

# **Knowledge of and Attitudes toward the European Union in Georgia**

**2021 Survey Report**



Tbilisi

2021

The survey was commissioned by Europe Foundation and conducted by CRRC Georgia.



It has been generously supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Danish International Development Cooperation (Danida). The views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of Sida or Danida.



All rights are reserved and belong to Europe Foundation  
Copyright © Europe Foundation, September 2021

# Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations .....	1
Executive Summary.....	2
Perception of the European Union .....	2
Presence of the European Union in Georgia .....	3
Knowledge about the European Union .....	4
Information Received about the European Union.....	5
Georgia’s Membership in the European Union.....	5
Introduction .....	7
Methodology.....	9
Survey results .....	10
Perception of the European Union .....	10
The European Union Presence in Georgia .....	15
Perception of relations with the European Union .....	15
Perception of EU assistance to Georgia.....	16
Association Agreement with the European Union.....	18
Travelling to, working in, and emigrating to the European Union .....	19
Knowledge about the European Union and its policies towards Georgia .....	22
Knowledge about the EU .....	22
Knowledge of visa-free travel procedures to EU/Schengen countries.....	23
Who knows more about the EU and its policies towards Georgia?.....	25
Information received about the European Union .....	26
Georgia’s membership in the European Union .....	27
Support for the country’s EU membership .....	27
Perceptions of Georgia’s readiness to become an EU member .....	30
Perceptions of the effects of Georgia’s membership in the EU .....	31
Conclusions .....	33
Annex 1: Ethnic minorities.....	37
Bibliography.....	39

## List of Abbreviations

CAPI	Computer-Assisted Personal Interview
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
EU	European Union
EUMM	European Union's Monitoring Mission

# Executive Summary

## Perception of the European Union

- The European Union is perceived positively by a plurality of the Georgian population. Overall, forty-six percent of Georgians have either very positive (16%) or rather positive (30%) attitudes towards the European Union. About 43% have a neutral outlook, while a minority (7%) has either a rather negative or very negative attitude.
- Ethnic Georgians (6%) and Azerbaijanis (4%) are least likely to have a negative opinion about the organization, as opposed to Armenians (19%) and the representatives of other ethnic groups (24%). A plurality of ethnic Georgians (48%) positively perceives the EU, while a plurality of Armenians (45%) has a neutral attitude.
- The European Union is among the most trusted institutions in Georgia. Georgians trust the European Union more than the majority of the country's own social and political institutions. In terms of net trust (50%), that is, the sum of the "Fully trust" and "Trust" answers, the EU ranks just below the army (77%) and religious institutions (70%) as being perceived as trustworthy.
- Fifty-two percent of ethnic Georgians either fully trust or trust the EU, followed by ethnic Azerbaijanis (48%), Armenians (38%), and the representatives of other ethnic groups (21%). The latter are more likely to distrust the organization (46%) when compared to ethnic Armenians, Azerbaijanis, or Georgians.
- About 34% contend that, first and foremost, the European Union is an international organization. For slightly less than a quarter of Georgians (23%), the EU is a political union, while 22% perceive the EU as an economic union. Fewer think of the EU as a military block (4%), or a cultural union (2%). Respondents residing in Georgian-speaking communities are more likely to have an opinion on what the European Union stands for. Only about 12% of such respondents said that they do not know the answer or refused to respond. On the contrary, almost half of the respondents in the ethnic minority communities (42%) did not have an answer to this question.
- About 54% of Georgians either fully or somewhat disagree that the European Union is a threat to the country's national traditions. Still, 35% agree with the statement. This is the first time that most Georgians disagree with the suggestion that the EU threatens the country's traditions. Compared to 2015, when only about 34% fully or partially disagreed with the statement that the EU represents a threat, in the 2021 wave of the survey the number of such respondents increased by 20 percentage points.
- Younger respondents, ethnic Georgians, those with higher education degrees are more likely to disagree with the idea that the European Union is a threat to Georgian traditions. So are those who never attend religious services and those with a relatively more highly perceived economic status. Older respondents, those who have not completed a course of higher education, respondents attending religious services, and those at the lowest level of perceived economic status are more likely to agree that the EU threatens Georgian traditions

## Presence of the European Union in Georgia

- Most Georgians (56%) consider the current state of relations between Georgia and the European Union as being neutral. Twenty-eight percent believe that relations are very good or rather good. About 13% are ambivalent or unsure, as they did not know the answer to the question. Very few (4%) thought that relations were either very bad or rather bad.
- Most Georgians pick the EU as the organization the country should strive to cooperate with the most, both in the areas of political and economic partnership. As for political cooperation, the EU is tied with the United States as the top choice with 60%. In terms of economic cooperation, Georgians most frequently think of the European Union as the desired partner (59%). When asked which would help Georgia the most, respondents most frequently picked the European Union (43%), followed by the US (27%). Only 13% named Russia as the country that can best support Georgia.
- The majority of Georgians believe that EU assistance is crucial to the country. About 86% consider such assistance as being important or very important.
- Georgians have a vague understanding of what type of assistance the EU provides to Georgia. More than a quarter of Georgians either do not know what sort of aid the EU is giving to Georgia (22%) or believes that the union is not helping Georgia at all (7%). Forty-three percent think that the EU is providing humanitarian aid. About 22% believe that the EU aids Georgia by investing in its economy, 12% think that the organization helps Georgia to resolve its social problems, 11% say that the EU is assisting Georgia in building public institutions, while 10% of Georgians believe that the European Union is helping the country to restore its territorial integrity. Notably, more Georgians do not know what sort of aid the EU is giving to Georgia (29%) when compared to 2019. The proportion of those who believe that the EU is assisting Georgia with humanitarian aid increased by ten percentage points, while the number of those who think that the EU is investing in Georgia's economy increased by four percentage points.
- A majority of Georgians believe that the aid disbursed to Georgia is not spent on its anticipated targets. Sixty-seven percent said that such funds were spent either completely or partially not on intended targets.
- A plurality of Georgians (about 43%) positively perceives the EU's role in the 2008 August war. Twenty-six percent think that the organization played a neutral role in the conflict, while 14% think that it had a mainly negative role.
- Almost half of the country's population (47%) do not know about the European Union's Monitoring Mission's work in Georgia. Twenty percent correctly answered the question regarding EUMM operations by stating that it works to stabilize the situation in conflict-affected areas. Nineteen percent incorrectly believed that it supports democratic and market-oriented reforms, 8% thought that the EUMM helped with enhancing regional cooperation in the South Caucasus, while 6% said that the mission's goal was to strengthen Georgia's ties with the European Union in higher education.
- Only 39% of Georgians are aware of Georgia's Association Agreement with the EU. Thirty-nine percent, that is, less than half of Georgia's population, is not aware of the Association Agreement. About 6% were ambivalent. The awareness of the Association Agreement among Georgians stands at its lowest since 2015 (63%), a year after the country officially signed the document.
- Ethnic Georgians (43%), those who hold a higher education degree (60%), and those who consider their income as sufficient or more than enough (49%) are more likely to know about the agreement. Ethnic minorities, including Armenians (15%) and Azerbaijanis (6%), as well as those with secondary or lower education (25%), are less likely to be aware of the Association Agreement.

- Notably, Georgians who are aware of the Association Agreement expect that it will help improve the situation by easing the procedures of obtaining long-term visas, improving healthcare and security, enhancing the quality of higher and secondary education, creating employment opportunities, and ensuring energy efficiency.
- More than a quarter of Georgians say they would contemplate going abroad for employment. Overall, the majority of respondents wanting to go abroad for work would consider emigrating to one of the EU member states (57%) or to North America (20%). About one-third would prefer emigrating to Germany (33%), followed by the United States (17%), Italy (7%), and Russia (5%).
- Only thirteen percent of the country's population would consider leaving Georgia on a permanent basis to live in another country. Notably, in total, more Georgians picked EU member states (39%). Slightly fewer (38%) chose North American countries, namely the US and Canada. Even fewer picked other non-EU European countries (10%) and Russia (5%).
- About 11% of Georgians have travelled to EU/Schengen countries at least once since the country was granted visa-free status as opposed to 86% who did not have a chance to do so. Compared to the 2019 wave of this survey, the share of Georgians who have visited the EU/Schengen states has increased by five percentage points.
- Younger people, ethnic Georgians, those with higher education, and those who are relatively well-off are more likely to have travelled to the European Union since the inception of the visa-free regime. About 18% of Georgians younger than 35 have visited EU/Schengen countries, as opposed to 11% among those between 35 and 54 and 6% of those older than 54. A larger percentage of ethnic Georgians (12%), in comparison with Armenians (5%) or Azerbaijanis (4%), have used the opportunity to travel visa-free. So has about one-fifth of holders of higher education degrees and about 16% of those who view their households' monetary income as sufficient or more than enough.

## **Knowledge about the European Union**

- Many Georgians have a rudimentary understanding of the rules governing visa-free travel. Only 7% of Georgians were able to name all five essential requirements for entering EU/Schengen states, while, on average, respondents could name only two of the documents necessary for travelling to the EU. Importantly, over the course of the last few years, the overall knowledge of the rules of the visa-free regime has decreased. The mean value of the index measuring the knowledge of visa-free travel rules in 2017 totaled 2.2, while it dropped to 1.9 in 2019 and 1.75 in 2021.
- Men, younger people, representatives of other ethnic groups, Georgians with higher education and those who consider their household income to be at least barely sufficient, scored higher than others. Ethnic Azerbaijanis, those with secondary or lower education, and those who consider themselves to be economically struggling, had a lesser knowledge of visa-free travel rules.
- The majority of the country's population believes that, after the instatement of the visa-free regime, Georgians will be able to work in the European Union. Sixty-two percent incorrectly said that the agreement granted the right to work legally in EU countries. Only 19% correctly believed that Georgians could not work in the EU member states as a result of the visa-free regime.
- Knowledge of the work-related rules of the visa-free regime has deteriorated over the last five years. In 2017, when Georgia had just been granted visa-free travel, the majority (59%) considered that such an arrangement would not allow Georgians to work in EU/Schengen countries. This proportion decreased in 2019; nonetheless, the plurality of Georgians (42%) still consider that the country's residents cannot legally work in the EU as a result of the visa-free regime.

- An analysis of the index measuring the knowledge of various EU policies shows that female respondents, ethnic Azerbaijanis and those who have only achieved secondary or lower education, score low compared to men, other ethnic groups, and those with higher education degrees.

## **Information Received about the European Union**

- Most Georgians receive information about the European Union from TV (75%), followed by word of mouth from friends, relatives, or colleagues (47%), and online social networks (44%).
- Interest in learning more about the European Union reached a thirteen-year low in 2021 when the proportion of those interested in receiving more information about the EU decreased by thirteen percentage points – from 66% in 2009 to 53% in 2021.
- A plurality of Georgians wants to receive information about EU-Georgia trade relations (41%). About one-third (33%) named EU educational programs, followed by the EU’s role in conflict resolution (24%).

## **Georgia’s Membership in the European Union**

- Georgians overwhelmingly support the country’s membership in the European Union. More than three-quarters (77%) of the country’s population report that they would vote for Georgian membership in the European Union. Eight percent would vote against, 6% would not participate at all, while 9% abstained from answering.
- Compared to the 2019 wave of the study, the proportion of Georgians who would for EU membership in a hypothetical referendum increased by six percentage points. Ethnic Georgians (80%) would overwhelmingly vote for Georgia’s membership in the European Union, compared to 56% of Azerbaijanis and 49% of Armenians. Ethnic minorities are more likely to be ambivalent, that is, indicating that they would refrain from voting, or do not know the answer.
- Georgians have grown increasingly optimistic about when the country might become a part of the European Union. Twenty-eight percent of Georgians in the 2021 survey believed that the country would become a part of the EU within the next five years, a 13 percentage point increase compared to 2019.
- Georgians supporting the country’s membership in the European Union are primarily motivated by potential economic benefits. Fifty-six percent of Georgians said that they would vote for joining the EU because their economic situation would improve as an outcome. About 36% had security considerations, namely being better protected from foreign threats (18%), or increased chances of the restoration of Georgia’s territorial integrity (17%).
- While few Georgians would vote against EU membership in a hypothetical referendum, those who would vote “no” frequently justify their choice by arguing that joining the EU would harm our culture and traditions (31%). Thirty-one percent expect that such a move would restrict Georgia’s independence, while 20% think that EU membership would damage relations with Russia.
- Overall, a majority of Georgians (54%) believe the country to be unprepared for EU membership. However, more Georgians (40%) said that the country is either definitely ready or quite ready for EU membership in terms of protection and respect for minority rights. Forty-six percent think that Georgia is not prepared in this regard. About 34% believe that the country is prepared in the area of human rights protection and possessing democratic institutions.
- Political concerns such as unresolved territorial conflicts (39%) and political instability (37%) are preventing Georgia from joining the EU. While the overall results remain reasonably similar to the



previous wave of the survey, the share of those who have named political instability as a hindrance to Georgia's EU membership has increased by twelve percentage points compared to 2019.

- Georgians expect improvements in almost all domains of public life should the country become a part of the European Union. Seventy-six percent expect that such a move would significantly or somewhat increase the quality of education in Georgia, followed by the number of available jobs in the country (74%) and pensions (71%).
- A majority of Georgians (68%) expect that joining the EU would have either a very negative or more negative than positive effect on bilateral relations with Russia. Only nine percent expects very positive or somewhat positive effects.

# Introduction

Since Georgia regained independence in the early 1990s, the European Union's (EU) involvement in the country has been multifaceted. As this relationship continues to evolve, what Georgians think about the EU and their knowledge of the organization's policies is very useful information. In line with this, in order to better understand Georgia's relationship with the EU and the potential it holds moving forward, we should take stock of the public's knowledge of and attitudes toward the EU.

Georgia has gradually moved toward closer cooperation with the EU by signing various trade and political treaties (such as GSP, GSP+, PCA), ensuring the country's integration within the union's common markets. In 2006, the country became part of the EU's European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Their close bilateral relations grew leading up to the 2010s when Georgia signed the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) and was granted visa-free travel.<sup>1</sup>

On the economic front, the EU is a major contributor to Georgia's economy. Over the last three decades, the organization's financial aid has exceeded two billion euros.<sup>2</sup> As of 2021, EU countries are Georgia's main trade partners, thus surpassing traditional trade partners, such as Turkey and Russia.<sup>3</sup> Since 2010, EU countries have been the main investors in Georgia's economy. With 4.5 billion Lari in foreign direct investments, in 2021 they contributed almost twice as much as Azerbaijan, 2.5 times as much as the United Kingdom, 3.5 times as much as Turkey, and five times as much as the United States.<sup>4</sup> In 2019, approximately 7% of tourists to Georgia were EU nationals, thus significantly contributing to the country's booming tourism industry.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from Georgia's economy, the EU has been helping to ensure Georgia's security and institutional development. Since 2008, the European Union's Monitoring Mission (EUMM) has protected peace and stability along the Administrative Boundary Lines with Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Most recently, the organization's involvement was instrumental in mediating a political crisis and diffusing political polarization between Georgia's major political parties.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, “საქართველო-ევროკავშირის ურთიერთობების მნიშვნელოვანი მოვლენების ქრონოლოგია” ([<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, “ევროკავშირის დახმარების მიმოხილვა” \(\[<sup>3</sup> European Commission, “Georgia - Trade” \\(<https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/georgia/>, April 2021\\).\]\(https://mfa.gov.ge/%E1%83%94%E1%83%95%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D%E1%83%9E%E1%83%A3%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98-%E1%83%93%E1%83%90-%E1%83%94%E1%83%95%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D-%E1%83%90%E1%83%A2%E1%83%9A%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%98%E1%83%99%E1%83%A3%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98-%E1%83%98%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%94%E1%83%92%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%AA%E1%83%98%E1%83%90/evrokavshiris-dakhmarebis-mimokhilva.aspx, 2021\).</a></p></div><div data-bbox=\)](https://mfa.gov.ge/%E1%83%94%E1%83%95%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D%E1%83%9E%E1%83%A3%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98-%E1%83%93%E1%83%90-%E1%83%94%E1%83%95%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D-%E1%83%90%E1%83%A2%E1%83%9A%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%98%E1%83%99%E1%83%A3%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98-%E1%83%98%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%94%E1%83%92%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%AA%E1%83%98%E1%83%90/%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%A5%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%97%E1%83%95%E1%83%94%E1%83%9A%E1%83%9D-%E1%83%94%E1%83%95%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D%E1%83%99%E1%83%90%E1%83%95%E1%83%A8%E1%83%98%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98.aspx?lang=en-US, 2019).</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

<sup>4</sup> National Statistics Office of Georgia, “პირდაპირი უცხოური ინვესტიციები” ([<sup>5</sup> National Statistics Office of Georgia, “უცხოელ ვიზიტორთა სტატისტიკა” \(\[<sup>6</sup> European Commission. 2017. ‘Statement by Commissioner Avramopoulos on the Council Adoption of Visa Liberalisation for Georgia’. European Commission - European Commission. 27 February 2017. \\[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT\\\\_17\\\\_363\\]\\(https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT\\_17\\_363\\).\]\(https://geostat.ge/media/38256/moqalaqebis-qveyana.xlsx, 2021\).</a></p></div><div data-bbox=\)](https://geostat.ge/media/38754/FDI_Geo_countries.xlsx, 2021).</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

Considering the all-encompassing presence of the EU, popular support for the organization remains high among Georgians. During the last thirteen years—a period when Europe Foundation tracked public opinion about the European Union in Georgia—a plurality of the country’s population expressed positive attitudes towards the Union, while the majority supported Georgia’s EU membership.

