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The 2026 Danish General Election in Alternative News Media

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NORDIC ALTERNATIVE
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The 2026 Danish General Election in Alternative News Media
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Dansk resumé

Rapporten undersøger 14 danske alternative nyhedsmediers dækning af Folketingsvalget i 2026 i perioden fra 26. februar til valgdagen den 25. marts. Analysen bygger på 928 artikler, hvoraf 138 (14,9 %) er klassificeret som valgrelaterede.

Analysen viser en tydelig forskel i valgdækningens omfang og tematiske fokus på tværs af venstre- og højreorienterede alternative medier. Venstreorienterede medier udgiver 397 artikler, heraf 106 valgrelaterede (26,7%), mens højreorienterede medier udgiver 523 artikler, heraf 31 valgrelaterede (5,9%).

Pio Pio og Arbejderen står for en stor del af den løbende valgrelaterede dækning på venstrefløjen. Højreorienterede medier dækker i højere grad valget selektivt og knytter det ofte til emner som indvandring, national identitet, mediekritik og politisk tillid.

Rapportens hovedkonklusion er, at danske alternative medier ikke udgør én samlet alternativ valgagenda. De præsenterer snarere forskellige tematiske prioriteringer, hvor venstreorienterede medier især fremhæver økonomi, arbejdsliv og velfærd, mens højreorienterede medier især fremhæver indvandring, national identitet og kultur.

Executive summary

The 2026 Danish election did not appear in Danish alternative media simply as another campaign story. It exposed a fragmented political information field in which different alternative media made different elections visible. Across 928 articles from 14 observed Danish alternative news media outlets between 26 February and election day on 25 March, only 138 articles (14.9%) dealt directly with the Folketing election — but those articles reveal a sharply segmented campaign agenda.

- The clearest finding is the contrast between overall output and election attention. Left-leaning alternative outlets published fewer articles than right-leaning outlets but carried most explicit election coverage: 106 of 397 articles were election-related, compared with 31 of 523 on the right. Right-leaning outlets did cover the election, but more selectively and often through broader themes of identity, immigration, media criticism and distrust of political institutions.
- Pio Pio and Arbejderen account for much of the election coverage among left-leaning alternative outlets. Pio Pio in particular follows the election as an ongoing political contest, focusing on polls, bloc competition and campaign strategy. On the right, outlets such as Document, Kontrast, 24nyt and Den Korte Avis publish many articles overall, but cover the election more selectively and often in relation to national identity, immigration, elite critique and distrust of established media.
- The result is not one alternative-media election agenda. It is two partially separate campaign worlds. Right-leaning outlets most clearly over-emphasise topics related to immigration and national identity, while left-leaning outlets more clearly foreground economy & labour and related welfare-oriented themes. Both camps write about politics and governance, but they attach the campaign to different anxieties, enemies and futures.

The democratic significance of the material therefore lies less in a simple “fake news” question than in agenda construction. The campaign is not primarily distorted by fabricated claims; it is refracted through partisan news priorities that decide which conflicts matter, which actors appear threatening, and which version of Denmark is said to be at stake.

The report therefore suggests that Danish alternative media presented different versions of the election campaign. Left-leaning outlets mainly focused on welfare, labour and parliamentary power, while right-leaning outlets more often connected the election to borders, culture, media power and national direction. Furthermore, alternative media help determine the emotional and thematic terrain on which parts of the electorate encounter the election. They do not just report the campaign; they sort it, sharpen it and give it political meaning for distinct publics.

1. Background

Alternative news media are typically defined relationally, as outlets that explicitly position themselves against perceived shortcomings of mainstream professional journalism (Heft et al. 2020; Holt et al. 2019). They share a self-perception of being 'corrective' or oppositional, but vary widely in ideology, professional norms and resources.

In practice, however, they vary considerably in political orientation, editorial style and professional ambition. Some resemble partisan commentary outlets, while others combine movement journalism, campaigning and news reporting. Previous research has shown that the Danish and European alternative-media landscape is segmented along two dimensions: ideological lines (left-leaning and right-leaning outlets), as well as a centre-periphery logic (more or less anti-systemic) (Ihlebaek and Nygaard 2021; Henriksen 2024; Kristensen et al. 2023; Mayerhöffer 2021).

