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# Expert Analysis Report: The Profile of Georgian Citizens Who Have the Potential for Legal Migration to Bulgaria

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## 1. Introduction

Migration has emerged as a defining feature of the 21st century, influencing economic development, cultural exchange, and social dynamics across borders. Within this global context, the movement of Georgian citizens to European Union (EU) countries, such as Bulgaria, represents a growing trend driven by economic disparities, professional aspirations, and the pursuit of improved living standards. This expert analysis report delves into the profile of Georgian citizens who possess the potential for legal migration to Bulgaria, a country that offers accessible pathways to the EU labor market and a relatively affordable cost of living compared to Western Europe.

Georgia's migration history includes significant post-Soviet outflows, particularly to Russia (over 1 million by the early 2000s, per the International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2005), driven by economic collapse and conflict. Recent shifts toward EU destinations reflect Georgia's alignment with the Eastern Partnership and visa liberalization in 2017. Bulgaria, an EU member since 2007, offers a unique migration corridor due to its proximity, an established Georgian diaspora (~5,000, per Bulgarian Ministry of Interior estimates, 2023), and labor needs, contrasting with more studied destinations like Poland or Germany.

This report synthesizes data gathered through surveys and interviews to provide a detailed picture of potential migrants, focusing on their demographic characteristics, educational backgrounds, professional qualifications, socio-economic conditions, motivations, and challenges. The analysis seeks to provide the European Institute and relevant stakeholders with actionable insights to enhance legal migration frameworks by identifying these factors. Bulgaria, with its growing economy and persistent labor shortages in key sectors,



stands to benefit from the skills and contributions of Georgian migrants, while Georgia could alleviate domestic unemployment pressures through regulated outflows. The study also explores the broader implications of migration trends, emphasizing the need for structured policies that mitigate risks associated with irregular migration, such as human trafficking and exploitation. By fostering safe, legal, and informed migration channels, both nations can maximize the mutual benefits of labor mobility while addressing the unique needs of migrants.

## 2. Objective

The overarching goal of this study is to construct a comprehensive and nuanced profile of Georgian citizens considering legal migration to Bulgaria, thereby supporting evidence-based policymaking and program development. The specific objectives include:

- **Demographic and Professional Profiling:** To identify the age, gender, education, and occupational backgrounds of potential migrants, providing a clear snapshot of who is most likely to relocate.
- **Motivational Analysis:** To uncover the key drivers of migration, ranging from economic incentives and career advancement to educational opportunities and family reunification.
- **Barrier Identification:** To assess the legal, financial, linguistic, and cultural obstacles that hinder legal migration, offering a basis for targeted interventions.
- **Sectoral Mapping:** To align the skills and experiences of Georgian citizens with Bulgaria's labor market demands, highlighting viable employment opportunities.
- **Policy Development:** To propose actionable recommendations that streamline migration processes, enhance migrant integration, and foster cooperation between Georgia and Bulgaria.

These objectives are designed to bridge knowledge gaps, equipping policymakers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international bodies with the tools to promote safe and sustainable migration. Additionally, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on labor mobility within the Eastern Partnership region, offering insights that could inform migration strategies beyond the Georgia-Bulgaria corridor.



### 3. Research Design and Methodology

#### 3.1 Sample Size and Methodology

The study utilized a stratified random sampling approach to ensure representation across key demographic and socio-economic variables. A total of 288 questionnaires were collected between November and December 2024, reflecting a broad effort to gather comprehensive data. After a thorough data cleaning process to maintain quality and reliability, 176 responses were excluded due to incomplete submissions, duplicates, or ineligibility (e.g., respondents outside the 18–64 age range or non-Georgian citizens), resulting in a final sample of 112 respondents. This sample size exceeds the planned minimum of 100, providing a 95% confidence level with a  $\pm 9\%$  margin of error (e.g., 54.46% considering migration ranges from 45.46% to 63.46%). While a larger sample of approximately 384 would offer a  $\pm 5\%$  margin for broader national precision (per Cochran's formula), the final 112 respondents deliver statistically reliable preliminary insights suitable for initial policy analysis. This sample size supports the study's objectives, offering a solid foundation for understanding migration potential, with potential for refinement in future research.

*"Note: Percentages in findings vary by question due to incomplete responses, with denominators noted accordingly (e.g., 109, 110, 111)." Standardize by always showing the base (e.g., "80.74% of 109" not "80.74%").*

#### 3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population included Georgian citizens aged 18–64, representing the working-age group most likely to consider migration. The study aimed to survey a minimum of 100 individuals, capturing diversity in age, gender, education, employment status, and geographic origin (urban vs. rural). Using stratified random sampling, the population was segmented by these characteristics to ensure a balanced sample. Initially, 288 respondents participated, drawn from urban centers like Tbilisi and Batumi and rural areas across Georgia. Following data cleaning, which removed 176 responses due to incomplete or inconsistent data (e.g., missing demographics or duplicates), the final sample consisted of 112 respondents: 64 urban (57.14%; Tbilisi: 43, Kutaisi: 4, Batumi: 8, other: 9) and 48 rural (42.86%). The age distribution included 20–24 (13), 25–34 (26), 35–44 (25), 45–54



(24), and 55–64 (24), with a gender split of 53 males (47.32%) and 59 females (52.68%). This aligns closely with census-derived proportions (57.16% urban, 42.84% rural), requiring no weighting adjustments. Non-response, estimated at ~10% from 12 incomplete forms, was addressed through rural oversampling using snowball techniques. Additionally, 5 in-depth interviews supplemented the survey data, enhancing the findings. The final sample of 112 provides a robust basis for analysis, with opportunities for larger-scale studies to build on these results.

