MOVING THE MIDDLE: COMMUNICATING WITH THE SILENT AND AMBIVALENT MAJORITY

Knowledge Dossier

IOM UN MIGRATION

Cover photo: Jordan Seott on Unsplash
Caption. © IOM 2023 / Moving the Middle

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Photo ©IOM 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Perceptions about migration in the Netherlands have been recorded to be, generally, multifaceted, and quite often, fairly negative (Ipsos, 2018; Den Ridder and Dekker, 2018). In a survey conducted by Ipsos in 2018, it was found that Dutch respondents tended to think more negatively about the effects of migration – 29 per cent considered the impacts to be negative while an additional 14 per cent were extremely negative (Ipsos, 2018). In research collected for the European Social Survey in 2016, it was found that citizens in the Netherlands became less generous towards migrants between 2002 and 2016 (Heath and Richards, 2019). Similarly, during the last five years, the narrative has been developed by right-wing political parties and opponents of migration in the Netherlands that migration happens without any control and that society, or the government has no control over it (Adviesraad Migratie, 2022). As a result, citizens experience great uncertainty and the rate of acceptance of migrants in Dutch society is negatively impacted (idem.).

In order to address these concerns and uncertainties, more nuanced narratives about migration can be promoted to inform individuals of the benefits of migration. As such, the Moving the Middle project, implemented by the International Organization for Migration in the Netherlands in 2022, had as goal to a) to collect more information about the Dutch Movable Middle and how best to communicate with them about migration and b) to contribute more nuance to the Dutch migration debate. The Movable Middle is defined as a segment of the population who is either uncertain or ambivalent about migration and therefore falls between the two polarized sides of the debate, namely the strong proponents and opponents of migration (Cassehgari, 2020). The Dutch Movable Middle remains an important group to communicate with, as due to their ambivalent attitudes, this group presents an opportunity to implement a change in attitudes and views on migrants and migration in the Netherlands.

To pursue these goals, a three-phase research plan was conducted to develop a methodology based on a good understanding of the Dutch Movable Middle and how they can be best reached. These three phases entailed: first, surveying the Dutch population [2] to collect more information on the current general stance towards migrations and collect more information on the characteristics of the Dutch Movable Middle. Second, organizing focus groups with members of the Dutch Movable Middle to delve further into their views and values. Third, implementing a test campaign on social media to gather information on the kind of messaging formats about migration that appeal to the Dutch Movable Middle the most. To ensure that migrant voices remained central to the project, a Migrant Ambassador Advisory Board (MAAB) consisting of five members with migrant backgrounds and diverse professional expertise was set up to provide advice and feedback on all phases of the project.

This Knowledge Dossier is part of the Moving the Middle project and consolidates the findings of the three-phase research endeavor. Through collecting more information on the characteristics, views, and values of the Dutch Movable

Photo ©IOM 2023

Middle, the Dossier presents first, more information and insights about the Dutch Movable Middle, and second, a tailored communication strategy to target this group to promote a more balanced migration narrative and further, to foster attitudes of openness and inclusion towards migrants within Dutch society.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

According to survey findings, the Dutch Movable Middle tends to be 35 years old and above, female, employed, and living outside the three biggest cities (Amsterdam, The Hague, and Rotterdam). Respondents classified as belonging to this group tended to prioritize values such as self-direction, benevolence, security, and universalism in their lives – similar to the average Dutch survey respondent, except that those falling within the Movable Middle category tended not to value tradition as much as the average survey respondent.

---

[2] **Number of survey respondents** = 1045. Equal gender and age representation to provide representational sampling of Dutch society: Gender: Male = 49.4%, Female = 50.7%. Age: 18-24 = 10.7%, 25-34 = 16.0%, 35-44 = 14.7%, 45-54 = 17.1%, 55-64 = 16.9%, 65+ = 24.4%. Level of Educational attainment: Low = 27.1%, Medium = 42.3%, High = 30.6%

Moreover, the survey revealed that on average, perceived personal and societal financial well-being, age, and educational attainment level have a significant role in determining attitudes toward migrants among respondents. Additionally, the survey respondents showed differing views on different categories of migrants (refugees vs. labour migrants vs. migrants who came to the Netherlands as a result of family reunification processes). Respondents reported feeling a sense of duty to help refugees but expressed security concerns surrounding increased levels of migration. Labour migrants are seen as contributing to the Dutch economy, but migrants' family members are overwhelmingly seen as migrating to take advantage of social services.

Summarizing the survey and focus group findings on communication best practices, it was noted that communicating with values-based messaging is more impactful for communicating with the Dutch Movable Middle. Therefore, messaging based on values that are most important to the Movable Middle tends to be the most appealing to this group. Additionally, communicating with personal stories featuring real people is thought to have the most impact on the Movable Middle. Real stories about real people are noted to be more impactful and create a connection faster than messaging solely based on statistics or more impersonal elements. These stories can also be about people who work with migrants, such as volunteers and language teachers, as the Movable Middle perceives this kind of work as close to their own lives and therefore can often relate to the individuals portrayed.

The Knowledge Dossier, therefore, proposes a communication strategy for civil society organizations and other relevant organizations and institutions active within the migration debate who strive to learn more about how to communicate about migration with the Dutch Movable Middle. Through using this strategy and targeting the Movable Middle, more nuance can be brought to the migration debate and more nuanced images of migrants can be disseminated, to combat anti-migrant sentiments and foster inclusive and accepting attitudes towards migrants.

Based on findings from the focus group sessions and the test campaign on social media, the Dutch Movable Middle seemed to respond most positively to messaging where migration is framed as a 'win-win' situation (promoting the opportunities that migration brings to all involved parties, including host countries and the migrants themselves). Besides the win-win, the ''Panta Rhei'' framing seemed also effective. That is, approaching migration as a natural fact of life, which has always been a part of human history. When considering the format of communication with the Dutch Movable Middle, the research showed that a combination of online and offline activities could be effective to reach this group. The Movable Middle seems to remain hesitant to talk about migration, especially in online settings, therefore combining an online and offline strategy is most impactful in interacting with them.

In conclusion, when aiming to communicate with the Movable Middle, it is recommended to use values-based messaging and personal stories of migrants and individuals working on issues of migration and combining online and offline activities should be prioritized to maximize the effect of the messaging disseminated.

INTRODUCTION

The Dutch migration debate is primarily linked to negative narratives around migrants and migration, often neglecting their positive contributions to society. Disinformation narratives about migration seek to exploit the public's existing insecurities, most commonly in relation to health and wealth, to polarize public opinion, manufacture discontent, sow divisions and set the political agenda. The narratives tend to adapt and change alongside the public's main concerns (Butcher and Neidhardt, 2020). In a 2018 survey on attitudes towards migrants, 39 per cent of the Dutch respondents indicated that they wanted less or no migration, 49 per cent wanted levels of migration to stay the same, and ten per cent wanted more migration (Cassehgari, 2020). As such, those in Dutch society who are already set in their ways and opinions, are more difficult to sway in changing their perceptions based on similarities and connections.

However, there is a large segment within the Dutch population who have been underrepresented in research about views on migration, individuals who are not quite so set in their opinions; this group is known as the 'Movable Middle' (Cassehgari, 2020). The Movable Middle, as defined by the Social Change Initiative, are individuals within the population who are uncertain about their opinion on migration or have conflicting feelings about the topic (idem.). They can be in favor of welcoming and integrating migrants and refugees, but at the same time can feel resistant and hesitant about other aspects of migration. The Movable Middle group presents a unique opportunity to bring more nuance to the migration debate because their ambivalence towards migration means they are susceptible to moving towards more openness and tolerance. In research conducted by Ipsos in 2018, it was estimated that about 44 per cent of the Dutch population belongs to the Movable Middle. Therefore, engaging with this group presents a unique opportunity to have a large segment of the population find more commonalities than differences with migrants (Ipsos, 2018).

It has become evident that there is a growing need to find a set of common values shared by both the Movable Middle and those who recognize the positive contributions of migrants. When such a dialogue occurs, the Movable Middle's opinions may shift. Reaching the individuals within the Movable Middle segment will take time and changing the migration debate is a step-by-step process. Knowing how to communicate with the Movable Middle ensures the promotion of a more balanced migration narrative, thereby activating their positive inclinations toward migration. This feeds into the Global Compact for Migration Objective 17 of promoting open and evidence-based public discourse (United Nations General Assembly, 2019), while at the same time supporting Sustainable Development Goal 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for all (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015).

This report is a part of a project entitled Moving the Middle, initiated by the International Organization for Migration, in the Netherlands in February 2022. The Moving the Middle project aims to contribute to a more positive narrative on migration by developing a methodology based on a good understanding of the Dutch Movable Middle and how they

can be best reached. This understanding has been generated through a host of research activities aiming to learn more about the characteristics and opinions of the Dutch Movable Middle through a three-phase plan: first, surveying the Dutch population to collect more information on the current general stance towards migrations and collect more information on the characteristics of the Dutch Movable Middle. Second, organizing focus groups [1] with members of the Dutch Movable Middle to delve further into their views and values. Third, implementing a test campaign on social media to gather information on the kind of messaging formats about migration that appeal to the Dutch Movable Middle the most.

Ultimately, this Knowledge Dossier strives to further enhance the ability of organizations in various sectors to reach out to the Movable Middle by presenting comprehensive recommendations and a communication strategy to communicate with this segment of the population. This is done by presenting the findings of the three phases of research conducted under the Moving the Middle project, accompanied by a communication strategy as well as recommendations to target the Movable Middle and shape the current narrative on migration in the Netherlands. The goal of these three research phases, namely the survey, focus group sessions, and test campaign on social media was to 1) gather more information on who the Dutch Movable Middle is and what their opinions on migration are and 2) to test out which communication styles and strategies have the most impact on this segment of the population. It is with these findings that this Dossier answers the question: ''How do we communicate about migration with the Dutch Movable Middle?'' The findings, together with the steps outlined in the 'How' section to build a communication strategy, can be used by organizations who wish to learn more about this middle group and how to adapt a more targeted communication strategy to address this segment of the population.

