

# **(In)tolerant: M/F?**

– A study on the role of socio-demographic variables on political tolerance levels in the  
Netherlands–

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Since Stouffer's groundbreaking work on political tolerance in 1955, a lot of research has been conducted on the sources of political tolerance. There are numerous aspects of political tolerance and some researchers have focused more specifically on the relationship between socio-demographic variables and levels of political tolerance (for example: Stouffer 1955, Nunn et al. 1976, Sullivan et al. 1981, McCloskey and Brill 1983, Wilcox and Jelen 1990). These researches have established that certain socio-demographic variables influence levels of political tolerance. In this paper, the influence of socio-demographic variables on political tolerance will also be addressed. Therefore, the following question will be the focus of this paper: 'What socio-demographic variables contribute to changes in the levels of political tolerance?'

It is important to analyze to what extent demographic variables such as age, gender, education, religion and region influence levels of political tolerance. This can give greater insight in the mechanisms of political tolerance. For one, it can provide more information about the connection between the demographic outlook of a country and the consequences of this for political tolerance levels in this country. This is important to look at, because if there is a relationship between socio-demographic variables and levels of political tolerance, this can have an effect on the stability of the democracy. To be more specific; it has been proven that higher levels of political tolerance are beneficial to society because they lead to more stable democracies (Walker 1966). This leads to the conclusion that if a stable democracy is desired – which is not difficult to imagine – political tolerance also needs to be taken into account. Therefore, it is important to know more about how political tolerance works in order to be able to adopt policies that can lower political tolerance levels.

Even though a lot of research has already been done that addresses and answers this question, it is important to continue doing research on this topic. The most important research on political tolerance comes almost exclusively from the United States. The United States differ from most other (Western) countries in the way that they have been constituted. The United States are historically a more heterogeneous society than other (Western-European) countries. The country is relatively new and exists mainly of immigrants from all over the world (Foner and Frederickson 2005). This could influence political tolerance levels and hence the results of the research. Therefore, it is relevant to know whether the conclusions of these researches from the United States are still valid when the research is conducted in other countries. In the Netherlands hardly any research has been done on the field of social variables of political tolerance. A knowledge gap exists here. It would be very useful to carry out such research in the Netherlands.

The Netherlands is an especially interesting country regarding this topic of research. For many years, the Netherlands were known worldwide for its multicultural society and high levels of tolerance (Besamusca and Verheul 2010, 109-212). But in the past few years, the Netherlands have become more politically polarized and extremist right-wing – anti-immigrant - parties such as the PVV have made their entry in the political system. Strong intolerant opinions are being voiced and the Dutch people at first sight seem to have become more intolerant (van der Veer 2006), especially since the assassinations of politician Pim Fortuyn and film maker Theo van Gogh by left- and right-wing extremists<sup>1</sup>. Do socio-demographic variables such as age and education still matter in an increasingly polarized society such as the Netherlands? Or are other variables better able to explain levels of tolerance in the Netherlands? Even though this last question will not be addressed in this paper, it remains important to look at the explanatory power of the socio-demographic

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/16/world/europe/16iht-islam1.html?pagewanted=all>, last visited: 21/5/2012.

variables. If they prove to hold in a society such as the Netherlands, this strengthens the theories about the influence of these variables on levels of political tolerance. Moreover, the previous literature does not provide any answers to the Dutch case.

This paper consists of several elements. First of all, the hypotheses for this research will be provided, using existing theories and research. Then a description of the research design and methodology will be provided. Next, the results will be displayed and conclusions will be drawn from these results. It will be concluded that certain socio-demographic variables influence political tolerance levels. Finally, a discussion of the research and recommendations for future research will be provided.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

As stated in the introduction, in the past 50 years a lot of research has been done on the sources of political tolerance. Some researchers have focused more specifically on the relationship between socio-demographic variables and levels of political tolerance (for example: Stouffer 1955, Nunn et al. 1976, Sullivan et al. 1981, McCloskey and Brill 1983, Wilcox and Jelen 1990). It is important to analyze to what extent demographic variables such as age, gender, education, religion and region influence levels of political tolerance. This can provide greater insight in the mechanisms of political tolerance and offer a basis for further research.

In this section, the contributions of previous researchers to this field of study will be evaluated. First, a short summary of the most important research on the relationship between social variables and levels of political tolerance will be provided. It will be explained why these articles have contributed significantly to the knowledge of political tolerance. Second, the main themes and issues associated with research on demographic variables of political tolerance will be pointed out. Finally, the mechanisms behind the previous findings will be described and the hypotheses for the research in this paper will be provided.

### **Research on Political Tolerance**

As stated above, Samuel Stouffer (1955) provided the first detailed research on the socio-demographic variables of political tolerance. He found that education is the main explanatory variable of political tolerance and that citizens can learn to be politically tolerant by being exposed to cultural and social diversity (Stouffer 1955). His research provides the ground work on which every other article after this about the relationship between socio-demographic variables and political tolerance that has been written is based. Nunn et al. (1979) have

replicated Stouffer's research on the origins of tolerance. In addition to education they found that city size, region, gender and occupation are also of influence on political tolerance (Nunn et al. 1979, 405). The authors have showed how society has changed over time and that Stouffer's conclusions still are viable twenty years later. Once again, it has been confirmed that exposure to cultural and social diversity leads to higher levels of political tolerance.

In 1981, Sullivan et al. used a different and new method to measure political tolerance than previous researchers had done. Using a content-controlled method, the authors analyzed what variables influence levels of political tolerance. They found that social variables, such as education, social status, age and religion, have relatively little impact on levels of political tolerance. Two political variables, general norms and perceived threat, have a strong direct impact on political tolerance (Sullivan et al. 1981, 104). These results contradict previous research (Stouffer 1955, Nunn et al. 1979) that stated that only social variables are of influence on political tolerance. The authors also contribute to the field of knowledge by providing a new content-controlled method of measuring political tolerance, whereby they let the respondents chose which group they dislike most instead of using predetermined groups. This reduces the bias that often appears when using predetermined groups. The bias appears when using predetermined groups because the respondents might not have the same attitudes toward the groups that have been selected for the tolerance questions. It could be that for example right wing groups are overrepresented in the options. People who are more leftwing are expected to have a more negative reaction towards these groups than people who are right wing. In this way, a bias could appear. If respondents are able to pick their own least-liked group and are thus not restricted by predetermined groups, this bias disappears. This is a point Sullivan et al. made (1979) as a critique on Souffer's work, because Stouffer used predetermined groups instead of the content controlled method.

