



# Attitudes towards news media in Ireland:

Perspectives from Nigerian and  
Polish migrants

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## **Foreword from the BAI**

The BAI plays a central regulatory role in promoting increased representation of the diversity of Irish society in Irish broadcast media and the Authority also has a responsibility to facilitate a mix of voices and opinions which ensures the plurality of media sources in Ireland and enhances democratic debate. This, in turn, helps to ensure that trust in journalism is sustained and upheld. The BAI undertakes a range of research that promotes and shapes debate about the diversity and plurality of the media in Ireland, including funding the inclusion of Ireland in the Reuters Digital News study. This research aims to understand how global audiences consume news content and to track news consumption trends from year to year.

In support of its strong commitment to increasing diversity and plurality in the Irish media, the BAI believes that the Reuters data should be examined from different perspectives. In 2021, the BAI commissioned an additional analysis of this data with a focus on gender and diversity particularly in relation to socio-economic class categories, also a strong area of interest for the Authority. In 2022, the BAI looked at the Reuters data from the perspective of Polish and Nigerian communities in Ireland, in order to create awareness amongst news providers and users about how news and current affairs are consumed differently by migrant populations. Through its support for this research, the BAI continues to deliver on its commitment to promote a more pluralistic and diverse Irish media landscape.

The BAI would like to thank the researchers at the Institute for Future Media, Democracy & Society (FuJo) at DCU, Assistant Professor Dawn Wheatly and Leysi Rubio Arevich, for their commitment and work on this research project.

**Celene Craig**

Chief Executive, BAI

**“The power of the news goes a long way in determining what knowledge people consume and what people's outlook are to their society, and to everyone at large. I think there's a lot of power in news, in the news reports, and it just goes a long way in influencing what the society will turn out to be.”**

Ade (28), who moved from Nigeria to Dublin in 2018 to study for a Master's degree.

# Introduction & context

## Project aims and motivation

Understanding consumption habits and attitudes towards news is a crucial dimension of the contemporary media landscape, in which the audience exist in a high-choice environment with a plethora of content sources fighting for their attention. Every year since 2015, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland has worked with researchers in Dublin City University to produce the Reuters Digital News Report, a large-scale survey of Irish audiences, published in collaboration with the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism in the University of Oxford. That data, part of an international project with more than 40 countries now participating, explores themes such as audience consumption, attitudes towards news brands, trust in the news, and interest in the news. Yet by its nature, survey data focuses on identifying and quantifying the common patterns, painting a picture of the average consumer, but those findings about the “typical” audience member can never fully capture and represent all facets of modern Irish society. Therefore, this project sought to broaden our knowledge around news and media consumption in Ireland by understanding some of the patterns of consumption through the lens of Polish and Nigerian migrants<sup>1</sup> who have moved to Ireland over the past two decades. This goal manifested in three key aims:

- 1) To document the attitudes and consumption habits of migrant populations towards Irish news media;
- 2) To understand some of the barriers and potential solutions to news consumption among these populations in Ireland;
- 3) To capture these insights through the participants’ own words and individual experiences.

The research builds on previous work regarding issues of representation, integration and communicative practices of migrant media channels in Ireland. A previous BAI report (Tittley et. al 2010)<sup>2</sup> examined media practices among migrant communities in Ireland, including Nigerians and Polish, and provided a valuable foundation for some of the topics explored in this study. Some of the criticisms towards Irish broadcasters raised in that report would continue to be problematic for our Polish participants more than a decade on, such as Irish media being “narrow in its range of reference and acquisitions”, questionable news values, and lacking broader European content, as well as migrants’ language competencies and struggles with regional accents. From the Nigerian perspective, concerns raised previously concerning “accuracy of reporting and representation”, racialised coverage, the need for balanced news productions, and the importance of more diversity on screen remain seemingly unresolved and would also be raised by our participants.

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<sup>1</sup> We use the term “migrants” throughout but acknowledge that some people prefer to use other descriptive terms, depending on the individuals’ circumstances. For this report, we draw on the UN’s International Organisation for Migration definition of a migrant as “any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (i) the person’s legal status; (ii) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (iii) what the causes for the movement are; or (iv) what the length of the stay is.” (<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/migration>)

<sup>2</sup> Tittley, G., Kerr, A. and King-O’Riain, R.C., 2010. *Broadcasting-in the New Ireland: Mapping & Envisioning Cultural Diversity*. National University of Ireland, Maynooth.

## Nigerian and Polish populations in Ireland

This study seeks to explore migrants' news consumption patterns and focuses on two nationality groups who have a substantial presence in Ireland; Table 1 provides a snapshot of the Polish and Nigerian populations here, including the number of arrivals from these countries since 2002 (based on new PPS numbers issued).

	2020 CSO estimated population living in Ireland <sup>3</sup>	2016 Census population	New Irish PPS numbers issued 2002-2022 <sup>4</sup>
Polish	128,326	122,515	418,053
Irish-Polish	N/A	9,273	N/A
Nigerian	14,758	6,084	28,148
Irish-Nigerian	N/A	6,995	N/A

Table 1: Overview of the Polish and Nigerian populations in Ireland (Irish-Polish and Irish-Nigerian appeared as categories in the 2016 Census).

Poland, lying in Eastern Central Europe, is approximately 4.5 times the geographic size of Ireland with a population of 38 million people. When Poland joined the European Union (EU) in 2004, the opportunity arose for citizens to live and work freely in EU member states<sup>5</sup>. Following a decade of migration, Polish people would become the largest non-Irish population in Ireland in the 2016 Census. Figure 1 shows the trend of newcomers to Ireland from Poland, illustrating the peak in the years immediately after EU membership; it has since dipped but remains relatively consistent over the past decade, typically between 5,000-10,000 per year.

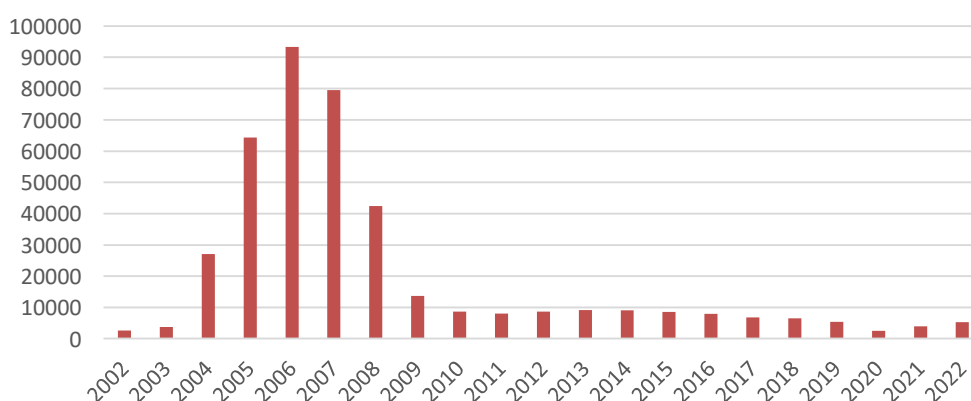


Figure 1: New Irish PPS numbers issued to Polish nationals between 2002-2022. See footnote 4.

<sup>3</sup> The 2022 Census figures were not yet available at time of publishing. The estimated populations are available at <https://data.cso.ie>, table IPEADS04.

<sup>4</sup> Data compiled from <https://data.cso.ie> table FNA10 and <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/a78027-statistics-on-personal-public-service-pps-numbers-issued/>

<sup>5</sup> Only Ireland, the UK and Sweden initially allowed access to the labour market in 2004, while other EU states implemented a longer transition period following the accession of the eight new Eastern and Central European countries in 2004. See Grabowska-Lusinska, I., 2008. "Migrations from Poland after 1 May 2004 with special focus on British Isles". *Espace populations sociétés*. (2008/2), pp.247-260

Nigeria lies in the western region of Africa, along the Gulf of Guinea coast. It has the seventh highest population in the world with just over 211 million people and, geographically, is approximately 13 times the size of Ireland. The Nigerian population in Ireland is much lower than Polish, but Nigerians are the largest population of African origin living in Ireland. As noted in Titley et. al. (2010), the migration of Nigerians into Ireland has a more complex history in terms of public perception, particularly around the 2004 Citizenship Referendum, the negative and controversial association of Nigerians with the asylum anxiety of 1990-2000 and the “persistently racialised form of public coverage”. The numbers seeking asylum have fallen substantially since the early 2000s<sup>6</sup>, mirroring the decline in migrants from Nigeria, as shown in Fig. 2. Notably, there has been an increase since 2015 as more Nigerians move here to pursue work and educational opportunities.

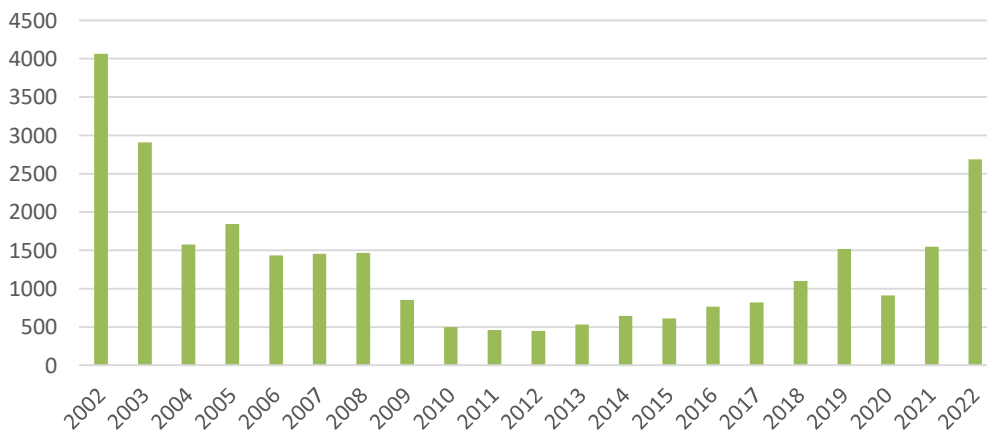


Figure 2: New Irish PPS numbers issued to Nigerian citizens between 2002-2022. (Source in footnote 4).

