



ევროკავშირი  
საქართველოსთვის  
The European Union for Georgia



# Media Monitoring of 2021 Municipal Elections

## Monitoring of Radio Newscasts Interim Report

5 July - 25 September 2021



INTERNEWS  
GEORGIA

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

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## About the project

Internews Georgia has monitored primetime radio newscasts within the framework of the project, Media Monitoring of 2021 Municipal Elections, funded by the EU and UNDP. The monitoring started on 5 July 2021.

The monitoring was to be carried out on newscasts of 12 radio channels; however, since Radio WAY (village of Duisi, Akhmeta district, Pankisi Gorge) did not produce newscasts during the reporting period, the monitoring covered primetime newscasts on 11 radio channels. These channels are: Sakartvelos Radio (Public Broadcaster), Imedi, Maestro, Palitra, Pirveli Radio, Fortuna, Hereti, Marneuli, Dzveli Kalaki (Kutaisi), Samkhretis Karibche (Akhhaltsikhe), Atinati (Zugdidi).

## Monitoring methodology

The monitoring of primetime radio newscasts aimed at identifying whether activities of political subjects in pre-election period were covered fairly, equally and in accordance with journalistic standards.

The monitoring consists of quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative monitoring determines indicators that can be counted and measured: time allocated to subjects, tone of reporting (positive, negative, neutral), direct/indirect reporting (whether subjects speak themselves or others speak about them), sex of subjects (male or female).

The qualitative monitoring is focused on the aspects that can hardly be measured qualitatively: timeliness of the coverage of facts, distortion of information, unbalanced coverage, bias, facts-based coverage, diversity of sources, manipulation with sound/music, adherence to ethical or professional standards, also any other fact that affects the quality of presented information.

Subjects of monitoring are political parties and politicians participating in the 2021 municipal elections, also: the government (central, local, Adjara autonomous republic), the president, Bidzina Ivanishvili and Mikheil Saakashvili. Monitoring is carried out not only on the reports about election-related topics but also all those reports that involve subjects of monitoring.

This report presents key findings of the monitoring of primetime radio newscasts. Detailed assessment of each monitored radio broadcaster will be provided in a final monitoring report.

## Key findings

Key findings of the monitoring conducted over the period between 5 July and 25 September are the following:

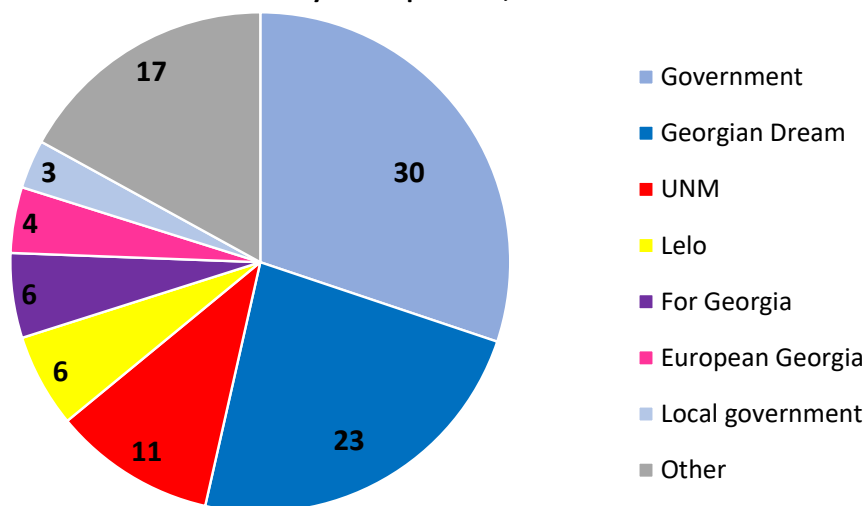
- The 2021 monitoring results have shown that the majority of radio broadcasters do not display a strong bias towards any of the political forces. However, compared to 2020 and particularly, previous years, unbalanced reports presenting perspectives of either the government or a political opposition have increase in number. For example, Radio Imedi covered the government mainly in a positive light and did not actually allocate any amount of time to criticism of the ruling party. In this regard, Imedi was distinguished from all other radios, thereby calling into questions its impartiality. Hereti, Pirveli Radio, Maestro and Palitra stood out for their critical coverage of events while Maestro and Palitra produced most balanced newscasts;
- The quality of reporting by Sakartvelos Radio (Public Broadcaster) has not shown any improvement on the reporting in previous years – reports about events were short and superficial, lacked analysis and critical insight; 100 percent of the time allocated to subjects accounted for indirect reporting. The content of the public broadcaster was no different whatsoever from that of other radio broadcasters. It failed again to offer high-quality journalistic material to its audience. Producing critical, diverse and analytical newscasts is the only possibility for the public broadcaster to meet existing high expectations and fulfil its responsibility;
- Compared to previous years, an increase was observed in the majority of radios of news items that were entirely focused on the confrontation between the government and the political opposition; little effort has been seen of journalists looking beyond that confrontation to find and cover topics that were pressing for population and thus make newscasts more diverse;
- Much like in the previous years, texts of news stories were almost identical on various radio channels – they reported similar topics and rarely a piece of information that could not be heard in other radio broadcasts. This trend was particularly noticeable in reports about pre-election activities of political parties;
- Lack of exclusive, deep and analytical reports has remained a problem of radio broadcasters, making it difficult to tell a lie from a truth. Journalists limited themselves to citing statements made by politicians at news conferences. Consequently, it was the statements of politicians that set the agenda of newscast, not the information sought by journalists. Journalists uncritically reacted to the agenda set by politicians and did not make any effort to change the focus of issue, present it from a different perspective or raise new problems;

