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საქართველოსთვის
The European Union for Georgia



Study and Research on Election Media Coverage for the 2021 Local Self-Government Elections in Georgia

Print Media Monitoring Preliminary Report

5 July - 25 September 2021



INTERNEWS
GEORGIA

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About the Project

Internews Georgia are monitoring print media as part of an EU and UNDP project entitled “Study and Research on Election Media Coverage for the 2021 Local Self-Government Elections in Georgia”.

Monitoring began on 5 July 2021 and covers 11 publications: *Rezonansi*, *Akhali Taoba*, *Kviris Palitra*, *Alia*, *Asaval-Dasavali*, *Kronika+*, *Sakartvelo Da Msoplio*, *Guria News*, *Alioni*, *Ho Da Ara* and *Chemi Kharagauli*.

Methodology of the Monitoring

The monitoring has both quantitative and qualitative research components. Quantitative monitoring focuses upon indicators that can be counted and measured—e.g. the amount of space devoted to various subjects, the tone of the coverage (positive, neutral, negative) or the gender of the subject (male or female).

Qualitative monitoring focuses on indicators that are difficult to quantify but are important to the quality of information—e.g. the timely reporting of facts, the distortion of information, unbalanced coverage, bias, fact-based reporting, the diversity of information sources, image manipulation, ethical and professional aspects, etc.

The monitoring covers the political parties and politicians running in the 2021 local elections as well as: the Government (central, local, Achara), the President, Bidzina Ivanishvili and Mikheil Saakashvili.

The monitoring focuses upon articles on the elections as well as upon all other materials in which the monitored subjects are discussed.

Advertising materials that are properly separated from editorial ones are not monitored.

Key Findings:

- Most print media outlets continue to face significant challenges and do not try to provide their readers with reliable high-quality information. Some newspapers are biased, and in most cases readers must therefore read more than one publication in order to access comprehensive information;
- As in previous years, newspapers have actively covered ongoing political processes in Georgia. Materials and interviews on political topics have increased, especially in the newspaper *Kviris Palitra*. In interviews with Tbilisi mayoral and majoritarian candidates belonging to various parties, this newspaper actively covered their pre-election promises and opinions on issues relevant to the capital's inhabitants, and interviews with candidates from various parties were also published in *Kronika+*. That said, most of the weekly print publications (and notably *Asaval-Dasavali*, *Alia* and *Georgia and the World*) failed to give their readers in-depth analytical information on the elections and focused less on the pre-electoral campaigns and electoral programs of both the ruling and opposition parties. Essentially, the statements and opinions of politicians on specific topics and current processes were published, and party controversies were also emphasized;
- As the elections approached, coverage of pre-electoral processes increased in both daily (e.g. *Rezonansi*, *Akhali Taoba*) and regional publications (*Guria News*, *Alioni*, *Chemi Kharagauli*, *Yes & No*). Regional newspapers in particular stood out in this respect, actively covering the electoral activities of both ruling and opposition parties and mayoral candidates in their area;

Regional publications (*Guria News*, *Alioni*, *My Kharagauli*, *Yes & No*) are fully balanced, with no offensive or unethical terminology, no image manipulation and no subjective, unverified or unsubstantiated information. The work of these newspapers meets journalistic standards. The electoral activities of political parties and the opinions of mayoral candidates were covered equally and impartially. Journalists were, however, less likely to ask searching questions, thereby giving politicians participating in the elections the opportunity to present their views in a positive context.

- In addition to pre-electoral political events, regional publications also focused on current socio-economic or infrastructural problems the population of their area is facing as well as on various social issues and topics related to agriculture and agro-tourism. Although they published statements by both the government and the opposition as well as the local population, the critical attitude of journalists covering local government activities and projects was less noticeable, resulting in the government being mostly presented in a neutral or positive light;
- One of the main problems of some newspapers (e.g. *Asaval-Dasavali*, *Alia*, *Kronika+*, *Georgia and the World*) has been the dissemination for years of unverified, inaccurate information: journalists address the government and politicians with neither justification nor evidence and do not avoid

making serious accusations. In many cases, their reasoning is based upon subjective opinions and is not supported by any facts. *Rezonansi* and *Kviris Palitra* were, however, exceptions, covering issues from different angles and avoiding unverified facts;

- Some publications carried statements containing serious allegations without any verification: their journalists clearly do not doubt the veracity of certain statements and do not try to determine their accuracy by asking additional questions. Also, no reply by the object of criticism was published in either the same issue or the next one, let alone in the same article;
- Some of the newspapers (e.g. *Asaval-Dasavali*, *Kronika+*, *Alia*, *Georgia and the World*) often offer their readers unbalanced articles based upon a single source, thereby denying them access to different views on a particular issue; and it is not only these publications' individual articles that are unbalanced, biased and one-sided, but the publications as a whole. Some materials of *Akhali Taoba* were also unbalanced;
- Most publications lack sources of information among politicians and especially experts: the same "experts" they select often make assessments on almost every issue. It would be better for newspapers to present their readers with the opinions of specialists in various fields, even in connection with this or that specific pre-electoral promise of a politician. One of the challenges of print media remains the preparation of materials based on dubious sources of information: journalists often do not try to determine the accuracy of information obtained from "reliable sources";

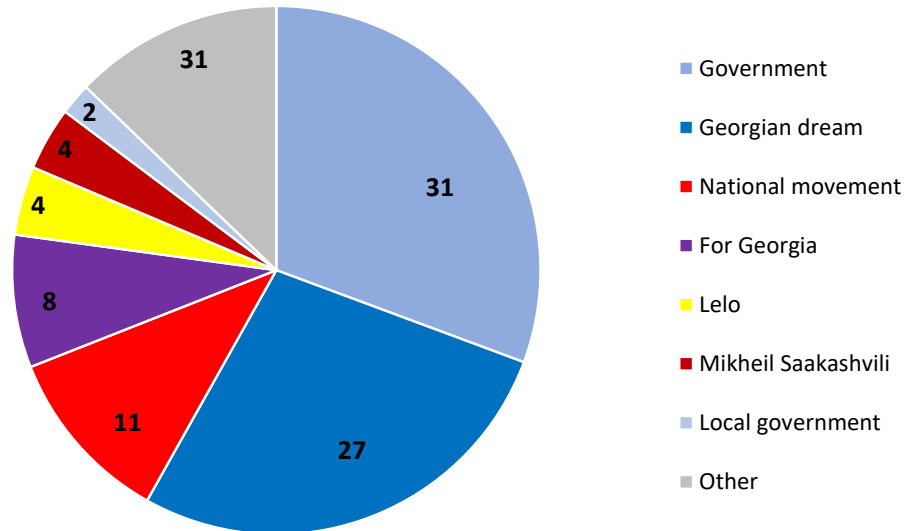
In some publications, the use of insulting and unethical terminology by politicians (from both the ruling or opposition parties) and journalists remains a problem. Similar terms were often found in respondents' statements, and journalists did not try to distance themselves from these. In some cases, insulting statements were even included in the title of articles;

