



Searching Differently?



How Political Attitudes impact Search Queries about Political Issues

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Background

Why search engines?

- Impact political preferences (Epstein & Robertson, 2015)
- Access point news and political information (Newman et al., 2020; Arendt & Fawzi, 2019)
- (Misleading) reputation of being unbiased and content-neutral (Haas & Unkel, 2017; Courtios et al., 2018)



Background (2)



What's the gap?

- Concern about "filter bubbles" (e.g., Bruns, 2019)
- Prior work on algorithm audits (e.g., Robertson et al., 2018; Unkel & Haim, 2019)
- Little known about user choices → **search queries**
- Searchers choose keywords depending on their political views (Trielli & Diakopoulos, 2020, Slechten et al., 2021)
 - Framing literature
 - Selective exposure



immigrants

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When people cross national borders during their migration, they are called migrants or **immigrants** (from Latin: migrare, ‘wanderer’) from the perspective of the destination country. In contrast, from the perspective of the country from which they leave, they are called emigrants or outmigrants.

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Google Search results page for two search queries: "immigrants" and "refugees"

refugees



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Refugees are people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country. They often have had to flee with little more than the clothes on their back, leaving behind homes, possessions, jobs and loved ones.



<https://www.unhcr.org> › what-is-a-refugee

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Research questions

- How do types of people search for political information on search engines, in terms of the search queries chosen?
- How do these types relate to political and sociodemographic characteristics?

Data and methods

Context

- Immigration & climate change in NL

Data ($N=1,994$)

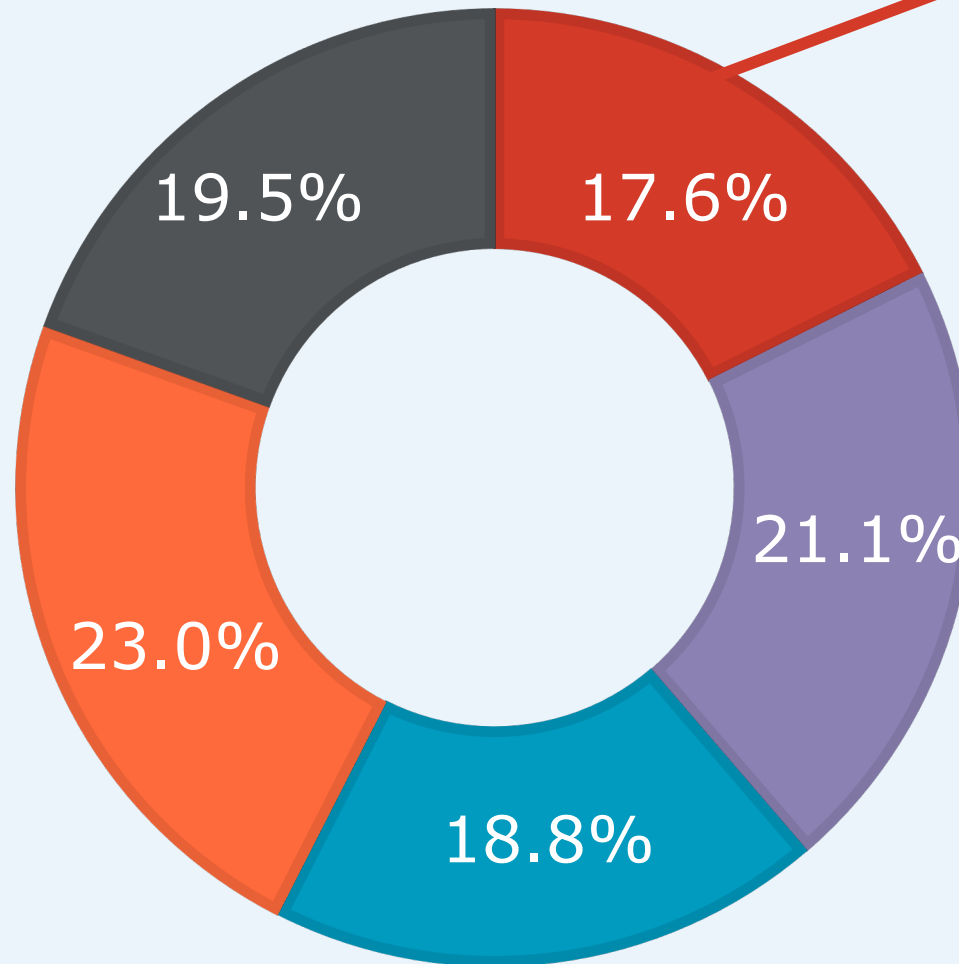
- 3 search queries
- Political characteristics: *issue attitudes, issue importance, political orientation, political interest*

