



# ATTITUDES TOWARDS REFUGEES, IMMIGRANTS, AND IDENTITY IN FRANCE

JULY 2017



**More in  
Common**

## About More in Common

More in Common is a new effort to build communities and societies that are stronger, more resilient and more open. The More in Common initiative took shape from work undertaken since 2015 to understand why advanced democracies failed to respond more effectively to the refugee crisis and its impact on domestic politics.

The refugee crisis was a harbinger of what happens when the forces of right-wing populist hate and division gain the upper hand, and those in favour of open and diverse societies do not come together in defense of those values. If the battle for hearts and minds is lost to authoritarian populists, advanced democracies will not be able to respond adequately to such profound collective challenges as climate change, inequality, technological disruption of the job market, population ageing and global public health threats. Holding diverse and inclusive societies together will become increasingly difficult.

More in Common's objective across its different streams of work is to build closer and more inclusive societies, which are resilient to the appeal of xenophobia and authoritarian populism. We aim to support the efforts of civil society and key influencers who share the values of open and inclusive societies, and help catalyse other new initiatives that advance these values.

More in Common is a non-profit organisation with teams in France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States. Purpose builds and supports movements to advance the fight for an open, just, and habitable world. The co-founders of More in Common are Tim Dixon, Mathieu Lefevre, and Gemma Mortensen.

For more information, please visit [www.moreincommon.com](http://www.moreincommon.com)



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## Download

This document is available to download as a free PDF at: [www.moreincommon.com](http://www.moreincommon.com)

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# Executive Summary

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France stands out among the world's major democracies for the prominent role played by far-right populist parties in mainstream French politics for several decades. In contrast to most western democracies, where xenophobic nationalism and nativism existed only on the margins of politics, Front National (FN) - France's main far-right political party - has been championing these sentiments in the country for many decades, and with growing success. Front National has significantly influenced a series of high-profile national debates about immigration, cultural integration, Islam and France's response to the refugee crisis in Europe. The debate in France has also had reverberations across Europe, inspiring far-right populist movements in other countries.

This report provides insight into the appeal of populist sentiments relating to French identity, globalisation, immigration, refugees, and Islam. Its unique contribution is that it identifies five segments of the French population, who are distinguished by their differing attitudes towards these issues. By dividing the population in this way, it is possible to study the traits and trends within each segment and better understand what motivates and concerns individuals. In our view, this research portrays a more complete and nuanced picture of French public opinion than past reports, in particular, by highlighting the conflicted views of a majority of the population, which belong to one of the three 'middle' groups. In doing so, this research helps to explain why opinion polls can report views that appear to be contradictory.

This report is the first in a series of major country reports from More in Common, a not-for-profit organization incubated by Purpose Europe in 2017. It was commissioned in conjunction with the Social Change Initiative with generous funding provided by the Human Dignity Foundation. More in Common is working on understanding and responding to threats that divide communities and undermine open and democratic societies. This series of reports aims to provide deeper insights than have previously been available into attitudes towards national identity, immigrants, refugees and community. The reports make it possible to identify commonalities and differences among countries (starting with France and Germany, with reports forthcoming in 2018 for the United States, Netherlands, Italy, Sweden and Greece). In addition to providing insights, More in Common's reports are intended to assist those who work to promote the values of openness and inclusion, to influence policy outcomes and to resist efforts to divide communities and marginalise newcomers such as refugees and immigrants.

## The Limitations of Existing Public Opinion Research

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This report aims to fill a gap in the existing body of public opinion research data in France. Most polls on these issues involve responses to a small set of direct questions about specific issues, providing limited explanation for those responses. Some studies go further by making associations between responses and other social and economic issues, or demographic and psychographic factors such as respondents' values. Few studies have attempted to build a more complete picture of the interconnected nature of attitudes towards identity, immigration and France's response to the refugee crisis.

Media coverage often focuses on people who hold strong views at the opposite ends of the spectrum. At one end are those with more cosmopolitan values who welcome immigration and celebrate the diversity of French society. At the other end are those who are anxious about threats to French national identity, immigration, and France's place in the world. This second group is typically identified with the Front National party.

Much less attention has been paid to the large number of French people who hold mixed views about their country's refugee intake, its immigration policies and France's place in the world. As noted above, this report suggests that a majority of the population belong to groups with mixed views (sometimes described as the "conflicted middle" or "anxious middle"). Middle groups are typically more open to changing their views. However, existing research has not identified the populations that are most open to changing their views, the messaging that would be most persuasive, or the most trusted messengers. This report makes a start towards achieving these goals.

## Key Findings

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The report provides a set of findings about overall levels of public opinion in France on a range of related issues around French identity and "otherness," and what different segments of the population think about those issues. Segmentation research retains a much longer "shelf life" than ordinary public opinion research because of the deeper insights that it provides into the public mindset. Although the responses are influenced by events in the months immediately before September 2016 when the quantitative data was collected (such as terrorist attacks), attitudinal segments typically remain reasonably stable over a period of several years. This is the first population segmentation of its kind that has been conducted on these issues in France, and our goal is to revisit it in future years to identify trends in public opinion.

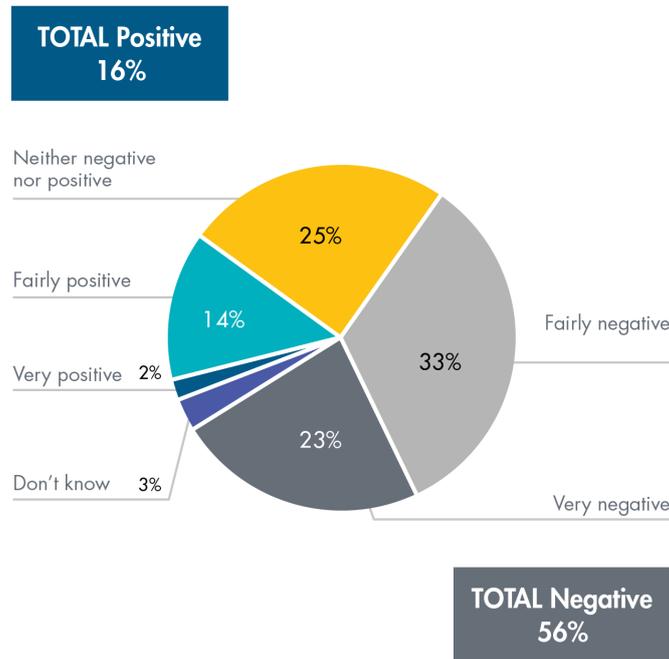
The following key findings reveal the overall levels of public opinion in France:

- 1. France is marked by pessimism and anxiety about the future.** 65 per cent of people describe France as "fearful" and 50 per cent describe it as "angry." A key driver of this pessimism is the perception of economic decline. The proportion of people expecting economic conditions to worsen outnumbers those expecting improvement by more than five to one (51 per cent versus 9 per cent, with 34 per cent not expecting a change). It remains to be seen whether the political upheaval since May 2017 will lead to changes in the fundamentals of French public opinion.
- 2. The majority of people are concerned about, and demand protection from, the effects of globalisation.** 58 per cent of people agree that the economic consequences of globalisation are very negative for France, while only 13 per cent disagree. An even higher proportion agree with the proposition that France needs to do more to protect itself from the world (61 per cent, with 15 per cent in disagreement), and that France is losing its identity (59 per cent, with 20 per cent in disagreement).
- 3. The risk of terrorism is an issue of high public concern,** with 53 per cent of people citing it as one of the three most important issues facing France. The proportion citing unemployment and jobs as among the country's most important issues is approximately the same (52 per cent of respondents).
- 4. The French public believes that immigration has increased significantly in recent years.** 85 per cent agreed with this proposition (62 per cent saying that the number of immigrants had increased a lot, and 23 per cent a little), and only 1 per cent disagreed. Immigration was the third most frequently cited issue of concern (cited by 37 per cent respondents). In fact, the level of immigration has been fairly stable in France for the past decade.

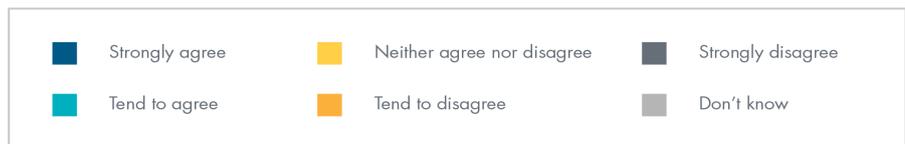
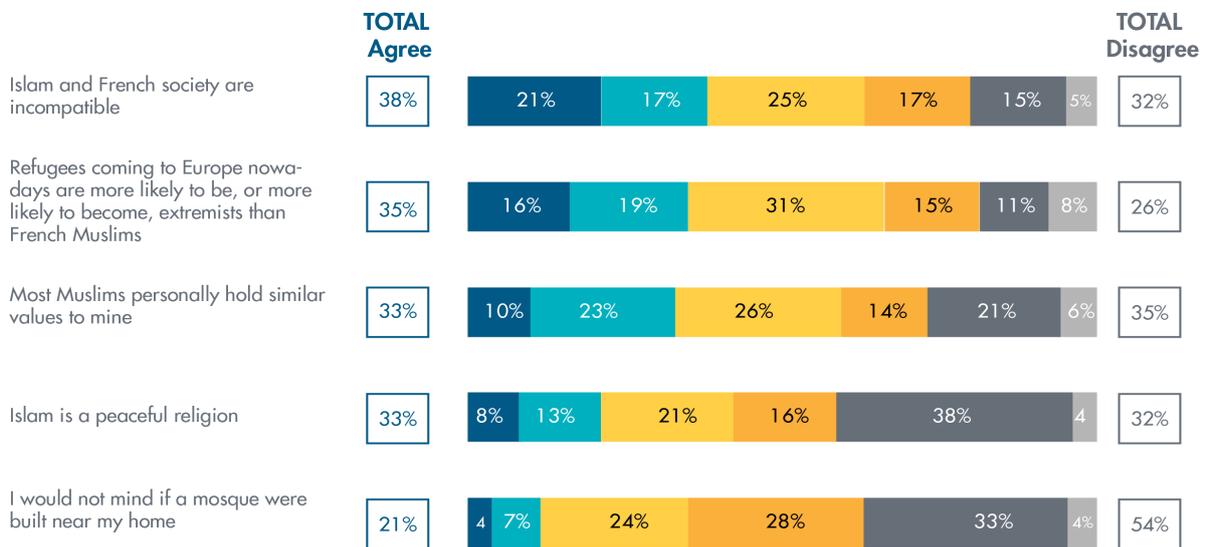
<sup>1</sup>see Hope Not Hate, 2011 and 2016

5. **The public has strong negative perceptions of the impact of immigration on France.** 56 per cent believe its impact has been negative (23 per cent “very negative”), while just 16 per cent believe it has been positive (and just 2 per cent “very positive”). These views are tied to the perceived failure of integration efforts both in cultural and economic terms. Furthermore, only 22 per cent agree that immigrants generally make efforts to integrate into French society; 47 per cent disagree.
6. **The perception of Islam in France is a central determinant of people’s views on refugees, immigrants, and otherness in general.** A sizeable minority believe that Islam is incompatible with French identity and loyalty to France. 38 per cent of respondents agree with the proposition that Islam and French society are not compatible (32 per cent disagree, and 25 per cent neither agree nor disagree).
7. **There is a relatively high level of understanding of the difference between refugees and immigrants** (with 55 per cent agreeing, compared to just 17 per cent disagreeing, that refugees are different from immigrants because they had no choice about leaving their home country).
8. **The high level of understanding of refugee status does not translate into strong public support for accepting refugees.** 45 per cent agree with the proposition that France cannot accept any refugees right now, and that it should close its borders (29 per cent disagree). Far-right populists appear to have successfully persuaded others that individuals claiming to be refugees are not genuine and are in fact coming to France for economic reasons: 51 per cent agree with this proposition (19 per cent disagree).
9. **In principle, the public supports the notion that France has an obligation to assist those who are fleeing war and persecution.** However, the combination of anxieties about immigration, economic decline, terrorism and its links to radicalised Muslims, has led many to doubt whether France has the capacity to take in more refugees right now, despite the scale of the global refugee crisis.
10. **There is a strong link in the public mind between domestic terrorism, immigration and the intake of refugees.** This reflects a series of terrorist incidents in France, beginning with the Charlie Hebdo attacks in early 2015. 53 per cent agree with the proposition that it is too dangerous to let refugees into France as a major threat of terrorism is posed by the people who come to France as refugees (20 per cent disagree).
11. **There is anxiety over the erosion of the ‘social contract’ in France, in particular towards immigrants.** The notion of a reciprocal contract between members of French society is a longstanding element of social and political debate in France. There is widespread concern that the social contract is no longer working. A consistent feature of the narrative of far-right populists in France is that certain groups such as immigrants are given priority over established residents for benefits, housing and public services (51 per cent agree, 23 per cent disagree). An even higher proportion believe that immigrants claim benefits and use public services without contributing something in return (65 per cent agree, 12 per cent disagree).
12. **Despite the public’s anxieties about immigration and integration, there is widespread concern about the rise of racism and discrimination.** 71 per cent agree with the proposition that they are worried by it, of which 38 per cent “strongly agreed”, while only 13 per cent are not concerned. Likewise, 79 per cent agree with the proposition that extremism exists in all religions (and just 9 per cent disagree).

**Question:** Generally speaking, would you say immigration has had a positive or a negative impact on France?



**Question:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

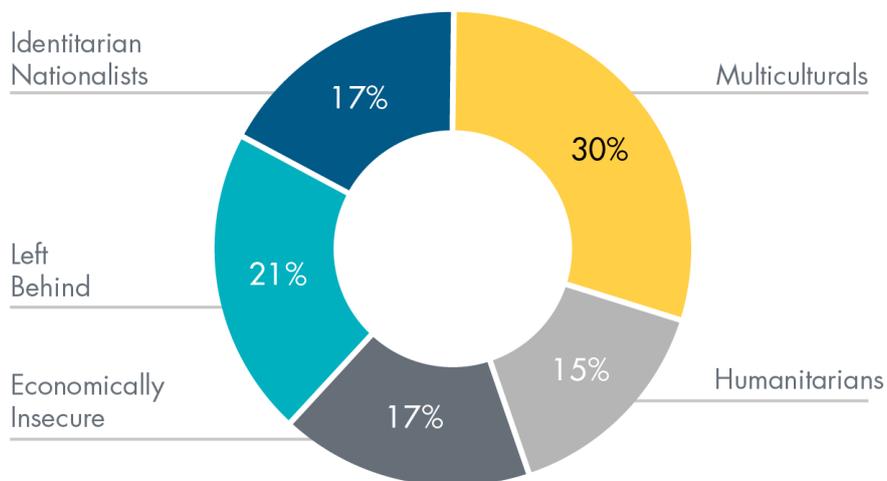


# Segmentation Analysis

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This study is based on a multivariate analysis that makes it possible to identify, based on different traits, groups that share attitudes and perceptions. The survey asked a wide range of questions about attitudes towards national identity, immigrants and refugees to a representative sample of 2002 people.

Segmentation Analysis (% of the Total Population)



**According to the attitudinal segmentation, French society can be divided in five distinct groups.** On a continuum, there are the Multiculturals, more open to the rest of the world and with more positive views of immigration and refugees and, opposite to them, the Identitarian Nationalists, who are wary of globalisation and oppose welcoming newcomers. There are three groups in the middle sometimes described as the “conflicted middle” or “anxious middle”: the Humanitarians, the Economically Insecure, and the Left Behind. Members of these middle groups often hold a mix of positive and negative views, even though those views may conflict with each other. This study suggests that on issues of national identity, immigration and refugees, France’s conflicted middle represents 53 per cent of the total population.

## *The Outliers*

### **Multiculturals (30 per cent)**

The Multiculturals represent 30 per cent of the French population, and are the largest of the five groups. They are more open-minded and have more positive views of immigrants and refugees. They have a more optimistic – or at least a less pessimistic and less closed - outlook on France’s future and their own prospects. They are more likely to believe that immigration has a positive impact on both economic and cultural life.

**Demographics:** Multiculturals are slightly younger than the average and are present in all regions, although they have a slightly higher presence in Paris.

## Identitarian Nationalists (17 per cent)

At the other end of the spectrum, the Identitarian Nationalists represent 17 per cent of the population. They are characterised by their strong opposition and negative attitudes towards immigrants and refugees and their perception of economic, cultural and security threats to France. Identitarian Nationalists believe that France is losing its identity and consider immigration to be one of the main challenges facing the country today. They perceive immigration to be a threat to security and believe that France should close its borders and protect itself from the rest of the world.

**Demographics:** Identitarian Nationalists are more likely to come from rural areas and small villages, have a higher proportion of men than women, and are more likely to be in the 25 to 49 years old age group.

### *The Conflicted Middle*

## Humanitarians (15 per cent)

The Humanitarians represent 15 per cent of the total population and are characterised by a more optimistic outlook than the other segments in the conflicted middle. Many in this group are in older age groups and identify with the political left. Compared to the population overall, they have positive opinions of immigrants, refugees, and the impact of immigration. They are also more likely than any other group to empathise with refugees and immigrants, believing that most refugees had no choice about leaving their country. Humanitarians believe many immigrants undertake jobs that other French people are reluctant to do.

The Humanitarians are distinct from the Multiculturals in their higher levels of pessimism. Many perceive France as an anxious country. Unlike the Multiculturals, they do not believe that they benefit from economic growth. Humanitarians also have higher levels of concern for domestic issues such as France's education system and the environment.

**Demographics:** There are more women than men in this segment. Humanitarians tend to be present in large cities, especially Paris. They are significantly older than the average of the population.

## Economically Insecure (17 per cent)

The Economically Insecure segment represents 17 per cent of the population. More than any other group, they are highly pessimistic about France's economic predicament. Almost all expect continued economic decline in France, and they describe their country as worried, angry and weak. They believe that it is becoming more difficult for people like them to succeed in France. They also feel that their region does not benefit as much as other parts of France from economic growth.

The Economically Insecure believe that France needs to do more to protect itself from the rest of the world. This economic anxiety shapes their reservations about immigration and refugees. A large majority of the group believe that refugees should go back to their country of origin once the situation has improved.

**Demographics:** There are more women than men in this group, on average they are younger, and on a professional level, there are in fact more inactive people and less labourers than in other segments.

## Left Behind (21 per cent)

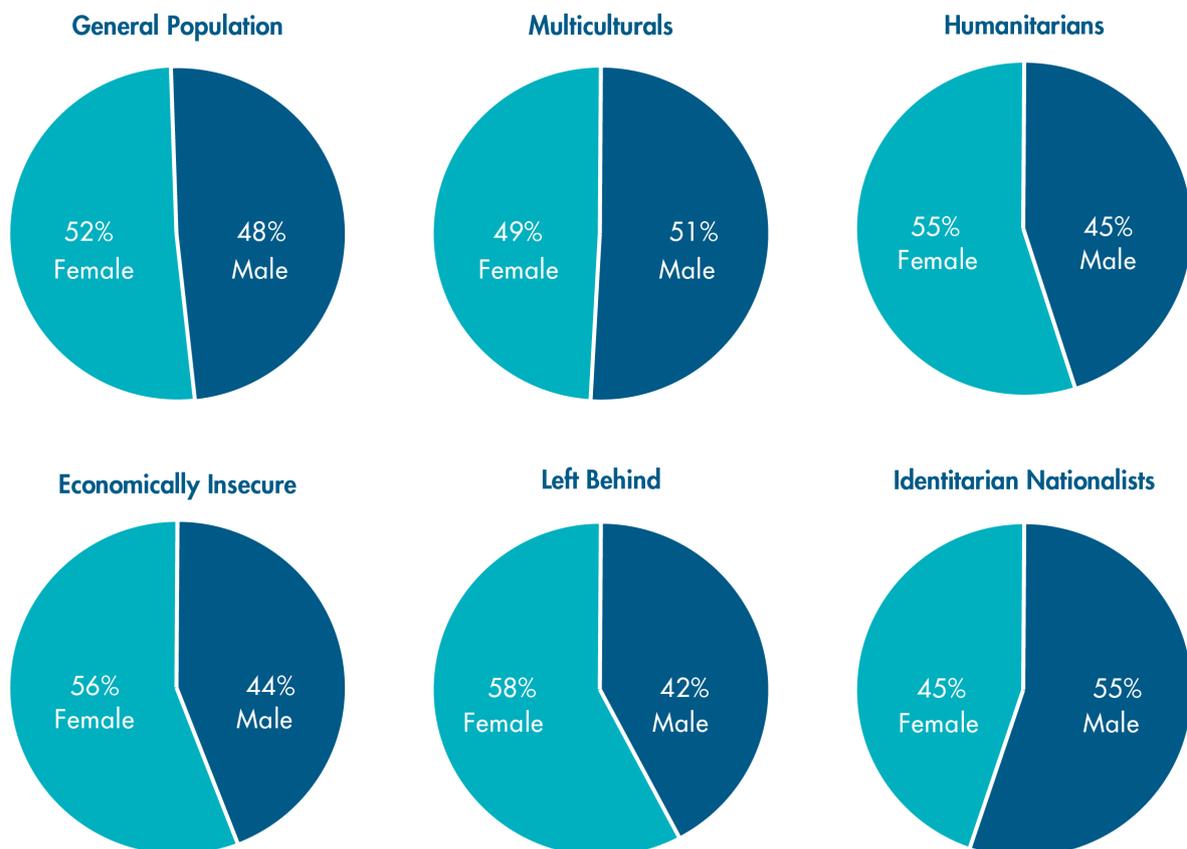
The Left Behind group represents 21 per cent of the population. This segment is more likely than any other group to believe that their personal circumstances have recently deteriorated. One of their main concerns is a lack of upward social mobility. They are more worried about economic challenges than other groups. The Left Behind group thinks that France should protect itself from the outside and that

globalisation has a negative impact on them and the country. They hold negative opinions of immigrants but differentiate between immigrants and refugees. Even though they share some of the views of the Identitarian Nationalists, the motives behind their beliefs are different. The views of Left Behind are mainly driven by their sense of abandonment and perceived deteriorating social and economic position. They believe that French identity is threatened, but this issue is secondary to other concerns. Unlike the Identitarian Nationalists, they are worried about an increase in racism and discrimination.

**Demographics:** There are significantly more women than men in this segment (58 to 42 per cent). The Left Behind are more likely to live in rural areas and small towns, but they also have a presence in Paris and other large cities. In this segment, there are more 50-64 year olds than the national average (33 per cent vs 22 per cent) and fewer 25-35 year olds.

