



Pre-election monitoring of radios

September 18 –October 26

Internews-Georgia is carrying out the monitoring of radio channels within the framework of the EU-UNDP funded project “Professional Media for Elections”. The monitoring started on June 15 and will last until November 15, inclusive. The monitoring covers the evening news releases of 12 radio broadcasters. These are: Radio 1 (Public Broadcaster), Imedi, Fortuna, Liberty, Palitra, First Radio, Green Wave, Hereti, Old City, Atinati, Maestro and Ajara.

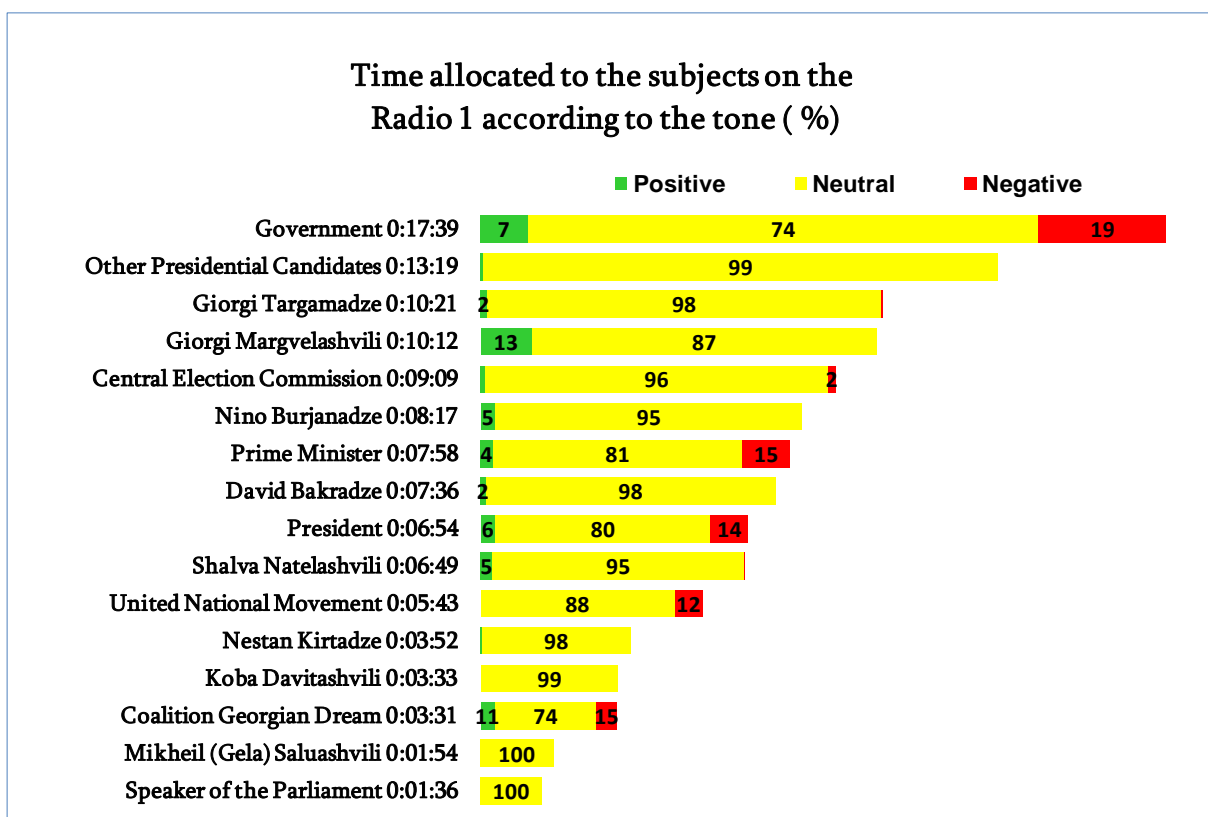
News release monitoring of radio channels (September 18 – October 26) revealed the following key findings:

- Monitoring has made it clear that radio does not belong to polarized media segment;
- Despite the coverage of Presidential candidates has increased on majority of radio broadcasters over the last period, the time has mostly been dedicated to the Government, the Prime Minister and the “United National Movement”;
- Among the presidential candidates, the most time has been allocated to Giorgi Margvelashvili, candidate of the coalition “Georgian Dream”;
- The pre-election campaign of Presidential candidates has been covered shallowly;
- Regional broadcasters have hardly covered Presidential candidates;
- Stories have often been based on one source only and disseminated information has never been verified with various sources;
- Radios “Liberty” and “Palitra” have prepared in-depth and critical stories as compared to other radio broadcasters;
- Stories have usually been limited to pure citation of politicians. Journalists have rarely asked critical questions;
- Journalists have never made subjective evaluations and cases of manipulating with a voice/music have not been registered.

Radio 1 (Public Broadcaster)

Within the reporting period “Radio 1” has been distinguished by diverse coverage of Presidential candidates: the channel has covered 16 subjects. Most of the time (17 minutes) in news programs has been dedicated to the Government. Direct speech of subjects was almost never covered.

„Radio 1“ covered almost all Presidential candidates. 13 minutes were allocated to those Presidential candidates, who rarely participated in news programs broadcasted by other radio channels. However, lack of critical questions still remains an issue: surplus of neutral rate presented on tone diagram points to dry and shallow news coverage. Journalists do not prepare in-depth stories about election campaign and programs of the candidates but rather simply cite comments.

