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## Addressing Gender Disparities Among Ethnic Minorities in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: A Policy Brief

### Policy Brief

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

### Background: About Gender Disparities Among Ethnic Minorities

Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia are the former Soviet Union member states. During the era of the Soviet Union, ethnic identity was formally established and ingrained in the system. After Josef Stalin's leadership, in the so-called "Titular Nations," such as Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and Russians, who were associated with the fifteen union republics of the Soviet Union, language played a pivotal role in an ethno-national policy, where minority communities had fewer privileges compared to the majority populations, and enjoyed fewer rights than majority populations<sup>1</sup>. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the fifteen republics regained independence as individual states but remnants of Soviet Union customs still affect attitudes towards national minorities. There are various ethnic groups in all three South Caucasus countries.

Azerbaijan accommodates a diverse array of over 15 ethnic groups, collectively comprising 8.4 percent of the population in 2009, which subsequently decreased to 5.4 percent as per the 2019 census (the latest census). **These ethnic communities tend to be concentrated in specific regions.** Over the past decade, a

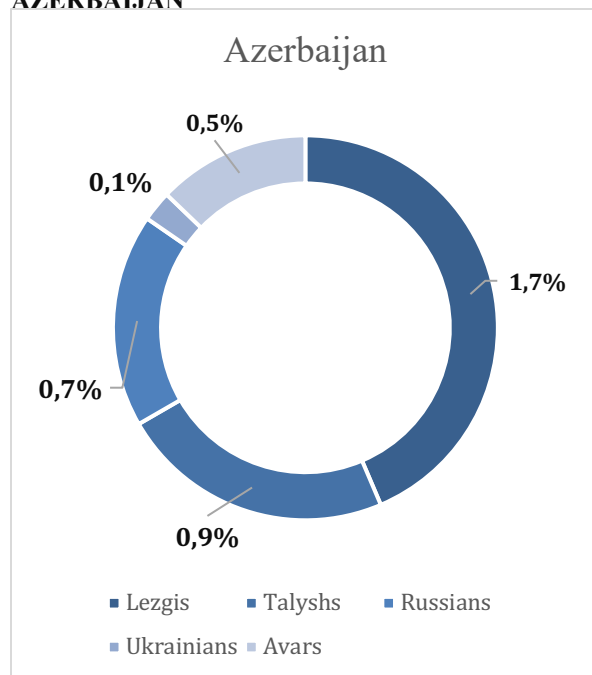
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<sup>1</sup> [Amirejibi\\_Gabunia\\_Georgia\\_Minorities.pdf \(carnegieendowment.org\)](#)

significant population decline has been observed among most of Azerbaijan's ethnic minorities, except the Talysh and Tats.

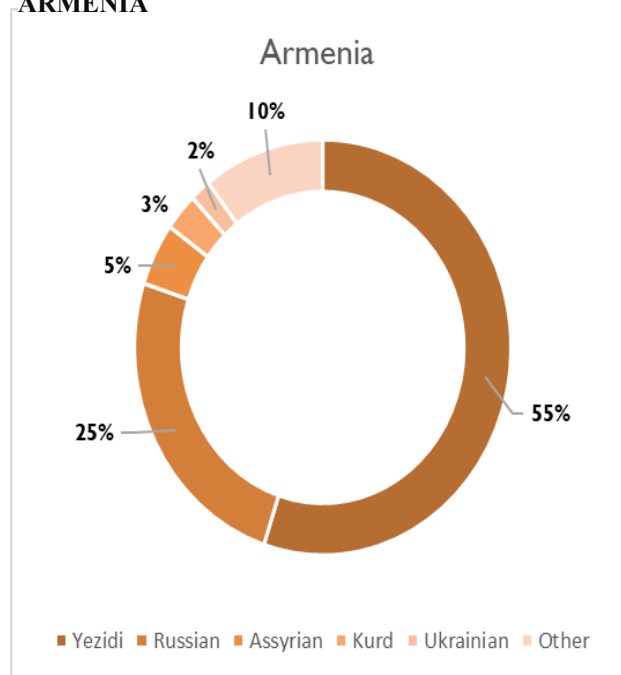
Notably, both the 2009 and 2019 census data point to a marked reduction in the Russian and Armenian populations within the country, primarily attributed to the aftermath of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which led to Armenians leaving Azerbaijan, and economic factors motivating the emigration of many

**FIGURE 1 – ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF AZERBAIJAN**



Source: Population Census 2019

**FIGURE 2 – ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF ARMENIA**



Russians. As a result of these demographic transformations, the Lezgians have now emerged as the largest minority group in Azerbaijan.

According to the 2022 Census data (the latest census), Armenia (with a total population of 3 million) is predominantly composed of individuals of Armenian ethnicity, constituting more than 98 percent of the population. Notably, Armenia also hosts several minority groups, including Yezidis, accounting for 1.06 percent (31,077 people), Russians at 0.48 percent (14,074), Assyrians at 0.09 percent (2,754), Kurds at 0.06 percent (1,663), as well as Ukrainians, Indians and Persian numbering 1,005, 593 and 434, respectively. It is important to highlight that these minority communities are spread across Armenia, without forming a majority in any specific regions or administrative units. Before the conflict with Azerbaijan, the Azerbaijani population constituted the largest minority in Armenia, with an approximate population of 186,000 individuals. However, nearly the entire Azerbaijani community was displaced to Azerbaijan as a consequence of the conflict. Conversely, Armenia experienced an influx of ethnic Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan. The departure of Russians from Armenia can be attributed to the challenging economic circumstances arising from the nation's independence (early transition from the command

economy to a market economy which was accompanied by a severe economic crisis) and the conflict with Azerbaijan, which also led to the emigration of ethnic Armenians from the country.

Georgia is a diverse nation with multiple languages and ethnicities. The 2014 census (the latest census) reported that approximately 87 percent of the population identifies as ethnic Georgians, with the remaining 13 percent comprising various ethnic groups. Among these, Azerbaijanis represent slightly over 6 percent of Georgia's population, while Armenians make up nearly 5 percent. The enduring influence of Soviet policies concerning ethnicity and language has had a significant impact, making it challenging for both Georgians and ethnic minorities to perceive themselves as part of a unified civic nation-state. Modern Georgia boasts a diverse array of minority groups, which encompasses Russians, Greeks, Kurds, Yezidis, Assyrians, Jews, Ukrainians, Roma, and Kists (which make up only 7 percent of Kakheti's population). Four regions in Georgia deserve special attention due to significant concentrations of minority populations: (1) Abkhazia, (2) South Ossetia/Tskhinvali Region, (3) Kvemo Kartli (which is home to a sizable Azerbaijani community), and (4) Samtskhe-Javakheti (known for its substantial Armenian population). **The proximity of Kvemo Kartli to Azerbaijan and Samtskhe-Javakheti to Armenia adds a political dimension to the status of the Azerbaijanis and Armenians residing in these areas.**<sup>2</sup>

This policy brief seeks to discern gender disparities among ethnic minority communities in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. This analysis encompasses diverse aspects of gender equality, including religious influences, demographic attributes, disparities in the labor market, levels of political engagement, instances of gender-based violence, and more. In addition, it offers a synthesis of governmental policy initiatives and furnishes recommendations.

## **Gender Disparities Within Ethnic Minority Communities**

The South Caucasus region faces a myriad of complex challenges related to gender disparities and other pressing issues affecting ethnic minority communities. **Ethnic minority populations are set apart from the majority due to a range of distinctive attributes. These characteristics encompass differences in religion, varying degrees of proficiency in the national language, diverse access to information channels, and unique cultural norms and traditions.** These factors collectively contribute to the unique identity and experiences of ethnic minorities in comparison to the broader population. The following sections will explore gender disparities between ethnic minority populations, having special emphasis on (1) gender disparities in sex ratios at birth, (2) gender-based violence, (3) education attainment, (4) early marriages, (5) disparities in political participation, and (6) employment and labor market participation. Each topic is selected for its critical importance: abnormal sex ratios at birth highlight deep-seated gender biases; gender-based violence underscores the urgent need for safety and justice; disparities in educational attainment reveal barriers to equal opportunities; early marriages demonstrate the impact of cultural traditions on young girls' futures; political participation reflects empowerment and inclusion levels; and labor market participation is vital for economic independence and overall development. Together, these areas provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges ethnic minority women face, guiding more effective and inclusive policy interventions.

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<sup>2</sup> [Amirejibi\\_Gabunia\\_Georgia\\_Minorities.pdf \(carnegieendowment.org\)](#)

## Gender Disparities And Gender-Based Sex Selection In The South Caucasus

Analyzing gender disparities should commence even before the birth of individuals. One of the most pressing issues, particularly in South Caucasus countries with a focus on ethnic minorities, is the practice of gender-biased sex selection (GBSS), leading to skewed sex ratios at birth. **According to UNFPA (2020), this concern gained significant prominence after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Three key factors contribute to GBSS: (1) a preference for male offspring, (2) a decrease in fertility rates, and (3) accessibility to ultrasound technology for early determination of fetal sex.**

During the Soviet era, despite a strong preference for sons, fertility rates remained relatively high, as the access to ultrasound technology was limited. However, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, son preference persisted. Deteriorating economic conditions and conflicts, led to a notable decline in fertility rates, additionally, the opening of borders made ultrasound technology accessible to the general population. Consequently, the number of male newborns per 100 female newborns increased significantly across all three countries, eventually reaching peak levels.

**Nevertheless, since 2010, sex ratios at birth (SRB) have displayed a clear declining trend, with this variable even normalizing in Georgia and approaching normalization in Armenia and Azerbaijan.** These positive developments can be primarily attributed to the gradual transformation of gender norms, including decreasing levels of son preference, particularly among urban populations, improved economic conditions, and increased access to education.

**However, GBSS remains a significant issue in regions predominantly inhabited by ethnic minorities.** This can be explained by the persistently high levels of son preference in these areas and the slower transformation of societal norms, which is influenced by language barriers and the limited integration of these regions into broader societal changes.

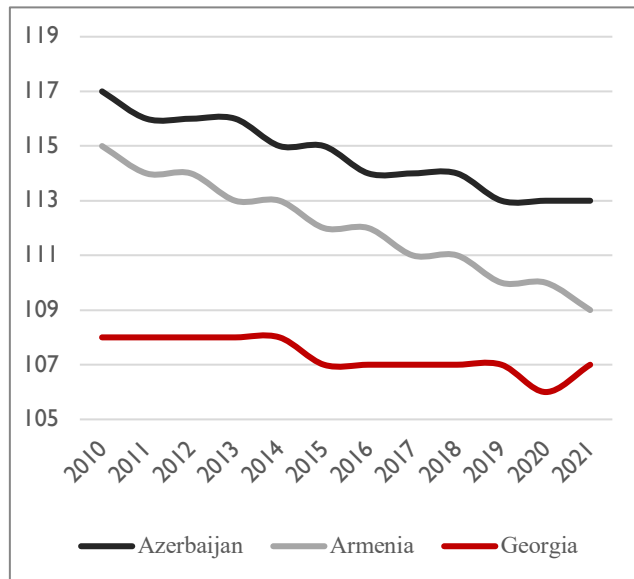
In addition, the changes in the labor market, especially the shift towards a service-oriented economy, have opened up new employment prospects for women in fields like banking, retail, and office roles. This economic empowerment of women plays a role in decreasing gender imbalances in the sex ratio at birth (SRB) by promoting their financial self-sufficiency. Furthermore, it alleviates the familial pressure on women concerning their family planning choices, which could lead to a decrease in instances of sex-selective practices.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Gender-biased sex selection in Georgia – ISET - 2020

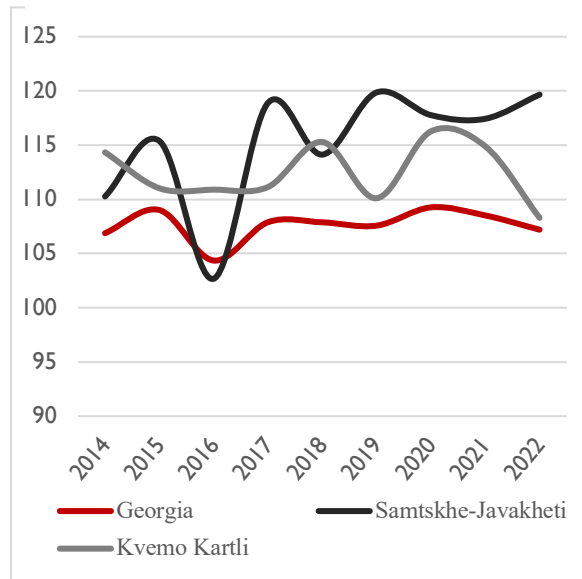
The sex ratio at birth in Georgia is lower compared to the other two countries of the South Caucasus. In Georgia, the sex ratio at birth (SRB) exhibits volatility, fluctuating between 104 and 109. Notably, over the past few years, Georgia's SRB has been approaching that of Armenia. In contrast, both Armenia and Azerbaijan have witnessed a declining trend in their SRB since 2014<sup>4</sup>.

