



ევროკავშირი  
საქართველოსთვის  
The European Union for Georgia



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

## Radio Monitoring Final Report

July 5 – November 14, 2021



INTERNEWS  
GEORGIA

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Contents

About the project ..... 3

Monitoring methodology ..... 3

Key findings..... 4

Charts ..... 6

## About the Project

Internews Georgia, as part of the Project funded by the EU and the UNDP – The Study and Research on Media Coverage of 2021 Municipal Elections – monitored evening news releases of radio broadcasters. The monitoring commenced on July 5, 2021 and continued through November 14 – it comprised the pre-electoral period, first (October 2) and Second (October 30) rounds of the Elections, as well as post-electoral period.

12 radio broadcasters' news programs had been selected for monitoring, but since the radio Way (Akhmeta District, Pankisi Gorge, Village Duisi) did not produce news releases during the research period, monitoring covered evening news releases of 11 radio channels. These radios are: Georgian Radio (Public Broadcaster), Imedi, Maestro, Palitra, Pirveli Radio (Radio One), Fortuna, Hereti, Marneuli, Dzveli Qalaqi (Old Town) (Kutaisi), Samkhretis Karibche (Southern Gate) (Akhaltsikhe), Atinati (Zugdidi).

## Monitoring methodology

The aim of monitoring of evening news releases of radio channels was to determine whether the activities of political subjects were covered fairly, on equal conditions and in compliance with the journalistic standards during the pre-election period.

The monitoring is comprised of quantitative and qualitative research components. Quantitative monitoring is focused on quantifiable and measurable indicators: time allocated to subjects, tone of the coverage (positive, neutral, negative), direct/indirect coverage (whether the subjects speak or other speak about them), gender of subjects (male or female).

The qualitative monitoring focuses on indicators that are hard to quantify: timely coverage of facts, distorting information, unbalanced coverage, bias, facts based coverage, diversity of the sources of information, voice/music manipulation, observing ethical or professional standards, as well as any facts that are important for the assessing the quality of information.

The subjects of monitoring were the parties and politicians who took part in 2021 Municipal elections, as well as: the Government (central, local, Adjara), the President, Bidzina Ivanishvili and Mikheil Saakashvili.

The monitoring covered not only election related reports, but also all pieces where the subjects of monitoring were referenced.

The report comprises the results of monitoring of evening news releases for the period from July 5 through November 14.

## Key Findings:

- The results of the 2021 monitoring show that most radio stations did not display an obviously biased attitude towards any political party; but compared to previous years, the number of unbalanced news reports focusing primarily upon either the government's position or those of the opposition has increased;
- Radio stations have maintained a positive trend of observing standards of professional ethics. Journalists do not use hate speech; programmes do not contain sexist or homophobic statements or statements criticising or threatening any gender; and no instances of manipulation of speech or music were observed. All of this is important for the coverage of political processes and pre-electoral campaigns, but the challenges listed below remain so severe that the news programmes of radio stations still fail to meet high standards of quality. Against a backdrop of political tension and polarization, the problems identified during the 2020 monitoring were further exacerbated in 2021. The quality of programmes has mostly deteriorated, and the ability of listeners to make informed choices remains limited by the superficiality of news programmes;
- Compared to previous years, the lack of attempts by radio stations to compete with each other was even more striking: their news programmes generally focused upon the same topics and only rarely covered news that the other stations did not;
- Compared to prior years, the news programmes of most radio stations were increasingly based entirely upon the confrontation between the government and the opposition. Journalists only rarely attempted to identify and report upon other topics beyond this confrontation and to make their news programmes more diverse;
- A lack of exclusive, in-depth and analytical reporting remains an problem among radio broadcasters. Journalists seem reluctant to cover or analyse matters from a different angle or to highlight new problems;
- The results of monitoring over the past few years have demonstrated that journalists fail to provide critical and comprehensive reporting on the pre-electoral programmes and visions of candidates (even when applicable). This problem was further exacerbated in 2021, given the complete absence of coverage of the candidates' visions or of substantive or comparative discussions of their political programmes. Reports instead limited themselves to giving succinct and superficial accounts of meetings between candidates and members of the public;
- When monitoring began, news programmes were mostly focused upon the Covid-19 pandemic and confrontations between political parties, but ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili's imprisonment subsequently overshadowed all other topics. Indeed, this was often the only topic covered by news

programmes, with the radio stations focusing less and less upon social problems, education, the economy, the environment or any issues beyond the boundaries of Tbilisi;

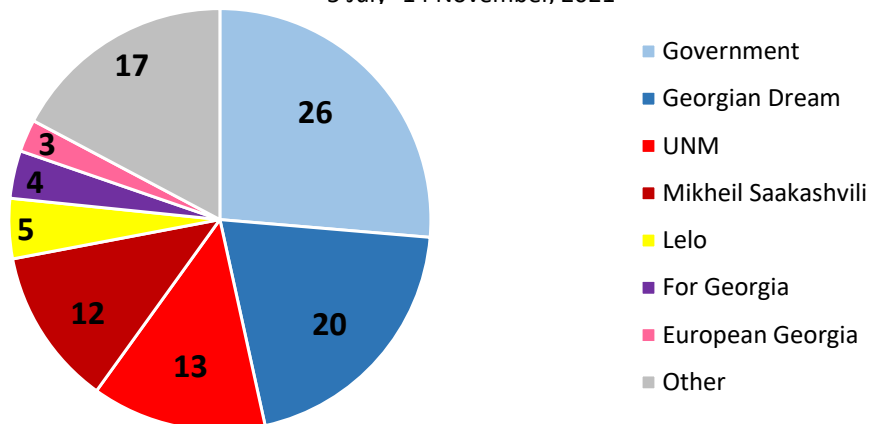
- News programmes on the radio did not use anonymous or questionable sources, although the statements of various politicians were often repeated without any verification. Also, almost no time was allocated to expert commentary, research or other data. Politicians often made contradictory statements and journalists failed to help their listeners to establish the truth;
- Radio stations maintained the trend identified in 2020 of reporters quoting the public statements of politicians; indeed, this represented a significant proportion of news programmes. But since radio obviously relies exclusively upon sound, it would be best to broadcast recordings of the politicians themselves when making such statements in order to give listeners the opportunity to better understand their significance. The generally indirect coverage of electoral subjects by radio stations also to some extent indicates the low degree of effort among journalists to report on the official statements of ruling party or opposition politicians or on information disseminated by news agencies;
- Regional radio broadcasters still failed to provide high-quality coverage of developments in their region, their news programmes often focusing upon developments in Tbilisi instead. When reporting on local news, journalists were less inclined to ask critical questions and reported on the activities or statements of politicians without any analysis or verification. Their coverage of local authorities was especially problematic in this respect: the lack of critical questions and superficial coverage of most regional radio stations resulted in the activities and projects of local authorities being mostly presented in a neutral or positive manner. A critical attitude towards local authorities is especially important during pre-electoral periods, and the passivity of regional radio stations is thus a particular problem—especially since national stations fail to discuss developments in the regions. Regional radio stations also have the potential to fill the gap that exists between coverage of events outside Tbilisi: by being the first to report on exclusive stories, they could raise the profile of problems in their own region, city or district;

