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Political content and news exposure of German TikTok users during the 2025 Federal German Elections

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Abstract

The impact of TikTok on recent elections around the globe has been a significant topic of public discourse, including debates over banning the platform (US) or regulating it (EU), specifically the possibility of asymmetric algorithmic amplification of certain political content by “the TikTok algorithm”.

By using digital traces of 624 participants’ watch histories collected through data donations, this study provides large-scale insights into the content voters have been exposed to during the German Federal Election campaign in 2025. We explore the prevalence of political content from official party accounts, political influencers, traditional news accounts, and party-referencing content in TikTok Feeds during the German Federal Election 2025.

Overall, political content makes up on average 5% of videos in user watch histories in the two months prior to elections with an increase closer to election date - while the share of legacy news stays constant around 1% throughout the whole time period. We do not find clear evidence for asymmetric algorithmic curation of extreme political content. Instead, our findings indicate that most of the political content users see on TikTok aligns with their stated political preferences and we cannot observe a disproportional prevalence of populist or right-wing content.

Introduction

Germany's general election on 23 February 2025 unfolded against the backdrop of a highly platform-driven campaign. With Meta rolling back hate speech protections, Elon Musk endorsing the far-right AfD on X, and renewed concerns about foreign interference—such as during Romania's 2024 election (European Commission, 2024)—digital platforms, especially TikTok, were expected to play a key role.

TikTok, owned by the Chinese firm ByteDance, is especially popular among 14–29-year-olds and has quickly become central to debates over political influence. The AfD - Germany's far right party -, in particular, was seen as mastering the platform's logic, similar to patterns from Sweden (Widholm et al., 2024), the U.S. (Ibrahim et al., 2025), or the Philippines (Mendoza, 2022). Following the elections, reports employing public engagement data and sock-puppet accounts mirror those expectations - with the AfD, but also the Left party seemingly outperforming other political parties on TikTok (Katzy-Reinshagen et al., 2025; Tjaden et al., 2024). Recent efforts go as far as estimating the number of votes parties gained through activity on TikTok in the German federal elections (Endt & Goldschmidtböing, 2025).

These macro-level efforts are helpful to derive a general understanding on the role of algorithmic recommendation in elections. They can, however, not tell us much about the relation between video exposure and partisanship on an individual user level. Beyond qualitative analysis, it remains difficult to understand the stream of information that users in general, and voters in particular are exposed to. Studies relying on aggregated public engagement data and simulated user behavior audits (sock-puppets) do not capture what *actual* users see on the individual level, and their findings are thus providing limited insights into how political TikTok is (perceived). The study at hand addresses this research gap by linking the granular TikTok watch histories of 624 individuals from a non-probability sample to their self-reported vote decisions. By focusing on videos viewed from January 1 through election day on February 23, the study provides detailed insights into political and news content to which individual users were exposed on TikTok during the election campaign.

We do not find evidence for asymmetric algorithmic favouring of political positions. However, we do find that political content patterns across voting groups are varying, including the increasing presence of such content towards the election date; and constant minimal share of traditional news.

Literature Review

Social Media, TikTok, and Elections

Nowadays, Social Media is an established channel for political communication, and has thus become an important research focus with recent studies exploring topics such as political learning via social media (Bode, 2016); differences in the forms of political conversations across platforms (Mitchelstein et al., 2021); digital activism (Pierri, 2022); and the impact of algorithmic curation on political attitudes (Gauthier et al., 2026). Specifically, for election campaigns around the world, social media is at the center of public debate, as a facilitating platform – but also due to concerns of asymmetric algorithmic curation favouring anti-democratic forces, foreign interference during elections and the spread of misinformation by government or oppositional forces independent of “algorithmic support” (Hendricks & Schill, 2017; Jensen & Schwartz, 2022; Mendoza, 2022; Tjaden et al., 2024). Researchers have put social media platforms such as X or Facebook under scrutiny, finding the X recommender system to nurture pro-conservative political attitudes (Gauthier et al., 2026) while finding no partisan preferences for Facebook (Guess et al., 2023) – although these non-findings are highly debated due to the opaque cooperation with Meta on that particular study (Kupferschidt, 2024).

Just like other social media platforms, TikTok continues to gain importance as a primary information and news source, specifically for younger audiences (Newman et al., 2025), consequentially leading to an increase in public interest in its recommender system and its possible

impact on election campaigns and outcomes. Research on public engagement metrics of political TikTok videos, coded based on their account partisanship, found, that videos with content expressing negative sentiment towards the political opponent drives the most engagement, with influencer- and activist-accounts reaching more engagement than accounts of news outlets and politicians (Cheng & Li, 2026). Furthermore, a recent study investigating TikTok’s recommender system during the 2024 elections, found that TikTok favoured content coming from pro-republican accounts (Ibrahim et al., 2025 [peer-review pending]). The authors found the share of partisan aligned content to be higher for pro-republican than for pro-democrat participants, while the share for cross-partisan content was higher for pro-democrat participants. Such initial evidence from the US together with the surprise success of populist radical-right parties during the Romanian 2024 parliamentary elections (Pop-Eleches, 2025) and presidential elections (Bader & Szabo, 2025) even led to the Constitutional Court of Romania deciding to invalidate the results and the European Commission to open “formal proceedings against TikTok for a suspected breach of the Digital Services Act (DSA) in relation to TikTok's obligation to properly assess and mitigate systemic risks linked to election integrity, notably in the context of the recent Romanian presidential elections on 24 November.” (European Commission, 2024).

In summary, TikTok’s presumed impact is of high interest to researchers, lawmakers, and the public alike. Yet current research does not provide a conclusive picture in this regard.

The Challenge of Defining Political Content

Assessing the influence of TikTok’s recommender system on elections crucially depends on *how political content itself is conceptualized and operationalized*. Claims about algorithmic bias, misinformation, or disproportionate exposure implicitly rely on assumptions about what types of content are considered politically relevant in the first place. Yet, political content is far from a clear-cut category. Prior research has approached this concept along a spectrum. More narrow definitions typically focus on content originating from or explicitly referencing political actors such as

parties or politicians (Tjaden et al., 2024) – sometimes also including other content creators such as influencers, news outlets and activists (Cheng & Li, 2026), allowing for high precision but potentially underestimating the broader political information environment users encounter. Broader conceptualizations extend political content to issue-based material, such as discussions of climate change or migration (Wojcieszak et al., 2024), capturing a wider range of exposure at the cost of analytical specificity. Other research has focused solely on news as a key content type for political public discourse (Chouaki et al., 2024). News are indisputably connected to political information online, playing a central role in the learning of political information (David, 2009). Depending on the conceptualization, studies may arrive at substantially different conclusions about the prevalence and impact of political information in users’ digital footprints (Wojcieszak et al., 2024).

In this work we combine official actors (politicians and party accounts; news media accounts); un-official political actors (political influencer); and keyword based approaches to arrive at a comprehensive, yet accurate description of political content in user feeds.

Methodological Limits and the 2025 German Election Context

Research to date on user exposure to political and news content on social media during an election campaign mostly relied on publicly accessible engagement metrics (Cheng & Li, 2026; e.g., Widholm et al., 2024), which does not allow for the understanding of sub-group specific exposure (by political bias, age, gender, etc.) or exposure on the individual user-level. However, media effects research has shown that, especially on social media, highly individual user trajectories are responsible for individual outcomes (e.g., Verbeij et al., 2022).

Therefore, an increasingly popular approach to better understand user-level exposure is synthetically generated data through sock-puppet accounts (e.g., Ibrahim et al., 2025; Tjaden et al., 2024). For regional elections in Germany 2024, a sock-puppet study identified that neutral “users” have a higher chance to encounter official party content from the right-wing AfD and even more so

content that mentions the AfD in its description compared to content from other established parties (Tjaden et al., 2024).

However, contextualizing these findings reveals a more complex dynamic. The dominance of AfD content is likely driven by three interacting factors rather than algorithmic bias: First, The AfD “fanpages” vastly outnumber those of other parties; therefore, AfD content dominates the platform by mere frequency (Katzy-Reinshagen et al., 2025). Second, a classification blind spot; political content from fanpages and election related content is less likely to be labeled as such by TikTok's internal diversification label compared to official party content (Bösch et al., 2021; Bösch & Ricks, 2021; Katzy-Reinshagen et al., 2025). This blind spot allows unofficial AfD content to be selected by the recommender system as non-political content. Third, research consistently shows that populist parties use significantly more negative emotional appeals in their social media postings (Widmann, 2021) which yield higher engagement – and therefore increased circulation through recommender system selection – than other content (Cheng & Li, 2026; Wang et al., 2021; Weismueller et al., 2022). Altogether, this may explain why synthetic profiles with often one dimensional characteristics (e.g., political leaning) created for study purposes show a tendency for e.g., the AfD in Germany but it cannot tell us if real users with an existing interaction history and multi-dimensional preferences do receive similar algorithmic recommendation patterns.

To validate this, research must move beyond sock-puppet audits, which require arbitrary assumptions about user behavior and ignore confounders like multi-leaning content consumption (Bouchaud & Ramaciotti, 2024). Understanding true algorithmic impact requires more ecologically valid data. The collection of data donations – i.e., asking platform users to request their usage data directly from the platform itself and then providing this data to researchers – provides privacy-compliant, unprecedented data into a users' actual exposure and interaction histories (Ohme et al., 2024).

Against the backdrop of the 2025 German Elections this study combines data donation collection with the investigation of political content in user feeds. The campaign experienced a massive shift in focus—from economics to domestic security—following a highly publicized, deadly knife attack (bpb, 2025), and a subsequent unprecedented cooperation between the conservative CDU/CSU with the right wing AfD, that triggered a parliamentary response by the Left party (the so-called “Brandmauerrede”) and subsequent viral political moments on TikTok specifically (Fürstenau, 2025), declaring the platform as a main driver for the left parties election success (Endt & Goldschmidtböing, 2025). Given these campaign dynamics, the election is a perfect case for studying longitudinal exposure trajectories and changes in campaign content exposure with digital trace data.

The Present Study

To gain a deeper understanding of TikTok’s role in elections, we explore the relationship between users’ content diets on TikTok and their self-reported voting decisions (RQ1). More specifically, we are interested in (RQ2) what kind of political content users encounter on TikTok, and (RQ3) what kind of temporal patterns can be observed in their political content diets. Thus, our study is guided by the following overarching research question:

RQ1: To what extent do users' content diets on TikTok relate to their self-reported voting decisions?

To address RQ1, we systematically break down the types of political content users encounter:

RQ2: What kind of political content were users exposed to during the election campaign, specifically regarding:

a) Official party and politician content?

b) Content from political influencers?

c) Party-affiliated content (e.g., via descriptions or hashtags)?

d) News content from official journalistic outlets?

