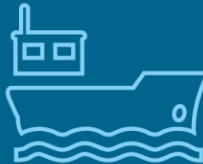


European Migration Network
Georgia



**EMN ANNUAL REPORT ON MIGRATION
AND ASYLUM 2022: GEORGIA**



European Migration Network

ANNUAL REPORT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM 2022 - GEORGIA

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AoG	Administration of the Government of Georgia
AP	Action Plan
API	Advance Passenger Information
ARM	Annual Report on Migration and Asylum (EMN)
BMP	Brief Migration Profile (Georgia)
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
COVID-19	Infectious disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2)
EMN	European Migration Network
EMN NCP	EMN National Contact Point
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
Frontex	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GBP	Georgian Border Police (MIA)
Geoconsul	Consular Case Management Electronic System (Geoconsul)
Geostat	National Statistics Office of Georgia
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
GoG	Government of Georgia
HEI	Higher Educational Institution
IBM	Integrated Border Management
INL	United States Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
LEPL	Legal Entity of Public Law
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

MoJ	Ministry of Justice of Georgia
MoE	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia
MoESD	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia
MoH	Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OTL	Order to leave (foreigners)
PNR	Passenger Name Record
PSDA	Public Service Development Agency of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia
SCMI	State Commission on Migration Issues of Georgia
SSSG	State Security Service of Georgia
THB	Trafficking in Human Beings
THB Council	Interagency Council on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (Georgia)
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHCR ExCom	Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VET	Vocational education
UAM	Unaccompanied minor
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

0. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY FINDINGS

ASYLUM AND MIGRATION POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

- A comprehensive policy document – “Vision 2030 - Development Strategy of Georgia” was adopted. Along with major policy directions, the Strategy includes migration related goals contributing to the country’s development;
- “Law of Georgia on International Protection” was amended with the aim to improve the asylum procedure *inter alia* through the digitalization and minimize the risk of the asylum system abuse;
- After the start of war in Ukraine, a simplified procedure of entry to Georgia for persons fleeing the war was introduced, while in parallel a temporary housing, rent and monthly financial assistance and access to the universal healthcare system were provided to Ukrainian citizens. In addition, Ukrainian-language sectors were launched at elementary schools and other integration related activities were implemented;
- The State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) adopted third - 2023 Action Plan (AP) of the 2021-2030 Migration Strategy of Georgia. The AP includes 105 activities (with the specific performance indicators) derived from the seven sectoral priorities of the Strategy.

LEGAL MIGRATION

- As of 31 December 2022, 54 200 foreign citizens possessed valid Georgian residence cards: amounted almost the same number as back in 2018. Compared to 2020, when due to outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic the figure was the lowest in last five years, in 2022 it increased by 26% and reached the highest point in last five years;
- In 2022, a total of 23 135 residence permits were issued to foreign citizens. The majority of residence permits were temporary and issued for study (43%), work (20%) and family reunification (8%) purposes;
- Amendments to the “Law on Labour Migration” and corresponding legislative acts have been prepared, aiming to improve management of labour migration processes, as well as to collect accurate data on migrant workers in the country. Complete draft package of amendments was approved by the Government of Georgia (GoG), and submitted to the Parliament for final adoption. Implementation of the legislative changes is planned from 2023;
- According to the “Skills establishment survey 2022”, as of 1 September 2022, 8% (3 884) of enterprises have employed 17 851 foreign citizens, which is 2% of the total employment;
- The “Consular Case Management Electronic (web-based) System” ([Geoconsul](#)) underwent a major update/upgrade involving launch of a new website and mobile applications for both IOS and Android users, equipped with new

features. Moreover, a renovated Consular and Citizen Service Centre was launched and modernization of MFA call centre was completed.

INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

- In 2022, number of asylum seekers in Georgia was the highest in last five years reaching a total of 1 473 persons;
- Most of the asylum seekers in 2022 were from Ukraine;
- The number of countries of origin of asylum seekers has also been going up in recent years. In 2018, persons from 45 countries were seeking asylum in Georgia, while in 2022 the number increased to 50;
- The “Law of Georgia on International Protection” was amended to further improve the asylum procedures and assist relevant authorities to implement a unified interpretation on procedural outcomes of asylum cases. Furthermore, the amendments also introduced new modus operandi for communication with asylum-seekers during the administrative procedure.

MINORS

- In 2022, 14 applicants for asylum were identified as unaccompanied minors (UAM), being the highest number in the last five years. The majority of UAMs applied for asylum in 2022, are citizens of Ukraine;
- Interagency Coordinating Council for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) approved “2023-2026 Governmental Strategy on Protection of Homeless Children from Violence, including Trafficking in Human Beings”, which was submitted to the Government for final adoption. The goal of the Strategy is to prevent children from getting into the street through placement/return to the family environment and to reduce the number of children living and/or working on the street;
- In 2022, Psychological-Social Service Center for minors who are victims of violence has become fully operational in Tbilisi (in 2021 Center was operating in pilot mode). The Center will soon be close to *Barnahus* model, which is a child-friendly, multidisciplinary and interagency model for dealing with child violence and witnesses of violence.

INTEGRATION

- The new state language program has been developed, to be piloted in 2023. The program is designed based on modern interactive methodology and brand-new learning material. Along with the language competencies, the programme will develop digital, civic and independent learning competencies. The program aims at reducing language barriers for those (including migrants) not speaking Georgian, hence enabling them integration in receiving society and providing with access to education and other services;
- In 2022, the construction of several vocational education (VET) institutions was finalized in three municipalities (Khashuri, Tskaltubo, Lanchkhuti) of

Georgia and nine institutions in total were authorised to recognise non-formal education, including four added in 2022;

- In 2022, non-formal education courses and youth work projects were launched in 18 VET institutions that aims to enhance key competencies among VET students (including migrants), to support their integration process and to make campus's life more attractive for them;
- GoG approved the second "National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights - 2022-2030" and submitted it to the Parliament for the final adoption. The Strategy puts special emphasis on the protection of the rights of such vulnerable groups as persons with disabilities, ethnic, sexual and religious minorities, women, children, migrants, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and other minorities. Meanwhile, the third priority of the Strategy includes continuous improvement of equality and anti-discrimination legislation, consideration of the needs of minority groups, including ethnic and religious minorities, promotion of teaching the state language and improvement of victim-oriented response to crimes committed on the grounds of discrimination/intolerance.

CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

- In 2022, through the naturalization¹ Georgian citizenship was granted to 3 995 person (mainly to either former Georgian citizens or persons originating from Georgia); Gender distribution of naturalized persons is almost equal, with the share of men (56%) surpassing that of women (44%);
- In December 2022, an "Organic Law on Georgian Citizenship" was amended extending until 31 December 2024 period to apply for the retention, restoration, granting and determination of Georgian citizenship. The amendments aim to ensure the access to the right to apply for Georgian citizenship by restoration of citizenship on the temporary basis and retaining Georgian citizenship to the maximum extent;
- In 2022, number of recognized stateless persons amounted 525. As for the gender distribution, the share of women (57%) slightly exceeds that of men (43%);
- The Public Service Development Agency of Georgia (PSDA), in close cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Georgia, in 2022 implemented the "Door to Door Campaign". It aimed to proactively identify and document stateless people in Georgia through the field works in the settlements where potential stateless persons were living. Data

¹ Rate of granting Georgian citizenship through naturalization is calculated based on all six types of acquisition of Georgian citizenship (by naturalization) derived from the Organic Law of Georgia on Georgian Citizenship.: granting citizenship under: ordinary, simplified, exceptional, restoration and special procedures. Calculation also includes the data on exercising temporary right for restoration of Georgian citizenship.

were collected on 762 people, 35 of whom were subsequently documented (granted Georgian citizenship or determined a stateless status).

BORDER MANAGEMENT and VISA

- Border Management and Coordination Division within the Information-Analytical Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia (MIA) has been established with the aim to ensure improved border management through strengthened intra and inter-agency cooperation, as well as effective risk management and introduction of the unified analysis methodology. The Division is responsible for the development of strategic/policy documents on border management within the MIA, introduction and implementation of Border Integrated Risk Analysis Model and application of Advanced Passenger Information (API) / Personal Name Recording (PNR) systems;
- In order to further enhance bilateral cooperation with partner countries and strengthen national border management system, cooperation agreements were signed in 2022, with the State Border Guard of Latvia and French company "Airbus Helicopters". Based on these agreements the Georgian Border Police (GBP) will be equipped with four new helicopters;
- In 2022, a total of 23 082 Georgian visas were issued to foreign citizens, from which 15 054 (65%) were short-term visas.

TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

- In 2022, three victims of THB crime were identified, two of them were citizens of Azerbaijan and one citizen of Georgia;
- In 2022, five traffickers arrested as suspects (prosecuted) and two were convicted;
- "Interagency Coordinating Council for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings" approved- "2023-2024 AP on Action against THB". New AP activities are focused on prevention of THB crime, refinement mechanisms to detect THB crime and ensure effective criminal prosecution, as well as on facilitation of the reintegration of victims/statutory victims of THB in the local society and provide coordinated action / cooperation against THB.

IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND RETURN

- In parallel with increased international mobility, in 2022 the number of foreigners found to be illegally present has also raised;
- In 2022, there was significant increase in the number of foreigners ordered to leave (OTL) Georgia, as well as in the execution rate of these decisions. Both indicators almost doubled in 2022 compared to the previous year.

1. INTRODUCTION

European Migration Network (EMN) National Annual Report on Migration and Asylum (ARM) 2022 is the first document prepared by the EMN Georgia and intends to provide various audiences (primarily national) with the overview of migration and asylum trends and policy developments of the country in 2022. The report describes key measures undertaken in the field of country's migration policy at legislative, policy and practice levels. The legislative and policy developments are covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2022 while most of migration statistics are provided for the years 2018-2022.

The thematic directions of the report follow EMN ARM structure.

1.1. METHODOLOGY

The report has been developed in accordance with the ARM specifications and EMN style guide, and was prepared from the perspective of receiving country of foreign migrants, alike with European Union (EU) Member States and Norway's contributions to the ARM. The document is based on both primary and secondary sources and on information obtained via desk research or directly from the relevant state agencies, through the ARM common questionnaire to contribute the EU-level Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2022. Upon necessity, information available via open sources was used, such as research papers, statistics, reports, etc. The majority of the statistics are so called „administrative data“ and were collected from the relevant SCMI member agencies.

The information has been mostly collected through formal inquiries from the following stakeholders: Ministry of Justice of Georgia (MoJ), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia (MoH), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia (MFA), Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (MoE), Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia (MoESD), National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat), State Security Service of Georgia (SSSG) and Administration of Government of Georgia (AoG).

The data collection and analysis, as well as desk research was carried out by the EMN NCP Georgia and report was drafted in close cooperation with all state agencies mentioned above in February-April 2023.

The terminology used in the report is based on the terms and definitions presented in the EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary (Version 8.0).

1.2. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The SCMI/Commission – a corporate management body - gathers all important actors operational in the field and devised action based on the whole-of-government approach². The Commission became a common platform that made possible to unify the interlinked basic thematic directions within the various sectoral agencies involved in migration management, and with that - on the one hand conditioned the thematic and structural expansion and development of these agencies, while on the other hand clustered them within the Commission, in accordance with linkages based on principles of shared responsibilities.

