

# **How provincial councilors perceive the power of news media in the Netherlands**

Master thesis

Public Governance: Public Administration, Economics and Law  
Track: Democratic Governance and Innovation

Tilburg Law School  
Tilburg University

Word count: 13415

Date: 5 July 2022

Supervisor: dr. N. Karsten MA

Name: Rogier Csikos

SNR: 2003510

## Abstract

This thesis aims to describe how provincial councilors in the Netherlands perceive the power of different types of news media. In the context of this thesis, news media are defined as national and regional television, radio and newspapers. Previous studies on the perceptions of national politicians cannot be generalized or related to provincial councilors. Specifically, one of the few studies focused on the perceptions of regional politicians yielded different results and indicates that regional politicians perceive the power of news media as small. In contrast, national politicians perceive the power of news media as large. Based on theories of political agenda-setting power and populism, multiple hypotheses are formulated. The primary hypotheses are that provincial populist and opposition councilors perceive a greater power of news media than non-populist and coalition councilors. The remaining hypotheses state that national news media is perceived to be greater than regional news media, television channels are perceived to hold the greatest power and radio stations are perceived to hold the smallest power. This thesis takes a quantitative approach using a survey to aim to examine the perceptions of provincial councilors. The results indicate that provincial coalition councilors perceive the power of news media as greater than provincial opposition councilors, whilst the remaining hypotheses were rejected as a result of insignificant results. The primary theoretical implication of this study entails that provincial coalition councilors perceive the power as greater than opposition councilors - contradicting the results of the vast majority of research on this topic. This contrasting result is crucial, as perceptions of news media could influence the actions of provincial councilors.

*Keywords: perceived power; news media; provincial governance; agenda-setting; populism.*

## Acknowledgements

Breda, 5 July 2022

For the past six months, I have been working on this thesis as the final product of my master's program in Public Governance: Public Administration, Economics and Law. The topic of my thesis is the perception of provincial councilors about the power of news media.

Writing this thesis has been a challenging journey from which I have learned a tremendous amount. Finishing this thesis would not have been possible without my supervisor Niels Karsten. I would like to thank him for his help and making time to review my thesis with a critical eye.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my second assessor Julien van Ostaaijen for his valuable feedback on my research proposal, which allowed me to improve my thesis.

I would also like to thank all provincial councilors who took the time and effort to fill out my survey, without you my thesis could not be completed. Finally, I want to thank my partner, family and friends for taking the time to read many draft versions and be my sparring partners.

I hereby wish you much pleasure in reading my thesis.

Rogier Csikos

## Contents

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
1. Introduction .....	6
1.1 Problem statement and background .....	6
1.2 Research aim and question.....	8
1.3 Scientific relevance .....	9
1.4 Societal relevance .....	9
2. Theoretical framework.....	10
2.1 Agenda-setting theory .....	10
2.2 Populism.....	11
2.3 Different types of news media.....	13
3. Research design .....	14
3.1 Data collection .....	14
3.2 Political parties.....	15
3.3 Survey questions .....	16
3.4 Analysis .....	18
3.5 Limitations.....	18
4. Results.....	20
4.1 Descriptive statistics .....	20
4.2 Percentages and mean scores .....	21
4.3 Mean scores for each type of politician and news medium.....	27
4.4 Normal distribution.....	30
4.5 T-test .....	30
4.6 Mann-Whitney U test .....	31
4.7 Spearman rank correlation .....	32
4.8 Kendall rank correlation.....	33
4.9 Mood's median test.....	34
5. Conclusion and discussion .....	35
5.1 Populist versus non-populist provincial councilors .....	35
5.2 Coalition versus opposition provincial councilors .....	36
5.3 National and regional news media .....	37
5.4 Television channels, radio stations and newspapers.....	38

5.5 Main research question .....	38
5.6 Limitations.....	39
5.7 Future research.....	40
References .....	41
Appendix A. Table 1 .....	45
Appendix B. Table 2 .....	46
Appendix C: Table 3 .....	47

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Problem statement and background

Actions of politicians could be influenced by the power of news media (Fawzi, 2018; Maurer, 2011). In the context of this thesis, news media is defined as television, radio and newspapers (Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2011; Strömbäck, 2011). News media are seen as the political power's fourth estate, meaning an entity next to the executive, legislative and judicial branch, thus news media are seen to also have political power (Van Aelst et al., 2008). In addition to having political power, news media also have a watchdog function according to Fawzi (2018). News media are seen as the mediator between government and citizens. To exert the function of watchdog, news media need to be powerful and aware of their political responsibilities. When government devises policies, news media should represent the voice of the citizens. They also inform citizens of how the policy formation process is going (Fawzi, 2018). According to Clarke (2008), the watchdog function of news media consists of multiple features. News media are a justifier of wrongdoings, observe politicians that possibly misuse their power and are an architect of the citizens' sense of belonging, locally and nationally. Therefore, the watchdog function of news media is an important part of the power of news media.

In contrast with national news media, regional news media have trouble exercising their function as watchdog since the regional press is in decline, due to a decreasing number of local journalists and local newspapers (Clark, 2021). This means local and regional government gain less coverage and are monitored less frequently than national government. This is confirmed by Firmstone (2016), who states that the function as watchdog of local news media is being eroded due to the constraint in resources and time. It so happens, for example that journalists publish press releases from local politicians directly as news since they cannot afford to analyze or critique the story. For local news media it gets harder to hold politicians accountable as there are less resources available for analytical journalism. Especially television and newspapers have to deal with less means to investigate certain issues (Firmstone, 2016). In order to understand whether regional politicians perceive regional news media to have a smaller power than national news media, more research is needed on how regional councilors perceive the power of national and regional news media.

The literature on how politicians perceive the power of news media indicates the existence of a knowledge gap about the perceived power of different types of news media (Davis, 2007; Strömbäck, 2011; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2011; Vesa et al., 2015; Walgrave, 2008). Scholars who conduct research on the perceptions of politicians often make a distinction between broadcasting media, namely television and radio, and print

media, newspapers (Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2011; Vesa et al., 2015; Walgrave, 2008). The knowledge gap is identified as the lack of conclusive answers to which type of news medium is perceived as the most powerful. Also, the power of radio is understudied as its power is not investigated separately, but only along with television. In their research, it is demonstrated that politicians perceive the power of television and radio, thus broadcasting media, as greater than the power of newspapers, thus print media. Strömbäck (2011), is one of the few researchers who has investigated the power of television, radio and newspapers separately. The author demonstrates that politicians perceive the power of radio as small. According to Davis (2007), politicians perceive the power of newspapers as greater than the power of television and radio. Since scholars as Davis, Strömbäck, Van Aelst and Walgrave, Vesa et al. and Walgrave cannot agree on which news medium is perceived to have the greatest power and which news medium is perceived to have the smallest power, the degree of influence of news media on the actions of politicians cannot be determined. What scholars agree on is that in general, politicians perceive news media as powerful.

The aforementioned research into how politicians perceive the power of news media (Davis, 2007; Strömbäck, 2011; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2011; Vesa et al., 2015; Walgrave, 2008) focuses exclusively on politicians at national level. Liu et al. (2010), provide reason to assume politicians at regional level perceive the power of news media differently than politicians at national level which is important as the different perceived power may lead to councilors undertaking different actions (Fawzi, 2018). Liu et al. (2010), conducted research on how regional policy elites, including politicians, perceive the power of local, regional and national governments, interest groups and news media. Less than five percent of those surveyed perceived news media as powerful. The results of the research conducted by Liu et al. (2010), suggest regional politicians perceive the power of news media as little, whereas national politicians perceive the power of news media to be great. However, this study of Liu et al. (2010), was conducted in the United States while the previously discussed research (Strömbäck, 2011; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2011; Vesa et al., 2015; Walgrave, 2008) was conducted in small, Western European countries, meaning more research is needed on the perceptions of regional councilors in small, Western European countries. This difference in perception by national and regional politicians in respect of the power of news media, suggests research conducted on the perceptions of national politicians cannot be generalized to regional councilors.

Furthermore, the earlier-mentioned research about how politicians perceive the power of news media (Davis, 2007; Strömbäck, 2011; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2011; Vesa et al., 2015; Walgrave, 2008) has not made any distinction between different politicians. However, research conducted by Louwerse and Otjes (2019), demonstrates that opposition populist politicians tend to undertake more symbolic actions, for example scrutinizing government, and less substantive actions, such as engaging in policymaking, than non-populist politicians in opposition. This can be explained by the fact that populist politicians prefer not to work together with non-populist parties as they are part of the establishment that the populist politicians try to counteract. Also, populist politicians prefer to scrutinize government, as in the view of populism, the elite does not represent the people, and thus populist politicians focus on issues that they consider as forgotten by the government (Louwerse & Otjes, 2019). According to Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006), news media have a greater power over symbolic actions than over substantive actions. Therefore, the perceived power of news media may vary between populist and non-populist politicians. This possible variation between how different politicians perceive the power of news media remains unclear.

