



# PRE-ELECTION MEDIA MONITORING

INTERIM REPORT



მედია განვითარების ფონდი  
MEDIA DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION



Kingdom of the Netherlands

FREE  
PRESS  
UNLIMITED

1 APRIL - 31 JULY, 2016

Authors:

TAMAR KHORBALADZE

Peer review:

JEAN MARIE COAT, FPU Expert

Researchers:

TAMAR GAGNIASHVILI, SOPHO GOGADZE, KHATIA LOMIDZE, ROMAN BAINDURASHVILI,  
TAMAR SOPROMADZE, TINA GOGOLADZE, IRAKLI TSKHADADZE, MARIAM TSUTSKIRIDZE,  
NATIA GOGELIA, NATIA GOGOLASHVILI, DALI KURDADZE

Editor:

TAMAR KINTSURASHVILI

Designed by

BESIK DANELIA / IBDesign



Kingdom of the Netherlands

The report is prepared by Media Development Foundation (MDF) in the framework of the project “Transparent and Accountable Media for Enhancing Democratic Practices during Elections” supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Georgia. The contents of this report is the sole responsibility of the MDF and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Embassy.

© 2016, MEDIA DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

MDFGEORGIA.GE

MEDIAMETER.GE/GE

## INTRODUCTION

Media Development Foundation (MDF) is conducting a pre-election media monitoring from April 1 to October 31, 2016. The monitoring is carried out with the financial support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands in Georgia within the frame of the project *Transparent and Accountable Media for Enhancing Democratic Practices during Elections*.

The aim of the project is to study how political subjects are represented in qualitative and quantitative terms in primetime news programs of TV channels and in online media; to clarify whether media provides citizens with relevant information to help them make an informed choice. The aim of the project also is to reveal essential problems through publicizing the findings of the research and attract citizens' attention to the reliability of their sources.

The methodology for MDF's monitoring was developed by Dominique Thierry, consultant of Free Press Unlimited (FPU).

Primetime news programs of the following TV channels were selected as monitoring subjects: the Georgian Public Broadcaster (Moambe at 20:00), Rustavi 2 (Kurieri at 21:00), Imedi (Kronika at 20:00), Maestro (Kontakti at 20:00), Kavkasia (Dges at 20:30), Tabula (Focus at 19:00), GDS (20/30 at 20:30). From 1 June the list was extended to include TV Obiektivi as this TV channel launched its news program (Akhali Ambebi at 19:30) on 16 May.

The monitoring subjects in online media are: Inter Press News (IPN), PiA, Netgazeti, Pirveli Radio, Marshalpress.

Monitoring subjects were selected on the basis of audience reach and influence. Due consideration was given to both TV ratings and the survey on the needs of political parties<sup>1</sup> conducted by MDF in 2016, before launching the monitoring, where political affiliation of certain media outlets were named by different political subjects themselves.

This interim report reflects the results of the monitoring carried out over the period from 1 April to 31 July 2016. Between 1 April and 1 June, the monitoring focused on news programs broadcast on weekdays (excluding weekends) alone. Since 1 June, the monitoring has been extended to include primetime news programs aired on weekends as well as weekly analytical programs such as Rustavi 2 (Kurieri P.S., aired on Sunday at 21:00) and Imedi (Imedis Dro, Sunday at 20:00). Where the news program is of mixed format (such as, for example, the primetime news program of GDS), the monitoring covers only the news section of the program.

In online media, monitoring also targets textual and photo aspects of news materials. But the qualitative part also discusses enclosed video materials.

The monitoring is carried out by the quantitative and qualitative method according to the following variables: direct/indirect coverage of political subjects; tone of content and context of coverage (positive/negative/neutral); topics covered in relation to political subjects; gender representation; the qualitative aspect involves the assessment of elements of pre-election media ethics such as accuracy, impartiality and fairness, balance, visual and verbal manipulations, reporting sociological surveys.

In carrying out the qualitative analysis of the monitoring, the requirements and principles of the following laws, self-regulation and recommendation documents were observed: the Election Code of Georgia, the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting, the Code of Conduct of Broadcasters, the Code of Conduct of Georgian Public Broadcaster, the Charter of Journalistic Ethics, and Recommendation No. R (99) 15 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

**ADVOCACY.** During the monitoring period, Labour party addressed the MDF twice. According to the party, Imedi TV's newsroom did not broadcast the meetings of the Leader of the Labour Party, Shalva Natelashvili with

---

<sup>1</sup> MDF (2016), Survey on Needs of Political Parties. <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/33>

electorate, presentation of candidates and briefings, and that its journalists did not attend the election-related events. One of the examples included an election-related event of the party scheduled on 12 August in Didgori.

Communication on this issue took place with the newsroom of Imedi TV as well. The newsroom is aware of the complaint of the Labour Party. According to the editorial board, it has made several efforts for solving the problem, communicated with the representatives of the party. They added that the TV channel expresses readiness to broadcast every important event of the party.

According to a four-month monitoring (April 1 –July 31, 2016) of the MDF, the Labour party was given 155 seconds in the main news program of Imedi TV that is 0.18% of the total time allocated to the political subjects covered by the TV channel. It is noteworthy, that the party was not covered in May at all, while in June, only 3 seconds were dedicated to it. With these data, Imedi TV has the lowest indicator among the target TV channels of the monitoring.

According to the monitoring report of the Georgian National Communications Commission covering the period from 8 June to 8 July, only 53 seconds were allocated to the Labour Party during the daytime, while the party was not covered during the primetime at all.

After inquiring the issue, the Media Development Foundation addressed Imedi TV with the recommendation<sup>2</sup> to follow the principle of impartiality towards qualified subjects which is ensured by law and by the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters.

On September 5, Labour party addressed again the MDF regarding covering pre-election activities by Imedi TV's newsroom. Labor party claimed that the newsroom of Imedi TV did not cover the presentation of Shalva Natelashvili as the majoritarian candidate in Dusheti.

**STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT.** The first part of the report provides the overall data of TV news programs, reflecting direct/indirect coverage of political subjects, the tone of content and context as well as topics in relation to which political subjects were covered. The second part of the report contains qualitative and quantitative data by each TV channel. The third part reflects the overall data for online media followed by the data on individual online editions in the fourth part. The gender representation and stereotypes in the coverage of political subjects are described in the fifth part whilst hate speech is covered in the sixth part. The final, concluding part contains recommendations.

Statistical data are provided according to the following principle: institutions (government; President's administration; CEC; Interagency Commission for Free and Fair Elections); qualified political parties<sup>3</sup>; parties having representatives in the Parliament<sup>4</sup>, and non-parliamentary parties, whose coverage was above 1% are calculated separately<sup>5</sup>; a category "other" unites those parties, whose coverage is below 1%, and independent (non-partisan) MPs and members of local councils (sakrebulo); non-parliamentary opposition unites those political parties, which have no representatives in elective bodies, and simultaneously, whose coverage is below 1%.

---

<sup>2</sup> MDF address Imedi TV with recommendations, August 19 2016, [http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view\\_news/463](http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view_news/463)

<sup>3</sup> The parties forming the Georgian Dream coalition were grouped before its disintegration and afterwards independently.

<sup>4</sup> Girchi; Tamaz Mechiauri – for United Georgia; New Georgia;

<sup>5</sup> State for People

<b>MAIN FINDINGS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. UNIFORM DATA FOR PRIME-TIME TV NEWS PROGRAMS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2. TOPICS COVERED IN TV REPORTING ON POLITICAL SUBJECTS</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3. PRIME-TIME NEWS PROGRAMS DATA BY TV CHANNELS</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1. Georgian Public Broadcaster;	11
3.2. Rustavi 2;	15
3.3. Imedi;	19
3.4. Maesro;	24
3.5. GDS;	29
3.6. Tabula;	34
3.7. Kavkasia;	37
3.8. Obiektivi.	41
<b>4. UNIFORM DATA FOR ONLINE MEDIA</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>5. TOPICS COVERED IN ONLINE MEDIA REPORTING ON POLITICAL SUBJECTS</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>6. ONLINE MEDIA DATA BY MEDIA OUTLETS</b>	<b>51</b>
6.1 Interpressnews;	51
6.2. PIA;	57
6.3. Netgazeti;	62
6.4. Pirveli Radio;	65
6.5. Marshalpress.	70
<b>7. GENDER REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL SUBJECTS AND GENDER STEREOTYPING IN BROADCAST AND ONLINE MEDIA</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>8. HATE SPEECH IN TV AND ONLINE MEDIA</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>84</b>

## MAIN FINDINGS

Based on findings of 4 month monitoring (1 April – 31 July) of prime time TV news programs and online media it can be concluded that voters are provided with diverse information and plurality of political opinions. However, in certain cases external pluralism is observed, when general picture of political developments can be created through collecting information from media platforms with different editorial policies. Following main trends were revealed through media monitoring:

### TV Channels

- The government (34.6%) was the leader among the monitoring subjects by amount of coverage received from all eight TV channels that were monitored. The largest amount of time was allocated to government by Imedi TV (41.2%) and GDS (41.1%) whereas the smallest amount of time by Rustavi 2 (25%).
- The ruling political force, Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia, was covered most extensively by Tabula (27.4%) and Rustavi 2 (25.1%) and least extensively by Obiektivi TV (15.8%). Moreover, indirect reporting on this political subject exceeded direct reporting by the mentioned TV channels.
- The total reporting on the government and the ruling party (56.5%) exceeded the total reporting on opposition political parties (36.4%). The largest gap between these two indicators was observed in Imedi TV (the government and Georgian Dream - 62.8% vs. the opposition – 30.7%).
- United National Movement (15.5%) was the second to the Georgian Dream by the amount of received coverage from seven TV channels; it was most extensively covered by Rustavi 2 (19.7%) and least extensively by Obiektivi TV (9.8%). Obiektivi TV was the only exception which spent the second largest time, after the ruling party, on the coverage of the Alliance of Patriots (10.2%).
- The most positive tone in the coverage of the government was observed in Maestro (15%) whereas the least positive tone was observed in Rustavi 2 (4%). The most negative in tone towards the government was Rustavi 2 (35%) whereas the least negative were GDS (6%) and the Georgian Public Broadcaster (8%).
- The coverage of Georgian Dream by Maestro (18%) was most positive in tone whereas by Rustavi 2 (32%) and Kavkasia (28%) was most negative. The least negative tone in the coverage of this political party was observed in GDS (8%) and the Georgian Public Broadcaster (12%).
- The most positive tone in the coverage of UNM was observed in Maestro (9%) and Rustavi 2 (8%), whereas the most negative tone was observed in Obiektivi TV (30%) and Imedi (29%).
- The share of Central Electoral Commission in total coverage was rather low (0.7%) as well as the share of Interagency Commission for Free and Fair Elections (0.1%).
- The highest positive tone of context, i.e. the indicator of critical attitude towards topics in reporting on political subjects, was observed in Maestro (9%) whereas the most negative tone was observed in Rustavi 2 (48%).
- Most frequently covered issues were activities carried out within the frame of pre-election campaigns (17.5%); this was followed by justice (14.2%) and political confrontation (10.7%) which shows the degree of radicalization of the process. The share of such topics as education, environment, conflict regions, refugees, health care, social problems, human rights was below 3% in the reporting about political subjects.
- The qualitative study showed that the journalistic standard of coverage by the monitored TV media was not uniform. Violation of balance in reporting was observed in almost all media outlets: when an event was covered from the standpoint of one side alone or comments of both sides were recorded but the balance was artificial and biased towards one of the sides.
- There were instances when TV channels (GDS, Imedi, Maestro) reporting on government events, including infrastructure or business projects, did not seek assessments of various political groups, thereby violating balance in favor of the government.
- There were instances when an opinion of only one opposition party was presented as the opinion of the entire specter of opposition political parties (for example, the Alliance of Patriots on Obiektivi TV, the UNM on Tabula TV).
- No monitoring media outlets did respect all the standard established by the law for the coverage of pre-election public opinion polls to avoid manipulation of public opinion. In this regard the Georgian National

Communications Commission<sup>6</sup>, on 22 July, released a statement reminding media outlets of the standard established by the law for the coverage of pre-election public opinion polls. Almost all TV channels failed to communicate all required data about the poll in full; in separate instances (Imedi, GDS) the opinion poll's questions were incorrectly formulated thereby misleading the audience.

- The share of women politicians (16%) in reporting was much lower than that of men politicians (84%). The highest share of women politicians was seen in the reports by Obiektivi TV (19%) whereas the lowest share was seen in the reports by the Public Broadcaster, Maestro and GDS (15%). The share of direct coverage of women politicians was higher (77%) than that of men politicians (65%) in broadcast media.
- During the reporting period, media covered four statements of political subjects, containing gender stereotypes. All of them were made by representatives of the Georgian Dream coalition.
- Although the broadcast media was not itself a source of hate speech, it covered 25 statements of political subjects, containing hate speech without commenting what type of speech it was. Of those statements 17 were homophobic, five were the encouragement of violence towards political opponents, one was racist and one was the expression of personal offense. The majority of homophobic statements (13) were made by representatives of the political coalition Georgian Dream. The highest number of homophobic statements (5) were covered by the GPB in its daytime news programs, while only in two cases it was not mentioned that the comments were homophobic.

## Online Media

- Five target online media outlets spent the highest amount of time on reporting about the government. The government was most extensively covered by the news agencies PIA (54.6%) and IPN (53.9%) and least extensively by Pirveli Radio (33.1%). One of the reasons of extensive coverage of the government in online media may be the contracts on the release of information, which were entered into by the mentioned agencies (IPN and PIA) with budget organizations in 2016.<sup>7</sup>
- The ruling political party Georgian Dream was most extensively covered by Marshalpress (27%) and least extensively by IPN (14.4%). In both cases, direct reporting significantly exceeded indirect reporting.
- The total coverage of the government and the ruling party made up 64.6% which exceeded the total coverage of opposition political parties (28.2%) by 2.3 times. The abovementioned two political subjects were most extensively covered (71.2%) by the news agency PIA.
- The United National Movement received the highest amount of coverage among opposition political parties. Most extensively it was covered by Netgazeti (13.9%) and Marshalpress (13.7%) though direct reporting comprised only 2.5%. Least extensively the UNM was covered by PIA (5%).
- The positive tone in reporting about the government was the highest in the coverage by Marshalpress (29%) and the lowest in the coverage by PIA (5%). These agencies were distinguished for the least negative tone in reporting about the government: PIA – 1% and Marshalpress – 2%. The negative tone in reporting about the government was most extensively applied by Pirveli Radio (17%) and Netgazeti (11%).
- The positive tone towards the Georgian Dream was the highest in the reporting by Marshalpress (24%) and the lowest in the reporting by IPN (8%) and Pirveli Radio (8%). The negative tone towards the Georgian Dream was the highest in the reporting by Pirveli Radio (25%) and the lowest in the reporting by Marshalpress (2%) and PIA (3%).
- The highest amount of positive tone towards the UNM was observed in the reporting by Netgazeti (8%) and the lowest in the reporting by IPN (1%) and PIA (2%). As regards the negative tone, it was applied most extensively by Marshalpress (72%) and PIA (43%).
- The most neutral in tone the online media was in the reporting about Democratic Movement for United Georgia, which received a mere 2.2% of the total coverage.
- The share of coverage of President in online media comprised 6.5%, of the Central Electoral Commission – 0.5% and Interagency Commission – 0.04%.
- The indicators of the tone of context, i.e. critical attitude towards topics in reporting on political subjects, were the following: the most positive tone of context was observed in Marshalpress (14%); the least

<sup>6</sup> GNCC (22 July 2016); statement concerning the publication of results of public opinion polls by media outlets in the run up to elections. <http://bit.ly/2bd0wWZ>

<sup>7</sup> Media Development Foundation (16 June 2016); Practice of Allocating Budgetary Resources among Media for the Release of Information and Advertisement; <http://mediameter.ge/ge/research/reklamis-da-inpormaciis-gavrclebis-miznit-mediashi-sabiujeto-resursebis-ganacilebis>

positive tone of context was observed in Pirveli Radio (1%). In case of negative tone, the highest indicator of negative tone was observed in NetgazeTi (31%) and the lowest indicator of negative tone was observed in PIA (8%).

- The coverage of political subjects in online media was most frequently focused on pre-election activities (21.8%). This was followed by foreign relations (10.6%) and Prime Minister's activities (8.4%). A substantial coverage was received by issues related to economy and infrastructure, agriculture and tourism (7.2%). Such prioritization of issues must be the result of contracts which various government entities have with online editions to publish their information.
- Unlike Netgazeti, which observed balance in a single news item, other online editions achieved balance in several news items taken together.
- Several online editions (for example, Marshalpress, PIA) often released information which was based on an improper source, was not verified and was biased.
- Several media outlets (for example, Marshalpress and Pirveli Radio) published photo manipulation, including of homophobic content on Marshalpress.
- Instances were observed of publishing pre-electoral or government information of identical content, which assumedly were advertisements and were not separated from editorial materials. The only exception was IPN which in most cases, though not regularly, separated advertisement from editorial content.
- Much like broadcast media, online media also were not observing fully the standard of reporting pre-election public opinion polls, which is established by the law. The necessary details about polls were not fully provided and questions were communicated to readers in a manipulative way in some cases (PIA, Marshalpress).
- Alike in broadcast media, the representation of women (15%) in online media was well below the representation of male politicians (85%); the highest indicator of covering women politicians was observed in PIA (19%) whereas the lowest indicator was observed in Marshalpress (12%). Direct reporting about women politicians (58%) exceeded that of male politicians (50%).
- According to the monitoring results of hate speech, the highest amount of material containing hate speech was published by Marshalpress (11). Netgazeti was the only online edition which noted in two cases that the speech applied by respondents was homophobic while InterPressNews, in one case, assessed a statement as offensive in the title.



# 1. UNIFORM DATA FOR PRIME-TIME TV NEWS PROGRAMS

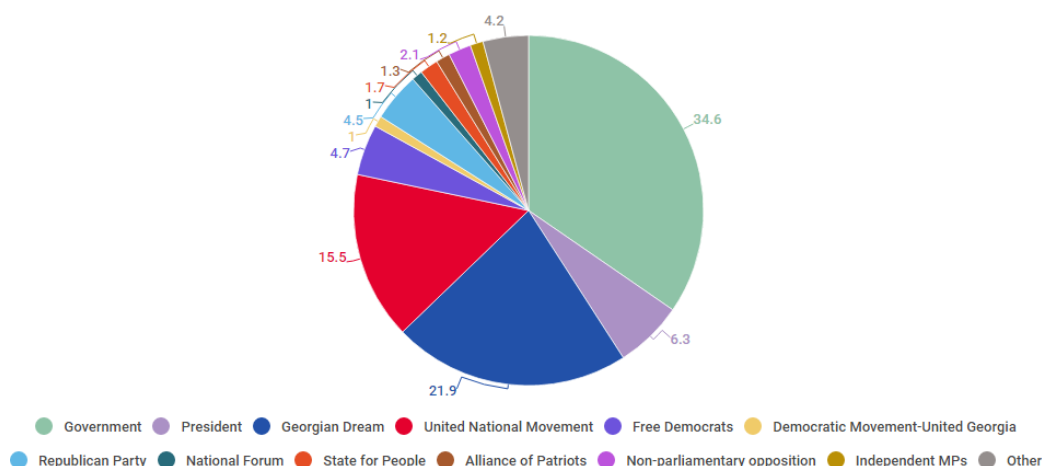
Four-month monitoring of televisions' primetime news programs (April 1 – July 31) has revealed that in aggregate, the most airtime was dedicated to the Government (34.6%) and the ruling political force, Georgian Dream (21.9%), totaling 56.5%. A share of these two subjects in total coverage falls behind the respective figure (64.6%) of online media by 8%.

Georgian Dream is followed by United National Movement (15.5%). As for other qualified political subjects, the picture looks as follows: Free Democrats (4.7%); Republican Party (4.5%); Alliance of Patriots (1.3%); Democratic Movement – United Georgia and National Forum – 1% each. The following qualified parties received less than 1%: Labor Party (0.8%); Industry will Save Georgia (0.5%) and Conservative Party (0.5%).

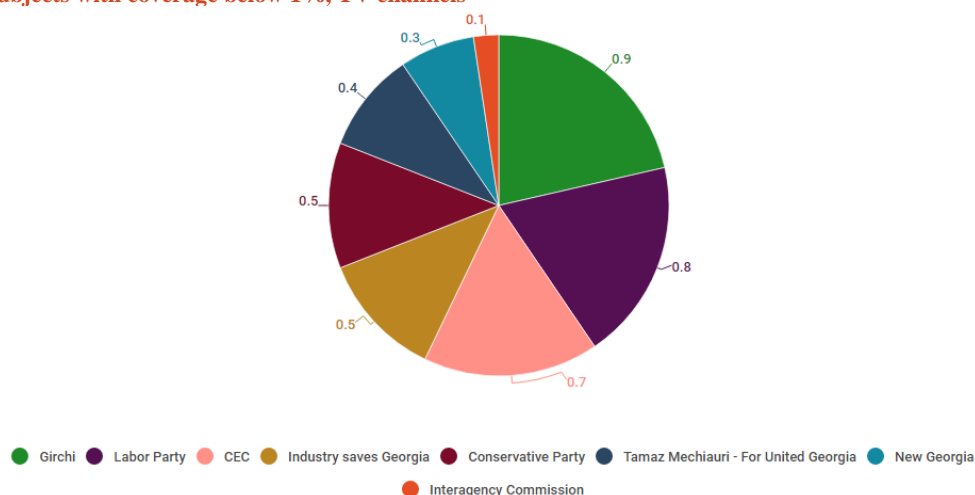
Among those parties, which were set up during the year of elections, State for People was covered most intensively by TV media (1.7%), followed by Girchi (0.9%); Tamaz Mechiauri United Georgia (0.4%) and New Georgia (0.3%).

A share of coverage of non-parliamentary opposition was 2.1%. In terms of total coverage, a share of the President's coverage in TV media was 6.3%; CEC – 0.7% and Interagency Commission – 0.1%.

**Chart 1.1. Airtime dedicated to political subjects, TV**



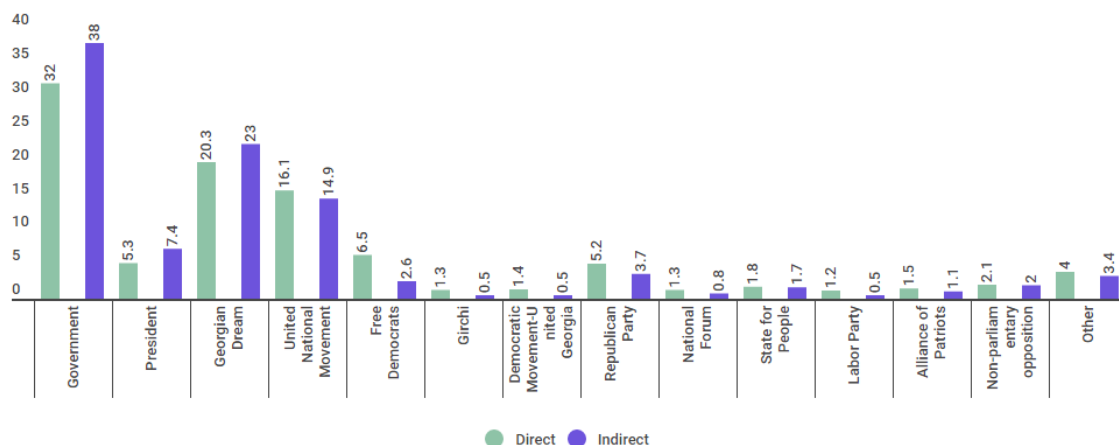
**Chart 1.2. Subjects with coverage below 1%, TV channels**



**Direct/indirect coverage of political subjects.** As chart 1.3 shows, indirect coverage prevails over direct coverage most significantly in case of the Government (indirect 38%, direct 32%). Three more subjects, where indirect coverage prevails over direct coverage, are: Georgian Dream (indirect 23%, direct 20.3%); President (indirect 7.4%, direct 5.3%) and CEC (indirect 0.8%, direct 0.4%).

In case of other subjects, direct coverage either prevails over indirect coverage or they are identical. The only exception is the Interagency Commission for Fair and Free Elections, which was covered only indirectly (0.1%).

**Chart 1.3. Direct/indirect coverage of political subjects, TV**



**Tone of content and context in covering political subjects.** Coverage of the ruling political force, Georgian Dream was highly negative in tone (21%); its positive coverage was only 7%. The tone of coverage of the Government and National Movement was equally negative (17% each). However, positive coverage of the Government (9%) prevailed over positive coverage of National Movement (5%). Negative tone of coverage prevailed over positive tone in case of National Forum (negative 10%, positive 3%) and Republican Party (negative 7%, positive 2%).

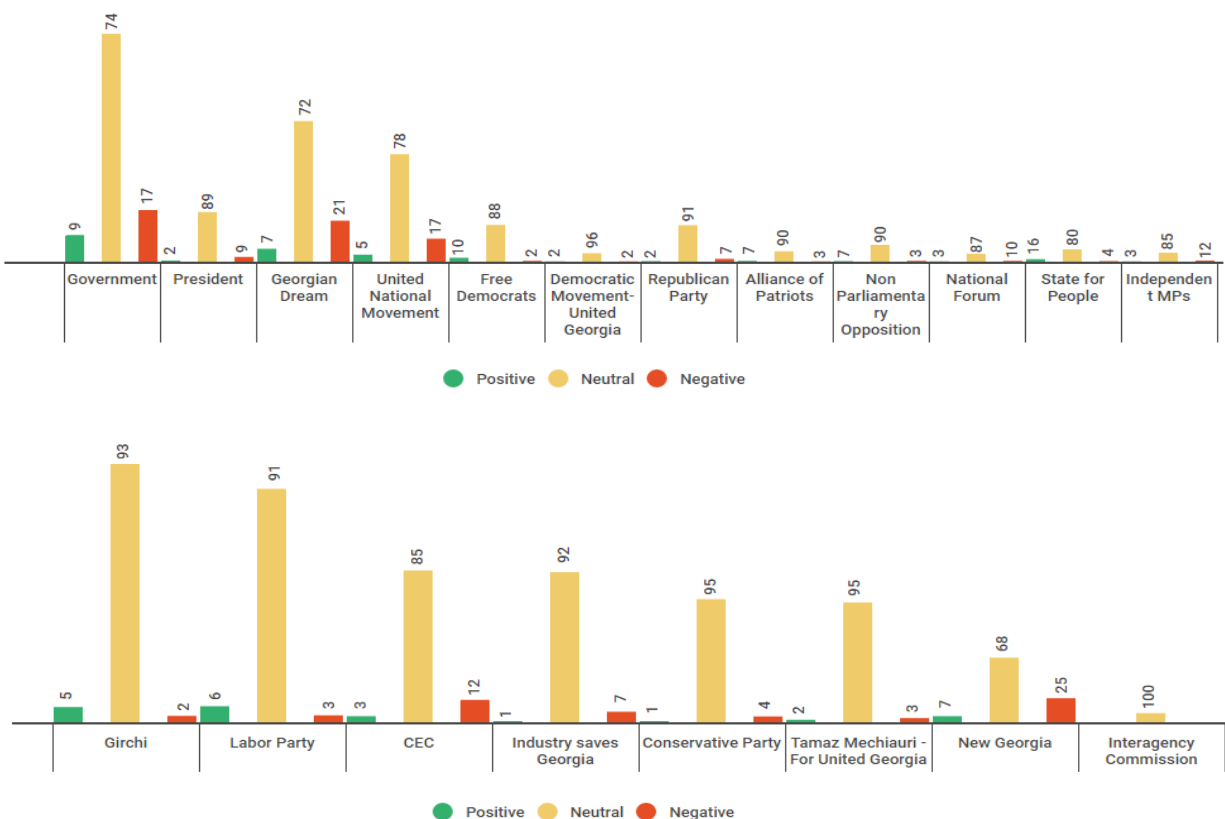
Coverage of newly established party State for People was highly positive in tone (positive 16%, negative 4%); among qualified political parties, Free Democrats was covered most positively (positive 10%, negative 2%). As for Alliance of Patriots and non-parliamentary opposition, positive tone prevailed over negative tone in both cases (positive 7%, negative 3%).

Among election subjects, coverage of Democratic Movement – United Georgia was highly neutral in tone (96%); its positive and negative tones are equal – 2%.

Among those political subjects, whose coverage was below 1%, New Georgia was covered most negatively (25%); its positive coverage is 7%. Coverage of Industry will Save Georgia is also highly negative in tone (7%; positive 1%). In case of Conservatives (negative 4%, positive 1%) and Tamaz Mechiauri – United Georgia (negative 3%, positive 2%), negative coverage prevails over positive coverage. The situation is quite the contrary in case of Girchi (positive 5%, negative 2%) and Labor Party (positive 6%, negative 3%), where positive coverage prevails over negative coverage.

As for the President, negative coverage (9%) prevails over positive coverage (2%); the same is in case of CEC (negative 12%, positive 3%); the tone of coverage of the Interagency Commission is 100% neutral.

**Chart 1.4. Tone of content, TV**



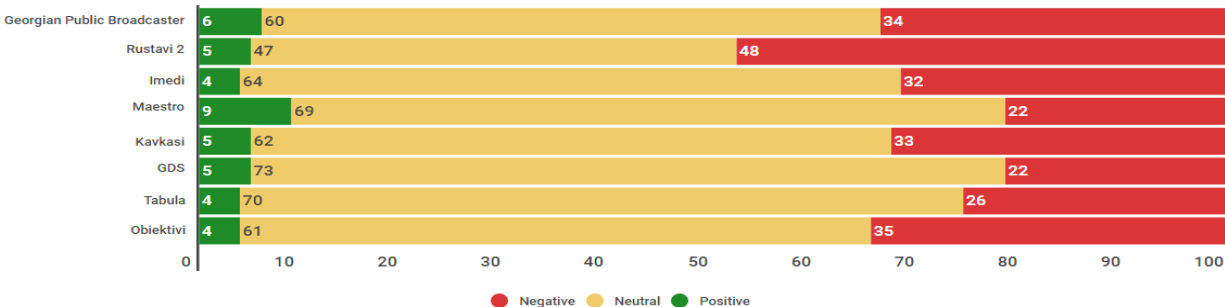
**Tone of context.** Neutral tone of context prevails statistically in coverage of political subjects by televisions. However, statistics enables to separate media outlets covering more or less critical topics.

According to the data, coverage of critical topics, i.e. materials with negative context, by TV media significantly prevail over materials with positive context.

Rustavi 2 TV has the highest percentage in terms of negative tone of context (48%), followed by Obiektivi (35%); Georgian Public Broadcaster (34%); Kavkasia (33%) and Imedi (32%). A share of Tabula's negative context is 26%; Maestro and GDS – 22% each.

Maestro TV has the highest percentage in terms of positive tone of context (9%), followed by GPB (6%), Rustavi 2, Kavkasia and GDS with identical share of positive context (5%); a share of Imedi, Tabula and Obiektivi was also identical (4%).

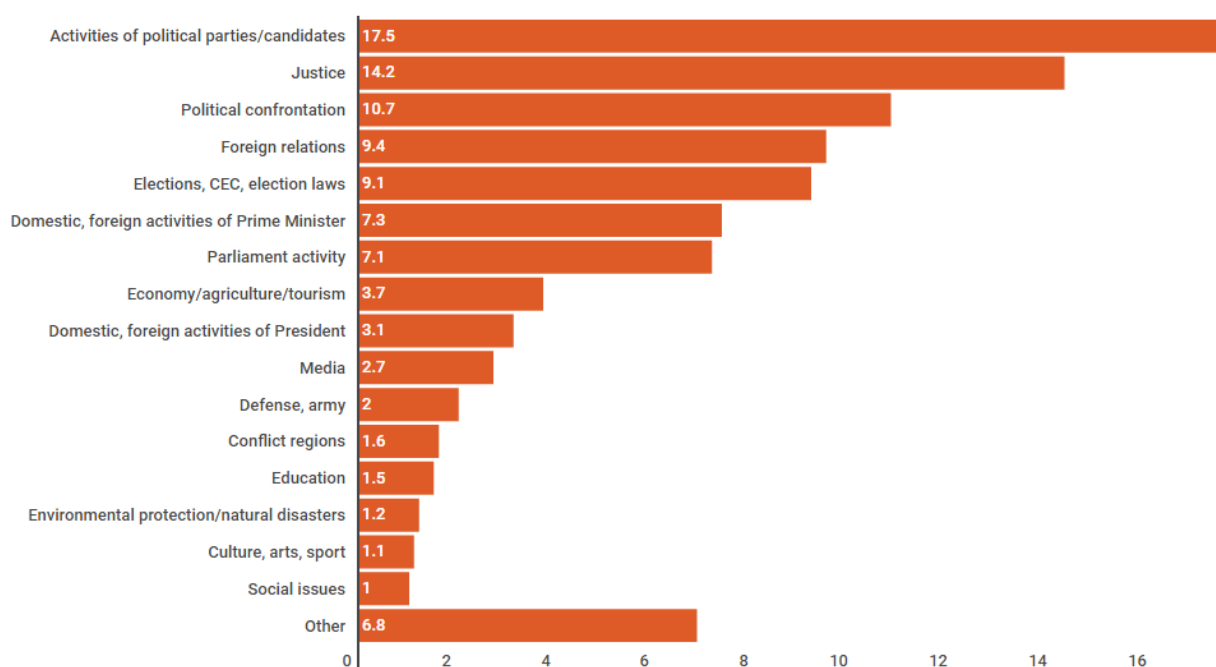
**Chart 1.5. Tone of context, TV**



## 2. TOPICS COVERED IN TV REPORTING ON POLITICAL SUBJECTS

The analysis of primetime news programs on TV media (10 229 stories) for 4 month (April 1 - July 31) revealed that the topics covered in reports on political subjects during the reporting period were mostly related to campaign activities carried out by political subjects in the run up to the forthcoming parliamentary elections (17.5%). The second most frequently covered topic was justice (14.2%) which combines issues related to court proceedings (including Rustavi 2 case, cases of representatives of former United National Movement government, the so-called case of cables related to Free Democrats, the issues surrounding the Constitutional Court, et cetera), penitentiary system, so-called restoration of justice, various crimes and other relevant themes. This is followed by: political confrontations (10.7%), which at the same time indicates about the degree of radicalization of political process ahead of the elections; the foreign relations (9.4%); issues regarding election legislation and administration of elections (9.1%).

**Chart 2.1. Topics covered in TV reporting on political subjects**



Comparison of topics covered in the pre-election reporting on political subjects with the results of public opinion poll, conducted by the US National-Democratic Institute (NDI) in June 2016,<sup>8</sup> shows that the top most important national issues<sup>9</sup> - Jobs, poverty, territorial integrity, price increase/inflation, pensions - named by respondents do not make into prioritized topics in the coverage of political subjects. For example, the topic of territorial integrity and conflicts which is the third priority according to the public opinion poll, comprises a mere 1.6% in TV reports on political subjects ahead of elections. One should also note that media allocates the least amount of time to such important topics as education (1.5%), social issues (1%), health care (0.5%) and human rights and minorities (0.9%) in the reports about political subjects.

<sup>8</sup> NDI (June 2016), Public Attitudes in Georgia. [https://www.ndi.org/files/NDI\\_June\\_2016\\_poll\\_Public\\_Issues\\_ENG\\_VFF\(1\).pdf](https://www.ndi.org/files/NDI_June_2016_poll_Public_Issues_ENG_VFF(1).pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Jobs, poverty, territorial integrity, price increase/inflation, pensions.

### 3. PRIME-TIME NEWS PROGRAMS DATA BY TV CHANNELS

#### 3.1 Georgian Public Broadcaster — Channel One

**About Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB):** Georgian Public Broadcaster<sup>10</sup> was established as a result of transformation of the State Television and Radio Corporation set up in 1956 after the Parliament adopted the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting in 2004. GPB, which currently unites two television and two radio channels, is a legal entity of public law that is independent of the state and accountable to the public. The governing bodies of the Georgian Public Broadcaster are the nine-member Board of Trustees approved by the Parliament and the Director General appointed by the Board. According to TVMR Georgia<sup>11</sup>, the annual average rating (ARM) for Georgian Public Broadcaster's Channel 1 on media market was 0,74% for the year 2015, while the share (SHR) amounted 3,92 %.

#### Quantitative Data

**Total coverage.** According to the total monitoring results (1763 stories) for four months (April 1 – July 1), those subjects (13), whose coverage was 1% and above 1 % were covered most intensively by Channel One of Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) in its primetime news programs. Most part of its airtime was dedicated to the Government (39.2%) and Georgian Dream (16.5%), totaling 55.7%.

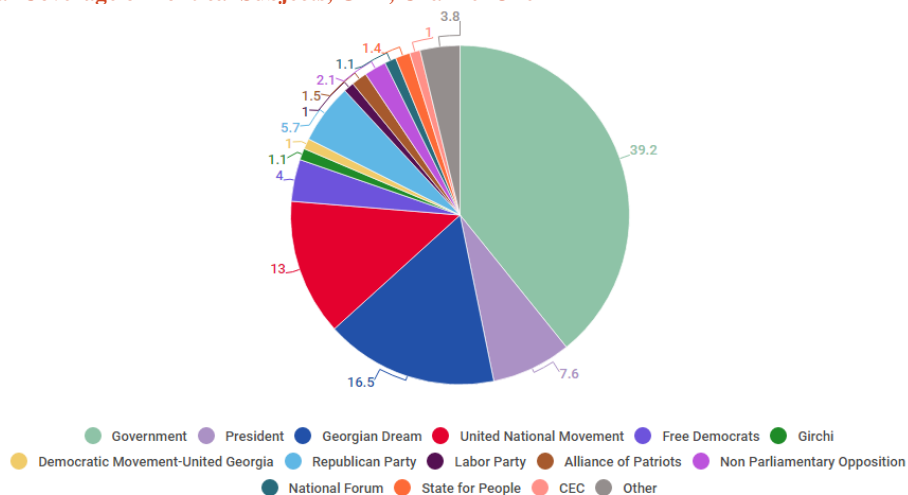
Among other parties, the United National Movement has the highest share (13%), followed by Republican Party (5.7%); Free Democrats (4%); those parties, whose coverage is below 1% (3.8%) and non-parliamentary opposition (2.1%).

A share of other qualified parties is lower: Alliance of Patriots – 1.5%; National Forum – 1.1%; Democratic Movement – United Georgia – 1.1%; Labor Party – 1%; Industry will Save Georgia – 0.7% and Conservatives – 0.6%.

Among newly created parties, State for People has the highest share (1.4%), followed by Girchi (1.1%); a share of New Georgia (0.6%) and Tamaz Mechiauri – United Georgia (0.3%) is relatively low.

The President's share in total coverage is 7.6%; Central Election Commission (CEC) – 1%.

