

# WORLD REFUGEE DAY 2026

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS  
REFUGEES  
Findings for Great Britain  
June 2026

# Key findings

## **Support for the principle of asylum remains strong, but public scepticism about refugees persists**

This year's survey reveals a complex and at times contradictory picture of British attitudes towards refugees.

### **Broad support, but lingering concerns**

A clear majority of Britons (73%) continue to support providing refuge to people fleeing war or persecution, remaining above the 29-country average (67%). While this figure is lower than the exceptional highs recorded in 2022 (80%) and 2023 (84%) following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it is broadly consistent

with pre-Ukraine levels (72% in 2019).

At the same time, a significant share of the public remains uneasy about refugee arrivals. Support for completely closing Britain's borders to refugees stands at 46% - down slightly from 49% last year, but still notably higher than in 2017 (32%). This points to a gap between support for asylum as a principle and worries about how the system works in practice.

### **Doubts about who is seeking protection**

These concerns go hand in hand with scepticism about why people claim asylum. Six in ten Britons (60%) believe most people

seeking refuge are not genuine refugees but are instead looking for economic opportunities or access to welfare services. This view has held steady over time and continues to colour how people think about refugees and asylum policy more broadly.

### **Questions about the longer term**

The survey also shows uncertainty about refugees' place in British society. Fewer than half believe refugees make a positive contribution to the country (46%) or will successfully settle in (41%) suggesting that concerns run deeper than just arrivals, touching on questions of belonging and social cohesion.

# Key findings

## **Younger Britons are more optimistic**

But there are striking generational differences. Gen Z stands out as notably more positive: nearly two thirds (63%) believe refugees contribute positively, and 61% are confident they will integrate successfully. These figures decline steadily with age; among Baby Boomers, fewer than three in ten expect successful integration. This generational gap suggests that attitudes towards refugees may continue to shift as younger cohorts become a larger share of the population.

## **Britons favour international solutions to refugee displacement**

The survey suggests that Britons continue to see refugee displacement as a global issue

that calls for a collective response.

When asked who should contribute more to support refugees around the world, people most often point to international organisations (35%) and the governments of other wealthier nations (21%). A smaller but notable share (18%) believe the UK government should increase its own contribution.

The proportion who believe other wealthier nations should contribute more has fallen sharply compared to 2025.

## **Preference for helping closer to home**

The findings also suggest the public generally prefers responses that address displacement nearer to where it begins. Asked about people displaced by conflict in Iran and Lebanon,

Britons are most likely to back diplomatic efforts (28%) and humanitarian aid delivered within the region (24%).

By contrast, relatively few support accepting more refugees into the UK (8%). This suggests that while many Britons want to help people forced from their homes, there is more appetite for international and regional action than for expanding resettlement here.

## **A consistent theme**

These findings echo a thread running throughout this year's survey: Britons remain willing to support people fleeing conflict, but they lean towards solutions that operate beyond the UK's own borders rather than bringing more refugees to Britain.

# Conclusions

Britons haven't turned against refugees—but neither are they confident the current system is working. The persistence of scepticism, even among those who support asylum in principle, points to something more nuanced: a gap between what people believe should happen and what they think is actually happening.

## **What shapes people's doubts**

People who doubt asylum seekers' motives tend to focus on the mechanics of the system - who qualifies, how decisions are made, whether the rules are being followed. Those more sympathetic to refugees often attribute public unease to media coverage and political

rhetoric. Both perspectives lead to the same conclusion: attitudes are shaped not just by values, but by what people believe to be true about how the system operates.

## **Where this leaves refugee policy**

Sustaining support will likely require more than appeals to compassion. It will mean building confidence that the asylum system is fair and well-managed; that it can distinguish between different claims, that those granted protection are able to contribute and settle successfully, and that the process serves the interests of both refugees and the communities that receive them.

Understanding what lies behind public scepticism - and recognising that people arrive at their views through different routes - will be essential for anyone seeking to build a more informed and constructive conversation about refugee protection.

