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THE ATTITUDES OF SERBIAN CITIZENS TOWARDS REFUGEES

- KEY SURVEY FINDINGS -

This public opinion survey was conducted through the Support for Local Response to Refugee Crisis Project implemented by the Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation in cooperation with the US Agency for International Development - USAID.

The survey was conducted over a one year period to monitor changes in citizens' views of refugees. Three polls were conducted and a representative sample size of municipalities/cities was used. The municipalities/cities in which the survey was conducted were selected due to their having reception centres and being places of possible closer contact between citizens and Middle Eastern refugees. The survey was conducted in Belgrade, Subotica, Šid, Lajkovac, Sjenica, Tutin, Dimitrovgrad, Preševo and in Loznica in which only the first cycle of the survey took place. Loznica was not part of the latter cycles of polling.

CITY / MUNICIPALITY	SAMPLE WAVE 1	SAMPLE WAVE 2	SAMPLE WAVE 2	15+ UNIVERSE
Belgrade	604	600	600	1.426.710
Subotica	340	300	300	121.250
Sid	308	304	300	29.551
Loznica	312	0	0	67.543
Lajkovac	300	300	300	13.202
Sjenica	300	304	300	20.817
Tutin	302	302	300	22.96
Dimitrovgrad	316	302	300	8.977
Presevo	300	380	300	2.539
TOTAL	3082	2792	2700	1.713.549

The first survey was a computer assisted telephone survey or CATI survey conducted from 18th May to 6th June 2016 on a sample of 3082 respondents.

The second survey represented a mixed method survey where CATI was applied to 50% of the sample, and one-on-one interviews were applied to the other half of the sample, in which the answers were recorded on tablet computers. The second survey was conducted between 1st and 25th December 2016 on a sample of 2792 respondents.

The third survey was also a mixed method survey where CATI was applied to 50% of the sample and one-on-one interviews were applied to the other half of the sample. The third survey was conducted between 10th May and 4th June 2017 on a sample of 2700 respondents.

All three polling cycles were conducted by ProPozitiv Agency.



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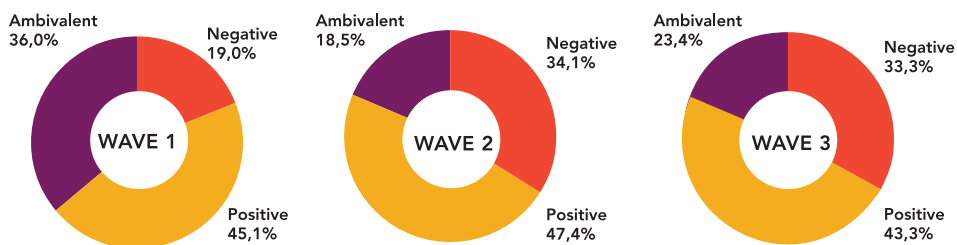
**Prijatelj se
u nevolji poznaje.**



CITIZENS' GENERAL ATTITUDE

The purpose of the entire survey was to answer the question: "What are citizens' views of/attitudes towards Middle Eastern refugees". By using a selection of questions that concern views of refugees as for instance: How helpful are citizens to refugees, how tolerant are they to refugees, are they are concerned that they will stay in Serbia for a longer period of time etc., we found that more than 2/5 of citizens have a positive attitude to refugees and that all three cycles of the survey recorded roughly this same percentage. The negative attitude has changed with time - from the initial 19% to 33%. This increase resulted from the decline in the number of respondents ambivalent to refugees, this accounting for 36% in the first cycle and only 23% in the third cycle. After being in contact with refugees for a while, people who hadn't had any attitude mostly developed a negative one, this owing primarily to negative references to refugees in the news. Terrorist attacks had taken place and refugees were being held responsible, all of which contributed to the shift from an ambivalent to a negative attitude. Those with a negative attitude mostly believe that refugees will spread diseases amongst the citizens; they fear possible criminal acts, terrorist attacks or physical assaults by refugees.