The Dossier consolidates the findings of a three-phased research that comprised three phases, each phase building on the knowledge collected in the previous phase. In the first phase, a survey was administered within a representative sample of the Dutch population to collect information on the status of opinions on migration and insights into the characteristics

---

[1] Two focus group sessions with ten participants were organized between August and September 2022

and values of the Dutch Movable Middle. Consequently, the second phase of research dove deeper into the findings from the survey by organizing two sessions of focus groups with five participants each with the Dutch Movable Middle and hosting conversations on migration and their views surrounding the topic. During the discussions, questions were also posed about current messaging about migration to the participants and preferred communication forms for this segment of the population. The insights of the focus groups further informed the third phase of the research, which consisted of conducting a test campaign on social media. Two strands of messaging were used to create two different animations to be disseminated on Instagram and Facebook to test the response and interaction rates with the Dutch Movable Middle online. The social media campaign tested which messaging form was the most effective in generating more interaction and positive reactions from the Dutch Movable Middle.

This Dossier begins with a background section delving deeper into the concept of the Movable Middle and the migration debate within the Netherlands to provide context. Thereafter, the Dossier is divided into three sections: the first section

(Who) consolidates the findings from the survey and focus groups conducted to provide an in-depth image of the Dutch Movable Middle and their views and values. The following section (What) provides an in-depth explanation of the types of messaging and narratives used in communication in the media and in the public discussion about migration. By discussing the findings and insights from the survey, focus group sessions, and the test campaign conducted on social media this section describes the types of messages that resulted to be the most effective to appeal to the Movable Middle. The last section (How) builds on the findings from the previous sections and presents a communication strategy to communicate about migration with the Dutch Movable Middle, outlining five steps to consider when designing a communication strategy to target this group. The Dossier ends with a summary of recommendations for societal actors on how best to communicate with the Dutch Movable Middle about migration based on all the featured sections. Whilst the Moving the Middle project targeted the Dutch Movable Middle and therefore provides guidance on how to engage within the Dutch context, this research can also be applied to other country contexts.

BACKGROUND: ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRANTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Attitudes toward migrants and refugees is a topic that has gained more traction in the political and social spheres throughout the last decades. While acceptance of migrants has increased in almost all countries within the European Union since 2021, of the top ten least accepting countries in the world, four are members of the European Union (Esipova, Ray, and Pugliese, 2020). Views on migration tend to rely on several factors, including personal exposure to individuals with a migrant background and personal feelings of stability. In a study done by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, based on results from the European Social Survey, it was found that anti-migrant attitudes are strongest and most likely to increase further in countries where migrants are hardly present, thus inhabitants have close to no personal experiences with interacting with migrants, and in countries where inhabitants lack a feeling of safety and control (Messing and Ságvári, 2019). The issue of immigration has become more volatile across the European region especially, dominating election discussions, and being labelled as one of the most pressing issues for voters in Europe today (idem).

The Netherlands is no exception to this trend. Starting in the 1990s, the Netherlands has been reported to observe an increase in fears and anxieties surrounding issues of migration (Drazanova and Dennison, 2018). Several events underlie the fears of the Dutch population concerning immigration. The fallout after the terrorist attacks in the United States on the 11th of September in 2001, along with the rise of far-right political parties, and subsequently, two political assassinations are all events that have contributed to raising concerns surrounding issues of immigration (idem).

Existing anxieties about safety, perceived cultural changes and/or differences, and myths about welfare exploitation have expanded and have also inspired far-right, anti-immigrant populist parties to use them as political tools. In 2021, the research company Ipsos published an article based on research conducted in several countries, including the Netherlands, which showed that immigration, ethnicity, and religion are considered the main sources of societal tensions within the Netherlands (van Heck, 2021). About 73 per cent of Dutch people think that there is a relatively high level of societal tension between immigrants and other residents within the Netherlands, and about 70 per cent believe that this tension

> "I think the current migration debate is just very divided. There are only two sides; one says yes, welcome, and the other says no, absolutely not. It always leads to escalation."
>
> Mariska[3] (66), focus group participant

also comes from ethnic differences between groups (idem).

This development in the Netherlands is particularly worrisome as it impacts societal cohesion and acceptance of migrants. Growing fears surrounding immigration have a significant impact on voting trends, as it was noted that

[3] Names have been changed and anonymized in accordance to IOM Data Protection Principles

Photo ©IOM 2023

voters most concerned about immigration are likely to vote for anti-immigration political parties, even if they do not agree with the other stances of the party (Leach, Dempster, and Hargave, 2020). With radical right-wing parties becoming more prominent in political circles, negative narratives and framing of migrants have increased, often leading to more restrictive immigration laws and a heightened fear of migrants throughout Europe (Roggeband, 2007). Additionally, growing

participate in society and contribute economically and socially to its welfare and cohesion, therefore promoting a system of reinforcement, whereby existing inequalities are enlarged and access to services is hindered.

Additionally, the benefits of migration remain overshadowed by these negative narratives. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published a

Photo ©IOM 2023

fears of migrants have a direct impact on refugees and migrants themselves. Nationalist rhetoric tends to use the technique of 'othering' migrants, which results in their dehumanization and erases the needs of migrants and refugees from the debate surrounding migration, ultimately portraying them as a threat to a population and promoting the need for a more restrictive immigration policy (Tsagkroni and Lazaridis, 2015). This, in turn, threatens the safety of migrants as they attempt to travel to the host country and their safety within the country, where a negative view of immigration can lead to racially based attacks. This occurred in Germany, where in 2016 it was recorded that daily almost 10 migrants were attacked throughout the year, along with 3,533 recorded attacks on migrants and asylum hostels (BBC News, 2017). Next to safety concerns, these fears can severely comprise the opportunities and prospects that migrants have to

Migration Policy Debate briefing in 2014 outlining that not only do migrants contribute more in taxes and social contributions than they receive in benefits, but they also contribute significantly to labour market flexibility and fill important niches in a host of sectors within the host country's economy (OECD, 2014). In fact, analyzing the European Social Survey from 2012, it was found that aggregate immigrant flows into a given country are likely to have a positive effect on the subjective well-being of native populations, explained by improved labour market efficiency and aggregate economic growth (Betz and Simpson, 2013). Existing, persisting negative narratives surrounding migration, therefore, often distract from the actual positive impacts of the phenomenon itself for the host country.

THE CONCEPT OF THE 'MOVABLE MIDDLE' AND IOM'S MOVING THE MIDDLE PROJECT

The concept of the 'movable middle' originates from segmentation research done on public opinion, originally used in market research. The concept was adopted to discuss social matters as well and has become a more commonly used within the migration debate (Cassehgari, 2020). It has increasingly been explored throughout the last decades as public opinion on migration has become a prominent research subject. The Movable Middle, as stated earlier in this Knowledge Dossier, is defined as a segment of the population who is either uncertain or ambivalent about migration and therefore falls between the two polarized sides of the debate, namely the strong proponents and opponents of migration (Cassehgari, 2020).

high-income countries, they have been measured to be the biggest part of the population (see Figure 1 below) (Butcher et al., 2021). Secondly, they hold ambivalent attitudes toward issues, in this case, migration, and therefore are considered to be more open to perception-shifting and adapting slightly more positive views on migration. Targeting the Movable Middle to change the migration debate ultimately carries the potential of creating narratives that will inform more people, beyond those that already hold positive views about migration, of the positive elements of migration, and can help fostering more open and inclusive attitudes towards migrants (Cassehgari, 2020). The 'Moving the Middle' project, implemented by

Figure 1 Grouping people based on their attitudes towards migration in six countries (Butcher et al., 2021)
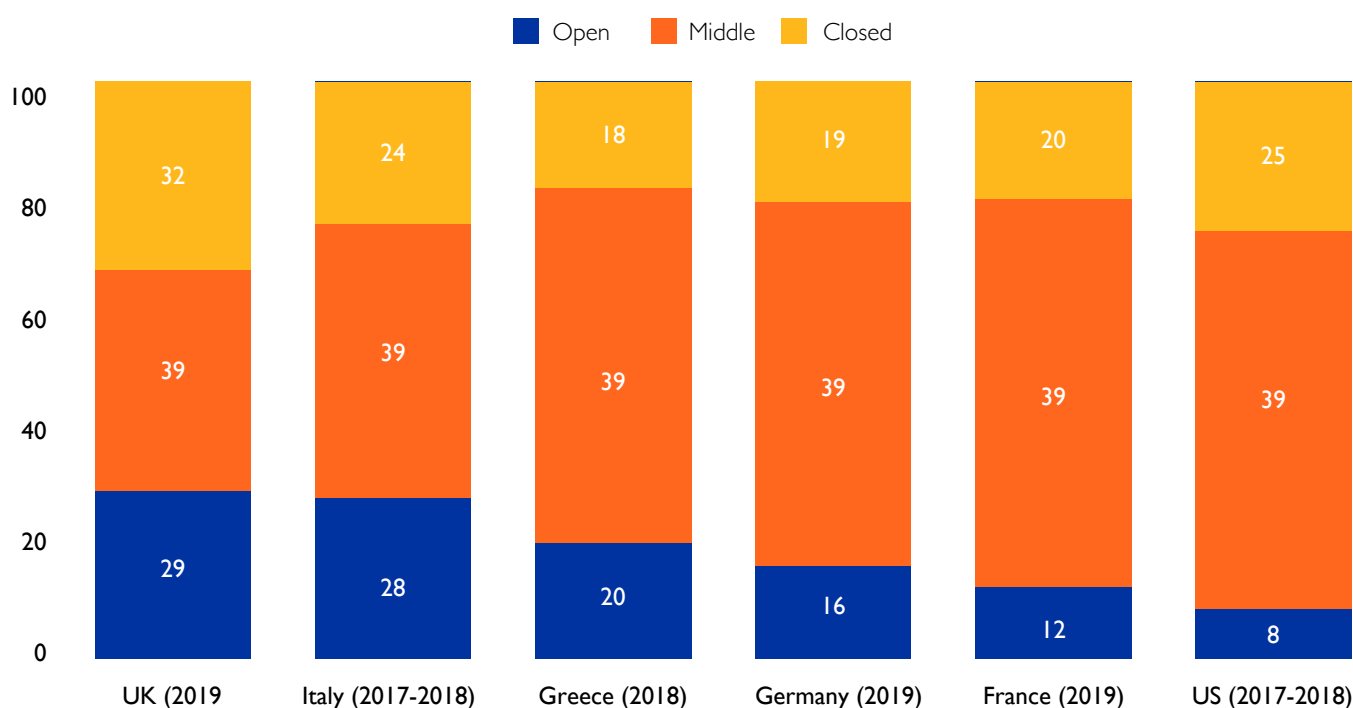
Source: Butcher et al., 2021

Commonly labelled as the 'anxious', 'conflicted', or 'movable' middle, this group tends to not have a strong ideological standpoint on immigration but does hold genuine concerns about current migration trends (Butcher et al., 2021). This group has become more prominent as a research subject in many articles and research projects about attitudes toward migration due to several reasons (idem.). Firstly, in many

IOM, aims to contribute to a more nuanced migration debate by deepening the understanding that governments and civil society organizations involved in the migration debate have of the Dutch 'Movable Middle.' This is done to target a population group with ambivalent attitudes to facilitate a more nuanced image of migration, in order to promote attitudes of openness and inclusion towards migrants within

this group. The project relies on a framework that separates the population into segments with specific characteristics to facilitate the creation of an effective communication strategy. For research purposes, specific analytical categories have been developed to identify a specific target group, but IOM recognizes that these categories do not reflect reality and do not imply that the individuals have hard lines and/or that the groups are homogenous.

