

Knowledge of and Attitudes Toward the European Union in Georgia

2023 Survey Report



Tbilisi
2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Georgia's relationship with the EU is multifaceted and continuously evolving. Understanding public perception is crucial in this context, both for measuring the current state of Georgia-EU relations at the grassroots level and for charting future potential. This report presents key insights from the Europe Foundation's eighth installment of a survey designed to gauge the country's population's knowledge of and attitudes toward the European Union. It delves into the significant findings from our 2023 survey, looks at time-series data from prior iterations to highlight long-term trends, and scrutinizes socio-demographic and attitudinal variables to better explain prevailing sentiments toward the EU among Georgia's population.

The methodology and research tools have been consistent across survey waves, enabling longitudinal comparisons. A multi-stage stratified cluster sampling was employed, aimed at capturing a diverse range of opinions across urban and rural areas, as well as among residents of predominantly ethnic Armenian and Azerbaijani communities. Conducted between March and May 2023, the study's timing is particularly noteworthy as it began just after public protests led to the retraction of a controversial 'foreign agents' law, thereby capturing public sentiment in its immediate aftermath. A total of 2,458 interviews were completed in three languages—Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani—with a response rate of 30%.

A majority of the population of Georgia (54%) hold a favorable view of the EU. This overarching sentiment serves as a backdrop against which we can explore more nuanced opinions and divisions that exist within the country. Enthusiasm for the EU is particularly pronounced among the younger generation. Nearly two-thirds of those under 35 hold a very positive or rather positive view of the Union. However, opinions differ across political lines. While 66% of opposition supporters view the EU positively, the figure drops to 41% among supporters of the ruling Georgian Dream party, underscoring the potential effects of increased anti-EU stances among Georgia's political elite.

Trust levels in the EU have remained largely consistent since 2009, suggesting a degree of stability in how the population of Georgia perceives the organization, irrespective of the global political climate.

When it comes to what the EU represents in the eyes of the population of Georgia, the answers are as varied as they are telling. For 28%, the EU is first and foremost an economic union. Roughly a quarter see it as an international organization while another quarter consider it a political union. Only a small minority view it as a military bloc, a cultural union, or—perhaps most intriguingly—an NGO.

More than half of the population dismisses the idea that the EU threatens Georgian traditions. Yet, 36% of the population of Georgia do perceive a cultural threat, a sentiment that has been slowly diminishing since 2015. The demographic profile of those who reject the notion of threat is notable: they're younger, ethnically Georgian, economically better off, and more likely to be opposition supporters.

When assessing the state of current EU-Georgia relations, the word that most often comes to mind is "neutral." A majority of the population of Georgia—58%—characterize the relationship as neither good nor bad.

Over the years, popular perceptions of Georgia's relationship with the EU have been generally positive. However, there's been a notable downturn. Compared to 2021, seven fewer percentage points view Georgia's relations with the EU as "very good" or "rather good," the lowest since the Europe Foundation started tracking public opinion on the EU in Georgia.

Respondents were asked how Georgia and the population of Georgia are perceived by the Europeans. Thirty percent believe the sentiment is positive, while a negligible 8% think it's negative. The majority, however, are hedging their bets, suggesting that Europeans are either neutral (42%) or that they don't

have enough information to answer the question (18%). This paints a picture of a population uncertain about how it fits into the broader European narrative.

The EU remains Georgia's partner of choice for both political and economic cooperation. An overwhelming majority—64% for politics and 62% for economics—favor the EU over any other potential partners. The commitment appears to be growing; the percentage of those who view the EU as the best supporter for Georgia has increased by seven points since 2021.

The perception of the EU's assistance is unequivocally positive among the population of Georgia. A staggering 84% consider the aid as important or very important, relegating the skeptics to a mere 11% of the population. This overwhelming endorsement extends to the motives behind assistance. About 77% agree that the EU aims to bring stability to its neighboring regions, and more than half think the Union has more pragmatic objectives like reducing migration and ensuring a stable environment for energy transport.

However, the type of aid provided by the EU seems to be a point of confusion. About a third either don't know what form the aid takes or believe the EU isn't assisting Georgia at all—a six-point increase from the last wave. Another third believes the aid is humanitarian in nature.

Public opinion on who benefits from EU aid has also shifted. While a plurality still think politicians and officials are the primary beneficiaries, this notion has decreased by 11 points since 2021. Interestingly, more now believe that students are the primary beneficiaries, marking a seven-point increase.

There is also skepticism about how effectively these funds are utilized. Sixty percent believe that the money is either completely or partially misallocated. Though still a majority, this figure represents a seven-point decrease from the previous wave, indicating a slight improvement in public confidence—or perhaps just a shift in perception.

When asked what the best way for the European Union to assist Georgia would be, opinions are varied but insightful. Nearly a quarter suggest investing in the economy, 15% recommend helping with territorial integrity, and 10% favor addressing social issues. These priorities provide a roadmap of sorts for what the population of Georgia sees as their most pressing needs.

Views on the EU's role in the 2008 August War are mixed but tend to be positive. While 38% view the role as positive, this is a five-point decrease from 2021. Additionally, 30% see the EU's role as neutral, and 18% see it as negative. This suggests some evolving opinions, possibly affected by recent geopolitical developments or shifts in national sentiment.

Awareness surrounding the Association Agreement between Georgia and the EU has significantly declined. As of 2023, only 41% of the population of Georgia is aware of the agreement, the lowest since 2014 when it was officially signed. Men, ethnic Georgians, those with a higher education, and opposition supporters are more likely to be informed. Furthermore, only 14% believe the agreement is fully operational, even though it has been since July 2016.

Roughly about a quarter of the population of Georgia express a willingness to go abroad for work. Significantly, the majority of these potential emigrants have their sights set on EU countries (42%) or North American countries, namely, the United States and Canada (30%). When it comes to educational pursuits, the numbers closely mirror those of employment. Again, about 26% of the population of Georgia would consider going abroad for their studies. EU member states top the list, capturing the interest of 41% of respondents, followed by the U.S. and Canada at 26% in total, and non-EU European states garnering 22%.

Fourteen percent of the population of Georgia would consider permanent emigration. Here again, the EU and North America are nearly neck-and-neck as top choices, with 33% opting for the EU and 31%

for a North American country, specifically, the U.S. or Canada. Intriguingly, this desire to emigrate is most pronounced among the younger population, with 26% of those under 35 indicating a willingness to leave permanently.

Despite these aspirations, few have extensive experience living in the EU. Only about 8% report living in an EU member state for at least three months since 1993. The most commonly named destinations are Greece, Germany, France, Poland, and Italy.

The visa-free travel regime granted by the EU is overwhelmingly well-received in Georgia. Nearly three-quarters of the population of Georgia said that they are happy with this development, while a mere 17% reported feeling indifferent. This broad approval underscores the symbolic and practical value the population of Georgia places on easier access to Europe.

Though the sentiment is positive, using visa-free travel shows room for growth. About 17% have made use of the opportunity to visit EU or Schengen countries at least once, a figure that has almost doubled since 2019. However, a significant majority—80%—have not traveled to these areas. The age and gender breakdown reveals that the younger population of Georgia and men are more likely to have taken advantage of this travel opportunity.

While enthusiasm for visa-free travel is high, knowledge of its details leaves something to be desired. While 78% correctly identified the need for a biometric passport, fewer could name other entry requirements. Only 9% could correctly name all five key requirements for entering EU/Schengen countries. About 57% of those pleased with the visa-free regime wrongly believe it allows the population of Georgia the right to work in the EU, indicating a significant gap in understanding.

The study also touches on the level of general knowledge about the EU. Female respondents and ethnic Azerbaijanis scored lower on an index measuring knowledge about the EU. On average, respondents answered just 3.5 out of 8 questions correctly. This suggests that while the EU looms large in the imagination and aspirations of the population of Georgia, their depth of understanding of the union is somewhat lacking.

The way the population of Georgia consumes information about the EU provides valuable context. Television remains the dominant source at 71%, followed closely by word of mouth and social networks. Curiously, although interest in learning about the EU dipped to an all-time low in 2021, it saw a modest rebound in 2023.

The population of Georgia displays a wide array of interests regarding the EU, from trade relations and educational programs to healthcare. Notably, the latter saw a 12-percentage-point spike in interest compared to 2021. Also capturing public attention are the EU's role in conflict resolution, salary structures, and rule of law, each garnering the interest of about a quarter of respondents.

In a hypothetical referendum on EU membership, a resounding 77% of the population of Georgia would cast a “Yes” vote. This sentiment has remained stable, and even gained momentum since 2015. NATO membership also enjoys robust support, with 70% in favor, while the Eurasian Union, a Russia-led integrationist project that consists of the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Belarus, and Kyrgyzstan, attracts only 16%, a proportion, that has decreased since 2021. Opposition supporters are particularly fervent about EU membership, with 85% indicating a “Yes” vote, but a substantial majority among the supporters of the ruling Georgian Dream party or unaffiliated respondents support Georgia's EU membership.

There's been a discernible uptick in optimism about Georgia's prospects for EU membership. A notable 27% believe that Georgia could become an EU member within the next five years, a significant increase from more pessimistic views in 2019.

Economic considerations dominate the motivations for the population of Georgia's pro-EU stance, with more than half of potential “Yes” voters naming the promise of economic improvement as a motive. Security concerns also weigh heavily, motivating about 38% of respondents. Conversely, the minority who would vote “No” often cite cultural and traditional concerns, an apprehension that has risen slightly since 2021.

The population of Georgia seems to view their country as increasingly ready for EU membership, especially in areas like minority rights and human rights protection. This confidence has grown since 2021. However, challenges are acknowledged too. Political instability and unresolved territorial conflicts are most frequently cited as barriers to EU membership, followed by a lack of political will both within Georgia and the EU.

Lastly, the population of Georgia has broad expectations of improvements across almost all domains of public life if the country were to join the EU. However, there's a widespread belief that closer ties with the EU would sour Georgia's relationship with Russia—72% expect it would have a negative impact on bilateral relations.

INTRODUCTION

Public opinion on the European Union in Georgia is positive, with a majority supporting the country's membership in the Union. This is a consistent trend as attested by the Europe Foundation surveys of the country's population on the subject, including a most recent study conducted in spring of 2023 and analyzed in this report. Importantly, opinions of Georgia's population towards the country's European path are coherent with their actions, often contradicting those of the country's elite, as attested by dramatic events in the lead-up of the survey. Between March 6 and 10, 2023, Tbilisi's main thoroughfare Rustaveli Avenue, was engulfed in mass protests.¹ Tens of thousands of protesters demanded the Parliament of Georgia to retract a controversial law on transparency of noted local and international observers, the protesters were primarily motivated by a fear that this law would have jeopardized the country's path towards closer integration with the European Union.²

The introduction of the "foreign agent law" was a logical culmination of increased anti-Western and anti-EU rhetoric of Georgian authorities, which often contradicts a majority of the country's attitudes towards Europe. Such a rift became increasingly visible since the start of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine,³ signaling a notable shift towards anti-European attitudes within Georgia's political class.⁴ Importantly, until now, major political parties among the government and opposition were in agreements with the country's declared foreign policy goals and its European aspirations as enshrined in the Constitution, echoing the unaverred support for EU integration among the majority of people, well documented in all waves of this study.⁵ The story of Georgia's bid for EU candidacy is a good illustration of this divergence in the elite's views. While the Georgian government officially applied for EU membership along with Ukraine and Moldova in 2022, the country was recommended for a "European perspective,"⁶ not candidate status, which many in Georgia hoped for.⁷ Some observers attributed this to the Georgian government's deliberate efforts to undermine the bid,⁸ with the blame also falling on Brussels that failed to recognize popular support of Georgia's EU membership, instead reacting on the Georgian government's actions.⁹

The support of the European Union in Georgia, to a great extent, reflects the Union's multifaceted involvement in the country. In the policy arena, Georgia has gradually moved toward closer cooperation with the EU by signing various trade and political treaties and driving the country to capitalize on the Union's common markets. Bilateral relations grew further leading up to the 2010s

¹ Matthew Mpoke Bigg and Shashank Bengali, "The Background on the Protests in Georgia," *The New York Times*, March 8, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/08/world/europe/georgia-protests-russia-ukraine.html>.

² Natia Seskuria, "Georgia's Protesters Won the Battle but Not the War," March 30, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/03/30/georgia-protests-russian-foreign-agent-law/>.

³ Kornely Kakachia and Shota Kakabadze, "What's Behind Georgian Dream's Anti-Western Rhetoric and Foreign Policy Behavior," December 9, 2022, <https://gip.ge/publication-post/whats-behind-georgian-dreams-anti-western-ethoric-and-foreign-policy-behavior/>.

⁴ 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>.

⁵ Kieskompas, "საგარეო პოლიტიკა" (<https://kompasi.partiebi.ge/ka/results/compareJustificationPage>, 2020).

⁶ European External Action Service, "The European Perspective for Georgia," Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, September 20, 2022, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/european-perspective-georgia_en?s=221.

⁷ Faustine Vincent, "Georgia's European Future Is on Hold," *Le Monde.fr*, June 23, 2022, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/06/23/georgia-s-european-future-is-on-hold_5987790_4.html.

⁸ Nini Gabritchidze, "Georgia Recommended for EU Candidacy, but with Conditions | Eurasianet," June 17, 2022, <https://eurasianet.org/georgia-recommended-for-eu-candidacy-but-with-conditions>.

⁹ Maximilian Hess, "The EU Will Regret Denying Georgia Immediate Candidate Status | Opinions | Al Jazeera," June 21, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2022/6/21/the-eu-commission-may-regret-denying-georgia-candidate-status>.

when Georgia signed the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) and was granted visa-free travel.¹⁰

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.¹¹ EU countries had been major investors in Georgia's economy, totaling 4.5 billion Georgian Lari in foreign direct investments, they have 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.¹²

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) protects 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.¹³

Such an all-encompassing involvement of the European Union in Georgia prompts even better understanding of Georgia's relationship with the EU and the potential it holds moving forward. This study, representing the Europe Foundation's initiative to take stock of the public's knowledge of and attitudes toward the EU, is a part of their effort to support Georgia's civil society organizations and the government in their quest to bring the country closer to the EU's "standards, practices, and values."¹⁴ Since 2009, the Foundation has conducted eight waves of large-scale nationwide public opinion polls 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.

This report summarizes the findings of the Europe Foundation's aforementioned "Knowledge of and Attitudes toward the European Union in Georgia" survey. The goals of this report are threefold. First, it explores the most prominent results of the 2023 installment of the Europe Foundation's survey. Secondly, where applicable, it uses time series data from previous waves of this study to characterize longer-term trends. Finally, it analyzes the socio-demographic and attitudinal factors predicting Georgia's residents' attitudes toward the EU and provides potential explanations for such trends.

