

Migration Narratives in Europe

A Social Media Intelligence Study

Country report for the Kingdom of Denmark



A Bakamo Public  **Project for the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung**

- 2019 -



Context to the Danish Discussion on Migration

- Denmark has been a member of the European Union (former European Economic Community) since 1973, with a population of 5,659,715 in 2015. At its peak, official **asylum seekers in the country made up 0.48% of the population**.^{*} A total of 768,275 residents in the country had immigrant backgrounds, and preventing spatial segregation and ethnic enclaves (officially called ghettos) has been a growing concern in Denmark since the 1980's.
- Public social media conversation in Denmark around migration in one year consists of ~156,364 posts. Compared to population size, **the conversation on migration in Denmark is the 18th largest in the EU**.
- The **Danish welfare state** is at the centre of economic and migration policies with an increasing strictness on handling of asylum seekers and migrants.
- The Danish conversation is quite evenly balanced between the narratives, while it echoes a **growing anti-migrant sentiment** that is highly politicized.
- The government is a minority coalition consisting of Venstre, the Liberal Alliance and the Conservative People's Party. It relies on parliamentary support from the Danish People's Party.



^{*}Source: europarl.europa.eu



Introduction | DK

From Liberal Immigration Policies to Ghetto-laws

In the twentieth century **Denmark had a welcoming attitude towards immigrant workers**, resulting in a fairly large segment of the population having immigrant backgrounds. However, **increasing concerns over the development of parallel societies and whether the Danish welfare state is sustainable with open borders have changed these attitudes and laws.**

In essence, the hard line anti-immigrant stance of the Danish People's Party (DF), who are now an outside supporter of the ruling government is influencing policies and agendas even for the Social Democrats.

We can see this play out on social media as after the parliamentary elections of 2015, local elections were held in 2017, and a new parliamentary (along with the European Parliament's) election is scheduled for 2019, influencing the discourse.



All images represented in this report appeared as attachments to posts on public social media platforms, and are used here as illustrations of the public online conversation.



Key Findings | DK

How and where do Danes discuss migration in the social media space?

Size of Pan-European Narratives

The discourse was a mostly **even split between security, humanitarianism and the economic narratives** – all marking a shift in the paradigm between an open- and a closed society.

Local Issues

The local narrative was the **elections**, as 2017 was and 2019 will be a busy political seasons in Denmark, which shaped the conversation around it.

EU & Domestic Politics

Both EU and domestic politics were quite significant in the conversations, mostly through the **EU level policies of border control** and through the **local policies aimed at removing the “ghettos”** by 2030.

Discussion Tone

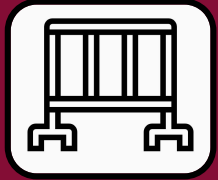
In every subject we can see the Danish discussing in a **highly passionate** matter, showing how polarized the entire migration discourse has become in the country.

Conversation Channels

Almost half of the discourse took place on **Twitter**, with online news, newspapers and blogs following behind, indicating a **quick and opinionated social media space**.



Pan-European Narratives in the Danish Context



The security narrative was dealing on the one hand with the **increased criminality rate of the immigrant population**, and on **sovereign/EU level border security** on the other.



While the discourse in the humanitarian narrative was more **empathetic to migrants** and refugees, it was also challenged by sentiments that the **problems should be handled outside of the EU** – and not within the Danish welfare state.



The identity narrative expressed **anxiety over the changing identity of Europe**, as well as **questions of previously welcoming 'Danish values'**, which are now increasingly used as a basis of cultural assimilation of migrants.



The economic narrative emphasized the definite shift in the Danish paradigm: that **open borders and the welfare state cannot coexist**. While others emphasized the economic benefits of migration, this was overshadowed by the calls to protect the welfare state for the Danes.



The demographic narrative was dealing with **anxieties over the failed integration of migrants in Denmark** detectable especially in high unemployment rate among people with refugee background, and called for strict policies of assimilation to reverse the development of parallel societies.

+ *Pan-European Narratives in Denmark*



1.

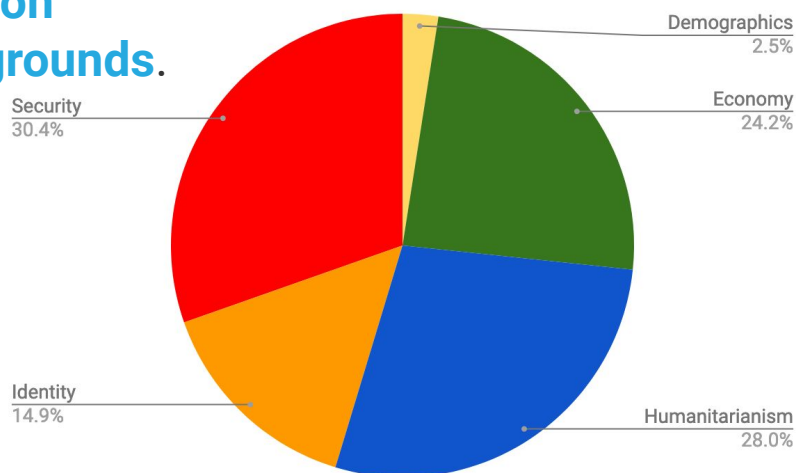


Pan-European Narratives | DK

The shape of the migration discourse

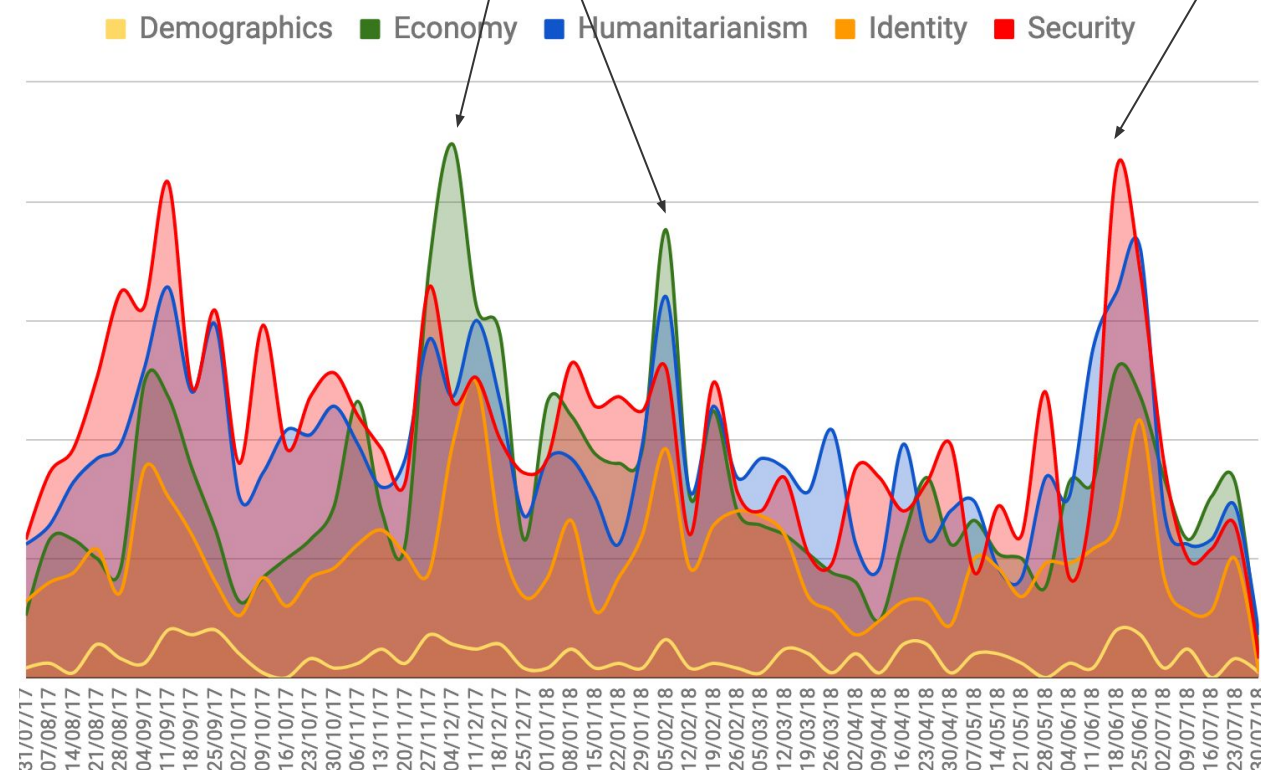
The peaks in the Danish discourse were tied to **local and international political events**, showcasing how **all narratives are political campaign tools in one way or another**. The local elections in November 2017 called for security and identity based measures against local migrants, and soon after the “ghetto laws” were passed, striking another peak and showing that humanitarianism can’t turn politics around by itself. A similar trend can be seen around the **EU migration summit, where stricter policies were celebrated on these narrative grounds**.