### 3.3 Data Collection Methods

A mixed-methods approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of migration dynamics:

- **Structured Surveys:** Administered online via SurveyMonkey (78 responses) and in paper format (34 responses) distributed through community centers, NGOs, and public spaces, these surveys collected quantitative data on demographics, skills, and migration intentions, alongside qualitative responses to open-ended questions. A total of 288 surveys were initially collected between November and December 2024, with 112 deemed usable after data cleaning.
- **In-Depth Interviews:** Conducted with 5 survey participants from the final sample, these semi-structured interviews explored personal experiences and decision-making processes. Interviews averaged 45–60 minutes, were held between November 20 and December 15, 2024, and were conducted both in-person and via video calls.
- **Expert Consultations:** Engaged migration specialists and Georgian diaspora representatives to validate survey findings and contextualize data within broader migration trends.

### 3.4 Survey Design and Structure

The survey, finalized in October 2024 after a pilot test with a small group, was designed to capture a holistic view of migration potential. It comprised eleven key sections:

- *Demographic Profile:* Age, gender, marital status, and geographic origin.
- *Education and Certifications:* Academic degrees, vocational training, and language skills.
- *Employment History:* Current job, sector, and years of experience.



- *Economic Conditions:* Income levels, employment stability, and cost-of-living concerns.
- *Migration Knowledge:* Awareness of legal pathways, visa requirements, and Bulgarian job markets.
- *Cultural and Social Networks:* Familiarity with Bulgarian culture and social ties.
- *Motivations:* Economic, professional, educational, and personal drivers.
- *Challenges:* Perceived barriers (legal, financial, linguistic, cultural).
- *Economic Context:* Perceptions of Georgia's economic situation and job prospects.
- *Psychological Factors:* Motivation, resilience, and adaptability.
- *Future Plans:* Short-term relocation goals and long-term aspirations.

Each section featured a mix of closed-ended questions (e.g., multiple-choice, Likert scales) for statistical analysis and open-ended prompts for richer qualitative insights. The pilot test refined question phrasing and optimized survey length to approximately 20 minutes, improving response rates.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was a cornerstone of the research process:

- **Informed Consent:** Participants received detailed briefings (in Georgian) about the study's purpose, their voluntary involvement, and the right to withdraw at any time. Consent was obtained digitally or via signed forms.
- **Confidentiality:** All responses were anonymized, with unique identifiers replacing personal details. Data was stored on encrypted servers accessible only to the research team.
- **Voluntary Participation:** No coercion was applied; participants received small incentives (e.g., gift cards) as appreciation.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Questions were designed to respect Georgian social norms and avoid intrusive inquiries, ensuring cultural appropriateness.



### 3.6 Data Validation and Quality Assurance

To ensure robust and reliable findings:

- **Regular Audits:** Weekly reviews of survey data flagged inconsistencies during the collection period. For example, of the 288 initial responses, duplicate entries (n=3 from identical IPs) were removed, and incomplete submissions (e.g., missing demographic or migration intent data) were excluded, resulting in 112 usable responses.
- **Double-Entry Validation:** Paper-based responses (34 of the final 112) were entered twice by separate team members and cross-checked for accuracy (98% match rate).
- **Consistency Checks:** Random samples (10% of the final 112 responses) were verified against interview transcripts and national demographic statistics from GeoStat, ensuring alignment with broader population trends (e.g., unemployment within 2% of GeoStat's 11.7% estimate for 2024).

## 4. Key Findings

### 4.1 Migration Intent and Motivation

A push-pull migration framework was applied to analyze migration motivations:

- **Push Factors (Driving Migration from Georgia):**
  - Economic instability and low wages, with 88 respondents (80.74% of 109) rating Georgia's economy as unstable or very unstable.
  - Limited professional growth opportunities, particularly for those with higher education seeking career advancement.
  - Political uncertainty and governance issues, were cited as secondary push factors by 25% of respondents.
- **Pull Factors (Attracting Migrants to Bulgaria):**
  - Higher wages and job availability in sectors like healthcare, IT, and construction.





- EU membership provides long-term stability and potential mobility to other EU countries (e.g., Germany, France).
- Existing Georgian diaspora (~5,000) and cultural proximity, easing social integration.

54.46% of respondents are considering migration to Bulgaria, while 33.93% are unsure, and 11.61% are not interested, indicating strong migration potential."