# Charts

## Coverage of Subjects (%)

"Saqartvelos Radio"

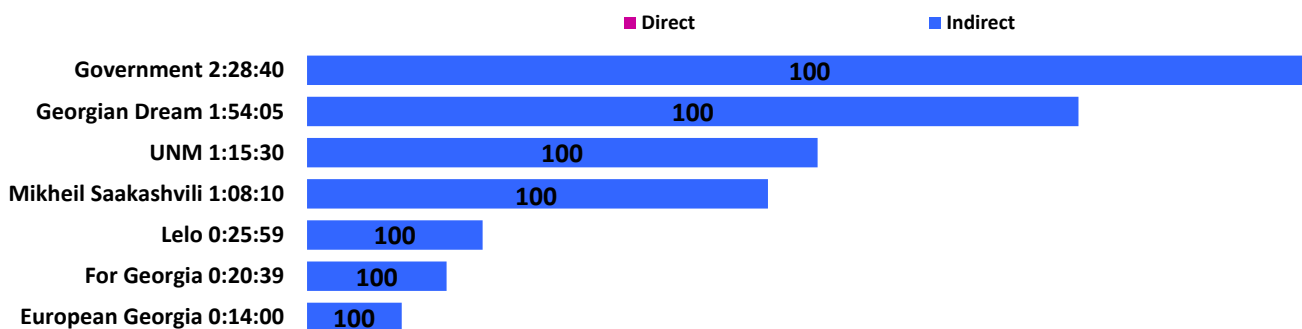
5 July - 14 November, 2021



## Coverage of subjects by direct / indirect speech (%)

"Saqartvelos Radio"

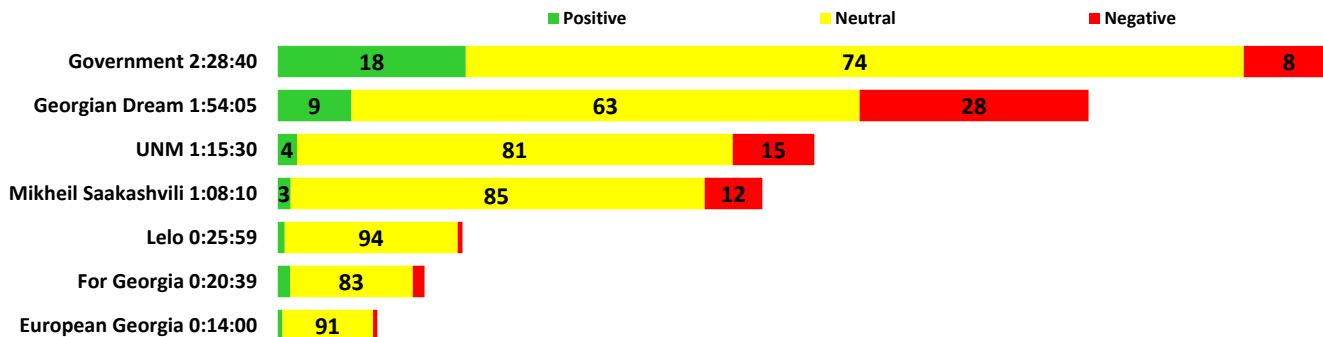
5 July - 14 November, 2021



## Coverage of subjects by tone (%)

"Saqartvelos Radio"

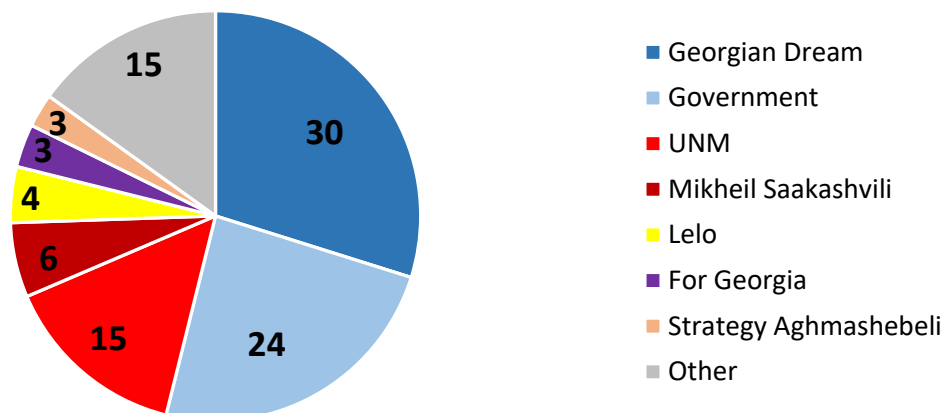
5 July - 14 November, 2021



### Coverage of subjects (%)

Radio "Maestro"

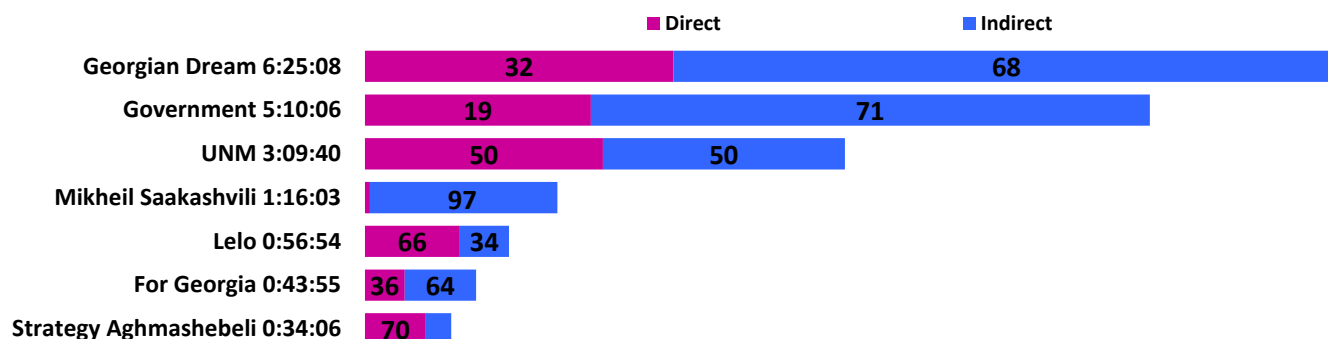
5 July - 14 November, 2021



### Coverage of subjects by direct / indirect speech (%)

Radio "Maestro"

