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Media Coverage of Sweden's Temporary Aliens Act:  
A News Frame Analysis of Swedish Newspapers, 2016-2019

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Master's thesis SOCM03, 15 credits

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## Abstract

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In November 2015, during the height of the '[European] refugee crisis', Sweden repositioned itself among the EU member states through its introduction of a swiftly drafted immigration law, the Temporary Alien's Act. Met with concern, criticism and enthusiasm alike, the Temporary Act marked a distinct shift from the country's previous immigration legislation, characterized by generous family reunification rules, towards the minimum prescribed by international and EU legislation. This paper aims to examine what themes are identifiable in printed Swedish news media on the topic of the Temporary – later turned Extended – Alien's Act, during two selected time periods set in the years of 2016 and 2019, respectively. It additionally aims to identify what, if any, thematic differences in reporting can be found between the two examined years. In order to achieve this, a mixed-methods news frame analysis was performed on a selection of articles from six major Swedish newspapers.

Results find the frames *conflict* and *attribution of responsibility* to be the most commonly occurring frames for both years, whereas the *human interest* frame was found less frequently employed than suggested by previous research. Throughout the material, collective language, often with naturalistic connotations, is applied to refer to immigrants and refugees, rendering those directly affected by the legislation changes in the Act largely anonymous in media. Between 2016 and 2019 a shift in perspective is identified, characterized by a normalization of the Act over time along with an increased focus on domestic politics. Lastly, the portrayal of immigration and immigrants as a cultural threat, explicitly emphasized through the discourse centered on '*Swedish values*', indicates the adoption of right-wing rhetoric by mainstream media and politicians.

Keywords: immigration, news framing, Temporary Alien's Act, media coverage, public policy, Sweden.

## Popular science summary

As a political response to the so-called ‘migration crisis’ of 2015, the Swedish government proposed more restrictive changes to the country’s immigration legislation. These changes took the form of a new, temporary, immigration law: the Temporary Alien’s Act.

How media has covered the issue in relation to the Temporary – later Extended – Alien’s Act can offer an interesting reflection of if, and if so how, reporting of ideological and political attitudes and resulting law-making regarding immigration and immigrants and refugees in Swedish society has changed over the last few years.

Immigration has become one of the central and most controversial matters in the Swedish domestic political debate. Furthering our understanding of how media, the implementation of public policy and attitudes on immigration are linked is therefore of general interest and importance.

This project compares how articles in six major Swedish printed newspapers have described the topic of the Temporary Alien’s Act at two critical points in time; around the time of the law’s implementation in 2016 and around the time of its extension into the Extended Act in 2019. By gathering and comparing the articles on the subject through a mixed-method news frame analysis, the aim was to see what, if any, differences there are between the articles in 2016 and the articles in 2019 with regards to changes in the discourse and the tone of reporting.

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# 1. Introduction

In November 2015, Sweden repositioned itself from one of EU's member states with the most generous legislation regarding family reunification, to one of the strictest (Sainsbury, 2012). The shift was brought about as a political response to the events of the latter half of 2015, commonly referred to as the '[European] refugee crisis'.

This repositioning manifested itself in the shape of a swiftly introduced new law – The Temporary Alien's Act. The government's proposition was met with searing criticism and enthusiasm alike, from both political and civil society. Expressly aimed at limiting the number of individuals entering the country, the law marked a drastic step away from the country's previous migration legislation, characterized by permanent residence permits, far-reaching rights to family reunification and welfare access (Hagelund, 2020; Rucka & de Cock, 2024).

In this setting of change and uncertainty, the media's portrayal of the Temporary Act played a crucial role as opinion maker, influencing how the new policy and its effects, was presented to the Swedish public.

## 1.1. From open hearts to closed borders

During the summer of 2014 the political stability in the Middle East deteriorated, resulting in increasingly dire humanitarian conditions in especially Syria and Iraq. On 16 August 2014, Sweden's prime minister at the time, Fredrik Reinfeldt of the Moderate party, delivered what would become known as the '*Open your hearts speech*'; a public address, in which he urged the Swedish people to welcome the refugees anticipated to arrive at the country's borders in the coming year:

*"I wish to remind you, that we are a nation which has stood up and been open in times when people have suffered difficult ordeals. We now see people fleeing in numbers similar to those of the Balkan crisis in the early 1990's. I hereby appeal to the Swedish people to be patient, to open your hearts in order to see the people suffering great stress, fearing for their own lives, who are fleeing, fleeing towards Europe, fleeing towards freedom, fleeing towards better conditions." (Dagens Nyheter, 2014, Reinfeldt: Öppna era hjärtan för de utsatta).*

## Migration high in Europe and Sweden

In July 2015, the Swedish Migration Agency reported an 85 percent increase in number of unaccompanied children applying for asylum compared to the previous year (Swedish Migration Agency, 2020). In the following autumn months of 2015, the arrival of immigrants and refugees continued, presenting the Swedish authorities with a progressively pressured situation. In September, involved authorities, such as the Swedish Migration Agency and Swedish Social Insurance Agency, reported difficulties to register and assign safe housing for the newly arrived, many of them minors, in a timely manner. Prompted by the progressive seriousness of the situation, municipalities nationwide, and not just in ‘arrival zones’, were called upon to aid in housing the newly arrived. By mid-October 2015, municipalities reported problems solving the housing situation, with some communities resorting to tents, gymnasiums, and other temporary spaces, less or more suited to function as housing, in order to meet the increasing demand for beds (Claesson, 2015; Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, 2017).

On 2 November 2015 Sweden reinstated border control along its outer perimeter, invoking the nation state’s interest over the free movement of the Schengen area (Migrationsverket, n.d.). On 24 November 2015 the Swedish government held a press conference where prime minister Stefan Löfven and vice prime minister Åsa Romson announced that immediate measures aimed at limiting the influx of immigrants had to be taken, and a temporary adaptation of the country’s immigration laws to the EU minimum demands was deemed necessary (Holm & Svensson, 2015; Prop. 2015:16/174). At the press conference Löfven stated:

*“[...] it pains me to announce that Sweden is no longer able to receive asylum seekers to the same high extent that we do today. [...] Now we must show that we simply cannot do more. The purpose of the actions we present here is to create space for the Swedish asylum reception to catch its breath.”* (Wiese Edeler, 2015).

### 1.2. A new domestic law emerges – The Temporary Alien’s Act

The government’s new law, The Temporary Alien’s Act was presented in November 2015 and implemented in July 2016. Its explicit and central aim was to restrict the possibility of obtaining residency in Sweden through a legislative shift away from permanent residence permits to temporary residence permits for refugees, subsidiary protection status individuals and other protection individuals in Sweden. The law also entailed limitations to the possibility of family reunification, a far-reaching international human right, aimed to restrict the possible secondary

influx of immigration based on family ties for the above-mentioned groups and in general. The law also saw the introduction of an additional maintenance requirement (SFS 2016:752, §9). This meant a noticeable tightening of the Swedish regulations regarding immigration, towards the edge of what was allowed within the framework of EU and international law (Prop. 2015/16:174, p.1). From a judicial standpoint, by adopting the Temporary Alien's Act Sweden thus re-positioned itself among the EU member states. Having once been among the states exercising the most generous interpretation of the right to family reunification, the introduction of the Temporary Alien's Act saw Sweden moved towards the EU minimum.

### Criticism and concerns

In the months leading up to the vote in parliament in 2016, the proposition for the Act was met with both criticism and enthusiasm. Members of NGO:s publicly argued that the new law was 'coldhearted' and 'damaging' from the perspective of both integration and health, and the Secretary General of the Swedish Red Cross called it a "a panicked legislation where alternative options have not been properly considered", the "humanitarian consequences" of which will be "enormous" (Jansson, 2016, p. 7; Johansson Metso, 2016). Several governmental agencies and committees also voiced concerns regarding the legal soundness of the law, having been drafted in an unusually short time. The Law Council, the main legal consulting body to the Swedish government and parliament on editions of laws and regulations, was also critical in its comments (Lagrådet, 2016).

### The Temporary Act extended

In May 2019, the Swedish government put forth a proposition to extend the Temporary Act to span an additional two years (Prop. 2018-18:128). The proposition included certain points of revision of the Temporary Act, some of them with consideration for Sweden's commitments to international law (ibid). One such revision was awarding individuals with subsidiary protection status the same possibility of family reunification as that of refugees; a matter of great importance for migrants from warzones such as Syria, whose need for protection in general did not align with grounds for asylum. On 18 June 2019, a majority in the Swedish parliament ruled



in favor of the proposition. On 20 July 2019, the Temporary Alien's Act turned into the Extended Alien's Act and was prolonged until 19 July 2021.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.3. Aim, research questions and delimitations

This project compares how articles in six major Swedish printed newspapers have described the Temporary Alien's Act, first around the time of the law's implementation in 2016 and then around the time of its extension in 2019. By gathering and comparing the articles on the subject the aim is to see what, if any, differences there are between the articles in 2016 and the articles in 2019 with regards to changes in the discourse and the tone of reporting.

As this study centers on media depiction and not on the reader's media perception, the focus lies with the sender rather than the audience. Looking at how a subject is portrayed may tell us just that, along with the reasonable assumption that this portrayal is subject to interpretation.

#### Research questions

- R1: What themes (in reporting/depiction) are identifiable in printed news media coverage regarding the Temporary and Extended Alien's Act in the years 2016 and 2019, respectively?
- R2: Is there a difference in reporting regarding the Temporary Act in 2016, as compared to the Extended Alien's Act in 2019? If so, what are the characteristics of these changes?

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<sup>1</sup> On 29 April 2021 the government proposed to install a revised permanent version of the original Alien's Act in the Extended Alien's Act's direct succession (Prop. 2020/21:191). The new proposition, entailing remnants from the original Temporary Act, such as temporary residence permits for individuals with subsidiary protection, was voted on by parliament on 22 June, 2021. The proposition was passed, and the revised, now permanent, Alien's Act (SFS 2021:765) came into legislation on 20 July 2021.

## 2. Previous research

The so-called ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015 has been the subject of a multitude of studies, focused on a wide range of themes. Considering the extensive body of literature available on the topic, providing a complete literature review is beyond the limitations of this study. Rather, this section will focus on previous research (centered) on the subject of interplay between media and immigration, with a focus on the case of Sweden.

Two searches on the website Web of Science (Web of Science, n.d.) were performed in July 2024 to identify studies of relevance. Searching for “immigration” *and* “media” *and* “Sweden” *and* “2015”, 2024-07-08 on Web of Science Core Collection (all fields), returned 12 results in total. Two of these results were on the topic of medicine and health sciences and thus disregarded. A corresponding search was made with “2015” replaced by “2019”, generating 24 results. A few of these were noted as reoccurring in one or more of the other searches, rendering a total of 20 unique results. By examining the article’s abstracts, the works most relevant in relation to this study’s topic were identified and selected for closer reading. These studies, along with several studies on the topic of frames and news framing linked to immigration, constitute the previous research considered in this section.

### Some common results

Although diverse in both timeframe and geographical focus, previous research (Berry et al., 2016; Strömbäck et al., 2017; Eberl et al., 2018) indicates that there are reoccurring results observable in international news reporting on the topic of immigration, many of which also translate to the to the specific case of Sweden. Among the findings, three main foci stand out: a focus on negative news overall, but in comparison to other countries Swedish media represents a comparatively positive view, a focus on (certain groups of) asylum-seeking individuals and refugees rather than other types of immigration, and a focus on politicians and official representatives rather than immigrants.

The prevalence of negative news in media attention tied to immigration is reflective of the dominance of negative news in media reporting in general, a common theme in media studies in a broader sense. Negative news was identified as one of the main *news values*, i.e. a factor that contributes to an event’s ‘newsworthiness’, in a central study by Galtung & Ruge in the 1960’s (Galtung & Ruge, 1965), and its continued dominance in media has since been continuously re-confirmed (see for instance Harcup & O’Neill, 2001; 2017).

## 2.1. Cross-national comparative studies

The wake of 2015 saw a number of cross-national studies aiming to compare media reports on immigration in 2015 and 2016 across Europe. As one of the countries that received the highest numbers of refugees, characterized by liberal immigration policy, Sweden presented an interesting case for comparison with other EU-countries.

In a report commissioned by UNHCR on news reporting regarding the refugee situation in Europe during 2014 and 2015, Berry et al. (2016) found that comparatively to the other five European countries included in the study (Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK), Swedish media featured the most positive reporting related to immigration, while the UK displayed the most negative and polarized (ibid, p. ii). Examining language use showed that Swedish media mainly referred to arriving individuals as ‘asylum seekers’ or ‘refugees’, and with regards to sources, Sweden stood out in its dominance of domestic politicians, while citing foreign politicians, citizens, and NGO:s notably less often than its counterparts. When looking at themes, most salient in the Swedish context was ‘*political responses/policy*’, present in just over half of the studied articles (ibid, p. 8; p.133), followed by ‘*immigration figures/levels*’ and ‘*humanitarian themes*’ (p. 134), respectively. The portrayal of immigrants as a threat to national security was least common in Sweden; however, portrayal of immigrants as a “*cultural threat or a threat to community cohesion*” second only to the UK (ibid., p. 8).

