



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



# GEORGIA MEDIA CONSUMPTION SURVEY

CRRC-Georgia

# Georgia Media Consumption Survey 2024

December 2024

Research conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Center – Georgia for the USAID Media Program.

## AUTHORS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study was conducted by CRRC - Georgia Researchers Makhare Atchaidze and Zachary Fabos, with contributions from the CRRC – Georgia team.

Additional contributions by Zurab Nabatkhteveli, Dianne Janes, Davit Grdzlishvili, Mark Skogen, Simon Mairson and Nic Newman.

## DISCLAIMER

This study is made possible by the generous support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this study are the sole responsibility of IREX and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Key Findings.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Media consumption in Georgia.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Issues affecting media.....	10
News and Information Consumption Habits .....	14
What are people watching?.....	16
News avoidance .....	17
Television Viewership.....	19
Regional TV .....	22
Internet and Social Media Use .....	23
Most used platforms.....	25
How people use social media and messaging apps .....	27
Online News Media Engagement.....	30
Radio Engagement .....	33
YouTube Engagement.....	34
Podcast Engagement.....	37
Streaming Services and Subscription-Based Platforms.....	39
<b>Trust in Media.....</b>	<b>41</b>
Trust in Television .....	42
Trust in Social Media .....	43
Trust in Online News Media .....	45
Trust vs Frequency of Use.....	46
<b>Public Perceptions of News Media.....</b>	<b>48</b>
Manipulative Information and Media Literacy.....	49
Public Perceptions of the ‘Foreign Influence Law’ .....	56
<b>EU Membership views relative to media habits.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Annexes .....</b>	<b>59</b>
Annex I: Research Methodology .....	59
Annex item II: Works Cited .....	63

## STUDY DESIGN

### Desk Research

An analysis of the current context and existing research on the media landscape of Georgia, along with international studies on media trends.

### Focus Groups

Two focus group discussions with participants from Tbilisi, and 7 additional focus groups in the regions, with a total of 72 participants providing insights into their views on media and issues affecting the sector. Participants were Georgian media consumers drawn from across age and gender demographics representing the general public.

### National Survey Data Collection

A nationwide survey conducting 2,421 face-to-face interviews in every region of Georgia, excluding occupied territories, asking questions about media consumption habits, trust in media, and knowledge of topical issues. The interview languages were Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani. Ethnic Armenian and Azerbaijanis were oversampled in order to provide a large enough sample size for comparative analysis. Election precincts were used as the primary sampling unit to accurately reflect the country's current demographic composition.

### Key Informant Interviews

A broad spectrum of media professionals, from both broadcast and online media, provided insight into the operating context and trends in media along with issues affecting the sector. Fifteen interviews were conducted.

The survey was conducted between July and September, 2024. A full breakdown of demographics and methodology is available in Annex 1.

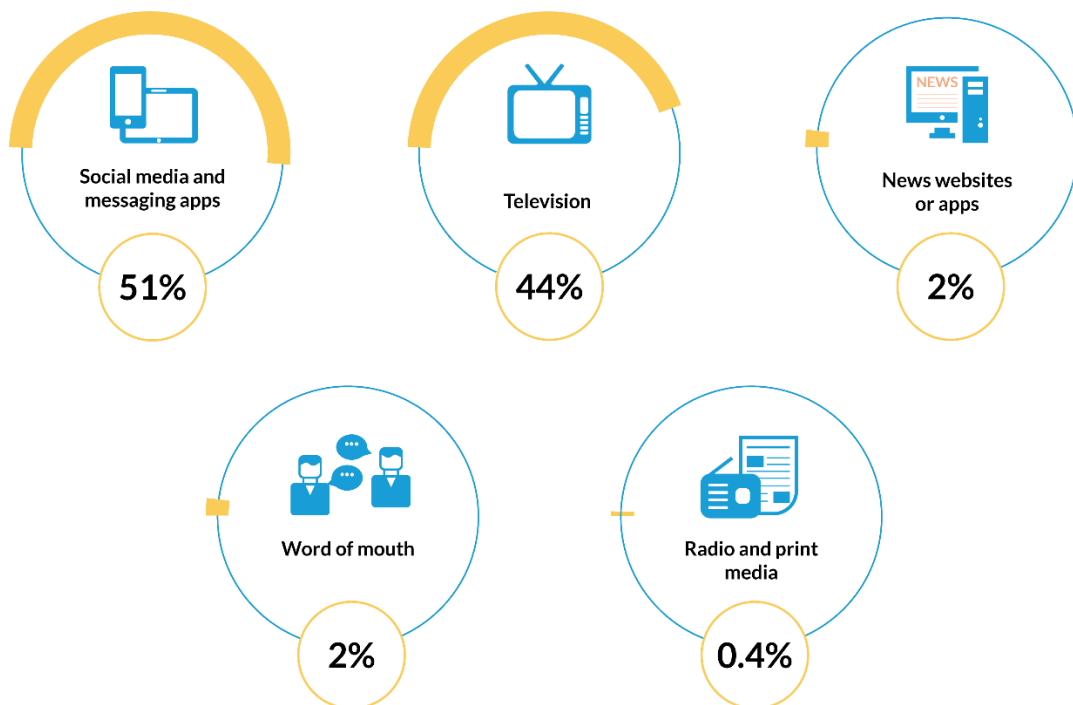
## KEY FINDINGS

### Media consumption

- In Georgia, online platforms have surpassed television as the primary source of news, with 51% of people using social media and messaging apps, while only 44% choose television.

#### Main source of news:

#### MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS



- TV is the main source of news for older age groups (77% of those over 55). Younger people are much more likely to get news from social media or messaging apps; 82% of 18-34 year-olds cited social media or messaging apps as their main source of news in contrast to only 20% of those over the age of 55. This may include news from television channels or online media outlets via their social media pages.
- 27% of people now watch TV via streaming on a device, and 14% of people say they don't watch TV at all.

- The majority of Georgia's population is dependent on news from increasingly politically polarized television sources, as television news remains a widely consumed form of news in Georgia. Sixty-three percent of the public watches news coverage each week on pro-government, Imedi TV. On the other hand, opposition-aligned Mtavari Arkhi reaches 47% of television viewers.
- Results from survey and focus groups confirm that the shift to digital in Georgia is well underway. Much of the Georgian public have turned to social media as their main source of news, on platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and rapidly rising in popularity, TikTok. Social media is used for news by over half (51%) of respondents as their primary source for news and information, with Facebook (88%) and YouTube (56%) the most popular.

**A majority (60%) of the public said they had watched a video on YouTube within the past 30 days, with a preference for films or TV shows, entertainment or celebrity news, sports, education, and music ahead of news content.**

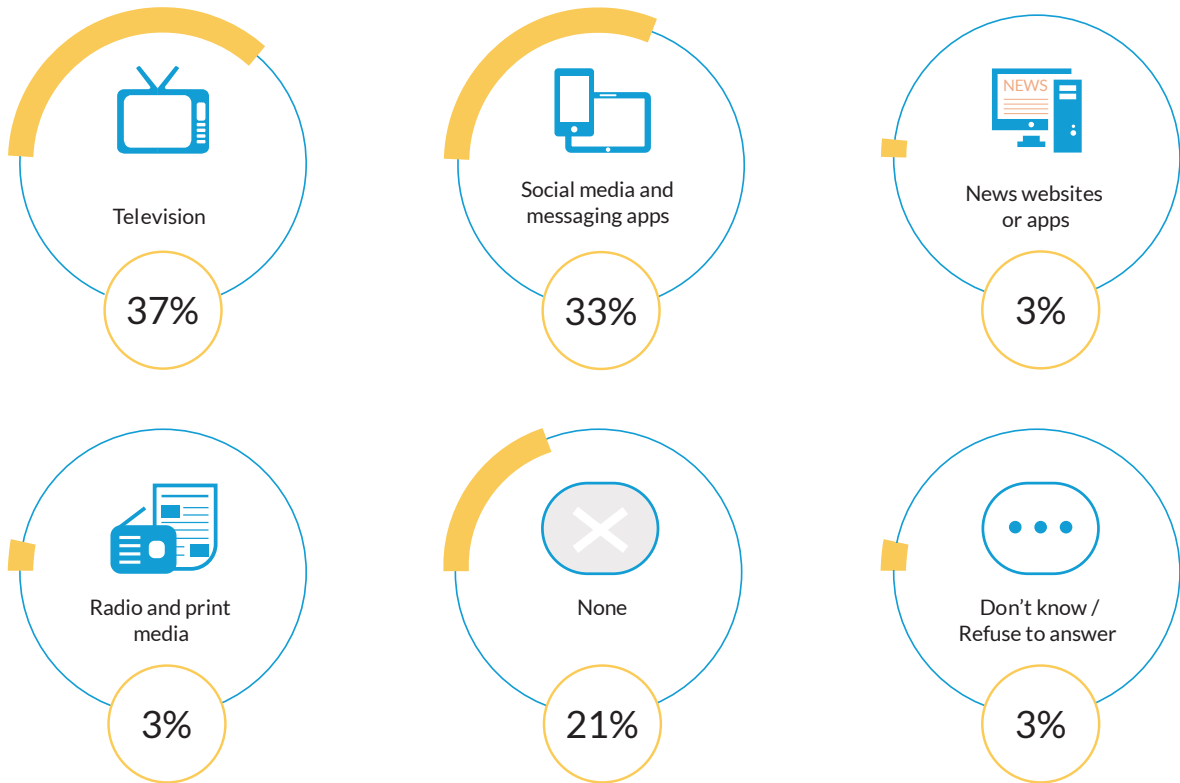


- While YouTube users said most (77%) of the content they consume is in Georgian, they reported viewing English and Russian content, as well. Among 18-34 year-olds, 28% reported watching videos in English, the most commonly used second language for this group. For 27% of 35-54 year-olds, Russian is preferred, and 45% of those 55+ engage with Russian language content on YouTube most frequently.
- Among users of online media news sources, most popular outlets include Ambebi.ge, used by 29% of people, Palitraneews.ge at 17%, Imedinews.ge, 16%, Mtis Ambebi, 15%, and Primetime.ge, 14%.

## Trust

- 21% of people do not trust media from any source, and only 13% of young people (18-34) trust television.

### *Most trustworthy source*



- 12% of respondents believe journalists and the media are a source of false news and information.
- There is a generational divide in media consumption and trust. 61% of people aged 55+ say they do trust television news. On the other hand, 57% of 18-34 year-olds trust social media most, compared to only 14% of those 55+. In other words, the youngest and oldest age brackets have opposite levels of trust when it comes to television and social media.
- Television broadcast output is believed by respondents to be deeply polarized according to survey results and qualitative data. TV stations are mainly privately owned with links to leading politicians and parties. Overall, 32% agree that undue political influence over the media has increased over the last five years.
- Many in focus groups voiced a sense of fatigue around what they believe to be an increasingly polarized and politicized media environment.

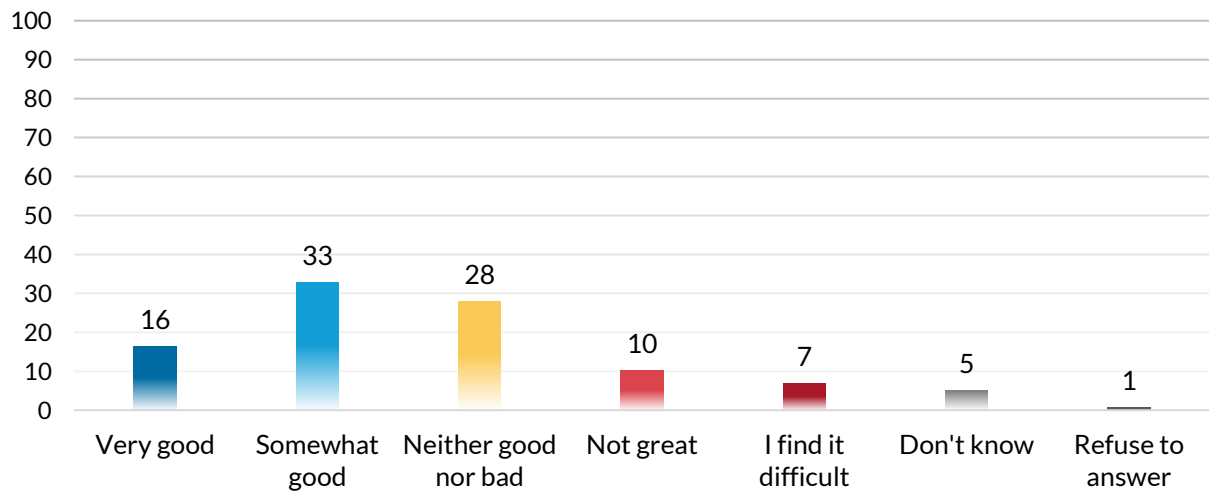
## Manipulative information and media literacy

- There are high levels of concern about misinformation (69%). A portion of the public states that most false information addresses political subjects (31%), followed by news about celebrities (20%), then international politics (18%), and the war in Ukraine (7%).
- Domestic politics is most frequently cited, at 31%, as a topic promoting false information. Nearly half (49%) indicated that politics is the news topic they avoid most.
- Only 5% of the public believe the Russian government and pro-Russian groups are responsible for spreading false information and proliferating of fake news on the internet.
- Only 7% of the population admitted they find it difficult to distinguish disinformation from credible, fact-based information. In contrast, nearly half (49%) of the public believes they are “very good” to “somewhat good” at distinguishing fake information from factual information online.



**The Georgian government (26%) is cited as being most responsible for spreading false information online, followed by scammers (17%), opposition parties (12%), and journalists (12%).**

*How would you rate your ability to distinguish disinformation from credible, fact-based information? (%)*





### Media's role in informing the Georgian public

The study examined public awareness of basic facts around important political or economic stories that affect the lives of the Georgian public.

- In testing factual knowledge about important subjects such as Georgia's membership in the EU and the right to work in the EU, a significant proportion (27% and 44% respectively) provided wrong answers, suggesting that accurate information about the EU accession process is not reaching a wide enough audience.
- There was no significant correlation between people's views on EU membership or the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence and their media consumption habits, despite Georgia's polarized television viewing environment.
- There was a higher level of support for Georgia's EU membership aspirations (73-82%) from viewers of the six main television channels (Imedi TV, Rustavi 2, Georgian Public Broadcaster, Mtavari Arkhi TV, TV Pirveli and Formula TV) than from the general public as a whole, with 70% indicating support for Georgia to join the EU.
- 39% of people didn't know what effect the new Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence might have on media freedom and democracy in Georgia, and 15% believed it would have no effect. Of those expressing concern about the law's impact on media, the most common concern (14%) was that media coverage would get worse if the law is enforced. 6% believe the law would threaten Georgia's democracy.

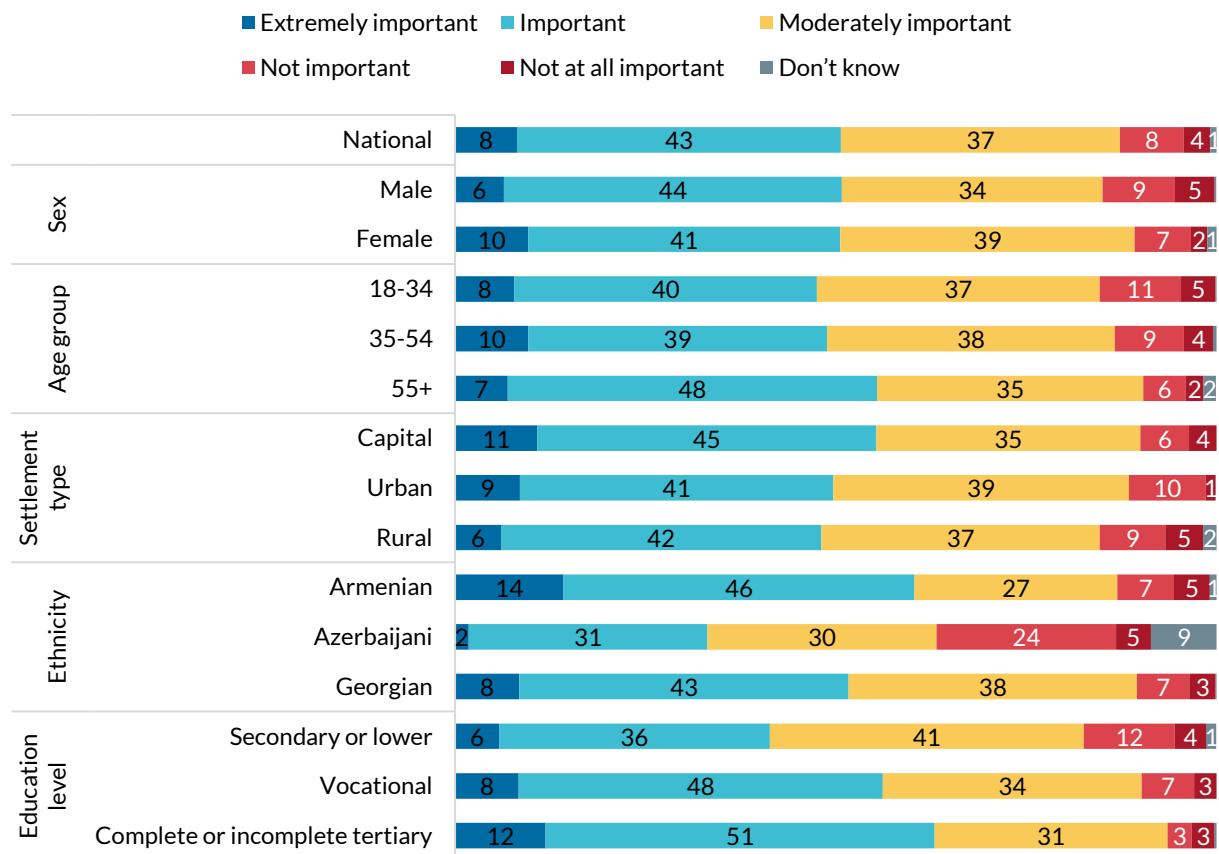
## MEDIA CONSUMPTION IN GEORGIA

### Issues affecting media

A total of 88% of Georgia's population considers keeping up with news and information to be important, with similar trends observed across age groups, genders, and levels of education. In contrast, only 63% of ethnic Azerbaijanis regard this as important.

The frequency of news consumption among the population of Georgia reveals that 75% report consuming news every day or several times a day. An age-based analysis indicates that individuals aged 55 and older demonstrate a higher interest in staying informed, with 85% of this group accessing news at least once a day.

*How important is it to you personally to keep up with news and information? (%)*



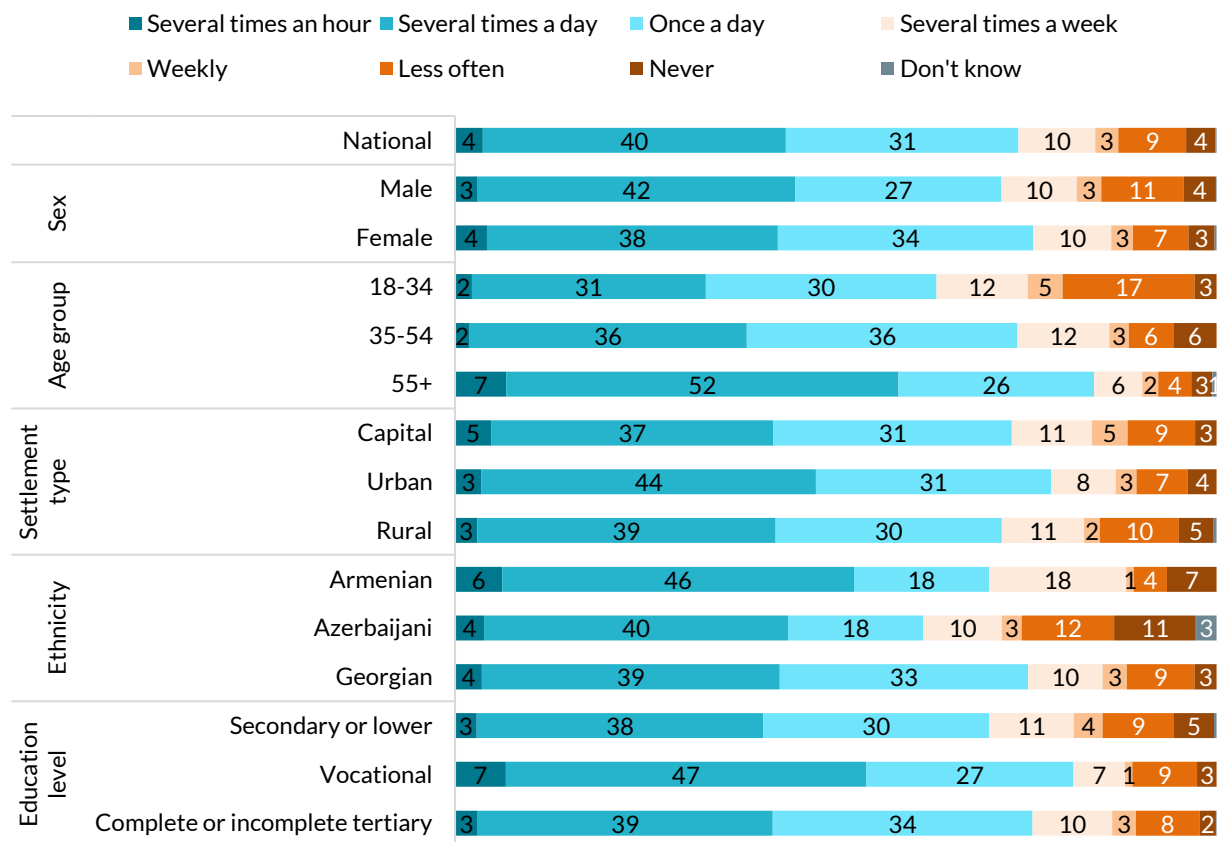
According to focus group participants across Georgia, engaging with news media is a priority. Generally, focus group participants described their news consumption habits as a civic responsibility;

*"We are involved in politics in Georgia. In many countries, for example, they do not know who a minister is, they may not know the name of the president, and they do not care about living in an organized country. Here everyone is in anticipation and eager to turn on the TV and watch."* (Male, 65, Zugdidi)

However, feelings were mixed, as some described actively pursuing news content, while others could not avoid it;

*"Whether I want it or not, everywhere I turn, there is news about politics or current events, so it appears that everyone is interested in and exposed to it."* (Female, 49, Telavi)

