



ევროკავშირი  
საქართველოსთვის  
The European Union for Georgia



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

## Print Media Monitoring

### Interim Report

15 June - 31 August 2020



# INTERNEWS GEORGIA

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## Project background

“Internews – Georgia”, within the framework of the project “Study and Research on Elections Media Coverage for 2020 Parliamentary Elections in Georgia” funded by European Union (EU) and implemented by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is conducting the monitoring of print media outlets. The monitoring started on June 15, 2020 and it covered the following newspapers: “Rezonansi”, “Akhali Taoba”, “Kviris Palitra”, “Aliya”, “Asaval-Dasavali”, “Qronika+”, “Sakartvelo Da Msoplio”, “Guria News”.

## Monitoring Methodology

Purpose of the print media monitoring is to establish to which extent equal conditions are created while reporting on the activities of political subjects during the run-up to the elections, and the degree of adherence to journalistic standards.

The monitoring consists of quantitative and qualitative research components. The quantitative monitoring defines the indicators, which can be quantified and measured: space allocated to the subjects, tone of coverage (positive, neutral, negative), gender of subjects (male or female). The quantitative monitoring is focused on indicators that are difficult to quantify: timely coverage of facts, distortion of information, unbalanced coverage, bias, facts-based coverage, diversity of sources of information, manipulation with photos, adherence to ethical or professional standards, also any other facts, which are important for assuring the quality of information.

The monitoring is focused on the qualified and non-qualified electoral subjects, parties and politicians, which are taking part in the 2020 parliamentary elections. Subjects of monitoring are: the government (central, local, region of Adjara), Prime Minister, President and electoral administration.

The monitoring methodology takes into consideration that some politicians may change the party, political parties may merge, or leave the coalition /bloc, or register under another name.

The monitoring is carried out not only in connection to the stories prepared on the topic of elections, but also regarding all the stories, where the monitoring subjects are spoken about.

This report covers the results of the print media monitoring for the period from June 15 to August 31.

## Findings of newspaper monitoring during the period of June 15 – August 31:

- The most frequently covered subjects were as follows: the government, the Georgian Dream - Democratic Georgia, United National Movement and the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili;
- While covering the monitoring subjects, the negative tone largely prevailed over the neutral one, and the positive tone was hardly ever observed. The following newspapers were the

exceptions: “Rezonansi”, “Akhali Taoba” and “Guria News”, where the subjects were mostly covered with a neutral tone.

- The newspapers “Asaval-Dasavali” and “Qronika+” stood out with their usage of abusive and discriminatory terminology;
- Compared to previous years, there were less cases of using hate speech in the newspaper “Aliya”;
- Compared to previous years, the number of abusive and discriminatory photos has decreased (with the exception of “Asaval-Dasavali”);
- The newspaper “Sakartvelo Da Msoplio” was distinguished with a clear-cut pro-Russian and anti-western dispositions;
- Dissemination of unverified information remains to be a problem: the journalists were not reluctant to bring grave allegations against some politicians without evidence;
- Accusatory statements of respondents were also reported without doublechecking. In most cases, the objects of criticism did not have an opportunity to respond with their comments;
- Majority of newspapers offered their readers the materials that were prepared based on one source only, which did not let them get familiar with different opinions regarding a specific issue;
- One of the main challenges of the newspapers is that they write articles based on dubious sources of information (“according to the backstage information”, “according to the widespread information”, “as our sources informed”, “some people say that”);
- There were indirect cases of gender-sensitive coverage in the print media. Both the respondents and journalists supports strengthening the gender stereotypes.

## Rezonansi

*The daily newspaper “Rezonansi” offered an intensive coverage of processes developed in the country. The newspaper was distinguished for the diversity of topics - it covered political and other issues that were important to the readers, also economic and social topics as well. In general, there was no bias observed in the articles towards any political party or a politician.*

The newspaper “Rezonansi” most frequently covered the Government (26%) and the “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (25%). 9% was dedicated to the “United National Movement”, and 6% - to the “European Georgia”. The election campaign had not entered its active phase during the reporting period yet, the parties were not very active, This is why the coverage rates for other political unions participating in the elections does not exceed 3%.

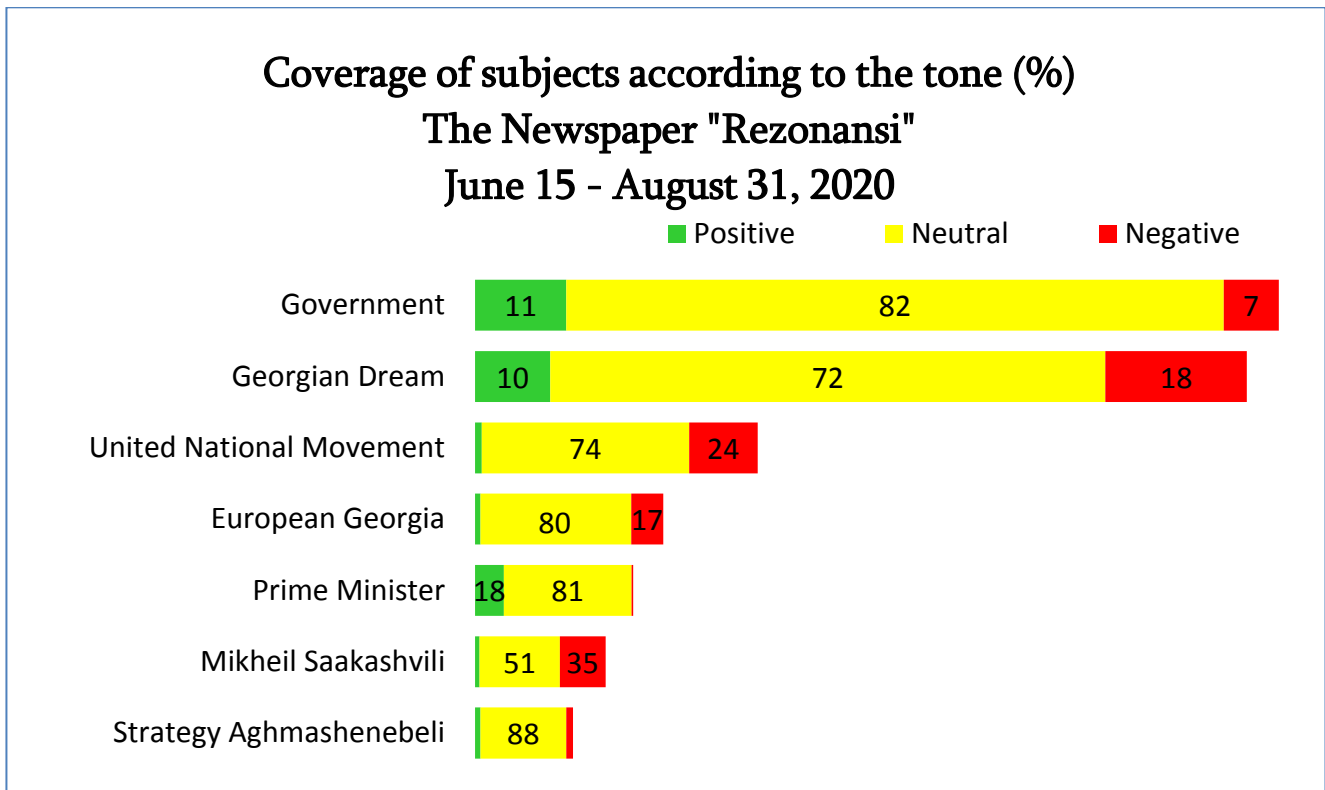
The newspaper is balanced, and there was no biased attitude to any political force. Opinions of representatives of the ruling team and those of the opposition parties were covered. However, the journalists seldom asked critical and hard questions, and the negative tone to the subjects mostly results from the statements of opponents. On average, the monitoring subjects were covered with a neutral tone, with the rate of 80%. The highest rate (11%) of positive tone was observed in regard to the Government, which was at a large extent caused by the activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Minister (investigated cases, official meetings, charity).

