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Abstract

The issue of humanitarian migration has been among the most debated and divisive topics of 2023 in Germany and beyond, boosting the performance of right-radical parties, such as the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). Perceptions of the topic are, among other things, shaped by public discourse frames, which often either appeal to a humanitarian responsibility to provide protection or highlight potential immigration-related threats for host societies. This research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the impact of these popular frames on humanitarian concerns, threat perceptions and preferences for refugee policies of Germans and on how these frames relate to demographic characteristics of the migrants. For this purpose, we analyze original data from a large-scale online survey experiment conducted in May 2023 in Germany with 2,012 respondents, in which different frames are presented in the form of short videos on Syrian refugees in Turkish refugee camps. We find that stressing the humanitarian plight of the refugees drives up various forms of humanitarian concerns and the support for a petition advocating for more on-site assistance, while our threat frame impacts mainly perceived cultural threat. Increasing the salience of young men among the refugees leads to an erosion of support for refugee admissions. The treatment effects differ largely between respondents from East and West Germany. Our findings shed light on the nuanced dynamics of public opinion on humanitarian migration and stress that solidarity with refugees is not merely a function of sheer numbers, but also depends on the representation of refugees in the public discourse and the media.

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1. Introduction

Immigration, and in particular the immigration of asylum seekers and refugees, is one of the most divisive policy issues globally, sparking charged debates on economic impacts, national security, cultural identity, and humanitarian responsibilities. The diverse opinions people and political parties hold on whether to adopt more open or more restrictive immigration policies also nurture political polarization (Herold et al., 2023). Political parties play an important role in framing immigration issues to the public and in gaining support for their policies. Right-wing parties, in particular, have been effectively capturing voters by framing immigration as an economic, security, and cultural threat at home (Kustov, 2022).

A famous example is Donald Trump's "Build the wall"-slogan, an important cornerstone of his 2016 campaign which helped pave the way to the White House (Lamont et al., 2017). The language of far-right parties and politicians in Europe, such as Giorgia Meloni in Italy or Gert Wilders in the Netherlands, use similar rhetoric (Campenhout, 2023; Riegert, 2022). Germany's far-right party, the "Alternative für Deutschland" (AfD), has garnered support primarily due to its stringent views on immigration rather than through other policy issues (infratest dimap, 2023b). However, in the context of unprecedented refugee numbers and record high poll ratings for the AfD, the tone among moderate parties has also changed, as illustrated by the call from the social democratic Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, for large-scale deportations (Scholz, 2023).

While the association between immigration and far-right voting is rather well established (Edo et al., 2019; Halla et al., 2017), it is less clear if the shift in narratives is merely a reflection of changing attitudes brought about by the large-scale influx of people or if narratives actually drive, or at least reinforce, this change. It is often discussed whether media narratives and frames affect how migrants are seen by the broader public. However, Dennison & Dražanová (2018) view media influence as a rather weak determinant of immigration attitudes, and Kustov et al. (2021) highlight that people's views on immigration are remarkably stable over time and largely independent from contextual factors or informational cues. Other studies find that priming respondents with certain pieces of information or frames may impact immigration attitudes but is ineffective in shaping policy preferences (Getmansky et al., 2018; Grigorieff et al., 2020).

In this paper, we investigate how framing refugee immigration either as driven by humanitarian plight or as posing a threat to the host country shapes citizens' views on and political support for Syrian refugees. We further investigate how each of these frames affect views on and political support for Syrian refugees depending on whether we focus on families with small children or young men among the refugee population. While a wealth of studies on immigration attitudes exists today (Dražanová et al., 2024; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014; Javdani, 2020), the present research helps to expand our understanding of the insufficiently explored effects of public discourse frames on attitudes specifically towards refugees and asylum policies (Ruhs, 2022). Dennison's (2022) recent review paper on the effects of communication on immigration attitudes shows a gap in the current literature regarding research on the effect of humanitarian messaging, which this paper intends to fill.

The existing evidence on the effects of humanitarian and threat frames on immigration views is not conclusive: Some studies show that highlighting the humanitarian need of migrants increases support for permissive policies (Newman et al., 2015) and that attitudes are more favorable towards humanitarian compared to economic migrants (Czymara & Schmidt-Catran, 2017; von Hermanni & Neumann, 2019). Other studies, however, find that portraying Turkey's open-door policy as an important humanitarian contribution that saves, in particular, the lives of Syrian women and children (Getmansky et al., 2018) or that depicting Syrian refugees as helpless and passive victims of a cruel conflict (Liu, 2023) results in more hostile attitudes. In the case of Liu (2023), this framing leads to even more negative views than exposure to a security threat frame. For Germany, Czymara & Schmidt-Catran (2017) find that an increasingly immigration-hostile media environment was associated with a deterioration of attitudes towards immigrants more generally, yet, refugees were exempt from this trend.

We focus our research on Germany, the second largest donor to the UN Refugee Agency and the primary destination country for refugees in the EU (UNHCR, n.d. -a). With more than 2.5 million refugees, it is also the third largest refugee-*hosting* country in the world and a political heavyweight in leading the European Union's response to migration. Figure 1 shows the development of the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers[2] in Germany since the

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[2] According to the UNHCR (n.d. -b), "refugees are persons outside their countries of origin who are in need of international protection because of feared persecution, or a serious threat to their life, physical integrity or freedom in their country of origin as a result of persecution, armed conflict, violence or serious public disorder."

beginning of the Syrian Civil War in 2011. Refugee numbers started to rise significantly from 2015. In 2015 and 2016, Germany welcomed over 1.2 million refugees and asylum seekers from Syria and other, predominantly North African and Middle Eastern countries, 70 % of whom were young men (Dostal, 2017). Before the onset of the war in Ukraine in 2022, Syrians formed, by far, the largest refugee group in Germany. The rise in numbers resulted from former chancellor Angela Merkel's effort to protect those fleeing active conflict. Germany's readiness to take in large numbers of refugees was internationally recognized as "Willkommenskultur" (Welcome Culture), and strongly supported by civil society. Many Germans volunteered time and resources to help refugees arriving in the country (Karakayali & Hamann, 2016).

Figure 1: Number of refugees and asylum seekers in Germany (2011-2023)
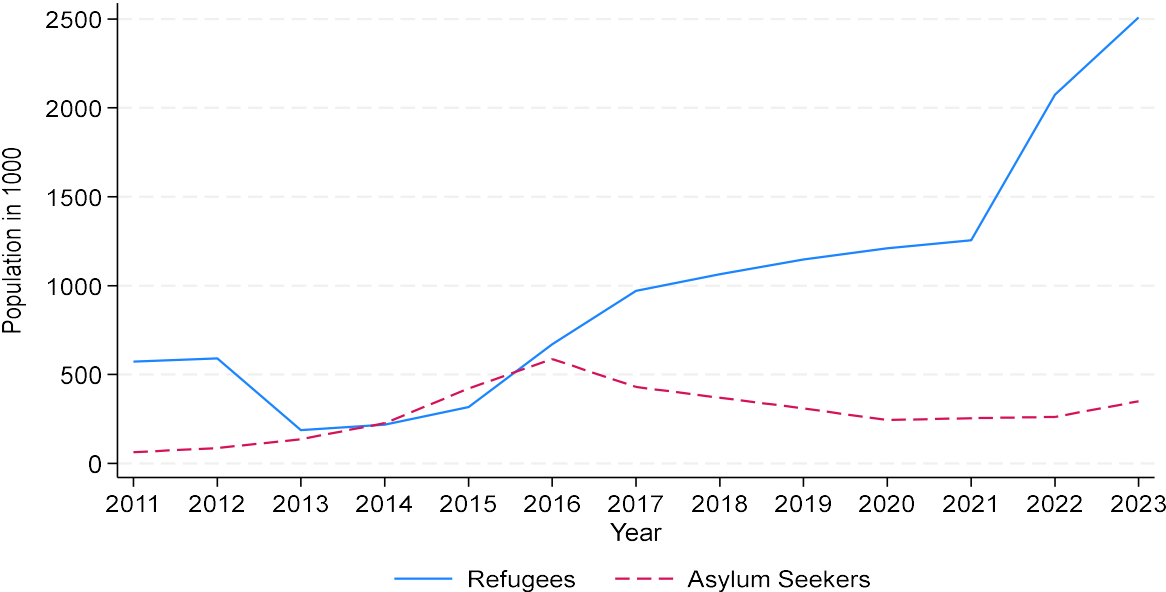
Source: UNHCR Refugee Population Statistics Database, 2023. For 2023, we show the mid-year value.

The public discourse at the time was strongly focused on humanitarianism. In line with the 1951 Convention to the Status of Refugees, better known as the Geneva Refugee Convention, Merkel invoked collective humanitarian values and responsibility as the primary motives for Germany's actions to protect those in need.

It describes asylum seekers on the other hand as a general term for people seeking international protection. The large majority of Syrian asylum seekers arriving at the time was also granted protection in Europe (Connor, 2017).

Today's public discourse is in large parts shaped by strong anti-immigration rhetoric led by the far-right opposition who put pressure on the government by demanding a "sea change" in immigration policies amid rising refugee numbers. The far-right opposition typically frames immigration as an economic, security, and cultural threat, whereas the government cites protection of Germany's social welfare state and capacity constraints as the main reasons for curbing immigration[3]. Following more positive views on humanitarian immigration to Germany in 2015, public opinion on the issue has been fluctuating. Czymara & Schmidt-Catran (2017) document a shift towards more negative views following the 2015 New Year's Eve incidents in Cologne and other German cities.[4] While attitudes improved between 2017 and 2022 (Kösemen & Wieland, 2022), especially under the impression of the war on Ukraine and the welcoming of Ukrainian refugees (European Commission, 2022), they have been deteriorating again recently. In a representative survey from May 2023, negative views towards immigration and a desire to take in fewer refugees were widespread among survey respondents (infratest dimap, 2023a). Only 8 percent of Germans were in favor of increasing refugee admissions, and more than half of the respondents expressed a preference for reduced numbers (infratest dimap, 2023a). This contrasts with 48 % of Germans agreeing with the statement that the country could and should take in more refugees for humanitarian reasons in 2021, relative to 36% who saw Germany at a capacity limit at the time (Kösemen & Wieland, 2022).