Given this report’s emphasis on news and media, the results from the 2016 Census regarding English-language proficiency are worth noting as accessibility and comprehensiveness of news content are important components of whether it is possible for migrants to consume media in a new country. English is Nigeria’s official language but exists alongside the hundreds of native languages which are more widely spoken in Nigerian homes, among the most common being Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. It is estimated that at least half of Nigerians can speak English, or “Nigerian Pidgin”, an English/creole variation influenced by the indigenous languages<sup>7</sup>. Because of this, it is unsurprising that most of the Nigerian population in Ireland say they speak English very well, as shown in Figure 3. In contrast, the level among Polish and Irish-Polish is lower, with a higher proportion who say they speak it “not well” or “not at all”, pointing to the continued strong connection to the Polish language in daily and home life.

<sup>6</sup> Statistics from the International Protection Office are available at <http://www.ipso.gov.ie/en/ipso/pages/statistics> and show figures for those seeking International Protection from 2016-2023, while the now-abolished Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner websites shows figures between 2001-2015 at [http://www.orac.ie/website/orac/oracwebsite.nsf/page/orac-stats\\_archive-en](http://www.orac.ie/website/orac/oracwebsite.nsf/page/orac-stats_archive-en)

<sup>7</sup> Jowitt, D. 2018. *Nigerian English*, DeGruyter. p.10



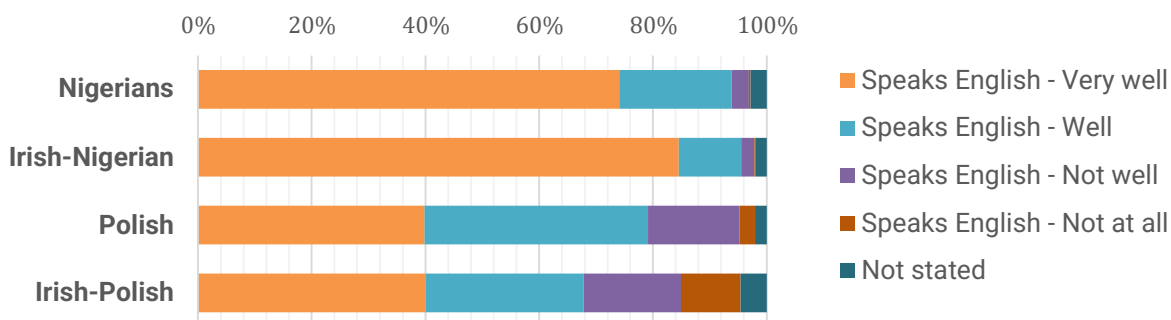


Figure 3: Data from 2016 Census showing the results regarding spoken English skills from Polish and Nigerians living in Ireland <sup>8</sup>.

## Outline of the report

This following section outlines the project methodology, including information on participants, their recruitment and the project’s limitations. The Findings section initially presents five key topics in which contributions from both the Nigerian and Polish participants are intertwined. Section 6 focuses on issues which arose specifically in the conversations with the Nigerian participants, followed by issues relevant for the Polish participants in Section 7. The report concludes with the project’s main findings and points for consideration.

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<sup>8</sup> Source: CSO. Population Usually Resident and Present in the State who Speak a Language other than English or Irish at Home 2016. <https://data.cso.ie>, Table EY027.

# Methodology

## Participants and recruitment

The study includes contributions from 24 participants: 12 Polish and 12 Nigerian. There were 12 men and 12 women<sup>9</sup>, all aged between 25 and 49. This study did not set out to be representative and garner large numbers of participants: instead, the goal was to speak to small groups who could offer meaningful insights into their experiences and attitudes, shared in their own words. Our participants all grew up in Poland/Nigeria, so we refer to them as first-generation migrants in Ireland. Eleven of the Polish participants had moved to Ireland between 2004-2007, with one coming in 2017, while all the Nigerian participants moved between 2016 and 2022. Participants were found through networking and snowball sampling, thus their responses are not applicable to larger Polish and Nigerian communities in Ireland. They were recruited through professional networks like Twitter and LinkedIn, as well as through community leaders and journalists of migrant groups and organisations in Ireland. Leaflets were also distributed in local Polish shops and posted on the Polish website "ogloszenia.gazeta.ie" in Polish and English. The Midlands Polish Society was also a key player in helping us to access its community.

Participants took part in either short one-on-one interviews (approximately 10-15 minutes long), or in focus groups (approximately 60-80 minutes) held in November/December 2022. Overall, the 24 participants contributed through 10 one-on-one interviews, two in-person focus groups, and two online focus groups via Zoom. Participants had a geographic spread around the country. We physically travelled to the Midlands Polish Society's Independence Day festival, held in Athlone, which facilitated contributions from many Polish people living in the Midlands and the West, as well as speaking to its chairman, Slavek Kazzek. The in-person focus groups – held on the Dublin City University campus in Dublin 9 – accommodated contributors based around the capital. The online focus groups allowed participants from elsewhere to contribute, including from Limerick, Waterford, and Louth.

Approval for the project was granted through DCU's Faculty of Humanities & Social Science Research Ethics Committee which reviewed the project proposal and its consent forms, which all participants signed. Each person spoke to us on the understanding they would not be directly named and would be granted a pseudonym (of their choice, if desired). All participants received a small voucher to acknowledge their time.

## Scope of the research

The project is tied to the annual Digital News Report which has been published in Ireland every year since 2015. It drew on many of the themes which the survey highlights, such as audience consumption habits, trust in the news, brand loyalty, polarisation, news avoidance, and demographic representations in the news. In practical terms, each interview/focus group followed the same broad structure: participants were asked to explain their own background and when/why

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<sup>9</sup> Although overall balance was achieved in terms of Polish and Nigerian contributors, and between men and women, it should be noted the breakdown was 8 Polish women, 4 Polish men, 4 Nigerian women and 8 Nigerian men.

they moved to Ireland, before being asked about their interest in the news, what outlets they use, whether they trust news in Ireland and their opinions of RTÉ in particular, their interest in news from Poland/Nigeria, and how news here might be made more appealing and accessible to migrants. The conversations remained semi-structured and reasonably flexible, which allowed for the discussion to naturally go in various directions, depending on the participants' responses and interactions with each other.

## Limitations

The sample size of 24 should be acknowledged for its strengths – deeper, qualitative insights that allow for follow-up questions and contributions which structured surveys do not allow – but also for its limitations: it can never capture the diversity of lived experiences among all the Polish and Nigerians resident in Ireland in a representative manner. Furthermore, most data-gathering methods involving participants are opt-in by their nature, attracting those who are interested in the subject matter: in our case, we have many contributors who felt strongly about how important the news is in their lives. Among the Nigerian participants, it is worth noting that they were recruited through professional networks, and many of them were highly educated, having come to Ireland for Master's degrees, which may not necessarily be indicative of the Nigerian population at large in Ireland. The majority of Polish participants had moved to Ireland shortly after Poland joined the EU and had a more mixed level of education, but had lived here longer and were more settled, many with children. The interviews/focus groups and recruitment were conducted in English, which excludes participants not comfortable speaking the language. Finally, this project focuses only on those who have moved to Ireland. The attitudes of second-generation migrants, who are born in Ireland to Nigerian or Polish parents, may vary from those of the first-generation migrants studied here, given the complex relationship between nationality, heritage and identity, and these differences could warrant further study.

# Findings

## 1. News consumption

The 2022 Digital News Report included results from Ireland, Poland and Nigeria, highlighted below in Table 2 to give some initial national context around the culture and attitudes towards news in the countries relevant to this report.

Digital News Report 2022	Average from 46 countries	Ireland	Poland	Nigeria <sup>10</sup>
Percentage who say “extremely or very interested” when asked: How interested are you in the news?	51%	57%	42%	70%
Percentage who say they access news “several times a day” at least	62%	61%	63%	76%

Table 2: Data from the 2022 Digital News Report.

We wanted to explore this further in terms of interest and consumption in the news, and the fundamental patterns discussed throughout this project echo the trends identified in the Digital News Report in recent years such as social media as a key gateway to news, mobile/smartphones as a crucial device, and the ongoing popularity of radio in Ireland. Only a small number of participants (fewer than five) mentioned they paid for any kind of news content, with others instead referring to paid streaming services like Netflix, and relying on other free sources of information.

Many of our participants noted that they were very engaged and interested in the news, both in Ireland and in their native country. As well as general curiosity about what happens in Ireland, some even felt it was a valuable part of a migrant’s experience to immerse themselves in the news media when they move:

*“If you’re living in this country, you should be [staying up to date]. You know, you should know what’s the story because, if you’re working, if your kids are going to school, any news regarding employment, new laws, new operational guidelines, whatever the government’s doing – you should know this.” Joanna (42), Polish<sup>11</sup>*

Adebayo, a Nigerian man in his early 30s, said it is “not wise” to live in a country without knowing what is going on: “I remember very well that the first difference between yourself and another

<sup>10</sup> As noted in the 2022 Digital News Report, the figures for Nigeria are based on a survey of English-speaking, online news users in Nigeria – a subset of a larger, more diverse, media market. Respondents are generally more affluent, younger (18–50 only), have higher levels of formal education, and are more likely to live in cities than the wider Nigerian population. Findings from the DNR should not be taken to be nationally representative for Nigeria.

