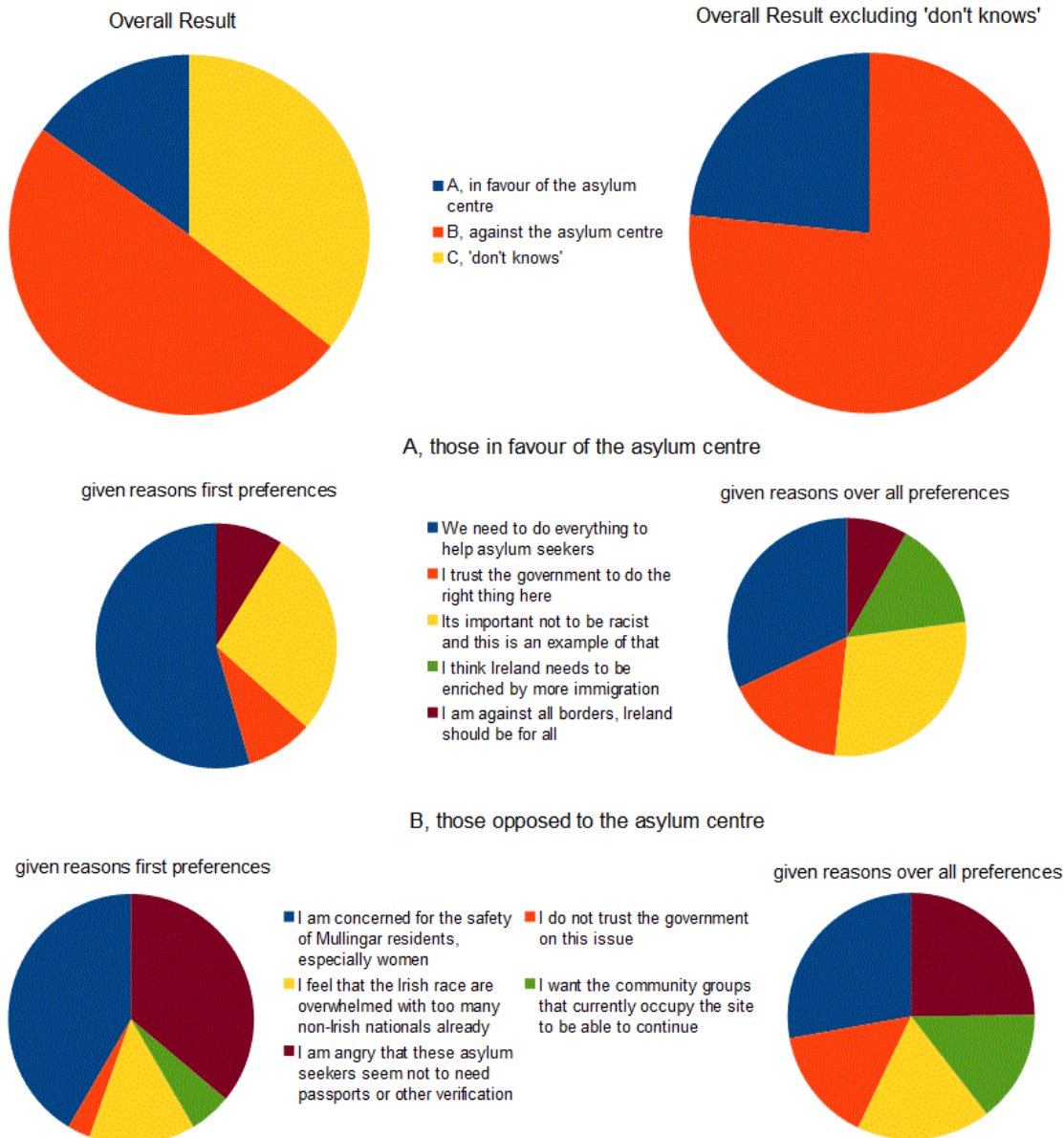


Mullingar Refugee Asylum Centre Survey

The organisation known as ‘Concerned Residents of Mullingar’, sometimes known as ‘Mullingar says No’, commissioned this survey of Mullingar residents to ascertain their view on a proposed refugee asylum centre to be located in the former army barracks in the town.

Opposition has arisen against this proposal, partly because the barracks is already in use by many local community groups, and partly in concert with a wave of opposition to these centres, and mass immigration generally, which has broken across Ireland in the early months of 2023. This opposition has however been characterised, by a local TD particularly, as a small and unrepresentative number of Mullingar residents, with the majority been content with the proposal. Hence this survey and the basic result can be seen in the following graphs:



In summary: a large majority of Mullingar residents, 77% excluding ‘don’t knows’, are against this proposed centre. Working Class and younger residents are more opposed to it, with no great difference between the sexes. The results, and the questionnaire used, follow.

