



ევროკავშირი  
საქართველოსთვის  
The European Union for Georgia



# Study and Research on Media Coverage of 2021 Municipal Elections of Georgia

## Online Media Monitoring Final Report

July 5 – November 14, 2021



THE GEORGIAN CHARTER  
OF JOURNALISTIC ETHICS

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## Introduction

From July 5, 2021 through November 14, 2021 the Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics monitored the coverage of 2021 Local Elections in online media.

The goal of the monitoring was to study the frequency and the tone the online media used to cover various election subjects during the 2021 Local Elections period. To observe, based on the tone of the coverage, whether online media outlets were biased towards any of the electoral subjects? How much online media adhered to the key principles of the Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics in the course of the coverage of local elections?

The monitoring was carried out with the financial support of the EU, under the UNDP Project – the Study and Research on the Media Coverage of 2021 Local Elections of Georgia.

## The Media outlets selected for monitoring:

17 online media outlets were selected for media monitoring. These are:

- ambebi.ge;
- batumelebi.ge (Adjara);
- guriismoambe.com (Guria);
- interpressnews.ge;
- knews.ge (Kakheti);
- kutaisipost.ge (Imereti);
- livepress.ge (Samegrelo);
- mpn.ge;
- netgazeti.ge;
- news.on.ge;
- publika.ge;
- qartli.ge (Shida Kartli);

- radiotavisupleba.ge;
- reginfo.ge (Regions of Georgia);
- sknews.ge (Samtkshe-Javakheti);
- sputnik-georgia.com;
- tabula.ge.

Eight media outlets were selected based on a regional principle – these outlets mostly covered the news of various regions of Georgia. Other media outlets were selected based on the ratings and the survey of media specialists.

## Monitoring subjects

- Electoral subjects (parties, politicians and independent candidates who participated in 2021 Local Elections);
- The Government (central, local, Adjara A/R);
- The President;
- Bidzina Ivanishvili;
- Mikheil Saakashvili.

## Methodology

Monitoring was made up of the quantitative and qualitative research components.

The monitoring involved articles prepared on the topic of elections, as well as all materials in which monitoring subjects were referenced.

Monitoring did not cover the paid content that was duly separated from editorial materials.

### Quantitative analysis

Quantitative monitoring was used to determine quantifiable and measurable indicators: area allocated to subjects, the tone of coverage, subject's gender (male or female).

As part of the assessment of the tone of the coverage of monitoring subjects, along with the quantity of the coverage of subjects in specific content, the monitors also indicated whether the tone of the coverage was positive, negative or neutral.

Positive or negative tone was assigned to coverage if: 1) a journalist or a respondent assessed a subject positively or negatively; 2) if the topic itself formed positive or negative attitude towards the covered subjects.

### Qualitative analysis

Qualitative monitoring focused on the indicators that can be hard to quantify but are important for assessing the quality of information: the accuracy of facts, balance, diversity of the sources of information, promoting various kinds of discrimination, photo and other manipulation, adherence to other key principles of the Charter of Journalistic ethics and professional standards, etc.

