



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency



InfoSheet No 8 Media Reporting of Migrants and Migration

The media can play an important role in shaping how and what people, including policy-makers and migrants, think and do about migration. Chapter 8 discusses media reporting on migrants and migration. Drawing on existing research in different countries, the analysis addresses four key questions: (1) What do media around the world say about migration and migrants? (2) What impacts does this coverage have on what members of the public, policymakers and migrants themselves think and do? (3)

How does the practice of journalism itself contribute to coverage? (4) What implications arise from recent experiences of media and migration for future research and practice? The authors argue that variations of media coverage of migration partly reflect considerable differences in how countries' media systems operate.

KEY POINTS:

- Evidence shows that media coverage of migration has been more negative than positive; this is particularly so for irregular migration. It should be noted however, that negativity is not unique to migration coverage, as journalists generally tend to emphasize problems across most topics. There are also exceptions to the “bad news” trend with some movement towards more positive – or at least more neutral – coverage of migration across several destination and origin countries.
- Changes in traditional media and the proliferation of social media provide opportunities for migrant-led media and journalism. These include opportunities for migrants to produce and promote their own content highlighting positive aspects of migration.
- Media provide important sources of information about the size and nature of migrant populations that affect what people think. Differences between perceptions and reality are important in shaping public

opinion. In addition to affecting what the public thinks about migration, media can also influence the agendas of policymakers.

- Media coverage can affect self-perception, self-portrayal and how migrants relate to host countries and consider home countries. It can also relate to mediatized realities and decisions to move.
- Journalism practices affect media reporting on migration; from economic and social contexts in which media exist, to everyday decisions made by individual editors and practitioners.

Changing narratives on migration: a commercial path?

One response to anti-migrant coverage in the British press has been the Stop Funding Hate campaign. By targeting companies that advertise with media outlets perceived to be deliberately fuelling negative portrayals of migrants, it aims to create change through an economic path. For example, the campaign claims to have succeeded in persuading Lego® to end a corporate partnership with the Daily Mail. However, critics of this tactic consider it a worrying precedent for liberal democracy if large companies are encouraged to use their advertising budget to put pressure on editorial policies of news organizations.¹

¹ Ponsford, D. 2016. Seeking an advertising boycott of newspapers you disagree with is an illiberal way to promote liberal values. The Press Gazette, 11th November. Available from <http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/seeking-an-advertising-boycott-of-newspapers-you-disagree-with-is-an-illiberal-way-to-promote-liberal-values>.

IMPLICATIONS:

- We need to better understand the following:
 - The role of the media in transit and origin countries, and particularly migrants' own use of, and preferences for, different types of media. This is especially important for understanding how and to what extent information sources shape perceptions.
 - Whether and how different types of messages and emotions shape public perceptions and policy activity. Applied studies can help a range of groups develop communication interventions that are more effective for the audiences and topics at hand.
 - Different media systems and how they may (or may not) produce different kinds of content on migration.

What is the United Nations doing about migration and media?

The TOGETHER initiative (www.together.un.org) is a global effort to mobilize the UN, Member States, civil society, the private sector, and researchers in community-level activities that promote solidarity towards migrants and refugees. It uses a wide range of media to both showcase the shared benefits of migration and acknowledge legitimate concerns of host communities. TOGETHER aims to speak to – and engage with – communities around the world, particularly through migrants' own stories. Launched in 2016, the initiative has hosted and supported many events internationally, including film festivals, workshops and discussion forums.

To read the report, please go to <https://www.iom.int/world-migration-report-2018>

