

PULSAR*



The Global Narratives &
Audiences of Foreign Aid

It's more urgent than ever to understand how audiences think about foreign aid

As we enter one of the biggest years for elections in this century, as the global media environment continues to be extremely politicized & plagued by misinfo, and as conflicts play out across the globe, foreign aid – particularly military foreign aid – has become an important topic of discussion.

Against the backdrop, the topic itself has become a political football domestically. A growing move towards isolationism amongst many political communities combines with real or perceived economic weakness to leave many audiences opposed to the entire concept.

Consequently, comms, PR and insights professionals have much to navigate when they look to either understand the landscape or project their own messaging.

Using Pulsar TRAC, we investigated the English language conversation taking place online, to shed some light on the different perspectives offered by audiences online, in a bid to understand both the different audiences involved, and the narratives that evolve over time.

Approach

Data Collection Period:

Nov 1st 2022 – Oct 31st 2023

Channels:

ⓧ X

Markets/Languages:

Global data collection.

Analysis collects all mentions in English language

Sources:

Pulsar TRAC

Audiense (Audience Intelligence data from X)

Key Takeaways

“

Conflict & its relation to foreign aid, is the primary driver of conversation in Foreign Aid with interest in other narratives intrinsically linked to it.

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Due to the political element of the conversation, the audiences are partisan between traditionally left & right groups distinguished internally by their geography.

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The degree of overlap shows that left-wing audiences are consistently engaging in the conversation throughout the year, whilst more right communities have new people entering the discussion and others dropping off as the year progresses.

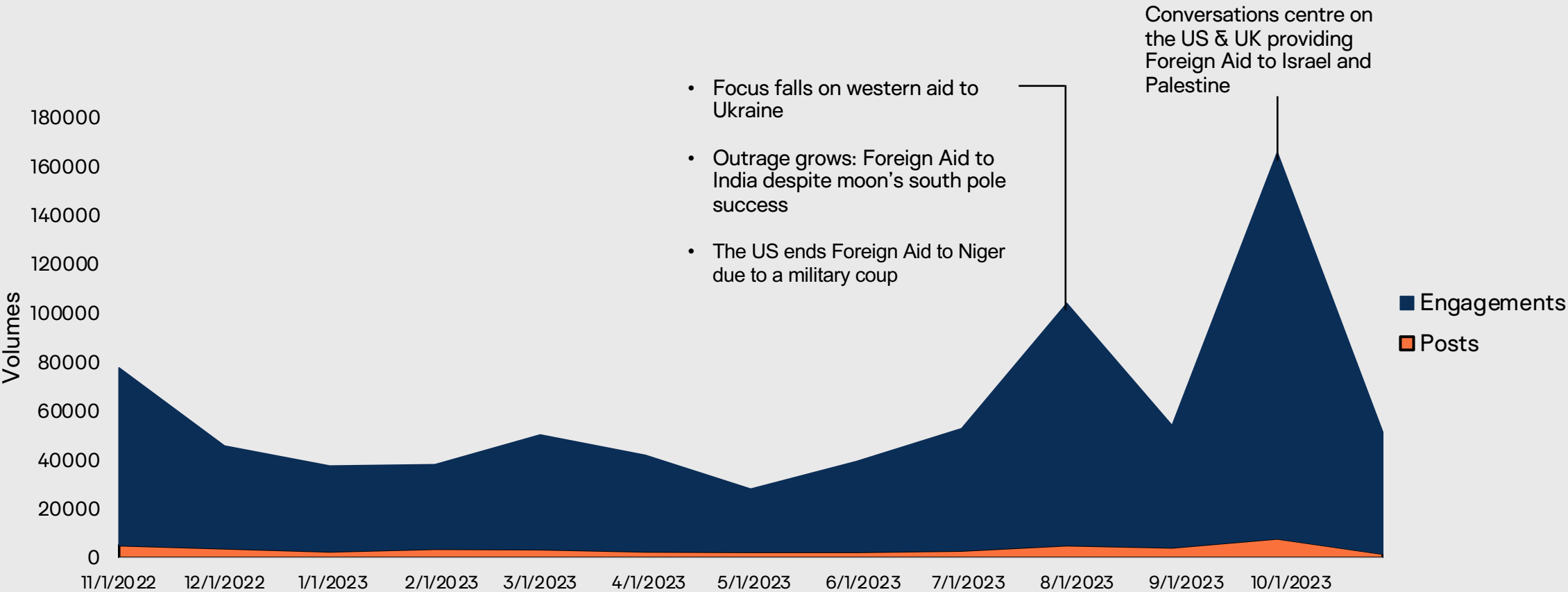
“

High engagements, engagement rates & volumes would suggest right-wing Groups exert the most influence on the conversation & its narratives, however the analysis would suggest these groups are isolated in the wider online graph & actually left-wing audiences are far more effective at shaping public opinion.

