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Assessing the Politicisation of Immigration in Portuguese Party Electoral Programmes, 2015-2024.

Ana Flor Vieira Saraiva

Master in International Studies

PhD. Thais França, Integrated Researcher,
Iscte - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

PhD. João Miguel Carvalho, Integrated Researcher,
Iscte - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

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SOCIOLOGIA
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Resumo

A imigração tem vindo a tornar-se um tema central nas esferas política e pública portuguesas. Neste contexto, esta tese traça a evolução da abordagem dos partidos políticos portugueses no tema da imigração entre 2015 e 2024, bem como a sua politização, partindo de uma análise anterior que abrange o período de 1995 a 2014. A questão da imigração foi analisada através dos programas eleitorais de seis partidos políticos para as quatro eleições legislativas no período: 2015, 2019, 2022 e 2024; focando-se nas três dimensões de saliência, conteúdo e posição. A politização é analisada através da interação entre a saliência e o grau de conflito entre posições dos partidos. Embora 2019 tenha sido marcado pela entrada do partido de extrema-direita Chega no parlamento, com posições marcadamente negativas sobre a imigração e tenha sido observado um aumento significativo na saliência da questão (avaliado tendo em conta as mudanças políticas e demográficas sentidas em Portugal), o grau de conflito registado entre os restantes partidos pode ser considerado irrelevante, indicando que até 2024 a questão continuou não politizada. Uma análise futura da questão da imigração no seio dos partidos políticos poderá revelar o início de uma tendência de divergência e a politização da questão, considerando as eleições legislativas de 2025 e as atuais políticas governamentais.

Palavras-chave: imigração; politização; Portugal; partidos políticos; programas eleitorais.

Abstract

Immigration has become a central topic in Portuguese political and public spheres. Within this context, this thesis traces the evolution of Portuguese political parties' approach to immigration between 2015 and 2024, building on prior work covering 1995-2014, as well as its politicisation. The immigration issue was analysed through 23 electoral programmes of six political parties for the four legislative elections in the period: 2015, 2019, 2022, and 2024; by focusing on the three dimensions of salience, substance, and stance. Politicisation is analysed through the interaction between salience and the degree of conflict between party positions. Although 2019 was marked by the entry of the extreme-right party Chega into parliament and its markedly negative positions on immigration, and a significant increase in issue salience was observed (assessed taking into account the political and demographic changes felt in Portugal), the degree of conflict between the remaining parties can be considered irrelevant, indicating that until 2024 the issue was not politicised. A future analysis of the immigration issue within political parties may reveal the beginning of a trend towards divergence and politicisation of the issue, considering the 2025 legislative elections and present government policies.

Keywords: immigration; politicisation; Portugal; political parties; electoral programmes.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Acronyms

AIMA	Agência para a Integração Migrações e Asilo (Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum)
AIPs	Anti-Immigrant Parties
BE	Bloco de Esquerda
CDS - PP	Partido do Centro Democrático e Social – Partido Popular
CDU	Coligação Democrática Unitária
CGTP	Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses
CH	Chega
CPLP	Community of Portuguese Language Countries
ERPs	Extreme-Right Parties
EU	European Union
IL	Iniciativa Liberal
IPM	Immigration in Party Manifestos
L	Livre
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
PAN	Pessoas-Animais-Natureza
PCP	Partido Comunista Português
PEV	Partido Ecologista "Os Verdes"
PS	Partido Socialista
PPM	Partido Popular Monárquico
PSD	Partido Social Democrata
SEF	Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (Portuguese Immigration and Borders Services)

Introduction

The word “immigration”, used to describe the inflow of foreigners into a country, has made its way into the Portuguese public sphere as one of its most important topics, drawing more political attention than ever. From a citizen’s perspective, the topic appears to have ruptured into Portuguese society quickly and often framed in a xenophobic and even racist perspective, with a seemingly hegemonic view that immigration is bad, dangerous, and illegal. At the same time, the extreme-right party “Chega” emerged and rose to prominence. These two phenomena seemed to develop in parallel, raising a puzzle: was Chega the only party addressing this issue, was its perspective the only one, and was it representative of the wider political party system and public opinion? With the political crisis that began in 2023 following the resignation of the Portuguese Prime Minister, and the subsequent legislative elections, debate intensified, the topic grew in importance, and more political voices began to address the issue.

The research’s main objective is to understand how immigration is addressed in the Portuguese political sphere. Accordingly, the thesis asks: how has the immigration issue been addressed by Portuguese political parties? Building on Carvalho and Duarte (2020) analysis of 1995 to 2014 this thesis examines the 2015-2024 period to assess how parties engaged with immigration in a period marked by the European “refugee crisis”, the emergence of the extreme-right party Chega and the sustained growth in foreign-resident population in Portugal. Focusing on political parties the analysis uses electoral programmes official party positions, (rather than in political claims measure in news articles).

The thesis pursues five key objectives: to measure the evolution of salience (the attention dedicated to the issue), substance (which categories are addressed within the immigration topic), and stance (how parties position themselves in the issue); to estimate the degree of conflict between party positions (distance between party positions and mean position); and to combine these into an indicator of politicisation. As well as to put forward a set of explanations to better understand the findings. Accordingly, it asks: RQ1: Has the immigration debate become more salient? RQ2: What immigration categories do parties place more emphasis on? RQ3: Have the parties' positions on immigration changed over time? RQ4: Can a degree of conflict be observed between parties’ positions? RQ5: Has the immigration issue become politicised?

A content analysis of 23 electoral programmes issued by six political parties between 2015 and 2024 (Chega had not been founded in 2015) was conducted. Salience is measured as the relative share of immigration-related content; substance is coded into six pre-defined categories; stance assigns a value on a -1/0/+1 scale to each reference and averages at the party programme level; the degree of conflict is the absolute difference between each programme's stance and the system-wide mean in each electoral cycle. Politicisation is originally assessed by combining salience and degree of conflict.

The dissertation, starting with this introduction, is organised into five chapters, followed by the conclusion, which recaptures the main findings and provides some final remarks. Chapter 1 contextualises the immigration phenomenon at the European and Portuguese levels, Chapter 2 presents the conceptual framework, focused on politicisation, Chapter 3 reviews literature on immigration politicisation at the European and Portuguese levels, Chapter 4 establishes the thesis' methodology, Chapter 5, divided into five subsections, analyses and compares the collected data, assesses issue politicisation, presents four types of explanations for the phenomenon, provides a brief qualitatively analysis of immigration in 2025 through news articles.

Based on the collected data, analysis and comparison with relevant literature, the thesis concludes that the patterns identified by Carvalho and Duarte (2020) largely persist in 2024, although some changes can be already observed, namely the increase in salience and in the degree of conflict, due to the sharply negative approach of Chega to immigration. Therefore, the issue cannot yet be considered politicised in Portugal. A brief contextual analysis of the 2025 legislative elections suggests the need for a future in-depth study of the year.

1. Migration: Phenomenon and Waves

The first chapter of the dissertation focuses on contextualising the reader on two regional levels of migration processes: European, and Portuguese; and across different perspectives, including migration waves and numbers, and the political dimension of the issue, through the work of several papers and authors, varying in scope, timeline, and methodology.

1.1. Europe

The Second World War and its aftermath mark the beginning of new immigration dynamics in and into the European continent. This post-war era saw a significant rise in immigration into Western Europe and signals a major *shift* in both the direction of the movement and the origin of migrants (de Haas, 2023, p. 19). Academically, three large waves of immigration are considered for this period in Europe: the labour wave, the family reunification wave, and the asylum and irregular wave. The first wave was shaped by the independence of former European colonies (with migrants coming from old colonial territories into the former metropoles) and by guest worker recruitment agreements (Geddes & Scholten, 2016, p. 8), from south to central and northern Europe. These migrants, first arriving as temporary workers and mostly solo male workers, with time showed increased engagement at both the institutional and civil society levels, slowly turning into permanent settlers. With large-scale labour migration restricted in the early 1970s, incentives reached higher skilled workers, and with the ongoing arrival of family members' of previous decades immigrants, family reunification became the main form of immigration, representing a shift in the demography of the immigrant population, from working age males, to include women, children, and older people (Geddes & Scholten, 2016, pp. 8-9).

Finally, the end of the Cold War era in 1989-1990 saw an increase in asylum seekers, a trend first intensified during the outbreak of violent conflicts in former Soviet Republics and former Yugoslavia, and, later, in 2015-2016, a peak of arrivals of asylum-seekers coming from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria in large numbers (Dancygier & Margalit, 2019). This constant exposure to flows of immigration brought large socio-demographic changes throughout the receiving countries, with consequences in several spheres of the countries' functioning,

significantly at the economic, social, and political levels. Hence, the third wave is associated with the development of common EU migration and asylum policies, with this type of migration starting to be defined as illegal or irregular for the first time. This once more contributed to a diversification of the migrant scenario in Europe, since the origin countries became more diverse, and different European countries, especially in Southern European countries, previously characterised by emigration, became hosts to the inflows. These large-scale movements reached a whole-time high in the "refugee crisis" of 2015-2016, put to the test and brought crisis to the EU asylum, migration, and border control system.

From the above overview of migration waves in Europe, it is important to consider the topic's relevance to European Union policy. Geddes & Scholten (2016, p. 1) distinguish between immigration policies, which seek to regulate entry into a country's territory, and immigrant policies, which aim to "integrate" migrant newcomers into the country's society, and argue that international migration's impact has increased since the 1990s at the societal (where changes can be seen either as *positive*, when considered to provide economic, social, and cultural gains, or as *negative* when associated with costs and burdens) and policy levels. Thus, the authors' focus is to understand how EU countries' policies play a role in shaping societal understanding of international migration, by accounting for factors such as geographical borders and different forms of social organisation, since such conceptualisations interacts with how societies view boundaries of membership, belonging, and entitlement, mediating the "us" *vs* "them" relationships. Adding to country-level policies, the EU has had an increased role in immigration policies at the regional level, of which the 2015 refugee crisis is a clear example: as the number of irregular arrivals sharply rising, European Union level policies were taken (e.g. *EU-Türkiye joint action plan)* to limit irregular crossings from Türkiye into Greece, and consequently, into the EU (European Commission, 2015). The "refugee crisis" became a manifestation of a broader and more complex debate on international migrations and their effects on EU politics and societies: "More than ever before, migration and mobility became central to the debate about Europe's future" (Geddes & Scholten, 2016, p. 2).

1.2. **Portugal**

Emigration from Portugal is inherent to the country's history. From colonial expansion in the modern period to the dictatorship-era of outflows to France and colonial territories, to a more

recent flow into Switzerland, France, and the UK, and a new, contemporary, North-South corridor to former colonised territories, such as Brazil and Angola, Portugal has seen steady emigration flows, contributing to the expansion of the Portuguese emigrant community: in a comparative perspective, Portugal is considered a top emigrant country of the EU (Carvalho, 2022, p. 340).

The other side of the migration process, the inflow of foreign population, does not share the same weight in Portuguese history. The more recent phenomenon of immigration, when accounting for large inflows, started in the late twentieth century, and is now in the spotlight of Portuguese *public space*, as seen in topic addressing by media sources, political parties' discourse, and civil society actions (Alves, 2025; Costa Lopes et *al.,* 2024; Gil, 2025; Rodrigues et *al.*, 2025). Large flows of immigration into Portugal are considered to have begun after the *Carnation Revolution*, which ended the *Estado Novo* dictatorship and the started the decolonisation process. The first wave of immigration encompasses the *returnees* from the former Portuguese colonies (Portuguese who settled in the former African colonies) and other people from Portuguese-speaking African countries (such as Cape Verde, Angola, and Mozambique), from the late 1980s into 2000. A second wave of immigration, from 2000 to 2007, has Ukraine, Moldova, and Brazil as the main countries of origin. A third wave, from 2004 to 2011, saw a new influx of Brazilians arriving in the country (Carvalho, 2022, pp. 447-450).

A forth wave of immigration into Portugal is not yet academically categorised, however, from publicly available reports from AIMA and SEF (AIMA I.P. - DPEE – Direção de Planeamento, Estudos e Estatística, 2024; SEF/GEPF, 2021), it is possible to make a characterisation of the most recent years in immigration into Portugal, both in terms of numbers of foreign residents, growth of foreign population, and origin of immigrants.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the 2015-2023 period (the most recent data available) saw a large increase in foreign population, from 388,731 to 1,044,606. Noteworthily, in 2015, the first year analysed in the thesis, the resident foreign population had slightly declined from 2014 (-1.60%), continuing a downwards trend observed in previous years (SEF, 2015). This tendency was reversed in 2016, with a slight increase in foreign residents, from which point on, the foreign population grew steadily. The 2020-2021 period marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, saw a more modest percentual increase, and by 2023 the foreign population abruptly increased by 33.60% to over a million foreign residents.

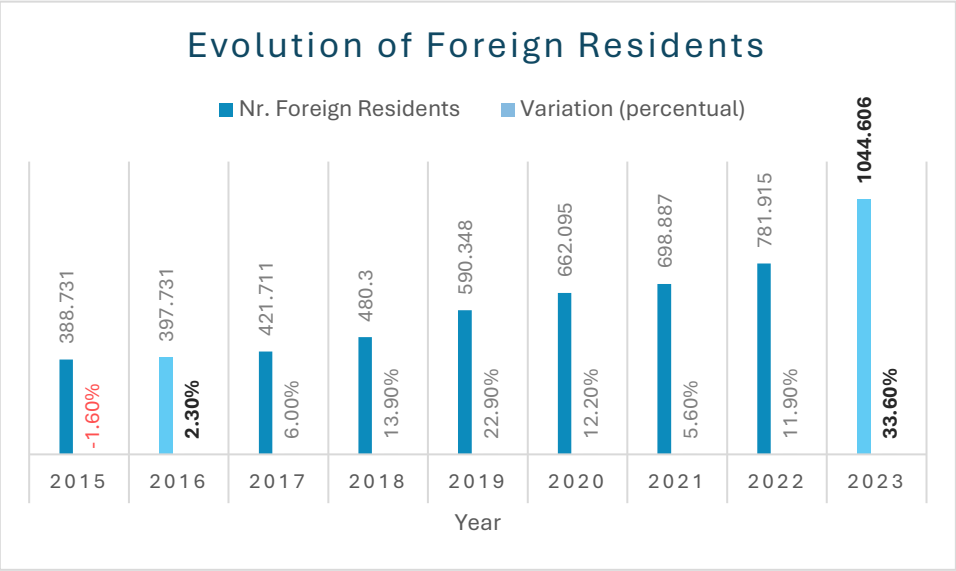

Figure 1.1 - Evolution of Foreign Residents in Portugal (2015-2023)

Nationality-wise, see Figure 2, in 2023 Brazil was the most represented country, accounting for 35.30% of all foreign residents, followed by citizens from Angola and Cape Verde (from which Portugal has been receiving immigrants historically). Notably, India and Nepal take the 5th and 8th positions in the top of most represented nationalities, making up 7,1% of foreign population (AIMA I.P. - DPEE, 2024), a remarkable change in the nationalities of arriving foreigners into the Portugal, since these state had not been historical sending countries, and only reached a noteworthy representation in 2021, when the countries entered the top 10 most representative nationalities.

