

Victimization & LGBT Attitudes: Beyond Physical Violence

Michael Elwell & Roman Hlatky
Department of Political Science
University of North Texas

Prepared for the 2025 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association
September 13, 2025

Motivation

- LGBT intolerance remains a global issue that leads to disparate outcomes for LGBT folks
- Anti-LGBT intolerance takes many forms
 - Physical Violence
 - Social Stigma
 - Institutional Discrimination

Research Question

- Does exposure to anti-LGBT victimization bolster positive attitudes towards the LGBT community?
 - Victimization: the harm, prejudice, and discrimination faced by LGBT individuals

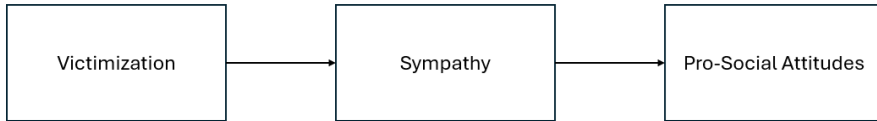
Previous Work

- Discrimination can foster empathy and reduce intergroup prejudice (Ayoub et al. 2025; Sirin et al. 2021)
 - Different positions in group-based hierarchy than majorities limits empathy (Cikara et al 2015)
- Anti-Minority violence can improve attitudes towards the minority group victimized (Reny and Newman 2021; Roman and Thompson 2024; Skigin 2024)
- Violence can elicit sympathy from the outgroup, which may be enough to shift their attitudes. (Chudy 2021)

Contributions

- Exposure to institutional and social violence as well as physical violence
 - Understand the effects of less dramatic experiences
 - Reframe understanding of victimization to include everyday discrimination
- Add novel evidence to determine if sympathy is enough to bolster support
- Provide evidence from the Central European context

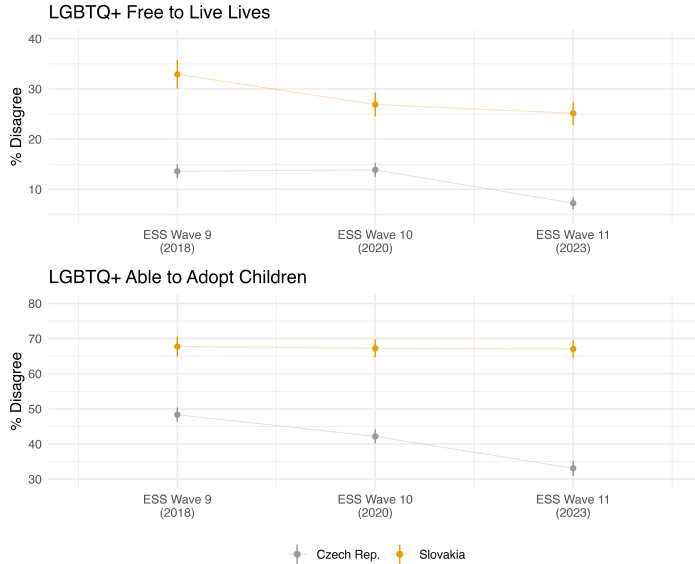
Theory



Hypotheses

- H1:** Exposure to anti-LGBT victimization will increase support for expanding legal rights
- H2:** Exposure to anti-LGBT victimization will increase support for societal equality
- H3:** Exposure to anti-LGBT victimization will decrease stigma
- H4:** Exposure to anti-LGBT victimization will increase sympathy with LGBT people

