

# Missionary Atlas Project

## Europe

### Georgia

#### Snapshot Section

Country Name:

Conventional Long Form: None

Conventional Short Form: Georgia

Local Long Form: None

Local Short Form: Sak'art'velo

Former: Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic

Country Founded In:

April 9, 1991 (date of independence from the Soviet Union)

Population:

4,646,003 (July 2007 est.)

Government Type (national, regional, local):

Republic

Geography/Location in the World:

Southwestern Asia, bordering the Black Sea, between Turkey and Russia

Number of People Groups:

4 People groups with 2.5% unspecified

Picture of Flag:



<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook>

Religion Snapshot

Major Religion and Percent of Population:

Orthodox Christian 83.9%

All Religions and Percent for Each:

Orthodox Christian 83.9%

Muslim 9.9%

Armenian-Georgian 3.9%

Catholic 0.8%

Other 0.8%

None 0.7%

### Government Interaction with Religion

The Constitution allows for freedom of religion and the Government usually respects this practice, although local authorities sometimes restrict the rights of nontraditional religious minority groups.

Sources: [www.cia.gov/library/publications](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications); <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/35455.htm>

## Country Profile

### Basic Facts

**Name:**

Georgia (Sak'art'velo)

**Demographics**

The current population of Georgia as of July, 2007 is 4,646,003. The population growth rate as estimated in 2007 is -0.329%.

The capital of Georgia is T'bilisi.

Approximately 11.9% of the population in Georgia is over the age of 65.

In 1998 for every sq km there were 78 people. There was an increase in the population living in urban areas from 52% in 1980 up to 61% in 2000. Several other cities in Georgia are Kutaisi has the approximate population of 236,000 and Rustavi has 160,000 people.

**Age Structure:**

0-14 years: 16.7% (male 413,506/female 364,407)

15-64 years: 66.6% (male 1,489,081/female 1,605,021)

65 years and over: 16.7% (male 311,098/female 462,890) (2007 est.)

**Median Age:**

Total: 38 years

Male: 35.5 years

Female 40.4 years (2007 est.)

**Birth Rate:**

10.54 births/1,000 population (2007 est.)

**Death Rate:**

9.37 deaths/1,000 population (2007 est.)

**Life Expectancy at Birth:**

Total Population: 76.3 years

Male: 73 years

Female: 80.07 years (2007 est.)

1.42 children born/woman (2007 est.)

The population of Georgia is a majority of Georgians with 83.8%. The Net Migration rate is - 4.45 migrants/1,000 population. The other part of the Georgian population is Azeri 6.5%, Armenian 5.7%, Russians 1.5%, and other 2.5% (2002 census).

Sources: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>; Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations Europe 10<sup>th</sup> Edition Volume 5 2001

### **Language:**

The language in Georgia is a South Caucasian language referred to as Kartveli by the native speakers. The alphabet that is phonetic with 33 symbols. The literature dates all the way back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. The official language is Georgian which is spoken by 71% of the population. Other languages that are used in Georgia are Russian spoken by 71% of the population, Armenian by 7%, Azeri by 6%, and many other languages. Abkhaz is the official language in Abkhazia.

<http://www.aboutgeorgia.net/language/>

### **Society/Culture:**

As part of the rites of passage in the Georgian culture each day of the year is given a name that is a saint's name and anyone with that same name can celebrate on that day. Two other events that are important to the Georgian people are the Orthodox baptism and wedding.

Several values that are important to Georgians and help them to define themselves are the values of honor and shame, traditions, loyalty to friends and kin, and generosity towards guests. The friendships that are made among people in Georgia last for a lifetime. The word Georgian's use to describe friendships is megobari, which means to have "shared your eating bowl." It is highly valued to be friendly and kind to your neighbors. Relationships that the family has will possibly help to send a child to university, help a family member to receive a promotion or even help a friend of the family to get in on the starting a of a business. In Georgia if you chose to not help out a family member in a time of need will mark you as a dishonorable person.

When a guest crosses the threshold of a home. Georgians will welcome them in keeping with their proverb, "a guest is sent by God." Georgian society requires that when a guest comes to a home, the homeowner should give welcome and also offer some type of food. The bringing together of family and friends in Georgia is an opportunity to honor one of your friends. During the dinner Georgians share gossip, honor the Georgian tradition, or to remember the dead. The Keipi, which is the name for feast, is very large especially if someone in the family is to marry or if there is a death in the family. During the feasts some of the topics for discussion are long toasts about tradition, family, friends, and the love of one's family. When entering the home of family or a close friend as a guest, a visitor should bring either chocolate or flowers as a gift.

Several traditions that Georgians have are to stand up when someone enters the room, greet someone properly, and don't sit with your back to someone. One of the Pagan customs that is

still prominent today relates to the time before heading off on a journey. Georgians will sit on their suitcases for a few seconds to ensure that they will have safe travels.

Food is very important to the Georgian culture. The guests in the home of a Georgian will be given the opportunity to take part in dish after dish. Some types of food that might be found in the Georgian feast would be food with a flare of Turkish, Greek, Arabic, and possibly some Indian types. As a guest when your plate becomes empty the host is there to offer you another dish to partake of. Walnuts are a popular item to appear in dishes. The walnuts grow abundantly on the sides of the highways. Wine is an essential part of the meal with it being made both red and white wines. Sweets are made throughout Georgia but the most popular is extravagantly prepared cakes.

