

## EMIGRATION STATISTICS – THE HERALD OF THE SURVIVAL OF THE POPULATION OF GEORGIA OR THE DEMOGRAPHIC CRISIS

Nino ABESADZE<sup>1</sup>, Otar ABESADZE<sup>2</sup>, Rusudan KINKLADZE<sup>3</sup>,  
Nino PARESASHVILI<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1, 4</sup>*Faculty of Economics and Business, I. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University,  
University str. 2., Tbilisi, Georgia*

<sup>2</sup>*Faculty of Business and Technology, Georgian National University, 9 Tsinandali str., Tbilisi, Georgia*

<sup>3</sup>*Faculty of Business Technologists, Georgian Technical University, Kostava str. 77, Tbilisi, Georgia*

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**Abstract.** Mass emigration from Georgia began after the collapse of the Soviet Union. 30 years have passed since then, but emigration in the country is still an actual problem.

The purpose of the research is to reveal the statistical trends of emigration in Georgia, against the background of comparative analysis of emigration and remittances.

In the research process statistical methods: observation, grouping and analysis were used.

Results. In 2020, the number of Georgian emigrants abroad amounted to 74,264 people. The largest part of Georgian emigrants is in Russia, Greece, Ukraine, India, Azerbaijan and Armenia. The age of most immigrants is between 20–35 years. The largest number of immigrants is recorded in the Imereti region; Along with the increase in emigration, the number of remittances received from abroad also increases, the demographic situation is worsening, and unemployment rates are high.

**Keywords:** Demographic Trends, migration, remittance, statistics, analysis.

**JEL Classification:** J11.

### Introduction

Migration processes, which have become a global phenomenon in recent years, have a significant impact on the socio-economic development of the country, its security and stability.

The factors causing emigration in Georgia are complex. They are related to economic, social, political changes, as well as individual decisions of people. Unfortunately, in the recent history of Georgia, emigration was mainly caused by the instability and security-related circumstances in the country. However, later economic and social factors played a more important role in the growth of emigration flows. Among other factors contributing to emigration, already established diasporic networks and associations, which can also facilitate migration, are no less important.

Even today, the main characteristics of existing international migration flows in the case of Georgia are related to emigration, and in particular, undocumented and

irregular emigration, not immigration. Emigration flows are a result of the country's difficult economic situation, low-wage jobs and unemployment, as well as developed Georgian migrant networks, which make emigration a safer and easier process for potential immigrants (European Education Foundation, 2021).

Massive migration started in Georgia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, because it was one of the ways to save the economic hardships of the population and families. It was a difficult period for the country. The intensity of emigration increased even more after the introduction of visa-free travel in EU/Schengen countries, when the rate of asylum requests by Georgian citizens in these countries increased dramatically.

Although more than after the collapse of the Soviet Union 30 years have passed, starting from the 1990s, a tough situation has been predominant Georgia's labor market.

Unemployment so far, remains as the major social problem in the country, with 40% of the unemployed

\* Corresponding author. E-mail: [nino.abesadze@tsu.ge](mailto:nino.abesadze@tsu.ge)

being individuals with a higher education. Unemployment is especially high within the young population (Shelia & Tukhashvili, 2020).

Over the last 25 years, Post-Soviet space, this big geographical area covering about 15 per cent of the world has been a scene of abrupt changes in mobility and migration patterns of a small share of global population (just below 5%). After 70 years of strictly controlled internal and external mobility, which on the one hand kept vast parts of the population in place and on the other forced many groups to move, the collapse of the USSR liberated massive migration flows (Weinar, 2014).

Migration processes were accelerated by the fact that the International territorial movement was liberalized due to the change of the political situation. Migration administrative restrictions were lifted and the movement between countries became easy. The barriers to returning to their historical homeland were lifted for Greeks, Jews, and others living in Georgia (Tukhashvili, 2018).

