

WORLD REFUGEE DAY 2025

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS REFUGEES

Findings for Great Britain
June 2025



Introduction

Ipsos has conducted an annual global survey for World Refugee Day since 2017 as part of our commitment to building a better global understanding of public attitudes towards refugees.

This year's report, capturing the views of 22,734 adults across 29 countries, is especially important. We are facing record number of displaced people at a time when organisations that support refugees are facing significant funding challenges.

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), by April 2025,

122 million individuals globally were forcibly displaced from their homes. This includes 42.7 million refugees, a significant 73% of whom are being hosted in low- and middle-income countries, highlighting the disproportionate pressure faced by these nations.

Although most people in Britain still think it's important to provide refuge to those fleeing conflict or persecution, our survey reveals a concerning decline in public support, potentially driven by anxieties about refugees' motivations and integration. This trend extends beyond Britain,

though the UK maintains a more favourable stance compared to the global average.

As in previous years, opinions vary country to country, and global surveys like this one from Ipsos are crucial for understanding how different countries are responding. Given the global nature of displacement, this understanding is essential for addressing public concerns while also ensuring there's fair and compassionate support for those who have had to leave their homes.



Trinh Tu
Managing Director
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To learn more about our previous World Refugee Day surveys, see the [2024](#), [2023](#) and [2022](#) reports.

Key findings

Britons remain more compassionate than the global average, despite complex views on refugees

This year's survey reveals a complicated picture of British public attitudes towards refugees, set against a backdrop of increasing global displacement.

While a significant majority of the British public (71%) still support providing refuge in the UK and other countries to people escaping from war or persecution – a figure exceeding the global average of 67% – this **support has been declining since 2023, now at**

the lowest level since 2019. This suggests a potential weakening of the UK's welcoming attitude, possibly influenced by [increased concerns about immigration among the public](#), and the close association of asylum seekers with 'immigrants' by the British public.

Alongside this, more of the public now support completely closing borders to refugees – 49%, up from 44% in 2024, indicating a **growing tension between support for asylum and concerns about border control.** This sentiment is particularly strong among those aged over 50, with

six in ten (61%) of this group supporting closing borders entirely.

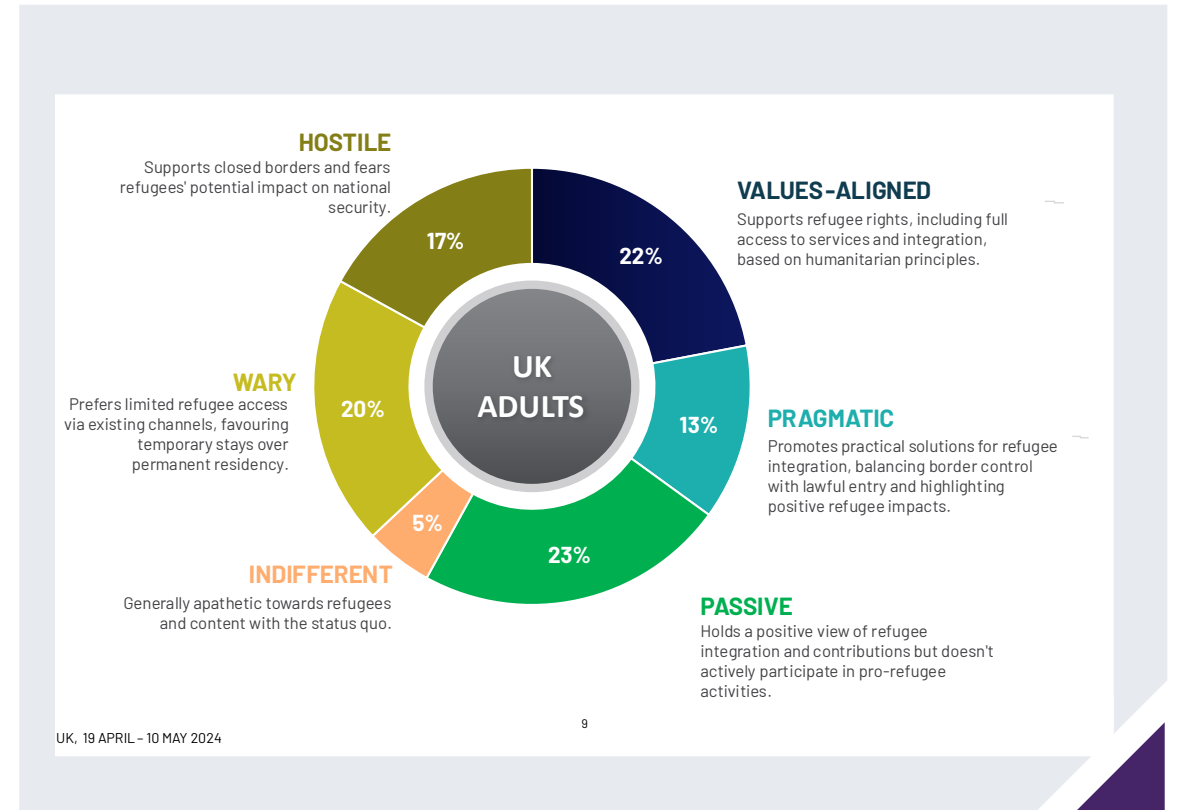
The survey reveals, once again, a persistent contradiction in public opinion: 37% of those who support providing refuge to asylum seekers also advocate border closures. This appears to be largely driven by scepticism, as 62% of the British public believe that most refugees are economic migrants or are seeking to exploit welfare services. This perception, unchanged from 2024 and mirroring the global average, remains a significant barrier to more welcoming attitudes.