<sup>11</sup> Participants' were granted pseudonyms (of their choosing, if desired) which are used throughout. Their ages are included the first time they are quoted.

person is just access to information.” He went on to describe how listening to the news gave him information about important topics like what areas are safer to live in, what changes in the Budget might affect him, such as the ability to claim back money on electricity and gas when working from home, and even “knowing the laws of the land”.

*“From reading the news, you’re going to ... know the things that are contravening with the laws: ‘Oh, there’s this person that was, so who did this, and was arrested for this’ ... Even during the pandemic as well, there were places you couldn’t move around, there were places you couldn’t move from county to county. So, news is a very, very good, integral part of your life, because it’s going to just expose you to everything that goes on in the country.”*

Others noted that the nature of their work or education in Ireland meant they needed to stay informed:

*“I’m in the criminology sector so I’m bound by my job to always be on top of what’s happening. And where our work is more with the homeless section, the news is one place to just tune in to get updates on what’s happening, especially crime news and stuff, or updates on homelessness and current regulations in Ireland as regards homelessness.” Cosi (28), Nigerian*

*“I have this lecturer, before he starts saying the lecture the first thing [he says] is: ‘Do you ever watch the news?’ And I always sit in the front, so he’s always asking me. So I was compelled to always watch the news.” Judy (27), Nigerian*

Some felt it was crucial to stay on top of the news because it might impact on their rights in Ireland, in particular regarding aspects such as changes to visas. For the Nigerians in particular, who do not have the security of EU membership and the guaranteed right to freely travel and work in Ireland, there was a particularly important reason for staying up to date if there were visa changes or new laws affecting them, as Cosi explained:

*“If someone’s making a decision about my life, I need to be up to date – I need to know what’s happening. That was one of the things for me, it was a priority, aside from getting my GNIB (Garda National Immigration Bureau) or the other stuff that you need to get in here. It was getting access to what these people are saying, or what they’re thinking, and what is happening in Ireland. That was it for me.”*

Vic (25), Nigerian woman who works in finance, added: “Whenever my friends send me [celebrity or entertainment] stuff, most times I don’t open it because I just don’t care. That’s one side of news that I won’t be interested in. But anything to do with migrants, anything to do with politics, anything to do with finance, those areas I’ll be interested in.”

Radio has always been a popular medium in Ireland and this was echoed by many participants who noted the ease and accessibility of consumption. Yet, as noted in the previous Digital News Report

from 2021, the increase in working-from-home impacted some radio consumption, as Monika (41, Polish) explained, suggesting she was now missing that source of updates:

*"I don't really travel that much to work anymore. I work from home. So I probably have a reduced [level] of information, but I feel like I lack ... there is a lack of information at present. So actually, my next step is actually get to listen to the radio maybe more frequently at home, because I don't travel as much as I used to."*

Some of the Polish contributors from the midlands, in particular, noted the value of local stations such as Shannonside FM, while also pointing out how listening to Irish radio helped them to improve their English, even if they were still some comprehension issues (mentioned again in Section 5).

Not all participants actively sought out news on TV, radio, newspapers or news websites, but instead found it through social media and apps, one of the key trends of the past decade internationally. Olubunmi, from Nigeria, noted how push notifications serve as an easy, passive way to receive updates on a variety of topics: "I just use RTÉ and Sky News. Most times, I get the update before I open the app. So I'm just like: 'Okay. I think it's okay, for me'. And it's kind of interesting that they don't just focus on one thing. They're focusing on a lot of [topics]."

Some respondents referenced Facebook as being useful for local updates, exemplified here by Marta (44, Polish): "In Portumna we have some, two or three Facebook groups or pages ... They share all the local information ... they're kind of small events." For some, following Irish news brands on social networks, was enough for them to feel they were up to date: "I'm following RTÉ on Twitter – anything happening on RTÉ they're going to tweet about it." This contributor, Jay, a Nigerian man in his 30s, was also among those who referenced the role of algorithms and recommendations influencing what they see, or curation services like Google News: "Every time I read Irish news, it pops up on my Twitter timeline, I just click and when I'm going through my tweets, I'm seeing news Nigerian, Irish [news] ... I'd click on it and it will take me to the link, and I'll read." Some of the Nigerians also spoke about watching a lot of streaming news from Nigeria, such as the Arise channel, via YouTube, while many Polish still listen to Polish radio and watch Polish TV. This ongoing attachment to news from Poland and Nigeria is discussed further in Section 4.

## 2. News avoidance

Digital News Report 2022	Average from 46 countries	Ireland	Poland	Nigeria
Percentage who say they “often” or “sometimes” avoid the news	38%	41%	41%	38%

Table 3: News avoidance results from the 2022 Digital News Report survey.

News avoidance is a common theme emerging in audience research over the past decade, with around two in every five people saying they sometimes or often avoid the news, as shown in Table 3. It has been particularly pertinent in the Covid era, and can often be attributed to two overarching factors: (i) the negative nature of news impacting on audiences’ moods, and (ii) issues around trust in the news turning people away. Both factors arose in conversations with our participants.

Firstly, the negativity felt from the news was apparent, and Covid-19 was a tipping point for some, as Agnieszka (31), from Poland, explained:

*“I used to watch the news a lot more often. Since Covid hit, I decided not to because, seriously, I ended up in a depression, taking the tablets and all of that. ... That’s why I said: “No, I’ve had enough of that”. I prefer my own bubble and seeing the good things other than bad ones. I might digest it later but definitely that was the breaking point when I stopped: “No, that’s too much of TV. That’s too much of the radio and the news. I don’t need that crap.”*

Others said tuning out of the news helped them to “stay sane”, and instead they would go for walks, and cook, or listen to music. For many of the Polish, while coverage of Covid-19 has settled down, the war in Ukraine – which borders Poland – began in early 2022 and was another wave of negativity and stress to manage:

*“It’s just like we are bombarded by news. From every angle, possible angle, are news, news, news, news. And sometimes I’m just like, I’m kind of tired of it ... And especially for Polish people, what is going on now in Ukraine it’s just so depressing. You feel so hopeless, you feel like in the pandemic. And I know, it wasn’t only my story that people stopped watching the news completely, because their heads were exploding.” Marta*

*“I watch [Polish TV] sometimes online, but I rather watch movies than the news. Because all the time when the war started, it was all about war. It was everywhere as well. So it was, again, bad news. Good things happen as well, but you never really hear them like, you know?” Maria (40)*

Regarding issues around trust and credibility as a cause of news avoidance, one Nigerian participant noted his concerns around racism in some aspects of Irish news, particularly how he feels Nigerians or other black people can be unfairly and negatively portrayed. This topic is explored more extensively in Section 6, but at this point is relevant as a factor in why some people might choose to avoid exposing themselves to particular content, as Ade (28) explains:

*"It actually has an effect on your perception of what the news is. Let's take it back to the US, a lot of people wouldn't listen to Fox News because they believe it is pro-Trump. So that's just the same way you would have bias towards the news where we'd really not hear any good things about ourselves in the news, and we really wouldn't get a true representation of what's going on in the news. So what's the point of listening to it? I might as well just watch the Kardashians, or 'Love is Blind'."*

Some Polish respondents also highlighted issues around credibility as a reason for switching off, citing the tone and approach to Covid-19 coverage in Ireland as part of their reason for avoiding the news, suggesting there was elements of fear-mongering, exaggeration, and a lack of diverse perspectives on how to best handle the pandemic: "That's why I felt too much overwhelmed with this information, especially the negative ones and the information that I didn't fully believe in", Pola (30s). Another echoed this, adding:

*"The fear, that the whole atmosphere of putting people really into very stressful situations was just really awful. Because of that, actually, we, as a family, we stopped listening to the mainstream media, totally. I just stopped watching TV, stopped listening to the radio." Kasia (47)*

The following section explores issues around trust and credibility more comprehensively.



### 3. Trust in the news

Results from Digital News Report 2022	Average from 46 countries	Ireland	Poland	Nigeria <sup>12</sup>
Percentage who agree or strongly agree with the statement: "I think you can trust most news most of the time"	42%	52%	48%	58%
Percentage who agree or strongly agree with the statement: "I think I can trust most of the news I consume most of the time"	48%	58%	49%	62%
Percentage who agree with the statement: "The news media in my country is independent from <u>undue political or government influence</u> most of the time"	26%	35%	19%	38%
Percentage who agree with the statement: "The news media in my country is independent from <u>undue business or commercial influence</u> most of the time"	26%	37%	20%	43%
In your view, how politically close together or far apart are the main news organisations in your country?	Close: 51% Far apart: 31%	Close: 62% Far apart: 21%	Close: 29% Far apart: 54%	N/A

Table 4: Results from the 2022 Digital News Report for some of the questions regarding trust, influences on the news, and polarisation.

