

**ATTITUDES OF THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION OF BATUMI TO THE LIVING
AND RECENTLY MIGRATED OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS
(ACCORDING TO A SOCIOLOGICAL SURVEY)**

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Abstract: The relevance of the research topic relates to the fact that recently there has been a sharp increase in the number of foreigners in Batumi; there also has been a rise of political activation among the local population of non-Georgian origin. Therefore, city of Batumi is of considerable interest. The attitude of the Georgian population of Batumi towards this issue. The purpose of our research is, through a sociological survey of representatives of the Georgian nationality in Batumi, to highlight the issues related to one or another socio-political and economic aspects of non-Georgians (including mainly foreigners) living in the city.

The fact that Batumi is distinguished for its multi-ethnic composition significantly increases the degree of reliability of the research. Based on these circumstances, it is clear that the Georgians from Batumi, with one frequency or another, always communicated with the representatives of other nations, which leads to a high level of reliability of their answers.

As for themes of the research, it follows a scheme that includes: Duration of life in Batumi; Attitude of Georgians towards non-Georgians living in Batumi in general; Have relatives or friends of non-Georgian origin; The existence of any kind of fact that there is any kind of harassment of non-Georgians by the state, certain groups of people or individuals; Attitude to foreign businesses in Batumi; The role of foreign business in Batumi to employment of indigenous population of Batumi; Attitude to foreigners who came to work in Batumi; A point of view on the prospects of further life of settled in Georgia foreigners and local non-Georgians in Batumi; Problems of illegal migration; The issue of granting Georgian citizenship and residence rights to foreigners; Difficulties in granting Georgian citizenship to persons of Georgian nationality from abroad; Expediency of entering of an Arab company "Eagle Hills".

In general, we can say that the main goal of the research topic is to outline the main problems that exist in relation to foreigners living in Batumi through sociological research. The relevance of the topic is due to the recent increase in the flow of foreigners to the city and the attitude of the Georgian population of Batumi towards this serious problem.

Key words: Investment, foreigner, ethnicity, migration, employment.

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Introduction: The term „ethnos“, a word of Greek origin in some way corresponds to Georgian ‘eri’ or ‘nation’. "From Greek *ethnos* "people, nation, class, caste, tribe; – a number of people accustomed to live together; used to form modern compounds in the social sciences" (Harper, n.d.).

The common historical past and culture we can thought out as the main constituents of the ethnos. We also may consider Ethnos a powerful factor that significantly determines uniqueness (identity) of this or that

ethnic group. The relationship between indigenous groups is the object of attention of many sciences (ethnology, history, psychology, political science, etc.). Ethnos are also studied by sociology (there is a special subject ethnosociology) (Ethnos in Georgia, 2008).

The specificity of the study of ethnic groups by sociology lies in the fact that its content is determined by direct contact with the representatives of this or that nation, which is carried out through a sociological survey of the respondents. The information obtained in this way is very convincing, which indicates the special role of sociology in the research of ethnic groups. Our research is also aimed at the fact that according to the sociological survey of the Georgian population of Batumi, the main subject of which is Batumi Autochthonous population, by sociological study of the attitude of the population towards non-Georgians living in the city; let us make a certain contribution to clarify this rather difficult issue.

Based on the answers of the respondents, we learn what moods dominate in Batumi relative to non-Georgians among the Georgian population. Sociological By research (also, the demands that the Georgian respondents demand from the government were highlighted. In terms of dependence on other ethnic groups, they generally want the state to implement a stricter policy in expelling illegal migrants (mainly from Asian and African countries) from the country.

In our opinion, more steps that are efficient should be taken by the state in this regard. For example, some of the respondents point to the danger that may follow the uncontrolled migration of people from developing countries and point to the numerous terrorist acts in Europe, which are mainly carried out by migrants from Asian and African countries. Regarding the work, one interesting circumstance should be emphasized – sociological research was conducted in Batumi, which is distinguished by the poly-ethnicity of the population. Therefore, the people of Batumi are better at inter-communal relations than those who live in a mono-ethnic environment. This factor allows us to see more deeply the problems that exist in mutual relations.

Methods. Based on the research topic, the target group of our empirical sociological research was selected Georgian nationalities living in Batumi (mainly in its old districts) for different durations of time, regardless of educational censorship and other factors (when selecting respondents, attention was paid only to their interest in the mentioned topic).

In order to study the issue, a quantitative study was conducted using the questionnaire method. The persons to be questioned were selected based on the principle of random selection of respondents.

Along with answering the closed questions asked in the questionnaire, through semi-open questions, the respondents could provide additional information in the form of a note about any issue.