**Chart 3.1.1. Total Coverage of Political Subjects, GPB, Channel One**



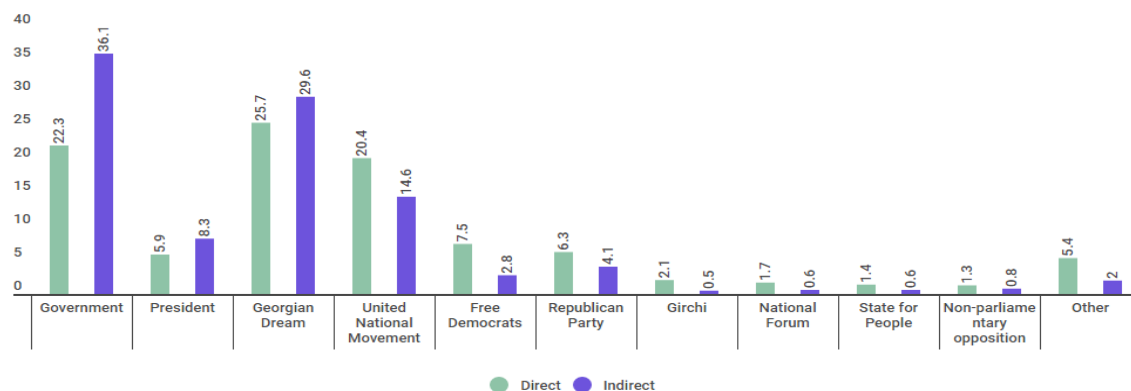
<sup>10</sup> MediaMeter, MDF, GPB, <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/channel-1-public-broadcaster>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.tvmr.ge/en/en/news/44/%26%234332%3B%26%234314%3B%26%234312%3B%26%234321%3B>

**Direct/Indirect Coverage.** In terms of direct and indirect coverage, the Government (direct 39.1%, indirect 39.4%) and Georgian Dream (direct 16.7%, indirect – 16.2%) were covered most intensively by Channel One. It should be noted that in both cases the results of direct and indirect coverage are almost identical.

The situation is different in case of the United National Movement (direct – 11.9%, indirect 13.9%), the President (direct 5.7%, indirect 9.3%), non-parliamentary opposition (direct 1.8%, indirect 2.4%), State for People (direct 1%, indirect 1.7%) and CEC (direct 0.7%, indirect 1.3%), where indirect coverage prevails over direct coverage. In case of other subjects, direct coverage prevails over indirect coverage, or the results are almost identical.

**Chart 3.1.2. Direct/Indirect Coverage of Political Parties, GPB – Channel One**

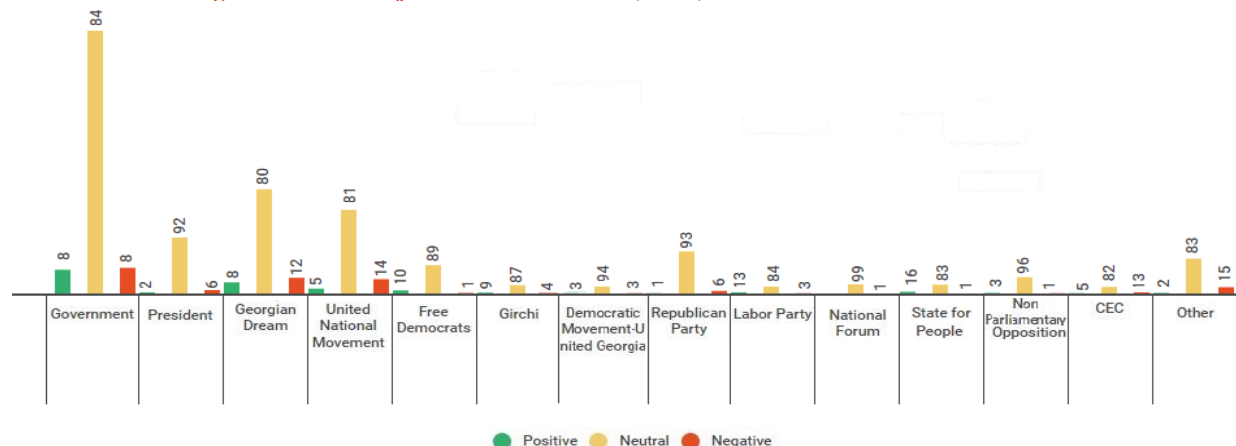


**Tone of content in covering political subjects.** Coverage of the following political subjects was most neutral in tone: National Forum (99%; negative tone – 1%); non-parliamentary opposition (96%; negative tone – 1%, positive tone – 3%); Democratic Movement – United Georgia (94%; negative tone 3%, positive tone 3%); Republican Party (93%; negative tone 6%, positive tone 1%).

Those subjects, whose coverage was below 1%, were covered most negatively in tone (15% in total); as for individual subjects, negative coverage of the United National Movement was 14%, positive coverage 5%; CEC - 13% and Georgian Dream - 12%. A share of the ruling party's positive coverage is 8%. The results of the following subjects are relatively low: Government (8%); Republican Party (6%); President (6%); Girchi (4%); Labor Party (3%); Democratic Movement – United Georgia (3%) and others.

Although with low coverage, the following subjects were covered in highly positive tone: State for People (positive 16%, negative 1%); Labor Party (positive 13%, negative 3%) and Free Democrats (positive 10%, negative 1%). Among new parties, coverage of Girchi was highly positive in tone (9%); its negative coverage was 4%.

**Chart 3.1.3. Coverage of Political Subjects – Tone of Content, GPB, Channel One**

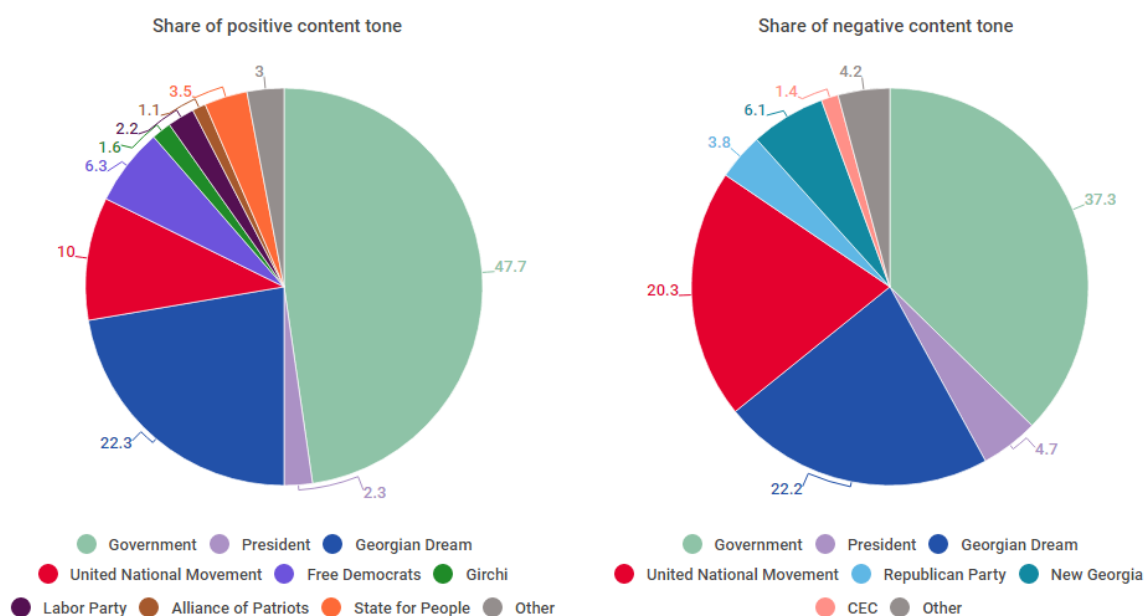


**A share of subjects in positive and negative content of the TV channel.** The Government (47.7%) and Georgian Dream (22.3%) have the highest share in Channel One's positive content (70% in total). A share of Georgian Dream in positive and negative tone is almost identical (negative 22.2%). The remaining 30% is distributed among other political subjects. The Government's share in negative content is higher (37.3%) compared to other subjects, but its share in positive content is smaller.

A share of the United National Movement in positive content is 10% and twice more in negative content - 20.3%; Free Democrats – positive content 6.3%, negative content 0.5%; State for People – positive content 3.5%, negative content 0.2%; Labor Party – positive content 2.2%, negative is less - 0.3% as well as Girchi's share in positive content 1.6% is more than in negative 0.3%.

A share of the President's coverage in positive content is 2.3%; negative content – twice more – 4.7%. Among newly established parties, a share of negative coverage of Tamaz Mechiauri – For United Georgia is quite high – 6.1%; while the positive coverage amounts 0.2%.

**Chart 3.1.4 A Share of Covering Political Subjects in Positive and Negative Content – GPB**



## Qualitative Data

The monitoring of the Georgian Public Broadcaster showed that the GPB covered a broad spectrum of political subjects and it largely observed balance and ethical standards in its reporting. However, there were instances where balance was violated and information was incomplete thereby affecting accuracy. In covering public opinion polls, the broadcaster mainly complied with the established standard, though all requirements and data necessary for the reliability of survey were not always communicated.

**Accuracy/complete information.** On 22 May (at 20:01), in the introduction to a report about a physical assault on UNM members during the midterm local election in Kortskheli, Zugdidi district, the presenter placed emphasis on the response of law enforcement officers to the incident and noted that more than 10 citizens, including UNM leaders and acting MPs, sustained injuries. However, in the report itself the journalist said:

“According to eyewitnesses, the situation at the electoral precinct in Kortskheli grew tense at around 1 o'clock, when UNM member, Nika Melia, arrived at the precinct. A verbal altercation soon degraded into a physical confrontation.”

Though report presented versions of both sides, report did not include a comment of an eyewitness describing how the arrival of the UNM member caused physical confrontation. Neither a respondent nor the journalist spoke in the report about efforts of law enforcement officers to prevent the incident on the scene. Although the report noted that persons involved in the incident prevented journalists from performing their job, even hurling bottles and stones at them, it did not include the comments of injured journalists either. Nor did it contain comments reported by other media outlets, according to which assaulting sportsmen demanded from a journalist that she erase filmed material. The report did not inform the audience about the results of election in Kortskheli in which the UNM emerged as the winner.

***Lack of balance/incomplete information.*** On 30 July, (20:00) the news program aired a report covering accusations made by several judges of the Constitutional Court against their colleagues with regard to the so-called case of cables. Five judges accused their colleagues of violating the rule of admitting and registering cases by the court and to prove it, referred to the case of cables which was associated with the former defense minister and leader of Free Democrats.

The report contained comments of both conflicting parties and a complainant: according to the accusing party, the complaint was added three pages over the week-end thereby representing the ground of violation, whereas according to another party as well as the complainant (Free Democrats), the clarification of the complaint was an accepted practice. The journalist failed to study into the legislative norms and regulations concerning the admittance and registration of complaints to find out whether the effective regulations allowed the clarification of complaints. Consequently, the audience was not able to learn from the report whether the accusations of one party were fair or arguments of another party were justified.

In the report, the journalist recalled old accusations towards the board of the Constitutional Court of Georgia which concerned the consideration of high profile cases (on Rustavi 2, cables, former Mayor of Tbilisi) at an accelerated speed. However, the report did not provide statistics showing an average length of consideration of cases, which would enable the audience to find out whether the terms of considering complaints of private TV company (Rustavi 2) and opposition political parties (Free Democrats and the UNM) were exceptions from the rule or not.

***Balance.*** On 17 May, (20:21) the news program aired a report covering a court ruling on the so-called case of cables. By this ruling, former high officials of the Defense Ministry were sent to prison. The report covered accusations of Free Democrats saying that the judge Besik Bugianishvili fulfilled instructions from the prosecution. The report also contained comments of representatives of nongovernmental organizations, emphasizing the lack of reasoning of the ruling. However, the report lacked a comment of prosecution and showed only an excerpt from a statement released by the High Council of Justice, thereby failing to achieve proper balance.

***Reporting public opinion polls/accuracy.*** On 28 June, the GPB covered a public opinion poll which was commissioned by Rustavi 2 and conducted by German-US company GFK. In the report, the broadcaster placed emphasis on the unreliability of the company that conducted the poll, referring to only problematic cases from the activity of the company. (For example, referring that the results of exit-polls conducted by the company in 2012 did not match the results of the elections; various problems appearing in Crimea and Turkey).

Moreover, the poll results were not covered comprehensively. For example, a journalist presented the ratings of the Georgian Dream and the UNM (Georgian Dream - 22,4%, United National Movement - 21,7%, State for People - 7,8 %) without naming the total number of respondents who answered the question “If you decide to participate in 9 October parliamentary elections, who would you vote for?” in the following way: refused to answer (10%), difficult to answer/have not decided yet (19.4%), will not vote for any party (3.9%). Nor did the broadcaster named the margin of error which is an important detail to have a comprehensive understanding of the poll results.

In the report the journalist said:

“The methodology and a contracting company that conducted field works are not known. Rustavi 2 has not made it public yet. It only informed that the poll was conducted in June and covered 2,200 respondents.”



Indeed, Rustavi 2 did not name the company which conducted field works but it made other information public, including the methodology. This information was reported on the TV and is also available on the website. Thus the GPB misinformed the audience.

Alike Rustavi 2, Maestro, Kavkasia and several other TV channels, the GPB covered on 14 April, (at 20:23) the results of in-house poll of the Georgian Dream, which were released by the news agency GHN. The report provided the rating of only several political parties and contained comments of representatives of two political parties.

Although a representative of the Georgian Dream denied that it was their political party's in-house poll and claimed that their poll results starkly differed, the GPB did not provide information on how the news agency obtained these poll results. Nor did it try to find out other details and necessary data of the survey (number of respondents, the methodology, the company that conducted the poll, margin of error, et cetera).

## 3.2. Rustavi 2

**About Rustavi 2 TV:** Rustavi 2 TV was founded in 1994 by Erosi Kitsmarishvili, Jarji Akimidze and Davit Dvali. Following the Rose Revolution, when the National Movement came to power, Rustavi 2 TV changed hands 20 times. The first change took place in 2004, as a result of which the TV channel's shares appeared in the hands of Kibar Khalvashi and his company. In that period Kibar Khalvashi was a friend of then Defense Minister Irakli Okruashvili.

Four months before the 2016 parliamentary elections the Court of Appeals ruled in favor of businessman Kibar Khalvashi and declared him and his Panorama Ltd legal owners of the Rustavi 2 TV's property. Current owners of Rustavi 2 TV, brothers Giorgi and Levan Karamanishvili, as well as TV Company Georgia appealed the ruling over Rustavi 2 TV ownership to the Supreme Court.

According to TVMR Georgia, TV Channel Rustavi 2 is on the first place with an annual average rating (AMR) for the year 2015-5.43%, while the share (SHR) is 28.78%.

### Quantitative Data

**Total coverage** The four-month monitoring of Rustavi 2 TV (April 1 – July 31, 2016) has revealed that in terms of total coverage (1728 stories) the TV channel dedicated a great part of its primetime news programs to the Government and the Georgian Dream coalition. A share of the government in total coverage is 28.2% and Georgian Dream – 25.1%. In sum, it makes 53, 3% of total coverage.

As for other qualified political parties, United National Movement has the largest share – 19.7%, followed by Free Democrats – 7.5% and Republicans – 3.3%.

Compared to other media outlets, Rustavi 2 TV covered the Labor Party (1.6%) more intensively. Other qualified subjects received less than 1%: National Forum – 0.7%, Democratic Movement for United Georgia – 0, 7%, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia – 0.6%; Industry will Save Georgia – 0.4%, Conservatives – 0.1%. The activities of non-parliamentary opposition accounted for 1.9% of total data.

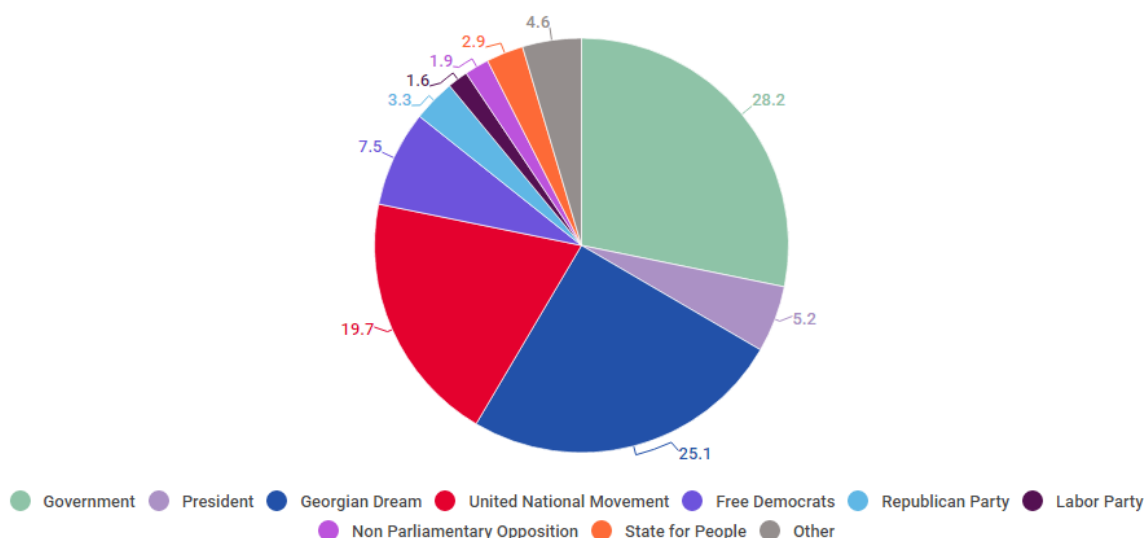
Among newly established parties, State for People was covered more intensively (2, 9%) compared to others. The share of other parties is relatively low: Girchi – 0, 4% and Tamaz Mechiauri for United Georgia – 0.3%.

Among institutions, the President's share of the total coverage amounted to 5, 2%, Central Election Commission (CEC) - 0, 6%.

---

<sup>12</sup> MediaMeter, MDF, Rustavi 2 TV, <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/rustavi-2>

**Chart 3.2.1. Total coverage of political subjects, Rustavi 2**

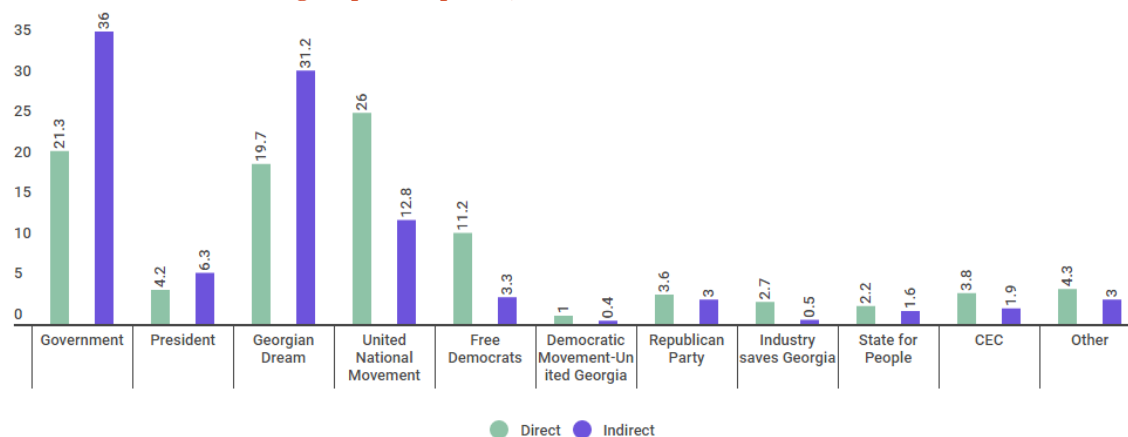


**Direct and indirect coverage** The direct coverage considerably prevails over indirect coverage in case of United National Movement (direct 26%; indirect 12.8%) and Free Democrats (direct 11, 2%, indirect 3, 3%). On the contrary, in case of the Government and Georgian Dream, indirect coverage prevails over direct coverage: Government – indirect 36%, direct 21,3%; Georgian Dream – indirect 31,2%, direct 19,7%.

As the chart 3.2.2 shows, the picture is homogenous in case of all other subjects except the President. Direct coverage prevails over indirect coverage or is almost equal. The situation is identical to the qualified subjects united in the category “other”, whose coverage was less than 1%.

Indirect coverage (6, 3%) of the President prevails over direct (4, 2%). On the contrary, in case of covering CEC the direct coverage (3, 8%) is higher than indirect (1, 9%).

**Chart 3.2.2 Direct/indirect coverage of political parties, Rustavi 2**

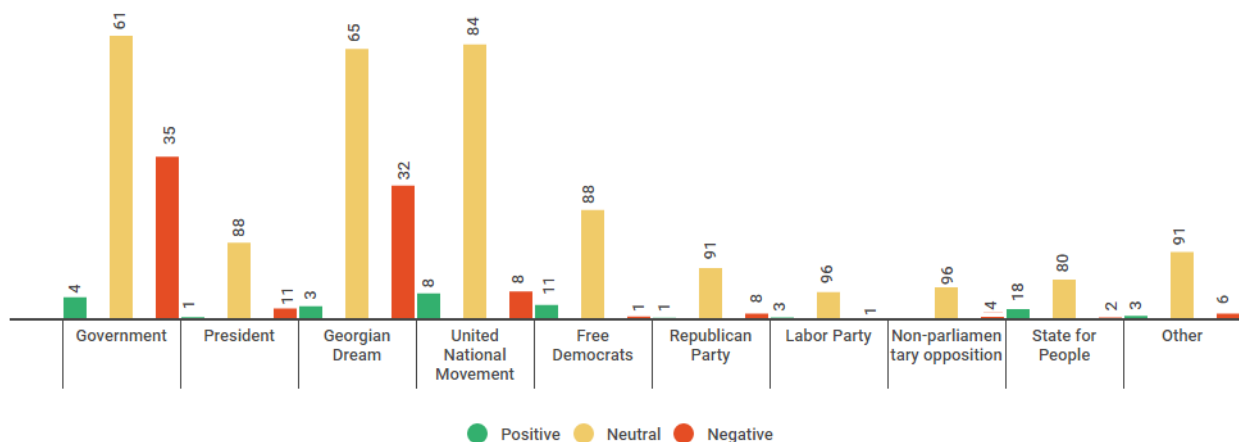


**Tone of content in covering political subjects.** Neutral tone prevailed in covering political subjects by Rustavi 2 TV in case of Labor Party (96%), non-parliamentary opposition (96%), Republican Party (91%), political parties united in the category “other”, whose coverage was less than 1% (91%), the President (88%), Free Democrats (88%) and United National Movement (84%). The highest negative tone was observed in covering the Government (35%) and Georgian Dream (32%), followed by the President (11%), United National Movement (8%) and Republic Party (8%); the last two subjects have identical results.

In covering political parties, the highest level of positive tone was observed with respect to the newly established State for People (positive 18%, negative 2%), as well as Free Democrats (positive 11%; negative 1%). Low level of negative tone is observed in case of both parties.

The tone of coverage of CEC – positive 4.5% and negative 15.8%.

**Chart 3.2.3. Coverage of political subjects – tone of content, Rustavi 2**

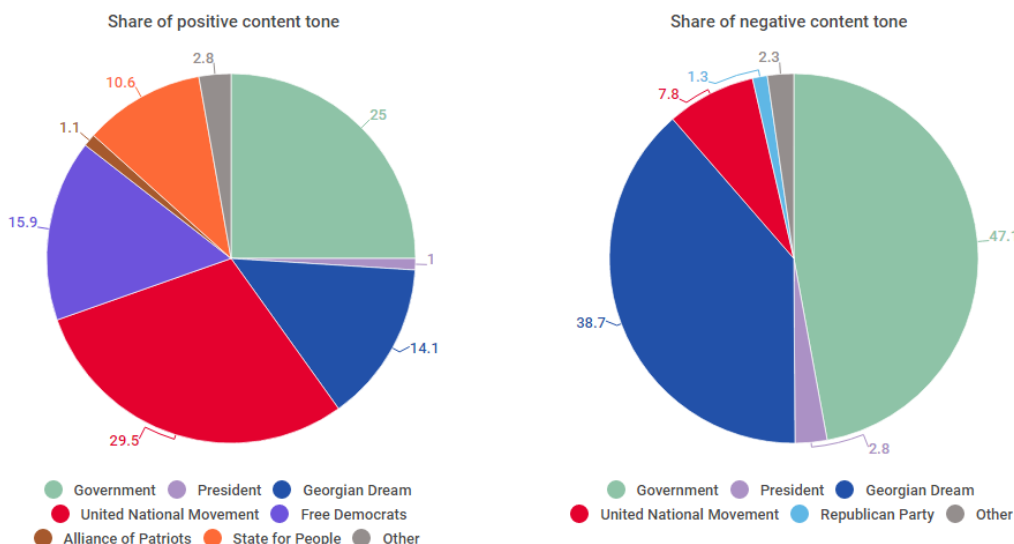


*A share of subjects in positive and negative content.* In regard to positive coverage, most of the airtime was dedicated to the United National Movement (29.5%). In case of negative content – 7.8%. The Government's share in positive content amounted to 25%, in negative content - 47.1%. Free Democrat's share in positive content was 15.9%, in negative content - 0.5%. Georgian Dream's share in negative content (38.7%) exceeded its share in positive content (14.1%). State for People's share in positive content (10.6) considerably prevailed over its share in negative content (0.2%)

The results of other qualified political parties look as follows: Alliance of Patriots – positive content 1.1%, negative 0.02%; Labor Party – positive content 0.9%, negative 0.1%; Republic Party – positive content – 0.4%, negative 1.3%. Other parties share is less than 1%.

Among institutions, the share of President in positive coverage amounted to 1%, in negative coverage - 2.8%; CEC's share in positive coverage was 0.5%, in negative - 0.4%.

**Chart 3.2.4 Share of Positive content and Negative content tone in coverage of political subjects, Rustavi 2**



## Qualitative data

Among other televisions, Rustavi 2 TV is most critical towards the government and Georgian Dream that is also confirmed by quantitative data. Coverage of the government and the ruling political team is highly negative in tone (67%) just on Rustavi 2 TV (Kavkasia – 49%; Obiektivi – 44%; Tabula – 21%; Maestro – 24%; Imedi – 22%; Georgian Public Broadcaster – 20%; GDS – 14%). The TV channel mostly covers a wide spectrum of different political subjects. As a rule, the stories present the positions of the parties, but there are a number of cases, when balance is artificial and is inclined towards one of the parties.

***Bias/insufficient sources/factual accuracy.*** The story aired on July 11 “The Gift to the State” (9:33pm) was about the fact of handing over a newly built concert hall Black Sea Arena by ex-PM Bidzina Ivanishvili’s Cartu Bank to the state. The story provides one-sided coverage of the issue and mostly focuses on the fact that maintenance of the GEL 200-million building may place a heavy financial burden on the state. The story provides this opinion as the general position of promoters, though actually the story involves the position of only one promoter.

The story involves a journalist’s comment: “A modern concert hall has the capacity of 10 000. This large-scale project arises some questions about how much the maintenance of this facility will cost taxpayers, especially as no cost analysis has been done in advance.”

Though the question is legitimate, the journalist does not try to substantiate her suppositions about additional expenses. The same supposition was expressed in the respondents’ comments, among them the former Minister of Culture. The story does not provide the position of the Ministry of Culture; moreover, the journalist did not even try to recheck whether the Ministry has a business plan on the development of Black Sea Arena, how the state plans to manage it – directly or through a private company, how much the maintenance of the concert hall will cost the state and what is planned in a long-term perspective to ensure its financial sustainability.

The story also provides the position of the other party, involving Cartu Group and the director of the newly built concert hall, instead of the Ministry of Culture, which would have been a reliable source for achieving a balance.

***Balance.*** On May 18 two stories were dedicated to the so called “cable case” (at 9:08pm and 9:15pm), involving the arrest of five former Ministry of Defense (MoD) and general staff officials over misspending charges; the case is associated with the Free Democrats opposition party. Its leader, Irakli Alasania was Defense Minister in that period. Tbilisi Court found five officials from MoD guilty of misspending of 4 GEL 4 million in an alleged sham tender on laying fiber-optic cable and sentenced them to seven years in prison.

Free Democrats, opposition and some non-governmental organizations condemned the arrest and guilty verdict as politically motivated. If the first story was more balanced, representing position of opposition, government and diplomats, in the second one all 7 respondents (2 experts, representatives of 4 political parties and 1 bar association) voiced their support to the former MoD and general staff officials and expressed accusations against the court and government. None of the stories provides the position of the court and the prosecutor’s office, not even journalist voiced their position.

***Balance.*** The July 3 story (at 10pm) is about Maestro’s new management decision to suspend employment contracts with 32 employees of TV shows – Business Contact and Sakmiani Dila after changes in Maestro ownership and changes in management. According to the story, the sacked employees plan to apply to court. It also provides comments made, among others, by opposition parties, who hint at the government’s interests. The story does not provide the positions of either the government or Georgian Dream.

***Balance.*** In the July 28 footage (at 9:59pm) the United National Movement expresses protest against the ruling of the Supreme Court of Georgia over the case of Revaz Karelidze, former deputy chairman of the Kobuleti Sakrebulo (local council). The story provides video comments made by UNM members, Giorgi Tugushi and Giga Bokeria, as well as Revaz Karelidze’s audio comment. The positions of the prosecutor’s office and the court are not provided. According to the story, Revaz Karelidze, who was serving a three-year sentence, was sentenced to 11 years in prison by the Supreme Court. The story says nothing about why the charges against Karelidze were re-qualified, as it does not provide the positions of the other party.

*Coverage of public opinion poll/factual accuracy.* The June 28 story “Political Ratings” was about the results of the poll fielded by German-American company GFK for Rustavi 2 TV.

When covering the poll, the TV channel comprehensively named 10 out of 11 compulsory requisites envisaged by legislation; the remaining one was named partially, as it did not name the company, which fielded the poll. According to the story aired by GDS TV, GFK commissioned the company BCG to field the poll; its director is the wife of Levan Tarkhnishvili; the latter is a member of the opposition United National Movement. The fact that Rustavi 2 did not name in its story the company which fielded the public opinion poll was also mentioned by Zurab Japaridze, chairman of New Political Center Girchi, who declares mistrust to the survey. The story also provides the comments made by those representatives of Georgian Dream and other political parties, who declare mistrust to the survey; it also contains Zurab Japaridze’s allegations related to the activities of GFK in Ukraine. According to the poll commissioned by Rustavi 2, there is minor difference in ratings of Georgian Dream ((22,4%) and United National Movement (21,7%), while NDI’s study<sup>13</sup> show 5% difference.

The results of the second public opinion poll were released by GHN news agency (April 14; 9:11pm). The news agency claims that the poll was commissioned by Georgian Dream. It is unclear from the story, how the news agency obtained this information; it only notes that the poll was allegedly commissioned by Georgian Dream; the latter denies any links with the poll. Still, the material provides the results of the public opinion poll and stresses that a 3% margin between Georgian Dream and National Movement coincides with the results of the poll released by the National Democratic Institute (NDI). According to the law, during a pre-election period a media outlet has to make sure of survey reliability and only afterwards it can release its results; this provision was violated by Rustavi 2 TV.

### 3.3. Imedi

**About Imedi:** Imedi TV company<sup>14</sup> was established in 2001 by late billionaire Badri Patarkatsishvili, who held executive positions at various Russian companies in the 1990s (LogoVAZ, Russian Automobile Dealers), including at Russian TV-6 channel and the public broadcaster ORTV. In 2008, Badri Patarkatsishvili ran for president of Georgia.

Imedi TV changed hands after riot police raided it on November 7, 2007. On November 13, 2007, the channel was transferred to News Corp Europe Inc. with the 100% management right; since August 27, 2009, the TV channel became wholly owned by Georgian Media Production Group, where former Economy Minister Giorgi Arveladze of the National Movement owned 45% of shares. After the change in power as a result of the parliamentary elections in 2012, Imedi TV was returned to the Patarkatsishvili family on the basis of agreement on conceding the share at a symbolic price. According to the TVMR Georgia, Imedi took second place with annual average rating (AMR) 4,23% and share (SHR) - 22, 39% in 2015.

#### Quantitative Data

**Total coverage.** The four-month monitoring of Imedi TV (April 1 – July 31) has revealed that in terms of total coverage (1 460 stories) the TV channel dedicated the greatest part of its primetime news programs to the government (41.2%) and Georgian Dream (21.6%). A total share of both of them is 62.8%. As far as other political parties are concerned, the opposition United National Movement has the largest share – 12.6%, followed by Republicans (6%), Free Democrats (3.1%) and National Forum (1%). A share of other qualified political subjects is less than 1% totaling 4.4%; a total share of non-parliamentary opposition is 1.4%.

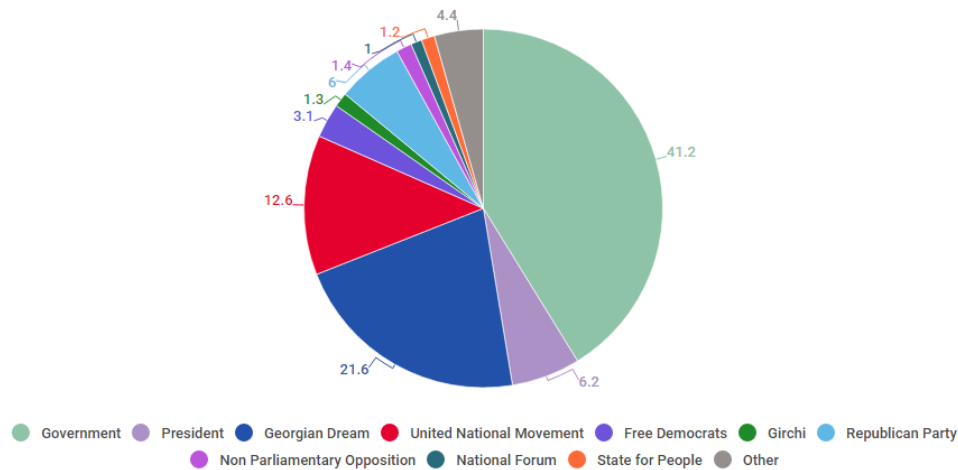
Out of newly established political parties, the shares of Girchi (1.3%) and State for the People (1.2%) are almost equal. A share of other new parties is below 1%.

The President’s share in total coverage is 6.2%; CEC – 0.3%.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.tabula.ge/ge/story/110317-ndi-archevnebsi-monatsileebi-19-ocneba-enm-14-uari-pasuxze-13>

<sup>14</sup> MediaMeter, MDF, Imedi, <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/tv-imeri>

**Chart 3.3.1. Total coverage of political subjects, Imedi**

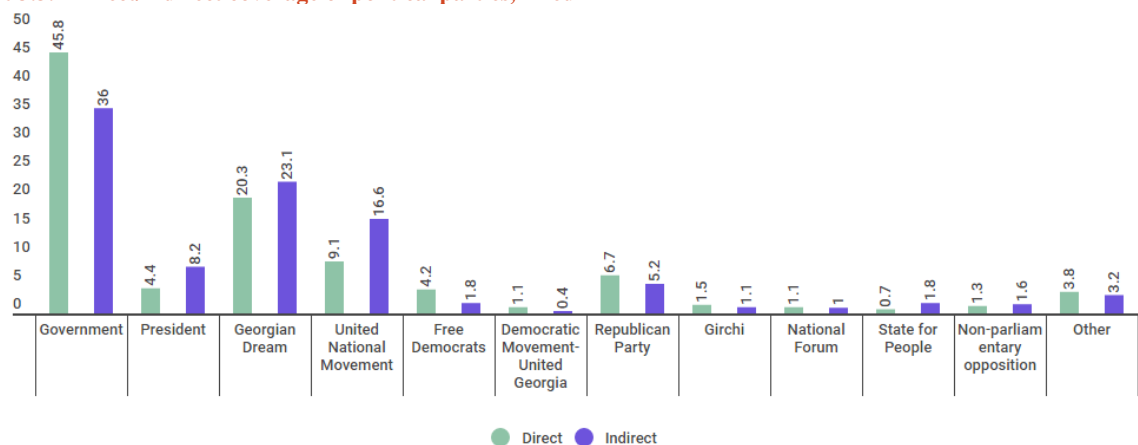


**Direct/indirect coverage.** Direct coverage of the government (45.8%) prevails over indirect coverage (36%); the same is in case of the Republican Party (direct 6.7% and indirect 5.2%) and Free Democrats (direct 4.2% and indirect 1.8%). In case of Georgian Dream (indirect 23.1%, direct 20.3%), National Movement (indirect 16.6%, direct 9.1%) and State for the People (indirect 1.8%, direct 0.7%), indirect coverage prevails over direct coverage; however, the percentage difference is higher in case of the National Movement.

Other qualified parties are mostly covered directly rather than indirectly. Some data are almost identical. New Political Center Girchi is mostly covered directly (direct 1.5%, indirect 1.1%) and State for the People – indirectly (direct 0.7%, indirect 1.8%).

Among Institutions, indirect coverage of the President (8.2%) prevails over direct coverage (4.4%); the same can be said about CEC – indirect 0.5%, direct 0.2%. The Inter-Agency Commission for Free and Fair Elections, which was set up in July, was covered only indirectly (0.03%).

**Chart 3.3.2 Direct/indirect coverage of political parties, Imedi**



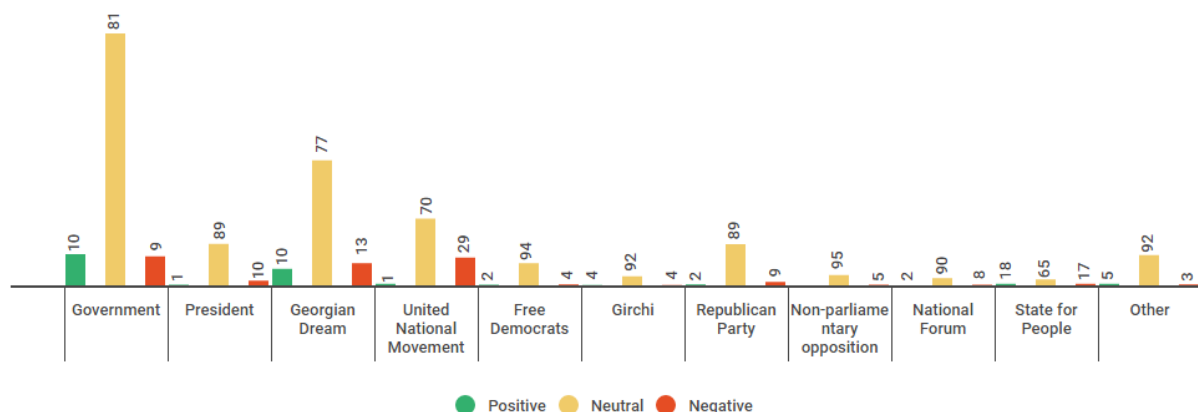
**Tone of content in covering political subjects.** The highest neutral tone in total coverage was observed in case of the non-parliamentary opposition (95%), Free Democrats (94%), Girchi (92%), political parties, whose coverage is below 1% (92%), Republican Party (89%) and President (89%).