Sullivan, Piereson and Marcus (1982) also used the content-controlled method to test whether Stouffer's and others' findings about political tolerance would still hold using these new methods. They found that income, occupational status and subjective social class are weak explanatory variables for political intolerance (Sullivan et al. 1982, 125). The authors did find a somewhat stronger relationship between education and political tolerance. Age and religion are also of influence on political tolerance (Sullivan et al. 1982, 126). They also found that the relationship previously found between gender and political tolerance disappears when the content-controlled measurement procedure is applied (Sullivan et al. 1982, 127).

In 1983, McClosky and Brill provided a more extensive research on the dimensions of political tolerance. The authors have analyzed political tolerance levels among different groups: the general public, opinion leaders, lawyers and judges, police officials, and academics. They both analyze the abstract political tolerance values and practical political tolerance levels. McClosky and Brill have found that community size, occupational status, gender and religion are of influence on political tolerance levels (McCloskey and Brill 1983, 380-384). Also, age is a strong predictor of political tolerance, even when controlled for education (McCloskey and Brill 1983, 390).

Wilcox and Jelen (1990) analyzed what the possible explanations are for the lower levels of political tolerance among evangelical Christians. Controlling for demographic variables reduces the differences between evangelicals and others, but the evangelicals still remain less tolerant. The most important demographic variable is education (Wilcox and Jelen 1990, 33). The remaining differences are largely explained by religiosity and doctrine (Wilcox and Jelen 1990, 36). Wilcox and Jelen's conclusions contribute to our knowledge because they show the



importance of demographic variables, which have in this case showed that the difference in political tolerance between evangelicals and others is partly spurious.

### **General Themes**

In sum, a lot of research has been done on the influence of demographic variables on levels of political tolerance. Looking at the conclusions above, some general statements can be made about the relationship between different demographic variables and levels of political tolerance. All of the authors seem to agree on the fact that education matters and that higher levels of education lead to higher levels of political tolerance. Also, most researchers found that religion, community/city size, occupational status and age are predictors of political tolerance. Only Sullivan et al. (1981) differ from this pattern, by stating that including political variables (perceived threat and general norms) weakens the relationship between the demographic variables education, social status, age and religion and levels of political tolerance (Sullivan et al. 1981, 104). This might be attributed to the fact that they used a content-controlled method and included other explanatory variables such as political variables. These conclusions might suggest that the relationship between demographic variables and political tolerance may not be so strong (or may be spurious) when controlling for other variables. But the overwhelming amount of research that does indicate a relationship between demographic variables and political tolerance suggests otherwise. However, care has to be taken when drawing conclusions too fast about the relationship between demographic variables and political tolerance and it has to be kept in mind that other variables might be of influence as well.

## **Mechanisms**

Now that an overview of and critique on the previous important works on political tolerance and socio-demographic variables has been provided, the general theories and mechanisms behind the conclusions of previous researches will be described.

### *Education*

Stouffer formulated a theory that could explain why demographic variables are of influence on levels of political tolerance. His general thought is that exposure to other people and their beliefs (in other words: social diversity) lead to higher levels of tolerance (Stouffer 1955).

Education means exposure to other beliefs and ideas and thus leads to learning and acceptance of these beliefs and ideas of other people. Therefore, people with higher education tend to be more tolerant than people who are not educated (Stouffer 1955). Even though Stouffer focused mainly on the role of education, many other authors have emphasized this same mechanism of exposure to social diversity (McCloskey and Brill 1983, Nunn et al. 1979, Sullivan et al. 1981, Sullivan et al. 1982). Therefore, I offer the following hypothesis:

H1: A higher level of education of an individual leads to a higher level of political tolerance.

### *City size*

The theory of social diversity can be extrapolated to explain why city of residence is related to levels of political tolerance. If a person lives in the countryside, this person is not exposed to a lot of other people in general and he or she is therefore not exposed to a lot of diverse ideas and beliefs that differ from the person's own beliefs. The bigger the city, the more people that live in it, the greater the chances that there is a diversity of ideas and beliefs and that people are exposed to other's ideas and beliefs. I offer the following hypothesis:

H2: A person who lives in a small town is generally less politically tolerant than a person who lives in a big city.

### *Religion*

For religion, the mechanism of social diversity does not work entirely the same as for the other variables. Religious doctrine is a better explanatory mechanism for the influence of religion on levels of political tolerance (Wilcox and Jelen 1990). This means that, in general, religions seem to teach intolerance. It is inherent to most religions that it dictates that the specific religious lifestyle is the best and only way to live. This implies condemnation or intolerance towards people who do not have the same ideas and beliefs. Therefore it is very well understandable that studies have shown that being religious leads to higher levels of intolerance. Moreover, the theory of social diversity could be applied to religion as far as it is assumed that religious people tend to live and interact in their own closed (religious) communities with like-minded souls. This of course does not apply to all levels of religiosity. Therefore, it is to be expected that higher levels of religiosity lead to higher levels of political intolerance than lower levels of religiosity do. Therefore, I offer the following hypothesis:

H3: Religious people are less politically tolerant than non-religious people.

