



**Utrecht
University**



Rerouting Digital Identities and Creating Counter Narratives: a public engagement project with migrants in the Netherlands

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Executive Summary

- This RNW Media and UU collaboration conducted a comprehensive investigation of how migration is framed in Dutch news media and delved into both individual and shared experiences of migrants in the Netherlands. To evaluate migration in the Netherlands from both a bird's-eye view and a grounded, experiential level, our interdisciplinary research team leveraged computational and mixed qualitative methods.
- Computational analysis: Researchers analyzed 125,000 Dutch news articles covering the period from 2000-2024. Migration is viewed as a challenge for the country and local communities rather than as a challenge for those who are migrating, which affirms the general "migration-as-a-problem" framing. The migration discourse in news is dominated by politicians, especially on the political right. While the migration news coverage is quite similar between news brands, there are noticeable differences pertaining to their political leanings and editorial policies.
- Grounded theory analysis: Researchers interviewed migrants in the Netherlands about their perceptions of anti-immigrant sentiments, their coping mechanisms, and their views on positive change, and compared lived experience narratives with common narrative trends in Dutch news media. While immigrants in the Netherlands often do not follow Dutch news, the symbolic bordering effect created in Dutch news media is nonetheless felt in migrants' daily lives. This research suggests that working towards migrant inclusion must actively humanize and valorize migrant voices, as agentic and authentic. This can augment more traditional advocacy work geared towards policy change.



Introduction

Background

- There is a widespread assumption that in the Netherlands, like in other European countries, the Dutch news media presents a consistent anti-immigrant stance (Berry, Garcia-Blanco and Moore 2015). There is also a fear that this negativity is rising, with reasonable evidence to support the claim that, as with other countries leaning to the right, the Dutch “migration crisis” is “politically manufactured” to demotivate potential immigrants from entering the country (Vincini, Horwood, and Frouws 2024).
- Dominant narratives in news and media on migration perpetuate stereotypes, stigmatize people, and justify restrictive mobility policies. Platforms’ algorithmic systems have a powerful influence on how these narratives are spread, taken up, reinforced, or resisted. These mechanisms filter and curate information flows in unpredictable ways, as algorithmic processes are largely infrastructural and therefore hidden from the user’s experience.
- This is particularly impactful to migrants, whose voices and stories are already marginalized as they move from one terrain to another. We adopted a participatory research approach to include migrant voices in the research process, and aimed to produce action-oriented knowledge that is usable for addressing anti-migrant sentiments in news and media. Through our two-pillar approach which combined computational and qualitative methods, we sought to address the following core question: How do immigrants in the Netherlands navigate digital media affordances (e.g., vernacular expression, platform design, algorithmic reach) to negotiate identity and belonging within online environments shaped by anti-immigrant sentiment and narratives?

Background, continued

- Migrants are not just restricted by physical borders and geopolitical processes. Symbolic bordering (Chouliaraki 2017) also impacts migrant agency, in that their voices are excluded or made passive, as objects versus subjects, most notable when migrants are depicted through statistics, versus stories and faces. This exacerbates the silencing already witnessed in context of the subaltern voice (Spivak 2010; Georgiou 2018). The problem is urgent whether the negative stance is actual or perceived, since it is nonetheless felt, resulting in greater anxiety and self-censorship among asylum seekers or refugees.
- Agency is a matter of feeling one's voice is heard, or that one is represented in the public sphere in some way. As Nikunen found (2018), the use of social media campaigns to produce online storytelling that includes real people telling real stories increases tactical use of social media, and also improves critical consciousness around digital content creation. This aids in the further development of what Nancy Fraser has called "subaltern counter-publics" (1992, 67).
- How is immigration characterized in public media like mainstream Dutch news outlets? Are there notable shifts in depiction of immigrants over time? Can we notice patterns in how particular immigrant groups are discussed?
- How do migrants, or 'people on the move', currently experience immigration in the Netherlands? Through fieldwork and immersed interactions with people, can we find patterns to help us understand the persistent perception of 'anti-immigration sentiment'? Whether through the news, through civic engagement, or in everyday lived experience, how does anti-immigration sentiment happen when it happens, and with what effects on migrating people?

Two-pillar approach

Through our two-pillar approach, we first adopted computational methods to analyse local news that contributed to the migration discourse in the past two decades, which produced data-driven findings about how the discourse developed over the years; second, we conducted immersive interviews with migrant content creators and explored with them: How do migrants navigate identity formation and agency within algorithmically-driven digital media ecosystems? What tactics and tools might be used to resist negative narrative frames and build more complexity into how migrants are portrayed?

- Pillar 1: First, our team conducted a comprehensive content analysis of the Dutch media coverage of migration from 2000-2024, to assess framing of immigrants or immigration trends, practices, and policies over time. We also measured the relative presence of immigrant agency, which attends to whose voices are used to talk about immigrants, as well as notable absences, silences, and use of statistics or data versus actual voices and names of immigrants.
- Pillar 2: Second, we conducted 7 months of immersive fieldwork, intensive interviews with immigrants who produce digital content and have encountered the immigration system, and a focus group with professionals who are also immigrants in the Dutch system. Qualitative coding and analysis were then conducted to identify themes and connect these to larger discourse patterns in the Pillar 1 Dutch news study.



Pillar 1: Studying Dutch Media and Anti-immigrant Sentiment through Computational Analysis

Key Research Actions

This RNW and UU collaboration represents the first comprehensive analysis of how the Dutch news media frames immigration.

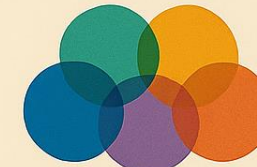
- All coverage in mainstream print news between 2000-2024
- **Analyzed over 125,000 articles on migration**
- Mixed method and interdisciplinary research team
- Topic modeling content analysis
- 250 key themes identified
- 2 in-depth qualitative analyses of surges in immigration discourse
- 2 RNW hosted workshops to co-create analytical depth and quality
- Extensive student research participation



All coverage in mainstream print news between 2000-2024



Mixed method and interdisciplinary research team



250 key themes identified



120,000+ articles on migration



Topic modeling content analysis



2 in-depth qualitative analyses of surges in immigration discourse



Extensive student research participation

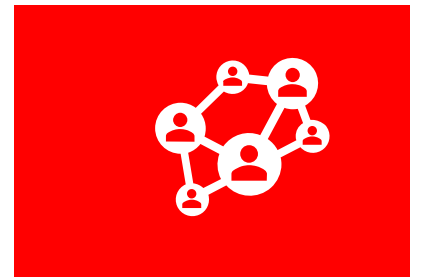
Primary Methods

- Data collection: 125.000 news articles from Lexis-Nexus database, covering the period from 2000-2024
 - Focus on "mainstream" news outlets, given their broad reach and relevance in the Dutch public sphere
 - Six news outlets in total: Algemeen Dagblad/AD, Volkskrant, Financieel Dagblad, de Telegraaf, NRC, and Trouw
 - These news outlets reflect different political angles in Dutch society
 - Social media are not included due to data access challenges
- Content Analysis: Using computational methods to perform content analysis, including topic modeling, word embeddings, cluster analysis, and frequency measures.
- Trend Analysis: Charting out trends over time:
 - Main themes and topics
 - Frequently mentioned organisations and people
 - Representation of migrants and refugee
 - Use of language in reporting about migration (and links to ideology)

Key Concepts

- **Visibility** – migration as a topic – politicians and political parties – migrants
- **Media Framing** – meta-frames/topics – agenda-setting – media representation

By analysing to what extent migration is a topic on the Dutch public agenda and how it is presented in news texts, we critically explore trends, patterns, and framing practices in the migration discourse.