The Commission comprising nine governmental agencies is chaired by the MoJ and co-chaired by the MIA. The SCMI is being provided with analytical and administrative support by the Secretariat (operating through the EU funding) at the PSDA under the MoJ. Meanwhile the PSDA/Secretariat is performing the role of EMN's National Contact Point (NCP)³.

To further activate the Commission's work in different directions, inside the Commission thematic working groups have been set up. In addition, in 2013, international and non-governmental organizations working in the field, and in 2021 Public Defender's Office were granted a consultative status within the Commission to provide additional expertise and develop a format of cooperation.

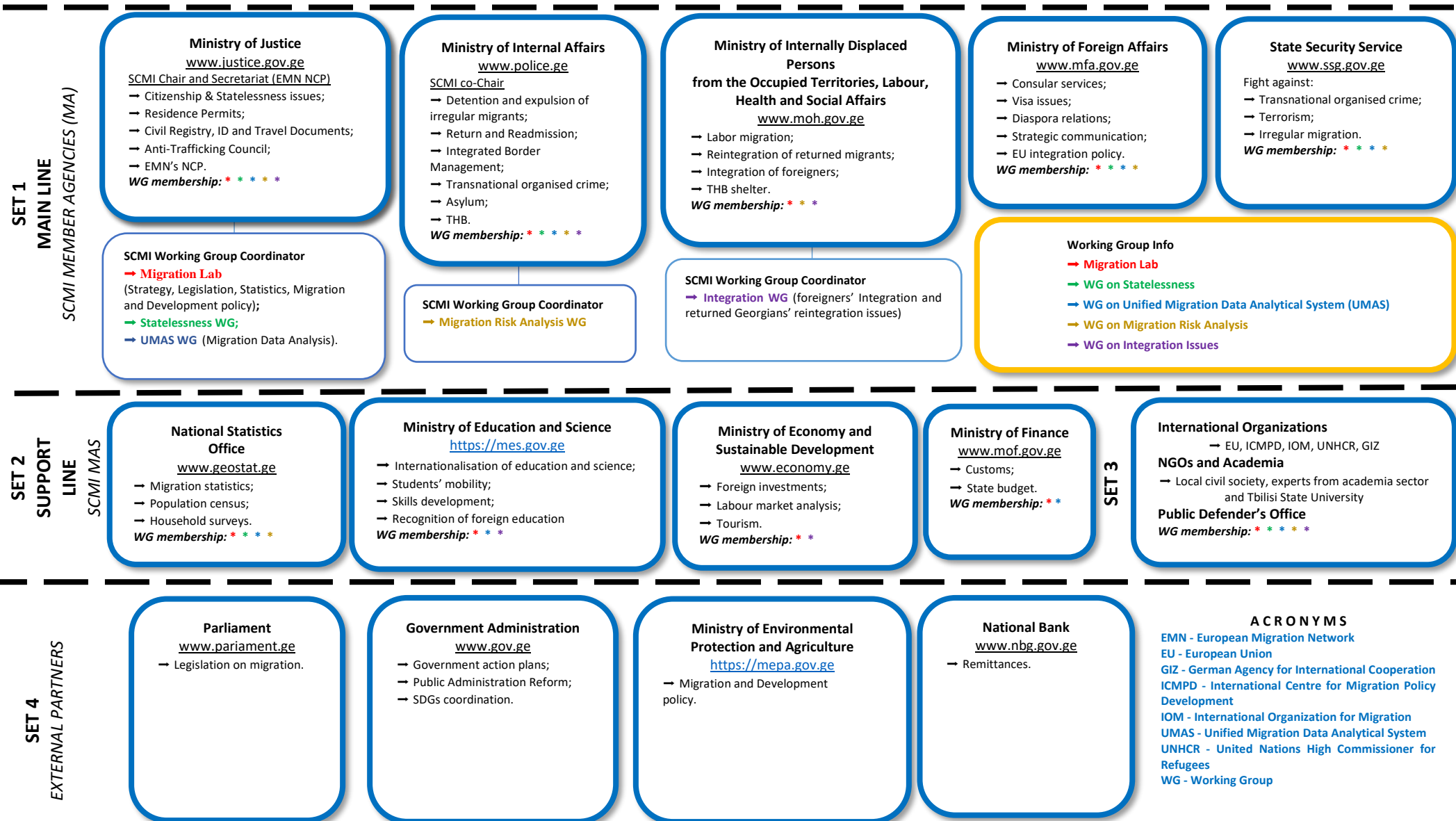
² http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=59&clang=1

³ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-members_en

STATE COMMISSION ON MIGRATION ISSUES

www.migration.commission.ge

The SCMI is the government's advisory body, which consists of three incorporated sets of organizations closely cooperating with the fourth external set (see below). The decisions within the Commission are made at a ministerial/deputy ministerial level, while preparatory work is run on medium (Dep. Director / Head of Unit) level. The medium level representatives' work is based on shared responsibilities and concentrated within five thematic working groups (WG). SCMI's analytical, advisory and administrative support is provided by its **Secretariat**, which at the same time is **EMN's NCP**.



1.2. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

In the field of migration governance following legislative framework⁴ is in place:

- Constitution of Georgia;
- Organic Law of Georgia on Georgian Citizenship;
- Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons;
- Law of Georgia on Labour Migration;
- Law of Georgia on International Protection;
- Law of Georgia on Combating Human Trafficking;
- Law of Georgia on Occupied Territories;
- Law of Georgia on the Procedure for Registering Citizens of Georgia and Aliens Residing in Georgia, for Issuing an Identity (Residence) Card and a Passport of a Citizen of Georgia;
- Law of Georgia on Compatriots Residing Abroad and Diaspora Organisations;
- Law of Georgia on the State Border of Georgia;
- Law of Georgia on the rules and procedures for Georgian citizens exiting and entering Georgia.

1.3. STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS

- Vision 2030 - Development Strategy of Georgia;
- 2022-2030 Human Rights Strategy of Georgia;
- 2021-2030 Migration Strategy of Georgia (being part of cation under the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and Association Agenda);
- 2020-2023 National Strategy for the Development Official Statistics of Georgia⁵.

Apart from the listed legislative and policy framework there are also numerous governmental ordinances, decrees of the ministers and/or policy documents (strategy/AP) regulating respective areas of the migration. Part of them, including legislative acts introduced or amended in 2022 is overviewed in the relevant sections of the report.

⁴ http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=54&clang=1

⁵ <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/630/strategy-for-the-development-of-statistics>

2. OVERVIEW OF ASYLUM AND MIGRATION POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

LEGAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

On 3 November 2022, GoG adopted (Ordinance # 517) a comprehensive policy document – “Vision 2030 - Development Strategy of Georgia”⁶. It is a nationwide policy document, which covers all key directions and priorities of country development by 2030 and fully complies with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Policy directions/sectoral priorities of the vision are following: Foreign Policy, Peaceful Resolution of Russian-Georgian Conflict, Public Security; Economic Development; Social Policy and Human Capital Development; Public Governance.

Along with mentioned directions, the Strategy includes goals related to 2021-2030 Migration Strategy⁷ contributing to the country development, such as the facilitation of labour migration and strengthening Georgian diaspora abroad. In terms of labour migration, the document prioritizes enhancement of labour migration management in the country and facilitation of temporary employment (circular migration) abroad. Enhancing connections with the Georgian diaspora and creating wider opportunities for the compatriots to better engage in country’s development, as well as effective protection of human rights of Georgian citizens abroad Is another priority of the Strategy.

On 23 December 2022, the SCMI adopted third - 2023 AP⁸ of the “2021-2030 Migration Strategy of Georgia”. The annual APs are the primary implementation instruments of the 2021-2030 Migration Strategy that in turn foster migration management through the whole of government and whole of society approach.

The 2023 AP includes 105 activities (with the specific performance indicators) derived from the seven sectoral priorities of the Strategy. 1.Enhancement of migration management – 14 activities; 2.Facilitation of legal migration – 23 activities; 3.Fight against illegal migration – 31 activities; 4.Reintegration of returned migrants - 12 activities; 5.Engagement of diaspora in the country’s development – 7 activities; 6.Development of the asylum system – 6 activities; 7.Integration of foreigners – 12 activities.

The AP predominantly is being implemented by the SCMI member agencies (MoJ, MIA, MoH, MFA, SSSG, Geostat, MoE, MoESD, in close cooperation with the partner organisations (EU, International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Frontex.

⁶ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5604706?publication=0>

⁷ http://migration.commission.ge/files/ms30_eng_web2.pdf

⁸ http://migration.commission.ge/files/msap_23_eng_fin_1.pdf

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

On 18 July 2022, the Governmental Ordinance #314 on “Establishing the State Commission on Migration Issues and Approving its Statute” was amended⁹ expanding analytical capabilities of the SCMI, majorly refining its functions in terms of international action and cooperation with external partners (NGOs, international organizations etc.). The main aim of the amendments was to enhance a whole-of-government-approach through modifying and making the operational system of the SCMI more flexible to effectively adjust its functions to new realities and existing tasks.

On 6 June 2022, the first session of the “Government Coordination Commission on the Population Census” was held, where the 2024 Census program has been approved¹⁰. According to the program, the next population census will be held from 14 November to 19 December 2024, and its reference date defined as of 13-14 November 12 a.m. The new Census will provide an up-to-date information on population size, age and sex structure, employment, education, health status and household composition.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

With an aim to strengthen bilateral cooperation on 11 May 2022, Georgia and Switzerland signed a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in migration related issues¹¹. The document includes provisions on enhancing legal migration programs, strengthening the protection of migrants’ rights, ensuring the management of migration flows and work for the prevention of irregular migration.

3. RESPONSES TO THE INFLUX OF PERSON FLEEING THE WAR IN UKRAINE

In order to provide immediate support to the persons arrived in Georgia due to war in Ukraine GoG adopted several decrees (e.g. #387 of 02.03.2022 and #1254 of 13.07.2022)¹². Governmental decrees include measures to be undertaken by relevant state agencies to provide such persons with access to the basic services, including housing, education and medical assistance, as well as to support their social and economic integration.

Temporary housing was provided to the citizens of Ukraine immediately after the start of the war. From the summer 2022, they also were provided with rent and

⁹ http://migration.commission.ge/files/gog_ord_314_scmi_22.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.geostat.ge/en/single-news/2548/population-census-will-be-conducted-by-the-end-of-2024>

¹¹ <https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/sem/en/data/internationales/internat-zusarbeit/bilaterales/keine-sr-nr/20220511-mou-geo.pdf.download.pdf/20220511-mou-geo-e.pdf>

¹² <https://www.moh.gov.ge/ka/publicinformation/list/116/?year=2022>

monthly financial assistance, the amount of which is same as assistance received by the IDPs from the occupied territories of Georgia.

