Media use, fear of terrorism, and attitudes towards immigrants and refugees: Young people and adults compared

# Details

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## Sample

881 Flemish adolescents, mainly aged 13 to 18 with a few outliers aged 20. Schools and classes were selected through two-step quota sampling, resulting in a disproportionate stratified sample.
(There is also a representative sample of 878 Flemish adults, for comparison)

# Abstract

In Flanders, citizens hold rather negative attitudes towards immigrants and refugees. This could be due to the news media, which depict newcomers in a rather negative way. The purpose of this study is to analyze whether there are separate media worlds at work in Flemish young people and adults and whether this results in different attitudes towards immigrants and refugees. To do so, we questioned 1,759 people aged 13 to 65 by means of an online questionnaire. Results indicate that overall news consumption increases with age, and that young people mainly use social media for their news consumption while adults still rely on traditional media. Interestingly, young adults are the most welcoming group towards immigrants and refugees. Although news media consumption seems to be related to fear of terrorism and attitudes towards newcomers to some extent, socio-demographic factors play an important role in the development of fear and negative attitudes towards newcomers.

# Outcome

"News consumption through traditional news media and importance attached to news both increase with age. For adolescents, social media is their most frequently used medium to consume news. Offline newspaper consumption is the only type of news consumption, which is negatively related to attitudes towards refugees. Unlike what was expected, not adolescents but 26- to 35-year olds (young adults) hold the most positive attitudes concerning immigrants and refugees. This is also illustrated by the lowest score on discriminatory attitudes and the least fear of terrorism, together with adolescents. More news consumption does not always result in more fear of terrorism or more negative attitudes towards newcomers." (Debrael et al., 2019, pp. 23-25)