



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

Subagreement # S-12-155

Report for: August 13 - 26, 2012

Project Period: 11 June 2012 - 10 December 2012

Total Budget: 31 000\$

Results Summary/Impact Statement

Main findings of the fourth phase of monitoring:

- Very few of the monitored subjects are dedicated airtime on regional TV channels;
- Out of the monitored subjects information is mainly delivered about five political unions including United National Movement (UNM), Georgian Dream coalition, New Rights, Christian-Democratic Movement and Free Georgia;
- Most of the regional TV companies dedicate a fair amount of airtime to reporting on the activities of local self governments. The reporting is almost always positive in tone;
- Most of the TV companies are loyal to the authorities in general;
- The programs initiated by the authorities are covered in a superficial manner without any additional substantiation; Reporting provided by the majority of TV companies is positive in tone;
- Marginal amount of TV companies cover developments in the country.

Background

The report represents the results of the survey carried out within the period of August 13-26, 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).

During the fourth phase of monitoring, like in previous ones, it was impossible to carry out a full monitoring of all 20 TV broadcasters. TV companies Kronika (Dusheti) and Egrisi (Senaki) still lack self-produced news programs. Preparatory works were still on at TV company 9th Wave (Poti), therefore news programs will be resumed on September 1.

Within the period of August 13-26 several TV companies including Mega TV (Khoni) and Borjomi (Borjomi) were producing a single news program per week. Due to the August 20 natural disaster TV company LTV (Lagodekhi) and Gurjaani (Gurjaani) faced some problems with broadcasting.

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.

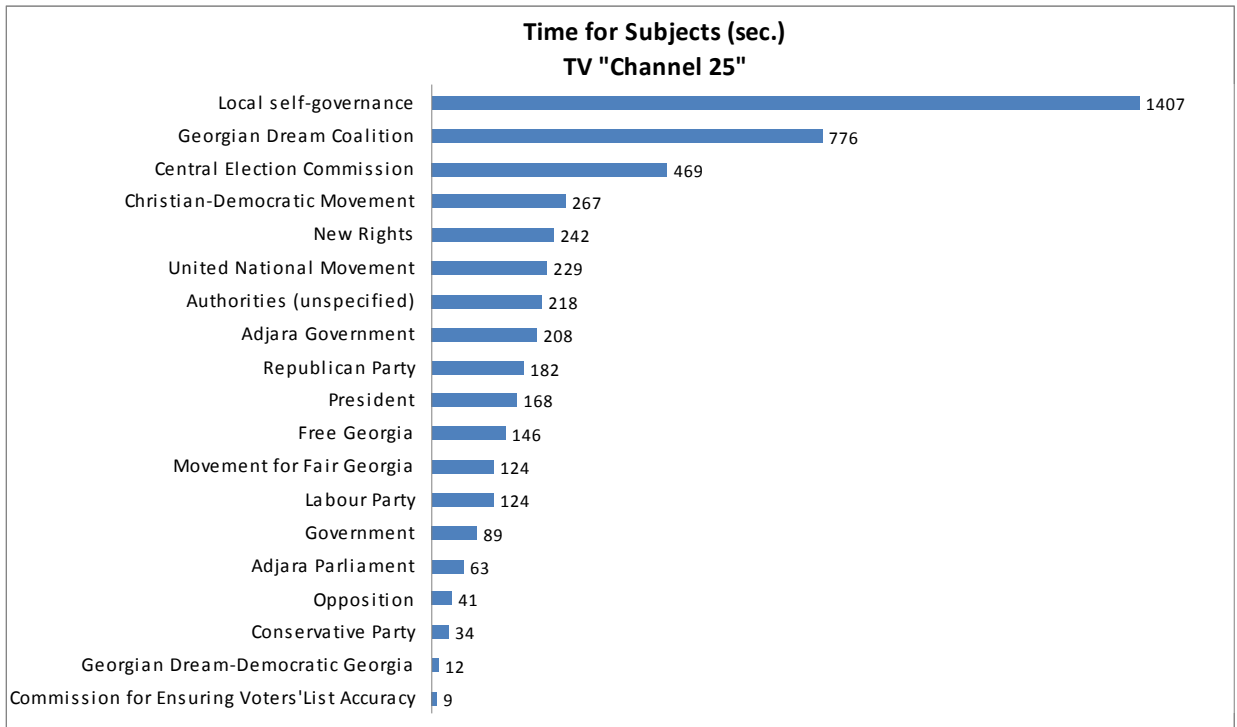
The monitoring subjects include: Parliament (speaker, vice speaker, MPs, committees); President (administration, advisors, press speaker); government (prime minister, ministers, deputy ministers, governors); authorities (when mentioned with no specification); local self-governments (mayors, chairs of 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).

The list is not final and might change in case a new election-related appears.

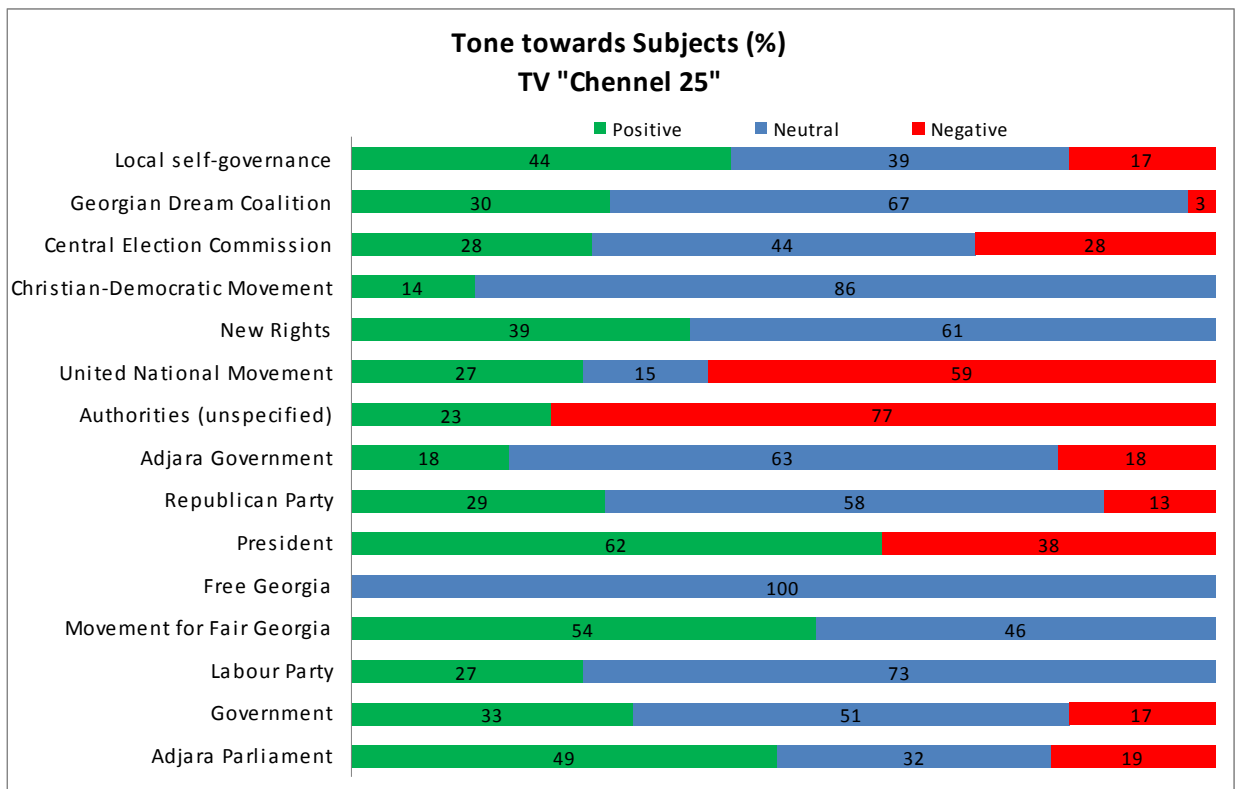
News programs monitoring results per channel:

Channel 25 (Batumi) – News programs dedicated most of the airtime, 24 minutes, to the local self-government. 13 minutes were dedicated to the Georgian Dream coalition, followed by the Central Election Commission (CEC) with 8 minutes. 5 minutes were dedicated to Christian-Democratic Movement and New Rights per each. UNM, authorities and Adjara government was each dedicated 4 minutes.

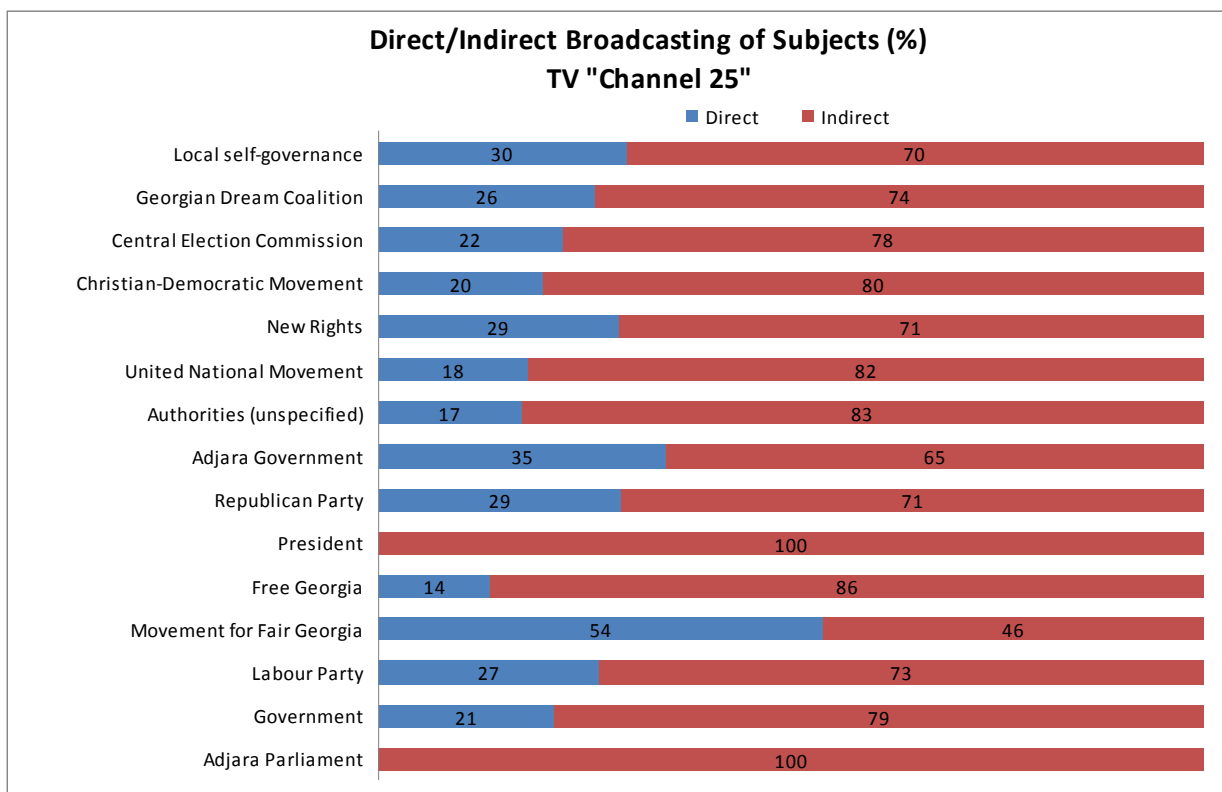
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The most negative tone fell on the authorities (77 percent) and UNM (59 percent). Only positive and neutral tones were observed in regard to Christian-Democratic Movement and New Rights. Reporting on the Georgian Dream coalition was neutral in tone. Monitored subjects were provided coverage either in all three tones or only positive and neutral. President was the sole exception. Positive (62 percent) and negative (38 percent) tones were observed in regard to this subject (3 minutes dedicated in total).



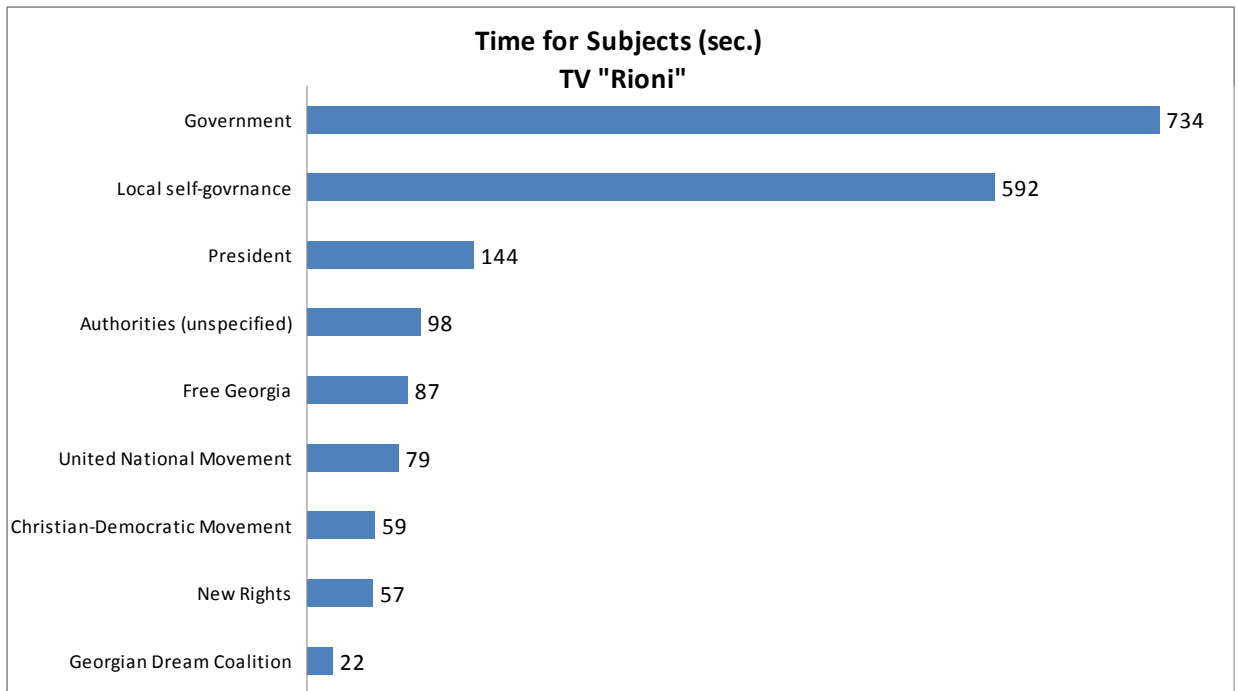
Indirect reporting greatly prevailed over indirect reporting.



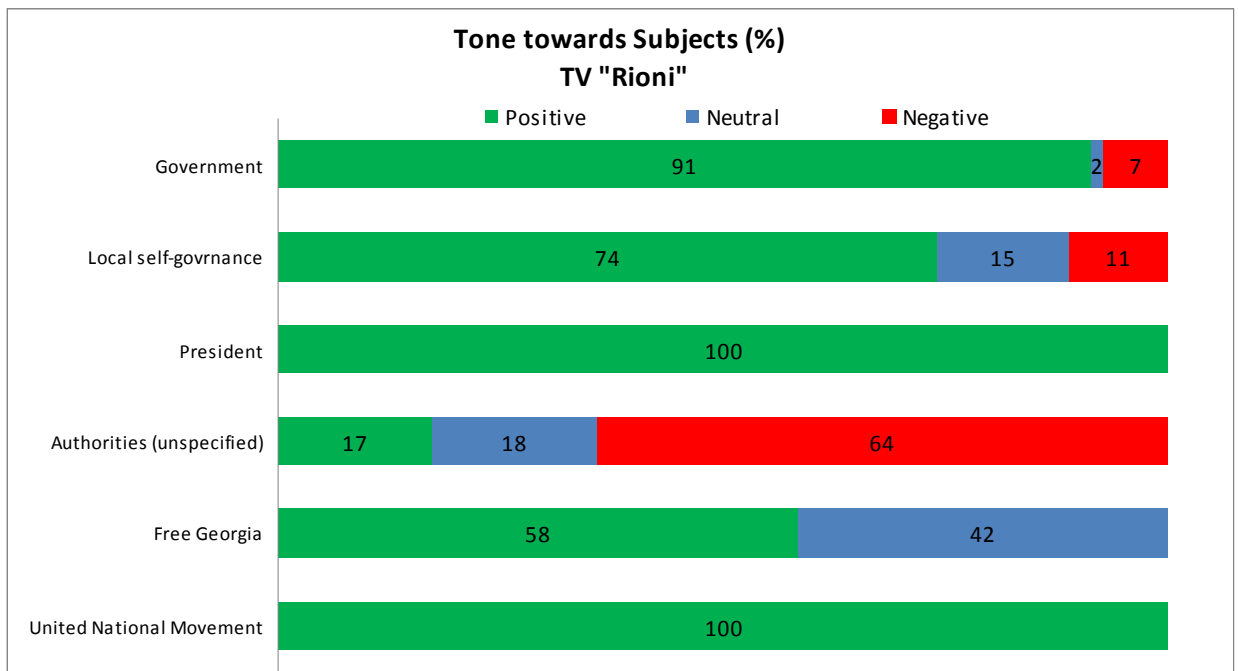
Within the period of August 13-26 (due to staff holidays) Channel 25 produced 10-minute news programs and dedicated most of airtime to the regional news. Stories are mainly balanced and offer viewers different opinions about the topic. During the reporting period no kind of bias was observed to either monitored subject.

Rioni (Kutaisi) – News programs dedicated most of airtime to the government (12 min) and local self-government (10 min). 3 minutes were dedicated to President.