Similarly, in the framework of the Moving the Middle project, the term 'migrant' is used as an umbrella term and is not defined under international law. The term migrant is here understood as "a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes several well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students)" (IOM, 2022). Throughout this document, the term 'migrant' will be used to represent this overarching group of migrant categories, unless otherwise indicated.

Photo ©IOM 2023

DUTCH ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRATION

WHAT DO THE NUMBERS SAY?

In the summer of 2022, IOM the Netherlands commissioned the research company Ipsos to circulate a survey amongst 1045 Dutch respondents, featuring questions asking them about their opinions on migration, different categories of migrants, their perceived well-being, personal values, and testing potential messaging about migration in the Netherlands (Ipsos, 2022). The 1045 respondents were identified to provide a representative sampling of the Dutch population. As such, representation of gender, age, and other demographic factors remained representative and equal, reflecting the average make-up of the Dutch population.

There were questions posed about different categories of migrants:

- **Refugees**, defined as persons who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. Source: Adapted from Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (adopted 28 July 1951, entered into force 22 April 1954) 189 UNTS 137) Art. 1A(2)(IOM, 2022).

- **Labour migrants**, defined as persons who move from one State to another, or within their own country of residence, for the purpose of employment (idem).

- **Family migrants**, defined as migrants who come to the Netherlands as a result of a family reunification process, which is the right of non-nationals to enter into and reside in a country where their family members reside lawfully or of which they have the nationality in order to preserve the family unit (Adapted from IOM, 2022).and reside in a country where their family members reside lawfully or of which they have the nationality to preserve the family unit.

The sample of 1045 respondents was representative of the Dutch population. However, the sample was too small to conduct official segmentation research. Therefore, all insights connected to the Movable Middle were based on a degree of uncertainty in the respondent's responses (respondents at least 50 per cent of answers about migration-related questions being listed as 'I don't know' or 'I don't have an opinion were classified as being part of the Movable Middle segment).

The key findings of the survey are summarized below.

1. Roughly 70 per cent of respondents think that Dutch people should be proud of their Dutch identity

In general, Dutch respondents are proud of their nationality and feel safe in their neighborhoods but has real financial concerns. Respondents above 45 years old tended to be prouder of their national identity (85% of respondents aged 65+ agreed vs. 55% of respondents aged 25-34 years)

2. 60 per cent believe that Dutch culture is disappearing

The age group of 65+ years tended to be most concerned about the disappearance of Dutch culture (71% of respondents agreed). Additionally, education plays a significant role: only 45 per cent of respondents with a high level of educational attainment [4] agreed with this statement vs. 65 per cent of respondents with a low level of educational attainment.

3. 75 per cent of respondents believe the financial situation of the Netherlands has worsened in the last year, while roughly 4 out of 10 respondents say that their personal financial situation has worsened in the last year

Those respondents who stated that their financial situation has worsened over the year also claimed to feel unsafe in their neighborhood and to not find their personal values reflected in general Dutch society. Education plays seems to be also related to feelings of well-being, safety, and acceptance. Respondents with a lower educational attainment level tended to feel less safe in their own neighborhoods (66% vs. 73% medium level vs. 77% high level) and not to see their own

[4] Education level classification:
Low educational attainment: primary education, the vmbo, the first 3 years of havo/vwo or the assistant training (mbo-1). Havo/vwo, the basic vocational training (mbo-2), the vocational training (mbo-3) and the middle management and specialist training (mbo-4). (HAVO or VWO (completed with a diploma) / HBS / MMS_4 MBO 2, 3, 4 or MBO before 1998). Medium-level educational attainment: This includes upper secondary school (havo/vwo), basic vocational training (mbo-2), vocational training (mbo-3) and middle management and specialist training (mbo-4).(MAVO / HAVO or VWO (transferred to 4th grade) / (M)ULO / VMBO (theoretical or mixed) / secondary special education)(LBO / VBO / VMBO (framework or vocational) / MBO1) High educational attainment: HBO or university master/doctoral/postdoctoral, HBO or university propaedeutic / HBO or university bachelor/candidate

values reflected in Dutch society (28% agreement rate vs. 48% agreement of respondents with a higher level of educational attainment). The respondents also noted several concerns about tolerance within public debate in Dutch society:

4. 40 per cent of respondents see their personal values reflected in society and feel that they can express their views on migration

Respondents with low educational attainment more often felt like they could not freely express their views on migration (32% said they did feel free to do so vs. 46% of respondents with a higher level of educational attainment). Similarly, respondents who experienced a decline in financial well-being also reported more often feeling like they could not freely express their views on migration (only 38% of this group agreed that they could freely speak about migration).

5. 60 per cent of respondents believe that the government should implement stricter rules for migration to the Netherlands

Age seems to play an important role in respondents' views: 66 per cent of respondents between 55-64 years old believe that the government should adopt stricter migration rules vs. 49 per cent of respondents between 18-24 years old. Similarly, educational attainment influences the respondents' views, with only 46 per cent of highly educated respondents agreeing with the statement vs. 73 per cent of lower educated respondents.

6. Over 60 per cent of respondents believe that refugees coming to the Netherlands need help and that the Dutch government and/or population should help them

More than 60 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that refugees should be provided with aid when they arrive in the Netherlands versus the 12 per cent that disagreed.

7. However, respondents were also largely in favor of reducing the number of migrants coming to the Netherlands and more than half stated that they believed that many of these migrants come to take advantage of the social services

Close to half of the respondents stated that they did not want the Netherlands to accept more refugees, labour migrants, or family migrants (52%, 42%, and 48% respectively). Additionally, almost half of the Dutch respondents stated that they believed that family migrants that come to the Netherlands as a result of family reunification processes come to take advantage of the social services available.

8. Respondents indicated that knowledge of the Dutch language and having similar cultural norms and values were the most important factors when accepting migrants into the Netherlands.

Level of educational attainment, religious background, and ethnicity were ranked as the lowest in importance.

9. Dutch respondents overwhelmingly view the messaging and imagery around migrants in the media as neither negative nor positive

Dutch respondents indicated that they believed that refugees should be helped in the Netherlands, but that no additional refugees should be accepted (as a consensus, respondents reported that they did not want the Netherlands to accept any more migrants as a whole). Survey results indicated that participants tended to also believe that refugees make the Netherlands more unsafe compared to labour migrants or family migrants (42% versus 31% and 32% respectively).

Figure 2 Opinions on categories of migrants
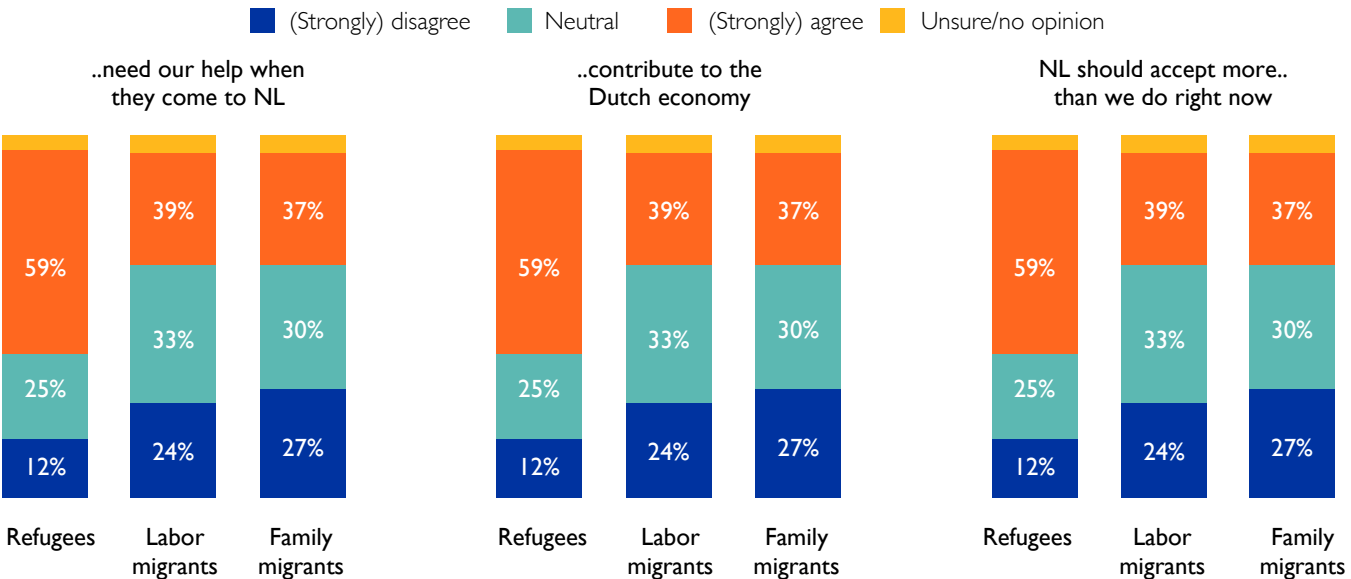
Figure 3 Opinions on categories of migrants II