Migration processes can have two effects. Emigration, if we look at it positively, it can be said to a certain extent is necessary in order for there to be international messages, for the country's population to be able to study highly developed technologies, to receive education in prestigious higher education institutions, to share international experience, etc.

A sociological survey has confirmed that emigration from Georgia, besides economic factors, is associated with such social-demographic factors of migration as are: receiving education, exile, and the desire to live in better conditions, etc. These factors substantially determine the positive of migration in the receiving highly-developed countries and negative – in Georgia. Therefore, the more distinction there is between the positive and negative factors of migration, the higher the expected emigration to the other countries and the possibility of staying there (Sulabeidze, 2019).

But on the other hand, there is an exit of the labor force, highly skilled personnel from the country, the so-called. brain Drain (Kinkladze & Thinthadze, 2015).

This negative effect is further strengthened by the change in demographic processes, low rates of birth and natural increase, since first of all, it is highly skilled personnel who are the human capital with high productivity, which is the precursor to the development and economic progress of any country, because it is long-term. In addition to remittances, the professionalism of the returning youth and their high competitiveness are much more valuable, because beside remittances, returned youth's professionalism and their high competitiveness is much more valuable. (Kurashvili & Kinkladze, 2016), and second, a large portion of the reproductive-age population will flow out. Therefore, migration processes, especially emigration, are a serious challenge for Georgia, and taking into account the country's geopolitical situation, managing these processes is one of the country's priorities.

Migration has always been a problem of Georgia. Its reasons have always been diverse, but the main one was

and is economic hardship (Inter Media, 2022). Despite the numerous problems that Georgians face upon arriving abroad, the number of emigrants does not decrease, on the contrary, it increases day by day. The situation became even worse during the pandemic and post-pandemic period. As a result, the demographic, economic, health and social situation of the country worsened (Abesadze et al., 2022a). For our country, all is accompanied by a relatively small and weak economy of Georgia and very limited financial resources (Gelashvili, 2021).

It should be noted that the number of women in emigration increased along with men. Many women leave their families and go abroad for the main reason – to financially support their families. As practice shows, the emigration process is long, sometimes eternal. Families are literally being destroyed. Such unhealthy relations are certainly harmful to the state and its demographic situation. Political and ethnic conflicts in Georgia contributed to the migration process to a certain extent, which resulted in a large number of refugees.

It is true that the growth of international migration is accompanied by the inflow of remittances and its share in the incomes of the population is systematically increasing, but at the same time, the negative impact of these processes on the functioning of the labor force and the demographic situation in the country it's heavy. However, it should be noted that the foreign currency earned abroad by the country's citizens plays a positive role in the economy of the labor force exporting country. Remittances contribute to the reduction of population poverty. Through the banking sector, they are an important source of foreign currency (Kinkladze, 2018). In fact, money transfers emigrants are a kind of shock absorber of social status. They perform a certain role in the development of small business, in the economic growth of Georgia (Tukhashvili, 2012). Increasing the intensity of migration processes accelerated the depopulation process in Georgia. In the conditions of a negative balance of migration, it worsens the country's demographic situation (Geoeconomics Media, 2021).

After the country gained its independence, the negative net migration of external migration started having an impact on the rate of size of Georgian population. As a result, lower natural increase of population cannot cover the higher negative net migration of the external migration, which leads to the decrease of the Georgian population and depopulation (Sulaberidze, 2018). During the 25 years after Georgia's independence, the population of Georgia decreased by one-fifth due to wars, socio-economic crisis and emigration. The birth rate decreased sharply, the death rate increased, and finally the country found itself in a difficult demographic situation. According to UN calculations, the population of Georgia should be 3.8 million by 2030, although according to the 2014 census, the population of Georgia is slightly more than 3.7 million. According to the UN forecast, the population of Georgia will be 3.4 million by 2050, and 2.4 million by 2100. Country's social and economic

development considerably influences evolution of family as a social institution (Shelia & Sulaberidze, 2016). The increase in the intensity of migration processes was further caused by the high level of unemployment.

