



HDI Rank 89th/182. **Public debt** 38.2% of GDP. **Income/person** \$2,924 (6% of USA).

Politics

Independent since 1991 after centuries of domination by surrounding empires. Stability was consolidated by 1995, but a dictatorial president failed to bring further progress, prompting the “rose revolution” in 2003, followed by new elections in 2004. Significant democratic progress since then. Georgia’s great challenge is the existence of two breakaway regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, supported and recognized by Russia. The Ossetians and Abkhazians have de facto independence. Attempts by Georgia to exercise greater control over South Ossetia drew in Russian military interference in 2008; Russia remains present in significant force as a “peacekeeping” measure. The dynamics of Georgia’s relationships with its breakaway regions and with Russia will shape Georgia’s future profoundly.

Georgia

Sak’art’velo

Asia

Geography

Area 69,700 sq km. Black Sea state between the Caucasus Mountains and Turkey. Moderate climate with good natural resources and soil.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	4,219,191	-1.12%
2020	3,982,461	-0.50%
2030	3,779,025	-0.57%

Capital T’bilisi 1,120,126. **Urbanites** 52.9%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 17%. **Life expectancy** 71.6 yrs.

Peoples

- Eurasian** 92.0%.
 - Caucasian** 81.7%. Georgian 69.9%; Mingrelian 9.1%; Abkhazian 1.9%.
 - Armenian** 5.4%.
 - Slavic** 1.9%. Russian 1.5%.
 - Other** 3.0%. Pontic Greek 2.5%.
- Turkic** 6.4%. Azerbaijani 6.2%.
- Iranian-Median** 1.2%. Ossetian 0.8%.
- Other** 0.4%. Assyrian, Jews.
- Literacy** 100%. **Official language** Georgian. **All languages** 25. **Indigenous languages** 13. **Languages with Scriptures** 3Bi 2NT 3por 2w.i.p.

Economy

Productive soil and good climate for fruit, tea, cotton, wine and tourism, but the industry and service sectors match agriculture as a percentage of the GDP. Tax reform, anti-corruption measures and some privatizations have won Georgia international favour; much progress has been made since the 2003 “rose revolution”. Potential for hydro-electric power remains promising as does the possible exploitation of Georgia’s strategic location along an old Silk Road route for European-Asian transit of goods, oil and gas.

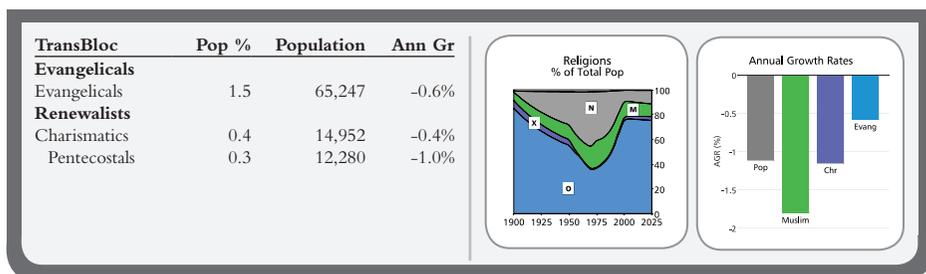
Religion

Over the centuries, the Georgian Orthodox Church was the one stable factor preserving Georgian culture and nationalism. Georgia and neighbouring Armenia are surrounded by Muslim ethnic groups; many are small and part of Russia. Despite Orthodox agitation, religious freedom is improving for non-Orthodox groups, especially since changes to the laws in 2005.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Christian	78.67	3,319,238	-1.2%
Muslim	11.30	476,769	-1.8%
Non-religious	9.58	404,198	0.0%
Jewish	0.25	10,548	-2.6%
Other	0.20	8,438	3.4%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	6	0.52	22,000	0.2%
Independent	22	0.29	12,000	0.7%
Catholic	2	0.95	40,000	0.0%
Orthodox	12	76.13	3,212,000	-1.2%
Marginal	1	0.78	33,000	0.8%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Georgian Orthodox	O	486	1,214,583	2,915,000
Armenian Apostolic Ch	O	18	45,000	225,000
Russian Orthodox	O	15	29,720	42,500
Jehovah’s Witnesses	M	186	17,500	32,700
Cath Ch – Latin Rite	C	7	14,286	22,000
Cath Ch – Eastern Rite	C	12	11,688	18,000
Evang Baptist Ch	P	72	4,896	14,400
Greek Orthodox Ch	O	14	6,750	13,500
Ukrainian Orthodox	O	2	3,846	5,500
Syrian Orthodox	O	3	3,234	5,400
Pentecostal (AoG)	P	110	3,100	5,000
Other denominations[32]		158	14,193	20,132
Total Christians[43]			1,083	1,364,796



Answers to Prayer

1 Positive social, economic and political changes continue since 1991. Reduced corruption and democratic reform pave the way for a more peaceful future. Openness to spirituality and Christianity in particular has increased greatly. The former Department of Atheism at the national university is now a theological faculty, and legal changes make it easier for non-Orthodox faiths to operate more freely and with less threat of persecution. Christian groups of all expressions have experienced growth in this nation in recent decades.

Challenges for Prayer

1 Georgia's independence, gained with such hope, is soured by a series of inter-ethnic wars aided and abetted by Russian efforts to undermine and control the country. Following the Rose Revolution, economic and political progress started in 2004 and helped lift the country out of some of its woes. Much of this progress was reversed in the August War of 2008, when Russian troops briefly occupied much of the country. Pray for an end to Russian belligerence, for peace to be established and for the economic situation to once again stabilize and make progress.