We break down the key elements of the two main immigration narratives put forward by Germany's political parties over the past few years and paint a nuanced picture of their impact on people's attitudes towards refugees and the immigration policies they are willing to support. Those two narratives can be summarized as an appeal either to the humanitarian concerns of people towards the refugees or to economic, security, and cultural threat perceptions that are commonly linked with refugee immigration.

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[3] Immigration policies started to tighten under the Merkel government, but to a lesser degree compared to current commitments.

[4] During that night, dozens of assaults, such as sexual assaults or robberies, were reported. In many cases, immigrants with an Arab or North African background were the main suspects (Czymara & Schmidt-Catran, 2017).

In May 2023, we conducted a large representative survey experiment in Germany with 2,012 respondents to investigate the impact of two migration frames (the *Humanitarian Plight* and the *Threat* frame) on people's (i) humanitarian concerns and (ii) threat perceptions towards Syrian refugees, as well as their willingness to support petitions for (iii) financial aid for refugee camps outside of Germany, or (iv) the admission of refugees to Germany. Respondents were randomly assigned to one comparison group and four treatment groups. The comparison group watched a video providing basic information on who is a refugee, the emigration of Syrians in the wake of the Syrian Civil War and their geographical distribution across Turkey. This basic information was also provided to all treatment group respondents, but the information in the second part of the video was systematically varied as follows. Our first treatment variables are the *Humanitarian Plight* and the *Threat* frame. The *Humanitarian Plight* frame emphasizes the hardship and difficult living conditions experienced by Syrian refugees during the Syrian Civil War and later in Turkish refugee camps. The *Threat* frame addresses the cultural and linguistic differences between Germans and Syrians, and points to the fact that a successful integration would necessitate time and resources. We interact both the *Humanitarian Plight* and *Threat* frames with specific key characteristics highlighting either the presence of families or young men among the refugee population. The *Families* characteristic mentions that among the camp residents are "families with small children", which is substituted by "young men" (the largest group among Syrian refugees in Germany) in the *Men* characteristic. This results in a two-by-two experimental design and, hence, four treatment groups to which respondents are randomly assigned (*Humanitarian Plight & Families*, *Humanitarian Plight & Men*, *Threat & Families*, *Threat & Men*).

In addition, we test the impact of these different frames on our outcome variables (humanitarian concerns, threat perceptions, petition for camp support, petition for refugee admission) depending on our respondents' political orientation and whether they reside in East or West Germany. As highlighted above, immigration is highly politicized and has proven to be essential for voting decisions, especially for voters on the right end of the spectrum (Kustov, 2022). We differentiate between East and West German residents given that negative attitudes towards immigrants and immigration have been observed to be particularly strong in Eastern Germany (Kösemen & Wieland, 2022).

Our results show that, across all conditions, average support for financial aid by the German government to refugee camps outside Germany is 25%, and 22% for admitting refugees to Germany. This appears as quite low, particularly in comparison to a study with a similarly designed petition question (Azevedo et al., 2021). Support among Eastern German residents amounts to 23% and 17%, respectively. Of the respondents on the political right, the support for both policies is at roughly 12%. Second, we find that the *Humanitarian Plight* frame significantly increases support for financial aid to refugee camps but has no effect on supporting admissions of refugees to Germany. The *Threat* frame has no significant effect on either of these outcomes. Third, the *Men* frame decreases support for admission of refugees to Germany, suggesting that people become more skeptical about refugees if the presence of young men among the refugee population is emphasized.

With regards to attitudes towards refugees, we find that threat perceptions, except for perceived job threat, are somewhat more pronounced than humanitarian concerns. Moreover, the *Humanitarian Plight* frame increases concerns for refugees' safety, health, and material well-being but not for their future life opportunities. Second, the *Threat* frame significantly increases perceptions of cultural threat to the host society but shows no impact on other types of perceived threat. While the *Humanitarian Plight* frame enhances concerns for refugees, it leaves threat perceptions unaffected. Similarly, the *Threat* frame has no impact on humanitarian concerns. Third, the *Families* frame has ambiguous effects, it increases people's concerns for refugees' safety but also increases the perceived burden of refugees to the welfare state.

Finally, the data reveals large differences in how East and West Germans are affected by the frames. Exposure to any of the frames reduce humanitarian concerns among East Germans to a significantly greater extent than West Germans. The *Men* and *Threat* frames are also more effective in augmenting forms of threat perception in the East than the West. And while the *Families* frame strongly augments support for refugee camps in the West, the effect on their Eastern counterparts is, if anything, negative. The results concerning political orientation are less clear but overall, the data suggest that the *Humanitarian Plight* frame influences attitudes for people on the left more positively than on the right.

This paper contributes to the broad and growing literature on immigration attitudes, which has been summarized by Hainmueller & Hopkins (2014) or, more recently, by Dražanová et al. (2024) or Javdani (2020). More specifically, we speak to two subfields within this

literature. First, this research helps to expand our understanding of attitudes specifically towards refugees and asylum policies, which should not be equated with the much better explored attitudes regarding immigration more generally (Ruhs, 2022; Steele & Abdelaaty, 2018). In particular, refugees are often perceived as especially vulnerable, which increases the relevance of humanitarian considerations for this group (Adida et al., 2019). Further, we explicitly measure the effects of our frames on (various types of) humanitarian concerns and threat perceptions, whereas many previous studies looked directly at policy preferences (Lahav & Courtemanche, 2012; Lazarev & Sharma, 2017; Newman et al., 2015) or forms of solidarity with migrants (Borah & Irom, 2021; Lazarev & Sharma, 2017) after exposing respondents to the respective frames. In a formal mediation analysis, we then estimate the extent to which the framing effects on policy preferences are mediated by perceived threats and humanitarian concerns.

Second, we study the role of public discourse frames as a determinant of immigration attitudes. A number of studies exposed participants to various threat frames (e.g., Lahav & Courtemanche, 2012; Liu, 2023), yet, adding a frame highlighting humanitarian cues, as done by Newman et al. (2015) for immigration to the US, has remained an exception. As mentioned above, we distinguish ourselves from Newman et al. (2015) by including humanitarian concerns and threat perceptions in our set of outcome variables and go one step further by combining these frames with emphasizing different demographic characteristics.

2. Data and Research Design

2.1 Data collection and representativity

To better understand the implications of the two dominant narratives on public attitudes, we conducted an online survey experiment between 8th May and 30th May 2023 in collaboration with the market research company *Bilendi*. 2,012 participants residing in Germany, aged between 18 and 69 completed our survey. We applied quotas for gender, age, and geographical composition to ensure a representative sample of the German population with respect to these variables. The sample also resembles national statistics with regards to the share of married people, political orientation and social trust, even though our participants are, on average,

slightly more right oriented and show slightly less trust.[5] Differences are larger regarding unemployment rates and education. Migrants and Muslims are underrepresented in our sample (see Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison of sample data with national statistics

Variable	Sample average	National Average	Observations
Married	43 %	41 %	1,990
University degree	29 %	21 %*	2,009
Unemployed	2.8 %	5.5 %	2,004
Migration Background	15.2 %	24.3 %	1,996
Muslim	3.3 %	6.6 %	1,960
Left-Right Scale	2.9 (1-5 scale)	4.3 (0-10 scale)	1,834
Social Trust	2.6 (1-5 scale)	4.7 (0-10 scale)	1,998

Source: Authors' calculations based on Bilendi survey in second column from the left. National averages for education, marital status and migration background derived from the German Federal Statistical Office (Destatis), unemployment data from the Federal Employment agency, the share of Muslims from a report of The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Pfündel et al., 2021) and political ideology and social trust data from the 10th wave of the European Social Survey (ESS) are reported in the second column from the right. The right column reports the number of observations in our sample.
*Note: The share of the German population with a university degree applies to the population between 15 and 65 years of age in the Destatis data.

2.2 Questionnaire and experimental design

All participants were asked to complete our questionnaire, which is provided in its entirety in *Appendix A*.[6] First, we asked respondents for their demographic characteristics, particularly for their gender, age and their state and county of residence. We continued with questions related to their educational attainment, their employment status and household income brackets before inquiring about their religious affiliation, political orientation, and level of trust in other people. Following Newman et al. (2015), we then measured the humanitarian

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[5] These slight differences may also have to do with the deviation in data collection periods between our survey data and the ESS data.

[6] The questionnaire in the appendix is the English translation. The original German questionnaire can be made available upon request.

orientation of respondents using an index of four question items that originally stem from the 1995 ANES (American National Election Studies) Pilot Study (Steenbergen, 1996). Participants were asked to indicate to which extent they agree with the following statements:

- One should always find ways to help others less fortunate than oneself
- A person should always be concerned about the well-being of others
- It is best not to get too involved in taking care of other people's needs
- People tend to pay more attention to the well-being of others than they should

Subsequently, respondents were randomly assigned to watch one of five different videos: they were either assigned to the comparison video or to one of four treatment videos.[7] All videos are centered around refugees from Syria living in refugee camps in Turkey. While much of the media and research attention has shifted towards Ukrainians since February 2022, the role of non-European refugees and asylum seekers has become particularly controversial (Geddes & Dražanová, 2023). Among those, Syrians are the largest group in Germany. Moreover, Ukrainians are a very particular group of refugees as they are predominantly white Christians from Eastern Europe with high shares of women with children (Moise et al., 2024). We choose to speak about Syrians outside of Europe as this is better aligned with the policy preferences we are interested in. Turkey is the largest host country for this refugee group. Selecting refugee camps as a setting helps to give participants a clear idea of the living conditions of refugees and is most compatible with our interest to measure participants' views on on-site assistance.