Comparing national media framing of the ‘European Refugee Crisis’ in major national newspapers in Germany, Spain, Hungary, UK and Sweden from January 2015 to 31 December 2016, Heidenreich et al. (2019) found ‘*human interest*’ to be the most salient frame in Sweden, followed by the ‘*humanitarian frame*’ (Heidenreich et al., 2019, p. 176). Heidenreich et al. (2019) noted however, that the ‘*human interest*’ frame decreased as the ‘crisis’ peaked; then instead, news stories saw an increase in ‘*refugee movement*’ and ‘*EU refugee policy*’ frames. ‘*Human interest*’ then regained its position as most salient once more (ibid, p. 178).

In their study of how immigrants, refugees and ‘the immigration issue’ were portrayed in daily printed news media in Sweden and Belgium from March 2015 to July 2017 during identified news peaks related to the ‘refugee crisis’, De Cock et al. (2019) also found Swedish press to be more positive than Belgian press, but noted that negative portrayals of refugees dominated in both countries (De Cock et al, 2019, p. 40; Rucka & De Cock, 2024). They noted that one group of immigrants, refugees of Syrian origin, received the majority of media attention in the

Swedish news outlets, resulting in an under-representation of other de-facto large immigrant groups, such as Iraqis and Afghanis. They also found a prevalence of describing immigrants as groups rather than individuals, and that this collective imagery often took the shape of ‘*an unending stream*’ (de Cock et al., 2019, p. 52). Parallely, they emphasize the voicelessness of those groups in media, noting that “*politicians and experts are given a forum in the press, whereas refugees remain voiceless*” (ibid, p. 41).

In their literature review of academic journal articles published between 2000 and 2018 on the topic of immigration in Europe and its consequences (Eberl et al. (2018), also confirm a widespread underrepresentation of immigrants in media, along with a dominance of negative and/or conflict-centered media coverage linked to immigration. They also report patterns between the wording used to describe immigrants and applied news frames, especially linking language use and economic frames (Eberl et al. 2018, p. 212). With regards to type of media, tabloids were noted as more prone to apply negative or delegitimizing terms to describe immigrants compared to more ‘serious’ printed news outlets, while printed news press contributed to a more positive image of the effects of immigration compared to televised news. They additionally highlight, that in the misrepresentation of immigrant groups and individuals, female migrants appear “*doubly disadvantaged as a minority in media coverage*”, rendering them seldom heard or seen (ibid., p. 210). The findings of Hovden et al. (2018) in their comparison of Danish, Swedish and Norwegian newspapers April-November 2015, show similar results when examining a Scandinavian setting. Once again, Sweden exhibited more positive reporting on the topic of immigration than the others overall, a result visible throughout 2015, despite the increasing medial presence of nationalist party Sweden Democrats, along with a dominance of domestic politicians as sources. Hovden et al. (2018) contribute the positive reporting in part to the fact that Danish, and to some extent Norwegian, tabloids are more similar to their British and German counterparts, while the Swedish evening press examined, Aftonbladet and Expressen, are, comparatively, regarded as more serious outlets (ibid., p. 331). Like Heidenreich et al. (2019), Hovden et al. (2018) also saw a decrease in the ‘*humanitarian*’ frame over time, supporting the indication that this frame fluctuates with different stages of the ‘*crisis*’.

## 2.2. On the specific case of Sweden

Examining how media depicted national immigration in Swedish domestic press from 1 January 2010 to 30 June 2015, Strömbäck et al. (2017) provide an overview of reporting on immigration outside of the extraordinary events of the 2015 ‘crisis’. The report identified five main themes: refugees as the most commonly mentioned immigration type, often observed through the perspective of receiving authorities, and resources required to meet different needs associated with refugee arrival; the prevalence of negative depictions of immigration and of its effects on Sweden over positive depictions; that individuals of foreign background were seldom quoted or portrayed, and lastly, that journalistic practices seldom directly questioned official migration politics, rather, they could be seen as contributing to its legitimacy (Strömbäck et al., 2017, p. 7, p. 19-20).

With regards to frames, Abdelhady (2020), examining news articles on immigration from *Dagens Nyheter*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, and *Aftonbladet*, found the self-constructed frame of ‘*institutional responsibility*’, a personal adaptation of the frame ‘*attribution of responsibility*’ frame by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000), to be the most common, followed by ‘*human interest*’ (Abdelhady, 2020, p.125-126). Abdelhady also found the ‘*economic consequences*’ frame to be “negligible in the Swedish context” (ibid., p 127). In addition, Abdelhady emphasizes the presence of collective descriptions of refugees and migrants throughout the publications, often with language alluding to natural forces (ibid). The application of this imagery is further supported by the findings of Yantseva (2020), comparing media discourse on migration in Sweden from 2012 to 2019 in the different channels Twitter, the web forum Flashback, and Sweden’s six largest newspapers, and of Rucka & De Cock (2024), examining the portrayal of immigration in official online material produced by the Swedish government.

## 2.3. Policy, politics and polarization

As mentioned by Hovden et al. (2018) and Berry et al. (2016), 2015 saw an increased media presence of the oppositional nationalist party the Sweden Democrats. Puschmann et al. (2018), in their comparison of Swedish and Belgian immigration policy connected to the events of 2015, similarly report that a number of European right-wing parties, among them the Sweden Democrats, benefitted from the ‘crisis’; effecting both public debate and policy during this time by indirectly “forcing governments to alter their liberal course and move to the right, which in

practice mostly meant limiting the numbers of refugees being admitted” (Puschmann et al., 2018, p. 23).

Examining Twitter posts from November to December 2015 by Sweden’s then ruling party the Social Democrats, Krzyżanowski (2018) argues that the Swedish parliament elections of 2014 together with the ‘crisis peak’ of 2015, marked a change in the domestic political discourse on immigration. Characterized by a normalization of anti-immigrant political views and rhetoric, “significantly fueled” by the Sweden Democrats, the end of 2015 also saw an increase in political parties using (social) media as a tool to legitimize policy changes; a mode of communication historically preferred by right-wing, anti-immigrant and racist parties (Krzyżanowski, 2018, p. 99). As a previous example of this – an oppositional party driving the domestic immigration discourse – Krzyżanowski mentions the rise of Swedish right-wing party Ny Demokrati in the beginning of the 1990’s. The party’s sudden rise on the political scene pushed other parties to “respond or at least ‘take a stand’” and present, as well as legitimize, new, often harsher, policy solutions on immigration in order not to lose constituents or the ability to steer public debate (ibid., p. 103).

One expression of far-right rhetoric specifically linked to Sweden and the ‘crisis’ of 2015 is ‘*taboo news*’ (Titley, 2019). Applied by Swedish and international right-wing alternative media alike, they are publications or statements conjuring an imaginary image of Sweden as “a dark future to be averted; a failed social experiment in immigration and multiculturalism” (Titley, 2019, p. 1020). As (in)famous examples of the above, Titley mentions a radio broadcast where British politician Nigel Farage referred to Malmö as the “the rape capital of Europe”, and Donald Trump’s “look at what’s happening last night in Sweden”-speech a political rally, both taking place in 2017 (ibid, p. 1011).

Elaborating on the idea of a discursive shift as identified by Krzyżanowski (2018) but examining the phenomenon through editorials on the topic of immigration published in *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Göteborgs-Posten* between 2015 and 2019, Ekman & Krzyżanowski (2021) attribute the successful transitioning of right-wing rhetoric from social to mainstream media in part to its “commercial logics” (Ekman & Krzyżanowski, 2021, p. 83). Controversial statements and the provocative style of ‘taboo news’ correspond well to newspapers’ desire to ensure wide circulation of content and traffic. News that evoke strong emotion, positive or negative, are likely to generate attention and may thus be used by newspapers as a tool in itself. This approach however, lends indirect legitimacy to the expressed rhetoric.

### 3. Theory

The main aim of this paper is to study how Sweden's Temporary/Extended Alien's Act is portrayed in news articles in two defined time periods, in order to identify and closer examine possible differences between the two. To provide meaning and structure to this aim, this paper uses *social constructionism* as its theoretical point of departure, along with concepts of how events are transformed into news, and how these news stories may be interpreted in a structured manner. *News value theory* as presented by Galtung & Ruge (1965) and adapted by Harcup & O'Neill (2001, 2017) is used as a departure point for how news are 'constructed' and selected. The concept of frames and *news frame analysis* is then introduced as a lens through which topic portrayal in news reporting may be further understood and examined. This section presents and reflects on these theoretical concepts that form the basis for the analysis of the article material.

#### 3.1. The social (re)construction of reality in news media

How do members of a society make common sense of their social world, and how do they shape, maintain, share, and exchange knowledge? How do they agree on what is real and what is not? In their work *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Berger & Luckmann (1967) put forth the idea of knowledge as stemming from human social interaction, arguing that written and spoken language uniquely enables individuals to communicate about their own subjective reality as well as the 'outside' reality shared with others. These two spheres of subjective and objective reality are assumed to be neither fixed nor separate (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 161), but rather in a perpetual cycle of reflecting and adapting to one another. What is considered real or accepted as reality is thus a product of the exchanges between mutually accepted views of interacting humans. In a social constructionist view, there is thus no assumption of a purely objective reality 'out there' – reality is a construction, malleable and created by humans.

Applying a social constructivist view to news and news media, thus allows for questions such as how do parts of reality turn into news, and whom decides when and how they do? Arguably, an event needs attention for this metamorphosis from the former to the latter to occur. The selection of which issues to report on, what angles of a chosen story to highlight, which pieces are cleared for publication, the timing and format of the final published text and so on, all play a role in the (re)presentation of events into news. Through this practice, mass media have the potential to influence the current news climate, and along with it, to present audiences with a

certain version, or versions, of reality. Mass media are, to a certain extent, driven to report what people are interested in reading (Strömbäck et al., 2017). At the same time, they act as gatekeepers that filter which information is considered “newsworthy”, mirroring the exchange of subjective and objective reality as described by Berger and Luckmann (1967). Media sociologist Peter Vasterman (1995) describes the classic image of journalists reporting on breaking events out in the field as a misconception, as, he argues, “news is not out there, journalists do not report news, they produce news. They construct it, they construct facts, they construct statements, and they construct a context in which these facts make ‘sense’. They reconstruct ‘a’ reality” (Vasterman, 1995, Media hypes).

### 3.2. News value theory

In their 1965 study, which would remain a central work on the subject for decades, Galtung & Ruge (1965) set out to examine how events become news, and whether it is possible to identify any general criteria for their selection (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). They identified twelve factors potentially at play in the selection of events into news: some which interplay with the practices of newspapers, for instance, how news-editors may reason when selecting news material, while others are more culturally dependent, such as which individuals or countries are well known by the intended readership and therefore more likely to be of (publishing and reading) interest (ibid, pp. 65-71).

**Table 1**

*Prominent factor pairs*

<b>(9 &amp; 10):</b>	<b><i>news about elite people in elite nations</i></b>
<b>(9 &amp; 12):</b>	<b><i>news of a negative nature relating to elite nations</i></b> — <i>in other words, big power conflict</i>
<b>(10 &amp; 12):</b>	<b><i>news of a negative nature relating to elite people</i></b> — <i>in other words, struggle for power etc., at the top of society</i>
<b>(11 &amp; 12):</b>	<b><i>news of a negative nature relating to persons</i></b> — <i>in other words, scandals</i>

Table 1 – The four factor pairs deemed particularly newsworthy by Galtung & Ruge (1965, p. 71), adapted by Kvist, 2022. The individual factors’ numbers as labelled by Galtung & Ruge (1965) indicated in parentheses.



Out of these twelve, Galtung & Ruge (1965) identified four pairs of factors as particularly newsworthy. Making up “a sizeable fraction of the news presented by newspapers in most parts of the world” the authors found said combinations to be: ‘*news about elite people in elite nations*’, ‘*news of a negative nature relating to elite nations*’, ‘*news of a negative nature relating to elite people*’, and ‘*news of a negative nature relating to persons*’ (ibid, p. 71). These pairs act as examples of what Galtung & Ruge (1965) call the ‘additivity hypothesis’; the more factors present in the case of an event, the more likely it is to become news and to make headlines (ibid.).

