

**Empathy as a Mediator Between Attitudes Toward Refugees and Pro-Refugee Action
Intentions**

Sophia Akbari

s4225627

Department of Psychology, University of Groningen

PSB3E-BT1: Bachelor Thesis

Supervisor: prof. dr. E. Gordijn

Second evaluator: Namkje Koudenburg

In collaboration with: M.C Osterwald, S.F. Willegers, S.W. Hoogcarspel, T. Dumas,

Y. Lippold

July 2, 2025

Abstract

This study examined whether empathy mediates the relationship between attitudes toward refugees and behavioral intentions in response to an intergroup transgression. Previous research has shown that attitudes strongly shape both emotional and behavioral responses to refugee-related events, yet the role of empathy as an underlying mechanism remains elusive. In this experiment, 417 European participants were randomly assigned to read a fabricated news article depicting either refugees or local citizens as victims of violence. Focusing on the condition where refugees were the victims ($N=211$), we examined whether empathy mediates the effect of attitudes on pro-refugee action intentions. The results showed that participants with more positive attitudes toward refugees experienced stronger emotional reactions, reported higher empathy toward refugees, and expressed greater willingness to support them. Importantly, empathy fully mediated the association between attitudes and pro-refugee action intentions. These findings suggest that empathy is a key driver of supportive behavior, but its presence depends on existing attitudes toward refugees. Understanding these emotional pathways can help inform strategies aimed at fostering more constructive public responses to refugee-related issues.

Empathy as a Mediator Between Attitudes Toward Refugees and Pro-Refugee Action Intentions

When witnessing injustice, people often feel compelled to take action. Whether it is signing a petition, donating to a cause, or protesting in the streets, our emotional reactions shape how we respond to social issues. One crucial factor influencing these responses is empathy: the ability to share and understand another's emotions. Empathy plays a key role in helping behaviors, which leads to individuals supporting those in need (Klimecki, 2015). However, the extent to which people feel empathy and act upon it does not occur in a vacuum. It is influenced by pre-existing attitudes, especially in contexts of intergroup relations. This is particularly relevant in discussions about refugees, where public opinion is deeply divided. While some view refugees as vulnerable individuals in need of support, others see them as outsiders who pose a threat. These perceptions may shape how people respond when refugees are involved in morally ambiguous situations, either as victims or perpetrators.

Recent research highlights the importance of emotions in shaping behavioral responses toward refugees (Gootjes et al., 2022). Emotions, in this context, refer to affective responses that arise when individuals are confronted with social injustices, such as anger, sadness, or distress. These emotional reactions are not only immediate responses to moral violations but also play a key role in shaping how people choose to act. Studies suggest that people's attitudes toward refugees significantly influence how they perceive and react to situations involving them. Specifically, those with more positive attitudes are more likely to feel anger when refugees are harmed and to engage in actions that support them. Conversely, individuals with negative attitudes experience stronger negative emotions when refugees are the perpetrators of transgressions and are more inclined to support punitive or exclusionary measures (Djaoeddi, 2023). However, while anger has been studied extensively, empathy has received less attention in this context. Given that empathy is a well-established driver of

prosocial behavior (Redford & Ratliff, 2017), it is essential to explore its role in shaping responses toward refugees. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate whether empathy functions as a psychological mechanism that explains how attitudes toward refugees influence individuals' behavioral intentions. By focusing on situations where refugees are victims, this research seeks to clarify whether those with more positive attitudes also show increased empathy, and whether this, in turn, predicts their likelihood to act in support of refugees.

Empathy is not always distributed equally across social groups. A growing body of research points to the existence of intergroup empathy bias, whereby individuals feel more empathy toward members of their own group (ingroup) than toward others (outgroup). This bias has been documented across various intergroup contexts, including race, nationality, and ideology. For instance, in a study conducted in South Africa, participants demonstrated significantly more empathy for racial ingroup members, even when group membership was assigned arbitrarily (Demel et al., 2025). This finding suggests that empathy biases can emerge from minimal group distinctions and persist even in the absence of overt conflict. In the context of refugees, who are often perceived as a distant or threatening outgroup, this bias could reduce people's emotional engagement and willingness to support them, particularly among individuals with negative pre-existing attitudes.

Empathy is often understood as a multifaceted construct, typically divided into two key components: cognitive empathy, which refers to the ability to adopt another person's perspective, and affective empathy, which involves emotionally resonating with another's experience. While both are important, research suggests that cognitive empathy, especially in the form of perspective-taking, plays a unique role in shaping moral judgments and concern for others (Zaki & Cikara, 2015). For example, when individuals are encouraged to take the perspective of someone from an outgroup, they are more likely to apply universal standards of justice and show greater empathic concern (Zaki & Cikara, 2015). However, this effect

appears to weaken when people hold strong boundaries between their ingroup and the outgroup. In the case of refugees, political and cultural narratives often highlight perceived differences, which may reduce the willingness to engage in perspective-taking. As a result, individuals may feel less moral responsibility toward refugees, even when they are clearly victims of harm.

The influence of empathy bias is further complicated by ideological factors. Evidence shows that political ideology can moderate the relationship between intergroup exposure and empathic responses. For example, in a study examining Israeli attitudes toward Palestinians, individuals with more conservative ideologies who were exposed to conflict-related violence exhibited significantly less empathy for outgroup victims (Hameiri et al., 2018). This suggests that ideological worldviews can reinforce existing biases and justify emotional disengagement from outgroups. In European societies facing ongoing refugee movements and sociopolitical debates about immigration, similar patterns may emerge. Individuals with more right-leaning or nationalist views may be more resistant to empathizing with refugees, especially in situations that involve complex moral ambiguity or perceived threat.

These findings converge on the idea that empathy is not simply a spontaneous emotional reaction but is shaped by social, cognitive, and ideological factors. Particularly in intergroup contexts, empathy operates through complex psychological filters that determine who is seen as worthy of care and support. This is highly relevant for understanding public responses to refugees, who are often positioned as “others” in dominant societal narratives.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives suggest that empathy is not an automatic or evenly distributed emotional response. Instead, it is shaped by psychological processes such as group categorization, social identity, and ideological worldviews. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) explains how individuals' identification with their ingroup can influence who they see as morally relevant, often reducing empathy toward perceived

outgroups like refugees. Moreover, political ideology may moderate these dynamics: individuals with more conservative worldviews tend to express lower levels of empathy for outgroup members, especially when those groups are associated with perceived threat or conflict (Hameiri et al., 2018). These insights point to empathy as a potentially powerful, yet conditional, emotional mechanism through which attitudes are translated into behavioral intentions. Based on this reasoning, we hypothesize that (1) attitudes toward refugees will shape emotional and behavioral responses to transgressions, and (2) empathy will mediate the link between attitudes and pro-refugee action intentions.