While positive tone (10%) prevailed over negative (9%) for the government, in case of the ruling party Georgian Dream, it was just the opposite – negative tone (13%) prevailed over positive (10%). Parliamentary opposition - the

United National Movement was covered most negatively (29%), while positive coverage was only 1%. Negative (17%) and positive (18%) coverage of the new established party State for People was almost equal. Republican Party was covered negatively (9%), while its positive coverage amounted to 2%. National Forum received 8% negative, and 2% positive coverage. Girchi's negative and positive coverage was equal and amounted 4%. CEC was covered equally in negative (4%) and positive tone (4 %).

Big difference was observed between negative (10%) and positive (1%) tones of coverage of the President. CEC was covered equally in negative (4%) and positive tone (4 %).

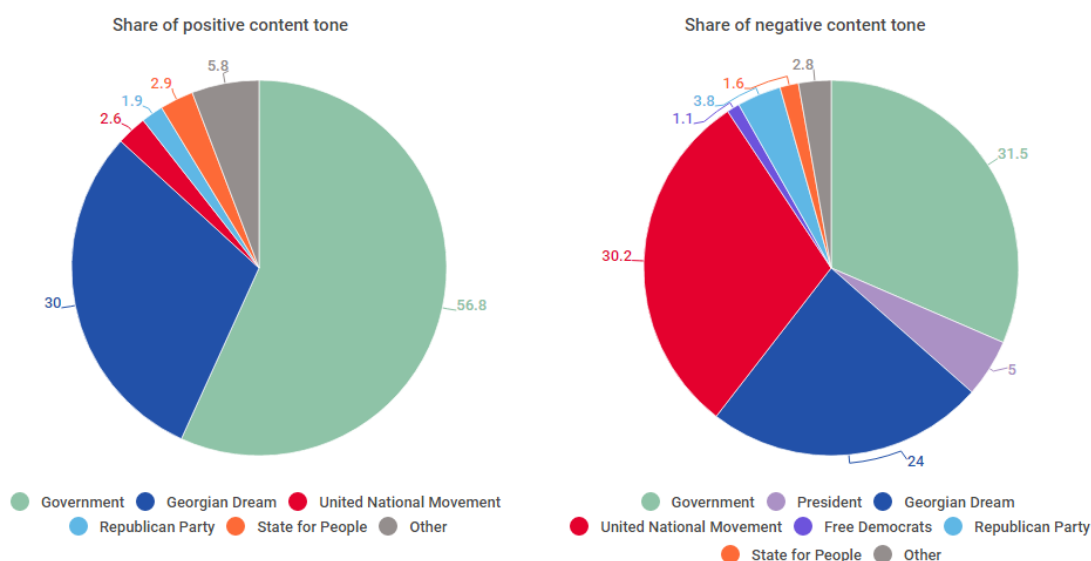
**Chart 3.3.3. Coverage of political subjects – tone of content, Imedi**



**A share of subjects in positive and negative content.** The government (56.8%) and Georgian Dream (30%) have the largest share in Imedi's positive content totaling 86.8%. They are followed by State for the People (2.9%), UNM party with 2.6% and Republican Party with 1.9%. A total share of positive content for other subjects, whose coverage was below 1%, amounted to 5.8%.

The largest share of Imedi's negative content comes to the government (31.5%) and United National Movement (30.2%), followed by Georgian Dream (24%) and relatively moderate Republican Party (3.8%). A share of negative tone (5%) of the President's coverage prevails over positive tone (0.9%); negative (0.2%) and positive (0.1%) tones of coverage of CEC are almost identical.

**Chart 3.3.4. Share of Positive and Negative content tone in coverage of political subjects, Imedi**

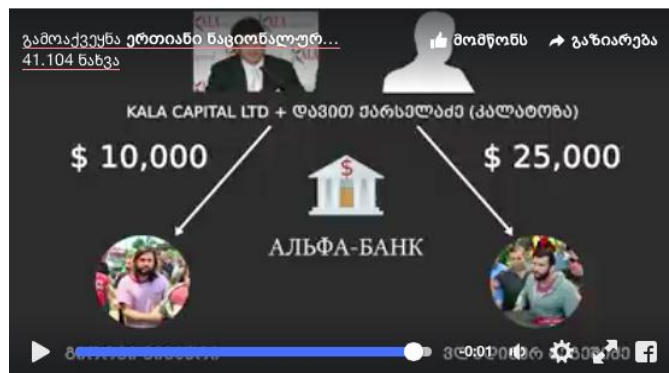




## Qualitative Data

According to statistical data of four-month monitoring, Imedi TV channel allocated 86.8% of its positive content to the government and the ruling party Georgian Dream, while a share of other political subjects in positive content is only 13.2% in sum. TV company covered the activities of various political subjects and as a rule, provided positions of different sides. It also mainly observed ethical standards. However, there were instances when information was not provided in full thereby raising questions about accuracy, balance and impartiality in reporting.

**Accuracy/impartiality.** On June 17, Imedi TV covered accusations of the United National Movement of Kala



Capital and a crime boss Kalatoza<sup>15</sup> transferring 35 000 USD to two persons (Giorgi Gigauri and Vladimir Gegeshidze) who were among those having physically assaulted leaders of the UNM during the midterm local elections on May 22 in the village of Kortskheli, Zugdidi district. At the news briefing, the UNM declared that the transfer was carried out via Alfa Bank and presented a document evidencing the transfer.

As the material on this topic, produced by the online edition Netgazeti, showed, at the news briefing the UNM presented a financial scheme with the crime boss Kalatoza being on the top and

Vice Prime Minister Kakha Kaladze involved. Vice Prime Minister Kakha Kaladze, who heads the election headquarters of the Georgian Dream, is a founder and partner of Kala Capital.

The Imedi report did not mention Kakha Kaladze as an addressee of UNM's accusations and entirely omitted the accusations about this top political official. Nor did the report explain the links between Kala Capital and the Vice Prime Minister. The material was focused on the denial of accusations. Apart from comments of politicians on the issue, the report provided a written explanation of Kala Capital as well as a comment of Alfa Bank to a news agency 20/30, according to which the presented documents were forgeries by the UNM.

**Accuracy/balance.** On 22 May, the program "Imedis Dro" (at 20:01) started with a no comment footage of physical assault on members of the UNM during the midterm local elections in the village of Kortskheli, Zugdidi district. Similarly to a presenter of Maestro TV channel, the presenter of Imedi also said that representatives of both sides sustained injuries, though did not identify any injured supporter of the Georgian Dream or report about any of them being hospitalized either on the day of incident or thereafter.

The discussion of the topic began with a live link-up from the Central Electoral Commission to convey the position of the Commission on the violations. It was followed by a live relay of speech of Kakha Kaladze, a leader of Georgian Dream, speaking about a provocation staged by the UNM in Kortskheli as well as other topics. Kakha Kaladze spoke about the midterm election for 304 seconds. There was another live relay of news briefing of Mamuka Mdinardze from the Georgian Dream office (186 seconds). The position of the UNM was provided after an hour of the start of the program (at 21:03) in the form of live link-up (Tina Bokuchava speaking for 229 seconds). Thus, in addition to accuracy the balance was also violated in the coverage.

**Balance.** On June 30, Imedi TV provided a live coverage of a news briefing of a member of city council from the UNM, Irakli Abesadze (22:34). According to the presenter, the financial director of city transportation company was dismissed because of mispending monies, which was revealed by the internal audit. A shot of internal audit

<sup>15</sup> "Kalatoza" nickname for Davit Karseladze, so called "thief in law" (mafia) who was sentenced for the membership of organized crime group during the previous government. Membership of the community of thieves in law was criminalized in Georgia in 2006.



conclusion was provided, but no excerpt from that conclusion was shown, which would either confirm or deny the UNM's accusations. Instead of double checking the information in the document, the report provided comments of the former financial director of transportation company and the Mayor of Tbilisi, both dismissing accusations as unfounded. The report did not say either that the addressee of the accusations was son-in-law of Guguli Maghradze, MP from Georgian Dream.

**Accuracy/balance.** much like Maestro, Marshalpress and PIA, Imedi, on June 25, covered (at 20:15) accusations on misspending charity contributions by Charity Fund Iavnana, which, in turn, was linked to the founder of the fund Paata Burchuladze and his newly-established political party State for People. In contrast to other media outlets being monitored, Imedi did not name the source – a tabloid newspaper *Prime Time* alleging that only 3 million GEL out of total 9 million charity donations were spent on charity. In the introduction to the report, the publication of one newspaper was generalized on the entire print press. In particular, the presenter said:

“Press raise questions about the Charity Fund Iavnana. According to media reports, Charity Fund Iavnana received 9 million GEL in charity contributions over the years and only 3 million was spent for charity.”

The *Prime Time* article was used as a backdrop of the report while a confidential source was named as having provided information on misspending amounts. However, from comments provided in the report audience learned that in 2012-2015, the Charity Fund received 5 769 406 GEL of which 4 850 343 GEL was spent on charity; the documentation about the balance between revenues and expenditure was submitted to Tax Service. The report, however, made no efforts to find out over what period was that 9 million GEL income received, or whether the Revenue Service revealed any financial violations and if it did, since when.

**Balance.** On April 1, Imedi reported on an altercation between members of Georgian Dream and Republican Party, both former members of the Georgian Dream coalition, concerning the law on education (20:05). The material provided a comment by Eka Beselia from the Georgian Dream though did not provide position of Nodar Ebanoidze, one of the participant of the altercation from Republican Party. Neither position of any representative of Republican Party was presented either.

**Reporting public opinion poll results.** On June 30, Imedi reported results of semi-publicized in-house poll conducted by the Georgian Dream (at 20:09). When presenting the report, the presenter focused on those two components which the ruling political team made public. Namely, the presenter said:

“Initially, the Georgian Dream did not want to make results of the in-house poll public; nevertheless, society learned about two main accents: 1. The number of supporters of the ruling party is twice as many as those of United National Movement. 2. Almost similar picture is seen in the rating of leaders – Giorgi Kvirikashvili is in the lead.”

Each shot was accompanied with the text: “In house poll of Georgian Dream. According to data, the ruling team has 35% whilst the UNM - up to 13%.”

In a live link-up of a reporter, the answer was shown to the question: “In your opinion who will better solve existing problems as Prime Minister?” The answer to this question was presented, both in verbal and written form, as a single result: 41% supports Giorgi Kvirikashvili, the incumbent Prime Minister.

Another question was also presented in a manipulative way. In particular, while the question was provided in full in the form of text: “Regardless of your choice, which party, in your opinion, will receive the highest number of seats in parliament?” the reporter read the question only partially, omitting the first part of it “Regardless of your choice” which was an essential element for evaluating correctly public attitudes. The answer to this questions was also provided partially: 65% think that it will be the Georgian Dream.

Covering poll results selectively and not providing exact formulation of questions is misleading, especially when essential elements which may influence the results such as a margin of error, information about undecided voters, et cetera are not provided.

Out of 11 compulsory indicators to be provided in reports about public opinion poll in pre-election period, Imedi had only three – the organization that ordered the poll, the organization that conducted the poll and exact formulation of questions, the latter partially though.

### 3.4. Maestro

**About Maestro TV:** Besides the Rustavi 2 TV ownership dispute, a dispute on financial and ownership issues erupted between Maestro’s co-owners and its management in late 2015 and early 2016.<sup>16</sup> In February 2016, configuration of shares was modified in favor of one of the owners, Giorgi Gachechiladze, who became a majority shareholder (55%) after he agreed with two co-owners – Giorgi Ebrilidze and Levan Chikvaidze, to buy their shares, 15% from each.

In February, Giorgi Gachechiladze’s brother, Levan Gachechiladze was appointed as new director of the TV channel. The latter ran for presidency in 2008. It was reported during the dispute between the TV channel’s management and owners that the chairman of Imedi TV’s supervisory board tried to buy Maestro’s shares, but the sides failed to reach an agreement on the price. It was made public in January, 2016 that Imedi TV bought Maestro’s and GDS’s commercial airtime.<sup>17</sup> According to TVMR Georgia, Maestro is on the third place in an annual average rating for the year of 2015 with 1,18% AMR and 6, 27% share (SHR).

#### Quantitative Data

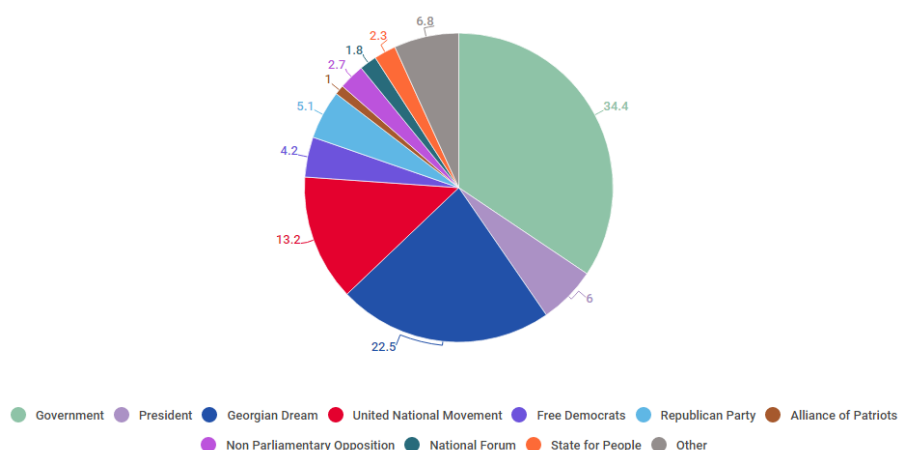
**Total coverage.** The four-month monitoring (April 1 – July 31) has revealed that in terms of total coverage, (1458 stories) the TV channel dedicated a great part of its primetime news programs to the Government (34.4%) and Georgian Dream (22.5%), which totals about 57%. Among other political parties, United National Movement has the largest share – 13.2%, followed by Republican Party (5, 1%), Free Democrats (4.2%) and newly established party State for People (Paata Burchuladze) (2, 3%).

Other qualified subjects fall behind National Forum (1, 8%) and Alliance of Patriots (1%) and their coverage is less than 1%: Democratic Movement – United Georgia (0.9%), Industry will Save Georgia (0.8%), Conservatives (0.7%). Except State for People, the share of other newly established parties is low: Girchi (0.8%), New Georgia (0.6%) and Tamaz Mechiauri – United Georgia (0.5%).

Non-parliamentary opposition received 2, 7% of the total coverage. All of the parties which are united in the category “Other” received 6, 8% in total.

Among institutions, the President’s share of the total coverage amounts to 6%, CEC’s – 0, 4%.

**Chart 3.4.1. Total coverage of political subjects, Maestro**



<sup>16</sup> MediaMeter, MDF, Maestro. <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/maestro>

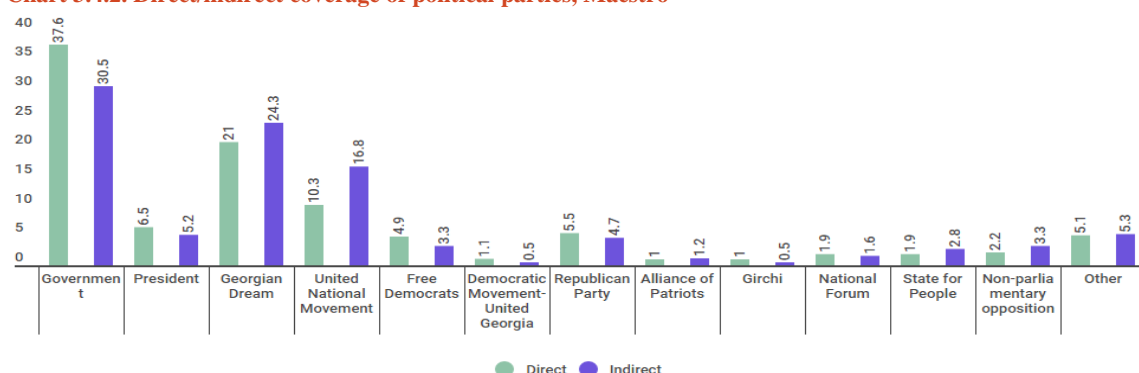
<sup>17</sup> MDF, Media Freedom 2015, Media ownership, Chapter 3. <http://mediameter.ge/en/research/media-freedom-2015>

**Direct and indirect coverage.** In terms of both direct and indirect coverage, Maestro TV dedicates most of its airtime to the Government and Georgian Dream. Herewith, direct coverage of the Government (37, 6%) prevails over indirect coverage (30,5%), while in case of Georgian Dream indirect coverage (24, 3%) is slightly more than direct coverage (21%). In case of United National Movement, the difference between indirect (16, 8%) and direct (10, 3%) coverage is bigger.

Direct coverage prevails over indirect coverage in case of the President (direct 6, 5%, indirect – 5, 2%), Republican Party (direct - 5.5%, indirect - 4.7%), Free Democrats (direct - 4.9%, indirect - 3.3%), Democratic Movement – United Georgia (direct - 1.1%, indirect - 0.5%), National Forum (direct - 1.9%, indirect - 1.6%), Industry will Save Georgia (direct- 0, 8%, indirect 0,7 %) and Conservative Party (direct - 0.9%, indirect - 0.5%).

Out of new political subjects, State for People was covered most intensively. In this case, however, indirect coverage (2, 8 %) prevailed over direct coverage (1, 9 %). As for other parties, the differences are insignificant or do not exist at all.

**Chart 3.4.2. Direct/indirect coverage of political parties, Maestro**



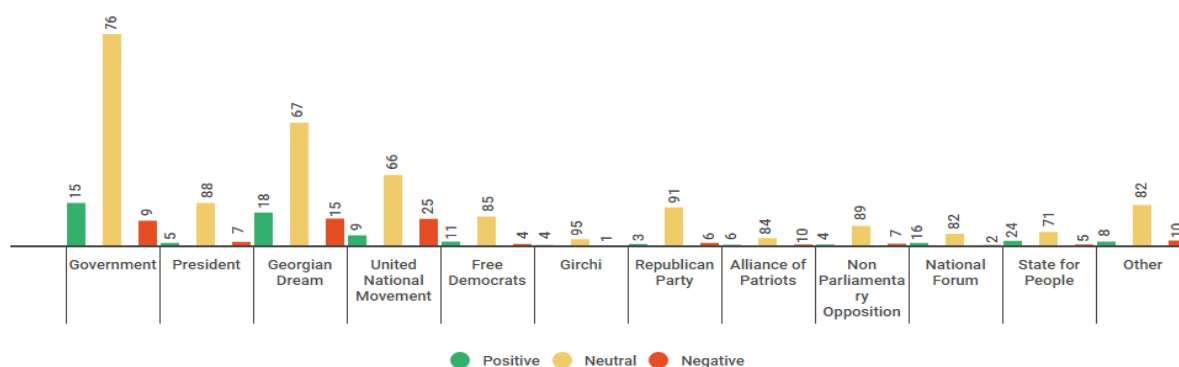
**Tone of content in covering political subjects.** Neutral tone prevails in covering new political subject Girchi (95 %), Republican Party (91 %), Non-parliamentary opposition (89 %), the President (88 %), Free Democrats (85 %) and Alliance of Patriots (84 %) by Maestro TV.

United National Movement was covered most negatively (25%) and this data prevails over its positive share (9%). Negative tone also prevailed over positive in the following cases: Alliance of Patriots (negative 10%, positive 6%), Republican Party (negative 6%, positive 3%).

The positive coverage prevails over negative in the following cases: Georgian Dream (positive 18%; negative 15%); the Government (positive 15%; negative 9%); Free Democrats (positive 11%; negative 4%); National Forum (positive 16%; negative 2%); State for People (positive 24%; negative 5%), Girchi (positive 4%, negative 1%).

As for non-parliamentary opposition, it was mostly covered negatively (7%) rather than positively (4%).

**Chart 3.4.3. Coverage of political subjects – tone of content, Maestro**



*A share of subjects in positive and negative content.* The Government (40.7%) and Georgian Dream (31.2%) have the largest share in Maestro's positive content, which in sum amounts to 71.9%.

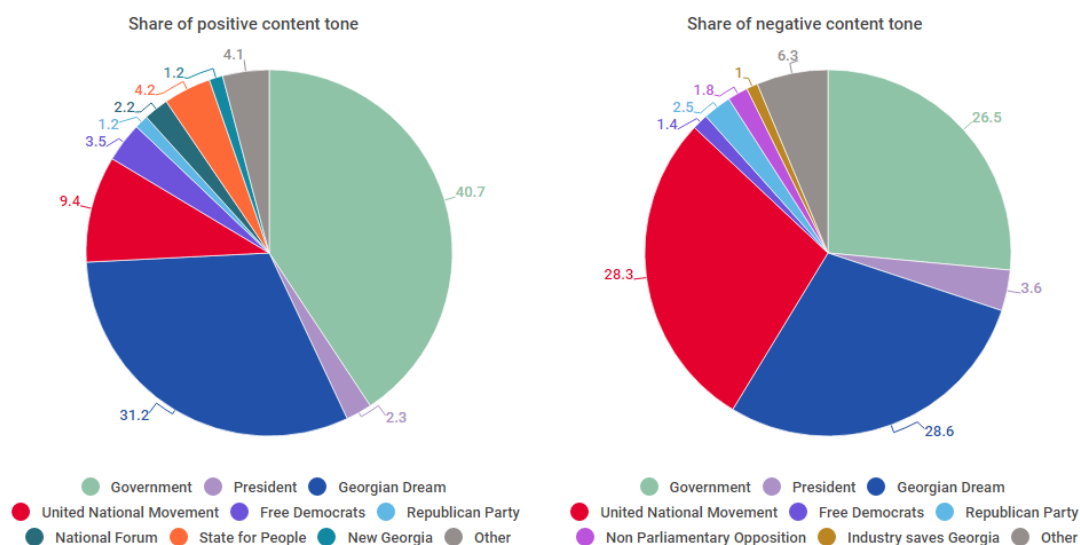
United National Movement's share in positive content (9, 4 %) significantly falls behind its share in negative content (28, 3%) and is almost identical to Georgian Dream's negative share (28, 6%). This is the highest result and is 2% lower than the Government's (26, 5%).

The share of the President in positive coverage (2,3%) is lower than negative (3,6%), as well as in case of Republican Party (Positive - 1,2%, Negative 2,5%). On the contrary, a share of of Free Democrats in positive content (3,5%) is higher than in negative (1,4%).

The share of positive content (4, 2%) of new party State for People (Paata Burchuladze) is also high. As for negative content, the party's share amounts to 0, 9%.

Other parties' share in positive content is 4, 1%, in negative – 6, 3% in total.

**Chart 3.4.4 A Share of Covering Political Subjects in Positive and Negative Content, Maestro**



## Qualitative Data

Maestro's main news program covers a wide spectrum of political subjects. However, separate cases of factual accuracy, balance and bias are still met. In some cases, certain materials against the government's political opponents with tabloid newspapers used as the source were aired without proper rechecking.

*Factual accuracy/bias.* On May 22, an incident took place outside a polling station in the village of Kortskheli of Zugdidi municipality during local by-elections, when several leaders of opposition United National Movement were beaten by supporters of Georgian Dream<sup>18</sup>. The story "Incident in Kortskheli" aired in the evening news program (20:01) on May 22 starts with the anchor's introductory remarks, according to which the Interior Ministry launched investigation into the case; speaking about the incident the anchor notes that members of the UNM party, supporters and activists of Georgian Dream confronted each other; controversial allegations are made over the incident and the case has some "victims." During the story a journalist and a hospital doctor speak about hospitalization of the UNM representatives only; injured activists from Georgian Dream are not featuring in the case either on May 22 or in the following days.

<sup>18</sup> Fair Elections, Assessment of the October 8, 2016 pre-election environment (p.5)

In addition, the same journalist emphasizes that the situation further fueled up after “UNM leaders and athletes confronted each other.” Video footage shows that leaders of the opposition party were physically insulted. The story does not specify how the physical confrontation started. It only provides the comments of the President’s spokesperson, according to which video footage shows that an organized group and athletes were involved in the incident. The President’s spokesperson also focuses on the fact of verbal and physical assault on journalists.

The journalist’s comments are also biased as she tries to justify police inaction and notes that “police officers mobilized on the adjacent area tried to defuse tension. However, due to a small number, they failed to take preventive measures.” The story does not make it clear how many police officers were present on the ground and whether they neglected the opposition’s complaints, as the UNM members say in their remarks.

**Balance/ Featuring.** Two materials prepared by Maestro TV about Paata Burchuladze, leader of a new political subject State for People, are based on tabloids Marshalpress and Prime Time.

The June 2 story “Burchuladze’s Property” (at 8:14pm) cites Marshalpress news agency as its source. The latter, in turn, refers to the Facebook status of Bondo Mdzinarishvili, host of Obiektivi TV’s talk show. Although the material published by Marshalpress has not been researched and rechecked by the news agency, the author of the TV story claims that Marshalpress counted Paata Burchuladze’s property, while the publication is based on tens of documents from the public registry. The video footage also highlights the title of the article ran by Marshalpress<sup>19</sup>.

The TV story offers no rechecked data about how real the facts provided in the Facebook status are, according to which Burchuladze owns tens of property assets, or what particular documents from public registry were enclosed. Balance has a formal nature, because the story involves only Paata Burchuladze’s remarks, according to which neither his identification card, nor his name and surname coincide with real ones. The editorial board did not recheck either this statement by Burchuladze, or the documents from the public registry indicated in the materials of Marshalpress, some of which have been uploaded several times. One of the public registry’s documents reflects not the issue of ownership, but the case of leasing from the Tbilisi self-governing unit.

Following the ownership issue, the story develops in a quite different direction and tells about mutual accusations concerning the links with the National Movement.

The second story aired by Maestro TV on July 25 “Iavnanam ra hkmna” (The Lullaby, at 8:10pm), which also targets Paata Burchuladze, is mostly built on the article ran by newspaper *Prime Time*. In its turn, the latter refers to an anonymous source. The story notes that according to unspecified reports, out of GEL 9 million transferred to the Iavnana Charity Foundation set up by Paata Burchuladze, only GEL 3 million was spent on charity. The story also involves remarks by a representative of the Iavnana Foundation and a journalist’s editorial text says the following:

“Iavnana confirms that GEL 5 769 406 was donated to the foundation during past year, but only GEL 4 850 343 reached the right addressees.”

The story says nothing about incompliance between the data provided by *Prime Time* (out of GEL 9 million only GEL 3 million was spent on charity) and the figures provided by the journalist. Moreover, it does not explain how the remaining funds were spent. The story does not answer the question asked by the anchor in his introductory remarks - “Did the donated funds reach their addressees?” - that arouses additional doubts.

**Balance/accuracy/bias.** On June 14, Maestro TV dedicated two stories in its main news program to the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) into ex-Prime Minister Vano Merabishvili’s pretrial detention case (at 9:17pm). The first story covered ECHR’s ruling and the second one was about negative aspects of Merabishvili’s activities in the past. In the introductory remarks of the first story, the anchor focuses not on violation of the article, where the European court found the Georgian government guilty, but on those two articles, where no violation was found. In particular, the anchor says in the introductory remarks:

---

<sup>19</sup> Marshalpress, June 1, <http://marshalpress.ge/archives/40682>

*“In the press-release disseminated by the European court it is written that the pretrial detention of the former Prime Minister was entirely legal and justified”.*

This assessment is partially correct because while the Strasbourg-based court found no violation in Merabishvili's initial pretrial detention in May 2013, it ruled that remanding him in custody four months later lacked reasonable grounds, thus constituting violation of Article 5 §3 of the Convention. The story provides incomprehensive information about violation of Article 18 of the European Convention on Human Rights and it only focuses on the investigation into Merabishvili's alleged removal from his cell. It says nothing about that part of the ruling, where the European court noted that Merabishvili's pretrial detention was “used not only for the purpose of bringing” him before the relevant legal authorities on “reasonable suspicion” of various offenses, “but was also treated by the prosecuting authorities as an additional opportunity to obtain leverage” over investigations into various cases, including the one against ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili.

Although the journalist notes in the first story that the European court did not discuss the criminal charges against Merabishvili and focused only on the issues of violation of his rights, the second story is fully dedicated to the cases against Merabishvili. The story is dedicated only to the negative aspects of his activities. When introducing the second story, the anchor says:

*“Some politicians say that if Merabishvili is granted a status of a political prisoner under any government, the country may appear on the verge of civil confrontation.”*

The story itself does not contain a relevant comment, where respondents talk about the possibility of civil confrontation. The story, which is fully built on one-sided accusations against Merabishvili and does not provide the position of the other party, ends with the journalist's remark according to which now it is up to the government whether it fulfills ECHR's ruling and pays compensation to Vano Merabishvili, or challenges this ruling. This passage is manipulative because ECHR has not discussed either the criminal cases against Merabishvili or the allegations voiced in the story, and only found violation of his rights with respect to two articles.

**Coverage of public opinion poll.** Like Rustavi 2 TV, on April 14 Maestro TV also covered the results of public opinion poll released by GHN news agency (8:17pm), which, according to the news agency, was allegedly commissioned by Georgian Dream. Although the latter denied any links with the poll, Maestro still covered the results of the poll without indicating compulsory requisites established by law. The story contained no evidence that would have confirmed its reality and justified its release.

In addition, “based on its own information” the TV channel unveiled the results of the survey of “another political party”, which are less convincing than GHN's poll, as it cites an anonymous party and source. The story provided information only about political ratings of Georgian Dream, National Movement and Free Democrats and noted that the results of Georgian Dream and Free Democrats might further improve.

According to the law, during a pre-election period a public opinion poll shall be published by a media outlet “after double-checking the credibility of the methodology of the public opinion poll and objectivity of its results.” This provision was violated by Maestro TV.

On June 5 Maestro TV covered the results of another internal public opinion poll allegedly commissioned by Georgian Dream (8:06pm). GHN was again referred to as a source. The story notes that the poll was conducted through the method of phone interviewing. According to the election code, a public opinion poll “shall not be conducted via telephone, mail, and/or internet.”



## 3.5. GDS

**About GDS TV:** GDS TV was founded in June 2012. Initially, it was named VTV and the channel was wholly owned by Vladimir Shengelia, technical director of Channel 9 TV. A month later the channel simultaneously changed its name and owner. Bera Ivanishvili, ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili's son, became 100% owner of the TV channel. Initially, GDS owned a specialized (cognitive) broadcasting license. After license modification in 2015 it obtained the right to produce news and public-political programs. Following the license modification, the channel launched a talk show 2030, which was initially hosted by Bidzina Ivanishvili and which aimed, as Ivanishvili put it, to neutralize the propaganda unleashed by the opposition UNM party and Rustavi 2 TV. Ivanishvili's family, particularly Bidzina Ivanishvili's wife, Ekaterine Khvedelidze had owned 80% of shares in Channel 9 since 2012. Eight months after the parliamentary elections the channel was closed down. According to TVMR Georgia, an annual average rating (AMR) of GDS TV for the year of 2015 is 0,55%, while the share (SHR) amounts 2,92%.

### Quantitative Data

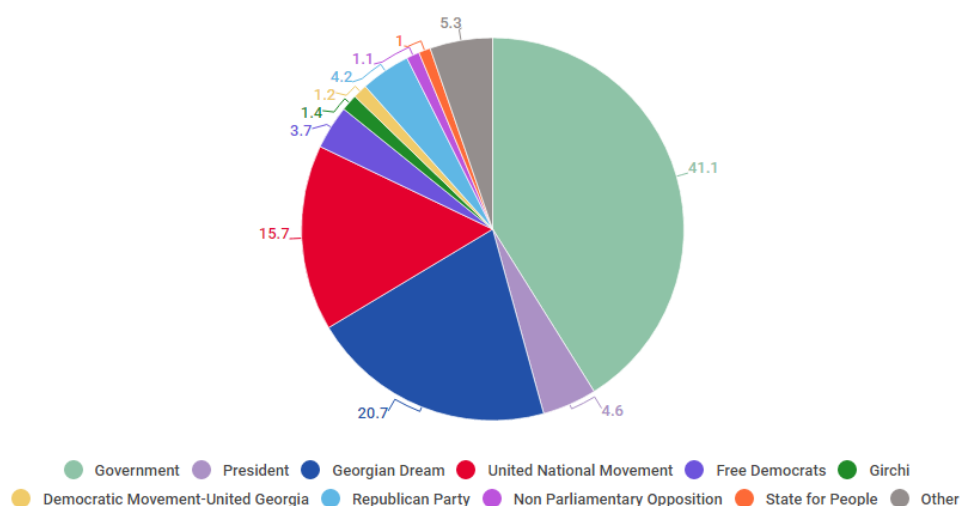
**Total coverage.** The four-month monitoring of GDS TV (April 1 – July 31) has revealed that the TV channel dedicated the greatest part of its primetime news programs (752 stories) to the Government (41.1%) and Georgian Dream (20.7%). A total share of their coverage is 61.8%.

As for other qualified subjects, United National Movement has the largest share (15.7%), followed by Republicans (4.2%), Free Democrats (3.7%) and Democratic Movement – United Georgia (1.2%). Total coverage of other parties is 5.3%, where coverage of qualified political parties looks as follows: Conservatives – 0.9%; National Forum – 0.7%; Alliance of Patriots – 0.5%; Industry will Save Georgia – 0.4% and Labor Party – 0.3%.

Among newly set up parties, Girchi has 1.4% and State for People – 1%.

The President's share in total coverage amounted to 4.6%, Central Election Commission (CEC) - 0.7%.

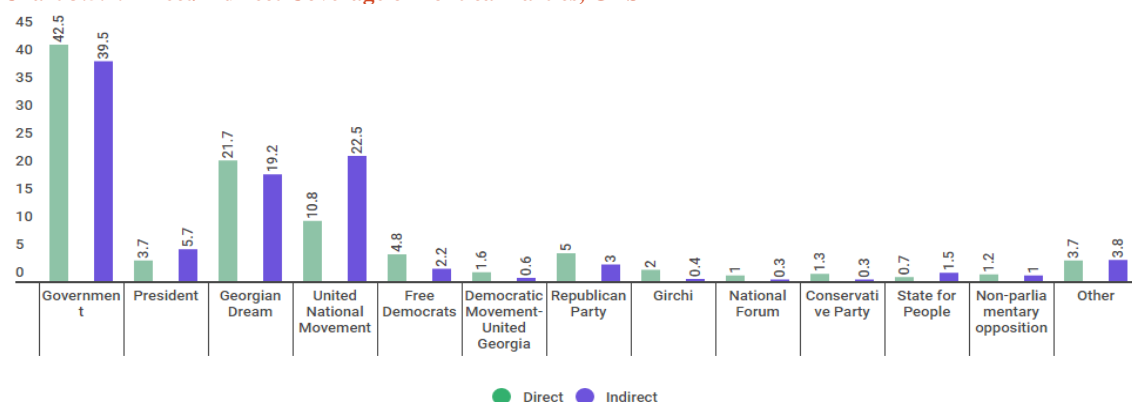
**Chart 3.5.1 Total Coverage of Political Subjects, GDS**



**Direct/Indirect Coverage.** Direct coverage prevails over indirect coverage in case of the Government (direct 42.5%; indirect 39.5%) and the ruling party (direct 21.7%, indirect 19.2%), though with a slight difference. On the contrary, in case of the United National Movement indirect coverage (22.5%) is twice more than direct coverage (10.8%). The situation is identical in case of the President (indirect 5.7%, direct 3.7%) and State for People (indirect 1.5%, direct 0.7%); however, the difference is insignificant.

In case of other political subjects, as chart 3.5.2. shows, mostly direct coverage prevails over indirect coverage.

**Chart 3.5.2. Direct/Indirect Coverage of Political Parties, GDS**



**Tone of content in covering political subjects.** New Political Center Girchi and Democratic Movement – United Georgia were covered most neutrally (100%) by GDS TV. The tone of coverage of other subjects was also mostly neutral with the exception of the United National Movement, where the highest negative tone (27%) and lowest positive tone (2%) were observed. In terms of negative coverage, the National Movement was followed by a group of various parties, whose coverage was below 1%; these parties are followed by non-parliamentary opposition (9%), Georgian Dream (8%) and the Government (6%).

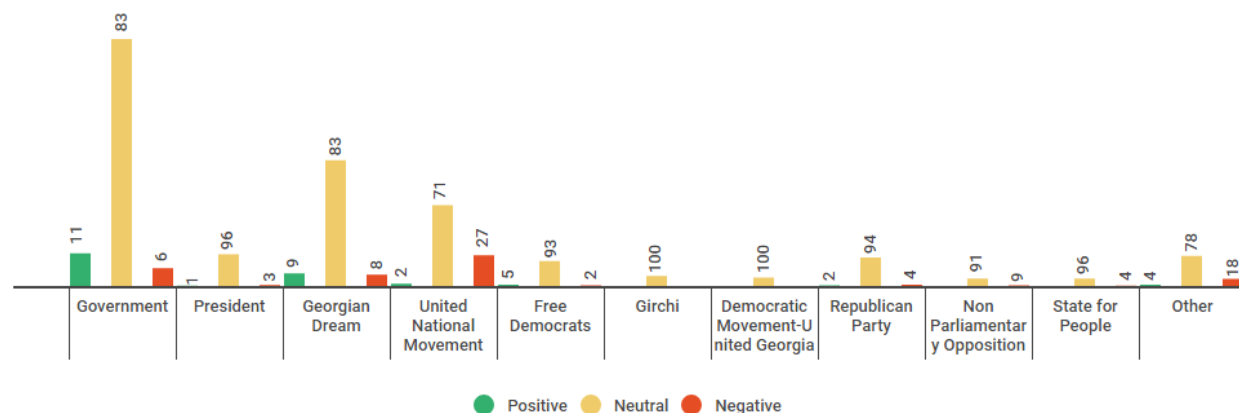
The highest level of positive tone was observed with respect to the Government (11%) and Georgian Dream (9%).

Newly established State for People and Republicans have identical coverage in negative tone (4%).

The President's coverage was relatively neutral in tone (positive 1%; negative 3%). Among qualified parties, Free Democrats party was covered positively (positive -5%, negative - 2%).

The tone of coverage is 100% neutral with respect to Girchi and Democratic Movement – United Georgia. The tone of coverage is mostly negative in case of the Republican Party (4%; positive 2%); among newly established parties, coverage of State for People is negative in tone (4%). At the same time, coverage of State for People, like the President, was highly neutral in tone (96%).

**Chart 3.5.3. Coverage of Political Subjects – Tone of Content, GDS**





*A share of subjects in positive and negative content.* A share of the Government in positive content is 63.4%; Georgian Dream – 24.7%; their total share is 88.1%. All other subjects have a share of 11.9% in positive content. As for negative coverage, the Government’s share is 25.2% and Georgian Dream – 15.9%.

The highest share of negative content comes to the United National Movement (43.5%) that is almost twice more than the government’s share (25.2%) and three times more compared to Georgian Dream (15.9%); its share in positive content is 4.5%. Compared to other parties, a share of National Forum in negative content is also high (6.6%). The latter was not covered positively.