Providing an adaptation of Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) findings to 21<sup>st</sup> century printed media, Harcup & O’Neill (2001; 2017) confirm the presence of many of Galtung & Ruge’s original factors, while identifying some central differences of interest (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001; 2017). The large emphasis on discord in media, for instance, renders the addition of the news factors ‘*conflict*’ and ‘*drama*’ in their 2017 update of the taxonomy (Harcup & O’Neill, 2017, p. 1482). Regarding the predominance of negative nature of news found by Galtung & Ruge (1965), Harcup & O’Neill (2001) arrive at the conclusion that although news of a negative nature continuously do make up a considerable part of published news, the question of negativity may be more adequately understood as a matter of representation (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001, p. 272-273). Whether news are perceived as negative, they argue, depend largely on the angle of the article, and as such, is a product of the presentation by the journalist and the publishing paper, rather than the nature of the event itself (ibid). They also note that a portion of the news stories presented by media, in fact, do not seem to be related to any event or story in particular. Rather, “many items of news are not reports of events at all, but ‘pseudo-events’, free advertising or public relations spin” (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001, p. 276).

### 3.3. Framing and news frame analysis

The dominating approach to studying the complex interplay of news media, journalistic practices and public opinion is through framing and news frame analysis. Goffman is usually attributed with introducing the basis for the concept in his publication ‘*Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*’ (Goffman, 1974; Linström & Marais, 2012; Pan & Kosicki, 1993). In Goffman’s view, frames, or framework, are “schemata of interpretation” that permit individuals to “locate, perceive, identify, and label” activities and events (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). He emphasizes that despite being adept at applying them, individuals are generally

unaware of utilizing frameworks, and would likely be unable to describe them if asked directly what they are. Frame analysis, in turn, is the examination of this type of ‘organization of experience’. The general concept of *news frames* is one that builds on Goffman’s (1974) definition, with an additional focus on media and media practices.

*[...] we may conceive a news media frame as a cognitive device used in information encoding, interpreting, and retrieving; it is communicable; and it is related to journalistic professional routines and conventions. Framing, therefore, may be studied as a strategy of constructing and processing news discourse or as a characteristic of the discourse itself. (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 57).*

Rather than *what* to think about an issue, Walter and Ophir (2019) describe (news) framing as “media’s ability to tell audiences ‘*how to think*’ about an issue” (Walter & Ophir, 2019, p. 249, italics added). Along the same lines, An and Gower (2009) argue that frames are “powerful mechanisms that can help define and solve problems and shape public opinion” (An & Gower 2009, p. 107). Altheide (1997) emphasizes that “mass media and public perceptions of issues and problems are inexorably linked” (Altheide, 1997, p. 648), which in turn harmonizes with the description of the practice of framing provided by Entman (1993), as:

*“[...] to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” (Entman, 1993, p. 52).*

Frame research distinguishes between so-called generic (news) frames and (issue)-specific frames. The two types are differentiated by their scope: generic frames may be applied to analyze a variety of news contexts, while issue-specific frames are tailored to and applied only to a specific subject or area of interest within a field (Eberl et al., 2018, p. 211; Strömbäck et al., 2017, p. 15). Frames may be singular and self-constructed, e.g. the ‘*problem frame*’ by Altheide (1997), or consist of a combination of previously defined frames, often called ‘sets’. While the approach of self-constructed frames allows much freedom of interpretation and may be tailored to a specific topic, it can also impede generalization and comparison between studies.

### 3.4. The Semetko & Valkenburg frame set

Considering the explorative character of this study, a generic, previously defined frameset was deemed preferable compared to a specific frame construction. Taking into account the research topic and type of news material examined, the Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) frame set, widely used and acknowledged (Linström & Marais, 2012; An & Gower, 2009; Walter & Ophir, 2019; Abdelhady 2020), was selected.

Constructed as a response to the identified need for a reliable measure of the prevalence of common frames in the news, and grounded in extensive previous research, the Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) standard set of frames consists of five frames: *conflict*, *human interest*, *attribution of responsibility*, *morality*, and *economic consequences* (ibid, 2000, p. 95-96).

**Table 2**

*The Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) frame set*

<b>Responsibility frame</b>	Presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group.
<b>Conflict frame</b>	Emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest.
<b>Human interest frame</b>	Brings a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem. [...] an effort to personalize the news, dramatize or “emotionalize” the news, in order to capture and retain audience interest.
<b>Morality frame</b>	Puts the event, problem, or issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions. Because of the professional norm of objectivity, journalists often make reference to moral frames indirectly—through quotation or inference, for instance.
<b>Economic consequences frame</b>	Reports an event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences it will have economically on an individual, group, institution, region, or country.

Table 2 depicts the five frames used by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) with original definitions (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 95-96). Adapted by Kvist, 2024.

Building on a previous frame set by Neuman et al. (1992); but with additions and differences in definitions (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Linström & Marais, 2012), and the theoretical concept of episodic and thematic news as identified by Iyengar (1991), the authors argue that the set accounts for the majority of frames found in news (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 95). Furthermore, the fact that the set was constructed with an explicit aim of examining political news in a country with a multi-party coalition government (ibid, p. 97), renders it additionally

suitable with regard to this study's focus on the Temporary and Extended Act, in a domestically turbulent political time.

## 4. Research methods

### 4.1. Research design

For this comparative study of news coverage of Sweden's Temporary Alien's Act in 2016 and 2019, a two-step analysis was performed. Firstly, the newspaper articles to be studied were identified and selected. I then conducted an initial quantitative coding of the articles' specifics, such as publication source and keyword frequency. Secondly, the articles' content was further examined through news frame analysis, using Semetko & Valkenburg's (2000) set design consisting of 20 questions, aimed at identifying five main frames. By combining quantitative coding with qualitative assessments of the articles, a wider understanding of the material was facilitated and comparison on a larger number of points enabled. Finally, the results between the two years' cohorts, 2016 and 2019, were compared and discussed.

#### Finding a source

First, I collected the data providing the corpus for analysis. As printed news media is the focus of the research questions of this project, the search platform Retriever Research (Mediearkivet, n.d.) was chosen to retrieve the sources. As the largest digital news archive in the Nordic countries, containing printed media from a variety of sources, Retriever Research proved a very suitable tool for this purpose.

### 4.2. Delimitations - Time frame, news sources & keyword selection

Considering the masse of news articles potentially published in a year, further narrowing of the time frame for this study was needed to improve the practical feasibility of the project. Thus, I chose the span of two months, June and July, for each of the years of 2016 and 2019 as the set timeframe. This period of time allowed inclusion of dates of central interest, i.e. the dates when the Swedish parliament voted on the propositions for the Acts, as well as the dates when the Acts became legislative, for both years. The Swedish parliament voted on the proposition of the Temporary Act on 21 June, 2016 and the proposition of the Extended Act on 18 June, 2019. Both Acts became legislative on the same date, on 20 July, in their respective years.

For guidance regarding the practical selection of suitable sources, I reached out to a subject librarian at the Social Sciences Faculty Library at Lund University. In dialogue with the librarian, I gained advice regarding choice of newspapers, initial keyword searches, and suggestions for further adjustments of the same.

Based on the above exchange, I chose the following six leading Swedish daily newspapers: *Aftonbladet*, *Dagens Nyheter*, *Expressen*, *Göteborgs-Posten*, *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Sydsvenskan*. The publications were primarily chosen based on circulation size, making up the largest Swedish publications; however, their individual geographical focus was also taken into consideration. *Dagens Nyheter*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, *Expressen* and *Aftonbladet* carry an emphasis on Stockholm and the capital region; *Göteborgs-Posten* focuses on the Gothenburg region and *Sydsvenskan* focuses on the Malmö and greater Scania region. By including these publications, the regions of the three largest cities in Sweden, were represented in the news article selection. These regions also represent the areas where a large majority of immigrants settle, and they correspondingly saw the highest influx of asylum seekers during the migration ‘crisis’ of 2015, which made them additionally suitable. The six publications differ slightly in style and political liaisons. *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen* are national daily evening papers, while the other four are newspapers. *Sydsvenskan*, *Dagens Nyheter*, and *Göteborgs-Posten* identify themselves as independent liberal, *Expressen* as liberal, *Aftonbladet* as independent social democratic, and *Svenska Dagbladet* as independent moderate.

In order to further limit the number of articles to be examined in this study, I chose to only include stories from the printed editions of the papers, while excluding digital articles from the publications’ online platforms, available exclusively for subscribers. Selecting printed media in a digital age might seem surprising, but the medium has its advantages. Lindström & Marais (2012) consider newspapers “a good choice for a medium of analysis as [...] they are able to communicate [more] complex ideas” (Lindström & Marais, 2012, p. 29). It may also be worth noting that, considering the growing emphasis on social media, printed news media have a wide spanning reach, with the addition of articles from print sources often circulated and shared digitally on social media platforms. Thus, the separation between the two is a matter of perception rather than absolute fact (Strömbäck et al., 2017, p. iii; Harcup & O’Neill, 2017, p. 1475).

As all the examined newspapers are Swedish publications, Swedish was the natural language of my performed search for articles. Defining the keywords used to filter the searches, however, was a task of trial-and-error even after the initial tips from the librarian, with numerous search attempts performed in order to refine the output. For example, unexpected issues arose when originally using the word ‘lagen’ (the law) as one of the default search words. As this word in Swedish has multiple connotations, two of these being ‘the law’ and ‘the teams’ respectively, searches based around this word generated results ranging from new regulations for leisure boat owners to debate articles on the topic of consent, to football match results in Champions League. A narrower selection was thus clearly needed to refine the results.

When putting any of the search words as a conditional ‘exact phrase’ in the search filter, the generated results proved either much too wide, meaning they included a large number of irrelevant articles (on topics such as football) that then needed to be filtered away or, surprisingly, depending on the word used they generated as little as zero results. The search pattern was therefore modified to find articles containing ‘any of the words’ of the selected search words. The search words used in the final article searches were:

**Table 3**

*Applied keywords*

	Swedish original wording
<b>temporary act</b>	tillfälliga lagen
<b>the act of temporary</b>	lagen om tillfälliga
<b>asylum law</b>	asyllagen
<b>family reunification</b>	familjeåterförening
<b>extended act</b>	förlängda lagen
<b>refugee act</b>	flyktinglagen
<b>family immigration</b>	anhöriginvandring

### Defining a corpus

The chosen timespan, the six publication sources and the selected keywords were then entered into the Retriever Research search engine. I then performed two parallel searches, one for 2016 and one for 2019. The searches were identical except for the input of year; both spanning from dates 1 June to 31 July.

In these general searches all articles containing the defined keywords within the timespan (the two months of June-July for the years 2016 and 2019 respectively) were included. Both searches were based on the occurrence of one or several keywords in the article's full body of text. This generated a total of 1 203 results for 2016 and 807 results for 2019. It is worth noting that these results still included online media and information from international news bureaus, as sources of this type were included in the search by default by the platform. Subsequently, I then performed a second, manual selection, in which results were filtered based on article type. In this step electronic and other sources were excluded, leaving only printed press, rendering 197 remaining articles in total. Lastly, five articles where it was apparent from the headlines that the keywords were used in a context irrelevant to this study were excluded as off-topic and omitted from the final selection.

#### 4.3. Initial coding of the articles

192 news articles, 110 from 2016 and 82 from 2019, were read individually. Each article was then quantitatively coded along nine criteria: source of publication, publishing date, type of article (editorial, debate, other), page number and length of article, author/undersigned, search keyword(s) present in article, and portrayal of the topic (positive, neutral, negative). A short summary of each article was also written down.

While mainly working as an introduction to the articles and an overview of the corpus, this coding process also facilitated the identification of articles containing the sought-after keywords, but with content irrelevant to the research topic. For example, an entertainment news story of a Swedish author reuniting with her estranged adult children had generated two hits (front page headline plus article) in the original 2019 search, due to including the wording '*family reunification*'. Articles in the form of short notifications from news desks, such as TT, which appeared identically worded in multiple publications, were also omitted after one entry had been recorded. In the 2016 cohort 19 and in the 2019 cohort 5 'irrelevant' articles of the above-mentioned type were identified, making up a total of 24 articles. These 24 articles were omitted from the further analysis, leaving a remaining total of 168 news articles.

#### 4.4. News frame analysis - A comparative approach

The focus of this paper is a comparison of news coverage regarding Sweden's Temporary/Extended Alien's Act in six national newspapers at two points in time during the years 2016 and 2019. Given this departure point, an approach allowing for a structured comparison between the content of the two chosen bodies of articles was preferable. As news frame analysis aims to identify the frames, i.e. what has been included and how, in the coverage of a news issue, this approach was considered well suited for this study.

From a methodological standpoint framing and news frame analysis ascribes fully to neither a quantitative nor qualitative approach but places itself in the realm of mixed methods (Linström & Marais, 2012). It can include quantitative coding, such as searching for and identifying certain words or images in a news report, as well as qualitative linguistic analysis, regarding the article content as a whole. Here, a combination of both has been used.

