

Political Elite Discourses and Majority Members' Beliefs About the Prevalence of Ethnic Discrimination in Europe

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Abstract

This article investigates European majority members' perceptions of the prevalence of ethnic discrimination. We use individual-level data from the Eurobarometer 'Discrimination in the EU' series, covering 26 European countries and six years (2006, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2019), enriched with contextual information on political elite discourses from the Comparative Manifesto Project. We shed light on significant and substantive cross-country and cross-temporal variations in these perceptions. Next, we explore how these variations are related to national political elite discourses by employing multilevel models. By disentangling between and within country variations, we find that particularly changes in political elite discourses within countries over time are associated with variations in majority members' beliefs about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination in their society. Exclusive discourses, which emphasize nationalistic ideas and demarcate strong boundaries between ethnic groups, are associated with majority members thinking that ethnic discrimination is less widespread in their country. The reverse holds for inclusive discourses: when political elites underline the importance of cultural diversity and multiculturalism, majorities perceive more ethnic discrimination. While these discourses are only related to within country variations, our descriptive and multilevel results show that the national context matters for majorities' perceptions of the prevalence of ethnic discrimination.

Introduction

The study of majority members' perceptions of the prevalence of ethnic discrimination is crucial for the understanding of current intergroup relations and social change. Such perceptions refer to an estimation of the frequency of discriminatory practices of individuals as well as to an evaluation of societal structures which disadvantage ethnic minority members. Studies from the United States show that opinions concerning discrimination differ across ethnic groups: minority members more often mark behaviors and societal structures as discriminatory than ethnic majorities do (Sommers & Norton, 2006; Carter & Murphy, 2015; Douds et al., 2019; Moberg et al., 2019). Because a lack of recognition of discrimination is correlated with acts of discriminatory behavior and simultaneously hinders constructive intergroup dialogue, differences in perceptions have clear implications for interethnic relationships in society (Sommer & Norton, 2006). For structural outcomes, perceptions of social problems are known to serve as justifications for social and policy change as awareness of a problem is often the first step to overcome it (Kluegel, 1985; Kluegel & Smith, 1986). Majority members' recognition of ethnic discrimination and awareness of their own privileged position is therefore presumed to be related to an individual's support or opposition to anti-discrimination policies. Moreover, as majority members still disproportionately influence national and local policies (Douds et al., 2019), and are more likely to stimulate change in opinions and attitudes for

fellow majority groups members (Mallet et al., 2008), majorities' perceptions of the prevalence of ethnic discrimination are crucial for understanding national levels of support for anti-discrimination policies.

Theoretically, majorities' perceptions of ethnic discrimination are important to study because they differ from the more often investigated opinions and attitudes about migrants and ethnic minority populations. While the latter concern majorities' attitudes towards out-groups, majorities' beliefs about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination are estimates of in-group members' discriminatory behavior towards minority out-group members. Mechanisms that explain anti-immigrant attitudes in general can thus not simply be assumed to apply to majorities' perceptions of ethnic discrimination in exactly the same way.

Numerous studies have established the persistent discrimination of ethnic minorities (for overviews see Zschirnt & Ruedin, 2016; Quillian et al., 2019). Research on perceptions of ethnic discrimination in Europe has predominantly concentrated on the experiences and beliefs of ethnic minorities (e.g., McGinnity & Gijsberts, 2016; Simonsen, 2016; Trittler, 2019). The very limited number of European studies which did investigate majority perceptions virtually all studied individual-level mechanisms in one single country (e.g., Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015). This means that at present we lack an overview of the differences and parallels in these beliefs between majorities in different European countries, and that

we lack a theoretical understanding and empirical evidence of the role of macro-level factors in shaping majority members' beliefs about ethnic discrimination. One notable exception is a recent study by [Kende and colleagues \(2022\)](#), who found that majority perceptions about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination were related to minority political participation, but not to minorities' perceptions of discrimination in a country. Although this study shed light on cross-national differences in majority members' beliefs about ethnic discrimination, it did not study variations over time, nor did it address the potential role of predominant political elite discourses in a country.

To address these research gaps, this study sets out to answer the following research question: *To what extent do majority members' beliefs about the prevalence of discrimination differ between European countries and change over time, and how are these cross-national and temporal variations associated with political elite discourses within countries?* To do so we first describe differences in majorities' perceptions about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination between 26 European countries and over six time points in the period from 2006 to 2019, using data from the Eurobarometer (EB) special series on 'Discrimination in the EU'. As the macro context is generally considered to be an important factor in shaping public opinion ([Pettigrew, 1997](#)), we expect to find within-country changes over time as well as between-country variations in majorities' perceptions. At the same time, European countries have experienced cross-border social phenomena such as economic crises and 'migration crises' which could lead to transnational trends in majorities' perceptions of the prevalence of ethnic discrimination.

Second, our study contributes to existing insights by exploring to what extent these anticipated between-country and over-time variations are associated with political elite discourses in a country. Political elite discourses are known to affect how individuals make sense of social reality and how they evaluate information, thereby playing an important part in the formation of public opinion ([Bohman, 2011](#); [Careja, 2016](#); [Helbling et al., 2016](#); [Czymara, 2020](#)). They have been found to be especially influential in opinion formation on subjects about which people are less informed ([Hellström, 2008](#)). Because majority members generally lack personal experience with being the target of ethnic discrimination ([Crosby, 2015](#)), their opinions about the prevalence are likely dependent on factors other than these personal experiences, such as the prevailing societal and political discourses in a country. In this study, we will analyze how discourses regarding social equality for all social groups and discourses on interethnic relationships specifically are related to majorities' perceptions of ethnic discrimination in their country. To this end, we match data from the Comparative Manifesto Project to the EB to measure the relative salience of the aforementioned political discourses in the years prior to the collection of the Eurobarometer.

The literature on the association between political discourses and public opinion discusses that public opinion is not only shaped by elite discourse, but that discourses are also responsive to public opinion ([Gabel & Scheve, 2007](#)). We cannot fully unravel the potentially bidirectional nature of this relationship with the repeated cross-sectional Eurobarometer data we employed. However, to ensure that we capture the impact of discourses on beliefs about ethnic discrimination, we lagged the measurements of political elite discourses (i.e., they refer to discourses during the election period prior to the

moment that beliefs about discrimination were measured). Note that our data also do not allow us to study attitudinal shifts within individuals. Rather, we contribute to the literature by investigating how different political contexts are associated with majorities' perceptions about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination. A second debate in the literature on political discourses and public opinion revolves around omitted variable bias ([Gabel & Scheve, 2007](#)). Given the nature of our data, we are not able to completely isolate the effect of discourses on majorities' perceptions, but our repeated cross-sectional Eurobarometer data do provide excellent opportunities to disentangle within-country differences over time from between-country differences at a certain point in time. As such, we are able to control for any country-invariant explanations in the former approach, and for any over-time-invariant explanations in the latter. Hence, our study builds on prior research by providing evidence on European cross-country differences and over-time trends in majorities' perceptions of ethnic discrimination and by assessing how political elite discourses are related to these geographical and temporal variations.

Theory

Political Elite Discourses

Political elite discourses inform people about societal matters and influence public opinion, although they can also react to public opinion and debates, as previously discussed ([Zaller, 1992](#); [Careja, 2016](#)). They are defined as the sum of political elites' frames, arguments, and narratives in a country at a certain point in time, as such reaching beyond specific party supporters and affecting the general public's opinion ([Czymara, 2020](#)). The impact of political elite discourses on public opinion concerning intergroup attitudes has been established by several studies ([Bohman, 2011](#); [Careja, 2016](#); [Czymara, 2020](#); [Helbling et al., 2016](#)). Typically, this relationship is explained by the mechanism of framing. The central premise of framing theory is that the same social phenomenon or issue can be viewed from a variety of perspectives ([Chong & Druckman, 2007](#)). By priming, that is selecting and highlighting certain features of issues and concealing other elements, politicians encourage the general public to think along particular lines and interpret social reality accordingly ([Entman, 1993](#); [Chong & Druckman, 2007](#)). As the political elite discourses in Europe consist of many different political actors and parties, a large variety of messages with different tones and content is sent to the general public. Messages that are salient, that is those that are emphasized more intensively by placement or repetition, are more likely to receive attention of the public and are thereby generally considered to be more important or pressing compared to other, less salient messages ([Entman, 1993](#); [Helbling et al., 2016](#)). Because of priming, these salient messages shape people's considerations when making judgments about other issues. In what follows we will explore political elite discourses which frame the factors that are central to perceiving discrimination, as we expect these to be related to majorities' perceptions of the prevalence of ethnic discrimination.

