



TENT

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# PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS

CANADA  
JANUARY 2016

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TENT

The TENT Foundation commissioned global research agency AudienceNet to conduct in-depth research into public perceptions of the refugee crisis.

# BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES



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## SHIFTING PUBLIC OPINION

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Watershed moments in the evolution of the refugee crisis can have a profound effect on public opinion.

The widespread dissemination of the photo of three year old Aylan al-Kurdi lying dead on a beach in Turkey provoked a profound surge in empathy and a desire to help, while terrorist attacks foment an atmosphere of fear and suspicion.

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## LONGITUDINAL PICTURE

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AudienceNet's mixed-method research provides in-depth insights and tracks more generalized trends over time.

In this way, an evidence base is built for communications strategies and policy approaches that work best in proactively promoting progressive and humanitarian responses in the public.

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## BEYOND FEAR

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This research project seeks to address the fears present among the public and to move beyond them. It examines the kinds of positive messaging to which people respond and tracks the evolution of this response over time.

It provides a basis for governments, international organizations and NGOs to show true leadership in bringing a message of solidarity to the public.

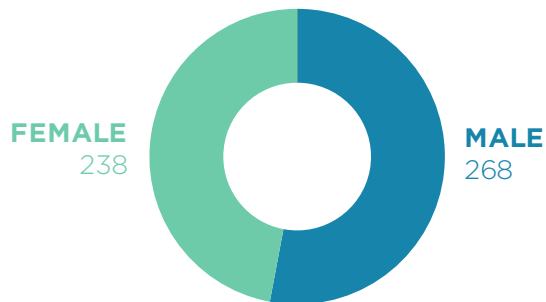
# SAMPLE



**TOTAL SAMPLE**  
**6,363**  
(Nov'15: 11,128)

										
Australia 511 (1,019)	<b>Canada</b> <b>506</b> <b>(1,057)</b>	Germany 512 (1,037)	Greece 509 (1,063)	Hungary 493 (1,080)	Serbia 521 (1,070)	Sweden 516 (1,059)	Turkey 513 (1,059)	UK 512 (1,152)	USA 770 (1,583)	France 1,070 (N/A)

## GENDER: CANADA



Following the terror attacks on November 13<sup>th</sup> in Paris TENT commissioned a re-contact survey in order to explore possible changes in perceptions of the refugee crisis. The re-contact survey is comprised of half of the respondents from the nationally representative surveys conducted in October 2015.



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## QUANTITATIVE PROFILING

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AudienceNet ran an interactive online survey in each country identified by TENT.

The sample involved re-contacts at random with half of the respondents who took part in the original research.

The original research was statistically and demographically representative of the population above the age of 18 years, with strict quotas to ensure the correct representation of: age, gender, region and household income.

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## QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS

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We propose recruiting representatives of the key segments identified in Part 1 into a week-long interactive online community forum. The forum will comprise 40 respondents per country.

The forums will be moderated in the respondents' own language by AudienceNet's team of highly experienced qualitative researchers and will include a series of questions, discussion topics and research tasks to be agreed with TENT.

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## CONNECTED & INTERACTIVE

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With round the clock operations from our London, Washington DC & Melbourne offices, genuine 24/7 dialogue is established with the target groups.

The steering group can observe the platform at anytime and to contribute to research tasks/discussion topics, in real-time, via direct links to the insights platform and moderators.

'Sleep mode' will be maintained beyond the initial phase of insights, at no cost to the client, i.e. the ability to wake the community up at any subsequent stage.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – CANADA



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## POLITICAL LANDSCAPE IN CANADA

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The surveys were conducted during an interesting time for Canada. In October, Conservative PM Stephen Harper was replaced by Liberal Justin Trudeau.

Harper had only agreed to take refugees from persecuted religious minorities, while Trudeau urged a significant increase Canada's commitment, pledging to take in 25,000 refugees within the next year.

By late December, Canada had added \$100m in aid and issued many new visas. While it looked unlikely the 25,000 target would be met, there was debate whether this indicated a quiet policy shift or was a product of red tape abroad.

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## CATEGORIZATION

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AudienceNet divided respondents into segments based on their perceptions of refugees relative to economic, security and financial matters as well as one's sense of responsibility to help.

This information was used to profile respondents as “overtly positive”, “overtly negative” and the mainstream of those with “mixed views”. These were combined with other demographic indicators of age, gender and income to get a full picture of public opinion.

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## THE CANADIAN PUBLIC

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Canada was among the more positive countries when it came to attitudes to refugees and was the second least negative. There was little or no shift in these positions between November and January.

Respondents seemed relatively comfortable that any security threats were manageable.

Those on high income were the most polarized while there was a clear correlation between self-declared progressive/liberal politics and an overtly positive disposition towards refugees. The opposite was true for conservatives.



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## PERCEPTION OF REFUGEES

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Canadians were more likely to credit refugees with seeking work rather than hand-outs, while the majority worked under the assumption that refugees who arrive in Canada would remain permanently rather than reside temporarily.

Respondents were emphatically egalitarian when it came to accepting refugees based on religion or country of origin. Some, however, were open to the idea of giving preference to women and children.

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## RESPONSES TO VARIOUS MESSAGES

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Very few Canadians have shifted their opinions in recent months but, of those who did, a slight majority were more rather than less sympathetic.

They identified the pain of imagining themselves in the refugees' situation, the role of news media and of visual prompts such as photos of refugees difficulty as significant bases for their changing mindset.

Those who had become more negative in their perceptions cited economic and security concerns.

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## A NARRATIVE FOR NEXT STEPS

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With the exception of social media, no particular source emerges as swaying opinion in any particular direction. However, in general, Canadians were among the most responsive to the role of news media as a basis for opinion-forming.

The role of political discourse and public education were particularly influential in shaping Canadians' attitudes. assurance of the temporary nature of refugees' stay. Also, given Canada's long history of immigration, many were responsive to reminders of positive experiences with past immigration processes.



SECTION 1

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# RESPONDENT PROFILING





# CHALLENGES OF CATEGORIZATION



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## BEYOND DEMOGRAPHY AND POLITICAL CLEAVAGE

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Robust analysis of public perceptions of the refugee crisis involves a much more nuanced approach to categorization and segmentation than traditional polling and market research.

Demographics and political perspective are important but so are the truths behind other stated opinions.

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## A FULL PROFILE

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AudienceNet has compiled the most important data from across Canada. The results allow for cross analysis based on nationality, gender, age, household income and political orientation.

There is also significant intelligence on media consumption and personal preoccupations available in this report

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## REFUGEE CRISIS IN SHARP FOCUS

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In spite of the wealth of other data available, these seemed insufficient for adequate categorization of survey respondents.

AudienceNet segmented respondents based on stated opinion in 4 categories: perceived responsibility to help refugees; economic considerations; security; and attitudes to types of financial assistance offered to refugees.