Moreover, according to the decision of the GoG, citizens of Ukraine benefit from the universal healthcare service from the very first day of arrival, with the same conditions as Georgian citizens. Citizens of Ukraine who entered Georgia and stayed continuously were provided with medical services within the framework of the following programs:

- a) Immunization;
- b) Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS treatment, including provision of specific medicines;
- c) Maternal and child health, including antenatal care and new-born screening;
- d) Mental health;
- e) Management of diabetes, including provision of medicines;
- f) dialysis;
- g) Treatment of patients with rare diseases and subject to permanent replacement treatment;
- h) Management of the new coronavirus disease - COVID-19, including testing, vaccination, residential and inpatient treatment;
- i) Referral services – medical services of urgent need, including childbirth, emergency immunization (Decree of the GoG #387 of 2 March 2022).

In 2022, grant agreement was signed with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)¹³, which aimed to provide *ad-hoc* assistance to the Ukrainian citizens (vulnerable groups such as children). According to the agreement from 2023 with the support of the UNICEF, the GoG will provide one-time financial assistance to children displaced from Ukraine. More than 3,000 families of Ukrainian children will receive assistance in order to cope with winter difficulties.

In order to ensure access to general education for displaced children from Ukraine, Ukrainian-speaking sectors were launched in Tbilisi and Batumi public schools, where students from Ukraine receive education in their native language¹⁴. Most of the teachers employed in the Ukrainian sectors are also displaced persons from Ukraine. School students were also provided with psychosocial services and involved in non-formal education. In 2022, 2,345 children from Ukraine were enrolled in the schools.

To facilitate access to the basic services for Ukrainian adults, there was a need to learn a Georgian language at least at elementary level. Thus, the MoE has started the implementation of a state language training and integration program for the Ukrainian citizens who live in Georgia due to the current situation in Ukraine. In 2022,

¹³ <https://www.unicef.org/georgia/press-releases/government-georgia-will-provide-financial-aid-ukrainian-children-support-unicef>

¹⁴ <https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=12998&lang=eng>

183 Ukrainian citizens (adults) were enrolled in Georgian language trainings, which were conducted in an online format.

Moreover, in order to ensure uninterrupted entry of Ukrainian citizens fleeing the war, simplified procedures of entry to Georgia have been introduced.

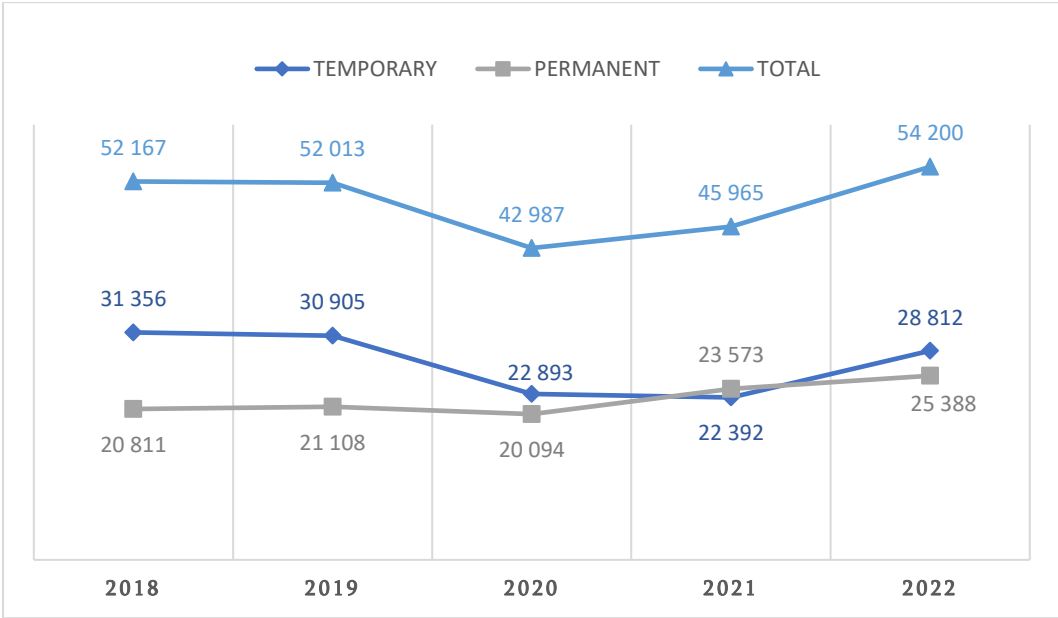
4. LEGAL MIGRATION

4.1. RESIDENCE PERMITS

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

54 200 foreign citizens possessed valid Georgian residence cards as of 31 December 2022. This is almost the same number as back in 2018-2019. Compared to 2020, when due to outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic the figure considerably dropped, in 2022 it increased by 26%. In 2022, number of valid temporary residence cards exceeded permanent ones compared to 2021.

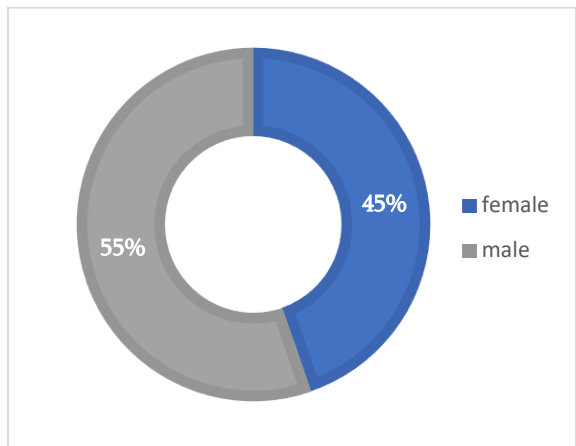
Number of foreigners with valid residence cards by year (as of 31 December) and card type



Source: PSDA

In 2022, 55% of valid residence cardholder foreigners were male. It should be noted, that such gender distribution is more or less same for the last five years.

Valid residence cardholder foreigners distributed by gender as of 31 December 2022

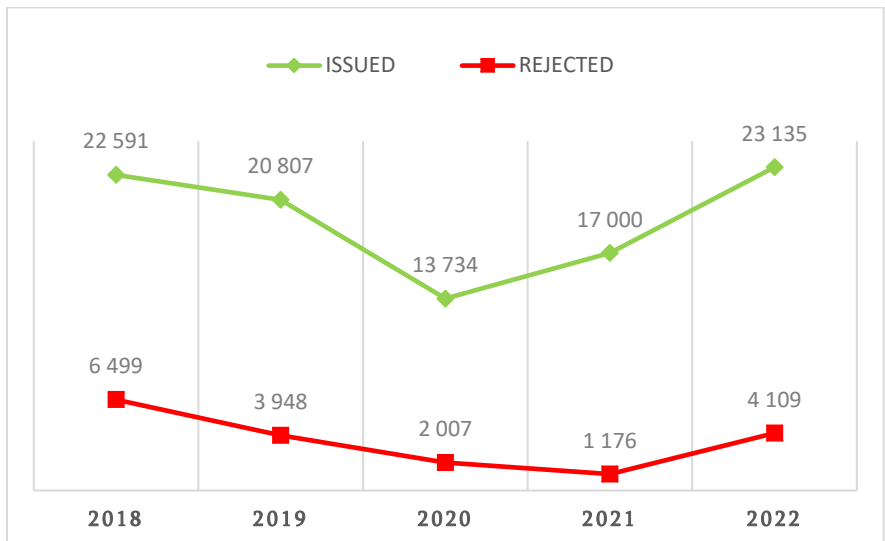


Source: PSDA

In 2022, the number of issued residents permits has been raised and reached the highest point (23 135) in the last five years. This is almost the same figure as back in 2018.

Regarding the refusals on granting resident permits, in 2022 it also significantly went up compared to 2021 year.

Number of issued residence permits and rejected decisions by year



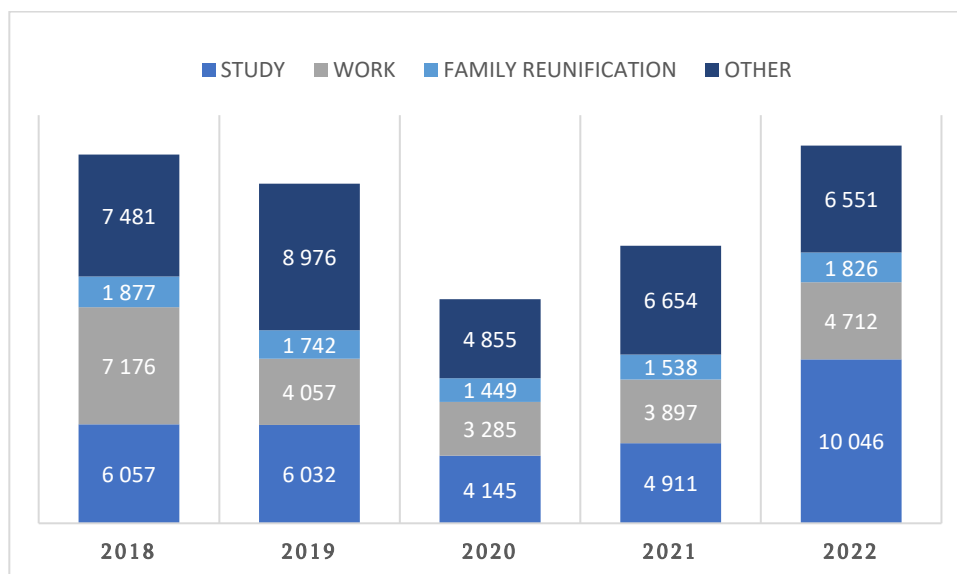
Source: PSDA

The majority of residence permits issued¹⁵ to foreign citizens in 2022 were temporary and granted for study (43%), work (20%) and family reunification (8%) purposes. Since 2019, the trend has been changed and number of issued study permits

¹⁵ Rate on issued residence permits is calculated based on total number of first time and extended residence permits.

exceeded work residence permits. Moreover, compared to the previous year, two times more study residence permits were issued in 2022.

Resident permits issued by the reason and year



Source: PSDA

4.2. LABOUR MIGRATION

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

In 2022, 4 712 work (temporary) residence permits were issued to foreign citizens. In 2019, the number of issued work residence permits sharply declined compared to 2018 and hit the lowest number in 2020. Since then, increasing trend is present and in 2022, it reached prepandemic level of 2019.

In 2022, the major part of work residence permits was granted to the citizens of China, Russia and Turkey.