## Key findings of monitoring

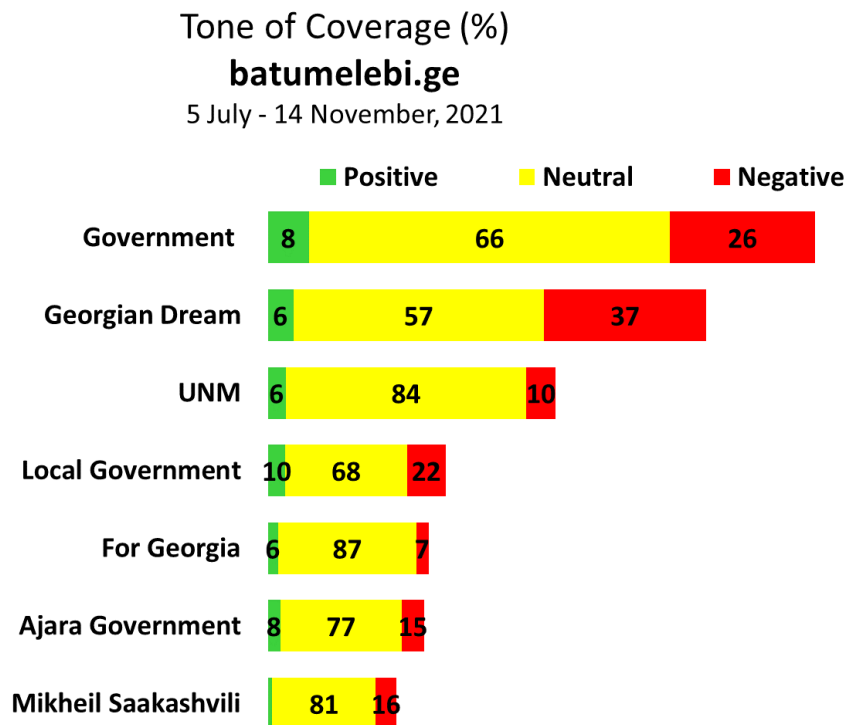
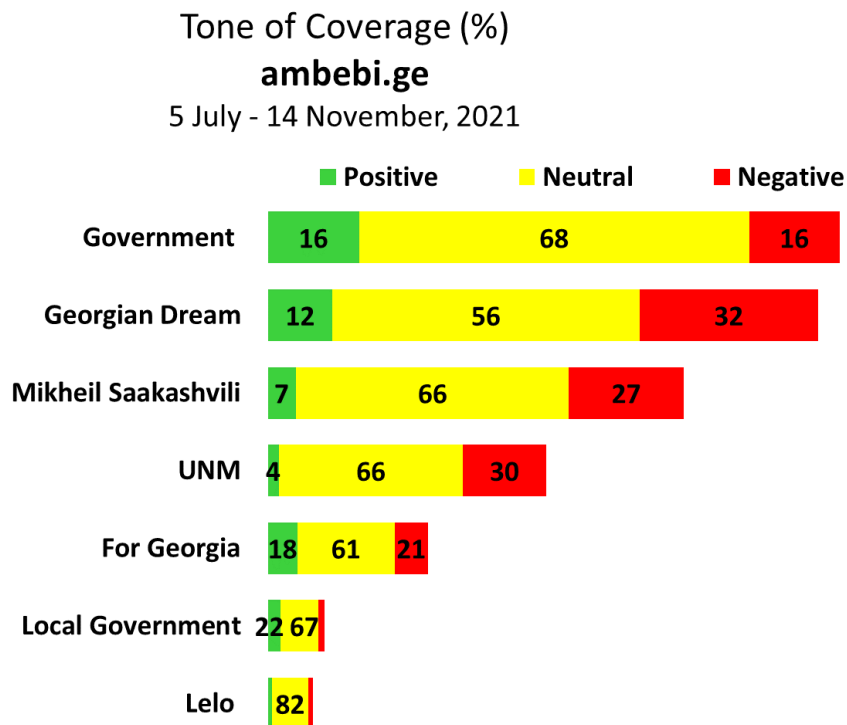
### ONLINE

- Most online media outlets have maintained a high degree of editorial independence, and they are therefore not particularly polarized when it comes to political questions;
- The electoral subjects most frequently and comprehensively covered by online publications were the government (local and central) and the ruling party; and among the opposition, the United National Movement (UNM) and Mikheil Saakashvili. The UNM's share of online media coverage rose from October 1 following Saakashvili's return to Georgia;
- Online media mostly adopted a neutral tone when covering electoral subjects. Only a few websites were identified as having adopted an explicitly positive attitude towards the government or the opposition;
- Most regional online media failed to inform their readers of local (regional) political developments. Most of the (very little) information they published on a daily basis was dedicated to the ruling

party and the central or local authorities, rendering their coverage of electoral matters even less comprehensive;

- Some online publications successfully maintained standards of journalistic ethics;
- Some websites failed to duly separate paid content from editorial content and published paid content without indicating it as such;
- The major challenge that online media face is the superficiality of their coverage; only very few of the websites selected for monitoring managed to provide in-depth and multi-faceted coverage of current political processes. Most online media outlets followed the agenda of politicians, reported the statements of government representatives and politicians, and covered no more than their everyday activities; electoral candidates were mostly covered against the background of confrontations between their political parties, and reports did not focus as much on analysing their electoral programmes or their future visions for developing their municipality.
- Mayoral candidates in the capital or other municipalities were mostly covered in the context of partisan confrontations—but it is worth noting that this was to some extent a reflection of the pre-electoral political environment, since the candidates, and especially those of the opposition, hardly focused much on municipal development plans or visions during the pre-electoral period, and instead viewed the local elections primarily as an opportunity to effect a change of government;
- Compared to the results of the 2020 media monitoring, the sensitivity to gender of online media has considerably improved.

