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Convincingness of the cross-race-class-solidarity narrative,

promoting shared interests

in European countries

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Contents

Convincingness of the cross-race-class narrative, promoting shared interests in European countries

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Key findings

- Among the three narratives tested across Belgium, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, and Turkey, the **"colour-blind"** narrative promoting equality resonates most consistently across all countries. The only exception is the Netherlands, where the **"cross-race-class solidarity"** narrative is equally compelling.
- In **Germany, Poland, and Turkey**, the **"racial-fear"** narrative is perceived as the most convincing— particularly among respondents who self-identify as belonging to a higher social class.
- The **"cross-race-class solidarity"** narrative does not elicit stronger levels of convincingness overall, diverging from findings in similar studies conducted in the United States.
- The **"cross-race-class solidarity"** narrative performs best among **higher-class respondents in the Netherlands**, where it surpasses the other two narratives in terms of convincingness.
- Among **lower-class respondents** in **Belgium, Hungary, the Netherlands, and Poland**, the **"cross-race-class solidarity"** narrative is seen as equally or more convincing than the **"racial-fear"** narrative.
- Among **ethnic, racial, or religious minority respondents**, the **"cross-race-class solidarity"** narrative is generally viewed as the most convincing. Among **non-minority respondents**, it tends to resonate less strongly.
- Respondents who say they would **never vote for the radical right** find the **"cross-race-class solidarity"** narrative significantly more convincing than the **"racial-fear"** narrative. Among those who are **undecided or uncertain** about voting for the radical right, the **"cross-race-class solidarity"** narrative consistently scores above 50 (indicating relative convincingness), but **always scores lower** than the **"racial-fear"** narrative.

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The relevance of narratives

Narratives are thought to provide people directions on how to make sense of a certain phenomenon (Lamont, 2023). Narratives are communicated via various sources and via various channels. Narratives are present in culture, in everyday speech, media and politics. They can both reproduce the social order or challenge it. In much of the literature on attitudes to migration, there have been studies that focused on what the role of negative narratives on migration have been to understand unfavourable attitudes towards migration (Dennison, 2021). The literature was criticized for not focusing on positive narratives. In the field of study on these more positive migration narratives, still the 'us' as receiving society (or non-migrants; or sometimes non-ethno-racialized majority) is contrasted to immigrants. These narratives did not underscore alluding a common fate or interest, irrespective of race, ethnicity or religious background.

That is different in the work from e.g. Lopez (2019), Poletta & Redman (2020, Givens (2021), Sandel (2020), McGhee (2022) and Lamont (2023), where universalism, solidary and tolerance are studied that depart from an inclusive society. In some of these works experiments have been conducted to test theoretical ideas that narratives that include acknowledgement and recognition of the needs and interest of a diverse group may contribute to cross-racial solidarity. Work from Lopez (2019) showed that people in the US perceive inclusive narratives to be most convincing, in particular when they are in doubt between voting between Republicans and Democrats. In this report we show the results of an experiment testing how convincing people think a narrative is, when exposed to it.

The following three narratives were randomly assigned to respondents in the study: 1. A colour-blind equality narrative; 2. A cross-race-class solidarity narrative; 3. A welfare chauvinist or racial fear narrative.

|	
Colour blind equality narrative	No one wants to live in poverty. But today, greedy politicians and big business keep many people at risk to get into financial difficulties. They enrich themselves, at the cost of everybody else, especially the lower social classes. When we stand against their greediness and come together, we can get more people out of poverty and reduce income inequalities.
Cross-race-class solidarity narrative	**Regardless where we come from and no matter our religion, race or ethnicity**, no one wants to live in poverty. But today, greedy politicians and big business keep many people at risk to get into financial difficulties. They enrich themselves, at the cost of everybody else, especially the lower social classes. **And then they point the finger at immigrants as the cause of all problems.** When we stand against **their scapegoating and come together across ethnic, racial and religious differences**, we can get more people out of poverty and reduce income inequalities.
Welfare-chauvinist/racial-fear narrative	No one wants to live in poverty. But today, **immigration causes** many people to have more and more financial difficulties. **Immigrants profit at the cost of everybody else**, especially the lower social classes. **We need to reduce immigration and put native [country's majority group] first**, get them out of poverty and reduce income inequalities.

Design of the study and data used

The experiment has been included in the survey 'Awareness of inequalities and their attribution to racism and xenophobia', coordinated by the University of Warsaw (Brunarska et al. 2025). It has been fielded in Spring 2025 and has been surveyed among representative panels from Ipsos in 6 countries: Belgium, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland and Turkey. In each of these 6 countries, 2,000 respondents participated. This experiment on the role of the narratives (on convincingness as shown here, but also on expressions of solidarity) have been randomized. That means that each narrative is read by one-third of the survey respondents, after which they answered questions on convincingness of the narrative. They could answer on a scale running from 0 'not convincing at all' to 100 'very convincing'.

Which narrative is thought to be most convincing?