Trust in the news, in the era of digital misinformation, is a core theme explored in the Digital News Report each year. As Table 4 shows, across all countries, there are slightly higher levels of trust among "news I consume" personally, rather than "most news" generally, and this was also apparent in how participants in our study dismissed or endorsed some outlets in their native countries. These results suggest Nigerians have a relatively trusting opinion of the news media in their country, believing there are lower levels of political or commercial influence than respondents in Ireland or Poland (although the footnote re: the narrow scope of the Nigerian survey data should be noted). However, this was not necessarily evident among our Nigerian participants, who spoke about how unreliable and sensationalist some aspects of Nigerian news were:

*"Ireland would be more trustworthy than Nigeria. It just goes without saying ... Just a few TV stations in Nigeria have integrity with: "We want to verify this news before we publish it". And I know that in Ireland, they'd be careful, they want to be very sure, digging [out] facts. Sometimes when I read the news, I noticed they carefully left out the names of the person, the pictures of a person, just because the details are still sketchy. No, in Nigeria, they bring out the name of a person, almost bring up the phone number of the person." (Adebayo)*

<sup>12</sup> See footnote 10

Overall, there was a broadly positive, or at least indifferent, response towards the tone and trustworthiness of Irish news, with many saying RTÉ seemed to do an effective job at informing the public of what was going on, even among those who were not heavy news consumers, such as Agnieszka:

*"For some people like me, who doesn't have any clue unless I watch RTÉ 1 or RTÉ 2, I will know what happened. Like all the main news, like a Budget event planning or something like that, I will find that. So definitely, [RTÉ] will be the first source where I would go to look for what's happening in Ireland."*

Yet concerns were raised, too. Monika acknowledged that Irish media are "actually in a better place" than Polish media, but she stressed that "none of the news are free from other influences". She said that all information can be presented in different ways to position one over another as the "truth", and also stated her belief in "the huge influence of what can be said in public news and what type of communication can be presented to a larger group of people". This points to the broader issues around trust and cynicism towards mainstream media, with some participants critical towards the relationship between media and governments. For some, Covid-19 was an example of the lack of critical discourse and the marginalisation of alternative viewpoints, and Kasia, from Poland, believed that media mirrors the government messages, not exclusively in Ireland but worldwide, and also stressed the value of alternate, independent news sources:

*"[During Covid] people started looking for alternative news and they found way more space to discuss on the internet, you know, on various channels. And I think this is really the dominating space now when people are looking for really more unbiased information. That doesn't mean that you can only listen to the only people who kind of share your worldviews. Because what we do, for instance, at home, we listen to various voices, and you try to understand how other people think, what is their argumentation about particular subjects and we try to make it square, find out."*

Yet related to this, Radek (41, Polish) pointed out how, during Covid, he felt he had to be extra cautious about the quality of his sources online: "Mostly I followed [news] on the internet, I tried to look for the correct source or listen to every news. Nowadays people speak whatever they want. So you have to be very careful, not listen to everyone. Not everyone will tell you the truth."

In considering the broader political-media relationship, Cosi (from Nigeria) explained that, to her, "the media and the government usually are like two sides of the coin that can't escape each other". She suggested that media organisations everywhere would lean towards politicians closely linked to their editorial guidelines, and that "whatever news the media takes on is what in turn informs the government to take on. Whatever decisions the government takes, is what the news will pass across to people". Marta, from Poland, described how her trust in the news across all the big

brands in Poland and internationally has deteriorated in the last decade: “[I think] probably most of them, they’re involved in politics in some way. So I think it’s very hard to get very independent news.”

Previous Digital News Reports have explored how education or income level can impact on attitudes towards the news and consumption habits. In this project, Opim (30) reflected on the limited accessibility to a variety of sources as an element of political dominance in Nigeria, as the majority of people consume traditional media brands due to their distribution through terrestrial broadcasting which goes “straight to your TV”. He also referred to how the news consumption habits are also influenced by social status, where underprivileged people would be more inclined to consume state-run radio as their primary source of information, in their own language, while people with more resources will access YouTube, blogs and a large variety of independent sources.

*“The [Nigerian] state will be successful in getting their own information, their own curated information to the people that they want. But here it’s different, because even RTÉ is kind of like a state but there’s still independence from the propaganda of the government. Even if RTÉ is moving, you have other sources that are available to people like Virgin Media, even print houses like Irish Times. You have different perspectives, options, you can read different sources for the same and see how people report things differently depending on what you’re trying to achieve. So you can compare and contrast the perspectives.”*

Opim also highlighted how accessible Irish politicians were to journalists, and ultimately the public, facing regular questioning, which he said was one of the main differences to the media landscape in Nigeria. “The public [in Ireland] has access to that, that you can see how your governance is going, how people are responding, how your politicians are responding to the questions given to them.” He went on to describe the coverage of the housing situation here, and he said his increased awareness of how the Government and Opposition were responding was a positive thing. “Even though I consume Nigerian news, I don’t have that front-row seat in terms of how politicians are responding to policies, and where the policy direction is going.” Another participant, Ozi (30), echoed this accessibility, saying the “system of government” and relationship with media here seems different: “In Nigeria, our president is caged somewhere called Aso Rock and nobody has access to him.”

The less polarised nature of Irish news was highlighted by some participants who were comparing it to Polish news: “I think the Irish news seems to be more independent from politics, more descriptive than subjective” (Marta). Similarly, Agnieszka identified a shift in Polish news over recent decades which was impacting their opinion of it: “It’s been a big issue now in Poland for the last year or two, the TV or any media, they are very political now. So we have to know which we have to listen to, believe or not to believe”. She added that she didn’t see the “two kinds of sides” evident in Ireland, suggesting media here is less divided. Maria added: “We have this kind of President now and the group of people, the leaders of the country and they kinda try to control it, the public knowledge of news and whatever. So it depends which kind of channel you watch. If you watch a public channel, it’s different kinds of stories, different points of the story. And if you’re watching the private channels, it’s kind of truth-ish. It’s a bit controlling.”

Some Nigerian participants also identified a more moderate tone to Irish news content, pointing out the “soothing” character of news in Ireland and agreed on a visible contrast between Irish and Nigerian outlets.

*“The news here is calmer. Each time I listen to the news, It's like the person is just reading a nighttime story. The tone, even in discussions, say you have maybe a minister or someone is maybe the something in one county is being interviewed about something, which is very calm, very soothing.” (Cosi)*

Nonetheless, Jay described Irish media as “not as vibrant” in comparison to Nigeria, due to the “conservative” tone in politics and even sports, he said. Jay also acknowledged Irish media as “kind of decent, cool”, but stressed his preference for “things that challenge my brain”. Furthermore, Ade flagged how the media schedule combines news programmes with entertainment shows, but there was a “very limited level of variety” when it comes to news:

*“In terms of being dynamic, when I watched the actual [RTÉ] news on TV, because I also consume my news on the TV. I think they could do better, that they're not as dynamic as the guys in the US or the UK are. So I think presentation wise, they could improve. But I mean, one isn't only going there just to watch them.”*

Nevertheless, Adebayo compared Irish news media favourably to the UK, saying he preferred the less hostile approach in Ireland: “I read how the English media destroys people. Literally, I see it. And I give you an instance. A football player maybe, for instance, buys a property for his mom, the way the caption is being made to victimise the players and all of that stuff. The Irish media doesn't do that. They don't pick on the players, they don't pick on the people.”

Lastly, Kasia underlined a shift in the Irish media landscape, and said that some discussions on the media “feel very staged”. She stressed that the Irish media reproduces the same rhetoric across different formats and platforms, and that “it was all pre-organised how people are supposed to be saying and there's not enough depth in discussion and nobody really is going for harpoons, everybody is trying ... especially people are now afraid of speaking their minds.” She added that she felt people were “vilified” if they did not think the same way as mainstream media contributors and journalists.

In many ways, these range of perspectives are indicative of the wider public's mixed attitudes towards the news and its trustworthiness: the majority seemed generally trusting towards news in Ireland, but with many pointing out problems which impacted their attachment to, and reliance on, mainstream news as a reliable source. Participants in this project were also clearly shaped by their experiences in Poland and Nigeria, while applying some of those frames of reference to the Irish context in which they lived now. The continued consumption of news media from Poland and Nigeria is further explored in the following section.

## 4. Ongoing connection to Nigerian & Polish media

In their report into migrants living in Ireland, Titley, et al. (2010) described migrants' media consumption as an amalgamation of local, Irish national, home-country nationals, diasporic and transnational channels throughout the day; they suggested this integration is an "ongoing process" influenced by factors such as language proficiency, length of time in Ireland, and "orientations towards past experiences and future horizons". Unsurprisingly this was still the case more than a decade on and most respondents spoke about an ongoing interest in staying up to date – to various degrees – with their country of birth. Many spoke enthusiastically about how they love staying involved and attached, and that their news consumption is a diverse mix of Irish and international content. Polish TV remains very common, with participants suggesting that at least half of Polish people in Ireland would still regularly watch Polish TV, integrated to various degrees – or sometimes not at all – with Irish media. It was also clear that increased easy, affordable internet access was enabling more fluid and extensive flows of content, with some of the Polish talking specifically about streaming Polish radio via apps on their phone each day.