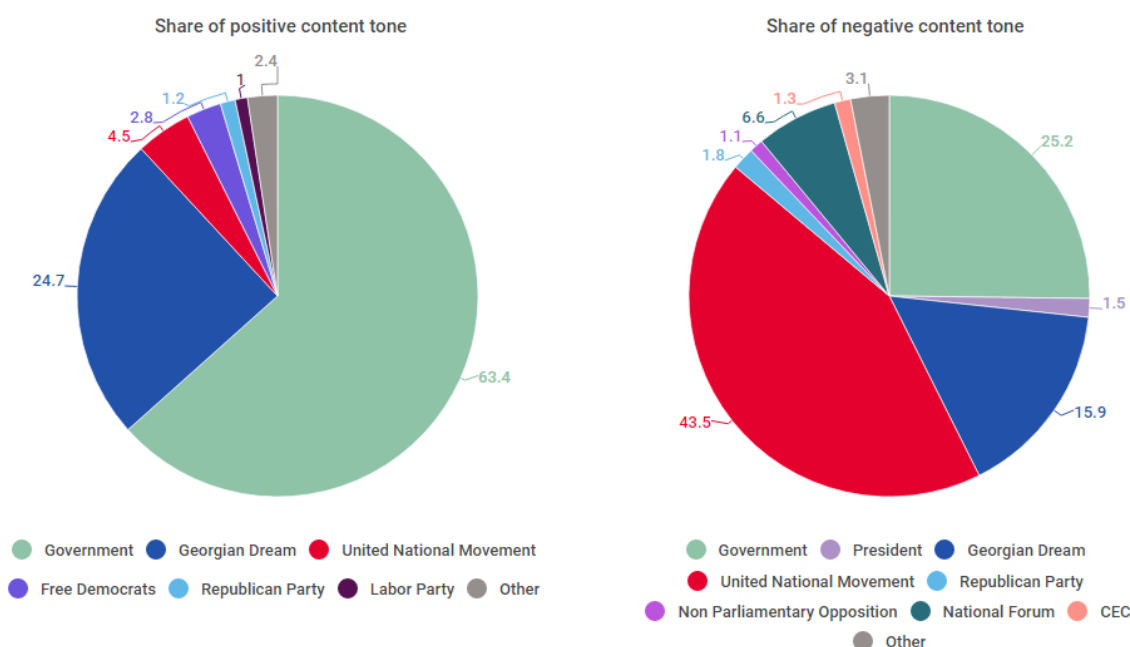
A total share of those qualified and newly established parties, whose share in negative content is less than 1%, amounts to 3.1% in negative content.

A share of Free Democrats in positive content is 2.8% and in negative content – 0.7%. A share of Republicans in positive content is 1.2% and in negative - 1.8%.

Among newly established parties, Tamaz Mechiauri – For United Georgia was mostly covered positively in tone (0.9%).

A share of the President’s coverage in positive content was one of the lowest (0.7%); negative content – 1.5%.

### 3.5.4 A Share of Political Subjects in Positive and Negative Content – GDS



### Qualitative Data

The balance on GDS TV is inclined in favor of the ruling party and the government which is revealed by following statistical data - the total sum of a share of the government and the ruling party in positive content amounts 88,1%, while all other political subjects have 11, 9% share in positive content, respectively. Coverage of the government and/or activities linked to the companies owned by Bidzina Ivanishvili in the news programs of TV Company appears without background information and alternative opinion. Breaching standards regarding factual accuracy and covering public opinion polls is also revealed.

*Accuracy of Facts/ Biased Coverage.* The incident that took place on May 22, 2016 in the Village Kortskheli (Zugdidi Municipality) during the Midterm Local Elections, when the leaders of the United National Movement were physically abused, GDS TV covered on May 23, in the News Show “20:30” (on the 20:38 minute mark)<sup>20</sup>. The coverage notes, that “out of 45 polling stations, this was the sole incident, reported during the Midterm Parliamentary Elections”

The coverage presents the incidents in the contexts of mutual responsibility: the two representatives of the opposition (United National Movement and Free Democrats) focus on the responsibilities of the Government, while the representatives of the ruling party – speak of the responsibilities of the UNM, which is being accused of provoking the violence. The Minister for Sports and Youth, Mr. Tariel Khechikashvili, as well as the member of the Georgian Dream, Mr. Leri Khabelovi, in their comments rejected the idea that sportsmen participated in the incident. Despite the fact that the videos air clearly shows the sportsmen<sup>21</sup>, the journalist fails to point out the factual discrepancy between the actual video documentation, and the comments made by the ruling team.

Towards the end of the coverage, it is pointed out, that out of 9 electoral districts, 7 was won by the Georgian Dream and 2 by the UNM representatives. The coverage in question fails to point out, that one of the districts were the National Movement had won is Kortskheli, where the incident took place.

*Biased Coverage/Balance.* On June 08, GDS covered floods that took place 1 year prior, on June 13 in the Vere Gorge in Tbilisi (on the 20:59 mark). The coverage mostly was dedicated to the rehabilitation infrastructural works of the Tbilisi Municipality and the assistance to the affected population. The journalist, based on the majority of the flooding victims, declares that “according to the majority of the June 13 flooding victims, they have already received compensation and housing space”. The statement is followed by Vake Gamgebeli (governor) comment, who notes that the majority of the victims have been satisfied and only several individuals remain out there that still dispute property and the categories assigned to them. Not only has the journalist failed to provide statistics on how many victims had been satisfied, but the coverage also fails to represent those individuals, who dispute the actions of the government with regard to their financial and material compensations. Only 2 victims were recorded, who recount development of events that took place 1 year ago. The coverage also fails to present comments of those NGOs, that monitored the process (Article 42) and advocated the rights of the flooding victims (Georgian Young Lawyers Association).

The second part of the coverage focuses on already carried out and the future recreational projects.

*Biased Coverage/Balance.* GDS covers the projects funded by the Georgian Co-Investing Fund. The Fund is established by Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili, former Prime-Minister of Georgia.

For example, on **May 25 (20:32 mark)** the news service of the GDS TV prepared as a first story to run a list of projects funded by the Fund. “A new investment for the merger of the high class Marriot hotels, the three of which are under construction and will be merged under the brand “Autograph Collection”. These includes the hotel financed by the Co-Investment Fund on Freedom Square, in Sololaki and in Shekvetili. The total sum of the project equals to \$ 265 Million.” This is how the news anchor presented the story.

The coverage features comments of the Prime Minister of Georgia, the representative of the Marriot, the representative of the Advisory Board of the Co-Investment Fund and the Mayor of Tbilisi. Their evaluation of the project is overly positive. The Mayor of Tbilisi not only highlights the positives, but also adds that “these are the projects, that only have positive sides to them”.

The coverage fails to mention civil protests, which is addressed towards the construction of one of the components of the projects – “Panorama Tbilisi” to be built on the Sololaki Heights. The construction has been the reason for numerous public demonstrations of environmental activists.

---

<sup>20</sup> On Weekend, the 20:30 does not air.

<sup>21</sup> E.g. Mr. Vladimer Gegeshidze- Greco-Roman Style wrestler. Mr. Koba Tkeshelashvili - a member of the Georgian National Team, also a founder of the Georgian Federation for Mixed Martial Arts and others.

*Balance/Accuracy of the Facts/Coverage of Cases Related to the Previous Government* . GDS TV broadcasted 752 stories, out of which 54 were dedicated to high level officials of the previous government and the criminal charges brought against them. Only in July, 21 news shows covered 17 stories on previous government. The existing practice shows that, frequently the position of the defendant party is not represented or in some cases the absence of the respondent party is explained away by their refusal to comment on the story.

For example:

**April 26** announcement of the show and the subsequent coverage “the demand of Tsindeliani” (**20:38 minute mark**) was dedicated to the so called 2008 March 27 prison upheaval in the #5 Ortachala Penitentiary Establishment: prisoner disobedience of the authorities results in the death of 7 inmates. After 10 years, the former prisoner, Mr. Levan Tsindeliani demands the events to be reinvestigated. Mr. Tsindeliani declares, that Mr. Bacho Akhalaia, Megis Kardava and other high level officials pressured him and demanded he confess in masterminding the prison upheaval. He believes that the allegations brought forward to the accused in the case are too soft and is inadequate with the gravity of the crime committed.

The coverage brings minor quote from the words of Mr. Mikhail Saakashvili, where he can be heard saying, that he will not tolerate “the prison management by the thieves-in-law”. The coverage does not demonstrate exactly what role of the thieves-in-law is meant by the then President Saakashvili with regard to the prison upheaval in question, and it also does not say what were the initial findings of the investigation on the case. The coverage only offers the version of one contesting party and it is noted, that both the lawyers of Bacho Akhalaia and the Prosecutor’s office declined to comment on the case.

**On June 25, 20:51** GDS TV covered testimony of the former Defense Minister, Irakli Okruashvili against the former President of Georgia, Mikhail Saakashvili; the coverage shows a question, asked by the attorney representing a party to the witness. Mr. Okruashvili did not respond to the question, however the journalist has recorded a comment of the Prosecutor of the case. The comment of Saakashvili lawyer, despite the fact that the lawyer was present at the hearing, was not aired at all.

*Standard for Airing Public Opinion Survey.* On July 29, GDS TV covered the results of the US National Democratic Institute (NDI) public opinion survey. In presenting the survey results, the news anchor focused on the distrust towards the instrument. Also, the announcement was selective in the survey results. Namely, the anchor noted that, “the majority of the surveyed plans to vote for the Georgian Dream again, while the majority of the surveyed will never vote for the United National Movement”. By announcing results of two, separate questions in one single sentence, the anchor highlighted the supremacy of the Georgian Dream and discontent with the UNM. Additionally, on the question of “Which party would you never vote for?” – 21% indicated the UNM, while 19% - the GD. It must also be noted, that standard deviation of the research was +/- 2,1%.

**On June 28, (20:44)** GDS aired a coverage titled “Who did Rustavi 2 contract to conduct research?!” The research in question was conducted by German-American organization GFK. The coverage illustrated responses to only one question out of the research: “If you are participating in the October 8 elections, which political party would you vote for?” and the video shows answers, according to which “the Georgian Dream” is favored by 22,4% of the surveyed, while the National Movement by 21,7%. The answer to the question is followed by “party ratings”, according to which the “Georgian Dream” has 30,5%, while the National Movement – 28,2%. However, the coverage does not specify to which question did these answers belong to.

Furthermore, the coverage only speaks about the problematic issues related to brand name of GFK. As the journalist has put it, the current “research has made analytics question it”.

The research methodology, dates, and deviation margins are not listed at all.

## 3.6. Tabula

**About Tabula:** Tabula TV began broadcasting in January 2013 after it purchased television frequency in 2012 and obtained a private broadcasting license. The TV channel was founded in 2010 by Civil Development Fund, as noted on the organization's website, with financial support of rightist businessmen with libertarian visions. The TV channel was created on the basis of Tabula magazine, which has not been issued since 2014. According to TVMR Georgia, an annual average rating (AMR) of Tabula TV was 0,20%, while the share (SHR) amounted 1,08%.

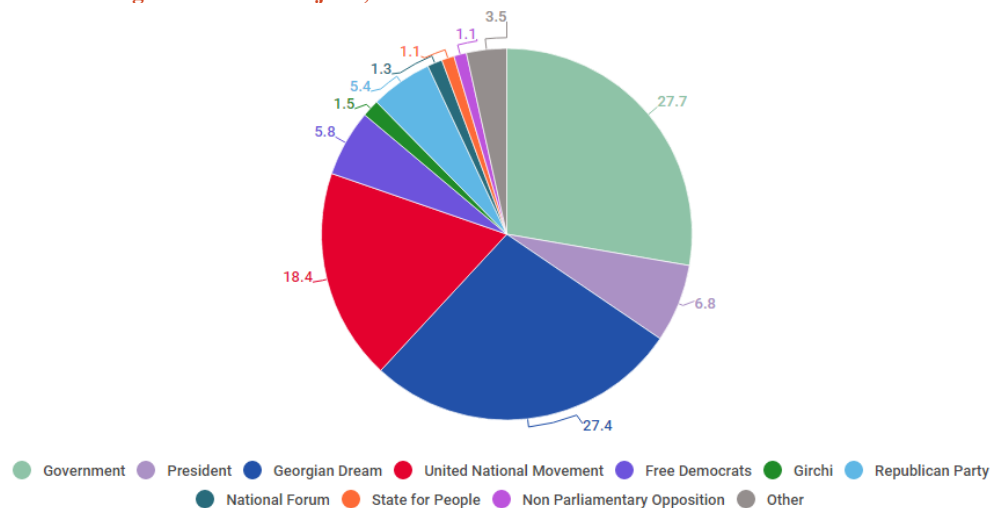
### Quantitative Data

**Total coverage:** The four-month monitoring (April 1 – July 31) of Tabula TV (774 stories) has revealed that the TV channel dedicated almost equal part of its primetime news programs to the Government (27.7%) and Georgian Dream (27.4%) totaling 55.1%. Georgian Dream is followed by qualified political subjects: National Movement – 18.4%; Free Democrats – 5.8%; Republican Party – 5.4% and National Forum – 1.3%.

New party State for People and non-parliamentary opposition have a share of 1.1% each. A total share of subjects, whose coverage is below 1%, amounts to 3.5% and looks as follows: Industry will Save Georgia – 0.6%; Democratic Movement – United Georgia – 0.5%; Conservatives – 0.4%; Tamaz Mechiauri – United Georgia – 0.4%; New Georgia – 0.3%; Labor Party – 0.3%; Alliance of Patriots – 0.2%; independent lawmakers – 0.6%.

Among institutions, a share of the President in total coverage is 6.8%, CEC - 0.2%.

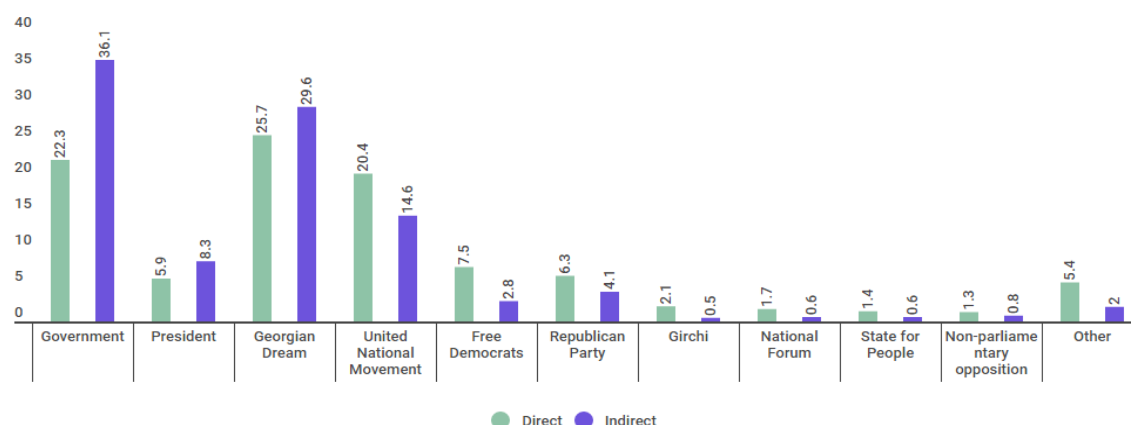
**Chart 3.6.1 Total Coverage of Political Subjects, Tabula**



**Direct/Indirect Coverage.** According to the results of four months, indirect coverage prevails over direct coverage in case of the following subjects: Government (indirect 36.1%, direct 22.3%); Georgian Dream (indirect 29.6%, direct 25.7%) and President (indirect 8.3%, direct 5.9%).

In case of other subjects, direct coverage prevails over indirect coverage and the difference is significant in case of National Movement (direct 20.4%, indirect 14.6%) and Free Democrats (direct 7.5%, indirect 2.8%). The same picture has been revealed in respect of the Republican Party, where direct coverage (6.3%) prevails over indirect coverage (4.1%).

**Chart 3.6.2 Direct/Indirect Coverage of Political Parties, Tabula**

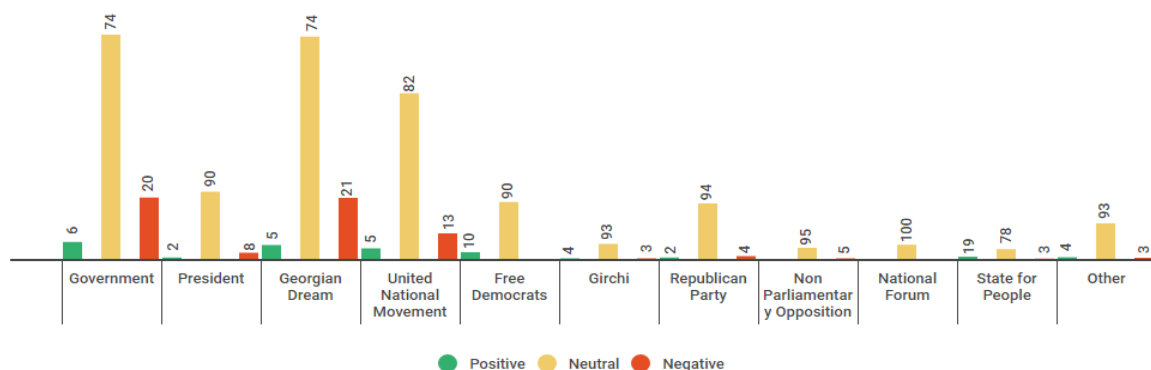


***Tone of content in covering political subjects.*** Coverage of Georgian Dream (negative 21%, positive 5%) and Government (negative 20%, positive 6%) was most negative in tone, followed by National Movement (negative 13%, positive 5%).

In terms of total coverage, newly established State for People party was covered most positively in tone (positive 19%, negative 3%), followed by Free Democrats (positive 10%, neutral - 90%). Coverage of National Forum (100%) and non-parliamentary opposition (95%; negative 5%) was highly neutral in tone. The tone of coverage of Republican Party is also highly neutral (94%); its negative coverage is 4% and positive – 2%. Girchi was mainly covered neutrally (93%), its positive coverage amounts 4% and negative coverage - 3%.

Negative tone (8%) of the President's coverage prevails over positive tone (2%). In case of CEC, it was covered in positive tone - 18% and in neutral - 82%. Negative coverage of CEC was not observed.

**Chart 3.6.3. Coverage of Political Subjects – Tone of Content, Tabula**

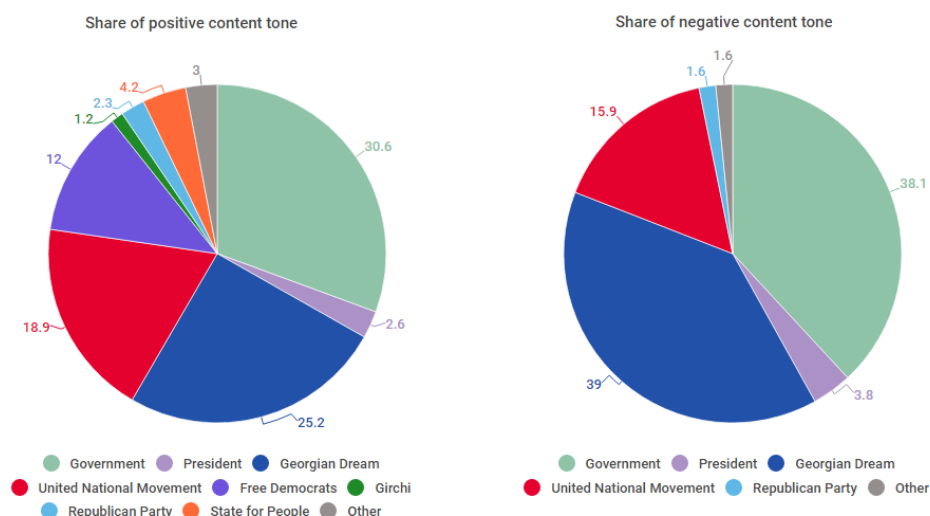


***A share of subjects in positive and negative content.*** The Government (30.6%) and Georgian Dream (25.2%) received the highest share in Tabula's positive content. Simultaneously, a share of these subjects in negative content is also highest (Georgian Dream 39%, Government 38.1%). A share of National Movement in negative content (15.9%) is slightly less than in a positive content (18.9%). A share of Free Democrats in positive content was 12%, while the negative coverage was not observed at all. In terms of positive coverage Free Democrats are followed by State for People - 4,2 %, whose coverage in negative tone amounted 0,2%.

A share of Republican Party in positive content (2.3%) prevails over negative (1.6%). A share of Girchi in positive content amounted 1.2%, in negative – 0.3%. A share of other parties, whose coverage is below 1%, amounts to 3% in positive content and 1.6% - in negative content.

A share of the President's coverage in negative content (3.8%) exceeds a share in positive content (2.6%); CEC's share in positive coverage is 0.9%.

**Chart 3.6.4 A Share of Covering Political Subjects in Positive and Negative Content – Tabula**



## Qualitative Data

Tabula TV mainly covers developments through observance of ethical standards and political pluralism. However, there are some cases when the balance of coverage of political subjects has been violated.

**Balance/Bias.** On April 29 (at 7:03pm) Focus news program aired a story “A part of Botanical Garden owned by Ivanishvili.” Some representatives of civil society organizations (Sulkhan Saladze, GYLA coordinator; Nata Peradze, founder of Guerrilla Gardening) speak about a non-transparent auction, which was announced by the Tbilisi City Hall on privatization of a plot belonging to the Botanical Garden; they also accuse former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili of some activities planned in the Botanical Garden as well as implementation of the Panorama Tbilisi project.

The story also involves comments by two members of the opposition United National Movement, Irakli Abesadze and Nika Melia, who say that the Tbilisi City Hall issued an illegal permit on building a hotel in the Botanical Garden. The opposition members threaten with holding protest rallies and unleash accusations against Bidzina Ivanishvili.

The story does not provide any comments by Bidzina Ivanishvili or any representative of the Tbilisi City Hall, other opposition parties, or the company owning the land. So, the story does not provide the attitude of the other party and therefore it is biased.

**Factual accuracy/incomplete information.** The May 11 story (at 7:11pm) “Amendments to Electoral System” is dedicated to the draft law on making amendments to the election code, which was submitted to the Parliament by GD lawmaker Giga Bukia from Conservative Party.

A journalist says that “the opposition slammed the draft law initiated by the ruling majority as obscure.” The same journalist claims that “the opposition has also submitted its own bill on amendments to the election code, which envisages replacing majoritarian component of the electoral system with regional-proportional system already in 2016.”

The story provides only the position of National Movement (four respondents from this opposition party), while the position of other opposition parties (parliamentary or non-parliamentary), including an inter-faction group, which works on the election code, has not been provided. It is not specified, which particular opposition party is referred to above. It should be noted that besides National Movement, other opposition parties also have their own initiatives

on electoral amendments (for example, Girchi, which held a presentation on April 1, 2016). So, the issue has been discussed only from the perspective of one opposition party.

**Balance.** On May 20, (19:12) Tabula dedicated a story to a topic “Paralympians Challenge the Results of Elections.” According to the story, Paralympians do not agree with the results of elections held at the Paralympic Committee on May 19. A journalist claims that the election “was held under pressure from the ruling party and therefore it is not legitimate.”

The story provides comments by Giorgi Tsasidze (former head of the Paralympic Committee), who directly accuses Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, Taniel Khechikashvili of “personal involvement in unrests.” The story also involves comments by Temur Arabidze (Paralympian), who makes similar remarks and speaks of government’s pressure.

The journalist provides the comments of the above mentioned persons as the position of the Paralympic Committee, whereas the position of those persons, who backed dismissal of Giorgi Tsasidze is not provided in the story. Neither did the journalist seek the comments from the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs and Georgian Dream. So, the story is not balanced.

**Coverage of public opinion poll/factual accuracy.** On June 28 (at 19:01pm) Tabula TV covered a public opinion poll, which was commissioned by Rustavi 2 TV and fielded by German-American company GFK. Two stories were dedicated to the issue. The first story is about the results of public opinion poll, involving information about some questions of the survey. The story provides no information about how many respondents refused to answer, as well as about percentage of undecided respondents; information about the methodology is provided only partially. Mandatory requirements for covering public opinion poll are provided incomprehensibly that represents violation of regulation.

The second story “Assessments about the Poll” provides assessments made by a wide spectrum of political subjects from both the ruling party and parliamentary and non-parliamentary opposition. Although the remarks about reliability of the company GFK were made that day (in connection with phone interviews conducted in Ukraine, particularly in Crimea), the story did not cover either this information, or the background information about the company.

## 3.7. kavkasia

**About Kavkasia.** Kavkasia TV was established in 1994. Initially, the channel covered only Tbilisi and nearby areas, but after the switchover to digital broadcasting, the TV channel, starting from 1 February 2016, expanded its broadcast range to include Batumi, Zugdidi, Telavi, Kutaisi and Poti too. Initial co-founders of the channel were: Davit Akubardia (90%), Geno Khrikadze (7%) and Davit Gergedava (3%). At present, the 100% of the channel is owned by its director and journalist Nino Jangirashvili. According to TVMR Georgia, an annual average rating (AMR) of Kavkasia TV for the year of 2015 was 0,20%, while the share (SHR) amounted 1, 04%.

### Quantitative Data

**Total coverage.** The four-month monitoring of Kavkasia TV (April 1 – July 31) has revealed that the TV channel dedicated the greatest part of its primetime news programs (total number of covered stories 1334) to the Government (35%) and Georgian Dream (21%). A total share of their coverage is 56%.

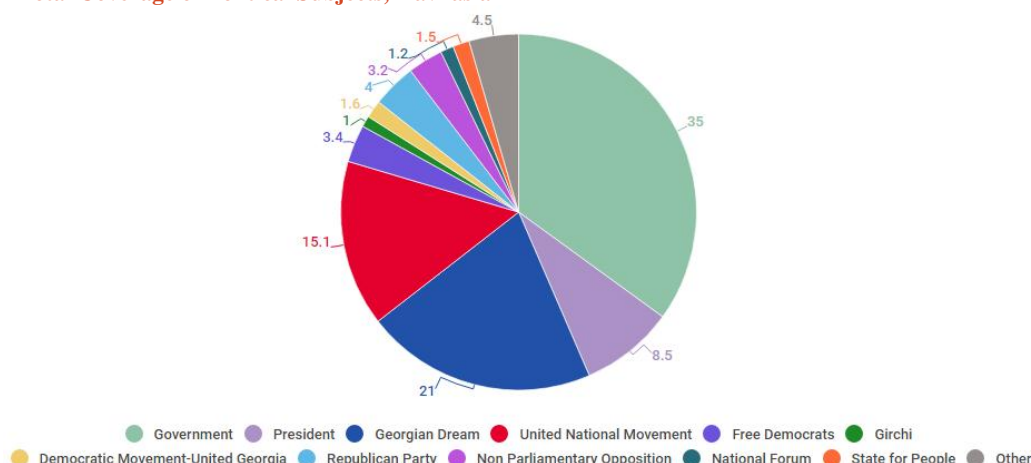
As for other qualified subjects, United National Movement has the largest share – 15.1%, followed by Republicans (4%) and Free Democrats (3.4%). The share of Democratic Movement – United Georgia (1.6%) and National Forum (1.2%) is relatively low; coverage of other qualified subjects is less than 1%: Labor Party - 0.7%; Industry will Save Georgia – 0.6%; Alliance of Patriots of Georgia – 0.5%; Conservatives – 0.5%; Christian-Conservative Party – 0.02%.



The non-parliamentary opposition received only 3.2%. Among newly established parties, State for People was covered more intensively (1.5%). The share of other parties is relatively low: Girchi – 1%, Tamaz Mechiauri for United Georgia – 0.4% and New Georgia – 0.1%.

The President's share in total coverage amounted to 8.5%, Central Election Commission (CEC) - 0, 3%.

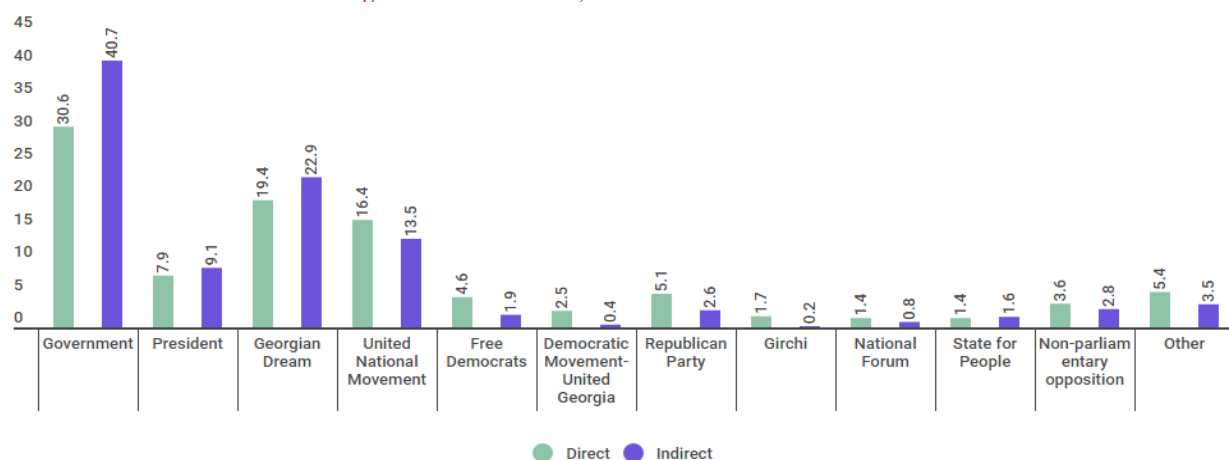
**Chart 3.7.1 Total Coverage of Political Subjects, Kavkasia**



**Direct and indirect coverage.** According to the four-month data, Kavkasia TV dedicated most of its airtime to both direct and indirect coverage of the Government (direct – 30.6%; indirect – 40.7%) and Georgian Dream coalition (direct – 19.4%; indirect – 22.9%). In the both cases indirect coverage prevails over direct coverage. In case of the President, direct coverage falls behind indirect coverage (direct 7.9%; indirect 9.1%).

As the chart below shows, in all other cases direct coverage prevails over indirect coverage or the results are almost identical.

**Chart 3.7.2 Direct/Indirect Coverage of Political Parties, Kavkasia**



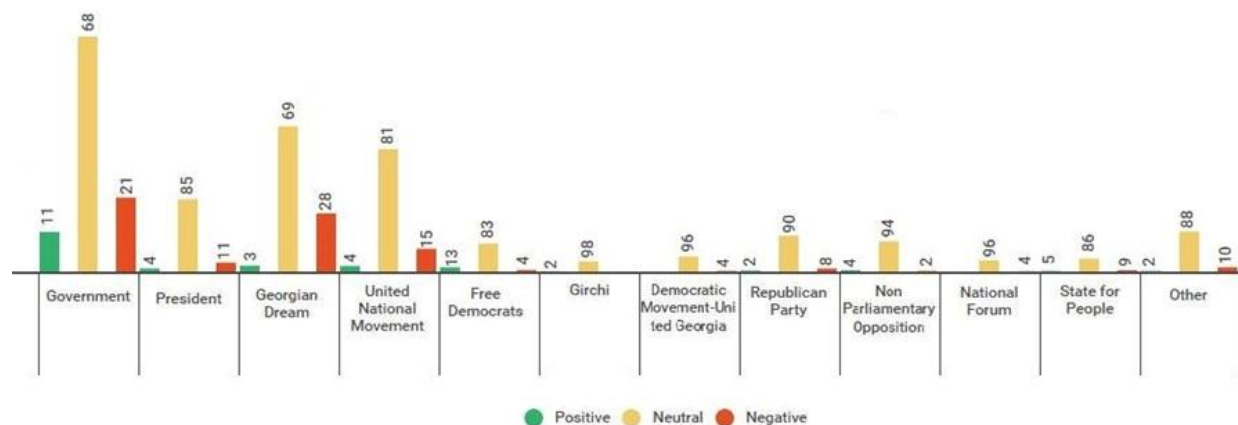
**Tone of content in covering political subjects.** New Political Center Girchi was covered most neutrally (98%) (negative coverage – 0%) by Kavkasia TV. The tone of coverage was also highly neutral with respect to Democratic Movement – United Georgia and National Forum (96%); a share of positive coverage of the both political subjects was 0%.

In covering political parties, the highest level of positive tone was observed with respect to Free Democrats (13%; negative – 4%), followed by the Government (11%). In case of this latter, a share of negative content was high (21%).



Georgian Dream (negative -28 %, Positive 3 %) and the Government (negative -21 %, Positive 11 %) received highest negative content. These subjects are followed by United National Movement (negative 15%, positive 4%), State for People (negative 9%, positive 5%) and Republican Party (negative 8%, positive 2%). As for the non-parliamentary opposition, their coverage on Kavkasia TV was more positive (4%) in tone than negative (2%).

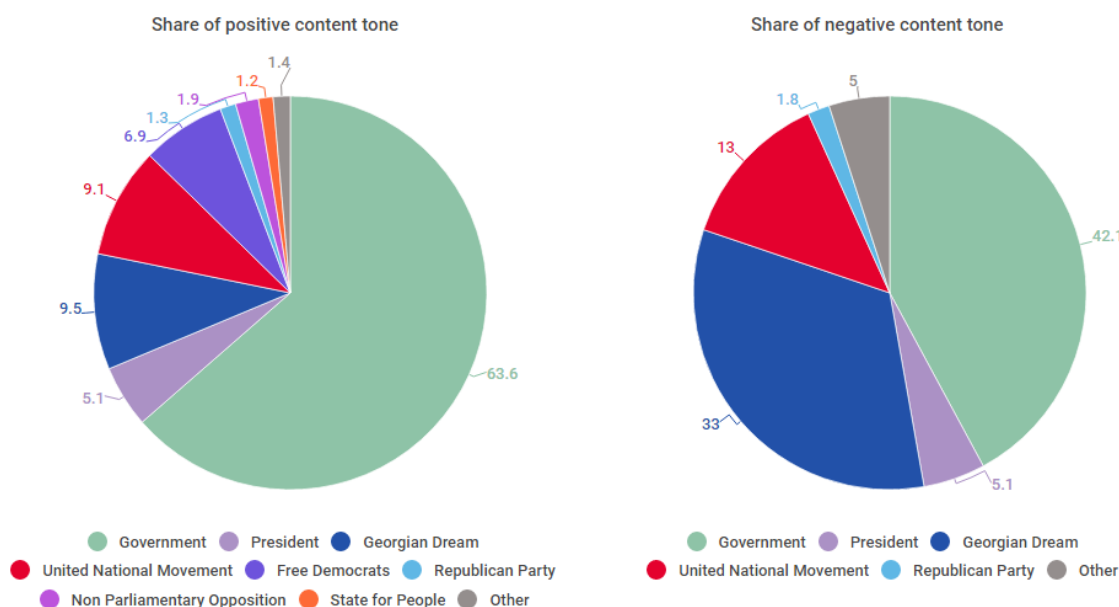
**Chart 3.7.3. Coverage of Political Subjects – Tone of Content, Kavkasia**



*A share of subjects in positive and negative content.* In terms of both positive and negative content, Kavkasia TV dedicated most of its airtime to the Government (positive 63.6%, negative 42.1%) and Georgian Dream (positive 9.5%, negative 33%). In case of Georgian Dream, a share of negative content significantly prevails over a share of positive content. In case of the United National Movement, a share of negative content (13%) prevails over positive content (9.1%) and in case of Free Democrats a share of positive content (6.9%) is much higher than a share of negative content (0.8%).

A share of the Republican Party's coverage is almost identical in positive (1.3%) and negative (1.8%) tones, as well as a share of the President's coverage (positive and negative 5.1%).

**Chart. 3.7.4. A Share of Political Subjects in Positive and Negative Content – Kavkasia**



## Qualitative Data

As quantitative data shows, the Kavkasia TV is the second to Rustavi 2 by its critical coverage of the government and the Georgian Dream (48%). The TV channel mainly adheres to the principle of balanced coverage and ethical norms of journalism. There are technical problems often observed in news reports such as, for example, absence of captions sometimes making it difficult to fully understand reported events. Moreover, Kavkasia TV covers a great amount of stories in voice-over to sound on tape format which might be attributed to the lack of human and technical resources, though this format complicates the observance of balance.

*Improper balance.* On 17 May (at 20:40), the TV channel produced one report and two voice-overs to sound on tape. The report covered the Day of Family Purity and Respect to Parents which was established by the Patriarch of Georgian Orthodox Church in 2014 to counterpoise the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, and the march organized to mark that day. The first section of the report was dedicated to the Day of Family Purity whilst another section covered the LGBT protest in front of the Interior Ministry, deprived of opportunity to mark 17 May for the second consecutive year, and the arrest of activists who were detained because of making inscriptions on the Patriarchate building. Although overall the report showed depth, there was a certain imbalance between the first section (the march of clergy and politicians) and the second section (LGBT protest). The first section contained six soundbites of participants of the march whilst the second section contained only two soundbites of LGBT rights defenders. Moreover, among the soundbites of the first section there were soundbites of only two members of Democratic Movement for United Georgia, Giorgi Akhvlediani and Dimitri Lortkipanidze, who spoke about the purity of family. For a properly balanced coverage, it would be desirable to also provide opinions of those politicians who do not agree to the idea of establishing an alternative to the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia and in contrast to the above named politicians, are not distinguished for their homophobic attitudes.

*Balance.* On 11 July (at 21:38), a voice-over to sound on tape story on problems of universal health insurance program was aired in news program of Kavkasia TV channel. The material contained a comment of UNM member, Zurab Chiaberashvili, alleging that the program came to face a problem of funding from the budget; he also alleged that a decree of the Health Care Minister restricted the participation of clinics in the program. The material lacked a position of the Health care Ministry.

*Balance.* On 15 June (at 20:49), the news program covered the fact of testimony given by the former defense and interior minister Irakli Okruashvili to the prosecution against the former President Mikheil Saakashvili and former interior minister Vano Merabishvili on the case of physical assault of businessman Valeri Gelashvili. The material contained only Irakli Okruashvili's comment whereas positions of lawyers of Mikheil Saakashvili and Vano Merabishvili were not provided.

*Improper balance.* On 17 May (at 20:31), the news program covered the speech of Tbilisi Mayor Davit Narmania to the City Council. The report contained 11 soundbites (some of them from the sitting of City Council and others recorded as comments) in which accusations were voiced against the Mayor. Soundbites of Tbilisi Mayor and a representative of the majority in City Council were taken from the City Council sitting. It did not provide comments, recorded separately, of defenders of the Mayor's positions.

*Reporting public opinion poll results.* On 14 May (at 20:48), Kavkasia (like Rustavi 2 and Maestro TV companies) covered the poll results, which were made public by the news agency GHN asserting that it was commissioned by the Georgian Dream.

Although Georgian Dream denied the authenticity of the poll, the results of the poll were presented as authentic. Moreover, apart from the organization that commissioned the poll, the report did not provide any other data compulsory for reporting public opinion polls in pre-election period.