Distribution of work residence permits issued by year and citizenship

2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
Iran	2 449	China	1 333	China	1 274	China	1 518	China	969
China	1 294	Turkey	616	Turkey	540	Turkey	737	Russia	755
Turkey	1 190	Iran	525	Ukraine	210	Russia	249	Turkey	720
India	404	India	259	Russia	203	Iran	173	Belarus	411
Russia	294	Russia	241	Iran	195	Ukraine	162	India	339
Other	1 545	Other	1 083	Other	863	Other	1 058	Other	1 518
Total	7 176	Total	4 057	Total	3 285	Total	3 897	Total	4 712

Source: PSDA

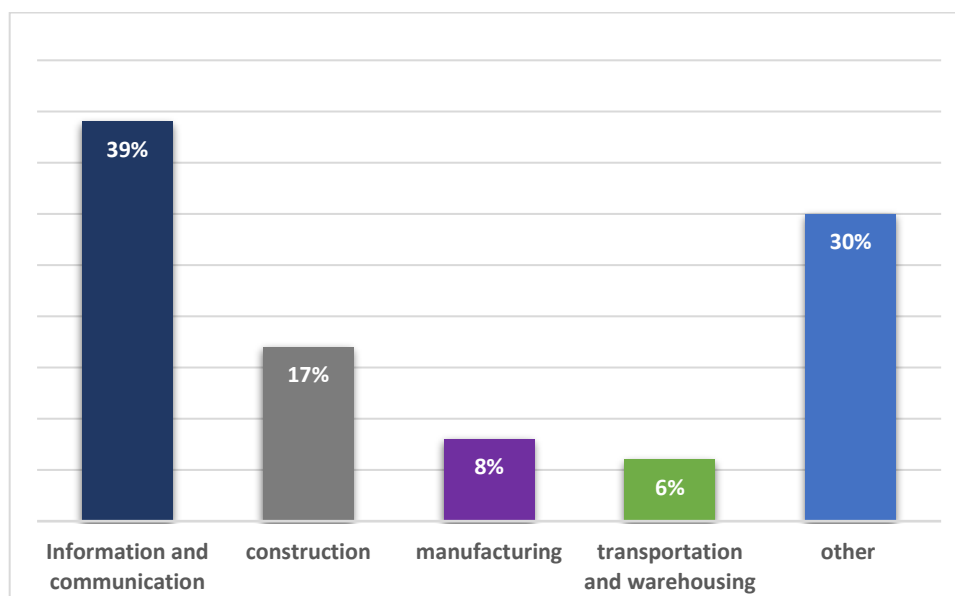
In 2022, the MoESD conducted “Establishment Skills Survey”¹⁶. Methodology and instrument of the Survey is based on the manual - “Developing and Running an Establishment Skills Survey” prepared by ILO, ETF and CEDEFOP. The Survey is designed to study employment structure, assessment of occupational skills, vacancies and demand for workforce, workforce development, establishments’ attitude towards VET, employment of foreigners and first jobseekers.

According to the “Establishment Skills Survey” as of 1 September 2022, 8% (3 884) of enterprises have employed 17 851 foreign citizens, which is 2% of the total employment. Compared to the previous year, in 2022 the number of foreign citizens employed in Georgia has increased by 78%.

The survey shows that majority (83%) of labour migrants work in small enterprises. As for the regional distribution, 76% of them works in Adjara region, while only 24% of labour migrants are employed in other regions of the country.

Information/communication (increased 10 times compared to previous year) and process manufacturing are the major sectors of employment.

Percentage distribution of foreign citizens employed in Georgia by employment sectors



Source: “Establishment Skills Survey”, 2022 (MoESD)

According to the mentioned study, labour migrants are mainly employed as specialists/professionals or managers. Main reason for employment of foreign citizens was the foreign founder / management of the enterprise (64%), while in 8% of cases - the foreign origin of the enterprise. However, 7% of respondents believe that main

¹⁶ <http://www.lmis.gov.ge/Lmis/Lmis.Portals.Web/Handlers/GetFile.ashx?Type=Survey&ID=9e1b0f7d-d8a2-47b9-9099-4dd07d00f82c>

reason for employment of foreign nationals is the lack of necessary qualifications and professional skills in the local market.

LEGAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

In 2022, amendments to the “Law of Georgia on Labour Migration” and corresponding legislative acts have been prepared. Complete draft package was approved by the GoG on 28 December 2022, and submitted to the Parliament for the final adoption. According to the legislative changes, Law will regulate the labour immigration in Georgia (before it was regulated by governmental decree) and all foreign citizens employed in Georgia should be registered in a special electronic system of MoH. Implementation of the legislative changes is planned from 2023. Amendments aim to efficiently manage and regulate labour migration processes and collect accurate data on migrant workers. It will ensure proper mechanisms for the regulation and registration of labour migration (emigration/immigration), as well as mechanisms of coordinated cooperation between the state agencies engaged in labour migration.

Moreover, according to the mentioned legislative package, several legal acts regulating labour exploitation and/or social dumping will also be amended. The project envisages changes in the “Law of Georgia on Labour Inspection” and the “Labour Code of Georgia”, according to which, the issues of labour migration will be determined as part of a unified system of labour legislation.

4.3. STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

In 2022, 10 046 study residence permits were issued, which is almost double number compared to 2021 and even exceeded pre-pandemic level in 2019.

Major part (52%) of study residents permits issued in 2022 were granted to the citizens of India.

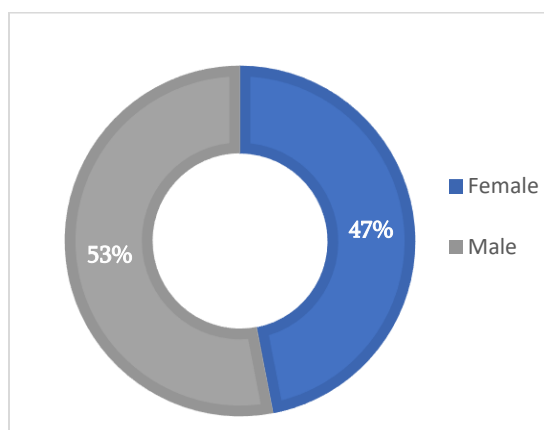
Distribution of study residence permits issued by year and citizenship

2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
India	4 486	India	4 068	India	2 292	India	1 917	India	5 259
Iran	326	Iran	607	Iran	456	Nigeria	475	Jordan	735
Nigeria	268	Nigeria	321	Nigeria	316	Iran	440	Egypt	682
Egypt	158	Egypt	215	Egypt	213	Egypt	435	Nigeria	541
Jordan	96	Jordan	158	Jordan	167	Jordan	371	Russia	513
Other	723	Other	663	Other	701	Other	1 273	Other	2 316
Total	6 057	Total	6 032	Total	4 145	Total	4 911	Total	10 046

Source: PSDA

In 2022, 53% of study resident permits were issued to male.

Gender distribution of study residence permits issued in 2022



Source: PSDA

LEGAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

With a view of facilitating enrolment of foreign students in Georgian higher educational institutions (HEI), the rules and procedures of granting the right to study to foreign citizens at Georgian HEIs were amended (Order #224 of MoE)¹⁷. Based on the amended rules the application processing has become more rapid, simplified and flexible. The major part of the application processing now will be done by National Education Quality Enhancement Centre of Georgia. Amendments will ensure the better management of increased volume of international students applying for studies in Georgian HEI.

In 2022, The SCMI developed a "Brief Migration Profile" (BMP) on Foreign Students in Georgia"¹⁸. The BMP contains statistical data on foreign students in Georgia for the 2017-2021 academic years, as well as evaluates (based on the several researches) the role and impact of foreign students as important actors in the country's economy and higher education system. The document is used by all parties interested in educational migration (state and high educational institutions, students, international organisations, researchers, NGOs, academia representatives and general public).

In December 2022, the annual information meeting on residence permit procedures was held¹⁹ for the representatives of Georgian HEIs having the highest number of foreign student enrolments. The meeting aimed to facilitate admission of foreign students in Georgian universities and prevent from possible difficulties while applying for the study resident permit. During the event, representatives of the PSDA delivered up-to date information on legal procedures and guidelines that should be considered

¹⁷ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/1545043?publication=12>

¹⁸ https://migration.commission.ge/files/bmp_22_students_eng.pdf

¹⁹ <http://www.enigma.ge/news/information-meeting-on-residence-procedures-for-educational-institutions/>

and implemented by HEIs, while providing support to their students to obtain study residence permits. Around 17 representatives from different HEIs attended the meeting, jointly organized by PSDA and ICMPD.

4.4. FAMILY REUNIFICATION

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

In 2022, 1 826 temporary resident permits were issued for the purpose of family reunification, equalled to pre-pandemic level of years 2018-2019.

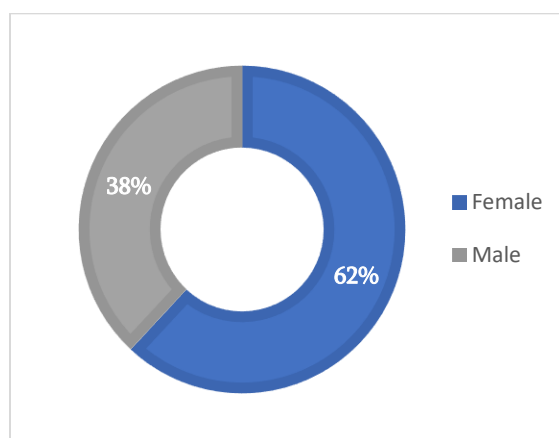
Distribution of family reunification residence permits issued by year and citizenship

2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
Iran	907	Iran	856	Iran	381	Russia	336	Russia	641
Turkey	219	Russia	171	Russia	260	Iran	273	Iran	267
Russia	137	Turkey	149	Ukraine	160	Ukraine	160	Belorussia	192
India	128	India	124	Turkey	132	Turkey	156	Turkey	151
Azerbaijan	86	Azerbaijan	80	India	102	Azerbaijan	102	Ukraine	135
Other	400	Other	362	Other	414	Other	511	Other	440
Total	1 877	Total	1 742	Total	1 449	Total	1 538	Total	1 826

Source: PSDA

In 2022, 62% of family reunification residence permits issued to females.

Gender distribution of family reunification residence permits granted in 2022



Source: PSDA

4.5. INFORMATION ON ROUTES TO AND CONDITIONS OF LEGAL MIGRATION

In order to raise the quality and accessibility of/to consular services and information, to ensure easy access to the information on migration issues and make the process of receiving consular services comfortable, in 2022 the MFA made several improvements:

- Geoconsul underwent a major update/upgrade involving launch of a new website²⁰ and mobile applications for both IOS and Android users, equipped with new features. The Geoconsul system is a carrier of major information on immigration procedures and the entire spectrum of consular services is provided via this system. Due to technical incoherence, the outdated technologies made it difficult to incorporate new features to the website. Moreover, the risks of system errors and crashes were higher with outdated software and irregularities in the functioning of the system could have negatively affected the process of provision with consular information and services;
- A renovated Consular and Citizen Service Centre was launched at the new premises of MFA²¹. The Centre is adapted to modern requirements and offers number of consular services to Georgian and foreign citizens. The renovated Service Centre was launched in order to adhere to highest standards in provision of state services in terms of technologies and environment. In addition, the modernization of MFA call centre was completed, aiming at ensuring high conductivity of hotline and strengthening its capabilities on operational (response, tracking, monitoring) and analytical levels. Due to the various critical developments of recent years, the workload of MFA call centre has significantly increased and the demand for counselling services raised.

4.6. OTHER MEASURES REGARDING LEGAL MIGRATION

In November 2022, workshop on residence permit rules and regulations led by the experts from Slovenia and Lithuania was held in Tbilisi. During the workshop, topics on the procedure of inspection of the grounds for granting residence permits and obligation of foreigners to leave the country were discussed. Invited EU experts also provided with information on the monitoring tools of checking grounds for granting residence permits to ensure effective administrative proceedings. The event aimed to advance residence permit management system in Georgia through sharing relevant experience and good practises from European partners.