■ (Strongly) disagree   ■ Neutral   ■ (Strongly) agree   ■ Unsure/no opinion

	Refugees	Labor migrants	Family migrants		Refugees	Labor migrants	Family migrants
Unsure/no opinion	5%	39%	6%		5%	5%	6%
(Strongly) agree	42%	31%	33%		42%	42%	49%
Neutral	30%	39%	35%		28%	32%	35%
(Strongly) disagree	23%	25%	26%		26%	21%	26%
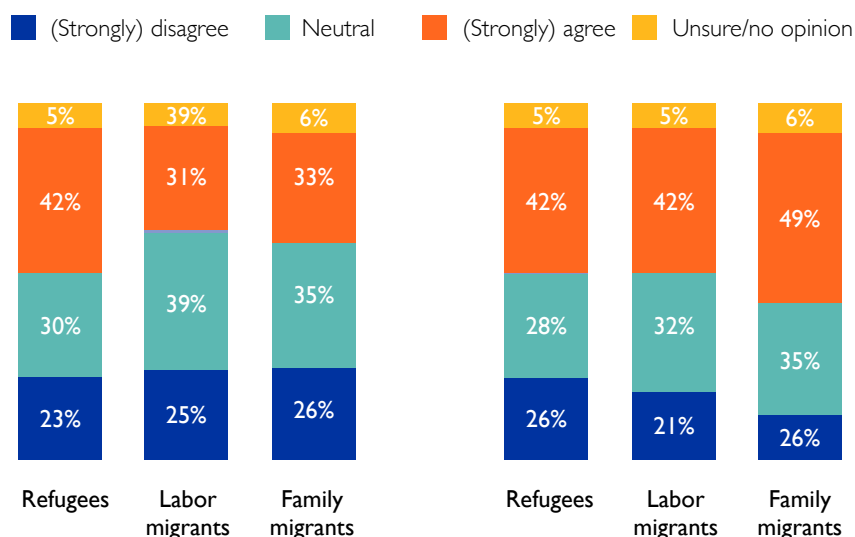
To summarize, the survey findings imply that there is a strong feeling of duty to help refugees who come into the Netherlands, but also that respondents thought that refugees, as a group, tend to make the Netherlands less safe than other categories of migrants. Respondents also indicated that they believe that labour migrants contribute most to the Dutch economy, out of the three categories, while family migrants are the group most associated with migrating to

take advantage of the social services in the Netherlands. As a whole, respondents indicated that The Netherlands should not accept any more migrants in general, regardless of the purpose of migration. Lastly, findings indicated that level of educational attainment, age, and perceived financial well-being play a role in determining attitudes towards migrants and migration within the Dutch survey group.

Photo ©IOM 2023

WHO?
THE DUTCH MOVABLE
MIDDLE

Looking at the Dutch public, the Movable Middle can be found throughout all social and age groups, occupations, and region groups (Ipsos, 2022). The fact that this group is so widely spread across society combined with the ambivalence in their attitudes towards migration, makes for a target group that can still be 'moved' in their views, presenting an opportunity to shift more opinions towards a more positive view on migration.

EARLIER RESEARCH ON THE DUTCH MOVABLE MIDDLE

In 2018, Ipsos conducted segmentation research[5] with the Stay Human network[6] to identify different groups within the Dutch population regarding their views on refugees (Ipsos, 2018). This research was conducted to delve further into perceptions about migration with the goal to identify certain target groups to try to influence individuals to adopt more positive views about migration. 1,964 Dutch individuals above 18 years old were surveyed to collect information on their views and opinions on refugees and other social issues within the Netherlands. Based on the analysis of the results, the Dutch population was categorized into four segments based

on their opinions on refugees, which are outlined below.

It is important to note that the profiles below the core values and views of the two groups within the Dutch Movable Middle should be implemented with caution, as not all members of the engaged but conflicted and the neutrally disengaged segments may share the same views. As such, these profiles are meant to act as guidelines or examples to apply directly to social surroundings, allowing for easier recognition of what members of the Movable Middle may look like and what views may commonly come up in conversations discussing migration.

Figure 4 Overview of segments of the Dutch population (Ipsos, 2018)

Segment name	Percentage of the population (sample size: 1964 respondents)	Characteristics
The concerned opponents	24 per cent	Respondents tend to believe that migration has a very negative impact on the Netherlands and that the borders should prevent refugees from coming to the Netherlands. Individuals within this segment tend to be older, have a lower level of educational attainment, and identify as belonging to the political right or extreme right.
The neutrally disengaged	28 per cent	Respondents tend to have a neutral opinion on migration as a whole and what kind of impact it has on the Netherlands. Individuals in this segment tend to avoid discussions about migration and do not have a strong opinion of refugees. Survey participants within this segment tended to be younger, have various levels of educational attainment, and tend to place themselves in the middle of the political spectrum.
The engaged but conflicted	16 per cent	Respondents within this segment tended to believe that immigration does have a relatively negative impact on the Netherlands, also causing division within society itself, but that it does make Dutch society more interesting and livelier. There was reported more acceptance for refugees who were escaping conflict versus migrants' respondents viewed as only coming for economic reasons. These participants were often older, have a medium level of educational attainment, and tend to vote more right, although some participants reported identifying as left on the political spectrum.
The confident multiculturalists	30 per cent	Respondents within this segment tended to be quite positive about the impacts of immigration on the Netherlands and believe strongly in aiding refugees who come to the Netherlands. They noted that immigrants enrich the culture and economy of the receiving country. These participants tended to have high levels of educational attainment, tend to identify as left on the political spectrum and live in big cities in the Netherlands.

[5] Segmentation research has its roots in marketing research. With segmentation research, a population is split into different groups which are distinguished from each other by relevant aspects. Traditionally, segmentation research looked at background characteristics such as age and/or gender. (Goyat, 2011)

[6] The Stay Human network was a coalition between more than 50 civil society organizations in the Netherlands that worked on issues related to migration. The goal of this network was to exchange knowledge and create a campaign to promote positive narratives around migration in the Netherlands.

PROJECT FINDINGS: THE DUTCH MOVABLE MIDDLE

Along with the findings listed earlier in this Knowledge Dossier, the 2022 survey commissioned by the Moving the Middle project had as aim to provide a deeper insight into the Dutch Movable Middle, using the 2018 Ipsos segmentation research as a theoretical base. As the sample size was not large enough to do an official segmentation, the Movable Middle was defined as respondents who answered 'neutral' or 'unsure' in more than 50 per cent of the questions, as neutrality and ambivalence remain consistent traits for the group.

As such, based on Ipsos 2022 survey, it was found that the Dutch Movable Middle, in comparison to the average Dutch respondent, tends to be:

• Female
• Employed
• Older (above 35)
• Mostly reside outside the three largest cities in the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and the Hague)

To test the values the Movable Middle hold, the survey hosted a question whereby a values model was used as a base to design questions. Respondents were asked to rank the listed values as most important to them to least. Schwartz's basic values model was selected as it presents a comprehensive overview of the proposed basic values that humans hold and has been used in other research done on segmentation research done based on attitudes (Dennisson, 2019; Walsh et al., 2010; Interview with Vossen, 2022).

Figure 5 Schwartz's basic personal values (1992: 6-12, 24)(Schwartz, 2012)

Value	Basic motivational goal	Specific goal examples
Universalism	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature	Social justice, inner harmony, equality, broadminded, unity with nature, protecting environment, a world at peace, world of beauty, wisdom
Benevolence	Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact	True friendship, mature love, meaning in life, responsible, loyal, helpful, honest, forgiving, spiritual life
Tradition	Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that one's culture or religion imposes on the individual	Humble, respect for tradition, moderate, devout, detachment, accepting portion in life
Conformity	Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations and norms	Obedient, honour parents, self-discipline, politeness
Security	Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationship, of self	National security, social order, family security, cleanliness, reciprocation of favours, sense of belonging, healthy
Power	Attainment or preservation of a dominant position within the more general social system	Authority, wealth, social power, social recognition, persevering public image
Achievement	Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards	Successful, ambitious, influential, capable, intelligent
Hedonism	Pleasure of sensuous gratification for oneself	Pleasure, enjoying life
Stimulation	Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life (a varied life, an exciting life, daring)	Exciting life, varied life, daring
Self-Direction	Independent thought and action – choosing, creating, exploring	Independent, freedom, curious, creativity, choosing own goals, self-respect

Additionally, questions were posed to test what the most important values were to the Dutch Movable Middle. This was done as to learn more about the reasoning behind some of the opinions the Movable Middle hold, exploring the values they hold can inform not only their opinions but also what messaging and/or stories may be effective.

Using the core human values listed by Schwartz's Values Model as the base, it was found that the Movable Middle shares very similar values to the average Dutch respondent. However, they tend to feel less strongly about their values and tend to value tradition less than the average respondent:

The most important values to the Dutch Movable Middle were listed as:

1. Benevolence (helpfulness) (79%)
2. Self-Direction (independence) (77%)
3. Safety (77%)
4. Universalism (equality) (71%)
5. Conformity (52%)
6. Power (authority) (10%)

This ranking is beneficial to keep in mind when designing communication to target the Movable Middle. If the values conveyed in the message algin with the values deemed important by the Movable Middle, the message is more likely to resonate and therefore will be remembered (Haidt, 2008).
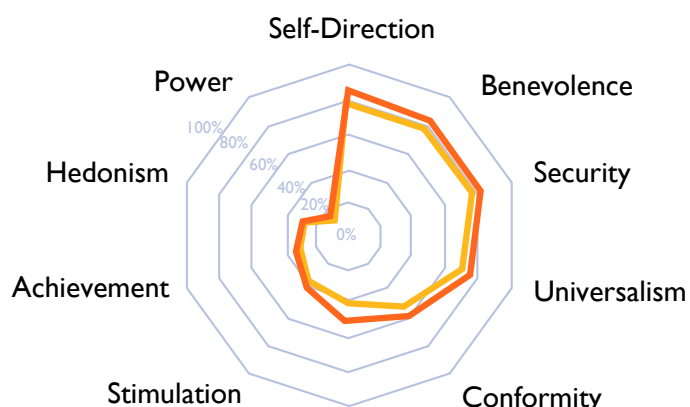
Figure 6 Values of the Movable Middle vs. the Average Dutch Population

Figure 7 Who do you discuss the topic of migration with?
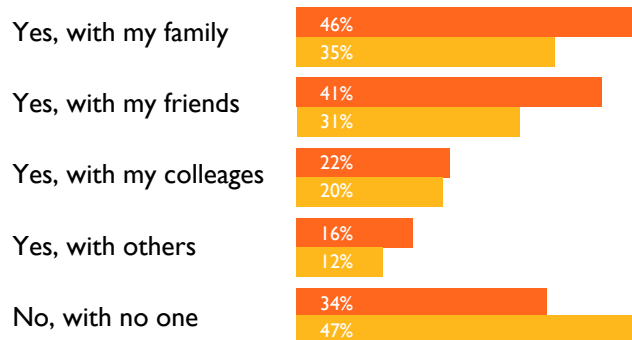
Another finding about the Movable Middle from the survey conducted in 2022 among 1045 respondents is that many hesitate to discuss migration, even with family members and friends:

This is important to note, again, when considering the format that communication with the Movable Middle might take. Looking at the answers from the respondents, relying on the Movable Middle to seek out information in their personal lives about migration may very likely not be an effective strategy, as many may just not broach the topic of migration or might even actively avoid it.