Breaking down the conversation on Foreign Aid

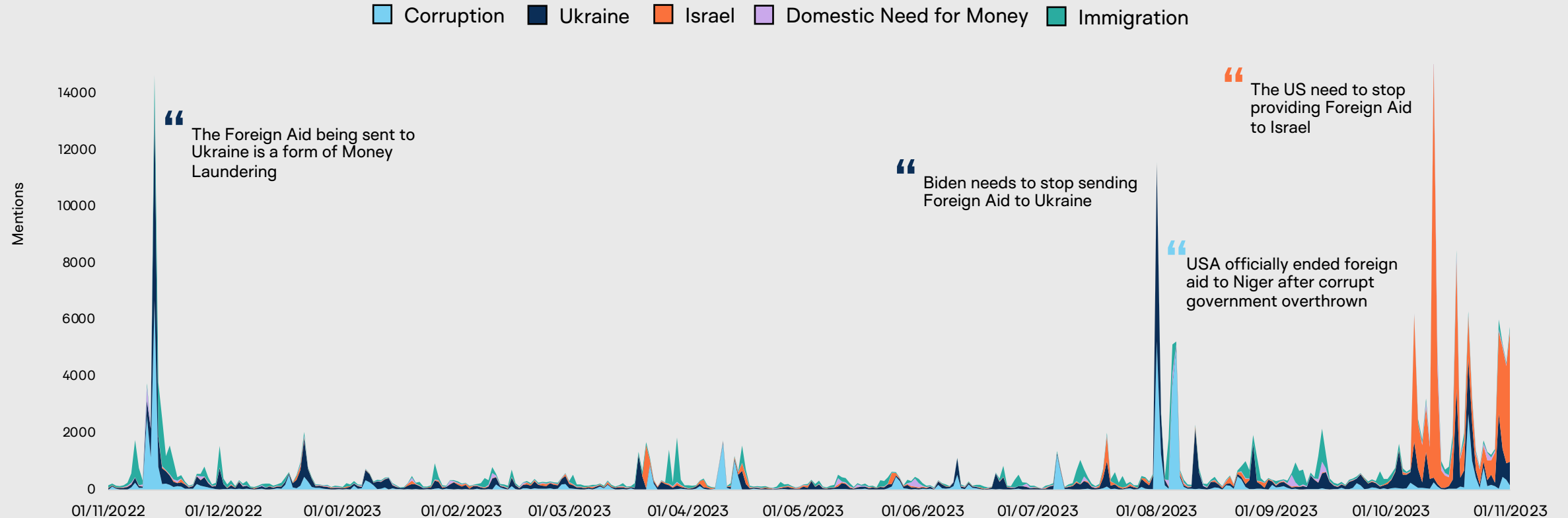
The mounting online engagement in Foreign Aid initiatives

Conflict around the world proves a flashpoint



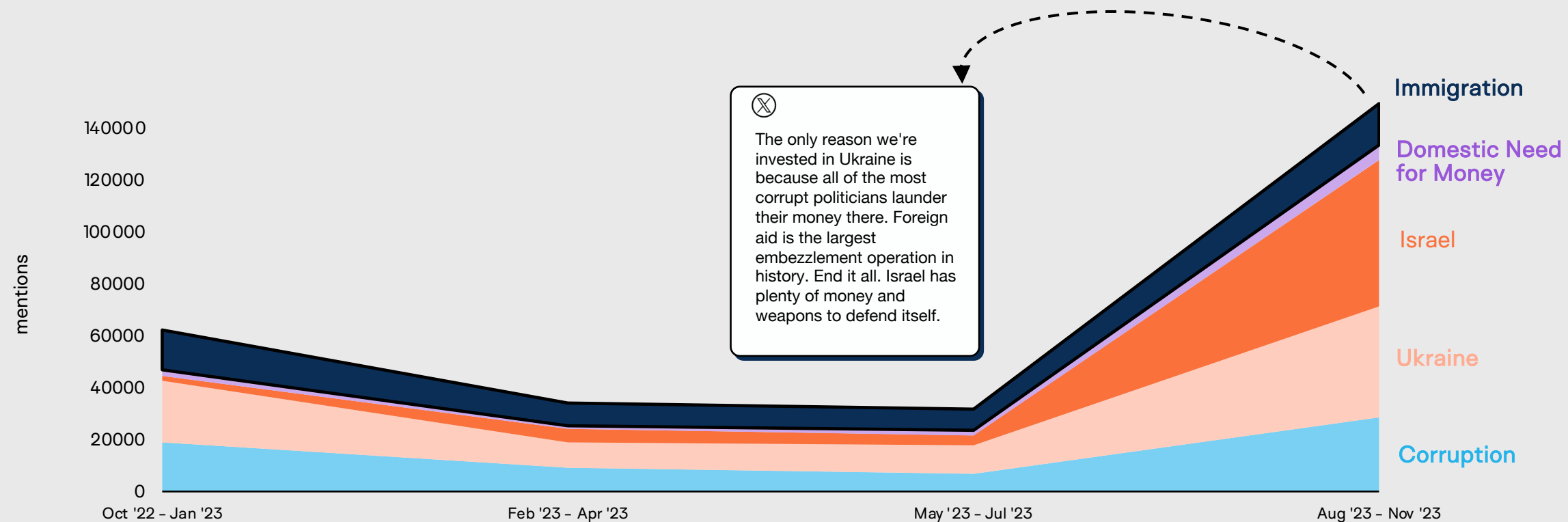
Who receives aid – and who decides – dominates discussion