Even though a negative attitude is expressed by 1/3 of citizens, it is important to note that 44% of citizens have a very positive attitude and that the general attitude of society is that refugees should be helped, that they are people in need, that there is no fear of possible terrorist acts or crimes, that there is an interest in knowing more about them, that there is empathy because of the problems they face and that government needs to help them.



We must mention here that the municipalities of Tutin, Sjenica, Preševo and Dimitrograd recorded a very positive attitude that grew cycle by cycle of the survey.

When we asked citizens what was **the first thing that came to mind when they thought of Middle Eastern refugees**, around 60% in all three cycles of survey stated that they felt sorry for those people and that they were in such a situation and additionally, around 10% referred to war as the main cause of the refugee surge. It wasn't so long ago when we were in a similar situation and they reported that they were thinking of those times whenever refugees would come to mind.



Welcome!

Milutin

Kristijan

Milorad

Zahra

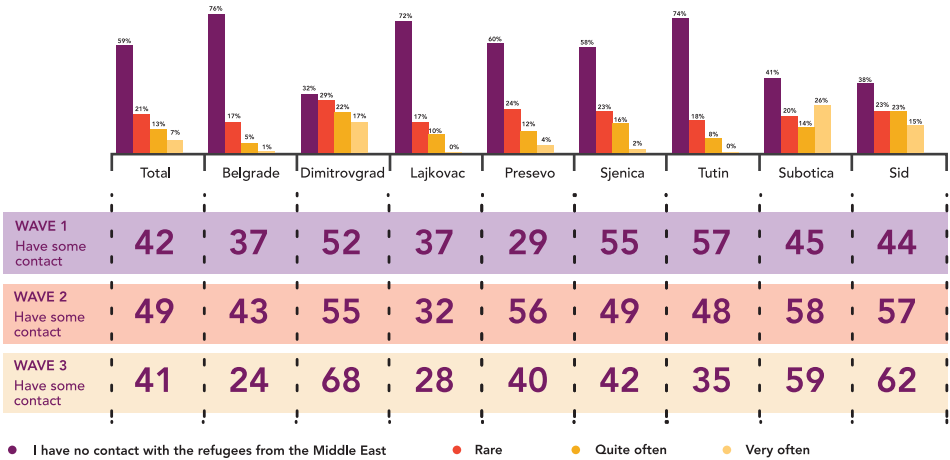
Zeynep

Serbia

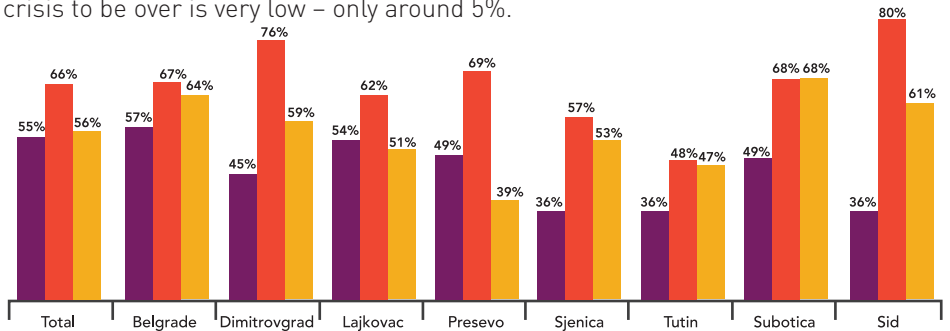
Bogov...

CONTACTS WITH REFUGEES


Given that the survey focused on the cities that were worst hit by the refugee crisis, the time that has elapsed and the extended stay of refugees, the finding that the targeted population had had more contact with refugees was to be expected –42% in the first cycle and ½ of the citizens in the second cycle stated that they had come into some kind of contact with refugees, either direct or indirect. Among the population that had had some kind of contact with refugees, on average ¾ of them reported having had a positive experience while such contact was rated very positively in the municipalities of Sjenica and Tutin (over 90%).



As regards the refugee crisis itself and its possible impact on Serbia, most citizens think that it is possible that the worst is yet to come. Around 60% of the citizens in all three cycles agreed with that view, whilst the number of people who consider the crisis to be over is very low – only around 5%.