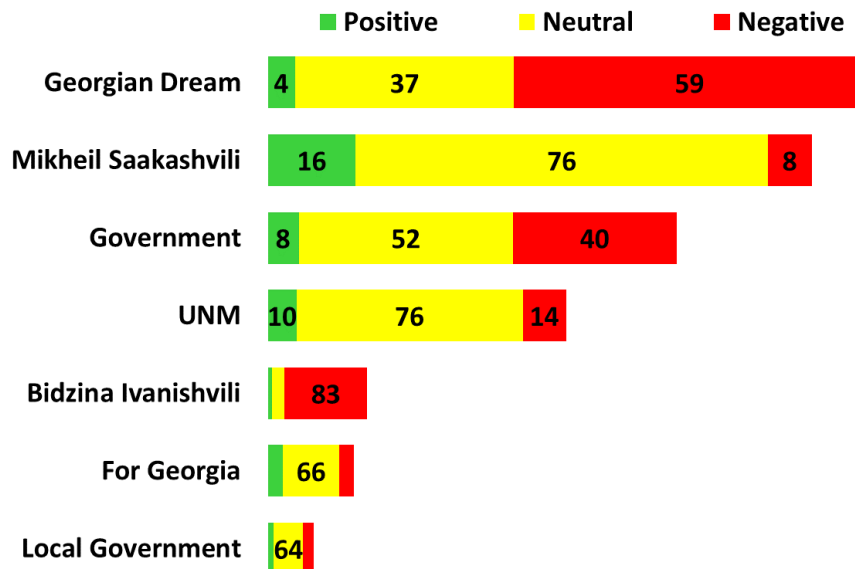
## ANNEX. Diagrams.



