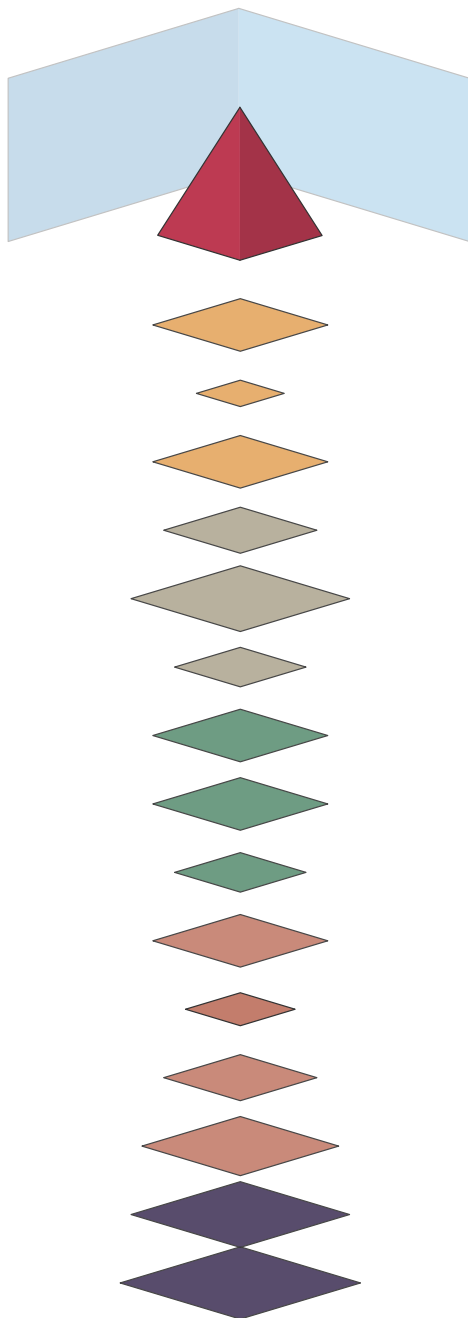




GEORGIA



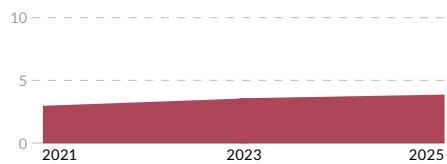
3.87 $\nearrow 0.27$

CRIMINALITY SCORE

159th of 193 countries $\nearrow 5$

42nd of 46 Asian countries $\nearrow 1$

7th of 8 Central Asian and Caucasian countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS

3.83 $\nearrow 0.23$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	4.00 $\nearrow 0.50$
HUMAN SMUGGLING	2.00 0.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	4.00 $\nearrow 0.50$
ARMS TRAFFICKING	3.50 $\nearrow 0.50$
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	5.00 0.00
ILLCIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	3.00 $\nearrow 0.50$
FLORA CRIMES	4.00 0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	4.00 0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	3.00 0.00
HEROIN TRADE	4.00 0.00
COCAINE TRADE	2.50 $\nearrow 0.50$
CANNABIS TRADE	3.50 0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	4.50 $\nearrow 0.50$
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	5.00 0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	5.50 $\nearrow 0.50$



CRIMINAL ACTORS

3.90 $\nearrow 0.30$

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	3.50 $\nearrow 0.50$
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	3.50 $\nearrow 0.50$
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	4.00 $\nearrow 0.50$
FOREIGN ACTORS	3.00 0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	5.50 0.00



This project was funded in part
by a grant from the United
States Department of State.