The problem of unemployment is one of the acutest problems in Georgia and as the results of different statistical, conjunctive or social surveys evidence, often ranks first among the most important social-economic or political problems the country and Georgian people face (Abesadze, 2014). Unfortunately in terms of globalization, the main reason for poverty in Georgia again remains unemployment and low income rates in.

In terms of unfavourable demographics, the high level of unemployment and poor economic activity, insufficient employment and labour compensation, accordingly is clearly seen and particularly, among women (Abesadze & Paresashvili, 2018).

In fact, in the conditions of modern globalization, human capital is the most important factor in terms of the competitiveness and development of the country and its economy in the world market.

It should be noted that employment policy in Georgia has a specific character. There are no so-called employment policy mechanisms. Ready-made recipes. Even if there are models developed in countries with market economies developed during the post-pandemic period, barriers to their mechanical transfer will still be created in Georgia, because the recommendations developed by these countries are general and applicable in the context of a balanced market economic system (Paresashvili, 2020)

Based on the above, the study of unemployment in respect of the country in general, as well as in regional, gender, age, and urban and rural respects, has great practical importance to develop the right policy of employment, as one of the major factors to overcome poverty (Abesadze & Paresashvili, 2018).

Today's official statistics show an incomplete picture of unemployment and employment on the one hand, and, on the other hand, due to the lack of relevant information, it is a hindering factor for the implementation of an effective state policy (Tugushi & Paresashvili, 2007).

**The main goal of the research** is to analyze the demographic situation in Georgia based on the statistical analysis of the emigration processes, outline the trends of remittances and evaluate its impact on the living standards of the population.

**Methodology.** All methods were used in the research process in accordance with the stages of statistical research: methods of statistical observation, grouping, and analysis. Average and relative indicators of migration, quantitative characteristics of birth, volume and share indicators of remittances, etc. For calculation and analysis, from the methods of analysis, emphasis was placed on average values, variation indicators, time series, etc. The main source of information was the data of the National Statistical Service of Georgia, the data of the portal located on the website. A comparative analysis was made based on emigration, birth, and remittance data.

## Results

As of January 1, 2022, the population of Georgia is 3,688.6 million people, which is 1% less than the previous data of 2021. It should be noted that today's data is 1% less than the data of the 2014 population census, when the population of Georgia was 3,713,804. It turns out that during 8 years the population of Georgia did not increase, but decreased. The statistics are really sad. According to the latest 2014 census, the population of Georgia decreased by 15% compared to the previous 2002 census, and by 32% compared to the 1989 census (<http://census.ge/en/results/census1>, 2022).

Among the various reasons for population decline in Georgia, the problem of migration stands out. According to the data of the National Statistical Service of Georgia, the number of emigrants from Georgia is 74,264. Compared to the previous year, its decrease by 29% is the result of returning to the country due to the pandemic caused by Covid-19. The level of 2019 almost approached the level of 2011, when the highest rate of emigration was in Georgia. In general, in 2010–2019, the number of emigrants from Georgia grew by 0.2% annually.

Although some emigrants returned to the country in 2020, according to unofficial statistics, their number increased again in 2021.

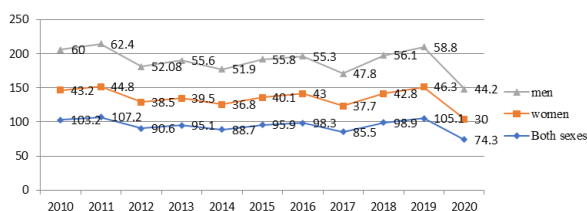


Figure 1. Number of emigrants by sex, thousand (source: National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022)

Men predominate among emigrants, although the number of female emigrants is increasing year by year, and the trend of their number growth almost coincides with the trend expressed by the time series of men (see Figure 1). The highest rate among women was recorded in 2019, which reached its maximum in 2019 during the study period, 2010–2020, and among men, as expected, this figure was the highest in 2011 and then in 2019.