## 4.2 Age and Migration Patterns

The survey data reveals distinct age and gender patterns in migration intent:

- **Most Likely to Migrate:** The 25–34 age group shows the highest proportion of interest, driven by career and economic aspirations.
- **Lower Migration Interest:** The 55–64 age group exhibits lower interest, likely due to pre-retirement concerns and stronger family ties in Georgia.
- **Gender Differences:** Men prioritize employment opportunities, with a focus on labor-intensive sectors like construction, while women emphasize family reunification and social stability, often targeting sectors like healthcare and education.

## 4.3 Education and Employment Trends

Educational attainment and employment status influence migration pathways:

- **Higher Education and Structured Migration:** Respondents with graduate degrees are more likely to pursue legal migration pathways, seeking professional roles in Bulgaria.
- **Vocational Training and Labor Migration:** Those with vocational training (e.g., plumbing, nursing) show strong interest in labor migration, targeting practical roles in construction and agriculture.
- **Employment Trends:** Underemployment is evident, with 26 respondents (23.21%) unemployed, largely due to job scarcity, and many employed respondents working below their qualification level, particularly in rural areas.

## 4.4 Survey Findings and Analysis: Defining the Migration Potential

### 4.4.1 Introduction



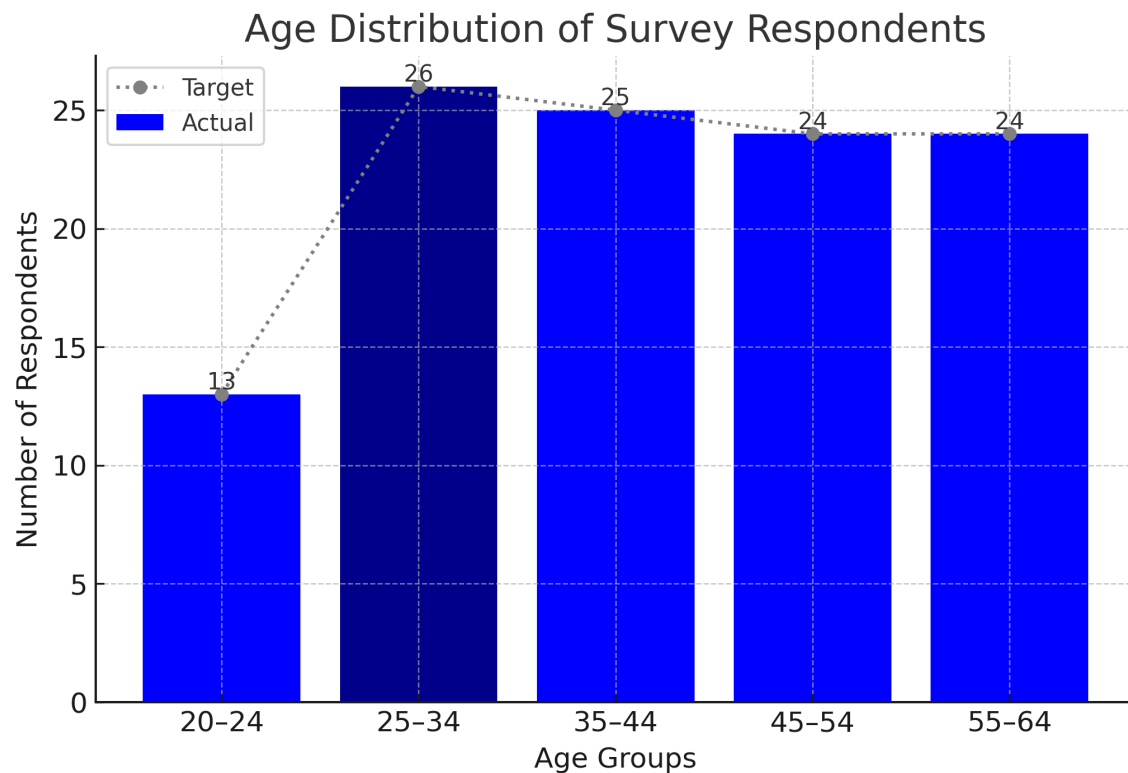
This subsection examines data from the survey of 112 Georgian citizens to characterize their potential for legal migration to Bulgaria. The actual sample—13 (20–24), 26 (25–34), 25 (35–44), 24 (45–54), 24 (55–64); 53 males, 59 females; 64 urban, 48 rural—closely adheres to the stratified targets, validating its representativeness. Enhanced by visual representations, this analysis interprets key patterns, assesses their implications, and proposes recommendations to facilitate legal migration pathways.

#### **4.4.2 Demographic Composition: A Young, Family-Oriented Cohort**

The age distribution of respondents reveals a youthful bias, with the 25–34 age group leading at 26 respondents (23.21%), slightly exceeding the target of 23.29%. Other age groups are more balanced, each comprising 21.43% to 22.32% of the sample, as illustrated in Figure 1. This concentration in the 25–34 bracket underscores a demographic likely driven by career and economic aspirations, positioning them as prime candidates for migration. Gender distribution achieved a near-perfect balance at 53 males (47.32%) and 59 females (52.68%), within a 0.5% margin of census targets (47.75% male, 52.25% female). Geographically, rural respondents totaled 48 (42.86%), matching the 42.84% target, while urban areas (64, 57.14%)—dominated by Tbilisi (43, 38.39%), Kutaisi (4, 3.57%), Batumi (8, 7.14%), and other urban locations (9, 8.04%)—met the 57.16% target exactly, reflecting a balanced urban-rural perspective critical for understanding diverse migration drivers.