Pillar 1: Key Findings

What is clear is that:

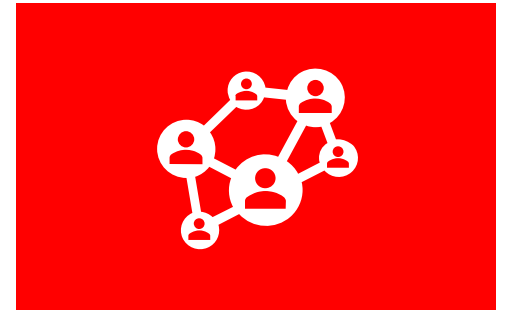
- Migration has gained visibility in Dutch News Media over the years.
- Migration is discussed as an aspect of larger frames such as 1) Integration, 2) National Politics & Laws, 3) Conflicts, Wars & Terrorism, 4) Foreign Politics & Global Affairs, and 5) Media, Arts, Culture & History
- The ideological leanings of a news outlet seem to influence whether immigration is discussed as an issue of "crisis" (right leaning) versus an issue of "refugees" and "children" (leftleaning). This is most visibly apparent in Syrian versus Ukrainian discussions.

The data also suggests that:

- Migration is viewed as a challenge for the country and local communities. There is a general "migration-as-a-problem framing".
- Human-interest stories did not emerge as a particular focus in the quantitative analysis. They exist but are seen small in numbers. Migration often remains "abstract".
- There are differences between how migrant groups are represented. The comparison of Syrian refugees and Ukrainian refugees suggests that perceived cultural proximity and forms of in-group/out-group building play an important role here.
- Politicians –especially on the political right- seem to dominate the migration discourse.
- While the migration news coverage is quite similar between news brands, differences exist and pertain to their specific political leanings, ideologies, and editorial policies – framing practices need to be read against this background.

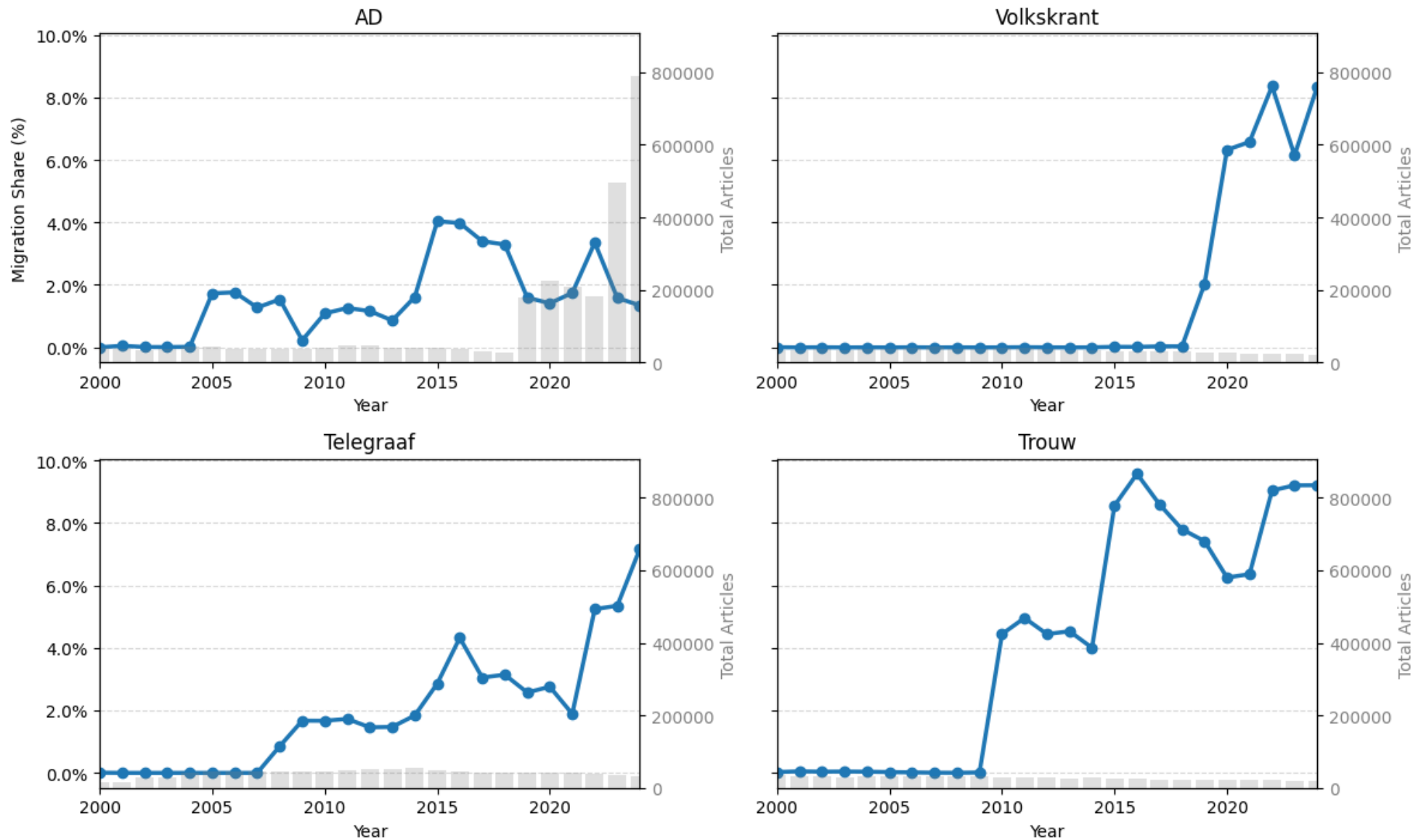
Graphic Illustrations of Patterns in Data Analysis

The following nine graphics illustrate patterns in the data that speak to the issue of how migration is discussed in Dutch News media. While some Figures provide strong analytical findings, and could be used as grounds for decision making, other Figures illustrate general patterns visible in the data and suggest points for further analysis and consideration by RNW.