Respondents in the comparison group watched a video that provided some basic background information on who is a refugee, the emigration of Syrians in the wake of the Syrian Civil War as well as their distribution across Turkey. In the four treatment conditions, this general information sequence is complemented by a second part containing the frames in which our main interest lies. Following a 2x2-factorial design, we combine frames that entail either humanitarian plight or threat cues with frames emphasizing different kinds of demographic characteristics (Table 2).

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[7] Randomization across the comparison and treatment conditions has overall worked fine as Table A.1, Appendix B confirms.

Table 2: Design of frames

	Humanitarian Plight	*Threat*
Families	Humanitarian Plight & Families	Threat & Families
Men	Humanitarian Plight & Men	Threat & Men

Source: authors' elaboration

The *Humanitarian Plight* frame emphasizes the cruelty of the Syrian Civil War as well as the poor living conditions in Turkish refugee camps. In contrast, the *Threat* frame addresses the cultural and linguistic differences between Germans and Syrians, and points to the fact that a successful integration of Syrian refugees would necessitate time and resources. In comparison to narratives in the public discourse but also to other frames that were used in earlier studies, e.g. Getmansky et al., (2018), we choose a very moderate tone in our frames. For this reason, our results rather represent a lower-bound of real-life framing effects. With respect to demographic characteristics, we focus on gender and age. Specifically, in the *Families* frame, it is mentioned that many of the camp residents are "families with small children", while this is substituted by "young men" in the *Men* frame. This distinction is also reflected in the selection of people best visible in the second part of the videos. The comparison group video runs for 49 seconds, the treatment videos for 82 seconds. The English translation of the scripts along with the weblinks for the videos are available in Appendix C.[8]

After watching the videos, respondents were asked to give information on their attitudes towards the Syrian camp residents. Specifically, we tested participants' levels of humanitarian concerns for the refugees: (i) safety; (ii) provision with basic material goods; (iii) health situation; and (iv) prospects for the future.[9] Responses could range from 1 (not at all concerned) to 5 (very concerned). Then, we tested participants` levels of perceived threats about Syrian refugees. Specifically, we asked participants to indicate to what extent they agree with the following statements:

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[8] Again, the version in the original German can be made available upon request.

[9] These four categories are broadly based on a humanitarian needs report by the World Health Organization & King's College London (2011).

If Syrians from Turkish refugee camps were to come to Germany to live here…

- they would take jobs away from the German population
- they would, in the long run, benefit more from the welfare state than they contribute
- the security situation in Germany would deteriorate
- their values and beliefs would be at odds with those of the Germans

Responses could range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Last, policy preferences were measured in the form of petitions. The use of petitions as so-called "real stakes" questions can increase credibility compared to self-reported preferences without any implications (Stantcheva, 2022). According to a study of the Office of Technology Assessment at the German Bundestag (TAB), a large majority of the German resident population (70 %) is aware of the right to petition the parliament, making it a well-known tool for expressing policy preferences (Kahlisch & Oertel, 2020).

Participants were randomized into two different groups, each confronted with distinct options, to prevent the decision on the first petition from influencing the decision on the second petition. The first group was asked if they would like to sign a petition calling for more financial support from the German government for Turkey's refugee camps. This refers to an important tool in the refugee policy mix that has, however, typically been excluded from studies on migration or refugee attitudes (Jeannet et al., 2021). The second group was asked if they would like to sign a petition calling for the admission of Syrians from Turkish refugee camps to Germany. Both groups were also given the option to not sign the petition. We explained to participants that the petition results would be shared with the Federal Commissioner of the Federal Government for Migration, Refugees, and Integration.

2.3 Empirical Strategy

Our empirical strategy to test the effects of exposure to the described frames on our outcome variables of interest is based on the following OLS regression:

$$y_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 T_{ij} + \alpha_2 X_i + u_i \tag{1}$$

where i defines the individual and j the treatment status. Y represents the three sets of outcome variables laid out above (humanitarian concerns, threat perceptions and policy petitions), while T is the treatment dummy indicating the assignment of respondents to any of the treatment

groups or the comparison group. *X* is a vector that comprises a range of controls, such as indicator variables for being female, married, unemployed, Muslim, holding a university degree, having a migration background[10], having lived abroad and for the states (Bundesländer) in which respondents live. We also control for respondents' age groups and income brackets.[11] Finally, variables for humanitarian and political orientation as well as for levels of social trust are added. Humanitarian orientation scores are formed as an additive index based on the four questions mentioned in the preceding subsection, whereas political orientation and social trust are measured on 5-point Likert scales.[12] A descriptive summary of all control variables can be found in Table A.2, Appendix D.

3. Results

In this section, we present the impact of our experiment on various outcomes of interest, beginning with humanitarian concerns, followed by threat perceptions, and concluding with policy preferences. For each dimension, we first give a brief descriptive summary, then provide our regression results by examining the pooled *Humanitarian Plight* and *Threat* frames, and subsequently, the pooled *Families* and *Men* frames. In addition, we conduct a mediation analysis to further explore the link between concerns, threats, and policy preferences and, finally, investigate the heterogeneity of our treatment effects across political ideology and Germany's East-West divide. Results with control variables are reported in the main text while those without controls are printed in Appendix F.

3.1 Humanitarian Concerns

We start by analyzing the effects of the different frames on respondents' humanitarian concerns for the refugees. The mean values of humanitarian concerns, averaged across all study groups, are reported in Figure A.1, Appendix E. Table 3 reports the regression results of our

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[10] Respondents have a migration background if they were either born abroad themselves or if at least one of their parents was born abroad.

[11] Regarding age, 5 classes are considered: 18-27; 28-37; 38-47; 48-57; 58-69. Regarding income, we created 10 classes (values are expressed in EUR): 11,999 or less, 12,000 – 19,999; 20,000 – 26,999; 27,000 – 33,999; 34,000 – 40,999; 41,000 – 49,999; 50,000 – 59,999; 60,000 – 74,999; 75,000 – 99,999; 100,000 or more.

[12] Lower values represent a more left-leaning political orientation or lower trust levels, respectively.

analysis with Panel A distinguishing between the *Humanitarian Plight* and the *Threat* frames and Panel B focusing on the differences between the *Families* and *Men* frames.

We find that the *Humanitarian Plight* frame is effective in increasing respondents' concerns for the refugees' safety, their material well-being as well as their health (Table 3, Panel A). The only exception are respondents' concerns for the refugees' future opportunities, for which we also find a positive point estimate which is, however, not statistically significant. When comparing the *Humanitarian Plight* with the *Threat* frame rather than with the comparison group though, this difference also becomes statistically significant. On the other hand, it seems that exposing respondents to threat cues does not significantly impact their humanitarian concerns relative to the comparison group (Table 3, Panel A).

Looking at the *Families* and *Men* frames, we find that the *Families* frame is consistently associated with positive coefficients which are, however, only significant for safety concerns and marginally significant for material concerns (Table 3, Panel B). Conversely, the *Men* frame does not affect humanitarian concerns (Table 3, Panel B). Yet, differences between the *Families* and *Men* frames are statistically significant concerning refugees' safety and health (Table 3, Panel B).

Table 2: Effects of frames on humanitarian concerns

	Safety	**Material**	**Health**	**Future**
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A:				
Humanitarian Plight	0.182**	0.217**	0.232***	0.095
	[0.084]	[0.086]	[0.087]	[0.091]
Threat	0.019	-0.033	-0.102	-0.058
	[0.084]	[0.086]	[0.087]	[0.090]
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Comparison group mean	2.603	2.801	2.923	3.013
p-value diff Hum & Threat	0.018	0.000	0.000	0.039
Obs.	1,600	1,610	1,611	1,602
R-squared	0.120	0.139	0.155	0.151

Panel B:				
Families	0.176**	0.155*	0.141	0.079
	[0.084]	[0.087]	[0.088]	[0.091]
Men	0.028	0.031	-0.010	-0.040
	[0.083]	[0.086]	[0.087]	[0.090]
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Comparison group mean	2.603	2.801	2.923	3.013
p-value diff Families & Men	0.031	0.078	0.035	0.107
Obs.	1,600	1,610	1,611	1,602
R-squared	0.119	0.134	0.146	0.151

Notes: Controls included in all regressions are indicator variables for being female, married, unemployed, Muslim, holding a university degree, having a migration background, having lived abroad, age groups, income brackets, humanitarian, political orientation, social trust and the states (Bundesländer) in which respondents live. Standard errors in brackets. * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

3.2 Threat perceptions

The descriptive summaries for participants' threat perceptions are reported in Figure A.2, Appendix E. It is immediately visible that the fear of labor market competition is less pronounced than the other perceived threat types which is in line with the existing literature (Dražanová et al., 2024; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014; Javdani, 2020). The levels of the remaining threat types are, however, somewhat higher than the humanitarian concern levels.

It appears that the various frames are less effective in shaping threat perceptions than humanitarian concerns. Table 4, Panel A, shows that the *Threat* frame had a significant impact on the respondents' perceptions of cultural threat and marginally significant effect on the respondents' perceptions of welfare threat. By contrast, the *Humanitarian Plight* frame does not appear to shape respondents' threat perceptions.

Table 4, Panel B reveals that the neither the *Families* nor the *Men* frame is consistently associated with an increase or decrease in threat perceptions, which is reflected in the signs of the coefficients. However, the two frames differ in the type of perceived threat which they impact the most. Highlighting the presence of families increases perceived welfare threat, whereas portraying young men causes perceived cultural threat to rise.