Amidst rising displacement worldwide, the fundamental right to seek refuge is being challenged by persistent suspicions about refugees' motives

Ipsos' attitudinal segmentation illustrates the complexity of public attitudes in Britain [1].

While extreme groups hold consistently positive or negative views, middle groups, like our “pragmatic group” (approximately 13% of the population), show more complex views. They generally believe in providing refuge, recognise refugees' potential contributions, and think they can successfully integrate, yet they also support closing borders, often believing that most refugees are 'bogus'.



[1] World Refugee Day 2024, Ipsos •



Key findings

Despite rising calls for border closures, nearly half of the public (47%), particularly younger adults (63% of those under 35), remain optimistic about the positive contributions refugees can make to the country. This suggests a **potential difference in attitudes between generations**, with younger people perhaps more open to the benefits of diversity.

Attitudes are equally divided on the issue of integration, with 45% of respondents each agreeing and disagreeing that refugees who come to Britain will

successfully integrate. This uncertainty highlights ongoing challenges and a lack of agreement on how well refugees are able to become part of British society.

Declining personal action alongside belief in global responsibility

Reflecting a shift in attitudes, the number of Britons reporting they have taken action to support refugees has declined over the past 12 months, from 28% in 2024. Nevertheless, nearly a

quarter (23%) of Britons report actively supporting refugees, which is below the global average (29%).

As in previous years, this support primarily takes the form of donations and social media engagement, rather than direct forms of assistance.

The **decline in personal engagement is a trend observed across many countries, not just Great Britain**, indicating potential widespread compassion fatigue or shifting priorities, such as the cost-of-living crisis.

Key findings

While personal engagement has declined, **over half of Britons (56%) believe wealthier nations have a moral obligation to contribute financially to refugee support**, both within their own country and in countries hosting refugees. This sentiment is comparable to that in the US and Germany, but it is less prevalent than the global average (62%), and the views held in countries like Italy, Spain, and Sweden.

This **support is closely tied to the public's awareness of the long-term benefits that refugee support can bring to wealthier nations**: those who recognize

these benefits are twice as likely to support financial contributions to refugee initiatives. However, over a third (36%) of the British public are currently unconvinced of the long-term advantages to wealthier nations, which could present a challenge in sustaining public backing for initiatives to support refugees.