Pattern 1: Migration gained visibility in Dutch News Media over the years*

Per-Outlet: Migration as % of All Articles

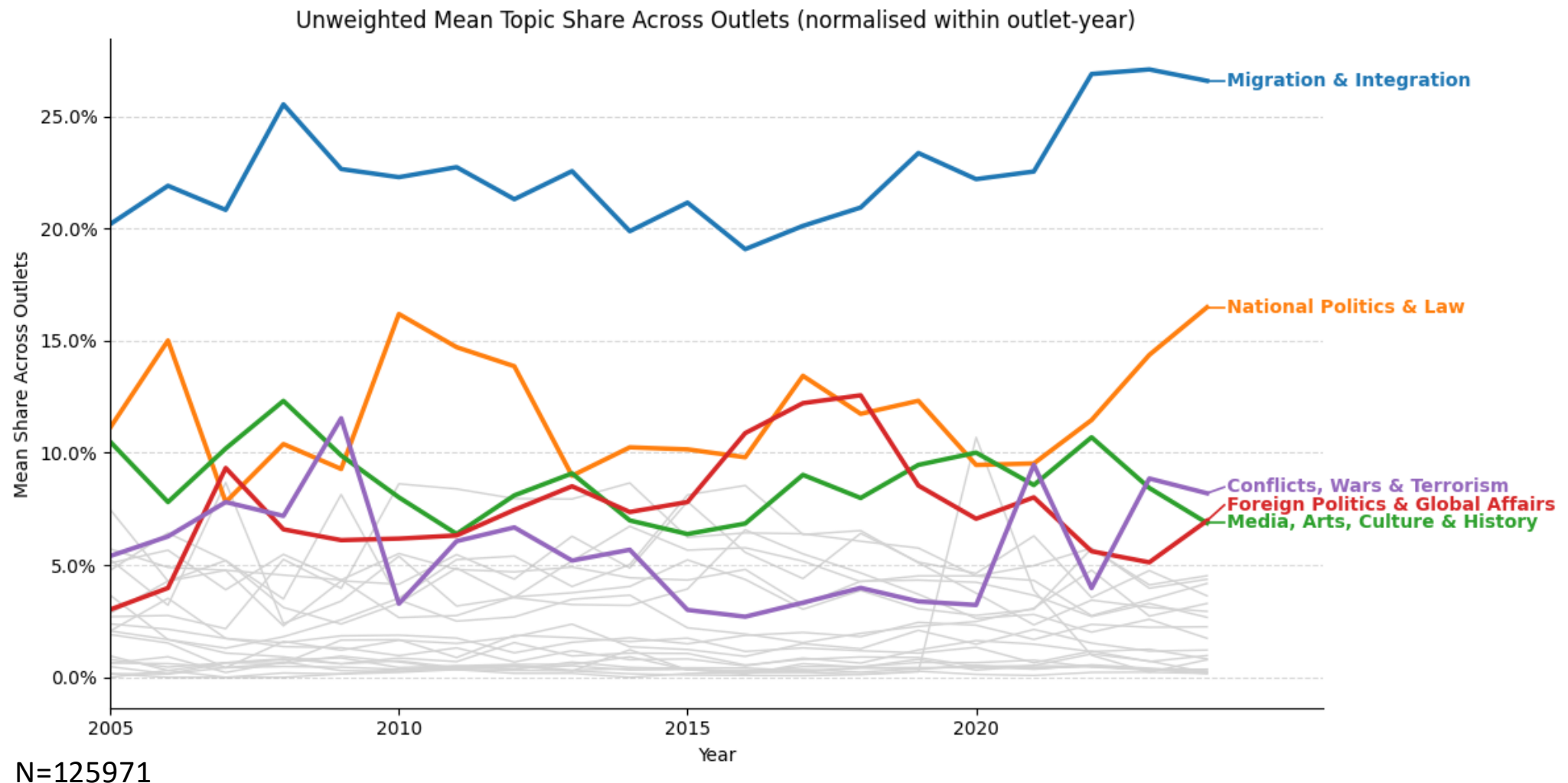


Pattern 1: This graph illustrates the proportion of migration-related articles in AD (Algemeen Dagblad), Volkskrant, Telegraaf, and Trouw between 2000-2024.

The visibility of migration in Dutch news began in 2005, when there was 2% of articles related to migration in AD. A noticeable increase is observed across the 4 news outlets over the years. There is a peak of migration-related news in AD, Telegraaf and Trouw around 2015. The percentage reached as high as over 8% for Volkskrant and Trouw in recent years, which indicates migration has become a significant topic in Dutch news media.

**We could only focus on four outlets, because the other outlets are partially no longer part of the archive*

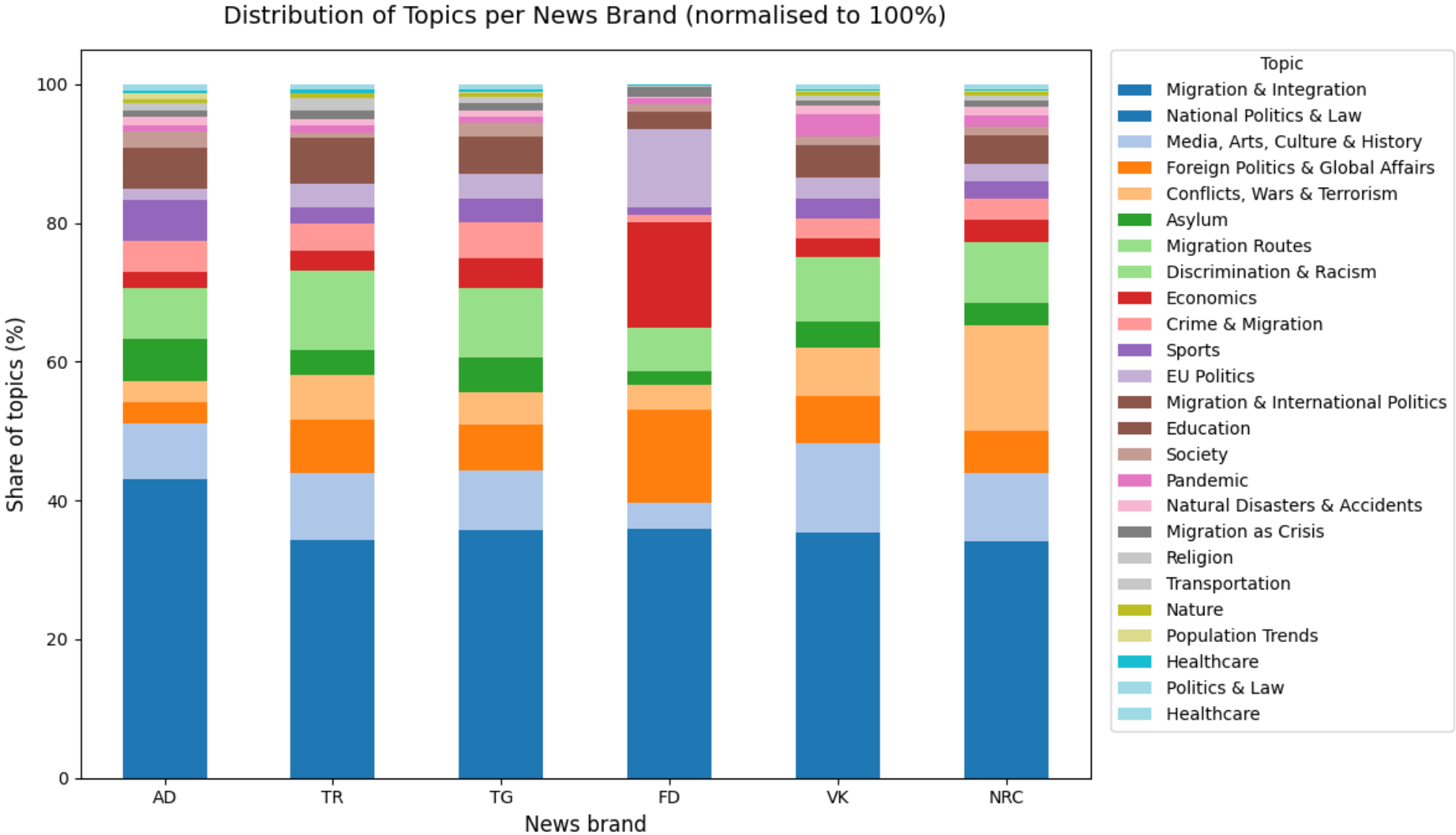
Pattern 2: Top 5 Meta-frames of Migration Coverage Across All Outlets



Pattern 2: Among our sample of 125,971 migration-related news articles analyzed, the 5 most prominent meta-frames are (1) *Migration & Integration*, (2) *National Politics & Laws*, (3) *Conflicts, Wars & Terrorism*, (4) *Foreign Politics & Global Affairs*, and (5) *Media, Arts, Culture & History*. These meta-frames provide a nuanced understanding of how migration coverage in the news is influenced and shaped by different topics in society and politics. The dominance of *Migration & Integration* as a meta-frame indicates there is a spotlight in migration coverage on how migrants live, fit, or are positioned within Dutch society. The other meta-frames augment migration in news as a complex discussion –especially *National Politics & Laws*, which is the second most dominant meta-frame.

Pattern 3: Proportional Distribution of Meta-Frames per Total Articles for each News Outlet

Pattern 3: While *Migration & Integration* is the main topic of migration coverage across all six outlets, there are also noticeable differences among the outlets. Each news outlet has its own agenda-setting, which influences its choice of which topics to cover for migration. For example, Financieel Dagblad unsurprisingly focuses more on *Economics*, while AD focuses more on *Sports*. Both of these focuses are in line with their respective editorial outlooks.



Pattern 4: What Meta Frames set the Different News Outlets Apart?

