Yearbook on Media Quality in Tanzania

Where are the candidates and citizens' voices?

SCRUTINY OF RADIO STATIONS COVERAGE OF 2024 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN TANZANIA

REPORT

2024

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Executive Summary

The Yearbook on Media Quality in Tanzania 2024 assessed Radio coverage of 2024 Local Government Elections (LGEs) in Mainland Tanzania. Using specific criteria, it assessed the coverage of 35 local Radio stations drawn from across the country, including those with regional, district, and community licences and the national broadcaster (TBC Taifa). The assessment criteria included the following aspects: how well they informed the citizenry about the elections and the candidates running for office, how they interrogated candidates' promises, and how they engaged the citizens (voters), who, according to the country's constitution, sovereign resides on them.

The sample size was 35 Radio stations, from which the research team analysed 992 news and programmes. Generally, the Radio stations in their reportage sourced their news from their initiatives and reacted less to official events or statements (event-based reporting), at least in their news bulletins. Comparatively, the 2024 performance is better than the performances reported in the Yearbooks of 2018 to 2022. The media-driven reporting in 2024 was better in the news section (37% compared to 28% in 2019) but slightly weaker in the programmes (88% compared to 95% in 2022).

With regards to multiple source usage and Radio station comparison of their performances from 2018 to 2022, the results signal a drop in sourcing performance in the 2024 LGE reportage. Indeed, the use of multiple sources in the news section was lower than in all the previous years (42% in 2024 against over 50% in previous years). For programmes, the performance was better in 2024, with 72% of multiple sourcing, compared to about 65% in the previous years. However, the performance of individual Radio stations varied: a few always use a good number of sources. These include *CG FM, El-Olama FM, Highlands FM, Kasibante FM, Mashujaa FM, Mpanda FM, Pambazuko FM, Sengerema FM, Rufiji FM, SG Five FM, and Uvinza Community FM*.

Although candidates are usually the centre of attention in election campaigns, local radio stations generally have very few stories about them. A paltry 12% of the radio pieces covered candidates. However, even with these few stories

about candidates, the performance of Radio stations in assessing their credentials and capacity to deliver for their respective electorates was still deficient generally. Nevertheless, most of the Radio stations covered the candidates' policies and promises (56% of stories with candidates) and, sometimes, referred to the party manifesto (30%).

On the other hand, the scrutiny of the candidates' achievements and the failures of the incumbents vying for another term was generally poor. The interrogation of candidates' achievements was minimally covered (10%), and the critical assessment of candidates' failures was almost non-existent (1%). Considering the media's crucial role in elections, this shortcoming exposes the local Radio stations. As watchdogs, they should critically scrutinise the candidates' achievements and failures to enable voters to make informed electoral decisions.

The local Radio stations remained non-partisan, with no particular preference for candidates from CCM or Chadema, the two leading political parties on Tanzania Mainland. There was low but almost equal coverage for both. The stations covered CUF and ACT Wazalendo, though much less than CCM, the ruling party, and Chadema, the main opposition party on the mainland. Candidates from other parties were not covered at all.

The inclusion of women—as sources of news—an essential element in news media coverage remains a grave concern with no improvement at all. The performance in "having at least one female source" was better in 2018 (43% of the stories) and 2022 (44% of stories) than in 2024 (only 38%). On the downside, the citizens' voices during the elections were confined to the back seat, prioritising political parties, government leaders, and local government administration.

Furthermore, the local Radio stations under review, albeit with some exceptions, avoided broadcasting viewpoints when they were required to inform citizens about different viewpoints so that they could form their own opinions.

Meanwhile, the differences between regional/district and community Radios were minimal and usually insignificant. However, there were two notable exceptions:

- Community Radio stations were outstanding in covering policies espoused by the candidates. Therefore, unlike other radio stations, they fulfilled the role of enlightening citizens about the candidates well.

- There is a significant difference between regional/district and community Radio stations regarding candidates' political parties. Community Radio stations have a strong affinity towards Chadema, which they prioritised. Stations with regional and district licences emerged to be more balanced than community Radio in this regard.

Media stakeholders have identified several significant challenges that hindered Radio stations' ability to effectively report the 2024 Local Government Elections (LGEs). These challenges include a lack of trust between candidates and radio stations, a limited seven-day campaign duration, and financial difficulties the stations face. Additionally, some journalists prioritised financial gain over public service. Furthermore, stations owned by politicians from the ruling party or their associates often prevented the coverage of opposition candidates.

This report strongly recommends the establishment of procedures to evaluate candidates running for office. This should be fair yet critical, examining their achievements and failures and inviting various sources to share their viewpoints on the electoral process and candidates. Such adjustments in coverage are particularly significant as the country prepares for the General Elections (GEs) later this year (2025).

1.0 Introduction

The United Republic of Tanzania (URT) held its seventh multiparty Local Government Elections (LGEs) in November 2024. Owing to political liberalisation and the reintroduction of multiparty democracy in 1992, the country held its first competitive LGEs in 1994 and, subsequently, in 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019, respectively. All the Radio stations covered each of these elections, hence playing a critical role in promoting democracy.

This report examines the performance of Radio stations during the 2024 LGEs and the extent to which they served public interests. In other words, it sought to establish the extent to which the Radio stations upheld the journalistic ethos and responsible coverage of the LGEs to support the democratic process. Specifically, it assessed the coverage of 35 Radio stations with regional, district, community, or national licences.

Using quantitative content analysis, the review assessed the coverage of the 2024 LGEs using predetermined quality indicators: the context of reporting, sources, reference to the party manifesto, questions related to the content of candidates' policies, their past achievements, and/or failures, and viewpoints in favour of or against the candidates. For triangulation purposes, the analysis was supplemented by information from key informant interviews with station managers, radio programme managers, a broadcast regulator, and media organisations to help understand and interrogate the gatekeeping process and roles during the study period.

This report has five sections: Introduction, Background, Methodology, Findings (quantitative and qualitative), Conclusion, and Recommendations. It provides the overall results before narrowing the presentation to specific categories or Radio stations based on their licences. This report can be accessed via UDSM-SJMC's website (https://www.udsm.ac.tz/web/index.php/schools/SMC) under the Yearbook on Media Quality in Tanzania menu.

2.0 Background of the Political System in Tanzania

The politics in Tanzania take place in the framework of a unitary, presidentially-democratic republic. Tanzania is a union of two independent states of then Tanganyika, now Tanzania Mainland, and Zanzibar, also called the Isles, which happened in 1964. As a democratic country, Tanzania has a multiparty system of governance and holds regular elections. Article 8 (1) (a) of the Constitution states that the power in the republic comes from the people who elect representatives to exercise it on their behalf.

There are two categories of elections in the United Republic of Tanzania, henceforth URT of Tanzania: General Elections (GEs) and Local Government Elections (LGEs). Whereas the GE involves electing a president of the URT, a president of the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar, Members of Parliament (MPs), members of the Zanzibar House of Representatives (ZHoR), and councillors, the LGE deals with electing leaders at the Local Government Authorities (LGAs) only on Tanzania Mainland (this election is not held in Zanzibar). Each of the elections is held every five years. The 1977 Constitution stipulates that the LGAs strive to promote and consolidate people's power by allowing them to participate fully in the planning and execution of their development.

3.0 Local Government Elections 2024

The LGEs on Tanzania Mainland were held on November 27, 2024.

3.1 Challenging the Management of LGEs

Before the LGEs, three Tanzanians—Mr. Bob Chacha Wangwe, Mr. Bubelwa Kaiza, and Dr. Anenilea Nkya

identifying themselves as civic-minded citizens—filed a lawsuit against the Minister for PO-RALG and the Attorney General of the URT. They requested the court to issue prerogative orders of *certiorari* and prohibition to annul the subsidiary legislation known as Government Notices No. 571, 572, 573, and 574, dated July 12, 2024, issued to supervise, coordinate, and conduct the 2024 LGEs. The plaintiffs argued that these notices were illegal as the minister had exceeded his authority, breached principles of natural justice, conflicted with the Constitution, and reflected bias.

They further asserted that, in response to electoral irregularities and public concerns, the Tanzania Parliament had enacted a new law titled *Sheria ya Tume Huru ya Uchaguzi 2024 ya Taifa No. 2 2024* (The Independent National Electoral Commission Act No. 2, 2024). This new legislation grants powers to and spells out responsibilities for the established Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to oversee the LGEs in the country. Therefore, the plaintiffs contended that the elections scheduled to occur in November 2024 contravened this new and officially gazetted law, which came into effect before the LGEs after the President had assented to it. The law assigned the INEC to coordinate and supervise LGEs instead of the PO-RALG.

ACT Wazalendo central council echoed this position on August 25th, 2024, noting that the ruling CCM party and its government had put the election into disrepute by allowing PO-RALG to oversee LGEs when the mandate had shifted to the INEC: "The ruling party and the government have started their trickery as we approach the election. They have started to restrict freedom of speech and assembly. They intimidate other political parties, practising tyranny and not listening to each other. We have already filed a case in the court to make it illegal for the PO-RALG to oversee local government elections"[1] (Dorothy Semu, Chairperson, ACT Wazalendo).

Despite these claims, the Court ruled that the Minister had acted within the legal framework when issuing the Government Notices, adding that the Minister retains authority until the Sheria ya Tume Huru ya Uchaguzi ya Taifa No. 2 ya 2024 Section 10 (1) (c) revoked it. Accordingly, Parliament intended the INEC to supervise LGEs after the law governing such elections had been enacted. In the absence of this law, the existing legal structure governing LGEs remains in force. Without that law, the INEC lacks the authority to supervise, coordinate, or manage the elections.

3.2 Voter registration

Voter registration started on Friday, October 11, 2024, and ended on October 20, 2024. There was a high turnout of eligible voters for voter registration. According to the Minister of State in the President's Office, Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG), Hon. Mohammed Mchengerwa, 31,282,331 (94.83%) of eligible voters registered, with 16,045,559 being women (51.29%) and 15,236,772 men (48.71%).[2] In the 2019 LGEs, 19,681,259 voters were registered, comprising 9,529,992 men and 10,151,267 women.[3]

Notwithstanding this government's success in voter registration, opposition parties raised concern about students under 18 registering for the local polls, which the government dismissed outright as false.

Up for grabs through the polls were five positions for the Village Chairperson, Street Chairperson, Hamlet Chairperson, Village Council Members, and Local Committee members. The following candidates vied for these positions: 18,340 for Village Chairperson position, 7,545 for Street Chairperson, 85,522 for Chairperson of Hamlet, 160,371 for Village Council Members (combined men and women), 108,166 for Village Council Members (women), 18,552 for Members of the Local Committee (combined), and 11,762 for Members of Local Committee (women).

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1   Visit https://x.com/JamiiForums/status/1827740701402026034 & https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-s6V1jKEmiw
2   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pgmv_YDsOyw
3   Ofisi ya rais Tawala za Mikoa na Serikali za Mitaa – Taarifa ya uchaguzi wa viongozi wa Mamlaka za Serikali za Mitaa ngazi ya Vijiji, Vitongoji na Mitaa uliofanyika tarehe 24 Novemba, 2019.

Hon. Minister Mohammed Mchengerwa, PO-RALG (second from left), launched a voter mobilisation campaign for the 2024 LGEs in Dodoma.

3.3 Election manifestos

Ordinarily, political parties do not prepare election manifestos for LGEs. They run their campaigns based on the manifestos of the GEs, in this case, the 2020 GEs. Nevertheless, two political parties—CCM and ACT-Wazalendo—in 2024 published their manifestos specifically for the LGEs. The rest of the political parties did not have specific manifestos for the 2024 LGEs.

ACT-Wazalendo Party leader, Dorothy Semu (left) launched the party's election manifesto. Picture courtesy of Mwananchi newspaper.

3.4 Nomination of Candidates

Political parties initially held nominations of candidates before the PO-RALG through the election, and returning officers completed the vetting process. Table 1 shows the vacancies against nominated candidates for the positions and those who were finally elected:

Nomination of candidates for the 2024 LGEs

	Positions	Number of vacant Positions	Nominated candidates	Successfully Conducted to fill Vacancies	Positions not filled
1	Village Chairperson	12,280	18,340	12,271	9
2	Street Chairperson	4,264	7,545	4,264	0
3	Hamlet Chairperson	63,886	85,522	63,849	37
4	Street Committee Members	21,320	18,552 / 11,762	21,292	22
5	Members of the Village Council	230,834	160,371 / 108,166	230,655	179

Source: PO-RALG (TAMISEMI)

3.5 Disqualification of Candidates

Opposition parties complained about returning officers disqualifying their candidates. The ACT-Wazalendo, Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (Chadema), and the Civic United Front (CUF) all claimed to have struggled with handling their candidates' appeals.[4] The Chadema Chairman, Mr. Freeman Mbowe,[5] [CHADEMA has a new chairperson: Mr. Tundu Antiphas Lissu] urged the PO-RALG to reinstate all their disqualified candidates. Speaking at a press conference on November 19, 2024, at the party's headquarters, Mr. Mbowe demanded that all the disqualified candidates be reinstated. He explained that the authorities disqualified the 2019 LGEs, prompting Chadema to boycott the polls but had no plan to back down in 2024.

Commenting on the opposition parties' charges, the Secretary General of the ruling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), Dr Emmanuel Nchimbi, pleaded with the PO-RALG to disregard minor errors that made many oppositions party candidates ineligible for the polls. The Minister for PO-RALG, Hon. Mohamed Mchengerwa, finally extended the time for opposition parties to lodge their appeals to the committees responsible for two days from November 13-15, 2024. Consequently, 5,589 previously disqualified candidates were reinstated for the LGEs.

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4   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7sC8hxLZTs
5   See: https://drive.google.com/file/d/16UlPZ_7QcKhaXOLse57FYasuF_M8lmLz/view

3.6 Election Campaigns and Results

Election campaigns took place from November 20 to 26, 2024. Overall, the campaign period was smooth, with minimal issues arising among the political parties. The canvasing was generally peaceful across different areas based on agreed-upon schedules. On November 27, 2024, the electoral day, 26,963,182 of the 31,282,331 registered voters, representing a voter turnout of 86.36%, cast their ballots. Table 2 presents the results:

LGE 2024 results per political party

Political parties	Village Chairperson	Street Chairperson	Village Council Members	Hamlet Chairperson	Street committee members
CCM	12,150 (99.01%)	4,213 (98.83%)	229,075 (99.31%)	62,728 (98.26%)	21,148 (99.3%)
Chadema	97 (0.79%)	36 (0.84%)	1,222 (0.53%)	853 (1.34%)	101 (0.47%)
ACT Wazalendo	11 (0.09%)	9 (0.21%)	232 (0.1%)	150 (0.23%)	29 (0.14%)
CUF	10 (0.08%)	4 (0.09%)	105 (0.05%)	78 (0.12%)	16 (0.08%)
NCCR - Mageuzi	1 (0.01%)	1 (0.02%)	16 (0.01%)	10 (0.02%)	2 (0.01%)
UMD	1 (0.01%)	1 (0.02%)		2 (0.003%)	
ADC	1 (0.01%)		1 (0.0004%)	1 (0.002%)	1 (0.005%)
CHAUMA		1 (0.02%)			
CCK			1 (0.005%)		1 (0.005%)
UDP				6 (0.01%)	
NLD			1 (0.0004%)		
Demokrasia Makini			3 (0.001%)		
TOTAL	12,271	4,265	230,655	63,828	21,298

However, according to the Minister, nine villages did not hold elections because of the untimely demise of the candidates and other unavoidable circumstances. In Sumbawanga, no winner emerged victorious for one street because the two candidates had a parity of votes. In all, 37 hamlets did not hold elections, with eight postponements attributable to candidates dying suddenly during campaigns. These candidates were competing for positions in the districts of Kilwa (2), Nanyumbu (1), Itilima (1), Ikungi (1), Manyoni (1), Uyui (1), and Mbarali (1). Additionally, 29 townships did not hold elections for different reasons. Twelve hamlets will have repeat elections because of tied results for their candidates. At the same time, nine (9) townships will hold new polls because the candidates did not attain the required number of votes.

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6   See: https://drive.google.com/file/d/16UlPZ_7QcKhaXOLse57FYasuF_M8lmLz/view

The opposition political parties disputed the electoral process and the results. For instance, ACT-Wazalendo called for the nullification of the results and holding of fresh elections, citing manipulation as one of the electoral irregularities. Ms. Dorothy Semu, the party leader, claimed that the electoral results did not accurately represent the people's will because of the alleged irregularities in the electoral process.

President Samia Suluhu Hassan queues at Chamwino Dodoma on October 11, 2024, to register in the voter registration book for the LGE 2024.

3.7 Stakeholders' Post-Election Observation

Opposition parties, Chadema and ACT-Wazalendo, sharply criticised the *modus operandi* of the elections, citing irregularities and violence associated with law enforcement as impediments to a free and fair electoral process. They called the LGEs a 'sham'. Chadema Chairperson Freeman Mbowe wrote on his X account: "The nation once again witnessed a blatant and shameful misconduct by government authorities working collectively to shamelessly steal the election in favour of CCM and its candidates, even at the expense of Tanzanian lives. Indeed, our nation is mourning yet again."[7] The other opposition parties such as CCK, NRA, and NLD regarded the elections as generally free and fair in spite of the shortcomings observed. In this regard, the NLD Secretary General, Doyo H. Doyo, remarked: "Let us not look for excuses for losing the election.[3]

Nevertheless, the diplomatic missions of Ireland, Norway and Sweden, as Tanzania's development partners, raised concerns over the unfortunate developments during the LGEs. During the commemoration of Human Rights Day on December 10, 2024, the Swedish Ambassador Charlotta Ozaki Macias said: "We are, though, concerned about recent credible reports, before and during the local

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7   Visit the following link for the clip covering NLD press conference posted at Wasafi FM instagram page: https://www.instagram.com/wasafifm/reel/DDCKFOjsLcP/

elections, of irregularities, disappearances and violence against citizens and active politicians. We support demands for transparent, independent investigations into these claims. And we remain hopeful that addressing the challenges at hand will set the stage for peaceful, free and fair elections in 2025." [8]

Addressing members of the Tanzania Editors Forum (TEF), retired Judge Joseph S. Warioba insisted that the contestable proceedings of the LGE could threaten the country's peace, noting that the public had hoped that the 2024 LGEs would differ from the one held in 2019. Commenting on the disqualification of many opposition party candidates for incorrectly filling out the nomination forms, the former judge said: "It is not possible for the public to believe that those disqualified made mistakes, as those disqualified were from one side. There are parties where candidates know and follow the rules, and there are others where candidates do not." He cautioned that without changing things, the 2025 GEs could be undermined by the same challenges: "From the discussions since 2019 until now, the perception surrounding this year's election is no different from that of 2019. As a result, next year's election [GEs of 2025] will be the same unless we take action to avoid the same outcome as the previous one." [9]

3.8 Media Freedom and the 2024 LGEs

Media freedom is an essential pillar of democracy and elections. If freedom is threatened, both democracy and elections suffer. Media freedom is essential to democracy, and a democratic election is impossible without free media. A free and fair election is not only about the freedom to vote and the knowledge of how to cast a vote but also about a participatory process where voters engage in public debate and have adequate information about political parties, policies, candidates and the electoral process itself in order to make

informed choices.

Unlike the media environment in the 2019 LGEs, which was characterised by open censorship, in the 2024 LGEs, the media environment was characterised by improved media freedom. The press freedom environment since 2022 began to improve after a sharp decline between 2016 and 2021. In 2024, *Reporters without Borders'* Press Freedom Index ranks Tanzania at 97th position out of 182 countries globally. The table below shows the country's ranking from 2016 to 2024.

Tanzania press freedom ranking 2016-2024

Note
- A **lower number** in the Press Freedom Index means greater media freedom, with fewer restrictions.
- A **higher number** indicates severe press repression, with censorship, or imprisonment of journalists.

Year	Ranking
2016	71
2017	83
2018	93
2019	118
2020	124
2021	124
2022	123
2023	143
2024	97

Source: Reporters Without Borders

Further, *the State of the Media in Tanzania* (2022-2023) report published by the Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) reads in part: "The research found that since President Samia Suluhu Hassan ascended to power in March 2021, she adopted a progressive stance to press freedom and media practice in the country compared to the previous period. Her words and actions during the period under review have created a friendlier environment, enabling the media outlets and journalists to practise their profession more freely" (MCT, 2024:8). However, the report also acknowledges that the laws that squeeze media and freedom of expression persist in the statute books despite the improved environment.

Additionally, in its survey, the *Afrobarometer* asked African respondents to answer the question: "How free is the news media in this country to report and comment on the news without censorship or interference by the government?" The results show that Tanzania ranks first out of 39 countries on the African continent.
Nevertheless, other reports have painted a contradictory picture of freedom of expression in

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8   See: https://thechanzo.com/2024/12/11/tanzanias-key-develop-
ment-partners-concerned-about-reports-of-irregularities-disappearances-and-violence-before-and-during-local-elections/
9   https://ippmedia.com/the-guardian/news/local-news/read/national-unity-now-in-peril-cautions-warioba-2024-12-04-192844

Figure 12: How free is the media? | 39 countries | 2021/2023

Country	Somewhat free/Completely free	Not very free/Not at all free
Tanzania	82%	16%
Gambia	79%	17%
Tunisia	77%	22%
Mauritania	76%	23%
Mali	72%	26%
Kenya	71%	28%
Namibia	70%	25%
Liberia	70%	29%
Senegal	70%	29%
Zambia	70%	27%
Ghana	70%	29%
Malawi	67%	29%
Uganda	67%	31%
South Africa	65%	29%
Mauritius	63%	36%
Sierra Leone	62%	36%
Madagascar	62%	32%
Cabo Verde	60%	37%
39-country average	57%	40%
Niger	57%	38%
Burkina Faso	57%	42%
Guinea	57%	43%
Morocco	54%	45%
Mozambique	52%	42%
Seychelles	52%	42%
Lesotho	52%	45%
Ethiopia	51%	44%
Botswana	49%	46%
Sudan	49%	47%
Angola	48%	42%
São Tomé and Príncipe	48%	46%
Benin	46%	54%
Zimbabwe	46%	47%
Nigeria	43%	54%
Togo	42%	57%
Cameroon	39%	61%
Côte d'Ivoire	37%	63%
Eswatini	26%	71%
Congo-Brazzaville	21%	79%
Gabon	14%	86%

■ Somewhat free/Completely free   ■ Don't know/Refused
■ Not very free/Not at all free

Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, how free is the news media in this country to report and comment on the news without censorship or interference by the government?*

the country. For example, the Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2024* report has assigned Tanzania 1 out of 4 points under the question, "Are there free and independent media?" Also, in a survey of 1,202 journalists titled "Sauti za Waandishi: Journalists' voices, a survey of Tanzanian media practitioners" conducted by Twaweza found that half of the journalists surveyed have been "threatened, harassed or assaulted" (Twaweza, 2024:2), mainly by government officials.