### *Income*

Several studies have found that income and levels of political tolerance are positively related. However, it is highly probable that there exists multicollinearity between income and education. This works in the following way. People who have a higher education have more knowledge and are able to do more advanced jobs and tasks. Generally, these jobs are better

paid than the jobs which require only a lower level of education. Therefore, the relationship between income and political tolerance might be partly explained by the independent variable education. However, it is also imaginable that a low income leads to less acceptance of other views because you could think other ideas pose a threat to your already bad (financial) situation. Therefore, I offer the following two hypotheses:

H4: The independent variables income and level of education are correlated.

H5: The higher an individuals' income, the more politically tolerant he or she is.

### *Age*

Sullivan et al. (1981) hypothesize that age has a conservative effect on political tolerance (94). They give two reasons for this. First of all, they expect younger respondents to be more educated. Second, they expect that 'younger cohorts of respondents have experienced a political climate that should be more liberalizing and enlightening than that of their elders (a period effect)' (Sullivan et al. 1981, 94). As stated in the introduction, Dutch society has become less tolerant over the years. Following the second argument of Sullivan et al., it is therefore to be expected that the youth of today is less tolerant than older people who have experienced more tolerant times. However, this contradicts the first argument of Sullivan et al. that younger people tend to be more educated than older people (which is still the case in the Netherlands<sup>2</sup>) and therefore tend to be more tolerant than older people. Since the shift from tolerant to intolerant in the Netherlands has happened quite recently (in the first decade of this century), there are also still some young people who have experienced the 'tolerant times'. For this reason, I expect the mechanism of education and age to influence political tolerance levels of different age groups more strongly than the period effect. Therefore, I offer the

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<sup>2</sup> See: [http://www.trendsinebeeld.minocw.nl/grafieken/3\\_1\\_2\\_32.php](http://www.trendsinebeeld.minocw.nl/grafieken/3_1_2_32.php), last visited 9/5/2012.

following hypothesis:

H6: Younger people are expected to be more politically tolerant than older people.

### *Gender*

As stated before, previous research has found that women were less tolerant than men (Stouffer 1955 and Nunn et al. 1979). At first, this difference was explained by inequality between men and women. In the sixties and seventies, women stayed home, while the men were out working and coming into contact with other people with different ideas and beliefs. This explained the difference in tolerance levels between men and women. However, since this inequality has nearly disappeared nowadays in the Netherlands, it is to be expected that there is no difference between men and women in the levels of political tolerance. This expectation is further strengthened by the fact that Sullivan et al. (1982) found that the gender effect disappeared when using the content-controlled method, which is also used for this research. Therefore, I offer the following hypothesis:

H7: There is no relationship between gender and levels of political tolerance.

### *Social status*

In addition to the variable income, I want to ask people what social status they think they have. I expect that a lot of respondents are still students at the university and have a low income. However, these people are expected to have higher incomes when they have finished their studies. These respondents will be classified in the low income group, but they are not representative of this group (people with low incomes are suspected to have low levels of education). In order to control for this phenomena, I want to add the variable social class.

Since people with a high social status are expected to be the higher educated ones (and therefore with higher political tolerance levels), I offer the following hypothesis:

H8: People in a higher social class are more tolerant than people in a lower social class.

All of the hypotheses based on the mechanisms of the individual socio-demographic variables lead to the conclusion that I expect that the variables religion, education, city size, income, social class and age are of influence on political tolerance levels.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### Case selection

As stated before, the research will be conducted in the Netherlands. This has several reasons. Research on political tolerance has focused almost exclusively on the United States (see the literature review in this paper). The relationship between socio-demographic variables and levels of political tolerance have been well established there. But it remains important to analyze whether these conclusions still hold up in other cases. The United States is a heterogeneous society (Foner and Frederickson 2005) and therefore it might be possible that the theories and mechanisms that lie behind the relationship between socio-demographics and political tolerance are case specific and do not hold up in other countries such as the Netherlands. Why is the Netherlands such an interesting case? For many years, the Netherlands was quite similar to the United States in the sense that the Netherlands was also known worldwide for its multicultural society. Moreover, the Netherlands was frequently characterized as a tolerant country (Besamusca and Verheul 2010, 109-212). But in the past few years, the Netherlands has become more politically polarized and intolerant opinions are being expressed more frequently by for example the Dutch political party PVV (van der Veer 2006). Because of this development it is even more surprising that hardly any research has been conducted on political tolerance in the Netherlands<sup>3</sup>. Do socio-demographic variables such as age and education still matter in an increasingly polarized society such as the Netherlands? If they prove to hold in a society such as the Netherlands, this strengthens the theories about the influence of socio-demographic variables on levels of political tolerance.

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<sup>3</sup> The only research I was able to find, was a master thesis from a student of the University of Utrecht. See: <http://igitur-archive.library.uu.nl/student-theses/2010-1025-200227/Masterthesis%20Kuiper.pdf>, last visited: 8/5/2012.

Moreover, from a social perspective it is also important to look at political tolerance. This can give insights in to the connection between the demographic outlook of a country and the consequences of this for political tolerance levels in this country. It has been proven that higher levels of political tolerance are beneficial to a society because they lead to more stable democracies (Walker 1966). Therefore it is important to look at political tolerance and more specifically to look at explanatory variables of political tolerance. This could provide new insights when trying to assess the causes of low political tolerance levels or when trying to adopt policies to lower political tolerance levels.

Since the mechanisms that lie behind the hypotheses (see page 9) are based on different people coming in contact with each other and are not explained by specific geographical characteristics that are present in the United States, the results of this research are expected to go in the same direction as previous results. Therefore, I suspect that the hypotheses will hold up. However, the fact that the results are suspected to be the same as in previous research does not mean that this research has nothing new to add. If it is found that the hypotheses also hold up in other countries than the US, this strengthens the expected relations between socio-demographic characteristics and levels of political tolerance. This also means that the relationship between socio-demographic variables and political tolerance is expected to be independent of country specific characteristics. However, in order to make stronger statements about this, future research should be conducted that includes more and different countries in the analysis. This research is not extensive enough to make any claims on this part, but this research could provide a basis for future research.