First, a news frame analysis was performed on the 168 selected articles, by applying the research design and definitions of aforementioned Semetko & Valkenburg (2020), in which a series of 20 questions is used to identify the presence or absence of the five news frames *conflict*, *attribution of responsibility*, *human interest*, *morality*, and *economic consequences* in each article. A full overview of the question series is presented in Appendix II. The questions are distributed between the frames with five questions each for the *responsibility frame* and the *human interest frame*, four questions for the *conflict frame*, and three questions each for the *morality frame* and the *economic consequences frame*. Each of the questions has the response option 'yes' or 'no', with 'yes' indicating a presence of the frame. The results from the coding were then processed statistically and organized in table form. In order to examine R2 it was hypothesized that the presence of each of the five news frames increased between 2016 and 2019. Five hypotheses were thus tested.

The deductive departure point was then complemented by a more inductive turn, through a content analysis of the examined article texts, with the research questions R1 and R2 as a its basis. Lastly, the results from the frame analysis were compiled and compared together with the qualitative thematic findings from the content analysis.



#### 4.5. Bias and validity

A matter of consideration when adapting framing to a corpus, is the role of the researcher in the construction and identification of frames, and the closely linked question of bias and validity (Linström & Marais, 2012; Walter & Ophir, 2019). Although the construction of individual frames is prevalent in some studies, the Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) set frame compilation was deemed highly suitable for this study. By choosing a deductive departure point and applying an existing set for the news frames analysis for this study, bias in the construction process has been limited, and comparability with other research facilitated. However, the processing and interpretation of the content of the articles performed as part of the coding was this author's own, and as such inevitably subjective to a certain degree. The content analysis in turn, is grounded in the interactions between the researcher and the studied texts, and the former's interpretations of the latter, and is as such fully qualitative in both nature and aspiration.

## 5. Results and findings

As the Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) frame questionnaire is constructed, coding for frame presence is dichotomous; a frame is either present or absent in the examined article. However, each frame has three to five identifying questions, aimed at detecting presence of the frame while coding. The number of items specified under ‘Presence of frame’, as reported in Table 4 and Table 5, is a measure of these question. These questions indicate the manner in which the frame is expressed in the studied articles. As such, it worked as an indicator of potential points of examination in the subsequent qualitative content analysis.

As shown in Table 4, among the 2016 articles, *conflict* is the most frequently occurring news frame, found in 87,9 percent of the studied articles. Second comes *attribution of responsibility* (74,7 percent), followed by *human interest* (68,1 percent). Less frequent is the *economic frame* (37,4 percent) and *morality frame* (25,3 percent); the latter found in about one in four articles.

**Table 4**

*Presence/absence of news frame in articles, year 2016*

<b>Frames 2016</b>					
	<i>Attribution of responsibility</i>	<i>Human interest</i>	<i>Conflict</i>	<i>Morality</i>	<i>Economic consequences</i>
<b>Absence of frame</b>	<b>25,3% (23)</b>	<b>31,9% (29)</b>	<b>12,1% (11)</b>	<b>74,7% (68)</b>	<b>62,6% (57)</b>
<b>Presence of frame</b>	<b>74,7% (68)</b>	<b>68,1% (62)</b>	<b>87,9% (80)</b>	<b>25,3% (23)</b>	<b>37,4% (34)</b>
One item	9,9% (9)	38,4% (35)	18,7% (17)	9,9% (9)	8,8% (8)
Two	20,9% (19)	7,7% (7)	30,7% (28)	2,2% (2)	3,3% (3)
Three	8,8% (8)	3,3% (3)	35,2% (32)	13,2% (12)	25,3% (23)
Four	27,4% (25)	7,7% (7)	3,3% (3)		
Five	7,7% (7)	11% (10)			
Total	100% (91)	100% (91)	100% (91)	100% (91)	100% (91)

\*Percentage rounded to nearest decimal. Real numbers in parentheses.

For 2019 *conflict* is the most frequently occurring news frame (96 percent) followed by *attribution of responsibility* (84 percent). *Human interest* is third most common, (64 percent) and *morality* (26 percent) displays overall similar levels compared with 2016, while presence of the *economic consequences* frame (49 percent) shows a percentual increase by twelve percent.

**Table 5**

*Presence/absence of news frame in articles, year 2019*

**Frames 2019**

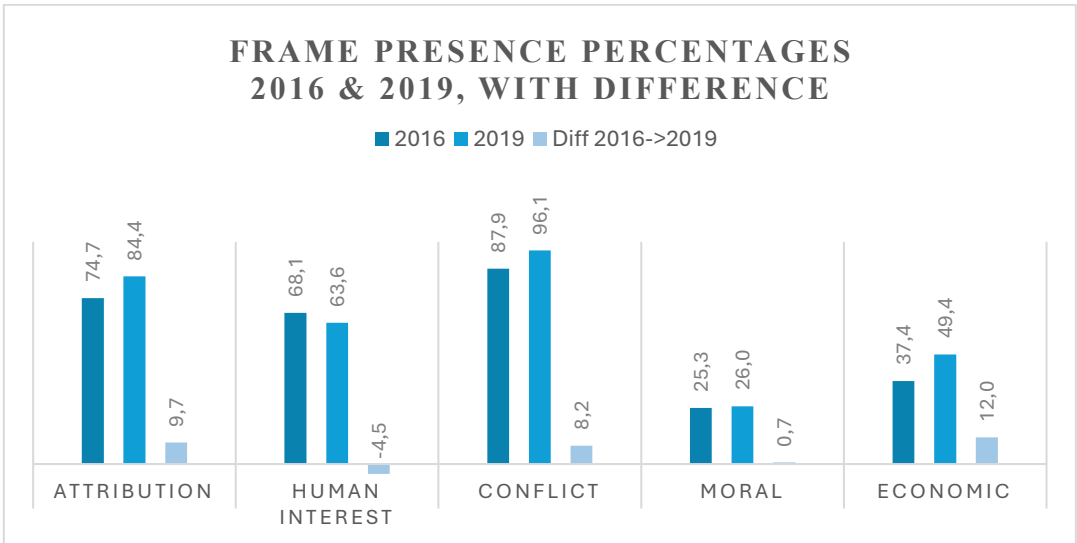
	<i>Attribution of responsibility</i>	<i>Human interest</i>	<i>Conflict</i>	<i>Morality</i>	<i>Economic consequences</i>
<b>Absence of frame</b>	<b>15,6% (12)</b>	<b>36,4% (28)</b>	<b>3,9% (3)</b>	<b>74% (57)</b>	<b>50,6% (39)</b>
<b>Presence of frame</b>	<b>84,4% (65)</b>	<b>63,6% (49)</b>	<b>96,1% (74)</b>	<b>26% (20)</b>	<b>49,4% (38)</b>
One item	13% (10)	18,2% (14)	14,3% (11)	3,9% (3)	5,2% (4)
Two	3,9% (3)	13% (10)	19,5% (15)	9,1% (7)	7,8% (6)
Three	14,3% (11)	18,2% (14)	33,7% (26)	13% (10)	36,4% (28)
Four	41,5% (32)	7,8% (6)	28,6% (22)		
Five	11,7% (9)	6,4% (5)			
<b>Total</b>	<b>100% (77)</b>	<b>100% (77)</b>	<b>100% (77)</b>	<b>100% (77)</b>	<b>100% (77)</b>

\*Percentage rounded to nearest decimal. Real numbers in parentheses.

The results for 2016 and 2019 are mirrored, with *conflict* as the most frequently occurring news frame, followed by *attribution of responsibility*. However, the 2019 results display an increase for both frames,  $p < 0.05$ . *Human interest* is third most common for both years but displays a decrease in 2019 compared to 2016. The *economic consequences* frame shows an increase in 2019,  $p < 0.1$ , while morality displays overall similar levels compared with 2016, with a negligible increase of 0,7 percent. The differences displayed by the *human interest* and *morality* frames are not statistically significant.

**Table 6**

*Frame presence percentages 2016 and 2019 respectively, with difference shown.*



### 5.1. Points of interest from the initial coding

Additional findings from the initial coding step identify *Svenska Dagbladet* (23,1 percent) as the most commonly occurring news source in 2016, followed by *Dagens Nyheter* (17,6 percent) (Appendix II: Table 8). In 2019, *Expressen* (29,9 percent) was the most commonly occurring source, followed by *Dagens Nyheter* (23,4 percent) (Appendix II: Table 14). Previous research has noted differences in both tone of reporting and frame presence depending on type of news sources, i.e. tabloids or ‘serious’ press (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Eberl et al., 2018; Hovden et al., 2018). Examining frame presence by newspaper for both 2016 and 2019 (Appendix II: Table 9 & Table 15) shows little support for this; rather the numbers are overall quite evenly distributed, and without typical indicators such as increased *human interest* frame in *Aftonbladet* or *Expressen*. Conversely, in 2016 *human interest* was most common in the broadsheet *Göteborgs-Posten*, and in 2019 the *economic consequences* frame was featured more in *Expressen* than in *Dagens Nyheter*. The less sensationalist profile of Swedish evening press compared to other European tabloids, as reported by Hovden et al. (2018), may offer an explanation for this result (see section 2.1.).

Examining keyword frequency (Appendix II: Table 7 & Table 13) showed that the most common keywords in the 2016 articles were *family reunification* (45,1 percent) and *asylum law* (38,5 percent), whereas in the 2019 articles *family immigration* (66,2 percent) and *family reunification* (35,1 percent) dominated. A difference in preference with regards to which wording was used to describe the Temporary/Extended Act over time was also noted. In articles from 2016 the paraphrasing terms ‘*the refugee law*’ and ‘*the asylum law*’ were commonly found, whereas in articles from 2019 the term ‘*relative immigration*’ and ‘*family reunification*’ was found in a large number of articles, often related to political debates.

The selected time periods of this study means that the examined articles were published in the summer months of June and July, traditionally a time of news drought. However, this also means that the selected time period coincides with Almedalsveckan; a week of political profiling and lobbying that takes place each year on the Swedish island of Gotland. As Almedalsveckan presents a chance for party leaders to showcase themselves and their agendas for the upcoming political year, it is perhaps no surprise that political and economic arguments – reflected in the

frames conflict, attribution of responsibility and economic consequences – are present throughout the studied corpus.

Dates with most newspaper attention (by number of printed articles) in 2016 were 21 June (8 articles), 22 June (10 articles), and 23 June (8 articles) (Appendix II: Table 10). 2019 saw highs on 14 June (4 articles), 19 June (7 articles), and 2 July (5 articles) (Appendix II: Table 16). Quite naturally, the increase in media attention for both years mirror the dates surrounding the vote for the Temporary, and later the Extended, Act in the Swedish parliament. In 2016 the vote was passed on 21 June 2016, and in 2019 the vote was passed on 18 June 2019. The second 2019 high in July in turn, correspond to the annual political event Almedalsveckan, which took place between 30 June and 7 July, in 2019.

Naturally, these events are also reflected in the headlines. Typical headlines from the 2016 dates with attention highs were: *'Painful. But necessary to safeguard the right to asylum'* (21 June); *'How temporary is the tightening of the asylum politics?'* (22 June), *'The Refugee law a democratic dilemma'* and *'Far from open hearts'* (both 23 June). The 2019 dates saw reports on current party polls in the lead up to the vote on the Extended Act, in the style of *'Moderate party reclaiming constituents – Christian Democrats fall behind'* (15 June); the results of the vote reflected on the day after – *'Tightened family reunification law extended'*; *'New regulations spark hope for family reunification'* (both 19 June) – followed by validations of the same in a political context: *'Stricter policy to increase integration'* (2 July). For all headlines from the mentioned dates, see Appendix II: table 11, table 17.

#### 5.1.1. Neutral, rather than negative

Comparing the tone of portrayal (positive, neutral, negative) of the topic of the Temporary/Extended Act in the 2016 and 2019 cohorts respectively, a neutral portrayal stands out as the most salient, found in over half of the 2016 articles (Appendix II, Table 12) and almost three quarters of the 2019 articles (Appendix II, Table 18). Looking at variation between the two years, 2016 articles show more differentiation in tone of portrayal overall, with a third of the articles having a negative tone, and close to nine percent depicting the topic positively. In the 2019 articles the negative number of articles is closer to 25 percent and positive articles make up a negligible three percent.

Thus, the findings of this study do not outright reflect previous studies that have found negative portrayal of immigration to be the most dominant, even when looking at studies concerning

solely Swedish sources (e.g. Strömbäck et al., 2017), see section 2. 2. However, it is noteworthy that neither does the neutral emphasis found here indicate a tendency towards positive reporting similar to that found in cross-national studies by Berry et al. (2016); De Cock et al. (2019); and Hovden et al. (2018), see section 2.1. Rather, as aforementioned, the presence of positive portrayals is (very) limited, with neutral together with negative portrayals outweighing the positive by far, especially so in 2019. Additionally, when taking the results from the frame analysis into account, we find that *conflict*, a frame with inherently negative connotations, stand out as the most dominating frame for both examined years. I would thus regard this neutral-to-negative dominance as in line with the finding of Eberl et al. (2018), that “negative and *conflict centered*” (Eberl et al. 2018, p. 207, italics added) depictions of immigration dominate media.

