

HATE SPEECH

2018

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The MDF conducted similar studies in 2016 and 2014–2015. The study was carried out in partnership with the UN Association of Georgia within USAID’s “Promoting Integration, Tolerance and Awareness Program.”

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INTRODUCTION |

Since 2015, the Media Development Foundation (MDF) has been publishing annual reports on hate speech. This report reflects the results of media monitoring and the data obtained through focus groups that were conducted between 1 January and 31 December 2018. The objective of the study was to reveal various forms of hate speech and sources of hate speech in media and public discourse as well as to analyze main trends.

Apart from media outlets, the monitoring also focused on other sources – politicians, clergy, public organizations and representatives of society. A public opinion about fake news concerning migrants was explored within the format of focus groups.

The introductory part of the report presents the key findings and the methodology of the study; the second part provides total qualitative data by typology of hate speech; the third part discusses sources of hate speech by typology as well as public attitudes to fake news about migrants; the final part contains profiles of the sources.

The report was prepared within the USAID-funded *Promoting Integration, Tolerance and Awareness in Georgia (PITA)* program that is implemented by the UN Association of Georgia (UNAG).

| METHODOLOGY

MDF selected both mainstream and tabloid media outlets as the subjects of monitoring. The monitoring was conducted on 18 media outlets. Several TV programs, taken off the air as a result of changes to programming during the reporting period, were replaced with the programs of a similar format. The subjects of the monitoring were:

- **DAILY PRIME-TIME NEWS BULLETINS AND WEEKLY ANALYTICAL PROGRAMS ON FOUR TV CHANNELS:** Georgian Public Broadcaster (Moambe; Akhali Kvira); Rustavi 2 (Kurieri; P.S.); Imedi (Qronika; Imedis Kvira); Obieqtivi TV (News¹).
- **TALK-SHOWS ON SEVEN TV CHANNELS:** Georgian Public Broadcaster (Kviris Interviu, Debates²) Rustavi 2 (Archevani); Imedi (Pirispir); Obieqtivi (Ghamis Studia; Okros Kveta); Kavkasia (Barieri; Spektri); Iberia (Tavisufali Sivrtse³), Maestro (Media Rentgeni⁴).
- **SEVEN ONLINE MEDIA OUTLETS:** Sakinformi, Netgazeti, Interpressnews, Georgia and World, PIA, Kviris Palitra, Marshalpress.
- **FOUR NEWSPAPERS:** Rezonansi, Prime-Time, Asaval-Dasavali, Alia.

The study contains both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative part of the report provides amounts of discriminatory comments by topics, while the qualitative part presents the typology of messages and focus group data.

¹ From 1 April 2018, the list of monitoring subjects was extended to include the news program on Obieqtivi TV.

² The election Debates was produced on the Public Broadcaster from 4 October to 28 November 2018, providing platform to presidential candidates.

³ The program Tavisupali Sivrtse was monitored until 16 October 2018. On 16 October the Iberia TV company stopped the broadcast.

⁴ The program Media Rentgeni was monitored on Maestro TV from May through June 2018.

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KEY FINDINGS |

The media monitoring revealed the following trends:

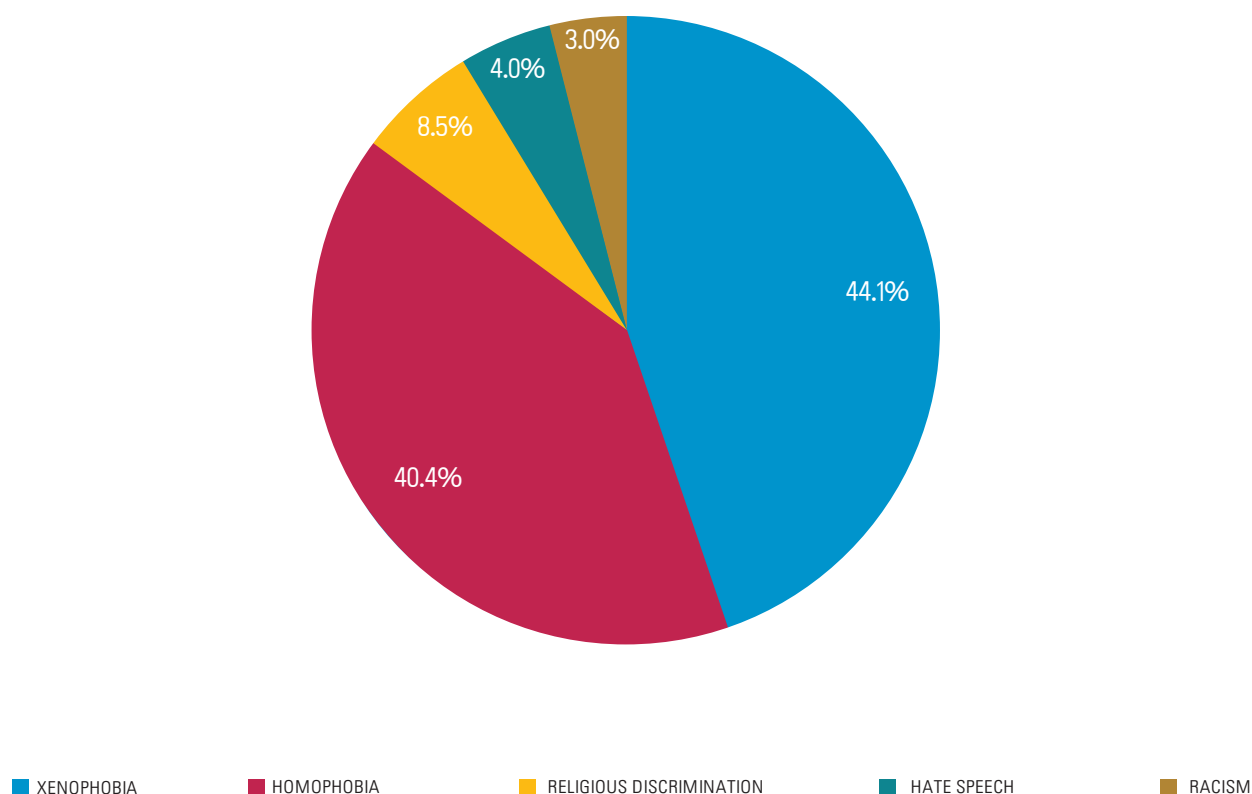
- As many as 1,814 discriminatory statements were reported by the monitored media outlets in the reporting period (1 January – 31 December, 2018). The largest proportion of these statements – 44.2% were xenophobic. The total share of homophobic statements comprised 40.4%, followed by statements that discriminated on the ground of religion (8.5%) and incited hate on various grounds (4%). The share of racist statements was the lowest – 3%.
- The comparison with 2016-2017 data shows an overall increase in xenophobic messages despite a small decrease seen in 2018; virtually no change has been observed in homophobic statements over the past two years as well as in the statements employing discrimination on religious ground; however, racist messages have almost trebled as compared to 2017.
- The largest proportion of xenophobic messages accounted for anti-migrant comments followed by Turkophobic statements.
- Turkophobic comments were dominated by an allegation that Turkey was carrying out expansion in Georgia ; much like in previous years, the message: “if Russia is occupier than Turkey is the occupier too” was employed in an effort to equate the current occupation of Georgia by Russia with the historical occupation by Ottoman Empire.
- A large proportion of homophobic messages promoted the idea that the West imposes homosexuality. The rights of LGBT community were depicted as the propaganda of perversion and infringement of majority’s rights; homosexuality was described as a sin, deviation and disease.
- The majority of religious discrimination instances were Islamophobic. The second by amount were statements against Jehovah’s Witnesses followed by those non-Orthodox denominations whose constitutional complaint resulted in the Constitutional Court ruling that all religions must enjoy equal conditions and the Orthodox Christian Church must not enjoy a preferential tax regime compared to other religious denominations. The number of discriminatory statements against the Catholic Church was relatively fewer.

- Inciting individual hatred and calling for violence were most frequently among hate speech on various grounds, followed by statements against the United National Movement.
- The majority of racist statements was linked to one specific incident of violence against Nigerian students and were made mostly by media representatives.
- Leaders among the sources of hate speech were representatives of media. Lagging a little behind by the share of discriminatory statements were the politicians and members of society.
- Discriminatory comments and hate speech were most frequently used by journalists of a pro-Kremlin online edition, Georgia and World and news agency, Sakinformi; ethno-nationalist newspaper Asaval-Dasavali and Alia; Obieqtivi TV, the channel having close ties with the political party the Alliance of Patriots.
- The media outlets that frequently used hate speech in editorial comments applied the identical editorial standard in selecting respondents as well.
- Among the political parties which used hate speech most frequently are pro-Russian Alliance of Patriots, Georgian Troup, Free Georgia, Democratic Movement – United Georgia. Representatives of the ruling Georgian Dream party and the opposition United National Movement (UNM) party were also among sources of hate speech.
- Eight civic organizations were identified as the ones using hate speech most frequently. Number one among these organizations in terms of the frequency of discriminatory comments is the Georgian March.
- Most of the discriminatory comments made by the clerics were homophobic, followed by those containing religious discrimination and xenophobia.
- Comments made by representatives of the public were mostly xenophobic.
- As the migrant related focus groups findings show, respondents were most vulnerable to that information which concerned local actors (the former ruling and currently opposition party – United National Movement and a far-right movement Georgian March).
- Attitudes of respondents towards information on both subjects divided almost equally and supposedly reflected their beliefs. Half of respondents (50%) believed that the news on the former government (United National Movement) giving Georgian passports to 25 000 Turkish citizens in Adjara, thereby creating a threat of forming a Turkish political party and separating the region, was true. A real fact that the far-right movement Georgian March requested the transfer of money into an account in the bank owned by an Arab business group was considered fake by 53.1% of respondents and true by 46.9%.

I. TOTAL QUANTITATIVE DATA |

As many as 1,814 discriminatory statements were reported by the monitored media outlets in the reporting period (1 January – 31 December, 2018). The largest proportion of these statements – 44.2% (802 statements) were xenophobic. The total share of homophobic statements comprised 40.4% (732), followed by statements that discriminated on the ground of religion (8.5%; 154) and incited hate on various grounds (4%; 72). The share of racist statements was the lowest – 3% (54), but showed a significant increase compared to the previous year (20).

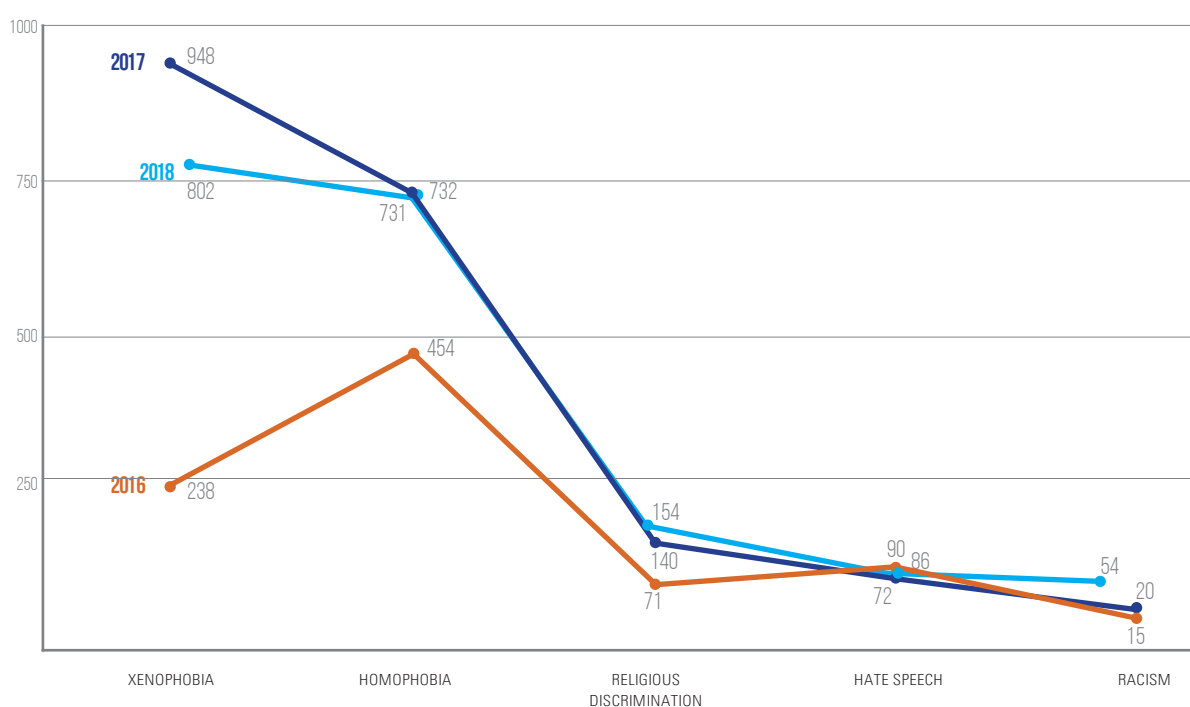
FIGURE 1. TYPOLOGY OF HATE SPEECH



	XENOPHOBIA	HOMOPHOBIA	RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION	HATE SPEECH	RACISM
Media	241	310	51	11	36
Politicians	231	96	35	18	4
Public organizations	116	143	15	14	1
Clergy	12	67	19	4	2
Society	202	116	34	25	11
Total	802	732	154	72	54

The comparison with 2016–2017 data shows an overall increase in xenophobic messages despite a small decrease seen in 2018; virtually no change has been observed in homophobic statements over the past two years as well as in the statements employing discrimination on religious ground; however, racist messages have almost trebled as compared to 2017.