News Brand Most Distinct Frames

AD	<i>Migration & Integration, Sports, Education, Asylum, Population Trends, Society, Politics & Law, Transportation, Crime & Migration, Natural Disasters & Accidents</i>
FD	<i>Economics, EU Politics, Foreign Politics & Global Affairs, Migration as Crisis, National Politics & Law, Migration Routes</i>
NRC	<i>Conflicts, Wars & Terrorism, Media, Arts, Culture & History, Pandemic, National Politics & Law, Natural Disasters & Accidents, Discrimination & Racism, Nature, Healthcare , Foreign Politics & Global Affairs</i>
TG	<i>Crime & Migration, Migration & International Politics, Discrimination & Racism, Foreign Politics & Global Affairs, Migration Routes, Society, EU Politics, Asylum, Healthcare, Transportation</i>
TR	<i>Religion, Discrimination & Racism, Migration & International Politics, Foreign Politics & Global Affairs, Conflicts, Wars & Terrorism, National Politics & Law, Media, Arts, Culture & History, Healthcare , Migration Routes, Migration as Crisis</i>
VK	<i>Pandemic, Media, Arts, Culture & History, Conflicts, Wars & Terrorism, Healthcare , Foreign Politics & Global Affairs, National Politics & Law, Discrimination & Racism, Natural Disasters & Accidents, Migration & International Politics</i>

News Brand Least Distinct Frames

AD	<i>Foreign Politics & Global Affairs, EU Politics, Conflicts, Wars & Terrorism, Economics, Discrimination & Racism, Migration & International Politics, National Politics & Law, Religion, Migration as Crisis, Migration Routes</i>
FD	<i>Media, Arts, Culture & History, Crime & Migration, Sports, Discrimination & Racism, Asylum, Migration & International Politics, Natural Disasters & Accidents, Education, Conflicts, Wars & Terrorism, Religion</i>
NRC	<i>Migration & Integration, Sports, Asylum, Crime & Migration, Education, EU Politics, Economics, Religion, Population Trends, Society</i>
TG	<i>Education, Migration & Integration, Population Trends, Pandemic, Religion, Sports, Conflicts, Wars & Terrorism, Natural Disasters & Accidents, Healthcare , Media, Arts, Culture & History</i>
TR	<i>Migration & Integration, Sports, Society, Economics, Population Trends, Asylum, Politics & Law, Transportation, Pandemic, Education</i>
VK	<i>Migration & Integration, Economics, Crime & Migration, Sports, Education, Religion, Asylum, Society, Politics & Law, Population Trends</i>

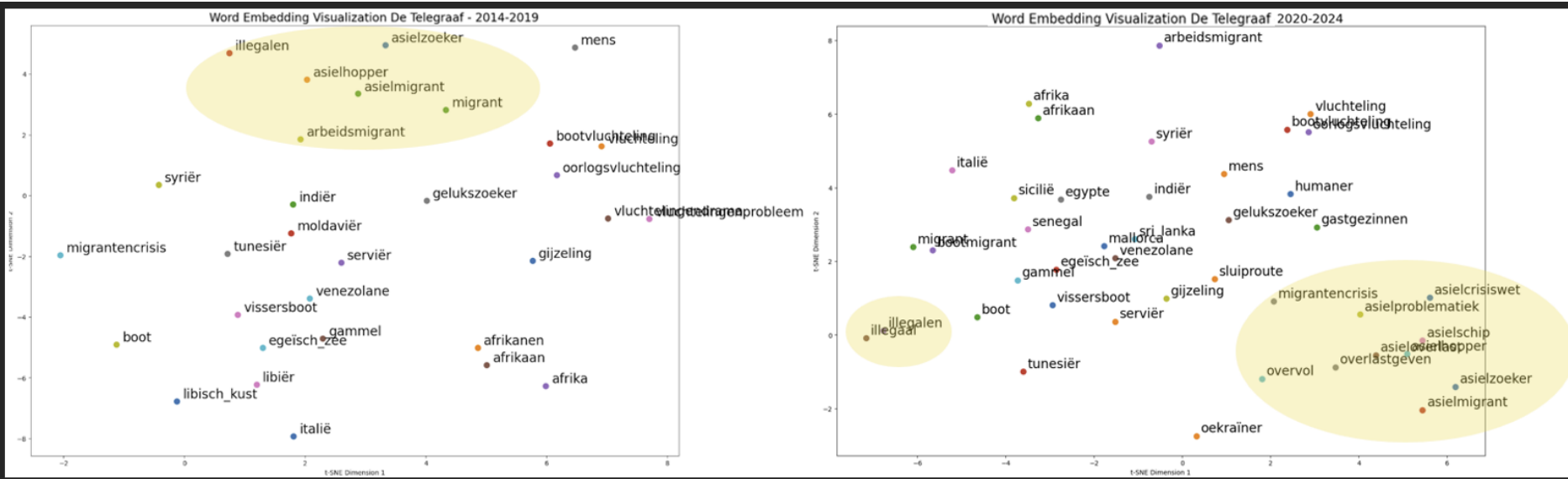
Pattern 4 indicates which meta-frames set a given news outlet apart from the others (i.e., they are more likely to cover these than the other news brands)– but also, which meta-frames are not particularly distinct for each of them. This correlates to the distributions per frame per outlet as shown in pattern 3 (e.g., AD has most articles on Sports and that is a statistically significant difference).

While *Migration & Integration* is the most dominant topic across all outlets by number (Pattern 3), the coverage of other topics varies by outlets.

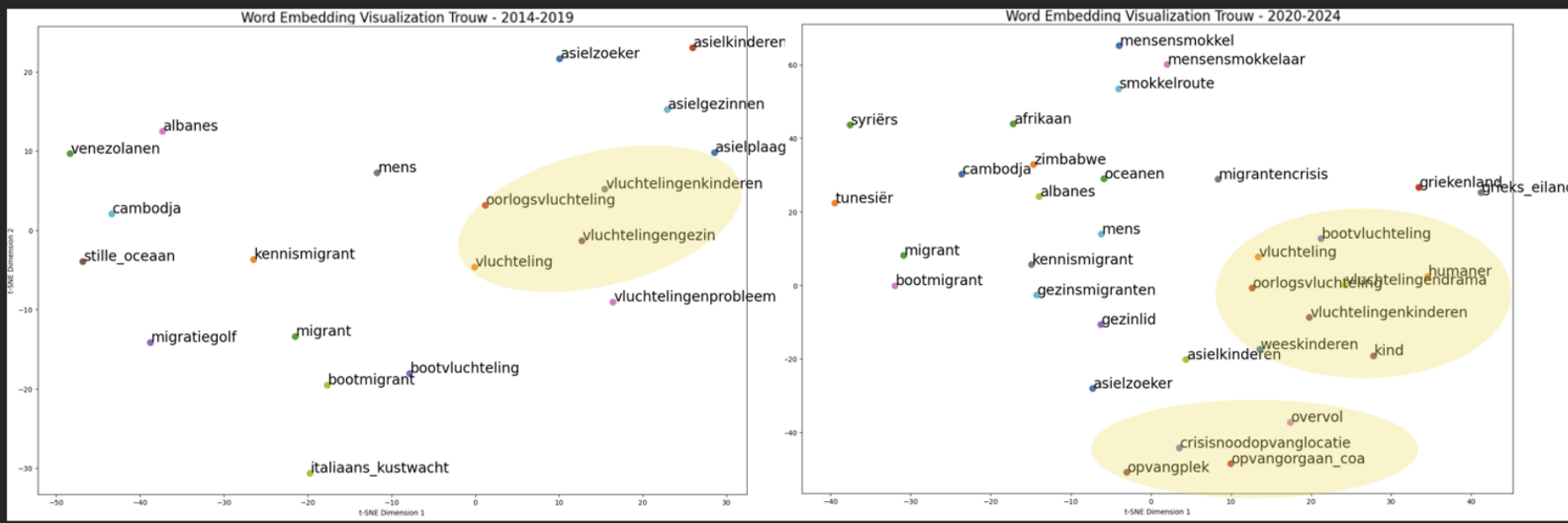
For example, FD's coverage profile is characterised by its focus on *Economics, EU Politics, and Foreign Politics & Global Affairs* (Most Distinct Topics); while FD covered *Media, Arts, Culture & History* the least compared to other outlets.