The ratio between immigrant women and men is almost stable with the predominant percentage of men varying from 55.9% to 59.5% (see Figure 2).

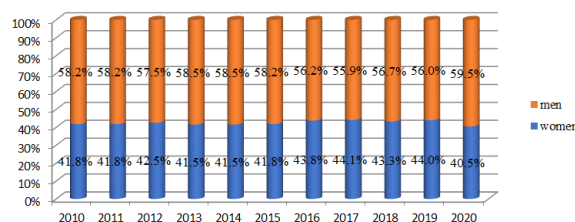


Figure 2. Share of emigrants by sex (source: National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022)

The most emigrating population is 20–24 years old (14%), then 25–29 years old (12.4%) and 30–34 years old (11.8%). In terms of sex, the situation is drastically different. 25–29 and 30–34-year-olds predominate among men, and the population over 65 years old prevails among women, with the highest specific share of the population aged 80–84. Such a high rate of the share of elderly people is noteworthy and thought-provoking. It seems that they have been in emigration for several decades or are the category of elderly parents taken by their young children (see Figure 3).

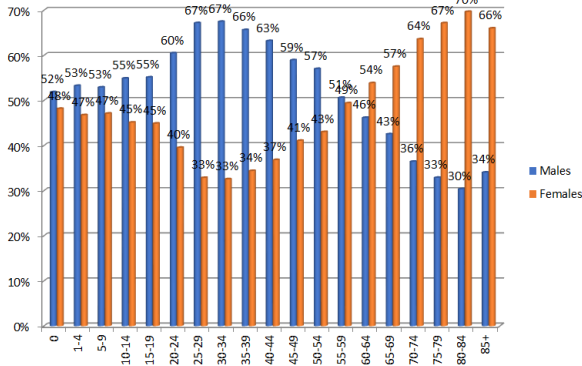


Figure 3. Age structure of emigrants in 2020 by gender (source: National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022)

I wonder what effect immigrants have on the involvement of family members remaining in Georgia in the labor market, on their decisions, on the level of labor activity. Attitudes to this question are logically different depending on gender and age. Immigrant family members are often passive in the labor market, largely dependent on and making decisions with the expatriate.

As practice shows, there can be three effects of dependence: the lack of incentive, which is caused by additional unearned income received in the form of money transfers; Substitution, which means that the fulfillment of family duties instead of participation in the labor market, and education, in this case, inactivity in the labor market is explained by the process of obtaining higher education. Therefore, the presence of a family member in exile to a certain extent reduces the motivation of work.

What is the geographic structure of immigrants?

In dynamics, the largest number of emigrants, both women and men, is recorded in the Russian Federation, Armenia, Turkey and Azerbaijan. If we compare the data of the last population census, after 2014, the geographical structure has not changed significantly, unless we consider that the statistics of emigration to neighboring countries have increased, due to which Greece has moved to the last position of the ten emigrating countries. The fact is that it is more favorable for Georgian citizens to emigrate to neighboring countries, this can be caused by relatively cheap availability, easy mobility, lack of language barrier, etc (see Figure 4).

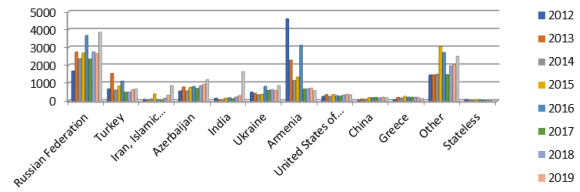


Figure 4. Number of emigrants by sex and citizenship (females) (source: National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022)

According to statistical data, the process of outflow of women in Russia is more intense than that of men. Despite the pandemic, 45% more women and 23% more men immigrated to Russia in 2020 than in 2019. In general, during the last 9 years, the average annual growth rate of women emigrating to Russia was 111%, and 107% for men (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022)

Emigration of women to India and Azerbaijan has increased. Their rate is traditionally high in Greece and Italy as well, where since 2014 the largest number of female immigrants have been recorded. Men mainly emigrate to Russia, Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan, India (see Figure 5).

