

Unmasking public attitudes towards immigration

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Spain justifies migrant pushback in wake of large-scale jump at Ceuta

Government admits that its reception system has reached the saturation point after spike in arrivals



European countries should face legal consequences for 'criminalising' migrant solidarity, says new report

Following openDemocracy revelations, a new EU-funded study has found that European countries are failing to tackle cases of criminalised solidarity and are not fully complying with anti-smuggling laws.



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'Mass immigration
people who use t
2

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Updated: June 16, 2019 5:51 pm

Majority of Canadians think immigration should be limited: poll

By Teresa Wright The Canadian Press

Migrants and the media: what shapes the narratives on immigration in different countries

April 26, 2019 8.54am EDT



The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness



**Key words: 'narratives' and
'attitudes'**

Europe

Immigration worries drove the Brexit vote.
Then attitudes changed.

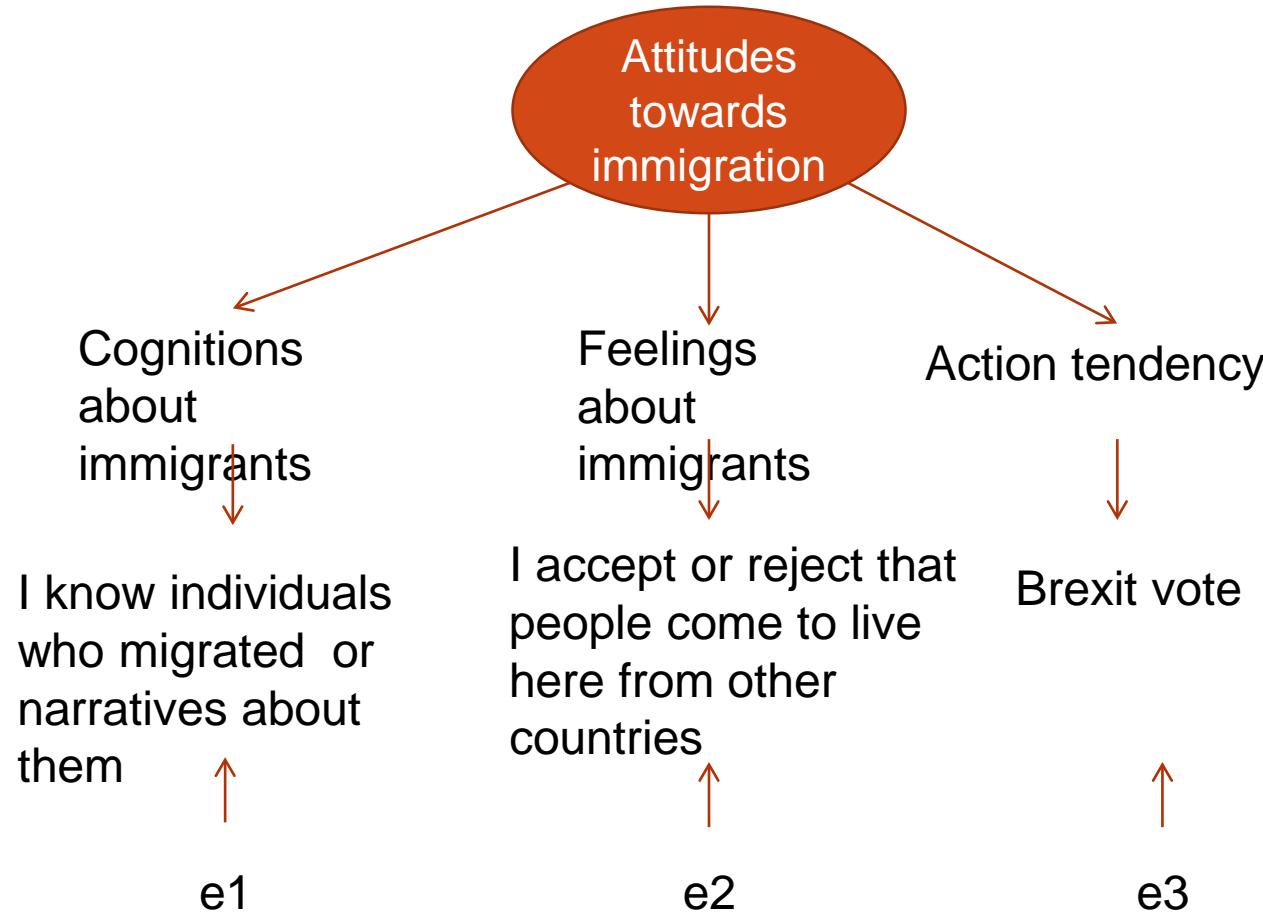
Who are ‘immigrants’?