- Some publications (e.g. *Asaval-Dasavali*, *Kronika+*, *Georgia and the World*) commit gross violations of journalistic and ethical standards, and some continue to use homophobic terminology containing hate speech. That said, the threatening expressions based on gender stereotypes that were often found during the 2020 monitoring were almost not seen this year. There were also almost no more images containing abusive or discriminatory content.

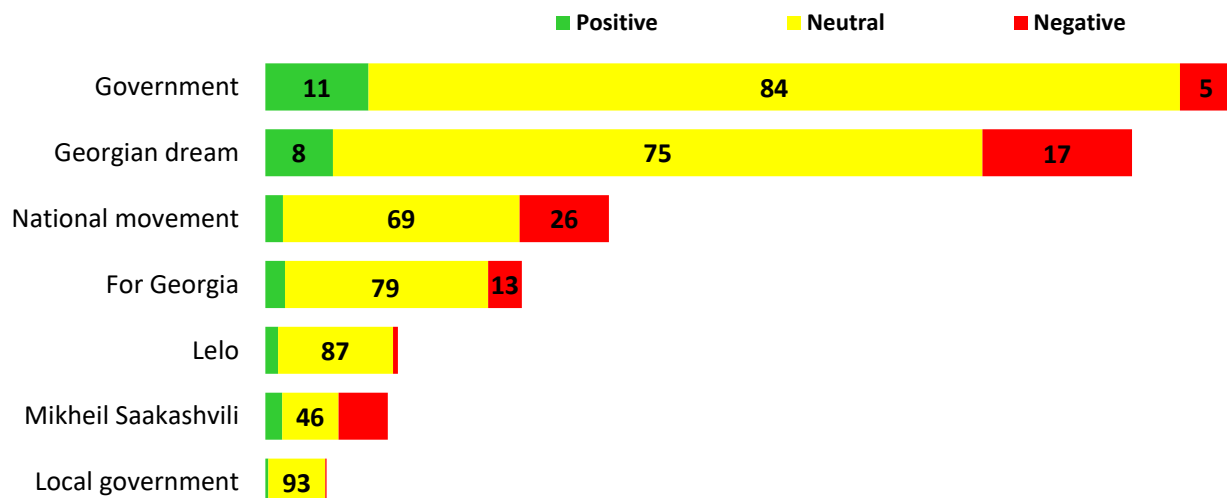
Annex: Diagrams

The diagrams show quantitative data on the subjects most frequently covered by each media outlet.

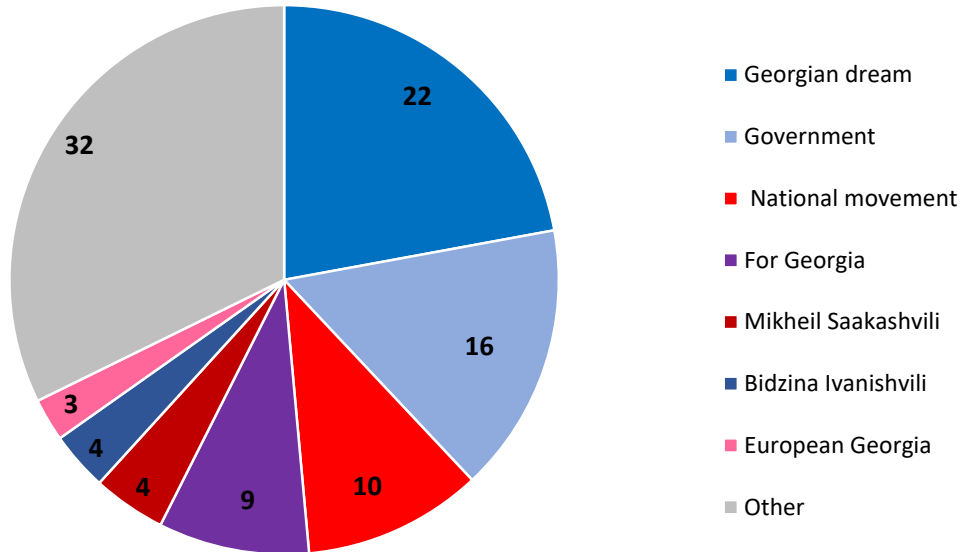
Coverage of subjects (%)
Rezonansi newspaper
July 5 - September 25, 2021



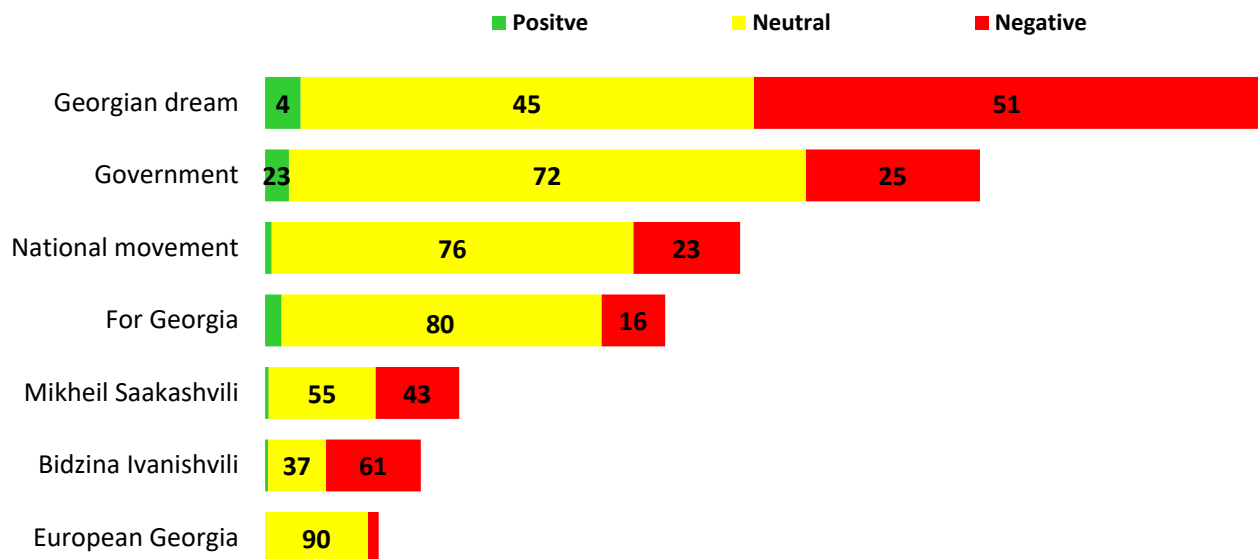
Coverage of subjects by tone (%)
Rezonansi Newspaper
July 5 - September 25



