

Framing of track policy (*Spoorwisselbeleid*) and public acceptance in The Netherlands

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### **Abstract**

This study examines how the public's approval of a track change policy—an alternative to the return of undocumented migrants to the Netherlands—is influenced by humanitarian and utilitarian framing. A randomized experimental vignette study was shared among Dutch residents to assess their attitudes regarding the implementation of track change policy. The results of the study show that, in contrast to predictions, there were no appreciable variations in public acceptance between utilitarian and humanitarian framings, with the exception of attitudes regarding integration difficulties. The study's internal validity is supported by statistical analyses, which include t-tests and control variables for demographic factors. Notwithstanding many drawbacks, including sample bias and the possible oversimplification of vignette-based techniques, the research offers insightful insights about policy framing and acceptance.

**Key words:** *humanitarianism, track change policy, policy framing, public acceptance, utilitarianism, migration.*

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## **Introduction**

### **Background and Context**

In 2020, the Dutch government reported new estimates of irregular migrants, stating that the number of illegal migrants went down from 194.000 in 1987 to somewhere between 23.000 and 58.000 in 2017-2018 (Government of the Netherlands, 2020). The decline of irregular migrants is credited to implementing stricter government rules and regulations regarding migrants. For instance, since 1994, it is required to always carry identification documents, and since 1998 access to public services has become stricter for irregular migrants. While the estimated numbers suggest the effectiveness of the Dutch migration policy, uncertainties persist. It remains difficult, if not impossible, to know how many irregular migrants there are around the globe because they are not officially counted (United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 2020). There are possibly errors or misrepresentations of officially reported statistics regarding the number of irregular migrants (Houte & Leerkes, 2019). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the vulnerability of migrant groups (United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 2020).

Irregular migration is a topic of significant interest and concern in Europe. Illegal, irregular, undocumented, and unauthorized migrants are usually used interchangeably and can mean different things (Morehouse & Blomfield, 2011). Here, the term irregular migrants will be used. Irregular migrants are defined as individuals lacking the proper paperwork, do not have an authorized presence, have undocumented status, and are at risk to enforcement issues (Houte & Leerkes, 2019; United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 2020). Otherwise put, irregular migrants are individuals present in a country where they are not allowed to stay and are difficult to deport (Leerkes & Houte, 2020).

Policymakers feel public and political pressure in European member states to address irregular migrants, with individual states addressing this topic in various manners (Morehouse & Blomfield, 2011). Such as through national-level return schemes (Scalettaris & Gubert, 2018), as well as European collaboration through the European Return Directive for irregular migrants (Morehouse & Blomfield, 2011). At least on paper, member states have converging policies regarding (irregular) migrants (Houte & Leerkes, 2019).

The European Union's manner of dealing with irregular migrants is critiqued, particularly the counterproductive nature of their approach. The focus on border security, lack of human rights perspective, the failure to address root causes and the focus on economic considerations are not effective in addressing the challenges posed by irregular migration and may even worsen circumstances. More humane, effective, and sustainable migration policies

are necessary, which are prioritizing and promoting human rights, root causes of migration, and international cooperation and solidarity (Andersson, 2016).

### **Problem Statement**

European countries aim to mobilize irregular migrants to leave their country through incentives for voluntary return, disincentives for staying, and domestic measures for forced return. In the Netherlands, such policies are also present (Houte & Leerkes, 2019). Despite these policies a significant number of irregular migrants are not leaving the country (Houte & Leerkes, 2019; Scalletaris & Gubert, 2018; Leerkes et al., 2012). Addressing irregular migration remains imperative because of humanitarian concerns such as ensuring fundamental human rights (Houte & Leerkes, 2019) and legal compliance (Dörrenbächer, 2017). It is also essential for social cohesion; the presence of irregular migrants might increase concerns about security and stability (Huysmans, 2000). It may result in economic disparities, cultural diversity and pose a need for functional regulatory frameworks (Doomernik & Bruquetas-Callejo, 2016).

Some countries have come up with alternatives to return to regularize irregular migrants in the country of arrival. Regularization is the process through which irregular migrants are given permission to remain and work in a nation even when they lack the required legal paperwork (Vickstrom, 2019). In the Netherlands, regularization is limited to the so-called “schuld procedure” through which foreigners can demonstrate why they are unable to go back to their country of origin despite their efforts (Houte & Leerkes, 2019). In comparison to other nations, the Netherlands is thought to have more rigorous policies addressing irregular migrants (Leerkes et al., 2012). The Netherlands is perceived as a leader in the European Union when it comes to the implementation of stringent immigration laws and the vocal opposition to immigration that surrounds them (Brouwer et al., 2017). The frequency of irregular arrivals has not diminished despite intensified suppression on unwanted migration (Van Liempt & Doomernik, 2006). Tighter regulations have not worked well to stop irregular migration because it will happen regardless of border controls (Siruno & Siegel, 2023). And once in the Netherlands, it is difficult to deport irregular migrants to their country of origin, because of different reasons such as no cooperation from the country of origin or no cooperation from the migrant (see Van der Leun & Bouter, 2015; Leerkes et al., 2012; Leerkes et al., 2017).

Germany offers more flexible policies for migrants who are non-deportable, such as “duldung” which translates to the toleration of the presence of migrants after rejection of asylum. This is a temporary postponement of return to the country of origin. It is not a right of residence or residence status (Timmermans et al., 2019). However, rejected asylum seekers who are non-deportable are entitled to a number of rights and advantages under the “duldung” system, such as housing, work, social benefits, healthcare, and education (Houte & Leerkes, 2019). And they may ultimately qualify for a residence permit, usually after one year, based on sufficient integration (Houte & Leerkes, 2019; Jonitz & Leerkes, 2019).

Another German policy is “spurwechsel” - or track change policy - which allows rejected asylum seekers to show integration efforts such as finding a stable job or meeting specific integration related criteria, which ultimately may result in legalizing their stay in Germany (Joppke, 2024). This policy differs from “duldung” as it is a planned procedure designed to help people integrate into society and the labour market. It leads to a residency permit based on certain requirements and accomplishments (Joppke, 2024). It can also be referred to as laborization policy, through which employment-based legal status may ultimately lead to a permanent residence permit (Jonitz & Leerkes, 2022).

Despite implementation-related obstacles, track change policy can benefit both the nation and migrants. For instance by enhancing integration, closing the gaps in the labour market, and national social cohesion (Jonitz & Leerkes, 2022; Vickstrom, 2019). Therefore, making it an interesting alternative to return to explore in the Netherlands, and specifically the public acceptance among its citizens.

Policies and their execution are greatly influenced by public acceptance and public opinion (Pleger et al., 2018). To ensure that policies are in line with democratic ideals, accomplish their intended objectives, and promote social cohesion, acceptance by the populace is crucial for legitimacy, effective implementation, efficacy, democratic governance, social cohesion, and sustainability (Pleger et al., 2018). Framing plays a key role in influencing public opinion about policy changes (Kangas et al., 2013). The public's perceptions, feelings, and support for a policy can be greatly impacted by the way different entities frame it (Jacoby, 2000). Framing is the deliberate presentation and selection of facts to influence the audience's perception of a problem. By choosing how information is delivered, highlighting particular points, and swaying public opinion, communication methods are essential to framing (Rossolini et al., 2021). It is implied that an individual's level of political knowledge and comprehension does not affect whether they change their opinion(s) when presented with information in different manners. Instead, the way of

presenting the information influence individuals' views on issues rather than their personal characteristics (Jacoby, 2000). Employers, NGOs, policymakers, and other political players can strategically construct policies around migration by taking public opinion into account and using compassionate communication techniques (Bell-Martin, 2024). There are different types of frames, Scheufele (1999), for instance, provides an overview of frames in media, which may be utilized and applied to track policy.