Results:
~156,000



Local elections are held, spiking the migration narratives. Soon after the “**ghetto laws**” are passed (see local narrative slide)

EU migration deal flares conversation





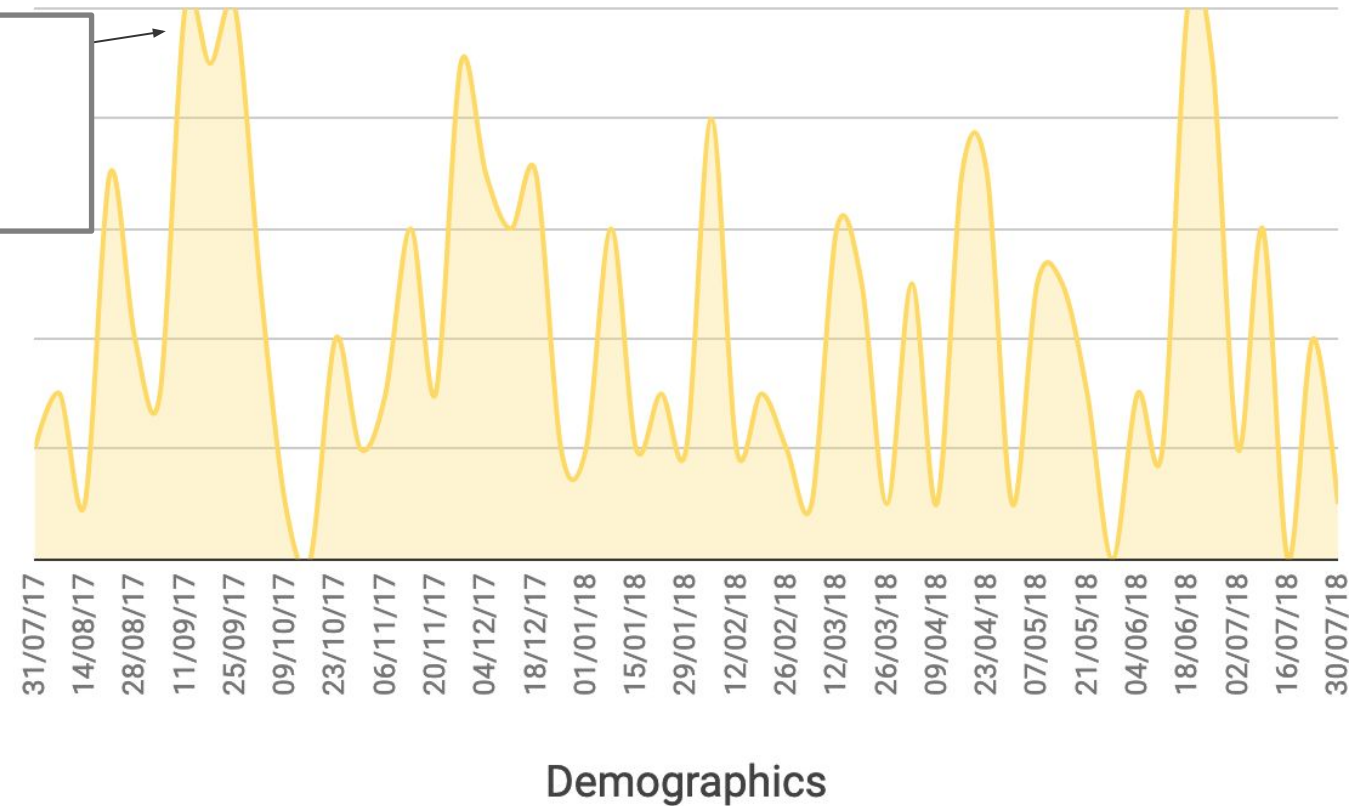
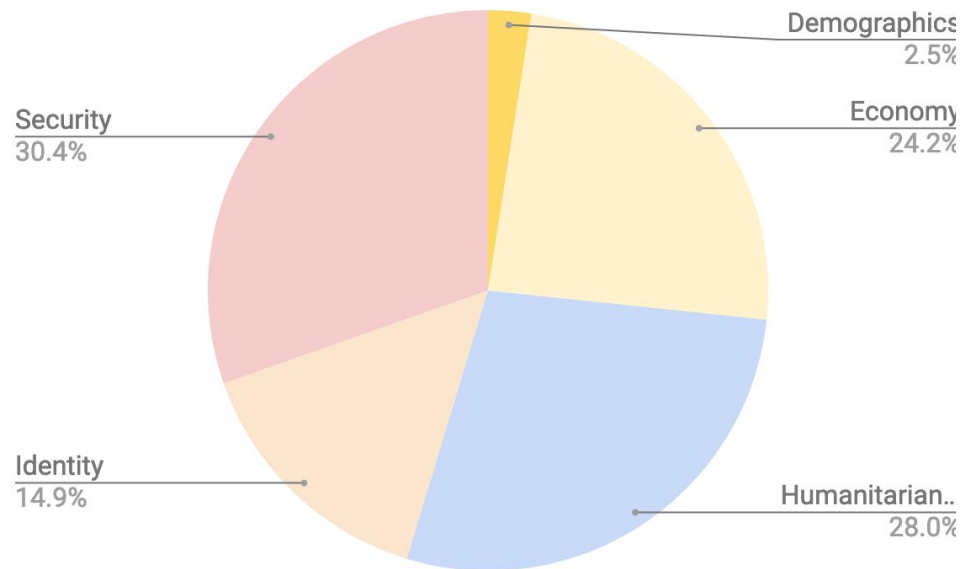
Pan-European Narratives | DK

Demographics (1)

While demography was the smallest narrative, it was concerned primarily whether or not Muslim immigrants (first or second generation) can be integrated into Danish society, and called for *assimilation* to be accepted as a full member. In Denmark this is not only cultural: **a pride in being a contributive member of society implies that having a job is a minimum, folding the high unemployment rate and poverty present among migration under the demographic narrative.**

Results:
~3,900
(2,5%)

Historian Uffe Østergaard
ahead of election says **immigrants should
assimilate to Danish society**



Pan-European Narratives | DK

Demographics (2)

ANTI-MIGRANT VOICES

Demographics above all were concerned with the integrability of migrants

"Our society already has big challenges and **integration has not succeeded.**"

"They should not only **be assimilated to democracy and the law, but also partly to the local culture.**"

"Baby boom will put the public sector under pressure and mean service degradation . What the article does not mention is that it is children of non-Western immigrants who are predominantly the cause of the explosion. Every 5th new citizen today has a Muslim origin"



Images in the demography narrative were concerned with the apparent *difference* of migrants from native Danes, tied in to the discourse of integration/assimilation. The data also showcased Viktor Orbán, famous for his words on “cultural and ethnic homogeneity”, as an example of what should be followed by policies.