Understanding Majorities' Beliefs About the Prevalence of Ethnic Discrimination

Perceptions about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination are subjective, depending on an individual's construal of

discriminatory behaviors (Carter & Murphy, 2015). Two main factors in this construal are the recognition of group-based disadvantages and inequalities in society, and the attribution of such unequal treatment to illegitimate exclusionary and discriminatory practices (Banfield & Dovidio, 2013; Ayalon, 2014; Crosby, 2015). We therefore assume majority members' perceptions of the prevalence of ethnic discrimination to be dependent on their awareness of existing (ethnic) inequalities, and on motivational factors which influence whether majority members ascribe differences in treatment of ethnic groups to discrimination.

Based on the assumption that political discourses inform and frame public perceptions about social reality, we explore two types of political discourses that are likely important in the formation of majorities' perceptions about ethnic discrimination. First, based on the assumption of recognition of existing inequalities, we investigate the association of majorities' perceptions with political discourses about social inequalities in general. Second, we propose that inclusive and exclusive discourses concerning multiculturalism and nationalism are associated with majorities' perceptions because these discourses influence views on interethnic relationships and as such relate to motivational factors that influence whether majorities see discriminatory practices in society. While both discourses are related to themes of social justice, the former refers to general social inequalities in society, while the latter refers to debates regarding interethnic relationships, migration, and integration specifically. It is relevant to distinguish between these two concepts, as this allows us to investigate whether only discourses on ethnic relationships are related to majorities' perceptions, or whether general discourses on social inequality and justice for everyone are also associated with majorities' perceptions of discrimination of ethnic minority groups.

Equality Discourses

The first political elite discourse we investigate concerns mentions of current social inequalities and the need for equality in a country. A key factor in the construal of perceptions about ethnic discrimination is whether citizens actually see the unequal treatment of and inequalities between ethnic groups. Studies on perceptions of inequalities in other domains of life show that people generally tend to underestimate inequalities in society (Gimpelson & Treisman, 2017; Kuhn, 2019) and that ethnic majority members are frequently unaware of their privileged position (Tropp & Barlow, 2018). Majority members might not be aware of the prevalence of ethnic discrimination because they lack personal experience with ethnic discrimination and the corresponding negative consequences (Crosby, 2015). When the political discourse in a country emphasizes the need for equality in society for all social groups and calls for the end of discrimination and special protection for underprivileged social groups, it is communicated to citizens that illegitimate inequalities are present and that these should be reduced. Majority members in a context where such messages are more salient are expected to be more aware of the unequal treatment of social groups in general and as such also of the unequal and discriminatory treatment of ethnic minority groups. Consequently, they are expected to perceive more ethnic discrimination than those in countries or at time points where such issues are discussed less or are not salient at all. This leads to our first hypothesis: *when political elite discourses in a country focus more on existing*

inequalities and the need for equality, majority group members believe that ethnic discrimination is more prevalent in their country (H1).

Exclusive and Inclusive Discourses

The second and third frames we explore are exclusive and inclusive discourses, which refer to ways of approaching and dealing with intergroup relations in societies and defining conceptual boundaries between majority nationals and ethnic minorities (Simonsen, 2019). Exclusive discourses are characterized by an emphasis on nationalistic ideas with a preference for a culturally homogenous society, by which cultural diversity is seen as a threat to national identity (Bohman, 2011; Helbling et al., 2016). Highlighting these exclusionary standpoints, political actors strongly differentiate between majority members and people who are not defined as part of this in-group, as such drawing sharp boundaries between these groups (Bohman, 2011). From social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) we derive that when group boundaries are sharp, negative treatment and prejudice between groups increases and solidarity and sympathy between ethnic groups is lower. Under such circumstances we expect that the extent to which majority members believe ethnic discrimination is prevalent is also lower because they are less motivated to ascribe behavior towards ethnic out-group members as discriminatory (Crosby, 2015). Majority members could justify differences in treatment by maintaining that ingroup members are superior to ethnic outgroup members (Simonsen, 2016), or they might be reluctant to accept the role of discrimination in shaping inequalities because acknowledging discrimination of minority outgroups undermines the social system that provides privileges to majority members (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015). We therefore hypothesize that: *when political elite discourses in a country are more exclusive, majority group members believe that ethnic discrimination is less prevalent in their country (H2).*

Inclusive discourses are characterized by favoring cultural diversity and plurality in society, and by opposing nationalism (Volkens et al., 2020). Such discourses reflect a positive evaluation of ethnic diversity, implying that ethnic exclusionist behavior is seen as illegitimate. Hence, they communicate norms of tolerance toward other ethnic groups, while simultaneously stimulating in-group reappraisal of existing norms and values. These two factors are core elements of a "deprovincialized worldview" which refers to learning that in-group norms are not the sole way to perceive the social world, thereby encouraging to see the world from an in- and out-group perspective (Pettigrew, 1997; Verkuyten et al., 2022). This is likely to increase the chance that majority members recognize and acknowledge persisting ethnic discrimination towards ethnic out-group members in their country (Todd et al., 2012; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015). So, due to inclusive political discourses majority members are expected to be more receptive to signs of discrimination towards out-group members, leading to the following hypothesis: *when political elite discourses in a country are more inclusive, majority group members believe that ethnic discrimination is more prevalent in their country (H3).*

Data and Measurements

To estimate the association between political discourses and majority members' beliefs about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination, we use individual-level data from

the Eurobarometer (EB) (European Commission 2012a, 2012b, 2018, 2020; European Commission and European Parliament 2012, 2015), enriched with information about national political elite discourses derived from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) (Volkens et al., 2020). Both datasets offer substantial spatial and temporal coverage of European countries, thereby enabling cross-country analyses over several timepoints. Our comparative focus requires data to be comparable across countries and time, which is ensured by the standardized cross-country design of the EB and the unified classification scheme for the content analysis of party manifesto's in the CMP.

The EB is, to our knowledge, the only cross-national European survey that asks a sample of majority members, aged 15 and over, about their perceptions of the prevalence of ethnic discrimination in their country. These questions are included in the special surveys 'Discrimination in the European Union', which were conducted in the years 2006 (EB 65.4), 2008 (EB 69.1), 2009 (EB 71.2), 2012 (EB 77.4), 2015 (EB 83.4) and 2019 (EB 91.4) in 31 countries. We excluded Croatia, North Macedonia, and Turkey from the dataset because they were not covered by all EB rounds. Great Britain and Northern Ireland were jointly surveyed in the most recent EB round, meaning that we had to collapse separate data from the previous years to match the 2019 survey. We also combined separately sampled East and West Germany into one country for our analyses. Furthermore, we excluded Malta because no party manifesto information was available in the CMP. Excluding these countries leads to a dataset with 157,107 unique observations distributed over 26 European countries.¹

As we investigate majority members' beliefs about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination, we excluded people with a migration background from the analytic sample. Because information on the nationality of the respondent is available for all EB rounds, we excluded those respondents who do not have the nationality of the survey country. Additionally, we excluded respondents who self-identified as ethnic minority group members in the rounds from 2008 to 2019 because of likely personal experiences with ethnic discrimination.² As survey-questions on self-identification were not included in the 2006 round, but, contrary to the other rounds, information on respondents' and their parents' country of birth was available, we opted to exclude respondents with a migrant background based on the latter for the 2006 round. Specifically, for the 2006 round, we omitted all respondents who were not born in the survey country, and those of whom at least one parent was not born in the survey country (or who lacked valid answers on either of these questions). The relative number of omitted minority respondents is very similar across the rounds of 2006 and later.³

¹ The countries in the sample are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

² The survey question in the Eurobarometer is: Where you live, do you consider yourself to be part of any of the following? Respondents could indicate to be part of 'an ethnic minority'.

³ For 2006, 6.4% of the original sample is considered to belong to the minority population and is, thus, omitted. This percentage is very similar in the other rounds, namely: 2008 (6.15%), 2009 (6.42%), 2012 (6.65%), 2015 (6.65%), and 2019 (5.79%).