In this thesis I aim to discover whether the acceptance of an alternative to return (track change policy) is affected by different types of framing among Dutch citizens. Additionally, what respondents perceive as advantages or disadvantages of track change policy is studied. This results in the following research question: “To what extent does the framing of track change policy as an alternative to return impact the policy acceptance level and perceived advantages and disadvantages among Dutch citizens?”.

Following this introduction, in the theoretical framework the most important concepts and theories will be set out. Subsequently, the research design and methods are discussed, followed by the results and a discussion and conclusion section.

### **Relevance and importance of the research**

The increased vulnerability of migrants and invisibility of irregular migrants indicates the need for attention to this group. This thesis aims to inform policymakers and others working with policy with an explorative study on framing and the acceptance migration of policies in the Netherlands. Understanding the invisible welfare aspects of irregular migration is crucial for developing inclusive policies that address the needs of all individuals (Park, 2015). By offering practical insights for policy formation, this goal is consistent with Buroway's (2005) definition of policy sociology, which is to make suggestions for policy actions based on research targeting specific social concerns.

Academic research on irregular migration enhances our understanding of the complex legal landscape governing migration, the ways in which discourse shapes public opinion, and the importance of equitable treatment for all individuals (Vreancanu et al., 2021; Chauvin et al., 2013). This study contributes to these areas by exploring how framing affects public sentiment and policy acceptance, this is redeemed necessary to promote inclusive communities and creating laws that uphold social norms of justice and equity (De Haas et al., 2018). Through examining the various ways in which migrants can make a contribution—such as through employment—officials can develop more effective and long-lasting solutions.

On a societal level, this study potentially sheds light on popular perceptions and attitudes about irregular migrants, which can impact policy discussions and public discourse. The examination of public sociology by Buroway (2005) emphasizes the need of interacting with various publics, encouraging communication, and incorporating sociological viewpoints into public debate to address social challenges and advance an informed and inclusive society. Therefore, by gaining a knowledge of the people's perspectives of migration, this thesis not only seeks to advance policy sociology but also advances Buroway's ideal of applying sociological insights to engage and benefit the general public. Ultimately, this study seeks to close the gap between scholarly inquiry and useful policy formulation, guaranteeing that the rights and necessities of undocumented migrants are adequately acknowledged and protected.



## **Theoretical framework**

In this section, the key concepts and theories from previous work related to the research question will be discussed. This includes public acceptance, framing, how framing and public acceptance relate to each other, and the types of framing.

### **Public Acceptance**

A key component of policy implementation is public acceptance. Policymakers must comprehend the factors that contribute to the public's acceptance of policy interventions. Public acceptance can be defined as the extent to which people support suggested public initiatives (Grelle & Hoffman, 2023). Grelle and Hoffman's (2023) integrative framework for public policy adoption describes the process from problem recognition to policy acceptance and adherence. The psychological factors that influence public policy approval are consolidated into a single model by this approach. While this thesis does not focus on psychological factors, it is important to mention its influence on public policy approval.

Public acceptance is closely tied to public opinion, which reflects the general attitudes, perspectives, and beliefs of the populace about a range of subjects, including government policies (Manin, 1987). Public support is consistent with democratic ideals and is essential to the successful implementation of policies. Manin (1987) emphasizes the critical significance that public opinion plays in democratic societies' policymaking processes. The public's endorsement of policies is necessary for both democratic legitimacy and their successful execution. For people to support and cooperate, policies should ideally be in line with their informed consent (Manin, 1987).

A person's outlook on immigration can be influenced by a wide range of variables, including cultural viewpoints, media exposure, personal beliefs, and the importance of immigration as a topic (Dempster et al., 2020). Immigration rules may be influenced by public opinion, especially in nations where there is a high migrant and refugee population. Interestingly, it has been found that people's views on migration often tend to be stricter than what governments decide regarding migration (Facchini & Mayda, 2010).

When making policy decisions, it is critical to take public sentiments regarding migration into account (Böhmelt, 2021). There may be diversity and contradictions in public opinion towards immigration, and therefore sophisticated communication strategies are necessary to address the varying attitudes in society (Dempster et al., 2020). To create successful and popular policies in the migration field, policymakers must have a sufficient understanding of public preferences for multifaceted policies (Vrânceanu et al., 2021).

## **Framing**

The concept of framing, as introduced by Goffman (1974), has been widely used in several social science fields, including communication, organizational behaviour, economics, political science, psychology, and sociology (Kallahan, 2008), offering useful insights (Benford & Snow, 2000). Goffman's concept of frames as cognitive structures affects people's perceptions and interpretations of reality (Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

Framing is described as a theoretical perspective on how people, institutions, and media manipulate the way information is presented, thereby influencing how individuals perceive the information (Kallahan, 2008). It is the process of recognizing, categorizing, and assigning labels to various aspects of a situation or problem to affect how individuals or groups understand and interpret it. It involves presenting information in a particular way to influence attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours (Van Hulst & Yanow, 2014). A specific form of framing is referred to as issue framing: an issue is made salient and promotes a specific solution to a problem, which in turn affects how both the public and political establishments understand certain issues (Fleming et al., 2016). This is an interesting approach to take on in this research, as a solution is provided in the form of an alternative policy.

Political scientists have examined framing and their research has demonstrated that it significantly affects people's sentiments toward policy. Iyengar (1990) addresses how public opinions can be influenced by defining and framing who is responsible for political concerns like poverty. Similarly, Jasperson et al. (1998) emphasize how media framing affects public views, investigating the impact of framing on the public agenda, particularly about the federal budget deficit. Druckman (2004) highlights the significance of comprehending the political contexts in which framing effects transpire, illuminating the complexities of framing in influencing views.

It is further pointed out that the influence of framing on political attitudes is evident, by presenting evidence that the way political statements are framed influences attitudes toward European integration (Nielsen, 2016). Sensitivity of policy views to framing of policy challenges in the field of climate change mitigation has also been found (Severson & Coleman, 2015). In the migration field, the significance of a so-called illegal immigration frame in influencing public perceptions of immigration policy is found (Woods & Marciniak, 2016).