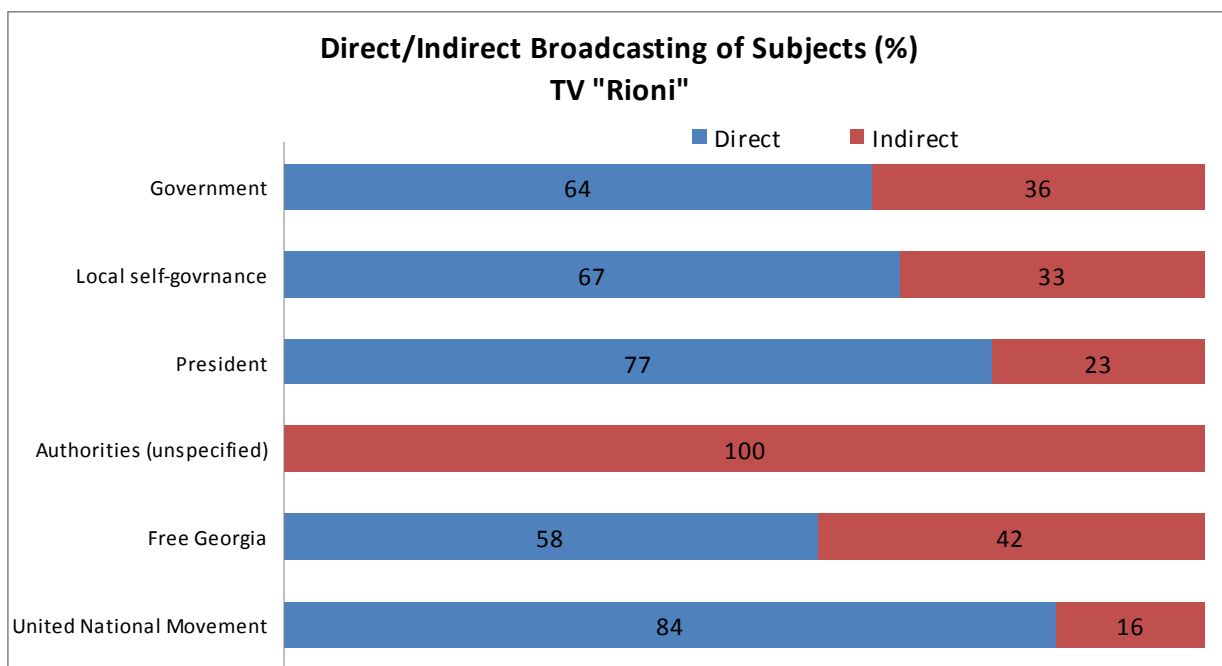
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All three tones were observed in regard to the most covered subjects, positive tone prevailed though. Solely positive tone was found when reporting on President.

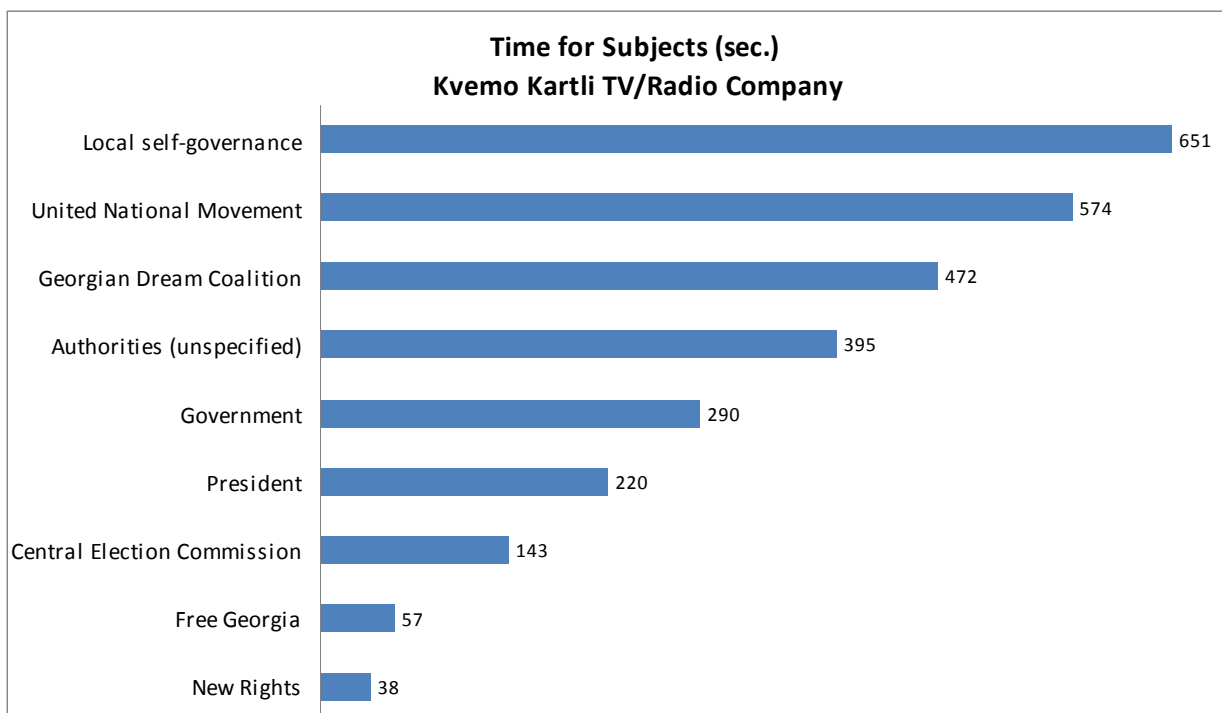


Direct reporting considerably prevailed over indirect reporting:

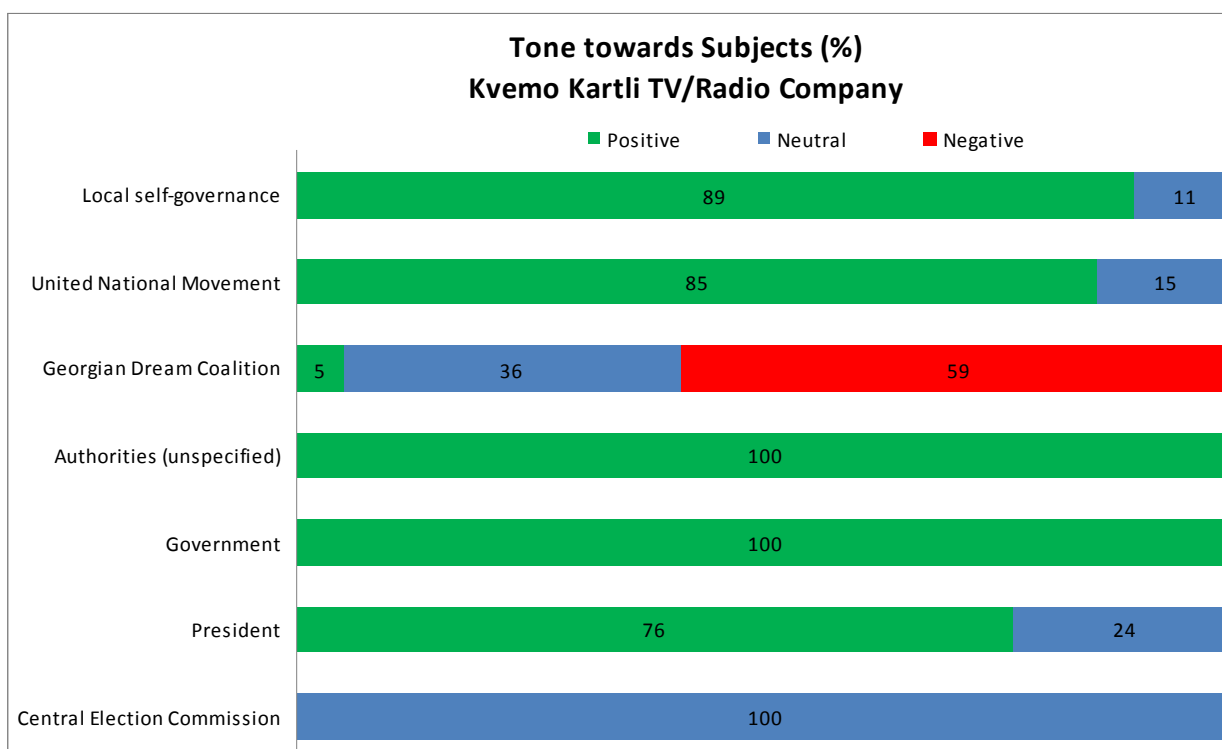


During the reporting period (August 13-26), TV company aird daily tvdigests was monitored. The company reported on local news in the main. PM Vano Merabishvili’s visit to Guria on August 13 was an exception. It is noteworthy that the news programs dedicate a fair amount of airtime to the interviews with the government representatives. For example, the August 13 news program dedicated 3 minutes and 44 seconds to the interview with the Prime Minister and 2 minutes to President.

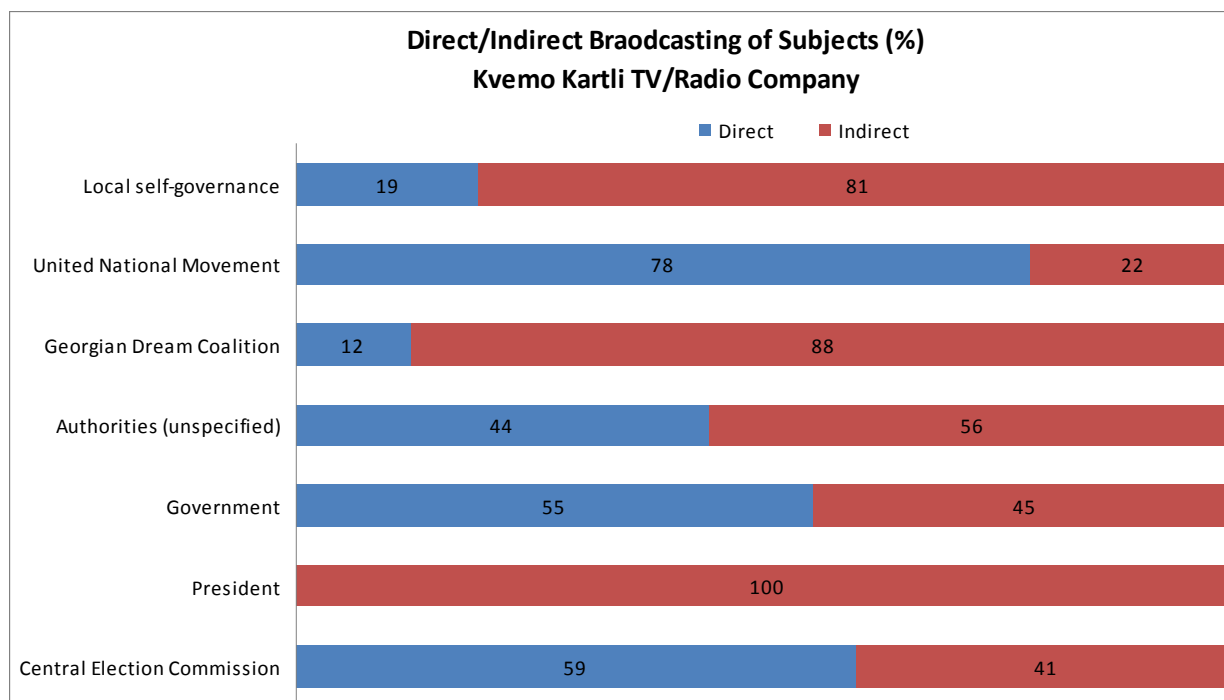
Kvemo Kartli TV/Radio Company (Rustavi) – The TV company dedicated the most of airtime - 11 min - to the local self government. 10 minutes were dedicated to UNM followed by the Georgian Dream coalition with 8 minutes and the authorities with 7 minutes.



Reporting was mainly positive in tone. All three tones were observed in regard to the Georgian Dream coalition: 5 percent positive, 36 percent neutral and 59 percent negative.

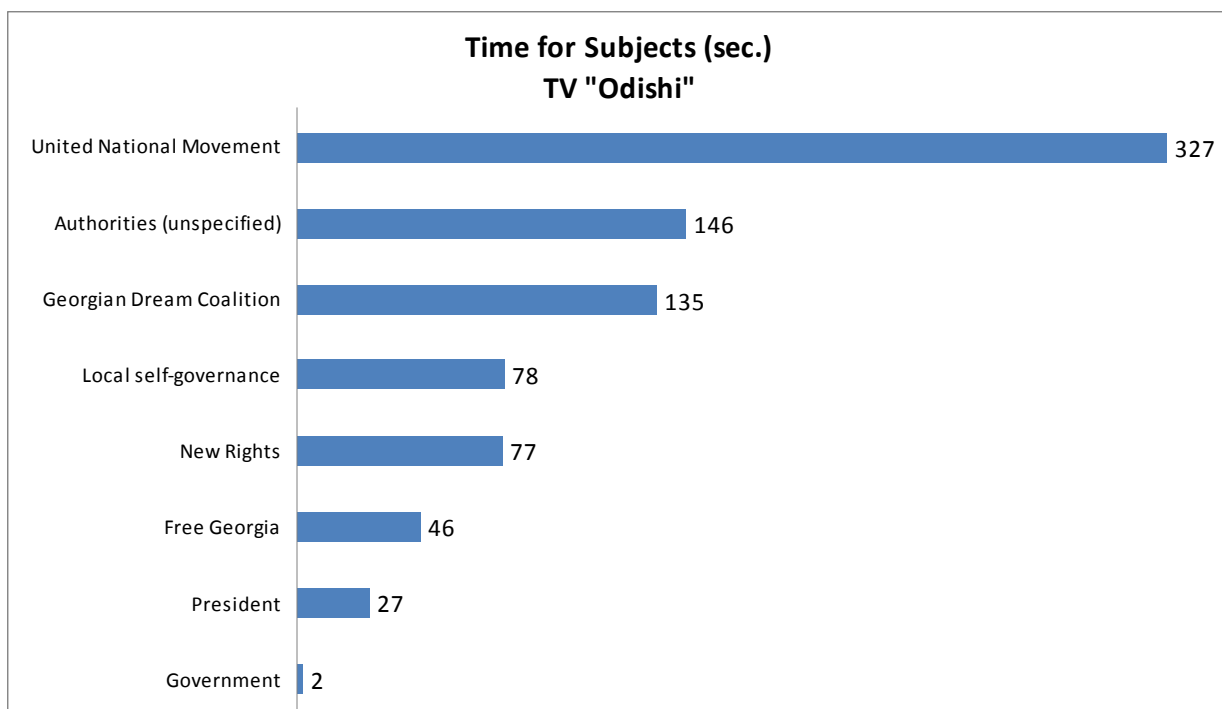


In terms of direct/indirect reporting the Georgian Dream coalition (88 percent) and the local self government (81 percent) have the highest index of indirect reporting. Direct reporting prevails over indirect reporting only in case of UNM – 78 percent / 22 percent.

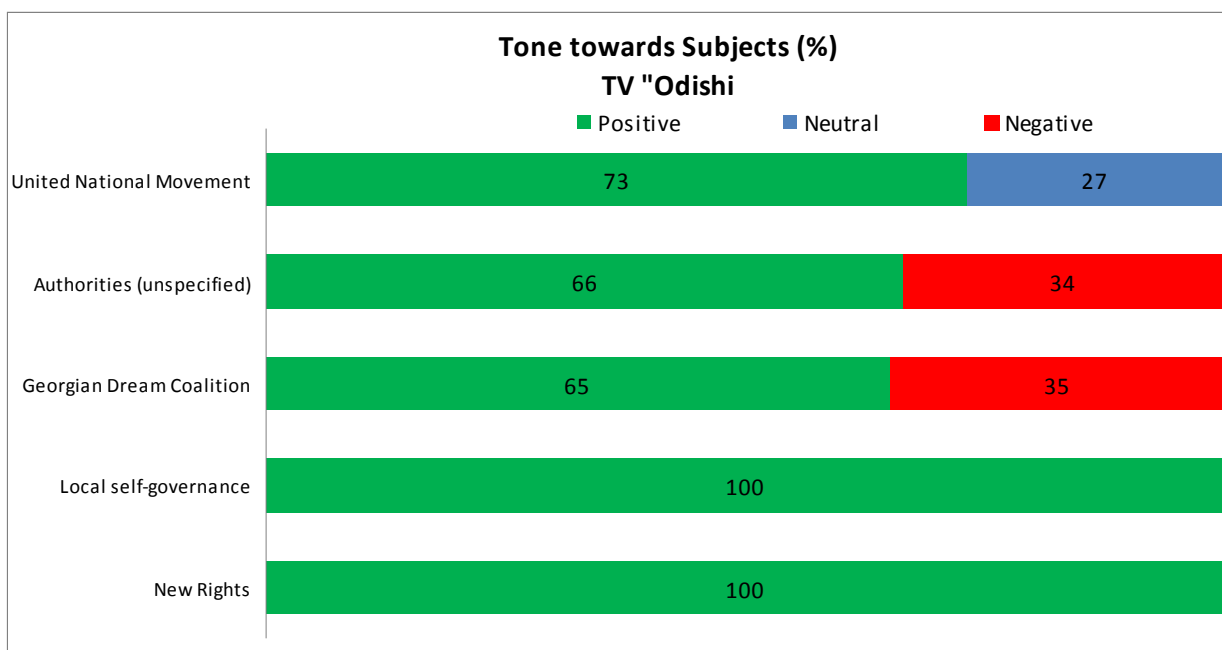


The TV company mainly covers the activities of the local self government and dedicates little time to other political (and especially oppositional) subjects even in case there is an informational ground. For example the reporting on the August 19 Georgian Dream rally held in Rustavi was limited to some badly arranged organizational issues and no political statements made at the meeting with the population was shown. News programs dedicated a fair amount of airtime to the activities carried out by UNM and the local self government. No negative tone was observed in this regard and a greater part of reporting on them was positive in tone. It is also noteworthy that the journalist provided a positive evaluation to the projects carried out by State agencies. For instance in the very first story of the August 16 news program the journalist says that the governmental project on the construction of the highway eases the flow of traffic and makes it safer. Journalist's positive attitude was evident in regard to the projects implemented by the local self government. For example in the August 18 news program the presenter says the local self government's project on the arrangement of patios is carried out on an unprecedented scale. It is noteworthy that this topic was covered in almost all of the news programs aired during the reporting period. Moreover, the stories were virtually identical.