Respondents who did not fill out the survey question on the prevalence of ethnic discrimination were excluded from the sample (4.31% of the majority population). Small country differences are present in the missing information for this dependent variable, with Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, United Kingdom, Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and Romania each contributing slightly more than 5% of the missing values on the dependent variable. No notable differences were observed between survey years. Missing values on any of the other control variables were excluded via listwise deletion (1.87%). This leads to a final analytic sample of 137,297 respondents in 26 European countries over the survey-years 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2019.

Dependent Variable

Our dependent variable is operationalized with the question: "For each of the following types of discrimination, could you please tell me whether, in your opinion, it is very widespread, fairly widespread, fairly rare or very rare in (country)?" : discrimination based on "ethnic origin," "gender," "sexual orientation," "age," "religion or beliefs" and "disability."⁴ For the purpose of this study we focus only on respondents' answers to the prevalence of *ethnic* discrimination. In addition to the answer categories mentioned above, the interviewer coded the answer "non-existent" if respondents gave this answer spontaneously. As this category was not an official option in the questionnaire and spontaneous answers may be influenced by cultural, personal, and interviewer factors, we combined this answer with the category "very rare." The final item ranged from 1 to 4, with higher values indicating that respondents thought ethnic discrimination was more widespread in their country.

Political Elite Discourses

We measure political elite discourses as a country characteristic at a given time by employing data from the Comparative Manifesto Project. We use party manifestos as a proxy for political elite communication of members of that party, as these manifestos reflect the joint decisions and commitments of these parties (Bohman, 2011; Czymara, 2020). The CMP offers information about party manifestos in virtually all European countries from 1945 onwards, thereby providing country and time specific information about a political context. The systematic coding instructions for all countries ensure comparability between, as well as within, countries over time. For these reasons, the CMP data is especially useful for cross-national comparisons and has been applied in various other studies on political discourses and public opinion (Bohman, 2011; Helbling et al., 2016; Czymara, 2020). The CMP measures policy preferences of political parties which gained at least one seat in parliament in Western-European countries, and at least two seats in parliaments in Eastern European countries. Each statement in a party manifesto is allocated to one of 56 predetermined issue categories via unified rules and regulations. The final values of these categories represent the share of sentences in a party manifesto that is dedicated to the respective subject, as such measuring the salience of a certain topic in the different party manifestos. Because we are interested in the national discourse at a certain

⁴ These are the categories that were asked in all EB surveys over the years. In later rounds, more specific types of discrimination were added.

point in time, we computed the mean of our issue-value for all party manifestos in a specific country and year. We used weights to take into account the electoral strength of the various elected parties by multiplying the party value with the percentage of electoral votes before calculating the country mean. Because we assume that majorities' perceptions about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination evolve under and are influenced by political elite discourses, we lag the CMP data by matching the information of the preceding elections in a country to the EB data (for an overview of these matches see [Table A1](#)).

Concerning equality discourses, the CMP offers one issue-category which captures the concept: "equality positive." This issue includes concepts in manifestos which mention social justice, the need for fair treatment of all people, and the call for the end of discrimination of different social groups. This discourse does not discuss discrimination or inequalities of ethnic groups specifically, but is more likely to capture a discourse on social justice and equality in general. However, as we theoretically expect that underlining social inequalities in general also increases awareness of ethnic inequalities and discrimination, this broader measurement appears to be a valid operationalization of our equality concept. Due to the absence of a negative issue of equality in the CMP, we only computed the salience of a positive equality political elite discourse for country-year combinations. The equality discourse values range from a minimum of 0.031 in Romania in 2019 to a maximum value of 2.415 in Austria in the years 2009 and 2012. On average, equality discourses are covered least in Italy while the values are highest in Austria ([Table A3](#)). Concerning yearly averages over all countries, equality discourses are on average lowest in 2006 with 0.58 and most salient in 2009 with 0.77 ([Table A4](#)).

For the measurement of exclusive and inclusive discourses on cultural diversity, we followed operationalizations by [Helbling and colleagues \(2016\)](#) and [Czymara \(2020\)](#), who combined the CMP issue-categories on "national way of life" and "multiculturalism" into one variable capturing statements concerning migration and ethnic minorities. For both issue-categories a positive and a negative category was available. "National way of life" refers to mentions of the manifesto country's nation, history, and general appeals. Positive mentions include the support for established national ideas, appeals to patriotism and nationalism and general appeals to the pride in citizenship. Negative mentions refer to, among others, opposition to patriotism and nationalism, and opposition to the existing national state, pride, and ideas. "Multiculturalism positive" refers to favorable mentions of cultural diversity and cultural plurality, while "multiculturalism negative" refers to appeals for cultural homogeneity in a country and the enforcement of cultural integration. For exclusive discourses we summed the salience of the categories "multiculturalism negative" and "national way of life positive," and for inclusive discourses we summed the categories "multiculturalism positive" and "national way of life negative". The exclusive discourse ranges from 0.0003 in Italy in the year 2006 to 2.94 in Hungary in 2019. Concerning country averages over the years, Spain has on average the lowest exclusive discourse value with 0.06, and Hungary the highest at 1.24. Inclusive discourses range from 0 (Estonia in 2006, Italy in 2008, 2009, and 2012, Poland in 2006, 2012, and 2015) to 0.465 in Hungary for the years 2008 and 2009.

Over the years, Italy shows the lowest inclusive discourse on average with a value of 0.01, while Denmark and Latvia have the highest inclusive discourses with 0.21. Comparing yearly averages of the discourses over all countries, exclusive discourses and inclusive discourses are lowest in 2006 and highest in 2019. An overview of the country and year averages can be found in [Table A3](#).

In line with our hypotheses, these measures focus on views towards ethnic minority groups instead of dealing with inequality and discrimination directly. As mentioned, the combination of these categories has been applied by several previous studies ([Helbling et al., 2016](#); [Czymara, 2020](#)). A study by [Protsyk and Garaz \(2011\)](#), however, noted that scholars should be aware of an underestimation of ethno-cultural statements captured by the CMP in the multiculturalism categories due to assigning some ethnicity-related statements under non-ethnicity designated CMP variables. We thus have to keep in mind a possible underestimation of inclusive and exclusive discourses measured by the CMP, which should affect the different countries and time frames to an equal extent. Additionally, the multiculturalism positive category also involves some broader statements concerning basic human rights, which are (likely) close to the equality discourse but could not be filtered out.

Control Variables

We include several control variables to account for possible confounding factors and spurious relationships. On the individual level, we included factors that have been found to be associated with majorities' explanations for ethnic inequalities in the United States ([Douds et al., 2019](#); [Hunt, 2007](#)) or individual variables that were related to more general inter-ethnic attitudes.

We adjusted for respondents' gender (0 = male, 1 = female), age (continuous, grand mean centered), and marital status (married, living with partner, single, other). We also took into account the age at which respondents completed their education, and centered this on the overall mean. For respondents who were still studying, we used their current age as a proxy for the age when education is completed. Values for all respondents who were younger than 14 when they completed their education were set to the cut-off value of 13. The maximum age for finishing education was capped at the age of 26. For occupation, we compressed the existing categories into self-employed, employed, unemployed, and non-active. The non-active category includes students, retired people, those who are unable to work, and those who are responsible for housework and childcare. Majority members also form their views on the frequency of ethnic discrimination on their experiences in their area of residence ([Crosby, 2015](#)). These areas differ in ethnic homogeneity, with more urbanized areas generally providing more contact between interethnic groups. Therefore, we included the urbanization grade of respondents' place of residence (rural area or village, small or middle sized town, large town).

At the macro level, we controlled for GDP, income inequality (GINI coefficient), and the net migration rates in the respective countries. All macro data were included with a one year lag to the EB survey year. GDP per capita (PPP) was obtained from the [World Bank \(2021\)](#) and was divided by 1,000 for the analyses. The GINI coefficient was obtained from [Eurostat \(2021a\)](#). This dataset had missing values for Romania in 2006 and the UK in 2019, which we substituted with the

available values closest to the missing years. Moreover, we controlled for the net number of migrants by including the crude net migration ratio, available via [Eurostat \(2021b\)](#). The net migration rate refers to the population change in a country minus the natural change by births and deaths, divided by the average population that year times 1,000. Descriptive statistics of these variables, as well as of the individual-level variables, are displayed in [Tables A2, A3, and A4](#).