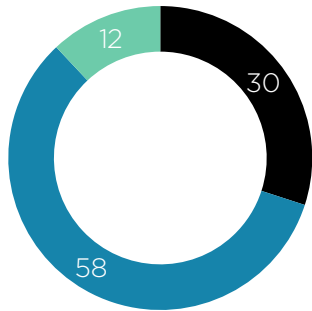


# SEGMENTATION FACTORS

## RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP

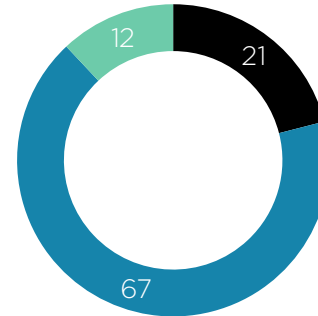


### INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE



- My country has no responsibility to accept refugees
- I would be willing for my country to take in a quota of refugees
- I would be willing for my country to take in any number of refugees

### CANADA



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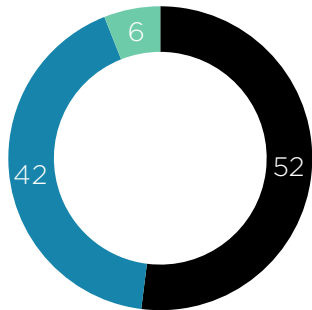
QUESTION: Which statement best represents your position? BASE: 6,433

# SEGMENTATION FACTORS

## ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

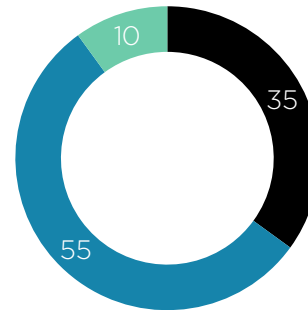


### INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE



- Refugees are a burden on the economies of countries that accept them
- Refugees can positively contribute to the economies of countries that accept them
- New arrivals from other countries benefit our economy

### CANADA



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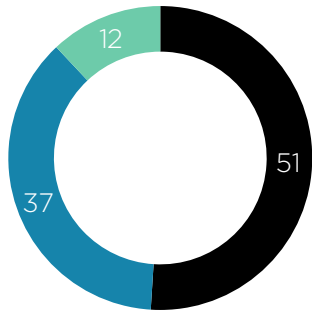
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# SEGMENTATION FACTORS

## SECURITY

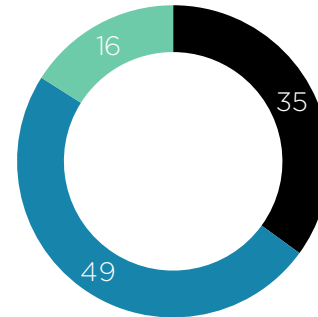


### INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE



- The more refugees my country accepts, the greater risk to our security
- The risk from refugees is a legitimate concern but can be effectively managed
- Refugees pose no risk to my country's security

### CANADA



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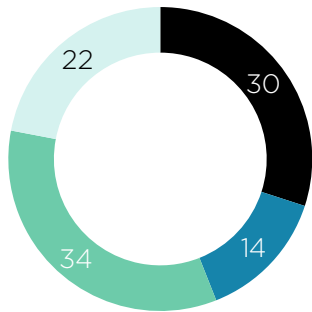
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# SEGMENTATION FACTORS

## FINANCIAL REASONS

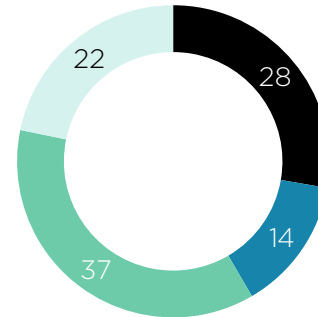


### INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE



- Not willing to provide any financial support
- Willing to donate to charities, but not via taxes used by the government to support refugees
- Happy for the government to provide support for refugees, but not willing to donate to charities
- Willing to donate to charities in addition to support provided by the government

### CANADA

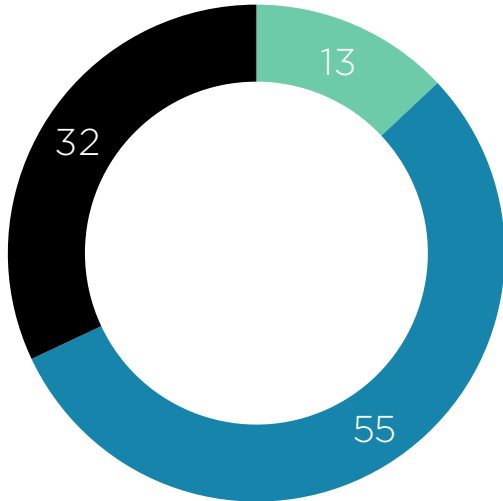


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QUESTION: Which statement best represents your position? BASE: 6,433

# ATTITUDES TOWARDS REFUGEES

CANADA



.....

### 13% OVERTLY POSITIVE

Answered positioning questions positively or neutrally with no negative responses

.....

### 55% MIXED VIEWS

Mixture of positive, negative & neutral responses. The priority target audience

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### 32% OVERTLY NEGATIVE

Answered positioning questions negatively or neutrally with no positive responses

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QUESTION(S): Based on a points system attributed to the answers in the position single choice questions (%) BASE: 506

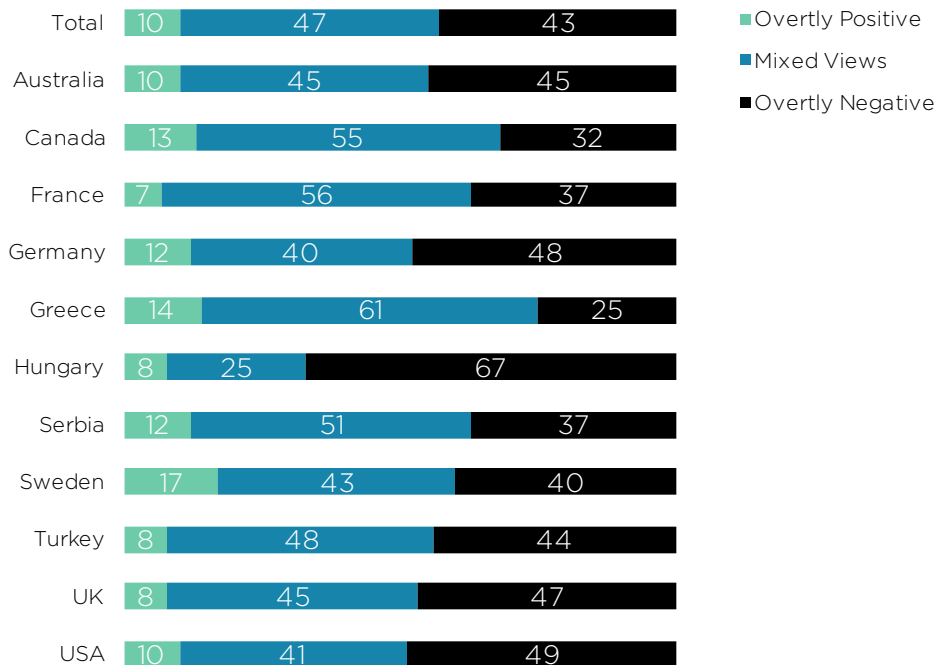
## COMPARED TO OTHER COUNTRIES

### ATTITUDES TOWARDS REFUGEES

Between the November and January surveys, Canadian positioning from overtly positive to overtly negative held quite steady.