The current research

Building on prior research, the present study aims to examine whether empathy with refugees mediates the relationship between attitudes toward refugees and action intentions following a transgression. Specifically, we investigate whether individuals with positive attitudes toward refugees experience greater empathy when refugees are victims, which in turn increases their likelihood of engaging in pro-refugee actions. Conversely, we explore whether those with negative attitudes exhibit lower empathy, leading to reduced support for refugees, even when they are victims. By focusing on empathy, this study seeks to deepen our understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying responses to refugee-related issues.

To investigate this, we replicate and extend the study by Djaoeddi (2023), which examined the role of attitudes in shaping emotional and behavioral responses to transgressions involving refugees. Our study introduces empathy as a potential mediator, drawing from theories on intergroup dynamics and emotional processes (Demel et al., 2025). We hypothesize that (1) attitudes toward refugees will shape emotional and behavioral responses to transgressions, and (2) empathy will mediate the link between attitudes and pro-refugee

action intentions. These findings have important implications for understanding how emotional and cognitive factors interact in shaping public responses to refugee-related events.

By addressing this research gap, we contribute to the broader discussion on how societal attitudes, emotions, and empathy influence real-world behaviors. Understanding these mechanisms can inform strategies to foster more constructive and compassionate responses to refugee-related issues, particularly in an era where migration remains a contentious topic. Ultimately, our work highlights the importance of empathy, not as a universal human instinct, but as a socially and ideologically mediated response that shapes who we choose to care for, and how.

Methods

Participants and Research Design

427 European participants who were students were recruited through two sources: the University of Groningen's SONA system and the online platform Prolific. SONA is a university-based participant pool primarily consisting of students, while Prolific is a British online research platform that offers diverse participant recruitment. The participants recruited via Prolific were rewarded £1.20 pounds as a monetary compensation after completing the questionnaire. The participants from SONA were compensated with credits required to pass a bachelor psychology course after completing the questionnaire.

Based on pre-registered criteria (AsPredicted¹), 10 participants who failed to complete at least 50% of the dependent measures, more than one attention check, who completed the survey in less than 120 seconds and/or who showed flatlining were excluded from the analysis. The final sample included 417 participants ($n = 111$ (26%) SONA, $n = 306$ (74%) Prolific), aged between 17 and 65 years, with $n = 202$ identifying as female, $n = 209$ as male, 5 as non-binary/third gender and 1 participant who preferred not to say. Based on Gpower, we needed 210 participants to test the predicted 2 way- interaction effects with a power of .95 (f

¹See <https://aspredicted.org/xnkd-9gmh.pdf>

=.25). This suggests that the current sample size of 417 participants provides sufficient power to test the expected interaction effects, as well as to explore additional moderation and mediation models.

This study employed an experimental design to investigate the effects of group identity on responses to an intergroup transgression. Participants were randomly assigned to read a fabricated news article, styled after EuroNews, that described a conflict between a group of local citizens and a group of refugees, with the victim–aggressor roles manipulated across conditions.

Our primary predictor variables were attitudes towards refugees and personal experiences with refugees. In addition, societal discontent, governmental trust, media trust and European identity were included as potential moderators. Our dependent variables were pro-refugee action tendencies, anti-refugee action tendencies, emotions (e.g. anger, compassion, etc.), empathy with the victims, support for the victims, empathy with refugees, punishment of the perpetrators, and policy support.

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Groningen. Participants were provided with informed consent prior to participation, and data were collected anonymously. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study, and participants were debriefed at the end of the procedure.

Procedure and Independent Variables

The study was conducted, using an online questionnaire (see appendix A-C) in English. After reading information about the study and providing informed consent, participants completed demographic questions about age, gender and political orientation (e.g. ‘What is your age?’, and ‘Please indicate your gender’).

Governmental Trust

The first part of the survey included five items assessing trust in government adapted from Awwad and Awwad (2023). They were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Absolutely disagree) to 7 (Absolutely agree). Two example items are: ‘The government is truthful in its dealings with me’, and ‘If I needed help, the government would do its best to help me’ (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$, $M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.25$).

Media Trust

Next, media trust was measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree) by using four items based on research from Kohring and Matthes (2007). Two example items: ‘The media provides all important faces on covered topics’, and ‘The media pays necessary attention to important topics’ (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .828$; $M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.17$).

Societal Discontent

Following this, participants completed a measure of societal discontent, adapted from Gootjes et al. (2022). Items included statements such as ‘I feel concerned when I think about the future of society’ and ‘I am satisfied about society’. (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .846$, $M = 5.06$, $SD = .567$). These items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree)

Prejudice

Then, a single item of the prejudice scale by Lin et al. (2004) ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.36$) was used to measure the attitude of participants towards refugees, (e.g., ‘With respect to refugees, I feel...’). The item was answered on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Absolutely negative) to 6 (Absolutely positive). This item was mixed with filler items asking about people’s feelings concerning several groups.

European Identification

Next, we measured participants' identification with Europe (Leach et al., 2008) using items such as 'Being European is an important part of who I am' and 'I feel a strong sense of belonging in Europe' (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.872$, $M = 4.85$, $SD = 1.23$). These items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree).

Personal Experience

After this, personal experience with refugees was measured with two items assessing the frequency of positive and negative interactions with refugees, rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Frequently). Positive experience was measured with the following item: 'How often have you had a positive experience with refugees?' ($M = 2.65$, $SD = 1.08$). Negative experience was measured with the item: 'How often have you had a negative experience with refugees?' ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 1.06$).

Manipulation

After these measures, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions in which they read a fictional EuroNews article describing a violent incident involving either refugees or local citizens as the victims. In the condition where refugees were the victims in the article, the perpetrators were local citizens. Conversely, when local citizens were the victims, the perpetrators were refugees in the transgression. Both articles were constructed to be equal in length, tone, and structure. For example, in the *Refugee-victim condition*, the article included the quote: " 'We were just going about our day, and then we were attacked without warning,' recounted Ahmed S., a refugee recovering in the hospital from stab wounds." In the *Citizen-victim condition*, the quote was identical except for the identity of the speaker: " 'We were just going about our day, and then we were attacked without warning,' recounted Lukas M., a local citizen recovering in the hospital from stab wounds."

After this, dependent measures were taken. Further, at the end of the questionnaire, participants answered two manipulation check questions to verify their understanding of the

scenario: ‘Who were the perpetrators in the article you just read?’ and ‘who were the victims in the article?’. This was measured to make sure the participants understand the identity of the victim and the aggressor in the article. We also included three attention checks (e.g., ‘To check if you are still there, can you solve this calculation: three plus three is?’) in the questionnaire to assess whether participants were paying attention. At the conclusion of the study, participants received a debriefing statement that explained the fictitious nature of the article and the purpose of the research, after which they were thanked for their participation.