Notably, similar views are shared by the majority of Georgia’s political class,<sup>7</sup> including the political party in government and major opposition groups.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, such enthusiasm has been affirmed in the most recent amendments to Georgia’s constitution. The updated document includes a transitional provision obliging Georgia’s constitutional bodies to “take all measures...to ensure the full integration of Georgia into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.”<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the government of Georgia has announced that it plans to apply for EU membership in 2024<sup>10</sup> and receive candidate status by 2030.<sup>11</sup>

Europe Foundation has been at the forefront of promoting civic participation in Georgia’s European integration efforts, facilitating consensus on the EU-Georgia Association Agreement implementation issues among different stakeholders to bring the country closer to European standards, practices, and values. To this end, the Foundation has implemented various interventions aimed at creating wider civic participation in AA/DCFTA reforms, and has spearheaded policy dialogue between civil society organizations and public sector representatives. One of the most important outcomes of the Foundation’s work over the past ten years has been the creation and gradual strengthening of the country’s food safety system, which has significantly improved the country’s food safety and consumer protection standards and practices. As a result, almost one hundred policy recommendations from civil society and business associations were considered and acted upon by the Georgian government, which led to improved legislation and practice in this area.

Since 2009, Europe Foundation has also led a comprehensive and long-running study of public opinion toward the EU in Georgia. Over these years, the Foundation has conducted seven waves of this large-scale, nationwide public opinion poll covering a host of topics on bilateral EU-Georgia relations, including the presence of the EU, support for union membership, and the perceived benefits of closer ties with the EU. The following report summarizes the findings of the aforementioned ‘Knowledge of and Attitudes toward the European Union in Georgia’ survey. The goals of this report are threefold. First, it explores the key results of the survey’s 2021 installment. Secondly, where applicable, it uses time series data from previous waves of this study to characterize longer term trends. Finally, it analyzes the sociodemographic and attitudinal factors predicting Georgians’ attitudes towards the EU and provides potential explanations for such trends.

The text proceeds as follows. First, a brief summary of the methodology is provided. The next section analyzes the survey findings on EU perceptions. Separate chapters then explore: the attitudes of Georgians toward the presence of the EU; knowledge of the organization and its policies, and; the prospects for Georgia’s EU membership. The report ends with concluding remarks.

---

<sup>7</sup> Levan Kakhishvili, “Towards a Two-Dimensional Analytical Framework for Understanding Georgian Foreign Policy: How Party Competition Informs Foreign Policy Analysis,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 37, no. 2 (March 2021): 174–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2020.1869455>.

<sup>8</sup> Kieskompas, “საგარეო პოლიტიკა” (<https://kompassi.partiebi.ge/ka/results/compareJustificationPage>, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> “Constitution of Georgia,” August 1995.

<sup>10</sup> Steven Van Hecke and Teona Lavrelashvili, “Georgia Is Ready to Apply for Membership by 2024 - Is the EU Ready Too?” *Www.euractiv.com*, January 2021.

<sup>11</sup> David Zalkaliani, “Applying for EU Membership in 2024 & Receiving Candidate Status by 2030 Are Important Constituents of GE’s Foreign Policy - Accentuated Given Topic at the Presentation of the 10-Year Action Plan of the @MFAgovge. Talked about the Useful Mechanisms in This Direction - #AA, #EaP, #A3 <https://t.co/2V7k16q7Yn>,” Tweet, @DZalkaliani, August 2021.

## Methodology

This analysis is based on the seventh installment of the Europe Foundation’s Knowledge of and Attitudes toward the EU in Georgia survey. Both the survey design, as well as the research instrument of the current wave, remain similar to the previous waves. The study’s design represents a multi-stage, stratified cluster sample and ensures that the data are representative of residents of Tbilisi, other urban areas, rural settlements, and communities with predominantly ethnic Armenian and Azerbaijani populations.

Interviews were administered using the Computer-Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) method between April 8 and May 30, 2021. Overall, 2,335 completed interviews were collected, with a 30% response rate. Interviews were administered in Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani languages.

To reflect the demographic structure of Georgia, data are weighted based on the results of the 2014 National Census. Overall, the margin of error of point estimates averages 2.2%. The margin of error for specific proportions is given in table 1.

*Table 1: Distribution of margins of error for 95% confidence intervals for specific proportions*

Proportions	Estimated Margin of Error
Near 95% and 5%	0.71%
Near 90% and 10%	1.79%
Near 75% and 25%	2.58%
Near 60% and 40%	3.32%
Near 50%	3.71%

This report makes use of both exploratory and confirmatory data analysis tools. The descriptive analysis includes simple cross-tabulations and frequencies. Associations between variables of interest are identified using appropriate regression models. Covariates in these models include common demographic characteristics such as the respondent’s gender, age, reported ethnic identity, education, settlement type, attendance of church services, place of residence, and perceived economic situation. Respondents’ ages were coded into three groups (younger than 35, 35-54, and older than 54); education was coded into three categories such as secondary or lower, vocational, and complete or incomplete higher education. Given the substantial size of oversample in ethnic minority areas, statistical modeling allowed differences between ethnic Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Georgians, and the representatives of other ethnic groups to be identified. Respondents who belonged to Russian, Ossetian, Kurdish/Yezidi and other minority communities were grouped into the “Other” category.

# Survey results

## Perception of the European Union

A plurality of Georgians perceive the European Union positively. Overall, forty-six percent of Georgians have either very positive (16%) or rather positive (30%) attitudes towards the European Union. An almost similar proportion (43%) has a neutral outlook, while a minority (7%) has either a very negative, or a rather negative opinion of the European Union.

Notably, attitudes towards the European Union are highly correlated to respondents' views concerning NATO.<sup>12</sup> As it was in the case of the European Union, more Georgians (45%) think positively about NATO than negatively (8%). Forty-three percent have neutral views of NATO.

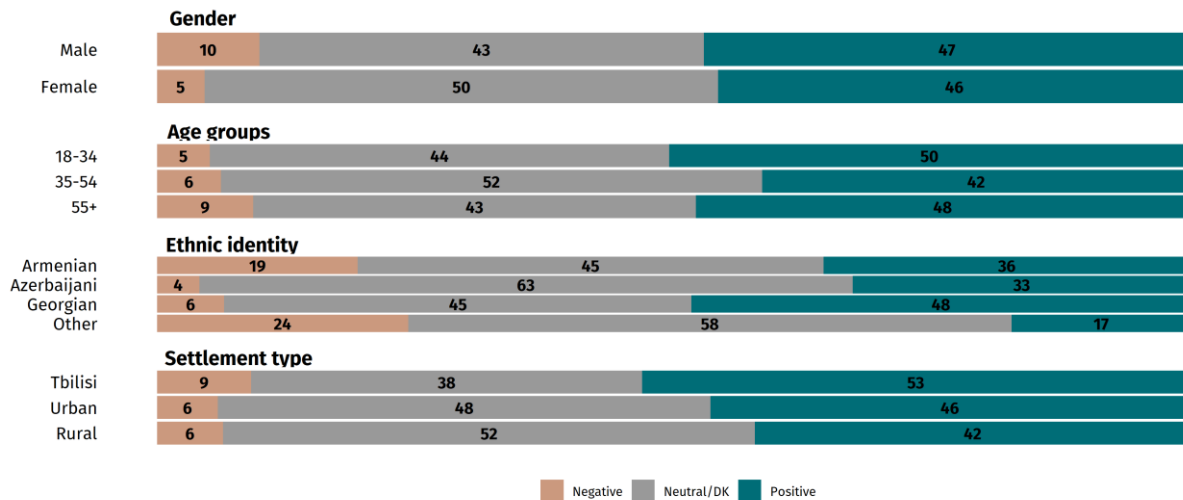


Figure 1: People in Georgia frequently talk about the European Union. What is your general perception of the European Union? By major demographic groups (%)

A respondent's gender, age, ethnic identity, and place of residence are good predictors of whether or not that respondent has a positive or negative opinion of the European Union.<sup>13</sup> Thus, half of the women and 43% of the men interviewed for the survey have a neutral opinion about the European Union (figure 1). Notably, more men (10%) than women (5%) are negatively predisposed towards the European Union. Almost half of the youngest (18-34) and the oldest (55+) age cohorts have positive views of the European Union. Fifty-three percent of Tbilisi residents perceive the EU positively. Fewer (46%) among those living in other urban areas have a similar opinion. About 42% of rural residents think positively about the European Union.

Ethnic identity is a good predictor of what a respondent thinks about the EU. Ethnic Georgians (6%) and Azerbaijanis (4%) are least likely to have a negative opinion about the organization, as opposed to Armenians (19%) and the representatives of other ethnic groups (24%). A plurality of ethnic Georgians (48%) perceives the EU positively, while a plurality of Armenians (45%) has a neutral attitude. The majority of Azerbaijanis

<sup>12</sup> 68% according to Spearman's rank-order correlation.

<sup>13</sup> Differences were identified using a multinomial regression model predicting respondents' general perception of the European Union. The model controlled for common demographic characteristics such as a respondent's gender, age, reported ethnic identity, education, settlement type, attendance of church services, place of residence, and perceived economic situation. To facilitate the interpretation of results, the dependent variable was coded as follows: options "Very Positive" and "Rather Positive" were grouped into "Positive;" "Very Negative" and "Rather Negative" were coded into "Negative;" and "Neutral," and "Don't Know" were grouped together.

(63%) and other ethnic groups (58%) responded neutrally or “Don’t know” when asked about their perception of the EU.

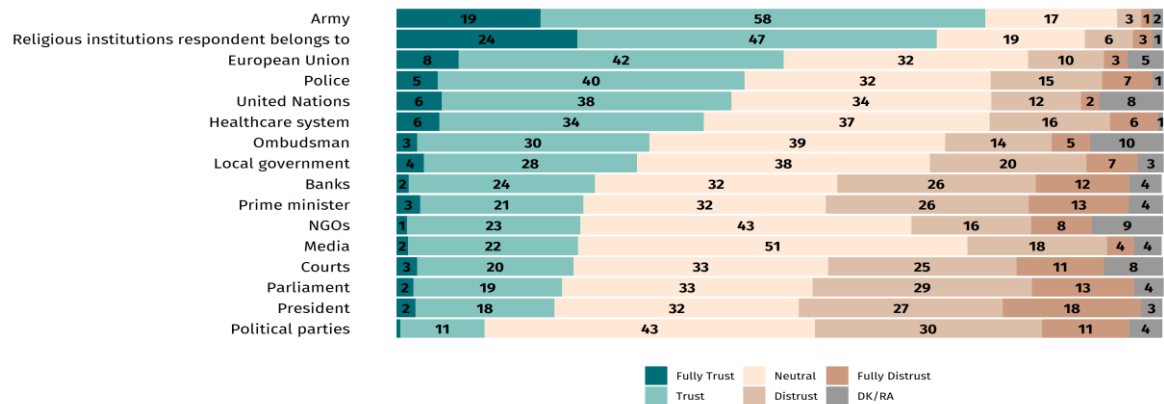


Figure 2: Please tell me how much do you trust or distrust... (%)

Half of Georgians either fully (8%) or partially (42%) trust the European Union (figure 2). About 32% have a neutral opinion, while only 13% fully or partially distrust the European Union. Notably, trust towards the European Union correlates with the general perception of the organization.<sup>14</sup>

The European Union is among the most trusted institutions in Georgia. In terms of “net trust” (50%), that is, the sum of the “Fully trust” and “Trust” answers, the EU ranks just below the army (77%) and religious institutions (70%), the two institutions Georgians traditionally trust the most.

Georgians trust the European Union more than they do the majority of the country’s own social and political institutions. In terms of net trust, the EU ranks higher than Georgia’s police (45%), ombudsman (33%), local government (31%), prime minister (24%), parliament (22%), and president (21%).

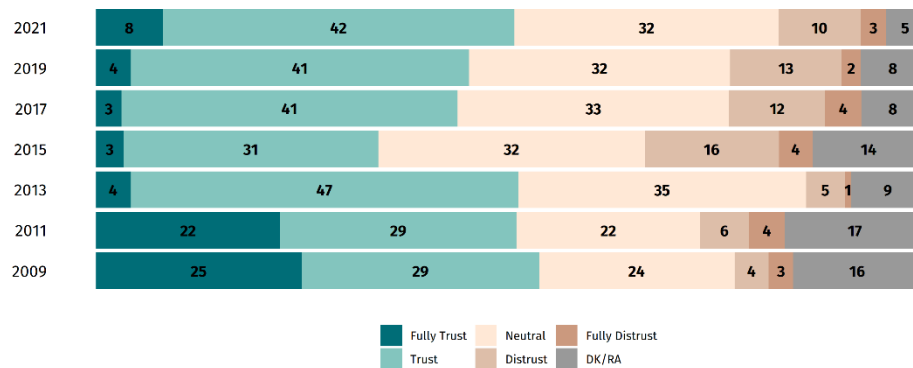


Figure 3: Please tell me how much do you trust or distrust the European Union... (%)

Importantly, in 2021 more Georgians trust the European Union than they did in 2015. Net trust towards the organization grew from 34% in 2015 to 51% (figure 3). While the share of those with neutral attitudes stayed the same, the proportion of the country’s population that answered “Don’t know” to the trust question dropped from 14% in 2015 to a mere 5%, hinting that most Georgians have made up their minds regarding the organization. Net negative trust also decreased from 20% in 2015 to 13% in 2021.

<sup>14</sup> 55% according to Spearman’s rank-order correlation.

A respondent's gender, ethnic identity, attendance of religious services, and perceived economic status also predict their trust towards the EU.<sup>15</sup> The majority of men and a plurality of women trust the European Union. Women are slightly more likely to have ambivalent feelings (figure 4).

Fifty-two percent of ethnic Georgians either fully trust or trust the EU, followed by ethnic Azerbaijanis (48%), Armenians (38%), and the representatives of other ethnic groups (21%). The latter are more likely to distrust the organization (46%) than ethnic Armenians, Azerbaijanis, or Georgians.

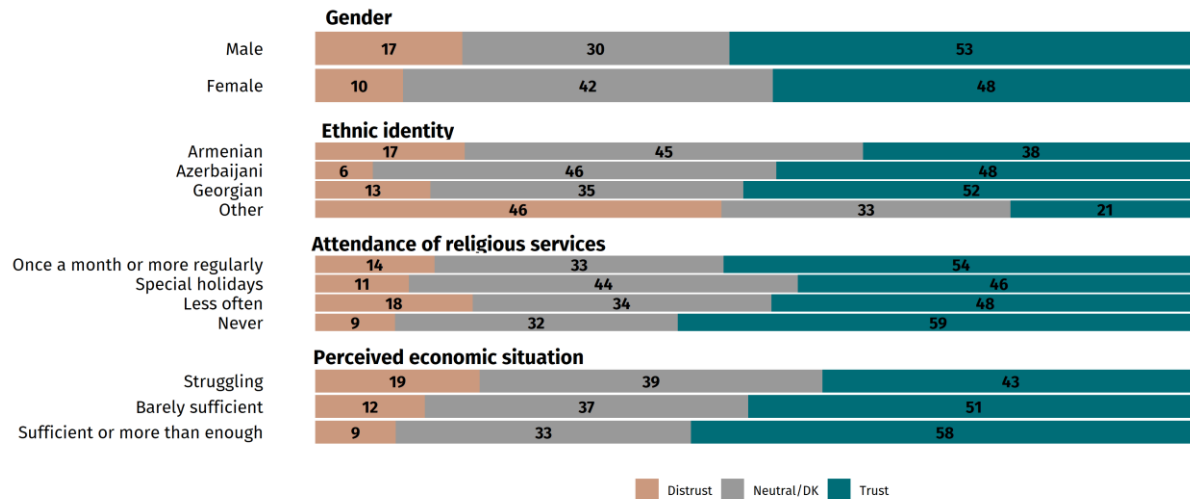


Figure 4: Please tell me how much do you trust or distrust the European Union... By major demographic groups (%)

Trust towards the EU is also connected to the frequency of attendance at religious services. Those who attend religious services once a month or more (54%) as well as those who never attend services (59%), are more likely to trust the EU than those who occasionally attend their churches, mosques, or shrines.

