



IN BRIEF



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN GEORGIA: LEGISLATION, MECHANISMS AND SERVICES

Photo: UN Women

Introduction

In Georgia, the prevalence of violence against women and domestic violence is alarmingly high. The 2022 survey on violence against women and girls showed that every second woman, constituting 50.1 per cent of individuals aged 15–69, has endured violence at some point in her life. Furthermore, within the past 12 months, 18.2 per cent of women have faced such

violence. This issue brief aims to assess Georgia’s current legislative framework, mechanisms and support services for addressing violence against women and girls. It will also provide recommendations for improving these systems to better protect survivors and prevent future occurrences of violence.

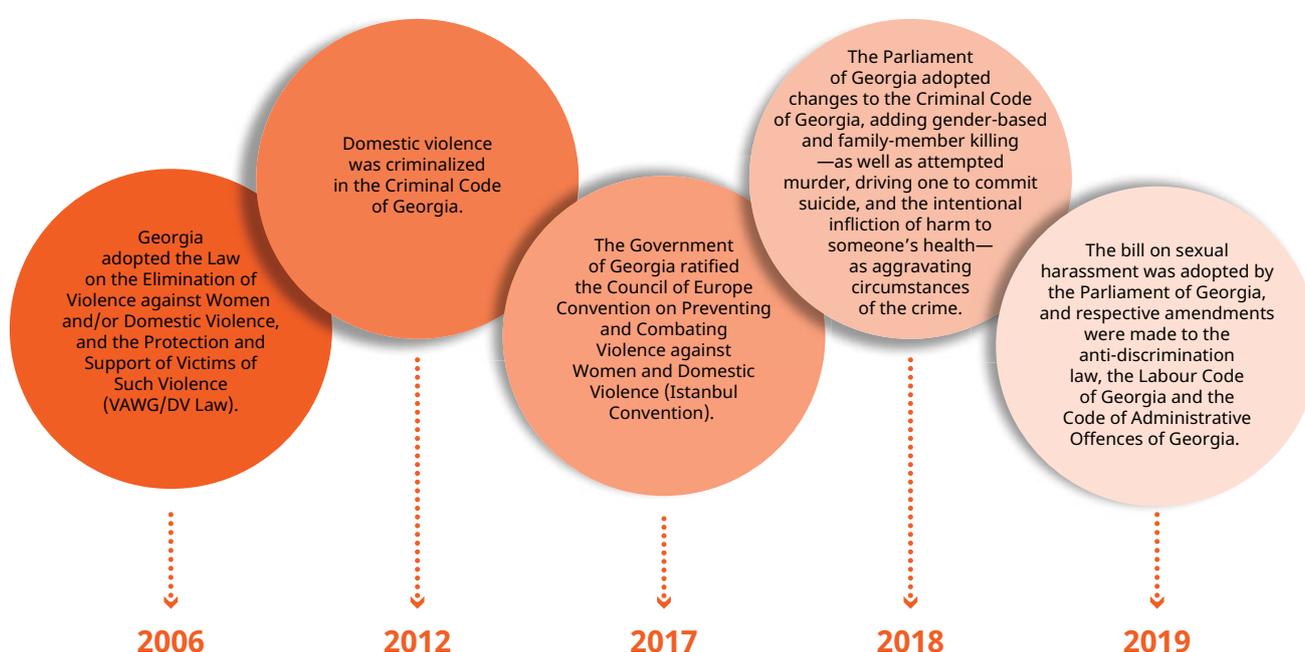


According to Georgian legislation, **Domestic Violence** is defined as the infringement upon the constitutional rights and freedoms of one family member by another, encompassing acts of neglect, physical, psychological, economic or sexual violence, or coercion within the familial context. Concurrently, violence against women is comprehensively addressed, extending beyond the confines of domestic settings to encompass all actions, whether public or private, that typify violence against women based on gender.