Methods

1. Qualitative and quantitative coding
2. Latent Class Analysis
3. Binary logistic regression



Results: Immigration

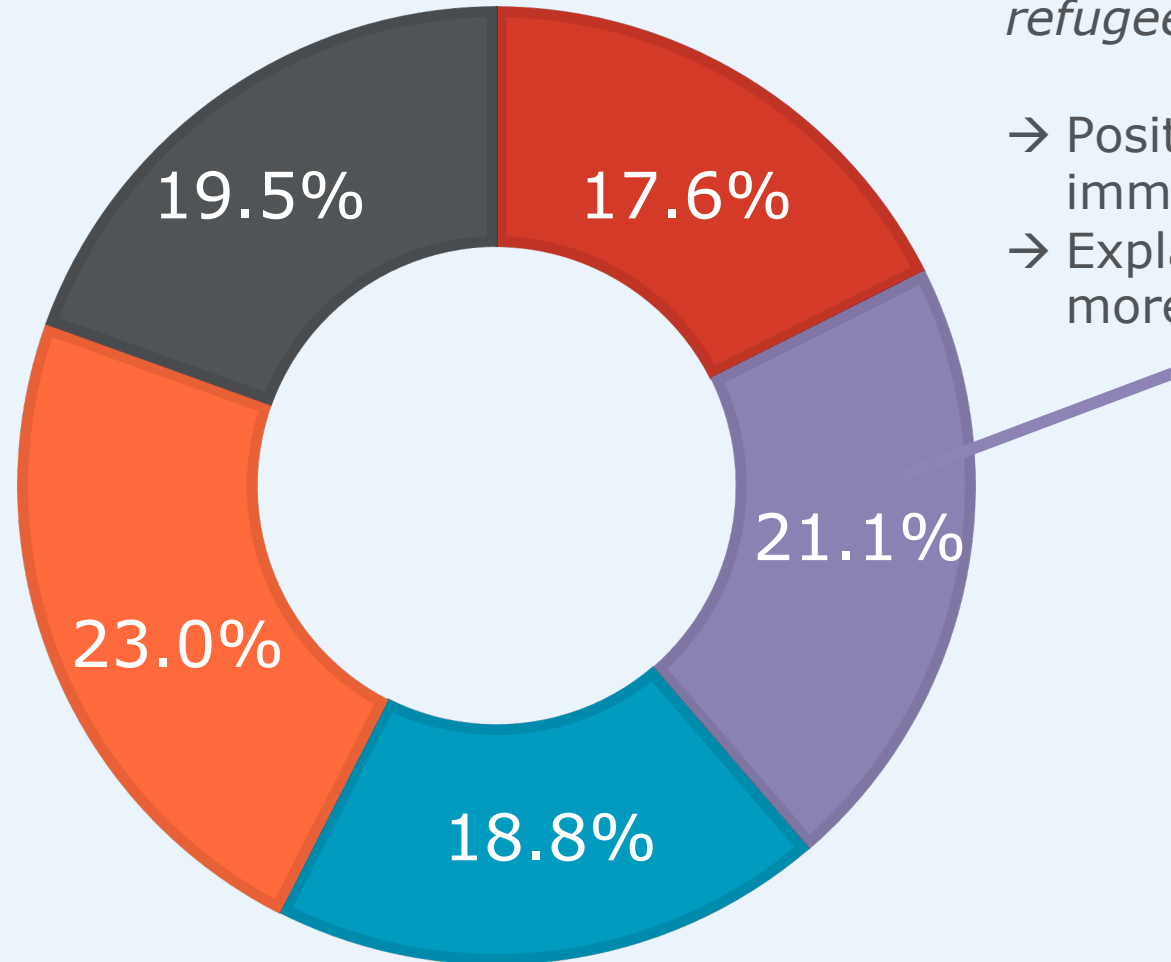