Those who perceive themselves as being relatively well-off are more likely to trust the EU (58%) than those who feel that they are struggling (43%).

Respondents were further asked about their opinion on what the European Union represents. About 34% contend that, first and foremost, the European Union is an international organization (figure 5). Slightly less than a quarter of Georgians (23%) believe that the EU is a political union, while 22% believe that the EU is an economic union. Fewer think of the EU as a military block (4%), a cultural union (2%), or an NGO (1%). Respondents residing in Georgian-speaking communities are more likely to have an opinion on what the European Union stands for. Only about 12% of such respondents said that they do not know the answer or refused to respond. On the contrary, almost half of the respondents from ethnic minority communities (42%) did not have an answer to this question.

<sup>15</sup> Differences were identified using a multinomial regression model predicting respondents' trust towards the European Union. To ease the interpretation of results, the dependent variable was coded as follows: options "Fully Trust" and "Trust" were grouped into "Trust;" "Fully Distrust" and "Distrust" were coded into "Distrust." Options "Neutral," and "Don't Know" were grouped together. Predictors include standard demographic characteristics used in previous models.

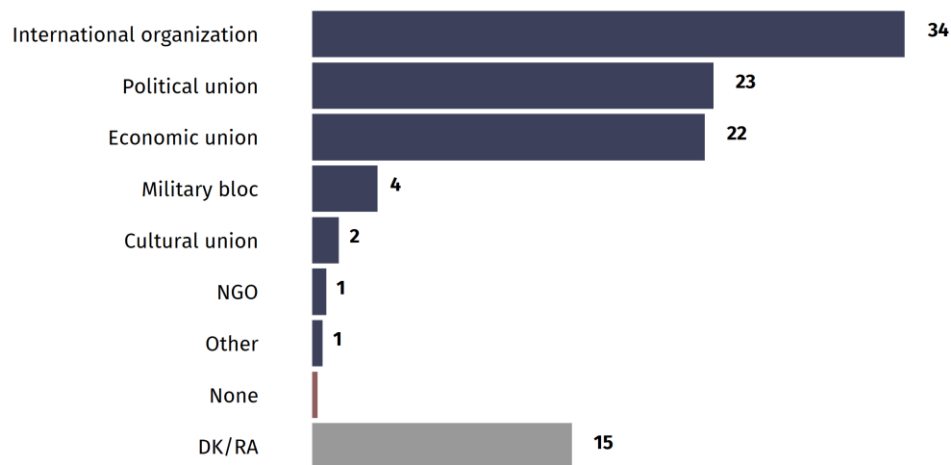


Figure 5: In your opinion, first and foremost, what does the EU represent? (%)

To further gauge Georgians’ perceptions of the European Union, respondents were presented with a set of statements describing common perceptions of the organization (figure 6), such as the EU’s political and economic roles, membership criteria, and identity.

The majority of Georgians agree that the EU is a democratic union (78%). Seventy-seven percent recognizes the EU’s role as a source for peace and security in Europe. The majority also believes that the organization supports the development of the economy (73%) and democracy (73%) in non-member states. Georgians are divided as to whether the EU is ready to accept any European country as its next member. Forty-two percent believe that the organization is prepared to do so, while 44% disagree.

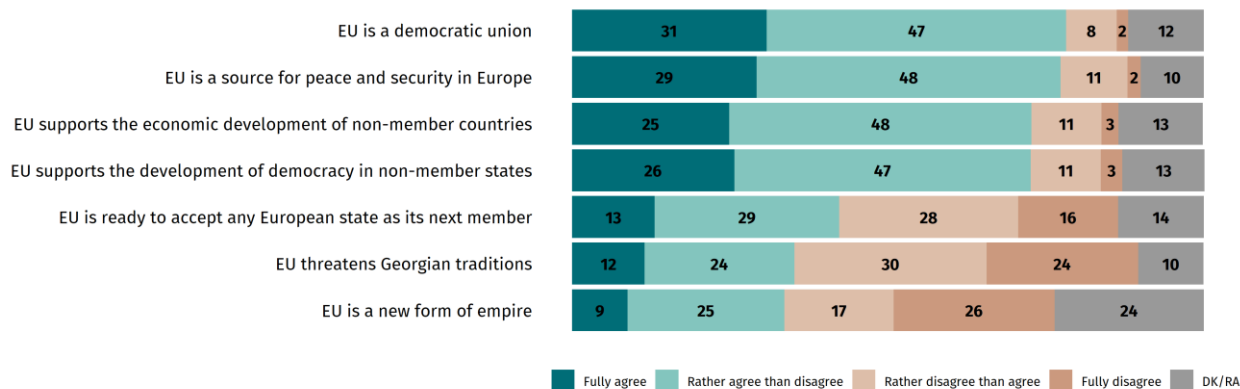


Figure 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each statement? (%)

More Georgians disagree than agree that the European Union is just a new form of empire. Forty-three percent disagreed that the EU is an empire, while 34% agreed with the statement.

Authors of anti-Western and, in particular, anti-EU narratives circulating in Georgia often propagate the claim that the European Union forces Georgia to adopt certain liberal values that are foreign to the country’s



predominantly socially conservative population.<sup>16</sup> In essence, such claims assert that Western-style modernization aims at dismantling Georgia’s own traditions that are deeply rooted in Orthodox Christianity.<sup>17</sup>

More than half of Georgians, that is, about 54%, either fully or partially disagreed that the European Union is a threat to the country’s national traditions. Still, 36% agreed with the statement.

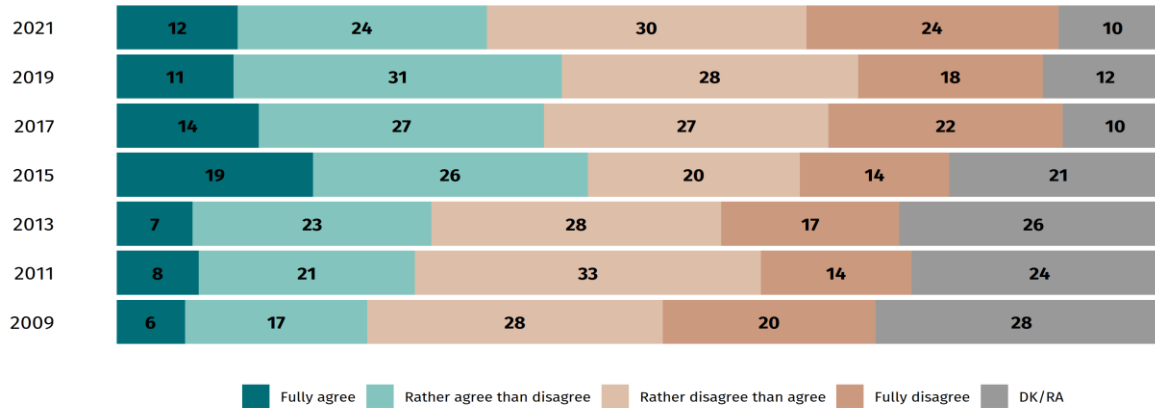


Figure 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the EU threatens Georgian traditions? (%)

Interestingly, this was the first time that the majority of Georgians disagree with the suggestion that the EU threatens the country’s traditions (figure 7). Compared to 2015, when only about 34% fully or partially disagreed, in the 2021 wave of the survey, the share of those who do not perceive the EU as a threat to Georgian traditions increased by 20 percentage points.

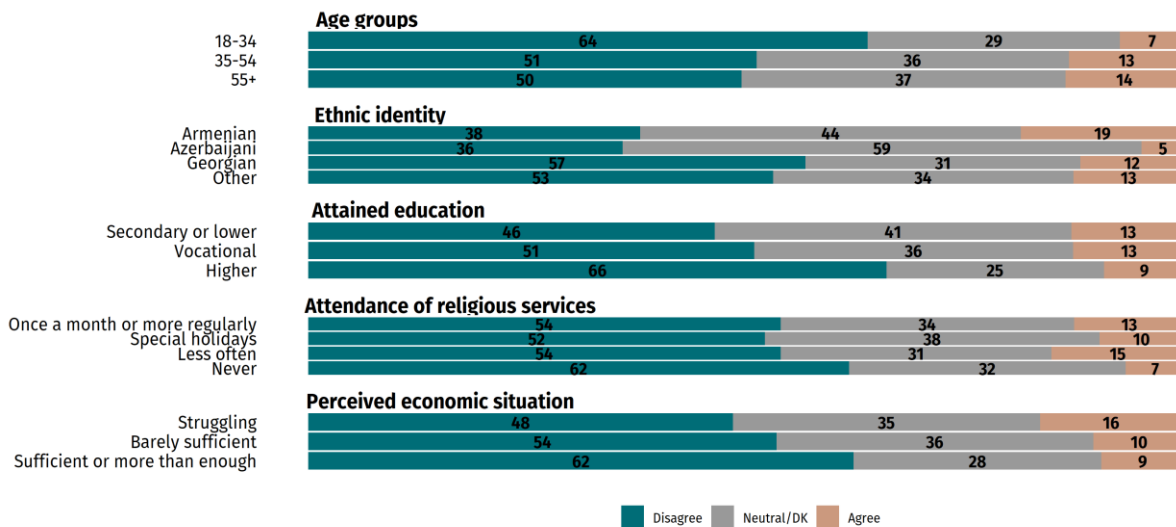


Figure 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree that EU threatens Georgian traditions? By major demographic groups (%)

<sup>16</sup> Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, “Myths about the EU-Georgia Association Agreement (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA)” (Tbilisi, Georgia, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Nino Lejava, “Georgia’s Unfinished Search for Its Place in Europe,” *Carnegie Europe* (<https://carnegieeurope.eu/2021/04/06/georgia-s-unfinished-search-for-its-place-in-europe-pub-84253>, April 2021).

Age, ethnicity, education, attendance of religious services, and level of economic well-being are factors that influence the perception of the EU as a cultural threat (figure 8). Thus, younger respondents, ethnic Georgians and those with higher education degrees are more likely to *disagree* that the European Union is a threat to Georgian traditions. So are those who never attend religious services and those with a relatively more highly perceived economic status. Older respondents, those who hold secondary or vocational education, respondents attending religious services, and those on the lowest level of perceived economic situation are more likely to agree that the EU threatens Georgian traditions.

## The European Union Presence in Georgia

### Perception of relations with the European Union

To understand how Georgians assess relations with the European Union, respondents were asked what they thought about the current state of relations between Georgia and the EU. Overall, the majority of Georgians (56%) believe that such relations are neutral. Additionally, 13% are ambivalent as they did not know the answer to the question. Very few (4%) think that relations are either very bad or rather bad. Twenty-eight percent believe that relations are very good or rather good.

Respondents were asked whether, in their opinion, Europeans have a positive, neutral, or negative outlook on Georgians. Only about 3% believe that Europeans know nothing about Georgia. Twenty-eight percent feel that Europeans think of Georgians positively, while 7% argue that Europeans have a negative opinion about the country’s residents. The majority are ambiguous, replying that Europeans either have a neutral view (40%), or saying that they don’t know the answer (22%).

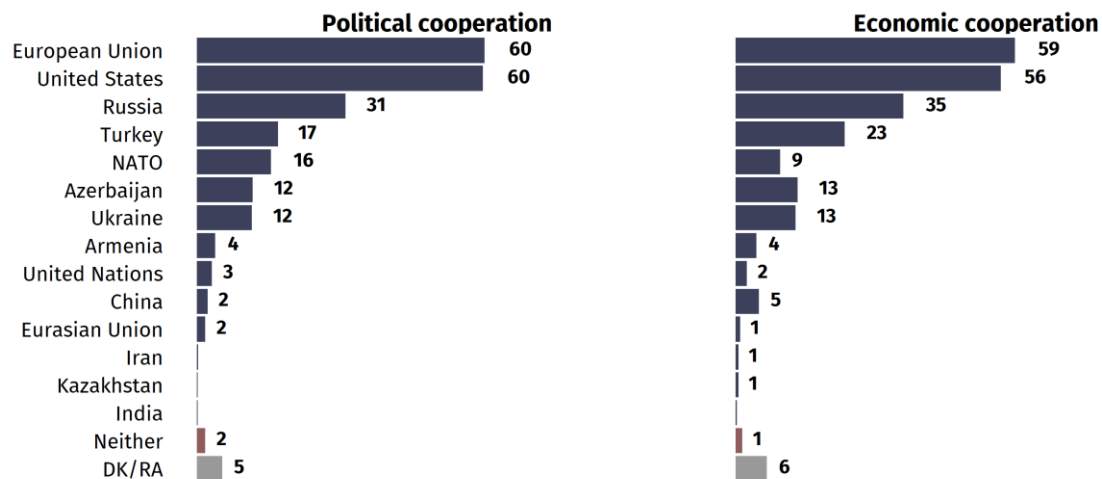


Figure 9: Which of the following countries and unions should, in your opinion, Georgia have the closest ... with? (%) Multiple choice with up to three answers

Considering Georgians’ overwhelmingly positive outlook on the European Union, it is therefore not surprising that they pick the EU as the organization with which the country should strive to cooperate the most, in the areas of both political and economic partnership (figure 9). While the EU is tied with the United States as the top choice for political cooperation, with 60%, when it comes to economic cooperation, Georgians most frequently pick the European Union as the most desired partner (59%).

These findings are further affirmed by Georgians’ perceptions of which entity can best support Georgia: the EU, the United States, or Russia. When confronted with this choice, respondents most frequently picked the European Union (43%), followed by the US (27%). Only 13% named Russia as the country that can best support Georgia.

Compared to 2019, the share of those who picked the EU as the one that can best support Georgia has grown by eight percentage points. The proportion of Georgians choosing the United States increased marginally, by four percentage points, while the share of Georgians selecting Russia decreased by five percentage points.

### Perception of EU assistance to Georgia

The majority of Georgians believe that EU assistance is crucial to the country. About 86% consider such assistance to be important or very important. Only 9% perceive EU aid as insignificant. Notably, a large majority of Georgians had a definite opinion on this point, attested to by the small share of ambivalent answers (5%) to the question.

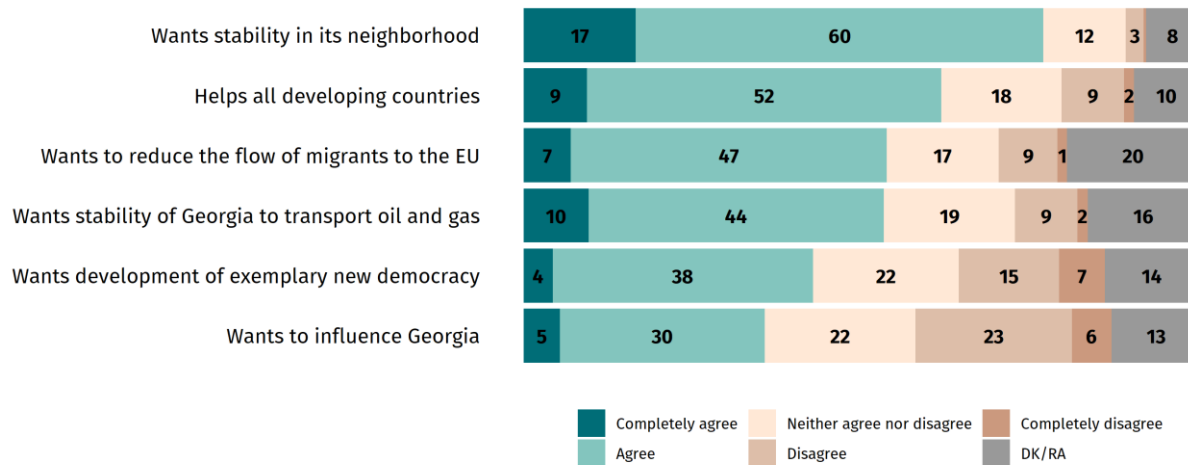


Figure 10: To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following opinions on why the European Union supports Georgia? (%)

Respondents were asked to evaluate their attitudes towards the perceived motives of the EU’s involvement in Georgia (figure 10). The majority (77%) completely or partially agree with the statement that the EU assists Georgia as the organization strives to bring stability to the union’s neighborhood. About 62% agrees that the EU helps all developing countries through its aid programs. About equal proportions believe in the union’s more pragmatic goals, such as reducing the flow of migrants (54%) and ensuring a stable environment for the transportation of oil and gas (53%). Fewer think that, by providing assistance, the European Union wants to develop Georgia as an exemplary new democracy (43%). Forty-three percent believe that by doing so, the EU wants to influence Georgia.