Legal framework

Georgia has demonstrated its commitment to addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG) through a series of legislative actions. These include the enactment of a national law on domestic violence and the subsequent criminalization of domestic violence, both of which were pivotal moments in the country's efforts to combat VAWG. Additionally, Georgia's efforts to harmonize its legislation with

international standards are vital. In 2017, Georgia ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (known as the Istanbul Convention). Through ongoing legislative updates and initiatives, Georgia continues to enhance its legal framework to recognize and combat VAWG effectively (Figure 1):



Criminal mechanisms: In Georgia, a domestic crime is any offence falling under the purview of the articles of the Criminal Code¹ when perpetrated by one family member against another. Moreover, the Criminal Code delineates criminal liability for offences classified as violence against women, offering a comprehensive legal framework to address and adjudicate such violations.

Civil-legal mechanisms: Civil law mechanisms are employed to seek compensation for damages resulting from instances of violence against women and/or domestic violence, as stipulated by procedures outlined in civil legislation. Notably, in November 2022, a regulation was enacted to facilitate the issuance of compensation to victims/survivors affected by violence against women and/or domestic violence.² As a result, a victim/survivor of violence is entitled to receive compensation from the State in the maximum amount of

GEL 10,000 in the event that the compensation for the damages is not paid by the perpetrator.³

Administrative mechanisms: Administrative law mechanisms play a vital role in addressing instances of violence against women and/or domestic violence, particularly in cases where the offence may not attract criminal liability but warrants preventive action. Under the provisions of the Administrative Procedures Code of Georgia,⁴ the Code of Administrative Offences⁵ and the VAWG/DV Law,⁶ restraining/protective orders are issued to ensure the safety and protection of victims. These orders may be implemented swiftly to restrain the perpetrator's actions and safeguard the victim's well-being. Electronic monitoring of a perpetrator may be authorized as a temporary protection measure for a victim when there is a credible risk of recurring violence from the perpetrator.⁷



A protective order

is an act issued by a court (judge) of first instance through an administrative proceeding that determines temporary measures for protecting a victim of violence. Protective orders shall be issued for a period of up to nine months. A court shall specify its validity period.



A restraining order

is an act issued by an authorized police officer that determines temporary measures for protecting a victim of violence against women and/or domestic violence. A restraining order shall be issued for a period of up to one month.



Electronic monitoring

may be imposed on the abuser upon the issuance of a restraining order and subject to court approval, as well as at any time during the period of validity of the restraining order. Electronic monitoring shall be carried out for a period not exceeding the validity period of the restraining order.

Institutional mechanisms

The **Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence** is an institutional mechanism ensuring national coordination of gender equality policymaking and implementation within the executive branch of the Government of Georgia. The Commission was established in 2017 and comprises intersectoral representatives from line ministries and various government institutions at the deputy minister level.

The main objectives of the Commission are:

- Advancing gender mainstreaming across government agencies.
- Supporting the fulfilment of international obligations concerning gender equality, violence against women and domestic violence (VAW/DV).
- Coordinating policy implementation, monitoring, assessment and data collection to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence.
- Facilitating Georgia's reporting on international commitments and representing the country in intergovernmental processes.

In 2018, the **Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia** took a significant step by establishing the Human Rights Protection and Investigation Quality Monitoring Department, dedicated to ensuring accountability and adherence to legal measures in combating VAWG. The department's initiatives have included the following:

- Development of a risk assessment methodology
- Enhancement of procedures for issuing restrictive orders
- Introduction of an electronic monitoring mechanism

Since 2018, **specialized prosecutors** have been appointed to handle domestic violence cases, with a subsequent extension to sexual violence crimes as of 2021, aiming to improve access to justice for victims of sexual violence.

The **State Care Agency** plays a crucial role within the framework of national referral procedures in addressing VAW/DV. Its authority encompasses providing essential services such as shelters, crisis centres and similar assistance to victims needing protection and support. Furthermore, the agency is tasked with identifying instances of VAW/DV, informing victims about their rights and available protection and assistance mechanisms, and implementing supportive measures in collaboration with authorized personnel.

The **Ministry of Justice** of Georgia has implemented a specialized programme on perpetrator rehabilitation since 2015, operationalized through probation services and expanded to eight correctional facilities since 2019. However, the number of spaces for perpetrators in this programme remains limited. Georgia faces challenges in providing sufficient perpetrator rehabilitation

programmes for individuals involved in VAW/DV outside of the criminal justice system.