Finally, we are interested in examining the temporal patterns of political content prevalence running up to an election in general, and especially in the context of the 2025 German Elections due to the significant external shocks throughout the election race:

RQ3: *To what extent do users' content diets change over the course of the election campaign and how do external shocks impact them?*

Methods

The study was conducted during the 2025 German general election. The data collection combined participants' TikTok activity histories—obtained through data donations—with metadata associated with the videos contained in the activity histories and a short online survey. The field period began one week before and ended two weeks after the election on February 23, 2025. The data collection resulted in data donations from 624 participants that were included in the analysis.

Data Collection

The data was collected in collaboration with two German media partners: Bayerischer Rundfunk and Zeitungsgruppe Stuttgart. The project employed a public-facing data donation campaign promoted through social media posts and online news articles during the field period. After sharing their data, participants received an instant, personalized report summarizing the presence of political party content in their TikTok feed.

Data donations were collected using the **Data Donation Module** (DDM v2.0; Pfiffner et al., 2024) integrated into a web application specifically developed for this project. People interested in taking part in the study first accessed a public landing page, which displayed daily activity of official

political party accounts on TikTok and explained the study's purpose. They were informed that, in exchange for donating their TikTok data, they would receive an individualized report on the amount of political content in their feeds. Participants then proceeded to the DDM, where they received comprehensive information and instructions on the data donation procedure. The data donation itself followed the download-upload approach, meaning that participants had to go to the TikTok app, login with their account, and request and download their data to their device. Next, they switched back to the DDM where they loaded their data into the application that pre-processed the data locally on participants' devices and automatically filtered all unwanted data out (e.g., account information etc.). Before confirming their donation and uploading the data to the server, participants could inspect the data and opt out if desired. Upon completing the upload, participants filled out a short survey capturing sociodemographic variables, voting intention and decision, and political interest, after which they received their personalized report. All participants included in this study (n=624), provided their voting intention and their watch history contained at least one entry between the first of January 2025 and the election on the 23rd of February 2025.

Accompanying the data donation collection, we employed a daily scraping routine to collect video metadata from TikTok's website based on an actor list of political accounts and politics-related keywords - details on both are provided later in this section. This metadata was then matched with the video IDs contained in the participants' data donations to generate the reports.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee at Weizenbaum Institute. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation. The consent process detailed the purpose of the study, the nature of the digital trace data collected, options for selective deletion, data storage protocols, measures for (pseudo-)anonymization, and the right to withdraw at any time.

Data Processing and Augmentation

The data collected through the data donations contained, among other information, participants' watched videos. The watch histories included the IDs and timestamps of all videos watched in (at least) the last 90 days before the data was provided.

To focus on exposure to political and news content during the campaign, in our analysis, we included only videos viewed between January 1 and February 23, 2025. Political activity on TikTok increased notably in early January. During the observation period, participants collectively watched 2,528,694 unique videos, of which we successfully scraped metadata for 2,224,161 (87.88%) using the TikTok Content Scraper (Bukold, 2025). All videos were labeled according to four dimensions:

Official political party content: To identify content from official political parties and politicians we used the Database of Public Speakers (Datenbank für öffentliche Sprecher, DBÖS; Merten et al., 2023). This includes accounts categorized under types 9 (party structures) and 21 (politicians) in the databases typology. The list was cross-checked with Martin Fuchs' "German Politics on TikTok" list, identifying and correcting errors in party affiliations (Fuchs, 2025).

Most watched political influencers: To identify content posted by political influencers present in the digital trace data, we collected sub group of participants by vote intention all account names that used at least one keyword belonging to a pre-defined list of political keywords (see Appendix A) in their posts and appeared at least in one third of the watch histories of the respective voter group. The resulting list of accounts was then manually labeled by six trained coders, who considered the account name, profile information, and video content. Intercoder reliability (ICR) was computed using a test set of 30 accounts labeled by four of the six coders. An account was classified as a political influencer if it posted original content featuring the creator's face (as opposed to reposted content;

Krippendorff's $\alpha = 0.699$) and at least two political videos—defined as referring to politicians, parties, or political topics—during the two weeks preceding the election (Krippendorff's $\alpha = 0.220^1$).

Political influencers (n = 158) were subsequently coded for explicit party support (“Does the account explicitly support a political party?”; Krippendorff's $\alpha = 0.860$). The final list of political influencers (n = 94) includes only those accounts that demonstrated clear party affiliation.

Political party–related content: To identify party-related content, we generated a list of keywords that have a clear party reference (e.g., including a party name or politician name), with each keyword referring to only one party. To derive these keywords, two of the authors independently labelled (Krippendorff's $\alpha = 1$) all of the 211 keywords that were the basis for the daily scraping of overall political content and retrieved via a snowball sampling approach (details Appendix A). In the end, 173 keywords were identified that clearly referred to one political party. If a video's description contained keywords referring to more than one political party its classification varied depending on the analysis – details are specified in the respective results section. Notably, those videos also include content from official party accounts and political influencers if they mention a party-related keyword in their descriptions (see Appendix B for overlap analysis).

News content: To identify news content, we relied on the categories for journalists and media outlets in the Database of Public Speakers (Datenbank für öffentliche Sprecher, DBÖS; Merten et al., 2023). Any video published by an account belonging to one of the listed outlets is considered news in the context of this study. It is noteworthy that this results in a conservative estimate of news (Loecherbach et al., 2024).

¹ The relatively low ICR for the political content variable is negligible in this context. Non-political accounts occurred only rarely and were identified inconsistently across coders. However, the subsequent coding for explicit party support can be understood as an additional validation layer that mitigates the inclusion of potentially non-political accounts.

Measures and Variables

Sociodemographics

In the questionnaire, participants provided their age in years ($M = 26.77$, $SD = 7.70$), their gender ($n = 376$ female [60.3%]; $n = 235$ male [37.7%]; $n = 13$ other [2.1%]), and indicated their level of education (ISCED; $n = 44$ low [7.1%]; $n = 304$ mid [48.7%]; $n = 276$ high [44.2%]).

Political Interest

Participants rated their interest in politics on a ten-point rating scale ranging from 1 (*not interested at all*) to 10 (*very strongly interested*; $M = 7.3$, $SD = 1.5$). Only 574 participants answered the question on political interest, which was voluntary in order to yield as many data donations as possible.

Voting Intention/Behavior

In German federal elections, citizens cast a so-called “first vote” for a constituency candidate and a so-called “second vote” for a certain party. To measure the voting behavior, participants were therefore asked both (1) which party’s candidate they voted for (or planned to vote for, if they participated before the election) in their constituency (first vote), and (2) which party they voted for (second vote). In both cases, participants selected their answer from the list of the parties running for election (but were also offered additional options [*I (did) cast an invalid vote, no answer/don’t know, I am/was not eligible to vote and I will/did not vote*]). The second vote is the decisive vote for the distribution of seats in the parliament. Therefore, we focus on the *second vote* in our analysis and will report there on the distribution.

Only nine participants did not indicate their voting intention for one of the main seven parties with chances of making it into the parliament (threshold of 5%). All other participants ($n = 615$) indicated their voting intention for either of the seven parties. A detailed analysis on the biases of the dataset will be provided in the results section.

Analytical Approach

To systematically evaluate the prevalence and dynamics of political information in users' algorithmic feeds, our analytic approach consisted of two steps. First, to ensure robust contextualization of our findings, we evaluated the sociodemographic and political characteristics of our dataset against a non-probability quota sample of the general German TikTok user base to identify potential biases. Second, we applied a combination of descriptive distribution analyses to calculate median feed fractions and total reach across self-reported voting-intention groups, alongside a longitudinal time-series analysis to track the daily average share of political content in users' feeds.

Results

The results section first reports on the biases inherent in our dataset. This contextualization is on the one hand important to highlight the strengths and limitations of the obtained data before presenting the detailed analysis. On the other hand, it is of great value to inform future research projects building on public campaign data donation collections about the expected sample characteristics. The second part will then report the results regarding political information and news exposure in participants' watch histories.

Is a non-representative dataset still a strong dataset?

To assess biases of our obtained dataset, we compared the distributions of age, gender, education, political interest, and voting intention among participants with the sociodemographic profile of a large German TikTok user sample. The data for the latter is

based on the sub-sample of self-reported TikTok users (n = 828) from a non-probability German quota sample (N = 2,296) (Anonymous, 2026).

Regarding age, our sample was significantly younger than the general TikTok user (see Table 1). The gender distribution looked as follows: male (37.7%), female (60.3%), and diverse (1.8%), indicating that they are more female than the average TikTok user (see Table 2). In terms of education, our sample (Low: 7.1%, Mid: 48.7%, High: 44.2%) is more educated than the general TikTok user (Low: 18.0%, Mid: 55.1%, High: 26.7%). The participant sample is only slightly more politically interested (M = 7.3, SD = 1.9 vs. M = 7.0, SD = 2.7).

Table 1: Age distribution of participant sample and general demographics of TikTok users from a quota sample.

	under 30	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Participant sample	73.1%	20.2%	4.5%	1.9%	0.3%
German TikTok users	52.9%	16.8%	12.3%	11.7%	6.3%
Note. N participant sample = 622 (2 abstentions); N German TikTok users = 828.					

Table 2: Gender distribution of participant sample and general demographics of TikTok users from a quota sample.

	Male	Female	Diverse
Participant sample	37.7%	60.3%	1.8%
German TikTok users	50%	50%	-
Note. N participant sample = 624; N German TikTok users = 828.			

Finally, the majority of our participants intended to vote for a party left of the political spectrum (the Left, Greens, Social Democrats) with their first (n = 549, 88.0%) or second (n = 567, 90.9%) vote (see Figure 1; we have no comparable data on German TikTok users).

While the conservative party coalition (CDU/CSU) is still represented close to an acceptable size for group-wise comparisons ($n_{\text{first-vote}} = 37$, $n_{\text{second-vote}} = 22$), voters of the liberal (FDP), and radical/populist (AfD, BSW) parties are a clear minority in the sample.

