

Pre-Election Media Monitoring Report of the Communications Commission

Qualitative Report
(01.10.2020 – 31.10.2020)



Results of Qualitative and Quantitative Media Monitoring Conducted by the Communications Commission

(01.10.2020 – 31.10.2020)

The Communications Commission is publishing the media monitoring report on the pre-election period of the 2020 Georgian parliamentary elections, covering the period between 1 October and 31 October 2020.

Qualitative and quantitative monitoring of the following six national broadcasters was carried out during the reporting period: the First Channel of the Georgian Public Broadcaster, Adjara TV of the Georgian Public Broadcaster, Rustavi 2, Telemedi, TV Pirveli and Mtavari Arkhi (Main Channel). Monitoring was carried out during the prime time period between 19:00 and 00:00 each day.

During the monitoring process, the Commission scrutinised the following:

- a) Pre-election advertising;
- b) Pre-election debates;
- c) News programmes and political shows;
- d) Pre-election canvassing;
- e) Public opinion polls / surveys.

Media monitoring of the 2020 Georgian parliamentary elections was carried out by employees of the Communications Commission, together with persons specially selected through competition.

The Communications Commission monitors were trained by the Council of Europe media expert and Executive Director of the media monitoring organisation Memo 98, Rasto Kuzel. By sharing international best practices, Mr. Kuzel explained the peculiarities and specifics of conducting qualitative media monitoring during a pre-election campaign. The monitors deepened their knowledge of pre-election media monitoring in accordance with internationally recognised standards.

The monitoring process included a detailed analysis of fair and transparent distribution of paid and free pre-election advertising among broadcasting companies. In the process of monitoring news programmes, political shows and pre-election debates during the reporting period, attention was focussed on the time allocated by broadcasting companies to the qualified electoral subjects and the coverage of their pre-election activities. Activities of political subjects who are not qualified electoral subjects but are involved in the election process were also scrutinised. In case of failure by broadcasters to fulfil their duties under the current legislation, the Commission will study each specific case and implement response measures in accordance with the legislation.

The monitoring of the aforementioned channels included qualitative and quantitative components. The quantitative component includes the time allotted to the subject, direct and indirect coverage, and the tone of coverage. Directly allotted time refers to cases when the electoral subject/candidate directly talks/participates in a programme, while indirectly allotted time refers to time spent by the broadcaster talking about the electoral subject/candidate and their supporters. In case of both direct and indirect coverage, the tone of coverage is assessed by the monitor based on three categories: positive, neutral and negative.

Monitoring results are also categorised by gender, showing the total time allocated by individual broadcasters to male and female politicians.

The six general broadcasters that were subject to qualitative monitoring were assessed by the following broadcasting standards: balance, accuracy, relevance, omission of important information, hate speech, misinformation, discrimination and manipulation of visual/audio materials.

Key Findings:

- The news programme “Moambe” of the Georgian Public Broadcaster covered all the important socio-political events taking place across the country during the reporting period. The coverage was balanced, allowing viewers to hear different opinions about the issues. Journalists were reporting verified and factual information. Ethical and professional standards were maintained. No cases of misinformation or manipulation were identified. Presenters used a balanced tone. The broadcaster allotted time on “Moambe” to both qualified and unqualified electoral subjects. The broadcaster gave each electoral subject an equal opportunity to participate in debates, although some parties declined to take advantage of this offer.

Presenters of political programmes did not display bias or irony towards any of the political actors and conducted discussions quite effectively.

- Presenters and journalists of the main news programme of Adjara TV largely complied with ethical standards while reporting the current affairs. The broadcaster allocated time to qualified and unqualified electoral subjects in various formats. Journalists did not display favourable or unfavourable attitudes towards any particular party. Diversity and balance of opinions was largely maintained on the main news programme of Adjara TV. Viewers normally had the opportunity to hear the positions of different parties on social and political issues.

Presenters of political shows asked critical questions while avoiding discriminatory remarks and hate speech. However, there was an occasion when hate speech was used by an interviewee without being challenged by the presenter. In another instance, a scene containing violence and bad language was replayed several times by the broadcaster. The extent and frequency with which the aforementioned scene was shown cannot be justified. The broadcaster held debates where both qualified and unqualified subjects were invited to participate.

- The news programme “Chronicle” of Telemedi displayed a positive attitude towards the ruling Georgian Dream party and the Georgian government, and a negative attitude towards the opposition, and the parties of the United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” in particular. The broadcaster actively covered the election campaign of Georgian Dream, while the campaign of the opposition parties received minimal coverage. Candidates from the ruling party benefited from extensive live broadcasts. Numerous stories were not reported in a balanced manner.

Presenters of political programmes displayed a positive attitude towards the governing party. There were instances of viewers being openly told who to vote for. Interviewees used hate speech without being challenged by the presenters. The broadcaster did not hold any debates.

- During the second reporting period, Rustavi 2 continued to cover current affairs in accordance with ethical standards. Activities of electoral subjects largely received neutral and balanced coverage.

Parties had the opportunity to present their election manifestoes on political shows. Presenters of the programme “Night Courier” were familiar with the manifestoes, documents and statistics. They asked relevant questions, allowing viewers to receive broad information about election manifestoes, as well as the methods and resources through which the programmes were to be implemented. Overall, this enabled viewers to make informed choices.

Presenters distanced themselves from any discriminatory remarks made by the guests and employed a critical approach towards both the opposition and the governing party.

- The monitoring of the main news programmes and political shows on TV Pirveli during the reporting period revealed that the broadcaster conducted biased coverage of the pre-election campaigns of various electoral subjects. Government activities and the pre-election campaign of Georgian Dream received extremely negative coverage. Presenters tried to present their personal opinions as facts without substantiating their statements with evidence. The broadcaster continued to employ a selective approach towards the coverage of pre-election campaigns of different electoral subjects, denying viewers the opportunity to make an informed choice. The main news programme contained fake news and cases of manipulation. Journalists made unsubstantiated accusations against the government and Georgian Dream based on suspicions and hearsay.

Pre-election topics were rarely analysed and debated on political shows, where most of the time was devoted to criticism of the government and Georgian Dream. There were cases of presenters openly expressing their sympathies towards opposition candidates. Presenters also used hate speech.

- During the reporting period, presenters and journalists of Mtavari Arkhi conducted unbalanced coverage of events, displayed a highly positive attitude towards opposition parties of their choice, and an extremely negative attitude towards the government and Georgian Dream. The channel broadcasted unverified information that was based on anonymous sources. Broadcasts contained manipulation, aggressive remarks and bad language. Journalists did not shy away from using ironic and negative tone towards members of the governing party, civil servants and government officials, or from using hate speech.

Grave and unsubstantiated accusations were made against the government based on personal opinions of journalists or members of various political parties.

Results of the Monitoring of News and Political Programmes

Georgian Public Broadcaster

First Channel

News Programmes – Time allotted to the monitoring subjects: Georgian Dream – 19.2% (positive – 33%, negative – 17%), Government of Georgia – 15.6% (positive – 16%, negative – 5%), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” – 13.6% (positive – 13%, negative – 26%), all other subjects – less than 10% (see graph).

Qualitative Assessment - The news programme “**Moambe**” (21:00) of the Georgian Public Broadcaster covered all the important socio-political events taking place across the country during the reporting period. The coverage was balanced, allowing viewers to hear different opinions about the issues. Journalists were reporting verified and factual information. Ethical and professional standards were maintained. No cases of misinformation or manipulation were identified. Presenters used a balanced tone.

News coverage was largely neutral. Exceptions include the news story “European Georgia against UNM” broadcasted on “Moambe” at 21:31 on 12 October 2020, where the reporting journalist stated the following:

“Gigi Ugulava says that the UNM’s local leadership was leading the Union, but everything changed when Vano Merabishvili was released from prison. One former convict believes that another former convict awakened dark instincts in the former president.”

The main news programme of the Georgian Public Broadcaster systematically covered the pre-election campaigns of the electoral subjects. Activities of the political parties were presented in a largely even, non-discriminatory and unbiased manner. The coverage on “Moambe” mainly focussed on the electoral subjects’ meetings with the electorate, their promises and programme presentations.

During the reporting period, the First Channel offered the electoral subjects another new format: every day, at the end of the 21:00 edition of “Moambe,” each individual candidate was given 5 minutes to present their election manifesto and vision to the electorate. “Moambe” ensured that each political party was represented. The programme also allocated broadcast time to unqualified electoral subjects. The aforementioned format had the form of a presentation – during their allotted time, political party representatives talked about the main priorities of their election manifestoes, as well as their views and strategies.

The following qualified and unqualified electoral subjects appeared on “Moambe” during the reporting period:

Reformer (once), People’s Party (once), Progressive Georgia (once), Conservative Party (once), Girchi (once), Our United Georgia (once), Victorious Georgia (once), Solidarity Alliance (once), New Force (once), Choice for Homeland (once), Georgian Development Party (once), Reformers (once), National Democratic Movement (once), Party for Justice (once), Green Party (once), Future Georgia (once), Lelo (once), Georgian Idea (once), Social Democrats for Development of Georgia (once), Georgian Roots (once), Georgian Choice (once), Change Georgia (once), Georgian Troupe (once), Georgia (once), Georgian March (once), Party for Social Justice (once),

Citizens (once), Zviad's Path – For God, Truth and Country (once), Free Georgia (once), Free Democrats (once), Political Movement of Armed Veterans and Patriots of Georgia (once), Democratic Movement (once), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (once), European Georgia (once), Freedom – Zviad Gamsakhurdia Way (once), New Christian Democrats (once), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (once), Georgian Dream (once), Traditionalists (once), Alliance of Patriots (once), Tribune – GDM (once), Labour Party (once).

According to the presenters, the following political parties declined to appear on the programme: Euroatlantic Vector, Christian Democratic People's Movement, Order of Patriots – Motherland, Industry Will Save Georgia, Movement for Free Georgia, National Democratic Party.

Political Programmes – One of the monitoring subjects – the Government of Georgia – appeared on the programme “**New Week**” (once).

The following political parties appeared on the programme “**Debates 2020**” on the First Channel of the Georgian Public Broadcaster:

Traditionalists (once), Labour Party (once), Tribune – GDM (once), Georgia (once), Change Georgia (once), Party for Social Justice (once), Georgian March – National Movement (once), Zviad's Path – For God, Truth and Country (once), For United Georgia (once), Georgian Choice (once), Georgian Roots (once), Social Democrats for Development of Georgia (once), Christian Democratic People's Movement (once), Lelo (once), Georgian Dream (once), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (once), Future Georgia (once), Green Party (once), New Force (once), Party for Justice (once), Reformers (once), Georgian Idea (once), National Democratic Movement (once), Choice for Homeland (once), Georgian Development Party (once), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (once), New Christian Democrats (once), Freedom – Zviad Gamsakhurdia Way (once), European Georgia (once), Solidarity Alliance (once), Conservative Party (once), Girchi (once), Progressive Georgia (once), People's Party (once), Reformer (once), Whites (once), Victorious Georgia (once), Workers' Socialist Party (once), Free Georgia (once), Free Democrats (once), Political Movement of Armed Veterans and Patriots of Georgia (once) and Democratic Movement (once).

The First Channel gave each electoral subject an equal opportunity to participate in the debates, although some parties declined to take advantage of this offer. The following parties declined to participate in the debates: Alliance of Patriots, Citizens, Georgian Troupe, Euro Atlantic Vector, Movement Free Georgia, National Democratic Party and Industry Will Save Georgia (according to the presenter, the electoral subject Industry Will Save Georgia did not decline to participate in debates out of principle, but was unable to appear on the programme).

1 October – debates were held between representatives of the electoral subjects Traditionalists, Labour Party and Tribune-GDM.

6 October – debates were held between representatives of the electoral subjects Georgia, Change Georgia, Party for Social Justice, Georgian March – National Movement and Zviad's Path – For God, Truth and Country.

13 October – debates were held between representatives of the electoral subjects For United Georgia, Georgian Choice, Georgian Roots, Social Democrats for Development of Georgia, Christian Democratic People’s Movement and Lelo.

15 October – debates were held between representatives of the electoral subjects Georgian Dream and Strategy Aghmashenebeli.

20 October – debates were held between representatives of the electoral subjects Future Georgia, Green Party, New Force, Party for Justice, Reformers, Georgian Idea, National Democratic Movement, Choice for Homeland and Georgian Development Party.

22 October – debates were held between representatives of the electoral subjects United Opposition “Strength is in Unity,” New Christian Democrats, Freedom – Zviad Gamsakhurdia Way and European Georgia.

27 October – debates were held between representatives of the electoral subjects Solidarity Alliance, Conservative Party, Girchi, Progressive Georgia, People’s Party, Reformer, Whites, Victorious Georgia and Workers’ Socialist Party.

29 October – debates were held between representatives of the electoral subjects Free Georgia, Free Democrats, Political Movement of Armed Veterans and Patriots of Georgia and Democratic Movement.

The Georgian Public Broadcaster began airing the programme “**Debates 2020**” on 1 October. The programme was broadcasted every Tuesday and Thursday at 22:30. The order of appearance of the political parties on the programme and the line-up of electoral subjects on each show were determined through random draw. The parties were free to choose their own representatives to appear on the debates. A total of 8 debates (each of them 90 minutes in length) took place during the reporting period. Four programmes were allocated to qualified electoral subjects, while the remaining four were allocated to unqualified electoral subjects.

The programme had two presenters who took turns to lead the broadcast. Debates consisted of several rounds. In the beginning, candidates addressed the viewers and introduced themselves. Candidates then had to answer specific questions posed by the presenter. Afterwards, they had the opportunity to ask their own questions to the opponents who were present in the studio. Finally, the political subjects had a chance to address the electorate with a closing statement. Each candidate was allotted one minute for the opening and closing statements, two minutes to answer the questions posed by the presenter, and one minute to answer the question posed by another electoral subject.

The format of the debates afforded all participating electoral subjects equal terms and equal time to present their positions, programmes and priorities to the electorate. The presenter did not display bias or irony towards any political actors and was equally demanding towards opposition members and government representatives alike. The presenter usually moderated the debates, maintaining a neutral and correct tone and conducting discussion quite effectively. There were cases when the programme exceeded its set boundaries due to confrontation between the debating parties, but the presenter quickly managed to bring the situation under control and restore a constructive tone to the debates.

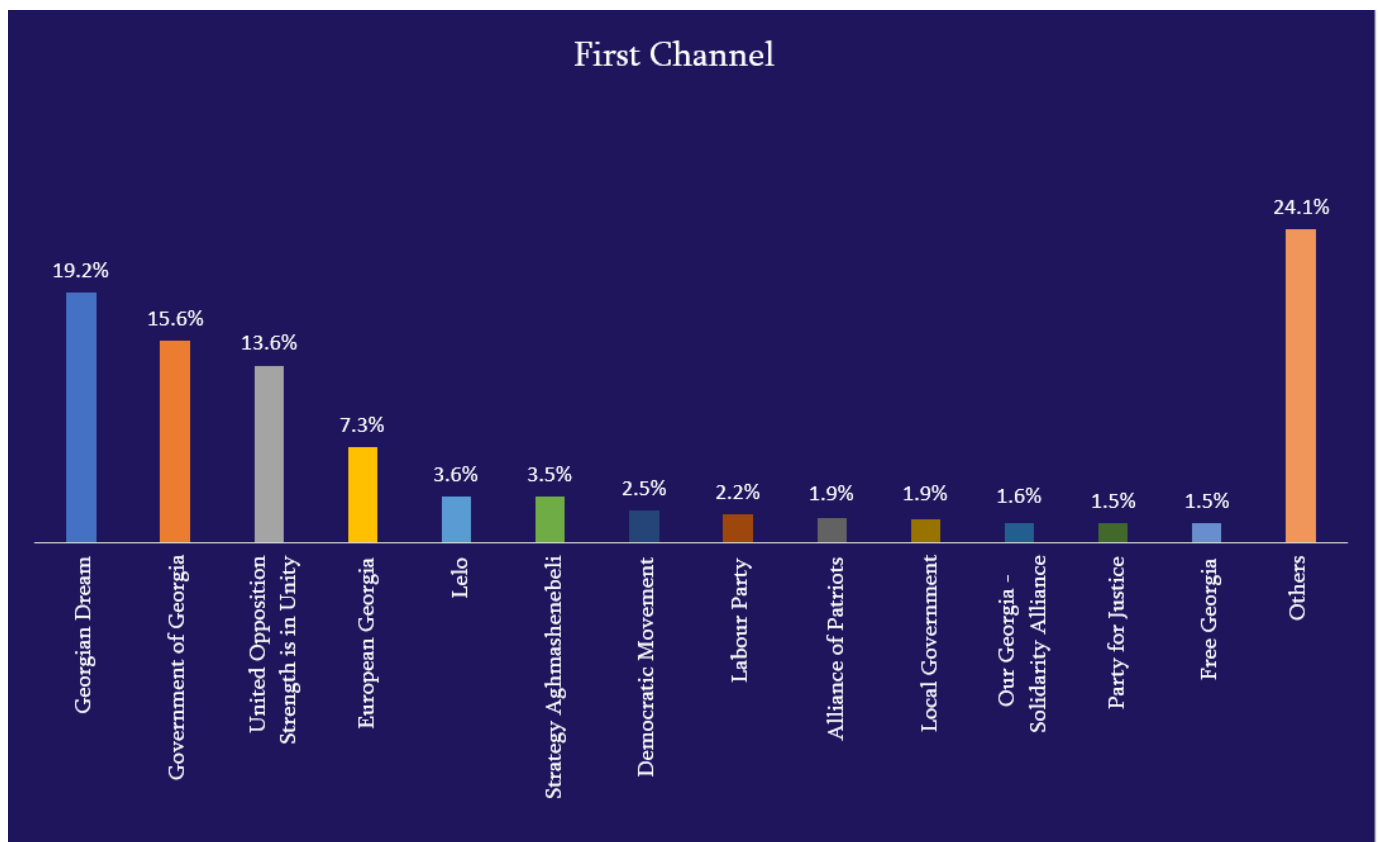
The presenter’s questions were mainly related to the election strategies of the parties, their election manifestoes and the new initiatives outlined therein. The emphasis was on issues concerning the economy, foreign policy and education.

