# How elites talk about their political career: Metaphors in spontaneous and informal political discourse

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*« The Walloon government … I <u>assimilate</u> it to a **Formula One** where you have 9 people to **drive** a **racing car** towards **victory**, you have 7 people who **step** on the **accelerator** and 2 who **activate** the **handbrake**, so it is not easy.»*

# Introduction: research questions

1. do politicians use metaphors in <u>spontaneous</u> and <u>informal</u> discourse

2. if so, <u>when</u>;

3. <u>why</u> do they use these metaphors

   Based on metaphor use → determine how politicians position themselves personnally as well as their careers within the political dynamics of their country

# Theoretical framework

1. Steen's three-dimensional model (2008)

2. Deliberate metaphors

3. Perrez & Reuchamps: *« Deliberate metaphors in political discourse: the case of citizen discourse »* (2014)

# Theoretical framework: **Steen's three-dimensional model (2008)**
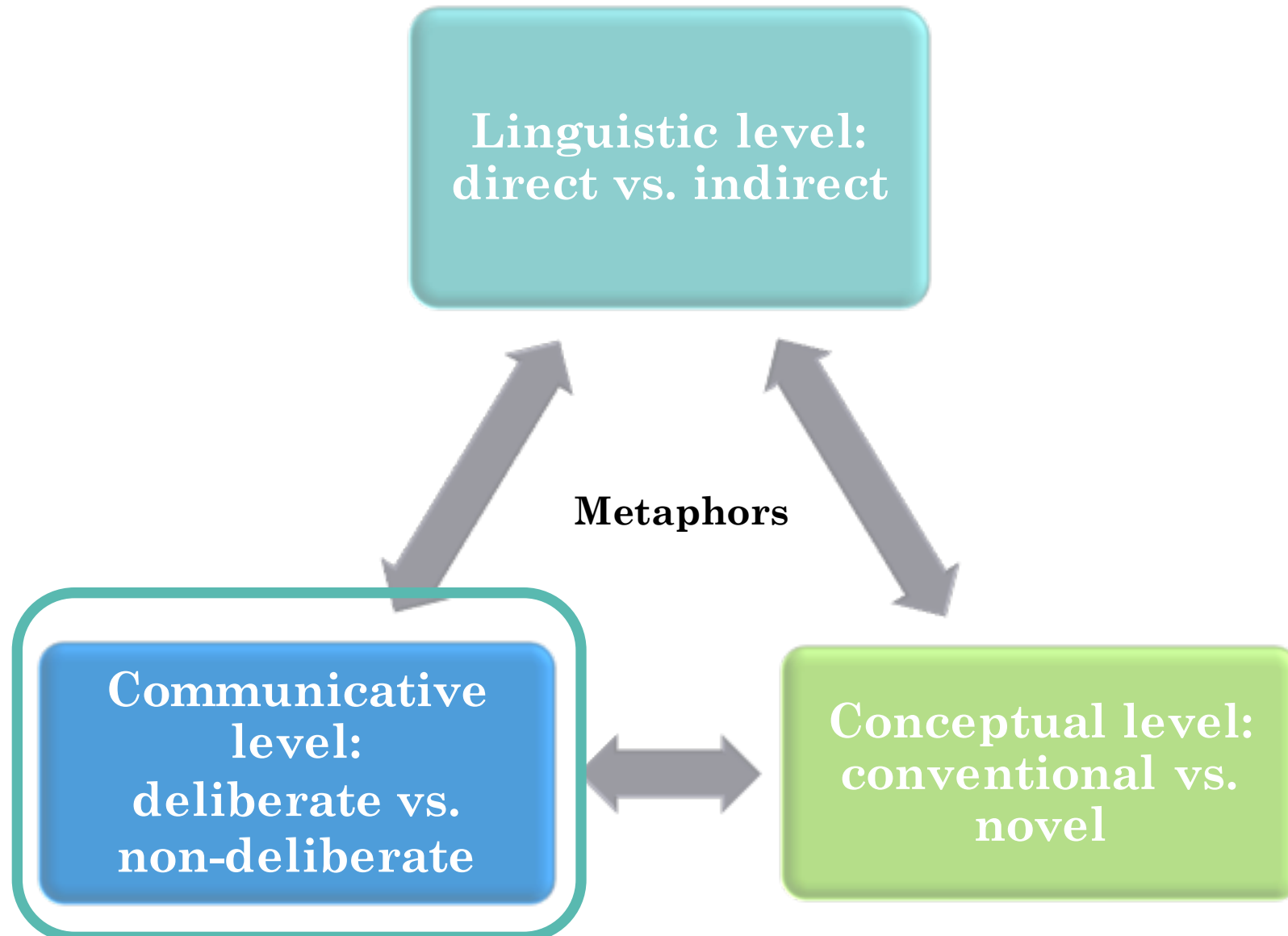
# Theoretical framework: **Deliberate metaphor**

➢ Origin: *The Paradox of Metaphor* (Steen, 2008)

 ➢ Processing of metaphor by **comparison** *versus* by **categorization**

 ➢ Contemporary theory of metaphor offers a two-dimensional model of metaphor analysis:
 language & thought
 → at the cost of the communicative dimension of metaphor

 ➢ Solution to paradox: three-dimensional model: language, thought <u>and</u> communication

➢ a metaphor that "is <u>expressly</u> meant to <u>change</u> the <u>addressee's</u> <u>perspective</u> on the referent or topic that is the target of the metaphor, by making the addressee look at it from a different conceptual domain or space, which functions as a conceptual source" (Steen 2008: 222)

**« Deliberate metaphors are perspective changers »** (Steen, 2011)

# Theoretical framework:
# **Article Perrez & Reuchamps (2014)**

➢Proposes to apply **Steen's three-dimensional model** of metaphor analysis in communication to corpus of political discourse: **citizen discourse**

➢ Group discussions about Belgian federalism

➢ Dutch- and French-speaking citizens

## Deliberate metaphors in political discourse: the case of citizen discourse

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**Abstract**

This article proposes to apply Steen's (2008) three-dimensional model of metaphor analysis in communication to a corpus of political discourse, in this case citizen discourse. Our corpus has accordingly been analysed by making a distinction between three layers of metaphor, respectively at the linguistic (direct vs. indirect metaphors), conceptual (novel vs. conventional metaphors) and communicative levels (deliberate vs. non-deliberate metaphors). Our results suggest that making the distinction between deliberate and non-deliberate metaphors leads to meaningful political insights, notably pointing to differences in saliency of the source domains in terms of which citizens make sense of Belgian federalism. In this regard, the family domain, and more especially the metaphor BELGIAN FEDERALISM IS A LOVE RELATIONSHIP appears to function as an important conceptual reference point for the citizens' understanding of the political relations in the Belgian context.