²⁰ <https://new.geoconsul.gov.ge/en>

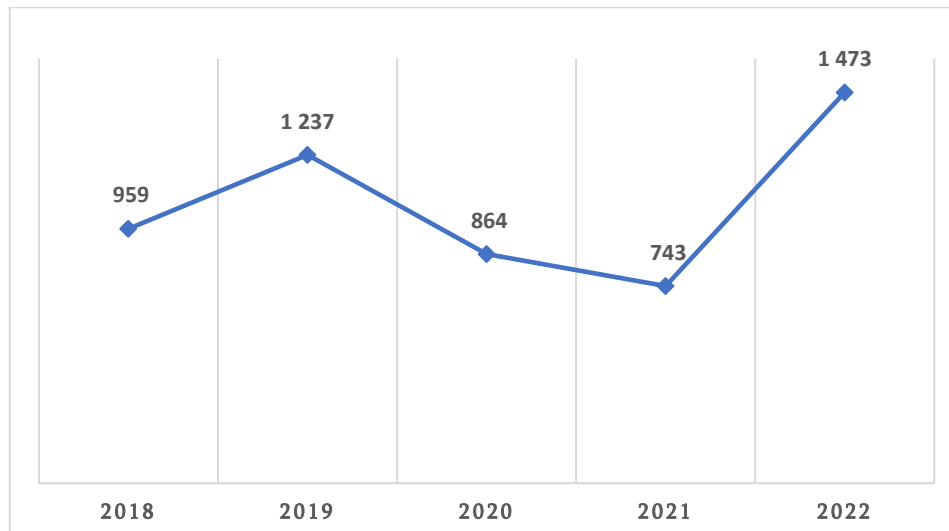
²¹ <https://mfa.gov.ge/en/news/828421-saqareo-saqmeta-saministroshi-moqalaqeta-ganakhleb>

5. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

In 2022 total number of asylum applications amounted 1 473. It almost doubled compared to the previous year and even reached the highest point in last five years. General trend fluctuates by year: the rising trend of asylum applications in 2018-2019 decreased in next two years and in 2021 hit the lowest mark. The underlying reason may be COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently decreased international mobility.

Number of asylum applications by year



Source: MIA

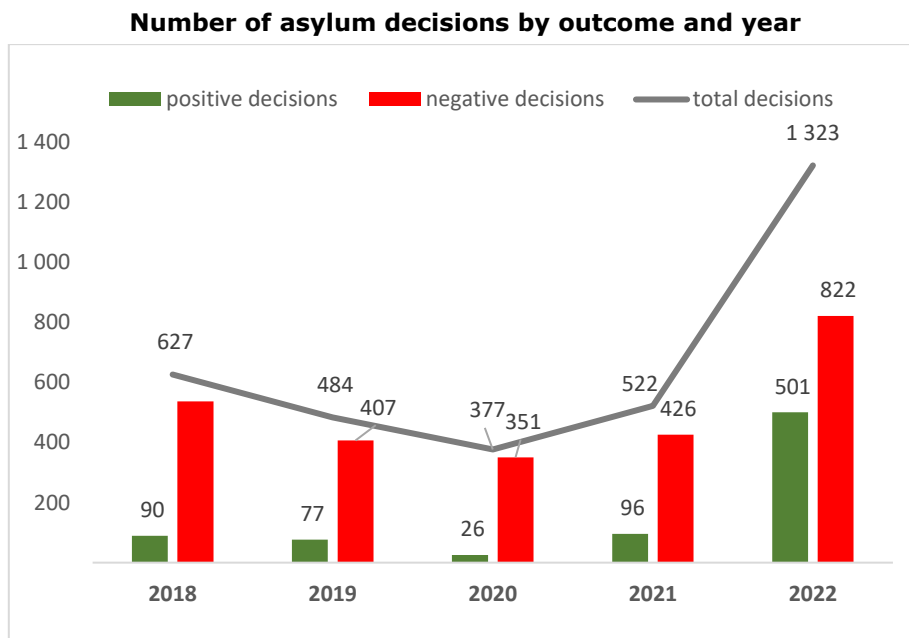
Most of the asylum seekers in 2022 were from Ukraine. Whereas, in the previous years predominantly citizens of Turkey and Iran were claiming asylum. The number of countries of origin of asylum seekers has also been going up in recent years. In 2018, persons from 45 countries were seeking asylum in Georgia, while in 2022 the number increased to 50.

Number of asylum seekers in Georgia by year and citizenship

2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
Iran	225	Iran	470	Iran	267	Turkey	137	Ukraine	516
Turkey	78	Egypt	113	Turkey	94	Iran	125	Turkey	203
Yemen	76	India	101	Russia	64	Russia	54	Iran	194
Iraq	75	Russia	79	Jordan	56	Jordan	47	Russia	115
Egypt	70	Turkey	64	India	52	Afghanistan	40	Egypt	44
Other	435	Other	410	Other	331	Other	340	Other	401
Total	959	Total	1 237	Total	864	Total	743	Total	1 473

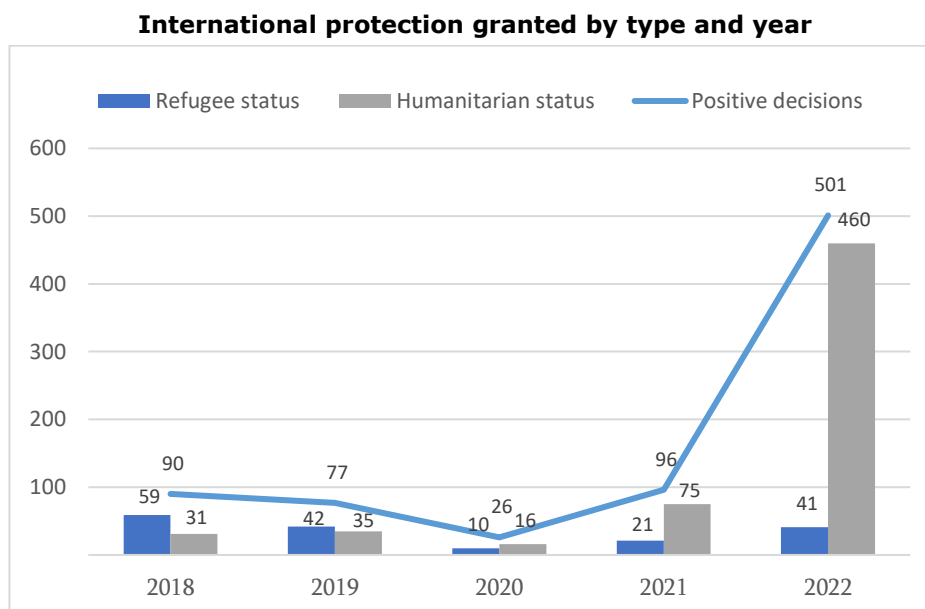
Source: MIA

In 2022, 502 asylum applications had been approved: the highest point of positive decisions in last five years, mainly on account of Ukrainian asylum seekers. Regarding the negative decision rate, like the positive one, the highest point was observed in 2022, when the number of asylum seekers had been increased as well.



Source: MIA

In 2022, Refugee Status was granted to 41 asylum seekers and amounted almost the same figure as in 2019. As for the Humanitarian Status – in 2022 it increased significantly and reached 460 decisions. In 2022, Humanitarian status predominantly granted to the Ukrainian citizens.



Source: MIA

In 2018-2022, a total of 409 asylum seekers were accommodated at the Asylum Seekers' Reception Centre of the MIA Migration Department.

5.2. LEGAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

Based on the amendments made to the "Law of Georgia on International Protection"²², the definition of the asylum-seeker was further clarified, as well as introduced the digitalized mode of notifying asylum seekers during the administrative procedure on their asylum case (including decision) through specialized platform - migration.police.ge²³. Furthermore, the rule and procedural outcomes while asylum applicant withdrawing a claim/appeal, appealing the court's decision concerning the withdrawal of a claim/appeal and/or re-applying to the court for international protection, were also specified.

Moreover, two by-laws: the Ministerial order "On approving the form of the asylum seeker's certificate, the rules for its provision and modification" (#34)²⁴ and the Ministerial order "On Approving Asylum Procedure" (#33)²⁵ have also been amended.

The main objective of the amendments was improvement of the asylum procedure and minimization the risk of the asylum system abuse.

5.3. ACCESS TO THE ASYLUM PROCEDURES

in August 2022, the MIA Migration Department and Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration (LEPL under the MoE), signed a Memorandum of Understanding aiming at providing Georgian language classes for the adult asylum-seekers at the Asylum Seekers' Reception Centre of the Migration Department. The initiative will enable asylum seekers to study Georgian language at the Reception Centre.

6. MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

6.1. UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

In 2022, 14 applicants seeking asylum were identified as UAM, being the highest number in the last five years. Compared to 2021, it almost quadrupled.

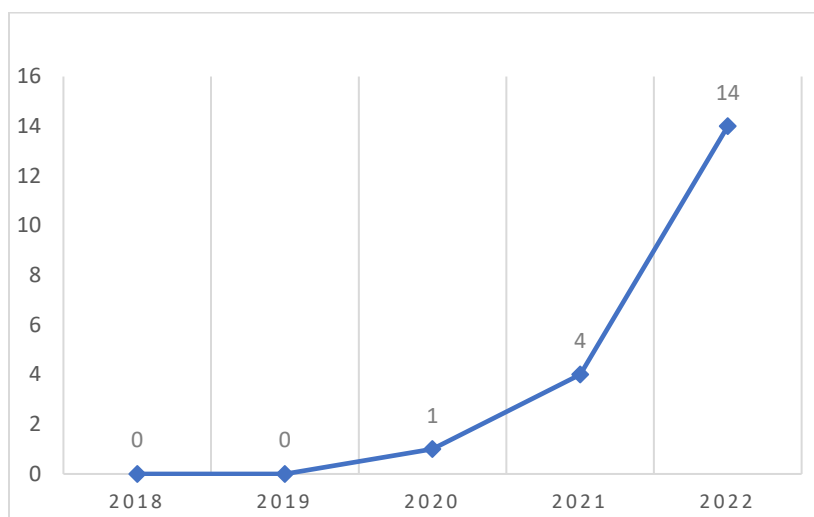
²² <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5461189?publication=0>

²³ <https://migration.police.ge/login>

²⁴ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5513979?publication=0>

²⁵ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5518895?publication=0>

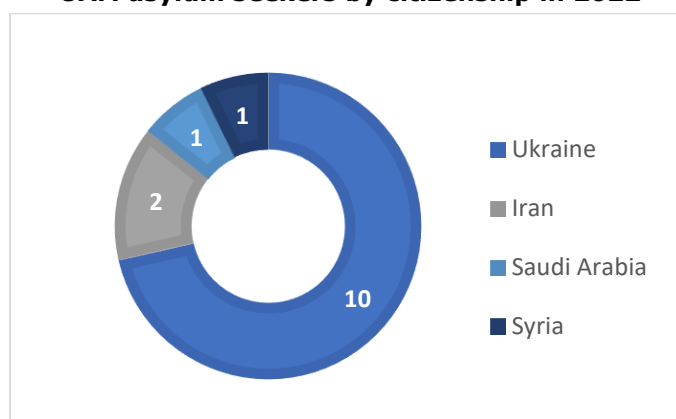
Number of applications by UAM for asylum by years



Source: MIA

The majority of UAMs applied for asylum in 2022, were citizens of Ukraine (10) and Iran (2).