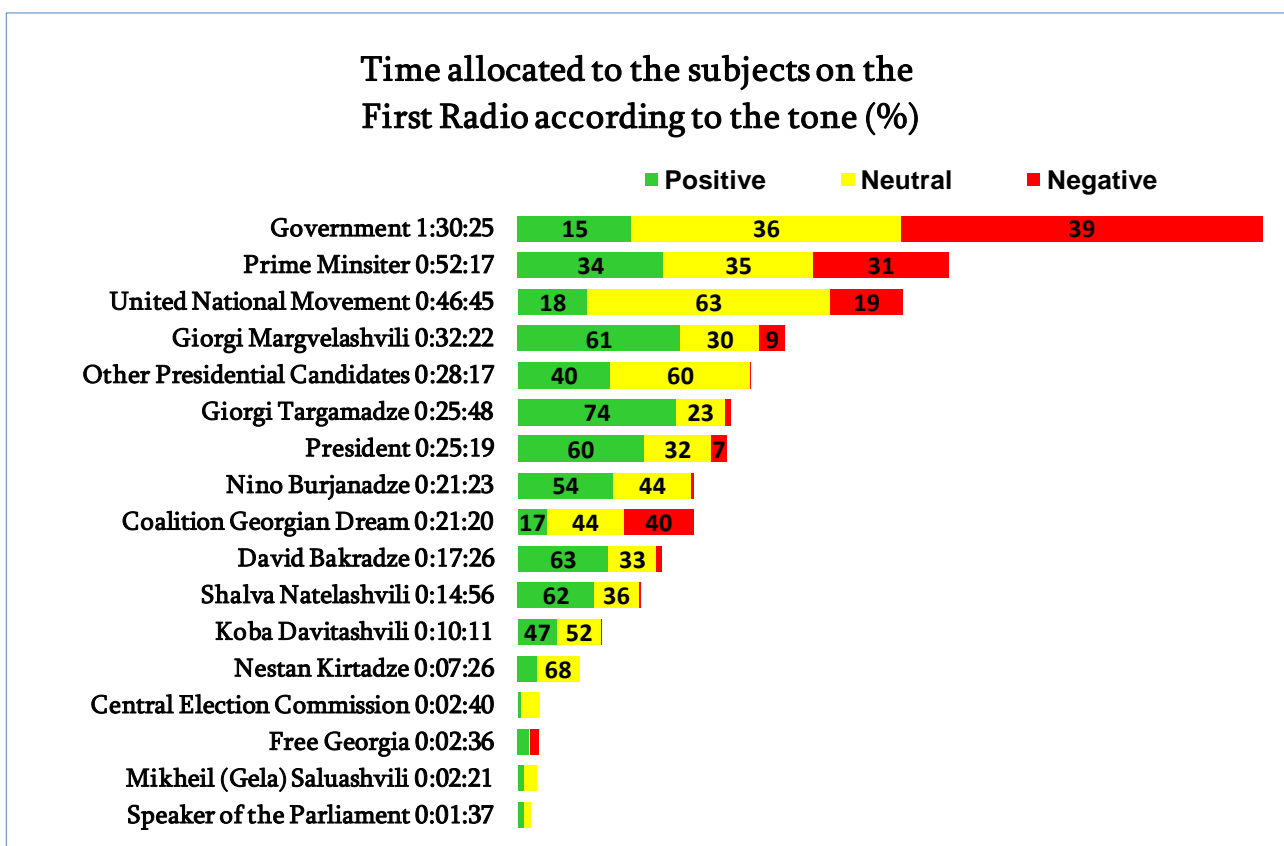


„First Radio“

„First Radio“ allocated 6 hours and 44 minutes to the monitoring subjects. 22% of that time was used to cover the Government, 13% - the Prime Minister and 12% - the “United National Movement”.

Coverage of Presidential candidates was mainly limited to review of their meetings with population, while a journalist did not ask critical questions. Therefore, positive tone was prevailing during their coverage.

In general, the journalists did not make biased evaluations. In average 44% of time was allocated to monitoring subjects for direct speech. However, an undue balance problem was registered: there was a clear tendency that negative stories were mostly prepared in regard to the Government rather than the “United National Movement” or the President.



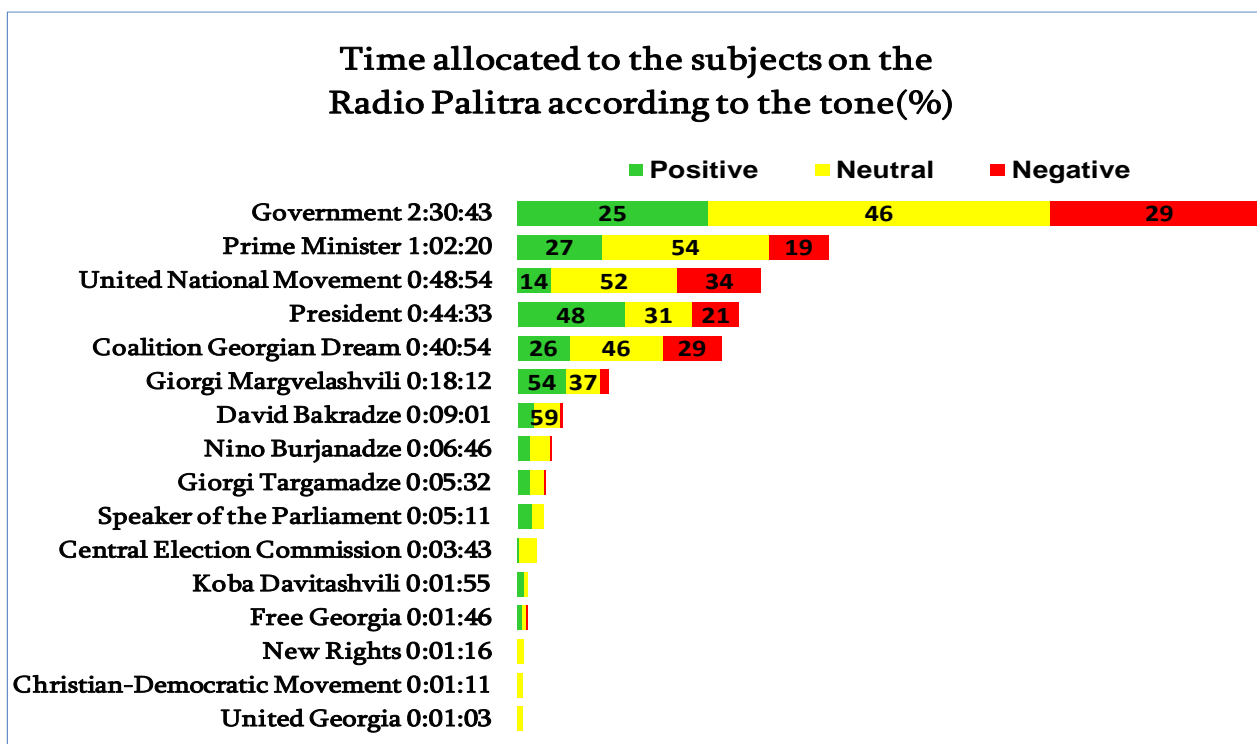
Radio „Palitra“

Radio “Palitra” allocated 6 hours and 45 minutes to the monitoring subjects. 37% of that time was used to cover the Government, 15% - the Prime Minister and 12% - the “United National

Movement”. Little time was allocated to cover Presidential candidates – only 11% of the total time. Half of that time went to the Presidential candidate from the coalition “Georgian Dream” Giorgi Margvelashvili. However, “Palitra” was distinguished by relatively different angle of covering election campaign. Pre-election meetings of Presidential candidates were less covered, while stress was made on their election programs and discussion of PR technologies.