#### How often do you watch, read, or hear the news? (%)

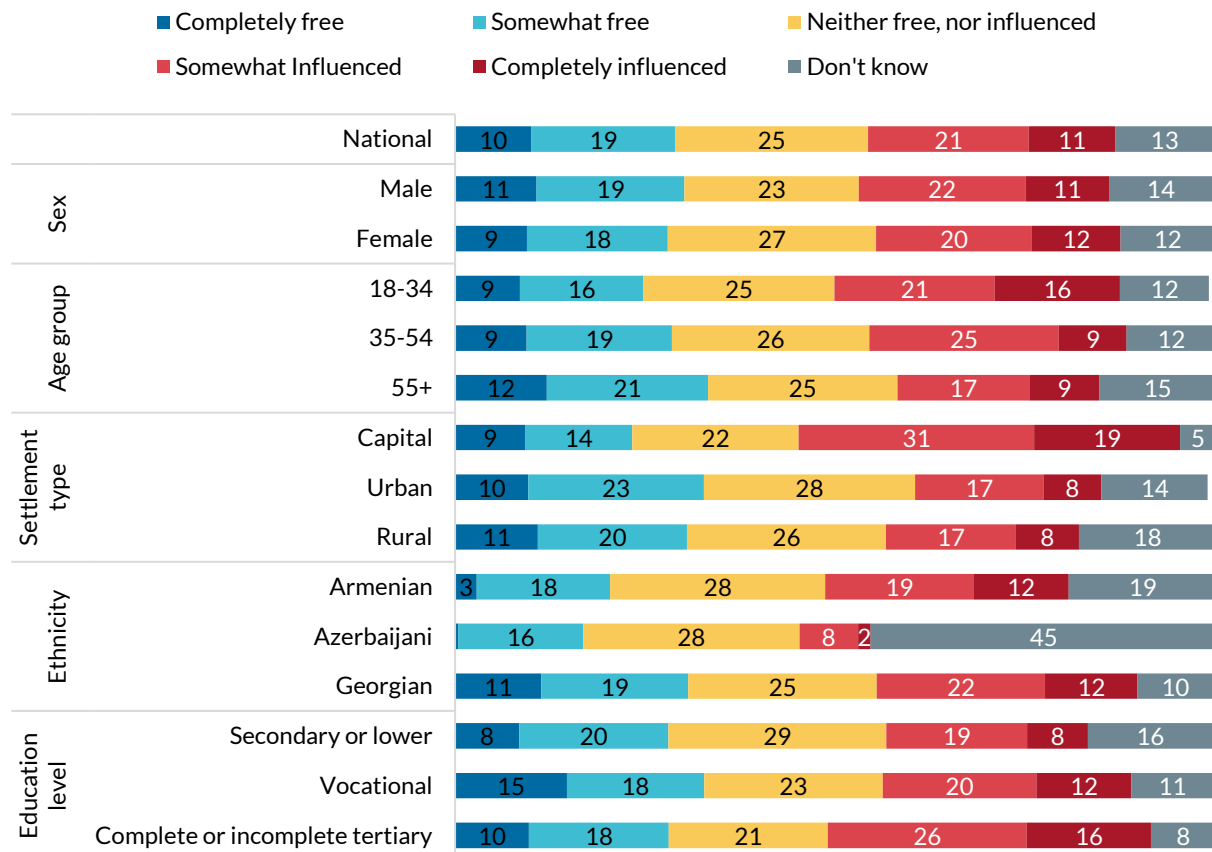


Corresponding to their prioritizing of keeping up with contemporary events, is the public's daily consumption of news media. Most (75%) of the country engages with news content at least once a day or more, with 44% claiming to check the news several times a day or more. Those 55 and older

are most engaged with news content, with 85% tuning in daily. Both a majority (76%) of women and men (72%) engage in news media at least once a day. Ethnic Georgians engage with news most frequently, with 76% tuning in at least once a day, compared to 70% of ethnic Armenians and 62% of ethnic Azerbaijanis.

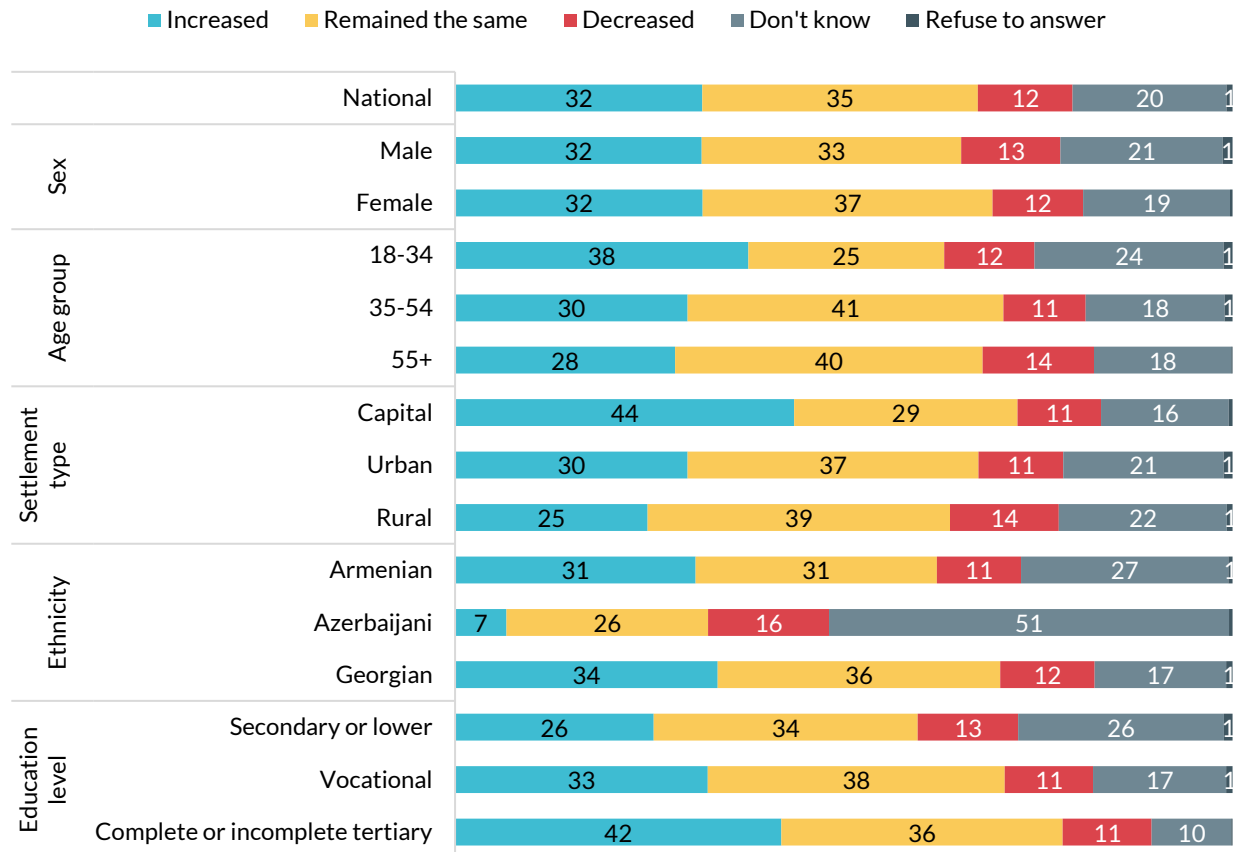
Least tuned into news media are those 18-34 years-of-age, in which a quarter (25%) reports engaging with such content less than once a week. This compares to 15% of 35-54 year-olds and 9% of those 55+ that claim the same. This gap in frequency of consuming news media is further demonstrated by age difference, where 85% of those 55+ report tuning into news at least once a day or more, compared to 63% of those 18-34. People aged 35-54 fall somewhere between the two groups, with 74% consuming news media at least once a day or more.

*In your opinion, to what extent is Georgian news media free from undue political influence? (%)*



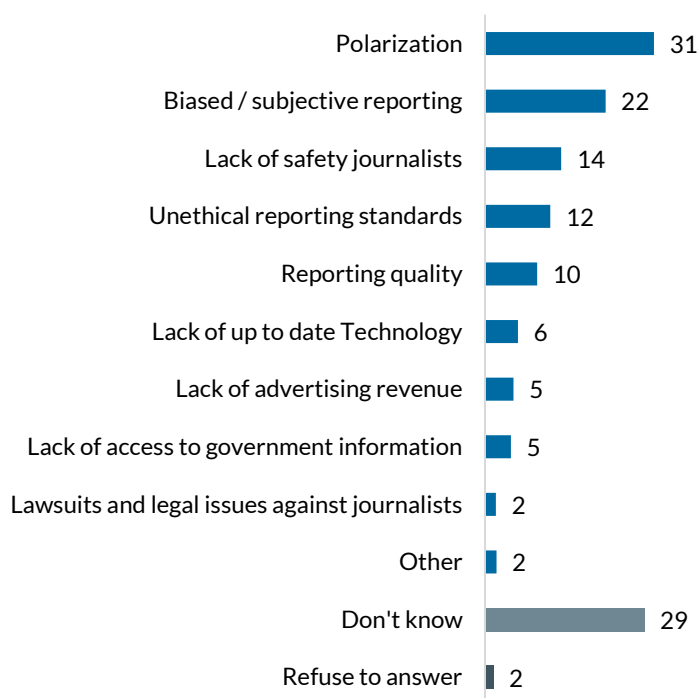
A significant number, 29%, regards Georgian news media to be somewhat or completely free from political influence. Interestingly, 45% of ethnic Azerbaijanis “do not know” if Georgian media is free or influenced by outside actors.

*In your opinion, has undue political influence in the media increased, remained the same, or decreased over the past 5 years? (%)*



Adding to this contradiction, 32% believe that political influence in media has increased over the past five years. Perceptions of outside influence in media are linked to age, where 28% of those 55+ believe influence has increased over the past 5 years compared to 38% of those 18-34 and 30% of those 35-54.

*What do you think are the top issues affecting Georgian media today? (%) (Multiple answers permitted)*



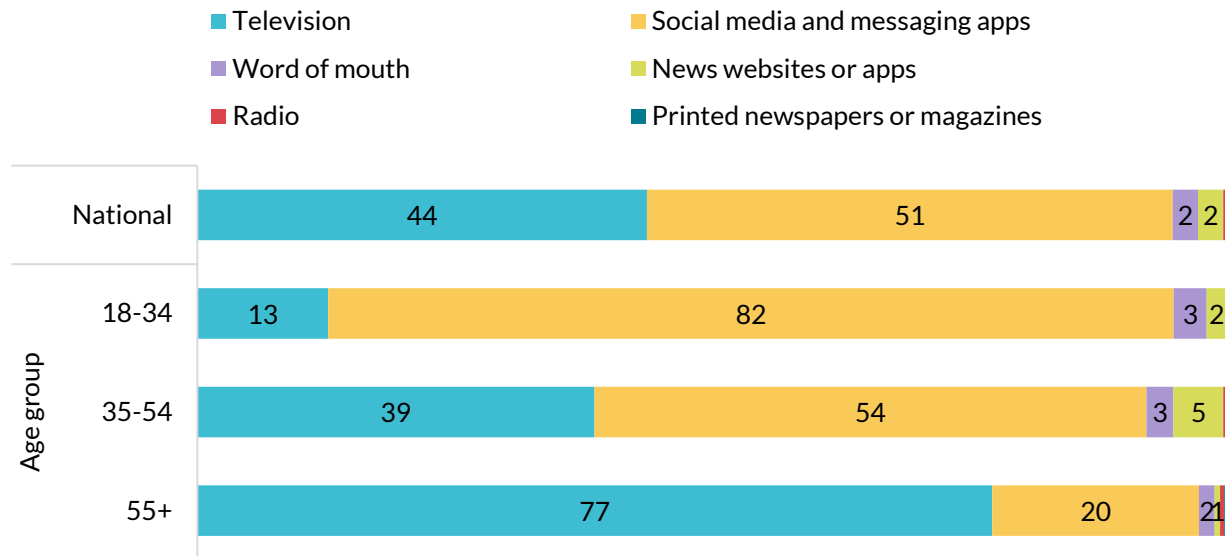
In responding to the top issues affecting the country's news media, most highlighted is polarization at 31%, and biased reporting at 22%. Far fewer people (14%) seem to be concerned about the safety of journalists in the country. This is despite high profile attacks on journalists, including the assault of 50 journalists in July of 2021 during an anti-LGBT protest and multiple reports highlighting widespread concern around safety among media professionals.<sup>1</sup> A significant number, 29%, indicated that they do not know what the top issue affecting Georgia's news media is.

### News and Information Consumption Habits

The main source of news content in Georgia is now online platforms. Only 44% of people say that television is their main source of news, compared with 51% using social media and messaging apps to share and consume news. Social media was grouped with messaging apps as the usage of the platforms is similar, with apps such as Telegram and WhatsApp featuring designated groups and feeds that share user-sourced content and information.

<sup>1</sup> Reporters Without Borders, "Georgia", Europe-Central Asia.

Which of these would you say was your MAIN source of news? (%)



The demographic divide is severe when it comes to different age groups and how they consume news. Among 18-34 year-olds, social media and messaging apps such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp are most popular, with 82% reporting that they prefer these sites to other mediums. 35-54 year-olds on the other hand are more split, with 54% identifying social media, and 39% choosing television news programs. Those 55+, however, far prefer receiving their news on television compared to any other medium, at 77%. This survey did not seek to identify the most used social media pages or messaging groups.

In focus groups, young people said they regularly turn to online sources for information, especially for topics of interest to them.

*"I mostly get information from social networks and less often from television. Maybe I listen to and get more information from platforms like YouTube, Soundcloud, and podcasts. Even less from print media. Because it has lost its popularity and mostly social media spread information."* (Male, 26, Tbilisi)

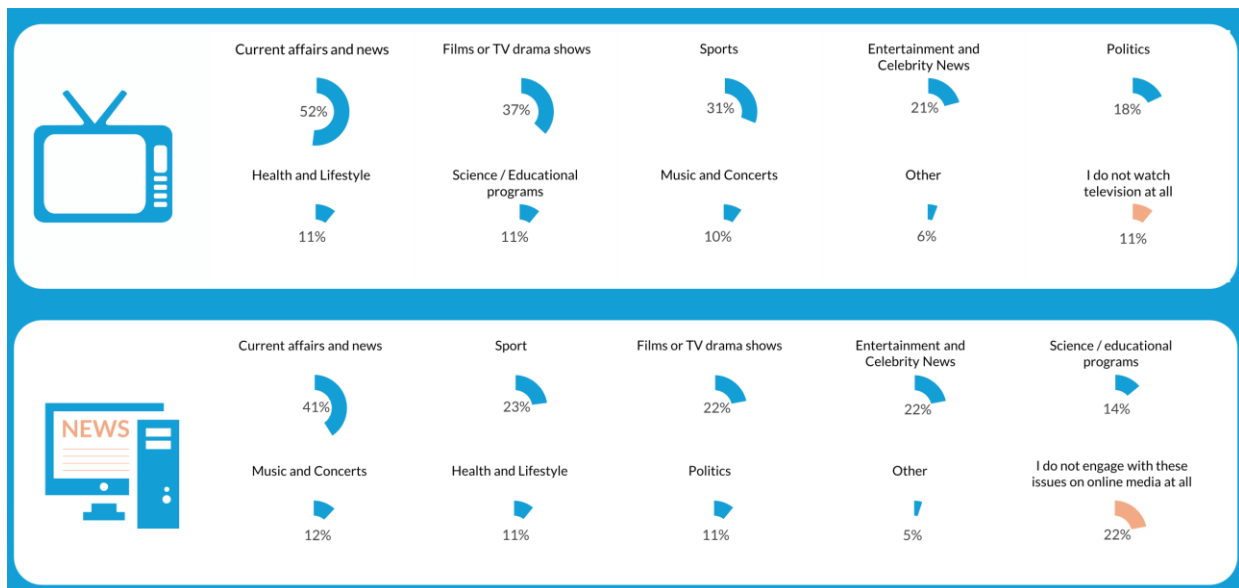
Notably, according to a media expert, surveys and data on user habits can be misleading, as many people are actually accessing web-based information via social media, such as Facebook pages and other sites, without considering it to be media consumption.

"In surveys, people are asked which media outlet they use the most, and they often name television stations. In my opinion, there is a flaw in the methodology because it doesn't fully capture the situation. People consume internet media and receive information in ways that they don't necessarily label as such." (Media Expert, Online Press, National and Local Media)

## What are people watching?

Regarding television, the public tunes into current affairs and news most, 52%, films or TV drama shows, 37%, and sports, 31%, compared to other genres. The same genres are popularly utilized online, on social media, and apps. Similar to television, a high percentage, 41%, engages with current affairs content while online, sports content also receives high interaction (23%), while films or TV drama shows are also popular content online (22%).

*On a normal day, which programming are you most likely to watch on TV / Which topics are you most likely to engage with online, on websites, social media, or apps? (%)<sup>2</sup>*



The experiences of interviewed media experts aligns with reported viewer interests, as one described stories that gain traction tend to focus on current events and crime.

"In general, the most popular stories in the media are issues that are criminal, scandalous, or issues like hacking, quarrels in Parliament, and so on." (Media Expert, Online Press, National Media)

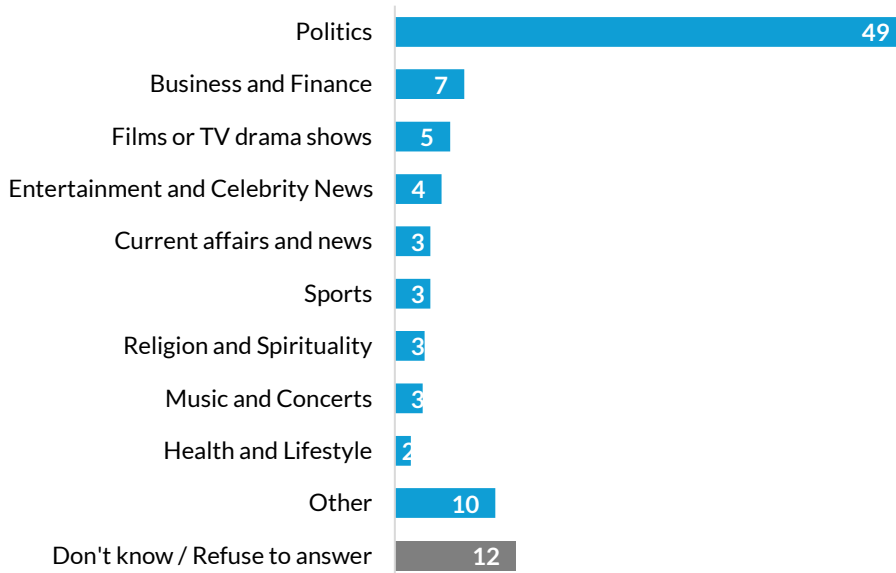
<sup>2</sup> **Note:** Respondents could provide up to 3 answers. On both questions 1% reported that they don't know.



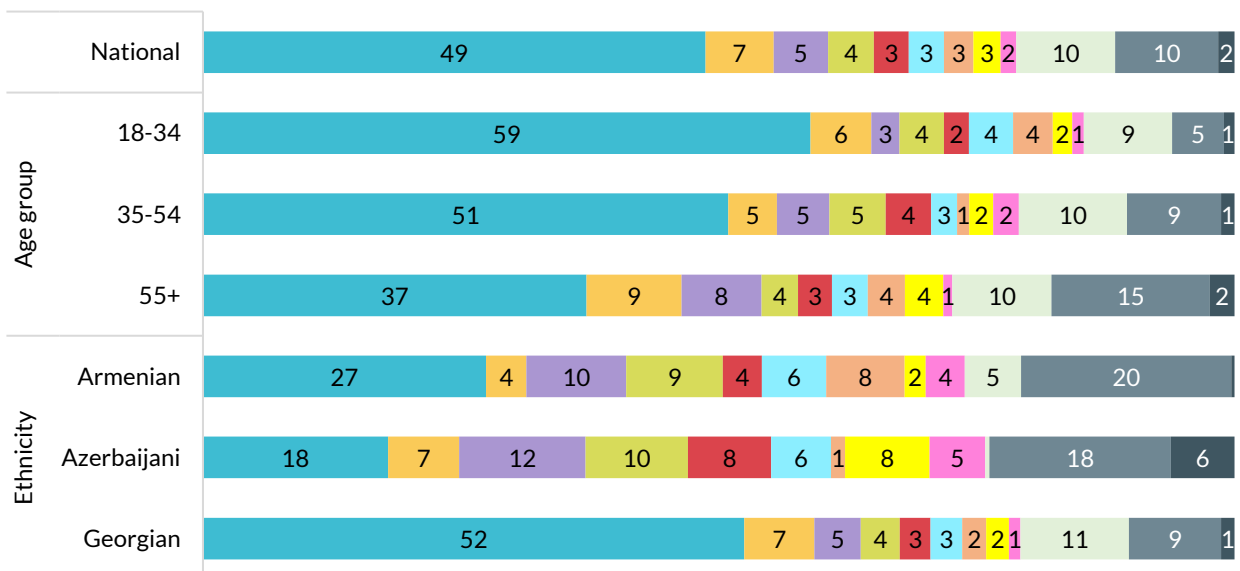
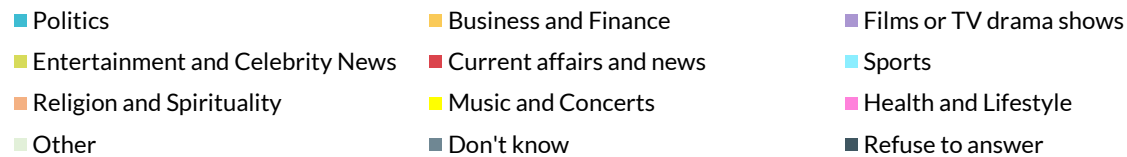
## News avoidance

*What kind of news content do you try to avoid the most? (%)*

### National figures:

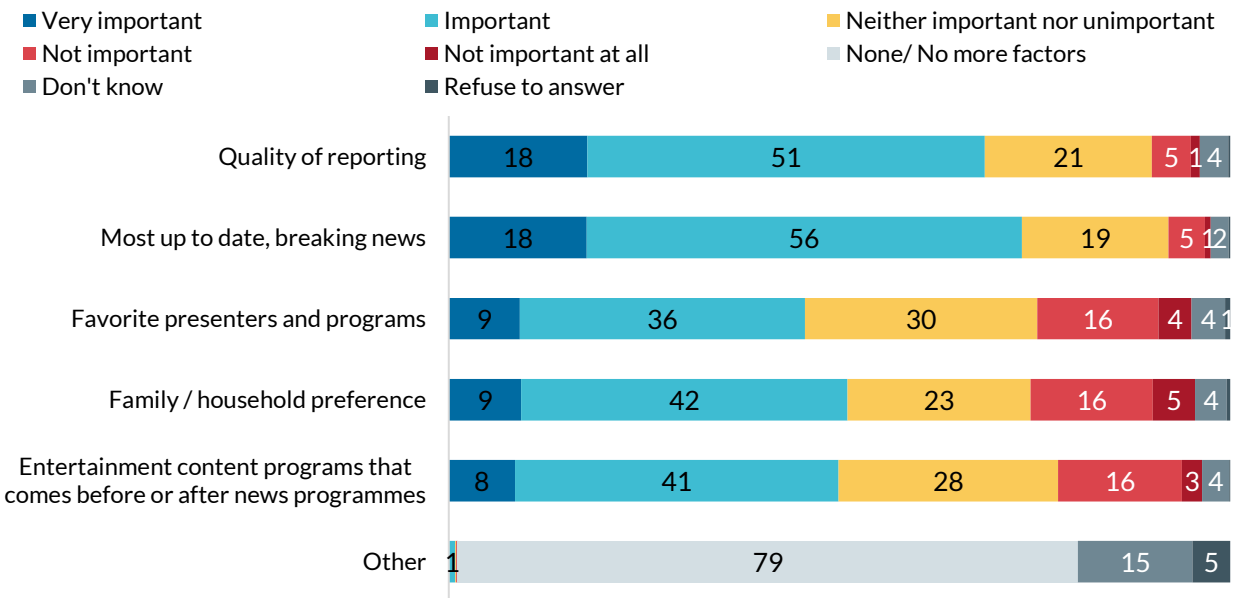


### Demographic breakdown:



Among topics avoided when consuming media, nearly half (49%) identified politics. The data suggests that 18-34 year-olds are more likely to avoid political news (59%) compared to those aged 55 and older (37%). Ethnic Azerbaijani and Armenian audiences report lower news avoidance when it comes to political stories. Avoidance of political news is largely a feature of ethnic Georgian audiences.

