A study of 100 local people in a suburban community regarding the arrival of Refugees

September 2015

Attitudes of a Local Community towards Refugees
Attitudes of a Local Community towards Refugees

A study of 100 people in a small urban community regarding the arrival of Refugees

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Abstract

This report describes a small research project that questioned 100 local people in September, 2015 asking how they felt about accepting refugees. It revealed a low correlation between the received popular view that refugees are welcome in this country, and the findings that they are not. The conclusion being to ask if the welcoming attitude England maintains towards Refugees is a creation of the history books, and if the resentments recorded in the Speenhamland relief system are still with us today.

Tags: refugees, public opinion, housing, Speenhamland, out relief, poor relief

It is not the purpose of this research to make any recommendations

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1. Introduction

Sir,

The refugee crisis currently engulfing Europe and the Middle East is appalling and requires urgent action.

As a former UN refugee worker in the Middle East myself, I am pleased the Government has listened to those of us urging further and more urgent action and I support plans to take 20,000 refugees from the existing camps in Syria and surrounding countries. I am proud our Government is the second highest bilateral aid donor to Syria, supporting the UNHCR and other NGO’s.

The experiences of many of these people seem a world away from [this constituency], but I have been overwhelmed by the generous response from residents. My postbag and email inbox have been inundated with offers of food, money and spare rooms for refugees coming to the UK it is clear that any refugees coming to our borough would receive a warm welcome.

In order to make this work effectively, the 20,000 figure requires proper planning, particularly given the existing shortage of housing in [this constituency]. I am encouraged the Government has committed to listen to the views of MP’s, local authorities and voluntary organisations to make sure that we get this right.

I hope that those residents who do feel able to help can be supported to do so, and I will be talking to [the local authority] and governments ministers to support a fair and workable outcome...

I hope [this constituency] will be as proud of what we are doing today as we have been in the past.

*Letter from the local Member of Parliament to the local newspaper September, 2015*
At the present time, September 2015, there is a crisis of refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers fleeing the Middle East and heading across Europe.

A Google search ‘Refugee Crisis 2015’ produced 60,000,000 entries

Make no mistake: The current refugee crisis is global. The coverage has focused heavily on the refugees arriving in Europe, and especially on Syrian refugees. But in fact refugees are fleeing countries from Honduras to Nigeria to Myanmar, and they are arriving in wealthy countries including the US and Australia, as well as poorer ones like Turkey and Lebanon. It is a worldwide problem — one whose scale and severity is unmatched since World War II.


2. Assumptions

It was assumed that people surveyed knew about the Syrian refugee crisis, and the offer by the UK government to accept 20,000 refugees.

3. Background

An ability to predict and respond to public opinion is crucial to the success of any government in a modern democracy.

The best polls are produced by independent, nonpartisan polling organizations, with no vested interest in the outcome of the findings. – Journalist Resource August 2015,

http://journalistsresource.org/tip-sheets/reporting/polling-fundamentals-journalists

The American political scientist V O Key Jnr defined public opinion in 1961 as “opinions held by private persons which governments find it prudent to heed.”

http://www.britannica.com/topic/public-opinion

The research was carried out without any funding or support from any organisation.

The Science of Sampling

The street corner survey that has been the basis of thousands of research reports typically uses sampling. It may even be erroneously called a "random" survey. People commonly use the word "random" to mean haphazard; the statistician uses it with precision to mean "having an equal probability of selection". Another important factor in survey sampling is to be certain the precise community, group, or class being talked about in the results is carefully defined.

4. Methodology

Basically, a case study is an in depth study of a particular situation rather than a sweeping statistical survey. It is a method used to narrow down a very broad field of research into one easily researchable topic.

This local research project examined the opinions of 100 local people aged over 15, in an urban community on the outskirts of a major city. The area is predominately Urban White 91%, with low unemployment and Local House prices above the National Average

http://www.richmond.gov.uk/chapter_1_economic_profile.pdf

The survey was conducted in the town centre face to face and interviewed 105 people, it recorded responses from 100 and 5 Preferred not to say.

An attempt was made to match the age distribution of the sample to the that of the UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>16 - 20</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 - 40</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>21 - 40</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>41 - 65</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>41 - 65</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 65</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>Over 65</td>
<td>17</td>
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</table>

The Survey age range Under 21 was increased, as a number below 10 fails to be statistically robust.

The ratio of Males and Females surveyed was 46:54

The survey was carried out over a period of 10 days

5. Ethics

Research was carried out with informed consent, the question shown to and read out to the respondent, no influence made regarding choice, people were allowed to withdraw if requested, no personal identification was recorded other than gender, age group and whether or not local. (96% were local)

The questionnaire was confidential, on a one to one basis. In view of the risk a respondent could be influenced by the presence of another and say what they felt to be socially acceptable


http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14792779443000049
Care was taken not to interview any person aged under 16.

This was a No hypothesis research study - the purpose being to explore ‘some area of interest to develop some specific hypothesis or prediction that can be tested in future research.’