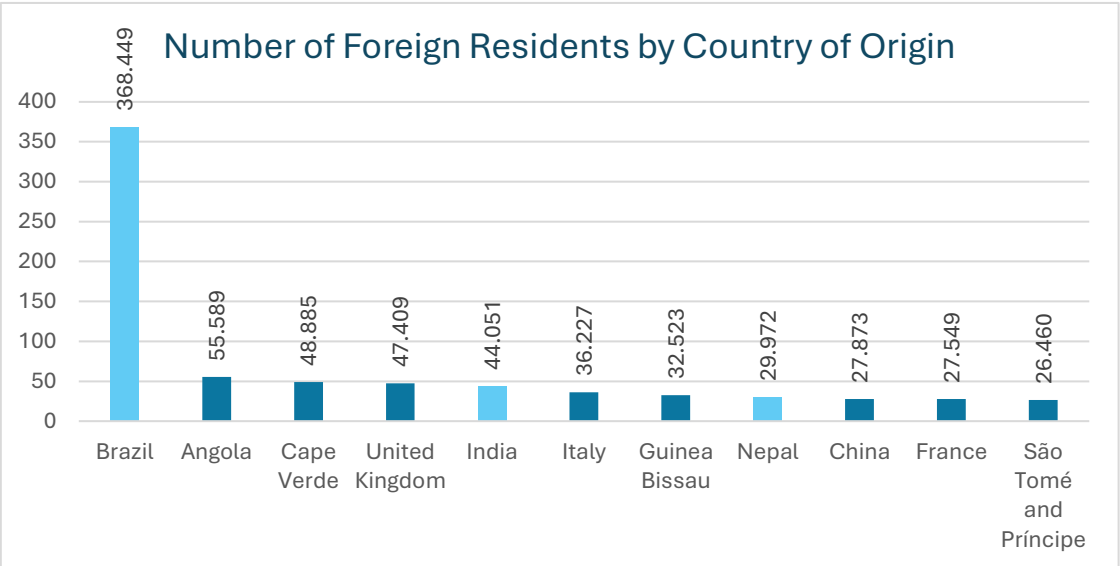

Figure 1.2 - Number of Foreign Residents by Country of Origin (2023)

Of the top ten nationalities, five are from CPLP countries, making up a total of 50.9% of the residing foreign population, meaning that these foreign residents share the Portuguese language and, at some degree, certain cultural traits imposed by Portuguese colonization, leading for cultural differences to be less significant than with other countries. Origin countries and nationalities are a relevant factor to consider when analysing the immigration topic, since the cultural factor, marked by language and religion, has proven to have significant impact in residents and political party views of immigrants (Shehaj et *al.*, 2019), as will further be explored.

2. Conceptual Framework: Politicisation

This research aims to trace the evolution of the immigration-related discourse from political parties in Portugal from 2015 to 2024. To do so, the thesis will look at addressing the issue as presented in electoral manifestos for the four legislative elections of 2015, 2019, 2022, and 2024, through five core questions: RQ1: Has the immigration debate become more salient? RQ2: What immigration categories do parties place more emphasis on? RQ3: Have the parties' positions on immigration changed over time? RQ4: Can a degree of conflict be observed between parties' positions? RQ5: Has the immigration issue become politicised? To answer these questions, three dimensions emerged for analysis: salience (frequency); substance (categories); and stance (position). After analysing several methodologies for measuring these dimensions, two dependent variables emerged: degree of conflict, which measures conflict between party positions, and politicisation, which considers an issue's salience and the degree of conflict.

Politicisation serves as the central concept for analysing immigration in policy-focused studies, as well as the present analysis. Politicisation is an indicator of when a specific issue becomes relevant both for public debate and political contestation: hence, an issue is politicised when it is deemed politically relevant by the public (Meyer & Rosenberger, 2015, p. 2). A later account by Schmidt (2019) considers politicisation to be a more complex phenomenon, through which "growing electoral divides find expression in increasingly polarised national debates" (p. 2).

To grasp the possible politicisation process of the immigration issue, politicisation is measured objectively by analysing the two dimensions of salience and polarisation (Koopmans *et al.*, 2005). Salience, the extent to which an issue receives more political attention than others (van der Brug et *al.*, 2015, p. 11), measures the extent to which focus is placed on a given issue. Polarisation is directly connected to position, which distinguishes between actors' perceptions of and claims for a specific issue, as it measures the differences in political positions taken by collective actors (Carvalho & Duarte, 2020, p.1474). Larger differences in position imply higher levels of polarisation (van der Brug et *al*., 2015, pp. 81).

For Green-Pedersen (2012, p. 2), issue-politicisation is a process through which an issue becomes relevant for public debate. Since the process involves political parties and their strategies as main actors, if a topic is salient in the political sphere, it is politicised. Carvalho

and Duarte (2020) claim that for an issue to be politicised, it needs to be both salient and polarised. And for Zürn (2012, 2019), the higher the degree of salience for an issue, the more actors will participate in the related debate, the more positions will be polarised, and the more politicised the topic will be.

Building on these accounts, the thesis combines the dimensions of salience and position as requirements to assess politicisation: if the topic shows relevant salience and actors position themselves substantially differently on the issue, if they present a high degree of conflict, it may be deemed politicised. The degree of politicisation is, then, a measurable dimension of how an issue, here the immigration topic in Portugal, gains relevance in the public and political arenas, and how the several actors in question approach it. Additionally to the assessment of issue politicisation of the immigration topic by political parties, which categories are brought for the debate can also be of great relevance when categorising the issue, since they make clear which framing each actor is purposely associating with immigration. It is especially relevant to compare not only party positions on several categories, but also which categories are chosen to be addressed and by whom, and how different actors choose to "enter" each category and position themselves inside it.

Hence, to measure the evolution of the immigration debate in the Portuguese political context from 2015 to 2024, analysis and objective measurement of the salience, stance and position dimensions are key. The following step, connecting the several dimensions to assess politicisation of the immigration issue is the final relevant indicator for tracing the path of the immigration debate by the political parties in the Portuguese context.

3. Politicisation of Immigration

3.1. Europe

While different causes may be pointed to have brought great relevance to the immigration discourse at a political level, Yilmaz (2012, p. 368) argues that "The far-right (…) succeeded in moving immigration to the centre of political discourse" when writing about the relationship between the extreme-right and the immigration debate in Europe. Going back to the 1980s, when the far-right intervened in the European immigration debate, Yilmaz traces the "hegemonic success" of the extreme-right with a shift brought into the discourse on immigration, from framing immigration economically to culturally. The research claims that the left and the mainstream-right offered little resistance to this shift and that this anti-immigrant discourse and politics marked by xenophobia were "quietly accepted" by them as an electoral strategy to keep the electorate from moving into the extreme-right, resulting in the centrality of the issue on political discourse today (Yilmaz, 2012, p. 377). Although a more recent account by Meyer and Rosenberger (2015) claims that the impact of extreme-right parties in politicising immigrations has been overrated and that their role is subordinate (pp.1, 13). Adding to the cultural framing of immigration, Shehaj et *al.* (2019) found some support for the claim that relatively large differences in both economic and cultural characteristics (such as linguistic and religious differences) between immigrants and natives were favourable to extreme-right parties[1] (ERPs) support.

Alonso and Fonseca (2011) measure the dimensions of *salience* and *position* of immigration in electoral manifestos to grasp the "Left's" behaviour in the immigration topic, both in and without the presence of Extreme Right Parties (ERPs), concluding that there was an increase in issue salience across countries, regardless of the presence of ERPs in the country's political landscape, and that parties may radicalise their agendas regarding immigration without the presence of ERPs. The limited impact of ERPs was enhanced when considering electoral competition, in which cases ERPs seem to show more impact on the mainstream left than on centre-left and centre-right parties. Regarding polarisation, convergence of immigration issue position was not widespread at the time, suggesting that the

[1] For clarity, "extreme-right parties" (ERPs) will be used as an umbrella term for populist, far and extreme right parties

polarisation of mainstream party positions on the immigration scale could facilitate the emergence of ERPs (Alonso & Fonseca, 2011, p.880). Although not looking into polarisation, regarding parties' positions on the immigration topic, Carvalho and Ruedin (2018) study the performance of mainstream left parties on the topic of immigration, pointing to a mainstream left with higher levels of coherence, lower levels of salience and more positive positions than centrist and mainstream right parties, while also claiming a limited impact of ERPs on mainstream left parties.

In a more recent account, Dancygier and Margalit (2019), make public a new dataset, the *Immigration in Party Manifestos* (IPM), that collects all available manifestos from 12 Western European countries, from the 1960 decade until 2013, a list of categories of analysis for the issue of immigration, as well as a scale to measure position (negative, neutral or positive). Looking at the three key dimensions of salience, substance and stance, Dancygier and Margalit (2019), test three hypothesis, concluding that: a movement of convergence between mainstream left and right parties is observable (a trend not noticeable in Alonso & Fonseca, 2011); anti-immigrant parties (AIPs) show modest influence in centrist parties (supporting Alonso & Fonseca, 2011); and that cultural concerns have not marginalized economic ones in the public's eye, when thinking about immigration, challenging Yilmaz (2012).

3.2. Portugal

Carvalho and Duarte (2020) assess the immigration topic in Portugal in the 1995-2014 period by carrying out a political claims analysis of news articles from two printed media sources. The paper concludes that low levels of salience and polarisation suggest the topic was not politicised in the period, apart from a short time in the early 2000s. This lack of politicisation is mostly associated with a consensus between the mainstream parties over a positive approach towards immigration, except for CDS-PP, as well as the topic's low salience in political strategies. The paper also has a comparative dimension (with seven other European countries in the same time frame), which shows Portugal as the country with the lowest level of politicisation, displaying a lack of convergence with the patterns observed in both older and more recent countries of immigration, and that the emergence of a cultural cleavage (already identified in other European countries) was not yet observable in Portugal. Additionally, Carvalho and Duarte (2020) bring forward four types of explanations to understand the levels of politicisation in their case-study:

societal developments (e.g. irregular flow trends; cultural cleavages with incoming migrants); actions of specific groups (such as the government, political parties, and civil society actors); policies (the specific policies adopted and the correspondence at the discourse level); and the political opportunity structure of the Portuguese political system.

The thesis is connected to Carvalho and Duarte (2020) analysis in several ways. First and foremost, the present study, similarly to Carvalho and Duarte (2020), aims at assessing the immigration topic in Portuguese politics, specifically if immigration has become a relevant issue in the political sphere and to observe if politicisation is observable, in the period following Carvalho and Duarte (2020). Although the thesis' methodology is original, as it is based on several methodologies with new elements (further explained in the methodology chapter), and does not share the object of analysis (political claims analysis in newspapers (Carvalho & Duarte, 2020) *vs.* electoral programmes' content analysis here), the core concept of politicisation is central in both. Finally, the four types of explanations put forward in Carvalho and Duarte (2020) are used as a basis for the possibilities of explanations for the findings in the thesis.

For setting the context of politicisation of immigration in Portugal, it is crucial to briefly characterize and discuss the emergence of CH in the Portuguese political sphere. Chega surged onto the Portuguese political scene in 2019, when it ran for the legislative elections of that year and obtained its first seat in Parliament. Over the three next legislative elections, CH grew to 12 seats in 2022, 50 seats in 2024, and to 60 parliamentary seats in 2025, becoming the second largest political party in the national parliament, the first time that the position has not been held by one of the two most preponderant parties: PS and PSD. The party has been classified by journalists and political analysts as falling into the "right-wing populism", "radical right", and "far-right" spectrums (Marchi, 2020, p.5), and as populist party from "the new radical right" by Marchi (2020, pp.191-193). Difficulty in a political science classification of the party aside, CH is the first party in the extreme-right spectrum to be in Portuguese parliament, since the end of the military dictatorship in 1974. Since elected to parliament, CH has been highly and steadily covered by media sources and in political analysis, and one of the topics it has "claimed" increasingly since 2019 is that of immigration. The party has used the immigration issue as one of its most significant political banners and in the 2025 electoral campaign, the topic even surpassed the visibility of their anti-corruption focus (Lusa & Baltarejo, 2025). The party has framed immigration in restrictive terms, with an emphasis on cultural and security perceived risks and concerns, as well as in economic fears of unemployment and competitivity

between Portuguese and foreign citizens. CH places a strong focus on irregular immigration (framed as "illegal") and rejects the regularization of irregular immigrants, while also advocating for the limitation of immigrants' rights (Saturnini, 2022, pp. 32-35). With respect to its cultural concerns, CH openly uses xenophobic discourse in its addressal of immigration (Saturnini, 2022, pp. 2-3), standing apart from an almost absence of xenophobic discourse up to 2014, apart from the "Partido Nacional Renovador" (PNR) which had remained below 0.5% of the vote in general elections, as pointed by Carvalho and Duarte (2020, p.1482). Overall, the party-political characteristics, the format and timing in which it emerged, and its framing of immigration up to this point makes clear a need for the revaluation of the immigration debate of the political parties, as well as the assessment of politicisation on the 2015-2024 period.

4. Methodology

The methodology for the thesis focuses on primary sources, 23 selected electoral programmes from Portuguese political parties, to trace the immigration-related discourse at the political level in Portugal and its evolution. The dissertation uses qualitative and quantitative research methods through the employment of a content analysis of the elected documents. The relevant parties or political coalitions have officially published the programmes for each of the legislatures under analysis.

In line with Carvalho and Duarte (2020), the present thesis aims to assess the immigration issue politicisation in the Portuguese political sphere, although using distinct methods and objects of analysis, and focusing on the subsequent period of 2015 to 2024. The analysis aims to allow the assessment of the Portuguese immigration issue after Carvalho and Duarte (2020)'s study, which comprehended the period of 1995 to 2014, starting in 2015 (marked by the beginning of a new Legislature and political cycle) and ending with the 2024 Legislative Elections (to comprehend four elections-period). This allows for a more comprehensive and longitudinal study of the parties' behaviour, explicit that of Chega, which only emerged in 2019 and rapidly grew in representation in the following elections. The quantitative content analysis methodology here applied allows for an examination of the immigration discourse among both established political parties, here considered the parties which held parliamentary seats in the four selected legislatures, and Chega in the 2015-2024 period. For continuity and longitudinal purposes, the analysis excludes the parties falling out of the above, specifically CDS – Partido Popular (as it failed to elect seats for the XV Legislature), "Partido Ecologista "Os Verdes"" (PEV) (without parliamentary representation in the XV and XVI Legislatures), "Livre" (L), and "Iniciativa Liberal" (IL) (which were first elected into parliament for the XIV Legislature), as well as all the remaining parties which in the four election periods failed to reach parliamentary seats. Hence, the data was collected for the following parties: "Chega" (CH); "Partido Social Democrata"[2] (PSD); "Pessoas Animais Natureza" (PAN); "Partido Socialista" (PS); "Bloco de Esquerda" (BE); "Partido Comunista Português" (PCP)[3].