- News items based on anonymous or incredible sources were not produced by radios; however, they covered statements of politicians without verifying them. Expert opinions, research data or other evidence was virtually absent – politicians made conflicting assessments while journalists failed to help audience find out the truth;
- Monitoring results of previous years revealed the failure of journalists to provide audience with a critical and deep coverage of election manifestos and visions of candidates. In 2021, this problem has worsened with the pre-election reporting completely detaching itself from covering candidates' visions and totally lacking substantive or comparative analysis of manifestos. Only short, brief and superficial reports were produced about meetings of candidates with population mainly in Tbilisi. A pattern of pre-election reporting is the following: a candidate meets with population of this or that district, listens to their problems and promises to solve those problems while journalists do not ask additional questions of candidates as to how, by what means and resources the candidate intends to deliver on his/her promise;
- Newscasts during the reporting period were mainly focused on news related to Covid-19 and the confrontation between political parties, paying significantly less attention to social problems or challenges existing outside Tbilisi. The majority of radio channels spent little time on covering events in regions, social issues and politicians' opinions about those issues;
- Regional radios (Atinati, Marneuli, Dzveli Kalaki, Samkhretis Karibche) have again failed to report about regional developments in accordance with high standards. Newscasts were focused on events unfolding in Tbilisi. When reporting local news, journalists rarely asked critical questions of politicians and covered their activities or statements without analyzing them or verifying the facts. The coverage of local governments was particularly problematic in this regard. Because of lack of critical questions and a superficial reporting, activities and projects of local authorities were presented mainly in a neutral or positive light on the majority of regional radios. Critical handling of local governments' performance is particularly important in the run-up to local elections. Passivity of journalists creates a serious problem especially when regional events are not covered by central radio channels. Regional radio broadcasters do have an opportunity to fill a gap in the coverage of developments outside Tbilisi, to be the first to report exclusive news and to highlight problems of their respective regions, cities or districts;
- A trend observed in radios in 2020, whereby the bulk of newscasts comprised of journalists citing public statements of politicians, has been maintained. To better perceive statements of politicians it is important to allocate more time to direct reporting so as to enable audience to hear statements and views of politicians directly from them. Indirect reporting of subjects may suggest that journalists do not work much on issues themselves and merely convey the statements officially issued by opposition parties or government or the information released by news agencies;

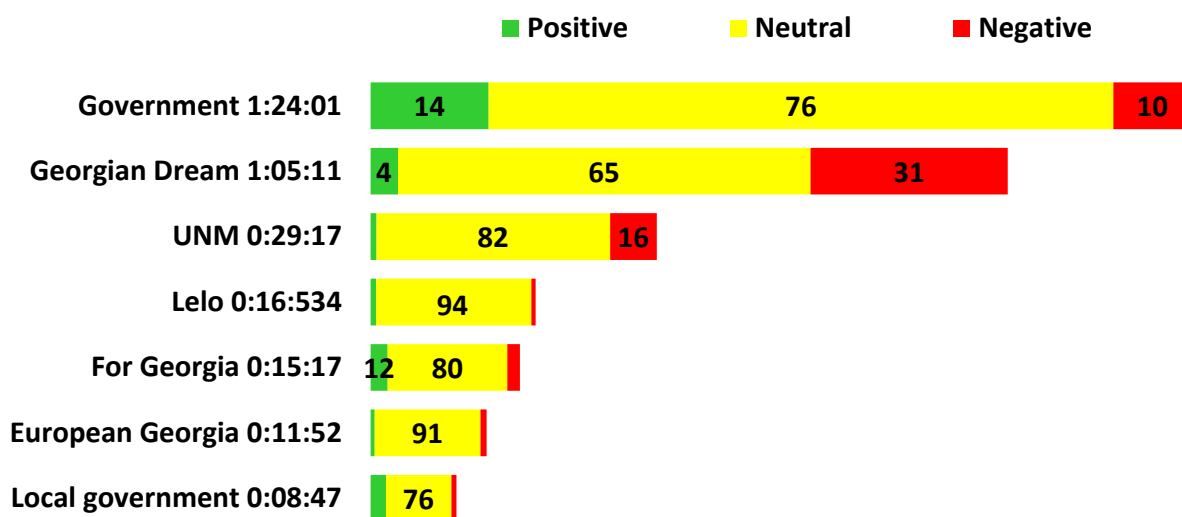
- A positive trend of adhering to standards of professional ethics has been maintained on radio channels. Journalists do not use hate speech or apply sexist or homophobic vocabulary; nor do they make statements that may incite violence or intimidate against any of the genders; no instances of manipulating with sound/music has been observed either. All this is an important factor in covering political processes and election campaigns, but radio broadcasters still fall short of high standards because of serious challenges listed above. In the setting of political tension and polarization, the problems that were identified as a result of media monitoring conducted in 2020 have become more acute – the quality of news stories has mostly deteriorated while a superficial coverage of events is not conducive to making an informed choice by population.

# Charts

**Coverage of subjects (%)**  
**Sakartvelos Radio**  
 5 July - 25 September, 2021



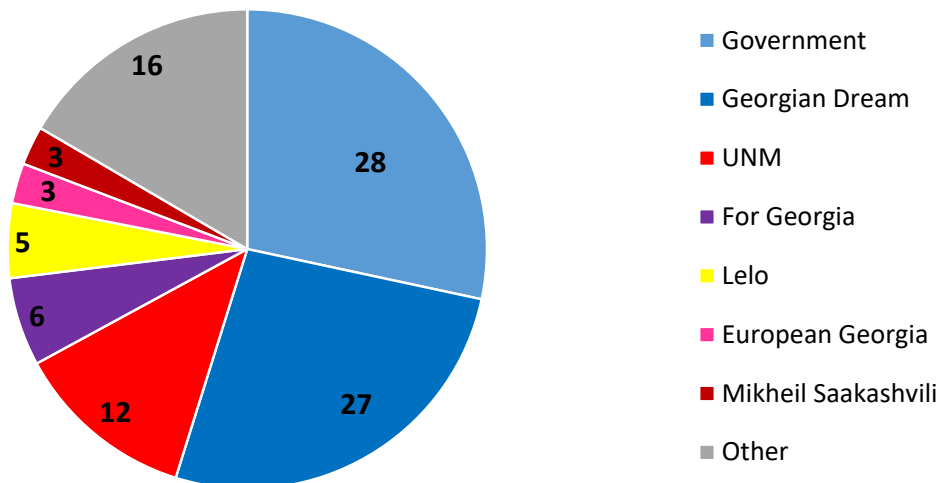
**Cpverage of subjects by tone of reporting (%)**  
**Sakartvelos Radio**  
 5 July - 25 September, 2021



