

Class Structure of Georgia

Introduction

Society is divided into hierarchical social groups. Which group you belong to largely determines your living conditions, lifestyle, and even your consciousness. One of the main methods for studying social hierarchy is dividing society into classes. In Georgia, within public and academic spheres, the word "class" has been tabooed against the backdrop of the discredit of the Soviet past. Since independence, the class structure of society has not been fully analyzed.

This study is one of the rare attempts at such an analysis, through which we wish to encourage the study of social hierarchy and facilitate discussion about the possibilities of solidarity ties, which are necessary for social justice. In this document, based on the "Labor Force Survey" of the National Statistics Office of Georgia, we present the first data regarding class structure and a class scheme. We also outline the scope for future research.

1. Why is class analysis important?

The purpose of class analysis is to reveal the mechanisms that exert significant influence on people's lives, regardless of whether they themselves are aware of it. Such analysis helps us uncover structures of domination and exploitation in society that are hidden from the untrained eye. It also helps us understand how the relationships between social classes and class positions determine individuals' lives, their views and opportunities, social inequalities and conflicts, state institutions, and the process of social change. Furthermore, class analysis does not aim merely to identify oppression and injustice. One of its primary tasks is to reveal the possibilities for solidarity or the forms and risks of social conflict; it aims to determine the conditions under which specific alliances are formed, either within classes or between classes, and when members of different classes unite for a common struggle or confront one another.

Therefore, class analysis, alongside research, is a political act. It helps us understand our position and place in society; it helps us realize who stands by our side and, based on this, plan our alliances and political activity. Class analysis also opens the path for analyzing political and institutional systems. An evaluation of state policy and institutions cannot be comprehensive without a class perspective; for example, by discussing the extent to which criminal law policy in Georgia is discriminatory against the working class and those we call the "surplus population" / underclass; or how the strict monetary policy of the National Bank of Georgia, a high interest rate, can serve the interests of individual large groups of local or foreign capital, and how the aforementioned monetary policy increases unemployment and, accordingly, weakens the mobilization potential of workers (Eristavi and Mikhelidze 2025); or how Georgia's labor and social policy increases the vulnerability of the working class, which serves to provide cheap and disciplined labor for local or foreign capital.

It is also important to examine and critique dominant ideologies through the lens of class analysis: for example, widespread views regarding how success is entirely the result of individual effort. In contrast, class analysis highlights the socio-economic factors that limit

people's opportunities and life chances. Moreover, this perspective helps us explain the vulnerability of the working class or the "surplus population" to various types of harmful ideologies and propaganda at specific historical moments of capitalist development. This offers us a significant framework for discussing democratic processes and the factors that hinder them.

2. Different Models of Class Analysis

Sociology recognizes several models of social stratification, which vary depending on the key characteristics each author chooses as a primary determinant and the specific questions they seek to answer through class analysis. There are three leading models, which are associated with the works of Max Weber, Pierre Bourdieu, and Karl Marx.

According to Max Weber (1968) and the neo-Weberian tradition (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992; Goldthorpe and Marshall 1992), what determines what you can achieve in capitalism is the access you have to resources. In his view, people are in a common "class situation" if they have similar "life chances" in the market, i.e., similar opportunities to improve their standard of living, such as income, social mobility, education, and healthcare. In the Weberian tradition, access to economic resources is of central importance for class division, although attention is also paid to an individual's skills and profession.

The second widely used model of class analysis is associated with the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1984; Bennett et al 2009). Similar to the Weberian approach, the main focus of Bourdieu's class analysis is on life chances and the factors that determine them. However, this approach observes a much broader spectrum of factors. It identifies three types of capital, the possession of which determines which class you belong to and what lifestyle (meaning identity, behavior, taste, views, preferences, etc.) one has.

These are: economic capital (material resources)¹, cultural capital (education, skills, behavior, taste), and social capital (acquaintances, social connections). For Bourdieu's analysis, the combination of these three forms of capital determines class belonging and lifestyle.²

In contrast to these two models, the main focus of the Marxist approach is class oppression and class conflict. Here, central importance in class analysis is given to relations related to property: who owns the means of production (factories, technology, labor force) and who is forced to sell their own labor in order to survive. The relationship to the means of production determines which class a person belongs to. Most importantly, from a Marxist perspective, the property hierarchy between classes makes it possible for one class to oppress another.

¹ Unlike Marx, Bourdieu does not specify what he means by economic capital. Known followers of Bourdieu's class analysis, such as Savage and others, within the framework of the Great British Class Survey, define economic capital as the level of respondents' income, the value of their residential property, etc. This differs from Marx's view on the means of production, which provides a different analysis of social relations.

² In Georgia, at the Georgian American University, a group of Georgian scientists is working on an analysis of the class structure based on this model, the results of which should be available in the near future.

In this study, we will use a neo-Marxist model of class analysis, which was developed by the prominent American sociologist Erik Olin Wright (Wright 2025). In the research, we will utilize Wright's earlier analysis, which is based on the concepts of domination and exploitation.³ To be applicable for the Georgian context, the model will be conceptualized with certain modifications.