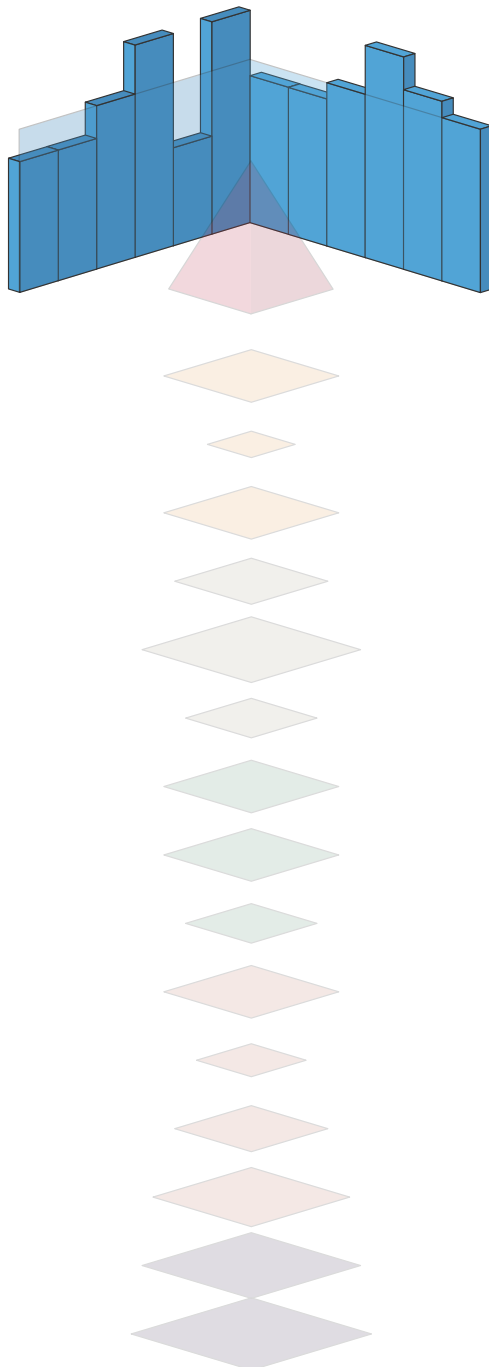


Funded by
the European Union

ENACT is funded by the European Union
and implemented by the Institute for
Security Studies and INTERPOL, in
affiliation with the Global Initiative Against
Transnational Organized Crime.



GEORGIA



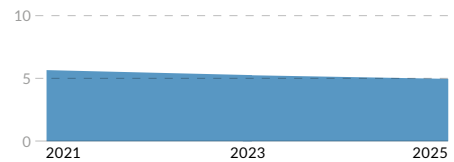
5.00 $\downarrow 0.25$

RESILIENCE SCORE

87th of 193 countries $\downarrow 11$

16th of 46 Asian countries $\downarrow 3$

2nd of 8 Central Asian and Caucasian countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	4.00	0.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	4.00	$\downarrow 1.00$
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	5.00	$\downarrow 1.00$
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.50	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	3.00	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	6.50	0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	4.50	$\downarrow 0.50$
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	4.50	$\downarrow 0.50$
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	5.00	$\uparrow 0.50$
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	6.50	0.00
PREVENTION	5.50	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	5.00	$\downarrow 0.50$



This project was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State.



Funded by
the European Union

ENACT is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Georgia is a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking. Georgian women and girls are exploited both abroad and domestically alongside foreign victims, particularly in the tourism sector. Labour trafficking affects Georgian nationals abroad, often owing to weak oversight of employment agencies and the absence of migrant worker protections. Children from marginalized communities and displaced populations are trafficked for forced begging and criminal activity. Georgia's geographic location facilitates the transit of Central Asian victims to Türkiye, while outbound trafficking cases reportedly end in Iran. Despite a significant rise in prosecutions, limited detection, especially via online platforms, contributes to underreporting of trafficking cases.

Georgia functions primarily as a transit country in the human smuggling market, facilitating the movement of migrants from Asia and Africa into Türkiye and onward to Europe. In recent years, hundreds of individuals from various countries were apprehended for illegal border crossings. Georgian nationals have been implicated in smuggling operations abroad and repatriated after failed asylum attempts. Cases of Georgians being smuggled into the US via Mexico have been reported in recent years, but tightened asylum rules have hampered this trend. Weak border controls and proximity to conflict zones continue to enable such activities.