In diesem Artikel wird Steens (2008) dreidimensionales Modell der Metaphernanalyse auf ein Korpus politischer Reden von Bürgern angewendet. Es wurden drei Metaphernebenen unterschieden, nämlich eine linguistische (direkte vs. indirekte Metaphern), eine konzeptuelle (konventionelle vs. neue Metaphern) und eine kommunikative Ebene (gezielte vs. nicht-gezielte Metaphern). Unsere Ergebnisse weisen darauf hin, dass der Unterschied zwischen gezielter und nicht-gezielter Metapher zu bedeutenden politischen Erkenntnissen führen kann, indem wichtige Unterschiede in der Bedeutung der Quelldomänen für den belgischen Föderalismus bei belgischen Bürgern deutlich werden. Vor allem die Familiendomäne und noch spezifischer die Metapher BELGIAN FEDERALISM IS A LOVE RELATIONSHIP scheinen ein wichtiger konzeptueller Referenzpunkt für das Verstehen der politischen Beziehungen durch die Bürger im belgischen Kontext zu sein.

Keywords: metaphor analysis, political discourse, MIP, deliberate metaphors, citizen discourse, Belgium, federalism

# Theoretical framework:
## Article Perrez & Reuchamps (2014)

➢ **Findings:**

❖ citizens use various **conceptual domains** to make sense of political phenomenon (Belgian federalism)

❖ high proportion of **deliberate metaphors** → citizens do rely on conscious comparisons between conceptual domains in order to explain their opinion and possibly make their case more convincingly

❖ **distinction** between **non-deliberate** and **deliberate** metaphors → suggests various degrees of saliency of conceptual domains in terms of which the citizens make sense of abstract political processes

# Methodology

## Data

➤ Biographical interviews conducted with Walloon politicians (French-speaking)

➤ Describing their personal political career within the political dynamics of their country

➤ 24 Walloon Members of Parliament from 4 political parties

➤ Length of corpus: +- 196 300 words

# Methodology

## Metaphor identification

➢ **MIPVU** procedure (Steen et al., 2010)

1) Read entire corpus → global understanding of content

2) Determine lexical units

3) **Search by terms referring to different source domains (e.g. battle, construction, relationships, etc.)**
   ➥ **744 relevant contexts**

4) Basic meaning of lexical unit ⇔ meaning in context (electronic version of *Le Petit Robert 2016*)
   ! As suggested by Steen (2010): ~~historical meaning~~
   ➥ **673 metaphorical contexts**

# Methodology

## Metaphor categorization

➤ **Steen's three-dimensional model (2008)**

1. **Linguistic dimension: direct versus indirect metaphors**

Is the cross-domain mapping between the source and the target domain explicitly expressed or not?

<u>Direct</u>: *« […] and beyond this, on a strategic plan, **it is a bit like a nuclear weapon**: it's having it without ever using it. »*

<u>Indirect</u>: *« We can imagine discussing texts that give a more structural **skeleton** to Wallonia, but that is not today's priority. »*

# Methodology

## Metaphor categorization

➢ **Steen's three-dimensional model (2008)**

**2. Conceptual dimension: novel versus conventional metaphor**

If the meaning of the metaphorically used expression is listed among the conventional definitions in the reference dictionary → conventional

If not → novel

**Conventional:** *« I want to __defend__ my region much more, even if it's on a federal level.»*

**Novel:** *« The Francophones are the __backpack filled with rocks__ of the Flemish.»*

# Methodology

## Metaphor categorization

➤ **Steen's three-dimensional model (2008)**

**3. Communicative dimension: deliberate versus non-deliberate metaphor**

To what extent do the metaphorically used expression match Steen's (2008) definition of deliberate metaphor? To what extent can we identify their <u>function in communication</u> (e.g. clarify one's conceptualization of abstract entities, aim to convince one's conversation partner, …)

**<u>Deliberate:</u>** *« We are **<u>a team</u>**, all **<u>players</u>** must be on **<u>the field</u>** and **<u>shoot</u>** in the same direction. If there is one person who **<u>shoots</u>** in their own **<u>camp</u>**, it won't work.»*

**<u>Non-deliberate:</u>** *« And yet, that is my fear given the current configuration: the Flemish had the opportunity to **<u>build</u>** their historical identity.»*

