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[Abstract]

Do citizens seek to protect the human rights of immigrants as much as their own? While the flow of people across borders is increasing, immigrants' human rights, which should receive equal protection as those of citizens, are not always being observed. We examined three possible boundaries that citizens might draw around those who they will and will not protect from human rights violations: in-groups vs. out-groups, culturally similar vs. dissimilar groups, and documented vs. undocumented groups. To test these three possibilities, we conducted vignette experiments with Dutch citizens on four areas of general human rights. The results show that the human rights of culturally heterogeneous and similar out-groups (Moroccan and Polish immigrants) are as protected as those of the Dutch, but the human rights of undocumented Moroccan immigrants are not protected. This indicates that undocumented immigrants are in a vulnerable position and that citizens do not even attempt to protect their universal human rights.

Do citizens seek to protect the human rights of immigrants as much as they do their own? The number of immigrants is increasing as the flow of people across national borders increases. However, the human rights of immigrants are not always protected. For instance, in the U.S., President Donald Trump has inflamed anti-immigrant sentiment by stating that a considerable number of immigrants are entering the U.S. illegally and by framing them as invaders (Cao, Lindo, & Zhong, 2022; Flores, 2018; Hodwitz & Massingale, 2021). He even went to the extreme of separating the children of immigrants who entered the U.S. without legal documentation from their families, resulting in the separation of more than 5,000 immigrant families (Congressional Research Service, 2021). While some of the American public harshly criticized the Trump administration for these human rights violations and sympathized with the immigrants, many others supported the administration's actions (Flores, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2018).

Citizens of democracies are supposed to punish politicians who do not protect human rights by not voting for them, and politicians are supposed to fear this and work to protect the human rights of their citizens (Simmons, 2009). Based on this assumption of democratic control, citizens' support for human rights has been widely studied (e.g., Chilton, 2014; Cole, 2012; Hill & Jones, 2014; Wallace, 2013). However, as observed among some U.S. citizens, there are scattered instances of relative intolerance for human rights violations against immigrants in democratic countries. Citizens may not be as willing to protect the human rights of immigrants as they are to defend those of their fellow citizens. Citizens' attitudes toward the protection of the human rights of immigrants may also vary depending on the type of immigrants. Nevertheless, little is known about how citizens perceive human rights violations against immigrants.

There are three possibilities for where citizens draw boundaries about whom they will and will not protect from human rights violations: ethnic in-groups vs. out-groups, culturally

similar vs. dissimilar groups, and legitimate vs. illegitimate groups. The first possibility is based on social identity theory, which indicates that citizens prefer their own group and do not seek to protect human rights violations against out-group members. The second possibility, which is based on the cultural threat thesis, is that citizens prefer culturally similar groups and treat culturally different groups poorly. The third possibility is that citizens draw a strict line between legal and illegal (“undocumented”) immigrants.

To examine which of these three possibilities is most plausible, we conducted a survey experiment in the Netherlands. The Netherlands has relatively high scores on human rights protection (Herre & Roser, 2016) and has a tolerant immigration policy (e.g., Solano & Huddleston, 2020). Given these conditions, the Netherlands is the “least likely case” for examining citizens’ endorsement of immigrants’ human rights. In other words, it is conceivable that even in such a tolerant country, if there are differences among citizens in their perceptions of protecting immigrants’ human rights, similar (or even stronger) phenomena should be observed in other, less tolerant countries.

In the following sections, we first derive a political theory of immigrants’ rights and clarify their human rights. Next, we elaborate on three possibilities for the protection of immigrants’ human rights. Then, we describe the design of our survey experiment conducted with Dutch citizens and present the results. Our findings suggest that citizens’ attitudes toward the protection of immigrants’ human rights vary across immigrants and that citizens are particularly negative toward the protection of the human rights of undocumented immigrants, which illuminates the vulnerability of undocumented immigrants in society. This finding supports the plausibility of the third possibility—the importance of the legal versus illegal boundary—in shaping public attitudes toward immigrants’ human rights.

Human rights of immigrants

Carens (2013) distinguishes between “membership-specific human rights” and “general human rights” (p.93, 97). The former refers to rights that are tied to membership in a state, including employment and social rights. Merely being present in the territory does not guarantee these rights; certain memberships (citizenship, migrant visa, etc.) are needed. For example, tourists cannot receive work or social benefits. The latter, on the other hand, is defined as the “rights to which everyone is equally entitled, non-citizens as well as citizens, visitors as well as residents” within the country’s jurisdiction (p.93). The most typical of these rights is personal security (protection from violence and the right to medical care), which must be protected regardless of one’s membership.¹

Other scholars, explicitly or implicitly, follow Carens’ concept of general human rights. Miller (2017) states that “a state that claims authority to apply its laws to everyone within its territory must also protect the human rights of all those present, whether legally or not” (p.117), and the human rights that he mentions, such as physical security, freedom of speech,

¹Carens (2013) also proposed other types of principles. For example, he argued that people should be given the rights to the country itself, and that immigrants have freedom of thought, freedom of religion, and freedom of speech. He also stated that employment is a membership-specific human right, but that noncitizens should be treated fairly as citizens when they participate in labor. Importantly, he stated that undocumented immigrants also have general human rights, arguing that “even the harshest critics of unauthorized immigration do not openly challenge this principle” (p.132).

and others, are similar to those highlighted by Carens. Interestingly, Miller also suggests that privacy rights should be protected for temporary migrants, but he argues that it is controversial whether these rights are equally protected for unauthorized immigrants, as the government may need to gather information about them. Mendoza (2017) similarly argues that undocumented immigrants should be protected from exploitation, oppression, and discrimination.

What are citizens attitudes toward guaranteeing immigrants the same general human rights that should be granted to all people? We are interested in citizens' assessments of these general human rights—those that are the most basic and fundamental. However, little attention has been given to general human rights in research on immigrants' rights. For instance, political scientists and sociologists have investigated citizens' attitudes toward immigrants' social (Kootstra, 2016; Magni, 2021), cultural (Çelebi, Verkuyten, & Smyrnioti, 2016; Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2006), and political rights (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015), as well as their access to citizenship (Hainmueller & Hangartner, 2013; Iyengar, et al., 2013; Raijman, Davidov, Schmidt, & Hochman, 2008). These studies have certainly provided valuable insights into how citizens perceive the various rights of immigrants, opening up the possibility of introducing these rights in the future. However, we know little about citizens' attitudes toward guaranteeing immigrants general human rights.²

In summary, even though scholars agree that immigrants have basic and fundamental human rights, few empirical studies focus on these types of rights. Instead, prior research has focused on immigrant-specific rights. However, since general human rights are fundamental to immigrants' lives in the host society, it would be worthwhile to examine whether citizens are willing to equally protect these rights. Unlike previous studies, we comprehensively examine general human rights violations against various groups.

Whose rights are protected: Three possibilities

General human rights have received little attention in discussions of citizens' perceptions and evaluations of the rights of immigrants and ethnic minorities. Therefore, we examine whether citizens seek to protect the human rights of immigrants and of citizens equally and whether they seek to protect the human rights of all types of immigrants. We formulate three hypotheses based on social identity perspectives, cultural threats, and illegality. In these hypotheses, the groups hypothesized to be unprotected differ, with ethnic out-groups, culturally distant groups, and undocumented immigrants being protected, respectively.