Georgians have a vague understanding of what type of assistance the EU provides to Georgia. More than a quarter of Georgians either does not know what aid the EU is giving to Georgia (22%) or believes that the union is not helping Georgia at all (7%). Forty-three percent think that the EU is giving humanitarian aid. About 22% believe that the EU aids Georgia by investing in its economy, 12% think that the organization helps our country to resolve its social problems, 11% say that the EU is assisting Georgia in building public institutions, while 10% of Georgians believe that the European Union is helping the country to restore its territorial integrity. Fewer respondents think that the EU is helping Georgia in the development of civil society (8%), equipping its armed forces (7%), resolving relations with Russia (6%), and aiding in the development of the country’s media (3%).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Respondents could pick up to three answers to this question.

Notably, more Georgians do not know what sort of aid the EU is giving to Georgia compared to 2019 (29%). The proportion of those who believe that the EU is assisting Georgia with humanitarian aid increased by ten percentage points, while four percentage points more think that EU is investing in Georgia’s economy.

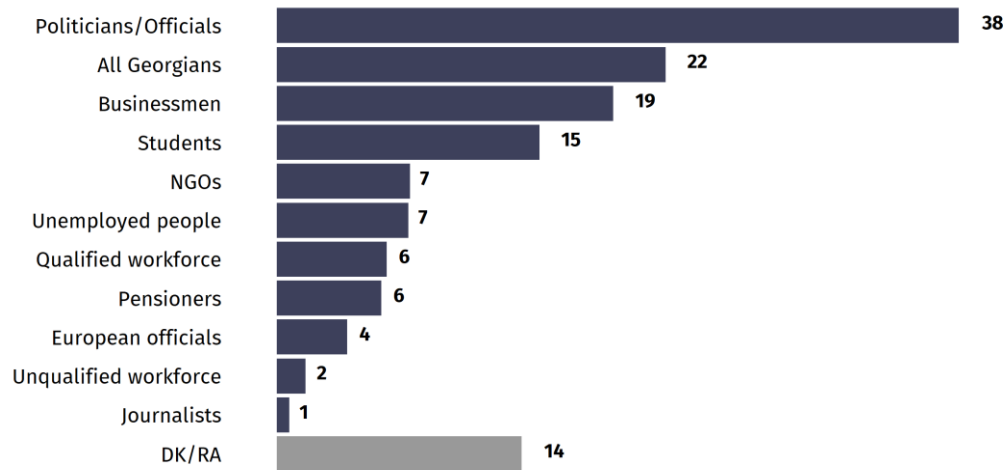


Figure 11: In your opinion, who normally benefits the most from the EU aid allocated to Georgia? (%) Up to two answers

A plurality of Georgians believes that the aid allocated to Georgia by the European Union benefits politicians and officials (38%, figure 11). About one-fifth (22%) thinks that it helps all Georgians, 19% feel that businessmen are those who normally benefit from EU aid, while 15% believe that students are the primary beneficiaries of such assistance. Fewer than ten percent consider NGOs, the unemployed, the qualified workforce, pensioners, European officials, the unqualified workforce, and journalists as beneficiaries of European aid.

Compared to 2019, more Georgians think that EU aid benefits the entire population. The proportion of those who agree with this idea grew by five percentage points, from 17% to 22%. The same share believes that EU aid benefits politicians and public officials. The proportion of those who think that EU aid helps businessmen declined marginally by three percent, while relatively more Georgians (+8%) think that EU help benefits students.

It is notable to that the majority of Georgians thinks that EU aid has not been spent as needed. Sixty-seven percent say that such funds have either completely or partially *not* been spent on the intended targets. Only 21% think that EU funding has been spent on its intended goals. About 12% do not know or hesitated to answer the question.

When asked what would be the best way for the European Union to help Georgia, a plurality (27%) said that the organization should invest in Georgia’s economy. Twenty-seven percent said that the EU should help with restoring the country’s territorial integrity, while 11% said that the organization should help Georgia in resolving social problems. Fewer respondents answered that the EU should assist Georgia by disbursing humanitarian aid to its poorest citizens (8%), resolving relations with Russia (6%), or by developing its media (6%). Less than five percent of respondents named assistance in enhancing the country’s infrastructure, equipping its armed forces, help in developing civil society, and opening EU markets to Georgian products as the most anticipated forms of assistance. Only 1% answered that Georgia needs no EU help.

A plurality of Georgians (about 43%) positively perceives the EU’s role in the 2008 August war. Twenty-six percent think that the organization played a neutral role in the conflict, while 14% think that it had a mainly negative role.

The European Union’s Monitoring Mission (EUMM) has been operating in Georgia since September 2008<sup>19</sup> and contributing to the stabilization of the situation in areas adjacent to the Administrative Boundary Lines with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Nonetheless, nearly half of the country’s population (47%) does not know about the mission’s work in Georgia. Only twenty percent correctly answered the question regarding EUMM operations by stating that it works to stabilize the situation in conflict-affected areas. About 19% incorrectly answered that it supports democratic and market-oriented reforms, 8% thought that the EUMM helped with enhancing regional cooperation in the South Caucasus, while 6% said that the mission’s goal was to strengthen Georgia’s ties with the European Union via higher education.

### Association Agreement with the European Union

On June 27, 2014, Georgia officially signed the Association Agreement with the European Union,<sup>20</sup> which entered into force on July 1, 2016.<sup>21</sup> Seven years later, the number of Georgians who are aware of the existence of the Association Agreement has decreased. When asked whether they have heard about the Association Agreement between Georgia and the European Union, only 39% of Georgians answered in the affirmative. More than half of Georgia’s population (55%) is currently unaware of the Association Agreement. About 6% are ambivalent.

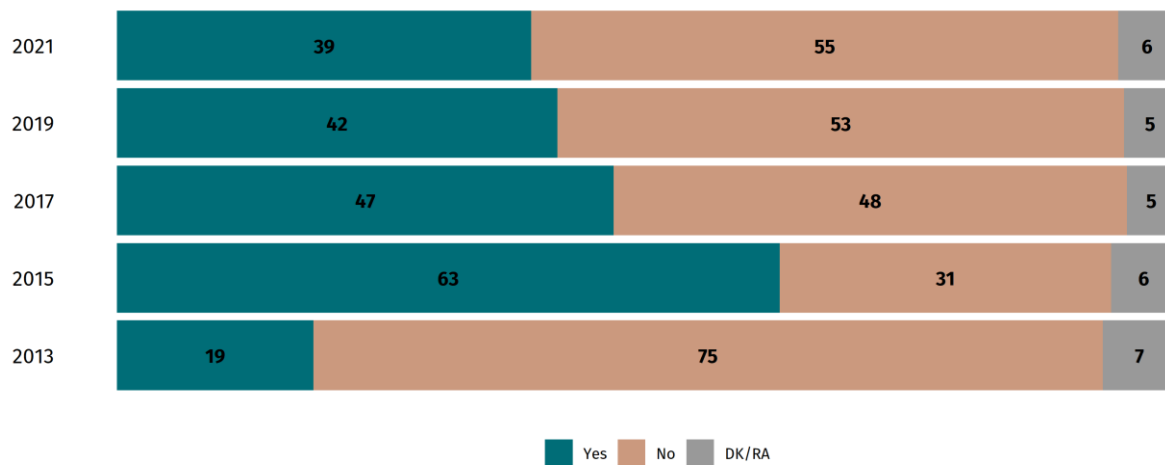


Figure 12: Have you heard of the Association Agreement between Georgia and the EU? (%)

The awareness of the Association Agreement among Georgians currently stands at its lowest since 2015, one year after the country officially signed the document. Compared to the 2015 wave of this study, the proportion of Georgians who know about the agreement has decreased by 24 percentage points (figure 12). Notably, survey results conducted in subsequent years also hint at a downward trend with regard to knowledge of the agreement.

Ethnicity, level of education attained, and economic well-being are the factors which best predict the level of awareness of the Association Agreement. Ethnic Georgians (43%), those who hold a higher education degree (60%), and those who consider their income as sufficient or more than enough (49%) are more likely to be

<sup>19</sup> EUMM in Georgia, “Our Mandate” ([https://www.eumm.eu/en/about\\_eumm/mandate](https://www.eumm.eu/en/about_eumm/mandate), 2021).

<sup>20</sup> Civil.Ge, “Georgia, EU Sign Association Agreement,” June 2014.

<sup>21</sup> 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 Pub. L. No. 480610000.03.030.016275, 200/42 (2014). <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2496959>

aware of the agreement. Ethnic minorities, including Armenians (15%) and Azerbaijanis (6%), as well as those with a secondary education or lower (25%), are less likely to be aware of the agreement.<sup>22</sup>

Those who stated that they have heard about the Association Agreement were then asked whether or not the document has been fully enforced. The majority of such respondents (54%) thinks that the agreement is only partially in force. Seventeen percent believe that the agreement is in full force, while 11% believe that the agreement is not yet either fully or partially in force. A significant minority (18%) did not know the answer.

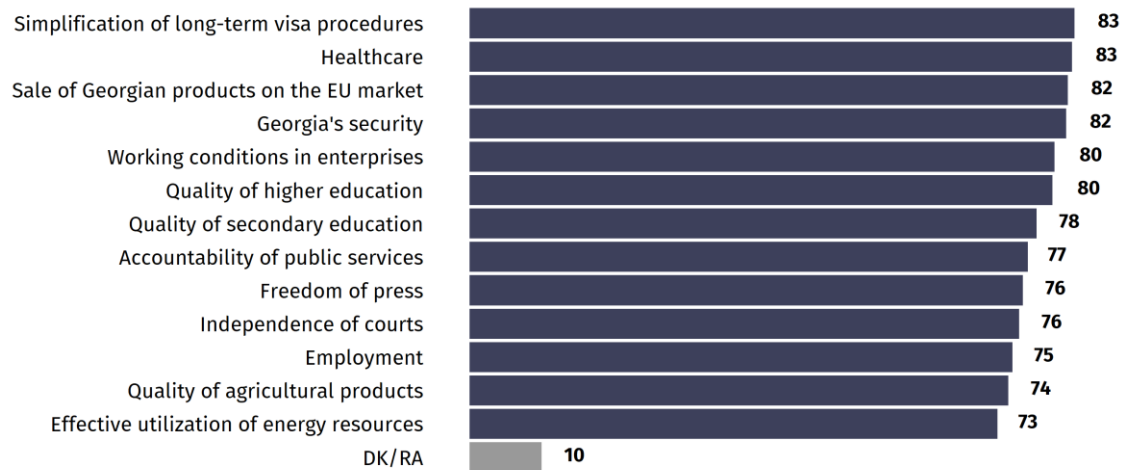


Figure 13: In your opinion, will the situation in the following areas improve or not as a result of the Georgia-EU Association Agreement? (%)

Respondents were presented a set of items describing various policy fields (figure 13) and were asked whether or not the Association Agreement would improve Georgia’s standing within these areas. Notably, Georgians who are aware of the Association Agreement expect that it will help improve the situation relative to all the named policy options including: procedures for obtaining long-term visas; healthcare and security; higher and secondary education; employment opportunities; and energy efficiency.

### Travelling to, working in, and emigrating to the European Union

#### General attitudes towards travel, work, and emigration

More than a quarter of Georgians say they would contemplate going abroad for employment. When asked whether they would like to go to a foreign country for work, about 26% said yes, while 71% would not emigrate, and 2% was unsure. Notably, the proportion of Georgians who would consider going abroad for work has remained stable over the past decade fluctuating between 26% in 2015 and 30% in 2017.

<sup>22</sup> Differences were identified using a multinomial regression model predicting respondents’ awareness of the Association Agreement with the European Union. Predictors include standard demographic characteristics used in previous models.

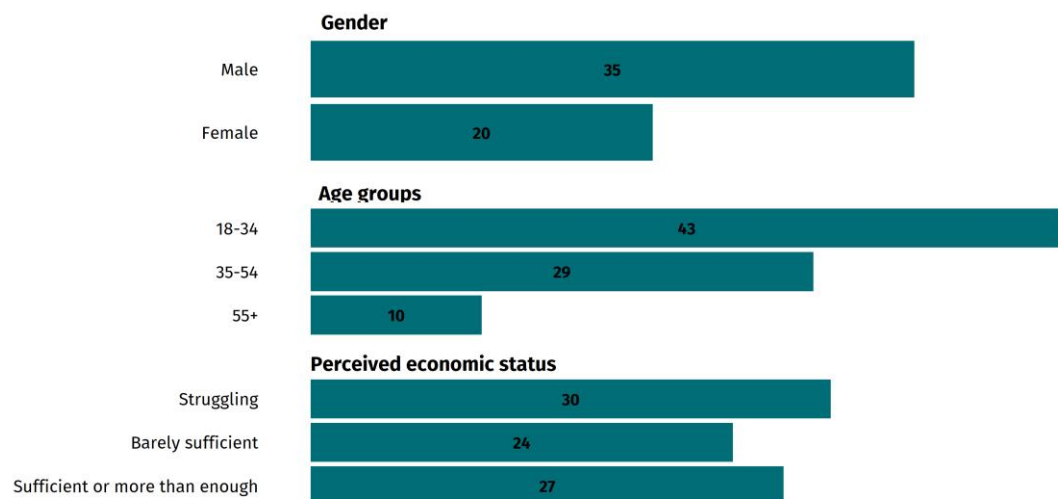


Figure 14: Would you like to go to a foreign country to work? (%). By demographic groups

The respondents' gender, age, and perceived economic situation predict whether one would consider emigrating for work (figure 14). More men (35%) than women (20%) answered "Yes" when asked whether or not they would like to go abroad for employment. Nearly half of younger Georgians (18 to 34) are thinking of emigrating for work (43%) while fewer from older age groups would do so. Finally, 30% of those who perceive their economic conditions as struggling would consider emigrating, as compared to those saying that their income is either barely sufficient (24%), or sufficient or more than enough (27%)

Those who would consider emigrating for work were asked which country they would consider moving to. About one-third named Germany (33%), followed by the United States (17%), Italy (7%), and Russia (5%). Overall, the majority of respondents wanting to go abroad for work would consider emigrating to one of the EU member states (57%) or to North America (20%).

Twenty-four percent of Georgians would consider going abroad for study. Of these, 28% would prefer going to Germany, 25% picked the United States, while 20% preferred the United Kingdom. Overall, 45% picked one of the EU member states, 25% chose North America, followed by 21% who picked a non-EU nation in Europe.

Younger Georgians, urbanites, and those who have either higher or secondary education are more enthusiastic about going abroad to study. Fifty-two percent of Georgians younger than 35 wish to go abroad for study compared to 20% of those between 35 and 54 and a mere 6% of Georgians 55 or older. Thirty-seven percent of Tbilisians and 28% of the residents of other urban areas said that they would go abroad for study as opposed to 14% of rural Georgians. About an equal share of higher education degree holders and those with secondary or lower education (36%, presumably current university students) would consider emigrating for study compared to 13% of Georgians with vocational degrees.

Few Georgians think of emigrating permanently. Thirteen percent of the country's population would consider leaving Georgia on a permanent basis to live in another country. Notably, the share of those wishing to emigrate has remained low over time. This proportion was highest in 2019 when 14% of Georgians said they would contemplate leaving the country forever. In 2011 however, only 7% would consider such a move.