## 1.2 Research aim and question

Previous research conducted on how politicians perceive the power of news media have focused on small, western European countries, namely the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden (Strömbäck, 2011; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2011; Vesa et al., 2015; Walgrave, 2008). The research by Liu et al. (2010), which holds contradicting results, has been conducted in regions within the United States. The United States differ as it is neither small nor western European, and the political system differs as well (Walgrave et al., 2008). In order to investigate whether the results of Liu et al. (2010) would be similar in a small, Western European country with a different political system, this thesis focuses on the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, where governance regions are called provinces, the political party Forum for Democracy (FvD) and the Freedom Party (PVV) are considered populist parties by many scholars (Akkerman et al., 2017; Hartevelt et al., 2021; Lucardie, 2007, Rooduijn, 2014). In the latest provincial elections of the above-mentioned four small, Western European countries, the FvD in the Netherlands gained the most provincial seats whereas a Belgian and Swedish populist party gained the third most provincial seats, and a Danish populist party gained the sixth most provincial seats (Valgresultater, 2021; Valmyndigheten, 2018; Verkiezingsuitslagen, 2019; Vlaanderenkiest, 2018). Since in the Netherlands a populist party is the largest party across the provinces, this country seems the best case to select, so a proper comparison can be made between populist and non-populist politicians. A distinction is made between different types of news media since the results of previous research contradict each other (Davis, 2007; Strömbäck, 2011;



Vesa et al., 2015; Walgrave, 2008). In this thesis all three national and regional news media are taken into account. This leads to the following research question:

*How do provincial populist, non-populist, coalition and opposition councilors in the Netherlands perceive the power of different types of news media?*

To help answer the research question multiple sub-questions are formulated:

- a) How do provincial councilors perceive the power of television channels?
- b) How do provincial councilors perceive the power of radio stations?
- c) How do provincial councilors perceive the power of newspapers?
- d) How do provincial councilors perceive the power of national news media as compared to regional news media?

### 1.3 Scientific relevance

Conducting research on how provincial councilors perceive the power of news media is relevant as perceptions of the media can influence the actions of politicians (Fawzi, 2018; Maurer, 2011). When politicians think the media have power, they behave as if the media indeed have that power, even though that perception might be incorrect (Fawzi, 2018). Maurer (2011), states that politicians design their strategies based on how they perceive the power of news media. Research conducted on how politicians perceive the power of news media focused so far on politicians at national level (Davis, 2007; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2011; Vesa et al., 2015; Walgrave, 2008), while research conducted at provincial level (Liu et al., 2010), demonstrated contradicting results. Therefore, this thesis can add to the literature by aiming to expand knowledge on how provincial councilors perceive the power of news media in countries outside of the United States.

### 1.4 Societal relevance

This thesis is relevant to society by contributing to the understanding how the power of news media is perceived. Provincial councilors can get more aware of their perceptions and adjust their actions while news media can put more resources on a specific type of news media to utilize their power. Citizens can make use of the knowledge of which type of news medium has the most perceived power to point attention to issues that they are dealing with. The societal relevance thus lies in providing information to assist provincial councilors, news media and citizens.

## 2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the theoretical concepts are defined and put in the context of how provincial councilors perceive the power of news media. The first paragraph defines the agenda-setting theory and discusses the symbolic and substantive political agenda. The second paragraph defines populism and discusses the effects of populism on the actions of provincial councilors. The final paragraph defines the different types of news media and explains the perceived power structure of different types of news media.

### 2.1 Agenda-setting theory

The power of news media can be referred to as the so-called political agenda-setting power (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). The political agenda-setting power has its origins in the agenda-setting theory from McCombs and Shaw (1972). In their study, the theme of the political campaign as stated by voters were compared with the news content of news media. Their research concluded that when the news media cover certain public issues, the public sees those issues as important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The study of McCombs and Shaw (1972), led to more than 350 studies conducted on agenda-setting by the year 1996 (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). According to Weaver et al. (2004), many studies focused on public agenda-setting while other studies shifted their focus to examine political agenda-setting. The political agenda refers to the set of issues that is debated by, and gains attention from, political actors (Baumgartner, 2001; Walgrave et al., 2008).

Political agenda-setting research expanded to focus on the power that news media have on setting the political agenda (Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2011). In a literature review by Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006), nineteen studies are examined. In their literature review, Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006), demonstrate that when certain issues gain attention from news media, the chance of those issues appearing on the political agenda increases. Although the political agenda-setting power of news media has turned out to be little to moderate, especially when compared to the political agenda-setting power of political actors and interest groups (Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2011), politicians perceive a great political agenda-setting power of news media (Davis, 2007; Walgrave, 2008). Davis (2007), interviewed members of parliament (MPs) in the UK where politicians stated that news media held a great political agenda-setting power. Walgrave (2008), has demonstrated the same result as Davis (2007), by surveying MPs who stated that they perceived a great political agenda-setting power of news media.

An important distinction in the political agenda is proposed by Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006), where a division is made based on what kind of actions are proposed. Proposed actions can range from symbolic to substantive. Proposed symbolic actions refer to actions that do not incur any changes of policy, for example voicing oral questions, and proposed substantive actions refers to actions with tangible consequences, such as filing a motion (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). According to Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006), the political agenda-setting power of news media differs on symbolic and substantive actions. Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006), demonstrate that the impact of political agenda-setting power of news media on symbolic actions is higher than on substantive actions. In their literature review, they discuss research that examines symbolic actions as well as other research that examines substantive actions. They have found that research examining symbolic actions demonstrates a greater political agenda-setting power of news media than research that examines substantive actions. Symbolic actions can be found in communication of political actors. Political actors use communication like briefings, speeches and press releases to show they care for an issue which does not hold any policy implications and therefore is classified as symbolic (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). This tactic of symbolic communication, showing they care, is frequently used by populists (Bos et al., 2013).

## 2.2 Populism

According to Bos et al. (2013), populist politicians increase their perceived legitimacy, as seen by their constituents, by using symbolic communication tactics. This is seen as an essential factor for electoral gain (Bos et al., 2013). Populists listen to what their constituents want, show they understand, care for their issues, and exercise their political power to initiate actions to solve those issues. Showing compassion and caring can be done by voicing their constituent's concerns, for example by posing oral questions, which is seen as symbolic action (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). Undertaking substantive action, like filing a motion or changing the allocation of resources to try to tackle certain issues, is more complex and time consuming. According to Louwerse and Otjes (2019), substantive actions are often initiated by cooperative non-populist political parties where opposition populist parties especially engage in symbolic actions more often. As populist councilors, more often than non-populist councilors, make use of symbolic actions on which news media hold a greater influence, it is hypothesized that populist councilors perceive the power of news media as greater than non-populist councilors. The hypothesis is formulated as follows: *Hypothesis 1: Populist provincial councilors perceive the power of news media as greater than non-populist provincial councilors do.*

Walgrave et al. (2008), conducted research on the political agenda-setting power of news media and states that news media have little power over substantive actions of coalition parties, whereas symbolic actions are strongly influenced by news media. Van Aelst et al. (2008), looked into the perceptions of media power and stated that MPs in opposition are more dependent on news media as they need media attention in order to gain popularity and to survive in the political arena. Walgrave (2008), investigated the perceived political agenda-setting power and established that MPs in opposition are more influenced by news media in comparison to MPs in coalition. 33 percent of symbolic actions MPs in opposition undertook stemmed from suggestions from news media against only 20 percent of symbolic actions of MPs in coalition. A possible explanation for this difference between coalition and opposition MPs could be that MPs in opposition can use the issues dealt with in news media to show that government handles those issues at an inadequate manner and to undermine government (Walgrave, 2008). Therefore, it is hypothesized that coalition councilors perceive the power of news media as smaller than opposition councilors. The hypothesis is formulated as follows:

*Hypothesis 2: Coalition provincial councilors perceive the power of news media as smaller than opposition provincial councilors do.*

Populist politicians satisfying their constituents by using symbolic communication is in line with the definition of populism. On the definition of populism, a moderate consensus is reached by scholars (Hunger & Paxton, 2021). The agreed upon definition was proposed by Mudde (2004), and can be explained as populism being interpreted as a thin ideology. This thin ideology means populism looks at society as two groups, namely 'the people' and 'the elite', where 'the people' are seen as pure and whose general will should be enforced in politics, against 'the elite' who are seen as corrupt (Mudde, 2004). Mudde's (2004) definition, is integrated into a broader definition that is laid out in a literature review about populism by Girdon and Binokowski (2013). Their definition of populism is listed as political ideology, political style and political strategy. According to them, political ideology is based on ideas about society and politics with a focus on 'the people' versus 'the elite' as Mudde (2004), stated. Political style is based on claim making and expression. Political strategy is based on chosen policies, the way in which politics are organized and mass mobilization. In addition to the in their view threefold definition, Girdon and Bonikowski (2013) also argued that the unit of analysis is threefold. Unit of analysis for political ideology would be political leaders and parties. Unit of analysis for political style would be speeches and discourse. Unit of analysis for political strategy would be party structures and movements (Girdon &

Bonikowski, 2013). In this thesis, populism is seen as an ideology and political parties are the unit of analysis.

### 2.3 Different types of news media

In the introduction, several studies discussed how national politicians perceive the power of news media (Davis, 2007; Strömbäck, 2011; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2011; Vesa et al., 2015; Walgrave, 2008). The literature review by Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006), about political agenda-setting power, also focused on politicians at national level. Little research has been conducted on news media at provincial level. Liu et al. (2010), conducted research in three local areas in the United States. In their research it was stated that local news media had much less power over setting the agenda than national news media. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is formulated:

*Hypothesis 3a: Provincial councilors perceive the power of national news media as greater than regional news media.*

Strömbäck (2011), is one of the few researchers who has investigated the perceived power of television, radio and newspapers separately. Most scholars have investigated television and radio together and newspapers as a separate entity. In their research, politicians perceive television and radio as more powerful than newspapers. However, Strömbäck (2011), states that out of the three news media politicians perceive television to have the greatest power while radio is perceived to have the smallest power. Based on these findings, the following hypotheses are formulated:

*Hypothesis 3b: Provincial councilors perceive the power of tv channels as greater than newspapers.*

*Hypothesis 3c: Provincial councilors perceive the power of newspapers as greater than radio stations.*

### 3. Research design

In this chapter, the methodological choices made are justified. In the first paragraph, the method of data collection is explained. In the second paragraph, the political parties in the provinces of the Netherlands are discussed and divided based on their partaking in coalition or opposition and whether a party can be identified as populist or non-populist. In the third paragraph, all survey questions are listed with their corresponding items and the reason why these questions are asked and modified are explained. In the fourth paragraph, the method of analysis is outlined. The final paragraph discusses the limitations of this research design and possible countermeasures.