There were cases of sharply positive and negative coverage of specific monitoring subjects. For example, the article published in the issue of June 16 with the headline “The Georgian Dream nominates Japaridze to be the majoritarian candidate in Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti” provided a clearly positive coverage about the activities of the governor, who was a potential majoritarian nominee, based on the local population; however, activities of the second potential candidate were described with a sharply negative tone.

We observed indirect cases of gender-sensitive coverage in the newspaper during the reporting period. For example, there was an interview with Alexander Elisashvili, leader of the political union “The Citizens”: *“I feel nauseating, they gossip like women from countryside, Bokeria and his corrupt friends should not be agitated like wayward piglets” (25.06, page 1-2).*

From the gender standpoint, statement of Giga Bokeria, one of the leaders of the “European Georgia” also draws our attention, where he is talking about the gender quotas in the Parliament: *“quotas are not acceptable, not because that the problem does not exist – we have dire problems in the area of women’s right... instead of fighting those ones who view the women as secondary citizens and such people are sitting in the hall and cast their votes as hypocrites, when they repeat themselves that women’s place is in the kitchen. Now they want to have them as dummies.” (2.07, page 4).*

The newspaper was distinguished with the diversity of sources and topics. Information was corroborated with opinions of specialists and statistical data. However, the exclusive, in-depth and more analytical, facts-based articles would have made the publication even more interesting for readers.



### Akhali Taoba

*The daily newspaper “Akhali Taoba” provided an intensive coverage of current issues taking place in the country. Other than political matters, it also covered social-economic issues. The publication stood out with a highly negative tone while reporting about the ruling party. There were no cases of gross violation of ethical norms observed while covering the subjects.*

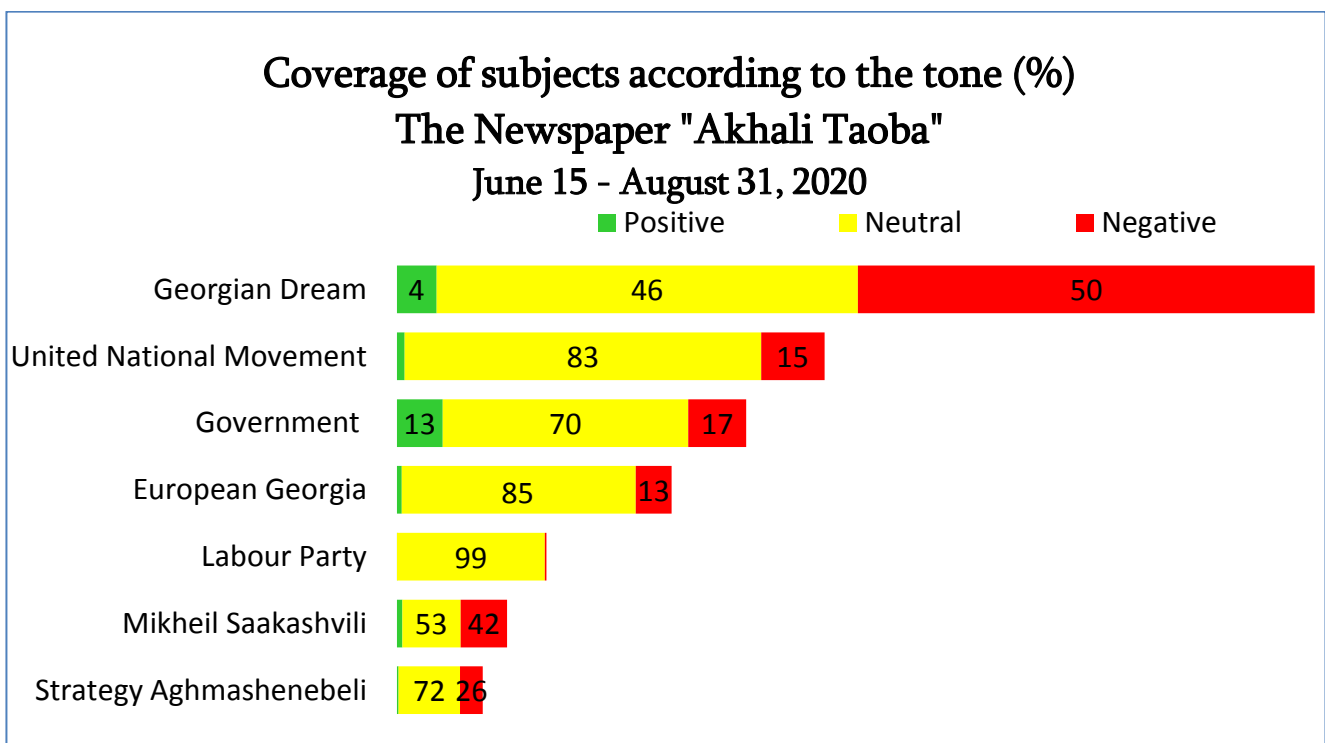
During the reporting period, the newspaper allocated the most space to the coverage of the “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (27%) “United National Movement” (12%), the Government (10%) and the “European Georgia” (8%). Coverage of other monitoring subjects did not exceed 4%. The subjects were covered with a neutral tone in 70% of cases. However, the “Georgian Dream” was an exception, with a negative coverage of 50%.

Despite the journalists did not reveal an explicitly biased attitude, the balance was shifted toward the opposition parties in the newspaper. The high rate of negative tone against the “Georgian Dream” and the government, compared to others, was basically caused by the statements of critical respondents (politicians, political scientists), whereas the objects of criticism did have a little chance to respond with their counter comments.

13% of positive tone, which was observed for the coverage of the government, was the result of the reports about the activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Almost every issue of the newspaper published information about an investigated case or trainings/meetings held at the Ministry.

Passing the law on gender quotes and incorporating it in the Election Code of Georgia served as a reason for another gender-sensitive statement: *“Bidzina Ivanishvili has a message in this respect, and this was demonstrated by nominating only one majoritarian candidate. There used to be an expression “woman in the kitchen”, and for Ivanishvili this expression is worded as “a woman in the list”* (interview with Sergo Ratiani, one of the leaders of the “European Georgia”, 21.07, page 3).

While commenting on the measures employed by the authorities against the coronavirus, Gigla Baramidze, secretary general of the “United Georgia – Democratic Movement” stated that *“it is not a victory when you close and shut down everything. Recently, Gakharia has been showing off and coquetting like a woman who wants to get married. It is interesting to know what he has to be bragging about”* (20.07, page 3).