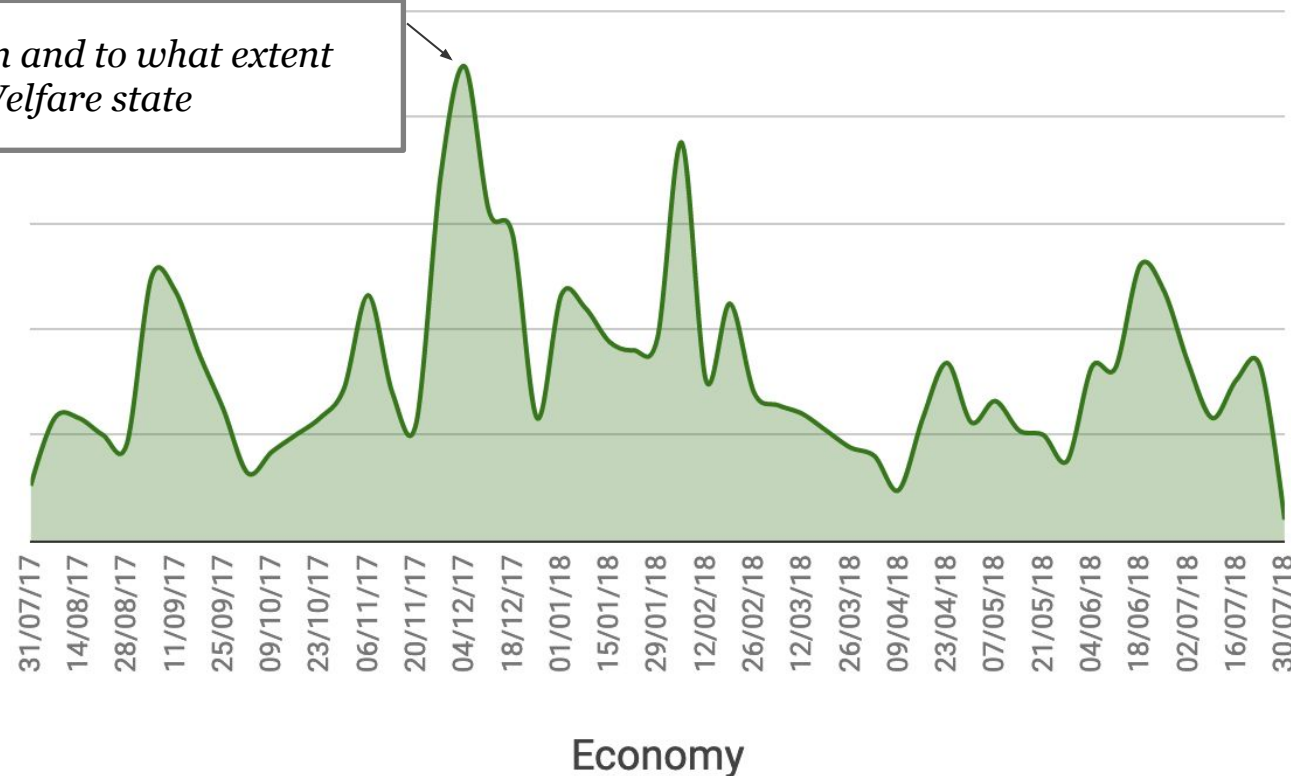
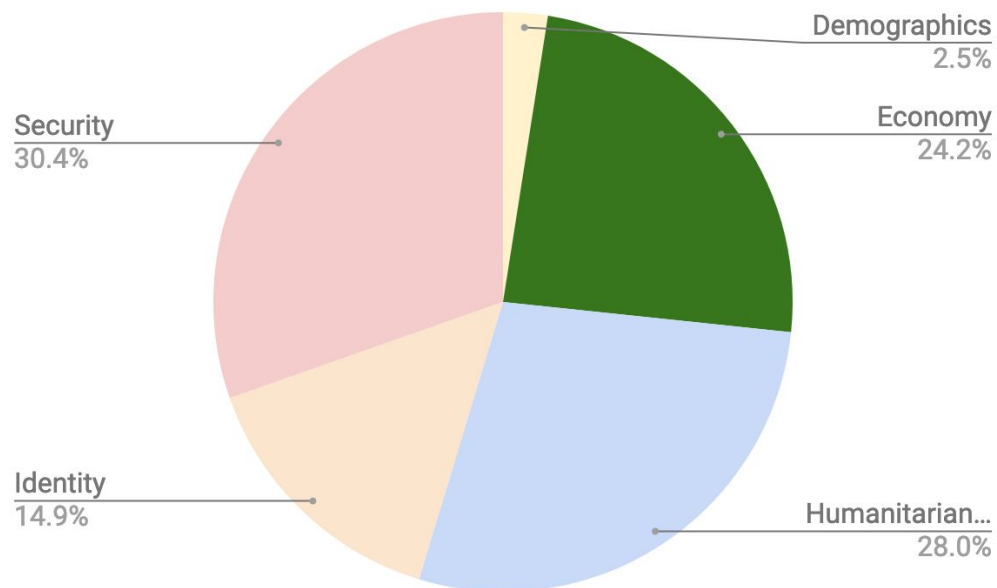
Pan-European Narratives | DK

Economy (1)

Because of their **welfare state**, economy is the third largest narrative in Denmark. However, this is not only expressed in discussing migration as a net positive or negative, but rather by **deploying economic incentives and disincentives for migration, with the latter opinions winning out in local politics**. The argument flows that since existing immigrants ended up as a net cost to the welfare state, refugees who come to Denmark must be kept from turning into permanent residents – even if it means limiting their access to the equal welfare system.

Results:
~38,000

Tax law negotiations spark debate about migration and to what extent non-Danes should receive benefits of the Welfare state



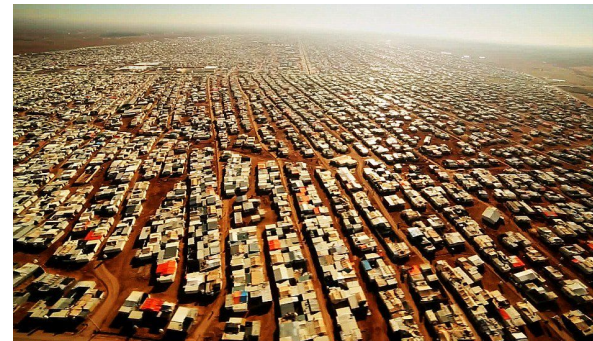
ANTI-MIGRANT VOICES

Migration ends up costing the economy more than it benefits

*“Immigration to Denmark is only a gain if immigrants come to work. **It costs us a lot of money when immigrants come to Denmark and instead end up on public services**”*

“A “paradigm shift “of refugee policy is being negotiated as a part of the tax cuts in the Finance Act.”