3.9 Media role in elections

The media largely plays two roles during elections: fulfilling social responsibility emanating from a professional standpoint and legal obligation. Generally, the media inform, educate, and, ultimately, empower citizens, to whom they must provide accurate, timely, contextualised, relevant, and well-researched information on the entire election process. Such responsibilities and obligations include rallying citizens to act and participate in elections collectively. Thus, media are indispensable in fostering free and fair elections. More specifically, the media have the following social responsibilities and professional roles. From a professional stance, the media plays three significant roles outlined as follows:

- **Media as a public educator**
  The media educates the citizenry on the electoral process and provides information to enable and empower voters to make informed decisions (vote wisely).

- **Media as a campaign platform and forum for debate:** The media provides a platform for promoting dialogue and debate on the divergent opinions and ideas of candidates and citizens.

- **Media as a watchdog:** The media serves as a watchdog, particularly for those likely to botch the electoral process, thus ensuring fair and free polls.

Specific legal regimes covering all the actors, including the media, usually guide the management of elections in Tanzania. In this regard, the legislative regimes demand that the media ensures proper, fair, and equitable coverage of political parties and candidates. Thus, these legal obligations constitute the second set of media roles during elections in the country.

3.10 Methodology

The study subjected media pieces to content analysis to assess the coverage of LGEs and generate quantitative data. These data were triangulated with interviews with station and programme managers to yield complementary qualitative data. In total, 35 local Radio stations were selected for the assessment.

3.10.1 Overview of LGE Reporting Quality Indicators

Content analysis was based on two-fold quality criteria: [10] election-related quality, and journalism quality indicators. Quality criteria related to the elections include references to the respective party manifesto, content vs. personality, critical coverage of past achievements of candidates, coverage of candidates and political parties, among others. On the other hand, journalism quality criteria include the context of reporting, sourcing, and ethics, among others. The Yearbook on Media Quality Research project uses "quality" as a summary notion comprising various quality criteria, primarily because quality as a "single" measure is usually unattainable. In consequence, the study assessed quality as a composite measure of the degree of media performance using various concrete quality criteria. The quality criteria that Yearbook 2024 used are derivable from journalism theory, journalistic practice and research on media coverage of elections. The following are the quality criteria (including journalism quality and election quality indicators) that the research used in the assessment:

- **Context of reporting:** This criterion examines events or statements that have prompted election reporting. It also determines whether journalists merely report on events or actively gather their own election stories. This analysis serves two purposes: to assess the distribution of coverage among political parties and to compare the proportion of event-based stories to those initiated by the media.

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10 A complete methodological approach is attached at the end of this report.

- **Sourcing:** Having at least two sources in each journalistic piece, whether a story or a programme, enables journalists to present various perspectives and provide more comprehensive information, helping voters to make informed decisions. Moreover, it ensures hearing the voices of different stakeholders, including ordinary citizens, who are often overlooked.

- **Diversity of candidates' coverage:** In the Local Government Elections (LGEs), we evaluated candidates' representation based on the contested positions: village chairperson, hamlet chairperson, members of street committees, members of village councils, female members of street committees, and female members of village councils. The assessment mainly aimed at identifying any imbalances or biases in representation across these positions.

- **Diversity of topics/subject:** This criterion examines the topics related to elections as well as other issues covered in media units, such as various stories and programmes to create a profile of media houses based on their coverage orientation, focusing on politics, development, economics, and other relevant issues.

- **Coverage of policy (new content):** The media play a pivotal role in educating voters about the candidates' policies and their visions for the future. In this regard, high-quality journalism should prioritise a thorough analysis and in-depth reporting of these policies that are critical in helping the electorate to make informed decisions. Focusing on the substance of candidates' proposals allows the media to provide context, explore potential implications, and discuss how these policies align with the values and needs of the community. In addition, ensuring that the public receives accurate and comprehensive information about candidates' positions can foster the citizenry's greater accountability and engagement in the democratic process.

- **Reference to party manifesto:** Citing candidates' party manifestos in electoral reporting is vital because these documents outline the policies and programmes that each candidate supports. By carefully analysing and discussing these manifestos, journalists can provide voters with a comprehensive grasp of what each candidate stands for and how his or her proposed initiatives can address relevant issues. This in-depth reporting helps voters make informed decisions and holds candidates accountable for their commitments. Thus, the onus is on journalists to diligently capture and convey this information to empower the electorate with information and knowledge that would make a difference during the electoral and democratic processes.

- **Achievements and failures:** Reporters covering candidates in elections should also report not only on their past achievements but also on their failures. This ensures a balanced coverage and provides citizens with a full picture of the candidates' standing.

- **Existence of viewpoints:** The media must provide fairly balanced viewpoints, both in favour and against the candidates, as they look for sources of such viewpoints. This provision can empower voters to know candidates and political parties and, thereby, vote wisely.

Reporting on elections using the established quality criteria is critical, especially in an era where citizen journalism is increasingly gaining traction. The proliferation of various media platforms also allows individuals to share their perspectives and information, but it also underscores the importance of professional standards in journalism. News media and journalists are responsible for enhancing the quality of their reporting to foster an informed citizenry. This informed populace is essential in empowering voters to make choices that reflect their values and interests during elections.
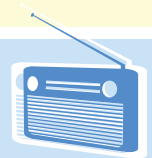
Quality reportage plays a pivotal role in distinguishing citizen journalism from traditional journalism. Though citizen journalists can provide valuable insights and grassroots perspectives, professional journalists have an obligation to embrace a deeper pursuit of uncovering unknown truths regarding the events and issues that significantly shape society during the election process. This pursuit can assume many forms, including expository reporting that seeks to inform the public about the facts of a situation or explanatory journalism that aims to clarify complex issues and help voters understand the implications of their choices. In essence, the quality of election reporting is foundational to fostering democracy, as it equips voters with the knowledge necessary to engage thoughtfully in the electoral process.

3.10.2 Sampling of Radio Stations

The study assessed 35 local radio stations and one (1) national broadcaster to determine the quality of their news bulletins and programmes. Initially, 40 radio stations were selected for sampling. However, five failed to meet the study's requirements because of several factors, including persistent technical issues that disrupted their broadcasts. Indeed, these stations frequently went off-air while recording programmes, making gathering the required number of programmes difficult and interruptive, hence their exclusion. Consequently, the research focused on the remaining 35 radio stations that could provide reliable access to their news bulletins and programmes. Table 4 shows sampled stations per zone.

Sample of radio stations — **35** Number of Radio Stations surveyed

Zones		Radio stations		
01	East	• TBC Taifa • Chalinze FM • Jamii FM	• Mashujaa FM • Pambazuko FM • Pangani FM	• Rufiji FM • TK FM
02	North	• Arusha One FM • Manyara FM	• Sunrise FM • Moshi FM	
03	Lake	• Bariadi FM • Bunda FM	• Kasibante FM • Kwizera FM	• Sengerema FM • Flamingo FM
04	Central	• CG FM • Dodoma FM • Standard Radio	• Uvinza Community FM • Uyui FM	• KICORA FM • SG FIVE FM
05	Southern Highlands	• Highlands FM • Ileje FM • Mbeya City FM • Mpanda FM	• Ruvuma FM • VOS FM • El-Olama FM	• Nuru FM • Pamoja FM • Vwawa FM

With the exception of TBC Taifa, a public broadcaster with a national licence, the remaining sampled radio stations operate under various types of licences, including regional (covers 10 administrative regions), district (one region), or community (specific community or geographical area). This distinction highlights the varied scope and reach of the stations. In terms of ownership structure, the sample comprises radio stations owned by private entities, Local Government Authorities (LGAs), and community-owned entities. The inclusion of such a wide range of ownership types was deliberate and essential. By incorporating stations from this diverse ownership, the sample provides a better understanding of the local Radio landscape, capturing various station types of unique perspectives, programming, and community engagement efforts across the country. This sampling approach enriches the assessment and highlights the significance of local radio as a medium for fostering local communities' connections and voices, which are essential ingredients in nurturing democracy and good governance.

3.10.3 Sampling of media pieces

Besides sampling local Radio stations, media pieces (news bulletins and programmes) were collected for 16 days within three weeks, that is, from November 11th to 1st December 2024, as Table 5 illustrates.

Sampling of radio pieces

Week
11 - 17 Nov
18 - 24 Nov
25 Nov - 01 Dec

16 Number of news bulletins to be recorded

6 November 19, 20,21,22,23, 24

7 November 25, 26, 27, 28, 29,30, and 1 December

3

November 11, 13, 15

09 Total of programs

3 November 11, 13, 15

3 November 25, 27, 29

3 November 20, 22, 24

25 Total of news bulletins and programs per radio station
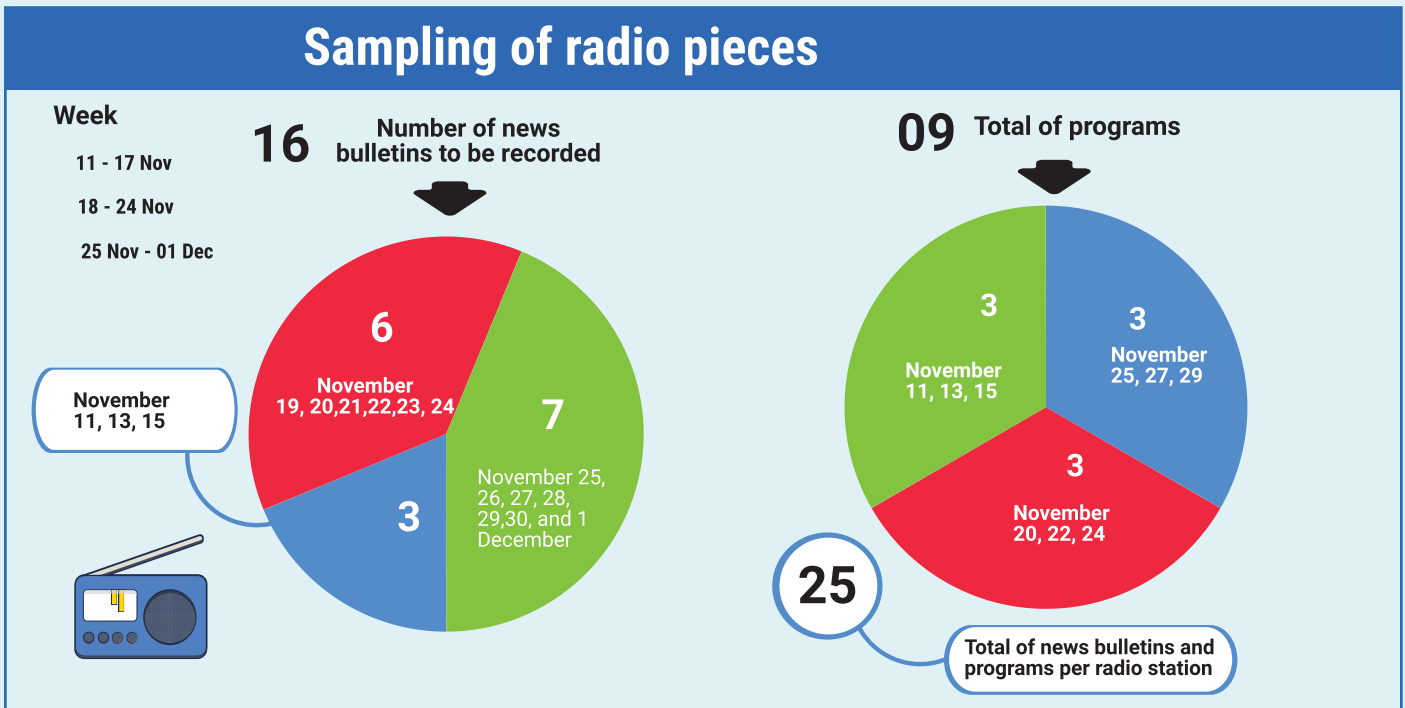
Overall, 874 radio pieces (532 news bulletins and 338 programs) were sampled from 35 radio stations. As the study focuses on the LGEs, only LGEs-related media pieces were included in the sample, totalling 992, which served as the final units of analysis.

3.10.4 Training of transcribers and coders

The project organised a refresher training program to enhance the skills of existing transcribers and coders and onboard recruits. The transcribers went through a one-day intensive training focusing on accurate and efficient transcription methods. Meanwhile, coders participated in a more extensive four-day training that delved deeper into a codebook, coding techniques, and best practices. The training programme successfully accommodated 18 participants, comprising a mix of both transcribers and coders. As part of the project's culture, we meticulously transcribed all the recorded programmes to create transcripts, which served as valuable resources for the coders. This approach enabled the coders to work with the transcribed versions of radio pieces rather than the original audio and television programmes, facilitating a more engaged and effective coding process. By coding the transcribed programmes, coders interacted with the content in a structured manner.

3.10.5 Quality Assurance of recorded pieces and coding

Quality assurance in the Yearbook project serves as a comprehensive framework for maintaining data integrity and accuracy. This process entails meticulous steps to verify that each Radio programme recorded is complete and ready for transcription. Thorough checks ensured that no segments of the recording were missing and that audio quality met the required standards for clarity. Additionally, the transcriptions of the radio programmes were systematically archived for future reference. This archival practice provides a reliable resource to clear any ambiguities or uncertainties during data analysis. The detailed transcriptions proved invaluable, particularly when clarifying coding issues and ensuring precise and reliable data were the basis of our analysis. Abiding by these quality assurance measures ensured we upheld the highest research standards.

4.0 Findings

This section documents the study findings for the 2024 version of the Yearbook. The findings are presented in three tiers: TIER-1 covers general findings of all Radio stations; TIER-2 presents results only for Radio with regional and district licences, and their results are compared with community radios; and TIER-3 focuses on the national broadcaster, TBC Taifa. The sample in 2024 comprised 992 units drawn from 35 local Radio stations.

4.1.1 TIER 1: General Analysis of all Radio Stations

4.1.2 Media genre

Out of 992 stories analysed, 686 (69%) were news and 306 (31%) were radio programmes.

4.1.3 Format

The format determines the content of the radio programme. This study found that 70% of the stories were news, 15% features, 4% discussions, and 8% interviews. Table 6 presents the results.

News format

693 — News **70%**

Total **992**

150 — Feature **15%**

44 — Discussion **04%**

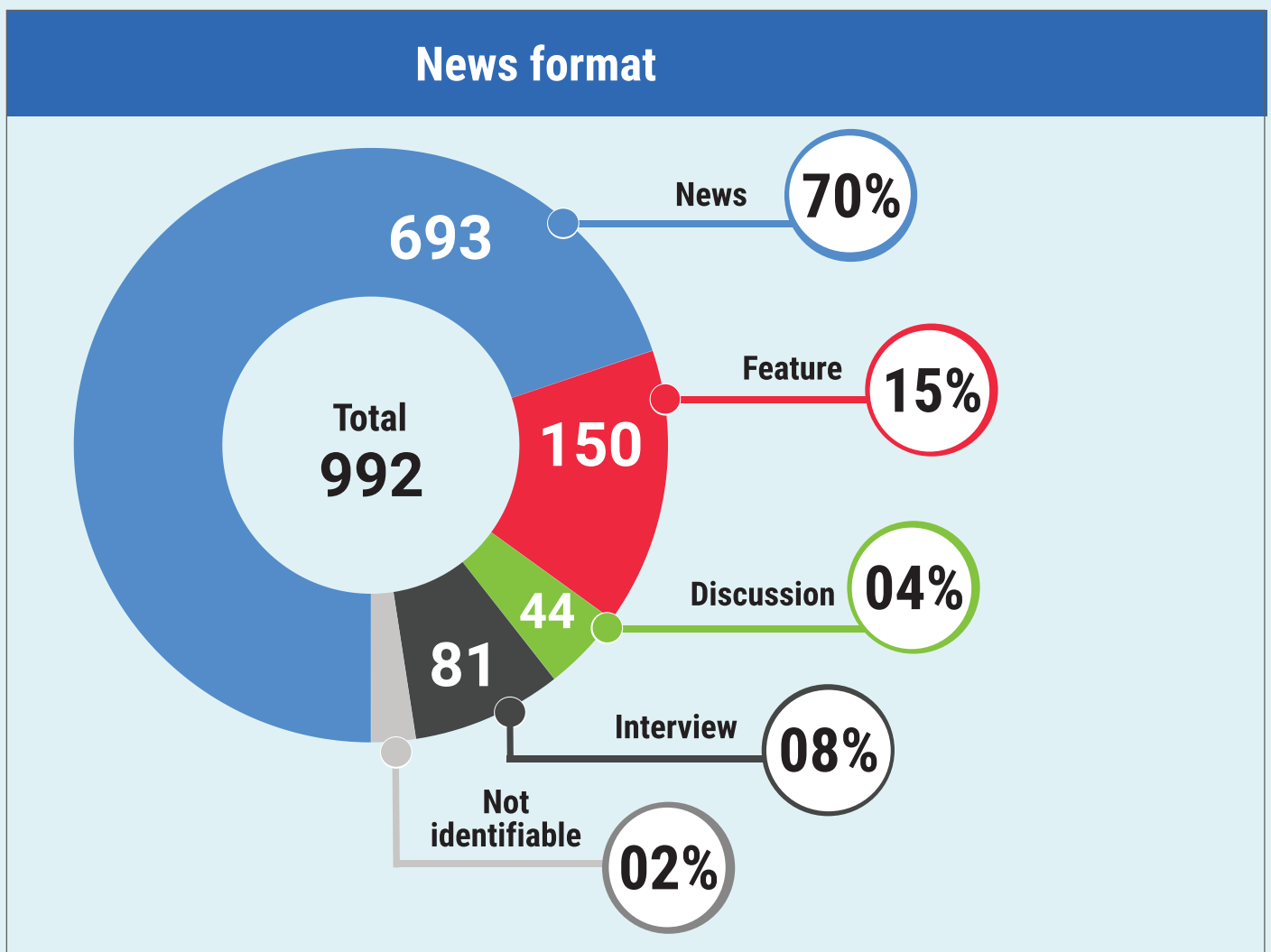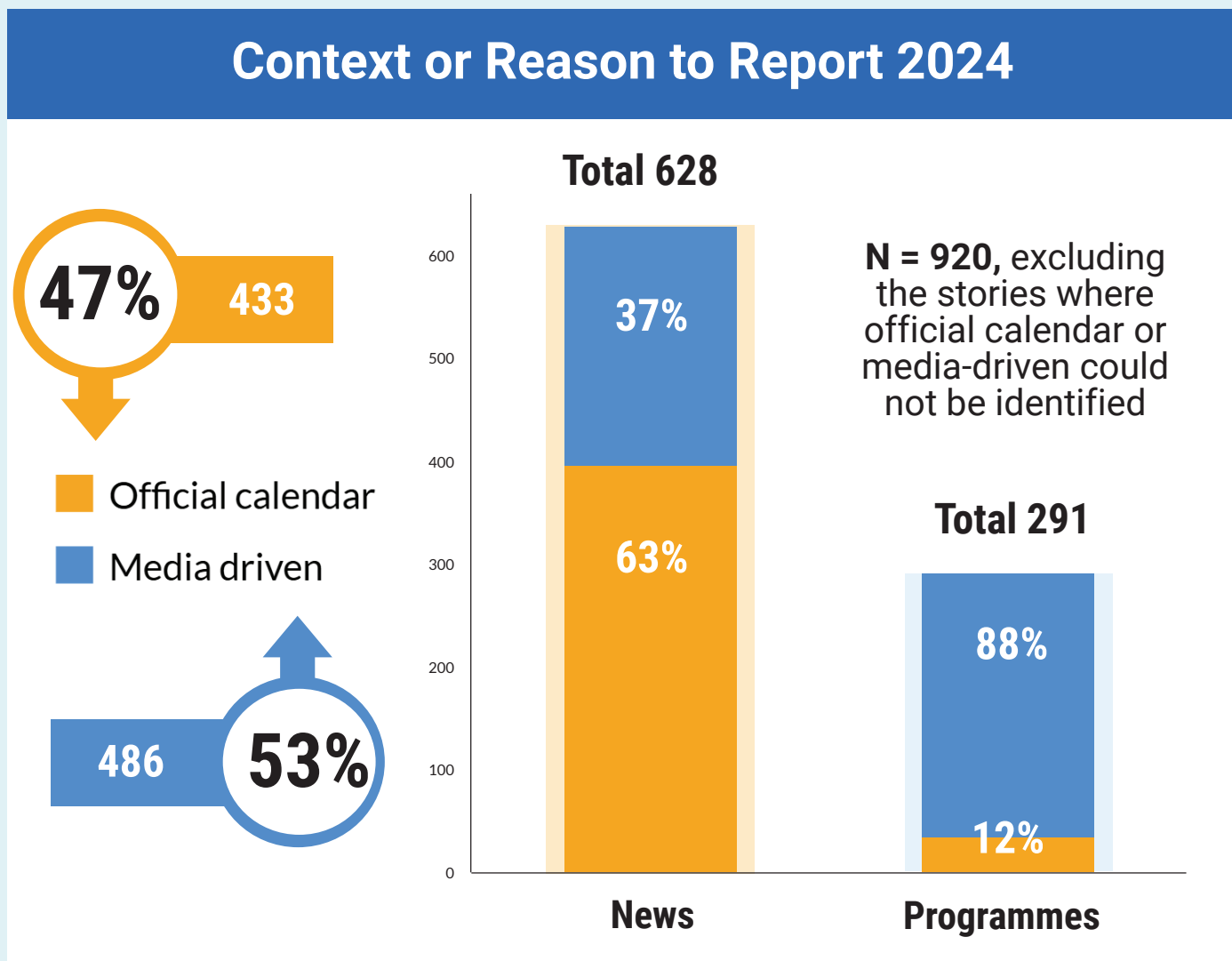81 — Interview **08%**

Not identifiable **02%**

Table 7 (below) shows how different Radio stations applied different formats. Some were strong in features, and others in discussions and interviews. Even some small stations had diverse options. *Manyara FM, Pangani FM, SG FM,* and *Kasibante FM* were some of the radio stations that devoted time to educating citizens through features, discussions, and interview programmes. For example, *Manyara FM* had 13% discussions and 19% interview programmes. *Kasibante FM* had 25% feature programmes, 13% discussions, and 13% interviews. *Pangani FM* covered 16% of the feature programmes, 11% of discussion programmes, and 32% of interviews. The *SG FM's* coverage had 23% feature stories, 15% discussions, and 15% interviews.