### Coverage of subjects (%)

#### Radio Palitra

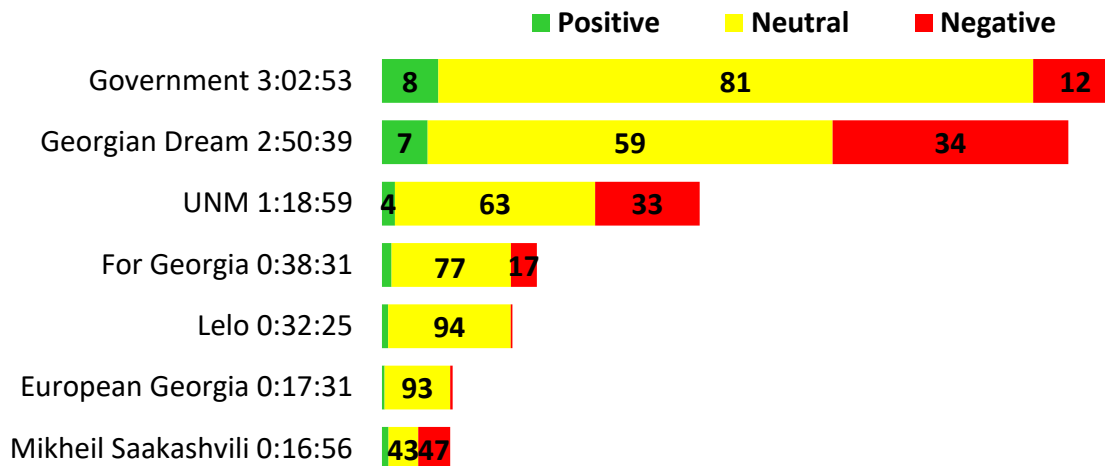
5 July - 25 September, 2021



### Coverage of subjects by tone of reporting (%)

#### Radio Palitra

5 July - 25 September, 2021

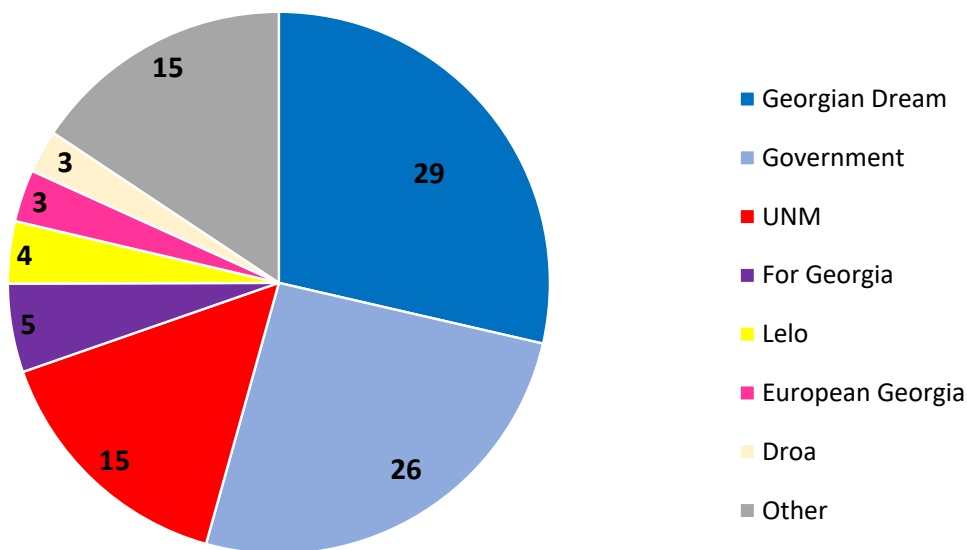




### Coverage of subjects (%)

#### Pirveli Radio

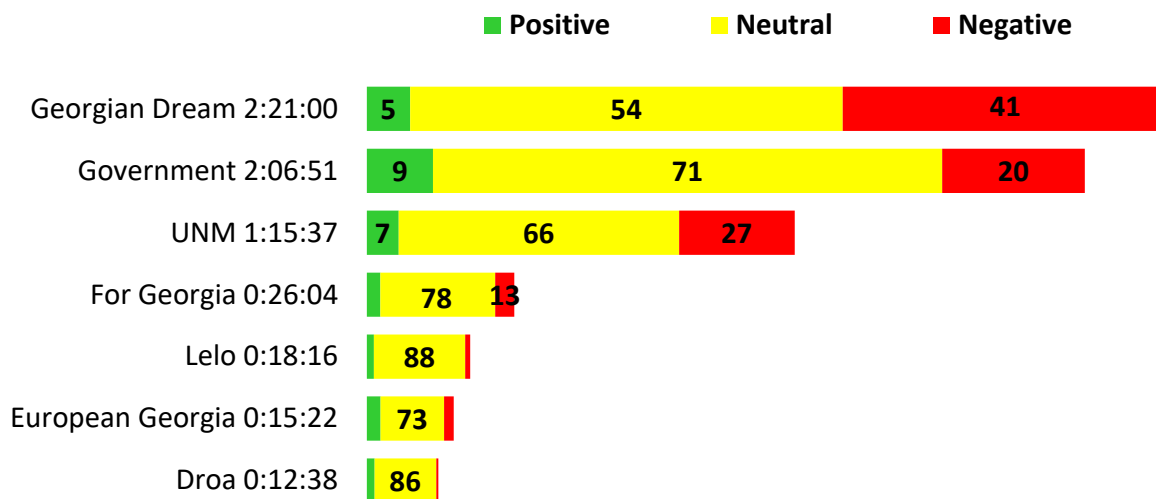
