



**Monitoring of Media Content
of Local/Regional Television Broadcasters
during Pre-Elections**

Subagreement # S-12-155

Report for: July 2 - 15, 2012

Project Period: 11 June 2012 - 10 December 2012

Total Budget: 31 000\$

Results Summary/Impact Statement

Main findings of the first phase of monitoring:

- Regional media is not providing a broad coverage of events;
- Only a minor part of TV companies cover central news;
- Most of the TV companies dedicate a fair amount of time to the coverage of activities of local self governments. The coverage is always positive in tone;
- The coverage of the subjects of interest to our survey is almost never provided;
- Scarce material gleaned within the first phase of monitoring (2-25.07.2012) gives us no possibility to discuss the proceeding and trends of regional media coverage of the pre-election campaign;
- In most cases the news programs offered by regional broadcasters, except for Batumi-based Channel 25, lack balance
- In some cases, journalist rely on anonymous sources.

Background

The report represents the results of the survey carried out within the period of July 2-15, 2012 by the Internews Georgia monitoring team. Media monitoring helps raise standard of professionalism and is conducive to the development of independent unbiased journalism. The goal of our survey is to reveal, through monitoring main news programs aired on Georgian regional TV broadcasters, the proceeding and trends of media coverage of pre-election campaign.

Activities

The survey was carried out on 20 regional broadcasters operating nationwide, including: Channel 25 (Batumi), Rioni (Kutaisi), Kvemo Kartli TV and Radio Company (Rustavi), Odishi (Zugdidi), Tanamgzavri (Telavi), 9th Channel (Alkhaltshikhe), Trialeti (Gori), Guria (Ozurgeti), Imervizia (Chiatura), Argo (Zestaponi), Gurjaani (Gurjaani), Borjomi (Borjomi), Marneuli TV (Marneuli), LTV (Lagodekhi), 12th Channel (Bolnisi), Mega TV (Khoni), Zari (Samtredia), 9th Wave (Poti), Kronika (Dusheti), Egrisi (Senaki).

It is noteworthy that within the first reporting period (July 2-15) the full monitoring of all of the 20 TV broadcasters was impossible to carry out since, due to the reorganization being on at the TV companies 9th Wave (Poti) and Zari (Samtredia), the news programs are not being produced until

August 1, 2012. Local news are no longer being on at Kronika (Dusheti) and Egrisi (Senaki). The TV companies are expected to resume news production from September 1. Within the period of July 2-15 several TV companies were not working at full load, producing only one news program per week. In particular, Mega TV (Khoni), due to the movement to a new building, will be producing the news program on Fridays only. Due to holidays of most of the journalists in July and August Borjomi TV news programming will be limited to the production of particular stories. For the same reason Bolnisi-based 12th Channel is airing news once per week.

Methodology

Monitoring was conducted on the regional broadcasters' main evening news programs during so-called prime time when the number of viewers is at its peak.

The technique applied in the project is based on quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative monitoring determines quantitative indicators that can be counted and analyzed. While qualitative monitoring is applied to evaluate the efficiency of media outlets' activities in relation to the indicators such as ethical or professional standards whose quantitative measurement is complex. In particular, the distortion of news, unbalanced coverage, bias or anything else that might affect quality news was focused on.

Quantitative data includes the running time (seconds) of the stories produced about our preselected subjects or making mention of them. In the given charts the time dedicated to the subjects is shown in seconds. In case the chart is missing any political party, which is the subject of monitoring, it means no channel dedicated any time to it within the monitoring period.

Direct and indirect coverage shows whether the subject is speaking on one's own or is being spoken about either by a journalist or other respondents. In the given charts direct and indirect coverage is shown in percentage. 100 percent indicates the time dedicated to each subject on a particular channel.

The tone of coverage is attributed to a subject when being indirectly spoken about or when speaking directly about oneself, other subjects or some general issues. Charts illustrate three categories of tones: positive, neutral and negative.

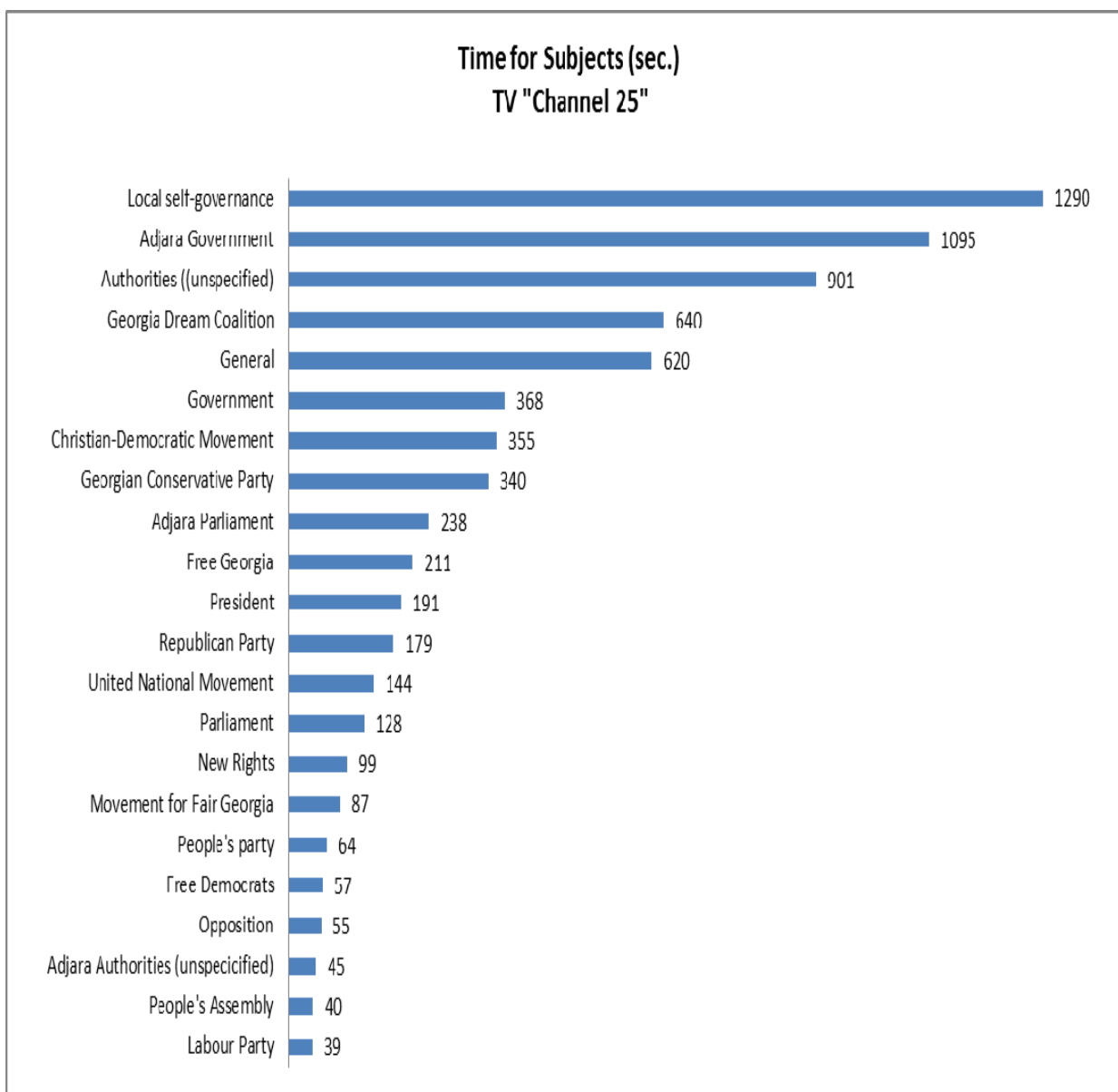
When conducting monitoring on news programs it was interesting to find out which events, either central or regional, were covered by the TV companies.

Based on qualitative data the efficiency of media activities in terms of adherence to ethical or professional standards, will be evaluated. The qualitative part embraces components such as balance or whether diverse opinions over the covered issue are represented in the stories; accuracy or whether mistakes are in place in the names or numbers; the vocabulary used and all those important aspects that are not subject to quantitative measurement. The cases of manipulation through shots and music used in the news programs were also brought into focus.

The monitoring subjects include: Parliament (speaker, vice speaker, MPs, committees); President (administration, advisors, press speaker); government (prime minister, ministers, deputy ministers, governors); authorities (when mentioned with no specification); local self-governments (mayors, chairs of Sakrebulo and Gamgeoba); Central Election Commission; election observers; State Audit Agency (in relation to elections); commission in charge of verifying voters' list; United National Movement; Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia; coalition Georgian Dream; Free Democrats; National Forum; Georgian Republican Party; Georgian Conservative party; People's Party; Georgia's Way; Free Georgia; New Rights; Democratic Movement for United Georgia; National Democratic Party; Labor party; Industry Will Save Georgia; Georgian Democratic Party; Georgian Troupe; Christian-Democratic Movement; European Democrats; Voters' League; People's Assembly; opposition (when mentioned with no specification).

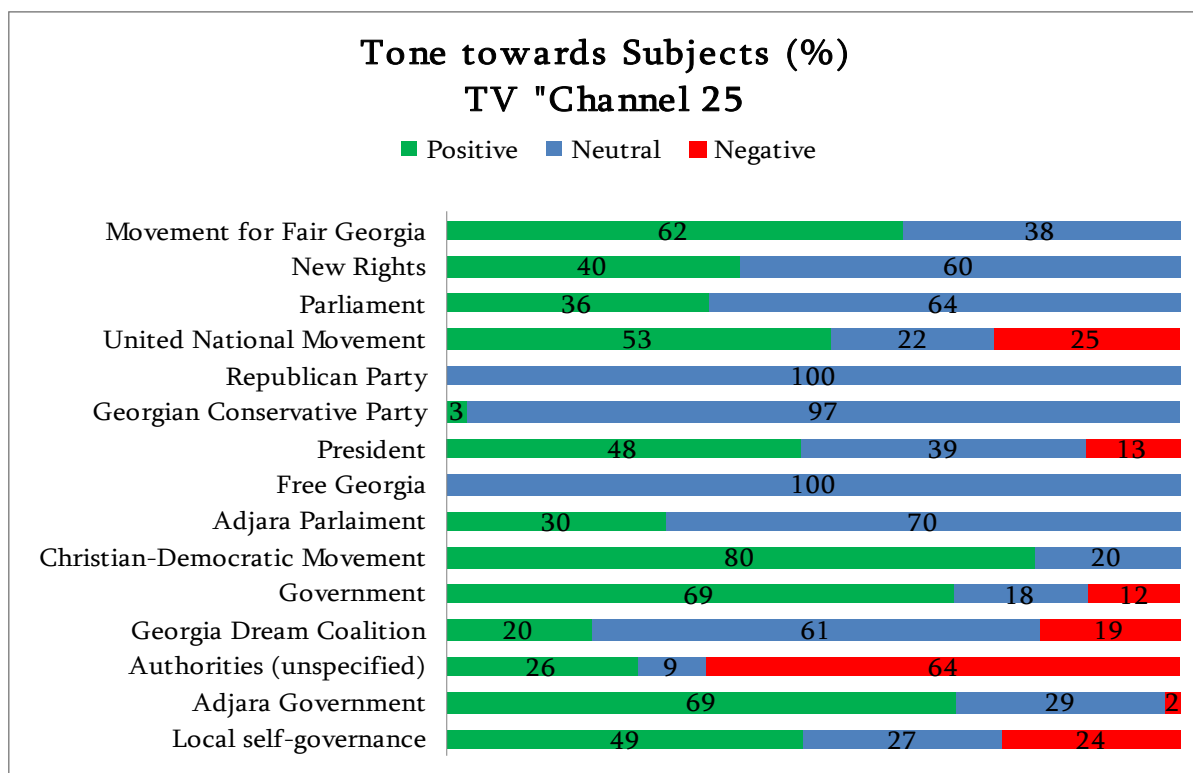
News programs monitoring results per channel:

Channel 25 (Batumi) – The channel dedicated most of airtime to the local self government (22 min), Adjara government (18 min) and the authorities in general (15 min), followed by coalition Georgian Dream (11 min), Christian-Democrats (6 min) and Conservative Party (6 min). Up to 3 minutes were dedicated to the United National Movement (UNM). The airtime was equally apportioned to the rest of political parties.



The authorities received the most of the negative tone of coverage (64 percent), coalition Georgian Dream received the most of the neutral tone (61 percent). But since the airtime dedicated to the subjects did not exceed 1 minute in most cases a 100 percent positive coverage tone gives us no possibility to speak of particular trends.

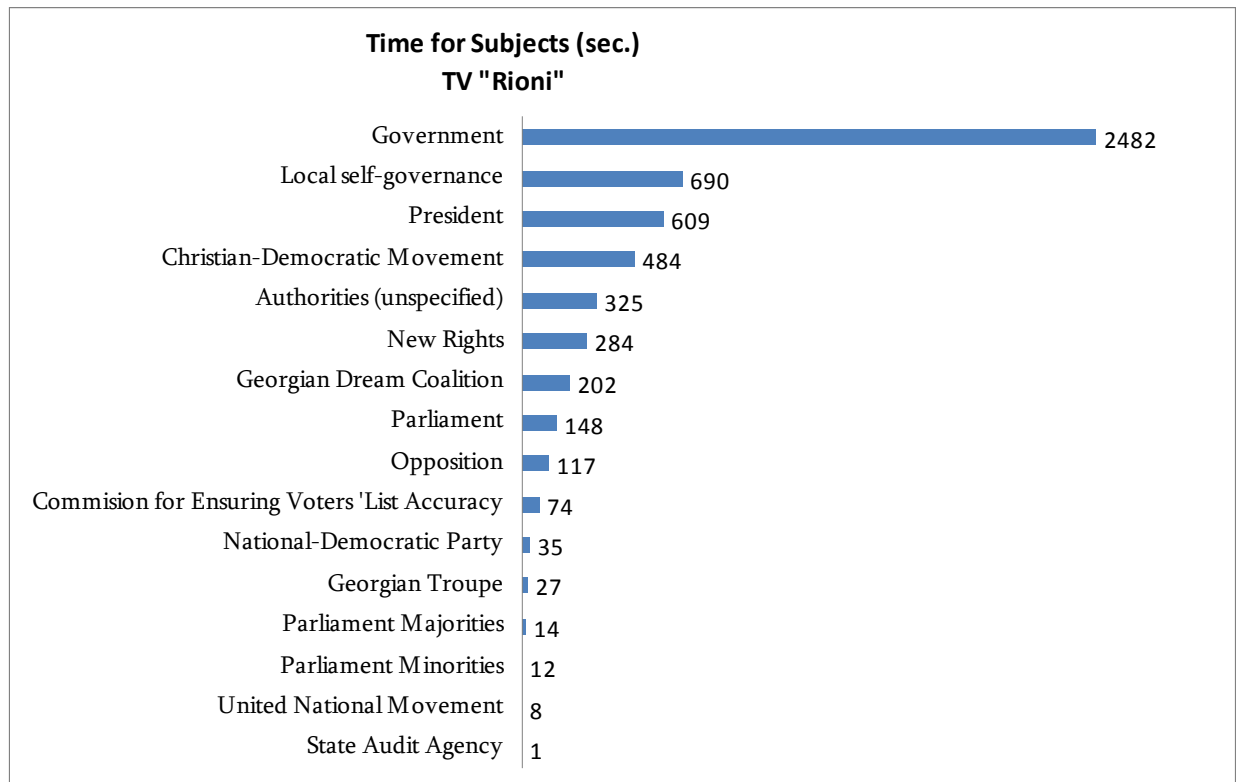
The percentage share of direct and indirect coverage of subjects shows that in most cases subjects are spoken about by others. But it is to be taken into account that the total airtime dedicated to them is very little.