[2] in coalitions for the elections for the XII ("Portugal à Frente", with CDS-PP) and XVI Legislatures ("Aliança Democrática", with CDS-PP and and PPM ("Partido Popular Monárquico"))

[3] Although PCP ran for all elections as the CDU coalition with "Partido Ecologista "Os Verdes", PEV, the analysed programmes are from PCP, due to coalition-specific dynamics

To assess the evolution of each party regarding the immigration topic, the 2015-2024 period was chosen. As the thesis aims to check for any trends that may have appeared across the whole political spectrum, specifically if politicisation occurred, several dimensions will be explored through the content analysis of the 23 selected electoral programmes[4] from the four Legislative Elections in the period, in which voters elect 230 members of parliament into the "Assembleia da República" the national parliament, according to a proportional electoral system based on the d'Hondt method (Carvalho & Duarte, 2020, p.1483). Content analysis is an approach to the analysis of documents, seeking to quantify its content systematically and in a replicable way into predetermined categories, allowing for an objective (rules are specified in advance), systematic (consistence in rule application) and quantitative description of the manifest content of a document (Bryman, 2012, p. 289). These characteristics are fundamental for suppressing possible bias that may occur in a document analysis such as this one, focused on political programmes. This research method is especially useful since it allows for both the analysis of manifest (e.g. counting words) and latent content (e.g. allocating categories to portions of text), offering the possibility to systematically analyse all 23 electoral manifestos for the three core dimensions of salience, substance and stance. Therefore, it allows us to trace the path each party paved in the immigration issue over the past ten years, as well as to outline interparty trends.

Electoral programmes are documents composed and published specifically for an election, be it for local government, the President, or for Parliament/Legislature. They are composed of a set of main objectives supported by the party/candidate meant to gather support, and ultimately, votes for the political party or politician. Electoral programmes, here exclusively for legislative (parliamentary) elections, are the documents which capture the collective view of each party in specific moments of time, in this case, at the end of a Legislature, constitutionally a four-year period, although this can be shrunk due to a number of political actions, such as the resignation of the prime-minister, the lack of approval of the state budget, or the dissolution of the government, and the ultimate decision of the President. Electoral programmes, hence, allow for the assessment of the view of each party, as a collective, at moments of political changes, instead of focusing on politicians and parties' declaration in other contexts. The possible mismatch between these two contexts in which parties address the public was assessed by Dancygier and Margalit (2019), and a high degree of correlation was

[4] See Annexe A

found, suggesting that analysing electoral programmes provides a reasonable estimate of parties' discussion on the immigration topic (p.17).

A coding scheme, enforced via MAXQDA, was constructed with the salience, substance (categories), and stance (position) dimensions, and, to avoid liabilities during the coding and data collection process, a set of rules was defined regarding the keywords chosen to find and select all immigration related references in each programme, the setting and definition of categories to which text can be allocated to and the scale on which text is positioned. The coding scheme, further discussed below, allows for transparency and for a longitudinal analysis (Bryman, 2012, pp. 288-309).

To measure the salience of the immigration topic in each electoral programme, a set of keywords was preliminarily defined, considering the several ways in which the topic can be addressed, and tested for arbitrarily selected programmes, to identify redundancies and other relevant words that may have been missed. Arriving at the following keyword list, which accounts for word variation in gender and number: <imigrante>; <imigração>; <migrante>; <migração>; <migratório>; <refugiado>; <fronteira>; <estrangeiro>; <vistos>; <asilo>. Aware that some of the keywords may be found in contexts that aren't connected to immigration, all references were manually reviewed to exclude such cases and to check for any immigration topic sentences that would have fallen out of the keyword set. Hence, the keyword search enabled the selection of the parts of each programme that concern immigration, and that were subject to coding for the dimensions of substance and stance. The absolute salience is measured through the occurrences of key words by the total number of characters dedicated to the topic, while the quotient between the number of absolute salience and the total number of characters in the manifesto obtained the relative salience, based in Dancygier and Margalit (2019, p. 18) calculus of salience through the relation between words in sentences dealing with the topic, and the total number of words in each programme. For comparative purposes, relative salience will be primarily used, since it considers when a given manifesto is larger or smaller than the remaining set.

For the dimension of substance, which refers to the specific aspects chosen to be addressed within the topic (Dancygier & Margalit, 2019, p.6), can be analysed through dividing the immigration issue into categories, a list of categories was defined *a priori* from the data analysis, based on Dancygier and Margalit's (2019) available list of immigration categories, in logical, exhaustive groupings. After an initial categorisation and review of the coded references

for ambiguity and overlaps, the coding scheme was revised, through consultation of Berkhout and Sudulich (2011) codebook, to ensure consistency, arriving at the final list of six categories concerning the broad immigration issue, encompassing the possible subcategories within them, see Table 1. The categories are divided into two larger branches of “Immigration Policy” and “Integration Policy”, the prior deals with government activities related to the entry and exit of people into and from the country, visa policies, border controls and any activities related to irregular entry, the latter is connected with any economic, social or cultural aspects related with the integration of the immigrants already residing in the country, including the impacts of immigration in existing government programmes or the social contributions of the immigrant community. To these two branches, “Demography and Data” was added to account for the references that could not be categorised within the above categories.

Table 4.1 - Category Dimension: Branches, Categories and Subcategories

Branches	Categories	Subcategories
Immigration Policy	**1. Immigration Policy**	Immigration Policy
		Visa Policy
		Targeted Immigration
		Immigration Flows
		Illegal Immigration
		Asylum and Refugees
	2. National Security and Law and Order	Border Protection
		Deportation
		Law and Order
		National Security
		Illegal Immigration
Integration Policy	**3. Integration and Rights**	Citizenship
		Civil Rights and Liberties
		Equal Treatment
		Women and LGBTQIA+ Rights
		Housing
		Tolerance, Discrimination and Racism
		Voting Rights
		Welfare system
		Education
		Asylum and Refugees
	4. Economy	Jobs
		Wages
	5. Culture and Identity	Culture and Identity
		Language
		Religion
6. Demography and Data		Demography
		Overpopulation
		Foreign Policy

The stance dimension takes each text portion referring to immigration and attributes it to a position on a scale from negative to positive (Dancygier & Margalit, 2019, p. 14). The position attribution procedure is an original analysis which combines the methodologies put forward by van der Brug *et al.* (2015, p.39) and Dancygier & Margalit (2019, p.14), to which further specific rules were added, after testing the methodology in the thesis' data sample, arriving at the following coding scheme for the position dimension: to a portion of text the negative position is attributed when discourse accounting for immigration and immigrant integration-relation positions is regarded as blatantly "negative", or in terms such as restrictive, conservative, pro-national residents; the reference must focus on immigration's negative impact on a given issue or area, defend decreasing or stopping immigration, ask for the enactment of policies which counter immigrants, critique a stance or policy which is favourable to immigration or immigrants, or promote a monocultural society. In such cases, the text is awarded a (-1) value. Positive positions refer to texts in which immigration policy discourse is regarded as positive, expansive, progressive, cosmopolitan; the reference must be focused on immigration's positive impact on a given issue or area, defend increasing immigration, ask for the enactment of policies which favour immigrants, critique a stance or policy which is disadvantageous to immigration or immigrants, or promote a multicultural society. In such cases, the reference is awarded (+1) value. A neutral position, awarded with (0), is attributed to references which: have no indications of policy preferences or evaluations; state that a policy should be taken, while not specifying in which direction (restrictive or expansive); are descriptions of the state of affairs; or which balance negative with positive statements. Additionally, some references could not be classified into one of the three positions, when they refer to the organisation of state agencies or foreign policies aiming at concentrating on the root causes of immigration, and it is not possible to objectively assess whether such changes or policies would be beneficial or disadvantageous to immigrants and immigration at large.

An overall mean position was then calculated for each programme, ranging between the (-1) and (+1) values: on the negative number side, the closer the overall position is to (-1), the more negative the position is; for positive values, the closer the overall value is to (1), the more positive the overall position is.

Still regarding the position dimension, the degree of conflict between party positions was assessed. The thesis' analysis understands the degree of conflict as the difference between a party's overall mean position and the overall mean position for each election period, that is, the distance between each party's position and the average of the political spectrum for any

given year. This value can range between the 0.000 and 2.000 in absolute terms (as the position dimension values can vary between (-1) and (1)). Positive values indicate that the party's overall position can be considered more positive towards immigrants and immigration than the overall political spectrum. In contrast, negative values show when parties position themselves more negatively towards the issue than the average. Higher absolute values reveal larger differences in party positions and hence may indicate a trend toward divergence. The degree of conflict is considered relevant for politicisation when it surpasses 0.500 (in absolute terms), for minor values, the degree of conflict is considered modest.

The methodology for identifying politicisation is based on Carvalho and Duarte (2020, p.1470), according to which politicisation happens when an issue is both salient and polarised, however, the methodology is original as it uses salience and the degree of conflict between parties' position to identify politicisation: if the issue is both salient and presents an above 0.500 value degree of conflict between party positions, it is politicised. Hence, for periods in which the immigration topic is salient, higher degrees of conflict indicate politicisation. In contrast, in cases where positions have minimal differences, politicisation is absent or at a low level.

Regarding the advantageous for this methodology, the data collection allows for investigating each specific party and checking for changes in the salience, substance and stance dimensions, tracing the evolution of the party's approach to immigration between 2015 and 2024. The comparative analysis between the various parties' results follows the per party programme study, allowing to check for convergence or divergence patterns both within party families and across the whole political spectrum. A final evaluation will consider all the above-described findings to attest whether politicisation is occurring in Portuguese politics regarding immigration.

It is essential to assess the methodology's possible limitations. In this regard, the selected object of analysis, the set of 23 electoral programmes, represents only one part of the political process – the election period – and embodies a planned, written, and fixed-in-time discourse that each party chooses to put forward, in its attempts to reach seats in parliament. The usefulness of party programmes as indicators of a party's position can be divided into two questions: do parties follow through on what they present in each manifesto? Does the study of political programmes misleadingly emphasise the pre-election period, while misrepresenting other settings through which parties appeal to their voters? Regarding the first question, since the thesis focuses on how parties discuss immigration, rather than the policies that are later

enacted, the possible drawback is minor. Regarding the second, since the political programmes are the sole official documents put forward by each party as a collective, they are key sources for understanding the policy positions of different parties. Additionally, electoral programmes can be used as a point of reference to measure other forms of communication by parties or even diverging party factions. Additionally, after the data collection and analysis, it was possible to identify a liability on the position attribution method, regarding references classified as "neutral". As the methodology predicts to attribute the neutral classification for references which are descriptions of the state of affairs, programmes with a more descriptive and narrative text flow, focusing on presenting the overall context of the immigration issue in Portugal, saw a lower mean position, as it decreases as with an increase in the number of neutral references.

5. Data Analysis

5.1. Programmes' characterisation

For characterising each of the 23 studied electoral programmes[5], the sub-chapter will focus on each party separately, first briefly contextualising the party, following with a short overview of each programme, consisting of its relative and absolute salience, the relative salience the six categories within the immigration topic, and the overall mean position of the programme, with a summary of the references to which each position was attributed, as well as some examples. Finally, complementing the specific information from each programme, a analysis of the dimensions over time will take place, including the key points addressed by the party in each category, as well as most common cases for each position type, alongside a table for easier visualisation, and an analysis of the findings based on the literature.

Bloco de Esquerda (BE)

Bloco de Esquerda was created in 1999, as a leftist political party, defending social equality and focusing on disadvantaged citizens. It is considered a socialist democratic party, opposing to authoritarianism and capitalism (Silva & Lameiras, 2019). In the Legislative Elections of 1999, the party elected its first two seats in parliament and has remained a part of every legislature so far, having reached 19 seats in the XIII and XIV Legislatures (2015-2022), during the first of which the party, alongside PCP and PEV, supported PS in the government solution dubbed "geringonça". BE shrunk in votes and number of seats in parliament in the following legislative elections to five seats (XV and XVI Legislatures) and to one seat in 2025, for the ongoing XVII Legislature (Assembleia da República, n.d., SGMAI – Secretaria Geral, n.d.). The party considers as its most important causes those of labour, housing, climate, antiracism, dignified care, wealth taxation, equality and peace (Bloco de Esquerda, n.d.).

[5] The programmes will be analysed following parliament's seating order from left to right, starting with Bloco de Esquerda and ending with "Chega"

In the 2015 electoral programme, the overall salience of the immigration topic accounted for 2.74% of the programme (4,649 coded text units out of 169,953 total), see Table 2. The most prevalent category was "3. Integration and Rights", which covered 42.98%[6] of the coded segments. Categories "2. National Security and Law and Order" and "5. Culture and Identity" were not recorded. Out of the 32 recorded references to immigration, 24 were coded as positive, namely asking for enforcement of regularisation mechanisms, universal access to social services, and Portuguese language courses (e.g. Voting rights for all immigrants who have been in Portugal for more than three years[7] (BE, 2015, p.41)); eight were coded as neutral (0), consisting of contextualisation of the Portuguese immigration *status quo*, headings and population data and critiques of the *vistos gold*[8] policy and balancing (e.g. While focusing solely on *vistos gold* for the wealthiest individuals as a major immigration policy option, Portugal overlooks the thousands of immigrants who contribute daily (BE, 2015, p.41)), resulting in a 0,750 overall mean position[9], indicating a clear pro-immigrant stance.

The 2019 programme exhibits a 2.15% salience for the immigration topic (7,718 characters out of 358,208 total), a significant increase in document size from 2015. The "3. Integration and Rights" and "1. Immigration Policy" categories were the most important, with a salience of 39.03% and 38.34%, respectively. "2. National Security and Law and Order" was absent. The same overall mean position was recorded, at 0.750, with 30 positive references (e.g. Fighting discrimination against migrants (BE, 2019, p.110)) and 10 neutral, e.g. a new cycle for immigration policy (BE, 2019, p.5), with similar claims from 2015, once again indicating a pro-immigration stance from the party, and the attribution of the neutral positions is also equivalent to that shown on Bloco de Esquerda (2015).

In 2022, the overall salience of the immigration issue was 2.38% in BE's electoral programme (11,079 of 466,335 text units), showing another increase in programme size. The "3. Integration and Rights" category increased in dominance to 58.28% of the coded text. Once again, "2. National Security and Law and Order" was absent. The overall mean position dropped to 0.605, with 26 positive references, e.g. immigrants provide the State with much

[6] Category percentages may sum above 100%, as some references are multicoded

[7] All direct citations from party electoral programmes have been translated into Portuguese by the author

[8] *Vistos gold* was a policy designed to attract foreign investment through the granting of a residence permit for third-country citizens who made qualified investments in Portugal (Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, n.d.)

[9] Overall mean position can vary in the [(-1) - (+1)] range. With (-1) and (+1), the minimal and maximal points.

more than what they receive back (BE, 2022, p. 189), 18 neutral, including descriptive references to the labour market and Portuguese immigration policies, as well as those criticising the *vistos gold* policy (e.g. In Portugal, agricultural wage labour as followed a model based on low-skilled labour, mainly immigrants, often without formal contracts, with low pay (BE, 2022, p.84)), and one unattributed reference, which referred to the state's agencies organisation, making it impossible to objectively determine if it would be positive or negative for immigrants or immigration: monitoring and supervision of the APMA agency, which will perform administrative tasks relating to foreign nationals (BE, 2022, p. 191).