#### 3.1 Data collection

In this thesis, survey research was used as the main method of research. In a survey, information is obtained about the perceptions and opinions of individuals (Queirós et al., 2017). The individuals in this thesis were provincial councilors. The survey was used to examine how provincial populist, non-populist, coalition and opposition councilors perceive the political agenda-setting power of different types of news media, namely national and regional television, radio and newspapers. Provincial councilors in the Netherlands were asked to fill out the survey so their perceptions of the power of news media can be compared based on whether they could be identified as populist or non-populist provincial councilors and coalition or opposition provincial councilors. Of the total 566 provincial councilors, 493 councilors are affiliated with Statenlidnu, the association for provincial councilors. Survey data was collected through Statenlidnu, which sent an e-mail to all affiliated provincial councilors. The e-mail acted as the initial cover letter and in the e-mail, information is stated about the purpose of the survey, assures anonymity and confidentiality, asks informed consent and includes instructions on how to fill out the survey (Miller & Yang, 2008). The survey platform Qualtrics was used to conduct the survey. In case of insufficient response, a reminder e-mail would be sent after one week to the provincial councilors that have not yet responded. If the reminder e-mail had little effect, the provincial councilors who are not affiliated with Statenlidnu would receive an e-mail. Their e-mail is publicly available. The reminder e-mail was not sent, and unaffiliated provincial councilors were not e-mailed because the data collection was completed within a week. Of the 493 provincial councilors affiliated with Statenlidnu, 47 councilors participated in the survey, which is a response rate of 9.53 percent.

### 3.2 Political parties

In the Netherlands, multiple national political parties can be identified as populist parties. These national parties are also represented at provincial level and share the same viewpoints. Many scholars have identified the right-wing Forum for Democracy (FvD) and the right-wing Freedom Party (PVV) as populist parties (Akkerman et al., 2017; Hartevelt et al., 2021; Lucardie, 2007, Rooduijn, 2014). The Right Answer21 (JA21), a relatively new right-wing political party, is identified as a populist party as well (Otjes, 2021; Schouten & Custers, 2022). JA21 was founded in 2021 by former FvD politicians who disagreed with the direction the party had taken under their leader. The Socialist Party (SP), a left-wing party, is also identified as a populist party (Akkerman et al., 2014; Rooduijn, 2018). The remaining national political parties which are also represented at provincial level are identified as non-populist parties.

Multiple politicians who represented the FvD in the House of Representatives and the Senate split off and established their own party (DNPP, 2022). Henk Otten established the first split-off party in 2020, namely Groep Otten (GO). They have two out of the 75 available seats in the Senate and one seat in the European Parliament. Wybren van Haga established the second split-off party in 2021, namely Interest of the Netherlands (BVNL). They hold three out of the 150 seats available in the House of Representatives. BVNL can be identified as a right-wing populist party (De Jonge, 2021) while GO can be identified as a non-populist party because there is no literature indicating that GO is populist and GO does not fit the definition of a populist party as proposed by Mudde (2004).

There are multiple split-off parties in the provincial councils. The name of these split-off parties consists of the word *Groep* (group), *Fractie* (faction) or *Statenlid* (provincial councilor), followed by the name of the provincial councilor who split off. All these split-off parties which are part of the provincial council have split off from the FvD since 2019 while one provincial councilor was expelled by the FvD. Fractie Baljeu was expelled and Fractie Koevoets split off from the FvD in 2020 and rejoined the FvD as a member in 2022. These split-off parties have joined various nationally represented parties. Therefore, the split-off parties can be identified as populist or non-populist. This is visually represented in table 1, which can be found in appendix A. This means Statenlid Goudzwaard, Statenlid Wymenga-Kooistra, Groep de Kok, Groep de Bie and Fractie Koevoets are seen as populist parties while Fractie Van den Berg and Fractie Baljeu are seen as non-populist parties. For the remaining political parties that act exclusively at provincial level, it could not be determined whether the party is populist or non-populist. This is due to the lack of research conducted on provincial parties and populism.

To determine whether a political party is part of a coalition or opposition, a table was prepared showing the current composition of coalition parties based on the composition of provincial executives or governance agreements. This is visually represented in table 2, which can be found in appendix B. The parties which are not listed in table 2 are opposition parties.

### 3.3 Survey questions

In the survey, it was determined to which political party a respondent belongs to, with the intent of making a comparison possible between populist and non-populist provincial councilors and coalition and opposition provincial councilors. The survey was made up of seven questions. The first question sought to ascertain for which province the respondent is a provincial councilor and the second question sought to ascertain which party the respondent represents in the provincial council. The third question is built around the following statement: 'News media have a lot of political power in provincial politics'. The fourth question is built around the following statement: 'News media can damage reputation of provincial politicians'. The fifth question is built around the following statement: 'News media's influence on provincial politics is overrated'. Questions three through five each have six items, as a distinction is made on the level of news media. News media is divided into national and regional television channels, radio stations and newspapers. The respondent is asked to answer the statements on a 5 point Likert scale with answers ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. A sixth answer option is added where respondents can answer the statement with: I do not know. The sixth question is built around the following statement: 'News media and the provincial government determine which issues are important in provincial politics'. The sixth question consists of only two items. The first item is about news media in general and the second item is about provincial government in general. The answer options range from strongly disagree to strongly agree with an additional option for I do not know. The seventh question is built around the following statement: 'How often do the following actors succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda?'. The following actors are the six different types of news media, the King's commissioner, the provincial executive, provincial council members, political parties and interest groups. The answer options are different from the previous answer options since the respondent answers the questions on a 5 point Likert scale where answers range from never to very often. A sixth answer option is added in this question as well where respondents can answer the statement with, I do not know.



The third question, news media have a lot of political power in provincial politics, has its origins in Van Aelst et al. (2008), where the following statement was presented: “The mass media have too much political power” (Van Aelst et al., 2008, p. 501). This statement was transformed from negative to positive, meaning too much was changed to a lot. In addition, the situation where the news media has power was clarified as provincial politics. The fourth question, news media can damage the reputation of provincial politicians, has its origins in Van Aelst et al. (2008) as well, where the following statement was presented: “The mass media make and break politicians” (Van Aelst et al., 2008, p. 501). This statement was double-barreled, meaning that when the respondent answered this question, multiple questions were answered. Therefore, the question was broken down in two parts, the mass media makes politicians and the mass media breaks politicians. The second part of the question was utilized and modified to more clearly resemble what break represented, namely damaging the reputation. Provincial was put in front of politicians, so the respondent understands the question is about provincial politicians. The fifth question, news media's influence on provincial politics is overrated, also has its origins in Van Aelst et al. (2008), where the following statement was presented: “The power of the mass media is overrated” (Van Aelst et al., 2008, p. 501). This statement was modified with the intent to clarifying that it is about provincial politics. The sixth question, news media and the provincial government determine which issues are important in provincial politics, has its origins in Walgrave (2008), where the following statement was presented: “Media determine what issues are politically important, politics has only limited impact” (Walgrave, 2008, p.450). This statement was double-barreled as well and thus broken down into two parts which were presented separately. The first item of question six was presented as follows: news media determine which issues are important in provincial politics. The second item of question six was presented as follows: the provincial government determines which issues are important in provincial politics. The negative connotation of only limited impact was changed to a more positive statement. The seventh question, how often do the following actors succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda, has its origins in Van Aelst and Walgrave (2011), where the following statement was presented: “How often do the following actors succeed in setting a new problem on top of the political agenda?” (Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2011, p.299). This question was only adjusted to match the provincial perspective. However, the actors differ greatly since Van Aelst and Walgrave (2011), did not include the news media as actors. Furthermore, the prime minister as actor was replaced with the King's commissioner as actor, the cabinet ministers as actor was replaced with the provincial executive as actor and the MPs as actor was replaced with the provincial council members as actor.

To measure the internal reliability of the survey, Cronbach's alpha can be utilized (Cortina, 1993). A Cronbach's alpha should be above .70, deeming the internal reliability acceptable while a Cronbach's alpha of over .80 equals good internal reliability (Cortina, 1993). The Cronbach's alpha of survey questions three through seven combined was  $\alpha = .71$ , which means that the survey has acceptable internal reliability. Questions one and two asked which province and party the councilors were representing, therefore these questions were not included in the internal reliability test. For each question, the internal reliability was also measured by calculating the Cronbach's alpha. For question three,  $\alpha = .85$ . For question four,  $\alpha = .92$ . For question five,  $\alpha = .87$ . The Cronbach's alpha for question six could not be calculated as there are two items measuring a different entity, namely news media and the provincial government. For question seven,  $\alpha = .74$ . Therefore, questions three through five have a good internal reliability while question seven has an acceptable internal reliability.

### 3.4 Analysis

The analysis of the survey consisted of performing descriptive statistics, calculating percentages and mean scores for each question, calculating mean scores for different types of councilors and news media, performing t-tests, Mann-Whitney U tests, Spearman rank correlation tests, Kendall rank correlation tests and Mood's median tests. These tests were performed using the statistical program SPSS. Descriptive statistics were conducted to show the party distribution by province and the descriptives of general questions. Percentages and mean scores were calculated for each question to show the results for individual items while mean scores are calculated for provincial populist, non-populist, coalition and opposition councilors and different types of news media. T-tests and Mann-Whitney U tests were performed to examine how provincial populist, non-populist, coalition and opposition councilors perceive the power of news media and to examine whether a significant difference could be established. Spearman and Kendall rank correlation tests were conducted to identify a possible relation between how provincial populist and non-populist councilors and provincial coalition and opposition councilors perceive the power of different types of news media. Mood's median tests were conducted to identify significant differences between how provincial populist and non-populist councilors and provincial coalition and opposition councilors perceive the power of news media.