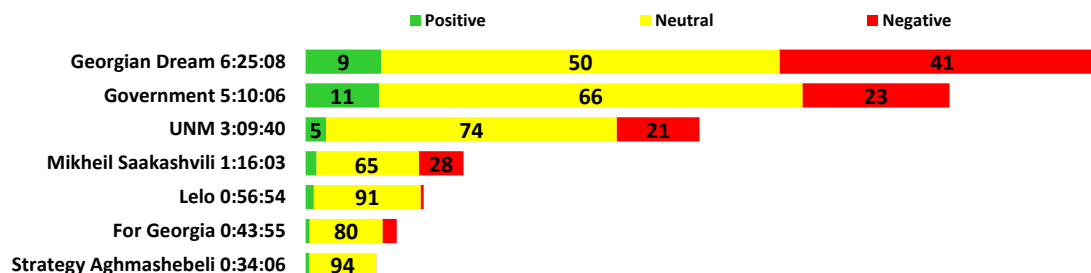
5 July - 14 November, 2021



### Coverage of subjects by tone (%)

Radio "Maestro"

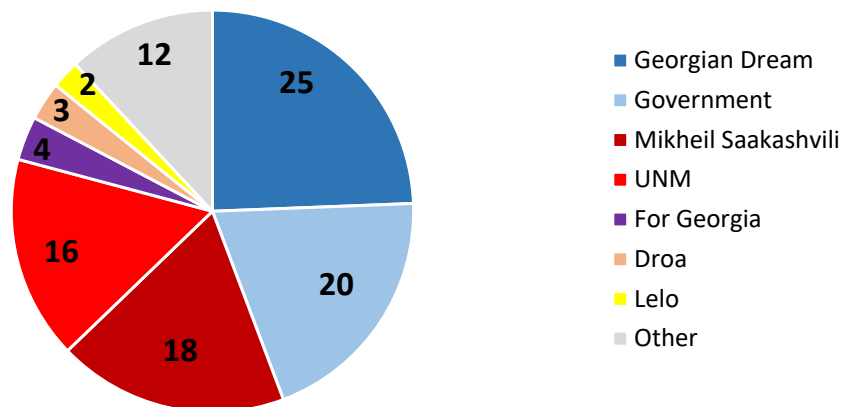
5 July - 14 November, 2021



### Coverage of subjects (%)

"Pirveli Radio"

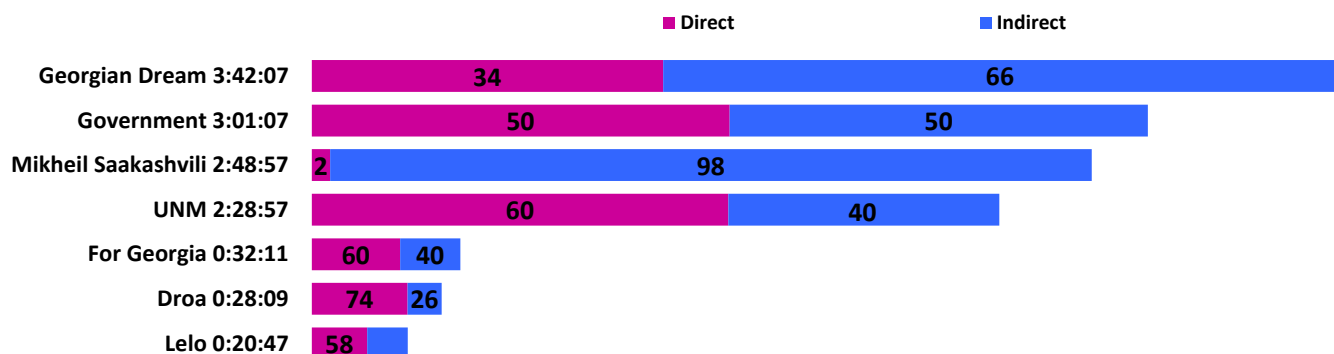
5 July - 14 November, 2021



### Coverage of subjects by direct / indirect speech (%)

"Pirveli Radio"

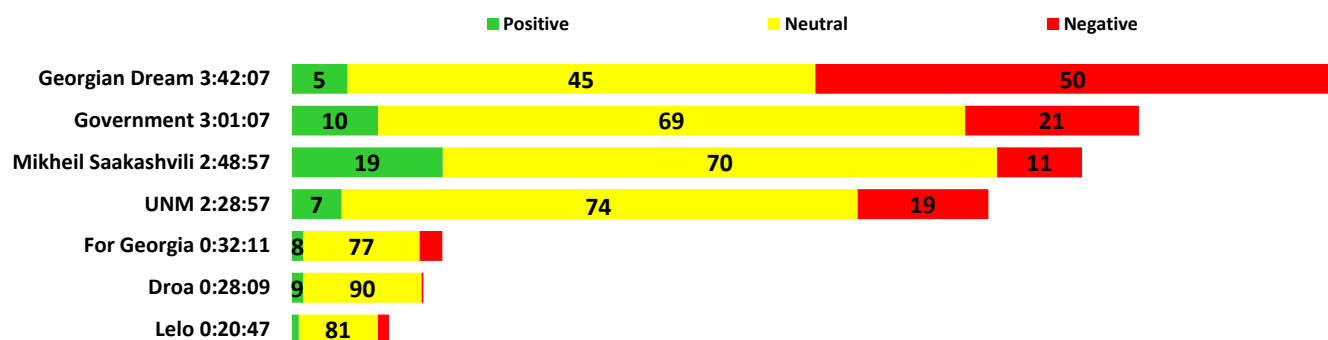
5 July- 14 November, 2021



### Coverage of subjects by tone (%)

"Pirveli Radio"

