American attitudes on refugees from the Middle East

A PUBLIC OPINION POLL BY SHIBLEY TELHAMI
A survey sponsored by the
Center for Middle East Policy’s
Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World at
The Brookings Institution
and
Sadat Chair
for Peace and Development
at the University of Maryland

fielded by
Nielsen Scarborough

Note: These questions were fielded as part of a larger poll on foreign and domestic issues. Participants in this study were provided by Nielsen from Nielsen’s sample of respondents
Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted May 20-31, 2016 with a panel consisting of a probability-based representative sample. The panel was recruited by Nielsen Scarborough from its larger probability-based national panel, which was recruited by mail and telephone using a random sample of households. A total of 1580 panelists completed the survey including a national sample of 845 adults, plus an oversample of 735 millennials (18-34), making for a total sample of millennials of 863. Responses were weighted by age, gender, income, education, race, and geographic region using benchmarks from the US Census. The survey was also weighted by partisan identification and millennials were down-weighted consistent with these groups’ incidence rate in the U.S. Census. The margins of error for the national sample and for each subgroup is: National – 845 respondents, MoE: 3.4% Millennials – 863, MoE: 3.3%
As you may know, since 2001 the United States has admitted about 800,000 persons with refugee status from around the world, or about 50,000 people a year on average. In U.S. law, a refugee is a person who is already living outside their own country because of a “well-founded fear of persecution.” This definition can include those fleeing civil war in their home country. It excludes those who “participated in the persecution of any person on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.” Those applying as refugees for asylum in the U.S. are investigated by various arms of the U.S. government. This process takes about two years.

In general, do you support or oppose the United States taking in refugees from the conflicts in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries after screening them for security risks?
In general, do you support or oppose the United States taking in refugees from the conflicts in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries after screening them for security risks?

- Support Strongly: 24%
- Support somewhat: 35%
- Oppose somewhat: 17%
- Oppose strongly: 24%
In general, do you support or oppose the United States taking in refugees from the conflicts in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries after screening them for security risks?

- **Support strongly**
  - 18-34: 30%
  - 35-54: 20%
  - 55+: 24%

- **Support somewhat**
  - 18-34: 38%
  - 35-54: 36%
  - 55+: 31%

- **Oppose somewhat**
  - 18-34: 18%
  - 35-54: 19%
  - 55+: 14%

- **Oppose strongly**
  - 18-34: 14%
  - 35-54: 25%
  - 55+: 31%
In general, do you support or oppose the United States taking in refugees from the conflicts in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries after screening them for security risks?

- **Support strongly**: 10% Republican, 24% Democrat, 24% Independent
- **Support somewhat**: 28% Republican, 32% Democrat, 32% Independent
- **Oppose somewhat**: 20% Republican, 15% Democrat, 16% Independent
- **Oppose strongly**: 8% Republican, 26% Democrat, 26% Independent
In general, do you support or oppose the United States taking in refugees from the conflicts in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries after screening them for security risks?

- **Support strongly**:
  - Those Favoring Donald Trump: 4%
  - Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 38%
  - Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 44%

- **Support somewhat**:
  - Those Favoring Donald Trump: 18%
  - Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 42%
  - Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 37%

- **Oppose somewhat**:
  - Those Favoring Donald Trump: 21%
  - Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 14%
  - Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 13%

- **Oppose strongly**:
  - Those Favoring Donald Trump: 56%
  - Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 5%
  - Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 7%
Assuming extensive background checks are in place to ensure there are not terrorist links, should the U.S. accept refugees from Syria specifically?
Assuming extensive background checks are in place to ensure there are not terrorist links, should the U.S. accept refugees from Syria specifically?
Assuming extensive background checks are in place to ensure there are not terrorist links, should the U.S. accept refugees from Syria specifically?

- Yes: 67% (18-34: 54%, 35-54: 49%, 55+: 49%)
- No: 33% (18-34: 32%, 35-54: 45%, 55+: 50%)
Assuming extensive background checks are in place to ensure there are not terrorist links, should the U.S. accept refugees from Syria specifically?