TG's coverage profile, on the other hand, is characterised by its focus on *Crime & Migration, Migration & International Politics, Discrimination & Racism*.

Pattern 5: Ideological Differences of News outlets (Through the Lens of Word Use)

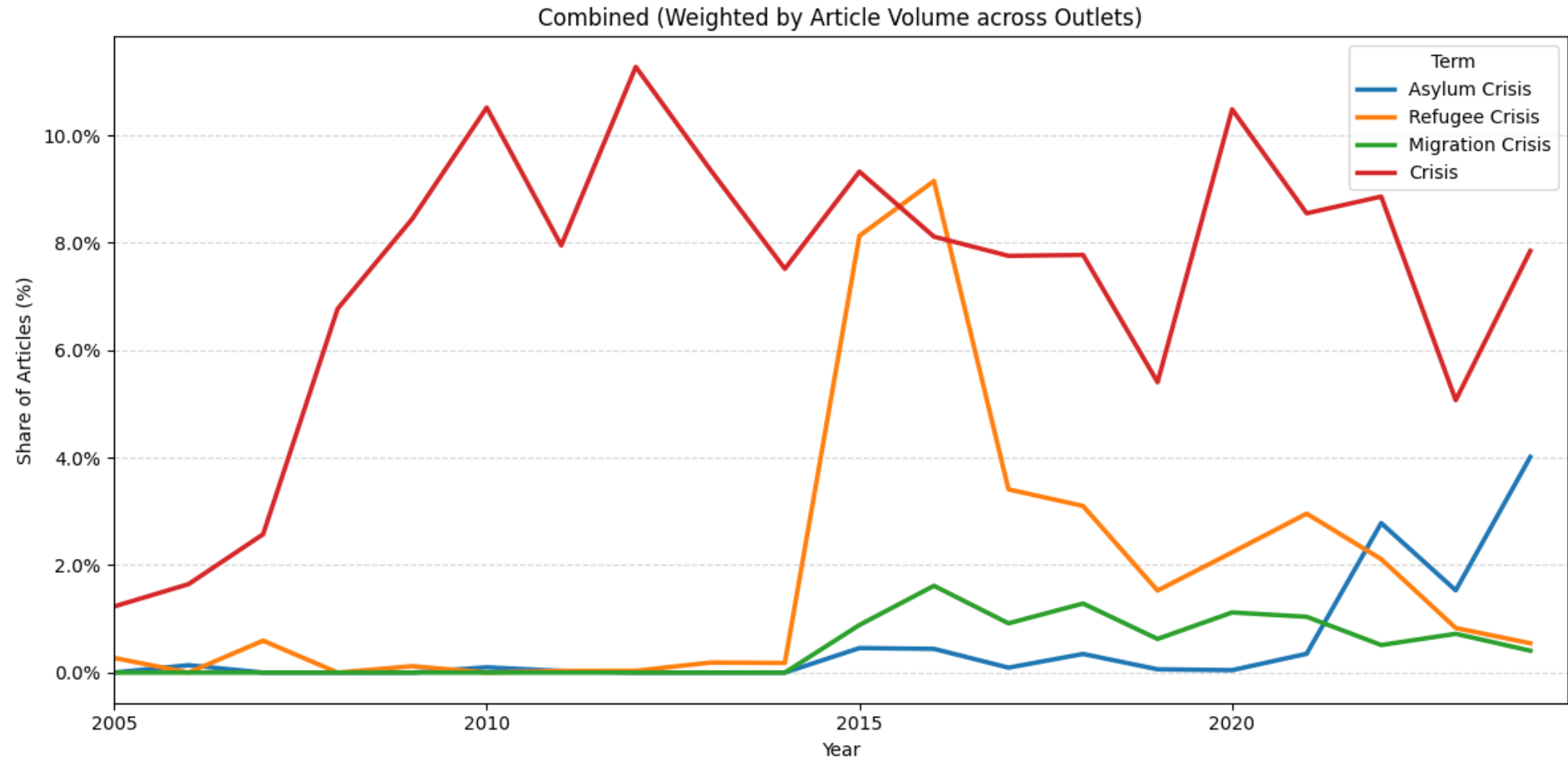


Pattern 5 shows what the "neighbourhood" of frequently occurring words in the news articles looks like. Words that are in the same space on the graph are frequently used together (co-occurring). In this way, we can explore framing differences between news outlets, also over time.



Ideological differences are likely reflected in the choice of words. Interesting patterns are highlighted in yellow. For example, right-leaning Telegraaf is more frequently linking migration to asylum issues and crime, portraying migration as a crisis and problem. More left-leaning Trouw is more frequently writing about refugees and especially refugee children.

Pattern 6: Average Percentage of Articles Mentioning "Crisis"