On 30 June (at 20:40), Kavkasia TV channel also covered the results of Georgian Dream's in-house opinion poll. It is worth noting that in contrast to other TV channels (for example, Imedi, Maestro, etc.), the presenter as well as the

reported focused on the criticism caused by selective publicizing of results of only two political subjects (Georgian Dream and UNM). In contrast to other TV channels, Kavkasia, based on the source of the poll, also reported the period of time when the poll was conducted, the amount of respondents, the method and the margin of error. However, it did not provide exact formulation of questions, thereby misleading the audience. For example, similarly to Imedi TV channel, Kavkasia also said that 65% of respondents believed the Georgian Dream would win the elections; however, this 65% was the result of answers to the question: “Regardless of your choice, which party, in your opinion, will receive the highest number of seats in parliament?”

With regard to opinion poll results, Kavkasia TV provided comments of a wide spectrum of political parties (Georgian Dream, Free Democrats, UNM, Democratic Movement for United Georgia, State for People, Labor Party).

### 3.8. Obiektivi

**About Obiektivi TV:** Media Union Obiektivi was founded in August 2010. Secretary General of Alliance of Patriots of Georgia (APG), Irma Inashvili was co-founder of the TV channel. Since 2014 she has not been involved in the channel’s management. Several anchors of Obiektivi (Bondo Mdzinarashvili, Vakhtang Begiashvili) are nominated by Alliance of Patriots as a candidates for the 2016 parliamentary elections. According to various surveys, Obiektivi carries out an anti-western, Turkophobic and homophobic editorial policy. Discriminatory editorial policy of the Obiektivi talk-shows were mentioned in the fifth monitoring cycle report<sup>22</sup> of the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), which recommended the Georgian authorities “to review their contracts with media outlets and cancel or not renew them in cases where media are known to engage in racist or homo-/transphobic hate speech.” The TV channel launched its pre-election news programs in May 16, 2016. Media Union Obiektivi was not included in TVMR Georgia TV ratings in 2015.<sup>23</sup> According to the financial declarations published on the website of the Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC) for the 2016 (January 1 -June 30), among 8 TV Companies<sup>24</sup> which are in lead on media market in terms of revenues, Media Union Obiektivi is the only TV company with highest donation share (31 %).

#### Quantitative Data

**Total coverage.** Obiektivi TV became a subject of monitoring after the channel started to produce news programs on May 16. Thus, the below data (960 stories) reflect the results of two months (June 1 – July 31).

Like other TV channels, Obiektivi dedicated the greatest part of its primetime news programs to the Government (35.7%) and Georgian Dream (15.8%). Unlike other TV channels, in this case Georgian Dream is followed by Alliance of Patriots (10.2%); United National Movement falls behind with a small difference (9.8%).

A share of non-parliamentary opposition is 3.8%; a share of those parties, whose coverage is below 1% - 3.4%. The results look as follows: Republican Party – 2.3%; Free Democrats – 2.1%; Democratic Movement – For United Georgia - 1.8%; Labor Party – 1.9%; National Forum – 1%.

Compared to other TV companies, among newly set up parties, New Georgia has the highest share – 1.6%, followed by Tamaz Mechiauri – United Georgia – 1.5%; State for People – 1.3% and Girchi – 0.3%.

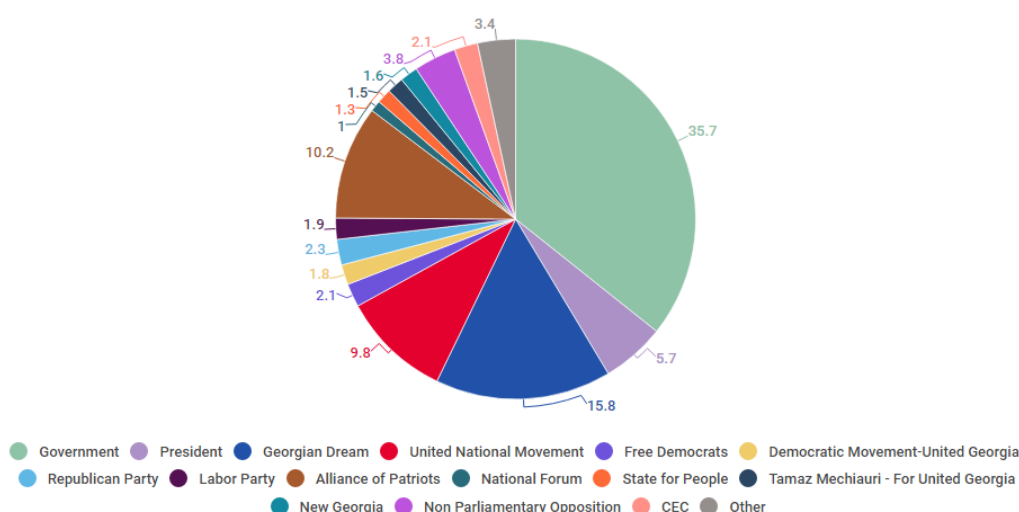
The President’s share in total coverage is 5.7%; Central Election Commission (CEC) – 2.1%.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Georgia/GEO-CbC-V-2016-002-ENG.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.tvmr.ge/en#!en/news/44/>

<sup>24</sup> A share of financial income of 8 TV companies in media market for January 1 - June 30, 2016 : Rustavi 2 (46%), Imedi (25%), Maestro (8 %), Georgia’s Media Network (7,5%), GDS (2,3%), Obiektivi (2 %), Iberia (1,9%) TV Pirveli (1%)

**Chart 3.8. 1 Total Coverage of Political Subjects, Obiektivi (June 1 – July 31, 2016)**

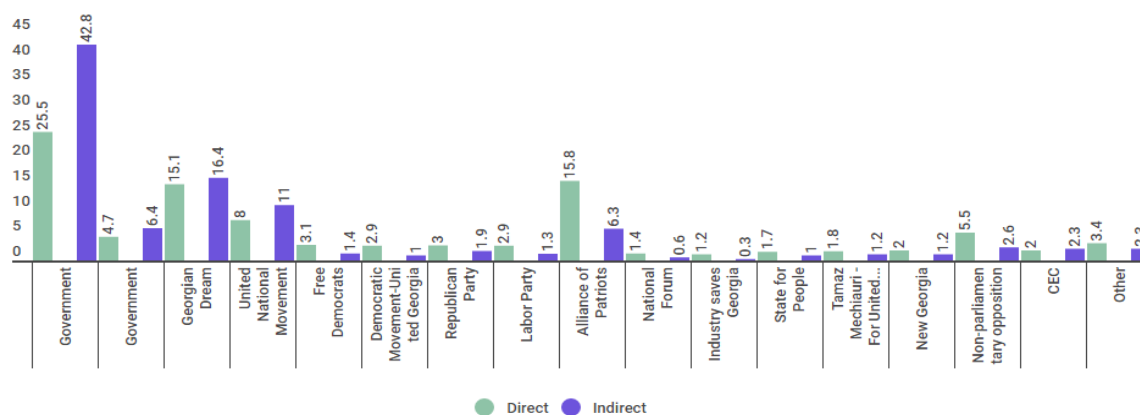


**Direct/Indirect Coverage.** Obiektivi covered most intensively the Government (25.5%), Alliance of Patriots (15.8%) and Georgian Dream (15.1%). Herewith, the greatest difference between direct (15.8%) and indirect (6.3%) coverage was observed in case of Alliance of Patriots. In case of the Government, indirect coverage (42.8%) significantly prevailed over direct coverage (25.5%).

Indirect coverage prevails over direct coverage in case of the following subjects: Georgian Dream (indirect 16.4%, direct 15.1%), National Movement (indirect 11%, direct 8%), President (indirect 6.4%, direct 4.7%).

In case of other political subjects, the direct coverage slightly prevails over indirect coverage. The only exception is CEC, where indirect coverage slightly prevails over direct coverage.

**Chart 3.8.2. Direct/Indirect Coverage of Political Parties, Obiektivi (June 1 – July 31, 2016)**

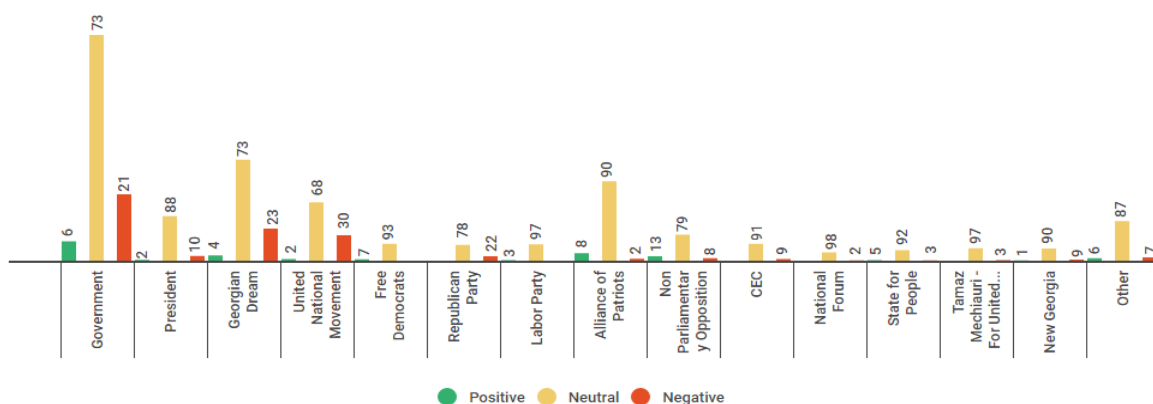


**Tone of content in covering political subjects.** Coverage of the following political subjects was most neutral in tone: National Forum (98%); Labor Party (97%); new parties Tamaz Mechiauri – United Georgia (97%) and State for People (92%), as well as Free Democrats (93%); CEC (91%); Alliance of Patriots (90%) and New Georgia (90%).

The tone of content was most negative with respect to National Movement (30%), Georgian Dream (23%), Republican Party (22%), Government (21%) and President (10%). In addition, the Republican Party has zero positive coverage.

Out of total coverage, the tone of content was most positive with respect to the non-parliamentary opposition (13%), Alliance of Patriots (8%), Free Democrats (7%), Government (6%) and political subjects with coverage below 1% (6%).

**Chart 3.8.3. Coverage of Political Subjects – Tone of Content, Obiektivi (June 1 – July 31, 2016)**



*A share of subjects in positive and negative content.* The Government (43.7%) and Alliance of Patriots (17%) have the highest share in Obiektivi's positive coverage. The Government's share in negative content is slightly higher (45.8%) and the share of Alliance of Patriots is much lower (1.4%).

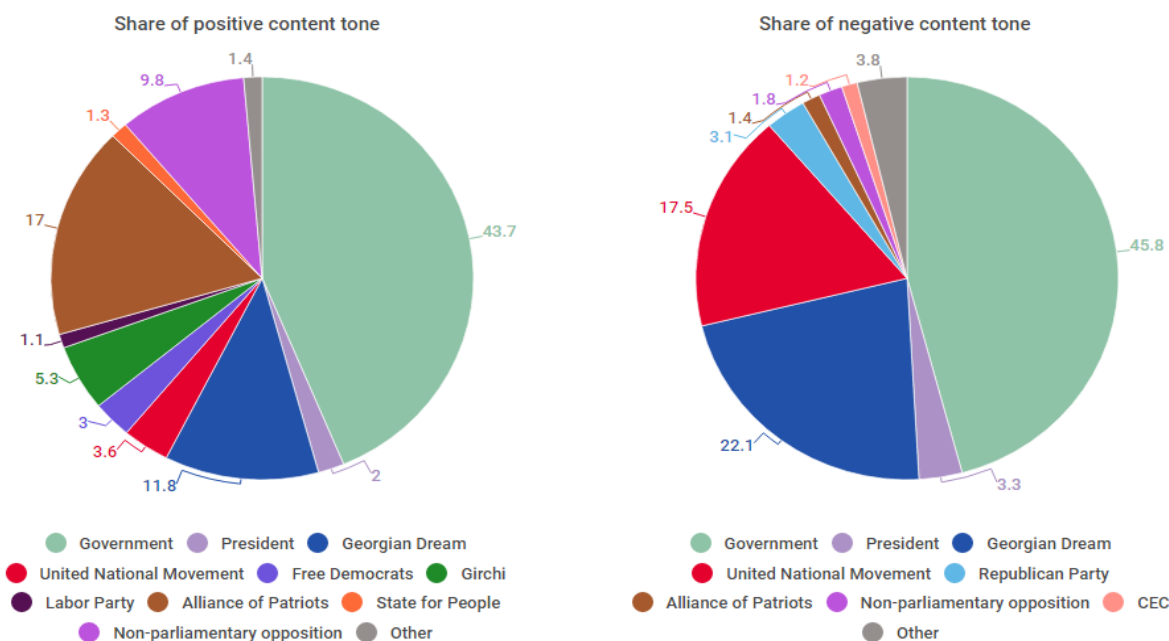
Georgian Dream's share in positive content (11.8%) is much lower than its share in negative content (22.1%); the same is with the United National Movement, where a share in negative content prevails over a share in positive content (positive 3.6%; negative 17.5%).

A share of non-parliamentary opposition in positive content is also high (9.8%); negative (1.8%). A share of Girchi in positive content is high 5.3%, which was not covered negatively at all.

A share of the President's coverage in positive content is 2%; negative content – 3.3%.

A share of qualified parties in positive and negative content looks as follows: Free Democrats – positive 3%, without any share in negative content. Labor Party's share in positive content is 1.1%. A share of the following political parties is less than 1% in positive content: Nino Burjanadze's Democratic Movement – United Georgia (positive 0.1%, negative 0.4%); Republicans (positive 0.1%, negative 3.1%); Industry will Save Georgia (positive 0.6%, negative 0.2%).

**Chart. 3.8.4 A Share of Covering Political Subjects in Positive and Negative Content – Obiektivi (June 1 – July 31, 2016)**



### Qualitative Data

Obiektivi was the only TV channel in which the Alliance of Patriots is the second, after the Government and the ruling party, by the amount of coverage received (10.2%). Instances of reports presenting opinions of the Alliance of Patriots alone as an alternative to the government's opinion were frequent, with opinions of other opposition parties – both parliamentary and non-parliamentary – being ignored. Balance in reporting was also violated in favor of various political subjects. Reports sometimes relied on only one source and accuracy was sometimes a problem too.

**Balance/impartiality.** News service of Obiektivi TV channel often produced reports in which alternative opinions were expressed by the Alliance of Patriots or subjects falling within the bloc alone and opinions of parliamentary opposition were totally ignored. For example:

On 15 July (at 20:01), the news program of Obiektivi aired the report concerning the increased state debt. The material contained only the comments of the chairman of budgetary committee of the parliament, Nodar Ebanoidze, and a member of the Free Georgia political party which falls within the Alliance of Patriots bloc, Kakha Kukava.

On 9 July (at 19:30), Obiektivi covered the topic of bonuses and salary additions in the Central Electoral Commission. The only alternative to the opinion of the Commission was the opinion of a member of the Alliance of Patriots, Gocha Tevdoradze.

On 7 July (at 19:52), a report covering a meeting between the Central Electoral Commission and opposition political parties contained a comment of Kakha Kukava alone, who is a member of Free Georgia political party which falls within the Alliance of Patriots bloc.

**Balance/accuracy.** On 7 July (at 19:48), Obiektivi covered the topic of Georgia's position in international ratings, presenting a member of Alliance of Patriots, Gigi Maglakelidze, as an economic expert, which was misleading. The report did not provide comments of any other political party.

**Bias/balance.** A report of 8 July (at 19:44) on NATO's challenges concerned the prospects of strengthening the defense of Black Sea territorial waters with the involvement of NATO. In the lead to the report the presenter raised a question of what that cooperation would bring to Georgia and announced two different opinions: a positive attitude of the government towards this process and probability of threats which this process could pose to Georgia. Apart

from comments of representatives of authorities, the report did not provide any additional information on what in particular this package of cooperation with NATO envisaged; nor did it mention the participation of Ukraine in it. In addition to different opinions of two experts, the report contained only a negative assessment of a member of Alliance of Patriots, Gigi Maglakelidze, who said that such cooperation would be dangerous for Georgia because it is not a NATO member state and consequently, not qualified for the defense mechanisms under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. The report did not present opinions of that segment of opposition political parties which view such format of cooperation as favorable for the security and defense of the country.

*Impartiality/balance.* On 4 July (at 12:04) Obiektivi reported about an initiative of Kartuli Dasi leader, Jondi Bagaturia, regarding the registration of a question for referendum to find out whether the population supports NATO membership. Apart from Kartuli Dasi and ruling political team, the Alliance of Patriots was the only political subject whose opinion was provided in the report whereas opinions of that segment of opposition parties which support Georgia's NATO integration were ignored. Moreover, a journalist questioned the legitimacy of plebiscite on the integration into NATO, which was held simultaneously with the presidential election in 2008. In particular, the journalist said:

“The question whether Georgia should integrate into NATO, 80% of voters answered positively. However, in 2008, the opposition political parties and nongovernmental organizations spoke about the election fraud and consequently, tampering with results of the plebiscite.”

The opinion of the journalist about falsification of election and consequently plebiscite results was presented as the position of the entire opposition political parties and civil sector, which was misleading. Moreover, the material did not cite results of most recent opinion polls conducted by respected international organizations, which show that the majority of society supports the country's integration into NATO.

*Balance/impartiality.* On 29 July (at 19:34), Obiektivi aired a report about frequent visits of Russian MPs to Georgia. The report evaluated the aim of visits and interests of parties to this issue. The topic was evaluated by expert Irakli Toronjadze who spoke about unacceptability of such cooperation. As regards politicians, the report provided opinions of only those politicians who view such relations important; they were: MP from the ruling majority Davit Lortkipanidze and representatives of opposition political parties “Tamaz Mechiauri – United Georgia” and “Democratic Movement for United Georgia.” The report did not include opinions of representatives of those political parties who are skeptical about the cooperation with Russia and view the issue in the context of occupation.

*Impartiality/balance.* On 18 July, Obiektivi aired a report on possibilities of destabilization in Georgia. This topic was based on a statement made by Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu and released by the Russian Interfax news agency, saying that alike Syrian crisis, armed conflict may happen in any country, including post-Soviet countries, Central Asia and South Caucasus and in such a case, Russia would undertake adequate measures.

In the introductory part of the report, an expert noted that in the process of destabilization, Russia may use pro-Russian political parties such as the forces rallying around Vladimer Bedukadze, Nino Burjanadze, Tamaz Mechiauri, Gogi Topadze.

After the abovementioned comment of the expert, the report took an absolutely different development. MP Gia Volski, a representative of Georgian Dream, Zurab Tkemaladze, a member of Georgian Dream coalition from the faction of Industry Will Save Georgia, and Gigi Maglakelidze, a member of Alliance of Patriots, accused the United National Movement of efforts to stage destabilization after the elections. According to Volski, the interests of Russia and the UNM coincided in that. The actuality in the report showed Zurab Tkemaladze agreeing to a suggestion of the journalist that the UNM was a source of destabilization. In particular, he told the journalist:

“One of political forces which you meant – and perhaps I mean too – longs for provocation and destabilization.”

The comment of a representative of Alliance of Patriots in the report was presented as the position of the entire non-parliamentary opposition. The report noted that UNM declined to comment. Apart from choosing respondents



selectively, the report tried to link the statement of the Russian Defense Minister with the opposition political party and consequently, portrayed this party as a threat.

*Accuracy/improper source.* Accusations against Defense Minister Tina Khidasheli (a member of Republican Party), covered by Obiektivi twice, rested on a single respondent alone. Accusations voiced by two incumbent employees of the Ministry against the Minister were also presented as the position of the entire Defense Ministry.

On 1 June, Obiektivi news program aired a report - scandal around the Defense Ministry (at 19:31) - in which a dismissed officer Davit Nemsadze accused Minister Tina Khidasheli of torturing children, nepotism and corruption. Those accusations were based on verbal statements of Davit Nemsadze alone. The report included a comment of the Public Defender's Office saying that it was studying the case on the basis of application from Davit Nemsadze. The TV channel did not undertake any effort to certify this information. The report also lacked a position of the Defense Minister.

On 1 July (at 19:40), Obiektivi aired yet another similar material based on the same respondent. During a news briefing, the respondent declared that he had a list of 111 employees of the Defense Ministry of which 55 were nepotistic appointments. Obiektivi TV did not show any interest towards the content or origin of this list; nor did it double check details and accuracy of accusations.

Balance was also violated in an anti-Defense Minister report - defense Ministry accused of nepotism - which was aired on 26 July (at 19:33). Accusations of two employees blaming the Minister of partisan staff policy were presented the position of the entire Ministry. Both the presenter and the journalist declared that employees got to confront the Minister. The report contained a phone comment of the head of press service who said that they would study the issue and make a statement if appropriate.

*Reporting public opinion polls.* In the reporting period, public opinion polls were covered in the Obiektivi news program in a somewhat comprehensive way only on 29 July (NDI poll). However, even in this case, it reported results to only one question – “if parliamentary elections were held tomorrow who would you vote for?” The report indicated the time of poll, the number of respondents, the method, the amount of undecided voters (57%), the exact formulation of the question and the organization having commissioned the poll.

## 4. UNIFORM DATA FOR ONLINE MEDIA

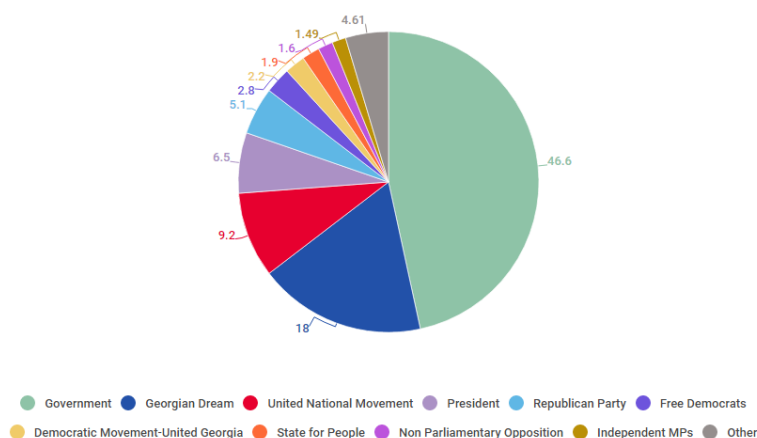
A four-month (1 April – 31 July, 2016) monitoring of online media (news agencies and online editions) showed that online publications allocated the largest amount of coverage, both direct and indirect, to the government and the Georgian Dream. The government received 46.6% of total coverage whilst Georgian Dream received 18%, both totaling 64,6%.

The next political party by the amount of coverage was the United National Movement (9.2%), followed by Republican Party (5.1%), Free Democrats (2.8%), Democratic Movement for United Georgia (2.2%) and a newly established political party State for People (1.9%). Non-parliamentary political parties received 1.6% of the total coverage.

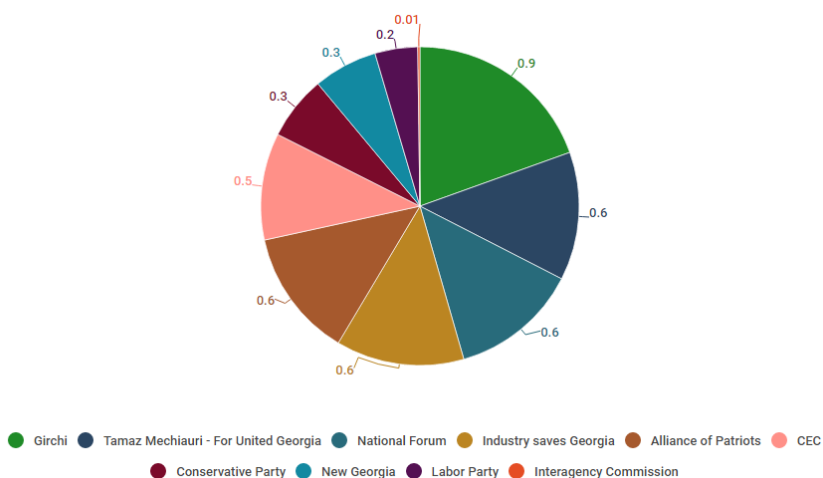
The political parties with less than 1% of the total coverage received (which, taken together, amounted to 4.61%) were: Girchi – 0.9%, Alliance of Patriots, Industry Will Save Georgia, Tamaz Mechiauri-United Georgia, and National Forum – 0.6% each, Conservative Party – 0.3%, Labor Party – 0.2%, Christian-Conservative Party – 0.02%.

The share of the President in the total coverage stood at 6.5% whilst shares of the Central Electoral Commission (0.5%) and the Interagency Commission for Free and Fair Elections (0.04%) were lower than 1%.

**Table 4.1. Total coverage of political subjects – online media**



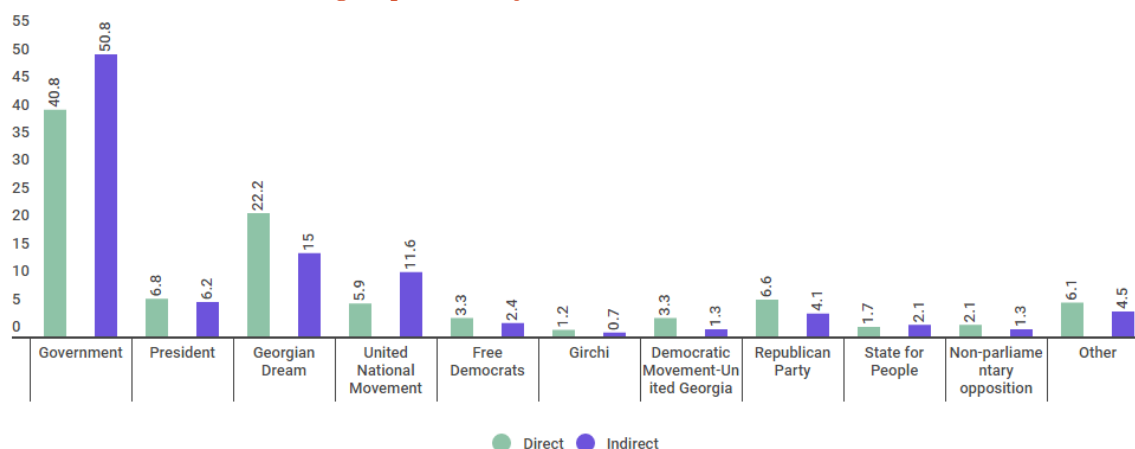
**Table 4.2. Subjects with coverage below 1% - Online media**



**Direct/indirect coverage.** In terms of direct and indirect coverage, the government and the Georgian Dream were the political subjects that were most extensively reported by online media. In reporting about the government, indirect coverage (50.8%) exceeded direct coverage (40.8) whereas in reporting about the Georgian Dream direct coverage (22.2%) exceeded indirect coverage (15%) by 7.2%.

In case of opposition political parties, indirect reporting was higher towards two political parties: the UNM (indirect - 11.6%, direct - 5.9%) and the State for People (indirect - 2.1%, direct 1.7%). As the chart 4.2 shows, direct coverage exceeded indirect coverage in relation to other political subjects.

**Chart 4.3. Direct/indirect coverage of political subjects – online media**



**Tone of content and context.** According to the results of four months of monitoring, the highest amount of positive coverage by online media was received by the Georgian Dream (positive - 12%, negative - 10%), followed by the government (positive - 10%, negative - 5%) and Free Democrats (positive - 9%, negative - 4%).

The highest amount of negative coverage was received by the UNM (negative - 34%, positive - 4%), followed by State for People (negative - 14%, positive - 6%), Georgian Dream (negative - 10%) and Republican Party (negative - 8%, positive - 3%).

The lowest negative tone (1.5%) and the highest neutral tone (98%) were observed in the reporting about Democratic Movement for United Georgia. The indicator of neutral tone was also high (93%) in reporting about non-parliamentary opposition (positive - 4%, negative - 3%).

Among political parties that received less than 1% of the total coverage, the Labor Party was in the lead by the indicator of negative content (negative - 26%, positive - 4%). The highest indicator of positive tone in this category was seen in case of a newly established political party New Georgia (positive - 10%, negative - 7%). Positive reporting was higher than negative reporting in case of Girchi (positive - 5%, negative - 4%). Extensively neutral was the reporting about the following political parties: National Forum (neutral - 95%, positive - 3%, negative - 2%), Conservative Party (neutral - 95%, positive - 3%, negative - 2%), Alliance of Patriots (neutral - 94%, positive - 3%, negative - 3%), Industry Will Save Georgia (neutral - 94%, positive - 5%, negative - 1%), Tamaz Mechiauri-United Georgia (neutral - 94%, positive - 4%, negative - 2%).

As regards the coverage of the institutions, the highest negative tone was seen towards President (negative - 7%, positive - 5%) and the Central Electoral Commission (negative - 7%, positive - 1%) whereas the Interagency Commission for Free and Fair Elections was covered either in neutral (94%) or positive (6%) tone.

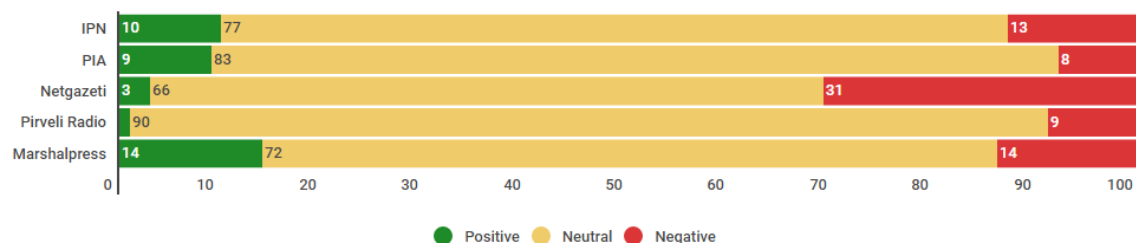
Chart 4.4. Tone of content – online media



**Tone of context.** The tone of context gives an idea about the amount of those critical topics in relation to which political subjects are covered. The four-month monitoring showed prevalence of neutral context tone in the coverage of political subjects by online media. The highest positive tone of context was used by the news agency Marshalpress (14%) though the negative tone of this news agency was also similarly high (14%). The second by positive context tone was IPN (10%), but its negative tone (13%) exceeded the indicator of positive tone. In case of PIA, positive tone was slightly higher than the negative tone (9% and 8%, respectively).

The highest negative tone of context was observed in the reporting by Netgazeti (31%) with the positive tone of the media outlet being much lower (3%). The negative tone exceeded the positive tone in the reporting of Pirveli Radio too (9% and 1%, respectively).

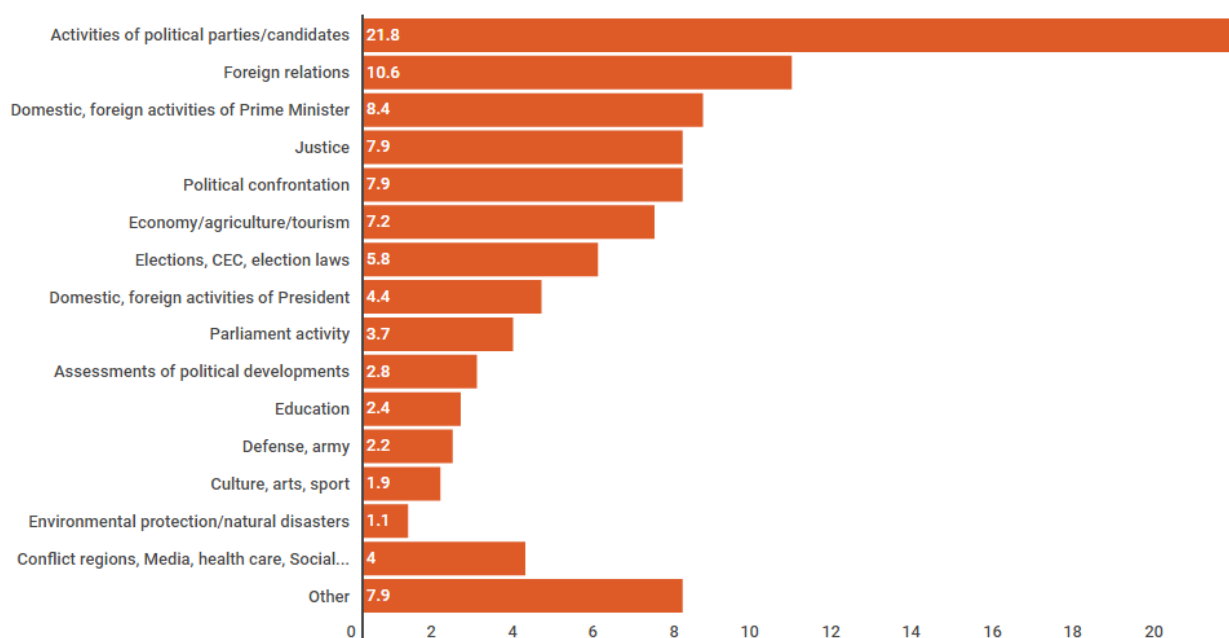
Chart 4.5. Tone of context



## 5. TOPICS COVERED IN ONLINE MEDIA REPORTING ON POLITICAL SUBJECTS

Much like in the case of TV media, in the reporting period (April 1 - July 31) the monitored online media (18439 publications) covers campaign activities of political parties/candidates most frequently (21.8%), followed by foreign relations (10.6%) and activities of Prime Minister (8.4%). Equal amount of coverage is given to issues of justice and political confrontations (7.9% each) with agriculture and tourism (7.2%) trailing. The latter topic is covered more extensively in online media than in broadcast media. This may be explained by the contracts various state agencies have entered into with some online editions to have them release information in exchange for certain reimbursement (IPN, PIA see details on p. 55, 60).

**Chart 5.1. Topics covered in online media reporting on political subjects**



Alike TV, the online media, when reporting about political subjects, provides little coverage of such issues as education (2.4%), environmental protection (1.1%), conflict regions and IDPs (0.9%), health care (0.9%), social problems (0.6%), human rights - minorities (0.5%). Similarly to TV media, the top five issues (Jobs, poverty, territorial integrity, price increase/inflation, pensions) revealed by the NDI poll do not make into the priority topics covered by online editions. These indicators show that in covering political subjects the online media sticks to the agenda set by the political subjects themselves.

## 6. ONLINE MEDIA DATA BY MEDIA OUTLETS

### 6.1 Interpressnews

**About InterPressNews:** Interpressnews (IPN.ge)<sup>25</sup> was founded in 2002 and is one of the largest private news agencies in Georgia. The news agency, which is part of Media Palitra Holding, has changed hands several times. As of February 2015, shareholders of News Ltd are: Zaza Buadze – 12%; Irakli Tevdorashvili – 46%; Giorgi Tevdorashvili – 12%; Kviris Palitra Ltd – 15% (Zaza Buadze 25%, Irakli Tevdorashvili 75%) and Newsroom Ltd 15% (Kviris Palitra Ltd 100%). One of the shareholder, Giorgi Tevdorashvili also owns 50% of shares in Tri-Media Intelligence (TMI), the company measuring television audience. The news agency has contracts with various ministries and budgetary organizations on dissemination of information and other information services for which it received GEL 249 352 in 2015 - one of the highest amount among agencies.

#### Quantitative Data

**Total coverage.** In the monitoring period (1 April -31 July) news agency InterPressNews (IPN) has allocated the largest amount of space to the reporting about the government and the Georgian Dream ruling party. The share of government in the total reporting (7 202 stories) stands at 53,9 % whilst that of Georgian Dream at 14,4%. With the ruling political team - government and Georgian Dream combined – being in the lead comprising 68,3% of total coverage, the ranking of other electoral subjects by the amount of received coverage is the following: United National Movement – 7,7 %, Republican Party – 4,5 %, Free Democrats – 3,1 %, Democratic Movement-for United Georgia – 1,7 %, Industry Will Save Georgia – 1%. The total coverage of other opposition parties that are not represented in the parliament made up 1%.

Among the political parties established during the year of the elections, the largest amount of coverage was received by the State for People political party which is led by Paata Burchuladze– 2%; by the most recent NDI poll results, the State for People enjoys 4% of population support. It is followed by Girchi (at 1%) which has the representation in the parliament.

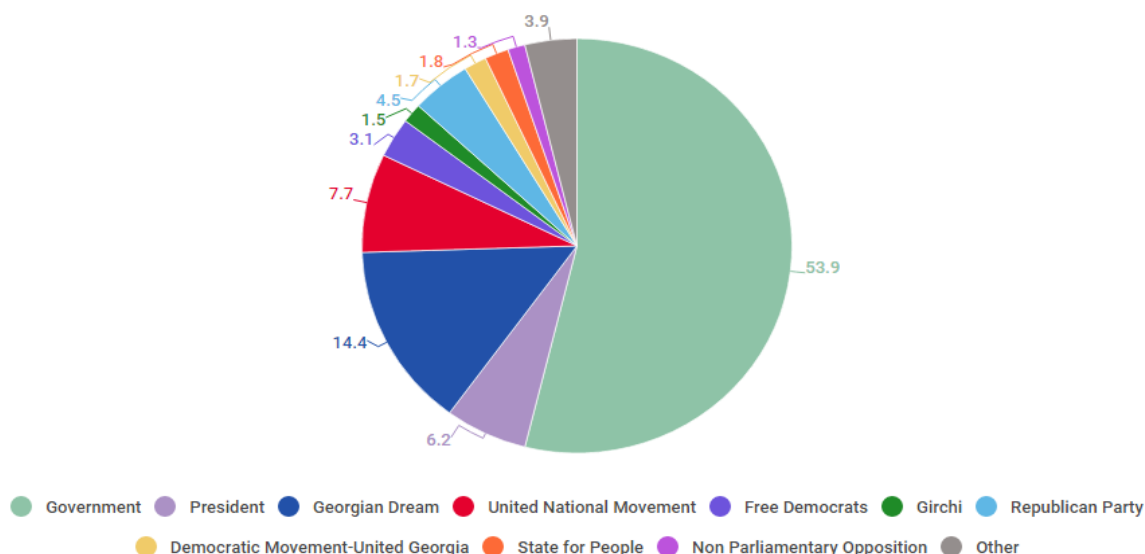
The category “Other” combines following qualified political parties: the Labor Party (0,05%), the National Forum (0,5%), the Conservative Party (0,4%) and the Alliance of Patriots (0,1%) and newly established parties: Tamaz Mechiauri-United Georgia (0,4%) and New Georgia (0,3%).

As regards the coverage of institutions, second to the government is the President and presidential administration (6,2%), followed by the Central Election Commission (1%) and the Interagency Commission for Free and Fair Elections (0,01%) which started operation in July.