# ATTITUDES TOWARDS REFUGEES

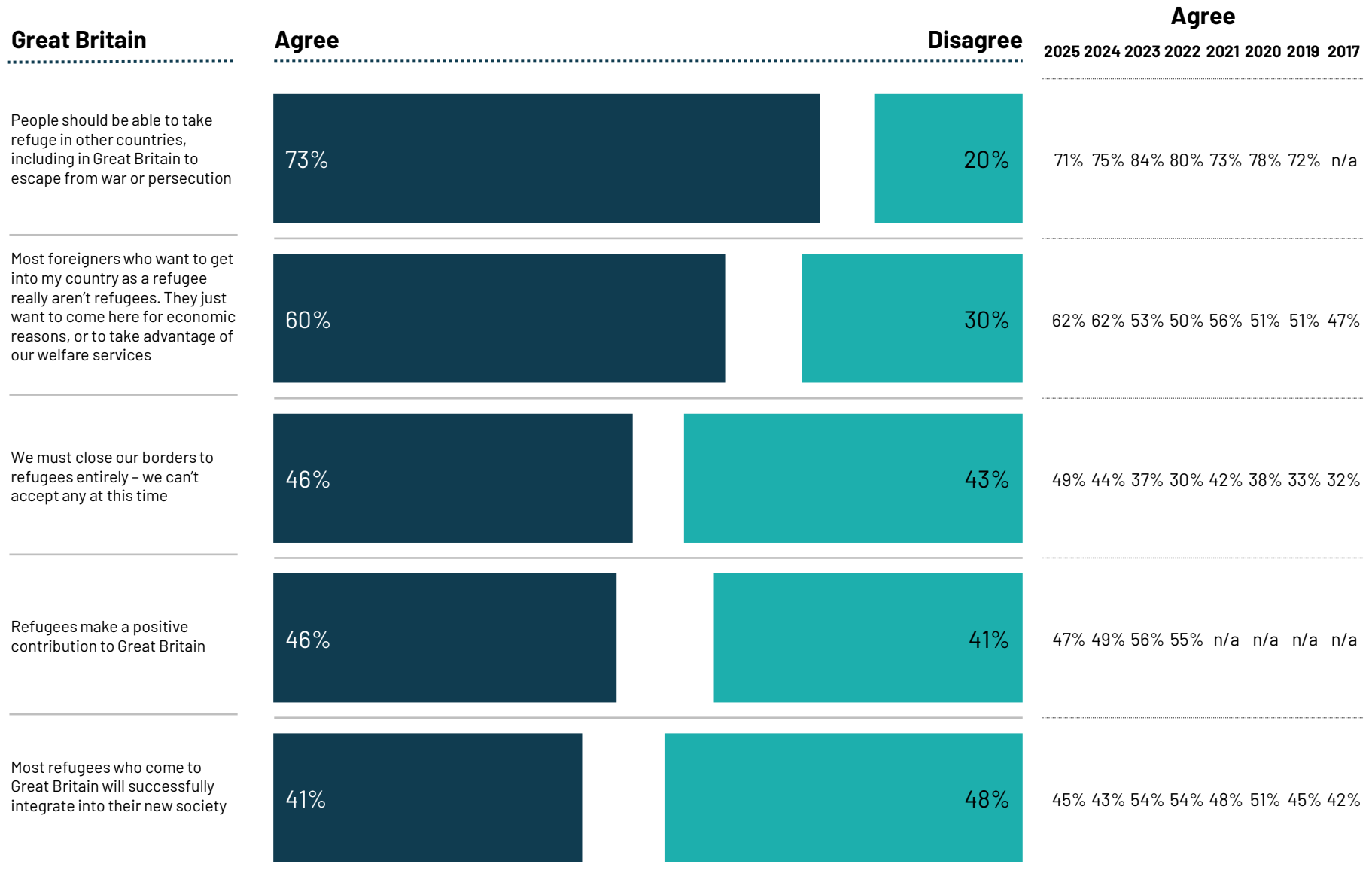
# 01

Most Britons continue to support the principle of providing refuge to those fleeing war and persecution, but persistent scepticism about refugees' motivations continues to shape views on border control, integration and contribution to society.

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

While support for the principle of refuge remains strong, attitudes towards refugees continue to be shaped by concerns about border control and integration. Support for closing Britain's borders has increased since 2017, while confidence in successful integration remains divided.

Base: 1,001 adults aged 16+ in the Great Britain, 24 APRIL –8 MAY 2026



# SOURCES OF SCEPTICISM

# 02

Public scepticism about refugees is shaped by a range of factors, with beliefs about asylum processes, media narratives and perceptions of asylum seekers all playing an important role.