*“It is a major catastrophe for our country, and **when tourism is falling and highly educated foreigners will no longer seek Danish companies, it's your fault that we all lose prosperity.**”*



Images in the economic discourse highlighted the trailblazer, Kristian Thulesen Dahl, leader of the Danish People's Party, who called for strong **economic disincentives for migration.**

Other images showcase the poverty associated with migrants and asylum seekers, invoking the subject **whether or not the Danish taxpayer should be footing the equalizing bill.**



Pan-European Narratives | DK

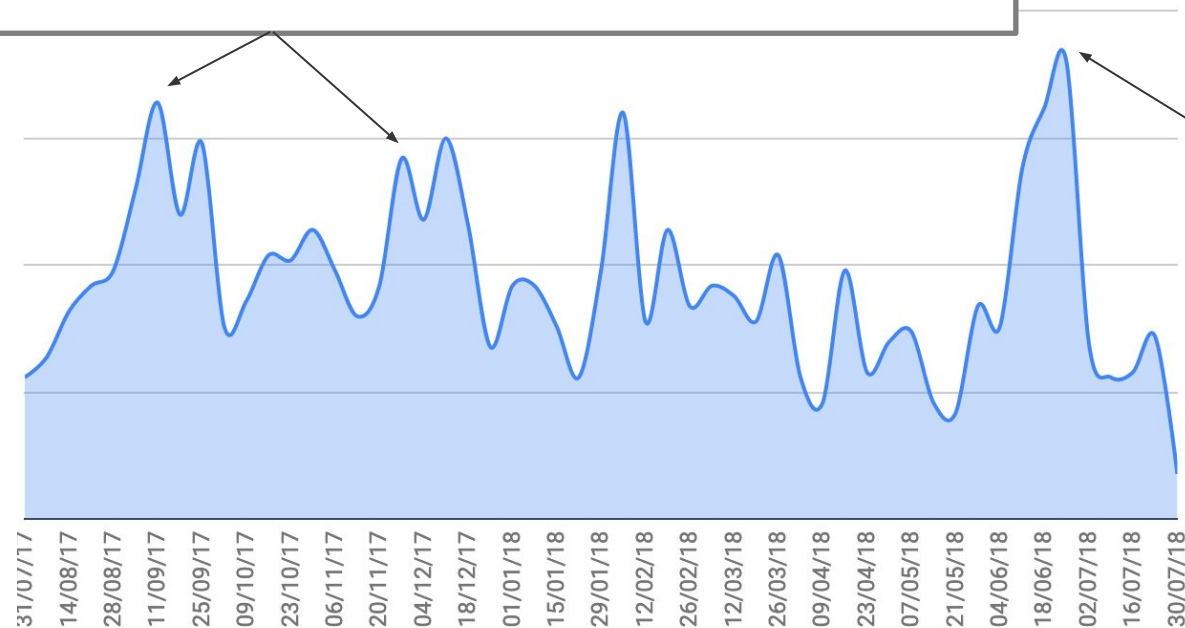
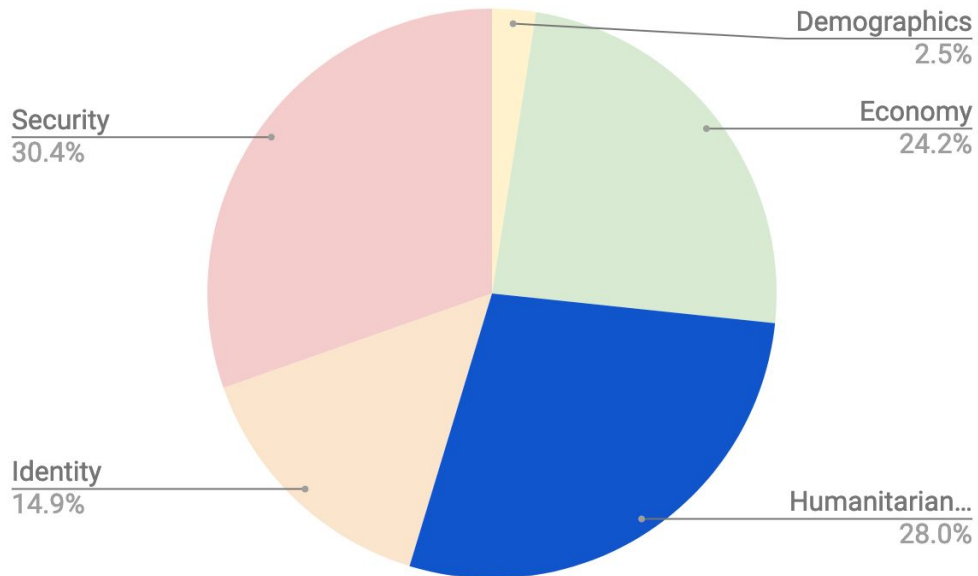
Humanitarianism (1)

Humanitarianism was discussed in relation to local political issues, such as that of the sovereignty of border control and EU level ones like that of the EU migration summit with the associated humanitarian costs. In the meantime, pro-migrant humanitarian concerns were minor, and mostly argued for humanitarian aid to be given to refugees abroad. The mid-spike of humanitarianism came after the local election during the introduction of new measures for "de-ghettification".

Results:
~44,000

Border control sovereignty and **Danish elections** spark humanitarian discourse on refugees and migration

EU28 summit sparks humanitarian discourse ending of the open border/welcoming policies



Humanitarianism

Pan-European Narratives | DK Humanitarianism (2)

Humanitarianism is a policy for aid abroad, not for local politics, and sovereign decisions should be respected on international levels

"The Danish People's Party wants the European Convention on Human Rights - written by Danish law."

"The asylum system is broken, yes, but our Social Democracy does not fix it."

"With support from Denmark's collection, Mission East will create a children's center in Mosul in spring 2018, where about 1,000 children and adolescents aged 4-17 will receive support and education in a safe environment"



The portrayal of migration within the humanitarian narrative showed cues of migrants and asylum seekers on the one hand, and the local population with immigrant background, who live mostly in areas what the government designates as “**Ghettos**” – areas with relatively high poverty, crime and unemployment.

Dismantling these areas is one of the government's priorities to avoid the development of parallel societies, which raised humanitarian concerns from some.

