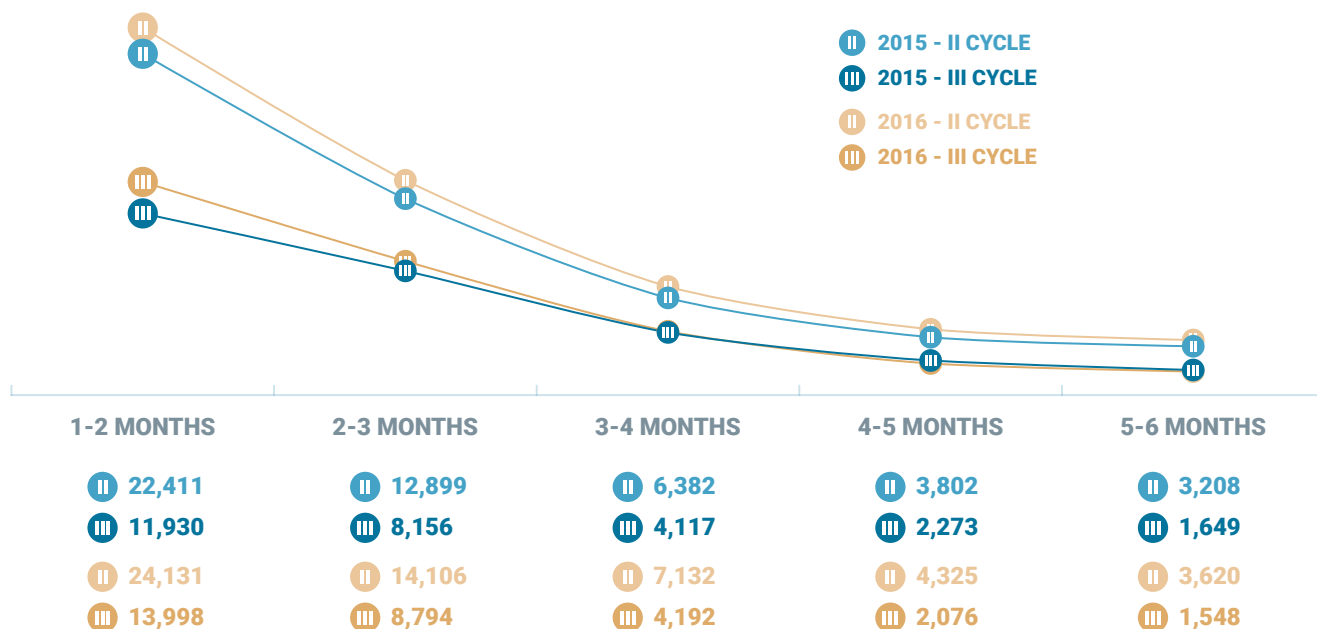
³⁰ Duration of stay in Georgia in 2015-2017 was analyzed for 2015 group and in 2016-2018 for 2016 group. 2018 data is tentative, as analysis also requires 2019 data of border crossings, which was not yet available at the time of preparation of the report.

³¹ A foreign national was considered a circular migrant, if s/he crossed Georgian border in the initial year (2015 or 2016) and stayed from 1 to 6 months in Georgia in the same year, also spent 1 to 6 months in Georgia in each subsequent year and has crossed Georgian border less than 50 times during a calendar year (to exclude migrants living close to the state border).

³² The report was prepared by combining data in UMAS on border crossing, granted citizenships and issued residence permits.

The majority of the above-mentioned circular immigrants stayed in Georgia from one to two months each year (one-time stay or the cumulative sum of several stays). They tend to come to Georgia for short-term visits primarily. The duration of each stay in Georgia of approximately 41% of these migrants was seven days or less.

Duration of stay of circular immigrants in Georgia



SOURCE: UMAS

Approximately 10% of circular immigrants from both cohorts were either Georgian citizens or permanent or temporary residence permit holders, by the time of their last visit.

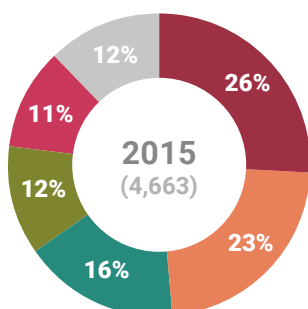
Immigrants who come to Georgia for higher education

In the past four years, the majority of study residence permits issued in Georgia were granted to the citizens of India, Iraq and Nigeria. Moreover, in the last four years, the share of residence permits issued to Indian citizens have been increasing in the total number of annually issued study residence permits, while the share of residence permits granted to citizens of Iraq, Turkey and Nigeria have been falling.

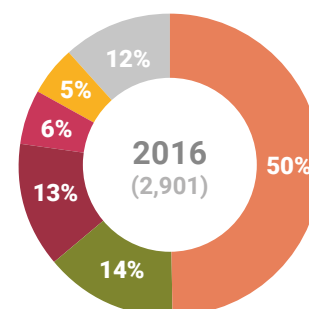


Percentage distribution of study residence permits issued by PSDA, by year and citizenship

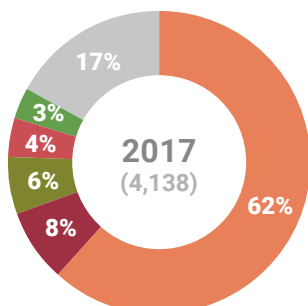
Iraq (1,209)
India (1,062)
Azerbaijan (774)
Nigeria (547)
Turkey (505)
Other (566)



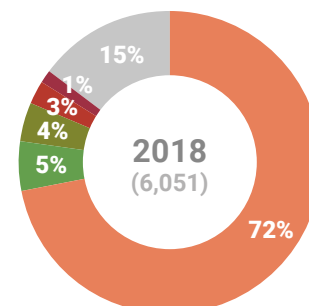
India (1,449)
Nigeria (409)
Iraq (386)
Turkey (169)
Sri Lanka (156)
Other (332)



India (2,556)
Iraq (327)
Nigeria (254)
Syria (162)
Iran (145)
Other (694)



















India (4,486)
Iran (326)
Nigeria (268)
Egypt (158)
Iraq (78)
Other (915)



SOURCE: PSDA

In the past two years, the number of foreigners enrolled in Georgian higher educational institutions has increased considerably, mainly due to admissions of foreign students to one-cycle medical programmes.

Foreign citizens enrolled in Georgian higher educational institutions, by year and level of study










	2015	2016	2017	2018
ONE-STAGE MEDICAL	 1,066	 1,864	 3,938	 3,513
BACHELOR'S	 1,516	 1,058	 1,230	 1,188
MASTER'S	 119	 125	 173	 183
PhD	 33	 31	 19	 4

SOURCE: MOE

Note: 2018 data is incomplete, as the heads of higher educational institutions are obliged to enroll eligible high-school graduates/graduate student candidates and students (without requiring them to pass Unified National Entrance/General Graduate Examinations) within a one-year period, so that the person is admitted to the educational process and that achievement of learning outcomes is ensured, in accordance with the rules defined by the legislation. Consequently, the number of foreigners who acquired enrolment rights in 2018 is likely to change before the end of 2019.

In 2015-2018, more than half of the foreign students enrolled in Bachelor's, Master's, PhD and one-cycle medical programs are citizens of India and Azerbaijan.

Percentage distribution of foreign students enrolled in 2015-2018 in higher educational institutions, by citizenship

1. INDIA	41%	6,582	
2. AZERBAIJAN	23%	3,688	
3. NIGERIA	5%	796	
4. IRAN	4%	704	
5. RUSSIA	3%	408	
6. IRAQ	3%	405	
7. ISRAEL	2%	346	
8. TURKEY	2%	355	
9. OTHER COUNTRIES	17%	2,776	
TOTAL	100%	16,060	

SOURCE: MOE

In order to promote Georgia as regional education hub and attract foreign students to Georgia's educational institutions, since 2017 the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport has been implementing the project "Study in Georgia". The study conducted in the frames of the project in 2017 shows that 78% of foreign students are interested in internship opportunities in Georgia, while about one-third would be willing to find employment in Georgia.³³ According to the study, the major obstacles which foreign students face in terms of internship or employment in Georgia are predominantly related to language barrier.

³³ Research on Foreign Students Experience, Attitude, Motivation and Satisfaction with Studies in Georgia, report, PMCG/MoE. 2017

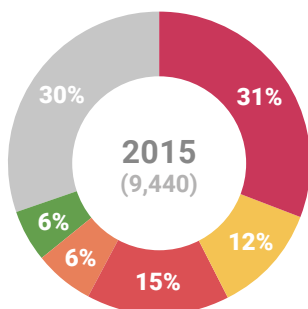
Labor Immigrants

A significant proportion of work residence permits issued in Georgia in the past four years were granted to citizens of Turkey, India, China and Iran.

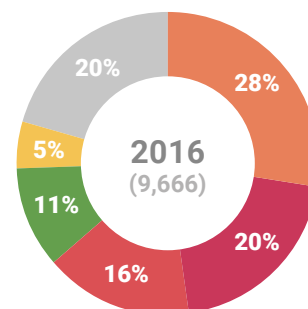


Percentage distribution of work residence permits issued by PSDA, by year and citizenship

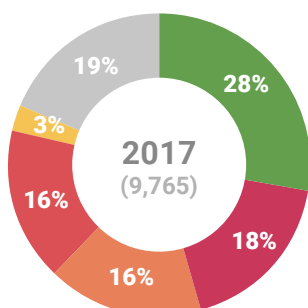
Turkey (2,911)
Ukraine (1,102)
China (1,449)
India (600)
Iran (524)
Other (2,854)



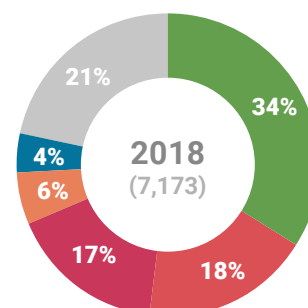
India (2,669)
Turkey (1,950)
China (1,551)
Iran (1,027)
Ukraine (483)
Other (1,986)



Iran (2,717)
Turkey (1,756)
India (1,610)
China (1,595)
Ukraine (278)
Other (1,809)



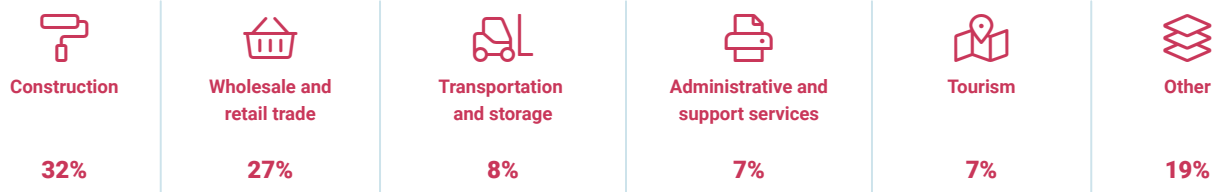
Iran (2,449)
China (1,294)
Turkey (1,190)
India (402)
Russia (294)
Other (1,544)



SOURCE: PSDA

According to the Survey of Business Demand on Skills, conducted by the MoESD, in 2017 number of foreigners employed in Georgia had increased by 17%, compared to the previous year and constituted 17,330 (2.2% of total employment). The research states that 79% of foreigners are employed in Tbilisi. Construction, along with wholesale and retail trade are major employment sectors for foreign citizens.³⁴

Percentage distribution of employed foreigners by employment spheres



SOURCE: "SURVEY OF BUSINESS DEMAND ON SKILLS", 2017

³⁴ Survey of Business Demand on Skills, report, MoESD. 2017.

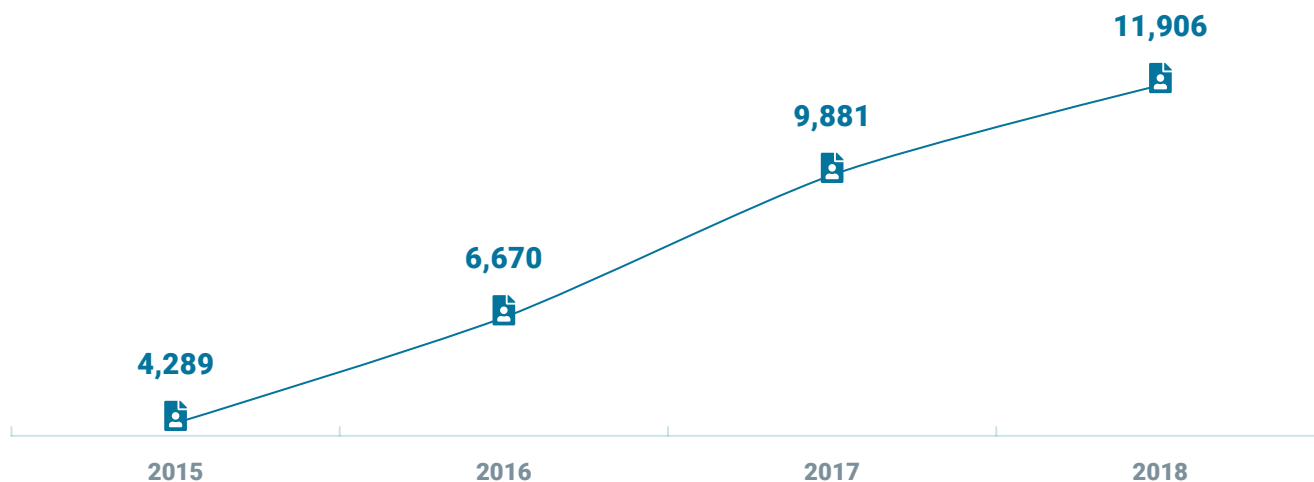
<http://www.lmis.gov.ge/Lmis/Lmis.Portal.Web/Handlers/GetFile.ashx?Type=Content&ID=d2c29a21-366d-40ae-9556-4594bdbfddb> last accessed: 26.07.2019

Foreign entrepreneurs

The number of foreign citizens who establish business entities in Georgia has been increasing in the past four years.