THE MOVABLE MIDDLE: VIEWS ON MIGRATION

After completing the first phase of research focusing on collecting information on the status of opinions on migration and the characteristics of the Dutch Movable Middle, the second phase focused on delving deeper into the findings of the survey through conducting focus group sessions with members of the Dutch Movable Middle.

Participants were recruited through a selection survey which was spread via various online platforms including Facebook neighborhood groups and NextDoor, a neighborhood social app. The selection criteria for participants were based on the information collected from the survey research, which included the following criteria:

- Older (above 35 years old)
- Living outside the three largest cities in the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and the Hague)
- Predominantly female

Additionally, three statements were posed to inform about their stance on migration, allowing potential participants to answer 'agreed, neutral, or disagreed':

1. "I'm not sure what my opinion on migration is. I prefer to listen to other people first when discussing this and then give my views on the subject."
2. "I am proud of my Dutch nationality."
3. "The migration debate creates divisions in Dutch society."

If potential participants answered either 'agreed' or 'neutral' to at least two of the three statements above, they could be considered as part of the Dutch Movable Middle as reflected in the findings of the survey from phase one.

Two sessions with, in total, ten members from the Movable Middle were held to discuss issues surrounding migration, the migration debate in the Netherlands, and potential messaging. Several participants pointed out the current climate in which discussions around migration take place:

> "The current discussion around migration is polarized. There are two camps, one says yes, welcome, and the other says no, absolutely not, and this often leads to escalation [during discussions]" — Mariska, 66[7]

The conflicting feelings of the members of the Movable Middle on helping and/or accepting migrants were also reflected in some of the answers provided during the focus group sessions:

> "I think we should absolutely help them [migrants that come here], that we should help everyone. But also our own people here [in the Netherlands]" — Kenneth, 67

> "If you're prepared to invest and give back to society [of the host country], then I think, then it doesn't have to be a big problem?" — Alice, 48

The above quotes reflect conflicting feelings that participants had about helping migrants coming to the Netherlands, but that they were also very aware of the perceived polarizing effect of the migration debate in the Netherlands.

THE 'REAL' REFUGEE

A phrase that continuously came up during discussions with the Movable Middle was the concept of the 'real' refugee. As described by a focus group member:

> "Ukrainians, they are often seen as real refugees. And Dutch people see a lot of African refugees as economic…lingerers" — Susan, 52

> "It comes down to public opinion [who is seen as a 'real' refugee…] and Ukrainians are seen more as 'our people'" — Ron, 30

> "Real refugees want to return to their country as soon as possible when that is possible" — Sofie, 57

Experiencing heavy combat and particularly bombings are seen as important criteria to be seen as a 'real' refugee. There was widespread consensus that 'real' refugees were welcome here, and that most do not create problems. Many members of the focus group echoed the need to help 'real' refugees and that it was only a small group of asylum seekers that caused issues that created the negative messaging that is often portrayed around asylum centres.

---

[7] Focus group participant quotes (names have been changed for purposes of anonymity)

The concept of the 'real', or 'good', refugee has been explored in other research, noting the differences in the presentation of different refugees and their refugeehood (Cousens, 2015; Szczepanik, 2016). In 2015, author Emily Cousens pointed out the differences in the portrayal of women and children versus men when discussing refugeehood. Often, the media portray female refugees as 'passive', in contrast with male refugees, who are often portrayed as 'active' or even 'aggressive', dangerous, or as a faceless, aggressive collective (Cousens, 2015). A gendered narrative is not the only distinction when discussing the differing portrayal of refugees in the media. Similarly, other 'good' or 'genuine' attributes the material situation of newcomers, namely dispossession, also the mode of travel whether with family or alone, the nationality, especially for those coming from a country with a well-documented, on-going conflict versus countries perceived as stable (Szczepanik, 2016). As noted by author Marta Szczepanik, individuals who do not possess these attributes are not perceived as 'good' or 'genuine' refugees, thus are seen as undeserving of protection (idem).

The Movable Middle is also very aware of the concept of 'fairness' within the migration debate. While noting the differences in acceptance towards different groups of refugees, several participants were also vocal opponents of the different treatment awarded to, for example, Ukrainians versus refugees coming from African countries. Two participants had the following exchange:

"But isn't it strange that no one truly had issues with Ukrainians [who came to the Netherlands]?"

"Well, Ukrainians are more our people. Yes, it is people who look more like you and me, and so it feels closer"

"But that is completely unfair? There is also war in Africa."

CONCENTRATION VS. AMOUNT

Amongst the Dutch Movable Middle, there is a concern about the number of migrants that are coming to the Netherlands. However, it is seemingly not the number itself that causes concern, but rather the concentration of a group in one area.

"There is a difference between having an asylum centre in a village of 100 people versus an asylum centre in a big city like Utrecht"
— Kenneth, 67

"If you spread the communities across cities and villages, then there is also less social control from the community themselves…

Also makes them hold each other in the grip of not doing what is Western… And I think when you scatter people like that in society, they can't control each other like that."
— Mariska, 66

There is a large consensus that integration into Dutch culture is an important consideration for social cohesion and acceptance. Numerous participants noted that spreading out migrants and their families across different locations would promote integration practices and see that as an important requirement for migrants who come to the Netherlands. Fears of the creation of "ghettos" in areas with a high concentration of migrants was largely present. Participants further noted the increase in social pressure among groups in locations with a high concentration of migrants, hindering integration into Dutch society.

TIMELINESS

"That group [expats, diplomats, foreign students] are seen as having a short-term stay […] With that short-term stay comes… more acceptance [from host populations]."
— Susan, 52

All participants unanimously agreed that 'expats' are treated more positively, and this treatment contrasts with the perceived treatment of other 'types' of migrants, such as labour migrants or refugees. Most participants acknowledged having similar perceptions of those perceived as 'expats' in contrast to those perceived as 'migrants':

"When I think of expats, and I wish I didn't, but I think of someone who is contributing something to the country, who is bringing something. When I think of migrants and refugees, often an image of what we have to give them comes up, that they are coming to receive something." — Denise, 30

The theme of 'contribution' was often raised in the conversation, namely, what is it that migrants contribute when they arrive in the Netherlands? Groups who were perceived as contributing skills to the country were often described in a more positive manner and were more likely to be accepted by the Movable Middle. Expats were named as a group that brought skills to the Netherlands as participants perceived them to be coming to the country with a goal, namely, to share that skill, and that that was one of the reasons as to why they tended to experience more positive feelings towards the term and concept of 'expat' versus the term 'migrant'.

WHAT?
EFFECTIVE MESSAGING AND FRAMING FOR THE MOVABLE MIDDLE

Having touched upon the 'Who' of the topic of communicating with the Movable Middle, namely who the Dutch Movable Middle is and what opinions they hold on migration, the next step is to look at the 'What'; the messaging to use to communicate with this group of the population.

Throughout research phases 1 and 2, along with questions to gather information on the characteristics of the Movable Middle and general opinions on migration, questions about messaging and imagery around migration were posed. This was done in order to begin collecting insights to use to aid in developing a comprehensive communication strategy to target the Movable Middle. In the survey from the first research phase, participants were asked whether they thought the current messaging around migration was positive or negative, and to also agree or disagree with popular messages often used in the migration debate (more details about the nature of these messages is outlined below). During the second phase of the research, hosting focus group sessions with the Dutch Movable Middle, session participants were asked to view old IOM campaign materials based on the same messages used in phase 1 and to provide their first impressions, their emotional response to it, and any other relevant feedback. The exact campaign materials used are listed in the section below.

FRAMING AND THE MOVABLE MIDDLE

When approaching the topic of narratives and images about migration, the practice of 'framing' becomes central to the discussion. Framing is the manner in which a subject or concept is conveyed through language and/or images. In other words, frames are mental images and words through which humans view the world which are also used as tools to communicate with other people (Blackmore and Sanderson 2017). Often, the media and various political figures use a variety of narratives and images to perpetuate a certain image of migrants and migration, to further a specific political agenda. Therefore, if organizations strive to change current narratives around migration and promote more a positive image of migration, using more positive frames to talk about migration is key to achieving this change (idem).

Examples of frames that have been used in the migration debate within Europe include portraying migrants as hostile intruders or migration as an issue, presenting the phenomenon as a cause for clashing cultures, and describing the inevitable clash between Western cultural values and an 'imported Islamic culture' (Van Gorp et al. 2020). Attempts to combat these negative, emotionally charged frames have relied on highlighting the universality of being human, or the victimization frame, which presents migrants and refugees as victims of unforeseen circumstances that have compelled them to migrate (idem). Such frames often utilize photos of migrant children. Frames can thus mobilize a wide range of emotions and images depending on the goal of the framer and the desired interpretation by the target audience.

Photo ©IOM 2023

In 2020, the Institute for Media Studies at the Catholic University of Leuven published a research report titled 'Communicating Differently about Migration and Refugees' (Van Gorp, et al., 2020). In this publication, the authors delved further into current frames being used to portray migrants and migration in Dutch-speaking Belgium via inductive frame analysis of a broad collection of media material, as well as social media messages and policy documents. Ultimately, four frames were identified that brought a problematic view of migrants, two frames were identified as having a more nuanced view, and lastly, seven counter-frames were identified that could be used to directly counter the problematic frames mentioned earlier (idem). These seven counter-frames were presented as the frames that could be used for messaging that could provide a more nuanced view of migration.

Due to the socio-cultural and linguistic similarities between the Netherlands and Dutch-speaking Belgium (Flanders), the frames identified by the researchers at the Catholic University of Leuven are applicable to the Dutch context. This was further supported through expert consultations with the OnMigration network and other media specialists.