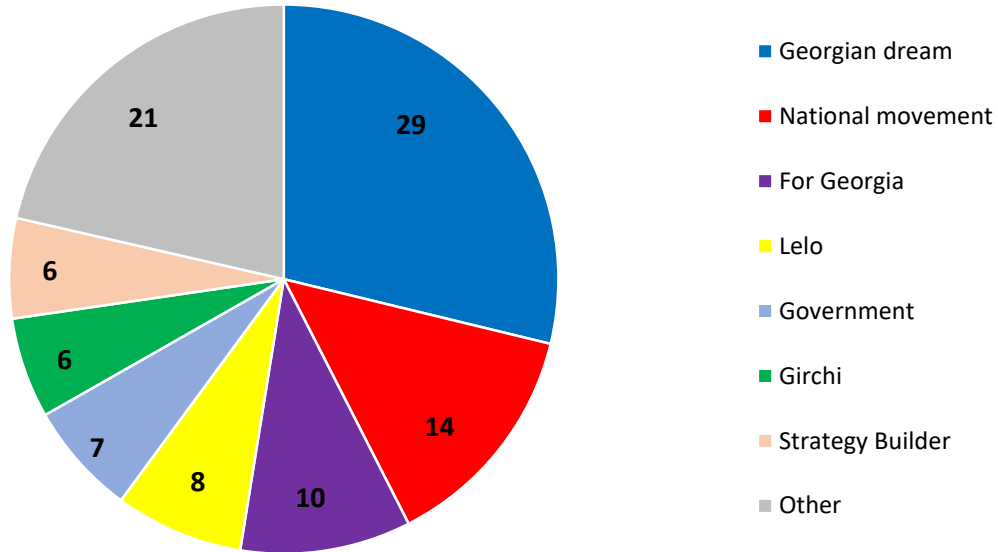
Coverage of subjects (%)
Newspaper "Akhali Taoba"
July 5 - September 25, 2021



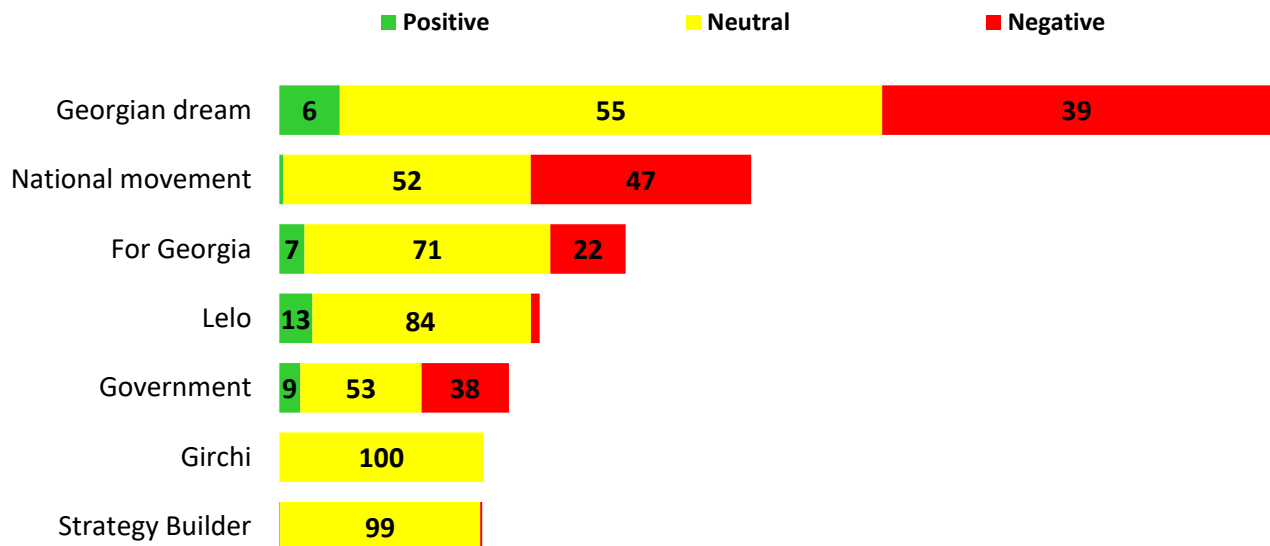
Coverage of subjects by tone (%)
Newspaper "Akhali Taoba"
July 5 - September 25, 2021