In terms of *actual* contributions, **Britons hold complex views on wealthy nations' contributions to refugee support**: 29% think they are currently doing *too little* to support refugees, 28% think it's about the *right amount* and 26% think they are doing *too much* –

significantly higher than the global average (15%). In fact, only Germany (34%) has a higher percentage of people who think wealthier nations are currently doing too much.

This division in views highlights a level of concern among the British public about the financial strain of international refugee support efforts, with a notable proportion feeling that wealthier nations are already overextended.

This concern is further reflected in recent Ipsos polling for the UK Spending Review, which finds that immigration and border control is



Britons are split on whether wealthier nations are doing enough to support refugees, but a significant minority believe the UK government should increase its support.



Key findings

the second-highest area the public wants prioritised for increased spending, though considerably behind the NHS/healthcare.

However, when asked which two groups should contribute more to assist refugees globally given the current funding challenges for refugee support, **governments of other wealthier nations, and international organisations are seen as primary candidates for increased contributions** (32% and 31% respectively). This

shows a desire for other countries and organisations to increase their involvement.

A significant minority (19%) believe that the UK government should increase its support, making it the third most cited group and slightly higher than the global average (16%). This suggests that while there's a push for others to do more, a notable portion of the British public also recognises a need for increased domestic involvement.

Conclusions

This year survey paints a complex and at times contradictory picture of public attitudes towards refugees in Great Britain. While a majority of Britons still express support for the principle of asylum, this support is declining, and scepticism about refugees' motives persists. A notable shift this year is the decline in reported personal actions to support refugees.

The survey highlights the need for effective solutions that address the challenges faced by *both* refugees and host communities.

These solutions should tackle public concerns and promote accurate narratives about refugees including highlighting the long-term benefits of refugee integration, such as economic and cultural contributions. However, recognising that negative beliefs about refugees are often deeply entrenched, building trust and promoting positive interactions between refugees and host communities must also be central to any effective solutions.



ATTITUDES TOWARDS REFUGEES

01

While a majority of Britons still support the principle of providing refuge, this support is gradually eroding. Scepticism over refugees' motivations remains a significant factor, and views on refugees' contributions, and their ability to integrate successfully are divided.

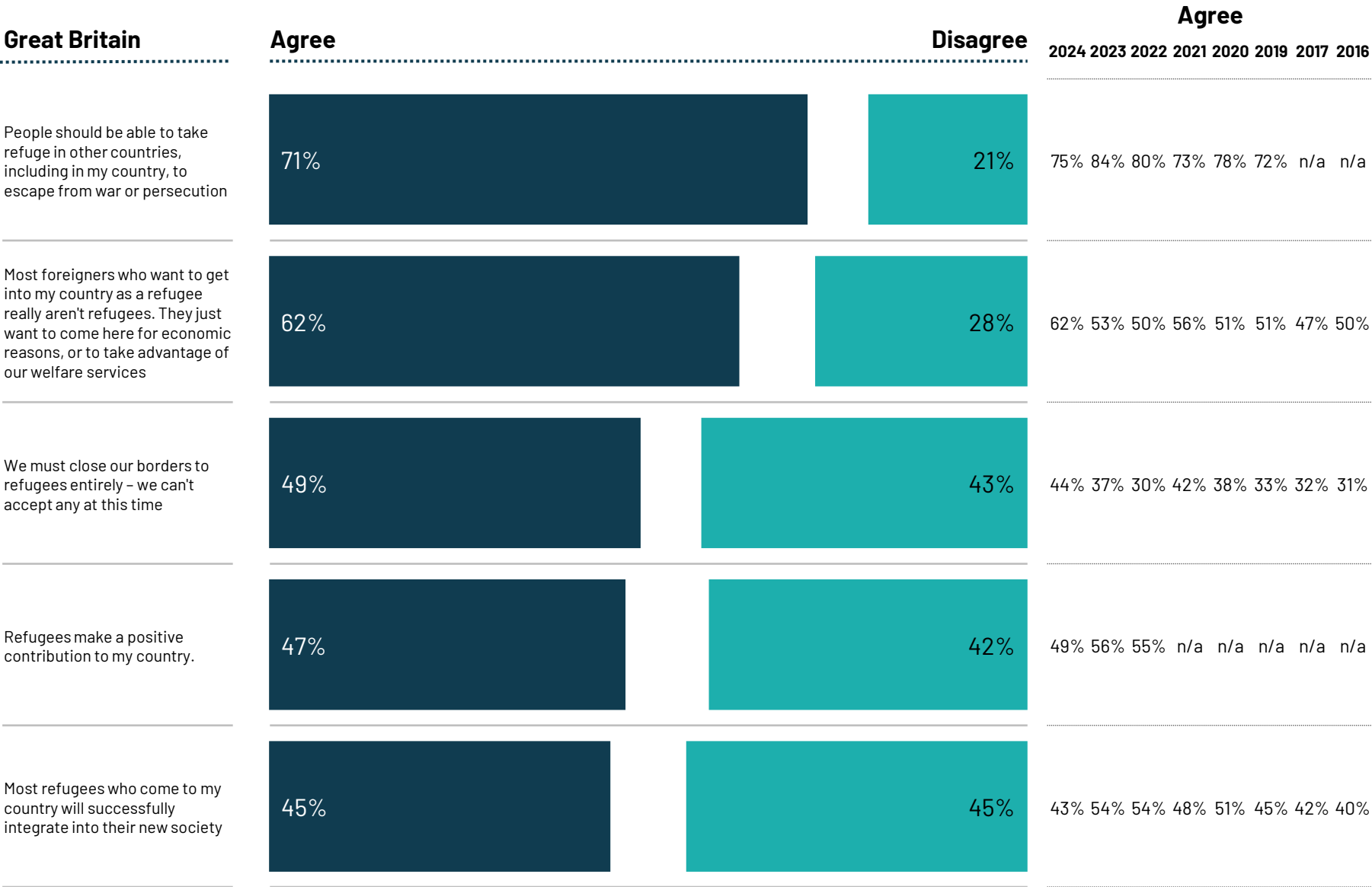
Q. Thinking about your country, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