FIGURE 2. TYPOLOGY OF HATE SPEECH IN 2016-2018

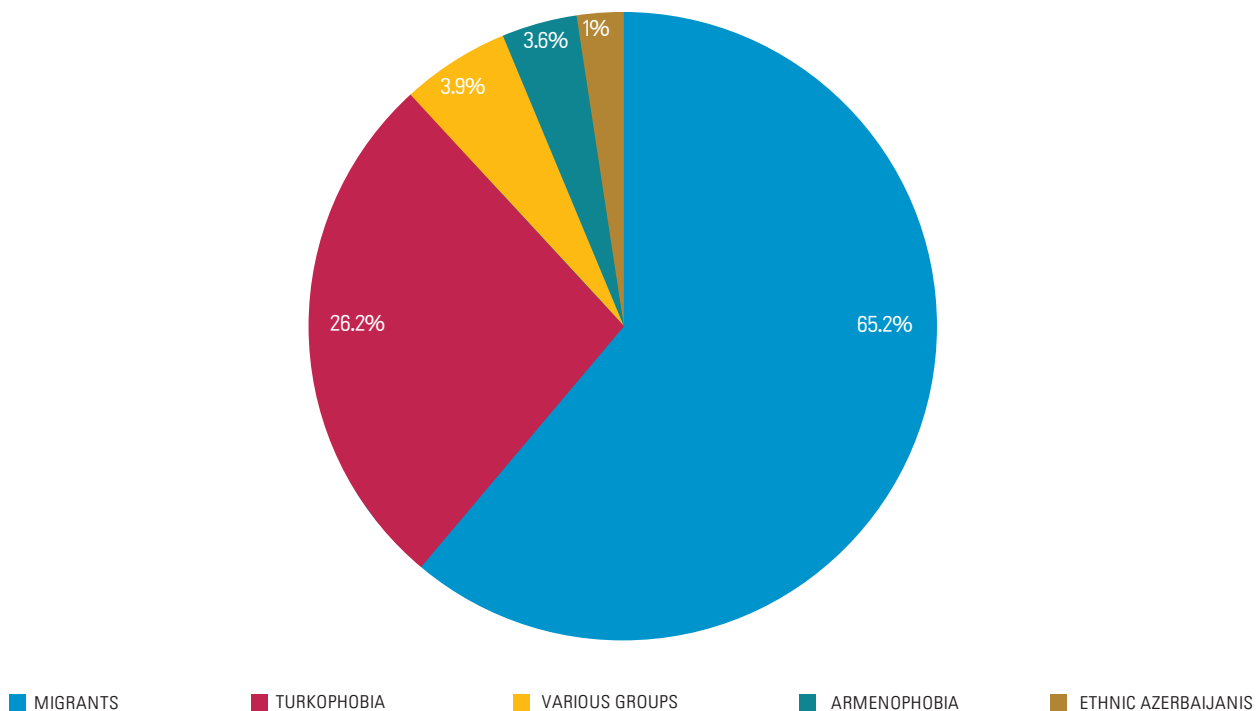


	XENOPHOBIA	HOMOPHOBIA	RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION	HATE SPEECH	RACISM
2018	802	732	154	72	54
2017	948	731	140	86	20
2016	238	454	71	90	15

1.1. XENOPHOBIA

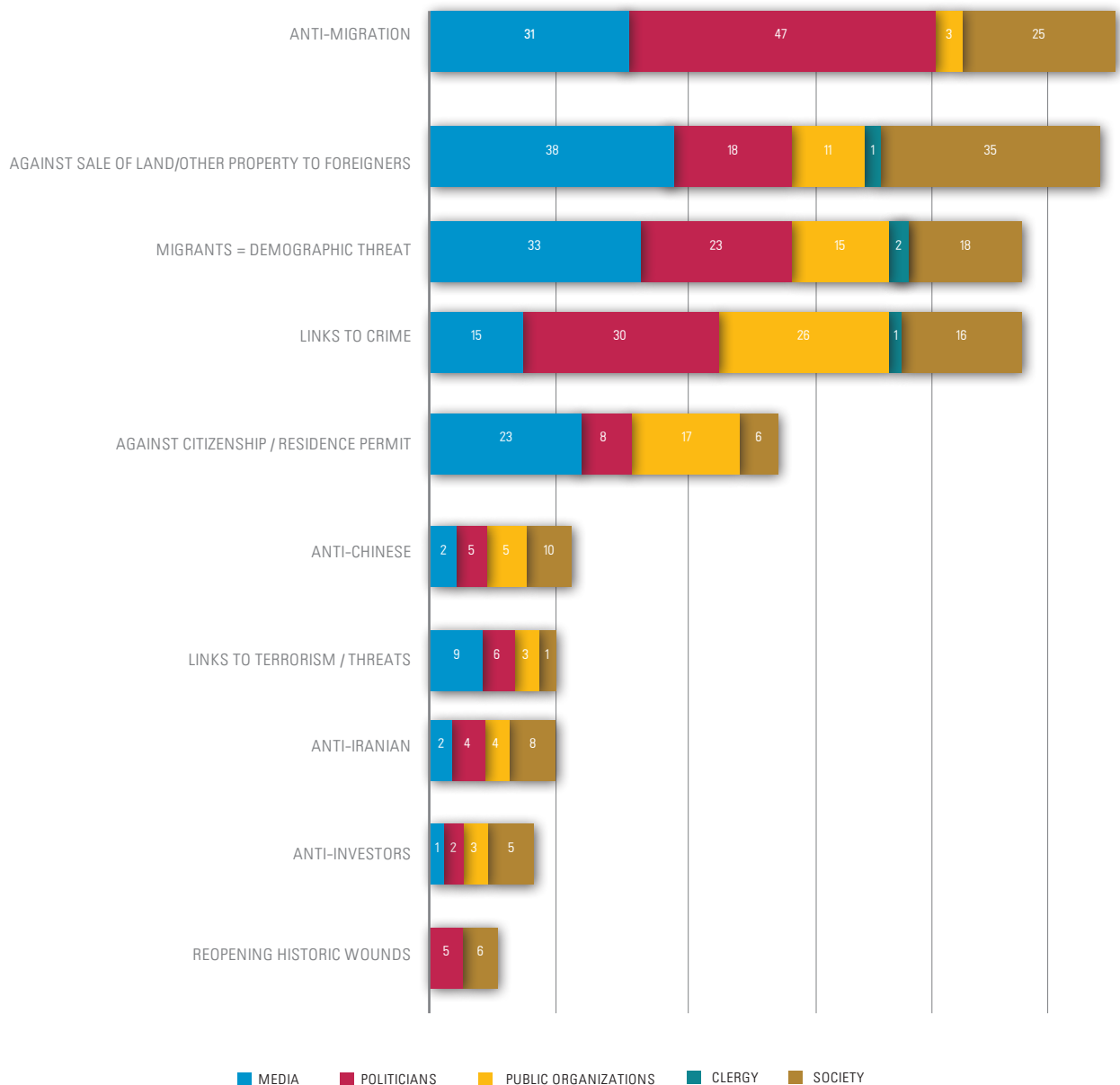
The largest proportion of xenophobic messages (802) accounted for anti-migrant comments (65.2%; 523); Turkophobic comments were second by proportion (26.2%; 210). Discriminatory comments against various ethnic and national groups comprised 3.9% (31), against Armenians totaled 3.6% (29) and against ethnic Azerbaijanis stood at 1.1% (9).

FIGURE 3. TYPOLOGY OF XENOPHOBIA



The highest number of anti-migrant statements concerned migration, in general, and emigrants (106); this was followed, in an almost equal amount, by statements against the sale of land and other immovable property to foreign citizens (103). Furthermore, migrants were portrayed as a demographic threat (91), and were linked to crime (88) and terrorism (19). Along with the statements against granting citizenship or residence permits to migrants (54), comments were made against Chinese (22), Iranian (18) and other foreign investors, in general, (11); there were even attempts to reopen wounds of historic traumas (11).

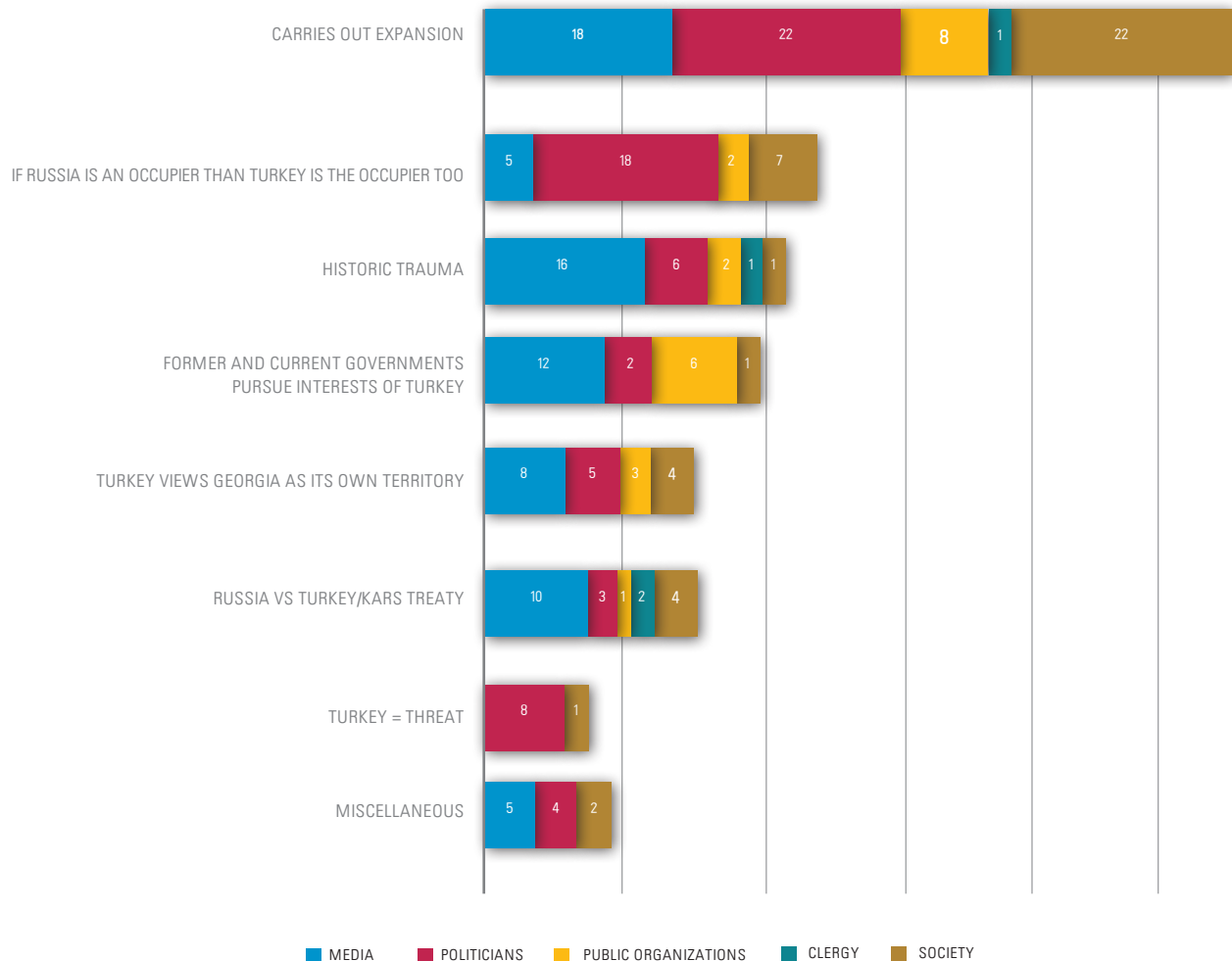
FIGURE 4. ANTI-MIGRANT MESSAGES



Turkophobic comments were dominated by an allegation that Turkey was carrying out expansion in Georgia (71); much like in previous years, the message: “if Russia is an occupier than Turkey is the occupier too” was employed in an effort to equate the current occupation of Georgia by Russia with the historical occupation by Ottoman Empire (32); other attempts to reopen historical wounds were also observed (26); the former and incumbent governments were accused of pursuing interests of Turkey (21); messages alleging that Turkey views Georgia as its own territory (20) and that the co-religious Russia is a guarantor of Georgia’s defense against Turkey (20) were spread in equal amounts. Portraying Russia as the guarantor of Georgia’s security

was partially linked to a widespread conspiracy about the Kars Treaty, whereby the Treaty expires⁵ in 2021 and Russia would not be able to be a guarantor of Georgia's territorial integrity thereafter because Turkey will occupy Adjara.

