

## Canadians divided on legacy of Syrian refugee resettlement plan

*No consensus on accepting more than the 25,000 pledged by government*

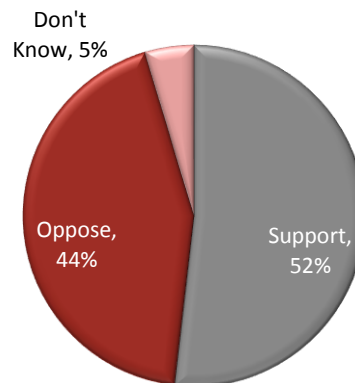
**February 19, 2016** – As the government's self-imposed March 1 deadline for resettling 25,000 Syrian refugees approaches, a new poll by the Angus Reid Institute finds Canadians still deeply divided about the plan, and its eventual legacy.

Support for the ongoing resettlement process has increased since government delayed its initial January 1 by two months, but most Canadians still feel the timeline is too short, and fewer than one-in-three think the current refugee screening process is adequate to ensure none of the refugees pose a threat to Canadians.

### Key Findings:

- Just over half (52%) of Canadians support the government's plan, while 44 per cent oppose it
- Roughly two-in-five (42%) say Canada should stop taking in Syrian refugees immediately. The rest either say the country should stop at 25,000 refugees (29%), or accept even more (29%)
- Canadians are evenly divided on what the legacy of the resettlement program will be, with roughly the same number saying it will be viewed as a success (23%), a failure (24%), or neither (24%) 15 years from now (29% are unsure)

### Overall, would you say you support or oppose the government's Syrian refugee resettlement plan?



### METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from February 2 – 5, 2016 among a representative randomized sample of 1,507 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

### MEDIA CONTACT:

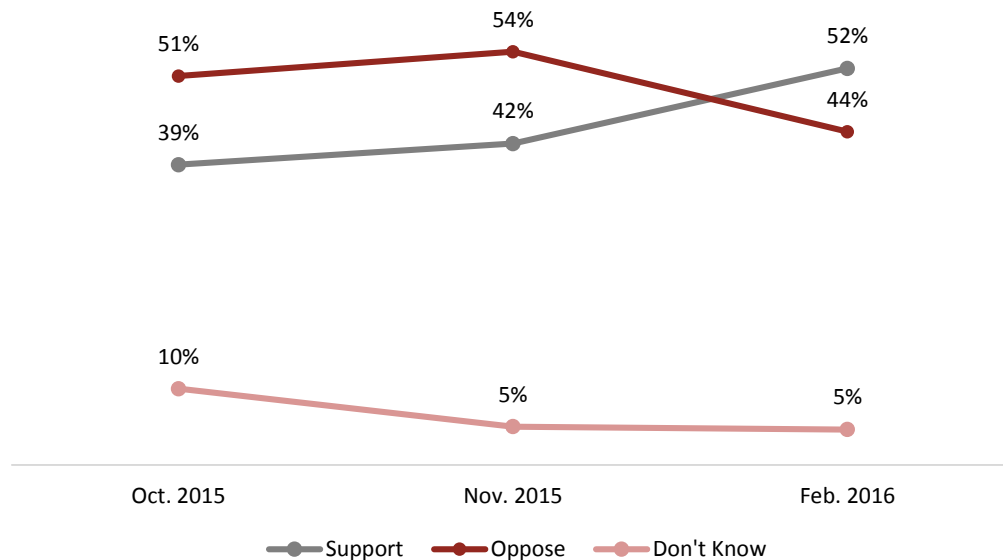
Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl

## Support increases after deadline change:

When the Angus Reid Institute asked Canadians [shortly after October's election](#) about the Liberal Party's campaign promise to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees by Jan. 1, roughly half (51%) were opposed.

A month later, in the wake of the ISIS-sponsored terrorist attacks in Paris, [opinion was largely unchanged](#), with a majority (54%) opposed and two-in-five (42%) supporting the plan. Most opponents cited the short timeline as their primary concern:

### Support for the government's refugee resettlement plan over time:



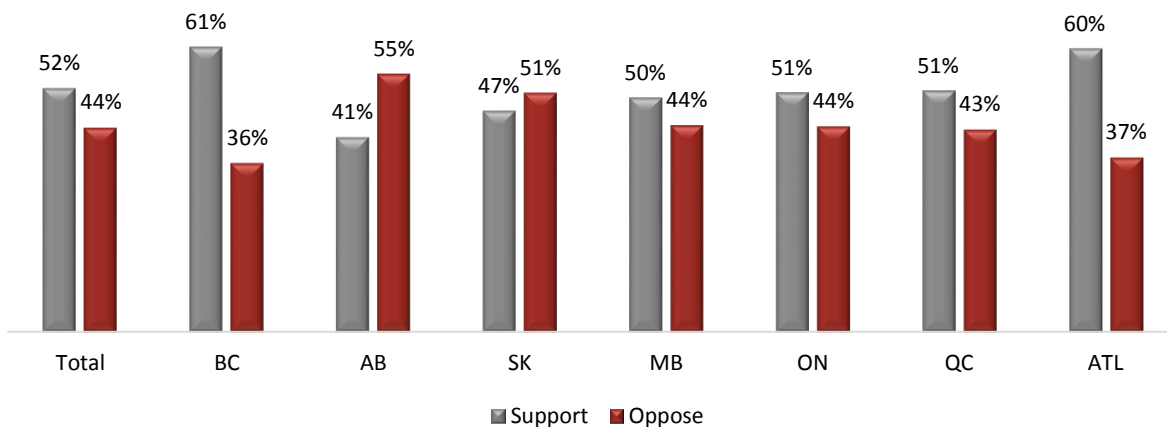
In this context, that support and opposition have flipped since the last time of asking is notable, and perhaps attributable to the government's late-November decision [to push the deadline back](#).

Regionally, Canadians remain divided about the plan, with support for it highest in British Columbia and Atlantic Canada, and lowest in Alberta, as seen in the following graph:

## MEDIA CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl

## Overall, would you say you support or oppose the government's Syrian refugee resettlement plan?



Support is also among younger Canadians (58% of those aged 18 – 34, [see comprehensive tables for greater detail](#)).

As was highlighted during [ARI's polling on this issue](#) during and immediately after the federal election campaign last fall, there is a political component to Canada's response to the Syrian refugee crisis. While the majority of those who cast ballots for the Conservative Party opposed the resettlement plan, majorities of those who voted for the NDP and Liberals were in support.

Since October, support for refugee resettlement has increased among past voters for each major party:

- Support for the plan among past CPC voters has nearly doubled from 14% to 25%
- Among past LPC voters support has grown from 55% to 70%
- And those who voted NDP last October are also more supportive from 53% to 66%

### **Concerns about timelines, security checks:**

The growth in support for the resettlement effort hasn't alleviated fears about the speed of the process, however. Overall, 59 per cent say the deadline is too soon, while 37 per cent say it's about right. Just four per cent say things are moving too slowly.

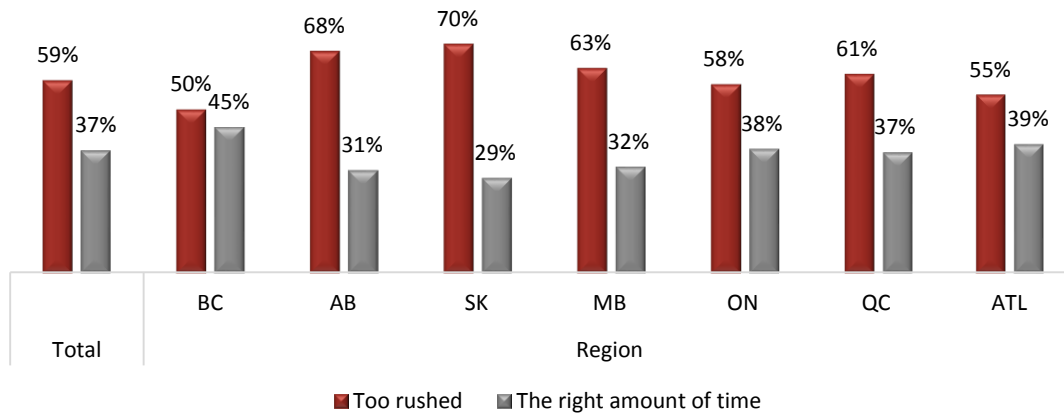
Notably, as is seen in the following graph, at least half of respondents in each province say the process is too rushed:

---

#### **MEDIA CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl

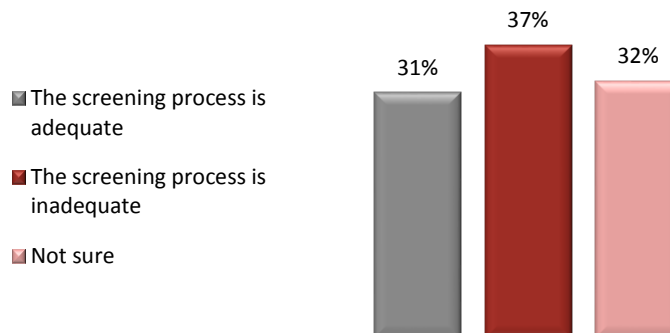
**All things considered, would you say the timeline for resettling 25,000 Syrian refugees by March 1st is:**