It is noteworthy that the news programs of Channel 25 dedicated more time to regional events rather than central ones.

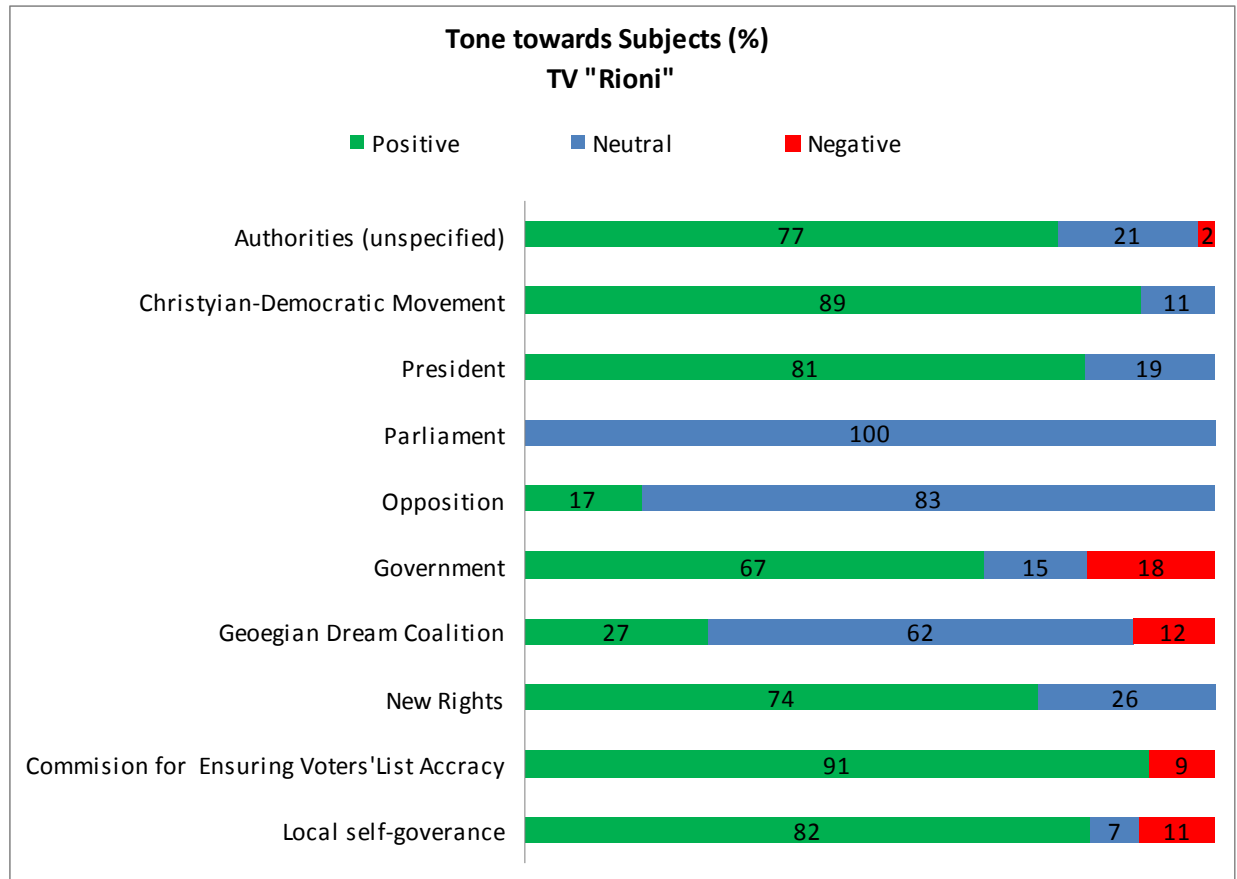
According to the qualitative analysis of the news programs the stories are balanced. But few cases of unbalanced stories were observed too. For example, on July 13 one of the stories repeatedly mentioned that the opposition was not attending the meeting of the Supreme Council of Adjara in the course of which the budget increase-related issue was discussed. Nevertheless, the story features the positions of the representatives of the authorities only and does not include the stance of the opposition. It is noteworthy that the Channel 25 journalists always speak about monitoring subjects in neutral tone and their personal attitude to either subject is not evident (except for the cases the journalist is quoting another respondent). In general journalists cover events in an unbiased manner.

Rioni (Kutaisi) - The channel dedicated most of airtime to the government (41 min), to the local self government (11 min) and President (10 min). 8 minutes were dedicated to Christian-Democratic Movement, 5 minutes to the authorities and New Rights each, 3 minutes were dedicated to the coalition Georgian Dream.



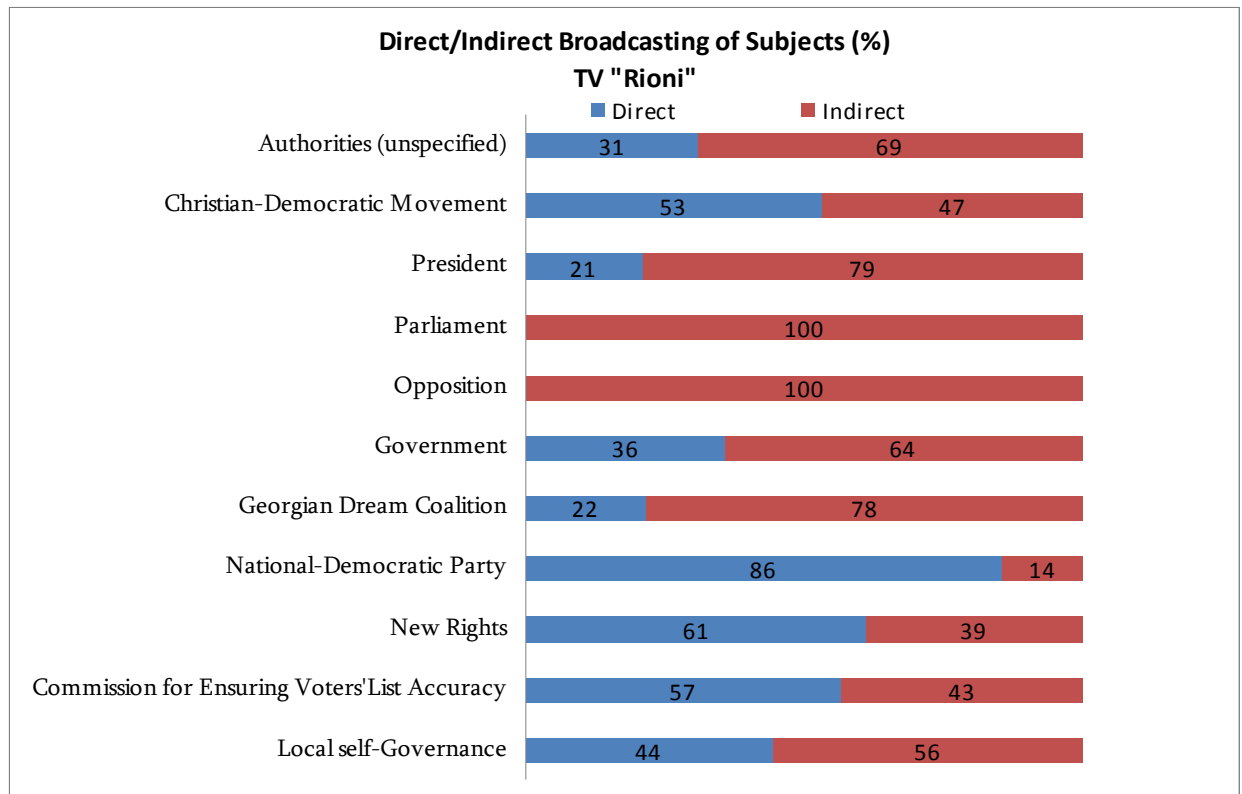
All of the three tones were observed when covering government (positive - 67 percent, neutral 15 percent and negative 18 percent), local self government (positive – 82 percent, neutral – 7percent and negative 11 percent) and coalition Georgian Dream (positive - 27 percent, neitral 62 percent, negative 12 percent). 81 percent of coverage tone is positive and 14 percent is neutral when covering President. The tone of coverage is hard to determine in regard to the rest of subjects due to the lack of the airtime apportioned.

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The observation on the direct/indirect coverage of subjects shows that the percentage of indirect coverage is higher compared with direct coverage. Only in case of covering local self government the results do not show much difference: 44 percent – direct coverage and 5 percent – indirect coverage.

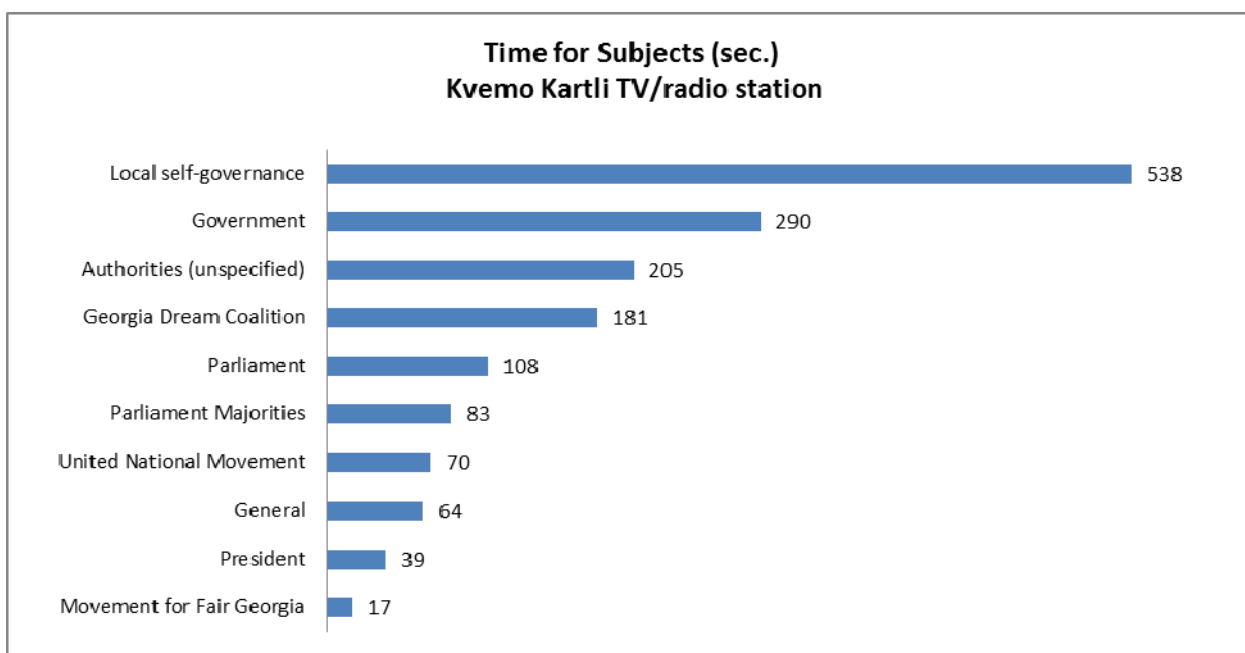
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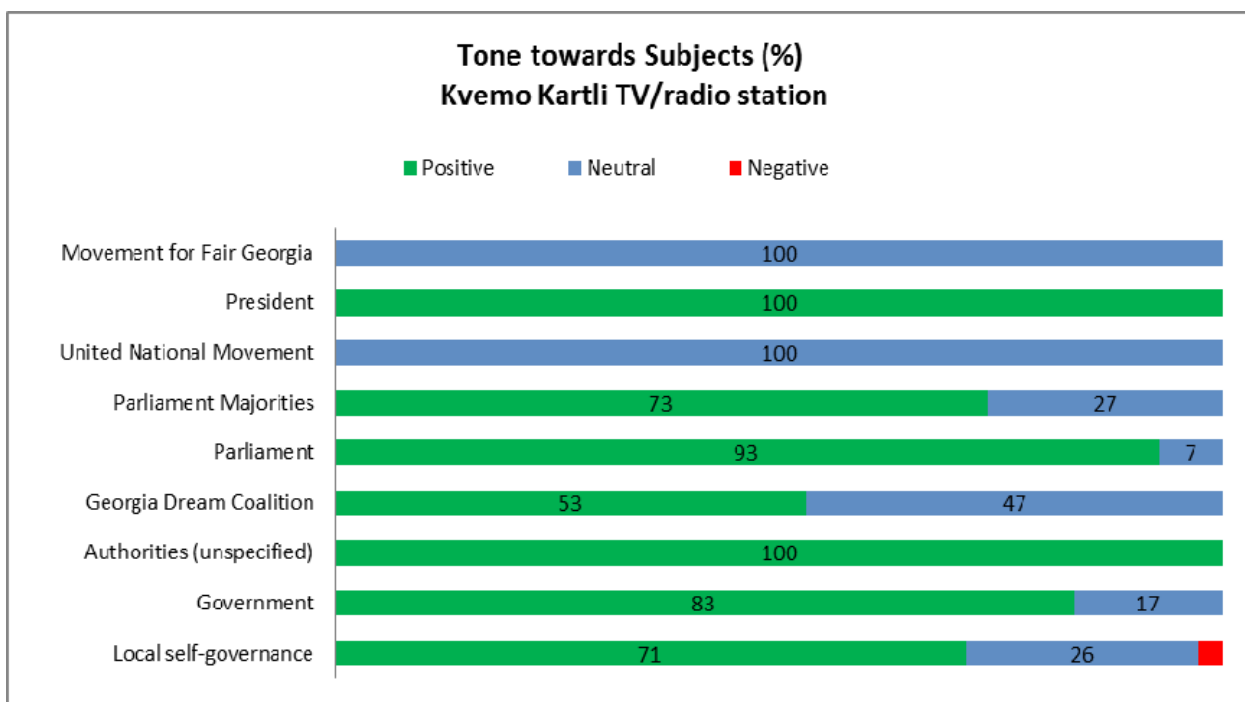
TV company Rioni dedicated most of airtime to the coverage of central events. Regional events too are rather intensively covered. According to the results of qualitative analysis the news programs are more or less balanced. Some drawbacks were observed though. For example, in some cases the subtitles are missing the notification of the political subject the respondent represents; or the interview is edited in a way it is hard to get the idea (interview with Mamuka Katsitadze of New Rights 6.07.2012); Occasionally journalists express unsubstantiated opinions and show their positive attitude mainly towards local authorities and the government in general (government will soon tackle the problems in the village of Khreiti - 5.07.2012); Journalists' attempt to positively represent President in the July 13 story was evident when featuring him holding a candle in the church.

