

An analysis of the rise in domestic violence cases in georgia

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



Domestic Violence in Georgia

“ Young men need to show women the respect they deserve and recognize sexual assault and to do their part to stop it.” — Barack Obama

The Republic of Georgia is a tiny country that borders two continents; Europe and Asia. This melting pot that combines various cultures predominantly practices Orthodox Christianity, and is populated by approximately 3.8 million people. More than a thousand civilians living there are victims of domestic violence in Georgia, and is in no small part “ fuelled by jealousy and alcohol”(agenda. ge). The majority of perpetrators are male, with only 100 female abusers for every 1,000 males in a seven-year period. The highest number of cases per capita was recorded in Georgia’s capital, Tbilisi. “ According to the Office of the Public Defender of Georgia, in 2014, 34 women have been killed, for a small country with only 3 million people, this a remarkably high number(ochr). There is a distinct anti feminine bias in this country; this unjust treatment of women has resulted in a above average death toll for a specific gender.

Though Georgia is taking steps to combat the issue,“ Crime continues to be a concern despite the establishment of a professional law enforcement presence and active enforcement.” According to official statistics, there was a five percent decrease in criminal cases in 2015 compared to 2014. However, crimes involving domestic violence and financial crimes increased in 2015.’ There is a disproportionately high amount of aggression towards

women in this country; a lot of the problems are caused by the cultural climate of the region.

There are many factors that cause domestic violence in Georgia. According to a well reputed governmental source, “ From the total number of incidents of violence 459 cases were incidents of physical, 799 – psychological, 75 – economic, 9- sexual, 83- forcing and 14-other types of Violence.” This shows the various amounts of violence taking place in this country. However, one of the main reasons is their culture’s deep rooted ties to Orthodox Christianity’s beliefs and practices. For example, sex before marriage is considered an egregious sin, so if a young girl is impregnated, there is a high probability that she is going to be forced into marriage, which leads to many kids having to mature at a very young age. Having to deal with so many issues at that age, such as: financial problems, relationship conflicts and all other challenges that come with forced adulthood, can cause many to suffer from severe psychological consequences in the long run.

Despite domestic violence being one of the leading crimes in Georgia, there is not much being done to help women who are stuck in an abusive relationship.” When 22-year-old model Salome Jorbenadze phoned the police earlier this year in the western town of Zugdidi, she was hoping to receive protection against her abusive former husband. But all she received was a lecture from two policewomen about what a woman has to do to pacify an embittered ex, a source familiar with the case told EurasiaNet. org. Jorbenadze went on to complain to an in-house police-oversight agency. But no restraining order was issued against her former husband, Sergi

Satseradze, a police officer. He later shot Jorbenadze dead in a crowded Zugdidi park on July 25.”(eurasianet. org). This issue of violence against women has plagued the region for years, and has only gotten worse. The lack of abundant resources dedicated to this crime have only served to inhibit women against getting help. Unfortunately, in such cases violence is so embedded into the culture that most of the population does not see this to be wrong. Women abide by such stereotypes and act accordingly to follow through with the cultural norms clearly seen in the conversation between the two female police officers and the abused. The misogynistic viewpoints aiding such communities negatively affects the ability for there to be a constructed plan to ameliorate this problem.

In an effort to understand this ongoing issue, Ms. Dubravka Šimonović, United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, made a trip to various regions in Georgia to understand the increased rate of domestic violence among the people of this area. To find the consequences and the causes, she held brief sessions with multiple female survivors of domestic violence to evaluate different situations. The Rapporteur “ directed all UN Members States to establish a “ femicide” or “ gender-related killings” watch through each member state, including Georgia, and this would release every year on 25th of November, International Day on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the number of femicides or gender-motivated killings of women per year, disaggregated by age and sex of the perpetrators, as well as the relationship between that perpetrator and the victim or victims.”(insert cite) Simonović also decided that all Information about the

prosecution and punishment of perpetrators should also be collected and published, and “ on the basis of such information, each case of femicide should be carefully analyzed to identify any failure of protection in view of improving and developing further preventive measures”.(insert cite) Her first important finding involved cases of girl child marriages. She discusses how often times early child marriage is a result of fear of the abduction of girls usually leading in arrangements such as child marriage. This is especially common part in rural areas, the vast majority of girls are married before the age of 18 and even 16. As a consequence of their marriage, they drop out of schools.”(cit) This would be considered a major taboo in many western countries, like the United States, where supporting governing laws against child marriage as well as the no child left behind act that state that all children should get an equal opportunity at an education.

However, it is evident that places such as Georgia are lacking in their enforcement policies of such practices. Sadly the cultural values are weighed down heavily in this rural area causing a vast difference in the way men and women are represented socially. The social stigma against women has is the leading cause of their oppression.

Even though females are allowed to drive in this country, vote, and get an education, there is still a huge gap between males and females and their way of life. Domestic violence is a huge problem in Georgia because strict cultural values do not allow many to escape forced marriages. “ These girls are extremely vulnerable to violence and lack economic independence to leave their abusers and a strict enforcement of the law would be necessary”

says Ms. šimonović examining the multiple cases discussed with her. She also states that as a popular way to make money in poorer regions, many result to sex selective abortions. According to a governmental source, “ From 2000 to 2012 the number of registered abortions had increased almost 3 times,

94% of all abortions are registered for the 20-44 age group.” (women&men health). Albeit the cultural connotations to these practices, there is a bigger player involved with this issue and it is the lack of a governing entity that is in support of banning this ongoing ritual. Naturally, divorce is more culturally accepted currently compared to years ago, however, the escalated violence that has been exercised in recent years has become a way to force people to remain in the marriage.

