

**Negatively affecting voters' issue considerations. An experimental study of parties' attack communication.**

Lefevere, Jonas; Seeberg, Henrik; Walgrave, Stefaan

*Published in:*  
Political Communication

*DOI:*  
[10.1080/10584609.2020.1760407](https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2020.1760407)

*Publication date:*  
2020

*Document Version:*  
Accepted author manuscript

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Lefevere, J., Seeberg, H., & Walgrave, S. (2020). Negatively affecting voters' issue considerations. An experimental study of parties' attack communication. *Political Communication*, 37(6), 812-831.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2020.1760407>

**Copyright**

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, without the prior written permission of the author(s) or other rights holders to whom publication rights have been transferred, unless permitted by a license attached to the publication (a Creative Commons license or other), or unless exceptions to copyright law apply.

**Take down policy**

If you believe that this document infringes your copyright or other rights, please contact [openaccess@vub.be](mailto:openaccess@vub.be), with details of the nature of the infringement. We will investigate the claim and if justified, we will take the appropriate steps.

## **Negatively affecting voters' issue considerations.**

### **An experimental study of parties' attack communication.**

This paper investigates whether parties' issue attacks can successfully discredit their rivals' issue evaluations. Existing research demonstrates how a party can influence voters' perceptions of itself on a single dimension of issue competition, but research showing the impact of negative campaigning on parties' issue evaluations remains limited. Based on novel experimental evidence, we test the impact of three different types of issue attacks – attacking the rival's position, competence or commitment on the issue – on voters' evaluations of the rival party on three issue dimensions, namely position, competence, and commitment. The findings indicate that commitment and position attacks depress the rival party's issue evaluations on that dimension, whereas competence attacks do not. Moreover, positional attacks lower position evaluations and competence evaluations but increase commitment evaluations. Finally, the effectiveness of attacks varies between issues, and party preference moderates the effects of issue attacks.

Keywords: issue ownership; political parties; position; competence; commitment; negative campaigning.

In elections, issue voting has become widespread. The more a voter considers a party to be competent, to be committed, and to be positionally closer on those issues she is concerned about, the higher the chance that she will vote for that party (Walgrave *et al.*, 2019). Voters' issue perceptions of parties are increasingly important to their vote choice (Bélanger & Meguid, 2008; van der Brug, 2004). Petrocik's (1996) theory of issue ownership argues that the party with the strongest reputation to handle the issue that dominates the campaign wins the election.

Unsurprisingly then, issue competition among parties is growing (Green-Pedersen, 2007). One element of issue competition is selective emphasis: Parties emphasize issues on which they have the strongest reputation (Budge & Farlie, 1983; Petrocik, 1996). But parties do not only compete by trying to increase the importance of such favorable issues. An important prerequisite is establishing, maintaining, and improving their reputation in the first place. They can do so by approximating their position to voters' issue position, by appearing competent on important issues, and by signaling commitment to these issues. This can be done by either conveying a *positive* image of one's own position, competence, and commitment or shedding a *negative* light on the position, competence, and commitment of competing parties. An example of the latter is negative campaigning in elections, which is on the rise in many countries (Nai & Walter, 2015).

The literature offers plenty of examples of parties discrediting other parties' issue reputations. For instance, in the 2001 Danish elections, the right-wing party leader Anders Fogh Rasmussen successfully discredited the left-wing party's competence and position on health, families, and elderly care at a time when these issues were a major public concern (Blomqvist & Green-Pedersen, 2004). Yet, we lack systematic evidence regarding this *negative* variant of issue communication: Does parties' negative issue communication about a

rival party's issue position, competence, or commitment affect voters' evaluations of the rival's issue position, competence, or commitment?

This study sets out to answer this question and makes four contributions. (1) Previous studies demonstrate how a party can influence voters' perceptions of itself (e.g., Stubager & Seeberg, 2016; Walgrave *et al.*, 2009). However, we lack insight on the ways in which parties can attack voters' perceptions of a rival party, even though a large part of issue competition involves parties attempting to discredit their rivals (but see Seeberg & Nai, 2020; Seeberg, 2020). (2) Extant research only examines a single dimension of issue competition (e.g., Dahlberg & Martinsson, 2015). We study issue attacks on three dimensions, namely position, competence, and commitment. (3) There is an ongoing debate regarding the confoundedness of voters' issue perceptions regarding positional, competence, and commitment elements (Johns & Kölln, 2019). As such, we examine *spillover effects*: Does discrediting a party on one dimension cause shifts in voter perceptions on the other dimensions? (4) We test our expectations on multiple issues and combinations of attacking/attacked parties, allowing us to assert whether our expectations hold up under different conditions.

### **Three dimensions of issue voting**

Voters' issue perceptions of parties break down into at least three dimensions: a party's issue position, its competence on an issue, and its commitment to an issue. All the three dimensions affect the vote (Walgrave *et al.*, 2019).

First, voters evaluate a party's *position* on the issue versus their own position (Downs, 1957). Research on this dimension has developed into two strands: Proximity models suggest that the closer a party's position is to a voter the more likely she is to prefer the party, whereas directional models stipulate that voters primarily care about whether parties are positioned on the same side of an issue as themselves (Enelow & Hinich, 2008). Although some debates

within the spatial approach remain, the influence of positional considerations on voters' party evaluations has received strong empirical support (e.g., Merrill & Grofman, 1999)

A second dimension of issue voting holds that people vote for the party that they consider most *competent* to tackle an issue. Some parties are seen as better able to deal with an issue, granting them an advantage. This work was triggered by Stokes' (1963) work on valence issues for which positional considerations matter less, and developed into research on 'issue ownership' or 'issue competence' (Budge & Farlie, 1983; Petrocik, 1996). Although the initial focus was on valence issues, more recent work demonstrates that voters' competence evaluations also matter for positional issues. Indeed, competence considerations affect the vote in a quite robust manner (e.g., Bellucci, 2006; Bélanger & Meguid, 2008).

A third dimension of issue voting revolves around voters' perception that a party is more *committed* than other parties on an issue. The proposition is that people vote for parties they consider to be especially committed to tackle the policy issues they care about (Bellucci, 2006; van der Brug, 2004; Walgrave *et al.*, 2012). This work holds that issue voting is not only a matter of agreeing with parties positionally or considering them as competent, but rewarding parties' prioritizing specific issues. Recent evidence shows that commitment perceptions also affect the vote (Bellucci, 2006; Walgrave *et al.*, 2012).

### **Discrediting rival party's issue reputations**

Three different issue considerations affect voting behavior. Yet, our understanding of how parties influence issue considerations themselves is limited because of several lacunae in the literature. First, research shows that parties can influence voters' position, commitment, and competence perceptions of *themselves* (Dahlberg & Martinsson, 2015; Green & Jennings, 2012; Stubager & Seeberg, 2016; Tresch *et al.*, 2015; Walgrave *et al.*, 2009). However, we lack knowledge on whether a party can discredit voters' perceptions of a *rival party* on these dimensions, although parties regularly attack other parties and often address issues on which

other parties have strong reputations (Nai & Walter, 2015; Seeberg and Nai, 2020; Seeberg, 2020). Studies on negative campaigning investigate how parties attack rivals, but they focus on whether such communication influences electoral outcomes and turnout, providing little insight in the effects of such attacks on the underlying issue reputations (Fridkin & Kenney, 2004; Lau & Pomper, 2004; Nai & Walter, 2015). We know that negative messages reduce voters' overall evaluation of the target party, but do they also reduce voters' issue evaluation of the party? Moreover, work that examines issue attacks is concerned with character- versus issue-based attacks, not with distinguishing different types of issue attacks (Fridkin & Kenney, 2004). Finally, most research on party competition tends to examine either position, competence, *or* commitment but rarely examines them concurrently or considers the effects that attacks on one dimension may have on other dimensions.

We focus on parties' attacks against a rival which holds a dominant issue reputation, which is a common occurrence and has potentially large ramifications for electoral outcomes. It would be tempting to argue that if a party can influence how voters evaluate itself, it can also influence how voters evaluate its rivals. However, the dynamics of maintaining one's own dominant issue reputation may differ from attacking a rival party's dominant reputation. First, it is easier for a party to maintain its own strong issue reputation than to convince voters to reevaluate their views on an opposing party's issue reputation. In the former case voters uphold the status quo, whereas in the latter case they have to update their beliefs. Second, when a party attacks a rival party's dominant reputation on an issue, it has to surmount a credibility disadvantage: By definition, on this issue most voters do *not* consider the attacking party as holding the most compelling position, being the most competent, or being most committed. This may weaken the attack's effectiveness. However, we do not expect discrediting attacks to be entirely ineffective. The attack conveys negative information about the rival party, and negative information has a greater impact on voters than positive

information (Soroka, 2014). Moreover, we know that parties' negative campaigning influences voters' perceptions of parties (Nai & Walter, 2015).

To clarify, we investigate how an individual voter evaluates a party, which aggregates to a party's reputation among the public at large. The concept of 'reputation' is used mostly in connection to issue ownership. Petrocik (1996) noted that parties can be seen by the electorate as being better able to 'handle' issues, which breaks down into two dimensions: a party's reputation for competence and commitment on an issue (Lefevere *et al.*, 2015; Walgrave *et al.*, 2012). However, spatial voting theories also show that voters can perceive a party as being 'best' (i.e. most close) in terms of position (Enelow & Hinich, 2008), and that positional changes may affect other reputational dimensions such as competence (Johns & Kölln, 2019). As such, we also conceptualize positional perceptions as reputations that parties can attempt to discredit. A party can have a reputation as having an attractive position to many voters, and other parties can attempt to discredit the party's position in an effort to reduce its appeal to voters. Consequently, we study if a party can discredit a rival party's reputation by attacking its position, competence, and commitment.

### ***Position***

Although party positions are to some extent given, for example a party either favors lower or higher taxes, parties can still engage in issue competition on this dimension. Emphasis theories of issue competition argue that parties that hold a popular position on an issue will emphasize the issue while ignoring issues on which they hold unpopular positions (Budge & Farlie, 1983; Petrocik, 1996). When a party holds a popular position on an issue, it is close to voters' perceptions of a 'good' position. Adhering to a classic Downsian (1957) logic, competing parties may attack a rival party's reputation by arguing that the party's position is extreme. This should diminish voters' perceptions that the party has a good position:

Labelling a position as extreme suggests that the party is unlikely to be able to implement this

position into policy, especially in coalition government systems. Therefore, a discrediting attack that presents a parties' position as extreme should result in voters downgrading their evaluation of the attacked party's position.

*H1: Exposure to a party discrediting a rival party's position on an issue results in more negative positional evaluations of the rival party by voters.*

### **Competence**

Parties can also call out rival parties as lacking expertise or competence. The role of blame attributions in party support has a long history in political science research (Weaver, 1986). When voters deem a party responsible for bad developments on an issue, their evaluation of the party's performance is more likely negative (Marsh & Tilley, 2009). Studies on economic voting also demonstrate the impact of blame attribution on a party's vote share (Pardos-Prado & Sagarzazu, 2014; Seeberg, 2018). We expect that:

*H2: Exposure to a party discrediting a rival party's competence on an issue results in more negative competence evaluations of the rival party by voters.*

### **Commitment**

There is less research on the changeability of evaluations of parties' commitment to an issue. Although it has been argued that the commitment dimension of issue ownership should be more resilient to change (Tresch *et al.*, 2015; Walgrave *et al.*, 2012), recent research demonstrates substantial individual-level changes over longer periods of time and points to party communication as a potential driver of such changes (Walgrave & Lefevere, 2017). Hence, if a party communicates to voters that a rival party does not prioritize or commit to an issue, we expect that voters will downgrade their commitment evaluations of the attacked party:

*H3: Exposure to a party discrediting a rival party's commitment on an issue results in*



*more negative commitment evaluations of the rival party by voters.*

### ***Effect size and spillover effects***

We expect that the effect size of the three aforementioned attacks may differ. Moreover, given concerns about the confoundedness of issue perceptions, there is a possibility that we see spillover effects across the three dimensions.

In terms of unequal effects, previous research suggests that competence perceptions (H2) might be more malleable than commitment (H3) and position perceptions (H1). Tresch *et al.* (2015) find that it is hard to dislodge a party's commitment reputation, suggesting that the commitment dimension may be stickier than the competence dimension. Building on Downs' (1957) argument that positional changes are more costly for parties than shifts in issue emphasis, Budge (1994) argues that it is hard for parties to change positional perceptions on an issue because voters have well-developed and deeply ingrained beliefs of where the parties are located. Thus, voters are especially resistant to changing positional perceptions. In contrast, Petrocik (1996) suggests that short term shifts in an issue's competence evaluations are possible, contingent on the issue developments such as crime rates and parties' issue performance (see also Green & Jennings, 2012). However, previous research rarely juxtaposes the three dimensions. Hence, we propose a research question rather than a hypothesis:

*RQ1: Is there a difference in the magnitude of the negative effect caused by a discrediting attack on the competence, commitment, or position dimension?*

We also expect that spillover effects may take place so that a party's attack on one dimension influences voters' evaluations of other parties on another dimension. Although the commitment and competence dimensions are relatively independent from one another (Walgrave *et al.*, 2012), voters often conflate competence and positional evaluations

(Stubager, 2017; van der Brug, 2004; Walgrave *et al.*, 2015; Johns and Kölln, 2019). In comparison, position contaminates commitment to a lesser degree (Walgrave *et al.*, 2016). Given the malleable nature of competence evaluations, and the fact that they are conflated with party positions, parties might be able to discredit party's competence evaluations by targeting its position on the issue. Again though, there is little prior research to guide us, so we propose a second research question:

*RQ2: To what extent do discrediting attacks on the position, competence and commitment of a rival party cause voters' evaluation of the rival party to become more negative on the other two dimensions?*

### ***Contingent effects: party preference and issue specificity***

Above, we argued that the effectiveness of discrediting attacks may be contingent upon the dimension that is targeted (RQ1). However, we also expect that voters' propensity to update their issue evaluations in response to an attack depends on their party preference. van der Brug (2004; 2017) points to the endogeneity of competence and positional evaluations and party preference, a claim backed up empirically by several studies (e.g. Bélanger & Meguid, 2008; Vliegenthart & Lefevere, 2018; Wagner & Zeglovits, 2014). For commitment evaluations, the empirical data is mixed, with several studies indicating less endogeneity (van der Brug, 2004; Walgrave *et al.*, 2012), but some indicating that party preference precedes the formation of commitment evaluations (Walgrave & Soontjens, 2019). When it comes to updating issue evaluations in response to issue communication specifically, the evidence is limited: only one study documents the moderating effect of party preference on competence (Walgrave *et al.*, 2014). Since we have little empirical evidence, we propose two additional research questions: one for the attacking party, another for the attacked party.

*RQ3: To what extent does a voter's preference for the attacking party moderate the attack's impact on that voter's evaluations of the attacked party?*

*RQ4: To what extent does a voter's preference for the attacked party moderate the attack's impact on that voter's evaluations of the attacked party?*

Finally, existing research on especially issue ownership has noted that the impact of issue evaluations can vary depending on the issue. For example, we already noted the difference between valence and position issues (Stokes, 1963). When it comes to the electoral impact of issue evaluations, research suggests substantial variation across issues (Bos, Lefevere, Thijssen, & Sheets, 2017; Walgrave *et al.*, 2019). Specifically, the impact of party communication on subsequent issue evaluations can vary depending on the issue at stake (Dahlberg & Martinson, 2015). As such, we also examine the contingency of the attacks on the issue at hand:

*RQ5: To what extent does the impact of a position, competence or commitment attack on voters' evaluations of the attacked party vary depending on the issue?*

## **Methods**

To test our expectations, we ran an online two-wave panel survey experiment in Flanders, the largest region of Belgium. The Flemish party landscape is quite fragmented, with six Flemish parties having representation in the regional and federal parliament: CD&V (Christian-Democrats), Groen (Greens), Open VLD (Liberals), sp.a (Social-Democrats), N-VA (Nationalists), and Vlaams Belang (Extreme Right).

## ***Sample***

Respondents were recruited from the ongoing opt-in panel of Antwerp University, which has been maintained since 2003, and is routinely used to field survey-embedded experiments<sup>i</sup>. The panel consists of 17 groups of roughly 900 respondents each, all of whom were invited to participate. To avoid overburdening respondents, they are excluded from other surveys for at least three months following their participation in a study. All groups were included in the

experiment and received invitations to participate, totaling 15,217 invitations that were successfully delivered to potential respondents. Respondents participated in two surveys between 18 January and 31 April 2018 with an average time gap between the two waves of one month (86% had a gap of 3 to 4 weeks; we control for respondents' time between waves in the analysis). Response rates were 39.4% (N=5,997) for Wave 1 and 27.6% for Wave 2 (N=4,200). Due to item nonresponse and the fact that the experiment was part of a larger setup which also contained conditions in which the attacking party praised itself, the actual N in the analysis is lower as we only use the attacking conditions, and respondents who answered the required questions (N=1,626).

The sample is not representative for the Flemish population, nor does it aim to be. Our sample underrepresents younger people aged 18-29 (3.4% of sample versus 17.5% of population) and 30-44 (13.4% of sample versus 23.0% of population), it contains more male respondents (74.2% of sample versus 49.0% of population), respondents are higher educated (76.9% of sample has a higher education degree versus 36.6% of the population), and respondents tend to be more politically interested and left-wing, overrepresenting Green voters and underrepresenting non-voters (see appendix tables A1 and A2). Still, despite its non-representative nature, the sample is quite diverse, which allows us to evaluate our hypotheses across a diverse group of respondents.

### ***Procedure***

In the first wave of the survey, respondents were randomly assigned to one of 12 conditions. Randomization checks show that the conditions do not significantly differ from each other in terms of age, gender, education, political interest and left-right position<sup>ii</sup>. We assessed respondents' pre-exposure evaluations of the six main parties' issue position, issue competence, and issue commitment (see question wording below). Respondents in conditions 1 to 6 were asked to report issue perceptions for environment and employment (two issues

generally owned by left-wing parties), whereas respondents in conditions 7 to 12 had to report issue perceptions for crime and taxes (two issues generally owned by right-wing parties). We randomized the order in which position, competence, and commitment were measured, but kept the order of the issues within each dimension constant to avoid confusion amongst respondents.