*To what extent do the following factors help to decide which TV news broadcast you will watch? (%)*



74% of respondents believe that having the most up to date, breaking news is very important or important to them when determining which TV news broadcaster to watch. This is followed by “quality of reporting” at 69%. Entertainment programs that are on before or after news broadcasts are also a significant factor (49%).

Although news programs maintain popularity in the country, many focus group participants expressed fatigue towards their reporting and a desire for different kinds of content on television.

*"In my opinion, television today is so politicized, adding more educational programs would be an improvement. Discussing politics from morning till night, with the same information presented in different ways, is exhausting. There should be a lot more educational and entertainment programs, so that when you come home from work feeling down, you can watch something that lifts your spirits." (Male, 50, Batumi)*

Others express turning away from television as a source due to this exhaustion.

*"I don't trust Formula or any other channel... For some reason, I always feel like they will be biased and work based on someone's agenda. I trust individual personalities more. If they're on a podcast expressing their own views, I trust them."* (Female, 23, Batumi)

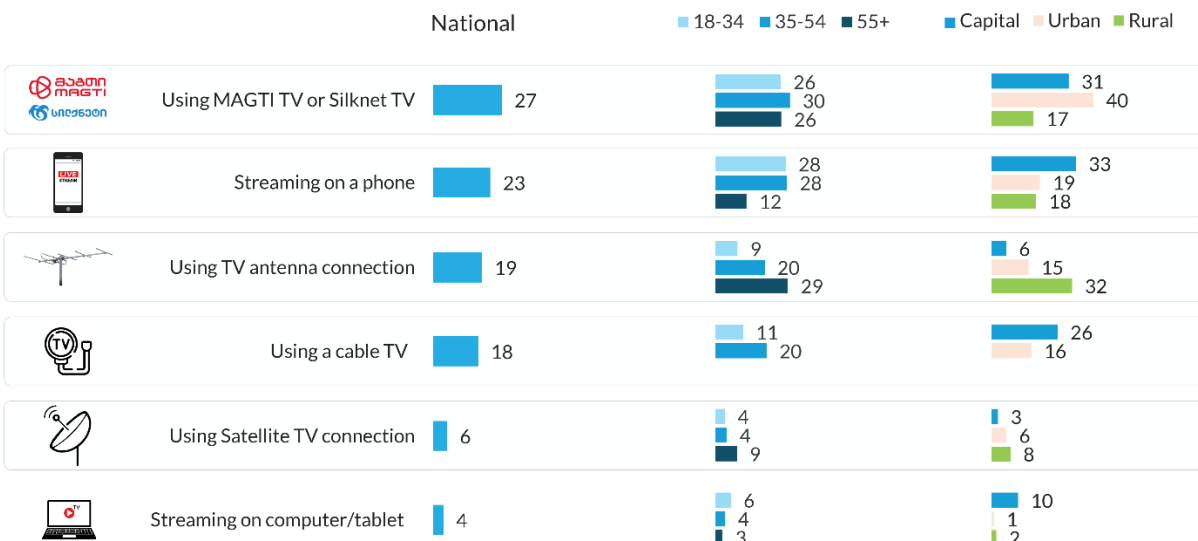
As one media expert expressed, much of these issues are rooted in broadcasters' desire to gain more revenue from political actors, as there is a lack of independent media and news content only becomes more politicized.

*"In short, the main thing, in my opinion, is that media organizations need to focus on is generating enough revenue to cover their operational costs. Since they often fail to achieve this and face related challenges, nearly all television channels are divided among political parties."* (Media Expert, Online National Media)

## Television Viewership

Of the population in Georgia, 94% report having a television in their home.<sup>3</sup> Despite widespread television ownership in the country, ways of accessing it vary, with the shift to digital demonstrated by the fact that 27% of people now watch TV via streaming on a device.

*How do you usually watch TV channels? (%) (Multiple answers permitted)*<sup>4</sup>



<sup>3</sup> CRRG-Georgia, "NDI: Public attitudes in Georgia, October 2023".

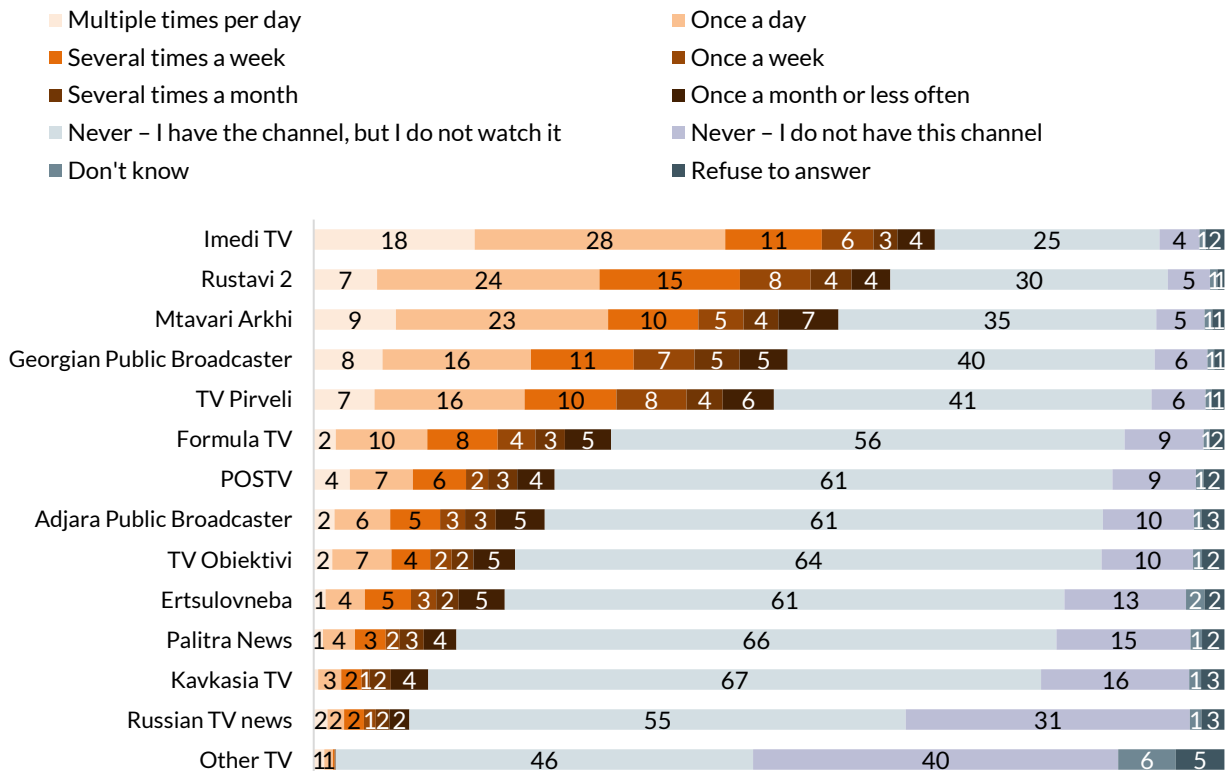
<sup>4</sup> **Note:** Other response options include 'Other' (1%) and 'Don't know / Refused to answer' (1%).

Just over a quarter (27%) of people report using fixed-line broadband providers, MAGTI TV or Silknet TV, to watch television. This is followed by streaming on their phone, 23%, then a TV antenna connection, 19%, and using cable TV, 18%. A significant portion, 14%, report not watching television at all. There are no significant differences between demographics with the exceptions of age, and settlement type. 26% of people aged 18-34 said they do not watch television at all. This contrasts to 12% of those aged 35-54, and only 4% of those aged 55+.

Streaming content on one's phone is most frequent among those 18-34 years-of-age, at 28%. The preferred medium for television among 35-54 year-olds is Magti TV or Silknet TV, at 30%. On the other hand, 29% of those 55+ report using a TV antenna connection, which is also the most common medium in rural communities at 32%.

In urban areas outside Tbilisi, 40% of TV viewers prefer Magti TV or Silknet TV. In Tbilisi, 33% favor streaming via phone. Rural viewers mostly use TV antennas (32%), while cable TV is popular among 26% in Tbilisi. Satellite TV, and computer/tablet streaming are less common across all settlement types.

*How often do you watch news coverage on the following TV channels? (%)*



Among television channels and those regularly watching TV, national news channels are more popular than regional broadcasters. A majority (70%) of Georgia's television audience report watching Imedi TV for their news content. This is followed by Rustavi 2 (62%), then Mtavari Arkhi (58%), and the Georgian Public Broadcaster (52%). Russian TV news is far less popular, with 11% of respondents tuning into such sources.

Ethnic Armenians most frequently watch Russian language news, with 41% reporting that they watch such channels at least once a month or more. This is followed by ethnic Azerbaijanis, 9% of whom report watching Russian language news. Ethnic Georgians watch Russian language news least, with 7% of television viewers tuning in.

The high frequency of viewership of Russian language news among ethnic Armenians is perhaps due to a lack of available media broadcasting in the Armenian language. As an ethnic Armenian focus group participant explained, there should be more national news available in other languages as to allow others to overcome existing language barriers in media;

*"There is more of a problem with access to channels for us, because satellites here work poorly for us, which, to some extent, prevents older people from receiving information on television... now we have to choose from Armenian channels, or only Russian or only Georgian. There is not the possibility of mixing [broadcasts from multiple countries] anymore, and this is very bad."* (Female, 24, Akhalkalaki)

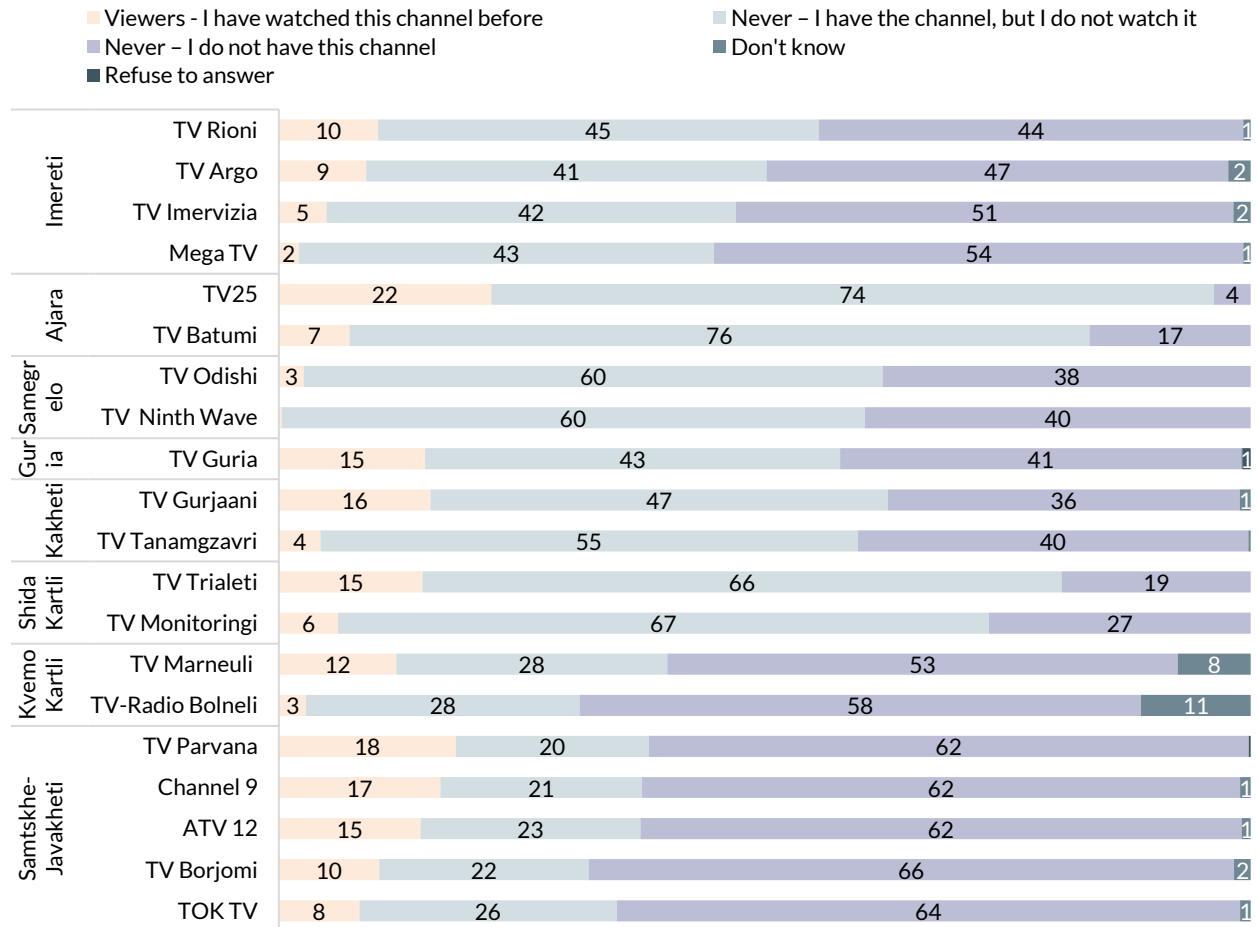
The challenge of language barriers in media is shared by ethnic Azerbaijanis as well, as one ethnic Azerbaijani focus group participant expressed;

*"Since I don't know the Georgian language well, I can't watch Georgian language media. Therefore, I would like to talk about the local media operating in our region. As a teacher, I regularly keep up with news, relevant news. In our local media, news is broadcast in both Georgian and Azerbaijani languages. Sometimes they make mistakes, and the same story sounds different in each version. I think it would be great if they could improve in this regard."* (Female, NA, Marneuli)

## Regional TV

Outside of national media, regional television channels are also active. According to each region surveyed, the Georgian public were asked which regional television channels they have tuned into before for news content.

*How often do you watch news coverage on the following (regional) TV channels? (%)*



Overall, regional television does not share the same popularity held among national outlets. No channel registers more than a quarter of those who watch television. Despite the existing challenge of language barriers in national media for ethnic minorities, regional outlets in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli, that broadcast in local languages, still do not garner more than a fifth of television viewers.

TV Marneuli, in Kvemo Kartli, and TV Parvana, in Samtskhe-Javakheti appear most popular among speakers of minority languages, Azerbaijani and Armenian, respectively. Among Azerbaijani

speaking respondents in Kvemo Kartli, 19% report having tuned in TV Marneuli before. Among Armenian speakers in Samtskhe-Javakheti, 24% claim to have watched TV Parvana. Viewership among Azerbaijani speakers in Kvemo-Kartli may be correlated to age, as those 55+ report having watched TV Marneuli more (24%) than 18-34 year-olds (18%), which could be attributed to older demographics' preference for television media. However, among Armenian speakers in Samtskhe-Javakheti, the opposite is true, as the frequency of 18-34 and 35-54 year-olds that have tuned into TV Parvana is higher (18% and 25%, respectively) than those 55+ (10%).

As one focus group participant voiced, a reason for low engagement in regional media in Georgia could be the popularity of local groups on social media, such as Facebook, where users post and discuss information deemed locally relevant.

*“For example, in Facebook groups... there is information about infrastructure, landscaping, in Imereti, Kutaisi, and [people] post things about like a pipe bursting or something that concerns Kutaisi itself, a street being made, a road was not finished, or something like grass being cut or some details about that. You can't get that on television.” (Male, 37, Kutaisi)*

Outside of the capital, Tbilisi, respondents were queried on awareness and presence of local media outlets that serve their community. While a majority (56%) of those living outside of Tbilisi indicate that there are local media outlets serving their community, 37% stated there are not. Despite a majority being aware of such outlets, only a minority choose to engage with them.

## Internet and Social Media Use

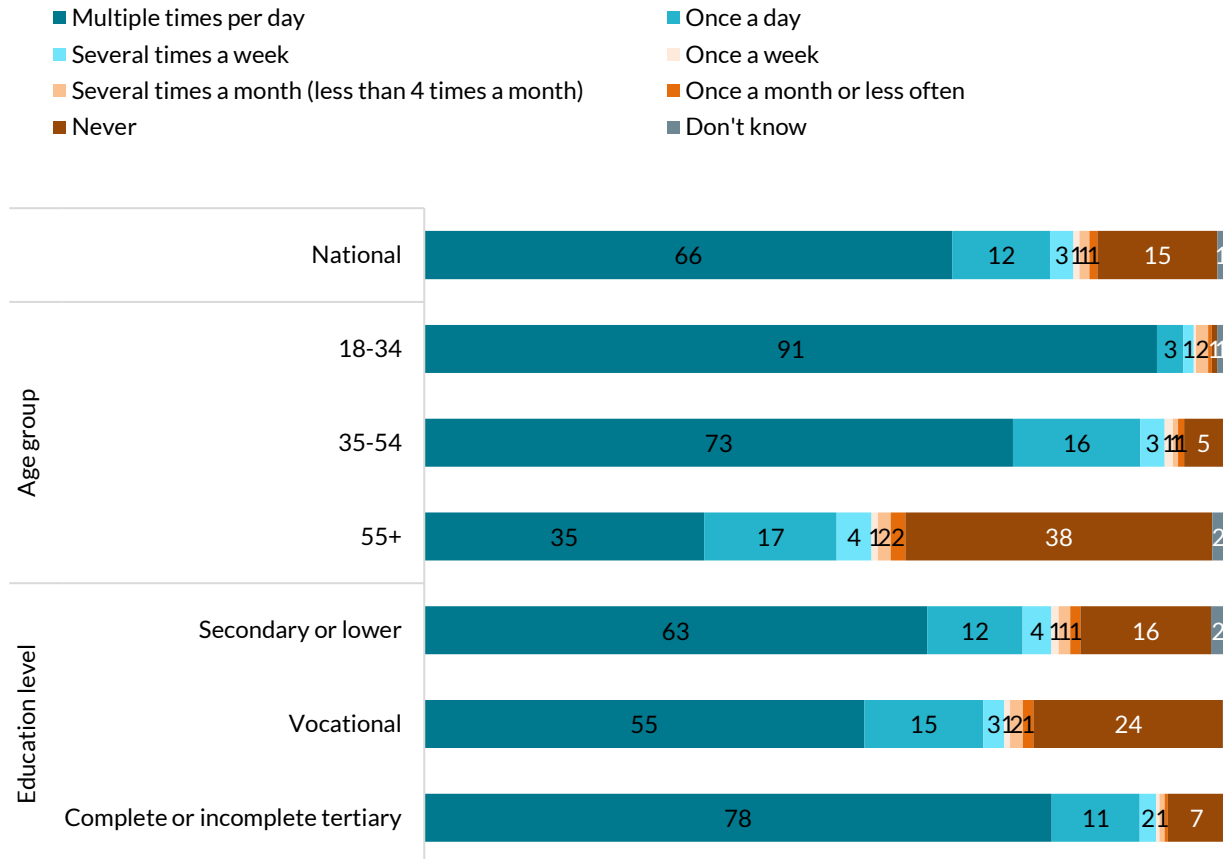
Over the course of the last two decades, internet usage in Georgia has skyrocketed. While in 2000 the country only had 20,000 internet users, by June 2024, 85.8% of the population had access to the internet.<sup>5</sup> Another significant trend is the rise of smartphone ownership in Georgia enabling constant access to the internet and online media. Remarkably, between 2016 and 2020 alone, smartphone ownership more than doubled from 39% to 80% of the population.<sup>6</sup> Among those between 15-29 and 30-59 years of age, this number is even higher, with 99% and 95% owning a smartphone, respectively.

<sup>5</sup> Geostat, 2024 <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/106/information-and-communication-technologies-usage-in-households>.

<sup>6</sup> CRRC-Georgia, “NDI: Public attitudes in Georgia, time-series dataset.”

In Georgia, 78% of the population actively uses the internet daily. Among the 18-35 age group, daily internet usage is particularly high at 94%, while it drops to 52% among individuals aged 55 and older. Regarding education levels, daily internet usage is significantly higher among those with higher education, reaching 89%.

#### How often do you use the internet? (%)



Nationally, a majority (66%) of respondents use the internet multiple times a day, with this majority significantly higher among 18-34 and 35-54 year-olds, 91% and 73%, respectively. Those 55 years-of-age and older use the internet least, with 38% reporting never using it. Additionally, ethnic Georgians are using the internet most, with 68% reporting to use it multiple times a day. This compares to 59% of ethnic Azerbaijanis claiming the same rate of use, while ethnic Armenians report less frequent use, with 49% claiming to go online multiple times a day. Those with a complete or incomplete tertiary education also suggest the most frequent internet use, with 78% logging on multiple times a day.