### Tone of Coverage (%)

**guriismoambe.com**

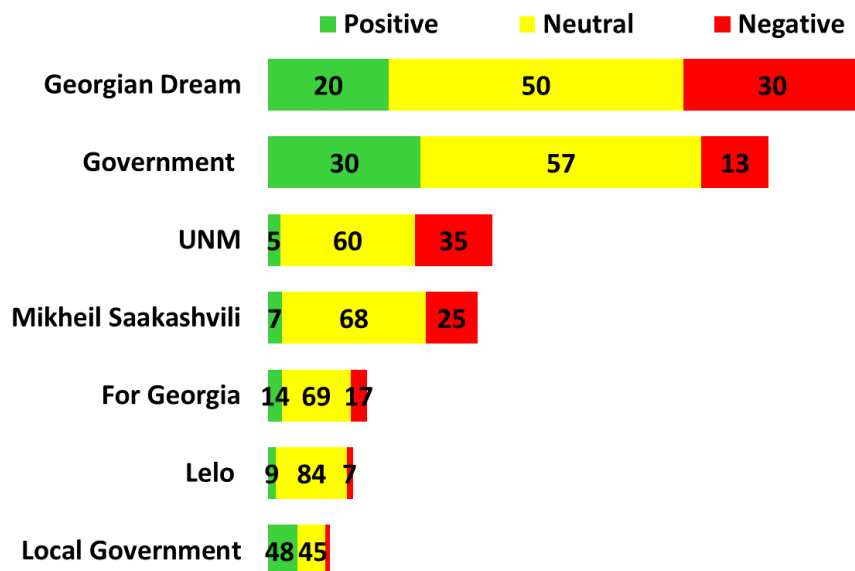
5 July - 14 November, 2021



### Tone of Coverage (%)

**interpressnews.ge**

5 July - 14 November, 2021

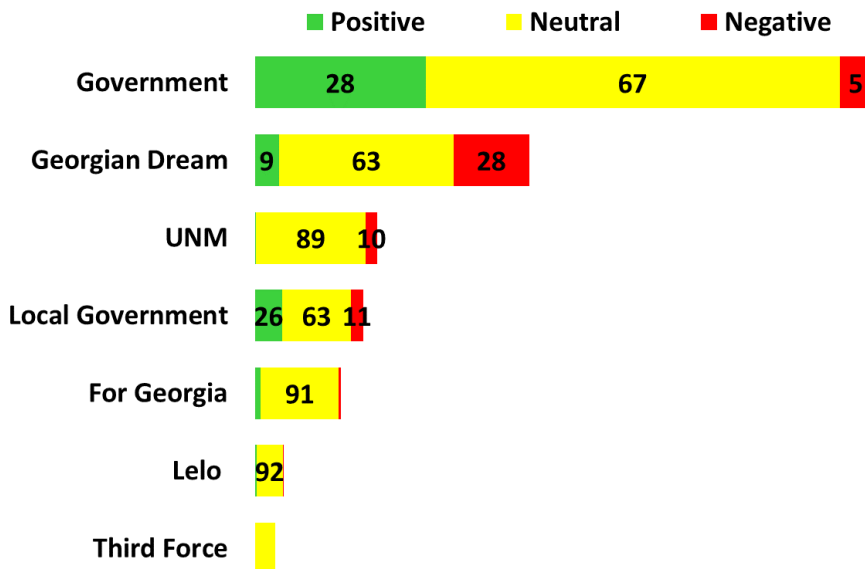




### Tone of Coverage (%)

**knews.ge**

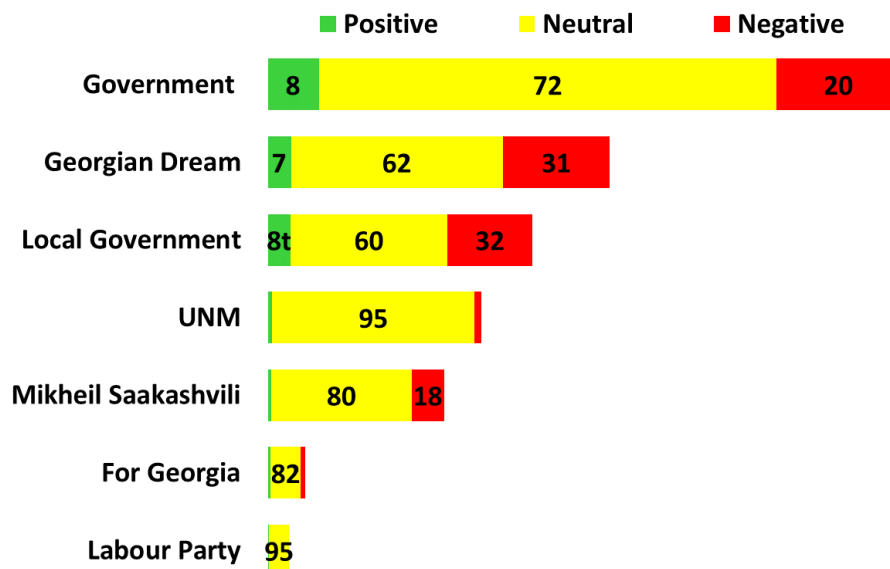