A few other countries such as the USA, Germany and Sweden had become significantly more negative in their views since the first survey. The Germans went from having 35% with overtly negative views to 48%.

The Greeks were the least likely to be negative (25%) and the Swedish were most likely to be in the 'overtly positive' segment (17%).

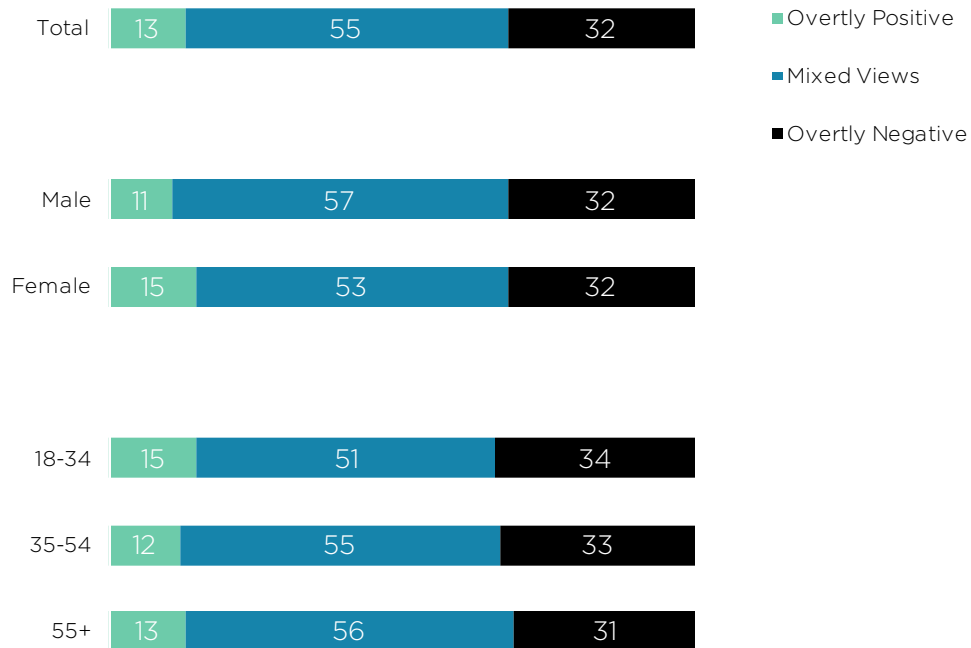


## SEGMENTS BY GENDER AND AGE

### ATTITUDES TOWARDS REFUGEES

Canadian women were slightly more positive towards refugees than their male counterparts. Still, overall Canadians were among the least negative of the territories studied.

The youngest generation (Millennials) were most likely to hold 'overtly positive' views although the differences between the age groups were not substantial.



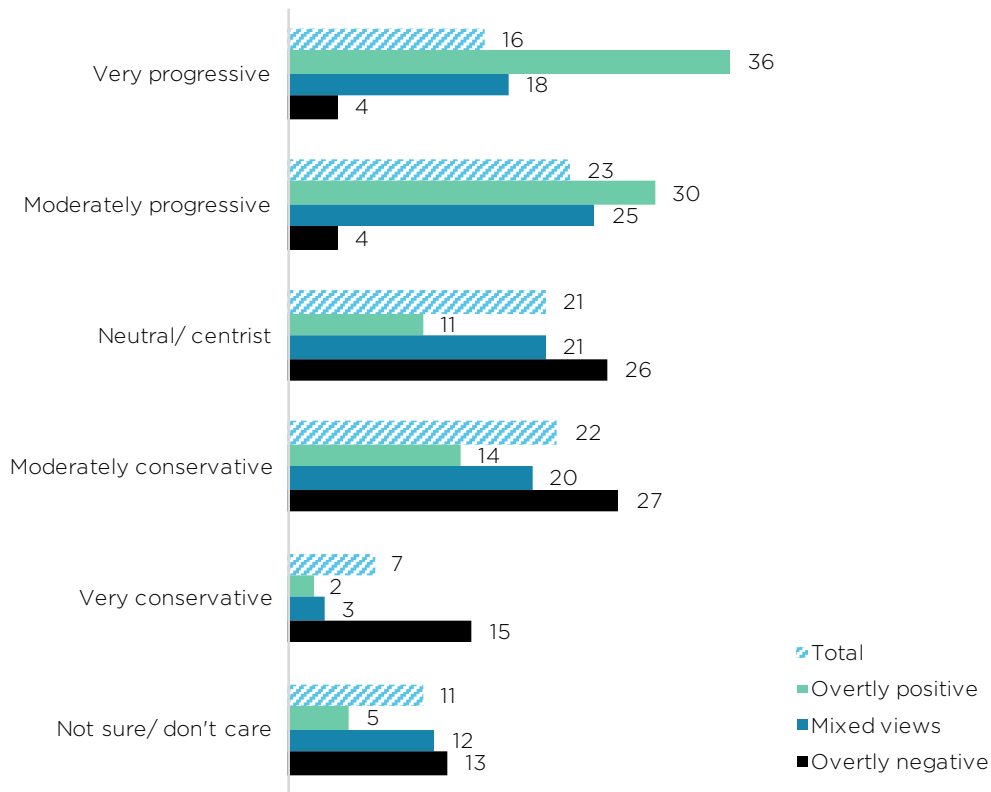
QUESTION(S): Based on a points system attributed to the answers in the position single choice questions (%) BASE: 506



# POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Those overtly positive towards refugees were most likely to identify as moderately progressive or very progressive.

The majority of the very conservative or moderately conservative were in the mixed views or overtly negative category.