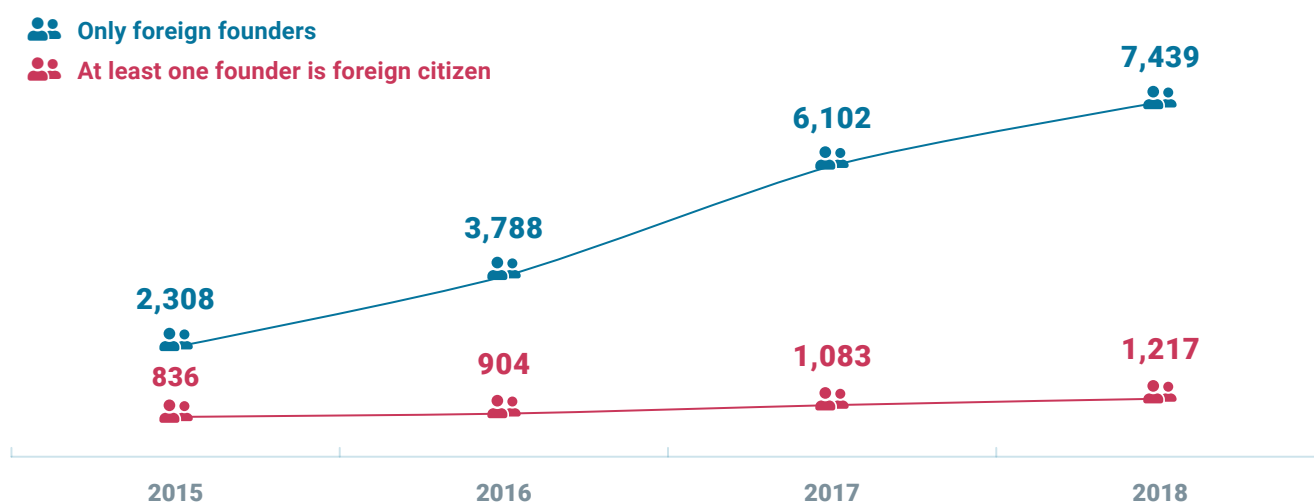
Number of foreign founders of the business entities registered in 2015-2018



SOURCE: NAPR

The number of business entities registered by foreign citizens in Georgia has also been rising in the last four years. Majority of such entities have solely foreign founders.

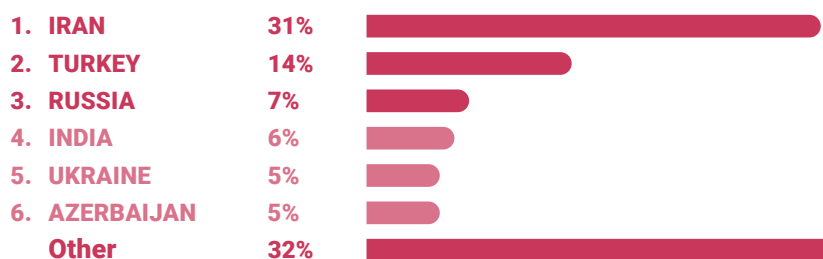
Number of business entities in Georgia, which (1) have only foreign founder(s) (individual(s)) and (2) have at least one founder, who is foreign citizen



SOURCE: NAPR

In the past four years, over the half of business entities registered in Georgia by foreigners were founded by citizens of Iran, Turkey and Russia.

Percent distribution (%) of the founders of business entities, registered by foreign citizens in 2015-2018, by citizenship



SOURCE: NAPR

Immovable Property

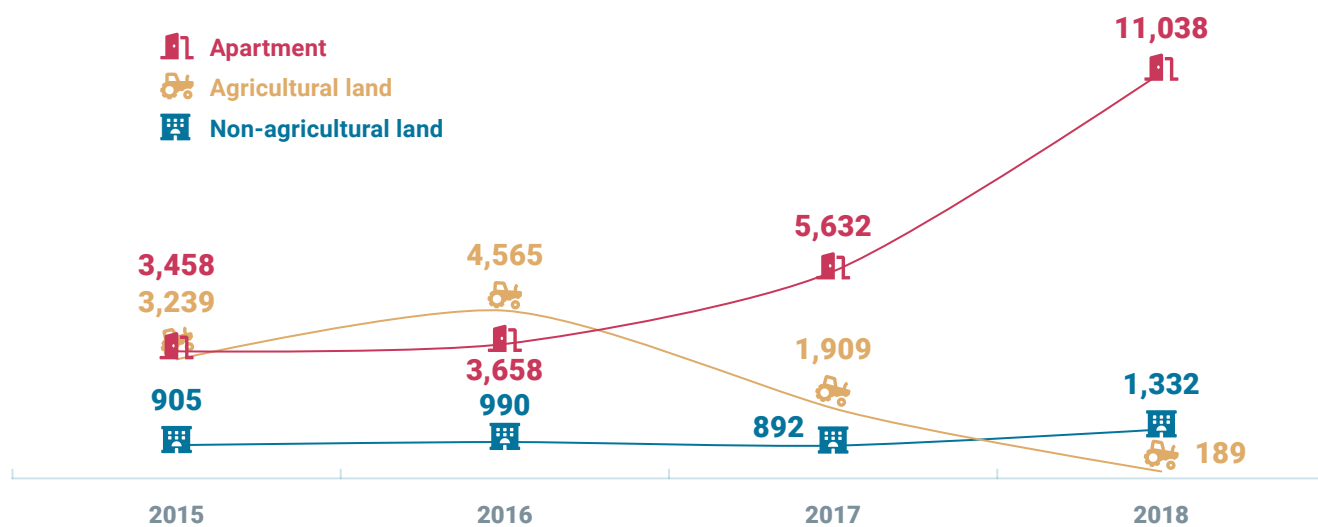
In the last four years, the number of registrations of ownership rights on immovable property in Georgia by foreigners has been increasing. Primarily, foreign citizens register ownership of apartments.



Compared to the previous year, the cases of registrations of apartments by foreign citizens almost doubled in 2018. Furthermore, the number of registrations of ownership rights on non-agricultural land by foreigners has also risen, although it significantly falls behind the number of registered apartments. At the same time, the number of registrations of the ownership right on agricultural land has considerably decreased, which can be attributed to imposition of moratorium on registrations of the ownership right on agricultural land by foreigners in June, 2017³⁵. In case of registrations during the moratorium period, all applicants had already been registered as owners of the agricultural land before submitting the registration application and in such circumstances only changes, specifying cadastral data and/or combining the land plots have been carried out.

³⁵ <http://www.justice.gov.ge/News/Detail?newsId=6438> last accessed: 26.07.2019

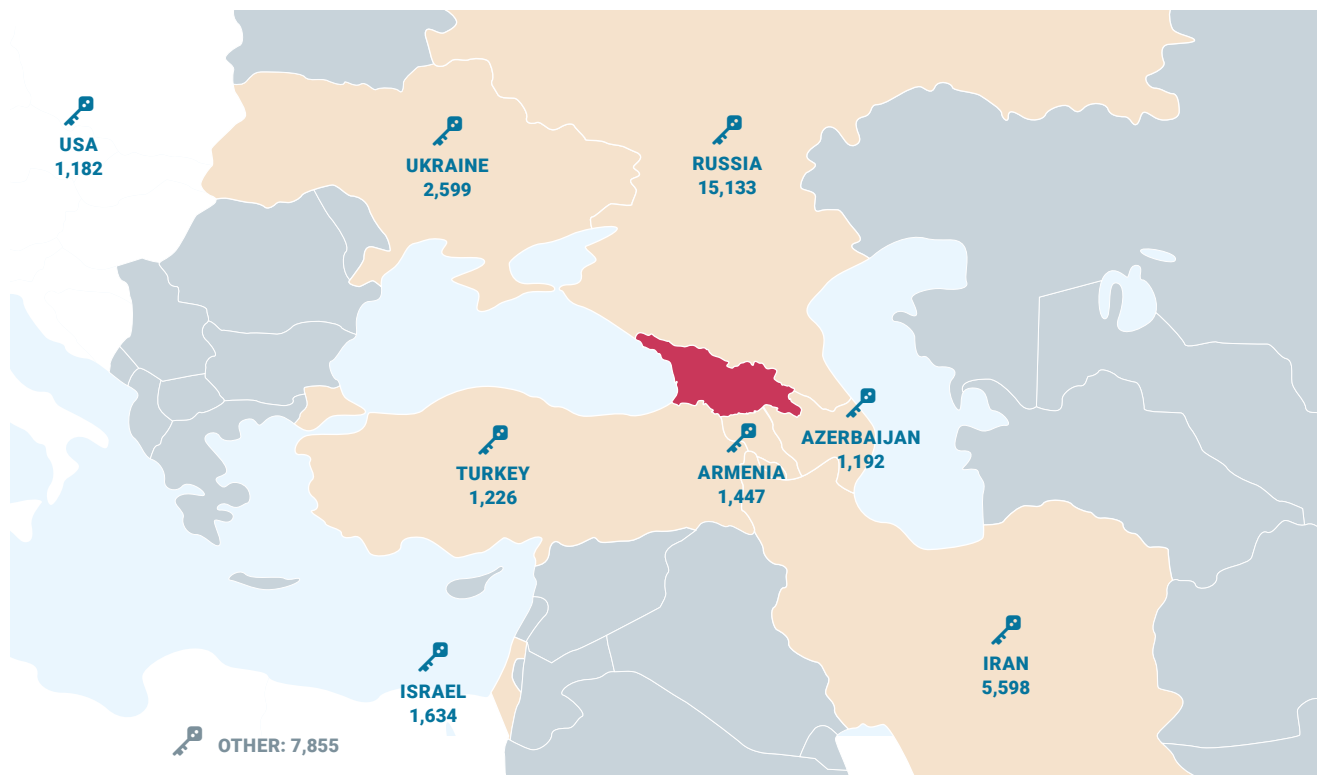
Cases of registration of the ownership right on immovable property by foreigners in 2015-2018, by year and type of property



SOURCE: NAPR

In the last four years, 40% of the registrations of the ownership rights on immovable property by foreigners in Georgia have been carried out by Russian citizens.

Ownership right to immovable property registered by foreigners in 2015-2018, by citizenship of the owner



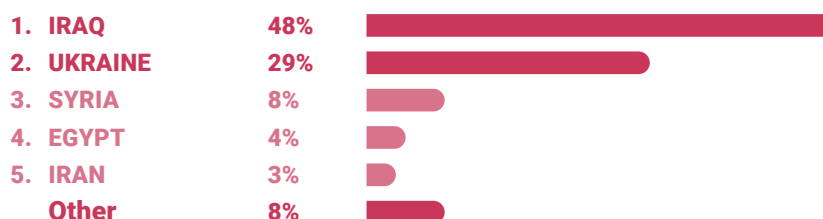
SOURCE: NAPR

Persons under international protection

By the end of 2018, there were 1,171 refugees and persons holding humanitarian status registered in Georgia. The majority of them are citizens of Iraq and Ukraine.



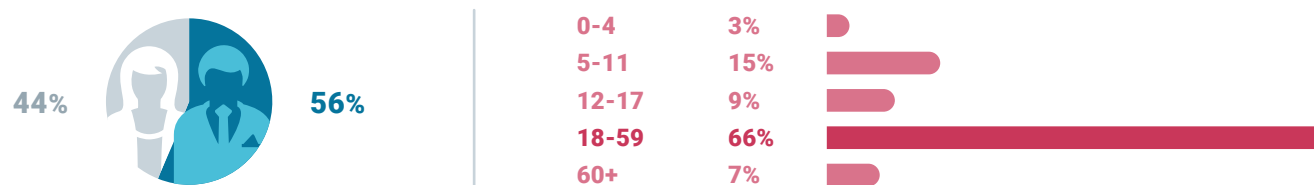
Percentage distribution of refugees and persons holding humanitarian status by citizenship (as of December 31, 2018)



SOURCE: MIA

The majority of refugees and persons holding humanitarian status living in Georgia are male aged 18-59.