FIGURE 5. TURKOPHOBIC MESSAGES



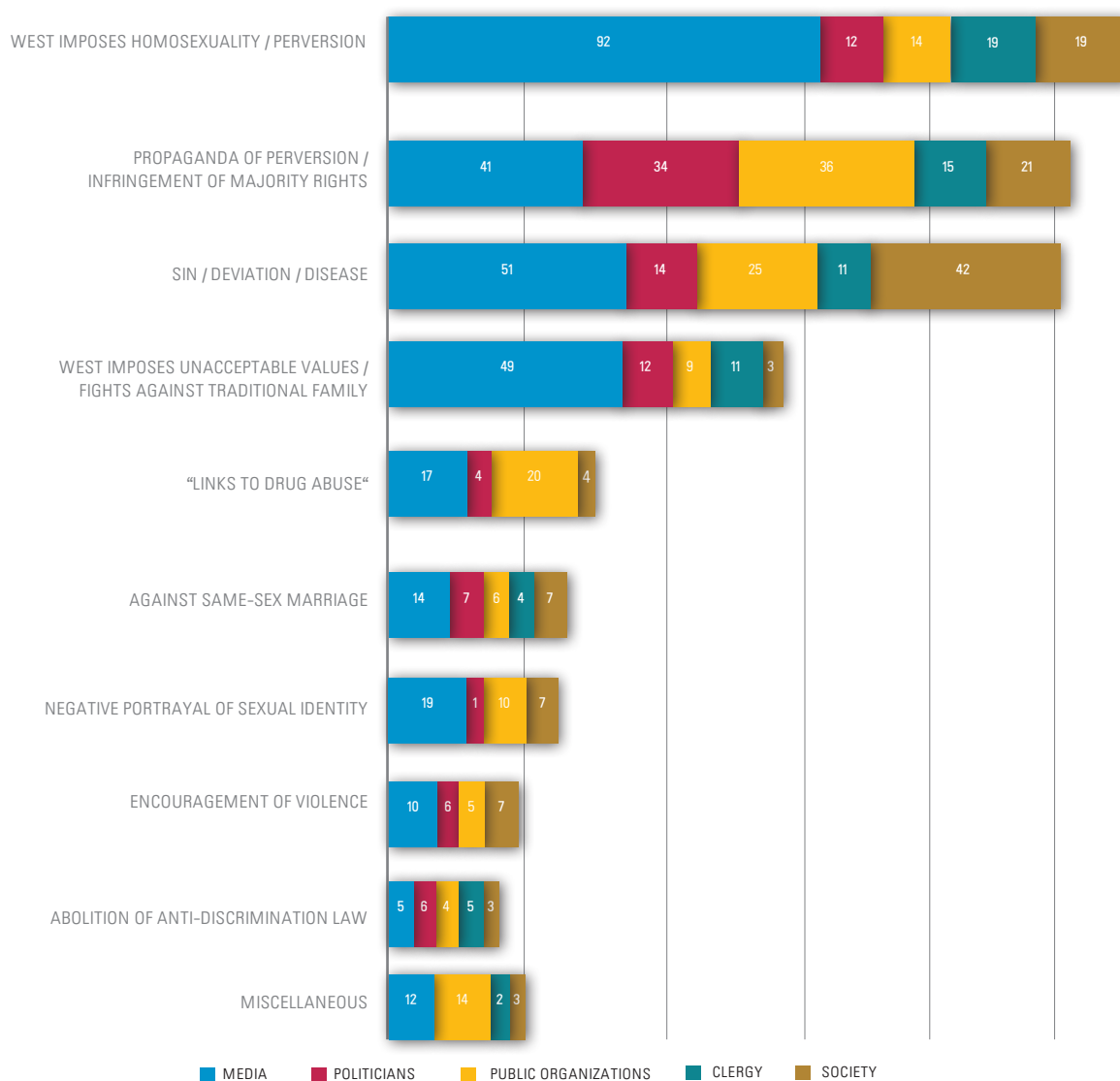
The majority of Armenophobic statements involved a negative portrayal of Armenian identity (16) while the rest of the comments accused Armenians of acting against the interests of Georgia and trying to seize Abkhazia. The number of discriminatory comments against ethnic Azerbaijanis living in Georgia was fewer (9).

⁵ The Treaty of Kars was signed between Turkey, on the one side, and Armenian, Azerbaijan and Georgian SSR, on the other, in the city of Kars on 23 October 1921. According to the treaty, Turkey transferred part of Adjara, including Batumi, as well as Gyumri, to the Soviet Union, in exchange for Kars, Artvin and Ardahan.
<http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/disinformation-alleged-opening-nato-military-base-poti-and-treaty-kars>

1.2. HOMOPHOBIA

A large proportion of homophobic messages promoted the idea that the West imposes homosexuality on Georgian society (156) and instills unacceptable values/fights against the institution of traditional family (84). The rights of LGBT community were depicted as the propaganda of perversion and infringement of majority's rights (147); homosexuality was described as a sin, deviation and disease (143) and also, linked to drug abuse and drug crime (45). A segment of authors of homophobic comments spoke against same-sex marriage (38) while in certain instances, individual sexual identity was discussed in a negative context (37). There were 23 statements encouraging violence against LGBT representatives and 23 statements with homophobic connotation, calling for scrapping the anti-discrimination law.

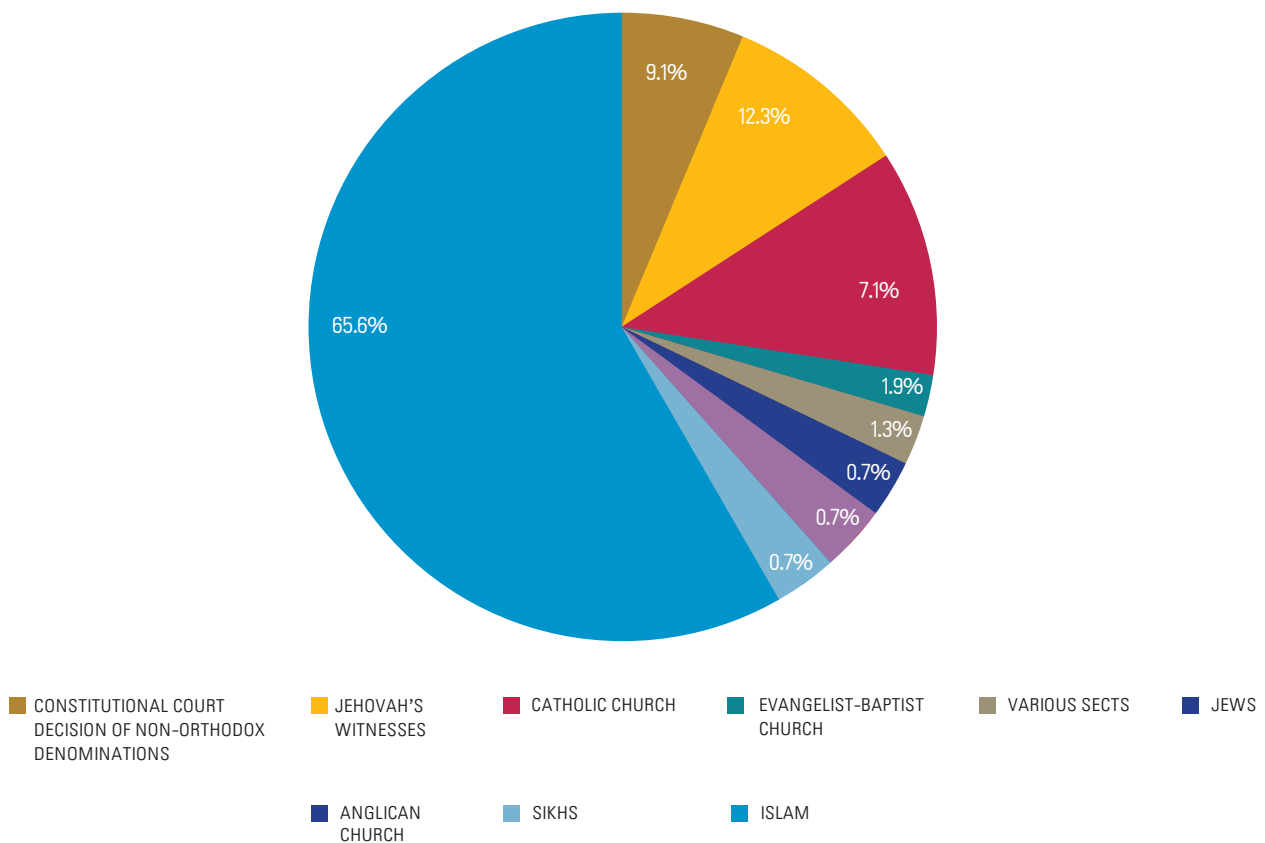
FIGURE 6. HOMOPHOBIC MESSAGES



1.3. DISCRIMINATION ON THE GROUND OF RELIGION

Out of 154 instances of religious discrimination, 65% (101 statements) was Islamophobic including 227 statements targeting Muslim migrants. The second by amount were statements against Jehovah's Witnesses. Fifteen discriminatory comments targeted those non-Orthodox denominations whose constitutional complaint resulted in the Constitutional Court ruling that all religions must enjoy equal conditions and the Orthodox Christian Church must not enjoy a preferential tax regime compared to other religious denominations. The number of discriminatory statements against the Catholic Church was fewer (11), followed by those against Evangelical-Baptists Church (3), various sects (2), Anglican Church (1), Sikhs (2) and Jews (1).

FIGURE 7. DISCRIMINATION ON THE GROUND OF RELIGION

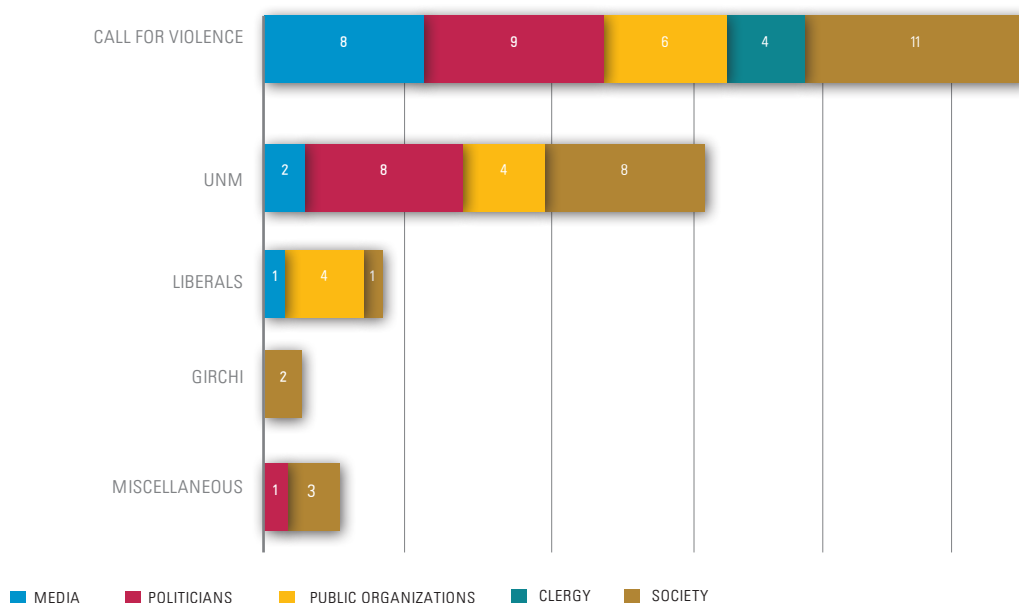


1.4. HATE SPEECH ON VARIOUS GROUNDS

Out of 72 statements employing hate speech on various grounds, most frequently made were the ones inciting conflict and calling for violence (38); these were followed by statements against the United National Movement (22). Equal number of statements (3 each) expressed intolerance of liberals and of organizers and par-

ticipants of the protest to demand the liberalization of drug policy in May 2018. Apart from the United National Movement, addressees of hate speech among political parties were Girchi (2) and the ruling Georgian Dream party (1); the latter falls under the category “Miscellaneous” together with hate speech comments against journalists (2).

