

# Recommendations for Journalists Reporting on Migration and Minorities

Verbatim from: <https://www.respectwords.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Reporting-on-Migration-and-Minorities..pdf> [bolding ours]

- **Choose the language you use carefully.** Consider the ideologies and connotations behind the words you use.
- **Challenge stereotypes, and avoid sweeping generalisations.** There is no one single migrant/Muslim/Jewish/Roma “community”, but instead diverse communities of individuals who have more to offer than just their migrant, ethnic or religious background
- Acknowledge – to yourself and to your audience – that **stories about migration and ethnic & religious minorities are complex.** Don’t try to fit your reporting into accepted master narratives.
- Remember that **context is essential.** Report not only immediate events and consequences, but also the root causes, which often have nothing to do with a person’s ethnicity or religious affiliation.
- **Provide an appropriate range of points of view,** including those of migrants and members of minority communities themselves. But don’t include extremist perspectives just to “show the other side” and be alert to political and social actors who spread hate to promote their interests.
- **Avoid directly reproducing hate speech;** when it is newsworthy to do so, mediate it by contextualising and challenging such speech, and exposing any false premises it relies on.
- Keep in mind that **sensitive information** (e.g., racial/ethnic origin, religious, philosophical or other beliefs, political party or union affiliation, health and sexual information) **should be mentioned only when necessary** for the audience to understand the news.
- **Ensure that the title of your article or programme does not sensationalise;** often, it may be all that the audience remembers.
- **Uphold the basic principles of journalism.** Verify the facts; respect the notion of “innocent until proven guilty” when reporting on crime; protect the rights of your sources, especially those in vulnerable situations.

- The challenges of covering migration and minority issues are constantly evolving. **Take continual advantage of opportunities to develop your knowledge, skills and awareness.**

## Recommendations for migration coverage

From page 13 of <https://www.respectwords.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Reporting-on-Migration-and-Minorities..pdf>

- Avoid oversimplification. Migration is a complex topic, with many different causes and many effects, and deserves nuanced media coverage. Migrants themselves are neither victims nor heroes.
- Don't fall into the trap of focusing solely on possible negative aspects of large-scale migration. It is also important to highlight positive contributions of migration and individual migrants.
- Strive to be accurate and free of bias. Reporting should aim to be impartial, inclusive and fact-based.
- When covering the impact of migration on areas such as the economy and crime, don't fall prey to assumptions or narratives that stem from politics and emotion. Stick to the facts – what do the statistics actually show?
- Avoid painting migrants with the same broad brush. Keep in mind that within every large group of people – migrants and non-migrants alike – there are criminals and rule breakers. Take care not to use the actions of one individual to smear the reputation of all members of a group or cast suspicion on all migrants.
- Stay clear of sensationalism. When problems inside the asylum system occur – e.g., migrants riot, or an increase in small-time criminality is noted – look critically for the root cause
- Put migration movements in context. Inform your audience about the reasons why people feel compelled to leave their homelands, and investigate what connections there may be to policies and practices of European states.
- Inform your readers, viewers or listeners where relevant about the right of asylum (basic background and state obligations) and the process of applying for asylum.
- Include the voices of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants themselves when reporting on the issue of migration.

- Keep in mind that there is no structural connection between migration and terrorism. In cases where there may be a link between these two issues, stick to the facts and avoid generalisations.
- Avoid dehumanising language that evokes imagery or invasions or natural disasters (“flood”, “horde”).
- Differentiate among “asylum seekers”, “refugees”, “migrants” where it is reasonable and feasible to do so. Avoid making sweeping assumptions about migrants’ intentions.
- Don’t use the adjective “illegal” to describe migrants. Avoid terminology that is more appropriate when referring to objects.
- When it comes to video or photo, balance newsworthiness with migrants’ right to privacy (including cultural values regarding being photographed) and any potential for retribution against them. Ensure that photo captions are accurate.
- When using migrants as sources for stories, or in interviews, treat them with the same respect as any other source. Be mindful, however, of particular sensitivities. Asylum seekers feeling persecution may fear retribution against them or their families back home, or fear prejudicing their asylum applications. Be clear about what you plan to do with the material they provide (use an interpreter where necessary), and respect requests for anonymity.
- Don’t quote politicians or other public figures on migration topics without contextualising, substantiating and, where necessary, challenging their statements. Seek the views of experts, advocacy groups and migrants themselves to help set the context and question politicians’ views and assumptions.
- Where it is necessary and newsworthy to report hateful and/or racist comments by groups or individuals, mediate their statements by challenging these comments and exposing any false premises they rely on. Don’t simply reproduce such comments for their shock factor.
- Don’t rely on popular narratives, images and tropes about migrants; critically examine them instead. Familiarise yourself first-hand with the topic. Talk to migrants yourself. Visit migrant camps and asylum facilities. Ask experts and civil society groups for their views and experience.
- Question assumptions about who and who is not a migrant, and how a migrant is supposed to look and act. Don’t assume that a person is a migrant simply on the basis of his or her looks. Migrants are people who migrate; the children or grandchildren of migrants who are born in the country in question no longer fall into that category.