---

<sup>25</sup> MediaMeter, MDF, IPN, <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/interpressnews>

**Chart 6.1.1.**Total coverage of political subjects, IPN

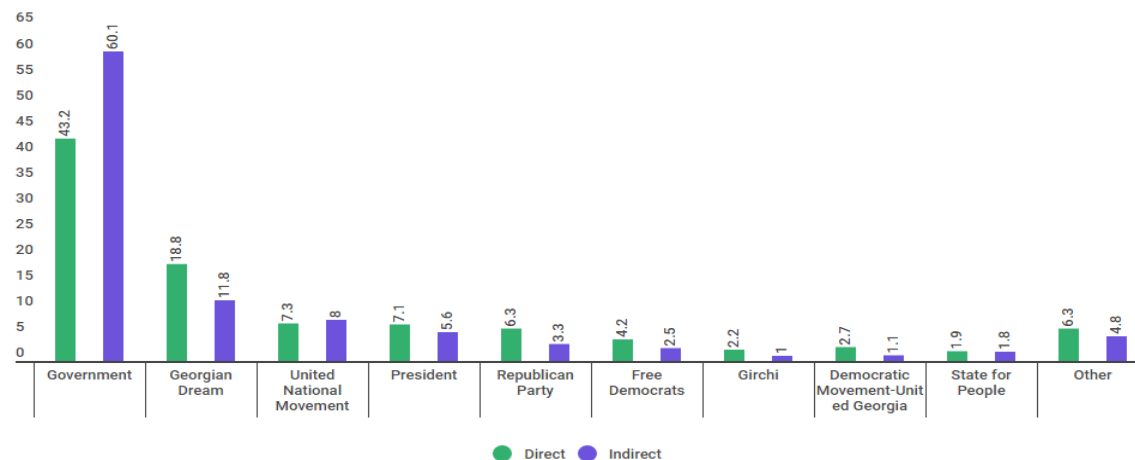


**Direct/indirect coverage.** The indicator of direct coverage of government is lower as compared to the indirect coverage (43.2% and 60.1%, respectively). In the case of the President, the situation is opposite – the direct coverage exceeds that of indirect (7.1% and 5.6%, respectively).

As chart 6.1.2 shows the direct coverage is higher than the indirect coverage in case of majority of political parties, exception is the United National Movement with the received direct coverage (7.3%) being insignificantly lower than the indirect coverage (8%). Among other qualified electoral subjects the Labor Party is the only political party which has not received any direct coverage and been covered only indirectly (0,1%); the Alliance of Patriots received equal amount of direct and indirect reporting (0.1%).

As regards newly established political parties, the highest indicator of direct coverage is seen in case of the Girchi (direct at 2.2% and indirect at 1.0%) and the State for People party (Paata Burchuladze) (direct at 1.9% and indirect at 1.8%).

**Chart 6.1.2.** Direct/indirect coverage of political subjects, IPN



**Tone of content in covering subjects.** The tone of news agency's reporting about political subjects is mostly neutral. However, the highest indicator of negative tone is observed towards the United National Movement (20%) which is followed by the ruling Georgian Dream (10%), the Alliance of Patriots (9%), and the State for People (8%).

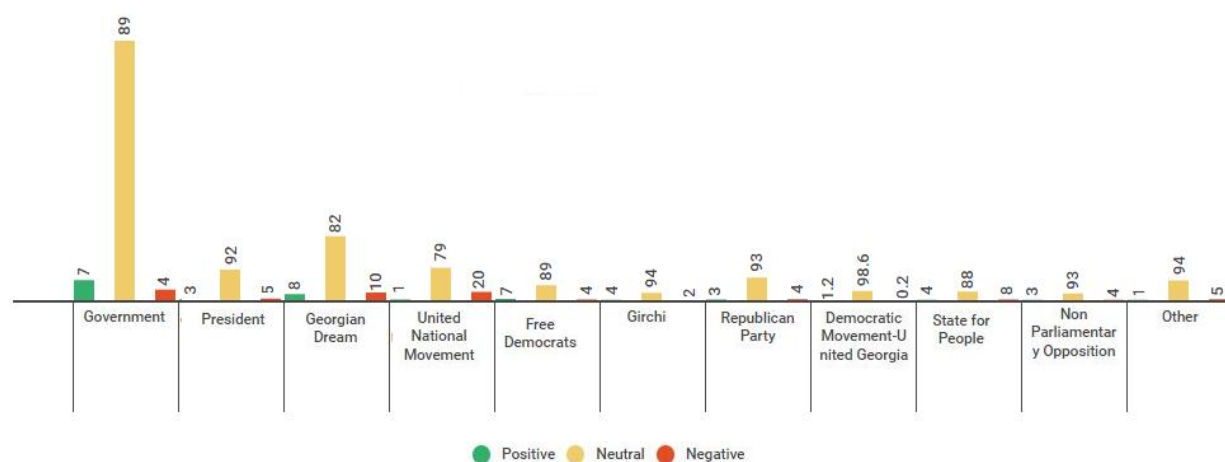


Although the total coverage (7202 stories) of the Labor Party is insignificant (0.05%), the share of negative tone in the total coverage comprises 39%.

The highest indicator of positive tone is seen in the coverage of the Governmental Interagency Commission for Free and Fair Elections (25%), the Alliance of Patriots(9%), the Georgian Dream (8%) and the newly-established political party New Georgia (8%).

The lowest indicator of positive tone is seen in the coverage the United National Movement (1%) and the Democratic Movement–United Georgia (Nino Burjanadze) (1,2%) as well as other parties with the total received coverage standing below 1%.

Chart. 6.1.3. Coverage of political subjects – tone of content, IPN



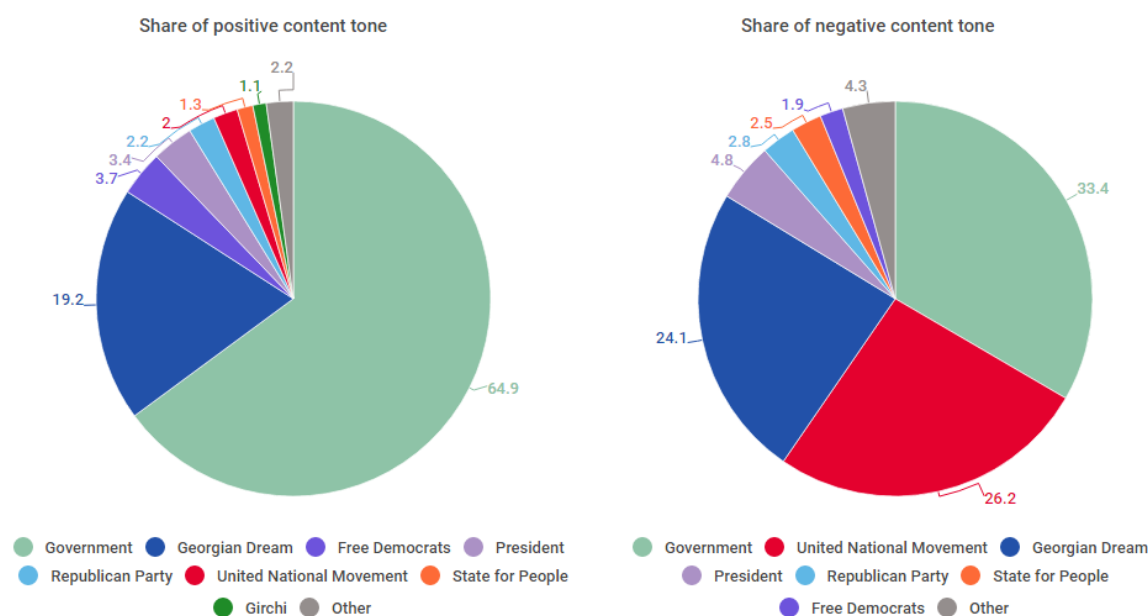
*Share of subjects in the news agency's content of positive and negative tone.* The largest share of IPN's total content of positive tone was received by the government – 65%, which is followed by “Georgian Dream- democratic Georgia” with 19%. Besides these two political subjects, political parties are minimally covered in positive tone of content. The third place takes Free Democrats with 4%, which is followed by the President (3%), United National Movement (2%) and Republic Party (2%).

Newly established political parties – Girchi and the State for People (Paata Burchuladze) - have similar indicators of positive content (1%).

The share of all other political subjects in terms of positive content tone is below 1%.

As regards the negative content tone, the government is in the lead here too (33,4%), though this indicator is half the positive tone indicator (65%). The second in ranking by negative tone of content is the United National Movement – 26% whilst the third is the ruling Georgian Dream with 24%. It is worth noting that the negative content tone is higher in the coverage of the Republican Party (3%) than the positive content tone (2%). The indicators of Girchi, the CEC and non-parliamentary opposition are almost identical 1%. All other subjects,taken separately, receive less than 0.5% of negative content tone.

**Chart 6.1.4. Tone of coverage of political subjects, IPN**



## Qualitative Data

The news agency InterPressNews (IPN) does not provide information in the format of articles but publishes it in the form of separate comments and pieces of news. Consequently, one may only judge about the balanced coverage by analyzing all pieces of news about one topic. Overall, this media platform is pluralistic and reports about activities of all political subjects, though with differed prioritization.

As the quantitative analysis shows, news about government activities comprises 54% of the news agency's total content. This may be explained by contracts signed between news agencies (including IPN) and various government entities<sup>26</sup> on the release of information of the latter, which is manifested in the publication of identical materials on official government websites and various news agencies.

*Identical materials of budget organizations in an unaltered form.* The news agency publishes information provided by government entities in an unaltered or slightly altered form and without providing any alternative opinion. In contrast to other news agencies, being awarded budget contracts to release official information,<sup>27</sup> the IPN is the only agency which uses symbol NS (News from Subscriber) in the byline to signal such materials as financed, though this practice is not regular.

For example, the information published on the website of Tbilisi Mayor's Office was simultaneously released by nine news agencies, including three (see table 6.1.) that are under monitoring, with the identical title "Three new squares to open in Tbilisi in autumn." Among those news agencies having published this piece of news, IPN was the only one which signposted this material by NS, thus separating the editorial material from the financed content. However, as Table 6.1 shows, on another similar occasion the IPN did not signpost the material as financed. It is worth noting that in 2016, the news agency entered into the contract with the Mayor's Office on the release of information via the intermediary company IPM Research.

<sup>26</sup> Media Development Foundation (2016); Practice of Allocating Budgetary Resources among Media for the Release of Information and Advertisement; Chapter V, Online Media; <http://mediameter.ge/en/research/practice-allocating-budgetary-resources-among-media-release-information-and-advertisement>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

**Table 6.1** Identical materials of budget organizations in various online agencies

	IPN	PIA	Marshallpress	Netgazeti
Title	Three new squares to open in Tbilisi in autumn <sup>28</sup>	Three new squares to open in Tbilisi in autumn <sup>29</sup>	“New Kindergarten is being built in Nadzaladevi district” <sup>30</sup>	—
Form of publication	NS	—	—	—
Title	Green wall to be arranged on building on Aghmashenebeli Avenue <sup>31</sup>	—	—	Green wall to be arranged on building at 59 Aghmashenebeli Avenue <sup>32</sup>
Form of publication	—	—	—	—

*Materials financed by political and other subjects in an unaltered form.* The news agency provides a paid service to several electoral subjects<sup>33</sup> too, though it largely ignores signposting the material as financed, thereby misleading readers. On several occasions, the news agency indicates inside the text that the information has been provided by a press service or a political party. The Table 6.2 below shows separate examples of news items released by IPN and PIA news agencies, which are either word-for-word repeats or slight modifications of information published on official websites of political parties, without bearing NS symbol to signpost the material as financed. The Table reflects materials of those political parties which receive paid service from the IPN.

**Table 6.2.** Materials financed by political parties

	IPN	PIA	Websites of political parties
Title	Neither NATO nor Russian army on Georgian territory – this will be the only guarantee of security <sup>34</sup> <i>Indicated source: press service of the party</i>	Neither NATO nor Russian army on Georgian territory – this will be the only guarantee of security	Neither NATO nor Russian army on Georgian territory – this will be the only guarantee of security <i>Democratic Movement for United Georgia</i>
Title	Nino Burjanadze on NDI poll – for the first time ever I wished I were a man and even more so, from Kakheti <sup>35</sup>	For the first time ever I wished I were a man and even more so, from Kakheti <sup>36</sup>	For the first time ever I wished I were a man and even more so, from Kakheti <i>Democratic Movement for United Georgia:</i>
Title	Helen Khoshtaria met with residents of Tskneti <sup>37</sup> <i>Indicated source: press service of the party</i>	—	Helen Khoshtaria met with residents of Tskneti <i>United National Movement</i>
Title	A Girchi district office opened in Avchala <sup>38</sup> <i>Indicated source: press service of the party</i>	—	A Girchi district office opened in Avchala <i>Political center Girchi</i>

<sup>28</sup> IPN, 31 July, 2016 <http://bit.ly/2cZt89L>

<sup>29</sup> PIA, 31 July, 2016 <http://bit.ly/2cEohdc>

<sup>30</sup> Marshallpres, 31 July, 2016. <http://marshallpress.ge/archives/51058>

<sup>31</sup> IPN, 27 July, 2016 <http://bit.ly/2caop4Y>

<sup>32</sup> Netgazeti.ge, 27 July, 2016 <http://bit.ly/2ct4zzj>

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., Georgian Dream, United National Movement, Democratic Movement, Free Democrats.

<sup>34</sup> IPN, 14 July, 2016. <http://bit.ly/2cn8Ov0>

<sup>35</sup> IPN, 29 July, <http://bit.ly/2cIYNKg>

<sup>36</sup> PIA, 30 July, <http://bit.ly/2cwn9YW>

<sup>37</sup> IPN, 30 July, 2016. <http://bit.ly/2cXEyrD>

<sup>38</sup> IPN, 22 July, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2cwPBq2>

There are instances when published information, containing political accusations, have been signposted as advertised material.

Under the section “Important Information”, the IPN news agency published an article about the former defense minister of the United National Movement government, titled **“Senta Group vs Kezerashvili - a court sitting on high-profile case to be held on 10 June”** (10 June).

The article begins with the sentence: “A business seized under the previous government and yet another case against Kezerashvili and his former companies” and it provides the position of a party to the dispute - the Senta Group.

The news agency published again the material of similar content and signposted as advertisement: **“Address of founders of Senta Group to the government”** (13 June).

The information published as advertisement covers an issue of high public interest as it contains accusations against the defense minister of the previous government. However, the news agency did not undertake any measures either to provide the position of another party regarding the accusations voiced in the article or to carry out an independent journalistic investigation into the case in its own editorial materials.

*Biased coverage.* On May 22, during the midterm local elections the leaders of the United National Movement were physically offended by sportsmen transported from Tbilisi in the village of Kortskheli, Zugdidi district. While Netgazeti outlined the fact of physical offence of opposition party members in the title (“UNM members physically offended at Kortskheli electoral precinct”), the IPN, just like Marshalpress, stressed the confrontation between the parties in the title (“Physical confrontation occurred at #53 precinct in Kortskheli”) and in the text of the news item. However, while Marshalpress and PIA described the incident as happening between the population and the opposition political party, the IPN named as the parties of the confrontation the Georgian Dream and the United National Movement.

*Breach of standards of reporting public opinion poll/balance.* The IPN published the results of an in-house public opinion poll, commissioned by the Georgian Dream to the research-consultation center Psychoproject, by violating the rule established under Article 51(11) of the Electoral Code of Georgia which requires the communication of 11 necessary data the information was provided in a fragmented form, mainly focusing on two electoral subjects.

**For example:** “According to the in-house poll of the Georgian Dream, the majority of respondents believe that Giorgi Kvirikashvili will be able to really solve problems” (30 June, 1 July).

“The poll conducted by Psychoproject shows that 65% of respondents think that Georgian Dream will get the majority of seats in the parliament” (30 June, 1 July).

“Zurab Bigvava – according to in-house polls, the rating of United National Movement is under 13% whereas that of Georgian Dream comprises 35%” (29 July).

Moreover, although the news item contained poll results for the United National Movement, the news agency did not provide the opinion of a UNM representative about the issue.

The news about a public opinion poll commissioned by Rustavi 2 TV company to the GFK was also incomplete (indicating who commissioned and who conducted the poll, the number of respondents covered, the date of survey; but omitting the method of survey, margin of error, et cetera). Moreover, the news agency published the news about the poll results in combination with a statement by the political party Girchi, under the following title:

“Girchi – in 2014, the GFK was stripped of the right to measure TV viewership ratings because of tampering with ratings by bribed panelists” (28 June)

The above information contained accusations (that was included in the title) against the company that conducted the poll as well as question marks regarding Rustavi 2 TV company (For example, stating that the results of the public opinion-poll was preliminary known by Mikheil Saakashvili). However, neither the mentioned news item nor any other material published on 28 June or thereafter, provided the position of the research company or Rustavi 2 TV company regarding those accusations.

## 6.2. PIA

**About Pia.** The news agency Pirweli (PIA)<sup>39</sup> was established in November 2006. It is associated with the name of Ani Mirotadze, representative of the party “National Forum” which was included in Georgian Dream coalition by May, 2016. In 2010, 100 percent of the shares in the news agency was owned by Levan Mirotadze; in 2013, the agency was registered in the name of Khvicha Senakia whilst in 2014, the owner of 100 percent of the shares became Dimirti Tikaradze. Editions linked to PIA are: Daijesti.ge, rubrica.ge, funtime.ge. In 2015, the news agency PIA received budget revenues from the contracts signed with state entities in the amount of 80 236 GEL.

### Quantitative Data

**Total coverage.** In the reporting period (1 April- 31 July), the news agency PIA (total 4 157 stories reviewed) most expensively reported about activities of the government (54.6%) and the ruling party Georgian Dream (16.6%), both making up 71.2%. Compared to this, all other political subjects received much smaller amount of coverage. Three political parties which followed by the amount of coverage were: United National Movement (5%), Democratic Movement-for United Georgia (Nino Burjanadze) (4.5%) and the Republican Party (3.7%).

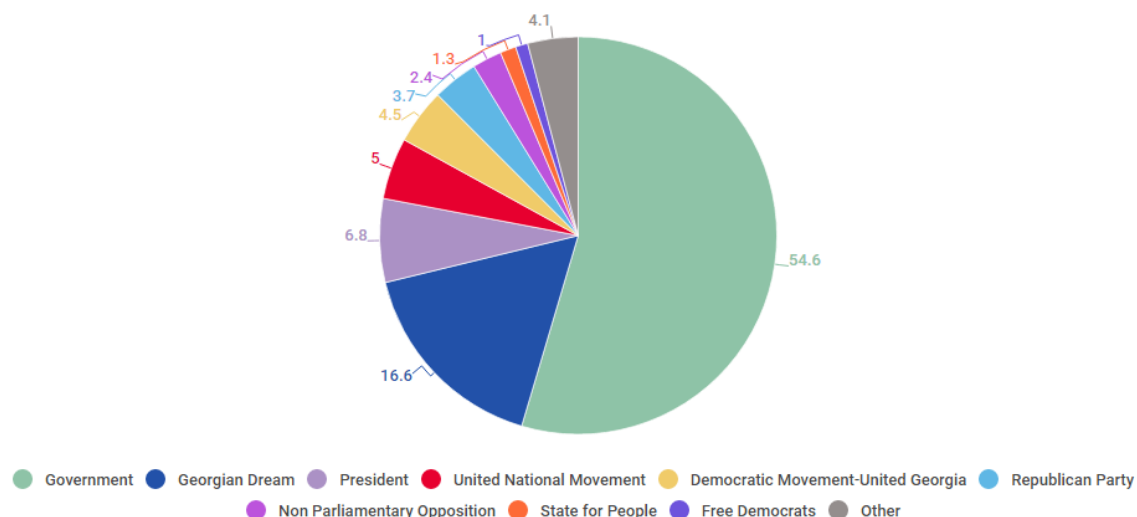
Qualified electoral subjects which received a mere 1% or lower coverage include: Free Democrats (1%), National Forum (0.8%), Alliance of Patriots (0.3%), Industry Will Save Georgia (0.2%), Conservative Party (0.2%), and Labor Party (0.1%).

The political parties that were established in 2016 received the following shares of the total PIA coverage: State for People (Paata Burchuladze) - 1.3%, Tamaz Mechiauri- United Georgia - 0.4%, political center Girchi- 0.2%, and New Georgia - 0.2%.

A corresponding total indicator of non-parliamentary opposition parties comprised 2.4%.

As regards the coverage of institutions, the indicator for President of Georgia and his administration stood at 6.8%, of Central Election Commission at 0.3% and the Interagency Commission for Free and Fair Elections at 0.1%.

**Chart 6.2.1. Total coverage of political subjects – PIA**



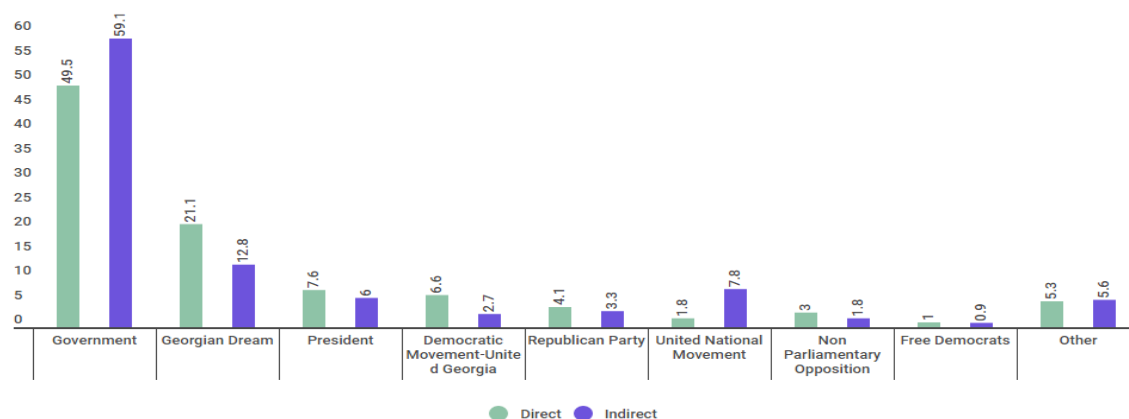
<sup>39</sup> MediaMeter, MDF, PIA, <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/pia>

**Direct/indirect coverage.** The direct coverage of Georgian Dream (21.2%) notably exceeded that of its indirect coverage (12.8%) in the materials of news agency; in case of the government, the situation was opposite with indirect coverage (59.1%) exceeding the direct one (49.5%). This may be explained by contracts signed between news agencies (including PIA) and various government entities with the former providing the paid service through releasing information from government entities in an unaltered form.<sup>40</sup>

The highest indicator of indirect coverage was seen in relation to the United National Movement (7.8%), which well exceeded the indicator of direct coverage received by the party (1.8%); the situation with Democratic Movement-for United Georgia was opposite – direct coverage (6.6%) being higher than the indirect coverage (2.7%).

Among newly-established political parties Girchi was the only one which did not receive any direct coverage (the indirect coverage at 0.2%); New Georgia received both direct and indirect coverage (0.1% and 0.09%, respectively); State for People (Paata Burchuladze) also received direct coverage (0.9%). Indirect coverage of this party was (1.8%).

**Chart 6.2.2.** Direct/indirect coverage of political subjects – PIA

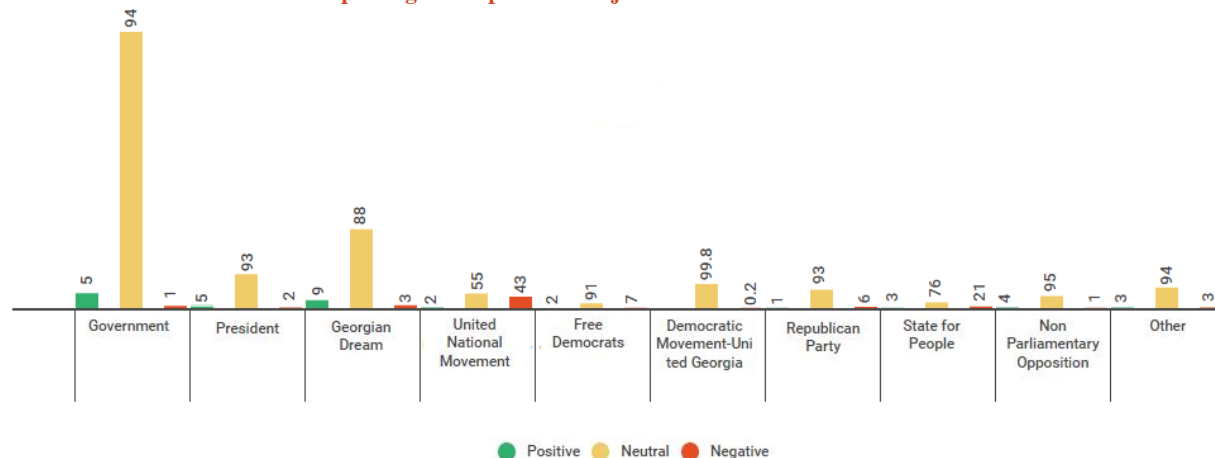


**Tone of content in covering subjects.** The content of the news agency was explicitly negative in tone towards the United National Movement (43%) and the newly-established political party State for People (21%). The negative tone of content was observed in relation to Free Democrats (7%) and Republican Party (6%) whereas the positive tone was the highest towards the Georgian Dream (9%). Compared to other media outlets, PIA showed the lowest indicator of negative tone (1%) in the reporting about the government. By positive tone of content, the leader was Georgian Dream (9%), followed by the government (5%) and the President (5%).

Among the qualified political subjects having received less than 1% of the coverage, the highest indicator of negative tone was seen in relation of the Labor Party (30%) and the Industry Will Save Georgia (22%).

<sup>40</sup> Media Development Foundation (2016); Practice of Allocating Budgetary Resources among Media for the Release of Information and Advertisement; Chapter V, Online Media; <http://mediameter.ge/ge/research/reklamis-da-informaciis-gavrcelebis-miznit-mediashi-sabujeto-resursebis-ganacilebis>

**Chart 6.2.3. Tone of content in reporting about political subjects –PIA**



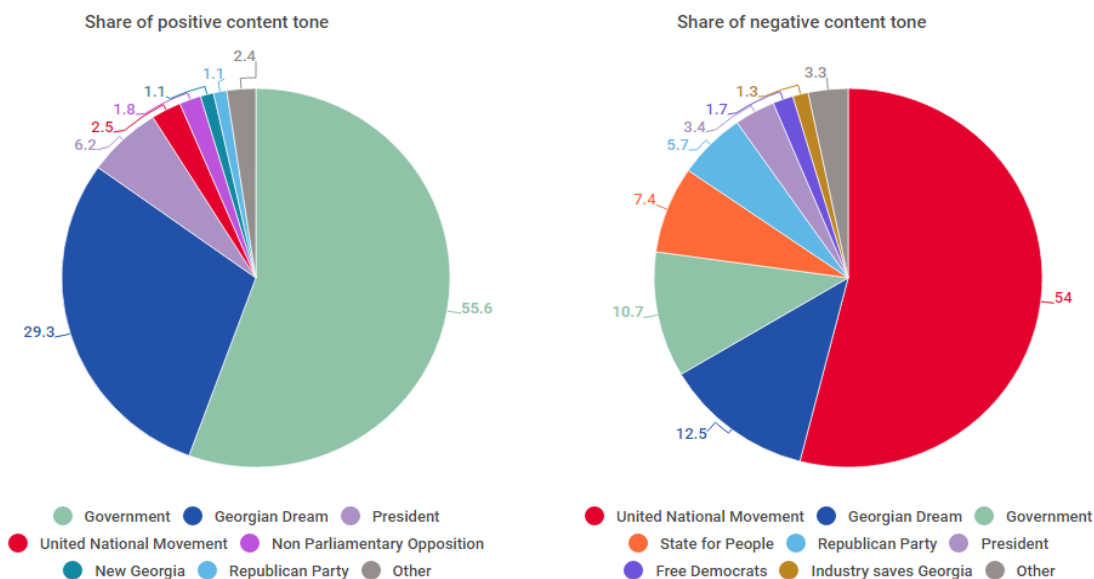
*Share of subjects in the news agency's content of positive and negative tone.* The largest amount of PIA's total positive content was received by the government (55.6%) which was followed by the Georgian Dream (29.3%). Apart from these two, the positive coverage was also received by the President (6.2%).

More than half of the total negative reporting by the news agency concerned the United National Movement (54%) which was followed by the Georgian Dream (12.5%) and the government (10.7%). Negative coverage was also received by the State for People (7.4%), the Republican Party (5.7%). In this regard, other subjects fall behind the President (3.4%) and received 3.3%.

The political subjects having received lower than 2% of share of negative content are Free Democrats (1.7%) and Industry Will Save Georgia (1.3%), as well as Labor Party (0.6%) and National Forum (0.1%).

Indicators of positive content tone for the United National Movement stood at 2.5%. The Republican Party and the New Georgia had equal indicators – 1,1% each. These were outstripped by the non-parliamentary opposition with 1.8% indicator. All other political subjects received the total of 2.4% of content positive in tone.

**Chart 6.2.4. Share of coverage of political subjects in positive and negative content tone – PIA**





### Qualitative Data

The news agency PIA reports about activities of various political subjects but prioritize clearly several political subjects. Problems in meeting standards of accuracy, balance, reporting public opinion polls and impartiality were observed. Several illustrations of are provided below:

**Breach of balance/impartiality.** The news agency PIA published an article titled “Political trick of UNM – who is Paata Burchuladze’s candidate for Zugdidi constituency” (11 July).

The article discusses the ties of potential single-seat candidates from State for People political party, Vakhtang Tskhadaia (in Zugdidi) and Goderdzi Bukia (in Khobi), with the United National Movement as well as the assistance they received from law enforcement authorities. The coverage is in negative tone, unbalanced lacking opinions of State for People party, and of single-seat candidates or the United National Movement. However, another information about Goderdzi Bukia, which the news agency published a little later (on 25 July) when Goderdzi Bukia was nominated as a single-seat candidate by the Georgian Dream and not the State for People, was reported in a starkly different, positive tone. In this latter case, Goderdzi Bukia received a positive coverage from the news agency: “He is a seasoned parliamentarian, a true patriot of his district and will allocate a great deal of his attention to Khobi.” This information did not contain background information about the candidate’s links to the United National Movement.

**Biased reporting.** As noted with regard to IPN, PIA’s report about the attack on leaders of United National Movement by the sportsmen brought from Tbilisi in the village of Kortskheli, Zugdidi district, during the midterm local elections on 22 May, was biased. In contrast to IPN which identified the parties to the confrontation - the Georgian Dream and the United National Movement, PIA covered that incident as a confrontation between population and United National Movement. Within an hour after the incident happened, the news agency released three pieces of news and titles of all the three items informed that the conflict occurred between local population and the former ruling party, saying nothing about the physical assault on leaders of political party as it was stressed in the title of news item published by Netgazeti:

PIA	Netgazeti
<b>12: 58</b> Quarrel took place between Giga Bokeria and people gathered at the precinct in Kortskheli	UNM members physically assaulted at Kortskheli precinct
<b>13:39</b> Quarrel took place between local residents and one of UNM leaders at the Kortskheli precinct	
<b>13:51</b> Nikanor Melia and Tengiz Gunava went into confrontation with local residents	

Without referring to a source, one of the news items noted that the cause of quarrel between local population and UNM leaders was the offence of population by the UNM members. The news item, in particular, said: “According to existing information, UNM members, standing at the entrance to the precinct, were offending population” (22 May).”

**Accuracy, conformity of title and text/photo, balance.** The news agency PIA reprinted, with smaller changes and identical title, an article from the *Prime-Time* newspaper about the Charity Fund Iavnana. The article was titled “Iavnana spent only 27% of revenues received as charity contributions from people” (28 July). The article was about past charity activity of Paata Burchuladze, the chairman of State for People party.

The information provided in the article is incompliant with the title as the article does not provide information about the remaining 73% of the revenues and, consequently, it is not clear whether or not this amount was spent on charity; moreover, the article does not provide opinions of either the charity fund or the State for People political party, although the article had a photo of the leader of the party, Paata Burchuladze.

An unbalanced material on the same topic, titled “Where Paata Burchuladze spends contributions of our citizens,” was reprinted by the news agency from *Akhali Taoba* newspaper on 20 July.

**Accuracy, balance.** The news agency PIA published an accusation made by a military expert Tristan Tsitelashvili against the leader of UNM in Adjara, Levan Varshalomidze, under the title “Military expert: Levan Varshalomidze was tasked by Saakashvili to set up a paramilitary group” (8 July).

The material relies on the accusation of a single source, which is not verified with another party, investigative authorities or any other independent source. Moreover, the background information does not mention that the source of accusation, Tristan Tsitelashvili, was convicted for espionage during the rule of previous government and was released by the current government as a political prisoner.

**Reporting public opinion polls.** In the reporting period, the news agency PIA repeatedly reported about the results of public opinion polls either incompletely or without the data which the law requires to publish in the pre-election period. The titles of news items about NDI polls as well as in-house polls which Georgian Dream conducted and disclosed partially, emphasize the advantage of the ruling party. For example:

“Georgian Dream: 65% think Georgian Dream will get most of the seats in parliament – poll results” (1 July);

“NDI: Compared to previous polls share of Georgian Dream supporters has increased” (30 July).

Out of 11 compulsory indicators, specified by Article 51(11) of the Electoral Code of Georgia, to be communicated to public when reporting poll results in the pre-election period,<sup>41</sup> only four indicators (organization that commissioned the poll, the number of respondents; the formulation of question and the time of conducting the poll) were named in the first case and three (organization that commissioned the poll, the formulation of question and the time of conduct) in the second case. The report about the poll conducted by the Georgian Dream, which was not officially published, did not provide results of any other party either. In reporting NDI polls, the coverage lacks important information such as the number of undecided voters, which is quite high (57%) and may affect the outcome of the elections.

Accuracy was a problem too. For example, the title of a news item “Majority of respondents would vote for the same political party they supported in 2012” is misleading. Although the text of the item notes that only 57% of decided voters say that they would vote for the same party or bloc which they supported in 2012, but it does not specify that this response reflects the attitudes of the majority of that 38% of respondents who has already decided whom they will vote for and that amount of undecided voters was sufficiently high.

NDI question	PIA title
Do you intend to vote for the same party you voted for in 2012 elections? - 38% who have decided who they vote for	Majority of respondents would vote for the same political party they supported in 2012

Thus, the standard of reporting opinion polls as well as the principle of due accuracy is violated.

**Materials financed by budget organizations and political parties in an unaltered form.** Similarly to IPN, the news agency PIA has entered into contracts with budget organizations to release their information. However, in contrast to IPN, this news agency does not signpost such information as financed (see table 6.1. pg.55), thus misleading readers.

According to MDF study<sup>42</sup>, PIA also provides the paid service to 2 political parties –Georgian Dream and Democratic Movement for United Georgia (Burjanadze). Table 6.2 (pg. 55) contains an example of the news agency publishing information of the Democratic Movement for United Georgia without signposting it as financed and changes of content and title.

<sup>41</sup>1. An organization having conducted a public opinion poll, 2. a person having ordered or funded a public opinion poll, 3. the exact formulation and sequence of questions put in a public opinion poll, 4. the time of conducting field opinion poll, 5. the number of individuals interviewed and the method of selection, 5. in what area or among what category of people the selection was conducted, 7. whether the survey is based on the opinions of all respondents, 8. the number of respondents who refused to participate in the poll, who did not answer a question, or who could not be interviewed, 9. the sample size, 10. the margin of error, 11. information about any other factors that might have caused a significant impact on the results.

<sup>42</sup>Media Development Foundation (2016); Practice of Allocating Budgetary Resources among Media for the Release of Information and Advertisement; Chapter V, Online Media; <http://mediameter.ge/ge/research/reklamis-da-informaciis-gavrcelbis-miznit-mediashi-sabujeto-resursebis-ganacilebis>

## 4.3 Netgazeti

**About Netgazeti.** Online edition Netgazeti.ge<sup>43</sup> was established by the newspaper “Batumelebi” in 2010. Founders of “Batumelebi” are private persons: Davit Gurgendidze(25%), Mzia Amaghlobeli(25%), Murad Amaghlobeli(25%) and Leila Turadze(25%). The online edition implements various projects with the financial assistance from international organizations.

### Quantitative Data

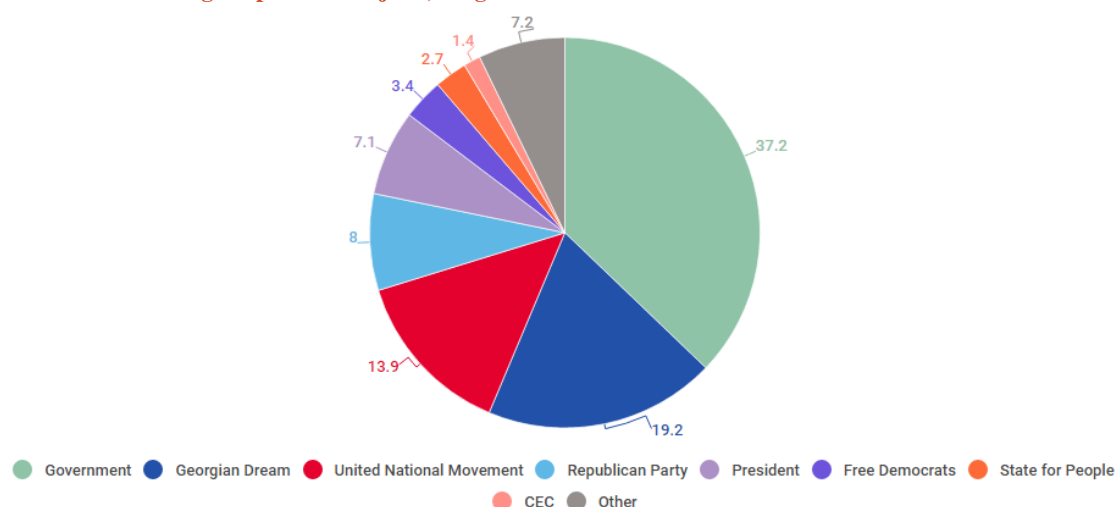
**Total coverage.** According to the results of four-month monitoring (1 April-31 July 2016), the largest share of Netgazeti’s reporting (1 397 total reviewed articles) accounted for the government – 37.2%, followed by the Georgian Dream – 19.2%. Ruling party is followed by the United National Movement (13.9%) and the Republican Party (8%). Free Democrats has a relatively lower amount of coverage (3.4%).

Other qualified political parties accounted for less than 1% of coverage: National Forum (0.9%), Alliance of Patriots (0.8%), Democratic Movement - United Georgia (0.5%), Industry Will Save Georgia (0.4%), Conservative Party (0.2%) and Labor Party (0.05%).

As regards newly established political parties, the highest share of the coverage was allocated to State for People (2.7%), with much lower shares of reporting allocated to Girchi (0.7%), TamazMechiauri – United Georgia (0.5%) and New Georgia (0.2%).

As regards the reporting about institutions, the President received 7.1% of total coverage and the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) received 1.4%. It is worth noting that Netgazeti is the leader among online editions by the amount of reporting about the Central Electoral Commission (compared to IPN – 1%, PIA and First radio – 0.3% each and Marshalpress – 0.2%).