Pan-European Narratives | DK

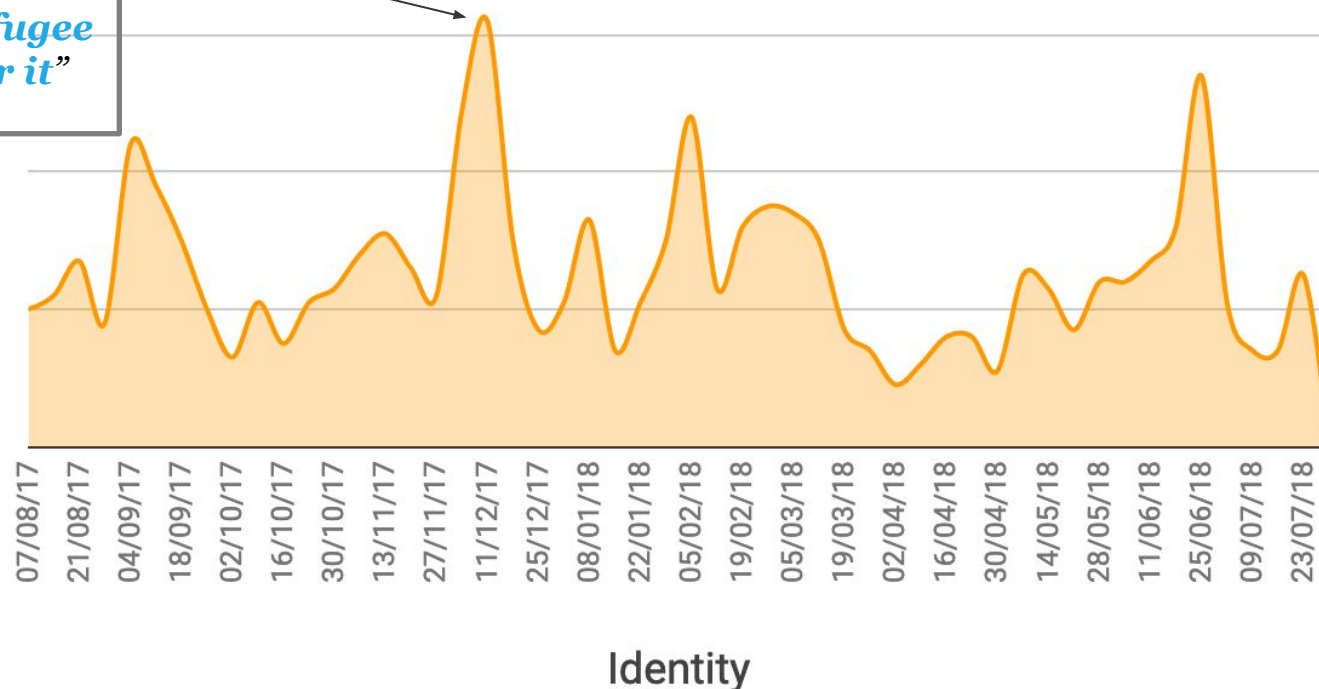
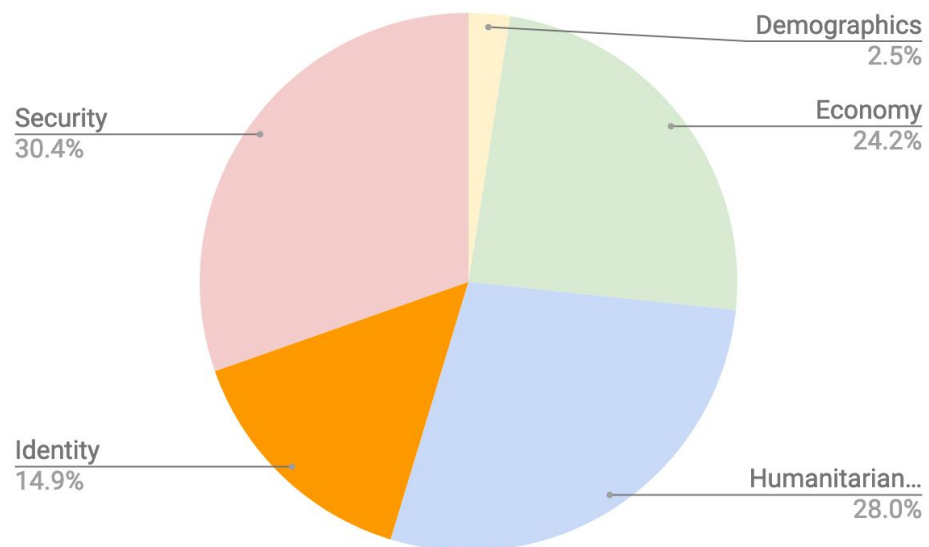
Identity and Customs (1)

The Danish identity narrative shows a paradigm **shift from a tolerant to a discriminatory society**, with apathy, negligence, tolerance, hatefulness and politics mixed together.

The entire discourse on integration-assimilation is seen either as the only tool to counter Islamic radicalization, or as a “moral hysteria” that is dividing society - not just in Denmark, but in Europe as well.

Results:
~23,000

*“A local school drops their Christmas Church programme citing tolerance, and **a Syrian refugee family fears that they will be blamed for it**”*



Pan-European Narratives | DK

Identity and Customs (2)

Migration is the decisive issue for European and Danish identity

*“Angela Merkel's only way beyond Muslim-critical AfD is a **review of her own migration and immigration policy**”*

*“I have an association about **what Danish culture is and it is definitely not Denmark = Migration and Islam**. My Danish ancestors also had an idea of what their culture was.”*

*“These **concepts [of integration]** are often mentioned in **Danish context in connection with radicalization problems** and Danish values”*



The images present within the identity discourse are related to **Danes talking about their own society: whether it can or will turn against authoritarianism or is it apathetic**. In the meantime, migrants are part of this meta-narrative and people ask whether they are a threat to Danish identity or not. Which, when compared to the comments, translates to an answer of a **perceived incompatibility**.

Pan-European Narratives | DK

Security (1)

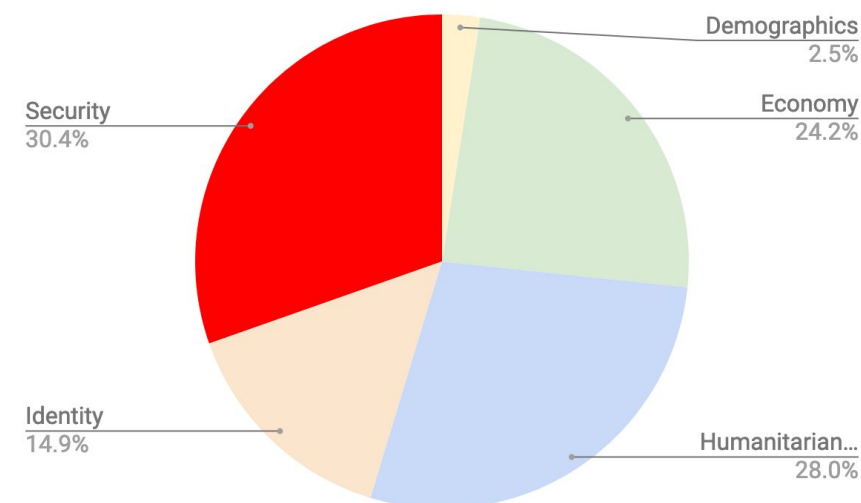
Security had the largest share of all narratives in Denmark, and dealt with two subjects mainly: one was the **elevated crime rate associated with migrants**, both in and out of the country. This threat called for stricter controls on migration, tied in to the question of border control and the juxtaposition of state sovereignty and EU level rights.

With passing of domestic laws after the local elections to deal with the **“ghetto problem”**, the EU-level shift in thinking and policy was discussed on security terms as well at the second peak.

Results:
~46,000

EU summit: **“Seeing the crime rate and the danger of some terror cores, politicians and the society decided to reduce the flow immigrants”**

“EU will no longer allow Denmark, Sweden and several other countries to have **temporary border controls.**”



Pan-European Narratives | DK

Security (2)

ANTI-MIGRANT VOICES

Increased migration causes elevated crime, and consequently higher policing costs

*"It is the **Danish government** and not the European Commission, **who is to decide if border control is to continue.**"*

"A total of 581 men were convicted of rape during the said period, and most of them they had a non-western background."

*"**Border control** results in crazy many working days for Danish police officers"*



The images present in the Danish media within security show the development of increased policing and border control efforts, while emphasizing the “otherness” of migrants as an object to be policed.