Statistics & Facts

e.g. *immigration statistics, immigrants in the netherlands*



Results: Immigration

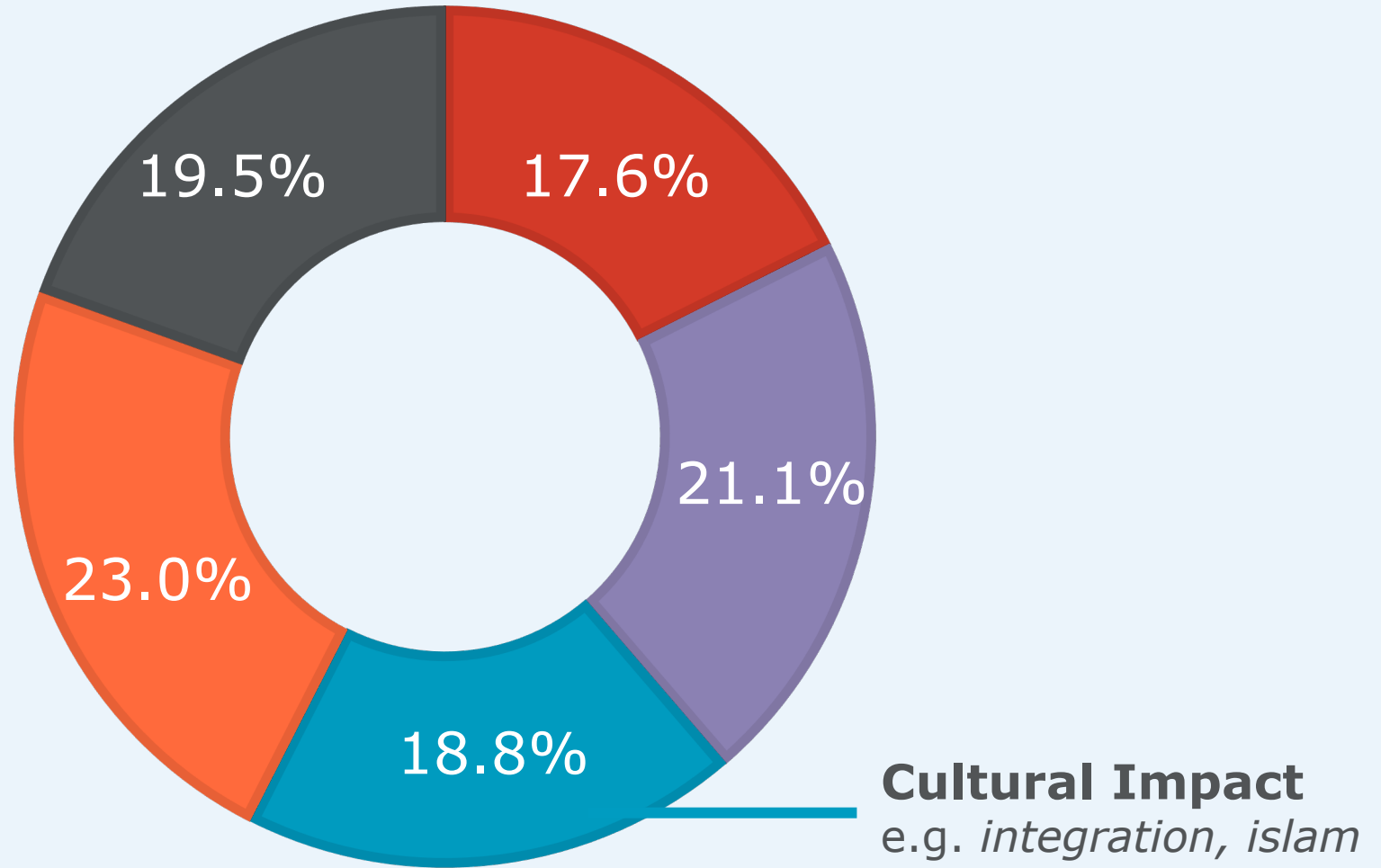