At the start of the second survey, respondents first received one of 12 experimental treatments, which consisted of a single newspaper article in which a party attacks another party (see below). Then respondents were asked to again evaluate the six main parties on three dimensions of the issue—position, competence, and commitment—using the exact same question wording and randomized order as in the first wave. The survey ended with the manipulation checks (see below) and a debriefing.

Importantly, although respondents were only exposed to a single stimulus on one issue, respondents always had to rate all parties for *two* issues (either environment and employment, or crime and tax). This allows us to use the perceptions on the non-exposed issue to be used as controls against which we can contrast the perceptions to the exposed issue. Table 1 provides an overview of the 12 conditions: by means of example, respondents in conditions one through three were exposed to the Green party being attacked on the environment (on the three dimensions). Respondents in conditions four to six were exposed to the Socialist party being attacked on employment. We use the scores of the Green party on environment of respondents in conditions four to six as the control group against which we contrast the treatment conditions one to three. This approach assumes that the evaluations of the non-exposed party on the non-exposed issue should remain free of influence of the treatment. Our results suggest that this is the case: in appendix table A10 we report the results of the treatments on the attacked parties' reputation on the *non*-exposed issue. As expected,

the effects are insignificant, suggesting that the treatment effects do not cross issues, let alone parties.

[Table 1]

### *Issue selection*

We selected the four issues for the experiment based on several criteria. First, we based the issue selection of our experiment on the notion that one party has a strong reputation on the issue, since this is the starting point of the study. Evidence from a 2014 representative survey established that this is the case for crime (Nationalists), the environment (Greens), employment (Socialists), and taxes (Liberals) (Deschouwer et al., 2015)<sup>iii</sup>. The relative rankings of parties' reputations in our study are similar – except for employment (Table A3). The socialists 'owned' employment in the 2014 survey, but in our sample they rank only 5<sup>th</sup> on position and competence and 4<sup>th</sup> on commitment. In contrast, the 'challenger' Christian Democrats should be considered the owner, scoring 1<sup>st</sup> on competence and position, and 2<sup>nd</sup> on commitment. We kept the employment conditions in but ran robustness checks leaving out one issue at a time and refer to these checks in our results (Table A9-A12).

Second, we selected two issues that were owned by left-leaning parties (environment and employment) and two by right-leaning parties (crime and taxes). This allows us to ascertain whether the patterns hold up for parties across the political spectrum.

Third, we selected issues that we expected to be salient for voters. This seems to be the case: on an 11-point scale from 0 (very unimportant) to 10 (very important), on average respondents rated crime 6.3, environment 7.6, employment 7.4, and taxation 6.8 (see Table A4 for the salience of all issues).

Fourth, the selected issues represent both valence and positional issues (Stokes, 1963) with taxation being rather positional and crime, employment, and environment more valence in nature (Pardos-Prado, 2012; Stubager & Seeberg, 2016). As such, these issues

should allow us to assess our expectations over a varied set of policy areas in which one party is established as the owner, for different sides of the political spectrum.

### ***Stimuli***

The stimulus consists of a mock newspaper article. Respondents receive a single article where, depending on the condition, the attacking party discredits either the position, competence or commitment of the rival party on an issue. The context is always identical: the attacked party has recently presented its electoral manifesto, and this led another party to attack the party on a specific dimension of an issue. Figure 1 shows example stimuli for the environment issue.

[Figure 1 here]

The content of the article varies somewhat across issues, but article length and the manipulation were kept equivalent across issues and parties (Appendix 2 contains all stimuli). We opted for a mock news item as most voters get political information through the news media, and prior research on issue ownership has used news items, albeit from broadcast media (e.g. Walgrave *et al.*, 2009). The article was bereft of opinions by the journalist, limiting the article content to opinions voiced by (politicians of) the parties involved.

The study took place in a relatively neutral period: it had been several years since the last elections (2014), and the next local elections were only to be held in six months so there was no ongoing campaign. As such, although 2018 was a tumultuous year in Belgian politics with the local elections and the demise of the incumbent federal coalition, these events all occurred well after our study concluded (Rihoux *et al.*, 2019). While beneficial for our purposes, there is a risk that the stimulus topic (presentation of an election manifesto) might be considered unrealistic in this non-election context. However, results indicate that the external validity of the stimulus was high: we asked respondents to indicate how often they saw similar articles in the news media, and only 3.9% indicated that they had never seen a

similar article elsewhere.

The manipulation checks asked respondents to rate the extent to which the article emphasized “*The position of parties on a certain issue*” (position), “*The extent to which parties are capable to deal with an issue*” (competence), or “*The extent to which parties are engaged to deal with an issue*” (commitment) on 11-point scales ranging from “Totally not emphasized” (0) to “Totally emphasized” (10). Respondents consistently rated the stimuli higher on the dimension that we intended to manipulate, both within and across conditions (see Table A5 for mean scores for each question, per treatment).

### ***Measures***

Respondents’ evaluations of each of the parties on the position, competence, and commitment dimensions were assessed as follows. Respondents were always asked to evaluate the six main parties one by one (CD&V, Groen, N-VA, sp.a, VB, Open VLD). For position, we asked: “*To what extent do you agree with the proposals of the Flemish political parties on the issue of [issue]?*”. Respondents answered on an 11-point scale ranging from “Totally disagree” (0) to “Totally agree” (10). This question wording leaves out any competence or commitment evaluations but only emphasizes the (dis)agreement on the content of the policy proposals themselves. Although spatial theories routinely opt to measure positional evaluations by obtaining measures of parties’ perceived positions and respondents’ own positions on an issue scale (e.g., the left-right), we chose a measure of agreement since this can be kept constant across issue domains and is used routinely in research on issue congruence (e.g., Lesschaeve, 2017).

For competence, the question ran: “*To what extent are the Flemish political parties able to handle the issue of [issue]?*” Respondents answered on an 11-point scale ranging from “Totally unable to handle the issue” to “Totally able to handle the issue”. This competence measure reflects the classic issue ownership measure by focusing on a party’s ability to



handle problems on an issue (Petrocik, 1996). However, it departs from the prevalent question format by not asking respondents to choose a preferred party among the alternatives. Instead, as in previous surveys, a continuous measure is adopted to offer more analytical leverage (see, e.g., Stubager and Seeberg, 2016).

For commitment, we asked: “*To what extent do the Flemish political parties prioritize the issue of [issue]?*” Respondents answered on an 11-point scale ranging from “Totally not prioritized” to “Totally prioritized”. We did not use the spontaneous association measure proposed by Walgrave *et al.* (2012). As Walgrave *et al.* (2016) argued, the core of the concept is whether a party is committed to an issue. This is thus a more direct measure of the intended construct than the extent to which a party is associated with an issue.

For RQ3 and RQ4 we asked respondents’ party preference in wave 1: “*If the elections for the national parliament were to be held today, and you would have to make a choice, which is the single party you would probably vote for?*”, with as answer categories the seven main parties (Christian Democrats, Greens, Nationalists, Liberals, Extreme Left, Socialists, Extreme Right), “Other”, “Invalid” and “I would not go out to vote”. Based on this question we constructed the *party preference* variable, which takes values 0 (reference: no preference for either party), 1 (preference for attacking party) or 2 (preference for attacked party).

We tested to what extent the three dimensions are correlated: the commitment dimension is correlated with both the competence ( $r = 0.58$ ) and position ( $r = 0.50$ ) dimension but the correlation between the competence and the position dimensions is stronger ( $r = 0.77$ ), suggesting substantial overlap – in line with the findings of Johns & Kölln (2019).

### ***Sample size and power***

The 12 experimental conditions each have between 124 and 141 respondents, although the N in the analysis varies slightly as respondents sometimes did not give an answer for a party on a dimension, causing them to be excluded from that analysis. Yet, as each hypothesis is tested

across four issues, we have for each hypothesis test effectively about 500 respondents in each treatment group and about 1,000 respondents in each control group. We conducted a power analysis using a two-sided t-test that assesses the experiments' ability to successfully detect differences between the treatment and control groups: the larger the effect of the attack versus the control group, the more reliably the effect can be detected. The power analysis indicates that for the competence attack conditions, the sample allows us to reliably (80% of the time) detect a difference of 0.31 between treatment and control; for commitment attacks the minimum effect size is 0.26, and for position attacks 0.28. In simple terms: if the attacks depress post-treatment evaluations by 0.31 or more compared to the control group, our design has an 80% chance to successfully detect it.

## **Results**

To evaluate whether exposure to three types of issue attacks affect respondents' issue evaluations, Table 2 presents multivariate linear regressions of post-exposure position, competence, or commitment evaluations. We include the pre-exposure evaluations as controls, limiting the remaining variance in the dependent variable to changes in evaluations. In addition to the treatment variables themselves, we also include party preference, the issue, and the number of days between a respondents' answers on the pre- and post-exposure questionnaires as controls. For interested readers we provide simple bivariate tests in appendix (Table A6): although these do not allow us to control for party preference, for the most part they tend to comply with the findings of Table 2. They do show substantial differences between issues – a point we return to when we discuss the research questions on contingencies.

[Table 2]

The leftmost models test H1-H3. We find an effect of commitment attacks (H3), whereas the position effect (H1) is only half as large and significant at  $p < 0.10$ , and competence attacks

(H2) have no effect. Regarding RQ1, the effect sizes of the commitment and position attacks in Table 2 are significantly different at  $p = 0.08$ . The competence attack has no discernable effect, yet the effect size is only significantly different from the commitment effect ( $p < 0.01$ ), not the position effect ( $p = 0.25$ ). Note that the bivariate tests (Table A6) suggest a less significant position effect: importantly, our models control for party preference and the influence of the wave one scores on other dimensions – most notably competence evaluations before exposure exert a substantial effect on post-exposure position evaluations above and beyond the pre-exposure positional considerations: both dimensions are highly related. When we exclude the peculiar employment conditions, we find a significant effect of the position attack ( $-0.21, p < 0.05$ ) (Table A9). The findings on competence and commitment attacks hold up when excluding the various issues. In sum, position attacks and commitment attacks affect their respective dimensions, confirming H1 and H3, whereas competence attacks do not have an effect, disconfirming H2.

Examining the cross-dimension effects, we find that a position attack *increases* commitment evaluations: being labelled extreme by a rival raises respondents' perceptions that the attacked party is committed to the issue. The connection between position and commitment is not symmetric though: positional attacks raise commitment evaluations, but commitment attacks do not raise positional evaluations. Further, the position attack also depresses competence evaluations by 0.16 points. The robustness checks show that the impact of a positional attack on commitment remains significant at  $p < 0.10$  at least, whereas the significance of the competence effect varies although it is consistently negative. We also find that a competence attack depresses commitment evaluations by 0.18 points. Removing the employment conditions increases the effect size to  $-0.23$  ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table A9). To be clear, these are small effects: for example, 0.18 points on an 11-point scale is 2% of the scale range. Yet, we find this effect controlling for important determinants of issue evaluations, and after

exposure to a single newspaper article.

Next, we examine the contingency of the three attack's effects. To what extent is the effect moderated by party preference (RQ3, RQ4), and dependent on the issue (RQ5)? To test the moderating impact of party preference we interacted party preference with the exposure variables. Table 4 presents the marginal effect of exposure to the three attacks (i.e. the difference between control and treatment) for respondents that prefer neither party, prefer the attacking party, and prefer the attacked party (full models available in Table A7).

[Table 3]

Table 3 suggests that party preference substantially moderates the effects of issue attacks. The top rows show the impact of the attacks on the same dimension. Both position and commitment attacks exert strong effects amongst respondents that do not prefer either party – and as such do not have ‘a stake’ in the competition at hand (competence attacks have no effect regardless of party preference). Interestingly, sympathy for the attacker does not increase the effect size which is almost identical to respondents that prefer neither party. Most importantly, however, is that amongst party supporters of the attacked party, these attacks have either no effect (commitment attack) or even bolster evaluations (position attack). For the cross-dimension effects, the position attack also exerts its effect solely amongst respondents preferring neither party. In fact, the only negative marginal effect of a cross-dimension attack amongst supporters of the attacked party is the impact of a competence attack on commitment. We also find evidence of moderation by party preference for the attacking party in two other cross-dimension effects: the effect of competence attacks on position evaluations and commitment attacks on competence evaluations only occurs amongst supporters of the attacking party. Yet, overall it seems that preferences for the attacked party most consistently moderate the attacks' effects – to the extent of nullifying their effects. This does not necessarily mean that issue attacks are ineffective: amongst voters without clear

partisanship to either party, the attacks work. These voters are prime targets of campaign communication as they can tip the electoral outcome. In the conclusion, we return to this point.

[Table 4]

Next, we look at the effect size per issue. The top part of the table examines the impact of attacks on their respective dimension. The commitment attack exerts a negative effect on all issues, with two issues yielding highly significant effects. For position, we find negative effects for three out of four issues, but the effect is only significant for the environment. We conclude that it is especially the position attack that depends on the issue, whereas commitment attacks exert more uniform effects. This seems sensible: a party can always be accused of not showing commitment or ‘giving its all’ on an issue – more can always be done. Yet, a party’s position is oftentimes a given, and party communication operates within these boundaries. We find that accusations of extreme positions are most effective on the environment. One simple reason for its effectiveness is probably that the attacked party (Greens) *has* extreme positions on the issue compared to its rivals. With regards to cross-dimensional effects, the impact of positional attacks on commitment evaluations seems robust, with positive effects for three issues. For competence evaluations, the impact of position attacks is consistently negative, but the smaller effect size leads to only a single significant effect. The negative effect of competence attacks on commitment evaluations we reported in Table 2 seems mostly driven by crime and the environment. We reflect on our findings in the conclusion.

## **Conclusion**

Based on a survey experiment in Belgium, we investigated whether parties can discredit voters’ perceptions of rival parties on three dimensions of issue competition: position, competence, and commitment evaluations. These dimensions have been central to scholars’

understanding of not only the ways in which parties compete over issues, but also the nature of issue voting. Only few studies have examined whether party communication can affect voters' evaluations, and even fewer studies have examined the effect of issue attacks although such attacks are common in modern campaigns (Nai and Walter, 2015).

Our findings suggest that parties can discredit voters' perceptions of a rival party. We find the strongest effect for the commitment dimension where a commitment attack lowers voters' commitment evaluations of the targeted party. We find a weaker and inconsistent effect on the position dimension and no effect on the competence dimension. This is reflected in the cross-issue analysis where the effect of the commitment attack is consistently negative across the four issues, the effect of the position attack is negative on most of the issues but only statistically significant on one issue, and there is no effect on any issue for the competence attack.

These are important findings. Although building a reputation for being committed to an issue may take a long time, rival parties can make a dent in that reputation rather easily by saying that the party lacks commitment. Perhaps the most interesting of our findings is that voters are also prepared to update their evaluation of a party's position when a rival party says that it holds an extreme position. The lack of effect of a competence attack is noteworthy because the prevalent view in the literature is that especially the competence dimension is malleable.

We also find cross-dimension effects. A competence attack depresses commitment evaluations, and a position attack, which pits the party as holding an extreme position, undermines competence but bolsters commitment. When a party tells voters that the rival party's position is extreme, voters take this as a signal that the party is committed and willing to go far in achieving its objectives on the issue. This resonates with recent findings in the literature (Wagner, 2012). Yet, as Johns and Kölln (2019) demonstrate, extreme positions also

cast doubts on the party's ability to get its policy adopted. Our findings similarly suggest that accusing a rival of holding extreme positions depresses competence evaluations. Moreover, these findings add to the ongoing debate regarding the conflation of position and competence. We find substantial correlation between respondents' competence and position evaluations, and further demonstrate that positional attacks shift competence evaluations, indicating that for many voters both dimensions are highly intertwined. More generally, the fact that there *are* spillover effects from one dimension to the other further fuels the ongoing debate about the independence of the three dimensions of issue voting and, most importantly, about the direction of causality regarding the actual vote. Follow-up work needs to take a closer look at these cross-dimension effects, we just demonstrate here that they exist.

The analysis further reveals that these attacks mainly affect the evaluations of respondents that prefer neither party. Respondents that prefer the attacked party either are unaffected (in the case of a competence attack) or even bolster their evaluations (in the case of a position attack). Partisan motivated reasoning may lead supporters of the attacked party to reject unpleasant information about their party. Importantly, however, we find that the issue attacks sway the 'swing' voters who are not aligned to either party. Since this group of voters is crucial for winning elections, issue attacks can be effective, although they may also bolster support amongst the rival's electorate.

Our study does have several limitations: First, we show that the effects are contingent upon the issue but do not theorize why the effects per issue. Given the large differences between issues, future work should examine why attacks on some issues work better. Second, for one issue (employment) respondents' prior perceptions did not match our intention – i.e. with the issue owner being attacked by the challenger. The sometimes inconsistent findings suggest that the effects may be contingent upon not just the issue or party preference of the voter, but also upon the standing of the party: in particular, it may be more difficult to

dislodge the reputation of a dominant party, and as such our design may understate the effects of issue attacks. Third, our treatments were highly standardized and left out issue-specific rhetorical arguments. In the real world, such rhetorical plays are common and probably add to the attack's effectiveness. Our findings may thus understate the attacks' effectiveness—although we still find that they matter. In sum, we demonstrate that issue reputations are far from untouchable, but also discovered several caveats to this negative campaign strategy. Moreover, considering the multidimensionality of issue competition advances our understanding of voters' response to parties' issue communication.