While support for providing refuge remains high and more positive than the global average (67%), that support has been declining over time. This decline is linked to the belief among many that refugees are motivated by economic factors or are taking advantage of the UK’s welfare services.

Consequently, there's a growing belief that the UK should completely close its borders to asylum seekers. This viewpoint is notably more common among older people.

As a result of these concerns, the public remains divided on whether refugees will successfully integrate into and contribute to society.

Base: 22,734 adults aged 16+ across 29 countries, including 1,001 in the UK, 25 APRIL – 9 MAY 2025



SUPPORTING REFUGEES

02

Active personal support for refugees among Britons has declined, but a majority feel wealthier nations have a moral obligation to provide financial support. Opinions are divided on whether enough is currently being done.

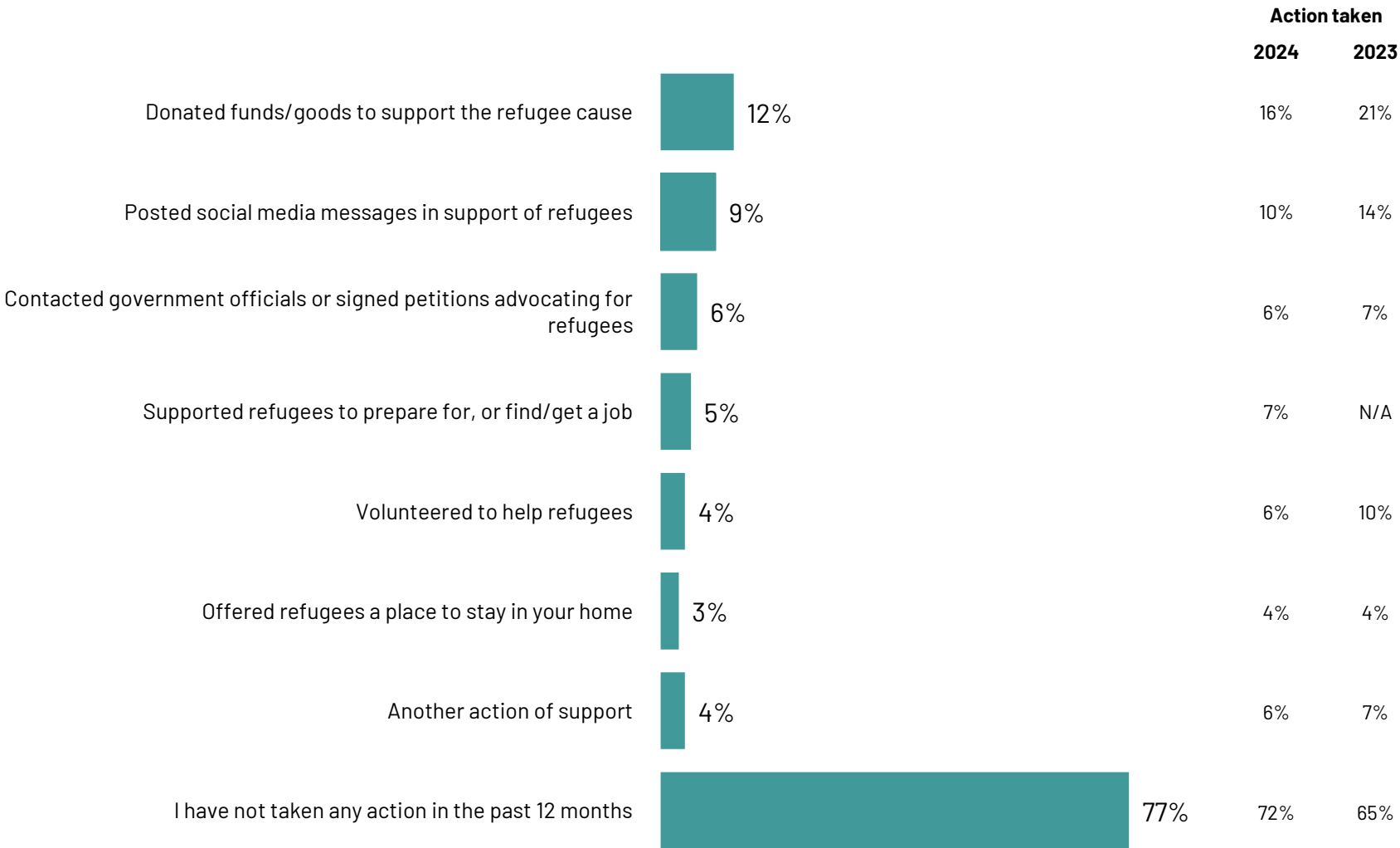
Q. In the past 12 months, have you done any of the following?

Personal action to support refugees has declined. This mirrors a broader trend observed across many countries, though the proportion of Brits *not* taking action remains higher than the global average (77% vs. 71%).

Younger Britons are bucking the trend though, demonstrating a greater willingness to take action in support of refugees (40% vs. 23% overall).

Base: 22,734 adults aged 16+ across 29 countries, including 1,001 in the UK, 25 APRIL – 9 MAY 2025

Great Britain



Several countries have recently announced significant cuts to their foreign aid budgets, specifically impacting support for refugees.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements?

While many Britons feel a moral obligation for wealthy nations to financially support refugees, views are divided on whether current efforts are sufficient.

Fewer than half believe it will benefit wealthier nations in the long-term, a view less prevalent in Britain than the global average. Furthermore, a significant number – second only to Germany – believes wealthy nations are already over-contributing.