Formats according to radio stations (figures well above average are marked in color)					
Radio stations	News	Feature	Discussion	Interview	Not identifiable
Average	70%	15%	4%	8%	2%
Arusha One FM	58%	29%	0%	4%	8%
Bariadi FM	71%	19%	0%	5%	5%
Bunda FM	76%	12%	3%	6%	3%
CG FM	67%	30%	0%	3%	0%
Chalinze FM	65%	19%	0%	12%	4%
Dodoma FM	80%	8%	5%	8%	0%
El-Olama FM	54%	21%	13%	8%	4%
Flamingo FM	90%	6%	0%	4%	0%
Manyara FM	56%	0%	13%	19%	13%
Highlands FM	64%	11%	4%	14%	7%
Ileje FM	72%	11%	6%	6%	6%
Jamii FM	69%	22%	0%	6%	3%
Kasibante FM	44%	25%	13%	13%	6%
KICORA FM	81%	3%	10%	7%	0%
Sunrise FM	69%	19%	13%	0%	0%
Mashujaa FM	64%	21%	0%	0%	14%
Mbeya City FM	62%	29%	0%	10%	0%
Moshi FM	68%	16%	11%	5%	0%
Mpanda FM	62%	27%	12%	0%	0%
Nuru FM	79%	7%	2%	10%	2%
Pambazuko FM	56%	15%	7%	15%	7%
Pamoja FM	63%	25%	3%	9%	0%
Pangani FM	42%	16%	11%	32%	0%
Kwizera FM	82%	6%	6%	6%	0%
Sengerema FM	72%	6%	0%	22%	0%
Rufiji FM	45%	25%	15%	10%	5%
Ruvuma FM	76%	19%	0%	5%	0%
SG FIVE FM	46%	23%	15%	15%	0%
Standard FM	88%	4%	0%	8%	0%
TBC Taifa	82%	18%	0%	0%	0%
TK FM	74%	12%	5%	2%	7%
Uvinza Community FM	44%	38%	0%	19%	0%
Uyui FM	68%	3%	7%	23%	0%
VOS FM	69%	17%	6%	6%	3%
Vwawa FM	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

4.1.4 Context of reporting

The context of reporting helps establish whether stations sourced their stories from events or took the initiative to find them. Whereas events are important, news media tend to search for news and set their agenda both to stay competitive and be ahead of their rivals with news scoops. In 2024, the official calendars triggered 63.2% of the news stories in the news section, with media initiatives accounting for only 36.8%. In contrast, official calendars triggered only 12.4% programmes, with a staggering 87.6% stemming from media's initiative.

Context or Reason to Report 2024

Total 628

47% **433**

Official calendar

Media driven

486 53%

600

500

400

300

200

100

0

37%

63%

News

N = 920, excluding the stories where official calendar or media-driven could not be identified

Total 291

88%

12%

Programmes

Comparing this performance to those of the 2018 to 2022 reviews, the media-driven reporting during the 2024 LGE was much improved in the news section (36.8%) compared to 28% registered in 2019). On the other hand, the results for programmes weakened relative to the previous records (88% compared to 95% in 2022). Implicitly, the radio stations under review still lack the drive and financial resources to cover news stories generated from their initiatives. Table 9 presents the comparative results.

Performance of radio stations in the context of reporting
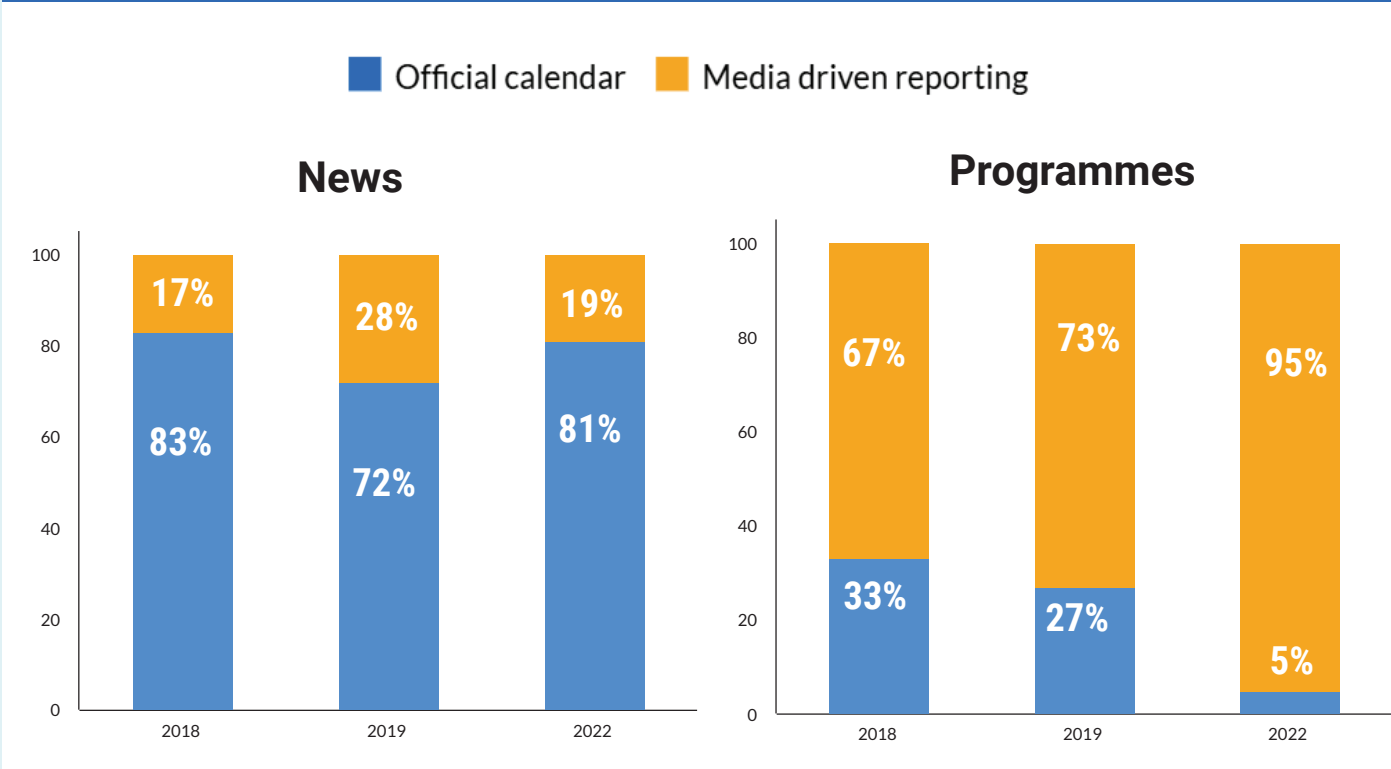
Source: Yearbook on Media Quality in Tanzania 2018, 2019 and 2022

4.1.5 Topical coverage

During the 2024 LGEs, the media dominantly covered the election issue more than other topics. Other topical issues rarely covered were national security, legal issues, corruption, crimes, and diseases. These topical issues combined accounted for less than 3% of all the stories.

4.1.6 Sourcing

News sources provide different insights, angles and better stories. Media usage of multiple sourcing (2 or more sources) in the news stood at 42.2% in 2024 compared to over 50% in previous studies of 2018 to 2022. However, for programmes, it is the other way around. The performance in LGE 2024 is better, with 71.8% of multiple sourcing compared to about 65% in the 2018 to 2022 period. Table 10 presents the results.

Sourcing in 2024 LGEs

- 🟧 0 or 1 source
- 🟦 2 or more sources

News 58% / 42% — Total 686

Programmes 28% / 72% — Total 305

Average 48% / 52% — Total 991
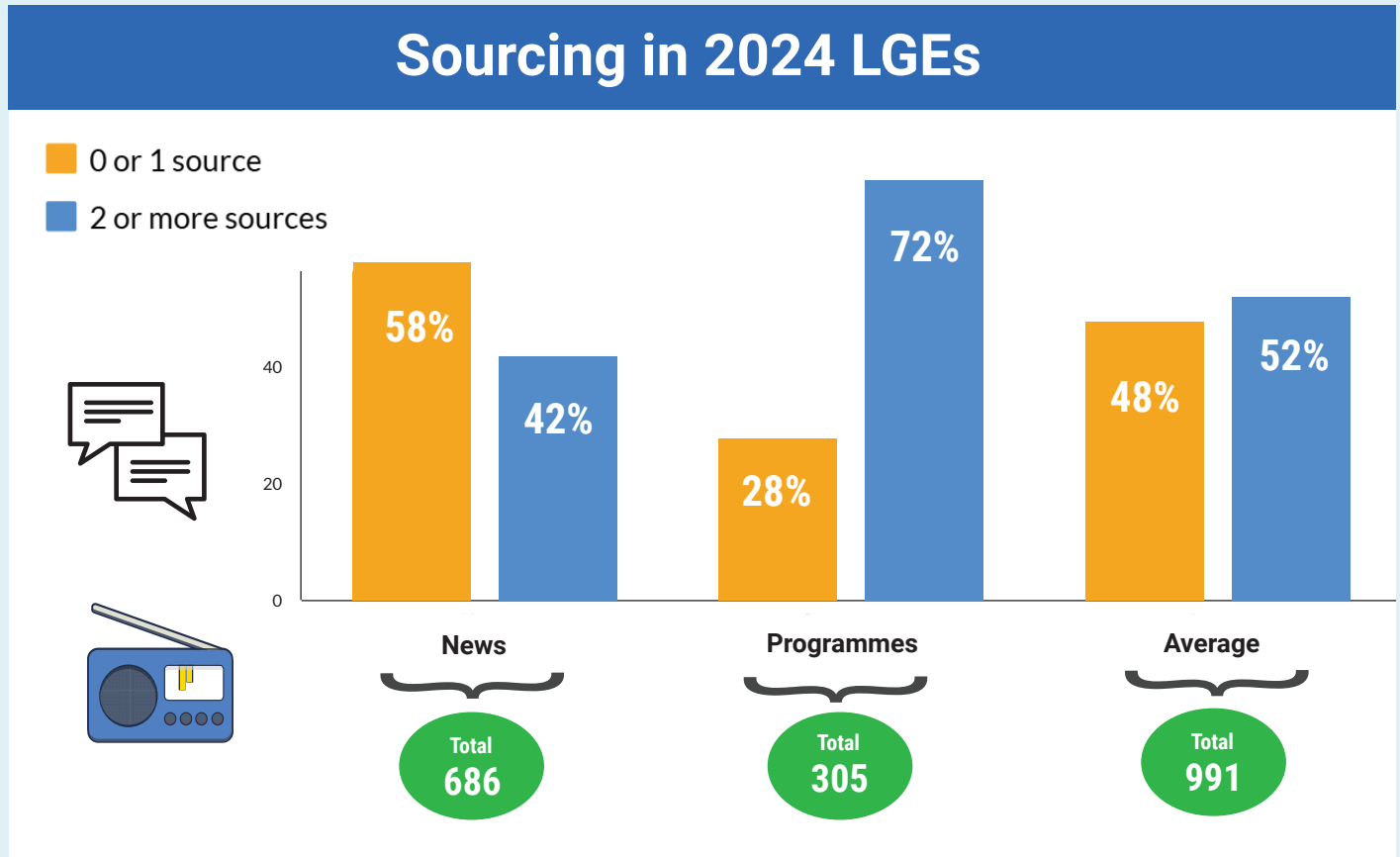
Over the last four years, we have taught journalists to cover their stories and look for sources with divergent views. Yet, there are still one-source stories. Some Radio stations performed better in using multiple sources than others in 2024 LGEs. Some tried to look for multiple sources (four or more) while covering the LGEs: *CG FM* (76%), *El-Olama FM* (46%), *Kasibante FM* (31%), *Mpanda FM* (44%), *Pambazuko FM* (52%), *Sengerema FM* (36%), *Rufiji FM* (30%), and *Uvinza Community FM* (56%). Table 11 illustrates the percentage of the sources each station under study used.
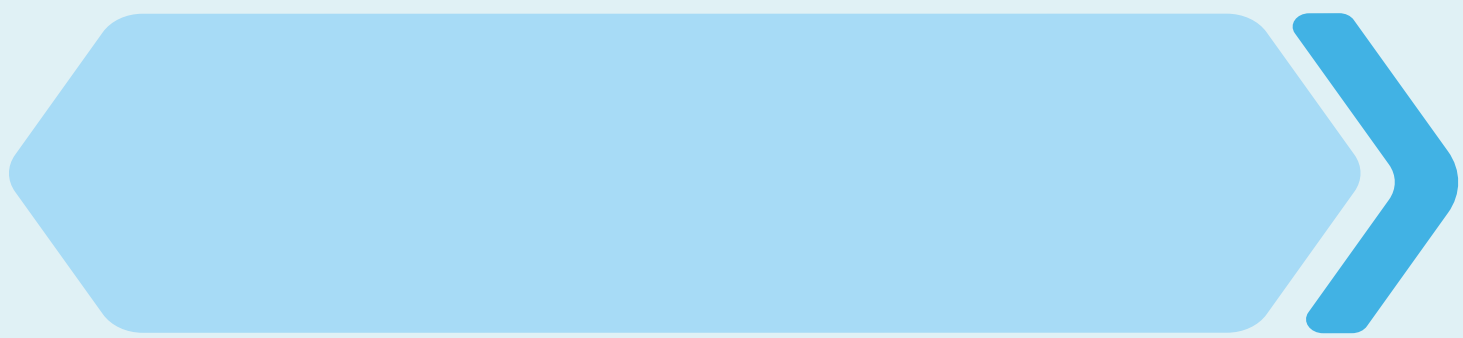
Number of sources according to radio stations

■ 0 or 1 source   ■ 2-3 sources   ■ 4+ sources

Station	0 or 1 source	2-3 sources	4+ sources
Average	49%	27%	25%
Arusha One FM	46%	17%	38%
Bariadi FM	57%	24%	19%
Bunda FM	73%	18%	9%
CG FM	9%	15%	76%
Chalinze FM	62%	19%	19%
Dodoma FM	43%	33%	25%
El-Olama FM	13%	42%	46%
Flamingo FM	59%	29%	12%
Manyara FM	38%	44%	19%
Highlands FM	32%	39%	29%
Ileje FM	50%	33%	17%
Jamii FM	50%	39%	11%
Kasibante FM	38%	31%	31%
KICORA FM	61%	26%	13%
Sunrise FM	63%	31%	6%
Mashujaa FM	29%	50%	21%
Mbeya City FM	71%	14%	14%
Moshi FM	43%	32%	24%
Mpanda FM	29%	27%	44%
Nuru FM	50%	21%	29%
Pambazuko FM	37%	11%	52%
Pamoja FM	59%	22%	19%
Pangani FM	68%	21%	11%
Kwizera FM	65%	24%	12%
Sengerema FM	50%	14%	36%
Rufiji FM	30%	40%	30%
Ruvuma FM	54%	30%	16%
SG FIVE FM	23%	62%	15%
Standard FM	71%	25%	4%
TBC Taifa	44%	33%	23%
TK FM	57%	19%	24%
Uvinza Community FM	31%	13%	56%
Uyui FM	55%	23%	23%
VOS FM	46%	31%	23%
Vwawa FM	68%	24%	8%

In journalism, sources give reporters insights, different angles, or a different and better story than others will be able to produce. The findings indicate that, the most used source groups were political parties (37%), followed by executive government and their agencies (27%), the local government (22%), ordinary citizens (20%), candidates (13%), and at the tail-end were security forces at 11%. The radio stations under review covered the candidates and their policies less than other issues. Yet, media coverage of candidates' policies allows citizens to make the right choices on election day. Table 12 describes the radio stations' source groups and associated percentages.

Use of sources groups

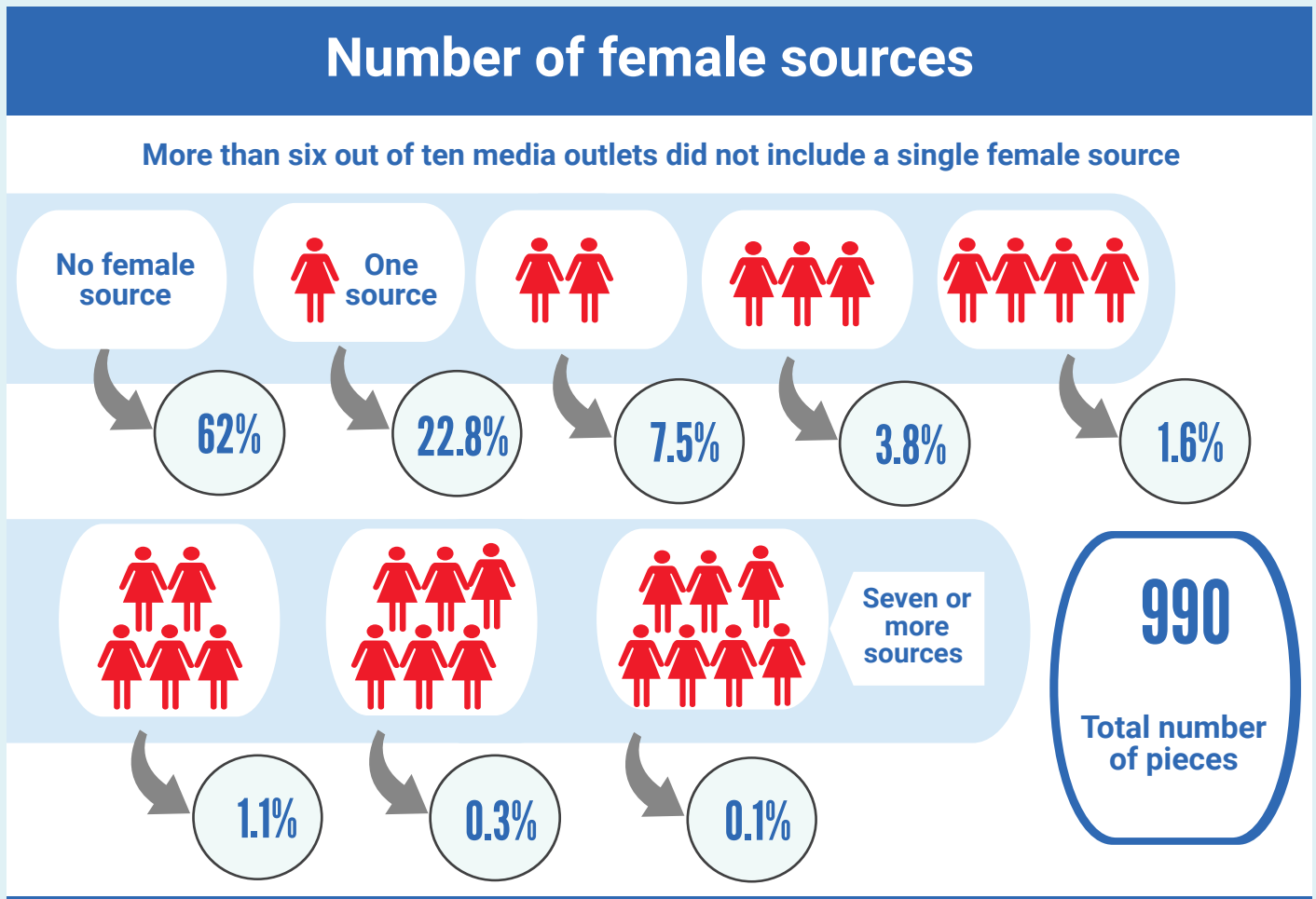| Sources	Number of sources	Percentage of presence in stories
Political parties (representatives)	349	37%
Executive Government of the country and govt agencies	262	27%
Local government and administration	209	22%
The general public / ordinary people	193	20%
Candidates for local election	127	13%
Security forces (police, army, military)	106	11
Other	61	6%
Religious and cultural groups	48	5%
NGO (and activists, associations)	44	5%
Document or study	42	4%
Parliament (MPs)	32	3%
Scientists, Experts, Researchers	28	3%
Judiciary	26	3%
Media (people and organisations)	14	2%
Education stakeholders	7	1%
Workers and employees	5	1%
Doctors and medical practitioner's personnel	5	1%
Business people and companies (also small traders)	3	0%
Peasants, farmers, pastoralists, fishermen	3	0%
Websites and social media	3	0%
Children	2	0%
Foreign political bodies (UN, WB, Govts and Donors)	1	0%

Generally, however, stations mentioned different sources. Some were exemplary in covering candidates and ordinary citizens as sources, respectively. Those that covered the candidates more than the rest were *CG FM* (49%), *Arusha One FM* (29%), *Sengerema FM* (25%), and *Mbeya City FM* (24%). Whereas the radio stations that mostly covered ordinary citizens were *Uvinza Community FM* (63%), *CG FM* (79%), *El-Olama FM* (42%), *Dodoma FM* (35%), *Sengerema FM* (25%), *Mashujaa FM* (29%), *Moshi FM* (24%), and *Nuru FM* (24%). Table 13 shows how radio stations covered the candidates and ordinary citizens respectively.

| Candidates and ordinary citizens as sources according to radio stations		
Radio stations	**Candidates**	**Ordinary citizens**
Average	**13%**	**20%**
Arusha One FM	**29%**	17%
Bariadi FM	**14%**	10%
Bunda FM	0%	6%
CG FM	**49%**	**79%**
Chalinze FM	12%	19%
Dodoma FM	**15%**	**35%**
El-Olama FM	8%	**42%**
Flamingo FM	10%	8%
Manyara FM	13%	13%
Highlands FM	4%	**21%**
Ileje FM	8%	14%
Jamii FM	8%	6%
Kasibante FM	13%	**31%**
Kicora FM	3%	7%
Sunrise FM	6%	13%
Mashujaa FM	7%	**29%**
Mbeya City FM	**24%**	14%
Moshi FM	8%	**24%**
Mpanda FM	**18%**	**21%**
Nuru FM	10%	**24%**
Pambazuko FM	**33%**	**22%**
Pamoja FM	6%	13%
Pangani FM	0%	5%
Kwizera FM	0%	18%
Sengerema FM	**25%**	**25%**
Rufiji FM	**15%**	20%
Ruvuma FM	**22%**	8%
SG FIVE FM	0%	**23%**
Standard FM	13%	8%
TBC Taifa	8%	13%
TK FM	7%	17%
Uvinza Community FM	0%	**63%**
Uyui FM	**16%**	19%
VOS FM	9%	11%
Vwawa FM	**20%**	8%
Note: Values above average are colored		

4.1.7 Female Sources

The inclusion of women as sources of news ensures gender inclusivity in the media and determines issues to raise from their perspective. In 2024, Radio stations did not prioritise female sources. The study found that 62% of the news stories had zero female sources, 23% had one female source, and 15% had two or more female sources. Table 14 presents the results on stations' use of female sources.

Number of female sources

More than six out of ten media outlets did not include a single female source

No female source	One source			
62%	22.8%	7.5%	3.8%	1.6%

		Seven or more sources	990 Total number of pieces
1.1%	0.3%	0.1%	

Compared with previous studies, including women as news sources as an essential element in media coverage has not improved. When we compare the figures of "having at least one female source," the performance of Radio and percentages in brackets in previous years are as follows: 2018 (43%), 2019 (36%), 2022 (44%), and 2024 (38%), as further Table 15 further illustrates.