- People who come and live **here** from other countries.
- ‘**Here**’ refers to a country, but in fact individuals interviewed react to the narratives they know, and their immediate context e.g. neighbourhood.

What is an attitude?

- Attitudes are defined as a combination of three elements (Krech et al. 1962):
 - a cognitive component,
 - a feeling component,
 - an action tendency component

What is an attitude?



How do we measure attitudes?

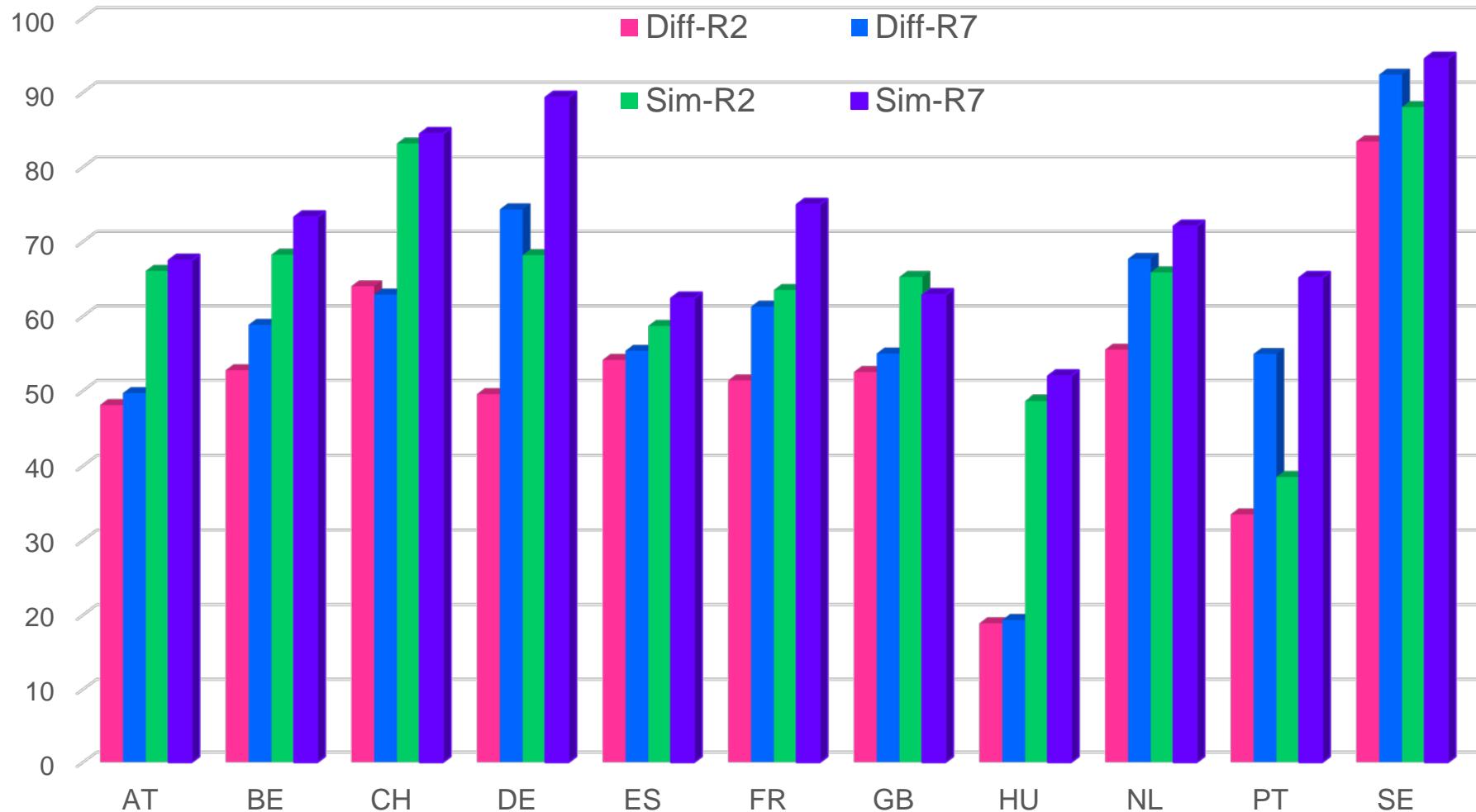
- We typically measure attitudes through surveys or polls.
- Self-reported measures in a standardised interview
- With and without interviewers
 - Different degrees of anonymity

Survey questions

- To what extent do you think the Netherlands should **allow people** of the **same race or ethnic group** as most Dutch people **to come and live here**?
- How about people of a **different race or ethnic group** from most Dutch people?
- And how about people from the **poorer countries** outside Europe?
- ESS (2004, 2014):
 - Allow many to come and live here
 - Allow some
 - Allow a few
 - Allow none
- LISS Panel (2014)
 - Allow to come and live here
 - Do not allow to come and live here