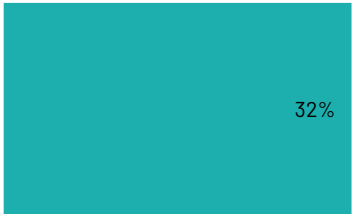
Base: 22,734 adults aged 16+ across 29 countries, including 1,001 in the UK, 25 APRIL – 9 MAY 2025

Great Britain

Agree

Disagree

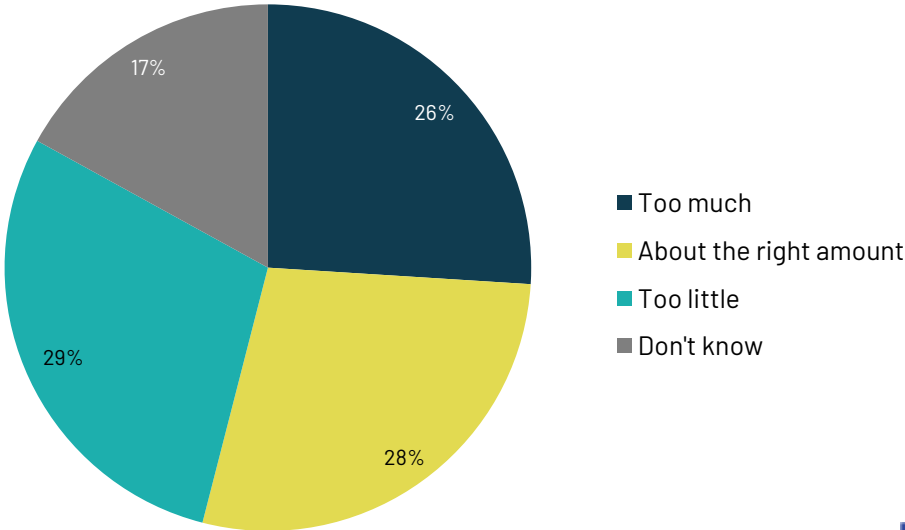
Wealthier nations have a moral responsibility to provide financial support to refugees, both those within their own borders and those hosted by other countries



Wealthier nations benefit in the long term from providing financial support to refugees, both those within their own borders and those hosted by other countries



Q. And do you think wealthier nations are currently doing too much, too little or about the right amount to support refugees?

