

Georgia

Ethnicity in Georgia

Group selection

We identify the following politically relevant ethnic groups: **Georgians, Abkhazians, Armenians, Azeri, and (South) Ossetians.**

The Census data of Georgia in 2002 does not include South Ossetia and Abkhazia (²¹⁰⁸), those numbers are only approximations based on the estimated size of the population in these regions available at the website of the Minority Rights Group International (²¹⁰⁹, ²¹¹⁰). A new census was conducted in 2014, again not including the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia (²¹¹¹). Based on a census in South Ossetia in 2015 (²¹¹²) and one in Abkhazia in 2011 (²¹¹³), the percentages were revised back to 2003.

The Adzhars (Ajars) in South-western Georgia are considered politically irrelevant. The Adzhars are ethnically closely related to Georgians, but are Muslims, thus they were also called “Muslim Georgians”. Since independence from the SU a Christianization took place, so that by now about half of the Adzhars are Muslims and half Christians (²¹¹⁴). The Russian minority is irrelevant due to mass-emigration of Russians after Georgia’s independence. There was no evidence of Russians being politically organized in independent Georgia.

Power relations

1991-2021

There are two periods with same power status but different group sizes, resulting from the emigration of Armenians, Russians and other politically irrelevant ethnic groups.

Power relations remained static in Georgia since independence (²¹¹⁵; ²¹¹⁶). Georgians are the dominant majority in the country. The Armenians and Azeri are both regionally concentrated and have a few representatives in the government, but are considered politically “powerless” as they lack executive power (²¹¹⁷). It is difficult for them to gain political power. The law prohibits parties that do not have members in all regions to run in national elections. This aims to prevent parties from regionally concentrated ethnicities to become strong at the national level (²¹¹⁸). Although there were some positive shifts in terms of minority rights after the Rose Revolution, there have been no substantial improvements in grant-

²¹⁰⁸ [National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2002a]

²¹⁰⁹ [Minority Rights Group International, 2008a]

²¹¹⁰ [Minority Rights Group International, 2008b]

²¹¹¹ [Geostat, 2016]

²¹¹² [Georgia Today, 2016]

²¹¹³ [UNPO, 2015]

²¹¹⁴ [Toft, 2001]

²¹¹⁵ [International Crisis Group, 2011]

²¹¹⁶ [US State Department, 2010–2013]

²¹¹⁷ [Minority Rights Group International, 2015]

²¹¹⁸ [Zollinger & Bochsler, 2012]

ing political power on the national level to minorities (²¹¹⁹; ²¹²⁰). While the Georgian government took several steps to integrate ethnic minority communities (through language instruction, education and participation in several programs) and while few members of ethnic minorities are present in the parliament as well as occupying positions in local governments, ethnic minority representation on the national political arena generally remained limited and far lower than its representation in the country (²¹²¹). In the elections of 2015, the Georgian Dream coalition won again, increasing its vote share even more in the elections of 2016 (²¹²²). According to the 2020 Freedom House report, the law does not prevent members of minority groups from participating in political processes. However, their representation is still limited at all levels of government (²¹²³).

As a result of the ethno-territorial conflicts in the beginning of 1990s, the South-Ossetians and the Abkhazians have regional autonomy in their secessionist republics (²¹²⁴). While conflicts in these regions have been “frozen” between 1994 and 2008, in 2008 the violent conflict re-occurred in South Ossetia which resulted in the recognition of the two regions as independent states by Russia. Already after the conflicts in the beginning of 1990s, the Georgian government had no power in these two regions (²¹²⁵). Most of the international society considers Abkhazia and South Ossetia as part of Georgia, while Russia, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Nauru have officially recognized them as independent states (²¹²⁶; ²¹²⁷). The situation remains unchanged in this regard until 2021.

²¹¹⁹ [Minority Rights Group International, 2009]

²¹²⁰ [US State Department, 2010–2013]

²¹²¹ [US State Department, 2010–2013]

²¹²² [Reuters, 2017]

²¹²³ [Freedom House, 2020]

²¹²⁴ [King, 2001]

²¹²⁵ [US State Department, 2010–2013]

²¹²⁶ [BBC, 2017]

²¹²⁷ [Minority Rights Group International, 2015]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Georgia

From 1991 until 2002

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Georgians	0.694	DOMINANT
Armenians	0.08	POWERLESS
Azeri	0.056	POWERLESS
Ossetians (South)	0.032	SELF-EXCLUSION
Abkhazians	0.017	SELF-EXCLUSION

From 2003 until 2021

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Georgians	0.817	DOMINANT
Azeri	0.058	POWERLESS
Armenians	0.052	POWERLESS
Abkhazians	0.03	SELF-EXCLUSION
Ossetians (South)	0.016	SELF-EXCLUSION



Figure 392: Political status of ethnic groups in Georgia during 1991-2002.



Figure 393: Political status of ethnic groups in Georgia during 2003-2021.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Georgia

From 1991 until 2008

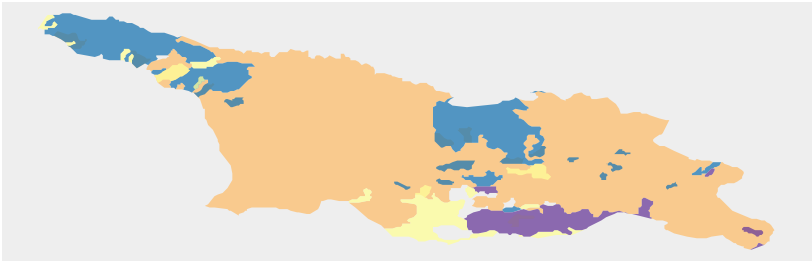


Figure 394: Map of ethnic groups in Georgia during 1991-2008.

	Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■	Georgians	52 502	Regionally based
■	Abkhazians	5603	Regionally based
■	Ossetians (South)	5163	Regionally based
■	Armenians	3747	Regionally based
■	Azeri	3124	Regionally based

Table 143: List of ethnic groups in Georgia during 1991-2008.

From 2009 until 2021

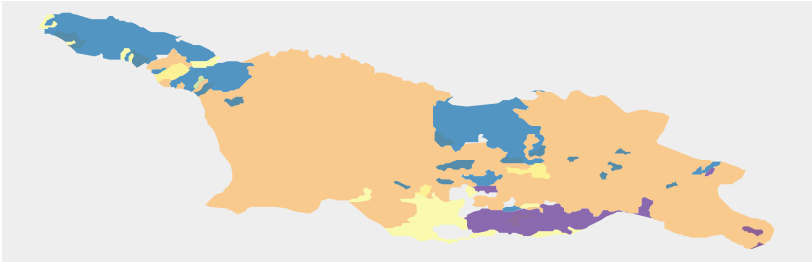


Figure 395: Map of ethnic groups in Georgia during 2009-2021.






	Group name	Area in km ²	Type
	Georgians	52 090	Regionally based
	Abkhazians	5603	Regionally based
	Ossetians (South)	5163	Regionally based
	Armenians	3747	Regionally based
	Azeri	3124	Regionally based

Table 144: List of ethnic groups in Georgia during 2009-2021.

Conflicts in Georgia

Starting on 1991-12-21

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Georgia	National Guard and Mkhedrioni	Georgians	1991-12-21	No	Yes, from EGIP	No
Government of Georgia	Zviadists		1992-01-20			

Starting on 1992-05-11

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Georgia	Republic of South Ossetia	Ossetians (South)	1992-05-11	Explicit	Yes	Yes

Starting on 1992-08-13

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Georgia	Republic of Abkhazia	Abkhazians	1992-08-13	Explicit	Yes	Yes