5 July - 25 September, 2021



### Coverage of subjects by tone (%)

#### Pirveli Radio

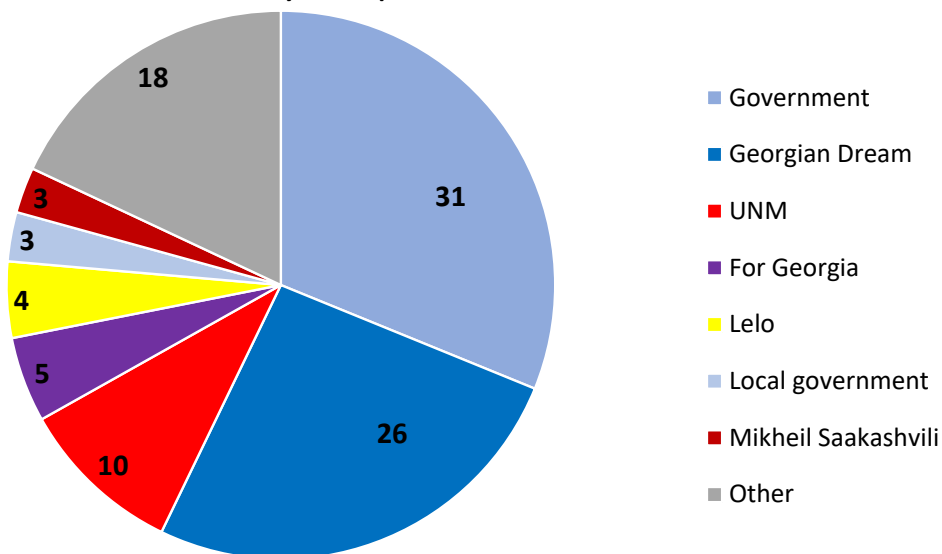
5 July - 25 September, 2021



### Coverage of subjects (%)

#### Radio Fortuna

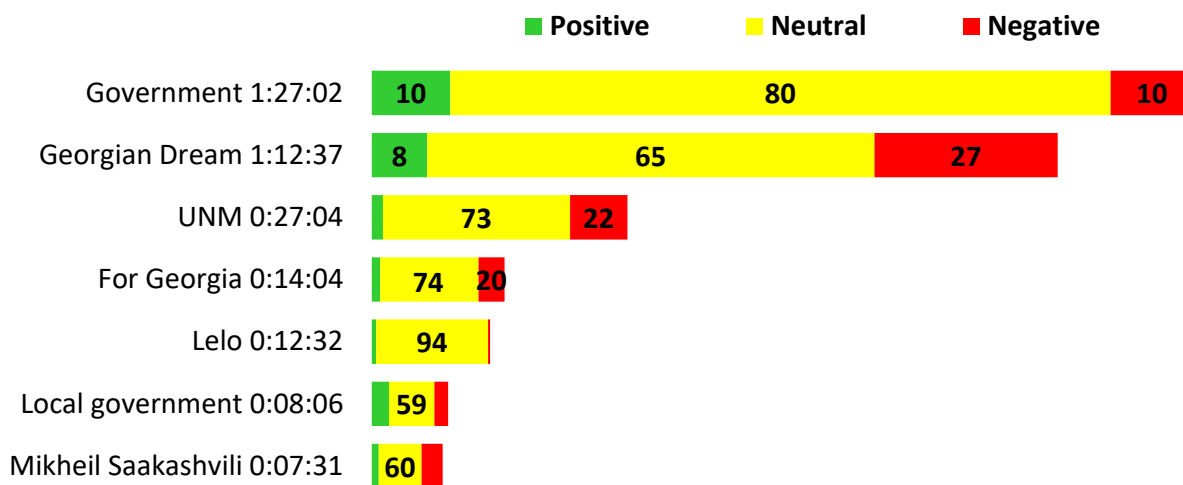
5 July - 25 September, 2021