At least one female source in past reports on radio
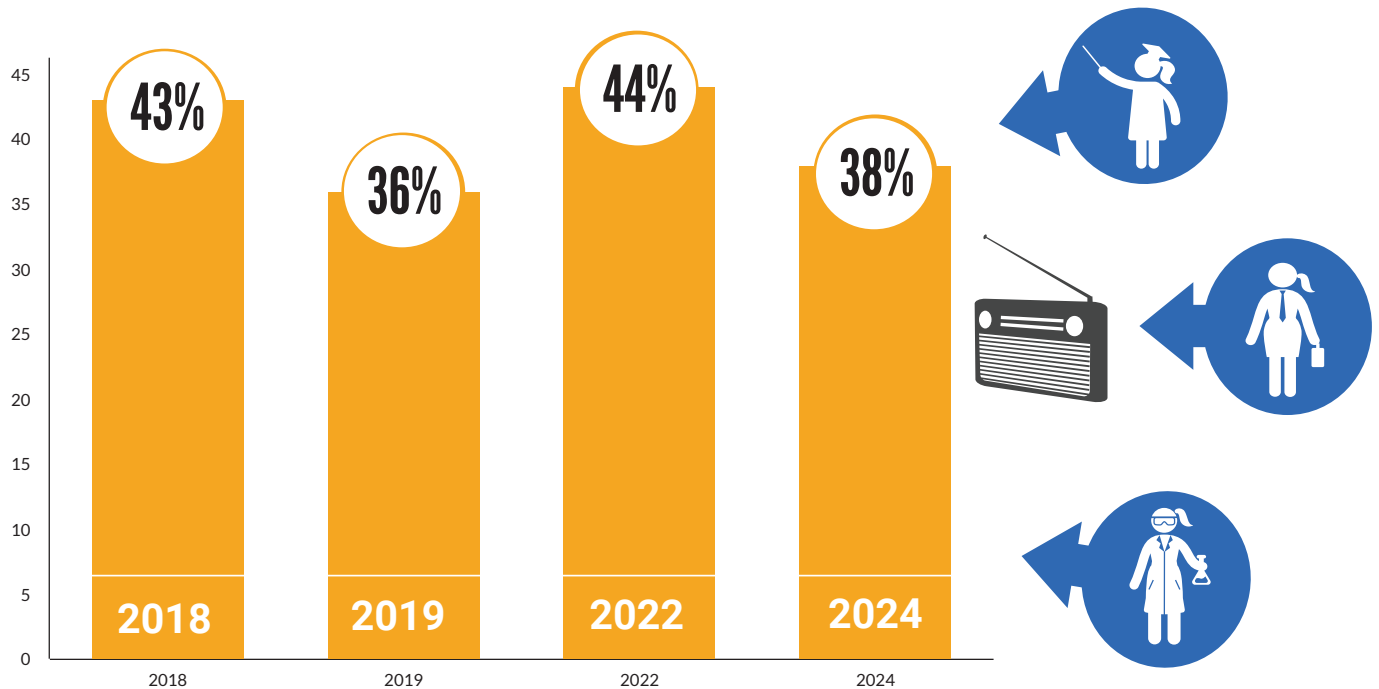
Source: Yearbook 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2024

4.1.8 Callers and text messages

Call-ins and text messages show audience participation in the election process, hence their importance. Thus, the media must prepare programmes encouraging citizens to call in and send text messages to question candidates or political party leaders. The study findings indicate that citizens' participation in radio call-ins and text messages was around 5% and 6%, respectively, which is relatively minimal.

4.1.9 Coverage of different positions

As the sub-chapter "sourcing" has already demonstrated, the stories of this sample did not mention candidates often. Only 12% of stories did. Of the 126 pieces of news covering the candidates, the village chairpersons were covered more than other potential sources (64.3%), followed by the Hamlet chairperson (10.3%), and members of the village council (3.2%). No doubt, radio stations need more training on candidates' coverage as this dimension of news would add value to their reportage. In the LGEs, the stations under review never mentioned the positions of "female members of street committees" and "female members of village councils." Table 16 shows how the coverage of candidates by positions.

Position of candidates

- 🟥 Village chairperson
- 🟦 Hamlet chairperson
- 🟩 Member of village councils
- ⬛ Position not identified

64%
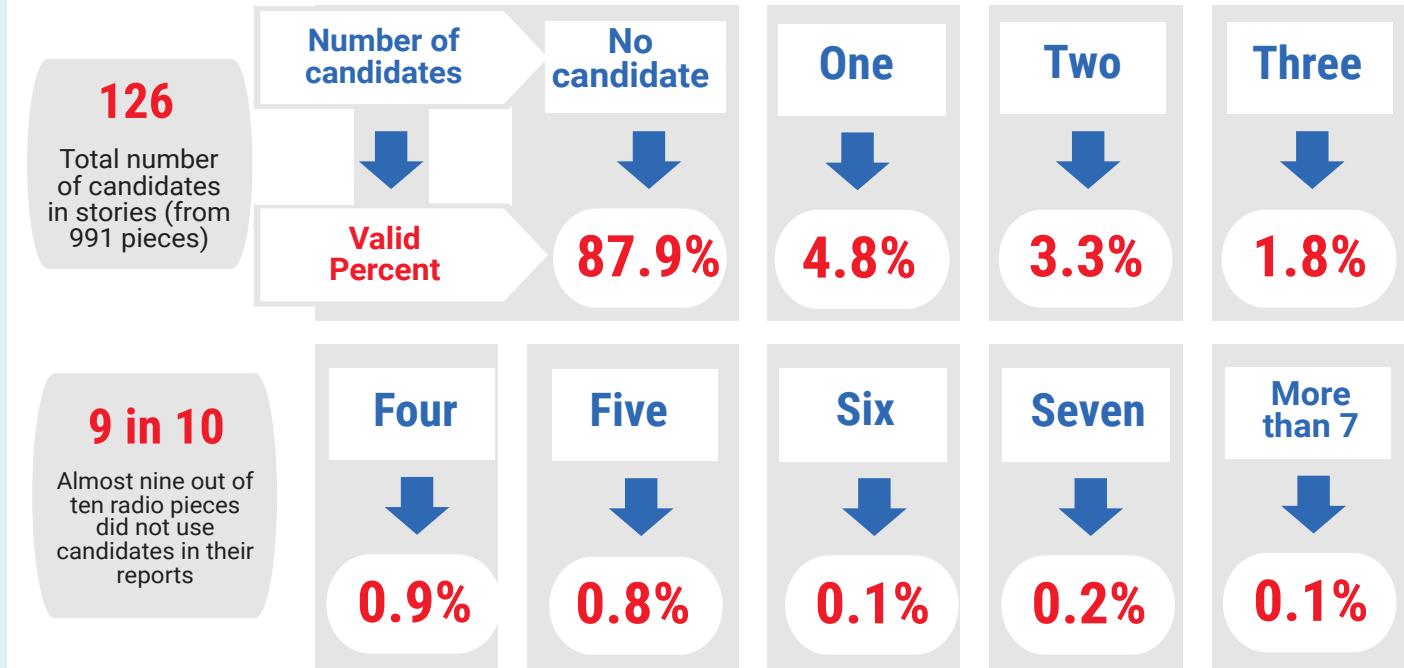
22%

3%

10%
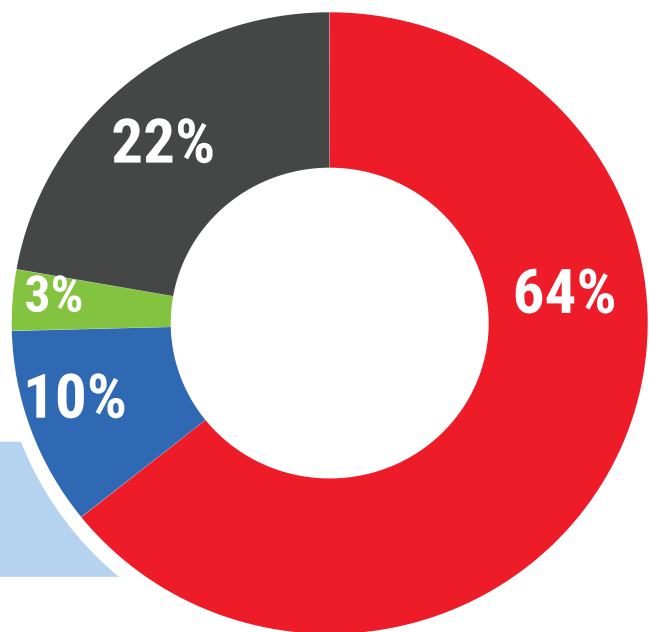
126 Total number of number of pieces with candidates

4.1.10 Findings on the Assessment of Candidates

The study found that 871 pieces (87.9%) of all the LGE news stories did not include candidates. Many radio stations hardly included candidates. Many stations did not play their roles of presenting at least candidates running for office in their localities, or the candidates did not see the importance of using the radio stations for their electoral campaigns. However, a few radio stations had a high percentage of news stories covering at least one, two or more candidates. These stations are *Arusha One FM* (25%), *CG FM* (39%), and *Pambazuko FM* (19%). Tables 17 and 18 present results on the number of candidates covered and how each radio station faired in covering candidates numerically, respectively.

Number of candidates in stories

	Number of candidates	No candidate	One	Two	Three
126 Total number of candidates in stories (from 991 pieces)	**Valid Percent**	**87.9%**	**4.8%**	**3.3%**	**1.8%**
9 in 10 Almost nine out of ten radio pieces did not use candidates in their reports	**Four** → **0.9%**	**Five** → **0.8%**	**Six** → **0.1%**	**Seven** → **0.2%**	**More than 7** → **0.1%**

Number of candidates according to radio stations			
	0 candidates	1 candidate	2+ candidates
Average	**88%**	**5%**	**7%**
Arusha One FM	71%	4%	25%
Bariadi FM	86%	5%	10%
Bunda FM	97%	3%	0%
CG FM	49%	12%	39%
Chalinze FM	89%	12%	0%
Dodoma FM	85%	3%	13%
El-Olama FM	92%	0%	8%
Flamingo FM	92%	6%	2%
Manyara FM	88%	0%	13%
Highlands FM	96%	0%	4%
Ileje FM	94%	3%	3%
Jamii FM	92%	0%	8%
Kasibante FM	94%	6%	0%
Kicora FM	97%	3%	0%
Sunrise FM	94%	0%	6%
Mashujaa FM	93%	0%	7%
Mbeya City FM	81%	10%	10%
Moshi FM	92%	3%	5%
Mpanda FM	82%	12%	6%
Nuru FM	91%	5%	5%
Pambazuko FM	70%	11%	19%
Pamoja FM	97%	3%	0%
Pangani FM	100%	0%	0%
Kwizera FM	100%	0%	0%
Sengerema FM	75%	14%	11%
Rufiji FM	85%	5%	10%
Ruvuma FM	81%	14%	5%
SG Five FM	100%	0%	0%
Standard FM	96%	4%	0%
TBC Taifa	92%	0%	8%
TK FM	93%	5%	2%
Uvinza Community FM	100%	0%	0%
Uyui Media	84%	3%	13%
Vos FM	94%	0%	6%
Vwawa FM	76%	12%	12%
Note: Values above average are colored			

In addition, from the sampled Radio stations, only 51(5%) of news items mentioned female candidates, 10 (1%) mentioned youth candidates, and 6 (0.6%) of the stories mentioned candidates with disabilities (0.6%). Notably, the coverage of women, youths and people with disabilities was abysmal.
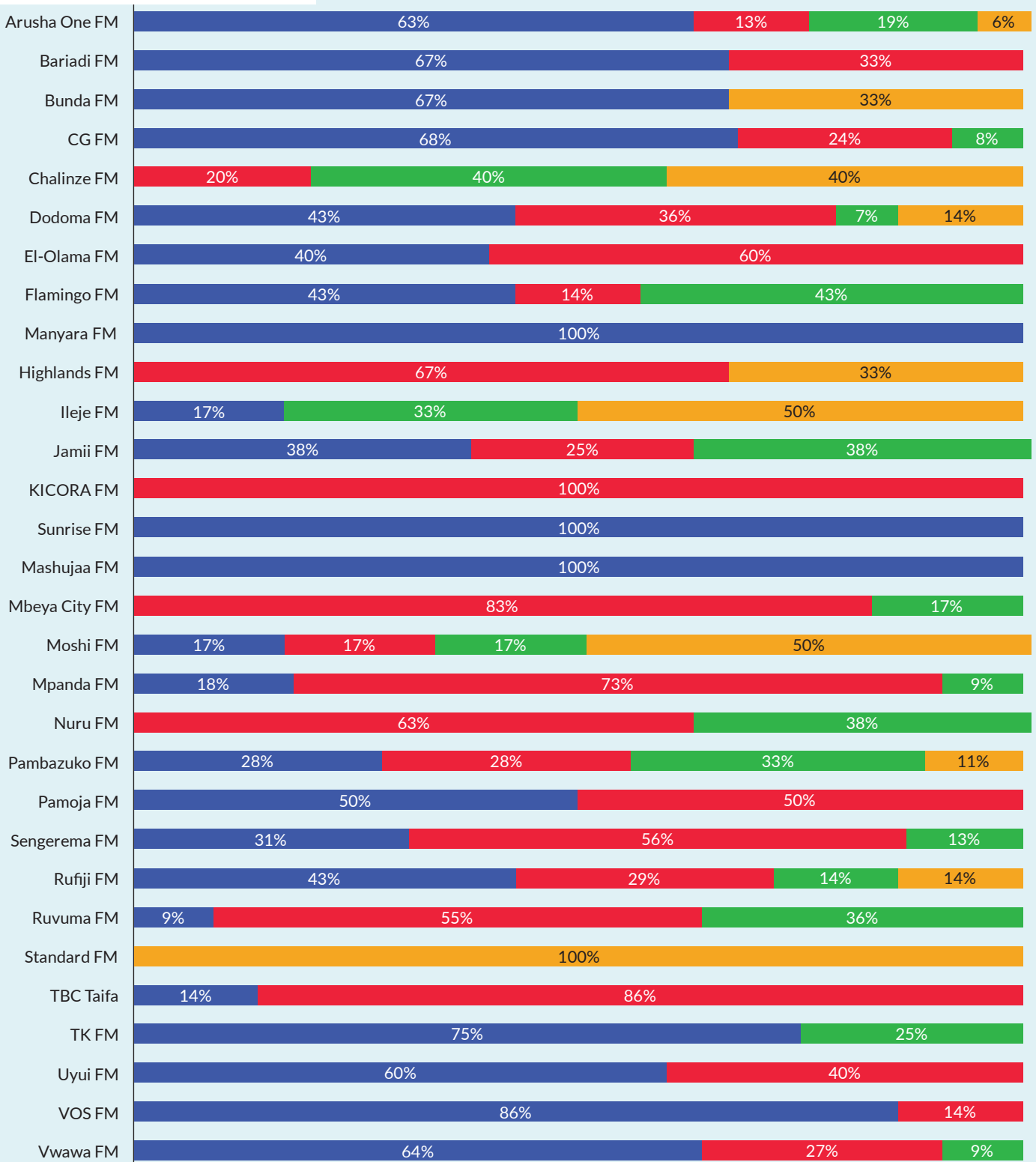
4.1.11 Coverage of policy content

The news media covers candidates and their policies to enlighten listeners. As Table 19 illustrates, 56.6% of the radio stories mentioning candidates included policy content rated as little at 34%, large (15%), and very large (6.9%), implying that more than half of the stories were sound on this aspect.

Reporting in 2024 about the content of the policy

Legend:
- No reference to content
- Yes, little (1)
- Yes, large (2-3)
- Yes, very large (4+)

7%

15%

44%

34%

247 Total mentions in relevant pieces
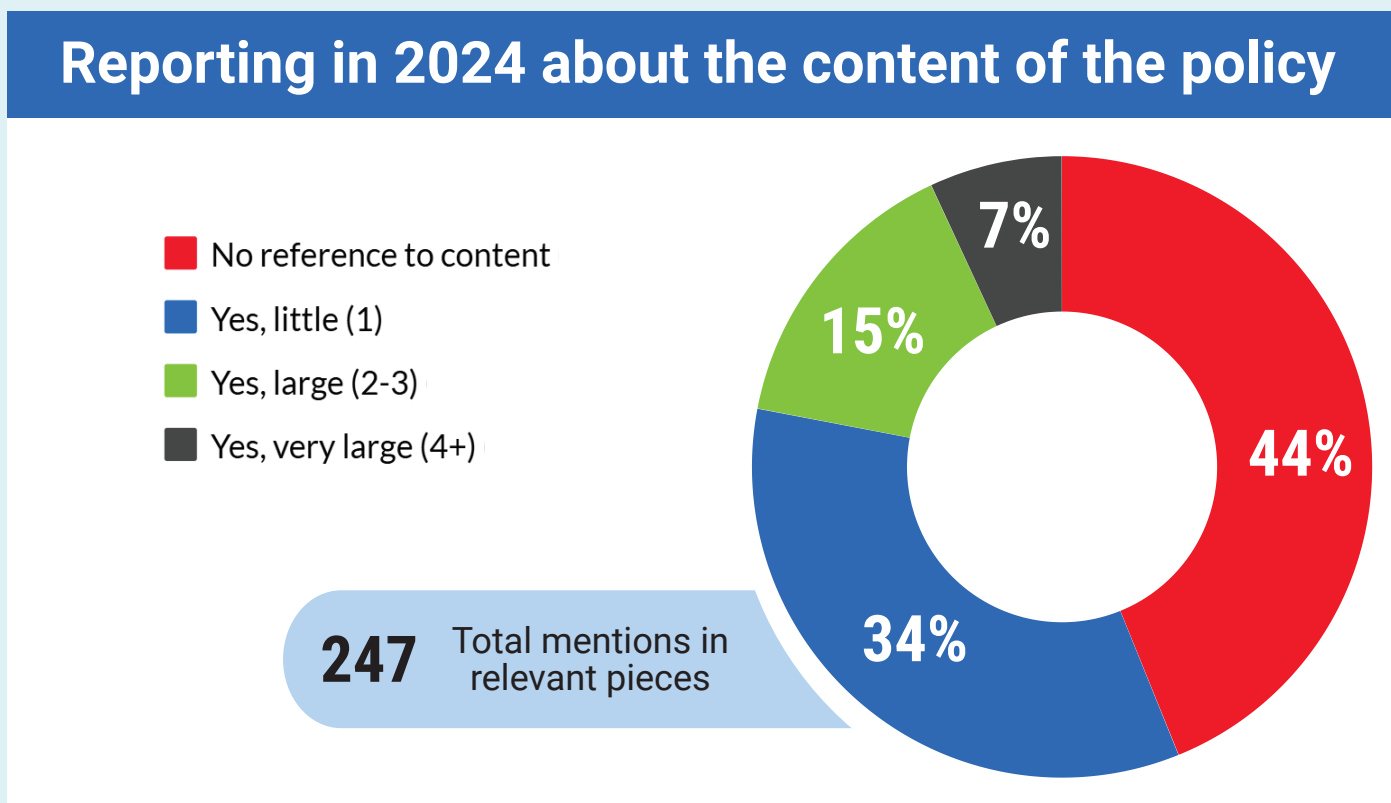
However, some differences between stations emerged in their coverage of policy content. Some performed well in covering the policy content of candidates. The standout radio stations in this regard are *Chalinze FM, Dodoma FM, Flamingo FM, Highlands FM, Ileje FM, Jamii FM, Moshi FM, Mpanda FM, Nuru FM, Pambazuko FM, Rufiji FM* and *Sengerema FM*. Table 20 further accounts for their performance in covering the policy content of electoral candidates.
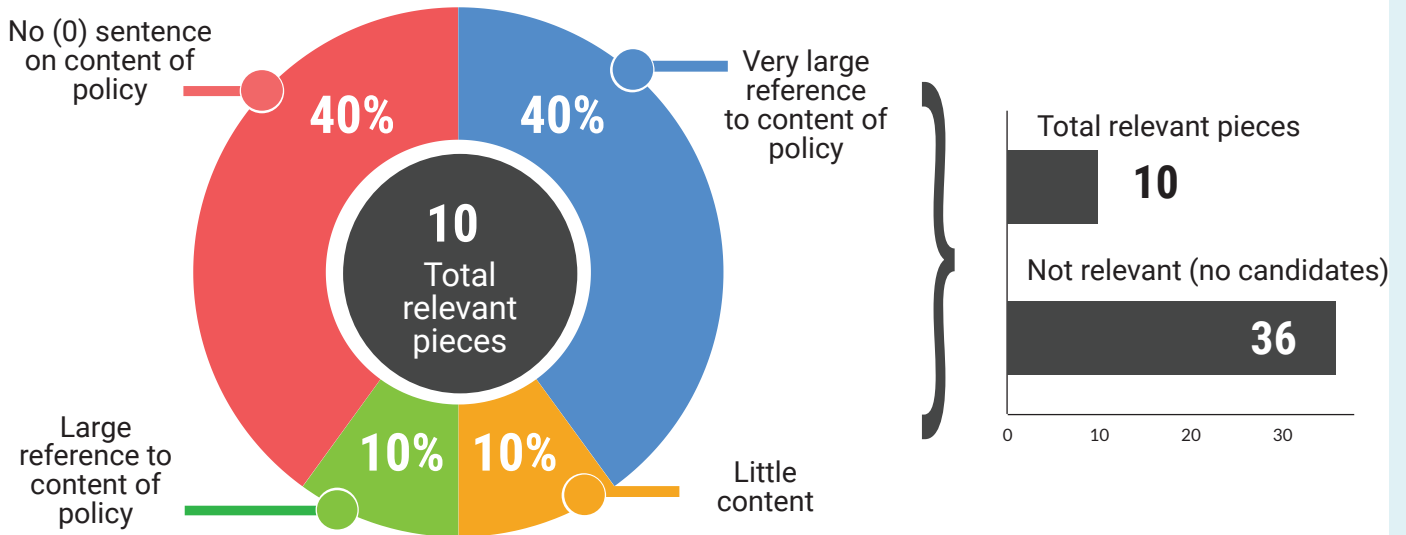
Covering the content of policy of candidates

Legend: ■ No ■ Yes, little (1) ■ Yes, large (2-3) ■ Yes, very large (4+)

Station	No	Yes, little (1)	Yes, large (2-3)	Yes, very large (4+)
Arusha One FM	63%	13%	19%	6%
Bariadi FM	67%	33%		
Bunda FM	67%			33%
CG FM	68%	24%	8%	
Chalinze FM		20%	40%	40%
Dodoma FM	43%	36%	7%	14%
El-Olama FM	40%	60%		
Flamingo FM	43%	14%	43%	
Manyara FM	100%			
Highlands FM		67%		33%
Ileje FM	17%		33%	50%
Jamii FM	38%	25%	38%	
KICORA FM		100%		
Sunrise FM	100%			
Mashujaa FM	100%			
Mbeya City FM		83%	17%	
Moshi FM	17%	17%	17%	50%
Mpanda FM	18%	73%	9%	
Nuru FM		63%	38%	
Pambazuko FM	28%	28%	33%	11%
Pamoja FM	50%	50%		
Sengerema FM	31%	56%	13%	
Rufiji FM	43%	29%	14%	14%
Ruvuma FM	9%	55%	36%	
Standard FM				100%
TBC Taifa	14%	86%		
TK FM	75%		25%	
Uyui FM	60%	40%		
VOS FM	86%	14%		
Vwawa FM	64%	27%	9%	

In comparison, the media in the 2019 LGEs also did well on this aspect, as 60% of the pieces on candidates also covered their policy content, as Table 21 attests.