Singing in Georgia dates as far back as the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Many of the performing choirs in Georgia are male, but women are a part of the choirs that perform in churches. The Gurians in West Georgia are known for their yodeling. A lot of the people in Georgia are able to play either the piano or the guitar which are popular for helping to accompaniment. Two other instruments that are played are the duduki which is a double reed instrument like the clarinet or the panduri which is a three-stringed lute and these two instruments especially are used to accompany urban folk songs.

Georgians love to go to the theater and classical concerts. Several of the famous classical performers in Georgia are pianists Alexander Toradze and Eliso Virsaladze, violinist Leana Isakadze, and bass Paata Buchuladze. Georgia also has its own symphony orchestra, dance, opera, and ballet companies. The current political and economic situations have not allowed people to continue performing in these different companies. As of today the Georgian film industry has collapsed. Book publishing has almost ceased to exist because no one is able to buy books anymore.

By the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century the Bible had been translated into the Georgian language along with other religious works. An early book written about the history of Georgia is the Kartlis Tskhovreba, which goes back to the early years of Christianity in Georgia.

In looking at another part of the culture of Georgia it can be seen that poetry is a very crucial part. One of the most famous Georgian poets is Shota Rustaveli. He discusses friendship, lost love, and infatuation in the title of his work "The Knight in the Tiger's Skin." Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a renaissance of Georgian literature and some of the famous ones were Ilia Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli, Galaktion Tabidze, Vazha Pshavela, and Ana Kalandadze.

During the 1930s however Stalin had many of the writers killed because he did not want Georgia to remain a country with a strong sense of who they were as a nation. The Georgian writers however were able to remain highly lyrical due to love of country and nostalgia for the past. Some of the great poets from Georgia who are Konstantine Gamsakhurdia's "The Hand of the Great Master," and Galaktion Tabidze's poems "The Moon of Mtatsminda" and "The Wind Blows."

The Georgian folklore and folk poetry which makes just as a large part of their literary collection as other literary texts, it is made up of mythological characters, magicians, beasts, heros, and spirits many of these characters are preserved in song, and in superstitions surrounding birth, death, the New Year, and harvest festivals. For example some of the people showing up in the Georgian folk poetry are mzetunakhavi (who is the most beautiful woman in the world), modzalade devi (a violent beast sometimes with three heads), and natsarkekia (a ne'er-do-well). The first work of Georgian folklore was published in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Several other mythological works such as the Bahlavariani, Amiraniani, Visramiani, and Rostomiani these tales were penned in the middle ages and their roots go back to Buddhist, Persian, Greek and Christian sources.

#### National Holidays:

- New Year's Day January 1
- Christmas Day January 7
- Epiphany January 19
- Mother's Day March 3
- Easter (TBD)
- Independence Day May 26
- Constitution Day August 24
- Mariamoba August 28
- Svetitskhovloba October 14
- Giorgoba (St. George's Day) November 23

Source: Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life Vol. 4 Timothy L. Gall, Editor 1998; <http://ggdavid.tripod.com/georgia/holidays.htm>

#### **Government:**

Georgia's government is a republic. There are several administrative divisions within this there are 9 regions, 9 cities and 2 autonomous republics. The regions are Guria, Imereti, Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti, Samegrelo and Zemo Svaneti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Shida Kartli. The cities are Chiat'ura, Gori, K'ut'aisi, P'ot'I, Rus'avi, Tbilisi, Tibuli, Tsqaltubo, Zugdidi. The autonomous republics are Abkhazia or Ap'khazet'is Avtonomiuri Respublika (Sokhumi) and Acharis Avtonomiuri Respublika (Bat'umi). The places in parenthesis are the administrative centers for the two autonomous republics.

Georgia is based upon a civil law system and accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction.

The universal age of suffrage in Georgia is 18 years of age for all citizens.

The three branches that make up Georgia's government are executive, legislative, and judicial.

#### Executive Branch:

Chief of State: President Mikheil Saakashvili (came into office January 25, 2004) the president is both the chief of state and the head of the government for the power ministries; ministries: state security (includes interior) and defense

Head of Government: President Mikheil Saakashvili (since January 25, 2004); Prime Minister Zurab Noghaideli (the president is the head of the remaining ministries)

Cabinet: Cabinet of Ministers (president elected by a popular vote for a five-year term)

**Legislative Branch:**

The legislative branch is made up of a unicameral Supreme Court (also known as parliament) or Umaghiesi Sabcho. It is made up of 235 seats 150 of the members are elected by proportional representation, 75 from single-seat constituencies, and 10 represent displaced persons from Abkhazia and they each serve 5 year terms.

The last elections were held March 28, 2004 and the next ones to be held in spring 2008.

**Judicial Branch:**

Supreme Court: (judges elected by the Supreme Council on the president's or chairman of the Supreme Court's recommendation)

Constitutional Court: (first and second instance courts)

**Political Parties and Leaders:**

Burjanadze-Democrats

Georgian People's Front

Georgian United Communist Party or UCPG

Georgia's Way Party

Greens

Industry Will Save Georgia (Industrialists) or IWSG

Labor Party

National Democratic Party or NDP

National Movement Democratic Front

National Movement

New Rights

Republican Party

Rightist Opposition

Socialist Party or SPG

Traditionalists

Union of National Forces-Conservatives

Source: [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html)

**Economy:**

In 1998 the GDP grew by 4%. Georgia is experiencing an annual GDP rate of 8% and this estimate goes back to 2006. Much of the power does not come from Georgia. The country is looking to building the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum. These projects have brought into the country much needed opportunity for job opportunities and also for investment. The country is looking to long-term growth to come through pipelines and trade.