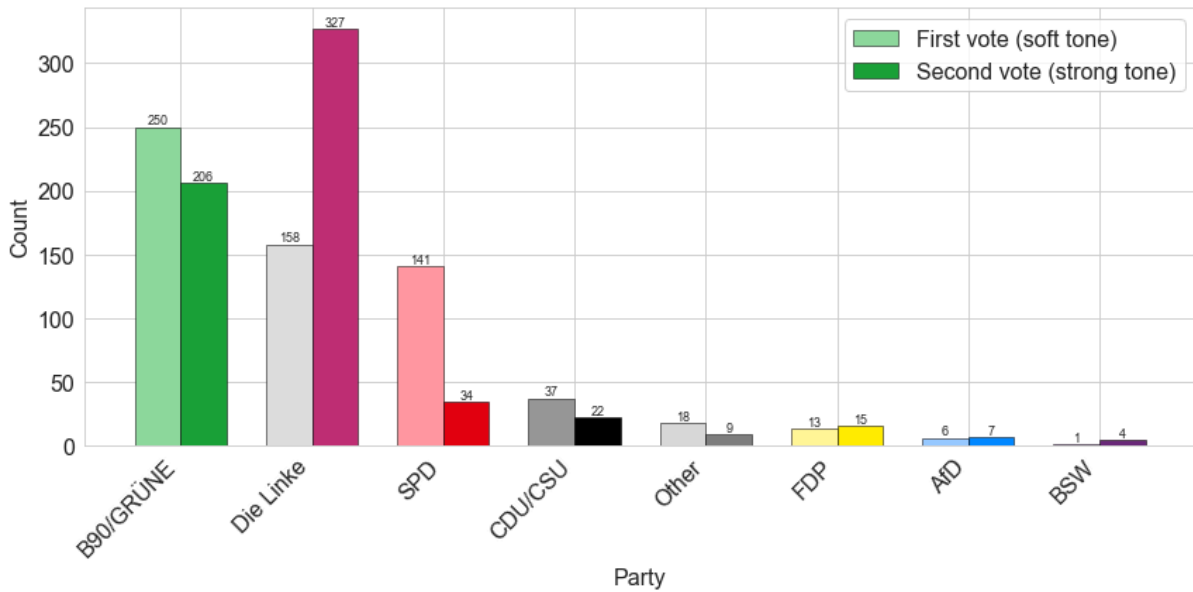


Figure 1: Self-reported first and second voting intention of participants. **Note:** In Germany's mixed-member proportional system, the first vote directly elects a local representative, while the second vote determines the overall proportion of seats each party receives in parliament. The system combines local accountability with national proportional representation.

In sum, the present sample is not representative of German TikTok users, exhibiting typical biases found in data donation studies (e.g., Hase & Haim, 2024; Wedel et al., 2026; Welbers et al., 2024): it is younger, more educated, more female, and politically left. Despite its biases, the sample remains an excellent resource for exploring TikTok use, particularly among the political left, young, and educated users. The small subset of conservative and right-spectrum party voters can serve as a sufficient analytical point of contrast. Given the descriptive nature of this paper, the imbalance is negligible. Therefore, to fully exploit the dataset's potential, we include all voter groups, no matter their sample-size.

Election content exposure

For the 624 unique participants included in the analysis, 8,426,681 videos ($n_{\text{unique}} = 2,528,694$) were recorded in their watch histories between the 1st of January 2025 and the 24th of February. The participants liked 778,683 times, shared 75,919 times, and left 11,110 comments under a video. Over the 54-day observation period, participants were active on

TikTok on an average of 45 unique days (SD = 12.6; min = 1; 25th percentile = 43). We will now report in detail on the presence of each content type depending on voting groups, before looking at the overall presence, and temporal development of those content types.

Official party content

In the donated watch histories, we identified 5,942 unique videos posted by 610 different official party accounts that occurred a total of 57,971 times in participants' watch histories (see Table 4). Only 14 watch histories did not contain any official party content ($N_{\text{reached}} = 610$).

Table 4: Prevalence of content published by official party accounts in participants' watch histories. The maximum outside of the Total row is marked in bold.

Party	Accounts	Videos	Videos per Account	Total Occurrences	Avg. per Participant	N Reached	Reach %	Avg. per Reached
SPD	168	1,204	7.2	8,087	13.0	541	86.7%	14.9
B90/GRÜNE	145	1,397	9.6	12,230	19.6	568	91.0%	21.5
CDU/CSU	75	708	9.4	3,422	5.5	325	52.1%	10.5
AfD	75	462	6.2	1,319	2.1	253	40.5%	5.2
FDP	63	796	12.6	2,730	4.4	244	39.1%	11.2
LINKE	50	940	18.8	27,228	43.6	590	94.6%	46.1
Other	28	361	12.9	2,322	3.7	402	64.4%	5.8
BSW	6	75	12.5	633	1.0	251	40.2%	2.5
Total	610	5,943	9.7	57,971	92.9	610	97.8%	95.0

Note. Percentages represent the proportion of participants reached within the sample. Averages are calculated across all participants unless otherwise indicated.

In a party-by-party comparison, we could see stark differences in terms of the party accounts found in our dataset and the reach of the respective videos: While the SPD and B90/Die Grünen operated the highest number of unique accounts (168 and 145, respectively) occurring in the participants' watch histories, the Die Linke emerged as the most prominent actor regarding both total visibility and frequency. Despite maintaining only 50 accounts—less than a third of the SPD's infrastructure—the Die Linke generated 27,228 total occurrences, resulting in an average of 43.6

videos per participant and a 94.6% reach (fraction of watch histories with at least one video from the Die Linke) within the sample.

In contrast, parties on the center-right and right-wing spectrum exhibited notably lower engagement metrics, which is not surprising given the sample characteristics. The CDU/CSU reached roughly half of the participants (52.1%), while the AfD (40.5%) and FDP (39.1%) saw even lower penetration. Interestingly, the newly formed BSW, despite having only six accounts that occurred in our participants' watch histories, achieved a reach of 40.2%, placing it on par with established parties like the AfD and FDP in terms of initial audience access, though with a much lower intensity of only 2.5 videos per reached user.

While the overall reach of official political content was high (97.8%), this reach varied significantly across parties, and official political content comprised only a minimal fraction of all videos in participants' watch histories (57,971 of 8,426,681; 0.7%). Those variations were in line with the sample skew towards left-leaning users, and are a first indicator that the algorithmic curation of TikTok caters to user preferences while ultimately still providing alternative political content since the reach of conservative and right parties went beyond just their voter group in the sample.

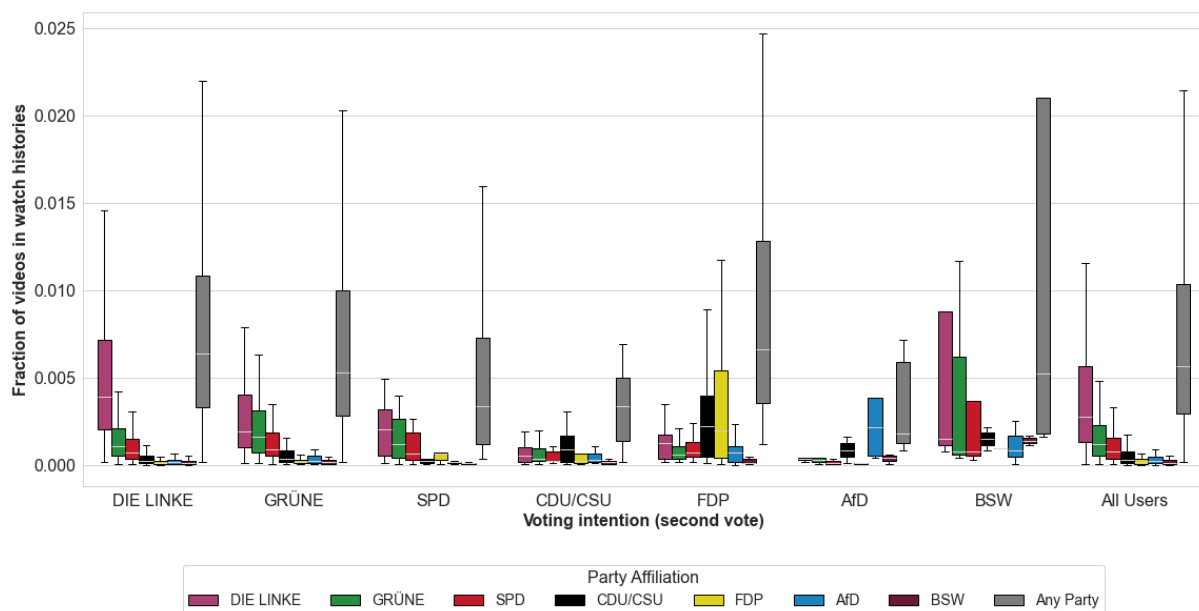


Figure 2: Distribution of political party content in user feeds by voting intention group

Figure 2 shows the distribution of official party content by voting intention and across the whole sample, illustrating a connection between voting intention and the share of official party content in the participants' watch histories. Notably, content from the Die Linke demonstrated the strongest presence not only among its own supporters but also across the broader left-wing political spectrum, including voters for B90/Die Grünen and the SPD. For these left-leaning voter groups, official party content from the Greens and the SPD consistently ranked second and third, respectively.

The consumption patterns of BSW voters reflected the party's unique left-conservative positioning within the German political landscape (Wagner et al., 2023). Their watch histories showed a balanced distribution of content, with the Die Linke and the CDU in the top tier having a similar median fraction, followed by the Greens, SPD, and AfD. For other voter groups, the respective party of choice was the most prevalent in their algorithmic recommendations.

Overall, the median share of official party content in participants' watch histories was just above 0.5% (see Figure 2). While the presence of each party generally aligned with the sample's voting preferences, the Die Linke significantly overperformed. Their content maintained a strong presence even in the feeds of participants who reported voting for different parties, with the notable exception of AfD voters.

Political influencer content

Next, we examined the presence of videos published by the 92 most frequent political influencers with clear party affiliation (as indicated by explicit endorsements) in the watch histories. We identified 3,286 unique videos that occurred a total of 50,048 times (see Table 5). These videos appeared on average 80.2 times in the watch histories, and only 15 did not contain any content published by these influencers ($N_{\text{reached}} = 609$). Hence, political influencers consistently appeared in voters' TikTok feeds.

Table 5: Prevalence of content published by political influencer accounts in participants' watch histories. The maximum outside of the Total row is marked in bold.

Party affiliation of influencer	Accounts	Videos	Videos per Account	Total Occurrences	Avg. per Participant	N Reached	Reach %	Avg. per Reached
LINKE	40	1,993	49.8	34126	54.7	600	96.2%	56.9
AfD	19	245	12.9	1,380	2.2	317	50.8%	4.4
FDP	12	175	14.6	1,130	1.8	130	20.8%	8.7
GRÜNE	11	576	52.4	10,150	16.3	537	86.1%	18.9
CDU/CSU	6	116	19.3	1,507	2.4	382	61.2%	3.9
SPD	3	138	46.0	1,214	1.9	360	57.7%	3.4
BSW	1	43	43.0	541	0.9	230	36.9%	2.4
Total	92	3,286	35.7	50,048	80.2	609	97.6%	82.2

Note. Percentages represent the proportion of participants reached within the sample. Averages are calculated across all participants unless otherwise indicated.