Extortion is a notable issue in Georgia, with law enforcement identifying numerous cases involving threats, firearms and intimidation for financial gain. These activities are frequently linked to the influence of 'thieves in law', whose reputations are exploited by other criminals to demand payments in exchange for protection. Authorities also reported several cases tied to criminal underworld membership and support for such networks. Experts believe these figures may underestimate the problem owing to victims' reluctance to report. Evidence suggests extortion continues within prisons, and street gangs may be mobilized for voter intimidation and contributions to obshchaki (collective criminal funds derived from coerced payments).

TRADE

Illegal arms trafficking has intensified in Georgia in recent years, with over a thousand cases of unlawful possession, trade and transport of firearms and ammunition recorded across multiple regions. This growth is tied to political instability, regional conflicts and weak enforcement of

firearm regulations. Armed groups have become more active, expanding their arsenals. Authorities linked some illegal weapons seizures to terrorism investigations, notably involving suspects in Batumi associated with the Islamic State. Incidents have revealed illicit explosive materials and broader trafficking networks. Ongoing conflicts in areas such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as the war in Ukraine, continue to drive demand.

Georgia hosts a well-established counterfeit goods market, particularly in pharmaceuticals, apparel, footwear and cosmetics, driven in part by tourist demand and local acceptance. In recent years, authorities reported hundreds of customs violations, including trademark misuse and illicit goods circulation, although not all involved confirmed counterfeit items. The illicit trade in excisable goods in Georgia – particularly unstamped tobacco and alcohol – is relatively limited yet persistent. Although official data on seizures is scarce, repeated interceptions indicate the ongoing presence of this criminal market. Cross-border smuggling, especially from Türkiye, Armenia and Azerbaijan, fuels non-domestic cigarette consumption. In addition, separatist regions under Russian occupation, particularly Abkhazia, have become potential hubs for circumventing international sanctions, leveraging their isolation and ties to Russia to engage in and benefit from illicit economic activity.

ENVIRONMENT

Illegal logging and related environmental crimes are prevalent in Georgia, with numerous cases of unlawful timber activities and widespread violations by sawmills and transporters recorded in recent years. These crimes are concentrated in regions such as Kakheti and Tbilisi and are often facilitated by systemic corruption and weak enforcement. Loopholes in forest governance and the exploitation of legal ambiguity enable illicit operations within the broader logging sector. The unsustainable collection of endemic plants for food, medicine and ornamental use further contributes to biodiversity loss. Several species, including the Caucasian elm, face critical threats owing to habitat destruction and commercial overharvesting.

Georgia's fauna crimes market is moderately developed, with illegal fishing, hunting and wildlife trafficking posing ongoing challenges. Violations of fishing and hunting laws are recorded in the country, with anchovy fishing off the Abkhazian coast – often involving Turkish vessels – highlighting regulatory ambiguities and the scale of the illicit trade in fish products. Wildlife crimes also include the trapping and smuggling of birds for falconry, a formerly traditional practice now largely driven by profit, with tens of thousands of birds affected annually through domestic capture and cross-border trafficking.

The illegal trade of non-renewable resources, particularly gold, silver and diamonds, does exist in Georgia, with seizures revealing connections to neighbouring countries and transnational criminal networks. Authorities have confiscated varying amounts of precious metals, including gold and silver in significant although sometimes unspecified amounts. Some of these materials are illicitly integrated into legal markets, obscuring the distinction between lawful and unlawful trade. Georgia's geographic location makes it vulnerable as a transit corridor for smuggling operations.

DRUGS

Georgia serves primarily as a regional transit point for opiate trafficking, particularly Afghan heroin moving from Asia to Europe via the Caucasus and Black Sea routes. Although domestic heroin consumption appears limited, Georgia's role in transnational smuggling networks is notable. The country also reports internal drug circulation, with tens of thousands of residents injecting drugs. Heroin trafficking through Georgia continues despite declines in opium production in Afghanistan, with evidence of large shipments moving to Europe through neighbouring countries, underscoring Georgia's strategic geographic vulnerability.