*"Everyday I listened to the radio for about six hours. Polish radio, on the internet ... I'm driving to work [in Dublin] 1 hour 10 minutes in the morning, about two hours in the evening. ... Every time, I have Polish radio, so I have all the information every single day." George (37), Polish*

Pola said she was "kind of picky" about what Polish media she consumed ("I like listening to Polish radio, and I still do it. I occasionally check newspapers. Occasionally, watch TV"), while Bartar (44), pointed out his passion for consuming all sorts of Polish media: "I followed what's going on in my country, I can say that. I absolutely just follow the information, everything. I watch the TV, I read the papers, social media, everything about my country. I will get it." A similar enthusiasm was present among some of the Nigerian participants, with Omoh B claiming that "even if we are in China, in America, Nigerian news remains, to us, our favourite", while the upcoming presidential election made it a particularly important and interesting time for them. Samuel (40) explained this further saying, because of the significance of the election, "I tell you, I am 40% in Nigeria, even while I am in Ireland." Some spoke about watching YouTube videos or reading blogs from Nigerian outlets every day – as these are typically very widespread and often more engaging and popular than some of the traditional legacy news brands – and Omoh B described how his social media feeds are hybrids of content, moving fluidly between Irish and Nigerian content:

*"We get news on Twitter, Facebook, and what's happening in the region. Twitter has a feature that goes by location. In Ireland, I noticed how my Facebook changed from my Nigerian location to my Ireland location. And all the time, I get all this from my iPhone, things happening around in my county and Ireland in general."*

This reiterates the prevalence of social networking and messaging groups as sources of news content as an almost effortless way to balance their dual identities, and keep in touch with family and happenings in their home country. For many, there was an incidental, ongoing social connection to updates driven by personal ties, even if it wasn't necessarily actively sought out:

*"The thing is, even if you don't live there, your family is there, your friends are there. Also, apart from that, you're still very, very connected. So if you leave, even if you try to not to even listen to Nigerians, someone on your WhatsApp has posted about Nigeria, someone has posted some news. You cannot avoid Nigerian news. Every day." (Adebayo)*

Others described the very serious and important reasons why they felt an obligation to stay on top of information that may affect their rights or visas; in one instance, George explained how important it was to know about developments in case, for example, there was momentum towards Poland leaving the EU "and we will have to start thinking about the Irish passport and stuff like that". Cosi explained how issues around visa rights could arise from within Ireland and that, if she had to return, then it was crucial she was aware of what was happening:

*"I know I'm here in Ireland, but I feel like Nigeria is still home. If push comes to shove, if anything happens, and [Ireland is] like: 'You know what, we want everybody to leave right now, we just want Irish people here'. If anything happens, and everyone has to go back, that's home. So for me, I have to be on top [of Nigerian politics and elections] ... and as much as you're here, it could still affect you."*

Vic elaborated on this, giving an example about how, in Nigeria, there was an issue with SIM cards for non-residents being potentially deactivated and, as many still retained their Nigerian phone numbers, it was crucial they were aware of news like this which could impact the diaspora. For others, it was simply concern about the wellbeing, safety and circumstances of their family members at home, as Ade explained: "We still have a responsibility to make sure that [our families are] in good shape and things are not working against them."

### **'One leg was in Poland and one here'**

For some, there was an acceptance that their time in Ireland was temporary by choice; planning a return to their home country and staying up to date on what was going on there was simply part of that longer-term plan. Nevertheless, most Polish participants in this project moved to Ireland in the mid/late 2000s following Poland's accession to the EU and were now very settled. Marta articulated how, at one point after meeting her Irish husband here, she faced a decision about where her priorities and focus should lie, echoing broader questions around migrants' identities, in which choices around news consumption is a core element.

*"I was like that for a few years ... one leg was in Poland and one here [in Ireland], and then I realised that this position is not really comfy. Really, I didn't feel comfortable, because I kind of knew that I can't follow 100% what is going on in Poland, and then you can't live two lives at the same time. Then it was my choice, I was thinking about this, what to do. Then I decided in my head, in my heart, that my home is here [in Ireland]. You know, I miss Poland, sometimes I'm very homesick, but I focus on my life here and I make the most of it here."*

She added that her decision is not necessarily the most common one for Polish people living in Ireland, as many “have only Polish TV, they watch only Polish TV, and then focus on Polish news only”, so they do not know what is happening in Ireland. “And they want to keep that way. Different reasons again, because some of them, I know that they want to come back to Poland so they want to be up to date with everything.”

Elsewhere, the sheer size of the country and the diversity of Nigeria’s many ethnic and tribal groups make it difficult to stay fully on top of what was happening, compared with the national scope of much of Irish news, and Cosi explained that it meant that you focus on updates from your region in Nigeria, or in your language:

*“Nigeria is a very big country. And the news in the north is completely different from the news in the south. The news in the southwestern part of Nigeria is different from the news in the southeastern part, or the South. It’s that big. So if you have to consume that much stuff to be on top of what is happening, I don’t think anyone can be on top of what’s happening in Nigeria at 100%. Because you probably will not consume news in Hausa, that’s another language. It’s such a very diverse country.”*

She contrasted geographic and cultural diversity in Nigeria with the relatively small nature of Ireland which is reflected in national-level coverage which spans and provides updates on the whole country: “The news you hear in [Ireland], maybe just if something happens in Tipperary, then you hear it in the news in Dublin. It’s the same, it happened everywhere.” A Polish contributor, Agnieszka, also noted the death notices – “the long list of people who died” – heard on local radio in Ireland as the thing that struck her as the most different to Polish radio, again indicative of the relatively narrow target audience of Irish news outputs. Elsewhere, some of the Polish contributors found the news from Poland frustrating to listen to because of the politicised and divisive nature of it, and issues around ownership and trust, as outlined in Section 4.

*“Polish media drives me crazy because, in general, there is politics, but it looks like I can describe this as a little circus of two main parties that are fighting against each other. And you can really see news being used to support one party over another, and vice versa” (Monika).*

Yet for many of the Nigerian participants, they embraced and sought out the more subjective, lively approach and the variety of YouTube channels, commentators and exchanges of opinions. Some enjoyed it much more than the “calmer” approach visible in Irish news, as Derrick (40s) explains: “As a people, we are very vocal, we express ourselves, we are confident in our assertions. So because of that, there is always these discussions about your own view on this particular thing, or that thing.”

## Language

Language arose as part of the conversation about news consumption in two ways, particularly among the Polish participants. Firstly, there was some issues around the lack of understanding of much English-speaking media (discussed further in the following section). Secondly, there was a strong desire from some participants to maintain strong ties to the Polish language, especially for their children, as explained here by Monika:

*"I do have Polish channels in my television, so I can switch to Polish channels. I like doing this for a few purposes as well: for the language as well, for my kids, which is actually almost recommended as a heritage of language. Speaking in your own language at home is the easiest and the only way that you can actually learn as well. That's another actual reason for Polish news access."*

Many described their "mixed" households, whether that was two Polish parents who were now raising English-speaking children, or a Polish person with an Irish partner, but the desire for Polish influences and updates remains strong, such as in George's case: "Even though I have Irish children, because all of my children were born in Ireland, they are even speaking English on the back of the seats and I'm speaking with my wife in Polish. So I still wanted information from Poland, what's going on there, what's happened." Yet even beyond the language, as Bartar explained, there is a valuable reason to ensure Polish news and events are still present in his home: "This is a part of our culture, so I don't want to cut off the culture."



## 5. Accessibility of Irish news

Barriers to access and consumption are a challenge with which news producers must grapple if they hope to reach migrant audiences; such barriers may be technical, cultural or psychological, but can lead to isolation from a country's main news institutions. Touching on the negative nature of much news content, as explored in Section 2, some participants in the project sought more positive material and a balanced output that was not constantly filled with bad news. There were also suggestions to be more inclusive of regional news outside Dublin. These may appear minor, but go to the core of whether a not a news outlet is effectively serving its diverse audiences and whether it *feels* relevant and worth accessing.

Considering the broader media environment, Vic explained how news consumption nowadays competes with streaming platforms for people's attention, where accessibility becomes a key word in understanding the current landscape.

*"A lot of people would be on IPTV [Internet Protocol Television, in Nigeria], Netflix, Prime, and YouTube for news. If they could make the local TV stations more accessible, then people will be more open to watching and learning more about what's happening in the country."*

Some Nigerian respondents criticised the obstacles in accessing TV news programmes – TV boxes, and the TV licence – in Ireland, where news is not widely streamed online. For people with explicit interest in the news, this might not represent an excessive cost but, as Ade says, it contends with other sources of news that "in an easier fashion, more people would be inclined to go for that".

*"Everybody literally uses TSTV [in Nigeria - Telkom Satellite TV, a Pay-As-You-Watch Cable TV]... Irish news from other sources in an easier fashion, I'll be more inclined to go for them and rather than go for RTÉ [via TV licence], since I'm still getting the Irish news at the end of the day."*

These discussions led to a series of suggestions from participants to potentially help bridge the gap between Irish media and migrants living here, outlined below.

### **TV licence fee**

Nigerian participants admitted it was a "culture shock" to pay for television in Ireland, as in Nigeria the service is freely distributed, and no separate TV licence is needed. In this regard, they suggested adding the payment of the TV licence to the individual's taxes as a way to increase RTÉ's accessibility: "I shouldn't have to get another box, shouldn't have to pay for another subscription to get access to RTÉ. Might as well just let me pay for this through the boxes" (Ade). Vic inquired about the impact of the TV licence fee in funding RTÉ, and added it is a positive thing that should be charged directly from her taxes, which could perhaps increase how invested the public are in the broadcaster:

*"They could just find another source of funding from the taxes that they are already collecting, rather than asking people to pay an annual fee. And if people*

*understand that: From your tax – we're not increasing your taxes – but from your tax we are taking this money to support RTÉ, maybe people will be like: "Oh, what is going there [on RTÉ]? I should see what's happening there". And they'll be more interested in watching the news as well."*

This also touched on discussions in Ireland in recent years regarding how the licence fee is collected and how RTÉ is funded. Regarding RTÉ Player, participants called out for removing any hurdles or "stumbling blocks" in accessing the public broadcaster's content. "We want something that is very easy to access, that we don't have to go through something [i.e., an app or other platform] to get access to it," suggesting a constant YouTube stream, such as what Sky News offers or TVC News in Nigeria.

Under the same topic, Jakub (48) from Poland, reflected on the public investment in RTÉ because of the state support and licence fee structure, suggesting its social responsibility is to produce original content and not replicate foreign agendas. "If I must pay, for example, a TV licence, I expect from the RTÉ to make more Irish, original produce, something like that". Jakub has technical experience in this field and added that improving the image resolution of the service was another way to elevate the quality of the broadcasting service.