Kvemo Kartli TV and Radio Company (Rustavi) – News programs covered only few subjects. Most of the airtime was dedicated to the local self government (9 min), followed by government (5 min), authorities (3 min) and coalition Georgian Dream (3 min).

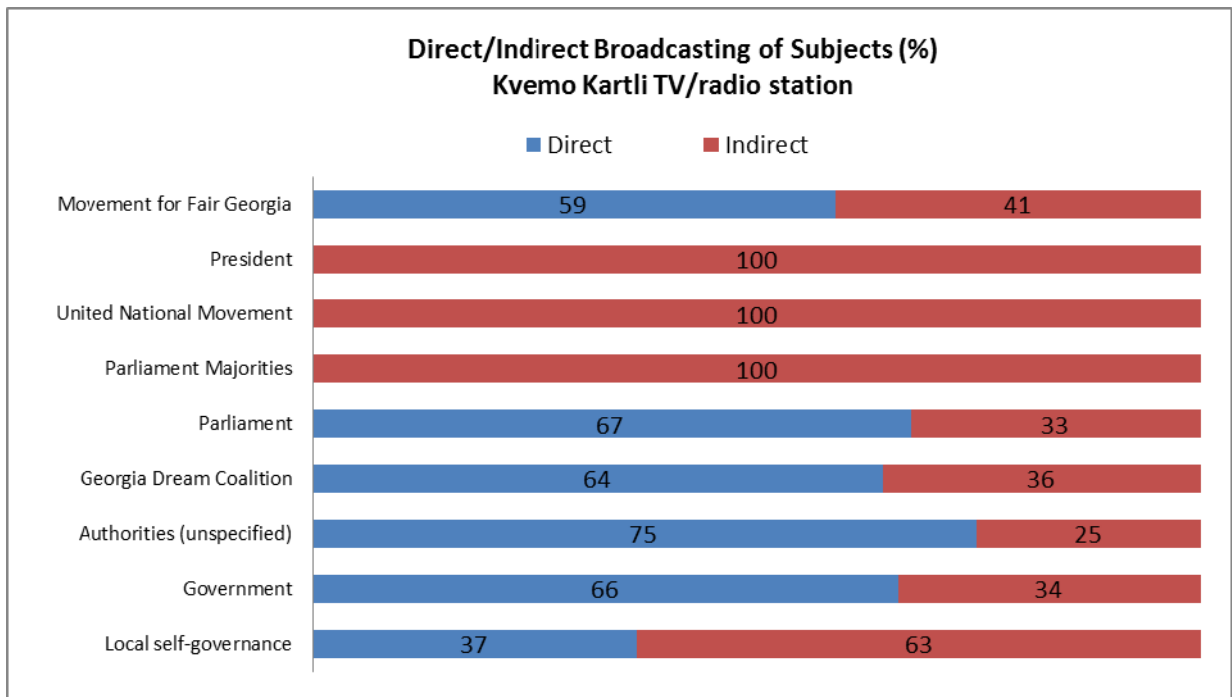
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Under the circumstances of scarce airtime apportioned to the subjects the percentage of the tone of coverage looks as follows.

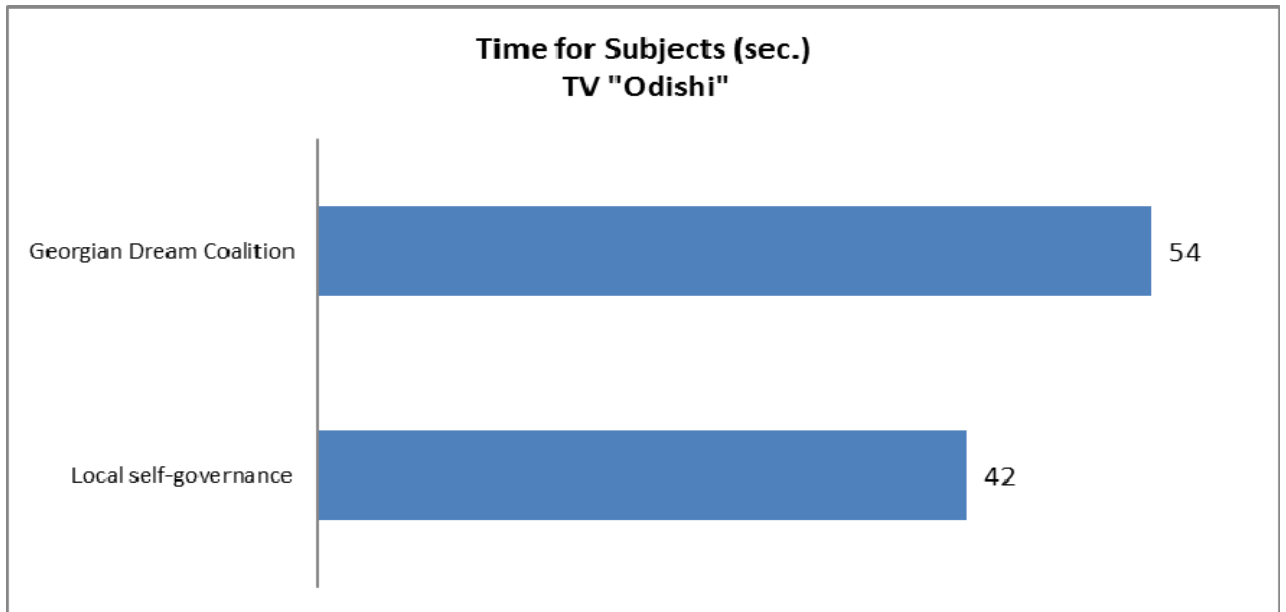


Percentage share of direct/indirect coverage of subjects looks as follows:



Kvemo Kartli TV and Radio Company dedicated most of airtime to the coverage of regional news. Less time is dedicated to the coverage of political news. For example, it is noteworthy that the monitoring period coincided with the presentation of the new governmental plan but no story had been produced over the issue. Besides, TV stories provide the coverage of either issue in a biased manner and mostly lack balance. News programs are mainly dedicated to the projects carried out by State structures, with journalists and respondents discussing only positive sides of the projects. Quantitative data is another proof to that: in the list of airtime dedicated to the subjects top three positions are taken by local self government, government and authorities which makes up a total of 17 minutes. Moreover, no negative tone was applied to the aforementioned subjects.

Odishi (Zugdidi) – Within the period of July 2-15 the subjects of our interest were not covered at all in the TV company’s news programs. In particular, 54 seconds were dedicated to the coalition Georgian Dream and 42 seconds to the local self government.

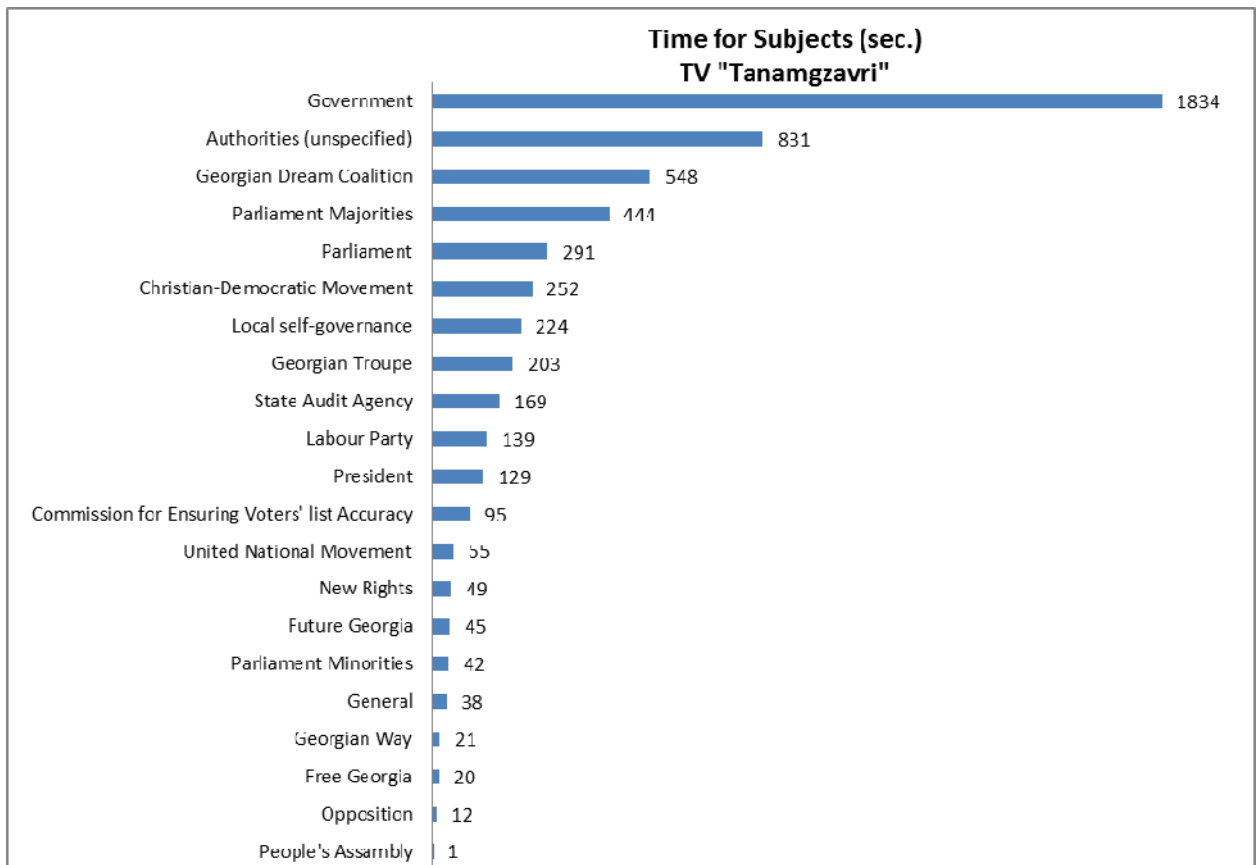


Due to the scarcity of airtime dedicated to the subjects the analysis of data, in terms of tone and direct/indirect coverage, makes no sense.

The TV company essentially covers local news. It is noteworthy political processes being on nationwide, or the activities of local authorities are provided a rare coverage. Many of the stories are dedicated to local cultural events which include a fair number of interviews with the representatives of local self government.

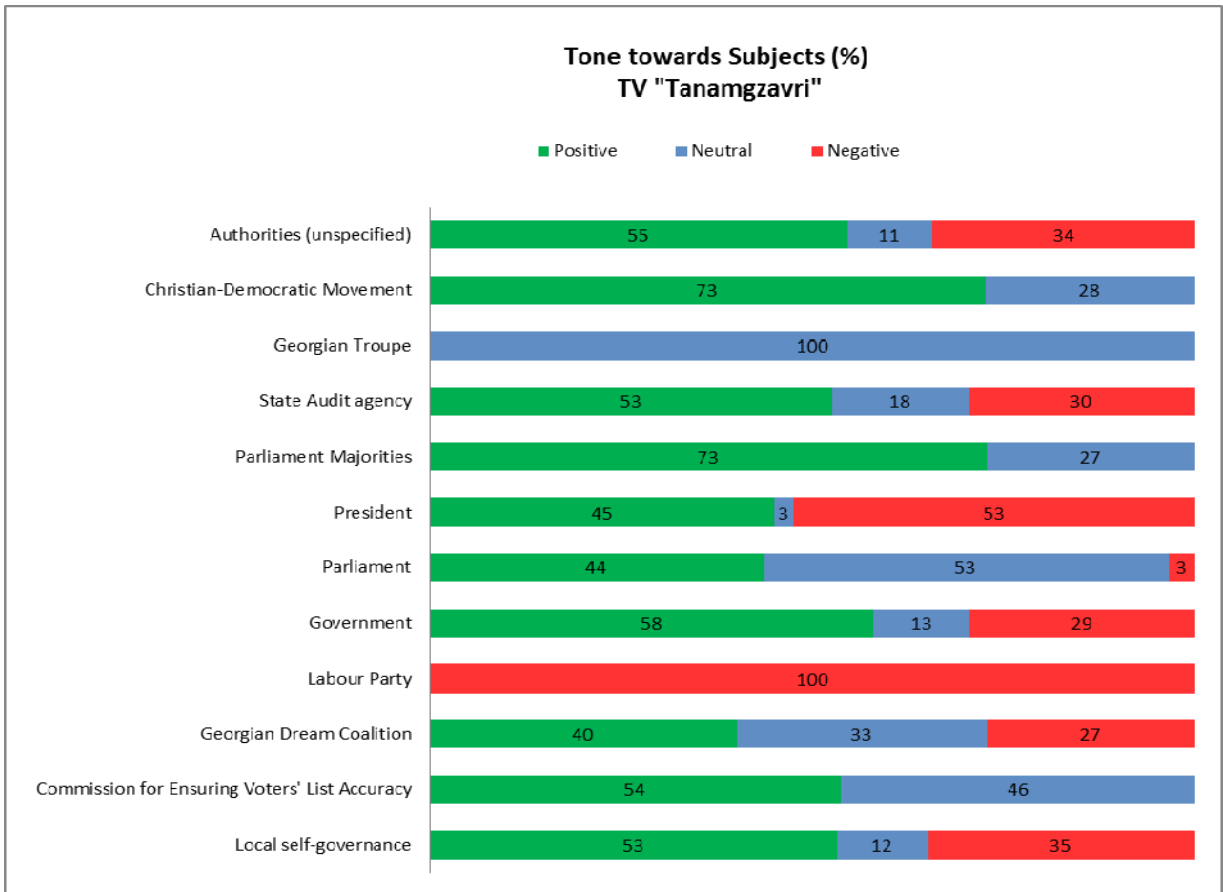
Tanamgzavri (Telavi) – Most of the airtime was dedicated to government (31 min), authorities (14 min) and coalition Georgian Dream (10 min). The time dedicated to the rest of subjects is little.