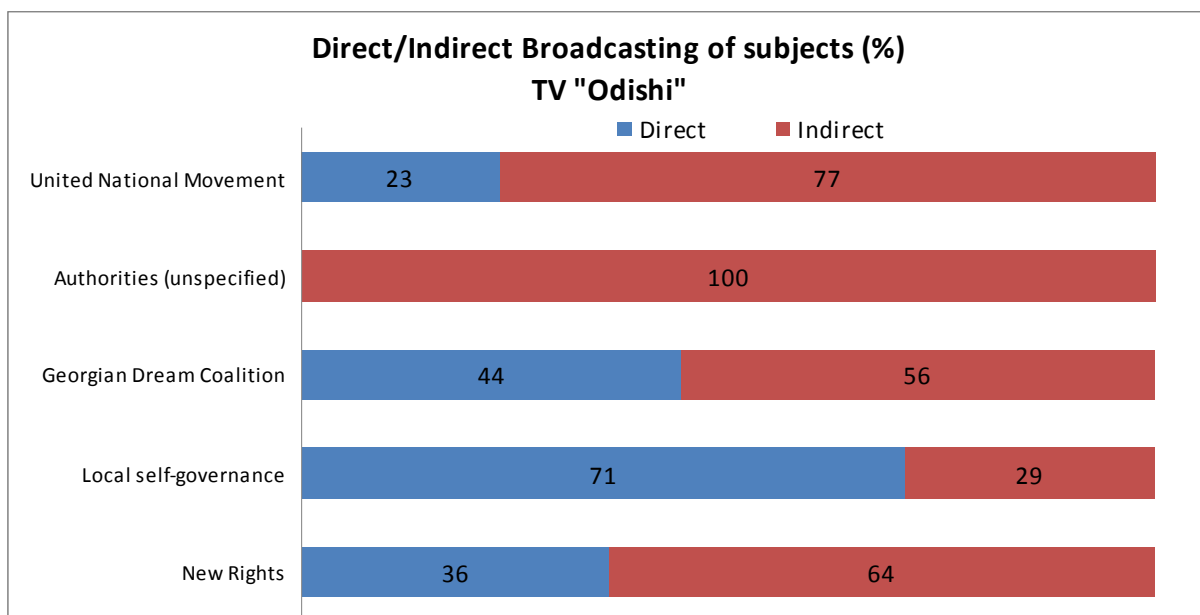
Odishi (Zugdidi) – Out of the monitored subjects the most of the airtime (up to 6 min) was dedicated to UNM, followed by the authorities and the Georgian Dream coalition with 3 and 2 minutes respectively.



Reporting on UNM was only positive (73 percent) and neutral (27 percent) in tone while reporting on authorities and the Georgian Dream coalition was positive and negative.

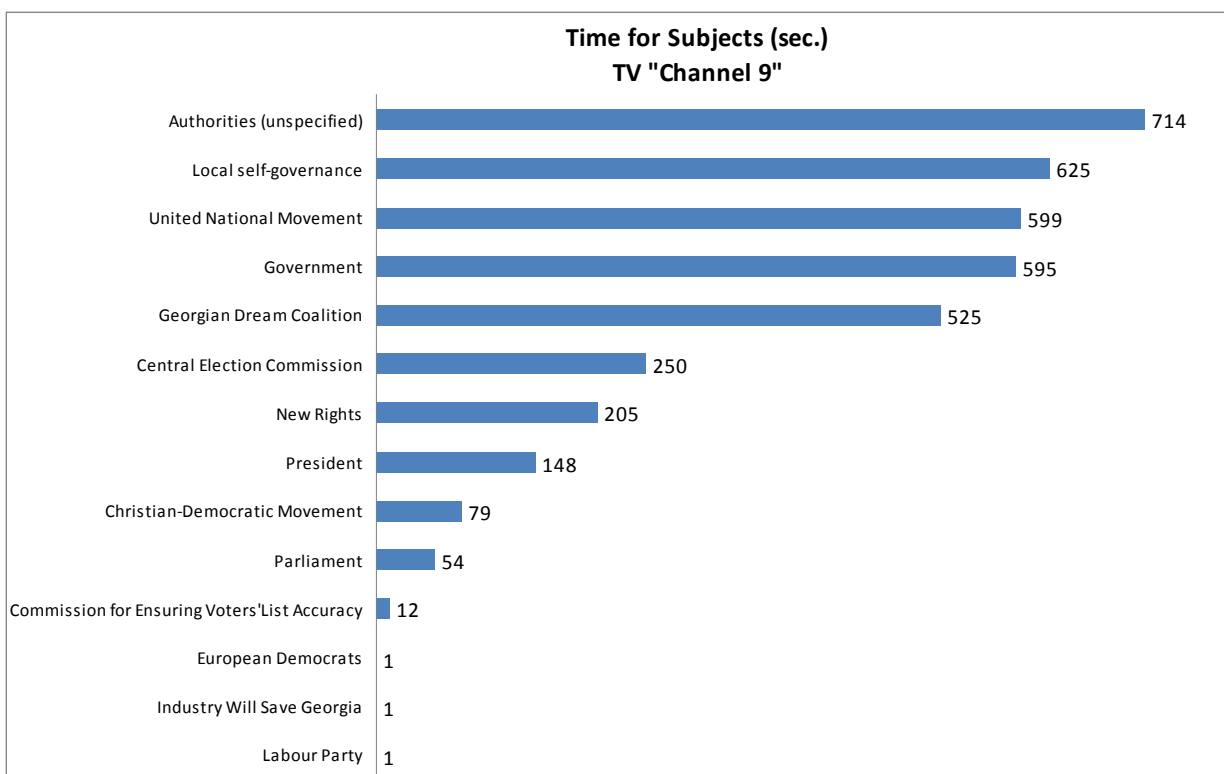


In regard to UNM indirect reporting prevailed. But in case of the Georgian Dream coalition direct and indirect reporting was almost equal.

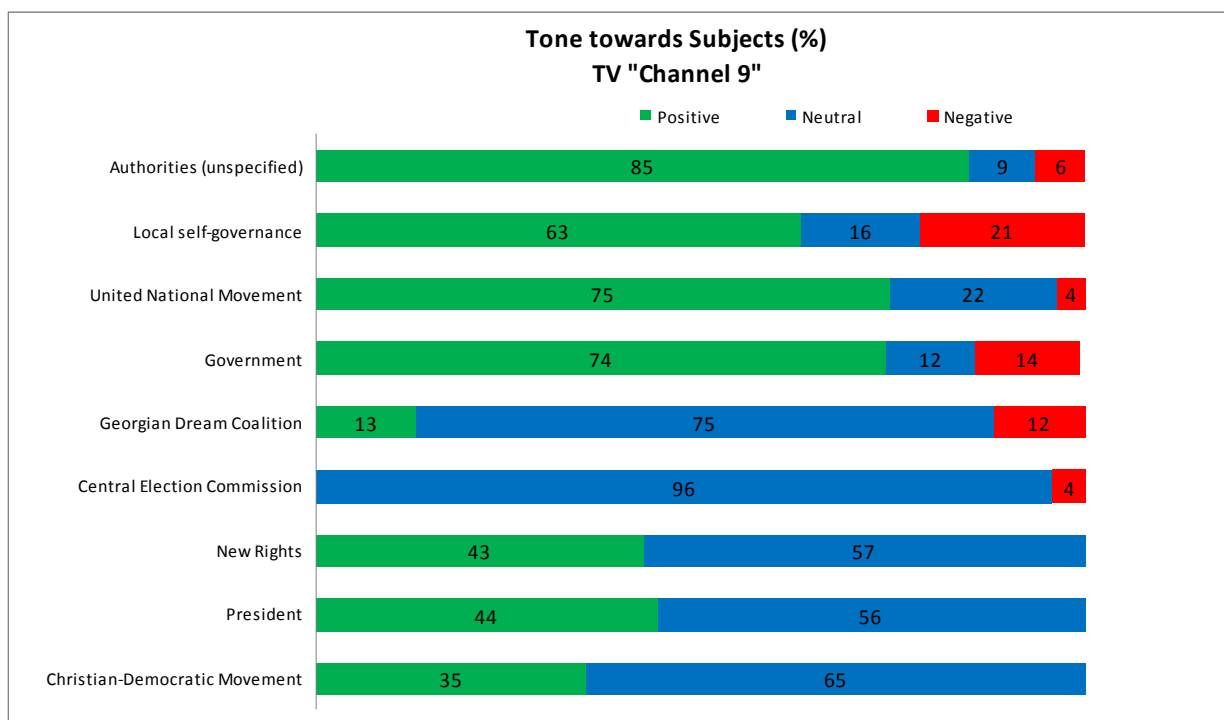


During the reporting period the TV company mainly covered local news. A fair amount of airtime was dedicated to the UNM activities. The rest of the monitored subjects were virtually provided no coverage.

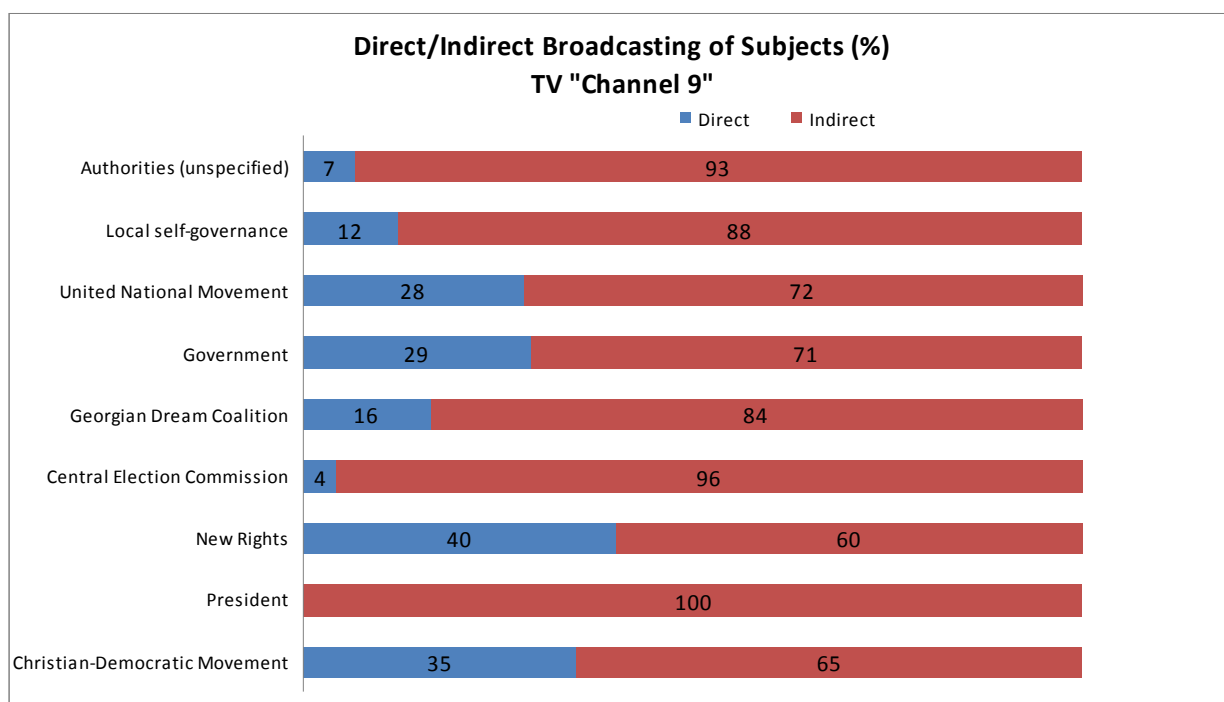
9th Channel (Akhaltsikhe) – The most of airtime (12 min) was dedicated to the authorities followed by the local self government with 11 min, UNM and government with 10 min each. 9 minutes were dedicated to the Georgian Dream coalition.



Positive tone prevailed when reporting on the monitored subjects. The neutral tone (75 percent) was attached to reporting on the Georgian Dream coalition.



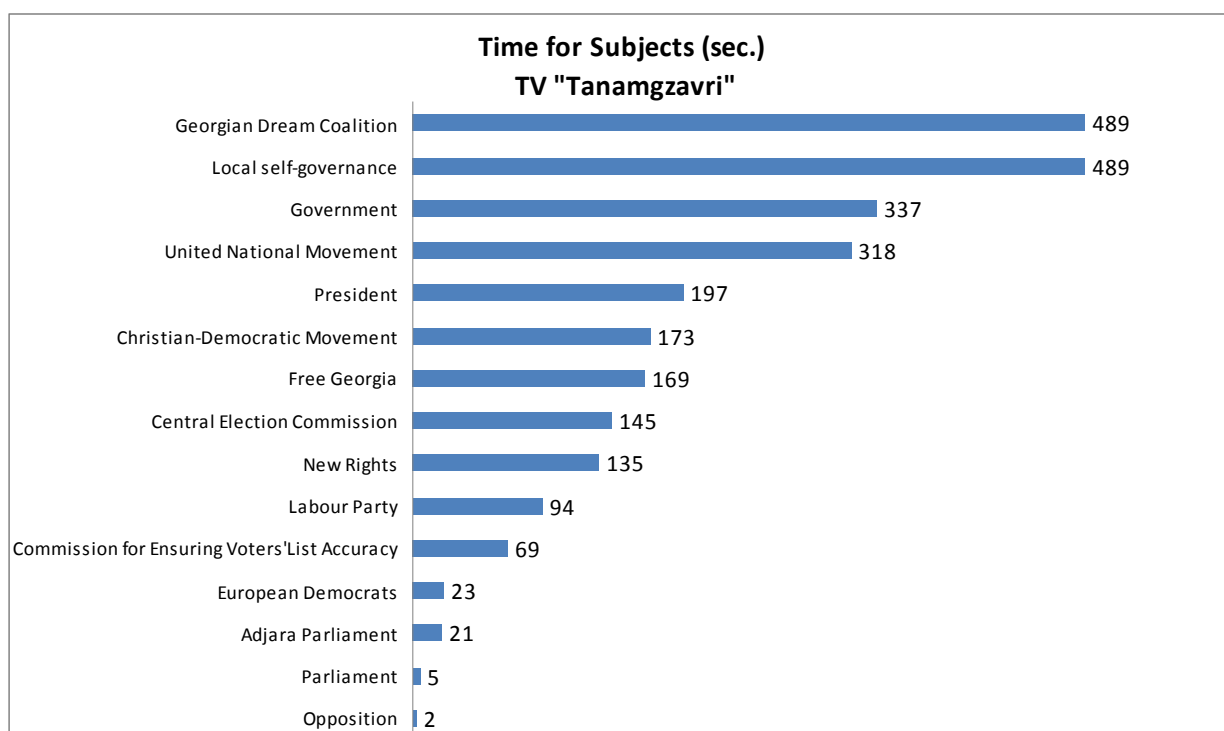
Indirect reporting considerably prevails over direct reporting:



During the reporting period the channel solely covered the events being on in Samtskhe-Javakheti region. The 9th Channel reporters mainly produced stories about current social issues, planned and ongoing projects as well as PM's visits to the region. Some of the news programs were dedicated to the election campaigns conducted by political parties. UNM (10 min) and Georgian Dream coalition

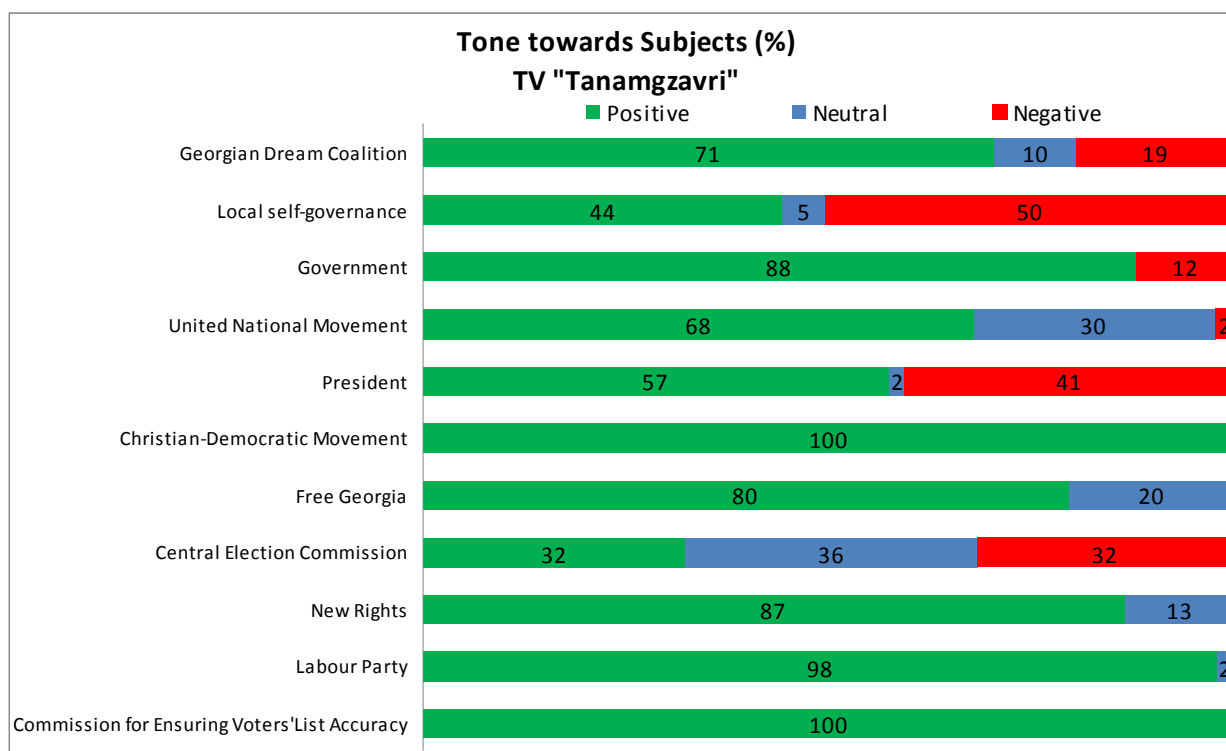
(9 min) lead the list in terms of the airtime dedicated. It is noteworthy that journalists demonstrated strictly positive tone in regard to UNM (75 percent) and neutral in regard to the Georgian Dream coalition (75 percent).