Young people prefer using the internet as they feel their interests are better represented by an array of online outlets, influencers, and personalities;

*"I watch TV less frequently. Mostly I receive information from social media. In particular, I use Facebook and YouTube more."* (Male, 30, Telavi)

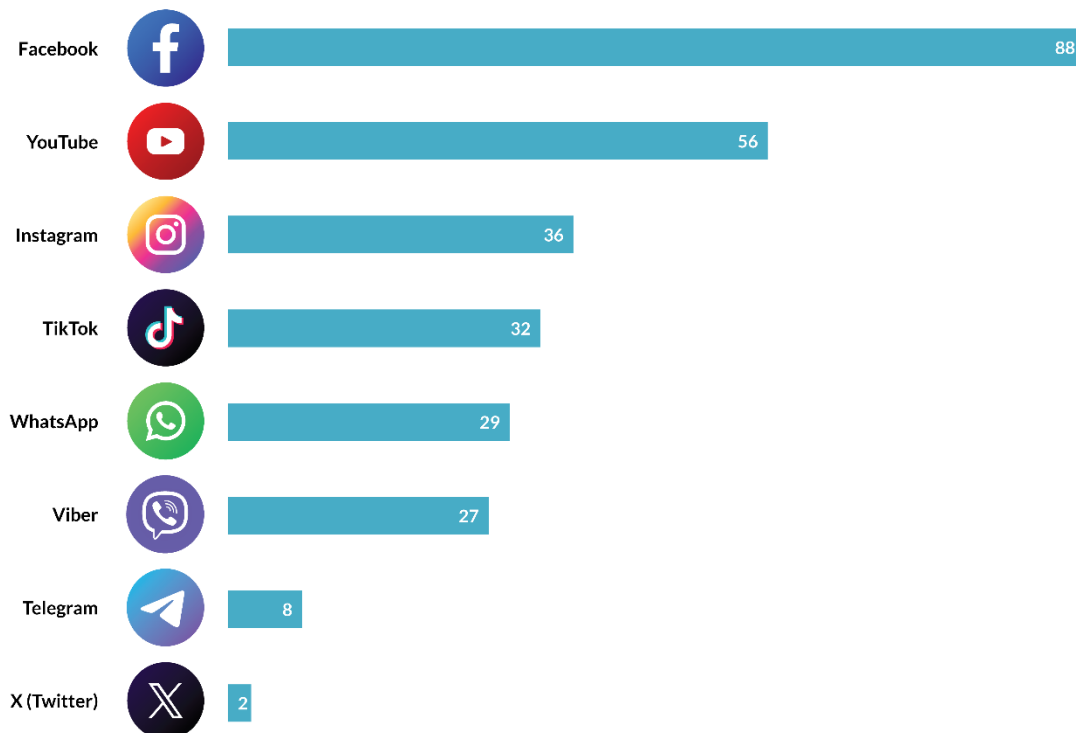
However, television and internet use are not mutually exclusive. According to many, their favorite broadcasters have an online presence paired with television broadcasting. In other words, the public can follow their preferred outlets both on television and online, via social media;

*"I also mainly get informed through social media, TikTok, and Facebook. In many cases, I am subscribed to TV channels' pages like, Imedi, Rustavi 2, TV Pirveli, Mtavari Arkhi, and so on."* (Male, 22, Zugdidi)

## Most used platforms

*Which of the following, if any, have you used in the last week for any purpose? (%) (Multiple answers permitted)*

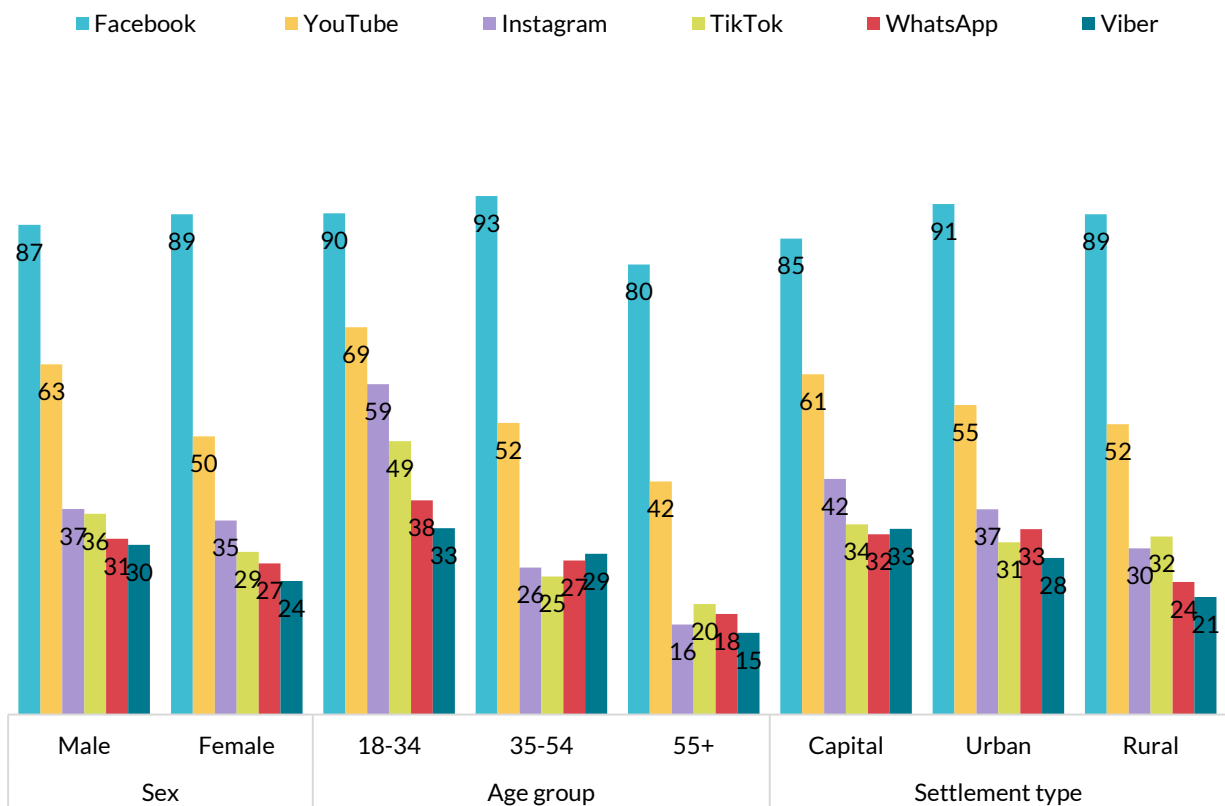
**Note:** Among those who use the internet, N=1768



By far, the most popular social media platform is Facebook, with a majority (88%) of respondents, including all age groups, using the platform in the last week alone. Other platforms like VKontakte, LinkedIn, Odnoklassniki, and Signal were each mentioned by no more than 1% of respondents. Only 3% of people reported not using any of these social media platforms or being unsure of which they had used.

*Which of the following, if any, have you used in the last week for any purpose? By sex, age, and settlement type (%) (Multiple answers permitted)*

**Note:** Among those who use the internet, N=1768



Other platforms' use, such as Instagram, are highly correlated to age, with 59% of 18-34 year-olds using the platform compared to 26% of 35-54 year-olds and 16% of those 55 and older.

When the survey was conducted, a majority (56%) of the public reported using YouTube within the past week. Like Facebook, YouTube remains popular among all age-groups, with the exception of those 55+, who, although using it significantly less, still report accessing the site more than other platforms, except Facebook.

TikTok is primarily used among those 18-34 years-old, with 49% of the age group utilizing the app. Use of X (Twitter) in Georgia is marginal at 2%. Russia-linked social media platforms Odnoklassniki and VKontakte are used by only 1% of the population.

Among messenger platforms, WhatsApp is most popular among 29% of respondents using social media. This is followed by Viber (27%), Telegram (8%), and less than 1% (0.07%) using Signal. Use of LinkedIn is relatively rare, with only 1% having used the app within the last week, at the time the survey was conducted.

Only 2% of those surveyed report not using any social media platforms.

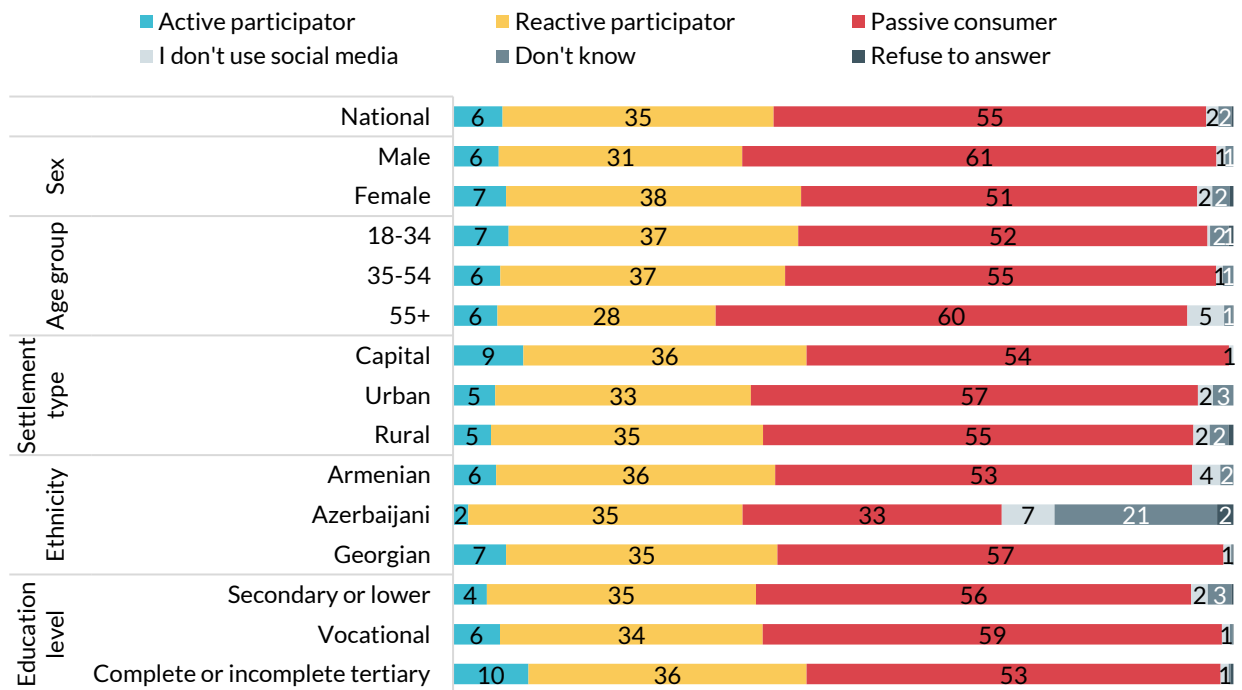
### How people use social media and messaging apps

Focus group participants further described how they engage with platforms online, and why. For example, as one respondent explained, as you scroll on social media, interesting and random information appears on your feed, making it more engaging than mediums such as television.

*“Social media has more variety, it is faster and has more consistent information. If you do not care about specific information you can scroll and see something else.” (Female, 22, Tbilisi)*

#### How do you interact with posts on social media? (%)

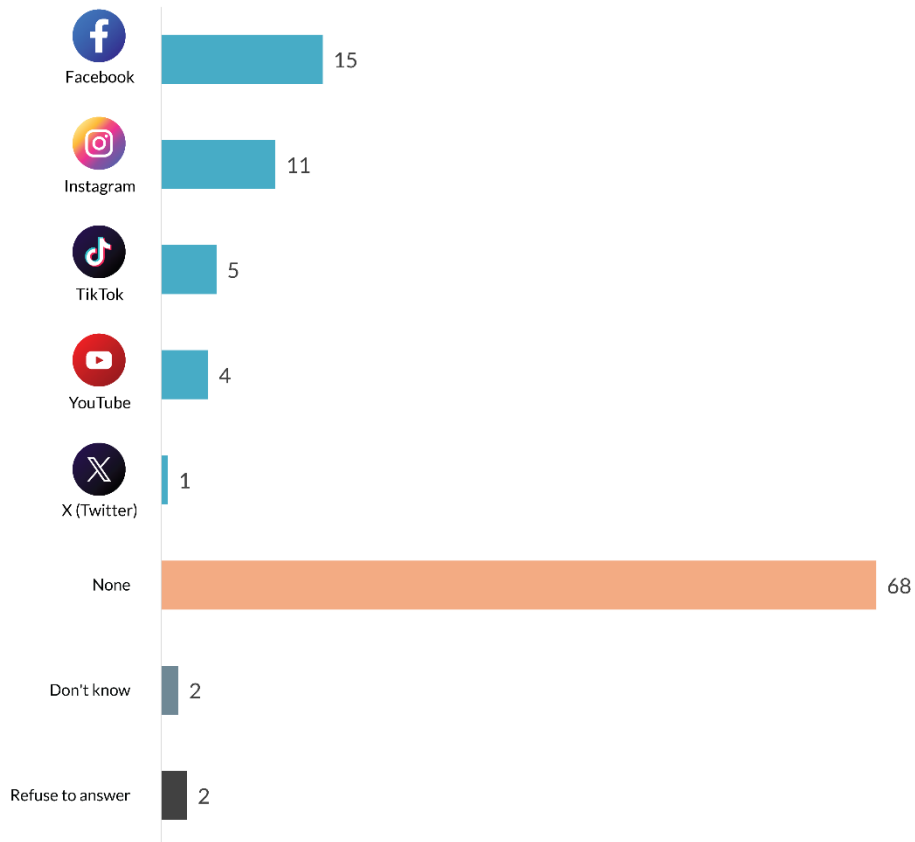
**Note:** Among those who use any of above listed social media platforms, N=1674



Of those using social media platforms, 35% identify as “reactive participators” or those that read, like, and share posts, but do not repost or create content on their own. A significant number (55%) are “passive consumers” or those that use social media but do not actively engage with content. On the other hand, only 8% of those on social media identify as “active participators,” as they regularly repost, comment on content, and create their own posts. These results were similar across age, gender and ethnic groups, with the exception of ethnic Azerbaijanis with 21% reporting “don’t know”.

*On which platforms do you follow personalities/influencers/bloggers, who post about different topics? (%) (multiple answers permitted)*

**Note:** Among those who interact with posts on social media, N=1618. 'Signal' is excluded from the chart as it was mentioned by only 0.07% of respondents.



Of those that report following online personalities, 15% report doing so on Facebook. Among those 18-34 years-old, Instagram is more frequently used at 22%. Additionally, women more frequently

use Instagram to follow personalities, with 14% using the app to do so, compared to 8% of men. Most (68%) report not following any online bloggers, influencers, or personalities.

Among those following online personalities, a wide variety were mentioned. The top three most reported online bloggers, influencers, and personalities that people report following include, travel blogger “Soso Around the World” (4.2%), and athletes Khvicha Kvaratskhelia (2.7%), and Merab Dvalishvili (2.5%). Although the frequency of following online figures was low, those identified most often included athletes, actors, travel bloggers, and beauty influencers, among others.

*Which personalities / influencers / bloggers do you follow? - Top 10 most frequent answers (Up to three answers permitted) (%)*



Note: of those who use the internet and follow personalities on social media platforms. N=354

Reflecting survey findings, focus group participants frequently mentioned following content from “Soso Around the World.” Some foreign personalities were identified, such as American conservative figure, Tucker Carlson, by one participant. Frequently mentioned among focus group participants was the sports commentator, Fabrizio Romano.

*“I watch Fabrizio Romano’s page on social media. He publishes reliable information all the time.”*  
(Male, 41, Gori)

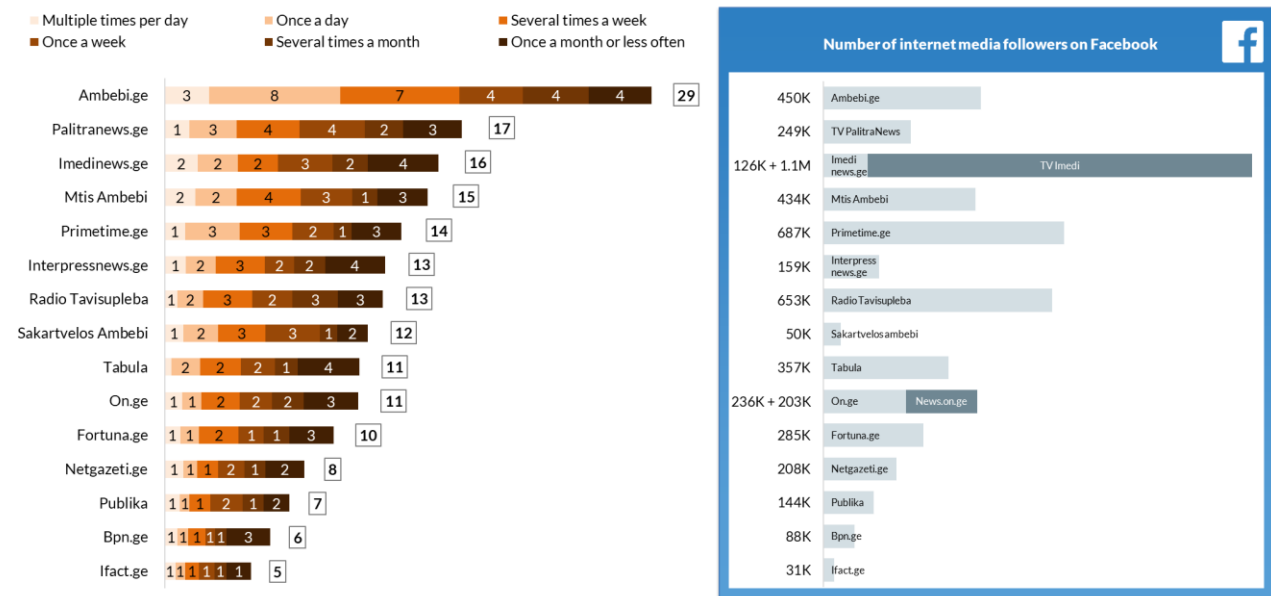
Media experts mentioned other figures such as YouTuber Giorgi Makharashvili, who has over two hundred thousand subscribers on YouTube. His content focuses on food while connecting cuisine

to current events and social issues. Other political commentators on Facebook included Teona Tskhomelidze, and Archil Marshania. Another was “Mikheil Ukraineologist,” who shares, according to one media expert, “questionable” news on the war in Ukraine.

## Online News Media Engagement

Other sources for news include online outlets which feature information on current events, entertainment, and sports on both a national and regional level. Some, such as Imedinews.ge, are offshoots of television broadcasters.

*How frequently do you usually visit these news websites to receive information about the current events in Georgia and the world? (%)*



**Note:** The chart on the left excludes those who have never used online media or are unsure which online media source they had used. Due to rounding errors, the total percentage may not sum exactly. Both "Imedi TV" and "Imedinews.ge" are part of the same media holding. Content is frequently shared between Imedi TV's Facebook page and Imedinews.ge. It is important to note that an individual user may subscribe to both pages. Similarly, On.ge and News.on.ge are two pages operated by the same company.

According to survey results, the most visited site among respondents is Ambebi.ge, a tabloid news site, with nearly 30% of those using online news sites, claiming to have used the source at least once a month or more. This is followed by news site Palitrnews, at 17%. Imedi's website follows closely in popularity among those using online news sources, at 15%.

Although Ambebi.ge received the most frequent visitors on its website, TV Imedi and Imedinews.ge receive the largest number of users on Facebook, with their pages registering over a million followers. This is followed by Primetime.ge, despite ranking fifth among most frequently visited news websites, its Facebook presence ranks second in number of followers with 687,000. Third is Radio Tavisupleba, with their Facebook page garnering 653,000 followers. On.ge and News.on.ge have a combined Facebook following of 439,000 users. Finally, Ambebi.ge receives a following of 450,000 Facebook users. Reported frequency of visiting each news website does not translate directly to the popularity of its corresponding Facebook page.

It is also important to note, with the exception of Ambebi.ge, much of the Georgian public that uses online sources, as suggested in an interview with one media expert, may do so inadvertently;

*"People consume online media and receive information without necessarily identifying the source. For instance, they might come across a news link on social media, click on it, and read the article on a newspaper's website, but they still perceive it as news they heard on Facebook."* (Media Expert, Online Press, National and Local Media)

Focus group participants that reported utilizing online sources suggested that they trust them more compared to information broadcast on television;

*"In general, if I watch or read something, I focus on the information itself and not the discussions around it... I mostly trust Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. I've never had a case where I read something from them, and it turned out to be untrue elsewhere."* (Male, 27, Batumi)

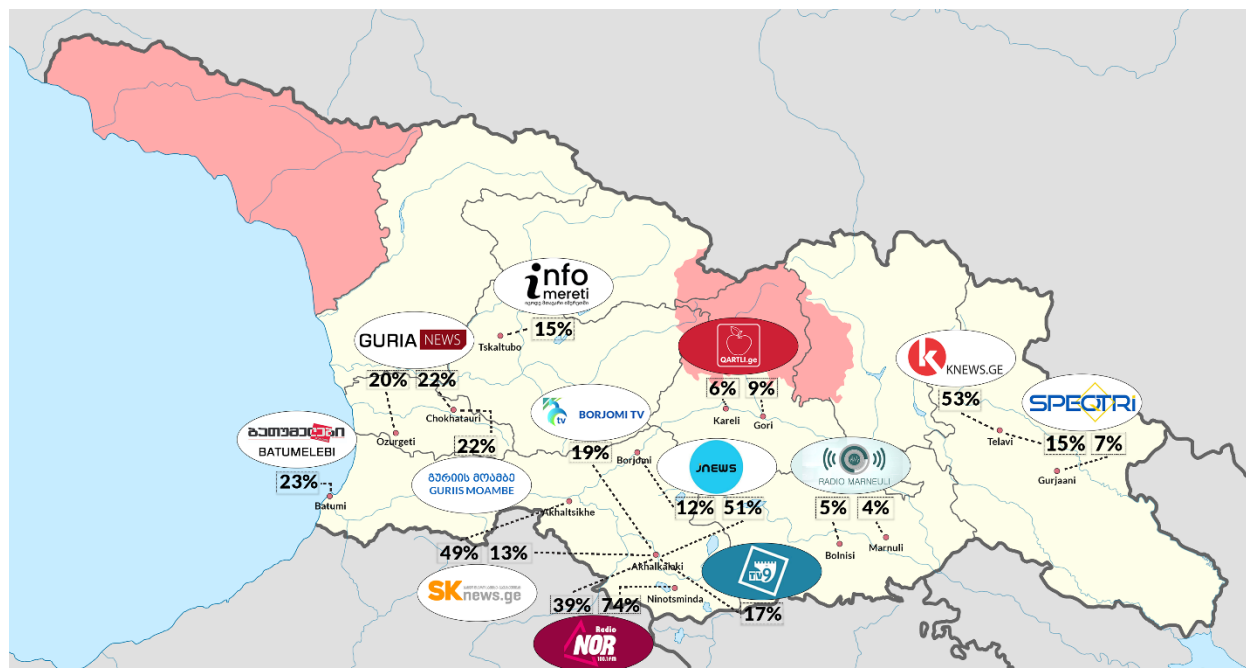
Aside from national news websites, regional sources are also present online, providing both information on international and domestic current events, while also focusing on local reporting.