FIGURE 8. HATE SPEECH ON VARIOUS GROUNDS



1.5. RACISM

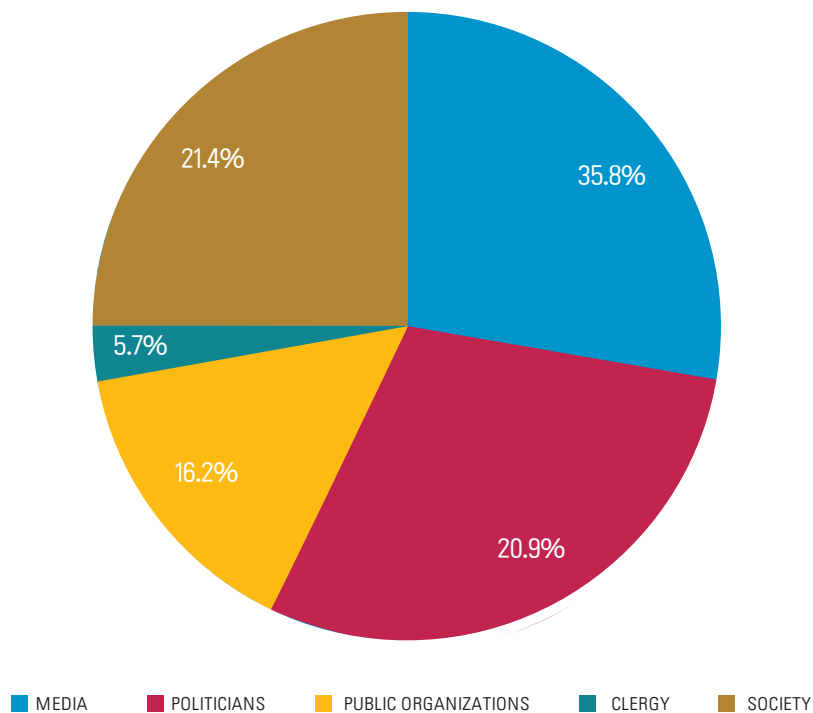
The number of racist statements increased compared to 2017 (from 20 in 2017 to 54 in 2018). The majority of racist statements was linked to one specific incident of violence against Nigerian students.⁶ Most of racist statements were made by media representatives (36), followed by representatives of society (11), politicians (5) and clergy (2).

⁶ On 8 April, several students with dark skin, playing football on a playing ground in Beliashvili street, were abused physically and verbally and forced out of the playground by a group of aggressive men. <http://netgazeti.ge/news/266201/>

2. HATE SPEECH BY SOURCES |

Leaders among the sources of hate speech were representatives of media (30%; 649). Lagging a little behind by the share of discriminatory statements were the politicians (28.8%; 380) and members of society (25.2%; 388). Members of various public organizations made 299 hate speech comments (14.5%); the fewest hate speech comments were made by clergy (1.5%; 104).

FIGURE 9. SOURCES OF HATE SPEECH



2.1. MEDIA

Discriminatory comments and hate speech were most frequently used by journalists of a pro-Kremlin online edition, Georgia and World (281); this is followed by ethno-nationalist newspaper Asaval-Dasavali (147). Jour-

nalists of Obieqtivi TV, the channel having close ties with the political party the Alliance of Patriots, made 110 discriminatory statements. Representatives of yet another pro-Kremlin news agency, Sakinformi, made 45 such statements, while journalists of Alia newspaper which pursues ethno-nationalistic editorial policy made 41 discriminatory statements. Eight instances of hate speech were found in Rezonansi paper.

FIGURE 10. HATE SPEECH BY MEDIA SOURCES

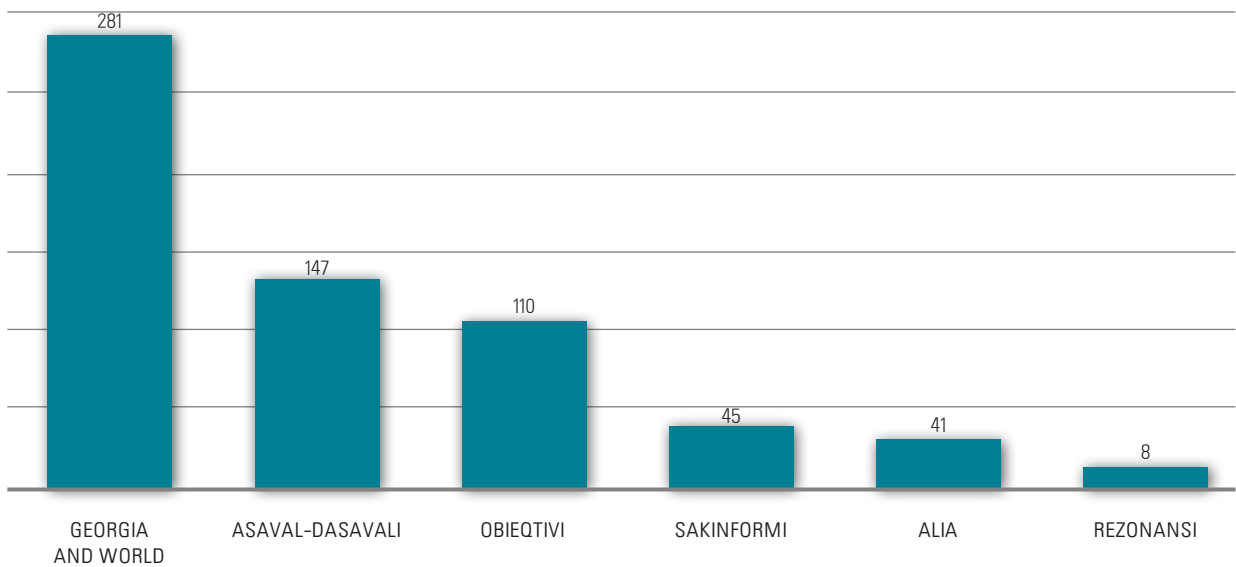
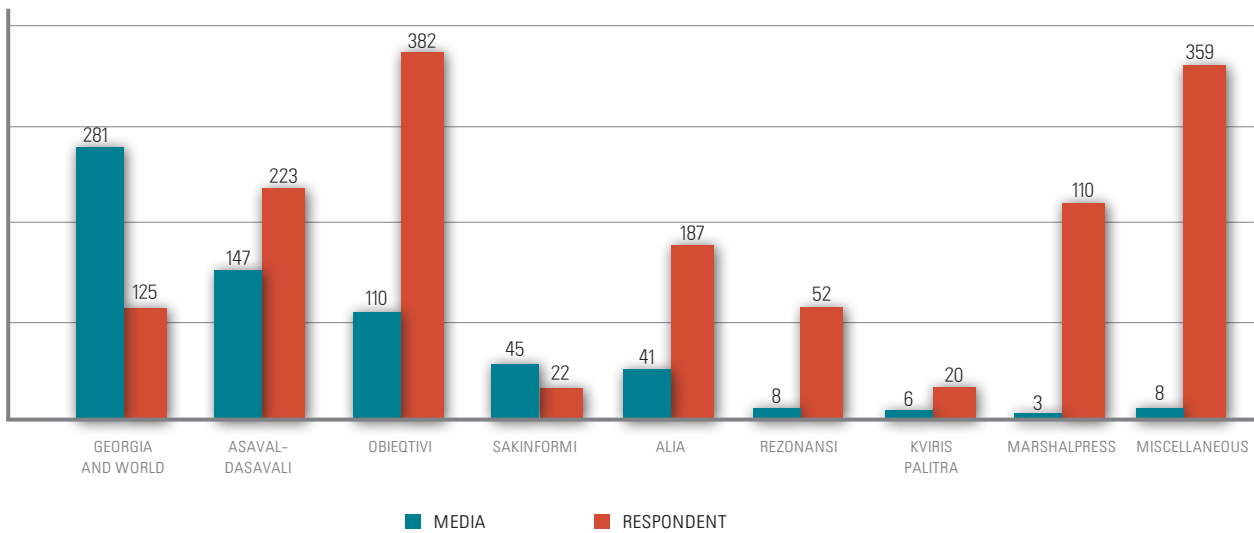


Figure 11 makes it clear that the media outlets that frequently used hate speech in editorial comments applied the identical editorial standard in selecting respondents as well (Obieqtivi TV respondents – 382 comments; Asaval-Dasavali respondents – 223 comments; Alia respondents – 187 comments) while some were distinguished for a high indicator of such respondents (Marshalpress – 110).

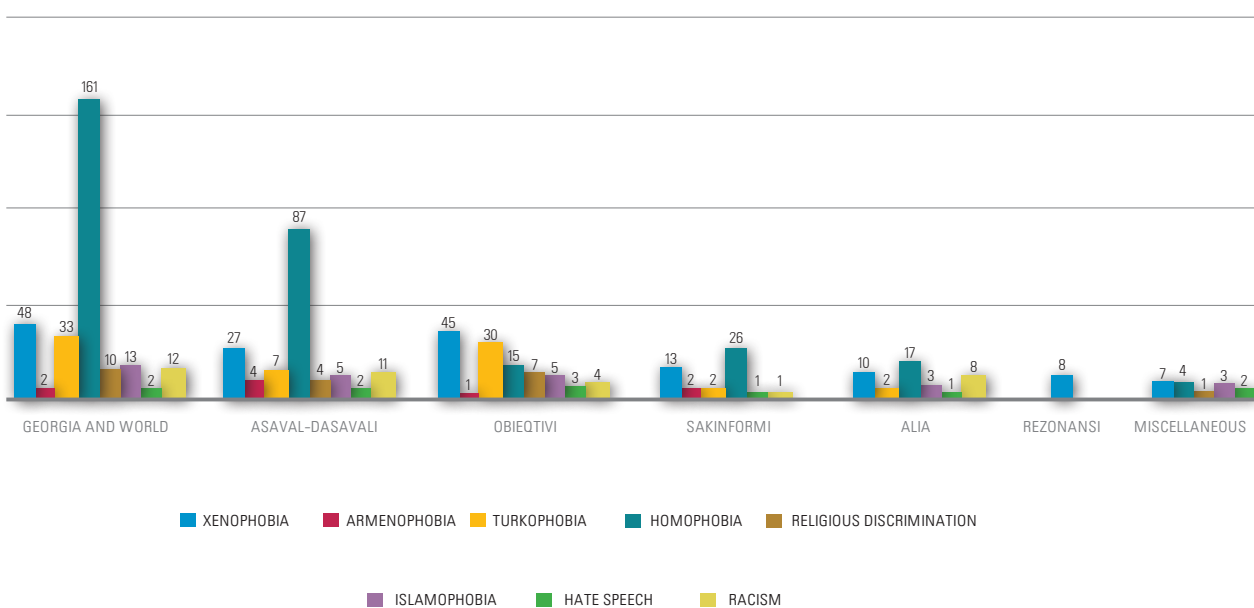
FIGURE 11. HATE SPEECH BY MEDIA OUTLETS AND THEIR RESPONDENTS



Among discriminatory statements made by media representatives (649) most frequent were homophobic comments (310), followed by xenophobic comments (241) including Turkophobic (74) and Armenophobic (7) comments. The number of racist comments made by media representatives comprised 36.

Comments by media employing religious discrimination comprised 51 including 29 Islamophobic statements and 22 against various religious denominations. Media representatives also made 11 statements encouraging violence.

FIGURE 12. TYPOLOGY OF HATE SPEECH BY MEDIA OUTLETS



HOMOPHOBIA. Homophobia is the leading topic of the discriminatory comments that were made by the monitored media outlets (310). The majority of these comments appeared in the online outlet Georgia & World (161), followed by the Asaval-Dasavali newspaper (87), the Sakinformi online outlet (26), the Alia newspaper (17) and the Obiektivi TV Channel (15).

Georgia & World, like other media outlets, is promoting the view that homosexuality, a corrupt way of life, is imposed by the West and combatted by Russia:

GIVI SOMKHISHVILI, AUTHOR: “Euro-America has turned the greatest filth into the banner of democracy and pushed it on countries through threats, violence and palm-greasing... As for those who find the path laid with such bouquets appealing, may Satan bestow upon their kin the stench of lesbianism and sodomy as they deserve.” (Georgia & World, 25 January).

VALERI KVARATSKHELIA, PRESENTER: “This is the Americans’ main weapon – they can corrupt a society, cause it to degrade and rot. This is what they can do and not just that: they can make all of it legally documented and lawful.” (Obiektivi, Okros Kveta, 27 January).

DAVIT MKHEIDZE, AUTHOR: “Last week, in the presence of Patriarch Kirill, the Russian parliament started discussing the creation of an expert council on morality... The morality of any given society is not defined by the number of LGBT [community representatives] but by this society’s attitude towards sodomy.” (Georgia & World, 9 February).