1. Ethnic in-group vs. out-group

The first expected possibility is that citizens draw dichotomous boundaries between ethnic in-groups (groups to which they belong) and out-groups (groups to which they do not belong).

² One exception is the study on torture. Torture is related to physical rights, one of the fundamental personal rights, and falls into a subcategory of general human rights. Conrad et al. (2018) examined this by conducting survey experiments in which American citizens support government torture when detainees have Arabic names and are allegedly involved in terrorism. Other empirical studies have also reported similar results (e.g., Blauwkamp, Rowling, & Pettit, 2018; Young & Kearns, 2020). However, these studies focus exclusively on torturing terrorists, providing little insight into whether torture alone or other types of human rights violations are endorsed by citizens, and against whom those violations are endorsed.

This expectation stems from the social identity perspective (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Hornsey 2008). According to this theory, when social categorization is salient, people seek similarity with members of their in-groups and seek to differentiate themselves from members of their out-groups. To maintain a positive self-concept and self-esteem, people are supposed to evaluate in-group members favorably and out-group members negatively (Rhodes & Baron, 2019; Raijman, Davidov, Schmidt, and Hochman 2008; Verkuyten 2009).

Although people draw group boundaries based on various social properties (e.g., Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010), it is rather common, especially in Western societies, to draw boundaries between ethnic out-groups and in-groups (Sluiter, Tolsma, & Scheepers, 2015; Zschirnt and Ruedin 2016). A considerable number of studies have shown that in-group favoritism and out-group derogation lead to negative intergroup relations, such as negative attitudes toward members of ethnic minority groups (de Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Sides & Citrin, 2007; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, & Prior, 2004) and the induction of intergroup conflict (Bar-Tal, 2007; Sambanis & Shayo, 2013; Wimmer, Cederman, & Min, 2009).

Intergroup tensions resulting from the categorization of in-groups and out-groups are also likely to lead to tolerance for human rights violations. Tarrant et al. (2012), using the torture of out-group terrorists as an experimental case, showed that torture committed by other citizens is morally more justifiable than torture committed by ethnic out-group members. They identified a mechanism whereby if in-group members tortured an out-group terrorist, the in-group respondents had less empathy for the out-group terrorist and blamed them more. These results indicate that torture of out-group members, a violation of human rights, may be justifiable when the perpetrators are in-group members (and potentially in-group institutions). Similarly, Bilali et al. (2012) showed that when people are presented with mass killings committed by their in-group members in the past, they tend to attribute responsibility for the mass killing to the victim's out-group rather than the perpetrator's in-group. The results indicate that people are likely to blame in-group members less, even when they violate human rights, and blame out-group members more for evoking conflictual situations. Furthermore, Bilali et al. showed that people with higher national identification are more likely to assign blame to out-group members.

These findings, combined with research on intergroup relations, indicate that people tend to derogate those who do not share their citizenship and that these negative attitudes can be generalized even to attitudes toward ethnic out-group human rights. From these studies, we expect that citizens seek to protect the human rights of their own in-group members (citizens and co-ethnic groups) and not those of ethnic out-group members.

2. Culturally similar vs. dissimilar groups

The second expected possibility is related to the first, but more emphasis is placed on the differences among immigrant groups. That is, it is possible that citizens seek to protect the human rights of group members that are culturally similar to them but do not care about the human rights of culturally dissimilar groups. This notion stems from the cultural threat thesis, which states that in-group members have an exclusive attitude toward out-groups that are perceived as incompatible with the culture of the in-group (e.g., Blumer, 1958; Sears, 1988). In-group members anticipate that culturally dissimilar out-groups will endanger the coherence of their culture, form more negative attitudes and seek to exclude out-group members to protect their own culture.

While culture has various dimensions, religion in particular has been shown to be a very strong indicator of attitude formation (Grigoryan, Cohrs, Boehnke, van de Vijver, &

Easterbrook, 2022; Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010). Particularly in Western societies, Islam and non-Islam are prominent cultural boundaries around “liberal” values³. Muslim residents tend to maintain their cultural values regarding women and sexual minorities in host societies within and across generations (Diehl, Koenig, & Kerstin, 2009; Drouhot & Nee, 2019; Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 2018). These values have been dramatically liberalized in Western societies in recent decades (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004; Roberts 2019), resulting in a strong perceived cultural incompatibility between native and Muslim immigrant values. This perception of cultural incompatibility, in turn, evokes negative sentiment among natives toward Muslim immigrants (e.g., Adida, Laitin, & Valfort, 2010; Choi, Poertner, & Sambanis, 2021; Helbling & Traunmüller, 2016; Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007. However, also see Helbling & Traunmüller, 2020). Such negative attitude formations emerge across the dichotomous categories of native and immigrant. For example, Ben-Nun Bloom, Arikan, and Courtemanche (2015) show that U.S. citizens have negative attitudes toward religiously heterogeneous immigrants but positive attitudes toward religiously similar immigrants.

Studies further examined how cultural threats are associated with extreme attitudes such as the expulsion of Muslim immigrants and the endorsement of violence against them (Beck & Plant, 2018; Thomsen, Green, & Sidanius, 2008). Although these results are limited to a subset of the human rights domains, they potentially suggest that non-Muslim citizens may be generally reluctant to endorse the human rights of Muslim immigrants.

3. Legal residents vs. undocumented immigrants

The third expected possibility is that citizens draw a boundary between those who reside legally and those who reside illegally in the host society. Specifically, citizens may protect the human rights of citizens and noncitizen immigrants equally and be indifferent to the human rights of undocumented immigrants. Such an expectation is possible because people have negative feelings toward undocumented immigrants. Although this argument is rather empirical, prior studies provide solid evidence of illegality as a cue for negative attitudes (e.g., Laurence & Kim, 2021; McCabe, Matos, & Walker, 2021; Schachter, 2016; Wright, Levy, & Citrin, 2016). Furthermore, strong negative attitudes toward undocumented immigrants are not mitigated by immigrants’ attributes (e.g., ethnicity, education, skills). Wright et al. (Wright, Levy, & Citrin, 2016) found that the experimental attributes of immigrants do not deter the negative effects of being undocumented on others’ attitudes toward them. Using conjoint analysis, Schachter (2016) showed that U.S. citizens are most opposed to immigrants who are undocumented, regardless of their race or ethnicity. In other words, illegality is perceived as a consensually negative cue.