European Social Survey (2004-2014)

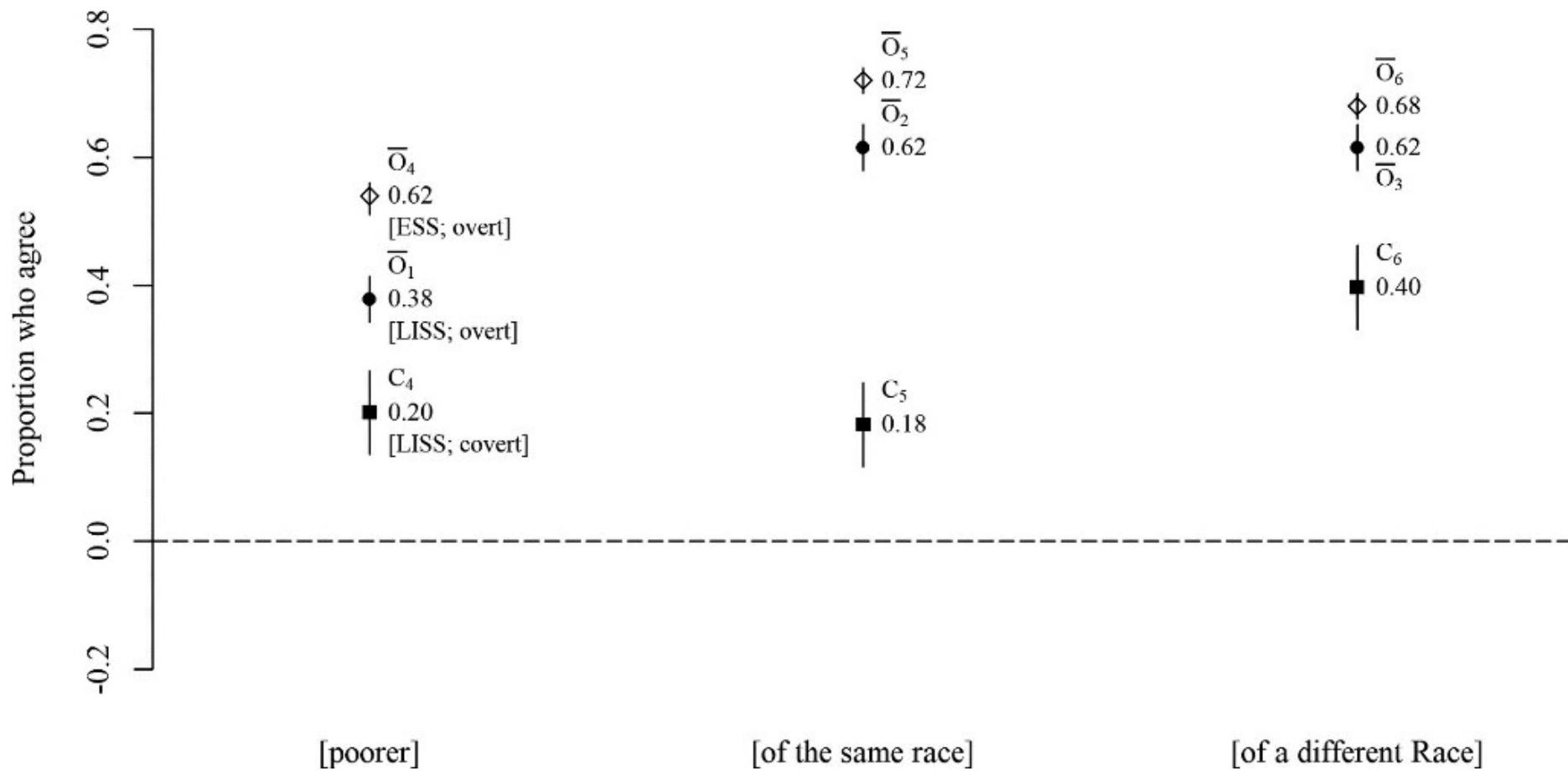
– Overt estimates



How reliable are self-reported measures?