Case Selection

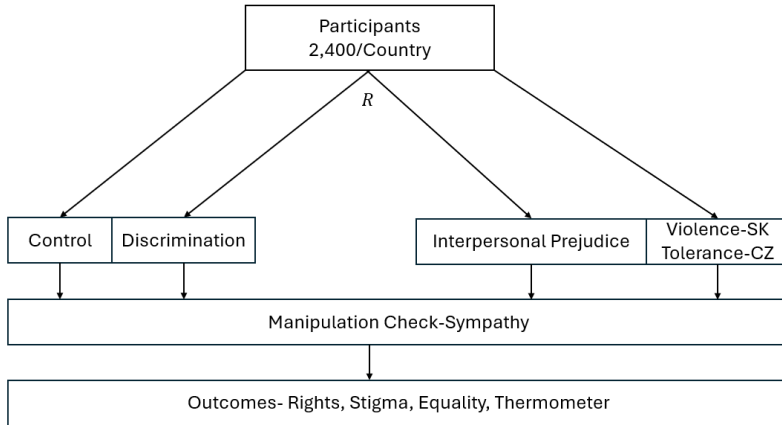


Case Selection

Measure	Czech Republic	Slovakia
Felt discriminated at government offices	9%	19%
Felt discriminated using healthcare/social services	13%	19%
Hide sexuality at work	19%	41%
Avoid holding hands in public	18%	42%
Perceived increase in violence over 5 years	6%	48%

Data from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

Experimental Design



Vignettes

Unequal Standing of LGBT people in Slovakia

Gays and lesbians face **discrimination**



- ... they avoid using various state, healthcare, and legal services because they face discrimination when doing so ...
- ... they avoid showing signs of affection to their partners because they face judgment and prejudice when doing so ...

*The LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community in Slovakia faces many challenges, including **discrimination**. Many LGBT people talk about how they **avoid using various state, healthcare, and legal service because they face discrimination when doing so**. This **discrimination** shows that Slovakia still has a long way to go until it ensures equality and safety for LGBT people.*

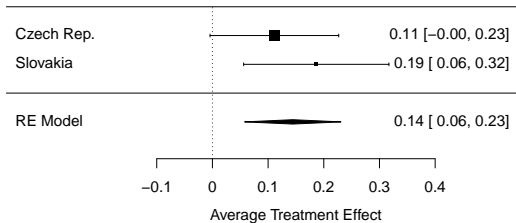
Outcome Measures

- Legal Rights- $\alpha=0.93$; $\omega=0.92$
 - to form registered partnerships.
 - to get married.
- Societal Equality- $\alpha=0.84$; $\omega=0.85$
 - Businesses should have the right to refuse service to LGBT people (gays and lesbians)
 - State offices should have the right to refuse service to LGBT people (gays and lesbians)
- Stigma- $\alpha=0.79$; $\omega=0.79$
 - If someone from my close family were gay, I would feel embarrassed
 - Same-sex couples (homosexual couples of gays and lesbians) are just as good parents as heterosexual couples
- Feeling Thermometer

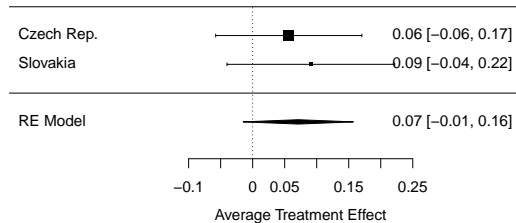
Discrimination and Interpersonal Prejudice Treatments