Scholars have proposed two major explanations for negative attitudes toward undocumented immigrants: moral considerations and dehumanizing considerations. First, citizens consider undocumented immigrants to be morally wrong as they are illegally residing in their territory and breaking the law. Wright et al. (2015) showed that those who rigidly adhere to the law have very negative attitudes toward undocumented immigrants. Another

³ It is undeniable that Muslim immigrants tend to be associated with the threat of terrorism. However, prior research has systematically compared cultural and terroristic threats and found that cultural rather than terroristic threats increase anti-Muslim attitudes (Obaidi, Kunst, Kteily, Thomsen, & Sidanius, 2018).

explanation is that undocumented immigrants are associated with dehumanization, in which certain groups are denied human status (e.g., Haslam & Loughnan, 2014), and multiple studies have shown that dehumanization triggers negative attitudes toward undocumented immigrants (Kteily & Bruneau, 2017; Markowitz & Slovic, 2020; Utych, 2018). Utych (2018) showed that people who received the dehumanization treatment in an experiment had increased anger and then increased negative attitudes toward undocumented immigrants.

The strong boundaries drawn between legal residents and undocumented immigrants may, in turn, be generalized to the endorsement of human rights. Citizens may perceive undocumented immigrants as breaking and being disrespectful to the law. As a result, they may not be willing to protect the human rights of undocumented immigrants. They may also dehumanize undocumented immigrants and deprive them of basic and fundamental human rights. Importantly, prior research has shown that both moral considerations and dehumanization are associated with the endorsement of human rights (e.g., Markowitz & Slovic, 2020; Stolerma & Lagnado, 2020).

Three hypotheses in the Dutch context

We have offered three possible explanations for how citizens endorse the human rights of immigrants. As we mentioned above, prior research has not systematically examined whose human rights citizens seek to protect. In this study, we use the Dutch case to examine which of the three possibilities is most plausible. The Netherlands scores relatively high on human rights (Herre and Roser, 2016)⁴ and on tolerance for immigrant integration policies (Solano & Huddleston, 2020). These features suggest that the Netherlands is “the least likely case” for observing citizens’ negative attitudes toward human rights protection. Moreover, because of its favorable environment for immigrants and human rights, if opposition to human rights protection is found in this country, the situation could be worse in other countries with lower scores on human rights and immigrant integration policies.

In our experiment to test which of the three explanations is the most plausible, we selected four groups as hypothetical targets of human rights violations: the Dutch, Poles, Moroccans, and undocumented Moroccans. In the Netherlands, Poles and Moroccans are representative immigrant ethnic groups. It is also well known that compared to the Dutch, Poles and Moroccans (both documented and undocumented) are negatively perceived (e.g., Erisen & Kentmen-Cin, 2017; McGinnity & Gijsbertsa, 2015). Our experiment assumed that Polish and Moroccan immigrants are noncitizen first-generation immigrants to examine whether Dutch citizens have an inclusive attitude toward these immigrant groups. Using these ethnic groups, we posit the following three hypotheses.

The first hypothesis is that if the argument of social identity perspectives is valid and Dutch people draw a line between Dutch and non-Dutch groups, then Dutch respondents would be less likely to consider the human rights of any immigrant groups as worthy of protecting compared to those of the Dutch.

The second hypothesis, an argument based on cultural threats, expects that Dutch citizens prefer those who have religions and cultures that are similar to their own. The most

⁴ In the West, some societies score higher than the Netherlands, such as Norway, Iceland, and Finland. However, Norway, for example, has a very low level of integration policy and Iceland has a very small number of residents. In terms of accessibility and immigrant tolerance, we decided to use the Netherlands as our experimental subject.

salient cultural cleavage in the Netherlands lies in whether someone is Muslim or not. Because most Moroccan immigrants are Muslim, we expect that Dutch citizens would seek to protect the human rights of a culturally similar group (i.e., Poles) but would not seek to protect Moroccan immigrants.

The third hypothesis focuses on the illegality of residents. According to this hypothesis, Dutch citizens are expected to be willing to protect the human rights of Dutch people and of Polish and Moroccan immigrants but not the human rights of undocumented Moroccans. Notably, according to this hypothesis, people are expected to draw a line between Moroccan immigrants and undocumented Moroccan immigrants. Even if these two groups are likely to share a religion, Dutch citizens are expected to react according to the legality of the target group.

Experimental design

We conducted our survey experiment in January 2022. We recruited respondents using Lucid, a web survey platform that recruits respondents registered with various web survey companies. Lucid is an emerging platform for conducting social science experiments that is gaining popularity and has been tested for its suitability for social science theories. Coppock and McClellan (2019) show that descriptive and experimental findings from the Lucid platform and a national representative sample are comparable.⁵ We recruited 2,458 Dutch national respondents on this platform for our survey experiment.

In the vignette experiment, we asked the respondents to read a fictitious story in which a person is in a situation in the Netherlands where his rights have been violated by a public authority. We randomly changed the ethnicity of the person and the type of rights being violated in the story. We prepared three types of ethnicities: Dutch, Polish, and Moroccan. For Moroccan, we further prepared two types: Moroccan and illegal (undocumented) Moroccan. We acknowledge that some respondents may react strongly to the word “illegal.” However, prior research has shown that the framing of illegal, undocumented, and unauthorized immigrants does not change respondents’ attitudes (Merolla, Ramakrishnan, & Haynes, 2013). The types of human rights that appear in the story include the right to be protected from violence, the right to medical care, freedom of speech, and the right to privacy. These rights were derived from Carens and Miller’s theoretical proposal. The exact story in the vignette is as follows, with the content in parentheses being randomly assigned:

This is a 35-year-old [Dutch man/Polish man/Moroccan man/Moroccan man illegally] living in Amsterdam. He was living a peaceful day in Amsterdam, but he found himself in a situation where his [right to express his opinion in public without restrictions/right to receive appropriate medical treatment if necessary/right to be protected from police brutality/right

⁵ We should note, however, that recently the number of inattentive samples in Lucid have increased (Ternovski & Orr, 2022). To address these issues, we conducted an attention check. The main results did not exclude those who did not pass the attention check because excluding these respondents did not change the results. We presented the main results without those respondents who did not pass the attention check in Table A1 in the Appendix.

to privacy] was violated by a public institution (government, police, judiciary, etc.). Frustrated by this situation, he decided to file a lawsuit against the government.

After the respondents read the vignette, they were asked to answer on a 5-point scale whether they thought his rights should be protected. The responses were rescaled so that higher scores indicated more negative treatments of the person (the original vignette and questions written in Dutch can be found in the Appendix). Note that to make the vignette appear more natural, only the ethnic group was specified for the person in the vignette and not nationality. To ensure that the respondents correctly perceived the immigrant person in the vignette as an immigrant group, we conducted a manipulation check in which the respondents were asked to guess the citizenship of the person in the vignette. The results showed that most respondents (65%) correctly answered the question about the citizenship of the person in the vignette (e.g., respondents who received the “Polish” treatment indicated that the person in the vignette had Polish citizenship). Excluding the respondents who did not pass the manipulation check did not change the results, and they were therefore included in the main analysis.

We conducted regression analysis with the human rights protection responses as the dependent variable and the experimental treatments as the independent variables. Using the Dutch as the reference group, we examined the effects of ethnicity and legal status on attitudes toward human rights protection. To ensure the robustness of the main results, we also performed some additional analyses. First, we included variables of the respondents’ age, gender, education, and perceived threat from immigrants⁶ in the model to control for respondent background. In addition, we tested whether changing the dependent variable from attitude toward human rights protection to two other variables, i.e., whether the person in the vignette was considered responsible for the situation and whether the institution treated the person in the vignette fairly, would change the results. Furthermore, we used the respondents’ background information to explore heterogeneity in the treatment effect on human rights support. We present some of the heterogeneous effects in the text, while the remaining additional results are shown in the Appendix (Table A1, Figures A1 to A3).

