

## Rohingya crisis: Canadians would revoke Suu Kyi's honorary citizenship by ratio of nearly three-to-one

55 per cent say ultimately the situation in Myanmar is not Canada's problem to be involved in

**November 7, 2017** – Some [have called](#) the Rohingya of Myanmar “the world’s most persecuted minority”. This characterization came well before recent events the UN has [called](#) “a textbook example of ethnic cleansing” by the nations military forces.

In recent weeks, Prime Minister Trudeau has dispatched former Liberal MP Bob Rae as Special Envoy to the region, and the government has announced that it will match eligible donations to organizations working on relief in the region.

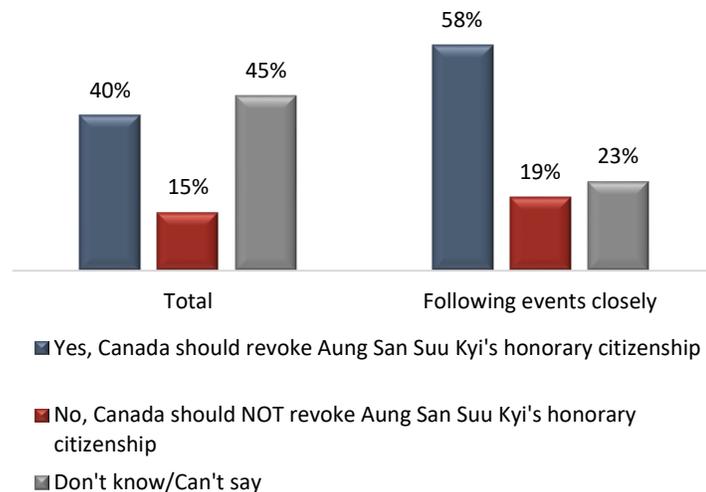
As Canada's involvement in the crisis in Myanmar grows, a new study from the Angus Reid Institute finds Canadians largely uninformed about ongoing events and further, less than supportive of their government getting more involved in the conflict.

As for Myanmar's de facto leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, one of only six people to have ever been granted honorary Canadian citizenship, four-in-ten Canadians (40%) would like to see this revoked due to her handling of the crisis and a perceived unwillingness to protect the Muslim-minority Rohingya people. Among those Canadians following the crisis more closely, this opinion rises to six-in-ten (58%).

### More Key Findings:

- Ahead of the federal government's announcement that it would match private donations to eligible charities aiding in Rohingya relief efforts, just one-in-five Canadians (20%) said that their country was not contributing enough. That number was double (39%) among those following the crisis most closely.

Some people have said that Canada should revoke Aung San Suu Kyi's honorary citizenship because of her stance on the Rohingya crisis. What are your views on this?



### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from October 24 - 27 among a representative randomized sample of 1504 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.

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- More than half of Canadians (55%) say that ultimately, they don't view the situation in Myanmar as a problem for Canada. A majority of Canadians feel this way, regardless of their awareness level.
- Three-in-ten Canadians (30%) say they would support prioritizing those fleeing Myanmar when it comes to Canada's refugee acceptance. Half however (48%), oppose this idea.

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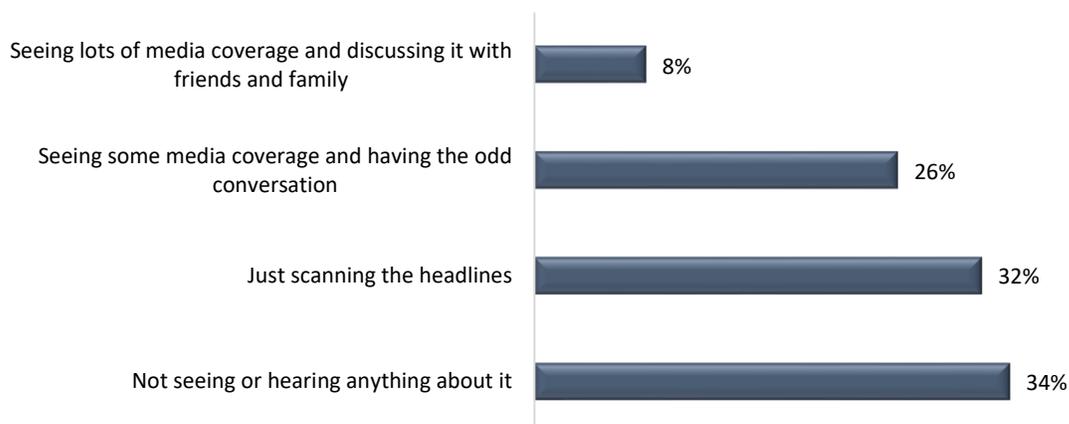
### Crisis not top of mind for most Canadians

Since Myanmar's independence from the United Kingdom in 1948, the Muslim-minority Rohingya population have faced overwhelming discrimination in their home country, where they are not recognized as citizens. According to human rights groups they have been "attacked with impunity" and "driven from their homes" since the 1970's. And while abuse has largely become the norm in Myanmar's western province of Rakhine, recent events since last year have escalated to a point that some observers are calling crimes against humanity.

