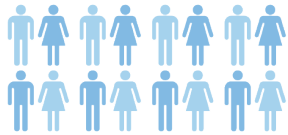


GEORGIA

Georgia is a predominantly Christian country in the Caucasus region of Eurasia. Located at the crossroads of Western Asia and Eastern Europe, it is bounded by the Black Sea, Russia, Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. It has a unique and ancient cultural heritage and is famed for its traditions of hospitality and cuisine. It is home to mountain villages and Black Sea beaches. The capital, Tbilisi, is known for the diverse architecture and maze-like, cobblestone streets of its old town. Georgia is famous for its cave monasteries and ancient wine-growing regions. The Georgian language is one of the oldest in the world and is in its own unique language group. Russian is also widely spoken. The currency is the lari.

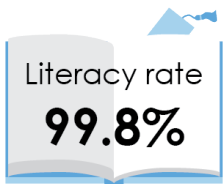


Population
3,981,887



26,911 Mi²

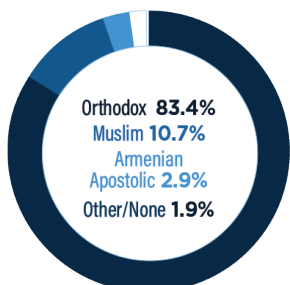
Slightly larger than
West Virginia



Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

It is common to have multiple generations living in the same household, and eating meals together is an important part of family life. It is normal for family members to spend time in pursuit of individual interests, but it may be considered rude to not spend time with family members daily. Sharing clothes and other items is encouraged in Georgian families and asking permission beforehand, although encouraged, may not be common practice.

In terms of privacy, it is rare for family members to knock on doors before entering, unless it is a parent's room. Knocking may also be considered a formal gesture, so one may not wait for an answer before entering. Children often have a more formal relationship with their father than mother since fathers are seen as the authority figure in the family. Grandparents are held in high regard and are very involved in raising grandchildren. It is not acceptable for young people to call an adult by their first name, and they may thus address close family friends as "uncle" or "aunt."

Mothers are primarily responsible for the housework, and rarely require their children to clean up their rooms or do chores (which, if given, tend to be divided according to traditional gender roles). It is uncommon for teenagers to cook for themselves. In larger cities, both parents may work, in which case grandparents often help watch after younger children.

Usually, fathers are the decision makers in the family, but mothers may have a lot of influence as well. Parents are very involved in the decisions of their children, including what activities they participate in outside of school and the approval of friendships. It is uncommon for teenagers to work while going to school, so purchases are always discussed with parents.

Owning pets is not common. Families may own dogs that are kept outside to protect property. Georgians are accustomed to seeing many stray animals that may be aggressive.

FRIENDSHIP

Friendships are often formed with classmates and neighbors and commonly last a lifetime. The term "friend" is used sparingly and only for those who are very close. Loyalty in friendship is taken very seriously, and occasionally friends are expected to help one another out by cheating on a test. Friends often spend time together at cafes, but late evening hangouts are only acceptable on special occasions. In terms of mixed-gender friendships, group socialization is preferable to one-on-one interactions.

Teenagers in Georgia are more indirect in their communication style and may rely on behavior and subtle clues to communicate their true feelings. Personal space is much more relaxed and

teenagers tend to sit and stand closer to each other in conversations and personal interactions. This is especially the case with close friends and family members. Georgians have a more relaxed sense of time and it is considered acceptable for someone to run 10-15 minutes late.

SCHOOL LIFE

Students are primarily evaluated on attendance, homework, class participation, and written and verbal exams. Students are divided into sections in elementary school and remain with the same group of students until graduation. Generally, students have little flexibility in choosing their academic classes and study each subject at the same level of difficulty. When attending school, they tend to dress formally, as casual sports clothes are not considered appropriate attire.

Plagiarism and cheating, although discouraged, may have less serious consequences. Teachers often warn students about cheating during a test but are not very strict about punishment if someone is caught cheating. It is often considered a betrayal of friendship if students do not help each other during an examination.

The relationship between teachers and students is very formal. It may be considered disrespectful for a student to express a different opinion on a subject matter than a teacher. There is usually less active classroom participation and discussion.

Student clubs and sports teams are uncommon in schools, but many students participate in activities at youth centers in their cities. Many students enroll in music schools or practice traditional Georgian dance outside of classes. Additional resources from parents are usually required to participate in these types of activities.

FOOD

Lunch is usually the biggest meal of the day and eating healthy, homemade dishes is common in Georgia. A vegetarian or vegan diet is not common. Religious families fast multiple times a year. Fasting in the days leading up to Christmas and Easter is common and usually involves avoiding meat and dairy products.

RELIGION

Religious services have more of a spiritual character, and families attend church to worship rather than for social activities. Churches are not seen as community centers. About 80% of the population considers themselves to be religious and attends church at least occasionally.

PERSONAL CARE

People typically shower every other day in the winter and every day in summer. Since utilities are inexpensive, people tend to take longer showers. Teenagers are not expected to change their clothes every day unless they are visibly unclean. Families usually hang their laundry to dry since dryers are uncommon.



The Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. FLEX provides competitively selected secondary school students from 22 countries in Europe and Eurasia with the opportunity to spend the academic year in the U.S. living with a volunteer host family and attending a host high school. Begun in 1993, FLEX now has over 29,000 alumni.