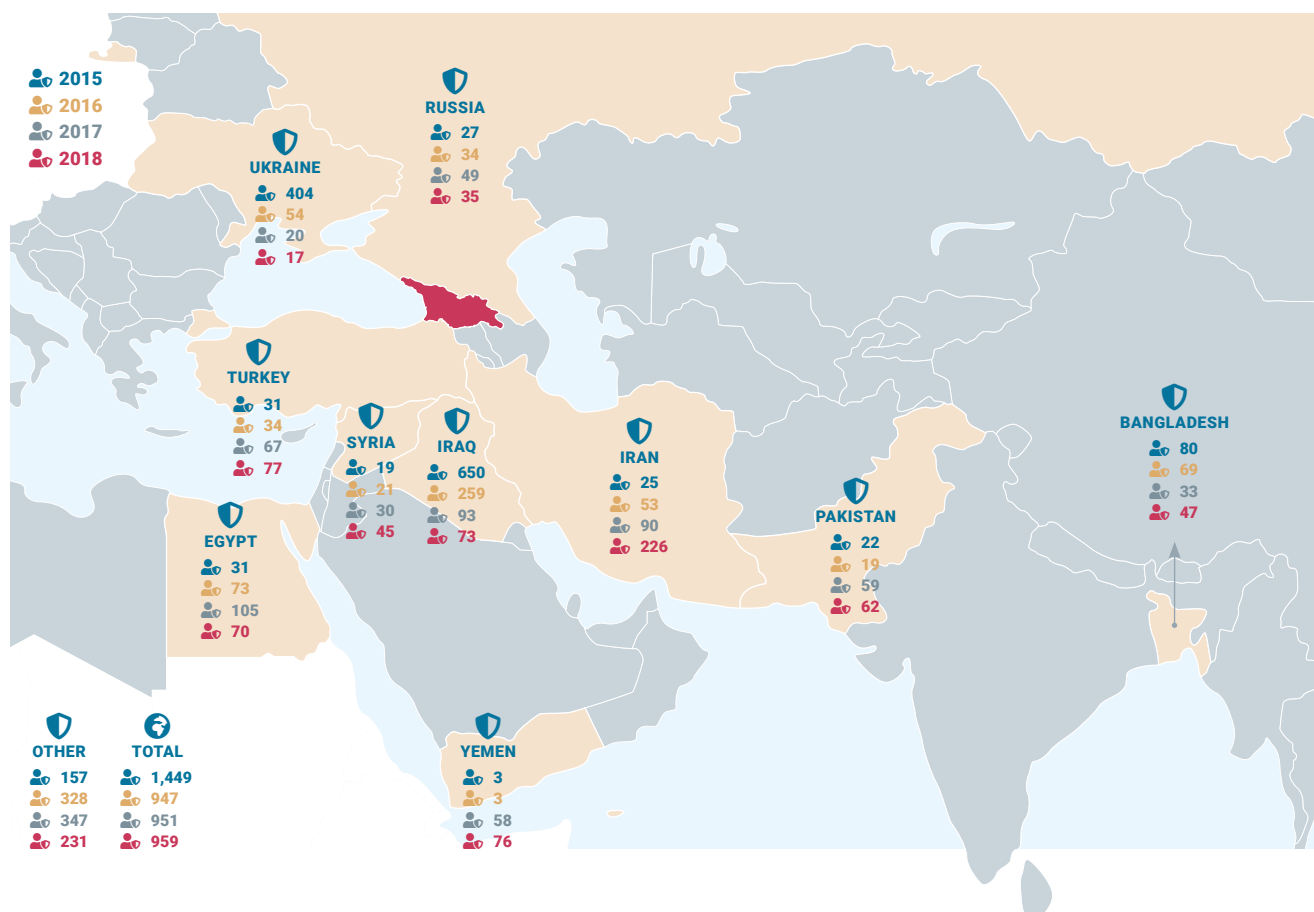
Percentage distribution of refugees and persons holding humanitarian status by gender and age



SOURCE: MIA

The number of asylum seekers in Georgia has declined compared to 2015 and remained stable in the last three years. Moreover, in the past four years, the main countries of origin of asylum seekers has seen some changes. Namely, the number of applications from citizens of Iraq, Ukraine and Bangladesh has declined, while number of applications from citizens of Iran, Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, Syria and Yemen has increased.

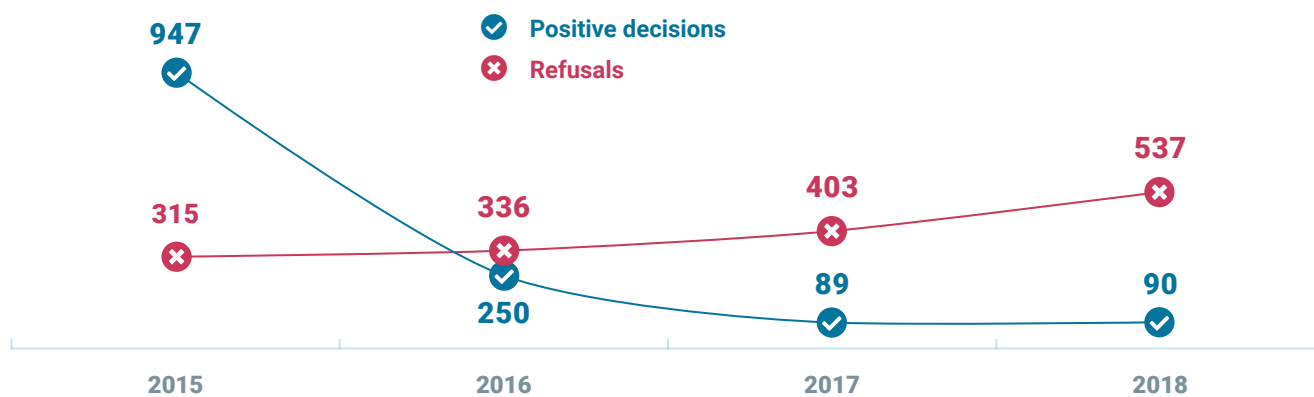
Number of asylum seeker applications by year and top countries of citizenship



SOURCE: MIA

In the last four years, both total number of refusals to asylum applications and their share in total number of yearly decisions has been increasing. This can be primarily attributed to the rise in the number of unfounded applications for international protection.

Number of positive and negative decisions to refugee and humanitarian status seeker applications, by year



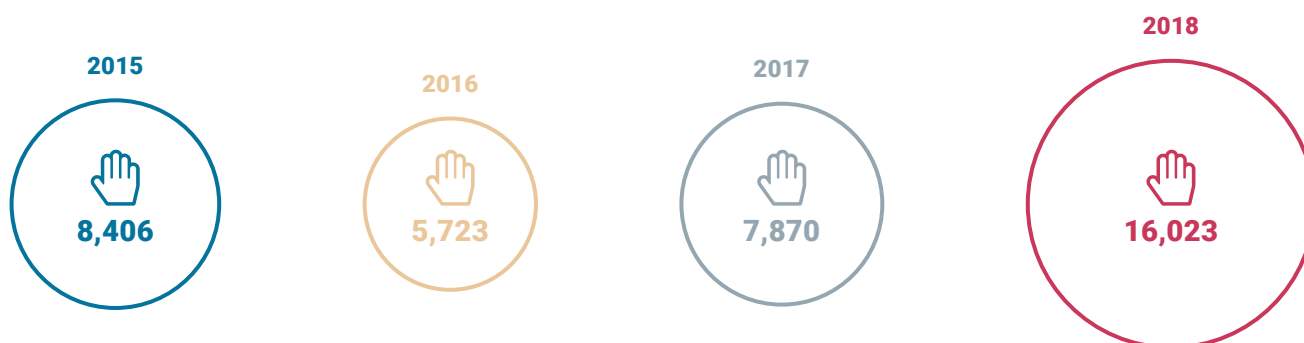
SOURCE: MIA

Irregular immigration

In 2018, compared to previous years, the number of cases of foreigners being refused entry to the country at the Georgian state border has doubled.



Number of refusals of entry of foreigners to the country at the Georgian state border, by year

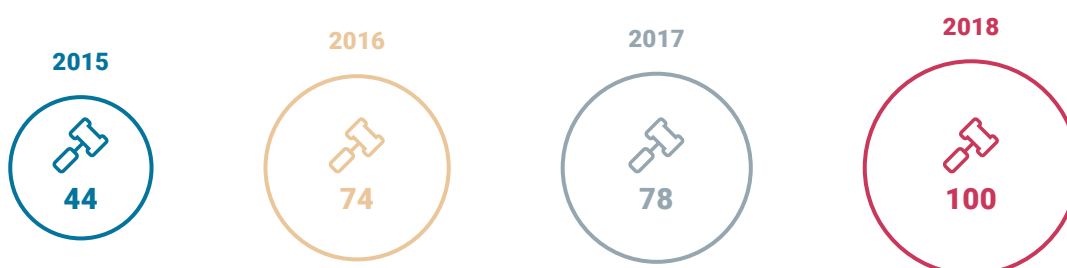


SOURCE: MIA

The largest share of refusals of entry to Georgia falls on citizens of Iran (20%) and India (14%).

Moreover, in the past 4 years, the number of foreigners expelled from Georgia due to lack of legal grounds for staying in the country, has increased.

Number of foreigners expelled from Georgia, by year

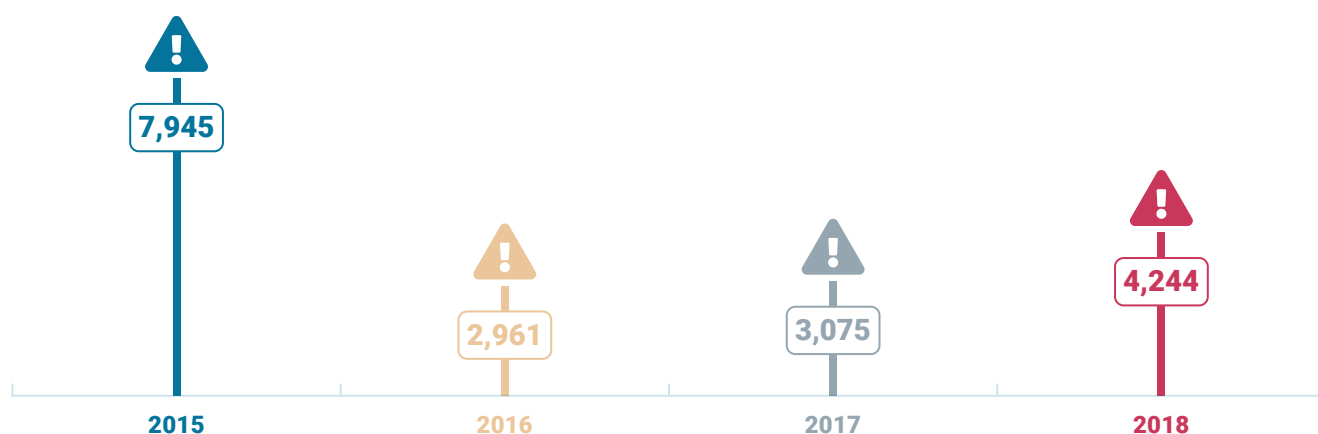


SOURCE: MIA

In 2018, 52% of foreigners expelled from Georgia were citizens of Bangladesh (13), Turkey (12), Iran (10), Azerbaijan (9) and Sri Lanka (8).

Since 2015, the number of cases of foreign citizens violating Georgia's visa regime has declined significantly, however the number of such cases has been still rising since 2016, which is consistent with the increased migratory flows and mobility in the same years.

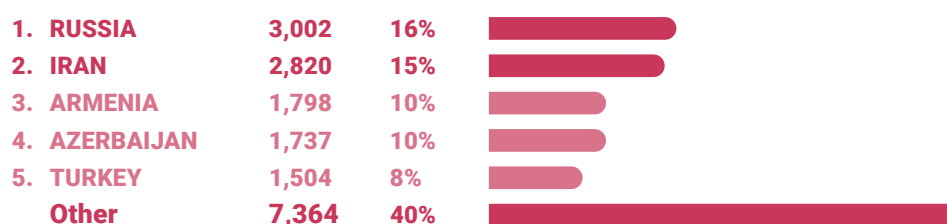
Number of cases of visa regime violations, by years



SOURCE: MIA

The visa regime in Georgia is predominately violated by citizens of neighbouring countries and Iran.

Percentage distribution of visa regime violators in 2015-2018 by citizenship (top countries)



SOURCE: MIA

It is noteworthy that in cases of detection of visa regime violation, the majority of foreigners residing without legal grounds in Georgia leave the country voluntarily and are subject to respective administrative fines at the border crossing.

INTEGRATION

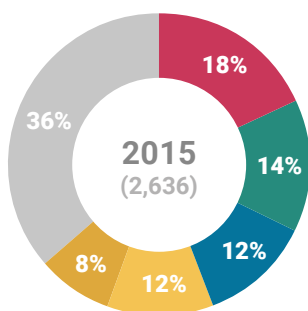
Family Reunification

In the past four years, 8,396 residence permits were issued to foreign citizens for family reunification purposes. The largest proportion of these permits were granted to citizens of Iran, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Russia, Ukraine, Armenia and India. It is noteworthy that share of residence permits issued to citizens of Iran for family reunification purposes has significantly increased in the recent years.