### Asaval-Dasavali

*A weekly newspaper “Asaval-Dasavali” was distinguished with its negative attitude to every political force. The subject coverage tone was negative in most cases. We encountered many cases of violations of journalism standards and ethical norms in the publication, and the hate speech was also used.*

During the reporting period, the newspaper dedicated the most area to the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili (24%), “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (19%), “United National Movement” (14%) and the “European Georgia” (10%).

The subject coverage tone was negative in most cases. The exception was the Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia, who was covered with in a positive and neutral context most of the time. Basically, it were the respondents who expressed positive attitudes toward him. For example: *“/Bidzina Ivanishvili/ needs people like Gakharia beside him, to bring things to the end! Therefore, many Giorgi Gakharias in the government!”* (13-19.07, page 5); *“Gakharia is the brains of this team! This talented and honest man told the UNM people – I will finish you! So, let him keep his promise”* (27.07 – 2.08, page 13); *“Giorgi Gakharia is such a strong and effective Prime Minister, that he should be the first official of the country again”* (17-23.08, page 12);

Negative and abusive attitudes toward the monitoring subjects were revealed in the respondents statements, also in the texts of journalists. For example: *“Yeah, indeed, how come Vashadze can feel any shame? It does not matter whether you are the senior Vashadze or the younger Vashadze, shame and modesty are strange to them, like caviar to the general and pearls before swine!”* (10-16.08, page 4); *“it would be interesting, where did they survey the people – in the UNM, Girchi’s brothel or Khazaradze-Usupashvili’s joint toilet?”* (20-26.07, page 10).

There were many cases of using hate speech: *“They are from the sect who are fighting against occupiers at the dividing line with their pants down and bare bottoms. They are the ones from the LGBT pack, who are dreaming of holding gay-prides and having the men in dress and pantihose walking down the Rustaveli Avenue.”* (27.07-2.08, page 21); *“You, Levan Berdzenishvili! There will be no salvation for faggots or gay henchmen, for example, your brother – a rogue Davit Berdzenishvili, who was bellowing with a dribbling mouth in front of the Parliament – we want Georgia – country of sexual minorities”* (3-9.08, page 13.).

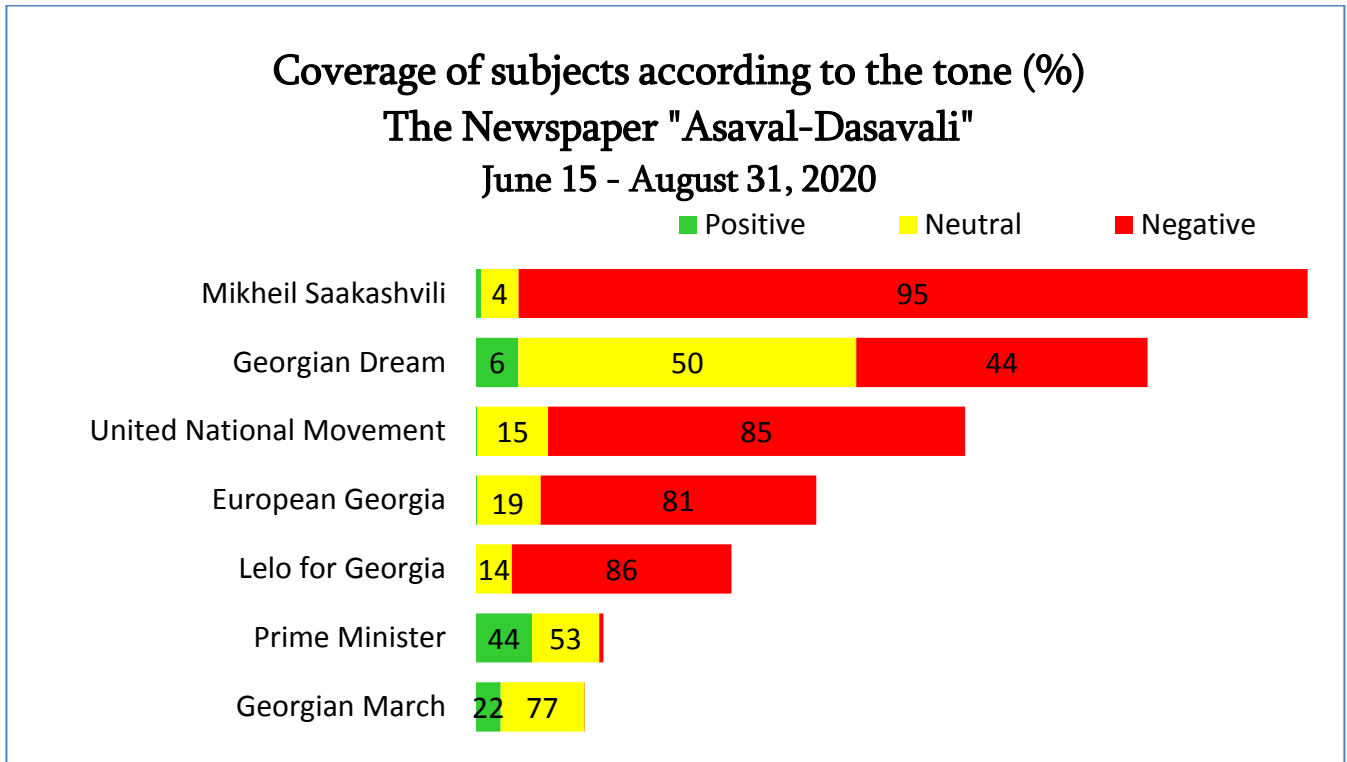
The publication also contained indirect cases of covering the gender-sensitive topics, when “femininity” or “womanlike behavior” is used as an insult. For example: *“These are hard times for Gubaz Sanikidze, nicknamed as “traditianalist” and “Gubass”! If he were a woman, we would blame so-called “critical days” for all these, but he looks like a man at least with his appearance, and perhaps, it is again because of “politbitchian’s critical days!””* (13-19.07, page.15).

There was no balance observed in the articles and coverage of events was one-sided. A reader did not have an opportunity to get familiar with different opinions. There were some doubts about the trustworthiness of sources, because quite often it would be “a reliable source”, “verified information”, “according to the information we have”.

Majority of photos would carry a negative implication to the people portrayed there or had a negative inscription.

There were many cases of violating journalism standards and ethical norms in “Asaval-Dasavali”, and hate speech was also used a lot. The newspaper did not try to get rid of unsubstantiated arguments and usage of abusive terminology.





### Kviris Palitra

*“Kviris Palitra” is a weekly newspaper, which intensively covered the processes taking place in the country. There was no bias observed to any political party or a politician in the articles. The newspaper was distinguished with the diversity of topics – economic, social, infrastructural issues were covered together with political ones. The journalists were not reluctant to ask burning questions, and they tried to cover the events from different angles, in more depths.*

During the reporting period, the newspaper most of all covered the “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (30%), followed by the Government and the “United National Movement” with 10-10%, respectively. The coverage was equal for “Lelo for Georgia”, the Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia and the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili. Out of the total area dedicated to the monitoring subjects, their share was 7-7% per each.