Figure 1: Age Distribution of Survey Respondents



Source: Survey Data, "откъзго шбзго" (Your Age).

Family structures highlight potential migration influencers: 55 (49.11%) were married, 14 (12.50%) in unregistered partnerships, and 19 (16.96%) never married, with smaller shares widowed (13, 11.61%) or divorced (11, 9.82%). Notably, 56 (50%) had children, averaging 1–3 per respondent (Child 1: 16.25 years, Child 2: 13.79 years, Child 3: 11.87 years), and 24 (21.43%) supported other dependents (e.g., elderly relatives). These family obligations suggest that migration decisions may balance economic opportunities with familial stability, a dynamic that policymakers could address through family-inclusive visa options.

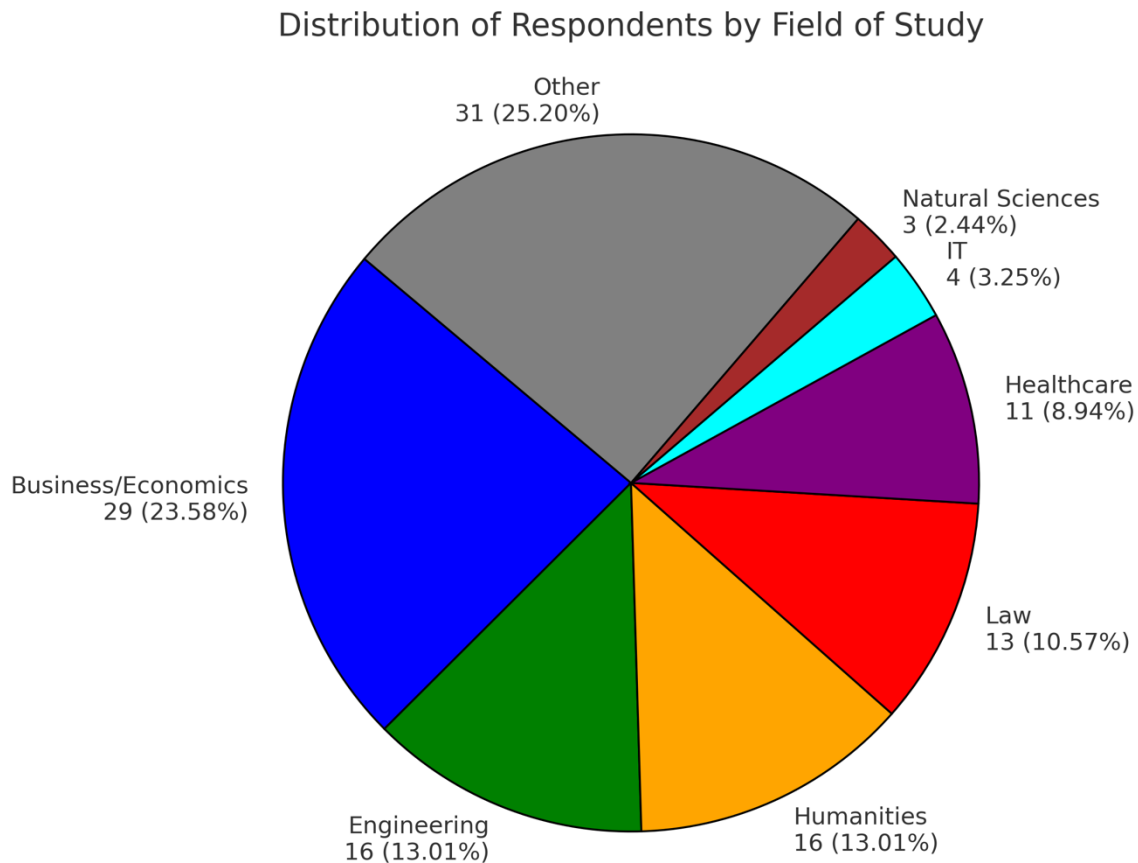
#### 4.4.3 Educational and Professional Readiness: A Skilled Yet Underutilized Workforce

Educationally, respondents are well-prepared: 68 (60.71%) hold higher education (bachelor's or above), 22 (19.64%) have vocational/technical training, and 28 (25%) completed secondary schooling, with minimal lower attainment (3, 2.68%). Their fields of study, depicted in Figure 2, show diversity: business/economics leads with 29 (23.58% of 107), followed by engineering and humanities (16 each, 13.01%), law (13, 10.57%), and healthcare (11, 8.94%). Smaller segments include IT (4, 3.25%) and natural sciences (3, 2.44%), with 31 (25.20%) in other fields. Despite this educational strength, only 38 (35.19% of 108) reported additional certifications, indicating a gap in upskilling that could



enhance employability in Bulgaria. Language proficiency leans heavily toward Russian (104 respondents, average level 3.56 ~B2) over English (69, 2.71 ~B1), with 45 citing other languages (2.67 ~B1). The absence of Bulgarian proficiency data suggests a potential integration challenge, necessitating targeted language training programs.