In our survey, respondents were filling out the questionnaires. Altogether, 200 respondents of both sexes were interviewed.

The main sources of obtaining the material of the conducted sociological research were the results of the questionnaire survey of – respondents and various publications related to the research topic.

It should be emphasized here that due to the lack of resources needed for large-scale research, the research is local It was of a nature, so the extrapolation of its results did not spread to the whole country.

Reasoning. As for the questions asked to the respondents in the sociological questionnaire, based on which the research was conducted, it is of the following type: to the question – „ Are you an indigenous Batumi resident? “ – 41.1% of respondents answered that they were born and live in Batumi; 51.7% were not born in Batumi, but have been living here for a long time; 7.2% recently became Batumi residents. To the question – „Batumi is a multinational city, many non-Georgians were born and live here, what is your attitude towards them? “ – 71.8% of respondents answered that they have the same positive attitude towards all nations; 4.6% prefer Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians); 3.4% – Europeans; 4.5% – Caucasians; 7.0%

do not welcome the life of representatives of any other nation in Batumi; 8.7% of respondents find it difficult to answer this question.

In addition to this semi-open question, the following types of points of view are recorded in writing (the text is conveyed unchanged now and later): „The number of foreigners should not exceed some limit, the demographic balance should not change, there should not be a problem from the point of view of national security“. „I am against the influx of non-Georgians to Batumi and staying. No one forbids you to come to visit, come, but live with us permanently – under no circumstances“; „The vast majority of the city's population must be Georgian“; „Europeans can live in Batumi, Asians can't“.

To the question, „Do you have a non-Georgian relative, relative or friend“, –74.5% of the respondents answered that they have no one; 20.3% – have a small circle of relatives and friends of non-Georgians, and 5.2% have a rather large circle of relatives and friends of non-Georgians.

To the question – „Do non-Georgians living in Batumi experience harassment from the state or certain groups in any way“? – the respondents answered as follows: according to 92.4% of respondents, non-Georgians living in Batumi do not experience any harassment from anyone; 0.5% think they sometimes suffer; 0.2% believe that non-Georgians from Batumi are often victims of violence; 7.9% of respondents find it difficult to answer this question. Regarding this question, the following types of textual points of view are recorded from the respondents that – „not harassment, Russians, Ukrainians and Turks rather feel as if they were in their countries“; „On the contrary, non-Georgians are characterized by excessive insolence“; „Some non-Georgians who live in Batumi are avid chauvinists and raise their children „as Velikoderzhavny derzhimordas“ (Rus. For 'Great-power smug-snouts'); Non-Georgians feel spiteful in Batumi. The government supports them in every possible way, for example, Russian and Ukrainian schools are open for them, they have their own kindergartens, and no one interferes with business activities, etc. They are more supported by the local government than Georgians from Batumi. No one harasses them“; „Georgians are a tolerant nation, we treat people of other nationalities and religions with respect. Nonetheless, I do not welcome the fact that Georgian land and water will be dominated by foreigners.“

To the question, „How do you view the settlement of foreigners in Batumi? “ – The answers are as follows: 65.5% of the respondents are dissatisfied with the presence of foreigners in Batumi. According to them, foreigners work here taking over the jobs of locals. At this time, Georgians go abroad to earn a living; 13.8% of respondents think that they lack nothing by settling the arrivals in Batumi. 20.7% of the respondents have no opinion on this issue. Some additional assessments from the interviewees regarding this issue are as follows: „I look positively at foreign investments, negatively“– at the settlement of foreigners in Batumi, „because a foreigner buys an apartment in Batumi, it turns out that he wants to live here“; Foreigners may be only tourists in Georgia. Others try to settle here in various ways“; „With the settlement of so many foreigners in Batumi, the ethnic appearance of the city is gradually changing,“; Batumi has always been an international city distinguished by its tolerance, but recently the mass influx of foreigners and their settlement has exceeded all limits. Based on this, the granting of citizenship to foreigners should be stopped, and those who have been granted it should be immediately deprived (first of all, thousands of Turks should be deprived) of the Georgian citizenship granted during Saakashvili's time. “

To the question, „many foreigners have their own business in Batumi. How do you view their work“? – Respondents gave the following answers: 27.6% of respondents have a positive view of their work. According to them, they employ the people of Batumi; 37.9% of the respondents look at their activities quite negatively, because, in their opinion, foreigners do not bring us any good; 34.5% of respondents cannot answer any question. Additionally, respondents state the following views: „foreign businesses are destroying our small entrepreneurs. They are financed from outside (e.g. Turkish businesspersons are helped in Georgia by the

Turkish state, and Georgian entrepreneurs are abandoned to their fate); “A large number of foreign businessmen work online. Therefore, it cannot affect the employment of locals; foreign business has swallowed up our country. E.g. „Glovo“, „Volt“, „Yandex“, „Maxim“, „Bolt“, are Russian businesses“.