The text proceeds as follows. First, a brief summary of the methodology is provided. Next, a section analyzes the survey findings on EU perceptions. Separate chapters then explore the attitudes of Georgia's population toward the presence of the EU, knowledge of the organization and its policies, and the prospects of Georgia's EU membership. An analysis of opinions across Georgia's predominantly ethnic minority and Georgian communities is presented as an annex to this report. The report concludes with a summary of key findings.

¹⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, "საქართველო-ევროკავშირის ურთიერთობების მნიშვნელოვანი მოვლენების ქრონოლოგია," 2019.

¹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, "ევროკავშირის დახმარების მიმოხილვა," 2021.

¹² National Statistics Office of Georgia, "პირდაპირი უცხოური ინვესტიციები" (https://geostat.ge/media/38754/FDI_Geo_countries.xlsx, 2021).

¹³ 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, February 2017).

¹⁴ Europe Foundation, "European Integration," *Europe Foundation*, 2019.

METHODOLOGY

This report summarizes the results of the eighth wave of the Europe Foundation’s Knowledge of and Attitudes toward the EU in Georgia survey. The study design and research instrument have been kept similar to previous waves, allowing a comparison of results across waves. For selecting respondents, a multi-stage stratified cluster sample design was used to ensure that the data allows granular estimations of opinions of the 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 March 14 and May 3, 2023. Notably, the fieldwork commenced soon after protesters in Tbilisi forced the Georgian parliament to retract a controversial “foreign agents” bill.¹⁵ Consequently, results reflect the country’s public mood that followed protests.

Overall, 2,458 completed interviews were collected, with a 30% response rate. Interviews were administered in the Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani languages.

To reflect the demographic structure of Georgia, data is weighted based on the results of the 2014 National Census. Overall, the margin of error of point estimates averages to 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%	0.83%
Near 90% and 10%	2.22%
Near 75% and 25%	3.52%
Near 60% and 40%	4.07%
Near 50%	4.42%

This report uses both exploratory and confirmatory data analysis tools. The descriptive analysis includes simple cross-tabulations and frequencies. Comparisons across ethnic groups are done using a self-reported ethnicity variable. Proportions of respondents who say that they belong to other ethnic groups rather than being ethnic Georgian, Azerbaijani, or Armenian, are not reliable due to the small sample size. As a result of rounding, some proportions might not add up to 100%. Associations between variables of interest are identified using binary, multinomial, and “Poisson” (count) regression models with survey settings.

CRRC-Georgia conducted the fieldwork and prepared this analysis.

¹⁵ Bigg and Bengali, “The Background on the Protests in Georgia.”

SURVEY RESULTS

Perception of the European Union among the population of Georgia

The majority of the population of Georgia positively perceives the European Union. Overall, fifty-four percent have either very positive (21%) or rather positive (33%) attitudes towards the Union. An almost similar proportion (34%) share having a neutral view. Less than one in ten (8%) have either a very negative or a rather negative opinion of the European Union.

Attitudes towards the European Union correlate with respondents' views concerning NATO. More think positively about NATO (46%) than negatively (12%). Thirty-six percent have a neutral view of NATO.

Notably, the share of those who see the EU in a positive light has reached an all-time high (54%) since EF started tracking such attitudes in 2009. While a plurality always had positive attitudes towards the EU, it was only in 2009 (51%) and 2011 (53%), that a majority saw the organization positively.

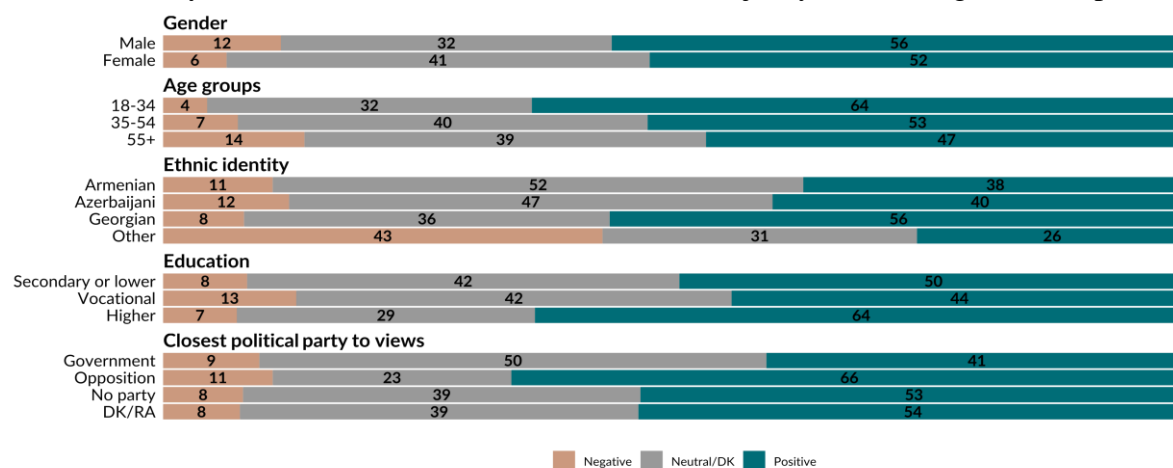


Figure 1: People frequently talk about the EU in Georgia. What is your general perception of the EU? By major demographic groups (%)

Respondents' gender, age, ethnic identity, education, and political party affiliation predict whether one has a positive or negative opinion of the European Union.¹⁶

The majority of both women (52%) and men (56%) see the EU positively. Forty-one percent of women and 32% of men have a neutral opinion about the European Union (figure 1). Notably, more men (12%) than women (6%) have a negative opinion of the organization.

The EU is most positively viewed among younger people under 35, almost two-thirds (64%) of whom have a very positive or rather positive attitude towards the organization. The majority of 35-54 year-olds (53%) also see the organization positively similar to the plurality (47%) of those 55 and older. Notably, more than one in ten (14%) in the oldest age cohort negatively view the European Union. While not a majority, a substantial share across age groups (32% to 40%) still has neutral attitudes.

Ethnic Georgians (8%), Azerbaijanis (12%) and Armenians (11%) are least likely to have a negative opinion about the organization. The majority of ethnic Georgians (56%) positively perceive the EU. The majority of Armenians (52%), and a plurality of Azerbaijanis (47%) had a neutral view of the Union.

¹⁶ Differences were identified using a Binary logistic regression model with common socio-demographic covariates.

Close to two-thirds (64%) of respondents with a higher education have positive views towards the European Union, with half of those with a secondary or lower education sharing similar attitudes. Here, too, substantial proportions have neutral attitudes.

The country’s population is divided across the political spectrum in their views of the European Union. Two-thirds of opposition supporters (66%) see the organization positively. So do the majority of unaffiliated respondents (53%) and those who don’t know or refuse to answer the question on their party sympathies (54%). Notably, the plurality of Georgian Dream supporters (41%) view the EU positively. Still, half of this group feels neutral towards the organization.¹⁷

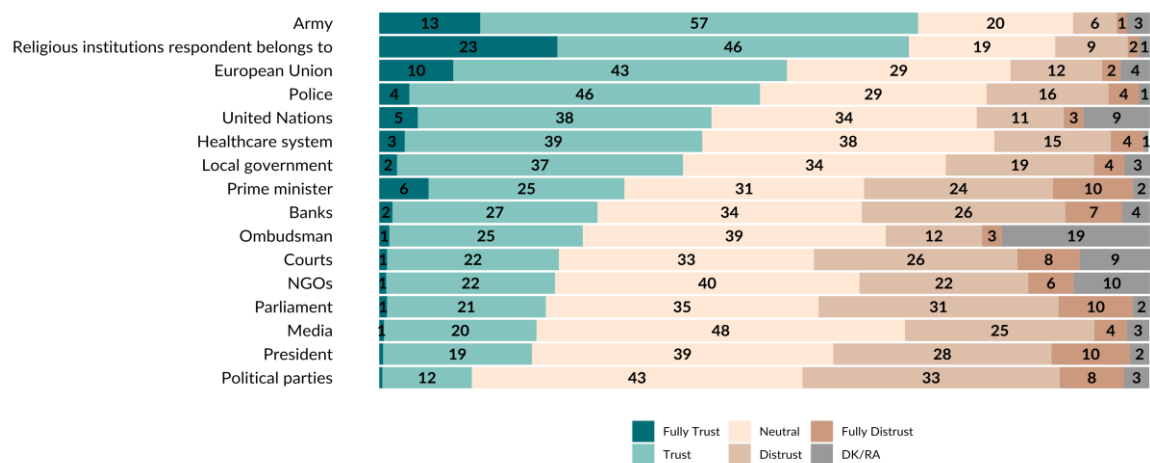


Figure 2: Please tell me how much do you trust or distrust... (%)

More than half of the population of Georgia either fully (10%) or partially (43%) trust the European Union (Figure 2). About 29% have a neutral opinion, while only 14% fully or partially distrust the European Union. Notably, trust in the European Union correlates with the general perception of the organization.¹⁸

The European Union is among the most trusted institutions in Georgia. By net trust (53%), that is, the sum of “Fully trust” and “Trust” answers, the EU ranks just below the army (70%) and religious institutions (69%), in which the population of Georgia traditionally trust the most.

The population of Georgia trusts the European Union more than most of the country’s social and political institutions. By net trust, the EU ranks above police (49%), healthcare system (42%), local government (39%), prime minister (32%), parliament (22%), and president (20%)¹⁹.

¹⁷ Respondents who named the Georgian Dream as the closest political party to their views or had a sympathy towards the ruling party accounted 17% of the population; opposition supporters totaled 23%; 35% of Georgians said no party is close to their views while a quarter did not know or refused to answer.

¹⁸ 52% according to Spearman’s rank-order correlation.

¹⁹ Proportions trusting and distrusting might be different from the original question due to rounding error.

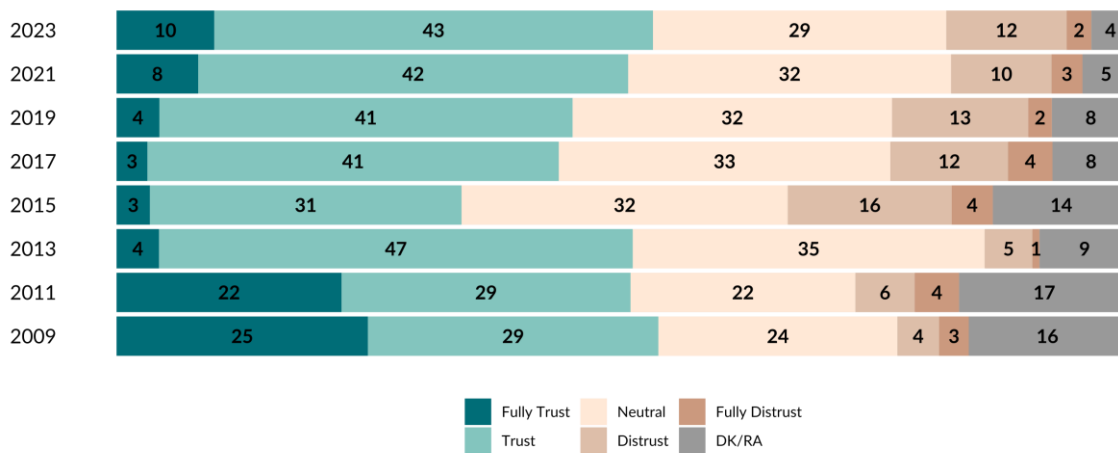


Figure 3: Please tell me how much do you trust or distrust the European Union ? (%)

Importantly, trust towards the European Union is on par with that in 2009, when the largest share of the population trusted the organization. Since 2015, when the lowest share of the population trusted the EU, the net trust towards the organization grew from 34%, reaching 53% in 2023 (Figure 3). The share of those with neutral attitudes has declined between 2013 and 2023, by 6 percentage points. The proportion of the country’s population that answered “Don’t know” to the trust question dropped from 16% in 2009 to a mere 4%, hinting that the majority have made up their mind regarding the organization. Net negative trust also decreased from 20% in 2015 to 14% in 2023.

Respondents’ age, ethnic identity, perceived economic situation, and political affiliation predict the level of trust towards the EU.²⁰ The majority of both men (54%) and women (52%) trust the European Union. Notably, more women are ambivalent towards the Union than men (Figure 4).

Fifty-five percent of ethnic Armenians and 54% of ethnic Georgians either fully trust or trust the EU, followed by ethnic Azerbaijanis (48%).

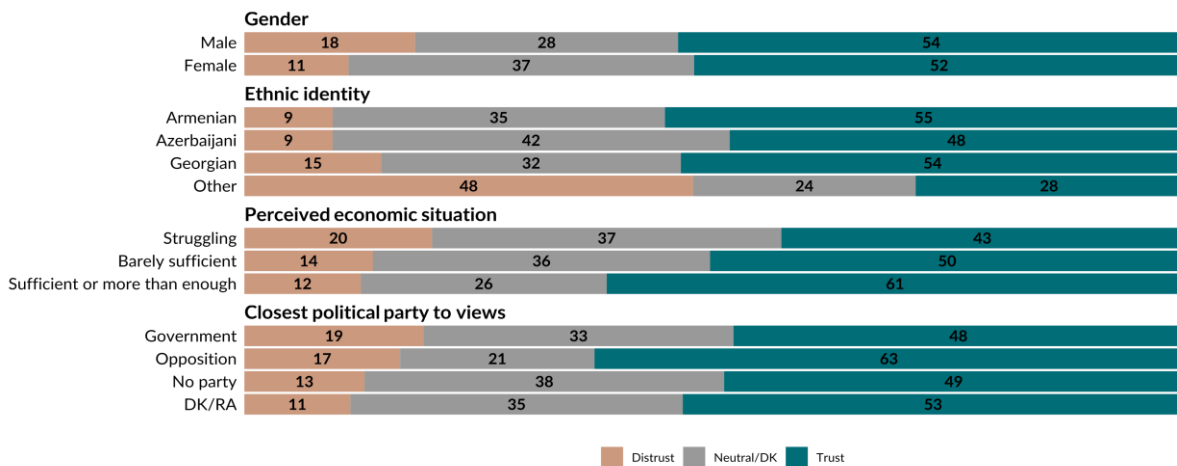


Figure 4: Please tell me how much do you trust or distrust the EU... By major demographic groups (%)

²⁰ Differences were identified using a multinomial regression model predicting respondents’ trust towards the European Union. To ease interpretation of results, 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.

Those who perceive themselves relatively well-off are more likely to trust the EU (61%) than those who say that they are struggling (43%).

Similar to views towards the European Union, one’s political sympathies are strongly associated with trust in the organization. About two-thirds of opposition supporters and more than half of those who don’t know or refuse to answer questions on political sympathies (53%) say that they fully trust or trust the European Union. While the plurality of unaffiliated respondents (49%) and the supporters of the ruling Georgian Dream party (48%) trust the European Union, still, about one in five among the GD supporters distrust the EU (19%), with one-third being ambivalent.

Respondents were further asked what the European Union represents for them. For 28%, the EU is an economic union, while a quarter of the population of Georgia think that the EU is a political union (Figure 5). About 24% contend that, first and foremost, the European Union is an international organization. Fewer think of the EU as a military block (4%), a cultural union (3%), 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 in the ethnic minority communities (39%) did not have an answer to this question.