The **Public Defender of Georgia** plays a pivotal role in advancing gender equality in the country. The Public Defender’s Office (PDO) monitors the implementation of legislation and services for victims of gender-based violence (GBV) and domestic violence. In 2016, the PDO established the Femicide Watch mechanism, which plays a crucial role in analysing cases of femicide and providing relevant recommendations.

The main objectives of the PDO are:

- Supervising the protection of human rights and freedoms related to gender equality.
- Supporting the integration of gender equality issues into human rights activities carried out by the Public Defender.
- Monitoring specialized services for VAWG/DV survivors.
- Raising public awareness of gender equality in Georgia.

Support services

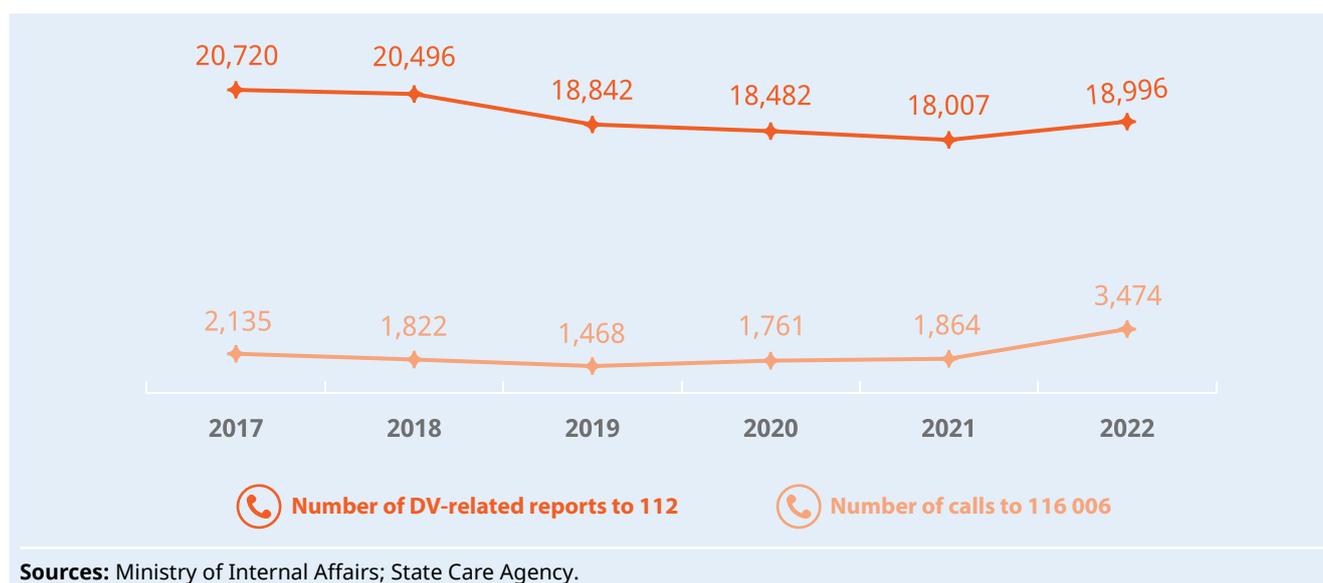
Emergency telephone services

Victims of domestic violence in Georgia have access to dedicated hotlines offering round-the-clock support and guidance. The primary emergency number ‘112’ provides immediate assistance to individuals in crisis. Additionally, victims and interested persons can seek support and advice by dialling the ‘116 006’ consultancy hotline, which is available in multiple languages to cater to diverse needs. Moreover, the child helpline ‘111’ has been strengthened to receive calls from children concerning violence and other violations of child rights, ensuring comprehensive support for vulnerable individuals in need of assistance.

For victims of GBV/DV, the **“112 GEORGIA”** mobile app offers a silent alarm via the **SOS BUTTON**, enabling users to discreetly send their location to dispatch the police when making a call is unsafe.

There has been a notable increase in the utilization of hotlines for reporting incidents of VAW/DV in recent years (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1:
Number of DV-related reports to 112 and calls to 116 006



Shelters and crisis centres

Victims/survivors of domestic violence and violence against women in Georgia have access to specialized shelters equipped with comprehensive services. Victims are assured that their employment positions in public institutions will be maintained when admitted to these shelters or crisis centres.