## 6. Analysis and interpretation

Two research questions were posed: R1: What themes (in reporting/depiction) are identifiable in printed news media coverage regarding the Temporary and Extended Alien’s Act in the years 2016 and 2019, respectively? And R2: Is there a difference in reporting themes regarding the Temporary Act in 2016, as compared to the Extended Alien’s Act 2019? If so, what are the characteristics of these changes?

Due to their interlinked nature, R1 and R2 are reflected upon jointly.

### 6.1. Frames

Examining the selected articles through the lenses of the four factor pairs of ‘big news’ listed by Galtung and Ruge (1965), with the additional adaptations of Harcup & O’Neill (2001, 2017) (see section 3.2.), plenty of common identifiers of both the aforementioned are found. For instance, both ‘*conflict*’ and ‘*bad news*’ clearly dominate the studied corpus, as well as the presence of ‘*elite people*’, where the ascendancy of domestic politicians stands out, and ‘*elite organizations*’. Systemized through Semetko & Valkenburg’s (2000) set of news frames, the following observations were made under each of the five main frames of *conflict*, *human interest*, *attribution of responsibility*, *morality* and *economic consequences*.

### 6.1.1. Attribution of responsibility

Second most prominent for both examined years, and displaying an additional increase in 2019, the *Attribution of responsibility* frame is closely linked to actions and obligations regarding the examined topic on a governmental level. It also carries with it connotations of urgency and problem-solving, focused on the alleviation of the (perceived) problem at hand. As it is a problem-focused frame, it is also often associated with the *Conflict* frame; a link that was clearly visible in this study as well.

The subject of a new, subsequently extended, law is judicial in nature and thus naturally closely linked to actions and legislative decisions at a national level. Additionally considering that the focus area of said law is immigration, and that its introduction to the public is made in direct response to a perceived national ‘crisis’, the link between the government and the topic of the Temporary/Extended Alien’s Act is a candid one. Political opponents of the ruling government refer to the major parties’ politics as either the root of, or considerably contributing to, the situation at hand, and therefore naturally emphasizing the government’s responsibility for being in fault for the current state of affairs. Sympathizers of the ruling party also attribute responsibility to the government, but with the difference that the attribution here can be positive, or neutral, e.g. proposing the Temporary/Extended Act was the right action to take and the right way forward; the government is playing an active role in the direction of the nation.

In 2016, ‘*elite organizations*’ such as the European Union, and EU-legislation, such as the Dublin agreement, is a presence in the background, and often referred to in terms of responsibility. Most commonly, articles indicate that other member states have failed to fulfill their responsibilities during the ‘crisis’ of 2015, while Sweden carried an unreasonable part of the ‘burden’. An article on differences within the Social Democratic party relating to migration policy and the Temporary Act, contains the following quotation by a party member:

“A very large mass of people. [...] When the influx has been as copious as it has, all EU countries must share in solidarity. Sweden and a few other countries cannot carry all of it.” (Lönnaeus, 2016, p.7).

This reflects the findings of Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) who found that in countries with a strong welfare state, responsibility was increasingly often attributed to the government or government level organizations, seeing as “the government is expected to provide answers to social problems”, rather than individuals (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 106). This is also in line with An & Gower (2009), who found that, especially in cases where the crisis in question is perceived as fully or to some degree preventable, “media are more likely to focus on

attribution of responsibility in crisis situations” (An & Gower, 2009, p. 111). In a debate article by the Secretary General of Save the Children, Sweden, on the perceived effects of the Temporary Act, the reproach on the government is unmistakable:

*” This time last year, 1 850 individuals had lost their lives on the journey towards safety in Europe. This year that number is currently 2 500, according to the UNHCR. The new proposition means that many Syrian women, children, and elderly, who normally would have been eligible for obtaining a safe route of refuge through family reunification, now are forced either to stay on in insecurity or to embark on the life-threatening route across the Mediterranean. This is completely contrary to the ambition of turning the convention of the child into Swedish law and runs counter to the feminist foreign policy.”* (Dahlin, 2016, p. 6).

Along the same line, a 2016 article featuring interviews with representatives from the NGO Refugees welcome, highlights the following quote: *"If Sweden won't take responsibility, we'll do it instead."* (Kudo, 2016, p. 14).

As aforementioned, *attribution of responsibility* often goes hand in hand with *conflict*. One area in this study where this is clearly visible, is internal conflicts within political parties. An example that reoccurs in both 2016 and 2019 is the divide between the Christian Democrats (KD) and the Christian Democratic Youth party (KDU). In a debate article standing in stark contrast to the main party's official stance of pro-family reunification, leader of the (KDU), Skyttedal, expresses thorough critique of the idea of a return to previous immigration legislation:

*”What has been offered has mainly been thoughtless and populist suggestions, or the complete denial of the fact that migration waves and immigration comes at an economic and cultural cost [...] Noone seems to have the courage to face the foundational issues within the asylum system. Instead, stilted voices urge the protection of the right to asylum, when it is exactly the right to asylum which is part of the problem.”* Skyttedal, 2016, p. 4).

The approach is repeated in 2019, in a debate article by Skyttedal's successor, Hallander, published in Expressen the day before parliament voted regarding the Extended Alien's Act, KDU leader Martin Hallander, called the main party's presumed – more generous – line of vote with regards to family reunification in parliament the following day *'irresponsible'* (Hallander, 2019). According to Ekman & Krzyzanowski (2021), the approach of depicting immigration-friendly acts or expressions of solidarity as *“naive, irresponsible”* is an expression of the discursive shift to the right (Ekman & Krzyzanowski, 2021, p. 70, see section 2.3.).



### 6.1.2. Human interest

Where frames such as *conflict*, *attribution of responsibility* and *economic consequences* often represent a macro-level view of the examined topic, the *human interest frame* focuses on the examined topic in connection to people. Who does the examined topic concern and effect, and who is portrayed and how?

Among the examined 2016 and 2019 articles, examples of how individuals and groups are, or will be, affected by the Temporary/Extended Act, both with regards to potential legal and social/emotional consequences, are readily found throughout both years. The use of other *human interest* indicators, such as personal portraits and vignettes, are notably lower, however. This renders a depiction where the individuals affected by the changes in immigration policy brought about through the Act are described or written *about*, rather than interviewed themselves. The few examples of the exception to the rule are a handful of articles, across both years. One article from 2016, describing the scene outside of parliament during the vote regarding the Temporary Act, and one from 2019, a portrait of two brothers from Syria with subsidiary protection status hoping to reunite with their families in the wake of the lessened restrictions brought about through the Extended Act, represent the few news reports which contain direct quotations from concerned parties (Thornéus, 2016; Kudo, 2019). Similarly to the findings of Eberl et al. (2018), female immigrants were found all but completely absent in the reporting.

Additionally, refugees, immigrant and asylum seekers are as a rule referred to as a group, *en masse*, and commonly with euphemisms alluding to natural forces, such as *streams* and *waves*. These findings are reflective of numerous previous studies, such as Eberl et al. (2018); De Cock et al. (2019); Berry et al. (2016); Abdelhady (2020); Yantseva (2020); Rucka & De Cock, (2024) (see section 2.1, 2.2). However, as Strömbäck et al. (2017) additionally report that similar results were found to be prevalent in Swedish media between the years 2010 and 2015, this seems indicative of Swedish media portrayal on immigration across time, rather than a journalistic approach specifically tied to the events of 2015 or the Temporary and Extended Act examined here.

Parallely to the noticeable face-and voicelessness of the groups mainly effected by the Temporary and Extended Alien's Act, the opinions and rhetoric of political party representatives, especially party leaders, are awarded considerable space in the reporting from both examined years. This supports the focus on domestic politicians in Swedish news media

previously noted by Berry et al. (2016), and subsequently confirmed by De Cock et al. (2019), Hovden et al., (2018), and Strömbäck et al. (2017).

As politicians per definition are representatives of the people through democratic election, they serve as readily available examples of how ‘*elite people*’ (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Harcup & O’Neill, 2001, 2017) are used to represent ‘ordinary’ people in news reporting. In the 2019 articles in particular, several members of all the parliamentary parties are expressively vocal in their claims of actively representing the ‘*right way forward*’, and on occasion, the Swedish people’s’ opinions on immigration, and as safeguarding ‘*Swedish values*’.

In previous research of Swedish news media and reports on the topic of immigration, *human interest* has recurrently been found as either the most, or one of the most, common/salient frames applied (Heidenreich et al., 2019; Abdelhady, 2020; Hovden et al. 2018; De Cock et al, 2019), see section 2.1, 2.2. As such, the result of this study, finding *human interest* placed third and with a small decrease between 2016 and 2019, presents a somewhat differing view.

It is however worth noting that Heidenreich et al. (2019) de facto also reported a decrease in the *humanitarian* frame at the peak of the 2015 ‘crisis’, but then saw it regain its position as the most salient frame. I would argue that the 2015 ‘crisis’ examined in the previously mentioned sources and the Temporary and Extended Act examined here differ somewhat in a temporal regard. While the ‘crisis’ of 2015 may be identified by the sudden increase in numbers of individuals entering the country and considered ‘over’ when these levels returned to previous numbers, the topic examined here – the Temporary and Extended Act – has two inherent ‘peaks’ by nature, the 2016 introduction and 2019 extension of the law. The pinpointing of these two points in time making up the basis for this study, might thus explain the less frequent occurrence of the *human interest* frame in this study compared to other works. Thus, it is at this point unclear whether this result may be due to the presence of two ‘crisis’ periods, or the absence of crisis. Future research on the topic would be much welcomed.

### 6.1.3. Conflict

Standing out as the most dominant frame for both 2016 and 2019 is the *conflict* frame. Considering that the topic of the examined articles is the adaptation and extension of a contended law, set in a politically turbulent time, this focus on conflict seems apt. As the frame is based on the presence of disagreement or reproach from one or more sides, the frame is quite wide spanning, rendering the identified conflict(s) in question as multiple, ranging from

expressions of moral outrage from individuals and civil society regarding the introduction of the Temporary and Extended Acts, to political disagreements on both national and international level. As such, it ticks the majority of boxes of the Galtung & Ruge (1965) four particularly newsworthy factor pairs (see section 3.2), and is commonly found together with the *attribution of responsibility* frame (Valkenburg & Semetko, 2000).

Internationally, in the 2016 articles, reoccurring references are made to the conflict between Sweden and the EU with regards to migration legislation and the notion of responsibility regarding refugee reception. Domestically, political conflict in 2016 mainly takes the form of positioning pro or con the new legislation, with the governmental party issuing the proposal for the new legislation, their allies supporting and the opposing parties contesting the new law. On the one hand, the opposing parties criticize how the government handled the migration influx during the second half of 2015 and the ‘too little, too late’ attempt to regain control of the situation manifested in the legislation proposition and the following law; together presented as a failure to rule and sign of incompetence on the government’s, and supporting parties’, part.

In the 2019 cohort, the already dominant conflict frame increased additionally overall. In the articles, the conflict between Sweden and the EU persists, but with a notable decrease in intensity. The conversation has moved more from the calls for common EU reception quotas and upholding the European legislation expressed in 2016, towards discussions of border control of the outer Schengen area and a concern regarding Sweden’s potential return to being viewed as (too much of) an ‘attractive’ country for migrants. Instead, the 2019 articles present an image of immigration and immigration policy as more of an internal affair, focused on Sweden and Stockholm, rather than Syria.

This is reflective of Strömbäck et al. (2017) who note that, due to the interconnectedness between (armed) conflict areas and increased displacement of individuals, media reports on refugee immigration often have common connotations to foreign affairs reports (ibid, 2017, p. 22). As the arrival of new immigrants had greatly decreased in 2019 compared to 2016 through the introduction of the Temporary Act, a shift of focus inwards, towards domestic economic and administrative matters takes place.

One 2019 news story generated such considerable attention that it has the makings of Galtung & Ruge (2016) original news value ‘*scandal*’, with the Harcup & O’Neill (2017) addition ‘*drama*’: a lunch between the leader of the Christian Democratic party, Ebba Busch Thor, and the leader of the Sweden Democrats, Jimmie Åkesson. The meal-oriented meeting, officially

described by the two as a discussion of “healthcare, energy and migration” over a meal of potatoes and meatballs (Thurfjell, 2019,), signified a symbolic shift in Swedish domestic politics, and became little short of a political news sensation (Lönnaeus & Fjellman, 2019; Thurfjell, 2019; Jakobson, 2019; Nilsson, 2019).

