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საქართველოსთვის  
The European Union for Georgia



# Study and Research on Election Media Coverage for the 2020 Parliamentary Elections in Georgia

## Monitoring of Print Media Final Report

15 June - 21 November 2020



INTERNEWS  
GEORGIA

This report was prepared with the assistance of the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Its contents are the sole responsibility of its authors, and can in no way be taken to reflect the views or positions of EU and UNDP.

## About the project

As part of the EU/UNDP ‘Study and Research on Election Media Coverage for the 2020 Parliamentary Elections in Georgia’ project, Internews Georgia monitored various print media from 15 June to 21 November.

The following 8 publications were monitored: *Rezonansi*, *Akhali Taoba*, *Kviris Palitra*, *Alia*, *Asaval-Dasavali*, *Kronika+*, *Sakartvelo da Msoplio* and *Guria news*.

## Monitoring Methodology

The purpose of monitoring these publications was to identify whether or not their coverage of political parties during the pre-electoral period was carried out under equal conditions and respected journalistic standards.

The monitoring involved both quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative monitoring defined countable and measurable indicators: the space dedicated to various subjects, the tone of coverage (positive, neutral, negative) and the gender of subjects (male or female).

Qualitative monitoring focused upon data that was difficult to measure: the timely coverage of events, the distortion of information, biased coverage, tendentiousness, a basis in fact, the diversity of sources of information, photographic manipulation, respect for ethical and professional standards, and any other factor relevant to the quality of the information published.

The monitoring targeted the political parties and politicians who took part in Georgia’s 2020 parliamentary elections, including the Government (central, local, Ajarian), the Prime Minister and the President, and was carried out not only on articles concerning the election but also on all kinds of materials which mentioned the subjects of monitoring.

This report covers the results of the monitoring of print media between 15 June and 21 November.

## The monitoring of print media revealed the following:

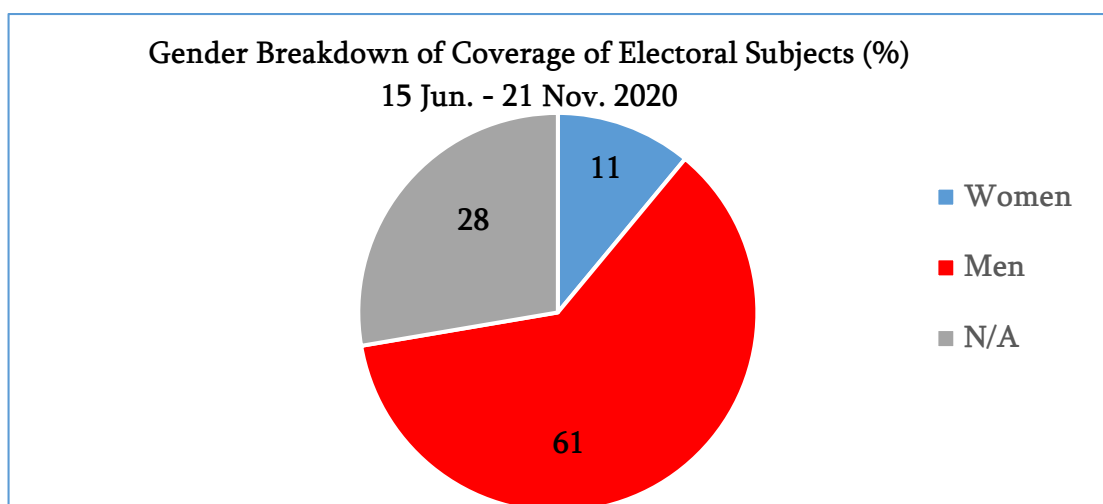
- Most newspapers offered readers biased (unbalanced) articles on individual issues based upon a single source of information, thereby preventing them from familiarizing themselves with diverse viewpoints.

- The publishing of unverified information remains a problem in print media: some journalists do not hesitate to make strong accusations against the Government or a politician without naming a source of information or providing any evidence.
- In most cases, statements containing accusations were published without being checked and without presenting any evidence: journalists often did not try to check their facts and did not ask any additional questions in order to verify the accuracy of information. In most cases, the object of their criticism was not even given the opportunity to respond.
- The journalists of certain publications continue to use insulting and unethical terminology towards both the ruling party and the opposition. Such terminology is also very often found in statements made by their respondents, without the journalists attempting to distance themselves from such expressions.
- Most newspapers revealed a negative attitude towards almost every political party. That said, the opinions they published were usually not based upon solid facts, statistical data or constructive criticism, and instead reflected their journalists' subjective and ungrounded assumptions.
- As the elections approached, the coverage of opposition political parties increased, but the publications monitored only rarely covered their electoral programmes. Instead, readers were presented with the assumptions or statements of electoral subjects regarding current events and with information about their individual activities such as the presentation of party lists or the naming of prime-ministerial candidates. Electoral processes were also discussed during interviews with political scientists and analysts, the electoral environment and party strategies were assessed, and forecasts were made.
- The preparation of materials based upon dubious sources remains one of the main challenges facing print media: in most cases, articles would begin with sentences such as 'based upon our source', 'according to behind-the-scenes information', 'an official has told us that', 'according to available information', 'they say that', etc.
- Journalistic standards and ethics were grossly violated in some publications, with some continuing to use insulting and unethical terminology. That said, insulting or discriminating photographs were hardly ever used compared to previous years.
- Both the respondents and the journalists of certain publications contributed to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes.

## Gender-sensitive coverage

The project also involved the monitoring of gender-sensitive coverage, with attention being paid to the kinds of coverage or terminology that directly or indirectly (surreptitiously) strengthen established gender stereotypes in society.

Female politicians and candidates enjoyed 6 times less coverage than their male counterparts in print media.



The monitoring also revealed that both the respondents and the journalists of certain publications contributed to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes.

Especially frequent were cases in which the words ‘woman’ or ‘female behaviour’ were used as an insult; statements which, by focusing upon the appearance of a female politician, were minimizing the importance of her work and abasing her image; and hidden forms of discrimination that reinforce stereotypes such as ‘a woman needs protection’ and ‘behind every female politician always stands a strong man’ (husband, father).

Early on during the monitoring period, another reason for gender-sensitive statements was the adoption of a gender quota in the Electoral Code of Georgia. Male politicians often criticized this decision, and sometimes did not even hesitate to make insulting statements.

## ANNEX. Charts.