Overall, the focus of the debates was to allocate equal time to all candidates and offer them a non-discriminatory platform. Viewers received information that would help them make an informed choice on the day of the vote.

A representative of Lelo appeared (once) on the programme “**Interview of the Week**” on the First Channel of the Georgian Public Broadcaster.

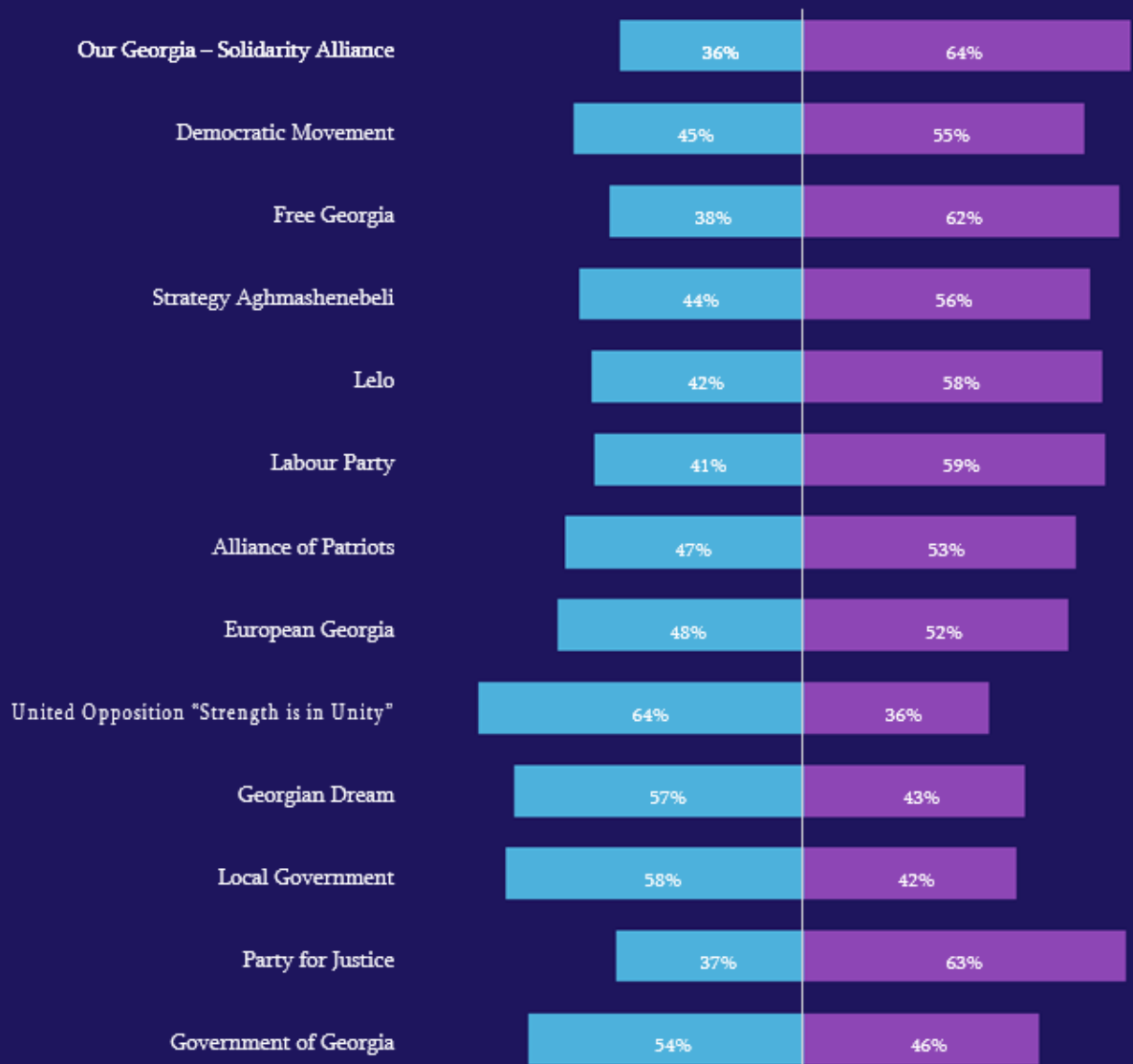
The programme “Interview of the Week” was aired by the Georgian Public Broadcaster twice during the reporting period, but a monitoring subject was only invited to appear on one of the programmes. The presenter was quite actively involved in the programme. He discussed important socio-political topics with the guest. The presenter posed critical and in-depth questions to obtain exhaustive answers on various issues. He also tried to counter the guest’s statements and present opposing views to engage him in the discussion. The presenter did not display sympathy or antipathy towards the electoral subject. At times, the presenter expressed his personal opinions.

According to the weekly information released by the broadcaster, the self-regulating mechanism of the Georgian Public Broadcaster did not receive any complaints regarding bias or violation of the principles of fairness and balance.



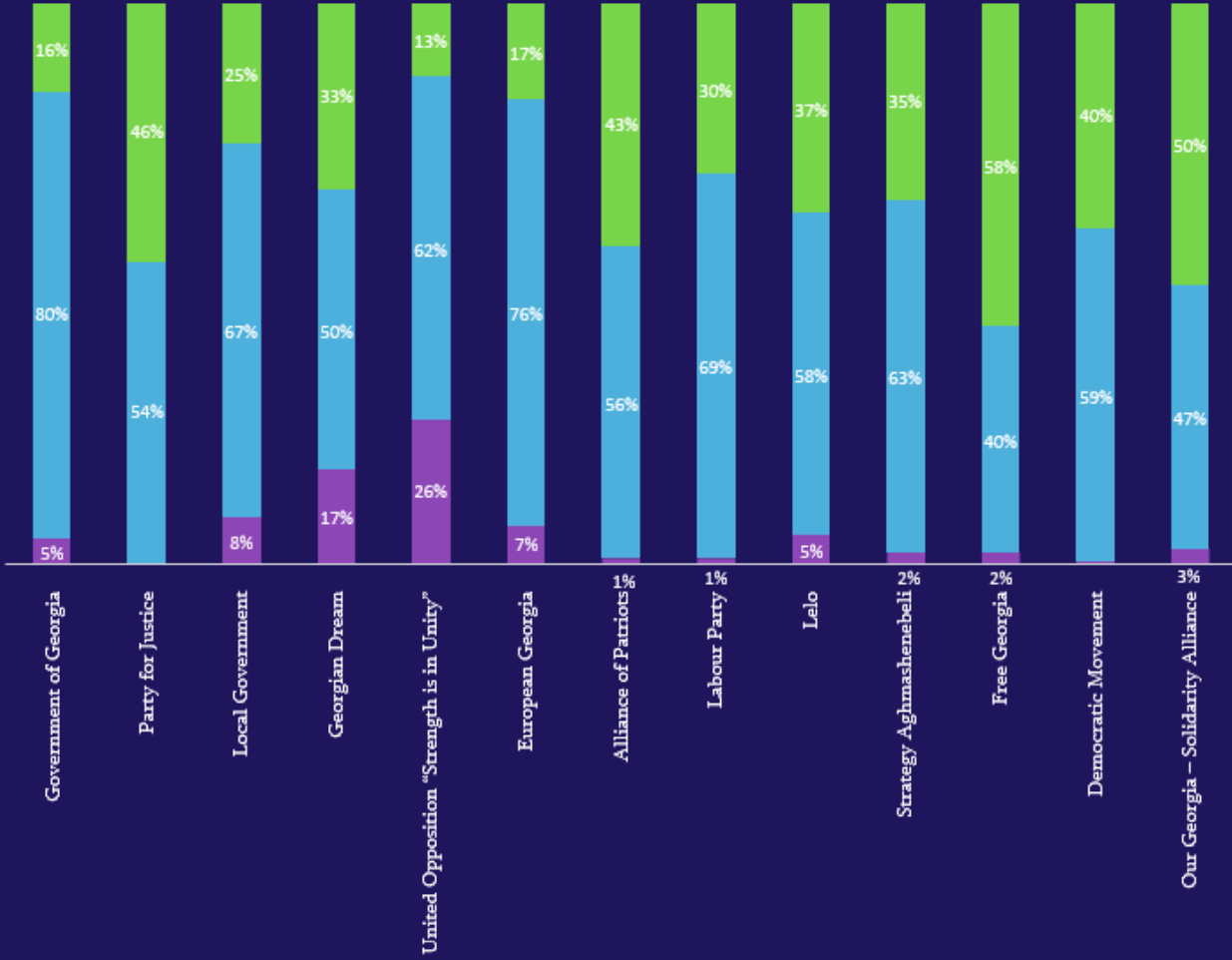
Direct and Indirect Coverage

■ Indirect ■ Direct

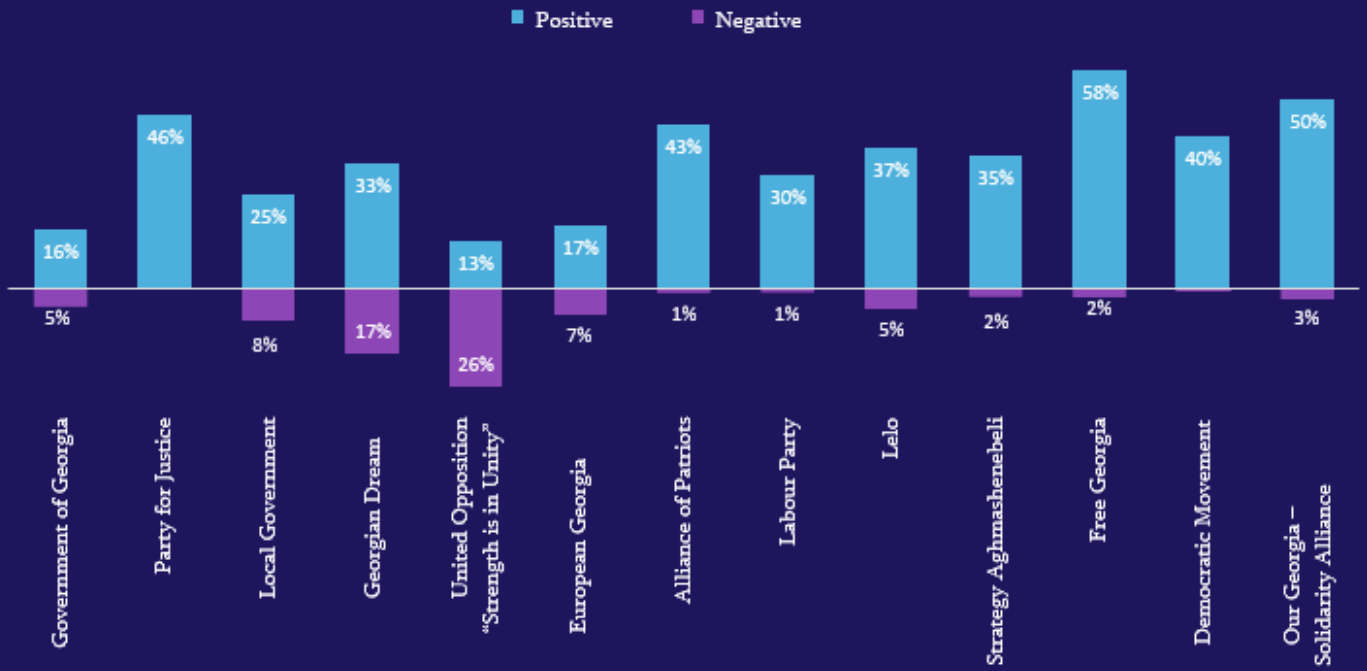


Tone

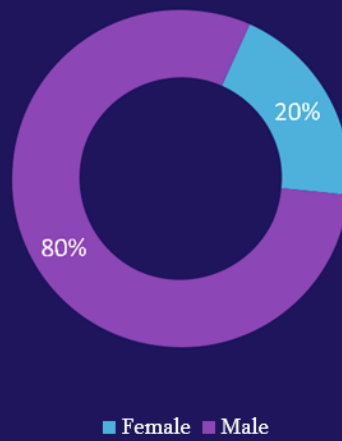
■ Negative
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Positive



Positive and Negative Coverage



Gender



Adjara TV of the Georgian Public Broadcaster

News Programmes – Time allotted to the monitoring subjects: Georgian Dream – 20.7% (positive – 41%, negative – 26%), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” – 13.7% (positive – 18%, negative – 31%), Government of Georgia – 12% (positive – 23%, negative – 8%), Government of Adjara – 11% (positive – 20%, negative – 29%), all other subjects – less than 10% (see graph).

Qualitative Assessment – Presenters and journalists of the main news programme largely maintained ethical norms during the coverage of current affairs.

The presenter announced during each programme that Adjara TV of the Georgian Public Broadcaster was following its requirement under law to allocate air time both to qualified and unqualified electoral subjects in various formats. The announcement was followed by a six-minute interview with the electoral subject.

During the news programmes, presenters did not display positive or negative attitude towards any of the parties. The main news programme of Adjara TV was largely diverse and balanced in terms of opinions and guests. Viewers usually had the opportunity to hear the positions of different parties on political and social issues.

The story broadcasted on 21 October at 20:09 can be deemed to have violated Article 55 of the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters, which states that “broadcasters shall ensure that material which may cause offence is justified by the context and is in the public interest.” The story concerned the confrontation that took place between political parties during the special operation in Zugdidi. The journalist’s monologue was accompanied by scenes where members of opposing parties were attacking each other physically and verbally. Bad language and obscene remarks were heard on numerous occasions. This was followed by the journalist’s live report containing the same information. Identical scenes of violence were shown parallel to the live broadcast by the journalist, followed by similar scenes without the voice-over. The latter section was preceded by the following statement from the journalist: “Now we can hear the confrontation between the sides.” Indeed, we could hear the obscenities and watch the scenes of physical violence. In total, the same scenes were shown 4 times in the same report. Later, between 20:35 and 20:38, the aforementioned scenes were broadcasted again twice in a row. Although showing such scenes may be in the public interest and justified by the context, the frequency with which they were aired by the broadcaster significantly exceeded the boundaries of the context.

Political Programmes – Adjara TV of the Georgian Public Broadcaster aired the following political programmes: “**Free Space with Vakho Khuzmiashvili**” and “**Elections 2020.**”

During the reporting period, the following political subjects appeared remotely on the political programme “**Free Space with Vakho Khuzmiashvili**”: United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (twice), Georgian Dream (once), Party for Justice (once), European Georgian (twice), Strategy Aghmashenebeli

(once), Lelo (once), Free Georgia (once), Labour Party (once), Citizens (once), United Georgia – Democratic Movement (once). Apart from the electoral subjects, representatives of the Government of Adjara (once) and Government of Georgia (once) also appeared on the programme.

On the aforementioned political show, the presenter posed critical questions, although there were cases when the presenter could not conceal irony. For example, Vakho Khuzmiashvili addressed the representative of United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” in the following manner: “You are number 41 on the list. Is this symbolic, a coincidence, or something else?” (21:25). This was followed by the journalist’s remark – “are you feeling nostalgic?” (21:26).

On several occasions, guests used hate speech on the programme. For example, on 5 October, the representative of United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” referred to Georgian Dream as “Bidzina Ivanishvili and his government hordes” (21:04); on 12 October, the representative of Strategy Aghmashenebeli made the following remark about the leader of Lelo: “Who is supposed to get us out of the crisis? A crooked banker of 30 years?” (21:48). It should be noted that in response to the aforementioned remark, the presenter did not call on the guest to act in an appropriate manner.

The programme “Free Space with Vakho Khuzmiashvili” staged debates between the following electoral subjects:

5 October (21:00): Party for Justice and United Opposition “Strength is in Unity”; 12 October (21:00) – Strategy Aghmashenebeli and Lelo.

Although guests appeared on the programme remotely, the format made it possible for them to challenge each other’s views.

The programme “**Elections 2020**” was broadcasted on Adjara TV in three different formats.

During the talk show “**Elections 2020 – Presentation of the Manifesto,**” electoral subjects had the opportunity to talk about the party manifestoes and plans. The following electoral subjects appeared on the programme: Party for Justice, Solidarity Alliance, Georgian March, Bagrationi Face+, Georgian Idea, For Social Justice, Georgian Choice, Alliance of Patriots, Labour Party, Freedom – Zviad Gamsakhurdia Way, Tribune, United Georgia – Democratic Movement, European Georgia, Conservative Party, Free Georgia, Georgian Dream, United Opposition “Strength is in Unity,” Strategy Aghmashenebeli.