**Chart. 6.3.1. Total coverage of political subjects, Netgazeti**



**Direct and indirect coverage.** Indirect coverage exceeded direct coverage in the reporting about the government (40.6% and 31.4%, respectively) and the UNM (16.4% and 9.8%, respectively). Conversely, the share of direct coverage was higher than the share of indirect coverage in the reporting about Georgian Dream (22.1% and 17.4%, respectively), Republican Party (13.1% and 5%, respectively), Free Democrats (4.2% and 2.9%, respectively) and National Forum (1.1% and 0.8%, respectively) with the difference between the two indicators being the largest in case of Republican Party.

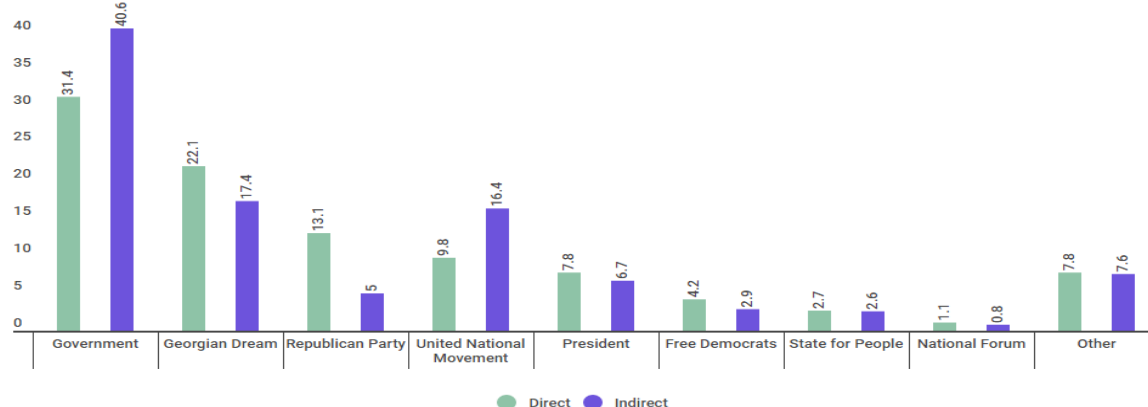
<sup>43</sup>MediaMeter.ge, MDF, Netgazeti, Media Profile. <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/netgazeti>

The reporting about the political parties, which received less than 1% of coverage, mainly showed a higher share of direct coverage as compared to the indirect coverage, with the exception of Christian-Conservative Party (0.2%), Conservative Party (0.2%) and Labor Party (0.1%) which received only indirect coverage.

Among newly established political parties almost equal indicators were seen in the reporting about State for People (direct 2.7%, indirect 2.6%) and Girchi (direct 0.7%, indirect 0.6%) and some difference was seen in the reporting about Tamaz Mechiauri-United Georgia (direct 0.6%, indirect 0.3%) and New Georgia (direct 0.5%, indirect 0.3%). The reporting about non-parliamentary opposition, however, showed a higher share of indirect coverage (0.8%) as compared to direct coverage (0.6%).

As regards the institutions, direct coverage of President slightly exceeded the indirect coverage (7.8% and 6.7%, respectively) whereas indirect coverage was higher than direct coverage in case of the Central Electoral Commission (1.9% and 0.4%, respectively). The Interagency Commission for Free and Fair election received only indirect coverage (0.1%).

**Chart 6.3.2. Direct/indirect coverage of political subjects, Netgazeti**

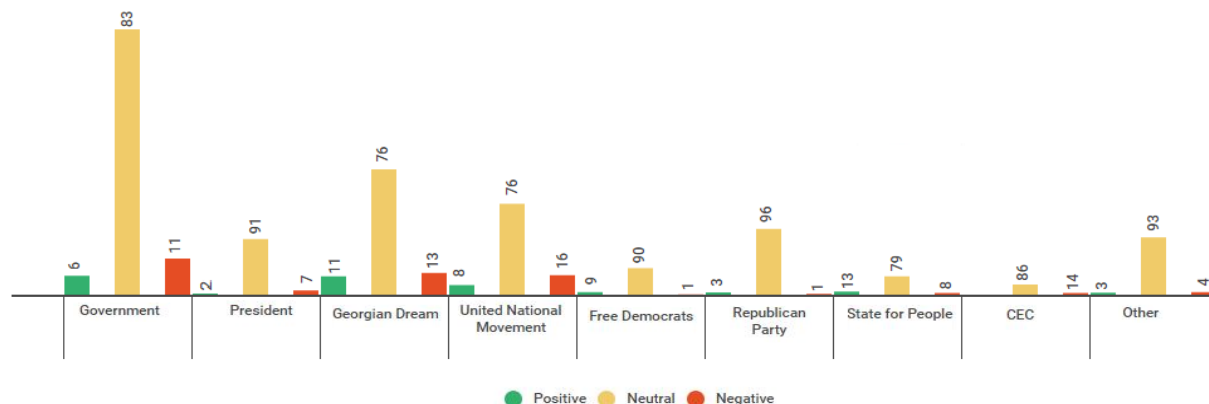


**Tone of content in covering subjects.** Overwhelmingly neutral content in tone was seen in the coverage of Republican Party (96%), the political subjects, falling under the category of “Other,” who received less than 1% (93%) and the Free Democrats (90%). The highest negative content in tone was observed in the coverage of the UNM (16%) which was followed by the Georgian Dream (13%), the government (11%) and State for People (8%).

The highest positive content in tone was seen in relation to State for People (13%), followed by Georgian Dream (11%), Free Democrats (9%), UNM (8%), the government (6%) and Republican Party (3%).

The reporting about President was largely neutral with negative tone exceeding (7%) the positive tone (2%). The reporting about the Central Electoral Commission was negative in tone (14%) with positive tone not observed at all.

**Chart 6.3.3. Tone of content in reporting about political subjects –Netgazeti**

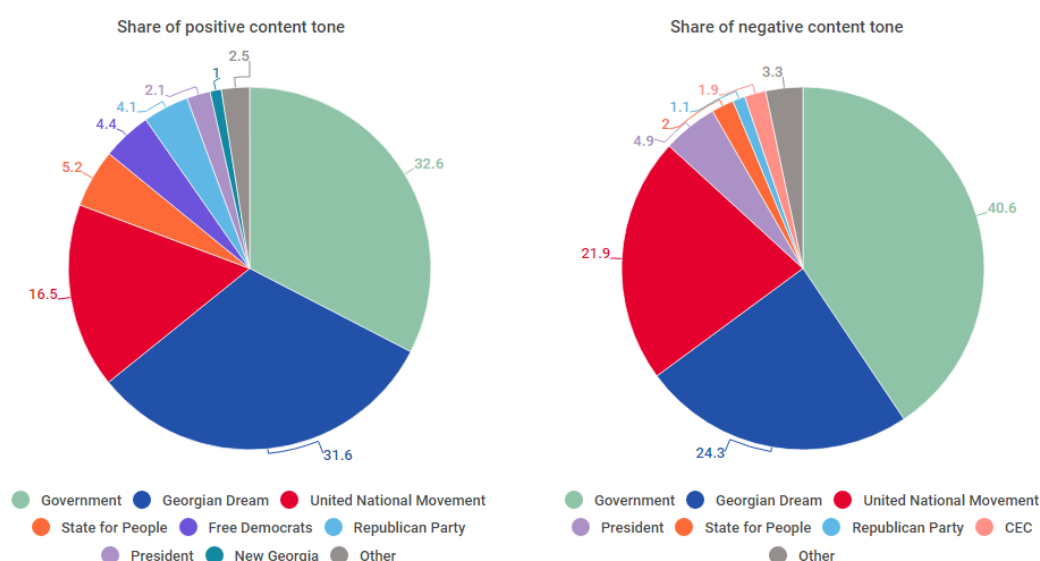


**Share of subjects in the edition's content of positive and negative tone.** The highest share in Netgazeti's positive content accounted for the government (32.6%) which, at the same time, was the leader by the share of negative coverage (40.6%). In case of Georgian Dream, the positive coverage of (31.6%) exceeded the negative coverage (24.3%) whereas in case of UNM, the positive coverage (16.5%) was lower than the negative coverage (21.9%). Political subjects with more than 4% of positive coverage tone include Free Democrats – 4.4% against negative 0.4%, and the Republican Party – 4.1% against 1.1% negative.

In case of newly established political parties, the highest indicator of positive tone was observed in the reporting about State for People (5.2%) versus negative 2%; followed by New Georgia 1% versus negative 0.1% and Girchi – 0.8% versus negative 0.6%.

Content tones in the reporting about President were distributed as 2.1% positive and 4.9% negative. The share of negative reporting about Central Electoral Commission stood at 1.9%.

**Chart 6.3.4: Share of Covering Political Subjects in Positive and Negative Content, Netgazeti**



## Qualitative Data

Netgazeti stands out from other online media outlets by its coverage of developments in a comprehensive and balanced way, and relying on more than one source. The online edition adheres to ethical and professional standards of journalism, ensuring pluralistic platform for various political subjects. Although gross violations of standards are not observed in the reporting of media outlet, several instances of inadequate balance and problems regarding coverage of opinion polls are noted in the reporting period.

**Balance.** On April 27, Netgazeti published an article titled “Before putting it up for auction, 30 ha of land adjacent to Botanical Garden was changed its status of landscape-recreational zone.” It provides a detailed description of official documents, opinions of opposition parties in the city council – Democratic Movement -United Georgia and the United National Movement, as well as opinions of representatives of non-governmental organization “Transparency International Georgia”. Although official documentation of the government is provided in the article, it would have been desirable to provide opinions of Mayor’s Office and the City Council whilst in case of their refusal, to note that they declined to comment.

**Balance.** On June 20, Netgazeti published an article titled “Tbilisi emergency medical service center files complaint with court against Anzor Melia.” The article was about a response of emergency medical service center to accusations voiced by the head of clinic Guli, Anzor Melia, in the program Business Courier on Rustavi 2 TV channel on June 18. The information contained accusations voiced in the TV program and the response of the

emergency medical service center accusing the UNM and program Business Courier of deliberately releasing false accusations ahead of elections and demanding from Business Courier team that it present evidence of corrupt schemes and deals within a reasonable time or risk being sued. The article did not contain a position of program Business Courier. Nor did it note how the UNM was related to statements of the respondent. It is worth noting that the respondent is the father of one of UNM leaders and he spoke on the TV program in the capacity of the director of clinic.

**Balance.** On June 13, the article “GYLA to sue Ministry of Culture for violating the rule on release of public information” did not contain an comment of the Ministry of Culture regarding the publicity of information which concerned budget means.

**Reporting public opinion poll results.** Netgazeti largely complies with standards when reporting results of public opinion polls. There was only one exception in the reporting period, which concerned results of in-house opinion poll of Georgian Dream. On 30 June, Netgazeti published information titled “According to in-house poll, Georgian Dream has twice as many supporters as UNM,” which rested on a comment of Zurab Bigvava, a representative of the organization having conducted the poll, made in the program Mtavari Tema on Public Broadcaster. It is worth noting that Georgian Dream did not officially release the poll results, making public that part of the poll alone, which concerned Georgian Dream and UNM and ratings of political leaders of these 2 parties (Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili and Chairman of UNM Political Council Davit Bakradze, respectively). It is worth noting that two days earlier of the comment on TV about fragments of Georgian Dream poll, on June 28, Rustavi 2 TV channel released results of public opinion poll which it commissioned to US-German organization GFK, showing almost equal ratings of Georgian Dream and UNM. Georgian Dream expressed mistrust towards the GFK poll, linking it to the UNM and questioning the reputation of the organization. Netgazeti did not indicate this in the background information. Given that the information about poll results was based on the comment made on TV, it did not indicate compulsory data required by the law in reporting public opinion polls in pre-election period. The information contained only two data: the organization that commissioned the poll and the organization that conducted it (Zurab Bigvava’s organization). At the same time, information about the organization that conducted the poll was incomplete as it did not name Zurab Bigvava’s organization, Psychoproject.

## 6.4 Pirveli Radio

**About Pirveli Radio.** Pirveli Radio<sup>44</sup> is a private company which, since 30 December 2011, is owned by Vasil Kobaidze who simultaneously holds 65% of shares in Pirveli Stereo. 14 days before (December 16, 2011) the owner of Pirveli Radio was Chemexim International Ltd, the company registered in Marshall Islands, simultaneously holding 20% of the shares in Rustavi 2 TV company. Between 2007 and 2011, the 100% owner of Pirveli Radio was Holding Georgian Media Incorporated Ltd. Before that, in 1999-2007, it was owned by five private persons. In 2013, Pirveli Radio recruited former journalists of Imedi TV company, who were dismissed from their former jobs following the return of the TV company into the ownership of Patakatsishvili family.

### Quantitative results

**Total coverage.** According to the results (In sum, 2 945 articles) of four-month (1 (April – 31 July) monitoring of Pirveli Radio online edition, the largest share of the total coverage accounted for the government (33.1%) and the Georgian Dream coalition (20.2%), which made up 53.3% in total.

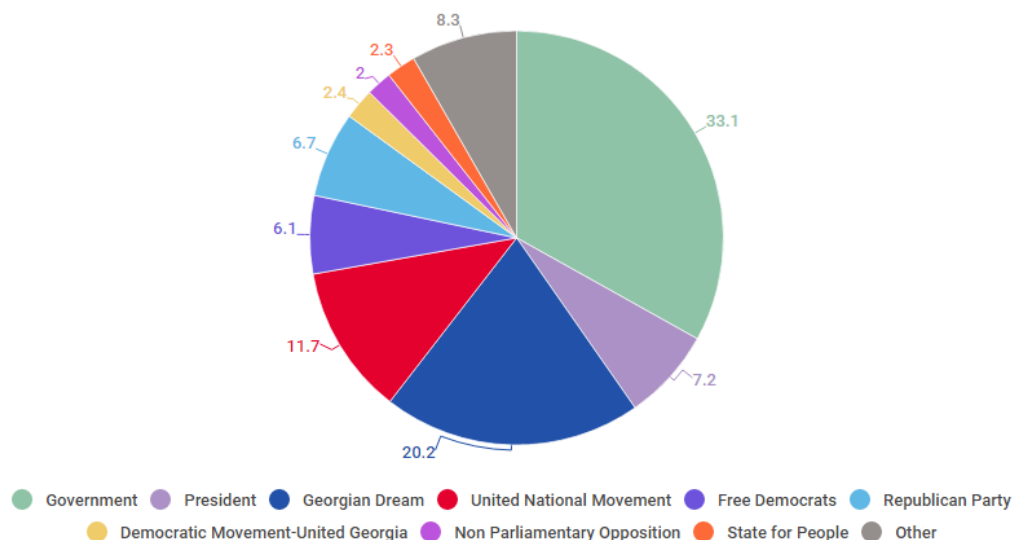
Among political parties, the highest amount of reporting was dedicated to the UNM (11.7%), followed by the Republican Party and the Free Democrats - at 6.1% each. Other parties trailing were Democratic Movement for United Georgia (2.4%) and the newly-established State for People (2.3%). All those political parties that received less than 1% of the total coverage, comprised 8.3% altogether. Among the latter are qualified electoral subjects: Industry Will Save Georgia (0.9%), Conservative Party (0.3%) as well as newly established parties: Tamaz Mechiauri – United Georgia (0.9%), Girchi (0.7%) and New Georgia (0.5%).

---

<sup>44</sup>MediaMeter.ge, MDF, Media Profiles. <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/pirveli-radio>

As for the institutions, the President received 7.2% and the Central Electoral Commission 0.3% of the total coverage.

**Chart 6.4.1: Total coverage of political subjects , Pirveli Radio**

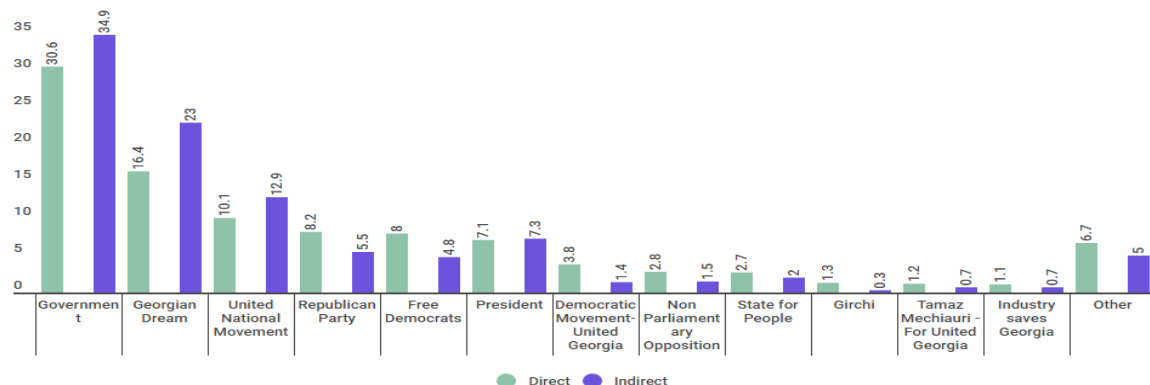


**Direct/indirect coverage.** The largest gap between direct and indirect coverage by Pirveli Radio was seen in case of Georgian Dream (direct – 16.4% and indirect – 23%). This gap was narrower in the reporting about the government (direct – 30.6% and indirect – 34.9%) and the UNM (direct – 10.1% and indirect – 12.9%).

The results were opposite in regards with other qualified political parties where direct coverage exceeds the indirect coverage: Republican Party (8.2% and 5.5%, respectively), Free Democrats (8% and 4.8%, respectively), Democratic Movement for United Georgia (3.8% and 1.4%, respectively), Industry Will Save Georgia (1.1% and 0.7%, respectively).

Indicators of direct and indirect coverage of President was almost identical (7.1% and 7.3%, respectively). As regards to other subjects, any stark difference between corresponding two indicators was not observed.

**Chart 6.4.2. Direct/indirect coverage of political subjects, Pirveli Radio**





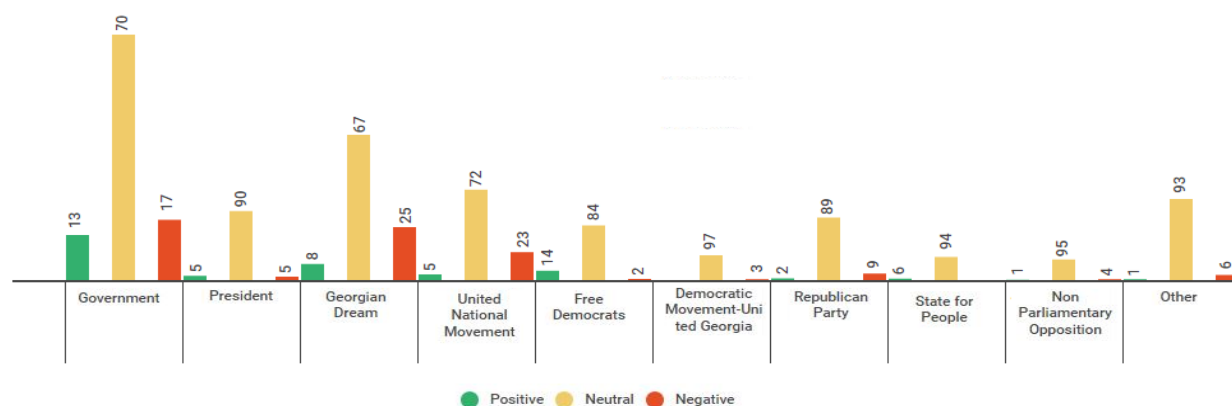
***Tone of content in covering subjects.*** The highest positive content in tone was seen in the reporting by the Pirveli Radio about Free Democrats (14%) and the government (13%). Relatively lower were corresponding indicators for Georgian Dream (8%), State for People (6%) and UNM (5%).

The highest negative content in tone was observed in the reporting about Georgian Dream (25%) and the UNM (23%) as well as the government (17%).

Overwhelmingly neutral in tone was the reporting about the Democratic Movement for United Georgia (97%) with the negative content comprising 3% and positive content at 0%. A similarly high indicator of neutral tone was seen in case of newly established party State for People (94%) with the positive content tone standing at 6% and negative content tone nonexistent. The coverage of President was also dominated by neutral tone (90%) with negative and positive coverage standing at 5% each.

Although the amount of coverage of Central Electoral Commission (CEC) was insignificant, the share of negative tone in it was 14%.

**Chart 6.4.3. Tone of content in reporting about political subjects, Pirveli Radio**

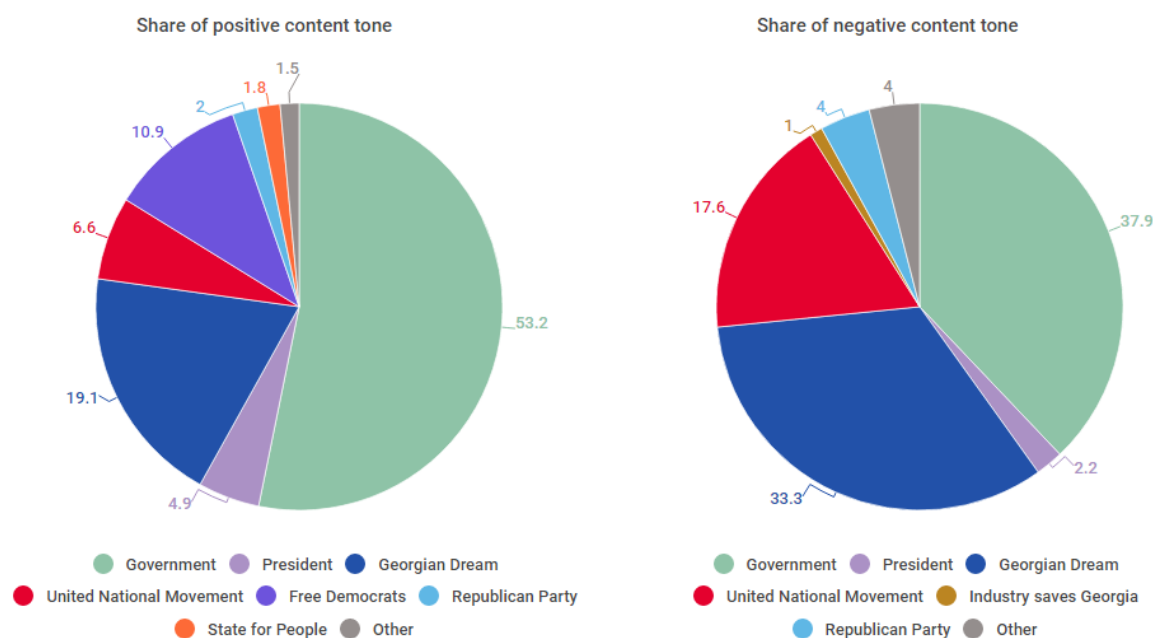


***Share of subjects in the edition's content of positive and negative tone.*** The coverage by Pirveli Radio in terms of positive as well as negative content showed the highest share of reporting about the government (53.2% and 37.9%, respectively). The share of negative content exceeded that of positive in the coverage of three most reported political parties: Georgian Dream (negative – 33.3% and positive 19.1%), the UNM (negative – 17.6% and positive 6.6%), and Republican Party (negative – 4% and positive 2%). Conversely, the coverage of Free Democrats showed a notably higher share of positive tone (10.9%) compared to the share of negative tone (0.8%). The newly established party State for People received 1.8% of positive coverage with negative coverage not observed at all whilst neutral comprising 94%.

The shares of both negative and positive content is insignificant in the reporting about the political parties which received the coverage of less than 1%.

The coverage of President was positive in tone in 4.9% of the total reporting about him and negative in 2.2%.

**Chart 6.4.4: Tone of coverage of political subjects, Pirveli Radio**



### Qualitative Data

The online edition of Pirveli Radio extensively covered qualified parliamentary subjects. It provided mainly pluralistic coverage of developments, though information was based on one source alone, lacking double checking with another source and opinions of opposite sides. Consequently, one could see instances of bias, manipulation, breach of balance and accuracy in the coverage by Pirveli Radio.

**Accuracy/photo-manipulation.** On April 6, the online edition published a comment of political analyst Soso Tsiskarishvili under the title “Georgian Dream’s Carousel, Vanga and Prime Minister,” in which the respondent gave a negative assessment to possible government reshuffle. The material did not provide a position of the government either negating or confirming expected reshuffle in the cabinet. Although a day before, on April 5, the chairman of Georgian Dream parliamentary faction, Gia Volski, denied reports about such reshuffle,<sup>45</sup> the April 6 publication of Pirveli Radio presented this probability as a real fact and the respondent’s negative assessment of this alleged change. The respondent’s comment in which he spoke of “government carousel” and a newspaper “becoming Vanga”<sup>46</sup> was illustrated with a photomontage portraying the Prime Minister, clairvoyant Vanga and a carousel, thereby trying to prejudice readers. The material did not specify either the newspaper which the respondent implied or the expected changes he was talking about.

<sup>45</sup>Liberali (5 April 2016), “Gia Volski: No government reshuffle is planned.” <http://liberali.ge/news/view/21892/gia-volski-mtavrobashi-sakadro-tsvlilebebi-ar-igegmeba>

<sup>46</sup>Vanga - Bulgarian blind clairvoyant.

**Balance/photo manipulation.** On April 6, Pirveli Radio published the information of non-governmental organization Mediator, concerning an excessive consumption of fuel by Tbilisi Mayor's Office, titled "75 tons of fuel for Narmania's mayor's office." The material was based on the information and assessments of only one source, the head of NGO, Levan Khabeishvili, and did not cover the position of Tbilisi Mayor's Office.



Alongside the photo featuring the process of filling the car tank, the material was also illustrated with a photo of Davit Narmania against the background of symbols of Olympic Games at the 2015 youth Olympic inauguration event. This photo was not relevant to the content of the article and represented an attempt of ridiculing the Mayor.

**Photo manipulation.** On 15 June, Pirveli Radio published a comment of expert Gia Khukhashvili concerning a judgment of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on the case of pretrial detention of former Prime Minister Vano Merabishvili, in which the Court found the violation of the Convention on Human Rights. The material titled "Ostrich and mirror – Tsulukiani is looking for a scapegoat to dodge blame" was illustrated with a photomontage featuring an ostrich looking into a mirror. The photo was manipulative resting on one sentence of the respondent, in which he recommended the government to look into the mirror instead of burying the head in the sand like an ostrich.



**Manipulation of religious feelings.** On 26 July, Pirveli Radio published a material titled "New members include people known for their clearly radical, aggressive attitude towards the Georgian Orthodox Church." This material was a fragment of an article from a tabloid newspaper *Alia*, in which a lawyer, Valer Gelbakhiani, spoke about anti-Orthodox and anti-national actions of several new members in the list of parliamentary candidates from the Georgian Dream. According to him, the parliament must not have members who advocate for the legalization of same-sex marriage and fight against Georgian values. The material provided a generalized comment of only one side, in which the respondent neither specified the actions he evaluated as anti-national nor the new members of Georgian Dream he spoke about. The online edition's choice of title as well as of the material for publication represented manipulation of religious feelings and unfounded generalization of a proposition that new members of Georgian Dream fight against Orthodox Church.

**Balance.** The material titled "Rally of Free Democrats in Gldani – political party leader speaks about interests of Narmania's brother in ongoing construction works," which was published on 31 July, concerned the protest rally against the construction works in Davit Jabadze Street, Tbilisi's Gldani district, in which a candidate from Free Democrats for Gldani constituency, Amiran Giuashvili, participated alongside population. The material quoted a rally participant, without identifying this participant, speaking about interests of Tbilisi Mayor Davit Narmania being behind those construction works. Amiran Giuashvili himself expressed doubts about interests of Narmania's brother in ongoing constructions. The information lacked a position of another side or any evidence proving the interests of Narmania's brother.

**Reporting public opinion poll results/confidential source.** On 14 April, Pirveli Radio published the opinion poll results, which were made public by the news agency GHN, under the title "In-house poll of Georgian Dream: Georgian Dream – 33.2%, UNM – 30.7." It should be noted that the Georgian Dream itself did not officially publicized that poll; assumedly, the information was exclusively obtained by GHN<sup>47</sup> from a confidential source. Although Pirveli Radio named GHN as the source, it did not indicate how the news agency obtained the in-house opinion poll results. The online edition did not seek to verify the authenticity of the poll from Georgian Dream. Even was the poll authentic, the online edition should have provided the position of the Georgian Dream as well as the information on how GHN obtained it. Neither did Pirveli Radio provide important data required by the law in reporting public opinion poll results, such as the organization which commissioned the poll, the exact formulation of

<sup>47</sup>GHN (14 April), "In-house poll of Georgian Dream: Georgian Dream – 33.2%, UNM – 30.7." <http://ghn.ge/com/news/view/151752>

questions, margin of error, the number of respondents, methodology, et cetera. It is worth noting that titles of information of Pirveli Radio and GHN were identical, focusing on an insignificant difference between two political subjects – the Georgian Dream (33.2%) and the United National Movement (30.7%).

## 6.5 Marshalpress

**About Marshalpress.** The news agency Marshalpress<sup>48</sup> appeared in the Georgian media landscape on February 18, 2015. Marshalpress.ge is managed by private company Marshalpress Ltd, which, as of 6 May 2015, was wholly owned by Otar Stepanishvili, former journalist from Info 9. As a result of changes carried out on November 24, 2015, the shares were redistributed between Otar Stepanishvili (49%) and Luka Antidze (51%).

### Quantitative Data

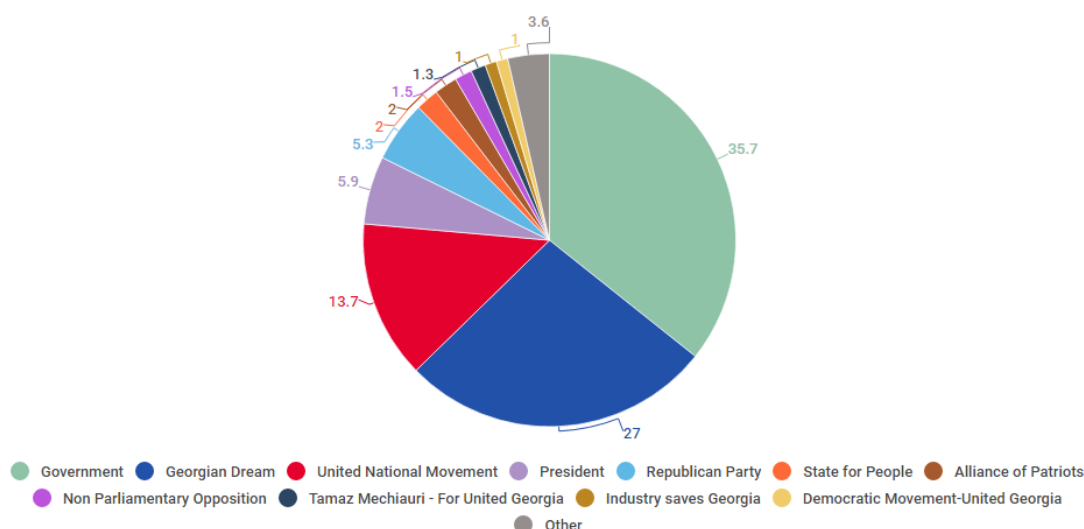
**Total coverage.** In the reporting period (1 April – 31 July), out of the total coverage (2738 articles) the news agency Marshalpress most extensively reported about the government (35.7%) and the Georgian Dream coalition (27%), making up 62.7% in total.

Among opposition political parties the highest share of coverage was received by the United National Movement (UNM) – at 13.7%. Following by the share of coverage were electoral subjects Republican Party (5.3%), Alliance of Patriots (2%) and a newly-established party, the State for People (2%).

The total coverage of all other qualified subjects comprised either 1% or less: the Industry Will Save Georgia and the Democratic Movement -United Georgia (1% each), Free Democrats (0.4%), the Conservative Party (0.4%), the National Forum (0.3%) and the Labor Party (0.3%).

As regards the coverage of institutions, the share of President comprised 5.9% whilst that of the Central Electoral Commission was at 0.2%.

**Chart. 6.5.1: Total coverage of political subjects, Marshalpress**

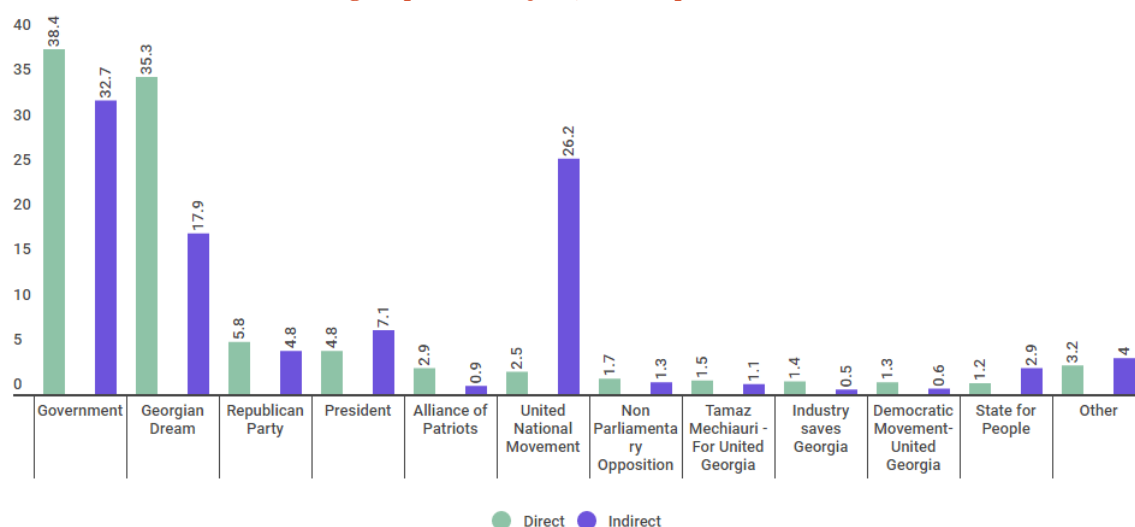


<sup>48</sup> Mediameter.ge, MDF, Marshalpres, <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/marshalpress>

**Direct/indirect coverage.** Most extensive coverage in the form of direct (38.4%) and indirect (32.7%) reporting was received by the government. Shares of direct (35.3%) and indirect (17.9%) coverage of the Georgian Dream were also high respectively.

The largest difference between the direct and indirect coverage was seen in the reporting about the UNM, with direct reporting (26.2%) significantly exceeding indirect reporting (2.5%). The indicator of indirect reporting (7.1%) was also higher than that of direct reporting (4.8%) in the coverage of President. The same holds true for newly-established party State for People (indirect at 2.9% and direct at 1.2%) as well as the Free Democrats and the Labor Party (direct – 0.1%, indirect – 0.6%) which received a relatively less amount of coverage from the news agency. As the Chart 6.5.2 shows, such significant differences between these two indicators were not observed in relation to other political subjects.

**Chart 6.5.2: Direct/indirect coverage of political subjects, Marshalpress**

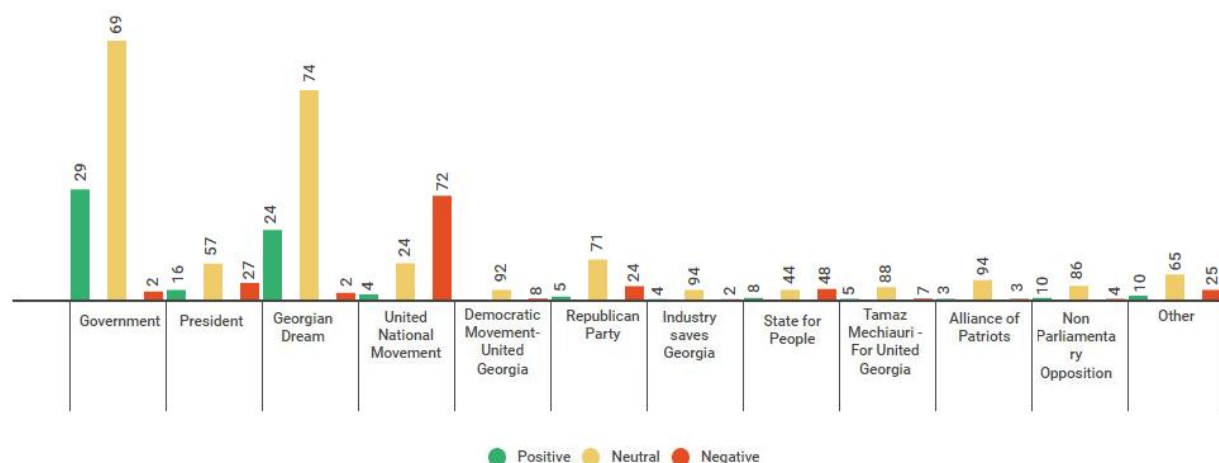


**Tone of content in covering subjects.** Compared to other news agencies, the coverage of particular political subjects were either explicitly positive or explicitly negative in tone. For example, the most extensive positive coverage was received by the government (29%), Georgian Dream (24%), President (16%), followed by non-parliamentary opposition (10%), various political parties which, taken separately, did not receive more than 1% of the total coverage (10%).

The highest negative tone of content was seen in the reporting about the UNM (72%), with the positive indicator comprising a mere 4%. The coverage of Republican Party was also high in negative tone (24%), while positive tone amounted 5%.

Although, after the government and the Georgian Dream coalition, the President received the highest amount of positive tone (16%), at the same time the negative coverage of President was quite high (27%). The same holds true for Paata Burchuladze's new political party State for People – 8% of positive coverage against 48% of negative coverage. The neutral content tone was overwhelming in the reporting about Alliance of Patriots (94%), Industry Will Save Georgia (94%), Democratic Movement- United Georgia (92%) and Tamaz Mechiauri-United Georgia (88%).