For the Sweden Democrats in particular, the symbolic value of the lunch was arguably much greater than just a meeting with another party. It signified the end of the closed ranks of all the other parties in parliament towards the Sweden Democrats, rendering them less of political pariah. On the Christian Democratic party’s part, agreeing to the lunch signaled that the party, and perhaps even more so its leader, had its own political agenda, was ready to challenge established political alliances and on the road to doing so were open to talks with ‘anybody’. Choosing to include migration on the lunch meeting agenda namely spotlighted a delicate topic, as KDs official stance was pro-family reunification and expressly so for children, a matter tightly associated with the party’s emphasis on ‘family values’, while SD on the other hand were explicitly against similar policy adjustments. In a Facebook post after the lunch, Busch Thor was quoted to have written “*There are good prospects for common action on several matters*” (Lönnaeus 2019); a statement which carried with it new questions with regards to its meaning and opened up for additional conflicts.

A similar connection between immigration and the conflict frame has been reported by Strömbäck et al. (2017). They found that as immigration in the form of asylum-seeking individuals requires other kinds of economic and administrative resources from a nation compared to other forms of immigration, and it is prone to generate more political conflict than other types of immigration (Strömbäck et al., 2017: p. 22), see section 2.1.

#### 6.1.4. Morality frame

As the least common frame for both 2016 and 2019, the *morality* frame displays a numerically humble presence in the studied material. Nonetheless, it contributes to interesting perspectives when viewed in combination with the content analysis. It also stands out as the frame within which NGO:s, civil society and members of the clergy are the most visible.

As a nation, Sweden is a highly secularized country. As such, the Christian church and religious organizations are seldomly actively involved in political and social/societal matters on a national level. Reflective of this, few articles where the *morality* frame is present in the studied articles make explicit references to religion; instead, a majority make references to what they

perceive as humane/inhumane/humanitarian attitudes and policies. Some also refer to and call upon ‘values’ of different kinds. In this context, the term ‘Swedish values’ appears in articles with expressly political connotation, as an indicator of preferred social behavior and traditions that should be preserved (e.g. Forsell & Magnusson, 2016).

An exception to this rule is present in the 2016 articles – a couple of debate articles where members of the Swedish Christian clergy, among them the 14 bishops of Sweden, engage in the public debate on the topic of migration and the Temporary Act. Published before the vote in parliament and the day(s) before the Temporary Act became legislative, they urge politicians and members of society to consider the moral implications of the new legislation (Jackelén, 2016; Modéus 2016a).

” Every year members of the parliament vote on a large number of matters. Some of these matters are of major – indeed crucial– concern to moral values. A society’s values are not a beforehand given, rather, we must jointly shape the society we wish for. The policy positions of today are the foundation for the values of tomorrow.” (Jackelén et al., 2016, p. 6).

A single member of the group, the bishop of Linköpings diocese, in addition published a solo-debate article in Dagens Nyheter, headlined ‘*A crisis of values. What is immigration doing to our society?*’ Modéus (2016b). While applying numerous references to both texts and practices of Christian religion, the author similarly refers to the manifestation of these into ‘*societal values*’, ‘*societal value systems*’ and ‘*the value compass of society*’ (ibid, p. 7).

This, quite uncommon, initiative on religious representatives’ part does not go unnoticed. Two days after the publication of the first article, one Expressen lead writer retorts:

“A small elite of bishops and priests from the Church of Sweden seem to have grown accustomed to airing their feelings publicly. [...] Often, they claim to fight for values. Not everything can be reduced to economics. Which is true. [...] But that does not mean that the political views of the Church is some kind of trump card. If representatives for the largest Christian organization in Sweden are interested in supplementing their spiritual activities with public debate, they should learn how to argue like us common mortals.” (Pihl, 2016, p. 2).

This exchange aside, arguments of ‘humanism’ dominates articles referring to the introduction of the Temporary Act. For example, the week leading up to the parliament’s vote on the matter in June 2016 saw debate articles urging politicians to vote counter to the proposition in order to protect “humanism and human rights” (Al Naher, 2016, p. 2), while the Swedish Red Cross and other large NGO: s openly criticized the new law, calling it “unacceptable” and “beyond

coldhearted” (Johansson Metso, 2016, p. 4), and the Secretary General stated that its “humanitarian consequences” will be “enormous” (Jansson, 2016, p. 7). With regards to political affiliation, the term ‘inhumane’ is recurringly found in statements by members of the Environmental Party (MP). Commonly used where a negative or apologetic stance regarding the Temporary Act is expressed, it shines light on the tension the passing of the Act created between the party’s ideology and political pragmatism. One 2016 article features a statement by the party’s spokesperson on migration policy, emphasizing the temporality of the policy changes, and the “aim to return to a more humane legislation” (Lönnaeus, et al., 2016, p. 6), while another reports of disillusioned MP party representatives in the region of Blekinge publicly apologizing on behalf of the party’s representatives in parliament, who voted in favor of the “inhumane refugee policy” (Gudmundson, 2016, p. 4).

Interestingly enough, the same argument of ‘inhumanity’ is often applied by those who welcome the proposition, mentioning naivete on the opposition’s part, and arguing that the former legislation, in fact, was the ‘inhumane’ one (Gudmundson, 2016; Bigert, 2016; Skyttedal, 2016; Forsell & Magnusson, 2016). Politically, the Moderate party and KDU stand out as the main adopters of said language, but it is also used by representatives of the media, such as lead columnist in Svenska Dagbladet, Per Gudmundson (Gudmundson, 2016). This linguistic linking of immigration-positive actions and sentiments with naivete is, as previously mentioned, identified by Ekman & Krzyżanowski (2021) as an expression of how right-wing rhetoric is adopted by mainstream media (Ekman & Krzyżanowski, 2021, p. 70).

While articles referring to ‘principles’ rather than politics more commonly invoke ‘humanism’ (Al Naher, 2016, p. 2) or ‘societal values’ (Jackelén et al., 2016, Modéus, 2016b), it is worth noting that ‘Swedish values’ stand out as a preferred term in articles expressing immigration-restrictive sentiments and most often in connection to the Moderate party, the Christian Democrats and its youth party KDU (Forsell & Magnusson, 2016; Lönnaeus, 2016; Skyttedal, 2016). As such, the expression also often appears together with mentions of cultural values or cultural ‘costs’ related to immigration. For the Moderate party, the introduction of the expression on a wider scale seem to coincide with the party’s day during the Almedalen week in 2016, where Moderate party leader at the time, Anna Kinberg Batra, made numerous references to (undefined) ‘Swedish values’ (Lönnaeus, 2016). Along the same lines, in a debate article published just a few weeks after the Temporary Act was passed in parliament, two Moderate party members, one of them the party’s spokesperson on migration policy, express

the need for a new (restrictive) immigration policy to be instilled in the Act's wake. While cautioning against insufficient immigration integration, they emphasize the need to "strengthen the respect for Swedish values" as a way to alleviate the former (Forsell & Magnusson, 2016, p. 4).

Objecting to both the passing of the Temporary Act and the perceived simplistic popular positioning by members of the political sphere, a journalist expresses his displeasure in an article in Svenska Dagbladet:

*"In one scale of the balance: The fleeing. The desperate mothers and fathers. The little ones whose home and childhood has been bombed into gravel and contorted metal rods. In the other scale the power elite wishes to place us constituents. Us with "Swedish values" (Berge, 2016, p. 17).*

As a 2019 example of the term's adaptation by other political parties, an article interviewing members of the Christian Democratic party, list the following perceived success factors behind the increased popularity of party leader Busch Thor between the years 2018-2019:

"[...] the last weeks before election day in 2018, [she] finally disregarded her party board, broke free, stretched decisions [...] focused on nuclear power, the prayer calls, migration and Swedish values, and thus showed that the Christian Democrats are the guarantee for a conservative government. The Culture war, this group [of party members] insist, is the reason for her success." (Nilsson, 2019, p. 19).

#### *6.1.4.1. The rise of 'Swedish values'*

Besides insights to the media debate related to the Temporary and Extended Act in this specific study, a closer look at the use of the term '*Swedish values*' presents an additionally interesting image. Performing a search on the Retriever website (2024-07-08) for the term '*Swedish values*' (*svenska värderingar*) in all available sources, between the years 2010 and 2023 renders notable results. In the years 2010 to 2015 the occurrence of the term generates between 163 and 218 results. In 2016, however, this increases multifold to 3 578, followed by numbers between 1510 and 2088 for of the following years up to 2019. In 2020 the levels diminish once more to previous numbers, ranging between 538 and 909 between 2020 and 2022. 2023 then sees an increase once more to 1343. Considering the peak seen between 2016 and 2019 and the strong penchant for the term expressed by the Moderate party, the expression seems directly linked to the politically turbulent time after 2015.

### 6.1.5. Economic consequences

The fourth most common frame for both 2016 and 2019 respectively, is the *economic consequences* frame, focused on economic costs linked to the portrayed issue. The frame interplays to a large extent with attribution of responsibility and conflict, in terms of being a reoccurring argument for or against specific policy between political opponents.

In line with the previously mentioned observations of Strömbäck et al. (2017) regarding domestic immigration reporting prior to the events of 2015, this study found economic and administrative costs related to immigration recurrently mentioned in the examined articles, often through the perspective of the concerned authorities or domestic politicians. References to whom is – often in contrast to whom *should* be – bearing the costs, is commonly made, thus rendering the attribution of responsibility and economic frames present in the same articles. An additional observation is that the costs in question are very seldomly specified, leaving it to the reader to assess their extent.

For example, in 2016, KDU leader Skyttedal makes references to both economical and ‘cultural’ costs related to immigration reception (Skyttedal, 2016), and party secretary for the Moderate party, Tobé, presents “*decreasing costs for subsidies and migration*” as a crucial component of success for the party’s ‘*plan for a stronger Sweden*’ (Österstam & Bengtsson, 2016, p. 10).

Also referring to economic costs in connotation with immigration and the Temporary Act, but representing another angle, are two 2016 articles. The first is the previously mentioned article authored by the bishops of Sweden, Jackelén et al. (2016). Noting that temporary, rather than permanent, residence permits will become the rule under Temporary Alien’s Act, the authors foresee increased administrative costs connected to their processing, for both the Migration Agency and the Migration courts. On the same theme, but standing in contrast to the former, the other is an article mentioning how a decrease in the number of expected asylum seekers causes the Swedish Migration Agency to adjust the predicted costs linked to immigration by two billion Swedish kronor less compared to the agency’s previous prognosis (Ezpeleta, 2016).

In both 2016 and 2019, a double connotation of Sweden’s ‘generous’ migration politics – indicating both judicial inclusivity and economical costs – is present in several articles. Linking legal ‘generosity’ regarding family reunification with economical, and occasionally social, costs, an image of (irresponsible) spending on the government’s part is conveyed by parties in opposition.



2019 also sees additional focus on the increased costs linked to immigration experienced by municipalities, when locally implementing nationally enforced policies such as the Extended Act (Boscanin, 2019; Gröning, 2019; Hallander, 2019; Sandström, 2019). A lead article in Göteborgs-Posten, published the day after the Extended Act was voted on in parliament, critiques the passing of the “too generous” policy, and expresses added exasperation that this decision was reached in close proximity to the prediction of a large deficit in the welfare sector by the year 2026 by the minister of finance:

“In a situation like the current, facilitating relative immigration is irresponsible. The problem is not that people shouldn’t be able to bring their families here, but that Swedish taxpayers shouldn’t have to bear the cost.” (Boscanin, 2019, p. 2).

Inspired by the findings of Berry et al. (2016), reporting that ‘*refugees*’ and ‘*asylum seekers*’ were the most commonly applied terms in Swedish media to describe arriving individuals, and those of Eberl et al. (2018), correlating the language used by media to describe groups of immigrants and economic frame presence; a simple, explorative, wordcount of the words ‘*asylum seeker*’ (asylsökande), ‘*refugee*’ (flykting), ‘*immigrant*’ (invandrare) and ‘*migrant*’ (migrant), see section 2.1, was performed on the examined articles from both years. Eberl et al. (2018) found the terms ‘*migrants*’ and ‘*immigrants*’ to be closely associated with the frame of economic threat, for instance, increased competition on the labor market, while ‘*refugees*’ and ‘*asylum seekers*’ are associated with economic burden, such as increased costs for the welfare system.

In the 2016 articles, ‘*asylum seeker*’ occurred on 179 instances, and ‘*refugee*’ on 235. ‘*Immigrant*’ appeared on 15 occasions, used in articles targeting legislation from a political standpoint (Skyttedal, 2016; Kudo, 2016; Forsell & Magnusson, 2016), and ‘*migrant*’ appeared on 29 accounts. The 2019 articles saw a considerable decline in both ‘*asylum seeker*’ and ‘*refugee*’ along with a more even distribution between the two, with 55 references made to ‘*asylum seeker*’ and 60 to ‘*refugee*’. ‘*Immigrant*’, however, increased multifold to 43, and was commonly featured in articles focused on politics, with immigration-restrictive connotations. Party politicians arguing for new and/or restrictive policies, such as the Moderate party presenting their ‘language package’ as a tool to increase integration during the Almedalen week (Moderaterna, Delling, 2019), is one example.