To the question, „Do foreigners who migrated to us lose their jobs for Batumi residents“? – The answers of the respondents are as follows: 34.5% of respondents believe that mainly the presence of foreigners in the city causes the unemployment of Batumi residents; 13.8% do not consider foreigners as the reason for their unemployment; and 51.7% of respondents find it difficult to answer this question. In the answers to the semi-open question, the respondents expressed the following views: „foreign business (mainly Russian) – „Glovo“, „Volt“, „Yandex“, „Maxim“, „Bolt“ – employs a considerable number of Batumi residents and thus contributes to the reduction of unemployment in the city“.

To the question, „Do you think that in the future the number of foreigners who came to live in Georgia, including Batumi, will increase or decrease? “ – Respondents' answers are as follows: 5.2% think that the number of people who come to live will decrease; 67.4% of respondents think that it will increase; 27.4% find it difficult to answer this question.

To the question, „What do you think, should Georgian citizenship and residence rights be granted to foreigners“? – Respondents gave the following answer: 89.7% believe that foreigners should not be given citizenship and the right of residence under any circumstances; 10.3% think that foreigners should be given only the right of residence, that too for a short period of time; The following views were recorded in the respondents' answers to the semi-open question: „citizenship should be granted to a foreigner only if the person has made any contribution to Georgia“; “By granting citizenship and right of residence, the Georgian nation is physically replaced by foreign migrants;” “The population of Georgia was subjected to liberal immigration legislation from abroad, according to which, after paying a certain small amount, a foreigner receives the right of residence“; foreign migrants In Georgia By settling, the official mafia earns huge money“; “All conditions have been created for the migration of foreigners in the country, which changes the demographic balance of the country to the detriment of the Georgian nation.”

To the question, „Many Georgian nationals wishing to return to Georgia from abroad are refused citizenship by the relevant agencies. What is your opinion on this issue“? – From the point of view of 91.5% of respondents, Georgian citizenship should be immediately granted to any Georgian wishing to return to his homeland from abroad; 3.9% think that an ethnic Georgian wishing to return to Georgia should not have any privileges compared to representatives of other nationalities when obtaining Georgian citizenship; 6.4% find it difficult to answer this question. In the semi-open question, the following opinions of the respondents are additionally recorded: „Georgians are running abroad, the nation is shrinking, therefore all those persons who have Georgian blood in their veins should be granted Georgian citizenship without any hesitation“; cannot be granted citizenship unconditionally (e.g. A Turk who entered Georgia from Turkey can pretend to be a Georgian, it is precisely such Georgians who were granted citizenship by M. Saakashvili. We think some of them are Turkish agents; “Those who only have a Georgian surname but do not know the Georgian language should not be granted Georgian citizenship. Also, citizenship should not be granted to persons who have committed crimes against the country“; “Many Georgians are running abroad due to unemployment, therefore, in order for the country not to be emptied of Georgians, the state should do everything for the repatriation of Georgian immigrants and create decent jobs for them in their homeland”.

To the question, „Do you think illegal migrants live in Batumi“? – The interviewees answered as follows: according to 67.7% of them, illegal migrants live in Batumi; According to 12.3%, illegals do not live in Batumi; 7.4% believe that there are few illegals in the city; 16.6% find it difficult to answer this question.

Economic expert Soso Archvadze confirms the fact that Ross is illegal in Georgia. Based on official documents, according to the data of 6 months of 2025, 525 citizens of foreign countries had been expelled due to their illegal stay on the territory of Georgia; that is 280% higher than the figure of the same period of the previous year (Archvadze, 2025, p. 4). It confirms the fact that illegal migrants not only live in Georgia, but also work illegally. Union of Trade Unions Deputy Chairman R. Liparteliani, who noted that special monitoring agencies check the facts of employment of illegals in Georgia (Liparteliani, 2025, p. 6).

For our part, we will add that it is necessary to tighten the legislation in this regard, so that illegal migrants should not get the opportunity to easy employment in our country, because jobs (including low-level ones) are problematic for the citizens of our country.

Illegal migration creates a problem in the sense that some of these types of migrants have entered from countries where they are wanted for their criminal activities (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, etc.).