The relative salience of the immigration issue in 2024's BE electoral programme was 2.57% (11,829 coded units out of a total of 460,307). "3. Integration and Rights" was once again the leader category, with 60.79% of the coded text, and "2. National Security and Law and Order" was at last absent. The overall mean position fell again to 0.554, although no negative positions were attributed; the share of neutral references increased to 29 of 64, with the majority of these being *status quo* references and data charts (e.g. chart on natural, migratory and effective balance (BE, 2024, p.242)), and the positive references amounted to 36, focusing on incentives for hiring immigrant workers and anti-exploitation inspections to such companies, as well as to critiques to governments policies that negatively impact immigrants conditions (e.g. The failure to assign migrant patients a patient number and the lack of cultural mediators and interpreters [by the government] prevented them from gaining full access to healthcare (BE, 2024, p.41)), alongside similar claims to those presented in the previous programmes.

The collected data, see Table 5.1, shows immigration as a consistent issue for Bloco de Esquerda, with the topic's salience ranging between 2.15% and 2.74% in the period; the issue's framing is consistently linked with immigrants' integration, the "3. Integration and Rights" category led every manifesto, rising from 42.98% in 2015 to 60.79% in 2024, with a strong emphasis in access to services, equality and anti-discrimination policies, support to immigrants' associations and the recognition of foreign diplomas, and "2. National Security and Law and Order" was absent throughout. "5. Culture and Identity" emerged in 2019, stressing the contributions of immigrants to a more diverse and plural Portuguese society, the importance of language learning for integration, and called for more intercultural activities; the "4. Economy" category, the third most addressed, peaks at 28.97% in 2024, emphasizing immigrants' contribute to the Portuguese economy through social security contributions and fighting for immigrant worker's rights. "1. Immigration Policy" focused on the regularization of immigrants' situation, streamlining all related procedures, and reinforcing the welcoming

compromises to both refugees and immigrants, oscillated in salience, dropping significantly to 1.68%. in 2024, but maintained its place as the second most addressed category. BE's positions are overwhelmingly supportive of immigrants' rights, even with the decrease in overall mean position in 2022 and 2024, mostly due to the growing share of neutral statements in later programmes, which are primarily earned by the party's tone and language in manifestos, with large swaps of state of affairs descriptions and critiques of policies embraced by previous governments. This support for immigration and immigrants' integration is expected by a party which falls into the left political spectrum, according to Carvalho and Ruedin (2018, pp. 8-9), who's analysis suggest that a positive/expansive approach can be expected by mainstream left parties. The data analysed here can confirm BE's same liberal, expansive approach to immigration recorded by Carvalho and Duarte (2020, p.1480), who document certain political divergences from the positions and policies approved by parliament and enforced by government two times. The thesis does not record the parties' debates and positions while in parliament, hence, it is not possible to directly compare the behaviour recorded by Carvalho and Duarte (2020) with the one recorded in the electoral programmes, however, the intense focus on immigrants integration and rights together with the language used in all four programmes, marked by an emphasis on the multiple discriminations, risks and even threats faced by immigrants in Portugal, as well as harsh criticism of certain government policies, show the party's expansive and cosmopolitan approach to the immigration issue.

Table 5.1 - Bloco de Esquerda's dimensions by year and Evolution

BE	Year	2015	2019	2022	2024	Evolution
Salience	Relative Salience (%)	2.74%	2.15%	2.38%	2.57%	
	Absolute Salience (text units)	4,649 out of 169,953	7,718 out of 358,208	11,079 out of 466,345	11,829 out of 460,307	
Categories in order (salience)	3. Integration and Rights	42.98%	39.03%	58.28%	60.79%	
	1. Immigration and Policy	26.35%	38.34%	24.14%	16.82%	
	4. Economy	15.75%	9.86%	10.82%	28.97%	
	6. Demography and Data	14.95%	6.65%	6.04%	4.44%	
	5. Culture and Identity	0.00%	12.02%	5.43%	4.62%	
	2. National Security and Law and Order	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	
Position	Positive	24	30	26	36	
	Neutral	8	10	18	29	
	Negative	0	0	0	0	
	Not attributed	0	0	1	0	
	Overall mean	0.750	0.750	0.605	0.554	

Partido Comunista Português (PCP)

Partido Comunista Português is an historical political party and the oldest party still in activity in Portugal. Founded in 1921 during the First Republic, the party resisted the Estado Novo dictatorship in clandestinity and came to have a central role in the revolutionary process started in 1974 with the Carnation Revolution. The party classifies itself as a working class and labour party, aiming at building socialism and communism, a new society freed of exploitation, oppression, inequalities, and injustices, focusing its causes on those connected with the rights of the working class (PCP, 2013, p.9). PCP has been part of every legislature of democratic Portugal, starting with 40 seats in the I Legislature of 1976-1980, and slowly declining in number of seats to three seats in ongoing XVII Legislature (Assembleia da República, n.d., SGMAI – Secretaria Geral, n.d.).

PCP's 2015 electoral programme showed an overall salience of the immigration topic, which accounted for 0.64% of the programme (1.531 coded text units out of 238,284 total), as shown in Table 3. The most prevalent category was "3. Integration and Rights", which covered 40.30% of the coded segments. Out of the 14 recorded references to immigration, 11 were coded as positive, in cases involving calls for equality, social protection, anti-discrimination measures, access to services, combating worker exploitation, regularisation schemes and defending cultural diversity (e.g. Advocacy of a migration policy that respects human, social, labour and development rights (PCP, 2015, p.82)). Two were coded as neutral (section headings, e.g. Migrations (PCP, 2015, p.82)), and one was left unattributed, as it calls for international measures designed to fight the causes of mass migration: combat to the real causes of mass migration, namely the neocolonial policies in the African continent (PCP, 2015, p.82). This resulted in an overall mean position of 0.846, indicating that the programme can be read with a positive stance towards immigrants and immigration.

The relative salience of the immigration issue in 2019's PCP electoral programme was 1.06% (2608 coded units out of a total of 245,691). "3. Integration and Rights" was once again the leader category, with 54.33% of the coded text. The overall mean position fell to 0.652, with 15 positive references, calls for a human rights based immigration policy for the European Union, measures that ensure refugee with conditions to restructure their lives, and rejecting xenophobic attitudes towards immigrants and refugees (e.g. PCP rejects the deliberate mystification between immigrants and refugees, which aims to incite xenophobia (PCP, 2019, p. 99)); eight neutral stances (all descriptions of the *state of affairs*, e.g. the reality of discrimination in the workplace encompasses discrimination based on ethnicity and nationality (PCP, 2019, pp. 65-66)), and one reference in which it was not possible to attribute a position, since it referenced combating the causes of mass migrations. No negative positions were attributed.

For the 2022 Legislative Elections, PCP decided not to present a new electoral programme and instead published an electoral compromise, which, together with 2019's electoral programme, would serve as the 2022 party manifesto. Since PCP's electoral compromise did not address the immigration issue, the programme's characterisation for 2022 remains the same as the one presented for 2019, in terms of categories' importance and order, and attributed positions. The relative salience, although, needs to be adjusted to the new document size, decreasing to 0.87% (2608 coded units out of 298,123 total).

In 2024, the overall salience of the immigration issue was 1.34% in PCP's electoral programme (3,826 of 284,631 text units), establishing an increase in the immigration issue's salience. The "3. Integration and Rights" category increased in dominance to 59.30% of the coded text, and the "5. Culture and Identity" category was absent. The overall mean position increased back to 0.857, with 18 positive references with similar claims to those presented in the previous programmes, e.g. immigrant workers have an important role in the growth and sustainability of the Portuguese economy (PCP, 2024, p.78) and four neutral (descriptions of the state of affairs, e.g. there are still manifestations of racism and xenophobia [against immigrants] (PCP, 2024, p.78)).

PCP's programmes, see Table 5.2, show the immigration issue with only modest prevalence for the party, although with a steady increase in issue relevance (salience increased from 0.64% to 1.34%). The most prevalent branch was that of Integration Policy, with the "3. Integration and Rights" category, focused on equality, anti-discrimination policies and access to services, leading in every programme, followed by "4. Economy", fixated on dignified work, worker protections and fighting worker exploitation, which gained weight in 2019; "1. Immigration Policy" followed, focused on regularisation of immigrants and refugee reception, although with a significant drop in salience in 2024. "6. Demography and Data" had similar salience over the programmes, focusing on fighting mass migration causes, while "2. National Security and Law and Order", focused on criticising militaristic approaches to immigration policy, decreased over time, from 14.11% salience to 2.35%: finally, "5. Culture and Identity" was the least relevant category, calling for cultural diversity, being the only absent category in 2024. PCP's positions are overwhelmingly supportive of immigrants' rights and immigration, with no negative stances and neutral references in contextual mentions of the state of affairs. This recording of PCP goes in line with what was recorded by Carvalho and Duarte (2020, p.1480), who characterise the CDU coalition[10] approach to immigration as liberal, as well as supporting Carvalho & Ruedin point that left-wing ideology can be a predictor for expansive/positive positions taken by parties regarding immigration control and integration policy (2018, p.9).

[10] Carvalho and Duarte (2020) cover the political claims made by parties, hence their focus also lies in parliament activity, since PCP and PEV both held seats in all legislatures in the period covered by the article (Assembleia da República, n.d.), they refer to the CDU coalition, while the thesis refers to the PCP party's programmes and positions

Table 5.2 - Partido Comunista Português's Dimensions by year and Evolution

PCP	Year	2015	2019	2022	2024	Evolution
Salience	Relative Salience (%)	0.64%	1.06%	0.87%	1.34%	
	Absolute Salience (text units)	1,531 out of 239,815	2,608 out of 245,691	2,608 out of 298,123	3,826 out of 284,631	
Categories in order (salience)	3. Integration and Rights	40.30%	54.33%	47.53%	59.30%	
	4. Economy	13.00%	20.09%	17.58%	21.38%	
	1. Immigration Policy	16.33%	14.34%	12.55%	8.60%	
	6. Demography and Data	13.91%	11.85%	10.36%	8.36%	
	2. National Security and Law and Order	14.11%	6.40%	5.60%	2.35%	
	5. Culture and Identity	2.42%	1.30%	1.14%	0.00%	
Position	Positive	11	15	15	18	
	Neutral	2	8	8	3	
	Negative	0	0	0	0	
	Not attributed	1	1	1	0	
	Overall mean	0.846	0.652	0.652	0.857	

Partido Socialista (PS)

Partido Socialista was founded in 1973, still during the Portuguese Estado Novo dictatorship, in Germany. In its "Declaration of Principles", the party claimed for the defence of socialism in freedom, and after the events of the Carnation Revolution, the party was able to establish in Portugal. PS reached 107 seats in the I Legislature of 1976-1980 and has been part of every legislature as either the largest or the second largest political force in parliament, until the ongoing XVII Legislature, in which the party occupies the place as the third largest force (with two fewer seats than CH). The party has formed a total of eleven governments, and in the thesis focus period, starting in 2015, formed the XXI (2015-2019), XXII (2019-2022), and XXIII (2022 until April 2024) Governments, holding executive power for a total of nine years in this time (Governo da República Portuguesa, 2025a). The XXIII Government was formed after the party reached an absolute majority in the elections for the XV Legislature (Assembleia da

República, n.d., SGMAI – Secretaria Geral, n.d.). The party is in the centre-left with a social democracy ideology, its recent focuses have been on economic matters, such as economic growth, the regulation of public finances and the reduction of the public debt, the quality of public services, especially of health services, and of the Portugues democracy, while acknowledging fighting against inequalities and discrimination (PS, 2022, pp.3-6).

The relative salience of the immigration issue in PS's 2015 electoral programme was 0.94% (4,880 coded units of text out of 516,997 total), as seen in Table 4. The most salient category was "1. Immigration Policy" (34.24%), closely followed by "3. Integration and Rights" (32.89%). The "4. Economy" category was not mentioned. With a strong, favourable position towards the immigration issue, a 0.839 overall mean, the programme has 27 positive references, calling for the attraction of immigrants through legal channels, the promotion of their inclusion, intercultural learning, and adopting solidarity based policies in the welcoming of refugees into Portugal (e.g. create faster and more transparent mechanisms and procedures for issuing visas at Portuguese consulates around the world (PS, 2015, p.51)), three neutral instances, which balanced positive and negative views regarding border control, e.g. affirmation of a border control policy based on solidarity with efficient coordination and inspection mechanisms (PS, 2015, p.30), and one negative (framed "illegal" immigration as a danger to society and called for the Armed Forces in the combat against it (PS, 2014, p.30)).

In the 2019 PS electoral programme, the issue's salience peaked at 2.86% (13,650 out of 477,538). "1. Immigration Policy" maintained its place as the most referenced category, increasing its saliency to 46.40%, while "2. National Security and Law and Order" was absent. A sharp increase in neutral positions to 21 references, mainly descriptive portions, headings or non-specific commitments (e.g. The manifestations of the principle of jus soli in the nationality regime should also be further explored (PS, 2019, p.146)), led to a slight decrease in the overall mean to 0.744. One unattributed reference, concerning the Portuguese state's organisation (PS, 2019, p.145) was made, and 57 positive references endorsed the party as being the best equipped to ensure a balanced management of migratory flows, acknowledging the country's need for immigration to contribute to its development and, hence, to promote immigration, calling for the simplification of the regularisation mechanisms and, the promotion of equality, the ensuring of integration mechanisms as means immigrants to become citizens, while criticising perspectives that look to immigrants as suspects (e.g. It is a central objective to create formal immigration channels from origin countries into Portugal (PS, 2019, p.142)). Negative views were absent.

The 2022 electoral programme published by PS saw a slight decrease in overall immigration issue salience to a value of 2.47% (10,030 coded units out of a total of 406,218). The most salient category remained "1. Immigration Policy", increasing its salience to 59.02 and "2. National Security and Law and Order" stayed absent once again. The overall mean position increased to 0.813, having been recorded 26 positive references which promoted the streamlining of regularisation procedures and welcoming programmes to entrepreneurs, guaranteed access to public services, called for increased access to political participation in local elections, and for the establishment of a clear separation of policing and administrative functions in immigrants' authorisation and documentation services (e.g. guarantee immigrants' access to political participation in local elections (PS, 2022, p.75)) and six neutrals, a mix of headings, contextualisation and claims that lacked clear proposals (e.g. the demographic challenges have aggravated during the financial crisis, due to the negative net migration (PS, 2022, p.66)).

The lastly analysed programme of 2024 recorded another slight decrease in overall salience to 2.33% (8,451 coded units out of 362,789 total). With a substantial rise in salience to 61.97%, "3. Integration and Rights" was the most recorded category, and "2. National Security and Law and Order" was addressed for the first time. A total of 35 positive references were recorded, in subjects such as the promotion of professional stability and housing rights for immigrant workers, enforcing Portuguese language courses and other integration policies for immigrants, and also focusing on anti-discrimination measures (e.g. the support of foreign students is a priority (PS, 2024, p.68)), alongside four neutrals, a mix of contextualisation and advocating for non-specific measures (e.g. immigrants have a higher poverty risk (PS, 2024, p.112)), one negative reference, focused on fighting illegal immigration (PS, 2024, p.112), and one reference with no attributed position, since it regarded the state's organisation, without a clear understanding of the possible consequences for immigrants (PS, 2024, p.111).

