Demography and social policy:

Falling Birth Rates: What It Means for Georgia

Fewer children are born in Georgia every year. In 2025, 37,867 children were born in the country, almost 38 percent fewer than in 2014, and since 2020 the number of deaths has exceeded the number of births every year. A similar process is under way in almost every European country. This report briefly describes how birth rates are changing in Georgia and around the world, and answers three questions: why fewer children are born; whether birth payments and other cash support for families raise birth rates; and what this means for Georgia's family policy.

01 How Birth Rates Are Falling in Georgia

According to Geostat, the number of births in the last decade peaked in 2014, when 60,635 children were born. Since then the number has fallen almost every year: 39,483 children were born in 2024 and 37,867 in 2025, a decrease of 4.1 percent on the previous year. The total fertility rate, the average number of children a woman would have over her lifetime if the current year's rates continued, fell from 2.31 in 2015 to 1.67 in 2024. A rate of about 2.1 is needed for the population to replace itself.

Since 2020, natural increase in Georgia has been negative. In 2025, 44,319 people died, and natural increase was minus 6,452. According to preliminary data for the first half of 2026, 17,509 children were born and 22,224 people died.

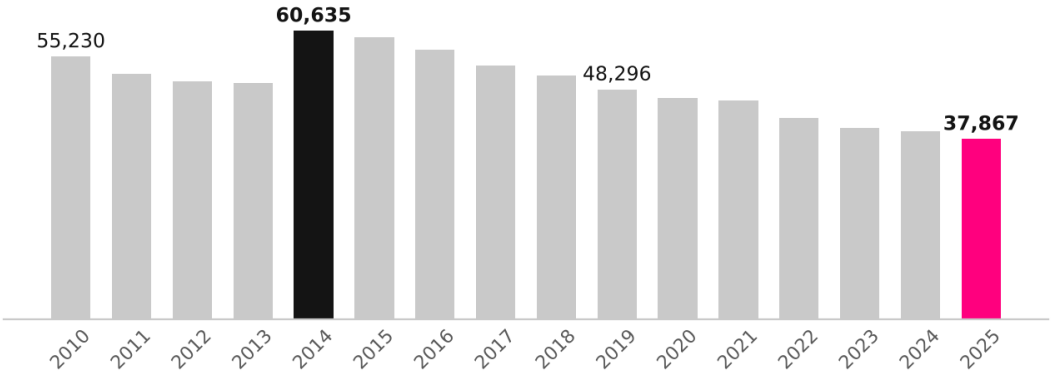


Figure 1. Live births in Georgia, 2010–2025. Source: Geostat.

The decline is concentrated in first and second children. According to Geostat, first children made up 43.5 percent of births in 2014 and 36.6 percent in 2025. Over the same period the share of second children fell from 38.2 to 32.9 percent, while the share of third and later children rose from 18.2 to 29.1 percent. Because total births also fell, a calculation based on Geostat data shows that the number of first and second births fell by almost half compared with 2014, while the number of third and later births hardly changed. Tbilisi accounted for almost 38 percent of births in 2025, and natural increase was positive only in Tbilisi, Adjara and Kvemo Kartli.

02 Why Fewer Children Are Born in Georgia

According to a February 2026 study by the ISET Policy Institute, one reason for the decline is that the number of women of reproductive age has fallen: the number of women aged 15 to 49 fell from more than 1.2 million in the mid-1990s to about 820,000 in the early 2020s. This means that the number of births can fall even when each woman has, on average, the same number of children.

A second reason is that people marry and have children later. In 2025 the mean age of women at first marriage was 30.1 years, compared with 25.8 years in 2010. In 2025, 22,285 marriages were registered, compared with 34,675 in 2010. ISET estimates that recent changes are largely explained by postponement of childbearing, although the authors do not rule out a fall in the final number of children in families.

The gap between the desired and the actual number of children is also large. In Caucasus Barometer surveys, about half of respondents consider three children ideal, while the total fertility rate is 1.67. In a survey of 14 countries for the 2025 report of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), one in five respondents expected to have fewer children than they want, and more than half named economic barriers, including the cost of housing and job insecurity. In Georgia's case, the ISET study also points to structural factors, including low maternity pay, limited access to nurseries and kindergartens, and the rarity of fathers taking leave.

03 Falling Birth Rates in Europe and the World

According to the United Nations, the global total fertility rate fell from 3.3 in 1990 to 2.3 in 2024, and in more than half of all countries it is below replacement level. According to Eurostat, the EU's total fertility rate was 1.34 in 2024, the lowest since records began in 2001. In the same year 3.55 million children were born in the EU, 3.3 percent fewer than in the previous year. The highest rate is in Bulgaria (1.72) and the lowest in Malta (1.01).

National data for 2025 show that the decline continues. In France, which long had the highest birth rate in Europe, the rate fell to 1.56, and for the first time since the Second World War deaths exceeded births. The rate is 1.32 in Germany, 1.14 in Italy and 1.07 in Poland. Georgia's rate is above the EU average, but it is falling fast: from 2.31 to 1.67 in nine years.