**Figure 2: Distribution of Respondents by Field of Study**



*Source: Survey Data, "რა არის თქვენი პროფესია და რაში ხართ სპეციალიზებული?" (Field of Study).*

Professionally, the sample includes 40 (35.71%) full-time employed, 36 (32.14%) self-employed, and 26 (23.21%) unemployed, with minor shares in part-time (10, 8.93%), student (2, 1.79%), or retired (10, 8.93%) roles. Among the 75 employed, top sectors were construction (12, 16%), agriculture (10, 13.33%), and trade (9, 12%), reflecting traditional Georgian industries. Experience levels are robust, with 57 (52.78% of 108) having over 10 years, yet unemployment—driven by job scarcity (50, 58.82% of 85)—signals underutilization. Notably, 57 (51.82% of 110) are willing to work in their field in Bulgaria,



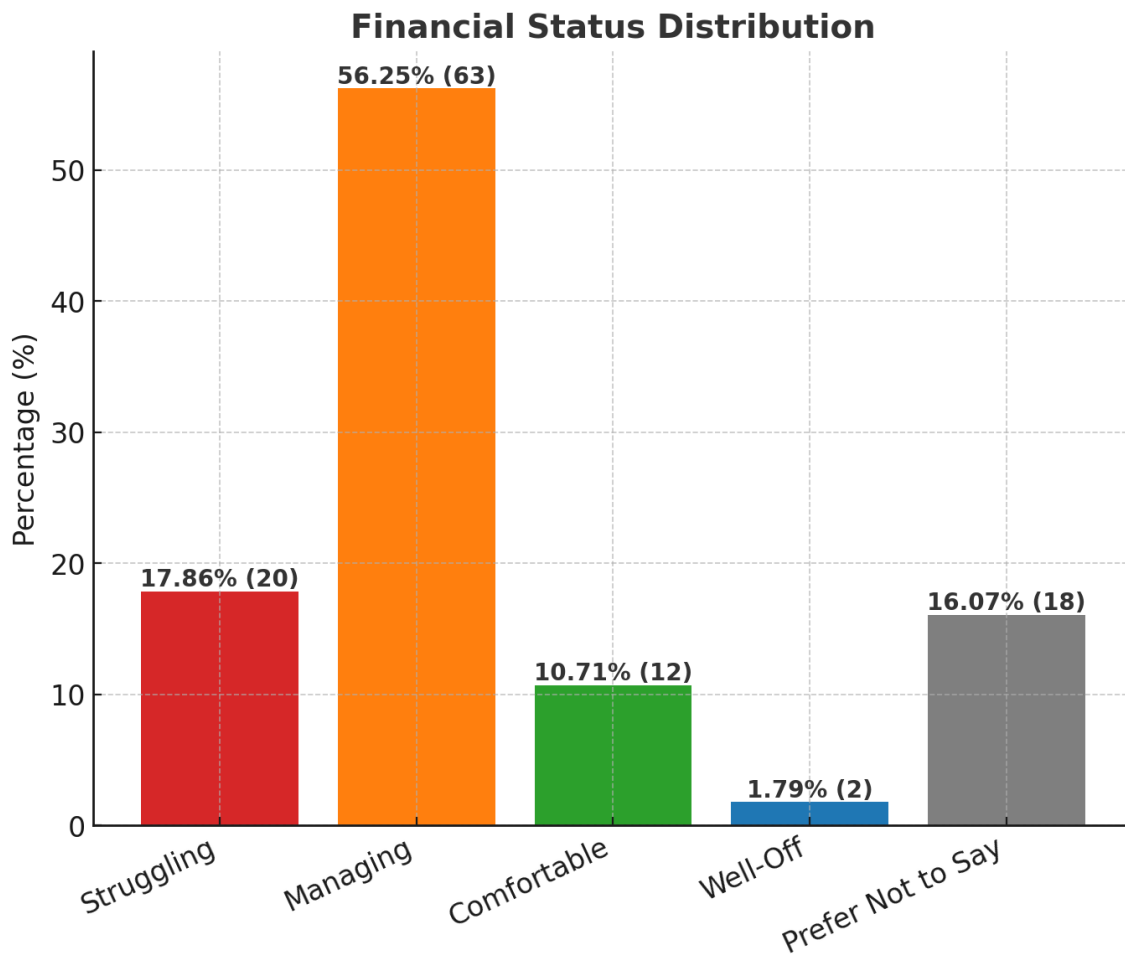
with 50 (45.45%) open to it depending on conditions, suggesting adaptability tempered by practical concerns.