## **Language and content**

One main drawback to consuming local news for migrants in Ireland is the language barrier, as noticed by respondents of the Polish communities. Their recommendation of including subtitles in different languages across the TV news programmes was aimed at increasing access to news for those who struggle with English. Samuel, a Nigerian participant, noted Irish accents as an extra barrier in the communication process, which in previous studies was acknowledged as "both a problem for users and an opportunity to familiarise oneself with the local vernacular" (Tittley et al., 2010).

*"[The broadcaster] should have it in his or her consciousness that there are so many people who are interested in the local news, who may not be having the opportunity of deep accent assimilation. ... we have to [consider them] when you speak to a wider populace." (Samuel)*

George, a Polish man who had been here since the mid-2000s, noted some ongoing challenges, and spoke about listening to 98FM or Spin when in Dublin: "My English is not really perfect. I understand probably maybe 80% of that one. There are a few words which I still don't understand." Yet he also commented that, regardless of what structural support might be offered, a small percentage of Polish people living in Ireland have no interest in learning the language, which he found frustrating: "If we are coming from Poland to Ireland we have to speak English and we have to understand a little bit. I know people who don't want to do that." This raises further challenges for news outlets here to reach those who may have little intention or motivation to learn English. Elsewhere, Pola, also Polish, mentioned the Irish language, noting how it was nice to hear it and "at least I know how it sounds" when it is in on TV or radio, and even on transport announcements: "I

don't understand [it] but, in my opinion, it's a good positive thing that here in the country, we can see the traits of this Irish heritage."

### **Community initiatives**

Participants of both nationalities recognised the importance of broader representation of the communities coexisting in Ireland today. Nigerians and Poles highlighted the impact of having more platforms for minority representation, and therefore a more accurate portrayal of their contribution to contemporary Irish society. Jay, from Nigeria, said he would love a situation where individuals could have access to some kind of broadcast platform to contribute independently to, as mainstream organisations would never sufficiently cater to their interests. He said this did not have to be limited to one nationality and could be more open:

*"Other nationalities... It's fine. You can have a channel that propagates news about Indians more. If you're Indian, you can decide. Any Indian that comes to this country and hears about that kind of channel, they will listen to it or watch it. We can have one that talks about Romanians in Ireland. It's okay if we have one that talks mostly about Nigerians. It's very fine. We can't never have enough. They're giving them the platform in Ireland to operate independently, and on level ground with order. So if we, as Nigerians, feel that we want to listen to that, they are just gonna be paying their taxes, adding to the economy, etc. I just feel we should have platforms like that."*

Marta, from Poland, suggested a similar weekly programme slot in which migrants are centred, but ensuring it is built into the public service platform, even if not offered on the main television or radio schedule but stream-able online:

*"Not only about Polish, there are so many communities interested. And then you would cover what they do, their traditions, their issues, problems, happy days, not happy days. And that people would know that you have different programmes on a regular basis, something like this, that people would know and then maybe some of them. And of course, RTÉ Player, because even if you don't have TV you can watch this online. And they would know that 'Oh, yeah, this programme was about Polish community in Cork', or something."*

In conversation with Slavek Kazzek<sup>13</sup>, Chairman of Midlands Polish Community CLG, he addressed the role of community media initiatives as a strategy to fill the existing gap between national media and minority communities in Ireland. Kazzek recognised the "huge potential here for the community TV", as RTÉ in its national broadcaster capacity, while doing good work, is "busy with national stuff, they're busy with international news, war in Ukraine, migrants crisis". Kazzek wanted to determine what was involved in "setting up a properly licenced community TV station in rural

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<sup>13</sup> Slavek Kazzek did not contribute as one of the participants of the study, but instead spoke to us during the Midlands Polish Community festival which we attended in Athlone in November 2022.

Ireland”, noting that there were two community TV stations in Dublin and Cork, but pointed out issues around licensing as a significant and costly barrier. He said the Polish community in the Midlands has undertaken communication actions in this regard by creating the Midlands Polish Community TV and Kazzek has become involved with Athlone community radio which can help to serve the Polish community in the region:

*“Actually what we are doing now, as part of the Midlands Polish community TV at the moment, is we have a subgroup which is our Media TV subgroup. And we are operating online, on YouTube, because there's no point, there's no way for us to fork out [hundred or thousands] for the licence, etc.”*

Kazzek also highlighted the diversified nature of modern Irish communities as a strength which he feels is not represented in the national media. He says publicly funded local news could be relayed via YouTube or alternative platforms, while it continues to be blurred by national interests in media organisations.

*“RTÉ wouldn't go here [Polish Independence Day festival] to us today. But if there is a local community TV, it would be very beneficial for them to come in and to enjoy and to broadcast that, live, in a proper standard, basically TV standard. That's my point of view on that community TV.”*

He pointed out that “obviously it’s a niche”, but that the huge proportion of funding from the licence fees goes to RTÉ, but “they are paying highly popular presenters €300,000 and more – where is this aim to service all the communities?”

## 6. Issues affecting Nigerian participants

The previous sections merge contributions from both sets of participants, but it is important to distinguish some issues of particular concern to each nationality. The 2021 Digital News Report did explore how well people felt they were represented in the news in terms of fairness, and frequency, based on factors such as their gender, region, and ethnicity. However, it was not possible to extract the responses from migrants to determine any concerns that would arise there, thus reinforcing how this report can fill a crucial gap.

### **Representations of Nigerians in Irish news and media**

The participants all seemed to understand the power of the news media in shaping public perception about their home country. While discussing their attitude towards Nigerian content/news in the Irish news, Ozi pointed out that in the past three years of watching RTÉ, Nigeria has only been mentioned a few times, and for negative stories such as violence or a recent tanker explosion in Kogi state. “So I’m like, why is Nigerian news on TV? Because we have a big population here. But my question is, why is it bad news like this on TV? If something good happened in Nigeria, I’m pretty sure they wouldn’t show it on TV”. Opim responded to this point about questionable news values on RTÉ, adding “I wouldn’t say I’ve seen much of Nigerian content or African content or black content.” However, they acknowledged that there was no specific reason to showcase Nigerian-centred content on a daily basis in the Irish mediascape as Irish news is intended to cater towards the Irish population. Nevertheless, they pointed out the impact of continual negative stories – explored later in this section – although Opim highlighted some efforts to acknowledge the shifting demographics in Ireland “and I think that’s why this focus group is happening. Because there’s a recognition that we have Nigerians here, and we have other people here, maybe we need to show from their perspective sometimes”. Elsewhere, Derrick noted the lack of attention granted by Irish media to the presidential election in Nigeria: “I don’t think I have heard much or read much [in Ireland] about the elections going on back at home, which is really, really huge news.”

### **Media portrayals of ‘success’ stories**

Aside from coverage of events in Nigeria, the presence of Nigerians in Ireland was a crucial part of the focus groups. Conversations around media coverage of rising Irish-Nigerian sports stars, such as Israel Olatunde and Rhasidat Adeleke, or footballs like Gavan Bazunu, Michael Obafemi and Chiedozie Ogbene, were widely positive and assumed as a symbol of national pride when their success is celebrated in the news:

*“It’s a joy for me. And it’s fulfilling to see them do something positive. Because, whether you like it or not, there’s a Nigerian in them. And there’s an Irish in them. So it’s just a good image for both countries.” (Adebayo)*

Nevertheless, such success and amplification of Irish-Nigerians sparked conversations about identity and self-recognition among the participants with a variety of perspectives offered. Regarding visibility at its simplest level as something visual, the impact of seeing successful people of Nigerian heritage on Irish television was a powerful feeling for some participants, as explained by Ozi:

*"The beauty about Nigeria and our culture is, once he tells me his name, I know what part of Nigeria he's from. So when I see Rhasidat [Adeleke] on TV, right? I know what part of Nigeria she's from. When I see Israel's surname, I know which part of Nigeria he's from. When I see the Irish number one goalkeeper Gavin Bazunu, I know where he's from in Nigeria, because he's from my state. ... When I see that on TV, I'm like: "Okay, like these people are putting us in a good light in the society". I feel very proud. I see myself."*

Despite this, some participants felt it was crucial to clarify the important distinction here between being a first-generation migrant in Ireland like they were, who had moved from Nigeria, and being second-generation Irish-Nigerian, and the identity connections that are strengthened or loosened because of that perception. Opim, below, felt it important to consider whether the person, such as a celebrated footballer, themselves identifies strongly with Nigeria, while in response, Ozi said that, regardless, he is perceiving the person as Nigerian, which is arguably more important.

*Opim: "It depends because there we have to open up whether they are actually identifying as Nigerians or whether they are Irish. And that's a very deep question, the fact that they look like us. I've spoken to a few people before and they do not want anything to be associated with Nigeria at all. ... So I have the perspective of "Yes, they are Nigerian", we have the same roots and everything. But, do they actually identify? ... Do I see my experience in them? Is it the same thing? Are they fully Nigerian? Would they claim to be fully Nigerian? That's my own perspective of it. It's a very complex conversation, because I can't speak for everybody."*

*Ozi: "Personally, even if he doesn't claim being from this place and everything, but because I see him and I know his name and everything. Personally, I'm using him to gain motivation and everything that this guy has done this thing, in this society. In as much as, maybe there's something else in the society saying black people or something cannot do this. Regardless of how – this is a very controversial thing, right – but regardless of how he might think or a woman might think she's not Nigerian, you don't know how every other white person in this society is looking at you. You're probably from Nigeria, regardless of how you try to change it. You are that African, you are Nigerian. I'm choosing to, when I look at you, I'm choosing to get motivated by seeing you there. Even if you don't claim to be from where I'm from."*

Furthermore, while physical visibility is one component, some felt that the attention granted to someone's Nigerian heritage was sometimes erased from news coverage: "I'm happy to see Israel [Olatunde] on the news. I'm happy to say he has Nigerian roots. But then, that Nigerian root is not acknowledged. More often than not, it's not" (Cosi). Conversely, some participants did not want the emphasis to continually be on the athletes' heritage, questioning why they could not be simply accepted as Irish. Yet, Samuel felt it was not a problem if their Nigerian roots were an ongoing focus: "It's part of their story because it's their history. Their parentage is their history".