Among the 13% of Georgians who would consider leaving for good, the majority (36%) say they would like to live in the United States. Fewer (12%) would consider emigrating to Germany, followed by other EU states, such as France (8%) and Italy (6%). Notably, in total, slightly more Georgians picked EU member states (39%) over North American countries, namely the US and Canada (38%). Even fewer picked other non-EU European countries (10%) and Russia (5%).

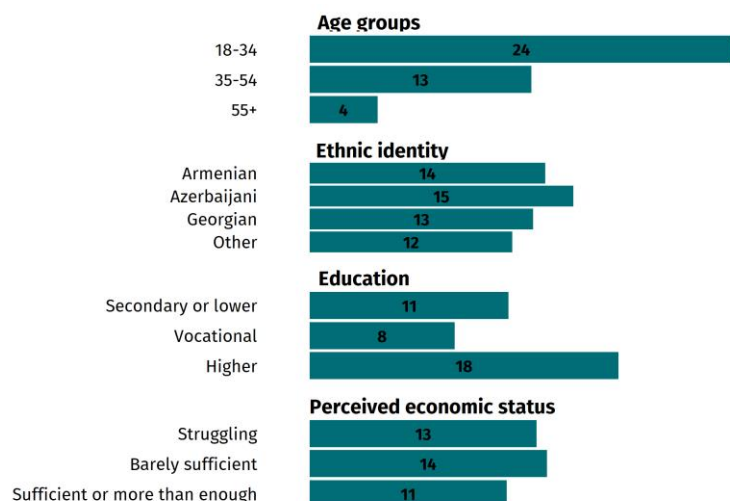


Figure 15: Would you like to move to a foreign country to live in? (%). By demographic groups

Almost one quarter (24%) of young Georgians between 18 and 34 would like to emigrate permanently (figure 15). About 13% of those between 35 and 54 would do the same, while only 4% of Georgians older than 54 would consider leaving Georgia forever. More Georgians with higher education degrees (18%) expressed positive views about emigrating permanently than those with lower educational levels. While ethnic Azerbaijanis and those who consider their household income to be barely sufficient are slightly more likely to consider emigrating, the differences are rather small.

#### *Experience of living in the EU*

Few Georgians have experienced living in the EU for an extended period of time. About 6% of Georgians report that they have lived for at least three months in any of the EU member states since 1993. The majority of these respondents name Greece, Germany, France, and Italy as their host countries.

#### *Visa-free travel with the EU*

On February 27, 2017, Georgia was granted visa-free travel to select EU member states and other members of the Schengen zone.<sup>23</sup> This agreement went into force on March 28, 2017.<sup>24</sup> As a result, Georgian citizens crossed Schengen borders about 1.1 million times between 2017 and 2020, while half a million unique Georgian visitors travelled to Schengen countries.<sup>25</sup> Not surprisingly, the majority of Georgia's population is positively predisposed towards visa-free travel. Seventy-four percent of Georgians answered in the affirmative when asked whether or not this opportunity granted by the European Union made them happy. About one-fifth (18%) responded that they have no particular emotion concerning the visa-free regime, while a tiny minority (4%) replied that they are not happy about visa-free travel to the Schengen countries. Only 1% had not heard about the visa-free travel regime.

<sup>23</sup> European Commission, "Statement by Commissioner Avramopoulos on the Council Adoption of Visa Liberalisation for Georgia," Text, *European Commission - European Commission* ([https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT\\_17\\_363](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_17_363), February 2017).

<sup>24</sup> RFE/RL, "Jubilant Georgians Ring In Visa-Free Travel To EU," *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty* (<https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-eu-visa-free-travel-/28395173.html>, March 2017).

<sup>25</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, "Statistical Information on Migration (Freedom of Information Request)," 2020.



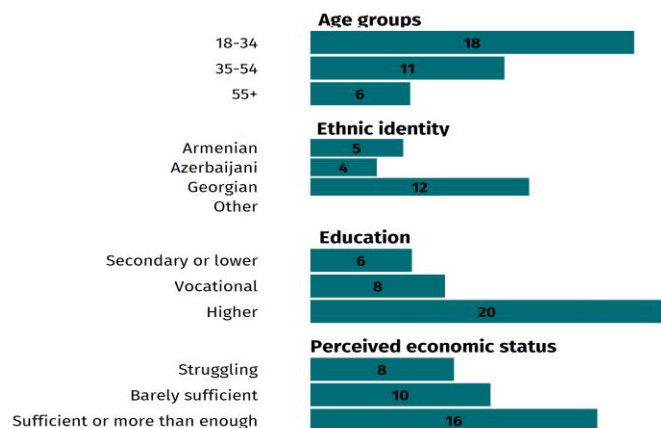


Figure 16: Since visa-free travel to the European Union was granted to Georgia, have you travelled to any EU country? (%). By demographic groups

About 11% of Georgians have travelled to the Schengen countries at least once since the country was granted the visa-free regime as opposed to 86% who have not have a chance to do so. Compared to the 2019 wave of this survey, the percentage of Georgians who have visited the Schengen states has increased by five points, from 6% to 11%.

The respondents' age, ethnic identity, education, and perceived household economic condition predict whether one had or had not gone to the Schengen states since the instatement of the visa-free regime (figure 16). About 18% of Georgians younger than 35 have gone to the EU/Schengen countries, as opposed to 11% of those between 35 and 54 and 6% of those older than 54. More ethnic Georgians (12%) than Armenians (5%) or Azerbaijanis (4%) used the opportunity to travel visa-free. So did about one-fifth of holders of higher education degrees and about 16% of those who consider their household's monetary income to be sufficient or more than enough.

## Knowledge about the European Union and its policies towards Georgia

### Knowledge about the EU

Survey respondents were asked a set of simple questions that evaluated their basic knowledge of the EU member states. First, respondents were asked how many member states are in the European Union. Almost half said that they did not know or were unsure (46%). Only about 25% picked the correct category (from 21 up to 30). The rest (29%) picked an incorrect answer.

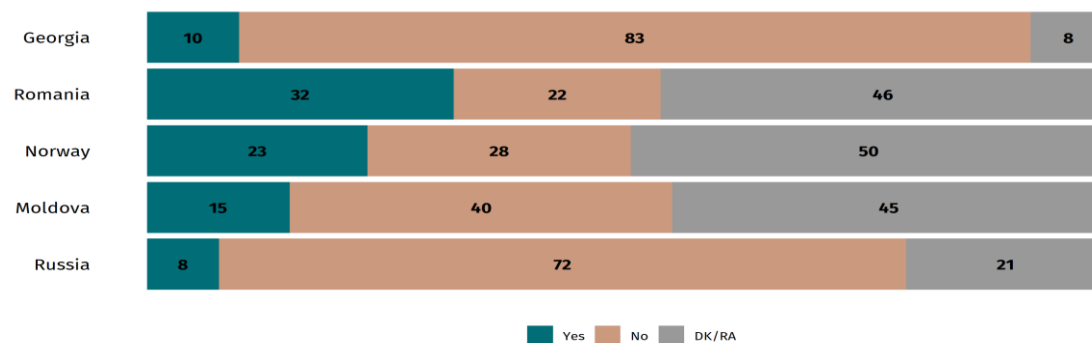


Figure 17: Is /Country/ currently a member of the European Union? (%)

Interviewees were further presented a list of countries and asked whether or not they are EU members (figure 17). Eighty-three percent of Georgians correctly answered that Georgia is not an EU member state. Similarly, 72% said that Russia is not part of the EU. When it comes to other countries, a plurality had difficulty answering as more respondents said that they were unsure. About 32% correctly picked Romania as an EU member state, while 22% gave an incorrect answer. While more Georgians (28%) correctly answered that Norway is not an EU member state, only slightly fewer wrongly identified the country as being part of the EU (23%). Forty percent rightly thought that Moldova is not in the European Union, while fewer (15%) considered the country to be a part of the EU.

### **Knowledge of visa-free travel procedures to EU/Schengen countries**

Since the instatement of the visa-free travel regime, the number of Georgian citizens who violated travel rules has increased.<sup>26</sup> The number of Georgians who have been illegally present in the EU has doubled between 2016 and 2019, from about 6,000 to approximately 12,000 persons,<sup>27</sup> while the number of asylum applications from Georgians over the same period almost tripled, reaching an all-time high of almost 24,000.<sup>28</sup> Georgian officials promptly acknowledged the problem and even stated that widespread violations of travel rules might lead to the cancellation of the visa-free travel regime.<sup>29</sup> As a result, the country introduced tighter rules for travelers to the EU, including thorough background checks in Georgian airports by Georgian and EU border officials.<sup>30</sup>

Survey results show that many Georgians have a rudimentary understanding of the visa-free travel rules. To gauge Georgians' knowledge of these rules, respondents were asked to name requirements for entering EU/Schengen states. While the majority (75%) correctly named biometric passports as an obligatory document to enter the EU/Schengen zone, fewer were aware of other required information such as return ticket (31%), proof of financial means (26%), travel insurance (23%), and a proof of address in the destination country (21%). More than one-fifth (21%) hesitated or did not know the answer.

As Georgian nationals are obliged to possess all the documents listed above,<sup>31</sup> this analysis also looks at the index of knowledge of visa-free travel rules. The index represents the number of items that respondents were able to list when asked to name the documents required to enter the EU/Schengen zone. The index's mean score is 1.75, which means that on average, Georgians were able to correctly identify less than two basic requirements necessary for travel. Only 7% of Georgians were able to name all five requirements essential for entering EU/Schengen states. Five percent could name four items, 19% correctly identified three requirements, 17% listed two documents, while 30% could correctly name only one item. Thirty percent could either not name any, or incorrectly identified the required documents.

---

<sup>26</sup> Civil.Ge, "Q&A: Might the EU Suspend Visa Free Regime with Georgia?" *Civil.ge*, June 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Eurostat, "Third Country Nationals Found to Be Illegally Present - Annual Data (Rounded)[migr\_eipr]" (<https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do>, 2020).

<sup>28</sup> Eurostat, "Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age and Sex - Monthly Data (Rounded) [Migr\_asyappctzm]" (<http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do>, 2020).

<sup>29</sup> Schengenvisa.info.com, "Georgian Minister of Justice Claims Visa-Free Regime With Europe Is 'Facing Difficulties'," *SchengenVisaInfo.com* (<https://www.schengenvisa.info.com/news/georgian-minister-of-justice-claims-visa-free-regime-with-europe-is-facing-difficulties/>, April 2019).

<sup>30</sup> Agenda.ge, "Georgian Parliament Approves New Regulations on Travel to EU," *Agenda.ge* (<https://agenda.ge/en/news/2020/2710>, September 2020).

<sup>31</sup> Agenda.ge, "Georgian Citizens to Be Screened for Entry to EU/Schengen at Georgian Border Checkpoints," *Agenda.ge* (<https://agenda.ge/en/news/2021/4>, January 2021).

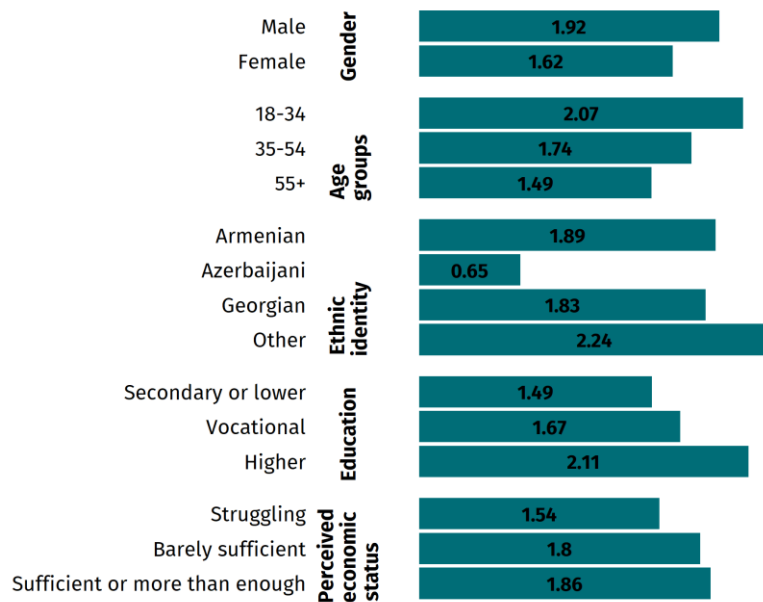


Figure 18: Which are the documents that a Georgian citizen needs in order to travel to the Schengen zone countries visa-free? Estimated values of knowledge index by demographic group. Estimates are derived from a Poisson regression model

Men, younger people, representatives of other ethnic groups, Georgians with higher education and those who consider their household income to be at least barely sufficient scored higher than others (figure 18). Ethnic Azerbaijanis, those with secondary or lower education, and those who considered themselves to be struggling economically, had lesser knowledge of such documents.<sup>32</sup>

Significantly, over the course of the last few years, knowledge of the rules governing visa-free travel has decreased. The mean value of a similar index totaled 2.2 in 2017, then dropped to 1.9 in 2019 and to 1.75 in 2021.

The majority of the country’s population is convinced that Georgians have been able to work in the European Union since the granting the visa-free regime. Sixty-two percent said that as a result of the visa-free regime, Georgian citizens have the right to work in EU countries. Only 19% correctly answered that Georgians could not work in the EU member states as a result of the visa-free regime. About 19% were unsure.

Notably, knowledge of the visa-free regime’s work-related rules has deteriorated over the last five years. In 2017, when Georgia had just been granted visa-free travel, the majority (59%) understood that such an arrangement would not allow Georgians to work in EU/Schengen countries. Although this proportion did decrease in 2019, a plurality of Georgians (42%) is still aware that the country’s residents cannot work in the EU as a result of the visa-free regime.

The visa-free travel regime allows Georgians to stay in EU/Schengen countries for ninety days over any 180-day period.<sup>33</sup> Still, when asked about the maximum number of days that one can stay in the EU/Schengen zone, only 6% gave a correct answer. The majority (54%) believe that Georgians can travel to EU/Schengen countries for ninety days per year. Ten percent stated that it was 180 days per year, while 4% answered that the visa-free

<sup>32</sup> Differences were identified using a Poisson regression model predicting index scores. Covariates include the respondents’ gender, age, education, ethnic identity, residence, religiosity, and perceived economic situation.

<sup>33</sup> European Commission, “Frequently Asked Questions on the Schengen Visa-Free” ([https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/visa\\_waiver\\_faqs\\_en.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/visa_waiver_faqs_en.pdf), 2021).

travel regime allows Georgians to stay in EU/Schengen countries for sixty days over a ninety day period. Almost one quarter (24%) did not know the answer to the question.

### Who knows more about the EU and its policies towards Georgia?

To understand which segments of the population know more about the European Union, a compound index was constructed. The index counted correct answers to a set of knowledge questions (table 2) that were posed to respondents. The maximum value of the index, 8, corresponds to the best knowledge of the EU and related policies, while zero corresponds to no knowledge.

Table 2: Variables used to calculate the EU knowledge index

Variable	Correct answer
Number of EU countries	From 21 to 30
Is Georgia a member of the EU?	No
Is Norway a member of the EU?	No
Is Russia a member of the EU?	No
Is Moldova a member of the EU?	No
Is Romania a member of the EU?	Yes
Do Georgians have the right to work in the EU?	No
The maximum duration of stay in the EU	90 days in 180 days

Overall, only one respondent answered all knowledge questions correctly, while 8% of Georgians were not able to answer any of the questions correctly. On average, Georgians got slightly less than three (2.9) out of eight knowledge questions right. Notably, in 2017, on average, Georgians correctly answered 3.3 knowledge questions, while in 2019, the average score decreased to 3.