Method

We aim to explore associations between equality, exclusive and inclusive national political elite discourses, and majority members' perceptions about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination in their country. We take into account the hierarchical structure of our data, with individual respondents (level 1) nested in country-year combinations (level 2). Our dependent variable has four categories, ranging from perceiving ethnic discrimination to be very rare to very widespread in the country of residence. We treat this variable as continuous, performing multilevel ordinary least square analyses. Accordingly, we conduct separate analyses to disentangle the role of over-time changes within countries in political elite discourses and between-country differences in these discourses.

First, to illuminate the role of variations in political elite discourses *over time* (within countries) in shaping perceptions of the prevalence of ethnic discrimination, we estimate models in which we include dummy variables for the countries in our data, thus holding constant any time-invariant characteristics of countries that may play a role. The reference country not included in these models is Lithuania, as this country has the lowest average score on perceptions of ethnic discrimination. Because these models zoom in on variations over time within one country, the discourse variables are group mean centered on the country. This means that, for each country, the average score across the survey years is taken as the reference point (i.e., the mean value of a specific discourse over the survey years in that country is subtracted from the value of a discourse in each survey year). That way, differences in discourse scores in these models refer to deviations of the political discourse score for a certain country in one year from the average score of that country over the survey years, and differences in the values across countries do not play a role in our discourse measures.

Second, to shed light on the role of differences in political elite discourses between countries at a specific time point, we estimate models in which we control for year dummies, thus holding constant any features of specific time periods which are invariant across countries and may play a role in shaping perceptions of the prevalence of ethnic discrimination. The first survey year (2006) forms the reference year in our analyses. As these models zoom in on variations across countries within one survey year, we use group mean centering over the years. This means that for each year, the average score across all countries forms the reference point (i.e., for each survey year, we calculated the average score across all countries, and subtracted this value from the country value in the corresponding survey year). As a consequence, in these models, differences in discourse scores refer to the extent to which a country's discourse score in a survey year deviates from the average score over all countries combined in that year, and differences in the values across survey years do not play a role in our discourse measures.

Results

Differences Across Time And Between Countries

We address the first part of our research question by describing to what extent majority members' beliefs about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination differ between European countries and whether they change over time. Calculated averages for each country-year combination can be found in [Table A5](#). These descriptive results reveal that marked differences in majority members' perceptions of the prevalence of ethnic discrimination are apparent both across countries and between years. The minimum and maximum values are each from the year 2019, in which majority members in Lithuania averaged a score of 1.75 and respondents from France scored an average of 3.14. These are considerable differences given that the theoretical range of the scale runs from 1 "ethnic discrimination is very rare" to 4 "ethnic discrimination is very widespread." The grand mean is 2.55, falling between the answer categories of considering ethnic discrimination to be "fairly rare" and "fairly widespread" in the respective country.

To test whether these observed differences are substantial we conducted a two-way independent measures ANOVA. Country as well as year differences are statistically significant (at $p < .001$), which means that the beliefs of majority members about ethnic discrimination differ significantly between European countries, as well as over time (within European countries). To provide insight into the differences between countries, we first pooled and then predicted country averages (with Bayes estimates; [Figure A1](#)) to test which countries differ significantly from the overall country mean of 2.55 ([Leckie, 2013](#)). Five countries do not differ significantly from the average, namely Ireland (2.47), Czech Republic (2.49), Germany (2.52), Austria (2.60), and Portugal (2.65). Below average scoring countries, that is, countries in which majority members believe ethnic discrimination is relatively less prevalent than in the "average country," are Lithuania (1.86), Latvia (1.95), Poland (2.09), Estonia (2.09), Bulgaria (2.17), Romania (2.29), Slovakia (2.30), Slovenia (2.30), and Luxembourg (2.38). This shows that countries which score significantly below average are mostly located in Eastern Europe, with the exception of Luxembourg. However, this does not translate to a strict Western versus Eastern European divide, which becomes especially clear when visualizing the country-means in [Figure 1](#). For example, Hungary and Cyprus score significantly above average, with mean scores of 2.81 and 2.73 respectively. Substantial variations are also present within Western Europe, indicating that this group should not be treated as a homogeneous cluster. In Germany and Austria, the average scores are relatively low, especially compared to the top five highest scoring countries, which are Belgium (2.89), Denmark (2.90), Sweden (2.93), the Netherlands (2.99), and France (3.06).

To investigate over-time differences within countries, we computed pairwise comparisons between means over the years for each country. [Figure 2](#) provides an overview of these changes over time, with black lines representing significant differences between time periods. Three countries show no significant changes over time in any of the time periods: Finland, Greece, and Luxembourg. By contrast, Slovenia and the Netherlands show significant changes in 4 of the 5 time periods. The other countries fall somewhere in between these numbers. Two time periods stand out in which significant

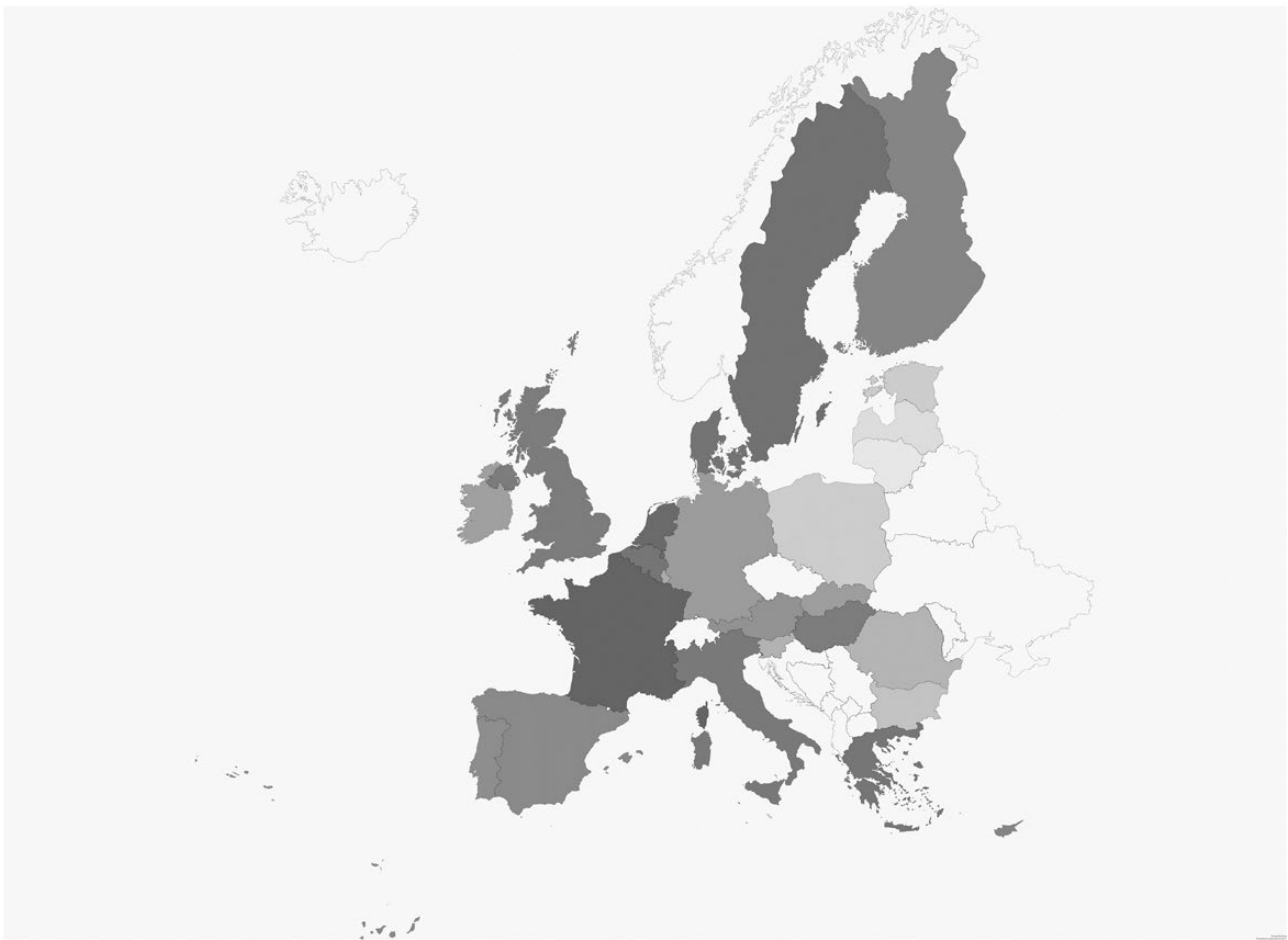


Figure 1. Country averages of beliefs about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination 2006–2019. Note: Perceptions of the prevalence of ethnic discrimination can range from 1 ‘very rare’ to 4 ‘very widespread’. Darker colors indicate a higher score. Countries filled with the background color of the graph are not included in this study. Sources data: Eurobarometer surveys 65.4, 69.1, 71.2, 77.4, 83.4, 91.4.

drops in majority members’ perceptions of the prevalence of ethnic discrimination are present: 2009–2012 and 2015–2019, the periods in which the economic crisis and a ‘migration crisis’ took place respectively.