Results of empirical analyses

We first analyze the results of each hypothesis separately. Figure 1 shows the results for the social identity hypothesis, which predicts that Dutch respondents would be more supportive of Dutch human rights than non-Dutch human rights. In the figure, the estimated values of respondent attitudes toward human rights protection when the person in the vignette was Dutch are compared to those when the person was non-Dutch. The non-Dutch group in the figure includes the three types presented in the vignette: Polish, Moroccan, and illegal Moroccan. The four types of human rights, namely, freedom of speech, right to receive appropriate medical treatment, freedom from violence, and right to privacy, are presented simultaneously. The results show that the willingness to protect medical rights and privacy rights was higher for Dutch people than for non-Dutch people. The marginal effects of being

⁶ Threat variables are composed of job threats, cultural threats, and crime threats. These variables were measured with statements that “Immigrants take jobs away from people who were born in the Netherlands”, “The Netherlands’ culture is generally undermined by immigrants” and “Immigrants increase crime rates”.

non-Dutch on medical rights and privacy rights are $-.268$ ($p=.002$) and $-.335$ ($p<.001$), respectively⁷. This indicates that Dutch respondents believe that these two types of human rights should receive more protection for Dutch people than for non-Dutch people (i.e., social identity matters). Interestingly, however, we found no difference in the responses regarding the protection of the rights of free speech and freedom from violence; Dutch respondents considered that these rights should be protected for Dutch and non-Dutch people equally. In other words, the respondents did not draw a line between Dutch and non-Dutch people on this front. The results are somewhat mixed and inconsistent, likely due to our aggregation of the non-Dutch groups into a single category. In the following analysis, we compare the ethnic groups for each right.

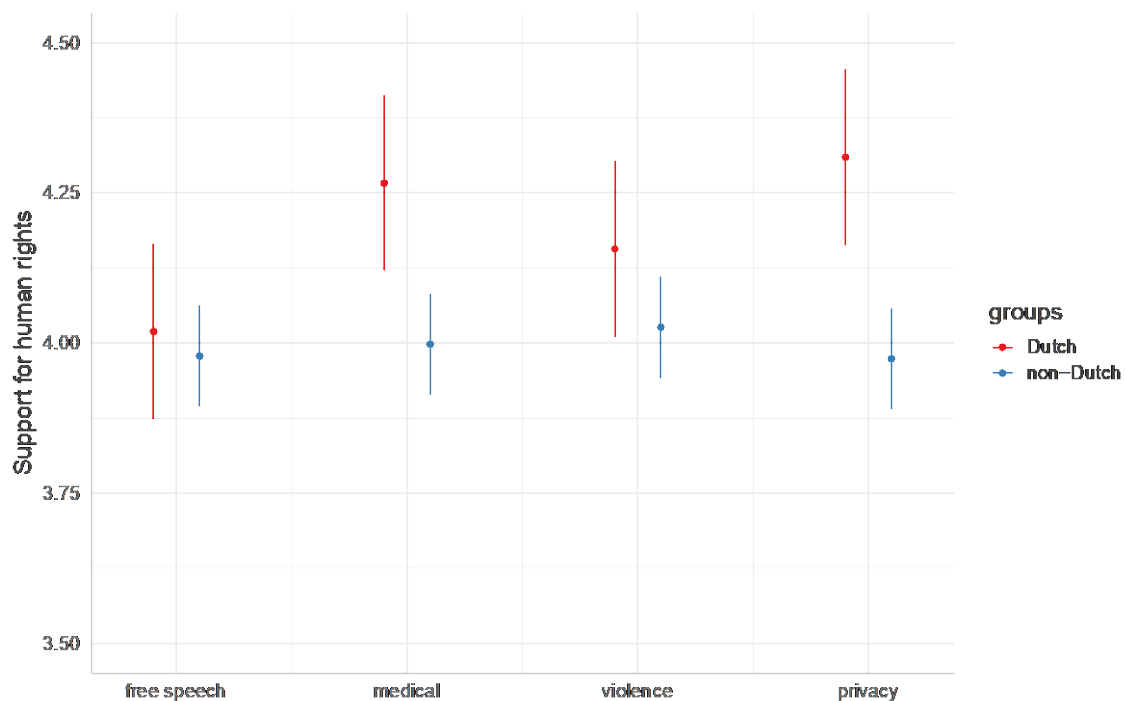


Figure 1. Dutch vs. non-Dutch

Second, we examine the results of testing the cultural threat hypothesis, which predicts that Poles, a group that is culturally similar to the Dutch, will be preferred over Moroccans, who are mostly Muslim. Figure 2 shows the results of a comparison of the estimated values of respondent attitudes toward the four types of human rights protection when the person in the vignette is a Polish and when the person is a (documented) Moroccan. The results show no statistically significant difference in the support for human rights between Polish and Moroccan immigrants. There is an exception for protection from violence, as Moroccans are less likely to be protected from violence (with marginal effects of being

⁷ The other two rights are not statistically significant. The marginal effects of being non-Dutch on protection of freedom of speech is $-.041$, $p=.633$, and those on protection from violence is $-.131$, $p=.131$.

Moroccan on protection = $-.197, p = .047$)⁸, although the effect is not substantial. Dutch respondents are equally protective of the human rights of both Poles and Moroccans. These findings suggest that cultural similarities do not necessarily play a role in shaping attitudes toward human rights.