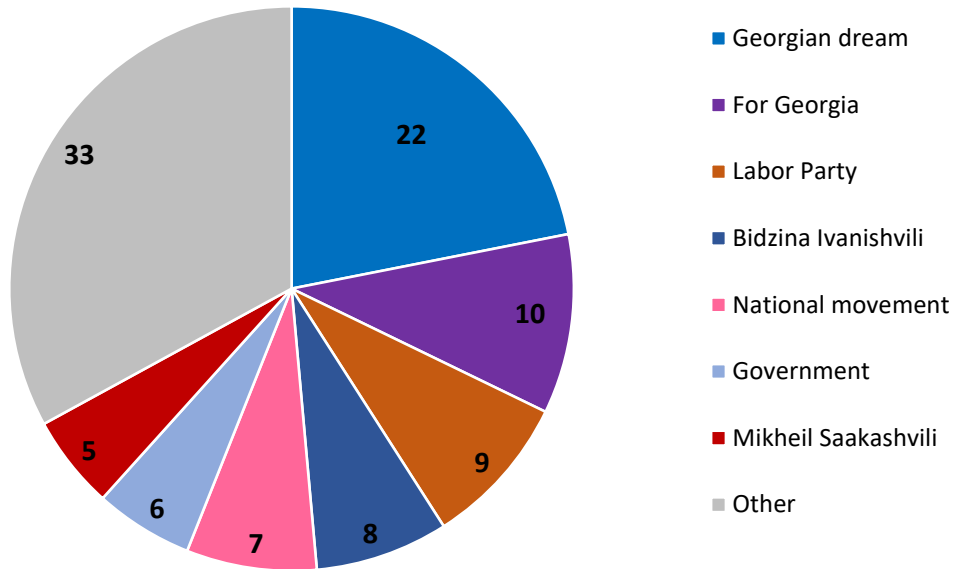
Coverage of subjects (%) Newspaper "Kviris Palitra" July 5 - September 25, 2021



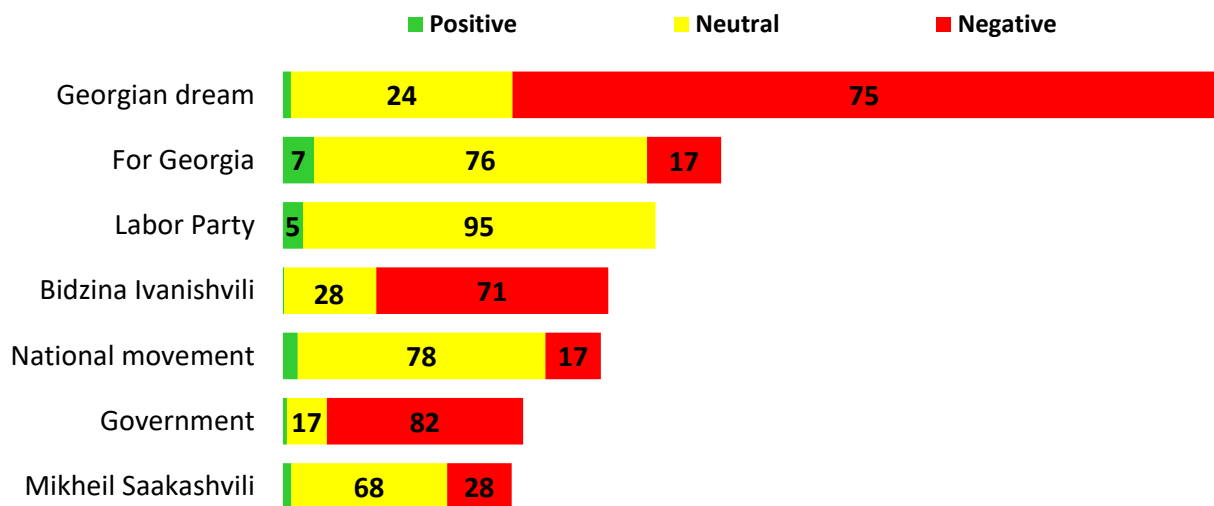
Coverage of subjects by tone (%) Newspaper "Kviris Palitra" July 5 - September 25, 2021



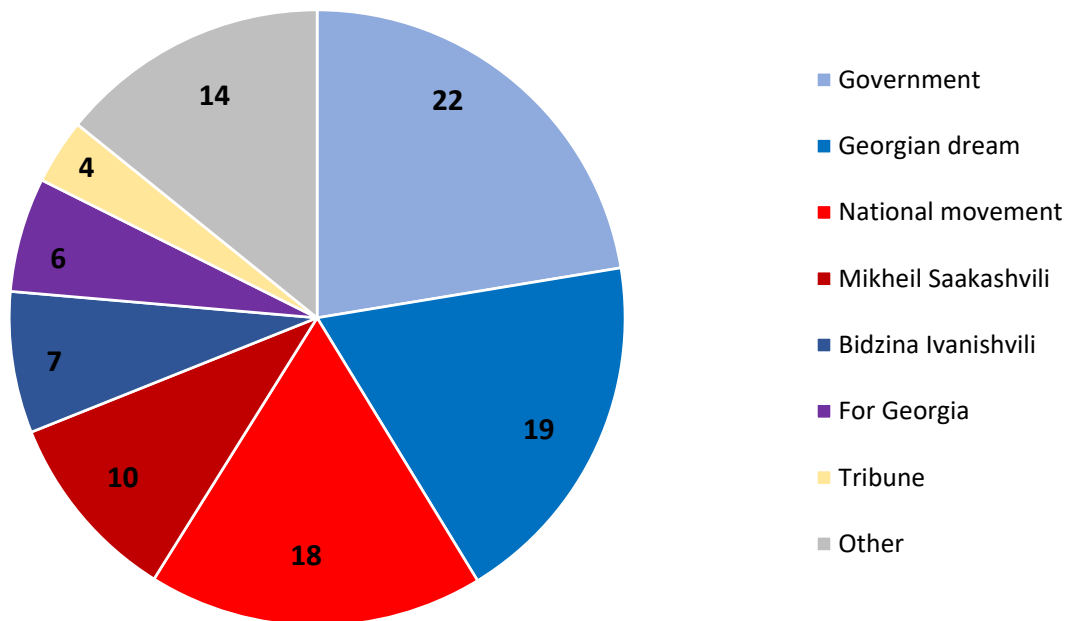
Coverage of subjects (%) Newspaper "Kronika +" July 5 - September 25, 2021



