PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS: PHASE II QUALITATIVE INSIGHT FOR CANADA

PREPARED BY AUDIENCENET FOR TENT

TENT

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The TENT Tracker is a multi-phased study seeking to understand public opinion on the refugee crisis:

- Phase 1: Multi-territory quantitative research (via an online survey) with representative samples of the population in 11 countries across North America, Europe and Australia. The findings from this phase established key trends in public opinion, and were also used to segment the population based on whether their attitudes were 'overtly positive', 'overtly negative' or 'mixed.'
- Phase 2: In-depth qualitative research (via online • communities) to better understand the rationale behind, and to identify the strength of, trends highlighted in the surveys. This phase also tested the effectiveness of different types of call to action messages. Five countries were included: Canada, Germany, France, Sweden. Turkev. with approximately 40 participants in each, split across the three population segments identified in Phase 1 ('overtly positive', 'overtly negative' or 'mixed'). It comprised two rounds of research, in March and June 2016.

This report documents the findings from Phase 2 and focuses on the Canadian Online Community.

Segment	Number
Overtly Positive	18
Mixed Views	18
Overtly Negative	8
Total	44

Social and Political Context:

- The online community was conducted several months after Canada's changeover to a Liberal government and since the country's initiative to bring in 25,000 refugees had been, for the most part, seen through.
- Internationally, Canada was praised for its efforts by such luminaries as the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, while internally, news media issued stories of refugees attempting to begin life in Canada as well as analysis on the different profiles of refugees coming to the country.
- Immigration Minister John McCallum urged Canadians to prepare for Phase 2 of the refugee scheme, which would focus on helping refugees settle into their new homes through language classes and other initiatives.

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OVERVIEW

Overall, Canadians were reasonably well informed with regard to the government's plans to provide safe harbor to refugees, although there were disparities in the distribution of this knowledge. More negative participants tended to have mistaken assumptions, particularly relating to the role of countries in Syria's neighborhood.

The refugee crisis did not appear to determine voting behavior to any great extent. However, many built a narrative of Canadian multiculturalism into their overall political perspective and this appeared to have significant sway among participants.

In terms of knowledge base among participants, they referenced campaigns from both government and the private sector as well local volunteering for civil society organizations and churches, and other ad hoc measures run by small, informal community groups assisting refugees with learning English or becoming accustomed to their new surroundings.

The perceptions of refugees articulated herein were, for the most part, respectful, even among those identified as "overtly negative". The empathetic nature of the exercises perhaps contributed to this and bears some lessons for future publicity campaigns. It was also evident throughout that there was a correlation between lack of familiarity and fear. Finally, it became clear that many participants imbued Canadian identity with a sense of tolerance, diversity and liberalism. Several specifically mentioned their preference for "mosaic multiculturalism" rather than its "melting pot" counterpart. Some of the obstacles identified were quite pragmatic, such as the crowded field in attaining charity and NGO funding. While well informed for the most part, a substantial proportion still urged more and better information to be disseminated among the population. This, they argued, would increase awareness, build acceptance and tolerance, and encourage volunteerism in helping refugees.



AUDIENCE



ONLINE COMMUNITIES TABLE OF CONTENTS







AWARENESS AND EXPERIENCES OF REFUGEES

AWARENESS AND EXPERIENCES OF REFUGEES

OBJECTIVES

This activity sought to understand participants' direct and indirect **experiences with refugees**, other means by which they attained their (varying levels) of **knowledge on the issue**, and **experiences/perceptions of media coverage**.

DISCUSSION POINTS/ TASKS

- Have you ever met a refugee yourself or heard any first hand stories about refugees?
- Have you heard anything in the news/media lately about refugees coming to Canada?
- Have you noticed **any differences in the type of coverage** of the refugee crisis depending on the media source?





KEY THEMES

LEARNING FROM THE PAST

It is clear that Canadians are keenly aware of their history of accepting previous waves of refugees and the Syrian conflict has been place alongside others in establishing a narrative.

"My grandparents immigrated to Canada during WWII, and while not typically thought of as "refugees" given their European provenance, the term is certainly applicable, giving license to inference from the resulting parallels. My town has become home to several refugee families, from which I only expect mutual benefits."

Male, 25-34, Mixed views

DIVISIONS OVER SOCIAL MEDIA

There is a strong level of distrust of social media as a tool for gaining information about the refugee crisis, in stark contrast to the perception of balance among traditional media.

"Yes, I definitely think there is a difference in the coverage on this depending on where you see it. Most of the stuff on social media is against it, and I see a lot of biased, untruthful posts there. Media reports tend to be a little more favorable, or at least try to show it in a favorable light."

Female, 35-44, Overtly positive

"Social media as always presents a much more diverse, divided and probably misinformed opinion of the crisis."

Male, 55-64, Overtly negative



AREAS OF DISCUSSION

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF MEETING REFUGEES OR HEARING THEIR STORIES

A significant proportion of participants reported having direct experience of meeting refugees. This was most common amongst the more positive and mixed view portions of the group.

The most detailed accounts of individual refugee narratives came from participants who had either volunteered at refugee help centers or people working within the education and healthcare system.

Accounts covered stories of refugees from Syria as well as Nigeria and Iraq. Some also drew on the experiences of their parents and grandparents coming as refugees to Canada.

EXTENT OF NEWS COVERAGE

Perspectives on the extent of the news coverage were quite measured. Most gave accounts of what they knew and where they received their information.

While coverage of the refugee crisis has been widespread and accessible, it was not seen as overbearing.

Some noted an increase in the coverage the refugee crisis has received since the Liberal government entered office. This is generally linked to the efforts by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to put the issue at center stage. There were, however, some negative commentators who felt that politicians were making political capital out of the refugee crisis.

