

14 December 2020



EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 WEDNESDAY 16 DECEMBER

Migrant Voice is publishing the [first major report](#) into UK media coverage of migration during Covid-19 (see attached). The findings are based on in-depth analysis of nearly 900 articles across nine of the UK's most read online news platforms: The Sun, Mail Online, Express, Mirror, The Independent, The Guardian, The Telegraph, BBC and ITV.

In the report [launched Wednesday](#), just ahead of International Migrants Day on 18 December, we reveal that 21% of those news stories included the voice of someone impacted by issue being reported on – a significant improvement from the 12% found in [our 2014 study](#). There were large differences between news outlets, however, with 33.5% of stories in The Guardian including a migrant voice and just 3.9% in the Express.

We also found a concerning tendency across outlets to box migrants into very specific categories – such as 'Channel crossers', 'frontline NHS workers', 'asylum seekers' – and to present these groups in simplistic ways, e.g. as heroes or threats.

The impact of this was profound. Calls to scrap the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) and to extend visas for migrant NHS workers – a group presented across the media as heroes and therefore uniquely deserving of fair policies – were amplified and supported by every news outlet. Just days later, both policies were introduced after Government U-turns.

In contrast, calls for fair policies for groups presented by the media as threats or victims – such as asylum seekers or migrants with a No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) condition – were reported far less and led to very little (if any) real change. This was despite the urgent and severe financial struggles and health risks these people faced.

Nazek Ramadan, Director of Migrant Voice, said:

"We're pleased to see that one in five stories about migration in this unprecedented period included a migrant voice, but this is still not enough and we're concerned that this may have been only a very temporary phenomenon."

"We're also concerned that the categorisation of migrants as heroes, threats or victims entrenches a narrative that says some migrants are more deserving of rights and respect than others. When you suggest that someone must have a certain job or behave a certain way to be worthy of a place and fair treatment in the UK, you undermine the idea that 'we are all in this together'."

"Policy change should happen because it is the right thing to do, not because of front-page headlines, not because those who will benefit are themselves of benefit to the UK, and not because it's in the interest of the Government."

"Yet there are positives here too. As a result of this pandemic, journalists, policymakers and the public know much more about issues such as asylum support and immigration detention, and we hope this can form the groundwork for more significant policy changes in the future."

"In the meantime, we encourage journalists to remember that migrants are a primary and highly valuable source of information for stories about migration, and that including migrant voices leads to fairer, more accurate, more engaging reporting, something that's in everyone's interests."

The report will be launched at an online event on **Wednesday 16 December, 5.30-7pm**. The report's authors will present the key findings and a panel of experts will help us put these findings into a broader context. See full details here: <https://bit.ly/345Xu3d>

For further information and interviews, contact Judith Vonberg at press@migrantvoice.org or on 07554 418967.