The talk show “**Elections 2020 – Single-Mandate Constituency Candidates**” introduced the qualified and unqualified candidates for the three single-mandate constituencies of Adjara to the public. This format of the programme included debates between the single-mandate constituency candidates of the following electoral subjects:

01.10.2020 (21:00) – Solidarity Alliance, Aleko Elisashvili – Citizens, Party for Justice, Lelo;

08.10.2020 (21:00) – Alliance of Patriots, Strategy Aghmashenebeli, Conservative Party;

15.10.2020 (21:00) – Georgian March, Georgian Idea, Bagrationi Face+;

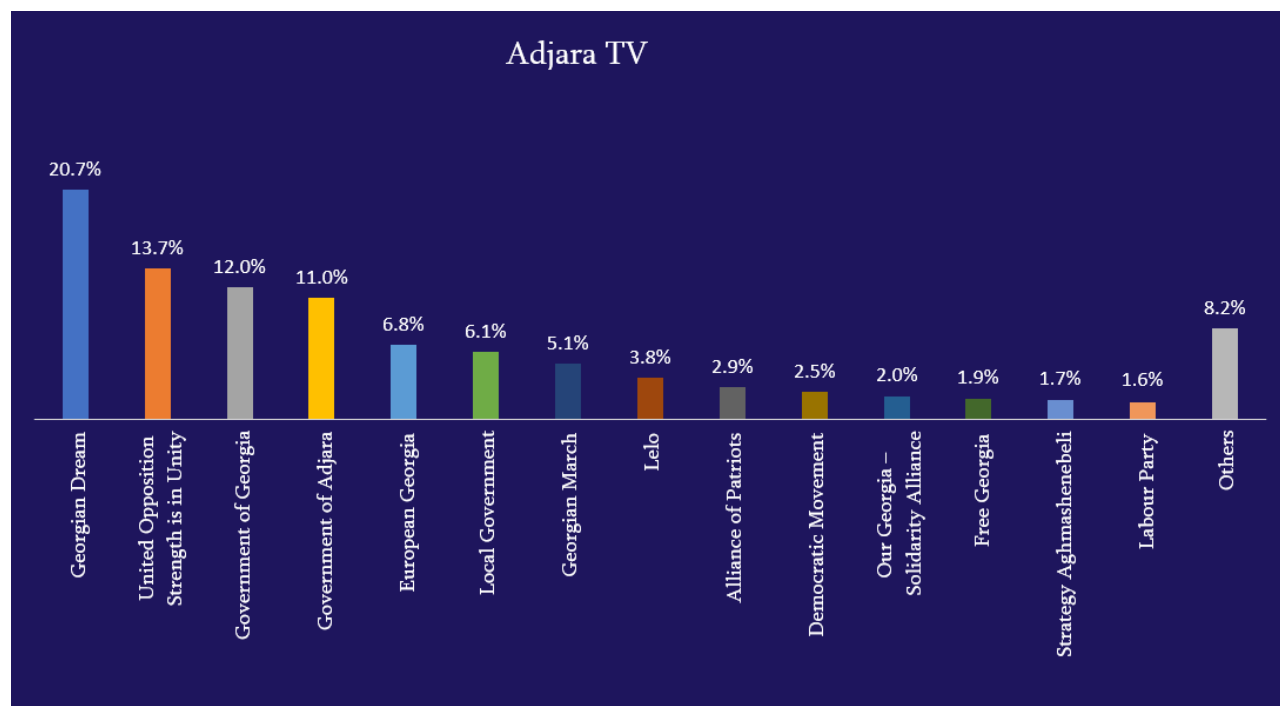
22.10.2020 (21:00) – Tribune, Labour Party, Free Georgia.

The talk show “**Elections 2020 – List Leaders’ Debates**” included candidates who topped the party lists of the electoral subjects. Debates in this format were held between the following electoral subjects:

26.10.2020 (21:00) – European Georgia, United Opposition “Strength is in Unity,” Alliance of Patriots, Labour Party, Free Georgia. **28.10.2020 (21:00)** – United Georgia, Freedom – Zviad Gamsakhurdia Way.

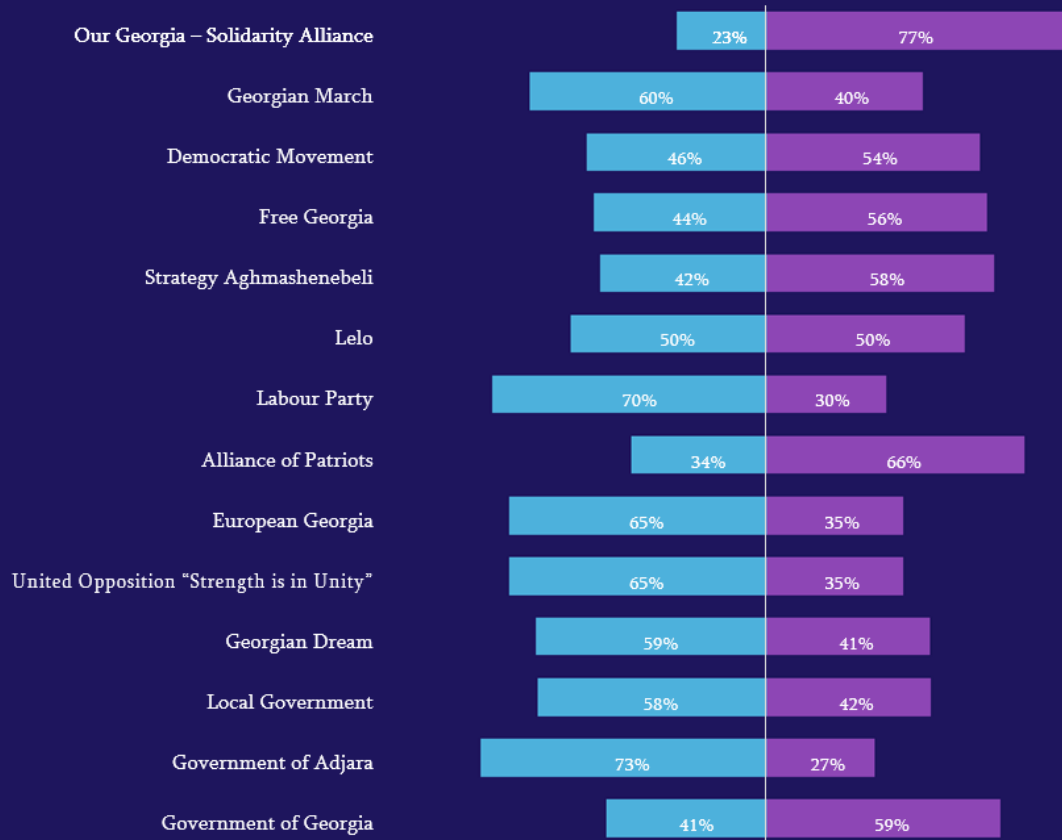
During the talk show “Elections 2020” in different formats, journalists asked critical questions. On several occasions, they had to respond to unsubstantiated arguments and distance themselves from discriminatory remarks made by interviewees. Thus, the journalist stated “I am distancing myself from discriminatory remarks” in response to the statement by the representative of Georgian March regarding “LGBT propaganda” (6.10.2020 – 22:34). Presenters often used various facts and statistics to formulate questions, citing relevant sources and calling on the interviewees to do the same (8.10.2020 – 21:48; 22:21; 20.10.2020 – 22:18).

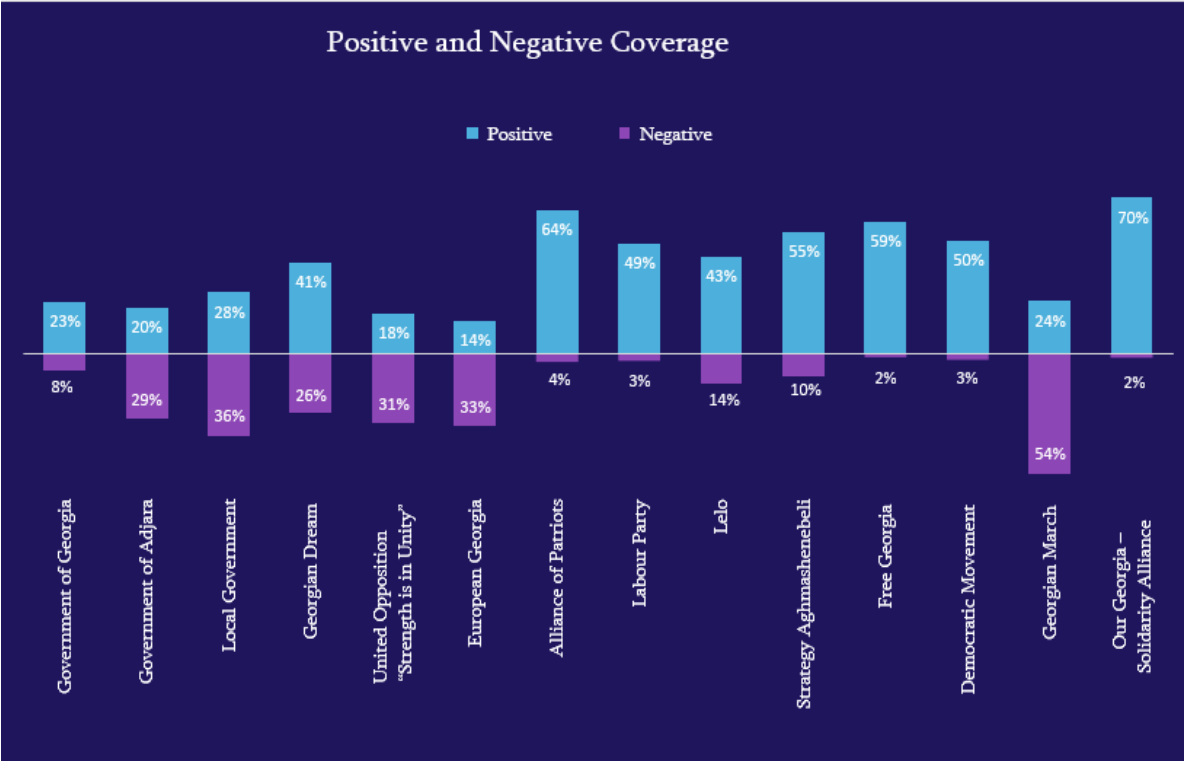
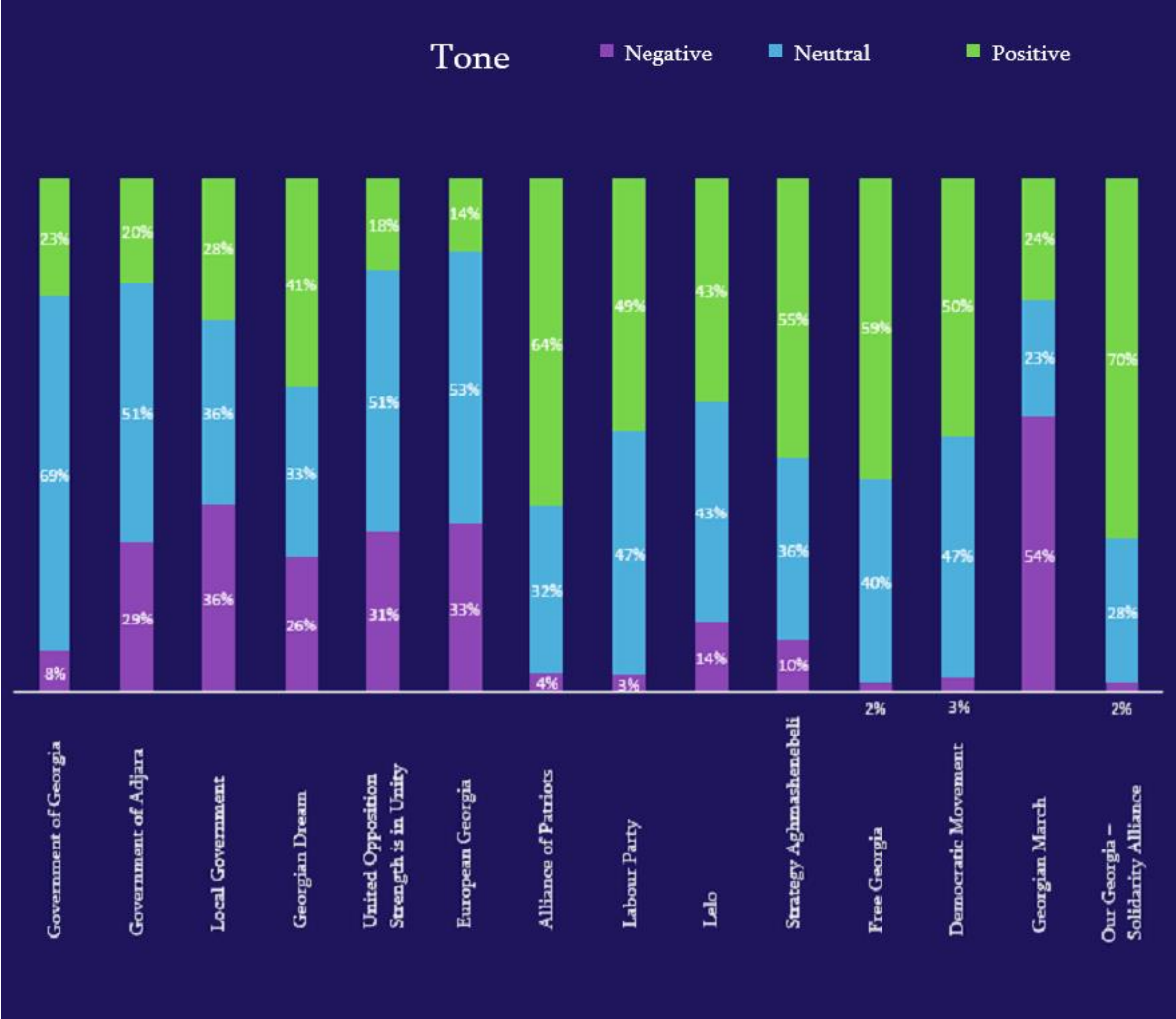
According to the weekly information released by the broadcaster, the self-regulating mechanism of Adjara TV did not receive any complaints regarding bias or violation of the principles of fairness and balance.

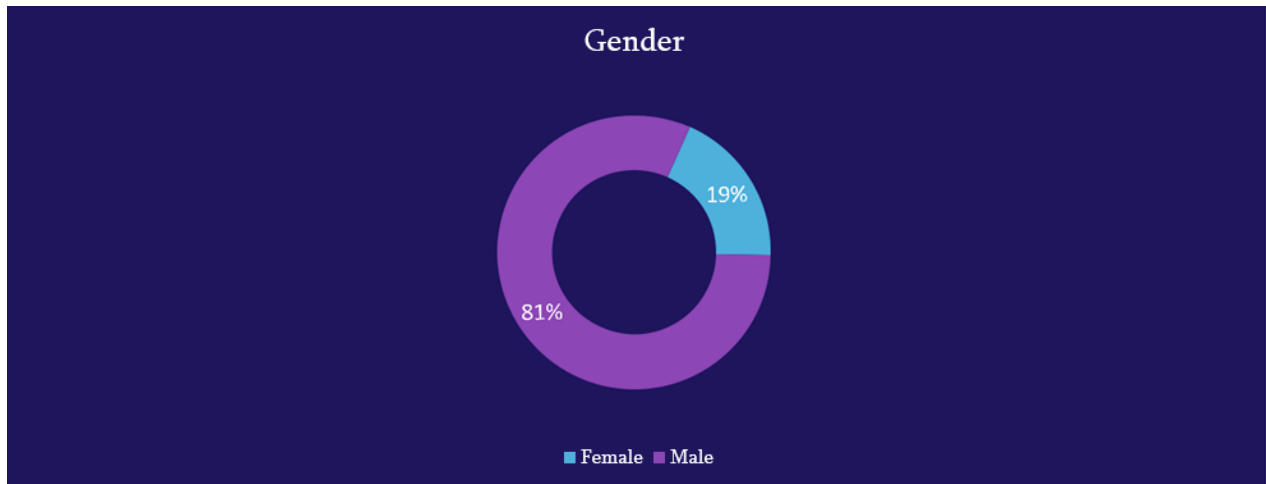


Direct and Indirect Coverage

■ Indirect ■ Direct







Teleimedi Ltd.

News - Georgian Dream – 47.4% (positive – 64%, negative – 1%), Government of Georgia – 21.8% (positive – 33%, negative – 2%), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” – 17.5% (positive – 0%, negative – 84%), all other subjects – less than 10% (see graph).

Qualitative Assessment – During the monitoring period, the 20:00 news programme “Chronicle” displayed a positive attitude towards Georgian Dream and the Government of Georgia, and a negative attitude towards the opposition, and members of United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” in particular.

Teleimedi actively covered the pre-election campaign of Georgian Dream, while allocating minimal amount of time to the election campaigns of the opposition parties. For example, the very first story of the news programme “Chronicle” on 01.10.2020 was dedicated to the presentation of the Georgian Dream election manifesto, for which the broadcaster allocated 1 hour and 51 minutes of live coverage; on 28.10.2020, the broadcaster allocated 23 minutes for the introduction of Sozar Subari, and 20 minutes for the introduction of Nodar Turdzeladze; on 30.10.2020, the broadcaster allocated 45 minutes to the coverage of the closing meeting of Georgian Dream; on 17.10.2020, the coverage of Irakli Chikovani’s presentation in Zugdidi lasted for 25 minutes.

Throughout the monitoring period, the 16 single-mandate constituency candidates of Georgian Dream, their political activities and public meetings received positive coverage. Separate news reports were dedicated to the governing party’s election manifesto and its thematic overview. Each of the following was covered by the broadcaster: 20.10.20 – thematic presentation of the Georgian Dream election manifesto; 26.10.20 – presentation of the Georgian Dream manifesto in the Shida Kartli region; 02.10.20 – presentation of Zaza Dugladze; 05.10.20 – presentation of Gogi Meshveliani; 09.10.20 – presentation of Gocha Ehlukidze and Resan Kontselidze; 02.10.20 – presentation of Anton Obolashvili and Nino Latsabidze; 13.10.20 – presentation of Samvel Manukian; 16.10.20 – presentation of Vasil Chigogidze; 26.10.20 – presentation of Davit Songhulashvili, Shalva Kereselidze and Mikheil Kavelashvili.

Balance was not maintained in the stories that were aired by the broadcaster during the reporting period. For example, in the 27.10.20 story “Violent Plans of Saakashvili and Merabishvili,” viewers heard comments from three representatives of Georgian Dream, while United Opposition was represented by Nika Melia’s comments which he made on another channel. There were cases when the other side’s position was not presented at all. For example, in the story “Statement by Goga Khaindrava” (aired on 20.10.20), the guest made accusations against the United National Movement over the issue of Davit Gareji, but the other side’s position was not presented in the story. In the story “Criticism from Davit Matikashvili” (aired on 03.10.20), several opposition parties were accused of breaching pandemic-related recommendations, but their positions were not presented to the viewers. In the story “Incident in Bolnisi” (aired on 20.10.20), the United National Movement was accused of provocation, but the other side’s position was not presented.

Imedi offered little or no coverage of the pre-election activities of the opposition.

During the attack on the Bank of Georgia branch in Zugdidi on 21.10.20, Imedi carried out work in an emergency situation, provided information in a timely and consistent manner, tried to ensure that the information was verified, took care in delivering assessments and complied with the demands issued by the MIA to broadcasters.

Political Programmes – The following political subjects appeared on the programme “**Real Numbers**” – Georgian Dream (four times), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (once), Government of Georgia (three times), Government of Adjara (once), President of Georgia (once).

On 29 October, more than half of the programme “**Real Numbers**” (51 minutes) was devoted to a film about Georgian Dream. During the second part of the show, where the guest in the studio was Mamuka Mdinardze, the presenter openly displayed a positive attitude towards the governing party: “We have seen the film, which shows various projects that have been implemented. It is truly impressive what has been achieved over the last eight years. I believe that the electorate has full information about what has been done, what is being done and what will be done in the future. While I am under no illusion that 100% of the electorate has an adequate perception of the projects that have been implemented, there have been positive developments literally in every area.”