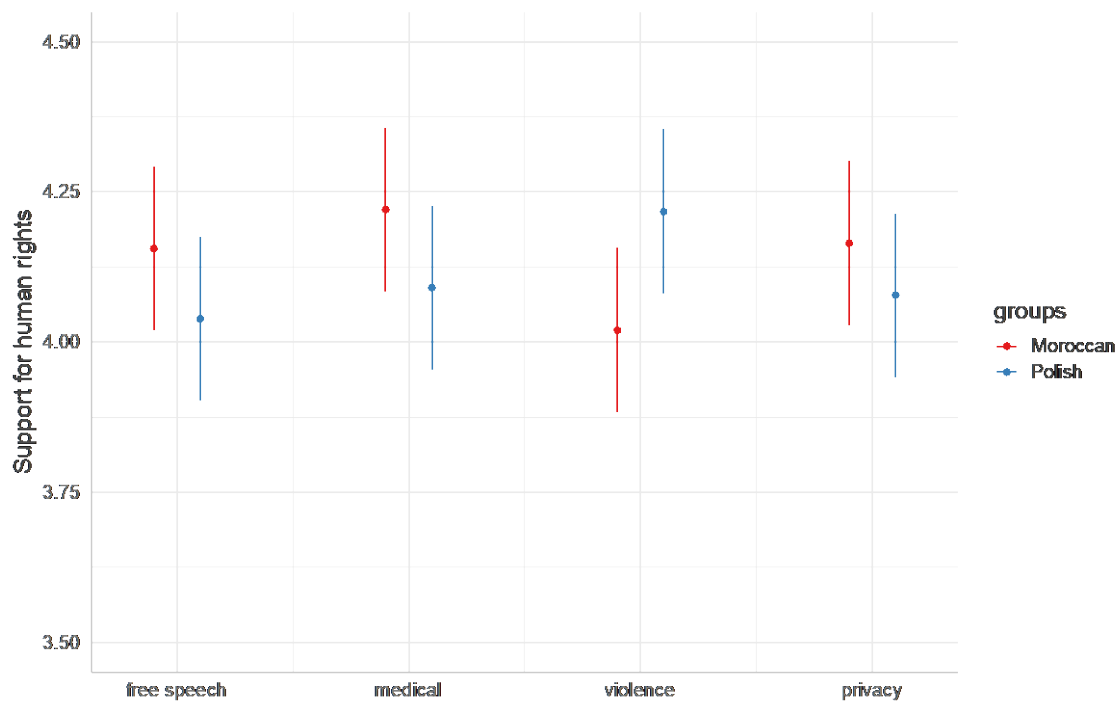


Figure 2. Polish vs. Moroccan

Third, we examine the results regarding the effect of illegality. To test how respondents reacted to the legality of the target group, we compared the case of documented and undocumented Moroccans. The results presented in Figure 3 show that Dutch respondents are less likely to support the human rights of “undocumented” Moroccans than Moroccans. The result, a within-ethnic group comparison, clearly indicates that the legality of immigration is a salient cue in shaping the respondents’ attitudes toward the protection of human rights. The differences in attitudes toward the protection of human rights are particularly large and significant for three types of human rights: freedom of speech, medical treatment, and privacy. Although the differences in attitudes toward protection from violence between documented and undocumented Moroccans are not significantly different (marginal effects = $-.176, p = .111$), protection from violence for undocumented Moroccans is negatively evaluated.

⁸ Protection of freedom of speech is $-.117 (.098)$ ($p = .233$), medical rights is $-.130 (.098)$ ($p = .185$), and privacy is $-.087 (.099)$ ($p = .381$).

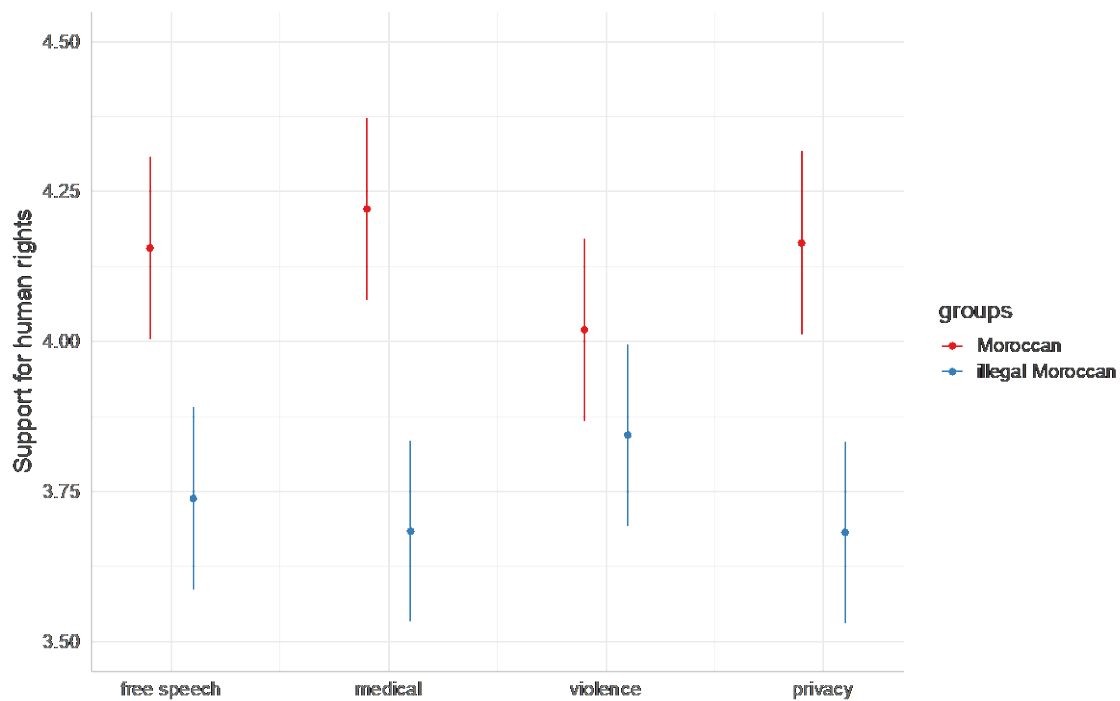


Figure 3. Legal vs. Illegal Moroccan

The results seem to be consistent with two of the three hypotheses: social identity and illegitimacy. However, the social identity results shown in Figure 1 may have been masked by the illegal Moroccan presence. To explore this possibility, we further analyzed respondents' attitudes toward the protection of the human rights of each of the four group categories of Dutch, Polish, Moroccan, and undocumented (or illegal) Moroccan.

Figure 4 shows the results, which clearly support the legality hypothesis rather than the social identity hypothesis. We found equal support for the human rights of Dutch, Polish, and documented Moroccans but strong opposition to illegal Moroccans. The results further reveal that Dutch respondents are less likely to protect almost all types of human rights if the person in the vignette is an undocumented Moroccan (except for protection from violence between documented and undocumented Moroccans). These results indicate that Dutch citizens draw a strict line between legal and illegal immigrants with respect to the protection of human rights and do not support the hypothesis derived from the social identity perspective or cultural threat.

