

Georgia (საქართველო)



QUICK FACTS

Population: 4.9 million

Area: Slightly smaller than South Carolina

Capital: Tbilisi (1.1 million)

Languages: Georgian (Kartuli)

EDUCATION

The education system in Georgia has experienced numerous reforms over the past two decades and has suffered from conflicts, natural disasters and insufficient investment. According to a UNICEF report, the quality of education has been deteriorating and a large portion of students rely on private tutoring to compensate and prepare them for higher education. Georgia currently has a compulsory 9-grade education system for ages 6-14 at which point student can pass exams and complete their studies, or continue for 3 more years at the secondary level to be eligible for university. Grading is on a 5-point scale (5=excellent, 4=good, 3=acceptable, 2=unacceptable). The literacy rate for 15 and over is 99.7%. Traditionally greater emphasis has been placed on rote-learning rather than inquiry-based or critical thinking and exams are typically oral.



Updated: 8/16/14

Georgian children in traditional dress

Modern day Georgia stands on the ancient kingdoms of Colchis and Kartli-Iberia. Colchis is where Jason and the Argonauts found Medea and the Golden Fleece. Throughout history the kingdoms of Georgia fought to protect their autonomy, but were often incorporated into larger empires including the Roman, Persian, Ottoman, Golden Horde, Russian and the Soviet Union. It's language and culture is unique and should not be confused or conflated with Russian. Do not call it "Russian Georgia". Georgians call their country Sakartvelo or "land of the Kartvels". "Georgia" may have roots in the Latin "geo" and refer to "tiller of the land" or "gurj" stemming from the Middle Persian root for wolf or "land of wolves".

RELIGION

The official religion of Georgia is Georgian Orthodox. Georgia was the second country in the world to declare Christianity as a state religion in 337 (following Armenia in 334). The patriarch of Georgia is a politically powerful position and one of the most trusted public figures. The church plays an active yet at times controversial role in society.

ETHNICITY

Georgian can imply a nationality, ethnicity or language and not all citizens are ethnic Georgians. While ethnic Georgians make up 84% of the population, there are also ethnic Azeri (7%), Armenian (6%), Russian (1.5%) and other smaller groups. Other ethnic groups such as Abkhaz and Ossetians live predominantly in the separatist territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS

Due to tradition as well as social and economic factors, Georgian youth tend to live with their parents through their education and after marriage. Grandparents often play a significant role in the upbringing of grandchildren. Georgian society holds strong to its traditions and has maintained a strong identity, culture and language despite being a small nation overrun by larger empires over the centuries. Throughout the Soviet Union the Georgians were known for their food, wine and *supras*. The *supra* is a feast of 3 or more (hundreds) with a toastmaster (*tamada*) who leads the feast with toasts often including tales and lessons about friendship, history, family and sweet memories. Some major holidays include: Orthodox Christmas (January 7 according to the Julian calendar), Women's Day (March 8), Orthodox Easter, *Giorgoba* (April 24 and November 24), *Mariamoba* (August 28) and Independence (May 23).



THE HENRY M. JACKSON
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON



CONTEMPORARY GEORGIA

Located in a strategic and desirable location between the Black and Caspian Seas, Georgia has been divided and conquered repeatedly throughout history. In 337 A.D it was the second country to declare Christianity as a state religion. Georgia experienced a Golden era from x to x under the Queen Tamar. At the turn of the 19th century Georgia was incorporated into the Russian Empire under Catherine the Great. It gained independence after the Russian Revolution, only to be annexed by the Soviets in 1921.

One of Georgia's most famous and controversial sons, Joseph Jugashvili (Stalin) rose through the Bolshevik ranks to become the leader of the Soviet Union. His role in history remains a contested issue, with Georgians torn between pride and horror. Stalin was not kind to his motherland and Georgians suffered considerably under his rule. During the Soviet period Georgia was a favorite vacation destination of leaders and the general population fond of its towering mountains and subtropical coast, food, wine and vibrant culture.

With the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, multiple conflicts erupted throughout the country. Over 300,000 Georgians were displaced and to this day have not returned to their homes. Eduard Shevardnadze, Soviet foreign minister under Gorbachev, returned to his homeland in 1992, and served as president until 2003 when he was ousted after accusations of vote rigging led to weeks of massive street protests known as the Rose Revolution. The results were annulled and his protégé, Mikheil Saakashvili, a leader of the protests, won the revote. In 2008, Georgia fought a brief 5-day war with Russia resulting in permanent Russian occupation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgian-Russian relations remain strained to this day and the country's western orientation is a point of contention with Moscow which sees Georgia as belonging within its sphere of influence.



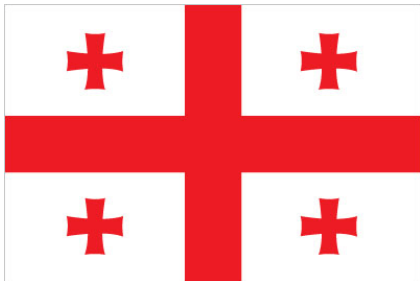
View of old city in Tbilisi

GEORGIANS IN THE USA

The first known immigrants to the US were Georgian horsemen including a troupe that arrived in 1890 and was hired by Buffalo Bill Cody. Additional waves of mostly nobility and intellectuals arrived following the Russian Revolution and Soviet invasion of Georgia. Emigration halted during the Soviet period, but resumed after 1991 when an estimated 1/5 of the population left. Georgian populations are found most in New York and San Francisco.



The Georgian flag, sometimes referred to as the Five-Cross Flag was adopted as the official Georgian flag in 2004; however, the five-cross design is said to date back to the 14th century.



Traditional Georgian enamel icon

NAMES

First names often originate from the Orthodox faith. Surnames often end in -dze, -shvili, -ia or -iani depending on the region of the country and means "son of" or "child of". Adults are often addressed by their first name preceded by *batono* (sir) or *kalbatono* (ma'am).

FAMOUS GEORGIANS

Famous Georgians include: Joseph Stalin, Eduard Shevardnadze, George Balanchine, Alexander Kartveli (engineer of US military airplanes), John Shalikashvili (former US Joint-Chiefs of Staff), Katie Melua (popular British singer).

LANGUAGE

Georgian, or *Kartuli* is from the *Kartvelian* language family, a primary family not related to any other. It has its own unique script.

GEORGIAN WORDS

Hi	<i>Gamarjoba</i>
Bye	<i>Nakhvamdis</i>
Good morning	<i>Dila mishvidobisa</i>
Yes	<i>Ho, Ki, Diakh</i>
No	<i>Ara</i>
Please/You're welcome ..	<i>Tu shedzleba</i>
Thank you	<i>Madloba</i>
How are you?	<i>Rogora khar?</i>
I do not understand	<i>Ar mes mis</i>
Do you understand?	<i>Gasagebia?</i>
What is your name?.....	<i>Ra gqvია?</i>
My name is	<i>Chemi sakhelia...</i>
Where are you from?	<i>Sadauri khar?</i>
Mother.....	<i>Deda</i>
Father.....	<i>Mama</i>

USEFUL LINKS

[CIA World Factbook: Georgia](#)

[BBC Country Page: Georgia](#)

[National Geographic: Georgia](#)

[English language News](#)

[English Language Magazine](#)