Influencers explicitly advertising the Die Linke appeared most frequently, which is likely due to our sample characteristics. With 40 accounts—representing 43.5% of all identified influencer accounts—these creators accounted for 1,993 unique videos present in the watch histories. This high production volume resulted in a near-universal reach of 96.2% and an average of 54.7 videos per participant—the highest frequency in the dataset. Influencers affiliated with other parties demonstrated varying levels of audience penetration. For instance, influencers clearly aligned with B90/Die Grünen achieved a significant reach of 86.1% despite being only 11 accounts. Notably, with an average of 52.4 videos per account, these influencers had the highest output, indicating that a small number of Green-affiliated influencers were responsible for a large share of the total algorithmic presence (10,150 occurrences). Conversely, there was a notable "reach-engagement gap" among AfD-affiliated influencers. Despite being the second-largest group (19 accounts), they only reached 50.8% of participants and the average number of videos per participant (2.2) was significantly lower compared to influencers on the political left. This means that in the watch histories of participants voting for a left politically party, although AfD-affiliated influencers did not have a very strong

visibility, they were still present in the TikTok feeds. The influencer landscape for centrist parties appeared even more constrained, with influencers affiliated with the CDU/CSU (6 accounts) and SPD (3 accounts) showing moderate reach (61.2% and 57.7% respectively) but very low total occurrences. With an overall reach of 97.6%, political content from influencers with clear party affiliations was a nearly unavoidable form of content during the election race in the participants' watch histories.

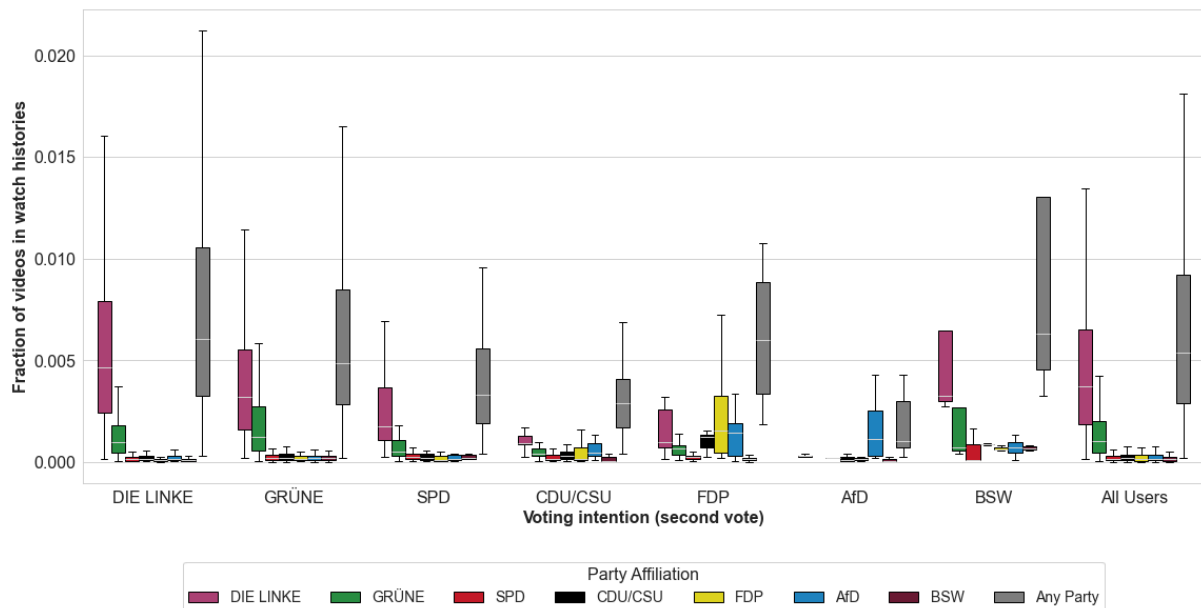


Figure 3: Distribution of political influencer content in user feeds by voting intention group

When considering the distribution across feeds (see Figure 3), content from political influencers mirrors the dominance of influencers supporting left- and green-party candidates already observable in Table 5. Across the left-leaning voter spectrum (DieLinke, Greens, SPD), influencers endorsing these parties were by far the most prevalent, with other political influencers playing a negligible role. Self-reported CDU/CSU voters showed generally small shares of content by political influencers. FDP voters' watch histories had the largest shares of FDP and AfD endorsing influencers, followed by the Left. Importantly, the reach of opposing political spectrums suggested by the statistics presented in Table 5 was only minimal: the presence of AfD influencer content in left-leaning voters' feeds was minimal, and vice versa (see Figure 3).

Party-referencing content

To detect political party-referencing videos beyond official party and influencer content, we used a list of political keywords with unambiguous references to one of the major parties and compared them with the video descriptions. One video can have multiple party references and therefore can count into more than one party's distribution. We identified 70,462 unique party-referencing videos posted by 29,862 distinct accounts, totaling 426,734 appearances (see Table 6). These videos appeared on average 683.9 times in the watch histories, and only one watch history did not contain any party-referencing content ($N_{\text{reached}} = 623$).

Table 6: *Prevalence and reach of party-referencing content in participants' watch histories*

Referenced Party	Accounts	Videos	Videos per Account	Total Occurrences	Avg. per Participant	N Reached	Reach %	Avg. per Reached
AfD	12,770	28,701	2.2	187,588	300.6	620	99.4	302.6
LINKE	11,721	23,800	2.0	164,803	264.1	618	99.0	266.7
CDU/CSU	8,527	17,912	2.1	115,401	184.9	615	98.6	187.6
GRÜNE	4,161	10,909	2.6	67,241	107.8	611	97.9	110.1
SPD	2,997	7,162	2.4	52,063	83.4	607	97.3	85.8
FDP	2,746	6,283	2.3	37,245	59.7	602	96.5	61.9
BSW	3,625	6,084	1.7	25,900	41.5	602	96.5	43.0
Total	29,862	70,462	2.4	426,734	683.9	623	99.8	685.0

Note. This table represents unique videos that reference at least one political party. Total party references ($N=100,851$) exceeds the number of unique videos with a party reference ($N=70,462$) due to multi-party referencing. Average parties referenced per video = 1.43.

Content related to the AfD was the most prominent, with 28,701 unique videos from 12,770 accounts. This content reached 99.4% of the sample, with a remarkable average of 300.6 occurrences per participant, regardless of their party preference. Only content mentioning the Die Linke had a similarly high frequency in this category, with 164,803 total occurrences and an average of 264.1 appearances per participant. The total reach across all party-related content signified a near-total saturation (99.8%). Even the party-related content with the lowest total occurrences, such as the BSW

and FDP, still achieved a reach of 96.5%, indicating that the political content participants received is related to much more than just their party preference.

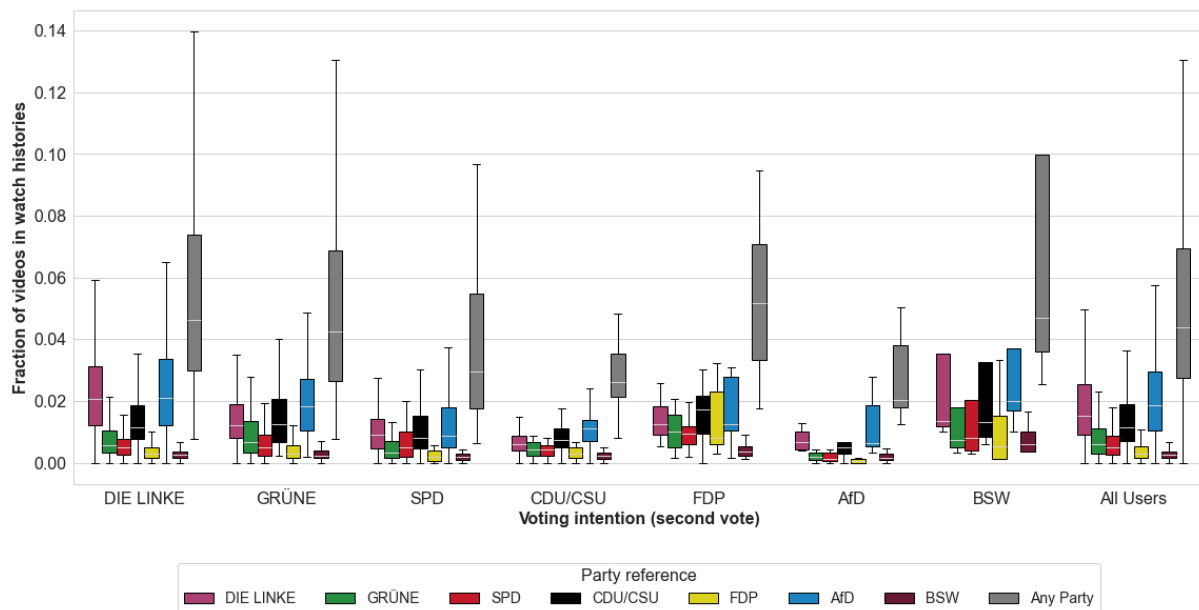


Figure 4: Distribution of party-referencing content in user feeds by voting intention group

For at least 50% of participants (*median*), posts referencing political parties constituted more than 4% of the content contained in their watch histories, signifying a stark increase compared to official and influencer party content (see Figure 4). Furthermore, we observed that the content distributions no longer align with our dataset's political bias: content referencing the AfD and CDU/CSU is now the most prevalent content besides content referencing the Die Linke across all voter groups. Importantly, the keyword analysis did not differentiate between positive and negative party references. Therefore, the present finding is rather an indicator for what parties are discussed, rather than for the platform dominance of specific parties.

This impression is further strengthened when considering party-reference co-occurrences (see Figure 5). Each cell of Figure 5 represents the fraction of posts that mention Party Y out of all posts that mention party X. There we can see that, e.g., content referencing any party also mentioned the AfD in at least 37% of instances (Greens, minimum). The CDU/CSU was often co-discussed with content referencing the political center parties (SPD, Greens, FDP) and the BSW. Importantly, the

co-occurrence identifies an asymmetry: other party-related content mentioned the AfD more often than AfD-related content mentioned other parties.