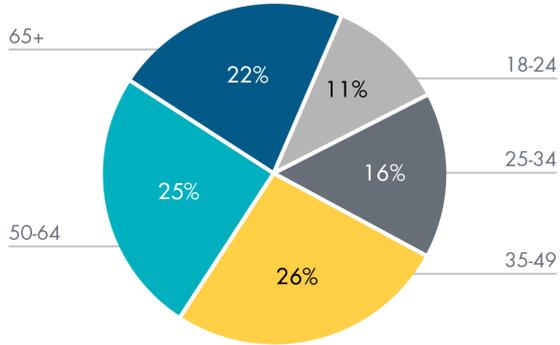
Socio-demographic profile of the French population (total and by segments)

## GENDER

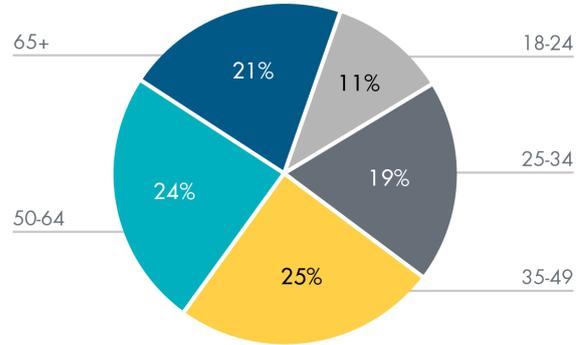


# AGE

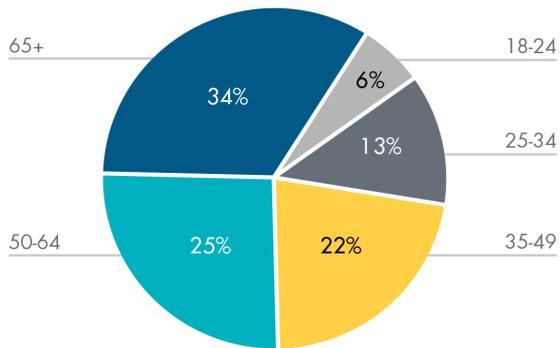
**General Population**



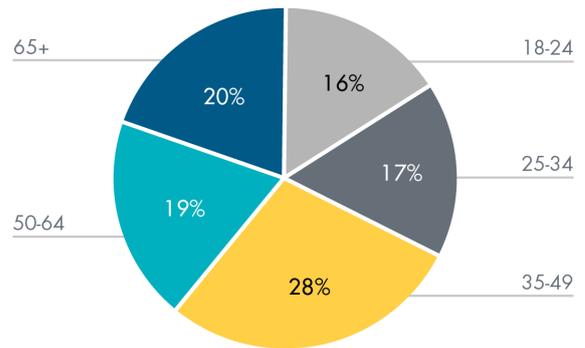
**Multiculturals**



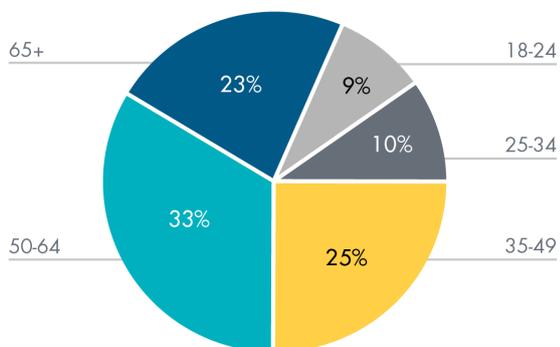
**Humanitarians**



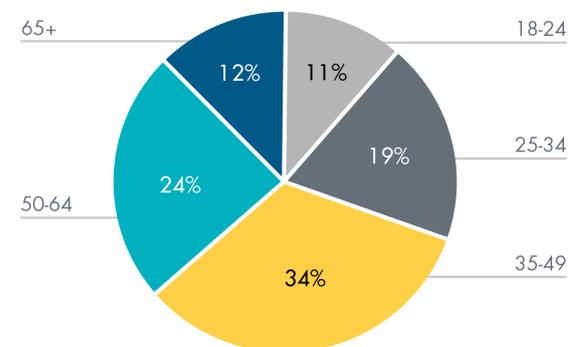
**Economically Insecure**



**Left Behind**

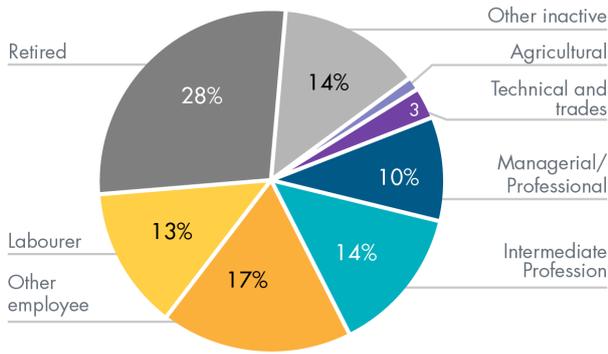


**Indentitarian Nationalists**

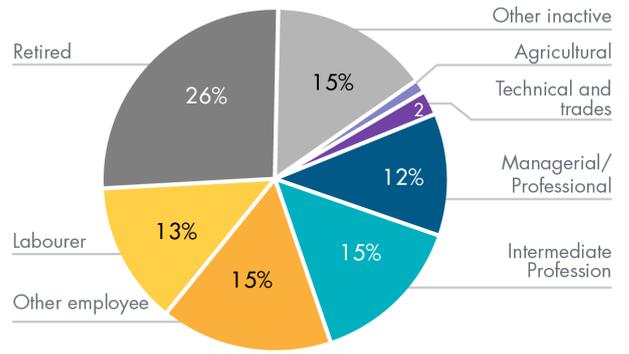


# PROFESSION

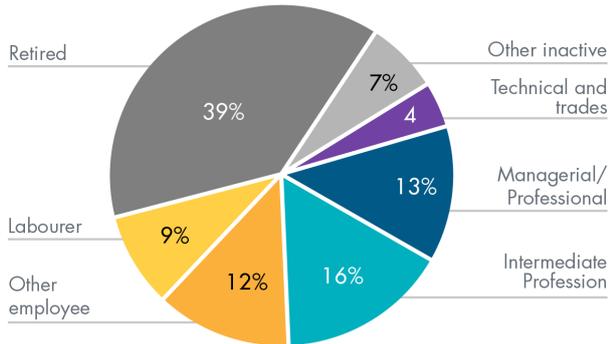
### General Population



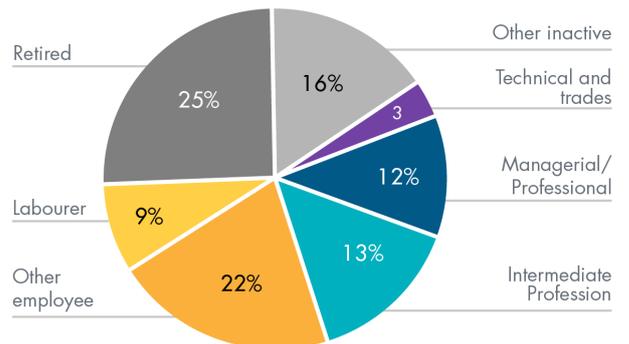
### Multiculturals



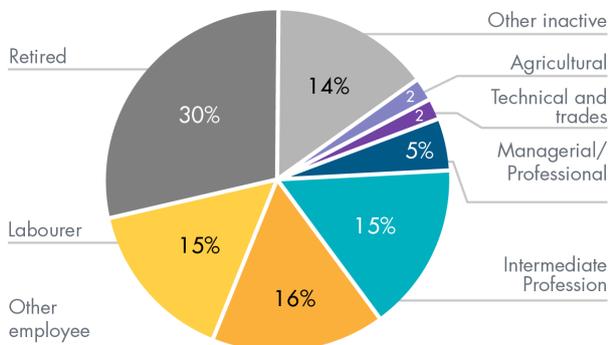
### Humanitarian



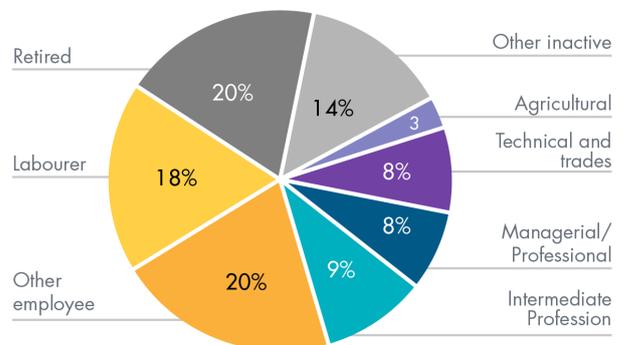
### Economically Insecure



### Left Behind



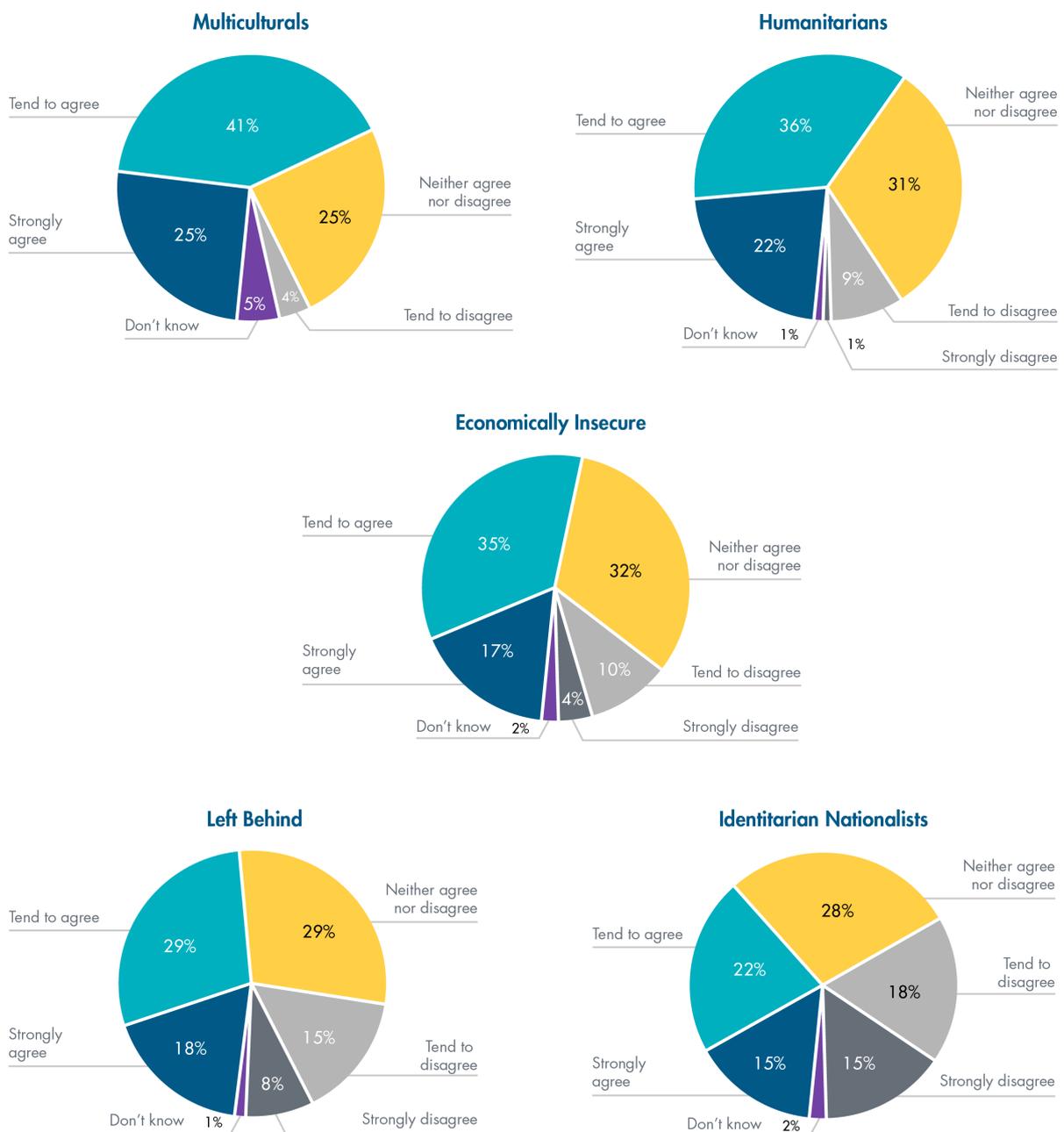
### Identitarian Nationalists



# Substantive Differences: French Landscape, Immigration, Muslims and Refugees

## French Landscape and Perceptions of Immigration, Refugees, and Islam

The segmentation analysis highlights the extent to which attitudes to immigration, refugees and Islam are connected to broader perceptions of France's place in the world, confidence or anxiety about the future, and otherness. Unsurprisingly, personal economic conditions are a major influence on people's perceptions of these issues. However, identity and culture also play very significant roles in shaping perceptions.

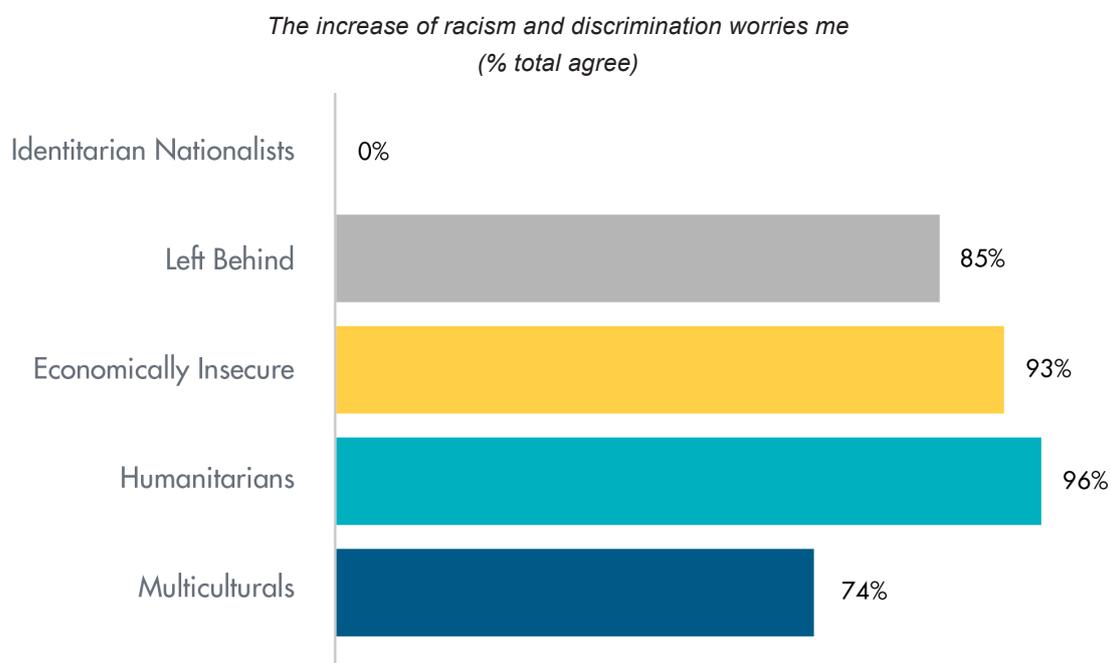


There are significant differences between the segments in perceptions of the degree to which people feel that they can be proud of their French identity. Multiculturals are most proud of their identity, with 66 per cent in agreement (and 25 per cent agreeing strongly) and none who strongly disagree. Falling levels of agreement are evident in the Humanitarian, Economically Insecure, and Left Behind segments until the lowest point of confidence is reached with the Identitarian Nationalists. Those in this group appear deeply discontented with their country. Equal numbers strongly disagree that they can be proud of their identity as those who strongly agree (15 per cent). Overall, only 37 per cent of them agree that French people can be proud of their national identity.

Perhaps the most striking outcome of the segmentation analysis concerns the intensity of the Identitarian Nationalist segment. Across a wide range of questions about identity, culture, and engagement with "others," the Identitarian Nationalists consistently hold the most opposed views. What is striking is that while for the most part, the differences in the responses of the segments are relatively modest, there are often large differences between the Identitarian Nationalists' responses and those of other groups. For example:

- While all the segments have low confidence in the willingness of immigrants to integrate into French society, Identitarian Nationalists almost unanimously reject this proposition (only 5 per cent agree, compared to 19 per cent in the closest segment, the Left Behind).
- While middle groups such as the Left Behind and the Economically Insecure hold some strong anti-immigration views, these concerns seem to relate most of all to economic anxieties. The Identitarians go much further in attributing alternative motives to immigrants and refugees. For example, 39 per cent even reject the proposition that refugees are different from other migrants because they did not have a choice to leave their home country. Among the middle groups, a much smaller proportion reject this proposition (ranging from 14 to 17 per cent).
- The rise of racism and discrimination is recognised as a concern by overwhelming majorities of all segments of the population with the exception of the Identitarian Nationalists. Remarkably, nobody in this segment expressed a concern about rising racism. Identitarian Nationalists appear unwilling to even recognise the existence of racism, and in this respect they are very different from the rest of French society.

**Question:** Thinking specifically about refugees coming to France nowadays, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

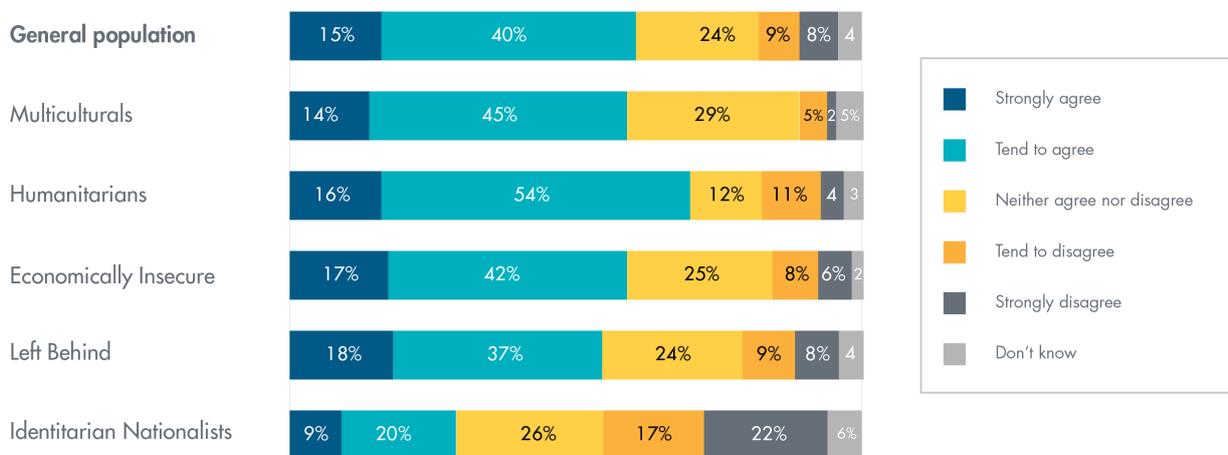


In contrast to the Identitarian Nationalists, the views of the Multiculturals differ from the middle segments far less dramatically:

- Multiculturals are only marginally more likely to believe that immigrants make an effort to integrate into French society (30 per cent, compared to 27, 21 and 19 per cent among the conflicted middle segments).
- Multiculturals are often accused of being naïve in ignoring the abuse of systems of welfare and asylum, yet 39 per cent of them agree that there are many people who claim to be refugees but who are not genuine refugees (with the middle segments ranging from 41 to 59 per cent agreement).
- On several issues (such as those relating to Islam), the Multiculturals and Humanitarians hold similar views. In fact on some issues, the Humanitarians have stronger views in support of immigration and refugees. Only 22 per cent of Multiculturals believe that immigration has had a positive impact on France, while 29 per cent of Humanitarians hold this view. However, the Multiculturals overall appear to be motivated more by affirmation of the value of diversity and appear more open to cultural differences, while the Humanitarians, an older group, are motivated more by compassion and humane values (but are less comfortable with cultural diversity).

**Question:** Thinking specifically about refugees coming to France nowadays, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

*Refugees are different from other migrants, because they had no choice about leaving their home country*



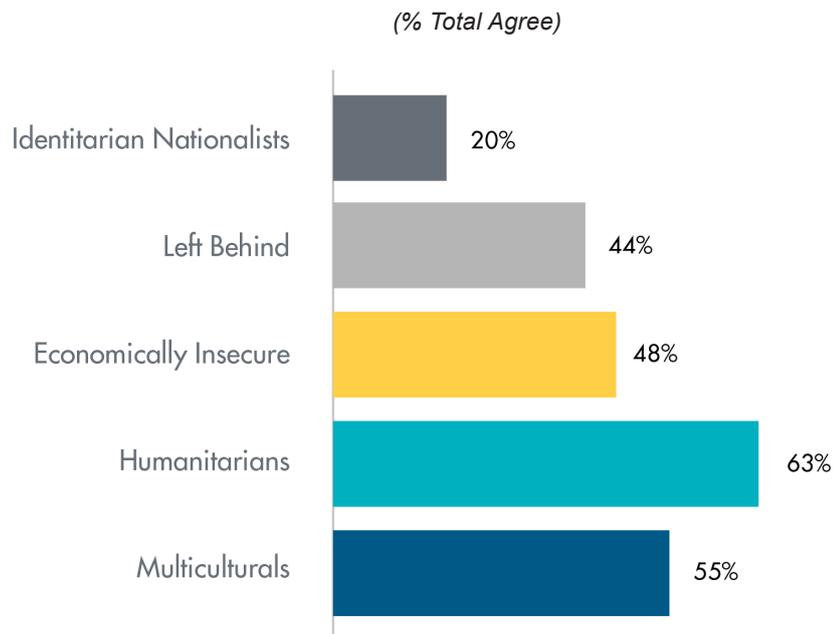
Analysis of the views of the Economically Insecure and Left Behind groups shows that on many issues they are closer to the Multiculturals and Humanitarians than to the Identitarian Nationalists. To that extent, the polarisation in attitudes in French society around issues of identity and otherness appears to be strongest between the Identitarians and all four other groups.

The Economically Insecure and Left Behind share deep concerns about France’s place in the world, but compared to the Multiculturals and Humanitarians, they are more sceptical about the benefits of immigration, the willingness of newcomers to integrate, and France’s capacity to assist refugees. Economic anxieties appear to play the greatest role in shaping their attitudes and explain the stronger views held by the Left Behind in comparison to the Economically Insecure. While these two segments have anxieties about the place of Islam in France, views differ by around 10 percentage points from the Humanitarians to Multiculturals (63 and 55 per cent respectively), but they are far less anxious than the

Identitarian Nationalists. Almost half of the Left Behind and Economically Insecure groups accept the principle of asylum for refugees (48 per cent and 44 per cent respectively), which places them closer to the Humanitarians and the Multiculturals, and a long way from the Identitarian Nationalists (just 20 per cent agree with the statement).

**Question:** Thinking specifically about refugees coming to France nowadays, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

*People fleeing from war or persecution should be able to find refugee in other countries, including France*



# Conclusion and Recommendations

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- 1. Beyond the specific issues of refugee and immigration policies, the study points to a wider French anxiety about the notion of "otherness."** It is striking that only 16 per cent view immigration as positive for the country, when one in four French people have at least one grandparent who was an immigrant. This is related to the perceived threats of terrorism, crime and economic and cultural decline. It is also a result of a widely shared perception that France has not integrated immigrants successfully. This has made people reluctant to accept further new arrivals such as refugees. In other words, the refugee crisis is perceived through the prism of immigration policy and the perceived failure of this policy. (In contrast, our research in Germany suggests that Germans perceive immigration through the prism of refugee policy, reflecting the much higher intake of refugees in recent years.)
- 2. Many questions arise from these findings on the pessimistic assessment of the French experience of immigration.** A key question is whether public debate has been distorted by the genuine shortcomings of immigration policy to the extent that it has obscured the many examples of successful integration that make up a majority of stories of immigration in France. A key challenge for policymakers is how to restore public trust in France's system of integration.
- 3. Perceptions of Islam are a major influence on French people's perception of refugees, immigration and otherness in general.** The findings show that it is critical to find ways to disentangle misleading perceptions about Muslims in France, increase people's understanding of what it means to be Muslim in France, and put forward what French people have in common rather than that which divides French Muslims from the rest of French society. In particular, the place of women in Islam comes up as a frequent point of criticism by groups all too keen to find a rationale for their rejection of Muslims. The narrative constructed around the role of women in Islam (one of oppression and lack of agency) is powerful and needs to be addressed if the rejection of Muslims is to be alleviated in France.
- 4. For a majority of the French population, ambivalence prevails on questions related to immigration and identity.** Commentators have written extensively in recent years of a fault line or fracture between an "open" and a "closed" France. Our study acknowledges that "conflicted middle" segments often hold contradictory but no less legitimate views on questions of immigration. The right frames and messages need to be tested in order to understand and take this ambivalence into account. A frame of "inclusive patriotism" composed of both rights and duties seems to be most effective with this ambivalent middle.
- 5. People's attitudes towards refugees and immigration in France are shaped by perceptions and public debates, and often not by hard facts.** For example, an overwhelming majority of French people believe that immigration has increased over the last five years. In fact, it has not. Similarly, a majority of individuals believe that most people who receive refugee status in France are not "real" refugees. These findings point to a loss of confidence in the ability of authorities to manage immigration flows. This lack of confidence is being exacerbated and exploited by extremist parties. Efforts to recognise public concerns and restore confidence are needed.
- 6. A persistent perception of a "competition of the poor" exists in France.** People in conflicted middle groups often question France's ability to show compassion to refugees from outside of France in light of the problem of "our French homeless." It is far more difficult to win public support for assisting refugees while a large number of people think they must choose between helping those in need within France versus helping those in need from outside of France. These genuine concerns about poverty and inequality within France must be addressed if the case for refugee assistance is to win greater support. Specifically, a broad government-led plan on homelessness and poverty,

may well have positive consequences in addressing the anxieties identified in this report and on the perception of immigrants and refugees.

- 7. Gender plays an important part in the demography of the conflicted middle groups.** Women make up a disproportionate share of the “conflicted middle” segments, particularly in groups that appear more open to extremist messages (the so-called “ante-chambers” of the Front National). This highlights a significant risk: should these women join the ranks of the closed groups, the electoral map of France would be redrawn. This warrants urgent further examination.
- 8. Research points to deep and widely held anxieties about France’s place in the world and the place of “the other” within French society.** While the research was undertaken prior to the 2017 election cycle, these anxieties are sure to re-emerge as the surge of optimism around political renewal in 2017 wears off. France rejected its political establishment in the 2017 elections. The danger is that if the French public concludes in coming years that its experiment with the new centrist force of *Republique en Marche* has failed to deliver, the public may well turn to the extremes. To that extent, this report sounds a clear warning of the urgent need to come to terms with the concerns of a majority of the French population, and build a new and more inclusive sense of French identity that brings people together and restores confidence in France’s place in the world.
- 9. This research highlights the profound questions that France is currently facing on the issues of identity, otherness, and its place in the world.** This methodology is, of course, imperfect and the segmentation analysis needs to be placed within the wider context of research into the experiences and perspectives of all members of French society. However, the report makes an important contribution in highlighting the many ways that French people feel displaced, lack confidence in their own identity and worry about difference within their society. Far more needs to be done to identify how to bring people together, including those who feel most excluded and left behind. Yet it is not just those on the margins who feel left out. Some form of identity crisis is felt in all the segments mapped out in this report.
- 10. The danger is that French people with divided opinions turn against each other.** Nonetheless, throughout its history, France has demonstrated its ability to unite and come together. France today is at a critical moment. On the shoulders of a young president lies a responsibility to bridge deep divisions in French society to reinvent a new aspirational narrative for the country. But the capacity of governments to build social trust is limited, and the challenge is as great as perhaps any president has faced. What is also needed is the engagement of ordinary citizens from all communities, in an ambitious and inclusive effort to support national unity and improve the welfare of all.

# Full Report

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## 1. Introduction

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There is a sense of entrenched social and political crisis in France brought about by prolonged economic stagnation, social divisions, and profound distrust of the political class. Attitudes towards refugees and immigration need to be seen within the wider context of a widespread sense of national decline, economic stagnation, and deep disillusionment with political institutions. Though the election of Emmanuel Macron to the Elysée (which happened after this research was completed) has brought a sense of optimism to parts of France, there is every reason to believe that the fundamentals of French public opinion on questions of identity, as revealed by this report, remain largely unchanged.

A long period of weak economic growth underpins this sense of crisis and sense of national decline in France. There has been no sustained recovery in job creation since the financial crisis in 2008. Unemployment hovers stubbornly around 10 per cent, while youth unemployment remains stuck at around 25 per cent. Public disillusionment was reflected as never before in the recent elections of 2017, which witnessed the collapse of France's two leading political parties (the Republicans and the Socialists). Neither party's candidate reached the final round of the presidential election and their candidates were likewise swept aside in the National Assembly elections, which gave the insurgent La République en Marche (The Republic on the Move, LREM) party a large majority, albeit on the back of record low voter turnout.

