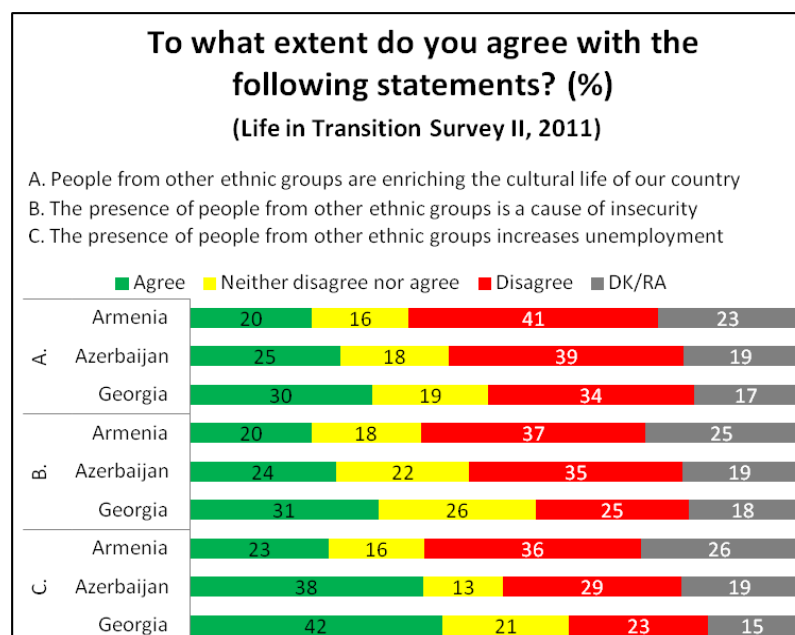


[Us and Them: Ethnicity in the South Caucasus](#)

The South Caucasus region is one of the most linguistically and ethnically diverse regions of the world. The titular ethnicities in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia form a clear majority (98%, 91% and 84%, respectively). Significant minorities also exist in Georgia where 6.5% of the population is ethnically Azeri and 5.7% is ethnically Armenian. Azerbaijan has fewer ethnic minorities including Lezgins (2.2%) who are also present in Dagestan, as well as other groups that comprise 3.3% of the population (including the Talesh who straddle the border with Iran). Armenia is the most ethnically homogenous of the post-soviet countries with a small Yezidi Kurdish population (1.3%). Using data from the 2011 [Life in Transition](#) (LIT) survey, this blog assesses perceptions between ethnic groups in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Relations between particular groups will also be examined using data from the 2012 Caucasus Barometer (CB) from questions on willingness to engage in business and marriage with someone from another ethnicity. Finally, this 2012 data will be compared to data from the 2009 Caucasus Barometer.

The LIT survey asks, “To what extent do you trust people from the following groups: Your family, your neighborhood, people you meet for the first time, friends and acquaintances, people of another religion and people from another nationality?” 43% of Georgians say they trust people from another nationality (23% distrust and 29% neither trust nor distrust). Armenians and Azerbaijanis show lower levels of trust with 14% and 17%, respectively, who say they trust people from another nationality (50% and 57% say they distrust people from another nationality, respectively).

Additionally, survey respondents were asked if they disagreed or agreed with three separately-asked statements about other nationalities on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This question permits a deeper understanding of perceptions between certain ethnic groups in the South Caucasus. 30% of Georgians agreed that people from other ethnic groups enrich the cultural life of their country, followed by 25% of Azerbaijanis and 20% of Armenians who say the same. However, more Georgians also think that the presence of people from other ethnic groups is a cause of insecurity (31%), followed by 24% for Azerbaijanis and 20% for Armenians. Finally, on the third statement, 42% of Georgians believe that the presence of people from other ethnic groups increases unemployment. 38% of Azerbaijanis and 23% of Armenians say the same. Consequently, the data indicates that although more Georgians think ethnic minorities enrich the cultural life of their country than their neighbours, they are also most worried about other ethnic groups posing a threat or taking jobs.