We asked citizens to define refugees, how they seem to them, what their views may be. Citizens mostly saw refugees as peaceful and optimistic. No significant changes were recorded here throughout the entire period of polling and research. However, the percentage of those who considered refugees to be mostly young people has changed, so that around 76% of the respondents in the third cycle considered refu-

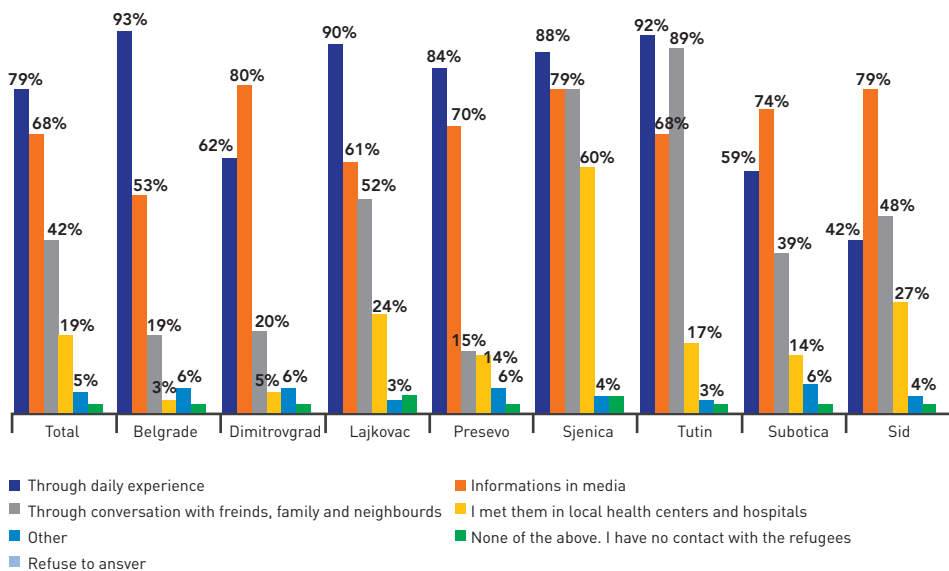
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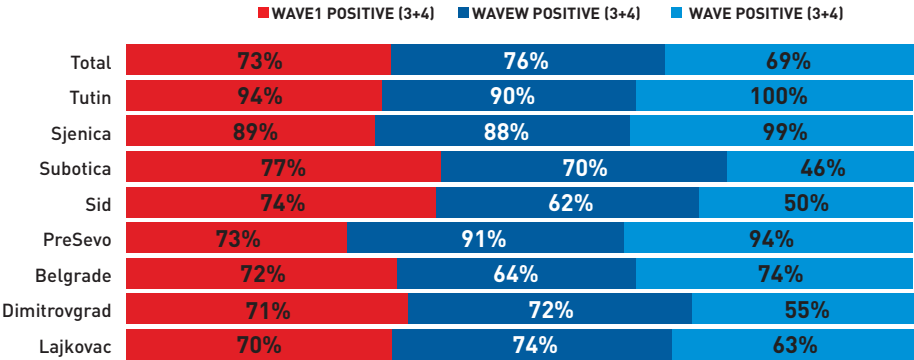
gees to be young people while in the previous cycles that percentage was somewhat lower– 71% in the first and 62% in the second. This has been determined by citizens' contacts with refugees, on account of which they have noticed that they mostly come across young people. As we know, in the first surge of refugees, mostly families with children were passing through our country, which later changed.

The manner in which the respondents had established contact with refugees determined their attitude towards refugees. As the surveys took place in the municipalities which were worst hit by the refugee crisis, it is of little surprise that the respondents' attitudes to refugees were formed through everyday contact with them, on the streets, in the stores, etc. Around 80% of the respondents have been affected by everyday contact with refugees; this percentage did not change much from one cycle to the next. There are two additional, important factors that have contributed to the formation of attitudes: first, the information **read, seen or heard in the media**, which affected 70% of the respondents and second, information heard from neighbours, friends or acquaintances – which affected 40% of the respondents in all three cycles. The forming of an opinion about refugees is influenced by several factors that can independently change a person's attitude.