From Ukraine to Israel, the ongoing discourse stays centered on the recurring motif of providing foreign aid to nations amidst conflicts



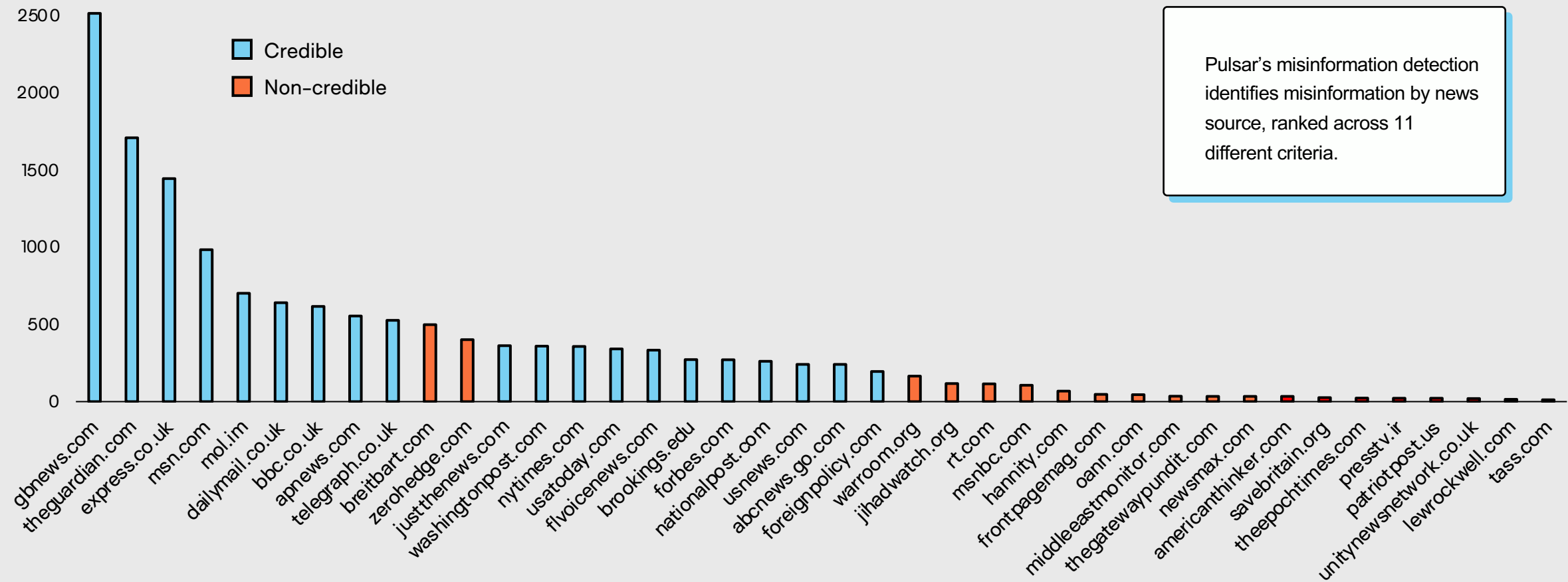
Corruption discussion underpins discourse around foreign aid

Corruption provides a unifying theme in conversation, with a cabal of wealthy elites blamed for a global misallocation of funds



Which news sources inform conversations online?