The following political subjects appeared on the programme “**Arena**” – Local Government (once), Georgian Dream (three times), Government of Adjara (once), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (twice), Georgian Troupe (once), Free Georgia (once), European Georgia (twice), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (once), Alliance of Patriots (once).

The following political subjects appeared on the programme “**Position**” – Georgian Dream (four times), Government of Georgia (three times), United Opposition (three times), Georgian Troupe (once), European Georgia (once).

On 29 October, towards the end of the programme **“Position,”** presenter Guram Nikolaishvili made a direct address to the electorate: “I am once again calling on you to take part in the elections and make your choice. Do not vote for the United National Movement. Otherwise, the list of choices is extensive.”

Interviewees/guests on the programmes **“Real Numbers”** and **“Position”** used hate speech without being challenged by the presenters. For example, one of the guests appearing on “Real Numbers” on 27 October repeatedly used hate speech and bad language without being interrupted or called on by the presenter to act in an appropriate manner. After the broadcast, no further assessment of the aforementioned outburst was offered, except for it being referred to as “an emotional speech” (23:11). “We see Nino Burjanadze looking like a deplumed peacock. We see Zura Nogaideli blinking his eyes, pretending not to have known what he was putting his signature to. I am so tempted to curse all the living and dead relatives of everyone who deserves it... these traitors. I will personally see to it that this rotten, disgusting mass media, these fat whores... all of this has been created by them. When I take care of these sons of bitches one by one, then everyone will understand.”

No election debates were held by the broadcaster during the reporting period. There were no broadcasts containing gender discrimination, gender stereotypes or xenophobic remarks.

Apart from the aforementioned programmes, Imedi TV aired the following political and entertainment shows where the majority of the guests were members of the governing team:

“Imedi Week” – Georgian Dream (four times), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (four times), European Georgia (four times), Government of Georgia (four times), Lelo (twice), Local Government (once), Georgian Troupe (once), Free Georgia (once), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (three times), Georgian March (once), Citizens (once).

“Chronicle at 20:00 with Tea Sichinava” – Georgian Dream (nine times), Lelo (twice), Government of Georgia (four times), European Georgia (twice), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (three times), Labour Party (once), Girchi (once), Local Government (once).

“Open Broadcast” – Georgian Dream (four times), Government of Georgia (three times), Local Government (once), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (five times), European Georgia (three times), Georgian Troupe (once), Georgian March (once), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (twice), Girchi (once), Labour Party (once), United Georgia – Democratic Movement (once), Lelo (once).

“Elections 2020” – the programme was broadcasted on 31 October. Georgian Dream (once), Government of Georgia (once), Government of Adjara (once), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (once).

“Daily Chronicle” – Georgian Dream (four times), Free Georgia (once), Government of Georgia (twice), Local Government (once).

“Business on Imedi” – Georgian Dream (three times), Government of Georgia (three times), European Georgia (once), Lelo (once).

“Morning Show” – Georgian Dream (once).

“Vasmedia” – United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (three times), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (three times), European Georgia (twice), Girchi (once), Labour Party (twice), Citizens (once), Alliance of Patriots (once), United Georgia – Democratic Movement (once).

“Morning on Imedi” – Georgian Dream (twice).

“Afternoon on Imedi” – Georgian Dream (twice).

“Culinary Duel” – Georgian Dream (twice).

“Prime Show” – Georgian Dream (once).

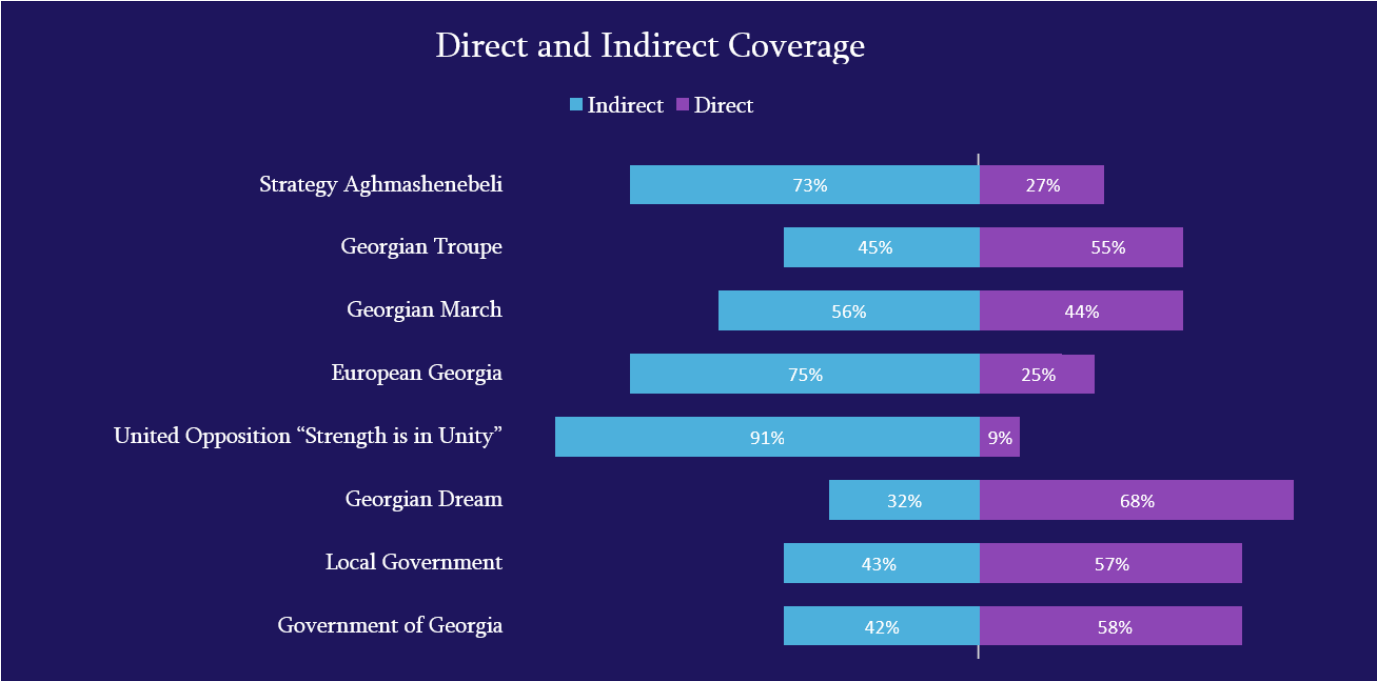
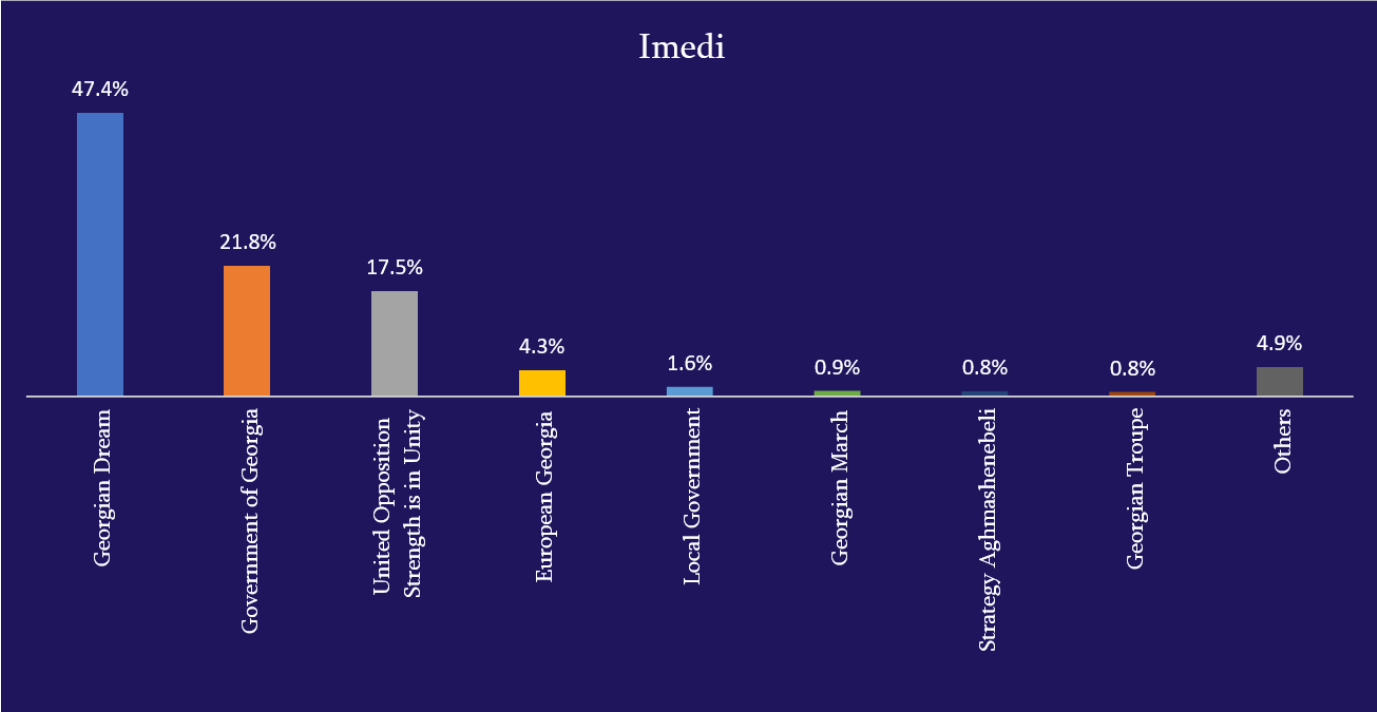
“No Time for Sleep” – Georgian Dream (twice).

“Sport on Imedi” – Georgian Dream (twice).

“Night Show with Giorgi Gabunia” – Georgian Dream (four times).

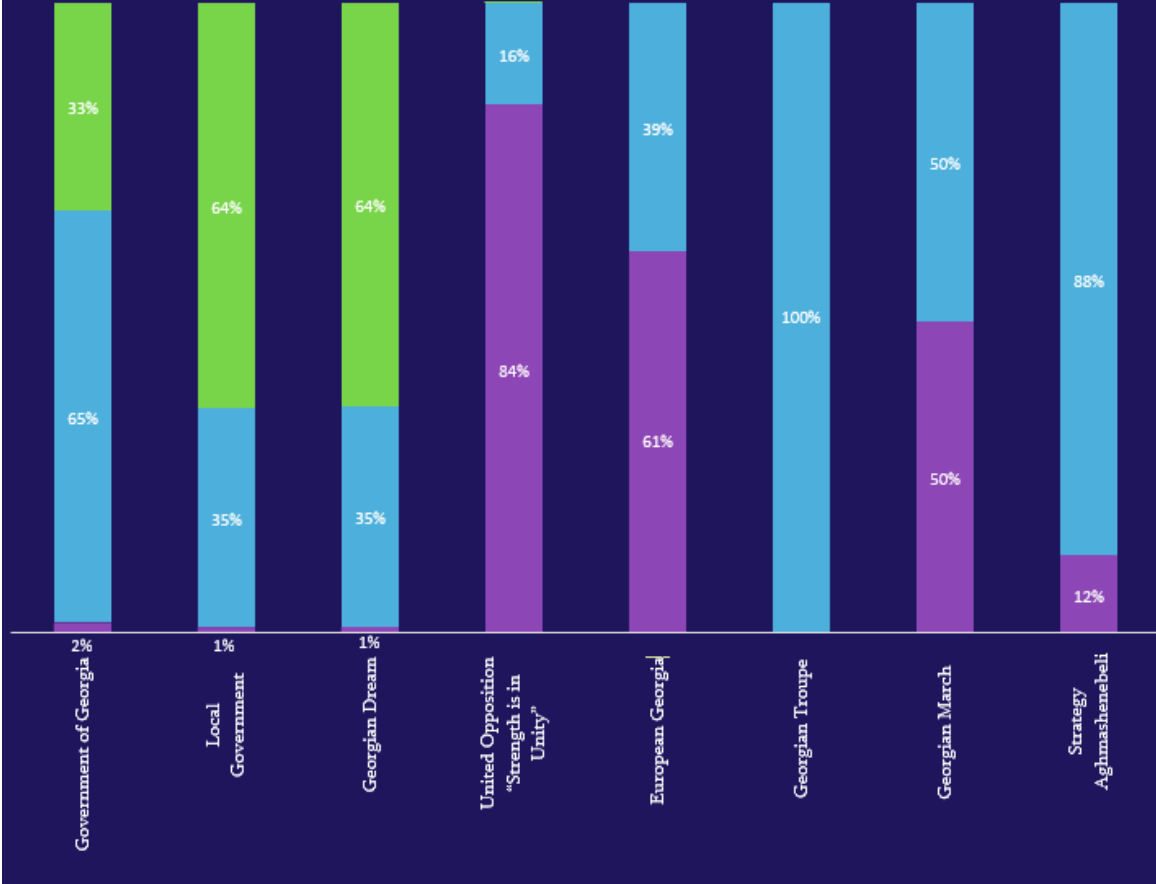
“Our Show” – Georgian Dream (twice).

According to the weekly information released by the broadcaster, the self-regulating mechanism of Imedi TV did not receive any complaints regarding bias or violation of the principles of fairness and balance.

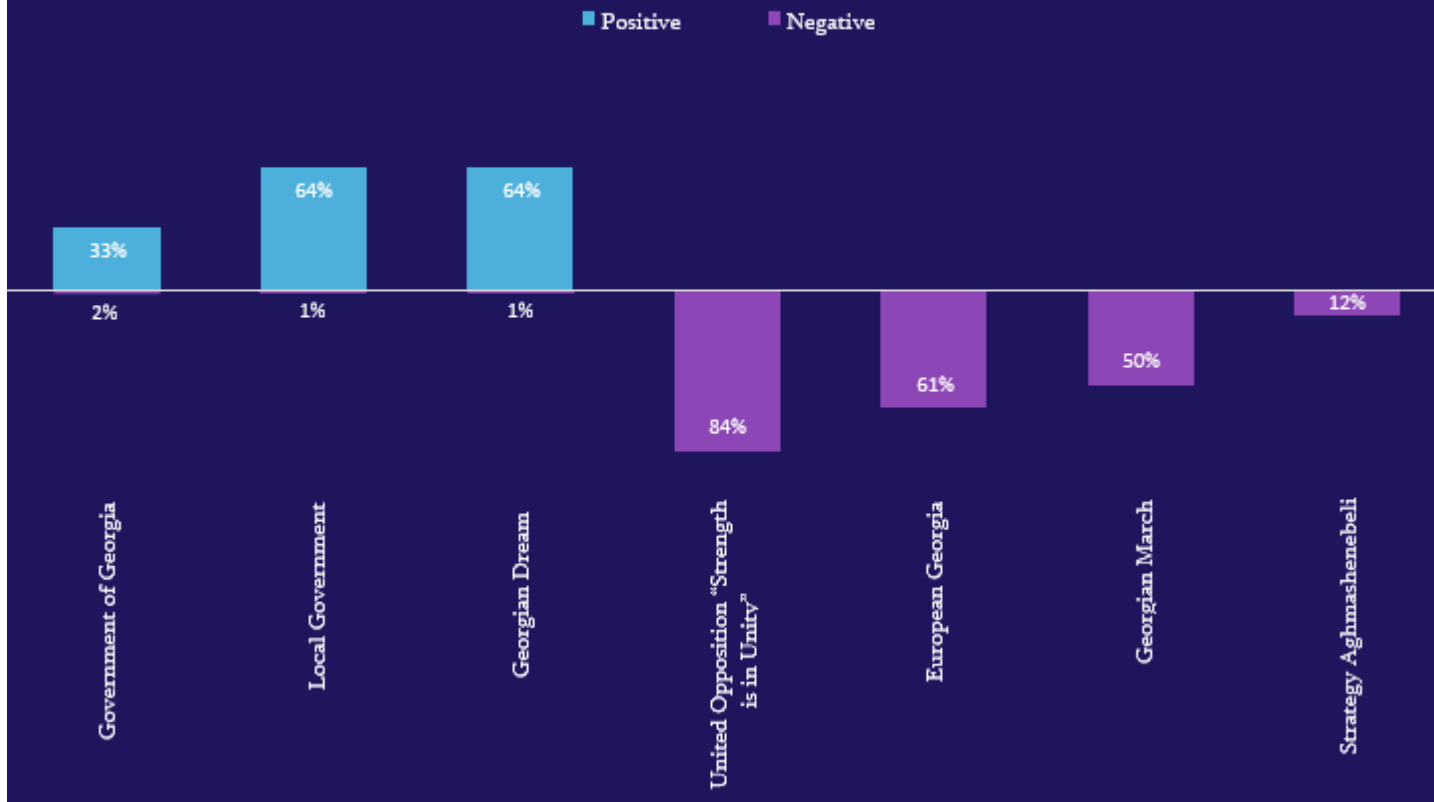


Tone

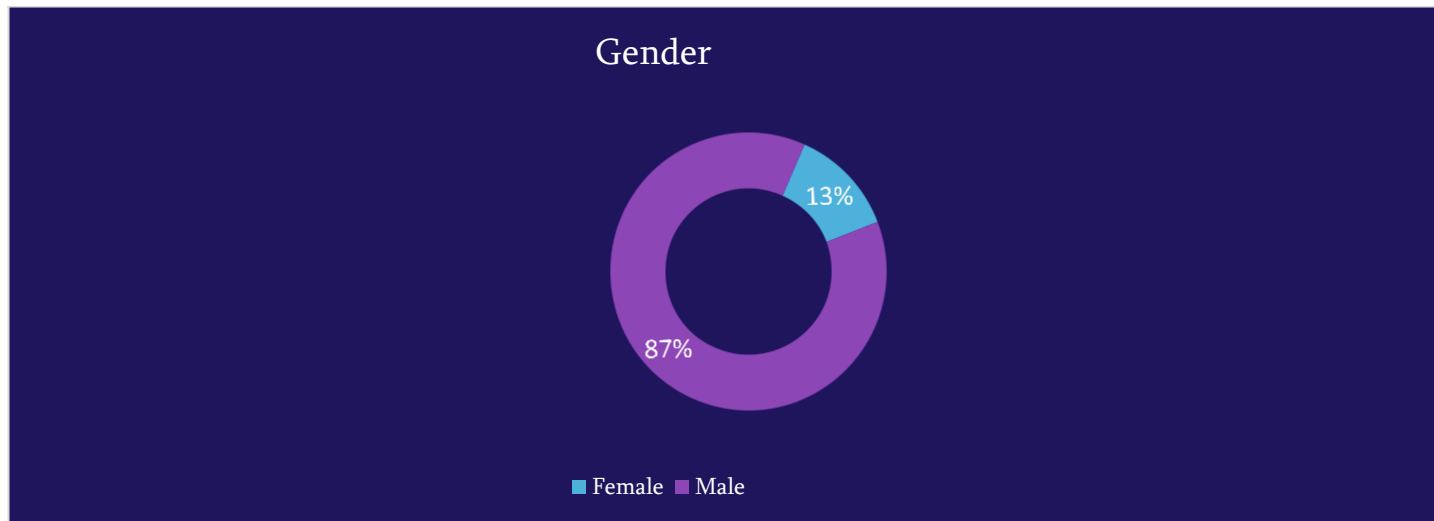
■ Negative ■ Neutral ■ Positive



Positive and Negative Coverage



Gender



Broadcasting Company Rustavi 2 Ltd.