+ *Local Issues in Denmark Around Migration*



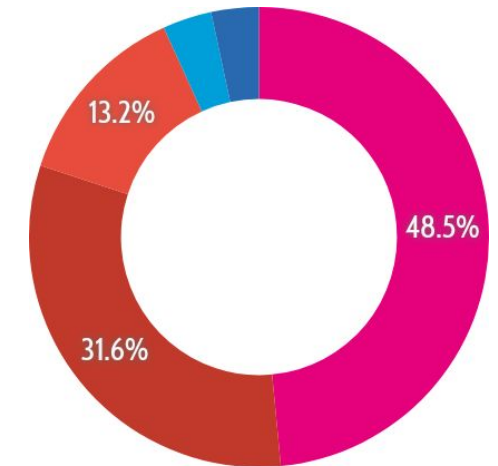
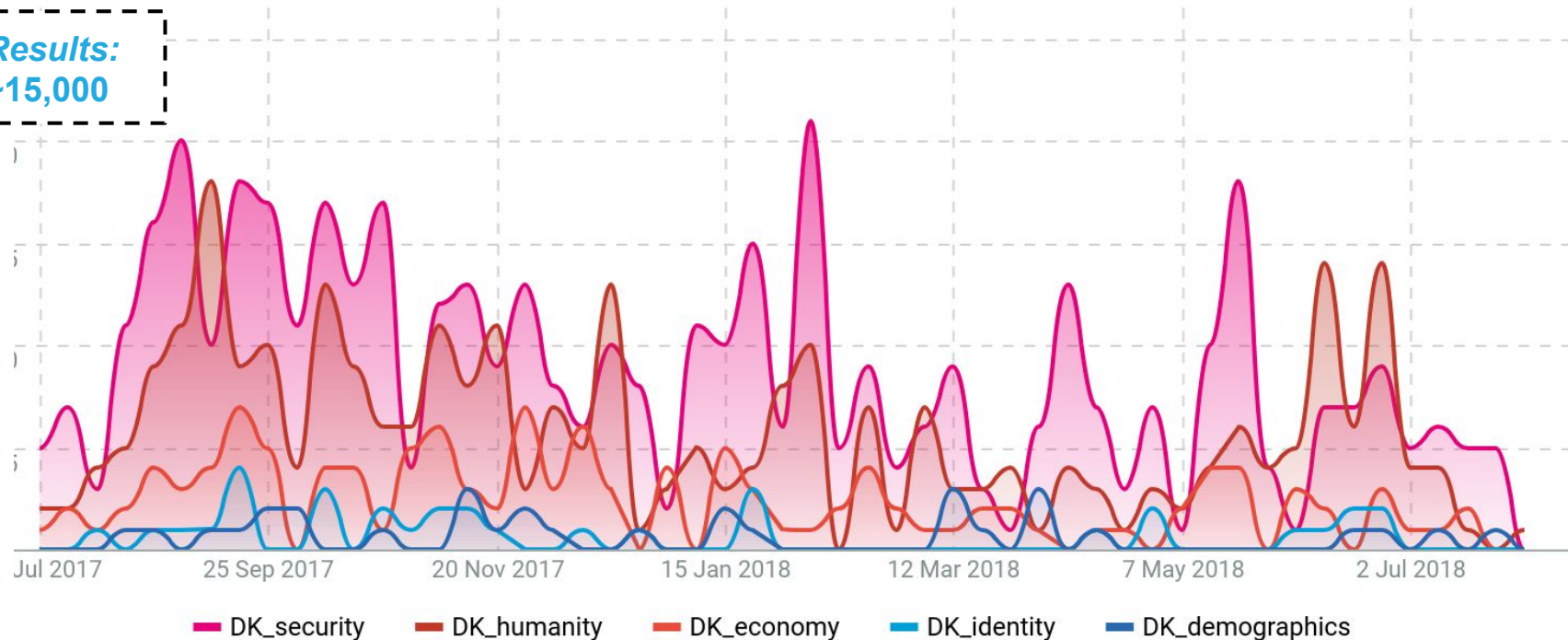
2.



Local Elections Shaped by Migration

At least 10% of the migration conversation explicitly references the elections. The related discourse adequately rise up or die down around and after the local elections (2017 September), and move hectically the next year, as the country moves towards the 2019's EU and general election season. The securitization discourse is notable, as it predicts some key events in local and EU politics.

Results:
~15,000



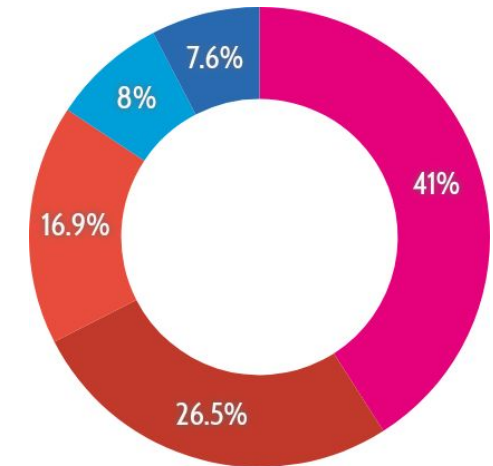
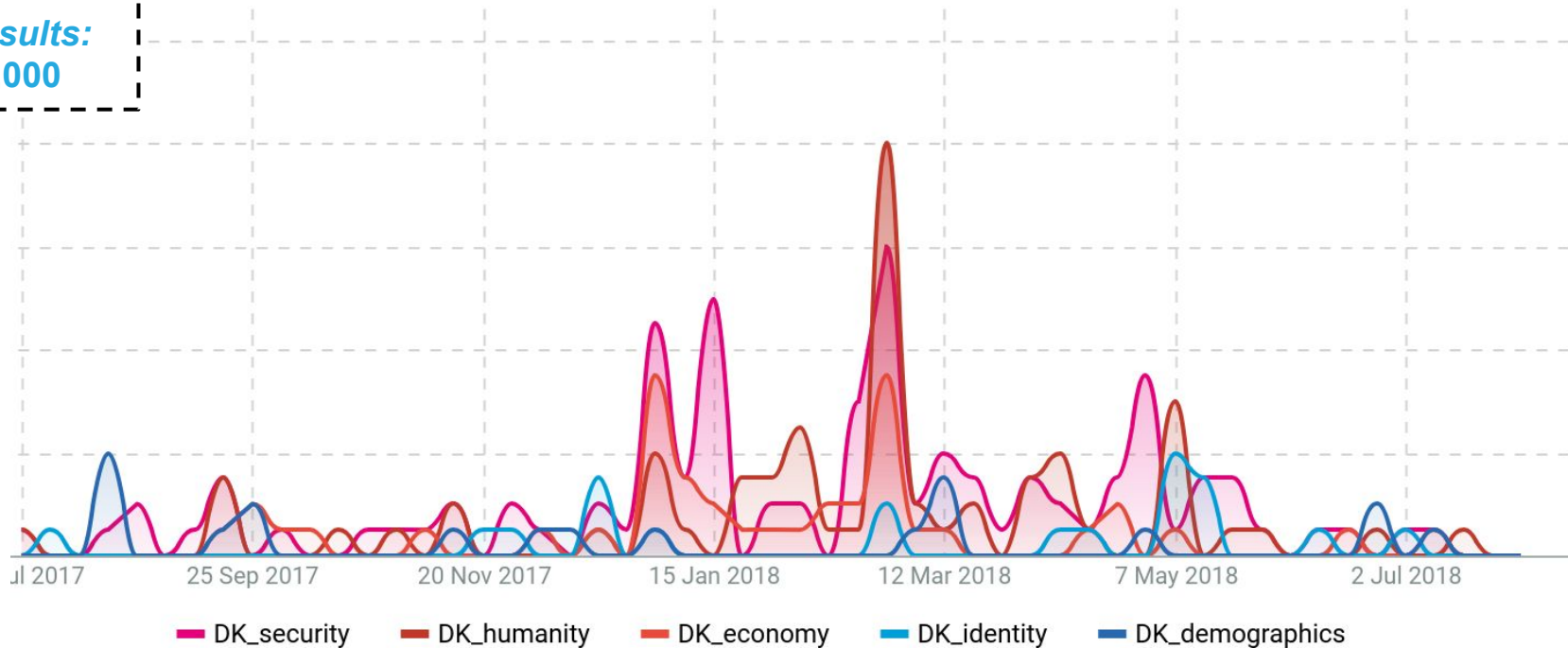
DK_security
DK_humanity
DK_economy
DK_identity
DK_demographics



Ghetto Laws and Assimilation

Following the local elections, migration was discussed in the context of the “**Ghetto laws**”: Denmark has passed legislation that will require children from the age of one living in areas defined as "ghettos" by the state to be separated from their families for at least 25 hours a week to help assimilation. Furthermore, the government has made it clear that they plan to disassemble the ghetto areas by 2030 – showcasing how a **politicized and securitized migration discourse leads to security measures being deployed against the local populace**.