# Methodology

## Metaphor categorization

➢ **Steen's three-dimensional model (2008)**

**3. Communicative dimension: deliberate versus non-deliberate metaphor**

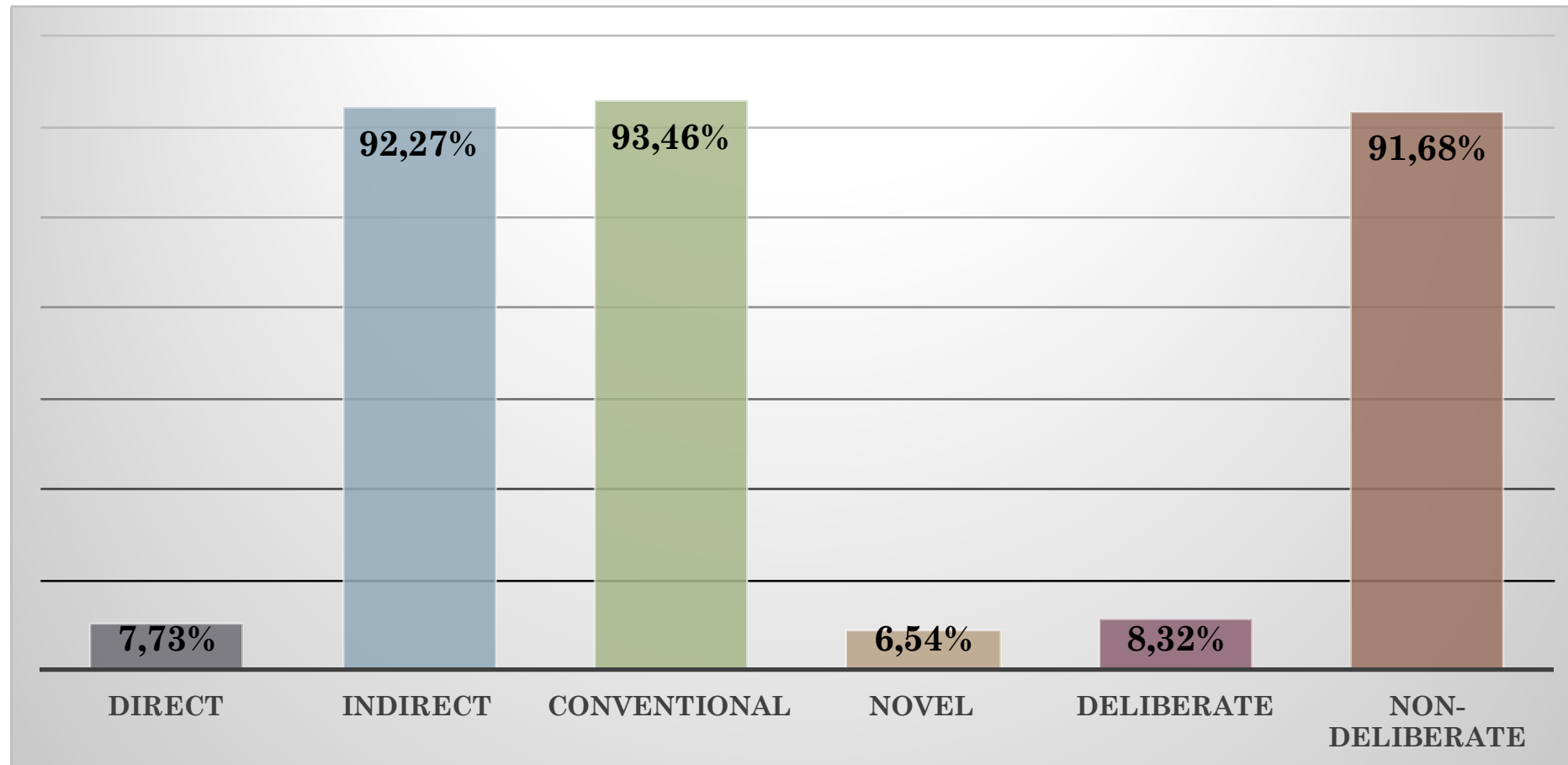| Direct & novel | Indirect & conventional |
|---|---|
| o Direct metaphors: explicitly point to the speaker's intention of presenting one conceptual domain in terms of another<br><br>o Novel metaphors: involve new, original mappings between two domains<br><br>⇒ more disposed to be considered as deliberate | o Match Steen's definition?<br><br>o If not → immediate context of metaphorical expression: several references to same source domain? If so, considered as deliberate |

# Methodology

## <u>Metaphor counting</u>

*« Politicians often have a discourse which I call the* **<u>handlebar discourse</u>***. This means … it is as if a* **<u>racing cyclist</u>** *would do the '***<u>Flèche Wallonne</u>***' without looking far ahead and would just keep on* **<u>riding</u>***. »*

➢ Every single lexical unit = considered as **<u>independent metaphorical unit</u>**

# Results: overall

| Metaphorical | Non-metaphorical | Total |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| **673** | 71 | 744 |
| **90,46%** | 9,54% | 100% |

# Results: deliberate metaphors

|  | Deliberate | Non-deliberate | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Direct | 51 | 1 | 52 |
| Indirect | 5 | 616 | 621 |
|  |  |  |  |
| Conventional | 18 | 611 | 629 |
| Novel | 38 | 6 | 44 |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Total** | **56** | **617** | **673** |

# Results: deliberate metaphors

| | Deliberate |
|---|---|
| Direct | 51 |
| Indirect | 5 |
| | |
| Conventional | 18 |
| Novel | 38 |
| | |
| **Total** | 56 deliberate metaphors |

➢ Link between direct and/or novel metaphors & deliberate metaphors = more easy to assume

➢ Our results:
  ❖ 5 cases of deliberate & indirect metaphor (8,93%)
  ❖ 18 cases of deliberate & conventional metaphor (32,14%)

# Results: deliberate metaphors

**Deliberate and indirect (but novel):**

« *To last in politics, you must first settle durably on a local level, instead of wanting to* **'do the shooting star',** *that's one thing.* »

**Deliberate and conventional (but direct):**

« *One of the major problems of Belgian federalism,* <u>is</u> *that there are* **two of us** *and, eventually,* **we just look at each other** *all the time;* **it's not me, it's you**.»