The seven counter-frames were presented at the quarterly Migrant Ambassador Advisory Board (MAAB) meeting to the five members to further provide feedback on authenticity and whether they thought the counter-frames were fitting for the Dutch context. As such, it was decided to omit one of the counter-frames from the research: the 'innocent frame' defined as messaging that presents refugees and migrants as victims of unchosen circumstances (idem). This decision was made as board members felt that the frame was infantilizing and portrayed migrants without agency, and as such, felt like the frame was counter-productive to portraying migrants authentically. Additionally, based on media expert consultations during the research process, the 'divide' frame was omitted as well as it had tested badly in other experiments and tended to sow further division, rather than unity and connection, between social groups. As such, the three research phases tested the six following counter-frames:

Photo ©IOM 2023

1. **Win-win** | promotes the opportunities that migration brings that benefit all involved parties, including host countries and the migrants themselves
2. **Migrants are heroes** | highlights the resilience of migrants, their perseverance to build a new life, and how essential they are to our society
3. **Panta Rhei** | migration is a natural fact of life that one cannot resist. Migration has been a part of human history for as long as we have walked this Earth
4. **Control** | current migration policies are insufficient to handle migration flows and thus create chaos
5. **Diversity** | intercultural communication benefits a society
6. **We are all human** | We are all human and share very similar values that transcends borders

An initial round of frame testing was done during the survey conducted by Ipsos in phase one, with the frames being rewritten into statements that respondents (total respondents = 1045) could agree or disagree with:

Figure 8 First round of framing questions

Legend:
- (Strongly) disagree
- Neutral
- (Strongly) agree
- Unsure/no opinion

Statement	(Strongly) disagree	Neutral	(Strongly) agree	Unsure/no opinion
Migrants deserve a chance to build a better life, also in the Netherlands	14%	32%	52%	2%
Migrants and Dutch people have more differences than similarities	15%	32%	50%	3%
Migration is part of the (globalizing) world	14%	32%	51%	4%
Migrants contribute to the Dutch culture	37%	28%	52%	3%
Migrants are needed to counter the aging population in the Netherlands	36%	29%	31%	4%

The corresponding frames with the statements are as follows:

1. Migrants are heroes
2. We are all human
3. Panta Rhei/Control
4. Diversity
5. Win-Win

Due to concerns about lengthy survey response time, the six counter-frames were consolidated into five, as the Panta Rhei and the Control counter-frames were rephrased so that they could be asked as one statement, there exists an overlap between the two frames about the movement of individuals across borders and the timelessness of it. To maintain consistency throughout the rest of the research phases, the five frames listed above were used instead of the original six.

The second round of testing was done during the second phase of the research, during the focus group sessions with the Movable Middle and the goal was to provide audio-visual materials to delve deeper into findings listed during the survey about which frames tended to be received positively and which not. Materials from past IOM campaigns were used in order to collect precise and comprehensive feedback to be used to create a targeted communications strategy to reach the Movable Middle. The selection of materials was reviewed by communications experts and the Migrant Ambassador Advisory Board.

The above five frames were also presented here, using the following visual-audio materials:

Panta Rhei: Migration is a natural fact of life that one cannot resist. Migration has been a part of human history for as long as we have walked this Earth.
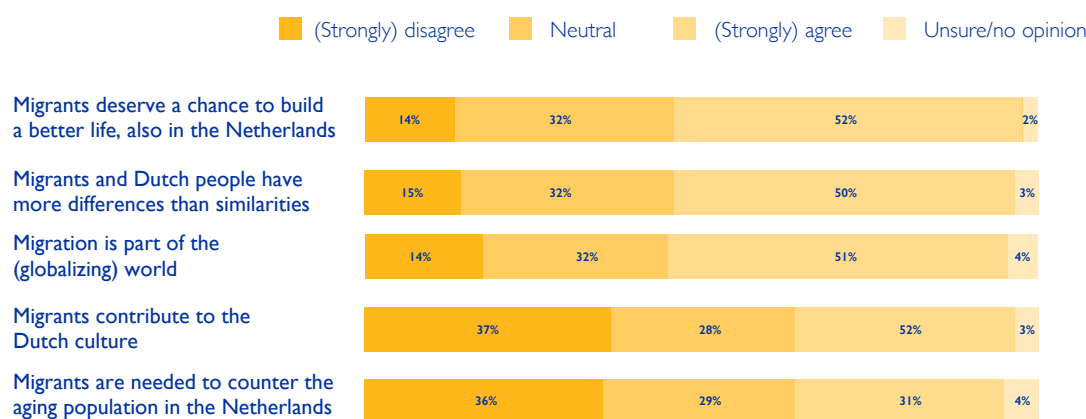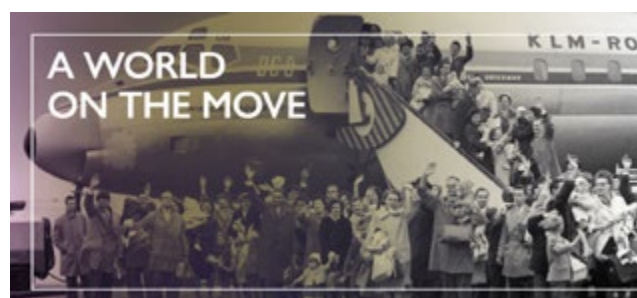

Win-win: promotes the opportunities that migration brings that benefit all involved parties, including host countries and the migrants themselves
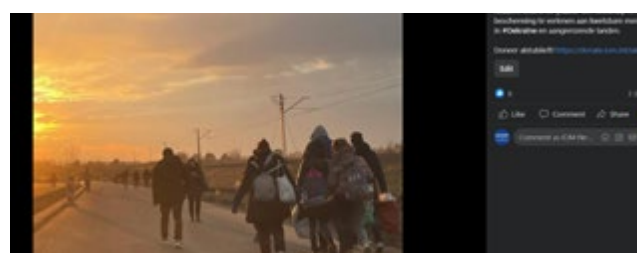
Control: current migration policies are insufficient to handle migration flows and thus create chaos.
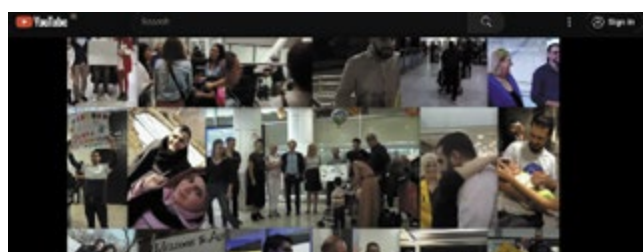
Diversity/we are all human: Intercultural communication benefits society, and we are all human and share very similar values that transcends borders Video
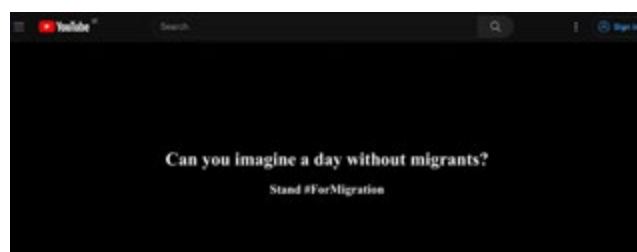
Migrants are heroes: Highlights the resilience of migrants, their perseverance to build a new life, and how essential they are to our society. Video

Message	Feedback: members of the Movable Middle	Feedback: members of MAAB
Win-Win (What Migrants Bring) Promotes the opportunities that migration brings that benefit all involved parties, including host countries and the migrants themselves	Focus group members were very positive about the win-win frame. The message was deemed as nice and positive and provides an element of goodwill for people coming here. Participants did note that seeing the faces of those in the photo would have been nice as then it would provide a more human and personal element.	Board members were mostly positive about the win-win frame. The symbolism of the large suitcase and how much migrants bring was regarded very positively. Members did note that the frame emphasizes the work experience of migrants and what they can provide rather than the shared humanity. They observed that it felt like an indirect point that migrants have to prove that they can come to the Netherlands.
Control (Donating to Ukraine) Current migration policies are insufficient to handle migration flows and thus create chaos	Feedback from focus group members was mostly negative. Members felt that it was an unclear frame and brought sad emotions with it. Additionally, the image did not make participants think of refugees, rather, of a collective march or walk.	MAAB members had neutral and slightly negative responses to the control frame. They felt that message was unclear and reduced the humanity of the individuals featured, reducing them to just numbers.
Diversity (It Takes a Community) Intercultural communication benefits society, and we are all human and share very similar values that transcends borders	Focus group members felt that the message of the frame was quite soft and did not carry much meaning. The video itself felt like a commercial and they felt the direct link to migration was missing. Several participants said they would have preferred to see a specific personal story that people can relate to.	The MAAB members had neutral and slightly positive reactions to the frame. The diversity and authentic interaction, as well as short length of the video were appreciated. However, members also felt that the message was unclear and missed depth and meaning.
Migrants are Heroes (A Day Without Migrants) Highlights the resilience of migrants, their perseverance to build a new life, and how essential they are to our society	Focus group participants had neutral and slightly positive reactions to this frame. They reflected that it did make them re-think how important migrants are to any society. However, participants did find that the material was very much focused on the economic contributions of migrants, not the additional diversity or social values that they bring.	The board members had very positive reactions to the frame. They considered it a powerful message and found it beneficial to highlight the contributions that migrants make within society. Members did note that the contributions were all economic contributions of the migrants, and not their shared humanity, and pointed out that this could further promote harmful stereotypes of migrants (i.e. that migrants only work low-paying jobs)
Panta Rhei (IOM 70th Anniversary) Migration is a natural fact of life that one cannot resist. Migration has been a part of human history for as long as we have walked this Earth	Focus group members had neutral and positive reactions to this frame. It sparked a conversation about migration and what makes people choose to move. Members found the image itself a little confusing, as they did not necessarily associate planes with migration, rather they associate migration with boats.	MAAB members, as a whole, responded positively to the frame, and that its general message emphasizes that all population groups have, at one point, experiences migration. Some members questioned how accurate the portrayal is that migration is always a positive experience and another pointed out that they felt like it ignores the complex racial dynamics within the migration debate.

TESTING MESSAGING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Combining the insights from the first and second phases of research (the survey and the focus group sessions), two frames were selected to test during a six-week long online test campaign. The test campaign was implemented on various social media platforms to test the effectiveness two chosen messages:

1. Win-Win: Promotes the opportunities that migration brings that benefit all involved parties, including host countries and the migrants themselves (in Dutch: 'Migratie verrijkt')
2. Panta Rhei: Migration is a natural fact of life that one cannot resist. Migration has been a part of human history for as long as we have walked this Earth (In Dutch: 'Migratie is van alle tijden')

The goal of the campaign was to target the Movable Middle on social media to monitor their interactions with

each messaging campaign. The test campaign was run on Instagram and Facebook, in the form of posts and stories. Each message strand consisted of 3-5 animations lasting about 35 seconds. The Movable Middle target group was targeted by selecting the following demographic indicators:

1. Individuals living outside the biggest three cities in the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague)
2. Above 35 years old

Age and residence were selected as the two selection criteria because both were characteristics attributed to the Movable Middle through the survey in phase 1. Additionally, the characteristics are easily monitored on social media thus providing a simple but effective framework to provide more targeted distribution.