Partido Socialista's programmes, see Table 5.3, show an increase in salience from 2015 to 2019 (from 0.94% to 2.86%), and a short decrease from then on. With a sharp expansion of "3. Integration and Rights" and a sudden drop for "Immigration Policy" in 2024, the two categories showed similar overall salience, with the former focusing on a responsible integration policy, mechanisms to fight discrimination and incentives to immigrants' associativism, and the latter on promoting regular migration, a new temporary visa for immigrants searching for work, and a mobility zone within CPLP countries, while balancing humanism, responsibility and efficiency in immigration policy, and calling for EU coordination.

“5. Culture and Identity” focused on Portuguese language learning and the promotion of interculturality, “2. National Security and Law and Order” emphasised Portugal’s role in EU border management and as a member of NATO in the fight against “illegal” immigration, “6. Demography and Data” situated the immigration issue in the Portuguese demographic situation, and “4. Economy” on labour-market integration measures, the economic contribution of immigration to the country, preventing employer entities’ abuse of immigrant workers, visa policies for immigrant searching for work, and reviewing investment visas. Support for immigration and immigrants remained steady and high, with an average above 0.810. However, two negative references were recorded, both portraying irregular immigration as “illegal” and asking for resources to fight it. The support shown by PS towards immigration in the 2015-2024 period meets the portrayal drawn by Carvalho and Duarte (2020), during which mass regularisation programmes were enforced by PS governments in 2001 and 2007 as well as an “overt liberal reform of the legislation on immigration control and immigrant integration” in 2005 (Carvalho and Duarte, 2020, p.1473) followed by the enactment of the 2006 national law, a multicultural approach that eased access to Portuguese nationality, showing a liberal approach to irregular migration, and leading the article to defend that PS, at the party level, shared a positive tone towards immigration in the 1995-2014 period (Carvalho & Duarte, 2020, pp.1473-1474; pp.1480). Once more the data seems to meet with Carvalho and Ruedin’s prediction of left-wing ideology as an important predictor of a positive/extensive position on immigration control and integration policy (Carvalho & Ruedin, 2018, p.9).

Table 5.3 - Partido Socialista's Dimensions by year and Evolution

PS	Year	2015	2019	2022	2024	Evolution
Salience	Relative Salience (%)	0.94%	2.86%	2.47%	2.33%	
	Absolute Salience (text units)	4,880 out of 516,997	13,650 out of 477,538	10,030 out of 406,218	8,451 out of 362,789	
Categories in order (salience)	3. Integration and Rights	32.89%	34.34%	32.43%	61.97%	
	1. Immigration Policy	34.24%	46.40%	59.02%	17.54%	
	5. Culture and Identity	13.36%	6.75%	7.38%	10.86%	
	6. Demography and Data	10.41%	10.33%	10.21%	16.90%	
	2. National Security and Law and Order	16.82%	0.00%	0.00%	5.11%	
	4. Economy	0.00%	5.27%	0.92%	12.70%	
Position	Positive	27	57	26	35	
	Neutral	3	21	6	4	
	Negative	1	0	0	1	
	Not attributed	0	1	0	1	
	Overall mean	0.839	0.744	0.813	0.850	

Pessoas-Animais-Natureza (PAN)

PAN was founded in 2009, originally as “Partido pelos Animais”. It ran for its first legislative elections in 2011, failing to reach a seat, and elected its first member of parliament in 2015 in the XIII Legislature. The party grew to four seats in the XIV Legislature; however, it fell back to one seat in the following XV, XVI, and XVII Legislatures (Assembleia da República, n.d., SGMAI – Secretaria Geral, n.d.). The party was founded with its attention in the defence of the rights of animals, and in the relationship between humans, animals, and nature, and as extended its focus to several other areas, such as humanitarian causes, having put forward electoral programmes with proposals on most areas of governing, such as education, equality and inclusion, justice, and democracy (PAN, n.d., PAN, 2019, pp. 3-5).

For the 2015 legislative elections, the first in which PAN secured a seat in parliament, the immigration issue was not on the party’s agenda, as presented in Table 5.

In the 2019 electoral programme, however, the topic's relative salience was 2.08% (with 7,622 coded units of text out of 366,372). The most salient category was "3. Integration and Rights", representing 61.74% of the coded text. The category "6. Demography and Data" was absent from this programme. With 39 positive stances, from enforcing policies for the integration of immigrants, namely LGBTIQA+ ones, claims on the positive impact of immigration in host countries' economy or the rejection of "nationalistic, xenophobic, racist, sexist, homophobic and transphobic" (PAN, 2019, p.55) vies in migration management (e.g. guarantee the true integration of LGBTI+ migrants and asylum seekers (PAN, 2019, pp.63-64)), six neutrals (all section headings), the overall mean position was 0.867, an explicit positive consideration of immigration and immigrants.

The 2022 electoral programme saw a slight increase in issue salience to 2.43% (9,587 out of 394,104 characters). "3. Integration and Rights" continued to be the most prevalent category, with a decrease in salience to 53.84%. The overall mean position increased to 0.929, with 52 positive references, such as criticising a lack of support from previous governments to immigrant's integration, ensuring equal treatment for everyone, including immigrants in an irregular situation, the need to value cultural representation as part of a larger measures to promote integration, or the criticism to government's inadequate integration policies (e.g. National figures reflect the limited altruistic policies of successive governments and the lack of support for integration (PAN, 2022, p.172)), four neutral instances (headings and brief contextualisations, e.g. Portugal is one of the EU states which receives fewer refugees (PAN, 2022, p.172)), and one unattributed reference, which pertained to sanctions against European Union states (PAN, 2022, p.174) and thus did not directly affect immigrants or immigration, demonstrating once more the clear positive framing of the immigration issue by PAN.

A slight decrease in salience was observed in 2024's electoral programme, to 2.12% (4,470 out of 210,876 coded units of text, a significant reduction in programme size). With an increase in salience, the "3. Integration and Rights" category maintained its prevalence (71.54%), while "2. National Security and Law and Order" was absent. The overall mean position increased once more to 0.962, the highest recorded value, with 25 positive references, such as claims to improve programmes for the development of foreign workers' skills, as well as training efforts for staff and managers of institutions who directly deal with immigrant's integration into the work force, counting to capacitate health services to detect exclusion situations, or the implementing of welcoming and support programmes for refugee students,

researchers and professors (PAN, 2024, p.165), and one neutral, which provided a brief contextualization of the refugee situation (PAN, 2024, p.163).

Although absent from the 2015 electoral programme, see Table 5.4, the immigration issue showed a consistent presence in PAN's programmes for the three subsequent legislative elections, resulting in an average salience of 2.21% for the 2019-2024 period. The Integration Policy branch was the clear dominant branch for the party, with "3. Integration and Rights" as the leader category, focusing on access to services, the need for widely accessible Portuguese language courses, the preparation of public-service staff to better deal with immigrants and an easier path to the recognition of diplomas for foreign students. "4. Economy" was the second largest category, mainly focusing on measures for the integration of immigrant workers into the labour market, combating exploitation and the positive impact of immigration in the Portuguese economy. "1. Immigration Policy" and "5. Culture and Identity" followed closely, with the former focusing on regularisation pathways, family reunification and reception capacity for asylum seekers, and the latter with the need for interpreters and translation services on public-service facilities and content, and on the importance of remembering and celebrating interculturality and migrations. "2. National Security and Law and Order" and "6. Demography and Data", while with diminished salience, focused on closing detention centres for migrants and ensuring oversight to ensure dignified conditions when arrest does happen, and demographic challenges faced by Portugal, respectively. PAN's overall mean positions, with the 2024 programme exhibiting the largest overall mean of all programmes, show an overwhelming and uncontested support for immigrants' rights and integration in Portugal.

Having reached national attention and its first seat in parliament only in 2015, PAN was not analysed by Carvalho and Duarte (2020). Adding to the recent existence of the party, the difficulty in classifying PAN in the left-right political spectrum makes it difficult to find references in the literature that help predicting the party's tone and approach towards immigration.

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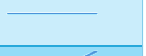
Table 5.4 - PAN's Dimensions by year and Evolution

PAN	Year	2015	2019	2022	2024	Evolution
Salience	Relative Salience (%)	0%	2.08%	2.43%	2.12%	
	Absolute Salience (text units)	0 out of 285883	7,622 out of 366,372	9,587 out of 394,104	4,470 out of 210,876	
Categories in order (salience)	3. Integration and Rights	0.00%	61.74%	53.84%	71.54%	
	4. Economy	0.00%	25.45%	12.98%	15.03%	
	1. Immigration Policy	0.00%	2.73%	14.71%	14.38%	
	5. Culture and Identity	0.00%	10.30%	10.06%	8.03%	
	2. National Security and Law and Order	0.00%	4.99%	4.70%	0.00%	
	6. Demography and Data	0.00%	0.00%	5.04%	4.27%	
Position	Positive	0	39	52	25	
	Neutral	0	6	4	1	
	Negative	0	0	0	0	
	Not attributed	0	0	1	1	
	Overall mean	No data	0.867	0.929	0.962	

Partido Social Democrata (PSD)

Partido Social Democrata was founded on May 6th, 1974, immediately after the Carnation Revolution, under the name Partido Popular Democrático (PPD), of social-democratic matrix (PSD, n.d.). The party claims as its fundamental values those of serving the citizens and their dignity, participatory democracy, pluralism, social justice, equality, and solidarity, strong and active civil society, and building a fair and lasting peace (PSD, 2025). The party was the second most represented force in the I Legislature, with 73 seats, and it has oscillated between the largest and second largest political force in parliament ever since. PSD formed thirteen governments and reached four absolute majorities in legislative elections, the last of which was in 1991. In our focus period, PSD formed XX (October to November 2015), XXIV (April 2024 to June 2025), and XXV (June 2025-ongoing) Constitutional Governments, hence, the party

has governed three times since 2015, although only amounting to a total time of under two years (Governo da República Portuguesa, 2025a, Governo da República Portuguesa, 2025b).

Recalling that PSD had been in government from 2011 to 2015, PSD's 2015 electoral programme should be understood as coming from the party in government, hence with the aim of a continuity agenda. PSD ran in the "Portugal à Frente" coalition with CDS, hence, the analysed electoral programmes is that put forward by the coalition and showed a relative salience of 0.81% (3,107 out of 383,927 units of text) for the immigration issue, see Table 6. The category "3. Integration and Rights" showed an overwhelming dominance within the topic, with a salience of 76.73%, while "2. National Security and Law and Order" and "6. Demography and Data" were absent from the programme. The programme's position dimension was characterised by 17 positive references, mainly integration measures, such as promoting active citizenship or supporting immigrant entrepreneurship and self-employment (e.g. create a development programme for the development of talent destined to young immigrant (PSD, 2015, p.139)). There were two neutral references, a heading and a brief contextualisation, and no negative references.

The 2019 programme marked an increase in immigration issue salience for PSD, to a relative salience of 2.30% (7,685 out of 334,643). "3. Integration Policy" maintained its place as the most addressed category, with a decrease in salience to 65.20%, and "2. National Security and Law and Order" remained absent. While dedicating larger attention to the topic, the programme recorded a decrease in the overall mean position to 0.606, with 20 positive references, such as promoting data retrieval on accessibility to health care, calling for practical knowledge of the reality faced by immigrants, increase higher education institution attraction to international students and the need to better equipped integration strategies, due to the contribute of immigrants to social security and the acknowledged inequalities and discrimination faced by immigrants (e.g. reinforce local integration strategies (PSD, 2019, p.103)), 13 neutral references, a mix of headings, and descriptions of the state of affairs (e.g. foreign nationality students continue to show lower success rates in school, comparing to Portuguese students (PSD, 2019, p.102)), and one reference without an attributed position, since it called for the development of immigrants' origin regions (PSD, 2019, pp.9-10).

In 2022, there was a slight increase in overall issue salience, to 2.50% (11,269 out of 450,098). Still taking the lead, "3. Integration and Rights" took up a 50.38% share of the issue's addressing. The overall mean positions practically stay unaffected, with a 0.607 value: 34

positive references, focused on poverty alleviation grants, stable and consistent immigration policies that respond to the human resources deficit faced by the country, and monitoring local integration programmes, while also developing cooperation agreements with the main immigrants sending countries (e.g. promoting immigrant associativism as a cohesion instrument (PSD, 2022, p.45)). There were 22 neutral references, a mix of data and short descriptions of the state of affairs, e.g. Portugal has been welcoming of thousands of immigrants and refugees, however this warm reception has not always matched to an equal openness to their integration (PSD, 2022, p.41), and six references to which it was not possible to attribute a position, due to them referring to changes in the state's own agencies.

The 2024 electoral programme (which was put forward by the AD coalition, encompassing PSD, CDS and PPM) showed a similar salience of 2.49% (9,487 out of 380,535). "1. Immigration Policy" nearly doubled in salience to 47.05%, being the most represented category, while "6. Demography and Data" was absent from the programme. The overall mean position increased slightly to 0.633, with 37 positive stances, advocating for a humanistic and protective approach to the working conditions of immigrant workers, an interpreter phone line that allows for an efficient interaction of public services with immigrants, and a proactive policy to attract family nuclei, stimulating a stable foundation for the integration of all immigrants (e.g. create an attraction, welcoming and integration programme promoting the regulated immigration of family units (PSD, 2024, p.58)). There were 22 neutral references, where stances referring to immigrants mixed positive and negative positions, and in brief descriptions (e.g. Adopt the principle that "we are a country with doors open to immigration, but not wide-open doors" (PSD, 2024, p.58)), and four unattributed positions, in cases dealing with the state's internal organisation, e.g. evaluate the consequences of extinguishing SEF (PSD, 2024, p.57).

PSD showed an increase in immigration issue salience from 2015 to 2024 (from 0.81% to 2.49%), indicating a steady compromise on addressing the issue, see Table 5.5, The Immigrants' Integration branch was the most prevalent, with the "3. Integration and Rights" category being by far the most addressed category, focusing on anti-discrimination measures, accessibility to services and safe work, and promoting local integration policies as well as immigrants' association. "1. Immigration Policy" was the second most addressed category, emphasising the importance of regulated immigration and cooperation agreements, notoriously within the CPLP area, and a policy marked by order and humanism, as well as the attraction of qualified immigrants, family units and international students, as well as a call for European coordination of the immigration and asylum situation. In this category, it is worth noting that a

shift in discourse was recorded in 2024: while still advocating for certain types of immigration, the programme identifies a need to invert previously followed immigration policy to ensure better control mechanisms for those crossing Portugal's borders. The "4. Economy" category focused on immigrants' integration into the labour market, the fight against clandestine work and workers' exploitation, and incentives for entrepreneurship, while "2. National Security and Law and Order" concentrated on control and management of borders, coordination between SEF and other armed forces: most references were regarded as descriptive or organisational. "5. Culture and Identity" emphasised the importance of Portuguese language learning, and associative participation, and "6. Demography and Data" focused on using data as a diagnosis for the Portuguese demographic situation while noting the positive impact of immigration on this. Regarding the measured position for each programme, the overall mean declined from a clear positive view of immigration in 2015 (0.895) to a more moderate position of 0.606 in 2019, and remained approximately steady in the two subsequent programmes (0.600 and 0.633, for 2022 and 2024, respectively), indicating a favourable position towards immigration and immigrants, which slightly decreased over time, with the increase in neutral and unattributed references from 2019 onwards.