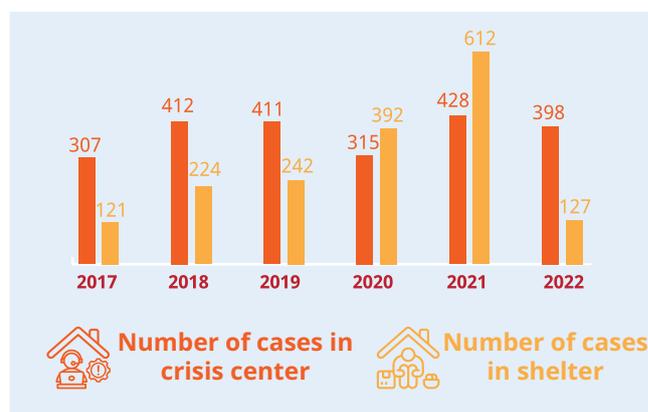
Additionally, individuals placed in shelters are entitled to free legal aid and primary and emergency medical and psychological assistance. Placement in the shelter also includes provisions for food, hygiene and other basic needs to ensure comprehensive support. For example, the Civil Service Bureau has implemented a new policy to protect and support victims of domestic violence in the workplace, ensuring that employers develop safety plans and conduct regular domestic violence training for staff and management.⁸

Currently, Georgia features five state-supported shelters and seven state-supported crisis centres, ensuring that victims have access to crucial support and resources across the country (Figure 2).

Crisis centres serve as vital resources for affected individuals and their families. The crisis centres provide the following services:

- Psychological-social rehabilitation/assistance
- Arrangement/receipt of medical services
- Legal assistance/representation
- Interpreter services if necessary

FIGURE 2:
Beneficiaries of shelters and crisis centres



Source: State Care Agency.

Note: According to the State Care Agency, the decline in service usage data between 2021 and 2022 is due to further alignment of data collection methodologies across all service centers; number of beneficiaries being identical to number of unique individuals rather than individual service recipients.

Legal assistance

The Legal Aid Service in Georgia plays a critical role in providing free legal assistance to survivors of domestic violence and ensuring access to justice through legal consultations, document assistance and court representation. However, it is noteworthy that this provision currently extends solely to victims of domestic violence, with victims of violence against women not covered under this service.



Recommendations

- **Amend legislation to fully comply with the Istanbul Convention**, in particular by:
 - Incorporating a consent component into the definition of sexual violence.
 - Introducing provisions for the remote interviewing of victims and the temporary removal of the accused from the courtroom to protect the safety and well-being of survivors.
 - Revising the provision for free legal assistance to include victims of violence against women, thereby ensuring equal access to justice and comprehensive protection for all survivors.
- **Develop clear guidelines and training programmes for law enforcement and judicial authorities** with a special focus on interacting with victims of VAWG/DV, especially with women with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ individuals, to increase their sensitivity towards issues regarding VAWG/DV and sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, as well as to prevent secondary victimization.
- **Launch targeted public awareness-raising campaigns to inform citizens**, especially for those in rural areas and conflict-affected regions, ethnic minorities, asylum seekers, refugees and individuals with disabilities, about existing protection mechanisms and regulations.
- **Establish a comprehensive national strategy to prevent femicide and GBV**, incorporating preventive measures, early warning systems and community engagement.
- **Strengthen support for survivors** by providing long-term assistance, empowerment programmes and access to economic opportunities.
- **Develop mandatory behavioural correction programmes** specifically designed for perpetrators of VAW/DV, particularly those who have had restraining or protective orders issued against them.

Endnotes

1. Criminal Code of Georgia (1999). Available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/16426?publication=259>.
 2. The Rule of Determination of Compensation Amounts and Procedures (2022). Available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5611339?publication=0>.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Administrative Procedures Code of Georgia (1999). Available at <https://www.matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/16492?publication=97>.
 5. Code of Administrative Offences of Georgia (1984). Available at <https://www.matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/28216?publication=495>.
 6. Law of Georgia on the Elimination of Violence against Women and/or Domestic Violence, and the Protection and Support of Victims of Such Violence (2006). Available at <https://www.matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/26422?publication=18>.
 7. Ibid.
 8. Domestic Violence Victim Protection Guidelines (19 September 2023), adopted by the Civil Service Bureau under Decree No. 1043/sa.
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