The aforementioned studies highlight the importance of framing in influencing people's views toward policies, which emphasizes the need to have a thorough understanding of framing influencing public perceptions of policies. Political actors can strategically use

framing to organize people and mobilize support for specific policy stances or ideologies (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Policymakers, government officials, interest groups, media outlets, and other parties with a stake in the process can all have an impact on how policies are framed. Opposing narratives between these different groups can have an impact on how much control the government has over framing (Scheufele, 1999). The way policies are framed by those entities can greatly influence their acceptance and execution. Policy discussion, agenda-setting, and decision-making processes can all be influenced by framing. Diverging frames from multiple sources can result in conflicting interpretations of policy issues, dividing the public and making decision-makers work more difficult. This can also have an impact on the outcomes of policy implementation (Van Hulst & Yanow, 2014; Scheufele, 1999). Through a variety of channels, including press releases, speeches by government officials, official declarations, and communication plans, governments can exert substantial influence over the formulation of public policy (Scheufele, 1999; Van Hulst & Yanow, 2014)

It is important to note that because of contradictions in its definition, framing has come under fire (Cacciatore et al., 2015). It is difficult to understand the theory and mechanics of framing because of its ambiguity and inconsistent definition. Furthermore, it can be challenging to distinguish the impacts of framing from other ideas like priming and agenda-setting because of their frequent overlap (Cacciatore et al., 2015). The methods section will examine strategies for negotiating these difficulties to overcome these challenges.

### **Types of framing**

Various frames are used in academic research, depending on the sort of inquiry. The main frameworks used in this field of study—the security threat frame and the deservingness frame—are frequently applied to irregular migration.

The deservingness frame is introduced in migration studies about a migrant's legality, which raises the question of how deservingness is acknowledged and understood. Criteria for deservingness may include employment or schooling, as well as a migrant's vulnerability (being a minor, for instance) or civic engagement (having a job and being independent (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2014). As well as on economic deservingness which manifests itself by being a member of the privileged group based on class, culture, and ethnicity stereotypes (Bonjour & Chauvin, 2018).

The security threat frame is a frame that is used to highlight the national threat that migrants pose to a country (Egres, 2018). This frame is divided into symbolic threat and

realistic threat, where symbolic threat relates to differences in morals, values, and culture. Realistic threats are threats to the political or economic safety of a society or group (Egres, 2018). Symbolic threat is for instance addressed by Roggeband & Vliegenthart (2007) using the Islam-as-Threat frame. Islam, immigrant culture, and the religion of migrants are seen as threats to Western values in this symbolic danger framing.

The aforementioned frames provide an overview of which frames have been used in irregular migration research, but I aim to take on a utilitarian versus humanitarian approach in framing. Scheufele (1999) provides an overview of different frames, such as the conflict frame, human interest frame, consequence frame, diagnostic frame, and prognostic frame. Two are fitting for this research' approach.

The 'consequence frame' and the 'humanitarian interest frame' are used as guidance towards the frames that I have chosen (Scheufele, 1999). The first frame can be categorized as utilitarian, concentrating on the practical outcomes and ramifications of a policy shift, emphasizing the (in this case) advantages associated with implementing the proposed track policy. Utilitarianism as a theory focuses on the maximization of overall utility and welfare, which entails weighing costs and advantages to provide the greatest good for the largest number of individuals. A good or goods may refer to economic goods, rights, freedom, and political power (Rose & Kverndokk, 2004). In this thesis, economic benefits will be presented which benefit both Dutch society and the irregular migrant. This frame is consistent with the consequence frame in Scheufele's (1999) article, which highlights the real-world effects of accepting or rejecting the suggested policies and frequently concentrates on advantages, disadvantages, or trade-offs.

The second frame that will be employed is the human interest frame, emphasizing the human element of a problem or a change in policy while bringing up moral issues or ideals connected to the welfare and respect of those impacted by the proposed policies. This framing attempts to evoke empathy, understanding, or a sense of belonging with those impacted by the suggested policies (Scheufele, 1999). In this thesis, this is called the humanitarian frame. This frame draws attention to the personal stories, values, and ethical considerations related to social responsibility and solidarity with those in need – in this case, irregular migrants. To gain support for policies that promote the welfare of people and communities, the humanitarian frame is used to highlight the ethical and human aspects of the issue (Scheufele, 1999).

### **Public acceptance and framing**

Framing of policy and public acceptance has been extensively studied, particularly in climate change studies. Walker et al. (2014) for instance emphasized the importance of effectively designing and communicating benefits to increase local acceptability of renewable energy projects, showing the impact of positive framing on acceptance of clean energy policies. Other research shows that framing is evident in relation to partisan identity and policy support regarding carbon energy policies (Feldman & Hart, 2018). Similarly, Pleger et al. (2018) found that the type of framing has an impact on the public acceptance of the policy – in their case spatial policies - that is being framed.

In the migration field, Lahav & Courtemanche (2011) demonstrate how people's attitudes and choices about immigration laws and civil liberties practices are influenced by the economic, security, and cultural risks connected to immigration. The results indicate that the way immigration concerns are framed (especially in terms of national security risks) can have a considerable impact on public perceptions and policy preferences by allowing for the manipulation of threat framing in an experimental context (Lahav & Courtemanche, 2011). Furthermore, other scholars found that the language used to characterize migrants (illegal, unauthorized, irregular, or undocumented) has less impact on public opinion regarding specific rights advising that migrant rights advocates should pay less attention to words and more attention to the actual policies and how they are framed (Knoll et al., 2011; Merolla et al., 2013).

### **Hypotheses**

Based on the introduction, problem statement, and the theoretical framework, the following hypotheses are derived:

**H0** – There is no significant difference in the acceptance and attitudes of track change policy among Dutch citizens based on framing.

**H1** – There is a significant difference in the acceptance level and attitudes among Dutch citizens regarding track change policy based on framing.

## **Research design and methods**

For this study, I used quantitative data collected from a vignette survey study. This research aims to empirically test whether framing impacts the acceptance rate of track change policy among Dutch citizens, as well as perceived advantages and disadvantages regarding the alternative. A vignette survey study is fitting, as it can measure acceptance or attitudes towards phenomena, policies, or ideas (Cresswell & Creswell, 2018). A vignette itself is “a short, carefully constructed description of a person, object, or situation, representing a systematic combination of characteristics” (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010).

### **Participants**

Data is collected in an online survey (Qualtrics) and the survey is shared on personal social media channels (LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram) over a period of four weeks. The studied population is Dutch citizens of all ethnicities and all education levels between 18 and 65+ years old. This is the legal voting age in the Netherlands (Government of the Netherlands, 2023). In total 232 people participated, the ideal sample size was between 250 and 350 respondents.

Participation is voluntary and anonymous. Respondents are asked to give consent before they fill in the survey. Informed consent affects how different groups understand information, perceive danger, and see decision-making power. It is essential for conducting ethical scientific research (Marshall, 2006). It is made clear that respondents can withdraw at any moment and that data remains anonymous. Respondents can leave their e-mail to receive the study results. They can click a link to a separate survey to do so. In this way, data is anonymised and researchers are not able to link answers to respondents. The purpose of the study is withheld, as otherwise the measuring of framing effects will get contaminated.

### **Design**

This study utilizes a vignette survey approach with either a humanitarian or utilitarian frame, which is positively framed in all instances. Two include a highly educated migrant, and two include a practically educated migrant. Therefore, there are four different frames. Adopting a cross-sectional design, data is collected at one point in time. The vignettes are randomly assigned, with each respondent being assigned to one (not multiple) vignette in total. Vignettes - brief explanations or scenarios—may help the understanding of complex concepts and allow readers to consider tolerance in particular contexts. Written inquiries may lead to misunderstandings, which can be prevented by using vignettes (Sadi & Basit, 2016).