Currency: lari (GEL)

Lari per US dollar: 1.78 to one US dollar

GDP Purchasing Power Parity: \$17.88 billion

GDP Official Exchange Rate: \$5.234 billion  
GDP Real Growth Rate: 8%  
GDP Per Capita: (PPP): \$3,800

GDP Composition by Sector:

Agriculture: 17.7%  
Industry: 27.5%  
Services: 54.8%

Inflation Rate (Customer Prices): 10%

Labor Force: 2.04 million (2004 est.)

Labor Force by Occupation:

Agriculture: 40%  
Industry: 20%  
Services: 40% (1999 est.)

Primary Agriculture Products:

- Citrus
- Grapes
- Tea
- Hazelnuts
- Vegetables
- Livestock

Export Partners:

- United Kingdom 21.5%
- Turkey 16.9%
- United States 5.8%
- Spain 5.8%
- Azerbaijan 5.6%
- Turkmenistan 5.1%

(est. 2006)

Import Partners:

- Russia 17%
- Turkey 12.3%
- United States 7.9%
- Azerbaijan 7.8%
- Ukraine 7.4%
- Germany 7.1%
- Italy 4.9%

(est. 2006)



The main industries in Georgia are steel, aircraft, machine tools, electrical appliances, mining (manganese and copper), chemicals, wood products, and wine. The imports that are much needed by the people of Georgia are fuels, machinery and parts, transport equipment, grain and other foods, and pharmaceuticals.

Sources: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>; Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations: Europe, 10 Edition 2001

### **Literacy:**

All Georgians that are age 15 or older are able to read and write.

Total Population: 100%

Male: 100%

Female: 100% (2004 est.)

In looking at the history of Georgia and its school system there has been a lot of achievement in this area. Academies and monasteries have been crucial to Georgia in keeping alive the heritage especially during times in which the country was occupied by outside groups.

During the time that the Soviets were occupying Georgia mass education was installed and today there is free and compulsory education. As a result illiteracy has been completely eliminated within Georgia. In 1979, 30.7% of Georgia's population had completed higher or specialized education. From the time that children are 6 until the age of 15 they attend general school that encompasses the curriculum of geography, Georgian literature, history, physics, chemistry, choir, and foreign languages.

The Russian language is the most taught in Georgia although English is the most popular language. If the students when they complete their general schooling can pass an exam, they qualify for two more years of school either in the secondary or vocational school. Students must complete 11 years of school to be eligible for university that lasts for five years. During 1987 and 1988, 16.3 per every 1,000 Georgians were attending university compared with 11.2 in the UK and 14.2 in Japan. Today there are 93,000 students in universities either in state or private institutions.

Children learn a large majority of poetry and are able to recite it by heart once they have completed school. Students in Georgia must complete their final exams as oral and they are given a score from 1 to 5 and if they are able to succeed and make all 5's then they are known as khutosani (a "fiver"). Students do not have to wear uniforms however they are to stand when a teacher enters the classroom. The schools that are presently in Georgia are in extremely bad shape. The students do not have the materials that they need to be able to fully learn. Some students are without textbooks, computers, science equipment, or even sitting in a classroom with leaky roofs. The students are unable to have heat in the winters and the teachers are not being paid what they should be receiving.

Source: Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life Vol. 4 Europe 1998

### **Land/Geography:**



Georgia is located in the Southwestern portion of Asia, bordering the Black Sea, between Turkey and Russia. The total area of Georgia is 69,700 square kilometers. It is slightly smaller than South Carolina.

The countries that border Georgia are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia and Turkey.

The climate of Georgia is warm and pleasant especially on the Mediterranean-like Black Sea Coast. The terrain in Georgia is largely mountainous with Great Caucasus Mountains in the north and Lesser Caucasus Mountains in the south. Kolkhet' is Dablobi (Kolkhida Lowland) opens to the Black Sea in the west. In the east is the Mtkvari River Basin. In the foothills of the Kolkhinda Lowland good soils in the river valley flood the plains and also the foothills.

The natural resources in Georgia are forests, hydropower, manganese deposits, iron ore, copper, minor coal, and oil deposits. The coastal climates and soils allow for important tea and citrus growth. A natural hazard in Georgia are earthquakes. Some of the current environmental issues you will find are air pollution especially in Rust'avi; heavy pollution of the Mtkvari River and the Black Sea; inadequate supplies of potable water; and soil pollution from toxic chemicals. Georgia is strategically located east of the Black Sea. Georgia also controls much of the Caucasus Mountains and the routes through them.

Source; <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

## History

Georgia's history can be traced back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and the classical period. Georgia has been overrun by the Romans, Iranians, the Arabs, the Turks, the Mongols, and the Hordes of Tamerlane. From the 6<sup>th</sup> century until the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Georgia enjoyed peace. By 1236 Georgia had been overtaken and the Mongols had control. After the Mongols the Ottoman and Persian empires fought to control Georgia. The Western part of Georgia became a Russian protectorate in 1783. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century the entire country of Georgia had been made part of the Russian Empire.

On May 26, 1918 Georgia declared its independence. Twenty-two countries accepted Georgia's independence. Even Soviet Russia accepted them as a country. In February 1921 Georgia was invaded and taken over by the Soviets, therefore losing their independence.

The Georgian people fell in the 1920s and 1930s to Soviet collectivization, industrialization, and Stalin's purges. Nationalist riots were held to a minimum in 1924 and 1956, and other nationalist demonstrations in 1978 and 1988. In April of 1989 there was a peaceable protest against Russian

support for Abkhaz's autonomy. Those demonstrating were murdered by the Soviet military and police forces with shovels.