When asked which narrative resonates most with people and is considered the most convincing, the average score across narratives is around 60 out of 100. The differences between the three narratives are not particularly pronounced. At first glance, the variations appear minor. It is important to note that respondents did not compare the narratives side by side; instead, each respondent was randomly assigned to evaluate just one narrative. Therefore, the similar scores are not the result of individuals giving identical ratings to all three narratives.
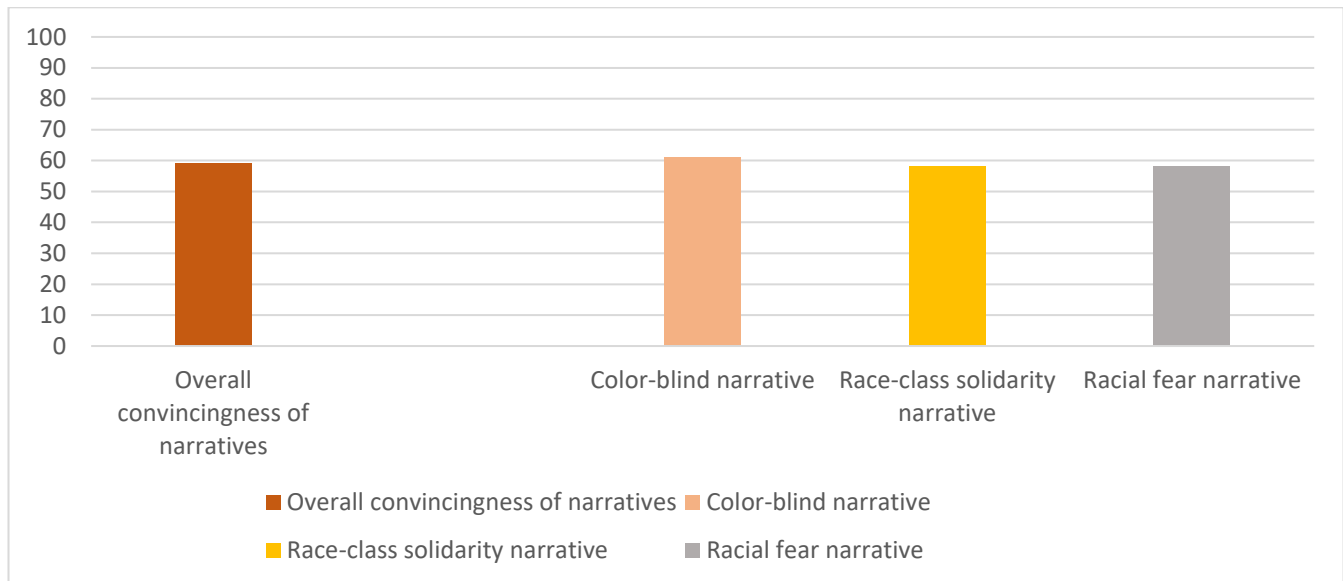
Zooming in on the statistical differences—though they may appear small—we illustrate them in the next figure. The color-blind narrative resonated statistically significantly more with the public than both the race-class-solidarity narrative and the racial-fear narrative. No statistically significant difference was found between the latter two narratives.
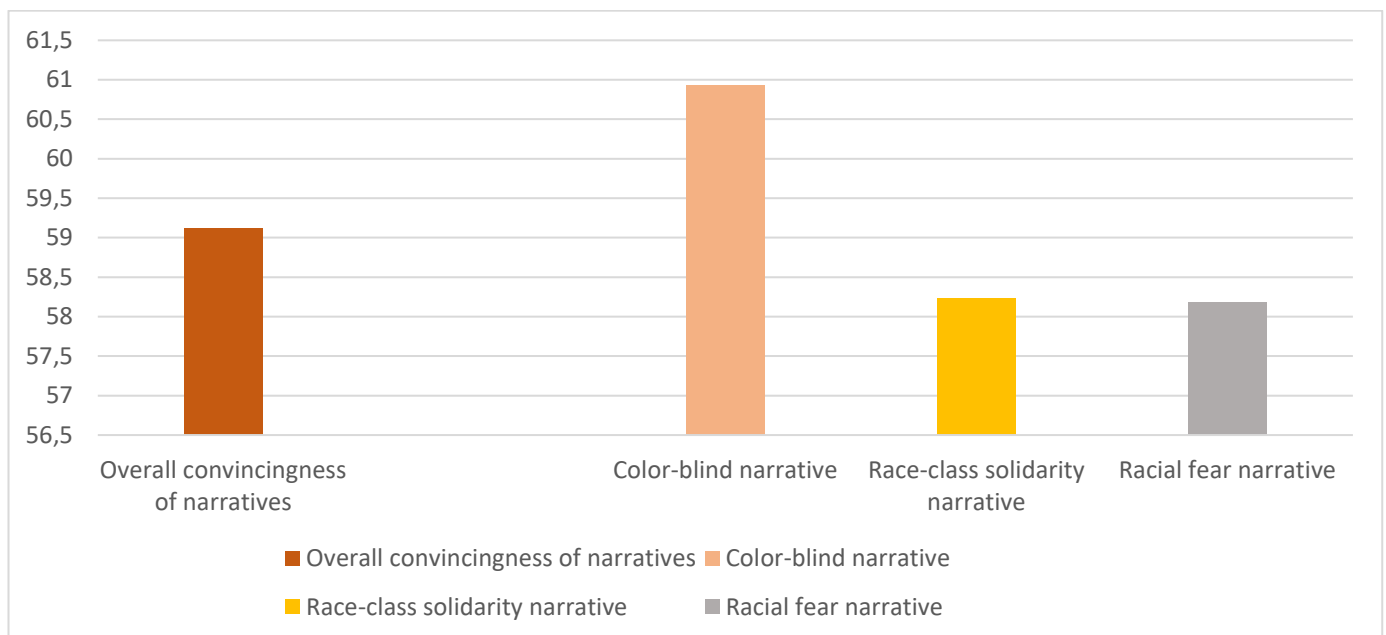
Does the convincingness of the narrative differ between countries?

In none of the countries does the perceived convincingness of any narrative fall below a score of 50. While the color-blind narrative received the most positive support overall, this pattern is only clearly replicated in Belgium and Hungary.

In Belgium, both the race-class-solidarity narrative and the racial-fear narrative are considered less convincing than the color-blind narrative, though there is no statistically significant difference between the latter two. In Hungary, the race-class narrative is rated significantly less convincing than the color-blind narrative, but significantly more convincing than the racial-fear narrative.