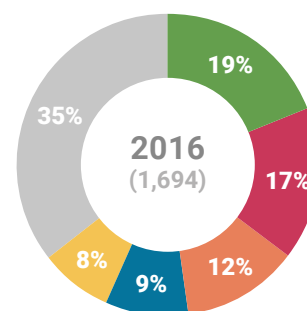


Percentage distribution of residence permits issued for family reunification purposes by year and citizenship

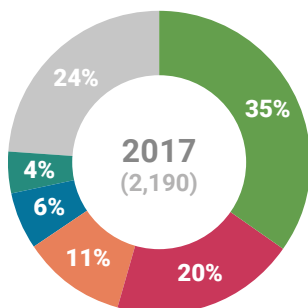
Turkey (482)
Azerbaijan (370)
Russia (313)
Ukraine (305)
Armenia (211)
Other (955)



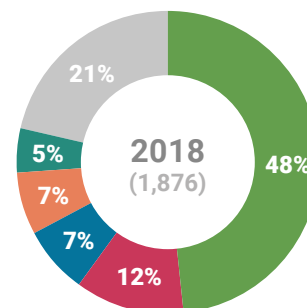
Iran (322)
Turkey (280)
India (209)
Russia (150)
Ukraine (134)
Other (599)



Iran (762)
Turkey (433)
India (246)
Russia (131)
Azerbaijan (95)
Other (523)



Iran (907)
Turkey (219)
Russia (137)
India (127)
Azerbaijan (86)
Other (400)



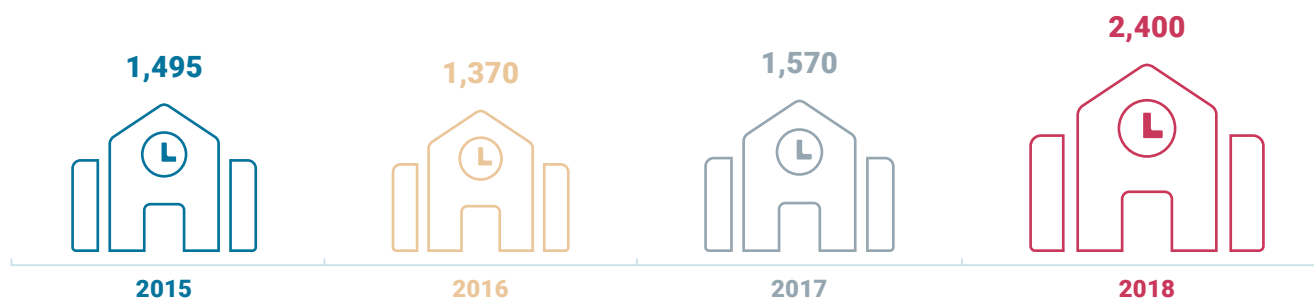
SOURCE: PSDA

General Education

Number of foreign pupils enrolled in Georgia's general educational institutions raised in 2018.



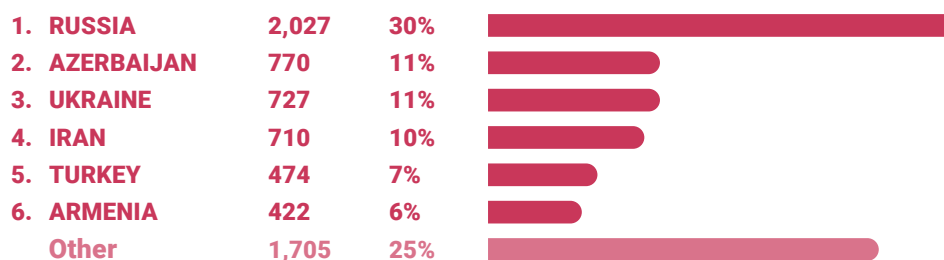
Number of foreign pupils enrolled in general educational institutions by years



SOURCE: MOE

75% of foreign pupils enrolled in Georgian schools in 2015-2018 are citizens of Russia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Iran, Turkey and Armenia.

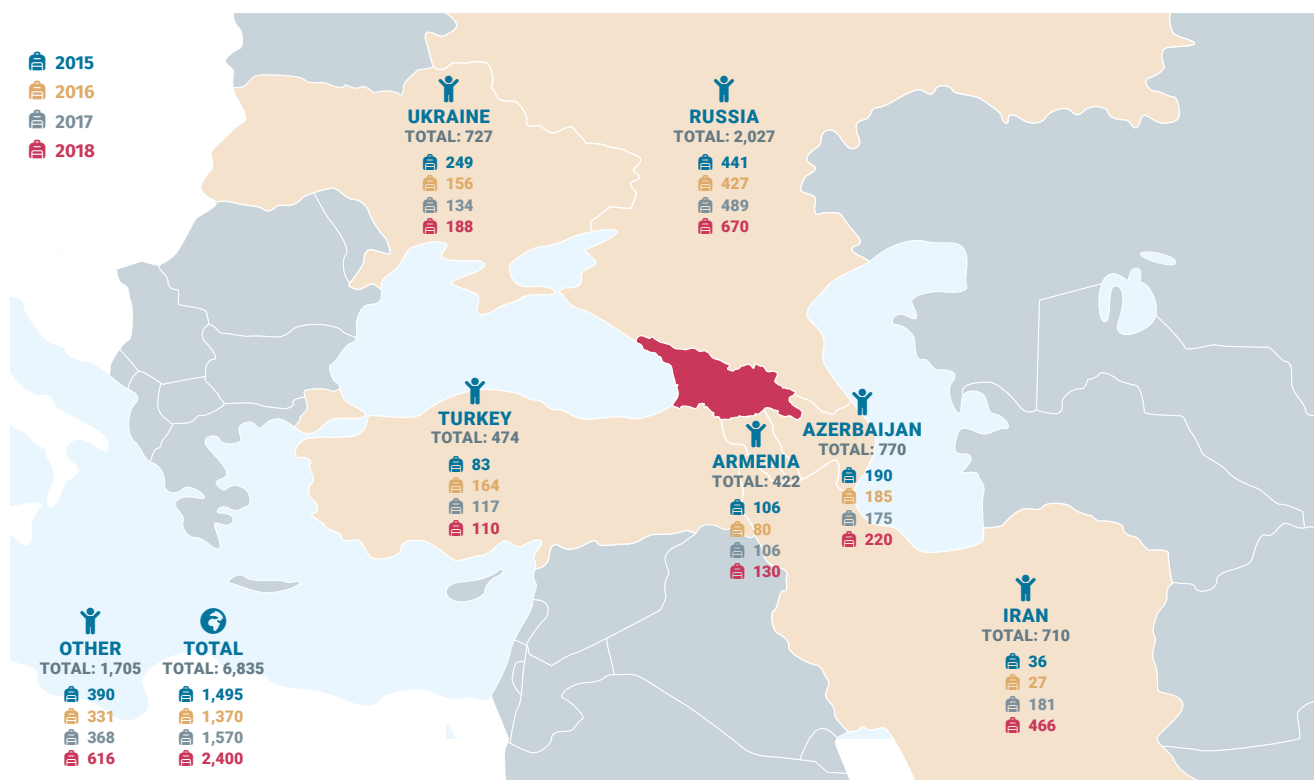
Percentage distribution of foreign pupils enrolled in general educational institutions in 2015-2018 by year



SOURCE: MOE

In the past four years, the number of pupils who are citizens of Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Turkey and Armenia, was stable. Increase of foreign pupils enrolled in institutions of general education in 2018 can be primarily attributed to the citizens of Russia and Iran.











Number of foreign pupils enrolled in general educational institutions by year and citizenship



SOURCE: MOE

In 2015-2018, the majority (62%) of foreign pupils were enrolled in public schools.

Number of foreign pupils enrolled in general educational institutions by year and school status

	2015	2016	2017	2018
 PRIVATE	 492	 480	 570	 1,065
 PUBLIC	 1,003	 890	 1,000	 1,335











SOURCE: MOE

Vocational Education

The number of foreign citizens enrolled in Georgia's vocational educational institutions has declined in the past four years.










Number of foreign citizens enrolled in vocational educational programmes by gender and year

	2015	2016	2017	2018
	 72	 39	 16	 9
	 36	 33	 17	 11

SOURCE: MOE

Over half of 233 foreign citizens enrolled in vocational educational programmes in 2015-2018 are citizens of Azerbaijan.

Percentage distribution of foreign citizens enrolled in vocational educational programmes in 2015-2018 by citizenship

1. AZERBAIJAN	165	71%	
2. RUSSIA	34	15%	
3. STATELESS	11	5%	
4. ARMENIA	8	3%	
5. UKRAINE	7	3%	
 Other countries	8	3%	

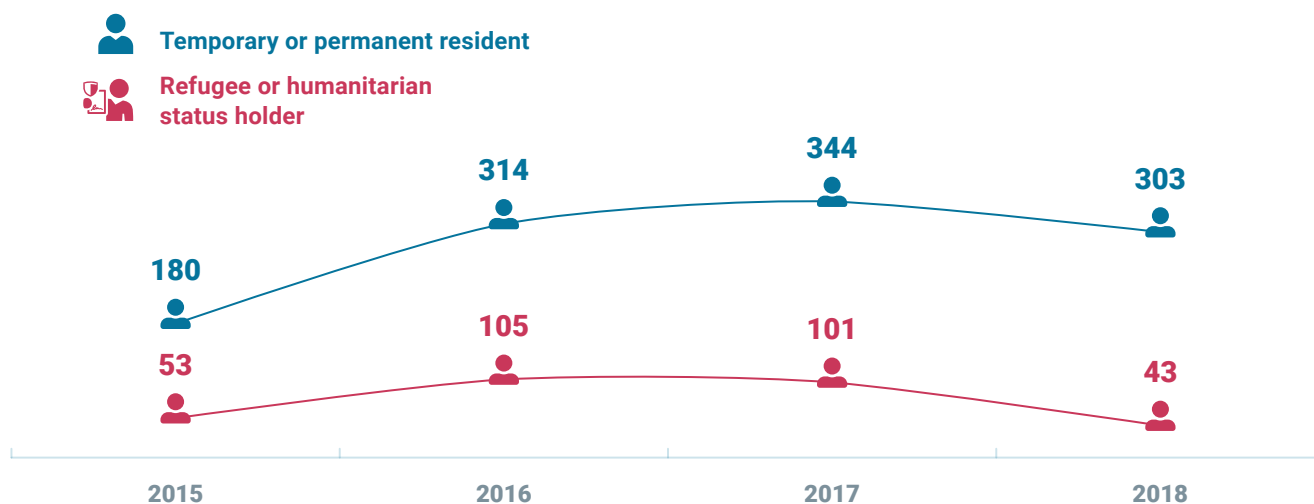
SOURCE: MOE

Healthcare and Social Assistance

The number of foreign citizens who receive healthcare and social assistance from the state, has been fairly small and relatively stable in the past four years.

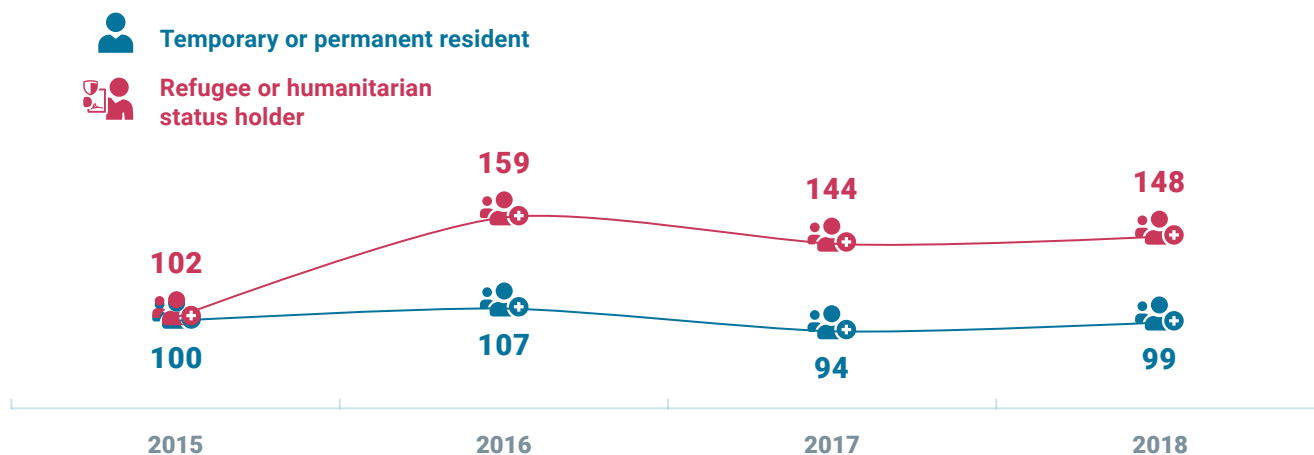


Number of foreign citizens, who have received social assistance by year and status



SOURCE: MOH

Number of foreign citizens, who have received healthcare assistance by year and status



SOURCE: MOH

Number of foreign citizens holding permanent resident status, who have received state allowances by year



SOURCE: MOH

Naturalization

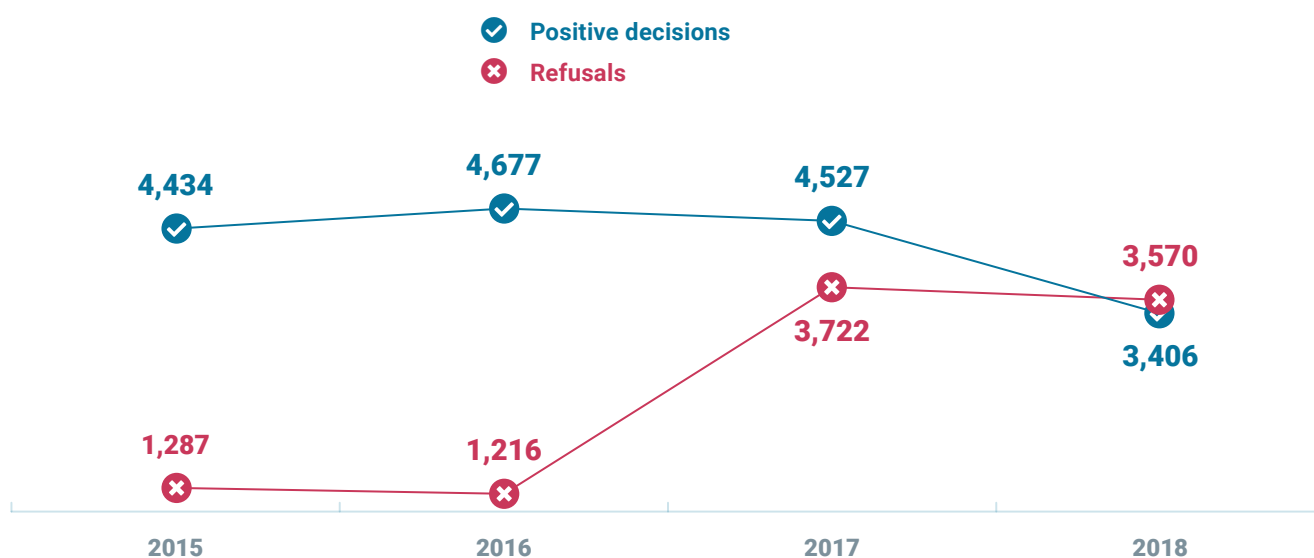
The Organic Law of Georgia on Georgian Citizenship defines five types of naturalization:

- ❶ Granting citizenship under regular procedure;
- ❷ Granting citizenship under simplified procedure;
- ❸ Granting citizenship by way of exception;
- ❹ Granting citizenship by way of its restoration;
- ❺ Granting citizenship under special procedure.