Tanamgzavri (Telavi) – Out of the monitored subjects news programs dedicated equal airtime, 8-8 minutes, to the Georgian Dream coalition and the local self government.

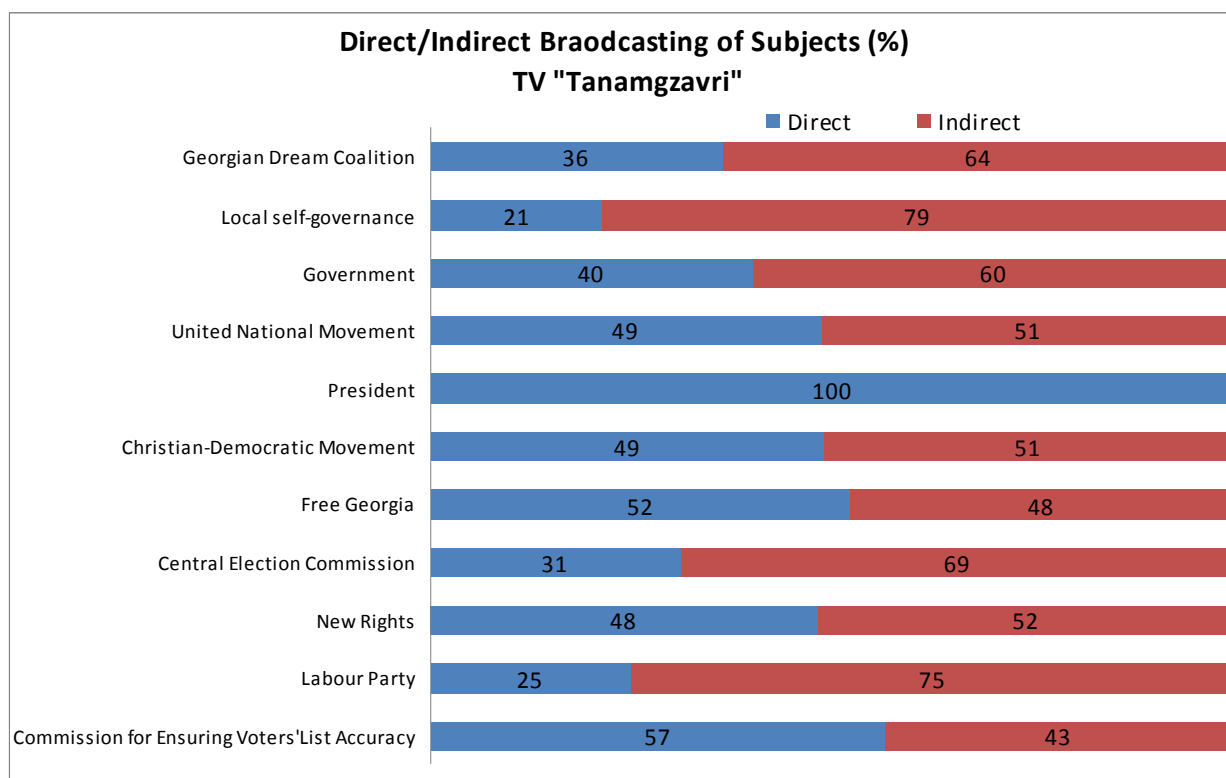


In regard to the most covered subjects all of the three tones were observed. The Georgian Dream coalition was most positively reported on – 71 percent, while the local self government was most negatively covered – 50 percent.

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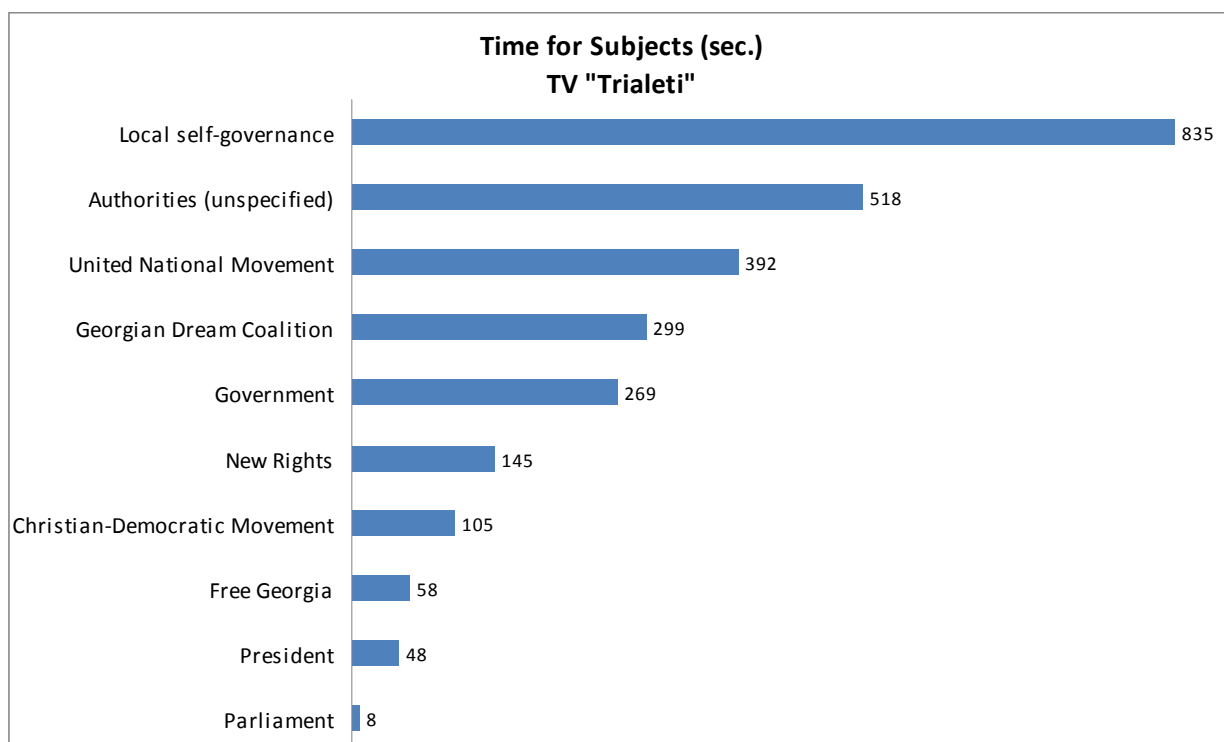
Indirect reporting prevailed over direct reporting:



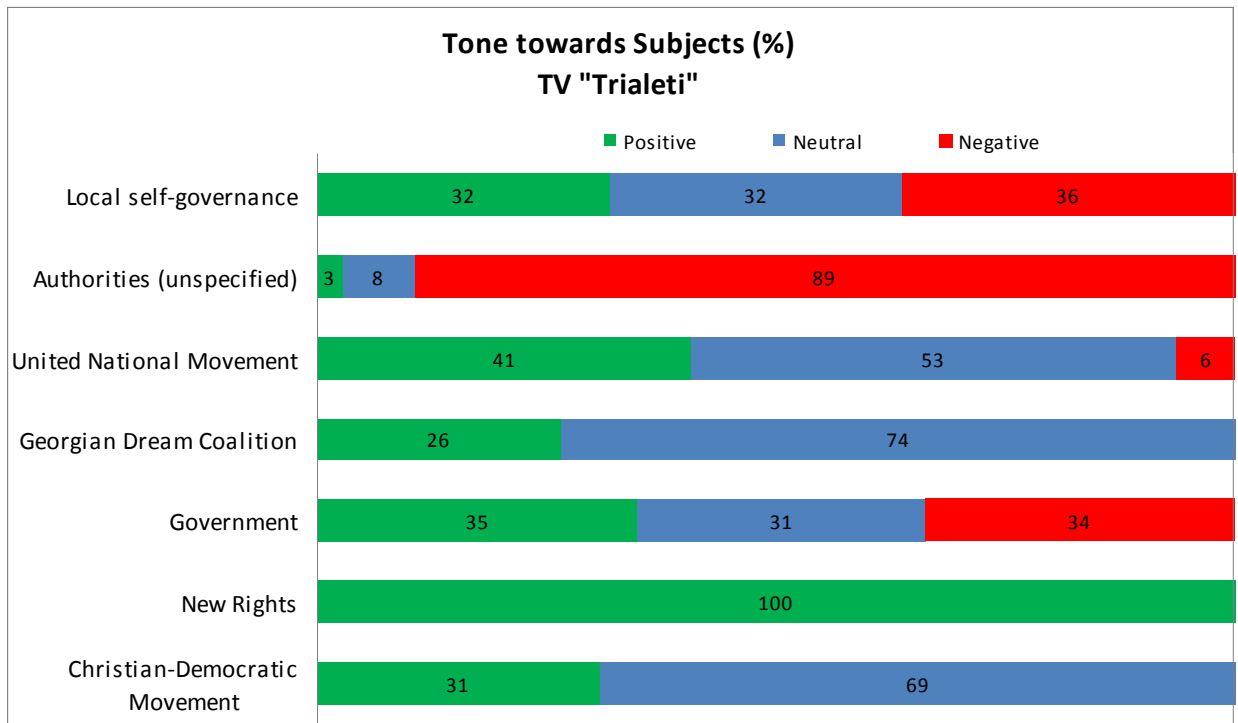
TV company Tanamgzavri essentially covered local news. But within the reporting period some stories from Tbilisi, Guria region, Shida Kartli, Imereti and Samegrelo were delivered too. The stories in the Tanamgzavri news program are more or less balanced. Journalists are trying to show and cover all of the interesting parties but in some cases the local self government representatives refuse journalists to grant interviews. For instance the TV story in the August 15 news program which

covered the protest rally held by the Vardisubani village dwellers in front of the Gamgeoba. The TV story features the journalist trying, though in vain, to obtain an interview from the village territorial management representative hitting his fist against the video camera.

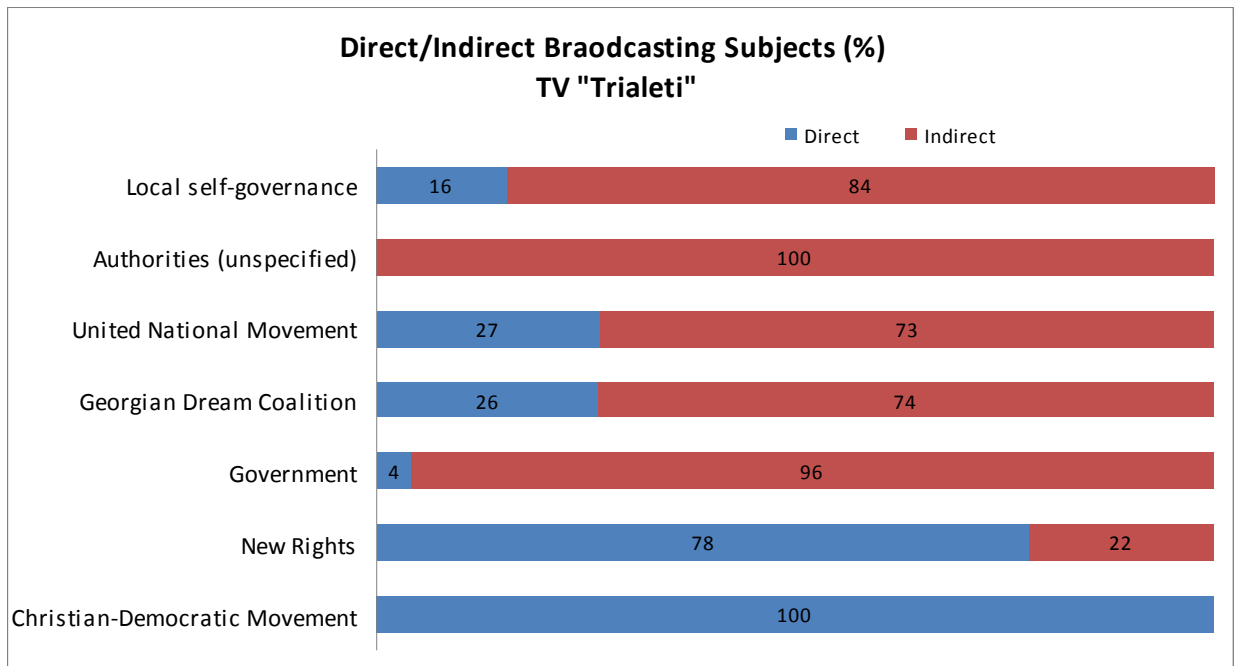
Trialeti (Gori) – The news programs dedicated most of airtime (14 min) to the local self government. The authorities enjoyed 9-minute coverage, followed by UNM with 7 minutes and the Georgian Dream coalition with 5 minutes.



The most negative tone was attached to the reporting on the authorities in general (89 percent); in regard to the local self government and government all of the three tones applied were equal.

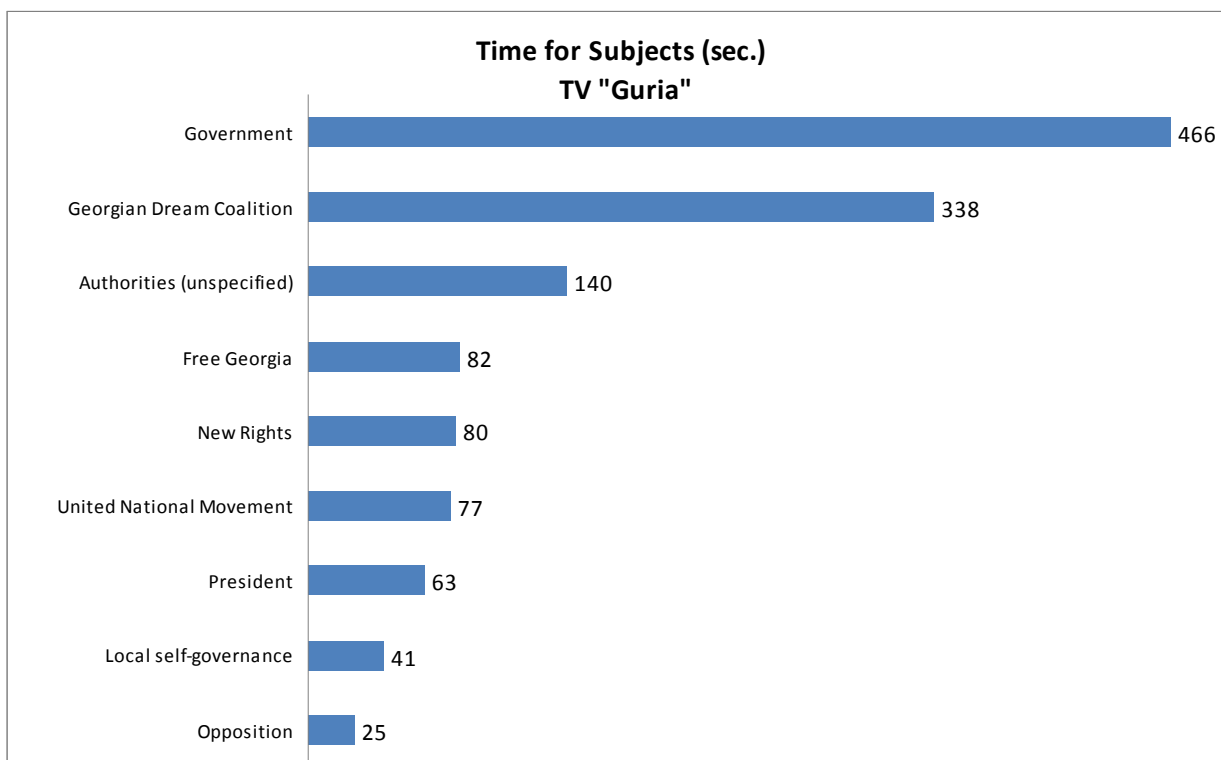


Indirect reporting prevailed over direct reporting. Government (98 percent) and the local self government (84 percent) have the highest index of indirect reporting.

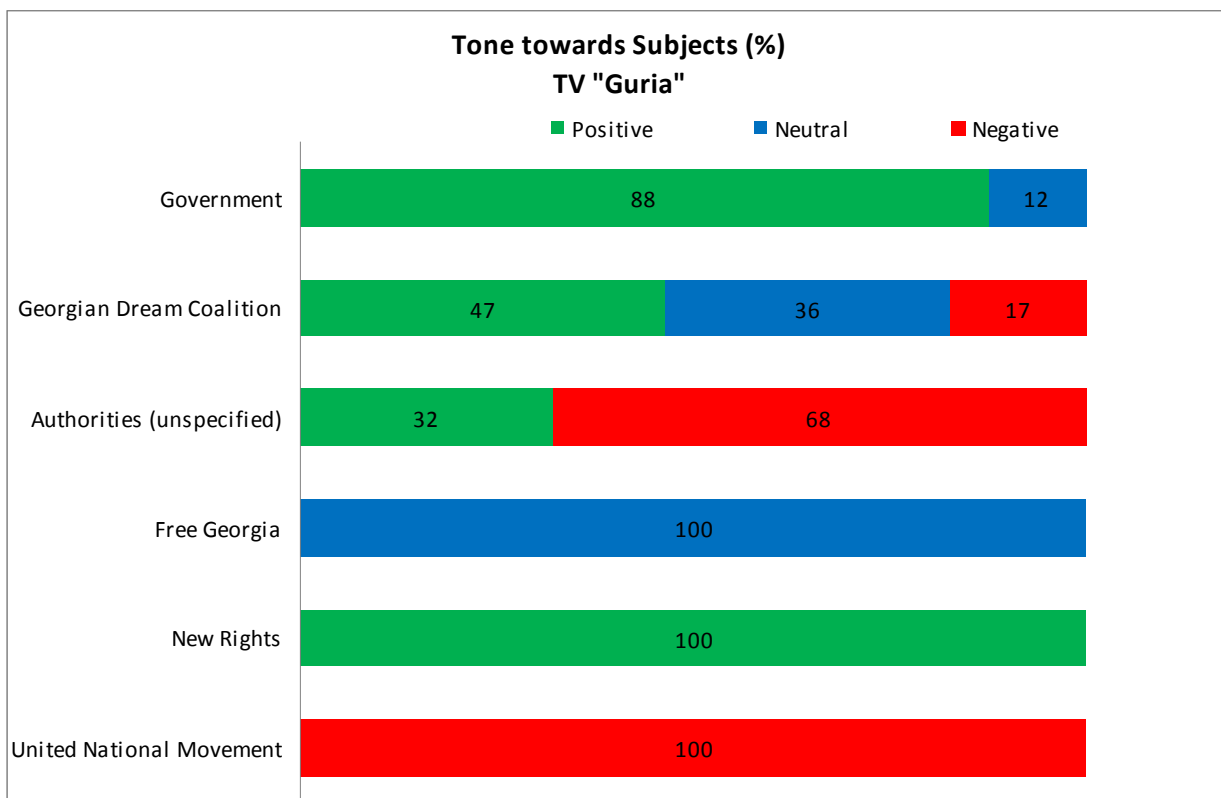


The TV company aggressively covered political events ongoing in the region. It is noteworthy that, unlike previous reporting periods, the airtime dedicated to the Georgian Dream coalition decreased while reporting on the activities carried out by the local self government went up. Moreover, journalists' personal attitude to either topic was less identified, stories were mostly balanced or the journalists clarified why the opinion of the other party was not presented – most frequently the representatives of State agencies refused to comment or journalists failed to get in touch with them.