Participants underlined the importance of the news media in modelling behavioural patterns, especially for the younger generation, and identified a shift in recent years that goes beyond sports, and is evident for Irish-Nigerian media presenters such as Zainab Boladale or Ola Majekodunmi, among others, along with Black History Month being present on Irish programming:

*"I think, up until now, recently, they did not really have role models to look up to. Now they have kind of like an influx ... people like Bashir [Otukoya], even though he doesn't know it, it's kind of inspiring people because they can look up to, they can go on Instagram and see him: "Okay, this guy doing something good". Until recently, you rarely find black people being pushed out there. But then there's a trickle of them out there, in athletics, in football, in academics, for example, there are loads of them." (Opim)*

The same participant suggested creating a media platform or space to share migrant positive stories that were outside the prominent areas of sports and athletes, like "RTÉ 30 minutes of immigrants story, success story", an invitation to highlight existing minorities in Ireland and their roles within society. He said this could help to "balance" some of the negative news that might be broadcast about Nigeria or the association "that every time a Nigerian comes on the TV it is likely gonna be bad":

*"If you're reporting on the bad news, but then every Sunday you [could] report the successful migrant story ... The people, the Irish-Nigerian people here. Then it also changes how all the Irish people see Nigerians, because then you don't just see them as a black person anymore, you see them as: "Oh, these people are not coming here to drink, they're actually contributing a lot to our economy". It's also a way of shaping how, not just how we see ourselves in Ireland, but how others also see us. Because Nigerians are very resourceful people. Anywhere you see a Nigerian they are trying their best to be the best."*

Ozi also touched on this, suggesting the hybrid cultural lives of those who have emigrated to Ireland is worth the media paying attention to through dedicated broadcast segments that focus on the normal, daily experiences of a migrant living here:

*"This person is a person that wakes up in the morning every day by six o'clock, and goes to Lidl to do their job, contributes to the economy. But on Saturday, this is how they're passing, kids like to go for the African party. ... We are now like an open society. We have different communities, not just us Africans. We have these other people: these Polish people, this is their culture, and this is how their culture ties them. This is where they go to celebrate so they don't get tired. This is their life."*

## Racism in Irish media

Most participants believed there is a negative imbalance in news content, whether it is news from Nigeria or news related to Nigerians in Ireland. Previous studies looking at media monitoring and assessment discussed the Nigerians' perceptions of being "framed as problematic in Ireland over at least the last decade, with several [participants] alluding to the problem of negative stereotyping" (Titley et al., 2010). Reiterating that this is still a significant problem, some participants argued that this disproportionately negative news related to Nigerians and black people in Ireland would make them turn away from Irish media, as Ade explained:

*"Unconsciously, everyone kind of switches off, because you are not gonna be represented in the right way. We're being represented wrongly, so what reason do we have to actually commit to the news or what you're saying about us?"*

They discussed how labels can become subconscious ways of portraying people in a certain fashion, while labels coined by news organisations can influence the lens through which society will approach and perceive topics and even factions of the population. Some of our participants were critical of the media in their homeland because of politicians' influencing the news organisations and the "corruption" but – as Jay said, the problem is something different here: "In Ireland, I would say I'd see it as racist". This immediately prompted a response from Vic:

*"You've touched the nerve there. I 100% agree with you. Up until now, it didn't even occur to me that maybe that's one of the reasons why I don't care much about crime news. Because whenever the perpetrator is not Irish – sorry, I'm gonna say "Not Irish". I don't mean it's not an Irish citizen, I mean it's not originally from Ireland. They feel the need to call out the origins, even if the person was born here and is Irish, because they were born here, they still feel the need to call out the origins of the person. I think that's a really bad thing. Because some people, the only time they get to hear about black people, or the only time you get to see black people is in the media because they live in a closed environment."*

They repeatedly highlighted reporting and editorial decisions that they believe undermine the representation of Nigerian and black communities in Ireland. For example, they raised the issue of "calling out origins" as a racist practice within Irish media organisations. The use of "selective origins" depending on the side of news being covered showed a trend of calling out someone from their country if it is for negative things, and for positive news "then they bury it in Ireland's achievements".

*Vic: "If every time we hear about a Nigerian in the news it is something negative, or in contrast, when Israel Olatunde – who is the record breaker for Ireland – he was an "Irish sportsman", because it was something good."*

*Cosi: "Today he [Israel Olatunde] is Irish, tomorrow if he commits an offence or there's a scandal around him, you're gonna say "Nigerian boy". It is unfair. And like Jay said, it is racist, there's no other word for it. Because, why do we have to pick the moments where someone is Irish and when they are non-Irish? And just*



*thinking that was just not the Nigerian community, with Brazilians as well, with Polish, they're always been called out whenever they do something bad."*

Participants discussed the importance of highlighting the origins of each person being showcased in the media. Yet there was acceptance of the complexity in dealing with this dimension. For some, origins and nationalities are part of each individual story, something that can't be erased and that should not eclipse their personal achievements, while for others, it is an individual's right to be identified as one decides. Everyone manifested a shared feeling of pride for their co-nationals, and a mutual desire to be fairly represented and fairly acknowledged in the Irish media. Underpinning this conversation was the core belief in the news media's power in shaping Irish people's perceptions, as Vic said:

*"Some people, the only perception that they're ever going to get of black people is from the media, and if the media is always placing us in the bad lights, that's all they're going to think about. And that's then that's what they'll inform their kids about black people, and then their kids will be throwing eggs at migrants, and you know, calling people names. So it's really important to have that representation."*

Elsewhere, they reflected on how migration has shaped Irish society, inward and outward, and the need for some sort of "migration empathy", and recognising minority groups' contributions to the Irish economy and society. Furthermore, these participants argued that media should have an obligation to cover migrant lives and communities more accurately and responsibly. Cosi pointed out the contrast history of Irish emigration and how "when they go wherever they go, they're accepted", such as the US.

*"[If Irish people come back home] and you have been given that great treatment out there, well, you're not showing the same to those who have been here or what are migrating and contributing to the economy. There are not many blacks or immigrants to Ireland who are liabilities to the country. There are not many. Out of the total migrant population, they will probably be less than 10%. The vast majority are hardworking, honest people, trying to make a living for themselves, for their families and contribute to this country and trying to integrate themselves into this society."*

*Jay, in response: "And the media should present it that way."*

Judy recommended educating media outlets in terms of representation and inclusion. She suggested a training programme, "some sort of a seminar, just to give them an orientation on how to identify these people", which could serve as a valuable reminder on responsible reporting "because these journalists ... they know what is to commit the fallacy of hasty generalisation". She explained that seeing headlines such as "A Nigerian man kills" or "A Nigerian woman steals" will influence audiences if they see these repeated during a week: "[If] I'd meet you and tell you I'm Nigerian and [then] you'd be like: 'Hmmm'. That is the root cause behind all of these racist comments – what they get to hear from the media here."

Another suggested that a shift in representation needs to start at the core of media production; Cosi argued it was a “the system” which narrows opportunities for migrants and minorities to get more involved in the Irish media industry.

*“Even for people that are [second-generation migrants], a lot of them tend to be in the background. You go in, and then one is handling the cameras, one's handling the daily running of the media. But, they won't be out front. I think those are some of the things that, if I were to tune into RTÉ today, and see someone who looks like me reading the news, I would love to listen to that person.”*

She added that there is an immense impact in “just seeing someone who represents you”, and acknowledged some improvements in some of RTÉ's children's shows, but there was still an overwhelming lack of migrants and black people in particular. Vic explained how, from a newsroom perspective, having a diverse workforce would improve the quality in terms of accuracy regarding someone's background.

*“If we have an African editor, or an editor of a black background, seeing something like that, they're gonna caution this, like: “No, you guys can't be saying this. This person is Nigerian by ethnicity, alright, but they are an Irish citizen. Why do you feel the need to call this out?”*

She added that this would encourage clear newsroom policies to be formed and followed, such as: “if we decide that we're not naming nationalities, or ethnicities, then let's not”. Crucially, Vic said it is not a lack of people to fill these newsroom roles, but instead something more insidious: “It's not that people are not there or they don't want to. [They're] just not given the opportunities. If you don't speak a certain way, or even go to a certain school, or they don't have a certain citizenship, then you can't work for certain organisations in Ireland and that's the truth.”

## 7. Issues affecting Polish participants

### Representations of Polish people in Irish news and media

While representation became a key part of the conversations with Nigerians because of the issues around race and racism, it was less contentious among Polish participants. Many were indifferent to how visible Polish people in Ireland were in the news media, or had not noticed anything particularly positive or negative. For some, though, they felt it was crime stories – either as victims or perpetrators – where the Polish nationality was mentioned: “Every so often if I hear it’s a crime: “Oh the Polish woman was hit by someone”, that’s about it. But nothing really about the Polish community on the radio” (Agnieszka), while another suggested “I don’t feel like I need to have more information [about Polish people], as long as [it’s] not bad news” (Monika).