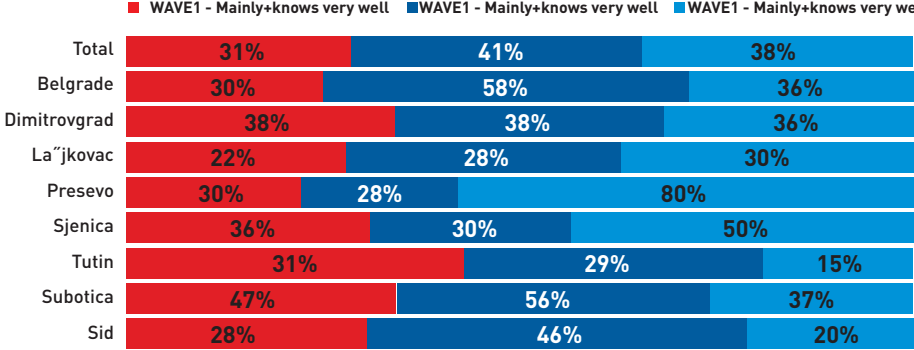


When we look at the ratings of contact with Middle Eastern refugees by those respondents who have had contact with them, their comments are mostly positive. In the first cycle, around 73% of such contact was positively rated, in the second it was 76% while in the third that percentage was significantly lower - 69%. We have to note again that in the municipalities of Sjenica, Tutin and Preševo these percentages are significantly above average and mutual acceptance is extraordinary -in Sjenica 99% of the contact was positively rated, in Tutin it was 100% and in Preševo 94%. In the municipalities of Subotica and Šid the positive ratings of such contact had decreased

with time. In Subotica, the initial figure of 77% for positively rated contact decreased to 70% in the second cycle and to only 46% in the third. In Šid, the figure of 74% for positively rated contact decreased to 62% in the second cycle and to 50% in the third. Subotica and Šid are exit-point municipalities for refugees with a high concentration of them in a small area, and a decrease in the number of positively rated contacts was to be expected.

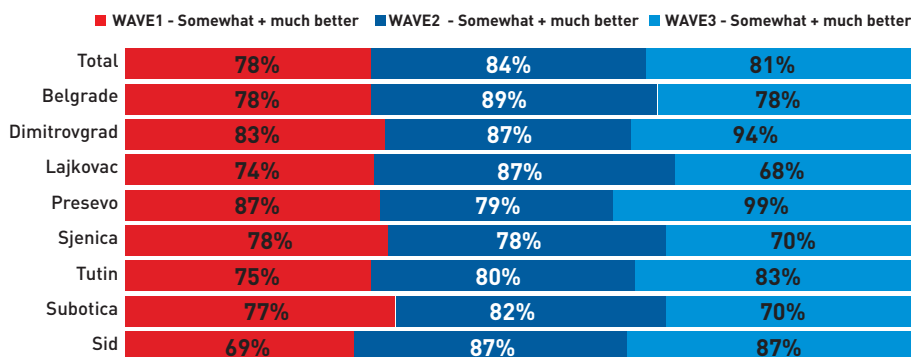


Public knowledge is an important topic, but even when citizens state that they are receiving information from the media, through contacts on the street and from acquaintances, they still think that they are inadequately informed, i.e., in the third cycle only 38% of them stated that they were well-informed about refugees, the refugee surge and the reasons for the appearance of refugees, in the second cycle it was 41% while in the first cycle of our survey it was even lower - 31%. Even though citizens have formed certain attitudes towards Middle Eastern refugees, it cannot be said that they are well-informed about the root-causes of the events leading to the refugee crisis.