While covering the subjects, the neutral and negative tone largely prevailed over the positive one, which was mostly attributed to the statements of respondents. However, the journalists did not really avoid asking sharp questions; they tried to provide in-depth coverage of issues and affirm their critical attitude toward the central or local authorities regarding specific issues. For example: *“this government is about to finish its eight-year presence in power, but in fact they have not taken even a single step for regulating online gambling despite loud statements... this is why the government owes people a lot, or they are in trouble, for which they will have to assume responsibility perhaps during the elections” (6-12.07, page 26).*

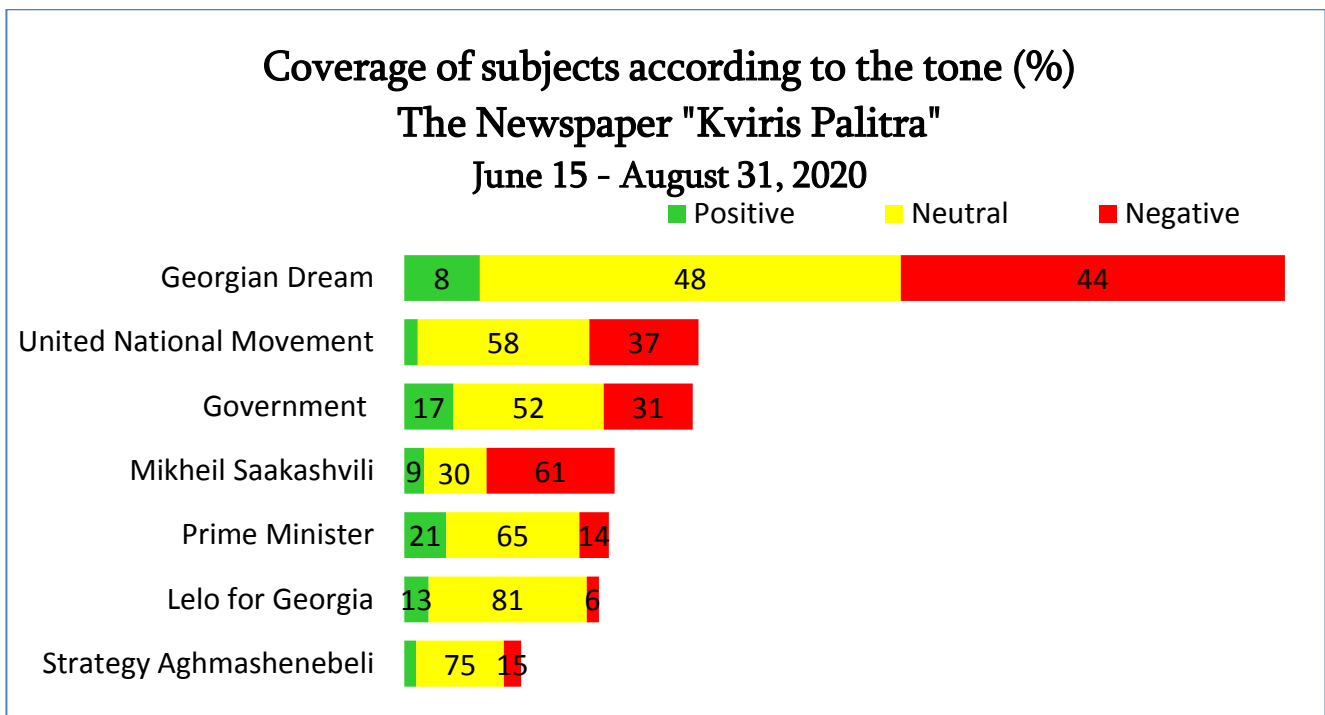
Rehabilitation of the Ilia Chavchavadze Avenue in Tbilisi was covered with criticism. The newspaper published articles about this problem in two issues, which offered different positions. The issue of August 3<sup>rd</sup> “Deep swearing, plenty of fumes and many sour faces!” severe comments of citizens are provided, which is followed by the interview with Davit Meskhishvili, chairman of the Transport and Road Association of Georgia, who provides critical evaluation of the new infrastructure project. There was an interview with Maia Bitadze, deputy mayor of Tbilisi published in the newspaper on August 17, who is talking about the positive sides of the project.

“Kviris Palitra” stood out with diversity of topics, sources of information and respondents. readers had an opportunity to get familiar with the opinions of politicians, also specialists and representatives of the public.

Questions/comments of journalists were critical in some cases. For example: *“the ruling party started an active election campaign. They are holding meetings in their regions; however, it is a fact that the “Georgian Dream’s” PR tools are quite outdated. They still stick to a negative narrative, always mention the rule of the “National Movement”, and endlessly speak about the flaws of the Saakashvili’s government” (17-23.08, page 2); “... We have seen the “address on Facebook” of the Mayor of Tbilisi against specific televisions. This is a little unacceptable from the authorities, as they themselves are linked to the so-called factory of trolls and bots. Don’t you think that the conduct of the authorities may jeopardize the freedom of speech?” (29.06-5.07, page 2).*

We did not reveal the facts of violating the gender equality while covering the events in the newspaper. However, there was a case when the respondent touched upon a gender sensitive topic herself, though in a covert manner, which solidifies the stereotype that a woman needs protection - interview with Ana Dolidze, leader of the “Movement for the People”: *“Although I was appointed by the President, and I was also a woman, Salomé Zourabichvili has never spoken up, neither did she support institutionally, or personally.” (22-28.06, page. 30).*

Overall, the newspaper is balanced and impartial. We did not observe any facts of the violation of ethical norms of journalism or hate speech.



#### Qronika +

*The weekly newspaper “Qronika +” provided an active coverage of events taking place in the country. It was distinguished with a high negative tone against the ruling party and the team. There were cases of gross violation of ethical norms while covering the subjects. the newspaper was not reluctant to ask biased and abusive questions.*

During the reporting period, the biggest coverage was observed for the “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (30%) and the “United National Movement” (10%), followed by the “Labour Party”, the Government and the “Strategy Aghmashenebeli”, each with 6%.

The newspaper did not try to avoid criticism of the ruling party and the team; however, in many cases the common opinions and hard questions expressed by the journalist were more biased than corroborated with fact, and sometimes they were even abusive and unethical.

For example: *“sorry, but after looking at some candidates nominated by the government and the opposition in certain constituencies, would not it be better to vote for onions instead of them?”* (Interview with Pikria Chikhradze, 4.08.2020, page 20); *“Ivanishvili is telling the public, - yes, you deserve the talk by Volski and by the one transplanted into alcoholic nirvana, and by nobody else”* (“Kojori Cluster”, 28.07.2020, page 32); *“When will you realize that the GD’s political will was to rip off the State Budget and not to save the country?”* (interview with Johnny Gigani, 11.08.2020 page 34); The article with the headline: *Stories from Kakheti* by “Zero Irakla”, “Egg Romana”, “Quince Gela”, “Harry Potter from Gurjaani”, “Slogan Gurama” and “Shiolpsha” (04.08.2020 page 34.)

The respondents also stood out with their sharp statements against the ruling team. Consequently, the highest negative tone of coverage was observed for the “Georgian Dream” and the government. The Prime Minister had 50% of negative coverage as well.