Analysis of the most cited news sources reveals a noisy minority of publications labelled at risk of misinformation



Volume of Outlet by Credibility on X in the Foreign Aid conversation between Nov 1 2022 – Oct 31 2023. Source: Pulsar TRAC

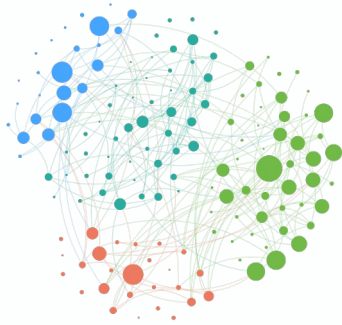
How do different
audiences engage with
the idea of foreign aid?

The audience evolves over time to become increasingly polarised

Political events and emerging narratives ensure that the communities only grow more politicised

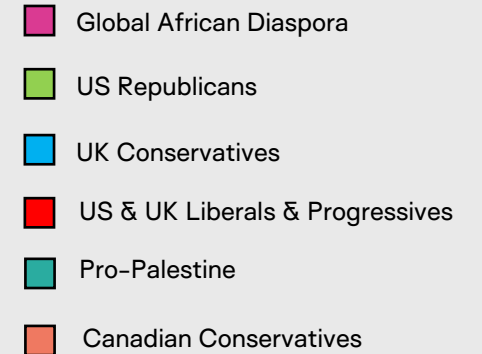
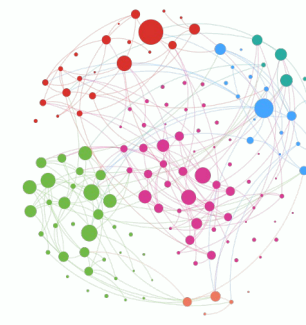
Period 1

Audience Segmentation
(Nov '22 – Jan '23)



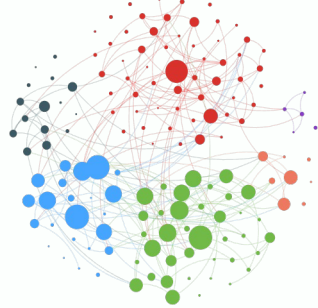
Period 2

Audience Segmentation
(Feb – Apr '23)



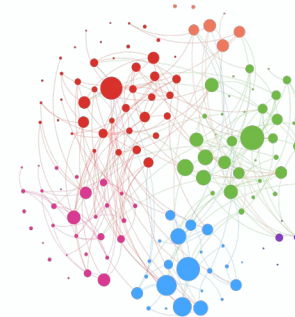
Period 3

Audience Segmentation
(May – Jul '23)



Period 4

Audience Segmentation
(Aug – Oct '23)