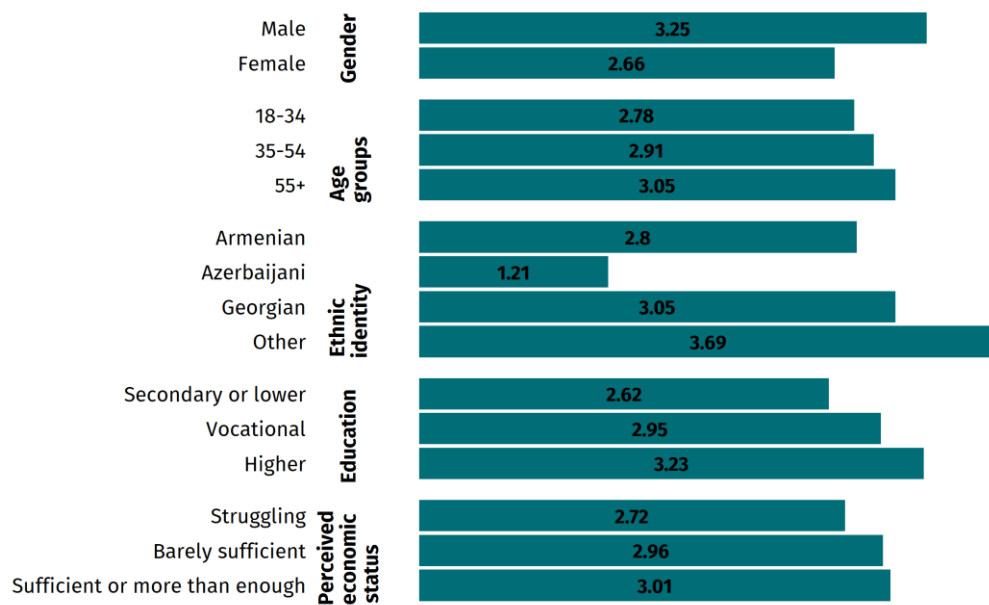


Figure 19: Estimated values of EU knowledge index by demographic groups. Estimates are derived from a Poisson regression model

While there are statistically significant differences across population groups in terms of EU knowledge, in many cases these variations are not that meaningful (figure 19). Notably, female respondents, ethnic

Azerbaijanis and those who only achieved secondary or lower education tend to score low compared to men, other ethnic groups, and those with higher education degrees.<sup>34</sup>

## Information received about the European Union

Respondents were asked to name the sources from which they have received information about the European Union (figure 20). Most Georgians receive information from TV (75%), followed by word of mouth from friends, relatives, or colleagues (47%), and online social networks (44%). Twenty-nine percent named media web pages, while about an equal proportion (16%) named the EU delegation to Georgia and Georgian governmental websites.

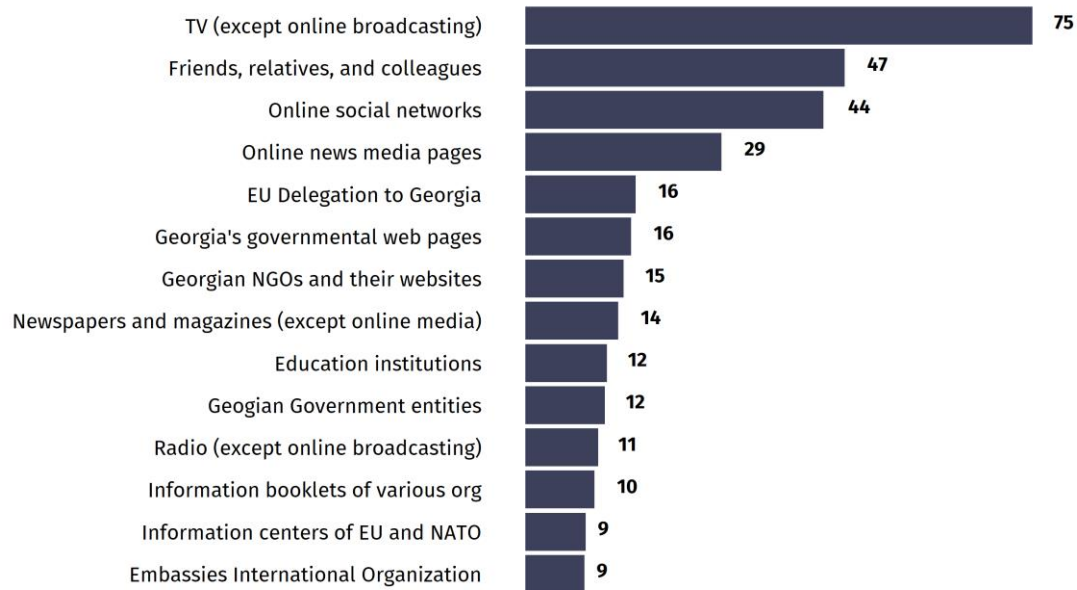


Figure 20: Could you please assess how much information about the EU you receive from the following sources? Share of respondents who reported receiving at least some information from the named source

Fifteen percent of Georgians receive information on the European Union from Georgian civil society organizations and their websites, 14% learn about the EU from printed media, followed by education institutions and Georgian governmental entities (12% each). Fewer named radio (11%), information leaflets (10%), NATO and EU information centers (9%), and embassies or international organizations (9%).

Forty-four percent of Georgians would like to receive more information about the European Union. More than half of younger respondents (53%), about 57% of those with higher education, and almost two-thirds (62%) of Tbilisi residents would like to learn more about the EU.

Notably, overall interest in learning more about the European Union reached an all-time low in 2021 over the last thirteen years. The proportion of those interested in receiving more information about the EU decreased by 13 percentage points from 66% in 2009, reaching its minimum in 2021.

<sup>34</sup> Differences were identified using a Poisson regression model, with common socio-demographic covariates.

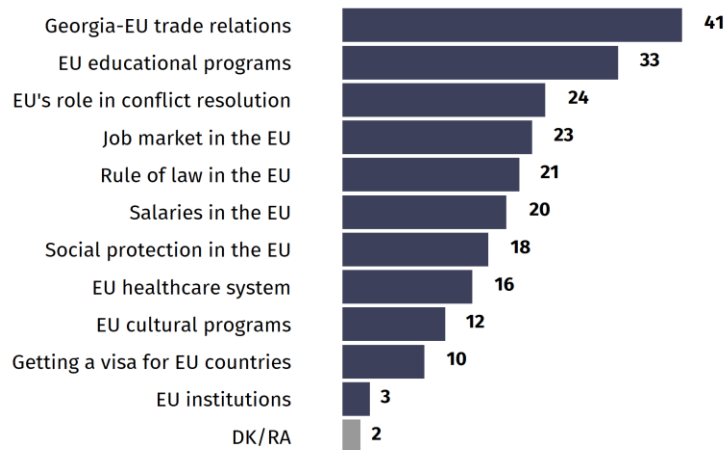


Figure 21: Please tell me what information you would like to get about the EU? (%) Only those respondents who were interested in receiving more information about the EU (44%). Multiple choice with up to three answers

Figure 21 depicts what Georgians want to learn more of about the European Union. A plurality would like to receive information about EU-Georgia trade relations (41%). About one-third named EU educational programs (33%), followed by the EU’s role in conflict resolution (24%), and those who are interested in the job market situation in the European Union (23%). Fewer picked rule of law in the EU (21%), and salaries in the European Union (20%). Less than one-fifth was interested in social protection, the healthcare system, cultural programs, and visa-related regulations in the EU. The majority wishing to receive more information about the EU wants to do so through TV (68%), followed by social media (38%).

## Georgia’s membership in the European Union

### Support for the country’s EU membership

Georgians overwhelmingly support the country’s membership in the European Union. Seventy-seven percent, that is, more than three-quarters of the country’s population, would vote for Georgia’s membership in the European Union if a referendum were to be held tomorrow. Eight percent would vote against, 6% would not participate at all, while 9% is undecided.

The share of those who would support Georgia’s EU membership has increased. Compared to the study’s previous wave in 2019, the proportion of Georgians who would vote for EU membership in a hypothetical referendum increased by six percentage points.

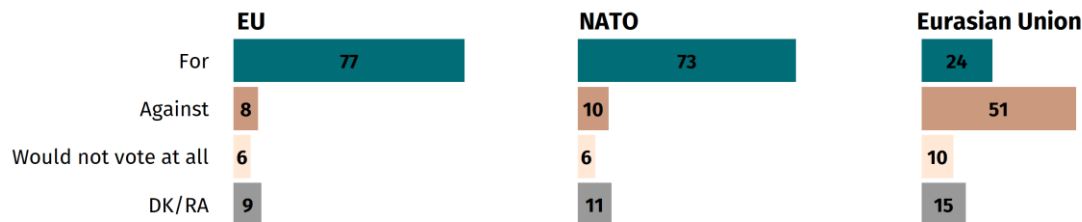


Figure 22: If there were a referendum tomorrow regarding Georgia’s membership in /ORGANIZATION/, would you vote for or against it? (%)

Notably, more Georgians would vote for the country’s membership in the European Union than they would for membership in NATO or the Russia-led Eurasian Union (figure 22). Seventy-three percent of Georgians would vote for NATO membership if such a referendum were to be held tomorrow. More than half of Georgians would vote *against* the country becoming a member of the Eurasian Union (51%) while less than

one-quarters of Georgians (24%) would vote for Georgia's membership in the Eurasian Union in such referendum.

Women and men are equally likely (77%) to say that they would vote for Georgia becoming an EU member state. Ethnic Georgians (80%) would overwhelmingly vote for Georgia's membership in the European Union, compared to 56% of Azerbaijanis and 49% of Armenians. Ethnic minorities are more likely to be ambivalent, that is, saying they would refrain from voting, or do not know the answer.

Eighty-four percent of higher education holders would vote for Georgia's membership in the European Union, compared to 74% of Georgians with vocational education and 72% of those who have attained secondary education.

More Tbilisians (83%) than residents of other urban areas (79%) and rural Georgians (72%) would vote for EU membership in a hypothetical referendum. Respondents who perceive their household's economic situation to be barely sufficient (83%) or sufficient (80%) are more likely to support EU membership in a referendum than those who report that they are struggling economically (71%). The latter are also more likely to vote against EU membership (13%).

Markedly, similar factors (except gender) predict Georgians' support of the country's membership in NATO. Ethnic Georgians, respondents with higher education, Tbilisi residents, and relatively well-off respondents are more likely to say that they would support Georgia becoming a NATO member in a hypothetical referendum.

The Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) is often presented as an alternative to the European Union,<sup>35</sup> especially to countries that have signed Association Agreements with the EU.<sup>36</sup> While fewer Georgians feel enthusiastic about the country's integration in a Russia-led organization, differences occur along sociodemographic lines. Slightly more men (27%) than women (21%) say they would vote for Georgia becoming a member of the Eurasian Union. More ethnic Armenians (43%) would support Georgia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union than ethnic Georgians (22%) and Azerbaijanis (26%). Notably, a plurality of the latter (39%) did not know the answer to the question.

Those Georgians who have obtained a higher education degree are more likely to vote against the country's membership in the Eurasian Union (62%) than voting in favor (19%). About 28% percent of those with a secondary or lower education would vote for Georgia to become a member of the Eurasian Union.

Two-thirds of Tbilisi residents (66%) would vote against Georgia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union if such a referendum were to be held. Seventeen percent would consider voting for Georgia becoming a member of the Eurasian Economic Union. While a plurality of the residents of other urban areas and rural settlements would vote against, approximately a quarter of these groups would support Georgia becoming a member of the Eurasian Union.

Interestingly, those Georgians who attend religious services are more likely to support membership in the Eurasian Union than those who never go to the church. About a quarter of those who reported going to church would vote in favor, while only 17% of those never attending a church would consider the same.

The research also attempted to ascertain what Georgians expect both from their compatriots and from EU citizens and EU governments regarding the country's membership in the European Union. Three quarters (74%) believe that, overall, other Georgians are in favor of the country becoming an EU member state, while 9% disagree that the majority supports EU membership. About 18% are unsure.

---

<sup>35</sup> Sijbren de Jong, "The Eurasian Economic Union and the European Union," *European Policy Analysis* September, no. 11 (2016): 12.

<sup>36</sup> Hans-Jürgen Zahorka and Ofelya Sargsyan, "The Eurasian Customs Union: An Alternative to the EU's Association Agreements?" *European View* 13, no. 1 (June 2014): 89–96, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12290-014-0309-3>.

When asked about their perception of whether the majority of EU citizens support Georgia’s membership in the organization, Georgians were less confident. While a plurality (49%) agreed that most EU citizens would back Georgia’s membership in the European Union, slightly more than one-third (35%) were unsure. Sixteen percent answered that EU citizens are generally against the country becoming part of the union.

More than half of Georgians (51%) are convinced that most of EU member states’ governments favor of Georgia becoming a member of the Union. Thirty-one percent are unsure, while 18% believe that most governments within the EU are against Georgia becoming a member of the European Union.

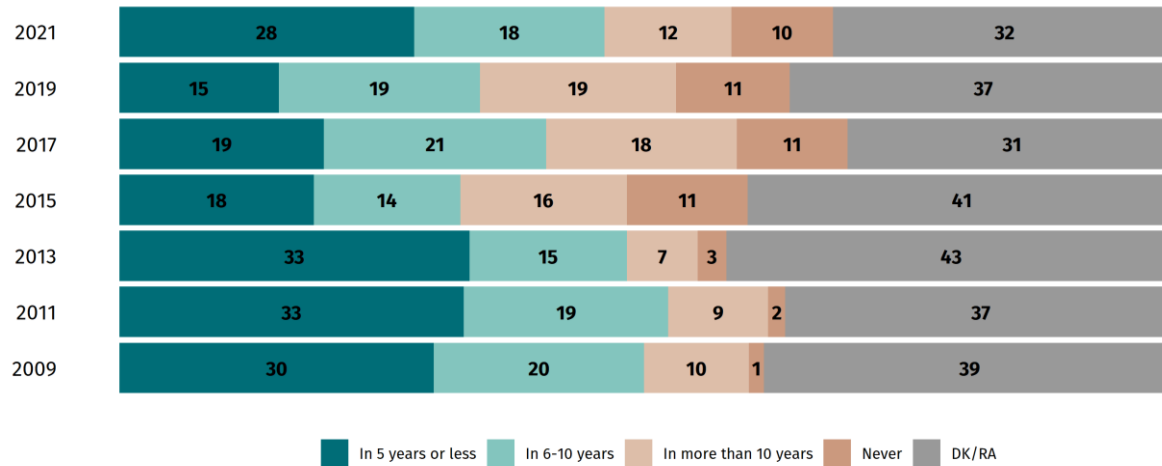


Figure 23: When do you think Georgia will become a member of the European Union? (%) Asked only to those respondents

Compared to the previous three waves of this study, more Georgians have grown increasingly optimistic about when the country might become a part of the European Union (figure 23). Twenty-eight percent of Georgians taking the 2021 survey believed that the country would become a part of the EU within the subsequent five years, a 13 percentage point increase compared to 2019. The proportion of those who anticipate Georgia entering the European Union in six to ten years (18%) has not changed significantly since 2019, while the share of respondents who expect such a move in more than ten years has decreased from 19% in 2019 to 12% in 2021. Notably, the share of those who are unsure has shrunk by about four percentage points between 2019 and 2021, reaching 32%.

Georgians supporting the country’s EU membership are primarily motivated by potential economic benefits. Fifty-six percent of Georgians said that they would vote for joining the EU because their economic situation would improve as an outcome. About 36% named security considerations. Namely, 18% believed that, as a result of joining the EU, Georgia will be better protected from foreign threats, while 17% believes that EU membership would increase the country’s chances of restoring its territorial integrity. Less than four percent named other reasons such as the possibility of travelling visa-free to the European Union and the opportunity to introduce Georgian culture to Europeans.

While relatively few Georgians would vote against EU membership in a hypothetical referendum, those who would do so frequently justify their choice by arguing that joining the EU would harm Georgian culture and traditions (31%). Thirty-one percent expect that such a move would restrict Georgia’s independence, while 20% think that EU membership would hinder relations with Russia. Fewer named reduced chances of restoring territorial integrity (18%) and worsened living standards (15%) as reasons they would consider voting against Georgia’s EU membership.

Similar questions were asked regarding Georgia’s hypothetical membership in the Eurasian Economic Union. Those supporting Georgia’s membership in the Eurasian Union are motivated by economic considerations,



saying that they would expect economic conditions to improve (47%). Thirty-one percent believe that, after becoming a member of the EEU, chances of restoring Georgia’s territorial integrity would improve. Fewer named opportunities for visa-free travel to the countries of Eurasian Union (10%) and protection against foreign threats (6%) as reasons for their decision.

Those opposed to joining the Eurasian Economic Union substantiate their decision by the belief that such a step would restrict Georgia’s independence (61%). About 27% answered that EEU membership would diminish the chances of recovering Georgia’s conflict regions, while 24% believe that joining the Eurasian Union would hinder Georgia’s relations with the West. Eighteen percent said that they would vote against membership as they expect that Georgia’s economic situation would deteriorate as a result. A few would vote against because they consider EEU membership as a threat to Georgia’s culture and traditions (8%).

### Perceptions of Georgia’s readiness to become an EU member

Respondents were presented a set of broad policy domains and were asked whether or not the country is ready for EU membership in the named area. Overall, considering answers to all listed items, more Georgians consider the country to be unprepared for EU membership (figure 24) than prepared.