The goal of choosing this model is not to reject other models. Moreover, it is possible that Weberian and Bourdieuan models offer a more complete and refined picture of dividing people into social strata and their life chances. However, the central goal of Marxist analysis, as a rule, is not a complete sociological study of all layers and aspects of society. Primarily, it has practical and political goals: to introduce class oppression as a central problem into sociological analysis; to offer a path toward liberation from oppression; to explain the essence of class conflict; and to describe the potential for class alliances. In the other two models, these aspects are often blurred.

Furthermore, as Wright notes, it is possible to simultaneously be a Weberian - when describing class mobility, a Bourdieuan - when analyzing factors determining lifestyle, and a Marxist - when critiquing capitalism.

3. Erik Olin Wright's Model

For class analysis, Erik Olin Wright uses two central concepts: domination and exploitation. Domination refers to the control of the actions of others, while exploitation refers to the extraction of economic benefits from people under that domination. Exploitation always involves some form of domination, but not all forms of domination imply exploitation (though see "secondary exploitation" below).

In capitalist society, the central factor of class division is the right to own the means of production. Workers, who do not own the means of production and cannot generate the resources necessary for survival, are forced to sell their own labor. In this way, they enter into a relationship of domination and exploitation.

In terms of domination, they become objects of control, surveillance, and sanctioning, and fall into various forms of subordinate hierarchical relationships. As for exploitation, propertyless workers are forced to agree to work for a wage with which they will earn the means of subsistence. However, due to power asymmetry, employers ensure that workers work and produce more than what they need to satisfy their own needs. In this way, the employer appropriates the fruits of the hired laborers' work. Consequently, domination ensures exploitation.

Based on the right of ownership, traditionally, there are three main classes: Employers (capitalists) who own the means of production and have hired workers; Workers (proletariat) who do not own the means of production and sell their own labor; Self-employed (petite bourgeoisie) who own the means of production but do not have hired workers. Other positions in the class structure are derived from this basic division.

³ In a later model (Wright, E. O. (1997). *Class counts: Comparative Studies in Class Analysis*. Cambridge University Press), Wright expands the concept of exploitation to include exploitation resulting from the asymmetry of skills and knowledge, which for many is a significant departure from the Marxist tradition. For interesting criticism, see: Das, R. J. (2017). *Marxist class theory for a sceptical world*. BRILL.

Beyond property ownership, for a more nuanced class analysis, Wright introduces two additional criteria:

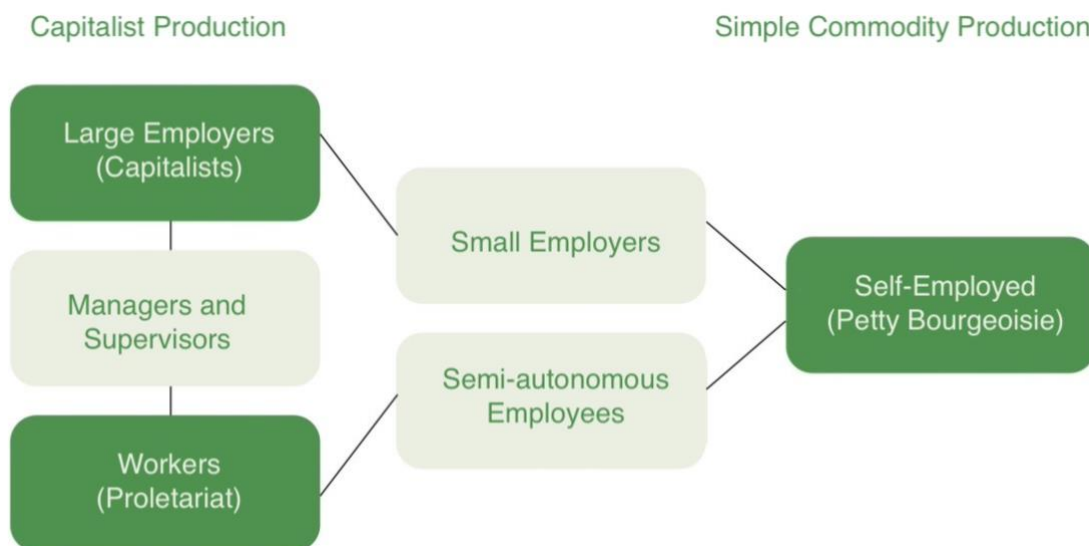
1. Authority in the work process;
2. Autonomy, which implies control over the planning and execution of the production process.

Based on these two additional criteria, Wright identifies three further "class positions," which do not represent independent classes, but rather "contradictory" positions between classes.

These are:

1. Managers and Supervisors: They occupy a contradictory class position because, on one hand, they themselves are exploited and dominated like workers, but at the same time, they ensure the domination of workers for the benefit of employers.
2. Small Employers: (<10 hired workers) They occupy a contradictory position between large employers (>10 hired workers) and the self-employed. Such employers, on one hand, own means of production and can hire workers, but their property is not sufficient to avoid working themselves. Accordingly, small employers exploit employees just like large employers, but often they are themselves involved in the work process, similar to the self-employed.
3. Semi-autonomous workers: They are not managers or supervisors, but they have relatively high autonomy in the work process and, accordingly, occupy a contradictory position between the self-employed and the working class (mostly, this refers to professionals).