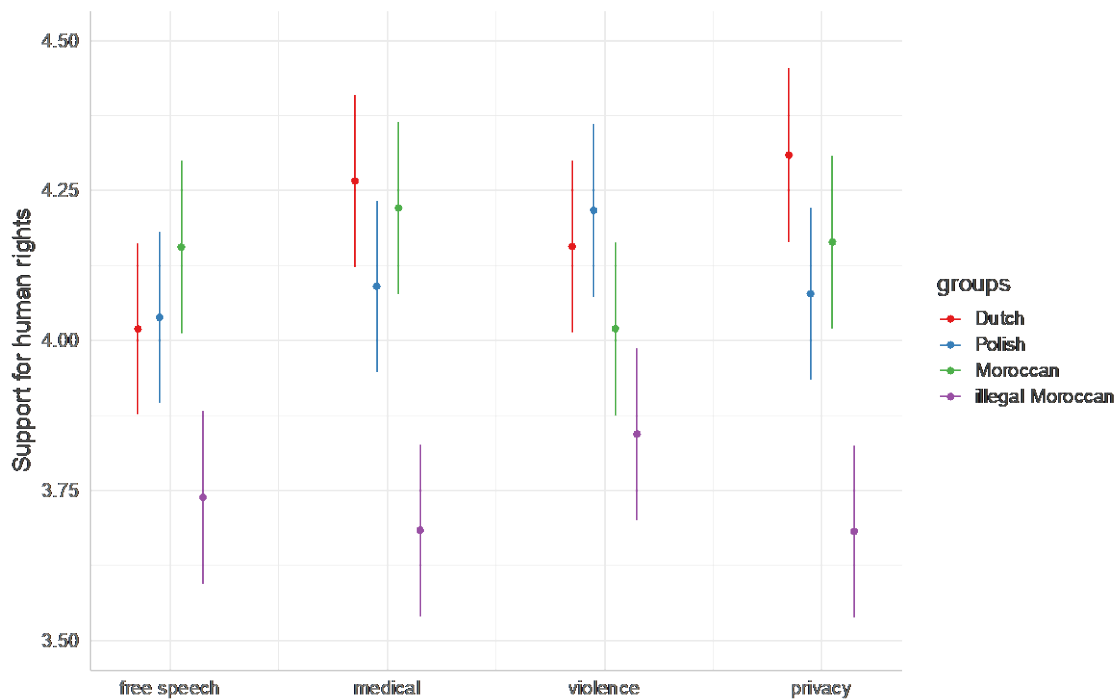


Figure 4. Comparison across all groups

Heterogeneity in treatment effects

To examine who among the respondents was more opposed to the human rights of immigrants, we also analyze the model by introducing interactions with age, gender, education, and perceived threats from immigrants to it. The results show that older respondents are less supportive of the human rights of illegal Moroccans (the marginal effect of one year older on support for human rights is $-.016$ (.002)), while respondents' gender has no statistically significant effect on the relationship between the experimental treatment and the dependent variable. Highly educated people are more supportive of undocumented immigrants, but they still have significantly more negative attitudes toward them than toward other ethnic groups. More detailed results are presented in the Appendix (Figures A1 to A4).

Here, we focus on the possibility that the effects may vary depending on the respondents' threat perceptions, derived from group threat theory (e.g., Blalock, 1967; Blumer, 1958). For instance, respondents may form negative attitudes when they perceive a potential threat from immigrants, such as immigrants increasing crime rates or taking jobs. To examine this possibility, we added to the model an interaction term between experimental treatment and perceived threat. The predicted values of increased threat on support for human rights are shown in Figure 5.

The results in Figure 5 show that those who perceive immigrants as a threat are less likely to support the human rights of Polish and Moroccan immigrants. Moreover, the effect is even greater in the case of undocumented Moroccans. This finding suggests that even among those who perceive immigrants as a threat, the opposition to human rights advocacy is stronger regarding immigrants who are in the country illegally. We should also note that even those who feel less threatened than average do not support the human rights of undocumented (illegal) Moroccans.

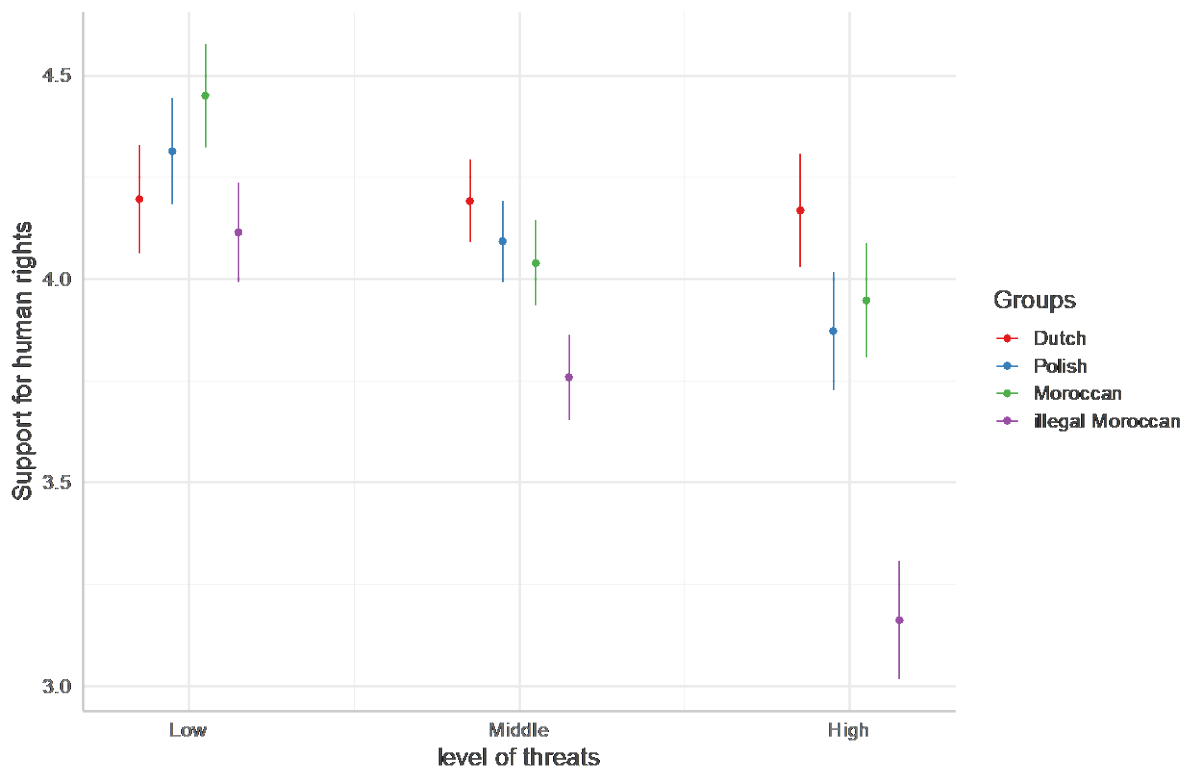


Figure 5. The predicted support level of human rights varies by threat perceptions

Conclusion

In recent years, the human rights of immigrants have been jeopardized by the emergence of Donald Trump in the U.S. and far-right parties in Western European countries. Prior research on human rights argues that citizens' endorsement of human rights is important for preventing governments and elites from violating human rights because citizens' voices have a feedback effect on the future elections of politicians who violate human rights. While there is a substantial body of research on this topic, there is a lack of prior research on whether citizens support the human rights of out-groups. Carens (2013) and other political philosophers have argued that regardless of ethnicity, nationality, or legal status, residents have fundamental human rights that must not be violated.

In this study, we investigated whose general human rights citizens seek to protect: immigrants in general, religiously dissimilar immigrants, or undocumented immigrants. The results revealed that the human rights of undocumented immigrants are not equally protected by citizens, while those of other types of immigrants are. This implies that not all residents' human rights are necessarily protected. Political philosophers have been rather optimistic about citizens' attitudes toward human rights. Carens (2013) predicted that even anti-immigrant citizens would not criticize the human rights of undocumented immigrants, and Miller (2016) argued that basic and fundamental human rights should be protected regardless of the legal status of immigrants. However, as our results show, Dutch citizens are not equally willing to protect the rights of undocumented immigrants. Moreover, our results

were obtained in the Netherlands, where human rights and immigration are relatively well protected. Even in this setting, undocumented immigrants are not protected.