Using a vignette approach allows for manipulation of framing conditions to assess whether acceptance levels among Dutch citizens are affected by it. The acceptance level is measured by a question immediately after reading the vignette. This question is: ‘What is your view on the implementation of the track change policy?’ and is measured with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 - strongly against to 5 - strongly in favour. A Likert scale is commonly used in research to measure attitudes, views, and perceptions (Field, 2009).

Apart from acceptance levels, perceived disadvantages and advantages of track policy are measured. These are measured using statements. For each statement the respondent should indicate to what extent it is important to them on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 - not important to 5 – important. For instance on advantages: It combats shortages in the labour market, It contributes to economic growth’ (see Shah & Van Uffelen, 2023), and I perceive it as a humanitarian duty (see Van Selm, 2019). Statements on disadvantages are also included, such as: It makes it more difficult for Dutch citizens to find a job and it leads to overloading of public facilities such as roads and hospitals (see Van Selm, 2019). The advantages and disadvantages, like the question on implementation, are dependent variables. The type of vignette is the independent variable. The questionnaire and full version of the vignettes are included in the appendices.

Control variables are measured in various ways. Gender is recorded as ‘male’ (1), ‘female’ (2) or ‘other’ (3), based on the Gender Identity Scale (GIS) measures (Ho & Mussap, 2019). Age is categorized into six groups: 18-25 (1), 26-35 (2), 36-45 (3), 46-55 (4), 56-65 (5), and 65 years and older (6). Education level is classified into six categories: no education (1), secondary education (VMBO, HAVO, VWO) (2), vocational education (MBO) (3), Higher professional education (hbo) (4), University level education (WO) (5), and postdoctoral education (6) (Neureiter, 2021). Finally, respondents are asked which party they would vote for if parliamentary elections were held today. The most political parties were included, as well as the options ‘other’, ‘I would not vote’, or ‘I do not want to answer’.

Respondents are selected based on convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Other types of sampling to account for sampling biases such as stratified and random sampling (Jager et al., 2017) are not achievable due to time and budget constraints. Both convenience and snowball sampling are cost-effective and efficient for reaching participants in a short time-span (Dusek et al., 2015; Etikan et al., 2016).

With convenience sampling, respondents are selected based on their closeness and accessibility to the researcher (Sarker & AL-Muaalemi, 2022). Referral sampling, often known as snowball sampling, begins similarly and grows as the original respondents bring in

more participants from their social networks. When these techniques are used, sample sizes can be increased beyond what can be obtained with convenience sampling alone (Sarker & AL-Muaalemi, 2022).

These approaches, however, have shortcomings. Snowball sampling may result in a potential sampling bias, lack of generalizability, and limited control over the sample population (Dusek et al., 2015). To counteract these biases, they are disclosed in the results section to enhance the study's validity (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018).

## **Method**

The data is analysed using quantitative methods to examine the relationship between framing conditions, acceptance levels, and how these relate to the advantages and disadvantages of track policy. The analysis includes descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The data is processed and analysed with SPSS software.

After forming the independent and dependent variables, a descriptive analysis will be conducted on these variables, including control variables. The control variables in this thesis include age, gender, education, and political affiliation.

Descriptive statistics and histograms give a quick overview of data distribution (Field, 2009). Therefore mode, median, and standard deviation are studied to determine if there are any meaningful differences between the various framing circumstances. The data is cleaned, which means that redundant, inaccurate, or incomplete data is not included in the analysis. Only responses that include all necessary answers regarding the control variables are included in the analysis. Neglecting adequate control factors might result in considerable biases in estimated relationships because the effects of the independent variable may be combined with those of the control variables. This can misrepresent the true nature of the interactions under investigation, leading to inaccurate conclusions (Becker, 2005). Data cleaning is essential for data analysis and application because it increases the precision and effectiveness of data-driven decision-making (Zou, 2022). Therefore, to guarantee the validity, accuracy, and reliability of study outcomes, this strategy was crucial (Field, 2009). After cleaning 226 responses have been included in the analysis. This procedure resulted in an unequal distribution between the vignette groups, which in turn caused differences in group sizes. As a result, although the randomization may appear unequal, this is only the outcome of the data-cleaning procedure.



Table 1: Experimental conditions after data cleaning.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>LU (n = 50)</b>	Utilitarian, practical education
<b>LH (n = 58)</b>	Humanitarian, practical education
<b>HU (n = 56)</b>	Utilitarian, higher education
<b>HH (n = 62)</b>	Humanitarian, higher education

Respondents in this study were divided into several vignette groups at random. Both chi-square and one-way ANOVA tests were performed to see if these groups were comparable based on background variables including gender, age, and political inclination. Chi-square tests are used to determine whether nominal or ordinal data differs significantly from what is expected before conducting data (Merkus, 2022). And a one-way ANOVA test is used to examine the difference in means between more than two groups (Bevans, 2024).

The findings demonstrate that regarding the control variables, there were no statistically significant differences between the groups. Table 2 demonstrates that there were no appreciable variations in the respondents' backgrounds among the four initial groups ( $P = >0,05$ ). This result validates the choice to aggregate the information from four vignette groups into two more general categories according to framing (humanitarian vs. utilitarian). This reformation allows concentration on the primary goal of the study without having to worry about the respondents' varied backgrounds distorting the findings.

Table 2: Control variables per vignette.

<b>Control variables</b>	<b>Vignette LU</b>	<b>Vignette LH</b>	<b>Vignette HU</b>	<b>Vignette HH</b>	<b>p-value</b>
<b>Age (mean <math>\pm</math> SD)</b>	2.96 $\pm 1.760$	3.22 $\pm 1.727$	2.71 $\pm 1.836$	2.97 $\pm 1.708$	.495
<b>Gender (% female)</b>	61.5	51.7	64.3	62.9	.231
<b>Education level (mean <math>\pm</math> SD)</b>	4.31 $\pm 1.001$	4.10 $\pm 1.003$	4.27 $\pm 1.070$	4.1 $\pm 1.141$	.612
<b>Voting behaviour (% left and progressive)</b>	57.7	63.8	71.4	75.8	.510

After merging the groups, independent sample t-tests are employed rather than multiple regression analysis to validate the results. An independent samples t-test is a statistical test

that determines whether the mean of a specific variable differs significantly between two groups (Van Heijst, 2022). When there are several independent variables in a data set, the statistical technique known as multiple regression is commonly employed for data analysis. Multiple regression analysis predicts or explains the (complex) relationship between a combination of multiple independent variables and a dependent variable (Leech et al., 2003). It might offer insightful information, particularly when multiple factors impact an outcome, it is not be required for more straightforward research questions that merely calls for comparing two groups to see if there is a statistically difference between them (Field, 2009).

In this research, the aim is to discover if different types of frames result in statistical differences regarding acceptance of track change policy. In this case, employing a t-test is more appropriate and efficient because it avoids the unnecessary complexity of multiple regression. When evaluating the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable in two different groups of participants, an independent t-test is especially helpful (Field, 2009). In this case the independent variable is the framing (vignette) and the dependent variable is the acceptance level among Dutch citizens’.