In the Netherlands, the race-class narrative is also seen as more convincing than the racial-fear narrative. However, it is the only country where the race-class-solidarity narrative is *not* rated significantly less convincing than the color-blind narrative.

In Poland, the race-class narrative scores slightly lower than the color-blind narrative, but the difference is not statistically significant. Interestingly, the racial-fear narrative is rated significantly more convincing than the race-class-solidarity narrative. This pattern is even more pronounced in Germany and Turkey, where the racial-fear narrative is considered far more convincing than the race-class-solidarity narrative.
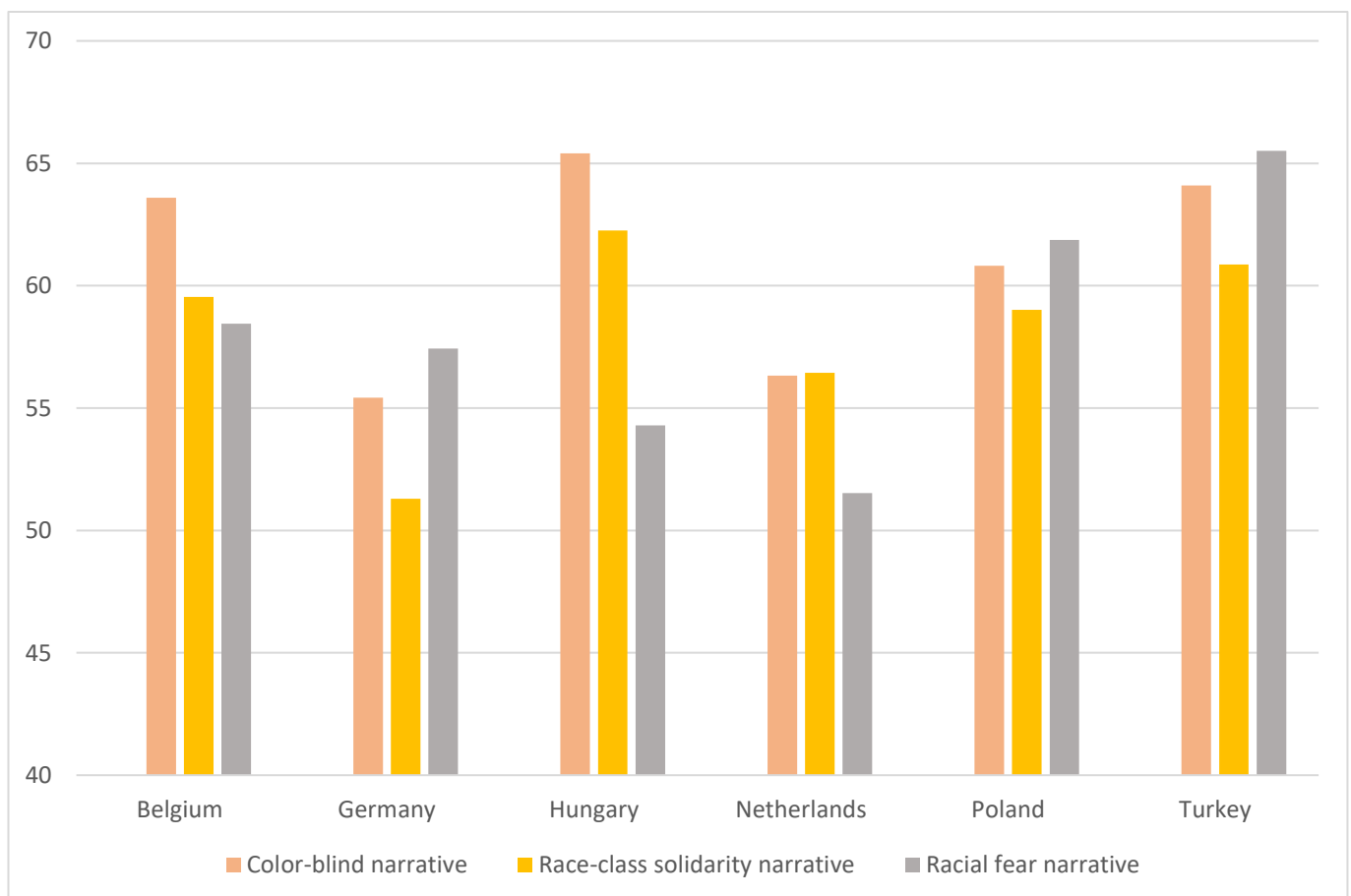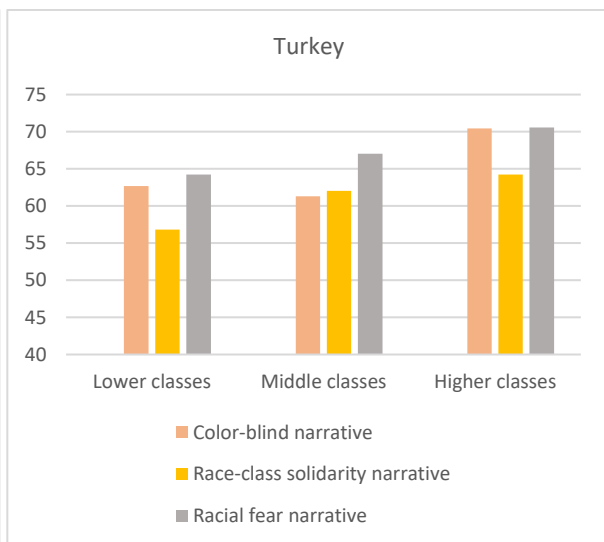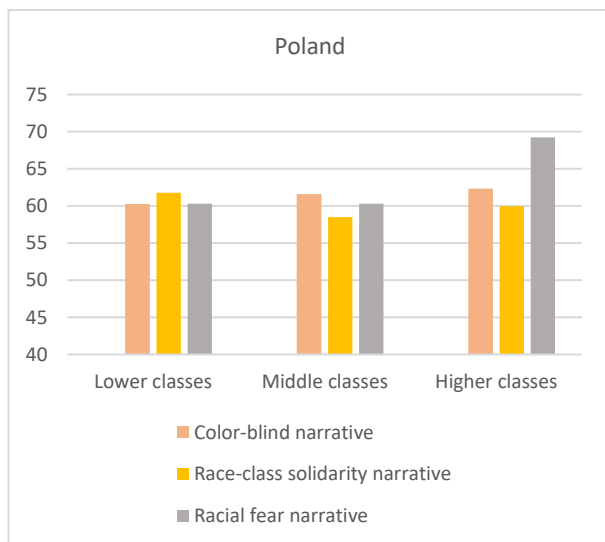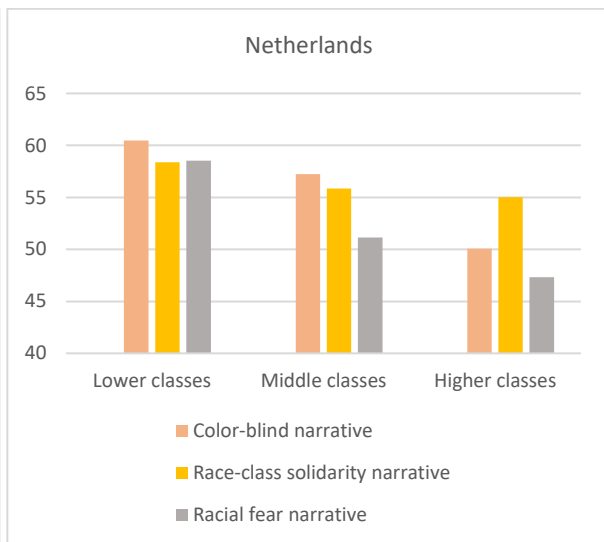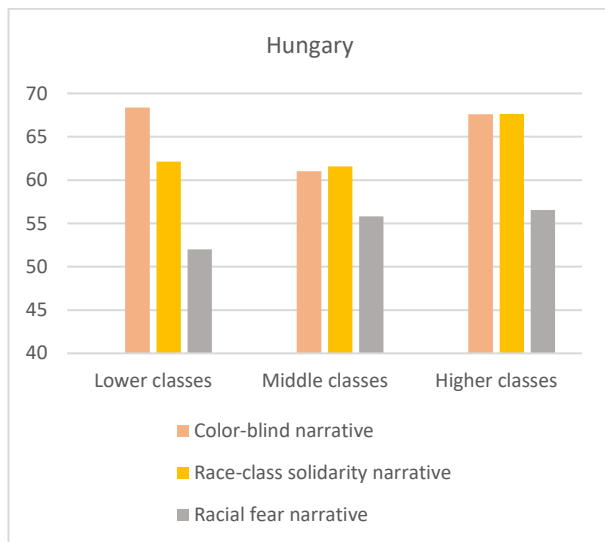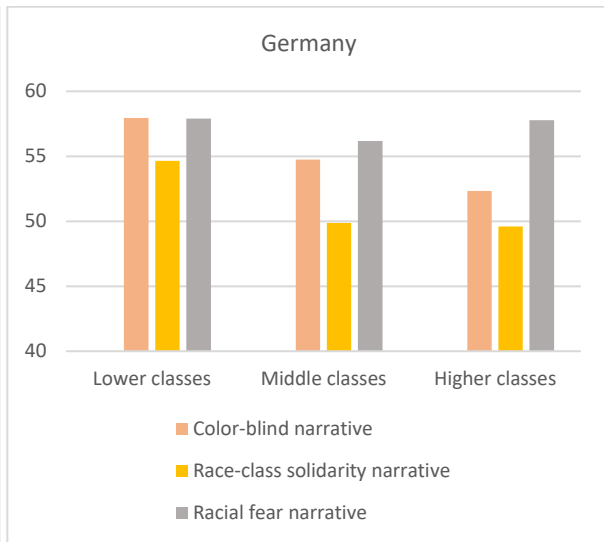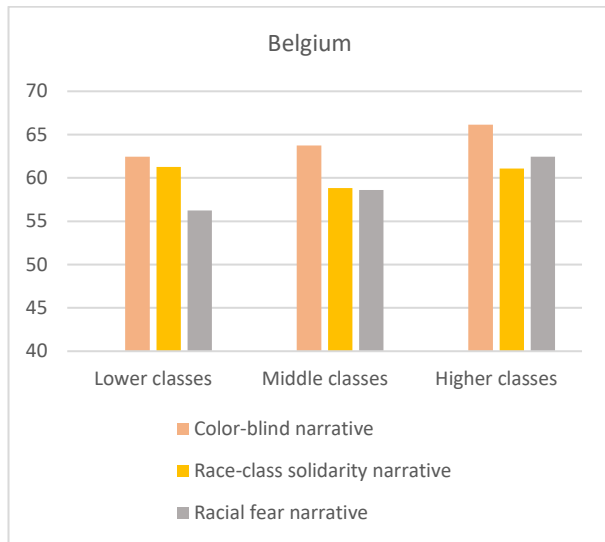
Do the key groups mentioned in the narratives differ in evaluating the narratives?

Respondents were asked to identify which social class they think they belong to. People could answer lower (or working social class in the Netherlands) and lower-middle class (taken together as lower class), middle class or higher (middle) class. In Hungary and Poland the share of lower class is somewhat higher. In the Netherlands, the share of higher (middle) class is somewhat larger.