5 July - 14 November, 2021



### Tone of Coverage (%)

**kutaisipost.ge**

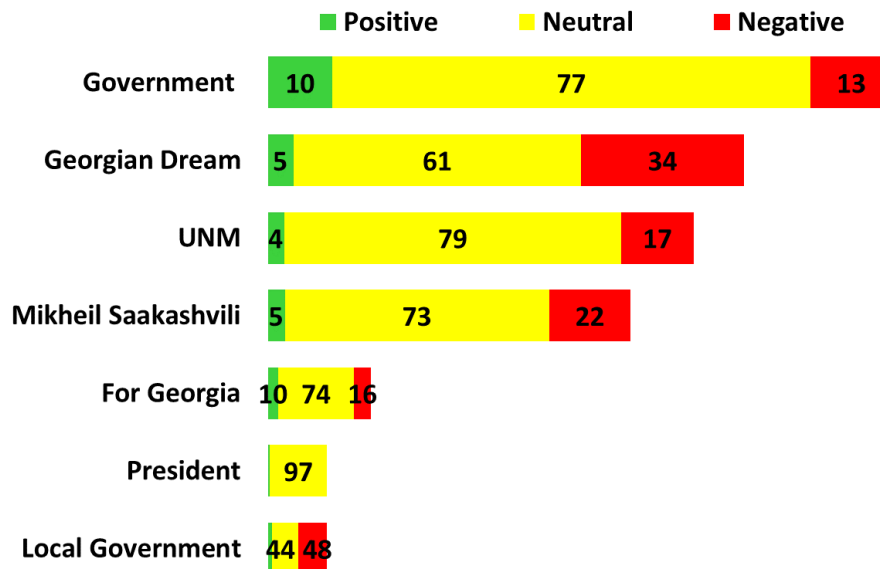
5 July - 14 November, 2021



### Tone of Coverage (%)

**livepress.ge**

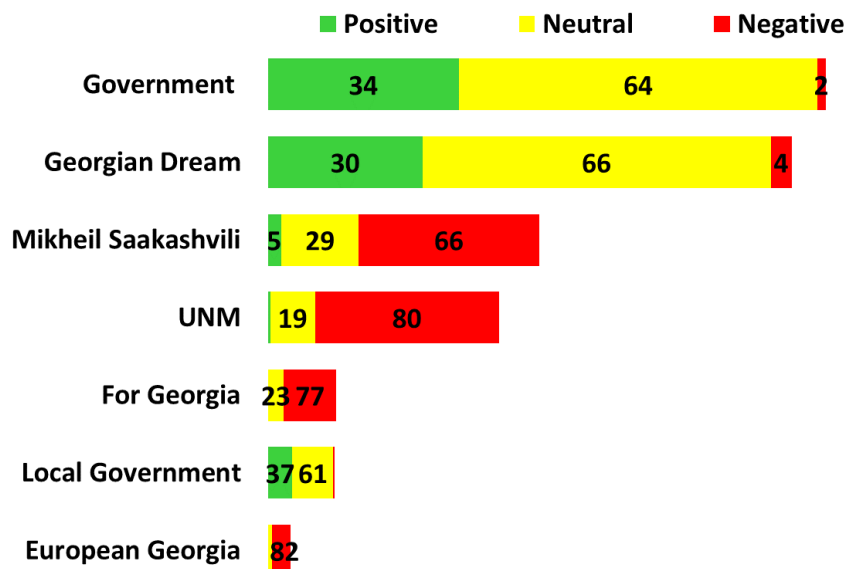
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### Tone of Coverage (%)