DIFFERING NATURE OF NEWS COVERAGE

The Canadian community was quite well informed on the refugee crisis, both through personal experiences with refugees and through news/ media. Those with positive or mixed views tended to be the most well informed, as well as those working/volunteering in education and service provision to refugees. Overall, the level of media coverage was seen as sufficient (not too much), although there was a level of distrust for social media.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"In my community there are a lot of new refugee families that have been welcomed. A lot of local charities have donated furniture, clothes and services to help them get started. My husband volunteers at a center to help with resume writing." Female, 25-34, Overtly positive

"Yes, I am aware of several refugees and have found them to be beneficial for our economy. They have jobs, contribute to the tax base and are simply trying to live a decent life. I am very disappointed with the exploitation of refugees by governments that are using the crisis to better their image."

Female, 25-34, Overtly negative

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"I have had students that are refugees from Nigeria. They fled and sought asylum after the Boko Haram attacks on the schoolgirls. Many of the kids were approved to enter Canada via student visas and living with local families, but some of their family members are still in Nigeria, which makes it especially hard on them...They told me stories about having to be especially careful about walking out by themselves because kids would get attacked walking to and from school, and hearing gunshots as a routine thing ... We need some kind of intervention if we expect these kids to be close to able to function in a peacetime society when they leave high school." Female, 25-34, Mixed views

I haven't met a refugee myself, but I've read some online newspapers and a printed magazine about the recent refugee crisis. Male, 18-24, Mixed views

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"I don't know enough about the politics or economics of this issue to form an opinion though. One story I found particularly memorable was one about how a town in my province, Altona, has taken in a large number of refugees. It touched my heart to see so many welcoming people so close to home. It's also nice to see that it's inspired other towns to follow suit. I feel that lately the news about the refugee crisis has died down a bit. I feel it comes in wavesonce a single story comes out other news sources seem to search for other stories to put out as well. Compared to other issues, I feel it doesn't get more than it's fair share."

Female, 18-24, Mixed views

SECTION 2 THE CANADIAN POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

THE CANADIAN POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

OBJECTIVES

This activity gathered views on the political landscape of each country in relation to the refugee crisis. For example, refugee and immigration policies.

It also examined the extent to which government actions on the refugee crisis **informed voter behavior**.

DISCUSSION POINTS/ TASKS

- Did you **vote** in the recent election?
- If you did vote, to what extent, if at all, did refugee and immigration policy have an impact on how you voted?
- How do you feel about the Canadian government's policies concerning refugees?
- What do you think people in **other countries think** about Canada's refugee policy?





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KEY THEMES

LIBERAL CANADA

Stephen Harper's government had shown much greater reluctance to embrace international obligations towards refugees, while the Trudeau government steered the country towards a notably different, humanitarian path. In essence, for many respondents the issue of refugee policy has been included in the overall narrative of Canada reasserting its historically liberal values.

"Since the election of Trudeau, the rest of the world started to see in Canada an example for peace, solidarity and openness. With Mr. Trudeau as Prime Minister I am proud again to be a Canadian citizen, which I I lost while Harper was ruling."

Male, 35-44, Overtly positive

"The world appears to have rediscovered Canada and holds us up as an example for the Western world."

Male, 55-64, Mixed views

REFUGEE POLICY & ELECTIONS

While the majority of participants did not attribute their voting decision to a focus on refugee policy, there were those who viewed the recent elections as a watershed moment in terms of how Canada is perceived, both internally and externally.

"Yes I did vote in the last election. Several issues were taken into account, immigration and refugee policies were heavily considered." Female, 25-34, Overtly positive

"I did vote in the recent election. The refugee policy didn't have much impact on my choices. But, the immigration policy had important influence on my decision. I was actually impressed by Liberal's policy because some of my friends and co-workers met certain difficulties in this area with Conservatives immigration policy."

Male, 45-54, Mixed views



REFUGEE CRISIS & VOTING INTENTIONS

In general, refugee policy did not emerge as a significant basis for voting decisions among Canadian participants. However, the more overtly positive participants were much more likely to state explicitly that it was. The actions and promises of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau came in for substantial praise from these quarters. "Overtly negative" participants were not always drawn on the direct influence on their vote. However, several indicated that they had voted for the Conservatives and more than likely favored Stephen Harper's policy. Some were also of the opinion that Justin Trudeau had used the refugee crisis to score political points.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Justin Trudeau still appears to be riding a wave of positivity as Prime Minister and participants in our community tended to show overarching support for the Liberal government's policy on refugees. As would be expected, this ran on a sliding scale from positive to negative.

Still, even some positive respondents expressed reservations about the government's capacity to implement its plan. Some also indicated that the government had shown a certain amount of naïveté, especially when it came to matters of adequate resourcing and the maintenance of security.

EXTERNAL PERSPECTIVES

When questioned about what other countries thought of Canada's actions, participants indicated a level of pride that their country was taking responsibility in the international community. As such, these participants imagined a general level of admiration from other countries.

Again, more negative respondents thought Canada's response would be seen as naïve, while a few respondents referred directly to the US, where they expected a certain level of anxiety at Canada's more open policy.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I voted in the most recent election. And to be honest the refugee policies had no impact on my vote. I didn't consider them in at all. I really hadn't even been paying attention to them throughout the election, thus I don't actually know what Trudeau mentioned about it I was more focused on other areas of the campaigns (like healthcare)."