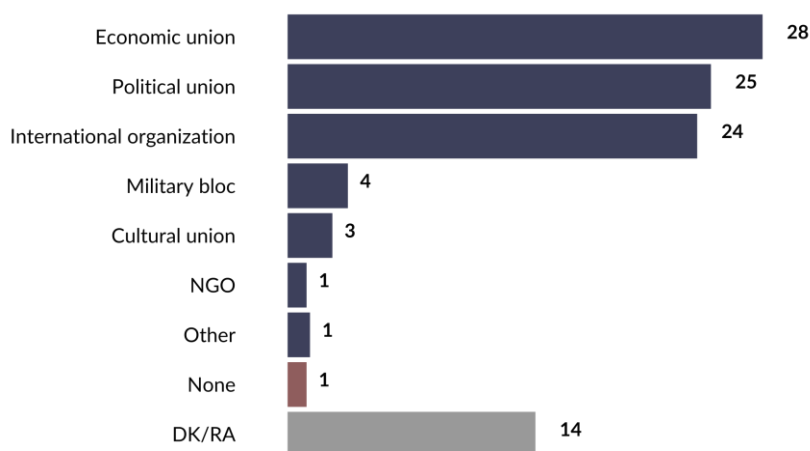


Figure 5: In your opinion, first and foremost, what does the EU represent? (%)

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

About three in four agree that the EU is a democratic union (75%). Seventy-five 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 (74%) and democracy (72%) in non-member states. The population of Georgia are divided on whether the EU is ready to accept any European country as its next member. Forty percent believe that the organization is prepared to do so, the plurality (49%) disagrees.

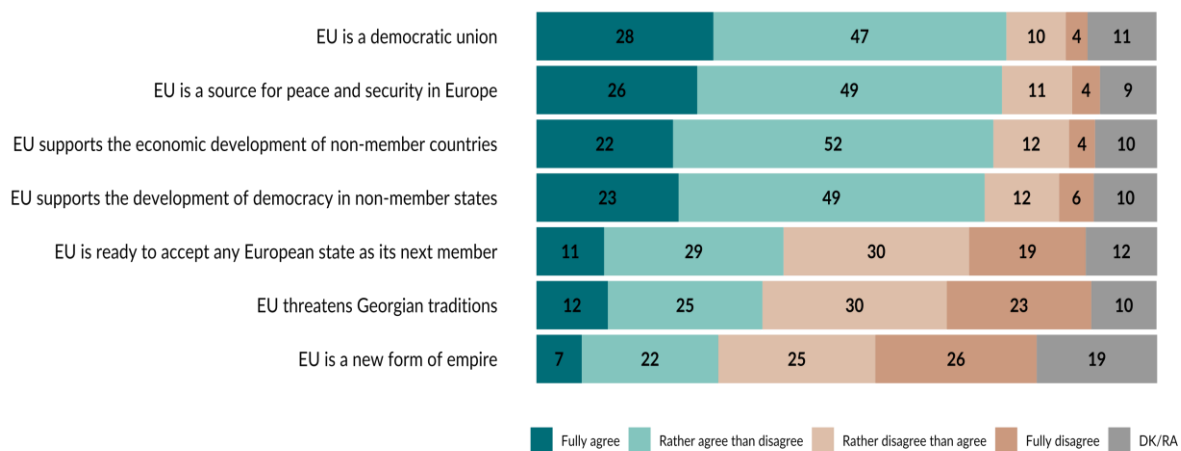
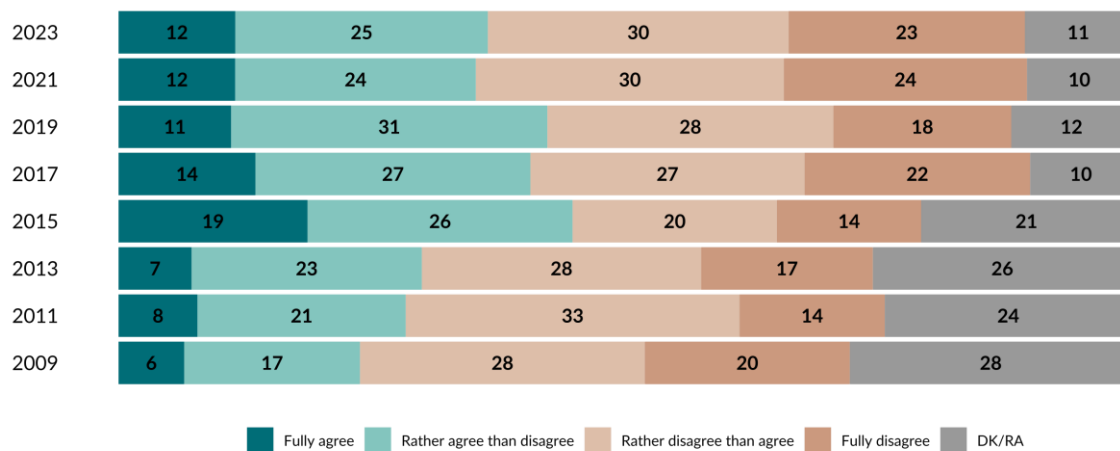


Figure 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each statement? (%)

More disagree than agree that the European Union is just a new form of empire. Fifty-one percent disagreed that the EU is an empire, while 29% agreed with the statement.

Authors of anti-Western and, in particular, anti-EU narratives circulating in Georgia often make use of a claim that the European Union forces its liberal values on Georgia which are foreign to the country’s predominantly socially conservative population.²¹ Such claims assert that Western-style modernization aims to dismantle Georgia’s traditions which are deeply rooted in Orthodox Christianity.²² As Georgia’s politicians, including the country’s top officials, openly endorse homophobic and anti-liberal narratives,²³ anti-Western views are becoming increasingly polarizing in Georgian politics.²⁴

The population of Georgia is divided on whether the EU threatens the country’s traditions. More than half, about 53%, either fully or rather disagreed that the European Union is a threat to the country’s national traditions. Still, 37% agreed with the statement.



²¹ 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).

²² 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).

²³ Dato Parulava, “Georgia’s Crackdown on Queer Rights Contradicts Its EU Ambitions,” July 15, 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/georgia-crackdown-queer-lgbtq-rights-say-about-eu-ambitions-european-union-membership/>.

²⁴ David Sichinava, “Cleavages, Electoral Geography and the Territorialization of Political Parties in the Republic of Georgia,” *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 2018.

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

Over time, the population of Georgia has diverged in their opinions on whether the European Union threatens Georgia’s traditions. In the last two waves of this study, a majority disagreed that the EU threatens the country’s traditions (Figure 7), with the share of those who perceive the EU as threatening Georgia’s traditions slightly decreasing. In 2015 for instance, only about 34% of the population of Georgia fully or partially disagreed with the statement, while 45% saw the EU as a threat. Notably, the share of those who do not perceive the EU as a threat to Georgian traditions has increased by a hefty 19 percentage points between 2015 and 2023.

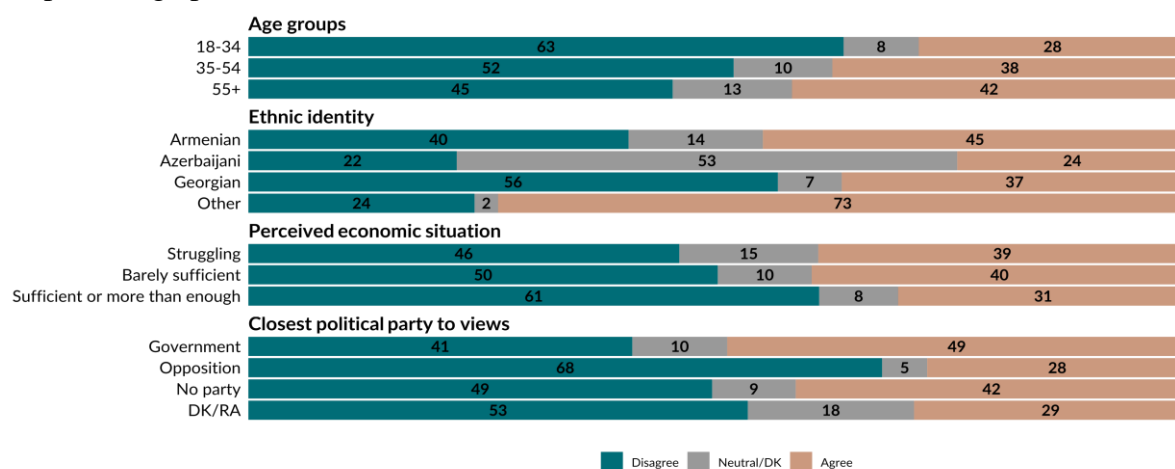


Figure 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the EU threatens Georgian traditions? By major demographic groups (%)

While fewer see the European Union as a threat to the country’s traditions, opinions vary across major socio-demographic groups (Figure 8). Younger respondents, ethnic Georgians, relatively well-off respondents, and opposition supporters are more likely to say that they do not see the EU as a threat to its traditions. Close to two-third of youth under 35 (63%) disagree that the EU is a threat to Georgia’s traditions. At the same time, those older than 55 are divided, with 45% disagreeing and 42% agreeing with the statement. Notably, more supporters of the ruling Georgian Dream party see the European Union as a threat to Georgian traditions (49%) than disagree with the statement (41%).

Presence of the European Union in Georgia

Perception of relations with the European Union

The majority of the population of Georgia perceive EU-Georgia relations as being neutral, with increasingly more people evaluating it as very bad or rather bad. Overall, the majority of the population of Georgia (58%) believed that the current state of relations between Georgia and the EU can be characterized as neutral. Twenty-one percent, that is, about one in five believed that relations between the EU and Georgia were very good or rather good. While only a small fraction was ambivalent or did not know the answer (9%), a comparable share (12%) thought that relations between the country and the European Union were either very bad or rather bad.

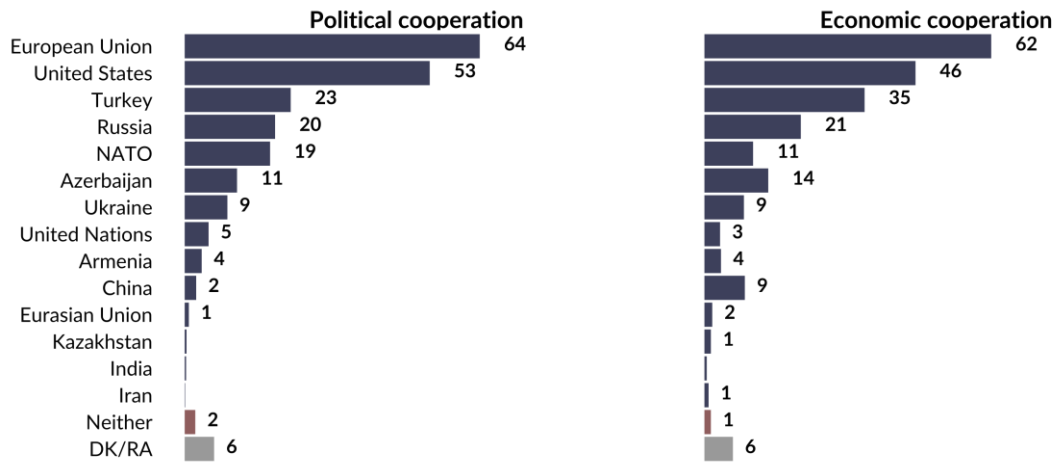


Figure 9: Which of the following countries and unions should, in your opinion, Georgia have the closest ... with? (%) Multiple choice with up to three answers

The share of those evaluating relations between Georgia and the EU as very good or rather good is the lowest in over a decade and a half of this study’s polling on residents of Georgia about the issues mentioned prior; even compared to 2021, the share of such respondents decreased by 7 percentage points. The share of those evaluating relations between the EU and Georgia as bad or rather bad hit double digits for the first time, increasing by 8 points compared to 2021.

When respondents were asked what attitudes, Europeans have about the population of Georgia, only a negligible share (3%) believed that Europeans know nothing about Georgia. Thirty percent thought that Europeans think of the population of Georgia positively, while 8% thought that Europeans have a negative opinion. The majority were ambiguous, noting that Europeans either have a neutral view (42%), did not know, or refused to answer the question (18%).

The European Union is the top choice for the population of Georgia with whom the country should have the closest political and economic partnership. Close to two-thirds, 64%, consider Georgia should have the closest EU cooperation in the political domain, while 62% says the same on economic cooperation (Figure 9).

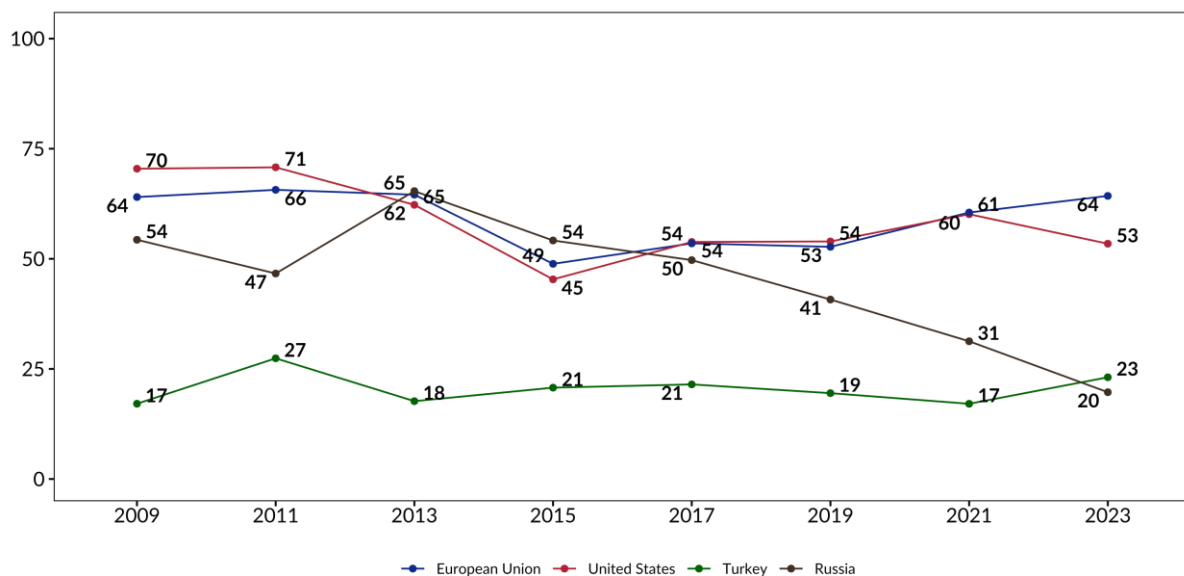


Figure 10: Which of the following countries and unions should, in your opinion, Georgia have the closest political cooperation with? Multiple choice with up to three answers

Unlike previous waves, when nearly equal proportions of the population of Georgia were picking the European Union and the United States among their top three choices for the closest political cooperation (Figure 10), in 2023, these paths diverged. About 3 points more of people chose the EU, while the share of those choosing the United States declined by 7 points across the two last waves of the study. Notably, in 2023, one in five picked Russia as the country with which Georgia should have the closest political cooperation.