While Myanmar leaders dispute that claim, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein has said that the situation appears to be an ethnic cleansing, though confirmation has been difficult to attain due to Myanmar's unwillingness to allow access to observers.

The severity of the situation has not translated into awareness among the Canadian population. Fewer than one-in-ten (8%) Canadians say they have been following the story closely, while another one-in-four (26%) have seen some coverage:

### How closely would you say you have been following this Rohingya issue?



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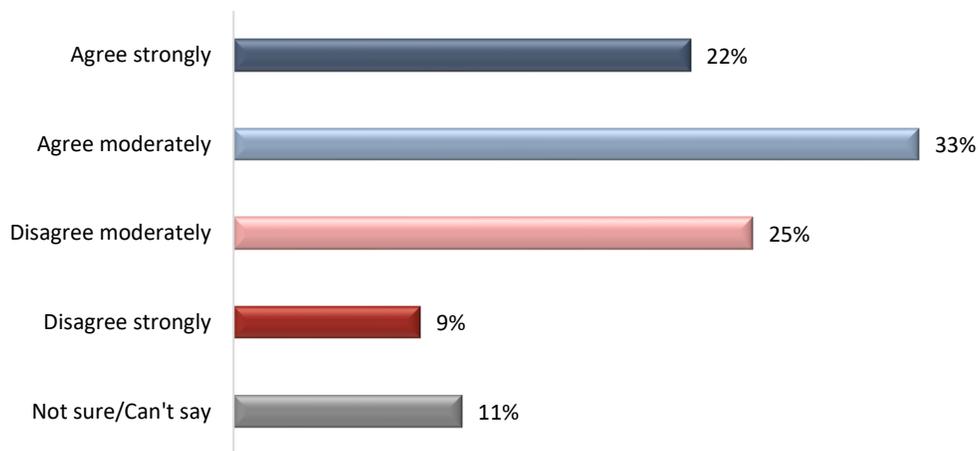
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## Most say it's not Canada's place to get involved

Before proceeding with further questioning, to ensure a base level of understanding, respondents were given information about the events thus far, Myanmar's leader – Aung San Suu Kyi –, and Canada's response to the crisis to this point. Please [view the questionnaire here](#) for more.

Despite the overwhelming nature of the crisis in Myanmar, which has seen more than 600,000 refugees flee to neighbouring Bangladesh since August, most Canadians (55%) say this is not Canada's problem to take on:

### "Ultimately, the situation in Myanmar is not Canada's problem"



Officials from Bangladesh, which has over time taken in nearly one million Rohingya refugees since military action caused the first groups to flee in 1977, have called the situation “[untenable](#)”. Humanitarian groups are seeking \$434 million (USD) to address the crisis over the next six months, as they deal with sickness, hunger and injury at makeshift refugee camps.

On October 23, Prime Minister Trudeau appointed former Ontario Premier Bob Rae as Special Envoy to Myanmar to assess the situation and advise the government how it can best support those affected by the conflict. In recent days the Canadian government announced it will [match donations](#) made to help refugees and ease the crisis.

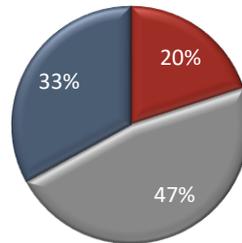
When this survey was fielded in late October (24-27) - shortly before the donation matching announcement – one-in-five Canadians (20%) said that Canada was not doing enough, and should spend more on aid to those affected. One-in-three (33%) said that the government was doing too much already. At the time, this included \$13 million in humanitarian aid to non-governmental organizations – about 0.2 per cent of the \$5.4B in the foreign aid budget. Half (47%) said that this was sufficient.