The newspaper provided a negative coverage about the President’s activities as well (95%). The article “Makvala in Red and Salomé with her liking to one-to-one fight” (21.07.2020. page 21), was interesting in regard to the gender-sensitive coverage of the President as well. The image of a female politician is affected with gender abusive expressions in the article: *“It is hilarious when your command of the Georgian language is frowned upon by a lady whose noun declensions and verb conjugations are as successful as her Easter cakes – squashed and burnt”, “Salomé Zourabichvili will keep on making astounding statements that are damaging for the state, and keep on walking barefoot, picking peaches or kneading Elarji, eating kidney beans and putting Jonjoli into it by the handful – this is what she thinks the Presidency is about”.*

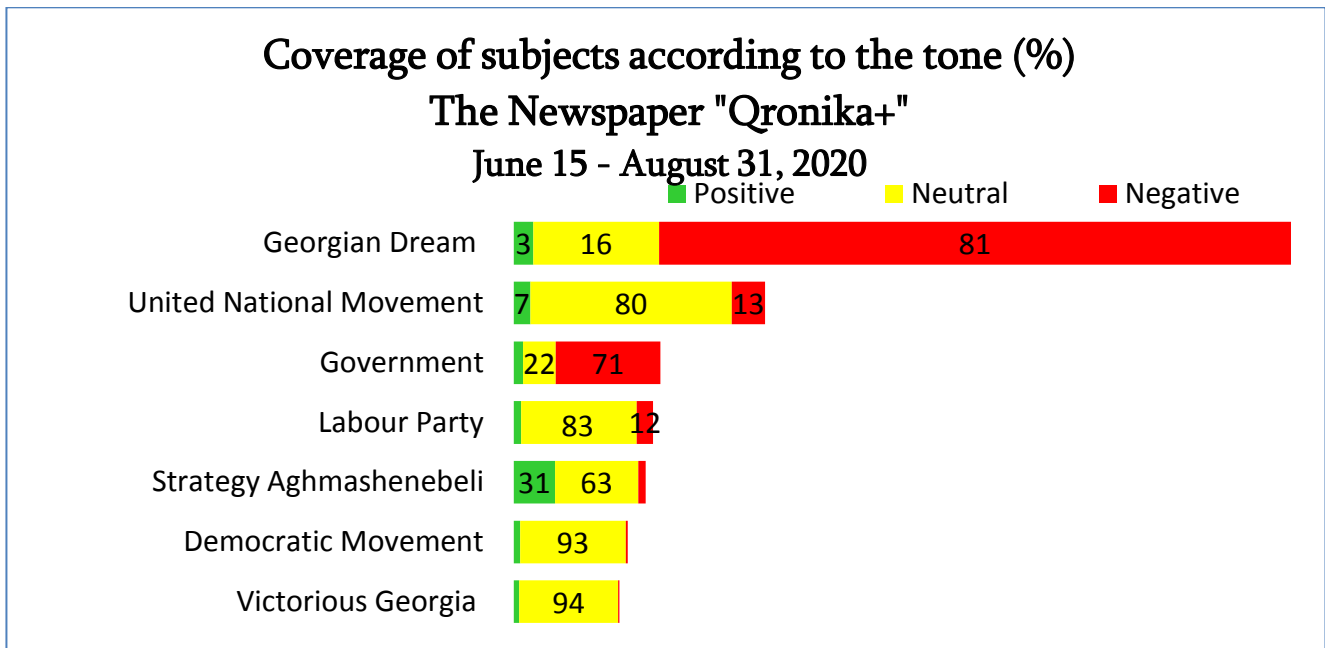
Other cases of gender-sensitive coverage were observed in the newspaper “Qronika+” – an interview with Bezhan Natelashvili, member of the Labour Party, where the respondent tries to underline the appearance of a female politician and this way belittle her actions: *“Mdinaradze and Talakvadze, also Kobakhidze and that woman with curly hair – Tea Tsulukiani”(16.06.2020, page 10).*

The newspaper published an interview with Giorgi Gugava, member of the Labour Party on July 14, where he gives his feedback about passing the law on gender quota in the Election Code of Georgia by the Parliament. Abusive evaluations are repeated both in the journalist’s question and the politician’s response:

**Journalist:** *“when we learned about the so-called women’s quota, our party leader asked a rhetoric question – I don’t understand, are we voting for MPs or sexual organs?”... Why were you repulsed, is it because you don’t have women that you could enlist into the party list?”*

**Giorgi Gugava:** *The parliament is the main body of state governance and should it be formed based on who represents which gender? Does it mean that we should condense everything down to sexual organs and the problem will be resolved this way somehow?”; “introducing the mandatory quota is an insult for our nation, history and culture, and not only women, but men as well!”*

We often observed the violation of journalism standards and ethical norms in the newspaper “Qronika +”, coupled with ungrounded arguments and usage of abusive terminology. The newspaper’s reader does not have an opportunity to get familiar with other different opinions and issues covered from various angles.



### Sakartvelo da Msoplio

*A weekly newspaper "Sakartvelo Da Msoplio" demonstrated less attention to the news reporting. The coverage of political processes in the country and that of any other issue was mostly done from the international standpoint. The publication stands out with its explicit pro-Russian and anti-western disposition.*

Out of the monitoring subjects, the most covered ones were: the "Georgian Dream" (33%), ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili (15%), the Government (14%) and the "United National Movement" (10%). The newspaper portrayed almost all the political forces with a very negative tone. There was no high rates of positive tone observed regarding any of the monitoring subjects.

The government, the "Georgian Dream" and the "United National Movement" was an object of severe criticism by journalists and respondents as well, which resulted in being covered with a highly negative tone.

"Sakartvelo Da Msoplio" is a clearly pro-Russian newspaper. Analytical articles or interviews are saturated with explicit anti-European and anti-American ideas, and Russia is a usual counterbalancing comparator for the West.