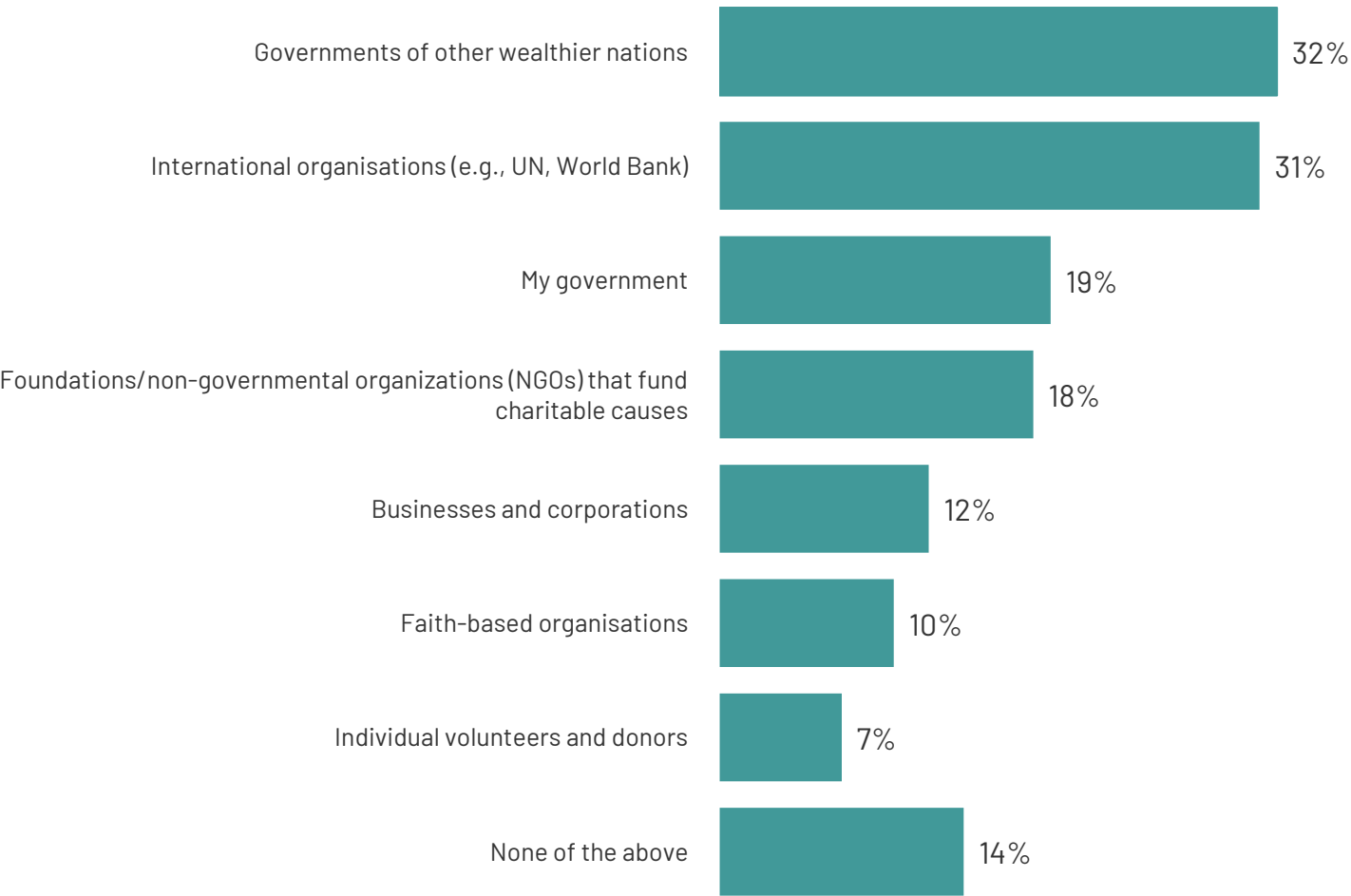


Q. Considering the current funding challenges for refugee support, which two groups, if any, do you believe should contribute more to assist refugees globally?

Given the current funding challenges for refugee support, Britons primarily believe other wealthy nations and international organisations should increase their contributions. However, they're not as keen on international organisations taking the lead compared to the global average. Interestingly, a notable proportion thinks the UK government should increase its support – more than the global average of 16%.

Base: 22,734 adults aged 16+ across 29 countries, including 1,001 in the UK, 25 APRIL – 9 MAY 2025

Great Britain



Methodology



Methodology

These are the results of a 29-country survey conducted by Ipsos on its Global Advisor online platform and, in India, on its IndiaBus platform, between Friday, April 25, and Friday, May 9, 2025. For this survey, Ipsos interviewed a total of 22,734 adults aged 18 years and older in India, 18-74 in Canada, Republic of Ireland, Malaysia, South Africa, Türkiye, and the United States, 20-74 in Thailand, 21-74 in Indonesia and Singapore, and 16-74 in all other countries.

The sample consists of approximately 1,000 individuals each in Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Spain, and the U.S., and 500 individuals each in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Hungary, Ireland, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Thailand, and Türkiye. The sample in India consists of approximately 2,200 individuals, of whom approximately 1,800 were interviewed face-to-face and 400 were interviewed online.

Samples in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, and the U.S. can be considered representative of their general adult populations under the age of 75. Samples in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Indonesia, Ireland, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, and Türkiye are more urban, more educated, and/or more affluent than the general population. The survey results for these countries should be viewed as reflecting the views of the more “connected” segment of their population.

India’s sample represents a large subset of its urban population — social economic classes A, B and C in metros and tier 1-3 town classes across all four zones.

The data is weighted so that the composition of each country’s sample best reflects the demographic profile of the adult population according to the most recent census data. “The Global Country Average” reflects the average result for all the countries and markets in which the survey was conducted. It has not been adjusted to the population size of each country or market and is not intended to suggest a total result.

When percentages do not sum up to 100 or the ‘difference’ appears to be +/-1 percentage point more/less than the actual result, this may be due to rounding, multiple responses, or the exclusion of “don’t know” or not stated responses.

The precision of Ipsos online polls is calculated using a credibility interval with a poll where N=1,000 being accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points and of where N=500 being accurate to +/- 5.0 percentage points. For more information on Ipsos’ use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website.

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