Some of the media outlets referred to homosexuality as sickness and anomaly:

GIORGI GIGAUURI, JOURNALIST: “Regardless of how much sodomites keep saying that, according to the World Health Organization’s conclusion, pederasty is not a sickness, the fact remains: this sick pederast is demonstrating his sick passions with sick madness!” (Asaval-Dasavali, 22–28 January).

NINO RATISHVILI, PRESENTER: “...I know many LGBT representatives who want to have children who are normal and healthy, right? And they are concerned about it, are they not?.” (Obiektivi, Ghamis Studia, 22 May).

The Alia newspaper idealized the Soviet legal provision which criminalized homosexuality:

NANA SULAVA, JOURNALIST: “On 10 August 1992, the so-called State Council in which Eduard Shevardnadze, Jaba Ioseliani, Tengiz Sigua and Tengiz Kitovani had the power of veto, illegally, wielding no legal power whatsoever, removed from the special section of the Criminal Code of Georgia Article 121 which envisaged a penalty of five years of imprisonment for sodomy.” (Alia, 21 May).

XENOPHOBIA. After homophobia, xenophobic comments account for the highest number [of the discriminatory comments] made by the media (241), most of which are of anti-migrant nature, some being Turkophobic (74) and some – Armenophobic (9).

The number of comments made by the journalists of Georgia & World (48) and TV Obiektivi (45) are virtually the same.

ANTI-MIGRANT SENTIMENTS. The following comments were made against migration and migrants:

EUROPE IS A HOSTAGE OF ITS OWN TOLERANCE AND VIOLENT MIGRANTS: “Europeans who forgot Christian teaching and began to zealously advocate ‘minority rights’ have found themselves unprotected from ethnically and religiously united migrants who aggressively impose their way of life on the entire Europe.” (Georgia & World, 19 April).

EU FORCES US TO ADMIT MIGRANTS, WHICH AMOUNTS TO DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEM FOR GEORGIANS: “Being in this process of European integration, Europe also calls on us to admit migrants like other European countries do... This will double our population and it will happen not by Georgians or other ethnicities living here since immemorial times but by inflows of immigrants and this is an absolutely real threat. What will happen to us? These are two very serious problems – our demographics, and reduction in birth rate” (Gia Areshidze, Obiektivi, Ghamis Studia, May 5).

GEORGIA IS AS UNPROTECTED FROM THE THREAT OF TERRORISM AS EUROPE: “Even in countries such as France, Great Britain, Germany, Spain and others, population is not protected against the terrorist threat and Georgia, with its population having decreased from 5.4 million to 3.7 million, where citizenship is granted to foreigners with anti-Georgian attitudes, faces the greatest threat because the defenders of so-called European values, tolerance and multiculturalism want to create the situation in our country similar to that in France or Belgium, Germany or Denmark” (Georgia & World, 19 April).

GEORGIANS ARE IN DANGER OF BECOMING A MINORITY AND FACE A THREAT SIMILAR TO THAT OF GERMANY: “I know Iranians, Turks, various people who arrived and then brought their compatriots to settle in Georgia... When the entire Georgian population of Georgia finds itself to be a minority, I would not be surprised to see the developments that takes place, for example, in Europe’s rather strong country, Germany... Of course, we are frightened” (Nino Ratishvili, Obiektivi, Ghamis Studia, April 16).

ARAB AND AFRO-AMERICAN MIGRANTS ARE A THREAT: “A gender-gang of Chugoshvili... must be sounding alarm because of mass re-settlement of Arab or Afro-American migrants!” (Asaval-Dasavali, 23-29 April).

LINKING MIGRANTS TO CRIMINALS/PROSTITUTION: “Review of the European press of recent times makes it clear that the ‘golden billion’ (that’s how the European population is called) faces ill fate from groups speaking totally different language, compared to which Georgian pickpockets are nothing more but a trifle” (Kviris Palitra, 2 April). “A government, a state which does not give its own citizens an opportunity to set up and run small and medium business while outlanders – and they run criminal business – have this opportunity in Georgia, is really very bad... See, if something happens, if someone decides to stage a provocation, do you know how many of them are here? They would decimate us, we simply will not be able to overpower them, you see...” (Nino Ratishvili, Obiektivi, Ghamis Studia, 23 October). “Georgia is filled with a huge number of official and unofficial migrants from the countries of the East and Asia... Over there, they lure local underage children [into brothels], violate them and force them into prostitution, they sell drugs to children there” (Sakinformi, 11 April).

TURKOPHOBIA. As with xenophobia, Turkophobic statements were disseminated by Georgia & World (33) and TV Obiektivi (30) in nearly equal numbers. Anti-Turkish messages mainly referred to Turkey's expansionist policies and aimed to reignite historic traumas in order to shift the focus of attention from the Russian threat to the historical threats. Among them, there was a well-known conspiracy⁷ theory about the Treaty of Kars expiring in 2021:

IF RUSSIA IS AN OCCUPIER, BUT SO IS TURKEY: "...It turns out that 33 percent of our territories were occupied by Turkey at the time, in 1921, and we will find ourselves in the similar "provisional" state with regard to Tskhinvali and Sokhumi as well" (Bondo Mdzinarashvili, Obiektivi, Ghamis Studia, 8 March). "Everything is being done both inside and outside Georgia to make Georgian people forget their lost territories and make them tolerate Russia's occupation of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region, like grabbing of Tao Klarjeti by Turkey" (Jaba Khubua, Asaval-Dasavali, August 6-12).

THE TREATY OF KARS IS SOON TO EXPIRE AND RUSSIA WILL NO LONGER BE ABLE TO PROTECT US FROM THE TURKISH THREAT: "Let me once again warn the leadership – the validity of the Treaty of Kars will expire in 2021. If we do not normalize our relations with Russia till 2021, they [Turks] will take it away and arrive in Guria" (Davit Mkheidze, journalist of Georgia & World, Obiektivi, Ghamis Studia, May 8).

TURKEY IS CARRYING OUT AN EXPANSION INTO GEORGIA: "We are facing an extremely serious challenge and Turkey, through Turkish TV series, brothels and a plethora of other horrid things, is trying to carry out a cultural, economic and political expansion into Georgia... Because the Georgian special services are subordinated to the special services of the United States, it becomes virtually impossible to protect Georgia from the attack of the foreigners" (Bondo Mdzinarashvili, Asaval-Dasavali, 5-11 February).

ARMENOPHOBIA. Georgia & World discussed ethnic Armenians living in Georgia in the context of a threat.

BESO BARBAKADZE, JOURNALIST: "The state agencies know full well that the majority of ethnic Armenians living near the Armenian border already have Armenian citizenship so that they do not have a problem crossing into their original homeland. On the other hand, the Armenian side is already saying in the corridors that the territory populated by Armenians is historically theirs and, in addition, it is now populated by Armenian rather than Georgian citizens and, one day, Armenia will decide to protect the interests of its citizens" (Georgia & World, 27 September).

AGAINST AZERBAIJANIS. The estrangement of ethnic Azerbaijani citizens of Georgia was being based on identifying them with the neighboring state of Azerbaijan and on the principle of reciprocity in the context of the rights of the [ethnic Georgian] residents of Saingilo.

BESO BARBAKADZE, JOURNALIST: "There is a total of 29,173 Beridzes[Georgian surname] living in Georgia. Mamedovs [Azerbaijani surname] are in the second place with 28,358 people and Alievs are in the third with 19,327... I do not

⁷ The Treaty of Kars was signed on 23 October 1921 between Turkey, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan and the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia in the town of Kars. According to the Treaty, Turkey handed over part of Ajaria, including the town of Batumi, as well as the town of Gyumri to the Soviet Union, receiving Kars, Artvin and Ardahan in return. <http://mythdetector.ge/ka/myth/dezinpormatsia-potshi-natos-samkhedro-bazis-shesadzlo-gakhsnis-da-qarsis-khelshekrulebis>

think that any country other than Georgia would have representatives of foreign countries accounting for two out of three most numerous surnames... In Azerbaijan itself, in Saingilo, there are many villages populated by Georgians. In these villages, Georgians are persistently trying to preserve the language but it does not work” (Georgia & World, 19 December).

RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION. The majority of statements containing religious discrimination (23) were made by the journalists of Georgia & World, 13 of them were Islamophobic and, at the same time, carried anti-migrant sentiments. Some of the statements made by the media outlets were directed against Jehovah’s Witnesses (19), non-Orthodox confessions (15), the Catholic Church (11) and the Evangelical-Baptist Church (3). In addition, criticism was voiced over the Constitutional Court decision which concerned establishing equal tax conditions for the Orthodox Church.

SALE OF LAND TO MUSLIMS IS THE ENMITY OF THE COUNTRY: “The government who sells the land of Giorgi Saakadze to Muslims is the enemy of the country!” (Asaval-Dasavali, 30 April – 6 May).

MUSLIM MIGRANTS = THREATS: “Places where Muslims settled long ago, face numerous security problems” (Georgia & World, 26 April). “Niqabs have become part of everyday life in Tbilisi... People wearing niqabs and hijabs sometimes cause fear among the majority of Tbilisians” (Tako Mchedlishvili, journalist, Obiektivi, News Program, 8 September). “Recently, Muslim foreigners have become particularly numerous in Georgia... You cannot see a shahid [suicide] belt underneath a niqab or burka, and merely guessing their intentions is not enough to prevent a tragedy” (Zaza Davitaia, Asaval-Dasavali, 30 July – 5 August).

AGAINST JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES / EVANGELICAL-BAPTIST CHURCH: “The Patriarchate of Georgia was blessing with large candles those executioners who destroyed Georgia! That is why Jehovah’s Witnesses became so strong; that is why Rusudan Gotsiridze became a bishop and that is why homosexuals and bandits appeared in the church!” (Dito Chubinidze, Asaval-Dasavali, February 12–18). “[In Abkhazia], Jehovah’s Witnesses capitalized on the confrontation among the clergy well, their numbers are growing every day despite the fact that their followers are declared ‘extremist’. Nevertheless, because the membership of this sect is a source of stable income, local authorities turn a blind eye and refrain from persecuting them” (Lali Papaskiri, Kviris Palitra, 4–10 June).

RACISM. Statements containing racial discrimination are encountered most frequently in Georgia & World (12), Asaval-Dasavali (11) and Alia (8).

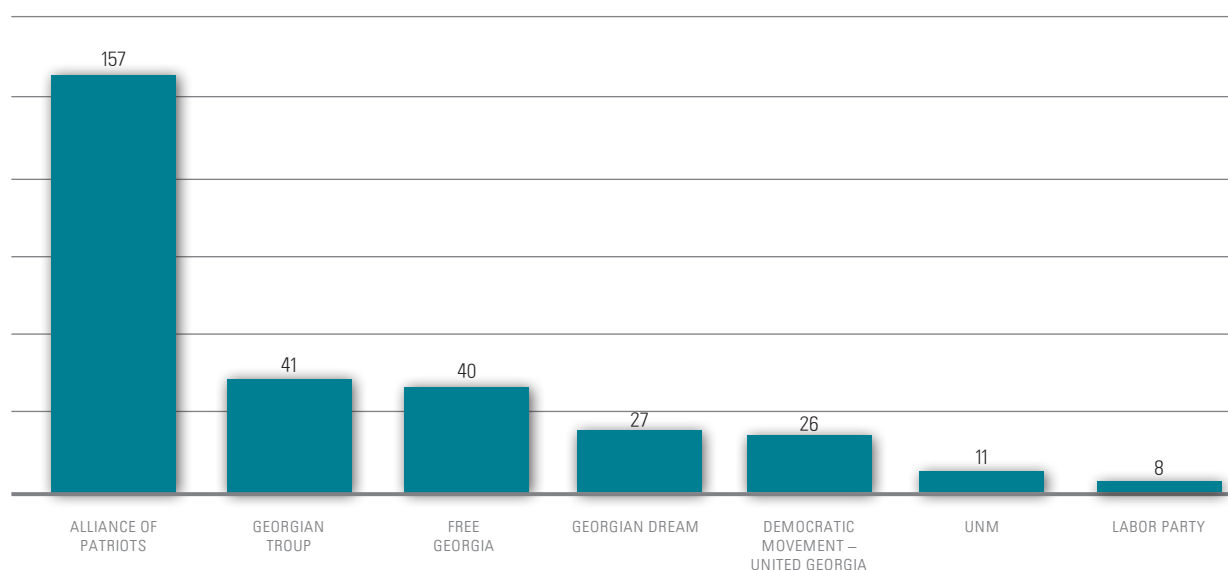
JABA KHUBUA, JOURNALIST: “Being portrayed as victims of ‘Georgian racism,’ have they really arrived in Georgia to obtain education or are they in reality spies of foreign services hiding under a disguise of students? Moreover, a segment of foreigners being in Georgia as students is engaged in terrorist activity, which is written in the report by the Security Service of Georgia” (Asaval-Dasavali, 23–29 April).