Journalists covered events in a balanced way. They were equally critical towards the Government and the opposition that also reflected on tone diversity. Nevertheless, there was an obvious shortage of criticism towards the Presidential candidates. Therefore, they were provided with time mostly in positive or neutral context.

In general, the journalists refrained from making subjective evaluations: their conclusions were based on information aired in their stories. Besides, the monitoring subjects were enabled to deliver direct speech.

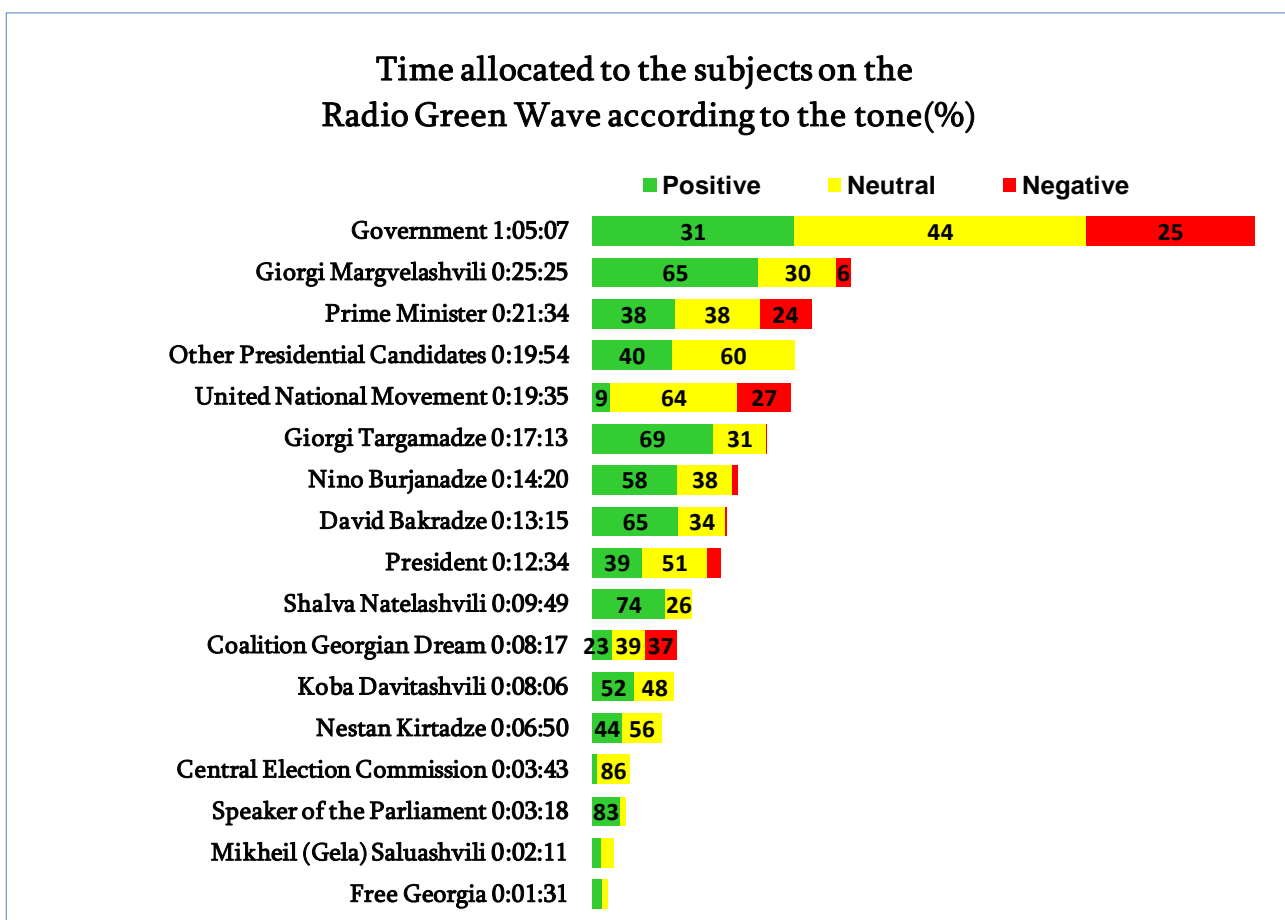


Radio “Green Wave”

Radio “Green Wave” allocated 4 hours and 14 minutes to the monitoring subjects. The largest portion, 26% of that time was used to cover the Government, then 10% - the Presidential

candidate from the coalition “Georgian Dream” Giorgi Margvelashvili and 9% - the Prime Minister.

Radio broadcaster had been providing the monitoring subjects with an opportunity and time to deliver direct speech. Journalists were preparing balanced stories about major topics of a day. However, in case of Presidential candidates the stories were shallow and based on one source. Despite the fact that the radio broadcaster allocated significant time to Presidential candidates and prepared a separate block about them, the coverage still lacked criticism that also reflected on increase of a positive tone. Presidential candidates were covered in a positive context within 56% of the allocated time in average, while a negative tone constituted only 2% of the time. Journalists did not make subjective evaluations; shallow coverage of events was again identified as a major problem.