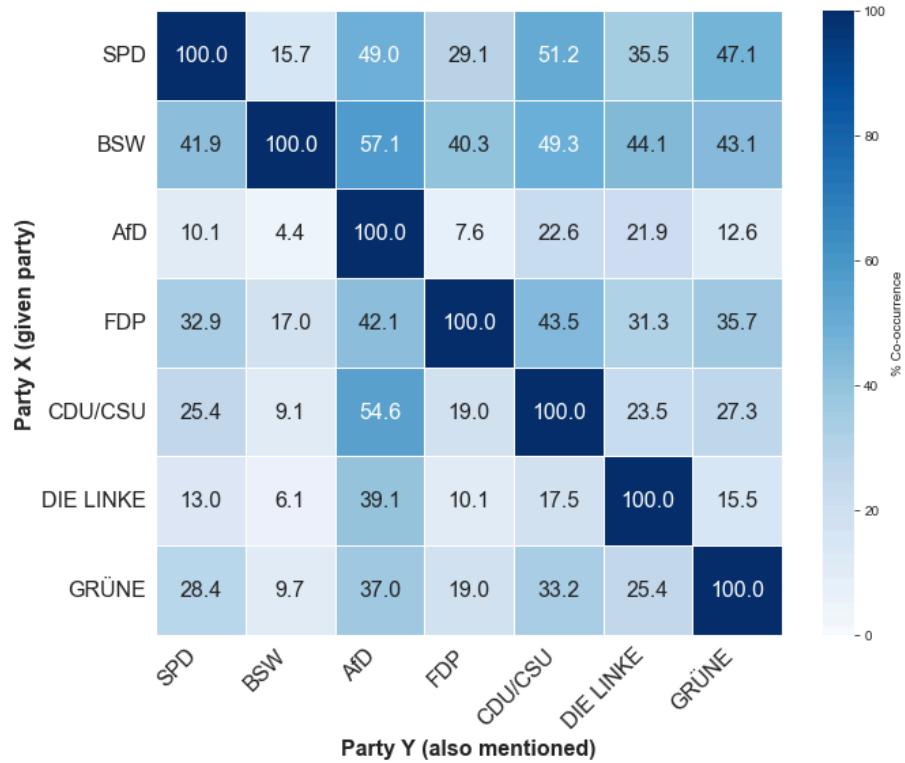


Figure 5: Co-occurrence probabilities of party-referencing keywords. When party X is mentioned, share of videos also mentioning party Y.

Finally, Figure 6 shows the top keywords that occurred in party-related content, mirroring Figure 5 - with *afd* being among the top co-occurring keywords for all party-related content, except for Die Linke-related videos. Importantly, the second most prominent keyword for AfD-related content was the negative hashtag *fkafd*, suggesting that even though AfD-content has been often discussed, it might have been in a negative sentiment.

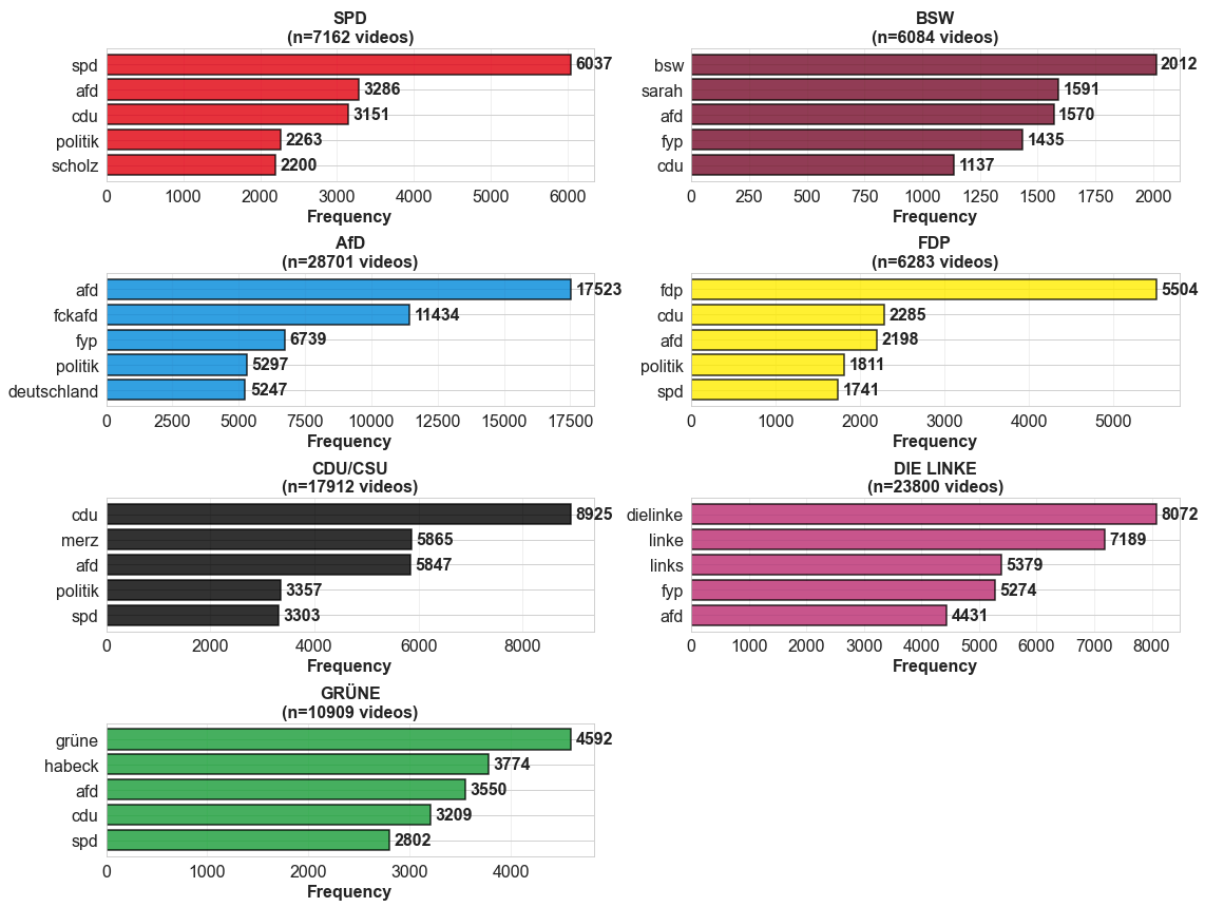


Figure 6: Top 5 keywords in video descriptions referencing specific German political parties

Note. The figure displays the most frequent keywords (including hashtags and terms) found in the descriptions of unique videos that mention each respective party. The n value indicates the total number of unique videos analyzed for each party category.

News content

Finally, we examined the prevalence of traditional news content in the watch histories. Based on the journalistic account list, we matched the accounts occurring in the data donations with 1,094 verified news accounts (news media and journalists) and identified 418 private media and 47 public media accounts in the donated data. In total, 16,032 unique news videos occurred 115,842 times in the participants' watch histories.

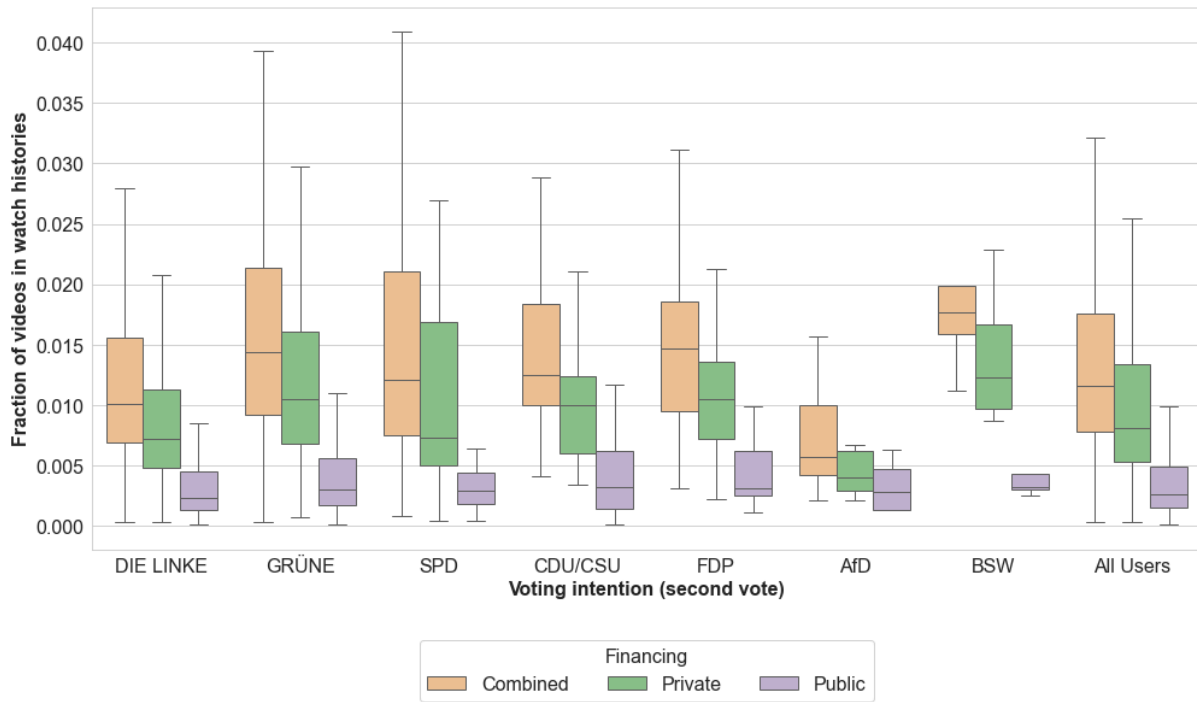


Figure 7: Fraction of news media videos in user feeds by voting intention and financing model

Figure 7 illustrates the distribution of conventional news media content within participant feeds. For the median participant, these videos accounted for just over 1% of the total content in their watch histories. When segmented by self-reported voting intention, the data showed distinct variations. Specifically, the median fraction of news content in the feeds of AfD supporters was half the median of the general sample. In contrast, BSW voters exhibited the highest engagement, with a median exposure of 1.5% or more.

For supporters of the SPD, CDU/CSU, GRÜNE (the Greens), FDP, and the Die Linke, news consumption patterns were similar, with each group remaining just above the 1% threshold. A consistent trend across all partisan categories was the consistently higher prevalence of privately financed media compared to public-service media. The most viewed news outlets solidify this finding (see Table 7): they are dominated by English-speaking and German-speaking private media accounts (e.g., dailymail, espn, rtlaktuell) and German-speaking public media (*tageschau*). *wwwshow* is an

interesting case: formerly part of the public service media content network “Funk”, it is now private media targeted at younger audiences.