Although smaller than other drug markets, Georgia's cocaine market is growing, with increasing seizures indicating its role as a regional transit hub. Several high-profile shipments originating from Ecuador were intercepted in recent years, some even linked to the 'Ndrangheta syndicate. Despite limited domestic consumption, the country has a documented local market and demand appears to be rising. The sharp increase in drug-related offences further reflects this trend. In addition, cocaine trafficking is closely tied to money laundering operations, with illicit proceeds being invested in foreign real estate, particularly in Cyprus, through shell entities.

Georgia's cannabis market is also active, pointing to persistent domestic demand and production. Despite personal consumption having been decriminalized, the illegal acquisition, transport and sale of cannabis remains punishable, particularly as the country is also a destination rather than just a transit point. Cannabis cultivation, both indoor and outdoor, occurs on a small scale, and some reports link this market to criminal groups involved in extortion and violence. However, experts caution that cannabis is often a secondary seizure during operations targeting more serious drugs. Although cannabis consumption is socially tolerated to a degree, trafficking activity remains widely condemned.

Similarly, Georgia has a notable synthetic drug market, evidenced by frequent seizures of substances such as buprenorphine, methamphetamine, MDMA, Alpha-PVP and other new psychoactive drugs. Despite strong social stigma and health concerns being linked to these drugs, domestic demand is persistent. Synthetic drugs, particularly

MDMA and amphetamines, are increasingly available, with some being laced with fentanyl. Reports indicate fentanyl is often sourced via the dark web and delivered by mail, with unconfirmed accounts of fatal overdoses pointing to evolving risks in the local market.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crimes are common in Georgia, involving unauthorized access to computer systems and data manipulation for financial gain. Criminal operations include malware deployment and hacking attacks targeting both the public and private sector. The continued presence of this market underscores Georgia's exposure to digital threats and the rising sophistication of cyber- and data-related crime in the region.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crime in Georgia is extensive and expanding, involving tax evasion, embezzlement and fraud. Notable cases during the reporting period involved fraudulent claims for state aid and misuse of public funds. The call-centre scam market is a growing concern, with transnational fraud networks operating from Georgia targeting EU citizens. Joint operations with foreign agencies have recently led to multiple arrests, asset seizures and the dismantling of illicit enterprises, with defendants facing substantial prison terms for fraud.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Despite official claims to the contrary, evidence indicates the continued presence of mafia-style groups within Georgia's criminal underworld. These groups, often linked to the 'thieves-in-law' tradition, operate through extortion, particularly targeting local businesses, and exert influence both domestically and from abroad. Their activities span several illicit markets, including drug and arms trafficking, human smuggling and the trade in counterfeit and excisable goods. Structural vulnerabilities such as corruption and weak prison oversight enable these actors to exert control within penitentiary systems, reinforcing criminal hierarchies and coordinating activities.

Georgia hosts a range of loosely structured criminal networks engaged in illicit activities such as drug trafficking, human smuggling, extortion and environmental crimes. These groups often lack formal hierarchies but are active across multiple illicit markets. Although violence is typically limited and used to enforce compliance, operations involving transnational networks – particularly in the drug, arms and human trafficking trades – can escalate to more severe forms, including coercion and lethal force. Georgian networks maintain international linkages, adapting their structures depending on the activity: drug trafficking follows a chain model involving foreign actors, whereas extortion and

gambling rely on a wheel structure led by external bosses. This transnational reach poses persistent challenges for law enforcement across Europe and North America.

State-embedded actors in Georgia are also notably involved in facilitating organized crime by leveraging their positions within government to enable illicit activities. Their involvement includes direct participation in criminal markets such as embezzlement and extortion, as well as indirect facilitation through abuse of power and collusion with criminal networks. Corruption is particularly pronounced in public procurement, where state funds are funnelled to politically loyal businesses. This system reinforces control over state institutions and suppresses dissent.

Foreign criminal actors are also active to a certain extent in Georgia's illicit economy, particularly in human trafficking, smuggling, arms trading, counterfeit goods and cybercrime. They often collaborate with local networks, facilitating cross-border criminal operations. Urban centres such as Tbilisi and Batumi are key operational hubs due to their

infrastructure and connectivity. Criminal groups with origins in Russia, China, Türkiye, Armenia and South East Asia are active in various sectors: Russian networks in trafficking and extortion; Chinese in counterfeit trade; and South East Asian groups in drug trafficking and human smuggling. Furthermore, foreign transport companies and travel agencies are used to support irregular migration, whereas offshore financial entities help obscure the origins of illicit capital, reinforcing Georgia's role in transnational criminal networks.