After merging, the average scores on the independent variables of the two groups are compared using the control variables. This is necessary because they possibly influence dependent variables. Control variables are important in research to rule out alternative explanations for observed relationships (Cresswell & Creswell, 2018). When there are two distinct groups of individuals, each receiving a different treatment, an independent t-test is employed. To compare the means, or average results, of these two groups. In this manner, we may determine whether the two treatments differ from one another (Field, 2009).

Subsequently, independent t-tests are used to decide whether there is a significant difference between the two groups (utilitarian framing vs humanitarian framing), using the dependent variables regarding acceptance, disadvantages, and advantages. Several t-tests are performed for multiple dependent variables (attitude question, advantages and disadvantages). The likelihood of discovering at least one noteworthy result by chance rises in the absence of a correction. To account for the higher possibility of Type I errors, or false positives, that may arise from doing repeated comparisons, a Bonferroni Correction is also provided (Field, 2009).

## Results

The research findings on the impact of framing on public acceptability of the track change policy as an alternative for the return of undocumented migrants in the Netherlands are shown here.

The purpose of this study was to find out if the track change policy is increasingly accepted by Dutch residents depending on the type of framing (utilitarian versus humanitarian). The following hypotheses were tested:

**H0** – There is no significant difference in the acceptance and attitudes of track change policy among Dutch citizens based on framing.

**H1** – There is a significant difference in the acceptance level and attitudes among Dutch citizens regarding track change policy based on framing.

### Descriptive statistics

Gathered survey responses on the track change policy were obtained, together with information about its implementation and perceived advantages and disadvantages. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of the following four vignette groups: LU, LH, HU, and HH. These four groups have been regrouped to two vignette groups that will be analysed (humanitarian versus utilitarian), as is motivated in the section Method. Only survey responses with all control variables answered have been included, which are 226 responses in total.

More females than males participated in the survey, 136 (60.2 percent) were female and 85 (37.6 percent) were male. Five respondents selected “other” when filling in their gender. Over the entire population, in Dutch society approximately 49.7 percent is male and 50.2 percent is female (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). The gender distribution in the sample of this research shows a significant over-representation of females in comparison to the Dutch population. Non-binary or other is not included in official statistics.

Most participants were in age group 18-25 years old (32.7 percent) followed by age group 56-65 years old (23.5 percent) and 26-35 years old (15.9 percent). The age groups are not a reflection of the Dutch society, as in this research sampling and convenience sampling was used. According to the Centraal Bureau van de Statistiek (2023) approximately 9.7 percent of Dutch citizens is aged 18-25 years old, around 13.8 percent is aged 56-65 years old, and around 13.2 percent is aged 26-35 years old.

The education level of participants is mainly high educated, divided in 31.4 percent of participants that have completed higher professional education (hbo) and 48.2 percent has completed university education and postdoctoral education (WO). In 2019, the education level of the Dutch population aged 25 to 64 was distributed as follows (according to Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau): Six percent had only completed primary education, 14 percent had a VBO, MAVO, VMBO, or MBO-1 diploma, 39 percent had a HAVO diploma, VWO or MBO levels 2 to 4, 25 percent had an HBO diploma, and 16 percent held a WO diploma (Maslowski, 2020). This indicates that the education level of the respondents does not align with the overall education level in Dutch society.

Regarding voting preference, the largest share (67.7 percent) of participants would vote for a Leftist party. Most would vote for Groenlinks-PvdA (30.1 percent) or the Party for the Animals (Partij voor de Dieren) (12.4 percent). I have chosen to regroup the political parties into three categories: left and progressive (1), right and conservative (2), and other (3) makes it possible to analyse how political orientation affects opinions about track change policies more simply. The regrouping of left and right is based on Voorn (2021). Only participants who reside in the Netherlands (122) are included in the analysis.

In table 3 and table 4 the descriptive statistics of the variables that measure acceptance, advantages and disadvantages of track change policy are displayed. In table 5 the mean and standard deviation per group (humanitarian, utilitarian) is displayed.

Table 3: Mean and SD of vignettes regarding the question “What is your view on the implementation of track change policy?”

<b>Vignette</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>SD</b>
Utilitarian (106)	3.66	1	5	1.154
Humanitarian (120)	3.55	1	5	1.151

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for the used variables in this research

<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>SD</b>
Attitude regarding implementation track policy	218	3.55	1	5	1.203
Advantage: economic growth	220	3.95	1	5	1.133
Advantage: it goes against labour shortages	219	3.33	1	5	1.321
Advantage: it goes against aging society	220	3.92	1	5	1.334
Advantage: it is a humanitarian duty	219	3.88	1	5	1.311
Advantage: it leads to	219	3.87	1	5	1.322

improved integration					
Advantage: it prevents illegality	222	4.16	1	5	1.259
Disadvantage: it decreases the availability of jobs	218	2.61	1	5	1.330
Disadvantage: it decreases the availability of housing	220	3.86	1	5	1.297
Disadvantage: overload on public facilities	220	2.81	1	5	1.414
Disadvantage: increases the risks of crime	218	2.61	1	5	1.414
Disadvantage: leads to more migrants	221	3.56	1	5	1.369
Disadvantage: leads to challenges of integration	217	3.35	1	5	1.290
Age	226	2.96	1	6	1.746
Gender	226	1.65	1	3	.524
Country of residence	226	122	122	122	.000
Political preference	226	1.456	1	3	.718

Table 5: Mean and SD of statements per group (utilitarian, humanitarian).

Variable	Vignette	Mean	SD
Advantage: economic growth	U	3.71	1.160
	H	3.40	1.227
Advantage: it goes against labour shortages	U	4.04	1.123
	H	3.86	1.141
Advantage: it goes against aging society	U	3.23	1.375
	H	3.42	1.268
Advantage: it is a humanitarian duty	U	3.86	1.389
	H	3.98	1.285
Advantage: it leads to improved integration	U	3.86	1.295
	H	3.90	1.331
Advantage: it prevents illegality	U	4.12	1.255
	H	4.20	1.266
Disadvantage: it decreases the availability of jobs	U	2.55	1.306
	H	2.67	1.355
Disadvantage: it decreases the availability of housing	U	3.97	1.297
	H	3.76	1.295
Disadvantage: overload on public facilities	U	2.79	1.466
	H	2.83	1.372
Disadvantage: increases the risks of	U	2.53	1.447
	H	2.67	1.387

crime			
Disadvantage: leads to more migrants	U	3.60	1.357
	H	3.52	1.385
Disadvantage: leads to challenges of integration	U	3.15	1.357
	H	3.54	1.203

Note: participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the statement. The answers were rated on a 5 point Likert scale from 1 = not important to 5 = important.

### Statistical analysis of framing effects

The results of the independent t-tests of advantages, and disadvantages (dependent variables) are presented in table 7.

Table 7: T-tests results acceptance, advantages and disadvantages between the two groups.