Out of these five types, granting Georgian citizenship by way of exception is the most in demand, which is granted to foreigner who “has made a contribution of exceptional merit to Georgia” or who should be granted Georgian citizenship “based on state interests”³⁶.

From 2015 to 2017, the demand for granting Georgian citizenship was increasing, although in 2018 it slightly declined. Moreover, share of refusals to grant Georgian citizenship in the total number of decisions increased considerably (from 22% to 51%).

Number of decisions on Georgian citizenship through naturalization, by year



SOURCE: PSDA

³⁶ Additional information regarding granting of Georgian citizenship can be found at: http://sda.gov.ge/?page_id=7434&lang=en last accessed: 26.07.2019

98% of positive decisions on naturalization are attributed to granting citizenship by way of exception. **In the past four years, Georgian citizenship by way of exception was predominantly granted to citizens of Russia, majority of whom had previously possessed Georgian citizenship.**

Foreign citizens granted Georgian citizenship by way of exception in 2015-2018 (top countries)



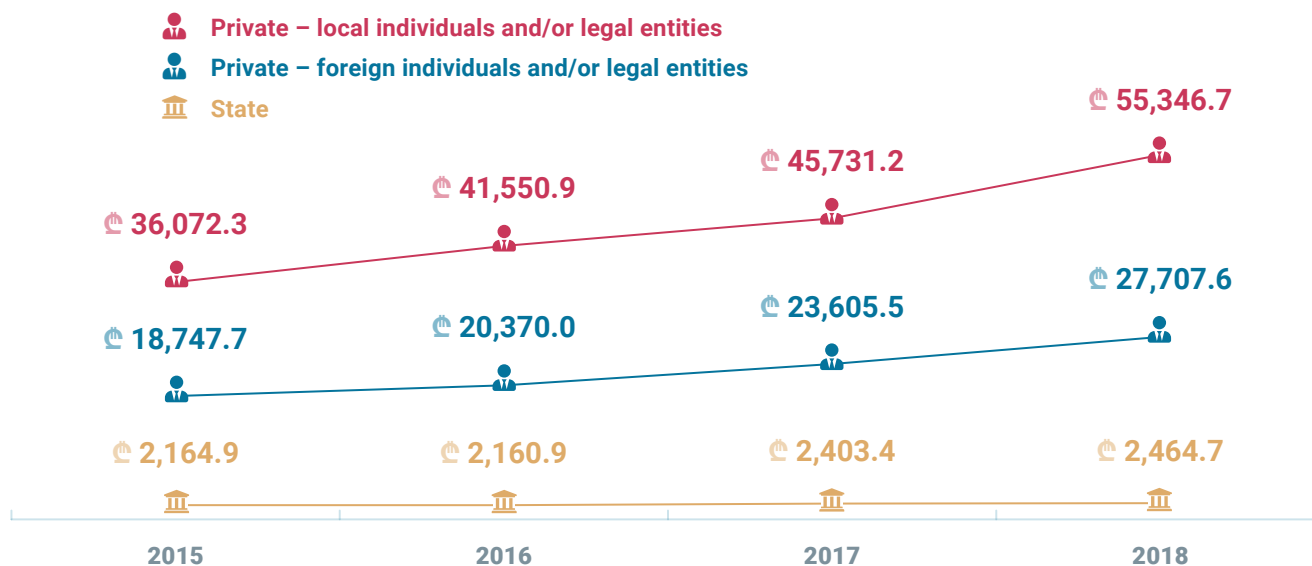
SOURCE: PSDA

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION

In the past four years, the volume of business sector turnover has been growing. Companies owned by foreign individuals/legal entities also significantly contribute to the growth.



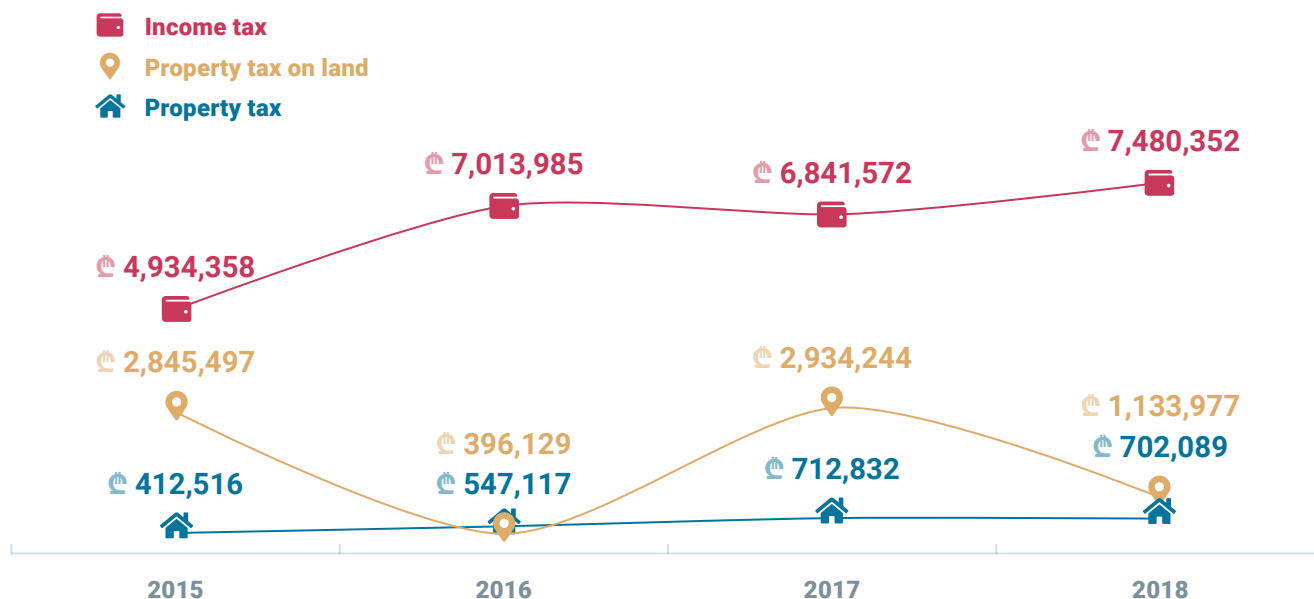
Business sector turnover by year and form of ownership (in millions of GEL)



SOURCE: GEOSTAT

In the last four years, the volume of income tax paid by foreign citizens has increased. Likewise, amount of property tax paid by foreign citizens has been increasing, although the amount is relatively smaller than income tax. In 2018, property tax paid by foreign citizens on land (both agricultural and non-agricultural) declined, compared with the previous year.

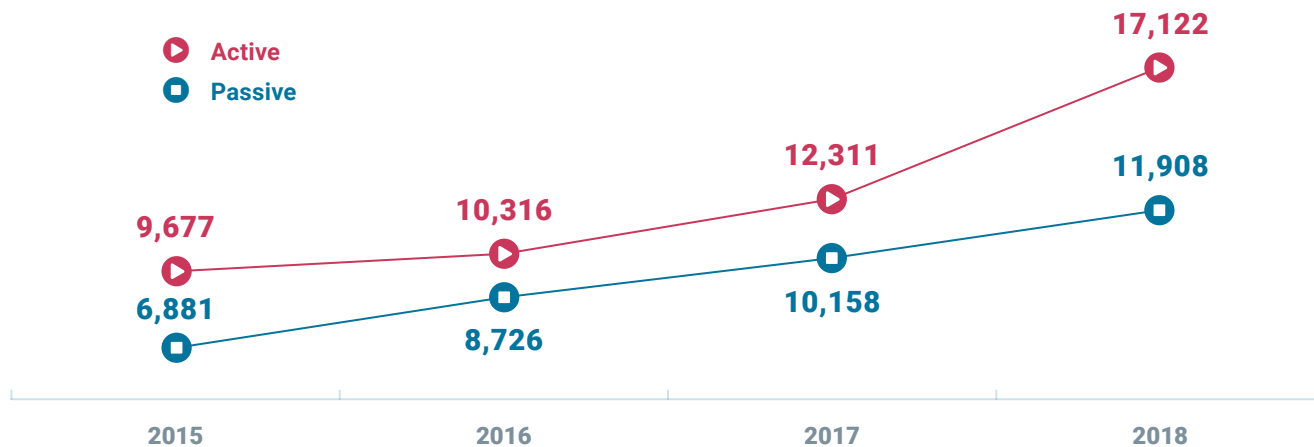
Income and property taxes paid by foreign individuals (including individual entrepreneurs) in GEL



SOURCE: REVENUE SERVICE

In the last four years, the number of both active and passive status holder entities that are subject to tax payment, founded by foreign citizens, has been increasing.³⁷

Number of entities founded by foreigners, by status and year³⁸



SOURCE: REVENUE SERVICE

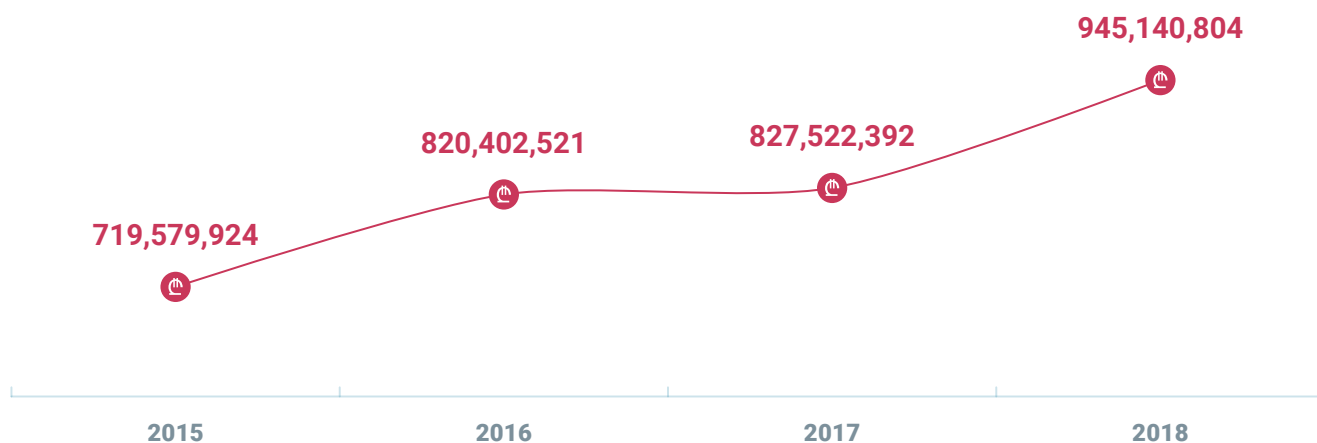
³⁷ "Active" and "Passive" status of taxpayer is determined by article 7 of the #996 Order of the Minister of Finance of Georgia (December 31, 2010) <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/1167887?publication=0> last accessed: 26.07.2019

³⁸ The term "subject" used in the current chapter combines the following legal forms: 1. Legal entities of private law (LLC, General Partnership, JSC, Limited Partnership, Cooperative); 2. Foreign business entity (permanent foreign enterprise /except for branch office/representation/, branch office /representation/ of foreign enterprise); 3. Foreign organization (foreign organization, diplomatic organization).

It is noteworthy that majority of foreign-founded taxpayer entities holding “Active” status were established solely by foreign citizens.

In the past four years, the total amount of taxes paid by foreign-founded business entities to the state budget has been increasing.