In October 1990, Georgia's first multiparty legislative elections were held and a victory was achieved for the party coalition Round Table Free Georgia. This group was led by Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Following in March 1991 a referendum or a formal declaration of independence was approved by the legislature on April 9. Gamsakhurdia officially became president in May of 1991 representing the National Congress which was a national liberation body that formed in October 1990.

Gamsakhurdia faced opposition as he tried to re-create Georgia's society and politics. Due to the changes that were being made by Gamsakhurdia, Tengiz Kitovani, who was the head of the National Guard, went over to the opposition side. The National Guard led by Mkhedrioni led an effort to overthrow Gamsakhurdia in 1991. In response, Gamsakhurdia left the country in early 1992.

Ioseliani, Kitovani, and others took power and the Soviet-era constitution was suspended. The country returned to the constitution of 1921. The legislature was abolished and an emergency group assumed a ruling function in the country. In March of 1992, Shevardnadze (headed up the Communist Party Georgia from 1972 until 1985) was asked to come and take over by providing an interim government. In taking over Shevardnadze formed a civilian State Council to take over the duties of ruling the country until there was a chance to have an election. He was chosen to be head of the four member presidium.

In October of 1992 Shevardnadze was elected to be the speaker without anyone running against him. Once he was elected as speaker, the new government gave him the responsibility head of state until the new constitution was officially in place. After Shevardnadze took his role in the government then he moved to get Kitovani and Ioseliani to resign in trying to secure his power.

In September of 1993 Gamsakhurdia returned to the country of Georgia, entered the western part of Georgia, Mingrelia, and led a revolt to overthrow Shevardnadze. The revolt was, however, taken over and silenced in early November 1993 by Pro-Shevardnadze forces along with the Russian military. In January of 1994 Gamsakhurdia's death was reported. Shevardnadze continued to gain power by having Kitovani arrested for planning an illegal parliamentary attack on Abkhazia in January 1995.

Georgia's ethnic minorities increased their dissident and separatist actions in the late 1980s and early 1990s. South Ossetians wanted their part of Georgia to be joined with North Ossetia, in Russia, for independence. Gamsakhurdia which was Georgia's former president attempted to disrupt peace in 1990 causing 1,500 deaths and 50,000 ethnic Georgians to be displaced. In June of 1992 Yeltsin was able to bring about a cease-fire, after this a Russian peacekeeping military with about 500 soldiers was brought into South Ossetia. An established commission made up of OSCE, Russian, Georgian, and North and South Ossetian emissaries, now meets regularly about the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. Their peace keeping efforts remain to be determined.

In 1999 the meeting of the OSCE summit called the Georgians and the Southern Ossetians to allow those who had been displaced back in and for there to be aid given from international

sources to help them in this process. Shevardnadze praised the success between the Ossetians and the Georgians in the peacekeeping process during his State of the Nation address on February 9, 2000.

The Southern Ajaria part of Georgia is under a police state and does not adhere to national laws, but regional laws are very much enforced. For there to be any national law in this part of Georgia, Shevardnadze has had to negotiate to be able to put in place.

Due to the conflict that is currently in the Abkhaz region of Georgia over 10,000 deaths and 200,000 people have been displaced. Most of these people are ethnic Georgians. In July of 1992 the Abkhaz Supreme Soviet declared its independence from Georgia and this move caused Abkhaz to be attacked by Georgia's National Guard. The result was that a UN Security Council was sent into the country to help try and reach a settlement between the two groups.

In September of 1993, Russian and North Caucasian "volunteer forces" made up of separatist forces broke a cease-fire and quickly routed Georgian forces. Peace talks led by UN forces between Abkhaz-Georgian led to a cease-fire. Russians and OSCE were also apart of the talks. In April of 1994 an agreement was signed so that refugees could be returned along with displaced persons. A Quadripartite Commission composed of Abkhaz and Georgian representatives and emissaries from Russia and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees was set up to hold talks about repatriation. In the following month a peace-keeping treaty was signed allowing Russian troops to move into a security zone on the Inguri River which divides Abkhazia from the rest of Georgia. The Russian Defense Ministry in 1999 reported the deployment of about 1,700 troops to keep peace.

The US Special Negotiator is working on a peace settlement for Regional Conflicts. According to the United Nations Security Council settlement the UNOMIG forces are to "monitor and verify" the cease fire, "observe the operation of the CIS peacekeeping force," patrol the security zone, investigate and attempt to resolve violations of the cease-fire, and "contribute to conditions conducive to the safe and orderly return of refugees and displaced persons." Russian forces are being used and this helps to demonstrate a trust that has been placed in Russia. The UNOMIG is responsible for reports of cease-fire violations, and provide protection for UNOMIG's unarmed observers. The UN Security General and the UNSC have officially viewed the cooperation of the Russian peacekeepers with UNOMIG as mainly unobjectionable. Increasing attacks on UNOMIG forces have led to limited patrolling and added security measures.

A point that has caused much strife is Georgia's demand to allow persons who had been displaced to return to Abkhazia, so that a negotiation can take place for broad autonomy in Abkhazia. The Abkhazians want "equal status" with the Georgians as a pre-requisite for a large-scale repatriation. Shevardnadze was backed by CIS in 1997-98 called for creating a special Abkhaz-Georgian administration, with participation by UN and OSCE, to be able to have peace in the Abkhazia's Gali section of Georgia, and also to enlarge the security area and allow Russian peacekeepers police powers. Abkhazia on the other hand would not allow changes to the peacekeeping mandate. Shevardnadze saw and stated in 2000 that there was not a way around their presence since no other international force had volunteered to come forward.