The desire for political change has enhanced, on the one hand, the appeal of newcomers like Emmanuel Macron's party and, on the other hand, the appeal of purportedly "alternative" parties such as the Front National (FN), France's longstanding 'outsider' party. Front National led France's national polls for much of the lead-up to the 2017 presidential election. Despite her ultimate defeat in May 2017, Marine Le Pen's 34 per cent in the final round of the presidential election against Macron was almost double the 18 per cent that her father achieved in 2002, when he too reached the second round. With the two 'establishment' parties diminished after the 2017 result, Front National's anti-immigration nationalist posture will play a major role in national debate in coming years. In addition, although its values are strongly opposed to Front National, LREM has now provided a blueprint for an outside party to sweep the presidency and the National Assembly – a blueprint that Front National might seek to copy in 2022, if President Macron and the LREM government does not live up to expectations.

Front National has benefited from increasing dissatisfaction with France's major parties and growing frustration with economic decline, while broadening its membership base, securing greater funding and developing more sophisticated campaigning techniques. FN's appeal is built on its nationalist, anti-establishment, anti-immigration and anti-EU messages. Its growing support has shifted the tone of political debate to the right. FN has also exploited security fears in the wake of a series of terrorist attacks (with three major attacks in France in 18 months between 2015 and 2016).

The widespread sense of national decline is also sharpened by perceptions of France's past grandeur and its importance as a global actor (e.g. in international fora such as the UN Security Council and through its relatively strong defence force). According to Ipsos research, the sense of national decline is felt by 86 per cent of the population. It is also underpinned by a fear of the impact of globalisation (felt by 58 per cent) and a mood of introspection. This mood is not entirely fatalistic, however: 62 per cent say they believe

that France's national decline can be reversed.

France has historically been a cosmopolitan country with a long history of immigration (but relatively little emigration). It is estimated that close to one quarter of French people have at least one immigrant grandparent. Successive waves of Italians, Spaniards, Poles, and Portuguese immigrants have made their home in France during the past century and longer. There were further large waves of immigration, largely from former French colonies in Africa in the 1950s and 1960s, a period of decolonisation and economic growth in France. One result of these waves of immigration is that France is home to western Europe's largest Muslim population (estimated to be around six million people), mostly of Algerian, Moroccan, Tunisian, and sub-Saharan African descent. France is also home to Europe's largest Jewish population (estimated at 475,000 people) and as late as the 1970s and 1980s, more than 120,000 refugees were taken in from South East Asia (the so-called "boat people").

There is a widely shared perception that recent waves of mainly North African immigration, and refugees from Syria and other conflict zones have not been and will not be well assimilated, principally because they are Muslim. The notion of a perceived incompatibility between French values and those of newcomers, particularly Muslims (see below), is widely held in France. The rejection of otherness – once directed at Poles and Italians in the early 20th century in France – is directed at Muslims in early 21<sup>st</sup> century France.

## 2. Research Methodology

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This study employs a population clustering segmentation analysis method that draws on a range of attitudinal characteristics of survey respondents. This form of segmentation provides a rich composite picture of how a population is divided in its views, going beyond basic demographic factors to show how networks of attitudes and opinions are connected. It identifies the profile of the population segment most ready to take action to support values of openness and diversity and to be welcoming of refugees and immigrants. The study also identifies the profile of those most hostile to perceived ‘outsiders’ to French society. Most importantly, it builds profiles of three groups with mixed views, and helps to identify those who are most open to change their minds.

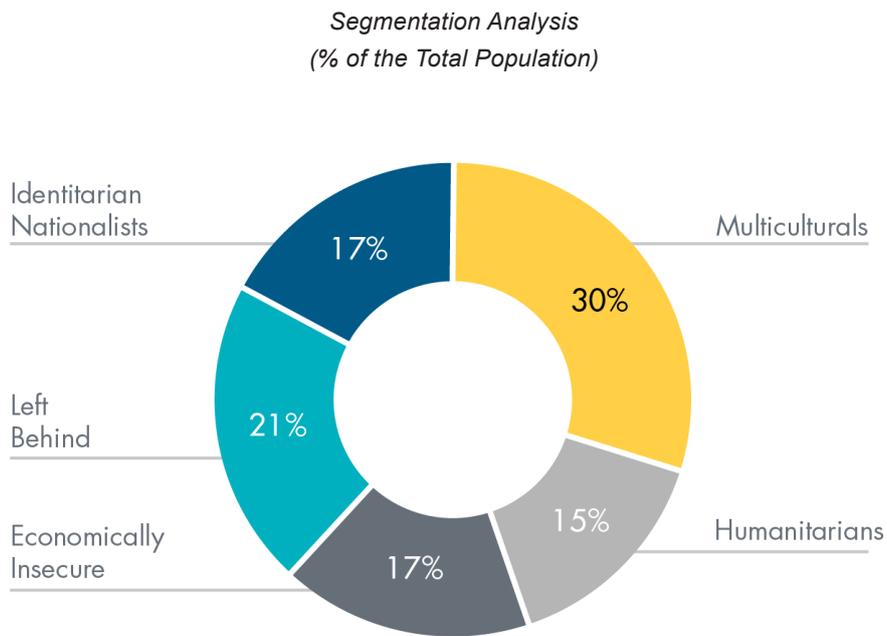
Although the research was conducted in 2016, in our experience research of this kind remains accurate for several years because of the extent to which it shows longer term attitudes and values. The first phase of the research was undertaken through an online survey from the 20th to the 27th of September 2016, with a representative sample of 2,002 adults. Respondents answered questions relating to their demographic characteristics, including gender, age, geography, educational level, income, ethnicity, religious identity, and media consumption habits. They were then asked questions relating to the issues of greatest concern to them, their political views and affiliations, familiarity with refugee and immigration issues, their understanding of different terminology in the refugee and migration debate, their personal experience with refugees and their responses to different policy approaches and messages. In the second phase of the research, two focus groups were conducted in Paris in December 2016 among key segments identified in the poll: The Humanitarians and the Economically Insecure. The focus groups allowed for observation of in-person responses to messages and policy initiatives.

While the research has value in contributing to a better understanding of public opinion on a complex set of issues, we recognise that it has many limitations. Further research is needed to test many of the inferences from the data. We plan to conduct more qualitative research among the segments identified in the report, and hope that a similar study can be conducted again in the future to track changes in public attitudes over time. Most of all, however, our goal is to provide practical guidance to those making the case for an open, inclusive society that values diversity, resists efforts to divide communities and embraces humanitarian values including the protection of refugees.

# 3. Overview of the Attitudinal Segments

The study identified five segments of opinion, demonstrating significant attitudinal differences in French society on the issues related to immigration, refugees, identity, and the perceived cultural clash between Islam and French society. At one end of the spectrum, the Multiculturals feel positively (or at least, less negative) about the future of France and have positive views of immigrants and refugees. At the other end of the spectrum are the Identitarian Nationalists, who are pessimistic about both the economic and cultural situation of France, opposed to an open society and globalisation, and hold generally negative views of refugees and immigrants. They are more likely to vote for the far-right party, Front National.

In between these groups, the analysis identified three other segments: the Humanitarians, the Left Behind, and the Economically Insecure. These three segments are considered the “anxious middle” or “the conflicted middle.” Their views and attitudes to the issues analysed can change, and their support for different policies can switch; this poses an opportunity but also risks. The conflicted middle constitutes 53 per cent of the French population.



## 3.1. Multiculturals (30 per cent)

The Multiculturals represent 30 per cent of the population, and are the largest of the five segments. Multiculturals are characterised by their inclination to be more welcoming of immigrants and refugees, as well as more optimistic regarding the overall situation in France.

This segment stands out for being the only segment in which a larger proportion of survey respondents hold positive rather than negative perceptions of the future. 26 per cent of the Multiculturals believe that the economic situation in France is going to improve, compared to 9 per cent of respondents overall. Many more Multiculturals also believe that the situation will remain the same (57 per cent, compared to the 34 per cent of the population overall). Multiculturals are also more likely to feel that they personally profit from

France's economic growth and they are the only segment that uses positive qualifiers to describe France (e.g. welcoming, tolerant, open, optimistic, confident).

Multiculturals are less likely than people in other segments to see immigration as one of the major challenges currently faced by France. This segment is also the least likely to believe that immigration has had a negative impact on France (Multiculturals are significantly more likely to remain neutral on this matter).

Multiculturals hold more positive perceptions of immigrants and are generally more open to receiving refugees, and are more empathetic to their circumstances. They are also more measured than other groups in their view of how receiving refugees may lead to an increased threat of terrorism and hold more positive views of Islam compared to the general population.

Multiculturals are slightly younger than the national average and while they are present in all areas, their presence in Paris' urban area is slightly higher. In terms of gender, this segment is balanced, with 49 per cent women and 51 per cent men. In this group, there are slightly fewer pensioners than the national average and slightly more people who work in professional or managerial roles.

### **3.2. Humanitarians (15 per cent)**

The Humanitarians represent 15 per cent of the total population. This segment is characterised for having a better opinion of the impact of migration than the whole and for being less pessimistic about the future of France (although they characterise their country as "worried"). They believe that it is becoming more and more difficult for people like them to succeed in France and they do not consider that they are personally benefiting from economic growth.

Humanitarians have a lower perception of external threats and a more optimistic view on immigration. They are significantly more likely to think that immigration has a positive impact (29 per cent are of this opinion compared to 16 per cent of French people overall). Immigration is seen as having a positive impact on the country's economy, as well as (to a lesser extent) its cultural life and, like the Multiculturals, Humanitarians have a more positive perception of immigrants in terms of the positions they occupy in the labour market (especially regarding lower wages, and less desirable jobs).

In terms of their opinions about refugees, Humanitarians are more likely than any other group to agree with the statement that refugees are different from other immigrants because they had no choice about leaving their country. When it comes to distrust of refugees, Humanitarians have opinions that are akin to those of the Multiculturals. Both groups tend to believe that refugees entering France are real refugees and oppose closing the borders.

Demographically, there are more women than men (55 to 45 per cent) in this segment, they are more present in Paris and large cities, are significantly older than the national average (34 per cent of the Humanitarians are 65 years old or older), there are far more retirees (39 per cent versus 28 per cent), and fewer people working in professional, managerial, or intermediate positions.

### **3.3. Economically Insecure (17 per cent)**

The Economically Insecure represent 17 per cent of the population and differ from other groups in that they are highly pessimistic and especially concerned about economic conditions. Most participants in the Economically Insecure category think that their personal circumstances have improved or stayed the same during the past year. However, almost all of them believe that the situation in France is going to deteriorate over the next five years (80 per cent believe this, compared to 51 per cent of the total number of respondents).

The top three qualifiers used by the Economically Insecure to describe France are ‘worried’, followed by ‘angry’ and ‘weak’. They also stand out as being significantly more likely to fear greater openness to the outside world. There is a wider belief in this segment that France must protect itself from the rest of the world, as well as a more commonly held view that globalisation has a very negative impact on France’s economy.

The Economically Insecure are also more sceptical about the impact of growth on their own life. In fact, they are more likely than any other segment within French society to believe that it is becoming more and more difficult for people like them to succeed in France, and that their region does not benefit as it should from the economic success of the rest of the country.

In terms of their attitudes towards refugees and immigrants, the Economically Insecure hold similar views as the overall population. Nonetheless, as many as 75 per cent of the Economically Insecure believe that refugees should return to their countries of origin once the situation there improves.

The Economically Insecure group comprises a higher than average proportion of women and younger people. Professionally, there are more inactive people in this group and less labourers.

### 3.4. Left Behind (21 per cent)

The Left Behind – which constitute 21 per cent of the population – are more likely than other groups to think that their personal circumstances have worsened over the past year and that circumstances for their families will deteriorate over the next few years. This segment is more worried about economic challenges (e.g. price increases, poverty, and social inequality) than other groups. The Left Behind are in general more pessimistic about the impact of immigration in France and describe France negatively.

Another defining feature of the Left Behind is their fear of losing their place in the social hierarchy: most believe that it is more difficult for people like them to succeed in France and that they do not personally benefit from the country’s economic growth. People in this segment tend to distrust others more than the average.

Members of this segment use negative qualifiers (e.g. angry, weak, naïve, or hostile) to describe France, and they are more likely than the average to say that France should close its borders, protect itself from the outside world, that globalisation has had a negative impact on the country, and believe that France is losing its identity.

In terms of immigration, the Left Behind hold negative opinions of immigrants (and distrust them) but not of refugees. People in this segment are more likely to see immigrants as violent and malicious. The Left Behind share many of the same negative perceptions that characterise the Identitarian Nationalists, although not as strongly. Unlike Identitarian Nationalists, the Left Behind hold similar views about refugees as the wider population: a slight majority (55 per cent) believe that refugees are different to other immigrants as they had no choice but to leave their country of origin.

Although some of the views of the Left Behind and the Identitarian Nationalists are similar, the people in each of these segments have different underlying reasons for them: the desire shown by the Left Behind to close France’s borders is primarily in response to their sense of abandonment and their deteriorating social position, as well as their wish to protect a country which they see as being threatened (mainly in an economic sense) by globalisation. The issue of identity is only secondary to this, and does not constitute the driving force behind this group’s choices. Further, three quarters of the Left Behind share the opinion of the majority and are fearful of seeing a rise in racism and discrimination, while Identitarian Nationalists are not concerned about this surge.

The Left Behind segment has a significantly higher proportion of women than men (58 per cent are female).

They are more likely to live in rural areas and small towns but they are also present in Paris and other large cities. They are more heavily concentrated in the 50-64 year old age range (33 per cent compared to 22 per cent of the national average) and there are fewer 25-35 year olds, fewer managers and professionals, and a smaller share of retirees than the national average

### 3.5. Identitarian Nationalists (17 per cent)

The Identitarian Nationalists – 17 per cent of the population – are characterised by their intense perception of external threats to France, their strong opposition to immigrants and refugees, and their higher levels of concern about criminal activity. Concerns about cultural issues and the loss of French identity appear to motivate them even more strongly than economic issues. In this respect, they reflect the values of Europe's identitarian movements, which focus on the preservation of national identity and western values. Many of them embrace absolutist positions: more than 60 per cent believe that France should close its borders to refugees entirely, and they show no concern at all about an increase in racism and discrimination in France (when asked about their concerns, literally none of the Identitarian Nationalists were worried about this). Identitarian Nationalists are also pessimistic about the future, believing that their families' circumstances are going to worsen over the next few years.

Identitarian Nationalists have low social trust. They are more likely to worry that others are trying to take advantage of them, and this influences their stronger belief that France needs to protect itself from the world. They worry that France is losing its identity in the world. They describe France as angry (55 per cent of Identitarian Nationalists), fearful (53 per cent), and naïve (50 per cent).

These concerns about French identity and external threats are reflected in their very negative perceptions of immigration, refugees, and diversity. Identitarian Nationalists are far more concerned about immigration than most French people: 60 per cent believe that immigration is one of the most important issues facing France today, compared to an average of 37 per cent. A significant majority of Identitarian Nationalists believe that immigration has had a negative or very negative impact on France. Only 5 per cent believe that immigrants make efforts to integrate into French society. This compares to 19 per cent in the Left Behind segment, which holds the most similar views to the Identitarian Nationalists, and to the average of 22 per cent across the population.

Identitarian Nationalists stand out as having a particularly negative view of refugees as well as immigrants. Both refugees and immigrants are generally more likely to be perceived by this group as being different from them, and to be violent and malicious. A significant percentage of the Identitarian Nationalists believe that refugees are no different to any other type of immigrant (39 per cent, more than double the proportion in all other segments). Many reject the principle of asylum that underpins the international refugee protection system. 44 per cent do not agree with the statement that refugees should be able to seek refuge in other countries when fleeing war or persecution (compared to an average of 18 per cent across the whole population).

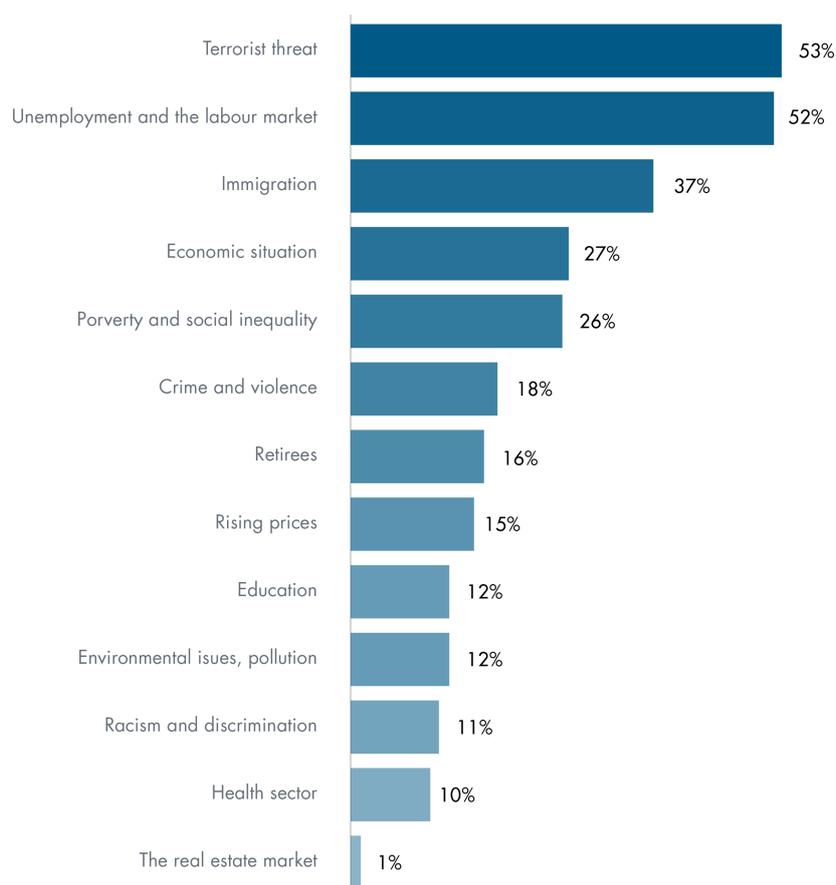
There are more men than women in this group (55 per cent men to 48 per cent women), more individuals in the 25 to 49 years old age group (and fewer aged over 64) and live mainly in France's rural areas and small villages.

## 4. Context: Socio-Economic Position and Self-Perception of France in the World

### 4.1. Fears, Concerns and the Self-Perception of France in the World

The results of this study show a grim picture of French people's perceptions of the state of the country and their future. The survey highlights a mix of anxieties about the threat of terrorism and economic challenges, and the existence of a wider sense of national decline. The people surveyed ranked terrorism ahead of unemployment as the issue of greatest concern in the country. This is relatively unusual as there are few occasions in recent years when the issue of unemployment has been displaced or matched as France's top concern. It happened during the presidential campaign in 2002, when the Front National candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen progressed to the second round. At the time, rising crime reached the top of public concerns (but not terrorism, despite the shock caused by the attacks on September 11, 2001).

**Question:** Which three of the following do you see as the most important issues facing France today?



The increased fear of terrorism has implications on French people's views and perceptions of the issue of immigration and, more specifically, on accepting immigrants and refugees into France. There was considerable debate about the links between immigration and terrorism after the November 2015 terrorist acts in Paris, which were perpetrated by a terrorist cell based in Belgium, and which included some individuals who had infiltrated the immigrant flows arriving to Europe.

This prompted a conflation of immigrants with terrorists and calls for stronger border controls, which was also reflected in interviewees' conversations during the focus group discussions.

*"Terrorists will strike through the migrants. So that makes us scared. That's their strategy." (Economically Insecure)<sup>1</sup>*

Even after the attacks in Nice and Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray in 2016, which were carried out by men with no links to incoming migration flows, there was increased public support for closing and controlling France's borders. The demand to "take back control" was also a constant feature in discussions about the refugee settlement in Calais – a mainstay of the debate on refugees in the media for well over a decade.

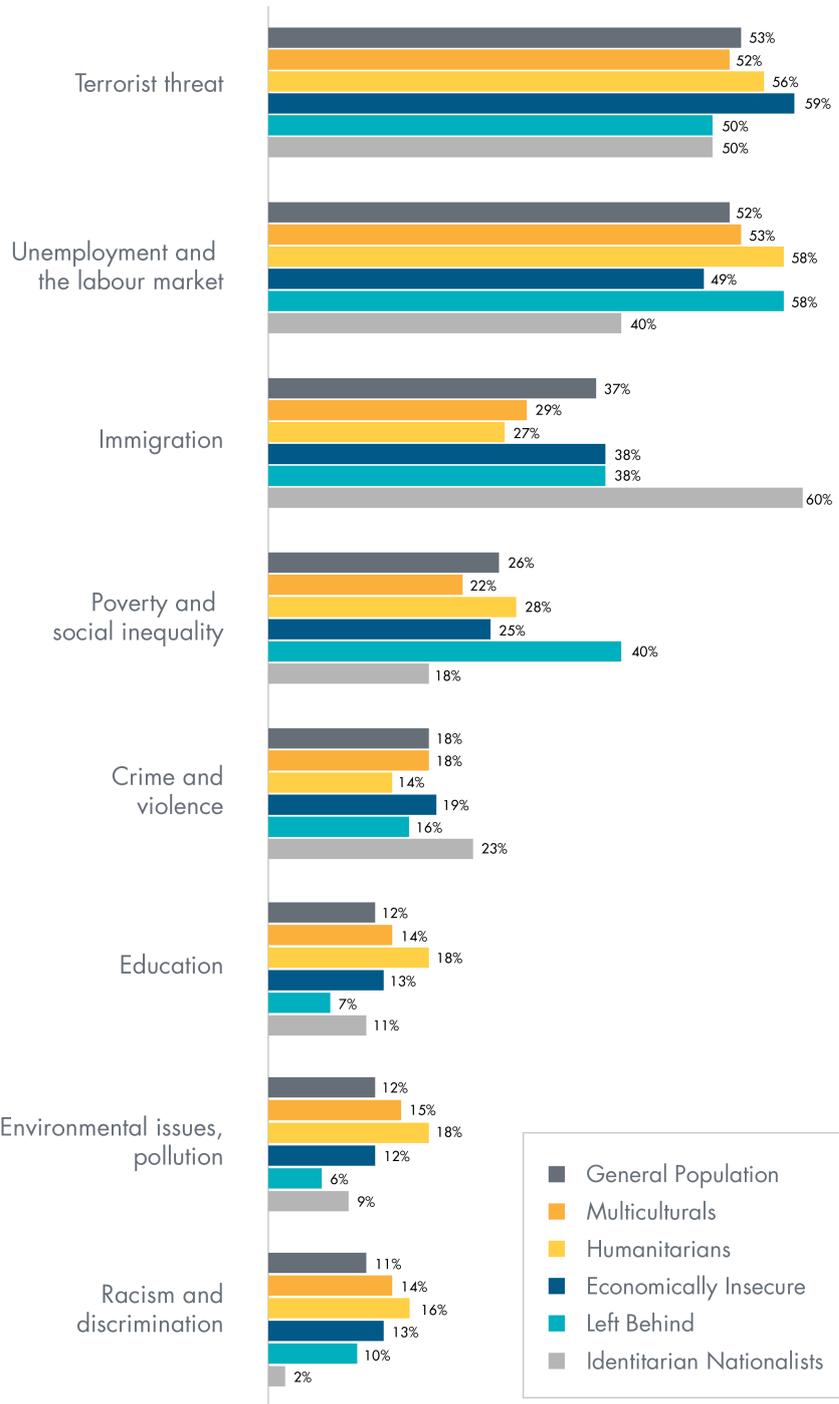
There are differences across the segments on their views of France's greatest challenges:

- Identitarian Nationalists are most concerned about immigration (60 per cent of responses versus 37 per cent of the overall population). They also have the highest level of concerns about criminality and violence (23 per cent compared to 18 per cent overall).
- The Left Behind segment is most concerned about economic issues. 58 per cent of the Left Behind cited unemployment and the labour market (versus 52 per cent overall), and 40 per cent mentioned poverty and social inequality as being one of the three main challenges (compared to 26 per cent of the French people overall).
- Humanitarians can also be distinguished from the other segments with their higher levels of concern about racism and discrimination, the environment and education.

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<sup>1</sup> All quotes in the report presented in this format are cited verbatim from the focus group discussions conducted in December 2016. Participants of the focus group discussions were chosen from two of the conflicted middle segments: The Economically Insecure and the Humanitarians

**Question: Which three of the following do you see as the most important issues facing France today?**



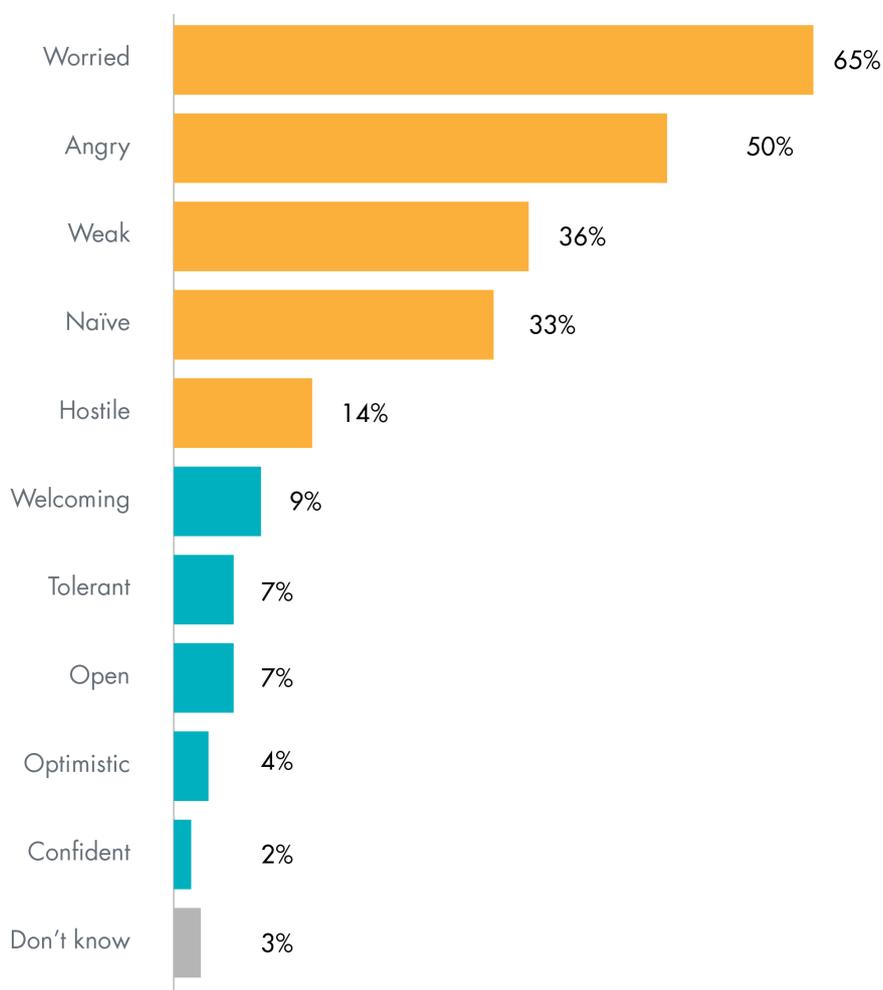
The survey reveals the high levels of pessimism about France and especially about the economy. When asked to choose different adjectives to describe the country, the respondents see it as worried (65 per cent) and angry (50 per cent). To over a third of the participants, France appears ‘weak’ (36 per cent) and ‘naive’ (33 per cent of responses).