FIGURE 3 – SEX RATIO AT BIRTH (2010-2021)



Source: World Bank, National Statistics Office of Georgia

FIGURE 4 – SEX RATIO AT BIRTH (2014-2022)



Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

The sex ratio at birth (SRB) values in Georgia exhibit fluctuations over the years but generally hover around or slightly above the natural sex ratio, typically ranging from 105 to 107 males per 100 females at birth. **However, in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region, the SRB is significantly higher, averaging around 115, compared to the national average.** This discrepancy suggests an imbalance in gender distribution at birth, indicating a preference for or a higher likelihood of male offspring in that specific region. **In the Kvemo Kartli region, SRB is averaging around 112.5,** which is higher than the national average, but is lower than the one observed in Samtskhe-Javakheti (Figure 5).

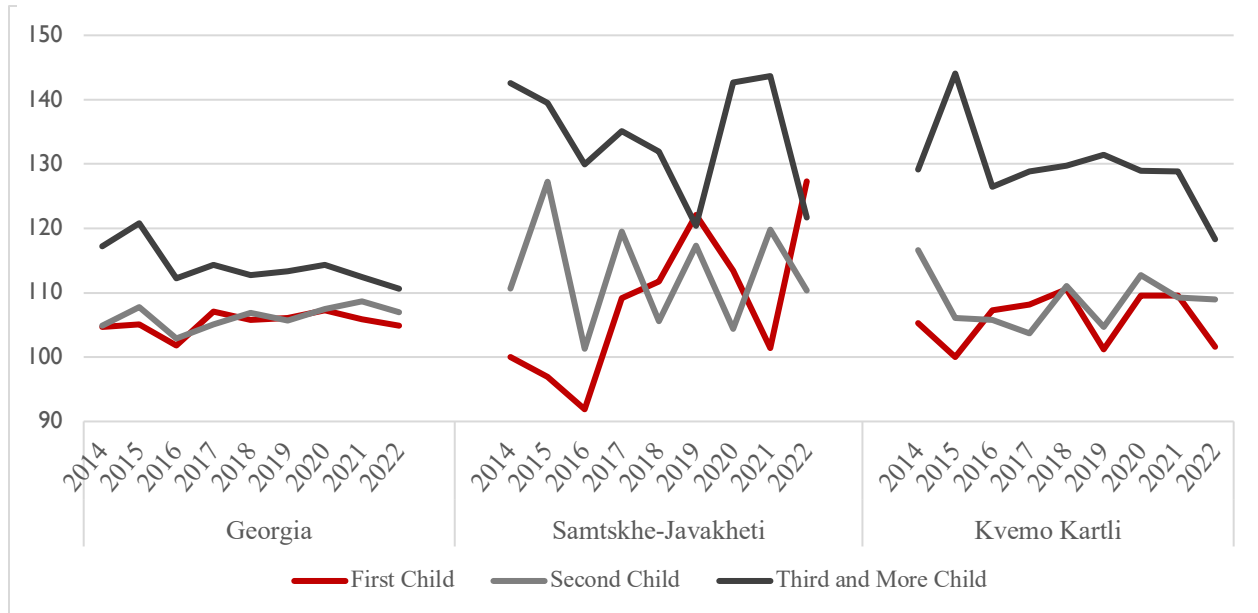
According to Geostat, the sex ratio at birth (SRB) for first births falls within a range of 101.8 to 107.3, while for second children, it varies from 102.9 to 108.7. The SRB for third births fluctuates between 110.6 and 120.8 but typically remains close to 110.6. This data clearly indicates that the number of male births increases with the birth rank.

In the **Samtskhe-Javakheti region**, the sex ratio at birth (SRB) for first births ranges from 91.9 to 127.3, while for second children, it varies from 101.3 to 127.2. **The SRB for third births fluctuates between**

<sup>4</sup> Normal sex ratio at birth varies between 102 and 106.

**120.4 and 143.7.** It is evident that the number of male births increases with the birth rank, and notably, it is considerably higher in this region compared to the national average.

**FIGURE 5 – SRS BY BIRTH ORDER**



Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

**The same is observed in Kvemo Kartli. SRB for the third birth is on average 20 points higher than for the first or second birth.** Additionally, it shows a decreasing trend. Data also shows that SRB for the first and second birth converges with each other.

**The southeastern regions of Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli, and Samtskhe-Javakheti in Georgia continue to have significantly higher sex ratio at birth (SRB) values compared to the national average.** Notably, these regions border Azerbaijan and Armenia, have substantial ethnic minority populations, and face specific social and inclusion challenges, which we will explore in more detail later.

The 2014 census data provides insights into crucial socio-economic factors, with ethnicity being a prominent factor. In the most recent census, approximately 86.8 percent of Georgia's population identified as Georgian, and their SRB is slightly lower than the national average at 107.3 boys per 100 girls. In contrast, the SRB for mixed groups encompassing various nationalities, excluding Georgians, is higher at 115 boys per 100 girls. **Ethnic Armenian and Azerbaijani populations exhibit even higher SRBs at 117 and 125, respectively.**

Regarding religious groups, both the Armenian-Apostolic and Muslim populations, mainly consisting of Armenian and Azeri ethnic minorities, have elevated sex ratios at birth, measuring 116.5 and 120, respectively. **However, it's worth noting that the SRB for the Muslim population is relatively lower than that of the ethnic Azerbaijani group, indicating a higher prevalence of sex selection among Azerbaijani Muslims compared to Georgian Muslims.**

In summary, the type of settlement and ethnic composition in specific regions significantly influence the variation in sex ratios in Georgia. Therefore, regional, and ethnic diversity plays a vital role in

understanding the factors contributing to changes in SRB, despite Georgia's small size. It was expected that regions like Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti, with larger ethnic minority populations, would exhibit a considerably higher preference for sons, resulting in skewed sex ratios at birth.<sup>5</sup>

To switch to the Armenian case, in 2011 Armenia had an SRB rate of about 112, which is higher than the normal sex ratio at birth of 102-106. **There is evidence that among national minorities, this ratio is even higher - around 128 male births per 100 female births.**

Yezidi representatives have raised concerns with the Advisory Committee about sex-selective abortion, pointing out that its consequences, such as contributing to early and forced marriages and bridal kidnappings, result from a lower number of female births. Connected to these issues, concerns have been raised in Armenia about sex-selective abortions. In 2016, amendments to the Law on Reproductive Health and Rights were introduced, having sex-selective abortions illegal.<sup>6</sup>

**Minority women still exhibit a higher SRB compared to Armenian women.** In addition, it's noticeable that factors such as the mother's declaration of births and multiple births continue to reduce the sex ratio at birth. However, concerning higher-order births, the age factor now appears to have a negative impact. In other words, our model indicates that, when considering other variables, **younger mothers tend to have more male births than older mothers for third and subsequent births.**

In Armenia, we observe that minority mothers tend to have a higher proportion of male births across various birth orders, particularly for second or subsequent children. This elevated birth masculinity rate among minorities remains a unique aspect of the situation, as confirmed by census and civil registration data. However, this phenomenon has a limited impact on the overall birth masculinity in Armenia, given the relatively small size of the minority population. Unfortunately, we cannot conduct a similar analysis based on religious denominations due to insufficient data. According to the study conducted by the UNFPA Armenia Country Office, the probability of a male child for birth ranks greater than 1, is 8.5 percent lower for ethnic majorities rather than minorities. For a birth rank greater than 2, the probability of a male child in ethnic minority families is 16.7 percent higher than otherwise. **Also, the probability of male birth is positively correlated with the birth rank.**<sup>7</sup>

**For Azerbaijan,** Until the early 1990s, the sex ratio at birth fell within the typical biological range, which spans from 102 to 106 males per 100 females. Nevertheless, in 1990, it increased to 107 boys per 100 girls, reaching 118 boys to 100 girls in 2003. This was followed by a slight decline to 114 during the last few years (2015-2017), but **the sex ratio at birth has since risen to 116 as of 2021.**

Rigid gender norms and disparities persist strongly in the minds of both Azerbaijani men and women. Empirical data underscores that these deeply ingrained gender stereotypes, misconceptions, and customary practices, which place a high value on having sons, are significant contributors to gender-biased sex selection in Azerbaijan. Son preference is an integral part of the country's patriarchal family structures and practices, and evidence-based information shows that it has led to an imbalanced sex ratio at birth. **SRB**

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<sup>5</sup> [https://georgia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Social%20Economic%20Research\\_GBSS\\_2020\\_ENG.pdf](https://georgia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Social%20Economic%20Research_GBSS_2020_ENG.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [Advisory committee on the framework for the protection of national minorities \(ACFC\) - 2022](#)

<sup>7</sup> <https://eecca.unfpa.org/en/publications/sex-imbalance-birth-armenia>

ratio for the regions, populated by Georgian, Armenian, Kurd, and Lezgin minorities, is approximately 109, 118, 117, and 109, respectively.<sup>8</sup>

## **Gender-Based Violence Among Ethnic Minority Women In The South Caucasus**

Another significant aspect of gender disparity within the context of ethnic minorities in the South Caucasus is the prevalence of gender-based violence across all three countries in the region. To address this problem among ethnic minority women we should study the group of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia<sup>9</sup>. **As mentioned earlier this ethnic community is poorly integrated into Georgian society, for various reasons (for instance, language barrier). Forced marriage, psychological and economic abuse, and physical abuse are the most common forms of abuse among this group.** Early marriage practices in Azerbaijani communities are typically rooted in tradition. While it is customary for women to marry at a young age, forced marriages continue to be prevalent. This community often involves young women being wed to men selected by their parents. **Qualitative research identifies two primary factors driving early marriage: (1) a misinterpretation of the Qur'an, which has led to the belief that women should marry at a young age, and (2) the economic advantages associated with acquiring a daughter-in-law who can contribute as an additional laborer to the family.** Azerbaijani women frequently endure emotional and economic abuse within their families. In these households, daughters-in-law often hold the lowest social status. **They are under significant pressure to give birth to a child within the first year of marriage.** Failure to do so may lead to accusations of infertility or severe health issues against Azerbaijani women.

**Economic violence, perpetrated by both intimate partners and other family members, is also prevalent.** A strong adherence to traditional gender roles is observed in Azerbaijani families, typically confining women to domestic roles. Consequently, women become financially reliant on their husbands and their husband's family, lacking independent sources of income.