### Coverage of subjects by tone (%)

#### Radio Fortuna

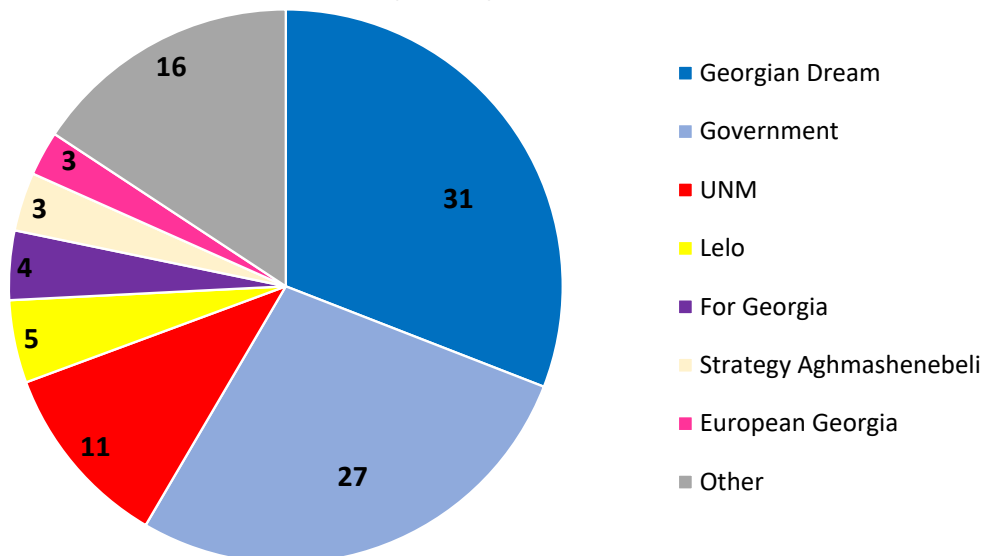
5 July - 25 September, 2021



### Coverage of subjects (%)

#### Radio Maestro

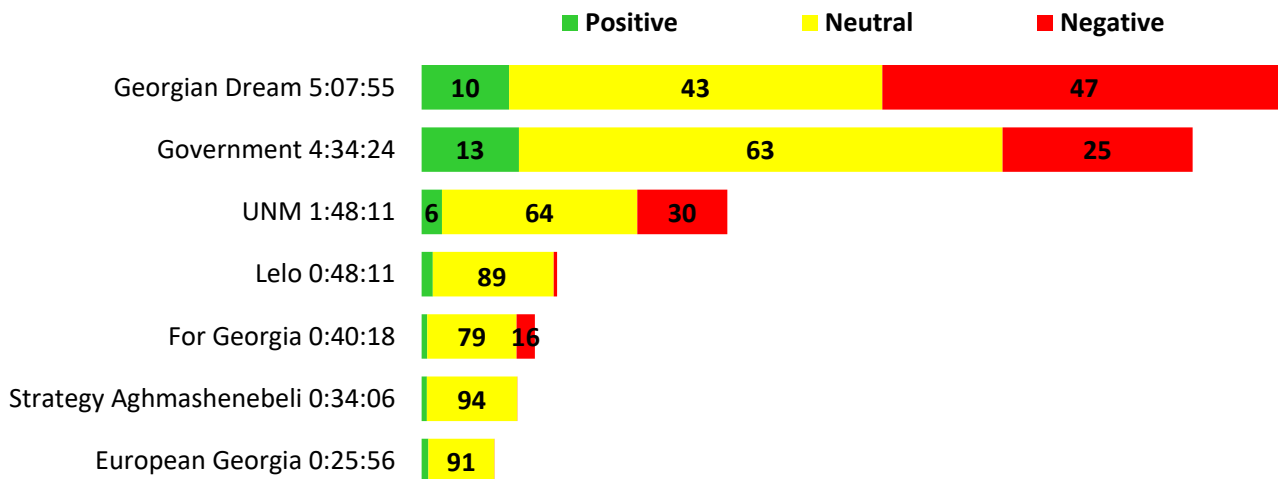
5 July - 25 September, 2021



### Coverage of subjects by tone (%)

#### Radio Maestro

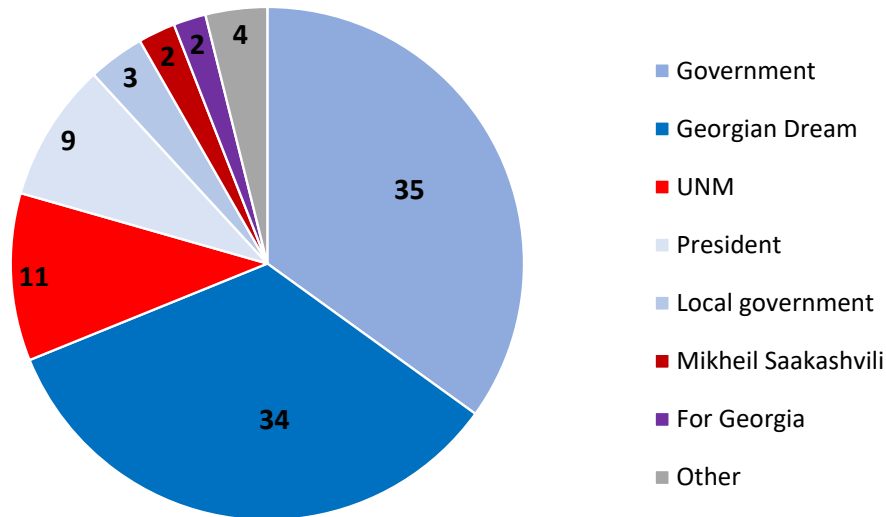
5 July - 25 September, 2021



