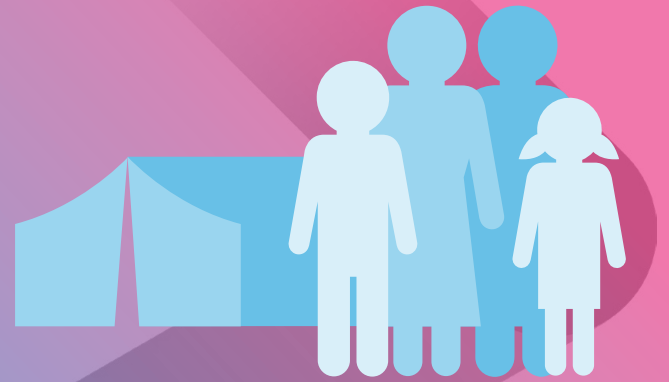


SOUTH CAUCASUS: Near-parity in emigration, growing immigration and displacement pressures with gendered impacts

April 2026



Migration in the South Caucasus is shaped by the legacy of labour mobility trends from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), industrial collapse in the 1990s and unresolved territorial conflicts following the dissolution of the USSR. These factors continue to drive labour outmigration, protracted displacement and regional economic disparities that structure gendered migration patterns today.¹ Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia remain countries of sustained outmigration, while also experiencing more diverse immigration and transit dynamics over the past decade.

Emigration from the South Caucasus remains structurally significant, though declining since 1990, with persistent near-gender parity in migrants. The total stock of emigrants from three countries fell from approximately 3.21 million in 1990 to 1.94 million in 2024, with women constituting **46.7 per cent** of emigrants from Armenia, **49.9 per cent** from Azerbaijan and **54.2 per cent** from Georgia.² These aggregate figures mask important differences by migration channel, duration and destination: recent Armenian emigration is heavily male

and work-related,³ while women are more visible in longer-term settlement pathways, including family-related mobility, education and care and service employment. In Georgia, while men still represent a significant portion, women have recently begun to represent the majority of the emigrants.⁴ This shift may reflect changing labour-market conditions in destination countries, evolving economic pressures at home, or a combination of both push and pull factors, including temporary and circular labour opportunities in male-dominated sectors.⁵

¹ Bara, A., A. Di Bartolomeo, Z. Brunarska and S. Makaryan. 2013. [Regional Migration Report: South Caucasus \(CARIM-East Research Report\)](#). European University Institute.

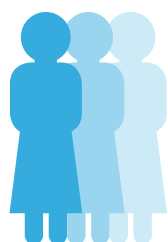
² UNDESA. 2024. [International Migrant Stock 2024 by sex and by region, country or area of origin](#).

³ Armstat and IOM. 2023. [Labour Migration Assessment in Armenia](#).

⁴ Geostat. 2025. [International Migration by Citizenship and Sex](#).

⁵ Eurostat. 2024. [International Migration Citizenship](#).

In Armenia,
46.7%
of emigrants
are women



In Azerbaijan,
women
account for
49.9%

Georgia has the
highest share, with
54.2%
women emigrants

50% of emigrants
93% and
of arrivals
are women



Only
~5%
of migrant women
are unregistered

*32% of migrant men are unregistered

In Azerbaijan, migration to Russia was and remains more male-dominated and temporary, while mobility to Türkiye is more family-related and permanent, with a higher share of women.⁶

Irregular migration is on the rise, with gendered vulnerabilities concentrated in hidden sectors. Armenia registered a sharp rise in detected irregular residence in 2023 (15,379 foreign nationals, up from about 6,000 in 2022),⁷ with authorities initiating administrative proceedings against thousands of Indian citizens for lack of valid status.⁸ In Azerbaijan in November 2021, 3,642 irregular migrants were identified, **35.5 per cent** of whom were women.⁹ Across both countries, available evidence suggests women in irregular situations are disproportionately concentrated in domestic and caregiving work – jobs that are informal, weakly regulated and associated with heightened exposure to exploitation, harassment and gender-based violence – while fear of deportation and limited gender-sensitive referral systems drive underreporting and invisibility.¹⁰

The South Caucasus has also become increasingly relevant as a destination and transit space. Immigration has grown most visibly in Armenia and Georgia since 2020, driven by regional geopolitical developments and economic opportunities.¹¹ In all three countries, women constitute a substantial share of immigrants, reflecting the prominence of family-linked and longer-

term settlement pathways alongside employment and education. At the same time, the subregion lies along mixed migration routes from Asia to Europe. Women in irregular or transit situations remain largely invisible in official statistics and face gender-specific risks related to deception, debt, coercion, restricted mobility and limited access to health, legal and protection services.¹²