## Survey design

To measure the political tolerance levels and socio-demographic variables of the respondents, an online questionnaire was used. In total, 787 respondents filled out the survey. The survey not only consisted of the questions used for this research, but it also contained questions of three other students who were doing research on the field of political tolerance as well. The questions they asked were different from my questions and they are not expected to influence the respondents and thereby bias my results. I recruited the respondents by addressing my network via e-mail and Facebook. Moreover, I asked my family and closest friends to spread the survey to their networks. Also, by combining four surveys, we were able to get more respondents than we each could have gotten individually.

The questionnaire went online on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2012 and it was closed on May 15<sup>th</sup> 2012. In total, 787 people filled out the survey. I had to remove 22 responses. Three of these respondents did not provide any information about their age and level of education; six other entries did not contain any data at all. 11 respondents are (currently) not living in the Netherlands. Since this research is specifically applied to the Netherlands and its citizens and city size is one of the independent variables, I removed these responses as well. I removed two more respondents because they did not give the exact name of the city they lived in (they filled out the province they lived in instead). As a result, I had 765 respondents left.

Moreover, 23 respondents answered the income question with 'I don't know'. These respondents were coded as missing. I coded these as missing instead of deleting them because otherwise I would have to throw out too many respondents. Moreover, as you will see in the results section, income will not be of any significant influence on political tolerance levels. Therefore, the data of these 23 respondents were not taken into account for the regression analyses, but they were taken into account for the calculations that did not use the income

variable. Below, I will explain what methods of measurement and analysis were used and what questions were included in the survey.

#### *Content-controlled method*

Stouffer's (1955) method was not content-controlled, because he used pre-determined groups to measure political tolerance. Later in time, Sullivan et al. (1979) showed that not using a content-controlled method can influence the results. Wilcox and Jelen (1990) don't either use the content-controlled measure Sullivan et al. (1979) suggest. Wilcox and Jelen analyze why evangelical Christians are more intolerant than other groups. They used predetermined groups such as atheists and communists. In this specific case, not using the content-controlled measure could be a big problem. It might be that evangelical Christians are generally more intolerant towards communists and atheists than other groups in society are. If the questions were asked about another group, the evangelical Christians might not have been the group to stand out on their levels of political tolerance. In this case, it is obvious that a content-controlled method would be a good complement to Wilcox and Jelen's analysis of tolerance levels of evangelical Christians. For these reasons, this research makes use of the content-controlled method Sullivan et al. (1979) suggested. The question to measure which group the respondent dislikes the most is: 'Which group in society do you dislike the most?' (for the Dutch version of this question, see Appendix B). The question was introduced with a short text explaining the context of the question.

Since the majority of research on political tolerance was conducted in the United States, the groups that have been chosen in previous research for the question are especially relevant in the United States and not in the Netherlands. Therefore the choices for the Dutch question are slightly different, namely:

- Neonazi's
- Muslimfundamentalist
- Homosexuals
- Eastern-European immigrant
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

These groups have been chosen because they have been socially relevant in the light of political tolerance in the Netherlands in the past few years (van der Veer 2006). The groups stand out because people have expressed intolerant feelings towards them. Therefore, I have decided to select these groups for the question instead of the original (American) groups that have been used in previous research.

### **Dependent Variable**

Sullivan et al. (1981) have used six statements that measure political tolerance (94). It can be disputed whether these statements accurately measure political tolerance. In other words, are these statements valid? The authors have operationalized the concept of political tolerance and the question is whether this is a valid way of measuring political tolerance. For example, a distinction could be made between more abstract levels of political tolerance and practical applications of political tolerance. It seems that these two different concepts require different methods of measurement. This is not only a problem for the Sullivan et al. (1981) article, but for the other articles discussed in the literature review of this paper as well. However, due to the (practical) limitations of this research, the issue of validity will not be addressed in this research paper. For this research, the questions that Sullivan et al. used to measure political tolerance will be used, since they have been used most in previous research and are the most well-established questions to measure political tolerance. The questions were translated to

Dutch<sup>4</sup>, since that is the mother language of majority of the respondents<sup>5</sup>. In summary, the questions used to measure political tolerance might not be perfect, but they have been used by others and it seems that it is not clear what the best questions actually are. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that future research should focus more on the validity of the questions that many researchers have used to measure political tolerance. The questions that were used to measure political tolerance are:

- Would you allow members of the group of your choice to teach (your) children in school?
- Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be allowed to present themselves as a candidate for government elections?
- Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be allowed to establish a political party?
- Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be allowed to get airtime on public broadcasting?
- Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be allowed to hold a rally or demonstration?
- Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be put under surveillance?

All questions had to be answered with either 'yes' or 'no'. From these questions, a scale from 6 to 12 has been constructed to indicate the level of political tolerance; 6 indicating a high level of tolerance and 12 indicating a low level of tolerance.

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<sup>4</sup> There were some difficulties with translating the exact English words to Dutch. It should be kept in mind this might have influenced results. Due to practical limitations, this issue will not be addressed in this paper. However, future research should focus on the influence of translation on the results and on the ideal Dutch questions to measure political tolerance.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix A for the complete survey.

### **Independent variable**

The independent variables city size, age, income, level of education, religion and gender were all measured by asking the respondents directly for this information (see Appendix A). For the variable 'city size' the respondents had to fill in where they currently lived. The number of residents for each city was identified. The question religion was recoded into two categories, namely into religious and non-religious. I did this because in some of the categories there were too few respondents to be able draw any reliable conclusions.

### **Analysis techniques**

Stouffer's research was conducted more than fifty years ago and since then, a lot of progress has been made in methods and techniques of analysis. For its time, Stouffer's research was really advanced, but today his methods of analysis would not be sufficient. Stouffer makes use of very limited statistical techniques, namely cross tabulation. Nowadays, a much more elaborate and advanced statistical method should be applied. To test the hypotheses, I will make use of different statistical techniques. I will use a simple linear regression analysis to investigate the relationship between the socio-demographic variables and the dependent variable political tolerance. The dependent variable was measured by asking six question about political tolerance which had to be answered with either 'yes' or 'no'. The answers of these six questions were combined to form a political tolerance scale which ranged from 6 to 12; 6 indicating a high political tolerance level and 12 a low political tolerance level. The precise coding of all variables can be found in the codebook (see Appendix C). After applying a linear regression analysis to the scale, I will test the relationship between the socio-demographic variables and each of the political tolerance questions individually using a binary logistic model.