News Programmes – Time allotted to the monitoring subjects: Georgian Dream – 31.1% (positive – 31%, negative – 12%), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” – 15.8% (positive – 17%, negative – 17%), Government of Georgia – 13.2% (positive – 15%, negative – 5%), all other subjects – less than 10% (see graph).

Qualitative Assessment – During the second reporting period, “**Courier**” once again covered the current affairs in accordance with ethical norms. Coverage of the electoral subjects on the news programmes was largely neutral and balanced. However, there were cases of journalists displaying irony towards the representatives of opposition parties:

For example, during the election campaign coverage on 19 October, the presenter expressed his disapproval of the extent of Strategy Aghmashenebeli leader Giorgi Vashadze’s activity. “The leader of Strategy Aghmashenebeli has once again been excessively active, having already published his work plan for the first 30 days after the election.”

The story “Broken Political Truce,” which was broadcasted on 13 October, displayed a negative attitude towards the opposition. The presenter remarked: “Representatives of the administration that presided over the Gareji scandal are now battling each other in an attempt to return to power. Two products of the former governing party – two opposition electoral subjects – have spent the last two days criticising each other. European Georgia and the United National Movement – the conflict continues.”

Political Programmes – The following political subjects appeared on the programme “**Daily Courier**” during the reporting period: Georgian Dream (twenty-three times), Lelo (sixteen times), European Georgia (fifteen times), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (fourteen times), Our Georgia – Solidarity Alliance (eleven times), Government of Georgia (nine times), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (six times), Free Georgia (five times), Ana Dolidze – Movement for the People (four times), Girchi (three times), Davit Chichinadze – Tribune (three times), United Georgia (twice), Free Democrats (twice), Aleko Elisashvili – Citizens (twice), Conservative Party (twice), Alliance of Patriots (twice), Victorious Georgia (once), Green Party (once), Reformers (once), Eka Beselia – Party for Justice (once), Georgian Troupe (once), independent candidate Bidzina Gegidze (once).

The following monitoring subjects appeared on the programme “**Night Courier**”: Lelo (three times), Georgian Dream (twice), European Georgia (twice), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (twice), United Georgian (twice), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (once), Girchi (once), Conservative Party (once), Labour Party (once), Aleko Elisashvili - Citizens (once), Ana Dolidze – Movement for the People (once), Alliance of Patriots (once), President of Georgia (once).

During the reporting period, the “**Daily Courier**” allocated air time to the pre-election activities and party presentations of candidates for the single-mandate constituencies in Tbilisi.

All electoral subjects were asked standard questions: what does your party promise to do, how does it plan to implement these promises, and how would you assess your party's list?

The programme "**Night Courier**" changed its format for the second reporting period and devoted the entire air time to party presentations. Party leaders appeared on the programme together with two other members of their party. The programme had three presenters who asked the guests questions on various topics.

Presenters were familiar with the election manifestoes, as well as other relevant documents and statistics. They asked relevant questions, allowing viewers to receive broad information about the pre-election manifestoes, as well as the methods and resources through which the manifestoes were to be implemented. Overall, the programme helped the viewers make informed choices.

Talk show presenters began introducing the guests by reviewing past activities of the respective political subjects. The presenter explained during the first show that this format would help viewers picture the relevant context: "Who promised what, and how did they arrive to the point where they are now?" The appearance of the governing party on the show on 27 October represented an anomaly, as the presenter did not start the programme by talking about the political past. The presenter remarked that the government is primarily responsible for what is happening in the present, proceeding to ask the guest questions about the 'fugitive terrorist.'

Presenters always distanced themselves from any discriminatory remarks made by guests, immediately making a statement to this end.

For example, the leader of United Georgia Nino Burjanadze told the presenter on the 2 October show: "I can express myself very well, and people usually understand what I say. Even the rural population understands, so I am not sure why someone like you, who has worked in England and on Georgian television, fails to understand."

The aforementioned phrase did not escape the attention of the presenter, who told the guest: "Our rural population certainly does not have a problem understanding your words, statements and promises... this programme is being watched in rural areas, and I do not wish to create the perception that such distinctions are made on our show."

On 6 October, the Labour Party leader Shalva Natelashvili made the following remarks on "Night Courier": "Three 'Kotsi' women have sued me. They were adopting this law, where a husband who disturbed his wife's sleep a year ago could be sued for rape. I stated that a nation where births and marriages are disappearing requires demographic support. We need to reproduce rather than introduce criminal laws in bedrooms. For this, I have been sued by three 'Kotsi' activists, all female." The presenter responded to these remarks by reminding the guest that strengthening the existing stereotypes about women is unacceptable.

There was a case when the presenter acted inappropriately towards the guest: "You can watch the recording of this programme tomorrow, and your face tells me that you are getting annoyed... you are blushing," the presenter told the leader of United Georgia Nino Burjanadze. This annoyed the guest and caused the presenter to apologise.

A special edition of the “Night Courier” aired on 31 October, the day of the vote. The presenter, who was joined by party leaders, analysts and NGO representatives, regularly switched to the main news studio for updates.

On the day of the vote, the presenter was critical towards the members of the governing party. When one of the Georgian Dream leaders Archil Talakvadze stated that his team “conducted fundamental democratic reforms that made it possible to hold free and democratic elections through an essentially proportional system,” the presenter responded: “let us remind the viewers that this election model was only adopted after the opposition sat down with our international partners and demanded that you fulfil your promise which, as you said back at the time, initially “fell through because of rebel parliamentarians from Georgian Dream.”

Entertainment Shows – During the reporting period, electoral subjects also appeared on the following entertainment shows:

“Nika Arabidze Show” – Georgian Dream (once), Conservative Party (once), Lelo (once), Ana Dolidze – Movement for the People (once).

“Mental Wars” – Girchi (once), Georgian Idea (once), United Georgia (once), independent candidate Tamar Makashvili.

“Profile” – European Georgia (once), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (once), Aleko Elisashvili - Citizens (once), Eka Beselia – For Justice (once).

“Hidden Envelope” – Ana Dolidze – Movement for the People (once), Conservative Party (once).

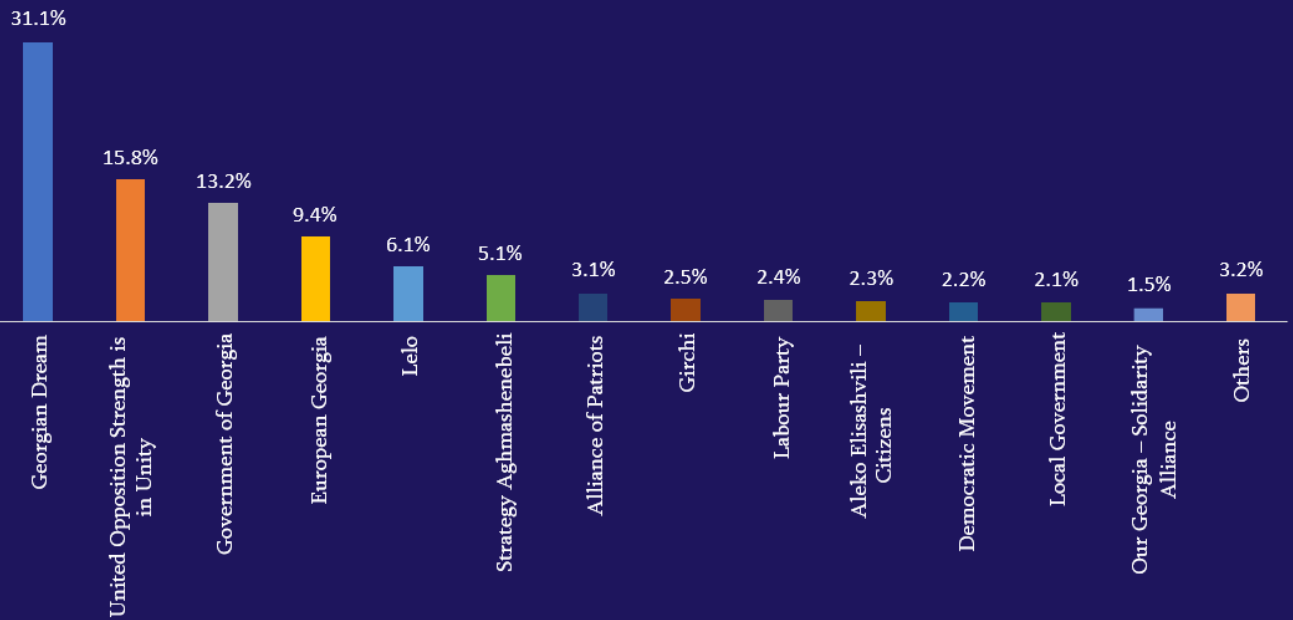
One monitoring subject from Georgian Dream appeared on **“Good Morning, Georgia.”**

Independent candidate Tamar Makashvili appeared on the **“Show of Jokes.”**

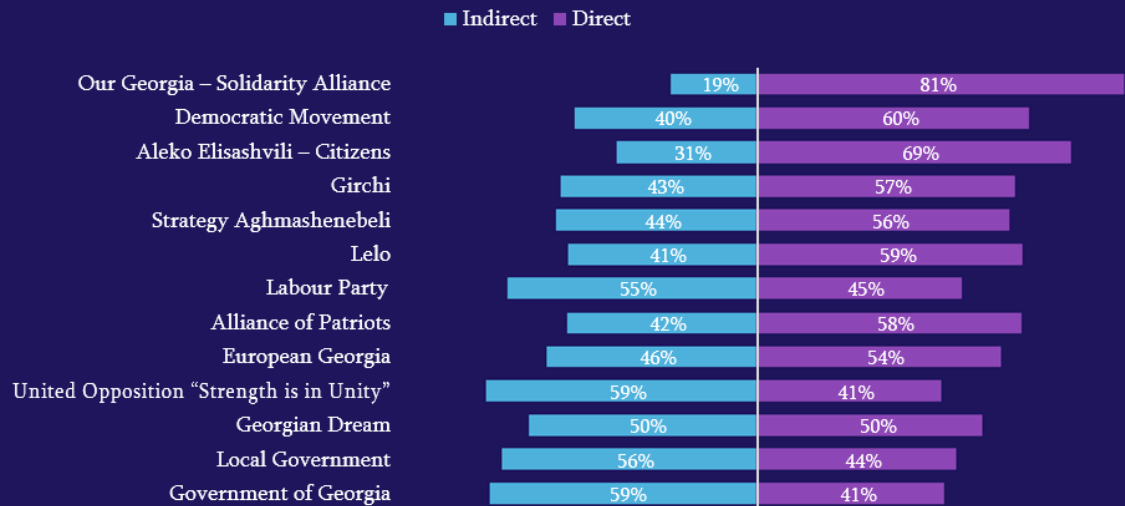
A representative of Girchi appeared on the programme **“Great Story.”**

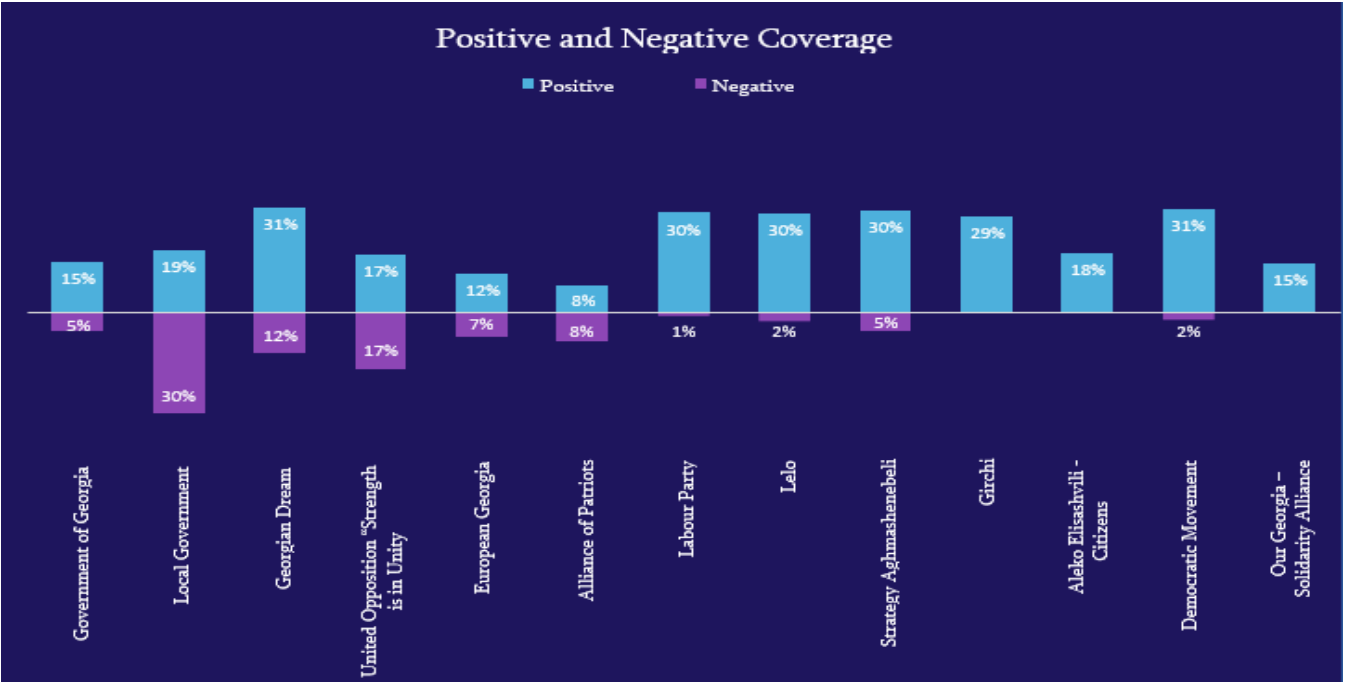
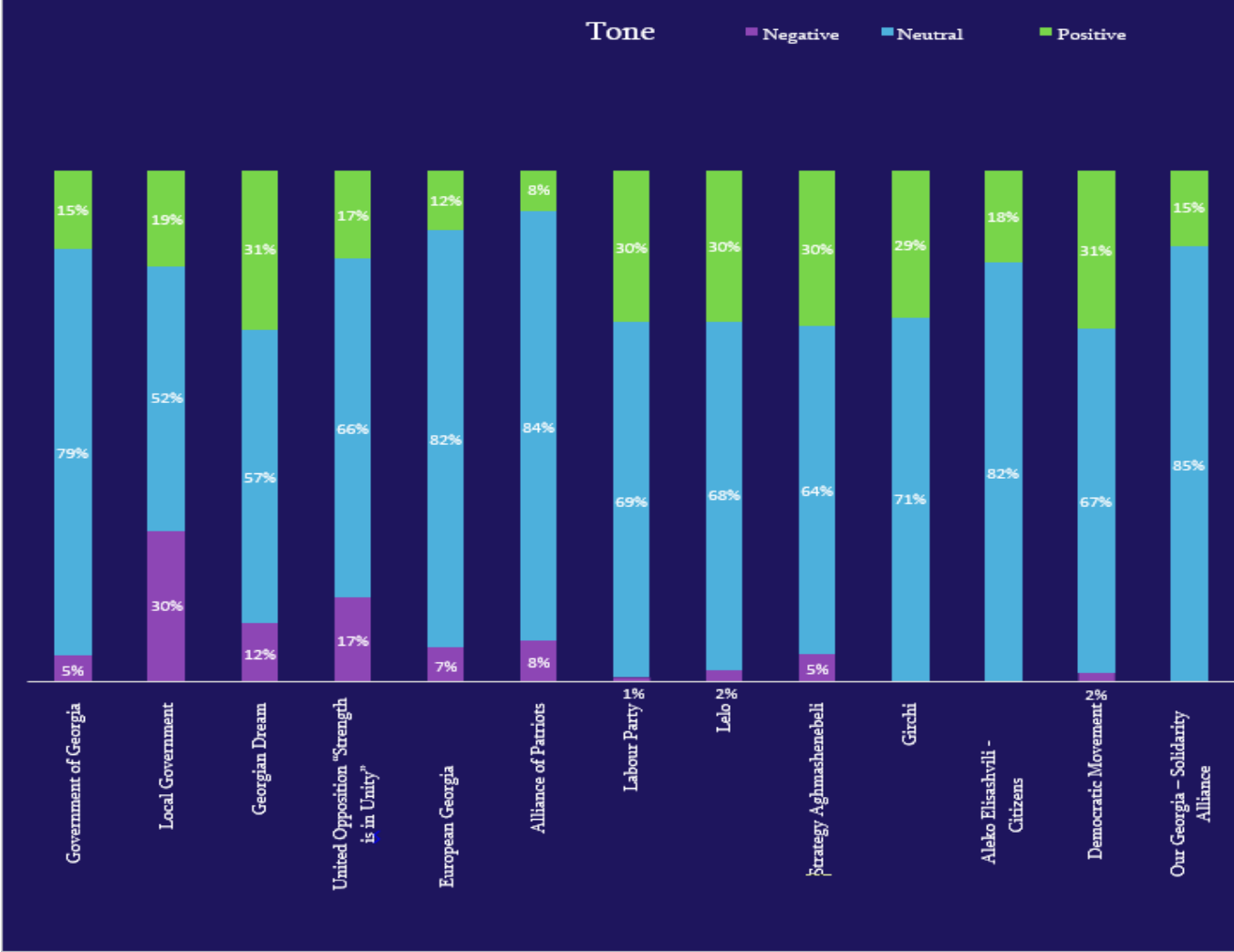
According to the weekly information released by the broadcaster, the self-regulating mechanism of Rustavi 2 did not receive any complaints regarding bias or violation of the principles of fairness and balance.