For elections specifically, alternative media matter for two reasons. *First*, they form a partisan-flavoured complement (or challenger) to the mainstream campaign agenda, raising questions about agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and issue ownership (Petrocik, 1996) outside the mainstream press. *Second*, their framing often combines populist anti-elite cues with strong thematic specialisations — immigration on the right, labour and social policy on the left — which makes elections a critical case for testing whether such specialisations carry over into actual campaign coverage.

This report uses the 2026 Danish Folketing election as such a critical case. Denmark is a useful setting because it combines a small but ideologically diverse alternative-media ecosystem (Mayerhöffer, 2021) with a well-institutionalised mainstream press in a democratic-corporatist media system (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), so any divergence in election agendas can be read against a stable mainstream baseline. Mayerhöffer and Schwartz (2020) argue that Danish hyper-partisan media should be understood in a “grey zone” between legitimate partisan alternative news coverage and communication that may spread “misinformation, mistrust and anger” during election campaigns.

2. Data and methods

This report draws on material collected through the Nordic Alternative Media Observatory (NORDICAMO), which monitors a curated set of Danish alternative news outlets (Henriksen 2026). For this report, we use the election-period corpus: all deduplicated Danish alternative-media articles published between 26 February 2026 and 25 March 2026. In total, the dataset contains 928 articles from 14 outlets, including 8 articles from outlets classified as “Other”. Figures and summary tables focus on the Left/Right comparison; these comparative analyses are therefore based on 920 articles from 12 outlets, of which 137 are election related. The full corpus contains 138 election-related articles.

To identify election coverage, we used an automated text classification approach using an LLM (Mistral-Small-3.1-24B) and then manually checked borderline cases. Articles were also grouped into a broader set of topic categories such as politics and governance, immigration and national identity, economy and labour, and media and censorship.

This report presents the main patterns in accessible form. More detailed information about scraping, model comparison and classification procedures is available at [the Nordic Alternative Media Observatory](#).

3. Findings

3.1 Volume and outlet structure

Across the 28-day observation window, the 14 outlets together published 928 articles, of which 138 (14.9%) were classified as election-related. The volume distribution is highly skewed: the four largest outlets — Arbejderen (Left), Document (Right), Kontrast (Right) and Pio Pio (Left) — together produce roughly two-thirds of all articles.