Table 4: Effects of frames on threat perceptions

	Jobs	**Welfare**	**Security**	**Culture**
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A:				
Humanitarian Plight	-0.085	0.103	-0.060	0.019
	[0.071]	[0.074]	[0.072]	[0.068]
Threat	-0.055	0.125[*]	0.061	0.230[***]
	[0.071]	[0.074]	[0.072]	[0.068]
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Comparison group mean	2.602	3.403	3.396	3.555
p-value diff Hum & Threat	0.611	0.710	0.040	0.000
Obs.	1,640	1,640	1,640	1,640
R-squared	0.178	0.257	0.255	0.208
Panel B:				
Families	-0.055	0.146[**]	-0.031	0.092
	[0.071]	[0.074]	[0.072]	[0.069]
Men	-0.083	0.084	0.032	0.158[**]
	[0.071]	[0.074]	[0.072]	[0.068]
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Comparison group mean	2.602	3.403	3.396	3.555
p-value diff Families & Men	0.629	0.302	0.281	0.240
Obs.	1,640	1,640	1,640	1,640
R-squared	0.178	0.257	0.254	0.201

Notes: Controls included in all regressions are indicator variables for being female, married, unemployed, Muslim, holding a university degree, having a migration background, having lived abroad, age groups, income brackets, humanitarian, political orientation, social trust and the states (Bundesländer) in which respondents live. Standard errors in brackets. * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Our results suggest the following: First, the *Humanitarian Plight* frame seems to successfully augment different forms of humanitarian concern for refugees among respondents without impacting people's threat perceptions. Conversely, our threat frame, while being of little relevance for humanitarian concerns, increases cultural threat perceptions. Further, highlighting the presence of families had ambivalent effects as it increased respondents' concerns for the refugees' safety, but at the same time drove up fears of increased welfare burdens. A heightened salience of men, on the other hand, made people worry more about cultural implications.

3.3 Policy Preferences

With respect to the support for policy petitions, we differentiate between two types of solidarity towards which the petitions are tailored. As explained above, respondents were exposed to either a petition advocating for more on-site assistance in the refugee camps or a petition speaking out in favor of relocating refugees from the camps in Turkey to Germany. Figure A.3, Appendix E suggests that, overall, the willingness to mobilize more funding for refugee camps in Turkey is slightly higher (25%) than the readiness to take in refugees from these camps (22%). However, in both cases, a large majority opted to not support the petition.

Table 5 reports the results of our analysis with *Panel A* distinguishing between the *Humanitarian Plight* and the *Threat* frames and *Panel B* focusing on the differences between the *Families* and *Men* frames. We find that the *Humanitarian Plight* frame significantly fosters the willingness to sign the Camps Petition, driving up the support rate by 10 percentage points (Table 5, Panel A). This represents almost a 50% increase relative to the comparison group. With respect to the admission petition, we do not find significant effects of either the *Humanitarian Plight* nor the *Threat* frame (Table 5, Panel A).

Concerning the demographic frames, Table 5, Panel B, shows that the *Men* frame matters significantly in decreasing the willingness of participants to support the admission petition. Featuring young men in the video decreases participants' willingness to support the admission petition by 8 percentage points.

Table 5: Effects of frames on petition support

	Camps	Admission
	(1)	(2)
Panel A:		
Humanitarian Plight	0.098**	-0.030
	[0.040]	[0.038]
Threat	0.029	-0.043
	[0.040]	[0.038]
Controls	Yes	Yes
Comparison group mean	0.208	0.230
p-value diff Hum & Threat	0.041	0.679
Obs.	806	834
R-squared	0.161	0.169

Panel B:		
Families	0.079[*]	0.010
	[0.041]	[0.038]
Men	0.051	-0.082[**]
	[0.040]	[0.038]
Controls	Yes	Yes
Comparison group mean	0.208	0.230
p-value diff Families & Men	0.406	0.003
Obs.	806	834
R-squared	0.157	0.178

Notes: Controls included in all regressions are indicator variables for being female, married, unemployed, Muslim, holding a university degree, having a migration background, having lived abroad, age groups, income brackets, humanitarian, political orientation, social trust and the states (Bundesländer) in which respondents live. Standard errors in brackets. [*] $p < .1$, [**] $p < .05$, [***] $p < .01$

3.4 Mediation analysis

Our results show that the *Humanitarian Plight* frame is highly effective in influencing humanitarian concerns and the decision to support the Camps Petition (as opposed to the Admission Petition). However, highlighting the presence of young men increases the perception of a cultural threat and decreases the willingness to support the admission petition.

As a final step, we integrate these results and conduct a formal mediation analysis to understand, first, how much of the effect of the *Humanitarian Plight* frame on the camps petition is mediated by changes in humanitarian concerns and, second, if the effect of the *Men* frame on the admission petition is mediated by changes in the perception of cultural threat.

Following a standard mediation analysis approach, we first investigate the effect of the two frames on the respective mediators. Formally:

$$M_i = \beta + \beta_1 F_i + \beta_2 X_i + u_i \qquad (2)$$

Where F_i indicates the treatment, i.e. our frames, and X_i is a vector with control variables. M_i represents the mediator. In the case of humanitarian concerns, the mediator is an index derived from the arithmetic mean of the four responses to the questions used to measure humanitarian concerns about Syrian refugees: (i) safety; (ii) provision of basic material goods; (iii) health situation; and (iv) prospects for the future. In the case of threat, we focus solely on cultural threat since the other indicators related to this dimension are not statistically significant (see Table 4, Panel B). Our coefficient of interest is β_1.

Second, we estimate the impact of the mediator (M_i) on the petition (P_i). Formally:

$$P_i = \delta + \delta_1 M_i + \delta_2 X_i + u_i \tag{3}$$

However, this step is problematic because two assumptions must be satisfied to obtain unbiased results (Imai et al., 2011). The first assumption requires the frame to be independent of both mediator and final outcome (i.e. petitions). This assumption is satisfied considering the experimental nature of our study. The second assumption is less likely to be valid because it requires the mediator variables to be statistically independent of both frames and any other pre-intervention factors (Imai et al., 2011). To address this issue, we follow (Heller et al., 2017) in making this estimation using solely the comparison group based on the intuition that the second assumption should be partially satisfied within this group. Formally, we estimate:

$$P_i = \delta + \delta_1 M_i + \delta_2 X_i + u_i \text{ for all } (i) \text{ with } T_{ij} = 0. \tag{4}$$

The coefficient of interest is δ_1 which refers to the association between mediator and support for the petition. With all this information, we can now calculate the share of the treatment effect (*Humanitarian Plight* frame or *Men* frame) on the outcome of interest (camps petition or admission petition) explained by the mediator (humanitarian concerns or cultural threat) using this equation:

$$(\beta_1 * \delta_1)/\alpha_1 \tag{5}$$

The results of the mediation analysis are summarized in Table 6 and Table 7. Table 6 confirms that humanitarian concerns are a relevant channel through which the *Humanitarian Plight* frame shapes the willingness to sign the camps petition. In particular, Column 4 shows that around 12% of the total treatment effect of the *Humanitarian Plight* frame on camps petition support is mediated through increased humanitarian concern.

Table 6: Mediation analysis – humanitarian channel

Effect of Humanitarian Plight frame on humanitarian concerns (β_1)	Association between humanitarian concerns and support for camps petition (δ_1)	Effect of Humanitarian Plight frame on camps petition (α_1)	% treatment effect on camps petition explained by this mechanism ($(\beta_1 * \delta_1)/\alpha_1$)
0.177**	0.067**	0.098**	12.10
[0.079]	[0.028]	[0.040]	

Source: Authors' calculations

Table 7 reports that the perception of cultural threat is a relevant channel through which the *Men* frame influences the willingness to sign the admission petition. Specifically, Column 4 shows that around 16% of the total treatment effect of the *Men* frame on admission petition support is mediated through increased perception of cultural threat.

Table 7: Mediation analysis – threat channel

Effect of Men frame on cultural threat (β_1)	Association between cultural threat and support for admission petition (δ_1)	Effect of Men frame on admission petition (α_1)	% treatment effect on camps petition explained by this mechanism ($(\beta_1 * \delta_1)/\alpha_1$)
0.158**	-0.085**	-0.082**	16.38
[0.068]	[0.043]	[0.038]	

Source: Authors' calculations

3.5 Heterogeneity analysis

Besides the discussed main effects of the frames, the following heterogeneity analysis is meant to provide more nuance with respect to variations of the effects across subgroups of our sample. First, we distinguish between the political orientation of respondents which has been shown to matter for framing effects (Lahav & Courtemanche, 2012). Given the distinct histories in terms of migration patterns and political socialization between East and West Germans, along with the substantial differences in immigration attitudes between the two parts

of the country today (Kösemen & Wieland, 2022), we also examine the moderating effect of residing in the West or in the East. The corresponding regression tables are in Appendix G.

Political Orientation

As highlighted in the introduction, refugee migration has been highly politicized and has proven to be essential for voting decisions, especially for people with more restrictive migration views and for far-right voting (infratest dimap, 2023b; Kustov, 2022). Indeed, we find that the effect of the *Humanitarian Plight* frame on cultural threat is moderated by the person's ideology. Among far-left respondents, this frame is likely to reduce perceived cultural threat, whereas we estimate the opposite for people on the far right. We also find right-leaning orientations to reduce the positive effect of the *Humanitarian Plight* frame on camp petition support. While the frame exerts a positive effect on left-leaning and centrist respondents, it does not impact the support of right-leaning individuals. On the other hand, the effect of the *Threat* frame is similar across the political spectrum.