The selection criteria for users were limited to just two factors in order to maximize reach online, to receive as much feedback as possible. As shown in the data of the survey from phase 1, the Dutch Movable Middle can be found in all levels of society, therefore leaving the selection criteria relatively wide increases the probability that it will reach those within the Movable Middle segment. The two different messages tested are further elaborated below.

'MIGRATIE VERRIJKT'
THE POSITIVE IMPACTS OF MIGRATION

Stemming from the frame known as 'win-win', that migrants make a positive contribution to society and thus increase the well-being of all involved while migrating, the campaign 'the positive impacts of migration' incorporated personal stories of ambassadors involved in the IOM the Netherlands Connecting Diaspora for Development (CD4D) project and added a quiz element to it. This concept was discussed during focus group sessions and noting the overall positive reactions, was then adapted into an animation.

Each animation lasted about 35 seconds and told the story of what each ambassador had 'brought' to the Netherlands, highlighting the skills that migrants bring when they move abroad. Some stills from the animation can be found below:

Dit is Nasir. Hij is geboren in Somaliland en woont sinds 1993 in Nederland.

A Marketing expertise

B Ervaring in jeugdbegeleiding

C Liefde voor voetbal

The goal of the animation was to make viewers question their assumptions when watching the animation, acknowledging the fact that many stereotypes about the kind of work or education that migrants have still exist.

'MIGRATIE IS VAN ALLE TIJDEN'
MIGRATION HAS OCCURRED
THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Stemming from the frame Panta Rhei, that migration is natural and a part of human history from the beginning of time, the campaign focused on trying to tell diverse stories about migration: refugees arriving in the Netherlands, Dutch post-war refugees leaving for other countries, and students and young professionals migrating to and from the Netherlands.

Each animation lasted about 35 seconds and told the story of two different migration stories, highlighting that migration has occurred throughout the years and that many different groups of people have migrated before. Some stills from the animation can be found below:

In 1957 emigreerde deze Nederlandse familie naar Australië.

In 2022 kwam deze Oekraïense familie aan in Nederland.

	Migratie verrijkt (win-win)	Migratie is van alle tijden (Panta Rhei)
Total		
Exposure in feed	163,911	161,400
Clicks	4,465	4,667
Click Through Rate (%)	2.72	2.89
Reactions (Likes or Emojis)	74	146
Comments	20	108
Engagements	33639	29422

Definitions

Exposure	The amount of social media accounts featured the animation, the number of times it was shown in a profile feed
Clicks	Clicks on the animation
Click Through Rate (%)	Number of users that clicked on the website link featured in the animation
Reactions	Likes of emojis users put under the animation
Comments	The number of comments placed under the animation
Engagements	The number of shares, reactions, saved, comments, likes, clicks on links and watching the animation for longer than 3 seconds

After six weeks, the results showed that both animations featured almost the same amount in feeds and had similar click rates, indicating that users viewed the messages a similar number of times. Looking purely at the comments and reactions, the Panta Rhei campaign was the most interacted with on social media platforms Facebook and Instagram, meaning that it received the most comments and reactions of the two. The engagement rate for the win-win campaign was in some terms higher because there were five posts, as compared to the Panta Rhei campaign, which only circulated three posts. However, looking at the reactions and comments put on the posts, the win-win campaign received more positive reactions, while the Panta Rhei campaign received a significant number of negative comments and/or began a debate about migration in the comments section.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the Dutch Movable Middle have more positive reactions to messages centered around how migration benefits all those involved, migrants and receiving societies, while being more likely to interact with messaging centered around how migration is a natural phenomenon and has been a part of human history since the beginning. Therefore, depending on the goal of the communication campaign, either message could be used to target the Movable Middle. If the goal is to ignite conversation and promote dialogue, the Panta Rhei messaging is most fitting. If the goal is to promote a positive reaction and/or narrative about migration, then the win-win messaging is most effective.

HOW? KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE MOVABLE MIDDLE

Having covered the 'Who' and the 'What' of the research done for the Moving the Middle project, therefore collecting information on who the Dutch Movable Middle is and what messaging is most effective to use to target this segment, this section will provide more information on how a communication strategy can be drafted to target the Movable Middle. Based on the insights gained during the Moving the Middle project, it has become apparent that when attempting to target a population segment such as the Movable Middle, several steps need to be taken to work towards creating a comprehensive, inclusive, and effective communication strategy. This approach can be divided into 5 core activities: know yourself, know your audience, know your context, know your tools, and finally, test your approach.

KNOW YOURSELF

Clearly identify your organization's values and position within the debate

To draft a strategy to reach out to the Movable Middle, it is recommended to review or define your organization's position and core values. Such a position influences how the larger public views you and your organization in the larger debate on migration. As such, this can influence how they perceive and receive any communication shared by yourself or on behalf of the organization on migration and might impact the effectiveness of the communication.

Identify your own preconceptions and biases

Every individual has unconscious biases about situations or other people. Forming biases has been a skill developed over centuries of human existence, designed to ensure that, based on a few fast observations, humans can make a judgment about a situation and react immediately. Coined by psychologist Daniel Kahneman as 'the fast route', humans react instinctively to many situations they encounter and make snap judgments, which are helpful with many everyday activities, such as walking, biking, and doing groceries (OnMigration, 2022). However, this fast route can also lead to snap judgments in categorizing people and deciding whether individuals belong to 'your' group or another. This can further lead to 'othering' or cementing current opinions on migrants or judgments about people whose opinions on migration differ from your own.

Identifying and evaluating your own biases is the first step in becoming more self-aware. OnMigration, a platform made up of civil society organizations, researchers, communication specialists, and other relevant parties in the debate about communication about migration, recommends completing the 'Implicit Association Test'. Once identified, it is important to unpack this bias and step into being uncomfortable and try to trace where this bias comes from. Secondly, once identified, take a step back and practice slow thinking, which involves being more critical of assumptions or first impressions you have of others who may not be similar to you (idem).

Being honest about personal biases will allow for more perspective-taking and more honest and effective communication and thus is a key first step when designing a communications strategy geared toward people who may not think as you do.

Questions to ask:

- What is the organization known for?
- What is the role of the organization in the migration debate?
- What is the mission of the organization?
- What are my personal views on issues surrounding migration? How do statements that I do not agree with make me feel?
- What values are important to me?

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Create messaging that is nuanced and targets the general public

For your messaging and communication to be as timely as possible, it is key to engage in nuanced and targeted communication. This entails identifying which group within the Movable Middle you wish to engage. The Dutch Movable Middle can be identified on all levels of society and so creating targeted messaging that has an impact can be quite challenging.

Based on survey findings, the Dutch Movable Middle tends to avoid conversations on migration and so how you communicate is critical. The group tends to find it difficult to speak up about their opinion on migration, but even on questions about fundamental values and life. Speaking to them in a neutral manner may aid in promoting circumstances whereby they feel more comfortable speaking about migration. As such, avoiding confrontational language is beneficial as it might push members in the Movable Middle to divert even further from wanting to talk about migration (i.e. avoid 'we should…you should…' statements).

Age has an impact on the communication channels and platforms used

Overall, the Movable Middle can be found in many levels of Dutch society. However, when selecting what communication channels to use to target this group, age is an important factor to consider. The older generation, above 35 years old, tends to use social media platforms less and follow the news, read the newspaper, and watch TV more than other groups. Younger individuals, instead, tend to follow news online, via various websites and social media and use a host of social media platforms (Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and Pinterest).

Therefore, age is a prominent factor to consider when identifying the target group and designing the most suitable strategy and tools for outreach.

'Nothing for us, without us'

Communication or narratives about migration and migrants should be designed with full and direct participation of members of the group that is being featured and directly affected. To keep communication accurate, and representational, it is key to involve migrants themselves in the storytelling and crafting of migration narratives. The Moving the Middle project set up a cooperation with the Migrant Ambassador Advisory Board where five members, with diverse migrant backgrounds and professional expertise, provided feedback and insights on communication materials created and circulated during the project.

Similarly, involving the Movable Middle in the drafting process of communication for this very same group can help create more impactful and targeted messaging. Having multiple feedback rounds and discussions with members of the Movable Middle further creates more space for discussion around migration and as such, can already have an impact on facilitating dialogue on migration.

When creating audio-visual materials, receiving well-informed consent from the people featured not only enables a more balanced collaboration and informed process, but most importantly, protects the personal data of those being featured. The individuals featured in messaging and posts are individuals with their own stories and agency and should be treated as such. Therefore, conducting informative conversations and receiving consent on the materials formed belong within a more inclusive creation process.

Questions to ask:

- How can we involve migrant voices and migrant organizations directly in the process of communicating with the Movable Middle?

- How can we bring the voices of the Movable Middle into the process of drafting communication for this very same group?
- What is our long-term goal, for this group, with this communication?
- Where does this group get their news from?

KNOW YOUR CONTEXT

Be aware of the timing of your campaign

Based on the findings from the three phases of research done for the Moving the Middle project, the financial situation of Dutch people and the Dutch economy plays a large role in determining views on migration in society as a whole, including the Movable Middle, as also further supported by previous research (Albada et al., 2021). As such, it is advisable to run campaigns during times of more financial stability to maximize the potential of reaching the Movable Middle and the effects of the campaign on their opinions on migration. Should this not be feasible, reflecting awareness of the current financial situation in the messaging is advisable, as well as bearing in mind that the context may not be favourable and the campaign may have a limited impact.

Focus your communication on current affairs

Based on project focus group discussions and messaging testing, respondents noted their preference for realistic and honest in communication but preferred remaining informed of current affairs surrounding the migration debate. As such, it is advisable to keep communication about migration and migrants as current as possible, addressing any recent events that may have occurred and acknowledging any problems faced by Dutch society.

Questions to ask:

- What are the main societal concerns at this moment?
- What is the main story and/or narrative being perpetuated within the migration debate at this moment?
- What are, if any, the concerns around migration at this moment?