Indeed, many who express the most support for the plan are among those who feel March 1 is too ambitious a deadline ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

Fears about the deadline being too soon may be rooted in a lack of confidence in the refugee screening process. Asked whether the security checks in place are sufficient to ensure that none of the Syrian refugees pose a threat to Canadians, fewer than one-in-three respondents (31%) say they feel such checks are adequate. The rest either see the screening process as inadequate (37%) or aren't sure (32%).

**Based on whatever you've seen, read, or heard about the security checks in place to ensure no Syrian refugees pose a threat to Canadians, would you say:**



Those who tend to have favourable attitudes toward refugee resettlement are more likely to see the screening process as adequate ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

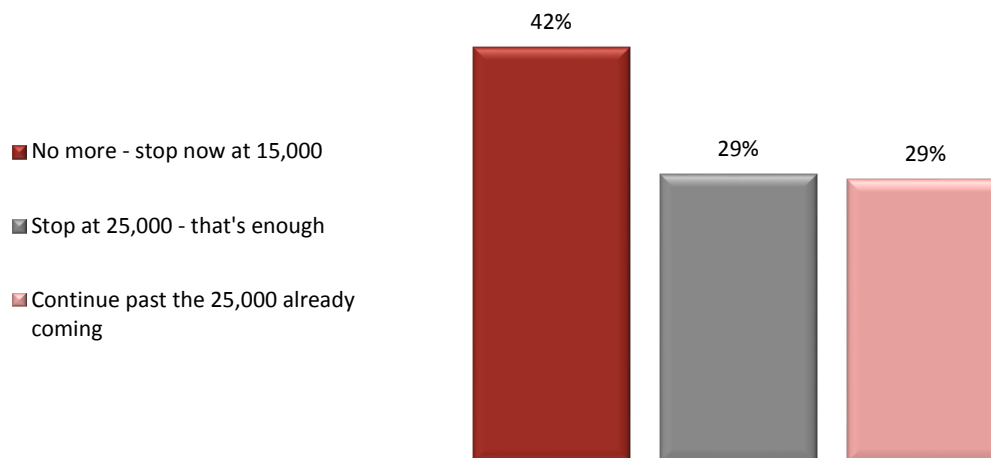
## **Should Canada take in additional refugees?**

According to government statistics, more than 20,000 Syrian refugees have arrived in Canada so far, while another 5,000 have been approved for resettlement but haven't yet made the journey.

This number pales in comparison to the 4.7 million displaced Syrians who have registered with the UN High Commission for Refugees, leading to a discussion in some quarters about whether Canada should take more people. Indeed this country's minister for immigration, refugees and citizenship is on record stating the total number of Syrian refugees resettled in Canada could reach between 35,000 and 50,000 by the end of 2016.

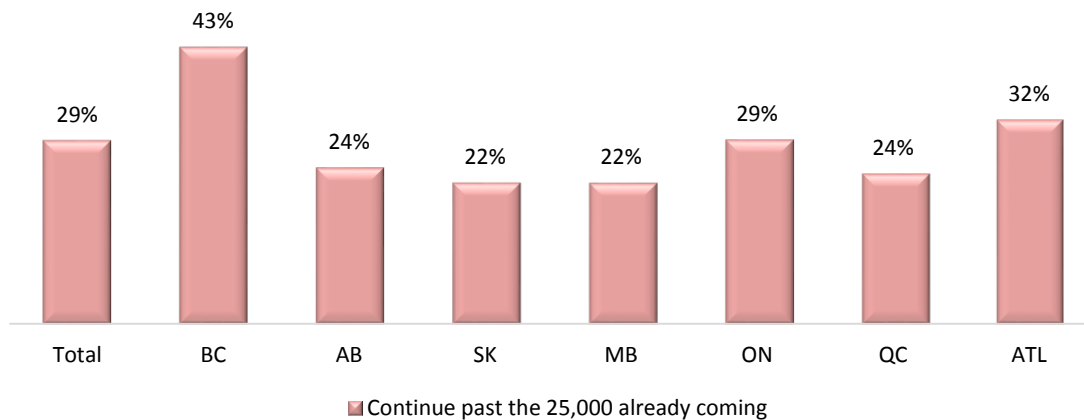
This puts the government at odds with a majority of Canadians, who are reluctant to exceed the originally pledged 25,000. In fact, fully two-fifths (42%) would like to see Canada stop short of that total. Another three-in-ten (29%) say 25,000 is enough:

### **What do you think is the ideal number of Syrian refugees Canada should accept in addition to the ones who have already come/are coming?**



As seen in the graph that follows, British Columbians are most likely to support resettling additional Syrians, but in no province do the majority back the acceptance of more than 25,000 refugees ([see comprehensive tables](#)):

**What do you think is the ideal number of Syrian refugees Canada should accept in addition to the ones who have already come/are coming?**

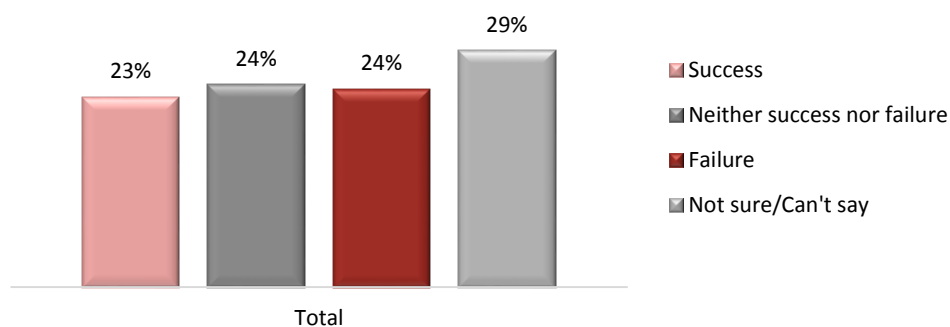


**What will the legacy of resettlement be?**

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Canada accepted [some 50,000 refugees from Vietnam](#), a fact often cited by those who favour resettling more Syrians today. They argue that future generations will view Canada's reaction to the Syrian refugee crisis in the same positive light in which many now remember the so-called "boat people" crisis.

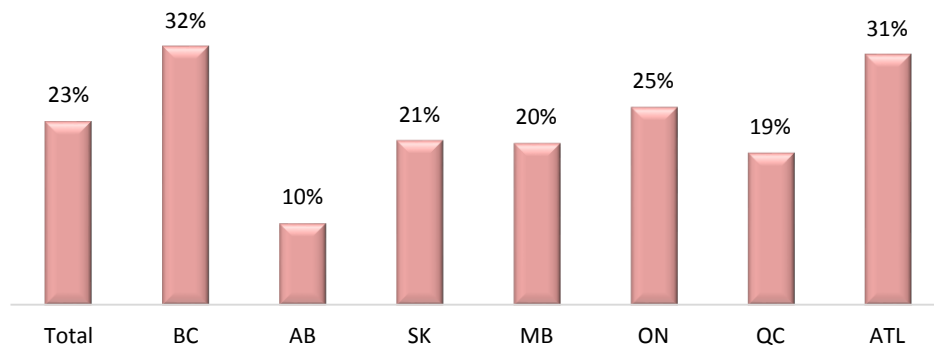
While that may one day prove to be the case, Canadians today are largely unconvinced that the current effort to resettle Syrians will be seen as a success:

**Thinking about the future - say 15 years from now - do you think Canadians at that time will look back at the resettlement of Syrian refugees and say it was a success or failure?**



As might be expected, the regions that are most supportive of the government's refugee plan are also the most likely to think it will be viewed favourably in the future:

**Thinking about the future - say 15 years from now - do you think Canadians at that time will look back at the resettlement of Syrian refugees and say it was a success or failure? (percentage saying "success" shown)**



*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

**Summary tables follow. For comprehensive results by region, age, gender, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).**

<b>Overall, would you say you support or oppose the government's Syrian refugee resettlement plan? (Feb. 2016)</b>				
	Total (1507)	Federal Vote Last		
		CPC (399)	Liberal Party (450)	NDP (261)
Strongly support	21%	3%	33%	34%
Moderately support	31%	22%	37%	33%
Moderately oppose	21%	30%	17%	15%
Strongly oppose	23%	43%	9%	15%
Don't Know	5%	2%	4%	4%

<b>Overall, would you say you support or oppose the government's Syrian refugee resettlement plan? (Oct. 2015)</b>				
	Total (1507)	Federal Vote Last		
		CPC (399)	Liberal Party (450)	NDP (261)
Strongly support	14%	3%	20%	23%
Moderately support	25%	11%	35%	30%
Moderately oppose	17%	14%	18%	14%
Strongly oppose	34%	64%	18%	23%
Don't Know	10%	8%	9%	10%