The scheme below makes the correlation between the classes and contradictory class positions clear:



Later, within the framework of the "Finnish Class Project" (Blom et al 1992), a group of researchers expanded this approach of Wright's and developed a five-level methodology for class analysis. According to this methodology, class analysis consists of the following stages:

1. Distribution of classes and class positions in the social structure;
2. Differences between class "situations" (conditions), specifically, differences between classes in terms of working conditions and conditions of reproduction;
3. Differences between various class consciousnesses and experiences (preferences, views);
4. Issues of class organization (readiness and ability to act to defend one's own interests; participation in organizational activities, etc.);
5. The relationship of classes to the state.

The present study mainly concerns the first level, the distribution of classes. However, we will partially touch upon the second level as well.

4. Georgian Context

The class structure and relationships of independent Georgia are being formed in the context of the collapse of the Soviet system and deindustrialization. The acute deficit of capital and the need for access to foreign financing forced the government of newly independent Georgia to conduct neoliberal reforms to gain the trust of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (Appel and Orenstein 2018). The initial reforms, in the form of "shock therapy," began in 1992 with the liberalization of prices (Papava 2013, 13-14) and continued from 1994 with a second wave, which included mass privatization, radical reduction of the state sector and subsidies, and strict monetary policy (Gurgenidze et al. 2007). These reforms, against the backdrop of wars with separatist regions, civil war, and hyperinflation, put the Georgian economy on a path of rapid deindustrialization, which was reflected in the loss of stable and qualified jobs and a sharp increase in unemployment. In 1990-1995, the total volume of production decreased by 78%, and the purchasing power of the population dropped significantly (Tsikhelashvili, Shergelashvili, and Tokmazishvili, 2012, 9). While 695,000 people were employed in industry by 1990, this number had already dropped to 284,000 by 1996 (CESCR 1998, par. 43). For comparison, according to 2024 data, the number of people employed in industry is only 180,000. Moreover, during this period (by 1996), according to state estimates, approximately 300,000 people who were formally employed were on forced unpaid leave, which would significantly reduce the actual number of those employed in industry among them. Stable and qualified jobs were lost en masse in other sectors as well, particularly due to the large-scale reduction of the public sector.

Along with the industrial system, the agricultural system also collapsed. By 2003, the number of those employed in agriculture had doubled, accounting for 51%. However, this growth mainly occurred at the expense of those who turned to agriculture to escape urban unemployment and poverty and to survive (Tsikhelashvili, Shergelashvili, and Tokmazishvili, 2012, p. 17).

Informal employment increased sharply. By 1999, 52% of Georgia's employed population was involved in the informal sector, including 70% of private sector wage employees (Bernabè 2002, p. 53). In parallel, the disintegration of the state welfare system was underway (Baumann 2012, pp. 268-270). In the 1990s, the decrease in state revenues, rising poverty, the influx of refugees

from Abkhazia and Samachablo, and problems with tax collection put the social system under significant pressure (EBRD 1994, p. 25). As a result, we saw a systematic reduction in state expenditures, including social assistance, and a debt regarding already meagre pensions and social transfers.

These structural factors significantly worsened the living conditions of the majority of Georgia's population and weakened the mobilization potential of workers. The state also confronted already weakened workers' organizations, particularly through the confiscation of the massive property inherited from Soviet trade unions. Beyond these "external" factors, "internal" conflicts likely played a significant role in the weakening of the working class during the transition to the new economic model. As Kalb (2019) notes, in post-socialist countries, the qualified segment of the working class welcomed market reforms as new opportunities for personal career advancement- a form of meritocracy that would punish the "lazy" and reward the "deserving." This significantly damaged solidarity among workers.

Thus, in the first decade, the number of small-scale farmers increased significantly. The number of such inhabitants also increased sharply. that is superfluous for the immediate needs of production and which we call below the "surplus population" / underclass. Here, we mean official unemployment, part-time/irregular employment, as well as a large portion of the population outside the labor force, including people involved in subsistence farming. Regarding the employed population, qualified jobs are lost, and the situation of a large portion of the employed becomes extremely vulnerable and unprotected due to the collapse of the welfare system, the spread of informal labor, rising unemployment, and the weakness of trade unions.

Hence, in the first decade, the number of small farmers increase sharply. So does the share of the population, that is superfluous for the immediate needs of production and which we call below the "surplus population"/underclass. Here, we mean official unemployment, part-time/irregular employment, as well as a large portion of the population outside the labor force, including people involved in subsistence farming. Regarding the employed population, qualified jobs are lost, and the situation of a large portion of the employed becomes extremely vulnerable and unprotected due to the collapse of the welfare system, the spread of informal labor, rising unemployment, and the weakness of trade unions. To sum up, Ghodsee and Orenstein (2021, p. 16) note, post-socialist transformation, especially in Georgia, generated huge inequality at the individual, regional, and national levels. Georgia became a place of impoverishment for the majority and enrichment for a small number of the population.