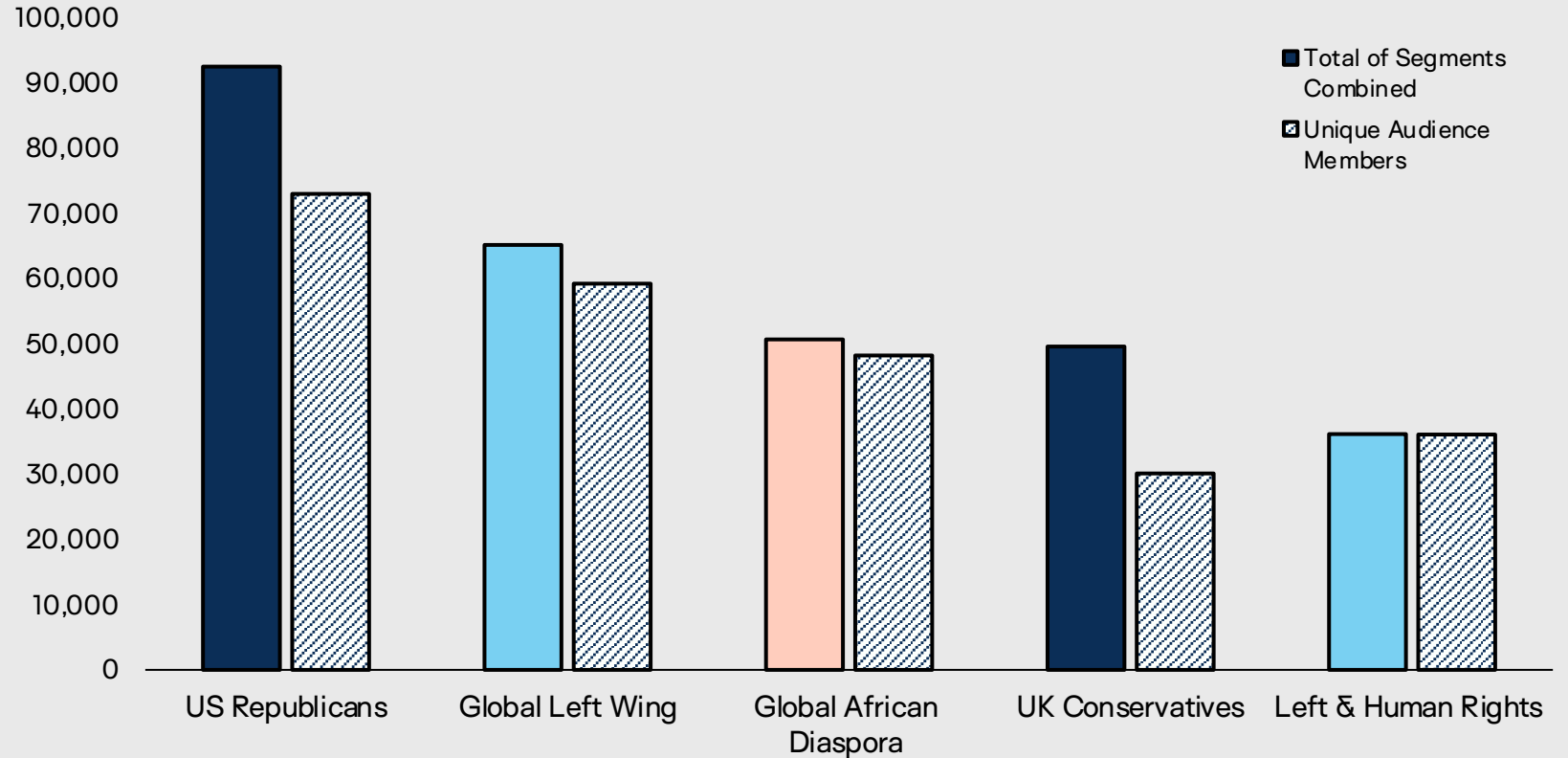


What participation looks like often depends on political stance

Left-leaning groups maintain consistent engagement, with few newcomers, while right-leaning groups attract new participants over time

The degree of overlap between total of segments and unique audience members provides an insight into the growth of audiences.

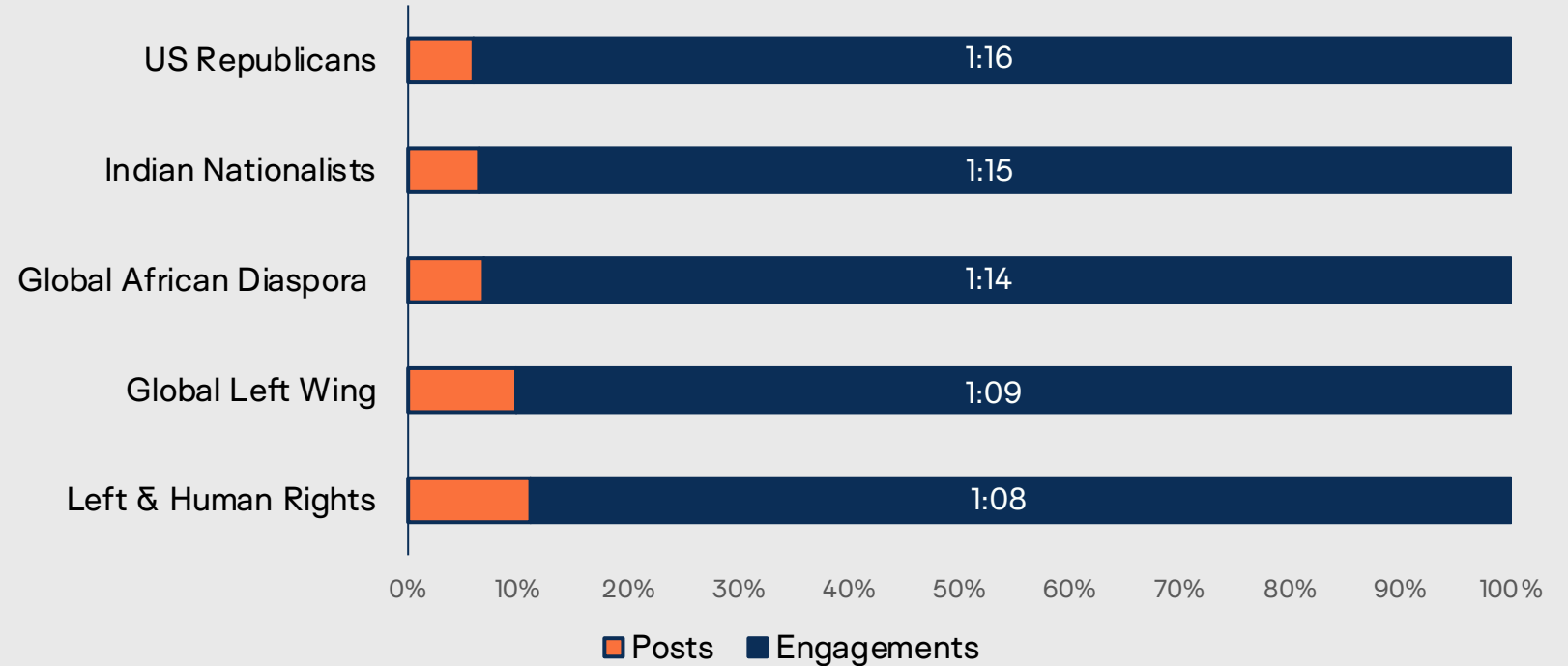
The higher the degree of overlap, the larger the increase of new audience members.