Refugees

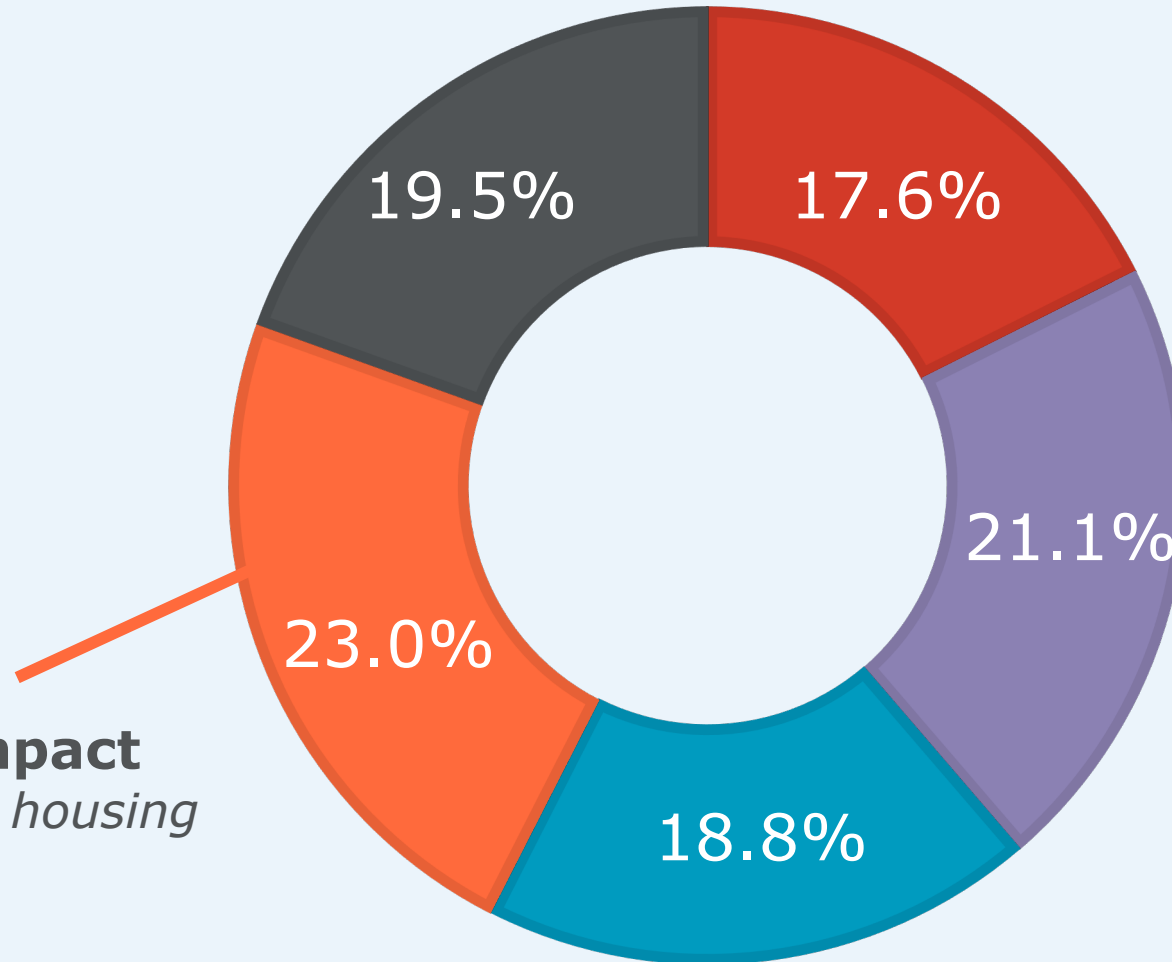
e.g. refugee shelters,
refugees

- Positive towards immigration
- Explained by being more left-wing