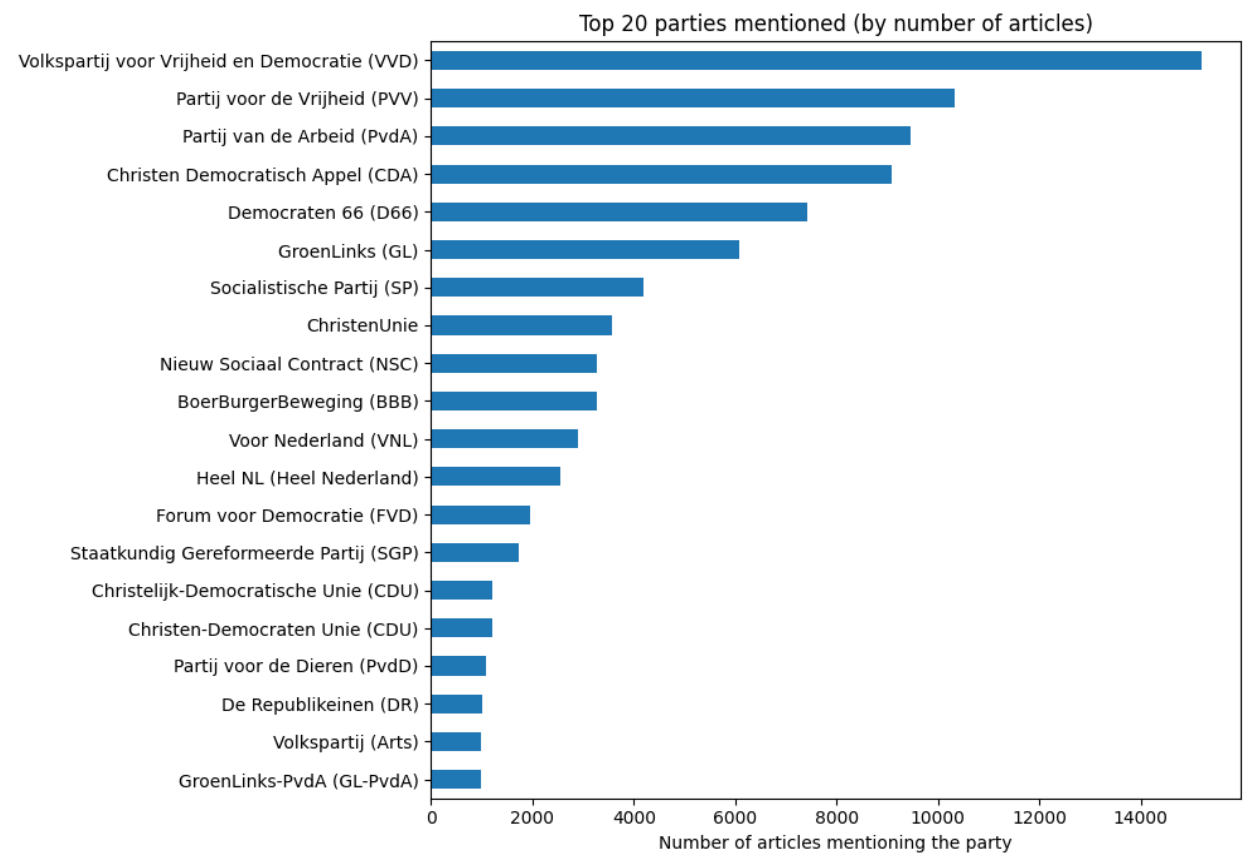


N=125971 articles

Pattern 6 indicates a noticeable increase of Dutch news mentions of "crisis" within migration coverage. Peaks in the use of the word 'crisis' occurred in 2010, 2012, 2015, and 2020. Some of these peaks coincide with Dutch General Elections in the past two decades, further research should investigate whether the term has been used strategically to garner support for candidates' electoral agenda. On the other hand, the use of 'vluchtelingencrisis' (translated into "Refugee Crisis") emerged and rapidly peaked in 2015 and 2016, when a significant number of refugees entered Europe and UNHCR referred to 2015 as "[The year of Europe's refugee crisis](#)".

*translated from Dutch into English

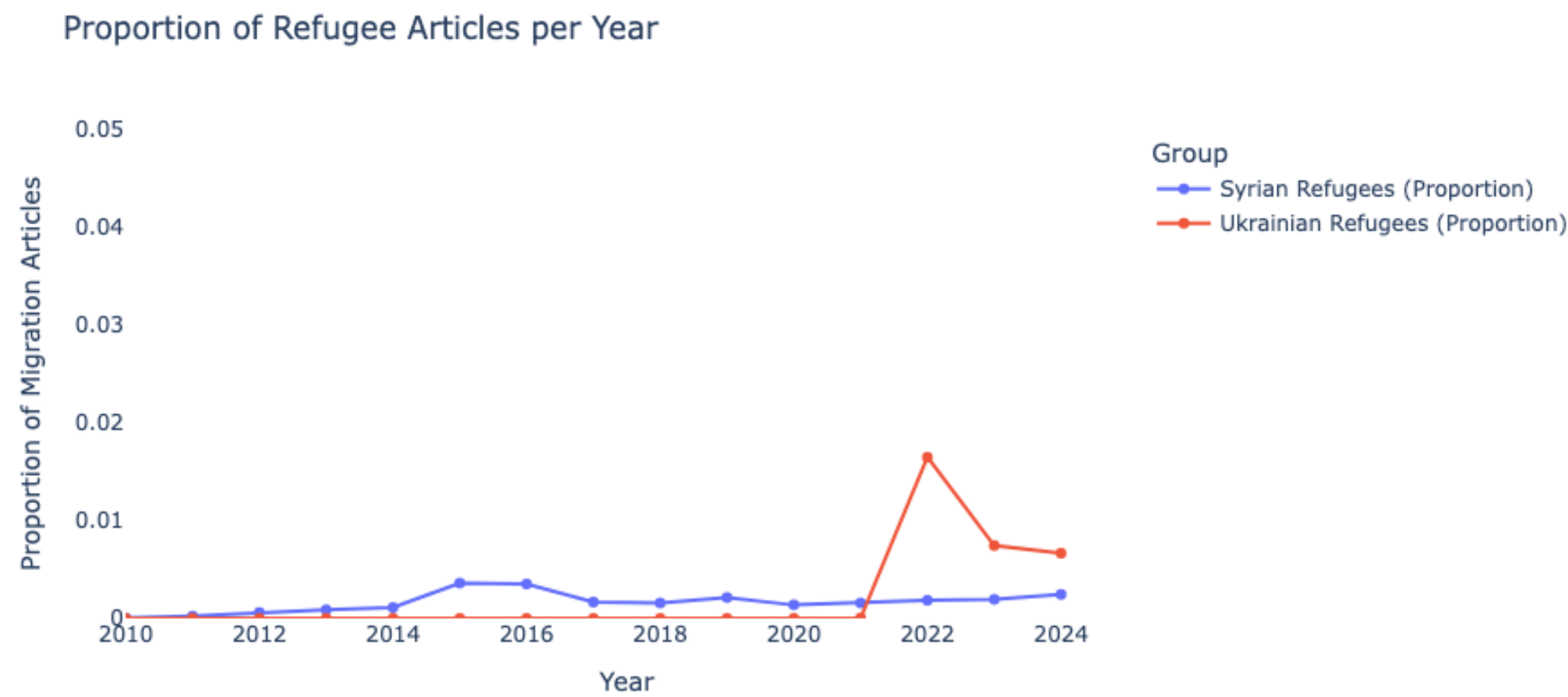
Pattern 7: Frequently mentioned Dutch Political Parties and Individual Persons in Migration Coverage



Pattern 7 includes two graphs that illustrate which political parties, and which individuals are most mentioned in migration coverage. In terms of political parties, VVD, PVV, PvdA, CDA, D66 are the most mentioned, which indicates a diverse representation of political parties from across the political spectrum in news coverage. However, it is noted that VVD, PVV, PvdA, and CDA support the tightening of immigration policies.

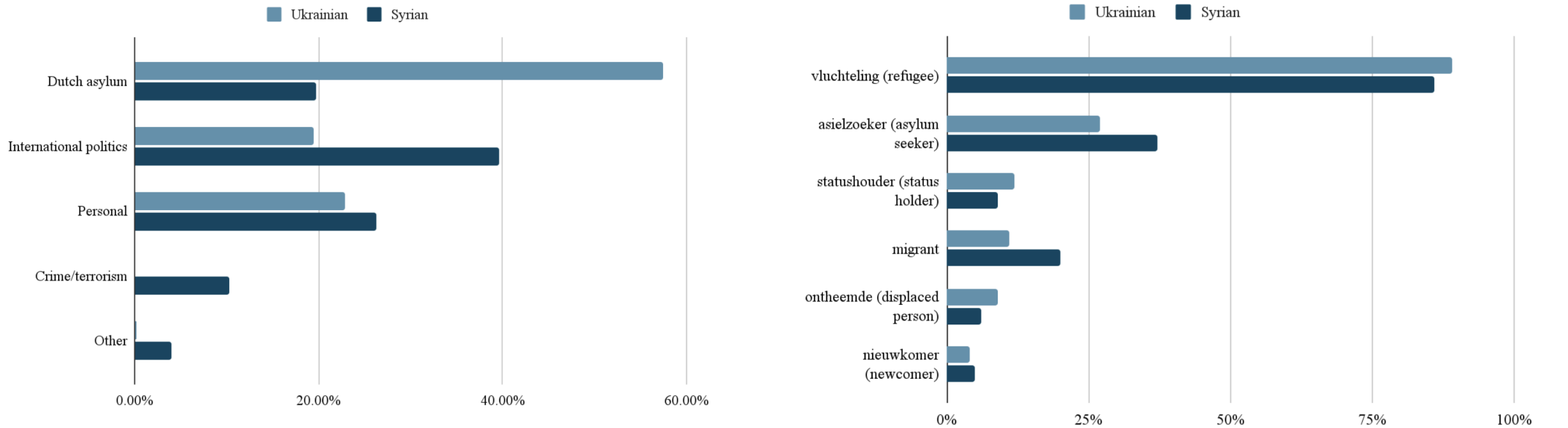
Unsurprisingly, the top ten most frequently mentioned persons are all politicians, which include the U.S. President – Donald Trump, leader of right-wing PVV – Geert Wilders, former Dutch Prime Minister – Mark Rutte, etc. This suggests that domestic and influential foreign politicians have most visibility in Dutch migration coverage, noting both Donald Trump and Geert Wilders are outspokenly anti-immigrant.