Female, 18-24, Mixed views

"I honestly wanted someone to address concerns of the middle class: economy, jobs, education, etc. I wasn't particularly concerned with the refugee issue because I knew it would be addressed appropriately and those other concerns affect my life more at this stage." Female, 25-34, Mixed views "

"I voted. I am usually NDP, but switched to Liberal. I loved Trudeau at form, and the way the whole Liberal party backed it up. I absolutely loved his pledge to bring over and integrate all the refugees. So exciting for us and them. What a process. One must be very courageous and trusting to go through such a journey. I would be terrified to find myself in a similar situation. Canada is such an awesome place to live, it is hard not to take for granted how lucky we have it here. Long Live Canada." Female, 45-54, Overtly positive "

"I will support our government's decisions on the policies concerning refugees. I think a lot of people are not in support of the refugee policy however I think a lot of people are careful in voicing their opinions as they don't want to come across as being racist." Female, 35-44, Overtly positive

"I think other countries would view Canada's policies rather positively because we're contributing to a global cause, only a few might think Canada might be overdoing it with the numbers (when refugees are far away from Canada) and is a bit lax in security (exposure to terrorism)."

Male, 18-24, Mixed views

AUDIENCE



AWARENESS OF EXISTING PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS

AWARENESS OF EXISTING PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS

This activity looked in detail at the **specific refugee-related campaigns** (information and activism) that participants had been exposed to.

Participants were asked their **general opinions** on the campaign(s), including the tone, impact, likes, dislikes etc.

It also aimed to identify the most effective means to communicate to as wide an audience as possible, both in terms of content and dissemination channels.

DISCUSSION POINTS/ TASKS

- Have you heard about/ seen any campaigns on the subject of refugees?
- What do you think about the campaign(s)?
- If you were involved with starting a new campaign about changing public attitudes towards refugees, how would you go about it?





KEY THEMES

CORRECTING MISINFORMATION

APPEAL TO EMOTION

Participants sought primarily to correct the basis on which prejudice grows by showing the challenges that refugees have faced as well as the enormous efforts they have made to adapt to Canadian life.

"There is a lot of prejudice surrounding refugees. Most is due to ignorance of the various ethnic groups, current issues with ISIS and especially the media. There are a few good stories about refugees but I have noticed there are too many bad stories because that is what sells. If there were daily progress reports (i.e. evening news broadcasts) of the integration of refugees, perhaps the general public would see the positive results and become desensitized and less afraid." Female, 25-34, Overtly negative

Added to this, many urged an appeal to emotion by individualizing and humanizing the journeys that refugees have made in order to inspire empathy.

"If I were to be involved with starting a new campaign to change people's attitudes I would try to appeal to their emotional side, with a few facts thrown in. I'd focus on what life was like for the refugees before they came to Canada and what it will/is like once they are here. Maybe have some recent refugees do some interview type stuff to give their honest opinion on what it's like, rather than second-handedly through a politician. But I would also pay attention to what information people want to know about this topic. There's no point throwing around info that nobody cares about, so it's nice to ask and then provide it to those who care."

Female, 18-24, Mixed views

KNOWLEDGE OF EXISTING CAMPAIGNS

Canadian participants tended to reference campaigns and initiatives from other countries as well as those in Canada. The most prominent external examples (both positive and negative) came from Germany and the US.

The Canadian campaigns that were referenced varied between government information initiatives, private sector fundraising by major companies, local volunteering from civil society organizations and churches and other ad hoc measures run by small, informal community groups assisting refugees with learning English or becoming accustomed to their new surroundings.

PERCEPTIONS OF CAMPAIGNS

While some felt there had been an oversaturation of media coverage of the refugee crisis, there was a notable tendency to see public information campaigns as absolutely necessary to offset hostile or ignorant opinions. The reaction to many of the campaigns already underway was quite positive and some participants even noted a shift in public discourse which they attributed to these initiatives.

While many comments inevitably focused on the successful use of social media initiatives on avaaz.org and change.org, there were some warnings about the pitfalls of "slactivism", wherein people show nominal support which in fact is of little consequence.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?

Canadians advocated a multiplicity of approaches in order to cover all bases. Participants looked to both social and traditional media to cover all demographics.

In terms of rhetoric and approach, some urged a factual and rational approach while others would appeal to the emotional side of the debate, drawing on stories of families making long, arduous journeys to come to Canada. Adding to this, there was some support for providing first-hand accounts of refugees' lives and the situations they had been fleeing.



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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I heard them on the radio, and also on Facebook through Humans of New York. They were basically trying to focus on the fact that refugees have been through experiences we hope to never have to experience and that they want to start a new life in new countries and get their lives back to normal, and we should support the government's efforts to bring them over."

Female, 25-34, Mixed views

"What is salient for me is the common appeal to "slactivism", whereby the support solicited is nominal and the supporters themselves are divorced from the realities of the complex situation. It is hard to quantify a movement-"likes" are not only incomplete, but insufficient as well."

Female, 25-34, Mixed views

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"I have not heard of public activities pertaining to refugees in Canada. The primary source I have seen them is in Germany where some extremely right wing (some more political sources call them reactionary or Neo-Nazi) groups protesting the acceptance of refugees as a whole. This was also accompanied by a counter-movement by those who openly accepted the refugees."

Male, 18-24, Mixed views

"The only campaigns I've heard of were before the refugees arrived. They were looking for clothing donations for when the people arrived. As for just the subject of refugees I have not heard of any campaigns."

Male, 35-44, Overtly positive

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"I think the campaigns are much needed, considering there are still people who believe refugees are a drain on our resources and cannot contribute anything worthwhile to the country. I think they have had an impact on public opinion because I have heard less of those negative opinions lately."

Female, 25-34, Mixed views

"If I were starting a campaign, I would first focus on how we could change a refugee's life by doing this. I would write stories or show videos about how dangerous it is to live in their home country because of the war and ISIS. Then I would show what life would be like living in Canada and share some successful stories of former refugees already in our country."