Results:
~3,000



● DK_security
● DK_humanity
● DK_economy
● DK_identity
● DK_demographics

+ *Migration in the Context of European- and Domestic Politics*



3.

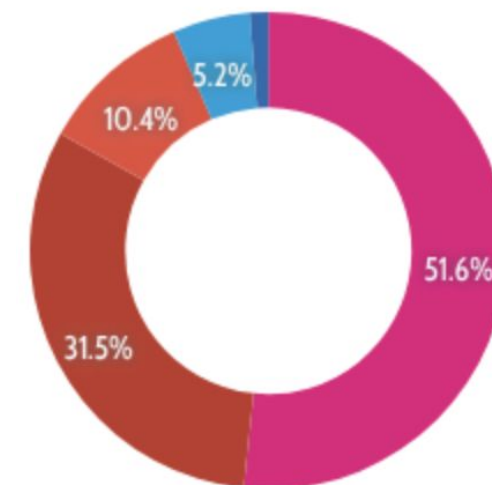
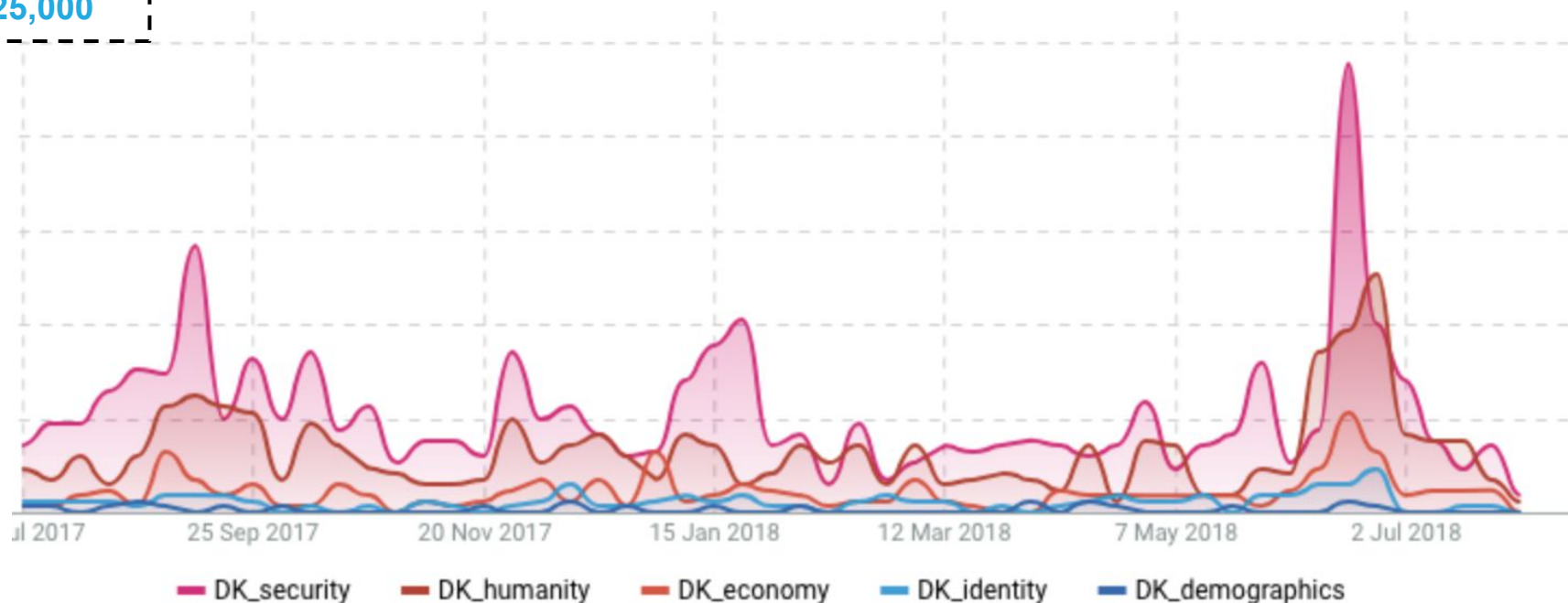


European and Domestic Politics Context within Narratives | DK

EU references point to Schengen

European politics were invoked 16% of the time - first ahead of the Danish local elections, when the EU barred Denmark and other states to continue border controls within Schengen, and second after the EU28 summit, when the overall victory of security-oriented policies over humanitarian solutions on migration and asylum seekers was celebrated.

Results:
~25,000



DK_security
DK_humanity
DK_economy
DK_identity
DK_demographics

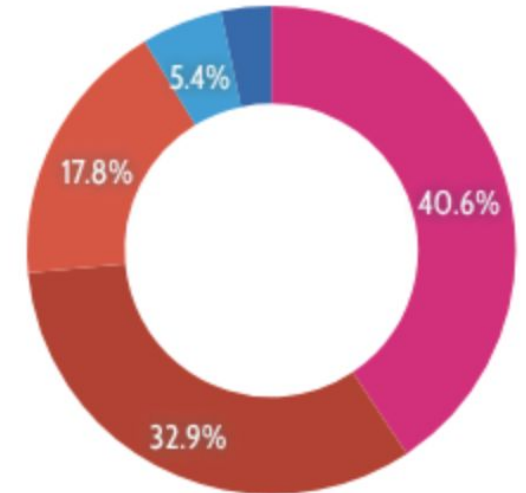
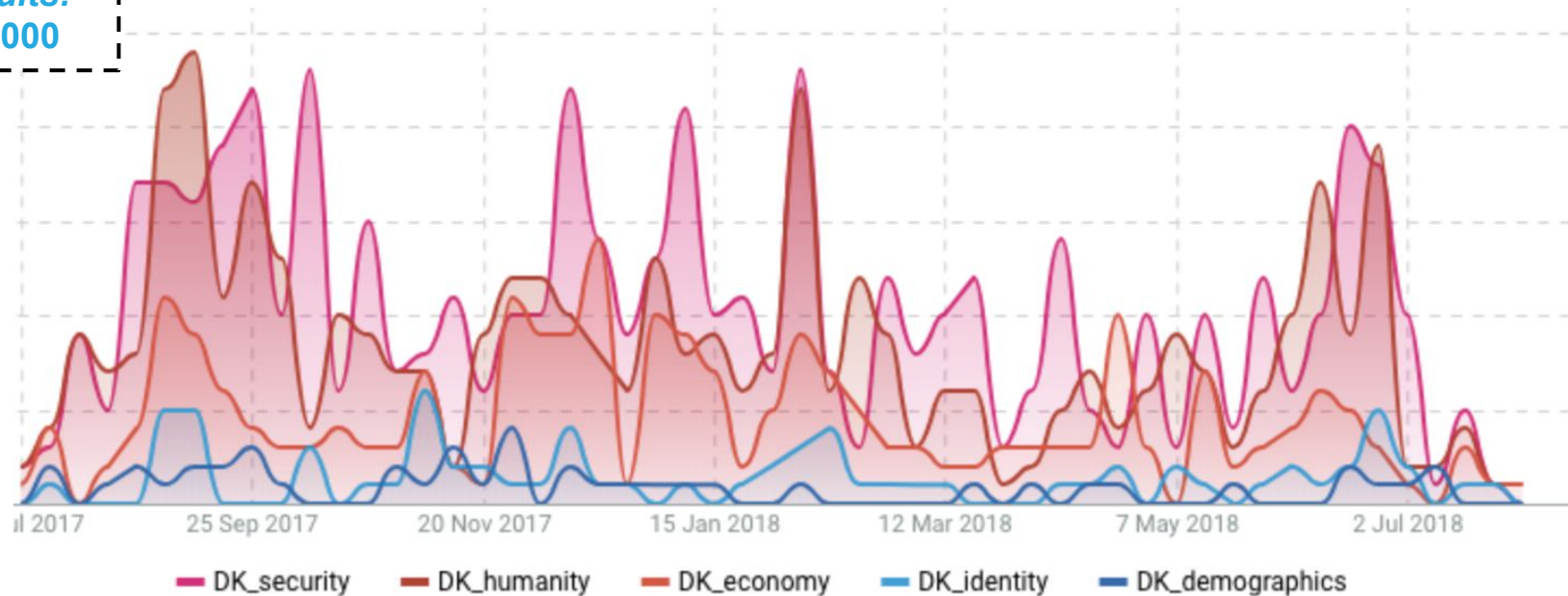