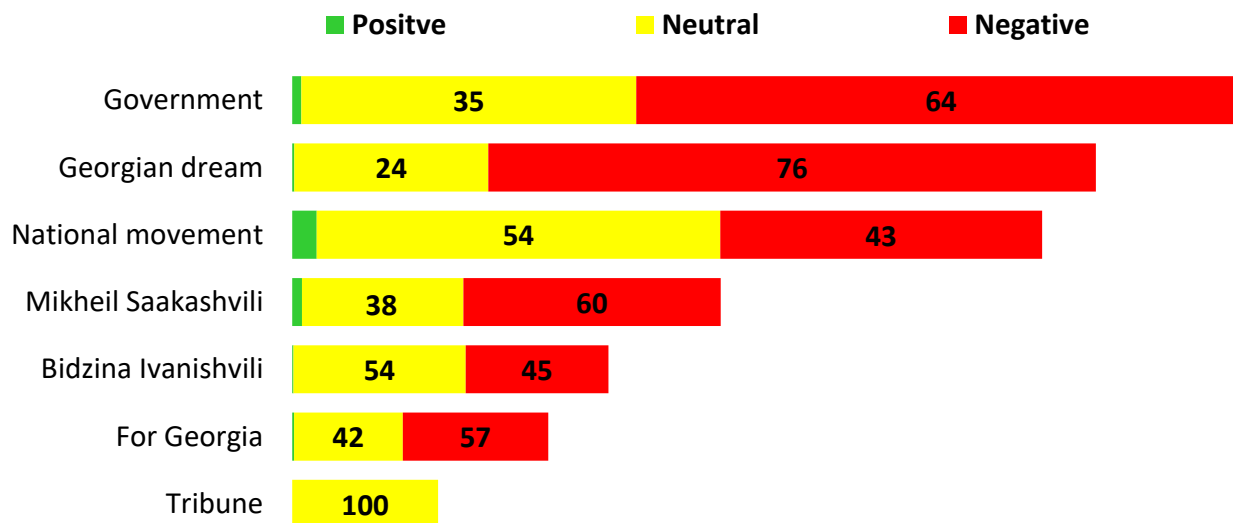
Coverage of subjects by tone (%) Newspaper "Kronika +" July 5 - September 25, 2021



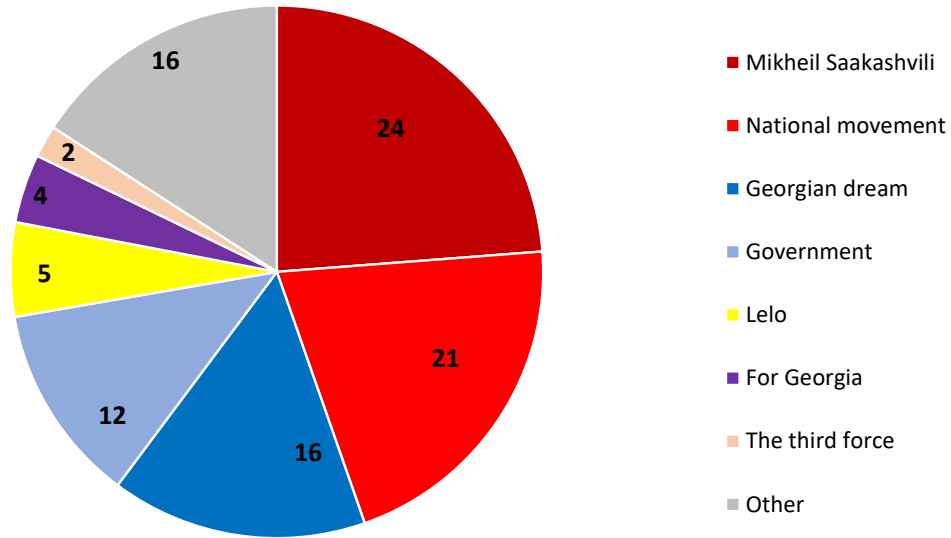
Coverage of subjects (%)
Alia newspaper
July 5 - September 25, 2021



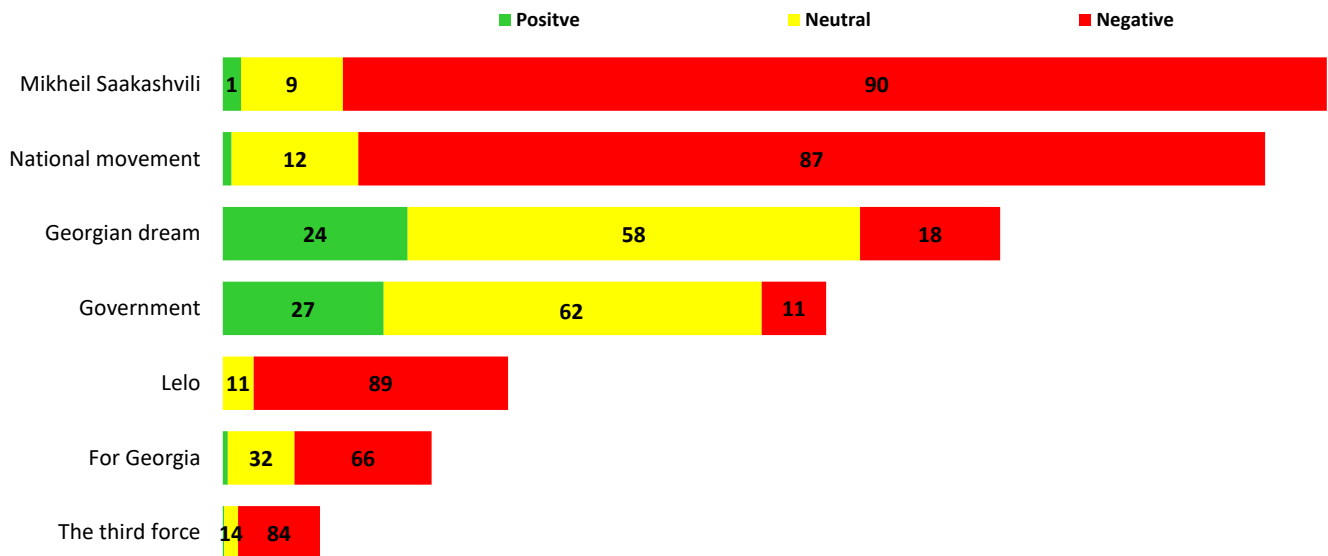
Coverage of subjects by tone (%)
Alia newspaper
July 5 - September 25, 2021