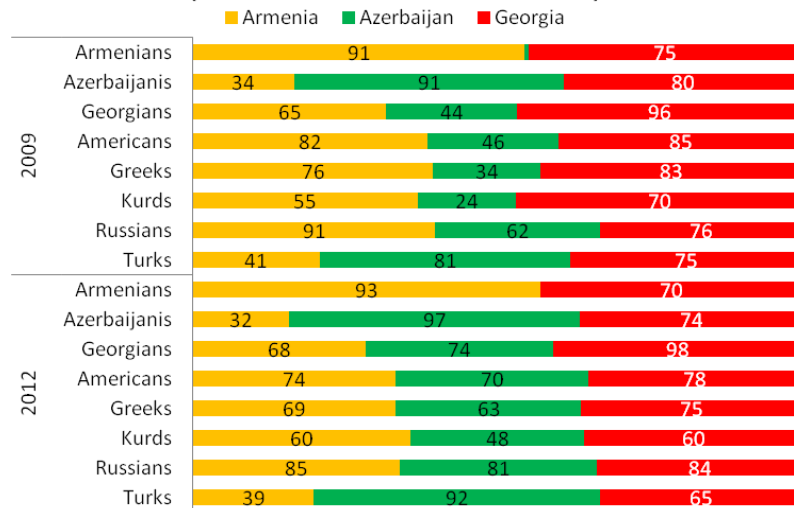


Opinions vary with regard to particular ethnic groups. One way to understand perception trends is to look at the willingness of doing business with people from other ethnic groups. Data from the 2012 CB shows that practically 0% of Azerbaijanis approve of doing business with Armenians, and 32% of Armenians are open to doing business with Azerbaijanis. 39% of Armenians also approve of trade with Turks, which have the highest approval rating for business among Azerbaijanis (92%). Georgians take the middle ground with more or less 75% willing to engage in business with most of the groups listed. It is important to note that despite the recent conflicts, Georgians are rather accepting of doing business with Abkhazians (74%) and Ossetians (73%). Overall, Russians are well-perceived (85% for Armenians, 81% for Azerbaijanis and 84% for Georgians), while Kurds get the lowest ranking (60%, 48% and 60%, respectively).

Comparing CB data from 2009 and 2012 reveals a few important trends. Azerbaijanis demonstrated the largest increase in approval of doing business for most of the ethnic groups listed; during the past three years approval for doing business with Americans increased from 46% to 70%, from 44% to 74% for Georgians, from 34% to 63% for Greeks, and from 62% to 81% for Russians. On the other hand, Georgian and Armenian attitudes have remained more or less similar from 2009 to 2012 with most changes within the margin of error. In Georgia, approval for business with Russians increased from 76% to 84% and decreased from 75% to 65% for Turks.

Would you approve or disapprove doing business with...(% approval)

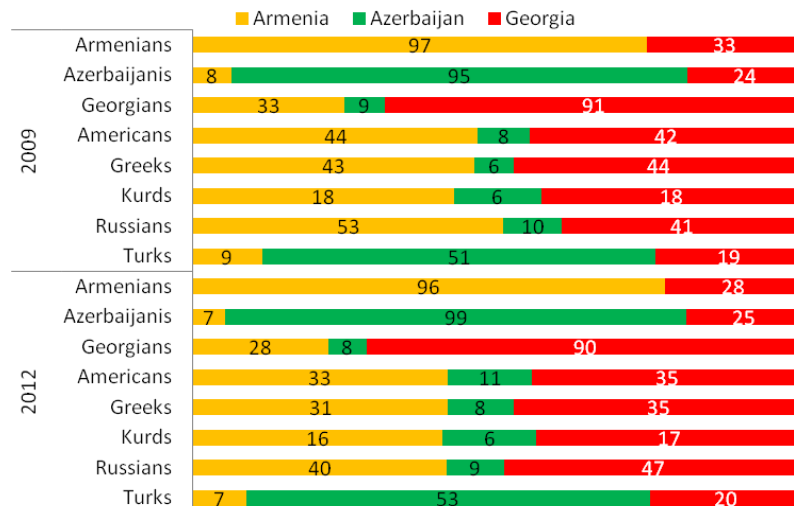
(Caucasus Barometer 2009 and 2012)



Approval of women marrying someone from another ethnic group follows a similar pattern, but on a much lower scale. Azerbaijanis and Armenians continue to largely disapprove of marriage with each other. Georgians are slightly more open to the idea of marrying outside their ethnic group (albeit results are within the 25%-35% range). Again, Abkhazians and Ossetians figure in this middle range. Russians continue to garner the highest approval, while Kurds receive less approval than many of the other groups. The main difference is that Azerbaijanis overwhelmingly disapprove of Azerbaijani women marrying outside of their ethnicity (only 6% to 11% would approve of doing so). The exception is marriage with Turks (53%) as they share some religious, cultural and ethnic similarities. There are no radical changes over time except for a decrease in the number of Armenians willing to marry Russians (53% to 40%) and Americans (44% to 33%).

Would you approve or disapprove women marrying with...(% approval)

(Caucasus Barometer 2009 and 2012)



For more information on ethnic perceptions and the South Caucasus in general, visit the [Life Transition data](#) on the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's website, and the 2012 Caucasus Barometer [dataset](#).