European and Domestic Politics Context within Narratives | DK

Domestic Politics: Moving with elections

Although mentioned less than EU politics, domestic politics followed the curve and composition of the overall conversation faithfully, showing a **relative politicization of the subject**. Key points here are prior to the local election, the jump at the passing of the “ghetto laws” and the climb at the EU summit, where the paradigm shift was used to bolster local politicians’ viewpoints: those who **welcome stricter border controls**, and who would **keep humanitarian solutions outside of the EU**.

Results:
~17,000



+ *Discussion Tone in Denmark*

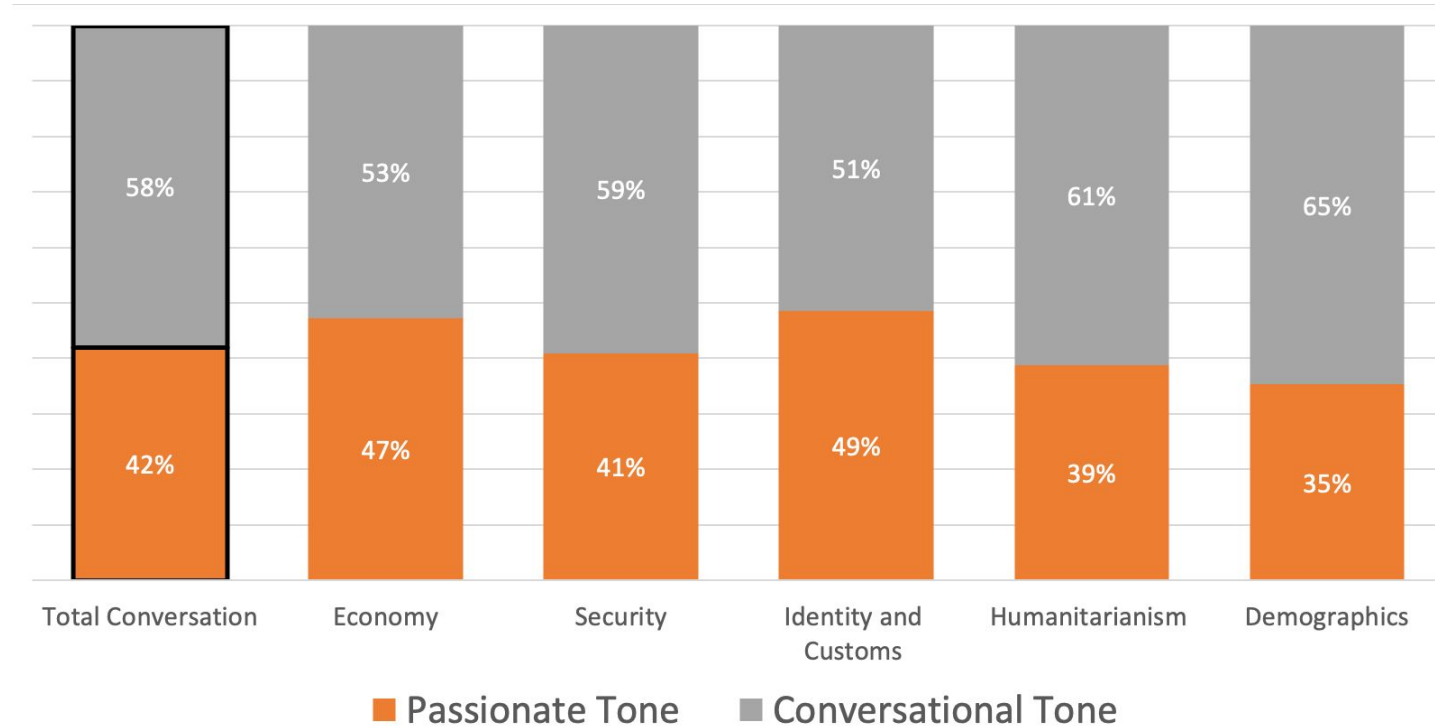


4.

Discussion Tone | DK

A heated conversation

In every subject we can see the Danish discussion in a highly passionate matter, showing how polarized the entire migration discourse has become in the country.



+ *Conversation Channels*



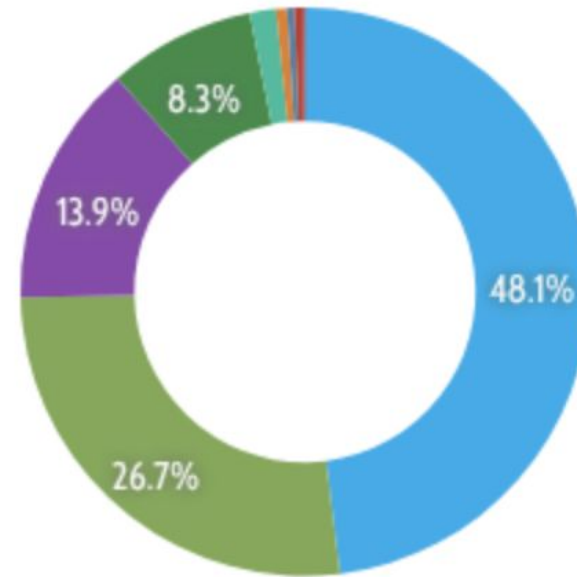
5.



Channel Distribution | DK

Twitter Discourse Locked in to the News

While almost half of the overall conversation took place on **Twitter**, looking at the influential authors we see a list of **daily news sources being key drivers of the conversation**. This shows that the discourse developed primarily to reactions on daily events, which were either interpreted within a given narrative or pushed by politics originally.



- Twitter
- Newspaper
- Online News
- Blogs
- Forums
- Magazine
- Instagram
- TV/Radio
- YouTube
- Flickr

	Gitte K. Persson @GitteKJP
	telegram ritzau, information.dk
	Ritau, borsen.dk
	ritau, folkebladetlemvig.dk
	ritau, stiften.dk
	ritau, viborg.folkeblad.dk
	ritau, amtsavisen.dk