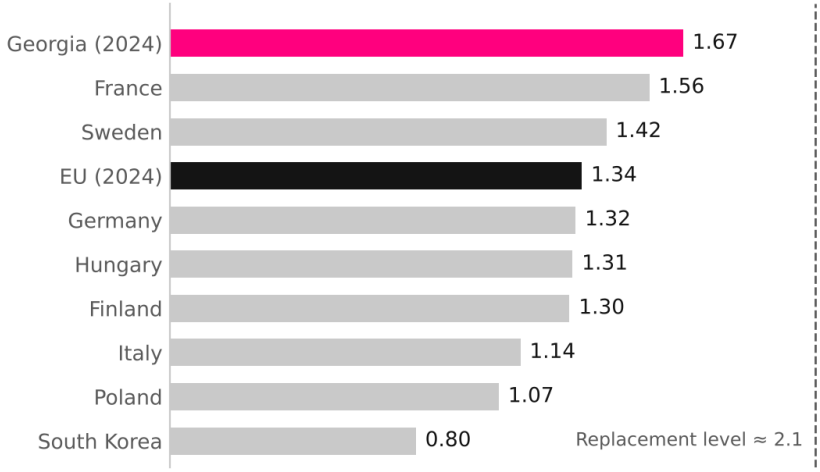


Figure 2. Total fertility rate, 2025 (Georgia and the EU: 2024). Source: Geostat, Eurostat, national statistical offices.

Falling birth rates speed up population ageing. The European Central Bank estimated in 2026 that in the euro area the number of people aged 65 and over per 100 people of working age will rise from 35 in 2025 to 51 in 2050. In Georgia, people aged 65 and over made up 18.1 percent of the population on 1 January 2026.

04 Do Cash Benefits Raise Birth Rates?

Hungary is often cited as an example of successful policy. According to the Hungarian government, the country spends about 5 to 6 percent of gross domestic product on family support. The total fertility rate rose from 1.25 in 2010 to 1.59 in 2021. However, demographers Wolfgang Lutz, Tomáš Sobotka and Kryštof Zeman estimate that this rise is mainly explained by women postponing childbirth less, while the average number of children women have over their lifetimes did not increase. In 2025 Hungary's rate fell to 1.31, and the number of births fell by 7.1 percent to about 72,000.

In Poland, since 2016 families have received 500 zloty a month per child, and since 2024, 800 zloty. According to the World Bank, after the programme began the total fertility rate rose from 1.39 in 2016 to 1.48 in 2017, but then fell again. According to Statistics Poland, the rate was 1.07 in 2025, and about 238,000 children were born, the lowest figure since the Second World War. Studies find that the programme's effect was small, appeared mainly among women aged 31 to 40, and was no longer noticeable after the programme was extended to first children in 2019.

South Korea has spent more than 280 trillion won on encouraging births since 2006, yet in 2023 its total fertility rate fell to 0.72, the lowest in the world. In 2025 the rate rose to 0.80, and the number of births rose by 6.7 percent. This rise followed a 14.8 percent increase in marriages in 2024, so it is too early to attribute it to state policy alone.

Reviews of the research show a similar picture. A 2021 review by Norwegian researchers covering 57 studies links more nursery and kindergarten places and lower prices with higher birth rates. Cash benefits and tax relief of sufficient size raise birth rates to some extent, and funding for fertility treatment raises birth rates among women over 35. The authors of another review published in 2025 conclude that the effect of family policy on birth rates is limited and that such policy should be judged by how well it helps families. An evaluation of the birth payment in the Canadian province of Quebec found that each additional child cost the state more than $15,000. In the Nordic countries too, where family support is among the most generous, the total fertility rate has fallen by 22 to 33 percent since 2010.

05 Georgia's Family Policy and Its Gaps

In Georgia, state maternity pay for 183 days of leave rose from GEL 1,000 to GEL 2,000 on 1 January 2023, and from 1 July 2023 the allowance per child in socially vulnerable families rose to GEL 200. A programme introduced in 2014 gave families in regions with a declining population monthly support for their third and later children. Some municipalities, such as Tianeti, pay their own support for newborns. The sources used in this report do not mention any new national cash programme for births in 2024–2026.

The ISET study identifies several gaps. GEL 2,000 is about 23 percent of the average female salary in 2023, while the International Labour Organization standard requires pay of at least 67 percent of previous earnings. According to a 2024 survey, 56 percent of private-sector employees received no additional pay from their employer during maternity leave. Only about 20 percent of children aged 0 to 2 attend nurseries, against a target of 50 percent, a gap of 37,757 children. In 2023 more than 13,000 mothers took maternity or parental leave, compared with only 342 fathers.

06 Conclusions

First, the number of births in Georgia has fallen by almost 38 percent since 2014, the total fertility rate is below replacement level, and natural increase has been negative since 2020. The decline is concentrated in first and second children.

Second, part of the decline is explained by later marriage and childbirth and by the fall in the number of women of reproductive age. Because there are fewer women of reproductive age, the number of births may stay low even if the fertility rate rises.

Third, international experience shows that cash benefits raise birth rates only slightly and often change only the timing of births. In Hungary and Poland, which spend large sums on family support, the fertility rate fell again in 2025. There is stronger evidence for wider access to nurseries and kindergartens, but in none of the countries discussed has the birth rate returned to replacement level.

Fourth, in Georgia the gap between the desired and the actual number of children is large. It is therefore important to reduce the barriers that research points to: low maternity pay, limited access to nurseries and kindergartens, and the rarity of fathers taking leave. When new programmes are designed, it is also important that their impact is evaluated independently.

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This analysis was prepared by the academic team of Business and Technology University (BTU) and BTUAI. It draws on publicly available statistics, studies and industry reports and is analytical in nature.

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