Content of candidates' policies – LGE 2019

No (0) sentence on content of policy **40%**

Very large reference to content of policy **40%**

10
Total relevant pieces

Large reference to content of policy **10%**

10% Little content

Total relevant pieces **10**

Not relevant (no candidates) **36**

4.1.12 Achievements

In election canvassing, mentioning the achievements of candidates in the media enlightens the voters on the suitability of candidates based on their track record of achieving success and competencies. In turn, this helps citizens to make informed choices on who to pick as an ideal leader. In 2024, few stories (8%) reported the achievements of candidates. More than 90% of stories covering candidates did not report on their achievements. Table 22 presents the results.

Reporting on candidates achievements

No reporting on achievements ➡ **91.1%**

Yes, little (1) ➡ **3.2%**

Yes, large (2-3) ➡ **3.6%**

Yes, very large (4+) ➡ **2%**

248 Total mentions of candidates in relevant pieces

However, *Bunda FM, CG FM, Dodoma FM, Kasibante FM, Mbeya City FM, Mpanda FM, Nuru FM, Pambazuko FM, Sengerema FM,* and *Ruvuma FM* covered candidates' achievements. Comparatively, the 2019 performance in the coverage of achievements was better (30%) than in 2024; however, with only three stories covered.
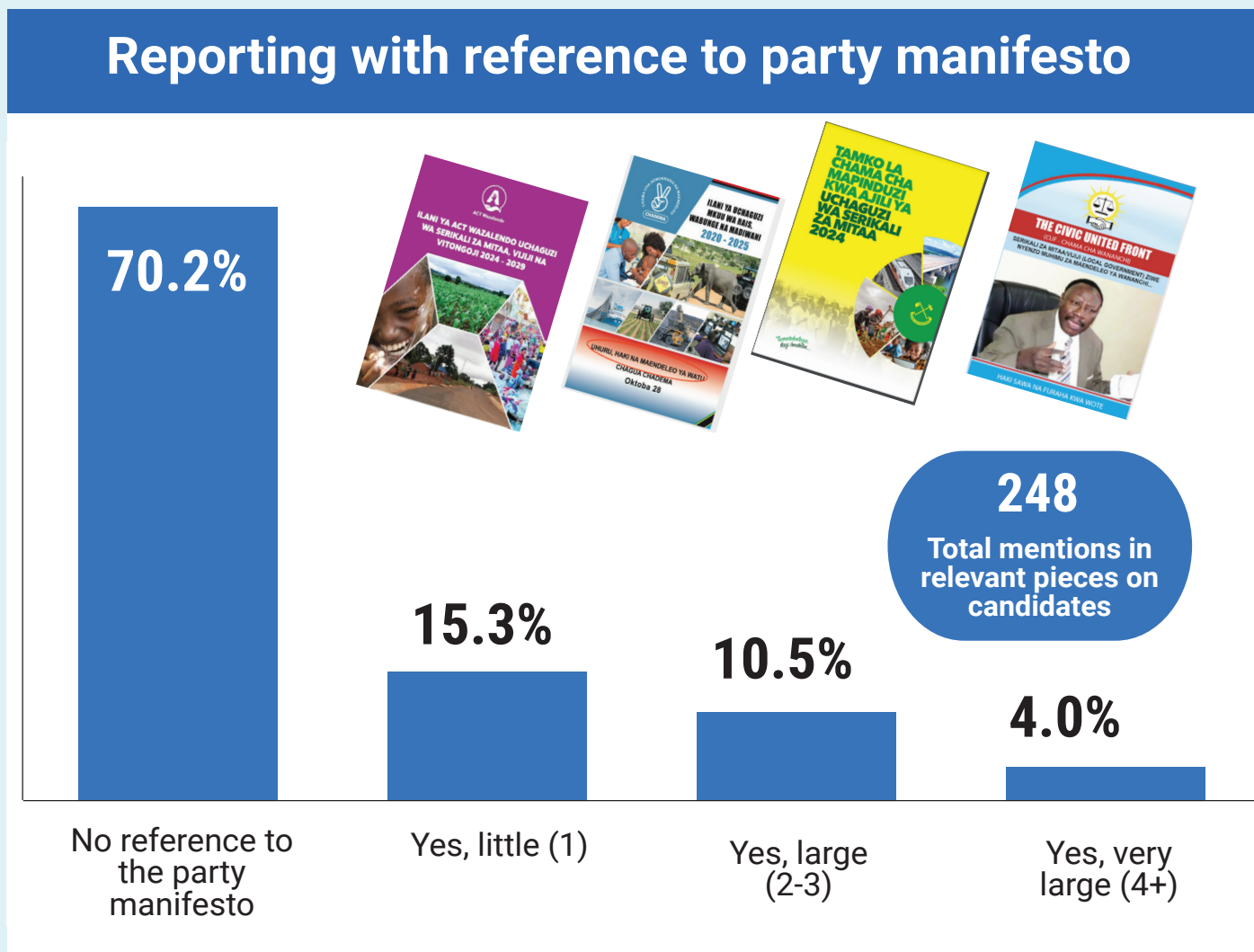
4.1.13 Failures

Media coverage of the candidates' failures can enlighten the public on their weaknesses. In 2024, only three (3) stories reported minimally about the candidates' failures. Sadly, the media did not critically assess candidates in their coverage to expose their weaknesses for the electorates to decide on their suitability for the positions they were contesting.

Reporting about failures of candidates

| No reporting on failures | → | 98.8% |
| Yes, little (1) | → | 1.2% |

247
Total mentions of candidates in relevant pieces
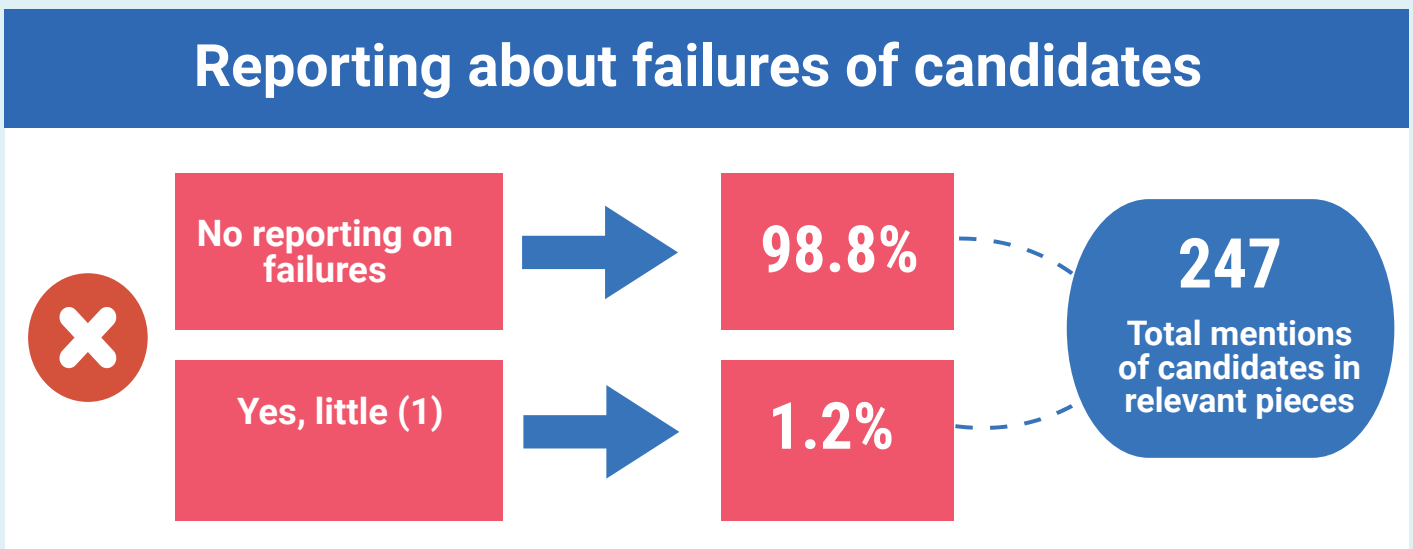
Stories on failures were covered only by *Kasibante FM* (one candidate) and *Nuru FM* in the news bulletin (two candidates).

4.1.14 Reference to the party manifesto

Media reporting on candidates and their respective party manifestos can further enlighten the public on which candidate and political party to embrace during the polls. In 2024, at least 30% of media referred to party manifestos. The same 30% was referenced in 2019 LGEs but only in three stories, while in 2024, it was referenced in 74 stories. Table 24 presents the percentage coverage of party manifestos during the LGEs.
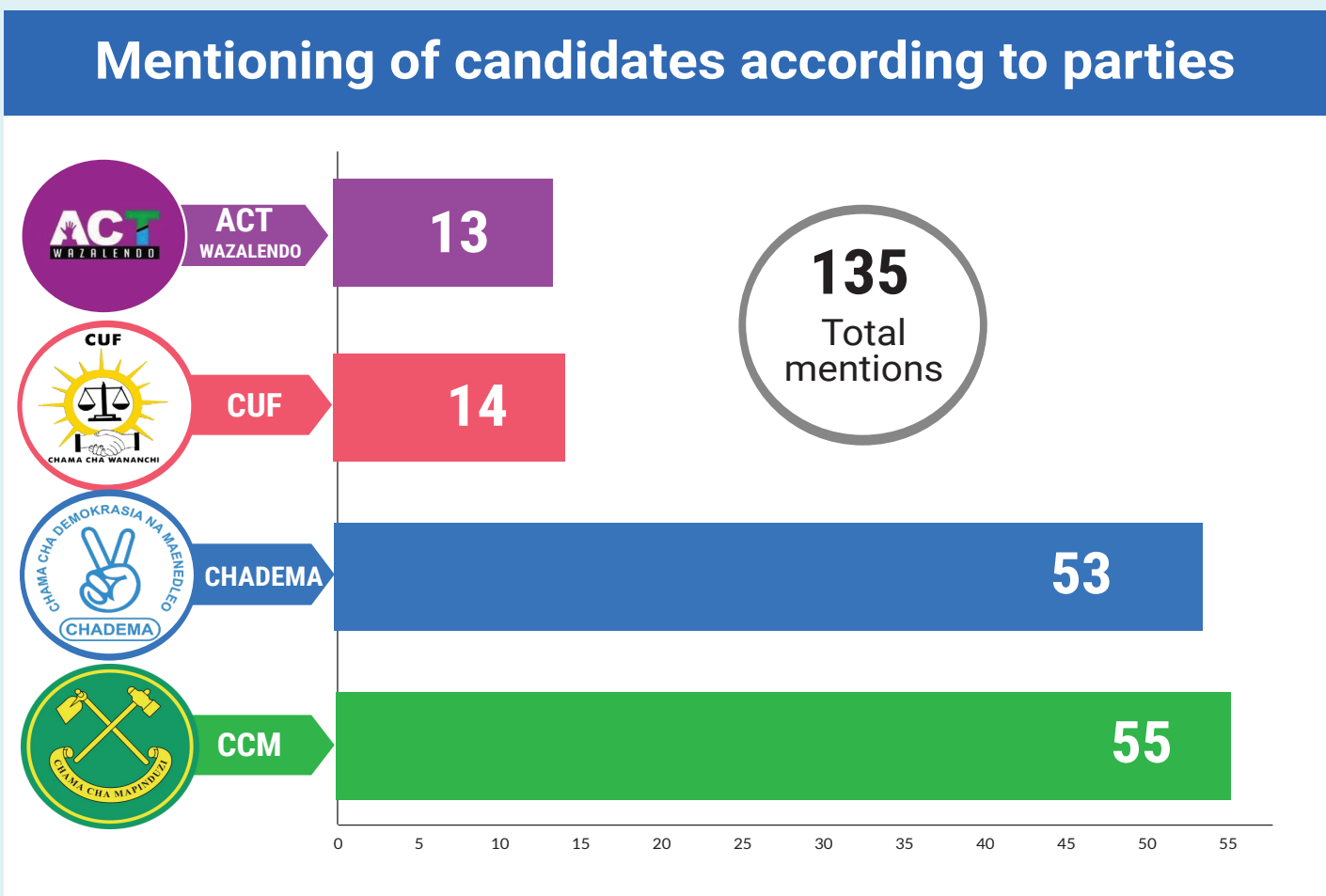

Reporting with reference to party manifesto

70.2% — No reference to the party manifesto

15.3% — Yes, little (1)

10.5% — Yes, large (2-3)

4.0% — Yes, very large (4+)

248
Total mentions in relevant pieces on candidates

4.1.15 Personality

Media reports on the candidates' personalities help voters judge candidates based on their personal and leadership attributes, such as experience, honesty, morality, compassion, competencies, and ability to lead. In this regard, it emerged that only 12% of the news stories mentioned the candidates' personalities in 2024, whereas in 2019 LGEs, the personalities of candidates featured in just two stories, or 20% of the coverage.

4.1.16 Findings on the coverage of political parties

Generally, the media are responsible for producing accurate, professional, and impartial news stories in their coverage of political parties participating in elections. As Table 25 (below) demonstrates, CCM and Chadema attracted almost similar coverage, with frequencies of 55 (5.5%) and 53 (5.3%), respectively, among the radio stations under review. CUF and ACT Wazalendo followed but with far lower mentions of only 1.4% and 1.3%, respectively. Nevertheless, the candidates for these political parties are rarely mentioned in news stories, even among those who have garnered commanding frequencies.

Mentioning of candidates according to parties

ACT WAZALENDO — 13
CUF — 14
CHADEMA — 53
CCM — 55

135 Total mentions

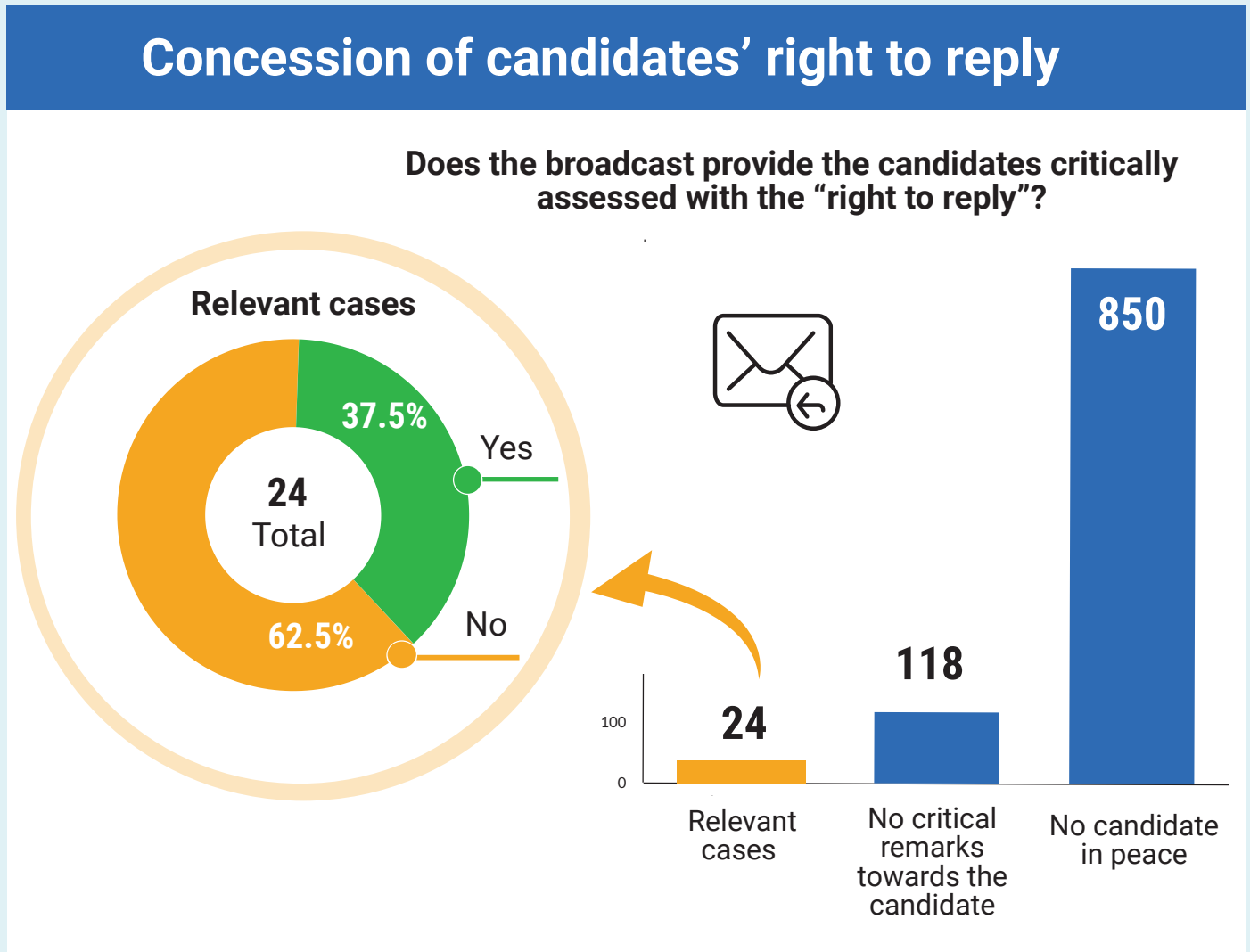## 4.1.17 Viewpoints for/against candidates

Viewpoints refer to different opinions on a particular issue, essentially the various angles or stances that different groups might have on a topic being reported. In this regard, the study found that reporting viewpoints against the candidates vying for election was almost unknown in the news items under review. Even viewpoints favouring candidates were a rarity, accounting for between 14% and 11% of coverage. It was even more challenging to see any difference in the reportage of CCM and Chadema candidates. Viewpoints against a candidate were rarely expressed (2% and 3%). Table 26 details the coverage of the poll candidates and their viewpoints.

Summary viewpoints in favour and against candidates

	In favour	Against
CCM	No 86% / 126 - Relevant pieces with candidates / Yes 14%	No 97% / 124 - Relevant pieces / Yes 3%
CHADEMA	No 89% / 117 - Relevant pieces / Yes 11%	No 98% / 111 - Relevant pieces / Yes 2%
Opposition candidate	No 93% / 106 - Relevant pieces / Yes 7%	No 100% / 98 - Relevant pieces / Yes 0%
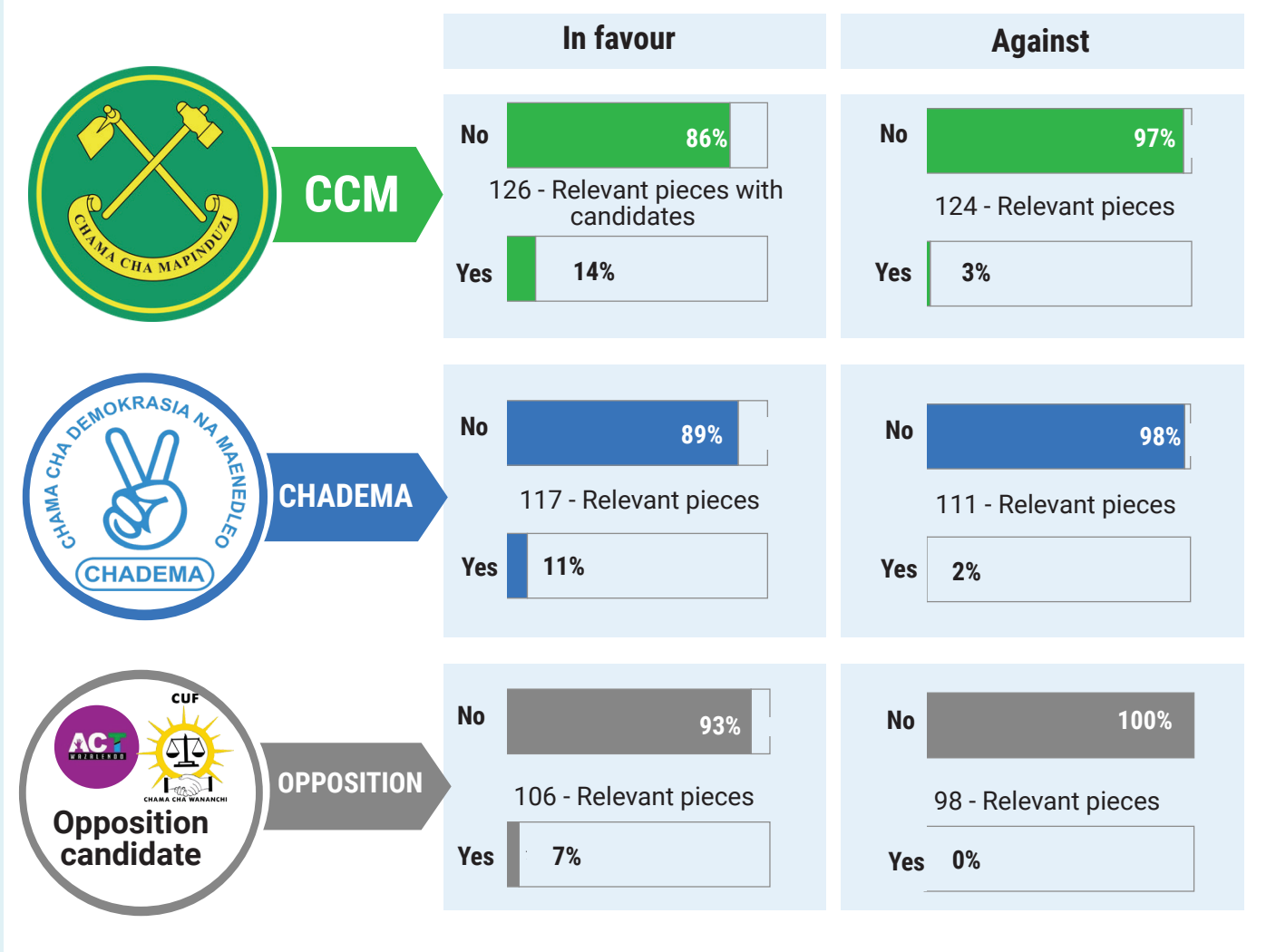
4.1.18 Ethics

The right to reply during elections is the right to defend oneself against public criticism in the same story in which such criticism was aired to ensure objectivity and impartiality. Regarding the right to reply, the study findings indicate that radio stations' performance was generally disappointing at 37.5%.

Concession of candidates' right to reply

Does the broadcast provide the candidates critically assessed with the "right to reply"?

Relevant cases

37.5%

24
Total

Yes

62.5%

No

850

118

24

100

0

Relevant
cases

No critical
remarks
towards the
candidate

No candidate
in peace

4.2 TIER 2: Results for District, Regional, and Community Radio Stations

4.2.1 Sample

Our sample consisted of 26 Radio stations with a district or regional licence, eight Radio stations with a community licence, and one broadcaster with a national licence, *TBC Taifa.* Naturally, most of the news pieces scrutinised came from district/regional stations (74%), the rest from Community Radio stations (22%), and one national broadcaster (4%).