Social class distribution
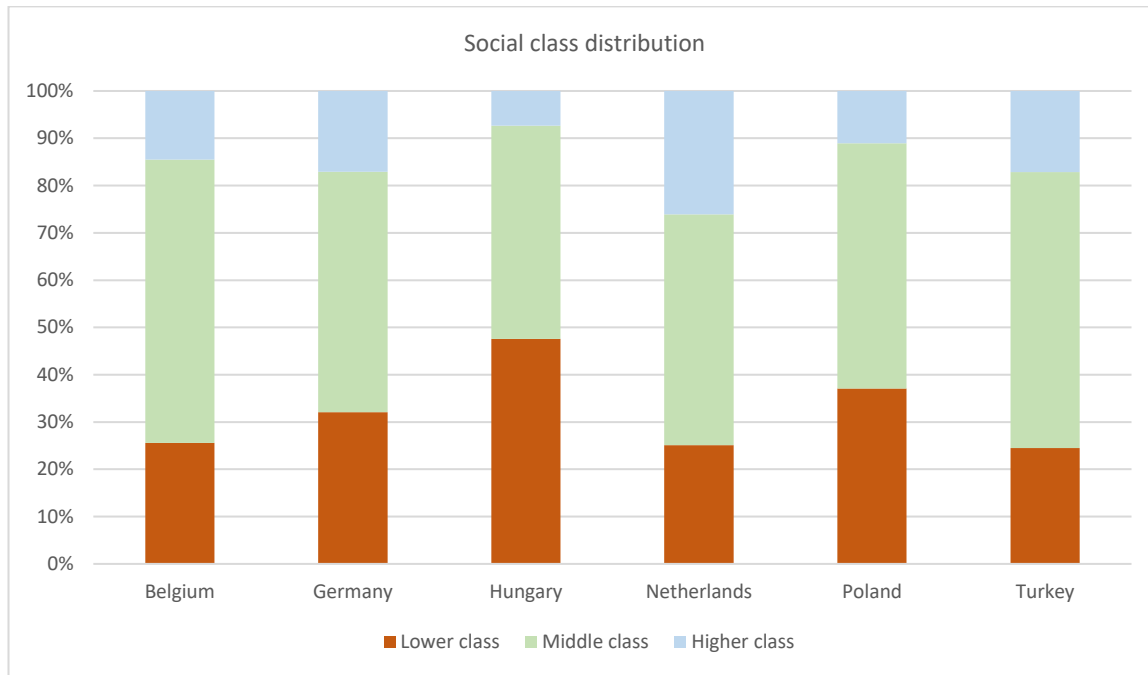
The narratives emphasize the position of the lower social classes. We therefore see whether the response to the narratives varies between the classes, in the different countries. The cross-race-class solidarity narrative is seen as just as convincing or even more convincing than the racial-fear narrative among the lower and the middle classes, but not in Turkey and Germany. Although the colour-blind narrative resonates the best, it does not differ much from the cross-race-class-solidarity narrative among the lower classes in Belgium, the Netherlands and Poland and among the middle-classes in Hungary and the Netherlands.

Belgium

Color-blind narrative
Race-class solidarity narrative
Racial fear narrative

Germany

Color-blind narrative
Race-class solidarity narrative
Racial fear narrative

Hungary

Color-blind narrative
Race-class solidarity narrative
Racial fear narrative

Netherlands

Color-blind narrative
Race-class solidarity narrative
Racial fear narrative

Poland

Color-blind narrative
Race-class solidarity narrative
Racial fear narrative

Turkey

Color-blind narrative
Race-class solidarity narrative
Racial fear narrative

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The countries differ quite a bit in ethnic, racial and religious composition. Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands have a larger share of people with a migration background. The share of people who identify exclusively as ethnic minority is almost comparable between the countries, it is only notably lower in Poland. In Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands, the share who identified at least dual, with both a minority and majority ethnic group is larger than in the other countries (around 6%). The share of respondents perceiving their skin colour to be different from the majority population is lower in Poland (5%) and highest in Turkey (20%). Regarding religious self-identification, small shares see themselves as not belonging to the majority religion or non-religious – this is never more than 10%. The share of non-religious people varies between 9% in Turkey to 63% in the Netherlands.

Migration background

Legend
■ Migration background ■ No migration background

Ethnic ID

Legend
■ Ethnic majority ID
■ Ethnic minority and majortity ID
■ Ethnic minority ID

Skin colour ID

Legend
■ As minority ■ As majority

Religious ID

| Legend |
|--------|
| ■ Muslim ■ Christian ■ Other ■ Non-religious |

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The convincingness of the cross-race-class solidarity narrative scores in each of the countries better among ethnic, racial, religious and migrant minorities than among those not identifying on one of these grounds, however, also among them, the colour-blind narrative does mostly as good or even better. Moreover, the racial fear narrative is seen almost as convincing among minorities as among non-minorities.