### Coverage of subjects (%)

#### Radio Imedi

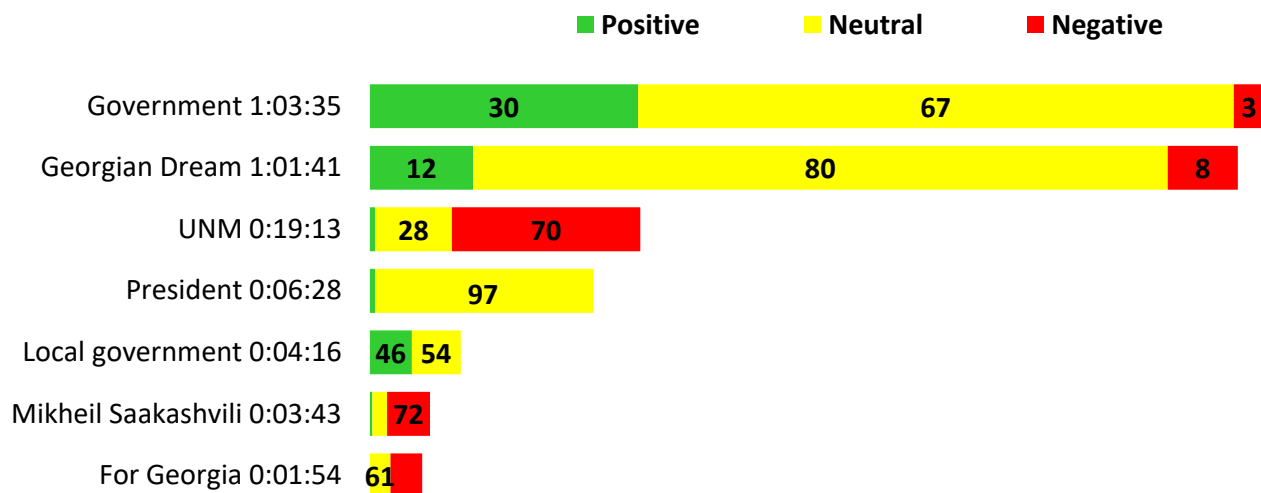
5 July - 25 September, 2021



### Coverage of subjects by tone (%)

#### Radio Imedi

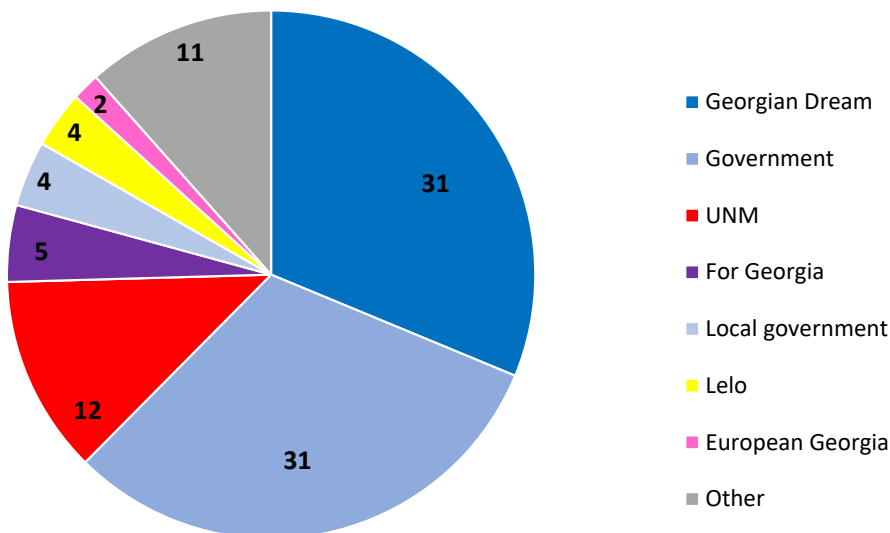
5 July - 25 September, 2021



### Coverage of subjects (%)

#### Radio Hereti

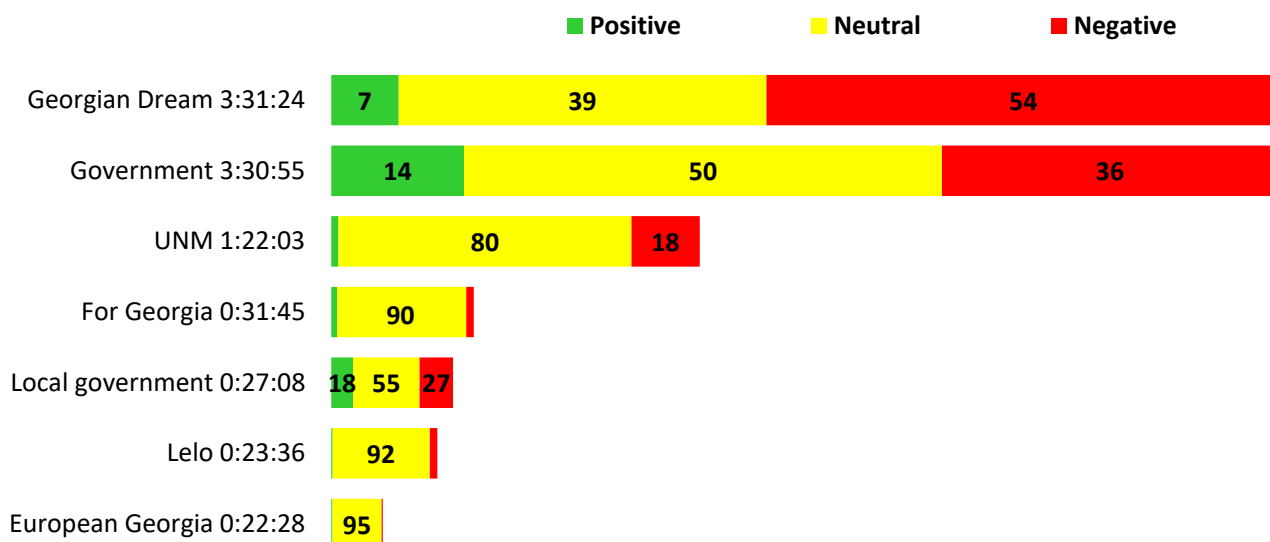
5 July - 25 September, 2021