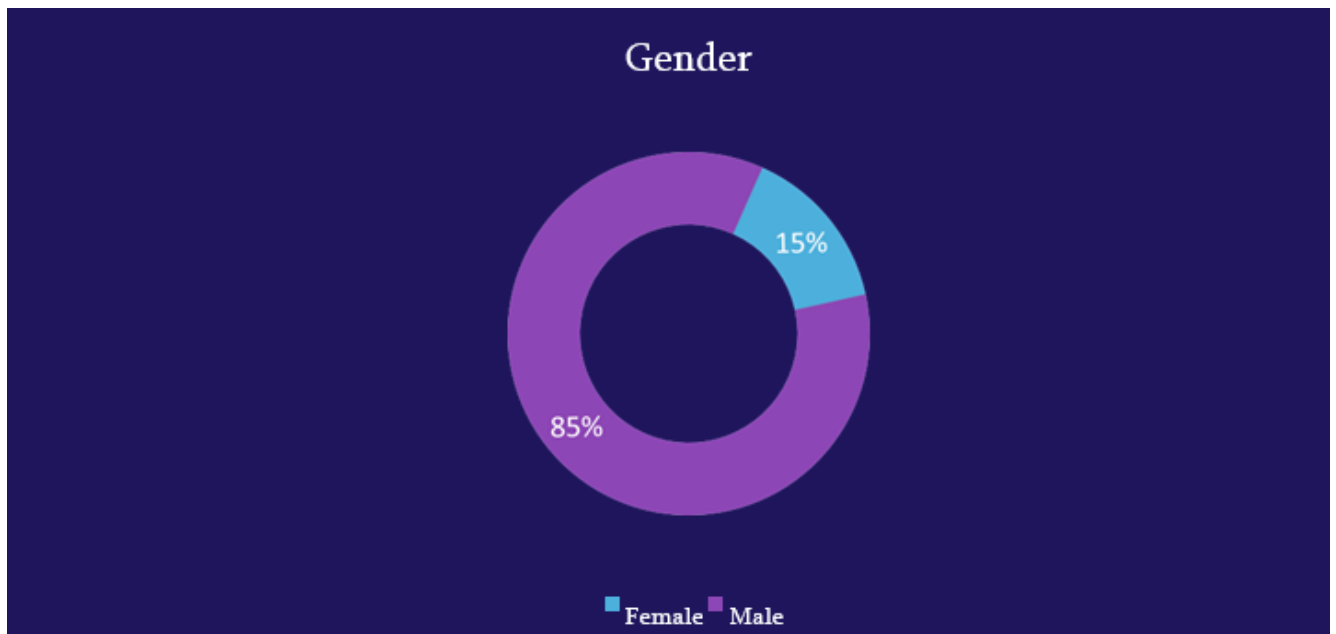
Rustavi 2



Direct and Indirect Coverage







Television Company Pirveli Ltd.

News Programmes – Time allotted to the monitoring subjects: Georgian Dream – 37% (positive – 14%, negative – 49%), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” – 19.6% (positive – 6%, negative – 22%), Government of Georgia – 18.9% (positive – 2%, negative – 38%), all other subjects – less than 10% (see graph).

Qualitative Assessment – The monitoring of the main news programmes and political shows of TV Pirveli during the reporting period showed that the broadcaster conducted biased coverage of pre-election campaigns of various electoral subjects. Government activities and the pre-election campaign of Georgian Dream received extremely negative coverage. Presenters tried to present their personal opinions as facts without substantiating their statements with evidence.

Coverage of pre-election activities of the political parties was mainly conducted in the form of live broadcasts of assemblies and candidate presentations. Candidates’ meetings with the electorate, candidate presentations and various other election topics were only given fragmented coverage on the main news programme. The broadcaster continued to employ a selective approach towards the coverage of pre-election campaigns of different electoral subjects, denying viewers the opportunity to make an informed choice.

During the reporting period, the tone of coverage of topics related to COVID-19 was extremely negative. Coverage focussed on the wrong decisions made by the government and did not serve to inform the public about the epidemiological situation. The stories mainly featured expert opinions from representatives of opposition parties. Coverage of the country’s healthcare system only featured hopeless forecasts, thereby potentially sowing panic among the population.

One-sided coverage has practically become norm on the main news programme. However, the broadcaster cited a boycott by Georgian Dream as an explanation.

The story “Persecution of the Opposition – Okriashvili’s Banners Removed,” which was broadcasted on the main news programme of TV Pirveli at 20:31 on 2 October, claimed that representatives of the Bolnisi Town Hall ripped off the advertising banners that were placed by the United Opposition candidate Kakha Okriashvili. However, no response from the Town Hall was offered by the broadcaster.

In the story “Violence in Bolnisi – One Arrest,” which was broadcasted at 20:12 on 4 October, the journalist claims that “law enforcement officers tried to arrest another opposition activist without a court order or arrest warrant. Six policemen dressed in civilian clothes went to Arif Yusufov’s house in the village of Nakhiduri. However, locals did not allow the man to be taken away by the officers of the Gomelauri station.” In the same story, the opposition blamed Georgian Dream for the violence. However, the positions of MIA and Georgian Dream were not presented.

We came across cases of fake news and manipulation on the main news programme of TV Pirveli. Accusations made by journalists against the government and Georgian Dream were based on suspicions and assumptions, rather than evidence.

On 2 October at 20:15, the broadcaster aired the story “25 Million on New Cars,” which contained the following:

“People are on the verge of destitution, yet the government continues to live in luxury. Soon we will have more than 300 new, expensive white vehicles on the streets of our country. In the time of economic crisis, the government decided to upgrade its fleet of vehicles and has already allocated 25 million from the state budget for this purpose. From black jeeps to expensive white cars – everyone who had a chance to study the tender documents states that we are dealing with simultaneous cases of money being squandered and money being made. Vehicle types were specified in the terms of the tender to tailor them to specific companies.” No evidence was presented for the claim that the tender documents were tailored to specific companies. Accusations were based on assumptions. It was also unclear to viewers whether the vehicles in question were being purchased for the comfort of high-ranking members of government, or whether, as stated by a government representative, they were designed to serve strategic facilities and satisfy standards on the road towards NATO integration.

The story “Secret Recordings Sent to Diplomats,” which was broadcasted at 20:22 on 20 October, concerned Bidzina Ivanishvili’s Russian connections:

“A scandalous audio recording e-mailed to diplomats is a direct proof of Bidzina Ivanishvili’s ties to an agent of the Kremlin. It transpires that Russian oligarchs were asked for help by a member of Bidzina Ivanishvili’s close circle, with Igor Giorgadze acting as an intermediary. On this specific occasion, Ivanishvili wanted to bring a Swedish company to Georgia.”

The recording, the authenticity of which had not been established, was presented as evidence by the journalist. The recording was so vague that one had to ask why it was being presented by TV Pirveli as proof of Ivanishvili's ties to Russia, especially when the identity of the "member of Bidzina Ivanishvili's close circle" was unknown, and the story was based on the journalist's assumptions.

On 27 October at 20:02, the broadcaster aired the story "Money Handed Out in the Offices of Georgian Dream."

"Five days before the elections, Georgian Dream is handing out money directly in its offices. TV Pirveli filmed the exclusive scenes of long queues in Bolnisi today. At first, people gathered outside the Georgian Dream office confirmed that they were there to collect money, but the events took a dramatic turn when party members came outside and warned people in the queue not to tell journalists the real reason why they came to the office."

Although the broadcaster failed to present direct evidence or recordings of money being handed out, this did not prevent the journalist from talking about the distribution of cash and bribing of the electorate as a matter of fact. It was stated on several occasions that members of the public admitted to collecting the money, but no recordings were presented. Members of the public did not confirm that money had been handed out. Comments by members of the public who could not understand Georgian were presented in the journalist's materials as confirmation that cash had been distributed.

On the day of the vote, TV Pirveli provided continuous coverage of the elections across the country. There were frequent reports of irregularities and live broadcasts of scenes of confrontation. At times, viewers were given information of dubious accuracy.

On the day of the vote, TV Pirveli reported that Georgian Dream representatives were handing out money from their vehicles. However, these accusations were often based on the journalist's assumptions and statements made by opposition parties. There were cases of attempted manipulation. Reports of attempted bribery of the electorate were unsubstantiated.

"What is the price of a vote for Georgian Dream? Today we can confirm for the first time that members of the electorate received cash for circling the number 41 at the polling station. The 2020 parliamentary elections have been characterised by distribution of money. This woman is a Georgian Dream coordinator. She is standing outside the polling station #4 in Zugdidi holding cash in her hands. Having studied the video material in detail, we can presume that this woman will soon give some of the money to individuals inside the car that is parked outside the polling station. As soon as TV Pirveli journalists appeared and began asking questions, the Toyota vehicle raced away from the scene."

The materials presented in the story raise questions and create the impression of attempted manipulation by the journalist. The recordings do not show money being handed over to the people in the car. Furthermore, the car in which the journalist claims to have seen cash being exchanged is a Honda model, while the car shown speeding off is a Toyota. The only thing that these two vehicles have in common is that they are both red.

Political Programmes – TV Pirveli has a broad variety of socio-political programmes. Nevertheless, analysis and discussion of pre-election topics on these shows was rather rare. Air time was mainly devoted to criticising the government and Georgian Dream, rather than analysing the contents of election manifestoes. Viewers only heard general promises being made by politicians. No independent experts were used by the broadcaster. Therefore, the public was unable to hear the analysis and learn how realistic it was for the candidates to be able to fulfil their promises. This, in turn, meant that the electorate could not obtain full information and make informed choices on the day of the vote.

Georgian Dream did not participate in the broadcaster's political shows during the reporting period. According to the broadcaster, this was due to the party boycotting the channel. It should also be mentioned that the broadcaster allocated most of the air time to candidates from the United Opposition "Strength is in Unity" and European Georgia. Comparatively less time was allocated to Lelo, Girchi and Strategy Aghmashenebeli.

Presenters with their own political shows were often unable to maintain neutrality and refrain from expressing their political views. The opinions of the presenters often matched those of opposition party representatives, meaning that instead of critical discussions and in-depth analysis of issues, viewers witnessed the journalists and their guests concurring with each other. Guests who were negatively disposed towards the government were given the opportunity by the presenters to make unsubstantiated accusations against the ruling party.

At times, journalists did not attempt to disguise their loyalties and personal sympathies towards certain candidates. For example, on 27 October, Inga Grigolia openly reiterated her support for Nanuka Zhorzholiani:

"To my colleague, I would like to openly express my support for her live on air. I do not care under which party number you are participating in these elections. I just wish you success and I want to see you in the Parliament, because I know what Nanuka Zhorzholiani can do in the Parliament... so, I am openly expressing my support for you live on air, and I hope that I will be congratulating you on your victory on 31 October," Inga Grigolia stated.

Ms Grigolia also expressed her personal sympathies towards Nika Melia on 29 October (21:13):

"I genuinely wish to see you in the Parliament after these elections. Nika, after I watched those scenes that resembled a "Communist Party assembly," when you sat there alone facing them, I will be honest with you, I do not care under which party number you are running in these elections. I do not often say this live on air, but this was an act of injustice and I wish that you can open that door and step inside."

Personal preferences and sympathies were also openly expressed by Eka Mishveladze and Buka Petriashvili on the programme "**Political Friday**."

Eka Mishveladze: "I personally want to see Elene Khoshtaria in the Parliament." Buka Petriashvili: "I concur."

The private views and political preferences of the presenters of political shows “**Public Policy**” and “**Inga Grigolia’s Reaction**” became even more open and blatant after the Executive Secretary of Georgian Dream released information about telephone communication between a TV Pirveli journalist and a representative of the United National Movement. The statement made by Inga Grigolia on the programme “**Reaction**” on 30 October (20:51), went beyond the norms of journalistic ethics and showed signs of hate speech:

“I warned you only a week ago, Mr. Kobakhidze – stop shouting about “canals,” or you will end up in the sewer. You did not stop, and now, having been charmed by your position of power, you have revealed your party’s big secret, that you are listening in on us, spying on us, following our telephone and social media conversations... to use your favourite word, you have stuck your head so far into the “canal” of spying that you have lost control over yourself and said something that you should not have said... normally I would make fun of this spectacularly stupid boy, but now is not the time to make fun. We are dealing with a serious crime, and even a stupid person must be held accountable for such a crime.”

Presenters of the show “**First Line**” do not disguise their negative attitudes towards the government and Georgian Dream. Differing opinions were rarely heard on the programme. Opposition candidates were allowed to use their air time to present themselves in a positive light. Journalists rarely posed critical and in-depth questions.

The stories broadcasted on the programme “**Nodar Meladze’s Saturday**” had the core purpose of trying to link Georgian Dream members and Bidzina Ivanishvili’s inner circle to corruption and association with high-level criminals.

TV Pirveli dedicated a special broadcast to the attack on the Bank of Georgia branch in Zugdidi and the subsequent special operation. It must be said that the coverage of the special operation violated the rules outlined in the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters.

More specifically, the journalists of TV Pirveli brought into question the need for broadcasters to comply with Article 53.4 of the Code of Conduct, which states that “any statements or demands made by terrorists or kidnappers should be broadcasted in an edited form to ensure that they do not manipulate public opinion.” TV Pirveli complied with the attacker’s demand to allow one of the hostages to read out the attacker’s terms live on air.

The broadcast schedule of TV Pirveli includes the following political programmes: “**Inga Grigolia’s Reaction**,” “**Public Policy**,” “**Political Friday**,” “**Nodar Meladze’s Saturday**,” “**First Line**,” “**News of the Day**.” In connection with the elections, the broadcaster also aired the show “**Election Reaction**,” where candidates were allocated a certain amount of time to present their manifestoes without debates.

The following political parties took part in the programme “**Inga Grigolia’s Reaction**” during the reporting period: European Georgia (nine times), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (twelve

times), Lelo (seven times), Girchi (once), Victorious Georgia (twice), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (three times), Labour Party (six times), Democratic Movement (once), Free Georgia (once), Ana Dolidze – Movement for the People (once), Party for Justice (twice), Solidarity Alliance (three times), Tribune (twice), Citizens (twice), Georgian March (once).

The same programme hosted debates between representatives of the following political parties: Solidarity Alliance, Strategy Aghmashenebeli, European Georgia, Lelo, United Opposition “Strength is in Unity,” Party for Justice, Labour Party, Ana Dolidze – Movement for the People.

The following political parties took part in the programme “**Public Policy**” during the reporting period: European Georgia (five times), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (six times), Lelo (six times), Girchi (four times), Victorious Georgia (three times), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (three times), Labour Party (five times), Democratic Movement (three times), Free Georgia (twice), Solidarity Alliance (four times), Georgian March (once), Conservative Party (once), Party for Justice (twice), Aleko Elisashvili – Citizens (three times), Ana Dolidze – Movement for the People (once), Tribune (twice).

The same programme hosted debates between representatives of the following political parties: Solidarity Alliance, Strategy Aghmashenebeli, European Georgia, Lelo, United Opposition “Strength is in Unity,” Party for Justice, Labour Party, Ana Dolidze – Movement for the People, Victorious Georgia, Aleko Elisashvili – Citizens, Girchi, Tribune, Democratic Movement, Free Georgia, Conservative Party.

The following political parties took part in the programme “**Political Friday**” during the reporting period: European Georgia (four times), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (three times), Lelo (three times), Labour Party (once), Alliance of Patriots (once), Solidarity Alliance (once), Democratic Movement (once), Girchi (once).

The same programme hosted debates between representatives of the following political parties: European Georgia, Lelo and Democratic Georgia.

The following political parties took part in the programme “**News of the Day,**” which airs three times a day: European Georgia (thirty-six times), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (seventy-eight times), Lelo (twenty-two times), Girchi (six times), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (twelve times), Labour Party (four times), Alliance of Patriots (once), Free Georgia (once), Solidarity Alliance (twice), Conservative Party (three times), Party for Justice (four times), Victorious Georgia (three times), Democratic Movement (six times), Aleko Elisashvili – Citizens (six times), Ana Dolidze – Movement for the People (three times), Georgian Choice (once).

The following political parties took part in the programme “**First Line**”: Victorious Georgia (three times), Girchi (twice), European Georgia (five times), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (five times), Aleko Elisashvili – Citizens (once), Lelo (three times), Party for Justice (twice), Free Georgia (once), Solidarity Alliance (twice), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (twice), Georgian Dream (once).