These results suggest that the integration of illegal immigrants into the host society is likely to be a difficult task. Previous studies show that institutional legalization of illegal immigrants has positive effects on their integration into the host society, including their employability (Devillanova, Fasani, & Frattini, 2018), traffic safety (Lueders, Hainmueller, & Lawrence, 2017), and political participation (Cheong, 2021). However, public sentiment toward illegal immigrants remains negative, with some studies reporting illegality as the strongest cue of prejudice (e.g., Laurence & Kim, 2021; McCabe, Matos, & Walker, 2021; Schachter, 2016; Wright, Levy, & Citrin, 2016). Our results are consistent with those of these studies regarding the sentiment that citizens do not support even fundamental human rights when the target group is living in the host society illegally. This attitude among citizens could eventually influence the choice of politicians to violate the rights of undocumented immigrants in the Netherlands. Thus, illegal immigrants are a very vulnerable group in their host society, and the negative sentiments of citizens toward their human rights further exacerbate the situation of illegal immigrants.

Our results also contribute to the literature on intergroup relations in general. Scholars on immigration have extensively studied citizens' attitudes toward specific rights of immigrants, such as cultural rights, social rights, voting rights, citizenship acquisition, and refugee status (Bansak, et al., 2016; Çelebi, et al., 2016; Emeriau, 2021; Kootstra, 2016; Magni, 2021; Hainmueller & Hangartner, 2013; Gorodzeisky, 2013; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015; Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2006). However, these studies have not examined the more general rights that are equally endowed to natives and immigrants, although these rights are fundamental for these immigrant-specific rights. While it was expected that the ethnicity and religion of immigrants would be a cue to developing attitudes toward human rights, our results show that Dutch citizens seek to protect the human rights of other immigrant groups, Poles and Moroccans, equally. These results are noteworthy because these two groups are viewed negatively by the Dutch, especially since Muslim immigrants such as Moroccans are highly stigmatized in the Netherlands (e.g., Erisen & Kentmen-Cin, 2017; McGinnity & Gijsbertsa, 2015).

The heterogeneous effects that we found, particularly education and perceived threats, suggest why people are willing to protect human rights. Previous studies have shown that educated people are more informed about the human rights situation and hold stronger human rights values and therefore support human rights (Carlson & Listhaug, 2007). Indeed, those who are highly educated become more supportive of the human rights of undocumented immigrants, while they are still less supportive of them than of other ethnic groups. This result suggests that education does not necessarily provide people with knowledge about the universality of human rights and may not be a solution for human rights protection. Rather, the results show that, depending on the perception of threats, citizens' attitudes toward the protection of immigrants' human rights change. In other words, people develop support for human rights based on their threat perception of immigrants rather than on their knowledge of human rights principles, suggesting that human rights protection is part of intergroup attitudes. This indicates that while human rights education may be important, from a policy perspective, the reduction of threat perceptions among citizens is more important than human rights education for protecting immigrants' human rights.

Finally, we discuss two major limitations of this study that should be explored in future research. First, the number of migrant groups manipulated in the experiment is rather limited.

To make our vignettes realistic, we chose Poles and Moroccans, who are the major immigrant groups in the Netherlands, and only for Moroccans did we set two types of legal and illegal status. However, to make our findings more generalizable, future studies should increase the number of ethnic groups and test the effects of random combinations of ethnic groups and legal status. Second, since the Netherlands ranks high in human rights awareness and tolerance toward immigrants, we chose this country as the least likely case for the denial of human rights protection and showed that, even in this case, illegal immigrants are not protected. Future research could, for example, extend this study to the least likely case of low awareness of human rights protection and strong stigma against immigrants to examine whose human rights are being protected. Citizens of a tolerant country showed no difference in their support for human rights protection between citizens and documented immigrants, but it is conceivable that the situation could be much worse in other countries.

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Appendix

Original vignette in Dutch

Hij is een (Nederlandse/Poolse/Marokkaanse) man van 35 jaar die [illegaal] in Amsterdam woont. Hij leidde een vreedzaam dagelijks bestaan in Amsterdam toen hij in een situatie verzeild raakte waarin (zijn recht om zonder beperkingen zijn mening in het openbaar te uiten/zijn recht op een passende medische behandeling indien nodig/zijn recht om beschermd te worden tegen politiegeweld/zijn recht om werk te weigeren dat zijn leven in gevaar zou kunnen brengen/zijn recht op privacy) niet werd beschermd door een openbare instelling (bijvoorbeeld de overheid, de politie, de rechterlijke macht). Hij was ontevreden over de situatie en besloot om de overheid voor de rechter te dagen.

Original questions for dependent variables

- Hoe goed vindt u dat zijn rechten beschermd moeten worden?