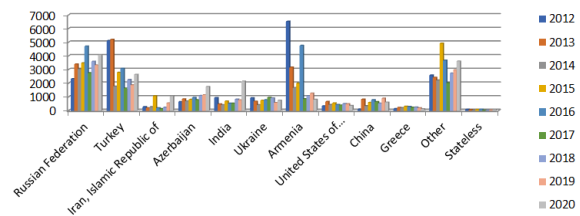


Figure 5. Number of emigrants by sex and citizenship (males) (source: National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022)

One of the main reasons for emigration is economic hardship, which is directly related to the increase in unemployment. The problem of unemployment is one of the acutest problems in Georgia and as the results of different statistical, conjunctive or social surveys evidence, often ranks first among the most important social-economic or political problems the country and Georgian people face (Paresashvili, 2020). This process was further aggravated during the pandemic. According to the latest data of 2021, the level of unemployment among women is 17.8%, and among men is 22.7%, which has increased over the last 4 years for both women and men. In addition, it should be noted that the level of unemployment is high in the most common age group of emigration, so for example, in 2021, the largest number of unemployed population is in the population of the age group 25–34, it is equal to 58.2 thousand among men, and 25.9 thousand among women. As we have seen, this age group among men is the leader in the age structure of immigrants. with that As expected, the unemployment rate is much, about 3 times higher in rural type settlements, while the difference between urban type settlements is relatively small (Abesadze et al., 2022b). Therefore, it is not surprising that the rate of emigration of rural residents is increasing. Thus, in terms of unemployment, the



economic potential of the country is impossible to use in full and the national wealth is impossible to increase to the maximum possible level (Abesadze & Paresshvili, 2018).

Is it worth so much to families that family members, especially women, emigrated? In fact, the family structure is being broken. Human relationships are transferred to online contact. The realization of personal values is sacrificed for the material well-being of the family, education of children, improvement of health, raising the standard of living, etc.

What are the income statistics in Georgia and what is the role of remittances among them?

The average monthly income in the country has been systematically increasing since 2010. In 2021, it increased by 13% compared to the previous year and amounted to 1258.4 million GEL, on average, in 2010–2021, the incomes of the population grew by 7% (see Figure 6).

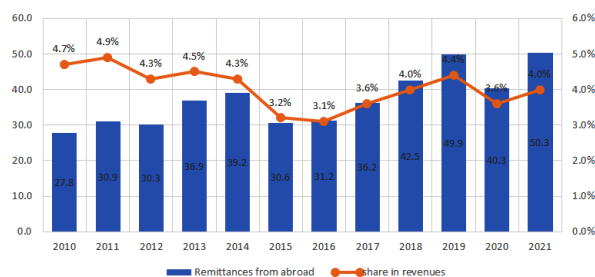


Figure 6. Distribution of Average Monthly Remittances from Abroad (million GEL) and Share of remittances in total revenues (%) (source: National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022)

Among which the percentage share of remittances was characterized by an increasing trend, except for some years' indicators. The variation range of the share of remittances varied between 3.2%–4.9% in 2010–2021. In 2021, the share of total income received from abroad through remittances was 0.1% of GDP (GDP is 60 billion GEL).

The majority of the income comes from the family of the city population. In 2021, the remittances received from abroad by the population of the urban settlement amounted to 34.5 mln. GEL, which is 21% higher than

the level of 2000 and 2.3% lower than the level of 2019. In 2010–2021, the volume of remittances among city residents increased by 4.3% annually. The rate of increase in the volume of remittances of the population in rural areas is relatively higher than in urban areas. For example, in 2021 compared to 2020, remittances increased by 33%, compared to 2019 by 8%, the average annual growth rate in 2010–2021 was 8.5%. It seems that the level of emigration of rural residents is increasing and the amount of money sent from abroad by them is also increasing. Nevertheless, the emigration and remittances of the city's population are predominant (see Figure 7).