East vs. West

In relation to the debate of whether xenophobia is primarily a problem in East Germany, we also differentiate along this geographical divide.[13] Interestingly, there is no evidence for more negative attitudes or harsher policy preferences among East Germans in the comparison group. However, the two groups differ largely in how they perceive any of the frames. When pooling across the *Families* and *Men* frames, we find that exposure to either one impacts humanitarian concerns among East Germans more negatively than among West Germans. This difference is statistically significant for both frames and all concern types, except material concern where the difference is only significant when exposed to the *Men* frame. Similarly, the *Men* frame leads to a significantly stronger increase of security and cultural threat perceptions among East compared to West Germans. Finally, the *Families* frame causes a statistically significant increase in camp petition support among West Germans that amounts to more than 50 % relative to the comparison group mean. However, East Germans respond significantly

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[13] To investigate the effect of living in East Germany, we replace the state dummies with an 'East' dummy that takes the value 1 for states that belonged to the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). Observations from Berlin, which was split between a Western and an Eastern part, were removed for this part of the analysis.

more negatively to the frame. Our analysis even suggests a *decrease* in support for this petition of roughly the same magnitude, yet given the smaller number of East Germans in the sample, this effect is not significant.

The picture looks very similar when distinguishing between the *Humanitarian Plight* and the *Threat* frame. Exposure to the *Humanitarian Plight* frame heightens concerns for the refugees only among West Germans. Conversely, the *Threat* frame leads to an erosion of all forms of humanitarian concerns exclusively among East Germans. Moreover, the *Threat* frame augments perceived security threat more strongly in the East than the West. The differences in the effects on East and West Germans' policy preferences are not statistically significant on conventional levels though.

4. Discussion and conclusion

This research provides an analysis of how these public discourse frames affect people's attitudes and policy preferences towards Syrians in Turkish refugee camps. In a large-scale online experiment with German respondents, we investigated how emphasizing the refugees' humanitarian plight, potential threats linked refugee immigration, the presence of families and/or the presence of young men among refugees impacts respondents' humanitarian concerns, threat perceptions and policy preferences for on-site assistance or admission to Germany.

In summary, we observe medium levels of humanitarian concerns for Syrian refugees in Turkish camps among our respondents, while threat perceptions – with the notable exception of perceived job threat – seem to be somewhat more pronounced. This is in line with rather low shares of people willing to sign a petition in favor of these refugees. The small magnitude of petition support becomes even more evident when comparing it with a recent study by (Azevedo et al., 2021) on Syrian Refugees in a number of European countries, in which 60% of participants supported a similarly designed pro-refugee petition.[14]

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[14] The exact wording of their question was: "We should be investing more money and resources to support the refugees who are fleeing war and hardship and coming to our borders." Respondents were nationals from a variety of European countries including Germany. The largest share were UK citizens though.

It is important to interpret these findings considering the larger social and political context at the time of data collection. We highlighted the unprecedented size of Germany's refugee population above. As a consequence, the number of voices especially on local levels of politics that expressed concerns about the overextension of Germany's integration capacities grew rapidly (DIE WELT, 2023). Despite the heated political atmosphere at the time of our data collection, we showed that exposing respondents to a humanitarian narrative about the respective group of refugees augmented their concerns for the refugees' welfare which corroborates the results from Bansak et al. (2016) and Newman et al. (2015). These increased concerns were also partly responsible for the positive impact of the *Humanitarian Plight* frame on mobilizing support for refugee camps in Turkey.

Conversely, exposure to a frame with typical threat cues drove up perceived cultural threat. The study by Newman et al. (2015) also showed that a frame combining various threat cues can affect views on immigration negatively. However, our study indicates that specifically cultural threat may be the driving force behind this. Cultural threat perceptions could also be the primary cause of the skepticism towards young and male refugees. While this aligns with the results from Ward (2019), we diverge from Ward's results in that we do not observe heightened security threat perceptions caused by our *Men* frame. The increased salience of young men also mattered for political preferences as it led to an erosion of people's willingness to admit refugees. Our results also reveal that frames can drive up humanitarian concerns without decreasing perceived threats and vice versa, which underlines the argument by Jeannet et al. (2021) that immigration attitudes are not unidimensional ranging from extremely pro- to extremely anti-immigration stances. Rather, distinct and potentially conflicting sentiments, such as the urge to help and the desire to mitigate perceived threats may coexist and be influenced differently by public narratives.

Additionally, we demonstrated that the effects of our frames are not homogenous. In particular, the *Humanitarian Plight* frame worked more effectively among people on the left of the political spectrum. This corroborates the argument by Dennison (2020) that messages have stronger appeals to people who are highly sympathetic to the values upon which the message relies. In contrast to the results by Lahav & Courtemanche (2012) , we did not observe stronger effects of the *Threat* frame on more left-leaning respondents.

We also documented that East and West Germans differed largely in how they responded to the frames, which is different from the – more widely known – fact that attitudes towards immigration differ across this geographical divide (Kösemen & Wieland, 2022). Interestingly though, attitudes of East and West Germans look similar in our comparison group. However, East Germans are affected much more negatively in their attitudes and policy preferences by our frames than their West German counterparts. The reasons for these different reactions could be explored in future research.

There are, however, limitations to our study. A typical challenge encountered in a field as controversial as refugee migration is social desirability. However, the anonymous way of our data collection in the absence of any personal interaction should mitigate the risk of biased answers (Cattaneo & Grieco, 2021). Moreover, by designing our policy preference items as petition questions, and informing participants that the results would be communicated to a government representative, we believe we are able to get closer to people's actual preferences (Stantcheva, 2022). Finally, the fact that large majorities decided not to support either petition can be interpreted as suggestive evidence that social desirability was not a paramount issue.

Policymakers, journalists and others who discuss immigration and refugees should therefore not only be mindful of the words they use and the pictures they paint. They also need to consider who they address since the same message may have different reactions among different groups of people.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no competing financial interest or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Appendix A: Online Survey Questionnaire

In the following the English translation of the online questionnaire is printed. The survey in the original German can be made available upon request. We report the answer options in italic below. They are separated by semicolons.

Q1.1 **Welcome!**

 You will be asked to take part in a survey. This survey is conducted by researchers from Maastricht University. All the information you get in this survey is verified.

There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in knowing your personal views about yourself and the world. The survey covers society-related questions that also concern the role of the state and politics.

Participation is voluntary. You can refuse to participate in this survey. If you start the survey, you can leave the study at any time, in which case you will not receive any financial compensation. Apart from the time you spend completing the survey (10-12 minutes), there is no cost to you. You still have the option of withdrawing your consent after completing the survey by contacting Prof. Dr. Melissa Siegel (melissa.siegel@maastrichtuniversity.nl).

Your study-related information will be treated confidentially. This study has been approved by the Ethics Review Committee of Inner City Faculties (ERCIC) at Maastricht University. The collection of data is confidential. Data analysis and reporting are anonymous. Your data will be kept separate from your Bilendi identification number.

Upon completion of the study, you will receive financial compensation for your time. This is done in accordance with Bilendi's guidelines.

If you have any questions or comments about this survey, please contact Prof. Dr. Melissa Siegel. At the end of the survey, you will have the opportunity to give us feedback on your experience.

_____

Declaration of consent

I agree that my data will be used for scientific purposes.

I had sufficient time to decide if I wanted to participate in the study. I know that participation in the study is voluntary, and I know that I can choose to cancel the survey and withdraw my consent at any time. I do not have to give reasons for such a decision. In this case, I will not receive any financial compensation.

I had the opportunity to connect with Prof. Dr. Melissa Siegel, a researcher involved in this study, and ask questions. I am aware that the data is stored anonymously and therefore only published anonymously.

I agree to participate

Yes; No

Q2.1 **The Survey**

During the survey, you will be asked to watch a short video. For this, you will need working speakers or headphones. The information contained in the video is genuine and comes from one or more publicly available and verified sources. The survey will take about 10-12 minutes to complete.

Your financial compensation

After completing the survey, you will receive financial compensation for your time. The survey is considered complete once you reach the last page thanking you for participating. You will not receive any compensation if you cancel the survey early, but you can do so at any time.

Q3.1 How would you identify yourself?

Man; Woman; Non-binary / third gender; Prefer to self-describe; Prefer not to say

Q3.2 What is your age in years?

Younger than 18; 18-27; 28-37; 38-47; 48-57; 58-69; Older than 69, Prefer not to say

Q4.1 In which state do you live?

List of all German states (Bundesländer); Other; Prefer not to say

Q4.2 In which German county do you live?

List of all German counties (Landkreise); Other; Prefer not to say

Q5.1 What is your highest educational degree? If you are currently still in education, select the highest degree you have already earned.

No formal education; Completion of primary school; Completion of Hauptschule or Realschule; Fachabitur or Abitur; Bachelor's degree; Master's degree or Diplom; Doctoral degree; Other; Prefer not to say

Q5.2 How would you describe your current employment status?

Employed (full-time or part-time; Self-employed/freelance; unemployed, jobseeker; unemployed, no jobseeker; Retired; In full-time education; Other, Prefer not to say

Q5.3 What is your approximate annual household income after deduction of taxes and social security contributions? Please select the appropriate category.

11,999 or less; 12,000-19,999; 20,000-26,999; 27,000-33,999; 34,000-40,9999; 41,000-49,999; 50,000-59,999; 60,000-74,999; 75,000-99,999; 100,000 or more; Prefer not to say

Q5.4 What is their religious affiliation?

Christianity, Roman Catholic; Christianity, Protestant; Other Christian Church; Islam, Judaism; Hinduism; Buddhism; No religious affiliation; Other; Prefer not to say

Q6.1 Many people use the terms "left" and "right" to denote different political views. When you think about your own political views, how would you rank those views on that scale?

Left, Center-left; Center; Center-right, Right, Prefer not to say

Q6.2 Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?

1 You can't be too careful; 2; 3; 4; 5 Most people can be trusted; Prefer not to say

Q7.1 Please indicate to which extent you agree with the following statements

Strongly disagree; Somewhat disagree; Neither agree, nor disagree; Somewhat agree, Strongly agree

- One should always find ways to help others less fortunate than oneself

- A person should always be concerned about the well-being of others

- It is best not to get too involved in taking care of other people's needs

- People tend to pay more attention to the well-being of others than they should

Q8.1 Please watch the following approximately one-minute video **carefully and** in its entirety**, and also make sure that the** sound is working well.