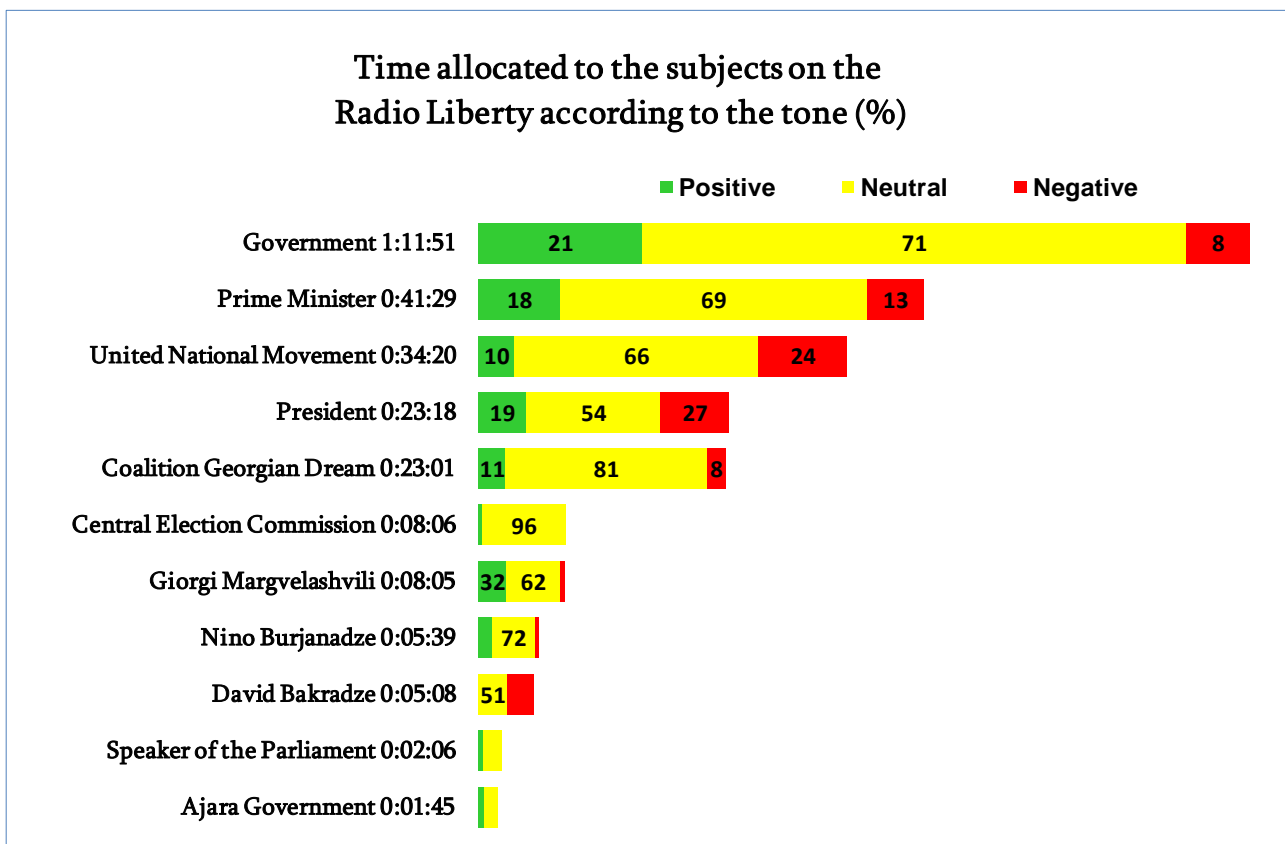


Radio „Liberty“

Radio “Liberty” allocated 3 hours and 47 minutes to the monitoring subjects. 31% of that time was used to cover the Government, 18% - the Prime Minister and 15% - the “United National Movement”.

The largest portion of time (8 minutes) was allocated to the candidate from the coalition “Georgian Dream” Giorgi Margvelashvili. Besides, he also enjoyed 32% rate of positive coverage. Radio “Liberty” was covering the election campaign in a relatively analytical way that was reflected in preparation of in-depth stories and review of election environment. However, the broadcaster accentuated only three candidates, while dropping others.

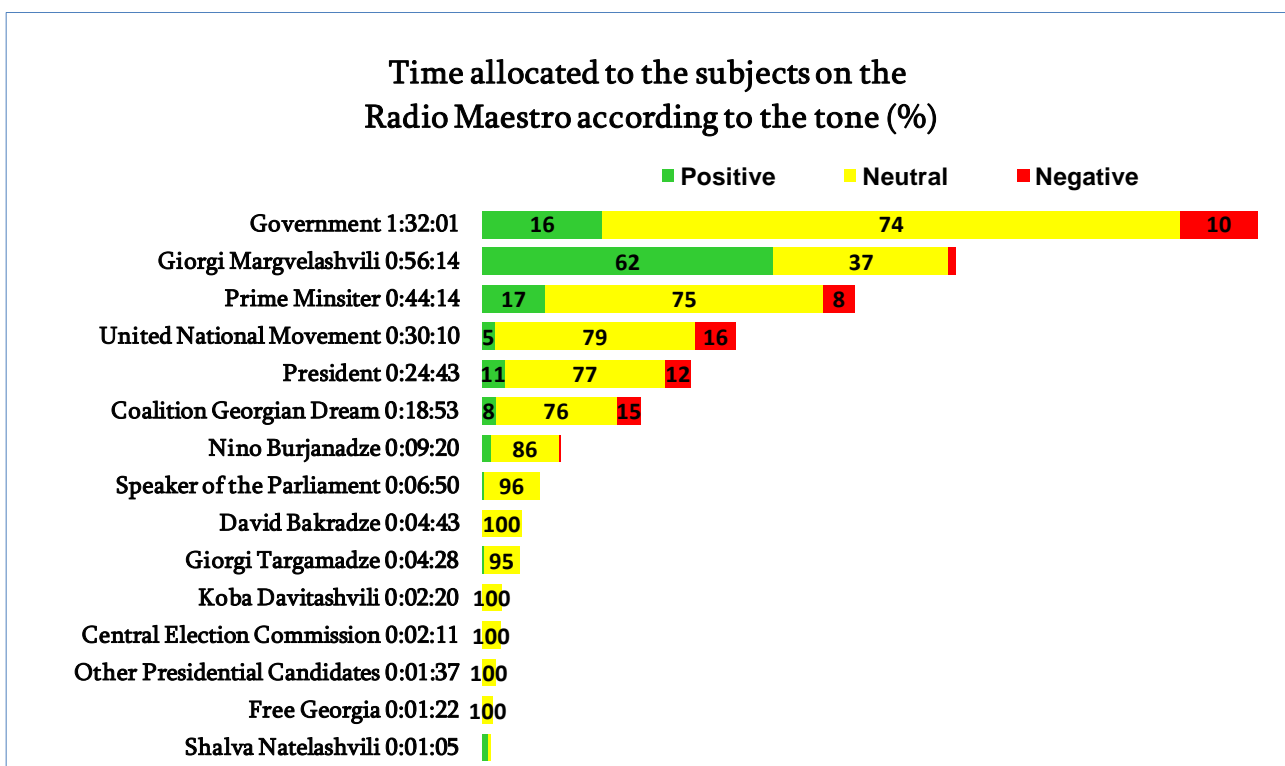
Stories aired in news programs were distinguished by balance and plurality of sources. The monitoring subjects were also enabled to deliver direct speeches. Position of experts and NGO sector was covered frequently. The journalists were covering the facts impartially: their conclusions were always based on the aired information.