Pattern 8: Media Attention: Syrian vs. Ukrainian Refugees



Pattern 8 illustrates that media attention was arguably higher for the Ukraine War than the Syrian Civil War. The proportion of migration articles about Ukrainian refugees peaked when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. From the perspective of news value theory, the closer cultural and geographical proximity of Ukraine to the Netherlands, compared to Syria, influences news outlets in their agenda setting.

Pattern 9: Media Framing: Syrian vs. Ukrainian Refugees



In Figure 9, on the left, the topic of *Crime/Terrorism* is raised in the context of Syrian refugees, but not Ukrainian ones. On the right, compared to Ukrainians, Syrians are more frequently portrayed as migrants and less frequently portrayed as refugees. Both can be partially explained by the much longer history of the Syrian refugee movement compared to the Ukrainian one. However, it also points to different media framing approaches linked to each group.

Pillar 1:

Recommendations

Further in-house analysis by RNW

- RNW can now conduct in-house data analyses, looking for new patterns or digging deeper into existing themes or trends that have been identified by UU researchers.
- Identify keywords that are relevant to the values and mission of RNW.

Emerging questions

- Is the term 'crisis' instrumentalized by Dutch politicians during electoral periods between 2010-2020 to garner support?
- How do social media discourses influence the wider Dutch migration discourse?
 - For example, is there a connection between the Syrian and Ukrainian discourse, and the emergence of Twitter?
 - For example, left-wing voices are no longer active on X, thus there are not a lot of pro-immigrant sentiment on X. Do journalists or platform algorithms use X as their sources, and how does that impact sentiment in the news?
- Would the discourses follow the same trends if we looked at social media versus mainstream news media, in the Dutch landscape? What are the connections?



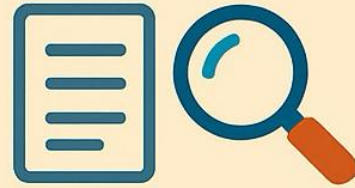
Pillar 2: Qualitative analysis of perceptions, attitudes, and narratives from immigrants in a world of "anti-immigration"

**7 months of
immersed qualitative
fieldwork**



**Semi-structured
interviews and
focus groups with
immigrants**

**In-depth qualitative
coding and thematic
analysis of 10
interviews and 1
focus group session**



**Qualitative
content analysis
of main patterns
in Dutch News Media**



**Identification of
key emergent themes
with participating
immigrants**



Key Research Actions

Researchers from UU and the RNW team collaborated to build a robust, ethnographically informed qualitative methodology for studying how migrants have experienced anti-immigrant sentiments in the Netherlands

- 7 months of immersed qualitative fieldwork
- Semi-structured interviews and focus groups with immigrants
- In depth qualitative coding and thematic analysis of 10 interviews and 1 focus group session
- Qualitative content analysis of main patterns in Dutch News Media
- Identification of key emergent themes with participating immigrants

Primary Methods

Utrecht University researchers applied a mixed qualitative methods framework to explore how recent immigrants to the Netherlands are experiencing anti-immigrant sentiment.

Desk research: The study began with desk research of current themes in social and popular media around migration as a politically divisive issue. *Symbolic bordering* is a core concept to guide research on this topic.

Interviews: with immigrant content creators

Fieldwork: Observation and participant observation of settings of mixed migrant/local interactions.

Focus Group with professionals who consider themselves immigrants

Comparative Text Analysis: comparative analysis of interview and focus groups transcripts with selected statements in News articles, identified in pillar 1 study.

Key Emergent Themes

Fieldwork, interviews, and a focus group all reflect similar issues as found in existing studies: 1) a strong perception among Dutch migrants that anti-immigrant sentiment is on the rise, 2) anti-immigration sentiment is understood only in specific contexts, 3) western and nonwestern immigrants express distinctive and contrasting perspective on the topic, and 4) immigrants censor themselves and their perspectives because of a sense of insecurity and fear of retribution.

Thematic analysis showcased in the following slides reflects focus on prominent patterns, including:

Language Barriers– because immigrants obtain news in their native language, or their Dutch proficiency is low, they are not well-informed about the Dutch news coverage of immigrants.

Othering– whether exoticized or ostracized, participants feel persistently treated as "Other"

Racial discrimination – people of color or from certain regions or language groups feel more labeled as ‘immigrant’, which is a strong sign of race-based distinctions across cultural groups of ‘people on the move’

Everywhere: Anti immigration is felt in many aspects of everyday life, including education, work, housing, traveling

Coping strategies – confrontation, avoidance

Censorship & self-censorship – online, offline

Agency – storytelling

Pattern 10: Exclusion and anti-immigration is exacerbated by language barriers

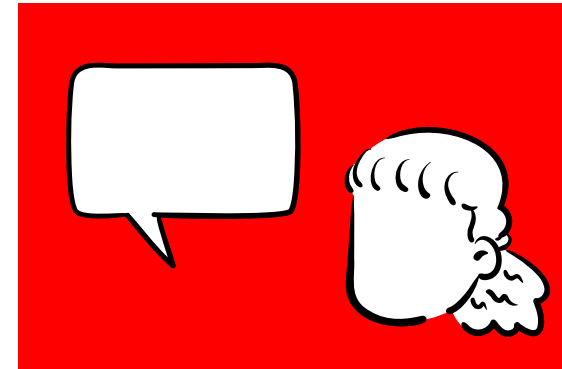
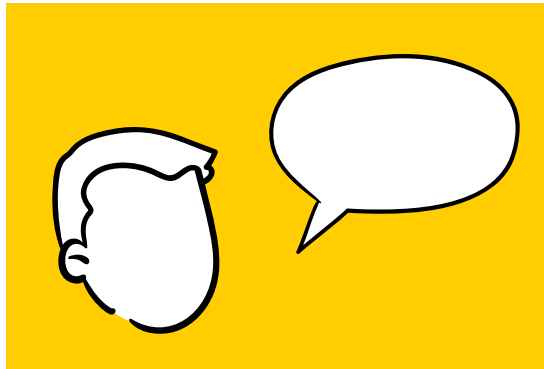
Interviewees express they feel excluded in Dutch society for not speaking the language fluently. Participants' experience what they perceive as hostile and/or bewildering interactions with Dutch 'locals'. This could be seen as being caused by Dutch dissatisfaction with immigrants' lack of Dutch proficiency, though this would need further evidence to be fully supported.

"My God, I'm gonna get fined if I don't do this correctly. You know, you look it up, everything is connected to something else, and not all of those pages have proper translation. So you need to rely on machine translation, which is more or less accurate, but sometimes it really isn't."

"The language is the first thing that they correct me on."

"I don't speak the language and I don't want it to influence my residence in any way."

"When I respond, I still ask if I can respond in English and then they refuse. They say, 'can you be with someone who really talk in Dutch?' And she said that in English."