**mpn.ge**

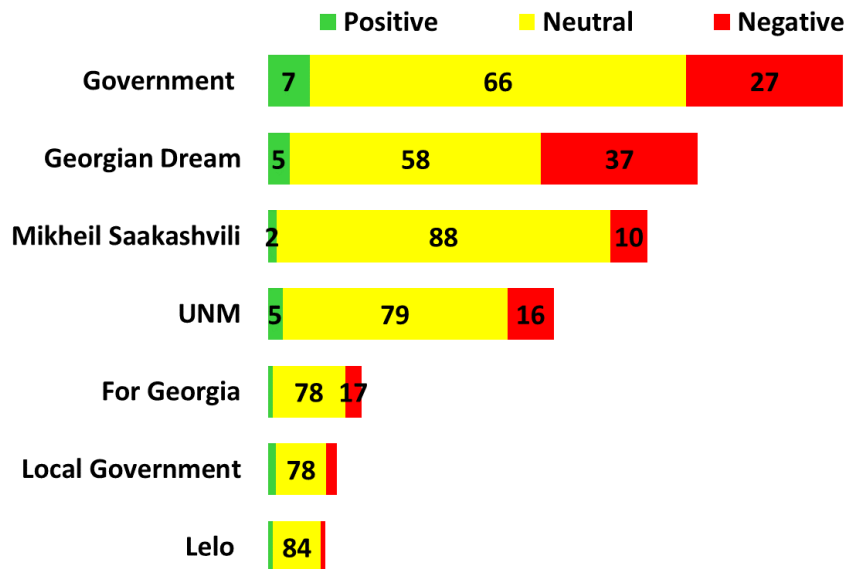
5 July - 14 November, 2021



### Tone of Coverage (%)

**netgazeti.ge**

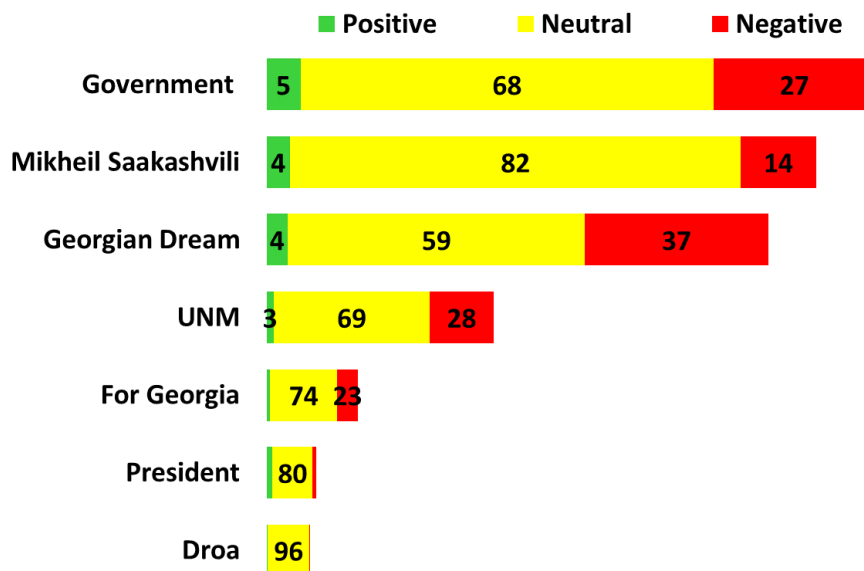
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### Tone of Coverage (%)