In order to assess the use of regional online media, survey respondents were provided with a list of local outlets available to them, according to the region they live in.

A majority (nearly 60%) of the public in Georgia's regions do not use local online news media sites at all. Use of popular regional online media outlets varies according to the areas they serve, however most of the leading regional media outlets report very high usage in the municipalities they serve, including the websites belonging to regional broadcasters. Outside of those municipalities,

knowledge and usage of these regional media is very low, showing that local online media has a very localized following.

Use news websites to receive information about the current events in Georgia and the world at least once a month by municipalities (%) (Most popular towns for each outlet shown)



The frequency in which locals use regional media sites varies across Georgia. For example, nearly three-quarters (74%) of residents in Ninotsminda report accessing Radio Nor's website (Nor.ge) for news and information. In Kakheti, over half (53%) of Telavi residents report having accessed reporting from Knews.ge. In the Samtskhe-Javakheti region, Borjomi TV (19%), TV9 (17%), and Jnews (51%) were most frequently identified in Akhalkalaki. In Akhaltsikhe, SKnews emerged as the leading local news agency at 49%. Batumelebi, which reports both locally on Adjara, Batumi and nationally, has a usership of 23% among Batumi residents. Other local sources, such as Info Imereti in Tskaltubo, and Qartli.ge, in Kareli and Gori, have a following from locals at 15%, 6%, and 9%, respectively.

In interviews, media experts expressed that ethnic minorities have access, although somewhat limited, to regional news sources which report in local languages. According to their experience, they believed that ethnic minorities do not use national sources, and instead use regional or Russian language news, due to language barriers.



*"As for ethnic minorities, they often don't follow Georgian sources. For example, I know that the Armenian-speaking population watches Armenian and Russian content, while the Azerbaijani-speaking population mostly watches Azerbaijani content, and relatively less Russian content because, in my observation, the Azerbaijani-speaking population doesn't know Russian well enough to follow the media, unlike the Armenian-speaking population, who usually know both Armenian and Russian well. However, this is just my experience—I haven't encountered any research on this, but it's generally the case." (Media Expert, Journalist, Online National Media)*

Data demonstrates that ethnic Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti are using regional online news media sites at the same rate or only slightly more than ethnic Georgians in other regions.

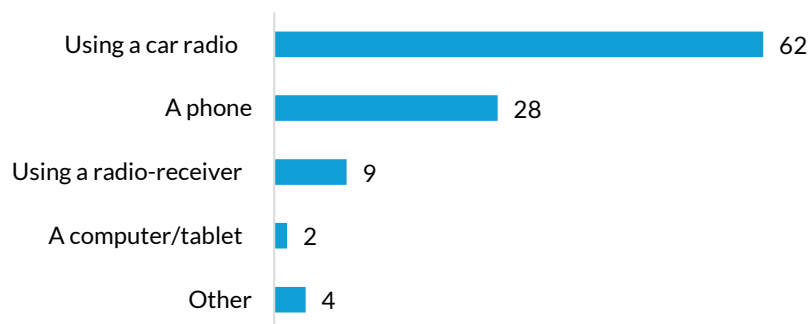
Among the total population utilizing online news media, there is a clear preference for national media outlets, as regional sites were used a lot less. This is supported by focus group discussions, where many could identify regional news outlets, but reported not using them themselves. However, when asked if they have sufficient quality sources that inform them of what is happening in their local community, 53% of people in the regions said yes. 39% reported that they do not have sufficient sources.

## Radio Engagement

Only 9% of people reported having listened to any radio stations within the last seven days. 14% of those between the ages of 35-54 years-of-age reported listening to radio within the past seven days, a higher frequency than any other age group. Of those who do use the radio, mediums for accessing stations varies. The following data on radio is therefore drawn from 124 respondents.

*How do you usually listen to the radio? (%) (Multiple answers permitted)*

**Note:** Among those who have listened to radio within the last 7 days, N = 124 respondents.



For news content radio, listeners turn to a variety of sources, including regional radio where available.

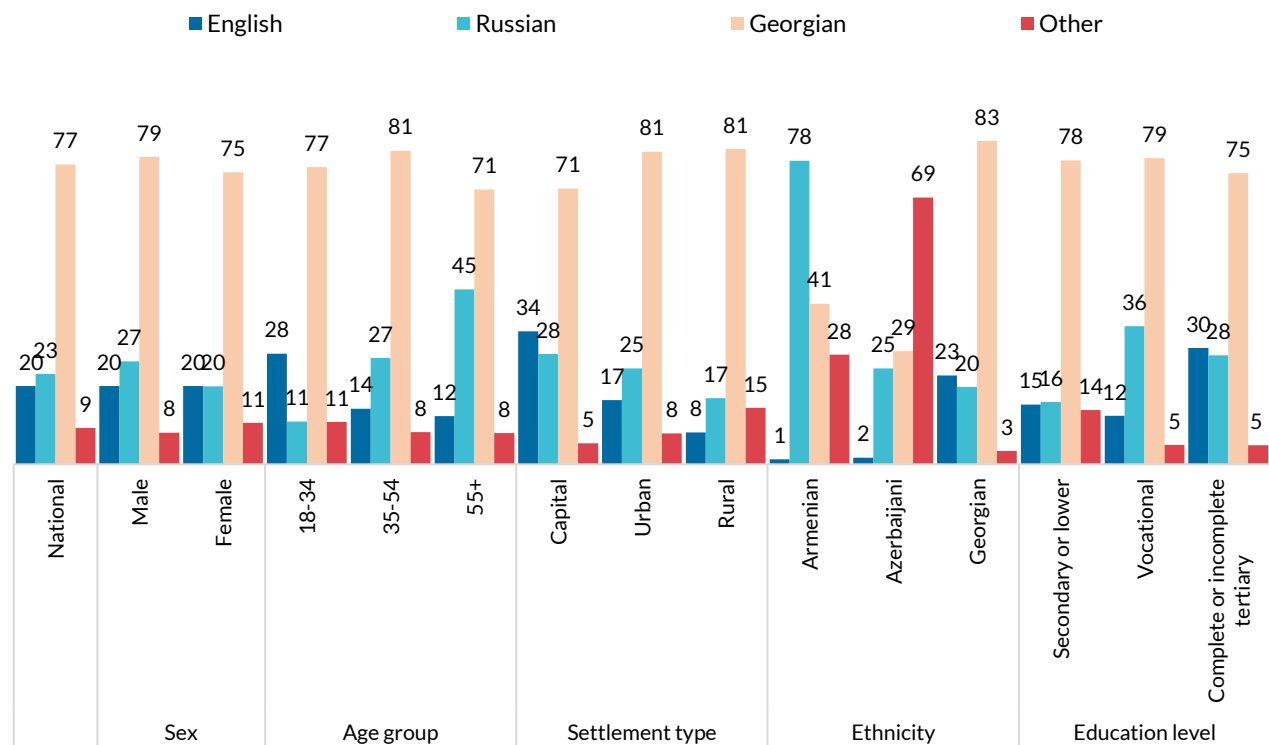
Focus group discussions reflect survey data demonstrating that a low frequency of the Georgian public regularly listens to radio. Although respondents in various groups could name radio stations, very few reported regularly listening to them. None of the focus group participants mentioned utilizing the medium specifically for news consumption. Due to the low frequency of those reporting to listen to radio for news information, further analysis concerning listener habits and individual station listenership was not possible to perform regarding the medium.<sup>7</sup>

## YouTube Engagement

In Georgia, YouTube is a popular destination for content. A majority (60%) of respondents said they had watched a video on the platform within the past 30 days.

*In what language was the content that you watched on YouTube, mostly? (%) (Multiple answers permitted)*

**Note:** Among those who have watched any videos on YouTube in the last 30 days, N=1037



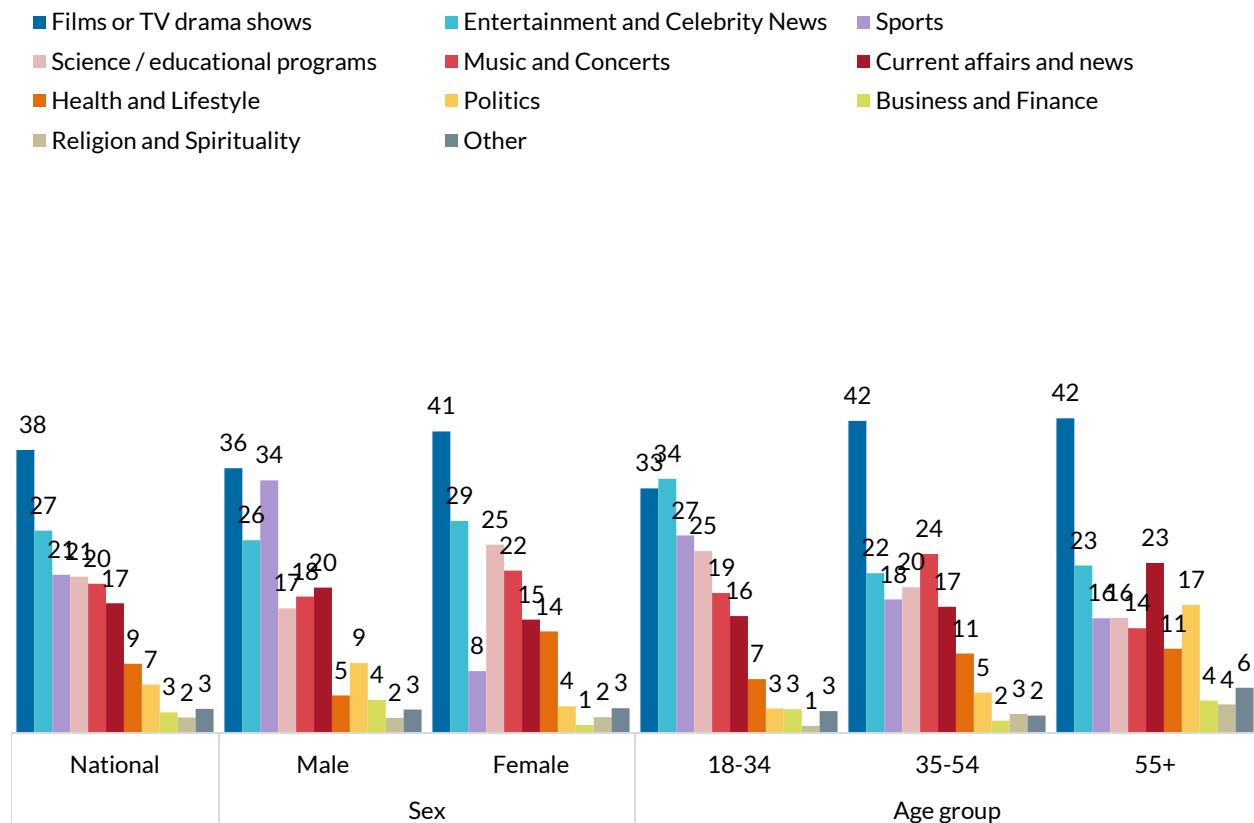
<sup>7</sup> All raw data utilized in the study is available for analysis on CRRC's website: [caucasusbarometer.org](https://caucasusbarometer.org).

A majority (77%) of content consumed on YouTube nationally is in the Georgian language. However, the frequency of Georgian language content's consumption on YouTube greatly shifts according to ethnicity. Among ethnic Armenians, the content most engaged with (78%) is in Russian. On the other hand, among ethnic Azerbaijanis, most (69%) report consuming content in another language. In focus groups, ethnic Azerbaijanis generally pointed to Turkish language sources as being preferred due to their perceived reliability.

The frequency of English and Russian content consumption on YouTube is also linked to one's age. Among 18-34 year-olds, aside from Georgian language content, English is most popular, 28%. Among 35-54 year-olds, Russian is preferred to English, at 27%. Those 55+ engage with Russian language content on YouTube most frequently, at 45%. The high usage of Russian language content on YouTube by the older generation is likely due to their lack of proficiency in English or other common foreign languages used on YouTube.

*What genre was the content on YouTube? (%) (Multiple answers permitted)*

**Note:** Among those who have watched videos on YouTube in the last 30 days, N=1036.



Among the most popular genres consumed on YouTube, variation exists based on age and sex. Films or TV drama shows are favored by 36% of male users compared to 41% of female users. Entertainment and celebrity news content on the platform is also more favored by female users, with 29% reporting to have consumed such programming compared to 26% of male viewers. Sports content on YouTube, however, is far more reported to have been consumed by male viewers, 34%, than female users, 8%. On the other hand, science and educational programs, are more reported to have been consumed on YouTube by female users, 25%, compared to male viewers, 17%.

Focus group participants, especially younger men, noted that they follow travel-related YouTube channels such as, “Soso Around the World.” Additionally, popular among young men are channels that cover the War in Ukraine, some of which contains questionable content. Moreover, channels that focus on current and international events are typically in English.

*“I watch bloggers. In particular, I watch content on YouTube about the War in Ukraine. As for that Austrian blogger, their content is also about militaries and wars. They are in English and I watch it with subtitles.” (Male, 30, Telavi)*

However, as one focus group participant explained, some remain skeptical of Western sources online regardless of platform as they feel they believe they are too dismissive of Russia;

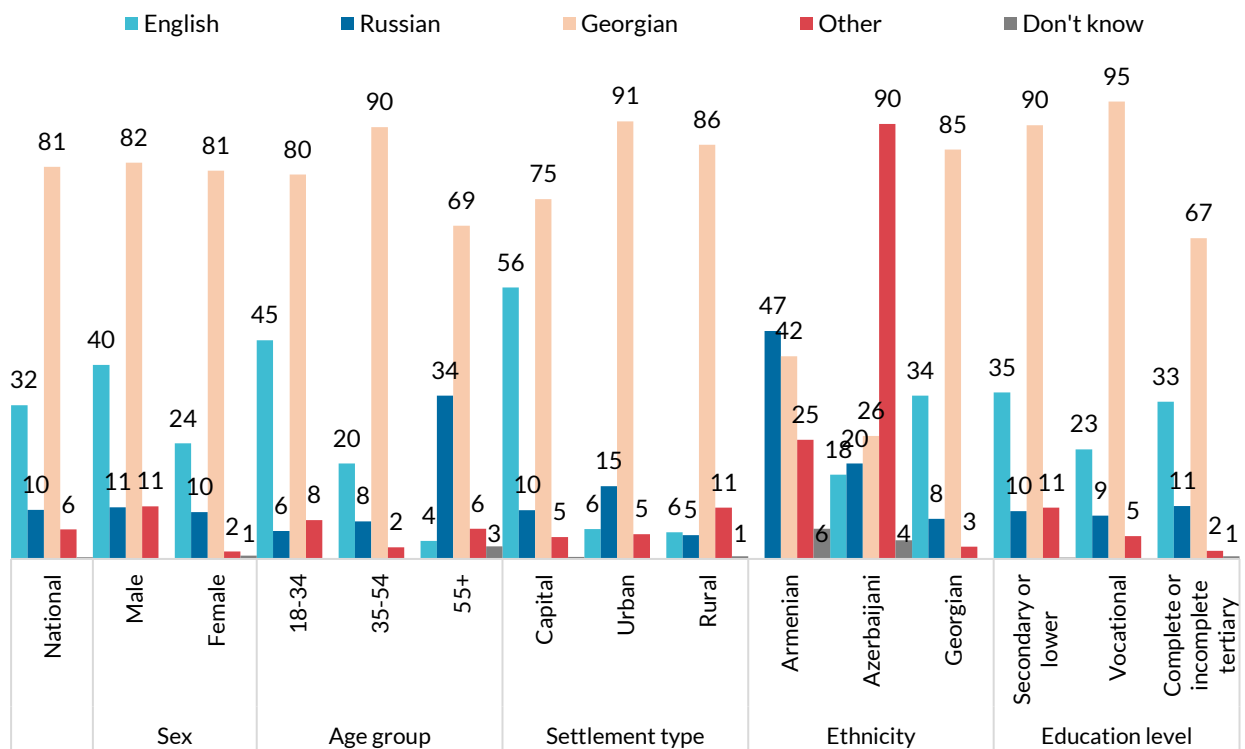
*“Not even all media in America is objective and independent, as it might seem. We are more interested in news related to our region. And in this case, they [Western media] are not always impartial and they actively defend the interests of the West. And their accusations against Russia sometimes sound offensive.” (Male, 21, Akhalkalaki)*

## Podcast Engagement

Podcasts appear to be a small but emerging medium for engaging with content in Georgia, with 12% of people report having listened to a podcast within the last 30 days. Those between the ages of 18-34 most frequently engage with podcasts, with 21% claiming to have used the medium in the last 30 days. Compared to the 18-34 group, the number of podcast listeners is less than half (10%) among those 35-54 years-of-age, and only 5% of those 55+ report having recently engaged with the medium.

*What was the language of the podcast(s) you listened to? (%) (Multiple answers permitted)*

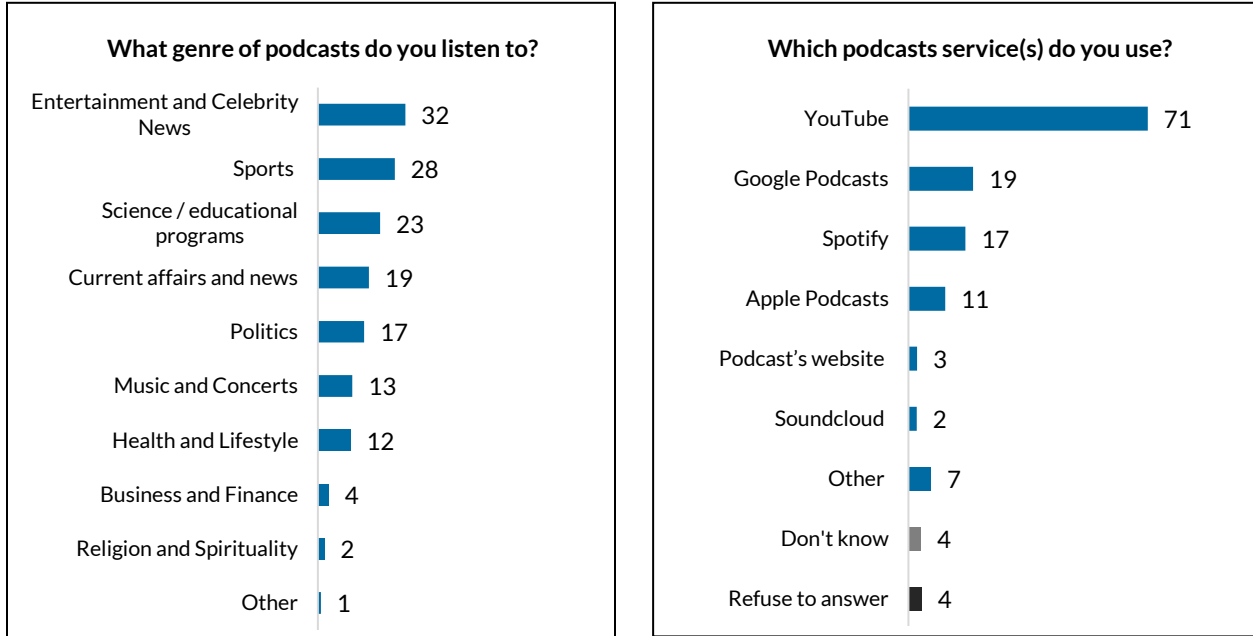
**Note:** Among those who have listened to podcasts in the last 30 days, N=189



Among those tuning into podcasts, Georgian language content is most frequently engaged with, 81% followed by those in English, 32%. Russian language podcasts are less tuned into, at 10%. 47% of ethnic Armenians listening to podcasts do so in Russian, however this is closely followed by Georgian language content, at 42%. Of ethnic Azerbaijani listeners, a great majority (90%) consume podcasts in another language which was not specified, however according to qualitative data, Turkish and Azerbaijani language sources were suggested to be popular among this group.

*Which genre of podcasts do you listen to? (%) (Multiple answers permitted) & Which podcast streaming service(s) do you use? (%) (Multiple answers permitted)*

**Note:** Among those who have listened to podcasts in the last 30 days, N=189



Of those listening to podcasts, the most popular genres consumed include entertainment and celebrity news (32%), sports (28%) and science/educational programs (23%). Current affairs and news also received a significant share of podcast listeners, at 19%.

Genres of podcast consumed varied according to gender. Among female podcast listeners, entertainment and celebrity news was most frequently reported (35%), then science and education (22%), followed by current affairs and news, 19%. Male podcast listeners, on the other hand, cited sports content most (42%), followed by entertainment and celebrity news (30%), and science and educational programs (22%).

Although podcasts are primarily an audio based medium, YouTube is the most popular platform to engage with such content among 71% of listeners. This is followed by Google Podcasts (19%). Other commonly used platforms include Spotify (17%), and Apple Podcasts (11%).

Most focus group participants reported not engaging with podcasts. Media experts interviewed also did not mention podcasts as a popular medium in Georgia. As one media expert explained,

compared to other parts of the world, the Georgian public seems to prefer condensed content over podcasts which can be extensive in length.

*"...While the rest of the world is moving to hour-long podcast discussions which people are even willing to pay for, here [in Georgia], short, contextualized pieces of information resonate more [with people] than extensive, in-depth, content."* (Media Expert, Journalist, Regional Media)

Despite focus group participants not reporting using podcasts, with 12% of people having listened to podcasts recently compared to 9% for radio, it is clear that the format is growing in popularity.

### **Streaming Services and Subscription-Based Platforms**

The global trend towards subscription-based news and entertainment platforms has not yet taken off in Georgia. A small minority (2%) of public currently pay for online news, while 96% claim to not use any such services.