Other findings also confirm what was said above. All others believe the EU can support Georgia better than the United States, Russia, or other countries. When asked to name a single country that can best help Georgia, the second most frequent answer was the United States, named by 19%. Less than one in ten, 9%, named Russia as the country that can best support Georgia.

Compared to 2021, the share of those who thought that the EU could best support Georgia increased by seven percentage points. The proportion of the population of Georgia choosing the United States decreased by eight percentage points, while the share selecting Russia further dropped by four percentage points.

Perception of the EU’s assistance to Georgia

The majority in Georgia believes that the EU’s assistance is crucial to the country. More than four in five, 84% considered the EU’s assistance as important or very important. Only 11% perceive the EU’s aid as insignificant. Very few share an ambivalent opinion (5%) about the EU’s assistance to Georgia.

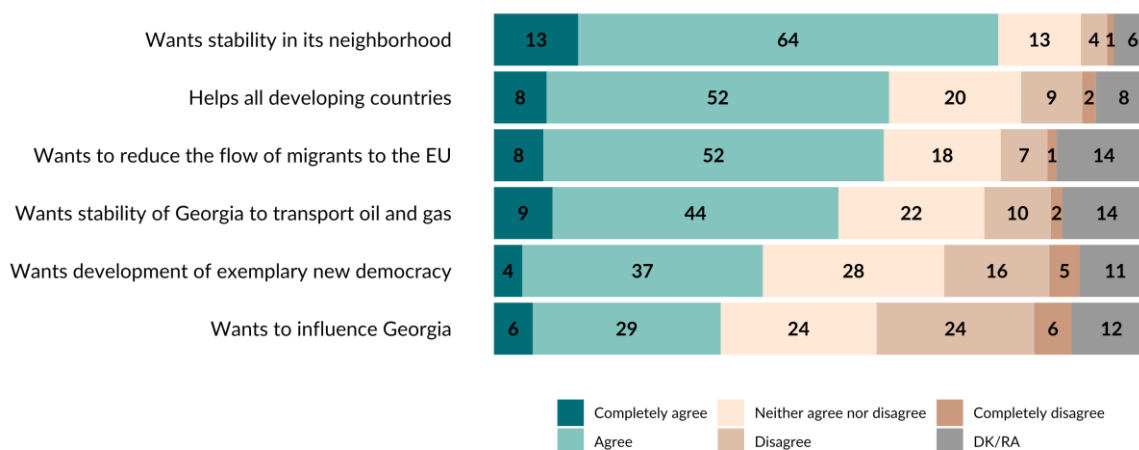


Figure 11: To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following opinions on why the European Union supports Georgia?? (%)

Respondents were further probed about the EU’s motives when helping Georgia (Figure 11). 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 60% believe that the EU helps all developing countries through its aid programs. More than half think that the union has more practical goals, such as reducing the flow of migrants (60%) and ensuring a stable environment for transporting oil and gas (53%). Fewer think that by providing assistance, the European Union wants to develop Georgia as an exemplary new democracy (41%). Thirty-five percent believe that by helping the country, the EU wants to influence Georgia.

The population of Georgia continues to have a vague understanding of what type of assistance the EU provides to Georgia. About one-third either do not know what aid the EU is giving to Georgia or believe

that the union is not helping Georgia at all (34%), a 6-point increase compared to 2021. The same proportion think that the EU is giving humanitarian aid. About 22% believe that the EU aids Georgia by investing in its economy, 15% think that the organization helps the country to resolve its social problems, 13% say that the EU is assisting Georgia in building public institutions, while 12% of respondents believed that the EU is helping Georgia in the development of civil society. Eight percent of the population of Georgia thought that the European Union is helping the country to restore its territorial integrity. Fewer named options such as equipping Georgia’s armed forces (7%), resolving relations with Russia (4%), and the development of the media (7%).

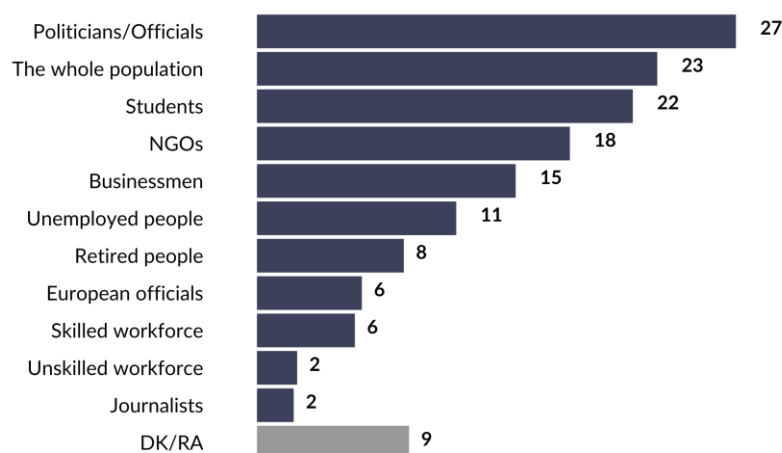


Figure 12: *In your opinion, who normally benefits most from the EU aid allocated to Georgia? (%) Up to two answers*

The plurality in Georgia still believe that aid allocated to the country by the European Union benefits politicians and officials (27%, figure 12). Importantly, this is an 11-point decrease compared to 2021, when nearly four in ten people believed the same. About a quarter (23%) thinks that the EU helps all Georgians. For 22%, students are the primary beneficiaries of such help, a 7 point increase compared to the last wave of this study. Almost a fifth (18%) consider Georgian NGOs as those who normally benefit from the aid allocated to Georgia by the EU. Only 7% thought the same in 2021. Fewer respondents named people in business (15%), unemployed people, qualified workforce, pensioners, European officials, unqualified workers, and journalists as beneficiaries of EU aid to Georgia.

A majority in Georgia think the aid allotted to Georgia is not spent on its anticipated targets. Sixty percent said that such funds were spent either completely or partially *not* on intended targets. While still a majority, the share of those agreeing that EU funds in Georgia are not spent on its aimed targets decreased by 7 points compared to 2021. Only about a quarter, 24%, think that EU funding was spent on intended goals. About 16% did not know or hesitated to answer the question.

When asked what the best way for the European Union would be to help Georgia, almost one in four (24%) said that the organization should invest in Georgia’s economy. Fifteen percent said that the EU should help with restoring the country’s territorial integrity, while 11% believed that the EU should help Georgia in resolving social problems. Fewer respondents thought that the EU should support Georgia in developing its civil society (8%), distribute humanitarian aid to Georgia’s poorest citizens (7%), help developing its public institutions (7%), and assisting in resolving relations with Russia (6%). Fewer named options, such as developing the country’s infrastructure or opening EU markets to Georgian products, are the most anticipated forms of assistance. Only 2% believed that Georgia needed no help from the European Union.

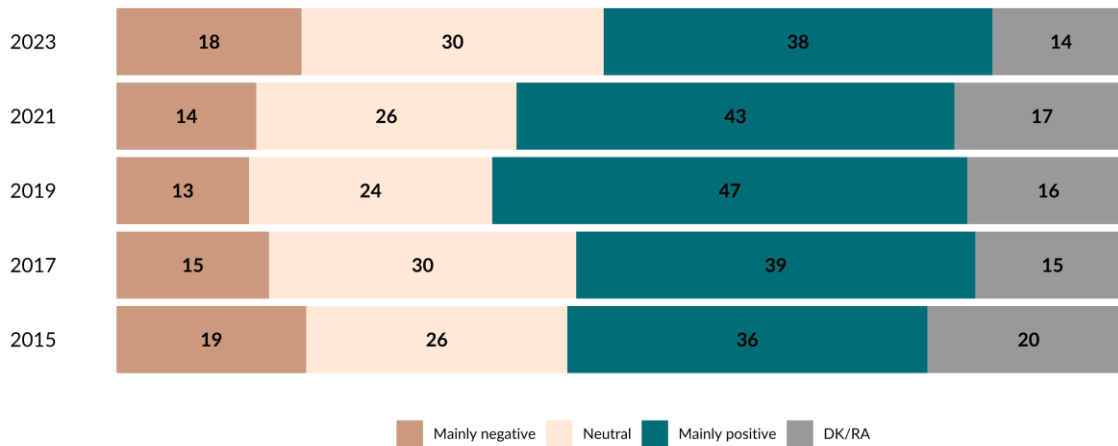


Figure 13: Was the EU role in Russia-Georgia August 2008 war mainly positive or negative? (%)

The plurality of the population of Georgia (about 38%) positively perceives the EU’s role in the 2008 August War. Thirty percent think that the organization played a neutral role in the conflict, while 18% think that it had a mainly negative role. Compared to 2021, the population of Georgia somewhat shifted their opinion on this issue. The share of those seeing the position of the EU positively in the 2008 August War has decreased slightly, by 5 points, with the share of those perceiving this role as mainly negative or neutral, and increasingly marginal, around four percentage points (Figure 13).

The European Union’s Monitoring Mission (EUMM) has operated in Georgia since September 2008²⁵ with the aim of stabilizing the situation in areas adjacent to the Administrative Boundary Lines with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. While the mission plays a significant role in ensuring peace and stability around the occupied territories, nearly half of the country’s population (45%) does not know what the EUMM’s work in Georgia is, or refuses to answer the question. Only 13% answered correctly the question regarding operations of the EUMM by stating that it works to stabilize the situation in conflict-affected areas, 7 percentage point decrease compared to 2021 and the lowest degree of knowledge since the Europe Foundation started tracking the population of Georgia’s awareness of the topic. A quarter incorrectly believed that it supports democratic and market-oriented reforms, a 6-point increase compared to the previous wave; 7% thought that the EUMM helped with enhancing regional cooperation in the South Caucasus, while 9% said that the mission’s goal was to strengthen Georgia’s ties with the European Union in higher education.

Association Agreement with the European Union

Georgia signed the Association Agreement with the European Union about a decade ago, on June 27, 2014. Since then, the population of Georgia’s awareness of the agreement has declined. In 2023, only 41% in Georgia said that they are aware of such an agreement. Fifty-two percent, or, more than half of Georgia’s population is not aware of the Association Agreement. About 7% were ambivalent.

²⁵ EUMM in Georgia, “Our Mandate” (https://www.eumm.eu/en/about_eumm/mandate, 2021).

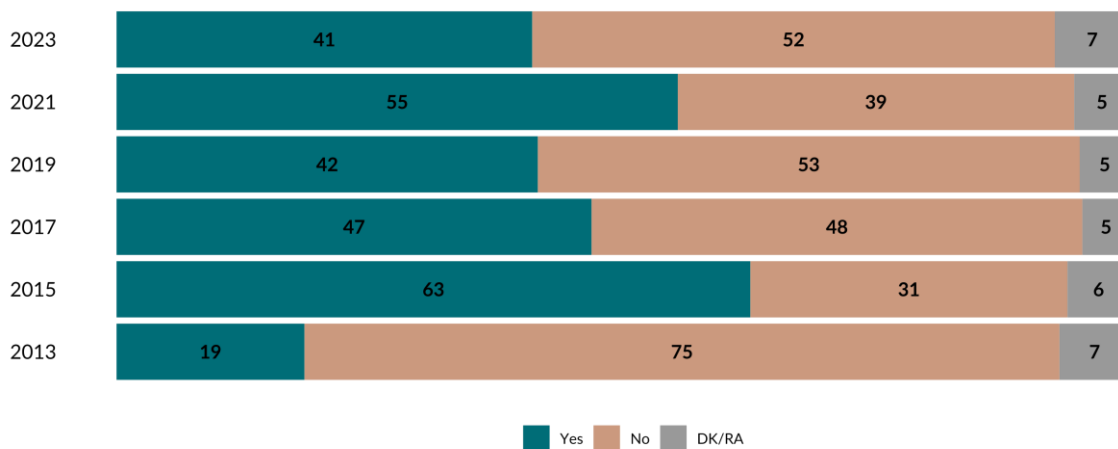


Figure 14: Have you heard of the Association Agreement between Georgia and the EU? (%)

Awareness of the Association Agreement among the population of Georgia stands at its lowest since 2014 when the country officially signed the document. Awareness of the agreement was highest in the 2015 wave of this study, that is, right after its signing (Figure 14). Since then, the proportion of those who knew about the agreement has decreased substantially by 22 percentage points.

Men (47%), ethnic Georgians (46%), those who hold a higher education (57%), and opposition supporters (53%) are more likely to know about the agreement. Ethnic minorities, including Armenians (15%) and Azerbaijanis (1%), as well as those with secondary or lower education (27%), are less likely to be aware of the agreement. Almost half of Georgian Dream supporters (46%) are aware of the agreement. At the same time, awareness is substantially lower in groups who find no party as closest to their views or don't know or refuse to share their political sympathies (Figure 15).

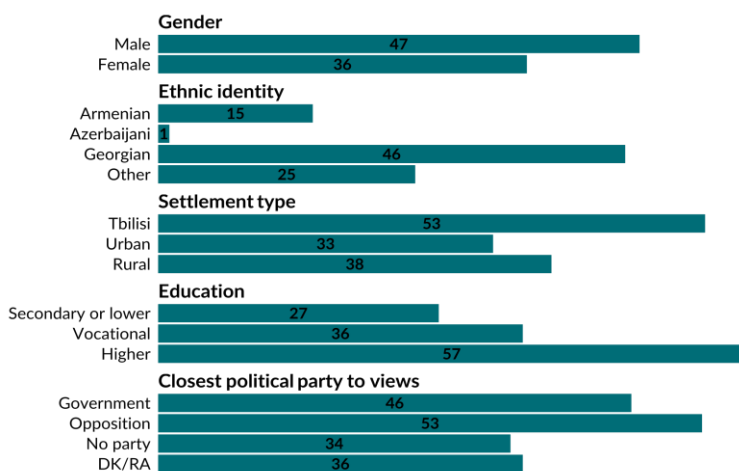


Figure 15: Have you heard of the Association Agreement between Georgia and the EU? (% by major demographic groups)

Those who heard about the Association Agreement were further asked whether the document had been fully enforced. Only a small fraction, 14%, believe that the agreement is in full force, even though the agreement is fully operational from July 1, 2016. Nearly half of the population of Georgia (48%) believe that the agreement is only partially in effect. About a quarter 26% consider the agreement neither fully nor partially into force yet. More than one in ten (13%) did not know the answer.