In mid-1997 a Coordinating Council was set up with the intention of discussing cease-fire maintenance, refugee economics and humanitarian issues. An envoy oversaw the talks that were held by the Coordinating Council along with talks from the Quadripartite Commission from Vladislav Ardzinba; who was elected as president and the Georgian State Secretary. Abkhaz forces drove out 30 to 40 thousand ethnic Georgians living in the Gali area.

In June of 1999 in Istanbul the two sides decided to come together and continue contacts with a group which had intentions to separate the warring forces. In November of 1999 Georgia and Abkhazia were encouraged through the OSCE Summit Declaration to resume peace talks. The UN-OSCE tried to find a way so that power could be divided between Georgia and Abkhazia and condemned ethnic cleansing in the Gali region of Abkhazia. The UN-OSCE decided to send a mission to find out what the situation of ethnic cleansing was in the Gali region and to help those people who had been displaced to return to their homes. The OSCE claimed that there should not be a separatist presidential election and that a referendum of independence in Abkhazia was not contributing to a peace settlement.

Georgian State Minister Vazha Lortkipanidze visited Sukhumi in the first part of February 2000. The leaders decided to exchange prisoners and stabilize the opposing forces in the Gali and Zugdidi areas at the border. Some of the prisoners were exchanged, but there has not been major progress on peace talks.

In November of 1995 Eduard Shevardnadze was elected to the re-created post of president. He received 74.32% of the vote in a six-person race, and there was also a new parliament chosen. Internationally the elections were seen as fair and free across the nation except for the region of Ajaria.

On April 9, 2000 there were seven candidates running for president in the elections. There were two major challengers against Shevardnadze, Jumbar Patiashvili who was the former first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party and Aslan Abashidze who was the Chairman of the Ajarian Supreme Council. The two challengers were leaders of the Revival Bloc that contested last year's legislative races. Abashidze did not campaign for the race and ended up withdrawing before the elections because of an unfair contest. Other possible reason for him to withdraw was that Shevardnadze gave him local power and finances.

Voting did not happen in the regions of Abkhazia or South Ossetia. The Georgian CEC reported the results as Shevardnadze receiving 80% of the vote for 1.87 million people and Patiashvili receiving 17% of the vote. The 150 monitors of the OSCE stated that the April 10 election did not meet OSCE standards. It was stated however that freedom was given to the candidates who were given the opportunity to express their views and thoughts and issues throughout the election process. It was stressed that the government aided the incumbent, state media views were biased, vote counting and tabulation procedures were uniformity, and at points, ballot box stuffing had taken place, and some voting protocols reportedly had been tampered with.

While Shevardnadze was in office the people of Georgia felt very much at the mercy of poverty, corruption, and crime. He was removed from office in November of 2003 due to what took place during the parliamentary elections.

During the Soviet period, Georgia was a country of much affluence, but after that time the inability to get the cheaper gas prices caused the economy to fail. Georgia received its gas from Gazprom which is a Russian company and in 2006 there was a hike in gas prices and since that time the prices have more than doubled. Georgia has now made the decision to receive a large portion of their gas supply from Azerbaijan. Due to this decision made by Georgia, Moscow has now banned importing Georgian wine and mineral water that seems to be more of a political reason than anything else. In Russia the air since independence it has been very strained due to fighting and civil war. Russian troops have occupied parts of Georgia since the early 1990s. In 2005 Russia agreed to withdraw its troops from the provinces of Abkhazia and southern Georgia by 2008. The troops continued presence has caused strife and tension between Tbilisi and the Kremlin.

Mikhail Saakashvili became president in January of 2004. Saakashvili decided to consolidate his position after his National Movement of the Democratic Front won parliamentary elections. His group holds most of the seats whereas the opposition does not hold many seats. He has promised since becoming president to fight corruption, improve pay, pensions and living standards to help Georgia in moving towards membership in the EU and NATO.

Irakli Okruashvili was the prior defense minister in Georgia. While he was in Germany he made a statement that President Mikhail Saakashvili was a part of the corruption within the country and that he had plotted to kill a political opponent. When this statement was released the people of Georgia began to riot in the streets of the capitol. There had not been any rioting since the "Rose Revolution" in 2003. The people who came out to protest wanted the president to be removed from office. The rioters were standing on the fact that the government was not fighting poverty and that it was corrupt. After Okruashvili made the statement he later retracted his statement. It came out later that the retraction had been forced. Mr Saakashvili was forced to call a state emergency for the country of Georgia, but a few days later was able to retract the state of emergency for the country. Okruashvili did retract his statement, but he had been threatened with a long prison sentence if he chose not to retract the statement.

Source: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country\\_profiles/1102477.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/1102477.stm); Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations. 10<sup>th</sup> Edition Volume 5 Gale Group 2001; www.bbc.com

## **Religion:**

### **Non-Christian Religions:**

#### *Islam*

Nineteen percent of the people in Georgia follow the Islam faith. The people that make up this group are the Azeris, Kurds, Mingrelians, Ossetians, and 5% of ethnic Georgians.

#### *Non-religious*

In 2000 Atheism was held by 18 percent of the population.

## *Orthodox*

### The Georgian Orthodox Church

The Georgian Orthodox church is one of the most ancient churches in Christendom. In Georgia missionary work began during the time of Constantine while another tradition connects it all the way back to the Apostle Andrew. Due to the conflict being had between Byzantium and Persia the members of the Georgian church were caught in the crossfire of these two countries. Several times throughout its history, the Muslims ruled Georgia. Surprisingly, few Georgians chose to convert.