During the process of deindustrialization, the "winner" of the post-socialist transition, the capitalist class, is formed. This happened in Georgia differently from the Western experience, where this class emerged as a result of industrialization. Consequently, the new capitalists did not become rich through development and modernization, but mainly through the appropriation of existing economic assets (Khelaia and Chivadze 2022, p. 178). In the 90s, we did not yet have a fully formed capitalist class. Capitalists were almost entirely integrated into the state's informal networks. Towards the end of the century, as the possibilities of the existing model of capital accumulation were exhausted, the economic elite fragmented, a part of which facilitated the change of government in 2003 (Radnitz 2010, pp. 135-136).

In the following decades, we see new waves of privatization, trade liberalization, reduction of the public sector, and large-scale deregulation. Neoliberal reforms take on a more massive, rapid, and aggressive character. The main strategy of development becomes the attraction of foreign investment (Schueth 2011; Lazarus 2013, p. 271), while labor relations favorable to the employer and wage suppression (slowing/freezing growth) become one of the main instruments for creating a "business-friendly" environment.

The state's direct persecution of workers' organizations continues and intensifies. In 2011, the Law on Economic Freedom (Liberty Act) was signed, which prohibits Parliament from introducing/increasing new taxes and sets limits on deficit spending and public debt. Such constitutionalization of the neoliberal course of development prevents the state from conducting industrial policy and undermines the existence of an adequate social protection system, which creates structural barriers to the empowerment of workers.

As of today, the Georgian economy is significantly dependent on resource-based and primary product exports, re-exports of cars, the tourism sector, and imports (Topuria and Khundadze 2022). The share of manufacturing in GDP is only 9.3%. The expansion of tourism and retail trade creates a low-productivity service sector and low-skilled jobs. A significant portion of the population is employed in agriculture, while the share of this sector in GDP is only 6%, which indicates the low productivity of the sector and rural poverty.

This structure of the economy results in a situation where the state is not interested in raising the education level and classification of workers, as this is not necessary for the functioning of the current economic model. Similarly, private investment in workforce development is scarce. The low level of industrial development in the context of "premature deindustrialization" (Rodrik 2015) means high unemployment and vulnerable jobs. The spread of low-skilled jobs weakens workers in their relationships with employers, making them easily replaceable. The scarcity of formal jobs in manufacturing, as well as the seasonal nature of tourism, increases informal and unstable employment. Furthermore, the limited number of qualified jobs encourages the emigration of skilled labor.

Given the realities described above, to apply Wright's model in the Georgian context, some modifications are necessary, which primarily relate to distinguishing small-scale farmers as a separate class position. However, before we move directly to the class scheme, we need to make a few qualifications and reach an agreement on terminology.

4.1. Small Employers

Wright considers small employers to be those who have fewer than 10 hired employees. This criterion of his is conditional, as he does not have access to data that would accurately measure the amount of capital and the degree of the employer's involvement in the work process. Such data is also not available to us, and therefore, at this stage, we are using Wright's criterion.

4.2. Self-Employed (Petite Bourgeoisie)

For the purposes of our typology, we define "self-employed" individuals as those who:

1. Engage in economic activity;
2. Own means of production;
3. Do not have hired employees (unlike the Geostat methodology, which allows self-employed individuals to have hired staff);
4. Are not involved in agriculture (those in agriculture are categorized as "small farmers").

The main characteristics of this class are their independence from domination and exploitation in the production process and their urban nature.

Unfortunately, labor force survey data does not fully allow us to distinguish "true" self-employed individuals from the significant group known as "dependent self-employed" (Bozzon and Murgia 2022; Böheim and Mühlberger 2009; ILO 2016). According to our typology, these individuals actually occupy the class position of semi-autonomous workers.

These dependent self-employed individuals effectively perform work characteristic of an employment relationship, but instead of a formal labor contract, they are engaged through other types of contracts (e.g., service agreements). Generally, this practice is used to circumvent requirements under the Labor Code, state taxes, or other social guarantees.

"Dependent self-employment" includes cases where the self-employed person is economically dependent on a single or limited number of clients/employers, or where the dependency is personal or organizational in nature:

- Economically dependent: Those who have only one or a few clients on whom their entire income relies.
- Personally/Organizationally dependent: Situations where the individual cannot decide the content, form, timing, or location of their work, or hire their own workers.

We categorize this group as semi-autonomous workers because they experience domination and exploitation while retaining some independence. At this stage, we identify groups such as drivers of light vehicles, vans, and motorcycles (ISCO-08 8322, 8321), including couriers and taxi drivers who use digital platforms and are thus subject to algorithmic management and discipline (Mikhelidze 2025).

Notably, there are 22,794 individuals in this group, though we assume this figure falls short of the actual number of people in such roles. Dependent self-employment is also widespread in the construction sector (Tskitishvili et al. 2022) and beauty salons (Kajaia 2021). It will be important in the future to accurately measure the scale of dependent self-employment in these and other spheres.

4.3. Managers and Supervisors

Geostat categorizes managers based on the professional occupational groups of the ISCO-08 (International Standard Classification of Occupations). We use this Geostat data to define the manager group. Regarding supervisors, we consider those to be individuals who are not classified as managers by Geostat, but who respond positively to the Labor Force Survey question regarding whether they supervise others. Employees classified as professionals by Geostat who supervise others are categorized as supervisors, rather than professionals.