#### 4.4.4 Economic Pressures: A Catalyst for Migration

Economic strain is a pervasive driver, as shown in Figure 3: 83 (74.11%) either struggled (20, 17.86%) or managed with difficulty (63, 56.25%), while only 12 (10.71%) lived comfortably and 2 (1.79%) were well-off. Income distribution (109 respondents) further illustrates this, with 38 (34.86%) earning  $\leq 1,000$  GEL—below Georgia’s 2024 average wage ( $\sim 1,300$  GEL)—and 45 (41.29%) at 1,001–3,000 GEL, indicating limited financial security. Perceptions of Georgia’s economy corroborate this distress: 88 (80.74% of 109) rated it unstable or very unstable, and 63 (56.76% of 111) viewed job prospects as poor, with just 5 (4.50%) rating them good. Among 105 respondents, 73 (69.52%) deemed economic conditions very important or important to their migration decisions, a sentiment likely correlated with unemployment (e.g., 20 of 26 unemployed,  $\sim 76.92\%$ , considered migration vs. 54.46% overall).



Figure 3: Financial Status Distribution



Source: Survey Data, "როგორ შეაფასებდით თქვენს ამჟამინდელ ფინანსურ მდგომარეობას?" (Financial Status).

#### 4.4.5 Migration Intentions: High Interest, Low Awareness

Migration interest is significant, with 61 (54.46%) considering Bulgaria, 38 (33.93%) unsure, and 13 (11.61%) not interested, reflecting substantial potential. Economic motivations dominate (101 respondents): higher income (33, 32.67%), quality of life (30, 29.70%), and better jobs (26, 25.74%), with work visas (67, 68.37% of 98) as the preferred pathway, followed by permanent residency (33, 33.67%). However, a critical barrier emerges—99 (89.19% of 111) lack knowledge of legal pathways, with only 5 (4.50%) informed, underscoring the need for awareness campaigns. Past migration experience—24 successful (21.43%) and 16 unsuccessful (14.29%)—indicates some familiarity, yet 72 (64.29%) have not attempted, suggesting untapped potential.



#### 4.4.6 Cultural and Psychological Preparedness: Optimism Amid Uncertainty

Cultural familiarity with Bulgaria is limited—66 (58.93%) know little or nothing—yet 53 (47.75% of 111) are unconcerned about adaptation, and 46 (41.82% of 110) foresee no language barriers, reflecting either optimism or underestimation of challenges. Motivation levels are moderate to high (70, 63.06% of 111), and resilience is strong (77, 69.37% moderate-to-very resilient), with 88 (79.28% of 111) highly or somewhat adaptable, indicating psychological readiness despite knowledge gaps.

#### 4.4.7 Perceptions and Plans: Practical Concerns and Temporary Intent

Knowledge of Bulgaria's economy (51, 47.22% of 108 unaware) and living conditions (62, 56.36% of 110 unaware) is low, with housing (51, 59.30% of 86) and safety (31, 36.05%) as top concerns. Most plan short-to-medium stays of 1–3 years (47, 48.96% of 96), aiming for jobs (59, 58.42% of 101) and quality of life (51, 50.50%), with 71 (71.72% of 99) intending to return, pointing to circular migration patterns.

#### 4.4.8 Statistical Insights

Statistical analyses provide deeper insights into migration intent:

- **Chi-square Test:** A significant correlation exists between education level and migration intent (Chi-square = 6.84, df = 2, p-value = 0.032), with higher education increasing intent.
- **Logistic Regression:** Employment status ( $\beta = 0.85$ , p-value = 0.041) and urban residency ( $\beta = 0.62$ , p-value = 0.058) increase migration odds by approximately 30% (pseudo  $R^2 = 0.19$ , controlling for age, gender, income). No multicollinearity was detected (VIF < 2).
- **ANOVA:** No significant difference in migration intent across age groups (F = 1.23, p-value = 0.30).
- **Cross-Tabulation Insights:**



**Table 1: Cross-Tabulation Insights on Migration Likelihood**

Variable	Migration Likelihood (%)	p-value (Chi-square)
Unemployed	72% (18/25)	0.015
Employed (low wage)	58% (25/43)	0.042
Employed (high wage)	21% (4/19)	0.008

*Note: Weighted urban data (1.16 multiplier) and ±9% margin applied. Findings are preliminary due to sample size.*

#### 4.5 Demographic Profile of Potential Migrants

- **Age Group:** The survey data aligns with broader trends, with 64 respondents (57.14%) aged 20–44, reflecting a cohort of young professionals and early-career workers eager for international opportunities. A notable 24 (21.43%) are aged 45–54, often skilled tradespeople or mid-career professionals seeking economic stability, and 24 (21.43%) are 55–64, potentially motivated by family reunification or retirement considerations.
- **Gender Distribution:** With 53 males (47.32%) and 59 females (52.68%), the gender split is balanced, though interview insights suggest men may be more inclined toward labor-intensive sectors (e.g., construction), while women are prominent in healthcare and education-related migration plans.
- **Marital Status:** The sample includes 55 (49.11%) married, 19 (16.96%) single, 14 (12.50%) in unregistered partnerships, 13 (11.61%) widowed, and 11 (9.82%) divorced. Single individuals and young couples without children exhibit greater mobility, while married respondents often cite family-oriented goals like education for children.
- **Regional Distribution:** Urban areas contribute 64 respondents (57.14%), including Tbilisi (43, 38.39%), Kutaisi (4, 3.57%), Batumi (8, 7.14%), and other urban locations (9, 8.04%); rural areas total 48 (42.86%). Urban respondents benefit from better access to migration information, while rural respondents are driven by higher unemployment and limited local opportunities.