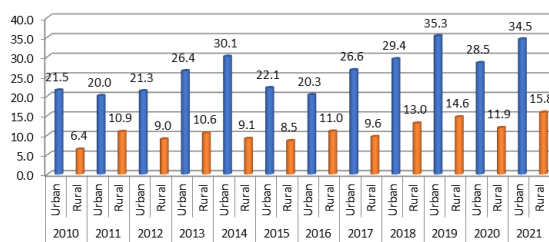


Figure 7. Distribution of Remittances from abroad of the Total Population by Urban and Rural Areas (million GEL) (source: National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022)

If we analyze the statistical data of emigration and remittances in more detail, it will be revealed that over the last 5 years, the highest income in the form of remittances from abroad is systematically recorded in the Imereti region, the volume of which is much higher than the data of other regions and equaled 16.1 million in 2021. Then comes Tbilisi with 9 million GEL and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti with 5.2 million GEL (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022).

It is interesting how the emigration of the population affected the demographic situation in Georgia. There is an unambiguous answer here – bad. Although emigration is not the only factor in reducing the birth rate, we believe that it is important. Since 2014, the value of the total birth rate has been systematically decreasing. Every year since 2014, the birth rate has decreased by 4–5% compared to the previous year (see Figure 8).

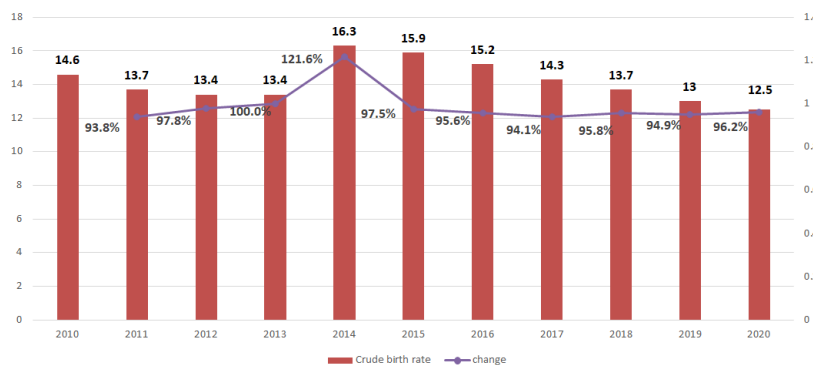


Figure 8. Crude birth rate (Live births per 1 000 population) and change (source: National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022)

The most active age in terms of birth in Georgia is 20–34 years. Age-specific birth rates in this age group range from 81.6 to 121.8 per thousand. This age is also the most active in the age structure of emigration. It turns out that the category whose potential in improving the demographic situation is very large is leaving the country. We are going to believe that if this continues, and there are indeed signs of it, the threat of a demographic crisis is emerging. In all age groups, except for the 35–39 age group, the relative indicators of the intensity of age-specific birth rates have deteriorated (see Figure 9).

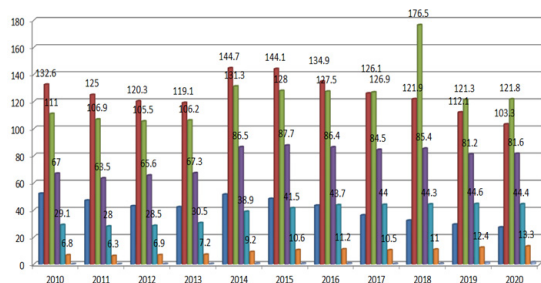


Figure 9. Age-specific fertility rates (source: National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022)

Since 2019, the natural increase in Georgia has been decreasing, and its rate has been negative for the last two years. According to the latest data, the natural increase per 1000 people is negative and amounts to -3.8. While in 2018 it was +1.2 per mille. In 2021, the birth rate has worsened by 2% compared to the previous year, by 11% compared to 2018 and by 23% compared to 2015 (see Figure 10).