Radio „Maestro“

The monitoring subjects were provided with five hours on Radio “Maestro”. The following subjects were characterized by high rate of coverage time: the Government (30%), Presidential candidate of the coalition “Georgian Dream” Giorgi Margvelashvili (19%), the Premier Minister (15%) and the “United National Movement” (10%).

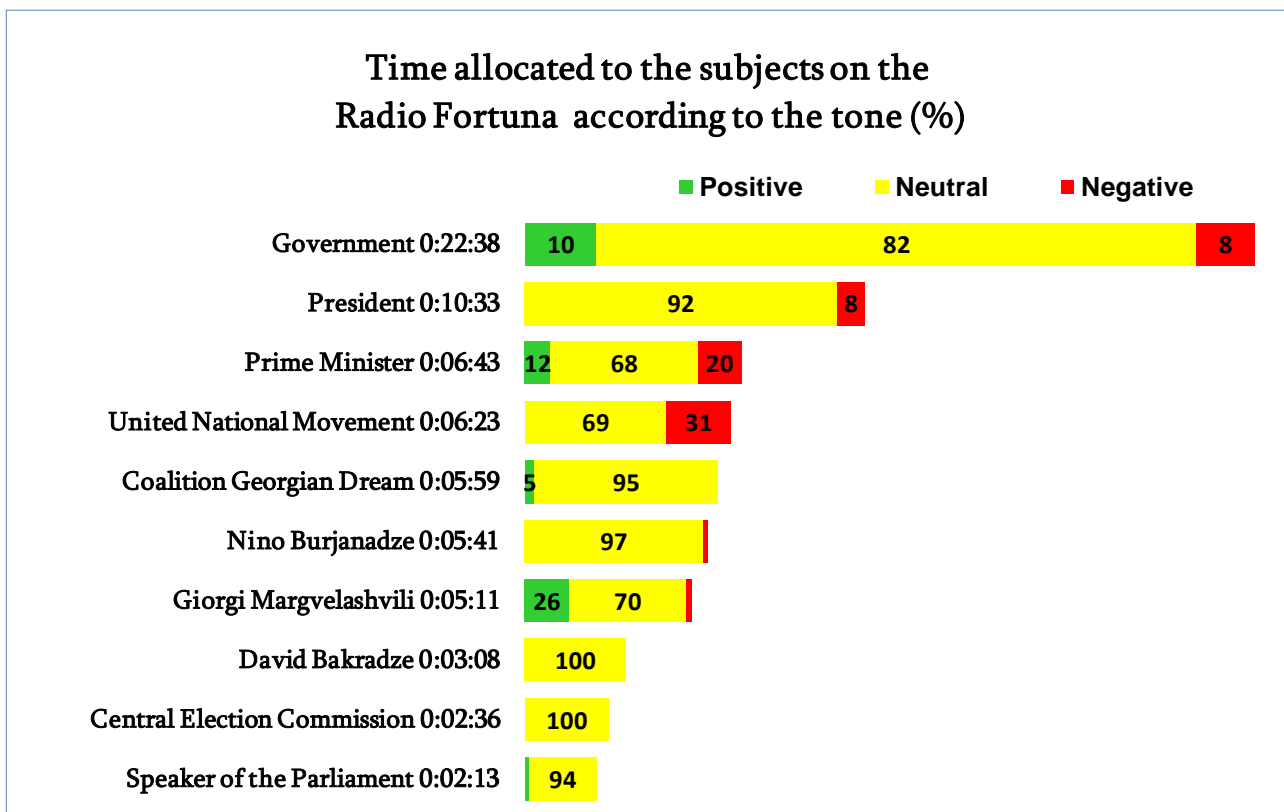
Unlike other candidates, the coalition “Georgian Dream” Presidential candidate was distinguished by allocated time (56 minutes) and high rate of positive tone coverage (62%). Compared to Giorgi Margvelashvili, his competitors were allocated 6 times less time each and mostly in neutral tone. Those rates were mainly conditioned by the detailed coverage of press conference dedicated to victory of the coalition “Georgian Dream” in Parliamentary elections of October 1. The series were disbalanced, however, biased phrases were not observed in the journalists’ texts. Presidential campaign and election programs of the candidates were covered in news programs rather shallowly, without asking critical questions. Journalists limited themselves to just citing respondents and telling news stories in brief.



Radio “Fortuna”

Radio “Fortuna” has allocated in total 13 minutes of air time to the monitoring subjects. The five minute news programs were briefly describing the events taking place in the country. The monitoring subjects were not provided with the time for direct speech – the journalists simply cited their comments. Most of the time was allocated to cover the Government (31%) the President (14%) and the Prime Minister (9%).

Among the Presidential candidates Nino Burjanadze (“Democratic Movement – United Georgia”), Giorgi Margvelashvili (coalition “Georgian Dream”) and David Bakradze (“United National Movement) were covered almost equally. Among them Giorgi Margvelashvili enjoyed the highest rate of positive tone (26%), while others were represented neutrally (almost 96%). Surplus of neutral tone points to shallow coverage and makes it obvious that journalists do not ask critical questions.