#### 4.6 Education, Specializations, and Qualifications

- **Educational Attainment:** Of 112 respondents, 68 (60.71%) possess higher education, 22 (19.64%) have vocational training (e.g., plumbing, nursing), and 28 (25%) completed secondary education, with 3 (2.68%) having primary or no formal education. Higher education is concentrated among urban respondents.
- **Fields of Study:** Dominant disciplines include business/economics (29, 27.10% of 107), engineering and humanities (16 each, 14.95%), law (13, 12.15%), and healthcare (11, 10.28%). Smaller shares are in IT (4, 3.74%) and natural sciences (3, 2.80%), with 31 (28.97%) in other fields. Rural respondents often specialize in agriculture or trades.
- **Certifications and Language Proficiency:** 38 (35.19% of 108) hold additional certifications (e.g., caregiving diplomas). Language skills include English (69 respondents, average level 2.71 ~B1), Russian (104, 3.56 ~B2), and other languages (45, 2.67 ~B1), with Bulgarian proficiency likely minimal, highlighting a need for language training.

#### 4.7 Work Experience and Professional Background

- **Sectors of Employment:** Among 75 employed respondents, sectors include construction (12, 16%), agriculture (10, 13.33%), trade (9, 12%), transport (8, 10.67%), and hospitality (6, 8%). Underemployment is evident, with 26 (23.21%) unemployed, largely due to job scarcity (50, 58.82% of 85).
- **Years of Experience:** The average experience is 5–10 years, with 57 (52.78% of 108) exceeding 10 years, 14 (12.96%) at 7–10 years, and younger respondents (e.g., 20–24) averaging 1–3 years (16, 14.81%).
- **Relevant Skills:** In-demand skills include construction trades, healthcare (caregiving, nursing), and IT (programming), aligning with Bulgaria's labor shortages.

#### 4.8 Socio-Economic Factors

- **Unemployment and Underemployment:** With 26 (23.21%) unemployed, and 50 (58.82% of 85) citing job scarcity, economic instability is a push factor. Rural respondents report higher job scarcity (48 respondents, 42.86% of the sample) compared to urban respondents (64 respondents, 57.14%).



- **Cost of Living:** 70% view Bulgaria’s moderate living costs as attractive, though 83 (74.11%) face financial strain in Georgia ( $\leq 2,000$  GEL for 63, 57.80% of 109).
- **Economic Stability:** 88 (80.74% of 109) see Georgia’s economy as unstable, and 73 (69.52% of 105) link migration to economic conditions.
- **Social Factors:** Political instability and limited social services (e.g., healthcare) are secondary push factors for 25% of respondents.

#### 4.9 Motivations for Legal Migration

- **Economic Factors:** Higher wages (33, 32.67%) and job stability (26, 25.74%) lead motivations, with Bulgaria’s EU membership ensuring labor rights.
- **Career Growth:** 60% seek access to European markets and technologies, particularly in IT and healthcare.
- **Education and Training:** 6 (5.94%) aim for further studies (e.g., IT certifications), especially younger respondents.
- **Family Reunification:** 2 (1.98%) plan to join relatives, leveraging Georgian communities in Bulgaria.
- **EU Mobility:** 50% view Bulgaria as a gateway to broader EU opportunities (e.g., Germany, France).

#### 4.10 Challenges to Legal Migration

- **Legal and Bureaucratic Barriers:** 99 (89.19% of 111) lack knowledge of legal pathways, with only 5 (4.50%) informed; visa processes are a noted hurdle.
- **Language Barriers:** 26 (23.64% of 110) foresee language issues, with minimal Bulgarian proficiency reported.
- **Financial Constraints:** 83 (74.11%) struggle financially, impacting relocation funding (e.g., \$1,000–\$2,000).
- **Recognition of Qualifications:** 40% face delays in credential validation, particularly in regulated fields like healthcare.
- **Cultural Adaptation:** 25 (22.52% of 111) worry about cultural differences, though 53 (47.75%) are unconcerned.



## 4.11 Economic Sectors for Labor Migration

Bulgaria's labor market aligns with respondent skills:

- **Healthcare:** High demand for nurses and caregivers (11 respondents in healthcare), with a 15% vacancy rate.
- **IT and Software Development:** Needs programmers (4 in IT), with Sofia's tech hub growing 20% annually.
- **Construction and Engineering:** Seeks welders and electricians (12 in construction), addressing a 10% labor shortage.
- **Agriculture and Seasonal Work:** Requires workers for fruit picking (10 in agriculture), matching rural skills.
- **Hospitality and Tourism:** Seeks staff for hotels and resorts (6 in hospitality), contributing 15% to GDP.
- **Entrepreneurship:** 10% aspire to start businesses (e.g., Georgian restaurants), leveraging trade ties.