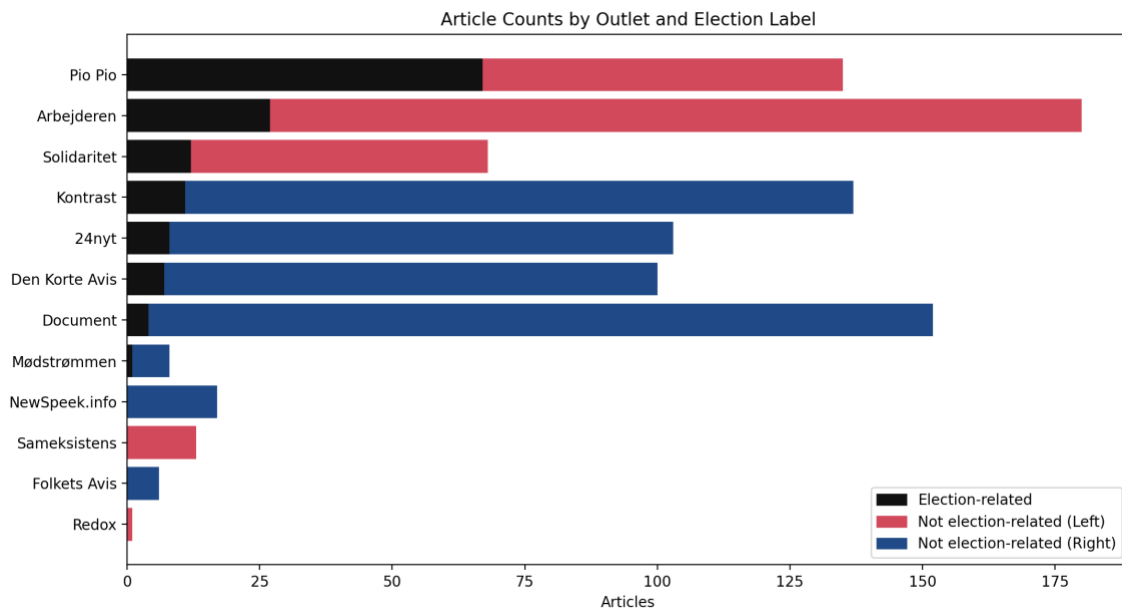


Figure 1. Total articles per outlet in the observation window, broken down by election relevance. Left-leaning outlets (top) drive the bulk of explicit election coverage.

Looking at election-related articles rather than total output makes this especially clear. Pio Pio devotes nearly half of its output in the period to the campaign, while Arbejderen and Solidaritet also give the election visible attention. By contrast, several right-leaning outlets publish similar or larger overall volume but treat the election more selectively, often as one issue among many rather than as the main organising topic of coverage.

Table 1. Outlet-level coverage among outlets classified as Left or Right.

Outlet	Camp	Total articles	Election-related	Election share
Arbejderen	Left	180	27	15.0%
Document	Right	152	4	2.6%
Kontrast	Right	137	11	8.0%
Pio Pio	Left	135	67	49.6%
24nyt	Right	103	8	7.8%
Den Korte Avis	Right	100	7	7.0%
Solidaritet	Left	68	12	17.6%
NewSpeek.info	Right	17	0	0.0%
Sameksistens	Left	13	0	0.0%
Modstrømmen	Right	8	1	12.5%
Folkets Avis	Right	6	0	0.0%
Redox	Left	1	0	0.0%

Note: The full corpus contains 928 articles from 14 outlets, including 8 articles from outlets classified as “Other”. This table reports only outlets classified as Left or Right and is therefore based on 920 articles from 12 outlets, of which 137 are election related.

3.2 Temporal pattern

Daily election-related coverage fluctuates across the election period. The number of election-related articles remains relatively modest on most days, with a few small peaks around the middle and end of the period. A focused qualitative slice for the second leg of the campaign (11–25 March 2026) contains 509 articles, of which 91 (17.9%) are election-related. This share is higher than in the full period, but this is partly due to decline in overall non-election output toward the end of the period. The temporal profile therefore does not show a simple campaign-acceleration pattern. Instead, it indicates that election-related coverage remains intermittent and uneven across the period, while the overall volume of non-election material varies substantially from day to day.