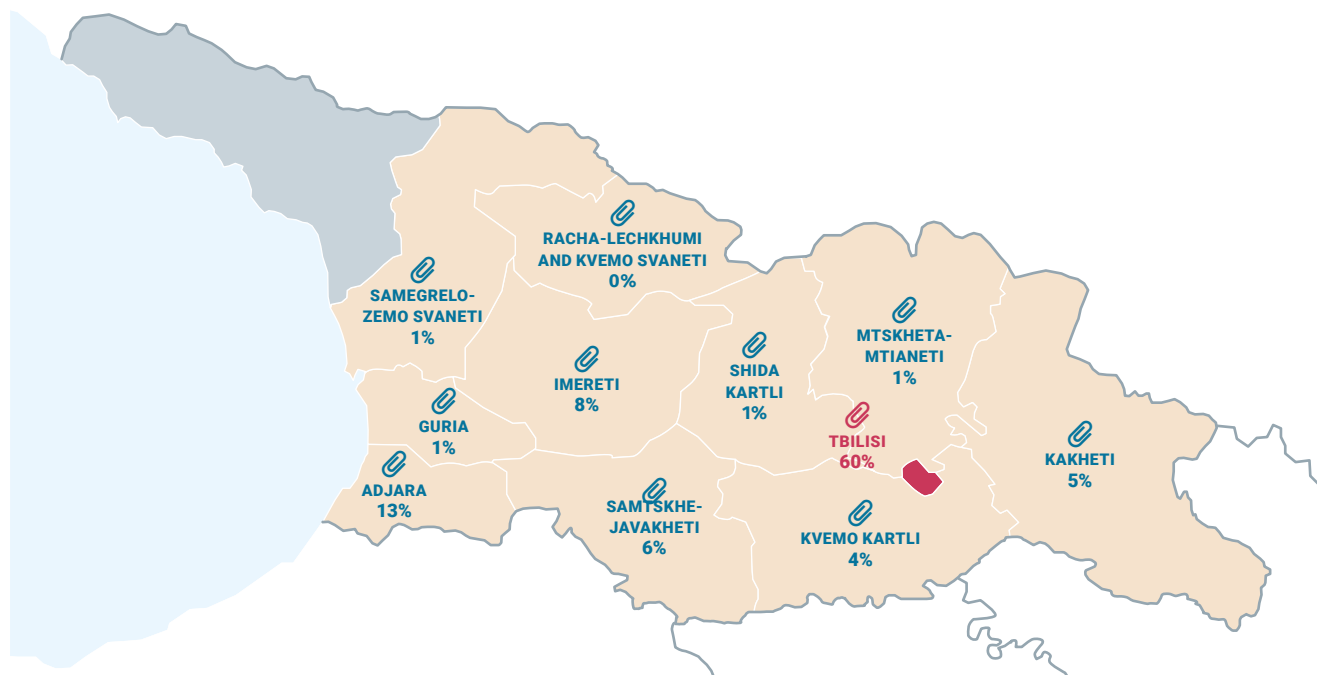
Taxes paid by foreigner-founded business entities by years (in GEL)



SOURCE: REVENUE SERVICE

The majority of business entities founded by foreign citizens are registered in Tbilisi.

Percentage distribution of business entities registered by foreign citizens in 2015-2018, by regions



SOURCE: NAPR

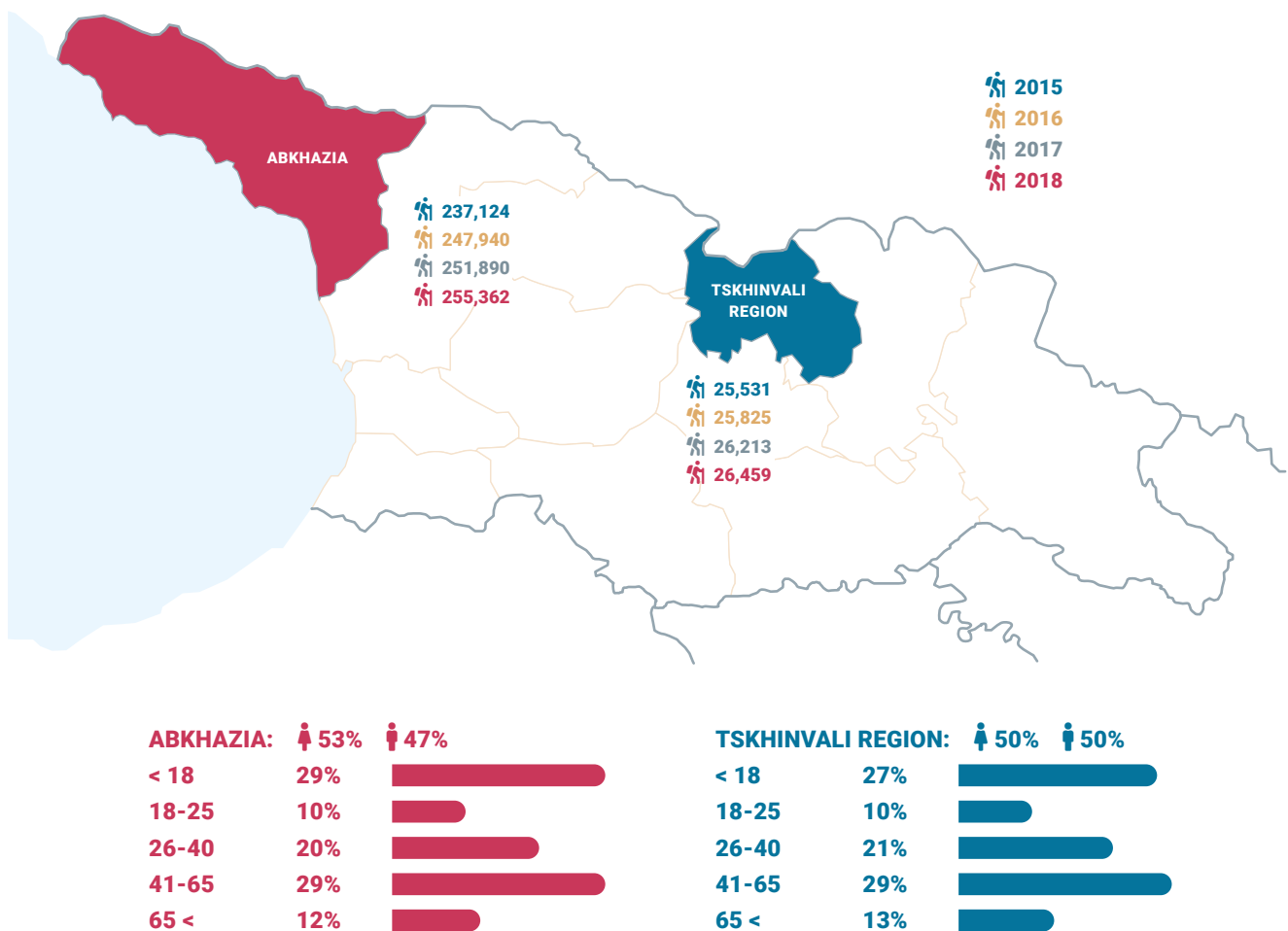
INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

The stock of IDPs currently residing in Georgia is comprised of two major groups:

- 1 The first caseload of IDPs that were forcefully displaced in the period 1991-1993 as a result of the conflict in the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, and
- 2 The second caseload of IDPs, from the same regions, displaced as a result of the 2008 Russian-Georgian War.

The number of IDPs from Abkhazia is almost ten times bigger than that of IDPs from Tskhinvali region.

Number of IDPs by year and region of origin, percentage distribution by gender and age in 2018

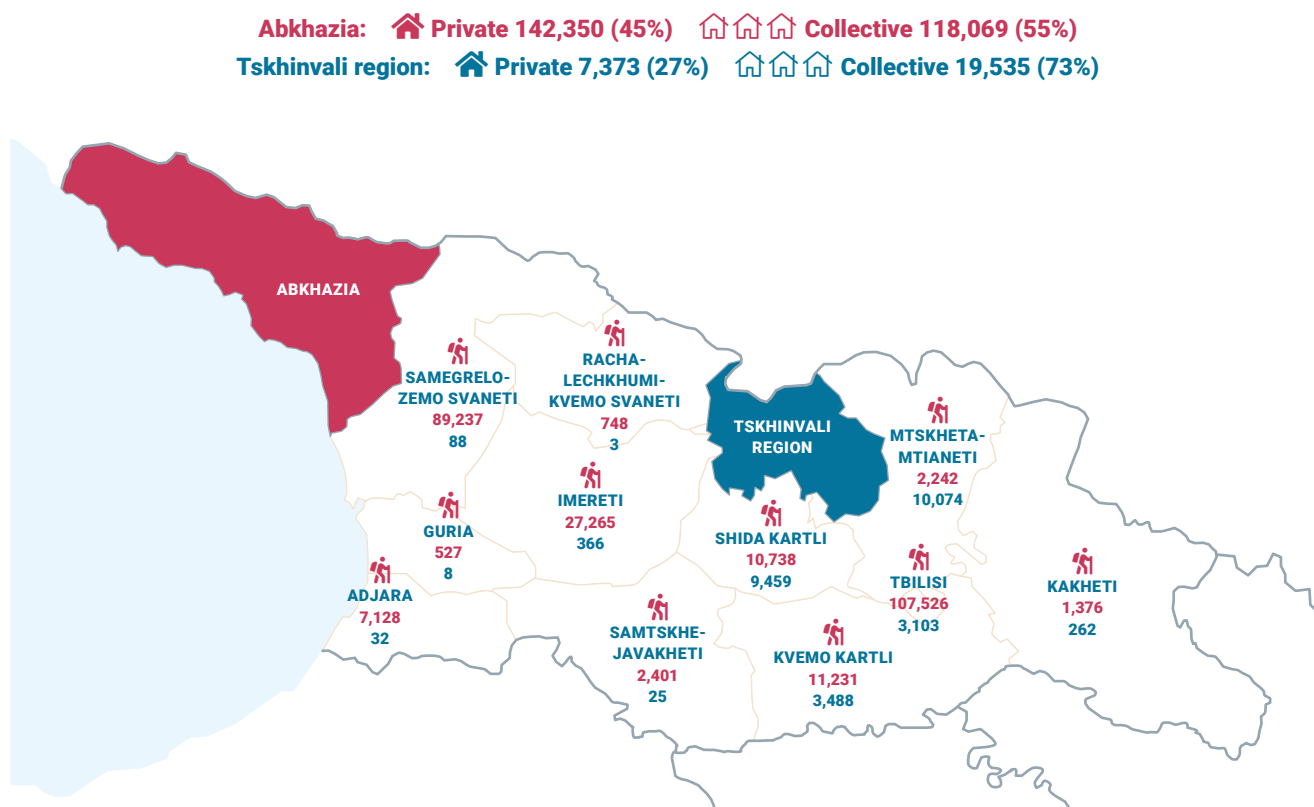


SOURCE: MOH

The largest share of IDPs from Tskhinvali region live in collective settlements, while majority of IDPs from Abkhazia live in private accommodation.

Also, there is a difference in terms of regional distribution among IDPs from Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia. Large share of IDPs from Tskhinvali region are concentrated in the Mtskheta-Mtianeti and the Shida Kartli regions, while majority of IDPs from Abkhazia are settled in either Tbilisi or Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti.

Distribution of IDPs from Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, by resettlement type and region (2018)







SOURCE: MOH

ECOLOGICAL MIGRANTS

In the last four years, the largest number of ecological migrants (eco-migrants/environmentally displaced persons) in Georgia were registered in 2017. The number of annually resettled eco-migrants is significantly lower than the annual number of registered ones.



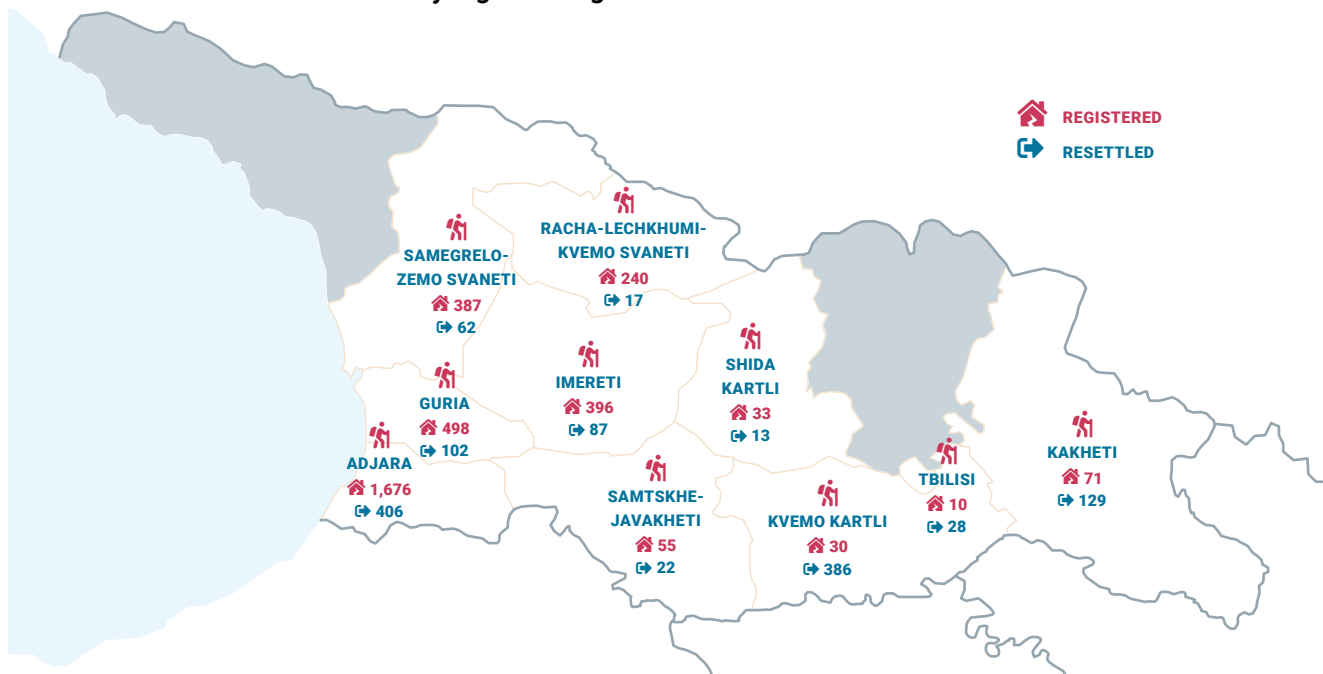
The number of registered and resettled eco-migrants by year³⁹

	2015	2016	2017	2018
 REGISTERED	 826	 897	 1,068	 605
 RESETTLED	 140	 484	 290	 338

SOURCE: MOH

In the past four years, the largest number of eco-migrants (environmentally displaced persons) were registered in Adjara, Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti. Eco-migrants were predominantly resettled in Adjara, Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti and Guria.