## Bibliography

- Bélanger, Éric, & Meguid, Bonnie (2008). Issue salience, issue ownership, and issue-based vote choice. *Electoral Studies*, 27(3), 477-491.
- Bellucci, Paolo (2006). 'Tracing the cognitive and affective roots of party competence: Italy and Britain, 2001', *Electoral Studies*, 25, 548-569.
- Blomqvist, Paula, and Christoffer Green-Pedersen (2004). 'Defeat at Home? Issue-ownership and Social Democratic Support in Scandinavia', *Government and Opposition*, 39(4), 587-613.
- Bos, L., Lefevere, J. M., Thijssen, R., & Sheets, P. (2017). The impact of mediated party issue strategies on electoral support. *Party Politics*, 23(6), 760-771.
- Budge, Ian (1994). 'A New Spatial Theory of Party Competition: Uncertainty, Ideology, and Policy Equilibria Viewed Comparatively and Temporally', *British Journal of Political Science*, 24(4), 443-67.
- Budge, Ian, and Dennis Farlie (1983). 'Party Competition. Selective Emphasis or Direct Confrontation? An Alternative View with Data', in Hans Daalder and Peter Mair (eds.), *West European Party Systems. Continuity & Change*. London: Sage Publications.
- Dahlberg, Stefan, and Johan Martinsson (2015). 'Changing Issue Ownership through Policy Communication', *West European Politics*, 38(4), 817-838.
- Damore, David (2004). 'The Dynamics of Issue Ownerships in Presidential Campaigns', *Political Research Quarterly*, 57, 391-397.
- Deschouwer, Kris, Delwit, Pascal, Baudewyns, Pierre, Hooghe, Marc, & Stefaan Walgrave. (2015). *De kiezer ontcijferd: Over stemgedrag en stemmotivaties*. Leuven: Lannoo Campus.
- Downs, Anthony (1957). *An economic theory of democracy*. New York: Harper.
- Enelow, J., & Hinich, M. (2008). *Advances in the spatial theory of voting*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fridkin, Kim, and Patrick Kenney (2004). 'Do Negative Messages Work?', *American Politics Research*, 32:5, 570-605.
- Green, Jane, and Will Jennings (2012). 'Valence as Macro-Competence: An Analysis of Mood in Party Competence Evaluations in Great Britain', *British Journal of Political Science*, 42:2, 311-43.
- Green-Pedersen, Christoffer (2007). 'The growing importance of issues', *Political Studies*, 55:4, 608-628.
- Holian, David (2004). 'He's stealing my issues! Clinton's crime rhetoric and the dynamics of issue ownership', *Political Behavior*, 26:2, 95-124.

- Johns, Rob, & Kölln, Ann-Kristin (2019). Moderation and Competence: How a Party's Ideological Position Shapes Its Valence Reputation. *American Journal of Political Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12481>
- Kaplan, Noah, David Park, and Travis Ridout (2006). 'Dialogue in American Political Campaigns?', *American Journal of Political Science*, 50(3): 724–736.
- Lau, Richard, and Gerald Pomper (2002). 'Effectiveness of Negative Campaigning in U.S. Senate Elections', *American Journal of Political Science*, 46:1, 47–66.
- Lefevere, Jonas, Anke Tresch, and Stefaan Walgrave (2015). 'Introduction: Issue Ownership', *West European Politics*, 38:4, 755–760.
- Lesschaeve, C. (2017). Finding inequality in an unlikely place: Differences in policy congruence between social groups in Belgium. *Acta Politica*, 52(3), 361–383.
- Marsh, Michael, and James Tilley (2009). 'The Attribution of Credit and Blame to Governments and Its Impact on Vote Choice', *British Journal of Political Science*, 40:1, 115–134.
- Merrill, Samuel and Bernard Grofman (1999). *A Unified Theory of Voting: Directional and Proximity Spatial Models*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nai, Alessandro, and Annemarie Walter, eds. (2015). *New Perspective on Negative Campaigning*. Colchester: ECPR Press.
- Pardos-Prado, Sergi (2012). 'Valence beyond consensus: Party competence and policy dispersion from a comparative perspective', *Electoral Studies*, 31, 342–352.
- Pardos-Prado, Sergi, and Iñaki Sagarzazu (2014). 'The Political Conditioning of Subjective Economic Evaluations: The Role of Party Discourse', *British Journal of Political Science*.
- Petrocik, John (1996). 'Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study', *American Journal of Political Science*, 40:3, 825–50.
- Rihoux, B., Vandeleene, A., Winter, L. D., Baudewyns, P., & Deruette, S. (2019). Belgium : Political developments and data in 2018. *European Journal of Political Research Political Data Yearbook*, 58(1), 30–36. <https://doi.org/10.1111/2047-8852.12255>
- Seeberg, H. B. (2018). The impact of opposition criticism on the public's evaluation of government competence. *Party Politics*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068818792578>.
- Seeberg, Henrik (2020). 'Issue ownership attack: how a political party can counteract a rival's issue ownership', *West European Politics*, 43:4, 772–794.
- Seeberg, Henrik and Alessandro Nai (2020). 'Undermining a rival party's issue competence through negative campaigning: Experimental evidence from the USA, Denmark, and Australia', *Political Studies*, *forthcoming*.
- Soroka, Stuart (2014). *Negativity in Democratic Politics*, Cambridge.

- Stokes, Donald (1963). 'Spatial Models of Party Competition', *American Political Science Review*, 57(2), 368-377.
- Stubager, Rune (2017). 'What is Issue Ownership and How Should We Measure It?', *Political Behavior*, 1–26.
- Stubager, Rune, and Henrik Seeberg (2016). 'What can a party say? How parties' communication can influence voters' issue ownership perceptions', *Electoral Studies*, 44, 162–171.
- Tresch, Anke, Jonas Lefevere, and Stefaan Walgrave (2015). 'Steal me if you can! The impact of campaign messages on associative issue ownership', *Party Politics*, 21:2, 198–208.
- van der Brug, Wouter (2004). 'Issue ownership and party choice', *Electoral Studies*, 23, 209-233.
- Wagner, Markus (2012). "When do parties emphasise extreme positions? How strategic incentives for policy differentiation influence issue importance", *European Journal of Political Research*, 51(1):64-88.
- Wagner, M., & Zeglovits, E. (2014). Survey questions about party competence: Insights from cognitive interviews. *Electoral Studies*, 34, 280–290.
- Walgrave, Stefaan, & Lefevere, Jonas (2017). Long-term associative issue ownership change. A panel study in Belgium. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties, Advance Online Publication*.
- Walgrave, Stefaan, Jonas Lefevere, and Michiel Nuytemans (2009). 'Issue Ownership Stability and Change: How Political Parties Claim and Maintain Issues Through Media Appearances', *Political Communication*, 26:2, 153–172.
- Walgrave, Stefaan, Jonas Lefevere, and Anke Tresch (2012). 'The Associative Dimension of Issue Ownership', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 76:4, 771–782.
- Walgrave, Stefaan, Lefevere, Jonas, & Anke Tresch (2014). The limits of issue ownership dynamics: The constraining effect of party preference. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties*, 24(1), 1–19.
- Walgrave, S., & Soontjens, K. (2019). How voters form associative issue ownership perceptions. An analysis of specific issues. *Electoral Studies*, 59, 136–144.
- Walgrave, Stefaan, Lefevere, Jonas, & Anke Tresch (2019). Position, Competence, and Commitment: Three Dimensions of Issue Voting. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. doi:10.1093/ijpor/edz006
- Walgrave, Stefaan, Anke Tresch, and Jonas Lefevere (2015). 'The Conceptualisation and Measurement of Issue Ownership', *West European Politics*, 38:4, 778–796.
- Walgrave, Stefaan, Kirsten Van Camp, Jonas Lefevere, and Anke Tresch (2016). 'Measuring issue ownership with survey questions. A question wording experiment', *Electoral Studies*, 42, 290–299.

Weaver, Kent (1986). 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance', *Journal of Public Policy*, 6:4, 371–98.

---

<sup>i</sup> Respondents can voluntarily opt-in on the panel, and the panel is continually promoted (<https://www.ua-burgerpanel.be/wat/>). In addition, major recruitment efforts were initiated in the context of the local elections (2006) and a large voting advice application for the general elections (2014).

<sup>ii</sup> Distributions of age ( $F(11,1256) = 1.11, p = .35$ ), gender ( $\chi^2(11) = 13.33, p = .27$ ), education ( $\chi^2(22) = 16.72, p = .78$ ), left-right position ( $F(11,1537) = 1.39, p = .17$ ) and political interest ( $F(11,1592) = 0.97, p = .47$ ) did not differ between conditions.

<sup>iii</sup> In the survey, respondents were asked which party they spontaneously thought of when they heard about an issue (commitment), which parties' positions on an issue they agreed with (position), and which party they considered best able to implement its program on an issue (competence). On *Environment*, the Greens had ownership on all dimensions. 54% of respondents saw them as most competent, 89% as most committed, and 56% as positional owner. The challenger CD&V scored second best on position (10%) and competence (9%), and similar to other parties (1%) on commitment. On *Employment*, sp.a scored highest on all dimensions (24% competence, 34% commitment, 29% position). The challenger CD&V scored second-best on competence (17%), position (22%) and commitment (16%). On *Crime*, N-VA scored highest on both position (36%) and competence (34%). The challenger Vlaams Belang did score higher on commitment (40% versus N-VA's 26%), but scored substantially lower on both competence (11%) and position (17%). On *Taxes*, Open VLD scored highest on commitment (30%), competence (21%), and was split with N-VA on position (both parties 22%). N-VA further scored second on competence (18%) and third on commitment (12%), warranting their challenger status.

**Figure 1.** Example stimuli for position (left), competence (middle) and commitment (right) attacks.

**"CD&V: "GROEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL MANIFESTO IS EXTREMIST".**

PRINSXEN [1] follows the position of the Liberal group in Groen's [2] Environmental Manifesto, proposing to give more weight to economic, social and environmental issues and policies. This is not in line with the Liberal and Conservative position, which is to give more weight to economic and social issues and policies.

So, in my opinion, this is a very extreme position. It is not only, as I said, the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group. It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group. It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group. It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group.

It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group. It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group. It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group.

**"CD&V: "GROEN'S MANIFESTO SHOWS LACK OF EXPERTISE TO DEAL WITH THE ENVIRONMENT".**

PRINSXEN [1] follows the position of the Liberal group in Groen's [2] Environmental Manifesto, proposing to give more weight to economic, social and environmental issues and policies. This is not in line with the Liberal and Conservative position, which is to give more weight to economic and social issues and policies. The position of the Liberal group is to give more weight to economic and social issues and policies. The position of the Conservative group is to give more weight to economic and social issues and policies.

So, in my opinion, this is a very extreme position. It is not only, as I said, the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group. It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group. It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group. It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group.

It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group. It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group. It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group.

**"CD&V: "GROEN'S MANIFESTO SHOWS LACK OF COMMITMENT ON ENVIRONMENT".**

PRINSXEN [1] follows the position of the Liberal group in Groen's [2] Environmental Manifesto, proposing to give more weight to economic, social and environmental issues and policies. This is not in line with the Liberal and Conservative position, which is to give more weight to economic and social issues and policies. The position of the Liberal group is to give more weight to economic and social issues and policies. The position of the Conservative group is to give more weight to economic and social issues and policies.

So, in my opinion, this is a very extreme position. It is not only, as I said, the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group. It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group. It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group. It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group.

It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group. It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group. It is not only the position of the Liberal group, but also the position of the Conservative group.

Note: Underline was not included in experiment itself, but was added to indicate manipulation.

**Table 1.** Experimental conditions.

<b>Condition</b>	<b>N</b>
1. Christian Democrats attacking Greens' Position on Environment	141
2. Christian Democrats attacking Greens' Commitment on Environment	140
3. Christian Democrats attacking Greens' Competence on Environment	124
4. Christian Democrats attacking Socialists' Position on Employment	141
5. Christian Democrats attacking Socialists' Commitment on Employment	129
6. Christian Democrats attacking Socialists' Competence on Employment	132
7. Radical Right attacking Nationalists' Position on Crime	135
8. Radical Right attacking Nationalists' Commitment on Crime	139
9. Radical Right attacking Nationalists' Competence on Crime	137
10. Nationalists attacking Liberals' Position on Taxes	140
11. Nationalists attacking Liberals' Commitment on Taxes	134
12. Nationalists attacking Liberals' Competence on Taxes	134
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,626</b>

**Table 2.** Linear regressions on post-exposure position, competence, and commitment evaluations of attacked party.

Variable	Effect on same dimension			Cross dimension effect of...					
	Position	Competence	Commitment	Position attack		Competence attack		Commitment attack	
				Competence	Commitment	Position	Commitment	Position	Competence
Exposure to...									
- position attack	-0.17+ (0.09)			-0.16+ (0.09)	0.25** (0.09)				
- competence attack		-0.03 (0.10)				-0.08 (0.09)	-0.18* (0.08)		
- commitment attack			-0.39*** (0.08)					-0.05 (0.09)	-0.08 (0.10)
Party preference (ref: neither party)									
- Attacking party preference	0.49*** (0.13)	0.32* (0.14)	-0.28* (0.13)	0.27* (0.13)	-0.12 (0.14)	0.45** (0.14)	-0.16 (0.14)	0.56*** (0.15)	0.34* (0.14)
- Attacked party preference	0.50*** (0.12)	0.17 (0.12)	0.04 (0.08)	0.21+ (0.11)	0.11 (0.09)	0.43*** (0.12)	-0.01 (0.09)	0.38** (0.12)	0.08 (0.12)
Issue (reference: environment)									
- Crime	-0.40*** (0.12)	0.06 (0.13)	-0.08 (0.11)	0.10 (0.13)	-0.27* (0.11)	-0.20 (0.13)	-0.13 (0.11)	-0.35** (0.12)	0.17 (0.13)
- Employment	-0.04 (0.13)	0.10 (0.15)	-0.45** (0.14)	-0.08 (0.13)	-0.85*** (0.14)	0.27+ (0.14)	-0.42** (0.13)	0.08 (0.13)	0.07 (0.15)
- Taxes	-0.23+ (0.13)	0.33* (0.15)	-0.44*** (0.12)	0.25+ (0.13)	-0.51*** (0.13)	-0.06 (0.14)	-0.25* (0.12)	-0.30* (0.13)	0.21 (0.14)
Pre-exposure position evaluation	0.58*** (0.03)	0.33*** (0.03)	0.06** (0.02)	0.32*** (0.03)	0.06* (0.03)	0.58*** (0.03)	0.06** (0.02)	0.58*** (0.03)	0.32*** (0.03)
Pre-exposure competence evaluation	0.19*** (0.03)	0.32*** (0.03)	0.05+ (0.02)	0.37*** (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.15*** (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)	0.13*** (0.03)	0.33*** (0.03)
Pre-exposure commitment evaluation	0.01 (0.03)	0.10*** (0.03)	0.49*** (0.03)	0.07** (0.03)	0.50*** (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.56*** (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.10*** (0.03)
N days between respondents' W1/W2 responses	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01+ (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01* (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)
Constant	1.49*** (0.26)	1.59*** (0.32)	3.65*** (0.36)	1.80*** (0.30)	4.26*** (0.35)	1.44*** (0.32)	3.26*** (0.38)	1.94*** (0.29)	1.93*** (0.31)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.68	0.56	0.47	0.61	0.47	0.66	0.48	0.68	0.57
N	1,362	1,354	1,340	1,354	1,357	1,351	1,349	1,335	1,335

Note: table entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*=p<.001, \*\*=p<.01, \*=p<.05, +=p<.10.

**Table 3.** Marginal effect of exposure to position, competence, and commitment attack, by party preference.

<b>Marginal effect (M.E.)</b>	<b>Neither party</b>	<b>Attacking party</b>	<b>Attacked party</b>
M.E. of position attack on positional evaluations	-0.30** (.11)	-0.30 (.24)	0.34+ (.18)
M.E. of competence attack on competence evaluations	0.02 (.12)	-0.36 (.27)	-0.01 (.18)
M.E. of commitment attack on commitment evaluations	-0.47*** (.11)	-0.46+ (.24)	-0.09 (.13)
M.E. of position attack on competence evaluations	-0.27* (.12)	-0.25 (.25)	0.28 (.16)
M.E. of position attack on commitment evaluations	0.31** (.11)	0.21 (.27)	0.05 (.14)
M.E. of competence attack on position evaluations	-0.05 (.12)	-0.48+ (.25)	0.05 (.17)
M.E. of competence attack on commitment evaluations	-0.15 (.11)	-0.23 (.27)	-0.26+ (.14)
M.E. of commitment attack on position evaluations	-0.06 (.11)	-0.42 (.28)	0.20 (.17)
M.E. of commitment attack on competence evaluations	-0.10 (.13)	-0.48+ (.25)	0.20 (.18)

Note: estimates based on models in Appendix 3, table A7. Other variables are kept at their mean or median value. \*\*\*=p<.001, \*\*=p<.01, \*=p<.05, +=p<.10.



**Table 4.** Marginal effect of exposure to position, competence, and commitment attack, by issue.

<b>Marginal effect (M.E.)</b>	<b>Environment</b>	<b>Crime</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Taxes</b>
M.E. of position attack on positional evaluations	-0.49** (.18)	0.03 (.17)	-0.03 (.19)	-0.21 (.19)
M.E. of competence attack on competence evaluations	-0.04 (.19)	0.09 (.18)	0.04 (.21)	-0.20 (.21)
M.E. of commitment attack on commitment evaluations	-0.52*** (.15)	-0.78*** (.16)	-0.01 (.19)	-0.20 (.19)
M.E. of position attack on competence evaluations	-0.16 (.20)	-0.33+ (.17)	-0.07 (.19)	-0.06 (.19)
M.E. of position attack on commitment evaluations	0.20 (.17)	-0.09 (.16)	0.48* (.20)	0.43* (.20)
M.E. of competence attack on position evaluations	-0.16 (.19)	0.21 (.18)	-0.11 (.19)	-0.23 (.18)
M.E. of competence attack on commitment evaluations	-0.25+ (.15)	-0.46** (.15)	-0.03 (.19)	0.02 (.19)
M.E. of commitment attack on position evaluations	-0.15 (.18)	0.02 (.17)	0.29 (.19)	-0.33+ (.18)
M.E. of commitment attack on competence evaluations	-0.12 (.21)	-0.05 (.19)	0.12 (.19)	-0.26 (.19)

Note: estimates based on models in Appendix 3, table A8. Other variables are kept at their mean or median value. \*\*\*=p<.001, \*\*=p<.01, \*=p<.05, +=p<.10.

## Appendix 1 – Information on Sample

**Table A1.** Party preference distribution amongst sample versus federal elections 2014 and 2019.

<b>Party</b>	<b>Sample % (N=1,626)</b>	<b>Election 2014 %</b>
Christian Democrats	9.8	16.0
Greens	28.7	7.4
Nationalists	28.5	28.0
Liberals	9.4	13.4
Extreme Left	9.2	2.4
Socialists	9.7	12.1
Extreme Right	1.8	5.0
Other	1.1	1.9
Invalid	1.1	4.3
I would not go out to vote	0.9	9.3

**Table A2.** Political attitudes amongst experiment sample and Partirep survey 2014.

<b>Attitude</b>	<b>Sample %</b>	<b>Partirep %</b>
Mean left-right position (0 = left, 10 = right)	4.7	5.3
Mean political interest (0 = no interest, 10 = very interested)	8.1	4.9
N	1,626	981

Note: the Partirep 2014 survey is a face to face survey on a probability sample of Flemish voters (for more information, see Deschouwer et al., 2015).