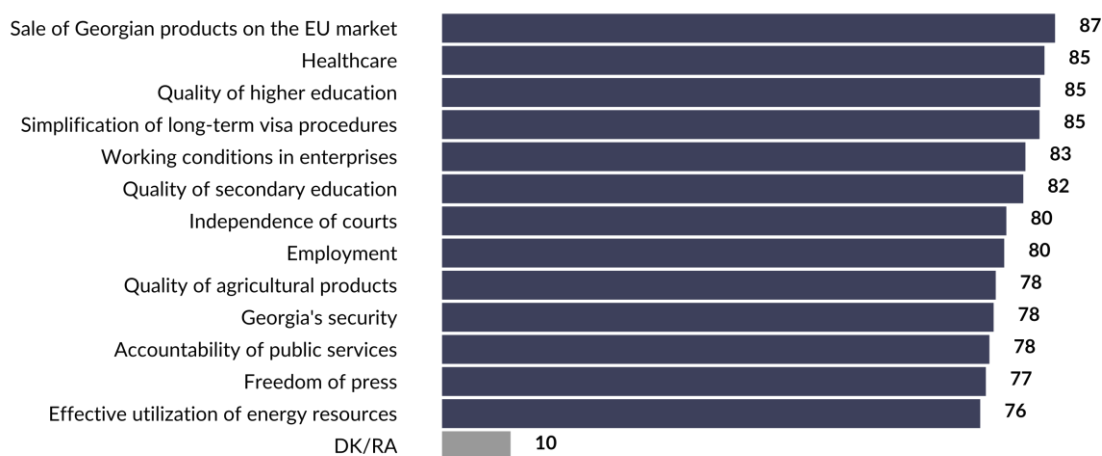


Figure 16: In your opinion, will the situation in the following areas improve or not as a result of the Georgia-EU Association Agreement? (% only those respondents who are aware of the existence of the Association Agreement, 41% of the population)

Those aware of the Association Agreement expect positive changes due to its implementation (Figure 16). More than three-quarters of such respondents believe that the situation will improve in policy areas such as 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.

Travel, work, and emigration to the European Union

General attitudes towards travel, work, and emigration

About a quarter (26%) of the population of Georgia would contemplate going abroad for employment. Seventy-one percent would not emigrate, while 3% were unsure. The share of those who would consider going abroad for work remained stable over the past decade, fluctuating between 26% in 2015 and 30% in 2017.

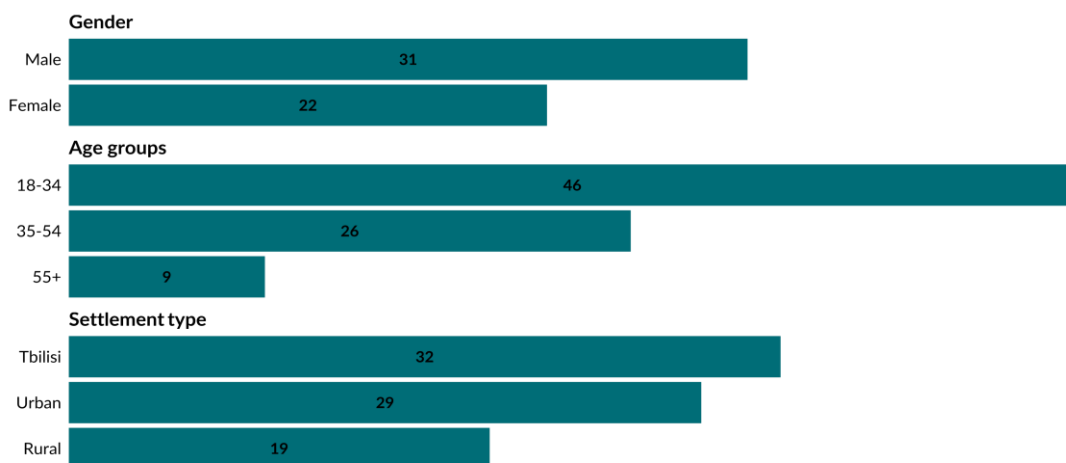


Figure 17: Would you like to go to a foreign country to work? (%). By demographic groups

Respondent's gender, age, and place of residence predict whether one would consider emigrating for work (Figure 17). More men (31%) than women (22%) would consider going abroad for employment.

Almost half of those between 18 to 34 are thinking of emigrating for work (46%) while fewer in older age groups would do so. Thirty-two percent of Tbilisi residents would consider going abroad for work, with 29% of the population of Georgia living in other urban areas, and about one in five of rural residents (19%).

About a quarter of those who would like to emigrate for work would go to the United States (26%). Close to one-fifth would prefer emigrating to Germany (19%). At the same time, fewer would like to go to France (8%) and Italy (5%). The majority of respondents wanting to go abroad for work would consider emigrating to one of the EU member states (42%) or to the U.S. and Canada (30%).

Twenty-six percent of the population of Georgia would consider going abroad to study. Twenty-seven percent would prefer going to Germany, 24% picked the United States, and 18% preferred the United Kingdom. Overall, 41% picked a EU member state, 26% chose North American countries like the U.S. or Canada, followed by a non-EU nation in Europe (22%).

Younger people, Tbilisi residents, supporters of opposition political parties, and respondents with a higher education are keener to go abroad to study. Fifty-five percent of the population of Georgia younger than 35 wish to go abroad for study as opposed to the 22% of those between 35 and 54 and a mere 4% of those 55 or older. Thirty-nine percent of Tbilisi residents and 27% of the residents of other urban areas said that they would go abroad to study as opposed to 16% of the rural population. About 37% of higher education holders would consider emigrating for study compared to 15% of the population of Georgia with vocational degrees and 20% with a secondary or lower education.

Few in Georgia think of emigrating permanently. Fourteen percent of the country’s population would consider leaving Georgia forever to live in another country, closely following the pattern shown in past studies. Among these 14%, the plurality (27%) would permanently leave for the United States, or Germany (14%). Fewer would move to other EU states, such as France (5%) and Italy (3%). Notably, in total, more picked EU member states (33%). Slightly fewer (31%) chose North American countries, namely the US and Canada. Even fewer picked other non-EU European countries (11%) and Russia (4%).

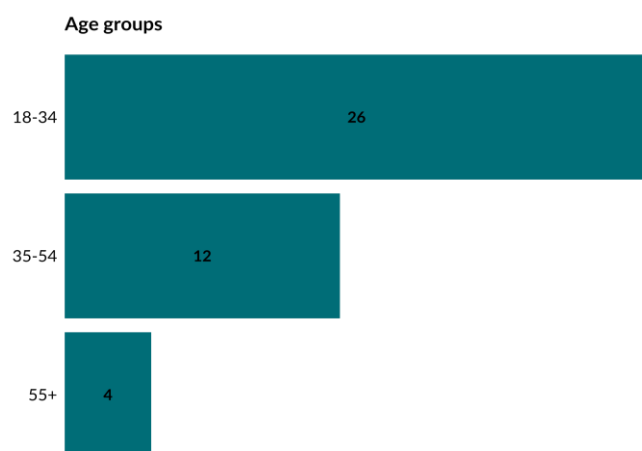


Figure 18: Would you like to move to a foreign country to live in? (%). By demographic groups

One in four in Georgia younger than 35 (26%) would like to emigrate permanently (Figure 18). About 12% of those between 35 and 54 would do the same, while only 4% of the population of Georgia older than 54 would consider leaving Georgia forever.

Experience of living in the EU

Few respondents have experience living in the EU for an extended period of time. About 8% report that they have lived for at least three months in an EU member state since 1993. Most respondents named Greece, Germany, France, Poland, and Italy.

Visa-free travel with the EU

A visa-free travel regime with select EU member states and other members of the Schengen Zone is one of the most substantial achievements for Georgia, affecting many citizens of the country. Predictably, most in Georgia positively assess a visa-free travel regime. Almost three-quarters, 74% of the population of Georgia said that they were glad when asked whether they were happy or not with this opportunity granted by the European Union. Less than one-fifth (17%) experienced no particular emotion concerning the visa-free regime. A negligible share (4%) was unhappy with the visa-free travel regime with EU/Schengen countries. Even fewer 2% have not heard about the visa-free travel regime.

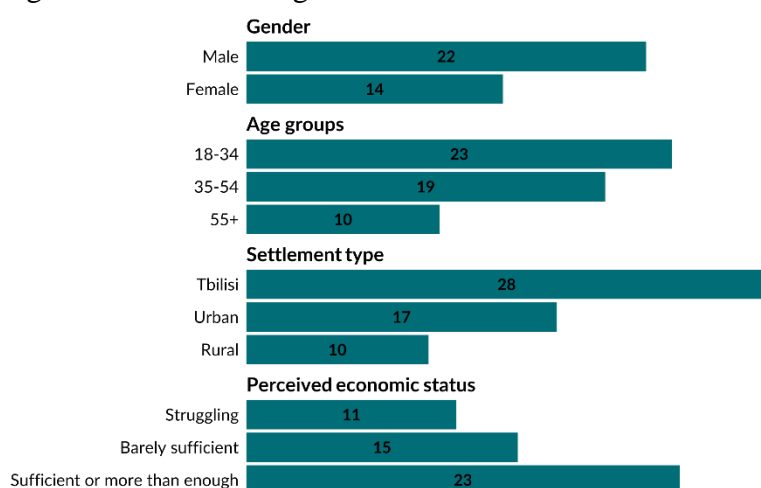


Figure 19: After the visa-free regime with the European Union had been granted to Georgia, have you travelled to any country of European Union? (%). By demographic groups, those who have heard about the visa-free travel regime, 98%.

Close to one in six (17%) of those who have heard about the visa-free travel regime, have traveled to EU/Schengen Zone countries at least once since the country was granted visa-free regime as opposed to 80% who did not have a chance of doing so. Since 2019, the share of those who traveled to the EU/Schengen Zone once or several times has almost doubled, growing from 9% to 17% in 2023.

A respondent's gender, age, ethnic identity, education, place of residence, and household's perceived economic condition predict whether or not one has traveled to an EU/Schengen Zone state since Georgia was granted the visa-free regime (Figure 19). About one in five men in Georgia (22%) and 14% of women traveled to EU/Schengen Zone countries in the period under observation. Twenty-three percent of those younger than 35 went to an EU/Schengen Zone country, as opposed to 19% among those between 35 and 54 and 10% of those older than 54. Notably, the share of those traveling to EU/Schengen Zone countries has increased across all age cohorts compared to 2021.

More than a quarter of Tbilisi residents (28%) have traveled to EU/Schengen Zone countries since the visa-free travel regime was granted, compared to fewer residents of other urban areas (17%) or rural residents (10%). Those who evaluated their households' monetary situation as sufficient or more than enough were more likely to travel to EU/Schengen Zone countries (23%) than others who considered their financial situation as struggling, or their household income as barely sufficient.

Knowledge about the European Union and its policies in Georgia

Knowledge about the EU

Respondents were asked simple questions that evaluated their basic knowledge of EU member states. First, they were probed on how many member states are in the European Union. Almost half said that they did not know or were unsure (41%). Only about 36% picked a correct category (from 21 up to 30). The rest (23%) gave a wrong answer.

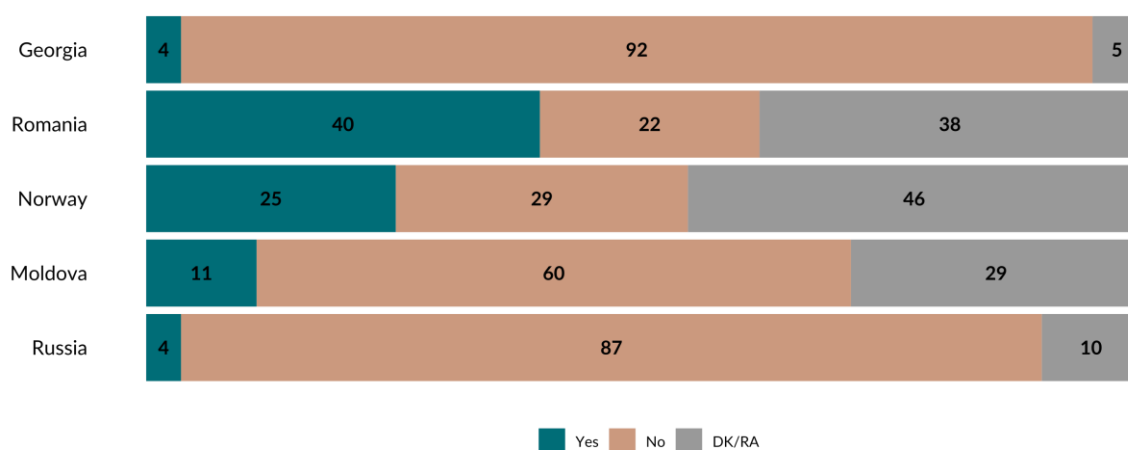


Figure 20: Is /Country/ currently a member of the European Union? (%)

Interviewees were further presented with a list of countries and were asked whether they were members of the EU (Figure 20). The majority, 92% correctly guessed that Georgia is not a member state of the European Union. Similarly, 87% said that Russia is not part of the EU. Regarding other countries, the plurality had difficulty answering questions, as more respondents said they were unsure. About 40% correctly picked Romania as an EU member state, while about one-fifth (22%) gave an incorrect answer. While more (29%) correctly believed that Norway is not an EU member state, a quarter wrongly identified the country as part of the EU. Sixty percent rightly thought that Moldova is not in the European Union, while fewer (11%) considered the country as a part of the EU.

Knowledge of the procedures for visa-free travel to EU/Schengen countries

After granting the visa-free travel regime, the number of Georgian citizens who violated travel rules has increased.²⁶ Georgian officials acknowledged the problem and even alleged that widespread violations of travel rules might lead to the cancellation of the visa-free travel regime.²⁷ As a result, the country introduced tighter rules for travelers to the EU, including thorough background checks at Georgian airports by Georgian and EU border officials.²⁸ That said, it still waits to be seen if these policies are effective since the number of Georgian asylum seekers in select EU countries is on the rise, questioning the effectiveness of border regulations.²⁹

Many in Georgia have a rudimentary understanding of visa-free travel rules. Respondents were asked to name requirements for crossing the border with EU/Schengen Zone states to assess their knowledge of travel-related rules. While the majority (78%) correctly named biometric passports as an obligatory

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

²⁷ Schengenvisa.info, "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).

²⁸ Agenda.ge, "Georgian Parliament Approves New Regulations on Travel to EU," *Agenda.ge* (<https://agenda.ge/en/news/2020/2710>, September 2020).

²⁹ Civil.Ge, "The Daily Beat: 25 July," July 26, 2023, <https://civil.ge/archives/553211>.

document to enter the EU/Schengen Zone, fewer recalled other required information such as return ticket (32%), proof of financial means (24%), travel insurance (26%), and proof of the address of stay in the destination country (20%). More than one-fifth (19%) hesitated or did not know the answer.

As Georgian nationals are obliged to possess all documents listed above,³⁰ this analysis also looks at the index of knowledge of visa-free travel rules, similar to the 2021 wave of this study. The index counts the number of rules that the respondent was able to identify correctly, and documents required to enter the EU/Schengen zone. The mean score of the index adds up to 1.77, which means that, on average, the population of Georgia could correctly identify less than two basic requirements necessary for travel. This notably is very close to the values from 2021, when the mean index score was two decimal points less than in 2023 but substantially less than the 2.2 which the population of Georgia, on average, scored in 2017. Only 9% were able to name all five requirements essential for entering EU/Schengen states. Six percent named four items, 14% correctly identified three requirements, 15% listed two documents, while 34% was able to correctly name only one item. About one-third, 34%, could not name any or incorrectly identify required documents.