Results: Immigration



Results: Immigration



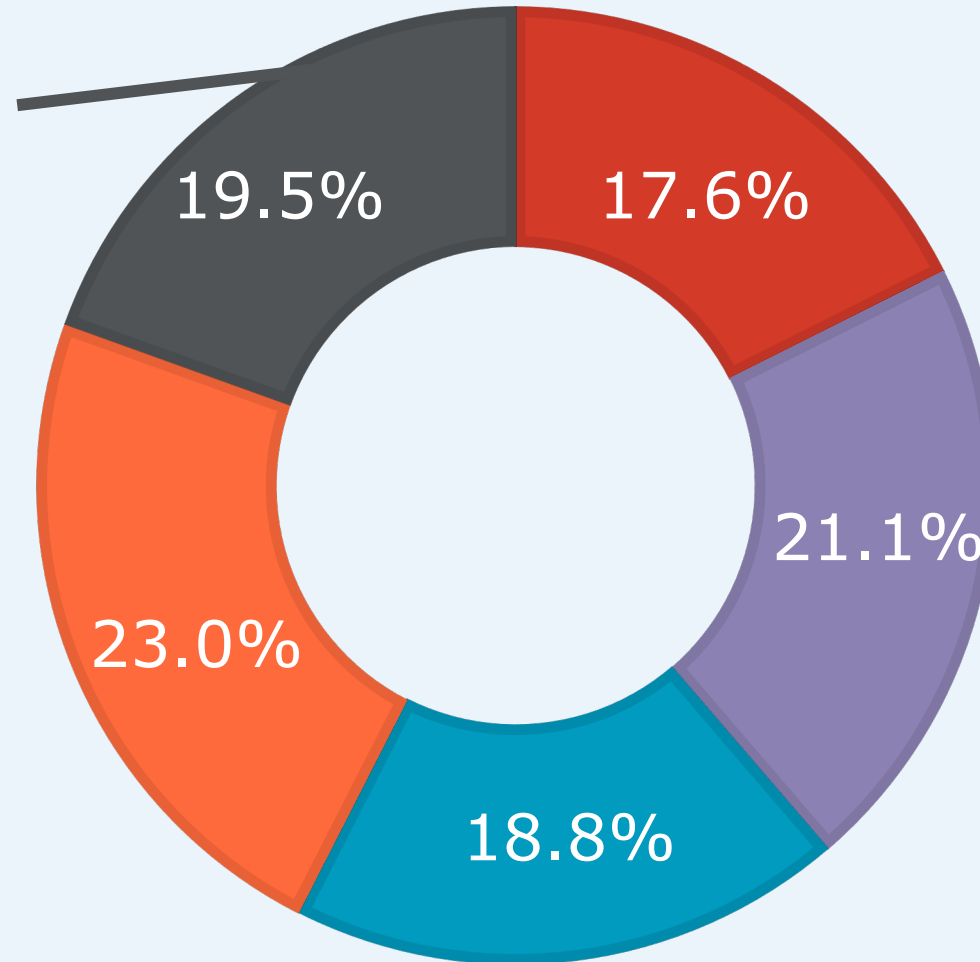
Economic Impact
e.g. foreigners, housing
immigrants