Dependent Measures

Emotions

Participants were asked to report their emotional responses after reading the fictional EuroNews article. The prompt read: “After reading the EuroNews article about the people who were attacked, I felt...”. Responses for each emotion were rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 6 (Very strongly).

Anger was assessed using two items: anger and outraged), with ($r = .791, p < .001, M = 4.05, SD = 1.30$), the scale was based on research from Batson et al. (2007).

Compassion was measured using the items moved and touched, ($r = .764, p < .001, M = 3.44, SD = 1.29$), the scale was based on research from Batson et al. (2007).

Distress was assessed with the items concerned and distressed), ($r = .647, p < .001, M = 4.00, SD = 1.15$), the scale was based on research from Batson et al. (2007).

Sadness (Zentner et al., 2008) was measured using the items unhappy and sad, ($r = .621, p < .001, M = 3.96, SD = 1.22$), based on research from Zentner et al. (2008).

Indifference was assessed with two items: indifferent and nothing ($r = .569, p < .001, M = 2.36, SD = 1.22$), adapted from Djaoedji (2024).

Empathy With the Victims

Empathy was assessed with one item “ I empathise with the victims in the article” on 7-point Likert-scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree) ($M = 5.52$, $SD = 1.36$).

Support for the Victims

Support for the victims was assessed with two items: ‘I think that the victims in the article should receive an apology’ and ‘I think that the victims in the article need to be compensated by receiving help and/or money’, on 7-point Likert-scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree) ($r = .357$, $p < .001$, $M = 5.37$, $SD = 1.21$).

Punishment of the Perpetrators

Punishment of the perpetrators was also measured with two items: ‘I think the perpetrators need to be imprisoned’ and ‘I think that the perpetrators in the article need to pay the victims’. Both items were measured on a 7-point Likert-scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree) ($r = .506$, $p < .001$, $M = 5.03$, $SD = 1.44$).

Empathy with Refugees

Empathy with refugees was measured with six items (e.g. ‘When I see refugees suffering, I want to help them’ and ‘I often imagine how difficult it must be to flee one’s home country’) on a 7-point Likert-scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree), with Cronbach’s $\alpha = .913$; $M = 4.71$, $SD = .61$).

Action Intentions Towards Refugees

To distinguish between different types of behavioral intentions, we used items developed by Gootjes et al. (2021), reflecting divergent aims. Anti-refugee intentions were assessed using four items (e.g., ‘After reading the article, to what extent do you want to avoid contact with refugees’ and ‘After reading the article, to what extent do you want to protest against refugees’) with Cronbach’s $\alpha = .85$; $M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.55$. Pro-refugee intentions were measured with three items (e.g., ‘After reading the article, to what extent do you want to donate money or clothes to refugees’ and ‘After reading the article, to what extent do you

want to help refugees by teaching the language or personal coaching') (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$; $M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.63$). All action intention items were rated on the same 7-point Likert scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree).

Policy Support

To see if support for left- or rightwing policy statements increased after reading the article. For the statements we chose statements regarding refugees from a VoteMatch (StemWijzer | Europees Parlementsverkiezing 2024, 2024), after that the items were categorised as left- or rightwing by looking if the party that agrees or disagrees is left- or rightwing (Links en Rechts, z.d.) Agreement on leftwing policies was measured with three items (e.g. 'European countries should respect and accommodate the cultural diversity of incoming refugees' and 'Europe should create welcoming environments for refugees'). Agreement on rightwing policies was also measured with three items (e.g. Refugees arriving in Europe should not receive governmental support, such as housing and integration programs' and 'Refugees who come to Europe should discard their own culture and adopt European culture'). All items were rated on a 7-point scale (1 - Absolutely disagree, 7 - Absolutely agree). To check if the items intended to measure agreement with leftwing and rightwing policy statements were internally consistent, the reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Left- and rightwing policy agreement scales showed high internal consistency among the items (Leftwing: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.904$, $M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.65$; Rightwing: $\alpha = 0.814$, $M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.53$).

Results

Preliminary analyses

Descriptive Statistics

The analyses reported below focus exclusively on the condition in which the refugee was presented as the victim. This decision was based on the scope of our hypotheses, which

specifically targeted emotional and behavioral responses in reaction to refugee victimization. As a result, data from the alternative condition, where the refugee was the perpetrator, were excluded from the analyses. The final sample used for hypothesis testing consisted of $N = 211$ participants in the refugee-victim condition, while $N = 206$ participants from the other condition were excluded.

Participants reported moderately positive attitudes toward refugees ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.36$), and moderate to high levels of empathy toward refugees ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 0.61$). Average scores for negative emotions experienced after reading the transgression article were moderate, with anger (e.g., “angry,” “outraged”) at $M = 4.05$ ($SD = 1.30$), distress (e.g., “concerned,” “distressed”) at $M = 4.00$ ($SD = 1.15$), and sadness (e.g., “unhappy,” “sad”) at $M = 3.96$ ($SD = 1.22$). Indifference (e.g., “indifferent,” “nothing”) was lower on average ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 1.22$). Pro-refugee action intentions were also moderate ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.63$). All variables were approximately normally distributed. Visual inspection of histograms and residual plots indicated no severe violations of assumptions of linearity, normality, or homoscedasticity. Missing data were minimal and were handled using listwise deletion.

Correlation Analyses

Pearson correlation coefficients among the main variables are presented in Table 1. Attitudes toward refugees were positively and significantly correlated with empathy toward refugees ($r = .645$, $p < .001$), pro-refugee action intentions ($r = .569$, $p < .001$), and negative emotions ($r = .455$, $p < .001$). Empathy was strongly associated with action intentions ($r = .813$, $p < .001$) and also showed a substantial correlation with negative emotions ($r = .688$, $p < .001$), showing that individuals who empathize more with refugees tend to both experience stronger emotional responses and express higher intentions to act on their behalf. The combined 6-item negative emotion scale (excluding items for “indifference” and “compassion”) showed excellent internal consistency, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$.

Table 1*Pearson Correlations Between Main Variables (Condition = 2)*

Variables	Pro-refugee Action Intentions	Empathy Toward Refugees	Negative Emotions	Attitudes Toward Refugees
Pro-refugee Action Intentions	—	.813**	.613**	.569**
Empathy Toward Refugees		—	.688**	.645**
Negative Emotions			—	.455**
Attitudes Toward Refugees				—

Note. $N = 211$. ActRefPo = Pro-refugee Action Intentions; EmpRefPo = Empathy Toward Refugees; NegEmoCom = Negative Emotions; AttRef = Attitudes Toward Refugees. $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

Testing the hypotheses

Hypothesis 1a: Attitudes Toward Refugees and Emotional Responses

A simple linear regression was conducted to examine whether attitudes toward refugees predict negative emotional responses in the refugee victim condition. The combined 6-item negative emotion scale excluded items for “compassion” and “indifference”. The model was statistically significant, $R = .455$, $R^2 = .207$, indicating that attitudes explained approximately 20.7% of the variance in negative emotions. The adjusted R^2 was .203, and the standard error of the estimate was 0.67, suggesting a moderately strong and reliable model fit. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 209) = 54.50$, $p < .001$, indicating that attitudes toward refugees significantly predicted negative emotional responses. This supports the hypothesis that more positive attitudes are associated with stronger negative emotional reactions when a refugee is the victim of a transgression.