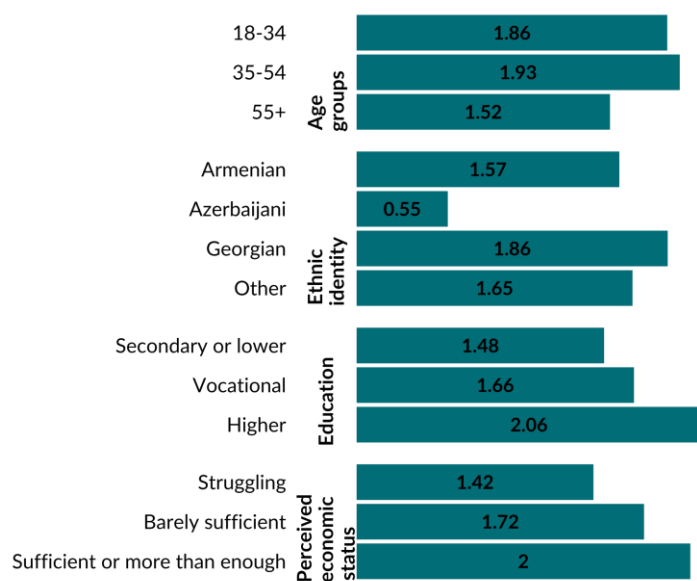


Figure 21: Which are the documents that a Georgian citizen needs in order to travel to the Schengen zone countries visa-free? Estimated values of knowledge index by demographic groups. Estimates are derived from a Poisson regression model.

Younger people, ethnic Georgians, those with a higher education, and considering their household income sufficient or more than enough scored higher than others (Figure 21). Ethnic Azerbaijanis, those with a secondary or lower education, those older than 55, and those who assessed themselves as economically struggling scored low on the index.

Contrary to visa-free travel rules, most of those who say they are glad the country was granted visa-free travel believe that Georgian citizens can now work in the European Union following the visa-free regime. Fifty-seven percent said that as a result of the visa-free regime, Georgian nationals have the right to work in EU countries. Only 22% correctly believed that Georgian citizens could not work in the EU member states as a result of the visa-free regime. About 20% were unsure.

Similar to the awareness of documents required for visa-free travel, knowledge of work-related rules within the visa-free regime has deteriorated over the last five years. In 2017, when Georgia was just

³⁰ European Commission. “Frequently Asked Questions on the Schengen Visa-Free.” https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/visa_waiver_faqs_en.pdf, 2021.

granted visa-free travel, a majority (59%) correctly considered that working in EU/Schengen Zone countries with visa-free travel was not an option. The proportion further decreased in following years, with a negligible change between 2021 and 2023.

The visa-free travel regime allows the population of Georgia to stay in EU/Schengen Zone countries for ninety to 180 days.³¹ Still, when asked what the maximum days that one can remain in the EU/Schengen Zone are, only 10% knew the correct answer. The majority (52%) believed that Georgian citizens could travel to EU/Schengen Zone countries for ninety days per year. Seven percent stated that it was 180 days per year, while 8% believed that a visa-free travel regime allows Georgian nationals to stay in EU/Schengen Zone countries for sixty days per ninety days. About one-fifth (21%) did not know the answer to the posed question.

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

A compound index was constructed to understand which population groups know more about the European Union. 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. Notably, an identical index was constructed for the previous survey waves, allowing a comparison across studies.

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 the population of Georgia have the right to work in the EU?	No
The maximum duration of stay in the EU	90 days in 180 days

Overall, similar to 2021, only one respondent answered all knowledge questions correctly; four percent of the population of Georgia could not correctly answer any posed questions, a four-point decrease compared to 2021. On average, they got slightly less than four (3.5) out of eight knowledge questions right, a 0.6-point increase compared to 2021. The knowledge index scores have substantially fluctuated over time. For instance, in 2017, interviewees correctly answered 3.3 knowledge questions; in 2019, the average score decreased to 3.

³¹ European Commission, “Frequently Asked Questions on the Schengen Visa-Free” (https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/visa_waiver_faqs_en.pdf, 2021).

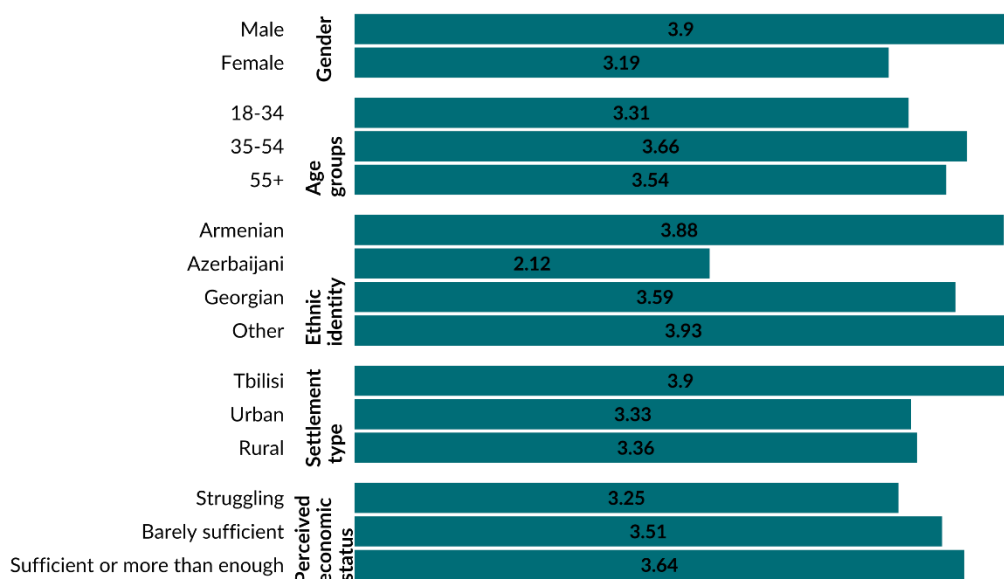


Figure 22: Estimated values of EU knowledge index by demographic groups. Estimates are derived from a Poisson regression model.

While there are statistically significant differences across population groups regarding EU knowledge, variations in many cases are not meaningful (Figure 22). Notably, female respondents and ethnic Azerbaijanis score low compared to men and representatives of other ethnic groups.³²

Information received about the European Union

Respondents were asked how much information they received about the European Union from various sources (Figure 23). The majority in Georgia receive information from TV (71%), followed by online social networks (62%) and word of mouth from friends, relatives, or colleagues (60%). Thirty-six percent named media web pages, while about one in five (22%) named the EU delegation to Georgia and Georgian government websites (18%).

³² Differences were identified using a Poisson regression model, with common socio-demographic covariates.

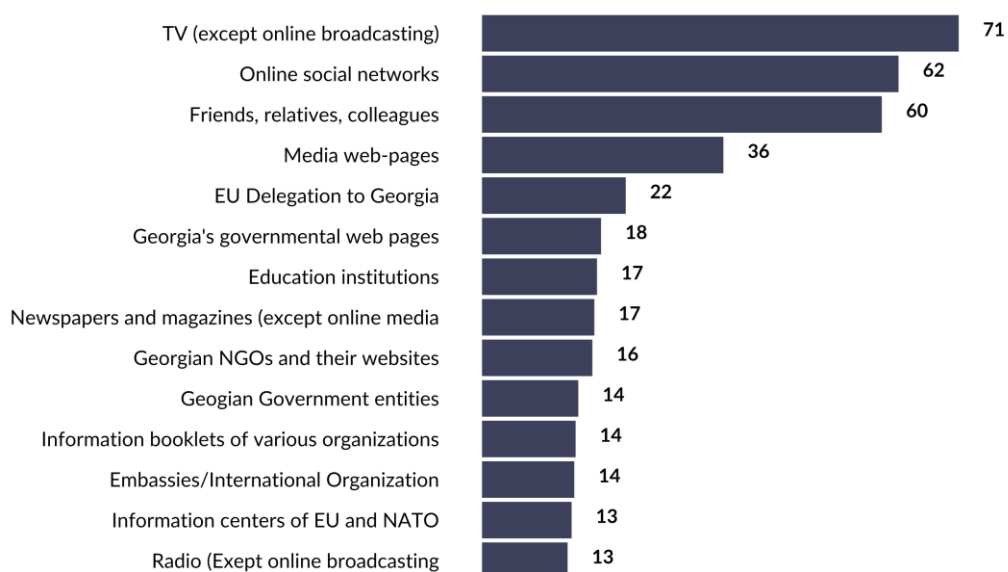


Figure 23: *Could you please assess how much information about the EU you receive from the following sources? Share of respondents who reported receiving at least some information from the named source.*

Sixteen percent of the population of Georgia receive information on the European Union from Georgian civil society organizations and their websites, 17% learn about the EU from printed media, with the same proportion receive information from education institutions. Fewer named Georgia’s governmental entities, informational booklets, embassies or international organizations (14% each), radio, or NATO and EU information centers (13%).

Forty-nine percent would like to receive more information about the European Union. Close to two-thirds of younger respondents (63%) and Tbilisi residents (65%) would like to learn more about the EU, followed by about 59% of those with a higher education.

While the share of those who are keen on learning more about the European Union reached its all-time low in 2021, the interest marginally rebounded in 2023, when about 5 percentage points more of the population of Georgia positively answered the question. Notably, the share of those not wanting to learn about the EU also slightly decreased by 6 points. Regretfully, this did not fully reverse the downward trend of previous years. The proportion of those interested in receiving more information about the EU decreased from 66% in 2009 by 22 percentage points for over a decade, reaching its minimum in 2021.



Figure 24: 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

Respondents were probed on what information they would like to receive about the European Union (Figure 24)? A plurality would like to receive information about EU-Georgia trade relations and EU educational programs (36%). Notably, the share of those who are interested in learning more about the EU’s healthcare system increased by 12 percentage points, with more than a fourth stating interested in such information. Around a quarter were interested in learning more about the EU’s role in conflict resolution (26%), salaries in the European Union (25%), and the rule of law in the EU (24%). Fewer were interested in information on social protections (19%), the job market situation in the European Union (16%), cultural programs (13%), and visa-related regulations in the EU (10%).

The majority that would like to receive information about the EU want to do so through TV (60%), followed by social media (45%).

Georgia’s membership in the European Union

Support for the country’s membership in the EU

Most the population of Georgia would say “Yes” if a referendum on the country’s membership in the European Union were held tomorrow. Seventy-seven percent, that is, almost four out of five would vote for Georgia’s EU membership. Nine percent would vote against, 7% would not participate at all, while 7% did not provide an answer to this question (Figure 25).

The share of those supporting Georgia’s membership in the European Union has stayed stable over the last few years. Compared to 2015, when the fewest number of those polled expressed support for integration, the share of the population of Georgia voting for EU membership in a hypothetical referendum increased by 16 percentage points.

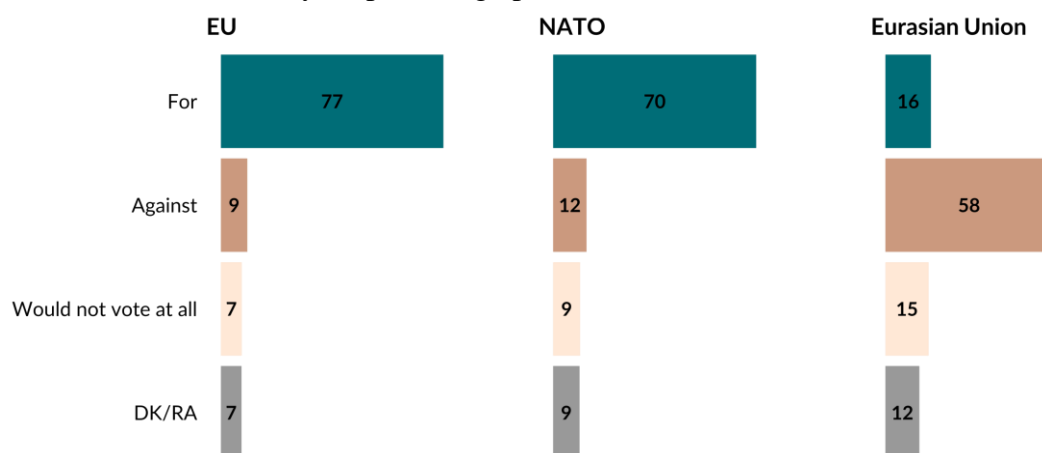


Figure 25: If there were a referendum tomorrow regarding Georgia’s membership in /ORGANIZATION/, would you vote for or against it? (%)

More would vote for the country’s membership in the European Union than in NATO and much fewer in the Russia-led Eurasian Union (Figure 25). Seventy percent would vote for NATO membership if such a referendum were to be held tomorrow. More than half of the population of Georgia would vote *against* the country becoming a member of the Eurasian Union (58%) while less than one in six (16%) would vote in such a referendum. Notably, the share of those voting for Georgia’s membership in the Eurasian Economic Union decreased by 7 percentage points, while the share of those voting *against* membership in the Russia-led Eurasian Union increased by the same proportion.

Respondents' socio-demographic characteristics predict whether one would vote for or against Georgia's EU membership. Women (77%) and men (76%) are almost equally likely to vote positively in a hypothetical referendum on Georgia's EU membership. Ethnic Georgians (81%) would overwhelmingly vote for Georgia's membership in the European Union, compared to 45% of Azerbaijanis and 55% of Armenians. Ethnic minorities are more likely to be ambivalent, saying they would refrain from voting or do not know the answer.

Eighty-five percent of Tbilisi residents would vote for Georgia's membership in the European Union, compared to 79% of those living in other urban areas and 68% of rural residents.

Attendance of religious services also predicts the propensity of voting for Georgia's EU membership. More among those who attend church less often than on special holidays (83%) than those going to services only on special holidays (78%) and those regularly attending religious services (73%) would vote for EU membership in a hypothetical referendum. Two-thirds of those who never go to religious services would vote in such a referendum.

Respondents who perceive their households' economic situation as barely sufficient (75%) or sufficient (81%) are more likely to support EU membership in a referendum than those who report that they are struggling economically (73%). The latter group is also more likely to vote against EU membership (7%).

While a majority across the political spectrum would vote for the country's EU membership, opposition supporters are more enthusiastic, with an overwhelming 85% anticipating voting "Yes" in a hypothetical referendum. Fewer, but still about three-quarters of those who support the government, have no party affiliation, or said they don't know or refused to share information on party support, would vote for Georgia's EU membership.

Similar factors predict support of the country's membership in NATO and their opposition to the Eurasian Economic Union membership. Ethnic Georgians, respondents with a higher education, Tbilisi residents, financially well-off respondents, those who attend church less often than special holidays, and opposition supporters are more likely to say that they would support Georgia becoming a NATO member in a hypothetical referendum. They are also more likely to vote against Georgia's Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union membership.