BONDO MDZINARASHVILI, ANCHOR: “... Negro is not a derogatory word, it is written in The Knight in the Panther’s Skin and we cannot remove two stanzas from this literary work because of a Nigerian monkey” (Obiektivi, Ghamis Studia, 9 May).

2.2. POLITICAL PARTIES

Among the political parties which used hate speech most frequently, Alliance of Patriots was the leader (157), followed by Kartuli Dasi (41) and Free Georgia (40) with almost equal numbers. Representatives of the ruling Georgian Dream party made 27 discriminatory comments in 2018, while members of the opposition party, the United National Movement (UNM), made 11 such comments. Members of the Democratic Movement – United Georgia made 26 statements of discriminatory nature, followed by a relatively small number of such statements made by the Labor Party (8) and Neutral Socialist Georgia (6).

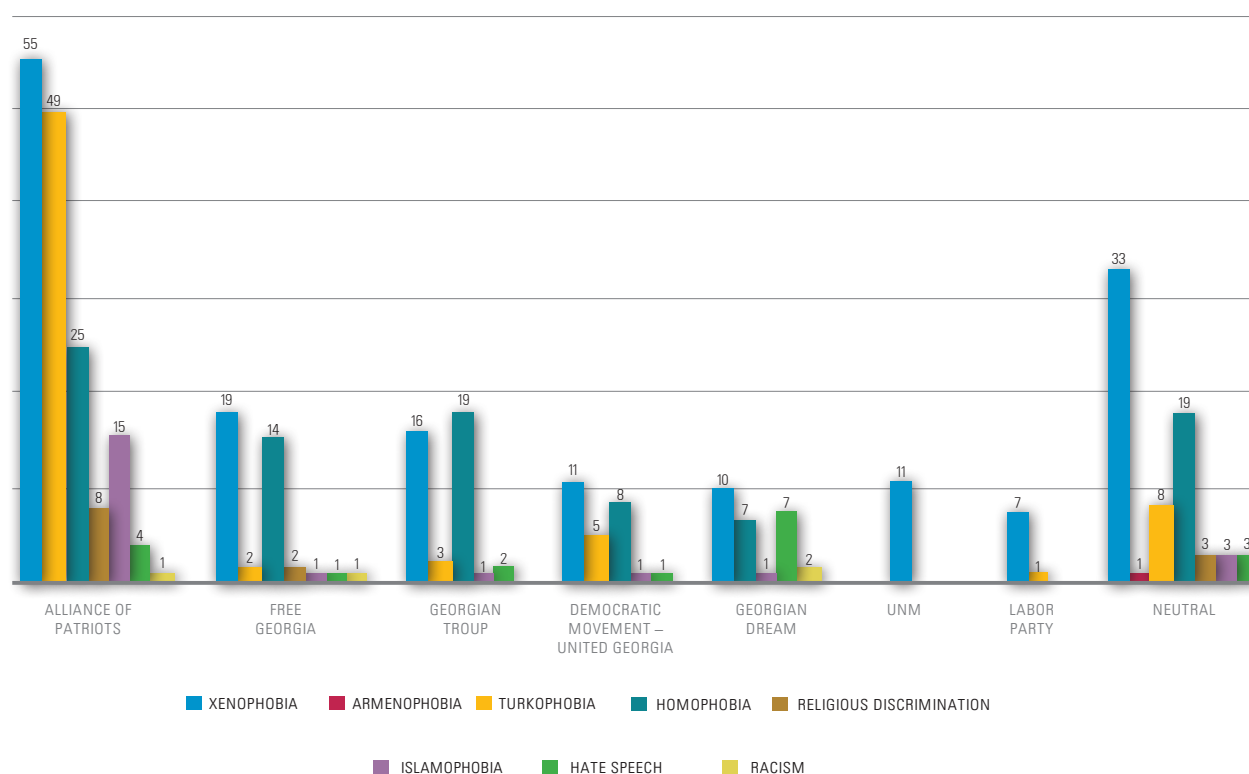
FIGURE 13. SOURCES OF HATE SPEECH BY PARTY



PRO-RUSSIAN PARTIES	RULING PARTY	OPPOSITION PARTIES
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alliance of Patriots 2. Georgian Troup 3. Free Georgia 4. Democratic Movement – United Georgia 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Georgian Dream 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. United National Movement (UNM) 2. Labor Party

The highest number of such statements made by politicians were xenophobic (162), including Turkophobic (68) and Armenophobic (1) comments. These are followed by homophobic (92), Islamophobic (22) comments, comments containing religious discrimination (13), hate speech (18) and racist statements (4).

FIGURE 14. TYPOLOGY OF HATE SPEECH BY PARTY



XENOPHOBIA. Most of the xenophobic statements made by parties incited anti-migrant sentiments.

MIGRANTS = DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS: “There are many problems among us, mental kind, a lot! We should really come to our senses otherwise, in 30–40 years’ time, Georgia will have a lot more outlanders than Georgians...” (Otar Chrdileli, Georgian Dream, Marshalpress, 27 January)

IMPOVERISHED MIGRANTS VERSUS RICH INVESTORS: “...So, these statistics demonstrate clearly that poor Iranians, Turks and other foreigners took away the Georgians’ jobs. Instead of rich investors who would give jobs to Georgians, we got broke migrants who can barely get employment themselves” (Mikheil Saakashvili, UNM, Georgian President, Netgazeti, 15 September).

VISA LIBERALIZATION AND INFLOW OF MIGRANTS OF EASTERN IDENTITY THREATEN GEORGIA WITH DEMOGRAPHIC CATASTROPHE: “The aim of visa liberalization is to empty this land of Blessed Virgin Mary [Georgia] from Georgians... Migration processes of bringing foreigners here – Iraqis, Syrians, Turks, Chinese, Indians, Arabs, Iranians, etc. pursue the aim of equalizing the number of national, aboriginal population and the number of foreign settlers” (Vazha Otashvili, Alliance of Patriots, Obiektivi, Ghamis Studia 26 May).

There are many terrorists among those who came from Syria and the Arab countries; Europe avoids the threat and imposes it on Georgia: “When a flow of refugees enter the country from Syria or the

Arab countries, 15%-20% of them are representatives of terrorist organizations... You want to avoid this threat while we must come to face this threat” (Giorgi Lomaia, Alliance of Patriots, Obiektivi, Ghamis Studia talk show, 4 April). “We are told that approximately 35,000 Georgians left Georgia and went away... Twice as many Iraqis came here, the Syrians came, twice as many people came in from the Asian countries, the countries where terrorist threat is high” (Irma Inashvili, Alliance of Patriots, Imedi, Pirispir, 20 February). “One of the terrorists was found in Brussels and they failed to get into that district, Arab district... Should such districts with Turkish and Arab citizens, which do not fall under our jurisdiction, appear in Tbilisi and Batumi, and should we then start kicking ourselves later?” (Kakha Kukava, Free Georgia, Kavkasia, Spektri, August 22).

FOREIGNERS ARE OFFENDERS: “Information was just released that three Iraqis tortured a 15-year-old Georgian boy... What are the authorities doing?” (Vazha Otarashvili, Alliance of Patriots, Obiektivi, Ghamis Studia, 26 May).

SELLING LAND TO FOREIGNERS MUST BE RESTRICTED: “...This is treason and an unforgivable crime committed before our future generations. We categorically raise the issue of putting a stop to selling land to foreigners and the Constitutional Court must immediately overturn its absurd decision” (Giorgi Akhvlediani, Democratic Movement, Interpressnews, 7 December).

TURKOPHOBIA. Most of the Turkophobic statements, as in previous years, were made by members of the Alliance of Patriots who, through reigniting historical traumas, tried to equate historical occupation by the Ottoman Empire with the current Russian occupation with the aim of shifting attention from Russia’s responsibility to the past:

IRMA INASHVILI, ALLIANCE OF PATRIOTS: “Why only Russia? Does not Turkey represent a threat? Does not Iran represent a threat? We have 33% of Georgia’s territories occupied by Turkey. Turkey is pursuing an extremely dangerous policy in the Ajaria region. We are talking about it. So, both Turkey and Russia are occupiers” (Rustavi 2, Kurieri, February 20).

IRMA INASHVILI, ALLIANCE OF PATRIOTS: “...It generally seems to me that the Russian issue is simply a very hackneyed subject, already very comical... Turkey has 33 percent of our territories occupied, admit that Turkey is an occupier, what are you afraid of...? We also know that Russia has occupied our land.” (Imedi, Pirispir, 20 February)

VAZHA OTARASHVILI, ALLIANCE OF PATRIOTS: “Georgia had a such great historical adversary and enemy as Turkey. It was not just Georgia that had Turkey as its enemy, Turkey carried out the genocide not only of Armenians, which has been recognized by the whole world, but also the genocide of Assyrians, Hungarians, Bulgarians, Greeks. Just recently, in 1974, it took half of Cyprus, did it not?! And this empire is coming to Georgia, it has essentially conquered the entire Ajaria with its businesses and no regulation is passed by the Georgian Parliament to counter it!” (Obiektivi, Ghamis Studia, 24 January)

HOMOPHOBIA. Most of the homophobic statements were made by the Alliance of Patriots (25), followed by Georgian Troup (19), Free Georgia (14), Democratic Movement – United Georgia (8) and the ruling party Georgian Dream (7).

KOBA LURSMANASHVILI, GEORGIAN DREAM: “...as a citizen, I categorically demand protection of public interests, interests of the society whose interests are frequently trampled down just by drug users, drug traders and pederasts” (Imedi, Kronika, May 18).

IRMA INASHVILI, ALLIANCE OF PATRIOTS: “It appears that minorities within the minority always oppress the majority... The majority has already been insulted by constant talks about drug legalization, permanent rallies of the LGBT community. I do not fight against the existence of the LGBT community; let them exist, it’s their business, but I am against propaganda. I call it propaganda when we are pressed [into thinking] that “if you are not with us, you are ignorant” (Marshallpress, May 16).

NINO BURJANADZE, DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT: “My negative attitude towards LGBT activists or representatives of this community is based on the fact that they are engaged in propaganda... Democracy does not mean minority rule over the majority... The less you talk about these issues, my dear friends, the less the rights of these people will be violated, and I definitely see that, in most cases, there is serious money behind the protection of these people’s rights, serious grants from the institutions, organizations, special services which use personal problems of these people to serve their own interests and for political games.” (Iberia, Tavisupali Sivrtse, 17 May)

JONDI BAGHATURIA, GEORGIAN TROUP: “...They, too, should realize that we consider their gay prides to be propaganda and imposition of a corrupt lifestyle.” (Public Broadcaster, Akhali Kvira, 20 May)

RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION. Among parties’ statements which expressed religious intolerance (33), the majority were of Islamophobic nature (22). Most of such statements were made by the Alliance of Patriots (15) which is notable for its intolerance of Catholics, Jehovah’s Witnesses and other non-Orthodox denominations in addition to Muslims:

DAVIT TARKHAN-MOURAVI, ALLIANCE OF PATRIOTS: “In every country, where Turkey has its interests, in every country, I emphasize, be it Bulgaria, be it Ajaria, Syria or Azerbaijan, in every country Turkey tries to build a large, intelligence-educational center and it tries to ensure that these institutions are built under a religious cover. It tries to build the Aziziye Mosque in every country. Why the Aziziye Mosque? Because they believe that it was the only Sultan with less blood on his hands...” (Obiektivi, Ghamis Studia, October 11).

IRMA INASHVILI, ALLIANCE OF PATRIOTS OF GEORGIA: “The Catholic Church is a guest in our country and nobody oppresses it, nobody struggles against it, nobody obstructs its activities, but this guest, in the person of Giuseppe Pasotto, files a lawsuit against the Orthodox Church in the Constitutional Court and demands the same rights as those exercised by the Orthodox Church... Let me remind you that the Catholics make

up 0.5% of the population of Georgia... It should be noted that besides the Catholic Church, seven of its supporters are also participating in this immorality...” (Marshallpress, August 2).

KAKHA KUKAVA, FREE GEORGIA, PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: “Muslim migrants are a much greater and larger-scale threat for Georgia than that of an Iranian man raping a Georgian woman” (Asaval-Dasavali, 3-9 September).

OTHER TYPES OF HATE SPEECH. The Georgian Dream ruling party was responsible for a large portion of hate speech use (7), followed by the statements made by the Alliance of Patriots (4). The statements inciting violence were mostly directed against the political opponents of political parties, namely, representatives of the UNM.