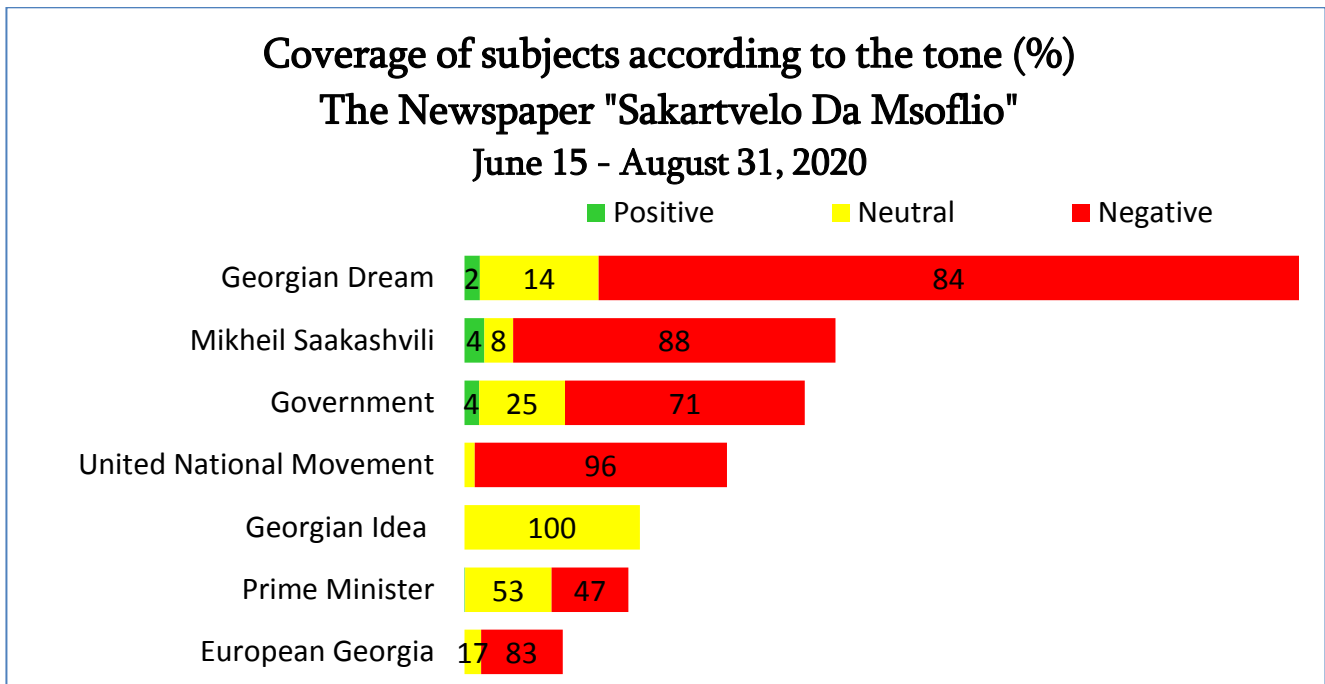
Materials published in the newspaper were biased and imbalanced. All the covered topics were discussed and evaluated in the light of the Georgian-Nato or Georgian-Russian relations. Almost all the publication on any topic (politics, economy, culture, education) suggests that the government and the ruling party should be more loyal to Russia: *"the GD made a mistake right at the very first stage of its relations with the Kremlin; the history of diplomacy is not familiar with the phenomenon of having a small nation cutting its ties at all the levels with its biggest neighbor"* (interview with a

political scientists Soso Tsintsadze, 22-28.04. page 7); *“unfortunately, Georgia is a member of another community – the western-American one. We have an aspiration toward the NATO, we have signed the Association Agreement and none of these has anything to do with resolving the relations with Russia; it was a very big mistake to write in the Constitution that Georgia should ensure to pursue the European way”*. (Interview with a political scientist Tamar Kiknadze, 22-28.07, page 6).

During the reporting period, one of the main topics was a letter sent by the American congressmen, where Bidzina Ivanishvili, chairperson of the Georgian Dream was mentioned as an oligarch and an ally to the Russian President. There was an interview published in the issue of June 17-22 with Gulbaat Rtskhiladze, head of the Eurasia Institute, where he is criticizing the leader of the “Georgian Dream” for not having sufficiently good relations with Russia: *“If Ivanishvili had settled relations with Russia, no American would have dared to speak to him with menace, because they would feel they have a strong back; if the US collapses tomorrow, people in Georgia would still think that it is still united and invincible; they will be thinking that the US still exists, they will be still waiting for a letter from them and will piss off again when the letter does arrive”*.

The newspaper reported little about specific activities and election promises of political parties. However, there were articles published about the elections, where the electoral environment and changes in the electoral system were discussed, together with the winning chances for the parties, how the events may develop after the elections, etc. Opinions expressed about the politicians were often negative and in some cases even abusive: *“can anyone mention one name and surname from Natelashvili’s pergola that would not make you nauseating, not to even mention voting for them?; After the shameful political marching of GD and UNM before the American and European high-ranking officials, the sympathy of the liberast west still ponders for the favor of Misha and UNM supporters”* (22-28.07, page 10).

Cases of gender-sensitive reporting were also observed: *“despite the errors made by the “Georgian Dream”, which can be regarded as crime, or despite having an idiot President (sorry, she is still a woman)... is it guaranteed for the “Georgian Dream” to win the elections?” “/Nika Machutadze/ hopes that Nato Chkheidze, wife of a multimillionaire Zaza Okruashvili (who moved from the “Alliance of the Patriots” to the party of Machutadze, the “rising star” of the Georgian Politics), will buy him the MP seat with her husband’s money”* (22-28.07, page 10).



### Aliya

*The weekly newspaper "Aliya" provides an active coverage of events developed in the country, but it did not really report much about the election topics, activities of political parties and their promises. The publication was distinguished with its negative attitude to every political force. The subject coverage tone was mostly negative, and the articles were frequently imbalanced. However, compared to the previous years, there were fewer instances of using hate speech.*

During the reporting period, the "Aliya" most of all covered the "Georgian Dream" (39%) and the Government (12%) among the monitoring subjects, and the "United National Movement" (8%) from the opposition political parties. The coverage tone was at large extent negative in regard to all the subjects.

The articles were imbalanced, and the events were covered from one side only. In some cases, the journalists were not reluctant to bring serious allegations against the ruling party and the political parties, but in some cases the allegations were not corroborated with facts and the object of their criticism did not have an opportunity to make a responsive comment. For example, *the articles: "good-for-nothing governor, hundred-dumplings-Vano and stinking rich officials of the Georgian Dream" (13-19.07, page 11-12); "When and why did Mamuka Mdinardze meet with Zurab Adeishvili and did people know about it at the GD?" (13-19.07, page 9), Tender Mafia, "kickbacks", funds transferred to the "Dream" and suspicious interests of Kakha Kaladze" (31.08-4.09, page 8).*

One of the important sources of information for the "Aliya" is the status updates from social networks. They occupy quite a large space in the newspaper. The newspaper publishes the opinions of celebrities and ordinary citizens as well on various topics, including the political ones. Different

positions are expressed there and quite often the sharp, critical and sometimes abusive statements are made about specific politicians. However, the object of criticism does not have an opportunity to respond.

There were crosswords published in the last page of the newspaper, which drew attention as they contained photos of politicians with question-poems, which mostly contained abusive expressions.