Legal Rights

Discrimination Treatment

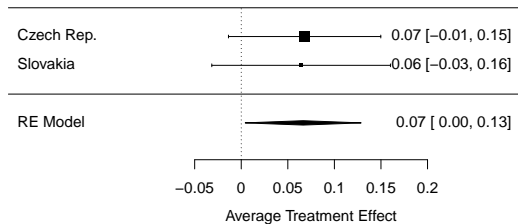


Interpersonal Prejudice Treatment

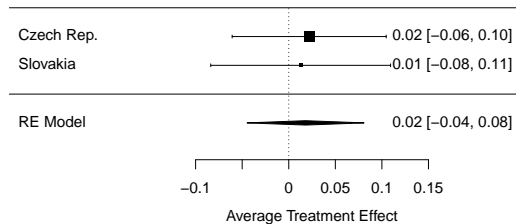


Societal Equality

Discrimination Treatment

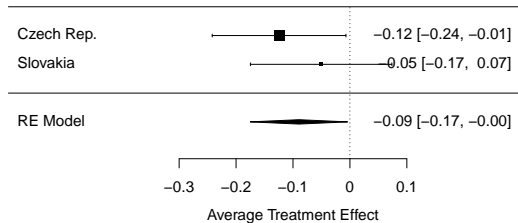


Interpersonal Prejudice Treatment

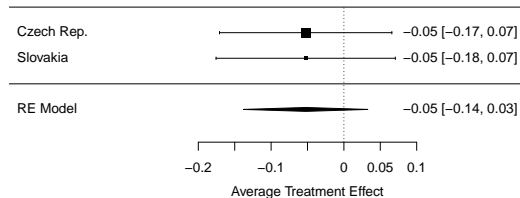


Stigma

Discrimination Treatment

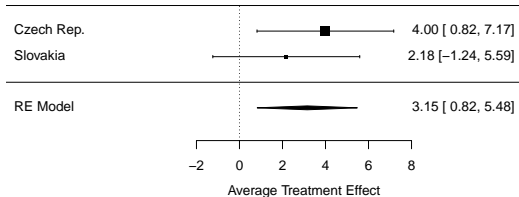


Interpersonal Prejudice Treatment

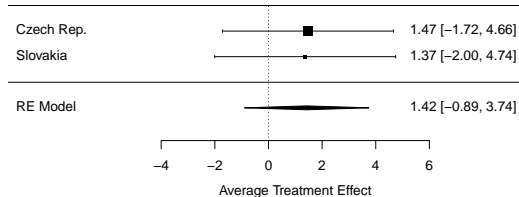


Thermometer

Discrimination Treatment

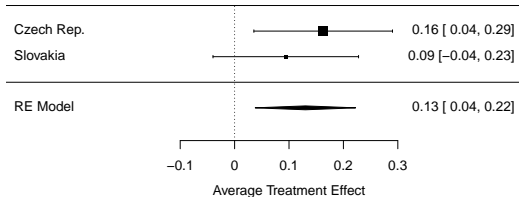


Interpersonal Prejudice Treatment

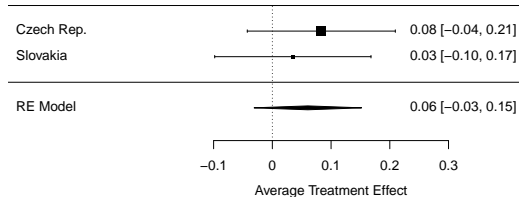


Sympathy

Discrimination Treatment



Interpersonal Prejudice Treatment



Summary

- Institutional Discrimination increased support for legal rights, equality, general attitudes and sympathy, while reducing stigma.
 - Bolstered support for legal rights in Slovakia
 - Lowered anti-LGBT stigma in Czechia
 - Elicited positive feelings towards the LGBT in Czechia
 - Bolstered sympathy in Czechia
- All other treatments had null effects
- Little evidence of treatment heterogeneity

Discussion

- Only the institutional discrimination treatment had any meaningful effect
 - We attribute this movement due to the belief that state institutions should be impartial
 - This could also come from eliciting empathetic frustration with government institutions
- Our main analytical goal was seeing if manipulating sympathy is enough to elicit pro-social attitudes-Signs point to yes
- We're happy to take suggestions on potential explainers as well!

Thank You

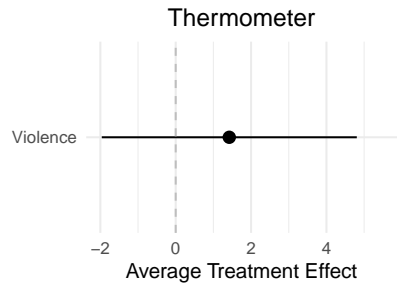
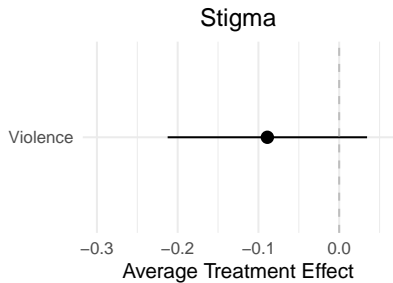
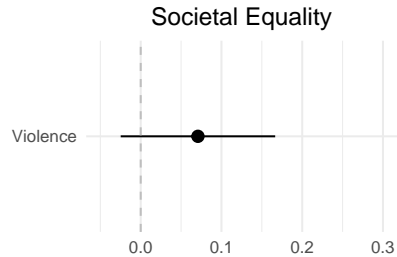
Michael Elwell — `MichaelElwell@my.unt.edu`