### 3.5 Limitations

According to Queirós et al. (2017), a limitation of performing research based on surveys is the reliability of survey data. The quality of answers and the structure of the survey can vary greatly, which can have

negative effects on the reliability (Queirós et al., 2017). Therefore, the structure of this survey is based upon relevant questionnaires that have surveyed how politicians perceive the power of news media (Miller & Yang, 2008; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2011). Another limitation is the validity of survey research (Miller & Yang, 2008). The measure should assess the variable, which in this case means that the question should assess how provincial councilors perceive the power of news media. Therefore, constructed questions are utilized that have shown to measure how their national counterparts perceive the power of news media (Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2011).

## 4. Results

In this chapter, the results of the performed analyses of this research are discussed to answer the hypotheses stated in the theoretical framework. In the first paragraph, the descriptive statistics are visually represented with corresponding observations. The second and third paragraphs present the percentages and mean scores of individual items and different provincial councilors and news media with corresponding observations. The fourth paragraph discusses the normal distribution and the use of parametric and non-parametric tests. The fifth and sixth paragraphs present the t-tests and Mann-Whitney U-tests conducted that will partially answer the hypotheses. The seventh and eighth paragraphs present the performed Spearman and Kendall rank correlation tests, which will partially answer the hypotheses. The final paragraph will show the Mood's median tests performed that will partially answer the hypotheses.

### 4.1 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics of the data are discussed here. In total, 47 provincial councilors have participated in the survey. From every province, except the province of Utrecht, provincial councilors participated in the survey. From the division based on populist and non-populist councilors, 6 councilors can be identified as populist, 35 councilors can be identified as non-populist and 6 councilors could not be identified as either populist or non-populist. From the division based on coalition and opposition councilors, 18 councilors could be identified as part of coalition while 29 councilors could be identified as part of opposition. This is visually represented in table 3, which can be found in appendix C.

In table 4, the descriptives of general questions can be seen. The general questions were calculated by summing the items that formed the questions. For question three, four and five, this means six items were added together. Question six was divided between news media and the provincial government, therefore these items are displayed separately. Question seven consisted of eleven items which were added together. In table 4, the number of councilors who participated can be seen as well as the minimum and maximum value, together with the mean and standard deviation. The number of councilors who participated varies, with a low of 43 and a high of 47 councilors. The minimum value varies between 1 and 2, where 1 is equal to totally disagree for questions three to six and equals never for question seven. The maximum value was 5, which equals totally agree for questions three to six and equals very often for question seven. The mean has a low of 2.63 for question five and a high of 4.20 for question four. The standard deviation ranges from .48 to 1.01.

**Table 4.***Descriptives of general questions*

	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
News media have a lot of political power in provincial politics	46	2	5	3.62	.77
News media can damage the reputation of provincial politicians	46	2	5	4.20	.73
News media's influence on provincial politics is overrated	43	1	5	2.63	.79
News media determines which issues are important in provincial politics	47	1	5	3.23	1.01
The provincial government determines which issues are important in provincial politics	47	1	5	3.77	.96
How often do actors succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda	43	1	5	3.41	.48

*Note.* M stands for Mean and SD stands for Standard Deviation.

#### 4.2 Percentages and mean scores

The percentages and mean scores of each item for the questions are discussed here. In table 5, the response percentages and mean scores of question three can be seen. The mean scores range from 3.13 to 4.19. For all different types of news media except national radio, more than fifty percent of councilors agree that these news media have a lot of political power in provincial politics. Regional newspapers are perceived to have the greatest power in provincial politics based on the percentages and the mean scores. Councilors perceive regional news media to have more political power in provincial politics than national news media, based on their mean scores.

**Table 5.**

*Response percentages and mean scores of question 3: News media have a lot of political power in provincial politics*

	National tv channels	National radio stations	National newspapers	Regional tv channels	Regional radio stations	Regional newspapers
Totally agree	21.3	8.5	14.9	36.2	19.1	51.1
Agree	34.0	23.4	36.2	31.9	29.8	27.7
Agree nor disagree	27.7	38.3	36.2	19.1	29.8	12.8
Disagree	17.0	27.7	12.8	10.6	19.1	6.4
Totally disagree				2.1	2.1	2.1
M	3.60	3.13	3.53	3.89	3.45	4.19
N	47	46	47	47	47	47

*Note.* M stands for Mean.

In table 6, the response percentages and mean scores of question four can be seen. The mean scores range from 3.96 to 4.47. For all different types of news media, more than seventy percent of councilors agree that these news media can damage the reputation of provincial politicians. Again, regional newspapers have the highest mean score and the highest percentage of councilors who agree, meaning that regional newspapers are considered most capable to damage the reputation of provincial politicians. Also, regional news media are perceived to be more capable of damaging the reputation of provincial politicians than national news media, based on their mean scores.

**Table 6.**

*Response percentages and mean scores of question 4: News media can damage the reputation of provincial politicians*

	National tv channels	National radio stations	National newspapers	Regional tv channels	Regional radio stations	Regional newspapers
Totally agree	42.6	31.9	38.3	48.9	40.4	57.4
Agree	40.4	38.3	42.6	40.4	40.4	36.2
Agree nor disagree	10.6	19.1	10.6	6.4	12.8	2.1
Disagree	6.4	8.5	8.5	4.3	6.4	4.3
Totally disagree						
M	4.19	3.96	4.11	4.34	4.15	4.47
N	47	46	47	47	47	47

*Note.* M stands for Mean.

In table 7, the response percentages and mean scores of question five can be seen. The mean scores range from 2.31 to 2.98. For national tv and regional tv and newspapers, more than fifty percent of councilors disagree that the news media's influence on provincial politics is overrated. Regional newspapers have the lowest mean score and the lowest percentage of councilors who agree, meaning the influence of regional newspapers is the least overrated, while the influence of national radio stations is the most overrated based on their mean scores and percentages. The perceived influence of national news media are more overrated than the perceived influence of regional news media, based on their mean scores.

**Table 7.**

*Response percentages and mean scores of question 5: News media's influence on provincial politics is overrated*

	National tv channels	National radio stations	National newspapers	Regional tv channels	Regional radio stations	Regional newspapers
Totally agree	2.1	8.5	2.1	2.1	6.4	2.1
Agree	19.1	19.1	21.3	12.8	19.1	6.4
Agree nor disagree	21.3	31.9	23.4	29.8	25.5	29.8
Disagree	40.4	29.8	44.7	38.3	36.2	38.3
Totally disagree	10.6	4.3	4.3	12.8	8.5	19.1
M	2.59	2.98	2.71	2.51	2.78	2.31
N	44	44	45	45	45	45

*Note.* M stands for Mean.

In table 8, the response percentages and mean scores of question six can be seen. The mean score of news media ( $M = 3.23$ ) is lower than that of provincial government ( $M = 3.77$ ). Based on the mean scores and percentages of councilors who agree, provincial government is perceived to have greater power over which issues are important in provincial politics than news media.



**Table 8.**

*Response percentages and mean scores of question 6: News media and provincial government determines which issues are important in provincial politics*

	News media	Provincial government
Totally agree	6.4	19.1
Agree	42.6	53.2
Agree nor disagree	21.3	14.9
Disagree	27.7	10.6
Totally disagree	2.1	2.1
M	3.23	3.77
N	47	47

*Note.* M stands for Mean.

In table 9, the response percentages and mean scores of question seven can be seen. The mean scores range from 2.70 to 4.36. Less than fifty percent of councilors perceive any of the news media to succeed often or very often in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda. However, more than fifty percent of councilors perceive the provincial executive, provincial council members and political parties to succeed often or very often in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda. The King's commissioner is perceived to succeed the least while the provincial executive is perceived to succeed the most. The perceived succeeding of getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda was higher for regional news media than national news media.

**Table 9.**

*Response percentages and mean scores of question 7: How often do the following actors succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda?*

	National tv channels	National radio stations	National newspapers	Regional tv channels	Regional radio stations	Regional newspapers	Kings's commissioner	Provincial executive	Provincial council members	Political parties	Interests groups
Very often	6.4	4.3	2.1	12.8	6.4	10.6	10.6	51.1	42.6	31.9	14.9
Often	17.0	4.3	19.1	34.0	29.8	38.3	4.3	36.2	34.0	23.4	25.5
Sometimes	61.7	53.2	55.3	38.3	34.0	42.6	38.3	10.6	19.1	36.2	51.1
Rarely	12.8	29.8	19.1	14.9	25.5	8.5	36.2	2.1	4.3	6.4	8.5
Never	2.1	6.4	4.3		2.1		6.40			2.1	
M	3.13	2.70	2.96	3.45	3.13	3.51	2.76	4.36	4.15	3.77	3.47
N	47	46	47	47	46	47	45	47	47	47	47

*Note.* M stands for Mean.

### 4.3 Mean scores for each type of politician and news medium

In table 10, the number of councilors based on the division of coalition and opposition and mean scores for the general questions can be seen. The general questions were calculated by summing the items that formed the questions. The mean scores for coalition councilors range from 2.43 to 4.37 while the mean scores for opposition councilors range from 2.75 to 4.09. Based on the mean scores, coalition councilors perceive the power of news media as greater than opposition councilors. All mean scores for coalition councilors are higher, except for question five, which is coherent since a low score for question five indicates that the influence of news media on provincial politics is not perceived as overrated.