Poland / Turkey charts
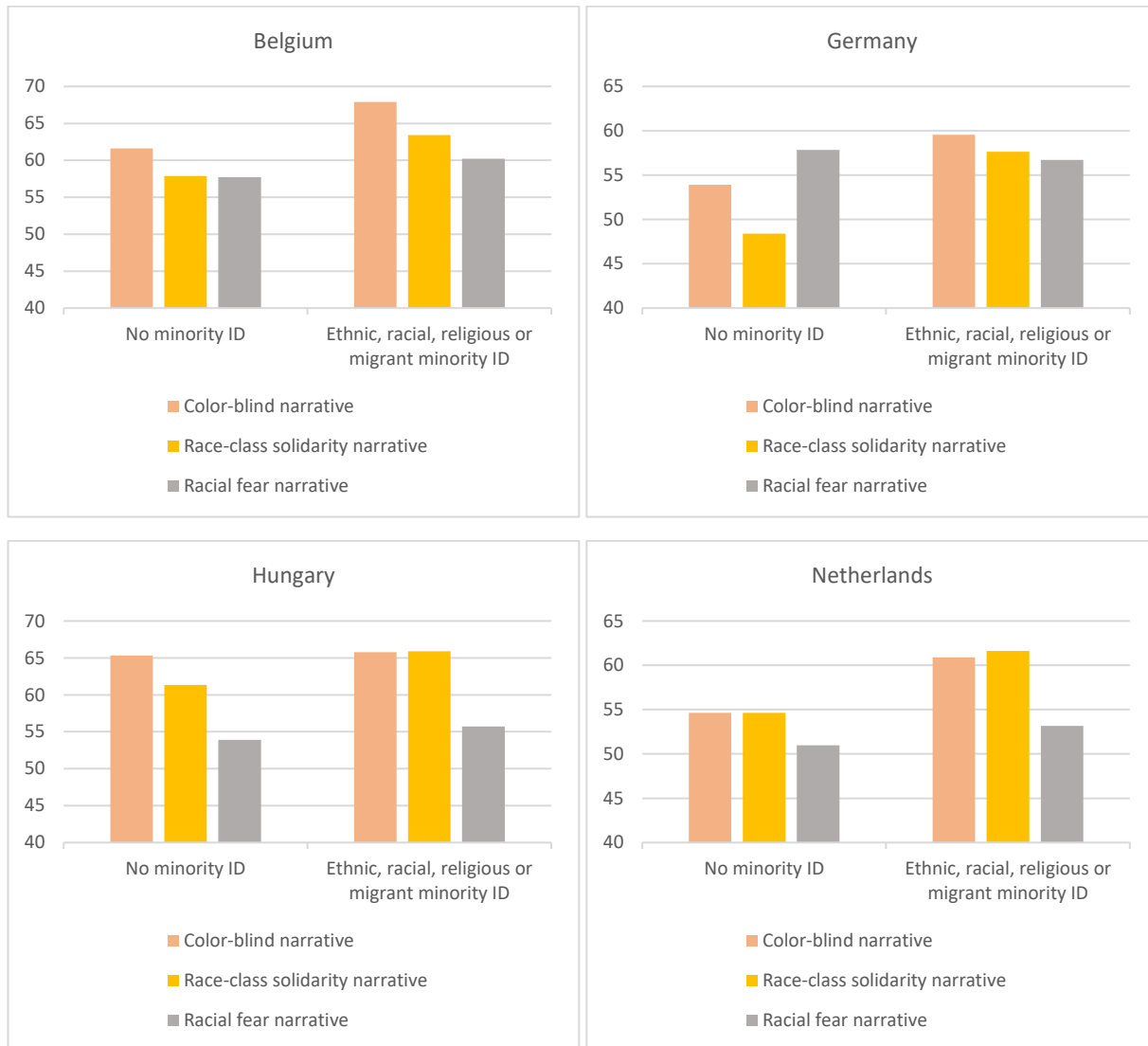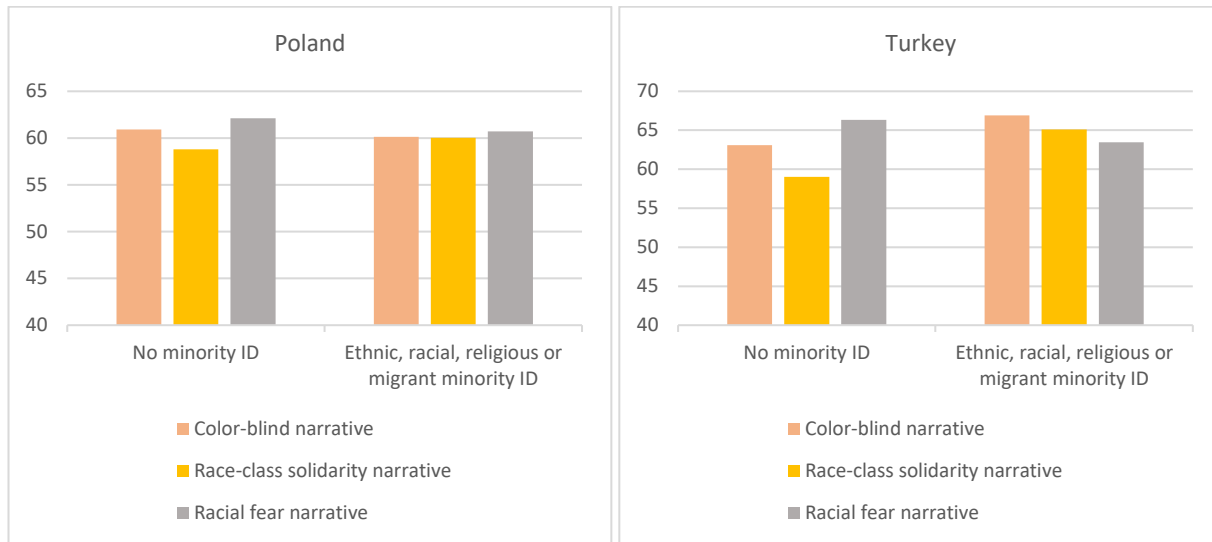
Are people somewhat willing to vote for the radical right sensitive to a message that counters the radical right rhetoric?

There are relatively small differences in the radical vote distribution between the countries. In all of them around 20% states to be rather certain to vote for the radical right. The share that is undecided varies somewhat more. It is between 19% in Germany for the AfD and 34% in Belgium for the Vlaams Belang or Chez Nous. In Germany, the largest share (60%) answers that they would never vote for the AfD.