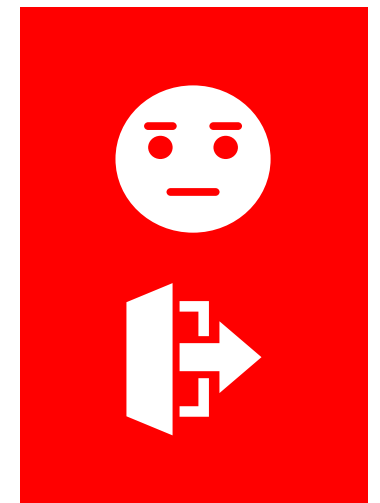


Pattern 11: Anti-Immigration is felt in the Experience of Being “Othered”

Interviewees expressed the experience of "Othering" in hostile or bewildering interactions with 'locals' in the Netherlands:

- Appearance, sexualization:
 - *"I know I don't experience as much obvious anti-immigrant treatment because I look white and Northern European"*
 - *"When [your appearance triggers] a negative thing, they will say 'go back to your own country,' and when it's a positive thing they make you more exotic."*
 - *"The conversation shifts and they assume [sexuality] from you and your experience that may or may not be true."*
- Bullying
 - *"I feel like I got so much bullying because I don't fit the stereotype."*
 - *"The ill treatment toward immigrants by the border guards is invisible to locals, but I am harassed every time I re-enter the Netherlands from a work trip."*
- Inaccessibility to services
 - *"There are so many things I simply don't know about –like the medical system, and how to navigate this. How can I learn when it's unwritten local knowledge?"*
 - *"I've never even thought about the rights I have in terms of accessing government support, let's say. And this is because I don't know the bureaucracy, I don't speak the language."*

*"When there's a negative thing, they will say 'go **back to your own country**,' and when it's a positive thing they make you more exotic."*



Pattern 12: Coping strategies differ between Western and non-Western immigrants

Many participants expressed they cope with their feelings about felt anti-immigrant sentiments once they have been confronted with hostile encounters.

Talking to friends: *"When I talk to friends about this, they're just calling out the hypocrisy, you know, I think that makes me cope a little better."*

Reaching for history: *"I found myself more just reaching out to history and talking about colonialism when those conversations come about."*

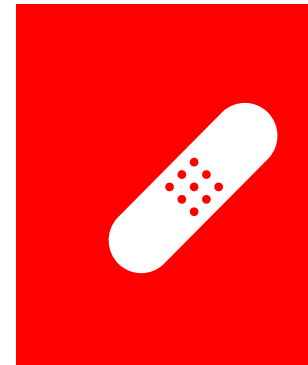
Staying silent: *"I've tried so many strategies of coping with it. I think right now I'm at a point where I just don't even comment. I, like, self-censor. I just do not get into the conversation because it's a very emotional conversation for me."*

"For some people, if you are not Dutch, you are immediately not white."

*"I can talk for days about what my grandma has told me about her experience being occupied in my home country. And here, I'm forced to listen to people who are just pontificating about, 'oh, this is what the Middle East should look like.' **How do you cope with that?**"*

"[...] it's hard to come here as an international student, but especially when you're non-European."

*"Negative comments that I receive, for instance, are that I'm doing a scam, all my content is bullshit, and 'don't trust this person' or something. Like 'oh **my God, you are moving to a country that used to colonize our country, you don't have dignity,**' something like this, you know?"*



"I think people just lack the consciousness on how to treat people from a non-Western background, also as non-white people."

Pattern 13: Migrants regularly censor themselves, diminishing their own voices.

This set of quotes depicts a strong tendency among migrants to censor themselves, whether speaking in meetings at work, writing content in social media, or stifling themselves as content creators. This requires further study, as it is a strong and potential damaging result of anti-immigrant sentiment. As two participants indicated, success in the Dutch context requires speaking up, and there is strong value in telling migrant stories.

Raising one's voice: *In the Netherlands, we live in a society where you need to raise your voice to get good services."*

Agential properties of the storytelling migrant voice: *"I think there's a lot of these influencers that are highlighting their personal experiences and then also not being afraid to mention moments for them that have also been distressful, but humanizing the immigrant experience."*

*"I really need to
dehumanize myself
as a creator."*

*"I've heard a lot of
times, 'you're not one
of those bad
immigrants who come
here with 'their own
culture' that they want
to impose on us.'"*

*"I didn't want to
express too much of
myself because I
thought that I would
be standing out or
making a bad
impression or
something like that.
And I try to hide my
culture characteristics
behind me to kind of
fit into this one."*



*"I try to avoid the negative in
my stories because I also
don't want to get too much
negativity from my
audience."*



*"Personally, I don't want to
do very political content. I
want to protect my mental
health. [...] It's like a
beehive. **Once you punch
the beehive, the bees will
fly out of the beehive.**"*

Provisional Results

- Immigrants in the Netherlands often do not follow Dutch news and are largely unaware of their representation through news outlets
 - The main reason that interviewees have expressed for this is not being able to speak Dutch, therefore only following news that is provided in either their native language and/or English
- News media act as regulatory agents in the establishment of moral sensibilities in a society (Chouliaraki 2017). As established in Pillar 1, Dutch news media typically utilize a "migration-as-a-problem" framework, incentivizing members of Dutch society to focus on their own challenges with migration rather than the challenges of the migrants and actively omitting migrants' faces as agentive and authentic
- While immigrants in the Netherlands seem largely unaware of the symbolic bordering happening through Dutch news media, they still feel the effects of it in their day-to-day lives, illustrated by felt anti-immigrant sentiments, their views on censorship, and the use of their voice. These feelings and perceptions lead interviewees to experience "Othering" as practiced by Dutch locals

Emerging question 1:

How do migrants experience their own agency?

When is someone considered a refugee, an immigrant, and a migrant?

Are migrants the people who the host country defines as migrants?

Do people have agency in calling themselves migrants?

"I don't feel myself migrant, maybe for minority, I just feel foreign here, but I'm from Europe."

"I identify myself as an immigrant since I got my high school migrant visa, because when I first came here as a student, I identified myself just as an international student."

"I don't feel like an immigrant at all. Mainly because I feel like I have a place here."

"I would say I'm not an immigrant because I don't know if I'm going to live here after my studies."

"I wouldn't say I think of myself as an immigrant because I think I really fit in here and I just really love this country."

Emerging question 2:

How can change be enacted?

Through the research conducted in Pillar 1, we have found that there is a general "migration-as-a-problem framing" which coincides with Chouliaraki's ideas on symbolic bordering. The role of migrants in Dutch society is reduced to how Dutch 'locals' are challenged by migration and touches upon migration challenges to those on the move in a very limited amount.

As introduced in the background to this research, "agency is a matter of feeling one's voice is heard". Our research suggests that migrants' voices in Dutch society are not felt to be heard enough to warrant a feeling of agency. Our question evolves: How can migrants in the Netherlands amplify their voice to gain a greater sense of agency?

As we consider this question, we must also consider the matter of media literacy and effective public engagement. While we advocate towards policy change, we must consider how migrants in the Netherlands can activate their own voice through the media they consume, and how they can become authentic storytelling agents.



Pillar 2: Recommendations

- Further Analysis: These findings are important signals that more work in this arena is urgently needed. There are different modalities and methods that can be used to build on the existing analysis and generate new directions for action:
- Focus groups: bringing together diverse groups including locals and immigrants is a tested method for fostering connection and shared understanding. Rather than collecting data, these focus groups are facilitated to foster conversation about critical issues of migration, where both sides are heard in a respectful and generous way. This requires careful facilitation, guided by the non-confrontive styles of Paolo Freire or Augusto Boal through Critical Pedagogy.
- Public awareness: Put out messaging that builds critical awareness that the Dutch news media tends to highlight only certain voices and that migrating people are strongly and negatively affected by anti-immigrant discourse. Public engagement: research on this topic needs to be made available to the general public. Publications that are both informative and promote stronger awareness of the power of anti-immigrant sentiment while maintaining strong advocacy.
- Critical literacies workshops: Critical and social media literacies can foster more resilient attitudes and perceptions among immigrants and Dutch people alike. Workshops can build stronger coping and integration strategies, and foster the skillsets needed for people on the move to build strategic messaging in their own communities to speak back to the anti-immigrant sentiment, broadly.
- Advocacy work: based in academic research, RNW and UU team members can continue to act as advocates for unheard voices. While we encourage migrants to expand their storytelling practices and advocate for themselves, we believe RNW and UU are uniquely positioned to continue working together to reach authoritative figures and enact change on the level of policy-making.

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