### Coverage of subjects by tone (%)

#### Radio Hereti

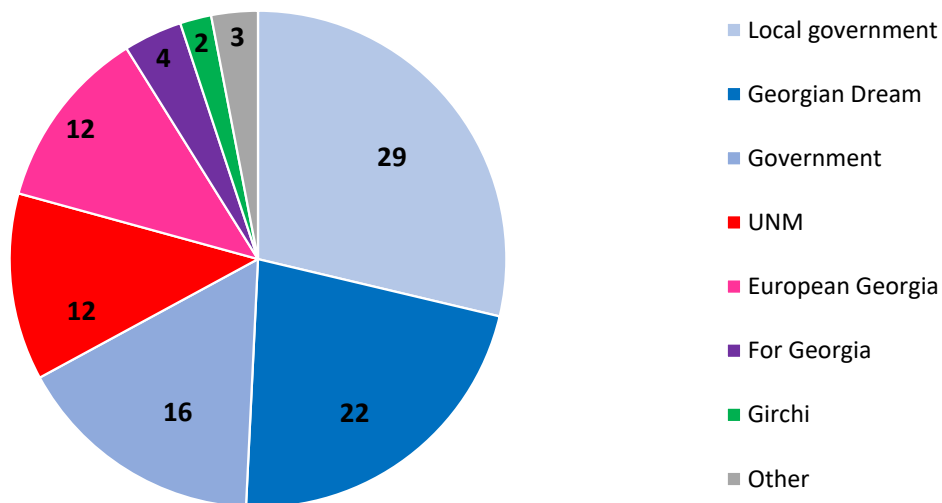
5 July - 25 September, 2021



### Coverage of subjects (%)

#### Radio Marneuli

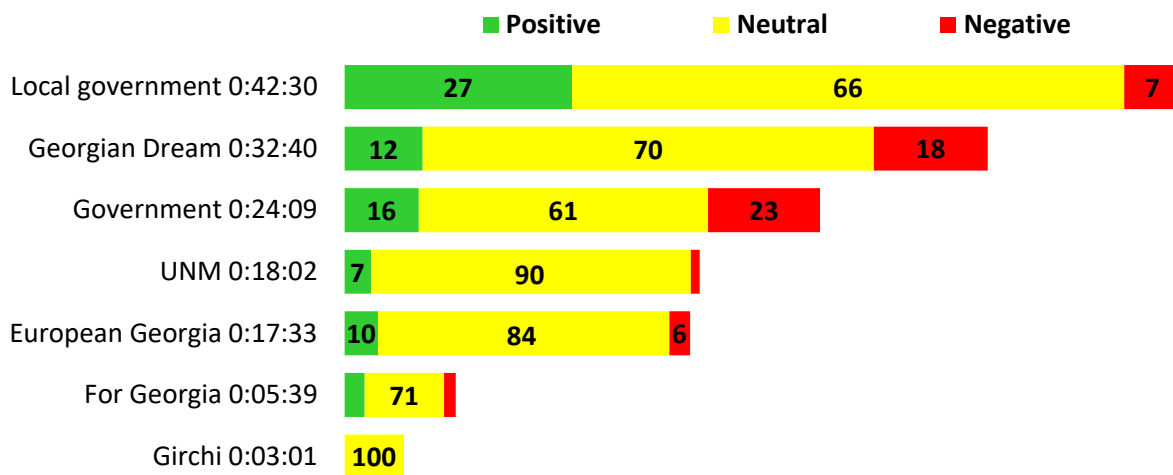
1 July - 25 September, 2021



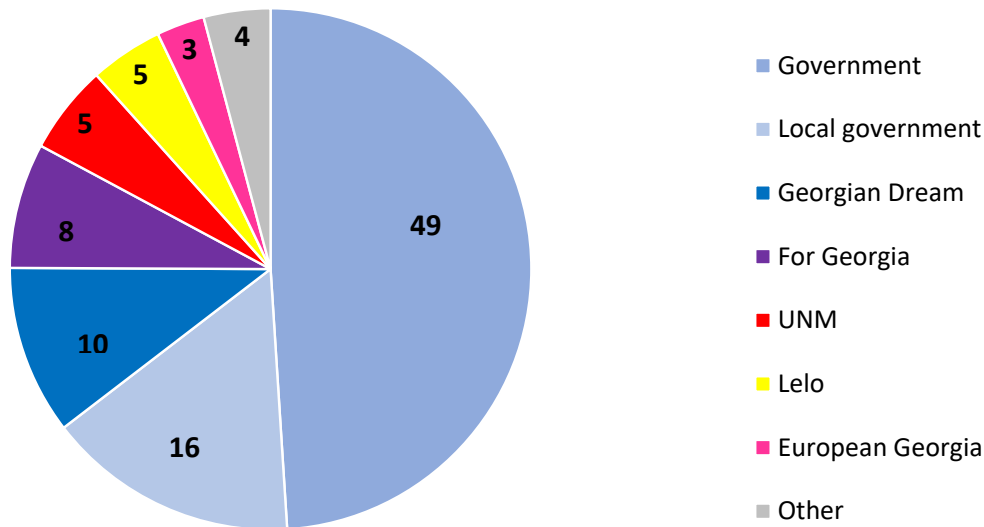
### Coverage of subjects by tone (%)