UAM asylum seekers by citizenship in 2022



Source: MIA

6.2. TRAFFICKING OF MINORS

LEGAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

In 2014-2021, Georgian Authorities identified more than 2,000 children in street situations. These children are one of the most vulnerable groups for human trafficking. In order to effectively address the challenge, in December 2022, the “Interagency Coordinating Council for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (THB council)” approved “2023-2026 Governmental Strategy on Protection of Homeless Children from Violence, including THB”²⁶ and submitted to the Government for final adoption. The goal of the Strategy is to prevent children from getting into the street

²⁶ <https://justice.gov.ge/?m=articles&id=RnJzgMA63f&lang=1>

through placement/return to the family environment and to reduce the number of children living and/or working on the street. Moreover, the Strategy represents a guideline for the relevant agencies to implement measures to achieve this goal. As the phenomenon of children living and/or working on the street is a complex issue that cannot be solved by only one state agency, the strategy aims coordination between state agencies at both the national and local levels, as well as cooperation with the civil society.

In order to offer each child a coordinated and effective child protection and criminal justice response, and to prevent traumatisation and re-traumatisation during investigation and court proceedings, psychological-social service Center for minors who are victims of violence has become fully operational in Tbilisi (in 2021 Center was operating in pilot mode). The Center will soon be close to *Barnahus* model, which is a child-friendly, multidisciplinary and interagency model for dealing with child violence and witnesses of violence.

6.3. STATELESSNESS RELATING TO MINORS

In December 2022, the PSDA shared national legal practice and experience on the determination of Georgian citizenship for the children at the technical meeting – “Ensuring the Right to Nationality to Every Child” organised by EMN Estonia and EMN Luxembourg²⁷. The event aimed to raise awareness on child’s right to nationality and preventive measures on statelessness from the EU perspective.

6.4. FIGHTING RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION OF MINORS

LEGAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

As mentioned in the section 7.3. (7.3. FIGHTING RASICM AND DISCRIMINATION) the GoG approved a new “2022-2030 Human Rights Strategy”²⁸, which covers all groups of population and directions, including protection of all children from various kinds of discrimination. The document contains a separate chapter on the rights of a child.

In September 2019, the Parliament of Georgia adopted the “Code of the Rights of a Child”²⁹, which improved the legal framework regulating child's rights. As the state realizes the need to properly implement the Code in practice, it plans to take a number of measures in this direction within the framework of the above-mentioned Strategy to effectively implement child-oriented social policies.

²⁷ <https://www.emn.ee/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/summary-of-the-event.pdf>

²⁸ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5757268?publication=0>

²⁹ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4613854?impose=translateEn&publication=2>

7. INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION OF ADULT MIGRANTS

7.1. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In order to increase access to education and support integration of persons who do not speak Georgian, the new “State Language Program” has been developed, to be piloted in 2023. The Programme is designed based on modern interactive methodology and brand-new learning materials covering A1, A2, B1 and B2 levels. Alongside the language competencies, it will develop digital, civic and independent learning competencies as well. The Programme is not attached to any VET program and will be accessible for any person, including migrants, from the age of 14. The main objective of the programme is to reduce language barriers for those (including migrants) not speaking Georgian, hence enabling them integration in receiving society and providing with access to education and other services.

7.2. LABOUR MARKET AND SKILLS

With an aim to make VET provision more inclusive, the draft version of the concept document for inclusive VET has been developed. The policy scope was broadened in terms of target groups, and would make VET provision more inclusive for the vulnerable and underrepresented groups, more accessible and available for everyone including migrants and would make it more tailored to individuals’ needs and interests.

In the scope of grant competition for extracurricular activities announced in 2022, non-formal education courses and youth work projects were launched in 18 VET institutions. Development aims to enhance key competencies among VET students (including migrants), to support their integration process and to make campus’s life more attractive for them. Soft skills and key competencies are substantial part of employability skill-set nowadays, that is why it is important to strengthen provision of extracurricular and non-formal educational opportunities.

In the reporting period, the construction of several VET institutions was finalized in three municipalities (Khashuri, Tskaltubo, and Lanchkhuti) of Georgia. Hence, from 2023, these institutions will also be involved in the enrolment process and all the target groups (including migrants) will have access to VET at local level.

In accordance with the regulation approved in 2019, an institution implementing a VET program and a legal entity authorized to implement a vocational training program have the right to recognize non-formal education (including for migrants) if the organization meets defined requirements. In 2022, four new institutions were authorized to recognize non-formal education according to the above-mentioned regulation. Thus, as of 2022, nine vocational schools have the right to recognize non-formal education.

7.3. FIGHTING RASICM AND DISCRIMINATION

On 5 September 2022, GoG approved (Decree #1627) the second “National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights - 2022-2030”³⁰ and submitted document to the Parliament of Georgia for the final adoption. The Strategy is a nationwide policy document, which covers all groups of population and directions of human rights protection in the country. It puts special emphasis on the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, ethnic, sexual and religious minorities, women, children, migrants, IDPs and other minorities. The third priority of the Strategy includes continuous improvement of equality and anti-discrimination legislation, consideration of the needs of minority groups, including ethnic and religious minorities, promotion of teaching the state language and improvement of victim-oriented response to crimes committed on the grounds of discrimination/intolerance. In parallel, GoG has started work on the relevant AP, which will incorporate targeted activities to ensure the implementation of the Strategy.

8. CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

8.1. ACQUISITION OF CITIZENSHIP

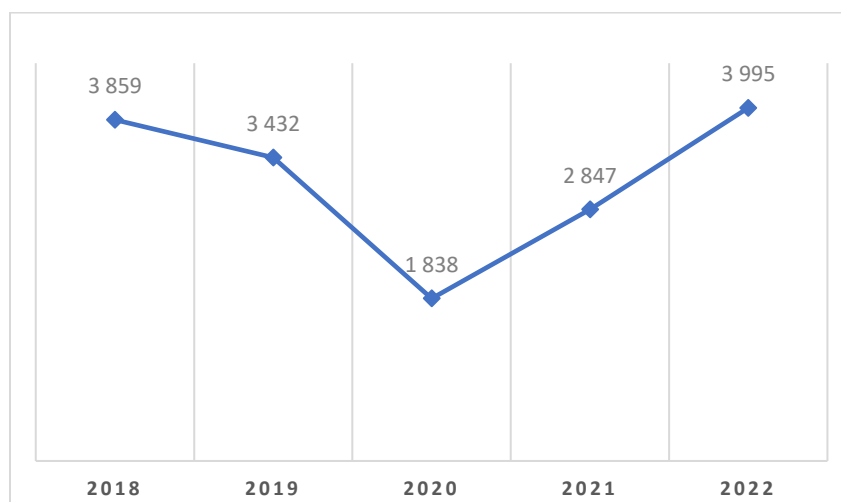
STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

In 2022, through naturalization procedure³¹ Georgian citizenship was granted to 3 995 persons. Significant decrease recorded in 2020 may be caused by outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and limited international mobility. From 2021 the trend has started to increase and in 2022 slightly exceeded pre-pandemic (2018-2019) level.

³⁰ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5757268?publication=0>

³¹ Rate of granting Georgian citizenship through naturalization is calculated based on all six types of acquisition of Georgian citizenship derived from the Organic Law of Georgia on Georgian Citizenship.: granting citizenship under: ordinary, simplified, exceptional, restoration and special procedures. Calculation also includes the data on exercising temporary right for restoration of Georgian citizenship.

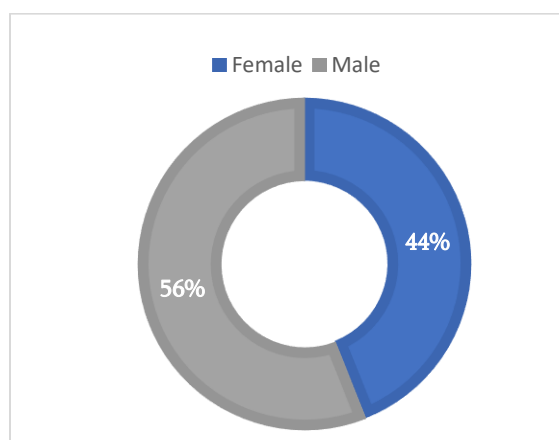
Number of persons granted Georgian citizenship by years



Source: PSDA

As for the gender distribution of persons granted Georgian citizenship, in 2022 the share of men (56%) slightly exceeds that of women (44%).

Gender distribution of persons granted Georgian citizenship in 2022



Source: PSDA

In 2022, the majority of persons who were granted Georgian citizenship were citizens of Russia, Armenia, Ukraine, Israel, USA and Greece. **It is noteworthy that based on different data sources; these are the major destination countries for Georgian emigrants, indicating that Georgian citizenship is mainly granted to either former Georgian citizens or persons originating from Georgia.**

LEGAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

In December 2022, “Organic Law on Georgian Citizenship” was amended³² extending until 31 December 2024 period to apply for the retention, restoration, granting (under

³² <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5644292?publication=0>

the special rule, which is applicable for the persons born in Georgia) and determination of Georgian citizenship. The amendments aim to ensure the access to the right to apply for Georgian citizenship by restoration of citizenship on the temporary basis and retaining Georgian citizenship to the maximum extent. These amendments derived from the fact that high number of former Georgian citizens applying for restoration and retaining of Georgian citizenship.

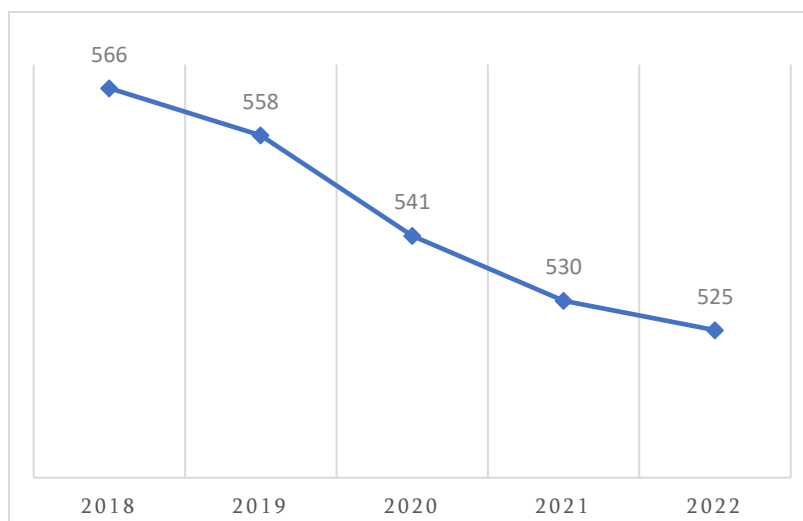
In October 2022, the GoG amended its Ordinance #508. Upon the amendment, a service fee for granting Georgian citizenship under the regular procedure (Article 1, para. 6) for the stateless persons has been abolished. Amendment aimed at supporting facilitated naturalization for the stateless persons in Georgia and approximation of Georgian practice to the best international standards and meeting the requirements under the UN 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (Article 32) to the maximum extent.