There is a law Regarding the approval of the minimum standards necessary for the arrangement and operation of a temporary residence (shelter) for victims of violence against women and/or domestic violence. This law includes the prohibition of discrimination based on sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity. It criminalizes domestic violence and provides appropriate assistance to victims. The main orders and protective measures against domestic violence in Georgia include protective orders issued by a court of first instance as temporary measures to protect victims of domestic violence, restraining orders issued by authorized police officers as temporary measures to protect victims, and the potential legal consequences for abusers who do not comply with these orders. Victims, their family members, or individuals providing assistance can request restraining orders, which can be issued for up to six months and potentially extended. Additionally, in Georgia, relevant state authorities are responsible for implementing domestic violence preventive measures and collaborating with organizations working on these issues. The police are obligated to respond if restraining or protective orders are breached. Despite the availability of law enforcement and emergency services within Azerbaijani communities, including the translation of restrictive and protective orders into the Azerbaijani language, very few women seek formal assistance. Moreover, although translation services are offered at shelters, women often refrain

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<sup>8</sup> STATE STATISTICAL COMMITTEE OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

<sup>9</sup> <https://data.unwomen.org/country/azerbaijan>



from utilizing them. As a result, those women who attempt to access services frequently terminate the process before it becomes official. This gap in service provision leads to unresolved cases of violence.

Women, despite their level of qualifications, adapt to these economic changes by engaging in work outside of their households? that might not align with their skill sets. Consequently, one of the key reasons for domestic violence, as identified by respondents in the National Research on Violence against Women in Georgia, is "male unemployment, which undermines the traditional male role in the family, often accompanied by drinking and sometimes drug addiction."

**This reaction to evolving gender roles reflects deeply ingrained gender stereotypes, often referred to as the "Caucasian mentality."** For the Azerbaijani population in Georgia, these stereotypes are further amplified by **Muslim traditions and beliefs**, a perspective supported by a study on social and economic conditions and attitudes among the Kvemo Kartli population in 2011.

**This study found that the acceptance of violence against women is highest among ethnic Azerbaijanis**, with 16.5 percent fully agreeing that "if the husband uses physical violence against the wife, it means the wife has deserved it." This contrasts with 10 percent of Armenians and 8.3 percent of ethnic Georgians. While there is little outright endorsement of violence, Azerbaijani women express concerning and sometimes contradictory attitudes towards gender relations, which reinforces the ongoing issue of domestic violence.

These attitudes are reflected in the fact that 63.4 percent of Azerbaijani respondents agree that "a good wife and mother will never deserve bad treatment by the husband," implying that wives and mothers who do not meet societal expectations could be seen as legitimate targets of violence by their husbands. In addition, 84.9 percent of Azerbaijani women agree that "a good wife obeys her husband," far above the national average of 42.5 percent. Only 52.6 percent believe it is legitimate for a woman to refuse intercourse if her husband has a sexually transmitted infection, compared to the national average of 76.5 percent.

**Domestic violence is just one manifestation of an imbalanced power structure within families, where women's positions are subordinate to their husbands.** However, examining traditional Azerbaijani families reveals that this power dynamic is often more complex. **In many cases, it's the mother-in-law who wields significant influence, not only over family finances but also over her daughter-in-law's personal freedom and choices.** This phenomenon extends beyond Azerbaijani families, as highlighted in the National Research on Violence against Women in Georgia, which notes that domestic violence is primarily perpetrated by husbands and their families, often involving the mothers-in-law.

To fully understand the problem of gender-based violence, it's essential to acknowledge that both men and women can be victims and perpetrators. A woman may be a victim of domestic violence when she's young but could become a perpetrator herself later in life. Similarly, a husband who oppresses his wife may himself be oppressed by his mother. While extended families are traditionally seen as crucial for social interaction and support in Azerbaijani culture, the family's sacred image contradicts the fact that it's where most forms of violence occur. The lack of private space in close-knit family settings creates a tense atmosphere that can foster various forms of abuse, both violent and non-violent. **This issue is exacerbated by the limited**

**employment opportunities in regions like Kvemo Kartli, where young couples often struggle to afford separate living arrangements due to financial constraints.**<sup>10</sup>

To continue with Armenia, during the visit of the Council of Europe’s Advisory Committee , concerns were raised about gender-based violence, particularly affecting individuals from national minority backgrounds. Domestic violence emerged as a significant issue, with language barriers hindering access to assistance. Unfortunately, there is a lack of disaggregated statistical data on criminal proceedings based on national minority background, gender, and geographical distribution. The state report did not provide recent data beyond the census, further exacerbating the data gap in crucial areas such as education, employment, healthcare, social welfare services, and domestic violence affecting national minority women and children. **According to the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, domestic violence remains a widespread problem in Armenia, with some regions showing high levels of acceptance of wife beating.**

In Armenia, only 12% of women who have experienced physical or sexual abuse by their partner have sought help from an appropriate institution, and 24% of these women have temporarily left home due to violence. Furthermore, 77% of women who have been physically or sexually abused by their partner continue to live with their abuser and have never left their abuser’s home<sup>11</sup>. Despite not having statistics for ethnic minorities, it has been reported that, national minority communities, especially women and children, are reported to be disproportionately affected by domestic violence. Civil society organizations highlighted the challenges faced by minority women when dealing with the police, emphasizing the need for authorities to address cultural and linguistic barriers to justice. Access to culturally and linguistically competent public services and support is also limited for national minority women.

Yezidi representatives specifically noted the cultural and linguistic barriers between their community and the police, which put individuals at risk and hindered access to legal remedies. The lack of reliable, disaggregated data poses a significant obstacle to effectively addressing gender-based violence against women and children in national minority communities.<sup>12</sup>

**Gender data gaps exist in monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from a gender perspective in Azerbaijan, with limited data available for key areas like the gender pay gap and other aspects such as gender and poverty, harassment, women's access to assets, and gender and the environment.** As of December 2020, only 50.8 percent of indicators needed to monitor the SDGs from a gender perspective were available. **In 2018, 5.2 percent of women aged 15-49 reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months**<sup>13</sup>. Although the data about gender-based violence among Azerbaijani ethnic minorities is unattainable, the **IMAGES survey by UNFPA in 2018 found that 33 percent of Azerbaijani men admitted to perpetrating violence against a partner, while 32 percent of women reported experiencing physical violence.** A significant number of women in Azerbaijan consider partner violence acceptable under certain

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<sup>10</sup> [https://www.ecmi.de/fileadmin/redakteure/publications/pdf/Working\\_Paper\\_74.pdf](https://www.ecmi.de/fileadmin/redakteure/publications/pdf/Working_Paper_74.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> COUNTRY GENDER PROFILE ARMENIA

<sup>12</sup> [Advisory committee on the framework for the protection of national minorities \(ACFC\) - 2022](#)

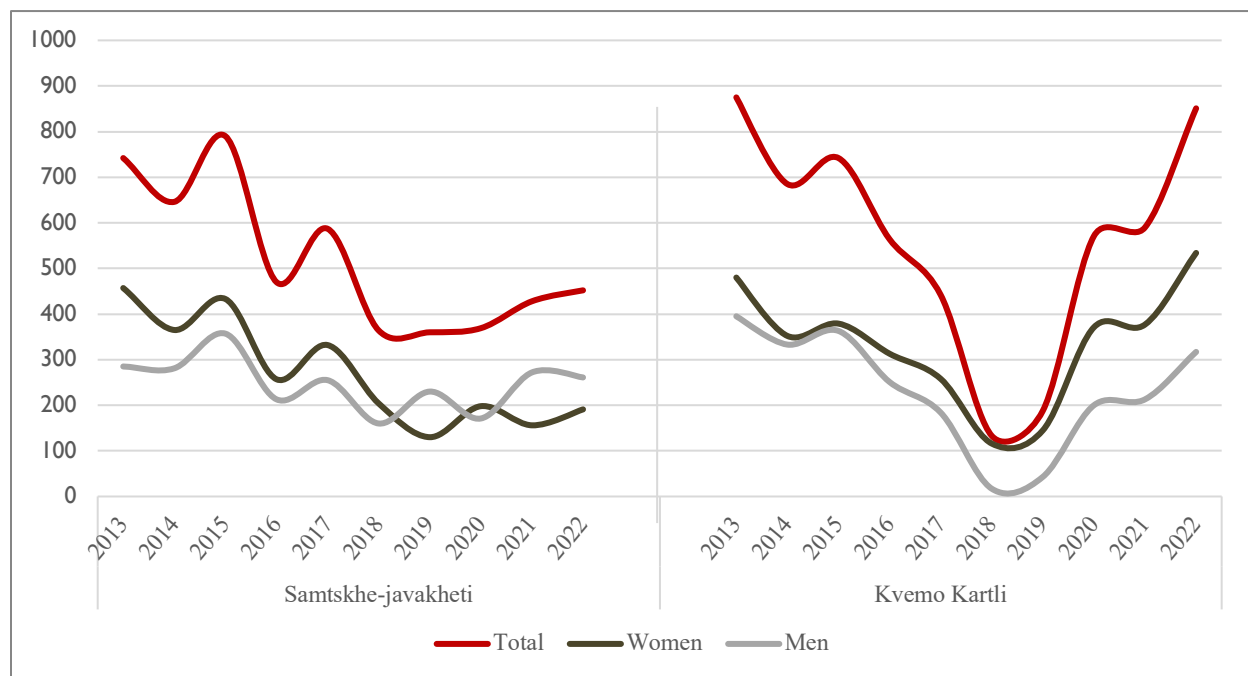
<sup>13</sup> <https://data.unwomen.org/country/azerbaijan>

circumstances, with percentages ranging from 11 to 59 percent. **Violence against women in Azerbaijan in 2017 had a potential economic cost estimated at 1.8 percent of the country's GDP<sup>14</sup>.**

## Educational Challenges And Opportunities For Ethnic Minorities In The South Caucasus

**One of the main obstacles to the integration of ethnic minorities into the public, political, and economic life of the country is the lack or no access to educational services.** The Study on Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care in Georgia<sup>15</sup> states that enrolment in preschool for ethnic minority children accounts for 33 percent. **For ethnic minority regions, Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti, shares are 50.1 percent and 55 percent respectively.**

**FIGURE 6 – NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED**



Source: Geostat

More interesting is university enrollment and graduation statistics for these two regions by gender. The data reveals significant trends in university enrollment between men and women in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli from 2012 to 2021. **Throughout this period, women consistently outnumbered men in terms of university enrollment.** In Samtskhe-Javakheti, despite fluctuations in total enrollments, with a peak of 790 in 2015 and a low of 587 in 2017, the gender gap persisted. In Kvemo Kartli, there was a substantial decline in enrollment from 2013 to 2018, dropping from 875 to 133, but a recovery began after 2019, with enrollment reaching 851 by 2022. **This sustained trend suggests that women have been**

Source: Geostat

<sup>14</sup> <https://azerbaijan.unfpa.org/en/topics/gender-based-violence-14>

<sup>15</sup> STUDY ON QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IN GEORGIA

actively pursuing higher education, consistently maintaining a higher enrollment rate compared to their male counterparts during this time frame (Figure 6). This trend can further enhance the integration level of minority groups into the economic, political, and social life of the national society. Also, female involvement in higher education levels may contribute to empowering ethnic minority women in these regions and may change their role in their society, in the future.

In both regions there is volatility when it comes to the number of graduated students, however, the situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti is more promising, since overall, unlike Kvemo Kartli, it does not exhibit a downward trend. In Samtskhe-Javakheti, between 2013 and 2015, the number of female graduates exhibited a rather steady increase, peaking in 2015, significantly outnumbering their male counterparts. However, from 2016 to 2018, a sharp decline in female graduates was observed, contributing to an overall reduction in the total number of graduates. Meanwhile, the number of male graduates remained relatively stable during this period. The year 2020 saw a notable resurgence in female graduates, narrowing the gender gap.