It is worth noting that, according to this typology, the "managers" category includes a small group of so-called top managers who have a high degree of control over the means of production and largely define the work process themselves. Top managers are often indistinguishable from employers and may even be shareholders of the company.

On the other hand, the "supervisors" group includes low-level supervisors who are essentially just executors of orders from higher-level supervisors or managers and differ little from the subordinates they oversee. Therefore, based on future research, the degree of authority at different hierarchical levels must be more precisely determined, and the distribution across class positions should be adjusted accordingly.

4.4. Semi-autonomous Workers

No available study examines the degree of worker autonomy in planning and executing the work process. At this stage, we can consider as semi-autonomous workers those who are hired professionals according to the Labor Force Survey and ISCO classification (as opposed to, for example, self-employed professionals). In addition, as we noted above, we consider professionals who are not supervisors to be semi-autonomous workers. The position of a professional implies occupations that require a high level of knowledge, education, and experience, and may include research, scientific, creative, educational, or other types of activities. We make the qualification that professionals have sufficient control over their own knowledge and skills to partially avoid domination in the work process and to reduce the degree of exploitation to a greater or lesser extent.

The position of a professional implies occupations that require a high level of knowledge, education, and experience, and may include research, scientific, creative, educational, or other types of activities. We make the qualification that professionals have sufficient control over their own knowledge and skills to partially avoid domination in the work process and to reduce the degree of exploitation to a greater or lesser extent.

Furthermore, professionals differ from ordinary workers in other respects as well. They have a greater potential for both self-employment (examples of which include the private practice of lawyers, economists, and doctors) as well as managerial and supervisory positions (for instance, up to 40% of supervisors in Georgia are professionals).

Also, professionals often have individual access to managers and employers, which is why they do not as frequently need collective mobilization to pressure them. It is worth emphasizing that not every professional possesses the type of autonomy that would substantially differentiate

them from ordinary workers. On the other hand, technicians and some auxiliary professionals, just like workers in other positions, may also have control over the work process. Accordingly, the group of semi-autonomous workers should be refined in future studies.

4.5. Small-Scale Farmers

A significant difference between our structure and Wright's class analysis relates to the class position of small-scale farmers. As we have seen, this class position is not found in Wright's typology. In the Western context, "farmers" are landowners who often use hired labor and have significant income. Accordingly, in Wright's framework, they are distributed across different classes.

While in Western discourse a farmer is often associated with well-being, in Georgia, as in other peripheries of the global economy, the rural population is an economically vulnerable group that survives through a combination of subsistence farming, state or private aid, and fragmented wage labor. Furthermore, infrastructure and energy projects constantly threaten their survival and environment.

For the purposes of our context, we call this class "small-scale farmers." By small-scale farmers, we mean the group designated by Geostat as self-employed in agriculture who sell more than 50% of their produce on the market. We also include those involved in subsistence farming, where products are produced mainly for personal consumption.

We do not include hired agricultural workers in the "small-scale farmer" category; this group is part of the working class. Similarly, those employed in agriculture who have hired employees are included in the employer category.

In our opinion, a large portion of small-scale farmers in Georgia occupy a contradictory class position in the modern capitalist class structure, as the majority of them are likely semi-proletarianized (i.e., they are highly likely to engage in wage labor as well).

Although existing studies do not allow us to speak about this with certainty, it is highly probable that:

1. The degree of economic dependency of small-scale farmers on clients and consumers is high, which may also bear signs of disguised employment; and
2. They often participate in seasonal and fragmented wage labor.

It is in this sense that we consider a significant portion of small-scale farmers to be semi-proletariat and place them in a contradictory class position. The structure of small-scale farmers (e.g., smallholders, landless farmers, etc.) and their class positions (Bernstein 2010) require thorough theorization and empirical research in the future.

4.6. Dynamics of Class Structure Development

The class scheme presented below is based on data from the 2024 Labor Force Survey. For comparison, we also utilize the 2020 survey. Although analyzing the dynamics of class structure changes over a long period is important, it is not possible at this stage due to methodological and technical limitations.

Data on the labor market from the beginning of the 2000s is unavailable, which precludes the inclusion of this period in the study. The earliest available data on the labor force is from the 2009 Household Survey. However, this data is unsuitable for comparative analysis because the variables used in the database differ significantly in structure and content, making them incompatible with the new methodology of the Labor Force Survey.

Although the 2017 database represents the results of the first separately conducted Labor Force Survey, we encountered technical problems when using these databases that, unfortunately, could not be resolved within the framework of the present study.

5. Class Structure in Georgia

Based on the considerations mentioned above, assuming access to full data, the social structure scheme should be developed as follows:

- **Capitalist Class:** Not involved in the production process.
- **Small Employers:** Involved in the production process.
- **Self-Employed Class:** Urban employment (excluding dependent self-employed).
- **Managers:** Excluding top managers, who are effectively indistinguishable from employers.
- **Supervisors:** In cases of real control over the planning and/or execution of the work process.
- **Semi-Autonomous Workers:** In cases of substantial control over the planning and execution of the work process.
- **Working Class:** Proletariat.
- **Small-Scale Farmers:** With their corresponding structure.