Once again, the data from 2015-2024 shows continuity with the portrayal of PSD from 1995 to 2014 made by Carvalho and Duarte (2020): at the party level, PSD adopted a positive tone towards immigration, both through partial regularisation programmes in 2003 and 2004, enacted by the PSD – CDS-PP right-wing coalition, which allowed for the regularisation of residents with an irregular status. Despite this, both programmes lacked effectiveness due to extensive disagreements inside the coalition, and immigration ended up downgraded in the government's political agenda (Carvalho and Duarte, 2020, pp.1473-1483). Finally, Carvalho and Duarte (2020, p.1483) identify an inter-party consensus between PSD and PS on immigrant integration policies, which can be observed in the positive approach to the issue by both parties in 2015-2024.

Table 5.5 - Partido Social Democrata's Dimensions by year and Evolution

PSD	Year	2015	2019	2022	2024	Evolution
Salience	Relative Salience (%)	0.81%	2.30%	2.50%	2.49%	
	Absolute Salience (text units)	3,107 out of 383,927	7,685 out of 334,643	11,269 out of 450,098	9,487 out of 380,535	
Categories in order (salience)	3. Integration and Rights	76.73%	65.20%	50.38%	36.93%	
	1. Immigration Policy	77.60%	12.58%	24.47%	47.05%	
	4. Economy	73.70%	11.31%	7.71%	55.50%	
	2. National Security and Law and Order	0.00%	0.00%	10.13%	11.95%	
	5. Culture and Identity	8.14%	3.31%	3.05%	5.45%	
	6. Demography and Data	0.00%	7.60%	94.90%	0.00%	
Position	Positive	17	20	34	38	
	Neutral	2	13	22	22	
	Negative	0	0	0	0	
	Not attributed	0	1	6	3	
	Overall mean	0.895	0.606	0.607	0.633	

Chega (CH)

Chega, according to what was characterised earlier, was founded in 2019 and ran for its first legislative elections in 2019. CH has claimed itself to be a national, conservative, liberal and personalist party (Chega, n.d.), and has focused on six programmatic axes during the 2025 legislative elections campaign period: family, justice, immigration, constitution, economy, and education (Monteiro, 2025).

In the electoral programme for the 2019 Legislative Elections the party dedicated 4.78% of its programme to the immigration issue (with 7,526 coded units of text out of a total of 157,237), as seen in Table 7. The most addressed category was "2. National Security and Law and Order", with a 49.28% salience within the immigration topic. The overall mean position was overwhelmingly negative at -0.733, with 34 negative references, from associating immigration with crime, asking for restrictions to basic services access or the focus in illegality

(e.g. withdrawal of all “privileges” (salaries, social support, scholarships…) for “illegal” immigrants (CH, 2019, p.49)); 10 neutral instances, brief contextualisation of border control, demographic and labour needs (e.g. the new wave of immigrants into Portugal is already significant (CH, 2019, p.40)), and generic appeals to immigration policy; three unattributed references (e.g. ask for the revision of criminal offences and tougher penalties in the fight against illegal immigration mafias (CH, 2019, p.40)); and one positive, to detect immigrants being exploited or trafficked for prostitution (CH, 2019, p.41).

The 2022 electoral programme saw a high increase in immigration issue salience to 7.19%, the highest recorded salience for all parties (1,929 out of 26,833 characters), although this enhance salience can also be partially attributed to the extremely reduced size of the programme, constituted by eight pages. The addressed categories also experience significant differences in salience with “1. Immigration Policy” being the most addressed (65,99%) and “3. Integration and Rights” having disappeared. With five negative references, similar to those in 2019 while also criticising multicultural ambitions (e.g. CH refuses to take part in the demographic substitution of Portuguese by non-Portuguese, as a response to the drop in natality (CH, 2022, p.4)), four neutrals, descriptions of the demographic and labour needs and as well as the mix of positive and negative positions (e.g. CHEGA bases its immigration policy on common sense and respect for the social, economic, cultural and secular identity of the Portuguese people, as opposed to the harmful multicultural and globalist ambitions of socialists and other left-wing groups); two unattributed instances, e.g. CH will put forward a resolution project that will revert the extinction of SEF (CH, 2022, p.5); and the absence of positive references, the overall mean position rose slightly to the -0.555 value, indicating a somewhat less negative overall programme position, but still a clear restrictive approach to immigration.

For the 2024 legislative elections, Chega’s programme dedicated 2.91% to immigration (10,635 text units out of 364,944 total, a drastic increase in programme size). “1. Immigration Policy” remained the most addressed category inside the immigration issue, with a 35.70% in issue salience. With 29 negative references, once again, similar claims to those in the previous programmes (e.g. create the crime of illegal residency in Portuguese soil, ensuring that those found in such circumstances are impeded of returning to Portugal and legalising their situation for five years (CH, 2024, p.51)); 20 neutral instances, such as mixing positive with negative views (e.g. Seek a balance between the necessary workforce and our country's demand for labour (CH, 2024, p.51)); seven positive, from recognizing the importance of immigrants to the national economy to ensure Portuguese language, history and culture teaching, and the

accompaniment of immigrants to check for their conditions in the integration period (e.g. promote the integration of immigrants into our society, disseminating the Portuguese language and culture (CH, 2024, p.51)), and three unattributed references (e.g. revoke the restructuring of the border management system (CH, 2024, p.51)), the overall mean position for the programme remained negative, but with a more modest value of -0.393.

The three CH electoral programmes can be characterized by oscillation, see Table 5.6, with drastic changes in all three assessed dimensions. Salience: relative salience started at 4.78%, increased to 7.19% in 2022 and decreased to 2.91% in 2024, indicating different compromises with the immigration issue. Substance: categories' salience showed dire changes from programme to programme, e.g. "3. Integration and Rights" had a large salience in 2019, a 0% salience in 2022 and a considerable salience in 2024; Position: the overall clear negative mean position became less drastic over time. Negative attributions (68) dominated the programmes, followed by neutral references (34), while positive references were rare (8), and concentrated in a few categories.

Concerning the substance dimension, the "1. Immigration Policy" category showed a strong emphasis on "illegal" immigration, quota-based immigration (by country of origin – meaning countries that share language and culture with Portugal) was also addressed, alongside critiques of existing immigration policy. "2. National Security and Law and Order" focused on borders and security, addressing crime, terrorism and trafficking associated with "illegal" immigration, while making frequent references to SEF and other security and armed forces, with the common use of order and control language. "3. Integration and Rights" debated access and conditionality to social benefits and services, such as healthcare, social supports and housing, frequently calling for the tightening of eligibility or removing benefits from certain immigrants altogether ("illegal" immigrants and people residing in Portugal for less than five years); the category also addressed the nationality law, calling for higher restrictions and even nationality withdrawal; while occasionally mentioning the need for concrete integration strategies for people in vulnerable situations. In the "4. Economy" category, the risk of "cheap" labour and worker exploitation was addressed, while discussing tension and competition between local and immigrant workers: a discussion which highlighted the need for policies to address labour needs in the economy. "6. Demography and Data" exclusively focused on demographic data, both focusing on statistics of immigration flow and the population structure, and on a "demographic substitution" of the Portuguese population. The least addressed category, "5. Culture and Identity" emphasised the Portuguese identity, with cultural and

language preservation, and often perceived other cultures and religions as a threat: while advocating for the promotion of the Portuguese language and accessibility of public content in different languages, it spoke out against "fundamentalism" and defending traditions.

Position-wise, negative references were concentrated in the top three categories ("2. National Security and Law and Order"; "3. Integration and Rights" and "1. Immigration Policy", in order of higher number of negative references), while positive references were overall rare (eight in total) divided between "1. Immigration Policy", "5. Culture and Identity", "3. Integration and Rights", and "4. Economy". Neutral references were more salient in the "1. Immigration and Policy" category, also appearing in "6. Demography and Data" and "2. National Security and Law and Order". The overall mean positions show a clear negative position towards immigration and immigrants, although with the value coming closer to (0), hence representing a less drastic negative view, in 2024 (-0.733 in 2019, -0.555 in 2022, and -0.393 in 2024).

Being a new party as well as the first extreme-right party in parliament, there are no previous cases with which CH can be compared in Portugal, apart from PNR , an extreme-right with a xenophobic discourse according to Carvalho and Duarte (2020, p.1482), which has never elected representatives to parliament.

Table 5.6 – Chega's Dimensions by year and Evolution

CH	Year	2019	2022	2024	Evolution
Salience	Relative Salience (%)	4.78%	7.19%	2.91%	
	Absolute Salience (text units)	7526 out of 157,237	1929 out of 26,833	10,635 out of 364,944	
Categories in order (salience)	1. Immigration Policy	23.36%	65.99%	35.70%	
	2. National Security and Law and Order	49.28%	26.65%	26.83%	
	3. Integration and Rights	29.50%	0.00%	19.27%	
	4. Economy	11.00%	19.39%	36.30%	
	6. Demography and Data	16.60%	6.38%	12.41%	
	5. Culture and Identity	90.50%	0.00%	4.62%	
Position	Positive	1	0	7	
	Neutral	10	4	20	
	Negative	34	5	29	
	Not attributed	3	2	3	
	Overall mean	-0.733	-0.555	-0.393	

5.2. Overall Data: Political Parties and Over Time comparison

After thorough characterisation of each electoral programme, grouped by political party, this section presents the data comparatively over time.

For the over time comparison and analysis, is it important to remember the political situation at which each elections took place, ensuring that each programme is analysed having in mind the political situation that preceded each election. PSD was in government from 2011 to 2015 (XIX Constitutional Government), and briefly governed after the 2015 elections, until it was forced to resign and PS (the second most voted party in the elections) formed the XXI Constitutional Government from 2015 to 2019, thanks to the support of BE and CDU in the government solution *geringonça*. As the most voted party in 2019 legislative elections, PS formed the XXII Constitutional Government, however, after the parliament failed the state budget proposed by the PS government in October 2021, the President dissolved the national assembly and called for early parliamentary elections in January 2022, in which PS reached absolute majority, forming the XXIII Constitutional Government until 2024, after the Prime-Minister resignation in November 2023 and the President called for early elections for March 2024, in which the AD coalition and PS shared extremely close results, and ultimately AD formed the XXIV Constitutional Government.

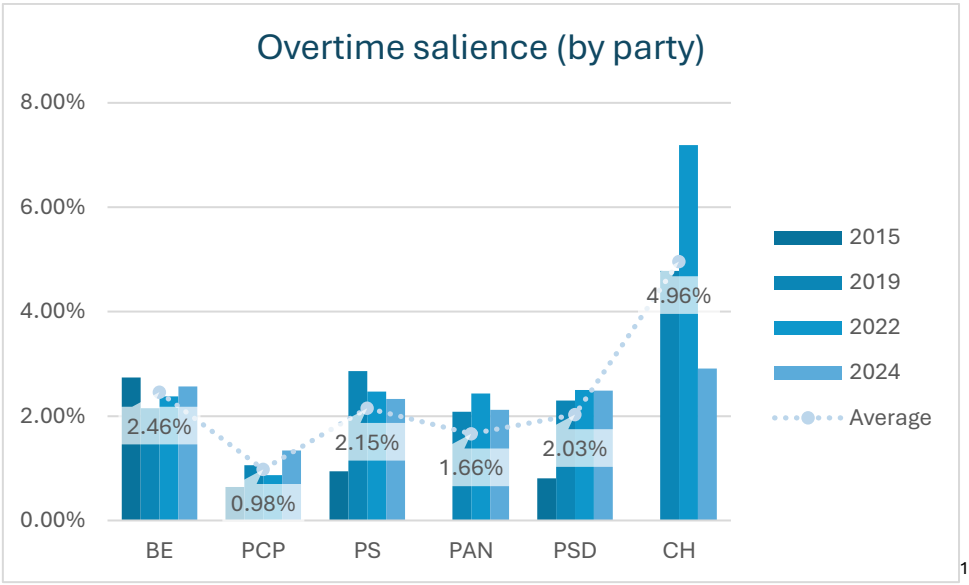
Finally, it is also crucial to recall a few moments at the European and Portuguese level, such as Eurozone sovereign debt crisis (which drastically affected Portugal), the European "refugee crisis" of 2015-2016, the shift in net migration in Portugal in 2017 (when immigration surpassed emigration) (Pordata, n.d.) and the peak in entries in 2023, when the foreign resident population passed over the one million mark (AIMA, 2024).

Table 5.7 and Figure 5.1 illustrate the issue salience over time by political party, including the yearly average. The lowest salience value was recorded in 2015, when all parties showed the lowest immigration-issue salience, apart from BE, which had its salience peak at 2.74%. Additionally, PAN's electoral programme did not address the issue, resulting in a 1.03% average issue salience for the year. In 2019, the average issue salience increased to 2.54%, with a high salience from both PS (2.86%) and CH (4.78%). The peak in average issue salience was recorded in 2022, at 2.97%, with above 2% salience for all parties except PCP (0.87%), and the largest recorded salience of 7.19% for CH. The average salience decreased slightly to 2.29% in

2024, with values within the 2-3% salience for all parties, except for PCP, showing a 1.34% salience, its highest value, although still below the 2% mark.

Table 5.7 - Issue Salience over time (with average)

Issue salience (%)	2015	2019	2022	2024	Average (party)
BE	2.74	2.15	2.38	2.57	2.46
PCP	0.64	1.06	0.87	1.34	0.98
PS	0.94	2.86	2.47	2.33	2.15
PAN	0.00	2.08	2.43	2.12	1.66
PSD	0.81	2.30	2.50	2.49	2.03
CH	The party had not been founded	4.78	7.19	2.91	4.96
Average (year)	1.03	2.54	2.97	2.29	



[11]

Figure 5.1 - Issue Salience over time (with average)

Regarding substance, the six categories were addressed differently by the parties in each programme, as shown in Table 5.8. Out of the 23 analysed programmes, only one did not address the immigration issue, PAN's electoral programme for the 2015 legislative elections, at a time when immigration was broadly away from the overall Portuguese political agenda. The following information regards the 22 coded programmes: "1. Immigration Policy" was the only category addressed by all programmes, "3. Integration and Rights" was addressed by every

[11] The chart omits data for both PAN and CH for 2015 for different reasons: PAN did not refer to the immigration issue in its 2015 political programme; CH had not been founded by 2015

programme except for CH in 2022, and "4. Economy" was only absent from PS's programme in 2015; "5. Culture and Identity" was lacking in BE 2015's manifesto, PCP's in 2024 and CH in 2022; "6. Demography" did not appear in the PAN 2019's programme, neither on PSD's 2015 nor 2024 programmes; "2. National Security and Law and Order" was the category which appeared in fewer programmes, being excluded from BE entirely; from PS in 2019 and 2022; from PAN in 2024; and PSD in 2015 and 2019. Although "3. Integration and Rights" was not the category featured in the most documents, it was the category with the highest frequency in codes, making up 41.87% of all codes, followed by "1. Immigration Policy" with 26.37%, together making up over two-thirds of all coded segments. "4. Economy" was the third most coded category (11.41%), followed by "2. National Security and Law and Order", "5. Culture and Identity", and "6. Demography and Data", with similar values (7.43%, 6.89%, and 6.03%, respectively). The Integration Policy branch was, hence, the most prominent.