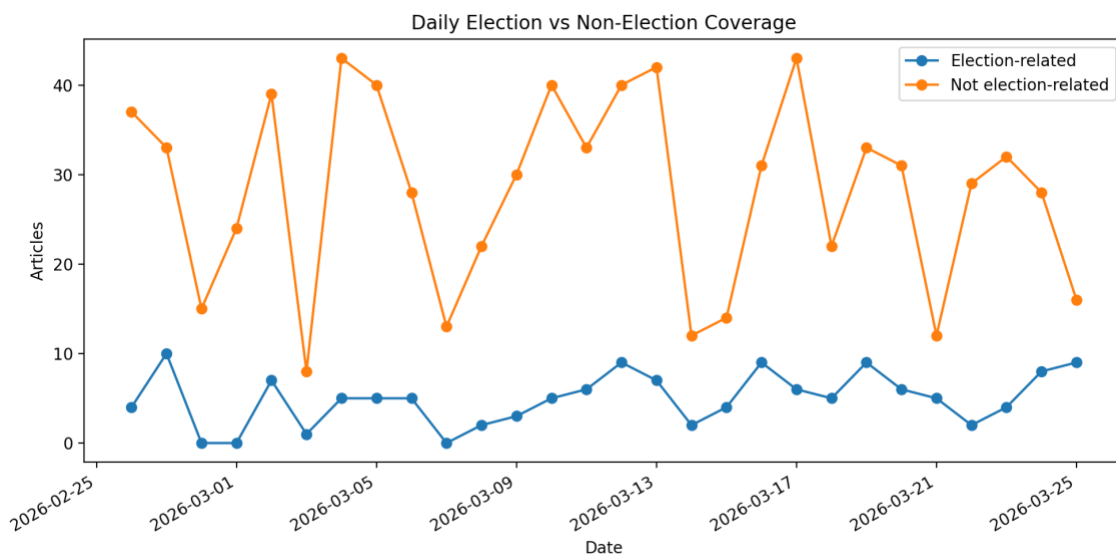


Figure 2. Daily article volume in the observation window, split between election and non-election articles.

3.3 Issue agendas: convergence and divergence

Within election-related articles, both left- and right-leaning outlets treated the campaign first and foremost as a matter of politics and governance. This category includes articles about parties, candidates, polls, coalition prospects, government formation, parliamentary conflict, political strategy and trust in political institutions. Beyond this shared baseline, however, their priorities diverged. Right-leaning outlets placed markedly greater emphasis on immigration and national identity, including migration, integration, border control, Islam, Danishness and cultural belonging. Left-leaning outlets more often foregrounded economy and labour, including taxation, employment, wages, unions, welfare spending and economic distribution.

Other categories capture additional dimensions of the campaign agenda. Media and censorship refer to coverage of journalism, public broadcasters, platform moderation, free speech and perceived bias in established media. International relations and conflict cover foreign policy, war, security, defence, the EU, NATO and Denmark's role in international conflicts. Social issues cover broader societal questions such as inequality, education, crime, family life, gender, minority rights and social cohesion. These categories help show that alternative-media election coverage is not only divided by volume, but also by the kinds of political conflicts and societal problems through which the election is made meaningful.

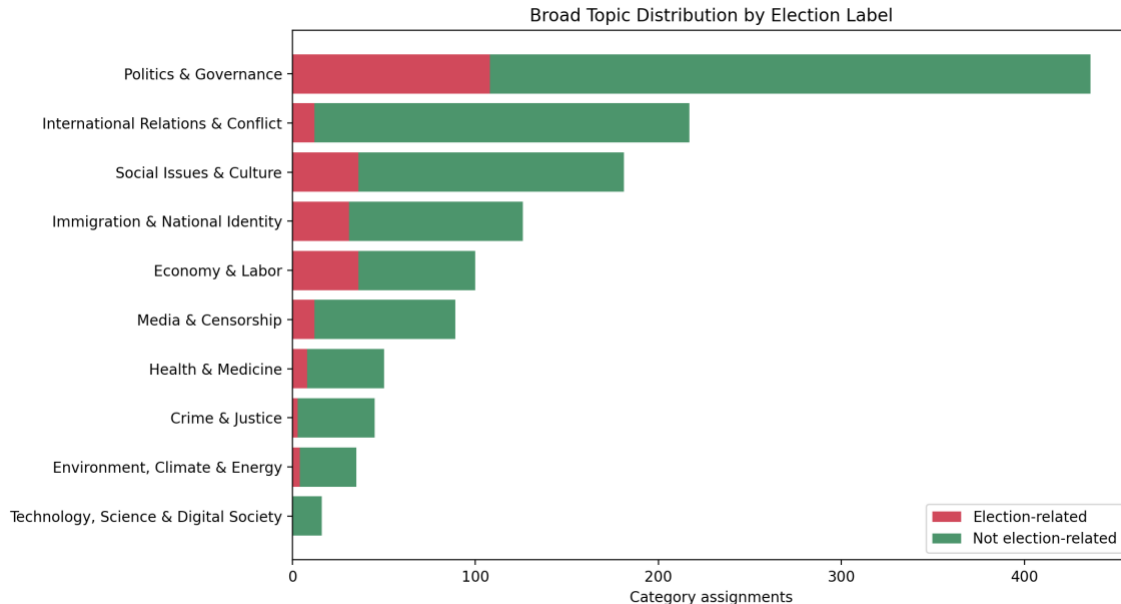


Figure 3. Distribution of broad topics across all articles, split by election relevance.