Engagement rates are highest amongst right-wing communities

The ratio between posts and engagements provides insight into the chance of virality between different audience groups.

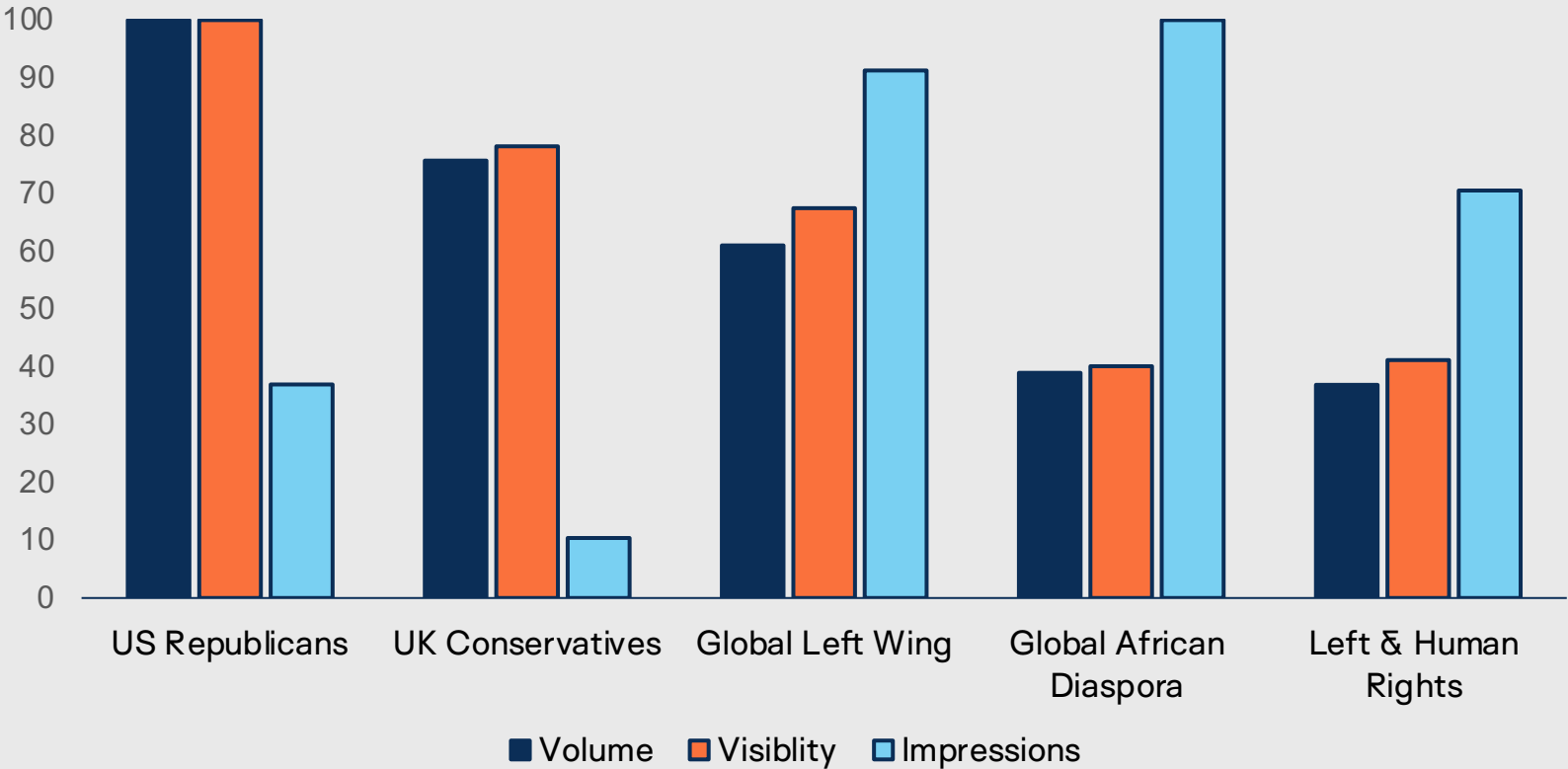
The ratio means for every 1 post, how many engagements does it receive on average.