## RESULTS

The distribution of the socio-demographic variables of the total respondents is as follows:

**Table 1. Gender of the respondents**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Female	456	59,6%
Male	309	40,4%
Total	765	100%

**Table 2. Income of the respondents**

<i>Income</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
None	101	13,2%
Less than 1450 euro a month	289	37,8%
Between 1450 euro and 2500 euro a month	168	22,0%
Between 2500 euro and 5000 euro a month	150	19,6%
More than 5000 euro a month	34	4,4%
I don't know	23	3,0%
Total	765	100%

**Table 3. Religion of the respondents**

<i>Religious</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Yes	261	34,1%
No	504	65,9%
Total	765	100%

**Table 4. Social class of the respondents**

<i>Social class</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Working class	39	5,1%
Higher working class	36	4,7%
Middle class	368	48,1%
Higher middle class	265	34,6%
Higher class	57	7,5%
Total	765	100%

**Table 5. Level of education of the respondents**

<i>Level of education</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Primary school	1	0,1%
VMBO/MAVO	13	1,7%
HAVO	35	4,6%
VWO	64	8,4%
MBO	77	10,1%
HBO	225	29,4%
WO	350	45,8%
Total	765	100%

**Table 6. Age of the respondents**

<i>Age</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
< 18 years old	8	1,0%
18-24 years old	291	38,0%
25-34 years old	215	28,1%
35-44 years old	58	7,6%
45-54 years old	65	8,5%
55-64 years old	105	13,7%
65+ years old	23	3,0%
Total	765	100%

**Table 7. City size of the respondents**

<i>City size</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
0-24.999	134	17,5%
25.000-49.999	70	9,2%
50.000-74.999	13	1,7%
75.000-99.999	116	15,2%
100.000-124.999	245	32,0%
125.000-149.999	10	1,3%
150.000-174.999	29	3,8%
175.000-199.999	26	3,4%
200.000+	122	15,9%
Total	765	100%

Table 6 and 7 are grouped into categories for practical reasons; the tables would be too big if the data was not categorized. However, for the analysis these categories were not used, instead the uncategorized data was used.

The distribution of the political tolerance scale looks as follows:

**Table 8. Frequency distribution of political tolerance level**

<i>Political tolerance level</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
6 (tolerant)	98	12,8
7	172	22,5
8	171	22,4
9	76	9,9
10	95	12,4
11	72	9,4
12 (intolerant)	81	10,6
Total	765	100,0

On average, the respondents have a political tolerance level of 8,65 with a standard deviation of 1,884. This means that the average tolerance level is located slightly more towards tolerant than towards intolerant. Hypothesis 4 stated that income and level of education are correlated. The expectations of this hypothesis are confirmed (at a significance level  $< .01$ ) when using Pearson correlation. The regression analysis of the socio-demographic variables (gender, age, city size, level of education, religion, income and social class) and the political tolerance scale provides the following results:



**Table 9. Simple linear regression of political tolerance scale and socio-demographic variables**

	<i>Beta</i>	
Gender	.019 (.137)	N= 742 R <sup>2</sup> = .112
Education	-.187** (.055)	
Income	.040 (.071)	
Social class	-.104** (.077)	
Age	.107* (.005)	
Religious	.098** (.141)	
City size	-.098** (.000)	
Constant	9.861** (.514)	

\*= significant at the .05 level  
 \*\*= significant at the .01 level  
 ( ) = standard error

Of the seven independent variables, five variables have a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable, namely political tolerance.

The scale of political tolerance went from 6 (tolerant) to 12 (intolerant). For each variable individually this means that, based on the results, it is expected that:

- The higher someone is educated, the more politically tolerant he or she is. This confirms the expectations of hypothesis 1.
- The higher social class someone identifies him- or herself with, the more politically tolerant he or she is. This confirms the expectations of hypothesis 8.
- The older someone is, the less politically tolerant he or she is. This confirms the expectations of hypothesis 6.
- People who are religious are less politically tolerant than people who are not religious. This confirms the expectations of hypothesis 3.

- People who live in a bigger city are more politically tolerant than people who live in a smaller city. This confirms the expectations of hypothesis 2.

Income does not have any significant influence on political tolerance. This does not confirm the expectations of hypothesis 5. Also, gender does not influence political tolerance levels significantly. This confirms the expectations of hypothesis 7.

As stated before, the political tolerance scale is made up of six questions. Again, each of the questions were:

1. Would you allow members of the group of your choice to teach (your) children in school?
2. Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be allowed to present themselves as a candidate for government elections?
3. Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be allowed to establish a political party?
4. Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be allowed to get airtime on public broadcasting?
5. Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be allowed to hold a rally or demonstration?
6. Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be put under surveillance?

The reliability of this scale is .777 (using Crombach's alpha). Below are the results presented of the regression analyses of each of the questions individually and the socio-demographic variables.