Table 7: Top 10 news media accounts by number of total views (incl. duplicate and multiple users) in feeds

Account	Videos	Total Occurrences	Avg. per Participant	N Reached	Reach %	Avg. per Reached
dailymail	6,948	7,908	12.7	457	73.4	17.3
tagesschau	5,327	5,994	9.6	470	75.4	12.8
espn	4,506	4,923	7.9	389	62.4	12.7
rtlaktuell	4,335	4,963	8.0	531	85.2	9.3
wwwshow	4,088	4,657	7.5	464	74.5	10.0
zeit	3,558	4,131	6.6	490	78.7	8.4
nbcnews	2,978	3,355	5.4	437	70.1	7.7
cnn	2,521	2,785	4.5	331	53.1	8.4
msnbc	2,470	2,686	4.3	332	53.3	8.1
br24	2,466	2,937	4.7	400	64.2	7.3

Summary of aggregated content exposure

After detailing each category individually, we now summarise the overall distribution of the four classified content types: official party, political influencer, party referencing, and traditional news (see Figure 8 and Table 8). Overall official party content, political influencer content, and traditional news constituted only roughly 1% or less each of a user's TikTok feed at the median (0.59%, 0.54%, and 1.15%, respectively). Even for users above the 75th percentile, the share of these three content types barely approached 2%. The only category that reached a substantially higher share

in participants' watch histories is Party Referencing content (e.g., videos containing a party-related keyword in the description), with a median of 4.38%.

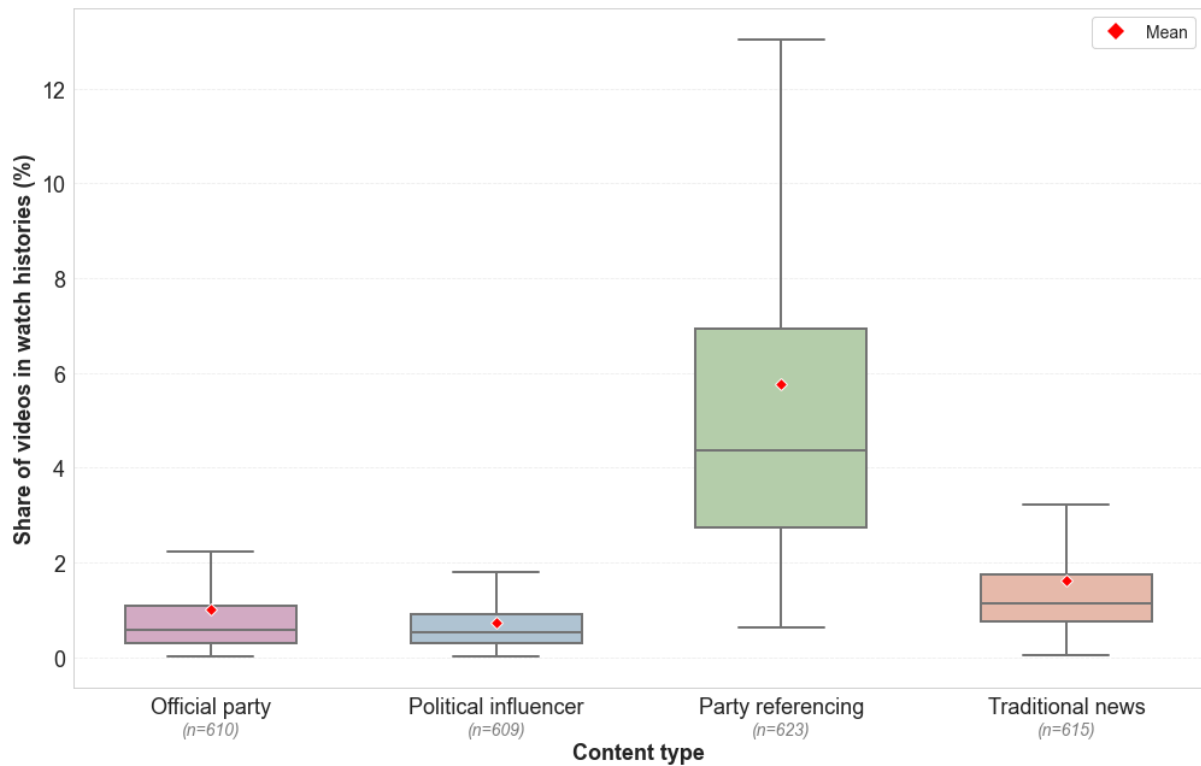


Figure 8: Distribution of video share per feed by content type.

Summing the average shares of political content ($M = 5.77\%$) and news ($M = 1.62\%$) in the TikTok watch histories of our sample running up to the 2025 German federal election, amounts to a combined average of approximately 7.39%. This demonstrates that although non-political content dominated users' TikTok feeds, a notable share of political and news information did successfully penetrate the feeds of the participants in our sample during a highly salient campaign period.

Table 8: Distribution metrics for share of content across all participants.

Content Type	count	mean	std	min	25%	50%	75%	max
Official Party	610.0	1.02	1.67	0.02	0.30	0.59	1.08	22.22
Political Influencer	609.0	0.74	0.70	0.02	0.29	0.54	0.92	4.91
Party Referencing	623.0	5.77	5.01	0.64	2.73	4.38	6.94	56.25
Traditional News	615.0	1.62	3.48	0.04	0.76	1.15	1.75	78.19

Content shared over time

Considering that election campaigns can exhibit highly dynamic patterns over the course of a campaign, this final section focuses on the analysis of temporal patterns regarding the prevalence of political content in our participants' watch histories. Figure 9 presents the average daily share of political content across the watch histories of all participants—both overall and per content type. The figure reveals temporal variation in political content exposure: while baseline levels of the share of political content remained relatively stable in the early phase of the year, increases emerged as the campaign progressed. Specifically, the unprecedented vote of the CDU/CSU with the AfD in the German Bundestag, sparked a significant rise in the share of political content to over 10% in the watch histories—a threshold that could only be achieved again on the election day. This spike and the general trend of an increased political content share was mainly driven by party-referencing content. The share of news content remained stable throughout the campaign, with the exception of notably higher shares surrounding the date of Donald Trump's inauguration—notably a peak in news share that seemed to be higher than the reporting on the national election. The share of official party content rose slightly at the beginning of February.

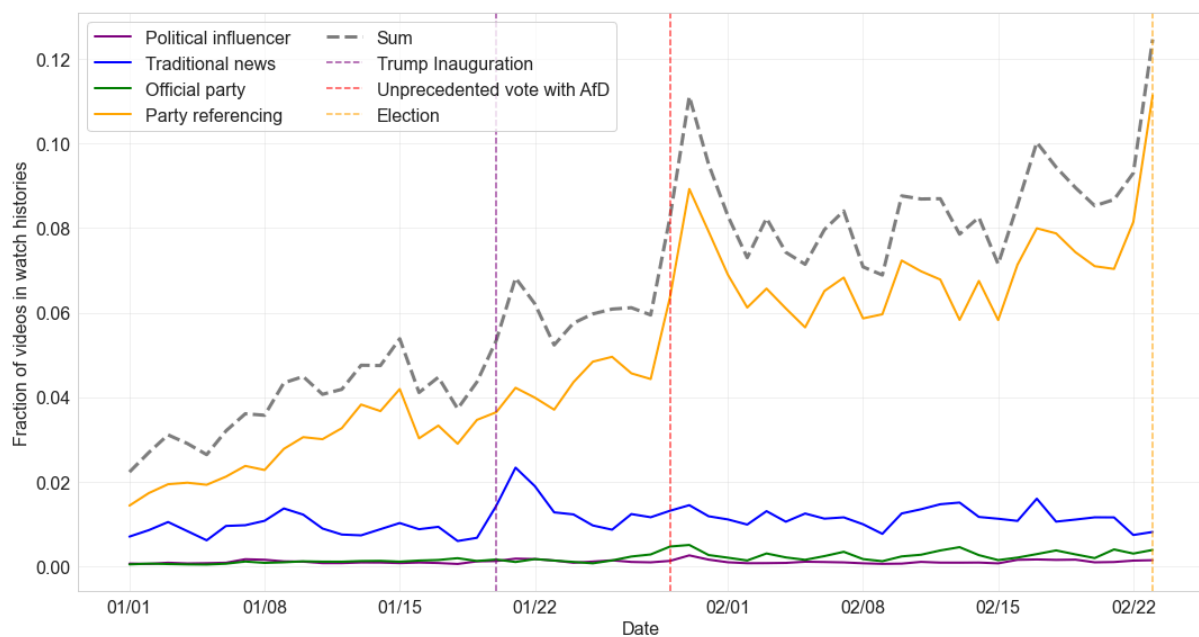


Figure 9: Daily average fraction of political content across all user feeds

When differentiating between the voting groups, the general trend remained the same with the overall volume of political content (including party-referencing, official party, and political influencer content) increasing steadily as the election approached (see Figure 10). However, the *unprecedented vote of the CDU/CSU with the AfD* led to a visible increase in the share of political content across almost all voter groups, but was most pronounced for voters of the Green (n = 206), the Linke (n = 327), the SPD (n = 34), and the FDP (n = 15). For the voter groups of the CDU/CSU (n = 22), and the AfD (n = 7) the spike was minor or could not be observed. The content spike on the date of Trump's inauguration could mostly be seen in the feeds of AfD and FDP voters. The overall increase in political content running up to the election was mainly driven by three voter groups (FDP, Linke, Greens), while for the remaining parties, the share was only slightly higher than at the beginning of January.

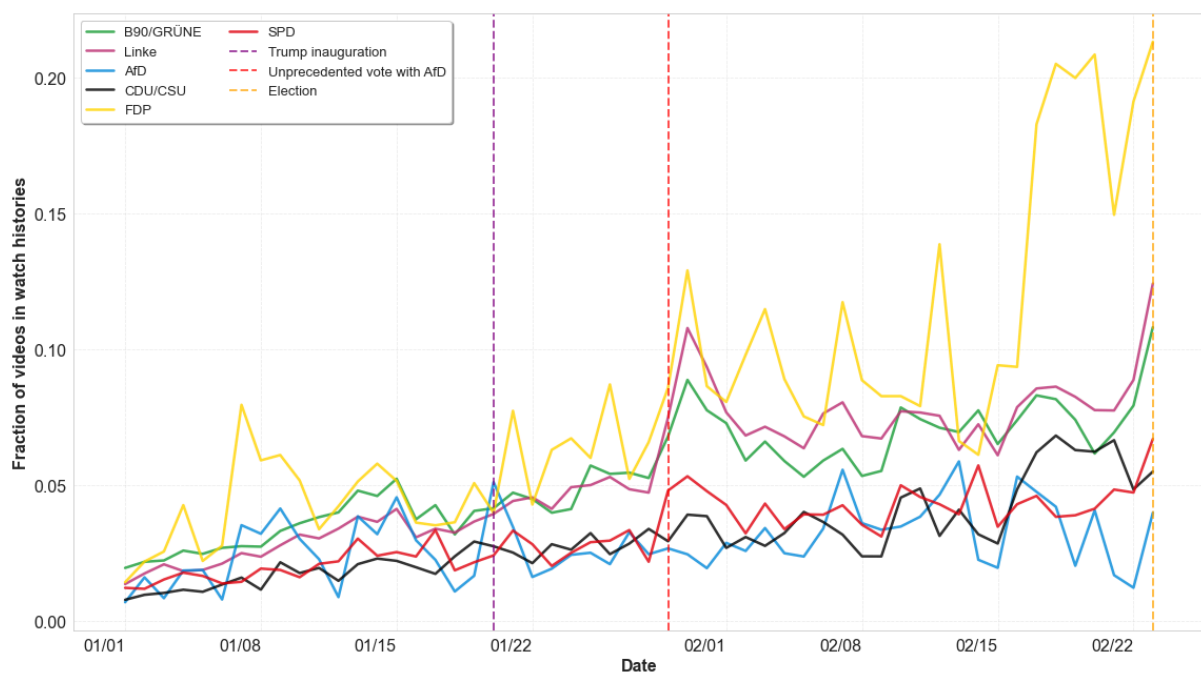


Figure 10: Fraction of political content across voting groups (second vote).