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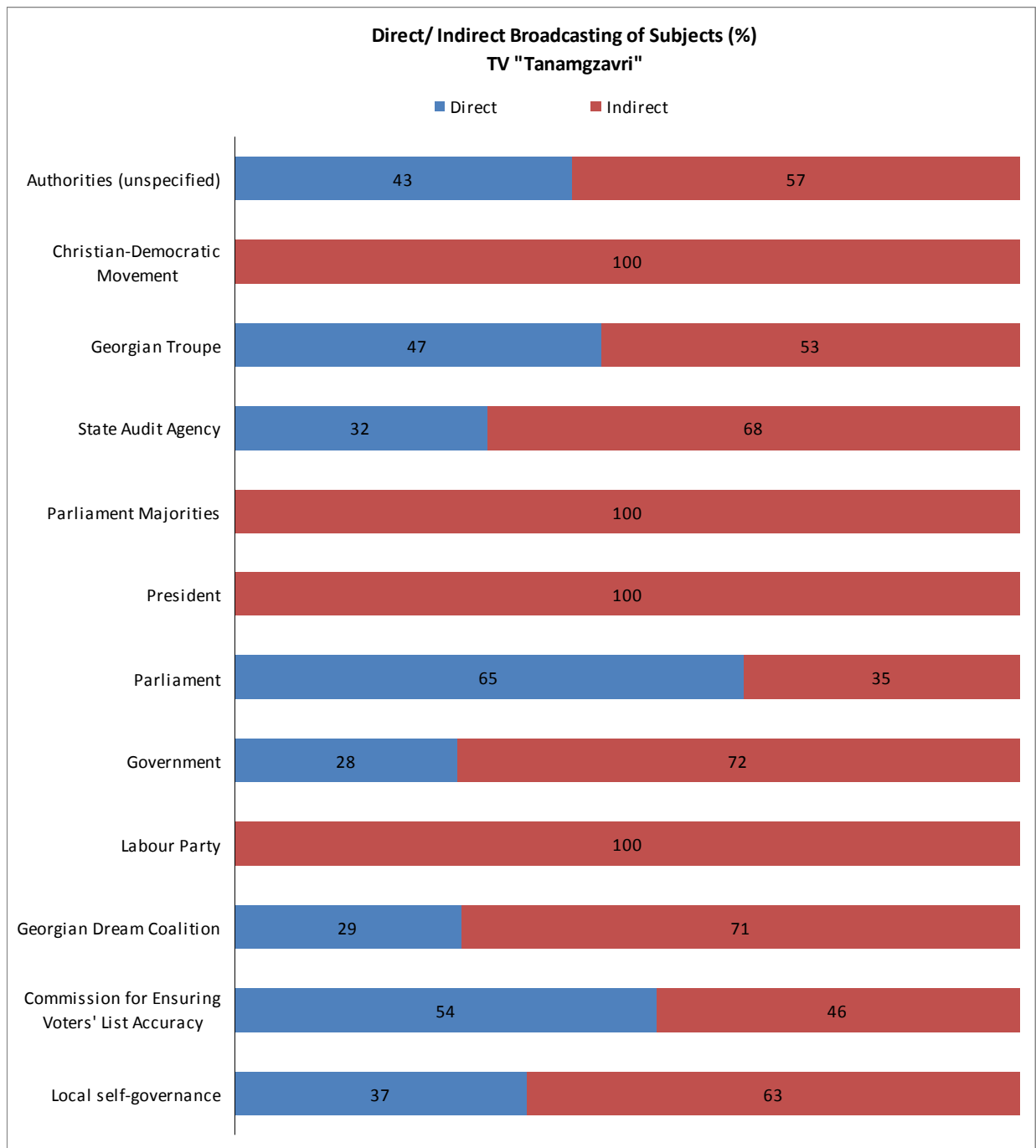
All of the three tones were observed in regard to government (positive - 58 percent, neutral - 13 percent, negative - 29 percent), authorities (positive - 55 percent, neutral - 11 percent, negative - 34 percent), and coalition Georgian Dream (positive - 40 percent, neutral - 33 percent, negative - 27 percent). Little airtime dedicated to the rest of subjects gives an incomplete picture of the percentage of the coverage tone.

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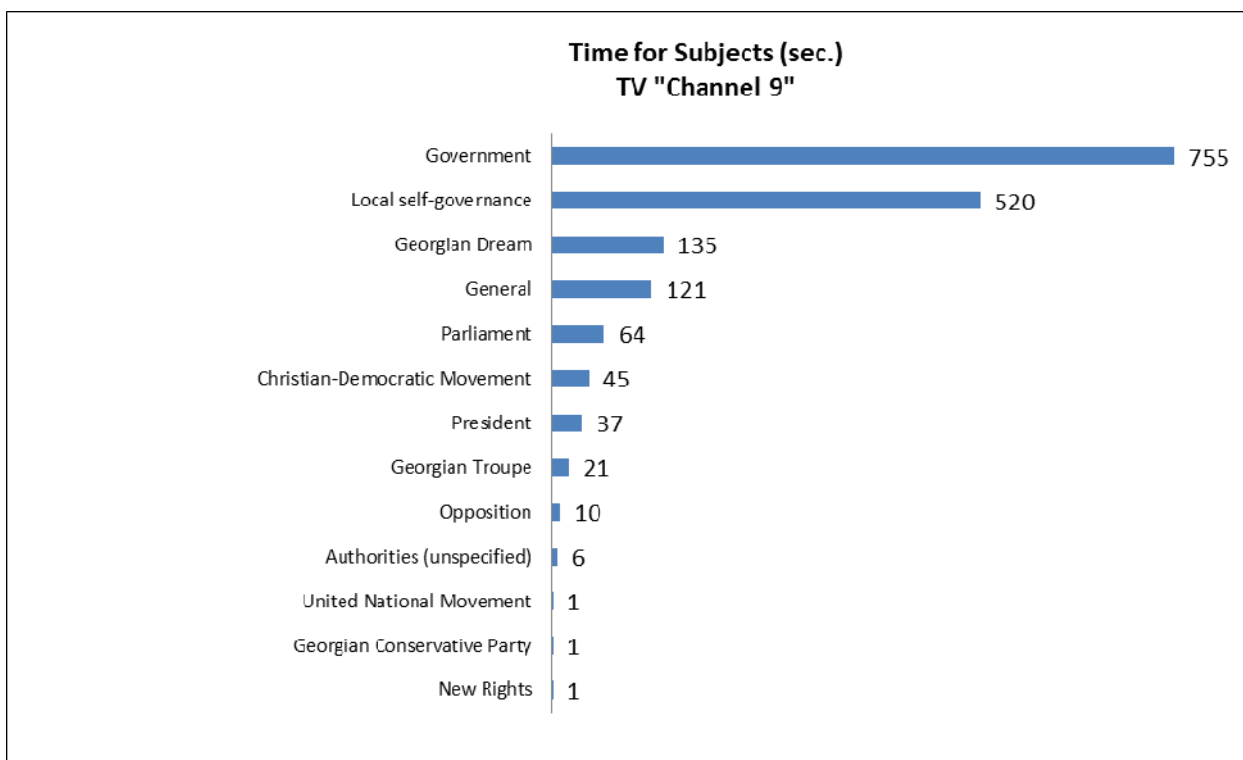
In case of three top covered subjects indirect coverage exceeds direct coverage.

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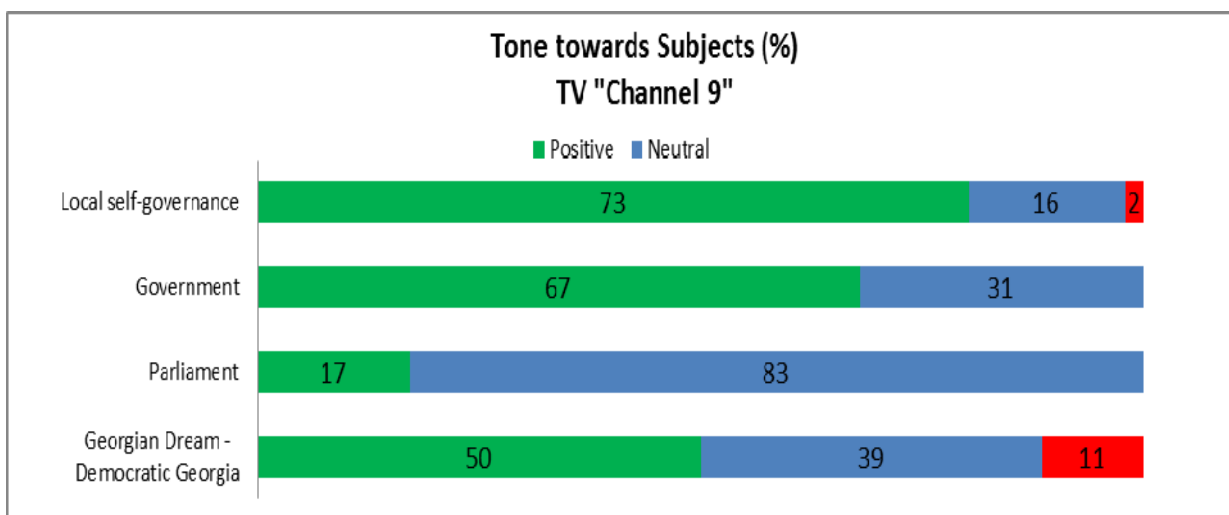


TV company Tanamgzavri, along with Kakheti region, covers political processes being on in Tbilisi. But inaccuracies are in place rather often. For example: in the July 2 news program the journalist mentions parliamentary majority instead of parliamentary minority. Due to similar inaccuracies the piece of news gets vague and confusing. Moreover, the balance of stories is another issue: some of them represent the position of one party, and the case-related different opinions and interpretation sin remain unclear.

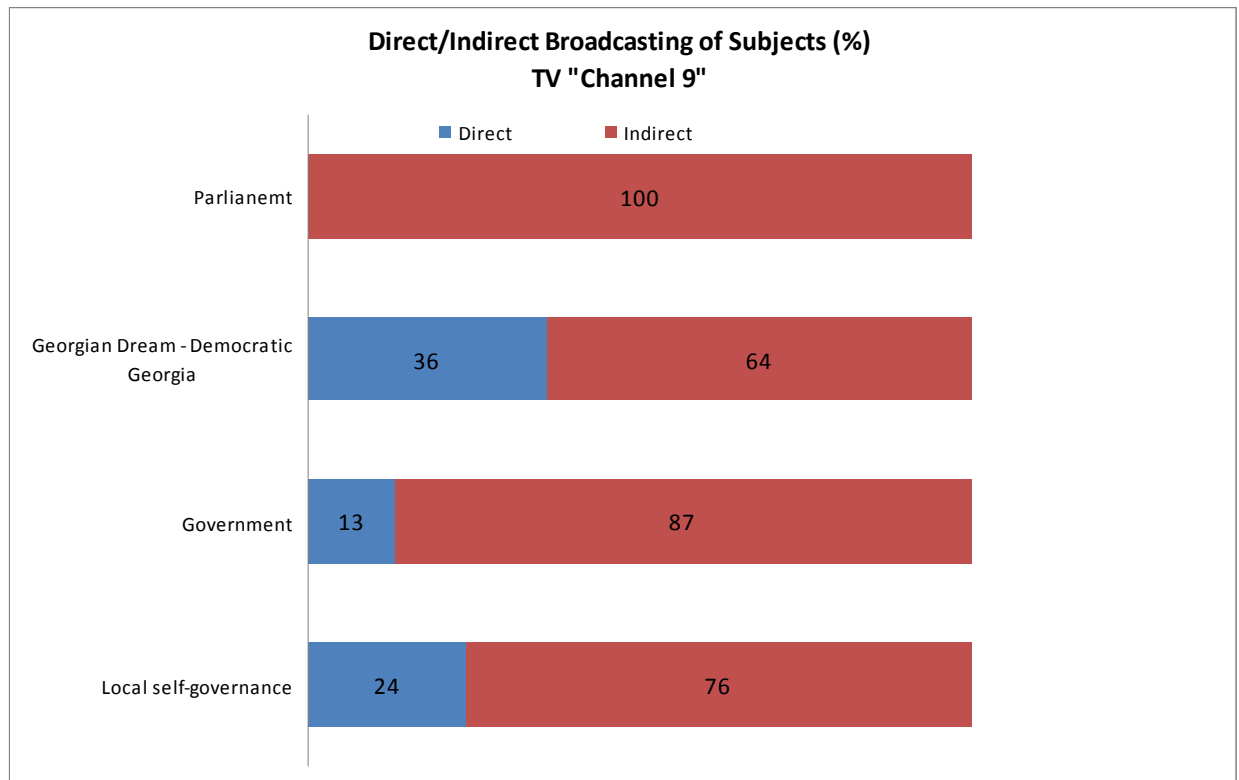
9th Channel (Alkhaltsikhe) - The TV company dedicated little time to the subject of our interest. In particular, 13 minutes to government, 9 minutes to local self government and 2 minutes to Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia. In the news programs one minute and less than one minute was dedicated to few other subjects.