**Deliberate, indirect and conventional:**

« *And Flanders, nothing can be done ... I came to the realization, you cannot make a* **wedding** *if both aren't* **consenting**. *I don't know, what do you think?* »
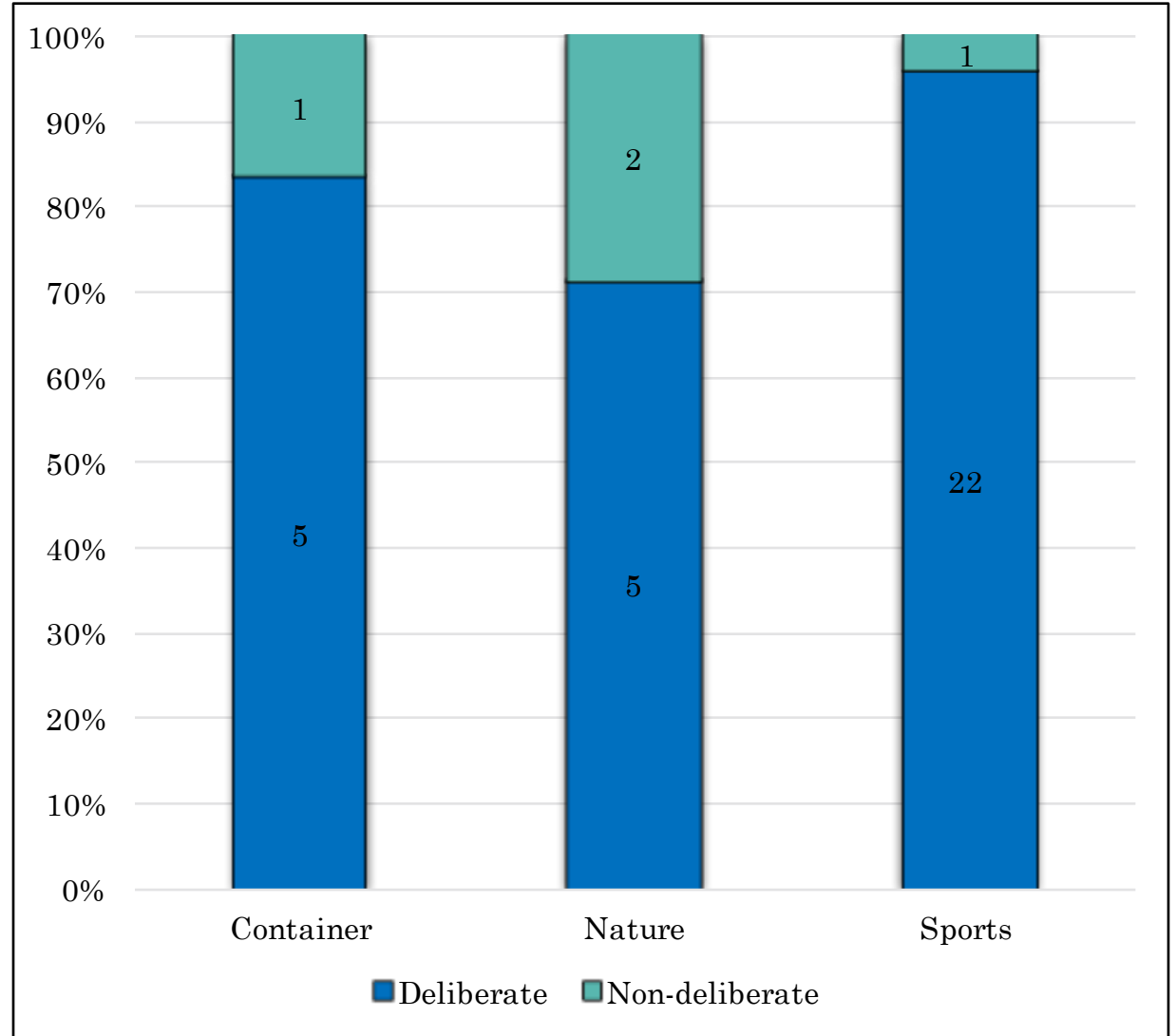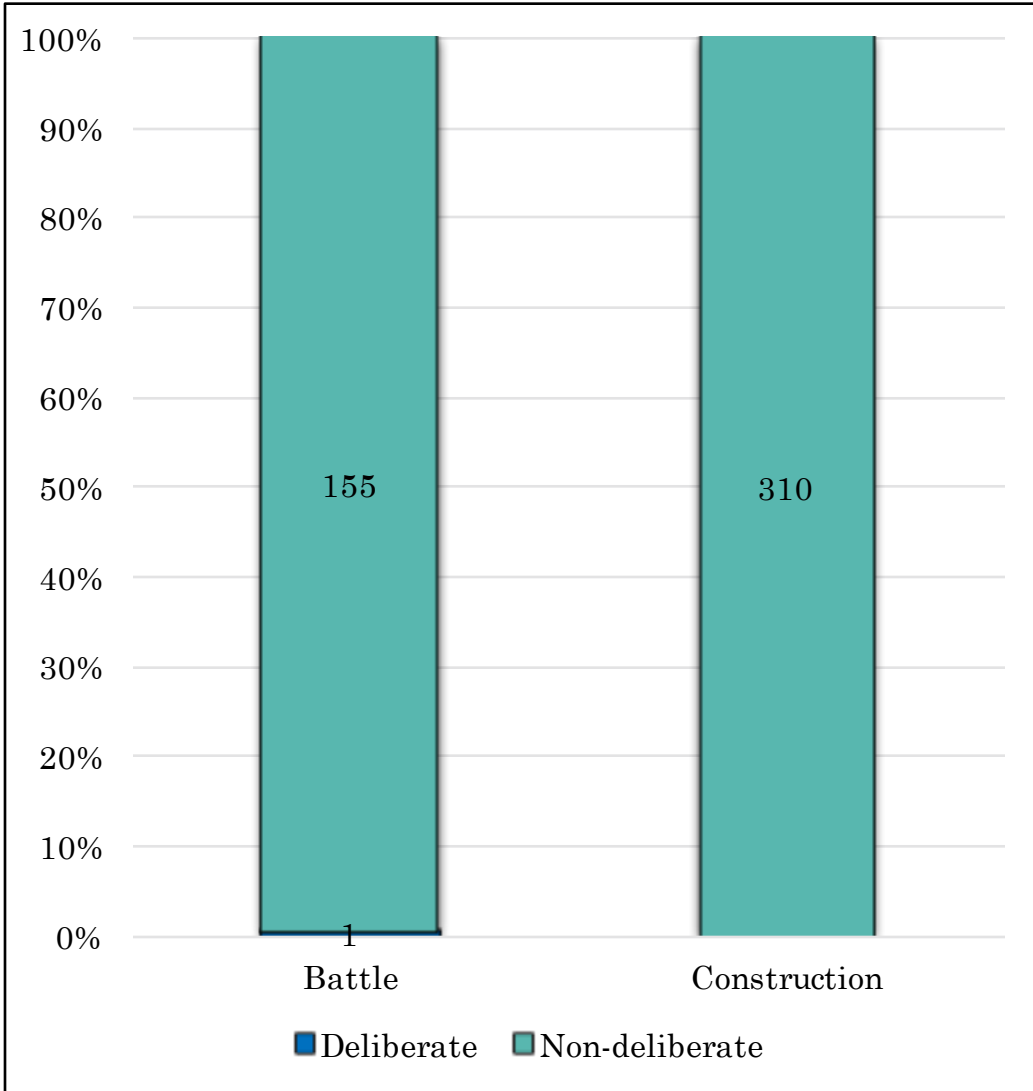
# Results: Source domains

| Source Domains | Deliberate | Non-deliberate | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Construction | | 310 | 310 |
| Battle | 1 | 155 | 156 |
| Relationships | 10 | 44 | 54 |
| Path/movement | | 25 | 25 |
| Sports | 22 | 1 | 23 |
| Games | 1 | 20 | 21 |
| Personification | 2 | 18 | 20 |
| Others | 1 | 16 | 17 |
| Human body | 2 | 11 | 13 |
| Nature | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| Disease | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Container | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| Life & death | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| Machine | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Everyday life | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Drama | | 2 | 2 |
| Religion | | 1 | 1 |
| **Total** | **56** | **617** | **673** |