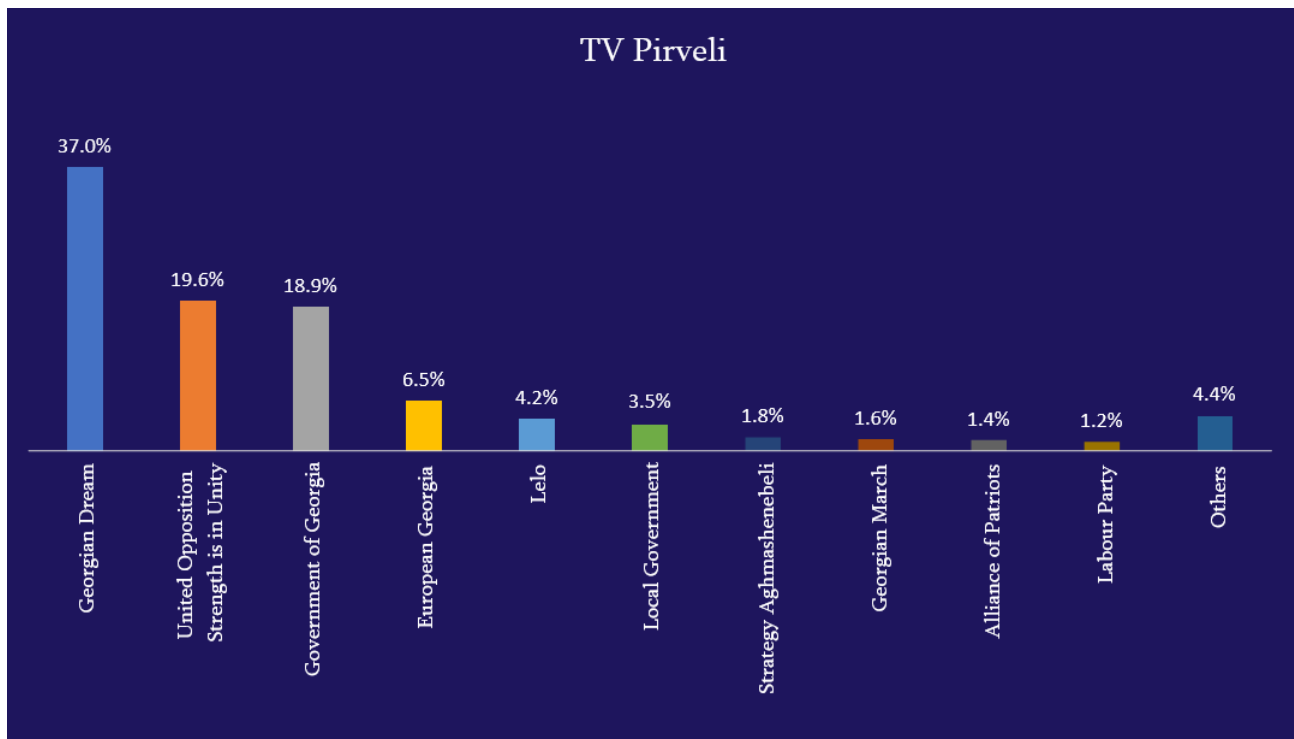
The programme “**Election Reaction**” aired three times during the reporting period. The following political parties took part in the programme: Girchi (once), European Georgia (three times), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (three times), Tribune (once), Lelo (twice), Free Georgia (once), Solidarity Alliance (twice), Georgian March (once), Democratic Movement (once).

During the reporting period, the programme “**Nodar Meladze’s Saturday**” broadcasted reports about the following political parties: Georgian Dream (four times), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (once), Alliance of Patriots (once), Tamaz Mechiauri for a United Georgia (once).

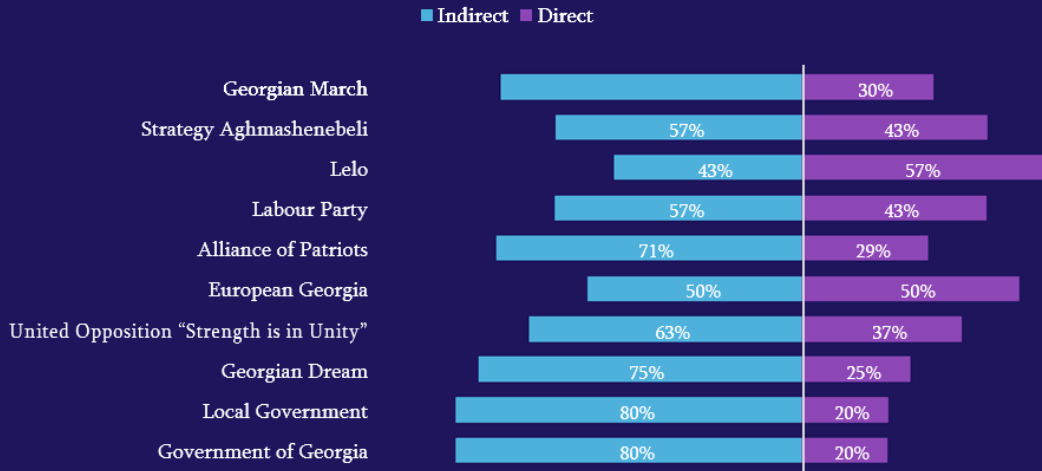
The prime time schedule of TV Pirveli includes the programme “**People for the People,**” which reports on Georgians living in extreme poverty and unbearable conditions. During the programme, journalists often emphasised that these people had been abandoned by the government and left to rely on other people’s help.

The programme “**Before One**” included appearances by Girchi (once) and Lelo (once), while the programme “**Afternoon Live**” included studio appearances from European Georgia (once), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (once) and Lelo (once). The programme “**Business Morning**” included appearances from Georgian Dream (once) and Lelo (once).

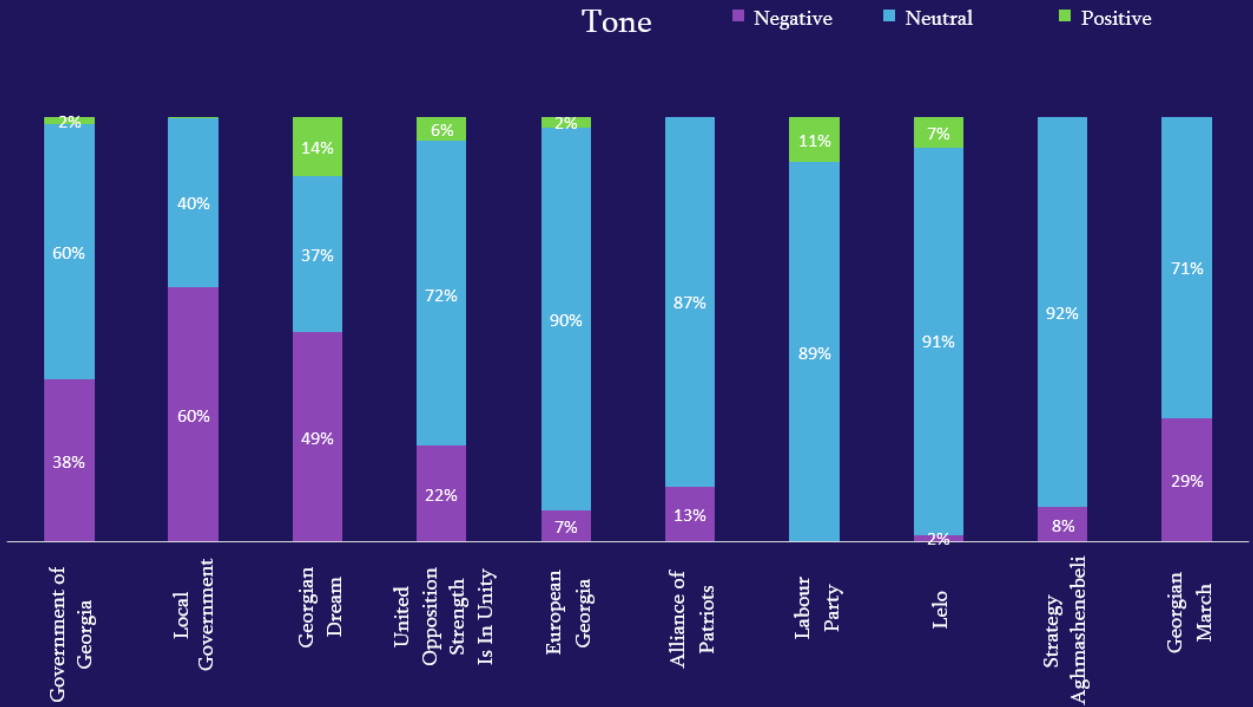
According to the weekly information released by the broadcaster, the self-regulating mechanism of TV Pirveli did not receive any complaints regarding bias or violation of the principles of fairness and balance.



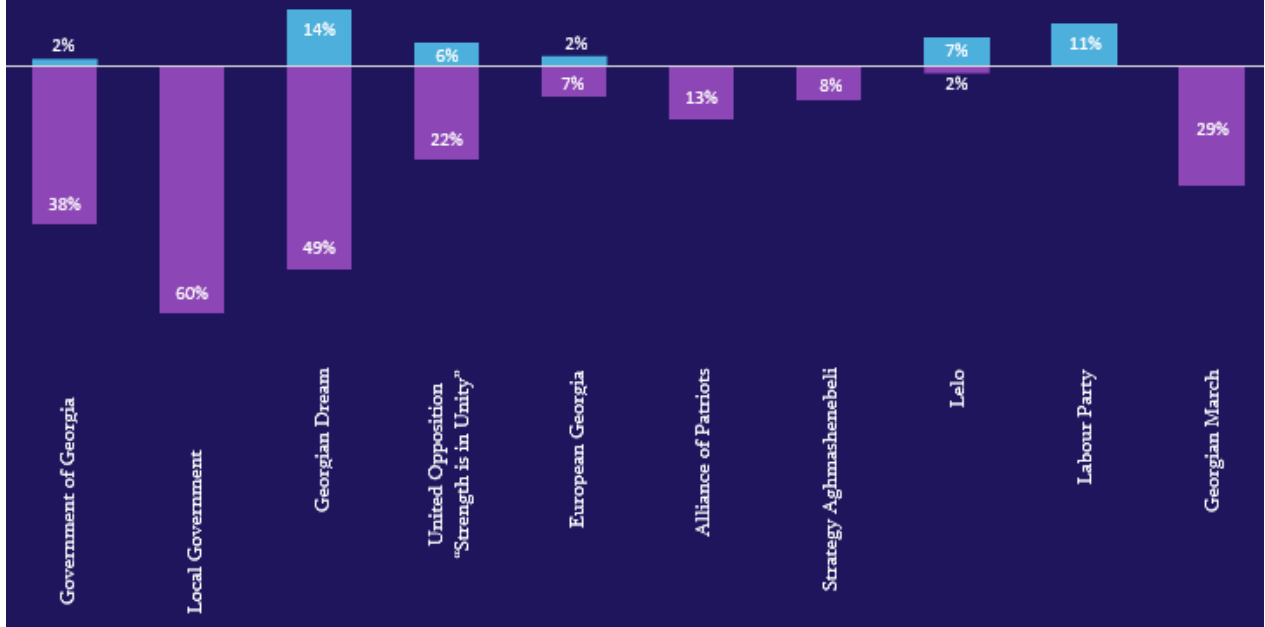
Direct and Indirect Coverage



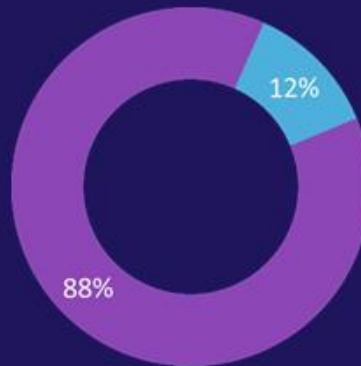
Tone



Positive and Negative Coverage



Gender



Female Male

Mtavari Arkhi Ltd.

News Programmes – Time allotted to the monitoring subjects: United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” – 42.2% (positive – 18%, negative – 1%), Georgian Dream – 28.9% (positive – 1%, negative – 66%), all other subjects – less than 10% (see graph).

Qualitative Assessment – During the reporting period, presenters and journalists of the broadcaster did not maintain balance. They displayed a highly positive attitude towards opposition parties, and an extremely negative attitude towards the government and the ruling party. They often used hate speech, broadcasted unverified information that was based on anonymous sources, used this information to manipulate viewers, and made aggressive and obscene remarks.

Journalists did not shy away from using ironic and negative tone towards members of the governing party, civil servants and government officials. The terms ‘oligarch’s slaves,’ ‘oligarch’s clan’ and ‘Ivanishvili’s subservient candidates’ were used frequently.

Presenter Nika Gvaramia referred to the head of the Georgian Dream election headquarters Irakli Kobakhidze as an idiot on several occasions (from 21:12 on 21 October).

A highly ironic story titled “Think, Kotsi” was prepared by Tengiz Gogotishvili and broadcasted on 25 October (“Post Factum,” 22:06).

On 29 October, the broadcaster devoted a substantial amount of time on its news programmes and political shows to a story that revolved around a plan allegedly composed by the Russian intelligence services. The story was based on a document, the authenticity of which was not supported by evidence, and which was presumably fake (grammar mistakes, absence of special marks, etc.).

On 20 October, the news programme of Mtavari Arkhi broadcasted the story “Secret Recordings of Igor Giorgadze.” In it, the broadcaster reproduced alleged secret phone conversations shared by a Russian web channel, involving Igor Giorgadze and an unidentified intermediary who was apparently acting on behalf of Bidzina Ivanishvili’s government. Although the authenticity of the recording was not established, the journalist presented it as evidence of Mr. Ivanishvili’s ties to the Russian special services.

For several days starting from 12 October, the broadcaster reported information about the politically motivated dismissal of a school director in Kartli. The journalist claimed that the director showed signs of having suffered a heart attack as a result of this episode. The broadcaster dedicated various talk shows to this story over a period of several days. Despite the severity of the accusations, the broadcaster never investigated the real reasons for the dismissal of the school director, never verified the information about her health, and focussed only on the presumptions made by her family members that her dismissal was politically motivated.

On 27 and 30 October, the news programme of Mtavari Arkhi reported a story about the registration of unknown individuals at registration addresses. Although the State Service Development Agency immediately issued a statement clarifying that the information contained in the report was untrue, the broadcaster repeated the false claims on 30 October.

On 21 October, while reporting on the attack on the Bank of Georgia branch in Zugdidi, the broadcaster put a hostage phoning on behalf of the terrorist live on air during the 15:00 edition of its news programme. The broadcaster ignored the MIA's instruction not to conduct any live broadcasts from the bank building, thereby violating Article 53.6 of the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters, which states that "broadcasters should listen to advice from the police and other law enforcement authorities about an issue which, if reported, may endanger the lives and health of individuals."

On 22 October, the programme "Mtavari at 9" broadcasted a story titled "Robbed Banks," reporting on various attacks on banks across the country without stating whether or not these crimes had been solved.

Coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic was largely conducted in a biased manner, with members of political parties being invited as experts on the programmes.

Crime was one of the recurring themes on the channel: "The government encouraged the thieves in law and criminals before the election, which was followed by a rise in crime levels." For example, on 12 October, "Mtavari at 9" led with a story about an elderly taxi driver arrested in Imereti on charges of paedophilia. Based on unverified and dubious information supplied by an unknown source, presenters and journalists claimed on several occasions that the 72-year-old taxi driver was supposedly a Georgian Dream activist.

Political Programmes – The broadcast schedule of Mtavari Arkhi included the following political shows: "Guest of the Day," "Main Debates," "Main in the World," "Mtavari at Night," "Main Accents," "Post Factum" and "Mtavari on Saturday."

The following monitoring subjects took part in the programme "**Guest of the Day**": Victorious Georgia (twice), Girchi (once), European Georgia (eighteen times), Democratic Movement (twice), Labour Party (twice), Lelo (nine times), Aleko Elisashvili – Citizens (four times), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (twice), Tribune (four times), Georgian Dream (once), Solidarity Alliance (once), United Opposition "Strength is in Unity" (twenty times).

The following monitoring subjects took part in the programme "**Main Debates**": United Opposition "Strength is in Unity" (sixteen times), European Georgia (eight times), Labour Party (once), Lelo (five times), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (twice), Democratic Movement (twice), Victorious Georgia (twice), Aleko Elisashvili – Citizens (twice), Party for Justice (once), Solidarity Alliance (twice), Tribune (once), Girchi (once).

The programme did not include classic debates. It mainly covered current affairs, although single-mandate constituency candidates were sometimes invited on the show to discuss their manifestoes. On the very first show, the presenter stated that representatives of the governing party did not wish to appear on the channel.

The following monitoring subjects took part in the programme **“Main in the World”**: European Georgia (twice).

The following monitoring subjects took part in the programme **“Mtavari at Night”**: Victorious Georgia (once), Girchi (once), European Georgia (eight times), Democratic Movement (once), Lelo (three times), Aleko Elisashvili - Citizens (once), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (three times), Solidarity Alliance (once), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (seven times).

The programme contained ironic and obscene remarks, e.g. “foolish members of the Commission” (31 October, 1:58:24).

As soon as the elections were over, the presenters of “Mtavari at Night” began openly encouraging the electorate and opposition leaders to gather outside the Election Administration building and defend their votes: “I have not slept for past five years here, and why are you not going outside?” (2:09:10); “It is now very important for the opposition to rally the troops and defend the votes” (2:38:59); “This is no longer the Election Administration, it is more like the Zhvania Bureau” (4:23:40). Throughout the night, presenters were openly and blatantly attempting to escalate the situation, spreading unsubstantiated information about people appearing at the polling stations armed with machine guns.

The following monitoring subjects took part in the programme **“Main Accents”**: Victorious Georgia (twice), Girchi (once), Ana Dolidze – Movement for the People (once), European Georgia (twelve times), Democratic Movement (twice), Free Georgia (once), Labour Party (once), Lelo (five times), Aleko Elisashvili – Citizens (three times), Party for Justice (once), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (five times), Tribune (once), Solidarity Alliance (once), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (twelve times).