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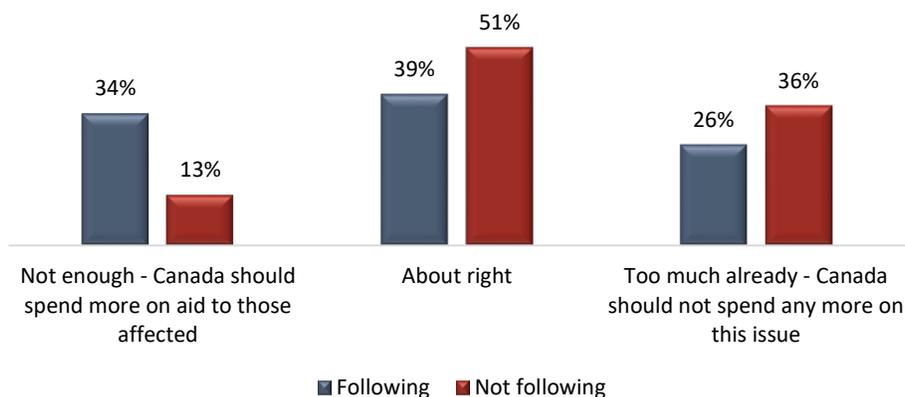
Based on whatever you've seen or heard and your own personal opinions, would you say the amount of money Canada has spent on the Rohingya crisis so far is:



- Not enough - Canada should spend more on aid to those affected
- About right
- Too much already - Canada should not spend any more on this issue

Views on Canada's generosity thus far differ substantially by awareness level. Among those who have been following the crisis, one-in-three (34%) say more should be done. This drops to just over one-in-ten (13%) among those not paying much attention. Note that 'following' comprises those who are following at least somewhat closely, having seen multiple stories about the issue, while 'not following' represents those who have only seen headlines, or aren't paying any attention at all.

Based on whatever you've seen or heard and your own personal opinions, would you say the amount of money Canada has spent on the Rohingya crisis so far is:



## Priority for Rohingya refugees?

The surge of Rohingya leaving Myanmar has only added to what is already an exhausting environment for aid groups helping refugees. At the close of 2016 more than 22.5 million people were seeking refuge

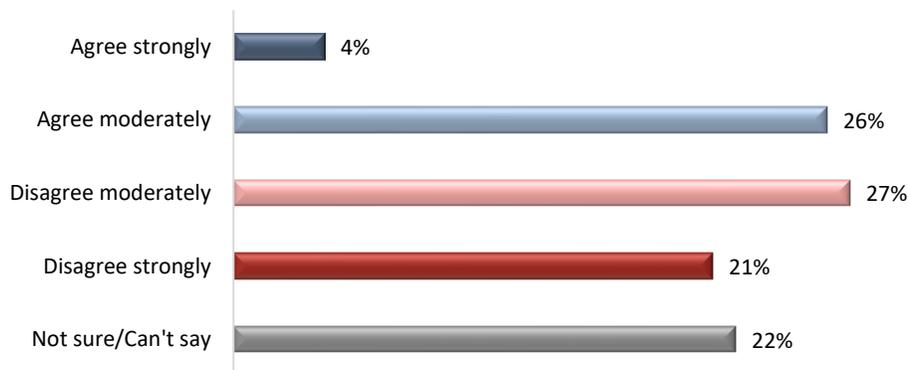
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outside of their home country, the highest number since the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees was founded after World War II.

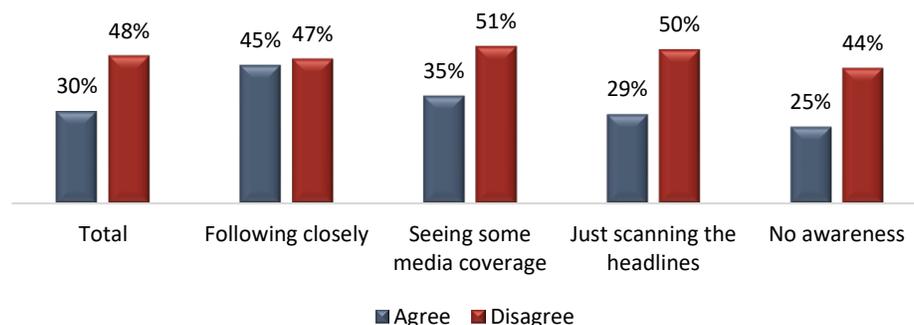
Canadians desire for an increase in refugees was low when the Angus Reid Institute asked in February of this year - just 11 per cent said they would like to see an increase. But what about a higher priority for Rohingyas fleeing Myanmar, rather than an increase in total refugees? Three-in-ten Canadians say they would support this group getting priority as Canada assesses refugee claims, but close to half (48%) say they disagree with this idea:

### "Canada should prioritize sponsoring Rohingya refugees over people from other conflict zones"



While regional and demographic differences on this question are minimal, again, those who have been following the events most closely are more likely to agree that this group should receive priority, though they're split overall:

### "Canada should prioritize sponsoring Rohingya refugees over people from other conflict zones"



### More support than oppose stripping Aung San Suu Kyi of citizenship

Many were caught off guard when Aung San Suu Kyi became Myanmar's de facto leader in 2015. This was because the ruling military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party had written into its 2008 Constitution that 25 per cent of the seats in the national legislature would be reserved for the military.