In Kvemo Kartli, between 2013 and 2020, both the number of female and male graduates displayed a significant declining trend. However, since 2021, the data reveals a positive shift, with the number of graduates nearly doubling by 2022. Furthermore, it is evident that the number of female graduates significantly exceeds that of their male counterparts (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7 – NUMBER OF GRADUATED STUDENTS



Source: Geostat

In Armenia, the authorities have recognized the presence of 30 communities lacking preschool facilities. UNICEF has identified that there are more than 170,000 ethnic minority children in Armenia who are not currently attending pre-primary education. School curricula lack information about ethnic minorities, with limited intercultural education opportunities for students who share classes with minorities. Some history and geography subjects may touch on minority topics, but they vary by school and teacher. In Assyrian and Yezidi schools, minority culture is informally emphasized within common areas, though it's not mandated. Yezidi students may face stereotyping by some majority teachers. Yezidi representatives

**pointed out that the absence of preschools in both Armenian and Yezidi languages in compact Yezidi settlements negatively affects access to quality education.** In some Yezidi villages, only nine years of schooling are available, and students must travel to neighboring villages, which can be risky due to gender-based violence concerns. This contributes to gender disparities in dropout rates amid rigid gender norms. **Around 70 percent of Yezidi girls drop out of school, and 50 percent of Yezidi boys (compared to around 7 percent in the majority population).** Besides this, the absence of textbooks in minority languages creates problems in communication between young Yezidi pupils (lacking fluency in Armenian) and Armenian teachers. Also, they are not able to write entry examination tests for higher education in any language other than Armenian.<sup>16</sup>

According to the 2022 population census in Armenia, the share of the population without primary education is higher among ethnic minorities (7.3%) compared to Armenians (5.9%). The data also shows that most of the ethnic minority population has at most a secondary education degree, with this share being higher than that of Armenians with the same education level. However, at higher education levels, the share of the Armenian population is higher. For example, about 22% of Armenians have a high professional education level, while this figure is 13% for ethnic minorities. Exceptions to this trend include Russians (30%), Indians (30%), and Persians (26%).

These figures are quite similar for both women and men. The data indicates that the share of women with preliminary or secondary professional education is higher than that of men. However, the share of men from ethnic minorities with higher education degrees (13.4%) is higher than that of women.

To deal with these issues, in 2021, the state started monitoring dropouts and attempting to re-engage them. **In higher education, Yezidi, Kurdish, and Assyrian minority representatives are granted university spots annually without competition.** Since 2010, other minority group members nominated by their respective organizations in the Council of National Minorities can also study culture and language-related subjects at higher education institutions. The Council can provide full or partial tuition fee waivers to these students based on their requests<sup>17</sup>.

In Azerbaijan Lezgin is taught as a foreign language in areas with Lezgin settlements, but resources are limited, relying on Russian textbooks. Concerns have been raised about the decline of the Lezgin oral traditions. Sunday Schools run by minority associations provide opportunities for minority language and culture learning. Ukrainian and Tatar communities in Baku organize language courses voluntarily due to the absence of school teaching. Efforts to publish and update minority language textbooks are underway, and the Ministry of Education is working on a systematic approach for textbook development and quality standards.

**Children from minority backgrounds are enrolled in general education schools in areas they reside, with two hours per week dedicated to their native language.** In the 2020/2021 academic year, various minority languages were taught in schools across the country, with over 30,000 students involved. In

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<sup>16</sup> [Advisory committee on the framework for the protection of national minorities \(ACFC\) - 2022](#)

<sup>17</sup> [ECRI report on Azerbaijan - 2023](#)

addition, there are 10 Georgian-language schools and Hebrew classes in Baku's School No. 46, accommodating 50 Jewish students.

Some communities said they receive support from respective embassies, but most have to rely on their resources. The Baku International Multiculturalism Centre and local cultural centers allocate premises for these activities. The Advisory Committee further notes that the Jewish Community runs the private Ohr Avner Chabad Day School with approximately 400 students.

The Advisory Committee notes, for example, that Talysh is taught at 71 out of the 89 public village schools in the Lankaran region, but at no school in Lankaran town, although according to the census, about 26 percent of the population identify as Talysh. Moreover, the Advisory Committee received conflicting information about the minimum number of children that would trigger the provision of minority language education. The Ministry of Education said that a minimum of 20 students was needed to open a new minority language class, though some village schools operate with a smaller number of students. The Advisory Committee finds that this lack of awareness puts persons belonging to minorities in a weak position.<sup>18</sup>

## Early Marriage

**Cultural idiosyncrasies within ethnic minority groups are usually manifested in higher levels of early marriages and a more skewed sex ratio at birth compared to the majority of the population.** Early marriages, often driven by complex factors, uphold traditional norms but can limit educational and economic opportunities, and social and political participation, perpetuating gender disparities. The interplay of these practices with cultural and religious differences between dominant and minority groups creates intricate dynamics. While they preserve cultural identity, they also exacerbate disparities, hindering economic progress and social integration for minorities. This results in marginalized positions and unequal access to resources. Understanding these idiosyncrasies is vital for fostering inclusive societies that celebrate cultural diversity while addressing the challenges they pose, aiming for equitable progress and social harmony.

**To continue with cultural, traditional, and social differentiation of the ethnic minorities from the national public we take a closer look at Armenia and Azerbaijan's exhibition of distinct cultural idiosyncrasies when it comes to gender norms. Notably, the Yezidis, the largest ethnic minority in Armenia, are governed by strict rules regarding marriage, prohibiting unions with individuals of different religions and castes.** These restrictions are deeply ingrained and considered essential for preserving Yezidi's identity, with violations considered blasphemous and carrying severe consequences. Interestingly, these restrictions appear less stringent for Yezidi boys in some communities, but the practice of double endogamy, requiring both religious and caste identity in a partner, presents challenges in finding suitable matches, leading to marriages between close relatives or even individuals from different groups. Gender roles are also highly traditional, with a prevailing son preference that results in differential treatment of male and female children. Girls are expected to embody specific virtues linked to family honor, leading to restricted mobility and a focus on household chores, while boys are encouraged to seek independence.

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<sup>18</sup> [Advisory committee on the framework for the protection of national minorities \(ACFC\) - 2022](#)

Furthermore, interactions between unrelated boys and girls are closely monitored and limited, restricting girls' autonomy in choosing their life partners.<sup>19</sup>

**The 2011 Life in Transition Survey conducted in Azerbaijan highlights significant social disparities faced by rural ethnic minorities, with a particular focus on the stigma surrounding intermarriage between different ethnic and religious groups.** Both Azerbaijanis and Armenians generally express disapproval of interethnic marriages. Notably, Azerbaijanis strongly oppose Azerbaijani women marrying outside their ethnicity, with approval rates ranging from only 6 percent to 11 percent. However, there is an exception in the case of Turks, where 53 percent approve due to shared cultural, religious, and ethnic connections.<sup>20</sup>

**Traditional gender norms, which contribute to early marriages and the discontinuation of secondary education, have been a focal point in various studies examining the Azerbaijani minority in Georgia.** These studies have brought to light the issue of underage girls, some as young as 11, entering into unregistered marriages, which appears to be prevalent within Azerbaijani minority communities and among Georgian Muslim communities in Adjara. **In such circumstances, girls not only miss the chance to complete their education but also become susceptible to domestic violence.** Furthermore, variations in cultural norms and practices among ethnic minority groups contribute to disparities in opportunities, particularly affecting minority women. As depicted in Figure 6, the gender gap in educational attainment within ethnic Georgian and Armenian communities is minimal, with girls even displaying slightly more favorable outcomes than boys. However, a significant gender gap exists within the Azerbaijani minority group, where girls are over 10 percent less likely to complete secondary education and about 6 percent less likely to attain a university degree. These differences can be attributed to prevailing social norms and practices.

Child marriage is a gender-specific issue that impacts girls and boys differently. Globally, the prevalence of child marriages among boys is notably lower than among girls. Girls who are married as children are particularly susceptible to domestic violence and sexual abuse within relationships characterized by inequality. In cases where child brides become pregnant, they frequently face complications during pregnancy and childbirth due to their bodies not being physically prepared for childbearing. Upon entering marriage, both boys and girls frequently have to discontinue their education in order to enter the labor force or assume domestic duties within their households.<sup>21</sup> The study findings indicated that, in the context of early marriages, education and marriage were viewed as two contrasting options for girls. After marriage, traditional gender roles and responsibilities were predominantly assigned. Decisions related to household finances, the continuation of girls' education, and family planning were typically made by husbands or their parents. Women's responsibilities were shaped by societal norms, portraying them primarily as caregivers responsible for attending to their family's daily requirements.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> [Issues Related To The Rights of And Opportunities For Yezidi Girls Residing In Armenia ENG.pdf \(epfarmeria.am\)](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Report on Social Injustices for Rural Poor in SC 09-01-14-FINAL.pdf \(care-caucasus.org.ge\)](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Child Marriage and the Georgian Example - WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE EUROPE \(wave-network.org\)](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Girls in early marriage are often left with limited education, employment prospects and social networks, newly released study says \(unicef.org\)](#)



**In Georgia Instances of early marriage are observed throughout the nation and are not linked to any specific ethnic, religious, or geographical communities.**<sup>23</sup> In a 2017 research initiative led by UN Women within the Kvemo Kartli region of Georgia, predominantly inhabited by ethnic minorities like Azerbaijanis, Armenians, and ethnic Russians, female participants were interviewed to ascertain the age at which they entered into a marriage or began residing with a partner. **The study's findings indicated that 32 percent of married women from these minority communities had married before reaching the age of 18**<sup>24</sup>. Among this subset, 5 percent had entered into matrimony at the tender ages of 13-14, while 16 percent did so between the ages of 15-16.<sup>25</sup> According to CRRC<sup>26</sup>, besides sex, various demographic characteristics determine different rates of underage marriage in Georgia. In rural areas, traditionally, women are highly likely to marry under 18. **Father's education level also plays a significant role in women's underage marriage. If a father attained some post-secondary education, it's less likely for women to be married under 18**<sup>27</sup>. The same study claims that only 45 percent of married women participate in the labor force compared to 52 percent of the same demographic characteristics of women.

**The lower economic well-being observed among individuals who marry at a young age is primarily linked to their lower educational attainment.** Specifically, women who marry underage are less likely to pursue vocational or higher education. For women who did not marry underage, there is a 37 percent chance of attaining higher education, whereas their counterparts who married under the age of 18 have only a 16 percent chance. Similarly, women who marry at or above 18 have a 27 percent chance of obtaining vocational education, while those who marry underage have a 21 percent chance. A significant proportion of women who marry underage (64 percent) do not progress beyond secondary education, in contrast to 36 percent of similar women who did not marry as children. **The exact reasons for this educational disparity, whether due to school dropout or a lack of pursuit of further education after completing secondary schooling, are not entirely clear.**<sup>28</sup>

**The inadequate integration of certain ethnic and religious minority groups into mainstream society can contribute to the prevalence of child marriage.** Many girls and young women from these communities do not speak the Georgian language, intensifying their isolation and limiting their career prospects. Language barriers and deficient infrastructure in their residing areas further hinder these girls' ability to resist marriage, as they face challenges in accessing essential services such as healthcare, education, law enforcement, and support systems. In addition, they may not be well-informed about existing

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<sup>23</sup> [Girls in early marriage are often left with limited education, employment prospects and social networks, newly released study says \(unicef.org\)](#)

<sup>24</sup> In Georgia, the Civil Code establishes the minimum marriage age as 18 years. However, marriages can occur at the age of 16 with parental approval or under specific circumstances. This legal framework is often rendered ineffective in practice. Even though the law outlines procedures for marriages involving individuals under 16, these regulations are not consistently enforced.

<sup>25</sup> [Child Marriage and the Georgian Example - WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE EUROPE \(wave-network.org\)](#)

<sup>26</sup> [Early Marriage Policy Brief.pdf \(crrc.ge\)](#)

<sup>27</sup> CRRC study finds that there is no statistically significant difference between the ethnic minorities and ethnic Georgians in underage marriage rate. However, authors claim that because of relatively small sample the margin of error must be seen as large for this population.