CANADA | JUNE 2016

Male, 18-24, Mixed views

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SECTION 4 IDENTITY AND OPINION FORMATION



IDENTITY AND OPINION FORMATION

OBJECTIVES

This activity looked to uncover the influence of identity on opinion formation. It looked at both personal and national identity, and whether these framed participants' views in relation refugees.

A key objective was to ascertain whether people from particular sub-groups or holding certain worldviews are likely to be more **hospitable or hostile** to refugees.

DISCUSSION POINTS/ TASKS

- When thinking about your personal identity, do you talk in terms of local area, region, nationality or something else?
- What does being Canadian mean to you?
- What do you think are the **best** and worst attributes of Canadian society?
 - Why do you think many refugees want to come to Canada above other developed Western countries?

	When you all of personal identity, I always feel Canadian, but in conversation with others you are always asked " where are you originally from" and that is where I feel you are always from somewhere else and the Canadian is then added on.			
2	Quilterca (*	*	o ⁰ 1	
	Refugees have to pay back the government for the trip to Canada. Usually they are sponsored for a year by some group and then are self supporting. They manage their money well, get jobs and contribute to society. Free money is not the	add tags		
	reason, it is not much money. They value the freedom and opportunities we offer. Our own people are taking advantage of free money and have no intensions of working.	add	note	
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KEY THEMES

THE 'CANADIAN MOSAIC'

From this online community, it is evident that many Canadians hold a national self-perception that embraces openness, international solidarity and liberal values. Even those who were categorized as "overtly negative" during the quantitative phase of analysis embraced a remarkably positive perspective when wedded to their own identity. The "Canadian mosaic" is strongly embedded in the national psyche.

"Being Canadian means being proud of living in a multicultural country, where different values and languages and cultures are accepted and respected."

Male, 45-54, Mixed views

"[We] tend to accommodate and incorporate refugees into the Canadian mosaic rather than assimilate via the melting pot. We value beliefs and traditions that are often forced to be hidden or abandoned elsewhere."

Male, 55-64, Mixed views

YOUNG SOCIAL TRIBES

Interestingly, younger participants looked to more abstract forms of identification than geographical, ethnic or socio-economic delimiters. Many looked to interests, hobbies and values and embraced what might be described as their "social tribes".

"Where I live does not define me. My identity consists of: 1. the values and emotions I have 2. the values and emotions I don't have 3. my logic which determines how I act to satisfy my values and emotions 4. what I believe in, especially being agnostic."

Male, 18-24, Mixed views

"When I think about my personal identity, I think about my beliefs and my hobbies mostly. My ethnicity is unimportant." Female, 18-24, Mixed views



PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION, LOCALE, REGION & NATIONALITY

There was a distinct lack of overly nationalistic representations of identity among respondents and many couched their self identification in highly civic and explicitly non-ethnic terms. References to ethnic difference were only couched within an inclusive Canadian identity and there is a noticeable pride about this inclusivity.

Interestingly, younger respondents tended to refer to social markers other than region, religion or nationality, such as hobbies, interests and values.

ATTITUDE TO CANADA & CANADIAN SOCIETY

Perceptions in Canada are of an open, inclusive, multicultural and liberal society. There is a noticeable pride in the extent to which the Canadian model has been a success. This is clearly part of the narrative that contributed to Canada's generous stance since the Liberal government attained power.

There is still a tendency to define Canada relative to other countries, most notably the USA. There were some negative comments regarding the big neighbor's stance on the crisis. Comparisons were also drawn with France.

WHY DO REFUGEES COME TO CANADA?

Explanations offered by our respondents varied but there was a similar thread throughout. There were references to the historical success of Canadian "mosaic" multiculturalism, the attractions of a decent social system, economic stability, stable government, a liberal and welcoming society and the freedoms offered in Canada that are often denied elsewhere.

Some were more measured in commentary, indicating that refugees did not *choose* to go to Canada, but that other countries had refused them entry.



"My identity is truly a mix of my ethnic cultural background, where I grew up locally, where I live now mixed in with Canadian nationality."

Female, 25-34, Overtly positive

"I prefer to be identified as a citizen of the world. In 2016, we only use the country or a region to identify ourselves. People's challenges and worries become global. What may still differentiate us from one another is the cultures or the roots more than geographical location. I identify myself as a Muslim Canadian. My culture is from North Africa."

Male, 35-44, Overtly positive

"Being Canadian means to me being open minded and liberal. Aware of what is happening around the world and polite and respectful..."

Female, 18-24, Overtly positive

"Our best is our consensus building abilities and our ability to accommodate different points of view without forcing total assimilation (mosaic versus melting pot). Our worst is that we tend to not stand tall when we should."

Male, 55-64, Mixed views

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"Following from what I've just said, it seems clear that refugees prefer by far settling down in Canada because they see they are more likely to be able to find their place in Canadian society. They can guarantee a better future for their children. In other countries like France, immigrants and refugees often suffer from exclusion and discrimination as soon as they arrive."

Male, 35-44, Overtly positive

"A reputation for civility, melded by centrism, on a vast geography with a stable economy makes Canada appealing."

Male, 35-44, Mixed views





ATTITUDES TOWARD REFUGEES

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OBJECTIVES

This activity sought to establish the strength (if any) of negative sentiment towards refugees, as well as what drives it (e.g. fears and anxieties). It also looked at whether negative sentiment or prejudice was more common in relation to particular 'types' of refugees.

DISCUSSION POINTS/ TASKS

- To what extent, if at all, do you think refugees arriving to Canada **pose a security threat**?
- Do you think some groups of refugees are better than others at integrating into Canadian life?





KEY THEMES

"OTHERING" VS. SUPPORTIVE INTEGRATION

The respondent classifications of "overtly positive", "mixed views" and "overtly negative", were particularly apparent in this activity. Among those who were negative, the narrative was very much about 'othering' refugees by focusing on cultural differences, drawing particular attention to Muslims.