Hope is not lost, however, “ Over recent years, the disclosure of domestic violence cases has dramatically increased in Georgia. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, it actually doubled in 2015, while the number of restraining orders issued increased from 227 in 2013 to 2, 598 in 2015.” Georgians are starting to take the situation seriously, and women are becoming empowered.” Female sufferers are now seeking out help more frequently than in the past. For example, in Tbilisi, the “ emergency management center “ 112” received 5, 447 calls about domestic conflicts in 2013. Out of these calls, 212 cases resulted in restraining orders being issued. While in 2014, the hotline “ 112” received over 10, 000 calls about domestic violence resulting in 817 restraining orders. However, there is no information about how the rest of the cases were addressed.” () According to

a well known Georgian source, these statistics seem too high for the government to fathom and believe soon there will be a change in rules and regulations. This change is “ largely attributed to a significant shift in public attitudes towards domestic violence: this problem used to be perceived as a “ family issue” (78. 3% in 2009), where victims or their relatives were reluctant to report it to the relevant agencies, even in quite extreme cases – but now this attitude has changed. Being that the highest number of cases per capita were recorded in the Capital of Georgia, Tbilisi, there has essentially been a push to establish governing rules regarding such criminal acts of violence. The 2012 Georgian criminal code states that there is strict prosecution for domestic violence. According to this source, “ In the past year, the Interior Ministry started criminal prosecution against 310 people for committing domestic violence.”(georgia. unwomen. org) Not only has the government taken its first steps, however they have also urged the citizens of Georgia to take initiative and call the police if they see or witness any form of domestic abuse or if they feel violated in any way. Not only is the government setting new rules in place, however, the women of Georgia feel as though they can take it up upon themselves to help the cause.

Georgian women are beginning to take the initiative and seek protection for themselves and their families. More and more are heading to domestic abuse shelters than before;“ the annual number of residents at these shelters – located in the capital, Tbilisi, and the regional towns of Batumi, Gori and Signaghi – more than quadrupled from 2010-2015 to 188. Currently, some 108 women and children are living in the facilities”(eurasia. net). A great

number of people are realizing that they deserve freedom, and should not be forced to suffer in an abusive situation. Women in Georgia are beginning to understand that they must put their own lives' and their children's' lives ahead of their sense of pride, and cultural obligation. Seeking aid from these programs is enticing because there a variety of services offered to help women get on their feet, separate from their husband, and become independent. " Those women who turn to a state-run shelter are eligible to receive psychological counseling, as well as legal and medical aid. They also have access to job counseling"(eurasia. net). The Georgian Government has finally started to take this crime seriously and has enacted sweeping changes to how these matters are handled.

Beginning in around the year 2008, the Ministry of the Interior has been tasked with enforcing a multitude of legislation and actions towards stopping domestic abuse. They have taken measures to try and stop the crime from occurring in the first place, and has taken serious steps towards the analysis and neutralization of threats. Some of these" prevention mechanisms include introducing effective legal methods to identify and eliminate domestic violence, holding a know-your-rights awareness-raising campaign which will provide information on the rights of victims, offering educational courses to support and protect victims and rehabilitate abusers, and developing programs with stakeholder organizations to ensure the implementation of the above measures."

“ The Ministry must provide for the study and analysis of the causes of domestic violence, give support to victims, and work with relevant state institutions in identifying those at risk for committing domestic violence.”

The backbone for this government enforcement is the new Domestic Violence Law. This piece of legislation provides for a plethora of effects that protect women from their abusers. For example, “ Under the new domestic violence Law, if there is not a serious injury but it is obvious that violence has occurred, police are required to issue a restrictive order”(UN). Finally, action is being taken to help these individuals before the violence occurs, not after it is far too late.

Part of the initiative to understand and prevent domestic violence is the compiling of a vast government database that contains all of the relevant information about domestic abuse. The researchers who analyzed this information have reached many conclusions regarding the causes of why violence among family members occurs, and how it can be prevented. In their list of causes for this atrocity, “ unemployment, poverty and economic problems, followed by alcoholism, infidelity, jealousy and drug addiction were named as the main reasons for domestic violence. “(UN). The government, as well as the people of Georgia, are starting to gain an understanding on how to deal with this issue. While the government has made headway in identifying and combatting incidents of domestic violence, there has been virtually nothing done to help curtail what is leading many men to attack in the first place: alcohol.

Drinking is an intrinsic part of Georgian culture. In fact, “the oldest evidence of winemaking was discovered here”(inyourpocket. com). From a study conducted in 2017 “ results indicated that in 2010, the prevalence rate of binge drinking in Georgia among the adult population was almost three times higher than in 2003 (30% vs. 11%), and five times higher in males than in females”(sph). Copious alcohol consumption can bring out aggressive tendencies in people. With such a high percentage of the population drinking in excess on a regular basis, the amount of occurrences of violence among spouses is very common. If steps are not taken to help rehabilitate individuals with alcoholism, along with those who suffer from anger issues, the root of the problem will not be solved. While the Georgian government is taking the right steps to stop domestic violence by helping the victims, they need to take it one step further and try to prevent violence from forming in the first place.

Georgia has a serious domestic abuse problem that is caused by a variety of problems caused by their religious doctrines, and widespread alcoholism among the male population. Many young men and women have been forced into marriage at an early age due to the antiquated religious beliefs that are held by the majority of society. Due to having to take on so much responsibility at such a young age, many families face dysfunction, and violence is often the result of these stressful situations. Tensions would not be so bad if binge drinking was not so commonplace in Georgian society. The government has made effort to help the women suffering from domestic

violence, but need to address the alcoholism in men if they hope to get to the root of the problem.