Joanna (42) pointed out that they see more “nice stories” about Polish people in their local newspaper, rather than at a national level – in most national coverage, they said, they could only think of crime stories. Another respondent, Jakub, pointed out the lack of political representation which is always a factor: “We don’t have actually any Polish person, even a Polish background person in the Dáil, in the parliament here.” He made the comparison with Indians in the UK, and how it took time for their assimilation and representation into electoral politics, and thus their regular presence in news media.

For some, they would like to see more acknowledgement of the contribution Polish people have made to Irish society, especially given the size of the population living here now. According to Kasia: “If you want to just talk about the minorities in Ireland, I would say, the Polish people are definitely a little bit downplayed towards other minorities,” pointing out that those from racial or ethnic minority backgrounds were more visible in advertising and on television. She added that the contribution Polish people have made “seems like it’s not that much appreciated”. Marta added: “Maybe it’s only my point of view, because I’m Polish. I think there’s not enough news about the Polish community in general, because we’re the biggest minority in Ireland. ... Even like Polish schools, we have over 50 schools in Ireland and when you talk to some Irish person, no one is even realising this.”

Conversely, though, others felt that they didn’t want special attention granted to them, as Joanna explained: “I don’t want to be very visible. [It’s not like] ‘Look, I’m Polish and I came here, I’m working here and ... you need to see me.’ No, I’m living in my little bubble. I’m very grateful I can be here, and I can work here. And I have kids, they go into the Irish school, they got an Irish passport. But no, I don’t think so we should be more visible.” Similarly, Agnieszka explained how she didn’t want “to feel like Polish are special”, and they shouldn’t be singled out: “[There are] loads of other nations living in Ireland, so why do we have to mention every single one being special? No. We are all in Ireland, Ireland community.”

## Geographic emphasis of Irish news

Some of the Polish participants commented on the geographic focus of Irish news content, suggesting it grants too much attention to the US and the UK, in particular, at the expense of its EU neighbours.

*"I would say [Irish news media] is West-oriented. Because it's natural, you are mostly interested in what's happening on the western side of the world, which is the United States or some Western Europe, but ... sometimes I get the impression that maybe people who I meet, they somehow don't know anything about Eastern Europe or Middle Europe. And sometimes they don't know where the countries are." (Maria)*

She suggested this lack of exposure leads to misconceptions around Poland, such as the idea that Russian is spoken there, and the news media could give better insights into life there, and more information about that part of Europe: "Because as long as we are in the European Union, we should know each other – but it looks like East has to know the West, but West doesn't have to know the East." EU membership was pivotal in providing Polish nationals with opportunities to freely travel and work around Europe and this idea of a European identity being crucial was raised, with George pointing out how it should arguably supersede the attention granted to the UK and shifting the focus could be one improvement made to Irish news.

*"Not having more information of the British, which for me is not important. For me, absolutely, I don't want to know what happened there. [However,] the Russian, Ukraine, Poland, Germany, France – I want to know that side. That side is more important [than] the British. It's finished, they are out [of the EU] ... My side of Europe is more important."*

George also explained how he feels Polish news can be more outward-looking than Irish news: he recounted how he found out about the explosion in Creeslough, Co. Donegal in late 2022, via a Polish radio station. He heard the breaking news about the explosion, and it caught his attention because he had been on holiday with his family there and knew that area. Crucially, he also questioned what would need to happen for a tragedy like that in Poland to make it on to an Irish news bulletin.

*"[It was] on the Polish radio when I heard there was a big accident in Ireland. There was a petrol station that exploded and few people – they didn't say nine, they said there were a few people – who died. So straightaway I was ringing my wife, I said: "Did you hear about something?" ... So you see, this is the problem: more information. If we had [an incident like that in Poland], it would have to be very big to appear on the [Irish] news."*

A general lack of awareness of EU and European affairs, which may be tied to the news coverage, was highlighted by Jakub, who recalled how, during one exchange he had in Ireland, “90% of people in the room knew who is Donald Trump, the US president, but had no idea who Donald Tusk was, the ex-president of the EU”.

Anna (40s) felt that RTÉ was “very English” in its coverage, suggesting the broadcaster is overly influenced by the approach and perspective of its nearest neighbour, particularly BBC: “I think the most information is coming from England so I’m not sure sometimes if that’s an Irish point of view, or maybe it’s taken from England. ... [From] what we can tell, if England likes Poland, Ireland automatically likes Poland as well. If England has a worse opinion, Ireland automatically as well. That’s a fact.”

### **Protecting the Polish language**

As mentioned in Section 4, concerns around language – and ensuring the Polish language was passed down to their Irish-born children – were present for many of the Polish participants and was cited as a factor in why Polish media was still consumed in their household. Marta noted how they feared a loss of the Polish language among her children, comparing it to the Irish language and how it is now a struggle to teach that to many children who are surrounded by English: “It’s so important that you won’t lose your roots. Because kids, one generation is enough that they lose, they forget language, but then they have family in Poland.” As also mentioned in Section 5 regarding accessibility, there were some issues raised around whether or not Polish migrants moving to Ireland could understand news media, and whether subtitles could help. While for some, improving their English language was one benefit of being here, and it was an asset they could bring back to Poland with them, as Pola explained: “I’m happy to get some experience here, improve my language, etc. But of course, I plan to go back.”

# Conclusion

This project sought to deepen our understanding of news consumption habits among two migrant populations in Ireland, and to document – in their own words – their attitudes and experiences of consuming news media here since their arrival. Some of the patterns identified are not at all unique to migrants – such as using social media, believing there is too much negative news, or frustration at the licence fee system – but it is valuable to capture these from those whose voices and insights are often overlooked.

The results from the interviews and focus groups demonstrate a variety of perspectives which are both positive and critical towards various elements of Irish news media. Of course, there is no single migrant experience, or no homogenous Nigerian or Polish perspective, so the results here should be taken in this context: the report presents a series of contributions based on participants' own observations, which may help to lay the foundation for future research and action from news organisations seeking to appeal to, and engage, those who are new to the country.

There were some clear positives for news media here: most of the respondents described the mainstream outlets, and RTÉ in particular, as being generally trustworthy, reliable and not overly polarised, if a little cautious in the scope of the perspectives included or the tone sometimes not being lively, diverse or engaging enough. Many respondents said radio in particular served them well, further reinforcing the long-standing tradition of radio's popularity in Irish life. Broadly, they felt the news here was informative and useful in helping them to understand what was going on. While the trend of news avoidance is a challenge for news organisations around the world, there was little to suggest that Irish outlets were particularly at fault for some of the participants' reluctance to consume news – instead, the pandemic, and more recently the war in Ukraine, were factors, along with the ongoing negativity bias that typically permeates newsrooms around the world. Furthermore, many described with apparent contentment how their daily media diet, particularly online, on social media and messaging apps, was a hybrid of Irish and Nigerian/Polish news, capturing the dual national identities which they currently weave between. This hybrid stream of content is clearly enhanced by mobile devices and easily accessible social media platforms.

Some of the critiques for news organisations are undoubtedly cause for reflection. Despite the majority suggesting a fundamental trustworthiness, some individuals raised concerns about bias and political agendas, and a failure by journalists to tackle certain political leaders and their decisions in a meaningful and robust manner. There was no consensus on a topic like representations: some people wanted more acknowledgment of migrant groups, while others preferred a more assimilated approach in which Ireland remained the focus and individual nationalities were not singled out. Among the most concerning, the points raised around negative stereotypes of migrants, and the racial dimension discussed in depth by some Nigerian participants, is clearly marginalising prospective audiences and causing many to feel that they will consistently be viewed through that negative lens regardless of their motivation to come here, and their contributions towards Irish life. This led to a lack of connection with some elements of Irish media. There was also repeated reinforcement of the power of the news media in shaping people's perspectives of minority groups, and an urging of news outlets to develop clear standards and

principles when reporting, especially around migrants and crime. Elsewhere, the US/UK tilt of much Irish news – at the expense of mainland Europe and EU affairs in particular – raises questions about perceived priorities and news values of outlets here, and lies at the core of whether or not minority audiences feel the news media is relevant to, and serving, them effectively.

There were some structural suggestions which could make news media more accessible and appealing, such as creating space for migrant voices and communities and sharing cultural dimensions in an effort to both build awareness among the public and also give a platform for those who often are overlooked as sources and contributors. Issues around language and comprehensibility were raised and how supports like subtitles could help encourage TV viewership, while easing the barriers to consuming RTÉ in particular, such as an ongoing YouTube stream, could help uptake.

The findings also suggest that, for many, news media from their home country is filling an important space in their lives. This might be simply because they are still curious and interested and feel like it touches elements of their identity, providing comfort and familiarity, or they want to pass on elements of the culture to their children. It may also be more pragmatic, because they plan to return home, or are concerned about the circumstances in which their family and friends still live. For some, there were also reasons to *detach* from the news and events in their native country, suggesting there are a variety of push and pull factors at play.

The annual Reuters Digital News Report data collected each year provides crucial insights regarding audience trends, but the material gathered for this report adds some original dimensions and perspectives which can easily be overlooked in large-scale survey results, especially when based on the “typical” Irish audience member. Future researchers could develop this direction of study further by exploring other migrant or minority groups in Ireland to further enhance our understanding of the news media’s role in daily life for all those living here. Elsewhere, the participants often noted the differences between first- and second-generation migrants in Ireland. This study focused on first-generation new arrivals, but it is an area which warrants further sensitive exploration to deeply consider what different values, perspectives or tensions exist between these groups regarding news and media representations and content. Systematic analyses of news content would also be valuable in documenting patterns in how migrants are portrayed, as well as the extent to which their voices are included or marginalised in the news.