2 Inter-ethnic conflicts of the past decade within the autonomous regions have displaced nearly a quarter of a million people from home and village. Many now live in camps or makeshift accommodation in and around the capital, Tbilisi. Humanitarian needs are great, with adequate food, water, heat in winter and medical supplies in high demand. Unemployment for these people is very high, and emotional and spiritual needs are vast. Pray for the effective witness of various church and agency personnel working among these struggling families; pray for provision of physical needs.

3 The Georgian Orthodox Church's history stretches back to AD 150; it can be regarded as the world's second-oldest Christian nation. Communist repression, infiltration and subversion brought both martyrdom and compromise. Since Communism's collapse and Georgian independence, many have returned to the Church of their ancestors. Some minority groups converted as well. For most Georgians, this is mostly an expression of nationalism and cultural identity, not a living spiritual faith. Pray for access to the Word of God, and that through it many may find the Truth of the gospel. Pray also for renewal among Orthodox clergy; some small beginnings of this are occurring.

4 The small Protestant Church struggled under Communism and, since independence, at the hands of some factions of the Orthodox Church. Evangelical ministries have been repressed, their work maligned as sectarian. They have had problems acquiring buildings and the permits necessary to hold meetings. There have been incidents of meetings being broken up, sometimes violently, and materials confiscated. Some legal changes in 2005 offer hope of greater freedom of religious expression. Pray for a relationship of mutual respect and understanding between the Orthodox and other churches; pray that Protestant and Independent churches and believers might conduct themselves in Christ-like ways, even amid hostility.

5 Evangelicals are effectively comprised of Baptists and Pentecostal/charismatic groups, but more and more congregations from both streams wish to remain independent of denominational affiliation. Evangelicals are not growing, but they are at least shrinking slower than the overall population. There has been some creative development in contextualized evangelical worship and practice and in work among Christian young people. The following need prayer:

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- a) **Poverty.** Village unemployment/underemployment is nearly 100%. Few congregations have the resources to support pastors and often have dilapidated church buildings. High-profile outreach and ministry are not feasible, especially when expensive foreign ministry models require dependence on foreign funds. Pray for creative ideas for church meetings and outreach, and pray for God's provision in the daily needs of pastors and church members living in poverty.
- b) **Unity.** The small but deeply divided evangelical community has taken significant steps toward unity and collaboration. Evangelical leaders across several denominations and ministries met in fellowship, committing to defend biblical values and to promote religious freedom within Georgia. Well-intentioned but ignorant foreign "help" for churches and increased influence of prosperity theology among many Pentecostals are causing further theological differences, even amid deliberate efforts to fellowship and work together. Pray for a greater willingness among all churches to put aside their own plans and to work together for the benefit of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.
- c) **Cultural irrelevance among youth.** Young Georgians have lost interest in the Church, with a majority leaving during teenage years. Youth groups have grown in some cases where intentional efforts were made to reach out to young people in creative and relevant ways and where youth were empowered to lead. Pray for churches to thoughtfully share the gospel with young people in relevant ways.

6 Pray for the spiritual need of ethnic minorities. Georgian believers are best placed to reach ethnic minorities, but they need a greater desire to train, send and support workers to do this. There is a little outreach to Muslims; some Baptists are receiving training to reach out to them. Pray for these believers to gain a burden for ethnic peoples, including the following:

- a) **Abkhazians** – mostly Orthodox and with a sizeable Muslim minority, they tend to reflect a worldview and practice that is more ethnoreligionist and pagan in its outlook. They live in their own breakaway region in the northwest; effective outreach would require cultural insight as well as spiritual breakthrough.
- b) **Jews.** There is no known witness to them. They face a rising tide of anti-Semitism in a country that has historically been for them a haven.
- c) **The Kish** live mostly in and near the Pankisi Gorge and are closely related to Chechens. Many live in poverty. They are mostly Sunni Muslim, but with some Christian and pagan influences among them.
- d) **The Mingrelians** number around 400,000; while many are Orthodox in name, the large majority are non-religious.
- e) **The Svaneti people** live in the mountainous west in remote villages, a dangerous area of Georgia often plagued by Chechen rebels. The Svaneti are largely untouched by the gospel; those who are Orthodox have little knowledge of their own faith. One Pentecostal couple works among this unreached people.
- f) **Azerbaijanis, who are Muslim.** There is at least one Azeri congregation, and the Bible is available in their language, as is the JESUS film.

7 Christian help ministries for prayer include:

- a) **Literature distribution.** The Bible Society, OM, BIEM and the Fellowship Tract League produce or distribute tracts and Christian literature in Georgian.
- b) **The Georgian Bible,** in use until a few years ago, was an ancient translation. The two recent translations (1990s) are the standard Bibles today, but due to their popularity, there is a great need to print more. A children's Bible is also available. The Bible Society projects are a welcome success in inter-confessional ministry; they also produce a Bible magazine and run a Bible shop. Their desire to distribute Scriptures in Abkhazia and South Ossetia has often been disrupted by the conflicts and instability there.
- c) **Christian radio programmes** in Georgian are another need. There is a wealth of radio broadcasting in Russian from abroad, but solid Christian content in local languages is sorely lacking.
- d) **The JESUS film** and related resources have been completed in Georgian, Russian, Ossetian and Mingrelian (the first ever film in this language!). Svan and Abkhazian productions are held up due to the conflict; pray for the completion of these translations. The JESUS film, combined with other discipleship tools, has proven to be very effective.