**Table 10.**

*General questions mean scores of coalition versus opposition councilors*

	<i>N</i> coalition	<i>M</i> coalition	<i>N</i> opposition	<i>M</i> opposition
News media have a lot of political power in provincial politics	18	3.69	28	3.57
News media can damage the reputation of provincial politicians	18	4.37	28	4.09
News media's influence on provincial politics is overrated	16	2.43	27	2.75
News media determines which issues are important in provincial politics	18	3.44	29	3.10
The provincial government determines which issues are important in provincial politics	18	4.00	29	3.62
How often do actors succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda	15	3.56	28	3.33

*Note.* M stands for Mean.

In table 11, the number of councilors based on the division of populist and non-populist and mean scores for the general questions can be seen. The general questions were calculated by summing the items that formed the questions. The mean scores for populist councilors range from 2.67 to 4.34 while the mean scores for non-populist councilors range from 2.63 to 4.19. Based on the mean scores, opposition councilors perceive news media to have more political power in provincial politics, perceive news media to be more capable of damaging the reputation of provincial politicians and perceive actors as more likely to succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the political agenda than non-populist councilors. However, populist councilors perceive the influence of news media on provincial politics as more overrated and perceive news media and provincial government to determine to a lesser extent what issues are important in provincial politics than non-populist politicians. Therefore, the mean scores of populist and non-populist councilors vary too much between questions to state whether populist or non-populist councilors perceive the power of news media as greater.

**Table 11.**

*General questions mean scores of populist versus non-populist provincial councilors*

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>
	Populist	populist	non-populist	non-populist
News media have a lot of political power in provincial politics	6	3.64	33	3.60
News media can damage the reputation of provincial politicians	6	4.44	34	4.15
News media's influence on provincial politics is overrated	6	2.72	31	2.62
News media determines which issues are important in provincial politics	6	3.00	35	3.37
The provincial government determines which issues are important in provincial politics	6	3.67	35	3.94
How often do actors succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda	6	3.24	31	3.44

*Note.* *M* stands for Mean.

In table 12, the mean scores of councilors based on the division between populist, non-populist, coalition and opposition for the different types of news media can be seen. The different types of news media are calculated by summing the items that formed one type of news media. For question three, four and five, this means one item of each type of news medium is added together. Question six is disregarded as no items of different types of news media are listed. For question seven, only the items for different types of news media are added to their respective counterparts. The mean scores for populist councilors range from 3.35 to 3.70 while the mean scores for non-populist councilors range from 3.28 to 3.65. The mean scores for coalition councilors range from 3.31 to 3.69 while the mean scores for opposition councilors range from 3.27 to 3.64. Based on the mean scores, populist and non-populist councilors and coalition and opposition councilors perceive the power of regional news media as greater than national news media.

**Table 12.**

*Perceived political agenda-setting power of different types of news media by different councilors*

	M	M	M	M
	Populist	Non-populist	Coalition	Opposition
	councilors	councilors	councilors	councilors
National tv channels	3.45	3.38	3.42	3.36
National radio channels	3.25	3.20	3.26	3.18
National newspapers	3.37	3.30	3.40	3.27
Regional tv channels	3.50	3.55	3.53	3.56
Regional radio channels	3.29	3.39	3.44	3.39
Regional newspapers	3.58	3.64	3.63	3.61
National news media	3.36	3.29	3.38	3.28
Regional news media	3.46	3.52	3.53	3.52

*Note.* M stands for Mean.

#### 4.4 Normal distribution

There are two types of tests which can be conducted to test for significance of results, namely parametric and non-parametric tests (Marshall & Boggis, 2016). Parametric tests are preferred as these tests are more precise in finding relations and differences between variables. However, to make use of parametric tests, the data must be normally distributed or close to a normal distribution as parametric tests can withstand some deviation from normality (Marshall & Boggis, 2016). To determine whether the items are normally distributed, a test of normality was conducted on all items, namely the Shapiro-Wilk test. The downside of this test is that for sample sizes where the sample size is smaller than twenty, the Shapiro-Wilk test might not identify non-normality. Populist and coalition councilors both have a smaller sample size than twenty. Nonetheless, a Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted and all items were considered to be non-normally distributed ( $W(47)=.680$  to  $W(44)=.903$ ,  $p<.001$  to  $p=.001$ ). Therefore, non-parametric tests must be performed. Non-parametric tests rank the data, so the distribution of data does not matter. However, as non-parametric tests rank the data, these tests might be less accurate in finding reliable results. Therefore, in addition to conducting multiple non-parametric tests, the parametric t-test is also used as the t-test can withstand some deviation from normality. In addition, t-tests are feasible to conduct when the sample size is larger than five (De Winter, 2013), which is the case for all samples. ANOVA tests could not be conducted as these tests required too many assumptions that the data did not meet. To investigate correlations between variables, Spearman and Kendall rank correlation tests have been conducted. Both Spearman and Kendall correlation tests do not require a normal distribution. The non-parametric alternatives to t-tests are Mann-Whitney U tests. The non-parametric alternative to one-way ANOVA tests are the Mood's median tests. These tests were conducted, and the results follow below.

#### 4.5 T-test

T-tests are conducted to compare the mean scores of independent groups (Marshall & Boggis, 2016). The groups are populist versus non-populist councilors and coalition versus opposition councilors. To investigate whether these groups perceive the power of news media differently, four independent samples t-test have been conducted. The first independent samples t-test is conducted with the perceived power of news media as the test variable and populist or non-populist councilor as grouping variable. This test variable is created by adding all items of question three, four, five, one item of question six and six items of question seven together. These questions all ask the councilors about the perceived power of news media. The grouping variable is created to group the councilors as populist or non-populist. The first independent samples t-test held a non-significant result ( $t(35) = -.129$ ,  $p = .898$ ), with a mean difference

of -.02. This means no significant difference could be identified regarding the difference between populist and non-populist councilors and all the items taken together that measured perceived power of news media. The second independent samples t-test is conducted with the perceived power of news media as test variable and coalition or opposition as grouping variable. This t-test also held a non-significant result ( $t(41) = .525, p = .603$ ) with a mean difference of .05. This indicates no significant difference could be identified regarding the difference between coalition and opposition councilors and all the items taken together that measured perceived power of news media. The third independent samples t-test was conducted with all items of question three, four, five, one item of question six and six items of question seven as test variables and populist and non-populist councilors as grouping variable. These items were not merged into one variable to further investigate whether a single item would show a significant difference. The third t-test held only non-significant results, meaning no significant difference could be identified regarding the difference between populist and non-populist councilors and any of the items that measured perceived power of news media. The fourth independent samples t-test was conducted with all items of question three to seven, four, five, one item of question six and six items of question seven as test variables and coalition or opposition councilors as grouping variable. Three items held a significant result. The first item, national newspaper's influence on provincial politics is overrated, held a significant result ( $t(32) = -2.054, p = .046$ ) with a mean difference of -.576. This indicates coalition councilors perceive national newspaper's influence on provincial politics as less overrated ( $M = 2.35$ ) than opposition councilors ( $M = 2.93$ ). The second item, how often do national tv channels succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda, held a significant result ( $t(45) = 2.238, p = .030$ ) with a mean difference of .513. This indicates coalition councilors perceive national tv channels to succeed more often ( $M = 3.44$ ) than opposition councilors ( $M = 2.93$ ). The third item, how often do national newspapers succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda, held a significant result ( $t(45) = 2.237, p = .030$ ) with a mean difference of .519. This indicates coalition councilors perceive national newspapers to succeed more often ( $M = 3.28$ ) than opposition councilors ( $M = 2.76$ ).

#### 4.6 Mann-Whitney U test

Mann-Whitney U tests are conducted to compare two independent groups and identify possible differences. First the data is ranked while secondly the sum of ranks is used to compare the groups (Marshall & Boggis, 2016). The independent groups are the same as for the t-test, populist versus non-populist councilors and coalition versus opposition politicians and possible differences in how these

groups perceive the power of news media. Four Mann-Whitney U tests are conducted. First, the difference of perceived power of news media as perceived by coalition and opposition councilor was investigated. There was a mean difference between coalition councilors ( $M = 24.03$ ) and opposition councilors ( $M = 20.80$ ) however, this turned out to be insignificant  $U(N_{\text{coalition councilors}} = 16, N_{\text{opposition councilors}} = 27) = 183.50, z = -.818, p = .413$ . The difference of perceived power of news media as perceived by populist and non-populist councilors was also investigated. Here a mean difference was found between populist councilors ( $M = 18.08$ ) and non-populist councilors ( $M = 19.18$ ) however, this turned out to be insignificant  $U(N_{\text{populist councilors}} = 6, N_{\text{non-populist councilors}} = 31) = 87.50, z = -.227, p = .820$ . A significant difference between separate items and populist and non-populist councilors could not be identified. However, a significant difference between separate items and coalition and opposition councilors could be identified for three items. For the first item, national newspaper's influence on provincial politics is overrated, coalition councilors ( $M = 18.26$ ) perceived the influence of national newspapers as less overrated than opposition councilors ( $M = 25.88$ )  $U(N_{\text{coalition councilors}} = 16, N_{\text{opposition councilors}} = 27) = 157.50, z = -2.017, p = .044$ . For the second item, how often do national tv channels succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda, coalition councilors ( $M = 29.56$ ) perceived national tv channels to succeed more in getting a new problem to the top of the agenda than opposition councilors ( $M = 20.55$ )  $U(N_{\text{coalition councilors}} = 16, N_{\text{opposition councilors}} = 27) = 161.00, z = -2.513, p = .012$ . For the third item, how often do national newspapers succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda, coalition councilors ( $M = 28.67$ ) perceived national newspapers to succeed more in getting a new problem to the top of the agenda than opposition councilors ( $M = 21.10$ )  $U(N_{\text{coalition councilors}} = 16, N_{\text{opposition councilors}} = 27) = 177.00, z = -2.034, p = .042$ .