Number of registered and resettled eco-migrants in 2015-2018
by region of registration and resettlement



SOURCE: MOH

³⁹ Due to the transfer to a new database in 2016-2017, eco-migrants have been re-registered. This explains the increased number of registrations in 2016-2017 in comparison with 2018.



RURAL-URBAN-RURAL MIGRATION

According to Geostat, the numbers of rural populations in Georgia decline annually, which affects the urban/rural population ratio. Based on the data of the past four years, the share of the urban population in total population has increased from 57.7% to 58.7%.



During the past four years, the population of Tbilisi increased by 3.4% and by 2.6% - in Adjara. In both regions, the growth was driven by the expansion of urban areas. The population decreased significantly in Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti (5.7%), Imereti (5%) and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti (3.7%) regions. It is noteworthy that the decrease of population in rural areas of these regions is considerably higher than in urban areas of the same regions.

**Number of population in urban and rural types of settlement (by 1st of January of each year)
by regions (in thousands of persons)**

			
Region	Urban	Rural	Total
	2016 2017 2018 2019	2016 2017 2018 2019	2016 2017 2018 2019
GEORGIA	2,151.5 2,161.9 2,174.8 2,184.3	1,577.1 1,564.5 1,554.8 1,539.1	3,728.6 3,726.4 3,729.6 3,723.5
Tbilisi	1,101.7 1,115.1 1,128.4 1,140.7	30.2 30.4 30.3 30.4	1,132.0 1,145.5 1,158.7 1,171.1
Adjara A/R	190.1 192.6 195.2 197.7	150.0 150.4 151.1 151.4	340.2 343.0 346.3 349.0
Guria	31.9 31.8 31.6 31.4	80.5 79.7 78.9 78.0	112.4 111.5 110.5 109.4
Imereti	255.0 250.8 247.8 244.9	268.7 263.6 259.2 252.5	523.7 514.4 507.0 497.4
Kakheti	71.9 71.6 71.4 71.0	245.9 244.3 243.3 241.5	317.8 315.9 314.7 312.5
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	21.6 21.7 21.9 22.1	72.5 72.2 72.0 71.6	94.1 93.9 93.9 93.6
Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti	7.0 7.0 6.9 6.8	24.5 23.8 23.3 22.9	31.5 30.8 30.2 29.7
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	129.3 127.7 126.5 125.0	199.1 196.5 194.3 191.2	328.4 324.2 320.8 316.2
Samtskhe-Javakheti	55.0 55.0 55.0 54.4	103.7 102.2 100.9 99.8	158.7 157.2 155.9 154.1
Kvemo Kartli	183.6 185.1 187.1 188.4	244.4 244.5 245.1 244.7	428.0 429.7 432.3 433.2
Shida Kartli	104.2 103.5 102.9 101.9	157.6 157.0 156.4 155.4	261.9 260.4 259.3 257.3


























SOURCE: GEOSTAT

Trafficking in Persons (TIP)

According to the Trafficking in Persons Report 2019 of the US State Department,⁴⁰ the efforts of Georgia are fully compliant with the minimum standards of combating human trafficking. According to the country profiles, Georgia serves as a source, transit and destination country for TIP. In the past four years, Georgia has made significant progress in the fight against human trafficking and protection of victims. Consequently, consistent with the US TIP Report 2016, Georgia moved from the tier 2 to the tier 1 group of countries and still retains its position among the highest ranking – the tier 1 in 2019.

In the last years, the statistics of human trafficking crimes has not changed considerably in terms of numbers

Human Trafficking Crime Statistics, by status of cases (2015-2018)

	2015	2016	2017	2018
 INVESTIGATIONS	 18	 20	 21	 21
 PROSECUTED PERSONS	 5	 1	 4	 7
 CASES SENT TO COURT	 3	 0	 4	 5
 CONVICTIONS (NUMBER OF CASES)	 3	 2	 2	 4
 NUMBER OF CONVICTS	 3	 4	 2	 6








SOURCE: SECRETARIAT OF THE TIP COUNCIL

According to the data of the last four years, the victims and statutory victims of human trafficking are primarily citizens of Georgia and Uzbekistan. The most common form of the human trafficking crime serves the purpose of sexual exploitation.

In 2015-2018, 37 victims/statutory victims of TIP were identified.

⁴⁰ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-trafficking-in-persons-report-2/georgia/> last seen: 26.07.2019

**The Number of Persons Granted with the Status of Statutory Victim and
Victim of TIP, by their citizenship (2015-2018)**

	GEORGIA	UZBEKISTAN	UKRAINE
 STATUTORY VICTIM	 12	 11	 2
 VICTIM	 10	 5	

SOURCE: SECRETARIAT OF THE TIP COUNCIL

**The Number of Persons Granted with the Status of Statutory Victim and
Victim of TIP, by the type of human trafficking crime (2015-2018)**

	LABOUR EXPLOITATION	SEXUAL EXPLOITATION	PURCHASE OR SALE
 STATUTORY VICTIM	 5	 17	 3
 VICTIM	 8	 7	

SOURCE: SECRETARIAT OF THE TIP COUNCIL

Note: There are 2 cases of forced begging included in labour trafficking.

Most of the aforementioned cases took place in Georgia, although several cases of labor trafficking were reported in Turkey and Iraq in 2015.

The international organization “Walk Free Foundation”, which measures the [Global Slavery Index](#) every year, ranked Georgia 18th out of 183 countries, in its 2019 report “Measurement, Action, Freedom”.⁴¹ The report states that Georgia as a low GDP country, is notable by its effective measures taken to combat TIP and is ranked 1st in the region.

⁴¹ https://cdn.globalslaveryindex.org/2019-content/uploads/2019/07/17123602/walk.free_MAF_190717_FNL_DIGITAL-P.pdf last accessed: 26.07.2019

MIGRATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

In the past years, notable progress has been made in the development of Georgia's migration management mechanisms, aiming at building a coherent migration policy on the national level. This was largely stipulated by the benchmarks envisaged by the VLAP, as well as the work carried out within the framework of the Migration Strategies (2013-15 and 2016-20) and consistent fulfilment of the obligations foreseen in the EU-Georgia Association Agenda. Moreover, in order to further increase the effectiveness and sustainable development of the management system, it is of particular importance to fulfill the long-term objectives of the VLAP, as well as to provide a well-analyzed, timely and correct response to the challenges of visa-free travel.

Strategic Planning

Following the 1997 Migration Policy Concept and the 2013-2015 Migration Strategy, in 2015 Georgia has elaborated and approved the third strategic document for defining the country's migration policy – the Migration Strategy 2016-2020⁴². Unlike the previous documents, this is a completely new type of paper in the field of migration policy planning, which takes into consideration the adjacent sector strategies and other policy defining legislative acts and largely reflects the main provisions of “the European Agenda on Migration” (2015) developed by the European Union, as well as migration-related United Nations' Sustainable Development (thematic) Goals (SDGs). It also incorporates the knowledge gained from the international migration processes in which Georgia is actively involved. Alongside the Strategy, the corresponding Action Plans⁴³ and its performance indicators were approved, which serve as a basis for assessment of results achieved. One of the important components of the current Strategy is its monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. In 2016, the SCMI Secretariat developed an *Electronic System on Monitoring and Reporting* (e-system) of the Action Plan, through which the Strategy implementing entities report online, while the Secretariat is constantly monitoring progress on implementation of the activities in accordance with the prescribed deadlines and indicators. This system has had a significant impact on the refinement of the monitoring mechanisms of other sectorial entities and their umbrella organizations, and developing there same/similar complex systems based on above described one.

Based on an in-depth analysis of the Strategy results and existing experience, in 2019, the work has begun on the Concept/vision of a new Migration Strategy for 2021-2030. The new document will determine the key strategic directions of the country for the next 10 years on the basis of research and evidence as well as current Strategy experience.

⁴² Governmental ordinance №622 of December 14, 2015 On Approval of Georgia's Migration Strategy 2016-2020 http://migration.commission.ge/files/migration_strategy_2016-2020_eng_final_amended_08.2018.pdf last accessed: 26.07.2019

⁴³ Action Plan of the 2016-2020 Migration Strategy of Georgia, http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=216&clang=1 last accessed: 26.07.2019

Integrated Border Management

Georgia's integrated border management principles are based on the European model and are aimed at coordination of the activities and cooperation with all relevant institutions engaged in the process, both at national and international levels.

A number of important steps have been taken by the Government of Georgia in recent years towards approximation of the State's integrated border management to EU standards in particular aiming at harmonization of legislative and institutional frameworks. As a result, relevant infrastructure has been renovated, modern technologies introduced and qualifications of human resources raised. Among the achievements could be outlined the following: the Border Police has established a Cynology Division; Border Operations Management System (BOMS) has been set up at certain areas of the Georgian-Turkish state border; new system of maritime monitoring "SEAVISION" has been introduced; border units have been equipped with modern technologies, special equipment needed for border control as well as transport/sailing and technical tools. Furthermore, construction-reconstruction works of border infrastructure are in progress.

Combating irregular migration and document security

According to the [Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons](#), MIA is responsible for combating irregular migration as well as its prevention and elimination. The responsibilities in this regard are distributed among different structural units of the Ministry. The Migration Department operating within MIA since 2014 ensures detection of foreigners residing without legal grounds in Georgia and implementation of the relevant procedures for their expulsion from the country. Moreover, within the Migration Department, a Temporary Detention Center was created for foreigners residing without legal grounds in Georgia. The center can accommodate 92 persons.

In order to ensure effective intra-agency cooperation in the field of combating irregular migration, a coordination group was created within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The aim of this group is to define a common policy on migration issues and to improve the management system of migration processes.

Rapid progress has also been achieved in the area of document security. From 2010, citizens of Georgia were issued a so-called second generation, while from 2016, a third generation biometric passports – a highly technological and protected against fraud travel documents. Thus, passports are permanently refined and equipped with stronger protective mechanisms, which further enhanced the credibility of the documents issued by Georgia. From 2020, it is planned to issue biometric passports with stronger parameters, polycarbonate data page and enhanced integrated electronic chip. The electronic profile of the document will be fully compliant with the [European Commission Implementing Decision N: C \(2018\) 7774 of 30 November 2018](#). Since 2011, the country has also been issuing electronic ID and residence cards.

Return and Readmission

"The Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the Readmission of Persons Residing without Authorisation" has been effective since 1 March 2011. Aside from EU, Georgia has concluded readmission agreements with Ukraine, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Moldova, Belarus and Iceland. Negotiations are currently underway with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Pakistan. For the effective implementation of the readmission agreement between Georgia and the EU, the Readmission Case Management Electronic System (RCMES) was developed in 2013. The System receives and processes readmission applications from EU countries. As of 2019, 19 European countries joined the system.⁴⁴ Given the effectiveness of the System, it has been (or there are plans for it to be) replicated and introduced by other countries as well.

Reintegration of Returned Migrants and Integration of Foreigners

Reintegration of returned migrants is one of the priorities of the Government of Georgia. Therefore, since 2015, in order to facilitate the reintegration process for returned migrants, the Government has started to systematically allocate necessary funds from the state budget. By 2019, the program budget constituted GEL 650,000. As a result of the structural changes in the Government of Georgia, from the second half of 2018, MoH has been assigned to facilitate the assistance in reintegration of returned migrants and to implement the state programme. It is worth mentioning that the programme along with capital covers the regions of Georgia.

Within the framework of the same structural changes, MoH was also given the function of facilitating the process of integration of the persons under international protection, foreigners legally residing in Georgia and persons holding stateless status in Georgia. The Center for Integration of Foreigners was also handed over to the above-said Ministry. In this regard, the state provides regular funding of the above-mentioned program from the budget, and manages the Integration Center.

Following the structural changes, Division for Migration Issues was created (2018) within MoH, which is responsible for conducting activities in both of the above-mentioned directions. Simultaneously, the Ministry was also assigned (2018) the coordinating function of the Working Group on Integration Issues under the SCMI.

⁴⁴ Poland, Greece, Bulgaria, France, Belgium, Romania, Switzerland, Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Spain, Lithuania, Latvia, Italy, Ireland, Czech Republic, Finland, Slovenia and Denmark.

System of International Protection

In recent years, significant legislative and institutional changes have been implemented for the improvement of the system of international protection. Thus, in order to achieve further approximation of the Georgian legislation to the international standards, the new Law “On International Protection” was adopted in 2016, and has been effective since 1 February 2017. As a result of the structural changes implemented in the government in 2018, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has been designated as the state entity responsible for granting, cessation, cancellation and revocation of international protection. The Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers as well as units for Country of Origin Information, Status Determination and Quality Assurance are operating under the Migration Department of MIA. In parallel, the electronic database of asylum seekers and international protection holders was improved and in 2017 Georgia started issuing biometric travel documents to persons holding humanitarian status.