According to available data, the class structure for 2020 and 2024 looks as follows:

	2020 Number	2020 %	2024 Number	2024 %
Sum (Employed + subsistence farmers)	1 689 159	100	1 772 583	100
Large Employers (Capitalists) (11+)	4 965	0.29	4 068	0.23
Small Employers (1-10)	34 111	2	42 422	2.39
Self Employed (Petty Bourgeoisie)	112 680	7.17	159 658	9
Managers	64 631	3.83	75 689	4.3
Supervisors	46 844	2.77	54 260	3.06
Semi-autonomous Workers	215 436	12.75	218 490	12.3
Workers	546 034	32.33	634 780	35.81
Small-scale Farmers	649 407	38.5	553 400	31.2

For the comparison, in the 1980s, class structure studies were conducted in developed capitalist countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland, the German Democratic Republic, the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) using Wright's model (Haller 1989).

In recent years, similar studies have been conducted in several post-socialist countries, including Poland (Słomczyński et al. 2007) and Romania (Pop 2013).

These studies provide a vital benchmark for understanding how the class configurations in countries like Georgia differ from those in both established Western economies and other post-socialist nations that underwent their own unique transformations.

The results are given in the table below:

	Swd	Nor	Fin	Ger	UK	USA	CA	AUS	NZ	Rom	Pol	Geo
Capitalists	0.7	1.0	0.7	0.6	2.0	1.8	1.0	0.4	2.9	1.7*	5.4	0.2
Small Employers	4.8	5.0	2.5	7.3	4.5	6.0	4.3	3.8	8.0	----	---	2.4
Petty Bourgeoisie	5.3	7.4	18	2.8	6.0	6.9	12.3	9.2	9.0	1.9	7.5	9
Managers	10.9	12.8	9.8	6.5	12.4	12.3	12.2	13.6	17.6	5.9	9.1	4.3
Supervisors	10.1	12.5	12.7	9.8	13.9	17.2	12.5	21.5	21.6	11.1	8.5	3.1
Semi Independent	17.4	16.4	10.4	20.5	11.6	9.5	14.4	9.9	6.2	7.9	9.1	12.3
Workers	50.7	45.2	46.2	52.4	49.6	46.3	43.2	41.6	34.7	60.7	51.3	35.8
Small Farmers										10.8	12.5	31.2

The table reveals that the most prominent feature in Georgia's class structure is the small size of the working class. Generally, a low level of proletarianization is characteristic of peripheral regions in the global economy where industry is less developed. This is also the case in Georgia. The scarcity of the proletariat hinders the development of a strong labor movement and necessitates alliances with other classes.

The low level of proletarianization also requires less social control, which is one reason for the small number of managers and supervisors. This can also be explained by the low degree of bureaucratization in the public sector and the lack of large-scale production (e.g., Boreham et al. 1989, p. 87). Notably, the number of semi-autonomous workers (professionals) in Georgia is quite high. Similarly, as seen in the social structure of Scandinavian countries, semi-autonomous workers predominate compared to other developed nations. The main explanation for this is the size of the public sector, as the state is a significant employer of professionals. Where the public sector is large, the number of professionals is also high. This was the case in Scandinavia, and it is the same in Georgia, where 58% of professionals are employed by the state. Furthermore, in Georgia, the public sector creates 23% of total jobs, whereas in the US, for example, it accounts for only 14%.

The high rate of self-employment is also noteworthy. On one hand, this is due to the development of the tourism sector, which facilitates the spread of small businesses and self-employment (small hotels, drivers, guides, small shops, etc.). Additionally, high unemployment and a weak social protection system drive people to secure their livelihoods through simple commodity production (bazaars, street vending, etc.).

Legal frameworks also significantly influence the number of self-employed individuals. Recently, self-employment in Georgia has been encouraged by significant tax incentives (e.g., individual entrepreneurship, micro-business status). Finally, another characteristic of the periphery is the high rate of semi-proletarianized population, which is reflected in the large number of small-scale farmers in Georgia. The scale of the class position of small-scale farmers in independent Georgia is partly determined by Soviet legacy and partly, as noted above, a survival strategy adopted by many in the context of unemployment and poverty created by the transition to a new economic system.

6. Class "Situation"

As noted earlier, following the methodology of the Finnish Class Project, after describing the class scheme, the next stage of analysis is the study of the "situation" (condition) of these classes. By "class situation," we mean the conditions existing both within the production process and beyond it, in the sphere of reproduction.

At this stage, we will briefly touch upon the issues of wages and education.