5 July - 14 November, 2021

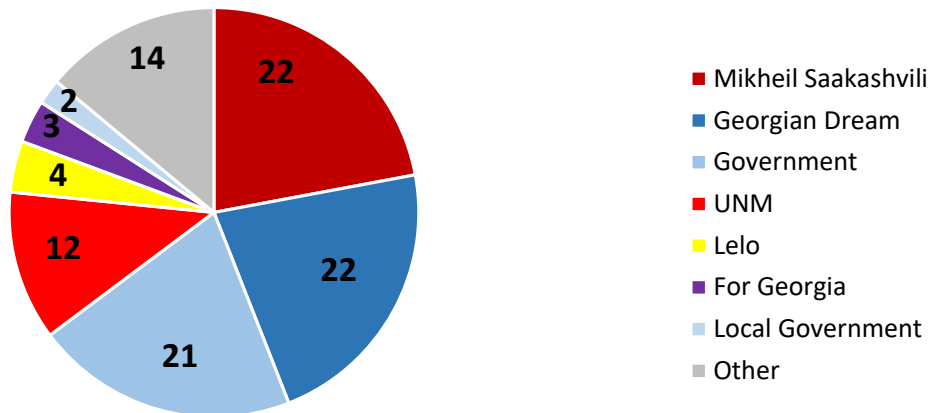




**Coverage of subjects (%)**

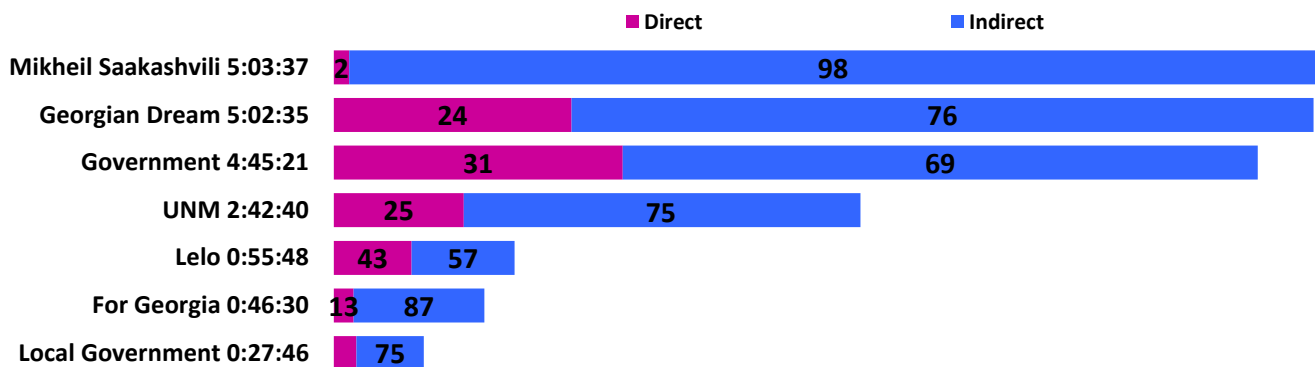
Radio "Palitra"

5 July - 14 November, 2021

**Coverage of subjects by direct / indirect speech (%)**

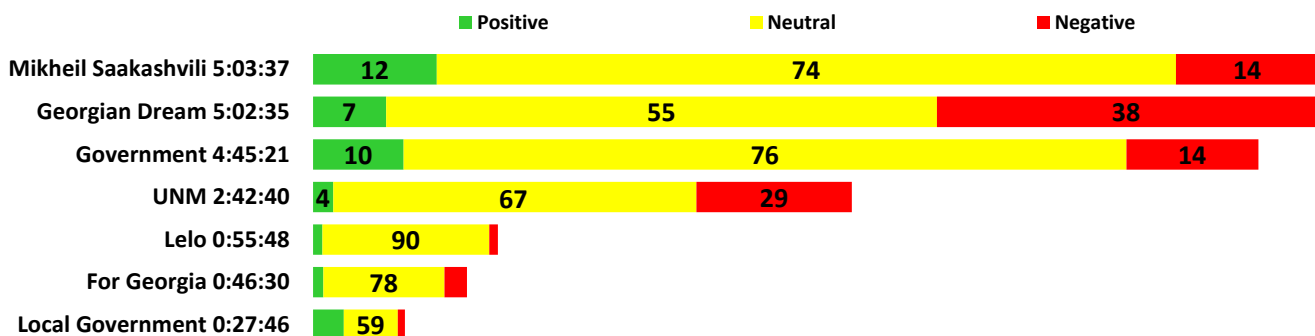
Radio "Palitra"

5 July - 14 November, 2021

**Coverage of subjects by tone (%)**

Radio "Palitra"

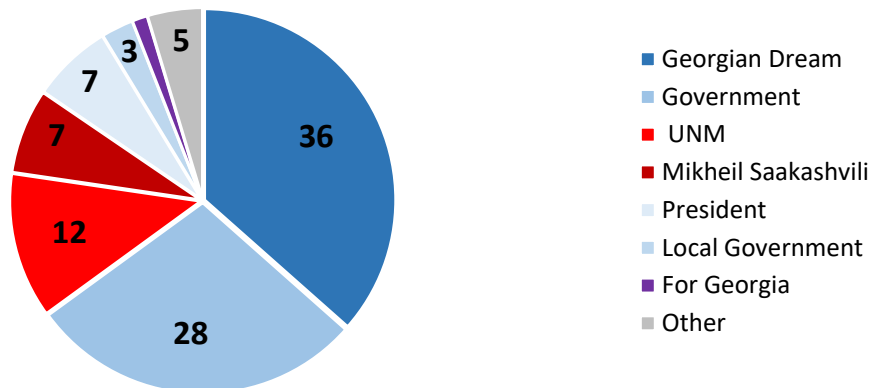
5 July - 14 November, 2021



**Coverage of subjects (%)**

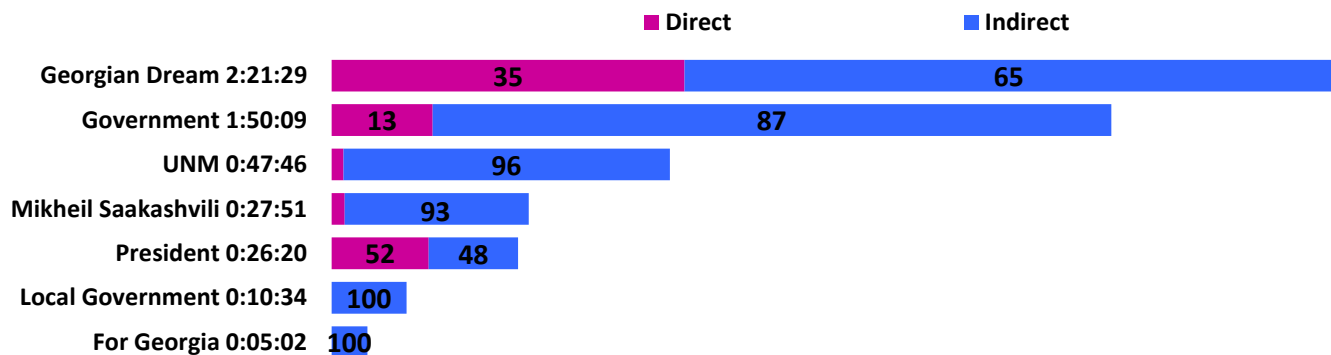
Radio "Imedi"