# Results: Source domains
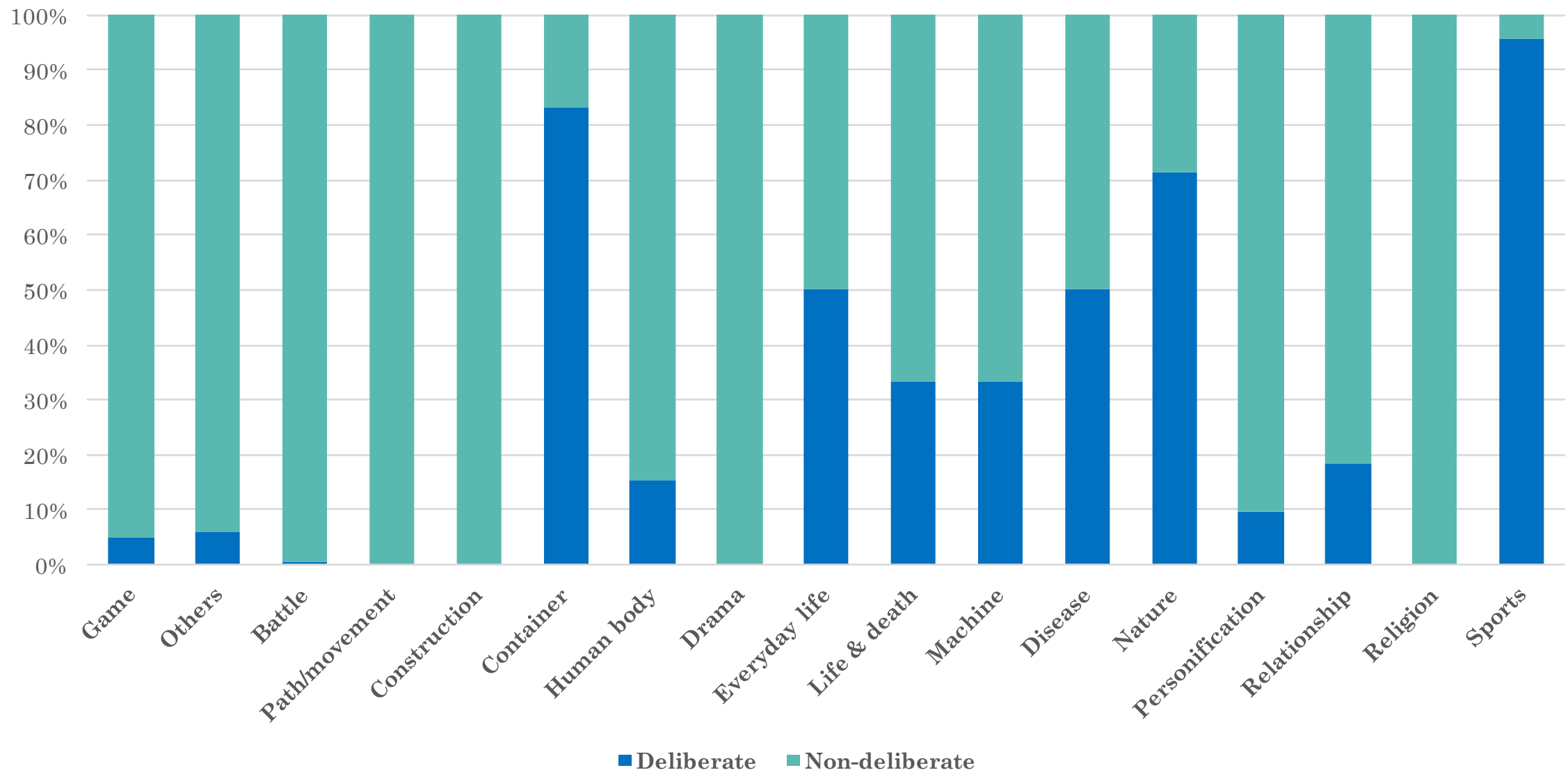
# Results: Source domains

# Results: target domains



**Percentage of metaphors per target domain**

Political life 38%

Institutions 62%