6.1. Wage Gaps

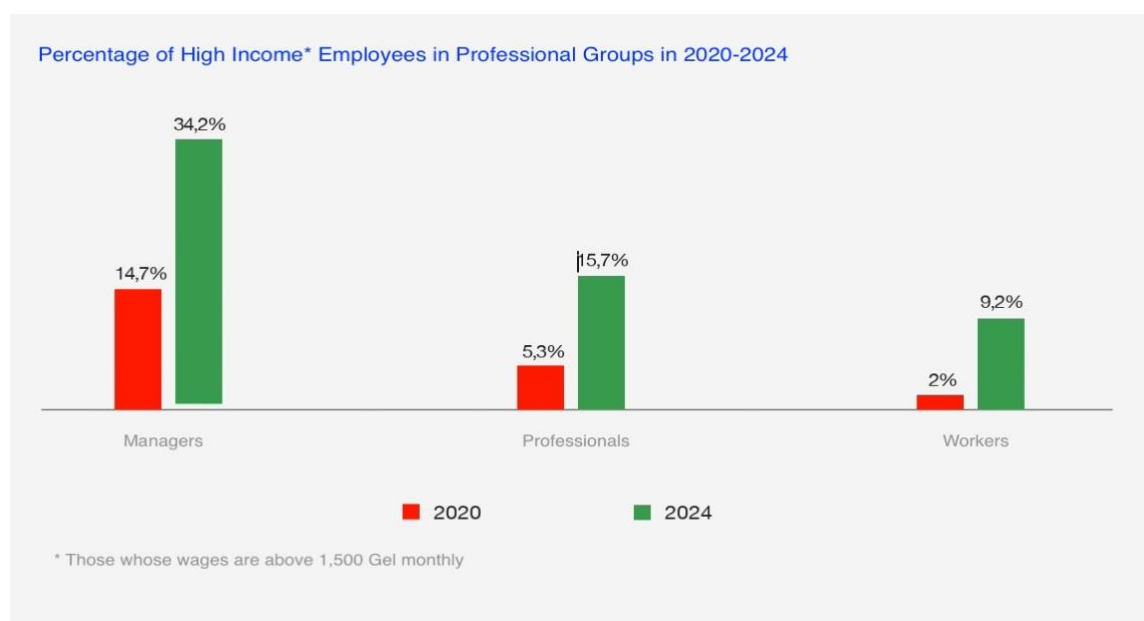
In the contemporary world, wage differences between occupational positions are generally considered acceptable, unlike differences *within* a position, which are often viewed as discrimination, especially when based on gender, race, or other similar characteristics. Moreover, in many countries, anti-discrimination legislation exists to prevent wage disparities for the same position.

In reality, however, wage differentials between positions, and especially the differing rates of wage growth, are not the result of individual merit, but rather of differing bargaining power, which in turn is linked to various structural factors. Wage differentials are influenced by:

- Strength of trade unions;
- Tax systems;
- Minimum wage policies;
- Educational systems, etc.

In socialist societies, or societies where strong trade union movements exist, wage differentials between professions are significantly smaller. For example, in post-World War II Sweden, wage differentials were intentionally reduced through a system of centralized bargaining, solidarity-based wage policy, and strong trade unions.

The graph below shows the wage growth rates for highly remunerated segments of managers, professionals, and workers in Georgia from 2017 to 2020:



As we can see, compared to 2020, in 2024, the wages of highly remunerated managers increased by approximately 20%, those of highly remunerated professionals by 10%, while the wages of highly remunerated workers increased by only 7% (it should be noted that the wage growth rate significantly exceeds the growth in the number of people employed in these positions).

Wage disparities hinder the formation of solidarity among workers and push those in higher-remunerated positions toward closer alignment with capital.

6.2. Education and Class Mismatch

In Soviet Georgia, a strong and accessible education system existed, and higher education was one of the primary determinants of high social status. The influence of this legacy is still noticeable today. The overall level of education among the employed population is quite high. For instance, nearly one-third of low-skilled workers have higher education, including over 15% with master's degrees. Similarly, nearly one-third of medium-skilled workers hold higher education degrees, with 17% holding a master's degree. These data clearly show that the Georgian economy is failing to adequately absorb and utilize its human resources.

Future research should more comprehensively demonstrate the relationship between social class and social inequality, specifically how class position determines social inequality driven by various other factors. Furthermore, to determine the rigidity of these classes and class positions, it is essential to analyze social mobility, both intra-generational (over the course of an individual's life) and inter-generational. In subsequent stages of analysis, another important direction should be determining how class position shapes people's views on various issues, including their attitudes toward the organization and management of the economy or the relationship between capital and labor.

7. Other Important Issues in Class Analysis

7.1. Precarious Labor

British scientist Guy Standing (2011) argues that the spread of vulnerable jobs in contemporary capitalism has generated a new social class, which he terms the "precarariat." The characteristics of precarity include unstable and unpredictable labor, low levels of worker organization, low income and lack of savings, weak labor guarantees, and more.

While Standing's concept is extremely important for analyzing the condition of workers, we believe that vulnerability is a characteristic of various classes and class positions, and that the instability of employment conditions or income is an insufficient criterion for class division.

This argument is particularly relevant for the Georgian context, where precarity is a pervasive phenomenon across the entire class structure. Today, in Georgia, a large portion of wage earners is vulnerable, starting from managers and ending with ordinary laborers. Vulnerability also characterizes the vast majority of the self-employed class, and even a significant portion of small employers is not free from signs of precarity.

Of course, the important question of what type of differences exist in terms of the degree of precarity between and within classes should be the subject of additional empirical research.