**Table 10. Regression analysis of the individual political tolerance questions**

	<i>B<sub>Teach</sub></i>	<i>B<sub>Candidate</sub></i>	<i>B<sub>Party</sub></i>	<i>B<sub>Broadcast</sub></i>	<i>B<sub>Rally</sub></i>	<i>B<sub>Surveillance</sub></i>
Gender	-.085 (.196)	.197 (.174)	.328 (.172)	.068 (.158)	.247 (.212)	-.328* (.159)
Education	-.091 (.080)	-.309** (.068)	-.276** (.067)	-.272** (.066)	-.389** (.078)	-.059 (.064)
Income	.130 (.106)	.042 (.090)	.039 (.089)	.006 (.083)	.185 (.107)	.040 (.084)
Social class	.060 (.107)	-.245* (.097)	-.260** (.095)	-.148 (.089)	-.328** (.115)	-.198* (.090)
Age	.016 (.009)	.021** (.007)	.014* (.006)	.006 (.006)	.014 (.007)	-.001 (.006)
Religious	.300 (.210)	.537** (.174)	.381* (.172)	.331* (.163)	.399 (.206)	.072 (.165)
City size	.000 (.000)	.000** (.000)	.000** (.000)	.000 (.000)	.000* (.000)	.000 (.000)
Constant	.731 (.745)	.331 (.632)	.484 (.624)	1.458* (.599)	.176 (.740)	.891 (.596)
	N= 742 Chi <sup>2</sup> = 17.892*	N= 742 Chi <sup>2</sup> = 83.863**	N= 742 Chi <sup>2</sup> = 77.009**	N= 742 Chi <sup>2</sup> = 39.610**	N= 742 Chi <sup>2</sup> = 78.994**	N= 742 Chi <sup>2</sup> = 12.175

\*= significant at the .05 level

\*\*= significant at the .01 level

( ) = standard error

From this table, it can be concluded that not all five independent variables influence each individual question in the same direction and at the same significance level. The questions about presenting as a candidate and establishing a political party are both statistically significant influenced (in the same direction) by the same five independent variables as those from the regression of the political tolerance scale. It is noteworthy that the first question is not influenced by any of the seven independent variables. This question was a very ‘strong’ question to which many of the respondents answered ‘no’ (81% of the respondents).

Therefore, the high percentage of respondents who answered ‘no’ to the question could (partly) explain why there is no significant difference between the various socio-demographic groups. It is interesting that such a high number of respondents answered ‘no’ (intolerant) to this question. People who are tolerant on other issues are intolerant on the ‘teach’ question. Future research should include more and different independent variables to see if these new

variables can have a different impact on the outcome of the ‘teach’ question.

Age seems to be of influence only on the answers to questions 2 and 3. These are two questions about participation in politics and government. It could be that older people are less tolerant towards their least-liked group to become active in politics than younger people because they have seen what the impact of these activities can be (more so than the younger generations).

Lastly, gender is of significant value to question 6, but it is not a significant variable in the regression of the scale. For question 6 this means that males are more in favor putting members of their least-liked group under surveillance than females. This might be explained by the fact that women are thought to be more empathic towards other people and their feelings and are therefore less inclined to restrict another person’s freedoms. Psychological research indicates that this is the case. Frodi, Macaulay and Ropert Thome state: ‘(..) men are less likely than women to have any empathy with the victim’ (1977, 645). Other research yields the same results (Mehrabian and Epstein 1972, Buss 1966). A socio-psychological research should be conducted to explain this phenomenon more precisely. The gender variable is not of influence on the rest of the questions. This suggests that the fact that the variable gender is significant for question six has little to do with political tolerance and more with other sociological or psychological mechanisms.

## **DISCUSSION**

This research has focused on the role of socio-demographic variables on political tolerance levels. Previous research in this area has focused almost exclusively on the United States.

This research was conducted in the Netherlands to see whether the conclusions of previous research still hold up in an increasingly intolerant society such as the Netherlands.

Using Sullivan et al.'s content-controlled method, a survey was conducted and 765 responses were collected. To answer the research question ('what socio-demographic variables contribute to changes in the levels of political tolerance?'), a six-item scale for political tolerance was constructed. The regression analysis showed that the socio-demographic variables age, social class, education, city size and religion were of significant influence on political tolerance levels. Moreover, income and gender appeared not to have any significant effect on political tolerance. Also, income and education proved to be correlated. These results led to the fact that 7 of the 8 hypotheses were confirmed. In summary: young, highly-educated, non-religious people who live in a big city and place themselves in a high social class are expected to be more politically tolerant than old, low-educated, religious people who live in a small town and place themselves in a low social class. These conclusions are broadly in accordance with what previous research has found in the United States. The fact that that socio-demographic variables are also of influence on political tolerance in the Netherlands, strengthens the expectations of the mechanisms that lie behind the relation between socio-demographic variables and political tolerance.

However, this research has not confirmed the expectation that income and political tolerance are related. This contradicts what previous literature has found. The fact that I have not found a relation between income and political tolerance might be attributed to the fact that students are overrepresented in this research. Students are overrepresented in this research because the

networks we used to gather respondents consisted mainly of students. This group does not have a high income but is highly educated. This contradicts the general idea that high educated people have a high income. The group of students are being placed in the low income group but they are not representative of this group (because they are high educated). This could explain why income has not shown to be of influence on political tolerance levels, but social class has (the students place themselves in a high social class). However, it is surprising that this research has shown that income and education are correlated. Following the argument above, it should be expected that, for this specific research in which students are overrepresented, income and level of education are not correlated in the direction that would be expected (higher education leads to higher income). Because of the large number of students in the low income group, I suspect that the found correlation works in the opposite direction (higher education leads to lower income). This is a conclusion that should not be generalized, since this effect is probably caused by the high number of students that participated in this survey. Future research should look more closely at the relationship between income and political tolerance. It might be that this relationship proves to be spurious when adding the variable social class; it is important to assess whether this is the case.

Also, this research has only focused on socio-demographic variables. Ideally, more and different types of variables should be included in the research (for example political or psychological variables). If the relationship between socio-demographic variables and political tolerance still holds up when including other variables, this could make the conclusions about the relationship even stronger. Future studies should include more and different types of independent variables.

Now that it has been shown that the conclusions of previous research on political tolerance

and socio-demographic variables hold up in the Netherlands, it would be very insightful if future research could show whether this is also the case for other countries. It might be interesting to look at countries that are totally different from the Netherlands or the United States, for example third world countries.