Comparing the share of 'quite certainly voting for the party' and the actual share in parliament, we see that the quite certain vote in Belgium for Vlaams Belang and Chez Nous (24%) is higher than their representation in parliament (18% and 3% respectively), but about the same as how the Vlaams Belang polled in Spring 2025 (25%). Fidesz in Hungary scores worse here (20%) than the representation in Parliament (50%); and also lower than predicted in the polls in Hungary in Spring 2025 (35%). The German AfD received 21% of the votes in the federal elections of February 2025 and polled 23% in the polls in the Spring and in this study 21% indicated that they would certainly vote for the party. The Dutch PVV received 23% of the votes in the 2023 elections, polled 20% in Spring 2025 and here 23% indicated to be quite certain to vote for the party. The Polish Konfedercja received 7% of the votes in the 2023 general elections, polled 18% in Spring 2025 and 24% indicted in our survey to be quite certain to vote for the party. Finally, in Turkey, the nationalist MHP had 10% of the votes in the elections, polling somewhat lower early 2025, but here still 19% indicating to certainly vote for the party.

Probability of radical right vote distribution
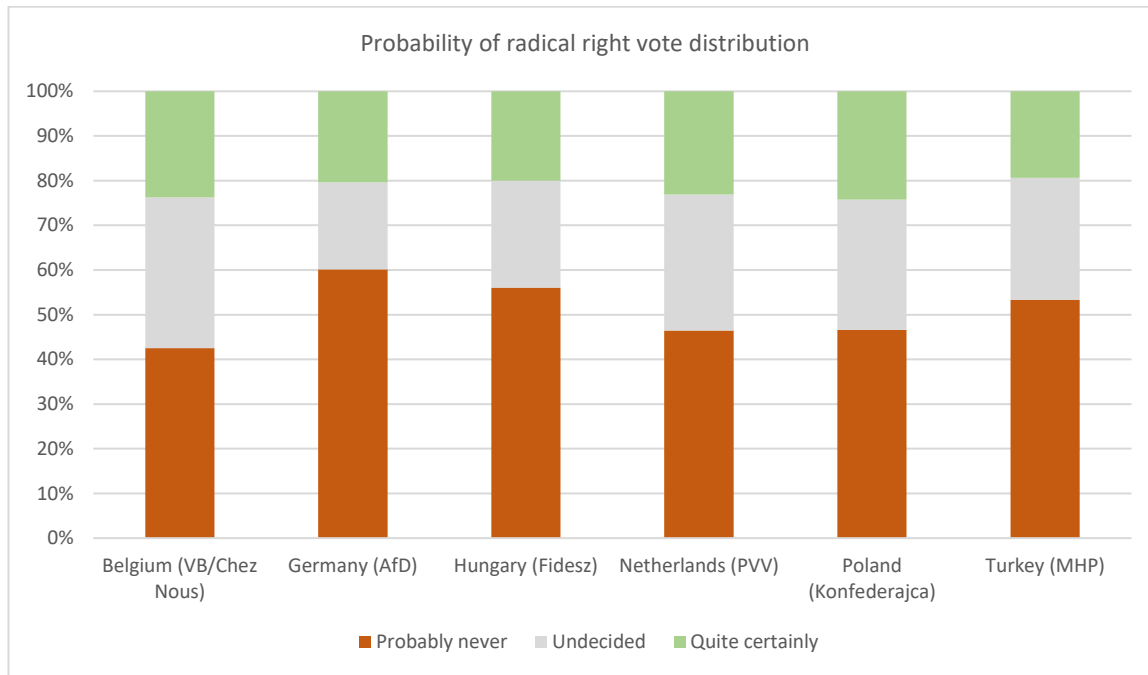
The cross-class-race-solidarity narrative always scores above 50 among people undecided to vote for the radical right. In fact, also among people who are certain to vote for the party the cross-class-race-solidarity narrative does so (except for German AfD voters, where this narrative scores 49) and is thus thought to be relatively convincing. However, the racial fear narrative does in each of the countries resonate slightly better among the undecided and much better among the radical-right sympathizers, with the exception of Turkey. Among the certain MHP voters (19% of the Turkish sample) the race-class-solidarity narrative receives a score of 80, higher than the 71 for the racial-fear narrative.

And vice versa; are there non-PRRP supporters who think that the radical right narrative is more convincing?

We do find that non-PRRP voters are in general negative on the racial-fear narrative, with the exception of Turkey. In Turkey, both the governmental party and the more progressive opposition party have been very critical on migration and the presence of Syrian refugees in Turkey, which may explain this.