- Only a minority of French people choose positive adjectives to describe the country. Multiculturals use positive qualifiers most often (between 2 and 4 points higher than the national average). Conversely, fewer people in this group describe France as being ‘angry’ (39 per cent versus 50 per cent), ‘weak’

(23 per cent versus 36 per cent), or 'naïve' (21 per cent vs. 33 per cent).

- In contrast, Identitarian Nationalists overwhelmingly choose negative qualifiers to describe the country: 55 per cent see France as 'angry', 50 per cent 'naïve', and 43 per cent 'weak'. Like the Left Behind, their description of the country as being naïve and weak is key to understanding how people in these groups view government policy, especially relating to globalisation and immigration, and the link in their minds between these issues and terrorist threats.
- The Left Behind segment stands out as being more inclined to describe France as 'angry' (57 per cent), 'weak' (43 per cent), and 'naïve' (41 per cent). Very few people in this segment choose positive adjectives.
- While 65 per cent of the population would use the adjective fearful to describe France, a higher proportion of the Humanitarians would do so (77 per cent).

**Question:** Which of these words do you think best describe France today?



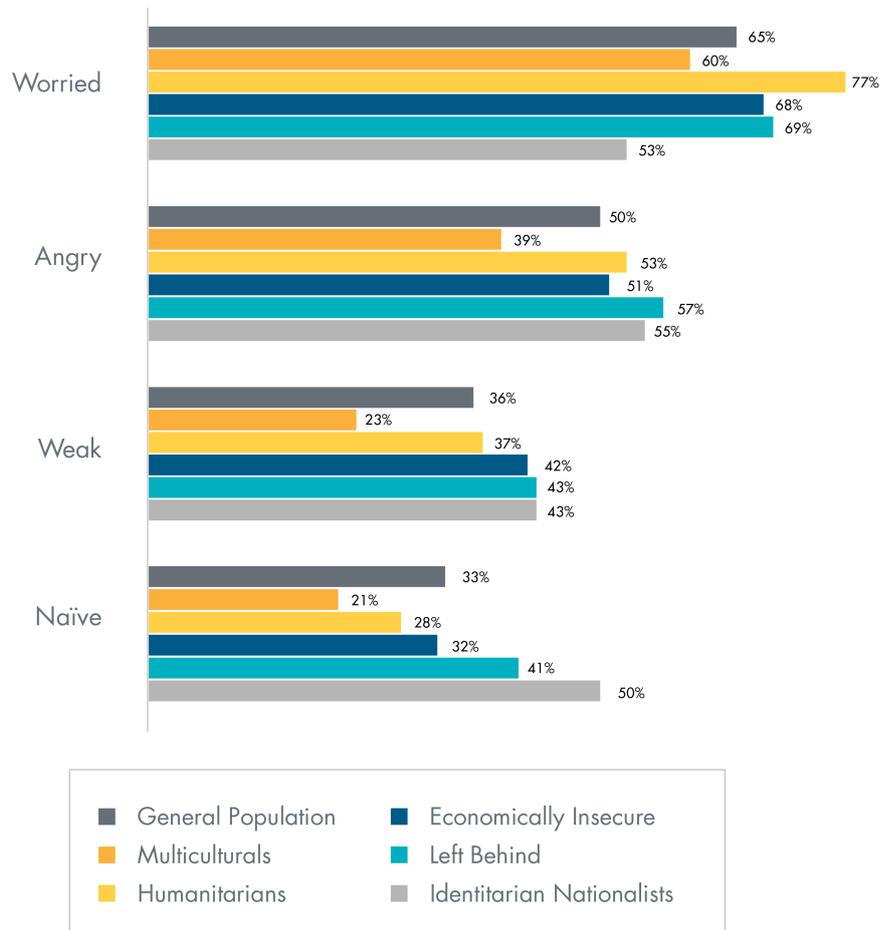
Similar reactions were observed during the focus group discussions, where participants described France as a country that is 'stuck', having lost both the confidence and the courage to assert itself both at the domestic and international level. For the Economically Insecure, France's perceived decline encompasses the loss of its identity and values, as well as its status.

*"I see people sleeping outside, French people - we should be helping them more. The Samaritans, the Red Cross, and other organisations help them, but it's not enough."  
(Economically Insecure)*

*“The small financial injustices - say you want to buy an apartment. You have a permanent contract, but you still can’t do it.” (Economically Insecure)*

*“The fear of your situation getting worse, of going backwards” (Humanitarians)*

**Question:** Which of these words do you think best describe France today?

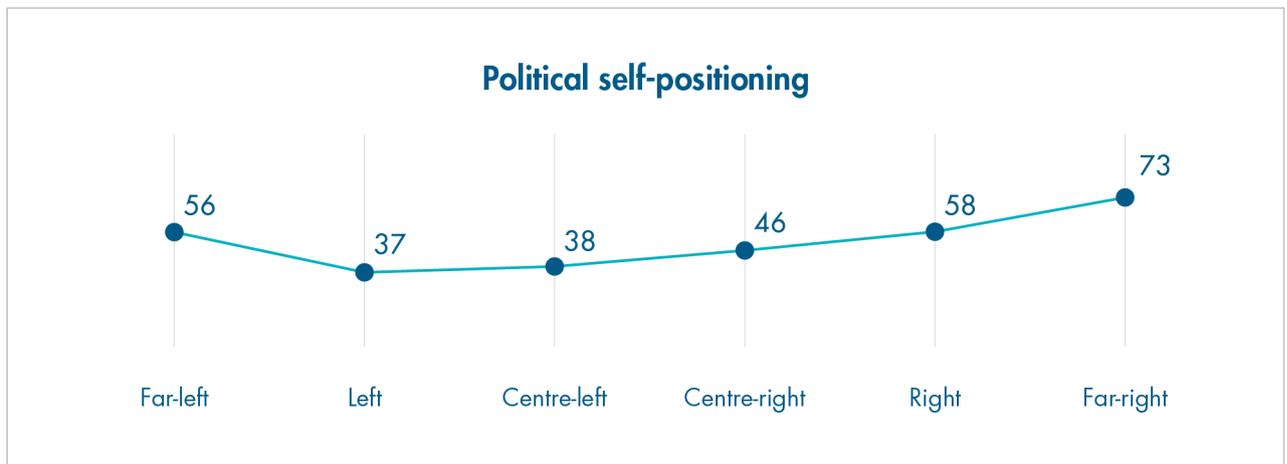
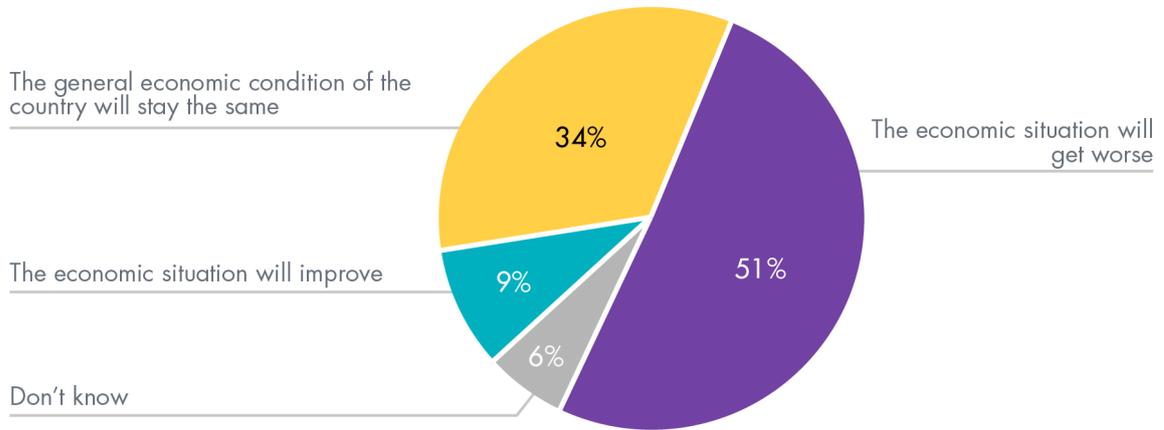


## 4.2. Personal and Economic Prospects

The pessimism observed vis-à-vis the country is also reflected in the respondents’ expectations of their own personal economic future. According to the results of this study, the majority of the French population believes that their circumstances have not improved over the course of the past year. The ratio of people who feel that their circumstances have gotten worse to those who feel that they have improved, is extremely unfavourable: only 12 per cent of the French report an improvement. The feeling of living in a country where prospects are not very promising is shared by many French people.

When they contemplate the future, only 20 per cent of those interviewed think that their circumstances will improve over the next five years, while 33 per cent think that they will get worse. A larger proportion of the French people (39 per cent) believe that things will stay the same for them on a personal level. One in two (51 per cent) predict that the country’s economic situation will decline over the course of the next twelve months, and one third (34 per cent) believe that nothing will change. Very few participants expect better days to come: only 9 per cent of the interviewees feel that economic conditions in France are going to improve over the course of the coming year.

**Question:** Do you think that the general economic condition of the country will improve, stay the same, or get worse over the next 12 months?



*Far-left and far-right voters are more likely to believe that things will get worse*

Perceptions differ among the segments:

- Both the Multiculturals and the Economically Insecure are more likely to have a positive or neutral picture of how their personal situation is changing and how they expect it to unfold in the future. However, the Multiculturals are the only group in which a significant number of participants believe that the economic situation in France is going to improve in the coming years (25 per cent compared to 9 per cent of the overall population).
- Despite their more positive outlook, a majority of the Economically Insecure fear that their families' situation is going to get worse in the coming years, as do all other groups except for the Multiculturals, who believe that their families' situation is not likely to deteriorate. This reflects their perceptions of France's economic outlook. The majority see the future as bleak, especially within the Economically Insecure and Identitarian Nationalists segments (80 per cent of both groups feel this way).
- The Left Behind segment is especially pessimistic about their personal circumstances and the circumstances of their families (both how they have evolved over time and how they expect them to unfold in the future). Economic considerations play a fundamental role in shaping the opinions and attitudes of the members of the Left Behind segment.

- The Identitarian Nationalists' perceptions of their own situation and that of their families does not stand out from the rest. The way in which they see their trajectory is very similar to the average of the French population.

During the focus group discussions with the Humanitarians and the Economically Insecure, similar trends were observed. The Humanitarians perceive that the economy is losing ground. They believe that France struggles to be innovative and appear attractive to investors.

*“Immature economies and less-developed countries are more interesting in terms of making investments: [France] is rich, it tries to protect itself ...it’s a bit of a vicious circle. There is not really an opening here for investors - they would sooner go to other countries” (Humanitarians)*

*“I think we’re always one step behind; we have the freedom to undertake new ventures, but it’s not easy due to all the taxes. We have the potential but it is not used” (Humanitarians)*

The Economically Insecure believe that France is stagnating. According to them, this becomes evident when assessing key economic outcomes such as unemployment levels, which remain constant rather than increasing or decreasing, the absence of positive prospects, and a European context that is seen by some as stifling. In this context, globalisation is viewed in a predominantly negative light: it is synonymous with outsourcing, disintegration in the labour market, and loss of competitiveness.

*“It’s really difficult to be independent. It is an illusion to believe that we have room to manoeuvre.” (Economically Insecure)*

The way in which the French population sees the economy informs their opinions on the ability of the country to receive refugees. France is one of the most reticent nations in Europe to welcome refugees and immigrants, reflecting the combination of perceived security risks, economic weaknesses, and fears of cultural clashes.

*“I just don’t know what to think. The people coming from Syria have a right to a different life, but integration? Can they do it? What if they don’t? There’s the issue of language, of culture. What happens if they don’t integrate? There will be more problems than just terrorism.” (Economically Insecure)*

As Jérôme Fourquet, co-author of the report and the director of the public opinion department at IFOP, has previously noted, historical factors are important in explaining France’s weaker response to the refugee crisis:

*“There are other factors which contribute to perceptions of receiving refugees and immigrants, such as the history of France and its relationship with immigration. At the end of the Second World War, the Federal Republic of Germany saw the arrival of many refugees from the East. During the existence of the Iron Curtain, and once again when the Aussiedler, the ‘German Russians’ left the USSR at the fall of the Soviet regime and emigrated to Germany under the Right to Return law. Fleeing war and dictatorship may therefore strike more of a chord with German nationals, a large number of whom descend from parents or grandparents who have experienced*

*exile to a higher degree than the French population. As for Italy, it is - unlike France - a country which has experienced high levels of emigration: for generations, many Italians have gone to try their luck in other countries, whether that be in the United States or elsewhere in Europe”.*

The participants in the focus groups who themselves had an immigrant background talk about their challenging circumstances (Algerian independence) or at least their fierce determination to integrate into French society, a determination which they believe is missing in the most recent immigrants, who are from much less similar cultural backgrounds.

*“The fact that I chose to be French was mostly down to knowing its history. There is vast heritage in France, and a collective memory - what we are missing is awareness. We are all French” (Humanitarians)*

*“We must be proud, when I arrived we learned the names of the French departments, the mountain ranges...for me, that’s what I passed on to my kids” (Humanitarians)*

*“I have had the same journey as Gloria, I’m a pied-noir. When the war happened in Algeria we came back to France, and they treated us like dogs when we got here. They thought of us as being less French than them [...] You had to really want to be French to become French [...] but we have to recognise that those first people arrived were here to work. It’s a shame that the people who are arriving now have not been given a way into society. I’m worried that they will experience that same rejection all over again” (Humanitarians)*

### 4.3. Globalisation and Identity

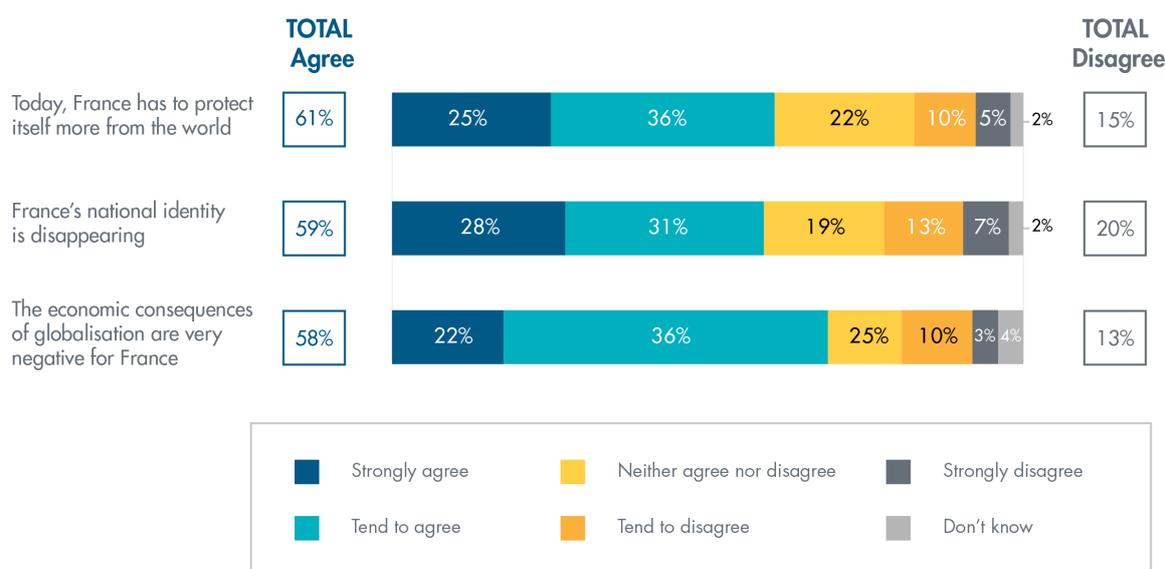
French perceptions of the impact of globalisation also help shape their views on welcoming refugees. The division between those who benefit from globalisation and those who do not has become a major fracture in the politics of many countries. Some political parties have taken advantage of this perception and division and depict themselves as representing people who do not benefit from globalisation. Geographic voting patterns highlight divisions between urban and rural areas; struggling industrial regions against tourist areas with better living conditions; and areas in which links to a new economy have emerged (Silicon Valley or major academic centres such as Oxford and Cambridge in Britain) against places whose place in a globalised economy is less clear (such as Lorraine in France, the Rust Belt, and the mining and industrial regions in the north of England such as Sheffield).

This new division is powerful and is closely related to the reception of refugees and immigrants, which in turn produces a backlash against some parts of the population. Globalisation is conceived as synonymous with traditional jobs disappearing from people’s home towns and with increasing population flows and immigration. Some argue that closing the borders is the last defence against the effects of globalisation, effects which are seen as harmful by those who feel that they have been left behind and forgotten by this global movement.

The evidence collected during this study confirms this backlash against globalisation. The majority of the French population (61 per cent) believes that France should be protecting itself more from the rest of the world. This percentage is even higher in French regions where traditionally there has been a lot of blue-collar and industrial employment: in Nord-Pas-de-Calais (67 per cent), Champagne, Picardy and Bourgogne (69 per cent), and Normandy (67 per cent).

These beliefs hint at fears about opening the borders, fears that include the threat of terrorism, outsourcing, and new European regulations from Brussels, and also migration flows. This reflects **a high level of anxiety within the population – the disappearance of France’s identity is considered a reality by 3 of every 5 French people** (59 per cent), with almost a third (28 per cent) agreeing completely with the statement “French identity is disappearing”. It is in part that sentiment that François Fillon, the Republican presidential candidate during the 2017 presidential elections, addressed when he alluded to “the France that does not want to die”. One of the key factors in the reticence surrounding the arrival of refugees and immigrants is that part of the population fears that allowing Muslims to arrive (there is a commonly held belief that new arrivals are mainly Muslim) will erode French culture and identity.

**Question:** Thinking about the position of France in the world today, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



From a purely economic point of view, more than one in two people (58 per cent), including almost a quarter (22 per cent) who are strongly convinced, agree with the statement that globalisation has a very negative effect on the country. Many French people feel that they have been ‘left behind’ because of globalisation, and only a small section of the population think that social mobility is still possible in France. One person in two (52 per cent) believes that it ‘is becoming more and more difficult for a person like me to succeed in France’, compared to only 14 per cent who do not agree with this statement. Additionally, only 11 per cent of French people feel that they personally benefit from the country’s economic growth (57 per cent say that they don’t benefit, of which 28 per cent believe that they don’t see any benefit ‘at all’).

There are also salient differences between the segments on globalisation and its effects.

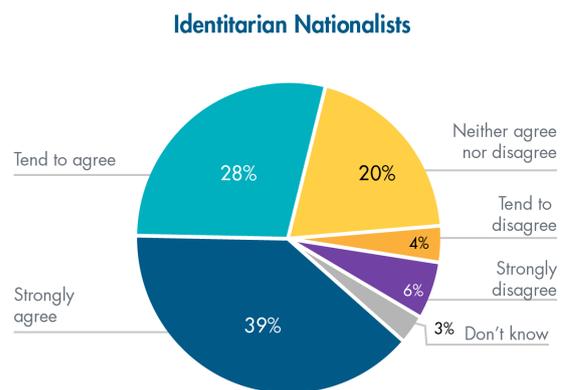
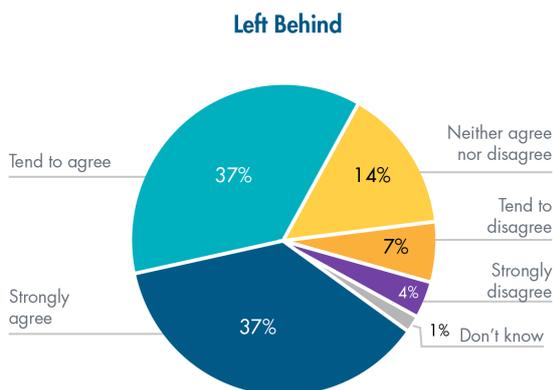
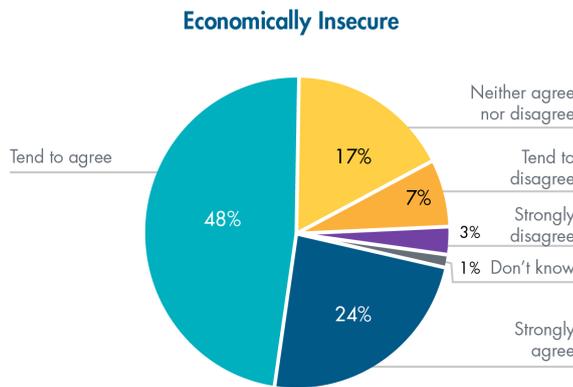
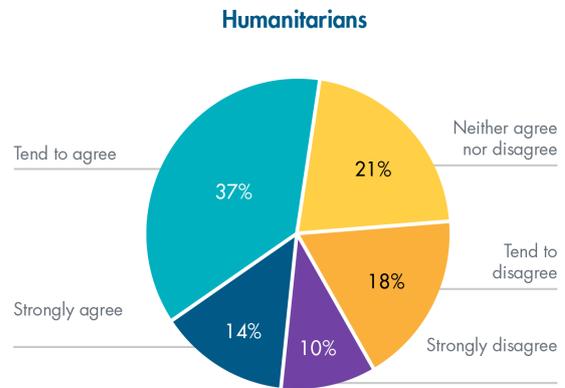
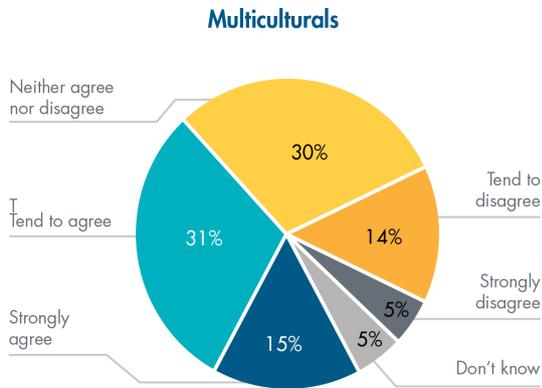
- The Economically Insecure have particularly strong views of globalisation. 72 per cent of the members of this group (one of the highest figures) believe that France should protect itself more from the outside world, and 66 per cent say that globalisation has an extremely negative effect on France’s economy. They perceive economic gains for themselves or their community as elusive. A higher proportion than average of the Economically Insecure tend to believe that it is becoming more and more difficult for them to succeed in France (60 per cent).
- The relationship that the Left Behind have with globalisation appears to be crucial in the formation of their perceptions. This group is the most aggressive in their beliefs about the position of France in a global context and the impact that globalisation has on both their region and their personal

situation. Three quarters of this group (74 per cent) believe that France must protect itself more from the rest of the world, that France is losing its identity (75 per cent), and that globalisation has an extremely negative impact on France's economy (76 per cent). Consensus is firmly formed around the possibility for them to succeed in modern-day France: 92 per cent believe that this is becoming more and more difficult. They are also much more likely to think that their region does not benefit as it should from the country's economic success (64 per cent). Although the Left Behind are not the only ones to feel a sense of abandonment in a divided France, this sentiment is at the heart of the "France des perdants" (a phrase referring to those who have lost out from globalisation) whose gaze on society and, a fortiori, on the issue of welcoming immigrants and refugees is directly influenced by this difficult relationship with globalisation and French economic growth.

- The Identitarian Nationalists group stands out in all areas relating to the closure of France's borders: 67 per cent believe that France should protect itself more from the rest of the world and 72 per cent think that France is losing its identity (compared to 59 per cent of all French people). However, economic concerns are less significant in this group and they do not stand out as being markedly different in this area. Evidence seems to indicate that for Identitarian Nationalists, culture and identity concerns have the greatest impact on their views about society.