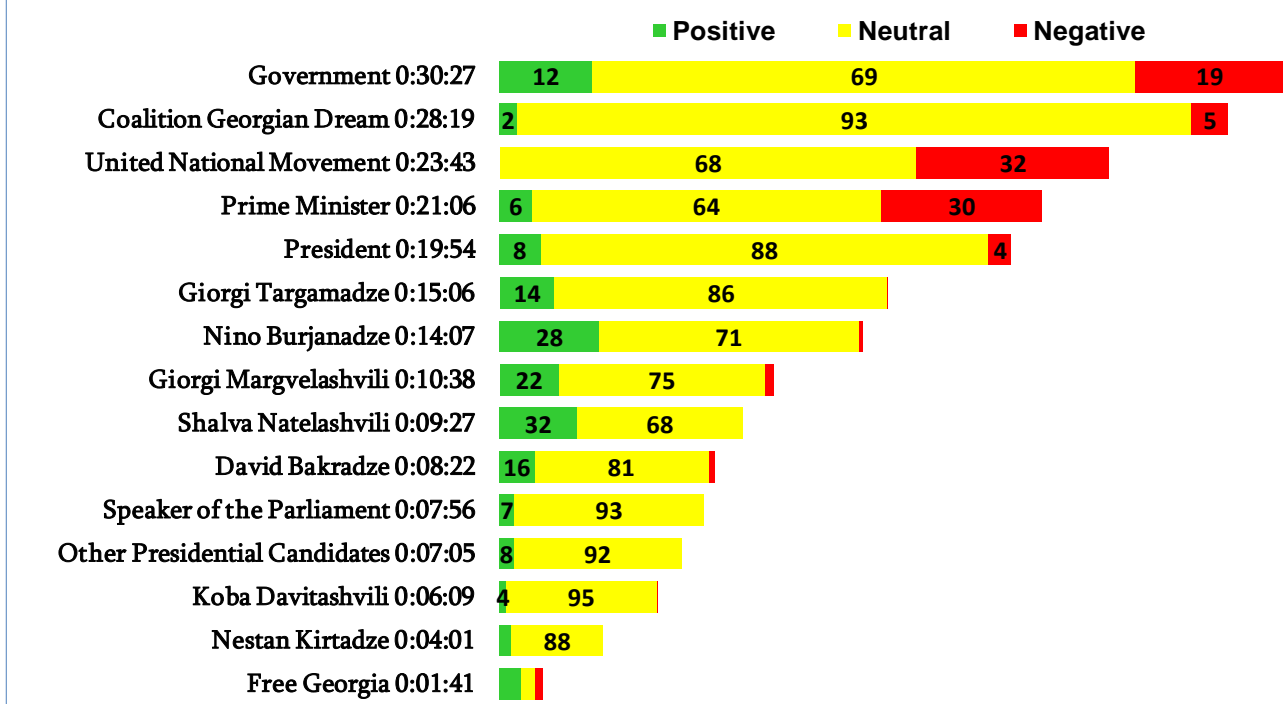


Radio “Imedi”

Out of the time allocated for monitoring subjects (3 hours and 29 minutes) the radio “Imedi” provided the following subjects with most part of the time: the Government (15%), the coalition “Georgian Dream” (14%) and the “United National Movement” (11%). Among Presidential candidates Giorgi Targamadze of “Christian-Democratic Party” has gathered most part of the time (15 minutes).

Time allocated to Presidential candidates has increased by the final stage of Presidential elections. On October 23 the following candidates: Nino Burjanadze (“Democratic Movement – United Georgia”), Giorgi Targamadze (“Christian-Democratic Party”) and Zuran Kharatishvili (“European Democrats of Georgia”) were provided with an opportunity to address the voters live and discuss their election programs. The Presidential candidates from the coalition “Georgian Dream” and the “United National Movement” were invited to the program, however they refused to participate by some cause. The monitoring subjects were provided with every opportunity to express their opinion. The journalists covered events impartially, however there was less criticism expressed towards the politicians’ statements.

Time allocated to the subjects on the Radio Imedi according to the tone (%)



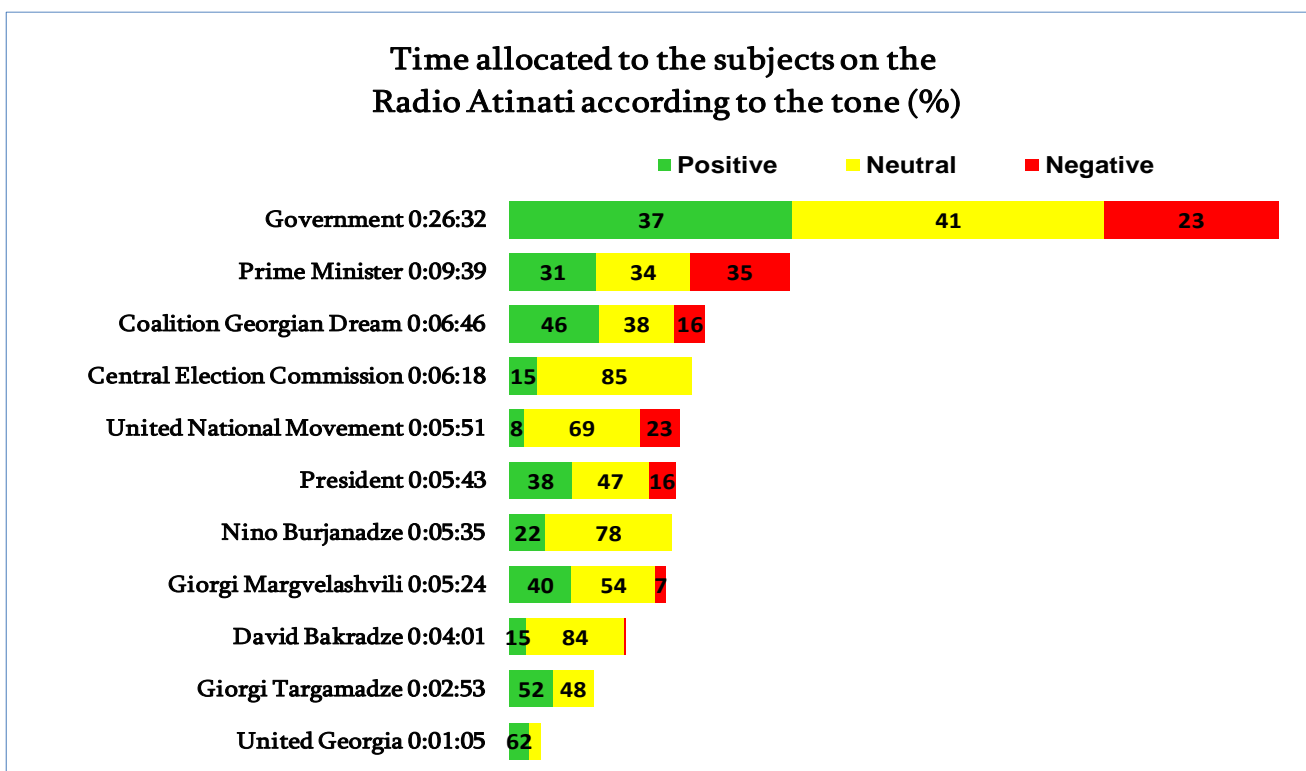
Radio “Atinati” (Zugdidi)