On the other hand, those classified as "overtly positive" or having "mixed views" tended to believe that integration would be better facilitated through a supportive environment and services such as language and culture classes.

"I don't think refugees pose a threat. Some people make negative comments not knowing the full story. I am confident in our government that the proper screening has been done."

Female, 65-74, Mixed views

"Any other of non-Muslim origin, educated and hardworking are definitely better candidates for integrating into Canada. They and their kids are more likely to contribute to Canada's economy in the future."

THE PRIVILEGE OF YOUTH

Across the positive-negative spectrum, it was assumed that younger refugees would find it easier to integrate, while there were differences of opinions over whether families integrated better than individuals.

"I'm sure that younger people will integrate far easier than, say, the elderly or even middle aged people. Young people are usually more open to change and see our way of life as a great freedom far different from that they had in their homeland."

Female, 35-44, Overtly positive

"Yes, immersion into a society is generally easier for younger people whereas older people often find it to be a struggle. The youth are open to new customs, pick up the language and are able to blend in." Female, 25-34, Overtly negative



Female, 45-54, Overtly negative

AREAS OF DISCUSSION

During this activity, most participants still adopted a broadly open, level-headed attitude to security risks. For the most part, differences of opinions reflected the positive-mixed-negative spectrum. However, it appears that fears regarding the safety of women have struck a chord even with some usually positive participants, seemingly on the back of the New Year's Eve events in Germany. Therefore, it seems it would be worth addressing such concerns in public information campaigns.

Overall, Canadians are confident in the screening process and seem to favor the decision to give preference to refugee families from a security perspective.

INTEGRATION

Almost across the board, it was assumed that young people would find it easier to integrate, due to greater adaptability, propensity to learn English and French and the opportunities Canada can offer a young person. The assumption persists that older people may find it difficult to adapt.

On questions of religion or country of origin, there are some divergences that reflect whether the respondent is negative or positive in orientations. A small minority expressed concerns directed in particular at the capacity of Muslims to integrate, while others rejected this, focusing instead on Canadian pluralism.

LANGUAGE AND VALUES

Of the issues that lie behind differing perspectives on refugees in Canada, there are two apparent issues that emerge: one very practical and the other abstract.

The practical issue is language. Many participants addressed this as a means of integration and across the spectrum they urged classes to be made available to refugees to learn French and English.

The other factor is compatibility of values. Negative respondents questioned the compatibility of refugees' customs with Canadian values. Positive participants, on the other hand, saw Canadian values grounded in their ability to absorb diversity and inclusivity.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"There is a stigma surrounding Middle Eastern (Syria, Afghanistan, etc.) immigrants coming to our country due to the prejudices and lack of knowledge. I do not think there is any significant security threat from immigrants coming to Canada. They just want a place to live in peace. I really don't think of others in terms of race, color or religion but rather as another human being."

Female, 25-34, Overtly negative

"I don't really think that the refugees post any real threat. They're just people who really needed to get away from the war in their country, I don't think they're coming here to do bad things, just to get safe. But who knows maybe I'm wrong"

Female, 18-24, Overtly positive

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"It may be easier for some to adjust to Canada than others. Leaving family is very hard. Like all of us it is easy for some and hard for others. In Canada they can practice their faith and culture. The older ones may struggle with the change while the younger ones especially children adjust faster."

Female, 65-74, Mixed views

"I don't particularly think refugees pose any more of a threat to Canada than those already living here. You're going to have "bad seeds" in any group of people, and I don't feel refugees will have more than any other group. So obviously we will do our best to not allow serious security risks to enter, but we shouldn't be overly suspicious of them just because they aren't from our country."

Female, 18-24, Mixed views

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"The good thing about Canada is that we are very inclusive and anyone can feel comfortable no matter what their gender, age, country of origin, or religion. They can feel at home because Canadian life doesn't have a strict definition, Canada is full of immigrants and society has been formed by that fact."

Female, 18-24, Overtly positive

"I do not think the security screening is effective in this hasty process, so yes they do pose a security threat. These terrorist organizations do have very clever ways to integrate themselves with the refugees."

Male, 35-44, Overtly negative

AUDIENC

SECTION 6 WALKING IN A REFUGEE'S SHOES



WALKING IN A REFUGEE'S SHOES

OBJECTIVES

This activity looked to determine the extent to which participants could **empathize with refugees**, putting their stories into their own words.

Participants were free to write in the first or the third person and to base their story on wherever they felt appropriate.

DISCUSSION POINTS/ TASKS

Create a story about a refugee's journey to Canada:

- Where did they come from?
- Why did they come to Canada?
- How are they finding **life in Canada**?
- What are their hopes for the future?

🎦 amandaku44

Thank you, it's interesting trying to see things from another's perspectivel. If muse the challenges fixed with be unique to each individual. If they spoke links English, alwould imagine this would be hange challings too, as readinate of our small town speak nothing bot English, and we are not culturally diverse. It would help if the relagese were motivated to learn the language, and be outgoing so they can quickly make friends within the community.

○ 0 Comment

🗾 dmy7122

After a long journey, 22 year old Mohammad from Syria finally arrived at Vancouver International Airport as refugees on January 5, 2016, their aunt, who came to Canada 8 years ago, was waiting for him.

Mohammat od his stories to hi saura. About 3 years ago when he was till in College in a smill Southern of up dyna mojne comparer sizence, ago of militanse gabode hin and dragged hen to their military came betwee killed, but kokly. Mhaammad anvend and successful sequeff from thema militarias and was hiding an a refless cargo concluded by the historia have also also control by the sizence of the sizence particular sizence of the sizence particular sizence of the particular sizence of the sizence of

KEY THEMES

ASPIRATION IN ADVERSITY

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

Even among some negative participants there was a respect for the courage and sense of aspiration among refugees in the face of untold adversity.