*'Migrant'* only occurs on 13 occasions in 2019, and notably so in articles where the distinction between groups of individuals is of relevance to the argument made therein, e.g., in an article specifying judicial aspects of the asylum policies, distinguishing between socio-economic migrants and refugees and individuals of subsidiary protection status (Färm, 2019); in an article undersigned by two academics in the field of ecology, with reference to demographics and economic costs of immigration (Andersson & Görmark, 2019), but also articles with political content (Kudo, 2019; Nordenskiöld, 2019) where distinctions are made explicit, for varying reasons. Thus, in both 2016 and 2019, *'immigrant'* was a comparatively seldomly occurring word, but with salience in articles of political connotation presenting 'cautionary examples' of effects connected to immigration and integration; indicative of 'taboo news' as described by Titley (2019), see section 2.3.

In conclusion, similarly to Berry et al. (2016), *'refugees'* and *'asylum seekers'* were the most commonly used descriptions of individuals effected by the Temporary Act. Additionally, the interaction between frame and language as reported by Eberl et al (2018), is clearly observable in this study as well, however with less (clear) distinction between the two types of economic effect. While the use of *'migrant'* was less frequent in the 2019 articles compared to the 2016 ones, *'immigrant'* nearly tripled, and was often featured in articles of political connotations, often with immigration-restrictive angles. I would thus suggest that this study supports the connection between language use, the economic frame and the idea of burden or cost but shows less ties to the labor market than reported by Eberl et al. (2018).

## 6.2. From rights to right-wing?

As this study focuses on public printed media and not social media, it is difficult to comment on whether the specific hybrid mode of politization that Kryzanowski (2018) argues the Social Democrats employed on Twitter in 2015 (see section 2.3), is visible in the here studied articles as well. However, indications of the more general normalization and adaptation of rhetoric from right-wing/anti-immigrant party Sweden Democrats by mainstream parties, can be clearly found, I argue. This shift is made most visible when comparing the cohorts of 2016 and 2019.

The lunch between the party leaders of the Swedish Democrats and the Christian Democrats in 2019 illustrates a normalization of not only rhetoric, but of the Swedish Democrats as both political party and political player. Establishing themselves on the political arena through the

role as driver of the political focus on ‘immigration issues’, the Sweden Democrats influenced the domestic political climate in general, thus driving the other parties to adapt, reflective of the findings of Puschmann et al. (2018).

### 6.3. Summary

Comparing the presence of frames alongside themes identified through the content analysis, a noticeable move in focus, from refugee/immigrant centered reporting in 2016 to domestic political debate on immigration in 2019, is visible. Whereas articles from 2016 A shift in perspective between 2016 and 2019; from international/European, to national. In 2019 the presence of the Act has been largely ‘normalized’ and established, and debate focuses on if, when, how, and why immigration should be restricted further, rather than whether it should be restricted at all. The calls to vote against or tear up the Temporary Act expressed in 2016, are replaced by internal political positioning and discussions of refugee quotas, characteristics of immigration legislation after June 2021, and the different political parties’ views of ‘the right way forward’ with regards to immigration and integration.

## 7. Conclusion

My first aim was to examine what themes (in reporting/depiction) are identifiable in printed news media coverage regarding the Temporary and Extended Alien's Act in the years 2016 and 2019, respectively. In order to do so, social constructionism and news value theory was selected as a suitable theoretical foundation. For the news frame analysis, the Valkenburg & Semekto (2000) news frame set, consisting of 20 framing questions aimed at identifying (the) five dominating news frames, *conflict*, *attribution of responsibility*, *economic consequences*, *human interest* and *morality*, was applied to the selected corpus of 168 articles.

My second aim was to assess what, if any, differences in the use of news frames could be identified between the articles published in 2016, on the topic of the Temporary Alien's Act, compared to the articles published in 2019, on the topic of the Extended Alien's Act. For this step, an initial comparison of the quantitative results, displaying the differences in presence of news frames between the years in percentages, was performed. These results were then in turn used as guidance for a content analysis of the article texts. Previous research provided additional context and contrasts to the findings.

I found that news stories regarding the Temporary/Extended Alien's Act in both 2016 and 2019 applied news frames in the following order of predominance: *conflict*, *attribution of responsibility*, *human interest*, *economic consequence* and *morality*. Although the presence of frames was similar for both years, a closer examination of each year showed internal thematic variations. The *attribution of responsibility* frame and *conflict* frame showed statistical variations within the 5% interval, while *economic consequence* was just below at 5%, but within the interval at 10% level.

With regards to content, an overarching change in focus from international to domestic politics, was clearly visible between 2016 and 2019. Along with this shift in perspective, a shift in ideals and concerns expressed follows: from debates regarding the moral implications of a restrictive immigration policy to the suggested immorality of maintaining a too 'generous' or 'open' immigration legislation; from concern regarding what the Temporary Act and 2015 'crisis' means for those fleeing, and for Sweden as a nation, to an increased focus on economic and other, intangible and perceived, costs, tied to immigration and integration.

### Main findings

- Reflective of this study's focus on a contested policy, *conflict* and *attribution of responsibility* frames were the most common frames. However, the *human interest* frame stood out as less frequent than suggested by previous research, such as Heidenreich (2019). Compared to previous research focused specifically on 2015, this study, although directly connected to immigrating individuals of 2015, has a more legal focus on effects, which might contribute to the observed emphasis on frames associated with government and political conflict.
- A shift in perspective between 2016 and 2019, from international/European, to a domestic focus. In 2019 the presence of the Temporary – turned Extended Act had been largely 'normalized' and established, and debate focuses on if, when, how, and why immigration should be restricted further, rather than whether it should be restricted at all. The calls to vote against or tear up the act expressed in 2016, are replaced by internal political positioning.
- As previously mentioned, immigrants and refugees featured in the studied articles were overall referred to as groups, rather than individuals. This collective imagery, and its pairing with the use of nouns with naturalistic connotations, further establishes and maintain a sense of otherness and facelessness. Words such as '*streams*', '*wave*', and '*rivers*', carries with it implications of something organically untamed and out of (or at least beyond) control, potentially threatening the order of the more 'humanly' organized world. This type of rhetoric is typical neither of the studied time period nor of the 2015 'immigration crisis', as noted by Strömbäck et al. (2017), but it is worth highlighting just how established it is, and how it permeates the topic of (refugee) immigration at large on a national level.
- The emphasis on immigration and immigrants as a cultural threat, most explicitly emphasized through the '*Swedish values*' discourse, interestingly reflects the discursive shift towards the right and adoption of right-wing rhetoric, as argued for by Krzyżanowski (2018); Ekman & Krzyżanowski (2021) and Titley (2019). It also reflects the findings of Berry et al. (2016), who found portrayals of immigration as a security

threat as scarce in Swedish media, but framing immigration as a ‘*cultural threat or a threat to community cohesion*’ as quite common (Berry et al., 2016, p. 8).

### 7.1. A comment on selection and material

A short reflection regarding the material studied is appropriate here. The basis for selection of the articles included in this study (apart from timeframe and source) was the occurrence of one or more of the identified search words in the text. Although a note of what section of the newspaper each article was published in was made in the initial coding, this information did not form the basis of any additional selection. This means that the studied material encompasses a range of different types of articles, from editorials, to debate, to profile pieces. On the one hand, it can be argued that this contributes to a more nuanced image of how the issue(s) of the Temporary Alien’s Act and Extended Alien’s Act was portrayed in media during the given points in time. On the other hand, it may blur the distinction between ‘news media’ and other contributors to the image presented, for instance politicians voicing their own views in a debate article. With this in mind, this study is careful of claiming to make any wider assumptions regarding the actions of ‘news media’ specifically. Rather, its contribution lies in contributing to a nuanced perspective of the description of the given topic *in news media*, at two historically important points in time.

### 7.2. Suggestions for future research

As this study focuses on the two months surrounding the implication and extension of the Temporary and Extended Acts, it would be interesting to see what findings would be rendered by a study of the frames used around the time of the introduction for the proposal of the Temporary Act and culmination of the ‘migration crisis’, namely September – November 2015, and at the time of the passing of the new permanently revised Alien’s Act in June 2021. As previous research has shown that changes in frames are discernible between ‘peaks’ in news fluctuation (Heidenreich et al., 2019; Hovden et al., 2018), this would be interesting to examine further.

Additionally, without taking away from this study’s contribution to the field through a mixed methods approach, I would readily welcome further study on the subject of media reporting on the topic of the Temporary and Extended Act through approaches where the processing of larger

sets of data is further facilitated. Although the selected keywords applied here provide an ample, and I would argue, representative basis for analysis, the possibility to include additional keywords may contribute to an even richer material. As the identified articles from Retriever were rendered in a format that presented the article text as well as the article page as an image, during the content analysis I occasionally came across articles with content related to the studied subject, where simplified versions of the applied keywords such as just *'the law'* or *'the rules'/'the regulations'* were applied to refer to migration policy and the Temporary/Extended Act. Naturally, such a wider inclusion of search words would in turn necessitate a data processing model that can sufficiently identify and handle the initial inclusion of a large number of irrelevant material in the corpus.

Lastly, a case with some similarities but with very different development, which could pose a highly interesting area for further research would be the EU common directive for refugees from the Ukraine, and a news frame analysis of media reports on the topic of its adoption. Similarly to the Temporary/Extended Act, the Temporary Protection Directive came about as a reply to a sudden change in immigration within Europe and has since been extended twice (first in February 2024 to March 2025, and then once more in June 2024 to March 2026). As Sweden in 2015 experienced an increase of mainly Middle Eastern refugee immigration (geographically distant), while 2021 saw a rise in Ukrainian refugees (harking from Europe's boarder), exploring the link between attitudes towards immigration and geographical origin of the immigration group, as reported by Theorin & Strömbäck, (2020) could be interesting. Additionally, the connection between refugee immigration and media reports on foreign policy and conflict areas found by Strömbäck et al. (2017) could present an additional area of interest to examine in relation to this topic.

This study reflects the salience the topics immigration and integration inarguably seem to continuously have in the domestic political debate, and in the world beyond. All the more reason to further our understanding of the interconnectedness between media, politics and social policy aimed at immigration and integration.

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## Appendix I

### News frame coding questionnaire

20 questions identifying 5 news frames, Semetko & Valkenburg (2000). Adapted by Kvist, 2024.

#### Attribution of responsibility (item R1-R5)

R1: Does the story suggest that some level of government has the ability to alleviate the problem?

R2: Does the story suggest that some level of the government is responsible for the issue/problem?

R3: Does the story suggest solution(s) to the issue/problem?

R4: Does the story suggest that an individual (or group of people in society) is responsible for the issue/problem?

R5: Does the story suggest the problem requires urgent action?

#### Human interest (item H1-H5)

H1: Does the story provide a human example or "human face" on the issue?

H2: Does the story employ adjectived or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?

H3: Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?

H4: Does the story go into the private or personal lives of the actors?

H5: Does the story contain visual information that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?

#### Conflict (item C1-C4)

C1: Does the story reflect disagreement between parties-individuals-groups-countries?

C2: Does one party-individual-group-country reproach another?

C3: Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problem/issue?

C4: Does the story refer to winners and losers?

#### Morality (item M1-M3)

M1: Does the story contain any moral message?

M2: Does the story make reference to morality, God, and other religious tenets?

M3: Does the story offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave?

**Economic consequences (item E1-E3)**

E1: Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future?

E2: Is there a mention of the cost/degree of expense involved?

E3: Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?

## Appendix II

### Results from initial coding, selected tables

Tables 7 – 12 show the results for keywords in articles, publications, frame presence by news source, and publish dates from the initial coding of the 2016 article cohort. Tables 13 – 18 show the results for the corresponding categories in the 2019 article cohort. Real numbers are presented for each table, with percentages in parentheses, if nothing else is stated.

For publish date tables, publish date is presented in an individual bubble. In the occurrence of more than one article published on a given date, the date is presented to the left, and the total number of articles published on that date visible directly to the right of that number.