**Table A3.** Party reputations per issue, pre-exposure (wave 1). Table entries are mean scores on 11-point scales, with rank in parentheses.

	<b>Christian Democrats</b>	<b>Greens</b>	<b>Flemish Nationalists</b>	<b>Liberals</b>	<b>Extreme Left</b>	<b>Socialists</b>	<b>Extreme Right</b>
<b>Environment</b>	<i>Attacker</i>	<i>Target</i>					
Position	<b>4.8 (2)</b>	<b>6.4 (1)</b>	4.1 (5)	4.3 (4)	3.8 (6)	4.7 (3)	2.0 (7)
Competence	<b>4.6 (2)</b>	<b>6.4 (1)</b>	4.3 (5)	4.4 (4)	3.3 (6)	4.5 (3)	1.7 (7)
Commitment	<b>4.7 (3)</b>	<b>8.5 (1)</b>	3.9 (6)	4.0 (5)	4.3 (4)	5.3 (2)	1.9 (7)
<b>Employment</b>	<i>Attacker</i>					<i>Target</i>	
Position	<b>5.6 (1)</b>	5.1 (3)	5.0 (4)	5.2 (2)	3.9 (6)	<b>4.6 (5)</b>	2.2 (7)
Competence	<b>6.0 (1)</b>	4.7 (4)	5.8 (3)	6.0 (1)	3.6 (6)	<b>4.5 (5)</b>	2.1 (7)
Commitment	<b>6.8 (2)</b>	5.6 (6)	6.8 (2)	7.0 (1)	5.9 (5)	<b>6.3 (4)</b>	3.5 (7)
<b>Crime</b>			<i>Target</i>				<i>Attacker</i>
Position	5.3 (1)	4.6 (4)	<b>5.0 (3)</b>	5.3 (1)	3.4 (6)	4.1 (5)	<b>2.9 (7)</b>
Competence	5.3 (3)	3.9 (4)	<b>5.9 (1)</b>	5.5 (2)	2.7 (7)	3.7 (5)	<b>3.4 (6)</b>
Commitment	5.5 (4)	3.9 (6)	<b>8.1 (2)</b>	6.4 (3)	3.1 (7)	4.0 (5)	<b>8.2 (1)</b>
<b>Taxes</b>			<i>Attacker</i>	<i>Target</i>			
Position	5.1 (1)	4.9 (2)	<b>4.4 (4)</b>	<b>4.5 (3)</b>	3.6 (6)	4.4 (4)	2.5 (7)
Competence	5.4 (2)	4.6 (4)	<b>5.4 (2)</b>	<b>5.6 (1)</b>	3.3 (6)	4.2 (5)	2.4 (7)
Commitment	6.1 (3)	5.4 (6)	<b>7.1 (2)</b>	<b>7.7 (1)</b>	5.9 (4)	5.9 (4)	4.5 (7)

Note: bold entries are scores of the parties that were designated as the challenger party (attacker) or the issue owner (target).

**Table A4.** Issue salience of all measured issues, pre-exposure (wave 1). Table entries are mean score on 11-point scale ranging from very unimportant (0) to very important (10).

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Mean Salience</b>
Crime	6.3
Defense	4.2
Economy	7.3
Education	7.8
Employment	7.4
Environment	7.6
Health Care	7.9
Immigration	6.8
International Security	6.0
Mobility	7.5
Operation of Justice and Police	7.1
Pensions	7.3
State Reform	3.7
Taxes	6.8

**Table A5.** Manipulation checks: rating of attack dimensions among the respondents after receiving stimuli

	Rating of dimension		
	Position	Competence	Commitment
<b>Attack on...</b>			
Position	<b>5.34 (0.12)<sup>ab</sup></b>	4.86 (0.12) <sup>a</sup>	5.07 (0.11) <sup>b</sup>
Competence	4.00 (0.12) <sup>a</sup>	<b>5.23 (0.13)<sup>ab</sup></b>	4.45 (0.12) <sup>b</sup>
Commitment	5.17 (0.11)	4.58 (0.11) <sup>a</sup>	<b>5.31 (0.11)<sup>a</sup></b>

Note: table entries are mean scores on the extent to which the article emphasized “*The position of parties on a certain issue*” (position), “*The extent to which parties are capable to deal with an issue*” (competence), “*The extent to which parties are engaged to deal with an issue*” (commitment). Per row, entries with different superscript are significantly different at  $p < .05$  (two-sided t-test).

## Appendix 2 – Full stimulus information

Note: for the experiment, the stimuli below were presented in a way as to simulate the appearance of a newspaper article, as below.

### **CD&V: “PROGRAMMA VAN GROEN TOONT GEBREK AAN EXPERTISE OM MILIEU AAN TE PAKKEN”.**

**BRUSSEL** | Naar aanleiding van de voorstelling van het verkiezingsprogramma van Groen, uit CD&V felle kritiek op de milieuvorstellen van Groen. “Dit programma bewijst dat Groen geen know-how heeft om op een kernthema als milieu resultaat te boeken. De partij mist de expertise om een degelijk milieubeleid te voeren dat tot resultaten leidt”, klinkt het aan de top van de partij.

Gisteren stelde Groen haar verkiezingsprogramma aan de pers voor. Daarin heeft de partij ook aandacht voor milieu. Europa voert momenteel de druk op België op om de klimaatdoelstellingen te halen. Uit recente cijfers blijkt dat, hoewel er vooruitgang wordt geboekt, er bijkomende klimaatmaatregelen getroffen moeten worden. Een recente peiling van TNS geeft aan dat ruim 7 op de 10 Vlamingen zich zorgen maken over de haalbaarheid van de klimaatdoelstellingen voor ons land.

CD&V schiet de groene voorstellen af omdat Groen volgens CD&V niet competent is om haar milieuvorstellen in realiteit om te zetten.

**[Condition 1 – Christian Democrats criticize Greens’ Competence on Environment]**

Dutch	English
<p><b>CD&amp;V: “PROGRAMMA VAN GROEN TOONT GEBREK AAN EXPERTISE OM MILIEU AAN TE PAKKEN”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSEL   Naar aanleiding van de voorstelling van het verkiezingsprogramma van Groen, uit CD&amp;V felle kritiek op de milieuvorstellen van Groen. “Dit programma bewijst dat Groen geen know-how heeft om op een kernthema als milieu resultaat te boeken. De partij mist de expertise om een degelijk milieubeleid te voeren dat tot resultaten leidt”, klinkt het aan de top van de partij.</p> <p>Gisteren stelde Groen haar verkiezingsprogramma aan de pers voor. Daarin heeft de partij ook aandacht voor milieu. Europa voert momenteel de druk op België op om de klimaatdoelstellingen te halen. Uit recente cijfers blijkt dat, hoewel er vooruitgang wordt geboekt, er bijkomende klimaatmaatregelen getroffen moeten worden. Een recente peiling van TNS geeft aan dat ruim 7 op de 10 Vlamingen zich zorgen maken over de haalbaarheid van de klimaatdoelstellingen voor ons land.</p> <p>CD&amp;V schiet de groene voorstellen af omdat Groen volgens CD&amp;V niet competent is om haar milieuvorstellen in realiteit om te zetten.</p>	<p><b>CD&amp;V: “GROEN’S MANIFESTO SHOWS LACK OF EXPERTISE TO DEAL WITH THE ENVIRONMENT”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSELS   In response to the presentation of the electoral manifesto of Groen, CD&amp;V heavily criticizes Groen’s proposals on the environment. “This manifesto demonstrates that Groen does not have the know-how to achieve results on a core issue such as the environment. The party lacks the expertise to conduct sound environmental policy that will yield results”, top party officials are saying.</p> <p>Groen presented its election manifesto to the press yesterday, in which the party also pays attention to the environment. Europe is ramping up the pressure on Belgium to achieve the climate targets. Recent figures show that, despite progress being made, additional climate measures need to be taken. A recent TNS poll shows that more than 7 out of 10 Flemish citizens are worried about the feasibility of the climate targets for our country.</p> <p>CD&amp;V shoots down Groen’s proposals because, according to CD&amp;V, Groen lacks the competence to realize its environmental plans.</p>

**[Condition 2 – Christian Democrats criticize Greens’ Commitment on Environment]**

Dutch	English
<p><b>CD&amp;V: “PROGRAMMA VAN GROEN TOONT GEBREK AAN ENGAGEMENT INZAKE MILIEU”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSEL   Naar aanleiding van de voorstelling van het verkiezingsprogramma van Groen, uit CD&amp;V felle kritiek op de milieuvorstellen van Groen. “Dit programma bewijst dat Groen zich niet echt engageert om op een kernthema als milieu het verschil te maken. De partij is niet gedreven om een sterk milieubeleid te voeren”, klinkt het aan de top van de partij.</p> <p>Gisteren stelde Groen haar verkiezingsprogramma aan de pers voor. Daarin heeft de partij ook aandacht voor milieu. Europa voert momenteel de druk op België op om de klimaatdoelstellingen te halen. Uit recente cijfers blijkt dat, hoewel er vooruitgang wordt geboekt, er bijkomende klimaatmaatregelen getroffen moeten worden. Een recente peiling van TNS geeft aan dat ruim 7 op de 10 Vlamingen zich zorgen maken over de haalbaarheid van de klimaatdoelstellingen voor ons land.</p> <p>CD&amp;V schiet de groene voorstellen af omdat Groen volgens CD&amp;V de toewijding mist om ambitieuze milieuvorstellen na te streven.</p>	<p><b>CD&amp;V: “GROEN’S MANIFESTO SHOWS LACK OF COMMITMENT ON ENVIRONMENT”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSELS   Following the presentation of the electoral manifesto of Groen, CD&amp;V heavily criticizes Groen’s proposals on the environment. “This manifesto demonstrates that Groen is not truly engaged to make a difference on a core issue such as the environment. The party is not driven to conduct strong environmental policy”, top party officials are quoted saying.</p> <p>Groen presented its election manifesto to the press yesterday, in which the party also pays attention to the environment. Europe is ramping up the pressure on Belgium to achieve the climate targets. Recent figures show that, despite progress being made, additional climate measures need to be taken. A recent TNS poll shows that more than 7 out of 10 Flemish citizens are worried about the feasibility of the climate targets for our country.</p> <p>CD&amp;V shoots down Groen’s proposals because, according to CD&amp;V, Groen lacks the dedication to pursue ambitious environmental proposals.</p>



**[Condition 3 – Christian Democrats criticize Greens’ Position on Environment]**

Dutch	English
<p><b>CD&amp;V: “MILIEUPROGRAMMA VAN GROEN IS EXTREEM”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSEL   Naar aanleiding van de voorstelling van het verkiezingsprogramma van Groen, uit CD&amp;V felle kritiek op de milieuvorstellen van Groen. “Het programma van Groen bevat extreme en onhaalbare milieuvorstellen. Dat kan onmogelijk resulteren in een evenwichtig beleid op een kernthema als milieu. De voorstellen van Groen zijn ongebalanceerd en radicaal”, klinkt het aan de top van de partij.</p> <p>Gisteren stelde Groen haar verkiezingsprogramma aan de pers voor. Daarin heeft de partij ook aandacht voor milieu. Europa voert momenteel de druk op België op om de klimaatdoelstellingen te halen. Uit recente cijfers blijkt dat, hoewel er vooruitgang wordt geboekt, er bijkomende klimaatmaatregelen getroffen moeten worden. Een recente peiling van TNS geeft aan dat ruim 7 op de 10 Vlamingen zich zorgen maken over de haalbaarheid van de klimaatdoelstellingen voor ons land.</p> <p>CD&amp;V schiet de groene milieuvorstellen af omdat de voorstellen van Groen volgens CD&amp;V extreem zijn.</p>	<p><b>CD&amp;V: “GROEN’S ENVIRONMENTAL MANIFESTO IS EXTREME”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSELS   Following the presentation of the electoral manifesto of Groen, CD&amp;V heavily criticizes Groen’s proposals on the environment. “Groen’s manifesto contains extreme and unattainable environmental proposals. This can never result in balanced policymaking on a core issue such as the environment. Groen’s proposals are unbalanced and radical”, top party officials are quoted saying.</p> <p>Groen presented its election manifesto to the press yesterday, in which the party also pays attention to the environment. Europe is ramping up the pressure on Belgium to achieve the climate targets. Recent figures show that, despite progress being made, additional climate measures need to be taken. A recent TNS poll shows that more than 7 out of 10 Flemish citizens are worried about the feasibility of the climate targets for our country.</p> <p>CD&amp;V shoots down Groen’s environmental proposals because, according to CD&amp;V, Groen’s proposals are extreme.</p>

**[Condition 4 – Christian Democrats criticize Socialists’ Competence on Employment]**

Dutch	English
<p><b>CD&amp;V: “PROGRAMMA VAN SP.A TOONT GEBREK AAN EXPERTISE OM WERKGELEGENHEID AAN TE PAKKEN”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSEL   Naar aanleiding van de voorstelling van het verkiezingsprogramma van sp.a, uit CD&amp;V felle kritiek op de werkgelegenheidsvoorstellen van sp.a. “Dit programma bewijst dat sp.a geen know-how heeft om op een kernthema als werkgelegenheid resultaat te boeken. De partij mist de expertise om een degelijk werkgelegenheidsbeleid te voeren dat tot resultaten leidt”, klinkt het aan de top van de partij.</p> <p>Gisteren stelde sp.a haar verkiezingsprogramma aan de pers voor. Daarin heeft de partij ook aandacht voor werkgelegenheid. Europa voert momenteel de druk op België op om de werkgelegenheidsgraad op te krikken. Uit recente cijfers blijkt dat, hoewel er vooruitgang wordt geboekt, er bijkomende maatregelen getroffen moeten worden om de werkloosheid op een aanvaardbaar niveau te houden. Een recente peiling van TNS geeft aan dat ruim 7 op de 10 Vlamingen zich zorgen maken over de werkloosheidsgraad in ons land.</p> <p>CD&amp;V schiet de socialistische voorstellen af omdat sp.a volgens CD&amp;V niet competent is om haar voorstellen inzake werkgelegenheid in realiteit om te zetten.</p>	<p><b>CD&amp;V: “SP.A’S MANIFESTO SHOWS LACK OF EXPERTISE TO DEAL WITH EMPLOYMENT”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSELS   Following the presentation of the electoral manifesto of sp.a, CD&amp;V heavily criticizes sp.a’s employment proposals. “This manifesto demonstrates that sp.a lacks the know-how to achieve results on a core issue such as employment. The party lacks the expertise to conduct sound employment policy that will yield results”, top party officials are quoted saying.</p> <p>Sp.a presented its election manifesto to the press yesterday, in which the party also pays attention to employment policy. Europe is ramping up the pressure on Belgium to increase the employment rate. Recent figures show that, despite progress being made, additional measures need to be taken to keep unemployment at an acceptable level. A recent TNS poll shows that more than 7 out of 10 Flemish citizens are worried about the unemployment rate in our country.</p> <p>CD&amp;V shoots down the socialists’ proposals because, according to CD&amp;V, sp.a lacks the competence to realize her employment proposals.</p>

**[Condition 5 – Christian Democrats criticize Socialists’ Commitment on Employment]**

Dutch	English
<p><b>CD&amp;V: “PROGRAMMA VAN SP.A TOONT GEBREK AAN ENGAGEMENT INZAKE WERKGELEGENHEID”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSEL   Naar aanleiding van de voorstelling van het verkiezingsprogramma van sp.a, uit CD&amp;V felle kritiek op de werkgelegenheidsvoorstellen van sp.a. “Dit programma bewijst dat sp.a zich niet echt engageert om op een kernthema als werkgelegenheid het verschil te maken. De partij is niet gedreven om een sterk werkgelegenheidsbeleid te voeren”, klinkt het aan de top van de partij.</p> <p>Gisteren stelde sp.a haar verkiezingsprogramma aan de pers voor. Daarin heeft de partij ook aandacht voor werkgelegenheid. Europa voert momenteel de druk op België op om de werkgelegenheid op te krikken. Uit recente cijfers blijkt dat, hoewel er vooruitgang wordt geboekt, er bijkomende maatregelen getroffen moeten worden om de werkloosheid op een aanvaardbaar niveau te houden. Een recente peiling van TNS geeft aan dat ruim 7 op de 10 Vlamingen zich zorgen maken over de werkloosheidsgraad in ons land.</p> <p>CD&amp;V schiet de socialistische voorstellen af omdat sp.a volgens CD&amp;V de toewijding mist om ambitieuze voorstellen inzake werkgelegenheid na te streven.</p>	<p><b>CD&amp;V: “SP.A MANIFESTO SHOWS LACK OF COMMITMENT ON EMPLOYMENT”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSELS   Following the presentation of the electoral manifesto of Sp.a, CD&amp;V heavily criticizes sp.a’s employment proposals. “This manifesto demonstrates that sp.a is not truly engaged to make a difference on a core issue such as employment. The party is not driven to conduct strong employment policy”, top party officials are quoted saying.</p> <p>Sp.a presented its election manifesto to the press yesterday, in which the party also pays attention to employment policy. Europe is ramping up the pressure on Belgium to increase the employment rate. Recent figures show that, despite progress being made, additional measures need to be taken to keep unemployment at an acceptable level. A recent TNS poll shows that more than 7 out of 10 Flemish citizens are worried about the extent to which our country can meet its employment targets.</p> <p>CD&amp;V shoots down the socialists’ proposals because, according to CD&amp;V, sp.a lacks the dedication to pursue ambitious employment proposals.</p>