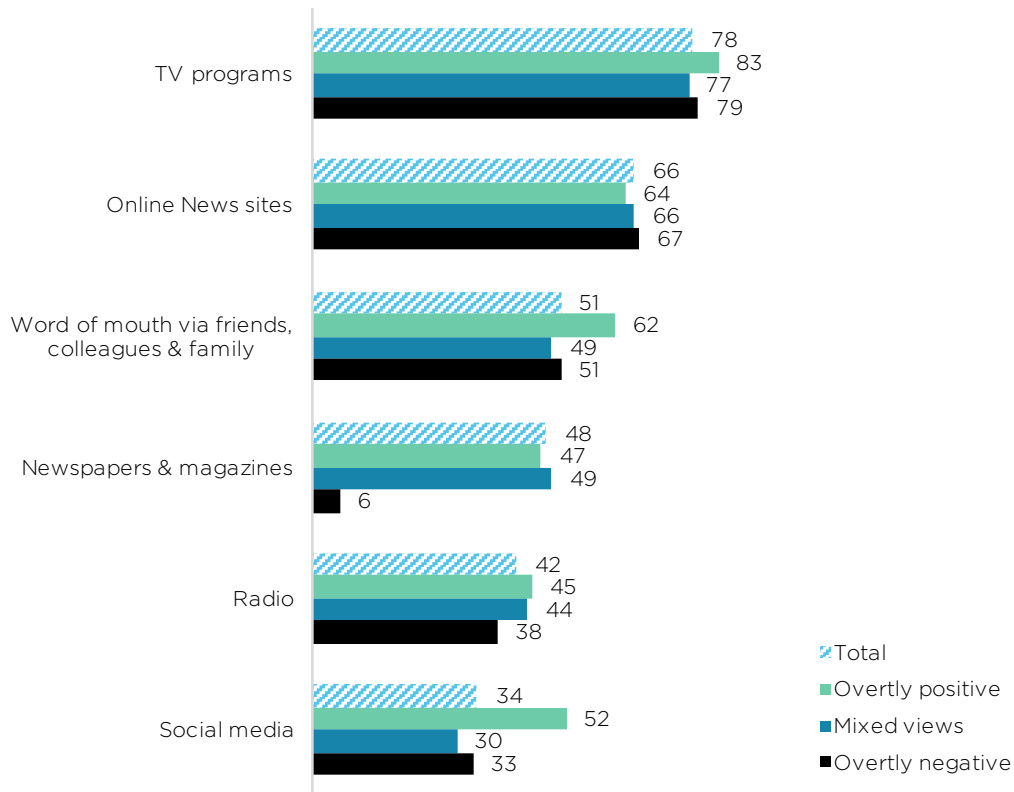


# PREFERRED MEDIA SOURCES

Those with overtly positive views towards refugees were more likely to favor TV programs and social media as their news sources, along with word of mouth. In this sense, Canadians gain knowledge from a multitude of types of platforms.

Online news sites were the top choice for those with overtly negative and mixed views.

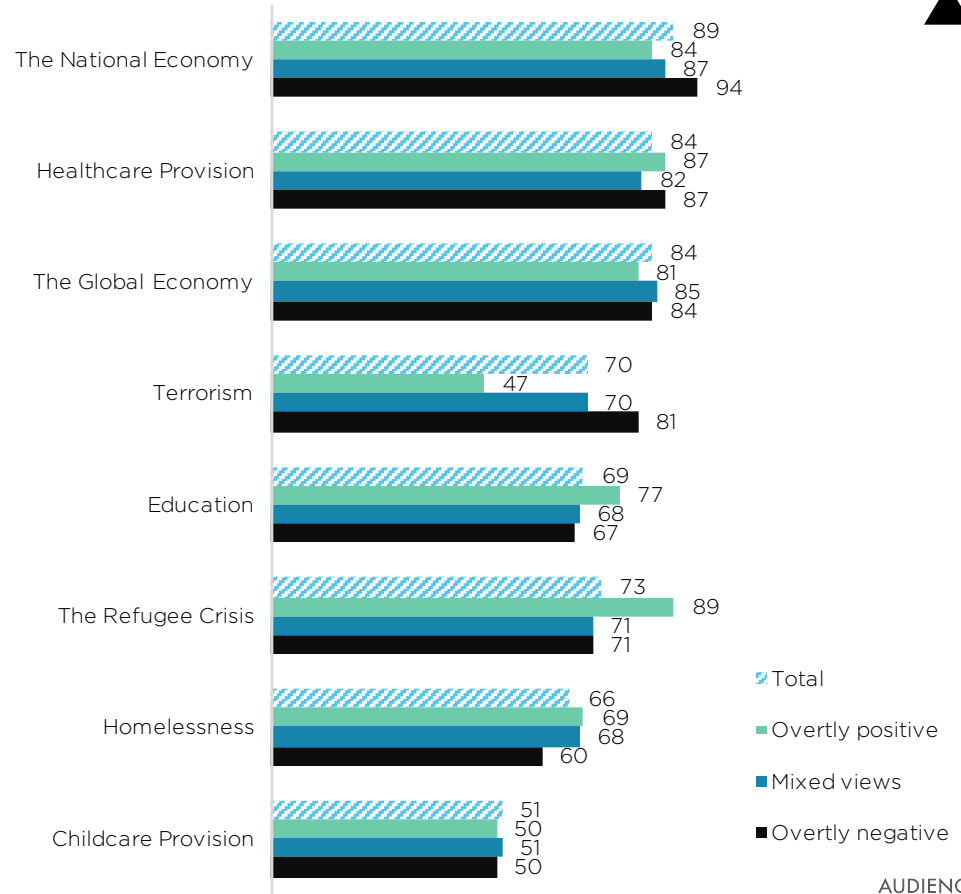
Yet with the exception of social media, no particular source emerges as swaying particular bodies of opinion in any particular direction.



# WHAT ARE THEY WORRIED ABOUT?

Canadians were, on the whole, most likely to be worried about the National Economy, Healthcare Provision and the Global Economy.

There were some notable divergences, however, with the overtly positive much more likely to express concern for the refugee crisis while the overtly negative were significantly more worried about the threat of terrorism.



QUESTION(S): To what extent are you concerned or worries about the following issues? (data shows NET: Great deal /some extent %) BASE: 506



▲  
SECTION 2  
—  
**PERCEPTIONS  
OF REFUGEES**

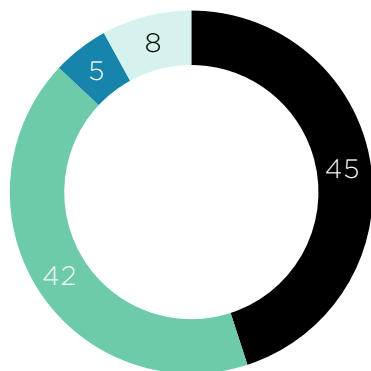


# EXTENT AND CAUSES OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS

People in Canada are well aware of the main causes of the crisis, while many acknowledge the scale of the situation in historical context.

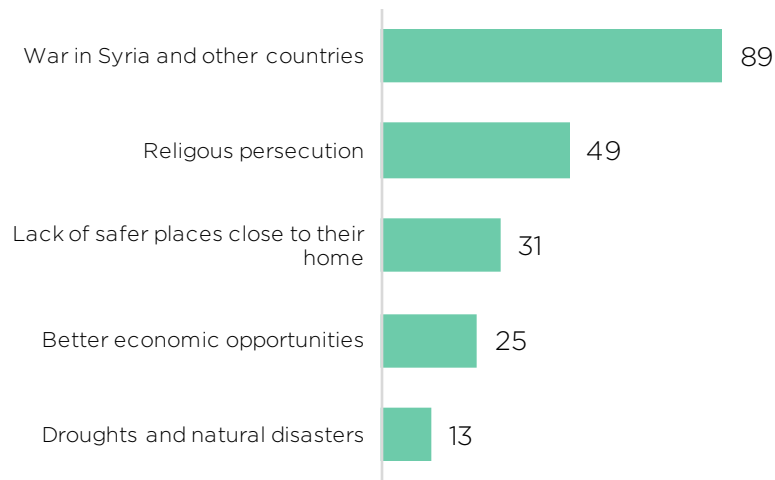


## COMPARED TO OTHER CRISES



- The refugee crisis is the worst since World War II
- The refugee crisis is serious, but it is similar to other recent crises
- The refugee crisis is nothing out of the ordinary
- Don't know