Multilevel Analyses

To address the second part of our research question and test our hypotheses, we investigate how political elite discourses are associated with majority members’ perceptions about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination in their country. As explained in the method section, we run two sets of linear multilevel models, examining variations within countries over time or between countries at one timepoint respectively. [Table 1](#) displays the results of our analyses modeling variations over time (within countries) in the panel on the left, and the results of our between-country variations models in the panel on the right. To maintain readability, the coefficients for the country and year dummy variables are not displayed in [Table 1](#) (for included dummy variables see [Table A6](#)). A stepwise approach showing the coefficients without any control variables can be found in the [Table A7](#).

We start by focusing on within country effects over time, as displayed in the left part of [Table 1](#). The results provide no evidence of a significant relationship between political elite discourses on the need for equality in a country and majority

members’ perceptions about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination. Hence, we do not find support for our first hypothesis. By contrast, we find that both exclusive and inclusive political elite discourses are significantly related to majority members’ perceptions about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination, thereby supporting hypotheses 2 and 3. Exclusive discourses, which emphasize nationalistic ideas and see cultural diversity as a threat to national identity, are negatively and significantly associated with majority members’ beliefs about ethnic discrimination ($b = -0.11, p < .001$). This means that majority members tend to think that ethnic discrimination is less prevalent at times that political elite discourses in their country are more exclusive. For example, in Hungary the (group mean centered) values of exclusive discourses range between -0.78 in 2012 and 1.70 in 2019 (i.e., a difference of 2.48), meaning that respondents perceive $(2.48 * -0.11 =) 0.27$ less ethnic discrimination on a scale from 1 to 4 when exclusive discourses are most present in that country compared to when they are least salient. For inclusive discourses, which focus on the value of cultural plurality in a country, we find a significant and positive association ($b = 0.24, p = .020$). This provides support for our third hypothesis and means that when political elite discourses in a country are more inclusive, majority members think that ethnic discrimination is more prevalent in their country. Again taking Hungary as

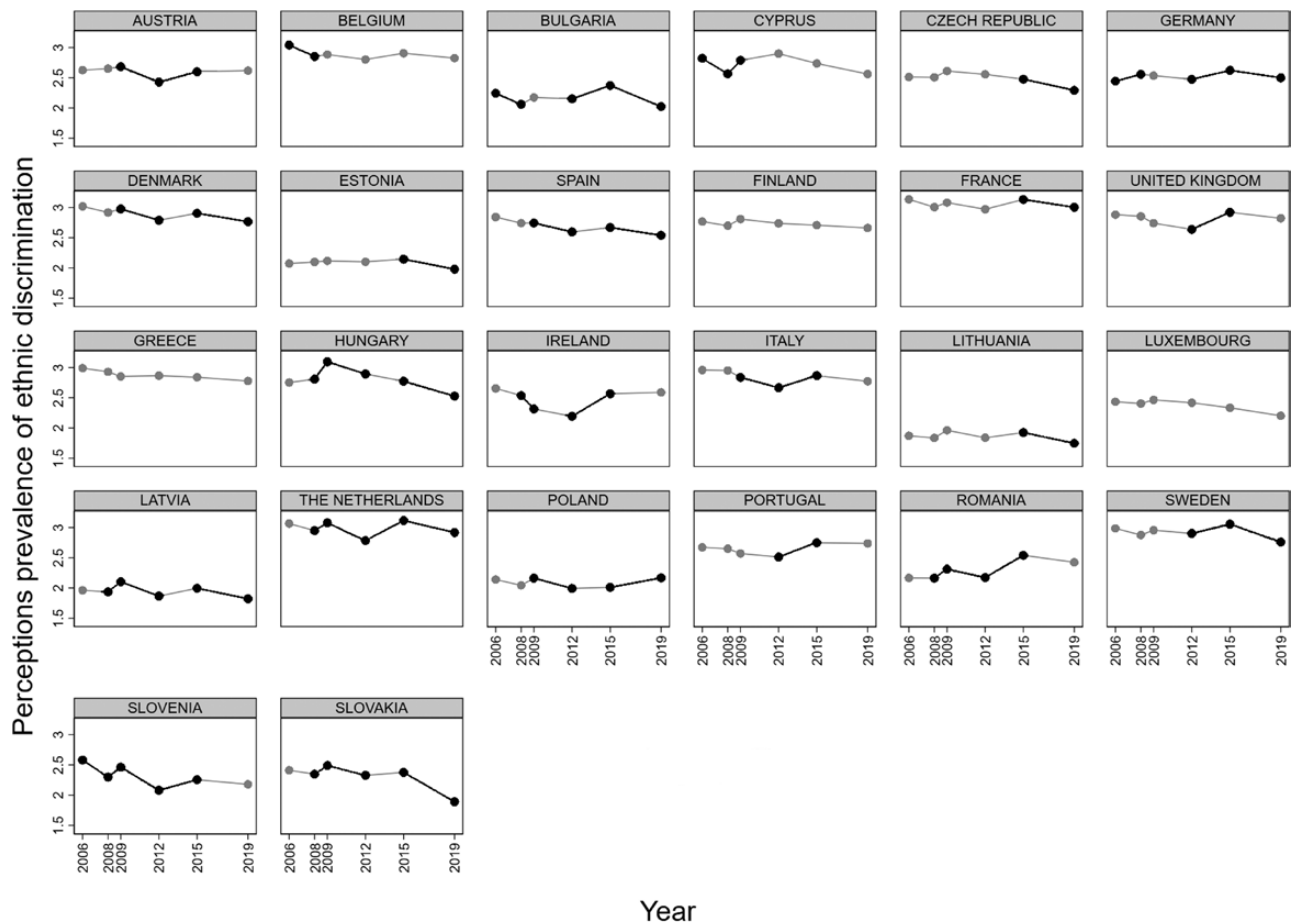


Figure 2. Country trends in majorities' perceptions of the prevalence of ethnic discrimination. Note: Black marked parts of the trend lines refer to significant ANOVA pairwise comparisons over the years within countries. Sources data: EB 65.4, 69.1, 71.2, 77.4, 83.4, 91.4.

an example, the (group mean centered) values of inclusive discourses range from -0.16 in 2006 to 0.27 in 2008/2009 (i.e., a difference of 0.10), meaning that when inclusive discourses are at their highest salience compared to their lowest, Hungarian majority members perceive $(0.43 * 0.24 =) 0.10$ more ethnic discrimination on a scale from 1 to 4. While we control for country time-invariant characteristics with the country dummy variables, we additionally control for possible relevant country characteristics that, just like political elite discourses, might change over time within countries. Within country changes in GDP or GINI are not related to majorities' perceptions. An increase in the net migration rate, however, is significantly related to majorities perceiving more ethnic discrimination in their country.

In the second part of our analyses, we focus on country variations in political elite discourses by controlling for the survey years in our cross-sectional data. This model provides no evidence of significant associations with any of the national political elite discourses we tested. Variations in majorities' perceptions between European countries at a certain point in time are thus not related to between country differences in equality, exclusive or inclusive political discourses. Rather, they are likely related to other macro variables. The GINI coefficient control variable shows that majorities in a country with a higher income inequality are actually less likely to think that ethnic discrimination is prevalent in their country, controlled for the net migration rate and GDP differences.