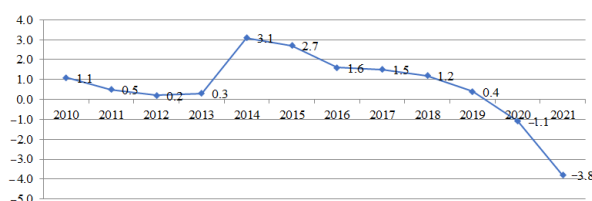


Figure 10. Coefficients of natural increase of the population (source: National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022)

## Conclusions

- Emigration in Georgia is an acute and actual problem. The number of immigrants decreased during the pandemic, but according to experts, their number will increase again in 2021;
- The ratio between immigrant women Since 2019, the natural increase in Georgia has been decreasing, and its rate has been negative for the last two years. According to the latest data, the natural increase per 1000 people is negative and amounts to -3.8. While in 2018 it was +1.2 per mille. In 2021, the birth rate has worsened by 2% compared to the previous year, by 11% compared to 2018 and by 23% compared to 2015;

- and men is almost stable with a predominant percentage of men, with a range of change from 55.9% to 59.5%;
- Most emigrants are 20–24 years old (14%), followed by 25–29 years old (12.4%) and 30–34 years old (11.8%). It should be noted that the age of immigrants is much higher for women than for men;
- The largest number of immigrants is recorded in the Imereti region;
- The level of unemployment is high in the age group with the highest emigration;
- The level of unemployment is high in rural settlements and it is 3 times higher than that of urban settlements;
- Men predominate among emigrants, although the number of female emigrants is increasing year by year, and the trend of their number growth almost coincides with the trend expressed as a time series of men;
- In dynamics, the largest number of emigrants, both women and men, is recorded in the Russian Federation, Armenia, Turkey and Azerbaijan;
- Along with the increase in emigration, the number of remittances received from abroad also increases. In 2021, the volume of these funds increased by 25% compared to the previous year, by 18% compared to 2018, and by 64% compared to 2015. The correlation is positive and close;
- In the last 5 years, the highest income in the form of remittances received from abroad is recorded in Imereti region, Tbilisi and Samegrelo Zemo Svaneti;
- Emigration and the created economic situation significantly worsened the indicators of natural movement;
- In all age groups, except for the 35–39 age group, the relative indicators of the intensity of age-specific birth rates have deteriorated;
- Since 2019, the natural increase in Georgia has been decreasing and its rate has been negative for the last two years;
- The most active age in terms of birth in Georgia is 20–34 years. Age-specific birth rates in this age group range from 81.6 to 121.8 per thousand. This age is also the most active in the age structure of emigration.

Finally, it can be said: although according to the latest official data, the growing pace of emigration in Georgia has slowed down, immigrants outside the country still represent a large army. Against the backdrop of existing inflation, the population of Georgia has become even more dependent on remittances received from abroad, the birth rate is decreasing, and the prerequisites for a demographic crisis are clearly present.

## Recommendations

- It is a fact that the main reason for emigration is the difficult economic situation of families in the coun-

try, which in many cases is caused by the level of unemployment and low wages. Therefore, the promotion of the development of small and medium-sized businesses, which ensures the formation of additional jobs in the labor market and thus increases the possibility of employment, can be considered an effective and real opportunity to reduce emigration.

- One of the negative side effects of emigration was the decrease in the birth rate. Therefore, it is vitally necessary to take effective steps to motivate the increase in birth rate. One such way is to increase the period of maternity leave for women;
- It is no less important to increase the volume of social benefits for families with many children from the side of the state, which should be accompanied by the offer of other social packages.

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