**[Condition 6 – Christian Democrats criticize Socialists’ Position on Employment]**

Dutch	English
<p><b>CD&amp;V: “PROGRAMMA SP.A LEIDT TOT EXTREEM WERKGELEGENHEIDSBELEID”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSEL   Naar aanleiding van de voorstelling van het verkiezingsprogramma van sp.a, uit CD&amp;V felle kritiek op de werkgelegenheidsvoorstellen van sp.a. “Het programma van sp.a bevat extreme en onhaalbare voorstellen inzake werkgelegenheid. Dat kan onmogelijk resulteren in een evenwichtig beleid op een kernthema als werkgelegenheid. De voorstellen van sp.a zijn ongebalanceerd en radicaal”, klinkt het aan de top van de partij.</p> <p>Gisteren stelde sp.a haar verkiezingsprogramma aan de pers voor. Daarin heeft de partij ook aandacht voor werkgelegenheid. Europa voert momenteel de druk op België op om de werkgelegenheid op te krikken. Uit recente cijfers blijkt dat, hoewel er vooruitgang wordt geboekt, er bijkomende maatregelen getroffen moeten worden om de werkloosheid op een aanvaardbaar niveau te houden. Een recente peiling van TNS geeft aan dat ruim 7 op de 10 Vlamingen zich zorgen maken over de werkloosheidsgraad in ons land.</p> <p>CD&amp;V schiet de socialistische voorstellen inzake werkgelegenheid af omdat de voorstellen van sp.a volgens CD&amp;V extreem zijn.</p>	<p><b>CD&amp;V: “SP.A’S PROGRAM RESULTS IN EXTREME EMPLOYMENT POLICY”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSELS   Following the presentation of the electoral manifesto of sp.a, CD&amp;V heavily criticizes sp.a’s employment proposals. “sp.a’s manifesto contains extreme and unattainable employment proposals. This can never result in balanced policymaking on a core issue such as employment. sp.a’s proposals are unbalanced and radical”, top party officials are quoted saying.</p> <p>Sp.a presented its election manifesto to the press yesterday, in which the party also pays attention to employment policy. Europe is ramping up the pressure on Belgium to increase the employment rate. Recent figures show that, despite progress being made, additional measures need to be taken to keep unemployment at an acceptable level. A recent TNS poll shows that more than 7 out of 10 Flemish citizens are worried about the extent to which our country can meet its employment targets.</p> <p>CD&amp;V shoots down the socialists’ employment proposals because, according to CD&amp;V, sp.a’s proposals are extreme.</p>

**[Condition 7 – Extreme Right criticizes Nationalists’ Competence on Crime]**

Dutch	English
<p><b>VLAAMS BELANG: “PROGRAMMA VAN N-VA TOONT GEBREK AAN EXPERTISE OM CRIMINALITEIT AAN TE PAKKEN”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSEL   Naar aanleiding van de voorstelling van het verkiezingsprogramma van N-VA, uit Vlaams Belang felle kritiek op de voorstellen van N-VA inzake criminaliteit. “Dit programma bewijst dat N-VA geen know-how heeft om op een kernthema als criminaliteit resultaat te boeken. De partij mist de expertise om een degelijk criminaliteitsbeleid te voeren dat tot resultaten leidt”, klinkt het aan de top van de partij.</p> <p>Gisteren stelde N-VA haar verkiezingsprogramma aan de pers voor. Daarin heeft de partij ook aandacht voor criminaliteit. Diverse incidenten verhogen de druk om een oplossing te vinden voor de criminaliteit in ons land. Uit recente cijfers blijkt dat, hoewel er vooruitgang wordt geboekt, er bijkomende maatregelen getroffen moeten worden om de criminaliteit in stedelijke gebieden in te dijken. Een recente peiling van TNS geeft aan dat ruim 7 op de 10 Vlamingen zich zorgen maken over de criminaliteit in ons land.</p> <p>Vlaams Belang schiet de Vlaams-nationalistische voorstellen af omdat N-VA volgens Vlaams Belang niet competent is om haar voorstellen inzake criminaliteit in realiteit om te zetten.</p>	<p><b>VLAAMS BELANG: “N-VA MANIFESTO SHOWS LACK OF EXPERTISE TO DEAL WITH CRIME”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSELS   Following the presentation of the electoral manifesto of N-VA, Vlaams Belang heavily criticizes N-VA’s crime proposals. “This manifesto demonstrates that N-VA lacks the know-how to achieve results on a core issue such as crime. The party lacks the expertise to conduct sound crime policy that will yield results”, top party officials are quoted saying.</p> <p>N-VA presented its election manifesto to the press yesterday, in which the party also pays attention to the issue of crime. Several incidents increase the pressure to find a solution for crime rates in our country. Recent figures show that, despite progress being made, measures need to be taken to keep crime rates in urban areas at bay. A recent TNS poll shows that more than 7 out of 10 Flemish citizens are worried about crime in our country.</p> <p>Vlaams Belang shoots down the Flemish-Nationalists’ proposals because, according to Vlaams Belang, N-VA lacks the competence to realize her crime proposals.</p>

**[Condition 8 – Extreme Right criticizes Nationalists’ Commitment on Crime]**

Dutch	English
<p><b>VLAAMS BELANG: “PROGRAMMA VAN N-VA TOONT GEBREK AAN ENGAGEMENT INZAKE CRIMINALITEITSBELEID”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSEL   Naar aanleiding van de voorstelling van het verkiezingsprogramma van N-VA, uit Vlaams Belang felle kritiek op de voorstellen van N-VA inzake criminaliteit. “Dit programma bewijst dat N-VA zich niet echt engageert om op een kernthema als criminaliteit het verschil te maken. De partij is niet gedreven om een sterk criminaliteitsbeleid te voeren”, klinkt het aan de top van de partij.</p> <p>Gisteren stelde N-VA haar verkiezingsprogramma aan de pers voor. Daarin heeft de partij ook aandacht voor criminaliteit. Diverse incidenten verhogen de druk om een oplossing te vinden voor de criminaliteit in ons land. Uit recente cijfers blijkt dat, hoewel er vooruitgang wordt geboekt, er bijkomende maatregelen getroffen moeten worden om de criminaliteit in stedelijke gebieden in te dijken. Een recente peiling van TNS geeft aan dat ruim 7 op de 10 Vlamingen zich zorgen maken over de criminaliteit in ons land.</p> <p>Vlaams Belang schiet de Vlaams-nationalistische voorstellen af omdat N-VA volgens Vlaams Belang de toewijding mist om ambitieuze voorstellen inzake criminaliteit na te streven.</p>	<p><b>VLAAMS BELANG: “N-VA MANIFESTO SHOWS LACK OF COMMITMENT ON CRIME POLICY”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSELS   Following the presentation of the electoral manifesto of N-VA, Vlaams Belang heavily criticizes N-VA’s proposals on crime. “This manifesto demonstrates that N-VA is not truly engaged to make a difference on a core issue such as crime. The party is not driven to conduct strong crime policy”, top party officials are quoted saying.</p> <p>N-VA presented its election manifesto to the press yesterday, in which the party also pays attention to the issue of crime. Several incidents increase the pressure to find a solution for crime rates in our country. Recent figures show that, despite progress being made, measures need to be taken to keep crime rates in urban areas at bay. A recent TNS poll shows that more than 7 out of 10 Flemish citizens are worried about crime in our country.</p> <p>Vlaams Belang shoots down the Flemish-Nationalist proposals because, according to Vlaams Belang, N-VA lacks the dedication to pursue ambitious crime proposals.</p>

**[Condition 9 – Extreme Right criticizes Nationalists’ Position on Crime]**

Dutch	English
<p><b>VLAAMS BELANG: “PROGRAMMA N-VA LEIDT TOT EXTREEM CRIMINALITEITSBELEID”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSEL   Naar aanleiding van de voorstelling van het verkiezingsprogramma van N-VA, uit Vlaams Belang felle kritiek op de voorstellen van N-VA inzake criminaliteit. “Het programma van N-VA bevat extreme en onhaalbare voorstellen inzake criminaliteit. Dat kan onmogelijk resulteren in een evenwichtig beleid op een kernthema als criminaliteit. De voorstellen van N-VA zijn ongebalanceerd en radicaal”, klinkt het aan de top van de partij.</p> <p>Gisteren stelde N-VA haar verkiezingsprogramma aan de pers voor. Daarin heeft de partij ook aandacht voor criminaliteit. Diverse incidenten verhogen de druk om een oplossing te vinden voor de criminaliteit in ons land. Uit recente cijfers blijkt dat, hoewel er vooruitgang wordt geboekt, er bijkomende maatregelen getroffen moeten worden om de criminaliteit in stedelijke gebieden in te dijken. Een recente peiling van TNS geeft aan dat ruim 7 op de 10 Vlamingen zich zorgen maken over de criminaliteit in ons land.</p> <p>Vlaams Belang schiet de Vlaams-nationalistische voorstellen inzake criminaliteit af omdat de voorstellen van N-VA volgens Vlaams Belang extreem zijn.</p>	<p><b>VLAAMS BELANG: “N-VA’S PROGRAM RESULTS IN EXTREME CRIME POLICY”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSELS   Following the presentation of the electoral manifesto of N-VA, Vlaams Belang heavily criticizes N-VA’s crime proposals. “N-VA’s manifesto contains extreme and unattainable crime proposals. This can never result in balanced policymaking on a core issue such as crime. N-VA’s proposals are unbalanced and radical”, top party officials are quoted saying.</p> <p>N-VA presented its election manifesto to the press yesterday, in which the party also pays attention to the issue of crime. Several incidents increase the pressure to find a solution for crime rates in our country. Recent figures show that, despite progress being made, measures need to be taken to keep crime rates in urban areas at bay. A recent TNS poll shows that more than 7 out of 10 Flemish citizens are worried about crime in our country.</p> <p>Vlaams Belang shoots down the Flemish-nationalist crime proposals because, according to CD&amp;V, N-VA’s proposals are extreme.</p>

**[Condition 10 – Nationalists criticize Liberals’ Competence on Taxes]**

Dutch	English
<p><b>N-VA: “PROGRAMMA VAN OPEN VLD TOONT GEBREK AAN EXPERTISE OM BELASTINGBELEID AAN TE PAKKEN”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSEL   Naar aanleiding van de voorstelling van het verkiezingsprogramma van Open Vld, uit N-VA felle kritiek op de belastingvoorstellen van Open Vld. “Dit programma bewijst dat Open Vld geen know-how heeft om op een kernthema als belastingen resultaat te boeken. De partij mist de expertise om een degelijk belastingbeleid te voeren dat tot resultaten leidt”, klinkt het aan de top van de partij.</p> <p>Gisteren stelde Open Vld haar verkiezingsprogramma aan de pers voor. Daarin heeft de partij ook aandacht voor belastingen. Binnen Europa is ons land één van de landen met de hoogste belastingdruk. Uit recente cijfers blijkt dat, hoewel er vooruitgang wordt geboekt, er bijkomende belastingmaatregelen getroffen moeten worden. Een recente peiling van TNS geeft aan dat ruim 7 op de 10 Vlamingen zich zorgen maken over de belastingdruk in ons land.</p> <p>N-VA schiet de liberale voorstellen af omdat Open Vld volgens N-VA niet competent is om haar belastingvoorstellen in realiteit om te zetten.</p>	<p><b>N-VA: “OPEN VLD MANIFESTO SHOWS LACK OF EXPERTISE TO DEAL WITH TAXES”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSELS   Following the presentation of the electoral manifesto of Open Vld, N-VA heavily criticizes Open Vld’s tax proposals. “This manifesto demonstrates that Open Vld lacks the know-how to achieve results on a core issue such as taxes. The party lacks the expertise to conduct sound tax policy that will yield results”, top party officials are quoted saying.</p> <p>Open Vld presented its election manifesto to the press yesterday, in which the party also pays attention to the issue of taxes. Within Europe, our country is amongst those with the highest tax rates. Recent figures show that, despite progress being made, additional tax measures need to be taken. A recent TNS poll shows that more than 7 out of 10 Flemish citizens are worried about the tax rate in our country.</p> <p>N-VA shoots down Open Vld’s tax proposals because, according to N-VA, Open Vld lacks the competence to realize her tax proposals.</p>



**[Condition 11 – Nationalists criticize Liberals’ Commitment on Taxes]**

Dutch	English
<p><b>N-VA: “PROGRAMMA VAN OPEN VLD TOONT GEBREK AAN ENGAGEMENT INZAKE BELASTINGBELEID”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSEL   Naar aanleiding van de voorstelling van het verkiezingsprogramma van Open Vld, uit N-VA felle kritiek op de belastingvoorstellen van Open Vld. “Dit programma bewijst dat Open Vld zich niet echt engageert om op een kernthema als belastingen het verschil te maken. De partij is niet gedreven om een sterk belastingbeleid te voeren”, klinkt het aan de top van de partij.</p> <p>Gisteren stelde Open Vld haar verkiezingsprogramma aan de pers voor. Daarin heeft de partij ook aandacht voor belastingen. Binnen Europa is ons land één van de landen met de hoogste belastingdruk. Uit recente cijfers blijkt dat, hoewel er vooruitgang wordt geboekt, er bijkomende belastingmaatregelen getroffen moeten worden. Een recente peiling van TNS geeft aan dat ruim 7 op de 10 Vlamingen zich zorgen maken over de belastingdruk in ons land.</p> <p>N-VA schiet de liberale voorstellen af omdat Open Vld volgens N-VA de toewijding mist om een ambitieus belastingbeleid na te streven.</p>	<p><b>N-VA: “OPEN VLD MANIFESTO SHOWS LACK OF COMMITMENT ON TAX POLICY”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSELS   Following the presentation of the electoral manifesto of Open Vld, N-VA heavily criticizes Open Vld’s tax proposals. “This manifesto demonstrates that Open Vld is not truly engaged to make a difference on a core issue such as taxes. The party is not driven to conduct strong tax policy”, top party officials are quoted saying.</p> <p>Open Vld presented its election manifesto to the press yesterday, in which the party also pays attention to the issue of taxes. Within Europe, our country is amongst those with the highest tax rates. Recent figures show that, despite progress being made, additional tax measures need to be taken. A recent TNS poll shows that more than 7 out of 10 Flemish citizens are worried about the tax rate in our country.</p> <p>N-VA shoots down the liberal proposals because, according to N-VA, Open Vld lacks the dedication to pursue ambitious tax proposals.</p>

**[Condition 12 – Nationalists criticize Liberals’ Position on Taxes]**

Dutch	English
<p><b>N-VA: “PROGRAMMA OPEN VLD LEIDT TOT EXTREEM BELASTINGBELEID”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSEL   Naar aanleiding van de voorstelling van het verkiezingsprogramma van Open Vld, uit N-VA felle kritiek op de belastingvoorstellen van Open Vld. “Het programma van Open Vld bevat extreme en onhaalbare belastingvoorstellen. Dat kan onmogelijk resulteren in een evenwichtig beleid op een kernthema als belastingen. De voorstellen van Open Vld zijn ongebalanceerd en radicaal”, klinkt het aan de top van de partij.</p> <p>Gisteren stelde Open Vld haar verkiezingsprogramma aan de pers voor. Daarin heeft de partij ook aandacht voor belastingen. Binnen Europa is ons land één van de landen met de hoogste belastingdruk. Uit recente cijfers blijkt dat, hoewel er vooruitgang wordt geboekt, er bijkomende belastingmaatregelen getroffen moeten worden. Een recente peiling van TNS geeft aan dat ruim 7 op de 10 Vlamingen zich zorgen maken over de belastingdruk in ons land.</p> <p>N-VA schiet de liberale voorstellen af omdat de belastingvoorstellen van Open Vld volgens N-VA extreem zijn.</p>	<p><b>N-VA: “OPEN VLD’S PROGRAM RESULTS IN EXTREME TAX POLICY”.</b></p> <p>BRUSSELS   Following the presentation of the electoral manifesto of Open Vld, N-VA heavily criticizes Open Vld’s tax proposals. “Open Vld’s manifesto contains extreme and unattainable tax proposals. This can never result in balanced policymaking on a core issue such as taxes. Open Vld’s proposals are unbalanced and radical”, top party officials are quoted saying.</p> <p>Open Vld presented its election manifesto to the press yesterday, in which the party also pays attention to the issue of taxes. Within Europe, our country is amongst those with the highest tax rates. Recent figures show that, despite progress being made, additional tax measures need to be taken. A recent TNS poll shows that more than 7 out of 10 Flemish citizens are worried about the tax rate in our country.</p> <p>N-VA shoots down the liberal proposals because, according to N-VA, Open Vld’s tax proposals are extreme.</p>

### Appendix 3: Bivariate tests, interaction regression models, and robustness tests

**Table A6.** Bivariate tests of effect of competence, commitment and position attacks.

Effect of position attack	Position score		Competence score		Commitment score	
	$\Delta$ Pre-Post	<i>p</i>	$\Delta$ Pre-Post	<i>p</i>	$\Delta$ Pre-Post	<i>p</i>
<b>Difference in score of Green party on environment amongst respondents exposed to...</b>						
- CD&V attacking Greens' position on environment (treatment)	-0.25	0.16	0.18	0.37	0.36	0.13
- CD&V attacking Socialists' commitment or competence on employment (control)	0.02		-0.03		0.06	
<b>Difference in score of Socialists on employment amongst respondents exposed to...</b>						
- CD&V attacking Socialists' position on employment (treatment)	0.28	0.65	0.32	0.72	0.55	0.03
- CD&V attacking Greens' commitment or competence on environment (control)	0.38		0.40		0.08	
<b>Difference in score of Nationalists on crime amongst respondents exposed to...</b>						
- Extreme Right attacking Nationalists' position on crime (treatment)	0.19	0.50	-0.44	0.00	-0.01	0.51
- Nationalists attacking Liberals' commitment or competence on taxes (control)	0.06		0.27		-0.12	
<b>Difference in score of Liberals on taxes amongst respondents exposed to...</b>						
- Nationalists attacking Liberals' position on taxes (treatment)	0.39	0.63	0.08	0.64	0.11	0.15
- Extreme Right attacking Nationals' commitment or competence on crime (control)	0.50		0.19		-0.21	
<b>Overall difference in score of attacked party amongst respondents exposed to...</b>						
- Four position treatment groups combined	0.16	0.42	0.02	0.10	0.24	0.00
- Four control groups combined	0.24		0.21		-0.05	
Effect of competence attack	Position score		Competence score		Commitment score	
	$\Delta$ Pre-Post	<i>p</i>	$\Delta$ Pre-Post	<i>p</i>	$\Delta$ Pre-Post	<i>p</i>
<b>Difference in score of Green party on environment amongst respondents exposed to...</b>						
- CD&V attacking Greens' competence on environment (treatment)	-0.28	0.76	-0.02	0.68	-0.24	0.52
- CD&V attacking Socialists' commitment or position on employment (control)	-0.22		-0.12		-0.15	
<b>Difference in score of Socialists on employment amongst respondents exposed to...</b>						
- CD&V attacking Socialists' competence on employment (treatment)	0.33	0.25	0.46	0.75	0.26	0.89
- CD&V attacking Greens' commitment or position on environment (control)	0.58		0.54		0.29	
<b>Difference in score of Nationalists on crime amongst respondents exposed to...</b>						
- Extreme Right attacking Nationalists' competence on crime (treatment)	0.14	0.75	-0.13	0.75	-0.46	0.04
- Nationalists attacking Liberals' commitment or position on taxes (control)	0.08		-0.07		-0.13	
<b>Difference in score of Liberals on taxes amongst respondents exposed to...</b>						

- Nationalists attacking Liberals' competence on taxes (treatment)	0.29		0.23		-0.05	
- Extreme Right attacking Nationals' commitment or position on crime (control)	0.51	0.28	0.27	0.87	-0.18	0.55
<b>Overall difference in score of attacked party amongst respondents exposed to...</b>						
- Four competence treatment groups combined	0.11		0.13		-0.13	
- Four control groups combined	0.24	0.22	0.15	0.86	-0.05	0.40
	<b>Position score</b>		<b>Competence score</b>		<b>Commitment score</b>	
<b>Effect of commitment attack</b>	<b>Δ</b>		<b>Δ</b>		<b>Δ</b>	
	<b>Pre-Post</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Pre-Post</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Pre-Post</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Difference in score of Green party on environment amongst respondents exposed to...</b>						
- CD&V attacking Greens' commitment on environment (treatment)	-0.10		-0.20		-0.62	
- CD&V attacking Socialists' competence or position on employment (control)	-0.05	0.78	-0.08	0.61	0.04	0.00
<b>Difference in score of Socialists on employment amongst respondents exposed to...</b>						
- CD&V attacking Socialists' commitment on employment (treatment)	0.63		0.43		0.31	
- CD&V attacking Greens' competence or position on environment (control)	0.40	0.31	0.55	0.60	0.43	0.58
<b>Difference in score of Nationalists on crime amongst respondents exposed to...</b>						
- Extreme Right attacking Nationalists' commitment on crime (treatment)	0.12		-0.11		-0.57	
- Nationalists attacking Liberals' competence or position on taxes (control)	0.19	0.70	0.17	0.22	-0.06	0.00
<b>Difference in score of Liberals on taxes amongst respondents exposed to...</b>						
- Nationalists attacking Liberals' commitment on taxes (treatment)	0.14		0.00		-0.44	
- Extreme Right attacking Nationals' competence or position on crime (control)	0.43	0.18	0.22	0.38	-0.26	0.37
<b>Overall difference in score of attacked party amongst respondents exposed to...</b>						
- Four commitment treatment groups above	0.17		0.02		-0.35	
- Four control groups above	0.24	0.50	0.21	0.10	0.03	0.00

Note: reported means and p values are based on a two-sided t-test comparing the mean difference in the exposure group to the control group.