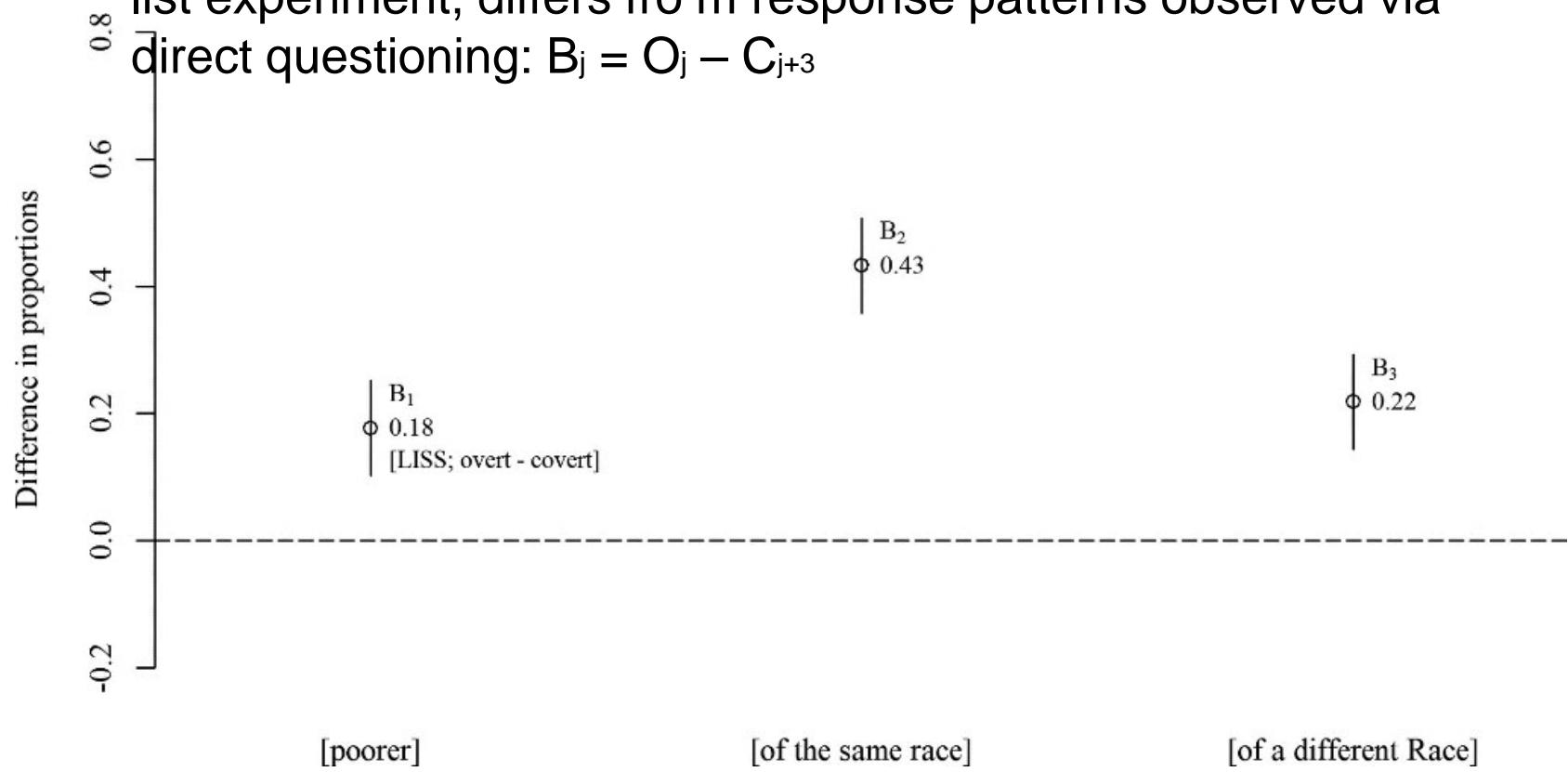
- Three sources of measurement error:
- Characteristics of the survey
- Response style
- **Social desirability**

Unmasking attitudes in the Netherlands (1)



Unmasking attitudes in the Netherlands (2)

- The difference between covert and overt measures is interpretable as the extent to which anonymity, provided via the list experiment, differs from response patterns observed via direct questioning: $B_j = O_j - C_{j+3}$



Conclusions (I)

- Are negative attitudes towards immigration growing in Europe?
- Likely yes...
- Likely not because:
- Bias of self-reported measures is huge and is a function of anonymity in the survey context
- It can be the case that in some countries it became more acceptable to be openly against immigration, whereas some countries may still be reporting socially acceptable answers in favour of it.
- In the absence of high levels of anonymity, attitudes towards immigrants show significant bias and a willingness to overstate tolerance.

Implications for policy makers

- Race-based preferences are masked, it calls into question the broad interpretation that religion is more relevant than race for shaping societal reception in Europe
- Policy makers need to target non-immigrant preferences acknowledging that changes in the context of reception might not be openly articulated.
- Policy-makers might do well considering how immigrant perception of hostility differs in contexts with distinct levels of social desirability bias.
- The masking and relatively high antipathy towards immigrants identified as similar racially suggests that narratives rooting preferences in religion or labour-market competition should be revised.

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Thank you

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