#### 4.7 Spearman rank correlation

Spearman rank correlation tests are conducted to assess whether a significant relationship exists between variables (Marshall & Boggis, 2016), in this case between how populist and non-populist councilors and coalition and opposition councilors perceive the power of news media. The Spearman test has been conducted on all items, resulting in three significant correlations for coalition and opposition councilors. Weir (n.d.), states the strength of the correlation for Spearman rank correlation tests indicates whether it is a very weak to very strong correlation: very weak (.00 to .19), weak (.20 to .39), moderate (.40 to .59), strong (.60 to .79), very strong (.80 to 1.00). Between the variable coalition or opposition and the item national newspaper's influence on provincial politics is overrated, a weak positive correlation was found,  $r_s(43) = .30, p = .042$ . This indicates coalition councilors perceive the influence of national newspapers as



less overrated than opposition councilors. Between the variable coalition or opposition and the item how often do national tv channels succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda, a weak negative correlation was found,  $r_s(45) = -.37, p = .010$ . This indicates coalition councilors perceive national tv channels to succeed more often than opposition councilors perceive national tv channels to succeed. Between the variable coalition or opposition and the item how often do national newspapers succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda, a weak negative correlation was found,  $r_s(45) = -.30, p = .041$ . This indicates coalition councilors perceive national newspapers to succeed more often than opposition councilors perceive national newspapers to succeed. Not any significant correlation could be found between the variable populist or non-populist and any item of the survey.

#### 4.8 Kendall rank correlation

Kendall rank correlation tests are conducted to assess whether a significant relationship exists between variables. Kendall rank correlation is used in addition to the Spearman rank correlation as the Kendall rank correlation is especially useful for smaller sets of data (Marshall & Boggis, 2016). The Kendall test has been conducted on all items, resulting in two significant correlations for coalition and opposition councilors and one significant correlation for populist and non-populist councilors. Botsch (2011), has conducted research on statistical interpretations of the Kendall rank correlation, where he states the following guidelines to interpretate Kendall's tau values: very weak (.00 to .10), weak (.10 to .19), moderate (.20 to .29), strong (.30 to 1.00). Between the variable coalition or opposition and the item national radio stations can damage the reputation of provincial politicians, a strong negative correlation relation was found,  $\tau_b = -.320, p = .028$ . This indicates that coalition councilors perceive the ability of national radio stations to damage the reputation of politicians as greater than opposition councilors. Between the variable coalition or opposition and the item how often do national tv channels succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda, a moderate negative relation was found,  $\tau_b = -.290, p = .046$ . This indicates that coalition councilors perceive national tv channels to succeed more often than opposition councilors. Between the variable populist or non-populist and the item how often do provincial council members succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda, a strong positive relation was found,  $\tau_b = .320, p = .041$ . This indicates that non-populist councilors perceive provincial council members to succeed more often than populist councilors.

#### 4.9 Mood's median test

Mood's median tests are conducted to assess whether significant differences can be identified between two independent groups as an alternative to an ANOVA test (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2016). The Mood's median test examines the median and when the median differs, the test confirms that the groups differ. Three items for coalition and opposition councilors and one item for populist and non-populist councilors held a significant result. Between the variable coalition and opposition and the item national newspaper's influence on provincial politics is overrated, the median differs,  $\chi^2 = 4.15$ ,  $p = .042$  ( $Mdn = 2$ ), meaning opposition councilors perceived national newspaper's influence to be more overrated than coalition councilors. Between the variable coalition and opposition and the item how often do national tv channels succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda, the median differs,  $\chi^2 = 7.20$ ,  $p = .007$  ( $Mdn = 3$ ) meaning coalition councilors perceived national tv channels to succeed more often than opposition councilors. Between the variable coalition and opposition and the item how often do national newspapers succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda, the median differs,  $\chi^2 = 5.40$ ,  $p = .020$  ( $Mdn = 3$ ) meaning coalition councilors perceived national newspapers to succeed more often than opposition councilors. Between the variable populist and non-populist and the item, how often does the King's commissioner succeed in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda, the median differs,  $\chi^2 = 4.96$ ,  $p = .026$  ( $Mdn = 3$ ) meaning non-populist councilors perceived the King's commissioner to succeed more often than populist councilors.

## 5. Conclusion and discussion

This chapter formulates a conclusion based on the results to answer the main research question and the results are discussed in relation to relevant literature. Furthermore, theoretical and practical implications of this thesis are discussed. Finally, limitations of this research are listed, as are recommendations for future research.

### 5.1 Populist versus non-populist provincial councilors

In this thesis, the following main research question is aimed to describe: *'How do provincial populist, non-populist, coalition and opposition councilors in the Netherlands perceive the power of different types of news media?'.* The following hypothesis was formulated based on theories and literature: *'Populist provincial councilors perceive the power of news media as greater than non-populist provincial councilors do.* Mean scores of responses for each question were calculated for populist and non-populist provincial councilors. It could not be definitively determined which group of councilors perceived the power of news media to be greater, as the mean scores were evenly distributed among the groups. However, the results were not considered significant as the t-tests and Mann-Whitney U test did not yield significance. The Kendall rank correlation between populist and non-populist provincial councilors did yield a significant result, namely that non-populist councilors perceive provincial council members to succeed more often in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda than populist councilors. The Mood's median test also held a significant result, namely that non-populist councilors perceive the King's commissioner to succeed more often in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda than populist councilors. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is rejected as neither the perceived power or any of the single items examined with t-tests and Mann-Whitney U tests yield a significant result. The Kendall rank correlation and Mood's median test yielded significant results however, the results were not associated with news media. A theoretical implication of the rejection of this hypothesis is that there is no significant difference between how populist and non-populist provincial councilors perceive the power of news media. However, based on the theory and literature, a difference was expected. Louwse and Otjes (2019), stated that populist politicians are more likely to initiate actions over which news media have more power. Therefore, it was hypothesized that populist provincial councilors perceived the power of news media as greater than non-populist councilors. This thesis implies that the difference based on the literature is unwarranted. Finally, an answer is formulated to the sub-questions that are associated with this hypothesis, namely how do provincial councilors perceive the power of television channels, radio stations and newspapers. It was hypothesized that a difference would exist between populist provincial

councilors and non-populist councilors, and the answer is that no difference could be identified between populist and non-populist provincial councilors as to which group perceives the power of news media as greater.

## 5.2 Coalition versus opposition provincial councilors

The following hypothesis was formulated based on theories and literature: *'Coalition provincial councilors perceive the power of news media as smaller than opposition provincial councilors do'*. Mean scores of responses for each question were calculated for coalition and opposition councilors. All mean scores indicated that coalition councilors perceive the power of news media as greater than opposition councilors. The results were found to be significant, as a t-test yielded three significant results, namely that coalition councilors perceive the influence of national newspapers as less overrated and perceive national television channels and national newspapers to succeed more often in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda. The Mann-Whitney U tests confirmed these findings. Correlation tests were conducted to identify relationships between how populist and non-populist councilors and coalition and opposition councilors perceived the power of news media. The Spearman and Kendall rank correlation test also yielded significant results, namely that coalition provincial councilors perceive national tv channels, national radio stations and national newspapers to have a greater power than opposition councilors. The Mood's median test also yielded significant results, namely that coalition councilors perceive the national newspaper's influence to be less overrated, national tv channels and national newspaper to succeed more often in getting a new problem to the top of the provincial political agenda than opposition councilors. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is rejected as the significant results of the conducted tests point in the opposite direction, meaning coalition councilors perceive the power of news media as greater than opposition councilors.

This is in contrast with the agenda-setting theory which theorized that coalition councilors undertake more substantive actions which should be less influenced by the power of news media as news media has more influence over symbolic actions. In addition, Walgrave (2008), stated that the actions of MPs in opposition were more influenced by the news media than the actions of MPs in coalition. This is confirmed by Vliegthart and Walgrave (2011), as their research showed opposition parties are more inclined to follow news media than coalition parties. These findings are in line with research conducted by Sevenans (2017), where it was shown opposition parties have a higher response to news media than coalition parties and more often take symbolic action upon information from news media. Therefore, this result

goes against all of the previous findings. A theoretical implication for literature about the agenda-setting power of news media is that the findings of this thesis contradict previous research. In prior studies, it was hypothesized and analyzed whether the power of news media was perceived as greater by coalition or opposition councilors (Louwerse & Otjes, 2019; Van Aelst et al., 2008; Walgrave, 2008). From the theory and following results, it was stated that opposition councilors perceive the power as greater. However, based on this thesis that reasoning seems to be flawed, as provincial coalition councilors perceive the power of news media as greater than provincial opposition councilors. Secondly, a theoretical implication of this thesis is that the understanding of actions of provincial councilors is expanded. As provincial coalition councilors perceive the power of news media as great, they may act as if the news media has that power (Fawzi, 2018). Another theoretical implication is that the research conducted by Liu et al. (2010), which stated regional politicians in the United States perceive the power of the media as small, does not apply to the Netherlands and possibly other small, Western European countries. This thesis indicates the opposite, namely that provincial coalition councilors perceive the power of news media as great. Finally, an answer is formulated to the sub-questions that are associated with this hypothesis, namely how do provincial councilors perceive the power of television channels, radio stations and newspapers. It was hypothesized that a difference would exist between coalition provincial councilors and opposition councilors, and the answer to this supposed difference is that coalition councilors perceive the power of news media as greater than opposition councilors.