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<thead>
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<th>Republican</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Independent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>49%</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>47%</td>
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Assuming extensive background checks are in place to ensure there are not terrorist links, should the U.S. accept refugees from Syria specifically?

- Yes: 76% (76% Favoring Donald Trump, 76% Favoring Hillary Clinton, 76% Favoring Bernie Sanders)
- No: 24% (23% Favoring Donald Trump, 23% Favoring Hillary Clinton, 24% Favoring Bernie Sanders)
Among those opposing absorbing refugees

Which of the following concerns you most about absorbing refugees?
I'm concerned about terrorism

I'm concerned about having more Muslims in the U.S., even if they are peaceful

I'm concerned about the economic burden of absorbing refugees of any kind

Other
I'm concerned about terrorism

I'm concerned about having more Muslims in the U.S., even if they are peaceful

I'm concerned about the economic burden of absorbing refugees of any kind

Other

Which of the following concerns you most about absorbing refugees?

Republican Democrat Independent

I'm concerned about terrorism

50% 41% 35%

I'm concerned about having more Muslims in the U.S., even if they are peaceful

8% 11% 4%

I'm concerned about the economic burden of absorbing refugees of any kind

38% 41% 52%

Other

3% 5% 8%
I'm concerned about terrorism

- Those Favoring Donald Trump: 52%
- Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 28%
- Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 44%

I'm concerned about having more Muslims in the U.S., even if they are peaceful

- Those Favoring Donald Trump: 8%
- Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 17%
- Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 7%

I'm concerned about the economic burden of absorbing refugees of any kind

- Those Favoring Donald Trump: 37%
- Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 49%
- Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 37%

Other

- Those Favoring Donald Trump: 3%
- Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 4%
- Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 9%
Apart from the question of whether U.S. should accept more refugees, does the U.S. have a moral obligation to help refugees from the following countries (Libya, Iraq, and Syria)?
Apart from the question of whether U.S. should accept more refugees, does the U.S. have a moral obligation to help refugees from the following countries?

- **Libya**: 50% No Obligation, 49% Some or High Obligation
- **Iraq**: 45% No Obligation, 54% Some or High Obligation
- **Syria**: 48% No Obligation, 51% Some or High Obligation
Apart from the question of whether U.S. should accept more refugees, does the U.S. have a moral obligation to help refugees from the following countries (Libya)?

- **No Obligation**
  - Those Favoring Donald Trump: 77%
  - Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 33%
  - Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 33%

- **Some or High Obligation**
  - Those Favoring Donald Trump: 22%
  - Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 66%
  - Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 66%
Apart from the question of whether U.S. should accept more refugees, does the U.S. have a moral obligation to help refugees from the following countries (Iraq)?

- **No Obligation**
  - Those Favoring Donald Trump: 69%
  - Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 32%
  - Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 29%

- **Some or High Obligation**
  - Those Favoring Donald Trump: 67%
  - Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 70%
  - Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 30%
Apart from the question of whether U.S. should accept more refugees, does the U.S. have a moral obligation to help refugees from the following countries (Syria)?

- **No Obligation**
  - Those Favoring Donald Trump: 74% (74%)
  - Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 31% (31%)
  - Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 32% (32%)

- **Some or High Obligation**
  - Those Favoring Donald Trump: 26% (26%)
  - Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 66% (66%)
  - Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 67% (67%)
How much of a role do you believe the 2003 Iraq War has played in the events leading to the emergence of the refugee crisis in Syria?
How much of a role do you believe the 2003 Iraq War has played in the events leading to the emergence of the refugee crisis in Syria?

- **Significant Role**: 56%
- **Small Role**: 31%
- **No Role**: 11%
How much of a role do you believe the 2003 Iraq War has played in the events leading to the emergence of the refugee crisis in Syria?