"They hope to be able to live without being constantly in fear, let their children have a top education, and have the freedom to do what they please. They heard Canada is a very welcoming country and is bountiful in opportunities. Their hopes for the future are for their children to be able to choose the paths they wish once they finish high school; whether it be in trades, college, university, etc. They hope to have more relatives move to their area, and experience all that Canada has to offer. They want to be able to give back to the community as much as possible also. Their possibilities are endless."

Female, 18-24, Overtly negative

Canada's long history of large-scale immigration became apparent as many narratives seemed keenly aware of the journeys refugees had to take. One participant could even account from personal experience and was able to offer advice to current refugees.

"I was a refugee kid who came to Canada in 1949, so I have some insight into this. I arrived in Dec 1949 two weeks before my sixth birthday."

Male, 65-74, Overtly positive

"They had chosen Canada because they heard that Canada was a welcoming country and completely safe."

Female, 18-24, Overtly positive



WHERE THEY CAME FROM AND WHY THEY CAME

While the vast majority referenced Syria, some based their narratives on refugees from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. One participant even recounted his genuine personal experience of arriving in Canada in 1949 as a refugee from Central Europe. Participants tended to focus on the fear of violence and persecution as motivating factors for going into exile. Canada presented a counterpoint of stability, safety and civil liberties.

LIFE IN CANADA

Many of the narratives recounted a deep sense of gratitude at having found a safe haven in Canada, as well as for the opportunities that the move would present. Many participants were keenly aware of the difficulties refugees from the Middle East would face adapting to the Canadian climate, while there were several references to problems with English and French, perhaps unaware that knowledge of these two languages is quite common among educated Syrians.

Interestingly, some (usually) negative commentators engaged in this activity in a constructive manner. It showed the strong potential for humanizing stories to evoke empathy and solidarity.

HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS

The stories recounted during this activity tended to assume that refugees wanted to stay and build lives in Canada. Only a tiny minority made reference to returning to their home countries. There was no judgment in this assumption and it seemed widely accepted.

The hopes and aspirations of refugees reflected the participants' assumptions regarding the refugees' level of education. Stories of highly educated protagonists were imbued with more ambition while the less educated had simpler needs and focused on safety and security.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"There was no time to take much with us other than the clothes on our backs and a few small possessions. The wars in Syria have all but decimated our lives and there is nothing left here for us. We fled Syria and made our way to Greece. There was no one to help us understand the language once we got there but we were able to make do. "

Female, 25-34, Overtly negative

"We were down to our last hopes when we heard that Canada had selected us as candidates for relocation. We came to Canada to find peace and hope; to build a new life in a welcoming, safe environment."

Female, 35-44, Overtly positive

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"From what I have heard there are some that are grateful to be here in Canada and some are really upset because they are stuck in a motel for the time being. I really do not know what their hopes would be for their future. I would believe though that they would hope to have found work and have an education for their children and all in all just have a better future for themselves."

Female, 35-44, Mixed views

"They came to Canada to escape the war in their home country, it seemed like a good place to start a new life."

Female, 18-24, Overtly positive

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"They learn that Europe is closing the doors on them due to the overflow of refugees from countries not really affected by the crisis. They decide to look beyond the European borders to Canada, the only country willingly accepting refugees."

Male, 35-44, Overtly negative

"Their hopes for the future are that they can live in a country free of chaos and strife and where they can hopefully resume productive careers again to make them feel fulfilled."

Female, 25-34, Mixed views

AUDIENC

YOU'RE IN CHARGE: APPROACH TO POLICY

SECTION 7
YOU'RE IN CHARGE: APPROACH TO POLICY

OBJECTIVES

The primarily objective of this activity was to get participants to offer **pragmatic ideas and solutions by getting them into policy makers' mind-sets**.

To achieve this, it placed them in a position of substantial power but where they were also in the midst of bureaucracy.

DISCUSSION POINTS/ TASKS

Imagine you are representing Canada at a world leaders' summit discussing the refugee crisis. The leader of another country presents you with a proposition:

If the movement of refugees is effectively coordinated between all of the countries represented at the summit, it will be possible for each country to manage the incoming refugees effectively. If some countries do not constructively contribute and accept a fair quota of refugees, it will be left to just a few countries who will find it increasingly difficult to provide sufficient resources.

- What would you do and why?
- Are any of the other world leaders being particularly helpful or unhelpful?





TENT

KEY THEMES

DESIRE FOR PROPORTIONALITY

For the most part, during this exercise, the tone favored reasonable solutions, proportionality of effort and effective coordination among international partners. Contributors were cognizant of the social and economic realities of other countries and wished to take these into account too.

"I believe we should dispatch refugees among those countries according to a proportion of their population (for instance, Switzerland has a smaller population than let's say Russia). It would have a lower impact on their population."

Female, 18-24, Mixed views

My hope is that each country has a certain 'quota' of refugees they are to allow and welcome into their country. I would strongly urge this position. It is only fair economically and socially to do this, and to not place too much of a burden among a few generous countries."

Female, 18-24, Overtly negative

MISINFORMATION ON SYRIA'S NEIGHBORHOOD

However, looking at the comments from some of the "overtly negative" respondents about countries in Syria's neighborhood, there appears to be an information deficit about the extensive refugee camps in countries such as Jordan and Lebanon. It would perhaps increase the sense of urgency among populations of potential recipient countries to disseminate better information about such camps as Za'atari in Jordan.

"I would propose to all surrounding Arabic countries to take them and offer reasonable financial help as a contribution to the crisis." Female, 45-54, Overtly negative

"I think it's sad that places like UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia are not doing more to help."