Results from focus groups and expert interviews reflect the lack of popularity for subscription news services. As these respondents explained, most are unwilling to pay for services they already receive in a television package, or for free online through pirate streaming services;

*"I'll probably go to whatever [free streaming] websites which are still active. If they are blocked and nothing else is left, only then would I pay for it [content] elsewhere."* (Female, 19, Kutaisi)

Media experts' opinions aligned with those voiced in quantitative results and focus groups, explaining that the public is reluctant to pay for services they receive for free elsewhere. Some even suggesting that the best strategy for media is to spread its content on free mediums as much as possible;

*"As far as I can remember, for example, 'Ifact.ge' and 'Jam-news' attempted to get subscribers, but it did not work. Donors in general advised us to do this, but it does not work. If you want good access to an audience, this format works the best in Georgia. That is the free distribution of information on as many platforms as possible."* (Media Expert, Journalist, Local Media)

Of those that do not pay for news content, most (66%) appear unwilling to do so as they claim no incentives would entice them to pay. Some noted that cheaper options would entice them to pay for such services, at 9%. Seven percent claims they would pay if the content offered on such sites was

more interesting or relevant to them. However, as reflected by feedback from focus groups, the public appears hesitant to pay for these types of services.

Georgian audiences are similarly unwilling to pay for subscription entertainment services. A large majority (83%) indicates not using any subscription entertainment services at all. Among those streaming content, the most used method (4%) was a free download site. This is followed by 3% of people who subscribe to Setanta Sports. Cavea+, Netflix, and YouTube Premium are subscribed to by 2% of the public.

*Which online streaming services do you subscribe to? (Multiple answers permitted) (%)*



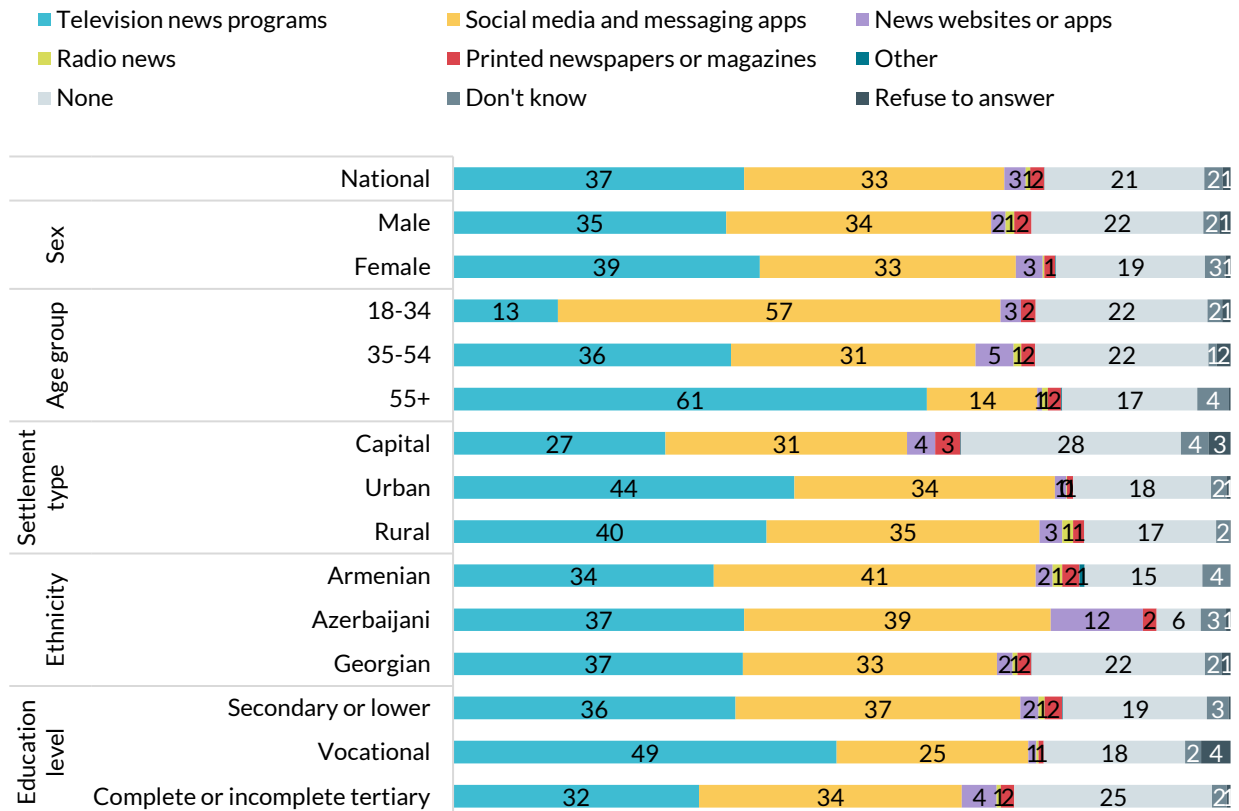


## TRUST IN MEDIA

When it comes to trust in media, Georgian people gave very low marks. 21% of people do not trust media from any source, and only 13% of young people (18-34) have trust in television. Across the population, 37% say they trust television news programs most, while 33% turn to social media and messaging apps. By contrast, 40% of those surveyed in a 2024 study by the Reuters Institute covering 47 countries said they trust the news, with the lowest level in any country at 23%.<sup>8</sup>

A generational divide is evident again, with 61% of people aged 55+ saying they do trust television news. On the other hand, 57% of 18-34 year-olds trust social media most, compared to only 14% of those 55+. In other words, the youngest and oldest age brackets have opposite views on trust when it comes to television and social media.

*Which media do you trust the most? (%)*

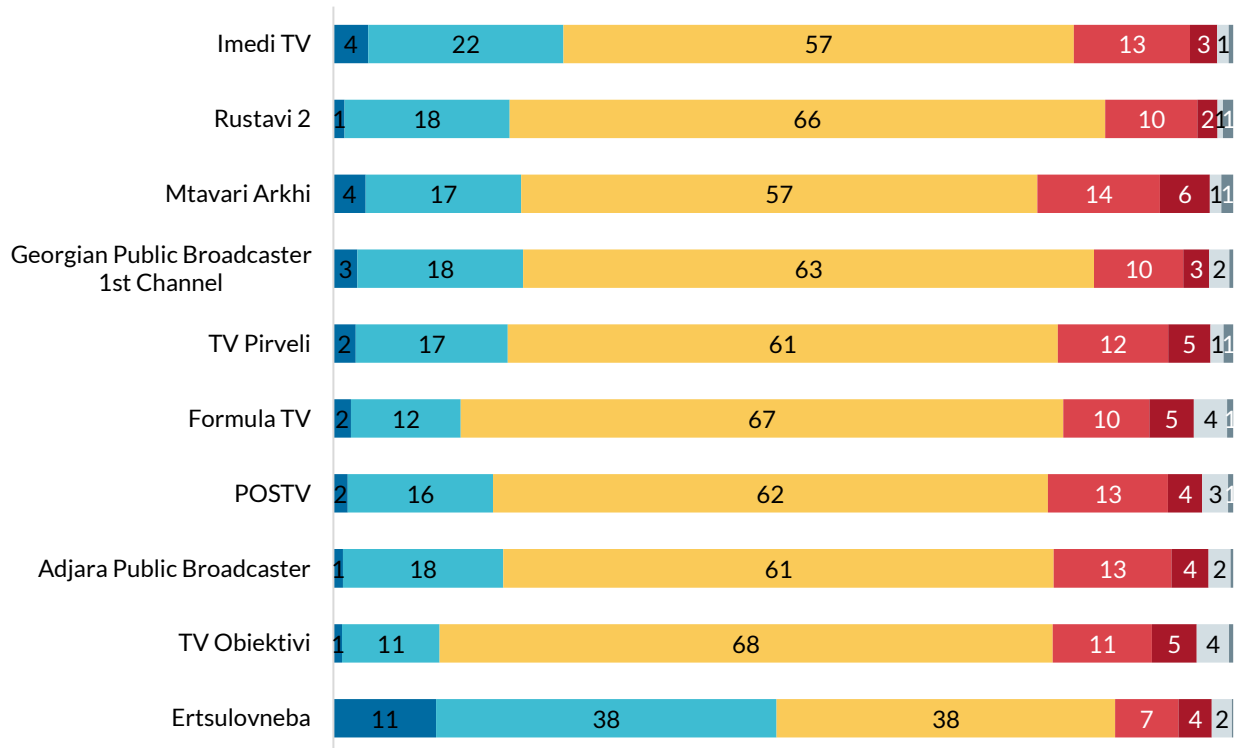


<sup>8</sup> "Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2024," Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2024, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2024>.

## Trust in Television

To what extent do you trust or distrust the following TV channels when it comes to their coverage of news and current events in Georgia? Top 10 most frequently watched TV channels (%)

■ Fully trust ■ Trust ■ Neither trust nor distrust ■ Distrust ■ Fully distrust ■ Don't know ■ Refuse to answer



Of those channels which over 20% of the public reported watching, religious channel Ertsulovneba has the highest trust (49%), followed by Imedi TV which garners more than a quarter (26%) of viewers' trust. Most commonly, respondents report neither trusting nor distrusting each of the channels, with this answer comprising a majority of the population in reference to the top ten broadcasters.

Despite survey results suggesting viewers lean more towards national broadcasters, focus group respondents expressed a sense of fatigue towards their content. Many feel that mainstream channels, such as Imedi TV and Mtavari Arkhi, are overwhelmingly polarized and politicized.

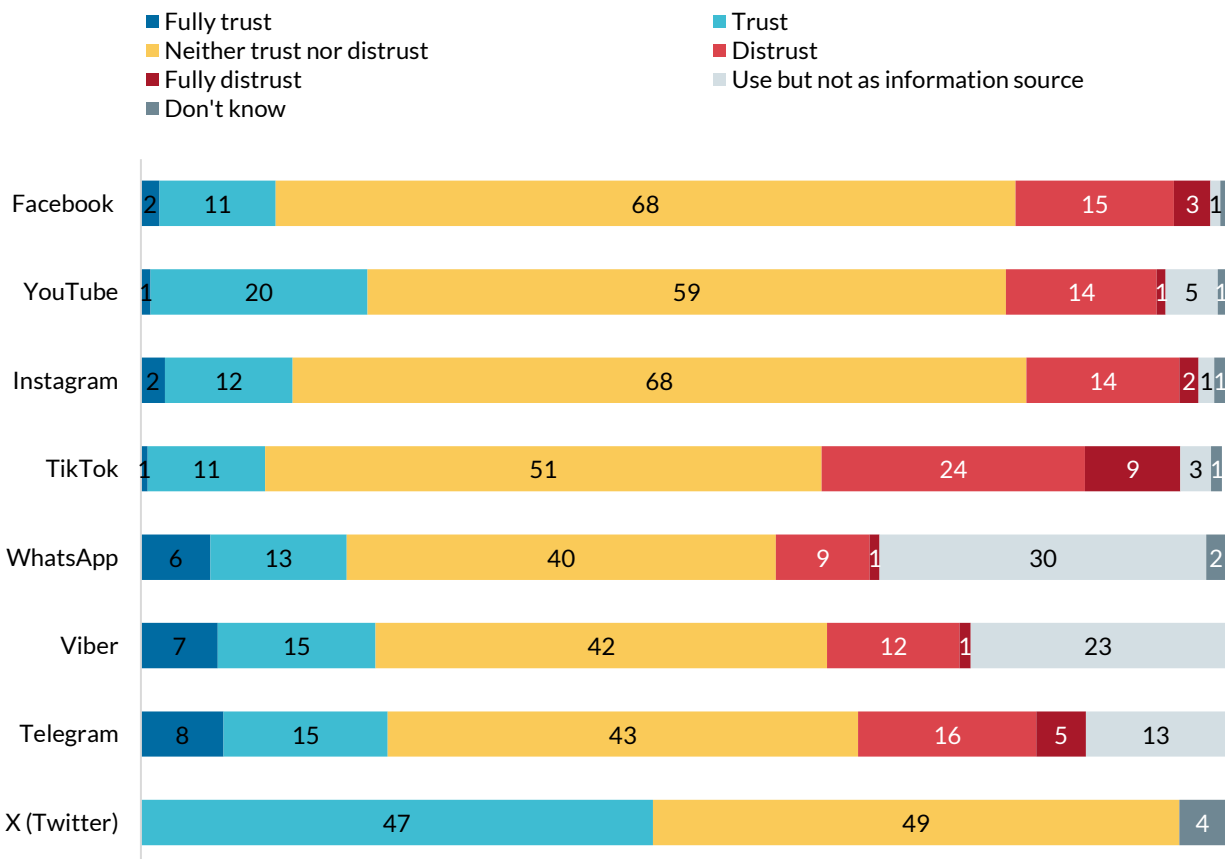
*"I said that there are biased TV channels. If you watch TV Imedi, everything in the country is wonderful, if you switch to TV Mtavari [Mtavari Arkhi] the country is collapsing. Everyone presents their own story and it's wrong." (Male, 49, Tbilisi)*

This opinion was largely backed by media experts during interviews, with many specifically identifying Imedi TV as a source of polarizing content. As one interviewee explained, many people watch Imedi TV's news content because it airs after drama series and other entertainment programming.

*"Why is Imedi popular? Because, besides investing in news, they've invested heavily in entertainment and TV series, which is a very important way to attract the masses. The masses watch Turkish series, they like talk shows and other shows that are uninteresting to us, and then, they stay to watch the news and fall under the influence of their political messaging."*  
(Media Expert, Online National Media)

## Trust in Social Media

*To what extent do you trust or distrust the content you see on social media platforms when it comes to the coverage of politics and current events in Georgia? (%)*



Although respondents report frequently using social media platforms, it is clear that this does not correlate to trust in the information shared. Users of all platforms do not particularly trust or distrust the information they receive online. TikTok users, however, have the highest frequency of distrust, at 33%. Among Facebook users, 18% distrust the information they find there. Those utilizing messaging platforms such as Viber and Telegram are most trusting of them, 22% and 23%, respectively. Trust scores were not significantly different among age groups.

Media experts and focus group participants agreed that the reliability of information found on social media is questionable. Disinformation, misinformation, and ‘trolling’ is common due to an absence of regulation.

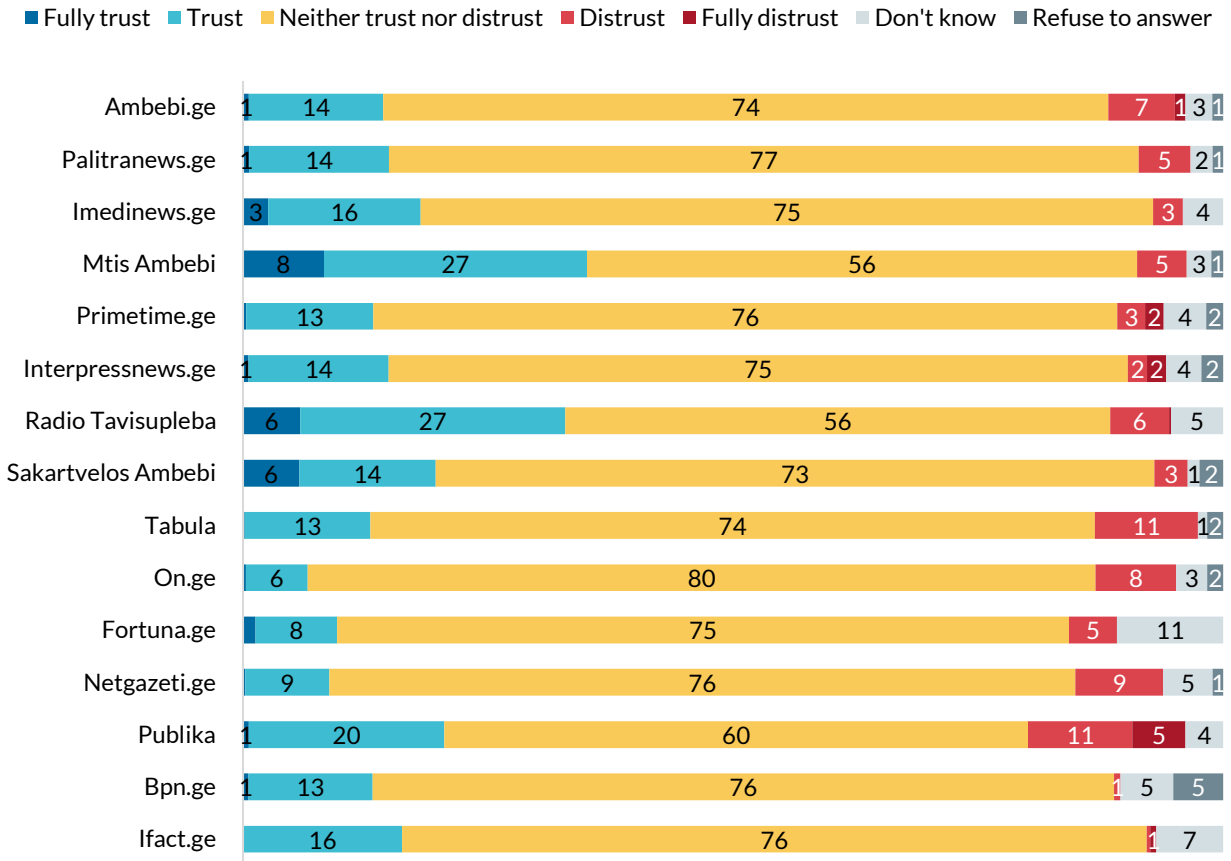
*“Meta has the darkest engagement and TikTok too. It's dark, that is, there are many trolls, anonymous accounts and artificially created content in the comments.”* (Media Expert, Journalist, Local Media);

*“I get most of my information from social media, but I always question its reliability because various opinions are spread there. Television media is more trustworthy for me, though I only rely on a few specific channels...”* (Male, 26, Batumi)

Despite national online media being turned to more frequently by the public, this preference does not necessarily translate to trust in their reporting.

## Trust in Online News Media

*To what extent do you trust or distrust the following web-based news agencies and newspapers when it comes to their coverage of news and current events in Georgia and the world? (%)*



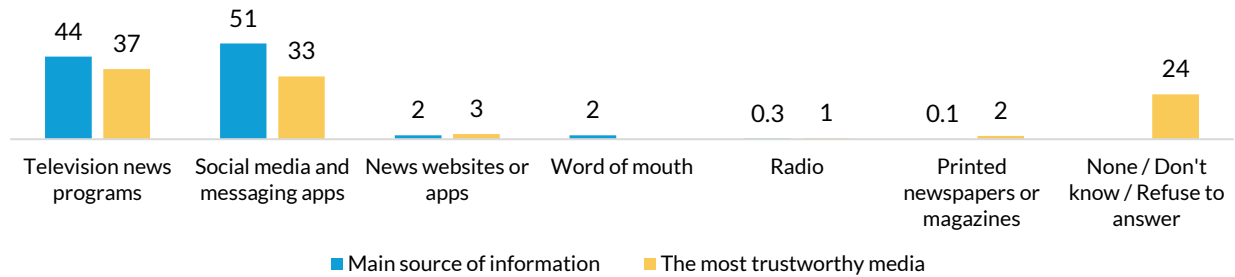
**Note:** Among those who report utilizing these online news media outlets. The sample size varies according to corresponding outlets.

Among the most frequently used national online media sites, Mtis Ambebi garners the highest degree of trust among those utilizing such sources, at 35%. This is followed by Radio Tavisupleba, at 33%, Sakartvelos Ambebi at 20%, and Imedineews.ge at 19%, with others receiving 15% of users' trust or less. A majority (50% or more) neither trusts nor distrusts such content. Interestingly, compared to television broadcasters, these online news sources are trusted less by users, with the exception of Mtis Ambebi, which is known for its in-depth investigative and activist reporting. It is important to note that the survey was conducted between July and September 2024, prior to significant protests and an increase of attention towards independent media coverage.

## Trust vs Frequency of Use

Analyzing reported levels of trust, and the frequency in which the public uses a source, demonstrates a strong correlation - people typically trust what they consume.

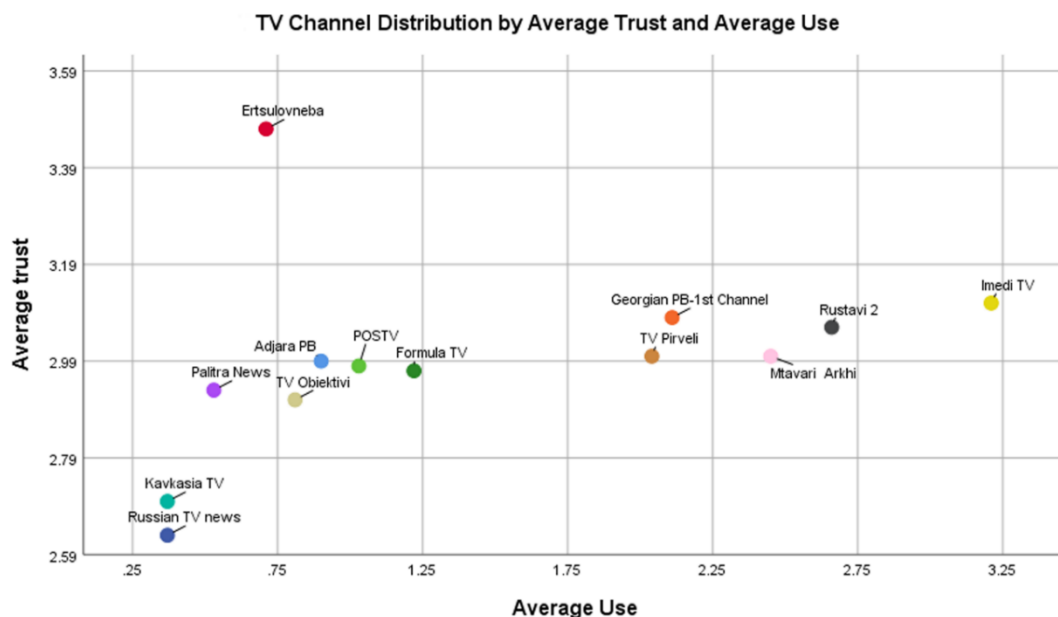
*Which of these would you say was your MAIN source of news and which media do you trust the most? (%)*



The data indicates that the majority of respondents use social media and messaging apps (51%) or television (44%) as their main sources of information. However, when it comes to trust, television is deemed the most trustworthy by 37% of the public, with social media and messaging apps following at 33%.

Among television channels, Imedi TV leads in usage and ranks second in trust, behind only Ertulovneba, which largely broadcasts on topics regarding religion.