- **Significant Role**: 44% Republicans, 53% Independents
  - Democrats: 67%
- **Small Role**: 37% Republicans, 33% Independents
  - Democrats: 25%
- **No Role**: 18% Republicans, 13% Independents
  - Democrats: 6%
How much of a role do you believe the 2003 Iraq War has played in the events leading to the emergence of the refugee crisis in Syria?

- **Significant Role**
  - Those Favoring Donald Trump: 42%
  - Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 68%
  - Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 69%

- **Small Role**
  - Those Favoring Donald Trump: 37%
  - Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 25%
  - Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 23%

- **No Role**
  - Those Favoring Donald Trump: 19%
  - Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 4%
  - Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 7%
[Open-Ended Question] How many refugees should the U.S. sponsor and resettle in 2017?
[Open-Ended Question] How many refugees should the U.S. sponsor and resettle in 2017?

- Republican: Mean 10000, Median 35618
- Democrat: Mean 15000, Median 64475
- Independent: Mean 15000, Median 83309
- Total: Mean 10000, Median 58928
In your estimation, how many refugees have been arrested in the United States since 9/11 over terrorism charges?
In your estimation, how many refugees have been arrested in the United States since 9/11 over terrorism charges?

- Fewer than 5: 14%
- Fewer than 25: 26%
- Fewer than 100: 30%
- 100 or more: 28%
In your estimation, how many refugees have been arrested in the United States since 9/11 over terrorism charges?

- Fewer than 5
  - Republican: 7%
  - Democrat: 19%
  - Independent: 18%

- Fewer than 25
  - Republican: 21%
  - Democrat: 30%
  - Independent: 24%

- Fewer than 100
  - Republican: 34%
  - Democrat: 27%
  - Independent: 31%

- 100 or more
  - Republican: 36%
  - Democrat: 23%
  - Independent: 25%
Here are some ways the U.S. might respond. Please tell us whether you support or oppose the following measures:

The U.S. government should take in more [war] refugees, allowing them into the U.S.
The U.S. government should take in more [war] refugees to the U.S. 47%

Individuals and community groups should sponsor more refugees in the U.S. 60%

The U.S. should give financial support to charities helping refugees abroad 60%

The U.S. should send humanitarian professionals to help refugees abroad 79%
If some of these Syrian refugees came to live in your state or community, do you think they would be welcomed?
If some of these Syrian refugees came to live in your state or community, do you think they would be welcomed?

- Yes: 55%
- No: 44%
If some of these Syrian refugees came to live in your state or community, do you think they would be welcomed?

- Yes: 56% (18-34), 61% (35-54), 48% (55+)
- No: 44% (18-34), 38% (35-54), 51% (55+)
If some of these Syrian refugees came to live in your state or community, do you think they would be welcomed?

- Yes: 48% Republican, 61% Democrat, 52% Independent
- No: 51% Republican, 39% Democrat, 46% Independent
As you may know, American laws prohibit discriminating against people including refugees solely on the basis of their ethnic or religious background. Does this incline you to be more or less accepting of Syrian refugees in the U.S.?
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As you may know, American laws prohibit discriminating against people including refugees solely on the basis of their ethnic or religious background. Does this incline you to be more or less accepting of Syrian refugees in the U.S.?
If the U.S. institutes a refugee policy excluding single men, would you support the U.S. accepting more refugees?
If the U.S. institutes a refugee policy excluding single men, would you support the U.S. accepting more refugees?

- Yes: 28%
- No: 70%
If the U.S. institutes a refugee policy excluding single men, would you support the U.S. accepting more refugees?

- **Yes**
  - Republican: 26%
  - Democrat: 32%
  - Independent: 24%

- **No**
  - Republican: 73%
  - Democrat: 66%
  - Independent: 75%
Based on what you’ve seen, heard or read, what do you think about Europe’s response to the migrant crisis?
Based on what you’ve seen, heard or read, what do you think about Europe’s response to the migrant crisis?

- European nations are doing too much as it is: 20%
- European nations are doing as much as can be expected: 36%
- European nations should be doing more: 17%
- Don't know/Can't say: 26%
Based on what you’ve seen, heard or read, what do you think about Europe’s response to the migrant crisis?