**news.on.ge**

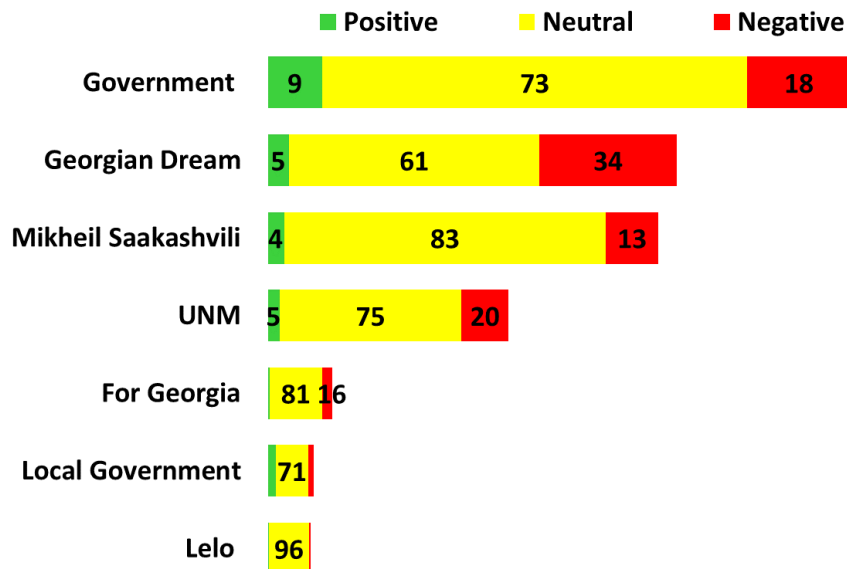
5 July - 14 November, 2021



### Tone of Coverage (%)

**publika.ge**

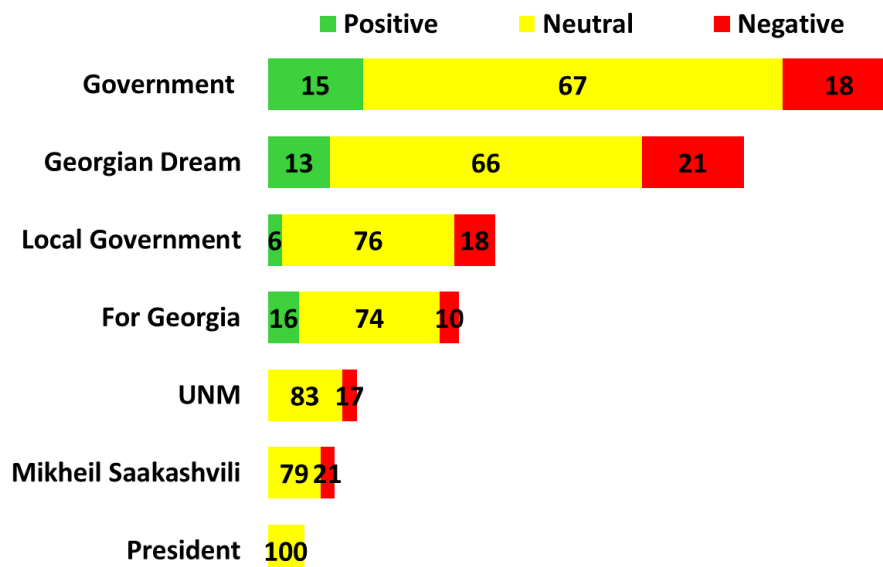
5 July - 14 November, 2021



### Tone of Coverage (%)

**qartli.ge**

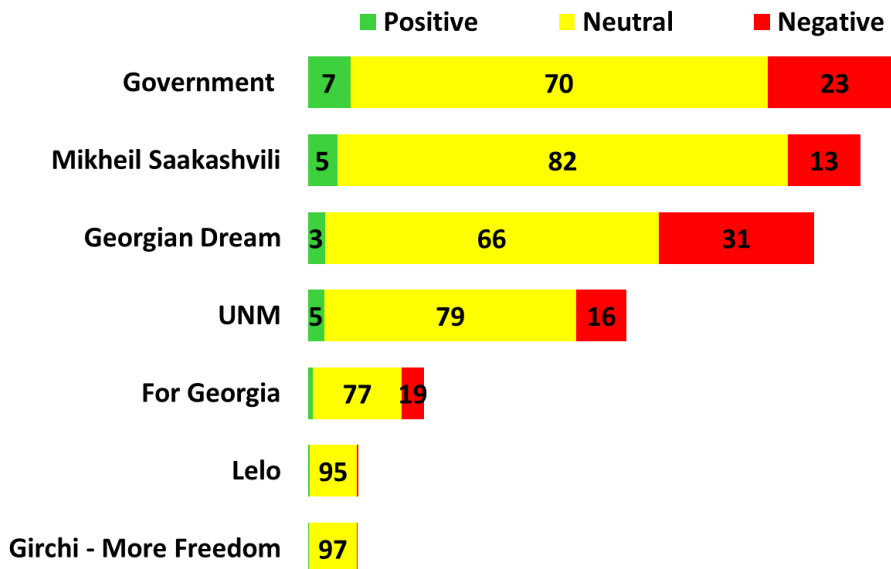
5 July - 14 November, 2021



### Tone of Coverage (%)

**radiotavisupleba.ge**

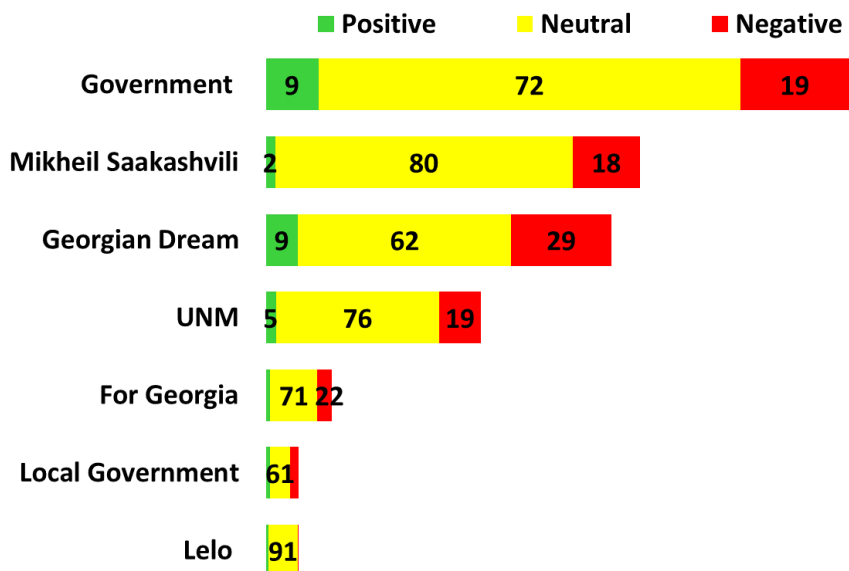