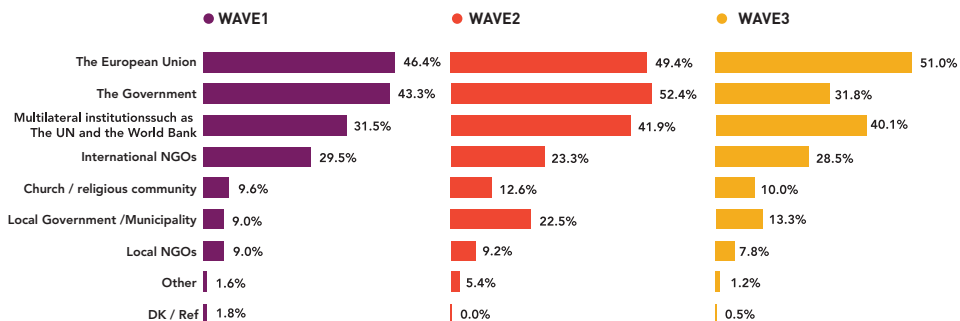


GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE AND RECEPTION OF REFUGEES RELATIVE TO OTHER COUNTRIES

From observing the events around the refugee crisis and the government's participation in them, most citizens have a positive attitude to the government's involvement. When we asked them to rate the Republic of Serbia's attitude towards refugees relative to that of other countries in the region, the respondents agreed that our country had responded considerably better. 81% of the respondents in the third cycle rated our country's response somewhat-to-considerably better than that of other countries in the region and this percentage is very similar in all cycles, 84% of the respondents of the second cycle rates our attitude as better, while 78% of the respondents of the first cycle shares the same view.

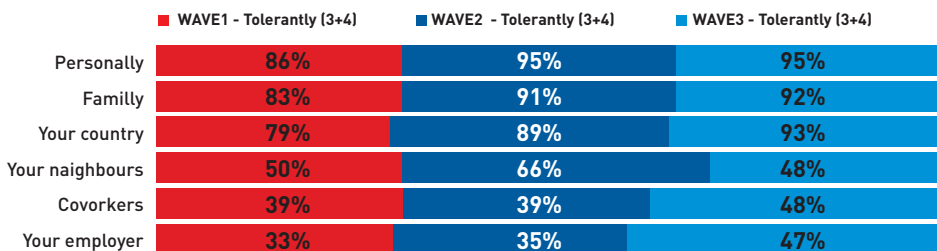


When asked about the institutions responsible for improving the refugees' situation whilst in Serbia, the respondents offered different opinions. According to citizens, the institutions required to provide help to refugees are the European Union, international organizations such as the World Bank and the UN and the Serbian Government. Ratings changed from one cycle to the next; in the third and last cycle, the EU was mentioned by 51% of the respondents, the World Bank by 40%, while Serbia ranked third. In the second and intermediary cycle, the Republic of Serbia was considered to be the most important institution which was required to offer help and was mentioned by 52% of the respondents; while in the first cycle, the EU had ranked first having been mentioned by 46% of the respondents. According to the findings of the third and last cycle, it is notable that citizens have come to the conclusion that this is a problem that we cannot handle by ourselves and that European Union's involvement is necessary, even though our country has acted responsibly when it comes to receiving refugees and addressing their status in the country.



GENERAL TOLERANCE AND SOCIAL DISTANCE

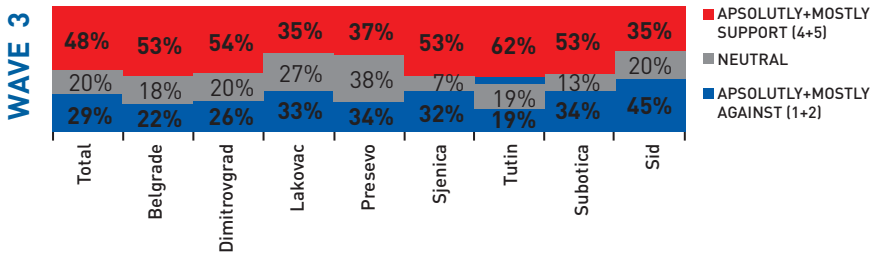
Citizens' personal attitudes towards refugees can be a reflection of a more general attitude towards refugees and can be measured through questions about the tolerance of others towards refugees, that is, of colleagues in the workplace, of the government, of employers and neighbours and institutions. According to the respondents, the tolerance of the government, of themselves and their family is quite high – over 90% of the respondents positively rated it. However, their ratings of the tolerance of their neighbours, their employer and workplace colleagues is a lot less positive – only 48%. This clearly points to a subjective view of the world and oneself and we may conclude that people see themselves as being quite tolerant and those who are more socially distanced as being quite intolerant.