Sample of national, regional/district and community radio
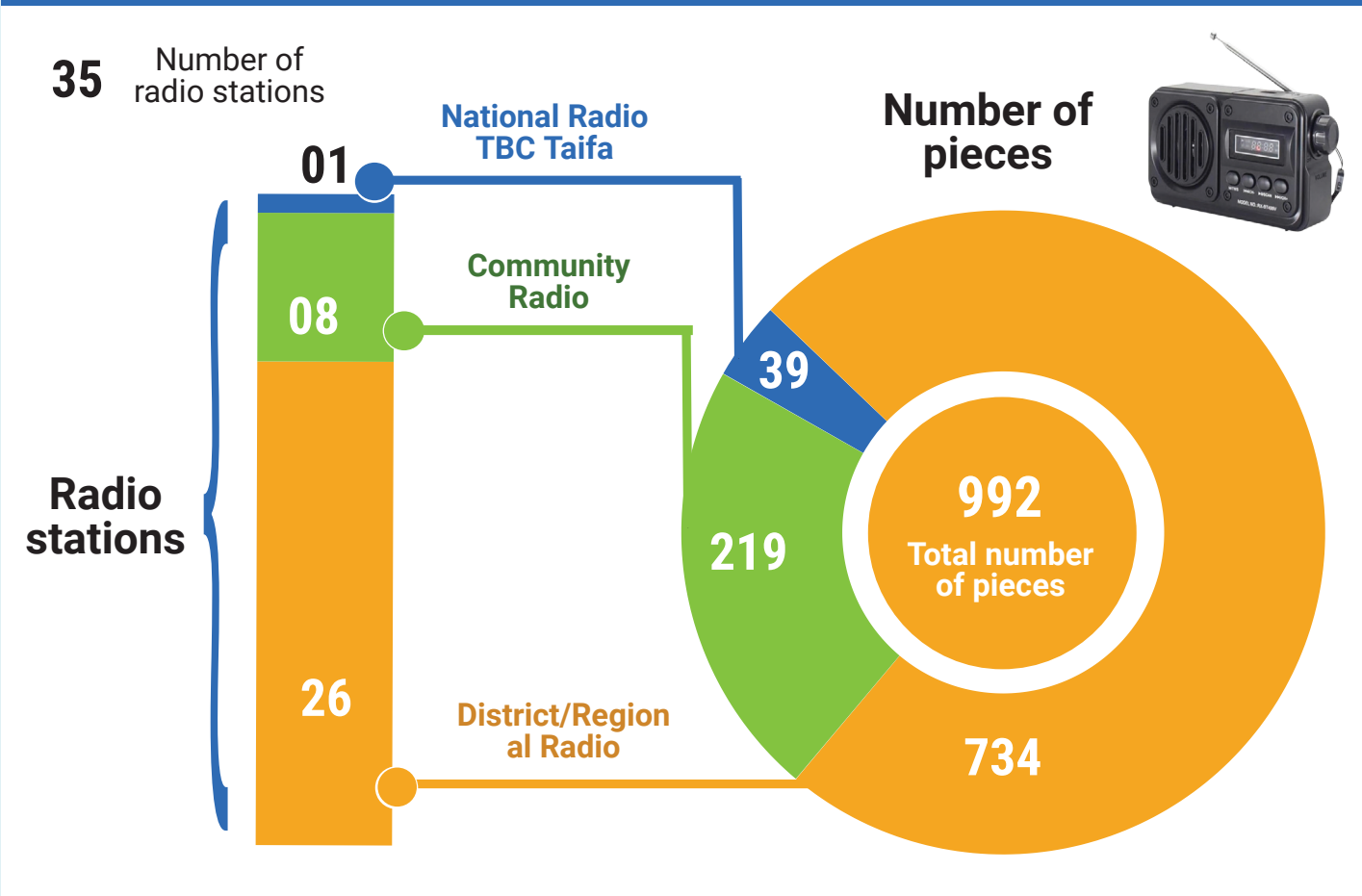
4.2.2 Media genre

The study found no differences between district/regional and community radio stations in their selection of news and programmes for coverage. Both had 31% for programmes and 69% for news. Table 29 presents the results on this aspect.

Media genre in regional, district and community radio
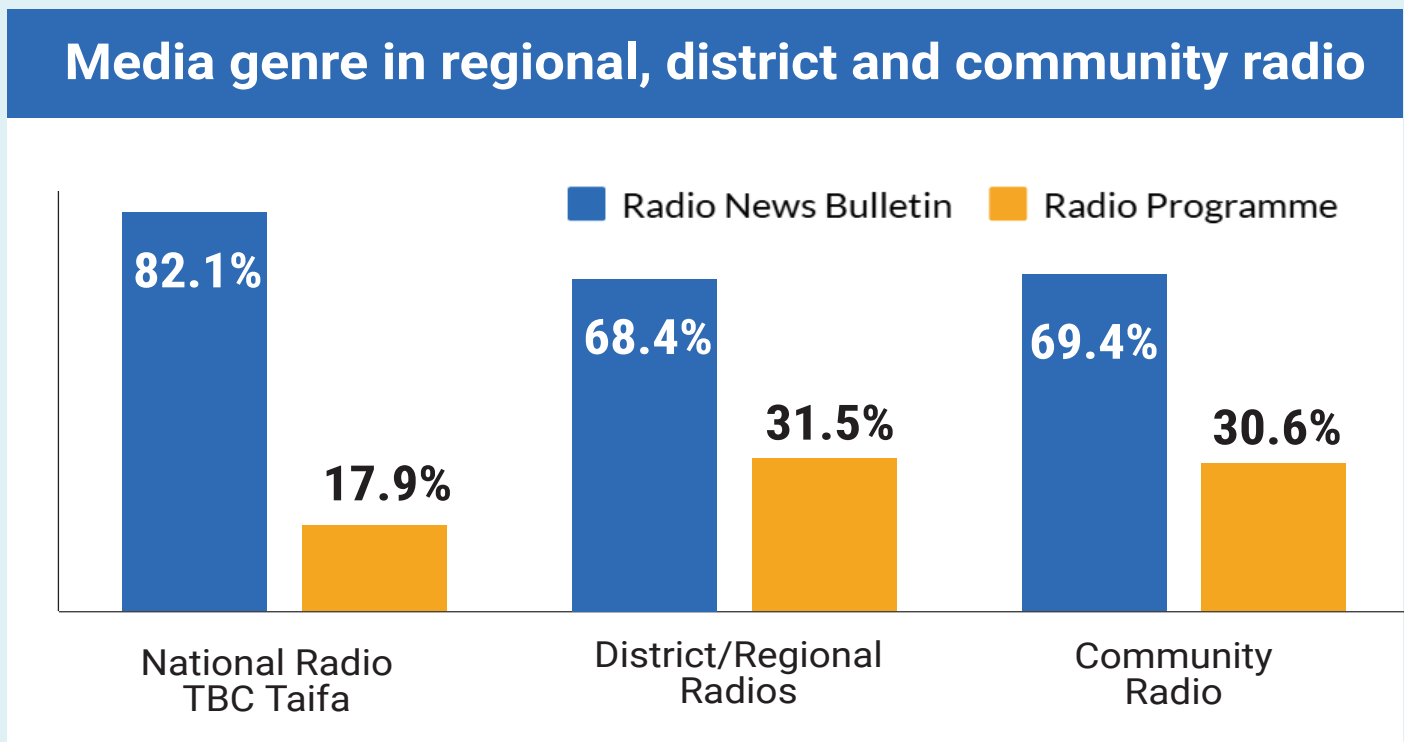
4.2.3 Formats

There were no differences between news and features. District/regional radio and community radio scored 69% in news and features. In terms of interviews, community radio aired more interviews (11%) than district/regional radios (8%). Moreover, regarding discussions, district/ regional radios performed slightly better at 5% than community radios at 3%.

Format in regional, district and community radio
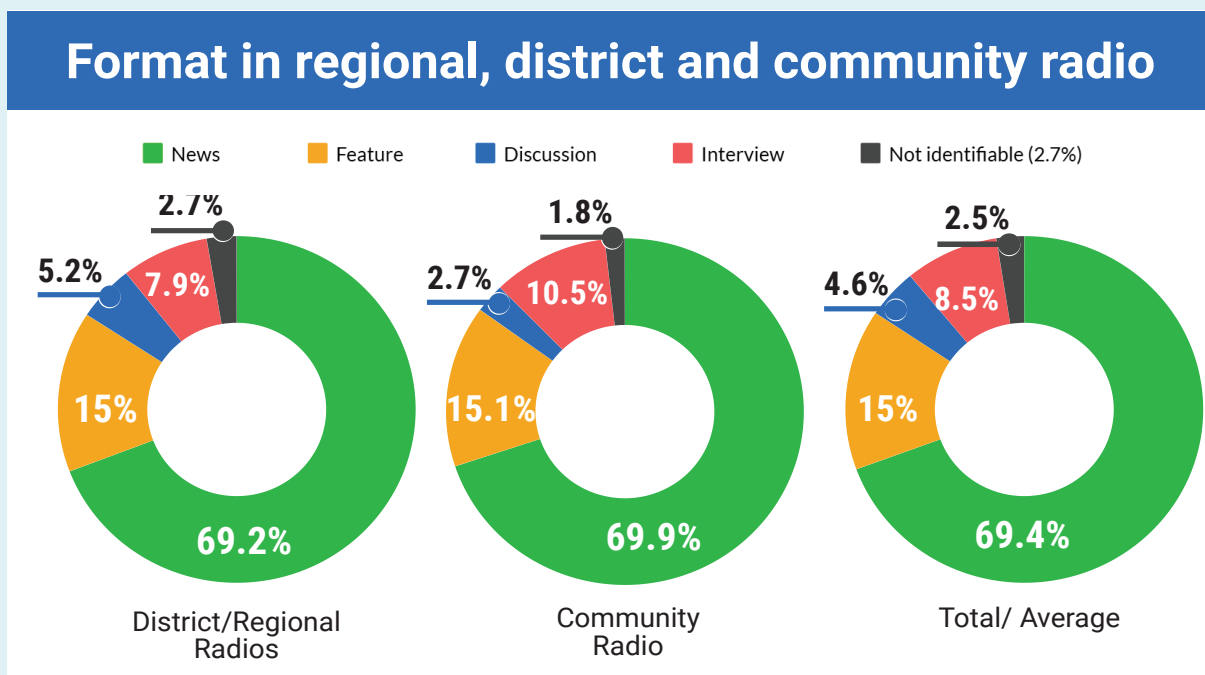
4.2.4 Reporting context

The findings indicate that district/regional stations accounted for more initiatives (52%) in covering news stories than community radio stations (42%). However, the findings indicate that community radio stations relied more on organised events and official statements to produce their stories, accounting for 37% and 13.2% of the coverage, respectively, than district regional radio stations (33.2% and 8.2%, respectively). However, both community radio stations and district/regional radio broadcasters were almost at par in low media initiatives at 47.5% and 50%, respectively. Table 31 further breaks down the comparative performances in the reporting context.

Context of reporting

Context of reporting in regional, district and community radio

- Low media own initiative
- Organised event
- Official statements report
- High media own initiative
- None of them

Total/Average: 47.5%, 34.1%, 9.3%, 2.2%, 6.8%

Community Radio: 39.3%, 37%, 13.2%, 2.7%, 7.8%

District/Regional Radios: 50%, 33.2%, 8.2%, 2.0%, 6.5%
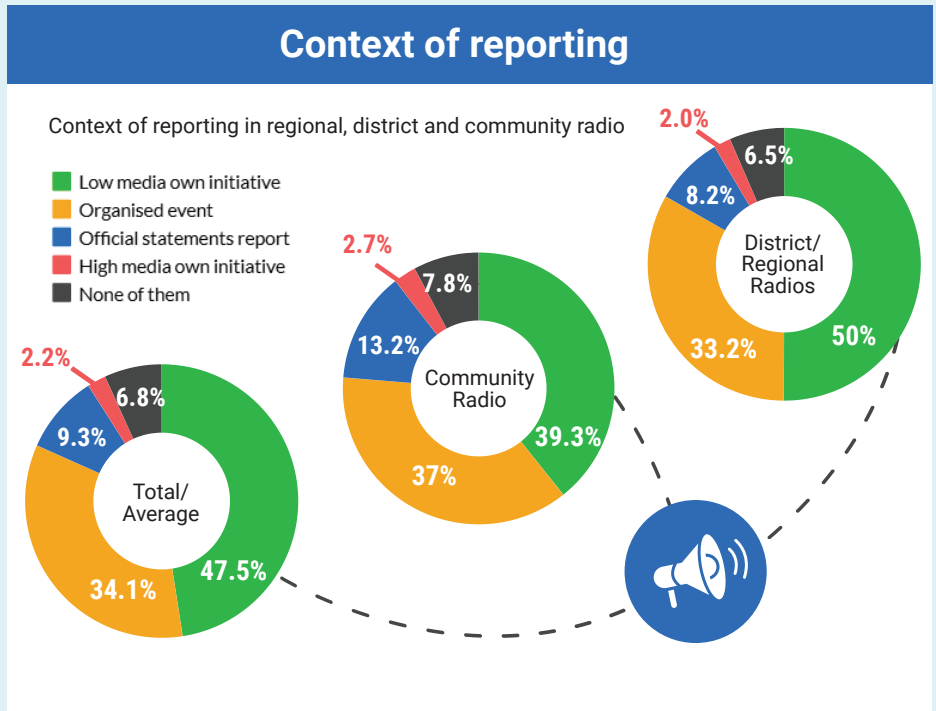
4.2.5 Topical coverage

As indicated earlier in Tier 1, this study focused on local elections reportage, making the election the main topical content for analysis in both radio station types. However, community Radio stations also covered other topics by 4%, compared to district/ regional radios, which covered the same by merely 1%. Other topics covered by community Radio stations were mainly crime and land-related problems.
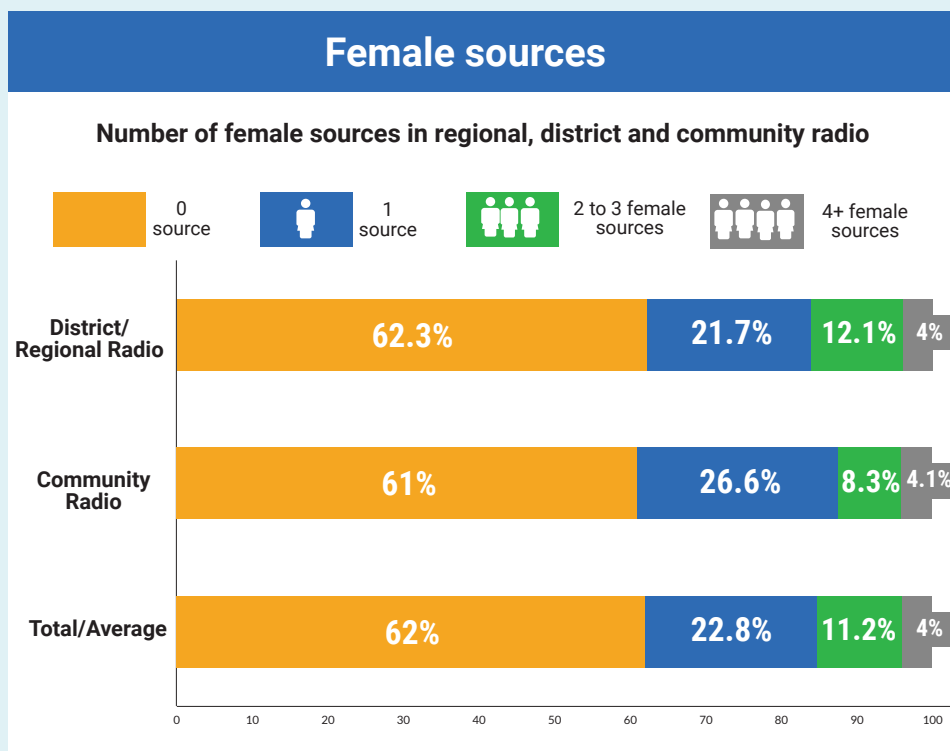
5.0 Sourcing

The study found that community Radio stations scored low on the number of sources compared to district/ regional stations. Community Radio stations scored 24% and 21% on 2-3 sources and 4+ sources, respectively whereas district/ regional radios scored 28% and 26% on 2-3 sources and 4+ sources, respectively. In relative terms, the differences are not large and, hence, insignificant. The results of using fewer sources by community Radio might be attributable to the use of more official events and statements.

Number of sources

Number of sources in regional, district and community radio

- 0 or 1 source
- 2 -3 sources
- 4+ sources

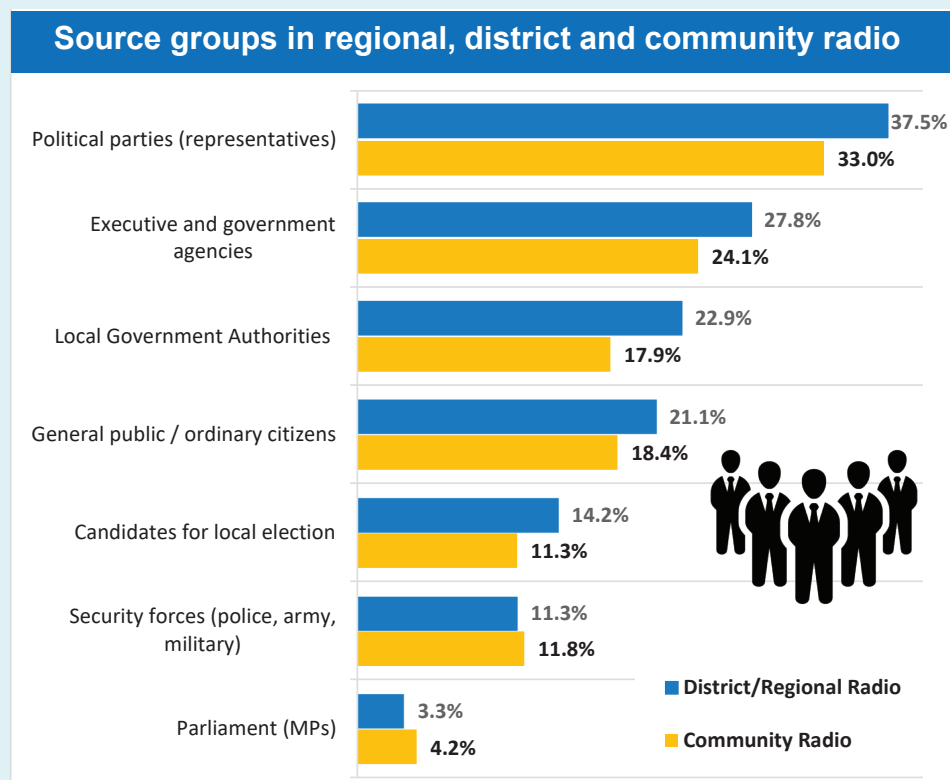|	0 or 1 source	2-3 sources	4+ sources
District/Regional Radio	46.9%	27.5%	25.6%
Community Radio	54.8%	24.2%	21%
Total/Average	48.7%	26.8%	24.6%
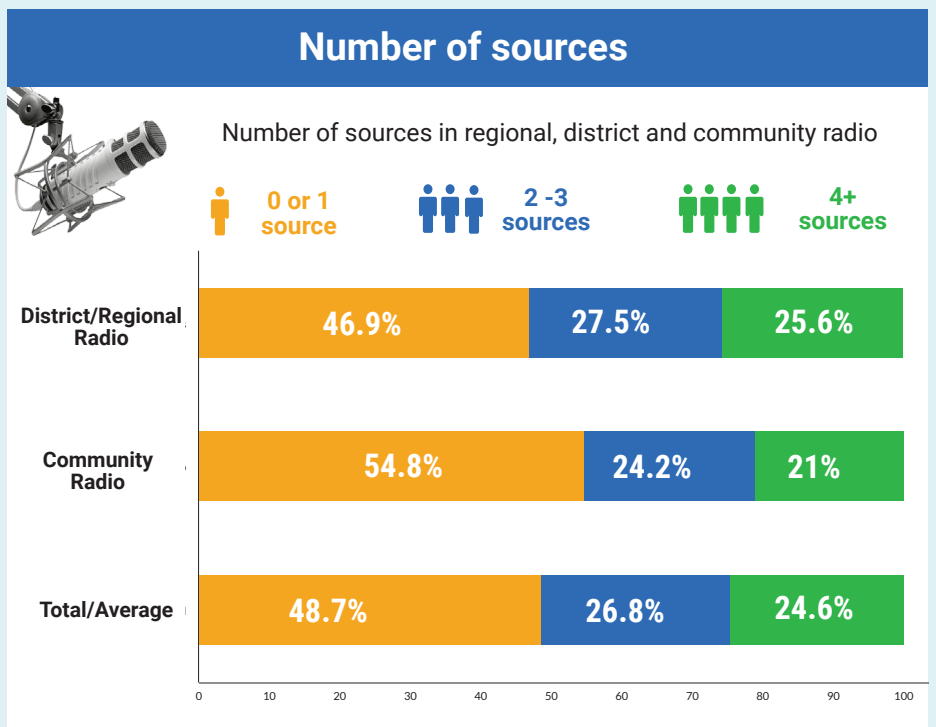
5.1 Female sources

The study further found minor differences in utilising female sources in news stories from the radios under review. About 61% to 62% of all the news items analysed had no female sources. However, community Radio had some news items with just one female source but accorded female sources less coverage than district/regional radios. Overall, the difference in the use of female sources remains rather minimal. Table 33 further details the results on the integration of female source in the LGE coverage.

Female sources

Number of female sources in regional, district and community radio

| | 0 source | | 1 source | | 2 to 3 female sources | | 4+ female sources |

	0 source	1 source	2 to 3 female sources	4+ female sources
District/Regional Radio	62.3%	21.7%	12.1%	4%
Community Radio	61%	26.6%	8.3%	4.1%
Total/Average	62%	22.8%	11.2%	4%

5.1.2 What kind of source groups?

The study findings further indicate that in terms of source groups for their stories, district and regional radios were more reliant on political parties, executives, local and administration, and the public/ ordinary citizens than community radio stations.