8.2 STATELESSNESS

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

In 2022, number of recognized stateless persons in Georgia amounted 525. In 2018-2022, the total number of recognized stateless persons decreased slightly, but did not change much and remained stable.

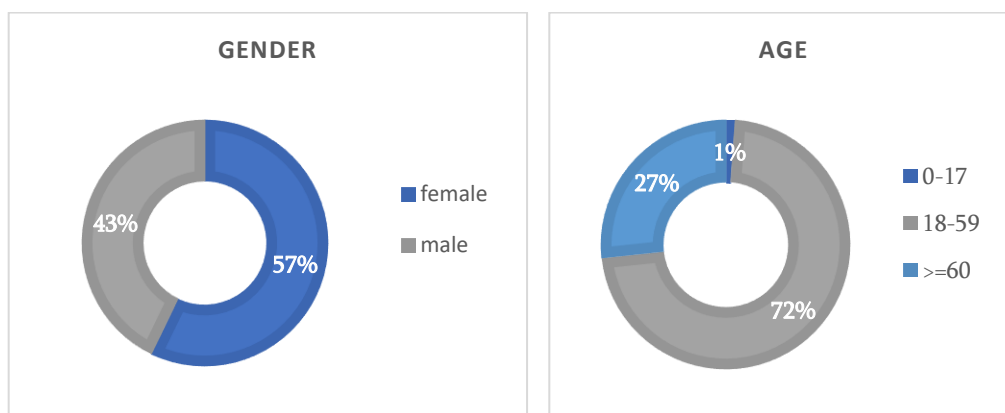
Total number of recognized stateless persons by year



Source: PSDA

As for the gender distribution, in 2022 it was more or less equal, with the share of women (57%) surpassing that of men (43%). As for the age groups, most of the stateless persons belong to 18-59 age group, constituting 72% of the total number in 2022.

Distribution of stateless persons in 2022 by gender and age



Source: PSDA

LEGAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

In order to proactively identify and reduce statelessness in the country, in April-December 2022, the PSDA in close cooperation with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Office in Georgia implemented the project - "Implementation of the Door-to-Door Campaign"³³. The Project aimed at proactively identifying and documenting stateless persons in Georgia, through the field works in the settlements where potential stateless persons were living. Within the Project, data on 762 persons were collected and analysed, 35 persons have been documented (either granted Georgian citizenship or determined stateless status) and five cases were in progress (as of December 2022). Noteworthy, implementation of the Campaign corresponded to the Action 10: Improve quantitative and qualitative data on stateless population of the "2014 – 2024 Global AP to End Statelessness" that was among the pledges undertaken by the GoG at UNHCR ExCom Session in 2019.

On 21 April 2022, the GoG amended its Ordinance #508³⁴ and abolished a service fee for the stateless status determination. Thus, since April 2022, PSDA provides stateless status determination procedure for the applicants free of charge and stateless persons as representatives of vulnerable group may not be able to pay a service fee for the status determination. Moreover, on 26 October 2022, the GoG decreased by 50% a service fee for issuing an electronic residence card to the persons holding stateless status in Georgia³⁵. This change aimed to support provision of documentation of stateless persons.

In October 2022, the PSDA aiming at presenting Georgia's best practice, participated in UNHCR's consultations dedicated to the identification of stateless persons and statelessness determination procedures, held in Madrid, Spain³⁶. The regional

³³ <https://justice.gov.ge/?m=articles&id=fJZ27v0T3C&lang=2>

³⁴ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5443968?publication=0>

³⁵ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5597030?publication=0>

³⁶ https://sda.gov.ge/?us_portfolio=19329

consultations brought together some 40 governmental experts from 31 European countries and provided a platform for exchange experience and good practices on identifying and protecting stateless persons.

On 8 November 2022, Georgia hosted a study visit of representatives from the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The study visit aimed to facilitate the sharing of experiences and best practices by the Georgian authorities dealing with citizenship and statelessness issues, including: coordination mechanisms; inter-agency cooperation between government, civil society and international organizations and other stakeholders; and the impact of acceding to the UN Statelessness Conventions³⁷.

The SCMI Working Group on Statelessness approved the Statelessness AP for 2023. The AP consists of activities aimed at further improving the statelessness related procedures, facilitation of naturalization and enhancing integration services for stateless persons.

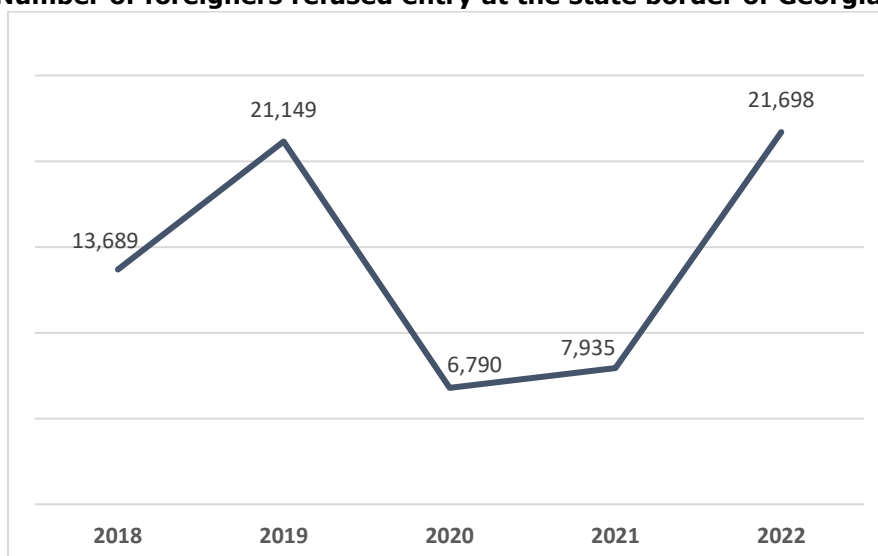
9. BORDERS and VISAS

9.1. BORDER MANAGEMENT

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

In parallel to the increased mobility in 2022, the number of foreigners refused entry at the state border of Georgia has also significantly increased (compared to 2021 it almost tripled).

Number of foreigners refused entry at the state border of Georgia³⁸



Source: MIA

³⁷ https://sda.gov.ge/?us_portfolio=19805

³⁸ Each person is counted only once within the reference period, irrespective of the number of refusals issued to the same person. Note: average statistical deviation margin +/-2.4%.

In 2022, the majority of persons refused entry to the territory of Georgia were citizens of Russia (41%) and Iran (15%).

LEGAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

In order to ensure improved border management through strengthened intra and inter-agency cooperation, as well as effective risk management and to introduce the unified analysis methodology the Border Management and Coordination Division within the Information-Analytical Department of the MIA has been established. The Division is responsible for the development of strategic/policy documents on border management within the Ministry, introduction and implementation of Border Integrated Risk Analysis Model and application of API/PNR system. The establishment of the Division will contribute to efficient border management through introducing common approach/unified vision as well as develop a standardized, modern methodology of Integrated Border Management (IBM).

With the financial support of the EU and in cooperation with the IOM, arrangement of the Border Surveillance System has been completed in 2022 on two sectors of the Georgia-Azerbaijani Segment of the State Border of Georgia.

9.2. REINFORCED COOPERATION IN THE AREA OF BORDER MANAGEMENT

In order to further enhance bilateral cooperation with partner countries and strengthen national integrated border management system, following activities were conducted in 2022:

- Partnership Agreement was signed between heads of the MIA Georgian Border Police (GBP) and the State Border Guard of Latvia³⁹. State Border Guard of Latvia will handover Augusta Bell 206b Jet ranger III type helicopter to the GBP;
- Agreement was signed with the French company “Airbus Helicopters” - Concerning the purchase of three new helicopters for the GBP;
- Within the frames of the MIA-Frontex cooperation deployment of Police Officers - Georgian patrol police officer was placed in Chisinau International Airport supporting Moldovan colleagues in profiling citizens of Georgia.

9.3. GEORGIAN VISAS

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

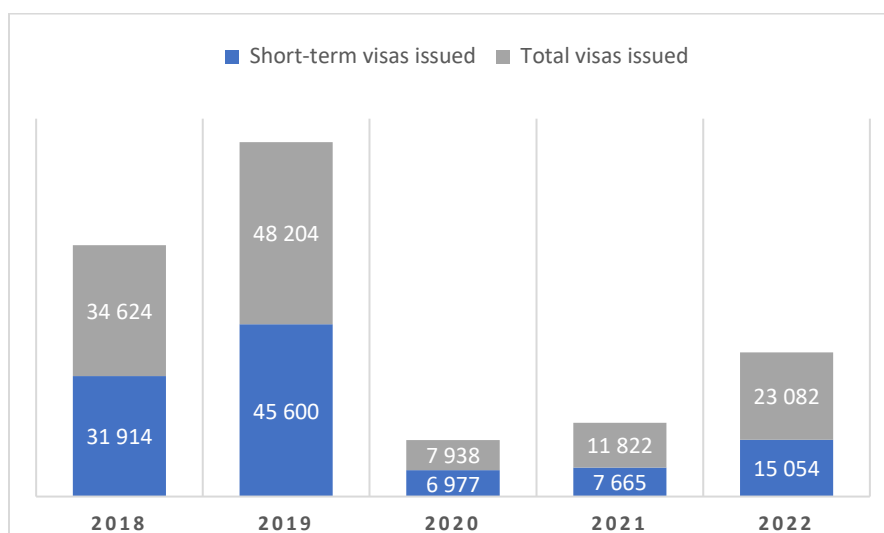
In 2022, 23 082 Georgian visas were issued to foreign citizens, from which 15 054 were short-term visas⁴⁰. The majority of issued visas has always been short-term

³⁹ <https://police.ge/en/shinagan-saqmeta-saministros-delegatsia-ofitsialuri-samushao-vizitit-latviis-respublikashi-imkofeboda/15269>

⁴⁰ Short-term visa shall be issued to foreigner when the overall duration of stay in Georgia shall not exceed 90 calendar days in any 180-day period. Short-term visas of Georgia: 1) Diplomatic (A1; A3; A4; A5); 2) Special (B1; B4); 3) Ordinary (C1; C2; C3; C4); 4) Transit (T).

ones, but the share changed over the years: in 2018, it amounted 92%, while in 2022 it decreased to 65%.

Number of short-term and all types of visas issued



Source: MFA

In 2022, most frequently, Georgian short-term visas were issued to citizens of China (39%) and India (14%).

Short-term visas issued by year and citizenship

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
China 21 009	China 30 811	China 3 635	China 4 861	China 5 820
India 4 993	India 8 161	India 1 660	Egypt 787	Egypt 2 061
Egypt 1 468	Egypt 2 017	Philippines 504	Philippines 483	India 1 488
Philippines 1 006	Philippines 1 597	Egypt 452	Indonesia 171	Philippines 1 462
Indonesia 504	Indonesia 577	North Macedonia 192	India 157	Indonesia 551
Other 2 883	Other 2 373	Other 520	Other 1 184	Other 3 645
Total 31 914	Total 45 600	Total 6 977	Total 7 665	Total 15 054

Source: MFA

LEGAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

In order to expand visa-free travel opportunities for citizens of Georgia, agreement with the United Arab Emirates on mutual visa exemption entered into force on 14 June 2022⁴¹. Hence, ordinary passport holder citizens of both countries are able to enter transit and stay in the territory of each state without a visa up to 90 days from the date of entry.