Institutions
Political life
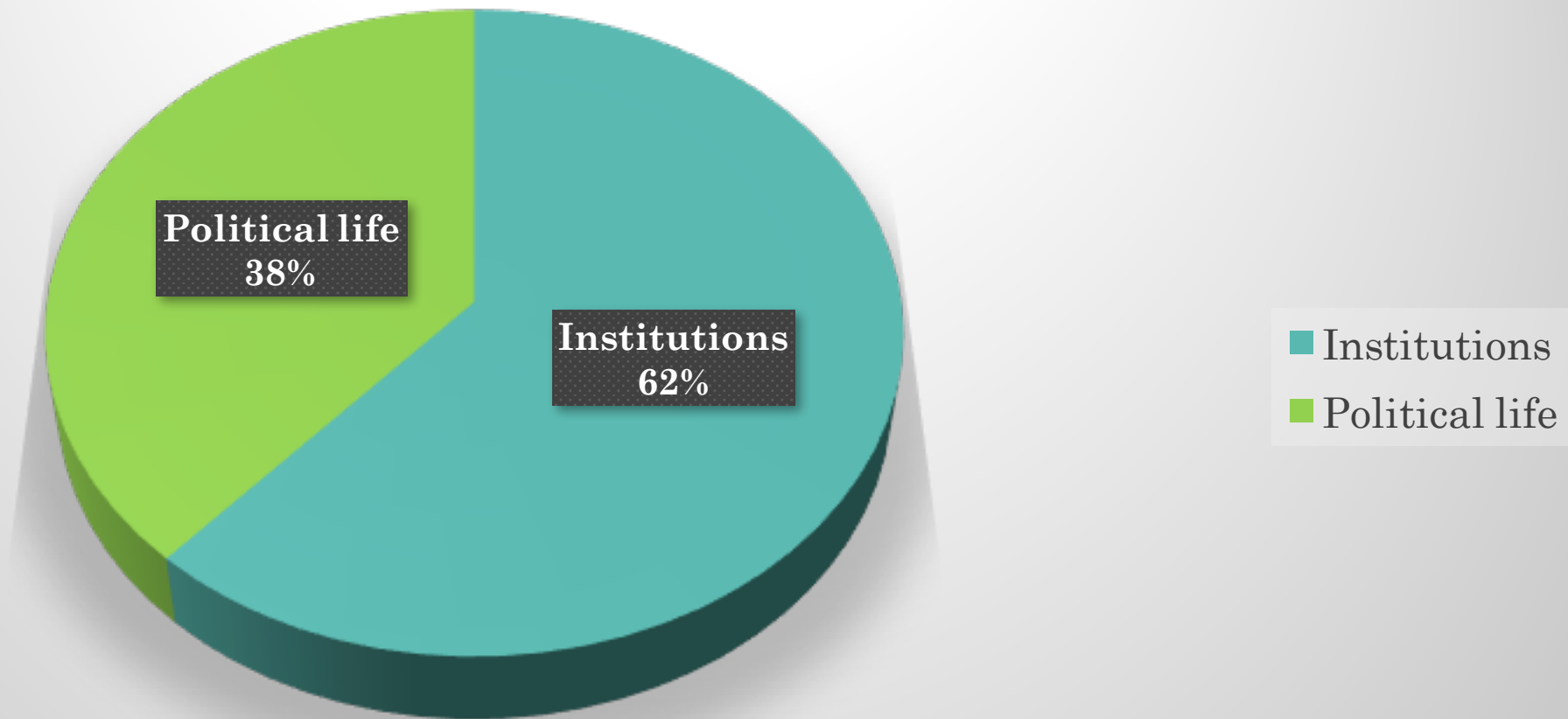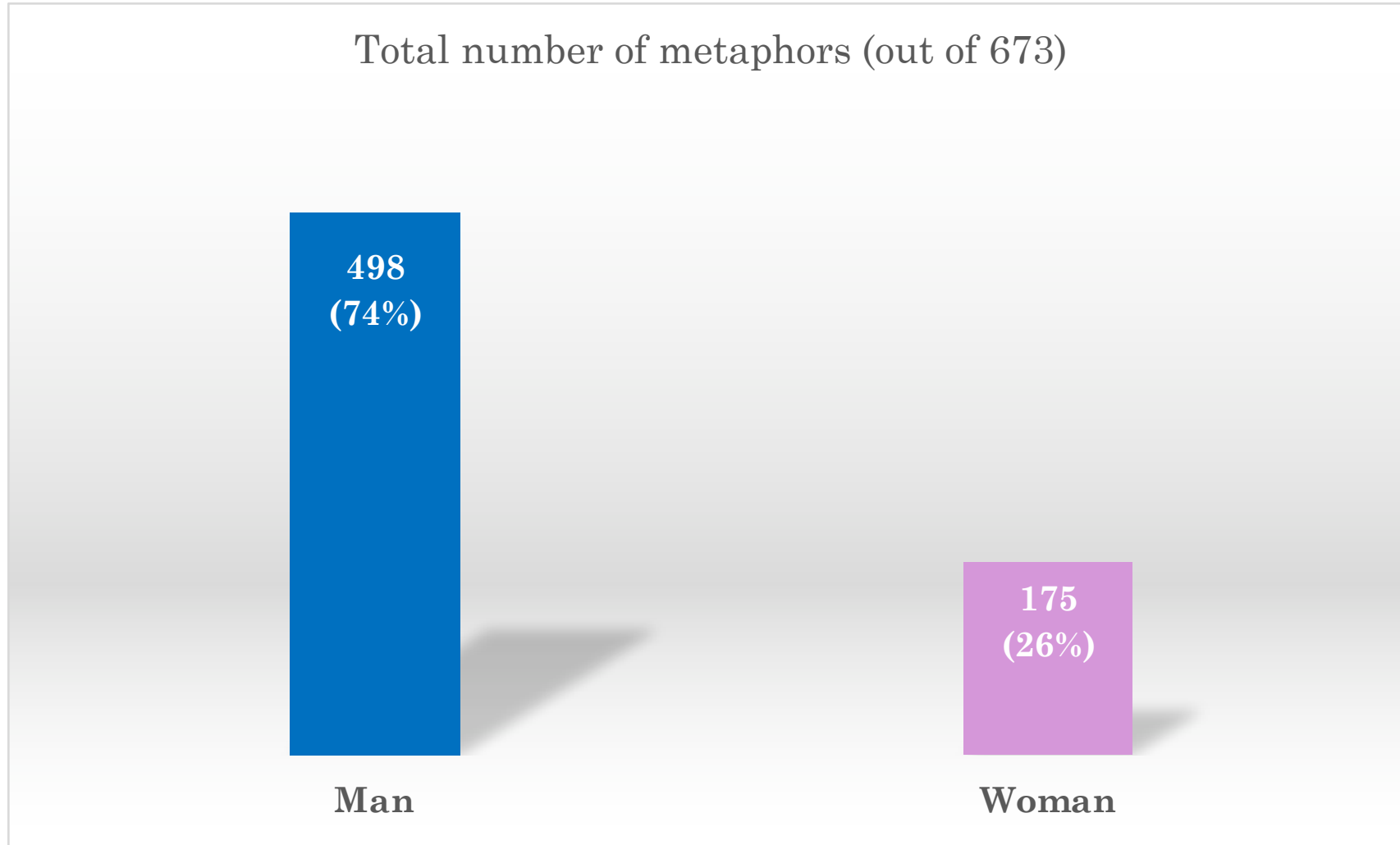
# Results: Gender

# Results: Gender



Number of deliberate metaphors (out of 56)

49
(87,5%)

7
(12,5%)