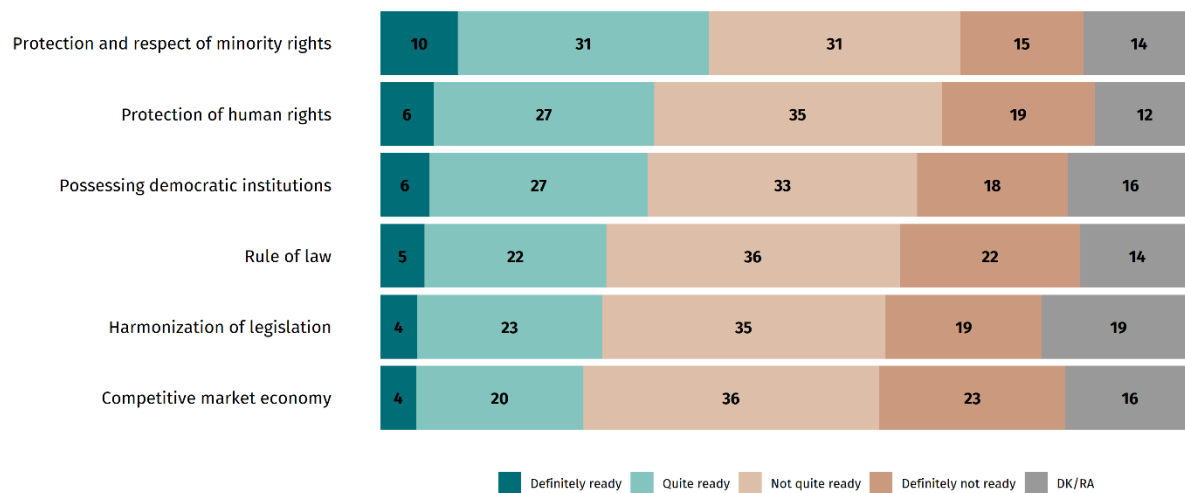


Figure 24: Do you think that Georgia is ready or not for EU membership in the following areas? (%)

Overall, more Georgians consider the country to be unprepared for EU membership. More Georgians answered that the country is either definitely ready or quite ready for EU membership in terms of protection and respect for minority rights (40%). Forty-six percent think that Georgia is not prepared in this regard. About 33% believe that the country is prepared in the areas of human rights protection and possessing democratic institutions, while 54% think that Georgia is not quite ready or definitely not ready for EU membership.

Twenty-seven percent think that Georgia is ready with regard to the rule of law, while about 58% believes that Georgia is not ready to join the EU in this policy field. About 27% consider the country to be prepared to join the EU in the domain of harmonizing its legislation with the organization’s.

The lowest proportion (24%) believes that Georgia is ready to join the European Union in terms of having a competitive market economy. This domain is also where most Georgians (59%) negatively evaluate the country’s preparedness for joining the EU.

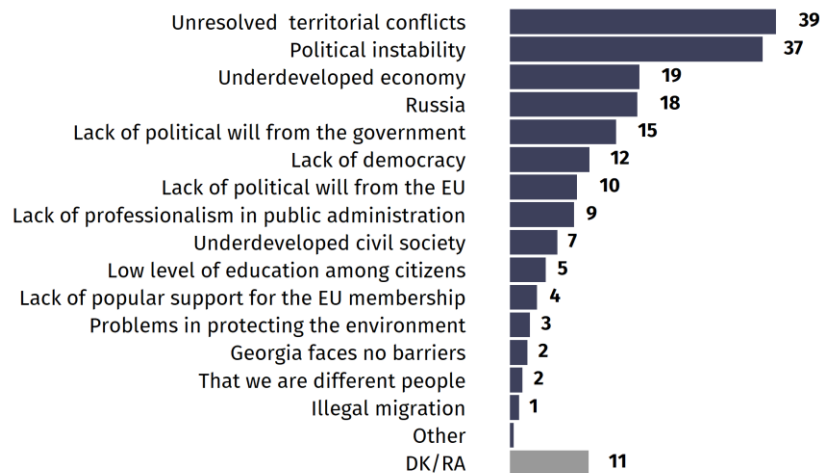


Figure 25: In your opinion, what are the main barriers to Georgia becoming an EU member state? (%) Multiple choice

The most frequently picked factors preventing Georgia from joining the EU were political concerns such as unresolved territorial conflicts (39%) and political instability (37%). Nineteen percent believe that its underdeveloped economy hinders Georgia’s bid for becoming an EU member, while 18% name Russia as the factor that prevents Georgia from joining the EU. Fewer named a lack of political will on the part of the government (15%), deficiencies of Georgia’s democracy (12%), and the political reluctance of EU member states (10%) as the things holding Georgia back on its path to joining the European Union. Less than ten percent of Georgians picked other factors such as a lack of professionalism in Georgia’s public sector, an underdeveloped civil society, low levels of education, and so forth. Notably, while results remain reasonably similar to those recorded in the previous wave of this survey, the share of those who picked political instability has increased by twelve percentage points since 2019.

### Perceptions of the effects of Georgia’s membership in the EU

Georgians expect improvements in almost all domains of public life if the country were to become a part of the European Union (figure 26). Seventy-six percent expect that such a move would significantly or somewhat increase the quality of education in Georgia, followed by the number of available jobs in the country (74%) and improved pensions (71%). Seventy percent expects improvements in Georgia’s national security, while 70% believes that incomes would increase. The same share anticipates improvements in freedom of speech, increased opportunities for holding free and fair elections (69%), more affordable healthcare (67%), better protection of minorities (66%) and property rights (65%), while 65% expects that the independence of the courts will increase as an outcome of Georgia joining the European Union. Notably, Georgians also believe that the level of corruption (60%) and poverty (66%) will decrease either somewhat or significantly if Georgia becomes an EU member. More than half of Georgians (53%) look forward to improved chances of restoring the country’s territorial integrity following EU membership.

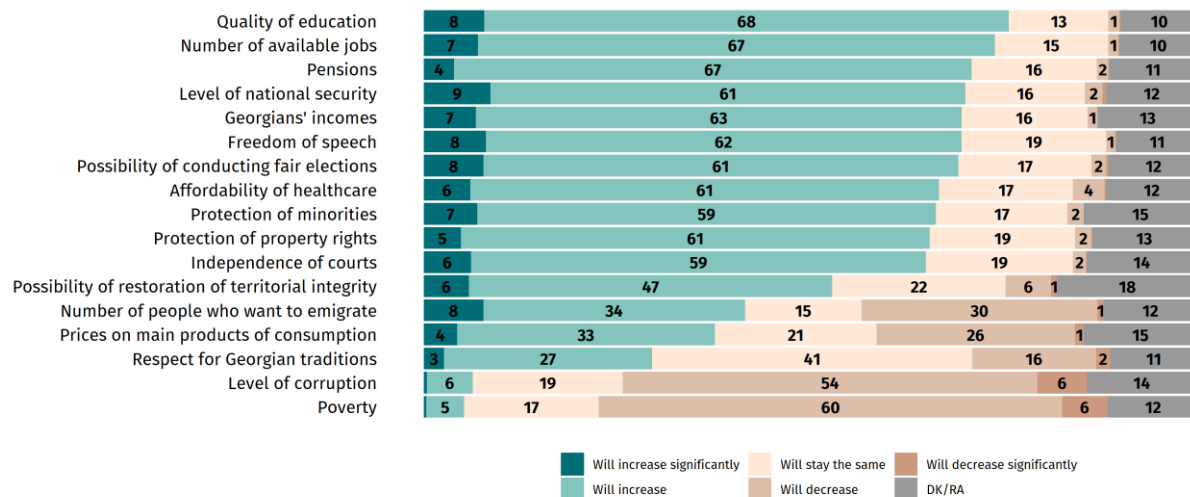


Figure 26: In your opinion, what are the main barriers to Georgia becoming an EU member state? (%) Multiple choice

Opinions diverge regarding the effects of EU membership on the number of people who might be willing to emigrate, prices on consumer goods, and respect for Georgian traditions. More Georgians (42%) think that the number of Georgians wishing to emigrate would increase due to EU membership, while relatively fewer (31%) believe the opposite. A plurality expects that the prices of key consumer goods would increase (38%) compared to the 27% of Georgians who expect such prices to decrease. Notably, the majority expects that the country's national traditions will be respected either at a similar level (41%) or even better (30%) following EU membership. Only 18% feels that Georgian traditions will be less respected if the country becomes a member of the European Union.

Finally, respondents were asked how the country's relations with Russia might be affected if Georgia were to strengthen its ties with the European Union. The majority of Georgians (68%) expect that such a move will have either a very negative or more negative than positive effect on bilateral relations with Russia. Nine percent expects very positive or somewhat positive effects, a similar share predicts no impact, while 14% is unsure about any effects.

## Conclusions

To understand how Georgians see the European Union, the respondents were asked multiple questions designed to measure their attitudes, trust, and perceptions of the organization. A plurality of Georgians positively perceives the European Union. Overall, forty-six percent of Georgians have either very positive (16%) or rather positive (30%) attitudes towards the European Union. About 43% have a neutral outlook, while a minority (7%) have either a rather negative or very negative outlook.

A respondent's ethnic identity can predict their positive attitude towards the EU. Ethnic Georgians (6%) and Azerbaijanis (4%) are least likely to have a negative opinion about the organization, as opposed to Armenians (19%) and representatives of other ethnic groups (24%). A plurality of ethnic Georgians (48%) positively perceives the EU, while a plurality of Armenians (45%) has a neutral attitude.

The European Union is among the most trusted institutions in Georgia. Georgians trust the European Union more than the majority of the country's own social and political institutions. In terms of net trust (50%), that is, the sum of the "Fully trust" and "Trust" answers, the EU ranks just below the army (77%) and religious institutions (70%). While this is a long-standing trend, most probably such a high level of trust might also have been influenced by the EU's active involvement in diffusing Georgia's recent political crisis. Fifty-two percent of ethnic Georgians either fully trust or trust the EU, followed by ethnic Azerbaijanis (48%), Armenians (38%), and the representatives of other ethnic groups (21%). The latter are more likely to distrust the organization (46%) than ethnic Armenians, Azerbaijanis, or Georgians.

Conservative and religious groups in Georgia often allege that Western values in general and specifically those of the EU are detrimental to Georgia's cultural and social norms. On the contrary, about 54% of Georgians either fully or rather disagreed with the assertion that the European Union is a threat to the country's national traditions. Still, 35% agreed with the statement. This was the first time that most Georgians have disagreed with the claim that the EU threatens the country's traditions. Compared to 2015, when only about 34% fully or partially disagreed with the statement that the EU represents a threat, in the 2021 wave of the survey, the number of such respondents increased by 20 percentage points.

Younger respondents, ethnic Georgians, and those with higher education degrees are less likely to perceive the EU as a threat. So are those who never attend religious services and those with a relatively more highly perceived economic status. Older respondents, those who have attained secondary or vocational education, respondents attending religious services, and those on the lowest level of perceived economic status are more likely to agree that the EU threatens Georgian traditions.

About 34% contend that, first and foremost, the European Union is an international organization. For slightly less than a quarter of Georgians (23%), the EU is a political union, while for 22%, the EU is an economic union. Fewer regard the EU as a military block (4%), a cultural union (2%), or an NGO (1%). Respondents residing in Georgian-speaking communities are more likely to have an opinion on what the European Union stands for.

Twenty-eight percent believe that relations are very good or rather good, while most Georgians (56%) consider the current state of relations between Georgia and the European Union to be neutral. About 13% are ambivalent. Very few (4%) answered that relations are either very bad or rather bad.

Most Georgians are in favor of having closer economic and political relations with the EU. As for political cooperation, the EU is tied with the United States as a top choice with 60%. In terms of economic cooperation, Georgians most frequently think of the European Union as a desired partner (59%). A plurality also believes that the European Union would provide the best support to the country (43%), followed by the US (27%). Only 13% name Russia as the country that would best support Georgia.

A majority of Georgians believe that EU assistance is crucial for the country. About 86% consider such assistance to be import or very important. However, they also have a fairly vague understanding of what type

of assistance the EU actually provides to Georgia. More than a quarter of Georgians either do not know what aid the EU is giving to Georgia (22%) or believe that the union is not helping Georgia at all (7%). Forty-three percent think that the EU is providing humanitarian aid, while about 22% believe that the EU aids Georgia by investing in its economy.

A plurality of Georgians believe that the aid allocated to Georgia by the European Union benefits politicians and officials. About one-fifth (22%) thinks that it helps all Georgians, 19% consider businessmen as those who benefit the most from EU aid, and 15% think that students are the primary beneficiaries of such help. The majority of Georgians think that aid given to Georgia is not spent on its anticipated targets. Sixty-seven percent said that such funds are either completely or partially not spent on intended targets.

A plurality of Georgians (about 43%) positively perceives the EU's role in the 2008 August war. Twenty-six percent think that the organization played a neutral role in the conflict, while 43% think that it had a mainly negative role. As for the EU's other contribution to Georgia's conflicts, the EUMM, almost half of the country's population (47%) is unaware of the mission's work in the country.

Only 39% of Georgians are aware of Georgia's Association Agreement with the EU. Thirty-nine percent is not aware of the Association Agreement. About 6% are ambivalent. The awareness of the Association Agreement among Georgians stands at its lowest since 2014, the year that the country officially signed the document.

Ethnic Georgians (43%), those who hold a higher education degree (60%), and those who consider their income as being sufficient or more than enough (49%) are more likely to know about the agreement. Ethnic minorities, including Armenians (15%) and Azerbaijanis (6%), as well as those with a secondary education or lower (25%), are less likely to be aware of the Association Agreement.

Notably, Georgians who are aware of the Association Agreement expect that it will help improve the situation relative to all named policy options including: the procedures for obtaining long-term visas; healthcare and security; higher and secondary education; employment opportunities, and; energy efficiency.

EU countries are seen as desired destinations to emigrate for many of those who would like to go abroad to live, study or work. More than a quarter of Georgians would contemplate going abroad for employment. Overall, the majority of respondents who want to go abroad for work would consider emigrating to one of the EU member states (57%) or to North America (20%). About one-third would prefer emigrating to Germany (33%), followed by the United States (17%), Italy (7%), and Russia (5%).

Thirteen percent of the country's population would consider leaving Georgia on a permanent basis to live in another country. More Georgians picked EU member states (39%), while slightly fewer (38%) chose North American countries, namely the US and Canada as their desired destinations.

About 11% of Georgians have travelled to the EU/Schengen countries at least once since the country was granted visa-free travel as opposed to 86% who did not have the chance to do so. Compared to the 2019 wave of this survey, the share of Georgians who have visited the EU/Schengen states has increased by five percentage points.

Younger people, ethnic Georgians, those with higher education, and the relatively more well-off are more likely to have travelled to the European Union since the instatement of the visa-free regime. About 18% of Georgians younger than 35 have gone to EU/Schengen countries, as opposed to 11% of those between 35 and 54 and 6% of those older than 54. More ethnic Georgians (12%) than Armenians (5%) or Azerbaijanis (4%) have used the opportunity to travel without visas. So have about one-fifth of holders of higher education degrees and about 16% of those who view their households' monetary income as sufficient or more than enough.

Knowledge of the EU is on the decline in Georgia. This relates to what Georgians know about EU assistance, visa-free travel rules, the Association Agreement, and various EU policies.

Many Georgians have a rudimentary understanding of visa-free travel rules. Only 7% of Georgians were able to name all five requirements for entering EU/Schengen states, while on average, respondents could name only two documents necessary for travelling to the EU.

Men, younger people, representatives of other ethnic groups, Georgians with higher education and those who consider their household income to be at least barely sufficient, scored higher than others. Ethnic Azerbaijanis, those with a secondary education or lower, and those who consider themselves to be economically struggling, had less knowledge of visa-free travel rules.

The majority of the country's population believes that Georgians will be able to work in the European Union after the instatement of the visa-free regime. Sixty-two percent incorrectly answered that the agreement grants the right for Georgians to work in EU countries. Only 19% correctly believe that Georgians cannot work in the EU member states as a result of the visa-free regime.

Knowledge of the work-related rules of the visa-free regime has deteriorated over the last five years. In 2017, when Georgia had just been granted visa-free travel, the majority (59%) understood that such an arrangement would not allow Georgians to work in EU/Schengen countries. This proportion decreased in 2019; nonetheless, a plurality of Georgians (42%) still realizes that the country's residents cannot work in the EU as a result of the visa-free regime.