The Georgian church was responsible for preserving the history and culture throughout the turbulent years. In 1917 in Georgia there were 2,455 parishes and 15 dioceses where as in 1970 there were 80 officially recognized churches. In the 1970s there was a jump in church attendance by the younger generation.

In the early part of the 1990s patriarch Ilya II tried to encourage an increase in devotion by writing a prayer book with the purpose of calling people to spend time throughout their days praying and to go and do charity on Saturdays. In 1992 the president of Georgia Eduard Shevardnadze who was a proclaimed atheist and formerly a part of the Soviet Communist was baptized in the Orthodox cathedral of T'bilisi. Along with the president were many Georgians who were returning to their ancient faith. Georgian Orthodox missionaries are beginning to be sent out to countries around Georgia, although they usually only minister to ethnic Georgian enclaves.

The Georgian Orthodox Church began in 150. There are 500 congregations located across Georgia. The number of adults involved with the Georgian Orthodox church is 1,100,000. In 1995 there were 2,500,000 people affiliated.

### The Armenian Orthodox Church

The Armenian Orthodox Church has been present in Georgia since ancient times. In 1995 there were more than 340,000 affiliated made up of nearly all ethnic Armenians. Other Orthodox churches in Georgia with presence in Georgia are Russian, Ukrainian, and Assyrian churches.

## *Catholic Church:*

The Holy See has diplomatic relations with Georgia. They are represented in the government and the Catholic hierarchy by a nuncio in Tiflis. Catholicism in Georgia was suppressed from 1917 until 1990. It is now part of the Caucasus jurisdiction with 30 parishes.

Franciscan missionaries worked among the pagans of Georgia about 1230 then followed by the Dominicans. The church was never able to gain large numbers, but in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century there were no longer Catholic missions within the country. In 1920 it was estimated that there were 32,000 Latin-rite Catholics in and 8,000 Armenian-rite Catholics. Due to persecution and

emigration the population dropped to around 12,000 and then went back up again in 1995 when there were 50,000.

The Catholic Church has 30 congregations. There are 22,100 adults within the Catholic Church. There are 50,020 people affiliated with the church.

#### *Jehovah's Witnesses:*

The Jehovah's Witnesses became established in 1950.

### **Protestants/Evangelicals/Pentecostals**

#### *Baptist:*

Baptists in Georgia were established in 1872 and up now they have remained the largest Protestant church. In 1992 they were not allowed to print any materials, or obtain any property, because of the influence by hostile Orthodox priests. These officials threatened Baptists with violence. The patriarch spoke against Protestant witnessing, but spoke of Georgia's history of religious toleration.

The Baptists in Georgia have existed since 1872. There are 28 congregations with 12,200 adults. In 1995 there were 16,000 affiliated with the Baptist Church in Georgia.

Source: World Christian Encyclopedia 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2001

#### *Lutheran:*

The Lutherans of Georgia fall under the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Georgia. It has been established since 1960. There are two congregations with 1,000 adults. In 1995 there were 5,000 Georgians affiliated with the Lutheran church.

#### *Pentecostal:*

The Pentecostals are apart of the Independent Pentecostal Churches and have been around since 1980. There are 30 congregations that are made up by 2,500 adults. In 1995 there were 5,000 Latvians affiliated with the Pentecostal church.

#### *Seventh - day Adventist:*

The Seventh-day Adventist church was established in 1970. There is currently one congregation. There are 100 adults attending the church. The Seventh-day Adventist church had 170 affiliates in 1995.

### **People Groups:**

784

Abkhaz (85,000)

The Abkhaz are a Eurasian people of the Caucasus people cluster. Alternate names for the Abkhaz include Abkhazian, Abzhui, Bzyb, Abxazo, Apswa and Ubyx. The Abkhaz primary religion is Islam or Christianity.



The Abkhaz make up 0.7 percent of the evangelicals. There is currently no complete Bible translated into the Abkhaz language.

785

Armenian (347,000)

The primary language of the Armenians is Armenian. Alternate names for the Armenians are Armiane, Ermini, Western Armenian, Ermeni and Hai. The Armenians are of the Eurasian peoples in the Armenian people cluster.

Primary religion of the Armenians is Orthodox. 50% of the Armenians in Georgia are Armenian Orthodox. 1.5% of the Christians are evangelical.

00000

Assyrian, Aisor (13,000)

The Assyrians are an Arab World people of the Assyrian/Aramaic people cluster. Their primary language is Assyrian Neo-Aramaic. Alternate names for this group include Aisor, Eastern Syriac, Suret, Syriac, Urmi, Chaldean, Southern Assyrian, Swadaya and Syrian Aramaic.

They are 78% Christian, the percentage of evangelicals is unknown.

00000

Avar (4,000)

The Avars are a Eurasian people of the Caucasus people cluster. Alternate names for this people group include Batlux, Daghestani, Dagestani and Maarulal. Their primary language is Avar. Another major language for the Avars is Avar: Zaqatala.

Their primary religion is Sunni Islam. They are 0.01% Christian, with the percentage of evangelicals unknown.

787

Azerbaijani, North (282,000)

The Georgian Azerbaijani make up about 5% of Georgia's population. They are a Turkic People of the Azerbaijani people cluster. The primary language of the Azerbaijani North is Azerbaijani North. Other major languages spoken are Azerbaijani, North: Zaqatala.