Three-quarters of the population of Georgia (75%) believe that overall, their other compatriots are in favor of the country becoming an EU member state. In contrast, 11% disagree that the majority supports EU membership. About 14% are unsure.

Respondents were less confident when asked whether most EU citizens support Georgia's membership in the organization. While the majority (52%) agreed that EU citizens back Georgia's membership in the European Union, slightly less than one-third (32%) were unsure. Sixteen percent thought that EU citizens are against the country becoming a part of the union.

More than half of the population of Georgia (55%) are convinced that most of the EU member states' governments favor Georgia to become an EU member. Twenty-seven percent are unsure, while 18% believe that most governments within the EU are against Georgia becoming a member of the European Union.

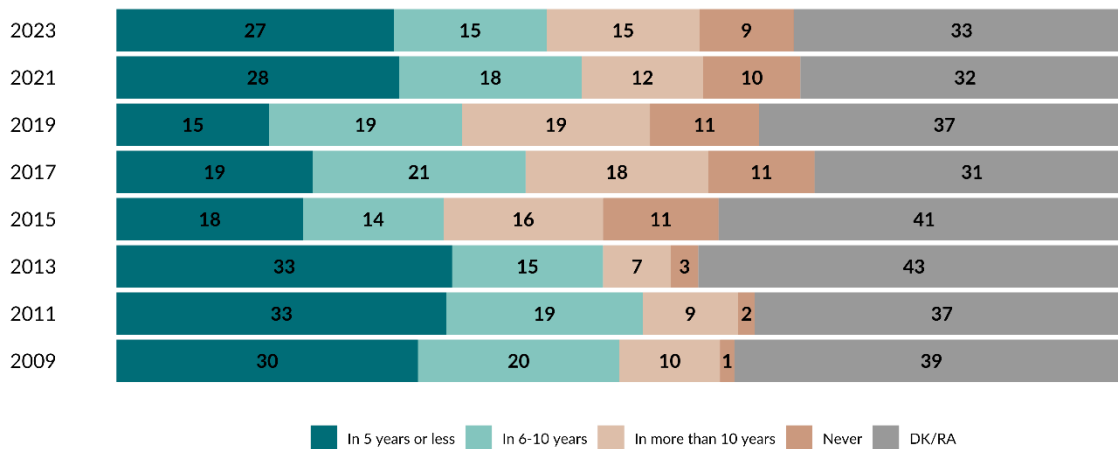


Figure 26: When do you think Georgia will become a member of the European Union? (%)

Compared to the previous three waves of this study, many have grown increasingly optimistic about when the country might become a part of the European Union (Figure 26). Twenty-seven percent in the 2023 survey believed that the country would become a part of the EU within the next five years, a 12-percentage point increase compared to 2019, when residents of Georgia felt least optimistic in this regard. The proportion of those who anticipate Georgia entering the European Union in six to ten years (15%) decreased slightly, while the share of respondents expecting such a move in more than ten years has marginally increased from 12% in 2021 to 15% in 2023. Notably, the share of those who were unsure has remained about the same across the last two waves of the study, with 33%.

Supporters of the country’s membership in the European Union are primarily motivated by potential economic benefits. About every other in Georgian who would vote for the country’s EU membership (52%) would primarily do so because they believe their economic situation will improve as a result. About 38% had security considerations. Namely, 25% believed that as a result of joining the EU, Georgia would be better protected from foreign threats. In contrast, 13% believes that this would increase the country’s chances of restoring its territorial integrity. Less than four percent named other reasons, such as the possibility of traveling without visas to the European Union and the opportunity to introduce Georgian culture to Europeans.

While few would vote against in a hypothetical EU membership referendum, those who would do so frequently substantiate their choice by arguing that joining the EU would harm our culture and traditions (37%), a 6-point increase compared to 2021. Twenty-nine percent expect that such a move would restrict Georgia’s independence, 6% more than in the previous wave of this study. Twenty-eight percent think that EU membership would hinder relations with Russia. About a fifth of such respondents named jeopardizing the chances of restoring territorial integrity (20%) and worsening living standards (19%) as reasons they would consider voting against Georgia’s EU membership.

Concerning the vote for Georgia’s membership in the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union, those supporting Georgia joining the Eurasian Union motivate their choice by economic considerations, saying that they would expect improving their economic conditions (50%). Thirteen percent of those supporting Georgia joining the Eurasian Union would vote for the membership as it will protect Georgia from foreign threats. Twelve percent believe that after becoming a member of the Eurasian Union, chances of restoring Georgia’s territorial integrity will improve and the opportunity of visa-free travel to countries within the Eurasian Union (12%).

The majority of those who say they will vote *against* joining the Eurasian Economic Union substantiate their decision that such a step would restrict Georgia’s independence (64%). About 35% thought that

this would diminish chances of recovering conflict regions. In contrast, 30% believed that joining the Eurasian Union would hinder Georgia’s relations with the West. Twenty-four percent would vote against joining the Eurasian Union as they expect Georgia’s economic situation to deteriorate as a result. About one in ten of such respondents would vote against it because, in their mind, Eurasia Union membership will threaten Georgia’s culture and traditions (11%).

Perceptions of the readiness of Georgia to become an EU member.

Respondents were presented with broad policy domains and asked whether the country was ready for EU membership in the named area. Overall, considering answers to all listed items, more of the population of Georgia thinks the country is unprepared for EU membership (Figure 27) than prepared.

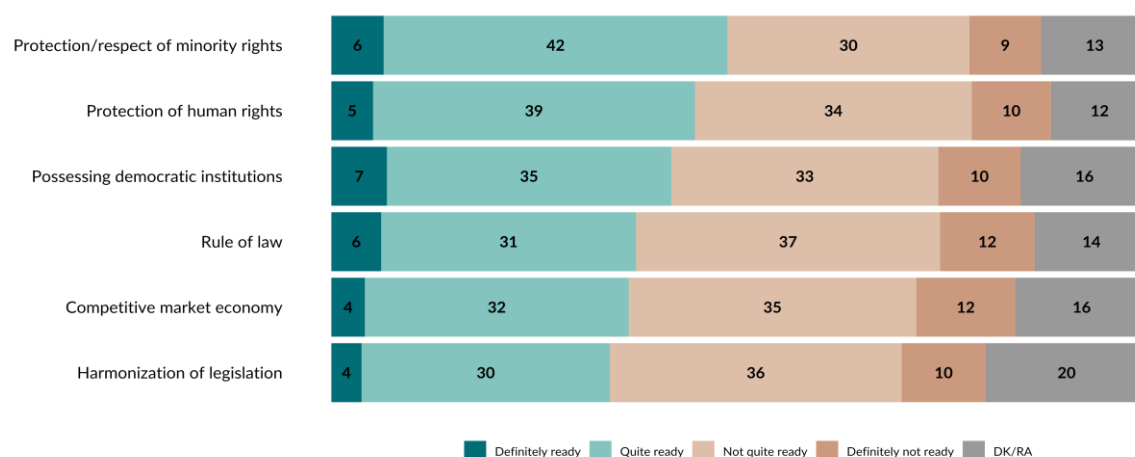


Figure 27: Do you think that Georgia is ready or not for EU membership in the following areas? (%)

Compared to other areas, more in Georgia said that the country is either definitely ready or quite ready for EU membership in terms of protection and respect for minority rights, with about a half (48%) thinking so. Forty-four percent believe that the country is prepared in the areas of human rights protection while 42% think the same about possessing democratic institutions. Thirty-seven percent think that Georgia is ready in the area of the rule of law, while about 49% believes that Georgia is not ready to join the EU in this policy field. Thirty-six percent believe that Georgia is ready to join the European Union in terms of having a competitive market economy. This domain is also where most in Georgia (47%) negatively evaluate the country’s preparedness for the EU.

About 34% consider the country prepared to join the EU in the domain of harmonizing its legislation with the organizations. Forty-six percent think that Georgia is not ready in this aspect of policy.

Notably, compared to 2021, an increased share thinks that the country is ready for EU membership in all policy domains than it is not. The proportion of those who believe that Georgia is prepared in terms of human rights protection and a competitive market economy has increased by 11 percentage points; 10 points more compared to 2021 think that the country is ready for EU membership based on rule of law. The share of those considering Georgia to be prepared for the EU membership in terms of having democratic institutions, protecting minority rights, and harmonizing its legislation to that of the European Union has increased by single digits, respectively, by nine, eight, and seven percentage points.

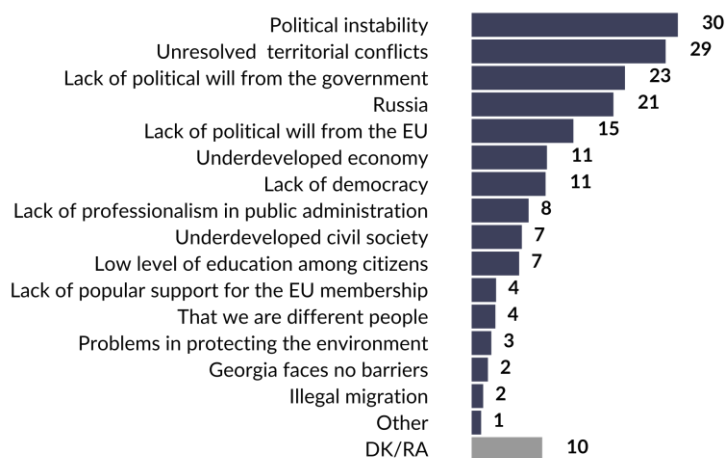


Figure 28: In your opinion, what are the main barriers to Georgia becoming an EU member state? (%) Multiple choice

Respondents were asked to name the factors that prevent Georgia from joining the European Union (Figure 28). They most frequently picked political concerns such as political instability (30%) and unresolved territorial conflicts (29%). More than one in five in Georgia named a lack of political will from the government (23%) and Russia (21%). For 15%, political reluctance of EU member states holds back Georgia on its path to join the European Union. Fewer named reasons, such as an underdeveloped economy (11%), a lack of professionalism in Georgia’s public sector, an underdeveloped civil society, low levels of education, and so forth (less than ten percent each).

Notably, the share of those attributing a hindrance to the country’s path joining the EU to the government’s lack of political will increased by 8 percentage points compared to 2021. Five percentage points more think it is a lack of the political will within the EU that prevents Georgia to join the organization. Ten percentage points fewer of respondents name unresolved territorial conflicts; Seven points fewer the population of Georgia consider political instability as a hindrance, while the share of the population of Georgia attributing the country’s underdeveloped economy for setbacks to join the EU decreased by 8 percentage points compared to 2021.

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

The majority in Georgia expects improvements in almost all domains of public life due to the country becoming a part of the European Union (Figure 29). Eighty-one percent expect that such a move would significantly or somewhat increase the quality of education in Georgia, with an equal proportion expecting the number of available jobs to increase (80%). Slightly less, 79% believes there will be a positive effect on the population of Georgia’s earnings.

About three-quarters, 76%, think that pensions will increase. At the same time, three in four of the population of Georgia believe poverty will be reduced. About three quarters, 74 percent expects improvements in Georgia’s national security. Almost the same share anticipates improvement to the freedom of speech and increased opportunities to hold free and fair elections (73%).

Seventy percent expect better protections for minorities. At the same time, the same proportion thinks that if Georgia joins the EU, the country’s courts will be more independent. Sixty-nine percent thinks that its EU membership will make healthcare more affordable, while 68% expects that property rights will be better protected.

About two thirds (66%) believe that the level of corruption will decrease. More than half of the population of Georgia (58%) anticipates increased chances of restoring territorial integrity following EU membership.

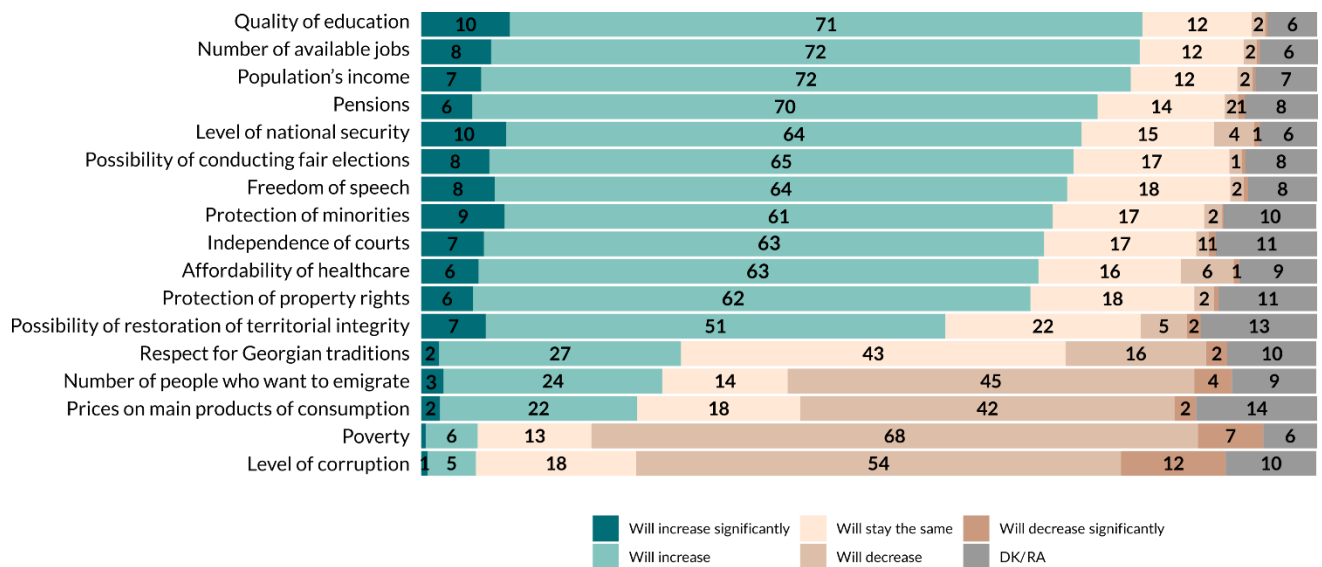


Figure 29: If Georgia becomes a member of the EU, how will the situation change in the following? (%)

Opinions slightly diverge regarding the effects of EU membership on the number of people willing to emigrate, the prices of consumer goods, and respect for Georgian traditions. Notably, fewer (27%) think that the number of people wishing to emigrate will increase due to EU membership. At the same time, half of the country’s population believes that if Georgia joins the EU, it will prompt many to stay home. Compared to 2021, 15 percentage points fewer think that EU membership will prompt people to emigrate.

A plurality expects a decrease of prices on crucial consumer goods (44%) compared to 24% who expect such prices to increase. The majority expects the country’s national traditions will be respected either at a similar level (43%) or even better (29%) following joining the EU. Only 18% think that Georgian traditions will be less respected if the country becomes a member of the European Union.