Recently, the Arab company „Eagle Hills” entering Georgia and the agreement signed with the Georgian government caused great excitement in the Georgian society, according to which this company invests 6.6 billion (in dollars) in Georgia and instead buys lands in Krtsanisi (Tbilisi) and Gonio (Adjara), where it will develop them in a modern style. To the question, „What is your opinion about the entry of this Arab company into us”? – 17.2% of respondents positively evaluate the entry of the Arab investment company into Georgia. 68.6% of the respondents have a negative attitude regarding the entry of this company into Georgia and believe that the goals of its activities are incompatible with the interests of the country; 14.2% find it difficult to answer this question. The respondents also expressed the following views: „project is unacceptable, because it is mainly aimed at the settlement of Arabs in Gonio, and not at the economic well-being of the local population”; „Project conditions are not published. It is interesting what document was signed behind people's backs”; „This Arab investment is very important for Georgia. Not everything can be carried out in a political prism”; „Investment is good, but it should not be followed by the establishment of foreigners with us. When I go out into the city, I sometimes feel as if I am in some Islamic country”. This investment has both positive and negative sides. It is positive to make a big investment in Georgia, negative – mass entry and establishment of foreigners with us”; „Any foreign investment should be allowed to enter provided that 90% of the employees as a result of the investment will be local; I welcome Arab investment, because the territory of Gonio Polygon is actually „dead”, it does not provide any income. At the same time, relations with ‘Eagle Hills’, should be hard for society”; „The territory should not be given to the Arabs for life use. The term must be specified, maximum 25 years”; „This is already the territory of the Arabs and will bring in those who deem necessary”; „If the Arab project is implemented, in the next 5-7 years we will turn into a national minority and lose the country, the United Nations has included us in the list of dying nations; Not a single piece of Georgian land should be transferred to the hands of foreigners, and what was appropriated should be taken out of our hands, ugly agreements should be annulled”.

Conclusions: Because of the research, it creates a clearer and certain idea for the reader about the research topic. Respondents gave quite qualified answers to all questions. The survey revealed the circle of acute issues to which quick response is an urgent task. One of these issues is the unfavourable demographic situation in Georgia. As Tbilisi Ivane Javakhishvili University professor Anzor Sakhvadze, notes that a demographic catastrophe awaits „Georgia, because the birth rate in the country is decreasing and the death rate exceeds it. It is sad to see the conclusion of foreign demographers that the Georgian ethnos is decreasing very quickly. According to UN data, by 2050 Georgians will be in an ethnic minority in their homeland” (Sakhvadze, 2025, p. 10-11).

The issue of illegal migration is very important for respondents. Therefore, in the interests of the country, it is necessary to develop a type of security concept that will limit illegal migration in the country. In

this regard, in our opinion, it is necessary to prohibit the acquisition of the right of residence through the purchase of real estate. In addition, it is advisable to develop and implement strict, locking mechanisms for illegal entry of migrants, granting the right of employment or residence. One of the contributing factors to the mass influx of foreigners to Georgia is the liberal legislation in force in Georgia, in which changes ought to occur immediately. Otherwise, if this continues, we may find ourselves in the minority in our own country.

As a result of the research, the following opinions were formed: the right of residence should not be related to the amount and ownership of real estate; The right of residence should not be the basis for requesting the citizenship of the country; Foreigners should be allowed to work with us only in those job positions on which it is impossible to find local personnel; All the international agreements that oblige us Granting residence and citizenship to foreigners should be abolished; It should be written in the constitution that the laws and court decisions of Georgia are superior to any international agreements and conventions. In this regard, the fact that from 2026, Georgia is gradually leaving the ultra-liberal migration model and moving to a manageable migration policy, where control begins not at the border, but at the moment of making a decision to travel, should be positively evaluated.

Recently, there has been a lot of hype in Gonio (Adjara) and Krtsanisi (Tbilisi) regarding the income from the Arab development company „Eagle Hills“, which is to invest 6.6 billion dollars in us. Special attention is paid to the fact that the agreement signed between this company and the state of Georgia has the status of commercial secret. In our opinion, the text of this agreement ought to be public; otherwise, the citizens of Georgia will always have doubts that there is some secret deal here. The interviewees are particularly concerned about the mass influx of foreigners (especially Arabs) into the country. In our opinion, this problem would be somewhat mitigated by the inclusion of such a clause in the legislation of Georgia, which prohibited the compact settlement of foreigners with us. Along with this, it would be good if such a large project was implemented through a tender.

In the end, it can be said that the respondents, through sociological research, identified the main aspects, the consideration of which will contribute to the improvement of relations between different ethnic groups living in Georgia. The considerable intensity of the answers of the participants in the survey is probably because Georgia has often become the object of other people's geopolitical games throughout its history that is why the perception of state and national security is intensified among our population.

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