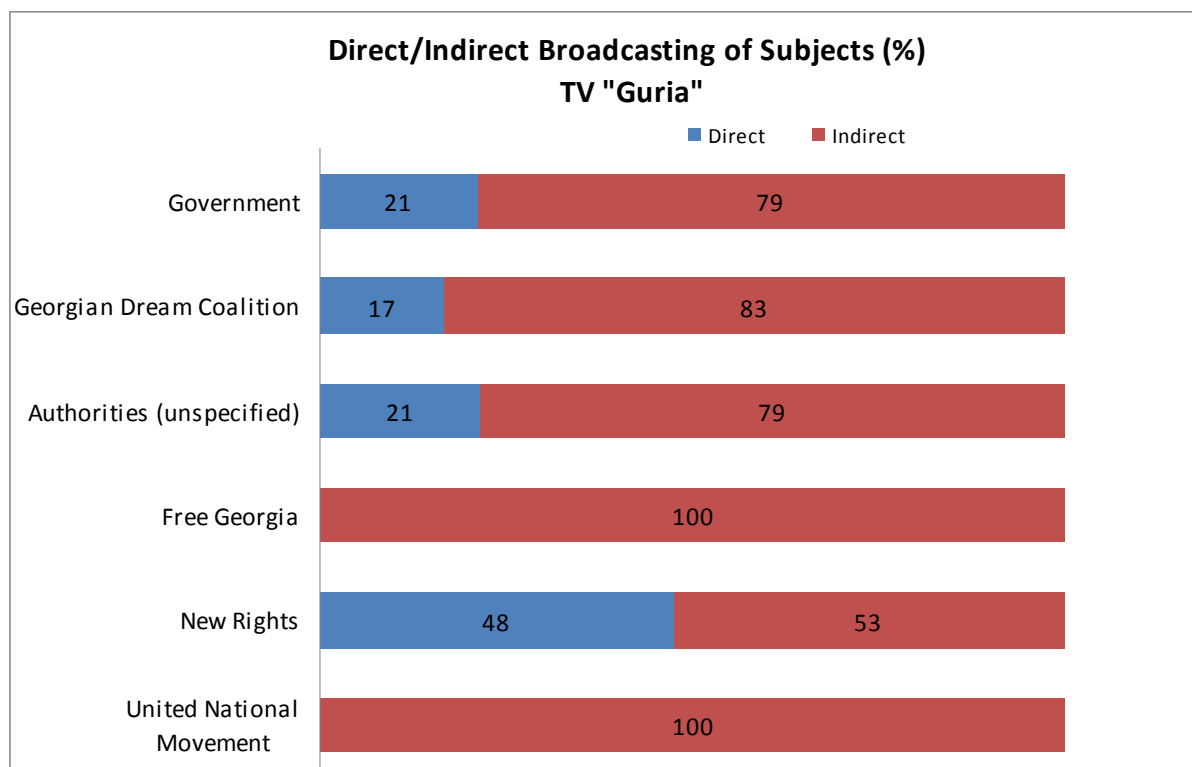
Guria (Ozurgeti) – The most of airtime, 8 minutes, were dedicated to the government, followed by the Georgian Dream coalition with 6 minutes and the authorities with 2 minutes.



Only positive (88 percent) and neutral (12 percent) tones were observed in regard to the government. Positive (32 percent) and negative (68 percent) tones were attached to the reporting on the authorities. All of the three tones were observed in regard to the Georgian Dream coalition.



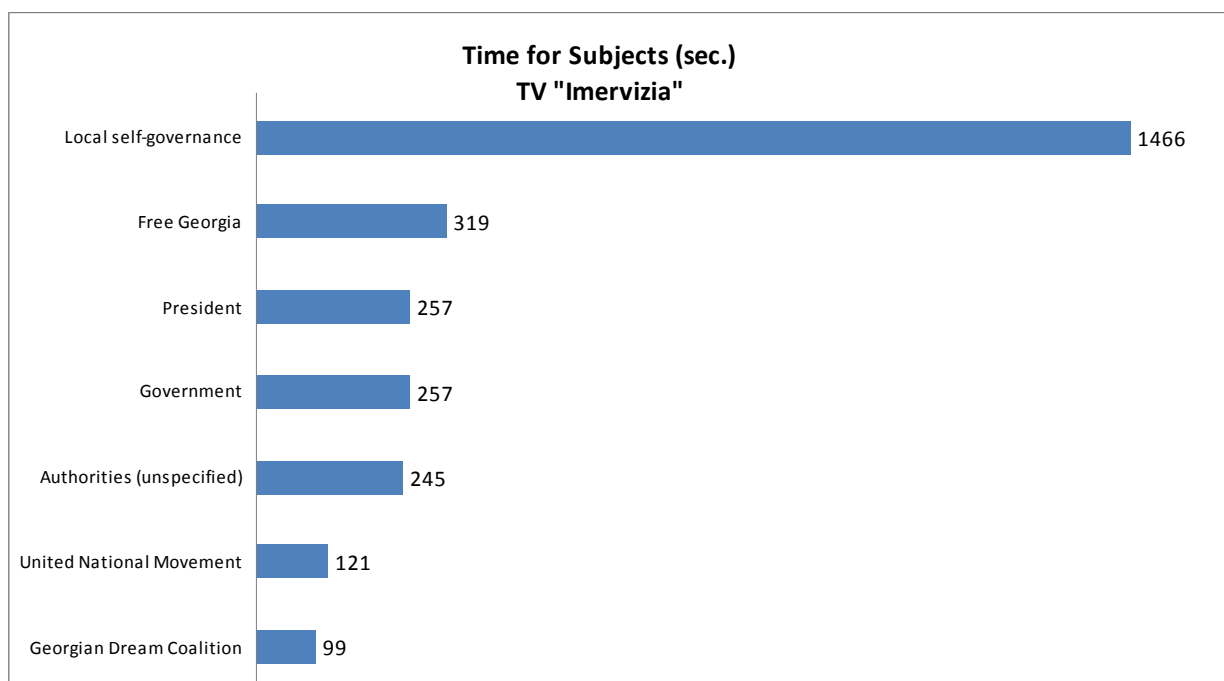
In the news programs indirect reporting prevailed over direct reporting:



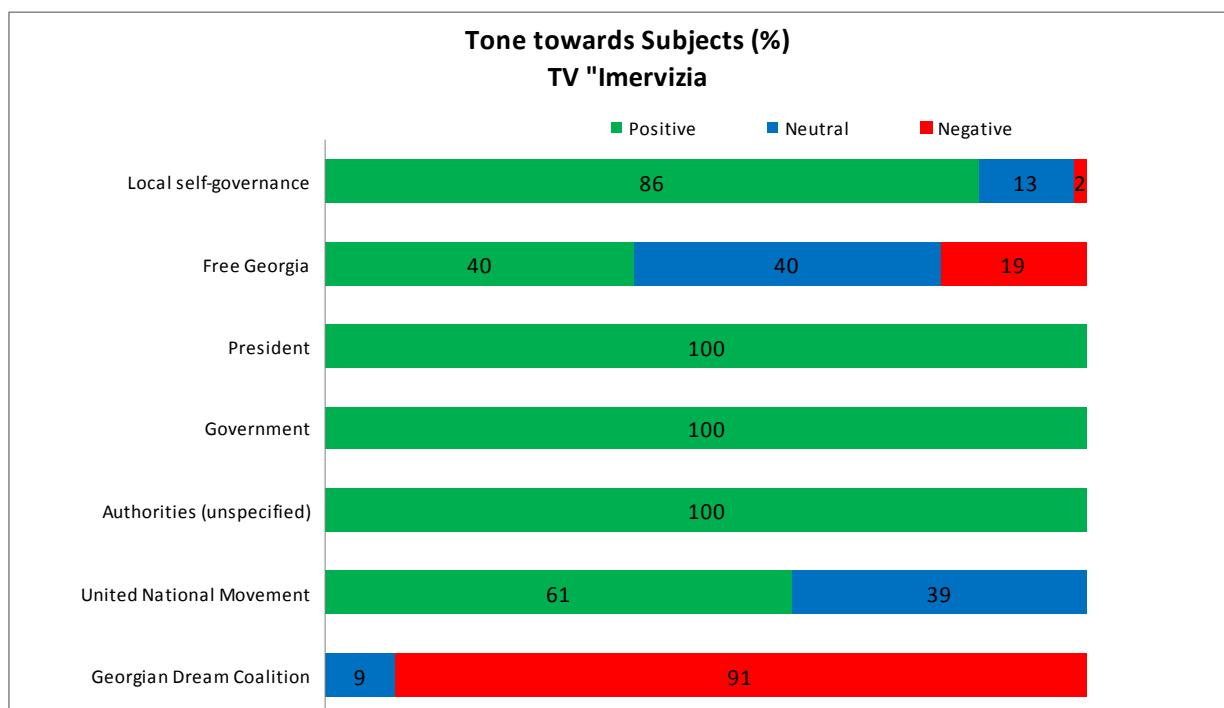
The TV company news programs mainly covered events ongoing in the region. During the reporting period (August 13-26) the channel covered pre-election campaign conducted by four political subjects including Georgian Dream coalition, UNM, News Rights and Free Georgia. It is noteworthy that the stories which feature the activities of the local self government tend to become more or less balanced.

Imervizia (Chiatura) – Out of the monitored subjects the most of airtime, 25 minutes, was dedicated to the local self government. The time dedicated to the rest of the subjects was much less: Free Georgia – 5 min, President, government and authorities in general – 4 minutes each.

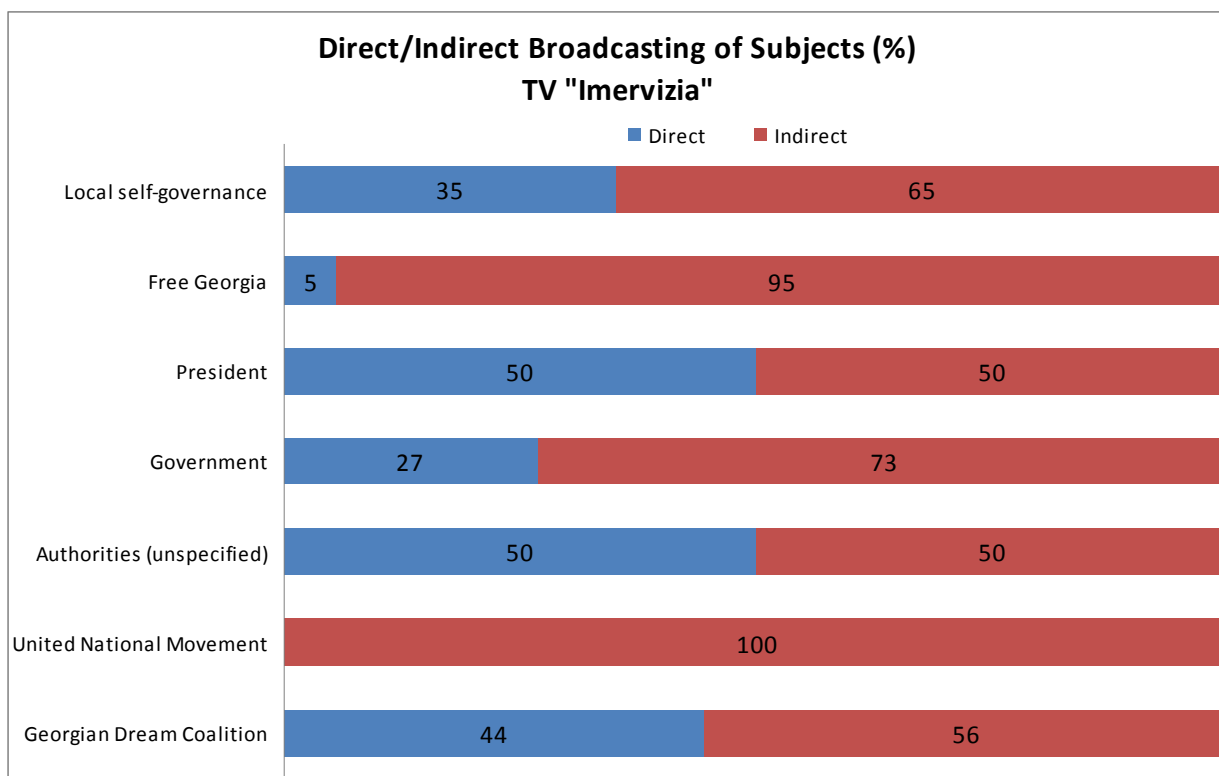
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Reporting on the local self government was mainly positive in tone (86 percent). Neutral (13 percent) and negative (2 percent) tones were observed too. Free Georgia too was covered in all three tones while in regard to President, government and authorities only positive tone was applied.

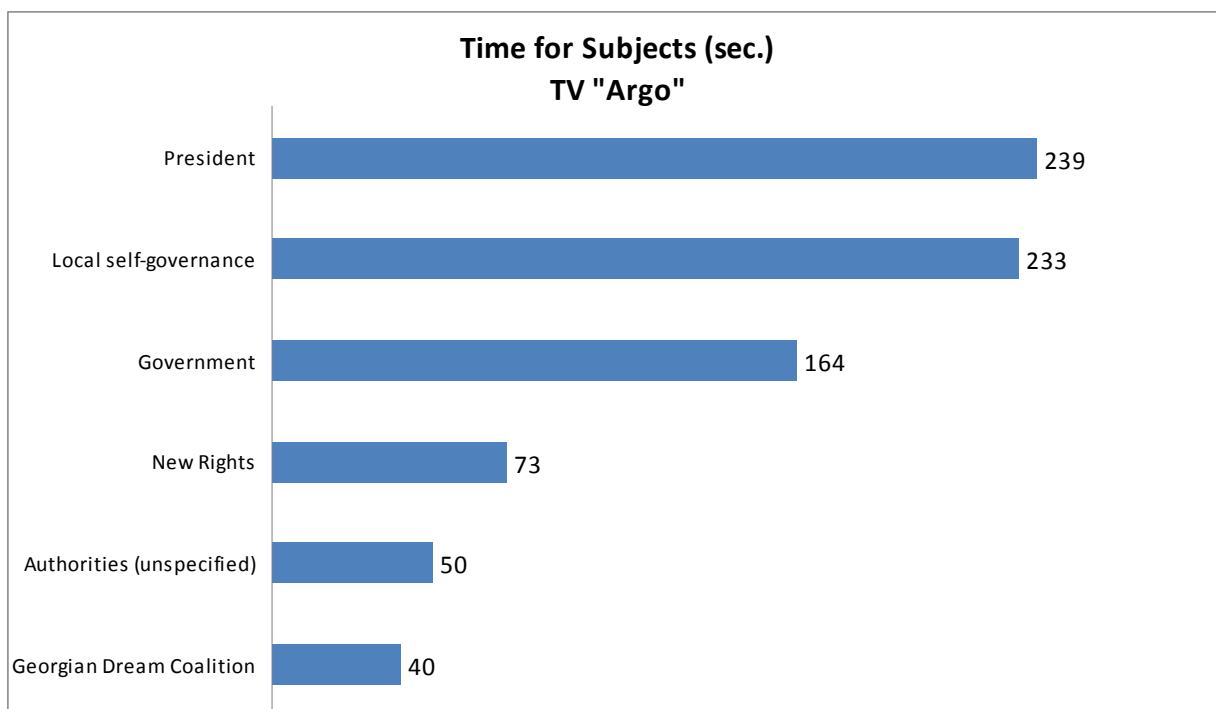


In the news programs indirect reporting prevailed. Direct and indirect reporting was equal in case of President only.