### 5.3 National and regional news media

The following hypothesis was formulated based on theories and literature: *'Provincial councilors perceive the power of national news media as greater than regional news media'*. The percentages and mean scores of each question showed that for all groups, meaning populist, non-populist, coalition and opposition provincial councilors, the power of regional news media was perceived to be greater than the power of national news media. Opposition councilors perceived the greatest difference of power between regional and national news media, while populist councilors perceived the smallest difference of power. However, these scores were deemed insignificant after conducting t-tests, Mann-Whitney U tests and Mood's median tests. The correlation tests also did not indicate a significant relationship. Therefore, hypothesis 3a is rejected as the results are insignificant and show an opposite direction of what was hypothesized. This implies that the theoretical difference is unwarranted. The results of the analyses point in the opposite direction, which was not in line with discussed theories and research. Liu et al. (2010), stated that local news media were perceived to have less power than national news media. This finding

could not be generalized to the Netherlands. Clark (2021), stated that regional news media are in decline and having trouble exercising their watchdog function. This leads to less monitoring of regional governments than national governments. Firmstone (2016), drew the same picture as he found that resources are scarce for local and regional news media. Apparently even though regional news media have demonstrably less resources, coalition councilors still perceive regional news media to have power. Finally, an answer is formulated to the sub-question associated with this hypothesis namely, how do provincial councilors perceive the power of national news media as compared to regional news media. The answer to this sub-question is that the results indicated that provincial councilors perceive the power of regional news media as greater than national news media however, the results were deemed insignificant.

#### 5.4 Television channels, radio stations and newspapers

The following hypotheses were formulated based on theories and literature: *'Provincial councilors perceive the power of tv channels as greater than newspapers'* and *'Provincial councilors perceive the power of newspapers as greater than radio'*. The mean scores of each question for all provincial councilors showed that they perceive newspapers to have the greatest power, followed by television channels and radio stations were perceived to have the smallest power. However, these results were deemed insignificant after conducting t-tests, Mann-Whitney U tests and Mood's median tests. The correlation tests also indicated that there was no significant relationship. Therefore, hypothesis 3b and 3c are rejected as the results are insignificant and for hypothesis 3b the results show an opposite direction of what was hypothesized. Finally, an answer is formulated to the sub-questions that are associated with this hypothesis, namely how do provincial councilors perceive the power of television channels, radio stations and newspapers. The answer to these sub-questions is that the results indicated that provincial councilors perceive the power of newspapers as greater than television channels while the power of radio is perceived as the smallest power however, the results were deemed insignificant. Based on the research conducted by Strömbäck (2011), it was hypothesized that provincial councilors perceived the power of television channels as greater than newspapers and the power of newspapers as greater than radio stations. This thesis implies that difference based on literature is unwarranted.

#### 5.5 Main research question

Answering the sub-questions contributed to answering the main research question: *'How do provincial populist, non-populist, coalition and opposition councilors in the Netherlands perceive the power of*

*different types of news media?*'. In conclusion, it can be stated that coalition provincial councilors perceive the power of news media as greater than opposition councilors do. There was no significant difference between how populist and non-populist provincial councilors perceive the power of news media. Also, no significant difference was found between how provincial councilors perceive the power of different types of news media. A practical implication is found in how provincial coalition and opposition councilors perceive the power of news media as perceived power may influence the actions of councilors (Fawzi, 2018; Maurer, 2011). According to Sevenans (2017), the intervention of media may be unwanted as politicians base their actions in part on what news media present, which are usually concerns in a daily news cycle and thus politicians may not take actions on problems that are not as newsworthy as others. According to Spruit et al. (2022), independent news media should be part of a democratic state. However, news media should also be held accountable. As news media hold power over politicians, news media have a great responsibility. They keep politicians in check and hold them accountable, but the news media supposedly controls itself. The agenda-setting power of news media can be seen as a control mechanism, according to Brants (2008). It so happens, for example that journalists use the agenda-setting power when they believe politicians avoid issues so that they do not appear on the political agenda, when these issues should be on the agenda. Furthermore, news media should aim to create a podium where citizens can exchange their demands and desires that emerge from society and relay these to the government. Thus, news media have an essential role in connecting the public opinion to governing (Brants, 2008). The practical implication associated with the role of media is that as news media holds power over politicians, news media should represent the public opinion in a correct manner as the results of this thesis indicated that provincial coalition councilors perceive the power of news media as great thus thereby possibly basing their actions on journalists.

## 5.6 Limitations

A limitation of this thesis is the relatively small sample size. In total, 47 provincial councilors filled out the survey however, only 6 councilors could be identified as populist whereas 35 councilors could be identified as non-populist councilors. As the samples were investigated independent of each other, 6 populist and 35 non-populist councilors were compared for which populist councilors are well below the border of a sample size that is greater than 30 while the group of non-populist councilors is barely larger. Both coalition and opposition councilors were also below the border of a sample size that is larger than 30. This may have contributed to less accurate results than if a larger sample was used when conducting statistical tests. A side note to this limitation is that t-tests are reasonably reliable as De Winter (2013), states that

t-tests can be conducted with a sample size as small as five. Rivera (2019), conducted research on methods of nonprobability sampling with a focus on the field of public administration. In his research, the author states that researchers who have obtained a smaller sample size have the possibility to redraw missing data from the respondents. By redrawing data, the analysis could be improved as there are fewer missing items. The same can be done by improving response rates to increase the certainty of analyses however, both do neither guarantee to improve the analyses (Rivera, 2019).

## 5.7 Future research

As for future research, multiple recommendations can be made. The expected results of hypothesis 2, coalition provincial councilors perceive the power of news media as smaller than opposition provincial councilors do, was based on both theoretical and practical findings from numerous studies. By examining already existing literature, a plausible explanation could not be given as to why hypothesis 2 had findings that went against the hypothesis. Therefore, as for recommendations for future research, researchers could utilize the specific questions that led to the findings of hypothesis 2 in future research. This way, it can be determined whether the results of this hypothesis are limited to this thesis or whether the perceptions of councilors really have changed. Hypothesis 1, populist provincial councilors perceive the power of news media as greater than provincial non-populist councilors, was based on theories and research conducted on opposition populist and non-populist parties however, this supposed difference has not been investigated in agenda-setting research. Therefore, as for recommendations for future research, scholars of agenda-setting power could include a question in their questionnaires that gauges the provincial councilor's party affiliation to determine whether the provincial councilor is populist or non-populist. Then analyses can be conducted to compare the two samples and aim to investigate whether a difference does not exist as this thesis suggests or that there is a difference between populist and non-populist parties. As one of the limitations of this thesis was the relatively small sample size, a recommendation for future research would be to aim to investigate whether the hypotheses have the same outcome when a larger sample is obtained. Especially little populist councilors filled out the survey so it could be valuable for the analysis to have more populist councilors included. According to De Winter (2013), the analysis and thus the results may become more accurate as the sample size increases. It is recommended to make use of a larger sample size than a smaller sample size. Thus, future research should ensure the number of provincial populist councilors participating in the survey. This could possibly be initiated by individually contacting provincial populist councilors to increase the likelihood of their participation.



## References

- Akkerman, A., Mudde, C., & Zaslove, A. (2014). How populist are the people? Measuring populist attitudes in voters. *Comparative political studies*, 47(9), 1324-1353.
- Akkerman, A., Zaslove, A., & Spruyt, B. (2017). 'We the people' or 'we the peoples'? A comparison of support for the populist radical right and populist radical left in the Netherlands. *Swiss Political Science Review*, 23(4), 377-403.
- Baumgartner. (2001). Agendas: Political. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 288-291.
- Bos, L., Van Der Brug, W., & De Vreese, C. H. (2013). An experimental test of the impact of style and rhetoric on the perception of right-wing populist and mainstream party leaders. *Acta Politica*, 48(2), 192-208.
- Botsch, R. (2011). Chapter 12: Significance and measures of association. *Scopes and Methods of Political Science*.
- Brants, K. (2008). Media, politiek en de spiraal van wantrouwen. B. Snels & N. Thijssen (red.), *De grote kloof: verhitte politiek in tijden van verwarring*, 163-190.
- Clark, T. (2021). From the Silent Watchdog to the Lost Watchdog: The Decline of the UK Regional Press' Coverage of Local Government over 40 Years. *Media History*, 27(2), 177-196.
- Clarke, J. (2008). Performance paradoxes: The politics of evaluation in public services.
- Cortina, J. M. (1993). What is coefficient alpha? An examination of theory and applications. *Journal of applied psychology*, 78(1), 98.
- Davis, A. (2007). Investigating journalist influences on political issue agendas at Westminster. *Political communication*, 24(2), 181-199.
- Dearing, J. W., Rogers, E. M., & Rogers, E. (1996). *Agenda-setting* (Vol. 6). Sage.
- De Winter, J. C. (2013). Using the Student's t-test with extremely small sample sizes. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, 18(1), 10.
- DNPP. (2022). Forum voor Democratie partijgeschiedenis. Retrieved on 7 June, 2022 from: <https://dnpp.nl/pp/fvd/geschied>.
- Fawzi, N. (2018). Beyond policy agenda-setting: political actors' and journalists' perceptions of news media influence across all stages of the political process. *Information, Communication & Society*, 21(8), 1134-1150.
- Firmstone, J. (2016). Mapping changes in local news. *Journalism Practice*, 10(7), 928-938.
- Gidron, N., & Bonikowski, B. (2013). Varieties of populism: Literature review and research agenda.