5 July - 14 November, 2021

**Coverage of subjects by direct / indirect speech (%)**

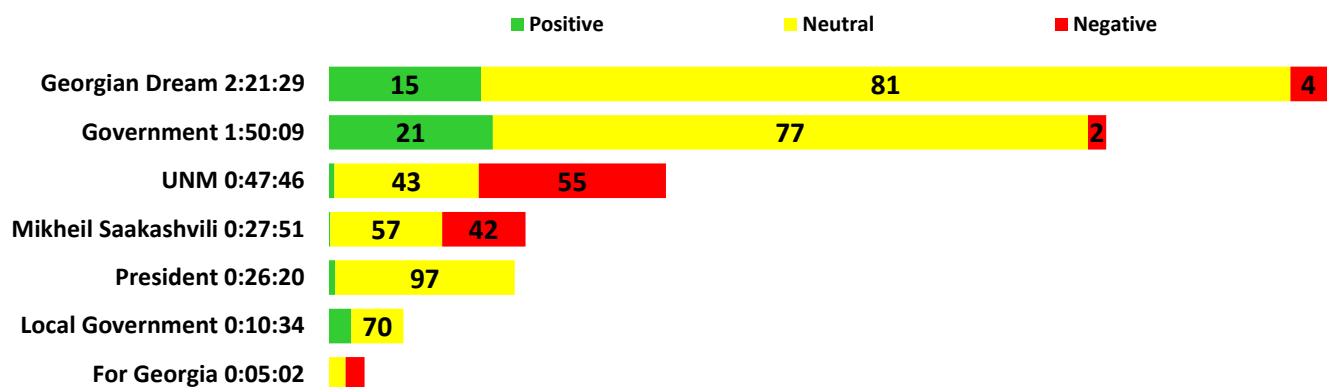
Radio "Imedi"

5 July - 14 November, 2021

**Coverage of subjects by tone (%)**

Radio "Imedi"

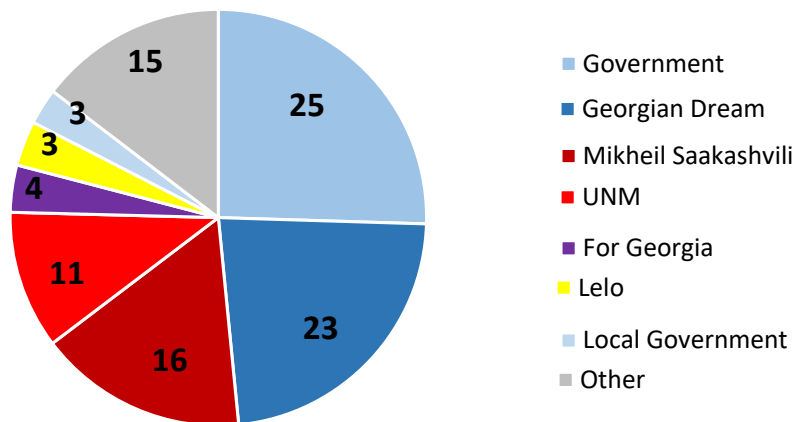
5 July - 14 November, 2021



**Coverage of subjects (%)**

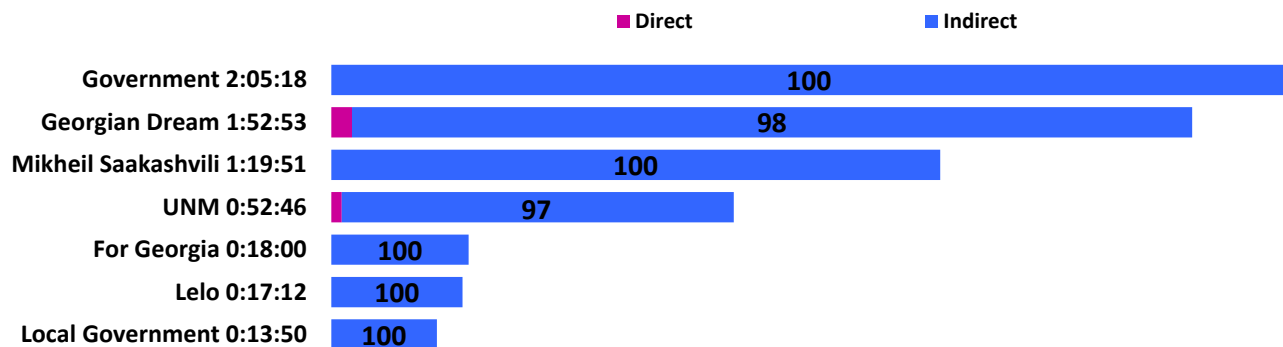
Radio "Fortuna"

5 July - 14 November, 2021

**Coverage of subjects by direct / indirect speech (%)**

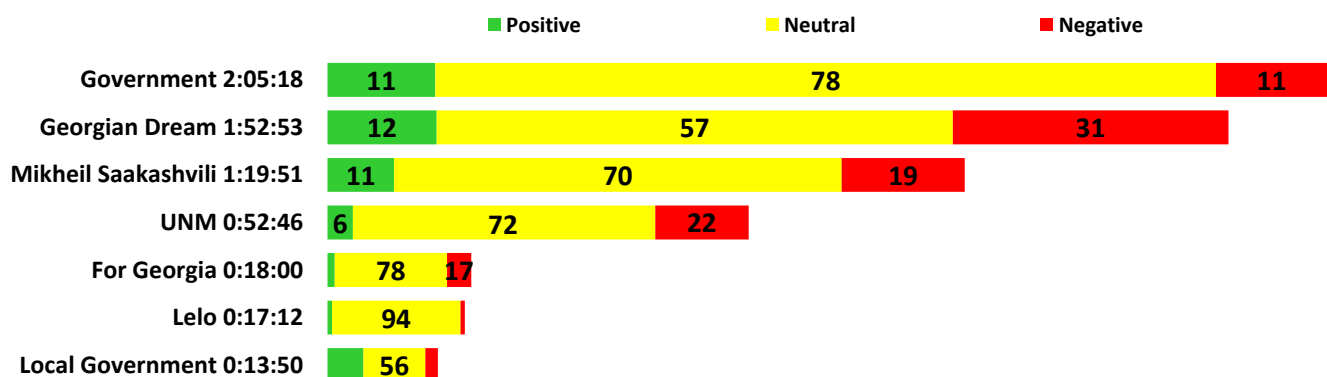
Radio "Fortuna"

5 July- 14 November, 2021

**Coverage of subjects by tone (%)**

Radio "Fortuna"