The regression coefficient for attitudes toward refugees was statistically significant ($B = 0.248$, $SE = 0.034$, $\beta = .455$, $t = 7.38$, $p < .001$). This indicates that for each one-unit increase in positive attitudes toward refugees, negative emotional responses increased by approximately 0.25 units.

Hypothesis 1b: Attitudes Towards Refugees and Pro-Refugee Behavioral Responses

A simple linear regression was conducted to examine whether attitudes toward refugees predict pro-refugee action intentions within the refugee victim condition (Condition = 2). The analysis yielded a statistically significant model, $F(1, 209) = 99.81$, $p < .001$, with an $R = .569$, indicating a moderate to strong positive relationship between attitudes and action intentions. The model explained approximately 32.3% of the variance in action intentions ($R^2 = .323$, $Adjusted R^2 = .320$), and the standard error of the estimate was 1.39, indicating an acceptable fit.

The regression coefficient for attitudes toward refugees was statistically significant ($B = 0.692$, $SE = 0.069$, $\beta = .569$, $t = 9.99$, $p < .001$). This suggests that individuals with more positive attitudes toward refugees were significantly more likely to express stronger intentions to act in support of them. The intercept was $B = 1.200$, reflecting the baseline level of action intentions when attitude scores are zero. These findings support the hypothesis that attitudes toward refugees are a substantial predictor of behavioral intentions, particularly in contexts where refugees are portrayed as victims of injustice.

Table 5

ANOVA Summary: Attitudes Predicting Action Intentions (Condition = 2)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Regression	191.624	1	191.624	99.81	< .001

Residual	401.271	209	1.920
Total	592.895	210	

Note. DV = Pro-refugee Action Intentions; IV = Attitudes Toward Refugees.

Table 6

Regression Coefficients: Attitudes Predicting Action Intentions (Condition = 2)

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
(Constant)	1.200	0.287	—	4.18	< .001
Attitudes Toward Refugees	0.692	0.069	.569	9.99	< .001

Note. DV = Pro-refugee Action Intentions (ActRefPo); IV = Attitudes Toward Refugees (AttRef).

Hypothesis 2: Empathy as a Mediator Between Attitudes and Action Intentions

A mediation analysis was conducted to test whether empathy toward refugees mediates the relationship between attitudes toward refugees and pro-refugee action intentions, using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4) with 5,000 bootstrap samples. The results showed that attitudes significantly predicted empathy ($B = 0.72$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = 12.21$, $p < .001$) and empathy significantly predicted action intentions ($B = 0.84$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = 14.51$, $p < .001$). The direct effect of attitudes on action intentions was not significant when controlling for empathy ($B = 0.09$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = 1.44$, $p = .152$), but the indirect effect via empathy was significant ($B = 0.60$, $BootSE = 0.06$, 95% CI [0.48, 0.72]), indicating full mediation. These

findings support H2, suggesting that empathy fully explains the link between positive attitudes and pro-refugee behavioral intentions.

Exploratory Analysis: Negative Emotions as a Mediator

Although the primary focus of this study was to examine the mediating role of empathy in the relationship between attitudes toward refugees and pro-refugee action intentions, we also conducted an exploratory analysis to assess whether negative emotions serve as an additional psychological mechanism. The combined 6-item negative emotion scale excluded items for “indifference” and “compassion”. Previous research has highlighted that emotional reactions, such as distress, anger, and sadness, are often closely tied to individuals’ willingness to support victims of injustice (Gootjes et al., 2022). Given the strong correlations observed between attitudes, emotional responses, and behavioral intentions in our data, we explored a multiple mediation model that included both empathy and negative emotions as parallel mediators. This analysis aimed to gain a more nuanced understanding of the emotional and cognitive processes through which attitudes influence support for refugees, particularly in morally charged contexts.

A multiple mediation analysis was conducted using Hayes’ PROCESS macro (Model 4, 5,000 bootstrap samples) to examine whether negative emotions and empathy toward refugees jointly mediate the relationship between attitudes toward refugees and pro-refugee action intentions ($N = 211$). Results showed that attitudes significantly predicted both negative emotions ($B = 0.38$, $SE = 0.05$, $t = 7.93$, $p < .001$) and empathy ($B = 0.69$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = 11.55$, $p < .001$). In turn, both negative emotions ($B = 0.22$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = 3.00$, $p = .003$) and empathy ($B = 0.71$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = 12.08$, $p < .001$) significantly predicted pro-refugee action intentions. The direct effect of attitudes on action intentions remained significant when controlling for both mediators ($B = 0.15$, $SE = 0.05$, $t = 2.83$, $p = .005$), indicating partial mediation. The total indirect effect was significant ($B = 0.57$, $BootSE = 0.06$, 95% CI [0.46,

0.70]), with both indirect paths contributing uniquely via negative emotions ($B = 0.08$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.17]) and empathy ($B = 0.49$, 95% CI [0.38, 0.60]).

Discussion

This study examined how attitudes toward refugees influence emotional and behavioral responses, especially in cases where refugees are victims of harm. The main focus was on the role of empathy and whether it helps explain why people with more positive attitudes are also more willing to take supportive action. The results were in line with our hypotheses. More positive attitudes were linked to stronger negative emotional reactions and higher pro-refugee behavioral intentions. More importantly, empathy toward refugees fully mediated this relationship, meaning that it served as the emotional bridge between people's thoughts and their willingness to help.

Emotional and Behavioral Responses

As predicted, people with more favorable attitudes toward refugees also reported stronger negative emotional responses when reading about a refugee being victimized. Emotions like anger, distress, and sadness were more intense for these individuals, and at the same time, they were less likely to report feeling indifferent or unaffected. This shows that when someone already has a supportive stance toward refugees, they are also more emotionally engaged when reading about harm done to them. These results align with earlier research (e.g., Gootjes et al., 2022; Djaoeddi, 2023) showing that people's emotional responses to refugee-related events often reflect their underlying attitudes.

The behavioral results told a similar story. Those with more positive attitudes were more likely to express intentions to help refugees, whether that meant donating, supporting policies, or other forms of action. This supports existing literature suggesting that attitudes are a strong predictor of behavior in intergroup contexts, especially when harm is involved

(Djaoeddi, 2023) . However, our study went one step further by showing that this relationship between attitudes and action is not direct.