**Table A7.** Linear regressions with interactions between three types of attacks and party preference.

Variable	Effect on same dimension			Cross dimension effect of...					
	Position	Competence	Commitment	Position attack		Competence attack		Commitment attack	
				Competence	Commitment	Position	Commitment	Position	Competence
Exposure to...									
- position attack	-0.30** (0.11)			-0.27* (0.12)	0.31** (0.11)				
- competence attack		0.02 (0.12)				-0.05 (0.12)	-0.15 (0.11)		
- commitment attack			-0.47*** (0.11)					-0.06 (0.11)	-0.10 (0.13)
Party preference (reference: neither party)									
- Attacking party preference	0.51*** (0.15)	0.45** (0.17)	-0.27+ (0.16)	0.28+ (0.16)	-0.09 (0.15)	0.60*** (0.17)	-0.14 (0.17)	0.70*** (0.18)	0.49** (0.18)
- Attacked party preference	0.30+ (0.15)	0.18 (0.15)	-0.09 (0.11)	0.04 (0.14)	0.19+ (0.11)	0.40** (0.14)	0.03 (0.11)	0.29* (0.15)	-0.02 (0.15)
Position attack * Attacking PP	0.00 (0.27)			0.02 (0.28)	-0.10 (0.29)				
Position attack * Attacked PP	0.64** (0.21)			0.55** (0.20)	-0.26 (0.19)				
Competence attack * Attacking PP		-0.37 (0.30)				-0.43 (0.28)	-0.07 (0.29)		
Competence attack * Attacked PP		-0.02 (0.22)				0.10 (0.21)	-0.11 (0.18)		
Commitment attack * Attacking PP			0.01 (0.26)					-0.36 (0.30)	-0.38 (0.28)
Commitment attack * Attacked PP			0.38* (0.17)					0.26 (0.21)	0.30 (0.22)
Issue (reference: environment)									
- Crime	0.00 (0.00)	0.04 (0.13)	-0.09 (0.11)	0.08 (0.13)	-0.26* (0.11)	-0.23+ (0.13)	-0.13 (0.12)	-0.39** (0.13)	0.13 (0.14)
- Employment	-0.42*** (0.12)	0.09 (0.15)	-0.43** (0.14)	-0.06 (0.13)	-0.86*** (0.14)	0.27+ (0.14)	-0.43** (0.14)	0.09 (0.14)	0.08 (0.15)

- Taxes	-0.01 (0.13)	0.34* (0.15)	-0.41*** (0.12)	0.28* (0.13)	-0.52*** (0.13)	-0.04 (0.14)	-0.25* (0.12)	-0.27* (0.13)	0.25+ (0.14)
Pre-exposure position evaluation	-0.20 (0.13)	0.33*** (0.03)	0.06** (0.02)	0.32*** (0.03)	0.06* (0.03)	0.58*** (0.03)	0.06** (0.02)	0.58*** (0.03)	0.31*** (0.03)
Pre-exposure competence evaluation	0.57*** (0.03)	0.32*** (0.03)	0.05+ (0.02)	0.36*** (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.15*** (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.13*** (0.03)	0.33*** (0.03)
Pre-exposure commitment evaluation	0.18*** (0.03)	0.10*** (0.03)	0.49*** (0.03)	0.07** (0.03)	0.50*** (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.56*** (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.10*** (0.03)
N days between respondents' W1/W2 responses	0.01 (0.03)	-0.01+ (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01* (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)
Constant	1.54*** (0.27)	1.59*** (0.32)	3.69*** (0.36)	1.85*** (0.30)	4.23*** (0.35)	1.45*** (0.32)	3.25*** (0.38)	1.96*** (0.29)	1.96*** (0.31)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.68	0.56	0.47	0.61	0.47	0.66	0.48	0.68	0.57
N	1,362	1,354	1,340	1,354	1,357	1,351	1,349	1,335	1,335

Note: table entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$ , \* =  $p < .05$ , + =  $p < .10$ .

**Table A8.** Linear regressions with interactions between three types of attacks and issues.

Variable	Effect on same dimension			Cross dimension effect of...					
	Position	Competence	Commitment	Position attack		Competence attack		Commitment attack	
				Competence	Commitment	Position	Commitment	Position	Competence
Exposure to...									
- position attack	-0.49** (0.18)			-0.16 (0.20)	0.20 (0.17)				
- competence attack		-0.04 (0.19)				-0.16 (0.19)	-0.25+ (0.15)		
- commitment attack			-0.52*** (0.15)					-0.15 (0.18)	-0.12 (0.21)
Party preference (reference: neither party)									
- Attacking party preference	0.54*** (0.14)	0.36* (0.15)	-0.34* (0.13)	0.24+ (0.14)	-0.18 (0.15)	0.52*** (0.15)	-0.22 (0.15)	0.61*** (0.16)	0.37* (0.15)
- Attacked party preference	0.52*** (0.13)	0.17 (0.12)	0.11 (0.09)	0.23* (0.11)	0.15 (0.09)	0.42*** (0.12)	0.04 (0.09)	0.39** (0.12)	0.09 (0.12)
Issue (reference: environment)									
- Crime	-0.58*** (0.15)	0.02 (0.17)	-0.00 (0.13)	0.16 (0.16)	-0.16 (0.14)	-0.33+ (0.17)	-0.06 (0.15)	-0.42** (0.16)	0.14 (0.17)
- Employment	-0.19 (0.15)	0.07 (0.19)	-0.62*** (0.17)	-0.11 (0.16)	-0.94*** (0.16)	0.25 (0.18)	-0.51** (0.17)	-0.06 (0.17)	-0.01 (0.18)
- Taxes	-0.32* (0.16)	0.38* (0.18)	-0.56*** (0.15)	0.21 (0.17)	-0.59*** (0.15)	-0.04 (0.17)	-0.35* (0.15)	-0.25 (0.16)	0.26 (0.17)
Position attack	0.53* (0.25)			-0.17 (0.26)	-0.30 (0.23)				
* Crime									
Position attack	0.46+ (0.27)			0.09 (0.28)	0.28 (0.26)				
* Employment									
Position attack	0.28 (0.27)			0.10 (0.28)	0.23 (0.26)				
* Taxes									
Competence attack		0.13 (0.26)				0.36 (0.26)	-0.20 (0.22)		
* Crime									
Competence attack		0.08 (0.28)				0.04 (0.27)	0.22 (0.25)		
* Employment									
Competence attack		-0.17 (0.28)				-0.08 (0.26)	0.27 (0.24)		
* Taxes									
Commitment attack			-0.26					0.16	0.06

* Crime			(0.22)					(0.25)	(0.28)
Commitment attack			0.51*					0.43+	0.24
* Employment			(0.25)					(0.26)	(0.29)
Commitment			0.33					-0.18	-0.15
* Taxes			(0.24)					(0.25)	(0.28)
Pre-exposure position evaluation	0.58*** (0.03)	0.33*** (0.03)	0.06** (0.02)	0.32*** (0.03)	0.06* (0.03)	0.58*** (0.03)	0.06** (0.02)	0.58*** (0.03)	0.32*** (0.03)
Pre-exposure competence evaluation	0.18*** (0.03)	0.32*** (0.03)	0.04+ (0.02)	0.37*** (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.15*** (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.13*** (0.03)	0.33*** (0.03)
Pre-exposure commitment evaluation	0.01 (0.03)	0.10*** (0.03)	0.49*** (0.03)	0.07** (0.03)	0.49*** (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.56*** (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.10*** (0.03)
N days between respondents'	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01+ (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.01* (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)
W1/W2 responses									
Constant	1.60*** (0.27)	1.60*** (0.33)	3.67*** (0.36)	1.79*** (0.31)	4.26*** (0.36)	1.47*** (0.33)	3.27*** (0.39)	1.97*** (0.29)	1.94*** (0.32)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.68	0.56	0.48	0.61	0.47	0.66	0.48	0.68	0.57
N	1,362	1,354	1,340	1,354	1,357	1,351	1,349	1,335	1,335

Note: table entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$ , \* =  $p < .05$ , + =  $p < .10$ .



**Table A9.** Robustness test – Linear regressions on post-exposure position, competence, and commitment evaluations of attacked party – excluding employment conditions.

Variable	Effect on same dimension			Cross dimension effect of...					
	Position	Competence	Commitment	Position attack		Competence attack		Commitment attack	
				Competence	Commitment	Position	Commitment	Position	Competence
Exposure to...									
- position attack	-0.21* (0.10)			-0.20+ (0.11)	0.16+ (0.10)				
- competence attack		-0.06 (0.11)				-0.07 (0.11)	-0.23* (0.09)		
- commitment attack			-0.50*** (0.09)					-0.15 (0.10)	-0.14 (0.11)
Party preference (ref: neither party)									
- Attacking party preference	0.34* (0.14)	0.36* (0.16)	-0.30* (0.14)	0.29* (0.14)	-0.03 (0.15)	0.51** (0.17)	-0.17 (0.15)	0.46** (0.17)	0.22 (0.16)
- Attacked party preference	0.42** (0.15)	0.25+ (0.14)	0.06 (0.10)	0.26+ (0.14)	0.09 (0.11)	0.52*** (0.14)	0.07 (0.11)	0.42** (0.15)	0.12 (0.15)
Issue (reference: Environment)									
- Crime	-0.33** (0.12)	0.04 (0.13)	-0.12 (0.11)	0.07 (0.13)	-0.34** (0.12)	-0.19 (0.13)	-0.16 (0.12)	-0.34** (0.12)	0.17 (0.14)
- Taxes	-0.16 (0.13)	0.31* (0.15)	-0.48*** (0.13)	0.22 (0.13)	-0.60*** (0.13)	-0.04 (0.14)	-0.29* (0.13)	-0.30* (0.13)	0.20 (0.14)
Pre-exposure position evaluation	0.63*** (0.03)	0.31*** (0.04)	0.05* (0.02)	0.31*** (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.60*** (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.61*** (0.03)	0.32*** (0.04)
Pre-exposure competence evaluation	0.14*** (0.03)	0.34*** (0.04)	0.04 (0.03)	0.37*** (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	0.13*** (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.11*** (0.03)	0.33*** (0.04)
Pre-exposure commitment evaluation	-0.01 (0.03)	0.10** (0.03)	0.49*** (0.04)	0.07* (0.03)	0.47*** (0.04)	0.02 (0.03)	0.59*** (0.04)	0.00 (0.03)	0.08* (0.03)
N days between respondents'	0.00 (0.01)	-0.01+ (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02* (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01* (0.01)	-0.02+ (0.01)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.69	0.54	0.40	0.58	0.34	0.66	0.41	0.69	0.54
N	1,045	1,040	1,033	1,040	1,043	1,039	1,035	1,028	1,028

Note: table entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*=p<.001, \*\*=p<.01, \*=p<.05, +=p<.10.

**Table A10.** Robustness test – Linear regressions on post-exposure position, competence, and commitment evaluations of attacked party – excluding environment conditions.

Variable	Effect on same dimension			Cross dimension effect of...					
	Position	Competence	Commitment	Position attack		Competence attack		Commitment attack	
				Competence	Commitment	Position	Commitment	Position	Competence
Exposure to...									
- position attack	-0.05 (0.10)			-0.16 (0.10)	0.26* (0.10)				
- competence attack		-0.03 (0.11)				-0.03 (0.10)	-0.16 (0.10)		
- commitment attack			-0.35*** (0.10)					-0.01 (0.10)	-0.07 (0.11)
Party preference (ref: neither party)									
- Attacking party preference	0.79*** (0.15)	0.26+ (0.15)	-0.28* (0.13)	0.17 (0.15)	-0.20 (0.15)	0.74*** (0.15)	-0.23 (0.16)	0.90*** (0.16)	0.38* (0.15)
- Attacked party preference	0.71*** (0.14)	0.12 (0.14)	-0.00 (0.10)	0.13 (0.13)	0.10 (0.11)	0.61*** (0.14)	0.03 (0.11)	0.49*** (0.14)	0.04 (0.14)
Issue (reference: Crime)									
- Employment	0.42** (0.13)	-0.01 (0.13)	-0.33* (0.13)	-0.19 (0.13)	-0.53*** (0.13)	0.46*** (0.13)	-0.36** (0.13)	0.45*** (0.13)	-0.09 (0.13)
- Taxes	0.19 (0.12)	0.26+ (0.13)	-0.35** (0.11)	0.16 (0.12)	-0.24* (0.11)	0.14 (0.12)	-0.15 (0.11)	0.07 (0.12)	0.05 (0.13)
Pre-exposure position evaluation	0.55*** (0.03)	0.35*** (0.04)	0.06* (0.03)	0.35*** (0.04)	0.06+ (0.03)	0.55*** (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.56*** (0.03)	0.32*** (0.04)
Pre-exposure competence evaluation	0.16*** (0.03)	0.31*** (0.04)	0.06+ (0.03)	0.33*** (0.04)	0.04 (0.03)	0.16*** (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.13*** (0.03)	0.32*** (0.04)
Pre-exposure commitment evaluation	0.05 (0.03)	0.08** (0.03)	0.50*** (0.04)	0.09** (0.03)	0.52*** (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0.52*** (0.04)	0.03 (0.03)	0.10** (0.03)
N days between respondents'	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.02* (0.01)	-0.02* (0.01)
W1/W2 responses									
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.67	0.57	0.46	0.61	0.46	0.68	0.44	0.68	0.59
N	1,016	1,009	995	1,007	1,010	1,008	1,006	993	993

Note: table entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*=p<.001, \*\*=p<.01, \*=p<.05, +=p<.10.

**Table A11.** Robustness test – Linear regressions on post-exposure position, competence, and commitment evaluations of attacked party – excluding crime conditions.

Variable	Effect on same dimension			Cross dimension effect of...					
	Position	Competence	Commitment	Position attack		Competence attack		Commitment attack	
				Competence	Commitment	Position	Commitment	Position	Competence
Exposure to...									
- position attack	-0.25* (0.11)			-0.11 (0.11)	0.38*** (0.11)				
- competence attack		-0.06 (0.12)				-0.14 (0.11)	-0.11 (0.10)		
- commitment attack			-0.27** (0.10)					-0.05 (0.11)	-0.09 (0.12)
Party preference (ref: neither party)									
- Attacking party preference	0.36* (0.17)	0.23 (0.20)	-0.22 (0.17)	0.34* (0.17)	-0.13 (0.18)	0.08 (0.18)	-0.10 (0.19)	0.26 (0.20)	0.33+ (0.19)
- Attacked party preference	0.33* (0.13)	0.14 (0.13)	-0.01 (0.09)	0.17 (0.12)	0.12 (0.10)	0.39** (0.13)	-0.04 (0.10)	0.25* (0.12)	-0.03 (0.13)
Issue (reference: Environment)									
- Employment	-0.04 (0.13)	0.08 (0.15)	-0.43** (0.14)	-0.10 (0.14)	-0.83*** (0.14)	0.26+ (0.14)	-0.39** (0.14)	0.09 (0.14)	0.05 (0.15)
- Taxes	-0.25* (0.13)	0.31* (0.15)	-0.39** (0.13)	0.23+ (0.13)	-0.46*** (0.13)	-0.07 (0.14)	-0.18 (0.12)	-0.30* (0.13)	0.22 (0.14)
Pre-exposure position evaluation	0.54*** (0.04)	0.33*** (0.04)	0.09** (0.03)	0.31*** (0.04)	0.11*** (0.03)	0.58*** (0.03)	0.10*** (0.03)	0.57*** (0.03)	0.32*** (0.04)
Pre-exposure competence evaluation	0.23*** (0.04)	0.29*** (0.04)	0.06+ (0.03)	0.38*** (0.04)	0.05 (0.03)	0.11** (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.12*** (0.03)	0.32*** (0.04)
Pre-exposure commitment evaluation	-0.00 (0.03)	0.12*** (0.03)	0.46*** (0.04)	0.07* (0.03)	0.45*** (0.04)	0.05+ (0.03)	0.52*** (0.04)	0.06+ (0.03)	0.10** (0.04)
N days between respondents' W1/W2 responses	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02* (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.03*** (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.65	0.53	0.49	0.59	0.49	0.62	0.50	0.65	0.55
N	1,003	1,003	980	997	1,001	1,001	1,001	975	977

Note: table entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*=p<.001, \*\*=p<.01, \*=p<.05, +=p<.10.