The percentage of the coverage tone looks as follows:

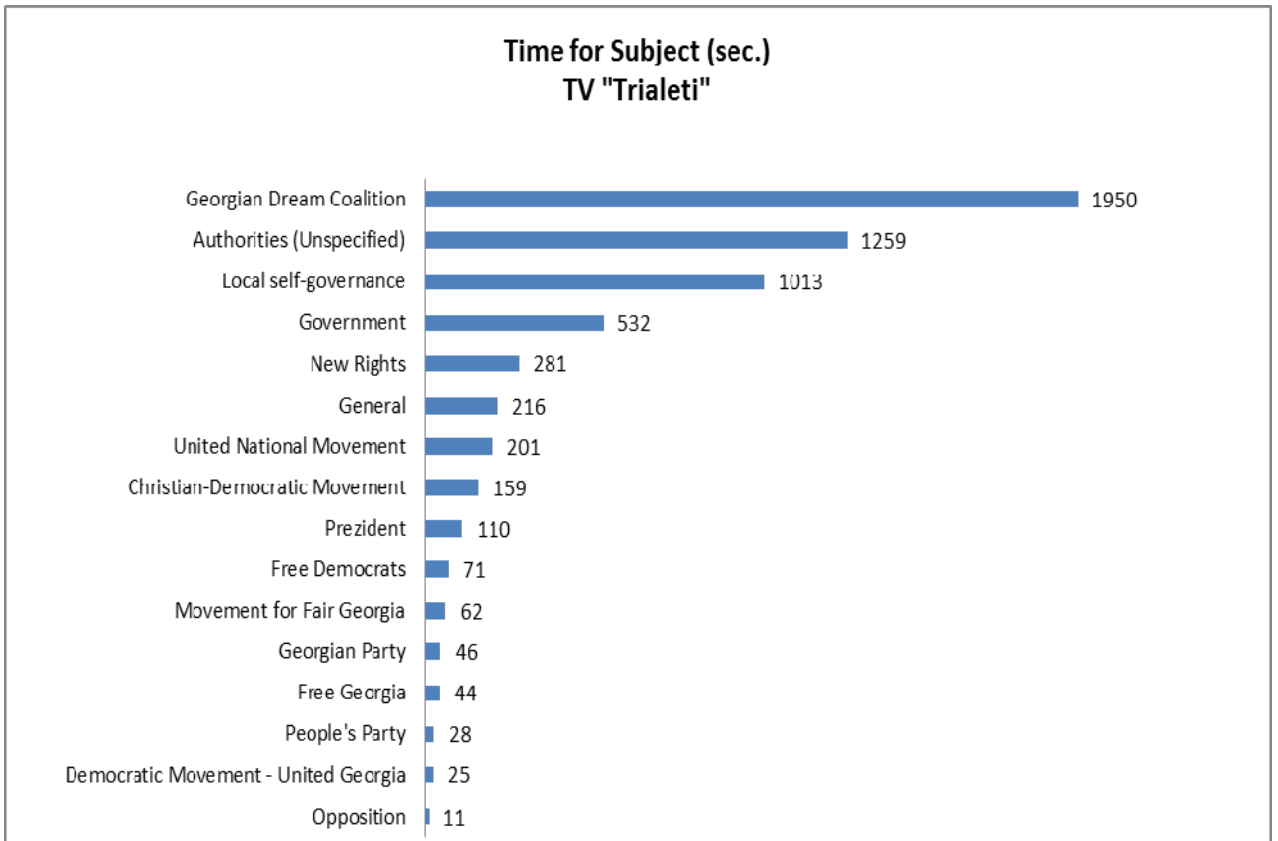


The findings in relation to direct and indirect coverage look as follows:



The TV company is dedicating almost equal airtime to the coverage of central and regional news. According to the qualitative analysis the TV company covers the representatives of the local self government in a positive tone while the aforementioned individuals do not represent competent persons related to the case. In most cases journalists' tone to the monitoring subjects is dissimilar and biased, and the presenter's text is vague. Journalist's positive attitude to either subject is overwhelming.

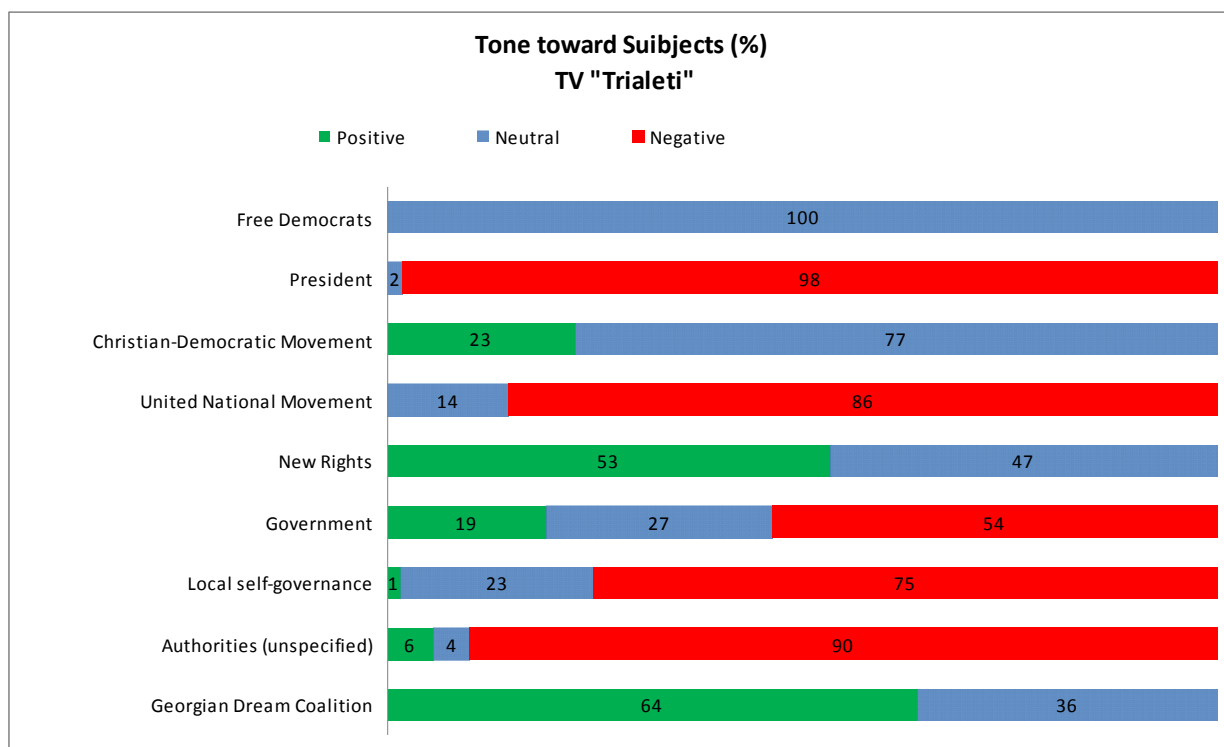
Trialeti, (Gori) – Out of the monitored subjects the most of the airtime was dedicated to coalition Georgian Dream (33 min), followed by authorities with 21 min and local self government with 17 min.



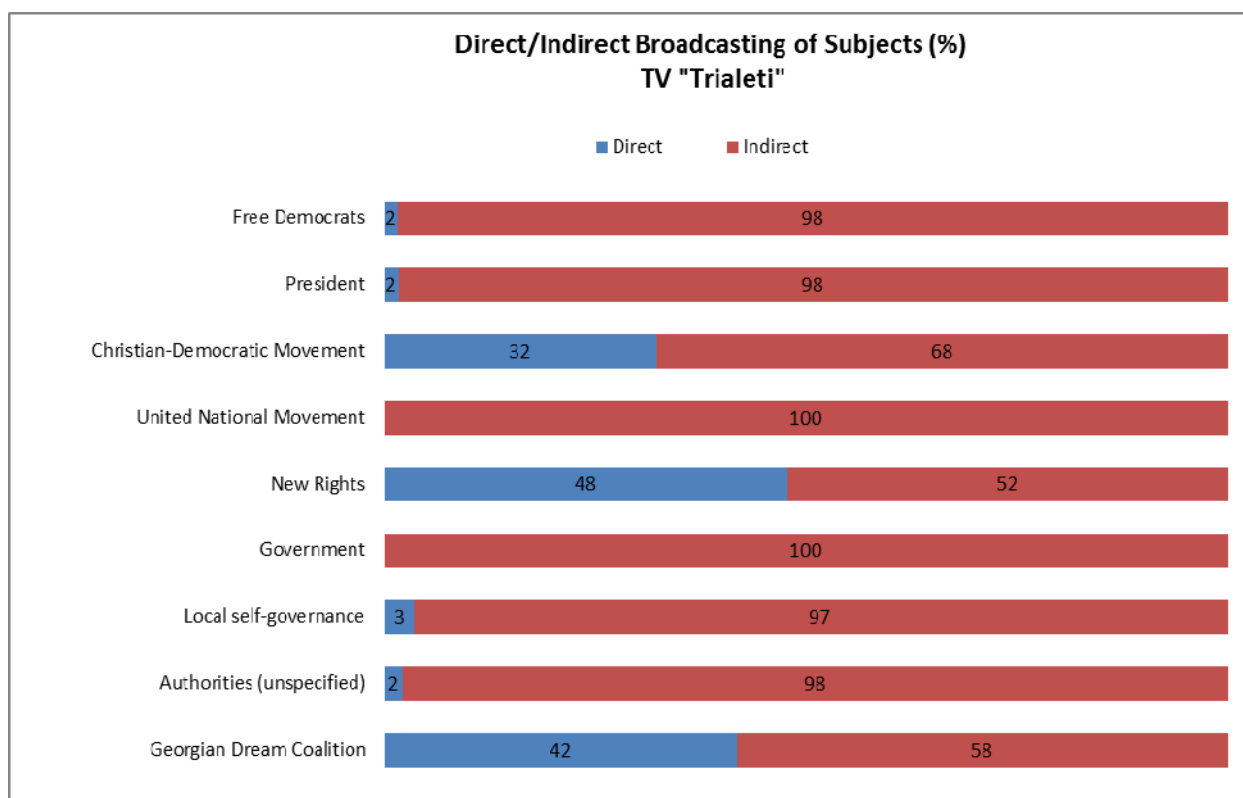
The most of negative coverage was received by the authorities (90 percent), local self government (75 percent) and government (54 percent). Positive (64) and negative (36) tones were observed in case of the coalition Georgian Dream.

In case of the given TV company, like in case of the aforementioned ones, it is hard to speak of clear trends due to the lack of airtime dedicated to the subjects.

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In most cases indirect coverage exceeds direct coverage.



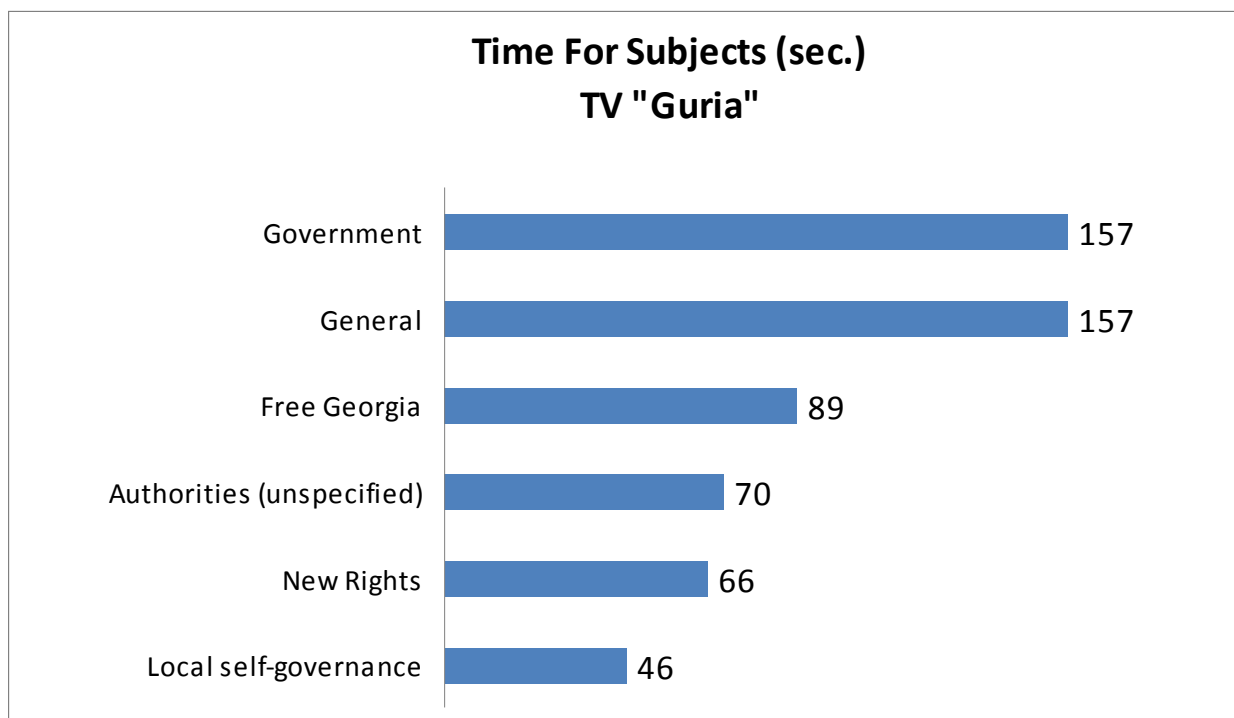
TV company Trialeti dedicates more time to the coverage of local news. According to the qualitative analysis Trialeti aggressively covers political events but the majority of stories lack balance, representing the opinions of the opposition only. Nevertheless, in most cases the journalist clarifies

the reason of unbalanced story, stating Trialeti TV journalist is not granted comments at the State agencies.

It is noteworthy that the reporters' questions to respondents imply negative attitude to the authorities. For example: When a citizen is saying that they have applied to the local authorities to have a problem settled, the journalist asks: And no one got concerned into your problem, did they? On the other side journalists give positive evaluation to the decision and statements made by the opposition and in particular coalition Georgian Dream. Trialeti provides active coverage of the coalition-related issues. For example: In the July 12 news program five out of seven stories were dedicated to the Georgian Dream's visits to the regions and case-related evaluations.

Moreover, in some of the stories the data provided is based on anonymous sources or is shown as a covert video/audio footage. Besides, rather often Trialeti produces stories about displeased citizens but it's hard to make out in regard to which agency or organization the complaints are made. Similar stories tune up negative attitude to the authorities even without mentioning the latter.