Q14.1 A large number of Syrians are living in refugee camps in Turkey. When you think about their situation, how concerned are you about...

Not at all concerned; A bit concerned; Somewhat concerned; Quite concerned; Very concerned

- their safety?

- their provision with basic material goods?

- their health situation?

- their prospects for the future?

Q14.2 Please indicate how you agree with the following statements.

If Syrians from Turkish refugee camps were to come to Germany to live here…

Strongly disagree; Somewhat disagree; Neither agree, nor disagree; Somewhat agree; Strongly agree

- they would take jobs away from the German population

- they would, in the long run, benefit more from the welfare state than they contribute

- the security situation in Germany would deteriorate

- their values and beliefs would be at odds with those of the Germans

Q15.1 Do you think the German government should increase financial support for Turkish refugee camps?

Definitely not; Rather not; Maybe; Rather yes; Definitely

Q16.1 Would you be in favor of Germany taking in Syrians from Turkish refugee camps?

Definitely not; Rather not; Maybe; Rather yes; Definitely

Q16.2 Would you be in favour of your hometown providing housing for Syrians from Turkish refugee camps?

Definitely not; Rather not; Maybe; Rather yes; Definitely

Q16.3 Would you be willing to privately accommodate Syrians from Turkish refugee camps for a few days?

Definitely not; Rather not; Maybe; Rather yes; Definitely

Q17.1 You can become politically active by signing a petition. We will send the petition to the Commissioner of the Federal Government for Migration, Refugees, and Integration. Your name will not be mentioned. Instead, we report how many participants in our study supported the respective petitions.

Would you like to sign the petition below?

I would like to sign a petition calling for more financial support from the German government for Turkey's refugee camps.; I do not want to sign this petition.

Q18.1 You can become politically active by signing a petition. We will send the petition to the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration. Your name will not be mentioned. Instead, we report how many participants in our study supported the respective petitions.

Would you like to sign the petition below?

I would like to sign a petition calling for the admission of Syrians from Turkish refugee camps to Germany.; I do not want to sign this petition.

Q19.1 As a participant in this survey, you will be provided with **an additional euro**. You can choose how much of this amount you want to keep for yourself or how much you want to donate to one of the following organizations.   1) You can donate up to 50 cents to a certified international **non-governmental organization (NGO) A that works to improve living conditions in Turkish refugee camps**.   2) You can donate up to 50 cents to another certified international **non-governmental organization (NGO) B that is committed to hosting**

Syrians from Turkish refugee camps in Germany.   Please indicate how many cents you would like to donate to the respective organization. Note that you can donate a maximum of 50 cents per organization.   The amounts will be allocated to you or the named organizations once the data collection process has been completed. We will inform you of the names of the organizations once you have completed the survey.   How many cents would you like to donate at a time?

Organization A: *No donation; 5 cents; 10 cents; 15 cents; 20 cents; 25 cents; 30 cents; 35 cents; 40 cents; 45 cents; 50 cents*

Organization B: *No donation; 5 cents; 10 cents; 15 cents; 20 cents; 25 cents; 30 cents; 35 cents; 40 cents; 45 cents; 50 cents*

Q20.1 What is your relationship status?

Single, never been married; In a relationship, not married; Married, remarried; Divorced, Single; Widowed, single; Other; Prefer not to say

Q20.2 Were you born in Germany?

Yes, No, Prefer not to say

Q20.3 In which country were you born?

Q20.4 Was your mother born in Germany?

Yes, No, Prefer not to say

Q20.5 In which country was your mother born?

Q20.6 Was your father born in Germany?

Yes, No, Prefer not to say

Q20.7 In which country was your father born?

Q20.8 Have you ever lived in another country for at least six consecutive months?

Yes, No, Prefer not to say

Q20.9 In which country(s) have you lived?

Q21.1 You are now reaching the end of the survey. As announced, we would like to inform you to which organizations the donations will be forwarded to:

Organization A: Médecins Sans Frontières Organization B: Amnesty International

You now have the opportunity to give feedback on this survey.

Please note that we do not accept hateful and hurtful messages and will contact Bilendi if necessary.

Thank you very much.

Appendix B: Balance test

Table A.1: Balance test across experimental conditions

	Comparison (1)	Hum & Fam (2)	Hum & Men (3)	Threat & Fam (4)	Threat & Men (5)
Humanitarian Orientation	-0.009** [0.004]	0.006 [0.004]	-0.004 [0.004]	0.002 [0.004]	0.005 [0.004]
Female	0.014 [0.021]	0.005 [0.021]	-0.026 [0.021]	0.006 [0.021]	0.001 [0.021]
Age	-0.004 [0.008]	-0.004 [0.008]	-0.002 [0.008]	0.001 [0.008]	0.009 [0.008]
Married	0.042* [0.023]	-0.012 [0.023]	-0.012 [0.023]	0.002 [0.023]	-0.020 [0.023]
University Education	-0.017 [0.024]	0.018 [0.024]	0.035 [0.025]	-0.003 [0.024]	-0.034 [0.024]
Income	0.000 [0.004]	-0.002 [0.004]	-0.001 [0.005]	0.003 [0.004]	-0.001 [0.005]
Unemployed	-0.036 [0.066]	-0.005 [0.066]	-0.002 [0.067]	0.103 [0.066]	-0.059 [0.066]
Muslim	0.043 [0.062]	-0.017 [0.062]	-0.078 [0.063]	-0.008 [0.062]	0.060 [0.062]

Migration Background	-0.040	0.026	0.034	-0.016	-0.004
	[0.030]	[0.030]	[0.030]	[0.030]	[0.030]
Left-Right Scale	-0.005	0.004	-0.007	0.013	-0.005
	[0.012]	[0.012]	[0.012]	[0.012]	[0.012]
Trust	0.001	-0.010	-0.006	0.002	0.013
	[0.010]	[0.010]	[0.010]	[0.010]	[0.010]
Lived Abroad	0.001	0.003	0.006	-0.044	0.034
	[0.029]	[0.029]	[0.029]	[0.029]	[0.029]
East	-0.029	0.030	0.015	-0.003	-0.013
	[0.028]	[0.027]	[0.028]	[0.027]	[0.028]
_cons	0.339***	0.144*	0.315***	0.104	0.098
	[0.080]	[0.080]	[0.081]	[0.079]	[0.080]
Obs.	1,566	1,566	1,566	1,566	1,566
R-squared	0.008	0.004	0.006	0.005	0.008

Standard errors in brackets. * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Appendix C: Scripts of videos for all study groups

Script 1) General Part (comparison condition and first part of all treatment conditions)

According to the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, refugees are people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country. Following the onset of the Civil War in Syria, large parts of the population have fled the country. Today, the majority of Syrian refugees reside in Turkey. Large populations of Syrians can be found particularly in Turkish provinces bordering Syria, but also in the metropolitan area of Istanbul. While some found a place to stay by themselves, others reside in refugee camps.

Weblink: https://youtu.be/oZb7FqMYVbs

Script 2) Humanitarian Plight & Families condition:

Large parts of the camp residents, many of whom are families with small children, do not want to stay in Turkey but would like to move on to European countries, for example to Germany. Most of them fled from shattered cities in Syria, such as Aleppo, some lost family members or friends during the war. Now they find themselves stuck in overpopulated camps where healthy food and sanitary facilities are scarce and employment or educational prospects grim.

Weblink: https://youtu.be/_m_z5_oAH4s

Script 3) Humanitarian Plight & Men condition:

Large parts of the camp residents, many of whom are young men, do not want to stay in Turkey but would like to move on to European countries, for example to Germany. Most of them fled from shattered cities in Syria, such as Aleppo, some lost family members or friends during the war. Now they find themselves stuck in overpopulated camps where healthy food and sanitary facilities are scarce and employment or educational prospects grim.

Weblink: https://youtu.be/RnLBZPpVQZ4

Script 4) Threat & Families condition:

Large parts of the camp residents, many of whom are families with small children, do not want to stay in Turkey but would like to move on to European countries, for example to Germany. Syrians come from a predominantly Muslim country though with a lifestyle distinct from the one in European countries and most speak very little or no German. Therefore, successful integration into German society would require time and resources.

Weblink: https://youtu.be/381xP-oUvL4

Script 5) Threat & Men condition:

Large parts of the camp residents, many of whom are young men, do not want to stay in Turkey but would like to move on to European countries, for example to Germany. Syrians come from a predominantly Muslim country though with a lifestyle distinct from the one in European countries and most speak very little or no German. Therefore, successful integration into German society would require time and resources.