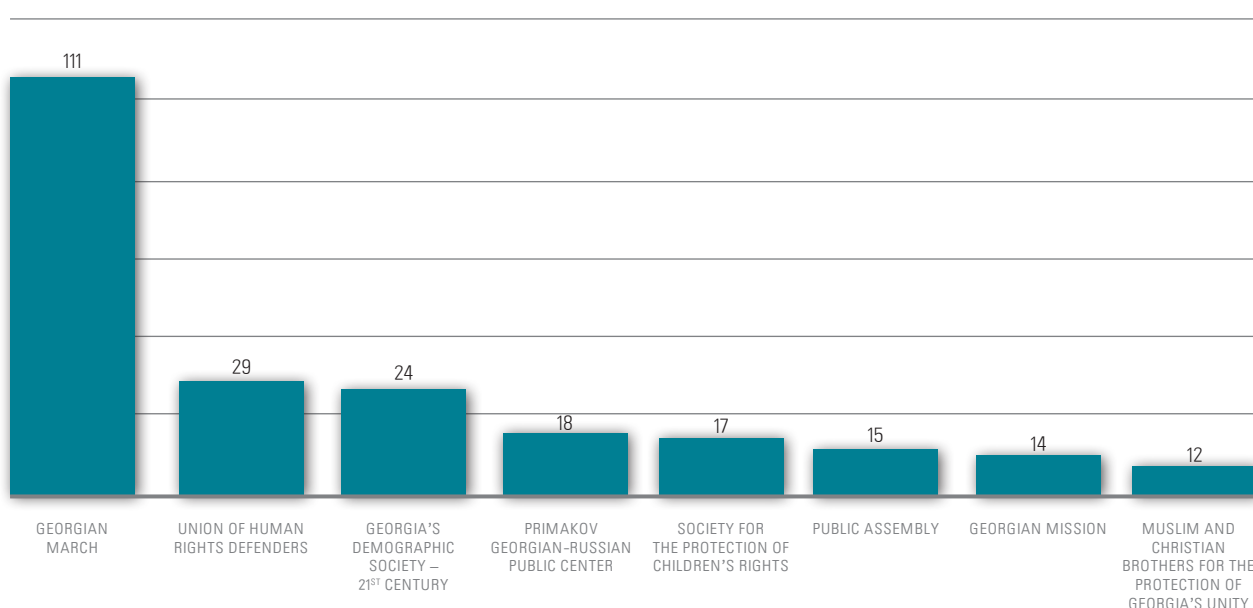
ZAZA PAPUASHVILI, GEORGIAN DREAM: “They [UNM members] definitely deserve good blows to their heads... I would happily slap Bokeria and any other natsi [derogatory name for a UNM member] who won’t stop engaging in sabotage...! I would have happily torn them apart had there not been some barriers!” (Asaval-Dasavali, 24-30 September).

IRMA INASHVILI, ALLIANCE OF PATRIOTS: “I think it would be better to have a fight once and I should really bash your [UNM members] faces! The criminals that they are!” (Obiektivi, Ghamis Studia, 12 December)

2.3. CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS

Eight civic organizations were identified as the ones using hate speech most frequently. Number one among these organizations in terms of the frequency of discriminatory comments is the Georgian March (111), followed by the Union of Human Rights Defenders (29), Georgia’s Demographic Society – XXI Century (24), the Primakov Georgian-Russian Public Center (18), the Society for the Protection of Children’s Rights (17), Public Assembly (15), Georgian Mission (14) and Muslim and Christian Brothers for the Protection of Georgia’s Unity (12).

FIGURE 15. SOURCES OF HATE SPEECH BY CIVIC ORGANIZATION

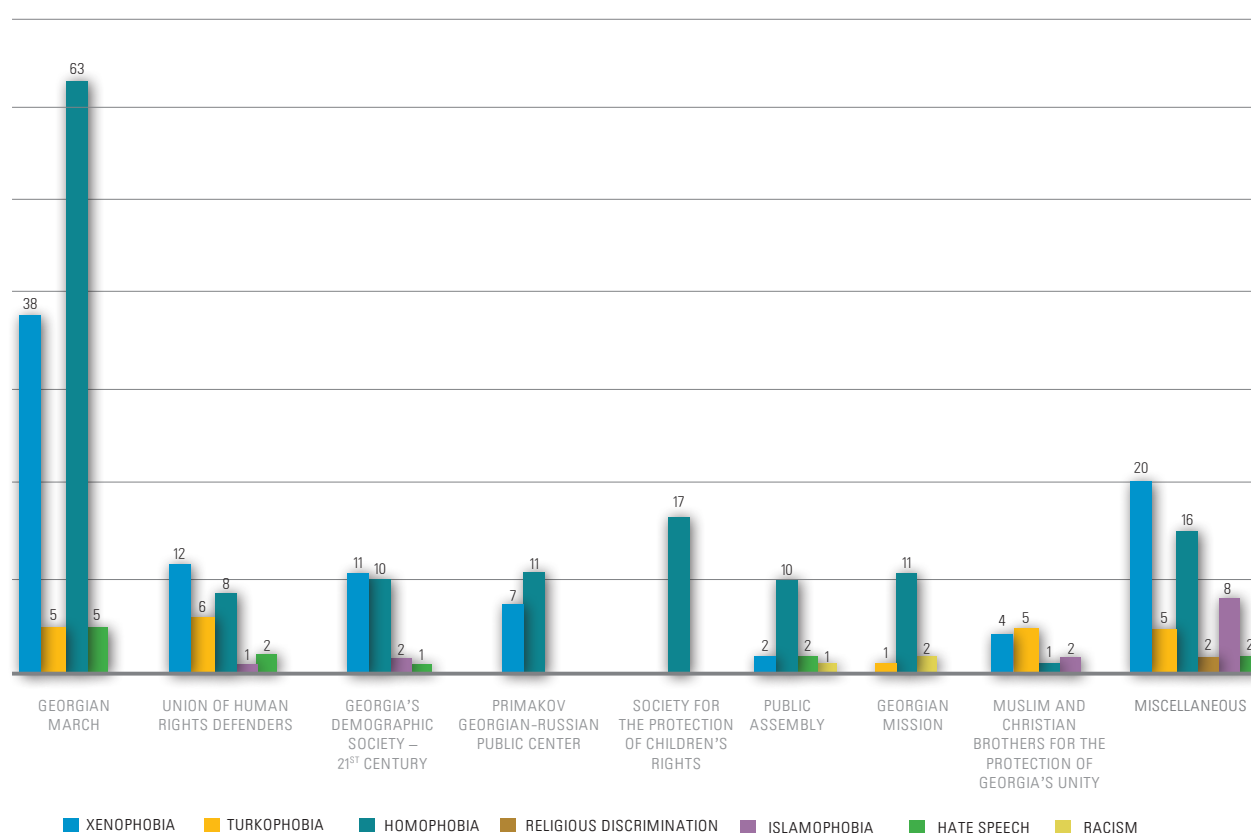




The majority of these organizations, as a rule, position themselves differently in the public domain, however both ultra-nationalist and openly pro-Russian groups are united in the so-called Accord of National Forces which was formed in opposition to the protest rallies held by liberal groups protesting against the 13 May 2018 special operation conducted in the night clubs and which, in turn, points at the homogeneity of its members.

The vast majority of the statements made by representatives of various organizations were of homophobic nature (147), followed by xenophobic (94) and Turkophobic (22) comments. Most of the comments containing religious discrimination (15) were Islamophobic (13).

FIGURE 16. TYPOLOGY OF HATE SPEECH BY CIVIC ORGANIZATION



HOMOPHOBIA. The Georgian March was notable for its homophobic statements. On 17 May, the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, members of this organization actively called on the public to restrict the freedom of expression by the LGBT community.

SANDRO BREGADZE, THE GEORGIAN MARCH: “No gay pride will be held in Georgia on 17 May or any other day... I have no desire to shed blood but my patience has limits, too” (Netgazeti, 14 May).

DIMITRI LORTKIPANIDZE, THE PRIMAKOV GEORGIAN-RUSSIAN PUBLIC CENTER: “I mean the gender dictatorship reigning in Georgia, as well as ‘the anti-discrimination law’ imposed on us, homosexuality propaganda, juvenile justice and legalization and expansion of drugs, with which they try to destroy Georgia!” (Asaval-Dasavali, August 20-26).

XENOPHOBIA. Xenophobic statements made by civic organizations were mostly directed against migrants. Here, too, the Georgian March dominated.

SANDRO BREGADZE, THE GEORGIAN MARCH: “Our society is unprotected and criminals are arriving under the cover of migrants, who pose a threat to the country. The main function of the People’s Patrol will be to identify violations by foreign nationals and transfer them to the law enforcement agencies. We mainly mean African migrants, who enter Georgia without any control and stay here illegally. They are involved in criminal activities, like drug trade, trafficking and prostitution. Our patrol will perform prevention functions” (Georgia and the World, February 9).

DIMITRI LORTKIPANIDZE, THE PRIMAKOV GEORGIAN-RUSSIAN PUBLIC CENTER: “We have no preventive mechanism with Asian countries; therefore, criminals from Northern Iran, as well as drug-related crimes have washed us away” (Kavkasia, Barieri, October 11).

TURKOPHOBIA. The Union of Human Rights Defenders, the Georgian March and the Muslim and Christian Brothers for the Protection of Georgia’s Unity were notable for Turkophobic statements.

NIKOLAZ MZHAVANADZE, THE UNION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS: “When the Turkish president says more than once that he is going to incorporate Ajaria and, against this background, you are airing Turkish TV series, fighting against national values and worldview, you are the enemy of the Georgian people” (Alia, 5-11 February).

RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION. The majority of the comments containing religious discrimination made by civic organizations were Islamophobic.

ZVIAD TOMARADZE, DEMOGRAPHIC SOCIETY XXI: “...I believe that restrictions should be imposed and walking around wearing these clothes [chador, burqa] should be prohibited. This has nothing to do with religion, this is an issue of security, not an issue of religion because I respect all religions and faiths” (Obiektivi, News Program, 8 September).

2.4. CLERICS

There were three clerics whose discriminatory comments were covered most frequently by the monitored media outlets.

CLERICS	HATE SPEECH
Giorgi Razmadze	23
Davit Isakadze	17
Vakhtang Davitashvili	5

Most of the discriminatory comments made by these clerics were homophobic (67), followed by those containing religious discrimination (29) and xenophobia (12).

HOMOPHOBIA. In the homophobic comments made by the clerics, freedom of expression by the LGBT community was equated with the propaganda of homosexuality, while homosexuality was depicted as a sin and corrupt way of life:

GIORGI RAZMADZE, CLERIC: “The public can see that this TV channel is engaged in the propaganda of sodomy and lesbianism with the funding from Soros. Today, Rustavi 2, with the help from the authorities, is trying to impose this degenerate way of life on the Georgian public” (Georgia & World, 31 May).

RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION. Religious discrimination on the part of the clerics was mostly Islamophobic and directed against the threat of religious expansion and construction of mosques. The clerics made intolerant comments about the Catholic Church and Jehovah’s Witnesses as well.

DAVIT ISAKADZE, CLERIC: “How can building mosques be an issue at all in Georgia today? I have said before and will repeat that in the current most difficult situation, when the country is on the brink of a demographic and ideological catastrophe, there should be no talk about building mosques at all. Those asking for and supporting these are enemies who have been paid off” (Georgia & World, 1 March).

SPIRIDON ABULADZE, BISHOP: “Look, we are facing a danger today, too. The Pope of Rome says, I am planning a visit to Georgia for missionary purposes. What could the Pope of Rome teach Georgia? What? How to set up concentration camps for Orthodox Christians and how to kill millions of them there?! The way they did in Serbia and Croatia?! This?!” (Rustavi 2, Postskriptumi, 27 May).

BASIL MKALAVISHVILI, CLERIC: “Some 15–20 years ago, too, I called on the Patriarchy to respond to the insolence of Jehovah’s Witnesses who came here as agents, but no one would listen” (Asaval-Dasavali, 21–27 May).

2.5. PUBLIC

Comments made by representatives of the public were mostly xenophobic (202) which included 42 Turkophobic and 19 Armenophobic statements. Homophobic comments (116) are in the second place, followed by religious discrimination (34), most of which were Islamophobic (28).

Most of the comments containing hate speech made by the public were voiced by the viewers of TV Obiektivi (52) during their broadcast telephone calls to the channel; they were followed by Guram Kartvelishvili (22), poet Rezo Amashukeli (15) and others.

PUBLIC	HATE SPEECH
Viewers of Obiektivi	52
Guram Kartvelishvili	22
Rezo Amashukeli	15
Paata Koghuashvili	14
Mamuka Areshidze	11

HOMOPHOBIA. The sexual identity of the LGBT community was equated with sin, sickness and corruption with the emphasis on unacceptability of a different sexual identity and restriction of their freedom of speech in public space.

REZO AMASHUKELI, POET: “When the issue is that an LGBT representative could be fired without this [anti-discrimination] law, then, without this law, almost all TV companies except for yours should be closed down, because there is a pederast on all TV channels... As for LGBT, they can do whatever damn they want, head over heels in their homes and beds but, in Georgia, a woman will always be a woman and a man will be a man, no matter what, West or East” (Obiektivi, Ghamis Studia, 7 October).