Table 5.8 - Categories' Salience Overall (within Documents and Codes)

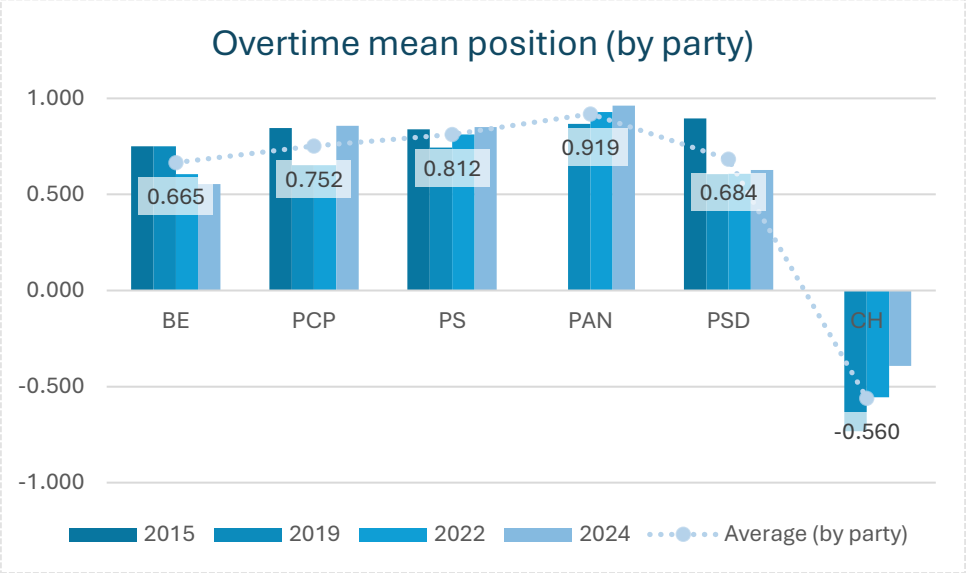
	Documents with Code		Segments with Code	
Categories	**Frequency**	**Valid percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
3. Integration and Rights	21	95.45%	389	**41.87%**
1. Immigration Policy	22	100.00%	245	26.37%
4. Economy	21	95.45%	106	11.41%
2. National Security and Law and Order	13	54.55%	69	7.43%
5. Culture and Identity	19	86.36%	64	6.89%
6. Demography and Data	19	86.36%	56	6.03%
Total	**23**	**100%** (of the documents with Code)	**929**	**100%**

Regarding the position dimension, expressed in Table 5.9 and Figure 5.2, 2015 saw the highest value at 0.833, indicating the point in time at which a more positive view towards immigrants and immigration was held, noteworthy is the absence of CH, which only appeared in 2019. 2015 saw the peak position value for BE (0.750 tied with 2019), PCP (0.846), and PSD (0.895). PS and PAN had their highest overall mean position in 2024, and hence their most supportive programmes regarding immigration and immigrants, with the respective values of

0.850 and 0.962, the highest recorded. Finally, CH showed its more radical position in 2019, with the highest negative value of -0.733, after which its negative position was slightly moderated to less negative values.

Table 5.9 - Overall mean position over time (with average)

Overall mean position	2015	2019	2022	2024	Average (by party)
BE	0.750	0.750	0.605	0.554	0.665
PCP	0.846	0.652	0.652	0.857	0.752
PS	0.839	0.744	0.813	0.850	0.812
PAN	The party did not address imigration	0.867	0.929	0.962	0.919
PSD	0.895	0.606	0.607	0.627	0.684
CH	The party had not been founded	-0.733	-0.555	-0.393	-0.560
Average (by year)	0.833	0.481	0.509	0.576	**0.567**



[12]

Figure 5.2 - Overall mean position over time (with average)

Table 5.10 shows the degree of conflict between parties' positions for each party and election period. Negative values (in light blue) indicate that the programme had a more negative view of immigration than the yearly mean position, and positive values (in darker shades) shows that the programme had a view of immigration more positive than the average for the year:

[12] The chart omits data for both PAN and CHEGA for 2015 for different reasons: PAN did not refer to the immigration issue in its 2015 political programme; CH had not been founded by 2015

values above 0.500 (in absolute terms) indicate a considerable degree of conflict on either direction. The average column enables us to grasp each party's average degree of conflict from the mean positions in the four programmes: to different degrees, all parties except CH share a position that is more positive towards immigration than the all-parties' average. On the positive position side, PAN is the party which positions itself more distantly from the average (+0.397 average distance), distantly followed by PS (+0.254), PCP (+0.194), PSD (+0.126), and BE (+1.07). CH (-1.082) bluntly disrupts the pattern set by the previous parties, presenting a clear negative view of immigration related issues, as well as a large detachment from the measured distance from mean position, and hence, the larger degree of conflict. CH is the only party that shows a relevant degree of conflict, largely over 0.500 for all three election cycles in which it partakes.

Table 5.10 – Degree of Conflict between Parties' Positions

Degree of Conflict	2015	2019	2022	2024	Average
BE	0.084	0.269	0.096	-0.022	0.107
PCP	0.180	0.171	0.143	0.281	0.194
PS	0.173	0.263	0.304	0.274	0.254
PAN	The party did not address imigration	0.386	0.420	0.386	0.397
PSD	0.229	0.125	0.098	0.051	0.126
CH	The party had not been founded	**-1.214**	**-1.064**	**-0.969**	-1.082

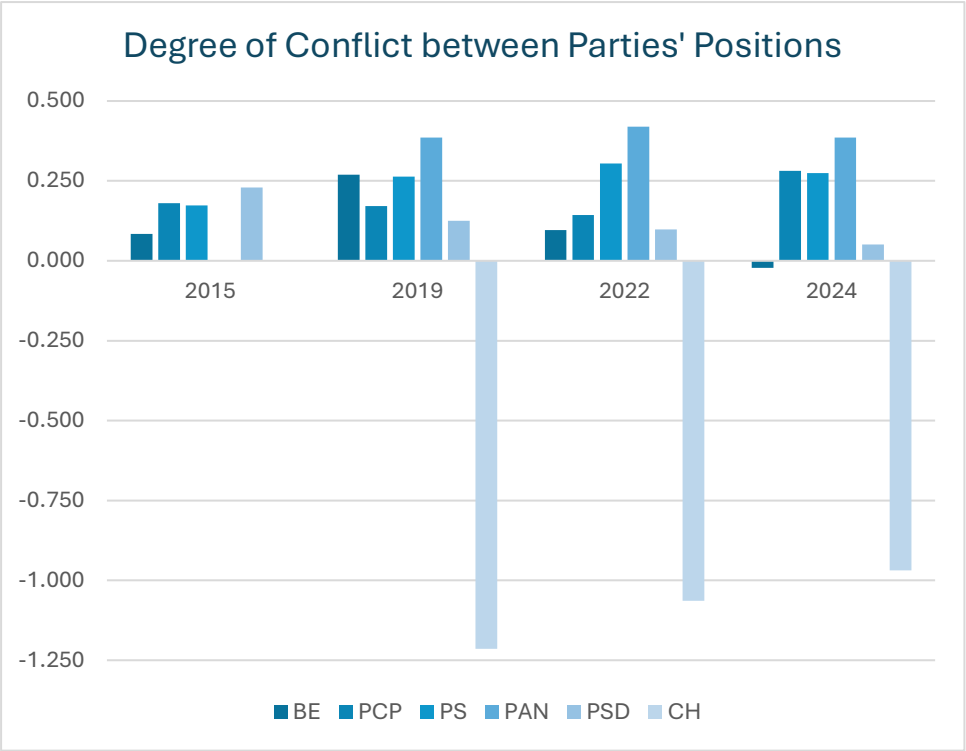


Figure 5.3 - Degree of Conflict between Parties' Positions

With the striking negative view of the immigration issue, and its distance from the mean position, the CH party can be clearly differentiated from the remaining analysed parties regarding immigration issue assessment. Hence, it can be helpful to analyse the position dimension-related data excluding the extreme-right party, to check for trends within the immigration supporting parties (Table 5.11). The corresponding average mean position for the four electoral programmes largely increases for all periods (+0.833 in 2015, +0.724 in 2019, +0.721 in 2022, and +0.770 in 2024). Therefore, the new degrees of conflict values also shift, dropping significantly: BE (from + 0.107 to -0.097); PCP (from +0.194 to -0.010); PS (from +0.254 to +0.050); PAN (from +0.397 to +0.181); and PSD (from +0.126 to -0.078). Not only does the magnitude order of the distance reduce (from decimals into centesimals, only PAN has an average difference of over 0.100), but each party's relationship changes with the mean position: BE goes from having a slightly more positive view of the topic than average, to having a slightly more negative one; the same goes for PCP and PSD; while PS and PAN remain with a positive average distance from the mean position (PS slightly, and PAN still significantly). This shows that the parties in question share similar positions (in overall mean), and do not demonstrate any large degrees of conflict, all over the 0.500 mark for relevance regarding politicisation. Hence, the convergence in parties' approach to immigration observed by

Carvalho and Duarte (2020, p.1480) for the parties continues to be observed until 2024, as the degree of conflict is minor.

Table 5.11 - Position dimension excluding CH

Degree of Conflict (excluding CH)	2015	2019	2022	2024	**Average**
BE	-0.083	0.026	-0.116	-0.216	-0.097
PCP	0.013	-0.072	-0.069	0.087	-0.010
PS	0.006	0.020	0.092	0.080	0.050
PAN	The party did not address immigration	0.143	0.208	0.192	**0.181**
PSD	0.062	-0.118	-0.114	-0.143	-0.078

5.3. Politicisation

As established earlier, issue-politicisation assessment requires consideration of both the salience and position dimensions: for immigration to be politicised, it needs to be both salient (in the political parties' spectrum) and a degree of conflict between parties' positions above 0.500 needs to be recorded.

Regarding salience in 2015, with an average value of 1.03%, the issue's absence from one of the parties' programmes (PAN) and the below 1% mark for all parties except for BE, indicates that the issue was not yet salient within the political parties' sphere. Hence, immigration cannot be considered politicised for the 2015 legislative elections period, which comes to show a continuity of the assessment that immigration was not an issue and lacked politicisation in the Portuguese political debates, as put forward by Carvalho and Duarte (2020, p.1484). From then on, the above 2% value for average salience, as well as for similar salience values for the recorded parties, apart from PCP, with below average salience for the four analysed periods, and CH with well above average salience for 2019 and 2022 (4.78% and 7.19% respectively), indicate that immigration was a relevant issue in the Portuguese political sphere, so the 2019, 2022 and 2024 elections cycles can be considered for politicisation assessment, through a closer analysis of the position dimension.

Considering the significant increase in overall issue salience in 2019 (by 1.51%, from 1.03% to 2.54%), alongside the sudden and significant drop in average position in the same year (by 0.352, from 0.833 to 0.481), and the high degree of conflict of CH against the overall

position (-1.214, the largest degree of conflict recorded), it can be argued that 2019 marks a shift in the addressing of the immigration issue by the parties composing the parliament, brought by Chega's burst into the political stance and its drastically negative approach to immigration. The remaining parties' degree of conflict is significantly lower, all under the 0.500 mark, and PAN showing the highest degree of conflict on the positive position side, with the still modest value of 0.386. The 2022 legislative elections showed a smaller difference in salience, which increased by only 0.43%, and in overall mean position, which grew by a mere 0.028 to 0.509 (out of 1.000). Alongside the high degree of conflict observed again in CH (-1.064), a still modest degree of conflict was recorded for the remaining parties, and PAN reached a 0.420 value, meaning it positions is substantially more positive towards immigration than the parties average, almost reaching a relevant degree of conflict. Finally, in 2024 the salience of immigration decreased by 0.68%, while the overall mean position rose slightly by 0.067 to 0.576 (with 1.000 representing the highest possible number). The degrees of conflict were still large for CH (-0.969) and remained below 0.500 for the remaining parties.

A rise in salience was recorded and maintained after 2019 and a high degree of conflict was recorded for CH in the three elections cycle, the remaining parties all presented conflict degrees below the 0.500 mark, indicating a divergence pattern for CH from the remaining parties. However, since CH remained the one party with a relevant degree of conflict, a single outlier is identified in the overall party convergence in a clearly positive approach to immigration, hence, it is not possible to argue that immigration has become politicised in Portugal until 2024.

5.4. Discussion: four types of explanations

On top of characterising parties' approach to the immigration issue, the thesis' last section explores four types of explanations proposed to understand the levels of politicisation of the immigration issue in Portugal between 2015 and 2024, according to Carvalho and Duarte (2020, p.1478-1484), which, backed by relevant literature can be helpful for discussing the findings.

Societal Developments:

This first set of explanations focuses on social, demographic and economic factors. Regarding the economy, the first half of the 2010 decade was marked by the financial crisis of 2010-2014,

a sovereign debt crisis in which the Portuguese state and population met dire financial distress and the presence of the *Troika,* which oversaw the financial bailout and the austerity measures imposed in Portugal and other countries during the larger Eurozone sovereign debt crisis, aiming at implementing structural reform and ensuring the fulfilment of the financial commitments made by the state. Shifting into the demographic dimension, between 2011 and 2016 the Portuguese net migration was negative[13], and only in 2017 was the net migration positive and on the rise (*PORDATA*, n.d.). Hence, by 2015, the large immigration inflow was an unpredictable demographic phenomenon. Looking at the societal level, although with few repercussions in Portugal, the refugee crisis of 2015 brought significant attention to the immigration debate in the European Union, which cannot be discarded when looking at immigration issue salience in the Portuguese context. Hence, the start of the analysis in 2015 represents a country who is finally exiting a large financial crisis, during which the immigration issue is less likely to be politicised, as its prevalence declines in the public debate (Carvalho & Duarte, 2020, p.1475). By 2019, our second point of analysis, the country had seen economic prosperity, during which the immigration topic is more likely to be politicised (van der Brug *et al.*, 2015), and a steady increase in foreign population.

The COVID-19 pandemic marked the 2020-2022 period, during which Portugal experienced a crisis period with financial impact in the state's finances and debt, alongside a plateauing of the arrival of foreign residents, although this was not reflected in a decrease in issue salience, contrary to what might be expected. In 2023 Portugal saw its foreign population increasing by over 33%, to over one million, alongside the entering of immigrants from India and Nepal in large numbers. Although immigrants coming from Lusophone countries still account for the largest portion of the foreign population, the increase in population minorities from the Indian subcontinent and meridional Asia presents a change in the portrait of the Portuguese foreign residents community in 2014 presented by Carvalho and Duarte (2020, p.1479), showing the importance of a future study of the impacts of cultural cleavages for immigration politicisation.