Belgium

Germany

Hungary

Netherlands

Poland

Turkey
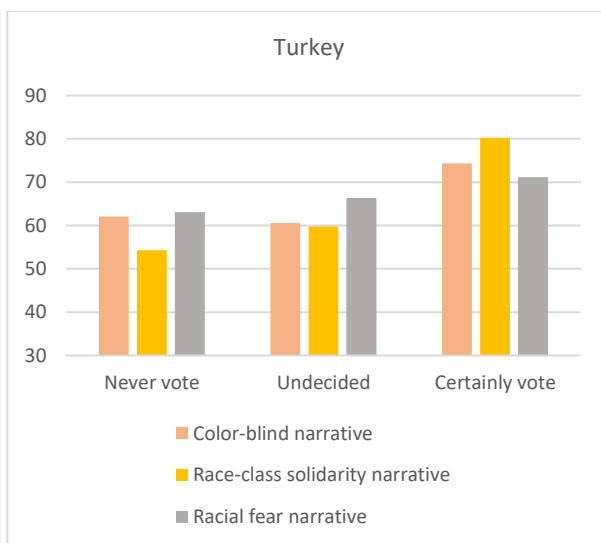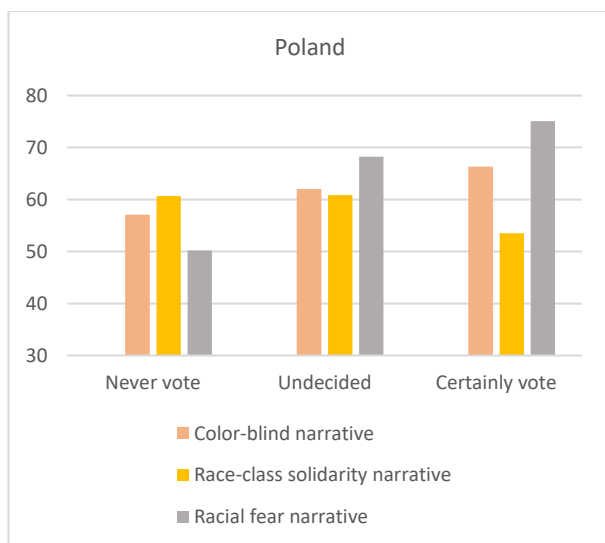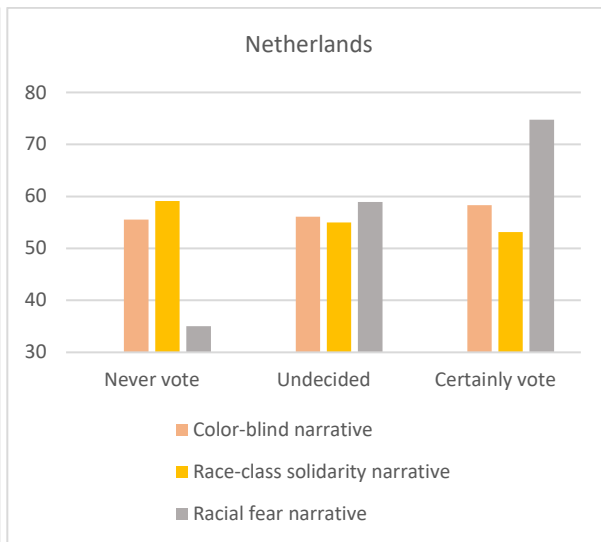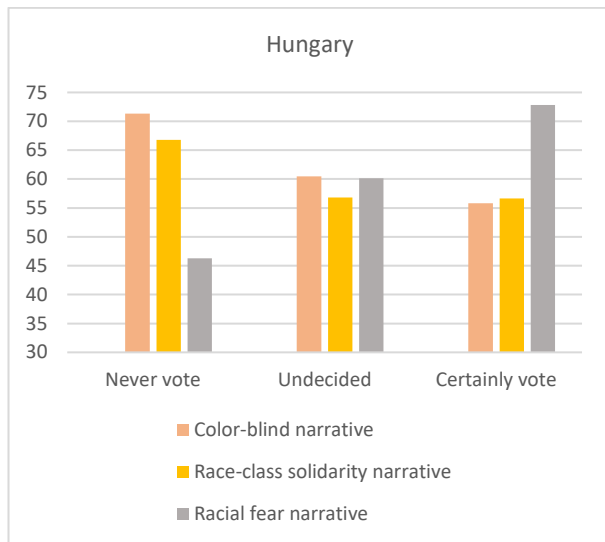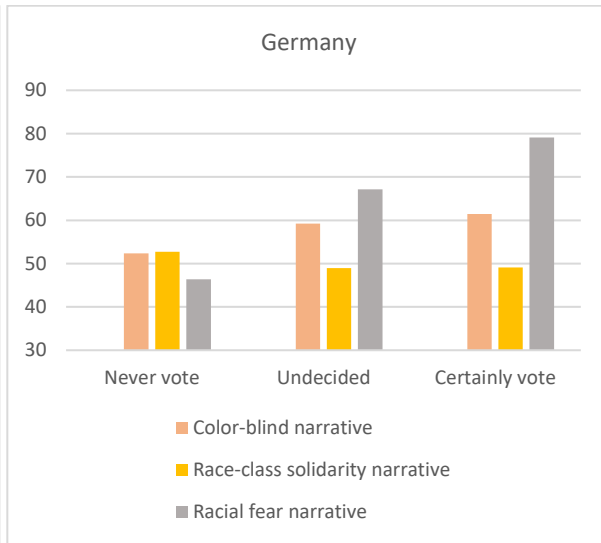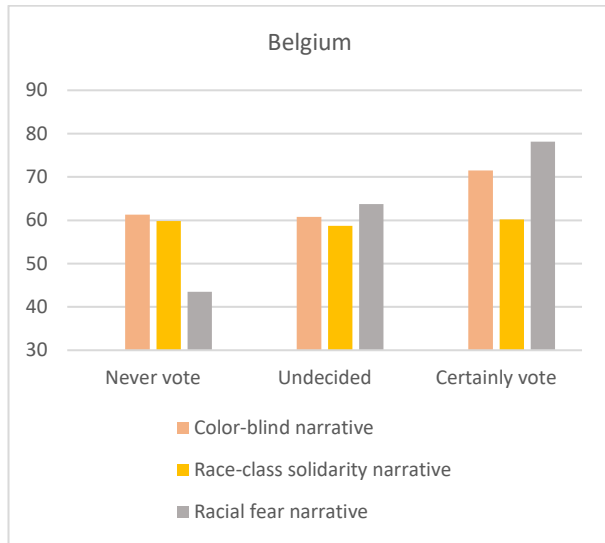
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