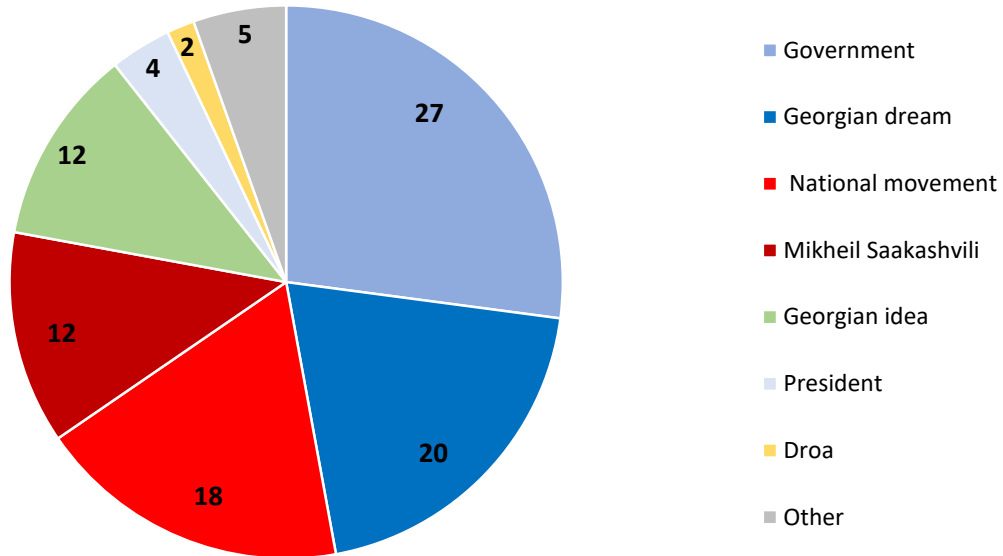
Coverage of subjects (%)
Asaval-Dasavali newspaper
July 5 - September 25, 2021



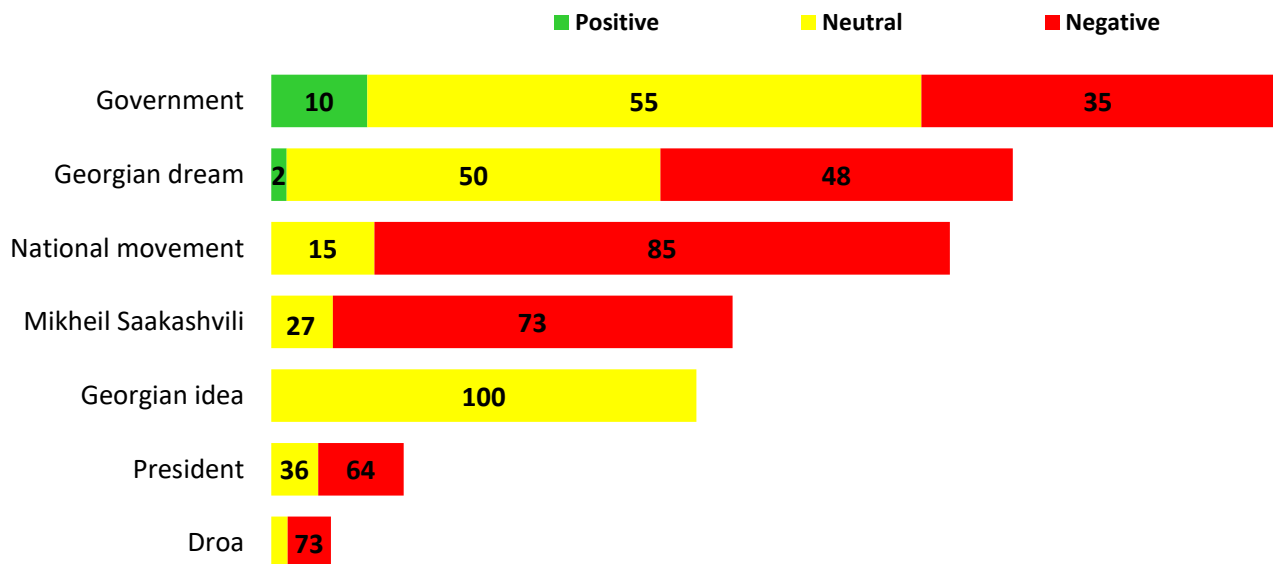
Coverage of subjects by tone (%)
Asaval-Dasavali newspaper
July 5 - September 25, 2021



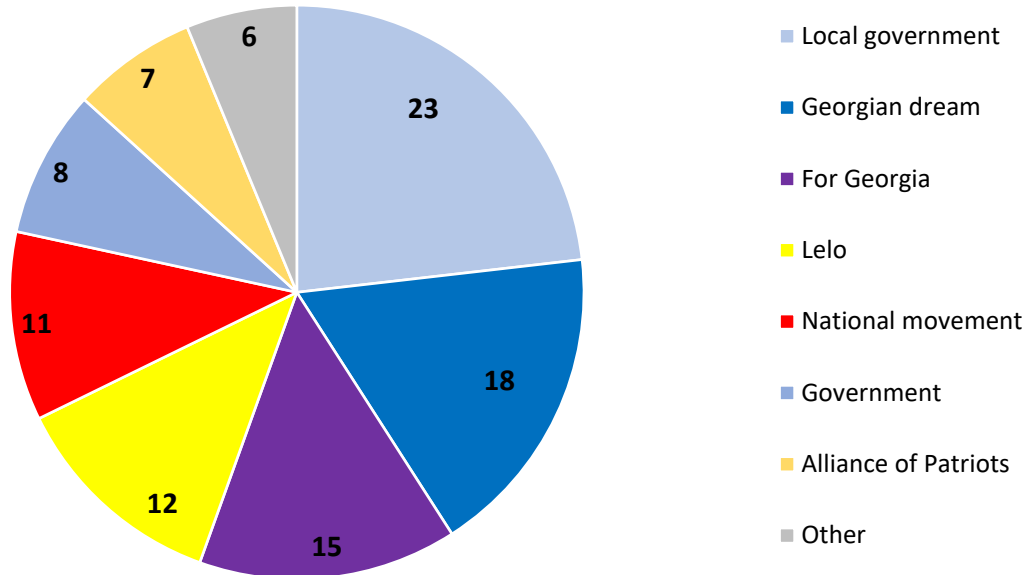
Coverage of subjects (%) Newspaper "Georgia and the World" July 5 - September 25, 2021