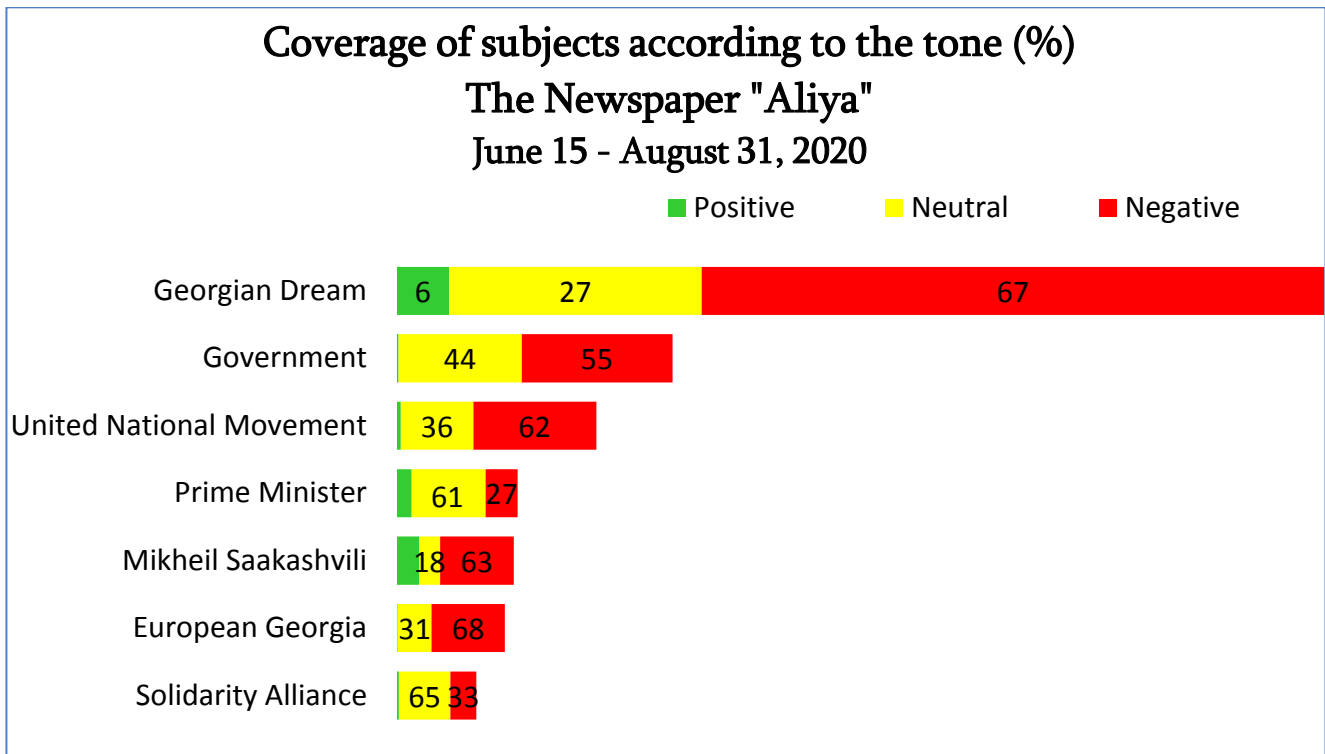
The newspaper often disseminates information obtained from suspicious sources. The journalists do not mention the source and add some phrases to the information in order to make them look more credible: “the exclusive news was sent to the “Aliya”, “according to the backstage information”, “according to the widespread information”, “as our source informs”.

Compared to previous years, the use of hate speech has sharply declined in the “Aliya”. This applies not only to the articles, but also to the photos published in the newspaper, which are mostly neutral and do not portray the politicians in a negative manner.

There was an indirect case of gender sensitive coverage observed in the newspaper, when “woman” is used as an insult. For example, there is a phrase from the post of a former MP Khatuna Khoveria: *“there is a swamp, and nothing will be built here, said madam Levan Berdzenishvili”* (6-12.07, page 7).

Evaluation of Irakli Kobakhidze’s statement by a journalists (“it would not be a bad idea if one out of four is a woman in their parliamentary party lists”): *“there will be many women in the GD’s parliamentary list. Chairperson of the ruling party has realized that the men who were herded into the Parliament from the streets did not live up to his expectations and many betrayed him. This is why now he is placing stakes on women, and the large share of the list will be made up from the friends of Ivanishvili’s wife Ekaterine Khvedelidze”*. (6-12.07, page 3).





#### Guria News

*The weekly newspaper the “Guria News” mostly reported the news about the region. The publication was distinguished with neutral disposition to every political force, it was balanced and presented the positions of various sides.*

During the reporting period the newspaper most of all covered the local government (34%), the “Georgian Dream - Democratic Georgia” (28%) and the government (16%).

The Journalists seldom ask hard questions, because of which the authorities, also the opposition had a more neutral coverage rather than critical. Basically, negative attitudes towards the subjects where expressing the statements of respondents and in recordings of the local council (Sakrebulo) sessions.

In most cases, the balance was maintained in the articles. While covering the events, comments of the authorities and opposition, also the local population were presented. For example, the readers had an opportunity to get familiar with three different opinions about the issue in the article “What was the motivation of the opposition not to back the budgetary amendments” (3-9.08, page 4).

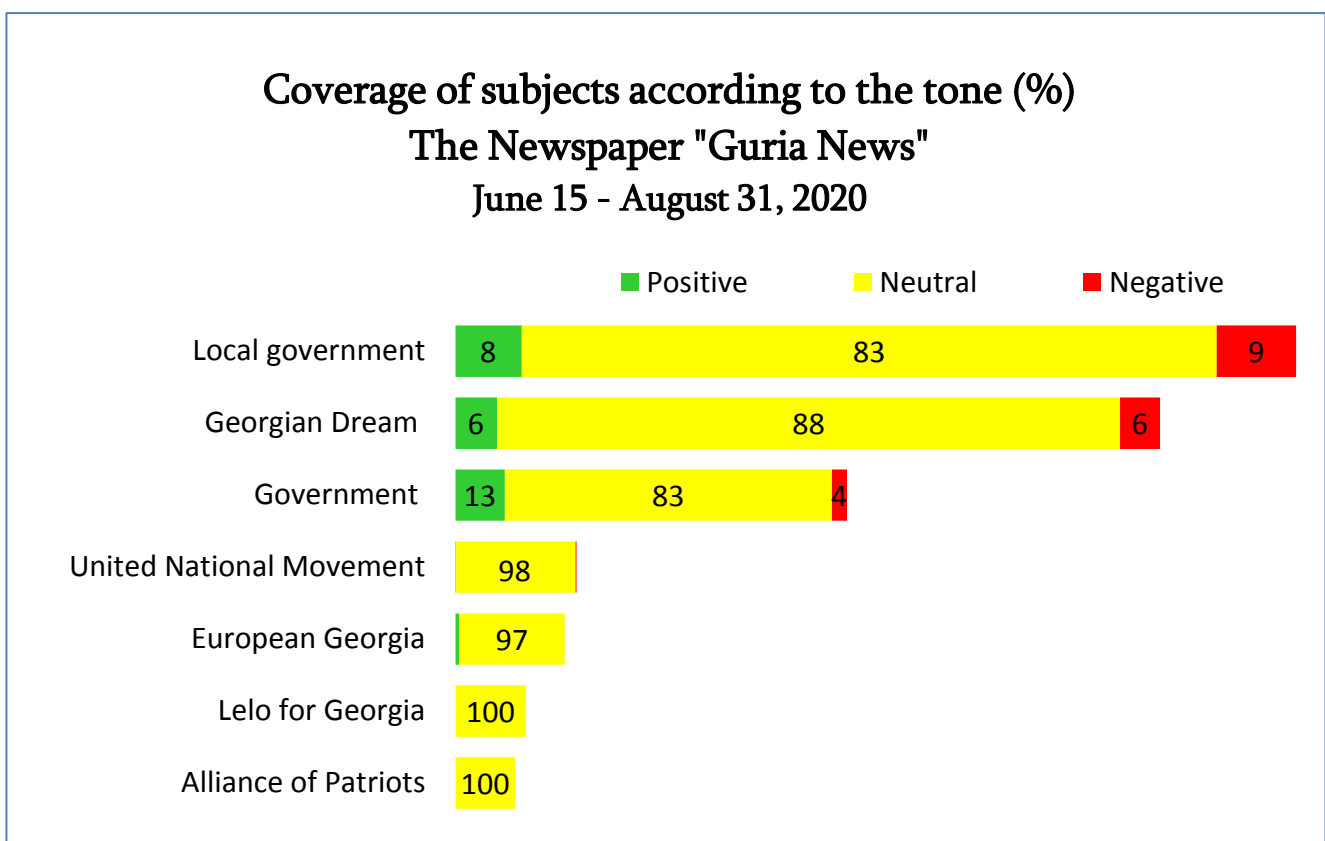
The “Guria News” actively covered the infrastructure problems and various social issues in the district centers and villages of regions and communicated the comments of responsible people to the readers. Besides, the journalists would not be satisfied with one single coverage, and they would get back to the story in their subsequent publications.