<sup>28</sup> [Early Marriage Policy Brief.pdf \(crrc.ge\)](#)



laws designed to protect them. This social isolation reinforces gender inequality and pushes early marriage as the perceived only option, often seen as an "inescapable fate" for these girls.<sup>29</sup>

**Child, early, and forced marriages pose a challenge related to human trafficking in Armenia, especially among Yezidi girls.** The Special Rapporteur's report highlights that Yezidi girls are entering marriage at ages as young as 13-14, often arranged by their parents, violating children's rights, and exposing them to sexual abuse and trafficking. **In response, Armenia amended Article 10 of the Family Code, setting the minimum marriage age at 18.** In exceptional cases, 17-year-olds can marry with parental or guardian consent. Under certain conditions, this minimum age can be lowered to 16 with parental consent and the other person being at least 18<sup>30</sup> years old.<sup>31</sup>

**According to UNFPA and Yezidi representatives, early and forced marriage is more common among minority ethnic groups more exposed to socio-economic marginalization, particularly Yezidis.**<sup>32</sup> Yezidis, as a closed ethnoreligious group, practice endogamous marriages within their community. Due to a limited female population and the principle of double endogamy, competition for brides begins early, involving pre-arranged marriages, formal engagements, or even girl kidnappings. Certainly, within the context of early marriage, the concern about and danger of bridal kidnappings have been highlighted. This adds to the social constraints faced by girls, with the fear of abduction during travel to school adversely affecting Yezidi girls' dropout rates, particularly.<sup>33</sup>

**In Azerbaijan, 11 percent of girls are married before turning 18, and 2 percent are married before their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday**<sup>34</sup>. The highest rates of child marriage are found in various regions, including the Absheron peninsula, northern areas, and parts of the capital, Baku. ACFC (2019) report<sup>35</sup> revealed a 42 percent increase in child marriage in East Azerbaijan between 2017 and 2019<sup>36</sup>. **While child marriage is acknowledged as a significant issue in Azerbaijan, the prevalence may be higher than reported due to the large number of illegitimate children born each year.** Many girls married before age 15 have their children registered as born out of wedlock. Child marriage is rooted in gender inequality and the belief that girls are inferior to boys. This problem is mainly driven by poverty, low level of education, religion, displacement, social status, and bride kidnapping.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> [Child Marriage in Georgia ENG.pdf\(un.org\)](#)

<sup>30</sup> To tackle this issue, changes were introduced to Article 10 of Armenia's Family Code, establishing 18 as the minimum age for marriage. In exceptional cases, 17-year-olds can marry with parental, adoptive parent, or guardian consent. Furthermore, this minimum marriage age could be reduced to 16 if there's consent from the child's parents, adoptive parents, or guardian, and the other party is at least 18 years old.

<sup>31</sup> [gbss report 2022 eng 0.pdf\(unfpa.org\)](#)

<sup>32</sup> [Advisory committee on the framework for the protection of national minorities \(ACFC\) - 2022](#)

<sup>33</sup> [Advisory committee on the framework for the protection of national minorities \(ACFC\) - 2022](#)

<sup>34</sup> [Azerbaijan - Girls Not Brides](#)

<sup>35</sup> [Advisory committee on the framework for the protection of national minorities \(ACFC\) - 2022](#)

<sup>36</sup> [Azerbaijan - Girls Not Brides](#)

<sup>37</sup> [Advisory committee on the framework for the protection of national minorities \(ACFC\) - 2022](#)

## Political Participation And Representation Of Ethnic Minority Women In The South Caucasus

The other dimension of gender disparities within ethnic minority communities pertains to the involvement of women in politics. Traditional family dynamics, which place the burden of family responsibilities on women limit women's participation in politics. Despite some advancements in recent years, women continue to be underrepresented in political roles across all levels of government.<sup>38</sup>

**The challenge of integrating ethnic minorities into the civic, political, and social fabric of Georgian democracy continues to be a significant issue.** Despite various projects and initiatives undertaken in recent years, there has been little notable advancement in terms of effectively incorporating ethnic minorities into the political sphere and promoting their inclusion in society.<sup>39</sup> **Women from ethnic minority backgrounds face a particularly significant level of political marginalization and exclusion, which is especially pronounced in a Georgian society where women, in general, have limited political participation both at the local and national levels.**<sup>40</sup> This is further exacerbated by the existing political system. According to current legislation, both the Georgian Parliament and local self-governments are structured around a mixed electoral system, which combines proportional and majoritarian elements (until 2024 elections).<sup>41</sup> In practice, there exists a notable connection between the electoral system and the participation of women in politics. The nature of the electoral system frequently plays a significant role in determining the level of female representation. Countries that employ a proportional electoral system tend to surpass those utilizing a majoritarian system when it comes to women's representation in political roles.<sup>42</sup>

The engagement of minority women in politics is severely restricted, with two main obstacles. Firstly, **structural factors** encompass aspects such as the electoral system, recruitment methods within political parties, and proficiency in the official language. Secondly, **cultural factors** involve the perceptions of politics, apprehensions, and gender biases within minority communities and the broader Georgian society.<sup>43</sup>

In each instance, the proportion of female voters within the electorate exceeds fifty percent. The substantial number of female voters in absolute terms leads to a higher representation of women among the total voter turnouts. However, upon closer examination of the women who actually cast their votes during elections, it becomes evident that men are more inclined to participate in voting than women. **On average, in areas with a significant minority population, men were 5.7 percent more likely to have participated in the 2014 local elections compared to women.** This highlights the relatively low level of indirect political engagement among minority women, even though indirect participation is considered a simpler form of political involvement. This implies that direct forms of political participation are likely to be even lower.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> [Women and Political Power in the South Caucasus: Recent Developments in Georgia-ISET Policy institute - 2023](#)

<sup>39</sup> Public Defender's Office, 2018

<sup>40</sup> UN Women, 2014

<sup>41</sup> Study of the participation of ethnic minority representatives in political life-2019

<sup>42</sup> United Nations, 2005

<sup>43</sup> Political Participation of national minority woman in Georgia – Levan Kakhishvili

<sup>44</sup> Political Participation of national minority woman in Georgia – Levan Kakhishvili

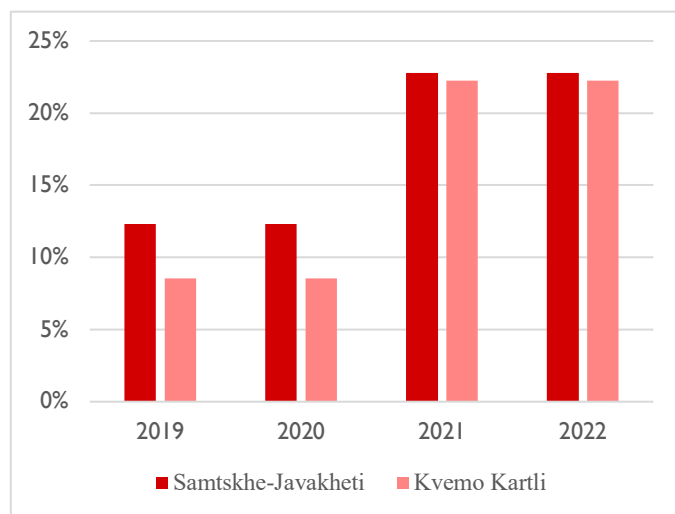
**When focusing on more direct forms of political engagement, like advocacy and running for political office, the situation becomes even more challenging.** Instances of minority women participating in activities connected to policy advocacy are rare, and if they do occur, they are predominantly tied to the formal roles that these women hold.

**The survey results indicate that a very small percentage of respondents, only 4 percent, reported having signed a petition within the six months leading up to the interview, including online petitions.** Interestingly, this low figure doesn't show significant variations across different age groups or other societal categories. However, when looking at generational differences, 5 percent of younger individuals reported signing petitions, while the figure was slightly lower at 3 percent for those aged 56 and above. Similarly, when it comes to contacting media outlets, only 4 percent of respondents mentioned that they had written a letter or made a call to a newspaper, TV, or radio station in the six months before the interview. Again, there was a minor difference between younger and older generations, but it was not statistically significant.<sup>45</sup>

As previously noted, factors originating from the supply side play a significant role in fostering gender biases in political engagement. **Georgian political parties often hesitate to present female candidates in majoritarian contests due to the perceived difficulty of their success.** As a result, they typically include female candidates in proportional lists. In the 2020 Parliamentary elections in Georgia, 44.3% of the 6,882 candidates nominated through the proportional election system were women. However, the percentage of elected female candidates fell slightly below the 25% mandatory quota. This was partly due to some parties securing fewer seats and not electing any women. While the major parties met the minimum requirements for female representation, women were often placed in lower positions on the candidate lists. Despite some efforts to include women in top positions, overall women's representation in Parliament decreased further in 2021.

*Figure 8 - Share of women in local self-government*

**FIGURE 8 – SHARE OF WOMEN IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT**



*Source: Geostat*

**When observing trends in the share of women in local self-government in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli (figure 8), a noticeable and substantial increase has become evident since 2019.** This increase is particularly remarkable, with representation nearly doubling in both 2021 and 2022 compared to previous years. It's worth noting that participation in the 2020 parliamentary elections in these regions was relatively high compared to other areas, further highlighting the noticeable engagement of ethnic

<sup>45</sup> Political Participation of national minority woman in Georgia – Levan Kakhishvili

minorities in political processes. This dynamic can be attributed to the rising education levels among women in this area.

**Continuing with Armenia, according to the World Bank estimates, the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament was 35.5 percent.** At the local level, the underrepresentation of women persists, with just 9.3 percent of local municipal councilors being women, and only three out of 79 communities headed by women<sup>46</sup>. Notably, the Aparan community in the Aragatsotn region stands out, as it lacks any women among the 21 members of the Council of Elders, despite the region's diverse ethnic makeup<sup>47</sup>. This landscape is influenced by cultural and customary biases that have deep roots, as evidenced by a 2015 study highlighting strong resistance to women's participation in politics, perpetuated by leaders, politicians, and media<sup>48</sup>. **In 2016, Armenian surveys indicated complex attitudes toward women in leadership, with 58.3 percent believing men were better political leaders.** However, respondents also supported women's political participation, endorsed gender quotas in public administration, local governance (63.3 percent), and business (65.9 percent), and recognized women's leadership potential (81.7 percent)<sup>49</sup>. This dual perspective underscores the intricate dynamics of women in Armenian leadership.

**To understand these inequalities more comprehensively, one must consider the multifaceted discrimination within Armenia.** Smaller towns outside Yerevan face economic limitations, and rural areas struggle with restricted access to formal employment and essential services, including quality healthcare. Although Armenian legislation prohibits gender and ethnic discrimination, the main ethnic minorities, including Yazidi, Russians, Assyrians, Kurds, and Jews, still encounter challenges in securing representation in government bodies, despite recent constitutional reforms and temporary special measures<sup>50</sup>. Yezidi representatives, as a prominent minority, have expressed apprehension regarding the notable underrepresentation of their community in various public sectors, with particular concern surrounding the absence of Yezidi individuals in the judiciary and their limited presence in law enforcement and the government's national minority division. According to Article 89 of the Constitution and Article 95 of the Electoral Code, parliamentary seats are allocated to national minority representatives in the National Assembly. In the 2021 National Assembly elections, four mandates were granted to the largest national minority groups—Yezidi, Russian, Assyrian, and Kurdish<sup>51</sup>.