**Table A12.** Robustness test – Linear regressions on post-exposure position, competence, and commitment evaluations of attacked party – excluding taxes conditions.

Variable	Effect on same dimension			Cross dimension effect of...					
	Position	Competence	Commitment	Position attack		Competence attack		Commitment attack	
				Competence	Commitment	Position	Commitment	Position	Competence
Exposure to...									
- position attack	-0.17 (0.11)			-0.20+ (0.11)	0.20+ (0.10)				
- competence attack		0.03 (0.11)				-0.02 (0.11)	-0.22* (0.10)		
- commitment attack			-0.46*** (0.10)					0.02 (0.10)	-0.04 (0.11)
Party preference (ref: neither party)									
- Attacking party preference	0.45** (0.15)	0.40* (0.16)	-0.28* (0.14)	0.28+ (0.16)	-0.05 (0.16)	0.43** (0.16)	-0.06 (0.15)	0.58*** (0.17)	0.43* (0.17)
- Attacked party preference	0.54*** (0.14)	0.18 (0.13)	0.16+ (0.09)	0.30* (0.13)	0.16 (0.10)	0.24+ (0.13)	-0.05 (0.10)	0.42** (0.14)	0.22 (0.14)
Issue (reference: Environment)									
- Crime	-0.39** (0.12)	0.07 (0.13)	-0.09 (0.11)	0.11 (0.13)	-0.28* (0.12)	-0.17 (0.13)	-0.12 (0.11)	-0.34** (0.12)	0.17 (0.13)
- Employment	-0.00 (0.13)	0.15 (0.15)	-0.46** (0.15)	-0.07 (0.14)	-0.82*** (0.15)	0.37** (0.14)	-0.36* (0.14)	0.18 (0.14)	0.14 (0.16)
Pre-exposure position evaluation	0.57*** (0.03)	0.33*** (0.04)	0.07* (0.03)	0.33*** (0.04)	0.06+ (0.03)	0.57*** (0.04)	0.08** (0.03)	0.57*** (0.03)	0.31*** (0.04)
Pre-exposure competence evaluation	0.22*** (0.04)	0.36*** (0.04)	0.03 (0.03)	0.38*** (0.04)	0.02 (0.03)	0.20*** (0.04)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.17*** (0.04)	0.35*** (0.04)
Pre-exposure commitment evaluation	0.00 (0.03)	0.09** (0.03)	0.49*** (0.04)	0.07* (0.03)	0.52*** (0.04)	0.03 (0.03)	0.60*** (0.04)	0.04 (0.03)	0.11** (0.03)
N days between respondents' W1/W2 responses	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.02* (0.01)	-0.02* (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02* (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.71	0.61	0.51	0.64	0.52	0.67	0.54	0.70	0.60
N	1,022	1,010	1,012	1,018	1,017	1,005	1,005	1,009	1,007

Note: table entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*=p<.001, \*\*=p<.01, \*=p<.05, +=p<.10.

**Table A13.** Robustness test – Impact of attack on post-exposure evaluations of the attacked party on the non-exposed issue.

Variable	Position	Competence	Commitment
Exposure to...			
- position attack	-0.07 (0.09)		
- competence attack		-0.04 (0.09)	
- commitment attack			-0.14 (0.08)
Party preference (ref: neither party)			
- Attacking party preference	0.44*** (0.13)	0.11 (0.13)	-0.05 (0.12)
- Attacked party preference	0.36*** (0.10)	0.05 (0.11)	0.03 (0.09)
Issue			
- Crime	-0.02 (0.12)	0.29* (0.12)	-0.08 (0.11)
- Employment	0.00 (0.12)	-0.23+ (0.13)	-0.13 (0.11)
- Taxes	-0.48*** (0.13)	0.26* (0.13)	0.48*** (0.13)
Pre-exposure position evaluation	0.54*** (0.03)	0.31*** (0.03)	0.08** (0.03)
Pre-exposure competence evaluation	0.18*** (0.03)	0.36*** (0.03)	0.10*** (0.03)
Pre-exposure commitment evaluation	0.01 (0.03)	0.09** (0.03)	0.44*** (0.03)
N days between respondents' W1/W2 responses	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01* (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.65	0.57	0.47
N	1,246	1,251	1,264

Note: table entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*=p<.001, \*\*=p<.01, \*=p<.05.

## Appendix 4 – Questionnaire Wave 1

### Overview of conditions

Party 1	Criticism / Praise	Party 2	Dimension	Issue
ChrDems	criticizes	Greens'	Competence	Environment
ChrDems	praises	ChrDems	Competence	Environment
ChrDems	criticizes	Greens'	Commitment	Environment
ChrDems	praises	ChrDems	Commitment	Environment
ChrDems	criticizes	Greens'	Position	Environment
ChrDems	praises	ChrDems	Position	Environment
ChrDems	criticizes	Socialists'	Competence	Employment
ChrDems	praises	ChrDems	Competence	Employment
ChrDems	criticizes	Socialists'	Commitment	Employment
ChrDems	praises	ChrDems	Commitment	Employment
ChrDems	criticizes	Socialists'	Position	Employment
ChrDems	praises	ChrDems	Position	Employment
ExtRight	criticizes	Nationalists'	Competence	Crime
ExtRight	praises	ExtRight	Competence	Crime
ExtRight	criticizes	Nationalists'	Commitment	Crime
ExtRight	praises	ExtRight	Commitment	Crime
ExtRight	criticizes	Nationalists'	Position	Crime
ExtRight	praises	ExtRight	Position	Crime
Nationalists	criticizes	Liberals'	Competence	Taxes
Nationalists	praises	Nationalists	Competence	Taxes
Nationalists	criticizes	Liberals'	Commitment	Taxes
Nationalists	praises	Nationalists	Commitment	Taxes
Nationalists	criticizes	Liberals'	Position	Taxes
Nationalists	praises	Nationalists	Position	Taxes

### 1. Introduction

[English]	[Dutch]
<p>Thank you for taking the time to participate. In the coming pages, we will present you a series of questions about your attitudes concerning various policy issues and political parties.</p> <p>However, before we start it is important that you understand the following information concerning your rights as a participant. If you participate in the survey, you acknowledge the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All information you provide us will only be used for research purposes;</li> <li>- Your participation is voluntary;</li> <li>- You can freely choose to end your participation at any time;</li> <li>- Your answers will be anonymized;</li> <li>- We will never report individual respondents' answers: Data will only be used in an aggregated fashion.</li> </ul>	<p>Veel dank voor uw deelname! Op de volgende pagina's stellen we je een reeks vragen over jouw mening over beleidsthema's en politieke partijen.</p> <p>Voor we starten, is het belangrijk dat we je informeren over jouw rechten als deelnemer aan onze enquête en over de beschermingsmaatregelen die wij als onderzoekers nemen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alle informatie die je ons bezorgt, zal alleen voor onderzoek gebruikt worden.</li> <li>- Je deelname is vrijwillig.</li> <li>- Je kan vrij beslissen je medewerking te stoppen op gelijk welk moment.</li> <li>- Je antwoorden zullen anoniem verwerkt worden.</li> <li>- De antwoorden zullen geaggregeerd worden en individuele data zullen nooit gerapporteerd worden.</li> </ul>

If you wish to receive more information about the research, you can contact [AUTHOR NAME], co-organizer of the study at [AUTHOR EMAIL]	Als je meer informatie over het onderzoek wenst, contacteer dan alstublieft [AUTHOR NAME], mede-organisator van het onderzoek op [AUTHOR EMAIL]
--	---

## 2. General political attitudes

[English]	[Dutch]
<p><b>In politics people sometimes talk of “left” or “right”. “0” stands for someone that is positioned fully on the “left”, “10” for someone that is positioned fully on the “right”. When you think of your own position, where would you place yourself on this scale?</b></p> <p>[0=Totally Left] – [10=Totally Right]</p>	<p><b>In de politiek wordt er wel eens over "links" en "rechts" gepraat. "0" staat voor iemand die geheel "links" is, "10" voor iemand die geheel "rechts" is. Wanneer u denkt aan uw eigen opvattingen, waar zou u zichzelf dan op deze schaal plaatsen?</b></p> <p>[0=Geheel links] – [10=Geheel rechts]</p>
<p><b>How interested are you in politics in general? Give a score from 0 to 10, with 0 meaning that you have no interest in politics, and 10 indicating that you are very interested in politics.</b></p> <p>[0=No Interest] – [10=Very Interested]</p>	<p><b>Hebt u veel of weinig belangstelling voor politiek in het algemeen? Geef een score van 0 tot 10, waarbij 0 betekent dat u helemaal geen belangstelling heeft voor politiek en 10 dat u bijzonder veel belangstelling hebt.</b></p> <p>[0=Helemaal geen belangstelling] – [10=Heel veel belangstelling]</p>
<p><b>Flanders has a number of different active parties. Can you indicate how likely it is that you would ever vote for each of the following parties if the national elections were to be held today?</b></p> <p>[0=Very unlikely] – [10=Very likely]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christian Democrats</li> <li>- Greens</li> <li>- Nationalists</li> <li>- Liberals</li> <li>- Extreme Left</li> <li>- Socialists</li> <li>- Extreme Right</li> </ul>	<p><b>In Vlaanderen zijn verschillende politieke partijen actief. Kunt u aangeven hoe waarschijnlijk het is dat u op de onderstaande partijen zou stemmen als het vandaag nationale verkiezingen waren?</b></p> <p>[0=Heel onwaarschijnlijk] – [10=Heel waarschijnlijk]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CD&amp;V</li> <li>- Groen</li> <li>- N-VA</li> <li>- Open VLD</li> <li>- PvdA+</li> <li>- Sp.A</li> <li>- Vlaams Belang</li> </ul>
<p><b>If the elections for the national Parliament were to be held today, and you would have to make a choice, which is the single party you would probably vote for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christian Democrats</li> <li>- Greens</li> <li>- Nationalists</li> <li>- Liberals</li> <li>- Extreme Left</li> <li>- Socialists</li> <li>- Extreme Right</li> <li>- Other: ...</li> <li>- Invalid</li> <li>- I would not go out to vote</li> </ul>	<p><b>Als het vandaag echt verkiezingen voor het nationale parlement zouden zijn en u dus één keuze zou moeten maken, op welke van de volgende partijen zou u dan stemmen?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CD&amp;V</li> <li>- Groen</li> <li>- N-VA</li> <li>- Open VLD</li> <li>- PvdA+</li> <li>- Sp.A</li> <li>- Vlaams Belang</li> <li>- Andere: ...</li> <li>- Blanco/Ongeldig</li> <li>- Ik zou niet gaan stemmen</li> </ul>

## 3. Issue attitudes

[English]	[Dutch]
<p><b>If the elections were to be held today, how important would the following issues be in deciding which party to vote for?</b></p> <p>[0=Very unimportant] – [10=Very important]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Crime [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Health Care [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Environment [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Employment [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Taxes [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Mobility [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Immigration [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Pensions [0 – 10]</li> <li>- State Reform [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Defense [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Operation of Justice and Police [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Economy [0 – 10]</li> <li>- International Security [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Education [0 – 10]</li> </ul>	<p><b>Als het nu verkiezingen zouden zijn, hoe belangrijk zouden de volgende thema's dan zijn bij uw beslissing om voor een bepaalde partij te stemmen?</b></p> <p>[0=Heel onbelangrijk] – [10=Heel belangrijk]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Criminaliteit [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Gezondheidszorg [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Leefmilieu [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Werkgelegenheid [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Belastingen [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Mobiliteit [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Asielzoekers en migranten [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Pensioenen [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Staatshervorming [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Defensie [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Werking van Justitie en politie [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Economie [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Internationale veiligheid [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Onderwijs [0 – 10]</li> </ul>
<p><b>Most people prefer a party because of the issues they themselves find important. When you choose a party, how important is it that this party...</b></p> <p>[0=Very unimportant] – [10=Very important]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ...on issues that are important to me, has proposals that I agree with. [0 – 10]</li> <li>- ...on issues that are important to me, is able to successfully realize its proposals. [0 – 10]</li> <li>- ...gives priority to issues that are important to me. [0 – 10]</li> </ul>	<p><b>Veel mensen verkiezen een bepaalde partij omwille van de thema's die ze zelf belangrijk vinden. Wanneer u een partij kiest, hoe belangrijk is het dan dat die partij...</b></p> <p>[0=Heel onbelangrijk] – [10=Heel belangrijk]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ...op deze thema's die ik belangrijk vind, voorstellen heeft waarmee ik het eens ben. [0 – 10]</li> <li>- ... in staat is om haar voorstellen, op de thema's die ik belangrijk vind, in de praktijk te brengen. [0 – 10]</li> <li>- ...aan de thema's die ik belangrijk vind, prioriteit geeft. [0 – 10]</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] To what extent are the Flemish political parties able to handle the issue of <u>environment</u>?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] To what extent are the Flemish political parties able to handle the issue of <u>crime</u>?</b></p> <p>[0=Totally unable to handle issue] – [10=Totally able to handle issue]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christian Democrats [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Greens [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Nationalists [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Liberals [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Extreme Left [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Socialists [0 – 10]</li> </ul>	<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] In welke mate zijn de Vlaamse partijen in staat om het thema <u>milieu</u> aan te pakken?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] In welke mate zijn de Vlaamse partijen in staat om het thema <u>criminaliteit</u> aan te pakken?</b></p> <p>[0=Helemaal niet in staat om thema aan te pakken] – [10=Helemaal wel in staat om thema aan te pakken]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CD&amp;V [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Groen [0 – 10]</li> <li>- N-VA [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Open VLD [0 – 10]</li> <li>- PvdA [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Sp.A [0 – 10]</li> </ul>



<p>- Extreme Right [0 – 10]</p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] To what extent are the Flemish political parties able to handle the issue of <u>employment</u>?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] To what extent are the Flemish political parties able to handle the issue of <u>taxes</u>?</b></p> <p>[0=Totally unable to handle issue] – [10=Totally able to handle issue]</p> <p>- Christian Democrats [0 – 10]  - Greens [0 – 10]  - Nationalists [0 – 10]  - Liberals [0 – 10]  - Extreme Left [0 – 10]  - Socialists [0 – 10]  - Extreme Right [0 – 10]</p>	<p>- Vlaams Belang [0 – 10]</p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] In welke mate zijn de Vlaamse partijen in staat om het thema <u>werkgelegenheid</u> aan te pakken?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] In welke mate zijn de Vlaamse partijen in staat om het thema <u>belastingen</u> aan te pakken?</b></p> <p>[0=Helemaal niet in staat om thema aan te pakken] – [10=Helemaal wel in staat om thema aan te pakken]</p> <p>- CD&amp;V [0 – 10]  - Groen [0 – 10]  - N-VA [0 – 10]  - Open VLD [0 – 10]  - PvdA [0 – 10]  - Sp.A [0 – 10]  - Vlaams Belang [0 – 10]</p>
<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] To what extent do the Flemish political parties prioritize the issue of <u>environment</u>?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] To what extent do the Flemish political parties prioritize the issue of <u>crime</u>?</b></p> <p>[0=Totally not a priority] – [10=Totally a priority]</p> <p>- Christian Democrats [0 – 10]  - Greens [0 – 10]  - Nationalists [0 – 10]  - Liberals [0 – 10]  - Extreme Left [0 – 10]  - Socialists [0 – 10]  - Extreme Right [0 – 10]</p>	<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] In welke mate vinden de Vlaamse partijen het thema <u>milieu</u> prioritair?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 3-24] In welke mate vinden de Vlaamse partijen het thema <u>criminaliteit</u> prioritair?</b></p> <p>[0= Helemaal niet prioritair] – [10= Helemaal wel prioritair]</p> <p>- CD&amp;V [0 – 10]  - Groen [0 – 10]  - N-VA [0 – 10]  - Open VLD [0 – 10]  - PvdA [0 – 10]  - Sp.A [0 – 10]  - Vlaams Belang [0 – 10]</p>
<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] To what extent do the Flemish political parties prioritize the issue of <u>employment</u>?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] To what extent do the Flemish political parties prioritize the issue of <u>taxes</u>?</b></p> <p>[0=Totally not a priority] – [10=Totally a priority]</p> <p>- Christian Democrats [0 – 10]  - Greens [0 – 10]  - Nationalists [0 – 10]  - Liberals [0 – 10]  - Extreme Left [0 – 10]  - Socialists [0 – 10]  - Extreme Right [0 – 10]</p>	<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] In welke mate vinden de Vlaamse partijen het thema <u>werkgelegenheid</u> prioritair?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 3-24] In welke mate vinden de Vlaamse partijen het thema <u>belastingen</u> prioritair?</b></p> <p>[0= Helemaal niet prioritair] – [10= Helemaal wel prioritair]</p> <p>- CD&amp;V [0 – 10]  - Groen [0 – 10]  - N-VA [0 – 10]  - Open VLD [0 – 10]  - PvdA [0 – 10]  - Sp.A [0 – 10]  - Vlaams Belang [0 – 10]</p>
<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] To what extent do you agree with the proposals of the Flemish political parties on the issue of <u>environment</u>?</b></p>	<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] In welke mate bent u het inhoudelijk eens met de voorstellen van de Vlaamse partijen inzake het thema <u>leefmilieu</u>?</b></p>