That is, empathy fully mediated the link between attitudes and behavioral intentions. In other words, once we took empathy into account, the direct relationship between attitudes on action intentions was no longer significant. This supports the idea that people do not act solely based on what they believe, it is also about what they feel. This finding fits well with theories of prosocial behavior, like those by Batson (1991) and Klimecki (2015), which highlight empathy as a key motivator for helping others. The strong correlation between empathy and action intentions ($r = .81$) also points to how powerful emotional engagement may be in shaping behavior.

If someone can emotionally connect with refugees, they are much more likely to act on that connection. On the other hand, people with negative or neutral attitudes may simply not experience enough empathy to feel compelled to act. This adds to the growing body of research on intergroup empathy bias (Cikara et al., 2011), which argues that we are less likely to empathize with those we see as “other.”

Group Context and Broader Contributions

Although this section of the thesis focused on empathy as a mediator, it was part of a broader group project that looked at several additional variables. Other team members examined factors like societal discontent, governmental and media trust, European identity, and differences in support for left- or right-leaning refugee policies. The combination of all these elements helps provide a fuller picture of how people respond to morally complex situations involving refugees, not just emotionally, but also ideologically and politically. This context is important because it highlights that public responses to refugee-related incidents are influenced by a mix of emotional, cognitive, and identity-based processes.

In addition to the primary analysis, an exploratory mediation model was tested to investigate whether negative emotions, such as anger, sadness, and distress, could also explain the link between attitudes toward refugees and pro-refugee action intentions. The analysis revealed that both empathy and negative emotions significantly mediated this relationship, with empathy showing the stronger effect. However, even after accounting for both mediators, attitudes still had a direct effect on behavioral intentions, suggesting a partially mediated model. These findings point to the importance of emotional engagement more broadly, and not just empathic concern, in shaping support for refugee-related causes. By focusing on one specific pathway (attitudes → empathy → behavior) while acknowledging others, this section contributes to a more detailed understanding of how emotional mechanisms operate within that larger framework.

Limitations and Future Directions

Even though the findings were clear, a few limitations need to be acknowledged. First, the analysis was only based on the condition where refugees were the victims. It would be interesting to compare this with the opposite condition (i.e., when refugees were the aggressors) to see whether empathy plays the same role or whether other emotional or moral responses become more relevant. Second, although our main model focused on empathy, our exploratory analysis revealed that negative emotions, such as sadness, anger, and distress, also significantly influenced pro-refugee behavioral intentions. This means that empathy isn't the only emotional process involved, other feelings matter too. Future studies could dig deeper into how different emotions interact or compete when shaping people's willingness to help or take action.

It's also important to recognize that emotional reactions aren't only shaped by the situation itself but also by how people view their own group compared to others. Intergroup Emotion Theory suggests that people respond emotionally based on their group identity, so

they may feel more empathy or concern for those they see as part of their ingroup. In the case of refugees, if they are seen as outsiders, some people may feel less emotional engagement altogether. This idea helps explain the presence of intergroup empathy bias in many social situations.

Lastly, although we did include a measure of political beliefs, we didn't directly examine how political identification interacts with group identity or emotions. Since political views often shape how people interpret social issues, future research could take a closer look at how ideology, empathy, and emotional reactions all work together to influence behavior in intergroup contexts.

Conclusion

This study examined how individuals respond to refugee victimization by exploring the role of empathy as a potential psychological mechanism linking attitudes toward refugees with intentions to offer support. The results demonstrated that individuals with more positive attitudes were more likely to experience empathy and, in turn, express stronger pro-refugee behavioral intentions. Additionally, the exploratory analysis revealed that negative emotions, such as sadness, distress, and anger, also contributed to this relationship, suggesting that multiple emotional processes play a role in shaping behavioral outcomes. Importantly, these findings emphasize that empathy is not an automatic or universally applied emotion. Rather, it is shaped by pre-existing attitudes, which are influenced by broader social and cultural factors such as media narratives, political beliefs, and personal experiences. Recognizing the role of these influences helps clarify why people respond so differently to the same situation. Within the broader context of the group project, this section contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how emotions and attitudes interact to influence real-world behavior in intergroup contexts. As public debates around refugee issues continue, these insights

underscore the importance of addressing not only policy and information, but also the emotional and psychological factors that guide human behavior.

References

- Awwad, M. S., Awwad, R. M., & Awwad, R. M. (2023). The role of trust in government in crisis management: Fear of COVID-19 and compliance with social distancing. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5973.12455>
- Azevedo, R. T., Macaluso, E., Avenanti, A., Santangelo, V., Cazzato, V., & Aglioti, S. M. (2013). Their pain is not our pain: Brain and autonomic correlates of empathic resonance with the pain of same and different race individuals. *Human Brain Mapping*, 34(12), 3168–3181. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hbm.22133>
- Batson, C. D., Kennedy, C. L., Nord, L., Stocks, E. L., Fleming, D. A., Marzette, C. M., Lishner, D. A., Hayes, R. E., Kolchinsky, L. M., & Zerger, T. (2007). Anger at unfairness: Is it moral outrage? *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 37(6), 1272–1285. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.434>
- Berry, D. R., Rodriguez, K., Plascencia Ibarra, I., Musick, A., Hoerr, J., & Napoli, D. (2023). Event-related correlates of compassion for social pain. *Social Neuroscience*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17470919.2023.2208878>
- Cikara, M., Bruneau, E. G., & Saxe, R. (2020). Us and them: Intergroup failures of empathy. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 24(12), 1047–1061. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2020.09.006>
- Contreras-Huerta, L. S., Baker, K. S., Reynolds, K. J., Batalha, L., & Cunningham, R. (2013). Racial bias in neural empathic responses to pain. *PLOS ONE*, 8(12), e84001. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0084001>
- Deist, M., & Fourie, M. M. (2023). (Not) part of the team: Racial empathy bias in a South African minimal group study. *PLOS ONE*, 18(4), e0283902. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0283902>

Demel, R., Masch, L., Schieferdecker, D., Schwander, H., Hutter, S., & Specht, J. (2025). Empathy during crises: Investigating attitudes, tolerance, and ingroup–outgroup dynamics in response to refugee movements. *Journal of Personality*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.13012>

Djaoeddi, L. (2023). *When refugees are either the perpetrator or the victim of a transgression: Positive and negative action tendencies as a function of attitudes towards refugees* [Master's thesis, University of Groningen].

Djaoedji, D. (2024). *When refugees are either the perpetrator or the victim of a transgression: Positive and negative action tendencies as a function of attitudes towards refugees* [Master Scriptie, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen].