Variable	Group Utilitarian mean and SD	Group Humanitarian mean and SD	t(df)	p-value	Cohen's d	95% CI for Mean Difference
<b>Acceptance track change policy</b>	3.66 ±1.154	3.55 ±1.151	.719 (224)	.473	1.15 2	[-.192, .413]
<b>Advantage: economic growth</b>	3.71 ±1.160	3.40 ±1.227	1.903 (216)	.058	1.19 6	[-.011, .628]
<b>Advantage: it goes against labour shortages</b>	4.04 ±1.123	3.86 ±1.141	1.153 (218)	.250	1.13 3	[-.125, .478]
<b>Advantage: it goes against aging society</b>	3.23 ±1.375	3.42 ±1.268	- 1.078 (217)	.282	1.32 0	[-.544, .160]
<b>Advantage: it is a humanitarian duty</b>	3.86 ±1.389	3.98 ±1.285	-.704 (218)	.482	1.33 5	[-.482, .228]
<b>Advantage: it leads to improved integration</b>	3.86 ±1.295	3.90 ±1.331	-.273 (217)	.785	1.31 4	[-.399, .302]
<b>Advantage: it prevents illegality</b>	4.12 ±1.255	4.20 ±1.266	-.446 (220)	.656	1.26 1	[-.410, .258]
<b>Disadvantage : decreases jobs availability</b>	2.55 ±1.306	2.67 ±1.355	-.657 (216)	.512	1.33 2	[-.475, .237]

<b>Disadvantage : less housing</b>	3.97 ±1.297	3.76 ±1.295	1.229 (218)	.221	1.29 6	[-.130, .560]
<b>Disadvantage : overload public services</b>	2.79 ±1.466	2.83 ±1.372	-.186 (218)	.853	1.41 7	[-.413, .341]
<b>Disadvantage : increased risks criminality</b>	2.53 ±1.447	2.67 ±1.387	-.706 (216)	.481	1.41 6	[-.514, .243]
<b>Disadvantage : more migrants</b>	3.60 ±1.357	3.52 ±1.385	.444 (219)	.657	1.37 2	[-.282, .446]
<b>Disadvantage : challenges to integration</b>	3.15 ±1.357	3.54 ±1.203	- 2.221 (215)	.027	1.27 9	[-.728, - .043]

The examination of acceptance scores reveals that the utilitarian group had a mean score of 3.66 (SD = 1.154), which was not substantially different from the humanitarian group's mean score of 3.55 (SD = 1.151). The t-test results indicated no significant difference ( $t(224) = 0.719$ ,  $p = .473$ ), indicating that both groups accepted the policy at similar levels.

When assessing various advantages of the policy, several observations were made:

- **Economic Growth:** The utilitarian group ( $M = 3.71$ ,  $SD = 1.160$ ) rated the economic growth advantage slightly higher than the humanitarian group ( $M = 3.40$ ,  $SD = 1.227$ ), approaching significance with  $t(216) = 1.903$ ,  $p = .058$ . This indicates a trend where the utilitarian group values this advantage more, although the difference is not statistically significant at conventional levels of statistical significance.
- **Addressing Labour Shortages:** Similarly, the utilitarian group ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 1.123$ ) scored higher on the advantage of addressing labour shortages compared to the humanitarian group ( $M = 3.86$ ,  $SD = 1.141$ ), but this difference is not significant ( $t(218) = 1.153$ ,  $p = .250$ ).
- **Countering Aging Society:** The utilitarian group ( $M = 3.23$ ,  $SD = 1.375$ ) had a lower mean score on the advantage of countering an aging society compared to the humanitarian group ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 1.268$ ). This difference is not statistically significant,  $t(217) = -1.078$ ,  $p = .282$ .
- **Humanitarian Duty:** The ratings for the advantage of it being a humanitarian duty were similar between groups, with the utilitarian group scoring  $M = 3.86$  ( $SD = 1.389$ ) and the humanitarian group scoring  $M = 3.98$  ( $SD = 1.285$ ). The difference is not significant,  $t(218) = -0.704$ ,  $p = .482$ .

- **Improved Integration:** The mean scores for the advantage of improved integration were also similar, with the utilitarian group at  $M = 3.86$  ( $SD = 1.295$ ) and the humanitarian group at  $M = 3.90$  ( $SD = 1.331$ ). The difference was not significant,  $t(217) = -0.273$ ,  $p = .785$ .
- **Preventing Illegality:** There was no significant difference between the utilitarian group ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 1.255$ ) and the humanitarian group ( $M = 4.20$ ,  $SD = 1.266$ ) regarding the prevention of illegality,  $t(220) = -0.446$ ,  $p = .656$ .

When assessing various advantages of the policy, the following observations were made:

- **Job Availability:** The utilitarian group ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD = 1.306$ ) reported lower concerns about decreased job availability compared to the humanitarian group ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = 1.355$ ). However, this difference was not significant,  $t(216) = -0.657$ ,  $p = .512$ .
- **Housing:** The utilitarian group ( $M = 3.97$ ,  $SD = 1.297$ ) had slightly higher concerns about less housing compared to the humanitarian group ( $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = 1.295$ ), but this difference was not significant,  $t(218) = 1.229$ ,  $p = .221$ .
- **Overload of Public Services:** Concerns about overload of public services were similar between groups, with the utilitarian group ( $M = 2.79$ ,  $SD = 1.466$ ) and the humanitarian group ( $M = 2.83$ ,  $SD = 1.372$ ) showing no significant difference,  $t(218) = -0.186$ ,  $p = .853$ .
- **Increased Criminality Risks:** The utilitarian group ( $M = 2.53$ ,  $SD = 1.447$ ) and the humanitarian group ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = 1.387$ ) did not differ significantly in their concerns about increased criminality risks,  $t(216) = -0.706$ ,  $p = .481$ .
- **Number of Migrants:** There was no significant difference in concerns about the number of migrants between the utilitarian group ( $M = 3.60$ ,  $SD = 1.357$ ) and the humanitarian group ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 1.385$ ),  $t(219) = 0.444$ ,  $p = .657$ .
- **Integration Challenges:** A significant difference was found concerning challenges to integration. The utilitarian group ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = 1.357$ ) reported more concerns compared to the humanitarian group ( $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = 1.203$ ),  $t(215) = -2.221$ ,  $p = .027$ . This suggests that the humanitarian group perceived fewer challenges in integration compared to the utilitarian group.

Overall, the research shows that, while there are certain trends and differences between the two groups, the majority of them are not statistically significant. The single major exception is the issue of integration, which varied greatly between the groups.



## **Discussion and Conclusion**

### **Conclusion**

This study aimed to answer the following research question “To what extent does the framing of track change policy as an alternative to return impact the policy acceptance level and perceived advantages and disadvantages among Dutch citizens?”. Statistical tests revealed no significant differences between the utilitarian and humanitarian framed groups, except for dependent variable regarding economic growth. For this variable has been demonstrated that there are significant differences in perception between utilitarian and humanitarian framing ( $p < 0,05$ ). There were no appreciable variations between the framing groups for all the other variables ( $p > 0,05$ ), including the control variables. The track change policy's acceptance and attitudes are not significantly different based on framing, which supports the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ). The utilitarian group assessed economic growth as marginally better than the humanitarian group, with the difference nearing statistical significance ( $p = .058$ ). This shows that the utilitarian group may place a higher importance on the advantage of economic growth. With a bigger sample size, this difference could become statistically significant.