Actions of Specific Groups:

This set explores the relationship between the politicisation levels of immigration and the agency of the analysed political parties. Carvalho and Duarte (2020) record that political parties had a low profile with respect to immigration (p.1479-80) comparing to other collective actors

[13] Emigration flow surpassed immigration inflow

until 2014, despite a period in the 2000's during which the issue was close to attain moderate salience. Whereas our analysis does not research other actors, it does shows that immigration earned a relevant salience in the political parties' agenda in 2019, a trend that has been persisting until 2024 in their political programmes. Carvalho and Duarte (2020, p.1480-1482) divide the immigration topic into three frames: instrumental, universal principles, and collective identity; differently from the thesis division into categories. Despite this, the "5. Culture and Identity" category can be somewhat connected to the collective identity frame, which was marginally employed, until 2014, as cultural differences were rarely emphasised, this trend was maintained from 2015 onwards, as "5. Culture and Identity" was the second least employed category overall. Starting in 2019, xenophobic discourse has been inflated by CH, amplifying cultural differences in their immigration discourse. For the time being, this behaviour has not been accompanied by an increase in the emphasis on cultural cleavages at the remaining parties' discourse, however the influence of the extreme-right party in the mainstream parties and in issue politicisation may be relevant for future studies.

Policies:

The policies set of explanations focuses on immigration and immigrants' integration policies taken at the government and parliament level in decisions regarding government proposed changes in law. Carvalho and Duarte (2020, p.1483) identify an interparty consensus between PS and PSD, and, at the discourse level in political programmes, the thesis tracks a large consensus between all parties framing of immigration with a positive stance, except for CH and for the specific issue of the dismantling of the SEF agency, which was taken by a PS government and was criticised by PSD and CH throughout their programmes. This consensus, with the one exception, links with the overall lack of politicisation.

Political Opportunity Structure:

The final set of explanations looks at the structural factors which can enhance the politicisation of immigration as they influence the action of the parties focused on immigration and their success in the public sphere (Carvalho and Duarte, 2020, p.1483). The authors claim that the Portuguese electoral system alongside the fact that the country is unitary and centralised had not enhanced the electoral breakthrough of either pro- or anti-immigration parties, hence not enhancing the politicisation of immigration in the Portuguese context until 2014. Chega's breakthrough in 2019, with just 1.29% of the votes in the parliamentary elections, during which the immigration topic already showed large salience (4.78%, above any other party) and its

substantial grow into the third force in the parliament by 2024 comes to shift the pattern observed until 2014.

5.5. A look forward: Immigration in 2025

The 2025 elections for the XVII Legislature resulted in 88 seats for PSD, enabling the party to form government once again, 60 seats for CH, 58 seats for PS, three seats for PCP, and one seat for both BE and PAN. Without the full analysis of the electoral programmes put forward by the parties, it is not possible to quantify and characterize each party's assessment of the immigration topic. However, with the help of the electoral results, the coverage of the campaign by the media, and the latest policy discussions and enactment, it is possible to draw a general qualitative analysis on the issue.

According to RTP (2025), PAN and BE remained focused on enforcing immigrant's rights and promote their integration, as well as on ensuring the hiring of interpreters and cultural mediators, to ensure access to social services, PCP emphasized the importance of the regularisation of pendent processes from SEF and the simplification of regularisation procedures, alongside with the claim to fight discriminations against immigrants and promoting measures to secure their integration. PS also claimed for streamlining legalization and visa requests, and added focus to the labour dimension of immigration, as it called for allowing employers seeking to hire foreign workers to be able to work with AIMA directly, to ensure that immigrants with job-seeking visas are assisted by the IEFP quickly and to create a channel for the integration of immigrants into the job market. PSD (within the AD coalition) asked for the revision of the Nationality Law, for a Borders and Foreigners Unit in the police, for the attraction of qualified immigration and for the reinforcement of integration measures. CH focused on the deportation of foreign citizens committing crimes in Portugal, the revocation of the mobility agreements with CPLP countries, the reformulation of AIMA to include a police force, the establishment of quotas for immigrants, based on professional specialisation, and the increase in penalties for crimes of aiding illegal immigration.

Regarding party focus on immigration, which points to the degree of salience, immigration seems to have taken an unprecedented amount of time and focus during the political campaigns for the 2025 legislative elections. Immigration was one of the four main topics discussed by the party leaders in the major television debate (Rodrigues et al., 2025), and

the most explored topic in disinformation campaigns prior to the legislative elections (Lusa & Baltarejo, 2025). The same article argues that the immigration topic was central in Chega's campaign, surpassing the corruption theme, central in previous campaigns. CH is recorded to have dedicated a large part of its programme to immigration, specifically in limiting the entry of immigrants into the country (Carvalho, 2025), PS is seen as having gotten closer to the AD government's view on immigration, with an increased focus on documentation (Borges, 2025). After the elections and the formation of the new government by AD, immigration has had a high focus for both the executive and in parliament. The government has made efforts for changing the Nationality and Foreigners Laws, and the Council of Ministers has approved four diplomas relating to citizenship, foreigners, the settlement of a unit of foreigners and borders, and residence permits, in efforts to strengthening the requirement for effective ties to the national community and for tightening of requirements and restrictions for obtaining permits to reside in Portugal (Branco, 2025). Some of these changes are predicted by CGTP (one trade union confederation) to weaken immigrant workers conditions and rights (Lusa, 2025).

Conclusion

This dissertation aimed to understand and characterise the immigration issue in the Portuguese political sphere in the period between 2015 and 2024. To do so, a content analysis of 23 electoral programmes (BE, PCP, PS, PAN, PSD, CH) for the legislative elections of 2015, 2019, 2022 and 2024 took place, looking at the political parties. The analysis, focused on the salience, substance, and stance dimensions of the immigration issue, characterised how each party addressed the issue over time, traced system-wide change, and assessed politicisation.

RQ1: Has the immigration topic become more salient? Yes, it is possible to trace a large increase in issue salience from 2015 to 2019, complemented with a slight increase in 2022, and a minor decrease in 2024 (1.03% > 2.54% > 2.97% > 2.29%). While it is not possible to directly compare this finding with the previous period of 1995-2014 in Portugal, due to the differences in sources with Carvalho and Duarte (2020), we can resource to Dancygier and Margalit (2019, pp.17-19) record that until the first half of the 2010 decade, immigration salience in manifestos peaked at 4.6% in the 2000's (for their set of European countries), a high figure, according to the comparison of other relevant issues salience. Hence, the above 2% salience mark recorded here from 2019 onwards, can see immigration as a relevant issue in the electoral programmes.

RQ2: What immigration categories do parties place more emphasis on? The thesis identified which categories parties emphasised. "3. Integration and Rights" was by far the most addressed (41.87% of all coded references), for all parties except CH. The more specific categories of "5. Culture and Identity", "6. Demography and Data", and "2. National Security and Law and Order", were addressed more selectively, with the latter being the category omitted from a greater number of programmes. Grouping each category to its larger branch, according to Table 1, it can be argued that between 2015 and 2024, parties' approach to immigration was significantly more focused on the Integration Policy branch (60.17% of coded segments were categorised as belonging to one of the categories included in this branch), compared with the Immigration Policy branch (which covered 33.80% of coded references). Therefore, we can argue that in the 2015-2024 period, parties attributed more importance to the integration of immigrants already residing in Portugal, than they did to controlling immigration flow. Carvalho and Duarte (2020) divides claims in two categories, immigration policy and immigrant's integration, hence it is not possible to provide a comparison in categories' salience between the two periods.

RQ3: Have the parties' positions on immigration changed over time? It was not possible to trace a cross-party and year pattern as clear as for the previous dimensions. Although parties oscillated in position differently over time, none fundamentally changed its approach. Hence, to different degrees, all parties kept their positions: BE, PCP, PS, PAN, and PSD, maintained a broadly pro-immigration stance; and CH a consistently anti-immigration stance. Hence, a convergence in parties' favourable approach to immigration and immigrant integration is observed across the political spectrum, apart from CH. This mirrors Carvalho and Duarte (2020, p.1480) interparty consensus pattern with a single outlier: CDS-PP in 1994-2014 and CH from 2019 onward.

RQ4: Can a degree of conflict be observed between parties' positions? Yes, from 2019 onward, a significant degree of conflict is observed between CH sharp negative positions and the wider political spectrum's positive account of immigration. Despite that BE, PCP, PS, PAN and PSD all share positive views of immigration, the remaining parties exhibit low conflict, reflecting small positional differences and stylistic variation (more contextualisation yields more neutral coding).

RQ5: Has the immigration issue become politicised? The low salience of immigration in the 2015 electoral programmes makes it possible to claim that immigration was not politicised at the time. The subsequent years of 2019, 2022, and 2024, with consistent issue salience, allow the claim that immigration became an issue in the Portuguese political debate, in contrast with Carvalho and Duarte (2020, p.1484) observed in the previous period. However, with a low degree of conflict between parties, except for CH, we do not find that immigration has become politicised in Portugal until 2024, confirming the trend traced by Carvalho and Duarte (2020).

Granting all this, the entry of the party CH into the political scene and into parliament in 2019 marked the opening of a clear anti-immigrant position in the larger political debate, which so far seems to have not affect the wider political spectrum. Regarding 2025, the short qualitative analysis traces some changes in PSD's discourse and management of immigration while in government, which together with the rise of CH to second most powerful party in parliament and its recurrent negative tone and approach to the immigration issue may lead to a disruption in the convergence patterns seen so far in the Portuguese political scene, marked largely by interparty consensus from 1995 to 2014 (Caravalho and Duarte, 2020) and until 2024, as argued here. Admitting that such claims cannot currently be made, a comprehensive study

for a greater period in the future, encompassing the 2025 election cycle and the work of the XXIV and XXV Constitutional Governments, may be able to check if a new divergent pattern between parties' immigration approach may be beginning in Portugal and if politicisation is on the horizon. Although the literature regarding the impact of extreme-right and anti-immigration parties at the European level claim that these parties' play only a subordinate role in the politicisation of immigration (Meyer & Rosenberger, 2015, p.13) and, hence have a limited and weakly correlated impact with any changes in mainstream parties approach to immigration (Dancygier & Margalit, 2019, p.33).

At last, the presented findings may contribute to future studies on the relationship between parties' electoral claims and subsequent policy enactment in parliament and government, allowing to trace the relationship between party claims and discourse during elections cycles, and their behaviour in parliament and in government.

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Appendix

Electoral Programme's List

The following table shows all the electoral programmes used in the thesis, encompassing the party to which they belong, the year of the legislative election they refer to, the title, and the link to the document, as available online.

Party	Year	Title	Document's Link
BE (Bloco de Esquerda)	2015	"Manifesto Eleitoral | Bloco de Esquerda | Legislativas 2015	https://www.bloco.org/sites/default/files/media/manifestolegislativas2015.pdf
	2019	"Programa Eleitoral 2019-2023 |Bloco de Esquerda faz Acontecer"	https://programa2019.bloco.org/images/programa-sem-fotos.pdf
	2022	"Saúde, Salário, Clima | Programa eleitoral 2022-2026 | Razões fortes, compromissos claros."	https://programa2022.bloco.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Programa-a-cores-otimizado-para-telemo%CC%81veis-e-tablets.pdf
	2024	"Fazer o que nunca foi feito | Programa eleitoral do Bloco de Esquerda | Legislativas 2024"	https://www.bloco.org/media/PROGRAMA_BLOCO_2024.pdf
PCP (Partido Comunista Português)	2015	"Programaa Eleitoral do PCP | Legislativas 2015 | Política Patriótica e de Esquerda - soluções para um Portugal com futuro"	https://www.pcp.pt/sites/default/files/documentos/programa_eleitoral_pcp_legislativas_2015.pdf
	2019	"Política patriótica e de esquerda | Soluções para um Portugal com futuro"	https://www.pcp.pt/sites/default/files/documentos/2019_programa_eleitoral_pcp.pdf
	2022	"Compromisso Eleitoral | Com o PCP soluções para Portugal"	https://www.pcp.pt/sites/default/files/documentos/2022_compromisso_eleitoral_pcp.pdf
	2024	"Programa Eleitoral do PCP | Política patriótica e de esquerda - Soluções para um Portugal com futuro"	https://www.pcp.pt/sites/default/files/documentos/2024_programa_eleitoral_pcp.pdf
PS (Partido Socialista)	2015	"Programa Eleitoral do Partido Socialista - Eleições 2022 - Alternativa de Confiança"	https://ps.pt/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2015.4.out_Programa.Eleitoral.do_.Partido.Socialista_Eleicoes.Legislativas.2015_Alternativa.de_.Confianca.pdf
	2019	"Programa Eleitoral do Partido Socialista - Eleições 2022 - Fazer ainda Mais e Melhor"	https://ps.pt/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2019.Programa-Eleitoral-PS-2019.-Fazer-ainda-mais-e-melhor.pdf
	2022	"Programa Eleitoral do Partido Socialista - Eleições 2022 - Juntos Seguimos e Conseguimos"	https://ps.pt/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Programa-Eleitoral-PS2022_v5_6Jan_pagsoltas.pdf
	2024	"Programa Eleitoral do Partido Socialista - Eleições 2024 - Portugal Inteiro"	https://ps.pt/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/PS-Portugal_Inteiro_2024-6.pdf
PAN (Pessoas, Animais, Natureza)	2015	"PAN Pessoas-Animais-Natureza | Eleições Legislativas 2015 | Programa Eleitoral"	https://www.er.cies.iscte-iul.pt/sites/default/dfiles/PT_2015_PAN.pdf
	2019	"Da Indiferença à Emergência | Ainda Vamos a Tempo | Programa Eleitoral do PAN Legislativas 2019"	https://pan.com.pt/files/uploads/2019/09/ProgramaPAN_Impressao_Legislastivas2019.pdf
	2022	"Programa Eleitoral | Legislativas 2022 | Agir Já!"	https://pan.com.pt/files/uploads/2022/01/PROGRAMA-PAN-2022-2.pdf
	2024	"Avançamos pelas Causas | Agenda 24-28 | Compromisso com as Pessoas, os Animais e a Natureza | Legislativas 2024"	https://2024.pan.com.pt/program
PSD (Partido Social Democrata)	2015	"Agora Portugal Pode Mais | Programa Eleitoral | Coligação Portugal à Frente"	https://www.psd.pt/sites/default/files/2020-09/programa-eleitoral-2015.pdf
	2019	"Programa Eleitoral | Primeiro Portugal	https://www.psd.pt/sites/default/files/2020-09/Programa-Eleitoral-2019.pdf
	2022	"Programa Eleitoral PSD | Legislativas 2022"	https://www.psd.pt/sites/default/files/2022-03/Programa%20Eleitoral%202022.pdf
	2024	"Mudança Segura | Programa Eleitoral AD 2024"	https://www.psd.pt/sites/default/files/2024-04/Programa%20Eleitoral%20AD%20Legislativas%202024%20VF_0.pdf
CH (CHEGA)	2019	"Programa Político | Chega 2019"	https://raquelcardeiravarela.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/programa_polc38dtico_2019_chega-2.pdf
	2022	"Programa Eleitoral | Legislativas 2022"	https://partidochega.pt/index.php/2021/12/23/programa-eleitoral-legislativas-2022/
	2024	"Programa Eleitoral | Limpar Portugal"	https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:EU:137d87f0-7541-44de-8be3-818c14d1811f?viewer%21megaVerb=group-discover