Right-wing content gains viral traction in specific communities, while left-leaning content resonates widely

Impressions provide an insight into how many people see the content shared by the community, whilst Visibility provides a gauge for Virality.

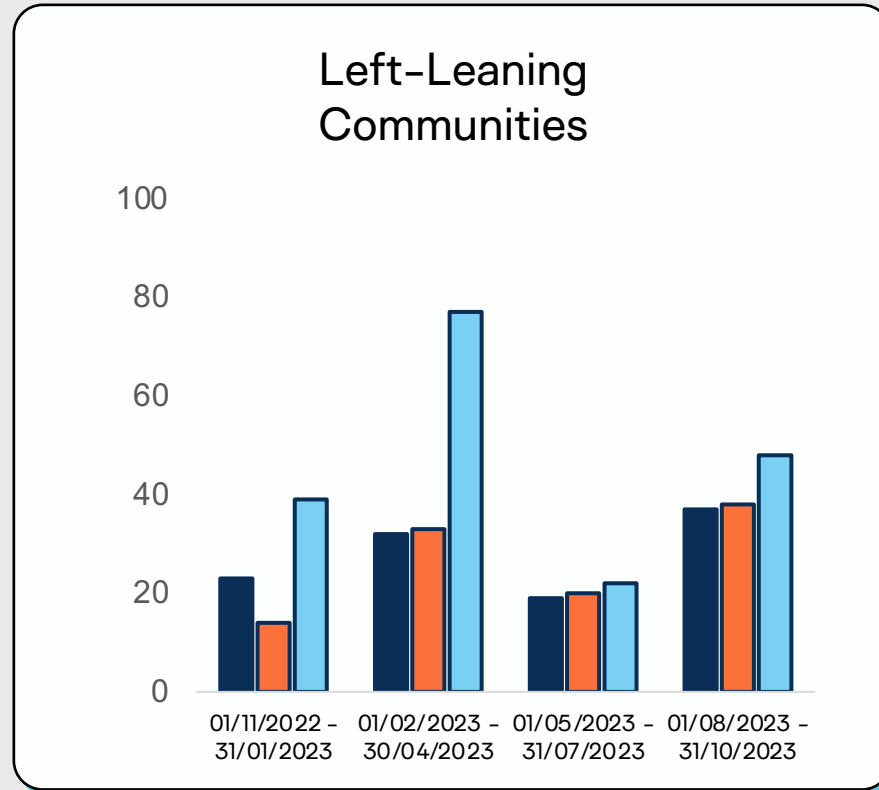
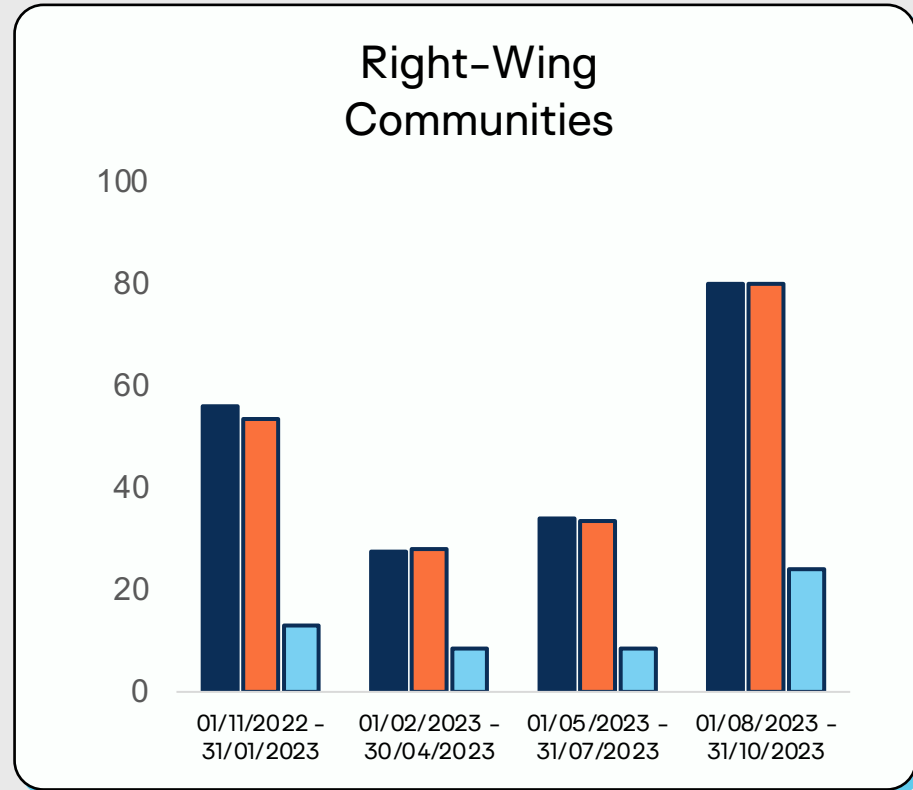
If the Visibility is high and the Impressions are low, it means it's gained traction within a closed network, but it hasn't been shared outwardly or widely.