These results are noteworthy because they refute the widely held belief that framing may significantly change how the public feels about policy. The findings of this study suggest that despite some earlier research suggesting otherwise (see Walker et al., 2014; Lahav & Courtemanche, Knoll et al., 2011; Merolla et al., 2013; Jacoby, 2000), framing nuances might not have a major impact on public perception in the context of the track change policy in the Netherlands.

### **Discussion**

I will go over a number of this study's limitations to offer guidance for future research. In this thesis, convenience and snowball sampling were used to reach respondents. There are several indications of sampling bias in this research. First, the percentage of women represented (60.2%) is higher than that of men (37.6%). According to the Centraal Bureau van de Statistiek (2022), this differs significantly from the demographics of the Dutch population as a whole, where the gender split is roughly 50.2% female and 49.7% male.

Secondly, the age distribution of the sample is not a reflection of the age distribution in the Dutch society. For instance, 32.7% of respondents in this research fall into the age category 18-25 years old. In Dutch society, only about 9.7% fall within this age group.

Thirdly, a large share (67.7%) of respondents would vote for a Leftist party. This is again not a reflection of the Dutch population, in 2021 30 percent of political parties were Leftist (Kiesraad, 2021). Given that opinions and attitudes regarding policies can differ based on a person's gender, age, and political preference this bias affects generalizability and external validity of the results. The overrepresentation of female responders, certain age groups, and political preferences possibly do not fairly represent the range of viewpoints held by the population as a whole (Dusek et al., 2015). Political preference may also influence the reaction to utilitarian or humanitarian framing, as voters on the centre-left lean more toward friendliness, universalism, self-direction, and open-mindedness. However, compared to centre-left voters, center-right voters are typically more gregarious, and diligent, and may hold other ideals (Caprara et al., 2006). Therefore, in future research, to increase generalizability and external validity, it is important to include a more representative sample of the Dutch population.

Lastly, level of education may also have had an impact. A large share of respondents (76.6 percent) has obtained a higher level of education. It is well-known that higher-educated people are more tolerant towards migrants. This association is significant because it shows that those with greater education are more likely to exhibit tolerant attitudes about migrants (Borgonovi, 2012). In the context of research findings where a considerable proportion of respondents had earned higher education, it is plausible that the results may alter in a more representative sample due to the influence of education on views toward migrants.

Vignettes were consulted in this research, which are great for measuring acceptance or attitudes towards a policy (Cresswell & Creswell, 2018). Using vignettes in research is critiqued as it may oversimplify difficult phenomena. In addition, they might not depict real-life situations accurately and participants may interpret vignettes differently based on personal experiences or preconceptions (Hughes & Huby, 2012). In this thesis, the vignettes were detailed and rich in context. This resembles real-life situations, which is crucial for engaging and authentic responses. It could be helpful to integrate vignette research with other approaches, such as observations or interviews, in future research. Triangulation can be used to overcome the limitations of vignette research and validate findings (Hughes & Huby, 2012). Apart from that, triangulation with qualitative methods may offer deeper insights into the underlying attitudes and reasoning of participants (Field, 2009).

Despite limitations, this research has contributed to renewed insights into framing and public attitudes. A thorough statistical analysis, the use of randomly assigned experimental vignettes for regulated framing research, and the inclusion of control variables to lessen

biases have all contributed. This thesis has offered a crucial perspective on how various arguing frameworks might not be as effective as previously believed. Utilizing advanced statistical methods like t-tests and control variables, thoroughly investigating the statistical significance between different groups, demonstrating accuracy and severity. Internal validity was strengthened by control variables that minimize alternative explanations, randomization, detailed and context-rich vignettes, and statistical analysis (Cresswell & Creswell, 2018; Hughes & Huby, 2012). This research advances our knowledge of how to best employ framing techniques to increase public support for immigration laws. This may assist legislators in creating more persuasive communication plans that take various demographic groups' sentiments into account.

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## Appendix I - Tables

Table I Political preferences

<b>Left and progressive</b>	<b>Right and conservative</b>	<b>Other</b>
ChristenUnie	BBB	A different political party
D66	CDA	I will not vote
Denk	FvD	I do not want to answer
Groenlinks-PvdA	JA21	
PvdD	PVV	
SP	SGP	
Volt	NSC	

Table II Vignettes

<b>Vignette</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>LU</b> <b>Practically educated, Utilitarian</b>	<p>Davit is an 18-year-old rejected asylum seeker from Armenia. He came to the Netherlands with his parents when he was twelve years old. During his stay, he completed GCSE-level education. He now wants to further his studies to become a security guard. There is a high demand for security guards in the Netherlands.</p> <p>The Dutch government has been trying for two years to get Davit to return to Armenia but without success. These attempts have cost €12,000 so far. It is unclear if they will be able to get him to return.</p> <p>Davit speaks Dutch well and Armenian reasonably well. If he were allowed to stay, he would soon have enough knowledge to work in the Netherlands. He would then contribute to the prosperity and economic growth of the Netherlands. Also, the Netherlands would no longer have to incur high costs to deport him.</p>
<b>LH</b> <b>Practically educated, humanitarian</b>	<p>Davit is an 18-year-old rejected asylum seeker from Armenia. He came to the Netherlands with his parents when he was twelve years old. During his stay, he completed GCSE-level education. He now wants to continue his studies to become a security guard. There is a high demand for security guards in the Netherlands.</p>

	<p>The Dutch government has been trying for two years to get Davit to return to Armenia, but without success. It is unclear if they will be able to get him to return.</p> <p>Davit speaks Dutch well and Armenian reasonably well. If he were allowed to stay, it would demonstrate that the Dutch value human rights. Davit is now rooted in the Netherlands and has few contacts in Armenia. Also, Davit cannot be held responsible for his parents bringing him to the Netherlands as a child.</p>
<b>HU</b> <b>Higher educated, utilitarian</b>	<p>Davit is an 18-year-old rejected asylum seeker from Armenia. He came to the Netherlands with his parents when he was twelve years old. During his stay, he completed A-levels education. He now wants to further his studies to become a software engineer. There is a high demand for software engineers in the Netherlands.</p> <p>The Dutch government has been trying for two years to get Davit to return to Armenia, but without success. These attempts have cost €12,000 so far. It is unclear if they will be able to get him to return.</p> <p>Davit speaks Dutch well and Armenian reasonably well. If he were allowed to stay, he would soon have enough knowledge to work in the Netherlands. He would then contribute to the prosperity and economic growth of the Netherlands. Also, the Netherlands would no longer have to incur high costs to deport him.</p>
<b>HH</b> <b>Higher educated, humanitarian</b>	<p>Davit is an 18-year-old rejected asylum seeker from Armenia. He came to the Netherlands with his parents when he was twelve years old. During his stay, he completed GCSE-level education. He now wants to continue his studies to become a security guard. There is a high demand for security guards in the Netherlands.</p> <p>The Dutch government has been trying for two years to get Davit to return to Armenia, but without success. It is unclear if they will be able to get him to return.</p>



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Davit speaks Dutch well and Armenian reasonably well. If he were allowed to stay, it would demonstrate that the Dutch value human rights. Davit is now rooted in the Netherlands and has few contacts in Armenia. Also, Davit cannot be held responsible for his parents bringing him to the Netherlands as a child.