## Q. Which of the following best describes why you...

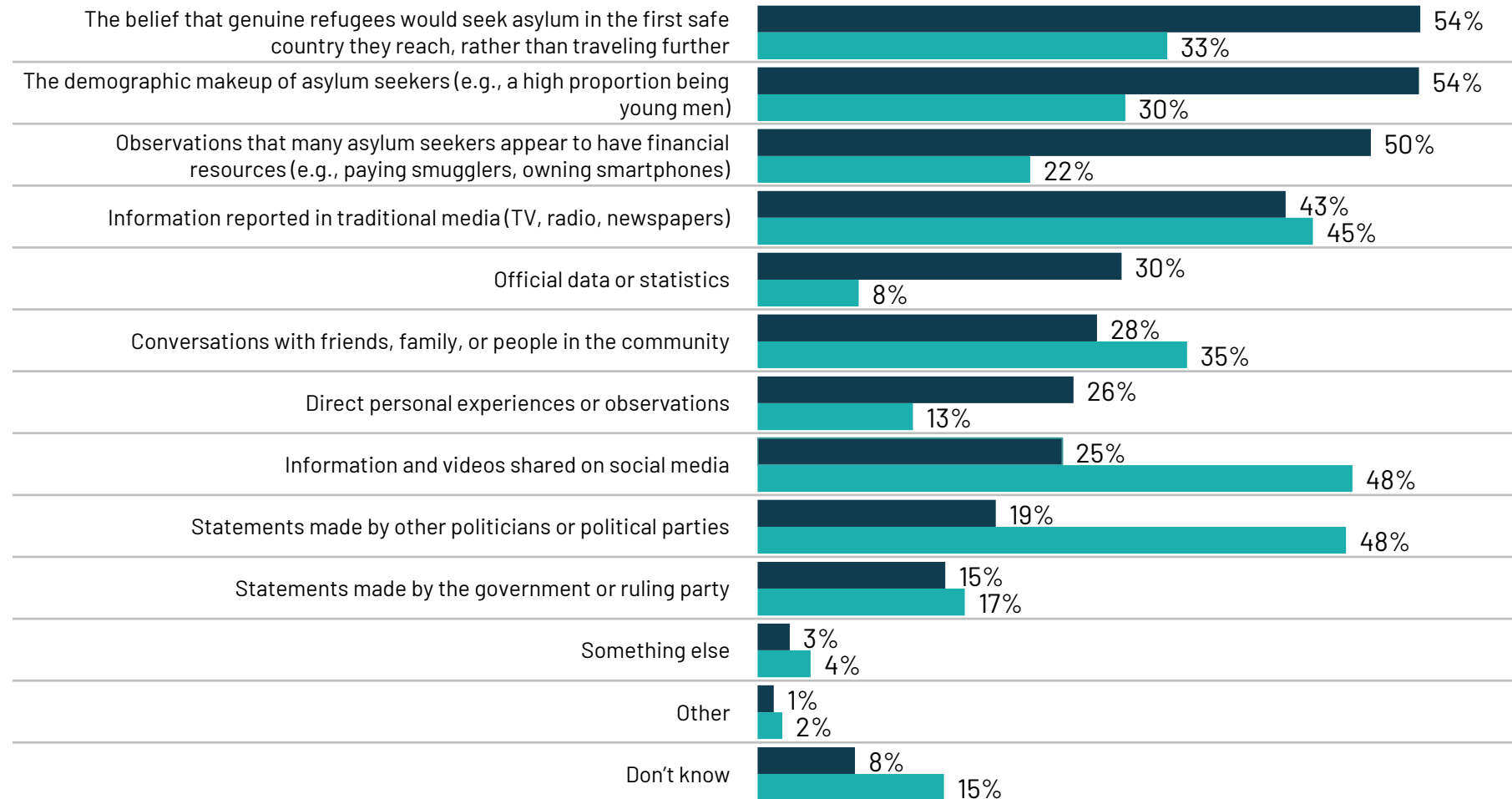
People who doubt that refugees are genuine cite a range of reasons, with relatively few unsure of their views.

The most common reasons are the belief that genuine refugees should seek asylum in the first safe country they reach, perceptions about the demographic profile of asylum seekers, and observations that they appear to have financial resource.

Those who believe refugees are genuine tend to attribute public scepticism to media coverage and political messaging.

Base: 1,001 adults aged 16+ in the Great Britain, 24 APRIL –8 MAY 2026

### Great Britain



... believe many people claiming to be refugees are not genuine?

... think some people doubt that people claiming to be refugees are genuine?

# EXPECTATIONS FOR ACTION

# 03

Britons tend to favour international cooperation and regional responses to displacement, with support focused on burden sharing and addressing crises closer to their source.