Radio “Atinati” provided the monitoring subjects with 1 hour and 22 minutes time in total, from which 26 minutes were dedicated to cover the Government, 9 minutes – the Prime Minister and 6 minutes – the coalition “Georgian Dream”.

The journalists covered the information shallowly that was especially true in case of Presidential candidates. There were asked no critical questions. News programs disseminated only dry information about candidates’ meetings with population. However, we shall also note duration of news programs that usually did not exceed 5 minutes. Also journalists did not make any subjective evaluations nor were they biased towards any political force.

A little time was also dedicated to direct speech of the monitoring subjects. Street polls were carried out on several occasions: such polls were prepared as separate stories and were limited to covering the people’s comments. It would be better if polls were prepared to cover different opinions about the topic already discussed in the story. For instance, in October 22 program the

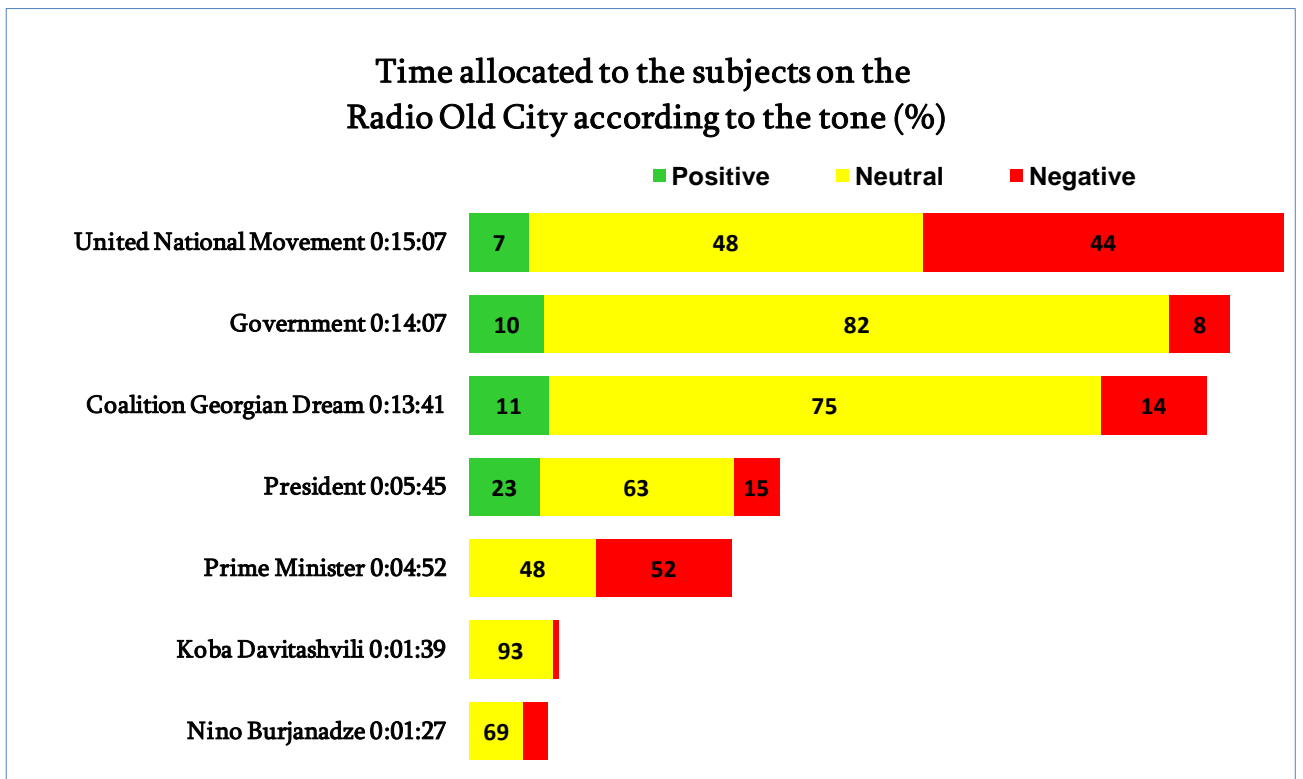
journalist was asking the population: “what do you expect from future President?”. This question would allow us to see the broader picture if the same story had discussed future plans of the Presidential candidates.



Radio „Old City“ (Kutaisi)

Radio “Old City” provided the monitoring subjects with 56 minutes of time. 15 minutes were dedicated to the “United National Movement”, 14 minutes – the Government and 13 minutes – the coalition “Georgian Dream”. It is noteworthy that no accent was made on covering the Presidential campaign. Only Koba Davitashvili (“People’s Party”) and Nino Burjanadze (“Democratic Movement – United Georgia”) were allowed more than one minute of time, while the Presidential candidates from the coalition “Georgian Dream” and the “United National Movement” were not covered whatsoever.

The stories are balanced and based on a sole source. A negative tone towards the monitoring subjects was conditioned by critical comments made by the opponents and not critical questions or subjective judgements made by the journalist.