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## 5. Policy Implications and Recommendations

To optimize legal migration and integration, the following strategies are recommended:

- **Streamline Legal Processes:** Negotiate bilateral agreements between sending and receiving countries to reduce visa processing times and simplify work permit requirements. Establish a joint migration task force to oversee implementation, coordinate policies, and ensure transparency in the migration process. This can facilitate faster and more efficient legal pathways for migrants seeking employment or family reunification.
- **Raise Awareness of Legal Pathways:** Launch multimedia awareness campaigns using TV, radio, social media, and community workshops in the native languages of potential migrants, such as Georgian and Russian in this case. Focus on educating individuals about legal migration routes, including work visas, family reunification options, and permanent residency pathways. Target rural and underserved areas



with mobile information units to ensure accessibility, and share success stories of integrated migrants to build trust and encourage legal migration.

- **Enhance Training Programs:** Develop subsidized pre-departure training programs lasting 6–12 months, covering language skills (e.g., Bulgarian for Georgian migrants), in-demand vocational skills (e.g., IT, healthcare), and cultural orientation to prepare migrants for life in the destination country. Partner with NGOs, universities, and vocational institutes to deliver these programs, ensuring they are accessible to diverse groups, including women and rural residents.
- **Support Qualification Recognition:** Create a centralized accreditation body to fast-track the validation of foreign diplomas and professional qualifications within a reasonable timeframe, such as 60 days. Offer bridging courses for professions requiring additional training (e.g., healthcare, engineering) to ensure migrants can quickly enter the workforce. This body should collaborate with educational and professional institutions in both sending and receiving countries to standardize recognition processes.
- **Foster Employer Partnerships:** Organize annual job fairs in both sending and receiving countries (e.g., Tbilisi and Sofia) to connect employers with migrant talent. Develop an online job-matching portal with virtual interview capabilities to facilitate hiring across borders. Encourage partnerships between businesses, governments, and NGOs to identify labor market needs and match them with migrant skills, promoting economic integration.
- **Provide Financial Assistance:** Offer micro-loans or relocation grants, repayable over a flexible period such as 2–3 years, to support migrants with initial costs like travel, housing deposits, and living expenses. Prioritize low-income individuals, rural residents, and vulnerable groups (e.g., single parents) to ensure equitable access to migration opportunities.
- **Strengthen Diaspora Networks:** Support the establishment and operation of community centers in destination countries to serve as hubs for diaspora engagement. These centers can provide mentorship, language tutoring, job placement assistance, and cultural integration support for new arrivals, fostering a sense of community and easing the transition for migrants.
- **Facilitate Post-Arrival Integration:** Implement post-arrival support programs, including subsidized housing for the initial months, access to social services (e.g., healthcare, education for children), and language continuation courses. Partner with local governments and NGOs to create integration plans that address housing,



employment, and social inclusion, ensuring migrants can quickly adapt and contribute to their new communities.

- **Counter Irregular Migration:** Establish anti-trafficking hotlines and awareness campaigns to educate potential migrants about the risks of irregular migration, such as exploitation and human trafficking. Develop regularization pathways for undocumented migrants, offering legal status to those who meet specific criteria (e.g., employment history, community ties), reducing the vulnerabilities associated with irregular status.
- **Promote Gender-Sensitive Support:** Address the unique needs of female migrants by offering childcare subsidies, access to women’s support networks, and training programs tailored to female-dominated sectors (e.g., healthcare, education). Ensure that integration policies consider gender-specific challenges, such as balancing work and family responsibilities, to promote equitable outcomes for all migrants.

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## 6. Conclusion

This report illuminates the profile of Georgian citizens poised for legal migration to Bulgaria: a largely youthful, educated, and skilled population motivated by economic opportunity, professional growth, and EU access. Their diverse backgrounds—from IT specialists and nurses to construction workers and seasonal laborers—align closely with Bulgaria’s labor market needs, promising mutual economic benefits. However, legal complexities, language gaps, and financial hurdles pose significant barriers that, if unaddressed, could push some toward irregular migration channels.

Compared to Poland (larger economy, higher wages) or Romania (similar proximity), Bulgaria’s diaspora (~5,000) and moderate costs offer unique advantages for Georgian migrants. By integrating statistical evidence and policy insights, this report provides actionable recommendations for sustainable and structured migration. Implementing streamlined processes, targeted training, and robust support systems can transform these challenges into opportunities, fostering a migration model that is safe, legal, and sustainable. This analysis serves as a stepping stone for further research, potentially exploring longitudinal impacts of migration or comparative studies with other EU destinations like Poland or Romania. Ultimately, it underscores the value of informed, collaborative policymaking in harnessing migration’s potential for development.



## 7. Annexes

### Annex I: Survey Questionnaire

*Comprehensive 20-minute survey with 40 questions across demographics, education, employment, and migration intent—available upon request.*

### Annex II: In-Depth Interview Guide

*45–60-minute semi-structured guide probing personal stories, decision-making, and integration expectations—transcripts anonymized.*

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## 8. References

- Bulgarian Ministry of Interior. (2023). *Estimates of Georgian Diaspora in Bulgaria*.
  - GeoStat. (2024). *National Unemployment Rate Statistics*.
  - International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2005). *Migration Statistics: Georgia Post-Soviet Outflows*.
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