Results: Immigration

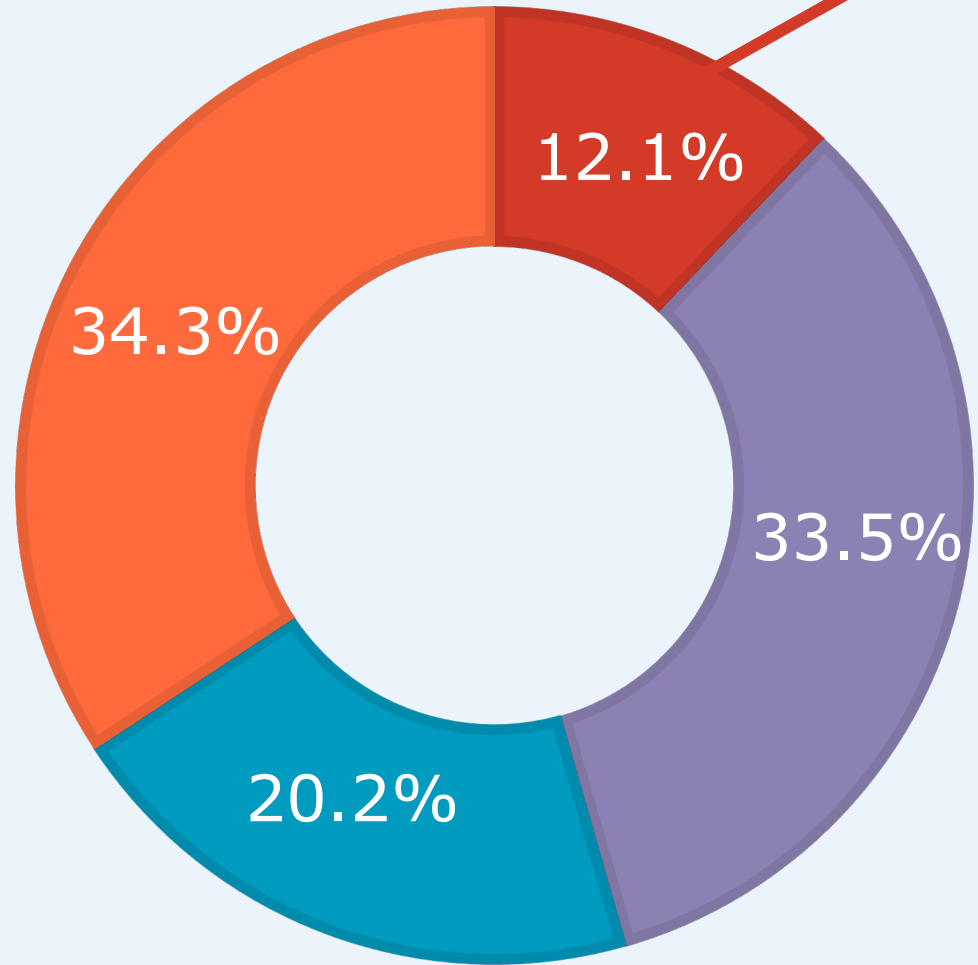
Asylum

e.g. *asylum seekers,*
accommodation centre

- Negative towards immigration
- Not explained by political orientation