This research used six questions to measure political tolerance that were used in previous research. These questions were first used in the 1970's. However, the changing of the times might have led to changes in what people consider as civil liberties (about which they then have to assess whether they would allow this for a group they do not like). This raises concerns about the validity of the six questions. Future research should be conducted on what people consider as civil liberties and whether the methods used here and in previous research is still valid.

In short, even though there are a lot of questions still unanswered for and a lot of research still has to be done on the field of socio-demographic variables and political tolerance, the findings of this research are important and contribute to our knowledge on this field. We now know that socio-demographic variables are also of influence on political tolerance levels in countries other than the United States. And even though society has changed in the Netherlands, this has probably not affected the relationship between age, city size, social class, level of education and religion on the one hand and levels of political tolerance on the other hand.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A – Questionnaire (English version)

*Questions marked with an \* are compulsory*

1. What is your gender?\*

- Male
- Female

2. What is your year of birth?\*

3. In which city do you live?\*

4. How high is your gross income?\*

- I don't have an income
- Less than 1450 euros a month
- Between 1450 euros and 2500 euros a month
- Between 2500 and 5000 euros a month
- More than 5000 euros a month
- I don't know

5. What is the highest form of education you have attended?\*

- Primary school
- VMBO/MAVO
- HAVO
- VWO
- MBO
- HBO
- WO
- Other, namely:

6. How often do you undertake any of these online activities?\*

	Almost every day	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Almost never	I don't know
E-mail					
Social networking (Facebook, LinkedIn)					
Participating in discussions on online fora					
Searching for information					
(Video) chatting					
Watch and share photos and video's (Flickr, Youtube)					
Follow the news					
Contribute to knowledge (crowdsourcing)					
Contribute financially to a project or organization (crowdfunding)					

7. Of which of the following organizations and associations are you a member?\*

- Youth association
- Religious association
- Political party or political organization
- Nature- or environmental association
- Consumers association
- Cultural association
- Hobby association
- Union
- Patient association
- Public broadcasting organization
- Sports association
- Women's association
- Neighborhood association
- Fan club or supporters association
- Senior or elderly association
- Carnivals association
- Student organization
- Professional association
- Music organization
- Other:

8. Some people believe that certain groups are a threat to society. Which group in society do you dislike the most?\*

*Below are some examples listed. If your least liked group is not among these, you fill out another group.*

- Muslim fundamentalists
- Neonazi's
- Eastern European immigrants
- Homosexuals
- Other:

9. Would you allow members of the group of your choice to teach (your) children in school?\*

- Yes
- No

10. Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be allowed to present themselves as a candidate for government elections?\*

- Yes
- No

11. Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be allowed to establish a political party?\*

- Yes
- No

12. Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be allowed to get airtime on public broadcasting?\*

- Yes
- No

13. Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be allowed to hold a rally or demonstration?\*

- Yes
- No

14. Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be put under surveillance?\*

- Yes
- No

15. There exist different political parties in the Netherlands. Are you attracted to one political party specifically?\*

- Yes
- No

16. To which political party are you especially attracted?

- VVD
- CDA
- PVV
- PvdA
- SP
- D66
- GroenLinks
- ChristenUnie
- SGP
- Partij voor de Dieren
- Other:

17. How much are you attracted to this party?

- Very much
- Much
- Not so much

18. Do you see yourself as a supporter of this political party?

- Yes
- No

19. Are you a member of a political party?

- Yes
- No

20. In which province have you grown up? \*

- Drenthe
- Flevoland
- Friesland
- Gelderland
- Groningen
- Limburg
- Noord-Brabant
- Noord-Holland
- Overijssel
- Utrecht
- Zeeland
- Zuid-Holland
- I am not raised in the Netherlands

21. Do you have a religious denomination?\*

- No, I do not have a religious denomination
- I am catholic
- I am protestant
- I am Muslim
- I am Jewish
- I am Hindu
- I am Buddhist
- Other:

22. What is your cultural background?\*

- Dutch
- Moroccan
- Turkish
- Indonesian
- Surinam's
- Antillean
- Chinese
- Other:

23. If you have to categorize yourself in a social class, which would this be? \*

- Working class
- Higher working class
- Middle class
- Higher middle class
- Higher class

24. How would you describe your sexual orientation?\*

- Heteroseksual
- Homoseksual
- Biseksual

## Appendix B – Questionnaire (Dutch version)

Vragen met een \* zijn verplicht

1. Wat is uw geslacht?\*

- Man
- Vrouw

2. Wat is uw geboortejaar?\*

3. In welke plaats woont u?\*

4. Hoe hoog is uw bruto inkomen?\*

- Ik heb geen inkomen
- Minder dan 1450 euro per maand
- Tussen 1450 euro en 2500 euro per maand
- Tussen 2500 euro en 5000 euro per maand
- Meer dan 5000 euro per maand
- Ik weet het niet/ geen opgave

5. Wat is uw hoogst genoten opleiding?\*

- Basisschool
- VMBO/MAVO
- HAVO
- VWO
- MBO
- HBO
- WO

6. Hoe vaak houdt u zich bezig met elk van de volgende online activiteiten?\*

	Nagenoeg elke dag	1 of 2 keer per week	1 of 2 keer per maand	Zelden of nooit	Weet niet
E-mailen					
Contact onderhouden via sociale netwerksites (Facebook, Hyves, LinkedIn)					
Meepraten op discussiefora					
Informatie zoeken					
(Video) chatten					
Foto's en video's bekijken en delen (Flickr, Youtube)					
Nieuws en actualiteiten volgen					
Bijdragen aan kennisvraagstukken (crowdsourcing)					
Financieel bijdragen aan een project of organisatie (crowdfunding)					

7. Van welke van de volgende organisaties en verenigingen bent u lid?\*

- Jeugdvereniging
- Religieuze vereniging
- Politieke partij of –organisatie
- Natuur- of milieuvereniging
- Consumentenvereniging
- Culturele vereniging
- Hobbyvereniging
- Vakbond
- Patiëntenvereniging
- Omroeporganisatie
- Sportvereniging
- Vrouwenvereniging
- Wijkvereniging
- Fanclub of supportersvereniging
- Bejaarden- of seniorenvereniging
- Carnavals- of Oranjevereniging
- Studenten- of studievereniging
- Beroepsvereniging
- Muziekvereniging
- Anders:

8. Sommige mensen vinden van bepaalde groepen een dreiging uitgaan voor de samenleving. Welke groep in de samenleving vindt u het minst sympathiek?\*

*Hieronder staan enkele voorbeelden. Als uw minst sympathieke groep er niet bij staat, kunt u zelf een andere groep invullen.*

- Moslimfundamentalisten
- Neonazi's
- Oost-Europese immigranten
- Homoseksuelen
- Anders:

9. Vindt u dat mensen die behoren tot uw gekozen groep les mogen geven aan (uw) kinderen?\*

- Ja
- Nee

10. Vindt u dat mensen die behoren tot uw gekozen groep zich verkiesbaar mogen stellen?\*

- Ja
- Nee

11. Vindt u dat mensen die behoren tot uw gekozen groep een politieke partij mogen oprichten?\*

- Ja
- Nee

12. Vindt u dat mensen die behoren tot uw gekozen groep zendtijd mogen krijgen bij een publieke omroep?\*

- Ja
- Nee

13. Vindt u dat mensen die behoren tot uw gekozen groep een demonstratie of betoging mogen houden?\*

- Ja
- Nee

14. Vindt u dat mensen die behoren tot uw gekozen groep onder toezicht geplaatst moeten worden?\*

- Ja
- Nee

15. Er zijn verschillende politieke partijen in Nederland. Voelt u zich meer aangetrokken tot één van de politieke partijen dan tot andere politieke partijen?\*

- Ja
- Nee

16. Tot welke politieke partij voelt u zich in het bijzonder aangetrokken?

- VVD
- CDA
- PVV
- PvdA
- SP
- D66
- GroenLinks
- ChristenUnie
- SGP
- Partij voor de Dieren
- Anders:

17. In hoeverre voelt u zich aangetrokken tot deze politieke partij?

- Zeer sterk aangetrokken
- Sterk aangetrokken
- Niet zo sterk aangetrokken

18. Ziet u zichzelf als een aanhanger van deze politieke partij?

- Ja
- Nee

19. Bent u lid van een politieke partij?

- Ja
- Nee



20. In welke provincie bent u opgegroeid?\*

- Drenthe
- Flevoland
- Friesland
- Gelderland
- Groningen
- Limburg
- Noord-Brabant
- Noord-Holland
- Overijssel
- Utrecht
- Zeeland
- Zuid-Holland
- Ik ben niet in Nederland opgegroeid

21. Heeft u een religieuze overtuiging?\*

- Nee, ik heb geen religieuze overtuiging
- Ik ben katholiek
- Ik ben protestant
- Ik ben moslim
- Ik ben joods
- Ik ben hindoe
- Ik ben boeddhist
- Anders:

22. Wat is uw culturele achtergrond?\*

- Nederlands
- Marrokaans
- Turks
- Indonesisch
- Surinaams
- Antilliaans
- Chinees
- Anders:

23. Als u zichzelf tot een bepaalde sociale klasse zou moeten rekenen, tot welke zou dat dan zijn?\*

- Arbeidersklasse
- Hogere arbeiders klasse
- Middenklasse
- Hogere middenklasse
- Hogere klasse

24. Hou zou u uw seksuele geaardheid omschrijven?\*

- Heteroseksueel
- Homoseksueel
- Biseksueel

## Appendix C – Codebook

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Label</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Type</i>
Geslacht/ Gender	What is your gender?	1= Male 2= Female	Nominal
Geboortejaar/ Year of birth	What is your year of birth?	1900-2012	Scale
Opleiding/ Education	What is the highest form of education you have attended?	1= Primary school 2 = VMBO/MAVO 3 = HAVO 4 = VWO 5 = MBO 6 = HBO 7 = WO	Ordinal
Groep/ Group	Some people believe that certain groups are a threat to society. Which group in society do you dislike the most?	-	Nominal
PT1	Would you allow members of the group of your choice to teach (your) children in school?	1 = Yes 2 = No	Nominal
PT2	Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be allowed to present themselves as a candidate for government elections?	1 = Yes 2 = No	Nominal
PT3	Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be allowed to establish a political party?	1 = Yes 2 = No	Nominal
PT4	Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be allowed to get airtime on public broadcasting?	1 = Yes 2 = No	Nominal
PT5	Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be allowed to hold a rally or demonstration?	1 = Yes 2 = No	Nominal
PT6	Do you think that members of the group of your choice should be put under surveillance?	1 = No 2 = Yes	Nominal
Inkomen/ Income	How high is your gross income?	1 = I don't have an income 2 = Less than 1450 euros a month 3 = Between 1450 euros and 2500 euros a month 4 = Between 2500 and 5000 euros a month 5 = More than 5000 euros a month Missing = I don't know	Interval

Religie/ Religion	Do you have a religious denomination?	1 = No, I do not have a religious denomination 2 = I am catholic 3 = I am protestant 4 = I am Muslim 5 = I am Jewish 6 = I am Hindu 7 = I am Buddhist 8 = Other	Nominal
Woonplaats/ City	In which city do you live?	-	Nominal
Klasse/ Social class	If you have to categorize yourself in a social class, which would this be?	1 = Working class 2 = Higher working class 3 = Middle class 4 = Higher middle class 5 = Higher class	Ordinal
Leeftijd/ Age		2012 – YearOfBirth	Scale
Tolerantie- schaal/ Tolerance scale	PT1 + PT2 + PT3 + PT4 + PT5 + PT6	6 = Tolerant 7 8 9 10 11 12 = Intolerant	Ordinal
Gelovig/ Religious		1 = Yes (1 from variable 'religion') 2 = No (2-8 from variable 'religion')	Nominal
GrootteWoonp laats/ City size		0 – 1000000	Scale