Trafficking patterns suggest gendered exposure to sex and labour exploitation in the subregion. Armenia's formally identified victims rose sharply in 2023, with both forced labour and sexual exploitation recorded,¹³ while GRETA highlights continued reliance on victim self-identification and limited female investigators – factors that weaken trust and detection.¹⁴ Similarly, in Georgia data reveal a significant increase in the number of identified trafficking victims in recent years, of which over three-quarters are women and children.¹⁵ In Azerbaijan, almost all of identified victims of human trafficking are women, most of whom were linked to sex trafficking (89 cases out of 90).¹⁶

Forced displacement remains a defining dimension of gendered mobility in the South Caucasus. In 2023, Armenia became a major host country following the escalation of hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan, with women and children comprising a large share of arrivals and facing acute needs related to housing, livelihoods, psychosocial support, childcare and pre-

⁶ Prague Process. 2024. [Azerbaijan Country Page](#).

⁷ EMN (European Migration Network). 2023. [Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2023: Statistical Annex \(Armenia\)](#).

⁸ News.am. 2024. [Indian migrants' blood saves lives in Armenia](#).

⁹ IOM. 2023. [Migration in the Republic of Azerbaijan: A Country Profile 2013–2021](#).

¹⁰ IOM. 2015. [Baseline Research on Irregular Migration in the Republic of Armenia](#); IOM. 2023. [Migration in the Republic of Azerbaijan: A Country Profile 2013–2021](#).

¹¹ Korableva, E. 2023. "Migrants from Russia in Georgia during the War in Ukraine: Political Performance and the 'Unpredictable Border'." Journal article. Russian Analytical Digest 301, pp. 2–7; IOM. 2015. [Baseline Research on Irregular Migration in the Republic of Armenia](#).

¹² Armstat and IOM. 2023. [Migration Profile of the Republic of Armenia 2023](#); IOM. 2023. [Migration in the Republic of Azerbaijan: A Country Profile 2013–2021](#).

¹³ US Department of State. 2024. [2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Armenia](#).

¹⁴ GRETA. 2022. [Evaluation Report Armenia. Third evaluation round](#).

¹⁵ U.S. Department of State. 2024. [Trafficking in Persons Report: Georgia](#).

¹⁶ US Department of State. 2024. [2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Armenia](#).

47%
of the unemployed
among displaced,
are women

Women are only
1 in 5
asylum
applicants



74–93%
of trafficking
victims
are women

vention and response to gender-based violence.¹⁷ Azerbaijan continues to manage large protracted displaced populations, with women overrepresented among older groups.¹⁸ Georgia's long-standing internally displaced population, originating from earlier conflicts, remains predominantly female and faces persistent barriers in housing, employment and access to services, reinforcing protracted vulnerability.¹⁹

Environmental pressures are becoming an increasingly important, although still weakly captured, driver of mobility across the subregion. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are highly exposed to cli-

mate-related risks, including rising temperatures, droughts, floods, landslides and water scarcity, with particularly strong impacts on rural and agriculture-dependent communities.²⁰ These stressors are already contributing to internal displacement, seasonal mobility and livelihood-related migration and are expected to intensify. Women are disproportionately affected due to their concentration in small-scale agriculture, limited access to land, credit, irrigation and extension services, and heavier unpaid care responsibilities, which constrain their capacity to adapt or migrate on their own terms.²¹

¹⁷ UNHCR. 2023. [Armenia – Emergency Refugee Response Plan: Inter-Agency Appeal](#), 12 October 2023–March 2024; UNHCR. 2024. [Armenia Refugee Response Plan: Six Months Achievements and Impact Report](#), October 2023–March 2024; UN Women and CARE Caucasus. 2024. [Armenia Refugee Crisis Gender Analysis](#).

¹⁸ IOM. 2023. [Migration in the Republic of Azerbaijan: A Country Profile 2013–2021](#).

¹⁹ Estonian Refugee Council. 2024. [Understanding Displacement in Georgia: An In-Depth Analysis of IDP Needs](#).

²⁰ For Armenia: IOM. 2023. [Policy analysis migration environment and climate change](#); For Azerbaijan: IOM. 2016. [Environmental Migration and Displacement in Azerbaijan: Highlighting the Need for Research, and Policies](#). *Migration, Environment and Climate Change Policy Brief Series*, Issue 4, Vol. 2.; For Georgia: FAO. 2023. [Gender, Climate Change and Agriculture in Georgia: Addressing Vulnerabilities and Strengthening Resilience](#).

²¹ IOM. 2023. [Policy Analysis on Migration, Environment and Climate Change \(MECC\): Armenia](#); FAO. 2022. [National Gender Profile of Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods: Azerbaijan](#); IOM Georgia. 2024. "New Project Launched to Address Environmental Migration Challenges." 2 March.

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