Figure 4 makes the camp-level divergence explicit by computing, for each broad topic, the difference in within-camp share between right-leaning and left-leaning outlets, restricted to election-tagged articles. Two patterns stand out. First, Immigration & National Identity is over-

emphasised on the right by roughly 14.6%-points — the largest single right-leaning divergence in the dataset. Second, Economy & Labor is over-emphasised on the left by roughly 12.2%-points.

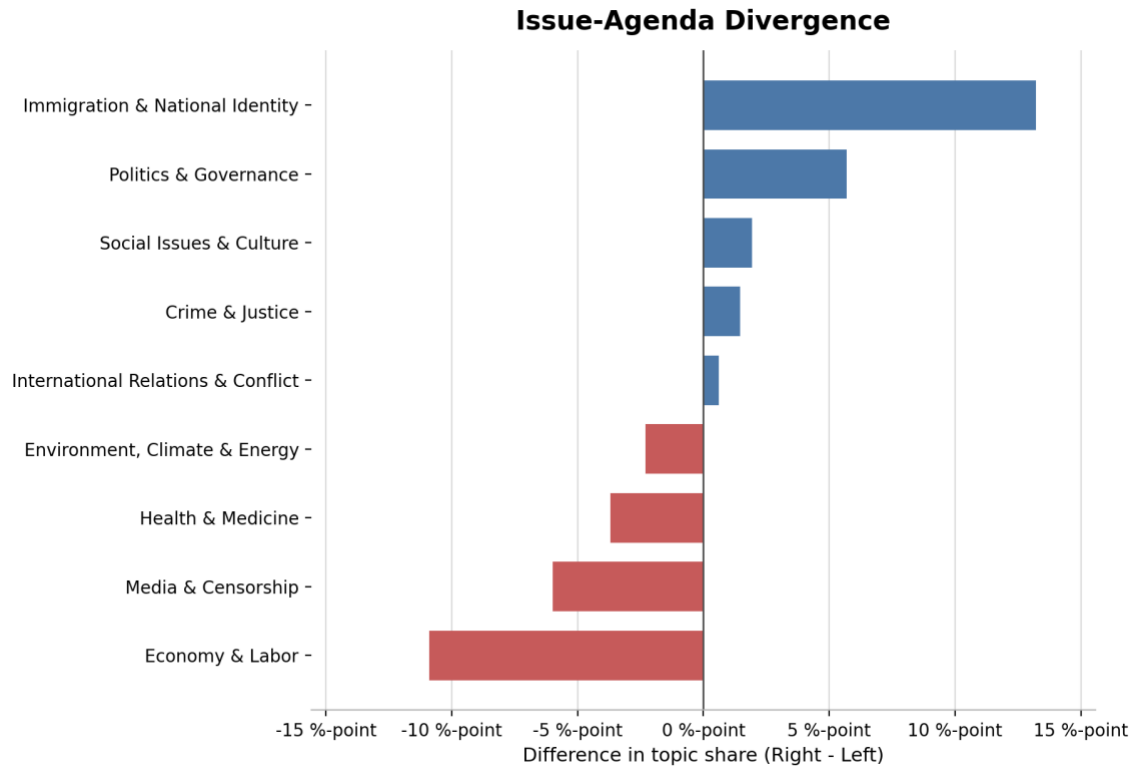


Figure 4. Issue-agenda divergence between Left and Right outlets based on election-tagged articles only (N = 138). The figure shows the difference in within-camp topic shares between right- and left-leaning Danish alternative news outlets, calculated as Right share minus Left share. Positive values indicate topics over-emphasised by right-leaning outlets; negative values indicate topics over-emphasised by left-leaning outlets.