Volume, visibility & impressions for communities on X between Nov 1 2022 – Oct 31 2023. Normalized to 100. Source: Pulsar TRAC

Escaping the echo chamber: the reach of different communities

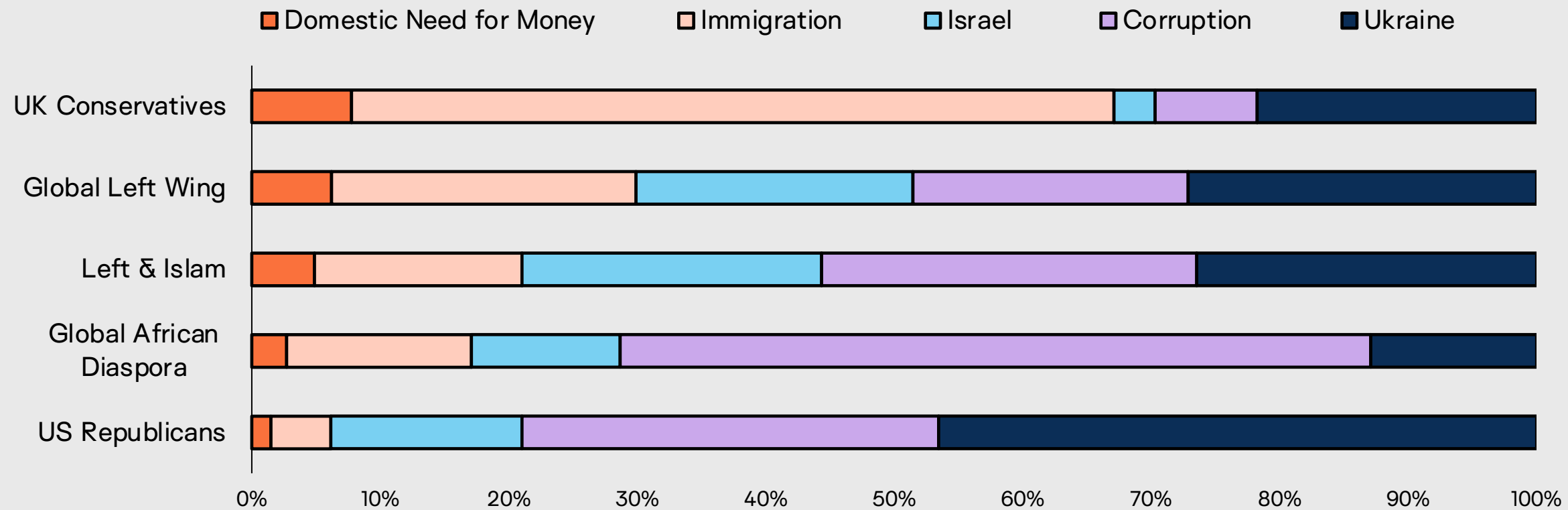
Year-round, left-leaning communities consistently display a potent ability to widely circulate content, securing amplified narrative influence in ongoing discussions



■ Volume
■ Visibility
■ Impressions

Narrative theme breakdown by audience

US & UK right-wing dominates singular discussions, while global left-wingers engage with broader narratives



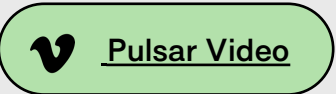
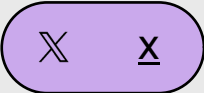
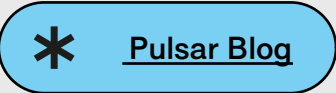
Share of Narratives by Community in the Foreign Aid conversation between Nov 1 2022 – Oct 31 2023. Normalized to 100. Source: Pulsar TRAC

About Pulsar

Pulsar is the world’s leading audience intelligence platform—harnessing rich data sets, AI and human minds – so our clients can access nuanced and actionable insights that get straight to what matters most to their customers, their businesses and to society.

Learn more

Get more audience-first insights wherever you like to get your content



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