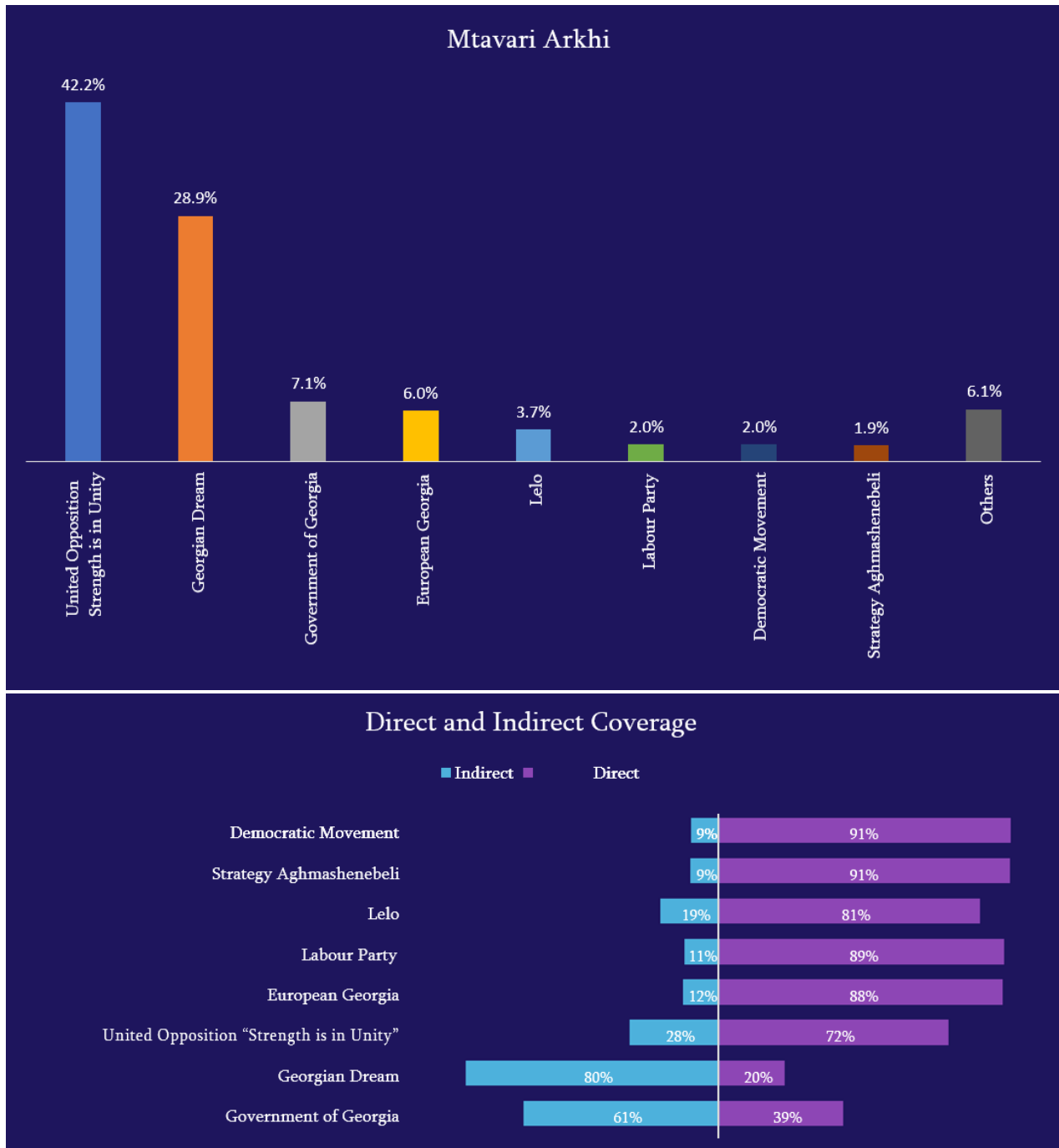
The programme contained discriminatory remarks and the use of hate speech by the presenter: “Are you trying to say that this country is under the rule of a psychopath?” – Nika Gvaramia used this discriminatory and disparaging remark about Bidzina Ivanishvili during an interview with Eldar Gogoladze, where a considerable amount of time was devoted to discussing Mr. Ivanishvili’s psychological state, concluding that “he may be in possession of a certificate from the psychiatric ward” (25 October).

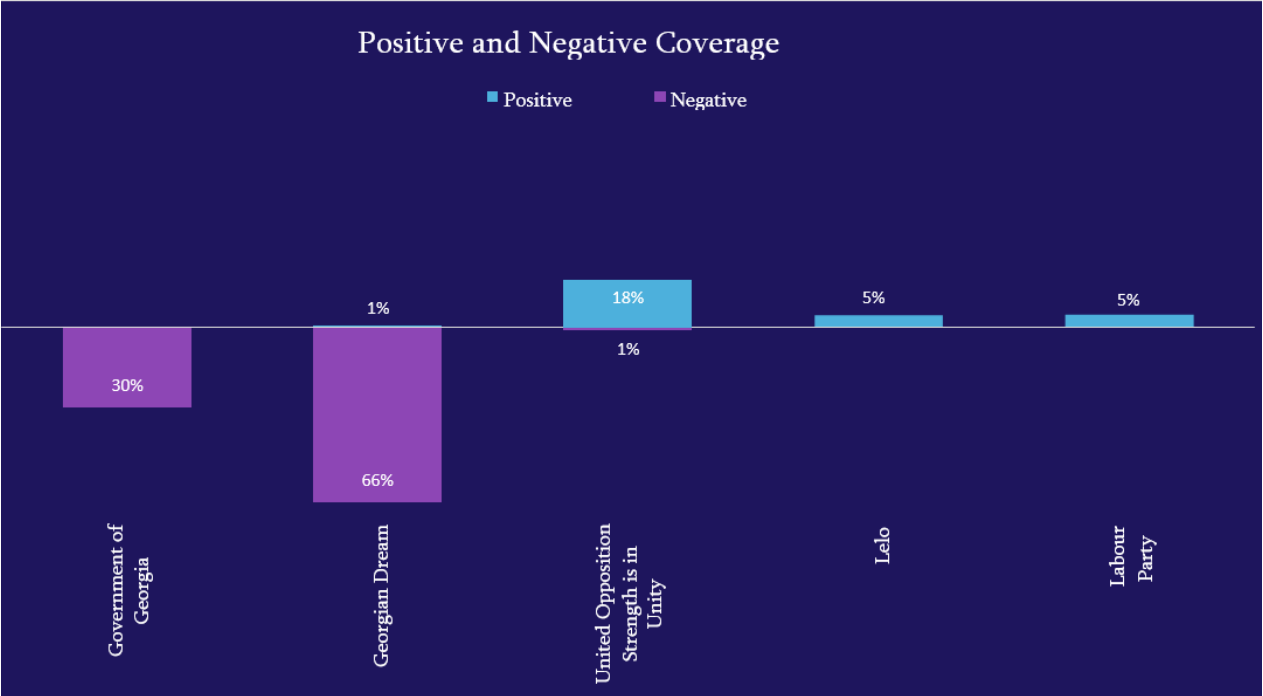
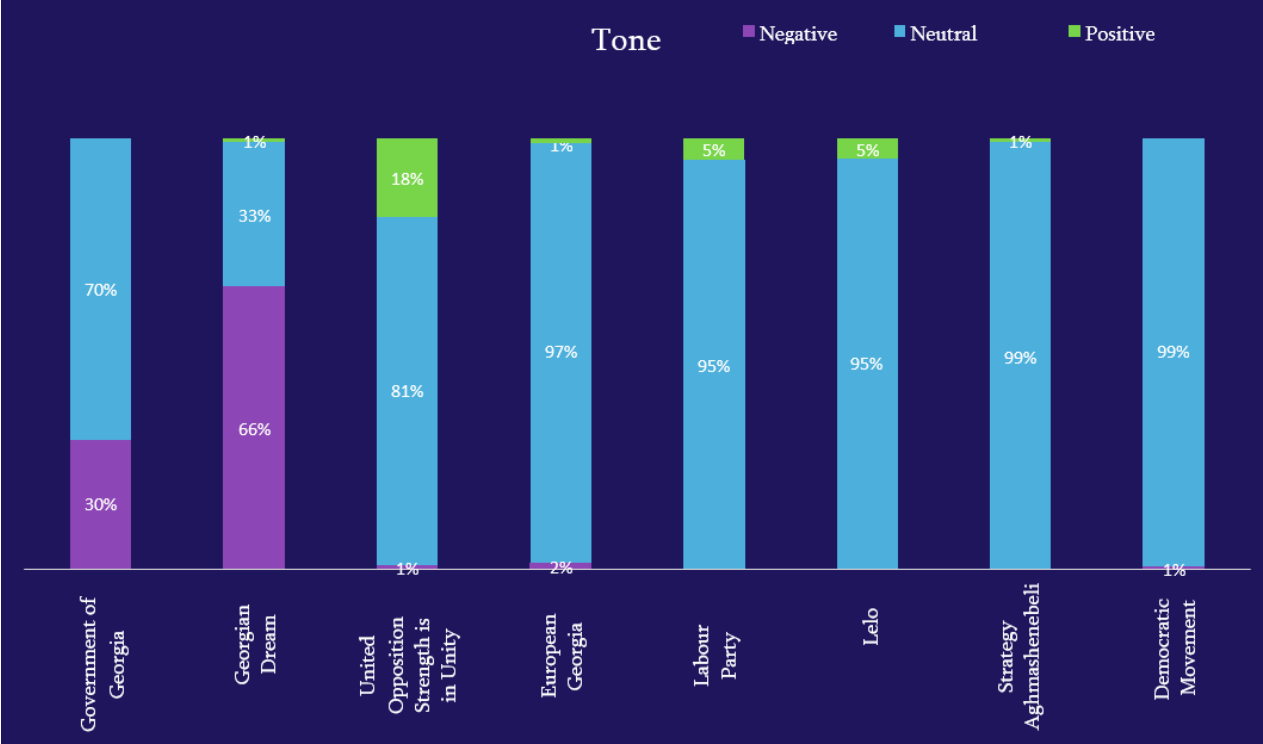
The following monitoring subjects took part in the programme **“Post Factum”**: Girchi (once), European Georgia (three times), Lelo (once), Aleko Elisashvili – Citizens (twice), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (twice), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (four times).

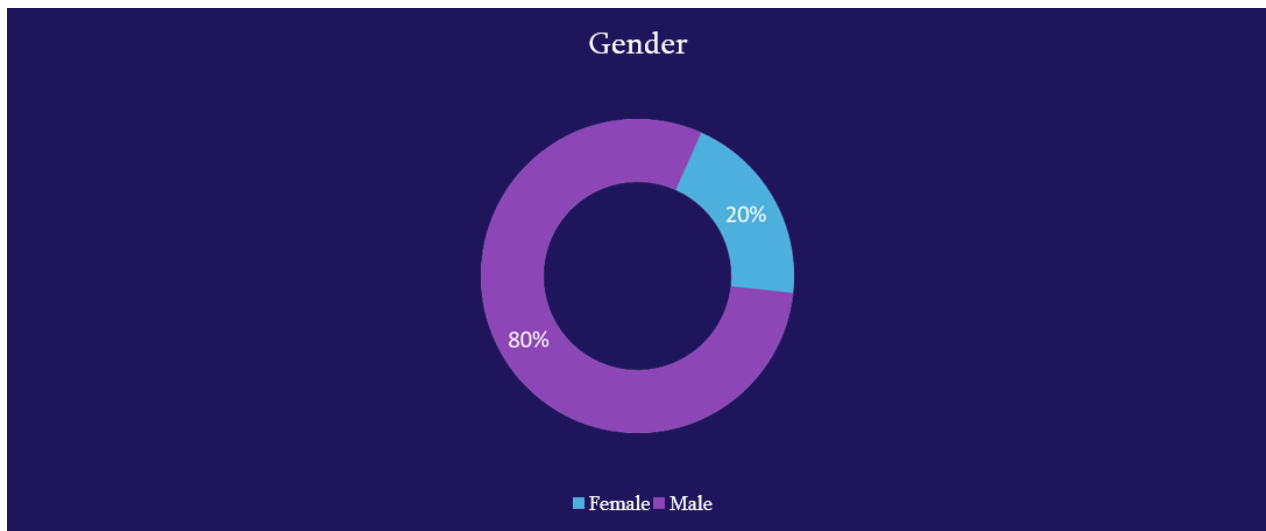
On 25 October, the presenter of “Post Factum” addressed Bera Ivanishvili and criticised him for the “Amazon Project.” He then showed a doll that had its pants down, remarking: “This is your father’s cowardly government. Your father allowed himself to be messed about by one armed individual, and even paid millions for this privilege.”

The following monitoring subjects took part in the programme “Mtavari on Saturday”: United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (twice), European Georgian (once), Victorious Georgia (once).

According to the weekly information released by the broadcaster, the self-regulating mechanism of Mtavari Arkhi did not receive any complaints regarding bias or violation of the principles of fairness and balance.







Pre-Election Environment, Violations and Recommendations:

The monitoring of the six aforementioned broadcasters has shown that:

The news programmes of the Georgian Public Broadcaster are mainly balanced and in line with the ethical standards of journalism. This is also largely the case with Adjara TV of the Georgian Public Broadcaster and Rustavi 2.

The political programmes and presenters of the Georgian Public Broadcaster and Rustavi 2 stand out through their relevant and critical questions, including towards representatives of the government, ensuring that the viewers are well-informed. The Georgian Public Broadcaster and Adjara TV allocated air time to the largest number of electoral subjects.

Telemedi, TV Pirveli and Mtavari Arkhi display clear bias towards different parties. News programmes and political shows are unbalanced and violate the standards of journalism. In contrast to the first reporting period, we find guests and interviewees on Telemedi using hate speech and obscene remarks without being appropriately challenged by the presenters.

The programmes of TV Pirveli and Mtavari Arkhi contained misleading and fake information, unsubstantiated accusations, frequent violations of ethical norms by the journalists, as well as the use of hate speech and obscene language.

As a reminder, the examples identified during the monitoring process constitute a grave violation of the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters. Based on the current legislation, response measures for the violation of the aforementioned norms can only be carried out within the self-regulation mechanism of the broadcasters. Decisions made within the self-regulation mechanism cannot be appealed before the Communications Commission or in court.

Along with the cases of swearing and bad language, Mtavari Arkhi broadcasted a programme containing obscenities. Article 56.4 of the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting prohibits the broadcasting of programmes that abuse a person's dignity and their fundamental rights, or contain obscenity. Based

on the current legislation, the Communications Commission is authorised to respond to this particular violation.

The Commission will soon release a statement for the media explaining their responsibility under law with regards to the use of obscenities in programmes or in advertising.

The Commission has reviewed 2 complaints regarding possible violation of the Election Code:

1. Complaint filed by the political union Alliance of Patriots on 23 October 2020, according to which, the political union submitted two political video clips to broadcasters for placement, with Telemedi Ltd. refusing to broadcast the clips.

Having studied the case, the Commission established that the advertising clip submitted by the political union did not satisfy legislative requirements and broadcasters were not obliged to place it. Therefore, on 25 October 2020, the Commission took the decision Ng-20-16/818 to reject the complaint. The decision can be viewed on the official website of the Communications Commission – <https://comcom.ge/ge/legal-acts/solutions/2020--20-16-818.page>.

2. Complaint filed by the political union European Georgia, according to which, Telemedi Ltd. refused to broadcast a political advert submitted by the political union.

The complaint was filed by the political union European Georgia on 28 October, and was reviewed by the Commission on 30 October. The Commission found that the advertisement in question did not breach legislative requirements, and the broadcaster had a duty to place the advert. Therefore, the Commission took the decision to issue Telemedi Ltd. with a record of administrative offence for failure to place political/pre-election advertising.

The 5 November 2020 public session of the Communications Commission discussed the issues of violation of the Election Code of Georgia by 10 broadcasters during the election period.

Specifically, the Communications Commission issued Mtavari Arkhi, Imedi TV, Palitra TV and Ilion TV with records of violation of law for publishing public opinion poll results within 48 hours before the polling day, which breaches Article 50.5 of the Election Code of Georgia. TV Formula failed to include mandatory information while publishing the results of its exit poll.

Representatives of Adjara TV of the Georgian Public Broadcaster, TV Pirveli, Mega TV, Talk TV, Palitra TV and TV Georgian Channel explained during the session that they reported on the exit polls commissioned and published by other channels in order to keep the public informed. Furthermore, as the events were being broadcasted live on air, with broadcasters trying to promptly deliver the information to the public, they failed to transmit all the information required for an exit poll. The

broadcasters asked the Commission to take the aforementioned circumstances into consideration during the decision-making process.

Although the Communications Commission did not issue the aforementioned broadcasters with records of violation of law, it was made clear that broadcasters must comply with all the rules for publishing exit polls, even when such polls are commissioned and published by others, and even when the polls are only being reported on during news programmes.

Appearance of electoral subjects on non-political programmes: The Commission believes that in order to ensure fair, balanced and unbiased coverage of the election campaign, broadcasters must pay particular attention to the guidelines included in the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters, which was approved by the Communications Commission on 12 March 2009. Consequently, broadcasters should keep in mind that the appearance of an election candidate on programmes that are not directly connected to politics is only permitted if the candidate's appearance was arranged prior to the pre-election period. The candidate must not be allowed to express political opinions or to otherwise promote their candidacy.

Candidates were given the opportunity by broadcasters to make political statements on the following non-political shows:

Teleimedi:

“Morning Show” – Georgian Dream (once).

“Vasmedia” – United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (three times), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (three times), European Georgia (twice), Girchi (once), Labour Party (twice), Citizens (once), Alliance of Patriots (once), United Georgia – Democratic Movement (once).

“Morning on Imedi” – Georgian Dream (twice).

“Afternoon on Imedi” – Georgian Dream (twice).

“Culinary Duel” – Georgian Dream (twice).

“Prime Show” – Georgian Dream (once).

“No Time for Sleep” – Georgian Dream (twice).

“Sport on Imedi” – Georgian Dream (twice).

“Night Show with Giorgi Gabunia” – Georgian Dream (four times).

Rustavi 2:

“Nika Arabidze Show” – Georgian Dream (once), Conservative Party (once), Lelo (once), Ana Dolidze – Movement for the People (once).

“Mental Wars” – Girchi (once), Georgian Idea (once), United Georgia (once), independent candidate Tamar Makashvili.

“Profile” – European Georgia (once), Strategy Aghmashenebeli (once), Aleko Elisashvili - Citizens (once), Eka Beselia – For Justice (once).

“Hidden Envelope” – Ana Dolidze – Movement for the People (once), Conservative Party (once).

“Good Morning, Georgia” – Georgian Dream (once).

“Show of Jokes” – independent candidate Tamar Makashvili.

“Great Story” – Girchi (once).

TV Pirveli:

“Afternoon LIVE” – European Georgia (once), United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (once), Lelo (once).

Mtavari Arkhi:

“Vano’s Show” – United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (three times), Aleko Elisashvili – Citizens (once).

“Main Boys” – United Opposition “Strength is in Unity” (once).

“Peppers” – European Georgia (once).