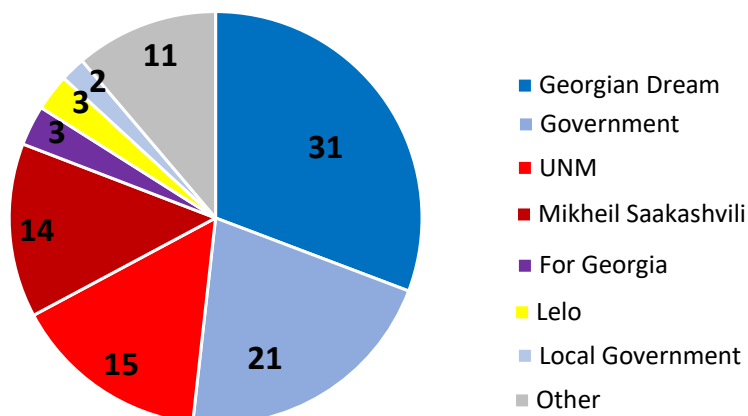
5 July - 14 November, 2021



**Coverage of subjects (%)**

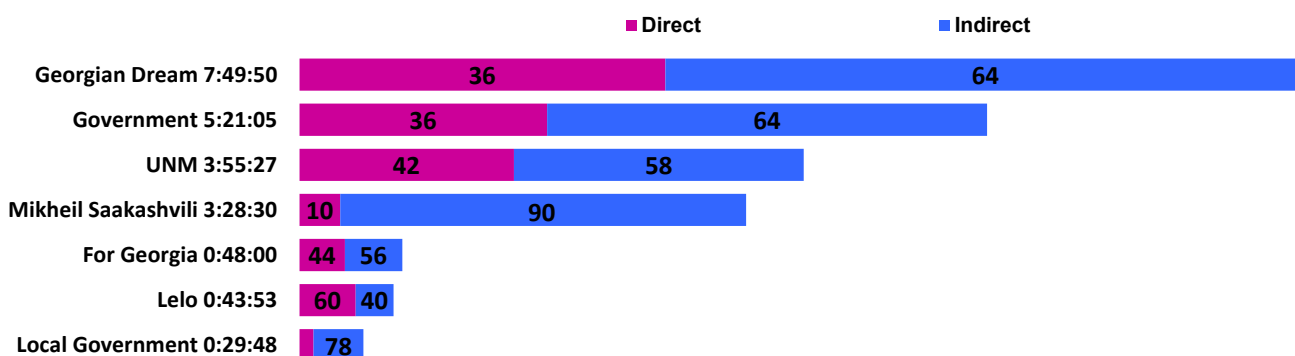
Radio "Hereti"

5 July - 14 November, 2021

**Coverage of subjects by direct / indirect speech (%)**

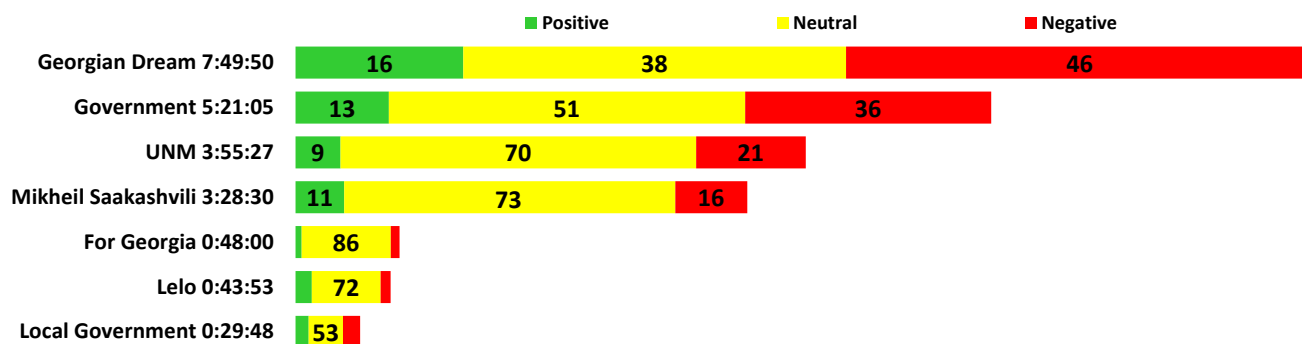
Radio "Hereti"

5 July - 14 November, 2021

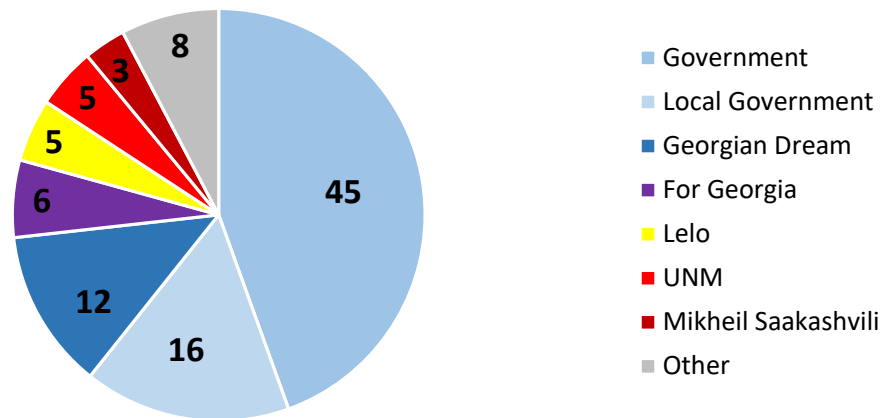
**Coverage of subjects by tone (%)**

Radio "Hereti"

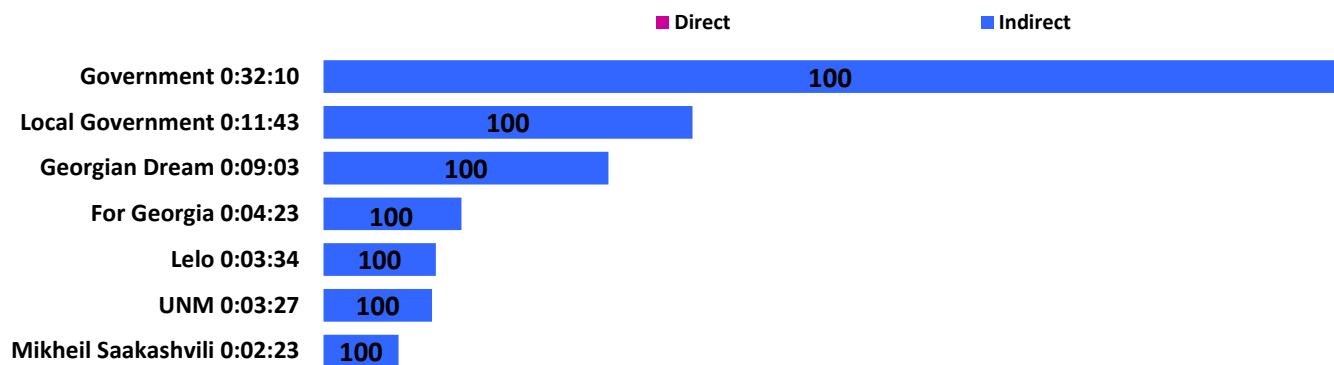
5 July - 14 November, 2021



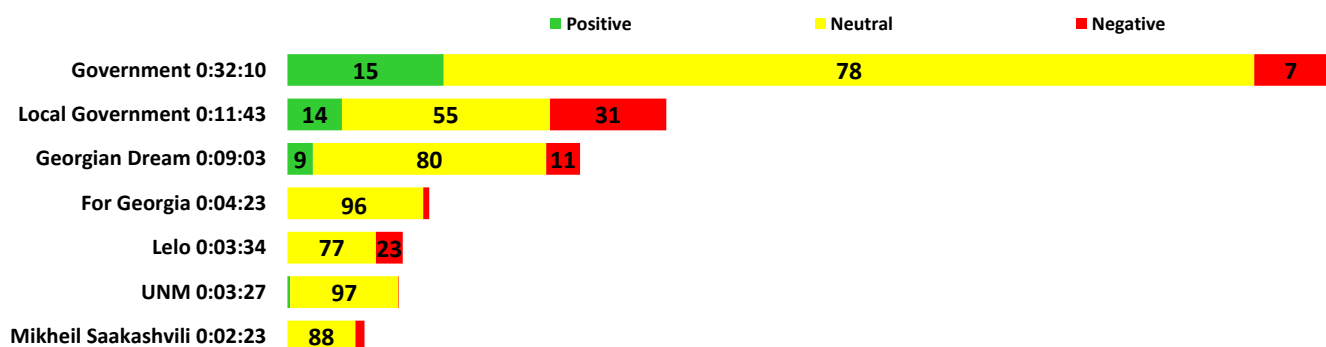
**Coverage of subjects (%)**  
Radio Samkhretis Karibche"  
5 July - 14 November, 2021