Weblink: https://youtu.be/2IosFa0g1AQ

Appendix D: Descriptive Statistics of Control Variables

Table A.2: Descriptive Statistics of Control Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Female (Yes=1)	.5	.5	0	1
Age	3.23	1.4	1	5
Married (Yes=1)	.43	.5	0	1
University Education (Yes=1)	.29	.45	0	1
Income	4.95	2.63	1	10
Unemployed (Yes=1)	.03	.17	0	1
Muslim (Yes=1)	.03	.18	0	1
Migration Background (Yes=1)	.15	.36	0	1
Lived Abroad (Yes=1)	.16	.37	0	1
Humanitarian Orientation	13.98	2.58	4	20
Left-Right Scale	2.87	.92	1	5
Social Trust	2.64	1.11	1	5

Appendix E: Descriptive Results of Outcome Variables

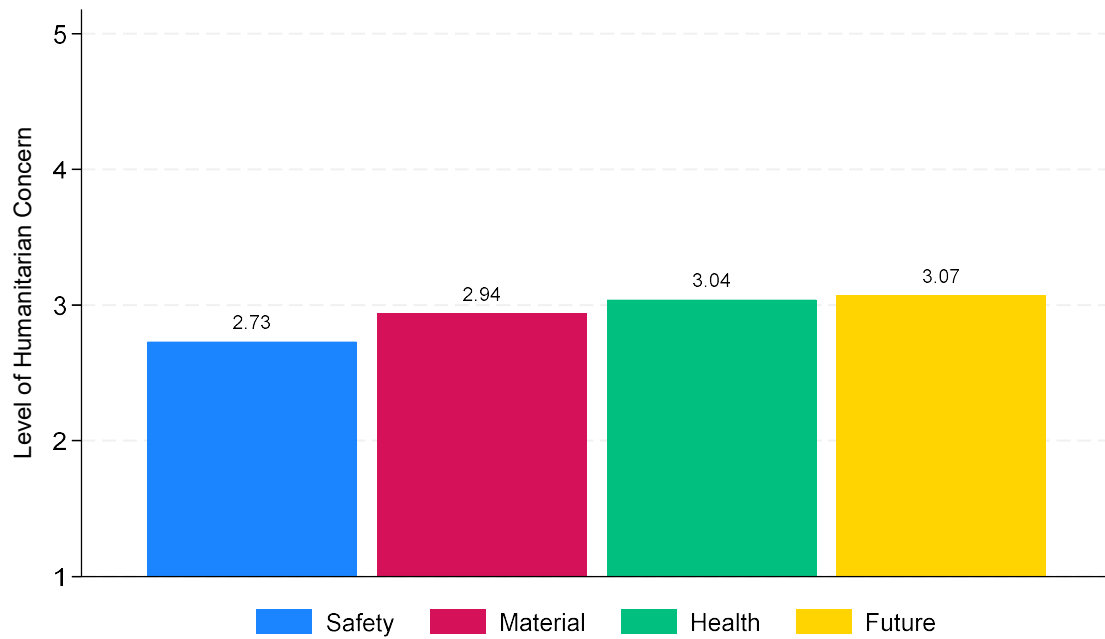Figure A.1: Descriptive results – humanitarian concerns by concern type

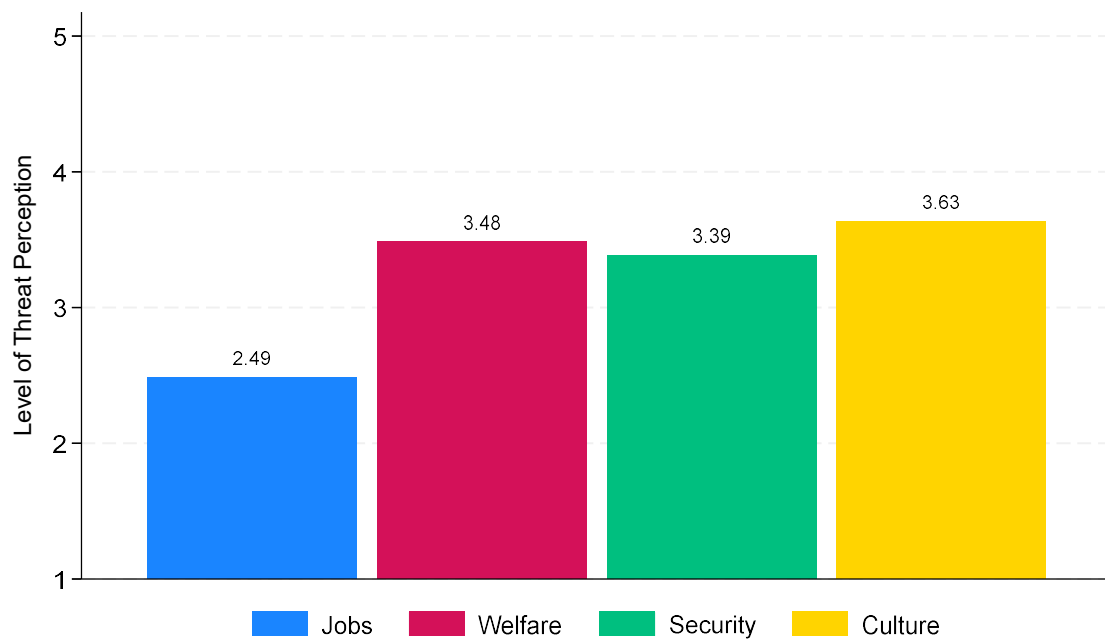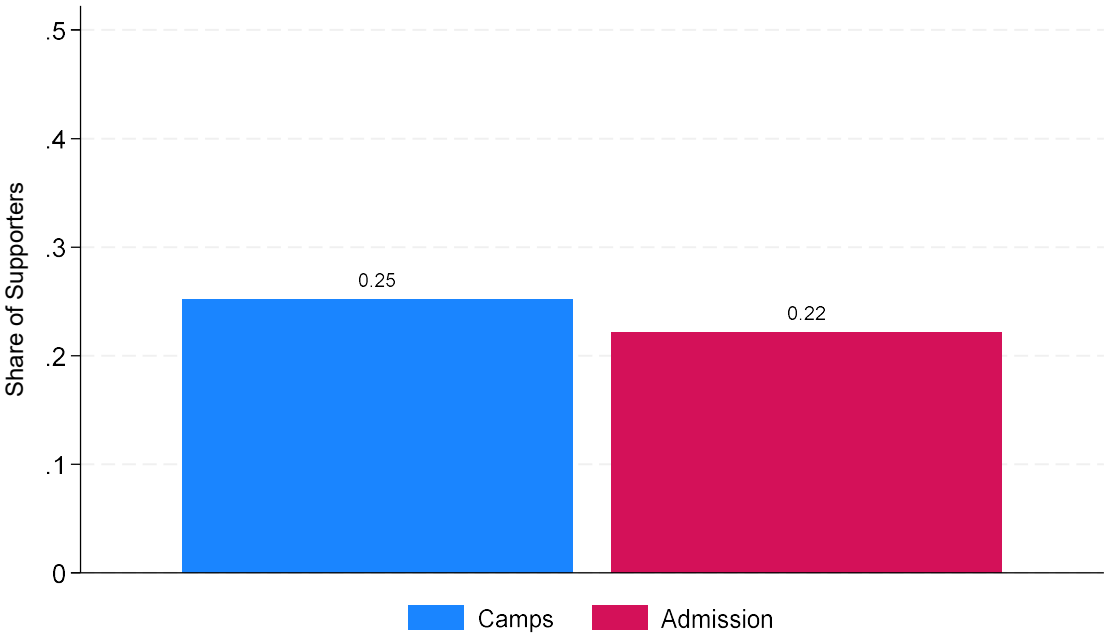Figure A.2: Descriptive results – threat perceptions by threat type

Figure A.3: Descriptive results – petitions

Appendix F: Main effects of frames

Table A.3: Effects of frames on humanitarian concerns – no controls

	Safety	Material	Health	Future
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A:				
Humanitarian Plight	0.237***	0.281***	0.309***	0.161*
	[0.080]	[0.083]	[0.085]	[0.088]
Threat	0.082	0.061	-0.016	-0.018
	[0.080]	[0.083]	[0.085]	[0.088]
Controls	No	No	No	No
Comparison group mean	2.603	2.801	2.923	3.013
p-value diff Hum & Threat	0.018	0.001	0.000	0.013
Obs.	1,929	1,944	1,952	1,933
R-squared	0.005	0.008	0.013	0.004
Panel B:				
Families	0.198**	0.205**	0.198**	0.097
	[0.080]	[0.083]	[0.085]	[0.089]
Men	0.120	0.137	0.095	0.047
	[0.080]	[0.083]	[0.085]	[0.088]
Controls	No	No	No	No
Comparison group mean	2.603	2.801	2.923	3.013
p-value diff Families & Men	0.234	0.319	0.139	0.488
Obs.	1,929	1,944	1,952	1,933
R-squared	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.001

Standard errors in brackets. * p < .1, ** p < .05, *** p < .01

Table A.4: Effects of frames on threat perceptions – no controls

	Jobs	Welfare	Security	Culture
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A:				
Humanitarian Plight	-0.157**	0.086	-0.059	0.018
	[0.069]	[0.075]	[0.074]	[0.068]
Threat	-0.130*	0.114	0.037	0.176***
	[0.069]	[0.075]	[0.074]	[0.068]
Controls	No	No	No	No
Comparison group mean	2.602	3.403	3.396	3.555
p-value diff Hum & Threat	0.628	0.654	0.111	0.004
Obs.	2,012	2,012	2,012	2,012
R-squared	0.003	0.001	0.001	0.005
Panel B:				
Families	-0.131*	0.152**	-0.038	0.072
	[0.069]	[0.075]	[0.074]	[0.068]
Men	-0.156**	0.049	0.015	0.121*
	[0.069]	[0.075]	[0.074]	[0.068]
Controls	No	No	No	No
Comparison group mean	2.602	3.403	3.396	3.555
p-value diff Families & Men	0.647	0.091	0.377	0.380
Obs.	2,012	2,012	2,012	2,012
R-squared	0.003	0.002	0.000	0.002

Standard errors in brackets. * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Table A.5: Effects of frames on petition support – no controls

	Camps	Admission
	(1)	(2)
Panel A:		
Humanitarian Plight	0.082**	-0.008
	[0.037]	[0.036]
Threat	0.028	-0.014
	[0.037]	[0.036]
Controls	No	No
Comparison group mean	0.208	0.230
p-value diff Hum & Threat	0.080	0.837
Obs.	1,000	1,012
R-squared	0.006	0.000
Panel B:		
Families	0.055	0.014
	[0.038]	[0.036]
Men	0.056	-0.035
	[0.037]	[0.036]
Controls	No	No
Comparison group mean	0.208	0.230
p-value diff Families & Men	0.973	0.091
Obs.	1,000	1,012
R-squared	0.003	0.003

Standard errors in brackets. * p < .1, ** p < .05, *** p < .01

Appendix G: Heterogeneity analysis

Table A.6: Effects of *Humanitarian Plight* and *Threat* frames on threat perceptions by political orientation