Sometimes we would come across with the comments of local government representatives in the publication, though it was difficult to establish the party affiliation of authors, because the identity

of respondents were not clearly indicated. In some cases, one and the same person was mentioned several times in the same article, but in different ways. For example, representative of Ozurgeti Townhall was mentioned sometimes as Gamgebeli, or a village resident in the article “We are tired with these meaningless demonstrations!” published in the issue of August 17-23. Another problem was that there were photos without inscription, or with many people and one inscription only. on the one hand the readers would not get full information because of such cases, but on the other hand a certain person would not be affiliated to any particular monitoring subject, and consequently they would be left out the research.

We encountered paid articles in the newspaper. For example, there was a letter of the MP Nino Tsilosani published on July 06, which spoke about the importance of gender quota in the electoral system.

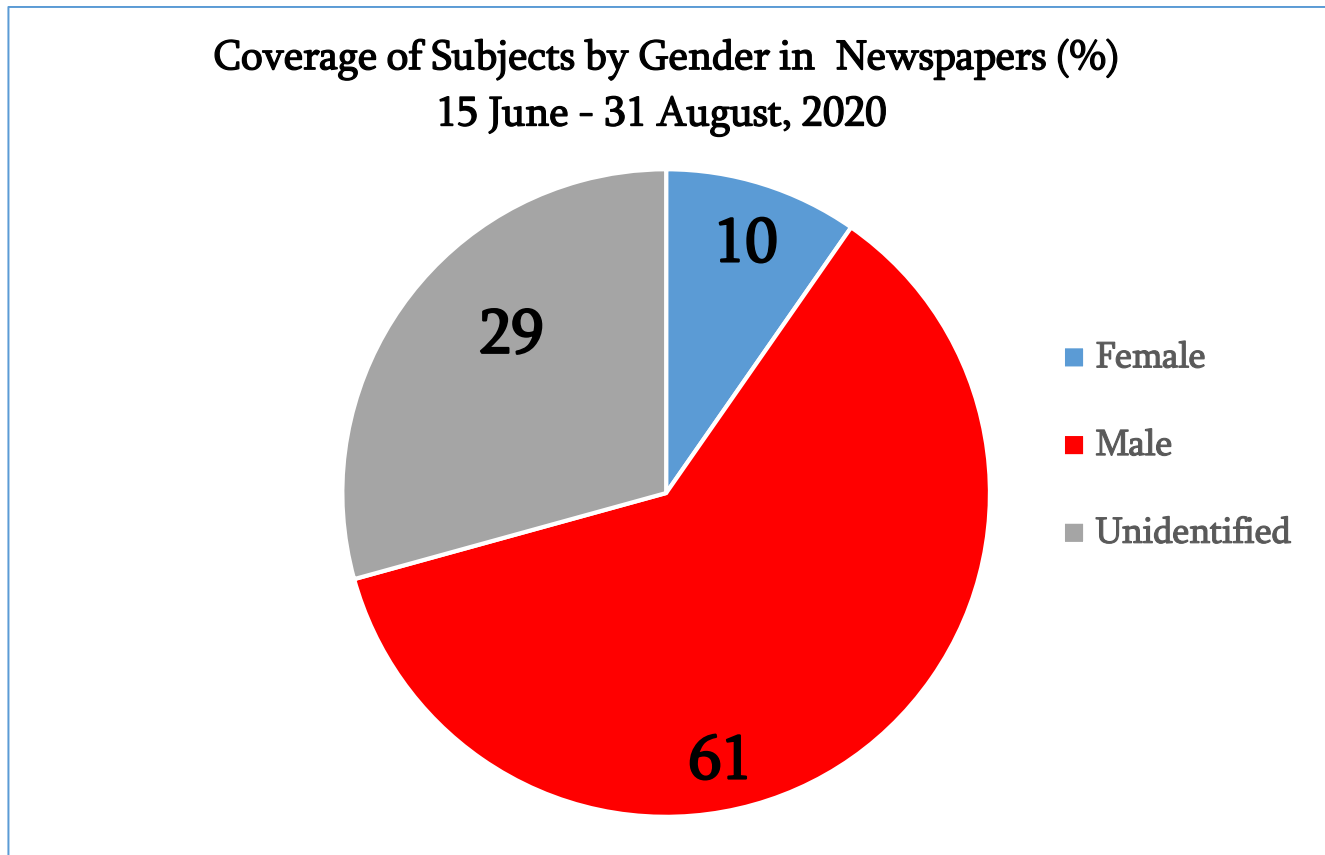
The “Guria News” acted impartially and in adherence to ethical standards of journalism. The newspaper tried to avoid the publication of unsubstantiated discussions and unverified information.



## Gender-Sensitive Coverage

While monitoring the election topics in the print media within the framework of the project, the emphasis was put on gender-sensitive reporting as well. Attention was paid to the coverage and usage of terminology that would intensify the gender stereotypes established in the society.

There was little space dedicated to the coverage of female politicians and female candidates in the newspaper.



The purpose of monitoring the coverage on gender equality was to identify the cases, which established gender stereotypes directly or in a covert manner.

During the reporting, we mostly identified the indirect forms of gender sensitive reporting. Not only the respondents, but also the journalists contribute to strengthening the gender stereotypes. Especially, there were frequent cases when ‘a woman’ and ‘feminine conduct’ was used as an insult, also the statements, when people tried to belittle the activities of female politicians by emphasizing their appearance; covert forms, which strengthen the stereotypes as if a woman needs protection and that there is always a strong man behind a female politician (a husband, a father).

Gender-sensitive statements were mostly caused by passing the law on gender quota in the Election Code of Georgia, and they were mostly made by male politicians. Sometimes there were even abusive statements expressed about this topic.

## Conclusions

Majority of newspapers were distinguished with their negative attitude to all the political forces, and we did not observe any clearly positive attitude to any political team.

We encountered the facts of gross violation of journalism standards and ethical norms in many newspapers: abusive and discriminatory terminology were used not only by respondents in their statements, but they were also often found in the text of journalists. However, compared to previous years, the number of photos with abusive and discriminatory content was decreased (except for the “Asaval-Dasavali”).

Dissemination of imbalanced and unverified information remains to be one of the key problems for the newspapers. We often encounter the cases when a media outlet disseminated information that had been obtained from suspicious sources. Journalists did not name their sources, neither did they use facts as proof to substantiate their allegations against the authorities or particular politicians. This is why in some cases the hard questions and criticism expressed by some journalists were more biased and subjective, rather than corroborated with facts.

Allegations of representatives of various political teams were also reported without being doublechecked. Besides, the object of criticism in most cases did not have an opportunity to respond back.

Majority of all the newspapers prepared their stories based on one source only, and for the readers it was not possible to get familiar with different opinions regarding a specific issue.