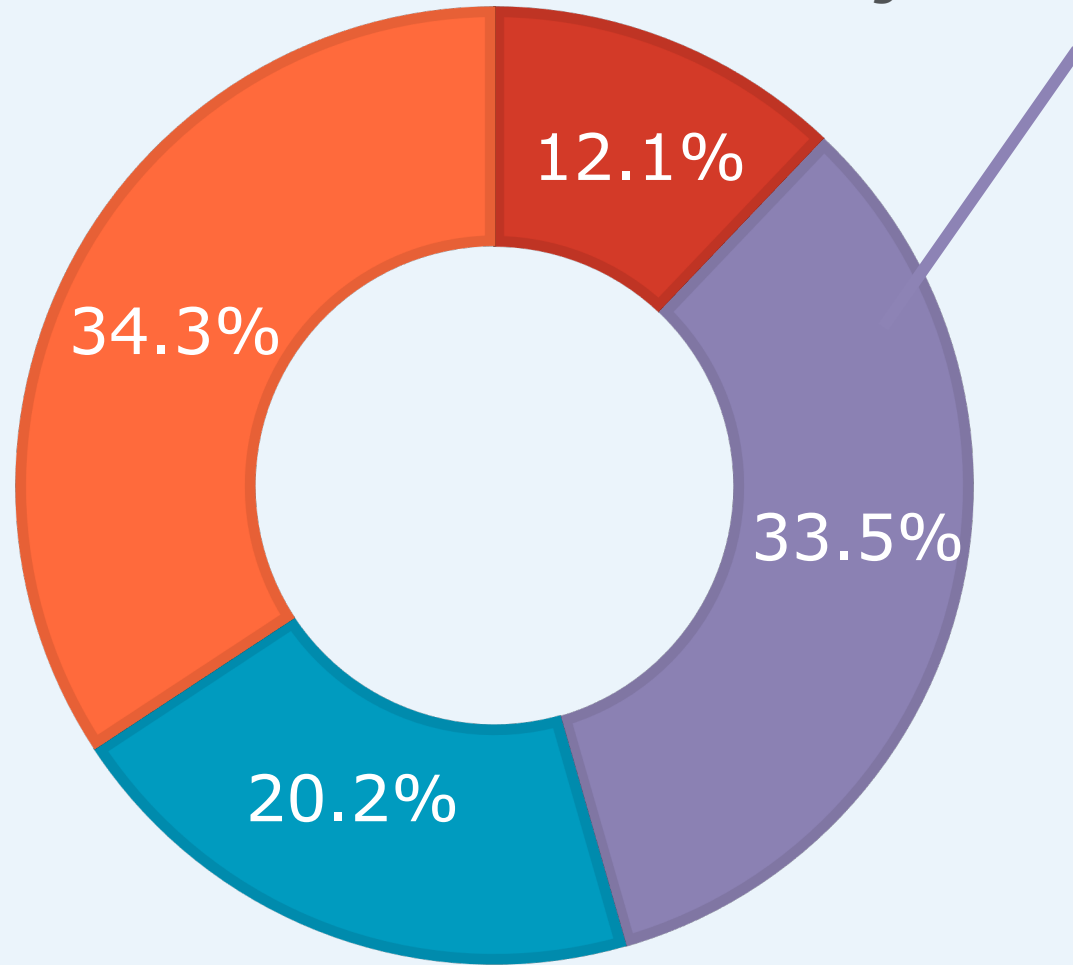
Results: Climate change



Solutions

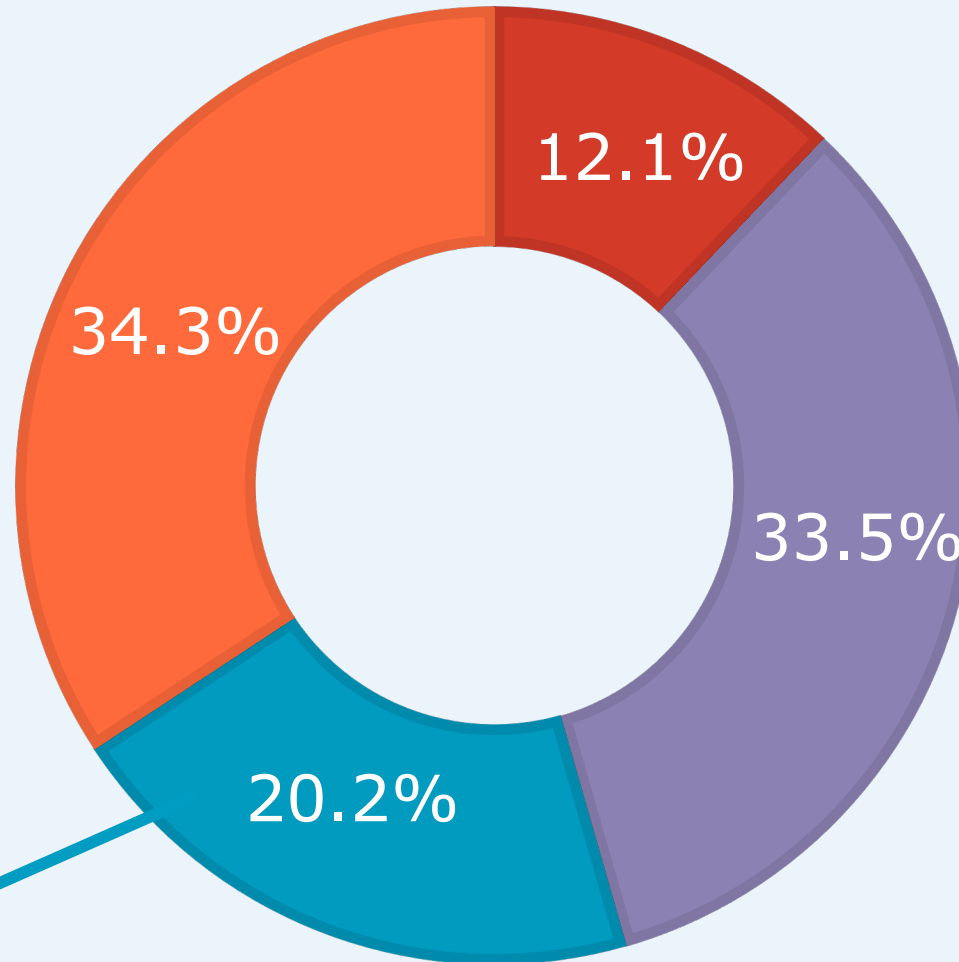
e.g. sustainable living, things to do for the climate