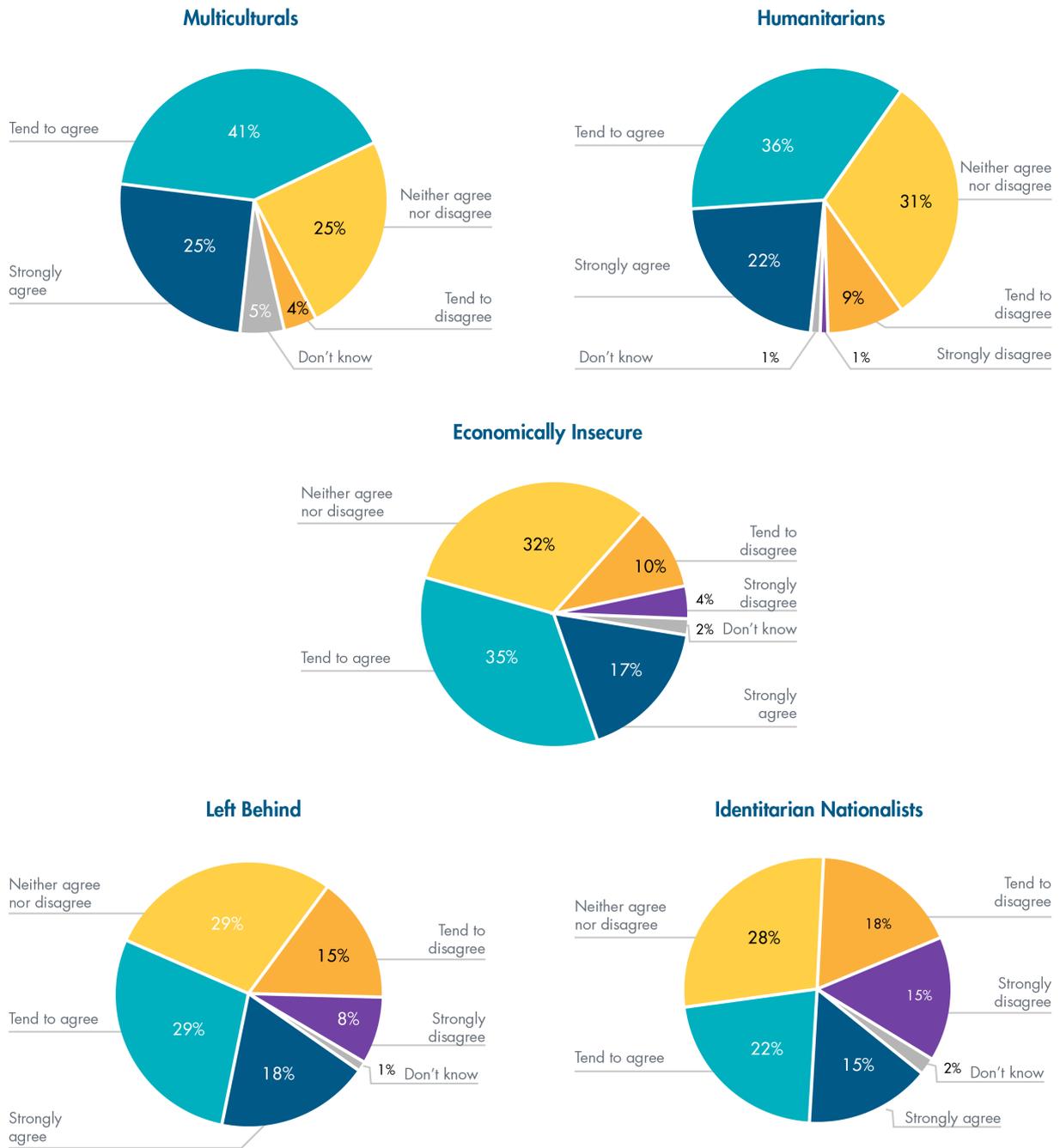
**Question:** Thinking about the position of France in the world today, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

*Today, France has to protect itself more from the world*



**The ideological foundations that underpin the issue of welcoming refugees and immigrants have – for some – more to do with identity than with the economy.** The relationship that French nationals have with their notion of French identity has a significant influence in the formation of their opinions on other matters. Half of those surveyed (54 per cent) believe French people can be proud of their national identity (29 per cent say that they ‘neither agree nor disagree’ with this statement, and 15 per cent do not agree).

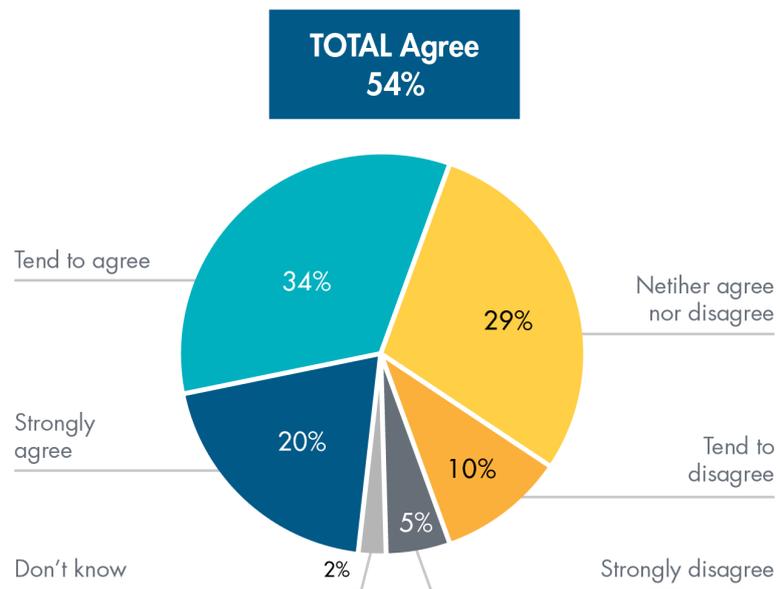
**Question:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that French people can feel proud about their national identity?



These mixed responses stem from the feeling of no longer recognising the country.

- Multiculturals stand out from the rest of the population, with 66 per cent considering themselves proud of their national identity (compared to 54 per cent of the overall population), along with the Humanitarians, the majority of whom also share this sentiment (58 per cent). The Economically Insecure reflect the national average, with 52 per cent agreeing with this statement.
- Conversely, the Left Behind, and to an even greater extent, the Identitarian Nationalists, are extremely sceptical about the extent to which French national identity reflects their way of thinking: 23 per cent of the former and 33 per cent of the latter say that the French should not be proud of their national identity (none of the Multiculturals strongly disagrees and only 4 per cent tend to disagree).

**Question:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that French people can feel proud about their national identity?



The focus group discussions suggest that many people in France sense a loss of identity and difficulties surrounding questions of culture and identity. Additionally, the Tent Foundation's second annual Tent Tracker research on attitudes to the refugee crisis across 12 countries, released in May 2017, reported that France has the highest proportion of people who feel that they cannot express their true opinions about the refugee crisis for fear of being judged (74 per cent), and the lowest proportion of people who reported that they are comfortable expressing their opinions "without fear of judgement" (28 per cent) (Tent, 2017).

*"We are terrified about defining [the French identity]; we don't want to impose ourselves on anyone. We don't have any authority anymore. We don't want to insist upon anything anymore. We are all about rights, and not about duties, we have no togetherness anymore and so we therefore no longer have an identity either. We no longer see ourselves as having one religion or another, we let remarks slide, and our teachings are really weak." (Economically Insecure)*

*"It's true. France is a Christian country; I am not Catholic but when you are, you're not allowed to say so anymore." (Economically Insecure)*

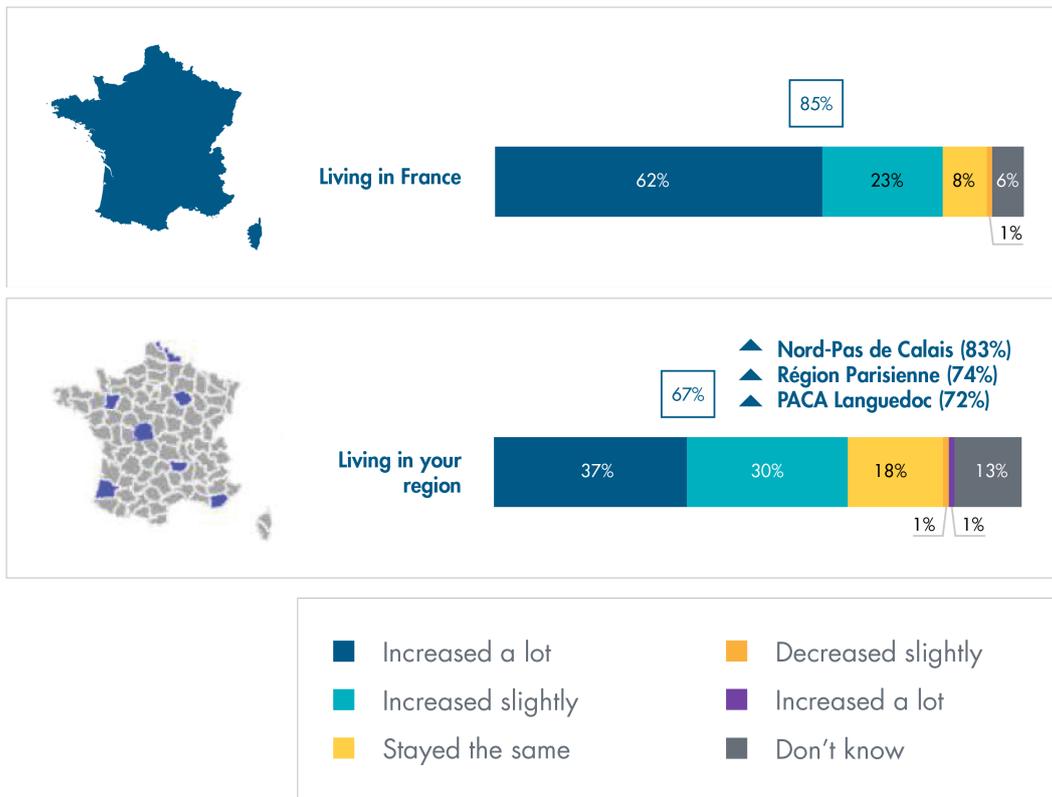
# 5. Attitudes towards Immigrants

## 5.1. Immigration and its Effects

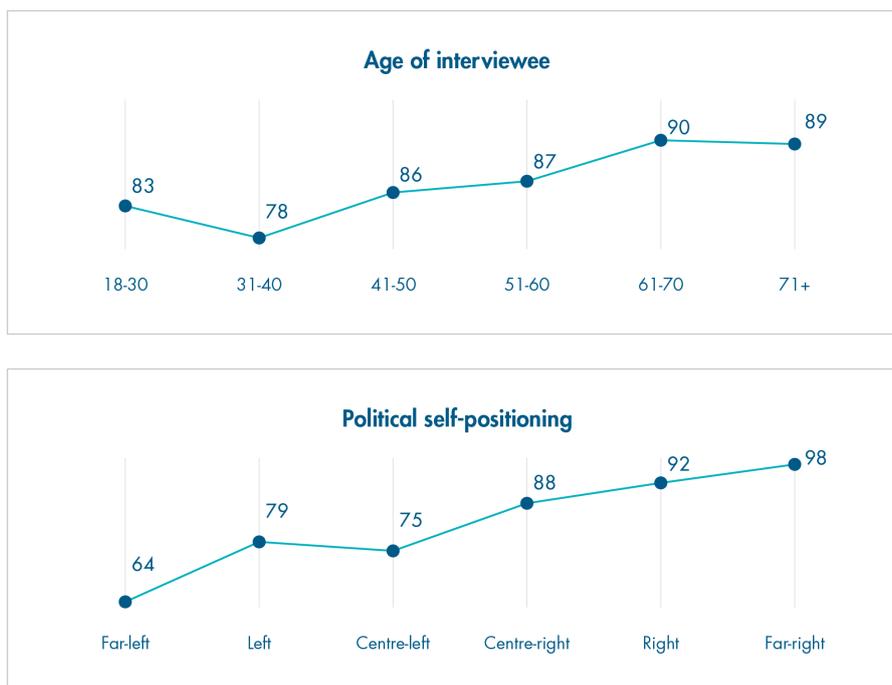
The high level of public attention paid to immigration issues in France has contributed to perceptions that levels of immigration have increased in recent years. 85 per cent of respondents say that the number of foreigners living in France has increased during the past five years, and 62 per cent feel that it has increased considerably. In fact, the delivery of residency permits to France has been fairly stable over this period, as has the net number of foreigners in France, according to the national statistics office INSEE.

These perceptions are likely to have been influenced by imagery that has shown large numbers of immigrants and refugees congregated in specific places such as the informal settlement in Calais, in the north of France (sometimes described as the ‘Calais effect’). The Calais settlement was labelled “the Jungle” and this term was also used to describe other settlements (especially in Paris), which were regarded as “mini-jungles”, contributing to perceptions of large people movements into France. This is despite the fact that actual numbers of refugees arriving in France were considerably lower than in countries such as Germany, Sweden, Greece and Italy.

**Question:** Over the last five years, has the number of immigrants [living in France / Living in your region]...?



Perception according to age and political self-positioning



**The survey revealed a dissonance between the perceived increase in immigrant population in general and what people respond when asked about an increase in the region where they live.** While 85 per cent say that the number of immigrants in France has increased in general, 67 per cent believe that there are more immigrants in their own region. This percentage rises to over 70 per cent in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur and Languedoc regions and the Paris area, and to over 80 per cent in Nord-Pas-de-Calais. Despite the dissonance, there is undeniably a widely held belief that numbers of immigrants are increasing.

**The majority of the population believes that immigration has had a negative impact on the country, regardless of their age, social status, or place of residence.** Only 16 per cent of the French people believe that immigration has played a positive role in French society, with a quarter adopting a neutral stance (‘neither positive nor negative’) and 56 per cent displaying a negative attitude towards immigration, of which almost a quarter (23 per cent) even view its impact as being ‘extremely negative’. **This is striking given that about a quarter of the French population has at least one immigrant grandparent.**

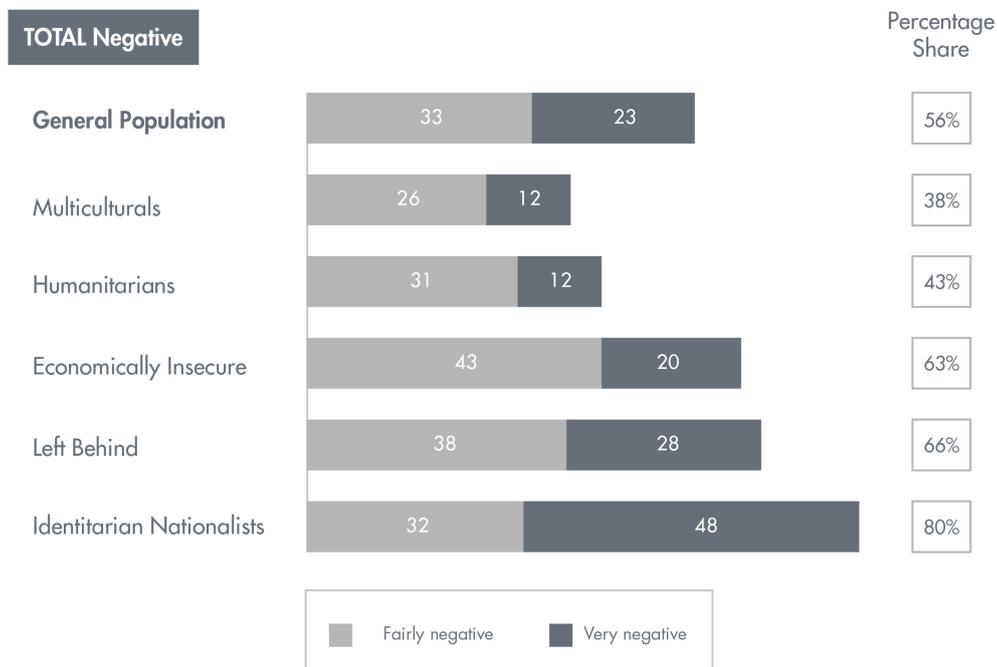
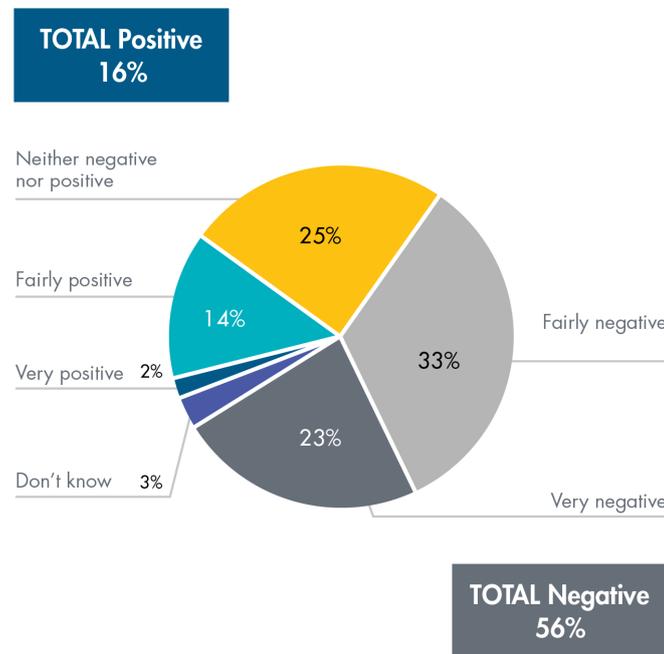
Attitudes about the impact of immigration vary significantly across the five segments. Overall, 56 per cent of respondents hold negative perceptions of the impact of immigration. The most negative views are held by the Identitarian Nationalists. 80 per cent of the Identitarian Nationalists view it as negative, and almost one in two see it as ‘very negative’ (48 per cent compared to 23 per cent of all French people).

Among the middle groups, perceptions of the impact of immigration are also negative: two thirds of the Left Behind and the Economically Insecure view the impact of immigration unfavourably (66 per cent and 63 per cent respectively). The Humanitarians hold a more sanguine view, although 43 per cent still view its effect as negative (and even among the Multiculturals, 38 per cent view it negatively).

One factor that may inflate these numbers is that some might be supportive of immigration per se, but are also very critical of France’s immigration and integration policies. From background research that More in Common conducted with French civil society groups in 2016, it is clear that many criticise how policies related to housing, education, and other aspects of integration have contributed to the marginalisation of immigrants in France. It is likely that some proportion of those who hold negative perceptions of the impact

of immigration attribute those perceptions to the failure of government policies rather than immigrants themselves. The research did not test this issue specifically, and it is an issue for future investigation.

**Question:** Generally speaking, would you say that immigration has had a positive or negative impact on France?



Negative perceptions of immigration relate to both the economic and cultural impacts that it can have in France. From a cultural perspective, the argument that immigration would be beneficial for France's cultural life, making it more lively and diverse, is rejected by 51 per cent of the French population (almost one

third of them extremely disagreeing). In this regard, this concern recalls the more widely visible tensions surrounding issues of identity, and the conflation that exists between religion, France’s cultural identity, and immigration.

The same results can be seen for the economic argument that emphasises how immigration contributes new talents and new opportunities to society, driving the country towards a more successful future: 55 per cent of the population do not agree with this idea, with one third of the French people again adopting the most opposed stance (31 per cent).

It is critical to understand the cultural and economic arguments – they influence the way in which the French form their opinions on immigration, and they are an important ideological marker. Around 20 per cent of the population stands by the belief that immigration has a positive impact on both the cultural and economic life of the country, viewing the arrival of more people as an opportunity. Around one quarter ‘neither agree nor disagree’ with these statements, demonstrating an attitude which is more moderate or ambivalent. The largest part of the population hold negative views of the impact of immigration, with almost a third of French people making up the group that is most resistant to receiving foreigners in France.

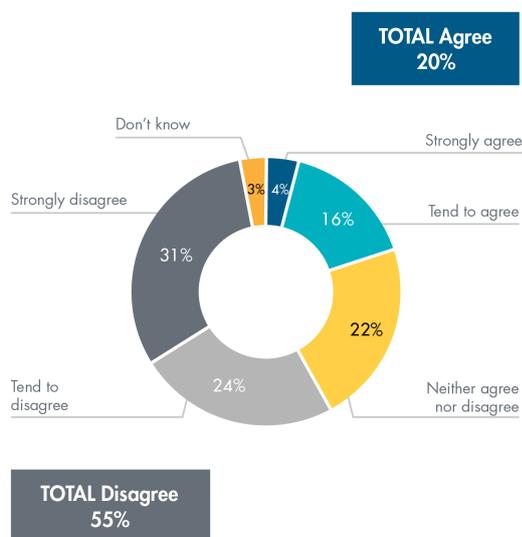
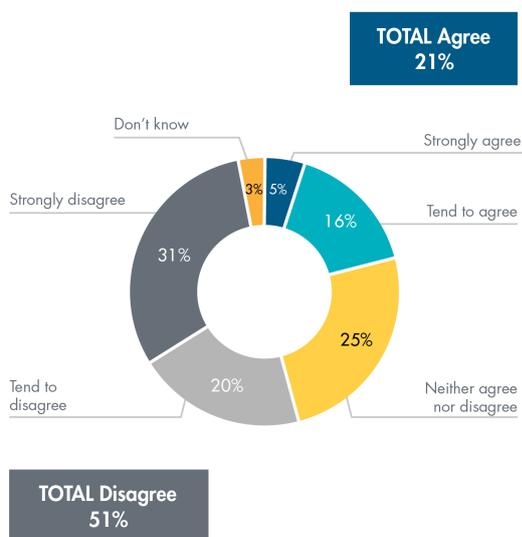
The most optimistic group of the population – and still, it is not highly optimistic – is primarily composed of Multiculturals, amongst which a third express a positive view of the cultural impacts (31 per cent) as well as the economic effects (33 per cent) that immigration has on the country. The Humanitarians also hold broadly positive views although not as strongly.

The Left Behind, and to an even greater extent, the Identitarian Nationalists, are the most opposed to immigration. In this first group, 62 per cent reject the idea of immigration has a positive cultural impact, and 68 per cent feel the same way at the economic level. The most uncompromising view of immigration is held by the Identitarian Nationalists: 76 per cent citing negative cultural impacts and 79 per cent negative economic impacts.

**Question:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

*Immigration nowadays is good for France's cultural life, making France a more vibrant and exciting place to live.*

*Immigration nowadays is good for France's economy, bringinG in new skills, new opportunities, and drive to succeed.*

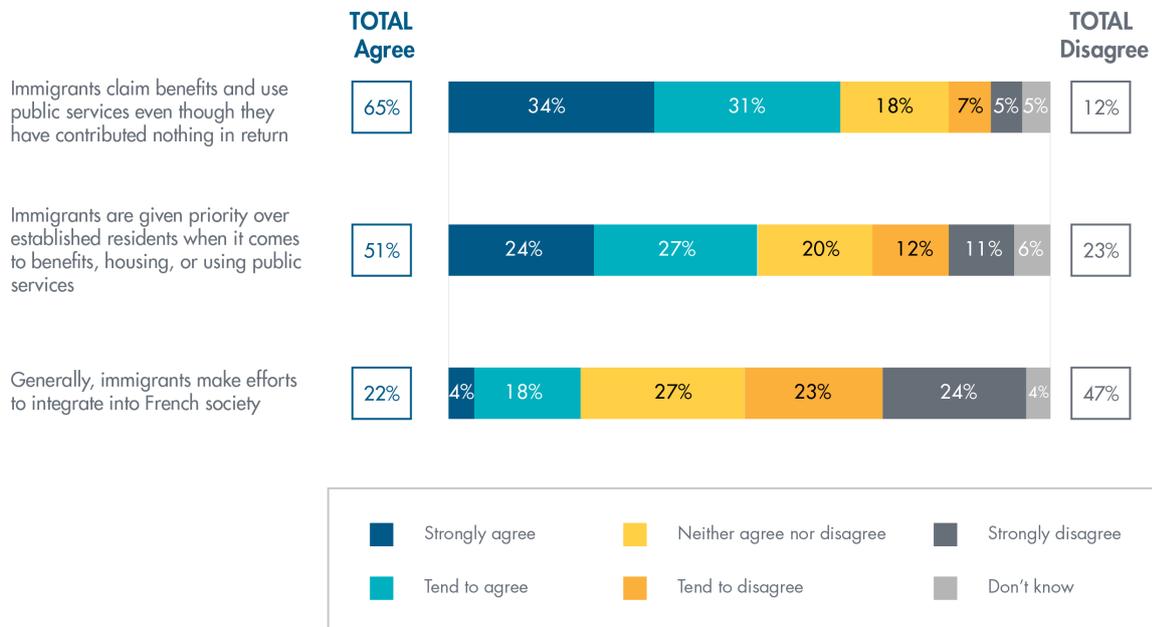


## 5.2. Immigration, Integration, the Employment Market, and the Welfare State

The attitude of many French people towards immigration - and more specifically towards immigrants - is generally negative, constituting a particularity of the French political spectrum, which the Front National joined 35 years ago. A recent study carried out for the Jean-Jaurès Foundation about the Front National's young activists aged between 15 and 30, showed that 70 per cent of young men and women were born in a family that supports the Front National, suggesting that the Front National's ideas are transmitted within the family from generation to generation. Based on the results of the current study, it seems that these ideas have also shaped and influenced the dialogue on how immigration is understood in France.