Roman Hlatky — `roman.hlatky@unt.edu`

Other Registered Hypotheses

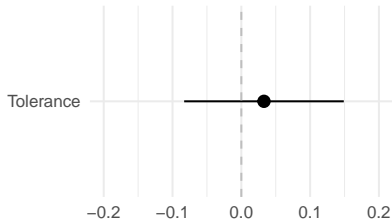
- H4:** The treatments will decrease the extent to which respondents would not want homosexuals as their neighbors or family members.
- H6:** Liberal/Conservative ideology will moderate treatment effects.
- H7:** Pre-existing stances on homosexuality will moderate treatment effects.
- H8:** Personally knowing someone who is a member of the LGBT community will moderate treatment effects.

Results: Violence Treatment (SK only)

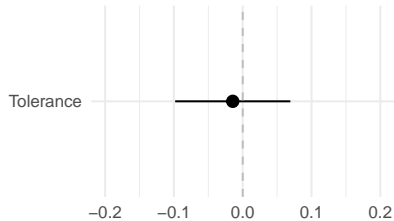


Results: Tolerance Treatment (CZ only)

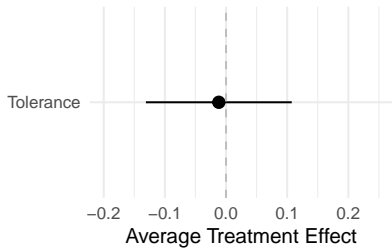
Legal Rights



Societal Equality



Stigma



Thermometer

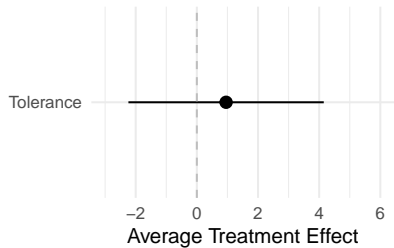


Table: Representativeness (Czech Republic)

	Sample	2021 Census (%)
n	2406	–
AGE (mean (SD))	46.22 (16.11)	46.90
EDU (%)		
primary+secondary w/o exam	846 (35.2)	43.5
secondary with exam	925 (38.4)	32.5
university	635 (26.4)	17.6
SEX = woman (%)	1205 (50.1)	50.7
SIZE (%)		
< 1,000	391 (16.3)	17.05
1,000-4,999	525 (21.8)	22.57
5,000-19,999	435 (18.1)	18.20
20,000-99,999	488 (20.3)	20.74
> 100,000	567 (23.6)	20.89
REG (%)		
Jihočeský	146 (6.1)	6.00
Jihomoravský	280 (11.6)	11.38
Karlovarský	63 (2.6)	2.65
Královehradecký	125 (5.2)	5.11
Liberecký	96 (4.0)	4.14
Moravskoslezský	261 (10.8)	11.05
Olomoucký	132 (5.5)	5.89
Pardubický	120 (5.0)	4.85
Plzeňský	133 (5.5)	5.53
Praha	333 (13.8)	12.37
Středočeský	319 (13.3)	12.46
Ústecký	151 (6.3)	7.50
Vysočina	118 (4.9)	4.73
Zlínský	129 (5.4)	5.36

Table: Representativeness (Slovakia)

	Sample	2021 Census
n	2409	—
AGE (mean (SD))	46.47 (15.31)	41.27
EDU (%)		
primary	163 (6.8)	17
secondary with exam	1028 (42.7)	30
secondary without exam	657 (27.3)	31
university	558 (23.2)	18
SEX = woman (%)	1333 (55.3)	51
SIZE (%)		
< 1,000	295 (12.3)	15
1,000-4,999	656 (27.3)	29
5,000-19,999	433 (18.0)	16
20,000-99,999	677 (28.1)	27
> 100,000	344 (14.3)	16
REG (%)		
Bratislavský	314 (13.1)	13
Banskobystrický	296 (12.3)	11
Košický	352 (14.6)	14
Nitriansky	269 (11.2)	12
Prešovský	352 (14.6)	15
Trenčiansky	291 (12.1)	11
Trnavský	231 (9.6)	10
Žilinský	301 (12.5)	13