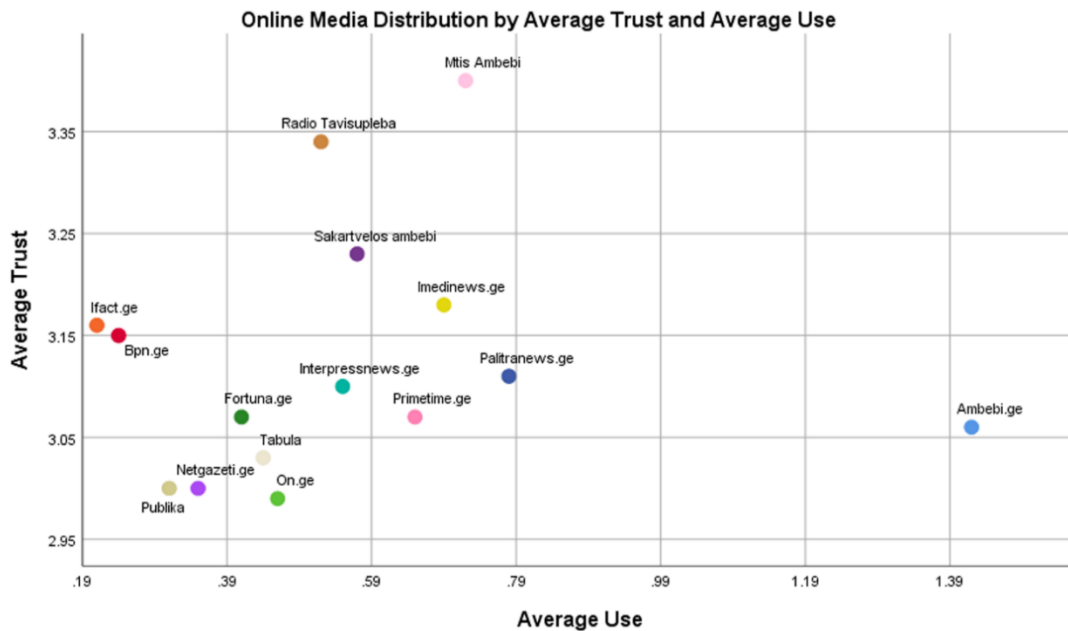
*TV channel distribution by average trust and average use.*



Individual online media sites rank relatively low in usage compared to TV channels. However, it is noted many users access content via social media and may not identify this as using an online news media site.

The scatter plot below of fifteen popular online news media sites suggests that higher usage does not always mean higher trust. Ifact.ge and Bpn.ge are less used sources while those who use them express a notable degree of trust towards them. Radio Tavisupleba and Mtis Ambebi demonstrate considerable use while garnering the highest degree of trust. Ambebi.ge is an outlier as it has the highest score of usage but its trust score is 11<sup>th</sup> among the 15 online media outlets selected. This list of outlets is not inclusive of all online media in Georgia.

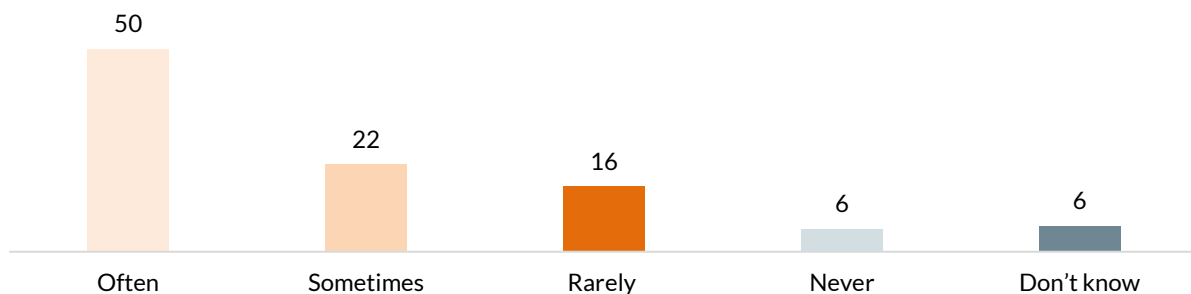
*Online Media distribution by average trust and average use.*



## PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF NEWS MEDIA

According to Freedom House, press freedoms and feelings of safety reporting in Georgia, among journalists, have severely decreased in recent years. Reports of intimidation, threats, and targeting of journalists by the government have become increasingly common.<sup>9</sup> This section covers the public perception of the media and awareness of violence and threats directed at journalists.

*How often, if at all, do you hear people criticizing journalists or news media? (%)*



Half (50%) of the public often encounters criticism towards journalists, while 22% reports hearing such criticism only sometimes.

Survey results demonstrate that criticism of journalism and news media over the past year has come from politicians, as reported by 51% of respondents. A quarter of the public mentioned that such criticism comes from ordinary people. Twenty-three percent said they heard criticism from friends, family, and colleagues, while another 20% indicated they heard it from celebrities and social media influencers. Only 18% reported hearing criticism of journalists and news media from other journalists.

A majority (55%) of the public have seen stories featured in media reporting on violent attacks on journalists within the past year. Despite concerns from media experts about violence towards journalists, 39% still reported not having seen content on such news in the past year.

In contrast to public perception, media experts expressed greater concerns about criticism and violence towards journalists. Some experts suggested that the government has contributed to this

<sup>9</sup> Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2024", Georgia.



problem by supporting and spreading critical messaging, passing laws intended to suppress independent media and voices, and supporting the perpetrators of violence against media figures. One media expert recalled an attack on reporters during an LGBTQ+ pride event, which received a violent response from counter-protestors:

*"What stands out most clearly in my memory now are the events of July 5<sup>th</sup> [2022], when several of my colleagues and friends were beaten, two of them brutally. We remember the entire anatomy of that day—the role of the government, specifically the Prime Minister, who almost gave instructions from the morning. And then we saw the subsequent process, the 'investigation', which was so symbolic that I don't even know what to call it."* (Media Expert, Online National Press)

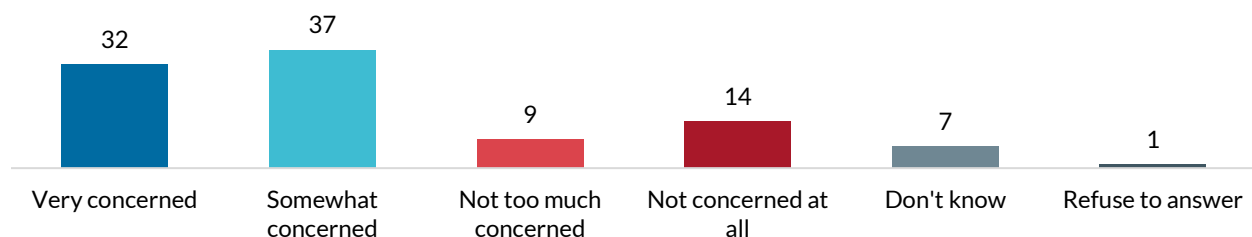
Another expert expanded on barriers in place, created by the government, which, although not violent, suppress their ability to properly report the news:

*"As for journalists, I can't say there is total persecution, but we clearly feel obstruction. For instance, during crucial sessions, our online media journalist or agency representative couldn't work in the parliament, which was very damaging for us. As mentioned, any information we request is either denied or answered vaguely, which we also cannot use."* (Media Expert, Journalist, Local Media)

## Manipulative Information and Media Literacy

Despite the popularity of online sources for news and information, many people are concerned about the internet's reliability in providing trustworthy information.

*To what extent would you say you are concerned about the spread of false information, also known as Fake News on the internet? (%)*

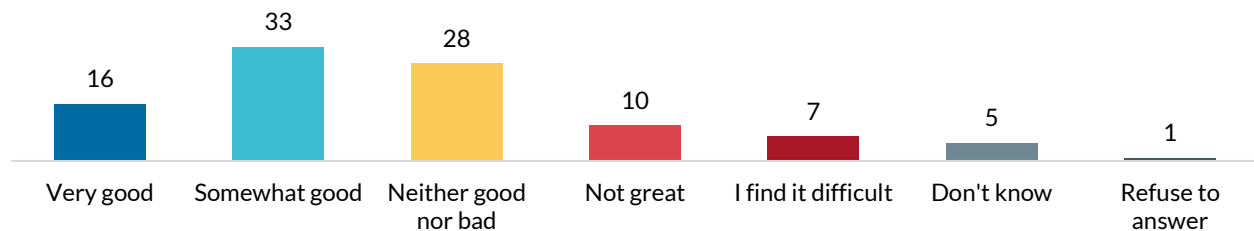


Despite its common use for news and information, 69% of the public are concerned about the spread of false information and the proliferation of fake news on the internet.

Although concerned, focus group participants felt confident in their ability to discern false information from factual content. This was especially true when discussing their preferred sources, as one respondent explained:

*“Regarding the Facebook group called ‘World Military’<sup>10</sup>, they gained a degree of my trust a long time ago, and I do not need verification. Because of what [content] they are putting out, I do not think it is necessary for me to verify it.” (Male, 26, Tbilisi)*

*How would you rate your ability to distinguish disinformation from credible, fact-based information? (%)*

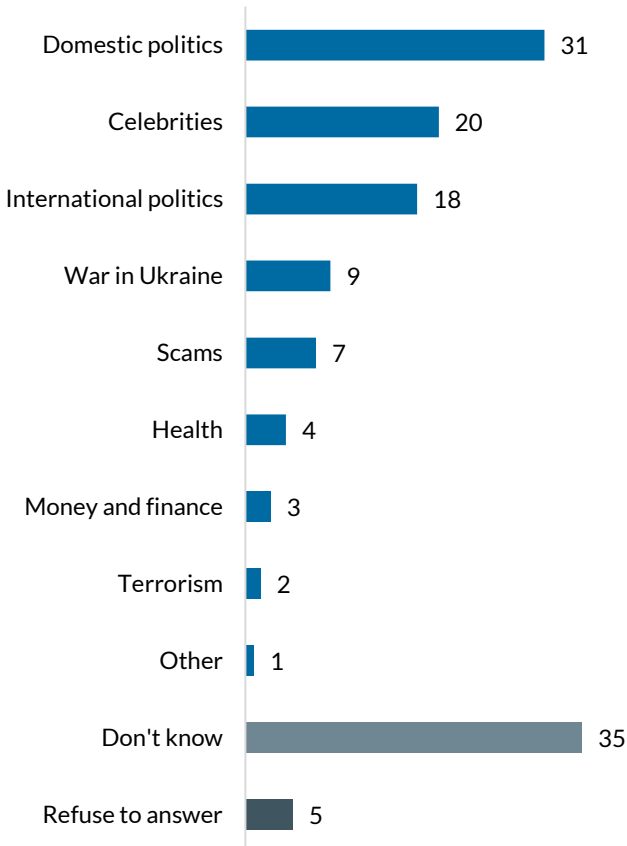


Just under half (49%) of the public believe they are 'very good' to 'somewhat good' at distinguishing fake information from factual information online. One focus group participant expressed concern about the difficulty of distinguishing fact from fiction online:

*“I will add one thing, although social networks have many positive sides, it is accompanied by negative sides. Everyone there can become a source and spread a story on their own, and it is very difficult to prove the accuracy of this, and there is no mechanism for regulating social media either.” (Male, 21, Akhalkalaki)*

<sup>10</sup> The "World Military" Facebook page has gained significant popularity among young audiences since its creation following the onset of the War in Ukraine. It provides news and analyses on global conflicts, including those in Syria, and covers political developments related to these issues. The page has expanded its presence to Telegram, where it shares more sensitive content. Despite being blocked and its page closed several times, the administrators continue to create new pages in order to maintain their social media presence.

*In the last 30 days, on what kind of topics have you seen or heard information that you think was false? (%) (Multiple answers permitted)*



Topics related to domestic politics are most often identified as sources of false information, at 31%. News surrounding celebrities is also frequently cited as a source of false content, at 20%. Additionally, 9% believe that information on the War in Ukraine is a common source of fake news. A further 18% believe that news related to international politics is a common subject of fake news.

One media expert expanded on other topics prone to disinformation:

*“The topic of gender is used heavily [for manipulation] ... In general, the theme of peace is used mainly for manipulation. War is used for manipulation and emotional topics that can affect a person's emotions in general rather than their ability to think rationally. (Media expert, Journalist, Local Media)*

A significant portion of the public points to domestic sources as responsible for manipulative information.

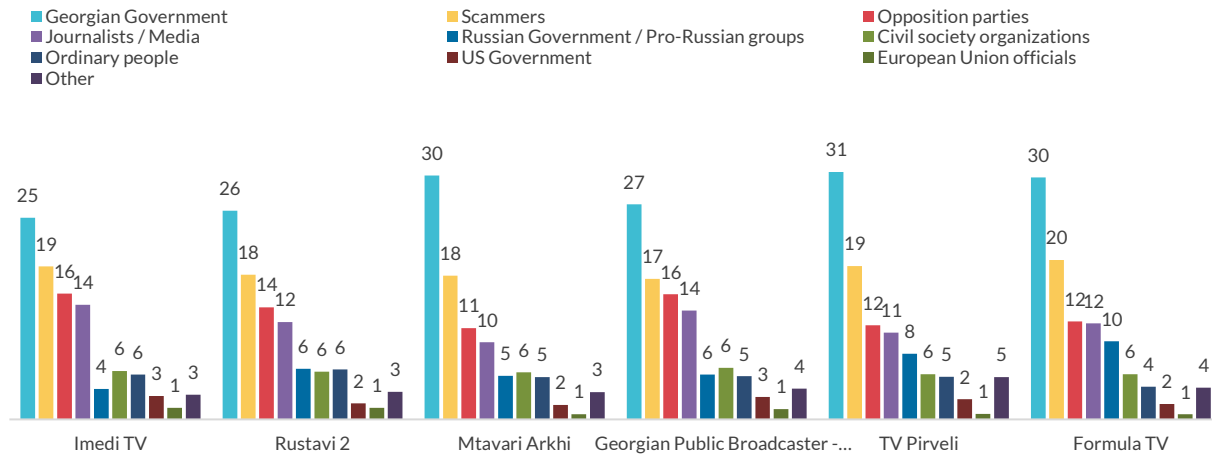
*In your opinion, who is most responsible for spreading false information in our country? (%) (Multiple answers permitted)*



Notably, 26% of people believe the Georgian government is responsible for the spread of fake news, followed by 'scammers' at 17%. Opposition parties are indicated by 12% of the public, along with journalists and the media. Civil society organizations are seen as a source by 5%, along with the Russian government and pro-Russian groups.

There are no notable differences in disinformation sources among viewers of the main TV channels. A slightly higher share of TV Pirveli (31%), and Mtavari Arkhi (30) viewers mentioned the government as the most responsible for disinformation, than those who watch Imedi TV (25%), though the difference is minor. Furthermore, a slightly higher percentage of Formula TV viewers (10%) reported that the Russian government or pro-Russian groups are primarily responsible for disinformation compared to Imedi TV viewers (4%).

*In your opinion, who is most responsible for spreading false information in our country? TV channel viewers (%) (Multiple answers permitted, 6 most watched channels shown)*



One media expert elaborated on the government as a source of disinformation, explaining that it is a tool to promote its policies and stances on social issues:

*"What do governments, especially this one, do? Why do they push the issue of minorities so much, claiming that LGBT propaganda is spreading, minors are being corrupted, and that Europe will come and everyone will turn gay? It's to scare people, to create the image of an enemy. They need anti-Western rhetoric right now, and they use the phobias that are already rooted in society. Manipulation of this topic is constant. I always remember a news story about how incest was legalized in Belgium, simply because it was so widely shared. I often meet people who actually think that [happened] over there..."* (Media Expert, Online National Media)

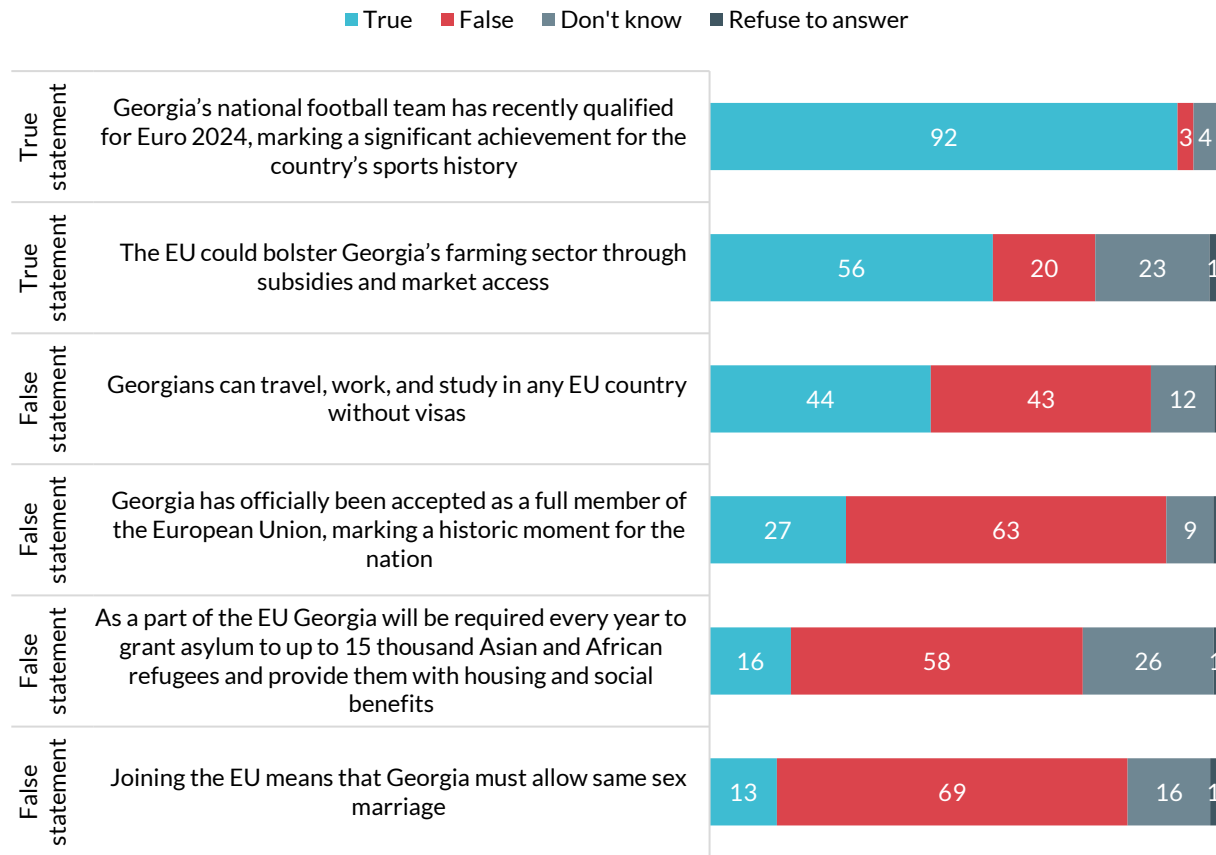
One focus group participant noted, however, that disinformation is used across the political spectrum in Georgia:

*"At the end of the elections, it was a lie that the UNM<sup>11</sup> won on Mtavari Arkhi and Georgian Dream won on Imedi. I haven't seen more obvious disinformation than that. The opposition was celebrating there, and the government was celebrating somewhere else."* (Female, 19, Kutaisi)

To measure media literacy and the nature of false information, survey participants were presented with a series of true or false statements. These statements covered topics and themes that have been widely discussed in the country, including politics, society, and culture.

<sup>11</sup> UNM (United National Movement) one of Georgia's opposition parties. In power from 2003-2012.

Answer the following statements as 'True' or 'False'. (%)



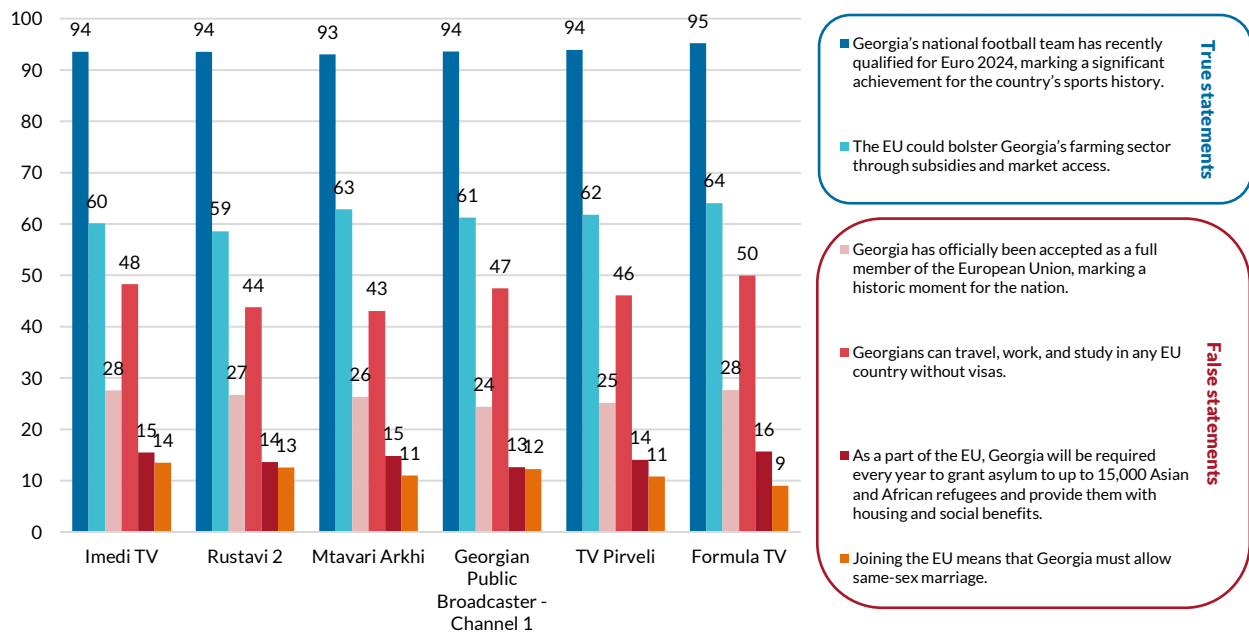
Question 1 received the highest percentage of accurate responses, at 92%. True and false statements related to the EU and its policies were more difficult for respondents to identify. Regarding current visa and travel policy in the EU, 43% are aware that they cannot work or study in the EU without a visa. Additionally, 13% inaccurately believe that EU integration will require Georgia to allow same-sex marriage, while another 16% believe the country will be required to host 15,000 asylum seekers. The interpretation of Statement 4 is also notable: a majority, 63%, correctly identify the statement as false, while over a quarter (27%) mistakenly believe it to be true that Georgia is already a full member of the EU.

This data was analyzed by ethnicity and other demographic factors to better understand media literacy within the population. The analysis revealed significant differences in media literacy based on ethnicity and education level, with ethnic Azerbaijanis and Armenians detecting incorrect statements less. Individuals with higher levels of education also demonstrated a stronger ability to distinguish between true and false statements.