- Gravetter, F. J. & Wallnau, L. B. (2016). *Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences. Custom Cengage Learning EMEA.*
- Harteveld, E., Van der Brug, W., De Lange, S., & Van der Meer, T. (2021). Multiple roots of the populist radical right: Support for the Dutch PVV in cities and the countryside. *European Journal of Political Research.*
- Hunger, S., & Paxton, F. (2021). What's in a buzzword? a systematic review of the state of populism research in political science. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 1-17.
- Liu, X., Lindquist, E., Vedlitz, A., & Vincent, K. (2010). Understanding local policymaking: Policy elites' perceptions of local agenda setting and alternative policy selection. *Policy Studies Journal*, 38(1), 69-91.
- Louwerse, T., & Otjes, S. (2019). How populists wage opposition: Parliamentary opposition behaviour and populism in Netherlands. *Political Studies*, 67(2), 479-495.
- Lucardie, A. P. M. (2007). Rechts-extremisme, populisme of democratisch patriotisme. *Jaarboek Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen*, 176-190.
- Marshall, E., & Boggis, E. (2016). The statistics tutor's quick guide to commonly used statistical tests. *Statstutor Community Project*, 1, 57.
- Maurer, P. (2011). Explaining perceived media influence in politics. *Publizistik*, 56(1), 27-50.
- McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public opinion quarterly*, 36(2), 176-187.
- Miller, G. J. & Yang, K. (2008). *Handbook of research methods in public administration*. CRC press, Second Edition.
- Mudde, C. (2004). The populist zeitgeist. *Government and opposition*, 39(4), 541-563.
- Rooduijn, M. (2014). Vox populismus: a populist radical right attitude among the public? *Nations and Nationalism*, 20(1), 80-92.
- Rooduijn, M. (2018). What unites the voter bases of populist parties? Comparing the electorates of 15 populist parties. *European Political Science Review*, 10(3), 351-368.
- Otjes, S. (2021). The EU Elephant: Europe in the 2021 Dutch General Elections. *Intereconomics*, 56(2), 70-75.
- Queirós, A., Faria, D., & Almeida, F. (2017). Strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative research methods. *European journal of education studies.*
- Strömbäck, J. (2011). Mediatization and perceptions of the media's political influence. *Journalism studies*, 12(4), 423-439.

- Van Aelst, P., & Walgrave, S. (2011). Minimal or massive? The political agenda-setting power of the mass media according to different methods. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 16(3), 295-313.
- Van Aelst, P., Brants, K., Van Praag, P., De Vreese, C., Nuytemans, M., & Van Dalen, A. (2008). The fourth estate as superpower? An empirical study of perceptions of media power in Belgium and the Netherlands. *Journalism studies*, 9(4), 494-511.
- Valgresultater. (2021). Hvliken kommune bor du i? Retrieved 14 April, 2022 from: <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/resultater/kommunalvalg>
- Valmyndigheten. (2018). Val till landstingfullmäktige - Röster. Retrieved 14 April, 2022 from: <https://data.val.se/val/val2018/slutresultat/L/rike/index.html>
- Schouten, L., & Custers, G. (2022). Waarom hoger opgeleiden zich tegen het politieke systeem keren: Een onderzoek naar de motieven van hoger opgeleiden om te stemmen op populistisch radicaal rechtse partijen. *Mens & Maatschappij*, 97(2), 182-212.
- Verkiezingsuitslagen. (2019). Verkiezingsuitslag Provinciale Staten 2019. Retrieved 6 February, 2022 from: <https://www.verkiezingsuitslagen.nl/verkiezingen/detail/PS20190320>
- Sevenans, J. (2017). The media's informational function in political agenda-setting processes. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 22(2), 223-243.
- Spruit, J., Visser, M., Volkers, K., Taal, A., Azzarhouni, S., Morsch, I., & Toussaint, T. (Eds.). (2022). Bestuurskundige Berichten maart 2022: In de pas lopen. *Bestuurskundige Berichten*, 37(1), 1-48.
- Vlaanderenkiest. (2018). Lokale verkiezingen 2018. Retrieved 14 April, 2022 from: <https://www.vlaanderenkiest.be/verkiezingen2018/#/provincie>
- Vliegenthart, R., & Walgrave, S. (2011). When the media matter for politics: Partisan moderators of the mass media's agenda-setting influence on parliament in Belgium. *Party Politics*, 17(3), 321-342.
- Vesa, J., Blomberg, H., & Kroll, C. (2015). Minimal and massive! Politicians' views on the media's political agenda-setting power revisited. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 20(3), 279-296.
- Walgrave, S. (2008). Again, the almighty mass media? The media's political agenda-setting power according to politicians and journalists in Belgium. *Political Communication*, 25(4), 445-459.
- Walgrave, S., & Van Aelst, P. (2006). The contingency of the mass media's political agenda setting power: Toward a preliminary theory. *Journal of communication*, 56(1), 88-109.
- Walgrave, S., Soroka, S., & Nuytemans, M. (2008). The mass media's political agenda-setting power: A longitudinal analysis of media, parliament, and government in Belgium (1993 to 2000). *Comparative Political Studies*, 41(6), 814-836.

Weaver, D., McCombs, M., & Shaw, D. L. (2004). Agenda-setting research: Issues, attributes, and influences. *Handbook of political communication research*, 275-300.

Weir, I. (n.d.). Spearman's correlation. Retrieved 20 June, 2022 from:  
<https://www.statstutor.ac.uk/resources/uploaded/spearmans.pdf>

## Appendix A. Table 1

**Table 1.**

*Split-off parties and their affiliation with nationally represented parties*

Province	Split-off party	Split off from	Affiliation with nationally represented party
Flevoland	Fractie Van den Berg	FvD	GO
Friesland	Statenlid Goudzwaard	FvD	JA21
	Statenlid Wymenga-Kooistra		BVNL
Gelderland	Groep de Kok	FvD	BVNL
Noord-Brabant	Groep de Bie	FvD	BVNL
Noord-Holland	Fractie Baljeu	FvD	GO
Zeeland	Fractie Koevoets	FvD	FvD

*Note.* This table was compiled from information found on the official website of BVNL, GO, JA21 and a provincial broadcaster on 7 June, 2022:

1) <https://bvnl.nl/onze-mensen-bvnl/> 2) <https://go2021.nl/>

3) <https://ja21.nl/actueel/nieuws/maarten-goudzwaard-geinstalleerd-als-tweede-kamerlid> 4) <https://www.omroepzeeland.nl/nieuws/14426171/statenlid-koevoets-terug-onder-vleugels-fvd-maar-nog-wel-solo-in-provinciale-staten>

## Appendix B. Table 2

**Table 2.**

*Current composition of coalition parties (2022)*

Province	Coalition parties
Drenthe	CDA, ChristenUnie, GroenLinks, PvdA, VVD
Flevoland	CDA, ChristenUnie-SGP, GroenLinks, PvdA, VVD,
Friesland	CDA, FNP, PvdA, VVD
Gelderland	CDA, ChristenUnie, GroenLinks, PvdA, VVD
Groningen	CDA, ChristenUnie, GroenLinks, D66, PvdA, VVD
Limburg	CDA, D66, GroenLinks, LOKAAL-LIMBURG, PvdA, VVD
Noord-Brabant	CDA, D66, GroenLinks, PvdA, VVD
Noord-Holland	D66, GroenLinks, PvdA, VVD
Overijssel	CDA, ChristenUnie, PvdA, VVD, SGP
Utrecht	CDA, ChristenUnie, D66, GroenLinks, PvdA
Zeeland	CDA, PvdA, VVD, SGP
Zuid-Holland	CDA, ChristenUnie-SGP, GroenLinks, PvdA, VVD

*Note.* This table was compiled with information found on the official websites of the twelve provinces of the Netherlands on 7 June, 2022:

- 1) <https://www.provincie.drenthe.nl/organisatie-bestuur/gedeputeerde-staten/> 2) <https://www.flevoland.nl/wie-zijn-we/gedeputeerde-staten>
- 3) <https://www.fryslan.frl/bestuursakkoord> 4) <https://www.gelderland.nl/themas/politiek/gs>
- 5) <https://www.provinciegroningen.nl/beleid-en-documenten/beleidskaders-2019-2023/> 6) <https://www.limburg.nl/bestuur/gedeputeerde-staten/gedeputeerden/>
- 7) <https://www.brabant.nl/actueel/nieuws/bestuur/2021/nieuwe-coalitie-bekend> 8) <https://www.noord-holland.nl/Bestuur/Coalitieakkoord>
- 9) <https://www.overijssel.nl/bestuur/gedeputeerde-staten/coalitieakkoord/> 10) [https://www.provincie-utrecht.nl/sites/default/files/2020-01/coalitieakkoord\\_2019-2023\\_nieuwe\\_energie\\_voor\\_utrecht.pdf](https://www.provincie-utrecht.nl/sites/default/files/2020-01/coalitieakkoord_2019-2023_nieuwe_energie_voor_utrecht.pdf)
- 11) <https://www.zeeland.nl/gedeputeerde-staten/coalitieakkoord-2019-2023-samen-verschil-maken> 12) <https://www.zuid-holland.nl/politiek-bestuur/coalitieakkoord-elke-dag-beter-zuid-holland/>

## Appendix C: Table 3

**Table 3.**

*Party distribution by province*

Province	N	Populist	Non-populist	Unknown (non)populist	Coalition	Opposition
Drenthe	5	1	3	1	1	4
Flevoland	3	1	2		1	2
Fryslân	5		4	1	1	4
Gelderland	3		3		2	1
Groningen	6	1	3	2	1	5
Limburg	2		2		1	1
Noord-Brabant	4	1	3		3	1
Noord-Holland	4	1	3		3	1
Overijssel	3		1	2		3
Utrecht						
Zeeland	10		10		5	5
Zuid-Holland	2	1	1			2
Total	47	6	35	6	18	29

*Note.* The province of Utrecht had zero responses.