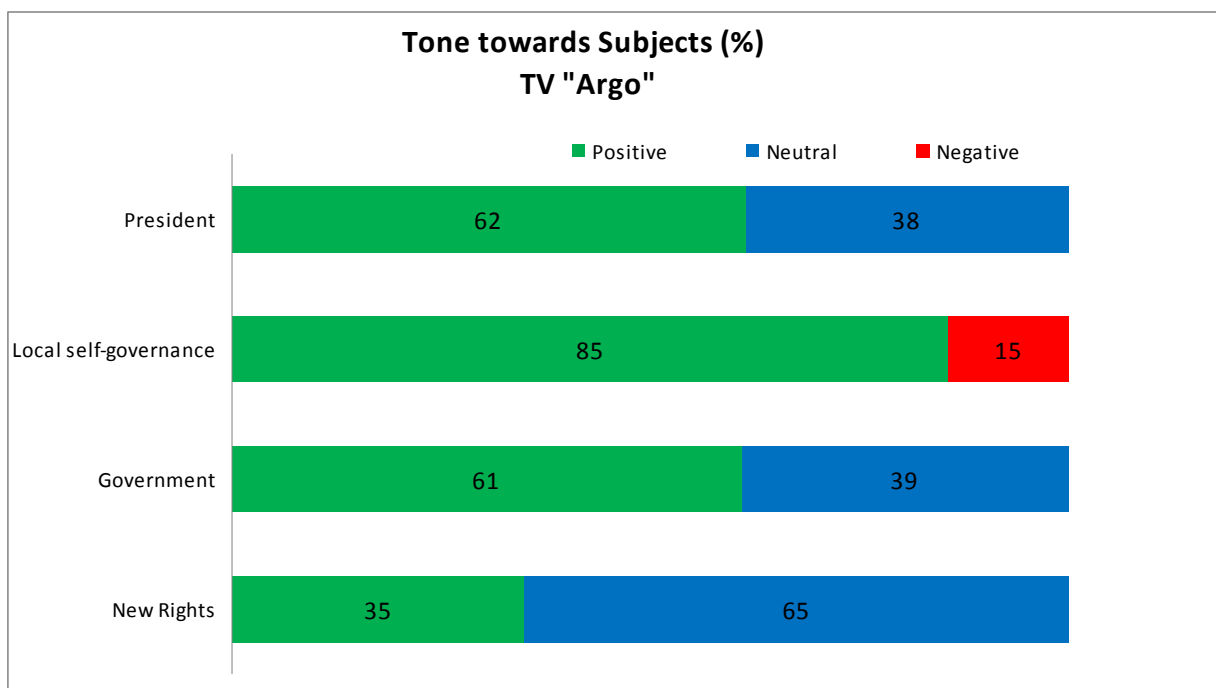


TV company Imervizia essentially covered events ongoing in the region. But the events were covered without offering viewers dissenting opinions. The stories lack balance and journalists' positive attitude to the authorities is evident. For instance when reporting on the local self government the journalist says: "The population will finally have its wish fulfilled." Journalists' stance (negative this time) to the Georgian Dream coalition is evident as well. "Who do you think is muddling up life?" the journalist asks a citizen.

Argo (Zestaponi) – The most of time in the news programs was dedicated to President, local self government (4 minutes each) and government (3 min).

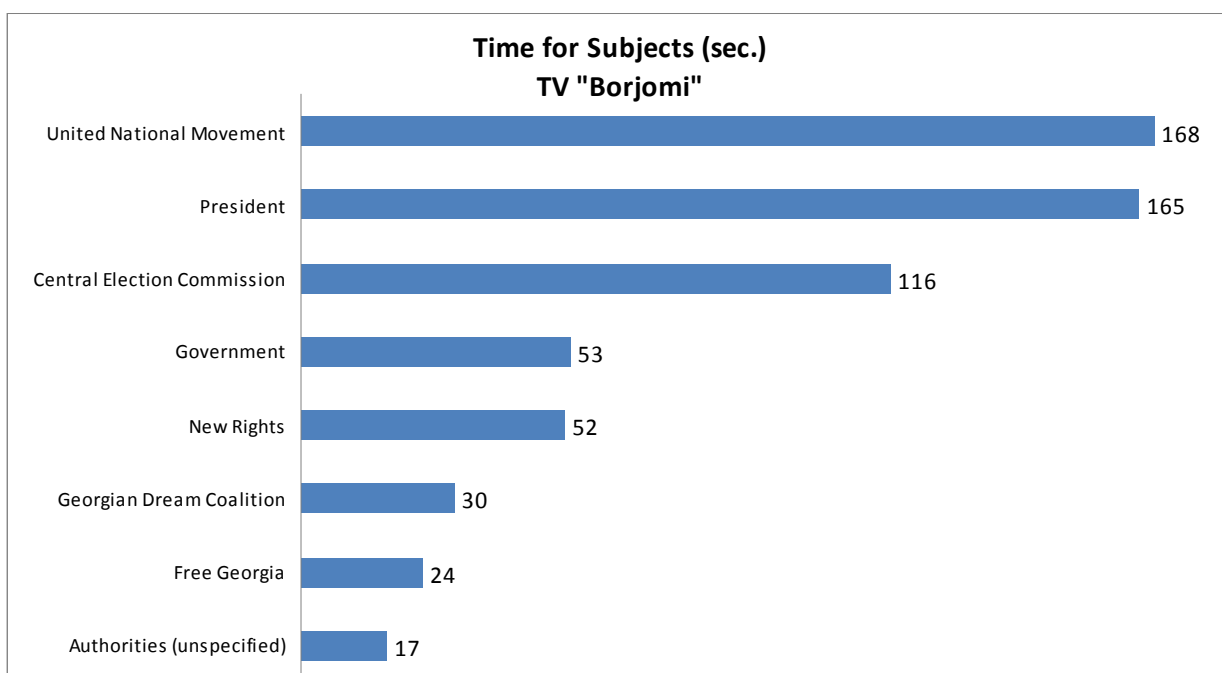


Subjects were mainly covered in positive and neutral tones. Positive (85 percent) and negative (15 percent) tones were observed in regard to the local self government. 100 percent of coverage was indirect, this is to say all of the monitored subjects were spoken about.



During the reporting period TV company Argo produced 5-minute news programs on a daily basis. But news programs did not provide regular coverage of monitored subjects. The news programs were essentially limited to covering social, cultural and economic issues ongoing in the region. The August 15 news programs, fully dedicated to President's meeting with the locals, is the one to note. The story was plainly positive in tone.

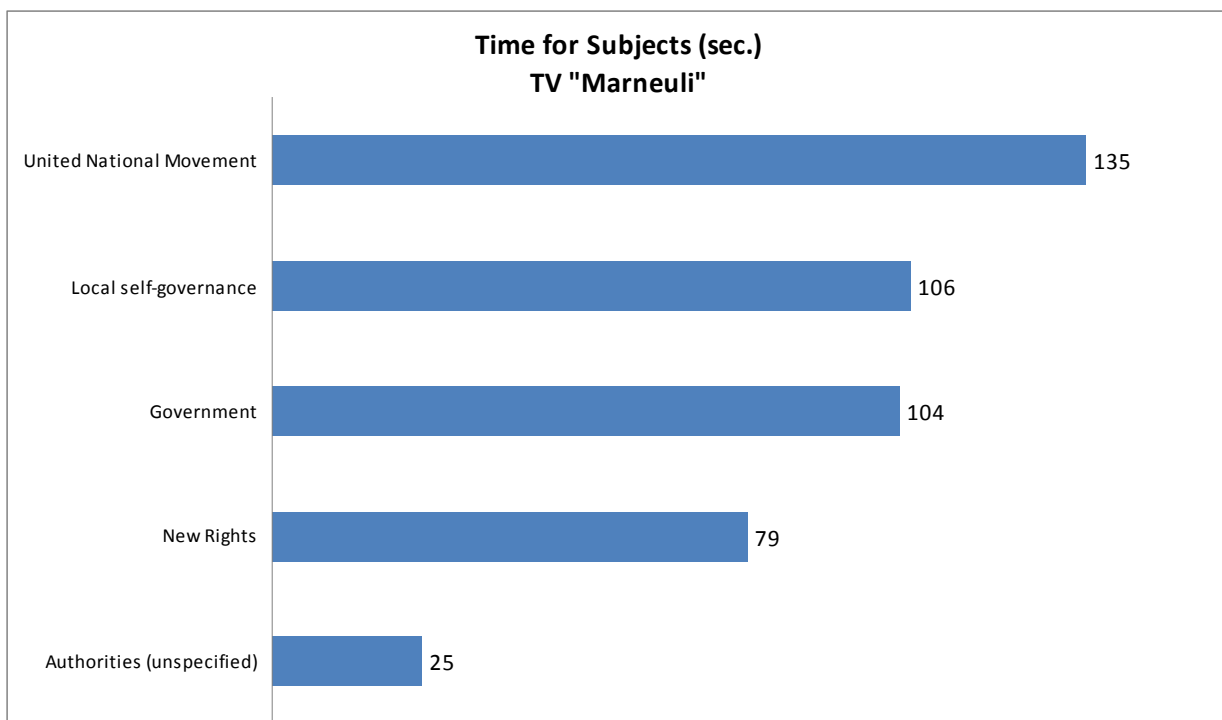
Borjomi (Borjomi) – Out of the monitored subjects 3 minutes were dedicated to UNM and President each , followed by CEC with 2 minutes.



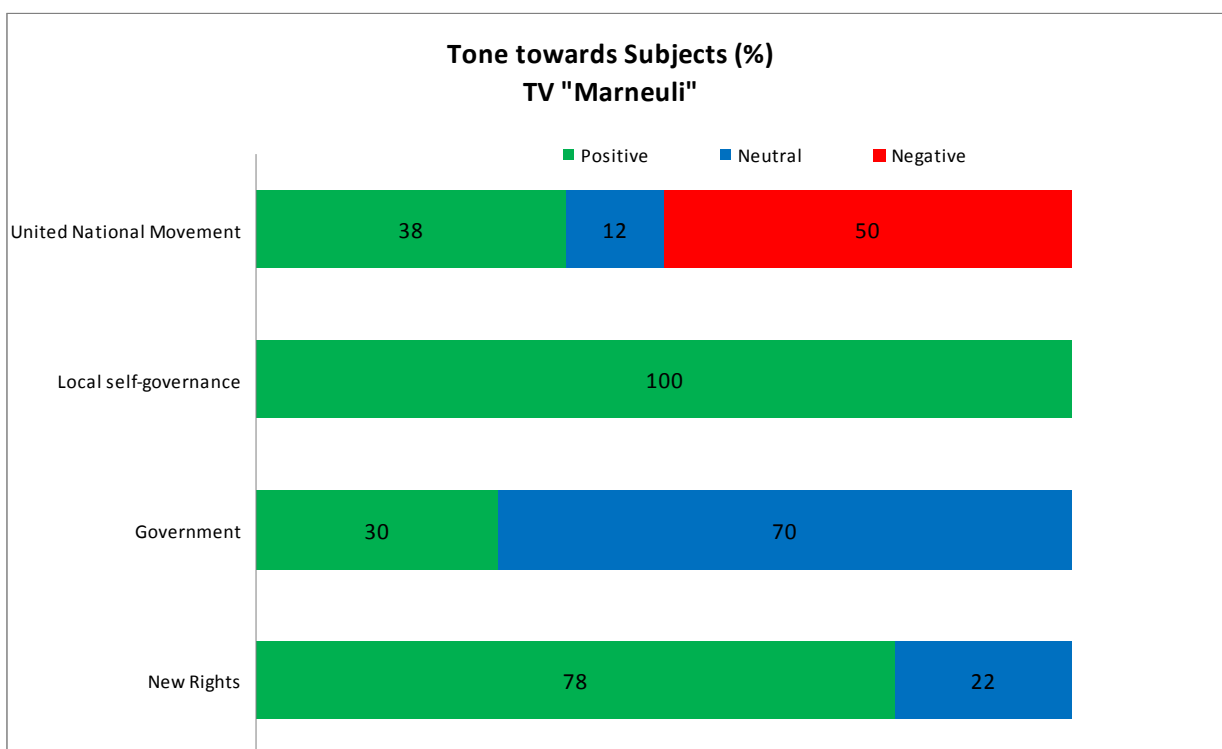
Reporting on the monitored subjects was positive and neutral in tone. Positive reporting always prevailed. Negative tone was attached to the reporting on President only. In case of UNM and President direct reporting prevailed over indirect. Due to little time dedicated to the monitored subjects qualitative analysis is impossible to provide.

Marneuli (Marneuli) – News programs dedicated approximately 2 minutes to UNM, local self government and government per each.

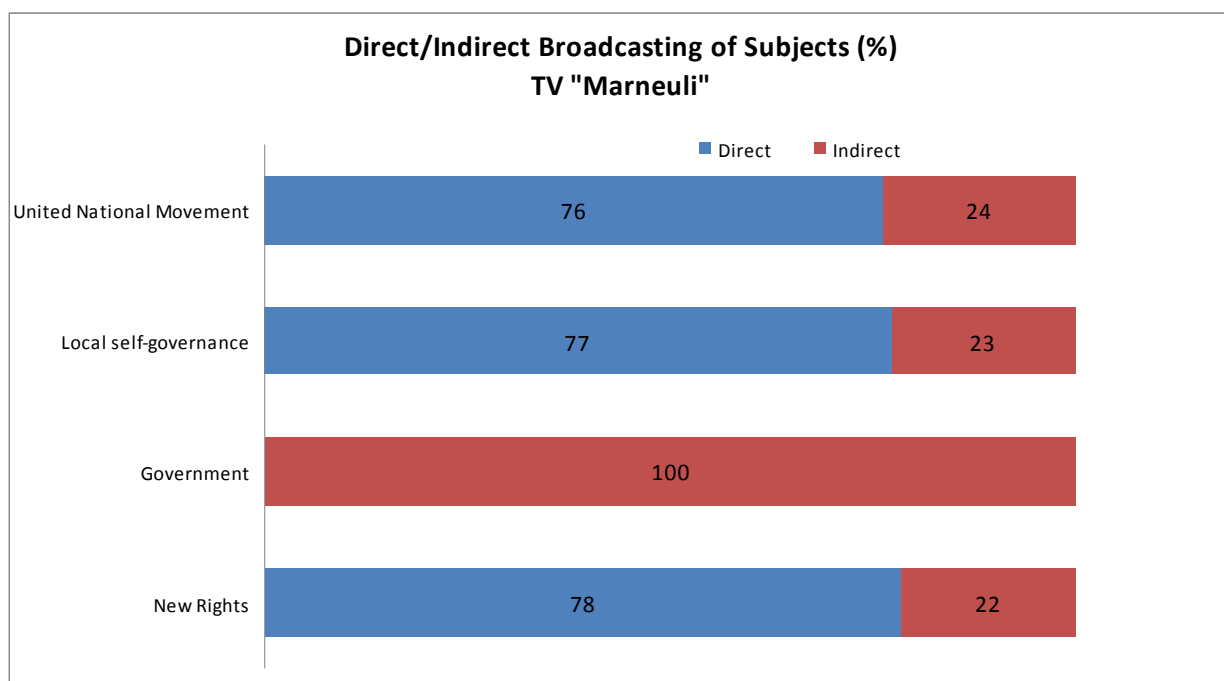
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Negative tone (50 percent) was observed in regard to UNM only.



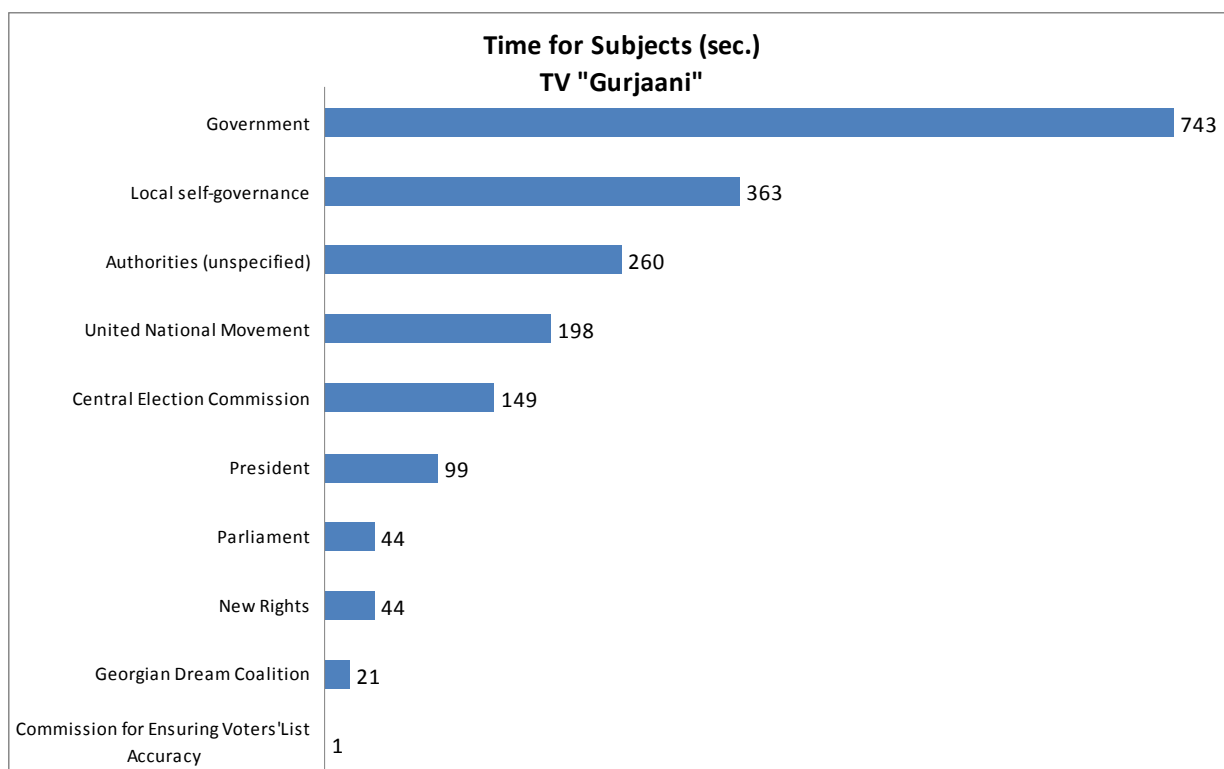
When providing the coverage of the monitored subjects (2-minute reporting) direct reporting prevailed over indirect:



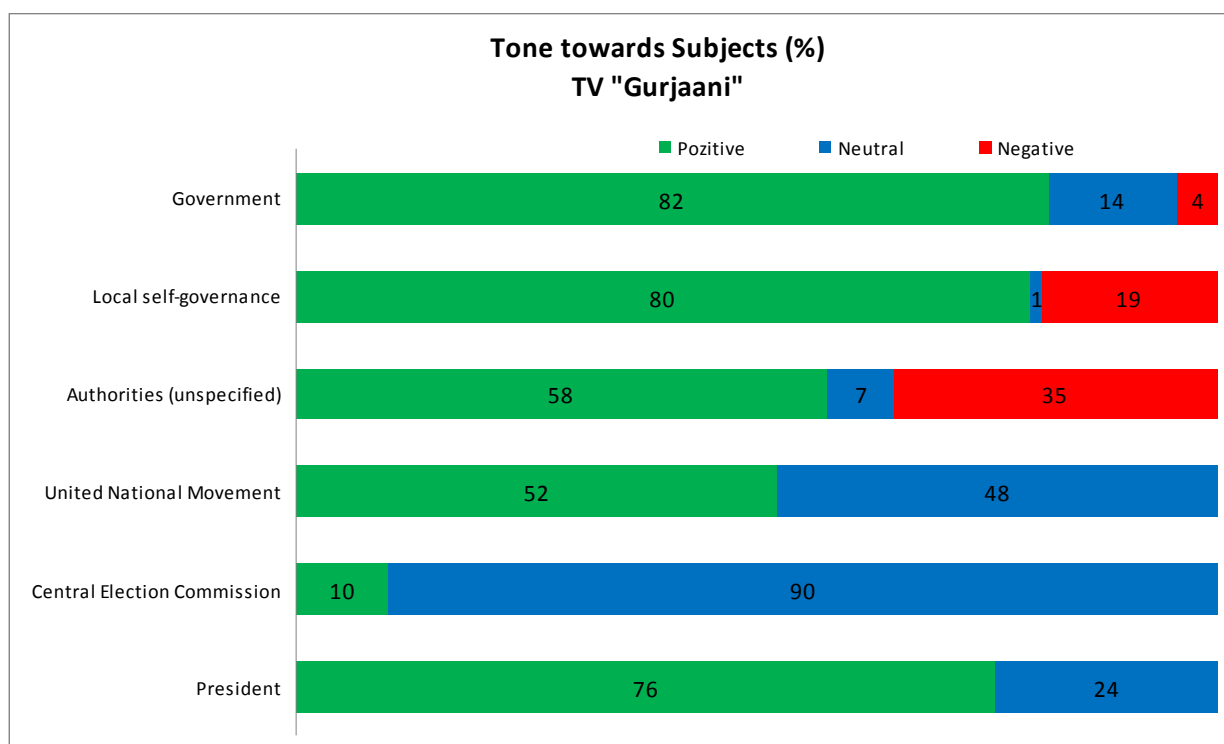
During the period of August 13-26, due to the staff holidays, the TV company did not work at full load. The running time of news programs was 6 minutes on average. Accordingly, monitored subjects were almost never covered. It is worth to note that the August 20 and August 24 news outlets aired the same story about the natural disaster in Marneuli. The story discussed the local self government's promises given to the locals.