Fourie, M. M., Subramoney, S., & Gobodo-Madikizela, P. (2017). A less attractive feature of empathy: Intergroup empathy bias. In M. Kondo (Ed.), *Empathy: An evidence-based interdisciplinary perspective* (pp. 45–61). InTech. <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.69287>

Fourie, M. M., Subramoney, S., Gobodo-Madikizela, P., & Decety, J. (2014). Empathy and helping: Effects of racial group membership and cognitive load. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 44(4), 426–438. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0081246314530280>

Hameiri, B., Brambilla, M., Rubini, M., & Nadler, A. (2018). Is exposure to conflict-related violence associated with less intergroup empathy? The moderating role of ideology. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 57(3), 537–556. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12249>

Han, S. (2009). Racial group membership modulates empathic neural responses. *Journal of Neuroscience*, 29(27), 8525–8529. <https://doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.2418-09.2009>

- Klimecki, O. M. (2019). The role of empathy and compassion in conflict resolution. *Emotion Review*, 11(4), 310–325. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073919838609>
- Kohring, M., & Matthes, J. (2007). Trust in news media. *Communication Research*, 34(2), 231–252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650206298071>
- Leach, C. W., van Zomeren, M., Zebel, S., Vliek, M. L. W., Pennekamp, S. F., Doosje, B., Ouwerkerk, J. W., & Spears, R. (2008). Group-level self-definition and self-investment: A hierarchical (multi-component) model of ingroup identification. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95(1), 144–165. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.95.1.144>
- Lin, M. H., Kwan, V. S. Y., Cheung, A., & Fiske, S. T. (2004). Stereotype Content Model explains prejudice for an envied outgroup: Scale of Anti-Asian American stereotypes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31(1), 34–47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167204271320>
- Links en rechts. (2023). Geraadpleegd op 18 maart 2025, van https://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrp8wsy/links_en_rechts
- Meiring, L. L., Subramoney, S., Thomas, K. G. F., & Decety, J. (2014). Empathy and helping: Effects of racial group membership and cognitive load. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 44(4), 426–438. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0081246314530280>
- Miron, A. M., Branscombe, N. R., Lishner, D. A., Otradovec, A. C., Frankowski, S., Bowers, H. R., Malcore, M., & Wierzba, B. L. (2020). Group-level perspective-taking effects on injustice standards and empathic concern when the victims are categorized as outgroup versus ingroup. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 42(5), 305–323. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01973533.2020.1768096>
- Redford, L., & Ratliff, K. A. (2018). Empathy and humanitarianism predict preferential moral responsiveness to in-groups and out-groups. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 158(6), 668–683. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2017.1412933>

Ruhrman, A., Pliskin, R., Shuman, E., van der Toorn, J., & Halperin, E. (2024). Is exposure to conflict-related violence associated with less intergroup empathy? The moderating role of ideology. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 54(12), 787–801.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.13073>

StemWijzer | Europees Parlementsverkiezing 2024. (2024). Geraadpleegd op 18 maart 2025, van <https://eu.stemwijzer.nl/#/>

Vanman, E. J. (2016). The role of empathy in intergroup relations. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 11, 59–63. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2016.06.007>

Vollberg, M. C., & Cikara, M. (2018). The neuroscience of intergroup emotion. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 24, 48–52. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2018.05.003>

Zaki, J., & Cikara, M. (2015). Addressing empathic failures. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 24(6), 471–476. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721415599978>

Zentner, M., Grandjean, D., & Scherer, K. R. (2008). Emotions evoked by the sound of music: Characterization, classification, and measurement. *Emotion*, 8(4), 494–521. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1528-3542.8.4.494>

ChatGPT, a large language model (LLM), was used as a brainstorming tool to explore effective approaches for analyzing the dataset. It was not employed to conduct the actual data analysis itself, but rather to gain a general understanding of the appropriate sequence of steps and how to utilize programs like JASP and SPSS. Example prompts can be found in Appendix B. Additionally, external tools such as Grammarly and the built-in Word spelling checker were used to review grammar and spelling. Although Grammarly includes AI-assisted writing features, these were not used in the composition of this paper.

Appendix A

Questionnaire Used in Experiment

Informed Consent

“VIEWS ON SOCIETAL ISSUES”

Why do I receive this information?

- You are being invited to participate in this study, because we are looking for Europeans to answer this questionnaire about how people in Europe think about societal issues. You will be asked about different political and societal issues, such as trust in government and media and the position of refugees in Europe.
- This research is part of the Bachelor's thesis project by S. Akbari, T. Dumas, S.W. Hoogcarspel, Y. Lippold, M.C. Osterwald and S.F. Willegers, from the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, and is supervised by E. Gordijn. Contact information: Y.lippold@student.rug.nl
- The start date of the research will be April 3 2025 and the end date of the research will be June 20 2025.

Do I have to participate in this research?

- Participation in the research is voluntary. However, your consent is needed. Therefore, please read this information carefully. You can withdraw from participation at every moment without explanation, and there will be no negative consequences for you. You have this right at all times, also after you have given consent for participation.

Why this research?

- In this research, we want to study how people from different backgrounds in Europe think and feel about societal and political issues in Europe. For this research, we are looking for participants who are at least 16 years old and who are European.

What do we ask of you during the research?

- First, we will ask you for your consent to participate.
- When you agree to participate, you will be guided to the online questionnaire. In the questionnaire, you first answer some demographic questions, namely your age and gender. Moreover, we will ask you about your political orientation. Next, you will be asked several questions concerning issues in Europe. Furthermore you will read a short news article regarding refugees in Europe, and we will ask several questions about that article.
- If you decided to withdraw from the study but would like to receive more information, you can always ask for this by sending an email to y.lippold@student.rug.nl.
- The questionnaire will take approximately 9 minutes to complete.
- You will receive compensation for your participation.

What are the consequences of participation?

- With our research, we hope to gain more understanding of how European citizens react to societal and political issues. Your participation will also help Bachelor students with their thesis.
- We believe that there are no major risks associated with participating in this study. Please remember that you may always withdraw from the study and/or skip questions you may not wish to answer, which does not have any negative consequences for you.

How will we treat your data?

- The data consists of your responses to the questions which will be collected using an online questionnaire. We collect this data for scientific purposes.
- Your data will be used to write a Bachelor's thesis, and possibly to write an empirical article in a scientific peer-reviewed journal.
- Your data is confidential. Some information may act as identifiers when combined (i.e., gender, age range, and political orientation). Only the researchers of this study will have access to it. Also, Prolific ID codes can be deemed as identifiers. We use them only to compensate for your participation. Once we compensate you, we will delete them.
- If the data is published, we will remove information that could be used to identify individual participants.
- Data processing takes place in Europe.
- When the study is finished, the data will be stored at a safe University of Groningen server and will be stored for 10 years, which is in line with the university's data storage protocol.

What else do you need to know?

- You may always ask questions about the research: now, during the research, and after the end of the research. You can do so by sending an e-mail to the researchers via Prolific.
- Do you have questions/concerns about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of the research? You may also contact the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences of the University of Groningen: ec-bss@rug.nl.
- Do you have questions or concerns regarding the handling of your personal data? You may also contact the University of Groningen Data Protection Officer: privacy@rug.nl.
- As a research participant, you have the right to a copy of this research information.