#### Radio Marneuli

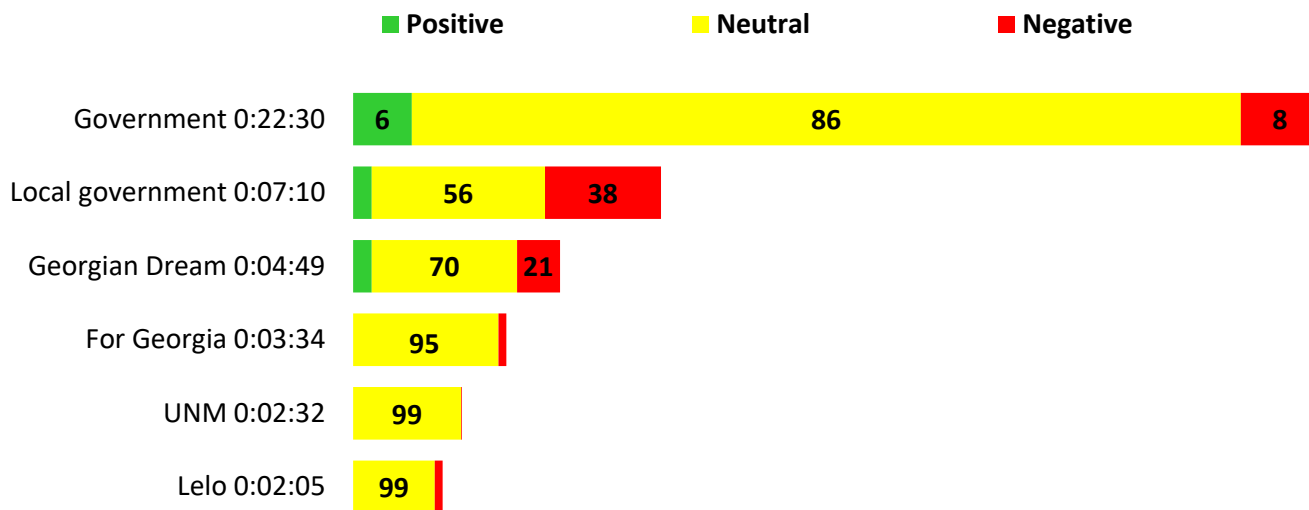
5 July - 25 September, 2021



### Coverage of subjects (%) Radio Samkhretis Karibche 5 July - 25 September, 2021



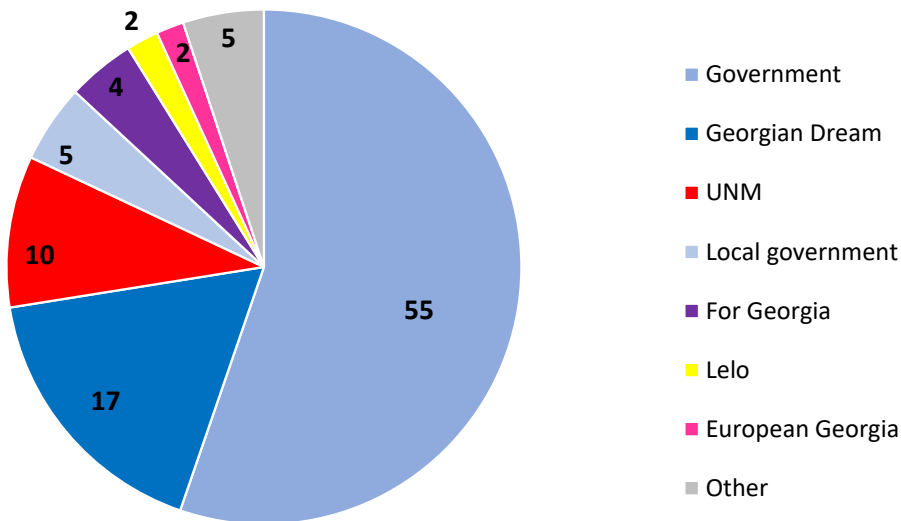
### Coverage of subjects by tone (%) Radio Samkhretis Karibche 5 July - 25 September, 2021



### Coverage of subjects(%)

#### Radio Atinati

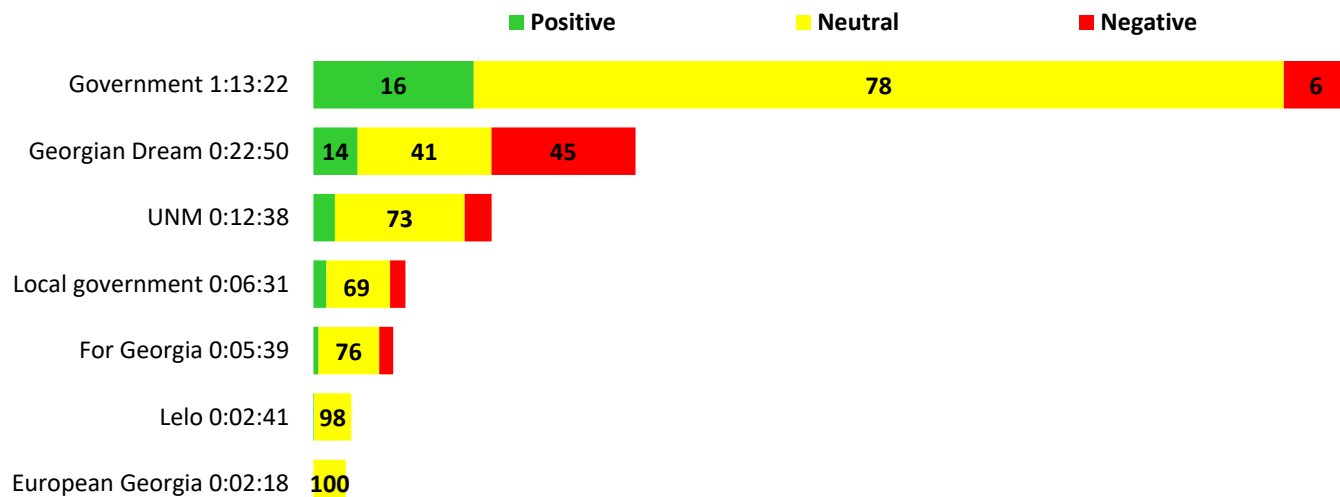
5 July - 25 September, 2021



### Coverage of subjects by tone (%)

#### Radio Atinati

5 July - 25 September, 2021

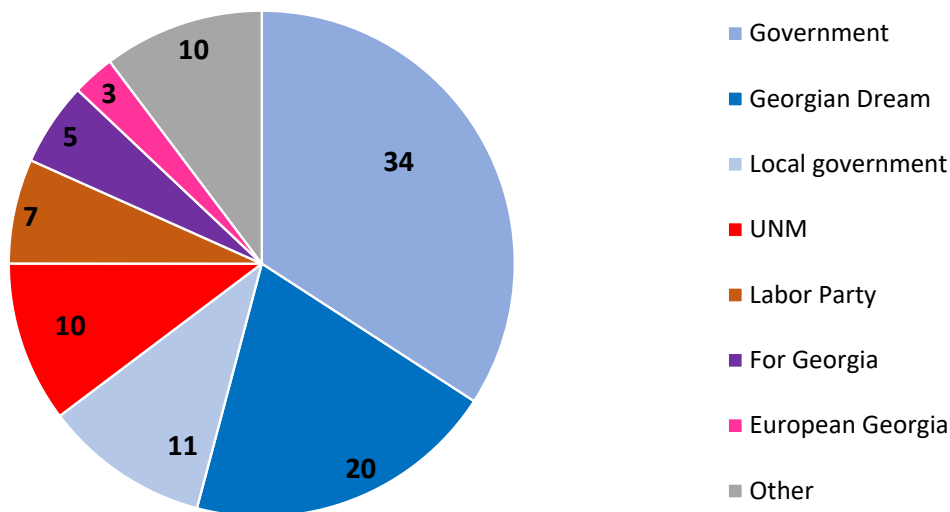




### Coverage of subjects (%)

#### Radio Dzveli Kalaki

5 July - 25 September, 2021



### Coverage of subjects by tone (%)

#### Radio Dzveli Kalaki

5 July - 25 September, 2021