Their primary religion is Islam. Most Azerbaijani work in the industrial sector of Georgia's economy. The Azerbaijani's in Georgia are 20% non-religious.

00000

Batsi, Tsova-Tush (3,200)

The Batsi, Tsova Tush are a Eurasian people of the Caucasus People Cluster. Alternate names for this people group include the Bac, Tsova-Tush and Batsbi.

Their primary religion is Sunni Islam. .06% of the Batsi are Christian.

00000

British (200)

The British of Georgia are located in the region of Eastern Europe and Eurasia on the continent of Europe. Other names that you might hear to refer to the British people are Anglo-Pakistani, Euronesian, Scottish, Anglophones, Scot, and White. They are a part of the Anglo-Celt people cluster. They speak English.

The primary religion is Christianity with a 70 percent adherence rate. It is not known however how many of these people evangelicals are.

00000

Bulgarian (600)

The Bulgarians are a Eurasian People of the Slav, Southern people cluster. Alternate names for this people group include Balgarski, Moldovian, Pomak, Bogomil and Palityan. Their primary language is Bulgarian.

72% are Christians, though the number of evangelicals is unknown.

Byelorussian (8,100)

The Byelorussians are a Eurasian people of the Slav, Eastern People cluster. An alternate name for this people group is Belarussian.

They are 70% Christian; the number of evangelicals is unknown.

24109

Chechen (600)

The primary language of the Chechens is Chechen. Primary religion is Sunni Islam. There few known believers. Alternate names for the Chechen are Nokhchi and Shishan. Chechens refugees, who mostly live in the location of Pankisi Gorge, have had a tumultuous history in Georgia. Many refugees have fled from Chechnya to Georgia, due to the tension between Chechnya and Russia. Russia placed great pressure on Georgia to deliver those called Chechen rebels, living within Georgia, even at the risk of attack. Georgia initially gave support to Chechens in their country. However, the Georgian government has since offered more cooperation to Russia. This cooperation has been labeled by some, including human rights advocates, as mistreatment of refugees. Allegations of poor treatment for all prisoners, including the more vulnerable Chechens, within the Georgian penal system, have also been voiced among human rights advocates.

It is unknown how many evangelical there are in the country.

00000

Deaf (unknown)

The primary religion is Christianity, but it is not known how many adherents exist.

00000

Estonian (2,200)

The Estonians are a Eurasian Peoples of the Finno-Ugric. Alternate names for this people include Estlased, Northern Estonian, Estonia and Southern Estonian. Their primary language is Estonian.

They are 61% Orthodox; the number of evangelicals is not known.

791

Georgian, Gruzin (2,637,000)

The Georgians are a Eurasian People of the Caucasus people cluster. Alternate names for this people group include Adjari, Gorji, Imerxev Georgian, Kartveli, Adzhar, Gruzin, Kartuli, and Western Georgian.. Their primary language is Georgian.

They are less than one percent evangelical.

00000

German (1,500)

The Germans are a Eurasian People of the Germanic people cluster. Alternate names for this people group are German, Standard; Saxon; Volga German; High German and Transylvanian. They are 78% Christian. It is unknown how many people are evangelicals.

793

Greek, Urum (82,000)\

The Greeks are a Eurasian people of the Greek people cluster. Alternate names for this people group include Dimotiki, Hellenic, Romeos, Greek Cypriot, Romei and Urum. Their primary language is Urum; another major language spoken is Greek: Saracatsan. They are 90% Orthodox although it is not known how many evangelicals reside here.

00000

Inghiloi (6,900)

The Inghiloi are a Eurasian people of the Caucasus people cluster. Their primary language is Georgian. Their primary religion is Shia Islam.

10% of the Inghiloi are Christians, though the number of evangelicals is unknown.

795

Jew, Georgian (3,500)

Georgian Jews trace their ancestry back 2,500 years to the time when Jews were dispersed to the Georgia area by the Assyrians. The majority live in Tbilisi and many face anti-semitism. Their primary language is Judeo-Georgian. Their secondary language is Yiddish, Eastern. The percentage of Christians is 0. The Askhenazi Jews speak Russian and are of Eastern European descents are not classified in this group.

00000

Kazakh (2,500)

The Kazakh are a Turkic people of the Kazakh people cluster. Their primary language is Kazakh. Alternate names that this people group goes by are Gazaqi, Kazax, Qazaqi, Hazake, or Qazaq. Their primary religion is Sunni Islam.

The number of Christians and evangelicals is unknown.

24112

Kurd, Northern (31,000)

The Kurds are an Iranian-Median people of the Kurd people cluster. Alternate names for this people group include Kermanji, Turkish Kurd, Yezidi, Kurmanji and Yazidi.

Their primary religion is Sunni Islam; 0.03% are Christians; the numbers of evangelicals is unknown.

Kurdish people living in Georgia emigrated from Turkey around the early 1900's and late 1800's. Life for Kurds in Georgia is not easy, but comparably better than the lives of Kurds in Turkey and Iran.

00000

Lezgian (3,400)

The Lezgians are a Eurasian people of the Caucasus people cluster. Their primary language is Lezgi. Their primary religion is Sunni Islam. However, the people keep close ties to their ancestors.

The percentage of Christians is .01%; the percentage of evangelicals is unknown.

00000

Margaluri, Mingrelian (402,000)

The Magaruli are a Eurasian People of the Caucasus people cluster. Alternate names for this group include Megrel, Mingrelian and Megruli. Their primary religion is Islam. 1% of the Megruli are Christians, but it is not known the number of evangelicals that are among this people within the country.