Gurjaani (Gurjaani) - The most of airtime, 12 minutes, was dedicated to reporting on the government, followed by the local self government with 6 minutes, authorities – 4 minutes and UNM – 3 minutes.

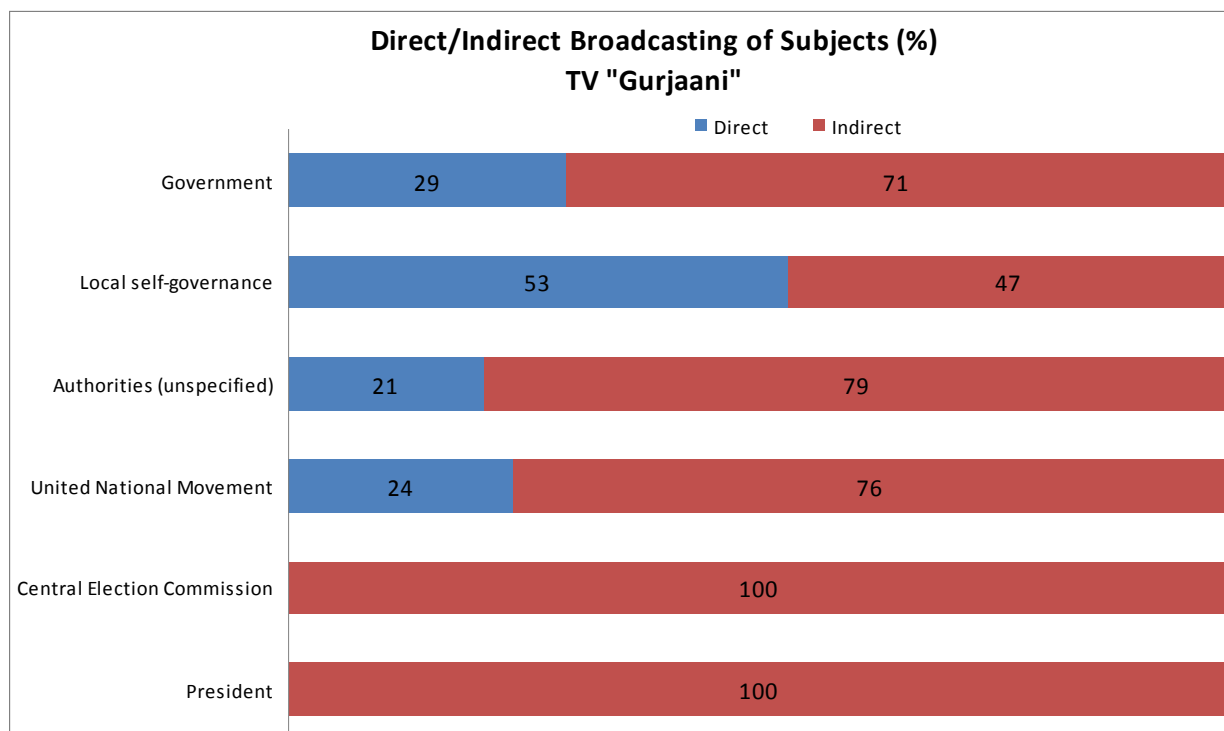
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High percentage of positive reporting was observed in regard to the monitored subjects: government – 82 percent, local self government – 80 percent, authorities – 58 percent. Positive (52 percent) and neutral (48 percent) tones were almost equal in UNM's case. The most negative tone was attached to the reporting on the authorities in general.

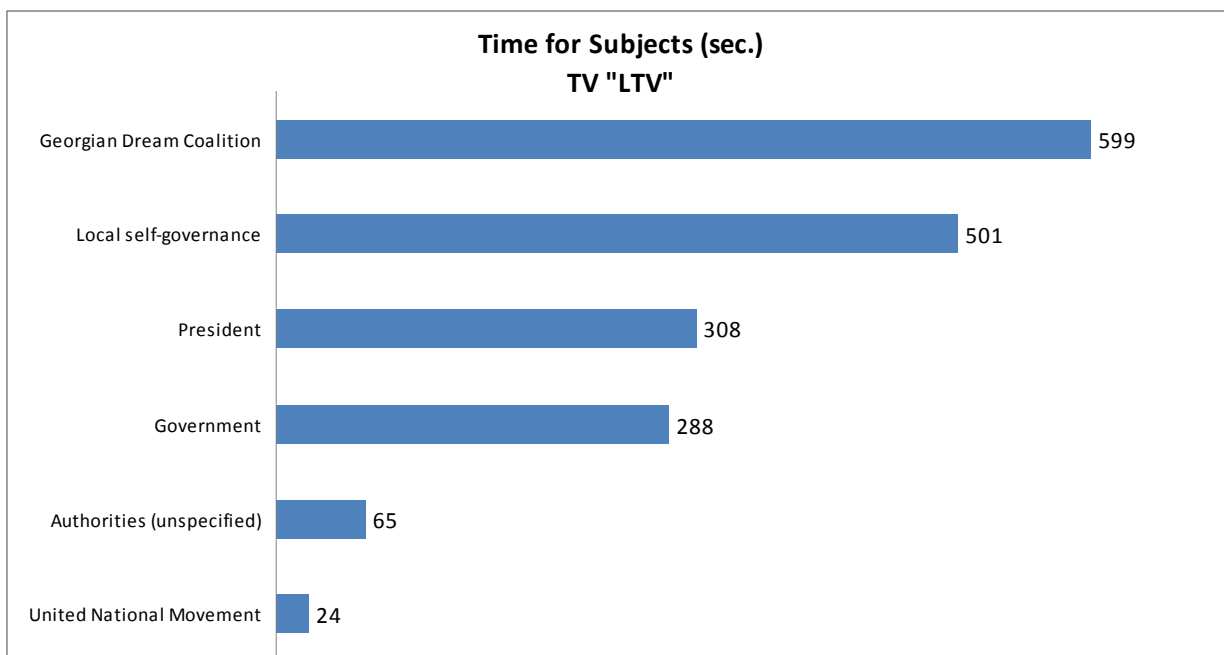


Within the reporting period indirect reporting prevailed. The ratio was almost equal when reporting on local self government – 53 percent direct and 47 percent indirect.

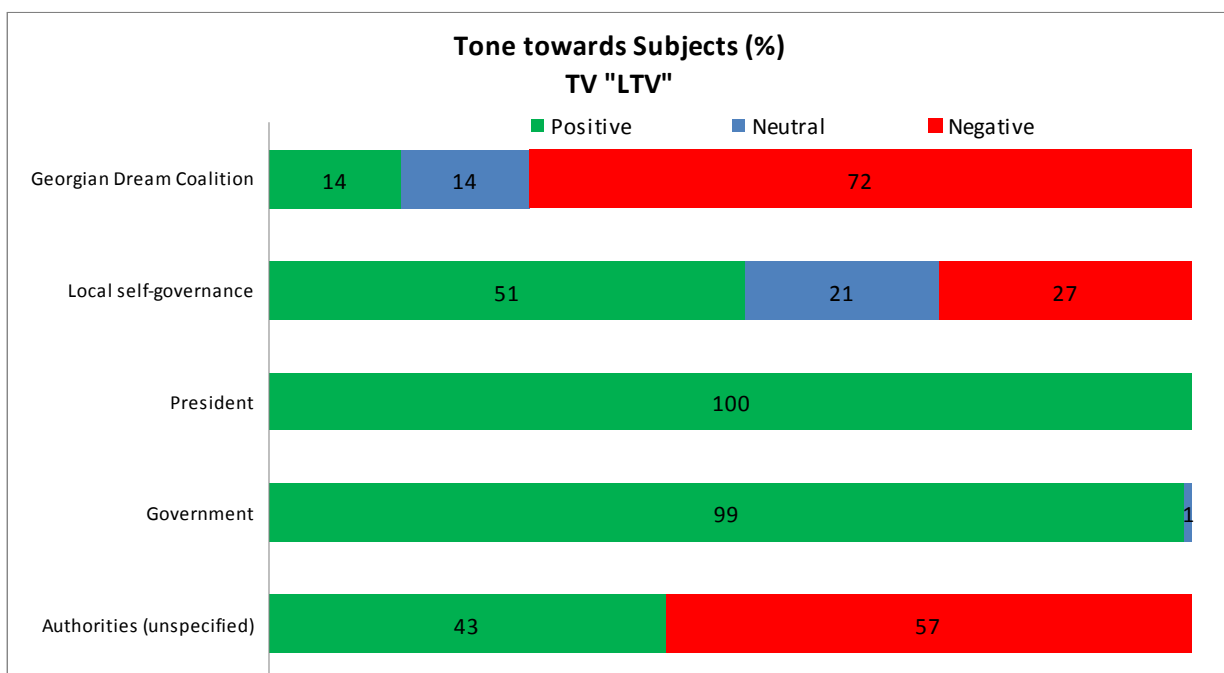


The TV company, following the natural disaster in the region, resumed broadcasting on August 15. But due to technical problems news programs were not aired on August 17, 20 and 22. According to the findings of the monitoring the news programs dedicated most of the airtime to the activities carried out by the authorities. Almost none of the rest of the monitored subjects was covered. The video footage featuring the meetings of the representatives of UNM (3 min), Georgian Dream coalition (21 seconds) and News Rights (44 seconds) with the locals and the nomination of majoritarian deputies of the region was shown.

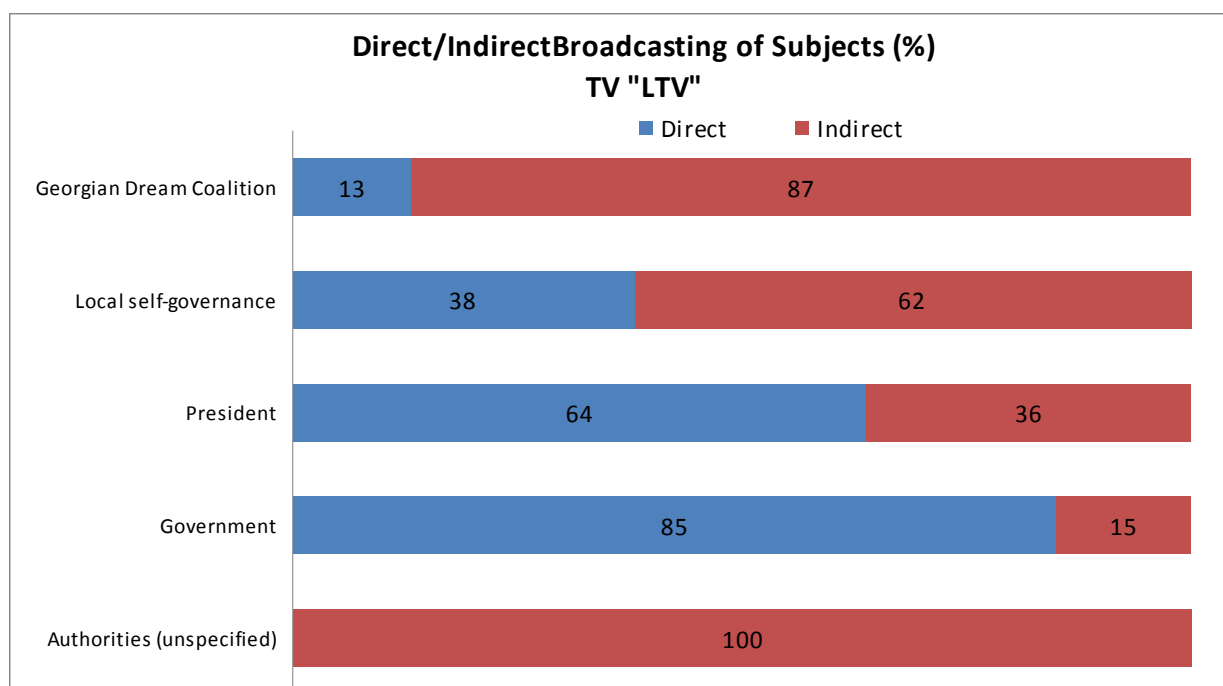
LTV (Lagodekhi) – The TV company dedicated most of airtime, 10 minutes, to the Georgian Dream coalition. The local self government and President enjoyed 8-minute and 5-minute coverage.



The most of the negative tone was attached to Georgian Dream coalition – 72 percent. Reporting on President was 100 percent positive in tone.



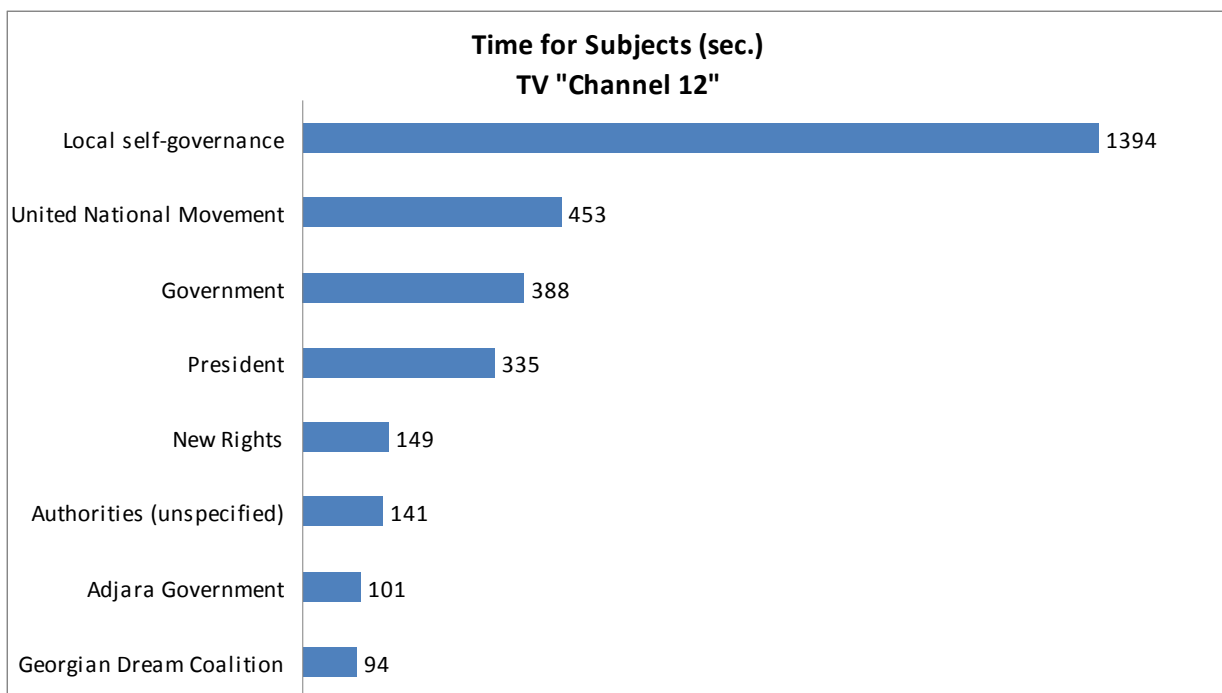
The highest index (87 percent) of indirect reporting falls on the Georgian Dream coalition. Indirect reporting prevailed in case of the local self government too (62 percent). Direct reporting prevailed over indirect reporting in President's case.