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

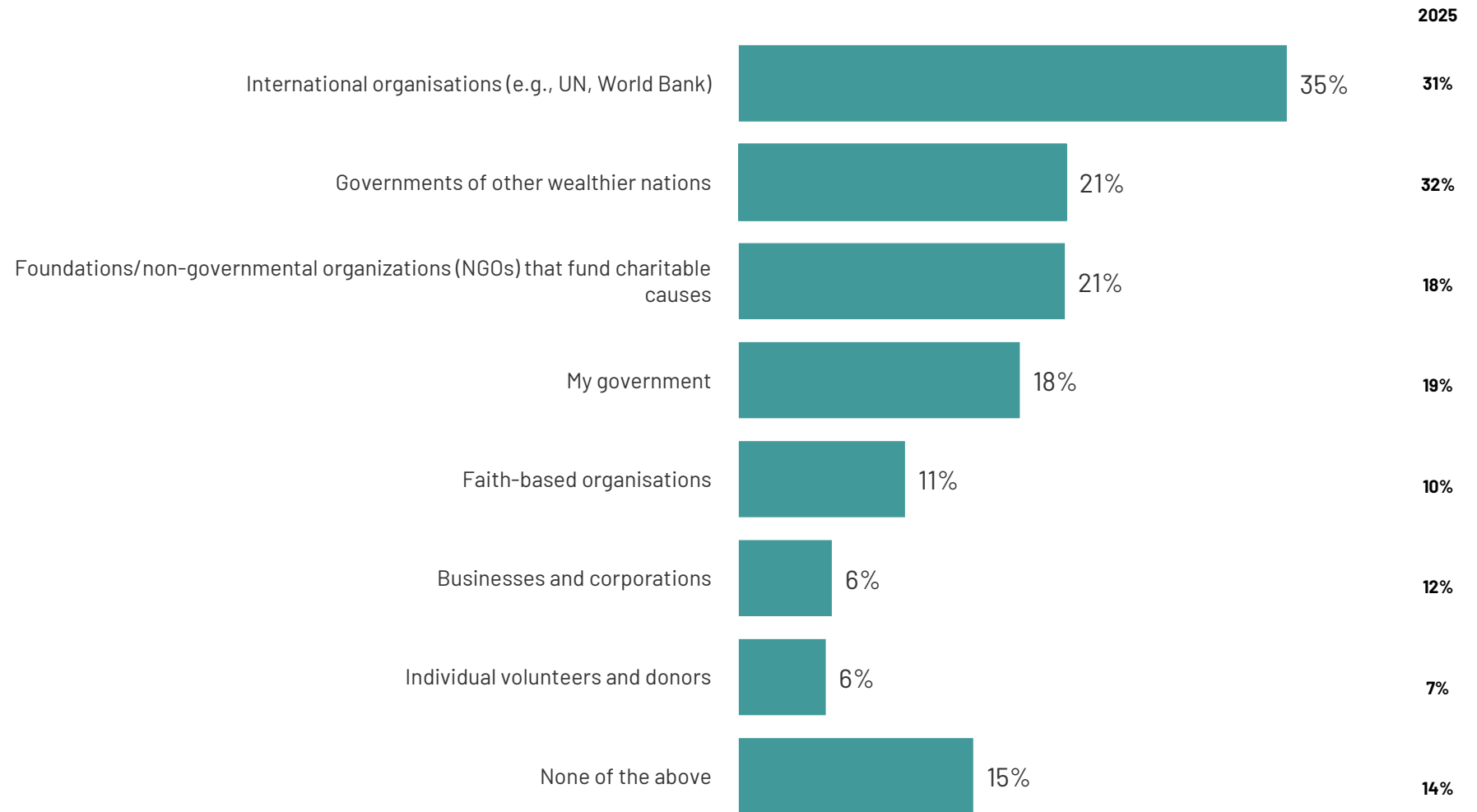
Britons are most likely to say international organisations and wealthier nations should do more to support refugees.

However, the proportion who believe other wealthier nations should contribute more has fallen sharply.

A notable minority believe the UK government should also increase its contribution – but overall, the findings suggest that refugee support is viewed primarily as a shared international responsibility.

Base: 1,001 adults aged 16+ in the Great Britain, 24 APRIL –8 MAY 2026

## Great Britain



## Q. Thinking about the displacement caused by the conflict in Iran and Lebanon, how would you like your country's government to respond?