Legal Migration

In 2014, based on the new Law of Georgia “On the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons”, a mechanism similar to the Schengen Visa Code system was created. In particular, new visa categories (A, B, C, D and T) were introduced and new types of residence permits (interrelated with visas) were determined. Moreover, since 2015, Georgia has been operating *E-visa portal*, which allows foreigners to apply remotely via the Internet and obtain a Georgian visa electronically.⁴⁵ In order to improve the consular services for Georgian and foreign citizens, a Consular Case Management Electronic System - *geoconsul.gov.ge*⁴⁶ was created, where consular services can be obtained by registering electronic application remotely. A similar type of service was also introduced by PSDA, where the interested persons can remotely apply for the migration related services via the PSDA's website⁴⁷.

In order to support and regulate temporary labor (circular) emigration, the MoH, with support from SCMI, has institutionalized the issue. The Division for Migration Issues, created within the ministry, was tasked to arrange temporary legal employment opportunities for Georgian citizens abroad, develop interstate cooperation in this field, and draft relevant agreements. Currently, the work is in progress to strengthen the aforementioned structural unit and to implement complex reforms in the field. Simultaneously, cooperation in the area of temporary labor migration is being developed with some European countries (Greece, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Lithuania, Spain, Portugal, Estonia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Portugal and Ireland).

⁴⁵ <https://www.evisa.gov.ge/GeoVisa/> last accessed: 26.07.2019

⁴⁶ <https://geoconsul.gov.ge/ka> last accessed: 26.07.2019

⁴⁷ https://sda.gov.ge/?page_id=7404&lang=en last accessed: 26.07.2019

Migration Statistics and Data Management

The efforts towards improvement of migration data collection and analysis is carried out in several directions: in 2015, Georgia introduced the qualitatively new Medium Migration Profile, which is updated once in two years while Brief Migration Profiles are developed in-between, using the particular thematic areas identified in the MMP. Moreover, Migration Profile data sources are being diversified and their methodology evolves each year; the research of a different scale using various methodologies is carried out on topics relevant to migration and the Unified Migration Data Analytical System (UMAS) is being developed. At the same time, since 2018, the SCMI has begun producing infographics based on the Migration Profile data, which will be a regular practice in the future. Its purpose is to communicate effectively with the public and provide the reader with the information on the major migratory trends in the country in an easily understandable manner.

In order to use administrative data resources more efficiently in the process of migration analysis and management, at the decision of the Government of Georgia and co-funding from the European Union the UMAS was developed using the so-called 'Big Data' technology. At this stage, the UMAS allows to combine administrative data related to immigration, collected by various state entities into a single database. The infrastructure of the Analytical System is based in PSDA. One of the main platforms for the UMAS is Migration Profile, where statistics and results of thematic analysis are presented. The main project for the creation and development of the analytical System was implemented during 2016-2018. Since 2019, the System is being gradually transferred into the real mode. As of June 2019, more than 10 pilot reports have been prepared via the analytical System, while one of those reports (on the short-term (circular) movement of the foreigners in Georgia) is presented in present document ([see page 46](#)).

Migration Risk Analysis System

In order to effectively manage the migration policy, analyze data related to migration flows, assess identified risks, adequately respond to expected processes and develop preventive measures and recommendations, the Concept for *Migration Risk Analysis System* was approved by SCMI at the end of 2015. According to the Concept, UMAS was defined as one of the main instruments and data sources for the effective risk analysis.

An interagency Migration Risk Analysis Working Group has been functioning within the framework of the SCMI since 2016, in order to put the Concept into practice. The activities of the Group are coordinated by the MIA. Except for MIA, four SCMI member state entities (MFA, MoJ, MoH and SSSG) are involved in the work of the Group and implementation of the Concept. These entities, according to own profile directions, conduct risk analysis within their organizations, thus promoting the unified risk analysis on the national level. Based on the Concept of the *Migration Risk Analysis System*, the aim of the Working Group is to develop a comprehensive unified migration risk analysis document by assessing migratory processes both in the country and abroad.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

In the past six years, four new major laws were adopted in the field of migration management:

- ❶ The **Organic Law of Georgia on Georgian Citizenship**⁴⁸ has been effective since June 2014. The Law simplifies the determination of Georgian citizenship and modifies the naturalization procedures. Furthermore, it is in full compliance with the 1961 UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. The conditions for retaining Georgian citizenship when acquiring the citizenship of another country were specified by the amendment to the law in 2018. Also, the criteria for granting Georgian citizenship by way of exception were clearly defined and the legal residence period in Georgia for granting Georgian citizenship under regular procedure was increased to 10 years;
- ❷ The new **Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons**,⁴⁹ which has been effective since September 2014, established new regulations for the entry and stay of foreigners in Georgia, introduced new visa and residence permit categories, and created the effective expulsion mechanism for persons with no legal basis for staying in Georgia. Several problematic issues were identified in the process of implementation of the Law, triggering amendments in 2015, which altered some of the regulations related to visa and residence permit issuance;
- ❸ The **Law of Georgia on Labour Migration**,⁵⁰ effective since November 2015, largely regulates the norms of the labour emigration of Georgian citizens abroad, particularly emigration through intermediary agencies. The Law also foresees mechanisms for the protection of labour emigrants' rights. Later, the Government of Georgia has also approved a corresponding bylaw regulating labour immigration;⁵¹
- ❹ With the purpose of approximation to the best international and European standards, the new **Law of Georgia on International Protection**⁵² was adopted in 2016, and has been effective since 1 February 2017. The Law defines legislative mechanisms, which on the one hand maximally protect the rights of the persons who are in real need of international protection, thus making the asylum granting procedures more effective and ensuring a decision within a realistic timeframe, while, on the other hand, tighten the regulations against persons abusing the asylum system in Georgia.

⁴⁸ <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2342552?publication=5> last accessed: 26.07.2019








⁴⁹ <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2278806?publication=9> last accessed: 26.07.2019

⁵⁰ <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2806732?publication=3> last accessed: 26.07.2019

⁵¹ Government of Georgia, ordinance №417 of August 7, 2015 "On Approving the Rule on Employment by a Local Employer of a foreigner Holding no Georgian Permanent Residence Permit and Performance of Paid Labour Activities by such foreigners", <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2941958> last accessed: 26.07.2019

⁵² <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/3452780?publication=4> last accessed: 26.07.2019

Other legislative acts regulating international migration:

-  Law of Georgia on the Rules of Georgian Citizens' Exit from and Entry into Georgia (1993);
-  Law of Georgia on the Procedures for Registering Citizens of Georgia and Foreigners Residing in Georgia, Issuing Identity (Residence) Cards and Passports of a Citizen of Georgia (1996);
-  Law of Georgia on the State Border of Georgia (1998);
-  Law of Georgia on Combating Trafficking in Persons (2006);
-  Law of Georgia on Compatriots Residing Abroad and Diaspora Organizations (2011);
-  Law of Georgia on Occupied Territories (2008);
-  Law of Georgia on Personal Data Protection (2011).

Moreover, strategic documents and agreements between Georgia and the EU provide important guidelines on how migration management should be further developed in Georgia. These documents are: the "Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part", which includes the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (AA/DCFTA), the Association Agenda between the European Union and Georgia, and the long-term tasks of the VLAP. At the same time, the latest global initiatives and formats of regional cooperation play an increasingly important role in shaping aspects of migration management.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The State Commission on Migration Issues was established in 2010 on the basis of the Governmental Decree №314.⁵³ The aim of the SCMI, founded on the corporate management principle, is to define and implement a unified policy of the Government of Georgia in the field of migration and to improve coordinated management of migratory processes. This goal is seen to be achieved through the elaboration and implementation of research- and evidence-based migration policy; coordination of activities of entities engaged in migration management; application of bilateral, regional and international cooperation formats and experience exchange; as well as through the active engagement of civil society and academia. Thus, in recent years, the SCMI's activities have been developing dynamically in these very directions.

In 2012, the SCMI Secretariat was formed within the framework of the EU funded project. The function of the Secretariat is to assist the Commission's efficient operations and provide with expert and analytical support on migration-related issues. The Secretariat is hosted by the LEPL Public Service Development Agency under the MoJ.

⁵³ http://migration.commission.ge/files/scmi_ordinance_eng_as_of_10.08.2018_.pdf last accessed: 26.07.2019

The SCMI brings together high-level representatives from the state agencies below:

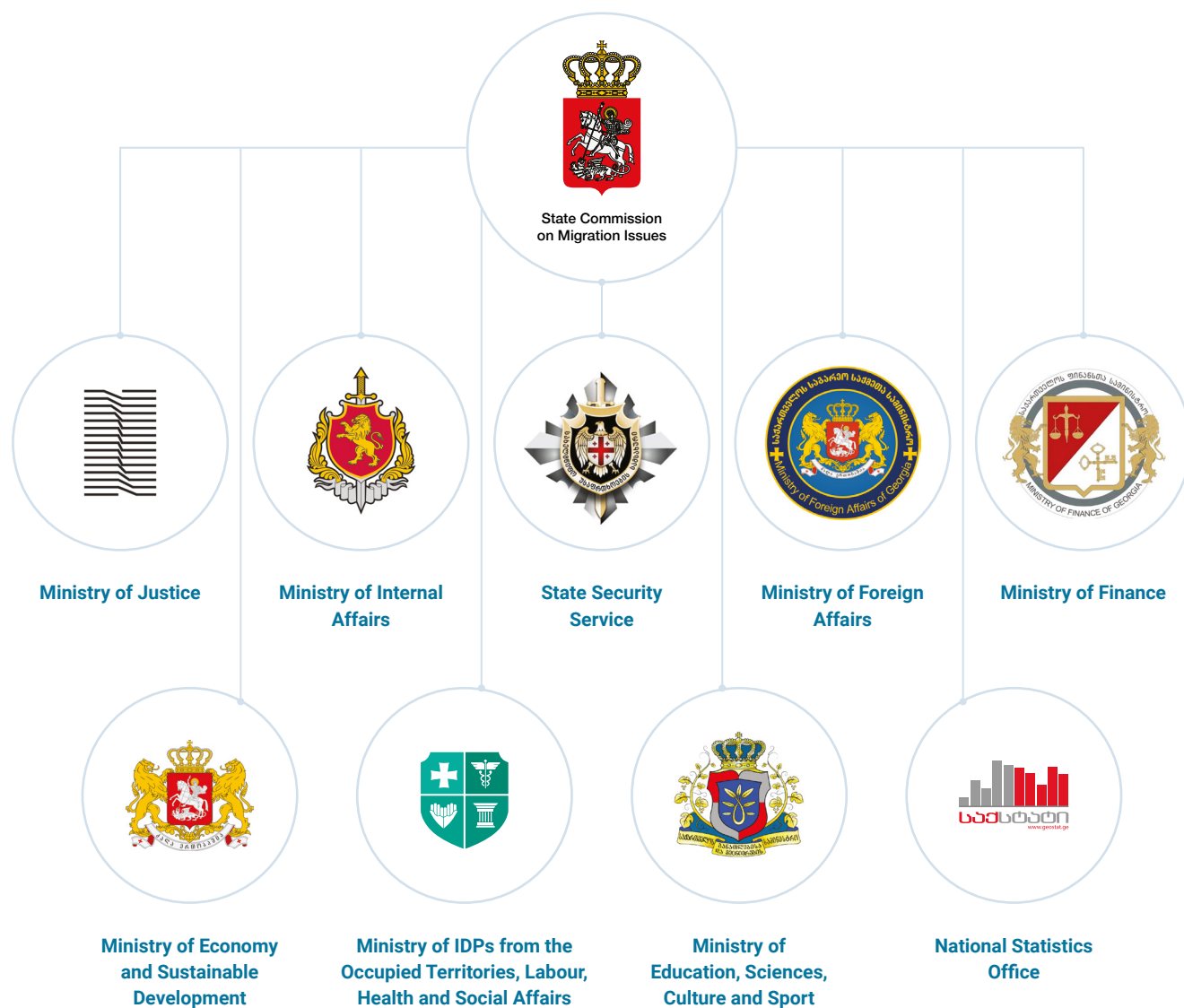


ILLUSTRATION 1. MEMBER AGENCIES OF THE SCMI

The chair of the Commission is the Ministry of Justice, and the co-chair is the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Five international organizations and four national non-governmental organizations have a consultative status in the SCMI.⁵⁴ Engagement of the non-governmental sector aims at supporting the Commission with additional expertise and encouraging regular inter- and intra-sectoral cooperation and experience exchange.

In order to study priority issues related to migration and proactively prepare drafts of the decisions to be discussed at SCMI sittings, several subject-specific Working Groups (WGs) have been established within the Commission:⁵⁵



Migration Laboratory;



Working Group on Migration Risk Analysis;



Working Group on Unified Migration Data Analytical System;



Working Group on Integration Issues;



Working Group on Statelessness.

The organizations holding consultative status within SCMI, alongside its member state agencies, are represented in the WGs.

It is noteworthy that such model of migration management – high quality coordinative system based on a whole-of-government approach, gained considerable acclaim internationally; and especially, within the EU and its member states. The full or partial replication of this model for migration management is being implemented in different countries.

⁵⁴ The list of organisations with consultative status can be found on the SCMI website:

http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=59&clang=1 last accessed: 26.07.2019

⁵⁵ The major directions of the Working Groups' activities can also be found on the SCMI website:

http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=56&clang=1 last accessed: 26.07.2019