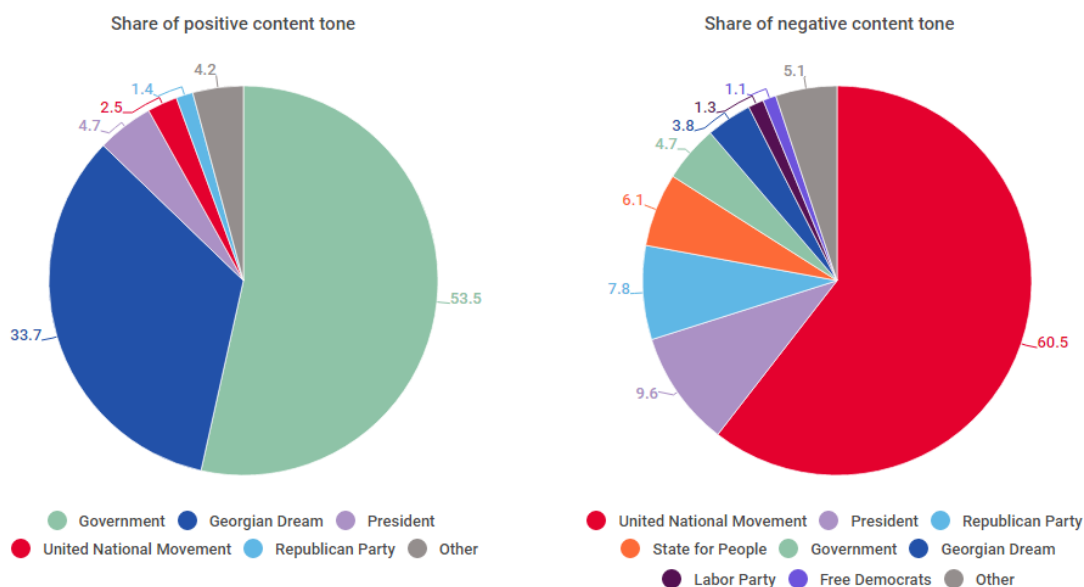
**Chart 6.5.3. Tone of content in reporting about political subjects, Marshalpress**



*Share of subjects in the news agency's content of positive and negative tone.* Marshalpress allocated the highest share of positive content tone to the government (53.5%) and Georgian Dream (33.7%), which, combined, made up 87.2%. Much smaller were the corresponding indicators for President (4.7%), UNM (2.5%), Republican Party (1.4%) and other subjects (4.2%), with all, taken together, totaling 12.8% of positive content.

As regards the negative content tone, the highest share was seen in the case of UNM (60.5%), followed by President (9.6%), Republican Party (7.8%), State for People (6.1%). Relatively lower indicators of negative coverage were seen in reporting about the government (4.7%), Georgian Dream (3.8%), and all those subjects (4.2%) which received less than 1% of the total coverage and are shown in the Chart 6.5.4 in the form of a total share.

**Chart 6.5.4: Tone of coverage of political subjects, Marshalpress**





## Qualitative Data

The data and analysis gathered showed that the news agency Marshalpress was distinguished for violating ethical standards, principles of balance, accuracy and using visual manipulations.

**Visual manipulation.** The news agency manipulated with photo and video materials in regard to separate politicians and various topics in order to exacerbate critical attitudes among society.



For example, an excerpt from an interview of former President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili which he gave to France 24 in 2015, was published by the news agency in an edited form under the title “Inebriated Mikheil Saakashvili” (April 18).<sup>49</sup> A 16-second-long video,<sup>50</sup> which contained only small fragments of journalist Robert Parsons asking two separate questions, was focused on the expression of Saakashvili’s face when he was listening to the questions; the respondent’s answers to those questions were cut out and the last shot of the video stopped on the smiling face of Saakashvili. The video was accompanied with the editorial comment saying that the news agency decided to publish this material, in which Saakashvili seemed inebriated, because of its popularity on social networks. The material was misleading whilst its title based on manipulation of video and unfounded editorial text.

On 21 July, Marshalpress used photomontage again,<sup>51</sup> suggesting that the former President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili had ties with ISIS. The illustration was accompanied with the information titled **“List of educational institutions established by Fethullah Gülen in Georgia.”** Relying on the founder of political party Kartuli Dasi, Jondi Baghaturia, as a source, the news agency alleged that Fethullah Gülen, whom the Turkish government accused of coup d’état attempt, together with Saakashvili’s mother, Giuli Alasania, established educational institutions in Georgia. The information contained only the list of educational institutions, but no information about the persons portrayed against the background of ISIS in the manipulated photo.



Yet another photo manipulation concerned Paata Burchuladze, the leader of newly established political party State for People. On 16 May, the news agency reprinted a comment of poet Rezo Amashukeli, which was published in a tabloid *Asaval-Dasavali* newspaper, under the title **“Paata Burchuladze defended Rustavi 2 brothel like a brothel keeper.”**<sup>52</sup> The photomontage accompanying the text manipulated with biographical details of Paata Burchuladze, who was an opera singer, portraying him performing the solo; the comment to the photo said that Paata Burchuladze was the UNM’s satellite and was fulfilling its order.

<sup>49</sup> Marshalpress, 18 April, 2016. <http://marshalpress.ge/archives/32867>

<sup>50</sup> France 24, The Interview, 23 February, 2015. <http://www.france24.com/en/20150221-interview-mikheil-saakashvili-former-georgian-president-ukraine-putin-poroshenko>

<sup>51</sup> <http://marshalpress.ge/archives/49610>

<sup>52</sup> <http://marshalpress.ge/archives/37792>





wedding dress.

The chapter on Hate Speech discusses an instance of photomontage which is of homophobic nature (pg. 80). On April 20, news agency again published article titled **“Signatures cannot be collected for putting an issue of same-sex marriage on referendum”**<sup>53</sup> in homophobic contest. The material concerns the registration of a referendum question about the definition of a family as an union between a man and a woman in the Constitution. The article is illustrated with a photo from an LGBT pride in a foreign country, portraying a man in a

**Accuracy/impartiality.** Like the news agency PIA, Marshalpress reported about the attack on leaders of United National Movement by sportsmen transported from Tbilisi in the village of Kortskheli, Zugdidi district, during the midterm local elections on 22 May, in a biased way, describing it as a physical confrontation between local population and UNM members (**“Physical confrontation at Kortskheli precinct”**). The accompanying video, however, featured physical assault on UNM members by strangers.

Similarly to PIA, Marshalpress reprinted a one-sided material titled **“Where Paata Burchuladze spends contributions of our citizens”** (20 July) from *Akhali Taoba* newspaper. In the article with the title accusing the leader of State for People political party of misappropriating revenues of the charity fund Iavnana, doubts were expressed, in the form of questions, about the embezzlement of monies collected as charity contributions. The report is unbalanced as it did not contain comments of either Paata Burchuladze or a representative of the charity fund.

Accusations against the leader of Labor Party, Shalva Natelashvili, titled **“Soso Shatberashvili: Labor Party received substantial funding from the UNM,”**(14 May) were expressed based on one source alone and without providing any proof. The material was built on a comment of Soso Shatberashvili, the leader of Left Alliance and former Labor Party member, in which he alleged that the UNM transfers hundreds of thousand euros to Shalva Natelashvili’s account in a bank in Austria. The material was unbalanced, failing to provide either a position of Labor Party representative or any factual evidence.

**Accuracy/manipulative title.** With the material titled **“You have no right to come here – population confronts Varshalomidze”** (20 July), Marshalpress reported about a pre-election meeting of UNM leader in Ajara, Levan Varshalomidze, with population. A video attached to the material, however, showed that the dissatisfaction with the period of UNM rule was voiced only by one citizen attending the meeting. The news agency generalized the disapproval of the UNM leader by one person on the entire population noting in the editorial text that Levan Varshalomidze who arrived at the so-called City of Dream was confronted by a segment of residents there. Both the title and the text were misleading.

**Bias/tendency.** The coverage of Free Democrats was also negative; while the total reporting about the party was very small (0.4%), the share of negative coverage in it was quite high which can be proved by titles given below for illustration purposes:

“Demur Giorkhelidze: God forbid Georgia from a leader like Irakli Alasania!” (6 April); “Why was Alasania not interrogated? Why is he not held responsible?” (19 May); “Irakli Alasania may be interrogated” (23 May); “Zaza Piralishvili left Free Democrats” (16 June); “Members of Alasania’s team left the party and joined Georgian Dream” (21 June); “Kvitsiani: Irakli Alasania and his special services had laid a trap for me” (14 July); “Gamzardia: Compared to Alasania, even Bokeria seems the embodiment of morality and honesty” (16 May).

<sup>53</sup> <http://marshalpress.ge/archives/33148>

*Accuracy/standard of reporting opinion polls.* In the material titled “**NDI: Georgian Dream – 31%, UNM – 11%**” (13 April), Marshalpress provided the data which did not reflect official results of the public opinion poll conducted by the US National Democratic Institute (NDI). In particular, the information released by the news agency noted that the Georgian Dream was in the lead among the political parties by responses to the question “if parliamentary elections were held tomorrow which party would you vote for?” with 31% of respondents naming the Georgian Dream and 11% of respondents naming the UNM. The official data published by the NDI,<sup>54</sup> showed different results to the above question; namely, 16% named Georgian Dream and 15% named the UNM.

That 31% was the result of responses to a totally different question, namely “if parliamentary elections were held tomorrow which party do you think would win?” to which 31% of respondents named Georgian Dream and 11 named the UNM.

The above news items contained only 4 compulsory indicators out of 11 specified in Article 51(11) of the Electoral Code of Georgia; namely, organization that commissioned the poll, geographic area, the number of respondents and the time of conducting the poll.

Similarly to PIA, Marshalpress distorted the results of NDI June polls in the material titled “NDI: 57% of respondents would vote for the same political party they supported in 2012” (29 July). The text of the material did not specify that 57% reflected the attitudes of the majority of that 38% of respondents who already decided whom they would vote for. Of compulsory data, the information contained only five –the organization that commissioned the poll, the methodology, the number of respondents, the geographic area and the time of conducting the poll.

---

<sup>54</sup>NDI (March, 2016), Public attitudes in Georgia.

[https://www.ndi.org/files/NDI%20Georgia\\_March%202016%20poll\\_Public%20political\\_GEO\\_vf.pdf](https://www.ndi.org/files/NDI%20Georgia_March%202016%20poll_Public%20political_GEO_vf.pdf)

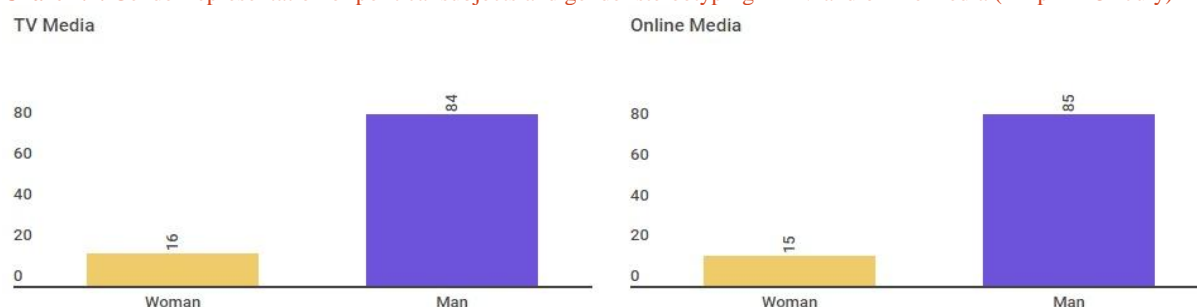
## 7. GENDER REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL SUBJECTS AND GENDER STEREOTYPING IN BROADCAST AND ONLINE MEDIA

Results of the monitoring of gender representation in media, carried out over the period of four months (1 April -31 July 2016), showed almost no difference between primetime TV news programs and online media. The distribution of gender representation stands at 84% men vs 16% women on TV and at 85% men vs 15% women in online media.

Majority of women covered in TV media are representatives of qualified parties (52%) and executive brunch (34%), followed by representatives of Administration of President - 8%, CEC - 2%, new political parties - 2%, non-parliamentary opposition -1%, non-partisan independent MPs and members of local councils -1%.

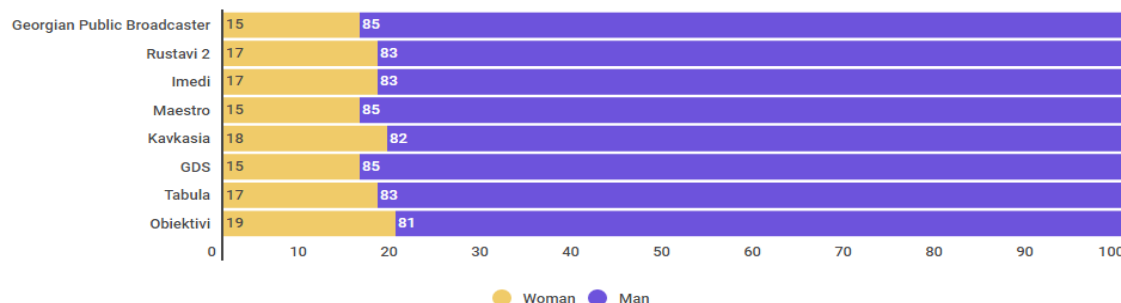
The same trend is observed in online media, however number of women representing executive brunch is higher. Representation of women in online media is following: qualified parties (45%); executive brunch (42%), Administration of President (7%); new political parties (2%); non-parliamentary opposition (3%), CEC (1%).

**Chart 7.1.** Gender representation of political subjects and gender stereotyping in TV and online media (1 April – 31 July)



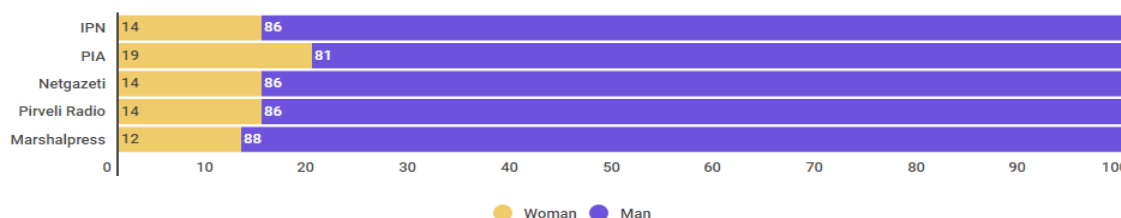
Among TV channels, Media Union Obiektivi is in the lead by the amount of time spent on coverage of women politicians in news programs (19%). It is followed by Kavkasia (18%), Rustavi 2 (17%), Imedi (17%) and Tabula (17%).

**Chart 7.2.** Gender representation of political subjects and gender stereotyping in broadcast media



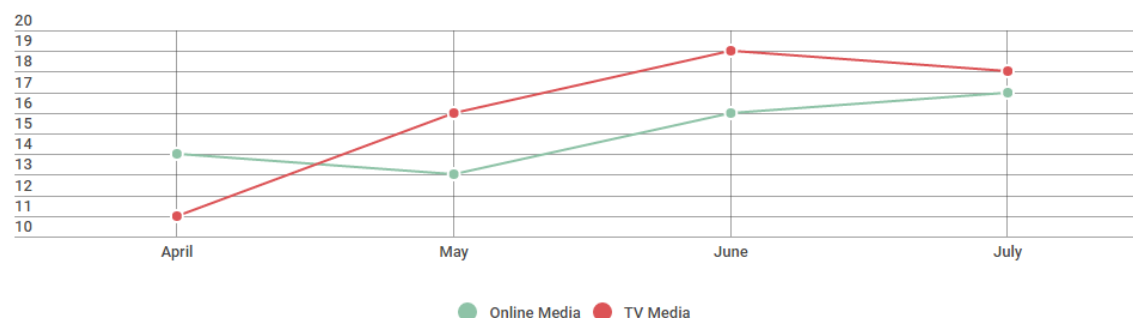
Among online media, the largest space to women politicians was allocated by the news agency PIA (19%) with InterPressNews, Netgazeti and Pirveli Radio following (14% each). The news agency Marshalpress allocated the smallest space to women politicians (12%).

**Chart 7.3.** Gender representation of political subjects in online media



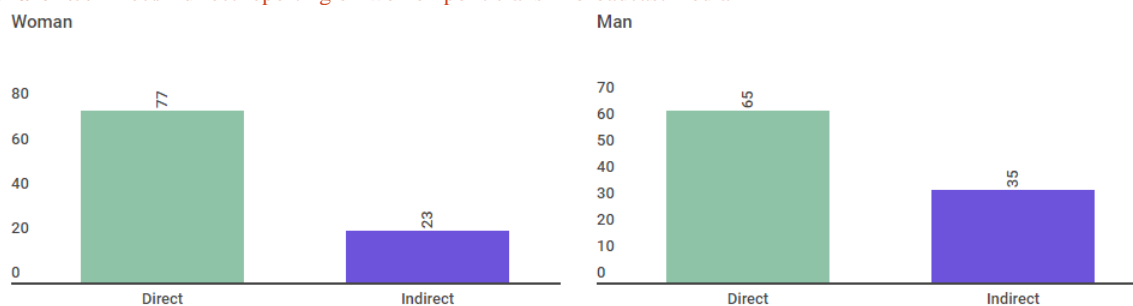
At the same time, the reporting period saw an upward trend in reporting on women politicians. While at the beginning of reporting period, in April, the representation of women politicians stood at 11% in broadcast media, in July this indicator comprised 18% with June reaching the peak (19%). In online media the indicator increased from the initial 14% to the highest 17% in May.

**Chart 7.4. Dynamics in coverage of women politicians by months (1 April – 31 July 2016)**



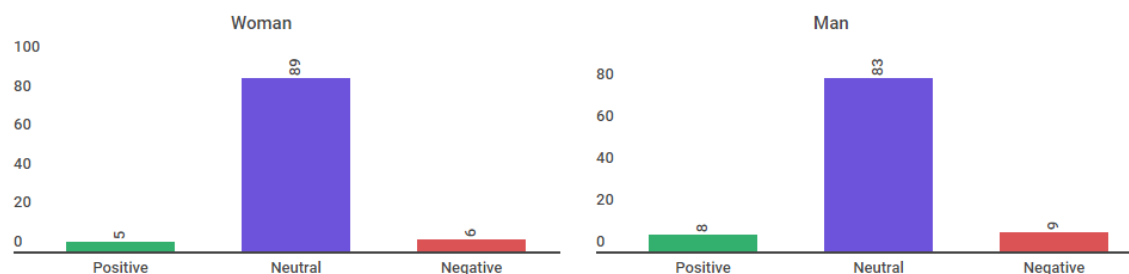
The analysis of pre-election coverage of political subjects by TV media from the gender perspective showed that although women politicians receive less coverage, the share of direct reporting on women politicians (77%) exceeds that of men politicians (65%).

**Chart 7.5. Direct/indirect reporting on women politicians in broadcast media**



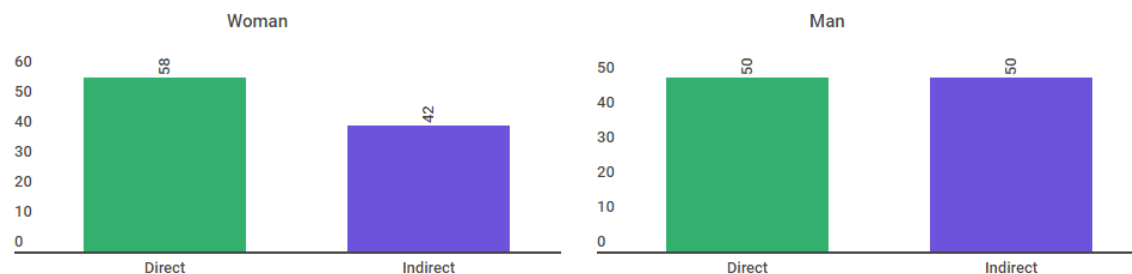
At the same time, positive and negative tones in reports about women politicians (5% and 6%, respectively) are a bit lower than those in reports about men politicians (9% and 8%, respectively). Consequently, the neutral coverage is higher when it comes to women politicians (89%) than to men politicians (83%).

**Chart 7.6. The tone of reporting (content) about women and men politicians in TV media**



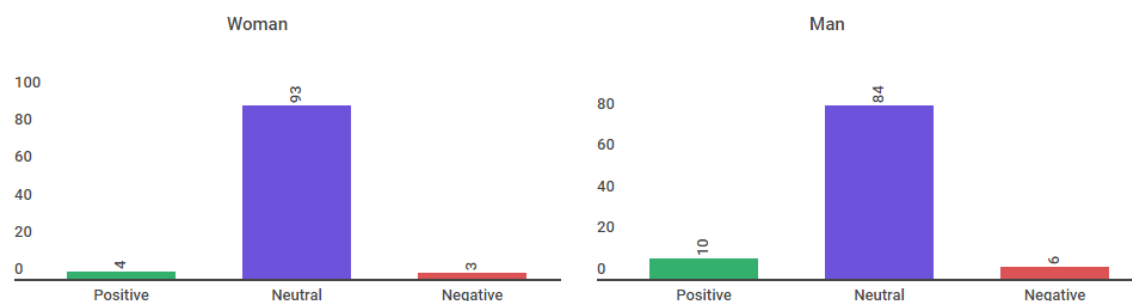
Similar trends are seen in online media too with the only difference that indirect reporting is, in general, higher in this media than in broadcast media. In particular, the direct coverage of women politicians stands at 58% compared to the corresponding indicator of men politicians, which comprises 50%.

**Chart 7.7. Direct/indirect reporting on women politicians in online media**



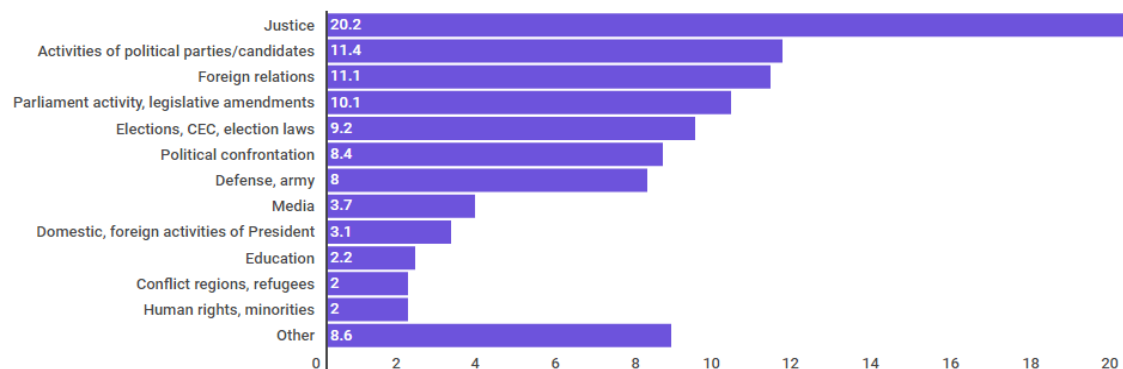
In online media, the tone of 93% of reports about women politicians is neutral and exceeds the indicator of neutral tone of reports about men politicians (84%). On the other hand, a positive reporting is significantly lower in case of women politicians (4%) than in case of men politicians (10%).

**Chart 7.8. The tone of reporting (content) about women and men politicians in online media**



**Topics covered in reports about women politicians.** Thematic analysis of media coverage of women politicians showed that TV media mostly reports about women politicians is dominated by issues related to justice (20,8%) followed with three topics: events of political parties, nomination of candidates (11.4%) which can be explained by active presentation of women candidates by some political parties for the forthcoming parliamentary elections; and foreign policy issues (11.1%) and Parliamentary activity (10.1%). The percentage of defense topic is also rather high (8%) which can be attributed to the fact that during the reporting period the Minister and Deputy Minister of Defense were women.

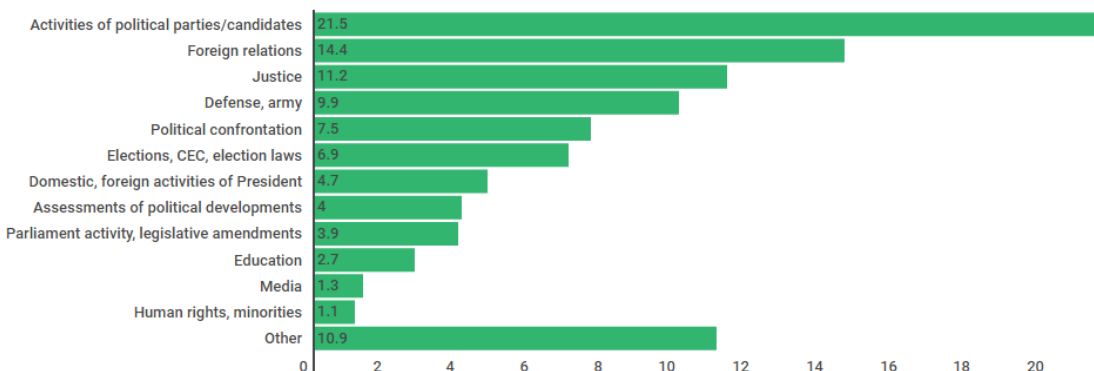
**Chart 7.9. Topics covered in reports about women politicians in broadcast media**



The category “Other” includes those spheres which received the smallest amount of coverage – less than 1%. The analysis showed that TV coverage of women politicians is infinitesimal in regards with crucial topics such as: health care – 0.2%; social issues – 0.9%; human rights and minorities – 1.4%; and education – 2.2%.

The priorities in covering women politicians somewhat differs in online media with the pre-election activities of political parties being in the lead (21.5%) and followed by foreign relations (14.4%); justice (11.2%), the percentage of defense topic (9.9%) is also rather high like in TV media.

**Chart 7.10. Topics covered in reports about women politicians in online media**



**Gender stereotypes/discrimination.** Sources of all four gender stereotyping statements, seen in the reporting period, were representatives of the Georgian Dream coalition. The statements were made in the context of political confrontations. Seven media outlets reported a stereotyping comment of Kakha Kaladze, the head of Georgian Dream’s election headquarters, which he made in response to the statement of the Chairman of Constitutional Court regarding the pressure exerted on judges.

**Kakha Kaladze, the head of Georgian Dream’s election headquarters:** “Here we deal with a sort of gossiping women usually do.” (*Rustavi 2, Imedi, Tabula, IPN, Marshalpress, Pirveli radio, NetgazeTi*; 25 July).

Tamaz Mechiauri from the Georgian Dream (who later left the coalition) made two statements containing gender stereotypes. He made these statements when confronting the member of the Republican Party and then Defense Minister Tina Khidasheli. Apart from being stereotyping, these statements were discriminatory on the ground of gender.

**Tamaz Mechiauri, the Georgian Dream:** “A woman shall not be allowed to take a gun and make decisions” (*Rustavi 2, Tabula, Georgian Public Broadacster*; 11 May).

**Tamaz Mechiauri, the Georgian Dream:** “She is a woman and I did not want to offend her, but since this woman holds the most masculine position, I deem myself obliged to respond to her, at least, concisely: ‘a woman’s place is in the kitchen though some even prove useless there’ (Marshalpress; 10 May).

A Facebook comment of Merab Kachakhidze, a majority MP, which Marshalpress published without editorial comment, was homophobic and sexist at the same time:

**Merab Kachakhidze, the Georgian Dream/Conservative Party:** “A friend, partner means a lover, fancy woman; a gay, queer means a pederast; a sex worker means a prostitute. Has the essence changed [by changing terms]?! Yes, it has. This category of people – starting from hairdresser to hooker – made it into the elite! The conclusion is that both the elite and the morality devalued!” (27 July, Marshalpress).

## 8. HATE SPEECH IN TV AND ONLINE MEDIA

**Regulations.** According to the recommendation adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in 1997<sup>55</sup>, the term "hate speech" shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin.

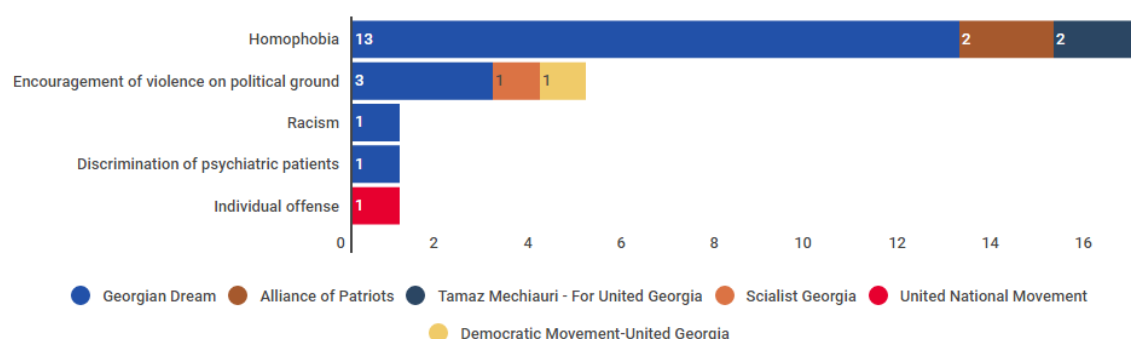
Georgian legislation does not criminalize hate speech except those cases, when it creates a threat of immediate, irreversible and apparent violence. Programme restrictions related to hate speech are envisaged only in case of broadcasting. According to Article 56.3 of the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting, "Broadcasting of programmes intended to abuse or discriminate against any person or group on the basis of disability, ethnic origin, religion, opinion, gender, sexual orientation or on the basis of any other feature or status, or which are intended to highlight this feature or status, are prohibited, except when this is necessary due to the content of a programme and when it is targeted to illustrate existing hatred".

Hate speech restriction standards are also set by the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters, Code of Conduct of the Georgian Public Broadcaster and Charter of Journalistic Ethics. The Code of Conduct for Broadcasters has been adopted by the Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC) as a normative act. Pursuant to the code, self-regulatory mechanism (commission and an appeal body) has been created in the broadcasters since 2009 to deal with violations. According to the CoE report<sup>56</sup>, the effectiveness of the self-regulatory mechanisms is hampered by the different definition of "affected party" among different broadcasters when NGOs and representative of the certain groups are deprived a right to lodge a complaint.

### Quantitative Data

In the reporting period, political subjects made 25 statements containing hate speech, which were covered in the TV news programs and online media being under monitoring (48). Most of these statements were homophobic (17). There were five statements of intolerance towards political opponents and encouragement of violence against them(5); one statement was racist; one statement contained individual offense and one statement made with regard to a critical interview of a journalist was discriminatory of psychiatrist patients. One homophobic photomontage and one photo manipulation was published in online media as well.

**Chart 8.1. Typology of hate speech by sources**



The majority of homophobic statements (13) were made by representatives of the ruling coalition – the Georgian Dream.<sup>57</sup> They concerned the constitutional amendments initiated by the ruling coalition, which aim at providing the definition of a family as the unity between a man and a woman, and a possibility to conduct the referendum on this

<sup>55</sup> Recommendation of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on Hate Speech

[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/hrpolicy/other\\_committees/dh-lgbt\\_docs/CM\\_Rec\(97\)20\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/hrpolicy/other_committees/dh-lgbt_docs/CM_Rec(97)20_en.pdf)

<sup>56</sup> CoE report on journalistic ethics and responsibilities in Georgia (December 10, 2015).

<sup>57</sup> After the break-up of the ruling coalition, its former members are represented by their new political affiliations in the study.



issue. These statements were made during parliamentary hearings and at public meetings regarding the referendum initiative. Homophobic statements were made by Georgian Dream representatives also in relation to the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia of 17 May. In two cases sources of homophobic statements were representatives of a new coalition “Tamaz Mechiauri for United Georgia,” the leader of which (Tamaz Mechiauri) is presented in the study as a separate subject after he left the ruling Georgian Dream coalition; the source of other two homophobic statements was “The Alliance of Patriots”.

**Below are separate examples of hate speech by typology:**

### *Homophobia:*

**Nukri Kantaria, the Georgian Dream:** “There has never been Romeo and Romeo, and Juliet and Juliet, has it? ... This still does not raise any compassion; it does not raise compassion because it is not natural; it is a deviation. Sometimes it is a mimicry, sometimes - a disease, but it is not organic” (27 May, GPB, Imedi, IPN, Netgazeti, Marshalpress).

**Tamaz Mechiauri, the Georgian Dream:** “Would you like to see a hairy-bearded man wearing a bridal veil in your family?” (7 April, Rustavi 2, Imedi, GPB, Marshalpress, Pirveli Radio).

**Gogi Topadze, the Georgian Dream/Industry will Save Georgia:** “I think hardly can one imagine two young men, 20 years old, kissing each other in Mtiuleti, Svaneti, Kazbegi and people seeing this scene liking it” (7 April, Rustavi 2, Imedi, GPB, Marshalpress).

**Zviad Dzidziguri, the Georgian Dream/Conservative Party:** “Children have the right to have women as mothers and men as fathers. We must protect the rights of children, It is necessary to do this in the world where societies for the protection of butterflies, lizards, ants are set up” (5 May, GPB, Tabula, Kvkasia, IPN, Netgazeti).

**Merab Kachakhidze, the Georgian Dream/Conservative Party:** “A friend, partner –a lover, fancy woman. A gay, queer - a pederast. A sex worker –a prostitute –has anything changed?...Changing terms does not change the essence of the terms” (27 July, Marshalpress).

**Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, the Alliance of Patriots:** “They say there will be a pill which will be administered to a pregnant women and a baby will not be born as homosexual” (24 July, Marshalpress).

**Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, the Alliance of Patriots:** “Homosexuality, unfortunately, is a psychological problem too (27 July, Marshalpress).

**Sandro Bregadze, Tamaz Mechiauri for United Georgia/Movement Erovnulebi:** “If a same-sex marriage is not prohibited through the referendum, the future parliament, under the pressure from abroad, will legalize this perversity” (29 June, Marshalpress).

**Encouragement of violence.** Statements of hate speech on the political ground are related to an incident that occurred on 22 May in the village of Kortskheli, Zugdidi district and in which members of the United National Movement opposition party were physically attacked. Georgian Dream members condoned and encouraged violence in their statements about the incident (3). In one statement, a representative of the Democratic Movement-United Georgia demanded the lynching of members of the United National Movement. In yet another statement, the chairman of Socialist Georgia called for violence against the authors of the draft law on prohibiting Soviet symbols.

**Omar Nishnianidze, the Georgian Dream:** “Provocations by the United National Movement can be avoided before the elections by beaten them up severely before that. Let us put them in their place” (23 May, Marshalpress).

**Gigla Baramidze, he Democratic Movement-United Georgia:** “People dream of lynching them, of getting hold of Saakashvili and eating him alive” (5 July, Pirveli Radio).

**Valeri Kvaratskhelia, Socialist Georgia:** “A stupid law was adopted by a group of stupid people... I will cut out that tongue with this sickle and smash that stupid head with that hammer” (30 July, Marshalpress).

*Individual offense.* An individual offence on the part of a representative of the United National Movement was addressed to Deputy Prime Minister Kakha Kaladze in relation to the Kortskheli incident.

**Eka Kherkheulidze, the United National Movement:** “By the way, he [Vice-Premier Kakha Kaladze] is also a muscular and mentally limited person who definitely finds it difficult to draw out correct conclusions” (22 May, Rustavi 2).

*Racist comment.* A source of racist comment (1) was the Ambassador of Georgia to the United States Archil Gegeshidze, who made the following statement:

**Archil Gegeshidze, the Ambassador of Georgia to the United States:** “It is a fact that we still exist and had it not been for that treaty [with Russia], we, like Persians, would have had coal-black eyebrows and hair” (6 July, Rustavi 2, Tabula, Netgazeti).

*Discrimination of psychiatric patients.* A representative of the Georgian Dream used discrimination against psychiatric patients in relation to a journalist of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty because of her interview with the ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili on the Georgian Public Broadcaster, in which the journalist asked critical questions:

**Nukri Kantaria, the Georgian Dream:** “I got an impression that a psychiatric patient was interviewing Bidzina Ivanishvili” (3 June, Marshalpress).

## Qualitative Data

*Coverage of hate speech by televisions.* Prime-time TV news programs basically provided a neutral coverage of hate speech of politicians expressed by them during parliamentary hearings and public meetings with population concerning the initiated constitutional change on defining marriage as union of a man and a woman. Out of 12 stories dedicated to politicians’ homophobic statements, only in three cases (GPB – 2, Imedi – 1) it was not mentioned that the comments were homophobic. Rustavi 2, Imedi, Kavkasia and Tabula (6 stories) aired the statements made by NGOs, where the statements made by politicians were described as homophobic. In three cases (GPB – 2, Maestro -1) the editorial text clearly noted a homophobic nature of politicians’ remarks.

*Coverage of hate speech by online media.* A different picture was seen in online media. Only Netgazeti noted on two occasions that respondents used homophobic language while Inter Press News titled one of its news items as follows: “Tamaz Mechiauri addressed LGBT activists and journalists with offending words.”

Among online media outlets, the largest amount of homophobic material was published by Marshalpress (11). Moreover, it might be considered as a manifestation of editorial policies that these materials were mainly titled with homophobic and discriminatory quotes of respondents without mentioning a discriminative nature of the content in the text.

Separate examples of headlines:

“They say there will be a pill which will be administered to a pregnant women and a baby will not be born as homosexual.”

“I got an impression that a psychiatric patient was interviewing Bidzina Ivanishvili.”

“You will get beaten once again, we are awaiting disturbances!”



The statement of Tamaz Mechiauri was reported by Marshalpress in a homophobic context, illustrated by a photomontage of a man in bride's veil. In one case the news agency used a photo manipulation in a homophobic context (see p. 70).

It should be noted that apart from reporting statements made during parliamentary debates, the source of 5 out of 11 materials was another media outlet (Obiektivi, Saerto Gazeti, Iberia, Interfactnews). In two materials, homosexuality was presented both in a headline and a text as an illness and it was not noted that the World Health Organization removed homosexuality from its

list of mental disorders. Two materials cited the Facebook posts of politicians as their sources.

## Recommendations

To avoid problematic issues identified as a result of monitoring, media must observe standards of reporting about elections, which are established by the law, the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters, Charter of Journalistic Ethics and international documents:

- **Equal coverage.** It is important that political subjects running for elections have equal conditions and media outlets define and publish their standard by internal regulations, which will establish uniform attitude towards both qualified and unqualified political subjects and will not selectively ignore electoral activities of separate subjects.
- **Balance.** To fully inform voters, it is important for media to ensure variety of sources so as to provide audience with diverse perspectives about an issue. When reporting, media outlet should take into account wide spectrum of different parties, including ruling and opposition parties and their diverse perspectives. Generalizing an opinion of one opposition party as that of the entire opposition may be misleading if the issue in question does not concern only one opposition party and there is a diversity of views about the issue among the opposition parties.
- **Balance in online media.** Online editions must ensure balanced reporting within a single news item and not within the entire information flow.
- **Reporting government activities.** When reporting government activities, it is important to also provide alternative opinions and to observe balance in reports about government activities by showing a different perspective. Media should distinguish between what is related to government activities (and public concerns) or political propaganda.
- **Practice of financed content.** Media outlets must clearly separate financed content from editorial content in order to avoid misleading of audience. This standard must be applied to content financed by the government as well as political parties and all financed content should be known to the public.
- **Social media as a source.** It is unacceptable to use social media as a source without proper verification of the information, or for releasing such opinions which are used to attack someone.
- **Public opinion polls.** Media must properly assess the reliability of a public opinion poll and only after that take a decision on its publication. Media outlets must also observe the rules established for publication of pre-election opinion polls and publish all those details which are important for audience to assess the data comprehensively. It is unacceptable to use poll results for manipulating public opinion especially when the amount of undecided voters is high.
- **Gender sensitivity.** When selecting respondents media needs to be gender sensitive and by due representation of women respondents contribute to pluralism which also implies equality of women and men.
- **Hate speech.** Media must not avoid reporting hate speech of political subjects and public figures in order to inform audience about the values of respondents. However, at the same time, media must understand the threat of encouraging discrimination and must inform what type of speech the public deals with. Moreover, media should refrain from using hate speech of public figures in titles and announcements without noting what type of speech it is. Media should avoid reporting statements containing hate speech by non-public figures.