Female, 35-44, Mixed views

AREAS OF DISCUSSION

PROPORTIONALITY AND COORDINATION

Across the spectrum of attitudes to refugees, there was a recognition that better coordination was needed between states and that this should be done with a view to proportional distribution of refugees to the countries involved.

Regarding Canada's own role, there was a perception, even among more positive participants, that the government's scheme had been rushed. As such there was a preference for phased relocation in many quarters.

DIPLOMACY AND GRADUALISM

Some did recognize that not all countries have the same economic or infrastructural resources as Canada to enable them to handle a large influx of refugees.

In recognition of this, there was a preference for a "softly softly" diplomatic approach to encourage others to partake in an agreed resolution. Although, some did think a pushier approach could be warranted.

POINTS OF FRUSTRATION

While the efforts of Germany and some Scandinavian countries came in for praise, there was a discernible frustration at the failure of resource-rich countries such as the USA to take in more refugees.

Notably, several of the "overtly negative" respondents were heavily critical of countries in Syria's neighborhood. In certain cases, this was grounded in the form of cultural determinism around language, religion and proximity.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"Diplomacy requires nuance, which seems anathema to the emotionally charged geo-political realities of the refugee crisis. The very notion of an equal or ostensibly fair "split" is incoherent in theory, let alone practice. Thus, the solution lies in 2., namely the comparative advantage of certain countries, namely Canada. With funding from the international community, Canada will populate its vast and resource-rich North, substantially growing its population and economy and birthing a new innovation industry."

Male, 25-34, Mixed views

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"I think proportionally and as a whole, Germany might be the hardest hit for this. The number of refugees heading there is astounding. Granted, I think the situation may be much more different for Germany compared to other nations as it appears many refugees see it as the desired goal for their journey... I feel Finland likely has kept itself in an isolated position, actively abstaining from EU motions to relocate citizens and only accepting refugees as the EU requests. Its Scandinavian neighbors are doing much more work; Sweden is pretty much an open door and Norway, for its size, is providing lots of support."

Male, 18-24, Mixed views

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"I would set a limit on the number of refugees Canada allows in at one given time to make sure there are enough resources and help to support them properly. Once that group has been received and settled in I would examine whether or not we are ready and able to accept more. I would keep doing this until Canada no longer can accept refugees."

Female, 25-34, Overtly positive

"Angela Merkel, Barack Obama, and Justin Trudeau would be helpful. They seem to the most sympathetic to refugees' issues."

Male, 55-64, Overtly positive

AUDIENC

SECTION 8 POSITIVELY INFLUENCING PUBLIC OPINION



POSITIVELY INFLUENCING PUBLIC OPINION

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The objective of this exercise was to establish the most effective types of discourse when seeking to positively influence public opinion towards refugees.

Participants were asked to imagine/ recollect their approach to **convincing friends/ family to take a positive stance towards refugees**.

DISCUSSION POINTS/ TASKS

- Can you think of a **friend or family member who might disagree** with you about the refugee crisis?
- How have you/ might you go about trying to change their perspective?
- How have/ would you go about convincing people who are undecided or have no strong opinions?





TENT

KEY THEMES

HEARTS AND MINDS

A particularly strong theme reflected the old adage of political communications: of appealing to hearts and minds. Some leaned towards a more rational (mind-led) approach and others more of an emotional (heart-led) one.

"To sway someone with no strong opinions/an unsettled opinion on the matter, I'd look more towards providing a strong and well reasoned case. That is, hitting with the biggest and most lasting arguments with solid backing and an emotional edge (for example, that we're not only investing in the future, but saving those who may not have a future. The men, women, and children who want simply what we have and are willing to leave everything they know to make it happen). This might have a stronger impact as you're discussing with someone who may not have an emotional investment in the situation as of yet and might find sway in the pure conviction of tone."

Male, 18-24, Mixed views

EVIDENCE OF SHIFTING OPINIONS

Interestingly, some who were classified as "overtly negative" were able to build a strong positive narrative in support of refugees. One, in particular, admitted to having been negative before but having changed her mind when exposed to better information. She placed a lot of emphasis on the responsibility of news media to report the situation more accurately.

"I know several people who are dead set against bringing refugees into the country. I too was one of them for a long time. It was seeing some of the success stories that helped change my mind. Knowing that these refugees are just people like me who want to make a life for themselves and their families was very moving. Perhaps the news media could report more of these success stories instead of focusing on all the negative stuff. Ya, I know that it's the negative stuff that sells but they need to help sway public opinion by airing more good stories that show that the refugees are not our enemies and pose no more danger than our next door neighbor."

Female, 25-34, Overtly negative

TALKING TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Several participants noted differences of opinions across generations in their families, which was also reflected in political perspective. They were able to give first hand accounts of arguments they had with parents and in-laws who had more negative or hostile viewpoints to helping refuges.

This showed the significant value in discussing such topics with family and friends. Some had seen limited success in their efforts and expressed frustration at not being able to get through to their loved ones.

UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER

Participants prioritized the need to thoroughly understand the perspectives of those they were speaking to. Having demonstrated that they respect everyone's right to have an opinion, they would then seek to explain their own.

Ensuring that their friends and family were well informed was also seen as fundamental to influencing their opinions. Some proffered highly intellectualized accounts of their approach while for others it was simply a matter of providing better information.

DRIVING THE MESSAGE HOME

Although they valued the rational and intellectual approach, for participants its effectiveness would be aided using emotional reinforcement, thereby fostering empathy. In particular, they would try to humanize the experiences of refugees and make the situation relatable by drawing comparisons to children in their own families. Some found this to be especially effective when it came to grandchildren.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"Yes, my father disagreed with me on the refugee crisis. He is very conservative and of the opinion that our screening process needs to be strict to prevent safety concerns. To try to get him to change his opinion, I first made sure he had the correct information... I also really stuck it to him emotionally. I have a 4-year-old daughter (my dad's only grandchild) and I related her to that Syrian boy (same age) who drowned and his body washed on shore when his family tried escape into Europe, I asked him what made my daughter so special that she deserved to have the life she has any more than that little boy, does that child deserve less than mine because he was born in a different country?"