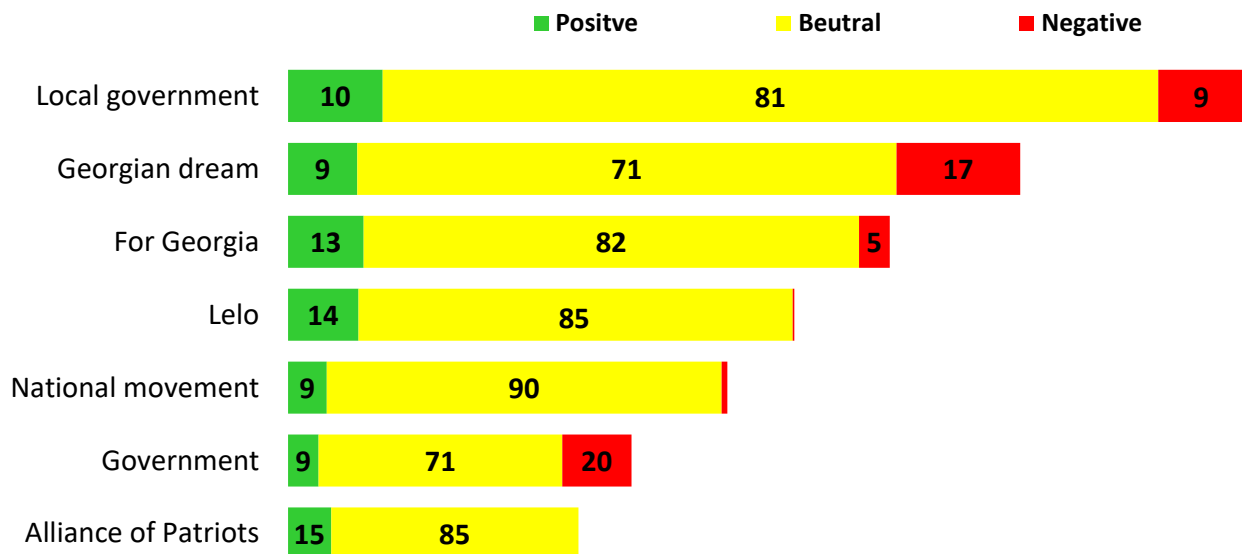
Coverage of subjects by tone (%) Newspaper "Georgia and the World" July 5 - September 25, 2021



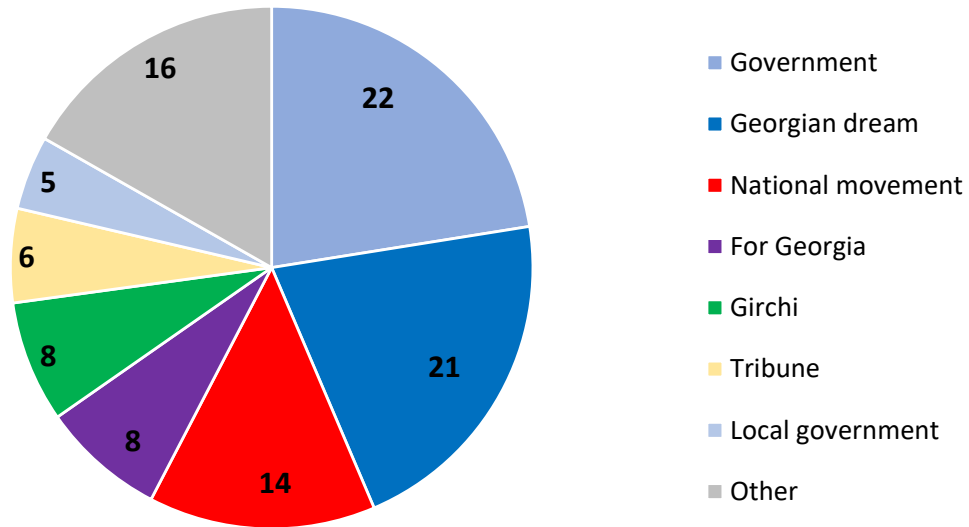
Coverage of subjects (%) Newspaper "My Kharagauli" July 5 - September 25, 2021



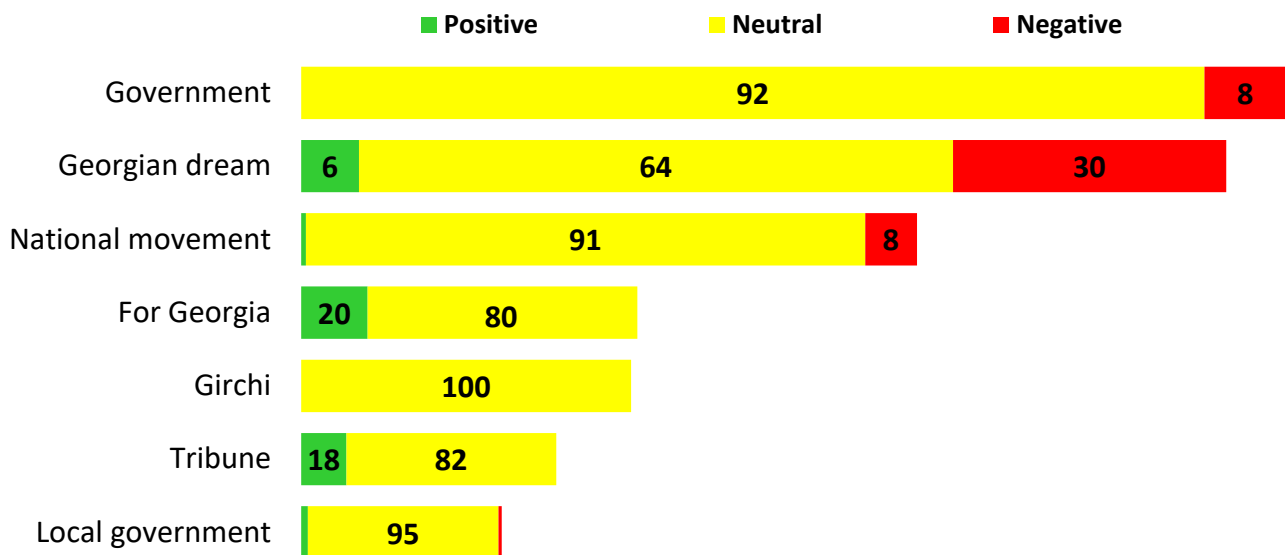
Coverage of subjects by tone (%) Newspaper "My Kharagauli" July 5 - September 25, 2021