5 July - 14 November, 2021



### Tone of Coverage (%)

**reginfo.ge**

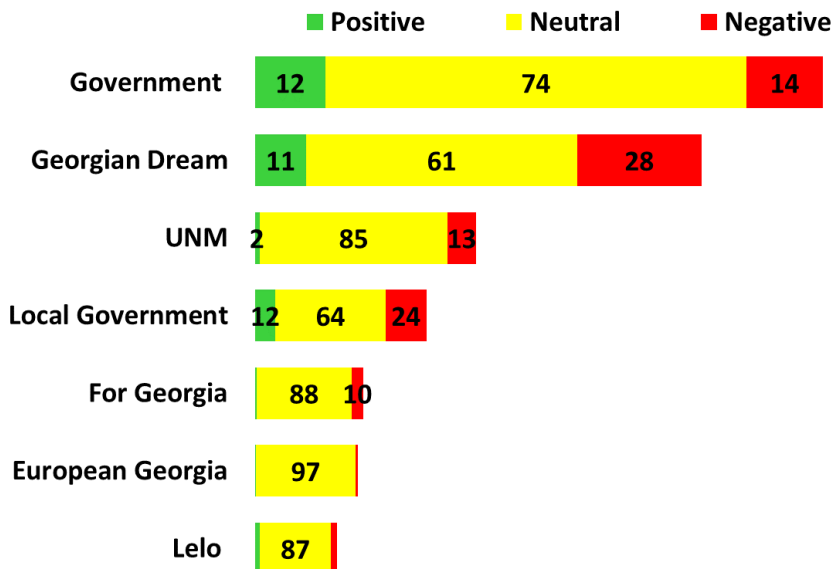
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### Tone of Coverage (%)

**sknews.ge**

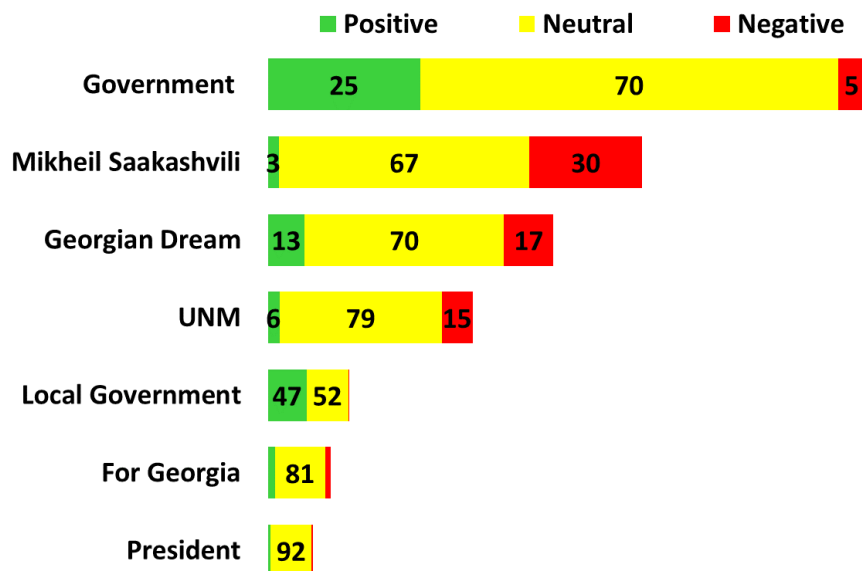
5 July - 14 November, 2021



### Tone of Coverage (%)

**sputnik-georgia.com**

5 July - 14 November, 2021



### Tone of Coverage (%)

**tabula.ge**

5 July - 14 November, 2021