By consenting to participate in this study you understand the following:

1. I have the right to receive a copy of this informed consent form by taking a screenshot of this page or asking the researcher for a copy (send an email to y.lippold@student.rug.nl)

2. My participation is voluntary, and I can withdraw from this study at any moment without having to give a reason and without any negative consequences.
3. I am allowed to refuse to answer any questions that I do not wish to answer. I do not have to provide any reason for this, and this does not have any negative consequences.
4. My responses are confidential and will not be shared with anyone besides the research team.
5. All my responses will be securely stored and are only accessible to the researchers.
6. After completing the questionnaire, I will receive more information on the purpose of this research.
7. I approve that researchers can handle my personal data.

Participation

1. Do you agree to participate in this study (if you don't want to participate, click no and you will leave the questionnaire)?
 - Yes, I want to participate.
 - No

Data Collection

2. Do you give permission for your data to be collected during your participation in this study, to be analyzed and used for the purposes of the study outlined above (if you do not consent, click no and you will leave the questionnaire)?
 - Yes, I consent to the processing of my data as mentioned in the study information.
 - No, I do not consent to participate.

Demographics

First, we ask you to provide some demographic information below before starting the main survey.

3. European: Are you European?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Prefer not to say
4. Age: What is your age?
5. Gender: Please indicate your gender.
 - Male
 - Female
 - Non-binary / third gender
 - Prefer not to say

6. Nationality: Are you European?

- Yes, I am European
- No

7. Ethnicity: Which of these best describes your ethnic background? Please select one answer.

- Asian or Asian British
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- White
- Other ethnic group

8. Political orientation: Please indicate where on the scale you see yourself regarding your own political orientation.

- Extremely left
- Left
- Slightly left
- Moderate
- Slightly right
- Right
- Extremely right

Perception Institution

Next, we would like to know how you perceive institutions such as the government and the media. To what extent do you agree with each statement (1= absolutely disagree; 7 = absolutely agree)?

Governmental Trust

9. If I needed help, the government would do its best to help me.
10. I believe that the government would act in my best interest.
11. The government is interested in my well-being, not just its own.
12. The government is truthful in its dealings with me.
13. I would describe the government as honest.

Media Trust

14. The media pays necessary attention to important topics.
15. The media provides all important facts on covered topics.
16. Please select six (attention check).
17. The information in the news is always truthful.
18. Journalists express fair and reasonable opinions.

Societal Discontent

How do you feel about and perceive society? Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements (1= absolutely disagree; 7 = absolutely agree).

- 19. I feel shocked about the way things are going in society.
- 20. I feel concerned when I think about the future of society.
- 21. I am satisfied about society.
- 22. I am frustrated because society is not as it should be.
- 23. I am afraid that things will go wrong in society.

Prejudice

How do you feel about the following groups of people in society? Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements (1= absolutely disagree; 6 = absolutely agree).

- 24. With respect to POOR people, I feel ...
- 25. With respect to HIGHLY EDUCATED people, I feel ...
- 26. With respect to REFUGEES, I feel ...
- 27. With respect to RICH people, I feel ...
- 28. With respect to LOWER EDUCATED people, I feel ...

Attention Check

- 29. To check if you are still there, can you solve this calculation: $3 + 3 = ?$

Refugees in Europe

In this part of the questionnaire we want to focus on refugees in Europe. We first want to know more about how you feel about being European.

- 30. Are you European?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Prefer not to say
 - Other, namely.....

European Identity

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about being European (1= absolutely disagree; 7 = absolutely agree).

- 31. I see myself as an European
- 32. Being European is an important part of who I am.
- 33. I feel a strong sense of belonging to Europe.
- 34. I feel good about being part of Europe.
- 35. In my current daily life, I often think about being European.

Personal Contact With Refugees

We now would like to know to what extent you have had positive or negative experiences with refugees (1 = never; 5 = frequently).

36. How often have you had a positive experience with refugees?
 37. How often have you had a negative experience with refugees?

Manipulation (See Appendix B and C)

For the second part of the questionnaire we would like you to read an article that was published a while ago. Please read it carefully as we will ask some questions about it.

Emotions

How do you feel about the situation described in the article? Please answer this for each item.

After reading the article about the people who were attacked, I felt ... (1 = not at all; 6 = very strongly).

- 38. Outraged
- 39. Touched
- 40. Distressed
- 41. Unhappy
- 42. Moved
- 43. Angry
- 44. Indifferent
- 45. Concerned
- 46. Nothing
- 47. Sad
- 48. Guilty
- 49. Ashamed

Victims and Perpetrators

Next we would like to know how you think about the victims and the perpetrators of the article. To what extent do you agree with the following statements (1= absolutely disagree; 7 = absolutely agree).

- 50. I think that the victims in the article need to be compensated by receiving help and/or money.
- 51. I think that the perpetrators in the article need to be imprisoned.
- 52. I empathize with the victims in the article.
- 53. I can understand why the perpetrators in the article behaved in the way they did.
- 54. I think that the victims in the article are at least partly responsible for how they were treated.
- 55. I think that the perpetrators in the article need to pay the victims.
- 56. I think that the victims in the article should receive an apology.

Empathy With the Refugees

Now we would like to know how you feel, think and want to behave with respect to refugees

in general. To what extent do you agree with the following statements (1= absolutely disagree; 7 = absolutely agree).

- 57. I feel compassion for refugees when I hear about their struggles.
- 58. When I see refugees suffering, I want to help them.
- 59. I can easily put myself in the shoes of a refugee.
- 60. Please select absolutely disagree (check)
- 61. I feel emotionally moved when I hear about the hardships refugees face.
- 62. I often imagine how difficult it must be to flee one's home country.

Action Tendencies Towards Refugees

Now we would like to know how you feel, think and want to behave with respect to refugees in general. To what extent do you agree with the following statements (1= absolutely disagree; 7 = absolutely agree).

- 63. I would like to demonstrate for rights for refugees.
- 64. I would like to protect my neighborhood from refugees.
- 65. I would like to help refugees by teaching the language of personal coaching.
- 66. I would like to avoid contact with refugees.
- 67. I would like to correct refugees firmly, even with violence, when they break the law.
- 68. I would like to donate money or clothes to refugees.
- 69. I would like to protest against refugees.

Policy Support

Next we would like to know how you think Europe should deal with refugees. To what extent do you agree with the following measures (1= absolutely disagree; 7 = absolutely agree).

- 70. Europe should create welcoming environments for refugees.
- 71. Refugees arriving in Europe should not receive government support, such as housing and integration programs.
- 72. European countries should respect and accommodate the cultural diversity of incoming refugees.
- 73. Refugees who come to Europe should discard their own culture and adopt European culture.
- 74. The government should aid refugees that come into Europe, for example with housing or other initiatives.
- 75. All refugees should be refused at the borders of Europe.