## CAUSES OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS

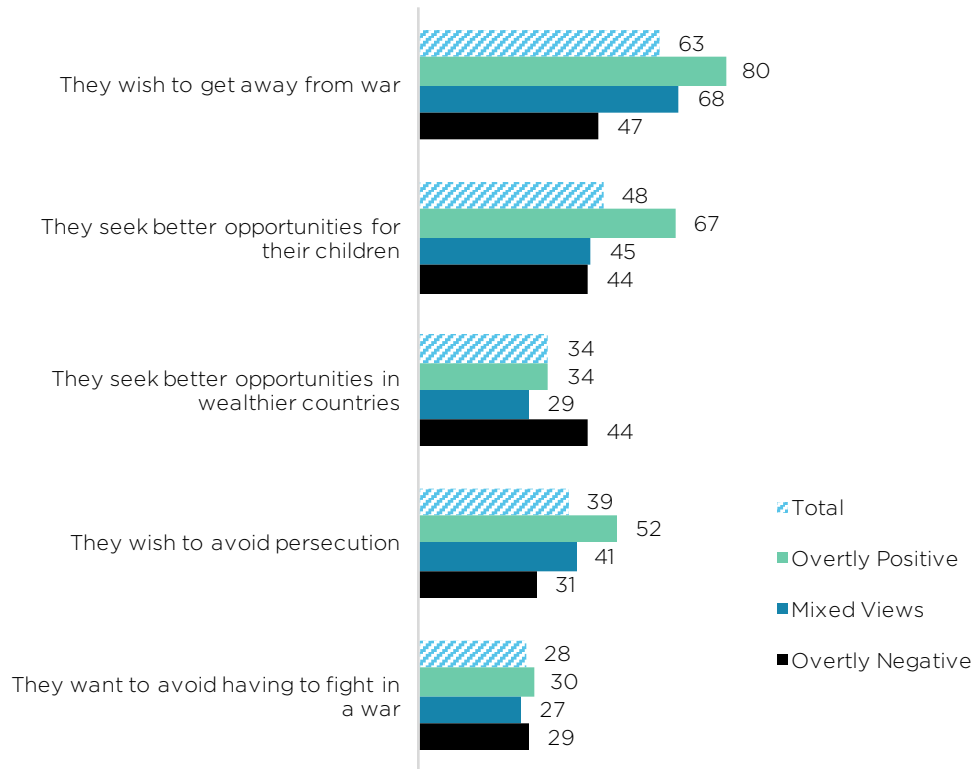


QUESTION(S): How would you describe the scale of the refugee crisis? What do you think has led to the refugee crisis? (%) BASE: 506

# WHY REFUGEES ARE LEAVING THEIR HOMELANDS

There are mixed opinions on what motivates refugees to leave their home countries. Overtly positive respondents cited the wish to get away from war and to seek better opportunities for their children as the main motivations for refugees,

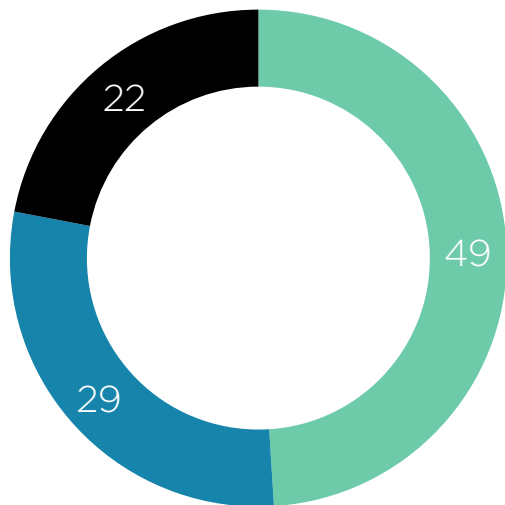
More negative respondents looked to economic motivations such as seeking better opportunities in wealthier countries.



QUESTION(S): To what extent do you think that each of the following motives apply to those who are currently fleeing their homelands? (%) BASE: 506

# WORKING HARD VS SEEKING HANDOUTS

## CANADIAN PERCEPTIONS



.....

### 49% WORKING HARD

The majority of refugees are “willing to work hard and try to fit into their new communities”

.....

### 29% HANDOUTS

The majority of refugees are “just looking for handouts”

.....

### 22% DON'T KNOW

“Don't Know / Not Sure”

.....

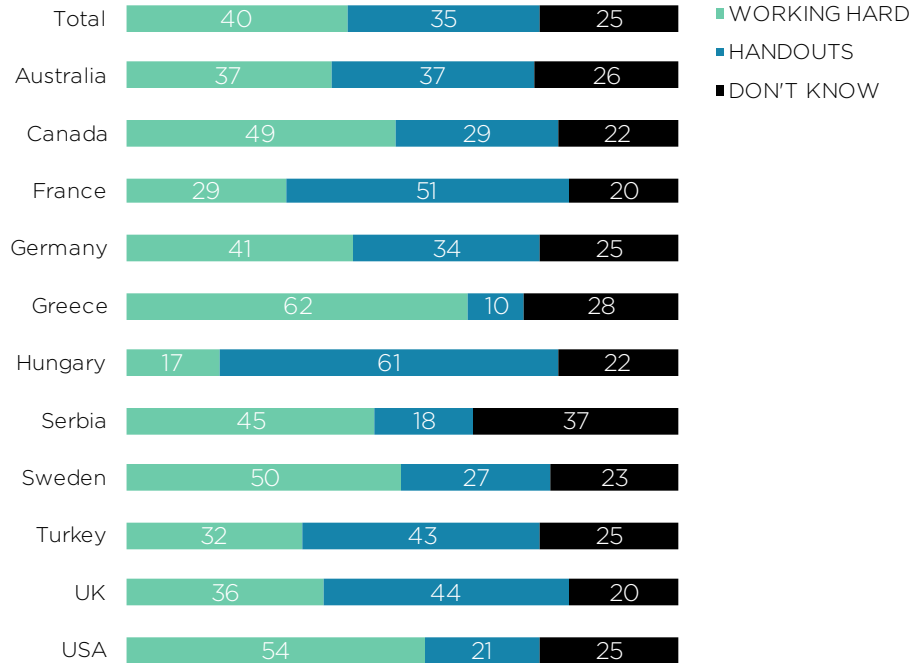
# WORKING HARD VS SEEKING HANDOUTS CANADA COMPARED TO OTHER COUNTRIES

Canadians were, compared to the international average (total), more likely to think that refugees were willing to work hard.

The Greeks were the most likely to think that refugees are willing to work hard and try to fit in (62%).

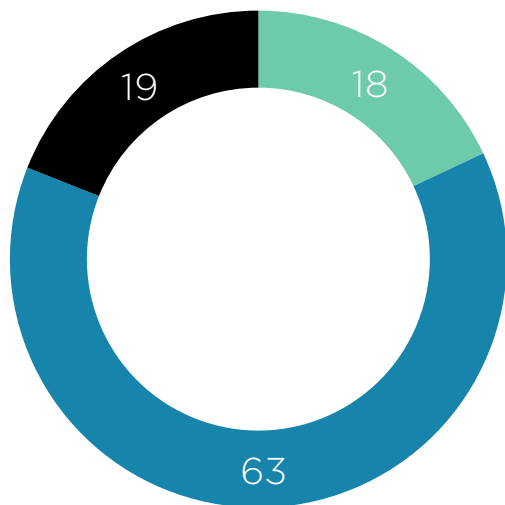
Hungary had the most negative attitude towards refugees with 61% believing that they were just looking for handouts. Serbians were, at 37%, the most likely to say 'Don't Know / Not Sure'.