00000

Mingrelian, Laz (1,700)

The Mingrelian, Laz people are a Eurasian People of the Caucasus people cluster. Their primary language is Laz. Their primary religion is Sunni Islam, though they were at one time Christian.

One percent adhere to Christianity, but it is not known how many evangelicals there are to be found among the people of this country. They primarily live spread throughout Georgia and Turkey. They are well known for their dances.

00000

Moldavian (2,700)

The Moldavian people are a Eurasian Peoples of the Romanian People Cluster. They use the Romanian language to communicate with one another.

They are 82% Christian, but it is not known how many of them are there that are evangelicals.

798

Ossete (94,000)

The Ossete are a Eurasian people of the Caucasus people cluster. Alternate names for this group include Allagir, Taguar, Western Ossetian, Iron and Western Ossete. The language used to communicate within this people group is Osetin.

Fifty-five percent adhere to Christianity although it is now not known the number of evangelical's exist among this people.

00000

Polish (1,900)

The Polish people are a Eurasian people of the Slav, Western people cluster. Alternate names for this people group are Pole, Silesian and Poles.

Their primary religion is Catholic or Orthodox. Eighty-five percent adhere to Christianity. It is not known how many of the people are evangelical.

00000

Pontic Greek (95,000)

The Pontic people are a Eurasian people of the Greek people cluster. The language spoken among this people group is pontic.

Their primary religion is Orthodox with a ninety percent adherence rate although it is unknown how many of them are evangelicals.

00000

Romani, Vlax (1,600)

The Romani, Vlax are a South Asian People of the Gypsy people cluster. Alternate names include Arhagar, Baltic Gypsy, Cingane, Gitano, Gypsy, Kalderash Gypsy, Lovari Gypsy, Lowara, Arhagar Gypsy, Cale, Colobmian Gypsy, Gurbeti, Kalderash, Lovari, Lovari Rom Gypsy and Norwegian Gypsy. Their primary language is Romani, Vlax.

Their primary religion is Sunni Islam. 20% are Christian though it is not known how many of them are evangelical.

800

Russian (142,000)

The Russians are a Eurasian people of the Slav, Eastern people cluster. Alternate names for this people group include Eluosi, Russ and Olossu. Their primary language is Russian. Their primary religion is Orthodox with a sixty percent adherence rate. The number of evangelicals is unknown.

801

Svanetian, Mushwan (14,000)

The Svanetian, Mishwan are a Eurasian people of the Caucasus people cluster. Another name for them is Svanetian. Their primary language is Svan.

40% are Christian Orthodox and it is not known how many evangelicals there are among this people group.

00000

Tajik (1,100)

The Tajik are an Iranian-Median people from the Tajik people cluster. Alternate names for this people group include Persian Tajik, Tadzhik, Persian, Dari, or Tadzhiki. Their primary language is Tajiki.

Their primary religion is Sunni Islam. The percentages are unknown about the different religions. This people group is one of the least reached.

00000

Tatar (3,900)

The Tatar people are a Turkic People from the Ural-Siberian people cluster. Alternate names include Dada, Kazan Tatar, Tartar, Tura, Dadan, Lipka, Tata'er, or Turkish Tatar. The language spoken among this people group is tatar.

Their primary religion is Sunni Islam; 1.5% are Christian. It is not known how many evangelicals there are among this people are. This is one of the least reached people groups.

00000

Turk (2,900)

The Turk people group is a Turkic people of the Turkish people cluster. Alternate names for this people group include Anatolian, Masakhastian, Osmanli, Rumelian Turk, Baharlu Turk, Meskhetian Turk, Ottomon Turk, and Urum. The primary language spoken is Turkish.

Their primary religion is Sunni Islam. It is unknown if there are any Christian or evangeliclas adherents among this people group.

00000

Udin, Udi (90)

The Udin are a Eurasian people of the Caucasus people cluster. Another name for this people group is Alban or Urum. Their primary language is Udi.

They are 90% orthodox. It is not known how many evangelicals there are among this people group.

803

Ukrainian (49,000)

The Ukrainian people are a Eurasian people of the Slav, Eastern People cluster. The language spoken among this people is Ukrainian.

They are 69% Orthodox. The number of evangelicals is unknown.

00000

Uzbek, Northern (1,200)

The Uzbek, Northern are a Turkic Peoples of the Uzbek people cluster. Other names for this people group are Northern Uzbek, Ozbek, Uzbek, and Wuzibeke, Ouzbek, Usbaki, and Uzbeki. The primary language used to communicate is Uzbek, Northern.

Their primary religion is Sunni Islam. It is not known if there is any Christian or evangelical adherents among this people group.

### **Missiological Implications**

1. Evangelical Christians and churches should continue to pray for the peoples of Georgia who have suffered so deeply over such a long period of time.
2. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek ways to meet the physical and social needs of the people of this region of the world
3. Evangelical Christians and churches should develop methods of sharing the Good News with followers of Orthodox and Catholic beliefs and train local believers in using these methods in evangelizing the peoples of Georgia
4. Evangelical Christians and churches should support means for evangelizing among the minorities of Georgia (Muslim Abkhazians and Ossertians, the Chechens and Kurds, the Jews)
5. Evangelical Christians and churches should support church starting movements among the peoples of Georgia
6. Evangelical Christians and churches should support efforts to find peace among the peoples of Georgia
7. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek means to evangelize peoples from Georgia who are living outside Georgia and could be a source of evangelists to return to the nation for starting churches.