ANTI-MIGRANT COMMENTS / ISLAMOPHOBIA. As in other cases, the xenophobic statements made by representatives of the public were anti-migrant and partially Islamophobic. The viewers of TV Obiektivi were particularly active in this regard:

VIEWER: “If you want to buy ice cream in Vake Park, there are mostly foreigners there of unclear, Asian or African origin” (Obiektivi, Ghamis Studia, 14 June).

Viewer: “I am very bothered by such an invasion of the Muslim world and no one is thinking about stopping them, make these people leave” (Obiektivi, Ghamis Studia, 24 June).

3. PERCEPTION OF MIGRANTS RELATED FAKE NEWS AND FACTS

Perception of fake news on migrants and migration processes published in Georgian media was studied during the focus group⁸ discussions. To this end misinformation detected by the Georgian fact-checking webpage, Myth Detector, as well as real facts concerning migrants, migration processes and visa liberalization were selected:

FAKE NEWS	FACTS
Visa liberalization obliges Georgia to admit Syrian refugees ⁹ .	220 000 citizens of Georgia benefited from visa liberalization ¹⁰ .
A Christmas tree has been removed in the City Hall of Bolzano, Italy, in order not to irritate Muslims ¹¹ .	Police detains citizen of Georgia in Bari, Italy, for an attempted burglary of shop and wounding security officer ¹² .
The former government (United National Movement) gave Georgian passports to 25 000 Turkish citizens in Adjara, which creates a threat of forming a Turkish political party and separating the region ¹³ .	“Georgian March” asks to transfer money onto an account in the bank owned by Arab business group ¹⁴ .
	Illegal immigrant Mamoudou Gassama rescued a child who was about to fall from a Paris apartment ¹⁵ .

⁸ In total, 8 focus groups discussions were conducted in two age groups (18–35 and 36–55) in four cities of Georgia (Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi and Akhalkalaki) with participation of total 64 individuals. The focus group participants were selected through a questionnaire which was developed in advance and envisaged the following parameters: age, employment status, and with regard to young participants, the involvement in civic activity. The sample comprised both employed and unemployed respondents, while with regard to youth, respondents who were engaged in civic activism and who have never been engaged in it.

⁹ Myth Detector, 3 April, 2018. Disinformation by “Patriots”: Accepting Syrian Refugees is a Price for Visa Liberalisation. <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/disinformation-patriots-accepting-syrian-refugees-price-visa-liberalisation>

¹⁰ IPN, 19 February, “220 000 people benefited from visa liberalization”, <http://www.interpressnews.ge/ka/article/478985-vizaliberal-izaciit-220-000-ma-adamianma-isargebla>

¹¹ Alt-Info news web-portal, 19 December 2017. Myth Detector, 27 December, 2017. Top 3 Lies about Christmas and the New Year in 2017. <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/top-3-lies-about-christmas-and-new-year-2017>

¹² Myth Detector, 4 May, 2018, Disinformation about Georgian Citizenship Allegedly Granted to 25 000 Turkish Citizens. <http://myth-detector.ge/en/myth/disinformation-about-georgian-citizenship-allegedly-granted-25-000-turkish-citizens>

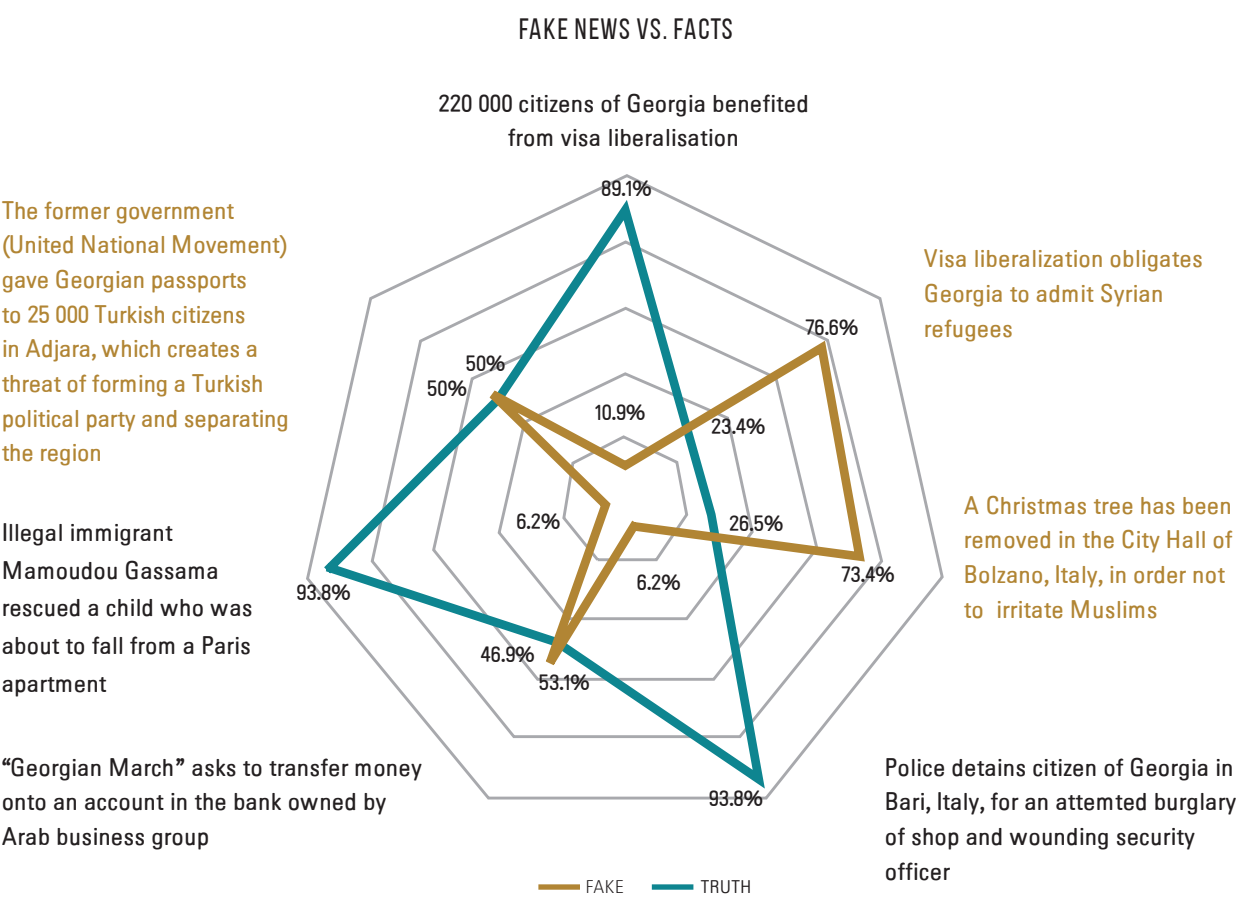
¹³ Myth Detector, 4 May, 2018, Disinformation about Georgian Citizenship Allegedly Granted to 25 000 Turkish Citizens. <http://myth-detector.ge/en/myth/disinformation-about-georgian-citizenship-allegedly-granted-25-000-turkish-citizens>

¹⁴ Myth Detector, 13 November, 2017. Real fact: ‘Georgian March’ requests money donations in a bank account owned by an Arabian business consortium. <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/real-fact-georgian-march-requests-money-donations-bank-account-owned-arabian-business>

¹⁵ Reuters, 28 May, 2018. France offers citizenship to Malian immigrant who scaled building to save child. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-hero/france-offers-citizenship-to-malian-immigrant-who-scaled-building-to-save-child-idUSKCN1IS0UF>

As the aggregated data of two age categories of focus groups held in four cities shows, respondents were most vulnerable to that information which concerned local actors (the former ruling and currently opposition party – United National Movement and a far-right movement The Georgian March). Attitudes of respondents towards information on both subjects divided almost equally.

FIGURE 17. ATTITUDES TO FAKE NEWS AND FACTS, %



UNITED NATIONAL MOVEMENT. Half of respondents (50%) believed that the news on the former government (United National Movement) giving Georgian passports to 25 000 Turkish citizens in Adjara,[8] thereby creating a threat of forming a Turkish political party and separating the region, was true. The same number of respondents believed that it was fake. In regional cross-section, this information was considered the least reliable in Tbilisi (18-35: 6; 36-55: 7), the most reliable in Akhalkalaki (18-35: 3; 36-55: 2), and almost equally reliable and unreliable in Kutaisi and Batumi. Most skeptical respondents from the Batumi focus groups questioned the number (25 000), noting that the number of such people was considerably smaller while one respondent supported this doubt by statistical data requested from the Public Registry by Batumelebi newspaper. A Kutaisi respondent questioned the reliability of this information because, in his opinion, had this data been real the current government would have necessarily used it against the former government:

A MAN (KUTAI, 36-55): “The government would have said that at least once. These are just rumors circulating among people. At least, the Justice Minister would have used it as evidence against the former government, but since no one has said anything it means that this is not true.”

Among those respondents in Batumi, who considered the news true, explained their position by interests of Turkey in Adjara:

A MAN (BATUMI, 18-35): “We are not ensured against what will happen in future; how many people have citizenship and several businesses?... We all know that Turkey pursues another goal and children in Chaqvi school are taught that the territory up to Chaqvi belongs to Turkey.”

THE GEORGIAN MARCH. A real fact that the far-right movement The Georgian March requested the transfer of money onto an account in the bank owned by an Arab business group was considered fake by 53.1% of respondents and true by 46.9%. This information was considered the most unreliable by older age group respondents in Akhalkalaki (all the eight respondents), Tbilisi (six from eight) and Kutaisi (five from eight). The Akhalkalaki youth group was not aware of The Georgian March itself. This news was questioned by Batumi (a man, 18-35) and Kutaisi (a man, 36-55) respondents because they were aware that this group was financed from Moscow, while others considered it illogical as, in their opinion one cannot “condemn and at the same time ask for money” (a woman, Batumi, 18-35). In addition, a Batumi participant (a woman, 18-35) said that a source was an important criterion in assessing the reliability of information and noted that she would not consider information released via Facebook reliable.

VISA LIBERALIZATION. True news about 220,000 Georgian citizens benefitting from visa liberalization was considered fake by only 10.9% of respondents. Most skeptical about this news was the younger age group in Batumi, where three of them considered it fake. While both age groups in Akhalkalaki considered the number (220,000) exaggerated, Batumi respondents questioned that part of the news which named aims of visits. In particular, the news said that “these visits mainly served the aims of tourism, strengthening business and cultural ties or other short-term visits.” Several respondents recalled the position of German government which considered the application of visa liberalization suspension mechanism with Georgia due to crime situation and increased number of asylum seekers.

A MAN (BATUMI, 18-35): “I think that news is fake... Once problems emerged, the entire Germany was alarmed.”

A WOMAN (BATUMI, 18-35): “Asserting as if these people went there with this aim while no one knows aims of each person, and as it was noted here, there are many examples of how people deviated from these aims.”

Misinformation that visa liberalization obliges Georgia to admit refugees from Syria was considered true by 23.4% of respondents whereas the majority (76.6%) considered it fake. The number of those who considered

it fake was the highest among younger respondents from Batumi (8) and Tbilisi (7). Several respondents in the younger age group of Akhalkalaki did not rule out such a possibility and explained their unclear position by the lack of information. Although one of the respondents considered the news unreliable, at the same time he noted that visa liberalization did not mean ease of travel alone and that it also imposed certain obligations on the country (a man, Batumi, 36-55).

CHRISTMAS TREE. Misinformation about the removal of Christmas tree in the City Hall of Bolzano, Italy, in order not to irritate Muslims, was considered true by 26.6% of respondents and fake by 73.4%. This information was most unreliable for older age group participants in Tbilisi and participants of both age groups in Akhalkalaki, with seven from eight participants in each group considering it fake. This news proved to be most reliable for young participants of Tbilisi and Kutaisi focus groups (4 in each).

Those who did not believe this news, supported their opinion by the fact that Italians were dedicated to their traditions and religion and they would by no means take that decision for the sake of Muslims:

A WOMAN (BATUMI, 36-55): “If Italy has its traditions, it of course will not reject them because someone would not like them.”

A WOMAN (BATUMI, 36-55): “It sounds too unbelievable, because Italians are very devout people, in schools too...”

A respondent from Batumi (a man, 36-55) did not rule out such a possibility and recalled the violence entailed by Muhammad cartoons to explain his position.

MISCELLANEOUS. A positive piece of news about illegal immigrant Mamoudou Gassama rescuing a child who was about to fall from the fourth floor of a Paris apartment as well as a negative piece of news about the detention of citizen of Georgia in Bari, Italy, for a crime proved reliable for the overwhelming majority of focus group participants (93.8%) because they had comprehensive and clear information about it from media.