Organized crime in Georgia is enabled by private-sector actors who launder illicit revenues through sectors such as real estate, finance, hospitality and construction. These actors create legal facades for illicit funds, offering organized crime groups access to legitimate economic structures. In addition, domestic private actors collaborate with foreign entities to facilitate criminal enterprises, particularly in human smuggling and financial crimes.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Georgia continues its efforts to combat organized crime through measures such as adopting a national strategy and action plan, strengthening cooperation with Europol, and issuing numerous implementation guidelines to executive agencies. Despite these efforts, organized crime is not a central political issue, overshadowed by concerns around governance, corruption and political polarization. Perceptions of elite influence, particularly by oligarchic figures, have raised questions about institutional integrity. Although Georgia has in the past engaged with European institutions, increasing alignment with Russian-style policies has prompted criticism. The country continues to face governance challenges, electoral controversies and declining democratic indicators. In late 2024, Georgia experienced widespread unrest following the government's decision to pause EU accession talks until 2028, citing concerns over national sovereignty. The move sparked mass protests, public discontent over governance and election legitimacy, and clashes with police. The situation has drawn international criticism and raised concerns about growing political instability and potential alignment with Russian interests.

Georgia introduced anti-corruption reforms, including the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Bureau and endorsement of a de-oligarchization action plan. However, corruption remains entrenched across public institutions, aggravated by elite influence, limited judicial independence

and opaque oversight mechanisms. Investigative bodies often fail to address corruption involving senior officials or those close to the ruling elite. Although international recommendations have been issued, several remain unimplemented. The Anti-Corruption Bureau lacks investigative authority and is perceived as politically influenced, which raises concerns about its effectiveness. Legislative gaps persist in access to information and protection for whistle-blowers. Civil society groups have been targeted ahead of elections, prompting criticism over declining transparency. High-level corruption cases often remain unresolved, undermining public trust and hindering institutional accountability.

Georgia is a signatory to major international conventions on organized crime, excluding the UN Firearms Protocol, and maintains active cooperation with the EU and other international partners. The country also participates in intelligence-sharing initiatives and uphold several extradition treaties. The State Security Service emphasizes international collaboration on transnational threats, including terrorism and corruption. Nevertheless, following the political turmoil as a result of the election results, the relationship between Western allies, including the US and the EU, were strained. Western partners have imposed sanctions on senior officials for human rights violations and undermining democratic processes, raising concerns about the future of international cooperation. In response, the Georgian government announced a halt in its EU accession process,

while continuing their commitment to the implementation of the EU accession reforms. Despite this, joint efforts continue, such as anti-trafficking awareness campaigns led by international organizations, focusing on vulnerable communities and safe migration practices.

As for the national policies, Georgia maintains a generally liberal drug-policy environment focused on treatment and harm reduction, including free methadone clinics. However, experts note the need for stronger legislative frameworks to support preventive strategies and the full implementation of the national drug policy. Georgian criminal law addresses various forms of organized crime, including human trafficking, arms smuggling and irregular migration, with penalties ranging from two to 20 years' imprisonment depending on severity and aggravating factors such as involvement of organized groups. Despite comprehensive legislation, enforcement is hindered by corruption among lower-level officials and legal loopholes, limiting the state's ability to effectively identify and prosecute criminal activity.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Georgia's judiciary face structural challenges, including interference from other branches of power, limited transparency and questions regarding impartiality. Although reforms are underway, enforcement of criminal penalties is inconsistent, particularly in cases involving organized crime. The penitentiary system struggles with internal criminal governance, with influential inmates running informal hierarchies that undermine prison authority. Corruption among prison staff and poor conditions (e.g., limited medical services and sanitation issues) further contribute to criminal influence within facilities. Despite some progress in addressing torture and improving detention standards, illicit practices such as extortion, gambling and forced dependencies persist, particularly in specific high-risk prisons.