**Azerbaijan, on the other hand, lacks data regarding women's political participation due to limited disaggregation by gender and reliability issues in official data sources<sup>52</sup>.** Women represented 18.2 percent of the national parliament as of 2021, being the highest value over the past 24 years<sup>53</sup>. As for 2022, the share of women in parliament was higher at 18.3 percent. Ethnic Azerbaijani participants noted the presence of ethnic minorities, particularly Kurds, in high-ranking positions<sup>54</sup>. However, the Lezgin minority

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<sup>46</sup> <https://womennet.am/en/category/figures-and-facts-en/>

<sup>47</sup> <https://womennet.am/en/category/figures-and-facts-en/>

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.old.yasu.am/files/Anna%20Melikyan%20and%20Irina%20Ghaplanyan.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> [https://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MEN%20AND%20GENDER%20EQUALITY\\_Final\\_0.pdf](https://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MEN%20AND%20GENDER%20EQUALITY_Final_0.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3807221?ln=en#record-files-collapse-header>

<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/armenia-country-gender-equality-brief>

<sup>51</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/5th-op-armenia-en/1680aa2a81>

<sup>52</sup> [Advisory committee on the framework for the protection of national minorities \(ACFC\) - 2022](#)

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/azerbaijan/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS>

<sup>54</sup> [https://care-caucasus.org/ge/uploads/reports/Report\\_on\\_Social\\_Injustices\\_for\\_Rural\\_Poor\\_in\\_SC\\_09-01-14-FINAL.pdf](https://care-caucasus.org/ge/uploads/reports/Report_on_Social_Injustices_for_Rural_Poor_in_SC_09-01-14-FINAL.pdf)

expressed concern over reduced parliamentary representation after a shift from proportional representation in the 2005 elections<sup>55</sup>. *“The political system does not allow women or minority groups to organize independently or advocate for their respective interests. There are no meaningful mechanisms to promote increased representation of women and ethnic or religious minorities... The government has worked to stifle public expressions of ethnic Talysh and Lezgin identity, among other targeted groups.... Women are subject to discrimination in employment, including both de facto bias and formal exclusion from certain types of work under the labor code”*<sup>56</sup>.

**While minorities hold positions in state structures and local authorities, their influence remains limited within the highly centralized political system.** *“There are, however, parliamentarians and members of administrative bodies, ministries, and local authorities who are of minority origin. Their impact on the decision-making process remains limited due to the highly centralized state structure. Neither the Forum of Religious Communities of Azerbaijan nor the Coordination Council of the Cultural Centers of National Minorities are directly involved in policymaking and serve only as consultative bodies”*<sup>57</sup>.

## **Employment Challenges And Opportunities For Ethnic Minorities In Armenia And Georgia**

**In both Armenia and Georgia, national minorities face significant challenges in terms of employment.** In Armenia, the absence of accurate unemployment data for national minorities, especially Yezidi communities in rural areas, is a major concern. Limited employment opportunities are mainly concentrated in roles within schools, village administration, and livestock farming, with administrative and educational positions in places like Ferik predominantly occupied by men or Armenian women, despite 82% of Ferik being inhabited by Yezidis. A shortage of qualified Yezidi language teachers further exacerbates the situation, while Yezidi women are primarily engaged in household and agricultural work, limiting their participation in community life. Insufficient infrastructure, including poorly maintained roads, hampers school attendance due to transportation difficulties, and despite experiencing higher unemployment rates, the true employment situation of Yezidis is not accurately reflected in official data.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the main source of economic participation for ethnic minorities, agriculture, is also impeded. Land use issues, including property sales without government intervention, deprive them of property rights and grazing space for livestock. Some organizations have asserted that land owned and utilized by the Yezidi community has been sold by third parties in several villages, and the state has failed to intervene to prevent these transactions. This situation is related to the challenges faced by Yezidis in documenting the properties they effectively controlled. They were not given advance notice of these property sales and were thereby denied the opportunity to continue using the land, including the chance to acquire disputed properties through adverse possession. Climate change disrupts traditional agriculture as well.<sup>59</sup>

**As for Georgia, the 2017 study by ISET, underscores significant ethnic disparities in callback rates between Georgian and non-Georgian job applicants, with ethnic Georgians receiving approximately**

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<sup>55</sup> <https://minorityrights.org/country/azerbaijan/>

<sup>56</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/country/azerbaijan/freedom-world/2022>

<sup>57</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/briefing\\_note/join/2014/522341/EXPO-AFET\\_SP\(2014\)522341\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/briefing_note/join/2014/522341/EXPO-AFET_SP(2014)522341_EN.pdf)

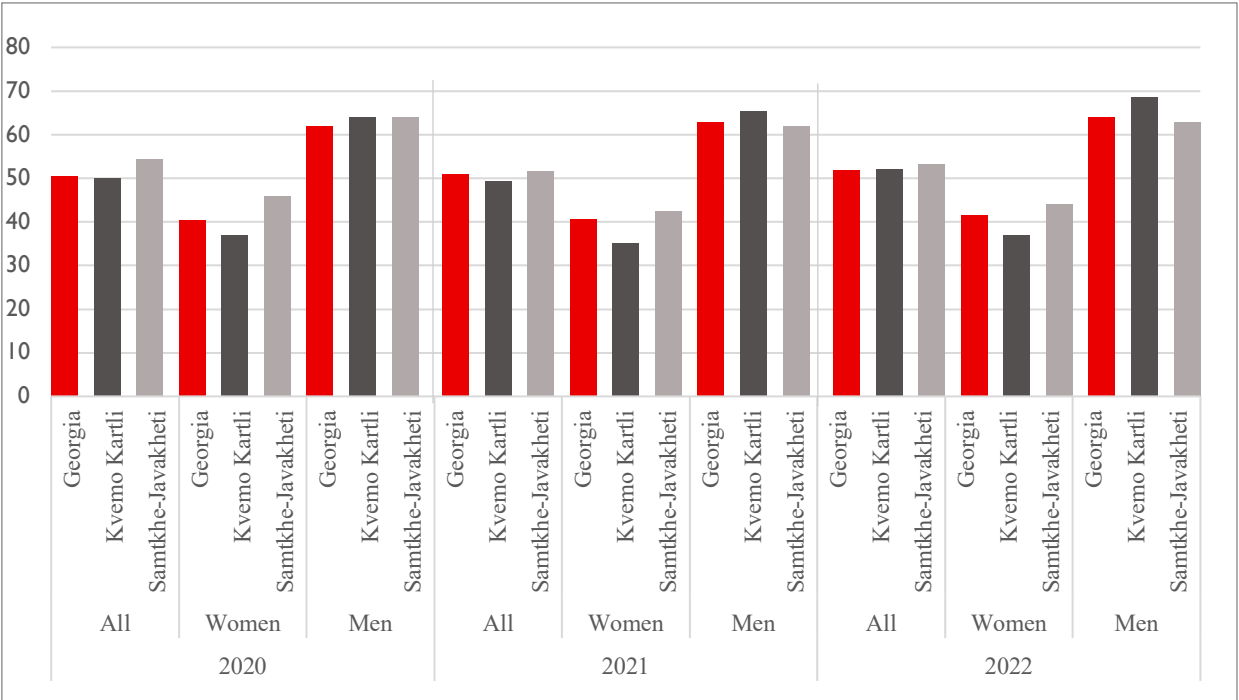
<sup>58</sup> [Issues Related To The Rights of And Opportunities For Yezidi Girls Residing In Armenia ENG.pdf \(epfarmeria.am\)](#)

<sup>59</sup> [Advisory committee on the framework for the protection of national minorities \(ACFC\) - 2022](#)

**twice as many callbacks.** This difference persists consistently among various employers, leading to an overall discrimination rate of 12.6 percent. Notably, these disparities remain unchanged regardless of factors such as experience or education, underscoring the central role of ethnicity in employment decisions. Intriguingly, there is no observed hiring bias within the non-Georgian ethnic group, which includes Armenians and Azerbaijanis, and gender does not have a significant impact on hiring outcomes. In addition, during economic downturns, discrimination against non-Georgian applicants intensifies, with each 1 percent increase in unemployment widening the callback gap between Georgians and non-Georgians by 0.02. In summary, ethnicity overwhelmingly influences hiring decisions, surpassing other qualifications, and both statistical and taste-based discrimination models emerge as credible explanations, particularly as discrimination escalates during economic downturns.<sup>60</sup>

Upon closer examination of the data on labor force participation (LFP), a distinct pattern becomes evident. **Samtskhe-Javakheti has consistently maintained a higher overall LFP rate than the national average over the past three years (figure 9).** This trend extends to women in the region as well. **In contrast, in**

**FIGURE 9 – LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE (%)**



Source: Geostat

**Kvemo Kartli, men have consistently exhibited a higher LFP rate than both the national average and the same measure in Samtskhe-Javakheti.** However, it's important to note that the overall and women's LFP rates in Kvemo Kartli have been slightly below the national average.

An intriguing shift in the past two years has been the decrease in the LFP rate for males in Samtskhe-Javakheti, which has fallen below the national average for Georgia. **It's noteworthy that, in both regions**

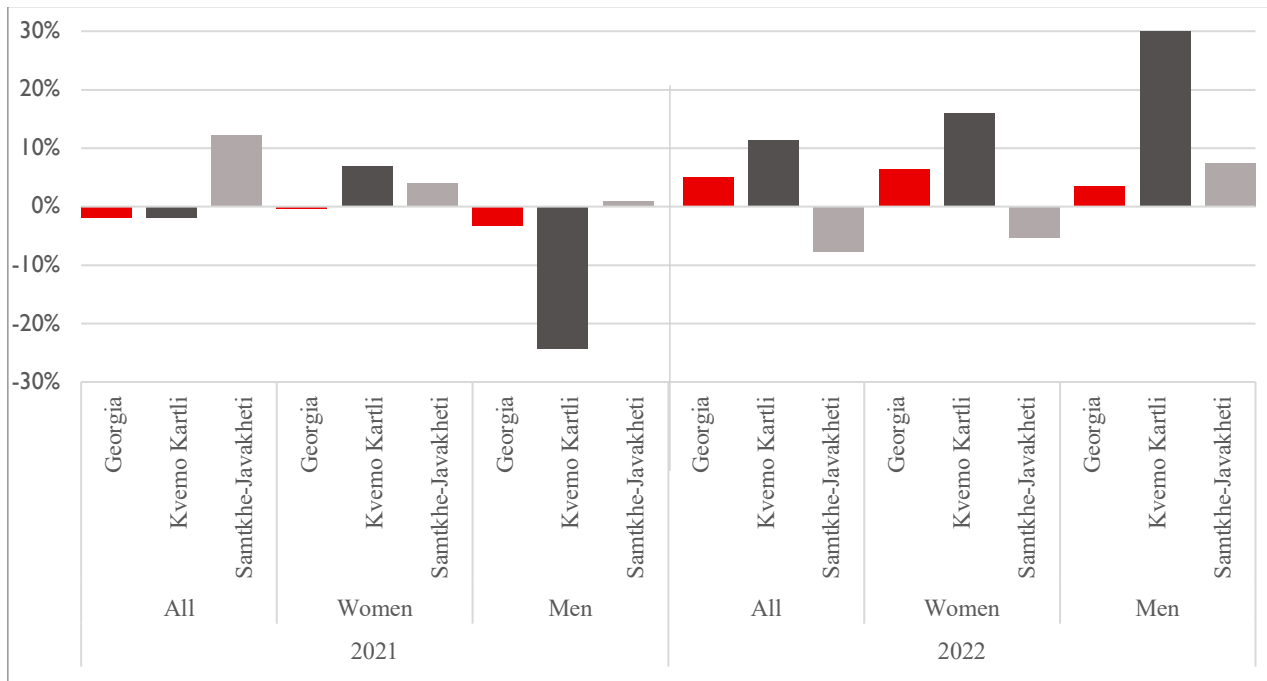
<sup>60</sup> [wp\\_04-17\\_Employment\\_Discrimination\\_in\\_Georgia.pdf\(tsu.ge\)](#)

and at the national level, there exists a significant gender gap in the labor force participation rate, with Kvemo Kartli displaying this disparity most prominently.