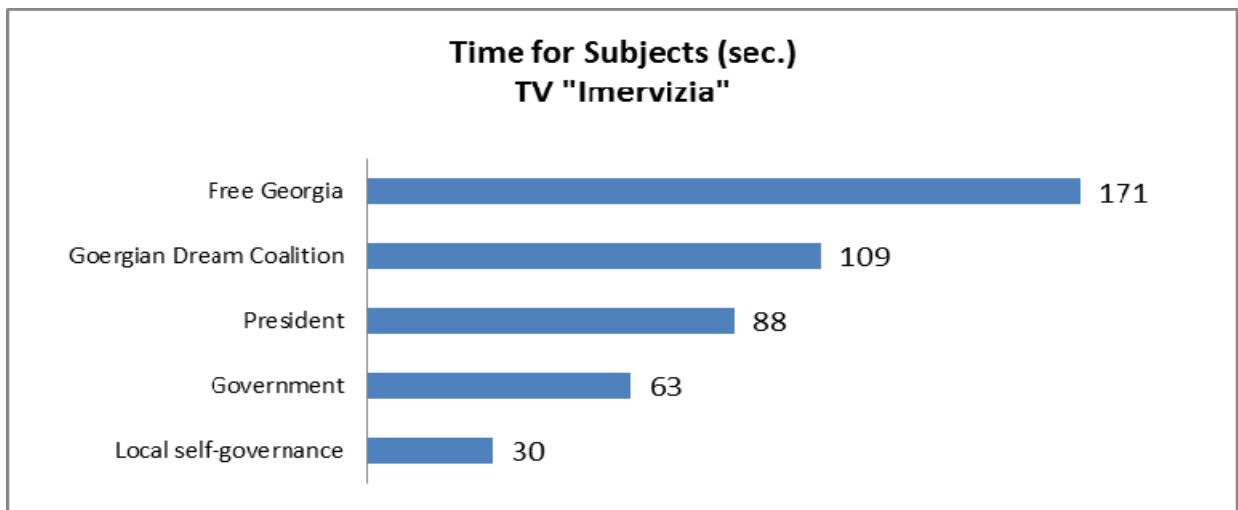
Guria, (Ozurgeti) - The TV company's news programs dedicated airtime to some of the subjects only. Most of the airtime (18 min) falls on local self government; 2 minutes were dedicated to New Rights and general issues each.



Due to the scarcity of airtime dedicated to the subjects the analysis of data, in terms of tone and direct/indirect coverage, makes no sense.

According to the results of quantitative analysis local self government enjoys positive coverage tone from TV company Guria. The company aggressively applies visual, video and music effects to create additional positive impression. For example, the running time of interview with the regional Gamgebeli exceeds 60 seconds (while standard is 30 seconds). News programs mainly provide coverage of the activities of the regional and local self-government. The TV company covers only local events.

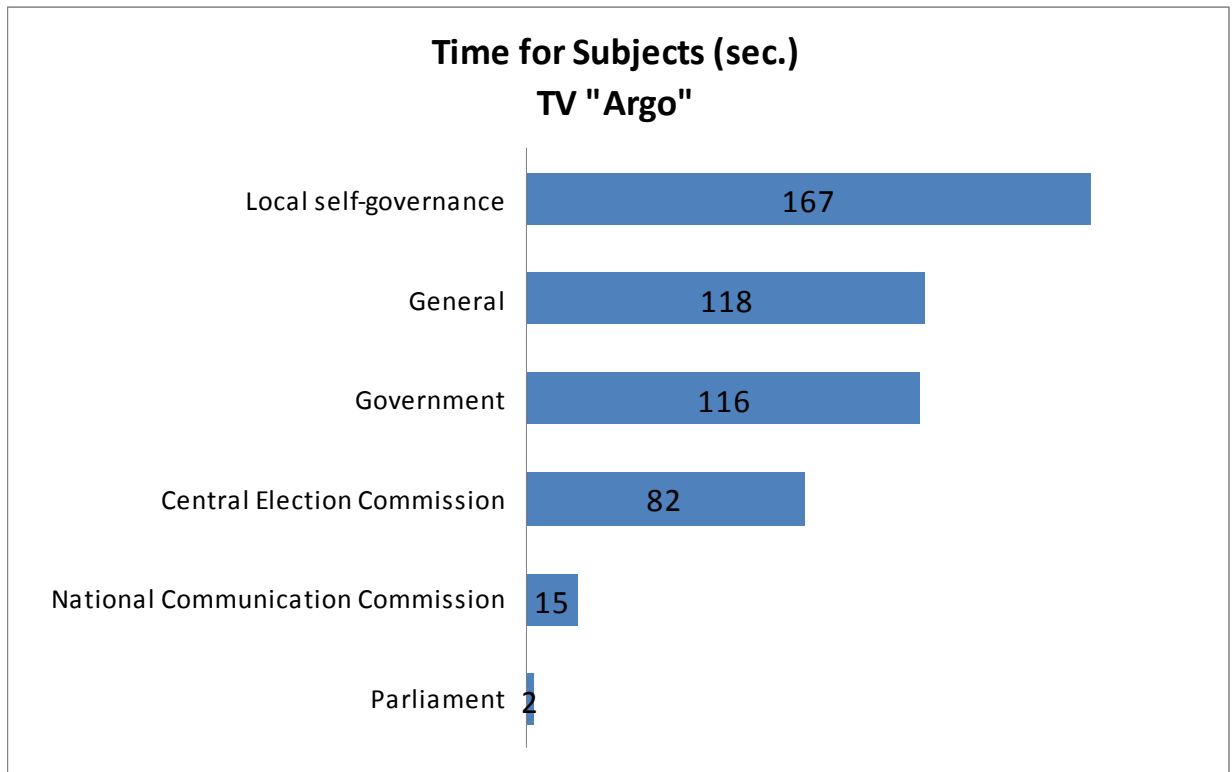
Imervizia (Chiatura) - The coverage of few subjects was observed here too. Most of the time was dedicated to President (3 min) and coalition Georgian Dream (2 min).



Due to the scarcity of airtime dedicated to the subjects the analysis of data, in terms of tone and direct/indirect coverage, makes no sense.

Imervizia mostly covers local news. In the course of qualitative monitoring of the news programs pro-governmental trend was evident. When reporting journalists express their opinions audaciously, without providing additional substantiation. For example, the journalist provided the coverage of the July 3 TV story about the coalition Georgian Dream rally held in Mtskheta in a negative tone, and at the very end demonstrated her positive stance to the government.

Argo (Zestaponi) - Neither in this case are we offered an opportunity to speak of particular trends. The most of time of TV coverage was dedicated to local self government (3 min), followed by general issues and government with 2 minutes each.

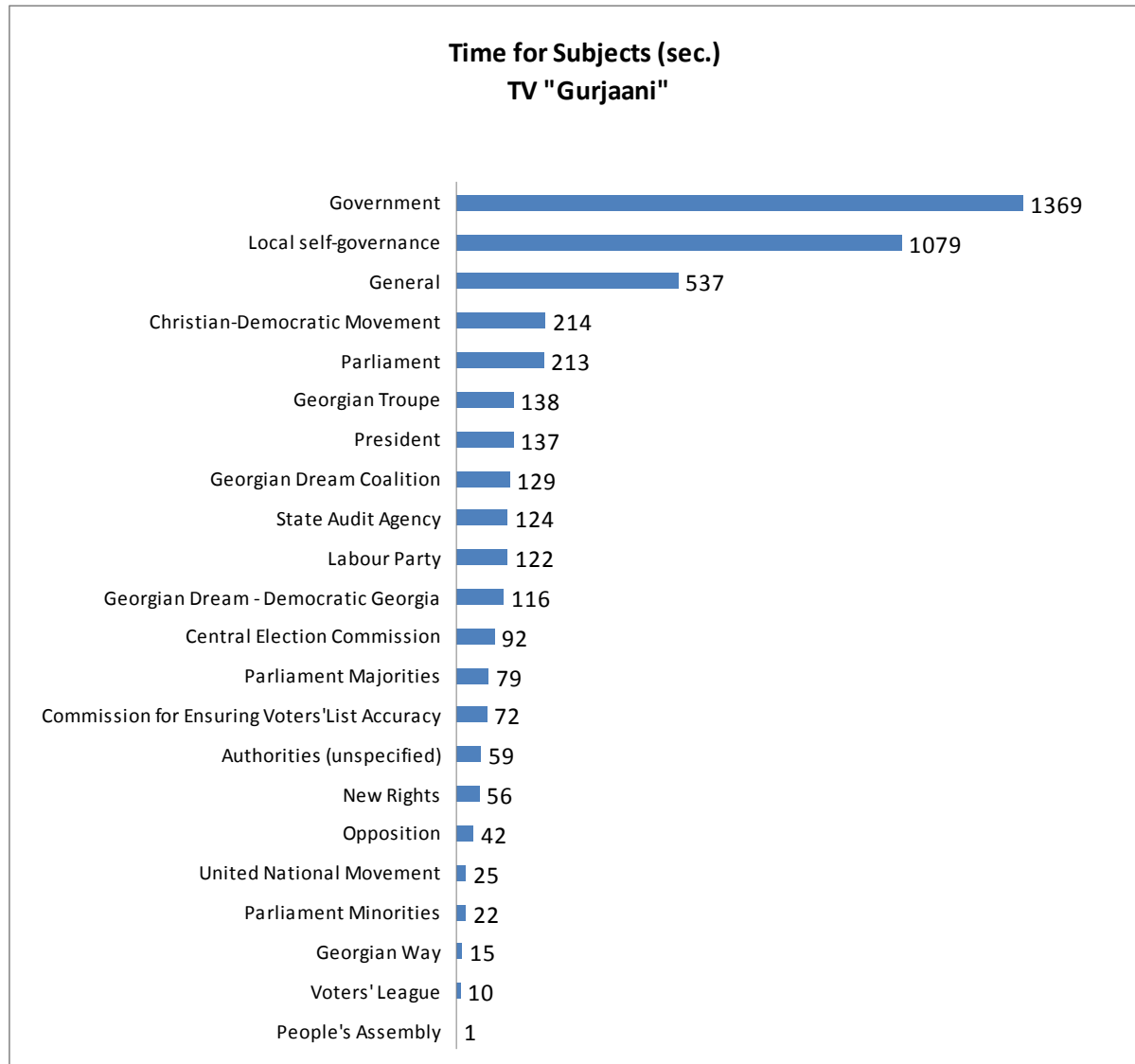


Due to the scarcity of airtime dedicated to the subjects the analysis of data, in terms of tone and direct/indirect coverage, makes no sense.

TV company Argo provides the coverage of local developments and virtually does not imply the subjects of our interest. The news program is limited to the coverage of cultural-entertainment events being on in the region.

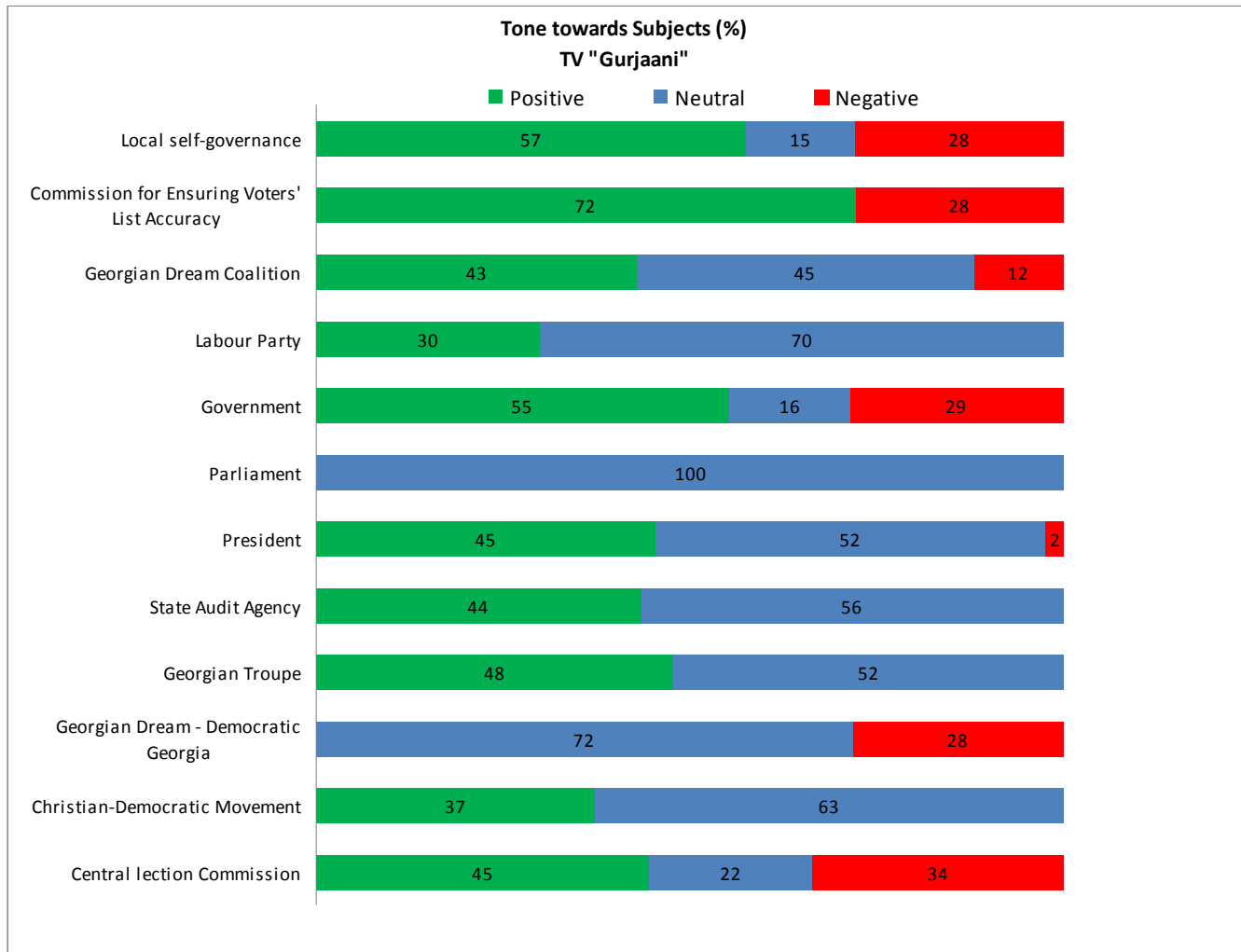
Gurjaani (Gujaani) – Government,, with 23 minutes, is leading the list of subjects provided coverage by the TV company. Local self government received a18-minute coverage and general issues were covered for 9 minutes in total. Christian-Democratic Movement and Parliament were dedicated 4 minutes each. 2 minutes were dedicated to President, coalition Georgian Dream, Georgian Troupe, Labor Party and State Audit Agency each.