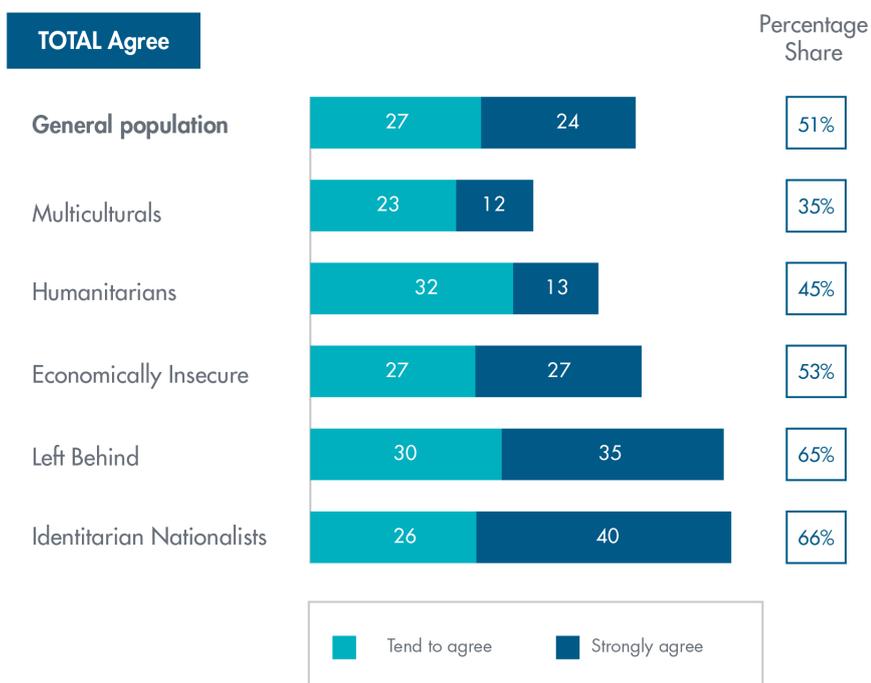
**The idea that immigrants receive aid and use public services even if they have not made any contributions to the system is widespread:** two thirds of the French population agree with this statement, of which a third agree entirely. Additionally, about half of the population believes that immigrants are given priority over residents when it comes to aid.

**Question:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

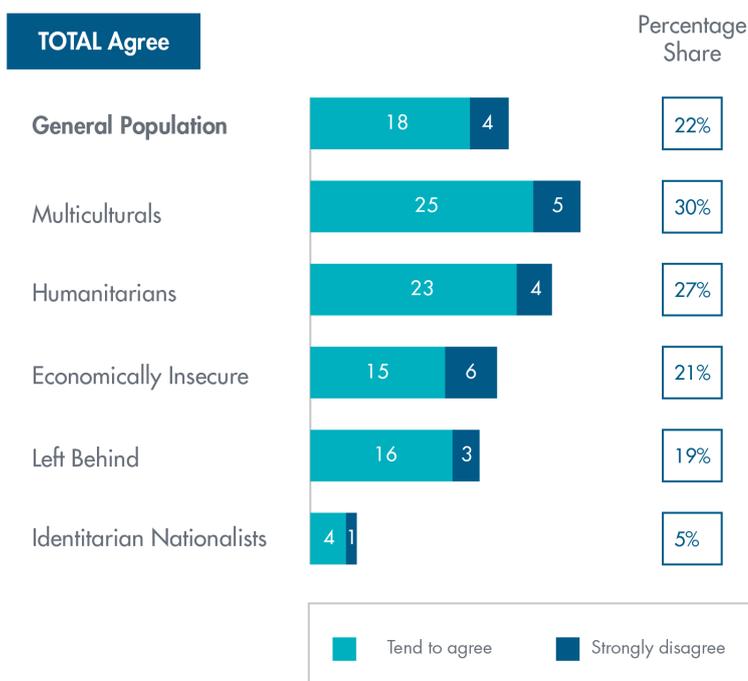


**Question:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

*Immigrants are given priority over established residents when it comes to benefits, housing or using public services*



*Generally, immigrants make efforts to integrate into French society*



**The rhetoric espoused by the Front National over the years has managed to take root in people's minds.** More recently, the landscape that has emerged has allowed for that rhetoric to blossom; a landscape most notably shaped by economic difficulties and the fear of a deteriorating social position, both of which have been visible for several years and have also been brought up during this study ("it is becoming more and more difficult for a person like me to succeed", etc.).

*"They have a lot of advantages, unlike the French" (Economically Insecure)*

*"OK, we need to help them, but we've built them some wonderful shelters to keep them safe whereas there are French people, people like us, out in the street, dying every day, sleeping near the subway entrances..." (Economically Insecure)*

**The reception of foreigners is therefore seen as an effort, a sacrifice, for which nothing can be expected in return.** Half of the French people believe that immigrants are not making any effort at all to integrate into French society. Only one French person in five support immigrants in this respect (22 per cent), with the rest of the population preferring not to say.

*"We have a limited amount to work with, and a number of beneficiaries. It's the lack of contributions which shocks me. When someone doesn't contribute anything, but has the right to access everything, that bugs me. Nowadays we have x per cent of people who pay income tax, and I get the feeling that a person who uses bits and pieces picks up the bill for everyone." (Economically Insecure)*

*"Integrating into our France. I have visited Morocco and Tunisia and I made an effort to fit in, I dressed myself as they do. If you wear a mini skirt, it's all 'look at how she's dressed, it's far too provocative'. When you go to the hammam you have to cover your head - OK, I accept that. But they want the same thing to happen over here." (Economically Insecure)*

*"People should leave if they don't want to make the effort to work. If they don't speak our language, they won't be able to find work" (Humanitarians)*

**Although these judgments are harsh, a degree of ambivalence is visible in the attitude towards immigrants.** The majority agrees that immigrants are willing to accept tough working conditions that French nationals would refuse: 56 per cent agree with the statement that immigrants are often prepared to work harder for lower wages (20 per cent think the opposite, this group being the most hostile towards the reception of foreigners in the country) and 46 per cent say that immigrants often do jobs that are necessary, those that French people no longer want to do (24 per cent disagree with this idea).

These opinions, however, can be interpreted in different ways and do not necessarily indicate support for immigrants. For example, on the issue of salary, the opinion that immigrants, in accepting lower wages, drag other wages down was one of the main arguments repeatedly made in the U.K. by Nigel Farage – leader of the pro-Brexit and anti-immigrant British party UKIP – and his supporters and was, arguably, a factor in many voters' decisions in favour of Brexit. It is also a perennial feature of the Front National's rhetoric in France.

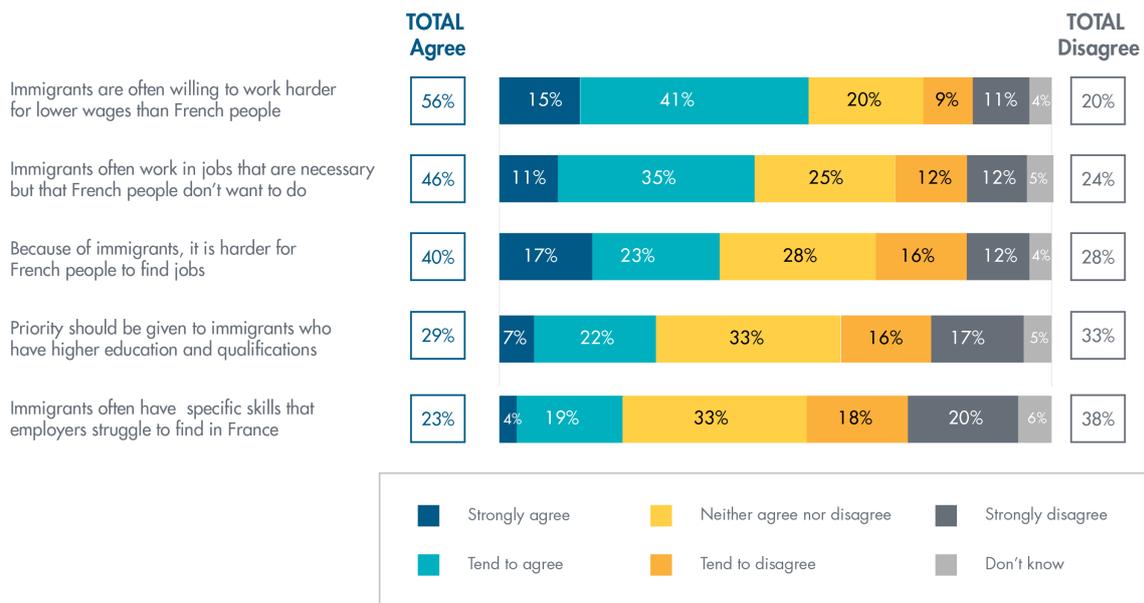
*"The black market; restaurant owners employ Indians for less money and therefore don't hire anyone else; that kills the competition" (Economically Insecure)*

*“That keeps wages low. It sets modernisation, investment and innovation back. It holds us back from modernising the country. It impedes us, and creates a strain on social policy later on. These people are exploited, but they still get social security benefits. That costs the rest of us. It’s like Kleenex - it’s disposable.” (Economically Insecure)*

**This aspect of immigration is tied to people’s perceptions of globalisation and its consequences on the economy: not just in terms of the country, but for French households too.** In Marine Le Pen’s speeches, globalisation is described as an opportunity, but only for big businesses; she argues that globalisation allows big corporations to bring a less expensive workforce to France, not opportunities for the French, who are, in fact, becoming victims of the situation.

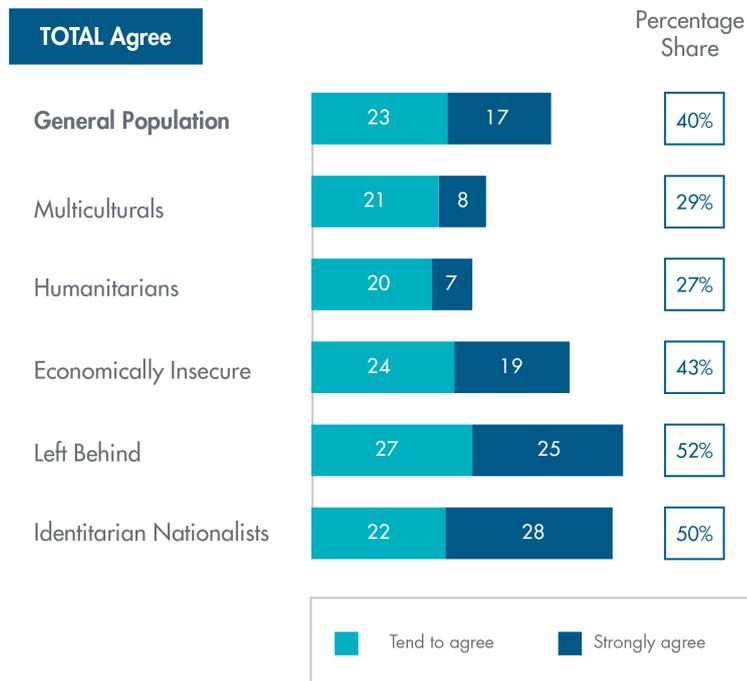
This idea is etched into public opinion: four French people in ten agree with the idea that it is more difficult for French people to find work due to the immigrants living in France, compared to only 28 per cent who disagree.

**Question:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?



**Question:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

*Immigrants in France have made it more difficult for French people to get jobs*



The option of ‘selective immigration’, a recurring theme for Nicolas Sarkozy during the presidential election campaign in 2012 that was intended to reconcile the French with the reception of skilled foreign workers as opposed to ‘inflicted immigration’, has fallen out of favour: 29 per cent of the French people believe that priority should be awarded to immigrants with higher levels of education and qualifications, 33 per cent are against this idea, and a further third prefer not to say. This demonstrates the extent to which the rejection of immigration in all its various forms has developed. In this respect, the rationale behind Germany’s widespread reception of immigrants, particularly from Syria and Iraq, does not work in the French context. In Germany, the argument that there is an aging population that requires the arrival of a young and skilled workforce is compelling, but it has little persuasive power in France.

*“In Germany, they have received 1 million immigrants. They have opened the floodgates, but they have an aging population so they needed to for the sake of their economy. They have had clothes made for them, but they have also given them a little handbook explaining how to behave: not insulting women, at the pool...”*  
 (Economically Insecure)

There are few French people who believe that ‘selective’ or ‘skilled’ immigration is appropriate. 23 per cent of those surveyed believe that immigrants often have very specific skills which employers struggle to find in France. Contrary, 38 per cent reject this argument, which was widely circulated in the UK by ‘Remain’ supporters during the referendum on leaving the European Union and related mostly to sectors such as health, where the lack of British graduates in the field has been counteracted by hiring foreign staff. Projections by the British National Health Service estimate that by 2020, the UK will need 16,000 more general practitioners, and that 100,000 nurses will need to be recruited by 2022.

*“I get the feeling that they tried to present the Syrians to us as an opportunity, as if they were trained, and had skills. That there were doctors among them...I don't want to be lied to.” (Economically Insecure)*

Differences between the segments can also be ascertained on these questions.

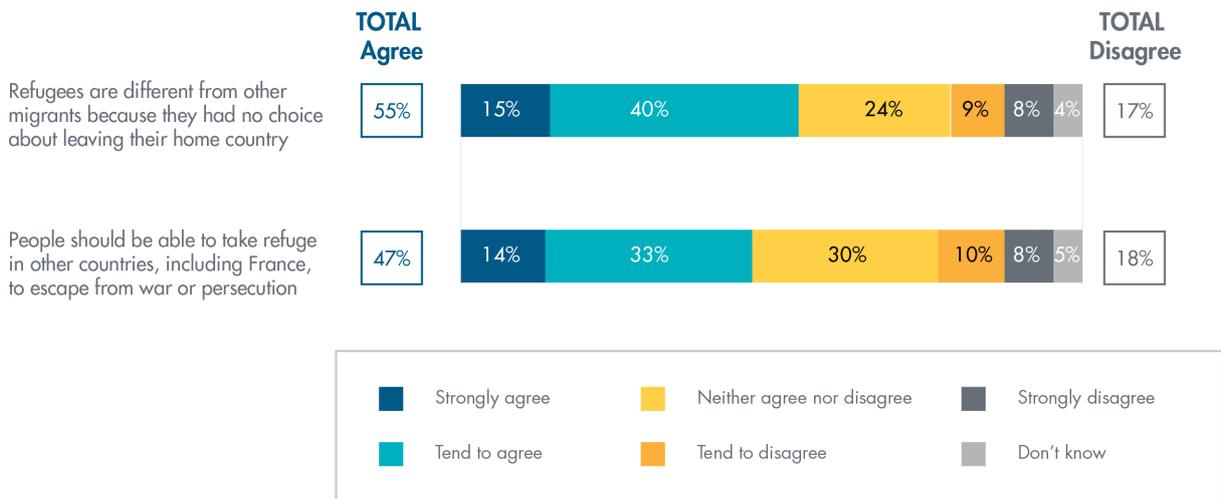
- The Multiculturals and the Humanitarians share a more positive (though still admittedly reserved) attitude towards immigrants across all the aspects that were probed. But it is interesting to note a feature here that is particular to the Humanitarians: this group contains the participants who gave the most positive responses, even more than the Multiculturals, regarding the difficulties that immigrants face upon arriving in France and the way in which they tackle them. 73 per cent of the Humanitarians believe that immigrants are often willing to work harder for lower wages (compared to 56 per cent of the French population overall); 62 per cent think that immigrants often do jobs which are necessary but that French people do not want to do (versus 46 per cent); and 30 per cent believe that immigrants often have very specific skills which employers struggle to find in France (versus 23 per cent).
- Similarly, it is possible to highlight an absence of features specific to the Economically Insecure group with respect to this issue; they hold opinions about immigrants, which are similar to the national average, with nothing to distinguish them either in terms of being particularly supportive or the opposite.
- The Left Behind and the Identitarian Nationalists display an attitude which is significantly more negative towards immigrants, with two different levels of intensity (the Identitarian Nationalists hold much stronger views). This rejection can be observed across all aspects mentioned and appears to be fuelled by motives that go beyond economic fears, especially for the Identitarian Nationalists. Indeed, ‘selective’ immigration does not appear to be an acceptable option in the eyes of the Left Behind (with the largest proportion – 39 per cent - saying that they are averse to the idea) and even more so for the Identitarian Nationalists, 42 per cent of whom completely reject this option (compared to 33 per cent of French people overall).

# 6. Attitudes towards Refugees

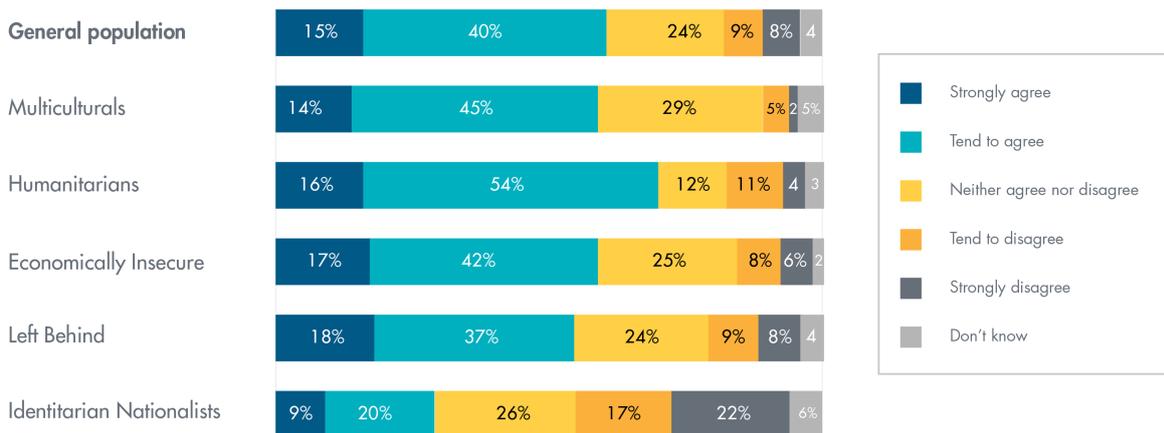
## 6.1. Reluctance to receive refugees despite acknowledging their special status

The majority of French people recognise the special status of refugees in immigrant flows: 55 per cent agree that refugees are different to other immigrants as they had no other choice but to leave their country of origin (17 per cent disagree with this statement, however, and 24 per cent have no opinion).

**Question:** Thinking specifically about refugees coming to France nowadays, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?



*Refugees are different from other migrants, because they had no choice about leaving their home country*



**Remaining loyal to France’s humanist tradition, a large part of the population (41 per cent) believe that “we should accept refugees in France as the reception of people fleeing war and violence is part of our country’s culture”. 15 per cent agree entirely with this statement, with the same percentage rejecting it.**

Many of the surveyed believe that European nations have to assume responsibility for the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, and should therefore bear it by welcoming refugees from these countries into their own. 43 per cent of the population agree with this statement, compared to 25 per cent who disagree with it.

In the same vein, almost one in two (47 per cent) believes that refugees should be able to seek refuge in other countries, including France, in order to escape war and persecution (18 per cent are against this idea and 30 per cent 'neither agree nor disagree'). Whilst almost half of the French population are united in having a positive attitude towards refugees in theory, there is nothing to suggest that they feel these refugees should be able to seek refuge in France any more so than in other neighbouring countries.

Beyond their theoretical positioning on the subject of refugees, when the focus shifts to the actual welcoming of refugees in France the picture that emerges is quite different, with many even questioning the veracity of the refugee status of some of the newly arrived in France.

*"With Aleppo, it's weird that we are only waking up to it 4 years after it started. They have been at war for 4 years. It's a blood bath, but we've already seen a war happening on TV" (Economically Insecure)*

One French person in two (51 per cent) believes that most of the foreigners wanting to come to France as refugees do not fit the criteria for this legal status (only 19 per cent view them as genuine refugees, 25 per cent prefer not to say), thus creating a way to justify their hostility regarding the reception of people coming from Syria or Iraq.

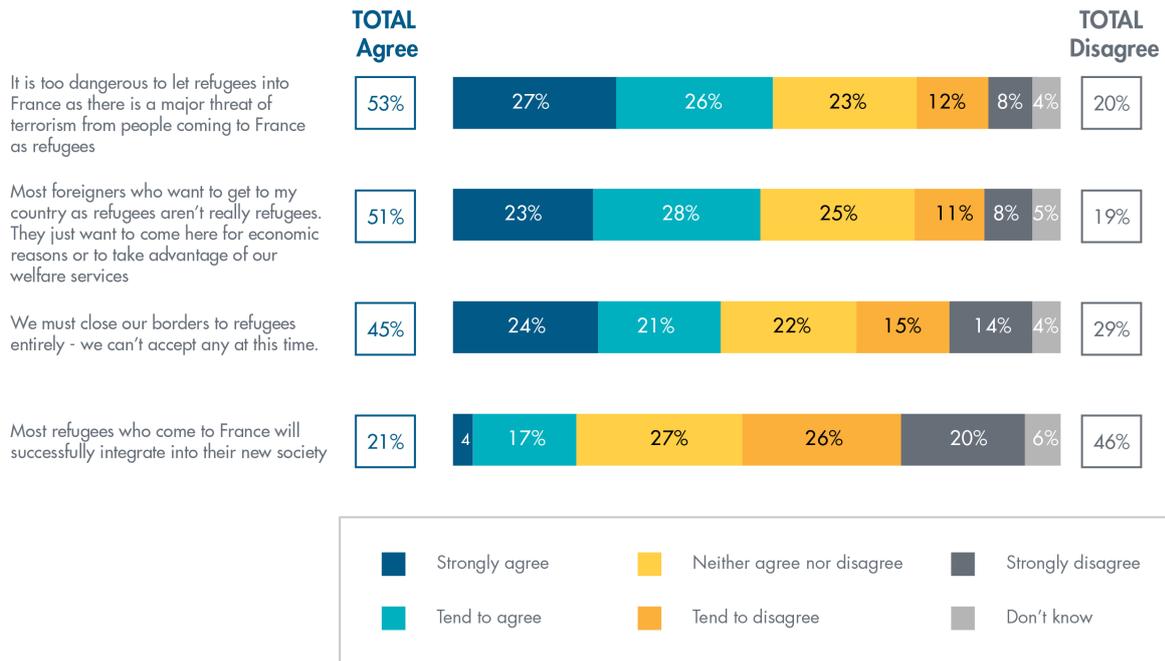
*"80 per cent of them are men. Where are the women? I reckon they're taking the piss out of me. The interviews are ridiculous. They don't investigate anything. I don't want to take responsibility for accommodating Syrians just because we don't have any way of checking that what they're saying is true." (Economically Insecure)*

Many of the respondents also explain their hesitance and doubts about the veracity of refugee status claims based on the perceived danger posed by refugees. The purported ties between refugee influxes and terrorist threats also has an effect in this respect. More than one French person in two (53 per cent) agrees with the statement "it is too dangerous to let refugees into France and there is a major threat of terrorism from people coming to France as refugees." A quarter of the respondents (27 per cent) say that this fear weighs heavily on their minds. In comparison, 20 per cent of those interviewed disagree with this statement and 23 per cent prefer not to say.

This argument has typically been espoused by certain political parties and after the conclusion of this study, it regained relevance after the attack carried out against the Christmas market in Berlin. Both national and European border control regained a top spot on many of the election manifestos introduced by the 2017 French presidential candidates.

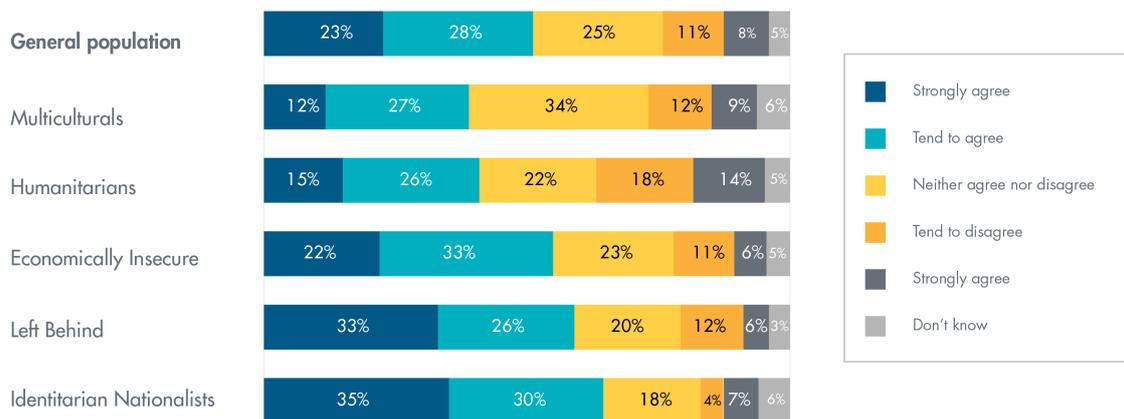
*"We have regained our reflexes, barbed wire and walls to prevent people from getting through, we have regained this identitarian closure, and increasingly more people want to regain our borders." (Humanitarians)*

**Question:** Thinking specifically about refugees coming to France nowadays, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?



**Question:** Thinking specifically about refugees coming to France nowadays, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

*Most foreigners who want to reach my country as refugees really aren't refugees. They just want to come here for economic reasons, or to take advantage of our welfare service*



**Question:** Thinking specifically about refugees coming to France nowadays, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

*We must close our borders to refugees entirely - we can't accept any at this time*



## 6.2. Conflating Refugees and Immigrants

French people – in general – are aware and understand the differences between the concepts of immigrant and refugee. However, this understanding of the distinction does not have an effect in the ways in which they form their attitudes and perceptions towards each one of them. Oftentimes, in public discourse, both **terms are used indistinctively to refer to people arriving as refugees from Syria or Iraq as for other immigrants**. The lack of differentiation between the two types of migratory situations seems to infiltrate the images citizens hold of each term, and explains why the vast majority of French people express similar attitudes towards the reception of refugees and immigration in general.

In this study, it was possible to examine whether distinctions were made by testing how pairs of words were associated with the terms 'refugees' and 'immigrants' with the finding that no real distinction is made and people's judgment of each is extremely similar. Refugees and immigrants are placed together on a scale ranging from 'violent' to 'peaceful'; the same occurs for the statement pair 'similar to me/different to me', as well as 'kind/malicious'. It is worth noting that for this last word pair, refugees and immigrants are placed, on average, closer to the 'malicious' end of the scale than the 'kind' end, showing a negative bias against them.

**Question:** Below you will see some pairs of words. For each pair, please move the slider to show where you would place the following group:



**Almost one respondent in two (45 per cent) consider themselves to be in favour of closing France's borders to migrants, including refugees** because – it is argued – the country is not currently able to host them. A quarter (24 per cent) of those surveyed is completely in favour of closing the borders. The number of French people considering reception, even if only in part, is no higher than 29 per cent.