Manipulation Check

- 76. Finally, please think back about the article that you just read. Who were the perpetrators in the article?
 - The refugees
 - The local citizens

77. Who were the victims in the article?

- The refugees
- The local citizens

Feedback

You are about to come to the end of the study. We would like to hear your thoughts and feedback about the study. If any, please report them in the box below.

Debrief

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!

Please read the following information about this study carefully; We have withheld some information about the study.

At the beginning, you were informed that this research was focused on people's perception about societal issues in Europe. To investigate this, you were asked several questions about how you perceive yourself and others in society, and your response about a EuroNews article about refugees.

However, the actual aim was to investigate whether a newspaper article describing a transgression involving refugees and local citizens influences how people perceive and act towards refugees. Depending on the condition you were assigned to, you either read an article about refugees being the victims or refugees being the perpetrator of a transgression. This is why you were asked about your emotions and action tendencies towards refugees.

However, please note that the EuroNews article you read was fictional and created by the researchers. The article was not based on any specific real-world events or situations. Study participants were shown a hypothetical article in which either refugees or local citizens were the perpetrators of a transgression involving both groups. It was designed as an experiment to explore the attitudes and actions that people might take in response to such a scenario.

We want to emphasize that the article was not real and did not appear on the EuroNews website. The transgression and crime scene described in the article were created solely for the purpose of this research, all the statements in the article are fictional.

We understand that the article may have elicited negative emotions. However, we believe it is important to examine these types of situations, as news stories about similar events are often published, and it is crucial to investigate how people respond to them.

We want to emphasize that this study was purely academic in nature, and your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Your participation was completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Thank you once again for your valuable participation, we appreciate your help in furthering our understanding on these important issues.

Renewed consent

78. Now that you have read all the information about the purposes of the study, do you still agree with the use and processing of your data?


- Yes, I consent to the use and processing of my personal data.
- No, I do not consent to the use and processing of my data, and my personal data should be permanently deleted.

Thanks

Thank you for your time. If you click on the red arrow you will return to Prolific to get compensated for your participation.

Appendix B


Fake Euronews Article Used: Refugees are the Perpetrators, Locals are the Victims


[Latest](#)
[Europe](#)
[World](#)
[EU Policy](#)
[Business](#)
[Travel](#)
[Next](#)
[Culture](#)
[Green](#)
[Health](#)
[Euroviews](#)
[More](#)
[Log In](#)
[Live](#)

Copyright Canva/Euronews

By [Romane Armangau](#)
Published on 17/03/2025 - 11:03 GMT+1

[Share this article](#) [Comments](#)



Local citizens left afraid after being caught by surprise with a violent attack by a group of refugees

Graz, Austria – March 17 2025

A disturbing incident unfolded this morning in the city center of Graz, Austria. A group of refugees viciously attacked a group of local residents near a tram station. The unprovoked assault left several civilians injured and traumatized, deepening concerns among citizens about public safety.


Witnesses described the attack as chaotic and terrifying. "I heard shouting, and then suddenly one of them pulled out a knife," recalled Marie Hoffner, a witness who was standing nearby. "At first, it seemed like an argument, but then it turned violent very quickly. There was panic—people screamed and ran in different directions."

According to reports, several of the attacked local citizens sustained injuries before bystanders and police intervened. "We were just going about our day, and then we were attacked without warning," recounted Lukas M., a local citizen recovering in the hospital from stab wounds. "I don't understand why this happened." Several other victims suffered cuts and bruises. Emergency services provided immediate medical attention at the scene.

Police arrived swiftly, detaining multiple individuals involved in the fight. Some of those arrested reportedly showed signs of erratic behavior. Authorities have not yet disclosed a motive for the altercation and are continuing their investigation.

Similar violent incidents between refugees and civilians have been reported across European cities in recent months. The attacks have reignited debates over migration policies, with many locals expressing growing frustration over security concerns. "We need to do more to protect our citizens from violence and hate", we can't allow this kind of behavior," said a local community leader.

Bekijk nu >




Nieuwe Laptop deals Megekko
Vandaag voor 22.30u besteld morgen in huis!


Shop nu >

TRG AD


Top stories




Trump says Putin ceasefire talks to discuss 'land and power plants'




Canada's PM Carney visits Paris and London to rally European allies



Lithuania says Russian military intelligence behind Ikea arson attack




Rwanda cuts diplomatic ties with Belgium over DRC conflict



Telegram's CEO Durov returns to Dubai amid French criminal probe

Appendix C


Fake Euronews Article Used: Refugees are the Victims, Locals are the Perpetrators


[Latest](#)
[Europe](#)
[World](#)
[EU Policy](#)
[Business](#)
[Travel](#)
[Next](#)
[Culture](#)
[Green](#)
[Health](#)
[Euroviews](#)
[More](#)
[Log In](#)
[Live](#)

Copyright Canva/Euronews

By [Romane Armangau](#)
Published on 17/03/2025 - 11:03 GMT+1

[Share this article](#) [Comments](#)



Refugees left afraid after being caught by surprise with a violent attack by a group of local citizens

Graz, Austria – March 17 2025

A disturbing incident unfolded this morning in the city center of Graz, Austria. A group of local citizens viciously attacked a group of refugees near a tram station. The unprovoked assault left several refugees injured and traumatized, deepening concerns among refugees about public safety.


Witnesses described the attack as chaotic and terrifying. "I heard shouting, and then suddenly one of them pulled out a knife," recalled Marie Hoffner, a witness who was standing nearby. "At first, it seemed like an argument, but then it turned violent very quickly. There was panic—people screamed and ran in different directions."

According to reports, several of the attacked refugees sustained injuries before bystanders and police intervened. "We were just going about our day, and then we were attacked without warning," recounted Ahmed S., a refugee recovering in the hospital from stab wounds. "I don't understand why this happened." Several other victims suffered cuts and bruises. Emergency services provided immediate medical attention at the scene.

Police arrived swiftly, detaining multiple individuals involved in the assault. Some of those arrested reportedly showed signs of erratic behavior. Authorities have not yet disclosed a motive for the attack and are continuing their investigation.

Similar violent incidents between civilians and refugees have been reported across European cities in recent months. These attacks have reignited debates over the treatment of refugees in Europe with many locals expressing frustration. "We need to do more to protect refugees from violence and hate, we can't allow this kind of behavior to continue," said a local community leader

Bekijk nu >




Nieuwe Laptop deals Megeeko
Vandaag voor 22.30u besteld morgen in huis!


Shop nu >

TRG AD


Top stories




Trump says Putin ceasefire talks to discuss 'land and power plants'




Canada's PM Carney visits Paris and London to rally European allies



Lithuania says Russian military intelligence behind Ikea arson attack



Rwanda cuts diplomatic ties with Belgium over DRC conflict



Telegram's CEO Durov returns to Dubai amid French criminal probe