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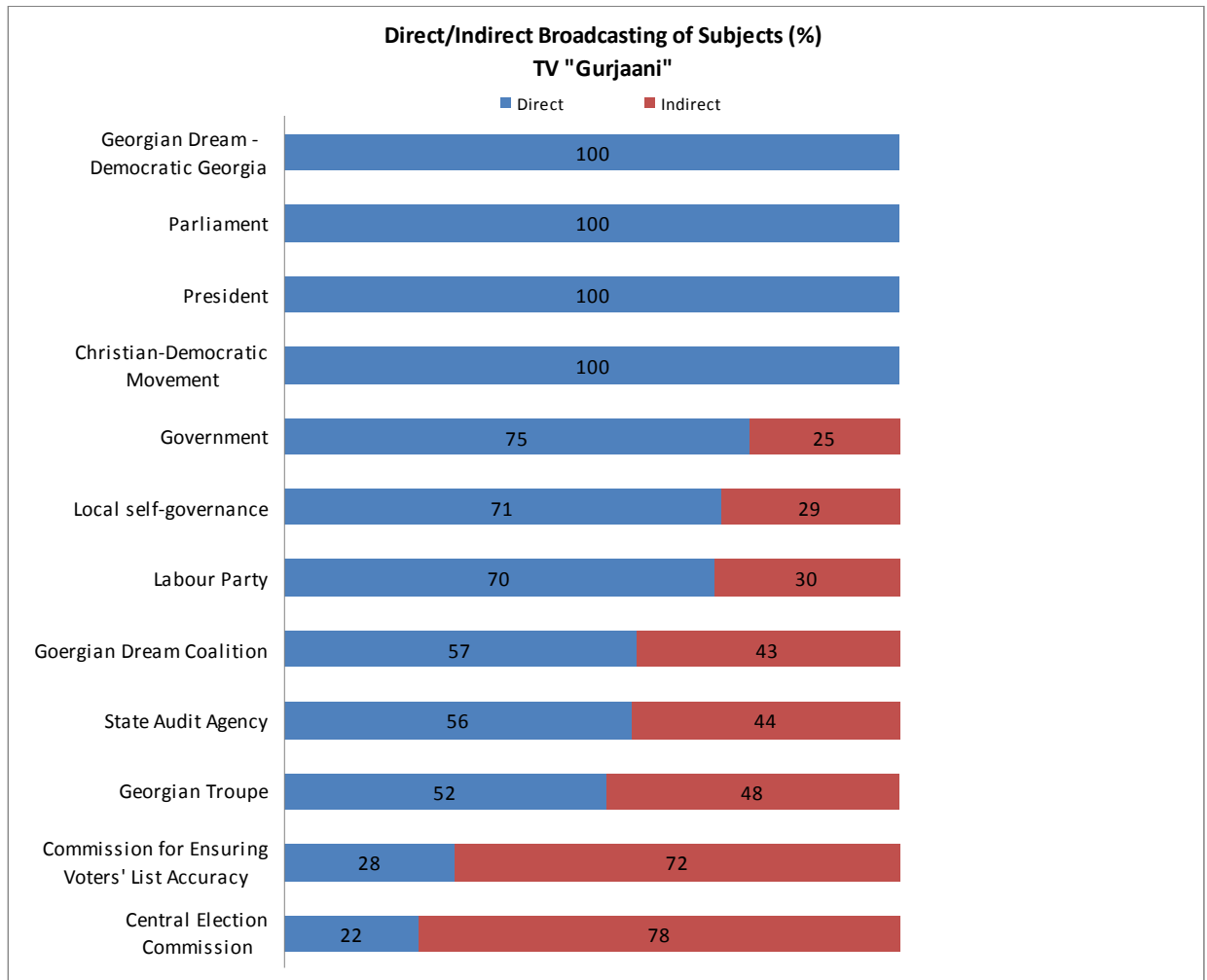
The government received the coverage in all three tones (positive - 55 percent, neutral - 16 percent, negative - 29 percent), local self government (positive - 57 percent, neutral - 15 percent, negative - 28 percent) and coalition Georgian Dream (positive - 43 percent, neutral - 45 percent, negative - 12 percent).

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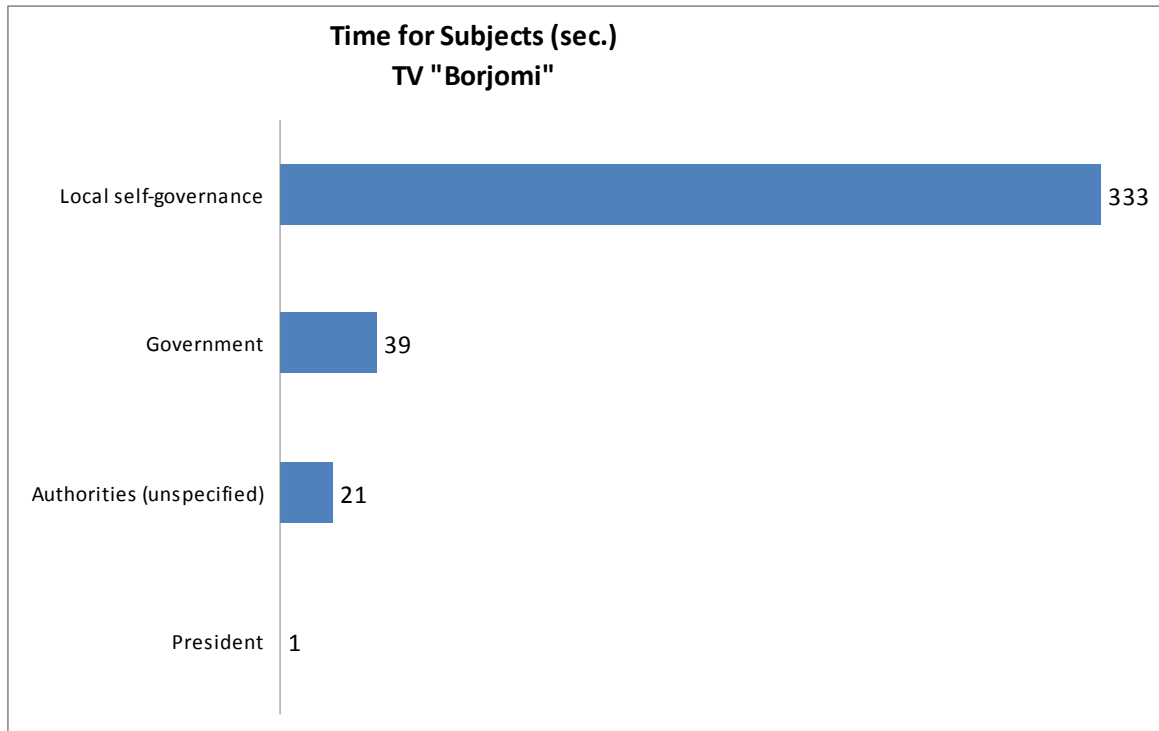
Taking into account the time dedicated to direct coverage of subjects prevails in the stories. For example, the government was provided 75 percent direct coverage, local self government – 71 percent. 4 minutes dedicated to the coverage of Christian-Democratic movement was direct in full.

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Gurjaani TV provides equal airtime to the coverage of central and regional news. According to the qualitative analysis Gurjaani news programs are balanced. But it is worth to note that strictly positive accent is made on the activities carried out by the central authorities and the local self government. They were provided a bigger share of coverage (approx 40 min) compared with the rest of subjects.

Borjomi (Borjomi) – Almost no coverage was provided to the subjects of our interest. Only local self government was dedicated 6 minutes. The tone of coverage was 78 percent positive, neutral – 19 percent, and negative - 3 percent. The representatives of local self government were mainly speaking themselves – 65 percent.

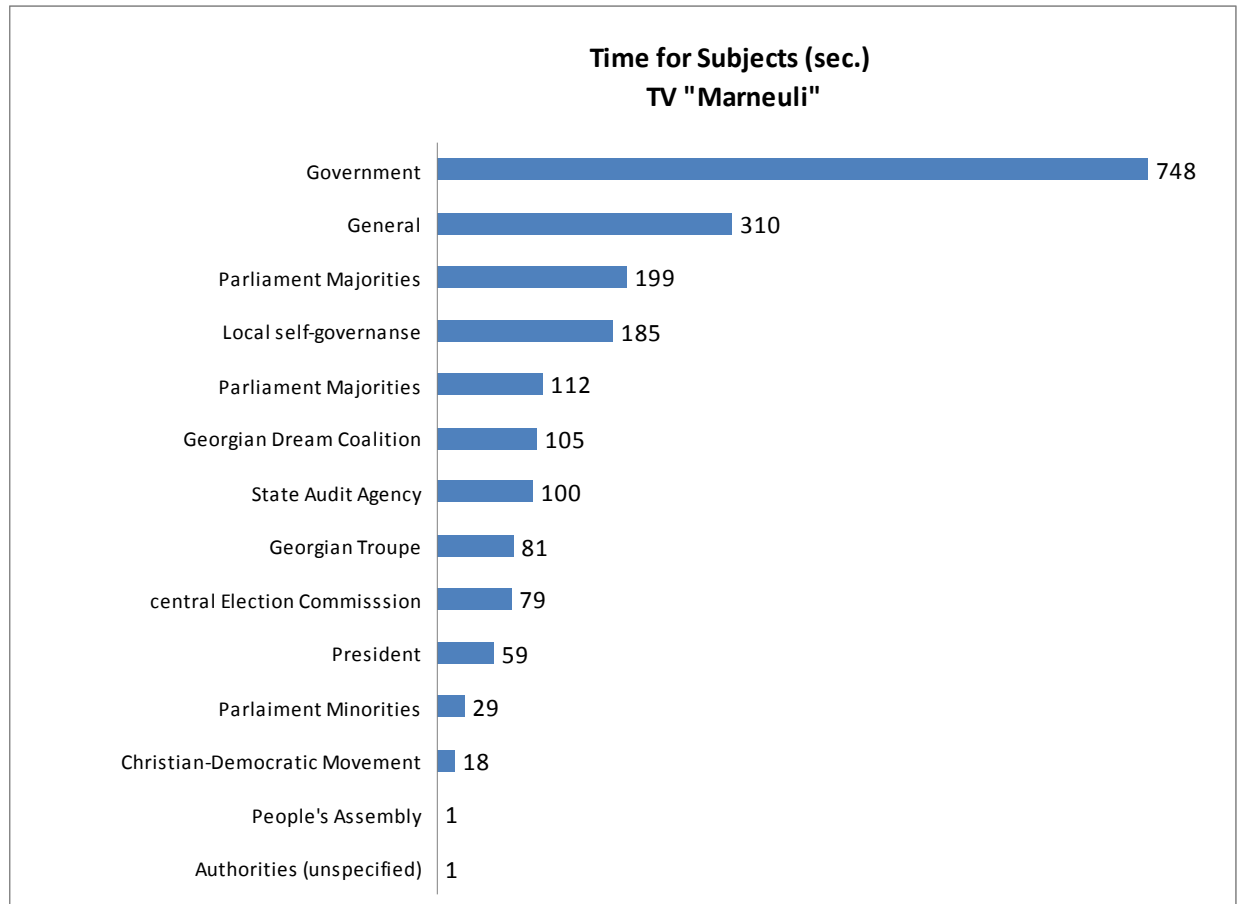


Due to the scarcity of airtime dedicated to the subjects the analysis of data, in terms of tone and direct/indirect coverage, makes no sense.

TV company Borjomi is limited to the coverage of local news. Unfortunately the scarce material gleaned gives us no possibility to conduct qualitative analysis.

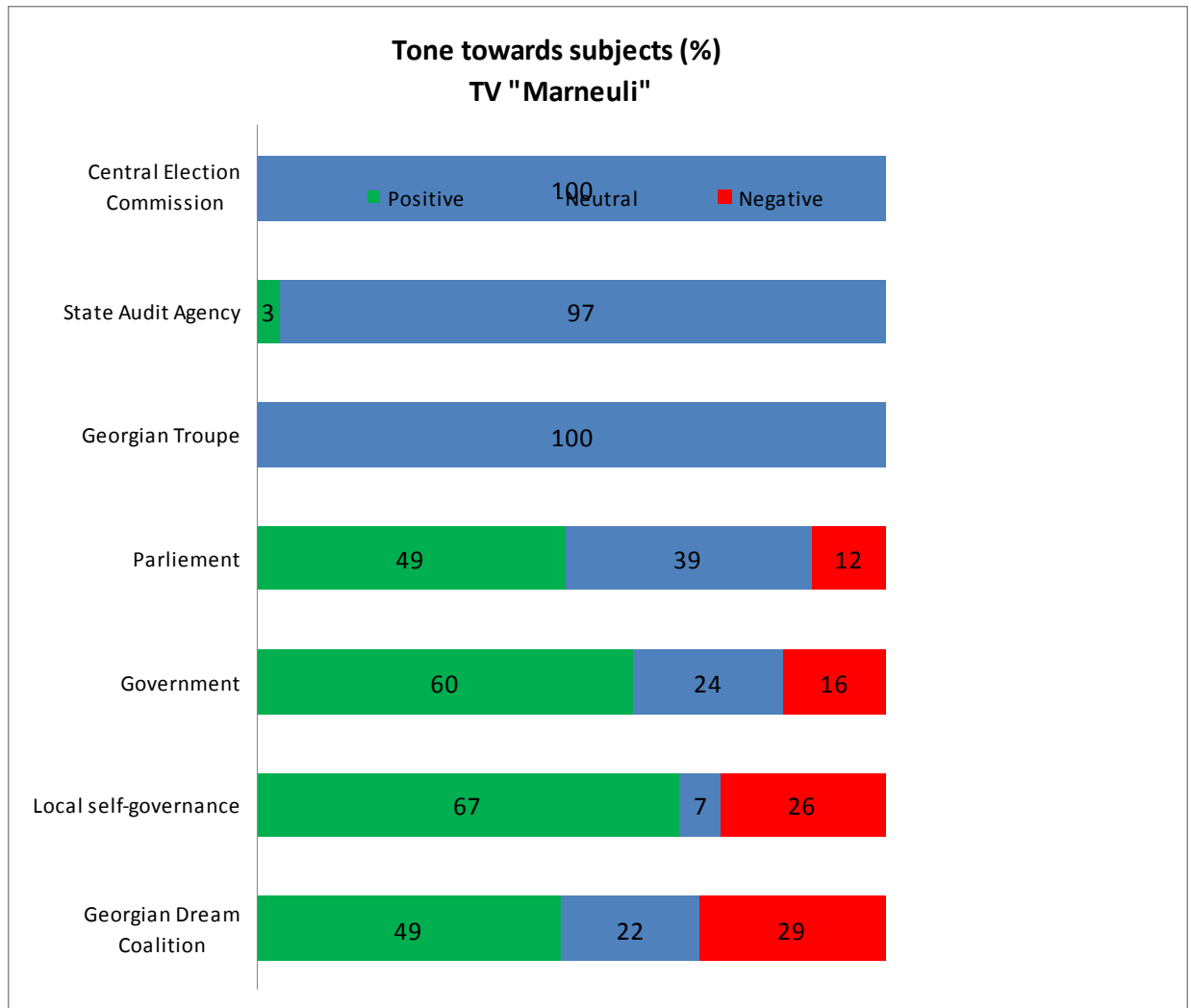
Marneuli TV (Marneuli) – Out of the subjects covered the most of the airtime was dedicated to government (12 min), followed by general issues (5 min), Parliament (3 min), parliamentary majority (2 min), local self government (3 min).

