

THE CRISIS OF THE REFUGEE:  
AN EXPLORATION OF WHY NATIONS HAVE CHOSEN TO EITHER ADMIT OR PROHIBIT  
REFUGEES ENTRANCE IN TIMES OF CRISIS.

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ABSTRACT

Refugee policies are the immigration policies that are most sensitive to times of crisis. Refugee outcomes are largely determined by the immigration policies that they face in host nations during times of conflict. Political scientists have answered the question, “How is refugee policy formed?” and have arrived at the two avenues by which refugee policies are formed. These two avenues are isolated government action and public opinion. Few have examined the possible causal forces behind the actions taken within each avenue. This analysis aims to shed light on the forces that drive isolated government action such as security concerns and ideology held by government officials, as well as the forces that drive public opinion such as racial and cultural differences and the perceived economic impact of refugees acceptance in the host nation. The exploration of these possible causal factors can help to isolate similarities across nations, crises, and time. If similarities are present, then it is possible to formulate effective solutions that target these causal factors.



METHODS

I chose to explore isolated government action and public opinion across two refugee groups, five nations, and two time periods.

Comparative Case Study

- Jewish Refugees

United States

Chile

Canada
- Syrian Refugees

United States

Germany

Turkey

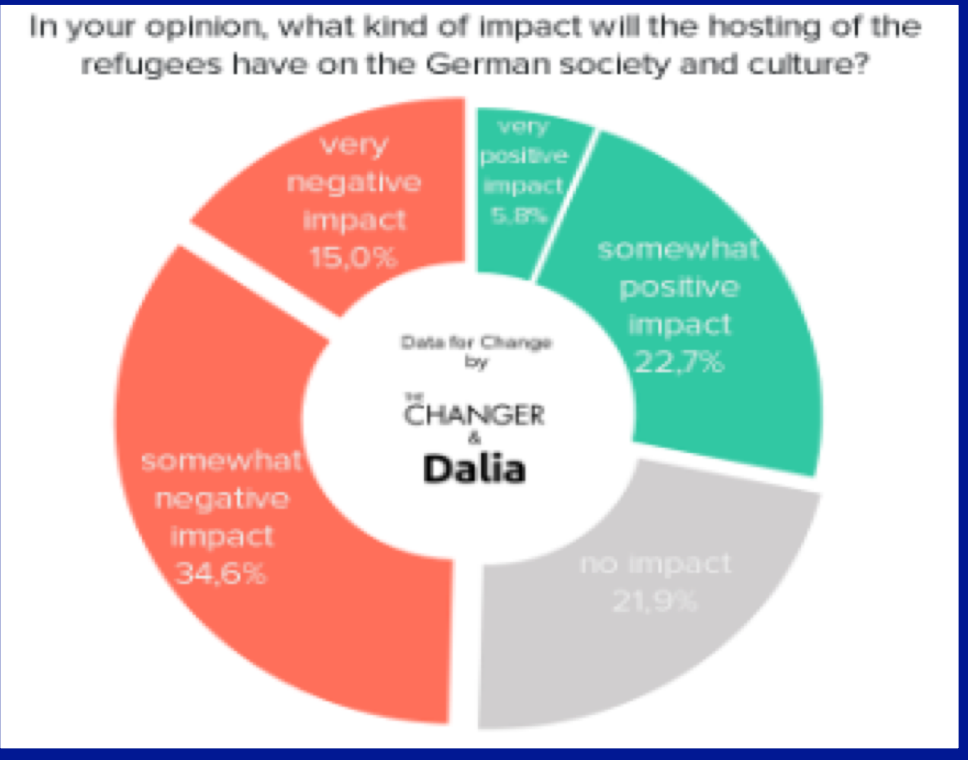
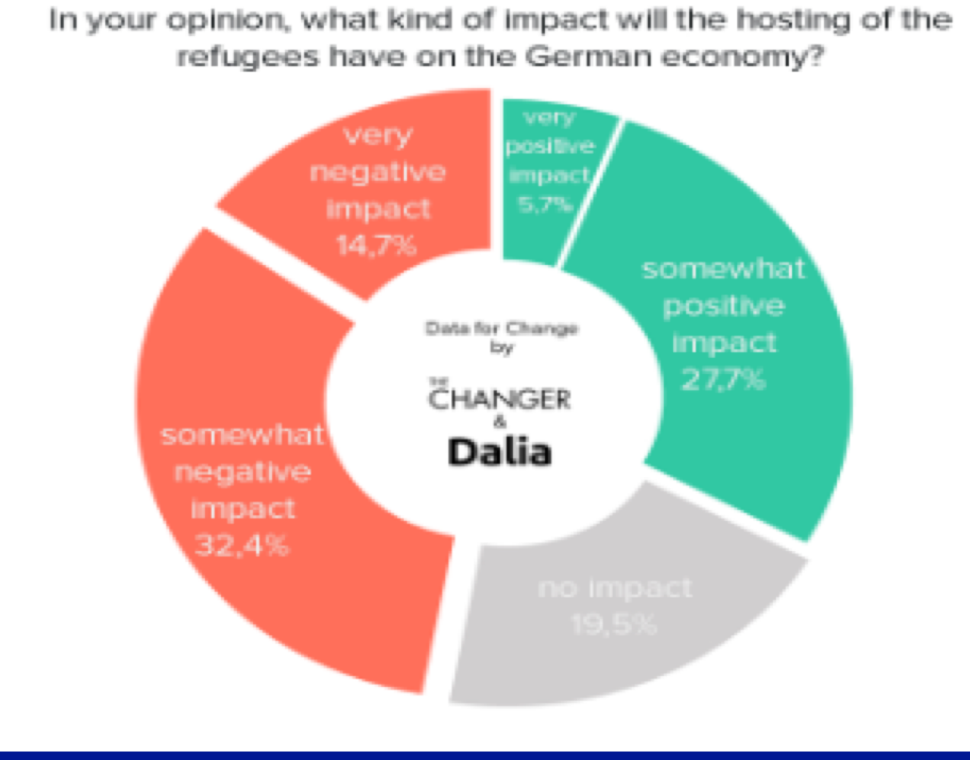
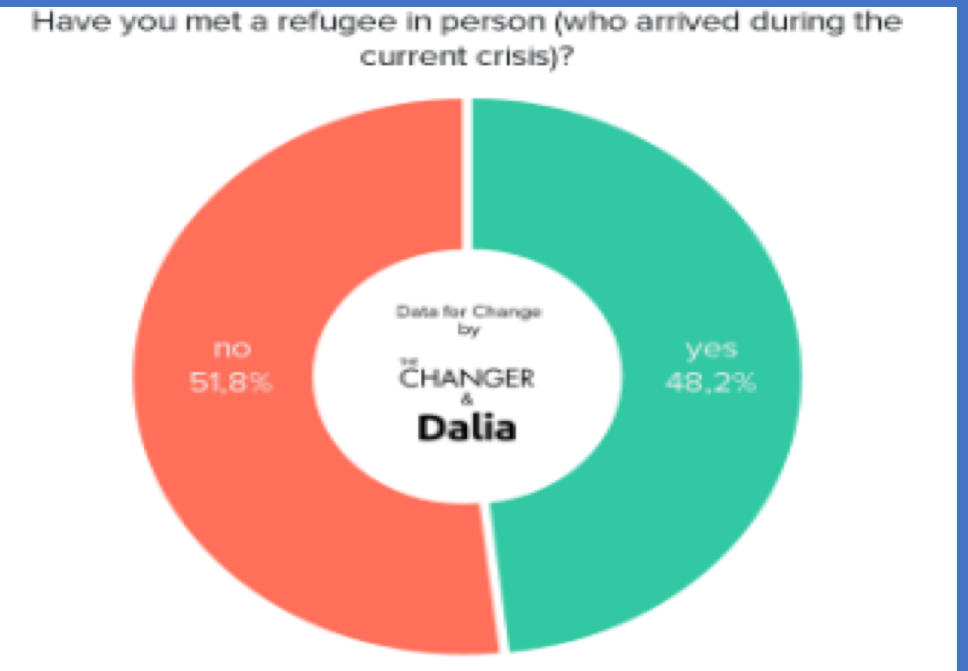
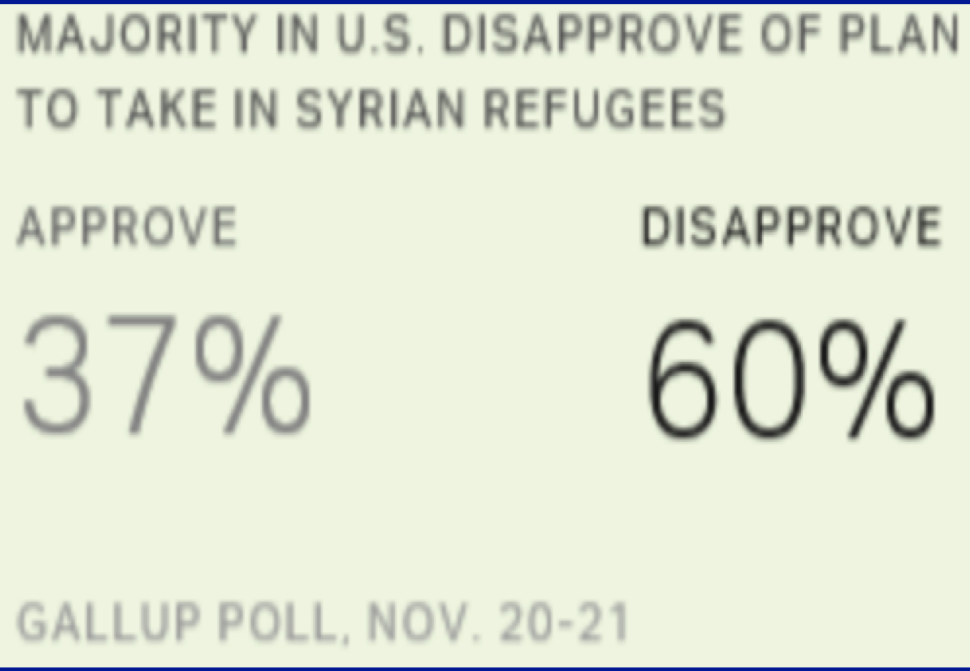