	Jobs	**Welfare**	**Security**	**Culture**
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Humanitarian Plight	-0.353	-0.202	-0.094	-0.466**
	[0.237]	[0.247]	[0.240]	[0.227]
Threat	-0.135	-0.104	-0.052	-0.006
	[0.234]	[0.243]	[0.237]	[0.224]
Humanitarian*LRS	0.093	0.106	0.012	0.168**
	[0.079]	[0.082]	[0.079]	[0.075]
Threat*LRS	0.028	0.079	0.039	0.082
	[0.077]	[0.080]	[0.078]	[0.074]
Left-Right Scale (LRS)	0.198***	0.331***	0.343***	0.157**
	[0.065]	[0.067]	[0.065]	[0.062]
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Comparison group mean	2.602	3.403	3.396	3.555
Obs.	1,640	1,640	1,640	1,640
R-squared	0.179	0.257	0.255	0.210

Notes: Controls included in all regressions are indicator variables for being female, married, unemployed, Muslim, holding a university degree, having a migration background, having lived abroad, age groups, income brackets, humanitarian, political orientation, social trust and the states (Bundesländer) in which respondents live. The variable LRS stands for *Left-Right Scale* and ranges from 1 (very left) to 5 (very right). Standard errors in brackets. * p < .1, ** p < .05, *** p < .01

Table A.7: Effects of *Humanitarian Plight* and *Threat* frames on petition support by political orientation

	Camps	Admission
	(1)	(2)
Humanitarian Plight	0.347***	0.151
	[0.130]	[0.132]
Threat	0.041	0.161
	[0.130]	[0.127]
Humanitarian*LRS	-0.088**	-0.062
	[0.043]	[0.043]
Threat*LRS	-0.004	-0.070*
	[0.043]	[0.042]
Left-Right Scale	-0.054	-0.011
	[0.036]	[0.035]
Controls	Yes	Yes
Comparison group mean	0.208	0.230
Obs.	806	834
R-squared	0.168	0.172

Notes: Controls included in all regressions are indicator variables for being female, married, unemployed, Muslim, holding a university degree, having a migration background, having lived abroad, age groups, income brackets, humanitarian, political orientation, social trust and the states (Bundesländer) in which respondents live. The variable LRS stands for *Left-Right Scale* and ranges from 1 (very left) to 5 (very right). Standard errors in brackets. * p < .1, ** p < .05, *** p < .01

Table A.8: Effects of *Families* and *Men* frames on humanitarian concerns by East vs. West Germany

	Safety	**Material**	**Health**	**Future**
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Families	0.251***	0.214**	0.217**	0.177*
	[0.093]	[0.096]	[0.097]	[0.100]
Men	0.101	0.118	0.064	0.051
	[0.092]	[0.095]	[0.097]	[0.099]
Families*East	-0.519**	-0.448*	-0.526**	-0.566**
	[0.238]	[0.243]	[0.246]	[0.257]
Men*East	-0.531**	-0.585**	-0.590**	-0.607**
	[0.236]	[0.243]	[0.246]	[0.256]
East	0.356*	0.217	0.267	0.348
	[0.197]	[0.201]	[0.204]	[0.213]
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Comparison group mean	2.603	2.801	2.923	3.013
Obs.	1,529	1,539	1,541	1,531
R-squared	0.113	0.128	0.144	0.148

Notes: Controls included in all regressions are indicator variables for being female, married, unemployed, Muslim, holding a university degree, having a migration background, having lived abroad, age groups, income brackets, humanitarian, political orientation, social trust and the states (Bundesländer) in which respondents live. The binary variable East takes a value of 1 for all observations, for which a state in the former German Democratic Republic has been selected as state of residence and 0 otherwise. Observations from Berlin are removed. Standard errors in brackets. * p < .1, ** p < .05, *** p < .01

Table A.93: Effects of *Families* and *Men* frames on threat perceptions by East vs. West Germany

	Jobs	**Welfare**	**Security**	**Culture**
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Families	-0.052	0.144[*]	-0.077	0.061
	[0.080]	[0.082]	[0.080]	[0.076]
Men	-0.065	0.066	-0.037	0.095
	[0.079]	[0.082]	[0.080]	[0.076]
Families*East	0.064	0.091	0.333	0.229
	[0.202]	[0.209]	[0.204]	[0.194]
Men*East	-0.117	0.163	0.408[**]	0.386[**]
	[0.202]	[0.209]	[0.204]	[0.194]
East	-0.061	0.103	-0.128	-0.086
	[0.168]	[0.174]	[0.169]	[0.161]
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Comparison group mean	2.602	3.403	3.396	3.555
Obs.	1,566	1,566	1,566	1,566
R-squared	0.170	0.252	0.249	0.196

Notes: Controls included in all regressions are indicator variables for being female, married, unemployed, Muslim, holding a university degree, having a migration background, having lived abroad, age groups, income brackets, humanitarian, political orientation, social trust and the states (Bundesländer) in which respondents live. The binary variable East takes a value of 1 for all observations, for which a state in the former German Democratic Republic has been selected as state of residence and 0 otherwise. Observations from Berlin are removed. Standard errors in brackets. * p < .1, ** p < .05, *** p < .01

Table A.10: Effects of *Families* and *Men* frames on petition support by East vs. West Germany

	Camps	Admission
	(1)	(2)
Families	0.112**	0.045
	[0.045]	[0.041]
Men	0.080*	-0.057
	[0.045]	[0.041]
Families*East	-0.219**	-0.072
	[0.107]	[0.115]
Men*East	-0.126	-0.067
	[0.105]	[0.117]
East	0.101	-0.010
	[0.085]	[0.100]
Controls	Yes	Yes
Comparison group mean	0.208	0.230
Obs.	772	794
R-squared	0.141	0.180

Notes: Controls included in all regressions are indicator variables for being female, married, unemployed, Muslim, holding a university degree, having a migration background, having lived abroad, age groups, income brackets, humanitarian, political orientation, social trust and the states (Bundesländer) in which respondents live. The binary variable East takes a value of 1 for all observations, for which a state in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) has been selected as state of residence and 0 otherwise. Observations from Berlin are removed. Standard errors in brackets. * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Table A.11: Effects of *Humanitarian Plight* and *Threat* frames on humanitarian concerns by East vs. West Germany

	Safety	**Material**	**Health**	**Future**
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Humanitarian Plight	0.249***	0.292***	0.297***	0.203**
	[0.093]	[0.096]	[0.097]	[0.100]
Threat	0.099	0.039	-0.017	0.023
	[0.093]	[0.095]	[0.096]	[0.099]
Humanitarian*East	-0.434*	-0.462*	-0.514**	-0.621**
	[0.235]	[0.240]	[0.242]	[0.254]
Threat*East	-0.638***	-0.596**	-0.631**	-0.561**
	[0.239]	[0.244]	[0.246]	[0.259]
East	0.355*	0.217	0.267	0.348
	[0.196]	[0.201]	[0.203]	[0.213]
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Comparison group mean	2.603	2.801	2.923	3.013
Obs.	1,529	1,539	1,541	1,531
R-squared	0.115	0.135	0.153	0.150

Notes: Controls included in all regressions are indicator variables for being female, married, unemployed, Muslim, holding a university degree, having a migration background, having lived abroad, age groups, income brackets, humanitarian, political orientation, social trust and the states (Bundesländer) in which respondents live. The binary variable East takes a value of 1 for all observations, for which a state in the former German Democratic Republic has been selected as state of residence and 0 otherwise. Observations from Berlin are removed. Standard errors in brackets. * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Table A.124: Effects of *Humanitarian Plight* and *Threat* frames on threat perceptions by East vs. West Germany

	Jobs	**Welfare**	**Security**	**Culture**
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Humanitarian Plight	-0.083	0.100	-0.111	-0.026
	[0.079]	[0.082]	[0.080]	[0.076]
Threat	-0.035	0.108	-0.003	0.180**
	[0.079]	[0.082]	[0.080]	[0.076]
Humanitarian*East	-0.024	0.023	0.309	0.311
	[0.201]	[0.207]	[0.202]	[0.192]
Threat*East	-0.022	0.248	0.447**	0.319
	[0.204]	[0.211]	[0.205]	[0.195]
East	-0.062	0.103	-0.128	-0.086
	[0.168]	[0.174]	[0.169]	[0.161]
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Comparison group mean	2.602	3.403	3.396	3.555
Obs.	1,566	1,566	1,566	1,566
R-squared	0.169	0.252	0.252	0.201

Notes: Controls included in all regressions are indicator variables for being female, married, unemployed, Muslim, holding a university degree, having a migration background, having lived abroad, age groups, income brackets, humanitarian, political orientation, social trust and the states (Bundesländer) in which respondents live. The binary variable East takes a value of 1 for all observations, for which a state in the former German Democratic Republic has been selected as state of residence and 0 otherwise. Observations from Berlin are removed. Standard errors in brackets. * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Table A.13: Effects of *Humanitarian Plight* and *Threat* frames on petition support by East vs. West Germany

	Camps	Admission
	(1)	(2)
Humanitarian Plight	0.135***	-0.006
	[0.045]	[0.041]
Threat	0.056	-0.008
	[0.045]	[0.041]
Humanitarian*East	-0.168	-0.038
	[0.105]	[0.116]
Threat*East	-0.181*	-0.098
	[0.107]	[0.117]
East	0.101	-0.010
	[0.085]	[0.101]
Controls	Yes	Yes
Comparison group mean	0.208	0.230
Obs.	772	794
R-squared	0.146	0.169

Notes: Controls included in all regressions are indicator variables for being female, married, unemployed, Muslim, holding a university degree, having a migration background, having lived abroad, age groups, income brackets, humanitarian, political orientation, social trust and the states (Bundesländer) in which respondents live. The binary variable East takes a value of 1 for all observations, for which a state in the former German Democratic Republic has been selected as state of residence and 0 otherwise. Observations from Berlin are removed. Standard errors in brackets. * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$