Sensitivity Analyses

To assess the robustness of our results we ran 11 sensitivity analyses, in which we apply alternative coding decisions for independent and dependent variables, add additional control variables, and apply different sample restrictions. The findings and explanations of these analyses are provided as [Supplementary material](#). These additional analyses all support our original conclusions.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study contributes to the literature on majorities' perceptions of ethnic discrimination by shedding light on variations between countries as well as within countries (over time), and by exploring how these variations are related to political discourses on equality, inclusion, and exclusion in a country at a certain point in time. By focusing on cross-national and temporal differences and the role of national political elite discourses, we build on and provide new insights to research on majorities' perceptions of ethnic discrimination (Kende et al., 2022) and literature on the relationship between political communication and interethnic attitudes (Bohman, 2011; Czymara, 2020; Helbling et al., 2016). We show that majorities' perceptions of ethnic discrimination do not only differ between European countries but that there are also significant fluctuations within countries over time. Variations in political elite discourses over time (within countries) are significantly

Table 1. Associations between political elite discourses and majorities' perceptions of the prevalence of ethnic discrimination

Over time (within-country) variations			Between-country variations	
Equality discourses	0.023	(0.030)	0.071	(0.061)
Exclusive discourses	-0.111***	(0.031)	-0.099	(0.069)
Inclusive discourses	0.242*	(0.104)	0.075	(0.291)
Age	-0.005***	(0.000)	-0.005***	(0.000)
Female	0.075***	(0.005)	0.075***	(0.005)
Marital status, Married ref				
Living with partner	0.024**	(0.008)	0.024**	(0.008)
Single	0.018***	(0.005)	0.018***	(0.005)
Other	0.039	(0.023)	0.040	(0.023)
Age left education	0.008***	(0.001)	0.008***	(0.001)
Occupation, unempl ref				
Non-Active	-0.040***	(0.010)	-0.041***	(0.010)
Self-employed	-0.047***	(0.012)	-0.047***	(0.012)
Employed	-0.048***	(0.010)	-0.048***	(0.010)
Community, rural ref				
Small/middle town	0.020***	(0.005)	0.020***	(0.005)
Large town	0.069***	(0.006)	0.069***	(0.006)
GDP	-0.002	(0.003)	0.002	(0.002)
Net migration	0.006**	(0.002)	0.012*	(0.005)
GINI	0.000	(0.006)	-0.021**	(0.007)
Country dummies	Yes		No	
Year dummies	No		Yes	
Constant	1.813***	(0.041)	2.579***	(0.061)
Sd (Country year)	0.008***	(0.001)	0.095***	(0.011)
Sd (residual)	0.695***	(0.003)	0.695***	(0.003)

N = 137,297, standard errors in parentheses. * *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01, *** *p* < .001

Dummy coefficients not shown.. Sources data: EB 65.4, 69.1, 71.2, 77.4, 83.4, 91.4 (individual-level variables), CMP (political discourses), Worldbank (GDP), Eurostat (GINI, Net migration).

related with majority members' perceptions of the prevalence of ethnic discrimination. Specifically, when political discourses within countries are more exclusive, majorities are less likely to think that ethnic discrimination is prevalent, while more inclusive discourses increase these perceptions. This supports the theoretical expectation that the way in which ethnic minority issues are framed and primed by political elites is associated with the extent to which majorities perceive ethnic discrimination to be prevalent in their society. Inclusive politics seem to make majorities more likely to acknowledge the existence of ethnic discrimination, while exclusive politics seem to be associated with ignoring or refusing to acknowledge the existence of ethnic discrimination.

Based on our study and findings we identify several promising directions for future research. First, complementing our macro-level approach with approaches from social-psychological studies might be a fruitful endeavor to gain insights into the explanations of the associations we found. Such social-psychological studies have previously found that deprovincialization has a direct positive effect on majorities' beliefs about discrimination and that this link is partially mediated by a superordinate identity between groups (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015). Future research may study whether political elite discourses on the macro-level can actually be linked to such micro-level phenomena, but it will need to rely on data other than the cross-national and repeated cross-sectional EB, which does not contain measures to capture these individual-level processes.

Second, contrary to our theoretical expectations, variations in political elite discourses between countries were not found to play a significant role in shaping majority members' perceptions. One possible explanation for our finding that political discourses are related to within country differences may be that people's beliefs are influenced by political discourses if they directly experience a shift in rhetoric, for example when this changes over time. This may be more impactful than merely being in a context of absolutely higher or lower exposure to a certain rhetoric (where people are likely often unaware of discourses elsewhere). Still, both our study and prior research by Kende et al. (2022) show that countries vary considerably regarding majorities' perceptions of ethnic discrimination. Hence, further research is required to discover more about which contextual characteristics are important for understanding between-country differences. Although this was not the main focus of our study, our results showed that income inequality and also the difference in unemployment between citizens with and without a migratory background (see sensitivity analyses) play a role, which is something future studies could elaborate on. Another suggestion is to focus on the normative influence of anti-discrimination policies. Such policies might communicate to members of a society that discrimination is currently present and needs to be reduced. Conversely, these policies could signal that the issue of discrimination is already being addressed, perhaps causing majority members to think that ethnic discrimination is less prevalent. The role of media depictions of ethnic discrimination may also be considered in future research, as they provide information about the sociopolitical context in ways similar to political elite discourses. However, we do not know of data sources that provide comparable information on media content in different countries. As such, studying the effects of media discourses on majority members' beliefs about ethnic discrimination calls for a single-country longitudinal design. Furthermore, we found that around the times of the economic crisis and the Syrian crisis, majority members in virtually all European countries believed ethnic discrimination to be less prevalent in their countries. Previous research showed that in times of crises, matters of identity and belonging are more present in the media (Bitschnau et al., 2021). On the individual level, crises might therefore lead to increased actual and perceived intergroup competition, which has previously been shown to be associated with more exclusionism towards ethnic minorities (Scheepers et al., 2002). This may in turn translate into majority members believing that ethnic discrimination is less prevalent in their country. Future research may further explore how people respond to

economic crises and ‘migration crises’ and how these potentially affect their perceptions of ethnic discrimination.

Third, we found that the more general discourses on the need for equality of social groups and social justice showed no significant association with majorities’ beliefs about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination. Theoretically, this could mean that such general calls for increased social justice do not necessarily translate into a higher awareness of inequalities that exist for specific out-groups. Instead, our research suggests that (relations to or positions of) ethnic groups have to be explicitly framed or primed in political discourses to increase majorities’ awareness. With the present data, we were unable to establish how political elite discourses on *ethnic* inequality in particular affect majority members’ opinions about the prevalence of ethnic discrimination, as no such item was available in the Comparative Manifesto Project. This matter should be explored further in the future.

Fourth, we operationalized political discourses via the CMP because of its extensive spatial and temporal coverage, the standardized research design, and the availability of discourses on equality and ethnocultural items. As the CMP is based on party manifestos, this means that we could not take into account the actual articulation by politicians, nor could we account for shifts in discourses between or during elections. Additionally, some studies voiced critique on the saliency measures of the CMP in general and called for caution due to possible measurement errors for especially topics concerning multiculturalism (Protsyk & Garaz, 2011; Gemenis, 2013). We expect these measurement errors to not be country- or time-specific, lowering the chance of erroneously supporting or refuting our hypotheses. Nevertheless, future research could employ other sources such as expert surveys to test whether our conclusions hold, although these surveys cover fewer countries and timepoints.

Fifth, we assumed that majorities’ perceptions of ethnic discrimination are particularly likely to be shaped by external sources such as political discourses because they generally lack personal experience with being the victim of ethnic discrimination. It is, however, possible that political elites (also) respond to voters’ preferences, which would mean that the relationship is in the other direction or bi-directional (Gabel & Scheve, 2007). Empirically, we aimed to, at least partially, rule out reversed causality by including lagged data of political elite discourses. Diving deeper into the causal connection between political discourses and majority members’ perceptions requires either panel data or experimental data, but to our knowledge such data are not available for a larger number of countries. Future research aimed at unraveling causality thus likely needs to focus on changes over time within single countries.

Finally, this study focused on majority members’ perceptions of ethnic discrimination, but political discourses might influence majority and minority members differently. Simonsen (2016) concluded that ethnic minorities perceive more discrimination in host countries where politics are more exclusive toward migrants. Contrasting such findings with the results of our study feeds the expectation of opinion

polarization between ethnic minority and majority members in the context of exclusionary discourses. This could be detrimental to intergroup-relationships, as it would create even stronger cleavages between groups. Hence, studying such polarizing effects merit attention in the future. Overall, our study demonstrates that the macro-context matters for understanding majorities’ perceptions of ethnic discrimination. To develop a full picture of what shapes majority members’ beliefs about ethnic discrimination, additional comparative research is needed that takes the impact of the broader societal context into account.