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## Appendix II – Survey

Welcome!

This questionnaire is about the attitudes of citizens regarding the implementation of policies for certain groups of rejected asylum seekers, who could thereby legally remain in the Netherlands to work and study. Such policies exist in Germany, but not in the Netherlands. Currently, there are no plans to implement it in the Netherlands, but it could be discussed in Dutch politics in the future. It takes about 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

The research is conducted by three Master's students from the Social and Behavioral Sciences program at Erasmus University Rotterdam:

Henriëtte Gussenhoven – Governance of Migration and Diversity

Nomi Perotti – Social Inequalities

Leah Nijboer – Politics & Society

The results will be used for their Master's theses under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Arjen Leerkes, a joint post on LinkedIn with the main results, and possibly a scientific article.

Your answers are completely anonymous, and the data will only be used for scientific research. The data will be stored at Erasmus University for a maximum of ten years and will only be accessible to the students and the supervisor.

At the end of the questionnaire, you can choose to provide an email address via a link if you would like to receive the theses once the research is completed. The students and the supervisor will not know which answers correspond to which email addresses, ensuring anonymity. The email addresses will be deleted by September 1, 2024.

This research is about your personal opinion, and there are no right or wrong answers. Some questions may be sensitive, such as questions about your political preferences and certain background information. For example, whether you or your parents migrated to the Netherlands. You can always choose to skip a question. Even after completing the questionnaire, you can ask the students to delete your answers without giving a reason. They can be contacted through the following e-mail: [spoorwisselproject@eur.nl](mailto:spoorwisselproject@eur.nl)

Thank you for your participation!

By clicking 'continue' below, you agree to the following:

I have been informed about the research. I consent to the use of the data for scientific purposes. I have read and understood the above information. I know who to contact with

questions about the research. I have been given the opportunity to consider my participation in the research, and it is entirely voluntary.

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### **Introduction**

You are now given some background information about asylum seekers. Please read this carefully, as it is important to be able to answer the questions.

Asylum seekers who do not have the right to asylum must, according to Dutch law, return to their country of origin within a month. If they do not return voluntarily, they risk being deported. Often, return is difficult to achieve in practice. Rejected asylum seekers often do not want to return, and many countries of origin only cooperate to a limited extent with deportations. As a result, many rejected asylum seekers remain in the Netherlands. They stay there without state authorization and have few rights. For example, they cannot work and are only allowed to follow education until they are 18 years old. Consequently, they are dependent on family and friends, or they could end up on the streets.

In Germany, there is a special tolerated status for rejected asylum seekers for whom return is not successful. Under this policy, adults may, in some cases, pursue education to learn a profession for which there is demand in Germany. They are then granted a work permit. After working for some years and speaking German fluently, they receive a temporary legal status. Furthermore, there is a chance that they can stay permanently in Germany under certain conditions. This policy is often called 'track change policy' (Spurwechsel).

Next, a hypothetical but realistic example follows of a rejected asylum seeker who has completed secondary school in the Netherlands. Please also read this description carefully. Keep in mind that in this example, we pretend that the track change policy is also being implemented in the Netherlands. In that case, young people would be allowed to stay in the Netherlands and, after they have turned 21, could potentially bring a partner. Other family members remain excluded from a residence permit.

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### **Vignettes**

See Appendix I Table II.

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### **Attitude towards track change policy**

There will now be some questions about the text you just read.

1. How would you feel if there were to be a 'track change policy' in the Netherlands for Davit, allowing him to stay in the country and further pursue education?
  1. Strongly opposed
  2. Opposed
  3. Neutral
  4. In favor
  5. Strongly in favor

What do you see as the greatest advantages of this type of 'track change policy'? Please indicate for each statement to what extent it is important to you.

2. It contributes to economic growth.
  1. Not important
  2. Slightly unimportant
  3. Neutral
  4. Slightly important
  5. Very important
3. It addresses labor market shortages.
  1. Not important
  2. Slightly unimportant
  3. Neutral
  4. Slightly important
  5. Very important
4. It combats aging population.
  1. Not important
  2. Slightly unimportant
  3. Neutral
  4. Slightly important
  5. Very important
5. I see it as a humanitarian duty.
  1. Not important
  2. Slightly unimportant
  3. Neutral
  4. Slightly important
  5. Very important
6. It improves the integration of migrants into the Netherlands.
  1. Not important
  2. Slightly unimportant
  3. Neutral
  4. Slightly important
  5. Very important
7. It prevents rejected asylum seekers from living on the streets illegally
  1. Not important
  2. Slightly unimportant
  3. Neutral
  4. Slightly important
  5. Very important
8. Other, namely...
  1. (open question)

What do you see as the greatest disadvantages of this type of 'track change policy'? Please indicate for each statement to what extent it is important to you.

9. It makes it more difficult for Dutch people to find jobs.
  1. Not important
  2. Slightly unimportant
  3. Neutral
  4. Slightly important
  5. Very important
10. It makes it more difficult for Dutch people to find housing.
  1. Not important
  2. Slightly unimportant
  3. Neutral
  4. Slightly important
  5. Very important
11. It leads to overburdening of public facilities such as roads and hospitals.
  1. Not important
  2. Slightly unimportant
  3. Neutral
  4. Slightly important
  5. Very important
12. It increases the risks of crime and insecurity.
  1. Not important
  2. Slightly unimportant
  3. Neutral
  4. Slightly important
  5. Very important
13. It will result in more asylum seekers coming to the Netherlands.
  1. Not important
  2. Slightly unimportant
  3. Neutral
  4. Slightly important
  5. Very important
14. It poses challenges for the integration of migrants.
  1. Not important
  2. Slightly unimportant
  3. Neutral
  4. Slightly important
  5. Very important
15. Other, namely...
  1. (open question)
16. What job does Davit want? (controle question)

1. Security guard
2. Architekt
3. Software engineer
4. Nurse

---

You are almost at the end of the survey. First, there will be a few background questions.

**Background questions**

33. What's your age?
  1. 18–25 years
  2. 26–35 years
  3. 36–45 years
  4. 46–55 years
  5. 56–65 years
  6. 65+ years
34. What's your gender?
  1. Male
  2. Female
  3. Other
35. What is the highest level of education or training that you have completed?
  - a. No qualifications
  - b. GCSE or equivalent
  - c. A-level or equivalent
  - d. Bachelor's degree completed
  - e. Master's degree completed
  - f. Postgraduate education completed
36. What is your country of residence?
  - a. [list with countries]
37. Where were you born?
  1. Country where I'm currently residing
  2. Other EU country
  3. Outside of Europe
38. Where was your father born?
  1. Country where I'm currently residing
  2. Other EU country
  3. Outside of Europe
39. Where was your mother born?
  1. Country where I'm currently residing
  2. Other EU country
  3. Outside of Europe
40. If you want to leave a comment after filling in the survey, you can do so down below. (This is not mandatory, you can leave this question open)

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You have reached the end of the survey. Thank you for your participation!

If you're interested in the results of the survey, you can sign up using your email via this link. The answers you have given here, and your email address, cannot be linked to each other. Your data remains anonymous.