KNOW YOUR TOOLS

Values-based messaging

As shown through the findings of the Moving the Midlde project, messaging based on statistics does not tend to have an strong impact on the Movable Middle. Other studies have shown similar results, emphasizing that many of the concerns and opinions individuals hold on migration tend to be rooted in emotion (Cassehgari, 2020; OtherTalk, 2021). As such,

communication based on values and emotions tends to be more impactful and therefore, values-based messaging is recommended when targeting the movable middle.

Therefore, while drafting a strategy, it is important to be clear about the core values of your organization because they will be highlighted whilst using value-based messaging. Chances are that, during the process of attempting to reach out to the Movable Middle, conversations will need to be held on what core values should be kept in the communication itself and how best to find a balance between what works and what messages also allow the campaign to stay true to your values.

As a first step, a basic values model is needed to start with the values mapping process. According to Schwartz's theory of basic human values, further elaborated upon earlier in the 'Who' section, nine core values are identified as being the base for human opinion. These values are "broad, stable motivational goals that individuals hold in life, which predict attitudes to specific issues and behavior" (Dennisson, 2019).

It has been found that aligning communication on migration with the target audience's values is likely to call up feelings of sympathy for the message. Moreover, messages that are based on values that do not align with those of the audience are less likely to elicit sympathy and are more likely to call up feelings of antipathy. Therefore, identifying the values of the target group is essential in attempting to create messaging that will call up more sympathetic views.

For guides on creating value-based messaging and moving towards a more emotive approach, you can consult the section titled 'Further Readings' in the References.

Questions to ask:

- What values do we, as an organization, prioritize in our work? Where do they overlap with the mentioned values of the Movable Middle?
- How would we translate this value into an image? Or a written message?
- How can we avoid personal attacks in messaging when discussing the opposition?
- How can we avoid repeating false ideas and/or messages and focus on new, more positive imagery?

TEST YOUR APPROACH

Provide an environment open for feedback

A key component of any communication strategy is the ability to test materials numerous times on the target group themselves and the group whom the communication is about. As mentioned earlier, the involvement of both representatives from the Movable Middle and migrant communities can aid in crafting more inclusive and representative messaging. This could be done in the following ways:

• Setting up an advisory group of migrants and/or migrant organizations to discuss potential messages and next steps in the communication strategy
• Setting up focus groups with members from the Movable Middle to present messaging and ask for direct feedback
• Placing ads on social media with the draft message and the option for users to provide direct feedback or answer a poll to get insights on the reception of the message (can be done on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook)
• Hosting one-on-one feedback conversations with relevant stakeholders to discuss draft messaging

For in-person testing, researchers can look at factors such as:

• Emotional reactions
• Associations with the message (asking about images, words, objects, etc.)
• the presence of a Call-to-Action (do users feel like they want to learn more or do something as a direct result of that communication?)

Organizing multiple rounds of feedback for materials used for campaigns can aid in promoting open channels of communication, as well as more targeted and authentic communication. This can be done by hosting additional focus groups, circulating test advertisements on social media platforms that target groups can provide direct feedback on, and showcasing the materials to migrant-led organizations.

In order to measure and test reactions, researchers can specifically conduct tests with factors such as:

• Engagements
• Interactions (Examples of indicators: likes, comments, emojis used)
• The nature of the responses and interactions
• Follow-through (Examples of indicators: click-thru rates, website visits)
• Time users spent on the target website and/or opening and observing the post

These factors can all often be measured through software such as Google Analytics or Social Media advertisement hubs, such as Facebook.

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

The below graphic outlines and summarizes further insights from the Moving the Middle project on how best to draft a communication strategy to target the Dutch Movable Middle.

SET UP MULTIPLE FEEDBACK CHANNELS

Facilitate co-creation processes with migrants and migrant organizations when working on messaging and create an open environment and room for multiple editing processes for the Movable Middle to provide feedback on the messaging.

USE PERSONAL STORIES OF REAL PEOPLE

Make sure to include faces and names of real stories that people can connect with while observing strict data protection principles.

BE AWARE OF THE TIMING OF YOUR CAMPAIGN

Perceived financial well-being and sense of societal well-being play a role in receptiveness to new messaging around migration. Make sure to include the concerns of the Movable Middle in the message.

COMBINE THE ONLINE WITH THE OFFLINE

Combine different means and modalities of communication, such as an online social media campaign, and in-person activities, such as cultural events, cooking events, dialogue sessions, etc.

USE VALUES-BASED MESSAGING

Values-based messaging has been proven to be more impactful when communicating with the Dutch Movable Middle as it touches upon concerns they hold about migration and current social affairs and reflects their values, making them feel heard and seen.

FACILITATE IN-PERSON CONVERSATIONS

Other research has shown that in-person conversations reduce biases and negative feelings towards others. Creating an environment in which in-person discussions can take place in an open and informal manner is key to promoting inclusion in the migration debate.

KEEP THE COMMUNICATION POSITIVE BUT ACTUAL

The Dutch Movable Middle responds well to positive messaging, but remains very realistic in their concerns surrounding migration. Address these concerns and current events that are prominent within the migration debate.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Through following these five steps and answering the corresponding questions, organizations wishing to target the Movable Middle to communicate about migration can do so in a comprehensive and targeted manner. The answers to the questions above and the best practices combined provide the elements needed to draft the basis for a communication strategy that will reach and engage the Movable Middle in an effective manner.

This Knowledge Dossier has discussed the characteristics of the Dutch Movable Middle (Who), what messaging styles and content are most effective to communicate about migration with this segment of the population (What) and has provided the steppingstones on how to plan a communication strategy to target the Movable Middle based on those previously mentioned findings (How). With this Dossier, IOM hopes to contribute to promoting a more balanced migration narrative and to fostering attitudes of openness and inclusion towards migrants within Dutch society. It is through meeting in the middle that biases and prejudices can be addressed and resolved, and social inclusion can be enhanced.

REFERENCES

Albada, K., Hansen, N., & Otten, S. 2021. Polarization in attitudes towards refugees and migrants in the Netherlands. European Journal of Social Psychology, 51(3), 627-643. More

BBC News. 2017. Germany hate crime: Nearly 10 attacks a day on migrants in 2016. BBC News, 26 February. More

Betz, W. and Simpson, N.B. 2013. The effects of international migration on the well-being of native populations in Europe. IZA Journal of Migration, Springer 2:12. More

Blackmore, E., and Sanderson, B. 2017. Framing equality toolkit. International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association Europe (ILGA) and the Public Interest Research Centre (PRIC). More

Butcher, P. and Neidhardt, A.H. 2020. Fear and lying in the EU: Fighting disinformation on migration with alternative narratives. The Foundation for European Progressive Studies. The European Parliament. More

Cassehgari, R. 2020. Working with the Movable Middle – Lessons from SCI's Stories of Change Case Studies Migration Narrative Project. Social Change Initiative. More

Cousens, E. 2015. We need to stop telling ourselves that women and children are the only refugees that matter. The Independent, 16 September. More

Dennisson, J. 2019. What policy communication works for migration? Using values to depolarize. European Union, EuroMed Migration, and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). More

Drazanova, L. and Dennison, J. 2018. Public attitudes on migration: rethinking how people perceive migration. The International Centre for Migration Policy Development. More

Esipova, N., Ray, J., and Pugliese, A. 2020. World Grows Less Accepting of Migrants. Gallup, 23 September. More

Van Gorp, B., Van Hove, J., Figoureux, M. and Vyncke, B. 2020. Anders communiceren over migratie en vluchtelingen: aan de slag met frames en conterframes. Christelijke Universiteit Leuven: Instituut voor Mediastudies. More

Goyat, S. 2011. The basis of market segmentation: a critical review of literature. European Journal of Business and Management, 3:9, 45-54. More

van Heck, S. 2021. Immigratie, ethniciteit en religie gezien als voornaamste bronnen van maatschappelijke spanning in Nederland. Ipsos, 25 June. More

International Organization for Migration (IOM). 2022. Key Migration Terms. More

Ipsos. 2018. Nationale Monitor Polarisatie en Beeldvorming Vluchtelingen. Stay Human and Purpose. More

Ipsos. 2022. Moving the Middle: Hoe activeren we het beweegbare midden? International Organization for Migration (forthcoming).

Leach, A., Dempster, H. and Hargave, K. 2020. Public attitudes towards immigration and immigrants: what people think, why, and how to influence them. ODI. More

Messing, V. and Ságvári, B. 2019. Still divided but more open – Mapping European attitudes towards migration before and after the migration crisis. European Commission. More

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2014. Is migration good for the economy? Migration Policy debates, May. More

OnMigration. 2022. Onze zoektocht. On Purpose and EmpathyLAB. More

OtherTalk. 2021. Communiceren over Migratie en Vluchtelingen naar het Beweegbare Midden: Een Framinggids van Other Talk. VluchtelingenWerk Vlaanderen en 11.11.11, October. More

Roggeband, C. 2007. Divergent Framing: The Public Debate on Migration in the Dutch Parliament and Media, 1995-2004. West European Politics. 30(3):524-548. More

Schwartz, S. 2012. An Overview of the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture 2, no.1, December 1. More

Szczepanik, M. 2016. The 'Good' and 'Bad' Refugees? Imagined Refugeehood(s) in the Media Coverage of the Migration Crisis. Journal of Identity and Migration Studies, 10:2, 23-33, 123. More

Tsagkroni, V. and Lazaridis, G. 2015. Securitisation of migration and far-right populist 'othering' in Scandinavian countries. Link.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2015. Sustainable Development Goals. More

United Nations General Assembly. 2019. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2018: Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration. A/RES/73/195. More

Interview with Mirjam Vossen, Media Scientist and Framing Expert, IOM, 6 April 2022.

Walsh, G., Hassan, L.M., Andrews, J.C., Hastings, G. 2010. Segmentation in Social Marketing: Insights from the European Union's Multi-Country, Antismoking Campaign. European Journal of Marketing, 44:7/8, 1140-1164. More

Further Readings:

Dennisson, J. 2019. What policy communication works for migration? Using values to depolarize. European Union, EuroMed Migration, and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). More

Marthouz, J.P. 2006. "How to Communicate: Strategic communication on migration and integration". King Baudouin Foundation. More

Maryville University. 2023. How to Identify and Overcome your Implicit Bias. More

Pfeifer, W. 2022. From "Nothing about us without us" to "Nothing without us". National Democratic Institute, March 28. More

Sharif, H. 2019. "Communicating effectively on migration: recommendations and policy options". ReSOMA: Research Social Platform on Migration and Asylum. Policy Option Brief: December 2019. More