Georgia has maintained specialized law enforcement units targeting organized crime, including those focused on trafficking, illegal migration and asset recovery. Cooperation with international actors such as Europol, NATO and EU member states supports capacity-building and intelligence sharing. The State Security Service and Financial Intelligence Unit are central to counterterrorism and anti-money laundering (AML) efforts, although limited resources hinder the latter's effectiveness. Law enforcement strategies incorporate community policing and modernization initiatives. However, concerns persist over political influence, particularly by oligarchic actors, undermining institutional independence. Allegations of excessive force against protesters and appointments of politically affiliated officials have raised questions about law enforcement impartiality.

Georgia faces persistent border security challenges owing to its strategic location and unresolved territorial

conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These areas, under Russian control, remain outside effective Georgian oversight, creating vulnerabilities exploited by organized criminal networks involved in smuggling, trafficking and money laundering. Smuggling of weapons, narcotics and counterfeit goods is prevalent along porous borders. Similar to its border control, Georgia's cybersecurity capabilities are limited, hindered by ongoing geopolitical tensions and regional instability, particularly in light of Russia's continued influence and military presence in separatist territories.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Georgia has advanced its AML framework, aligning national policies with international standards. A multi-pronged strategy emphasizes financial oversight, enhanced software tools, risk-based supervision of gambling, and public-private information sharing. Common laundering methods include the use of shell companies, forged documentation and illicit fund transfers disguised as legitimate transactions. The rising use of cryptocurrency and crypto-mining remains unregulated, with no formal investigations launched into crypto-based laundering. Although Georgia's legal framework meets international obligations, recent tax code amendments facilitating offshore capital inflow have sparked concern over potential misuse and decreased transparency in financial oversight.

Georgia's economy is moderately free, with policies encouraging entrepreneurship and trade, although impeded by weak judicial independence, transparency issues and persistent concerns over political favouritism. Global economic ties are expanding and the country maintains 16 free-trade agreements and 34 bilateral investment treaties. Experts highlight entrenched collusion between political elites and private interests, which undermines fair competition, complicates dispute resolution and raises concerns about state capture in the business environment. Furthermore, although authorities have denied facilitating sanctions evasion, there have been reports of Georgian entities allegedly assisting Russian individuals and companies in circumventing international restrictions.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

During the reporting period, Georgia continued to offer support services to victims of organized crime, including shelter, legal aid and medical care through dedicated state agencies and crisis centres. Inter-agency collaboration contributes to anti-trafficking coordination, with international assessments acknowledging compliance with global standards. Witness protection frameworks formally exist but remain ineffective in practice, contributing to low reporting rates and limited victim cooperation. Civil society organizations appear to have an important role in delivering treatment and support, particularly in areas related to drug addiction and trafficking. However, recently adopted laws targeting

civil society and marginalized groups raise concerns about reduced access to essential services and victim protection.

Georgia implements national strategies for drug prevention and anti-trafficking. Despite efforts such as the European Prevention Curriculum and a national drug prevention strategy, experts deem regulatory frameworks weak and poorly enforced. Drug-related crimes have increased in the reporting period, with a notable rise in positive drug-test results, although it remains unclear whether this reflects higher usage or improved enforcement. Prevention campaigns, legal reforms and collaboration with local communities and international bodies are key pillars of Georgia's crime-prevention approach.

Civil society organizations are active in countering organized crime, despite facing increasing political pressure and restrictions. Although their efforts contribute to exposing corruption and promoting accountability, government hostility – through discrediting campaigns, restrictive legislation and legal intimidation – appear to significantly constrain their role. The law on foreign influence has been criticized for undermining civil society and violating EU principles, negatively affecting Georgia's EU candidacy. Media outlets and journalists also appear to face escalating repression, with verbal attacks and physical threats contributing to a deteriorating environment for press freedom. This growing polarization has been linked to Georgia's geopolitical pivot towards Moscow.

This summary was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State. The opinions, findings and conclusions stated herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State.