Over the past three years, we have observed significant shifts in hired employment trends (figure 10). In 2021, there was approximately a 12 percent increase in year-on-year growth in hired employment in Samtskhe-Javakheti, whereas on a national level and in Kvemo Kartli, there was a 2 percent decline. However, the scenario changed in 2022, with a significant decrease in Samtskhe-Javakheti and a noteworthy increase in employment across Georgia, especially in Kvemo Kartli.

In 2021, compared to 2020, there was a rise in the participation of women in hired employment in both regions, but there was no change at the national level. However, in 2022, there was a decrease in the share

**FIGURE 10 – HIRED EMPLOYEES YoY(%)**

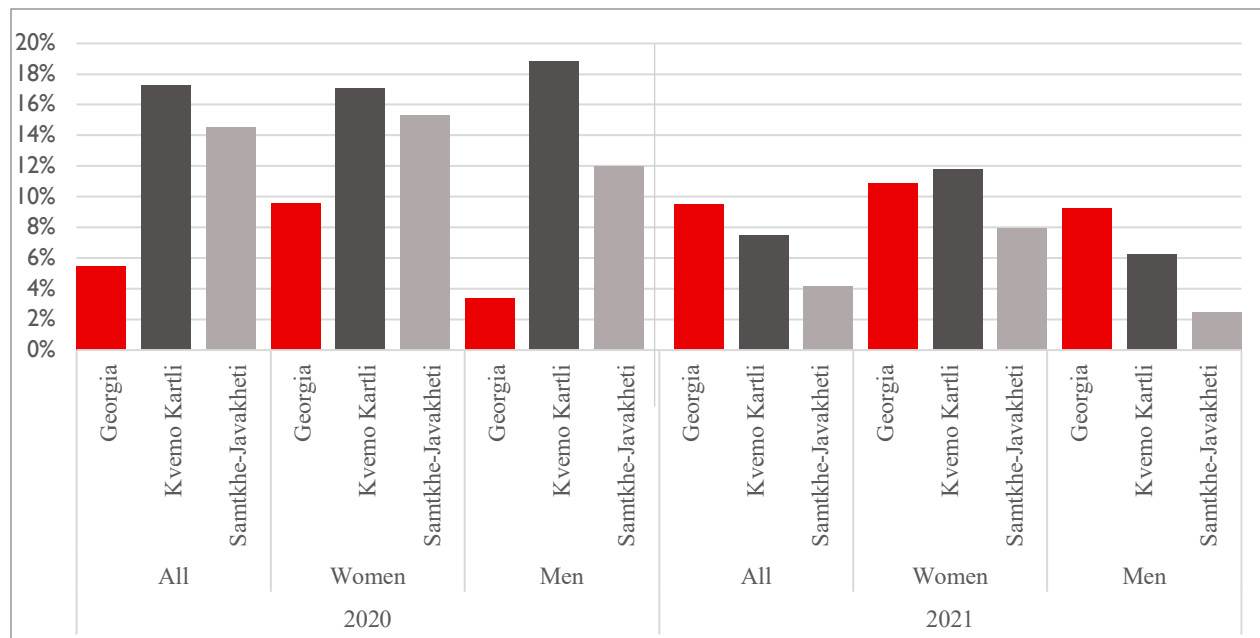


Source: Geostat

of women in Samtskhe-Javakheti compared to the previous year, while there was a significant increase in Kvemo Kartli and the national level.

The number of men in hired employment has been steadily rising over the past two years in Samtskhe-Javakheti, but it experienced a decline at the national level and in Kvemo Kartli in 2021. As for the gender gap in the number of hired employments, it appears to be absent over the past three years.

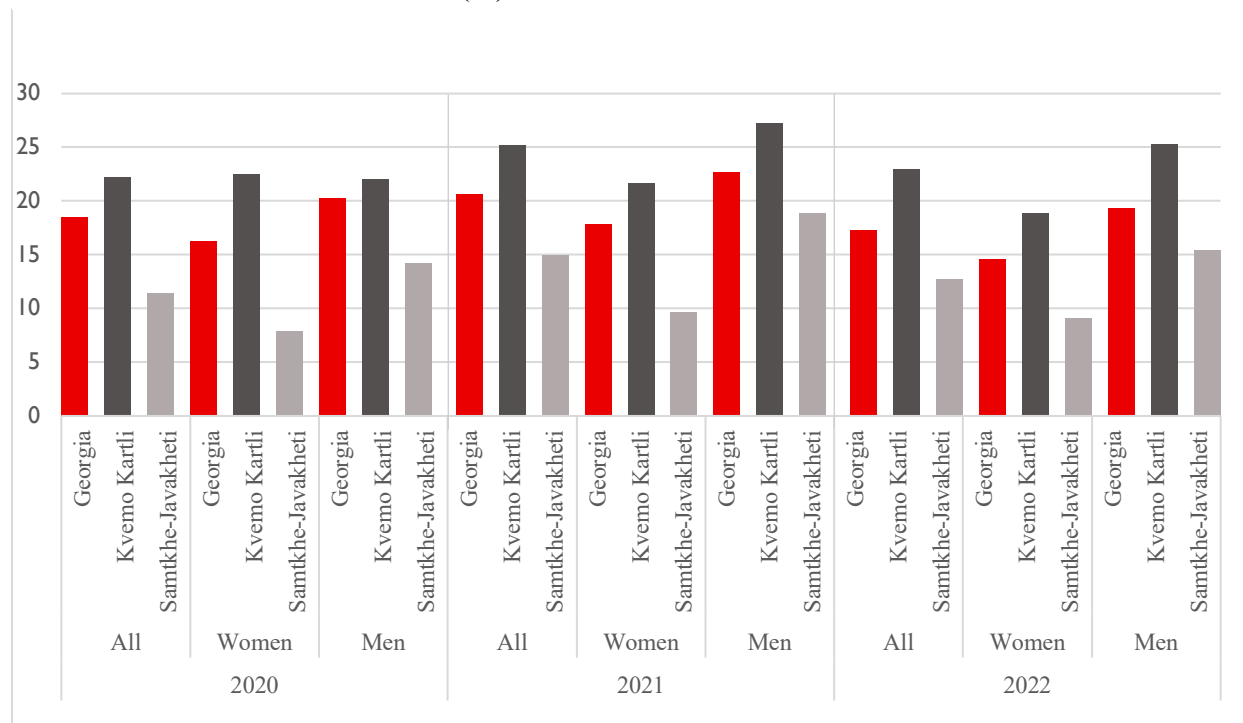
**FIGURE 11 – AVERAGE MONTHLY NOMINAL EARNINGS OF EMPLOYEES YoY (%)**



Source: Geostat



**FIGURE 12 – EMPLOYMENT RATE (%)**



Source: Geostat

**There has been an overall positive trend in average monthly earnings, both in Samtskhe-Javakheti and in the regions.** In 2020, regions in question, especially Kvemo Kartli, saw substantial year-on-year growth. A consistent gender gap in monthly earnings has been observed in recent years, with only a slightly higher gravity in the regions, but it's noteworthy that women's earnings are increasing at a faster rate in both years, especially in the regions with minorities. (Figure 11)

**The unemployment data over the past three years exhibits fluctuations, marked by an increase in 2021 but subsequent stabilization in 2022 (figure 12).** Intriguingly, the trends observed in both regions are in concordance with the national pattern. Furthermore, a noteworthy gender disparity is evident, with the unemployment rate notably lower among women. In addition, the dataset reveals that employment levels in both Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli have consistently exceeded the national average in recent years, with Kvemo-Kartli consistently registering the highest employment rates throughout this period.

ISET (2019) focuses on the influence of being employed on women's happiness in South Caucasus countries and among ethnic minorities in Georgia. **According to this study, Georgian women are the happiest, followed by Armenian women, while Azerbaijani women report the lowest happiness levels.** This happiness gap is most significant in Armenia, where working women are less happy than housewives. Azerbaijan shows a similar trend but with smaller differences. It also observes, that in Georgia, working

women are slightly happier than housewives. Armenian and Azerbaijani women in Georgia are less happy than Georgian women. Interestingly, among ethnic minorities in Georgia, there is no noticeable difference in happiness between working women and housewives, unlike in Armenia and Azerbaijan. So, the impact of employment on happiness seems more related to the country than ethnicity or culture, at least at this stage.<sup>61</sup>

## Government Policies

**The integration of ethnic minority groups into Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani society remains a gradual process, despite government claims of ongoing efforts.** Georgia has made strides in establishing a democratic state over the past two decades, but the foundations of sustainable democratic institutions remain weak. This has resulted in a sense of alienation and isolation among minority communities due to their distrust of state political institutions.

**A critical challenge for the governments is striking a balance between preserving minority cultural heritage and fully integrating these communities into national culture.** While there are initiated projects to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities, there is limited emphasis on familiarizing the majority population with the cultures and traditions of these minority groups.

**Georgia adopted an institutional approach to the civic integration of ethnic minorities** in 2005, aligning with the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Subsequent policy documents, such as the National Concept of Tolerance and Civic Integration (2009) and the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration (2015), have outlined the state's approach to civic integration. The underdeveloped state of democratic institutions in Georgia often results in laws existing only on paper, with weak or non-existent mechanisms for enforcement. This poses a challenge even when ideal laws are in place, necessitating monitoring by civil society to identify shortcomings and work with relevant authorities.

**Language policy plays a pivotal role in effective integration.** Many members of minority communities in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan have limited proficiency in the national language, and their languages receive only partial recognition in public civic settings. Linguistic divisions dating back to the Soviet era persist, contributing to these challenges.

The quality of language education, especially in minority -language schools, requires greater attention from the government. Teacher qualifications in such schools are lacking, with few programs in higher-education institutions to train teachers for these schools. In addition, insufficient translation of textbooks adversely affects education quality in these schools.

Efforts to support the teaching of Georgian as a second language have had limited success. **However, the affirmative action policy, known as the 1+4 program, initiated in 2010, has yielded positive outcomes by raising the quality of education for minorities in Georgian higher-education institutions.** Trust in these institutions has grown, and more young people are pursuing education in the Georgian language.

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<sup>61</sup> [wp\\_01-20\\_Employment vs. homestay and the happiness of women in the South Caucasus.pdf \(tsu.ge\)](#)

To ensure effective Georgian language instruction while preserving minority languages, the education ministry has introduced a multilingual education reform. However, challenges related to an inflexible curriculum, scheduling issues, and low teacher salaries have arisen during implementation.

The Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration, established in 2005, **offers free Georgian language courses in regions with minority populations.** While these courses are a valuable opportunity, the quality of teaching Georgian in public schools remains low, particularly in rural areas. The government must prioritize improving the quality of Georgian language instruction in public schools to ensure comprehensive language skills among all citizens.<sup>62</sup>

However, on 4th of April, the draft law considered in an accelerated manner was voted on in the third reading and as a result, the Parliament of Georgia canceled Article 203 of the Election Code of Georgia, which obliged parties to temporarily include a woman in the list of parliamentary elections, at least every fourth time. In the upcoming elections, political parties will no longer have the obligation to include female candidates in the party lists according to the quotas defined by the law.

According to Article 203 of the Election Code, quotas were meant to be maintained until 2032. It was written in the law that:

- For the elections of the Parliament of Georgia on October 26, 2024, parties are required to have lists where "at least one person in every four should be a woman." The list submitted to the CEC will be returned to the party if the gender balance is not maintained. 3 days are given to eliminate the defect.
- If the party submits an election list to the CEC chairman, in which at least one person is a woman in each of the top three, the electoral entity will receive additional funding provided by law.
- For the parliamentary elections of 2028 and 2032, at least one person must be a woman in every top three of the list.
- For municipal elections up to and including 2032, at least one out of every three candidates on the party list must be a woman.

80 non-governmental organizations stated that the abolition of the gender quota contradicts the will of the people as reflected in the Constitution of Georgia, violates women's rights and hinders the European integration process.