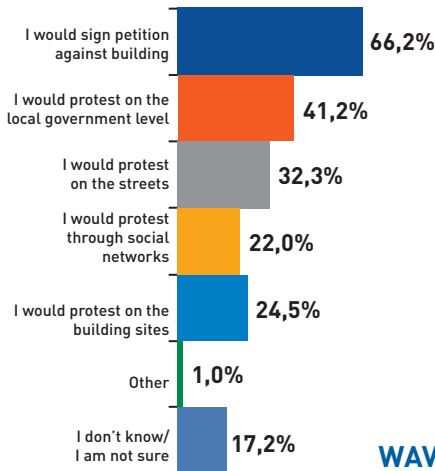
Social distance is also reflected in the respondents' reaction to a possible direct contact with refugees where the refugees might be the respondents' neighbours, employers, go to school with their children, be married to someone close to them and staying in Serbia. Through all these questions we see that a great number of people accept refugees in these ways. In the last cycle, 74% of the respondents would have nothing against refugees staying in Serbia, 56% of respondents would not have a problem having refugees as neighbours, 50% would have nothing against them being their bosses, 66% would have nothing against their child having a Middle Eastern friend, while that percentage is quite a lot lower when it comes to a marriage between someone close to them and a Middle Eastern refugee– only 35% would approve of this situation. These questions also show a significant tolerance and acceptance of refugees by our citizens.

RECEPTION CENTERS

Several reception centres in Serbia handled the crisis well. However, it is obvious that they lack the necessary accommodation space so therefore we asked citizens if they support expanding the current centres and building new ones. In the third cycle, 48% of the citizens absolutely support new reception centres, around 20% of them have no opinion about them while 29% are against building new and expanding the existing reception centres. The most serious opposition to expansion and building is seen in Šid – 45% of its citizens is against that idea.



Of 29% of those who are against building and expansion work, around 1/3 of them (approximately 10% of the total population) would react in one way or another. Those reactions would mostly be the signing of petitions, lodging individual complaints with the representatives of the local community, protesting and demonstrating on the



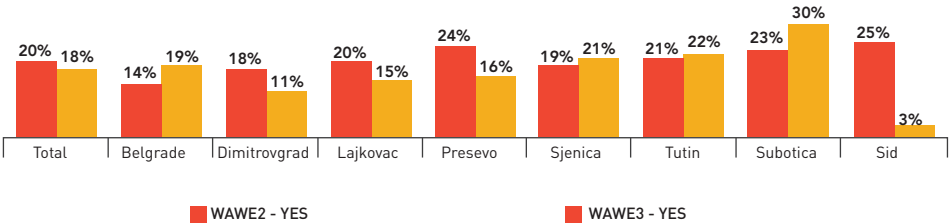
WAVE 3



ANNOUNCEMENT AWARENESS

As far as the visibility of the campaigns initiated by the Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation in these municipalities is concerned, it is noted that these campaigns manifested and implemented by means of posters/billboards and radio were seen by 20% of the respondents in the second cycle and almost an identical number of people in the third cycle (18%), which is a very high percentage for both cycles of the survey.

The most people who have seen parts of the campaign launched by the Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation are young people, that is around 2/5 of the respondents who have seen a part of the campaign are aged between 15 and 18. Regarding the municipalities, the highest campaign visibility is recorded in Preševo (27%), Sjenica (25%) and the lowest in Sid – around 10%. The low percentage in Sid is explained by the lack of campaigns in that municipality and people's protests against the refugee centre inside its city limits.



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The complete content of the survey of the attitudes of the Serbian citizens to the refugee crisis, including information on the project "Support for Local Response to Refugee Crisis", can be found on www.divac.com