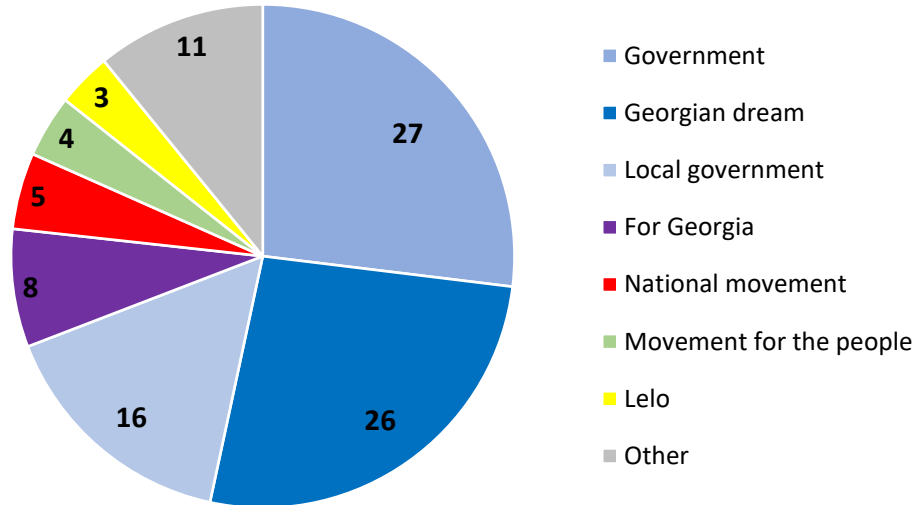
Coverage of subjects (%) Newspaper "Yes and No" July 5 - September 25, 2021



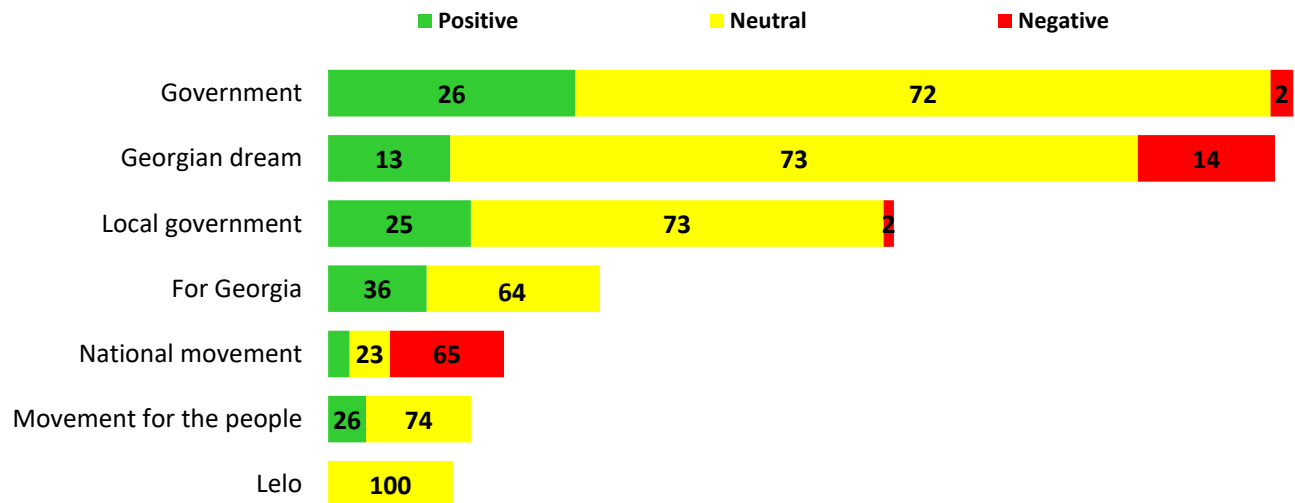
Coverage of subjects by tone (%) Newspaper "Yes and No" July 5 - September 25, 2021



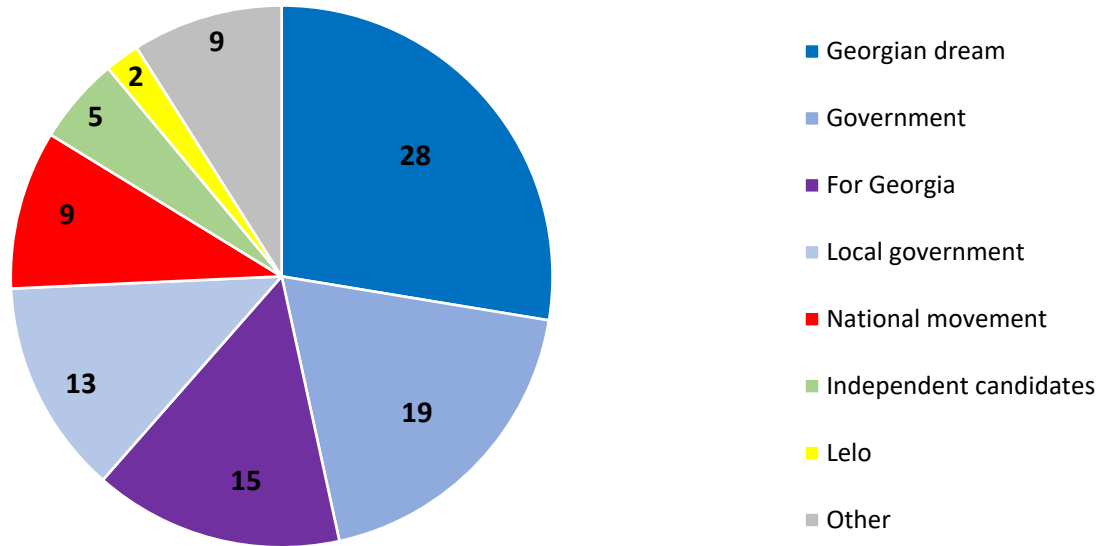
Coverage of subjects(%) Newspaper "Alioni" July 5 - September 25, 2021



Coverage of subjects by tone(%) Newspaper "Alioni" 5 July - 25 September, 2021



Coverage of subjects (%) **Guria News Newspaper** July 5 - September 25, 2021



Coverage of subjects by tone (%) **Guria News Newspaper** July 5 - September 25, 2021