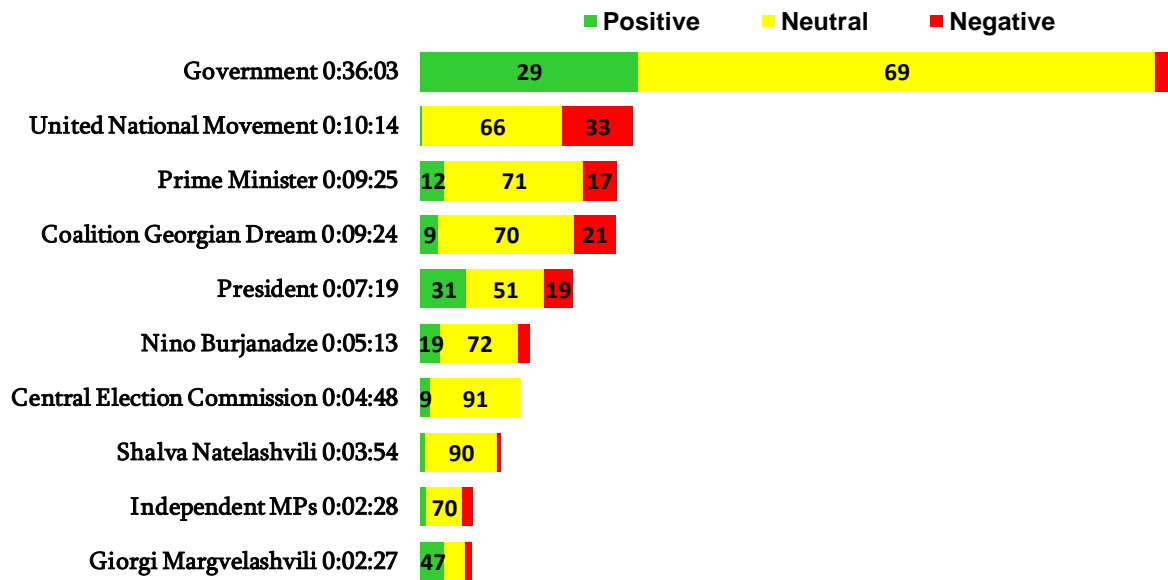
Radio “Hereti” (Lagodekhi)

Out of the whole time (1 hour and 31 minutes) allocated by Radio “Hereti” for the monitoring subjects, 38% went to the Government, 11% - the “United National Movement” and 10% - the Prime Minister. The Presidential candidate of the coalition “Georgian Dream” Giorgi Margvelashvili received most of the coverage (47%), while the “United National Movement” – most of the negative tone. The Government, that received most of the time was not covered in a negative context – that fact points to the lack of critical questions.

The stories about Presidential candidates were shallow and dry. Besides, only three candidates received more than one minute of time and the Presidential candidate from the “United National Movement” David Bakradze was not among them.

The journalists covered the events impartially and provided the monitoring subjects with an opportunity to deliver direct speech. The main problem was a shallow coverage of the events.

Time allocated to the subjects on the Radio Hereti according to the tone (%)

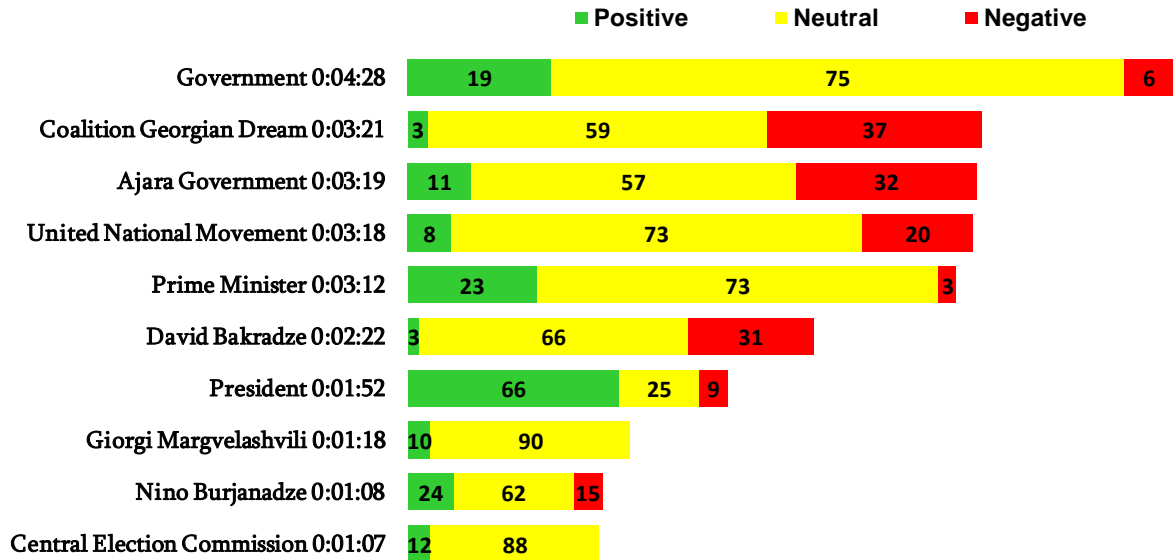


Radio “Ajara”

The radio “Ajara” allocated the least time (25 minutes) to cover the monitoring subjects. The coverage of candidates did not increase even in the final part of the campaign. Besides, the subjects were covered only indirectly.

Diversity of tones registered in quantitative data is not a result of in-depth and analytical stories. It is mainly conditioned by criticism of opponents by politicians. The journalists was simply citing this information, without providing a subjective judgment.

Time allocated to the subjects on the Radio Ajara according to the tone (%)



Conclusion

During this reporting period the Government, the coalition “Georgian Dream” and the Prime Minister and the “United National Movement” were covered most actively. Close proximity of a polling day facilitated increase of coverage of Presidential candidates by radio broadcasters, however the news programs were still shallow and limited to dry citation of candidates’ statements.

Lack of critical questions remains a problem: most of the radio broadcasters finished covering an election campaign without preparing in-depth stories related to presidential programs and asking candidates why and how they were going to fulfill pre-election promises.

Journalists were not making subjective evaluations, nor did they use sound/music manipulation technique. However, some programs aired by radio broadcasters were not balanced and were based on a sole source that finally created positive or negative impression in regard to certain political forces.