European nations are doing too much as it is
- Republican: 33%
- Democrat: 9%
- Independent: 17%

European nations are doing as much as can be expected
- Republican: 32%
- Democrat: 42%
- Independent: 27%

European nations should be doing more
- Republican: 10%
- Democrat: 22%
- Independent: 20%

Don't know/Can't say
- Republican: 23%
- Democrat: 26%
- Independent: 37%
How do you think the U.S. should deal with the Syrian refugees who are already in the country?
How do you think the U.S. should deal with the Syrian refugees who are already in the country?

- Welcome them and help absorb them into American society: 76%
- Expel them: 21%
How do you think the U.S. should deal with the Syrian refugees who are already in the country?

- **Welcome them and help absorb them into American society**
  - 18-34: 83%
  - 35-54: 73%
  - 55+: 73%

- **Expel them**
  - 18-34: 16%
  - 35-54: 24%
  - 55+: 23%
Welcome them and help absorb them into American society

Expel them

Republican

Democrat

Independent

How do you think the U.S. should deal with the Syrian refugees who are already in the country?

Welcome them and help absorb them into American society

60% Republican

90% Democrat

74% Independent

Expel them

36% Republican

9% Democrat

21% Independent
How do you think the U.S. should deal with the Syrian refugees who are already in the country?

- Welcome them and help absorb them into American society:
  - Those Favoring Donald Trump: 46%
  - Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 91%
  - Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 91%

- Expel them:
  - Those Favoring Donald Trump: 48%
  - Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 8%
  - Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 9%
Among those who said “Expel them”
How do you think the U.S. should deal with the Syrian refugees who are already in the country?

- **Donald Trump Supporters**: 67%
- **Hillary Clinton Supporters**: 10%
- **Bernie Sanders Supporters**: 9%
- **None appeal to me**: 14%
Do you support the proposal ‘for a total shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what is going on?’
Do you support the proposal ‘for a total shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what is going on?’

- Yes: 38%
- No: 61%
Do you support the proposal ‘for a total shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what is going on?’

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<tr>
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<th>35-54</th>
<th>55+</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you support the proposal ‘for a total shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what is going on?’

- **Yes**: 61%
  - Republican: 19%
  - Democrat: 39%
  - Independent: 39%

- **No**: 81%
  - Republican: 38%
  - Democrat: 59%
  - Independent: 59%
Do you support the proposal ‘for a total shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what is going on?’

- **Yes**: 80%
  - Those Favoring Donald Trump: 80%
  - Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 14%
  - Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 17%

- **No**: 86%
  - Those Favoring Donald Trump: 20%
  - Those Favoring Hillary Clinton: 86%
  - Those Favoring Bernie Sanders: 82%
Who would you like to see take the lead in addressing the needs of refugees once they are in the United States?
Who would you like to see take the lead in addressing the needs of refugees once they are in the United States?

- Federal government: 29%
- States: 17%
- Charities and other non-governmental organizations: 52%
Who would you like to see take the lead in addressing the needs of refugees once they are in the United States?

- Federal government
  - Republican: 17%
  - Democrat: 41%
  - Independent: 26%

- States
  - Republican: 19%
  - Democrat: 13%
  - Independent: 24%

- Charities and other non-governmental organizations
  - Republican: 62%
  - Democrat: 45%
  - Independent: 48%
On a scale of 0-5, where 0 is “not important” and 5 is “very important,” how would you rate the following steps to deal with the Syrian refugees once they arrive?
Ranking of responses indicating “very important” when asked: How would you rate the following steps to deal with the Syrian refugees once they arrive?
On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is “not being open” and 10 is “being very open,” rate your degree of openness for refugees from the following region (South America, Central America, Africa, The Middle East, East Asia):
On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is “not being open” and 10 is “being very open,” rate your degree of openness for refugees from the following region (mean):

- The Middle East: 4.83
- East Asia: 5.68
- Africa: 5.71
- Central America: 5.84
- South America: 5.96