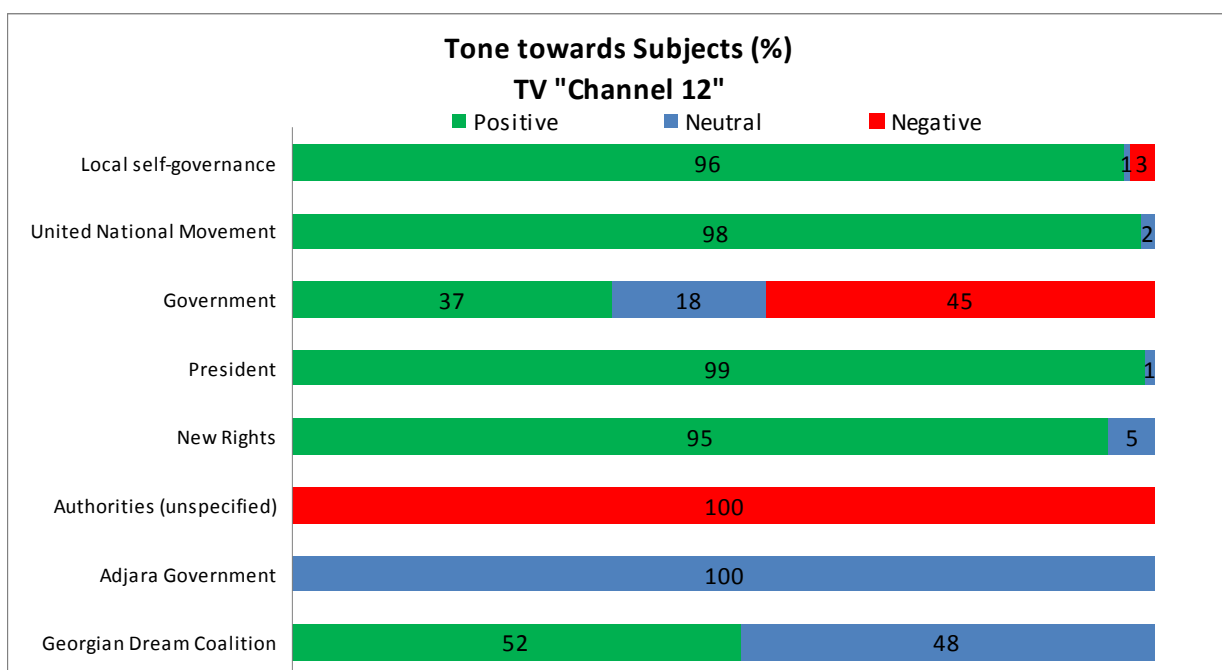
The TV company essentially covered local news. One of the TV stories, for instance, reports on the staff changes in the Georgian Dream coalition. It is noteworthy that journalists' negative attitude is evident in regard to the Georgian Dream coalition. In the aforementioned TV story journalist says: "Trust was won by Zugdidi dweller dreamer Leri Gelenava." The second story in the same story features the coalition member Luka Kurtanidze's meeting with the Afeni village dwellers. According to the journalist and local dwellers, people were deceived and brought to the meeting in this manner. The story shows the dialogue between Luka Kurtanidze and one of the villagers. The local, quarreling with Luka Kurtanidze, was dedicated about 3 minutes. The story does not include Luka Kurtanidze's conversation with locals. In the same story the journalist repeatedly mentions one of the coalition activists with his nickname Chechena. In the August 20 TV story, which features the damage inflicted by the natural disaster in several villages in Lagodekhi region, the journalist says: "The Georgian Dream coalition members haven't arrived in the village. Peasants were visited by the local self government representatives only."

12th Channel (Bolnisi) - During the reporting period the channel dedicated most of its airtime (23 min) to the local self government. In the news programs 8 minutes were dedicated to UNM, 6-6 minutes to government and President.

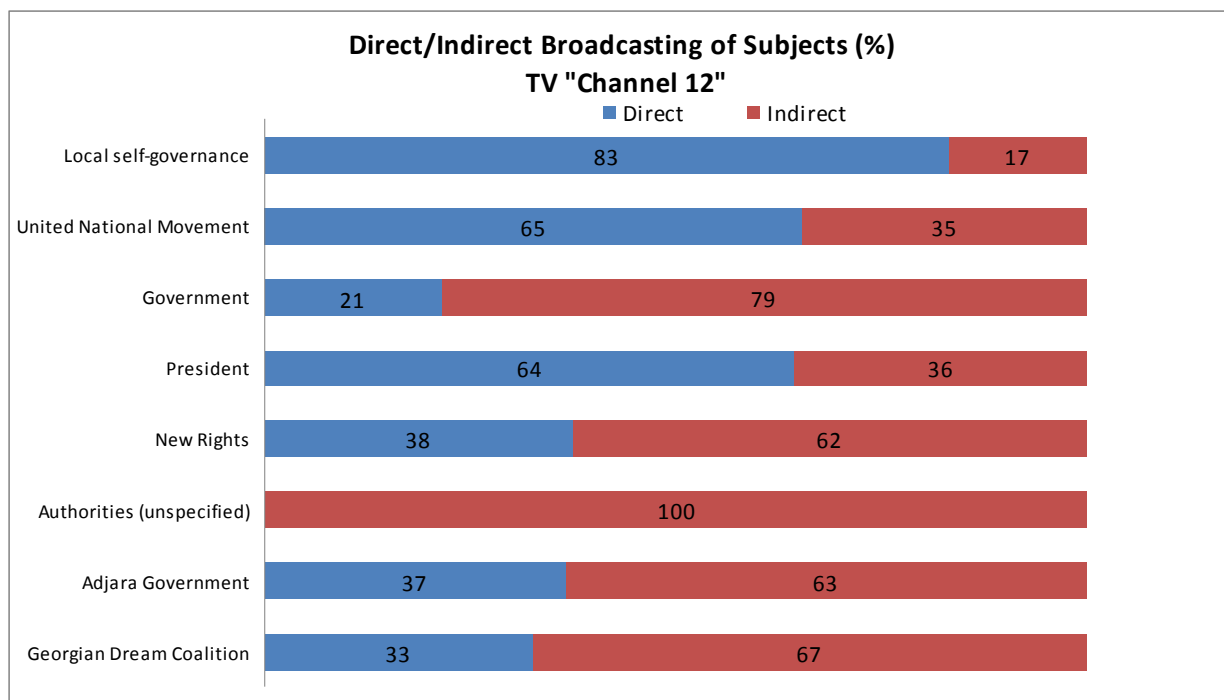
Monitoring of Media Content of Local/Regional Television Broadcasters



Reporting on the most covered subjects was mainly positive in tone. 45-percent positive tone was observed when reporting on the government.



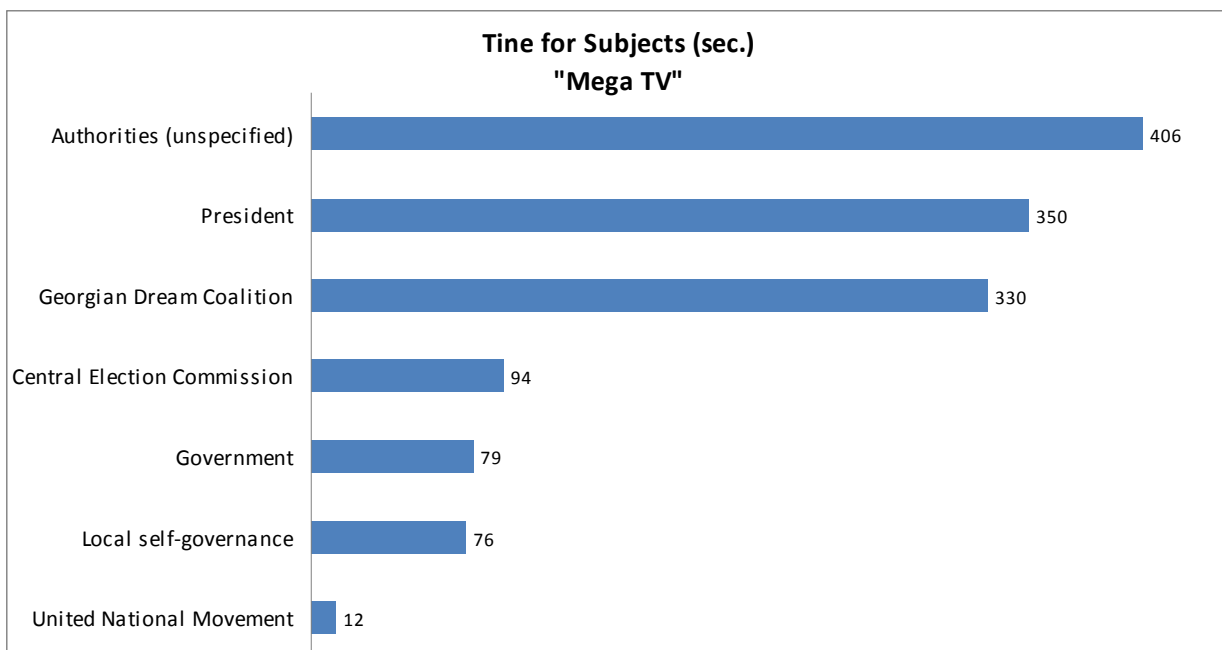
Direct reporting prevailed over indirect reporting. In case of the government high ratio - 79 percent - of indirect reporting was observed.



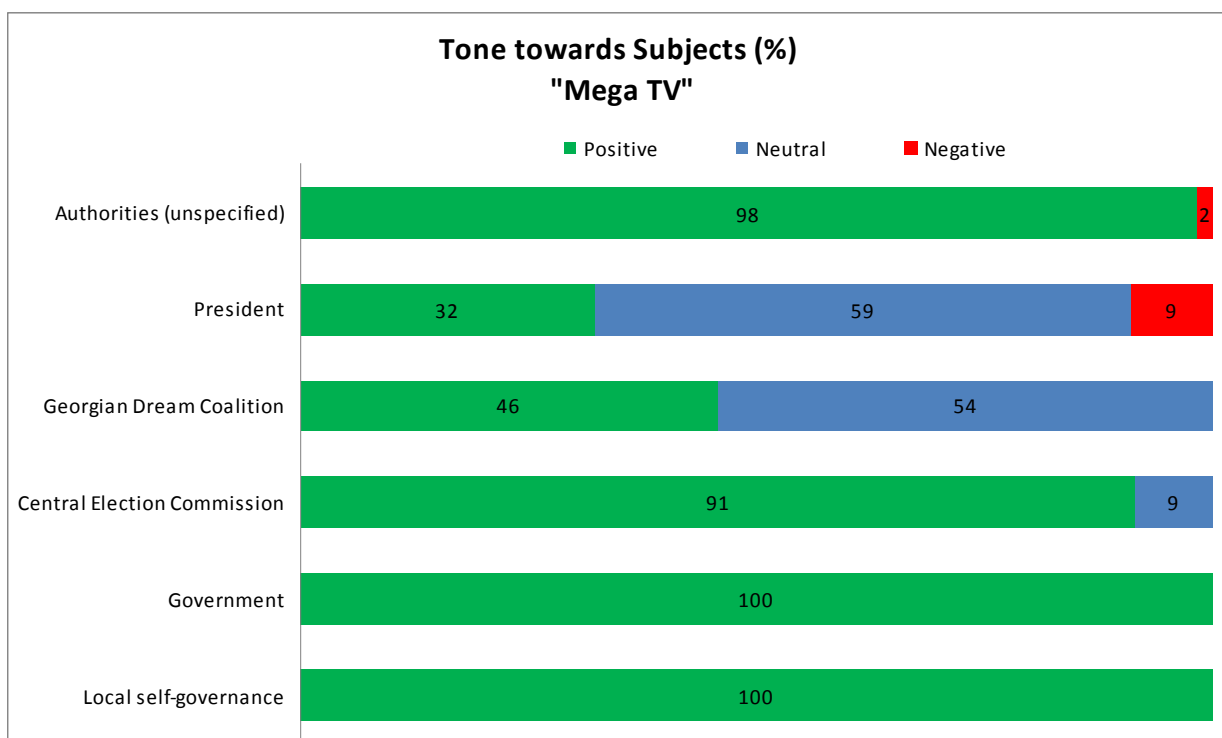
Within the reporting period the TV company mainly reported on the activities carried out by the local self government, authorities, UNM and President. Journalists' bias to the authorities is evident in the news. The first story in the August 15 news outlet, which features UNM's candidate Koba Nakopia's meeting with the population ends with the following text: "Meetings will be continued and a joint decision will be reached on the ways to tackle the problems." In the first story of the August 22 news program which covers the meeting with the management of the local self government the journalist says: "Gangebeli discussed the issues the population is most concerned into."

Mega TV (Khoni) – During the reporting period the most of airtime, 7 minutes, was dedicated to the authorities. President and the Georgian Dream coalition each enjoyed 6-minute coverage.

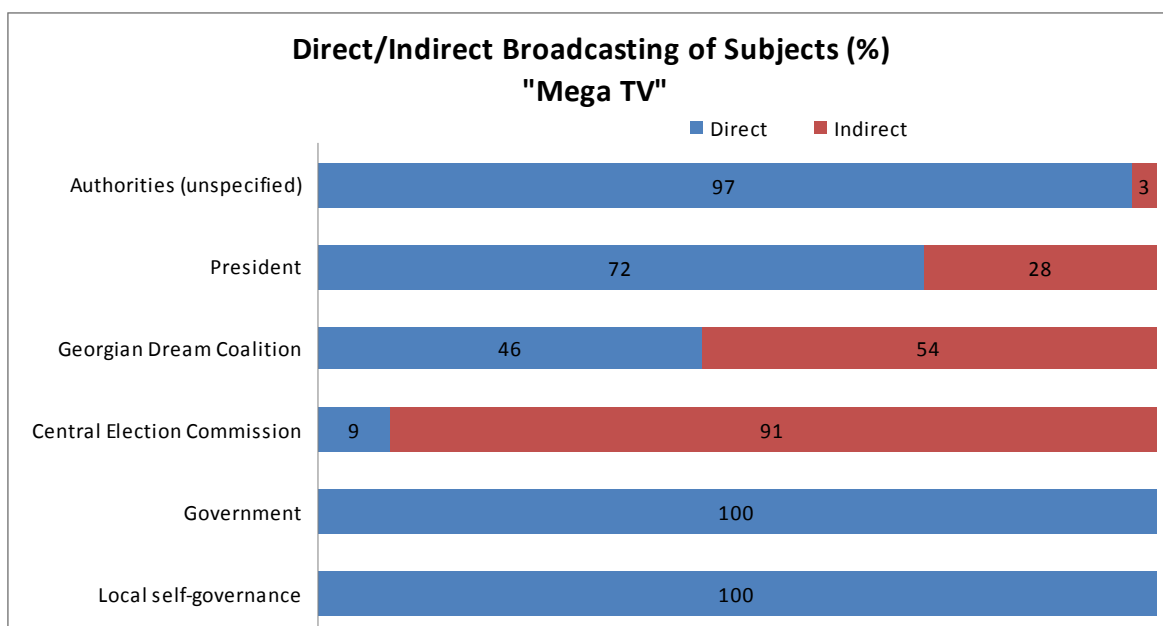
Monitoring of Media Content of Local/Regional Television Broadcasters



Reporting on the monitored subjects was mainly positive and neutral in tone. A minor ratio of negative tone was observed in regard to President (9 percent) and the authorities (2 percent).

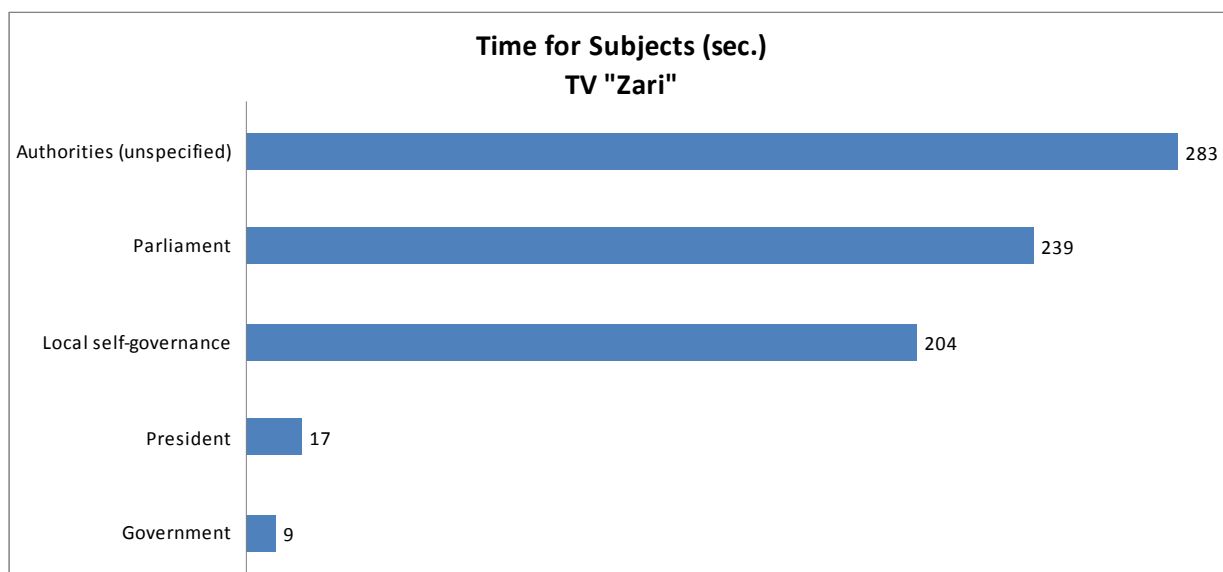


When covering President direct reporting prevailed over indirect reporting, and in case of the Georgian Dream coalition the ratio was almost equal.



Within the period of August 13-26 the TV company produced two news programs, limiting its reporting to the events ongoing in the region. The main topic in the news program included President's speech at the opening of the Canyon of Okatsi and the story about the Khoni majoritarian deputy nominated by the Georgian Dream coalition. It is noteworthy that the reporting tone was virtually never negative in regard to the monitored subjects. TV stories were produced about authorities as well as opposition parties but some of the stories lack balance and one-sided coverage is provided.

Zari (Samtredia) – Out of the monitored subjects 5 minutes were dedicated to the authorities in general, 4 minutes to Parliament, 3 minutes to the local self government. Reporting on the aforementioned subjects was positive in tone.



During the reporting period scarce amount of material was accumulated, hence qualitative analysis is impossible to provide. The activities carried out by State structures were solely covered. Journalists' subjective attitude was evident in the TV stories. During the meeting held between the authorities and the population the journalist says the representatives of the authorities were flooded with the demonstration of gratitude.

Activities to be carried out:

Within the period of August 27 – September 2 the fifth phase of monitoring of regional broadcasters will be carried out.



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