The analysis of the index measuring the knowledge of various EU policies showed that female respondents, ethnic Azerbaijanis and those who only achieved secondary education or lower score low compared to men, other ethnic groups, and those with higher education degrees.

Most Georgians receive their information about the European Union from TV (75%), followed by word of mouth from friends, relatives, or colleagues (47%), and online social networks (44%). Overall interest in learning more about the European Union reached its all-time – thirteen year – low in 2021. The proportion of those interested in receiving more information about the EU has decreased by 13 percentage points (from 66% in 2009), reaching its minimum in 2021. A plurality of Georgians want to receive information about EU-Georgia trade relations (41%). About one-third named EU educational programs (33%) in this regard, followed by the EU's role in conflict resolution (24%).

Georgians are generally enthusiastic about the country's membership in the European Union. More than three-quarters (77%) of the country's population would vote for Georgia to join the European Union. Eight percent would vote against, 6% would not participate at all, while 9% did not know the answer.

Compared to the 2019 wave of the study, the proportion of Georgians who would vote for EU membership in a hypothetical referendum increased by six percentage points. Ethnic Georgians (80%) would overwhelmingly vote for Georgia's membership in the European Union, compared to 56% of Azerbaijanis and 49% of Armenians. Ethnic minorities are more likely to be ambivalent, that is, saying they would refrain from voting, or do not know the answer.

Georgians have grown increasingly optimistic about when the country might become a part of the European Union. Twenty-eight percent of Georgians in the 2021 survey stated that the country would become a part of the EU within the next five years, a 13 percentage point increase compared to 2019.

Those Georgians who support the country's membership in the European Union are primarily motivated by potential economic benefits. Fifty-six percent of Georgians said that they would vote to join the EU because their economic situation would improve as an outcome. About 36% named security considerations, that is, being better protected from foreign threats (18%), or increased chances of restoring Georgia's territorial integrity (17%).

While few Georgians would vote against EU membership in a hypothetical referendum, those who would do so frequently justify their choice by arguing that joining the EU would harm Georgian culture and traditions

(31%). Thirty-one percent expect that such a move would restrict Georgia's independence, while 20% think that EU membership would hinder relations with Russia.

More Georgians consider the country to be unprepared for EU membership than prepared. According to a plurality, political concerns such as unresolved territorial conflicts (39%) and political instability (37%) are preventing Georgia from joining the EU. Only nineteen percent picked underdeveloped economy as a hindrance to Georgia's bid for becoming an EU member, while 18% named Russia.

Georgians expect improvements in almost all domains of public life if the country were to become a part of the European Union. Seventy-six percent expect that such a move would significantly or somewhat increase the quality of education in Georgia, followed by the number of available jobs in the country (74%) and pensions (71%). The majority of Georgians (68%) expect that joining the EU will have either a very negative or more negative than positive effect on bilateral relations with Russia. Nine percent expects very positive or somewhat positive effects.

## Annex 1: Ethnic minorities

Europe Foundation surveys regularly oversample Georgia’s ethnic minority communities to better understand their opinions. Overall, 916 respondents in ethnic minority communities were interviewed, including 480 respondents who identified as Armenian and 380 respondents identifying themselves as Azerbaijani. This section summarizes the essential sociodemographic characteristics of respondents belonging to ethnic Georgian and minority domains. Similar to answers on attitudinal questions, respondents’ sociodemographic characteristics vary across ethnolinguistic lines.

Respondents from ethnic minority communities are less likely to be employed, self-employed or in a salaried job than those from majority Georgian communities. Only 25% of the representatives of the ethnic minority domain are employed, compared to 44% within the strata of Georgian-speaking areas, and 42% nationally.

Most probably, such a disparity is associated with the less frequent involvement of women in the labor force. Notably, almost 25% of the respondents in the minority strata reported being a housewife, a higher number than recorded in the ethnic Georgian domain (11%), or nationally (12%).

Compared to the 2019 wave of the survey, the share of respondents who said that they were employed increased negligibly, by three percentage points nationally, two percentage points among Georgians, and by almost six points among respondents residing in ethnic minority communities. Notably, the share of unemployed respondents declined comparably.

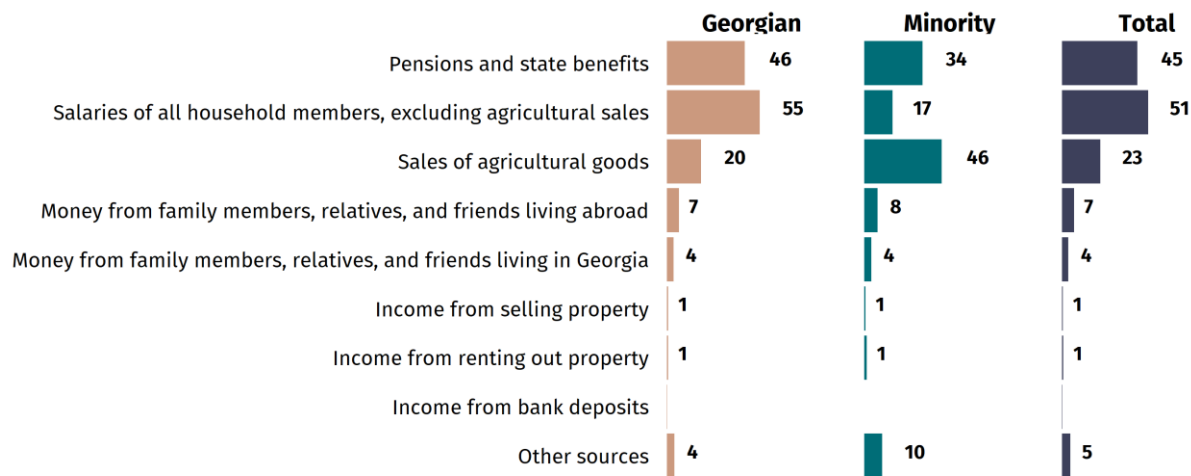


Figure 27: Many families have several sources of income. Using this card, please name the sources of income that your family had in the past 12 months. Please think of all sources of income of all members of your family. (%)

Respondents from ethnic minority strata are more likely to depend on income earned from the sale of agricultural goods (46%), state pensions and welfare benefits (34%), and, to a lesser extent, salaried jobs (17%). Respondents from predominantly ethnic Georgian communities mainly depend on the salaried jobs of other household members (55%), pensions and governmental support (46%), and sales of agricultural goods (20%, figure 27).

The overdependence of minorities on the sale of agricultural products could be explained by the fact that Georgia’s ethnic minorities are overwhelmingly rural. Notably, in the same survey, about 48% of Georgia’s rural population reported agricultural sales as a chief source of income.

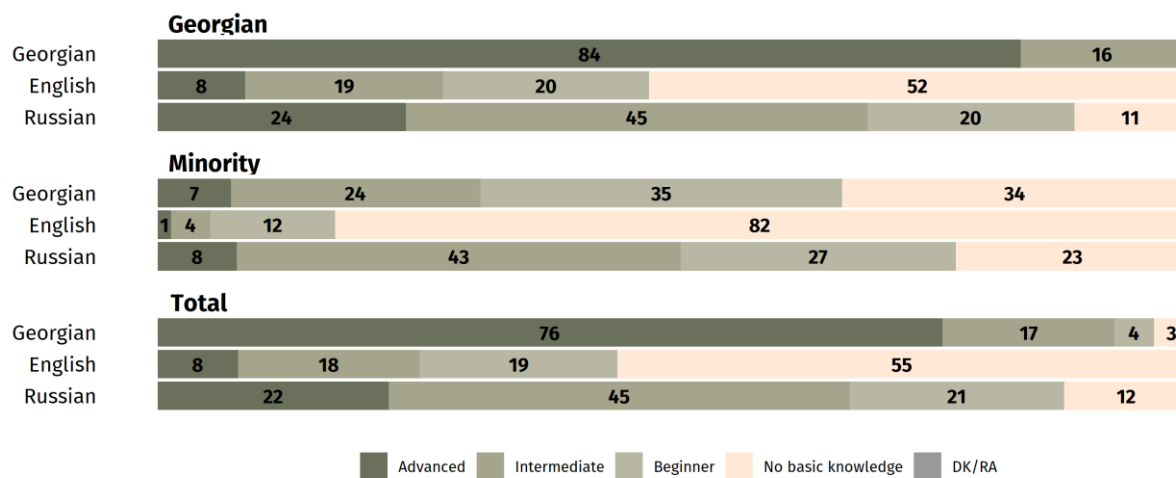
More respondents from ethnic Georgian communities assess their economic situation as “struggling.” About 26% of Georgians reported this, as compared to 17% of residents of ethnic minority communities and 25% nationally. More than half of minority respondents (53%) evaluate their households’ economic situation as



being barely sufficient. Forty-eight percent of respondents from predominantly Georgian-speaking communities and 48% nationally reported the same. More minorities (30%) than Georgians (26%) think of their household income as being sufficient.

More than half of the representatives of both communities are daily users of the Internet. Sixty-four percent of Georgians and 64% of those from minority communities access the Internet on a daily basis. More minorities use the Internet less often (29%) than Georgians (12%). About 21% of minorities and 24% of Georgians never use the Internet.

Respondents from ethnic minority communities are more likely to perceive themselves as a part of their own ethnic group than those from predominantly Georgian areas. Sixty-eight percent of minorities associate themselves only with their own ethnic communities in contrast to 58% of Georgians. They are less likely to see themselves as having a dual identity of a European and a representative of their ethnic community (9%) than Georgians (28%). Georgians are less inclined to see themselves as Caucasians (8%) than respondents from minority communities (16%).



Virtually everyone in the majority Georgian communities knows the Georgian language (figure 28). About 84% of such respondents claim to have advanced knowledge of Georgian, followed by 16% who evaluate their knowledge as intermediate. Slightly less than half of such respondents have some knowledge of English. About 8% claim to have advanced knowledge of English, 19% know English at an intermediate level, while 20% are beginners. All but 11% of Georgians claim to know Russian at some level.

Conversely, respondents from minority communities are less likely to possess the country’s official language. About 7% claim to have advanced knowledge of Georgian, 24% say that they know Georgian at an intermediate level, while 35% have a beginner’s knowledge. Thirty-four percent of respondents from minority communities have no basic knowledge of Georgian.

Eighty-two percent of minorities have no knowledge of English. Nonetheless, 77% claim to speak Russian at some level. Eight percent claim to have advanced skills in Russian, 43% understand it at an intermediate level, while 27% have a basic understanding of this language. As the proportion of those among minority communities who have some knowledge of Georgian grew by seven percentage points compared to 2019, more claim to know Russian (78%) than Georgian (66%).

## Bibliography

- Agenda.ge. “Georgian Citizens to Be Screened for Entry to EU/Schengen at Georgian Border Checkpoints.” *Agenda.ge*. <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2021/4>, January 2021.
- . “Georgian Parliament Approves New Regulations on Travel to EU.” *Agenda.ge*. <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2020/2710>, September 2020.
- 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 Pub. L. No. 480610000.03.030.016275, 200/42 (2014). <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2496959>
- . “Georgia, EU Sign Association Agreement,” June 2014.
- . “Q&A: Might the EU Suspend Visa Free Regime with Georgia?” *Civil.ge*, June 2019.
- “Constitution of Georgia,” August 1995.
- de Jong, Sijbren. “The Eurasian Economic Union and the European Union.” *European Policy Analysis* September, no. 11 (2016): 12.
- Delegation of the European Union to Georgia. “Myths about the EU-Georgia Association Agreement (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA.” Tbilisi, Georgia, 2014.
- EUMM in Georgia. “Our Mandate.” [https://www.eumm.eu/en/about\\_eumm/mandate](https://www.eumm.eu/en/about_eumm/mandate), 2021.
- Europe Foundation. “European Integration.” *Europe Foundation*, 2019.
- European Commission. “Frequently Asked Questions on the Schengen Visa-Free.” [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/visa\\_waiver\\_faqs\\_en.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/visa_waiver_faqs_en.pdf), 2021.
- . “Georgia - Trade.” <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/georgia/>, April 2021.
- . “Statement by Commissioner Avramopoulos on the Council Adoption of Visa Liberalisation for Georgia.” *European Commission - European Commission*. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT\\_17\\_363](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_17_363), February 2017.
- Eurostat. “Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age and Sex - Monthly Data (Rounded) [Migr\_asyappctzm].” <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do>, 2020.
- . “Third Country Nationals Found to Be Illegally Present - Annual Data (Rounded)[migr\_eipr].” <https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do>, 2020.
- Hecke, Steven Van, and Teona Lavrelashvili. “Georgia Is Ready to Apply for Membership by 2024 - Is the EU Ready Too?” *Www.euractiv.com*, January 2021.
- Kakhishvili, Levan. “Towards a Two-Dimensional Analytical Framework for Understanding Georgian Foreign Policy: How Party Competition Informs Foreign Policy Analysis.” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 37, no. 2 (March 2021): 174–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2020.1869455>.
- Kieskompas. “საგარეო პოლიტიკა.” <https://kompasi.partiebi.ge/ka/results/compareJustificationPage>, 2020.

Lejava, Nino. “Georgia’s Unfinished Search for Its Place in Europe.” *Carnegie Europe*. <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2021/04/06/georgia-s-unfinished-search-for-its-place-in-europe-pub-84253>, April 2021.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia. “ევროკავშირის დახმარების მიმოხილვა.” <https://mfa.gov.ge/%E1%83%94%E1%83%95%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D%E1%83%9E%E1%83%A3%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98-%E1%83%93%E1%83%90-%E1%83%94%E1%83%95%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D-%E1%83%90%E1%83%A2%E1%83%9A%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%98%E1%83%99%E1%83%A3%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98-%E1%83%98%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%94%E1%83%92%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%AA%E1%83%98%E1%83%90/evrokavshiris-dakhmarebis-mimokhilva.aspx>, 2021.

———. “საქართველო-ევროკავშირის ურთიერთობების მნიშვნელოვანი მოვლენების ქრონოლოგია.”

<https://mfa.gov.ge/%E1%83%94%E1%83%95%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D%E1%83%9E%E1%83%A3%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98-%E1%83%93%E1%83%90-%E1%83%94%E1%83%95%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D-%E1%83%90%E1%83%A2%E1%83%9A%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%98%E1%83%99%E1%83%A3%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98-%E1%83%98%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%94%E1%83%92%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%AA%E1%83%98%E1%83%90/%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%A5%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%97%E1%83%95%E1%83%94%E1%83%9A%E1%83%9D-%E1%83%94%E1%83%95%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D%E1%83%99%E1%83%90%E1%83%95%E1%83%A8%E1%83%98%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98.aspx?lang=en-US>, 2019.

Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia. “Statistical Information on Migration (Freedom of Information Request),” 2020.

National Statistics Office of Georgia. “პირდაპირი უცხოური ინვესტიციები.” [https://geostat.ge/media/38754/FDI\\_Geo\\_countries.xlsx](https://geostat.ge/media/38754/FDI_Geo_countries.xlsx), 2021.

———. “უცხოელ ვიზიტორთა სტატისტიკა.” <https://geostat.ge/media/38256/moqalaeobis-qveyana.xlsx>, 2021.

RFE/RL. “Jubilant Georgians Ring In Visa-Free Travel To EU.” *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*. <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-eu-visa-free-travel-/28395173.html>, March 2017.

Schengenvisainfo.com. “Georgian Minister of Justice Claims Visa-Free Regime With Europe Is ‘Facing Difficulties’.” *SchengenVisaInfo.com*. <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/georgian-minister-of-justice-claims-visa-free-regime-with-europe-is-facing-difficulties/>, April 2019.

Zahorka, Hans-Jürgen, and Ofelya Sargsyan. “The Eurasian Customs Union: An Alternative to the EU’s Association Agreements?” *European View* 13, no. 1 (June 2014): 89–96. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12290-014-0309-3>.

Zalkaliani, David. “Applying for EU Membership in 2024 & Receiving Candidate Status by 2030 Are Important Constituents of GE’s Foreign Policy - Accentuated Given Topic at the Presentation of the 10-Year Action Plan of the @MFAgovge. Talked about the Useful Mechanisms in This Direction - #AA, #EaP, #A3 <https://t.co/2V7kl6q7Yn>.” Tweet. @DZalkaliani, August 2021.