**Coverage of subjects by direct / indirect speech (%)**  
Radio "Samkhretis Karibche"  
5 July - 14 November, 2021



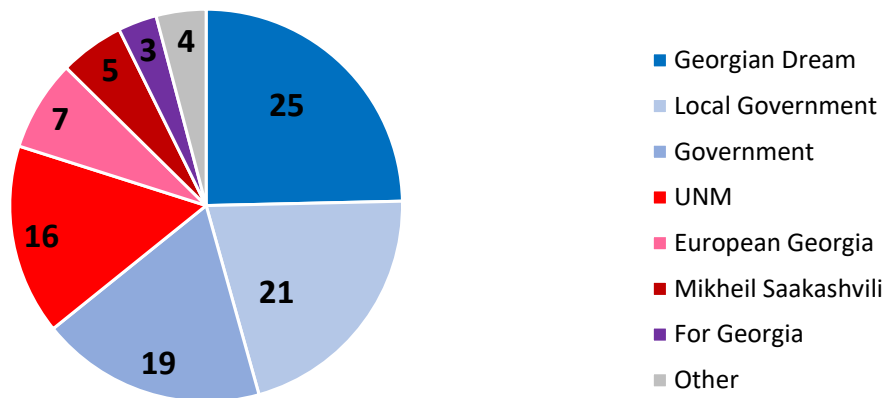
**Coverage of subjects by tone (%)**  
Radio "Samkhretis Karibche"  
5 July - 14 November, 2021



**Coverage of subjects (%)**

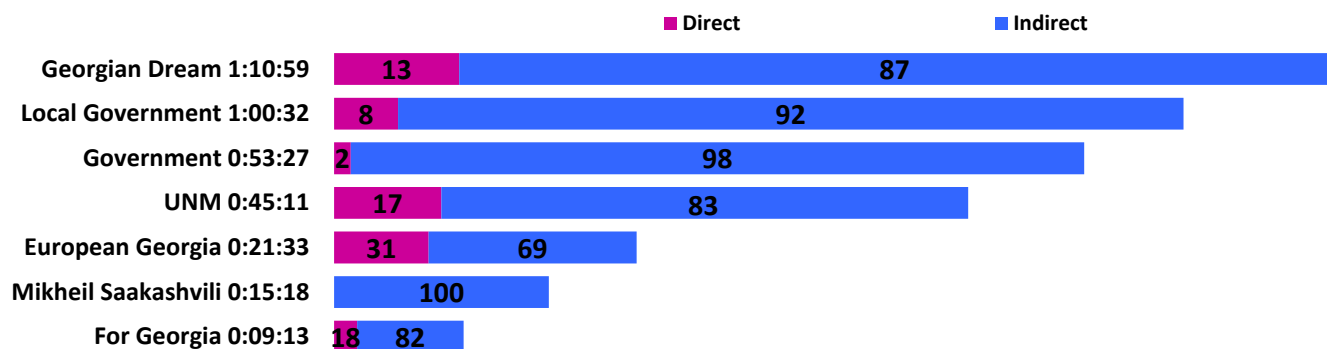
Radio "Marneuli"

5 July - 14 November, 2021

**Coverage of subjects by direct / indirect speech (%)**

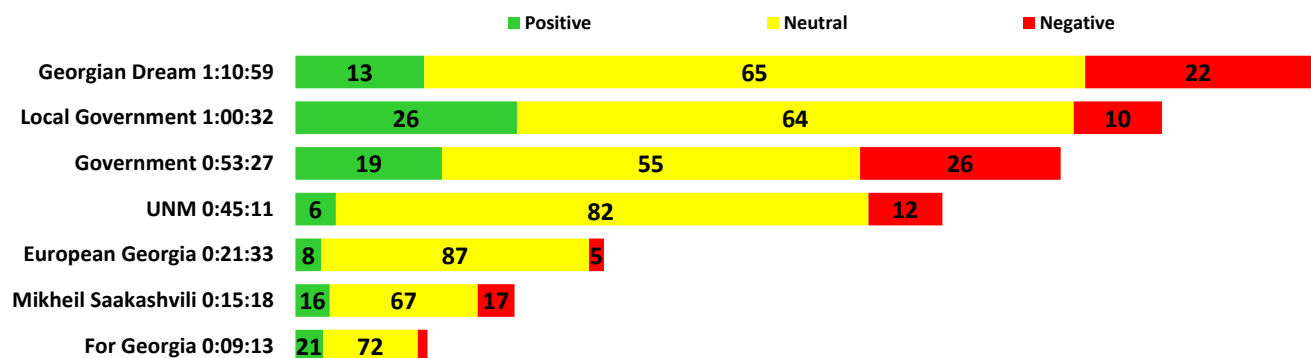
Radio "Marneuli"

5 July - 14 November, 2021

**Coverage of subjects by tone (%)**

Radio "Marneuli"