## THE MAJORITY OF REFUGEES ARE...





# DURATION OF ASYLUM CANADA



.....

## 18% TEMPORARY SHELTER

of Germans think that the majority of refugees caught up in today's crisis are looking for... "Temporary shelter until it's safe to return to their homeland"

.....

## 63% PERMANENT NEW LIFE

think that the majority of refugees caught up in today's crisis are looking for... "A permanent new life in a different country to their homeland"

.....

## 19% DON'T KNOW

"Don't Know / Not Sure"

.....

QUESTION(S): What do you think the majority of refugees caught up in today's crisis are looking for? (%) BASE: 506

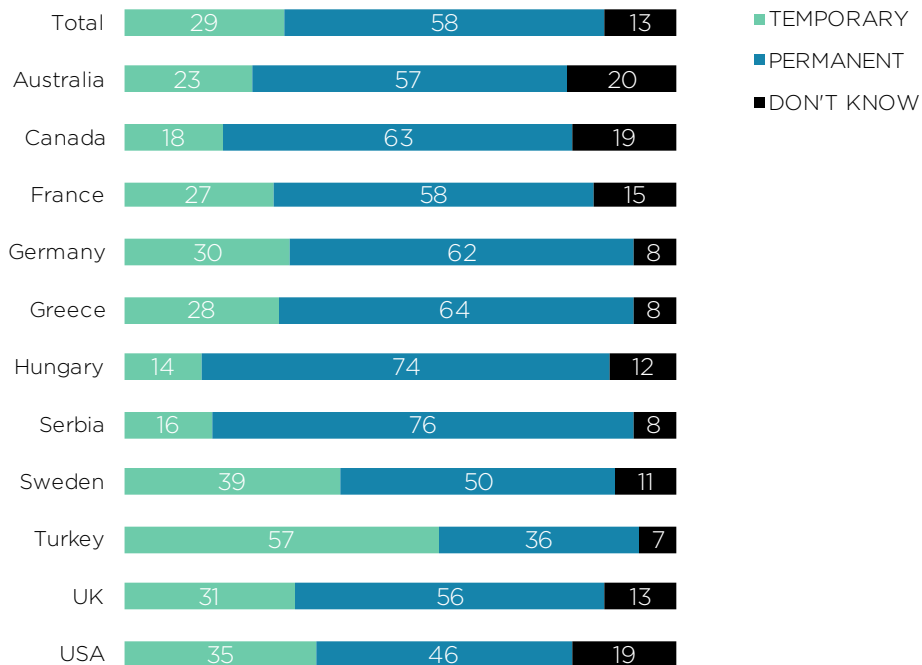
# DURATION OF ASYLUM COUNTRY BY COUNTRY

## DO THEY THINK THE MAJORITY OF REFUGEES ARE...

Just under a fifth of Canadians thought that the majority of refugees are looking for temporary shelter, compared to the international average of 29%.

Turkey, the country closest to major refugee origin countries such as Syria, Afghanistan and Palestine, was the only country where over half (57%) thought that the majority of refugees are looking for temporary shelter.

Around three quarters of respondents in Hungary (74%) and Serbia (77%) thought that the majority of refugees are looking for a permanent new life.



QUESTION(S): What do you think the majority of refugees caught up in today's crisis are looking for? (%) BASE: 6.433

# ARE REFUGEES VIEWED EQUALLY?

Or do respondents wish to show favoritism to some refugees?

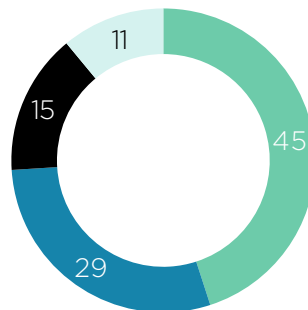


## HIERARCHY OF NEED

Anecdotal evidence had emerged from the refugee-based NGO sector of public preferences for certain profiles of refugees. This was primarily focused on country of origin, but also on indicators such as age, gender and religion.

However, research from Canada showed that the largest proportion of respondents preferred for refugees to be treated equally, while there was a preference among a significant proportion for women and children refugees to given priority. The vast majority felt that country of origin and religion should not be determining factors.

## AGE & GENDER



- All refugees should be helped equally
- Priority should be given to women and children
- Priority should be given to children
- My country should not help refugees

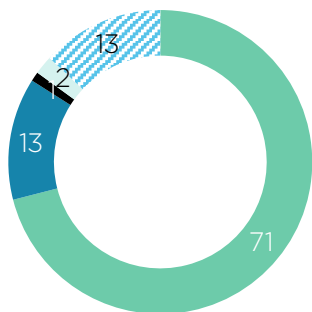
QUESTION(S): Which of the following statements comes closest to your views with regard to the level of help your country should offer refugees? (%) BASE: 506

# ARE REFUGEES VIEWED EQUALLY?

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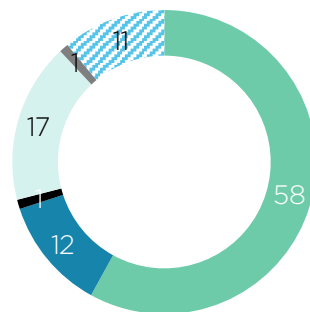


## COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



- All refugees should be helped equally regardless of country of origin
- Priority should be given to migrants from Europe
- Priority should be given to people from sub-Saharan Africa
- Priority should be given to people from the Middle East & North Africa
- My country should not help refugees

## RELIGION



- All refugees should be helped equally, regardless of religion
- Priority should be given to Christians
- Priority should be given to Muslims
- Priority should be given to groups that have faced religious persecution in their country of origin
- Priority should be given to other religious groups
- My country should not help refugees

QUESTION(S): Which of the following statements comes closest to your views with regard to the level of help your country should offer refugees? (%) BASE: 506



SECTION 3

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# RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP

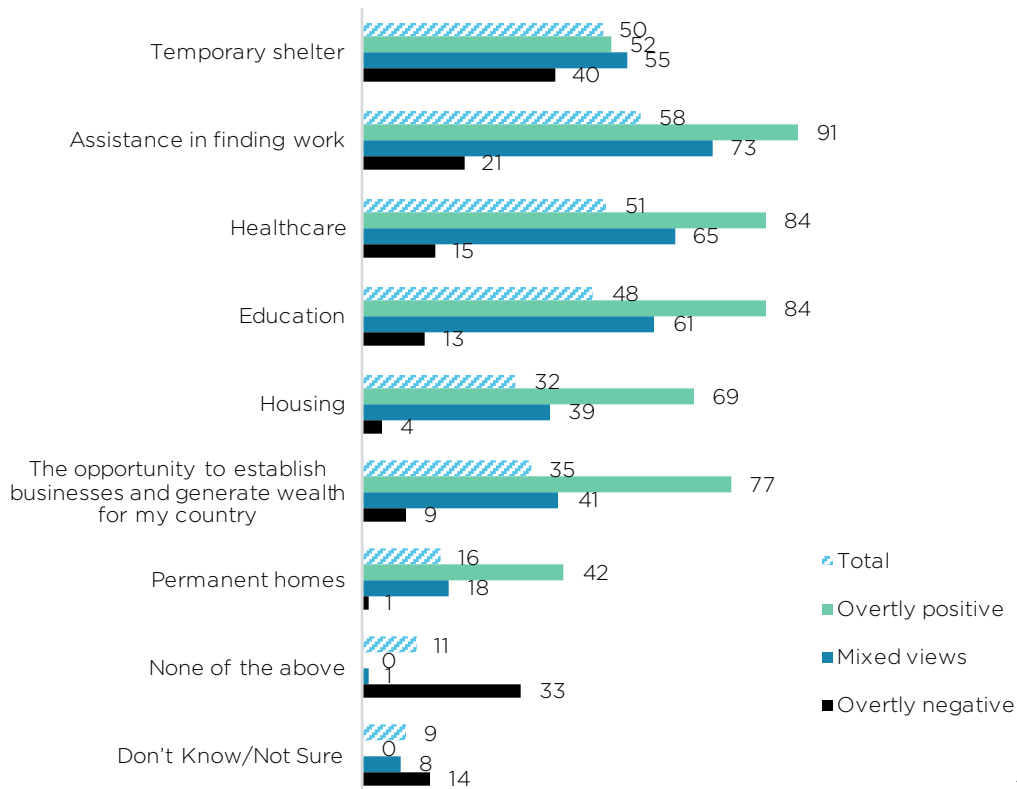


## SUPPORT BY SEGMENT

Those with overtly positive views were more likely to be in favor of support across all categories and registered far higher than mixed or overtly negative counterparts for provisions such as healthcare, education and the opportunity to establish businesses and generate wealth in Canada.

Even amongst those with overtly negative views, 40% thought refugees should at least be offered temporary shelter.

## WHAT SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE?



QUESTION(S): Based on a points system attributed to the answers in the position single choice questions (%) BASE: 506

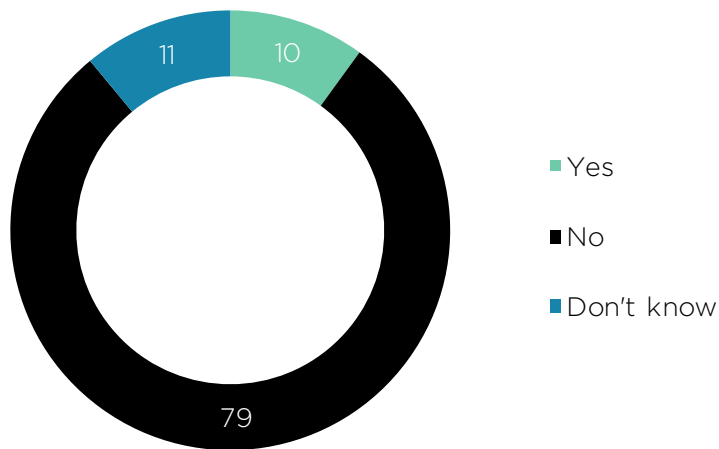
▲  
SECTION 4  
—  
**EVOLVING  
PERSPECTIVES**



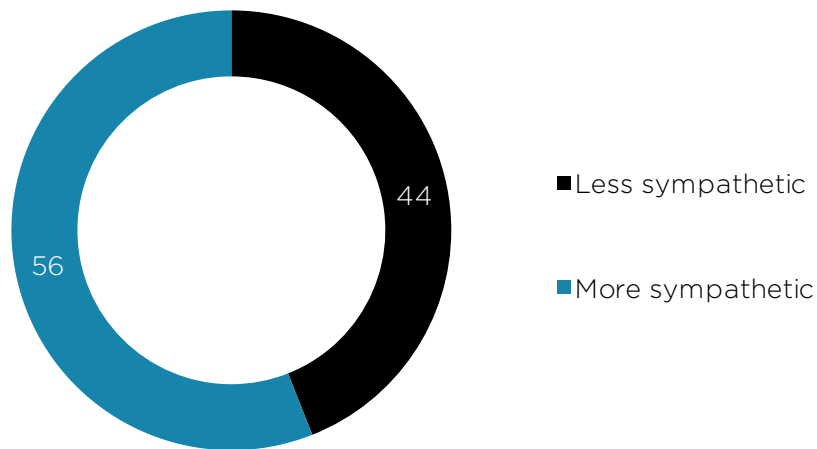
# CHANGING OPINIONS



HAS YOUR OPINION ON THE REFUGEE CRISIS CHANGED IN RECENT WEEKS?



HAVE YOU BECOME MORE OR LESS SYMPATHETIC TO THE SITUATION IN WHICH REFUGEES FIND THEMSELVES?



QUESTION(S): Has your opinion on the refugee crisis changed in recent weeks? (%) BASE: 506 Have you become more or less sympathetic to the situation in which the refugees find themselves? (%) BASE: 52

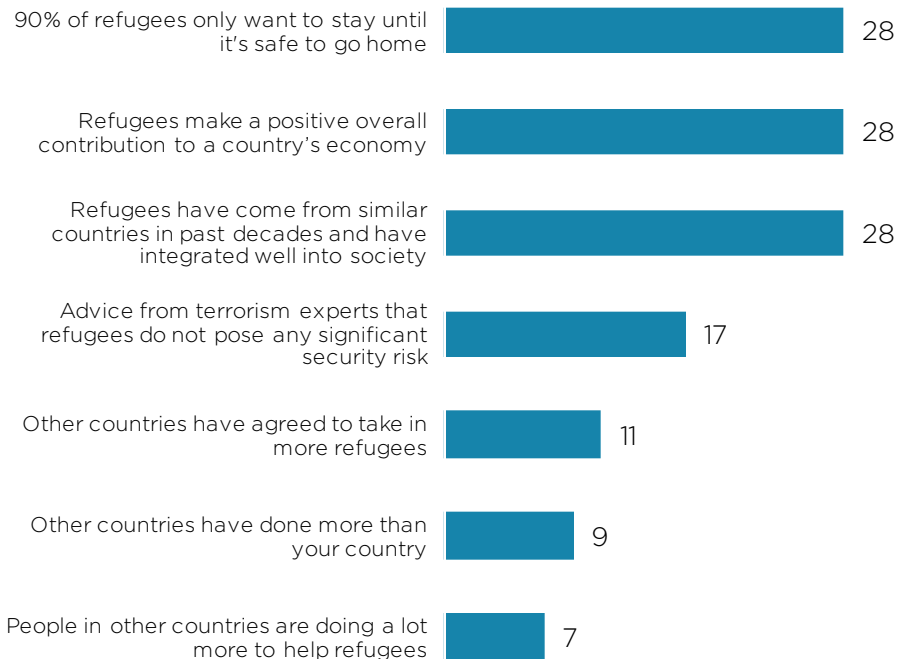


# MESSAGING TO CHANGE MINDS



Messages drawing on positive past experience with refugees in Canada were most likely to change the minds of Canadians who were less sympathetic to the situation. The most prominent were stories of successful integration and the idea that refugees can contribute positively to the economy.