Female, 25-34, Mixed views

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"I would remind them that as Canadians, we all started out as immigrants from somewhere else so it is within our heritage to welcome people to this country. As birth rates continue to decline, an immigrant base is needed to continue to provide a solid taxpayer base to fund government programs including the Canada pension plan (CPP)."

Male, 45-54, Mixed views

"I would describe my own family's refugee experience."

Male, 55-64, Overtly positive

Female, 25-34, Mixed views

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They would likely have more sympathy about the refugees than I have. That is not to say I don't feel an obligation that as a country we should step up to the plate and help these people who are in tremendous need. I just don't know how much is too much ... I think most of my family and friends are better off financially than I am and can afford to be more generous to others in need. So it is a little difficult to feel giving when I have no one to help me with my needs. I realize that what I have and am experiencing is nothing in comparison to what the Syrian refugee have suffered. So I have to continuously remind myself of that fact when I am experiencing the "poor me" and "why me" syndromes."

Female, 55-64, Overtly negative

TENT

AUDIENCE

SECTION 9 INCREASING THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEER EFFORTS



INCREASING THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEER EFFORTS

This exercise looked specifically at practical ways of increasing volunteering and donations to charitable causes linked to refugees.

It asked participants to come up with ways to overcome commonly cited **obstacles** (e.g. time and money), as well as any others they could identify.

DISCUSSION POINTS/ TASKS

Several refugee organizations are finding it difficult to raise money and recruit volunteers in Canada. People say they don't have enough money, time or knowledge about how they can help.

How do you think these organizations could **overcome these obstacles** and increase donations and volunteer numbers?



TENT

KEY THEMES

A CROWDED FIELD

Like during the quantitative phase, respondents identified limited time, financial resources and information as the key obstacles to improving volunteerism that would benefit refugees.

Added to this, competition from other causes and charities also diminishes the available catchment of people who could assist.

"I think that many organizations have these same problems. I think that people would rather make donations to health care foundations, etc. To get people more interested in donating to help refugees I think that what it takes is to educate people more on the topic. When people hear about raising money for refugees they probably see it as: 'I would rather help my own people', so they should be informed of how helping refugees can positively benefit everyone."

Female, 18-24, Overtly positive

BETTER INFORMATION IS PARAMOUNT

However, very few saw these obstacles as insurmountable. On balance, information came out as the most important starting point, which could help encourage more people to offer time, money and non-monetary goods to the cause of assisting refugees.

"By providing information to Canadians on how they can help. A lot of Canadians are willing to help in times of crises, but may not always be aware of which organizations to donate to or even of other ways to get involved. I myself have literally not received a single email or letter or even seen posters when out about how to help ... So giving more information about how many refugees are incoming and where they'll be landing really doesn't help much. A great way to approach people would be via internet ads, such as 'donate to the Syrian Crisis' and this ad would link you to a website with ways to help. Another would be putting ads up in national newspapers with website links or locations to drop off donations."

Female, 18-24, Overtly positive



COMPETITION FROM OTHER CHARITIES AND CAUSES

In a sense, refugee-focused charities are not alone in having difficulties attracting volunteers, donations and cash resources. As a result, while the refugee crisis has brought these NGOs to the fore, it is apparent that this is a crowded sector.

Several respondents pointed to this situation, indicating that, unless the refugee crisis is a personal priority, Canadians might be more likely to donate time, money and resources to other causes that are closer to their hearts.

POOR INFORMATION

Once again, information emerged as a key factor in improving access to resources. In essence, a substantial proportion of the population does not know where to find potential charities that focus on assisting refugees. Added to this, they do not know which ones are reputable and reliable, and which ones are not.

Furthermore, beyond the charity sector, lack of information about the refugee crisis itself is once again a key area in limiting assistance to refugee charities.

INNOVATION IN LEVERAGING RESOURCES

Several participants urged the use of innovative methods to leverage resources. Some proposed the use of student volunteer programs wherein academic credits could be attained. Others looked to mobilizing money from the private sector through food schemes or through the use of tax incentives. There were also those who would use social media to organize crowdfunding campaigns, while some would pursue more traditional means such as encouraging Canadians to volunteer as families to help refugees integrate better.

AUDIENCE NE

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I think that these are the excuses of people who don't want to help. It would be the same excuses to any other nonprofit organization. There are always going to be people that won't help, whether they care about the issue or not. I'm not sure how they would overcome the obstacles beyond getting the word spread out more that they require help. Take advantage of social media and try to solicit donations of, or for, air time on TV or radio. If they could get the media to do a story on them that would certainly help as well."

Female, 35-44, Overtly positive

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"Transparency in charity is paramount. Given the prevalence of exorbitant human resource overheads and similarly wasteful expenditures, people have a reason to find refugee organizations dubious. How do they know the money is actually helping the family? Hackneyed buzzwords only further foment cynicism. Be direct, concrete, and sensible. Do not attempt to entice with sophomoric sentiments about change, or Canadian identity. The cause most in need of attention now is reversing the trend of slactivism. More food and non-cash incentives always help."

Male, 25-34, Mixed views

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"I am part of a religious community that has been exploring the question of how we can raise awareness of how to support refugees in their process of settlement, and we noticed that one thing that is important is for people to know the stories behind the refugees, so instead of simply seeing statistics, we are invited to see the refugees as people who need support."

Male, 45-54, Overtly positive