Discussion

This study is one of the first to analyze individual TikTok watch histories, collected around the 2025 German federal election, and connect them to users' reported vote decisions. This unique dataset of TikTok watch histories from 624 users provides individual-level insights into actual political content exposure on TikTok—an area of research whose findings are thus far mainly based on aggregated macro-level exposure metrics, or artificial user-traces retrieved through sock-puppet studies. The detailed quantitative descriptions presented in this paper provide a baseline to what users are exposed to during an election campaign and have several, notable implications.

First, we find that content related to the Die Linke was especially prevalent on TikTok across all types of political content (official party content, political influencers, and party-referencing content). Considering the left-leaning political tendencies of our sample this finding seems unsurprising but it is noteworthy that the Die Linke content, specifically their official and partisan (influencer) content, also reliably reaches into the feeds of opposing voters—a pattern that could not be observed in the same way for the presence of AfD content in left-leaning voters feeds. Furthermore, our data shows that the Die Linke is also strong across the whole left political spectrum. The results therefore strongly suggest that the platform communication of the Die Linke Party on TikTok, supported by the algorithmic recommendation, was successful, allowing the party to reach not just politically sympathetic but also opposing users. This can be interpreted as a clear sign that cross-partisan communication is possible on algorithmically curated platforms. This is true across all types of measured political content. On the other hand, official AfD party content or AfD-affiliated influencer content was not as successful in appearing in feeds of political opponents, signaling the parties outside position in the political spectrum (see Gaisbauer et al., 2025). Therefore, it seems that direct communication of the AfD rarely reaches non-AfD voters. However, the AfD manages to be 'the talk of the town' on TikTok. Despite the low number of AfD voters in our sample, of all parties the AfD was the most often referenced party in the political videos occurring in our participants' feeds. Although we cannot reverse-engineer the algorithm, this suggests that it is not algorithmic

recommendations of AfD supporting content, but general talk about the party that receives prominence and attention. Future research should explore the content of such AfD related videos in more detail and differentiate conceptually between supply and demand, to understand the interplay between content characteristics (e.g., party-relation, stance), user preference, and algorithmic selection.

Second, the study provides novel insight into the *type* of political content that reaches people in their individual feed and also highlights notable differences. With a prevalence of a little over seven percent, we conclude that political content constitutes a minority on TikTok, supporting previous research reporting similar findings (and even lower numbers in non-election times) through tracking research for other social media platforms (Wojcieszak et al., 2024). While it remains an open question how much political content is enough to be impactful, we can see that, even with our rather narrow operationalization, the amount of political content exposure is not neglectable. Notably, the shares of official party content and content from party-affiliated influencers are almost on the same level in our sample, highlighting the relevance of influential supporting accounts. Considering that it is more difficult to identify influencer content as opposed to official party content, the number of influencers is in reality likely even higher. That said, with roughly 1% both content types did not frequently occur in the TikTok feeds. The same is true for news content, which also accounts for a low one-percent share of the video watch histories. Despite high efforts, news outlets are only partly successful in appearing in watch histories of users, highlighting once again the high competition news and journalistic information face on social media platforms like TikTok. What becomes clear is that the highest amount of political content does not originate from parties, influencers, or news outlets, but rather from other user-generated content that discusses and refers to political topics and parties. To fully understand political discourse on platforms such as TikTok, future research needs to reconsider operationalizations of political content.

Third, this difference between the share of official party content and actor independent party-referencing content becomes most notable in the longitudinal analysis regarding what content reached voters. Based on our findings it seems that news outlets were more successful in informing

voters about the inauguration of Donald Trump in the US, than about the upcoming election. In the weeks before the election, the prevalence of news outlet content in users' feeds stayed at a consistent level while the general amount of party-referencing content increased sharply towards the election date. This stark contrast needs to be explored further by future research, as it would be ironic if news content is more able to inform German TikTok users about foreign politics but their own election.

Furthermore, our findings can be interpreted as a validation of the findings of sock-puppet studies (Katzy-Reinshagen et al., 2025; Tjaden et al., 2024) with real user data. We come to similar conclusions on the example of German Elections, that the presence of the AfD on the platforms is less driven by asymmetric algorithmic recommendation, but rather by quantity and being talked about. These findings have two implications. First, democratic actors should focus on improving their public communication and discursive strategies on the platform. Second—and more importantly—initiatives on platform regulation should not lose focus by shifting responsibility onto an imagined malicious algorithm, a technological feature that, in our sample, does exactly what it is designed to do: provide users with content they like while occasionally introducing new or opposing material. Instead, discussions of the normative ideals underlying content moderation and their enforcement should be central to the public debate on the regulation of social media platforms.

Limitations

The results presented in this study are purely descriptive and they do not allow causal conclusions. As discussed in the first part of the results section, the characteristics of our sample are skewed in favour of left-leaning and younger, more female, and slightly more politically interested participants compared to the average TikTok user. This skewedness however also provides the unique opportunity to focus on the penetration of opposing content in comparison to aligning political content, thereby allowing us to provide sample-specific evidence against the assumption of asymmetric algorithmic recommendation on TikTok. Given the novel recruitment through a public

media campaign, our sample likely also includes official party accounts, which may introduce extreme values that are unusual even for highly politicized regular users.

Lastly and importantly, our classification of political content can be considered a rather conservative since we applied a purely actor driven classification—political content that does not mention a party in the description, or is not published by either an official party account or an influencer with an explicit party recommendation is not classified as political content. Similarly we only consider news from institutional news sources.

Conclusion

By combining the actual watch histories of 624 TikTok users leading up to the 2025 German Federal Election with self-reported voting behaviour of the same users, this study provides unprecedented insights into the political and news content, German TikTok users see on the Platform running up to a national election. The findings show that while political content constitutes only a small share of users' feeds, it remains a consistent part of the platform environment during an election campaign. Notably, content related to Die Linke was particularly prevalent and was able to reach both politically sympathetic and opposing users, suggesting that cross-partisan communication is possible on algorithmically curated platforms. In contrast, AfD's visibility appears to stem less from the direct reach of its official or affiliated accounts and more from being widely referenced in broader political discourse. The results also highlight that most political content on TikTok originates from decentralized user-generated discussions rather than parties, influencers, or news outlets, with the latter appearing only rarely in users' feeds. Taken together, these findings suggest that political prominence on TikTok is driven less by asymmetric algorithmic amplification and more by the volume and focus of public discourse. Consequently, debates on platform regulation should move beyond a narrow focus on "the algorithm" and instead address the normative foundations and enforcement of content moderation.

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Appendix A - Snowball sampling Keywordlist

The initial keyword list (kwl-1) was derived from a hashtag list compiled in a project investigating political content on TikTok during the German state elections in 2024 (Wolfgram et al., 2024).

Hashtags that referred exclusively to specific state elections were removed, and short forms referring to the German federal election (Bundestagswahl), namely *btw25* and *btw2025*, were added.

Using this list, we collected videos posted between 06 November 2024 and 12 November 2024 that either originated from official political accounts (Fuchs, 2025) or contained at least one keyword from kwl-1. To ensure coverage of relevant political actors and potential information operations, we included videos posted by accounts based in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Russia, or China.

From the video descriptions, we extracted all terms ($n = 13,939$) and calculated several relevance measures, including total frequency, co-occurrence counts, and summed TF-IDF scores. The top 50 terms for each measure were manually reviewed. Terms with a clear relation to the German federal election or political actors were added to the keyword list, resulting in kwl-2, which contained 191 keywords. Due to the time sensitivity resulting from the snap election and the need to quickly establish the scraping pipeline for the project, this step was conducted solely by the main author.

Based on kwl-2 and a set of actor lists used in the final study (Fuchs, 2025; Merten et al., 2023), we subsequently scraped all newly published videos on a daily basis. On 1 January 2025, keywords were again extracted from all collected video descriptions up to that date. For these terms, we calculated total frequency, co-occurrence counts, average TF-IDF, and total TF-IDF. The top 100 terms for each measure were selected, and all terms already included in kwl-2 were removed, resulting in 255 unique candidate keywords. These were manually reviewed for relevance to the federal election and political discourse, producing the final keyword list (kwl-3; see Table A1).

The procedure was repeated once more using the updated keyword list; however, no additional relevant keywords were identified, suggesting saturation of the keyword discovery process.