The divide in media literacy according to ethnicity may be due to language barriers that prevent access to national news sources, which primarily broadcast in Georgian, as well as limited coverage of Georgian issues in other languages. An ethnic Armenian focus group participant shared her news sources, which are unlikely to provide coverage of national issues in Georgia. She explained that she often relies on Armenian outlets and local sources for information:

*"For me, my first source is Jnews, and then the First Channel of Armenia. I'm just looking up some interesting stories or news and I browse who's writing what. World news is spread more on Telegram; I find news shared by Armenian media more there [Telegram]." (Female, 20, Akhalkalaki)*

Answer the following statements as 'True' by 6 most watched TV channel viewers (%)

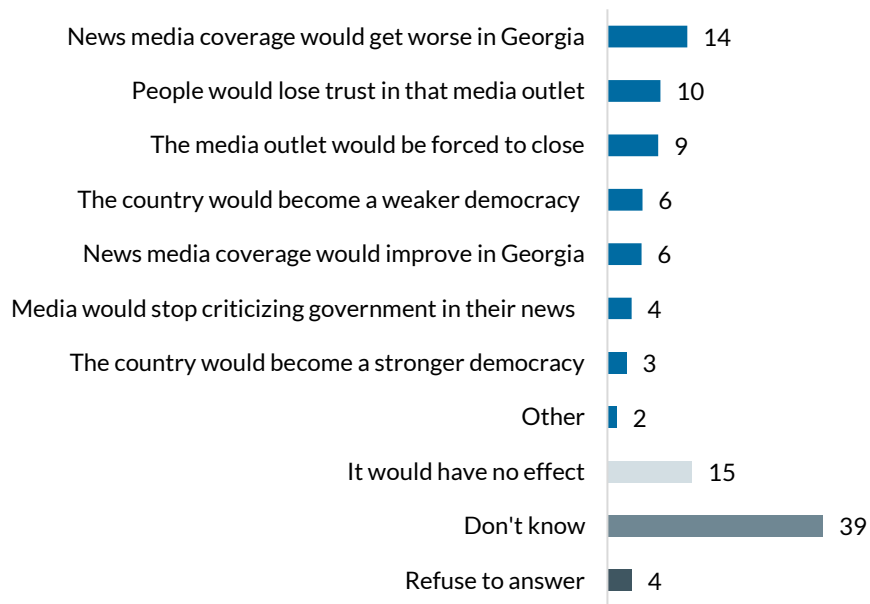


The above chart suggests that there are no significant differences in identifying the information as true or false. Slightly more Formula TV viewers (64%) correctly answered that the EU could bolster Georgia's farming sector, compared to Imedi TV (60%) and Rustavi 2 (59%) viewers. The smallest share of Formula TV viewers (9%) considered the false statement that joining the EU means allowing same-sex marriage to be true, while 14% of Imedi TV and 13% of Rustavi 2 viewers believed it.

## Public Perceptions of the 'Foreign Influence Law'

Many media professionals working for independent outlets believe that the Georgian government's recent passing of the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, commonly referred to as the 'Foreign Influence Law' or the 'Russian Law,' is a major development impacting media in the country. The survey examined public perception of the law's impact on independent media.

*What do you think would happen if independent media that receives funds from foreign governments are required to register as agents of foreign influence? (%) (Multiple answers permitted)*



Despite widespread protests and extensive media coverage, the results of this question did not vary significantly according to people's television viewing habits or other key questions.

A considerable 39% of people are unsure what will result from the law's enactment, indicating they 'don't know,' while 15% believe it 'would have no effect' on media.

Some concern about the future of independent media under the Foreign Influence Law was expressed, with 14% indicating that 'news media coverage would get worse in Georgia' and 10% saying that 'people would lose trust in that media outlet.' Nine percent of respondents also believed that independent media outlets might have to close if they are designated as foreign agents.

As one media expert explained, some independent media actors believe that the law is part of a larger plan by the Georgian government to sow distrust among the public towards the media:



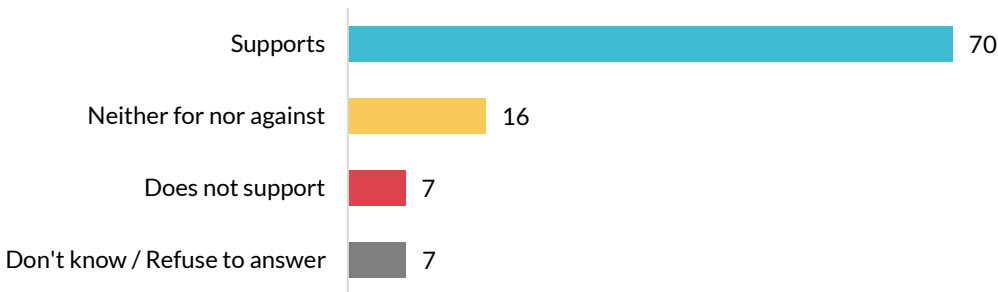
*“They [the government] do it on purpose to make it appear as if the critical media does not try to verify the information, and also the aggressive attitude of the politicians themselves, cursing, insulting journalists, and in general, how the audience feels about whether they support a particular party or its opinion is important, one can repeat this or that behavior and we have seen it under the previous government and we are seeing it under the current government as well.”*

(Media Expert, Editor, Online National Media)

## EU MEMBERSHIP VIEWS RELATIVE TO MEDIA HABITS

To assess the political outlook and preferences of the Georgian public and correlate them with media consumption habits, respondents were asked to indicate their degree of support for Georgia becoming a member of the EU.

*To what extent would you support Georgia’s membership in the European Union? (%)*



A question on public support of Georgia’s European aspirations has been asked regularly in surveys and polls, with results in 2023 showing over 80% somewhat or fully in favor.<sup>12</sup> According to this survey’s results, 70% of people answered favorably, either generally in favor or fully supporting Georgia’s membership in the EU.

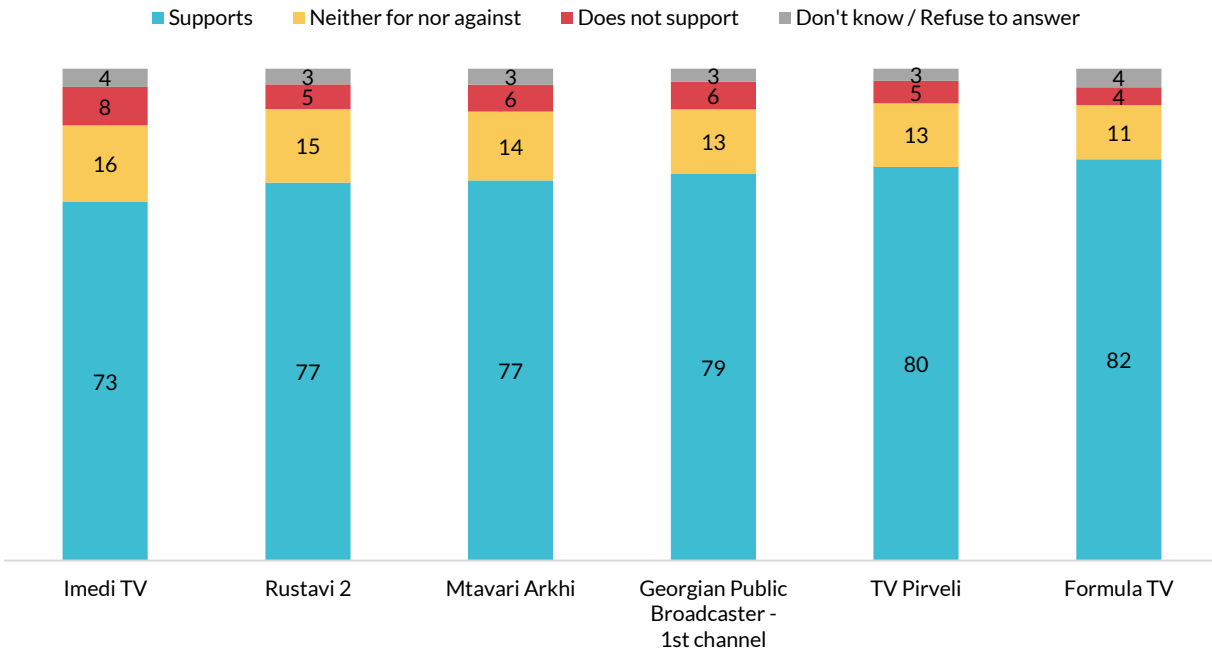
Only 7% do not support Georgia’s accession into the EU. It is important to note that a significant minority (16%) is neither for nor against Georgia becoming a part of the EU.

An analysis of people’s preferred information sources and TV viewing habits in relation to this data shows no significant correlation between support for Georgia joining the EU and how people get their information, nor according to preferred television stations. Among those who prefer social media and messaging apps versus those who favor television, both groups support Georgia’s EU membership at the same rate (71%). Despite the increasingly polarized news landscape on tele-

<sup>12</sup> International Republican Institute, “Georgia Survey of Public Opinion.”

vision, viewers' preferences for broadcasters do not significantly vary according to their support for Georgia joining the EU.

*Would you support Georgia's membership in the European Union? (%) and How often do you watch news coverage on the following TV channels? (%) (6 most watched channels shown)*



Viewers of the six most frequently watched channels, regardless of the outlets' affiliation, overwhelmingly support Georgia's EU membership. Slightly fewer (73%) of Imedi TV viewers support EU accession compared to competitor Mtavari Arkhi (77%), while support among TV Pirveli (80%) and Formula TV (82%) viewers is the highest. These numbers are all higher than the national average figure of 70%, indicating that viewers of these six television channels have higher levels of support for Georgia's EU membership than non-viewers.

Both focus groups and commentary from media experts align with the survey data. The Georgian public widely engages with news and information outlets; however, their sources of information are highly dependent on age and education level. Additionally, according to focus group participants, younger individuals and those who use online sources in general actively seek out information that interests them, whereas older generations are more likely to passively watch news stories selected for broadcast on television.

## ANNEXES

### Annex I: Research Methodology

The public opinion survey completed 2,421 face-to-face interviews, including an oversample of ethnic Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Areas with concentrated minority populations in Georgia are defined as electoral precincts in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, and Kakheti regions, where at least 40% of the population is ethnically non-Georgian. In these areas, ethnic Georgians were interviewed when randomly sampled. Ethnic Armenians residing in Tbilisi (constituting 33.3% of the ethnic Armenian population of Georgia and 5.2% of the Tbilisi population) were not stratified separately and were sampled alongside other ethnic groups in the capital city and weighted to match their share within the overall ethnic Armenian population.

The target population for the public opinion survey is defined as the adult population (18+) of Georgia, excluding those residing in occupied areas. To ensure nationwide representation and generalization of the survey results to geographic units and population groups, the research team utilized multistage cluster sampling with stratification. The sample is stratified by the capital city, other urban areas, and rural settlements.

The primary sampling unit (PSU) for the public opinion survey is election precincts, as appropriate information for sampling is not available at a smaller level, and no complete list of households or individuals is publicly accessible to enable a simple random sample. The sampling frame is based on electoral rolls from the most recent parliamentary/presidential elections, accurately reflecting the country's current demographic composition.

The table below outlines the number of target interviews per stratum and demographic indicators such as; age, sex, ethnicity, and education level of respondents.

Region	N	Age		Sex %		Ethnicity %		Education level %	
Adjara	199	Mean	51	Male	37.2	Armenian	3	Secondary or lower	50.3
		Minimum	18	Female	62.8	Georgian	97	Vocational	22.1
		Maximum	93					Complete or incomplete tertiary	27.6
Guria	200	Mean	57	Male	38	Armenian	1.5	Secondary or lower	38.5
		Minimum	18	Female	62	Georgian	97	Vocational	34.5
		Maximum	93			Other	1.5	Complete or incomplete tertiary	27
Imereti	200	Mean	61	Male	38	Armenian	0.5	Secondary or lower	48
		Minimum	18	Female	62	Georgian	99	Vocational	29.5
		Maximum	92			Other	0.5	Complete or incomplete tertiary	22.5
Kakheti	151	Mean	58	Male	37.7	Georgian	100	Secondary or lower	42.4
		Minimum	18	Female	62.3			Vocational	34.4
		Maximum	94					Complete or incomplete tertiary	23.2
Kvemo Kartli	276	Mean	54	Male	37.7	Armenian	1.8	Secondary or lower	66.3
		Minimum	18	Female	62.3	Azerbaijani	69.6	Vocational	13.8
		Maximum	90			Georgian	27.2	Complete or incomplete tertiary	19.9
						Other	1.4		
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	200	Mean	58	Male	35	Armenian	1.5	Secondary or lower	40
		Minimum	18	Female	65	Georgian	97	Vocational	32
		Maximum	92			Other	1.5	Complete or incomplete tertiary	28
Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti	209	Mean	63	Male	38.3	Georgian	99	Secondary or lower	32.5
		Minimum	18	Female	61.7	Other	1	Vocational	34
		Maximum	89					Complete or incomplete tertiary	33.5
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	203	Mean	56	Male	33.5	Georgian	100	Secondary or lower	43.8
		Minimum	18	Female	66.5			Vocational	33
		Maximum	90					Complete or incomplete tertiary	23.2
Samtskhe-Javakheti	353	Mean	56	Male	30	Armenian	56.7	Secondary or lower	59.8
		Minimum	18	Female	70	Azerbaijani	0.3	Vocational	20.1
		Maximum	93			Georgian	42.2	Complete or incomplete tertiary	20.1
						Other	0.8		
Shida Kartli	225	Mean	57	Male	31.6	Armenian	0.4	Secondary or lower	50.7
		Minimum	18	Female	68.4	Georgian	97.3	Vocational	24.9
		Maximum	89			Other	2.2	Complete or incomplete tertiary	24.4
Tbilisi	205	Mean	52	Male	40.5	Armenian	7.8	Secondary or lower	30.2
		Minimum	18	Female	59.5	Azerbaijani	2	Vocational	16.6
		Maximum	87			Georgian	86.3	Complete or incomplete tertiary	53.2
						Other	3.9		
<b>Total</b>	<b>2421</b>								

At the first stage of sampling, CRRC-Georgia sampled voting precincts in each stratum with probability proportional to size from the sampling frame (a list of voting precincts provided by the Central Election Committee of Georgia). At the second stage of sampling, interviewers selected households using a systematic random walk procedure.<sup>13</sup> Within the sampled households, CRRC utilized the Kish table method to select respondents at the final stage of sampling. No substitution of sampling points is permitted to minimize sampling bias.

CRRC adhered to the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR)'s standard for determining the response rate, wherein an interview in which at least 50% of the questions had valid answers were considered a full response.<sup>14</sup> The research team completed 2,421 interviews, with 6,398 interview attempts made. This resulted in a response rate of 38%.

### ***Focus groups***

The focus group plan involved conducting 9 discussions with participants from the capital city and eight additional regions/regional agglomerations. In some cases, regions were combined for this purpose, such as Adjara and Guria, and Racha-Lechkhumi-Zemo Svaneti with Imereti. The nine focus groups included two separate discussions with minority groups to ensure diverse viewpoints: one with ethnic Armenians from Samtskhe-Javakheti and another with ethnic Azerbaijanis from Kvemo Kartli.

The discussions involved survey respondents who had expressed their willingness to participate in follow-up inquiries. CRRC-Georgia recruited approximately 50% more focus group discussion participants than needed. That equated to 12 potential focus group participants for each event in order to reach 8. Below is a demographic breakdown of each focus group:

---

<sup>13</sup> Geostat, "2014 General Population Census Results".

<sup>14</sup> AAPOR, "AAPOR Code of Professional Ethics and Practices",

Location	Sex	Ethnicity	Age Groups	Employment Status
Akhalkalaki, Samtskhe- Javakheti	5 Female 3 Male	Armenian	20-60 years-of-age	5 employed 3 unemployed
Batumi, Adjara	4 Female 4 Male	Georgian	23-65 years-of-age	7 employed 1 unemployed
Gori, Shida Kartli	5 Female 3 Male	Georgian	25-65 years-of-age	4 Unemployed 4 Employed
Kutaisi, Imereti	4 Female 4 Male	Georgian	19-66 years-of-age	4 Employed 3 Unemployed 1 Refuse to Answer
Marneuli, Kvemo Kartli	4 Female 4 Male	Azerbaijani	22-61 years-of-age 1 Refuse to Answer	6 Employed 2 Unemployed
Tbilisi (1)	4 Female 3 Male	Georgian	22-58 years-of-age	6 Employed 1 Unemployed
Tbilisi (2)	4 Female 5 Male	Georgian	22-57 years-of-age	6 Employed 3 Unemployed
Telavi, Kakheti	5 Female 3 Male	Georgian	21-63 years-of-age	5 Employed 3 Unemployed
Zugdidi, Samegrelo	4 Female 4 Male	Georgian	19-65 years-of-age	4 Employed 4 Unemployed

### ***In-depth interviews***

The selection of in-depth interview respondents was a collaborative process between CRRC Georgia and the technical team, drawing from IREX's list of contacts representing a broad spectrum of media professionals from television, radio, print, and online outlets, including journalists, editors, and directors. Similar to the approach for focus group discussions, 23 respondents were selected to ensure reaching the target of 15 interviews.

## Annex item II: Works Cited

- AAPOR, “Standards and Ethics”. AAPOR: 2024. <https://aapor.org/standards-and-ethics/>
- Atchaidze, Makhare. “Tracking Georgia’s Media, Internet Usage and Perceptions Over a Decade.” Caucasus Analytical Digest: No. 138. Sept. 2024. <https://laender-analysen.de/cad/pdf/CaucasusAnalyticalDigest138.pdf>
- Communications Commission. “2022 Annual Report.” *Communications Commission*: 2022. <https://comcom.ge/uploads/other/11/11972.pdf>
- CRRC Georgia. “Caucasus Barometer 2021 Georgia.” CRRC Georgia: 2022. <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2021ge/codebook/>
- CRRC Georgia. “Caucasus Barometer time-series dataset Georgia.” CRRC Georgia: 2019. <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb-ge/codebook/>
- CRRC Georgia. “NDI: Public attitudes in Georgia, time-series dataset.” CRRC Georgia: 2020. <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/ndi-ge/codebook/>
- CRRC Georgia. “NDI: Public attitudes in Georgia, April 2014.” CRRC Georgia: Apr. 2014. <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/na2014ge/codebook/>
- CRRC Georgia. “NDI: Public attitudes in Georgia, October 2023.” CRRC Georgia: Oct. 2023. <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/no2023ge/codebook/>
- CRRC Georgia. “Unmasking Vulnerability: Understanding Disinformation in Samtskhe-Javakheti”. *International Media Support*: Mar. 2024. <https://www.mediasupport.org/publication/unmasking-vulnerability-understanding-disinformation-in-samtskhe-javakheti/>
- Data Report AL, “Digital 2023: Georgia”, *DigitalReportAL*: Feb. 2023. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-georgia>
- Fabos, Zachary. “Almost half of young Georgians are on TikTok.” *OC Media*: Oct. 2023. <https://oc-media.org/features/datablog-almost-half-of-young-georgians-are-on-tiktok/>
- Freedom House, “Freedom on the Net 2016”. *Freedom House*: 2016. [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FOTN%202016%20Georgia\\_0.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FOTN%202016%20Georgia_0.pdf)
- Freedom House, “Freedom in the world 2024, Georgia.” *Freedom House*: 2024. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/georgia/freedom-world/2024>

- Georgia Public Broadcaster. "Television Audience Research." *Sonar*: May, 2021.  
<https://cdn.1tv.ge/app/uploads/2021/05/1621940987-TELEVISION-AUDIENCE-RESEARCH.pdf?fbclid=IwAR32F0HoS35plrme1KpxwLQhiLEwS0knh1yiJn7LCWcganyhBdwqaylaVK8>
- Geostat, "2014 General Population Census Results". *National Statistics Office of Georgia*: 2014.  
<https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/737/2014-general-population-census-results>
- International Republican Institute. "Georgia Survey of Public Opinion." *International Republican Institute*: Nov. 15, 2023. <https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CISR-Approved-IRI-Poll-Presentation-Georgia-September-October-2023-For-Public-Distribution.pdf>.
- IREX, "Vibrant Information Barometer, 2021: Georgia." *IREX*: 2021.  
<https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/vibe-georgia-2021.pdf>
- Jonas, Ted. "US FARA vs. Georgian Foreign Agents Law: Three Major Differences." *Civil.ge*: Apr. 11, 2024. <https://civil.ge/archives/591175>
- Kincha, Shota. "Tbilisi court reduces sentences for 2021 anti-Pride rioters." *OC Media*: Jan. 16, 2023. <https://oc-media.org/tbilisi-court-reduces-sentences-for-2021-anti-pride-rioters/>
- Kobaladze, Mariam, Vacharadze, Kristine. "Do Georgians Trust TV?" *OC Media*: Sept. 2022.  
<https://oc-media.org/features/datablog-do-georgians-trust-tv/>
- Lessenski, Marin. "How It Started, How It is Going: Media Literacy Index 2022". *Open Society Institute Sofia*: Policy Brief 57, Oct. 2022. [https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/HowItStarted\\_MediaLiteracyIndex2022\\_ENG\\_.pdf](https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/HowItStarted_MediaLiteracyIndex2022_ENG_.pdf)
- Mikashavidze, Maia. "Media Landscapes: Georgia." *OCW*: 2019.  
<https://medialandscapes.org/country/georgia/media/print>
- Reporters Without Borders, "Georgia, Europe-Central Asia." *RSF*: 2024.  
<https://rsf.org/en/country/georgia>
- Thomson Reuters Foundation. "Georgia: Media Consumption and Audience Perceptions Research." Thomson Reuters Foundation: 2021.  
[https://epim.trust.org/application/velocity/newgen/assets/TRFGeorgiaReport\\_ENG.pdf](https://epim.trust.org/application/velocity/newgen/assets/TRFGeorgiaReport_ENG.pdf)
- Turmanidze, R., Dasic P., Pophkadze G. "Digital Infrastructure in Georgia as a Condition for Successful Application Industry 4.0". *International Scientific Journal 'Industry 4.0'*: 2020.  
<https://stumejournals.com/journals/i4/2020/1/3.full.pdf>



Zondler, Elena. Ekaterina Basilaia, Alexander Matschke, and Evelin Meier. "Georgia: Media freedom in decline." *DW Akademie*: Mar. 22, 2023.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/georgia/georgia-media-freedom-decline-enka>