Several also responded positively to the information that 90% of refugees wanted to return to their home country once it is safe to do so.



QUESTION(S): Would your opinion change if you were told that...? | BASE: 45 (All who are less sympathetic to the situation)

# MESSAGING TO CHANGE MINDS

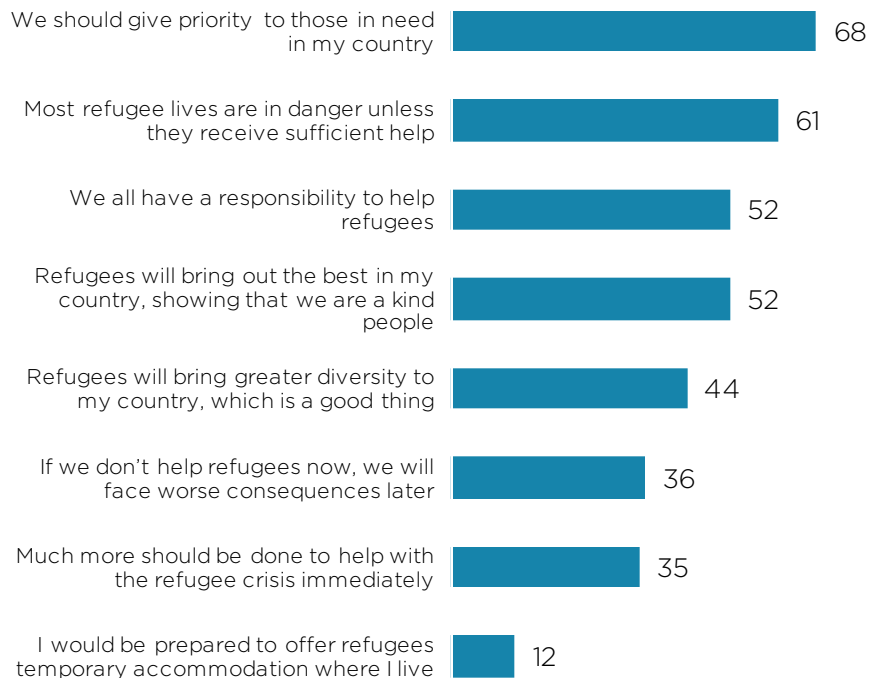


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Compared to other countries surveyed, Canadians were much more likely to agree that refugees would bring out the best in their country, showing they are a kind people. Canadians also registered highest for noting the benefits of the diversity refugees would bring to Canada.

Still, like other countries, Canadians felt strongly that priority should be given to Canadians who are in need.

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QUESTION(S): To what extent do you tend to agree or disagree with each of the following statements? | BASE: 506



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## BUILDING A POSITIVE MESSAGE

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Those who have moved in a more negative direction in their perspective on refugees have done so mainly out of security and economic concerns.

Meanwhile, there is a strong visual element to those who have become more open and sympathetic. Photographic evidence and human interest news reports appear to bring heightened empathy with the plight of the refugees.

# ACCEPTING REFUGEES SEGMENT

A more informed public is the greatest asset to positive messaging around helping refugees. 55% of those with mixed views (and 64% of overtly positive) thought that better knowledge of what is happening in refugees' home countries would make them more positive about accepting refugees. This points to a strong role for the media in Canada.

After public education, factors that drive empathy emerge as hugely significant. Those with overtly negative views were least likely to think anything would make them change their mind, where those with overtly positive and mixed views were more open to change.

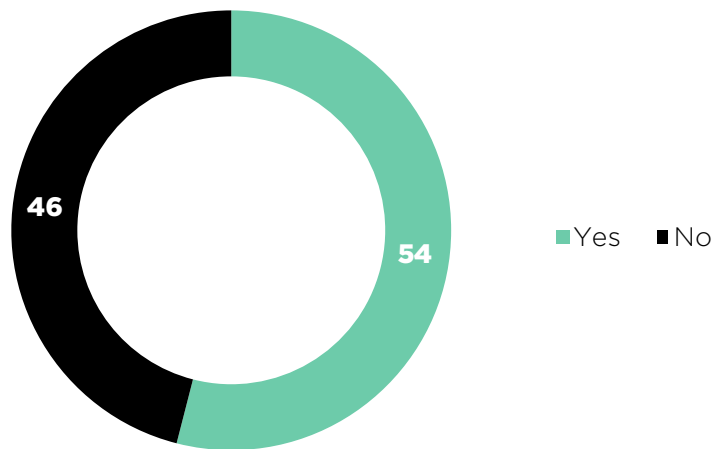
## WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU PERSONALLY MORE OPTIMISTIC OR POSITIVE?



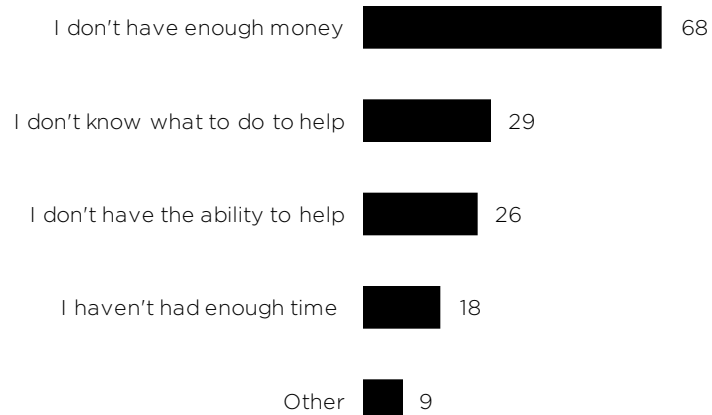
# ASSISTING REFUGEES



DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU HAVE BEEN ABLE TO  
CONTRIBUTE AS MUCH AS YOU WOULD LIKE?



IF NOT, WHY?



QUESTION(S): Do you feel that you have been able to contribute as much as you would like? (%) BASE: 506 If not, why? (%) BASE: 229

# What do you think would help enable you to do more?



BETTER INFORMATION / BETTER COORDINATION / MORE TIME & MONEY



“If I had money so I could get my own groceries maybe I could help them but I'm barely paying my own bills right now.”

“Nothing other than praying for them. I feel that it should be up to the government and churches, which I already support with paying taxes and collections, respectively.”

“Having friends pitch in to help alongside our family.”

“I have not been requested to contribute, nor have I seen opportunities to contribute funds or help in any other material way.”



“Don't have the financial resources to help but would be willing to provide other assistance or donate household goods etc.”

“Churches, Charities, Private Canadians should be able to sponsor families. The Government has no responsibility in taking in quotas of people, The also need to withdraw from the middle east so they don't make matters worse.”

“As a photographer, I'd like to document the crisis, both overseas where it is happening, but also by following new refugee-status immigrants to Canada.”



“Stronger leadership politically.”

“More knowledge of actual cause of situation.”

“Help integration at language level.”

“Having more time and more money to help them. Having a more powerful platform where I can express my opinion.”



TENT