

'A welcoming Northern Ireland? Understanding sentiment towards asylum seekers and refugees'

ARK Seminar, 22 November 2018
Dr Lucy Michael, Ulster University



Background

- Issues of integration
- Divided society
- MAC report showed high level of acceptance for segregation
- Historic issues of racist violence, harassment and exclusion

Numbers in Northern Ireland

1,000 refugees travelled
to NI 2016 -2018 under
United Nations
Vulnerable Persons
Resettlement Scheme

200-300 asylum seekers
per annum

Lack of disaggregated
data for Northern
Ireland



Warranting specific investigation?

Focus on minority ethnic communities in general does not provide accurate picture of attitudes to asylum seekers & refugees

Specific statutory responsibilities and support mechanisms for refugees

Particular effects of trauma on refugees warrant additional support & attention to ensure successful settlement

European attitudes to refugees

Poland

May 2015, Polish society one of the most welcoming in Europe
72% in favour of refugees from conflict zones

Italy

Support for refuge from war and persecution 72%
Only 9% disagree

Same as average across 12 countries measured in the 2017 Tent Tracker survey

April 2016, decrease to 33%

RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP NATIONAL

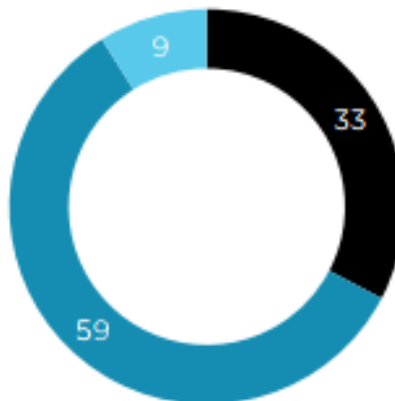
Tent Tracker: Public Perceptions of the Refugee Crisis (2017). www.tent.org UNITED KINGDOM REPORT

Participants were asked about their country's responsibility for resettling refugees. UK scores have remained fairly consistent between Year 1 and 2, with 1 in 3 feeling that their country does not have a responsibility to accept refugees and the remainder feeling that it does. Overall, having a quota for the number of refugees to be accepted was preferable, with 62% saying this, although 1 in 10 were open to 'any number of refugees' coming to the UK.

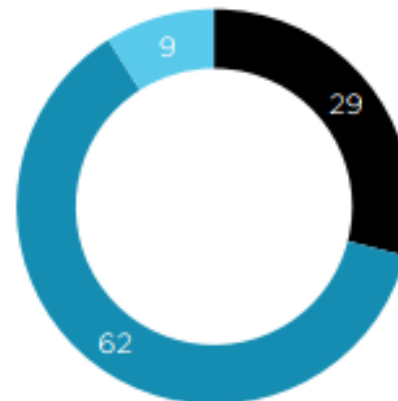
STATEMENT BEST REPRESENTING THEIR POSITION %

- 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

UK 2015/16



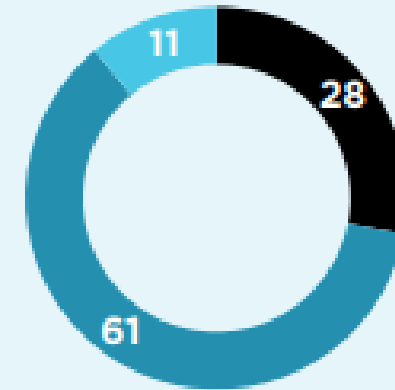
UK 2016/17



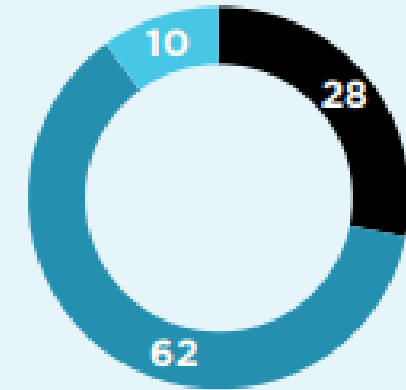
All countries:
61-2% support quota
72% overall

COUNTRY RESPONSIBILITY

2015/16 (%)



2016/17 (%)



- 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

**All countries excluding Italy for comparability reasons, as Italy was not surveyed in 2015/16*



All change?

Republic of Ireland

2004 citizenship referendum

79% of public voted against automatic entitlement to citizenship for those born on the island

Behaviour & Attitudes, November 2018

71% said they believed being born here should automatically entitle a person to citizenship

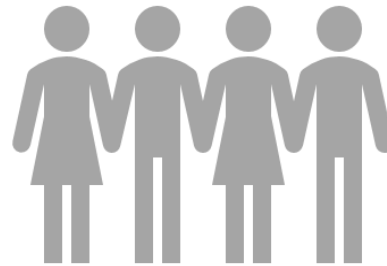
19% said it should not

10% said they either didn't know or had no opinion.

NILT historic data



First asked about asylum seekers in 2005



Narrow support (52%) for the idea of allowing asylum seekers suffering persecution in their own countries to stay in Northern Ireland



Only 21% disagreed

Should asylum seekers be put in detention until their right to remain in the country has been decided? [2005](#)

- 49% Yes
- 42% No

Coincided with significant expansion of statutory detention of asylum seekers across UK



Key Findings on Attitudes to Refugees

2017 Surveys



Survey Data

Over 1,200 adults

- Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) Survey 2017

Over 1,100 sixteen year olds

- Young Life and Times Survey 2017

2017
Questions
on both
NILT and YLT

[SYRIAREF](#): Should people from Syria be allowed to come to Northern Ireland?