7.2. Secondary Exploitation

While our discussion on exploitation focused on production relations, it does not mean that exploitation occurs only in the production process and that those who are not involved in wage labor remain outside of capitalism. It is important to distinguish between primary and secondary exploitation.

If primary exploitation is part of the production process and occurs between an employer and an employee, we encounter secondary exploitation in the process of "exchange" (Lapavistas 2013; Aalbers and Christophers 2014). The latter implies the appropriation of an individual's wages, state or private benefits, or other types of income by the owner of capital in the form of interest on loans, rent, or other forms.

Thus, relationships between a property owner and a tenant, or between a creditor and a debtor, are examples of secondary exploitation. For example, if we talk about the working class, it is exploited first at the workplace (primary exploitation) and also as a debtor or tenant (secondary exploitation).

Secondary exploitation also affects the self-employed class. For example, according to our typology, the majority of those employed in markets and bazaars in Georgia—those who have no employees and whom we do not consider dependent self-employed—belong to the self-employed class. Such employees do not experience domination and exploitation in the production process because they do not have employers. The classification of such employees as an independent class occurred precisely because of their freedom from primary exploitation. However, their relationship with the owners of markets and bazaars and the administration should often be viewed through the lens of secondary exploitation (Kajaia 2021).

The concept of secondary exploitation gains special significance when describing the status of the so-called "surplus population."

7.3. "Surplus Population"

"Surplus population" refers to the part of society that is superfluous to the immediate needs of the production process (Marx 2004, Chapter 25; Davis 2006). This population can include the unemployed, housewives, students, pensioners, prisoners, and other social groups outside the labor force. Although this portion of the population does not directly participate in the production process, it is often integrated into the capitalist market and exploited as debtors, tenants, or consumers.

A clear example of this is the exploitation of pensioners by "Liberty Bank" through the pension loan system. It should be noted that capital can draw on the "surplus population" when needed to engage them in the production process. This occurred on a large scale, for example, in the second half of the 20th century in the West, when, alongside the development of production, women previously excluded from the labor market were massively incorporated into production. Similarly, since the 1970s, in the process of neoliberal globalization, transnational capital has relied on the impoverished labor force of peripheral societies.

Most importantly, the existence and reproduction of the "surplus population" is a mechanism for disciplining hired workers and maintaining their wages at a low level (Eristavi and Mikhelidze, 2025). Furthermore, a significant part of the "surplus population" (e.g., deviants, unemployed youth) is also a special object of control, discipline, and punishment by the state as a potential source of destabilization.

The "surplus population" is particularly extensive and significant in peripheral societies of the global economy. This is also the case in Georgia. We will discuss this concept, the structure of such a population in Georgia, forms of its control, and other related issues in future research.

7.4. World-System and Class Structure

According to dependency and world-systems theories, the global economic system is characterized by uneven development (Frank 1967; Wallerstein 1974; Reinert and Kvangraven 2023). The Global North (so-called developed countries) prospers at the expense of the Global South (so-called developing countries).

This process is facilitated by mechanisms operating at the global level, such as sovereign debt, investment, trade, and intellectual property rights regimes, as well as international organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Hickel 2017; Roos 2019).

The global economic system is based on an international division of labor, where Southern countries—constrained by the aforementioned regimes and organizations—have limited access to necessary technologies and restricted opportunities to protect and develop local production. These countries hold specific economic roles and functions within the global economy, which primarily entails the supply of raw materials and cheap labor for developed nations.

Most importantly, the position a country occupies within this global system significantly determines its internal class structure. Unfortunately, research on the degree and forms of Georgia's integration and dependency within the global economic system is rare and insufficient. Along with the issues listed in this document, this topic should become a central focus of future research.

Conclusion

In this study, we have presented initial data on the division of Georgian society into social classes. Furthermore, we have discussed several issues and directions that should be the subject of future class analysis. These include: Theoretical and empirical research to refine and improve the class scheme; Differences and interrelations between class conditions (income, education, reproduction capabilities, etc.); Differences in political or other types of views among individuals based on class belonging; The impact of class belonging on social inequality and social mobility; Issues related to class organization; Analysis of state policies and institutions through a class lens; Analysis of the formation and change of class structure; Issues regarding the structure of the so-called "surplus population," as well as state control and discipline over them; The impact of the degree and forms of Georgia's integration into the global economic system on its class structure and other related issues.

With this study, we wished to emphasize once again that Georgian society is a deeply unequal one. At the same time, in our opinion, this inequality must first and foremost be viewed in the context of hierarchies between classes and class oppression. We believe that it is impossible to properly understand the social, economic, and political processes ongoing in the country without a class perspective.

However, returning the discussion about classes and class conflict to the public sphere is not merely a research or academic necessity; it is, first and foremost, a political imperative. It is clear to us that the often-superficial confrontations occurring around geopolitical choices and cultural themes, which have occupied the public space, mask the real conflicts between classes. In reality, class oppression itself feeds the social confrontations that have exhausted Georgian society. Therefore, revealing class conflicts is of essential importance, both for a proper analysis of social reality and for planning and conducting the struggle for social justice correctly. This study is an attempt to make a humble contribution to this analysis and path of struggle.

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