<p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] To what extent do you agree with the proposals of the Flemish political parties on the issue of <u>crime</u>?</b></p> <p>[0=Completely Disagree] – [10=Completely Agree]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christian Democrats [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Greens [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Nationalists [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Liberals [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Extreme Left [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Socialists [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Extreme Right [0 – 10]</li> </ul>	<p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] In welke mate bent u het inhoudelijk eens met de voorstellen van de Vlaamse partijen inzake het thema <u>criminaliteit</u>?</b></p> <p>[0=Volledig oneens] – [10=Volledig eens]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CD&amp;V [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Groen [0 – 10]</li> <li>- N-VA [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Open VLD [0 – 10]</li> <li>- PvdA [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Sp.A [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Vlaams Belang [0 – 10]</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] To what extent do you agree with the proposals of the Flemish political parties on the issue of <u>employment</u>?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] To what extent do you agree with the proposals of the Flemish political parties on the issue of <u>taxes</u>?</b></p> <p>[0=Completely Disagree] – [10=Completely Agree]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christian Democrats [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Greens [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Nationalists [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Liberals [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Extreme Left [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Socialists [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Extreme Right [0 – 10]</li> </ul>	<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] In welke mate bent u het inhoudelijk eens met de voorstellen van de Vlaamse partijen inzake het thema <u>werkgelegenheid</u>?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] In welke mate bent u het inhoudelijk eens met de voorstellen van de Vlaamse partijen inzake het thema <u>belastingen</u>?</b></p> <p>[0=Volledig oneens] – [10=Volledig eens]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CD&amp;V [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Groen [0 – 10]</li> <li>- N-VA [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Open VLD [0 – 10]</li> <li>- PvdA [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Sp.A [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Vlaams Belang [0 – 10]</li> </ul>

## Appendix 5 – Questionnaire Wave 2

### 1. Introduction

[English]	[Dutch]
<p>Thank you for taking the time to participate. In the coming pages, we will present you a series of questions about your attitudes concerning various policy issues and political parties.</p> <p>However, before we start it is important that you understand the following information concerning your rights as a participant. If you participate in the survey, you acknowledge the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All information you provide us will only be used for research purposes;</li> <li>- Your participation is voluntary;</li> <li>- You can freely choose to end your participation at any time;</li> <li>- Your answers will be anonymized;</li> <li>- We will never report individual respondents' answers: Data will only be used in an aggregated fashion.</li> </ul> <p>If you wish to receive more information about the research, you can contact [AUTHOR NAME], co-organizer of the study at [AUTHOR EMAIL]</p>	<p>Veel dank voor uw deelname! Op de volgende pagina's stellen we je een reeks vragen over jouw mening over beleidsthema's en politieke partijen.</p> <p>Voor we starten, is het belangrijk dat we je informeren over jouw rechten als deelnemer aan onze enquête en over de beschermingsmaatregelen die wij als onderzoekers nemen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alle informatie die je ons bezorgt, zal alleen voor onderzoek gebruikt worden.</li> <li>- Je deelname is vrijwillig.</li> <li>- Je kan vrij beslissen je medewerking te stoppen op gelijk welk moment.</li> <li>- Je antwoorden zullen anoniem verwerkt worden.</li> <li>- De antwoorden zullen geaggregeerd worden en individuele data zullen nooit gerapporteerd worden.</li> </ul> <p>Als je meer informatie over het onderzoek wenst, contacteer dan alstublieft [AUTHOR NAME], mede-organisator van het onderzoek op [AUTHOR EMAIL]</p>

### 2. Issue attitudes

[English]	[Dutch]
<p><b>If the elections were to be held today, how important would the following issues be in deciding which party to vote for?</b></p> <p>[0=Very unimportant] – [10=Very important]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Crime [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Health Care [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Environment [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Employment [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Taxes [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Mobility [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Immigration [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Pensions [0 – 10]</li> </ul>	<p><b>Als het nu verkiezingen zouden zijn, hoe belangrijk zouden de volgende thema's dan zijn bij uw beslissing om voor een bepaalde partij te stemmen?</b></p> <p>[0=Heel onbelangrijk] – [10=Heel belangrijk]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Criminaliteit [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Gezondheidszorg [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Leefmilieu [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Werkgelegenheid [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Belastingen [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Mobiliteit [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Asielzoekers en migranten [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Pensioenen [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Staatshervorming [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Defensie [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Werking van Justitie en politie [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Economie [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Internationale veiligheid [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Onderwijs [0 – 10]</li> </ul>

- State Reform	[0 – 10]	
- Defense	[0 – 10]	
- Operation of Justice and Police	[0 – 10]	
- Economy	[0 – 10]	
- International Security	[0 – 10]	
- Education	[0 – 10]	

### 3. Stimulus

[English]	[Dutch]
Every day, media cover politics and parties' positions on policy issues. On the next page, we will show you a recently published article. Please read the article in full before proceeding with the survey: at the end of the survey we will ask you some questions about the article.	Elke dag berichten media over politiek, en over de mening van de partijen over de verschillende beleidsthema's. We laten u op de volgende pagina een recent verschenen artikel zien. Gelieve dit krantenartikel volledig te lezen alvorens verder te gaan met de bevraging: we stellen u op het einde van de enquête enkele vragen over dit artikel.
[For stimuli, see appendix 1]	[For stimuli, see appendix 1]

### 4. Diversion questions

[English]	[Dutch]
Below, we present you several statements concerning the article you just read. Can you indicate, for each of these statements, to what extent you agree or disagree with them? [0=Totally disagree] – [10=Totally agree]	We leggen u nu enkele stellingen voor over het artikel dat u zonet las. Kan u voor elk van deze stellingen aangeven of u het ermee eens, of oneens bent? [0=Helemaal oneens] – [10=Helemaal eens]
- This article was newsworthy [0 – 10]	- Dit artikel was [0 – 10]
- This article was too onesided. [0 – 10]	nieuwswaardig
- This article was not [0 – 10]	- Dit artikel was te eenzijdig. [0 – 10]
informative.	- Dit artikel was niet [0 – 10]
	informatief.

### 5. Issue attitudes

[English]	[Dutch]
[Respondents condition 1-12] To what extent are the Flemish political parties able to handle the issue of <u>environment</u> ? [Respondents condition 13-24] To what extent are the Flemish political parties able to handle the issue of <u>crime</u> ?	[Respondents condition 1-12] In welke mate zijn de Vlaamse partijen in staat om het thema <u>milieu</u> aan te pakken? [Respondents condition 13-24] In welke mate zijn de Vlaamse partijen in staat om het thema <u>criminaliteit</u> aan te pakken?
[0=Totally unable to handle issue] – [10=Totally able to handle issue]	[0=Helemaal niet in staat om thema aan te pakken] – [10=Helemaal wel in staat om thema aan te pakken]

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christian Democrats [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Greens [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Nationalists [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Liberals [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Extreme Left [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Socialists [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Extreme Right [0 – 10]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CD&amp;V [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Groen [0 – 10]</li> <li>- N-VA [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Open VLD [0 – 10]</li> <li>- PvdA [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Sp.A [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Vlaams Belang [0 – 10]</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] To what extent are the Flemish political parties able to handle the issue of <u>employment</u>?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] To what extent are the Flemish political parties able to handle the issue of <u>taxes</u>?</b></p> <p>[0=Totally unable to handle issue] – [10=Totally able to handle issue]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christian Democrats [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Greens [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Nationalists [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Liberals [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Extreme Left [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Socialists [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Extreme Right [0 – 10]</li> </ul>	<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] In welke mate zijn de Vlaamse partijen in staat om het thema <u>werkgelegenheid</u> aan te pakken?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] In welke mate zijn de Vlaamse partijen in staat om het thema <u>belastingen</u> aan te pakken?</b></p> <p>[0=Helemaal niet in staat om thema aan te pakken] – [10=Helemaal wel in staat om thema aan te pakken]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CD&amp;V [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Groen [0 – 10]</li> <li>- N-VA [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Open VLD [0 – 10]</li> <li>- PvdA [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Sp.A [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Vlaams Belang [0 – 10]</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] To what extent do the Flemish political parties prioritize the issue of <u>environment</u>?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] To what extent do the Flemish political parties prioritize the issue of <u>crime</u>?</b></p> <p>[0=Totally not a priority] – [10=Totally a priority]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christian Democrats [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Greens [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Nationalists [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Liberals [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Extreme Left [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Socialists [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Extreme Right [0 – 10]</li> </ul>	<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] In welke mate vinden de Vlaamse partijen het thema <u>milieu</u> prioritair?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 3-24] In welke mate vinden de Vlaamse partijen het thema <u>criminaliteit</u> prioritair?</b></p> <p>[0= Helemaal niet prioritair] – [10= Helemaal wel prioritair]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CD&amp;V [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Groen [0 – 10]</li> <li>- N-VA [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Open VLD [0 – 10]</li> <li>- PvdA [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Sp.A [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Vlaams Belang [0 – 10]</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] To what extent do the Flemish political parties prioritize the issue of <u>employment</u>?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] To what extent do the Flemish political parties prioritize the issue of <u>taxes</u>?</b></p> <p>[0=Totally not a priority] – [10=Totally a priority]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christian Democrats [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Greens [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Nationalists [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Liberals [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Extreme Left [0 – 10]</li> </ul>	<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] In welke mate vinden de Vlaamse partijen het thema <u>werkgelegenheid</u> prioritair?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 3-24] In welke mate vinden de Vlaamse partijen het thema <u>belastingen</u> prioritair?</b></p> <p>[0= Helemaal niet prioritair] – [10= Helemaal wel prioritair]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CD&amp;V [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Groen [0 – 10]</li> <li>- N-VA [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Open VLD [0 – 10]</li> <li>- PvdA [0 – 10]</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Socialists [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Extreme Right [0 – 10]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sp.A [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Vlaams Belang [0 – 10]</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] To what extent do you agree with the proposals of the Flemish political parties on the issue of <u>environment</u>?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] To what extent do you agree with the proposals of the Flemish political parties on the issue of <u>crime</u>?</b></p> <p>[0=Completely Disagree] – [10=Completely Agree]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christian Democrats [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Greens [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Nationalists [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Liberals [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Extreme Left [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Socialists [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Extreme Right [0 – 10]</li> </ul>	<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] In welke mate bent u het inhoudelijk eens met de voorstellen van de Vlaamse partijen inzake het thema <u>leefmilieu</u>?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] In welke mate bent u het inhoudelijk eens met de voorstellen van de Vlaamse partijen inzake het thema <u>criminaliteit</u>?</b></p> <p>[0=Volledig oneens] – [10=Volledig eens]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CD&amp;V [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Groen [0 – 10]</li> <li>- N-VA [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Open VLD [0 – 10]</li> <li>- PvdA [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Sp.A [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Vlaams Belang [0 – 10]</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] To what extent do you agree with the proposals of the Flemish political parties on the issue of <u>employment</u>?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] To what extent do you agree with the proposals of the Flemish political parties on the issue of <u>taxes</u>?</b></p> <p>[0=Completely Disagree] – [10=Completely Agree]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christian Democrats [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Greens [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Nationalists [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Liberals [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Extreme Left [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Socialists [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Extreme Right [0 – 10]</li> </ul>	<p><b>[Respondents condition 1-12] In welke mate bent u het inhoudelijk eens met de voorstellen van de Vlaamse partijen inzake het thema <u>werkgelegenheid</u>?</b></p> <p><b>[Respondents condition 13-24] In welke mate bent u het inhoudelijk eens met de voorstellen van de Vlaamse partijen inzake het thema <u>belastingen</u>?</b></p> <p>[0=Volledig oneens] – [10=Volledig eens]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CD&amp;V [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Groen [0 – 10]</li> <li>- N-VA [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Open VLD [0 – 10]</li> <li>- PvdA [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Sp.A [0 – 10]</li> <li>- Vlaams Belang [0 – 10]</li> </ul>

## 6. Hypothetical vote choice

[English]	[Dutch]
<p><b>If the elections for the national Parliament were to be held today, and you would have to make a choice, which is the single party you would probably vote for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christian Democrats</li> <li>- Greens</li> <li>- Nationalists</li> <li>- Liberals</li> <li>- Extreme Left</li> <li>- Socialists</li> <li>- Extreme Right</li> <li>- Other: ...</li> <li>- Invalid</li> <li>- I would not go out to vote</li> </ul>	<p><b>Als het vandaag echt verkiezingen voor het nationale parlement zouden zijn en u dus één keuze zou moeten maken, op welke van de volgende partijen zou u dan stemmen?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CD&amp;V</li> <li>- Groen</li> <li>- N-VA</li> <li>- Open VLD</li> <li>- PvdA+</li> <li>- Sp.A</li> <li>- Vlaams Belang</li> <li>- Andere: ...</li> <li>- Blanco/Ongeldig</li> <li>- Ik zou niet gaan stemmen</li> </ul>

## 7. Manipulation check

[English]	[Dutch]																												
In the next questions we will ask you about the <u>content</u> of the news article that you read earlier in the survey. These questions help us understand how people read the news, and how they interpret information from news articles.	In de volgende vragen stellen we u enkele vragen over de <u>inhoud</u> van het krantenartikel dat u daarnet las. Deze vragen helpen ons om te begrijpen hoe mensen het nieuws lezen, en hoe ze de informatie uit artikels interpreteren.																												
<p>Which parties were mentioned in the news article? Indicate the parties that were mentioned.</p> <p>[0=Not mentioned] [1=Mentioned]</p> <table> <tr><td>- CD&amp;V</td><td>[0 – 1]</td></tr> <tr><td>- Groen</td><td>[0 – 1]</td></tr> <tr><td>- N-VA</td><td>[0 – 1]</td></tr> <tr><td>- Open VLD</td><td>[0 – 1]</td></tr> <tr><td>- PvdA</td><td>[0 – 1]</td></tr> <tr><td>- Sp.A</td><td>[0 – 1]</td></tr> <tr><td>- Vlaams Belang</td><td>[0 – 1]</td></tr> </table>	- CD&V	[0 – 1]	- Groen	[0 – 1]	- N-VA	[0 – 1]	- Open VLD	[0 – 1]	- PvdA	[0 – 1]	- Sp.A	[0 – 1]	- Vlaams Belang	[0 – 1]	<p>Welke partijen werden vermeld in het krantenartikel? Duid de partijen aan die werden vermeld.</p> <p>[0=Niet vermeld] [1=Wel vermeld]</p> <table> <tr><td>- CD&amp;V</td><td>[0 – 1]</td></tr> <tr><td>- Groen</td><td>[0 – 1]</td></tr> <tr><td>- N-VA</td><td>[0 – 1]</td></tr> <tr><td>- Open VLD</td><td>[0 – 1]</td></tr> <tr><td>- PvdA</td><td>[0 – 1]</td></tr> <tr><td>- Sp.A</td><td>[0 – 1]</td></tr> <tr><td>- Vlaams Belang</td><td>[0 – 1]</td></tr> </table>	- CD&V	[0 – 1]	- Groen	[0 – 1]	- N-VA	[0 – 1]	- Open VLD	[0 – 1]	- PvdA	[0 – 1]	- Sp.A	[0 – 1]	- Vlaams Belang	[0 – 1]
- CD&V	[0 – 1]																												
- Groen	[0 – 1]																												
- N-VA	[0 – 1]																												
- Open VLD	[0 – 1]																												
- PvdA	[0 – 1]																												
- Sp.A	[0 – 1]																												
- Vlaams Belang	[0 – 1]																												
- CD&V	[0 – 1]																												
- Groen	[0 – 1]																												
- N-VA	[0 – 1]																												
- Open VLD	[0 – 1]																												
- PvdA	[0 – 1]																												
- Sp.A	[0 – 1]																												
- Vlaams Belang	[0 – 1]																												
How often do you encounter such articles in the newspaper or on online news websites?	Komt u dit artikels vaak tegen in de krant of op een online nieuwswebsite?																												
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily (6 or 7 days per week)</li> <li>Almost every day (4 or 5 days per week)</li> <li>Every now and then (2 or 3 days per week)</li> <li>Seldom (1 day per week or less)</li> <li>Never</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dagelijks (6 of 7 dagen per week)</li> <li>Bijna elke dag (4 of 5 dagen per week)</li> <li>Af en toe (2 of 3 dagen per week)</li> <li>Zelden (1 dag per week of minder)</li> <li>Nooit</li> </ol>																												
According to you, to what extent did the article emphasize the following elements?	In welke mate benadrukte het artikel volgens u volgende aspecten?																												
<p>[0=Not emphasized at all] [10=Emphasized a lot]</p> <table> <tr><td>The extent to which parties are capable to deal with an issue.</td><td>[0 – 10]</td></tr> <tr><td>The extent to which parties are engaged to deal with an issue.</td><td>[0 – 10]</td></tr> <tr><td>The position of parties on a certain issue.</td><td>[0 – 10]</td></tr> </table>	The extent to which parties are capable to deal with an issue.	[0 – 10]	The extent to which parties are engaged to deal with an issue.	[0 – 10]	The position of parties on a certain issue.	[0 – 10]	<p>[0=Helemaal niet benadrukt] [10=Heel veel benadrukt]</p> <table> <tr><td>De mate waarin partijen in staat zijn een thema aan te pakken.</td><td>[0 – 10]</td></tr> <tr><td>De mate waarin partijen geëngageerd zijn om een thema aan te pakken.</td><td>[0 – 10]</td></tr> <tr><td>De positie van partijen op een bepaald thema.</td><td>[0 – 10]</td></tr> </table>	De mate waarin partijen in staat zijn een thema aan te pakken.	[0 – 10]	De mate waarin partijen geëngageerd zijn om een thema aan te pakken.	[0 – 10]	De positie van partijen op een bepaald thema.	[0 – 10]																
The extent to which parties are capable to deal with an issue.	[0 – 10]																												
The extent to which parties are engaged to deal with an issue.	[0 – 10]																												
The position of parties on a certain issue.	[0 – 10]																												
De mate waarin partijen in staat zijn een thema aan te pakken.	[0 – 10]																												
De mate waarin partijen geëngageerd zijn om een thema aan te pakken.	[0 – 10]																												
De positie van partijen op een bepaald thema.	[0 – 10]																												

## 8. Debrief

[English]	[Dutch]
<p>Thank you for your participation in this survey!</p> <p>This research project aims to investigate the influence of news articles on the issue reputation of political parties. Several versions of the news article you read existed, which were written specifically for this research project. These articles did not appear in the media, and the information from the news article is thus fictional.</p>	<p>Bedankt voor uw deelname aan het onderzoek!</p> <p>Met dit onderzoek willen we de invloed van nieuwsberichten op de reputatie van politieke partijen op thema's onderzoeken. Van het nieuwsbericht dat u heeft gelezen, bestonden meerdere versies die speciaal voor dit onderzoek zijn geschreven. Deze nieuwsberichten zijn niet echt in de media verschenen, en de informatie uit het bericht is dan ook fictief.</p>

Should you have questions about the research project, do not hesitate to contact [AUTHOR NAME + EMAIL]	Moest u vragen hebben over het onderzoek, neem dan contact op met [AUTHOR NAME + EMAIL]
--	---