Results: Climate change



Politics & Information
e.g. *climate politics, climate agreement*

Results: Climate change



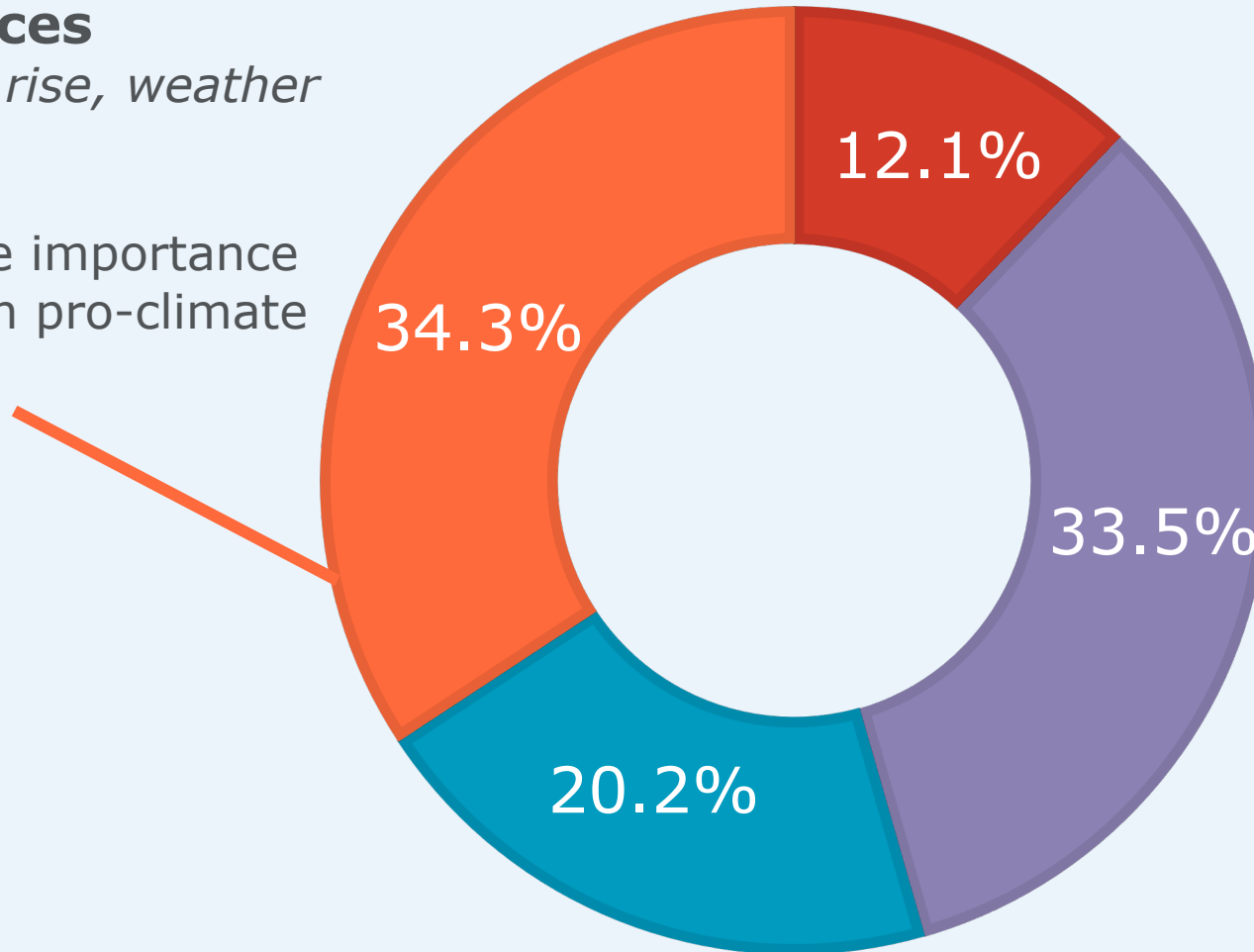
Factors & Actors
e.g. *carbon emissions, farmers*

Results: Climate change

Consequences

e.g. *sea level rise, weather climate*

→ Lower issue importance combined with pro-climate attitudes



To conclude

Take-aways

- Search queries important for search results
- Search terms related to political views!
- Findings depend on issue

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Future work

- Self-selection in search results
- User choices \leftrightarrow algorithmic personalisation

Thank you! Questions?

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