Man

Woman
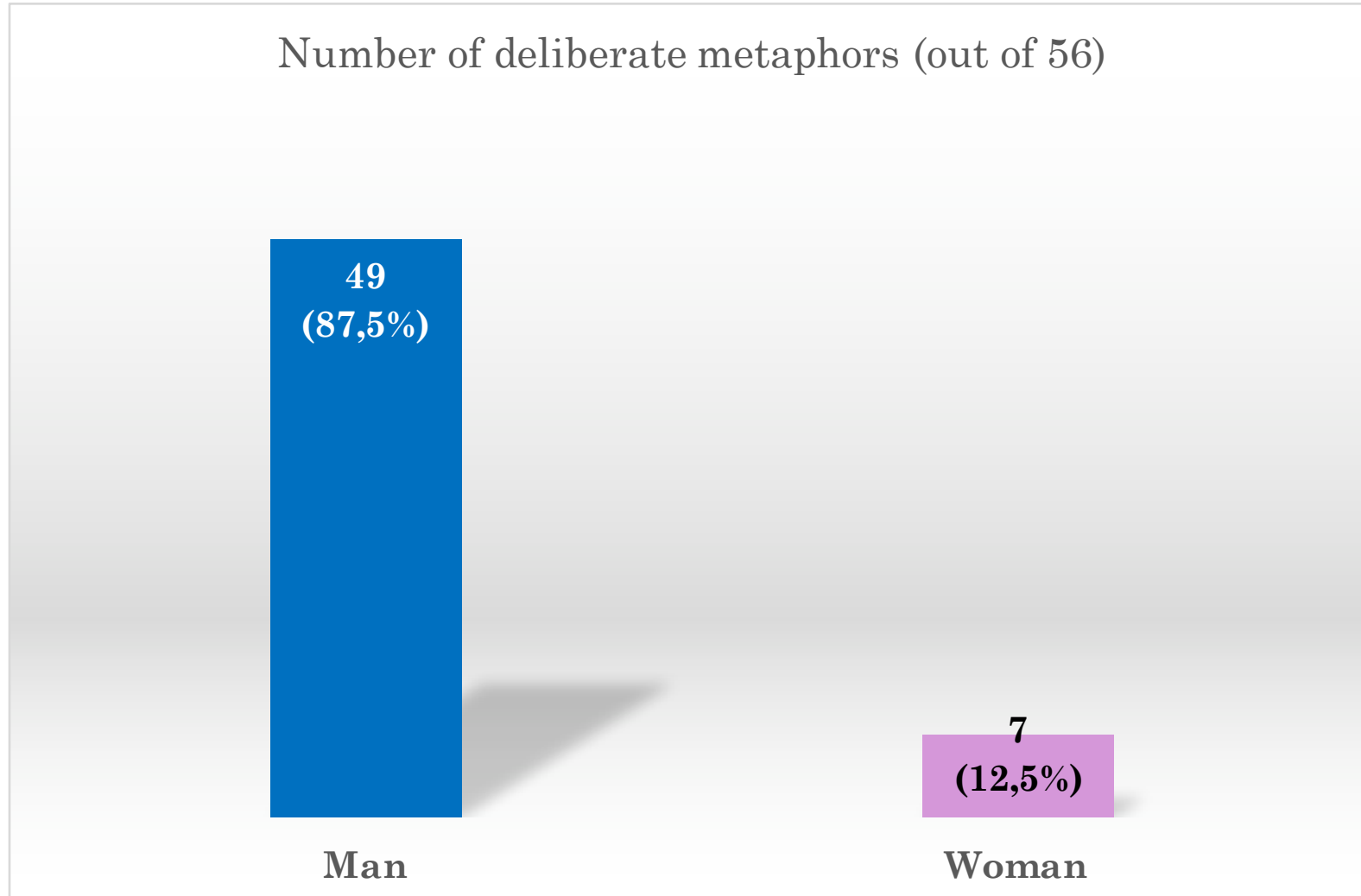
# Results: Gender



Source domains

# Results: Gender



Source domains

| | Men | Women |
|---|---|---|
| Game | 15 | 6 |
| Other | 12 | 17 |
| Path/movement | 19 | 6 |
| Container | 13 | 3 |
| Human body | 14 | 1 |
| Drama | 1 | 1 |
| Everyday life | 2 | |
| Life & death | 3 | 3 |
| Machine | 2 | 1 |
| Disease | 7 | 2 |
| Nature | 7 | |
| Personification | 19 | 2 |
| Relation | 34 | 25 |
| Religion | | 1 |
| Sports | 23 | |
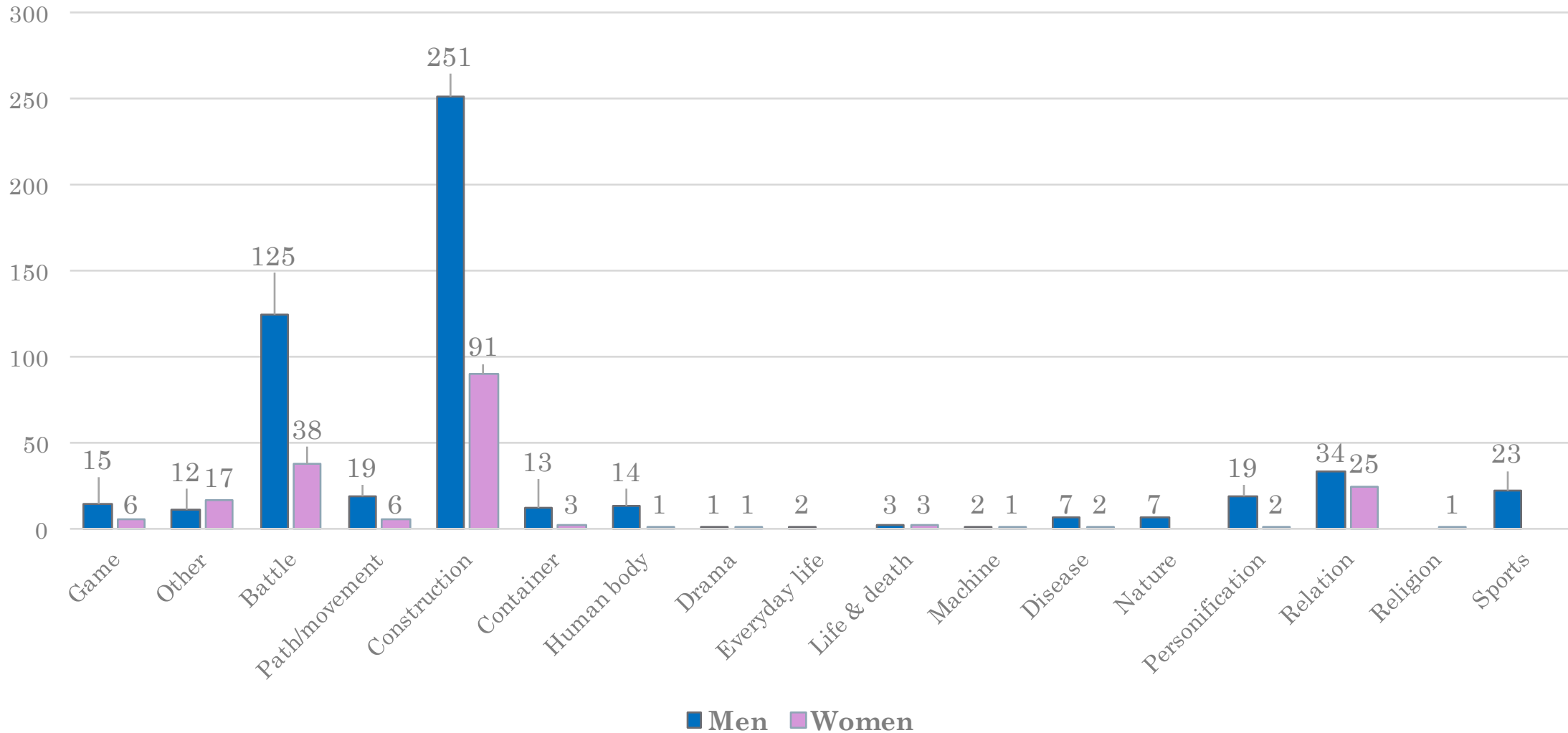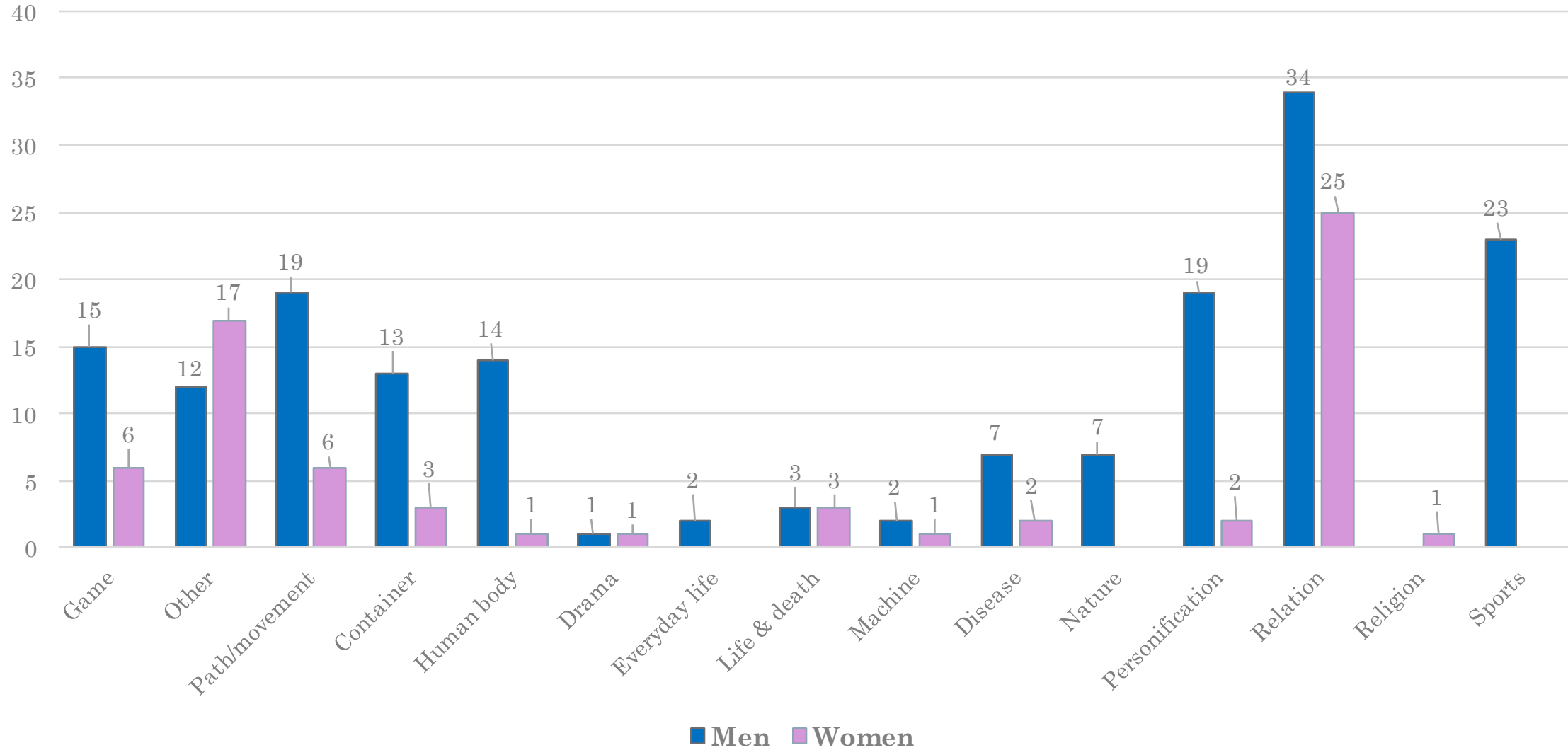
# Discussion

➢ Use of diverse **conceptual domains** to make sense of the political dynamics of their country (Battle, construction, sports, relationship, etc.)

➢ **Deliberate metaphors**: 8,32%
   ➢ Suggests that – even in spontaneous and informal discourse – politicians rely on conscious comparisons between domains to explain their perception of the political dynamics

➢ **Comparison** between **deliberate** and **non-deliberate**:
   ➢ Suggests different degrees of saliency of conceptual domains

➢ Results = similar to results of Belgian citizen discourse (Perrez&Reuchamps, 2014)

# Conclusion

➢ Usefulness of applying Steen's three-dimensional model of metaphor analysis

   ➢ Particularly when analysing metaphor in **political discourse** (elite, citizen, media, etc.)

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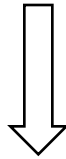
Special focus on **deliberate metaphors**

➢ Further work: apply Steen's three-dimensional model to corpus consisting of interviews with Scottish Members of Parliament

# Thank you !

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