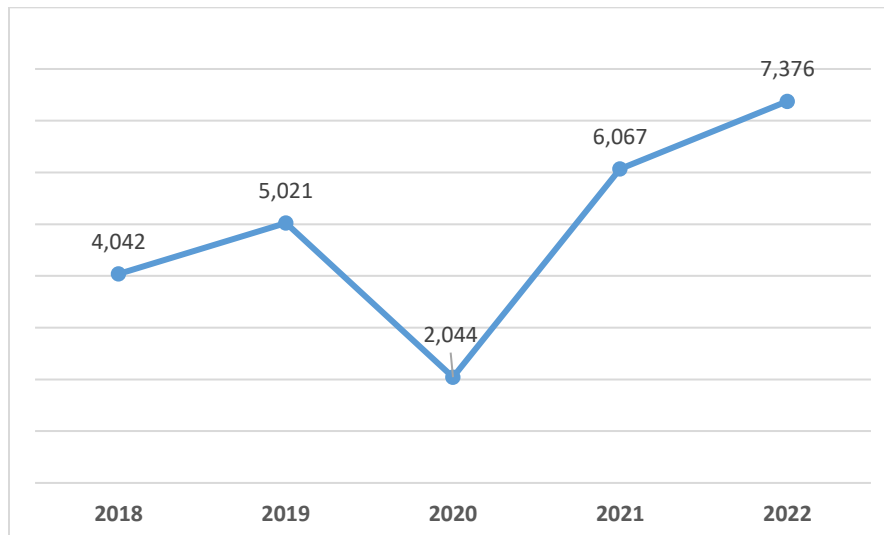
⁴¹ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5499532?publication=0>

10. IRREGULAR MIGRATION INCLUDING MIGRANT SMUGGLING

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

In parallel with increased international mobility, the number of foreigners found to be illegally present⁴² has also raised. The only exception was 2020 when the rate diminished significantly: the number reduced by 59% compared to 2019. Starting from 2021 the number has increased almost three times and in 2022 reached the highest mark in last five years.

Number of foreigners found to be illegally present by years



Source: MIA

Number of foreigners found to be illegally present by year and citizenship

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
CHINA	658	1 147	471	838	2 098
RUSSIA	306	280	129	900	814
AZERBAIJAN	192	146	54	950	760
IRAN	1 386	1 781	480	386	723
TURKEY	138	152	48	520	385
OTHER	1 362	1 515	862	2 473	2 596

Source: MIA

⁴² Foreigners who are detected at the border crossing points of Georgia, while leaving the country, and have been determined to be illegally present in the country since the expiration of visa validity (in accordance with Art. 47 of Law of Georgia on The Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons, Art. 190 of the Administrative Offences Code of Georgia). This category may relate to persons who may have entered legally but have subsequently remained on an illegal basis. Each person is counted only once within the reference period.

11. TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

In 2022, three victims of THB crime were identified⁴³, two of them were citizens of Azerbaijan and one citizen of Georgia. Two out of three trafficking victims identified were male and one female victim was below 18 year.

Out of three THB cases, one case was unlawful transaction in relation to human being, one case of sale of human being and one case of engaging person in criminal activity.

In 2022, a total number of five traffickers arrested as suspects (prosecuted) and two were convicted.

11.2. NATIONAL STRATEGIC POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

In December 2022, the “Interagency Coordinating Council for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (THB)” approved– “2023-2024 AP on Action against THB”⁴⁴. The AP includes responses on international assessments inter alia recommendations reflected in the 2022 US State Department’s Report on THB. Moreover, new AP activities are focused on prevention THB crime, on refinement mechanisms to detect THB crime and ensure effective criminal prosecution, as well as on facilitation of the reintegration of victims/statutory victims of THB to the local society and provide coordinated action / cooperation against THB. The policy document outlined the steps to be implemented over the next two years in the area of THB, the implementation of which is mandatory for the member agencies of the Interagency Council.

According to the US State Department’s “2022 Trafficking in Persons Report”⁴⁵, Georgia still maintains its position on the highest level - in the first tier, and is among the top 30 countries in the world that fully meet anti-trafficking standards and continuously pursue consistent and coordinated anti-trafficking measures⁴⁶.

11.3. IMPROVING DETECTION, IDENTIFICATION OF AND PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO FOREIGN NATIONAL VICTIMS OF THB

TRAINING AND AWARENESS RAISING

Through various information campaigns conducted in close cooperation with IOM in 2022, up to 35 000 flyers on the issues of human trafficking in Georgian, English, Russian and Turkish languages were disseminated at the seven border crossing points of Georgia (Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi Airports; Sarpi, Dariali, Red Bridge, Sadakhlo BCPs). In addition, more than 1 320 brochures on trafficking were handed over to the population during the meetings. The information meetings were held in Guria

⁴³ ‘Identified’ victims are those whom have been formally identified by the relevant authority (i.e. the national person/body authorised to formally identify victims).

⁴⁴ <https://justice.gov.ge/files/6VpU8Z8N7J2G.pdf>

⁴⁵ <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/20221020-2022-TIP-Report.pdf>

⁴⁶ <https://justice.gov.ge/?m=articles&id=pSD1CfiPuo&lang=2>

region, where topics related to forced labour with a particular focus on child labour exploitation, relevant legislative and institutional framework, as well as available state services were covered. In the past years, large-scale awareness-raising events have been restricted due to COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, the steps taken in the mentioned direction in 2022 had a special importance.

MoJ in close cooperation with the partner agencies (MIA, the Office of the Prosecutor General, Agency for State Care and Assistance to (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking and Labour Inspection Service) and international organizations organized oral rounds of the Moot Court competition on THB⁴⁷. The event was devoted to the International Day against THB.

In order to strengthen capacity of the relevant personnel on THB, several trainings were organized in 2022 period:

- On 2-3 May 2022, a training on "Best practice of investigating cases of child exploitation taking into account a multidisciplinary approach" was conducted for 22 employees of the Prosecutor's Office and the MIA of Georgia. The training was led by the expert from Moldova;
- On 7-8 April 2022, MoJ in cooperation with IOM organized a training on forced labour and labour exploitation. 36 employees of the LEPL Labour Inspection Service took part in the training led by the invited expert;
- On 7-11 November 2022, the first national simulation-based training on THB was held⁴⁸. About 40 investigators, prosecutors, labour inspectors, psychologists, social workers and staff working with victims took part in the training;
- On 6-8 December 2022, in close coordination with the MoJ the IOM conducted training for border control officials on THB⁴⁹. The training was led by subject-matter expert from Greece. About 25 participants representing different state institutions and deployed at land, air and sea border crossing points of Georgia benefited from the training.

11.4. COOPERATION WITH FOREIGN COUNTRIES

To improve international cooperation and introduce best practices against THB, several capacity-building activities were organized:

- On 29-30 June 2022, bilateral meetings between colleagues from Georgia and Uzbekistan were held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, to discuss existing challenges on Human Trafficking and strengthen cooperation in the field of prevention and effective identification of THB cases, as well as protection and reintegration of

⁴⁷ <http://www.tcj.gov.ge/ka/news/752/>

⁴⁸ <https://justice.gov.ge/?m=events&date=2022-11-11&lang=2>

⁴⁹ <https://georgia.iom.int/news/interdisciplinary-training-georgian-border-control-officials>

the victims. The meetings were held in close cooperation with IOM and financial support of United States Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL);

- Within the framework of the project “Joint Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons” (IACTA), three investigators from Georgia (Adjara Police Department) participated in the inter-agency meeting held in 28 June - 1 July 2022 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan;
- On 17-18 March 2022, regional workshop “Enhancing response to trafficking in persons, particularly in women and girls for sexual exploitation, through cross-border criminal justice cooperation in Southern Caucasus and Central Asia” was held in Georgia⁵⁰. The event was organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in cooperation with the Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia, funded by the MFA of Sweden. The workshop gathered states of origin, transit and destination, with a focus on Central Asia and Southern Caucasus regions.

12. RETURN AND READMISSION

12.1. RETURN

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

In 2022, there was significant increase in the number of foreigners ordered to leave Georgia, as well as in the execution rate of these decisions. Both indicators almost doubled in 2022 compared to the previous year.

Number of foreigners OTL and number of foreigners returned following an OTL by years

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of foreigners ordered to leave (OTL)	110	126	63	128	266
Number of foreigners returned to foreign country following an OTL	101	104	49	77	165

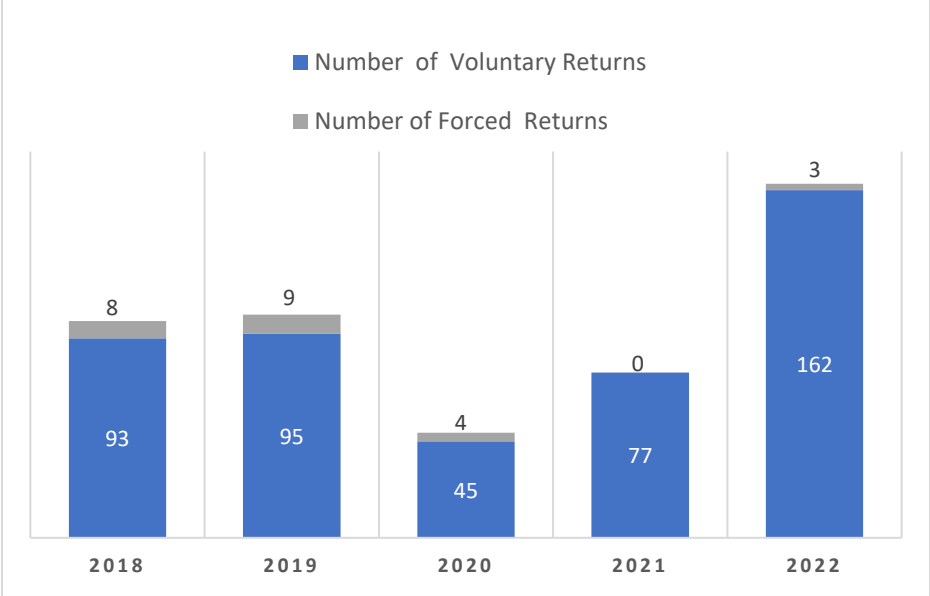
Source: MIA

In 2022, majority of foreigners OTL were citizens of Iran (24%), India (14%), Nigeria (9%) and Turkey (9%). As for the foreigners returned in 2022 following an OTL, the majority were citizens of Iran (18%), Turkey (15%) and Azerbaijan (13%).

⁵⁰ https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/CASC/news-and-events-casc-workshop-on-trafficking-in-persons_tbilisi.html

In 2022, 162 foreigners voluntarily left the country based on OTL. This is the highest number in last five years. As for the number of forced returns, it slightly decreased since 2018-2019 years.

Number foreigners who left the territory of Georgia by type of return and year



Source: MIA

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