[NIREFUGA](#): Is Northern Ireland a society that welcomes refugees escaping persecution in their home country?

[DREFGEEA](#): Is it our duty to provide protection to refugees who are escaping persecution in their home country?



Northern Ireland
has a duty to
provide protection
to refugees
escaping
persecution in
their home country

61% of adults agreed
60% of 16 year olds
agreed

YLT more likely than
NILT respondents to
strongly agree (29%
compared to 16%).



Northern Ireland
has a duty to
provide protection
to refugees
escaping
persecution in
their home country

Strongest support from

- areas which are neither loyalist nor republican (67%)
- mixed areas (65%)
- urban areas (65%).

Party allegiance

- Alliance Party supporters 93%
- DUP supporters 53%.

Generation effects?

Support for this feeling of obligation to provide protection was much stronger in 55-64 year olds than among 18-24 year olds NILT respondents (73% and 32% respectively).



Northern Ireland
has a duty to
provide protection
to refugees
escaping
persecution in
their home country

Immigration levels

86% of respondents who believed that immigration should be increased **also** felt a sense of duty to provide protection to refugees escaping persecution.

Only 31% of those who favoured a decrease in immigration **still** felt a duty to provide protection to refugees.



Northern Ireland
has a duty to
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to refugees
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their home country

Ethnic minority prejudice

Favourable to people from ethnic minority communities?

Yes, largely agreed (86%)

No, only 10% agreed.

Prejudiced against ethnic minority people?

No, 66% agreed.

Yes, only 45% agreed



Northern Ireland
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Young Life & Times

The strongest differences appear in national identity and education.

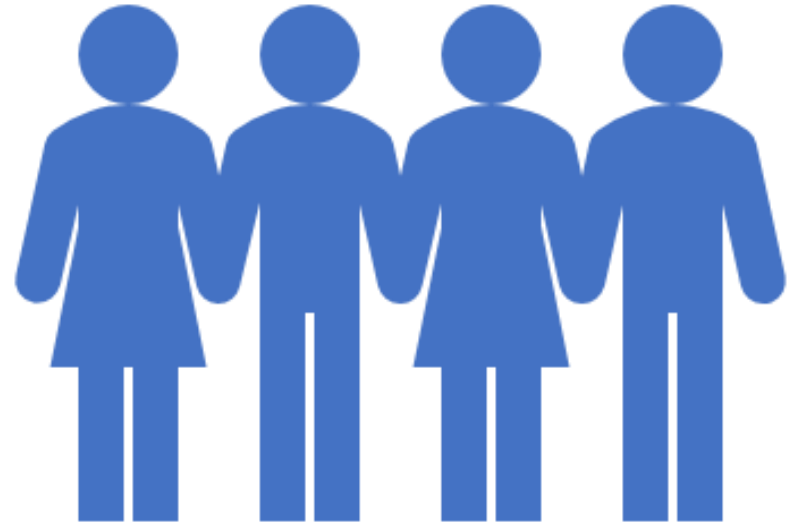
Only 40% of those who describe themselves as British agreed, compared to 70% of Irish and 62% of Northern Irish

School effect?

- grammar schools 71%
- integrated schools 59%
- secondary schools 50%
- FE college 36%

Is Northern Ireland a
welcoming society for
refugees?

Only half of adult
respondents, and only
a quarter of 16 year
olds, agree.



Northern Ireland is a society that welcomes refugees escaping persecution in their home country

Strong correlations in NILT

Positive attitudes
to immigration

Being favourable
to people from
minority ethnic
communities


Claiming to always
treat people the
same regardless of
their 'race'

Northern Ireland is a society that welcomes refugees escaping persecution in their home country

Young Life and Times

Greater differences between those in different school types than between those with different national identities.

32% of young people who had attended TBUC summer camps agreed, vs. 22% who had not.



Should people
from Syria be
allowed to come to
Northern Ireland?

Adults


14% strongly agreed and 43% agreed.

One in five neither agreed nor disagreed

One in five disagreed or strongly disagreed.


16 year olds

More likely to ***strongly*** agree (25%)




Should people
from Syria be
allowed to come to
Northern Ireland?

- Catholic (66%)
- Nationalist (65%)
- urban dwelling (62%)
- living in republican or mostly Catholic areas (61%)
- Alliance supporters (91%).



Should people
from Syria be
allowed to come to
Northern Ireland?

- Catholic (66%) Protestants (50%)
- Nationalist (65%) Unionists (47%)
- urban dwelling (62%) rural areas (50%)
- living in republican or mostly Catholic areas (61%) mainly loyalist areas (49%) or mainly Protestant areas (54%)
- Alliance supporters (91%) DUP supporters (44%)



Should people
from Syria be
allowed to come to
Northern Ireland?

The more 16-year olds socialize with people from minority ethnic backgrounds the more likely they are to agree.

Respondents from not well-off backgrounds (45%) were less likely to agree than those from average well-off backgrounds (54%) and those from well-off backgrounds (63%).

Females much more likely (60%) than males (43%) to agree or strongly agree.

Factors for consideration

Age

Education


Income
security

Mixed areas

Strength of
national
identity

Thank you

- The questions on refugees were funded by The Executive Office.
- Paula Devine undertook the primary statistical analysis.



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