The first argument that is put forward is that the French economy is too weak to accommodate an additional influx of people. Few French people believe that France can afford to open itself up to refugees and that it might have a moral obligation to do so: 18 per cent think it can afford it, compared to 59 per cent who believe it can't (and notably, 36 per cent are fiercely opposed to this statement).

**These beliefs need to be viewed in connection with the current levels of migratory movements – particularly surrounding welcoming of refugees - in Europe.** For Europeans, the consequences of opening up countries to this level of reception are difficult to measure; when faced with this type of unknown quantity, some of them take refuge behind the principle of prudence. The rhetoric used by French politicians and the media on this subject, with the wide use of terms such as 'wave', or even 'submersion', demonstrates how powerless the public authorities feel in the face of this mass exodus, which deposits thousands of people first in the seas, then onto the roads of Europe.

A large majority of French people (67 per cent) predict that "if France and Europe receive a lot of refugees, it will encourage even more people from places like African countries and Syria to come to Europe". One third of the people questioned (34 per cent) agreed completely with this idea, whilst only 11 per cent rejected it.

**These fears about receiving large amounts of foreigners implicitly carry with them some profound questions surrounding the country's identity. The question of culture has a strong influence in French people's minds.** Only 21 per cent of the people questioned agree with the idea that "the majority of refugees who come to France will succeed in integrating into society", compared to 46 per cent who think they won't. The focus group discussions confirmed the extent to which this cultural aspect represents the major obstacle to welcoming refugees in France. Many people understand 'cultural' to mean 'religious' and there is a widespread perception that the majority of people who have entered Europe over the past few years are predominantly from Muslim countries.

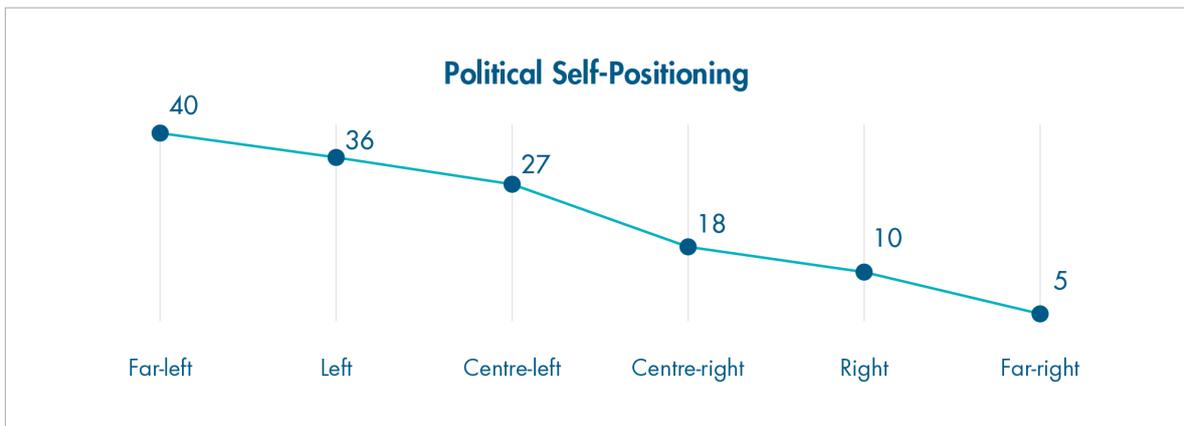
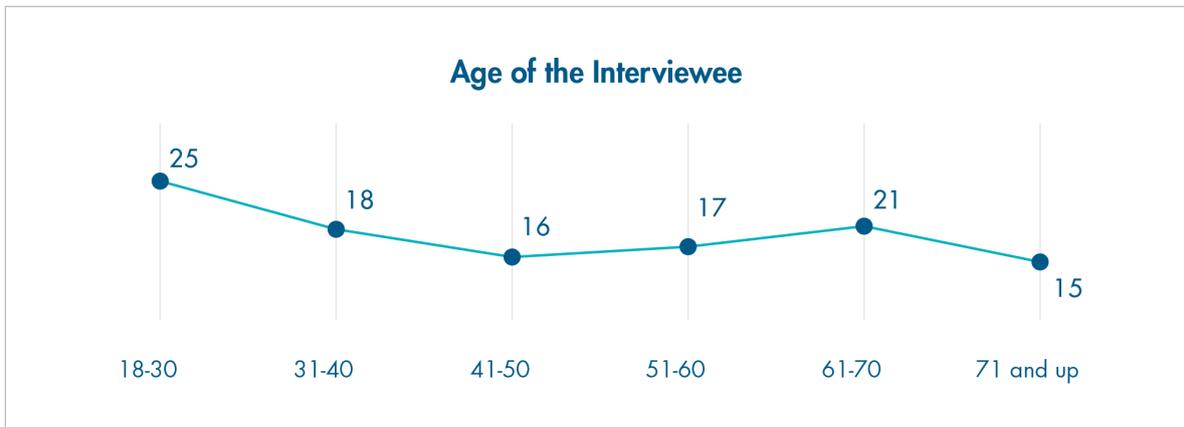
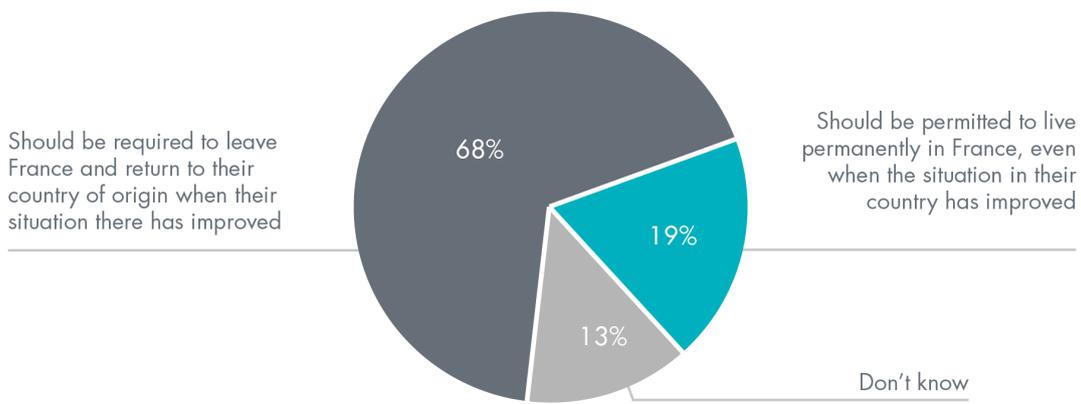
### 6.3. Assimilation as a sine qua non condition to staying in France

The French are wary about welcoming refugees into their country, with around a third of the population completely against it. Aside from this section of the population, opening borders - to a limited extent - may be considered, but within an extremely limited framework.

Firstly, few are prepared to accept refugees for the long-term: 68 per cent of the people questioned say that refugees should be obliged to leave France and return to their own countries once the situation there improves (19 per cent believe that refugees should be allowed to remain in France on a permanent basis, even when the crises in their countries of origin are over, and 13 per cent prefer not to respond).

The French do not seem to want to consider the option of receiving refugees, even on a temporary basis, unless the people coming to the country can prove that they have a genuine desire to integrate or, even, assimilate.

**Question:** In your view, the refugees that France accepts...



A large proportion of the population is sceptical of the idea that refugees currently coming to France promote a country that is more receptive to new ideas and cultures. In this respect, it is interesting to note the way in which secularism ('Laïcité') is viewed in various discourses, particularly those observed during the focus group discussions. Whilst the notion of laïcité that characterises the French Republican mainstay is held up as one of the primary markers of French identity, it is used more to justify a resistance to the acceptance of Islam in France than perhaps used in its original meaning.

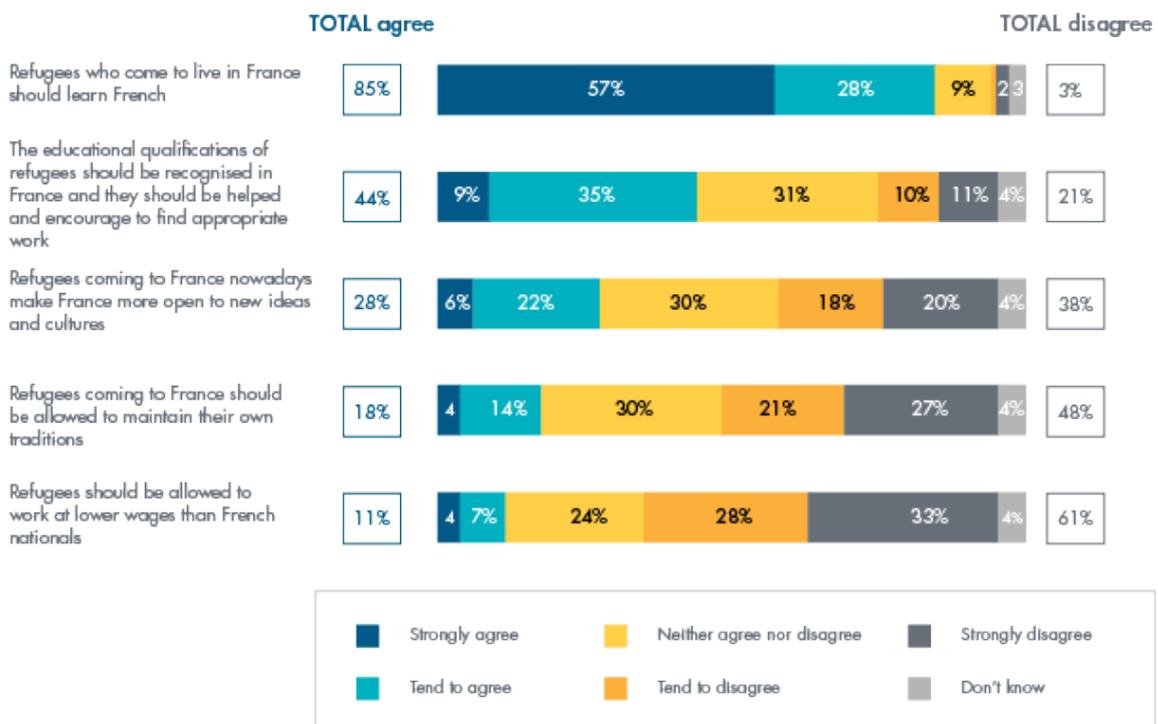
*"Preserving [religion] in private life, and passing on language, customs, cooking, songs, reading, arts and crafts...this can all be done without having to advertise it, and there's no need to make a big deal about it...that's an immigrant's job" (Humanitarians)*

*"It depends on where they're coming from, it's different; if they're from the Middle East, if they're Muslim, we need a social contract, so that this doesn't affect our own values. They don't need to abandon their own, but they need to try and adapt - for us it would be taking a step backwards. Assimilating is complicated." (Humanitarians)*

*"It's being appreciative of the culture, being open about the environment that you're in." (Economically Insecure)*

The largest part of the population (48 per cent) believes that the refugees coming to France should not be allowed to continue their own traditions. Less than one French person in five (18 per cent) would find it acceptable for them to continue living in accordance with their own culture when in France, and 30 per cent disagree with both options.

**Question:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about refugees coming to France nowadays?



According to the survey results, integration is achieved above all by learning French, which is a sine qua non condition for accepting the presence of refugees in the country. 85 per cent of the people questioned hold this opinion (of which 57 per cent say they 'completely agree' with the idea).

In addition to learning the language, those surveyed believe that integration also requires the incoming population to enjoy the same status as French people. According to the greatest proportion of French people, their qualifications and levels of education must be recognised in France (44 per cent, albeit 21 per cent are against the idea) and their terms of employment must be strictly identical to those of French employees to avoid lowering wage levels. Only 11 per cent believe that refugees should be allowed to work for a lower salary than French people, with 61 per cent rejecting this notion.

**In general, the segments show similar dynamics in terms of each group's relationship with refugees.** While the major trends observed across the entire population are reflected in the perceptions of each segment, there are also several particularities.

- In this respect, it is interesting to highlight the compassionate stance that characterises the Humanitarians: this is the only group that widely acknowledges the fact that refugees are different to other immigrants due to the reasons that led them to leave their country of origin (70 per cent believe this, compared to 55 per cent of the population), as well as the fact that it is necessary for them to seek refuge (63 per cent compared to 47 per cent overall). The Humanitarians are also the most likely to reject the idea that it would be too dangerous to receive refugees due to the threat of terrorism (37 per cent, compared to 20 per cent of the population).
- However, despite this welcoming stance, most of the Humanitarians and the Multiculturals only see the reception of refugees as being a short-term solution: 58 per cent of the former and 55 per cent of the latter believe that refugees should return to their own countries once the situation there allows them to do so (compared to 68 per cent of the overall population).
- There are some differences between the Multiculturals and the Humanitarians. On the one hand, they differ in their way of understanding the practicalities of reception. On the other hand, they view assimilation and integration differently. The Humanitarians think more similarly to the overall population, favouring assimilation, whereas the Multiculturals allow more space for cultural differences. Studying the language appears to be more essential for the Humanitarians (96 per cent believe that refugees should learn French compared to 78 per cent of the Multiculturals and 85 per cent of the overall population). Their views also differ regarding whether the refugees who arrived in France should be able to continue with their own traditions: 50 per cent of the Humanitarians are averse to the idea, whilst only 29 per cent of the Multiculturals oppose it. This same division can be seen regarding the option for refugees to work for lower wages than French people: The Humanitarians tend to oppose this idea (highest level of disagreement alongside the Left Behind), whilst the Multiculturals are at the other end of the scale as the group that is most inclined to accept this scenario (only 49 per cent disagree with it).
- The Economically Insecure tend to be close to the national average on questions about refugees and immigrants yet their opinions on closing the borders differ. In this respect, their opinions are closer to those of the Left Behind and (albeit to a lesser extent), to those of the Identitarian Nationalists. Most in this group believe that France must completely close its borders to refugees as France is, currently, not able to receive them (53 per cent compared to 45 per cent of the overall population; 55 per cent of the Left Behind and 67 per cent of the Identitarian Nationalists).
- On this basis, most of the Economically Insecure stand with the Left Behind and the Identitarian Nationalists in rejecting the long-term accommodation of refugees: 75 per cent believe that refugees should be obliged to leave France when the situation in their countries of origin improves, as do 75 per cent of the Left Behind and 84 per cent of the Identitarian Nationalists

- However, when it comes to the conditions of their stay, the Economically Insecure break away from the two most resistant groups. The Left Behind and, to a greater extent, the Identitarian Nationalists stand out as having a more hard-line position than the overall French population, the Economically Insecure convey a more measured feeling, similar to the national average, and do not particularly stand out on any of the aspects pertaining to the conditions of accommodation included in this study.
- The Left Behind and the Identitarian Nationalists have similar positions on the issue of conditions for reception. These two groups have generally negative attitudes regarding accepting refugees. The Identitarian Nationalists reject the idea of having refugees in the country far more categorically, going as far as to reject any possibility of assimilation. As for the Left Behind, they appear more positive regarding a scenario in which refugees may assimilate, whilst rejecting any possibility of refugees being able to enjoy a different status from the French people.
- The Identitarian Nationalists are significantly more likely to reject the idea that refugees foment a country which is more receptive to new ideas and cultures (67 per cent reject it - the only group in which this perception is held by the majority - compared to 47 per cent of the Left Behind and 38 per cent of the overall population).
- There are also differences between the Left Behind and the Identitarian Nationalists with regards to whether refugees should be allowed to work for lower wages: 70 per cent of the Left Behind, who show high levels of concern about the economy as a result of globalisation, are against this idea. The Identitarian Nationalists appear to be less averse to it: 59 per cent do not support it. This emphasises the fact that each of these groups demonstrates a different type of reluctance. This reluctance stems from the perceptions of a fundamentally different ideological base: a feeling of abandonment for one group and the question of identity for the other.

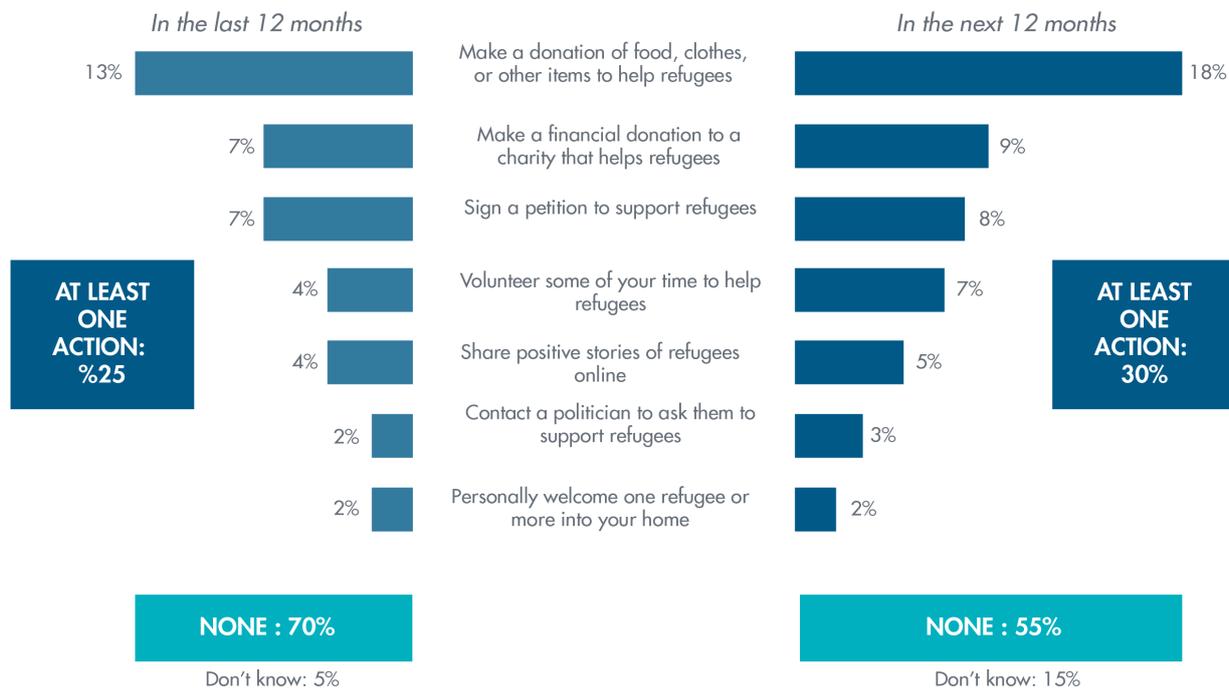
#### 6.4. Engagement and Activities in Support of Refugees

Although most of the population demonstrate various fears about opening the borders to refugees, a significant portion support having a reception policy which relies more on voluntarism and claim they are ready to get involved. While government action in the matter appears sufficient, or even too substantial to a significant part of the population (30 per cent believe that it is sufficient and 38 per cent think that the public authorities should do less to help refugees), **17 per cent of French people call for an aid policy which is more volunteer-based.** This part of the population is predominantly located on the left side of the French political spectrum: 55 per cent of those who are located to the extreme left would like to see a more ambitious aid policy, as would 28 per cent of the French people who see themselves as left-wing and 26 per cent of those who place themselves as centre-left.

Without waiting for government action, **a quarter of French people said last September that they had already, over the course of the previous twelve months, taken action to help refugees** (mostly through donations of money, food, or clothes). At the end of the study, the number of people questioned who say that they intend to give aid to the refugees coming to France was as high as 30 per cent (15 per cent prefer not to say, which suggests indecision rather than a refusal to act). People mainly plan to contribute via donations.

**Question:** Which of the following, if any, have you done in the last 12 months to help refugees in France?

And which of the following, if any, do you think you will do in the next 12 months to help refugees in France?



The driving force behind this desire to help is a **humanist vision of their place within society, the primary driver of people’s willingness to mobilise**. 42 per cent of the French people who currently help refugees or who intend to do so cite a moral responsibility as their motivation, 19 per cent refer to their personal beliefs or religion, and 17 per cent to a feeling of compassion.

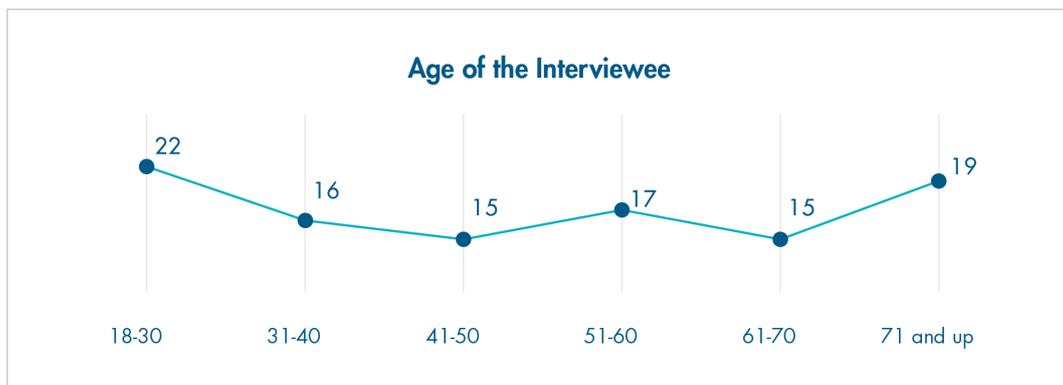
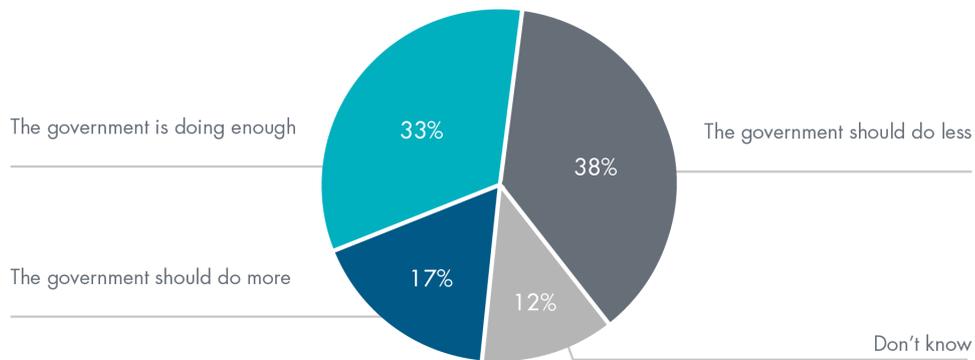
Different things prompt people to act. Discussions with friends or family are most frequently cited, with opinion leaders traditionally as the most effective conduits (32 per cent). In addition to the role played by those around them, it seems that action was also widely the result of a more private concern surrounding the issue of refugees, which arose either by seeing articles in the press or televised broadcasts depicting the reality of refugee life (28 per cent cite a story about refugees that they saw in the media) or by coming close to some of them (21 per cent said they donated because they had personal encounters with refugees).

However, generating a greater level of involvement that goes beyond supporting organisations or donations seems hard, especially if the proposed solutions revolve around an Anglo-Saxon culture of ‘community’ rather than the traditional French approach, which favours using a structure of collaborating experts as intermediaries.

As an example, the reaction of French people to the suggestion of establishing a mentorship program, akin to the one existing in Canada (and in some form in France) is extremely mixed. Such a program would aim to help refugees integrate into jobs, schools, and communities with support from groups of ordinary people (neighbours, churches and schools, for example) who agree to ‘mentor’ a refugee. They are thus able to contribute either practically or financially to help the mentee obtain housing, clothes, and feed themselves. Help could be given for a year, or even longer. In this research, the concept was introduced and explained to the participants but the response did not seem very positive. 32 per cent said they would like to see it implemented. 20 per cent said that they could probably participate in an aid scheme such as this and only 4 per cent appeared convinced and demonstrated a clear interest.

Between segments, there are differences in support to this type of program. The most supportive are the Humanitarians, 46 per cent of whom would like to see a program like this implemented, followed by the Multiculturals, 40 per cent of whom support it.

**Question:** Do you think that France's government is doing enough to help refugees that are coming to France, or do you think it should do more or less?

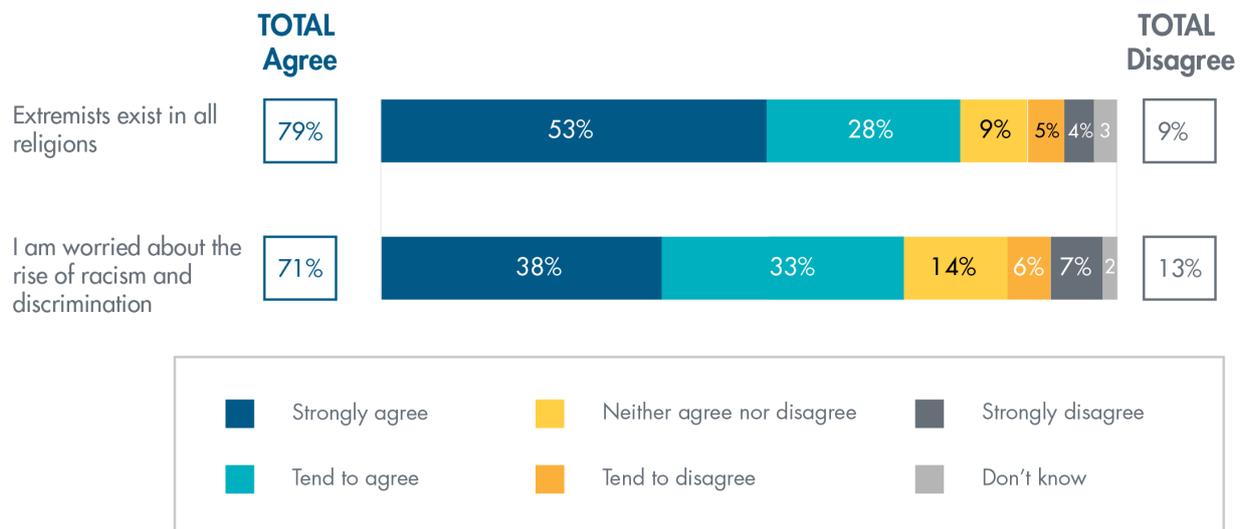


## 7. Attitudes towards Muslims and Islam

Public opinion trends towards refugees and immigration are strongly determined by opinions of Islam, which is perhaps the central determinant of people's views on refugees, immigration, and otherness in France (e.g. opposition to Islam usually goes hand in hand with opposition or resistance to immigration). Whereas in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Poles and Italians were the main recipients of French fears and rejection of otherness, Muslims bear the brunt of this a century later (along with the Roma, another group that was frequently cited in the qualitative research). Islam is seen with fear and mistrust by large swathes of the French population.