Supplementary Data

Supplementary data are available at *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* online.

Notes on Contributors

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APPENDIX

Table A1. Matching Comparative Manifesto Project Dataset with Eurobarometer

Country	EB: 2006	EB: 2008	EB: 2009	EB: 2012	EB: 2015	EB: 2019
Austria	2002	2006	2008	2008	2013	2017
Belgium	2003	2007	2007	2010	2014	2014
Bulgaria	2005	2005	2005	2009	2014	2017
Cyprus	2001	2006	2006	2011	2011	2016
Czech Republic	2002	2006	2006	2010	2013	2017
Denmark	2005	2007	2007	2011	2011	2015
Estonia	2003	2007	2007	2011	2011	2015
Finland	2003	2007	2007	2011	2011	2015
France	2002	2007	2007	2007	2012	2017
Germany	2005	2005	2005	2009	2013	2017
Greece	2004	2007	2007	2009	2012	2015
Hungary	2002	2006	2006	2010	2014	2018
Ireland	2002	2007	2007	2011	2011	2016
Italy	2001	2006	2008	2008	2013	2018
Latvia	2002	2006	2006	2011	2014	2018
Lithuania	2004	2004	2008	2008	2012	2016
Luxembourg	2004	2004	2004	2009	2013	2013
The Netherlands	2003	2006	2006	2010	2012	2017
Poland	2005	2007	2007	2011	2011	2015
Portugal	2005	2005	2005	2011	2011	2015
Romania	2004	2004	2008	2008	2012	2016
Slovakia	2002	2006	2006	2010	2012	2016
Slovenia	2004	2004	2008	2011	2014	2018
Spain	2004	2004	2008	2011	2011	2016
Sweden	2002	2006	2006	2010	2014	2018
United Kingdom	2005	2005	2005	2010	2010	2017

Note. The in cell years are the CMP years.

Table A2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean, proportion	Standard deviation	Range
<i>Dependent Variable</i>			
Perception prevalence ethnic discrimination	2.57	0.91	1–4
<i>Controls Individual Level</i>			
Age (centered)	49.03	18.14	–34.03–48.98
Age completed education (centered)	18.87	3.63	–5.86–7.13
Female	0.55		
Marital status			
Married	0.53		
Living with partner	0.10		
Single	0.36		
Other	0.11		
Occupation			
Unemployed	0.06		
Non-active	0.43		
Self-employed	0.07		
Employed	0.43		

Table A2. Continued

Variable	Mean, proportion	Standard deviation	Range
Type of community			
Rural area or village	0.34		
Small or middle sized town	0.38		
Large town	0.27		
<i>Macro Variables</i>			
Equality discourses	0.67	0.47	0.03–2.42
Inclusive discourses	0.12	0.1	0–0.46
Exclusive discourses	0.44	0.41	0–2.93
GDP	39.53	14.33	14.4–115.25
GINI	29.94	4.13	20.9–39.6
Net migration	2.04	5.69	–21.9–21.3

Note. Sources: EB 65.4, 69.1, 71.2, 77.4, 83.4, 91.4 (individual-level variables), CMP (political discourses), Worldbank (GDP), Eurostat (GINI, Net migration). *N* individual-level variables 137,297.

Table A3. Country Averages (over the years) of Macro-variables

Country	Equality discourse	Exclusive discourse	Inclusive discourse	GDP	GINI	Migration
Austria	1.86	0.78	0.18	52.92	27.01	4.69
Belgium	0.69	0.26	0.1	48.75	26.59	4.7
Bulgaria	0.44	0.65	0.07	17.93	35.32	–1.4
Cyprus	0.77	0.92	0.17	37.92	30.07	11.18
Czech Republic	0.59	0.17	0.03	34.67	25.04	4.16
Denmark	0.51	1.01	0.21	53.1	26.06	3.33
Estonia	0.5	0.97	0.17	30.3	32.7	–0.88
Finland	0.68	0.26	0.19	47.1	25.97	2.54
France	0.71	0.37	0.06	43.33	28.77	0.95
Germany	1.41	0.4	0.2	48.93	29.63	2.76
Greece	0.62	0.31	0.1	33.41	33.53	0.22
Hungary	1.18	1.24	0.19	26.47	27.12	1.74
Ireland	0.47	0.14	0.15	61.01	30.46	6.52
Italy	0.17	0.09	0.01	43.32	32.37	3.56
Latvia	1.01	1	0.21	24.9	35.87	–5.95
Lithuania	0.46	0.3	0.12	27.66	34.88	–7.41
Luxembourg	0.56	0.46	0.15	110.66	28.13	16.34
The Netherlands	0.42	0.41	0.11	53.06	26.93	1.57
Poland	0.35	0.38	0.01	24.48	31.57	–0.2
Portugal	0.84	0.2	0.03	32.01	35.25	0.08
Romania	0.25	0.3	0.14	21.98	35.95	–6.77
Slovakia	0.61	0.21	0.08	25.76	24.49	0.36
Slovenia	0.3	0.24	0.04	34.64	23.76	4.63
Spain	0.38	0.06	0.06	38.43	33.08	7.85
Sweden	0.86	0.31	0.13	49	25.37	6.1
United Kingdom	0.5	0.26	0.1	43.91	33.17	4.31

Note. Sources: CMP (political discourses), Worldbank (GDP), Eurostat (GINI, Net migration)

Table A4. Year Averages (of all countries) Macro-variables

Year	Equality discourse	Exclusive discourse	Inclusive discourse	GDP	GINI	Migration
2006	0.58	0.29	0.07	36.38	30.01	2.06
2008	0.75	0.43	0.12	39.70	29.80	2.69
2009	0.77	0.42	0.12	39.81	29.88	2.35
2012	0.73	0.39	0.12	38.50	29.75	0.67
2015	0.61	0.41	0.13	39.14	30.43	1.24
2019	0.60	0.67	0.13	43.51	29.79	3.24

Note. Sources: EB 65.4, 69.1, 71.2, 77.4, 83.4, 91.4.

Table A5. Mean Beliefs About Prevalence Ethnic Discrimination by Country by Year

Country	2006	2008	2009	2012	2015	2019
Austria	2.63	2.65	2.68	2.43	2.6	2.62
Belgium	3.04	2.85	2.89	2.8	2.91	2.82
Bulgaria	2.24	2.06	2.17	2.15	2.37	2.02
Cyprus	2.82	2.57	2.79	2.9	2.74	2.56
Czech Republic	2.51	2.51	2.61	2.56	2.48	2.29
Denmark	3.02	2.92	2.98	2.79	2.91	2.77
Estonia	2.07	2.1	2.12	2.1	2.15	1.98
Finland	2.77	2.7	2.81	2.74	2.71	2.66
France	3.14	3.01	3.08	2.97	3.13	3
Germany	2.44	2.56	2.54	2.47	2.62	2.5
Greece	2.99	2.93	2.85	2.87	2.84	2.78
Hungary	2.75	2.81	3.1	2.89	2.77	2.53
Ireland	2.66	2.54	2.31	2.19	2.57	2.59
Italy	2.96	2.95	2.84	2.67	2.87	2.77
Latvia	1.96	1.93	2.1	1.87	2	1.82
Lithuania	1.87	1.84	1.96	1.84	1.92	1.75
Luxembourg	2.43	2.4	2.47	2.42	2.33	2.2
The Netherlands	3.07	2.95	3.08	2.78	3.12	2.92
Poland	2.14	2.04	2.16	1.99	2.01	2.17
Portugal	2.67	2.65	2.57	2.51	2.75	2.74
Romania	2.17	2.16	2.31	2.17	2.54	2.43
Slovakia	2.41	2.35	2.49	2.33	2.38	1.89
Slovenia	2.58	2.3	2.46	2.08	2.25	2.18
Spain	2.84	2.74	2.74	2.6	2.67	2.54
Sweden	2.99	2.88	2.96	2.9	3.05	2.76
United Kingdom	2.88	2.86	2.74	2.64	2.92	2.82

Note. Sources: EB 65.4, 69.1, 71.2, 77.4, 83.4, 91.4

Table A6. Dummies Presented Associations Between Political Elite Discourses and Majorities' Perceptions of the Prevalence of Ethnic Discrimination