Source groups in regional, district and community radio

Source group	District/Regional Radio	Community Radio
Political parties (representatives)	37.5%	33.0%
Executive and government agencies	27.8%	24.1%
Local Government Authorities	22.9%	17.9%
General public / ordinary citizens	21.1%	18.4%
Candidates for local election	14.2%	11.3%
Security forces (police, army, military)	11.3%	11.8%
Parliament (MPs)	3.3%	4.2%

6.0. Callers

The results also show that 95% of LGE coverage from both types of radio stations was devoid of the call-in feature. In other words, the stations did not allow the members of the public to raise their concerns and issues with candidates during call-ins.
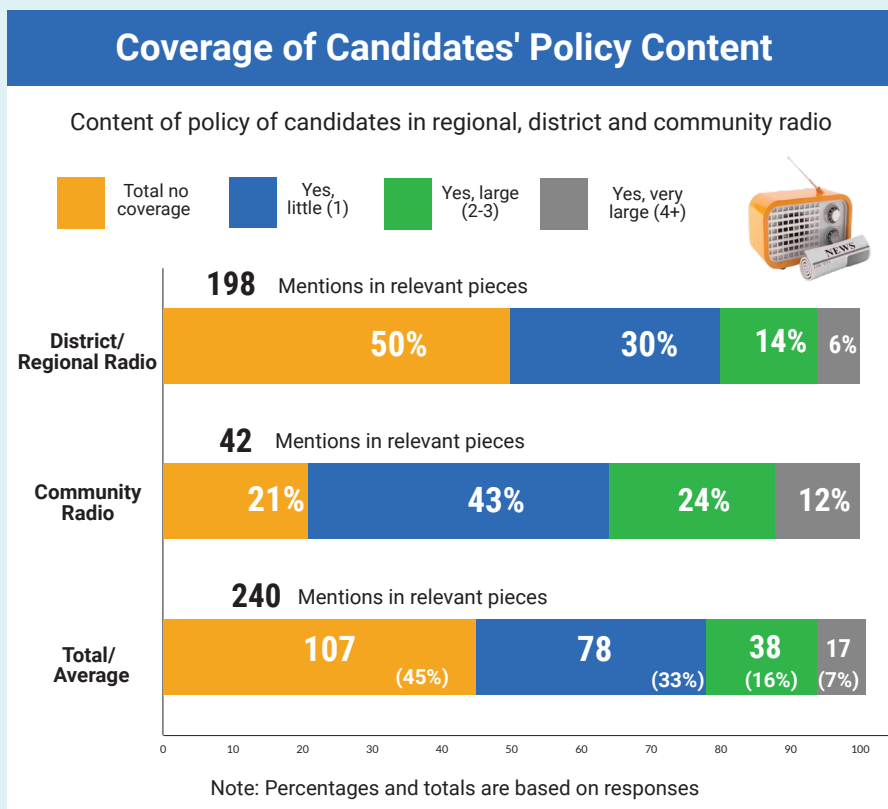
7.0. Findings on the appraisal of electoral candidates

The low performance of community Radio stations also manifests in the number of candidates. They present slightly fewer candidates (12%) than district/regional radios (13%), implying that both types had low coverage of electoral contenders. This insignificant difference attests to how the stations paid little attention to appraising candidates vying for various electable positions during the LGE. Table 34 presents the results on this aspect

Number of candidates in radio pieces

Assessment of candidates in the regional, district and community radio

	District/ Regional Radios	Community Radio	Total/ Average
0 candidates	87%	90%	87.7%
1 candidate	4.9%	5.5%	5%
2-3 candidates	5.3%	4.1%	5%
4+ candidates	2.7%	0.5%	2.2%
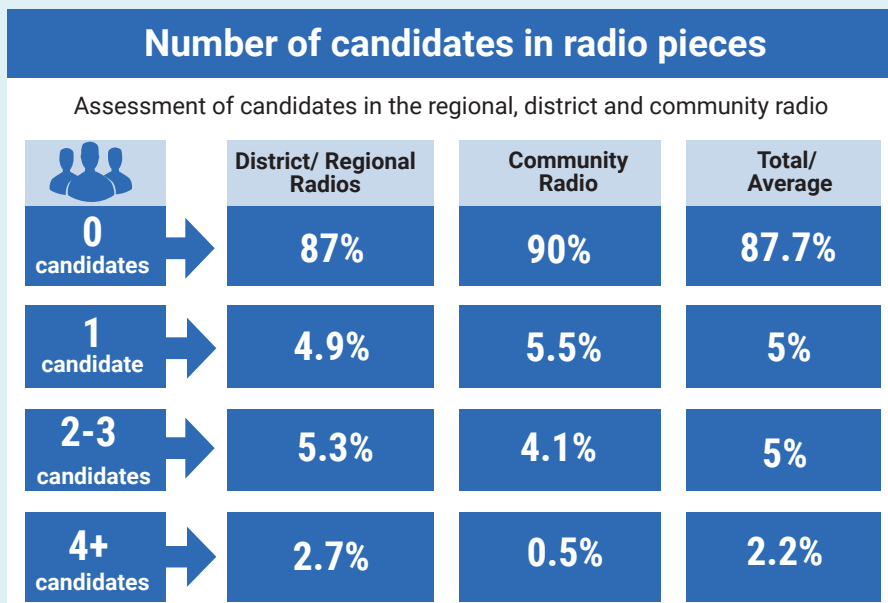
8.0. Coverage of candidate's policy content

The study found that community radio stations had a far higher performance in covering the policies of candidates (78%) than district/regional radio stations (50%). The community radio performed better than district/regional radio stations in all categories of covering the policy contents of the candidates, as detailed in Table 35:
.

Coverage of Candidates' Policy Content

Content of policy of candidates in regional, district and community radio

Legend: Total no coverage | Yes, little (1) | Yes, large (2-3) | Yes, very large (4+)

District/ Regional Radio — 198 Mentions in relevant pieces
50% | 30% | 14% | 6%

Community Radio — 42 Mentions in relevant pieces
21% | 43% | 24% | 12%

Total/ Average — 240 Mentions in relevant pieces
107 (45%) | 78 (33%) | 38 (16%) | 17 (7%)

Note: Percentages and totals are based on responses

The results in Table 35 suggest that community radio stations fulfil the designated radio role in enlightening the citizens about the credentials of various candidates relative to other radio stations.
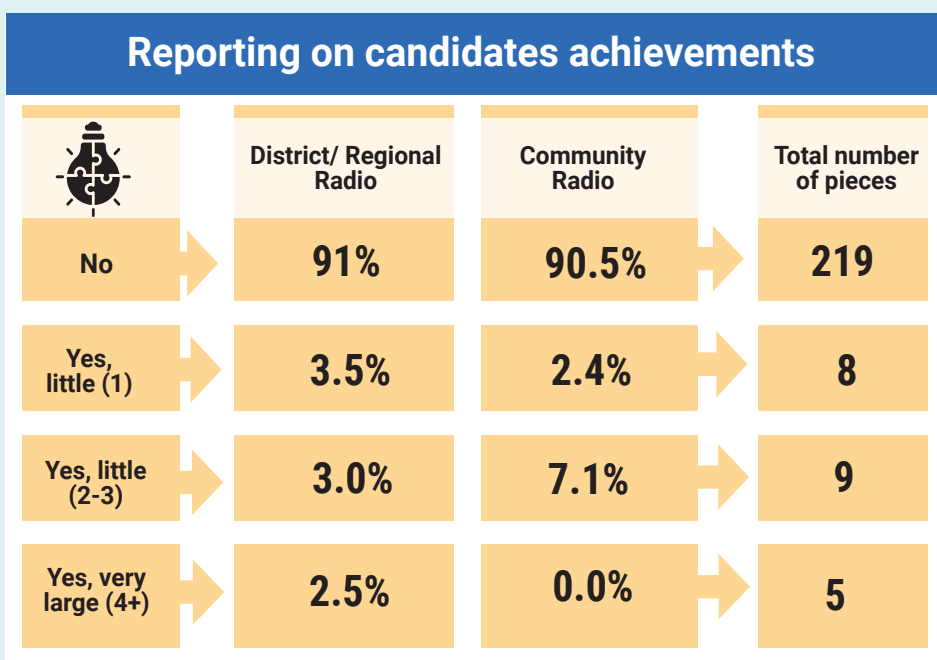
9.0 Reference to the party manifesto

The findings further indicate that community radio stations performed better than district/regional radio stations in covering the party manifestos of the candidates vying for various posts. In this regard, community radio stations scored 40% compared to district/regional radios, which garnered 32%.

Reference to party manifesto

Legend: ■ No reference ■ Yes, little (1) ■ Yes, large (2-3) ▨ Yes, very large (4+)

District/Regional Radio: No reference 71.4%, Yes little 14.6%, Yes large 10.6%, Yes very large 3.5% — N=199

Community Radio: No reference 59.5%, Yes little 21.4%, Yes large 11.9%, Yes very large 7.1% — N=42

Total: No reference 167, Yes little 38, Yes large 26, Yes very large 10 — N=241

Total references
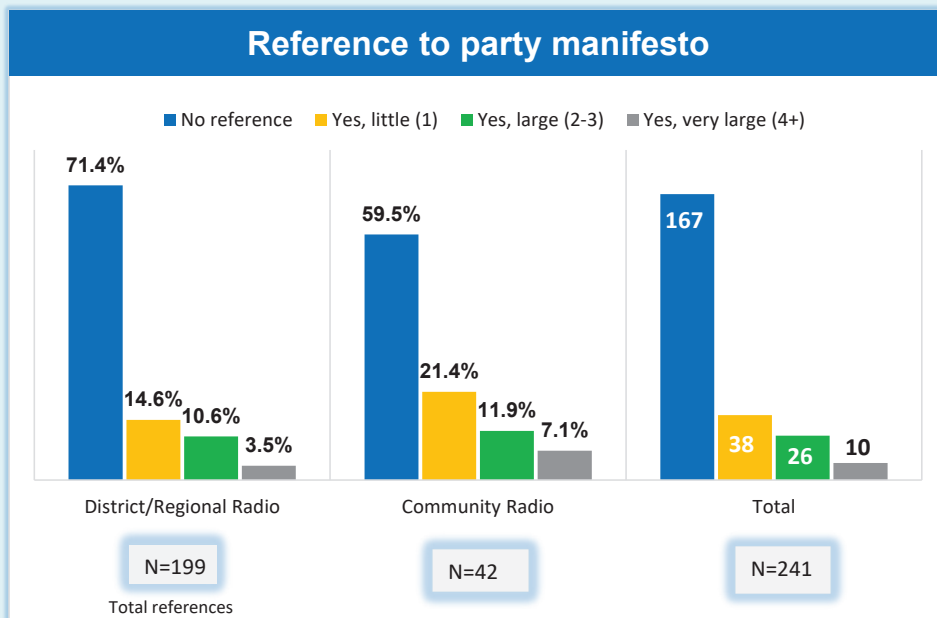
10.0 Reporting on the achievements of candidates

The study findings indicate that there was hardly any difference between the two radio types (regional/district and community Radios) regarding reporting on the achievements of the rival candidates mentioned. Each radio station scored almost 10%. Generally, the coverage of candidates' achievements was poor, as shown in the Table below. 37 further illustrates:.

Reporting on candidates achievements

	District/ Regional Radio	Community Radio	Total number of pieces
No	91%	90.5%	219
Yes, little (1)	3.5%	2.4%	8
Yes, little (2-3)	3.0%	7.1%	9
Yes, very large (4+)	2.5%	0.0%	5

10.1 Reporting on Candidates' Failures

Based on the study results, it was evident that community radio stations never discussed the failures of the candidates. The district/ regional radios were not better either with only compared 2% of such coverage. Specifically, the district/regional radio stations mentioned the candidates' failures three times in only two news items. One such report features on *Kasibante FM,* and the other appears on *Nuru FM.* Generally, the study results presented in Table 27 (above) and the subsequent Table 28, indicate that both categories of radio stations performed poorly in reporting on this aspect, whether on the candidates' achievements (positive attributes) or failures (negative attributes):

Reporting on failures of candidates

	District/ Regional Radio	Community Radio	Total/ Average
No	**98.5%** (196)	**100%** (41)	**98.8%** (237)
Yes, little (1)	**1.5%** (3)	**0.0%** (0)	**1.3%** (3)
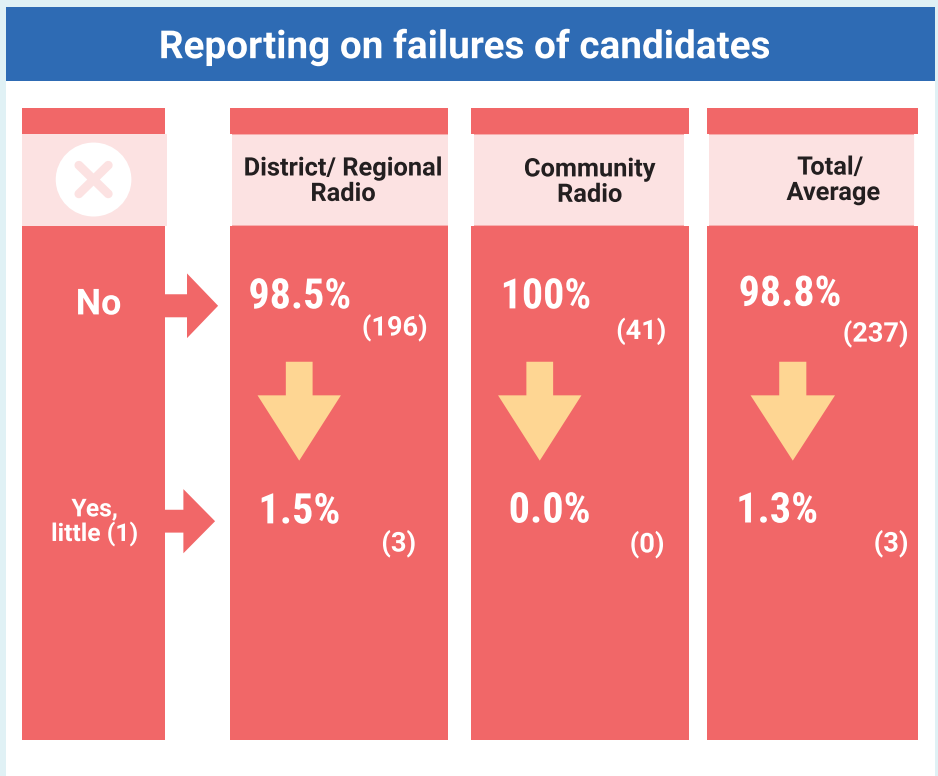
10.2 Candidates' personality

Coverage of the candidates' credentials, particularly their personality, provides vital information that helps voters make informed decisions about the contestants. Personal traits augment the candidates' policy content presentation, enriching the electorates' judgement about the contestants. In this regard, the study found that community radios performed well compared to district/regional radios in covering the candidates' personalities, with 17% and 12%, respectively. However, these differences are not significant and generally remain low in terms of the coverage of character traits.

Coverage of personality of candidates

Legend: No coverage / Yes, little (1) / Yes, large (2-3)

District/ Regional Radio — **196** Mentions in relevant pieces
87.8% | 9.2% | 3.1%

Community Radio — **41** Mentions in relevant pieces
82.9% | 12.2% | 4.9%

Total/ Average — **237** Mentions in relevant pieces
206 (86.9%) | 23 (9.7%) | 8 (3.4%)
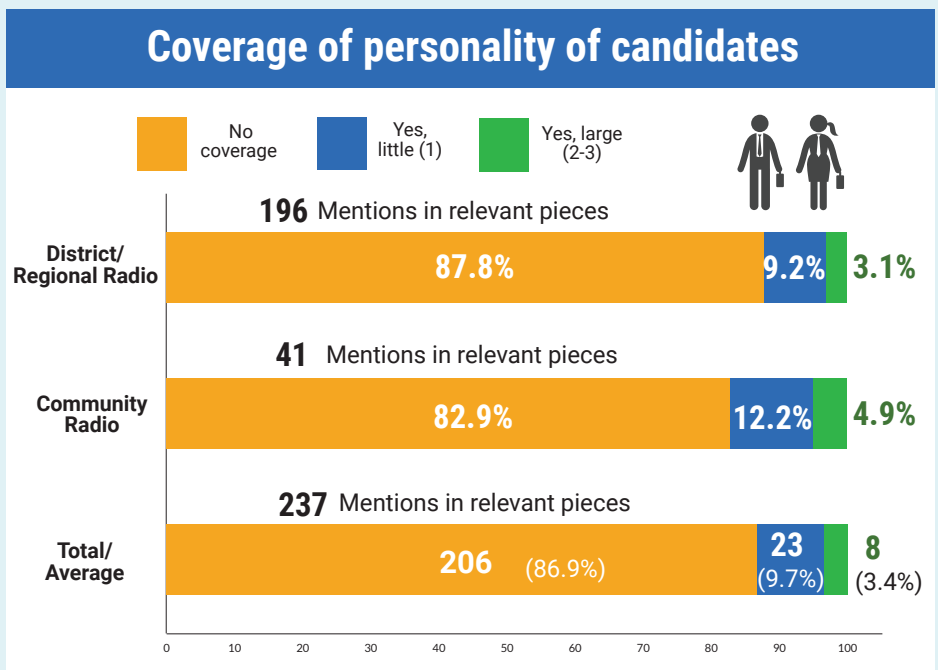
10.3 Findings on coverage of candidates' political parties

The findings indicate a significant difference between district/regional and community Radio stations in their coverage of the candidates and their respective political parties. Community radio stations gave preferential coverage to the opposition, particularly Chadema (65%) and CUF (56%), and covered CCM less (22%). The district/regional radios attempted to strike a balance in the coverage of the two political parties. Even though opposition parties (CUF and ACT Wazalendo) were also mentioned to a certain extent, the coverage was highly unbalanced. Both categories mention CUF candidates at almost the same level. However, ACT Wazalendo candidates were only mentioned once by both district/regional and community radios. One plausible explanation is that ACT Wazalendo had no specific candidates in the respective areas. Nevertheless, the data shows a large and significant imbalance in the coverage of candidates for all political parties.

10.4 Viewpoints

The findings indicate that community radio stations expressed fewer viewpoints in favour of the CCM candidates at 8% than district/regional radio stations, which favoured CCM candidates at 16%. However, no significant differences emerged between district/regional and community radio stations covering Chadema. Their coverage of Chadema candidates stood at 12% and 9%, respectively.
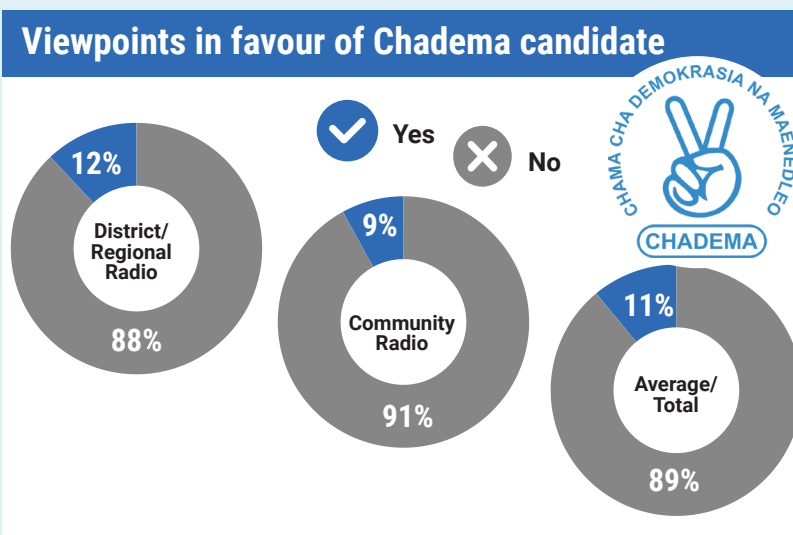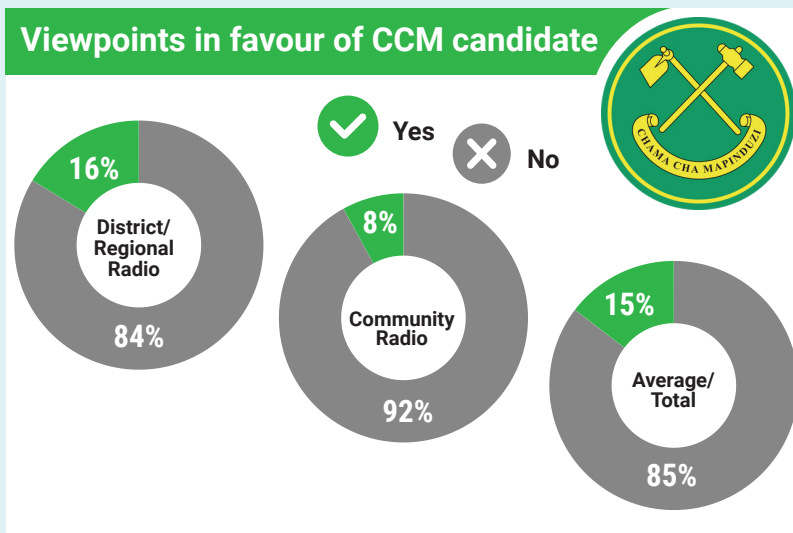
10.5 Probing

The study also considered how the stations treated probing questions, which help an interviewer get a complete story or the full meaning of the narrative, during their coverage. In this regard, the study found that district/regional radios were better at probing CCM candidates with an impeccable 70% compared to 0% for community radios.

Probing the CCM candidate

✓ Yes   ✕ No

70%
District/
Regional
Radio

30%

10 Total responses

Community
Radio
100%

2 Total responses

58%
Average/
Total

42%

12 Total responses
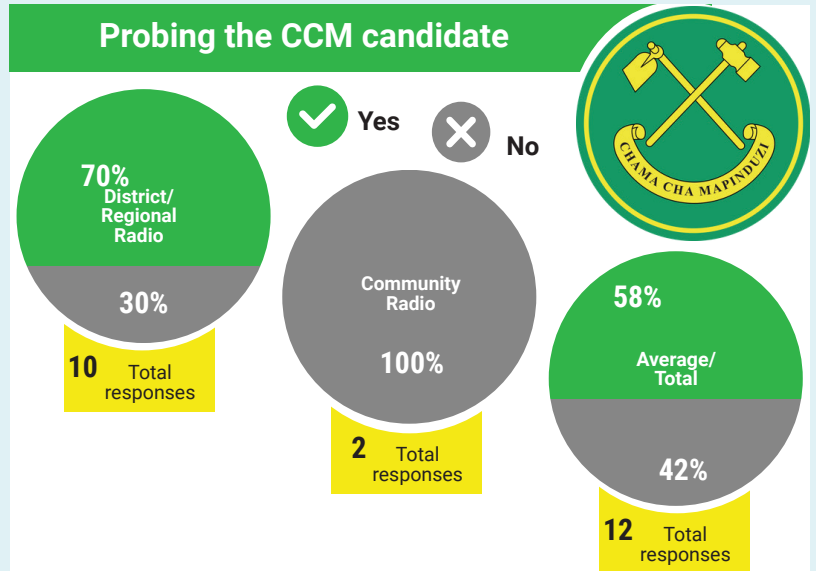
Conversely, to the opposition Chadema candidates, community radios probed the party more highly (60%) than CCM candidates (40%). This difference was insignificant and could be attributable to numerous factors not explored in this study. Nevertheless, candidates from both the opposition and ruling parties were varying subjected to grilling, which can serve as a fillip for future electoral coverage.