3.4 Qualitative perspectives

A closer qualitative reading of the election-related articles adds an important layer to the quantitative patterns. Across outlets, the election is not only covered as a contest over parties, polls and government formation. It is also framed as a wider struggle over values, identity and the future direction of Danish society. Three qualitative patterns stand out.

First, left-leaning alternative outlets carry much of the concrete and continuous campaign coverage. This is especially visible in Pio Pio and Arbejderen, which account for a substantial share of the election-related material and frequently focus on polls, candidates, campaign controversies and coalition prospects. In these outlets, the election often appears in a recognisable register of political journalism, where developments are followed as part of an ongoing contest between blocs and parties.

Second, the campaign is rarely treated only as strategy. Across the material, election coverage is more often tied to broader political conflicts over welfare, climate and energy, identity, immigration, security and the general direction of society. In this sense, alternative

outlets do not simply reproduce the campaign agenda as a parliamentary game. They often use the election as an occasion to connect immediate campaign events to larger normative and ideological questions.

Third, there are clear differences in tone and framing across outlets. Some remain relatively close to conventional political commentary and strategy reporting. Pio Pio, for example, frames the campaign through headlines such as “The blue bloc narrows the gap to the red bloc in a new poll” [“Blå blok haler ind på rød i ny måling”] and “The campaign’s great illusion: who is really fooling whom?” [“Valgkampens store illusion: Hvem narrer egentlig hvem?”]. This is still interpretive and partisan in tone, but it remains close to the familiar genre of campaign analysis.

Other outlets adopt a more conflict-oriented and anti-systemic framing. 24nyt describes the election period as “the political death march through the campaign’s barren desert landscape” [“den politiske døds-march gennem valgkampens golde ørkenlandskab”] and refers to the parties as “Rip, Rap og Rup” – the Danish names for Huey, Dewey and Louie – thereby suggesting sameness, exhaustion and a lack of meaningful political alternatives. In this framing, the election becomes less a contest between competing democratic programmes and more a sign of systemic stagnation. The same outlet also presents established news media as part of the political problem, for instance in the formulation that “it is not easy to be an Islam-critical party in an election campaign against the Danish media” [“det er ikke nemt at være et islamkritisk parti i valgkamp mod danske medier”].

A similar pattern appears in Document and Den Korte Avis, where the election is tied more explicitly to questions of values, immigration and national security. Document links the campaign to debates over cultural direction and border control, for example in the headline “No government will secure Danes’ wishes for tighter immigration policy” [“Ingen regering vil sikre danskernes ønsker om udlændingestramninger”]. Den Korte Avis likewise frames the election as a matter of national direction and sovereignty, as in the claim that “Immigration policy may become decisive for the election” [“Udlændingepolitikken kan blive afgørende for valget”]. In these cases, the election is not primarily narrated as a competition over policy packages or parliamentary arithmetic, but as a high-stakes struggle over Denmark’s political and cultural future.

Taken together, these qualitative patterns suggest that Danish alternative news media do not merely cover the 2026 election as a parliamentary contest. To a significant extent, they frame it as a broader conflict over the meaning, direction and boundaries of the political community.

4. Conclusion

Three findings stand out. *First*, campaign attention was uneven: left-leaning alternative outlets, especially Pio Pio and Arbejderen, carried much of the explicit election coverage in

the period. *Second*, the election was interpreted through different issue agendas on the left and the right, with immigration and national identity standing out on the right and economy, labour and media/censorship standing out on the left. *Third*, alternative-media election coverage differed not only in topic, but also in tone, ranging from strategic campaign reporting to broader system-critical framing. The 2026 findings extend Mayerhöffer and Schwartz's (2020) 2019 conclusion: the democratic significance of election coverage in Danish alternative media lies not in the danger of "fabricated news" but in their capacity to reinforce partisan political identities and make some conflicts feel more urgent than others. At the same time, as in 2019, the field as a whole did not show a clear, system-wide gearing up of election coverage during the campaign.

Taken together, the findings suggest that Danish alternative media function less as one coherent challenger to mainstream election news and more as an ideologically segmented field; they make different parts of the campaign visible and urgent to their audiences.

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