6. The Question

In view of the current refugee problem in Europe

1 How many refugees do you think the Local Authority should accept?

A - None,  B - few,  C – A lot,  D - Everyone that wants to come

7. The Results

7.1 Total p=100

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESULT</th>
<th>Qty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fig 7.1 The distribution of preferences of all respondents*
7.2 Results by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESULT</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 7.2 Distribution of Male (46) and Female (54) respondents
7.3 Results by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESULT</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 40</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 to 65</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over 65</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Fig 7.3 Distribution of preference by age*
8. Analysis of Results

An examination of the data reveals the following

Let us remind ourselves of the choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 How many refugees do you think [the Borough] should accept?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

8.1 All respondents

Fig 7.1 70% of all responses chose A and B.

Thus the Distribution is skewed to the right, indicating a preference towards A.

This finding shows little correlation with the comments in the Media and the letter from the local MP saying England welcomes Refugees.

8.2 Male and Female respondents

Fig 7.2 Distribution between Male and Female

While the difference between Male and Female was less marked at A and B, Males were less inclined than Females to choose C. with 6 Men (23%) and 20 Female (77%). Although far more M than F opted for D. But 4 respondents was too small a number to be statistically significant.

8.3 Age distribution

Fig 7.3 reveals Young People (16 to 20) were less welcoming, some chose A, and no one in that age group chose D.

The age groups 21 to 40, and 41 to 65 where broadly similar to one another

A notable result is the high number of respondents Over 65 who chose A. 10 of the 18 respondents who chose A were in this age group. And no Male or Female in that age group chose D
9. Supplementary Notes

9.1 Response from local Councillors to the Survey.

A copy of the questionnaire was sent by email to local councillors. At the time of the survey the Council comprised 54 Councillors – 38 Conservative, 16 LibDem.

Apart from 2 Councillors who were absent, all Councillors chose to say by default ‘Prefer not to Answer.’

We are therefore unable to make any research-based comparison between the attitudes of the public and their elected representatives.

9.2 Response from local Councillors at Council meeting

A question was asked at a full Council Meeting about provision for refugees. The Leader of the Council replied ‘[we] are not a Housing Authority, and are awaiting direction from Government.’

We took that to mean the Refugee Crisis was not a matter of great concern to the Council. Which correlates closely with the view expressed by the sample population.

9.3 Refugee children

41% of refugees are children


In view of the requirement for Children in Care in England to be placed with Foster Carers of the same religion as the child’s family we asked our Local Councillor the following

How many Muslim Foster Carers does the Borough, or its Foster Care Agencies, have and what proportion do they represent of all its Foster Carers or Agencies?

We received no reply, and made a request of the Council under the Freedom of Information Act

We received the following

In [the Borough] Council we have 0 Muslim foster carers.

Muslim Foster Carers in England represent 1% of Foster Carers

10 Conclusion

10.1 The results from the survey clearly show that refugees are by and large, not welcome by people who live here.

With no evidence to the contrary it can be assumed a similar view is held by Local Councillors.

i) the lack of any action, other than sympathy, made by the leader of the Local Authority towards supporting refugees

iii) the Local Council has no provision for fostering Muslim children.

ii) the fact Councillors declined to respond exposes the possibility of not wishing to contradict the popular view: that we welcome refugees.

10.2 Further research

Our history books assure us England is a country that welcomes and accommodates refugees.

However, these findings raise two question ‘why are local people opposed to refugees?’ and to what extent did the people of England actually ‘want’ or welcome the Jewish kindertransport children in 1939, the Belgian refugees in 1914, and the Protestant Huguenots in 16th century?

Closer examination reveals not every part of England has in fact welcomed poor strangers from out of the area.

Poor vagabonds [in 17th century] were often seen as dangerous, beggars and thieves who could spread disease - and that could all have been true. The practice of indiscriminate charity was one of the key issues which the Protestant reformers objected to. Several northern European cities introduced systems of organized poor relief, intended to limit the amount they had to pay for charity, to keep out strangers, and to control the poor.

http://www.spicker.uk/social-policy/history.htm

The Speenhamland system, in the late 18th Century, was set up to ensure poor people could afford to buy bread. The alternative was civil strife. But that generosity was reserved for local people, and someone had to pay to make it work.

One of the effects of the Speenhamland System was that ratepayers often found themselves subsidising the owners of large estates who paid poor wages. It was not unknown for landowners to demolish empty houses in order to reduce the population on their lands and also to prevent the return of those who had left.

At the same time, they would employ labourers from neighbouring parishes: these people could be laid off without warning but would not increase the rates in the parish where they worked.

http://www.victorianweb.org/history/poorlaw/speen.html
there is clearly a need for further research into this matter

References

Included in the text

This report has been peer reviewed
Appendix

The questionnaire

In view of the current refugee problem in Europe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 How many refugees do you think the Borough should accept?</th>
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<tr>
<th>M/F</th>
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<tr>
<th>3 Age group</th>
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<tr>
<th>Y/N</th>
<th>4 Do you live in the ** Borough?</th>
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