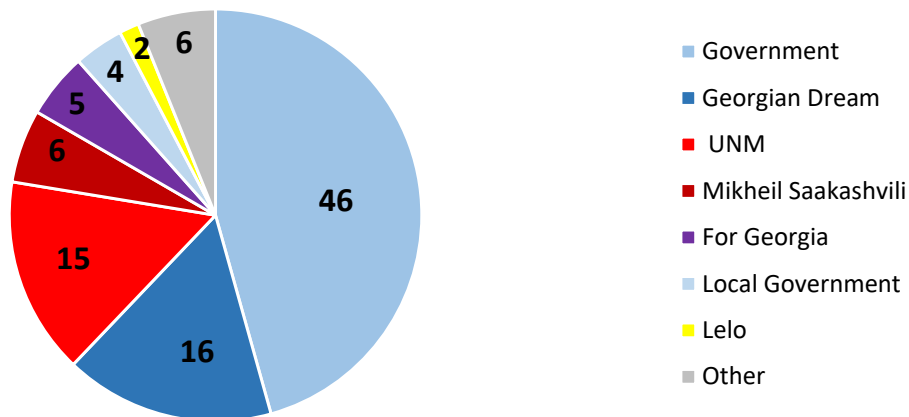
5 July - 14 November, 2021



**Coverage of subjects (%)**

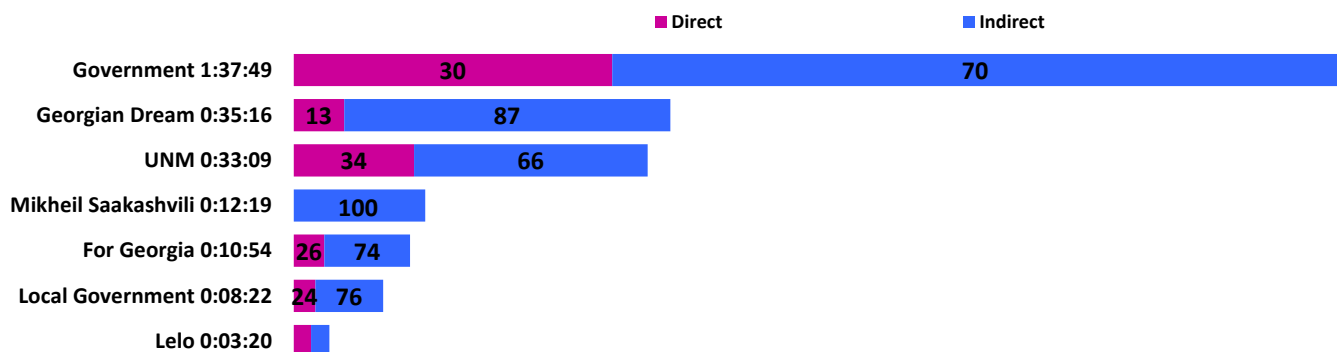
Radio "Atinati"

5 July - 14 November, 2021

**Coverage of subjects by direct / indirect speech (%)**

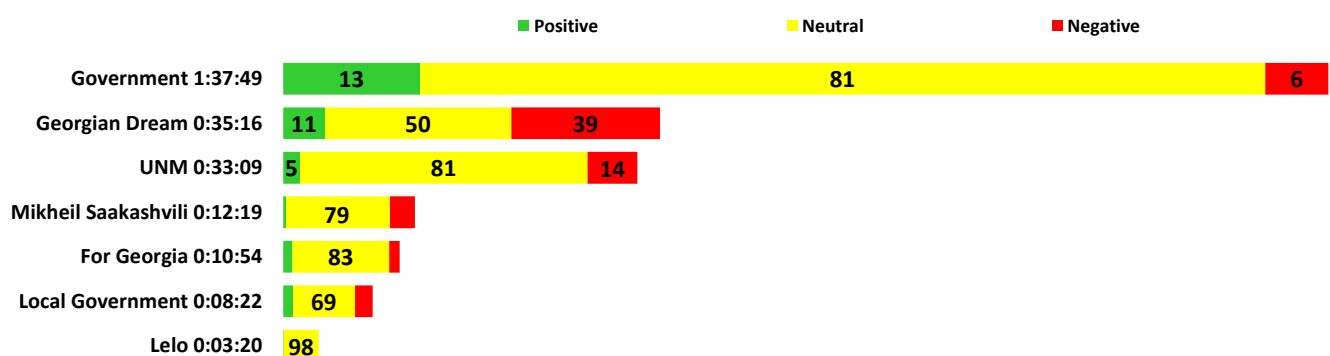
Radio "Atinati"

5 July - 14 November, 2021

**Coverage of subjects by tone (%)**

Radio "Atinati"

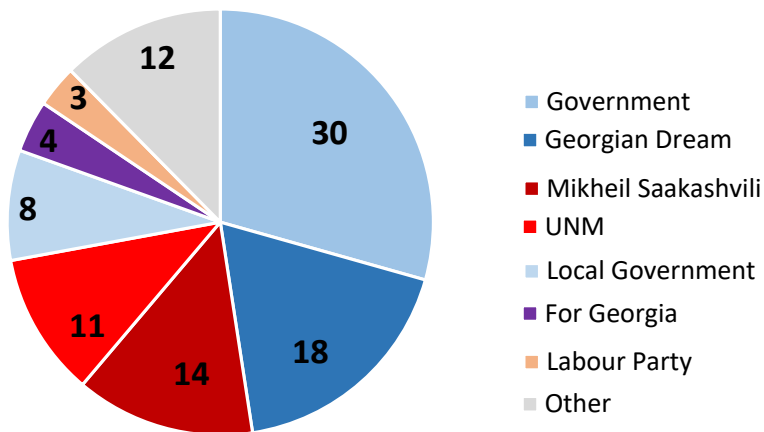
5 July - 14 November, 2021



**Coverage of subjects (%)**

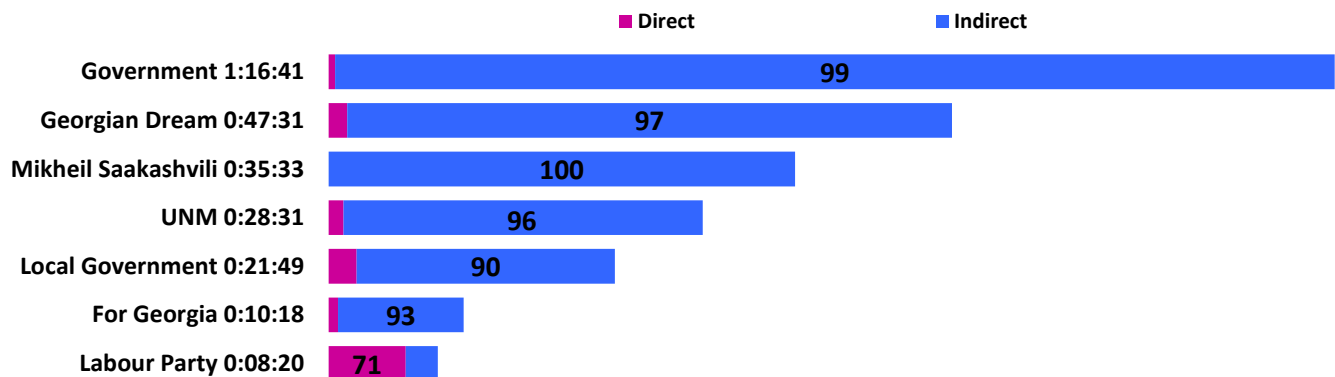
Radio "Dzveli Qalaqi"

5 July - 14 November 2021

**Coverage of subjects by direct / indirect speech (%)**

Radio "Dzveli Qalaqi"

5 July - 14 November, 2021

**Coverage of subjects by tone (%)**

Radio "Dzveli Qalaqi"

5 July - 14 November, 2021