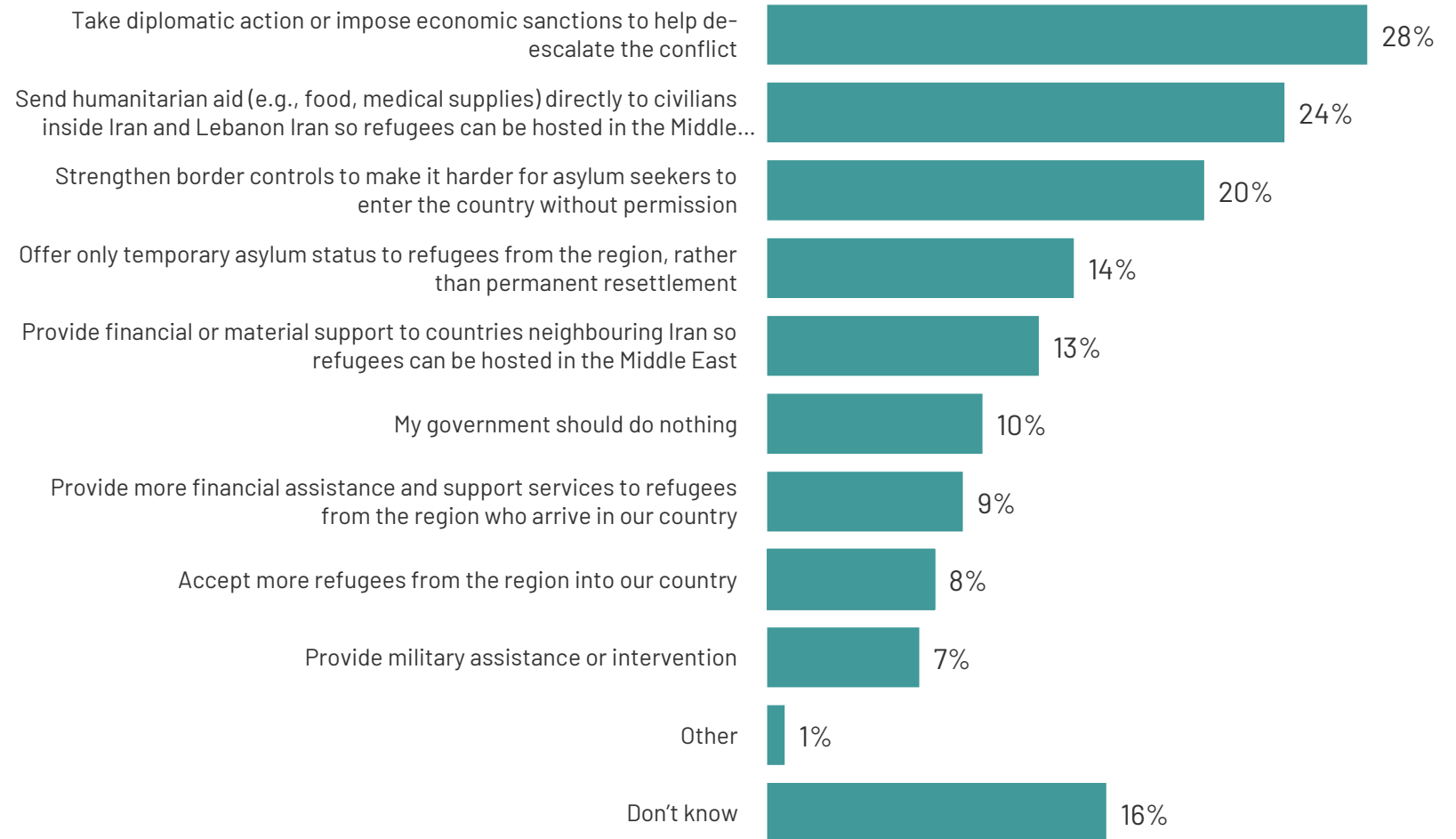
Britons are most likely to support diplomatic action and humanitarian assistance delivered within the region in response to displacement caused by the conflict in Iran and Lebanon.

Support for stronger border controls also exceeds support for accepting more refugees into Britain.

Overall, the findings suggest a preference for responding to displacement through international and regional action rather than expanding refugee protection within the UK.

Base: 1,001 adults aged 16+ in the Great Britain, 24 APRIL – 8 MAY 2026

### Great Britain



# Methodology



# Methodology

These are the results of a 29-country survey conducted by Ipsos on its Global Advisor online platform, between Friday, April 24, and Friday, May 8, 2026. For this survey, Ipsos interviewed a total of 21,521 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, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Spain, Türkiye, 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, and Thailand.

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, India, 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 in particular is considered to be heavily urban, and with higher education and affluence than the general population. For this reason, the trended data for India is not included on the charts.

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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