The Armenian government has demonstrated a commitment to fostering the integration of ethnic minorities. Notably, on May 3, 2019, **the government established the National Minorities Council**, operating under the supervision of the Chief Adviser to the Prime Minister and receiving logistical support from the Prime Minister's Office. This council maintains continuity in its organizational framework, election processes, functions, and goals compared to its predecessor, the Coordinating Council. This council serves as a crucial platform for official dialogues between representatives of national minority groups and the authorities and also plays a central role in disbursing funding to support these minority communities. Armenian law<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> [Georgia's Minorities: Breaking Down Barriers to Integration - Carnegie Europe - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)

<sup>63</sup> Article 22, Part 6, Clause 3, Sub-Clause "e" The Law on Audiovisual Media.

requires public television and radio to dedicate airtime to programs about Armenian national minorities, with provisions for 30 minutes per week on TV and two hours per week on the radio. This initiative promotes awareness and acknowledges the diverse languages of these communities. Public radio broadcasts daily segments in Assyrian, Kurdish, Yezidi, Greek, and Russian.

**In addition, a "Non-State Press Publication" program provides support for periodicals and newspapers representing national minorities, fostering their presence in the printed press.** The recently enacted criminal code, effective since July 1, includes provisions against hindering the exercise of religious freedom and imposes penalties, such as fines, community service, and imprisonment, for hate speech or incitement of violence based on religion. The Armenian Constitution, which remains unchanged since 2015, acknowledges the special status of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Additionally, there is a pending Draft Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations<sup>64</sup> currently awaiting consideration in the National Assembly. In an effort to facilitate the integration of national minorities, there is an article<sup>65</sup> that allows individuals from national minorities to submit their applications and accompanying documents in their minority language to local administrative authorities. However, it's important to note that administrative bodies may still require the translation of these documents into Armenian.

**The Armenian government has also demonstrated its commitment to addressing educational challenges faced by ethnic minorities.** In 2021, a systematic approach was introduced to track school dropouts, identifying students who have been absent for six working days or ten days in a month without a valid reason. These students are considered dropouts and are actively pursued through a national education system to facilitate their return to school.

**Regarding higher education, the government has taken steps to provide opportunities for ethnic minority students.** Representatives of the Yezidi, Kurdish, and Assyrian minorities are granted university placements on a non-competitive basis each academic year, specifically at the Faculty of Oriental Studies of Yerevan State University. Since 2010, this initiative has been expanded to include representatives of other national minorities who are nominated by relevant minority organizations within the Council of National Minorities. These students have the opportunity to pursue studies in departments related to culture and language at higher education institutions. Furthermore, the Council has the authority to recommend full or partial tuition fee waivers for deserving students, further promoting equitable access to education.<sup>66</sup>

Also, as mentioned above, in Azerbaijan, efforts are being made to preserve and promote minority languages and cultures. Lezgin is taught as a foreign language in areas with Lezgin settlements, as there are concerns about the decline of oral traditions. Sunday Schools and voluntary language courses organized by minority associations help facilitate language and cultural learning for Ukrainian, Tatar, and other communities in Baku. The Ministry of Education is working on developing and updating minority language textbooks, with some schools dedicating two hours per week to teaching native languages. Various minority languages are taught in schools across the country, with around 30,000 students involved. There are also specific Georgian-language schools and Hebrew classes in certain schools to accommodate Jewish students.

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<sup>64</sup> See ODIHR and Venice Commission opinion:

[https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-REF\(2018\)006-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-REF(2018)006-e)

<sup>65</sup> Article 27 of the Law on Fundamentals of Administrative Action and Administrative Proceedings

<sup>66</sup> [Advisory committee on the framework for the protection of national minorities \(ACFC\) - 2022](#)

However, there are challenges such as conflicting information about the minimum number of students required to open a new minority language class, which may affect the provision of education for minority groups.

In summary, all three countries face the complex task of integrating ethnic minorities while preserving their cultural heritage. Addressing language education and quality, enhancing democratic institutions, and promoting cultural understanding are essential steps in achieving successful integration and fostering trust between minority communities and the state.

## Conclusions And Recommendations

Cultural and religious diversity among ethnic minorities plays a pivotal role in shaping the socio-economic landscape of a community. These factors are not isolated but intricately interwoven with deeply ingrained beliefs and traditions that influence every aspect of life. Gender disparities, in particular, emerge as a prominent and multifaceted consequence of this diversity, impacting reproductive choices and economic decision-making, educational opportunities, healthcare access, political participation, and social mobility in profound ways.

The cultural idiosyncrasies inherent to ethnic minority groups often manifest in distinctive practices and beliefs that deeply impact various aspects of their lives. Two such idiosyncrasies that significantly influence these communities are **early marriages and the demographic phenomenon known as Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB), often shaped by strong son preferences**. These practices, rooted in cultural traditions and influenced by religious beliefs, play a pivotal role in shaping the outcomes of cultural and religious differences between dominant and minority groups.

**Early marriages, a common practice in many ethnic minority communities, are often driven by a complex interplay of cultural, social, and economic factors.** These unions are frequently guided by traditional norms and values that prioritize family honor, community cohesion, and the preservation of cultural heritage. For young girls in particular, early marriages can be associated with cultural expectations and religious teachings that emphasize obedience and submission. Educational opportunities for young brides may be curtailed, limiting their ability to pursue economic independence and personal growth. Health-related risks are also elevated, as early pregnancies and childbirth can pose serious threats to maternal and child well-being. Furthermore, the perpetuation of early marriages can reinforce existing gender disparities within these communities. To address and amend the gender disparities and close the gap in socio-economic aspects of life, we propose the following recommendations:

To enhance the integration and participation of national minorities in Georgia, it is recommended to establish a discussion platform that brings together government representatives, non-governmental organizations focused on minority issues, and political parties. This platform will foster national minority participation in decision-making processes. Additionally, raising the civic education level in regions densely populated by national minorities through specially designed educational programs is essential. Developing Georgian language courses accessible to all, as well as vocational training courses available to a wide audience, will further support integration efforts.

To effectively reduce unemployment in minority-populated regions of Georgia, the active development of agriculture is crucial. This includes providing financial and technical support to cooperatives of small-scale farmers to facilitate production and sale, as well as integrating farms into production chains and developing the necessary infrastructure. Establishing vocational education institutions and training the local population in high-demand professions, particularly in technical fields, agriculture, and the financial sector with a focus on modern technologies, is also necessary. Furthermore, developing and enhancing employment-related internship programs and training will improve employment opportunities and the competences and skills of the local population. These initiatives will foster economic development and social integration in minority-populated regions.<sup>67</sup>

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan share common challenges and recommendations in their efforts to promote inclusivity and protect the rights of national minority populations. **A shared recommendation for both countries is to protect the right to freedom of expression for individuals belonging to national minorities, ensuring compliance with international human rights standards, and addressing any impediments to this fundamental right.** In addition, they should actively condemn intolerance and hate speech, creating safe environments for individuals to openly express their identities.

**For both countries, it is advisable to integrate the culture, history, religion, and language of national minorities into school curricula and teacher training.** Specifically for Armenia, addressing high drop-out rates among Yezidi students and collecting gender-disaggregated data on violence against minority women and children are pressing issues. Armenia should also revise the Draft Law on National Minorities to align it with international standards, promote awareness of ethnic diversity, and support minority participation in socio-economic life. Fostering meaningful dialogues with national minorities regarding territorial or administrative reform is imperative. These dialogues should encompass prior and substantial consultation, particularly before any future consolidation takes place. **In addition, authorities need to guarantee that the existing separate municipalities have equitable access to adequate funds, mirroring the financial resources available to consolidated municipalities.** This approach is crucial for safeguarding and upholding the ongoing accessibility of minority rights within these municipalities.

**In both nations, it is crucial to ensure that the population census allows for free self-identification and the indication of multiple affiliations.** Both nations should adopt adequate legal frameworks for minority protection and comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. Azerbaijan should establish a specialized body for coordinating minority issues and align NGO registration practices with international standards. **Supporting minority cultures, providing funding for cultural activities, and promoting multiculturalism in education are essential steps for both countries.** In addition, maintaining and expanding support for minority language education, along with assessing demand and needs for minority language classes, will contribute to enhancing educational access for all national minorities.

In both countries, validating the role of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) is crucial. **The Ombudsman should actively and independently fulfill his mandate, focusing on increasing awareness of minority rights among both minority communities and the general population.** Furthermore,

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<sup>67</sup> INTEGRATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES IN GEORGIA

aligning the nomination and appointment procedures with the recommendations of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions is essential for effective oversight and protection of minority rights.

These concerted efforts, coupled with the imperative need for comprehensive data on minority populations, will cultivate more inclusive and harmonious societies in both Armenia and Azerbaijan by serving as the initial step in identifying pertinent issues and paving the way for effective solutions.<sup>68</sup>

Recommendations for better integration of ethnic minorities into the general public in all three countries can be summarized in several different groups.

### **Economic Development and Job Creation:**

- **Promote Agricultural Development:** Support small-scale farmer cooperatives, provide financial and technical assistance, and invest in infrastructure.
- **Labor Market Analysis:** Regularly analyze labor markets, create a job-seekers registry, and manage workforce migration.
- **Vocational Education and Training:** Establish vocational education institutions for in-demand professions and offer training in technical fields, agriculture, and finance.
- **Internship Programs and Skill Enhancement:** Develop employment-related internship programs and training to enhance local employability.
- **Information Dissemination:** Organize targeted informational meetings, use local media for outreach, and provide information in multiple languages.
- **Business Development Support:** Establish centers to assist with business development, promote state-supported programs, and explore options for cheaper loans.
- **Tourism Development:** Invest in tourism infrastructure, promote local attractions, and offer relevant education and training.
- **Support for Local Media:** Foster the development of local media and encourage collaboration between local and national broadcasters.

### **Minority Inclusion and Participation:**

- **Discussion Platform for Minority Issues:** Create a platform for dialogue between government representatives, NGOs focused on minority issues, and political parties.
- **Civic Education Programs:** Implement region-specific educational programs to enhance civic education among minority populations.
- **Language and Vocational Training:** Develop accessible language courses, vocational training, and skills development programs.
- **Electoral System Reform:** Work towards electoral system reform, including proportional representation and minority quotas.
- **Minority Representation Mechanisms:** Implement measures to increase minority representation, such as financial incentives for political parties and reserved seats in legislatures.

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<sup>68</sup> Azerbaijan: <https://rm.coe.int/sixth-report-on-azerbaijan/1680ab9e35>  
Armenia: <https://rm.coe.int/sixth-report-on-armenia/1680ab9e33>

### **Promoting Gender Equality in Politics and the Workforce:**

- **Policies for Female Labor Market Participation:** Implement policies to increase women's participation in the workforce.
- **Gender Quotas:** Sustain and expand gender quotas, especially in political parties and elected bodies ).
- **Affirmative Action:** Introduce affirmative action policies in candidate selection, hiring, and promotion.
- **Addressing Care Work and Gender Roles:** Address unpaid care work and promote changes in traditional gender roles.
- **Childcare and Family-Friendly Policies:** Provide support through affordable childcare and flexible work arrangements.
- **Training and Mentorship:** Develop programs for women's skill-building, mentorship, and networking.
- **Challenging Stereotypes:** Promote a more inclusive political culture by challenging gender stereotypes.
- **Financial Support:** Offer funding, including campaign financing, to facilitate women's political participation.

Empowerment of ethnic minority women by gaining more access to educational services, public services, health services, and financial services.

### **Regional Cooperation for Inclusivity:**

- **Regional Initiatives for Gender Equality:** Collaborate regionally to raise awareness of gender equality's importance in politics, provide training and mentorship, and share best practices.
- **Regional Economic Cooperation:** Explore economic collaboration and initiatives across regions to enhance job opportunities and development.

These unified topics encompass the key recommendations and strategies to address unemployment, promote minority inclusion, advance gender equality, and foster regional cooperation.



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