TABLE-14: How do you think Syrians in Turkey are similar to us in terms of culture?			
	#	%	%
Not similar at all	853	40,8	80,2
Not similar	823	39,4	
Not similar and similar at the same time	185	8,9	8,9
Similar	152	7,3	7,8
Quite similar	10	0,5	
No idea/no answer	66	3,1	
Total	2089	100,0	

SOLUTIONS

It is evident that the “fear of the foreigner” idea has been a prominent player in the discussion surrounding refugees. This analysis has demonstrated that differences between individuals can be a mechanism for this fear. In the case of isolated government action, personally held beliefs by government officials are deterministic in policy. In the case of public opinion, cultural differences play a key role in determining public opinion of refugees. Economic factors are also a key predictor of public opinion. Each deterministic factor has one thing in common. Individuals fear the unknown. Thus this analysis indicates that a solution to this problem must tackle that fear.

Can you guess what Americans had to say ?

“Our remembering is an act of generosity...extended to all others. Our remembering aims at saving as many men and women as possible from apathy to evil, if not from all evil itself.” -Elie Wiesel

FINDINGS

The fear of the unknown is prevalent in both isolated government action and public opinion across both crises and all five countries.

Isolated Government Action

- Officials have used security concerns as a way to legitimately propose legislation without fear of public and/or international community backlash.
- Personally held beliefs of government officials are influential in their policy making.

Public Opinion

- Culture
  - Refugees are perceived as a threat to national identity.
  - Religious differences play a key role in public perception.
- Race
  - Racial diversity may not directly benefit refugees. However, it is possible that due to a lack of diversity, populations may be unable to sympathize or connect with the refugees.
- Economic Concerns
  - Host nation populations have a fear of economic competition.
  - Classification of refugees by economic desirability is common place.
  - Public's perceived economic burden that a population of refugees will have on a host nation is highly influential.