Probing the Chadema candidate

✓ Yes   ✕ No

36%

District/
Regional Radio

64%

11 Total responses

60%

Community
Radio

40%

5 Total responses

44%

Average/ Total

56%

16 Total responses
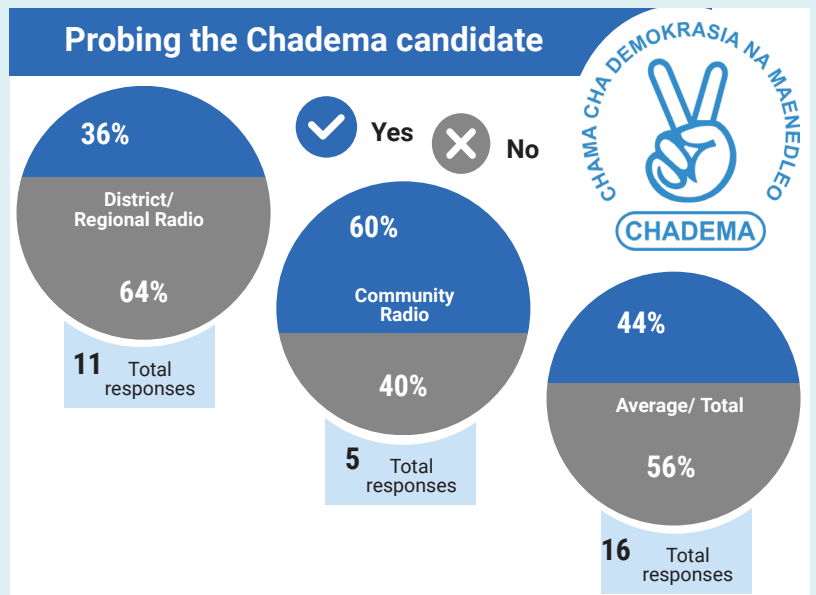
10.6 Ethics

Both categories of radio stations show no difference in conceding the right to reply, as they both deny this right in two-thirds of their relevant stories.

Ethics

✓ Yes   ✕ No   **Total responses**

District/
Regional Radio: 38.9% | 61.1% → 18

Community
Radio: 33.3% | 66.7% → 6

Total/
Average: 32.5% | 67.5% → 24

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
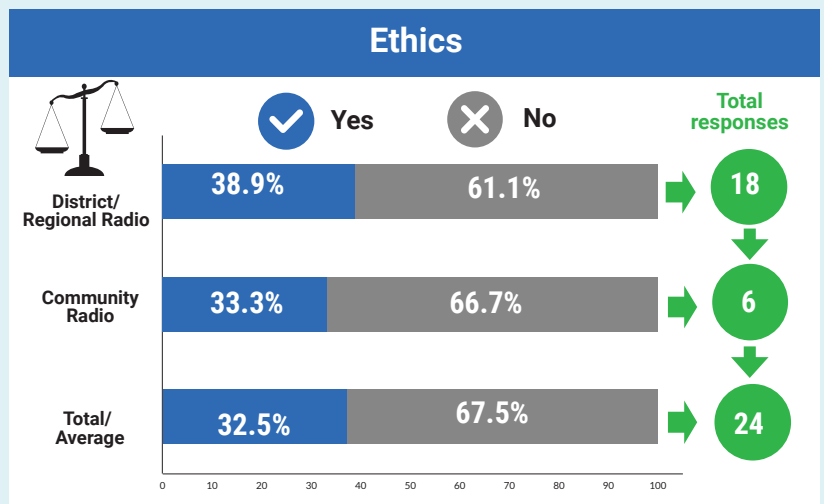
11.0 TIER 3: Results for the National Broadcaster—TBC Taifa

11.1 Sample

TBC Taifa had 39 stories in this sample. The national radio broadcasts mostly news (81%) and programmes on a lesser scale. *TBC Taifa* used only news and features and not discussions or interviews.

11.2 Sourcing

The national broadcaster was very close to the average regarding the number of sources (see section 4.3). In terms of using candidates and ordinary citizens as sources, *TBC Taifa* performed below the average by 8% and 13%, respectively.

11.3 Coverage of candidates

The findings indicate that *TBC Taifa* did not mention any candidate in 92% of all the stories analysed. This high percentage is understandable, as *TBC Taifa*, as a national broadcaster, has no reason to present single candidates for LGEs. *TBC Taifa* presented just three stories with candidates, twice with two candidates, and once with three candidates, for a total of seven candidates.

11.4 Appraisal of candidates

This assessment is based on just three stories and seven candidates covered by *TBC Taifa*, which appraised the candidates. Regarding reporting on the content of policy, the station reported little on this item for six out of seven candidates and nothing for one candidate. The station did not mention candidates and the party manifesto. It also never reported on candidates' achievements, failures, and or personalities.

The broadcast refrained from analysing these aspects. The same happened to viewpoints in favour of or against any candidate. The findings indicate that there were no viewpoints at all in the station's coverage. Additionally, *TBC Taifa* had no interviews or discussions with candidates, and this is understandable as the national broadcaster could not afford to engage all the candidates (see the number of candidates above).

12.0 REAL-TIME MONITORING
12.1 Overview

In the YB 2024, we introduced a new approach dubbed 'real-time monitoring.' This new idea was not applicable in the 2019 LGEs and 2020 GEs. It's piloting occurred from the 11th November to the 1st December 2024. Regional monitors assigned to specific radio stations in selected regions monitored them with the zonal monitors in charge of quality assurance at the zones, who were supervising. The zonal monitors reported to national monitors. The regional monitors submitted daily reports to the national monitor via KoboToolbox after the zonal monitors had approved them. The monitoring covered four issues only: candidates (with a specific check of female candidates), news sourcing (citizens, youth, women, and LGAs), political parties, and ethical issues. The monitors held an online meeting once per week to discuss the monitoring exercise and associated challenges.

12.2 Training and operations

Before the monitoring exercise began, monitors received training on how to use the monitoring guide with practical exercises. Successful monitors were assigned Radio stations and provided with programme schedules. In addition, they were linked to either the respective station manager or programme manager. On a daily basis, the regional monitors monitored an evening news bulletin and three programmes of the assigned radio station based on the programme schedule available, with the monitoring tool guiding the process.

They provided daily feedback through phone calls to the radio stations, communicated areas needing improvement, and encouraged them to retain standards in areas they fared well with the reportage. Overall, the 20 Radio stations monitored were *Arusha One FM, Bariadi FM, CG FM, Dodoma FM, Manyara FM, Highlands FM, Kahama FM, Kasibante FM, Mbeya City FM, Mpanda FM, Pambazuko FM, Abood FM, Kwizera FM, Sengerema FM, Ruvuma FM, Sunrise FM, Pangani FM, TBC Taifa, TK FM,* and *Vos FM.*

Radio stations generally responded positively to

12.3 Findings on training and operations

The piloting aimed to test how it would work and the perceptions of radio stations. The following were our findings:

- the initiative, although some felt that the daily feedback on areas for improvement amounted to policing their journalism. However, this situation had a positive aspect. Monitors observed that, on certain days, some radio stations adjusted their programming to align with the project's objectives. Radio stations sometimes even contacted the monitors to inform them that they would not air a program on a specific day because they could not secure multiple sources.

- The responses received from various stations were varied. A few of them accepted and implemented changes; the majority were slow in responding (taking a few days), and another few needed some time to work on the comments (taking a longer time).

- The impact of the feedback from the monitoring was noticeable on sourcing in programmes, specifically with consistent reminders to stations to ensure having two candidates in programmes and inclusion of citizens and female voices. The results section (above) shows that radio stations such as *CG FM, Highlands FM, Pambazuko FM, Kasibante FM, Mpanda FM,* and *Radio Sengerema FM* performed better in using multiple sources in programmes.

- Radio stations tend to prioritise national and regional leaders of political parties at the expense of local politicians. This hierarchical reporting and prioritisation partly explains why there was little coverage of candidates (only 12%). Major political parties used their national and regional leaders to canvas for their candidates at the LGEs, and the Radio stations opted for more prominent names while marginalising the actual people on the ballots. Without monitoring, we believe the percentage of coverage would have been lower.
  The coverage of youth and PWDs was

- hard to identify during monitoring. It emerged that most stations do not have a culture of introducing their sources by age and/or stating whether they are disabled or come from disabled communities or organisations. This lack of introduction complicated the identification of sources, particularly youths and PWDs, unless the programme is directly related to these groups. Our monitors kept reminding radio stations to find a way to introduce these source groups for easy identification.

- Most of the stations complained of having few staff members, which hindered their efforts to improve the reporting of LGEs. This has been a serious challenge affecting most radio stations in the country. Some stations have as few as five people. This notwithstanding, they are supposed to operate 24 hours a day and produce quality programmes that generate public debate and create an informed citizenry.

- Young people are presented in programmes as voters and not people who can contest in the LGEs. The monitoring shows that most programmes on youth are framed along 'youth as voters' and not youth as leaders. This representation creates stereotypes that disadvantage the majority of the youth. The radio stations must strive to balance their coverage to capture both framing 'youth as voters' and 'youth as leaders.'

- Most radio stations were more active on election day, sending reporters to different polling stations, engaging citizens, and reporting election results. There was pretty much better coverage on this day compared to previous days.

- The piloting of real-time monitoring during the YB 2024 elections has provided valuable insights into the state of radio journalism in the regions subjected to media monitoring. Whereas the stations generally received the initiative positively, it highlighted significant challenges, including a slow-down response to monitors' feedback and a tendency to prioritise national figures over local candidates, limiting local candidates' coverage during the LGEs. The findings illustrate the urgent need for radio stations to enhance their sourcing practices and to

foster a culture that prioritises inclusivity, particularly concerning youth and PWDs. Additionally, the staff shortage in many stations underscores the need for more significant support and resources to fulfil their role effectively during elections. Overall, this monitoring exercise marks a crucial step towards improving the quality of election-related news media coverage and promoting an informed citizenry, thus laying the groundwork for future initiatives to enrich democratic discourse and representation.

13.0 VIEWS FROM STAKEHOLDERS REGARDING THE RESULTS

Besides the quantitative analysis, the Yearbook provides qualitative insights into the quantitative assessment. The insights come from engaging with stakeholders: station managers, programme managers, and representatives from media organisations, whose viewpoints further shed light on the meaning behind the quantitative data. This section, therefore, answers this pertinent question: "What explains the quality of the radio station's coverage of the 2024 LGEs from stakeholders' point of view?" Overall, we interviewed 17 respondents from across the country.

13.1 Coverage of candidates

In response to the lack of extensive coverage of candidates by radio stations, the programme manager for Sengerema FM explained that the candidates were largely absent and that the returning officers did not provide their names to journalists. Only the candidates from CCM and Chadema, for example, were known to the electorates in Sengerema. In contrast, candidates from other parties, such as NLD, NCCR Mageuzi, and ACT Wazalendo, remained anonymous in the eyes of the public. These candidates did not even campaign, leaving citizens to discover their names only on the ballot papers.

In Ukerewe, the manager of *Flamingo FM* stated that candidates had limited knowledge of how to use the media effectively for their political campaigns. They preferred house-to-house canvassing and rallies over media engagement. The *Flamingo FM* manager noted that even district leaders tended to favour national television, often

hiring reporters from Mwanza and paying them to cover their stories instead of working with local radio stations. Three reasons were attributed to candidates' low coverage: mistrust between candidates and radio stations, limited campaign duration, and financial challenges facing radio stations.

Commenting on the mistrust, one respondent noted that some candidates had negative perceptions about radio stations owned by district councils. They opined that the operations of these stations were biased and favoured the ruling party (CCM). Consequently, some opposition candidates were reluctant to be interviewed or to use these radio stations.

Additionally, the respondent said that the campaign duration of the LGEs was minimal, spanning from November 20th to 26th, 2024. According to the respondent, the seven-day period was very limited for radio stations to engage and provide equal opportunities for all the candidates who contested various positions. Cosmas Lupoja, the coordinator of TADIO, echoed this view, stressing that two weeks were too short for the media to plan and adequately cover all the candidates. Subsequently, they capitalised on the two positions, namely the village chairperson and street chairperson.

The financial struggles that the stations are going through was also mentioned as an important reason that curtailed their ability to cover the candidates. Most of the respondents from radio stations and TADIO noted that the radio stations in the country are experiencing severe financial difficulties to the extent that they can hardly support their journalists financially to attend campaign rallies beyond their vicinity.

In this regard, the Secretary of the National Independent Broadcasters Association (NIBA), Heavenlight Kavishe, echoed this view and called for financial support to local radio stations. He also noted that "these stations could not adequately cover the LGEs without financial assistance". Moreover, the government should extend financial support to enable these outlets to play their expected roles of informing the public and creating an informed citizenry.

13.1.1 Coverage of female candidates and their voices

Regarding the few voices of female sources (not female candidates), some respondents raised concerns about women who dreaded engaging with the media or participating in media interviews. The respondents noted that women are more likely to avoid engaging with radio stations than their male counterparts. These sentiments can be associated with cultural orientation and lack of confidence among ordinary women in the upcountry.

Participation of female candidates is no exception. As the findings further illustrate, the coverage of female candidates remained relatively low at 5%. Although this may be associated with the small number of female candidates nominated compared to their male counterparts, participants from radio stations noted that female candidates were not forthcoming when requested to appear for interviews and or discussions. They associated this disinterest in participation with a lack of strategic skills in using media for electoral promotion.

The Director of the Tanzania Media Women Association (TAMWA), Dr. Rose Reuben, acknowledged concerns about inadequate gender representation regardless of the general improvements in the 2024 LGE media coverage. She pointed out that "reporting on women candidates and incorporating female sources remained insufficient", questioning whether journalists understood the significance of including women's voices in their coverage.

13.1.2 Coverage of ordinary citizens

Moreover, many ordinary citizens were hesitant to engage with the media. A programme manager from *Sengerema FM,* for example, reported that citizens often declined to provide comments when requested. This reluctance stemmed from a low level of education and an unawareness of the significance of discussing election-related topics, as many believed that only the elite had the privilege to voice their opinions. There was a strong call for increased civic education to empower ordinary citizens to participate in discussions about elections.

The media refrained from allowing citizens to make call-ins due to concerns over potential emotional outbursts that could lead to unfounded accusations against candidates. The worry revolved around permitting citizens to make baseless claims that could put the radio stations at risk. It was noted that some individuals harboured personal grievances against specific candidates, which could make them use derogatory language on air if given a chance. A programme manager from *Chalinze FM* said,

"Elections are sensitive matters, and the media also feels this sensitivity. If we allowed citizens to call in and they accused or defamed a candidate, our station could face closure immediately. Therefore, we opted to eliminate these segments from all election-related programs."

When asked why radio stations did not permit phone calls during their election programmes, the TADIO coordinator explained that, due to the sensitive nature of the election, the stations decided to do away with that segment to shield themselves from penalties that may arise when callers misbehave or when stations fail to balance the callers based on political parties' supporters.

Generally, respondents emphasised the need for the media to be more approachable to ordinary citizens, helping them gain confidence in speaking with the media. Despite some citizens being well-informed about various issues, including politics, they often felt disconnected from the media, which seemed to exist on a different level.

13.1.3 Interrogation of candidates' promises of success and or failure

Radio stations struggled to report on the candidates' successes and failures due to inadequate planning for the LGEs. Reporting on achievements and failures demands that journalists set aside enough time to gather the necessary information about the promises made by incumbents against their successes and failures and interrogate the same. The Chairperson of the Tanzania Editors Forum (TEF), Deodatus Balile, expressed concern, stating that the media were unprepared to report on these critical areas:
"As media fraternity, we did not discuss and arrived at a common understanding on how to cover the election [LGEs], what topics to focus on, and what objectives we hoped to achieve."

A manager from *Sengerema FM* highlighted that many reporters prioritise stories that provide personal benefits, noting that they often preferred to attend rallies of the candidates who might offer monetary incentives rather than discuss their successes and or failures. Moreover, some incumbents resisted interviews that could highlight their shortcomings. As a result, reporters opted to avoid such stories to maintain a harmonious relationship with these candidates. Lack of coverage regarding the performances of the candidates was also attributable to time constraints, thus making it challenging to cover all aspects adequately.

One of the disturbing revelations was the failure to interrogate the successes and failures of the candidates, including their refusal to talk to journalists. Some programme managers have hinted that their failure to explore this area is not entirely because they were unprepared or were looking for money. Some incumbents serving as village and street chairpersons were candid. As much as they would have liked to engage the reporters to discuss their successes and failures, they were restricted by their political parties. Therefore, there was nothing they could do. Additionally, some media houses owned by politicians from the ruling party imposed restrictions on critical reporting, thereby preventing their reporters from covering opposition candidates.

14.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

14.1 Conclusion

This report critically examined the coverage provided by Radio stations for the 2024 Local Government Elections (LGEs) through the lens of two distinct categories of journalism quality reporting criteria. The first category assessed general reporting quality criteria, including the context of reporting, sourcing, and overall journalistic reportage. These criteria were previously applied to evaluate the state of journalism reporting in the country during the years 2018, 2019, and 2022, respectively. The second category focused explicitly on journalism quality reporting designed for election reporting, encompassing criteria like coverage of candidates coverage, policy content, achievements and failures of candidates, among others.

The findings of this assessment revealed that the media coverage of the 2024 LGEs has seen only marginal improvements compared to the previous years. Generally, there exists a tendency for stagnation at a low and, at times, unsatisfactory level of reporting quality. Though there has been a slight improvement in multiple sourcing, the overall impact remains limited. Moreover, radio stations have exhibited a modest increase in taking the initiative to report on critical issues about the elections. However, this has not translated significantly into a substantial improvement in reporting quality.

One notable area of concern is the persistent underrepresentation of female voices in the coverage. The sourcing of perspectives and insights from women remains alarmingly inadequate. This trend indicates systemic issues within the media landscape perpetuating gender disparities in reporting.

Examining the coverage of candidates also exposed how significant weaknesses persist. Coverage was strikingly limited. Only 12% of all stories featured candidates. Moreover, the quality of these stories was lacking in essential information, including crucial aspects of candidates' past achievements and failures, which were notably absent in reporting. This omission severely undermines the electorate's ability to assess the candidates based on their track records and informed opinions about their competencies. Furthermore, the reporting on the content of candidates' policies appears insufficient. Without a robust scrutiny of their policies, voters are left unempowered and uninformed. The lack of diverse viewpoints, particularly from the public and experts regarding candidates, limits the ability of citizens to generate informed opinions. This deficiency underscores a crucial gap in the media's role in facilitating democratic discourse and informed citizenry.

Based on the insights drawn from media stakeholders, it is evident that these results are partly attributable to internal factors like lack of capacity by local reporters, lack of support from editors, or insufficient understanding of the media's role in elections. Nevertheless, the results are also caused by external factors. The political environment does not support an open discourse

within the media about candidates' ability to address the concerns raised by the citizenry. In addition, lack of finances is a huge hindrance for radio stations in fulfilling their roles meaningfully.

The influence of media owners can obstruct reporters from interviewing opposition candidates and presenting their viewpoints. This dynamic, paired with a culture of self-censorship, continues to impede journalistic integrity within the country's media landscape. The noticeable neglect of female voices in broadcasting is often deeply rooted in socio-cultural norms that discourage or silence women—especially in rural settings—from participating in public discourse.

Reflecting on the findings of the Yearbook 2024, it is evident that the country's media fraternity faces considerable challenges in enhancing the quality of reporting as it approaches the General Elections in 2025. The structural environment surrounding the media must change to foster a more open space for fair and balanced discourse about the country's future trajectory. Without substantive changes in media practices and broader legal-political contexts, achieving meaningful advancements in election reporting and citizen engagement will remain a serious hurdle.

15.0 Recommendations

Based on these findings, we recommend the following:

Media independence: Media stakeholders must remain steadfast in their defence of media independence and recognise their critical role in promoting societal transparency and accountability. This involves actively opposing any attempts by external forces—governmental authorities, media owners, political parties, or candidates—to manipulate or influence news content in ways contrary to the public interest. To ensure a truly independent press, stakeholders should employ a multifaceted approach. This includes advocating for robust legal frameworks that protect journalists from censorship and intimidation and fostering an environment where critical reportage can flourish. Above all, preserving media independence is a collective responsibility that requires concerted efforts from all stakeholders to ensure that the media fulfils its

essential role of safeguarding democracy and enhancing societal well-being in the country.

Moving upstream in reportage: Radio stations and other outlets should pay more attention to critical issues during the campaigns and avoid shallow reporting. The media should also improve the quality of reporting by moving upstream to cover the substance of policies while making explicit references to party manifestos, asking difficult questions (or finding sources to do that), particularly on the candidates' achievements and/or failures. This is extremely important as it adds value to reportage and helps the citizens, who are voters, make well-informed decisions.

Training: As we head towards the General Elections later this year, based on experiences drawn from the media's coverage of the 2024 LGEs and the challenges encountered by the journalists, there is an urgent need to train journalists on election reporting. The training can be organised either at the national level or locally by respective media houses. The training should start early enough to prepare journalists to cover meaningfully all three cycles of elections. Some of the activities of the first cycle of the 2025 GEs are currently underway, including an update of the voter register.

Election coverage checklist: To simplify the work of reporters and editors, we propose that newsrooms publish a one-page poster checklist on election reporting and post it on their newsroom walls for easy access and reference by their journalists.

Budget in election reporting: Elections coverage requires adequate funding, and with the news media struggling to operate financially, we recommend that media stakeholders consider setting aside funds for election reporting. A special account or fund should be created to stave off and protect journalists from the trappings of parties and candidates during a crucial period of polls.

Generally, we recommend that the news media develop and embrace a culture of playing the "watchdog" role in society, which has, so far, been limited. They should also build values and cultural norms to enhance democracy, the rule of law, and societal governance.

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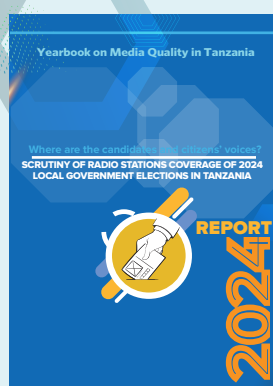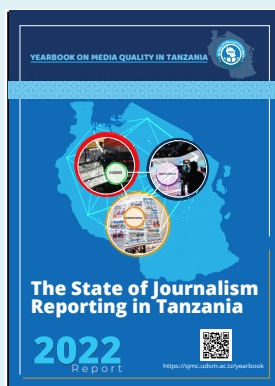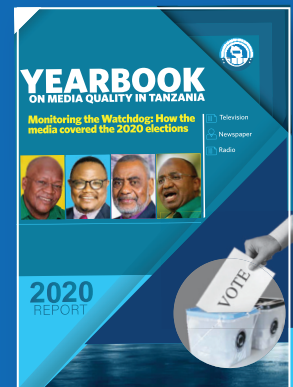**2023: Curriculum Integration**
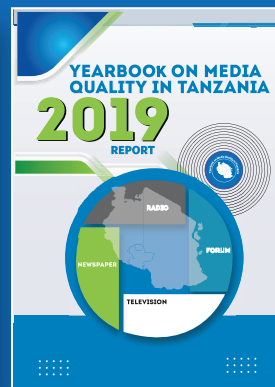
2023: Research Award

2018: Newsroom Engagement

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Where are the candidates and citizens' voices?

SCRUTINY OF RADIO STATIONS COVERAGE OF 2024 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN TANZANIA

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