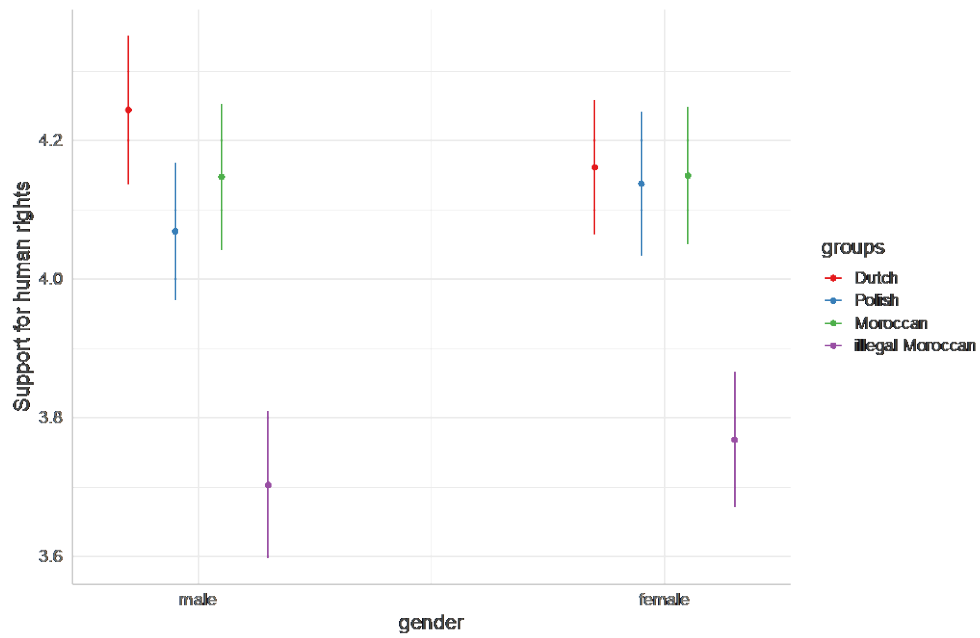


Figure A1. Heterogeneous effects of gender

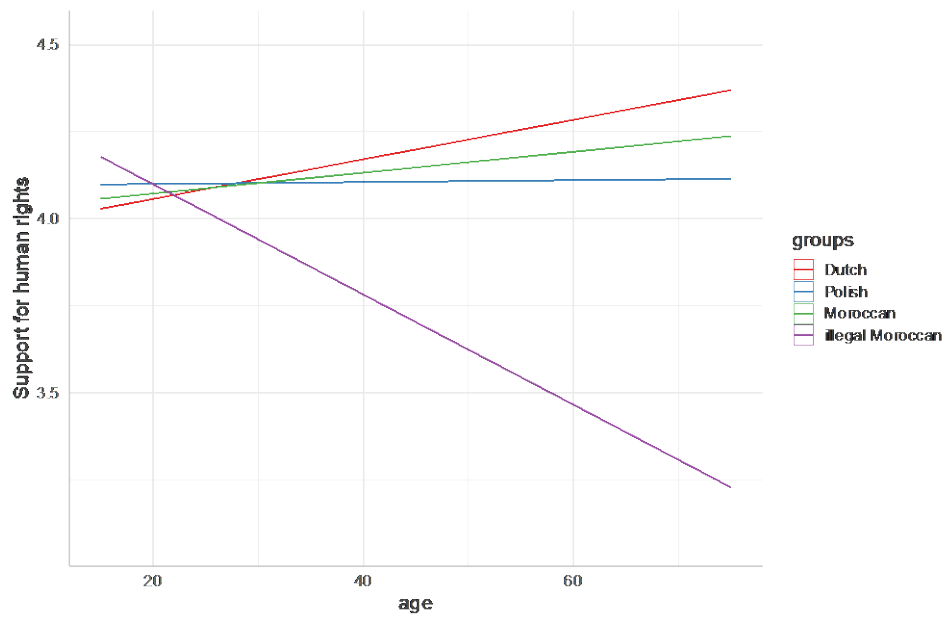


Figure A2. Heterogeneous effects of age

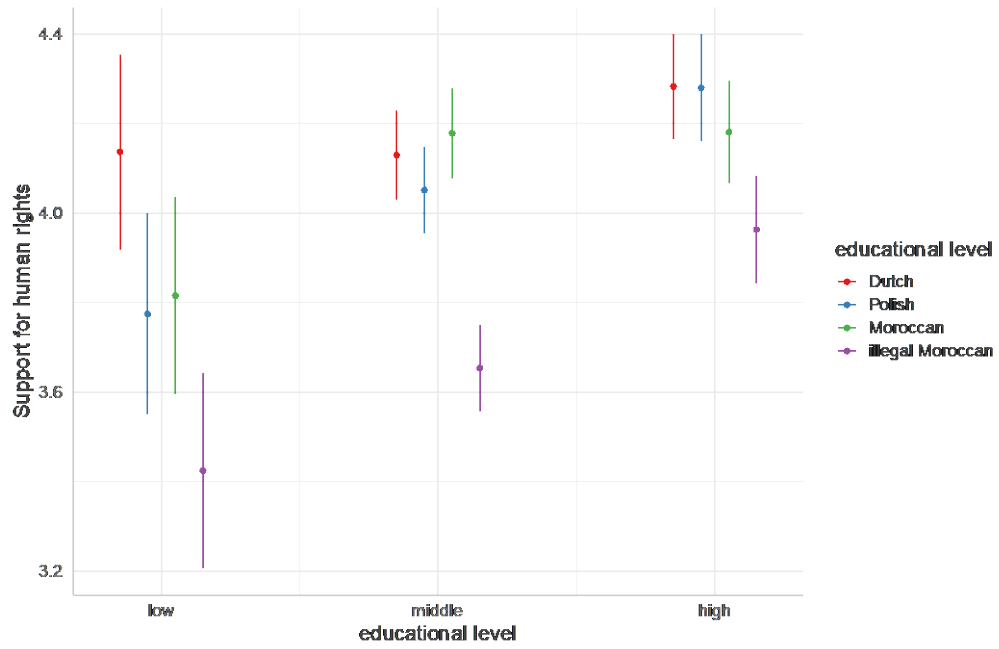


Figure A3. Heterogenous effects of educational level

Robustness check

As a robustness check, we conducted several additional analyses. These results are shown in Table A1. First, we included control variables for respondent attributes (age, gender, education level, perceived threat from immigrants, and state of residence), as shown in Model 1. However, the results remained the same, except that the attitude toward human rights became statistically significant for Poles compared to the Dutch.

Second, our data included only Dutch citizens and not residents without Dutch citizenship (see Model 2 in Table A1). However, due to the ethnically diverse nature of the Netherlands, these respondents are not necessarily ethnically Dutch. We tested how our results would change if we excluded non-Dutch respondents, but the results remained the same.

Third, the main results presented in Figures 1 and 2 do not exclude those who failed to pass the attention check questions embedded in the survey (see Model 3 in Table A1). However, even when we excluded respondents who did not pass the attention check, the results did not change.

Fourth, the dependent variable used in this study is skewed in the direction of protecting human rights (i.e., the proportion of respondents who say that human rights should not be protected is small) because the responses are about the perception of the importance of human rights. OLS was used to estimate the effects of experimental manipulation, but because of the skewed distribution, we re-estimated the same model using ordered logistic regression (see Model 4 in Table A1). However, the results remained the same.

Fifth, and finally, we tried to replicate the results by changing the set of dependent variables. The dependent variable used to estimate the main results was one that measured whether the respondents supported the human rights of the hypothetical person. Instead of this variable, we used two variables: 1) whether the vignette person is responsible for the situation and 2) whether the institution treated the vignette person fairly. However, changing the dependent variable did not change the results that only illegal Moroccans were treated less favorably. These results are presented in Models 5 and 6, respectively. The Dutch respondents answered that illegal Moroccans were more responsible for the lack of protection of their human rights and that the institution treated illegal Moroccans fairly.

Table A1. Robustness check						
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	With control	Exc. non-Dutch respondents	Exc. inattentive respondents	Ordered logit	DV: responsible	DV: fair treatment
	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)	B (S.E.)
Experiment variables						
Citizenship (ref. Dutch)						
Polish	−.138* (.066)	−.080 (.075)	−.104 (.069)	−.167 (.105)	−.109 (.060)	−.048 (.057)
Moroccan	−.062 (.066)	−.037 (.076)	−.033 (.069)	−.106 (.105)	−.150* (.060)	−.025 (.057)
Undocumented Moroccan	−.539***(.067)	−.618***(.074)	−.565***(.070)	−.836*** (.107)	.268***(.060)	.196*** (.057)
Human rights (ref. violence)						
Free speech	−.188** (.066)	−.235** (.074)	−.170* (.068)	−.174 (.105)	.055 (.060)	.006 (.057)
Medical care	−.008 (.068)	−.002 (.076)	.013 (.070)	−.011 (.105)	.099 (.060)	−.004 (.057)
Privacy	−.004 (.067)	.041 (.077)	−.011 (.070)	.041 (.107)	−.045 (.060)	−.063 (.057)
Control						
Age	−.002 (.002)	-	-	-	-	-
Female	.044 (.049)	-	-	-	-	-
Education (ref. lower)						
Middle	.061 (.088)	-	-	-	-	-
High	.163 (.091)	-	-	-	-	-
Threats	−.283***(.030)	-	-	-	-	-
Regional fixed effects	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
N	2,429	930	1,213		2,458	2,458
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. Model 2 has a small N because many respondents left the free answer of ethnicity blank.						