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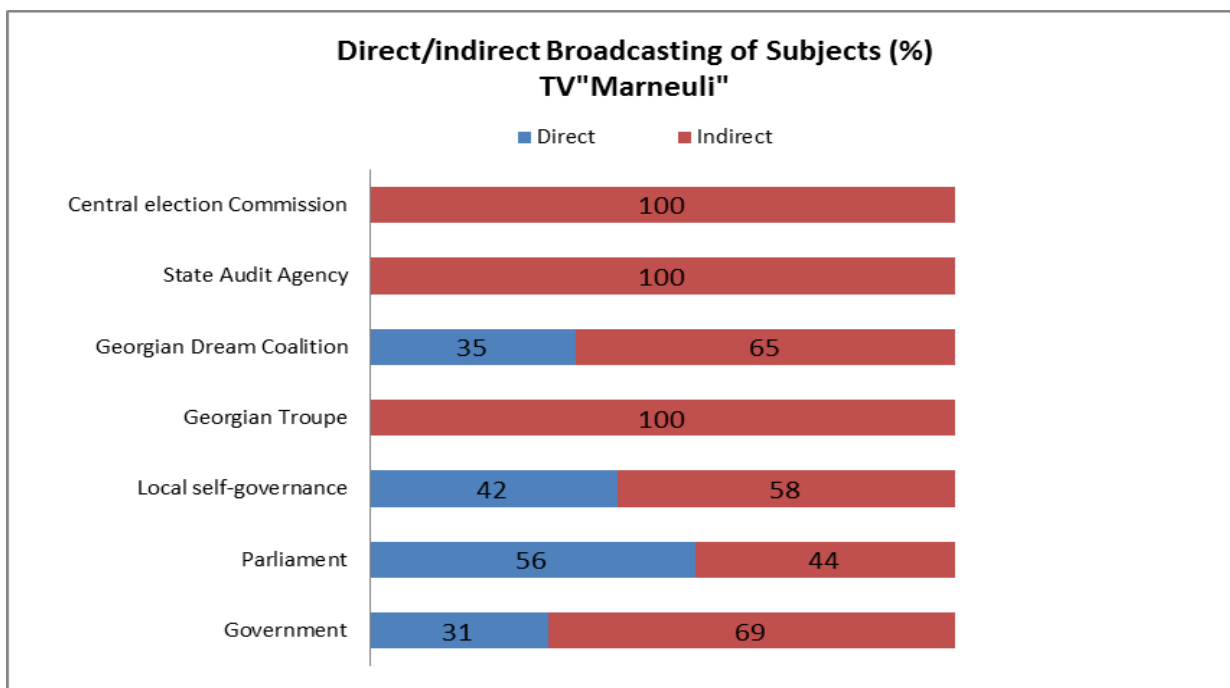


All three tones of coverage was observed in regard to the subjects which received most of the airtime: government - 60 percent positive, 24 percent negative, 16 percent negative; Parliament - 49 percent positive, 39 percent negative, 12 percent negative; local self government - 67 percent positive, 7 percent negative, 26 percent negative.

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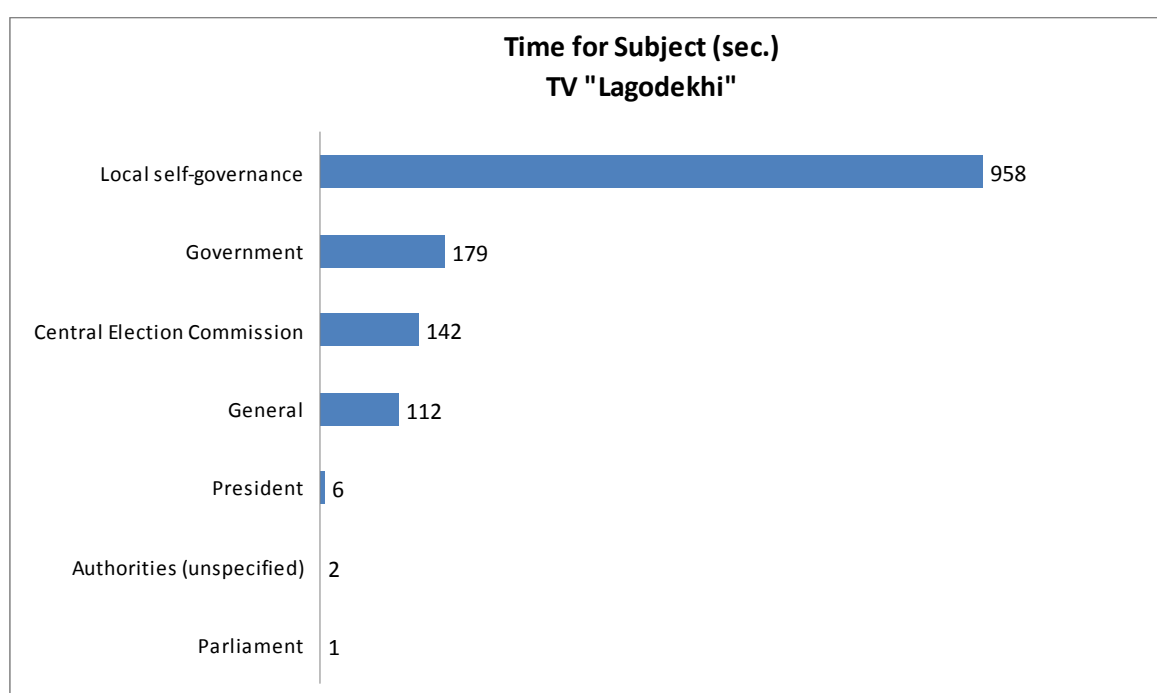


The share of direct/indirect coverage is more or less equal in case of local self government, Parliament and government.



The TV company provides the coverage of central news with a delay. For example, the governmental plan presented to the parliament by PM was covered by the TV company with a one-day delay. It is also interesting to mention that when selecting central news some important political developments are ignored.

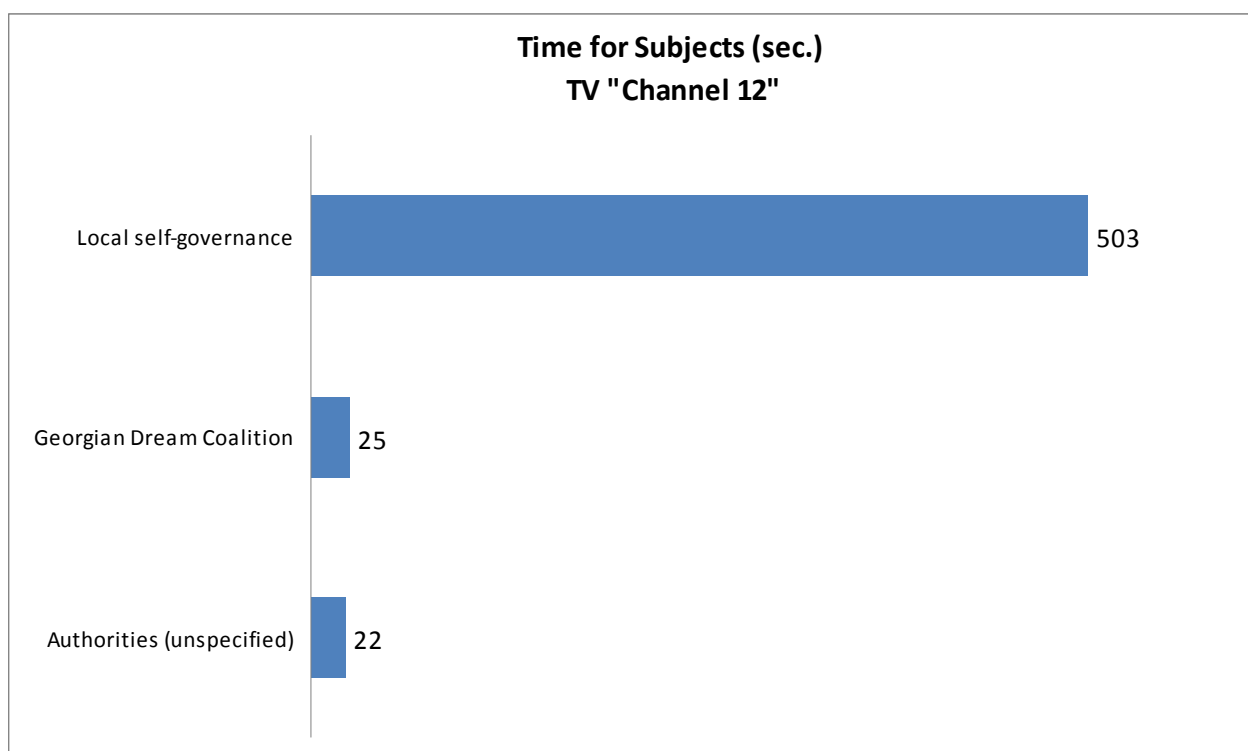
LTV (Lagodekhi) – The most of the airtime – 16 minutes – was dedicated to the coverage of local self government, followed by government with 3 minutes and Central Election Commission with 2 minutes.



Due to the scarcity of airtime dedicated to the subjects the analysis of data, in terms of tone and direct/indirect coverage, makes no sense.

The TV company provides the coverage of local news only. Determination of particular trends and qualitative analysis was impossible due to the lack of material.

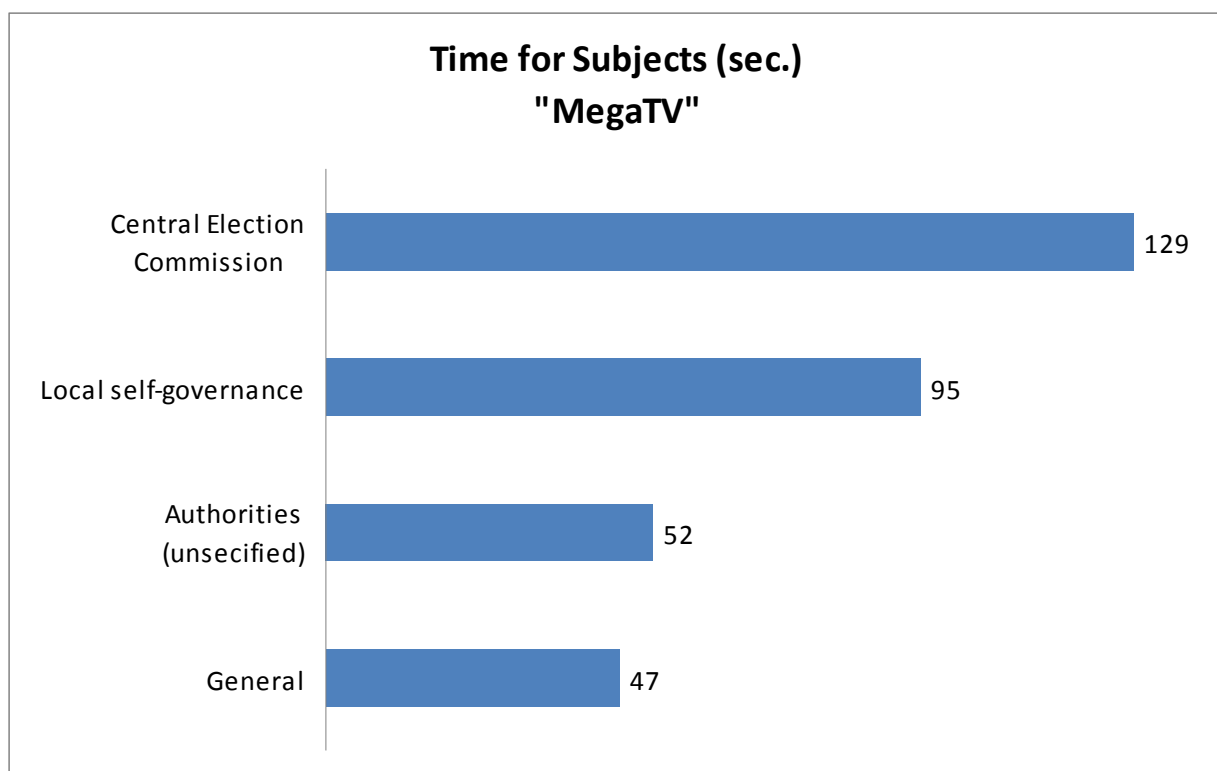
12th Channel (Bolnisi) – News programs dedicated 8 minutes to local self government, the rest of the subjects were virtually provided no coverage.



Due to the scarcity of airtime dedicated to the subjects the analysis of data, in terms of tone and direct/indirect coverage, makes no sense.

Bolnisi-based Channel 12 too essentially covers local news.

Mega TV (Khoni) – Only Central Election Commission (2 min) and local self government (2 min) were dedicated airtime on the given channel. The tone of coverage was neutral and positive, direct as well as indirect coverage was observed.



Due to the scarcity of airtime dedicated to the subjects the analysis of data, in terms of tone and direct/indirect coverage, makes no sense.

Mega TV's news program virtually never touched upon political issues. Thus far none of the political parties have been mentioned. Out of the monitored subjects only local self government, authorities and Central Election Commission were mentioned mainly in relation to cultural and social issues.

It is also noteworthy that on a part of the July 13 news story about the results of the NDI survey is identical – same shots and text – to the Trialeti TV story of July 12.

Activities Planned for Next Quarter

The second phase of regional broadcasters' monitoring will be carried out within the period of July 16-29, 2012.



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