Over time (within-country) variations			Between-country variations		
Equality discourses	0.023	(0.030)	Equality disc.	0.071	(0.061)
Exclusive discourses	-0.111***	(0.031)	Exclusive disc.	-0.099	(0.069)
Inclusive discourses	0.242*	(0.104)	Inclusive disc.	0.075	(0.291)
Austria	0.744***	(0.056)	Year 2008	-0.068	(0.086)
Belgium	1.051***	(0.056)	Year 2009	-0.011	(0.086)
Bulgaria	0.306***	(0.056)	Year 2012	-0.130	(0.086)
Cyprus	0.890***	(0.057)	Year 2015	-0.012	(0.086)
Czech Republic	0.629***	(0.056)	Year 2019	-0.137	(0.086)
Germany	0.688***	(0.055)			
Denmark	1.043***	(0.056)			
Estonia	0.239***	(0.056)			
Spain	0.850***	(0.056)			
Finland	0.893***	(0.056)			
France	1.216***	(0.056)			
United Kingdom	0.982***	(0.055)			
Greece	1.009***	(0.056)			
Hungary	0.970***	(0.056)			
Ireland	0.608***	(0.056)			
Italy	0.978***	(0.056)			
Luxembourg	0.549***	(0.058)			
Latvia	0.066	(0.056)			
The Netherlands	1.149***	(0.056)			
Poland	0.222***	(0.056)			
Portugal	0.825***	(0.056)			
Romania	0.435***	(0.056)			
Sweden	1.086***	(0.056)			
Slovenia	0.454***	(0.056)			
Slovakia	0.457***	(0.056)			
Age	-0.005***	(0.000)	Age	-0.005***	(0.000)
Female	0.075***	(0.005)	Female	0.075***	(0.005)
Marital status, Married ref			Marital status, Married ref		
Living with partner	0.024**	(0.008)	Partner	0.024**	(0.008)
Single	0.018***	(0.005)	Single	0.018***	(0.005)
Other	0.039	(0.023)	Other	0.040	(0.023)
Age left education	0.008***	(0.001)	Age left education	0.008***	(0.001)
Occupation, unempl ref			Occupation:		
Non-Active	-0.040***	(0.010)	Non-Active	-0.041***	(0.010)
Self-employed	-0.047***	(0.012)	Self-employed	-0.047***	(0.012)
Employed	-0.048***	(0.010)	Employed	-0.048***	(0.010)
Community, rural ref			Community:		
Small/middle town	0.020***	(0.005)	Small/middle	0.020***	(0.005)
Large town	0.069***	(0.006)	Large town	0.069***	(0.006)
GDP	-0.002	(0.003)	GDP	0.002	(0.002)
Net migration	0.006**	(0.002)	Net migration	0.012*	(0.005)
GINI	0.000	(0.006)	GINI	-0.021**	(0.007)
Constant	1.813***	(0.041)	Constant	2.579***	(0.061)
SD (Country year)	0.008***	(0.001)	sd(CountryYear)	0.095***	(0.011)
SD (Residual)	0.695***	(0.003)	sd(CountryYear)	0.695***	(0.003)

Note. N = 137,297, Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Sources data: EB 65.4, 69.1, 71.2, 77.4, 83.4, 91.4 (individual-level variables), CMP (political discourses), Worldbank (GDP), Eurostat (GINI, Net migration).

Table A7. Stepwise Regression Associations Between Political Elite Discourses and Majorities' Perceptions of the Prevalence of Ethnic Discrimination

	Over time (within-country) variations						Between-country variations					
	M1		M2		M3		M1		M2		M3	
Equality discourses	0.022	(0.107)	0.022	(0.031)	0.023	(0.030)	0.117	(0.067)	0.117	(0.066)	0.071	(0.061)
Exclusive discourses	-0.124	(0.110)	-0.125***	(0.032)	-0.111***	(0.031)	-0.143	(0.076)	-0.142	(0.074)	-0.099	(0.069)
Inclusive discourses	0.243	(0.371)	0.242*	(0.109)	0.242*	(0.104)	0.127	(0.316)	0.127	(0.311)	0.075	(0.291)
Age					-0.005***	(0.000)					-0.005***	(0.000)
Female					0.075***	(0.005)					0.075***	(0.005)
Marital status, Married ref												
Living with partner					0.024**	(0.008)					0.024**	(0.008)
Single					0.018***	(0.005)					0.018***	(0.005)
Other					0.039	(0.023)					0.040	(0.023)
Age left education					0.008***	(0.001)					0.008***	(0.001)
Occupation, unempl ref												
Non-Active					-0.040***	(0.010)					-0.041***	(0.010)
Self-employed					-0.047***	(0.012)					-0.047***	(0.012)
Employed					-0.048***	(0.010)					-0.048***	(0.010)
Community, rural ref												
Small/middle town					0.020***	(0.005)					0.020***	(0.005)
Large town					0.069***	(0.006)					0.069***	(0.006)
GDP					-0.002	(0.003)					0.002	(0.002)
Net migration					0.006**	(0.002)					0.012*	(0.005)
GINI					0.000	(0.006)					-0.021**	(0.007)
Country dummies	No		Yes		Yes		No		No		No	
Year dummies	No		No		No		No		Yes		Yes	
Constant	2.555***	(0.028)	1.863***	(0.042)	1.813***	(0.041)	2.555***	(0.027)	2.618***	(0.066)	2.579***	(0.061)
SD (country year)	0.120***	(0.014)	0.010***	(0.001)	0.008***	(0.001)	0.117***	(0.013)	0.113***	(0.013)	0.095***	(0.011)
SD (residual)	0.710***	(0.003)	0.710***	(0.003)	0.695***	(0.003)	0.710***	(0.003)	0.710***	(0.003)	0.695***	(0.003)

Note. $N = 137,297$, Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Dummies for countries or years respectively are added in model 2 (see Methods)—coefficients not shown. Macro variables are centered on the country mean for the overtime model, and on the year mean in the between countries model. Sources data: EB 65.4, 69.1, 71.2, 77.4, 83.4, 91.4 (individual-level variables), CMP (political discourses), Worldbank (GDP), Eurostat (GINI, Net migration).

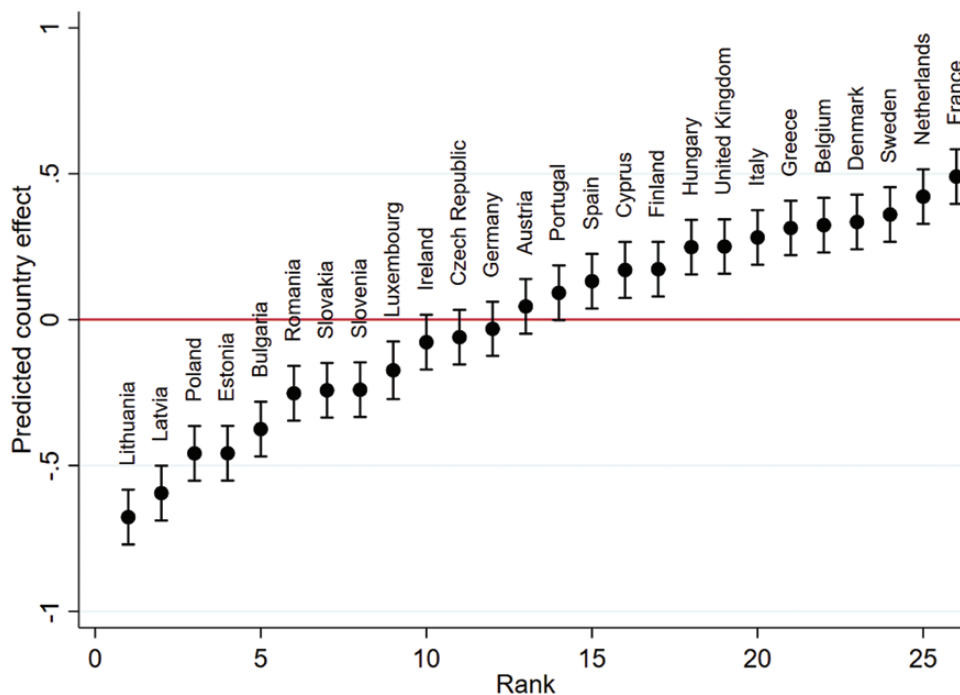


Figure A1 : Country average differences

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