This said, the majority of the population agree with the proposition that extremists exist in all religions (79 per cent) and that a rise in racism and discrimination is worrying (71 per cent, of which 38 per cent are extremely worried about it).

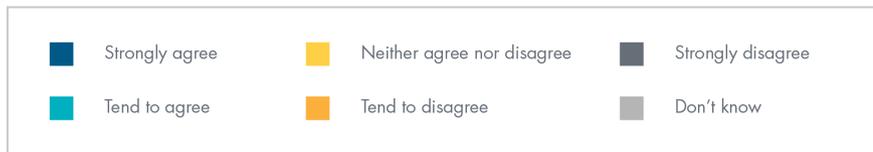
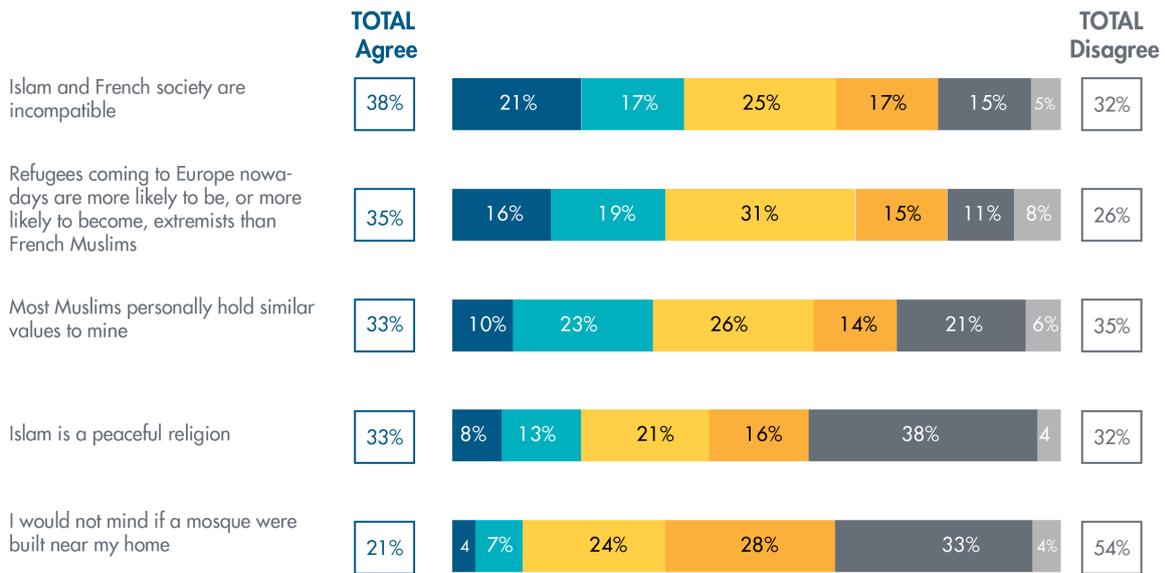
**Question:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?



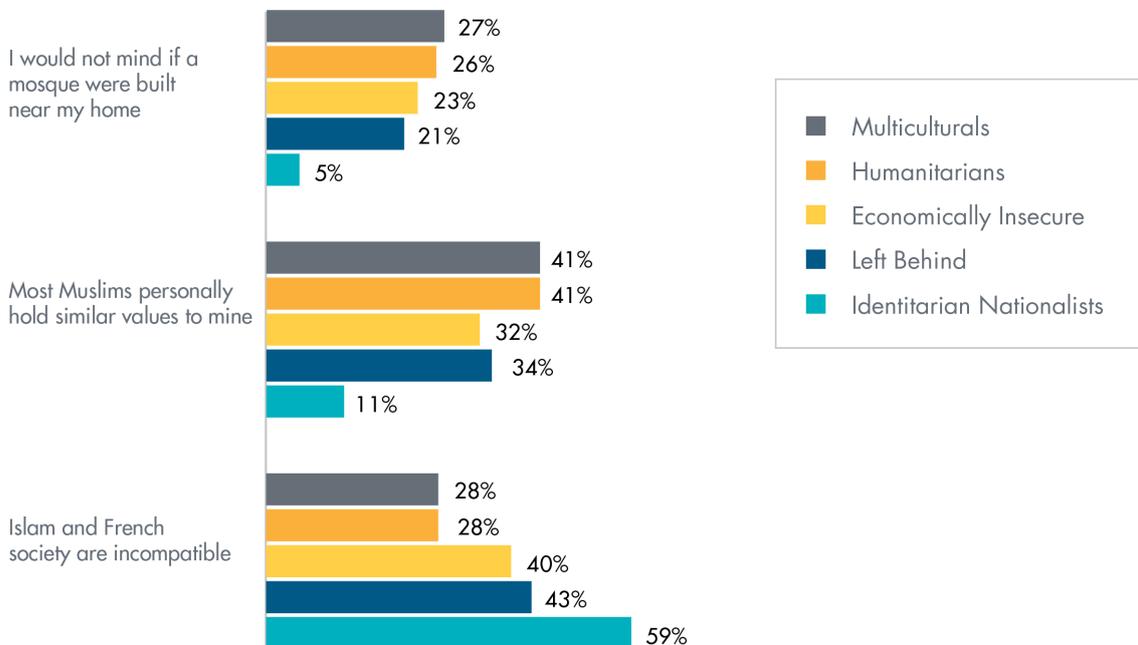
Opinions toward Islam influence how other opinions and attitudes are formed. Concern about the rise of racism and discrimination is remarkably widespread among a large majority of the French population. However, not **a single person in the Identitarian Nationalists group expressed concern about a rise in racism and discrimination** (disaggregated: 71 per cent are not concerned and 29 per cent prefer not to say.) In this particular aspect, the contrast between the Identitarian Nationalists and the Left Behind is stark – 85 per cent of the Left Behind are worried about a surge in racism and discrimination.

When we examine the attitudes of French people towards Islam in more detail, **a relatively high level of distrust can be seen. This points to one of France's biggest challenges in welcoming refugees and immigrants: the perceived incompatibility of Islam with France's traditional values and culture, which is a source of tensions fanned by the Front National and other extreme voices in France.**

**Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?**



**TOTAL AGREE**



The results of the survey show that, in general, the French population considers that Muslims have had and will have difficulties integrating into French society. Similar opinions were voiced by the participants of the focus group discussions.

*“All the immigrants before this have been from the same culture” (Economically Insecure)*

*“I just don’t know what to think. The people coming from Syria have a right to a different life, but integration? Can they do it? What if they don’t? There’s the issue of language, of culture. What happens if they don’t integrate? We will have more terrorist problems to deal with” (Economically Insecure)*

*“It is just not compatible with women’s rights; nowadays we live in a secular democracy, and I don’t want to go backwards” (Humanitarians)*

There are more French people who consider Islam to be incompatible with French society (38 per cent) than people who consider it to be compatible (32 per cent). The context of this study (with the field research being carried out in September, a few weeks after the attack in Saint-Etienne du Rouvray) may have exacerbated this sentiment yet something more fundamental seems to be at the core of these beliefs. As expressed during the focus group discussions – and as it appears in the survey – generally, it is the value systems that are deemed incompatible with each other by a large part of the population: a third of the French people believe that Muslims share similar values to them, with the same proportion (35 per cent) refuting this statement.

**According to respondents, this difference, or this perceived cultural incompatibility, revolves partly (and prominently) around the role of women in society in, or attributed to, Islam.** The French people questioned during the qualitative phase of this study also talk about their fear of seeing Muslims imposing their religion. The incompatibility (more keenly felt by the Economically Insecure) would refer as much to Islam as to the (perceived) desire of Muslims to avoid the principle of laicism.

*“Take the Syrians. In their culture, women do not occupy the same place in society as they do in ours. Looking at our history, women have gained rights over the course of several centuries. Over there they are oppressed. Everything is different, so there is a culture shock. That is what is going to cause problems when it comes to integration. They are not used to seeing liberated women, smoking and driving cars. It is an attack on their freedom.” (Economically Insecure)*

*“It is not their place to impose a different set of rules. I put a skirt on if it’s hot outside. That is Islam’s problem - not mine.” (Economically Insecure)*

*“In Sevran we are given to understand that women have no place in a cafe. To me, that is shocking.” (Economically Insecure)*

*“We have a history here in France where religion is considered apart. They haven’t evolved to this point over there” (Humanitarians)*

These widely held concerns also influence the way in which specific issues are evaluated. For example, the majority of the population would not want a mosque to be built near their homes (5 per cent of the Identitarian Nationalists would not mind to 27 per cent of the Multiculturals, a percentage that is still low).

At the core of these reservations lies a conflation – reinforced by members of the far-right – between (Islamic) terrorism and immigrant flows: one third of the French people think that the refugees currently

arriving in Europe are more likely to be or to become extremists than French Muslims (with 26 per cent of the population rejecting this idea and 39 per cent preferring not to say). This link informs citizens' rejection of newcomers and is reinforced by other notions, such as the belief that French Muslims are also open to radicalisation and could potentially become terrorists. In a more general sense, a link between Islam and violence exists in the minds of many French people; a third of those surveyed believe that Islam is not a peaceful religion (32 per cent), compared to a third who do believe that it is peaceful.

When it comes to attitudes toward Islam, the segments can be classified into three different camps.

- **Firstly, the Multiculturals and the Humanitarians share a significantly more benign view of Islam.** Their views are the least negative, especially amongst the Humanitarians, who more widely reject the assertion that this religion may be incompatible with French society (45 per cent compared to 29 per cent of the Multiculturals). These two groups completely agree on the notion that Muslims share their values (41 per cent within these two groups believe that similar values are shared by them and Muslims, compared to a third of the overall population) and on Islam's peaceful nature.
- **The Multiculturals are slightly more comfortable with the construction of a mosque near their homes** (only 38 per cent would be against it, compared to 50 per cent of the Humanitarians and 54 per cent of the overall population).
- **The second camp encompasses the Economically Insecure and the Left Behind.** These two groups share similar outlooks on Islam. Most of them express distrust and they also fear that Islam, as a religion, could destabilise the country. However, they do not seem to be more inclined to consider Islam as more violent or pass a harder judgment on this religion than the rest of the population. In this respect, a slightly higher percentage of interviewees in these two groups believe that refugees arriving in Europe are likely to be, or more likely to become, extremists than French Muslims (40 per cent and 39 per cent respectively, versus 35 per cent overall).
- Their opinions regarding the similarity of Muslim values with their own, as well as their views on the peaceful nature of this religion, are in keeping with those observed across the range of all interviewees, as is the case for the construction of a mosque near their home.
- **The third camp includes the Identitarian Nationalists, most of whom demonstrate a much higher rate of rejection than was registered across the population.** The majority of people in this group view Islam as a religion that is incompatible with French values and laws and see it as a source of fear in terms of it posing a terrorist threat. They reject any similarity between Muslim values with their own and the peaceful nature of this religion. 78 per cent of the Identitarian Nationalists would be opposed to the erection of a mosque near their homes. The views of the Identitarian Nationalists clearly demonstrate the extent to which tensions surrounding issues of identity influence the attitude that they take towards society - tensions, which in this respect, are less common amongst the Left Behind.

## 8. Message Testing

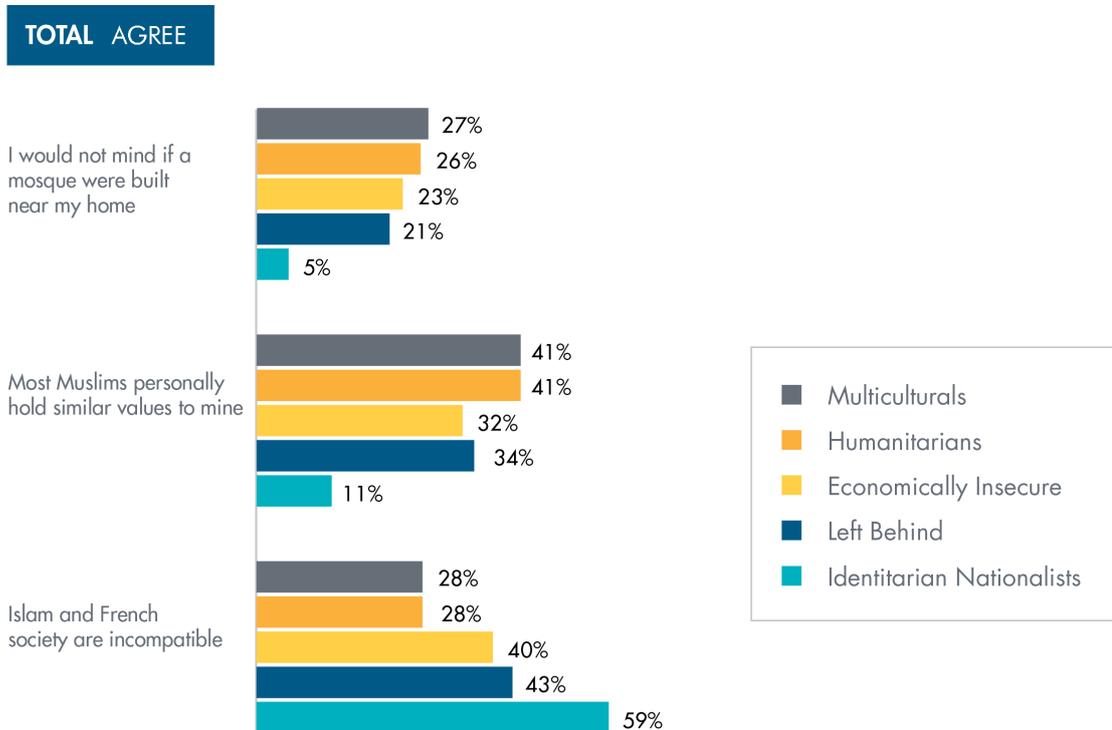
In the context of this study, various messages were tested. The message testing allows us to identify what kind of arguments and language have more persuasive power and influence. Initially, the interviewees were asked to express their opinion about the number of refugees accepted in France. They then received messages covering various aspects, ranging from humanitarian to cultural and economic content. These messages were then evaluated according to their persuasive power and ability to produce a shift in people's opinions about how many refugees France should accept (should it decrease, stay the same, or increase?).

**Question:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	It is convincing	It makes me more likely to support France accepting refugees
For decades, people have come to France from different backgrounds and with different beliefs. So long as they work hard, learn the language, and contribute to society, there is room for them here.	51%	39%
If I were from another country and fleeing terrible circumstances, I would want France to offer me protection	46%	34%
No one wants extremists in France, but many refugees have suffered the most from extremists. This is especially true for refugees from Syria and Iraq, many of whom have fled their homes, left behind friends and family, and abandoned their jobs. Refugees are not our enemies; they are the victims of our enemies.	44%	32%
Many religions - including Christianity - have faced the problem of having violent extremists among their ranks. We cannot allow our views of Muslims to be shaped by a few extremists.	42%	27%
Many of the refugees entering Europe are fleeing the oppression of radical Islamism or authoritarian dictatorships. As a country founded on freedom and equality, it is our responsibility to be true to French values and welcome those who are not as fortunate as ourselves.	38%	28%
World War II and its aftermath forced millions of people around the globe to become refugees. Today, different wars have driven millions to flee their homes. France should learn from history and open our doors to those who are trying to escape to safety.	38%	29%

**Question:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

*For decades, people have come to France from different backgrounds and with different beliefs. But so long as they work hard, learn the language, and contribute to society, there is room for them here.*



It appears that **the most compelling rhetoric, and the most likely to encourage French people to engage in the support of refugees, is the one that refers to the ability of refugees to integrate**, echoing the idea of the ‘Republican melting pot’. For example, we tested the message “For decades, many people of different backgrounds and beliefs have come to France. However, as long as these people work hard, learn the language and contribute to society, we are able to accommodate them”. Upon seeing this message, a majority of the French people (51 per cent) deemed the argument convincing, and 39 per cent thought it increased the likelihood of them supporting the accommodation of refugees in France (almost double the number who support opening the borders - around 20 per cent).

Also tested during the qualitative phase, this argument has the advantage of being more specific and current than other statements that were put forward for participants to consider. The idea that reception is based upon a contract between France and the immigrant, in a logical sequence of rights and duties, meets with the expectations of the two segments questioned, suggesting that it is essential that ‘rules of integration’ are established in order to ensure that people can ‘live in harmony’.

*“It’s more factual, more specific, more in keeping with the times. Emotions are kept out of it.” (Economically Insecure)*

However, this argument rarely seems to suffice on its own. The French people questioned during the focus groups believe that it is actually only the first step that needs to be taken:

- For the Economically Insecure, in addition to respecting the laws, habits, and customs of France, immigrants should also show an appreciation for the country itself in their behaviour and attitudes towards it.

*“Something is missing - appreciation, love for the country”  
(Economically Insecure)*

- For the Humanitarians, it is France that needs to demonstrate consistency: if the country decides to accommodate immigrants, steps must be taken (and both human and financial resources made available) to guide them through the arrival process and provide them with education.

*“If they want to stay they need to integrate, but we must give them the resources, the codes to live by, and tell them how they should behave so that they can fit in”  
(Humanitarians)*

*“They’ve arrived in my town and they’re being aggressive towards people - it’s not their fault, they’ve been fed, housed, cleaned up, but there’s no guidance or support to go with that. It’s a shame; there’s no one there to teach them, it’s the volunteers that have to do it” (Humanitarians)*

The rest of the messages varied in their persuasive power but were not as compelling. The messages that relied on shared humanity were well received. For example, the following message, which relies on reciprocity and empathy: “If I were from another country and I was running away from a terrible situation, I would want France to offer to protect me”, is convincing to 46 per cent of the people questioned and would increase the number who would support welcoming refugees to 34 per cent of the French population.

The arguments that referred to a common enemy had limited persuasive power, for example: “No one wants to see extremists in France, but many refugees have already suffered enough because of extremism”. The message “Refugees are therefore not our enemies, but the victims of our enemies” was favourably received by 44 per cent of people questioned and increased the level of acceptance to 32 per cent of the population and “Many religions, including Christianity, have had to deal with the presence of extremists within their ranks” performed similarly. 42 per cent of the surveyed found the statement “We cannot let our opinions of all Muslims be influenced by a handful of extremists” to be convincing but the number of people actually convinced by it does not amount to more than 27 per cent.

*“My parents were in this position so I don’t want to say no, they shouldn’t come here, but my parents were from a French culture. Under Nasser. They loved France.”  
(Economically Insecure)*

*“I would come, but I would try to fit in. But I was born here. Born in Lorraine. They waged war there with Hitler, and I would have absolutely loved for there to have been a receiving country for me to go to, if I had been able to escape France. I would have learned the language.” (Economically Insecure)*

*“‘Protection’ doesn’t imply a desire to integrate in a professional sense - it means that they’re seeking refuge, but that’s all” (Humanitarians)*

**Messages which call out to French people’s sense of morality are not particularly effective. Viewed as ‘guilt-mongering’, they are mostly rejected by the people they are showed to, and therefore appear to be counter-productive.** Examples include the argument based on French values: “Many of the refugees arriving in Europe are fleeing oppression under radical Islamists or autocratic dictatorships. As a country founded on the principles of liberty and equality, it is our duty to remain loyal to our French values and welcome those who have not been as lucky as us”. Only 38 per cent of the interviewees found

this argument to be convincing, with 28 per cent saying that it had a positive impact on their inclination to support the arrival of refugees. In the same vein, the argument that “the Second World War and its aftermath meant that millions of people around the world had to become refugees. Today, other wars have driven millions of others to flee their homes. France should learn from history and welcome those who try to escape to safety” is viewed positively by 38 per cent of the population, with less than a third believing that this message would increase the chances that they would support accepting refugees in France.

The different segments rated the persuasive power of the messages differently. The Multiculturals and the Humanitarians are the most sympathetic to these messages. The Humanitarians are the most receptive. Each of the messages tested appears convincing to most of the people in this group (and it is the only group where an impact such as this is measurable across all messages).

A message referring to the refugees’ ability to integrate was also tested, but it is the one viewed as least convincing by all groups, although only by a small amount (except for the Humanitarians).

## 9. Conclusions and Recommendations

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- 1. Beyond the specific issues of refugee and immigration policies, the study points to a wider French anxiety about the notion of "otherness."** It is striking that only 16 per cent view immigration as positive for the country, when one in four French people have at least one grandparent who was an immigrant. This is related to the perceived threats of terrorism, crime and economic and cultural decline. It is also a result of a widely shared perception that France has failed to integrate newcomers into its society. The widely held view that France has not integrated immigrants successfully makes people reluctant to accept further new arrivals such as refugees. In other words, the refugee crisis is perceived through the prism of immigration policy and the perceived failure of this policy. (In contrast, our research in Germany suggests that Germans perceive immigration through the prism of refugee policy, reflecting the much higher intake of refugees in recent years.)
- 2. Many questions arise from these findings on the pessimistic assessment of the French experience of immigration.** A key question is whether public debate has been distorted by the genuine shortcomings of immigration policy, to the extent that it has obscured the many examples of successful integration that make up a majority of stories of immigration in France. A key challenge for policymakers is how to restore public trust in France's system of integration.
- 3. Perceptions of Islam are a major influence on French people's perception of refugees, immigration and otherness in general.** The findings show that it is critical to find ways to disentangle misleading perceptions about Muslims in France, increase people's understanding of what it means to be Muslim in France, and put forward what French people have in common rather than that which divides French Muslims from the rest of French society. In particular, the place of women in Islam comes up as a frequent point of criticism by groups all too keen to find a rationale for their rejection of Muslims. The narrative constructed around the role of women in Islam (one of oppression and lack of agency) is powerful and needs to be addressed if the rejection of Muslims is to be alleviated in France.
- 4. For a majority of the French population, ambivalence prevails on questions related to immigration and identity.** Commentators have written extensively in recent years of a fault line or fracture between an "open" and a "closed" France. Our study acknowledges that "conflicted middle" segments often hold contradictory but no less legitimate views on questions of immigration. The right frames and messages need to be tested in order to understand and take this ambivalence into account. A frame of "inclusive patriotism" composed of both rights and duties seems to be most effective with this ambivalent middle.
- 5. People's attitudes towards refugees and immigration in France are shaped by perceptions and public debates, and often not by hard facts.** For example, an overwhelming majority of French people believe that immigration has increased over the last five years. In fact, it has not. Similarly, a majority of people believe that most people who receive refugee status in France are not "real" refugees. The evidence also points in the opposite direction. These findings point to a loss of confidence in the ability of authorities to manage immigration flows that is being exacerbated and exploited by extremist parties. Efforts to recognise public concerns and restore confidence are needed.

6. **A persistent perception of a “competition of the poor” exists in France.** People in conflicted middle groups often question France’s ability to show compassion to refugees from outside of France in light of the problem of “our French homeless.” It is far more difficult to win public support for assisting refugees, while a large number of people think they must choose between helping those in need within France and helping those in need from outside of France. These genuine concerns about poverty and inequality within France must be addressed if the case for refugee assistance is to win greater support. Specifically, a broad government-led plan on homelessness and poverty, may well have positive consequences in addressing the anxieties identified in this report and on the perception of immigrants and refugees.
7. **Gender plays an important part in the demography of the conflicted middle groups.** Women make up a disproportionate share of the “conflicted middle” segments, particularly in groups that appear more open to extremist messages (the so-called ‘ante-chambers’ of the Front National). This highlights a significant risk: should these women join the ranks of the closed groups, the electoral map of France would be redrawn. This warrants urgent further examination.
8. **Research points to deep and widely held anxieties about France’s place in the world and the place of “the other” within French society.** While the research was undertaken prior to the 2017 election cycle, these anxieties are sure to re-emerge as the surge of optimism around political renewal in 2017 wears off. France rejected its political establishment in the 2017 elections. The danger is that if the French public concludes in coming years that its experiment with the new centrist force of *Republique en Marche* has failed to deliver, the public may well turn to the extremes. To that extent, this report sounds a clear warning of the urgent need to come to terms with the concerns of a majority of the French population, and build a new and more inclusive sense of French identity that brings people together and restores confidence in France’s place in the world.
9. **This research highlights the profound questions that France is currently facing on the issues of identity, otherness, and France’s place in the world.** This methodology is, of course, imperfect and the segmentation analysis needs to be placed within the wider context of research into the experiences and perspectives of all members of French society. However, the report makes an important contribution in highlighting the many ways that French people feel displaced, lack confidence in their own identity and worry about difference within their society. Far more needs to be done to identify how to bring people together, including those who feel most excluded and left behind. Yet it is not just those on the margins who feel left out. Some form of identity crisis is felt in all the segments mapped out in this report.
10. **The danger is that French people with divided opinions turn against each other.** Nonetheless, throughout its history, France has demonstrated its ability to unite and come together. France today is at a critical moment. On the shoulders of a young president lies a responsibility to bridge deep divisions in French society to reinvent a new aspirational narrative for the country. But the capacity of governments to build social trust is limited, and the challenge is as great as perhaps any president has faced. What is also needed is the engagement of ordinary citizens from all communities, in an ambitious and inclusive effort to support national unity and improve the welfare of all.