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In spite of this, Suu Kyi won a stunning victory, her National League for Democracy (NLD) party garnering 86 per cent of the available seats in parliament. She was prevented from becoming President, due to the same 2008 Constitution [barring her](#) from holding this position, but has governed through a newly created position – State Counsellor.

But Suu Kyi's presence in Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) and on the world stage, goes back decades. She has been a well-known symbol of human rights and democracy since the 1990's due to her fight against the same military junta that prevented free parliamentary elections for 25 years, and was placed under house arrest between 1989 to 2010.

In 1991 she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her campaign and sacrifice for democracy.

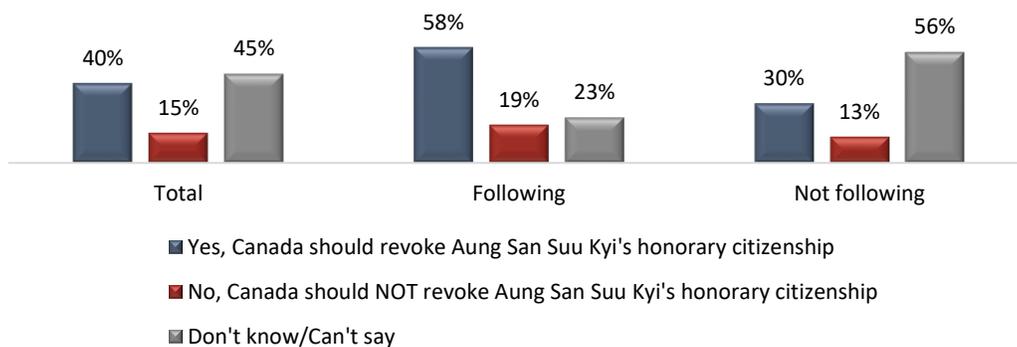
Now, Suu Kyi is being widely criticized for [her silence](#), and her [unwillingness to condemn](#) the violence in Rakhine. [Some](#) have called for her Nobel prize to be revoked, something [deemed unlikely](#) by the head of the Nobel Institute.

But that isn't the only accolade she has picked up over the years: in 2007 former Prime Minister Stephen Harper conferred honorary citizenship status on Suu Kyi. Harper described her as "the living embodiment for freedom and democracy" in her country.

Now some Canadians are calling on his government to renounce her honorary Canadian citizenship. The largest organized group has an online petition featuring more than 44,000 signatures at the time of this release. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [reportedly pressed](#) Suu Kyi on the importance of protecting the rights of minorities when they met in September. Four-in-ten Canadians support a measure to revoke Suu Kyi's citizenship, while 15 per cent oppose it. Those with more awareness of the situation are twice as likely to agree with such a proposal than those who haven't been following events:

## Some people have said that Canada should revoke Aung San Suu Kyi's honorary citizenship because of her stance on the Rohingya crisis.

### What are your views on this?



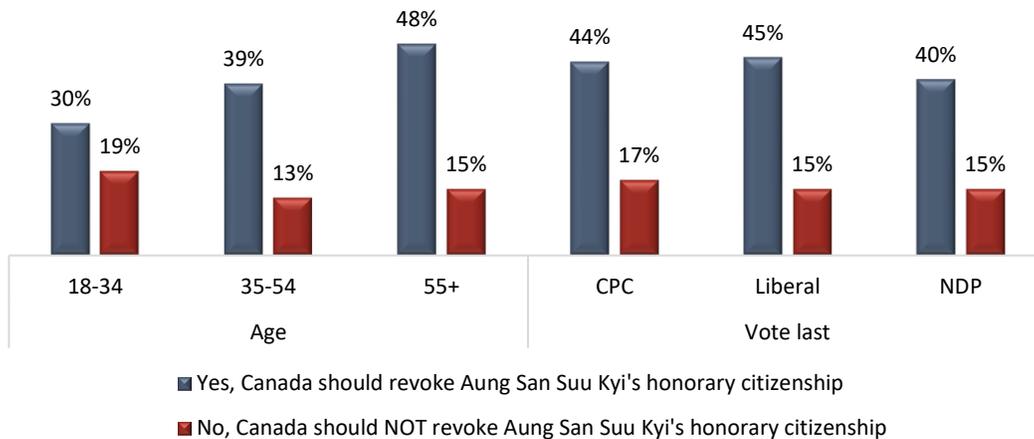
These opinions are relatively consistent across the political spectrum, but it is older Canadians who are most likely to say that Suu Kyi should no longer have her honorary citizenship, roughly half do (48%).

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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 foundation 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.

For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).  
For results by level of awareness, [click here](#).

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