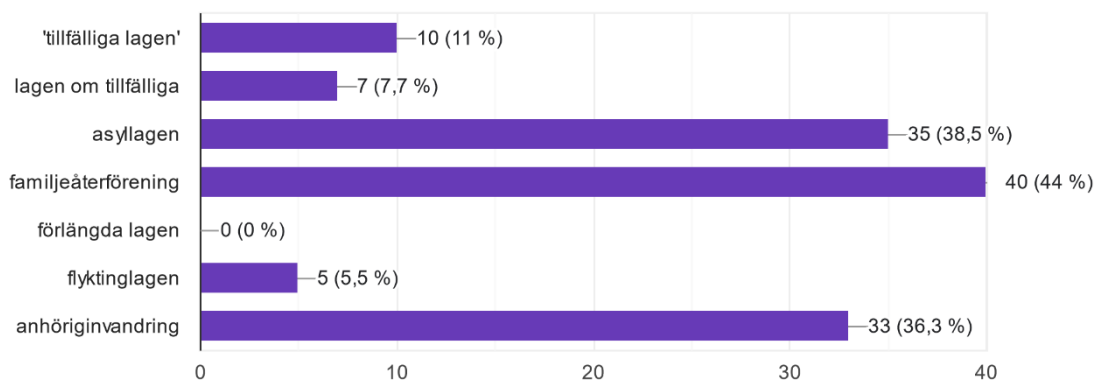
### Tables 2016 cohort

#### Table 7

*Keywords, 2016. N.B. that it is possible for multiple keywords to occur in one article.*

#### Search /Keyword hit in article

91 svar

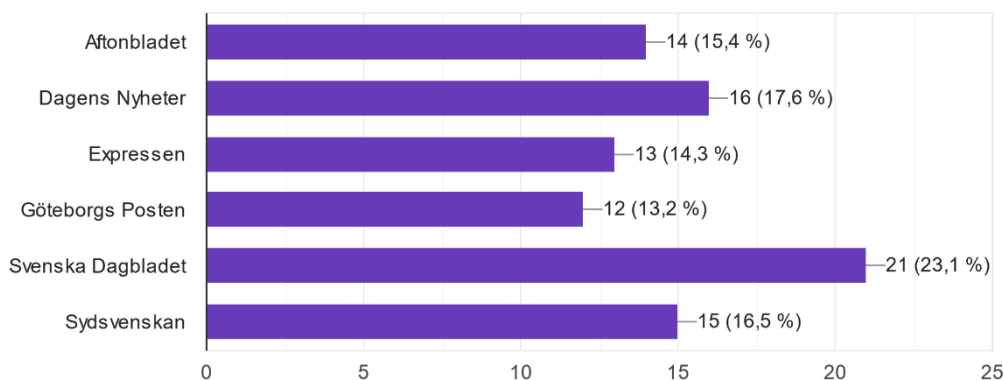




**Table 8***Publications, 2016*

Published in/Source

91 svar

**Table 9***Frame presence by news source, 2016*

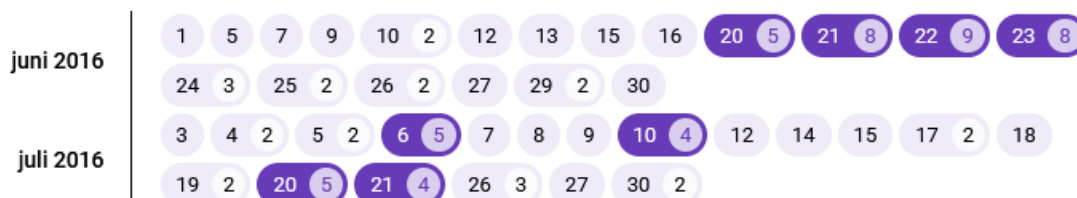
	Aftonbladet (n=14)	Dagens Nyheter (n=16)	Expressen (n=13)	Göteborgs- Posten (n=12)	Svenska Dagbladet (n=21)	Sydsvenskan (n=15)	Total n=91
<b>Presence of frame</b>							
Attribution of responsibility	100% (14)	93,8% (15)	100% (13)	91,7% (11)	85,7% (18)	100% (15)	
Human interest	85,7% (12)	75% (12)	84,6% (11)	58,3% (7)	85,7% (18)	60% (9)	
Conflict	100% (14)	81,3% (13)	100% (13)	91,7% (11)	85,7% (18)	93,3% (14)	
Morality	35,7% (5)	50% (8)	46,2% (6)	41,7% (5)	38,1% (8)	26,7% (4)	
Economic consequences	57,1% (8)	68,8% (11)	46,2% (6)	50% (6)	66,7% (14)	60% (9)	

Presence of frame shown in percent. Real numbers in parentheses.

**Table 10***Publication dates, June – July 2016*

Publication date

91 svar



Each circled number represents a day with a published article. For dates with more than one publication printed, the total number of articles published on that date is presented directly to the right of the date, within an additional circle.

**Table 11***Headlines on 'publication high' dates, 2016*

21 June (8 articles), 22 June (9 articles), and 23 June (8 articles)

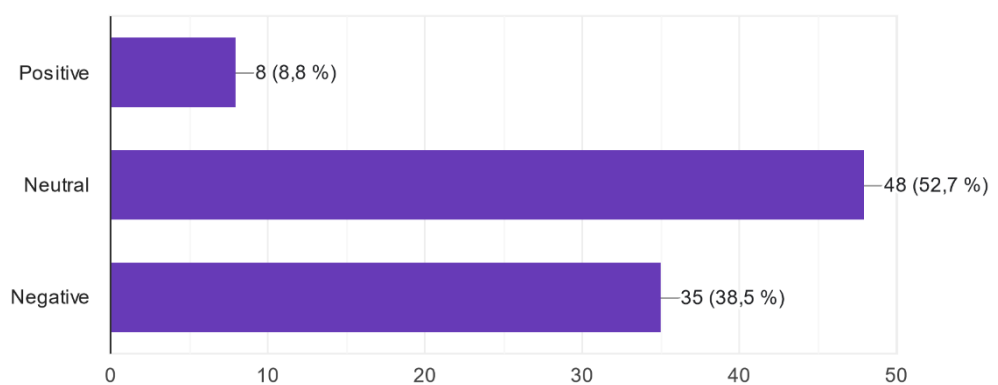
Date	Headline
21 June, 2016	
	Het debatt om asyllag i riksdagen: "En skitlag"
	Nya asylregler är tuffa men nödvändiga
	Juridik mot nya lagar. Nästa slag för asylrätten står i domstolarna.
	Så blottas ett barbari i den svenska modellen
	Ingen hållbar politik
	Smärtsamt. Men nödvändigt för att värna asylrätten.
	Asylpolitik kan ändras efter valet
	En tid av vanmakt
22 June, 2016	
	Asyllagen klubbades
	En sorglig dag - fel väg att gå'
	Ingen rubrik tillgänglig

22 June, <i>cont.</i>	Fyra MP-politiker röstade mot egna partiet
	”Öppna era hjärtan”-politiken vid vägs ände
	Fåtal gick mot skärpt asyllag
	Högljudda protester när asylreglerna skärptes
	Hur tillfällig är skärpningen av asylpolitiken?
	Det här innebär de nya reglerna
	MP-toppar sa nej till nya asylregler
	Röda Korset: Följderna blir ofantliga
23 June, 2016	
	Långt från öppna hjärtan
	Flyktinglagen ett demokratiskt dilemma
	Förtydligande röster asyllagen
	Asyllag hotar demokratin - inte en banderoll
	Hela Sverige svänger
	Pinsamt moderat röstfiske
	Hur mycket politiskt hyckleri tål Sverige?
	SD applåderar tuffare lagar

**Table 12**

Positive, Neutral, Negative (headline + article text) portrayal of the topic

91 svar



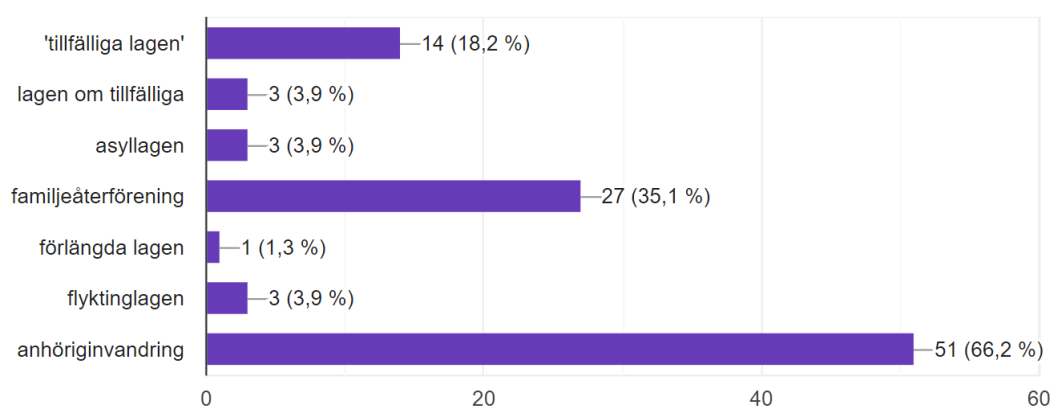
## Tables 2019 cohort

**Table 13**

*Keywords, 2019. N.B. that it is possible for multiple keywords to occur in one article*

Search /Keyword hit in article

77 svar

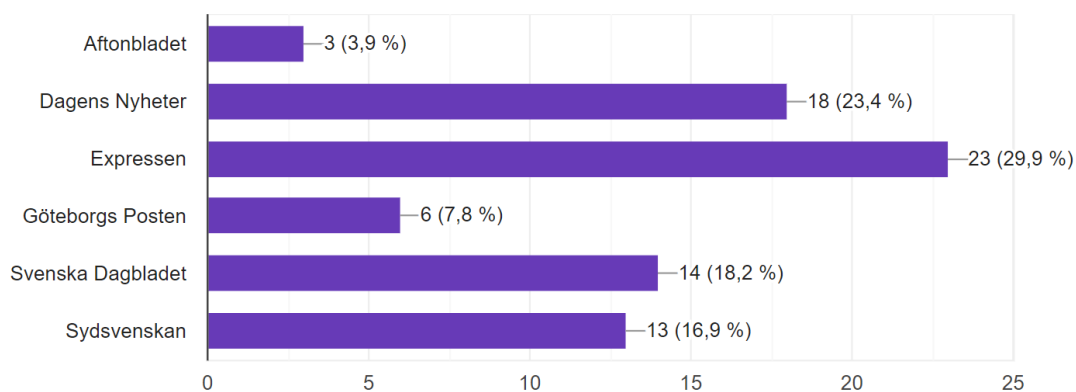


**Table 14**

*Publications, 2019*

Published in/Source

77 svar



**Table 15***Frame presence by news source, 2019*

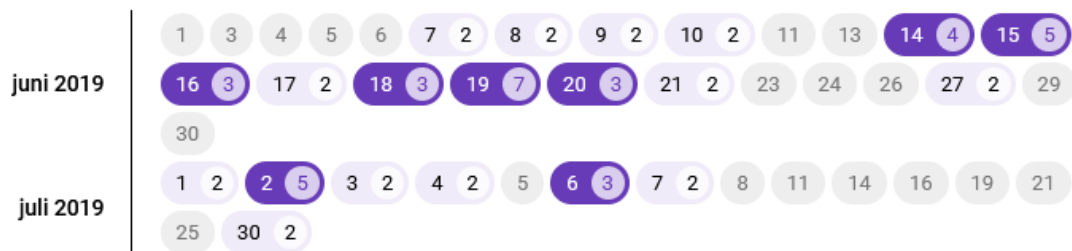
	Aftonbladet (n=3)	Dagens Nyheter (n=18)	Expressen (n=23)	Göteborgs- Posten (n=6)	Svenska Dagbladet (n=14)	Sydsvenskan (n=13)	Total n=77
<b>Presence of frame</b>							
Attribution of responsibility	100% (3)	100% (18)	91,3% (21)	100% (6)	92,9% (13)	84,6% (11)	
Human interest	100% (3)	88,9% (16)	87% (20)	83,3% (5)	85,7% (12)	92,3% (12)	
Conflict	100% (3)	100% (18)	100% (23)	83,3% (5)	92,9% (13)	93,3% (12)	
Morality	0% (0)	44,4% (8)	43,5% (10)	16,7% (1)	42,9% (6)	53,8% (7)	
Economic consequences	0% (0)	50% (9)	69,6% (16)	66,7% (4)	85,7% (12)	53,8% (7)	

Presence of frame shown in percent. Real numbers in parentheses.

**Table 16***Publish dates, June – July 2019*

Publication date

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Each circled number represents a day with a published article. For dates with more than one publication printed, the total number of articles published on that date is presented directly to the right of the date, within an additional circle.

**Table 17***Headlines on 'publication high' dates, 2019*

15 June (5 articles), 19 June (7 articles), and 2 July (5 articles)

Date	Headline
15 June, 2019	
	Oron sprids i KD - partitoppar försöker tvinga bort Adaktusson
	Asylpolitiken prövas i en ny utredning
	Busch Thor tappar 150 000 väljare
	Moderaterna tar tillbaka väljare - Kristdemokraterna backar
	Den gamla axeln mellan M och S vittrar bort
19 June, 2019	
	Höj kraven för anhöriginvandring
	Busch Thors svar till Åkesson: "Oseriöst"
	Ja till utökad anhöriginvandring
	Nytt hopp för bröderna om att återförenas med sina familjer
	Skärpt anhöriglag får förlängt
	Dagens citat
	Nya regler ger hopp om återförening
2 July, 2019	
	Stramare regler ska öka integration
	M-talet var anpassat för Sabuni
	KristerSSons nya strategi: Integrationen
	"Synd att S inte orkat hålla emot om migrationen"
	Inte läge för någon borgerlig familjefest

**Table 18**

Positive, Neutral, Negative (headline + article text) portrayal of the topic  
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