Finally, respondents were asked what might happen to the country’s relations with Russia if Georgia strengthens its ties with the European Union. The majority of the population of Georgia (72%) expect that if Georgia further deepens its relations with the EU, it will have a very negative or more negative than positive effect on bilateral relations with Russia. Seven percent expect very positive or somewhat positive effects, a similar share awaits no impact, while 12% is unsure about any effects. Notably, such attitudes remain similar to opinions measured in 2021.

CONCLUSIONS

Pro-European attitudes among the population of Georgia remain robust and all-encompassing, conforming with the decades-long trend measured by the Europe Foundation's surveys. Most of the country's population perceived the EU positively, with 54% saying so. While many see the EU as such, young people under 35, those with a higher education, and supporters of oppositional political parties are most positive about the organization.

The European Union is among the most trusted institutions in Georgia. By net trust (53%), the EU consistently ranks just below the army (70%) and religious institutions (69%). Notably, the population of Georgia trusts the European Union more than most of its own social and political institutions, such as its police, president, prime minister, and parliament.

Many in Georgia are divided on whether the EU threatens the country's traditions. Fifty-three percent, more than half of the country's population, either fully or rather disagree that the European Union threatens the country's national traditions. Still, 37% agree with the statement. Notably, such opinions have shifted over time, with increasingly fewer the population of Georgia considering the EU a threat to its traditions.

Younger respondents, ethnic Georgians, relatively well-off respondents, and opposition supporters are more likely to say that they do not see the EU as a threat to the country's traditions. More supporters of the ruling Georgian Dream party see the European Union as threatening Georgian traditions (49%) than disagree (41%).

The majority in Georgia (58%) perceives EU-Georgia relations as being neutral, with increasingly more people evaluating it as very bad or rather bad. The share of those evaluating relations as very good or rather good is the lowest in over a decade and a half, down by seven points compared to 2021. The share of those evaluating relations between the EU and Georgia as bad or rather bad hit double digits for the first time (12%), up by 8 points compared to the previous wave of the Europe Foundation's survey.

The European Union is a top choice for the population of Georgia with whom the country should have the closest political and economic partnership. About two-thirds think Georgia should have its most immediate political cooperation with the EU, while 62% say the same about economic cooperation. Notably, the share of those naming the EU as the top choice has increased by seven points over the last two years.

Many in Georgia believe that the EU's assistance is crucial to the country. More than four in five, 84%, considered the EU's assistance as important or very important. Only 11% perceive the EU's aid as insignificant. Very few share an ambivalent opinion (5%) about the EU's assistance to Georgia.

That said, most among the population of Georgia have a vague understanding of what type of assistance the EU provides to Georgia. About one-third either do not know what aid the EU is giving Georgia or believe that the union is not helping Georgia (34%), a 6-point increase compared to 2021.

While the plurality of the population of Georgia still believe that the aid allocated to Georgia by the European Union benefits politicians and officials, this is an 11-point decrease compared to 2021. About a quarter (23%) think that the EU helps all of the population of Georgia. For 22%, students are the primary beneficiaries of such help, a 7-point increase compared to 2021. About every fifth (18%) considers Georgian CSOs as those who typically benefit from the aid allocated to Georgia by the EU.

The majority, 60%, believe that the aid allotted to Georgia is not spent on its intended targets. Only about a quarter, 24%, think that EU funding was spent on intended goals.

A plurality (38%) positively perceives the EU's role in the 2008 August War, with a five-point decrease compared to 2021. Thirty percent think the organization played a neutral role in the conflict, while 18% believe it had a mainly negative role. Few are aware of the EUMM's mandate and the nature of its operations, with only 13% having correct information on these topics.

The awareness of the Association Agreement among the population of Georgia stands at its lowest since 2014, when the country officially signed the document, with only 41% saying that they are aware of the agreement. Few among those who do know about the document are not aware of the fact that the agreement is already in full force.

Attitudes towards temporary and permanent emigration are stable, with 26% of the population of Georgia contemplating leaving for work and a similar share thinking of traveling abroad for work; only fourteen percent consider leaving Georgia for another country to live permanently. Notably, about every fourth individual polled (26%) under 35 would consider this option.

About three quarters (74%) are glad that Georgia was granted a visa-free travel regime, with 17% of the population having traveled to the EU since such an option became available for Georgian nationals. Notably, the share of the latter has doubled since 2021.

Few know the procedures for visa-free travel or basic information on the European Union. While the majority (78%) correctly named biometric passports as an obligatory document to enter the EU/Schengen Zone, fewer recalled other required information such as a return ticket (32%), proof of financial means (24%), travel insurance (26%), and proof of the address of stay in the destination country (20%). About one-fifth (19%) hesitated or did not know an answer. In sum, only nine percent of the population of Georgia could correctly identify all the necessary documents to enter the EU.

With television and social media remaining major sources of information on the European Union for the population of Georgia, 49% would like to receive more of such information. With the plurality of these respondents being interested in updates on EU-Georgia trade relations and education programs (36%), the share of those who are keen to learn about the EU's healthcare system grew by two digits, reaching 28%.

The majority in Georgia would vote for Georgia's membership if such a question was to be asked in a referendum. Almost four out of five, 77%, would support this motion, while nine percent would vote against it. Similarly, the majority (70%) would vote for Georgia's NATO membership and against the country becoming a member of the Russia-led Eurasian Union (58%). Ethnic Georgians, Tbilisi residents, relatively well-off respondents, and those supporting opposition are enthusiastic, with EU supporters prevailing in other major sociodemographic groups.

Compared to the previous three waves of this study, people of Georgia have grown increasingly optimistic about when the country might become a part of the European Union, possibly reflecting discussions on the country's candidate status and the success of protest movements in March 2023. Twenty-seven percent of the population of Georgia in the 2023 survey believed that the country would become a part of the EU within the next five years, a 12-percentage point increase compared to 2019, when the population of Georgia felt least optimistic.

Support for EU membership is primarily motivated by economic benefits, with 52% of supporters substantiating their decision as such, followed by 25% who think that in this way Georgia will be better protected from foreign threats and 13% who consider the restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity as an outcome of the country's EU membership. Those opposing EU membership mostly substantiate their choice as threats to Georgia's culture and traditions (37%), with 29% claiming that this will restrict Georgia's independence.

Compared to 2021, more think that the country is ready for EU membership in all policy domains than it is not. The share of those who believe that Georgia is prepared in terms of human rights protection

and a competitive market economy has increased by 11 percentage points to 48%; 10 points more among the population of Georgia, compared to 2021, 37%, think that the country is ready for EU membership based on the rule of law. The share of those considering Georgia to be prepared for the EU in terms of having democratic institutions, protecting minority rights, and harmonizing its legislation to that of the European Union has increased by single digits, respectively, by nine, eight, and seven percentage points.

Regarding to what Georgia's population thinks on the reasons preventing the country from joining the EU, respondents most frequently picked political concerns such as political instability (30%) and unresolved territorial conflicts (29%). More than one in five named a lack of political will from the government (23%) and Russia's factor (21%). The share of those blaming the government's lack of political will as a hindrance to the country's path to joining the EU increased by eight percentage points compared to 2021.

The population of Georgia have an overwhelmingly positive outlook on the potential effects of Georgia's EU membership, with more than 70% expecting improvements to the quality of education, the number of available jobs, incomes, pensions, poverty reduction, national security, and civil liberties. Opinions diverge on the effects of EU membership on the number of people willing to emigrate, the prices of consumer goods, and respect for Georgian traditions, with a substantial minority expecting negative impacts of Georgia's ascension to the EU. Still, such opinions are shifting, with, for instance, 15 points, fewer the population of Georgia thinking that EU membership will prompt more of people to emigrate compared to 2021.

Attitudes remain stable concerning what happens to the country's relations with Russia if Georgia becomes a member of the EU. Similar to previous waves, the majority (72%) expect adverse impacts on Georgian-Russian bilateral ties, with no substantive shifts across the last few waves of the Europe Foundation's study.

ANNEX 1: ETHNIC MINORITIES

Europe Foundation surveys regularly oversample Georgia’s ethnic minority communities to understand their opinions better. Overall, 901 respondents were interviewed in ethnic minority communities, including 499 respondents who identified as Armenian and 356 respondents who identified themselves as Azerbaijanis. This section summarizes the essential sociodemographic characteristics of respondents from ethnic Georgian and minority domains. Similar to answers to attitudinal questions, respondents’ sociodemographic characteristics also vary across ethnolinguistic lines.

Respondents from ethnic minority communities are less likely to be employed, that is, self-employed or in a salaried job than those from majority Georgian communities. Only 30% of the representatives of ethnic minority domain are employed, compared to 49% within the strata of Georgian-speaking areas, and 48% nationally.

Such a disparity is probably associated with less involvement of women in the labor force. Notably, almost 26% of respondents in the minority strata reported to be a housewife, while fewer did in ethnic Georgian domain (10%), or nationally (11%).

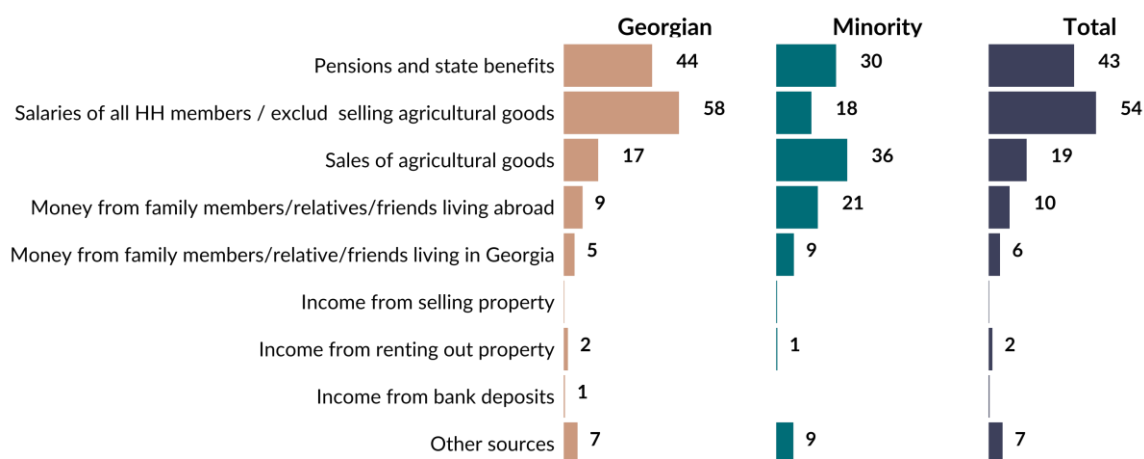


Figure 30: Many families have several sources of income. Using this card, please name the sources of income that your family had in the past 12 months. Please think of all sources of income for all members of your family. (%)

Respondents from ethnic minority strata are more likely to depend on incomes earned from the sale of agricultural goods (36%), state pensions and welfare benefits (30%), and to a lesser extent, salaried jobs (18%). Respondents from predominantly ethnic Georgian communities mainly depend on the salaried jobs of other household members (58%), pensions and governmental support (44%), and sales of agricultural goods (17%, figure 30).

Fewer respondents from predominantly minority communities assess their economic situation as “struggling.” About 20% of the residents of predominantly Georgian-speaking communities said so compared to 14% among the residents of predominantly minority communities, and 19% among the total population of Georgia. The plurality of respondents from minority communities (44%) evaluates their households’ economic situation as barely sufficient, as do the same proportion of the residents from predominantly Georgian-speaking communities. More minorities (43%) than the population of Georgia (36%) think of their households’ income as sufficient.

More than half of the representatives of both communities are daily internet users. Seventy-six percent of the population of Georgia and 55% of those from minority communities access the internet every

day. Minorities use the internet less often (27%) than the general population of Georgia (8%). About 18% of minorities and 15% nationally has never used the internet.

Respondents from ethnic minority communities are more likely to perceive themselves as a part of their ethnic group than those from predominantly Georgian areas. Seventy-two percent of minorities associate themselves only with their ethnic communities, as opposed to 61% of the population of Georgia. They are less likely to see themselves as having a dual identity of a European and a representative of their ethnic community (12%) than the population of Georgia (25%). About the same share (7-8%) of the representatives of both communities see themselves as Caucasians³³ and part of their ethnic group.

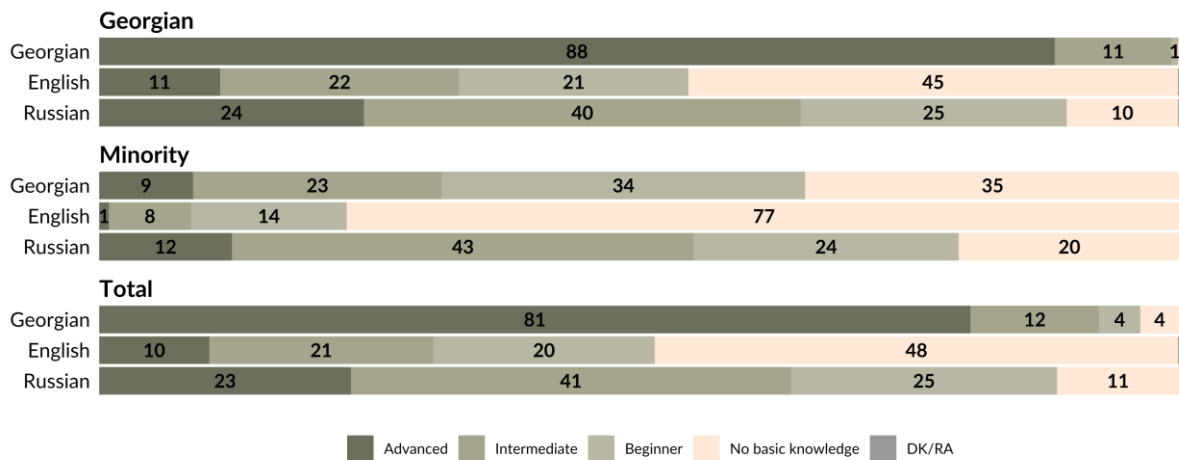


Figure 31: Please tell me, which of these levels best describes your ability in the following: ... language (%)

Almost everyone in the majority Georgian communities knows the Georgian language (Figure 31). About 88% of such respondents claim to have advanced knowledge of Georgian, followed by 11% who evaluate their knowledge as intermediate. More than half of respondents from predominantly Georgian communities have some knowledge of English (54%). About 11% claims to have an advanced knowledge of English, 22% knows English at an intermediate level, while 21% is a beginner. All but 10% of the population of Georgia contend knowing Russian at some level.

Sixty-six percent of the population in ethnic minority communities claim some level of knowledge of Georgian. Nine percent speak Georgian on an advanced level, 23% at an intermediate level, while 34% evaluates their knowledge of Georgian as a beginner. Thirty-five percent of minorities report no basic knowledge of the state language. Seventy-seven percent of minorities have no knowledge of English. Seventy-nine percent claim to speak Russian at some level.

³³ Caucasian as the part of the Caucasus region, not racial category.

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