Table A1 – Political keywords used for data collection

Hashtag	Hashtag	Hashtag	Hashtag
afd	afdde	afddeutschland	afddeutschland
afdfraktion	afdfraktionbundestag	afdimbundestag	afdkompakt
afdparteimitglied	afdwaehlen	afdwaehlenwirkt	afdwegdamit
afdwiduch	afdwaehlenwirkt	alice	alicefürdeutschland 🇩🇪
aliceweidel	alternative	alternativefuerdeutschland	alternativefürdeutschland
altparteienmüssenweg	amiramohamed	amiramohamedali	ampel
ampelaus	ampelkoalition	ampelmussweg	ampelregierung
ampelregierung 🗳️	annalenabaerbock	baerbock	beatrixvonstorch
bettinastarkwatzinger	bjoernhoecke	bjoernhoecke	blaueweile
borispistorius	bsw	bswbundestagsfraktion	bswpartei
bswteam	bswwaehlen	btw2025	btw25
buendnis90diegruenen	buendnissachwahl	buendnissahrawagenknecht	buendnissahrawagenknecht
bundeskanzler	bundesregierung	bundesrepublikdeutschland 🇩🇪	bundestag
bundestagswahl	bundestagswahl2025	buschmann	bündnis90diegrünen
bündnissachwahl	bündnissahrawagenknecht	bündnissahrawagenknecht	cdu
cducsu	cdude	cdufraktion	cdufraktionbt
cemoezdemir	cemözdemir	christianleye	christianlindner
christlichdemokratischeunion	chrupalla	claudiaroth	csu
csudoppelmoral	cumex	ddaylindner	demokratie
deutschland 🇩🇪	deutscherbundestag	deutschland 🇩🇪	diebasis
diegruenen	diegrünen	dielinke	dielinkeimdeutschenbundestag
dietmarbartsch	fabiodemasi	fckafd	fckbsw 🗳️
fckgrün	fckhoecke	fcknzs	fdp
fdpbt	fdpfraktion	fdpwaehlen	fraunion
freiedemokratischepartei	friedrichmerz	gauland	gregor
gregorgysi	gruene	gruenebundestag	gruenejugend
grüne	grünebundestag	grünejugend	grüneunterfünfprozent
gysi	habeck	habeck4kanzler	habeckmussweg
hoecke	hubertusheil	hoecke	janinewissler
jungealternative	jungeliberale	jungeunion	jusos
kanzler	kanzlerera	kanzlerkandidat	kanzlerkandidatinweidel
katjakipping	katringoertingeckardt	keinechancedercdu	kevinkuehnert
koalition	kubicki	larsklingbeil	lauterbach
lidner	lindner	lindneristweg	linke
linkesindzecke	linkewohnkngssituation	links	linksfraktion
linksjugend	linkspartei	marco	marcobuschmann
martinschirdewan	merz	merzcd?	miosga
mittelstandsunion	nachderampel	nazisrausausdenparlamenten	neuwahlen
noafd	norbertwalterborjans	olafschol	olafscholz
politik	regierung	renatekuenast	roberthabeck
sahra	sahrawagenknecht	sarah	sarahwagenknecht
saskiaesken	scholz	scholzmussweg	seischlausegegenblau
seischlauwählblau ❤️	solid	sozialdemokraten	sozialdemokratischepartei
sozialdemokratischeparteideutschlands	spd	spdbpt	spdbt
spdde	spdfraktion	spdfrauen	spdpartei
strackzimmermann	team4habeck	teamafd	teamboris
teambsw	teamcdu	teamesken	teamfdp
teamhabeck	teamheimat	teamklingbeil	teamlinke
teampistorius	teamrobert	teamscholz	tinochtrupalla
tonihofreiter	vertrauensfrage	volker	volkerwissing
vonstroch	wachauf	wagenknecht	wahl
wahlen	weidel	wiederstand	wirtschaftswende
wissing	wolfgangkubicki	❤️	

Based on kwl-3, a final snowball sampling procedure—following the same principles described above—was conducted after the election using all videos collected up to election day. During this step, newly identified keywords were only added if they could be clearly interpreted as

referencing a specific political party or affiliated actor. At the same time, kwl-3 was reduced by removing keywords that did not allow for an unambiguous assignment to a political party. The resulting list of keywords with clear party affiliation is reported in Table A2.

Table A2 – Party-referencing keywords used for data collection

Keyword	Party	Keyword	Party	Keyword	Party
afd	AfD	afdde	AfD	afddeutschland	AfD
afddeutschland	AfD	afdfraktion	AfD	afdfraktionbundestag	AfD
afdimbundestag	AfD	afdkompakt	AfD	afdparteimitglied	AfD
afdwaehlen	AfD	afdwaehlenwirkt	AfD	afdwegdamit	AfD
afdwiduch	AfD	afdwaehlenwirkt	AfD	alice	AfD
alicefürdeutschland 	AfD	aliceweidel	AfD	alternativefuerdeutschland	AfD
alternativfürdeutschland	AfD	altparteienmüssenweg	AfD	beatrixvonstorch	AfD
bjoernhoecke	AfD	bjoernhoecke	AfD	blauewelle	AfD
chrupalla	AfD	hoecke	AfD	hoecke	AfD
kanzlerkandidatinweidel	AfD	jungealternative	AfD	gauland	AfD
tinochtrupalla	AfD	vonstroch	AfD	weidel	AfD
teamafd	AfD	teamalice	AfD	amiramohamed	BSW
amiramohamedali	BSW	bsw	BSW	bswbundestagsfraktion	BSW
bswpartei	BSW	bswteam	BSW	bswwaehlen	BSW
buendnissahrawagenknecht	BSW	buendnissahrawagenknecht	BSW	bündnissahrawagenknecht	BSW
bündnissahrawagenknecht	BSW	christianleye	BSW	fabiodemasi	BSW
sahra	BSW	sahrawagenknecht	BSW	sarah	BSW
sahrawagenknecht	BSW	wagenknecht	BSW	teambsw	BSW
annalenabaerbock	Greens	baerbock	Greens	cemoezdemir	Greens
cemözdemir	Greens	claudiaroth	Greens	gruene	Greens
gruenebundestag	Greens	gruenejugend	Greens	grüne	Greens
grünebundestag	Greens	grünejugend	Greens	grünen	Greens
habeck	Greens	roberthabeck	Greens	habeck4kanzler	Greens
katringoertingeckardt	Greens	renatekuenast	Greens	tonihofreiter	Greens
team4habeck	Greens	teamhabeck	Greens	teamrobert	Greens
buendnis90diegruenen	Greens	bündnis90diegrünen	Greens	borispistorius	SPD
hubertusheil	SPD	kevinkuehnert	SPD	larsklingbeil	SPD
lauterbach	SPD	norbertwalterborjans	SPD	olafscholz	SPD
olafschol	SPD	saskiaesken	SPD	scholz	SPD
spd	SPD	spdbpt	SPD	spdbt	SPD
spdde	SPD	spdfraktion	SPD	spdfrauen	SPD
spdpartei	SPD	sozialdemokraten	SPD	sozialdemokratischepartei	SPD
sozialdemokratischeparteideutschlands	SPD	teamboris	SPD	teamklingbeil	SPD
teamesken	SPD	teampistorius	SPD	teamscholz	SPD
jusos	SPD	cdu	CDU/CSU	cducusu	CDU/CSU
cdude	CDU/CSU	cdufraktion	CDU/CSU	cdufraktionbt	CDU/CSU
christlichdemokratischeunion	CDU/CSU	csu	CDU/CSU	friedrich	CDU/CSU
friedrichmerz	CDU/CSU	merz	CDU/CSU	merzcdue?	CDU/CSU
frauenunion	CDU/CSU	jungeunion	CDU/CSU	mittelstandsunion	CDU/CSU
teamcdu	CDU/CSU	fdp	FDP	fdpbt	FDP
fdpfraktion	FDP	fdpwaehlen	FDP	freiedemokratischepartei	FDP
christianlindner	FDP	lindner	FDP	lidner	FDP
kubicki	FDP	wolfgangkubicki	FDP	marcobuschmann	FDP
buschmann	FDP	marco	FDP	volkerwissing	FDP
wissing	FDP	strackzimmermann	FDP	jungeliberale	FDP
teamfdp	FDP	dielinkeimdeutschenbundestag	Die Linke	dietmarbartsch	Die Linke
gregor	Die Linke	gregorgysi	Die Linke	gysi	Die Linke
janinewissler	Die Linke	katjakipping	Die Linke	martinschirdewan	Die Linke
linke	Die Linke	links	Die Linke	linksfraktion	Die Linke
linksjugend	Die Linke	linkspartei	Die Linke	solid	Die Linke
heidi	Die Linke	heidereichinnek	Die Linke	linkewohnkngssituation	Die Linke

Appendix B - Classification Overlap Analysis

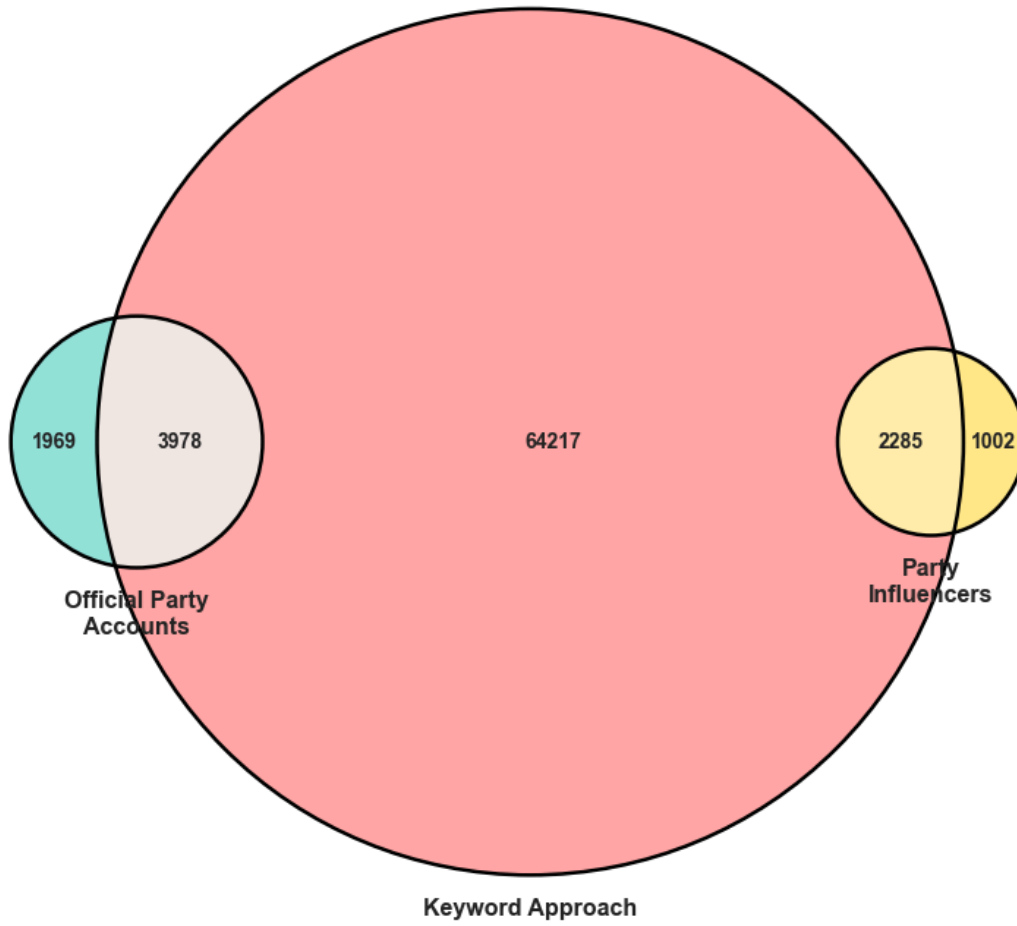


Figure A1: Set overlap between videos that are part of either political content video sub-set.