SECTIONS A, B, C

The overall answer was:

A, in favour of the asylum centre **B**, against the asylum centre **C**, 'don't know'
 11 (15%) 36 (49%) 26 (36%)

Those respondents who opted for either the A or B section were then asked to rate five potential reasons for their answer, placing a 1 to 5 in the box beside their preferences, like a ballot paper. The result of this was:

Preferences

A, in favour of the asylum centre

Survey boxes	1st preference	2nd preference	3rd preference	4th preference	5th preference
A.1	6 (54.5%)	1	1	1	
A.2	1 (9%)	1	2	2	1
A.3	3 (27.5%)	3	2	1	
A.4		3	1	1	1
A.5	1 (9%)		1		2

B, against the asylum centre

Survey boxes	1st preference	2nd preference	3rd preference	4th preference	5th preference
B.1	15 (41.5%)	11	7	2	2
B.2	1 (3%)	5	11	6	9
B.3	5 (14%)	6	6	8	9
B.4	2 (5.5%)	4	7	11	8
B.5	13 (36%)	10	3	6	4

Applying a simple weighting of 1 for a first preference, 0.8 for a second one, 0.6 for a third, 0.4 for a fourth and 0.2 for a fifth, yields the following results:

A

We need to do everything to help asylum seekers, 7.8
 I trust the government to do the right thing here, 4
 Its important not to be racist and this is an example of that, 7
 I think Ireland needs to be enriched by more immigration, 3.6
 I am against all borders, Ireland should be for all, 2

B

I am concerned for the safety of Mullingar residents, especially women, 29.2
 I do not trust the government on this issue, 15.8
 I feel that the Irish race are overwhelmed with too many non-Irish nationals already 18.4
 I want the community groups that currently occupy the site to be able to continue, 15.4
 I am angry that these asylum seekers seem not to need passports or other verification, 26

By no means were these preferences important to everybody, some just said they were generally in agreement with all of them in their section, but nonetheless some patterns are very evident:

– The current debate in Ireland on this issue, at least among activists and on twitter, seems to approximate to the phrases and hashtags #IrelandIsFull versus #IrelandForAll, and this was

incorporated into these two potential preferences: “I am against all borders, Ireland should be for all”, and “I feel that the Irish race are overwhelmed with too many non-Irish nationals already”. But generally speaking these were not popular choices among these citizens of Mullingar.

While some did express this view under B, an antipathy to mass immigration in general, the no borders concept was massively unpopular among those who were in favour of the asylum centre. Some even filled up four preferences under section A but refused to give any preference to the no borders concept. This would strike you as causing a problem for the government, because it seemed to be a major theme of their large Dublin protest held in favour of immigration some weeks ago (I say ‘their’ because it was organised by the political parties and other government funded agencies). They really do seem to take up this extreme no borders line, yet virtually nobody had any sympathy for the idea in this survey.

– In general these results accurately reflect what was said during the survey, that points 1 and 3 were popular among those who were in favour of the centre (that they wished to help asylum seekers in general and wanted to avoid racism), while 1 and 5 were very popular among those opposed (that they wished to protect especially women, and were angry about the non vetted, or even passport verified, nature of these new immigrants).

However there was a marked difference in approach towards these preferences for those who favoured A and B. Those who were in favour of the centre were frequently not enamoured of the choices and a bit indifferent about them (and sometimes debated their seemingly broad nature) while those who were against the centre were often enthusiastic about all these reasons and utterly adamant, frequently passionate, about reasons 1 and 5. Many stories emerged about women being now afraid to walk the streets because of the new asylum seekers – some of whom are already in Mullingar in a different location – and taxi drivers and others talked about the huge bureaucratic vetting, regulation and policing apparatus that surrounds many jobs and activities now in Ireland and the contrast with that and the even lack of passports among many of the new arrivals.

– This contrast in the energy and seemingly commitment of the two sides was in fact evident throughout. Many of those in favour of the centre, and some in the ‘don’t know’ section, were very undecided and lacklustre about their choice, apparently easily persuaded either way. Meanwhile not a few in the opposition camp were clearly very committed on the subject, some tripped across randomly in this survey had gone to the anti-asylum centre protests and some even camped out beside the Barracks. You can see that contrasting A/B sections Lack-of-passion/Fiery-nature in some of the comments left in Section D in this report, a few in favour of the centre almost seem to drift into an opposition position while many against it are very gung-ho.

In rough figures it could be estimated that two female respondents were very passionately in favour of the centre, and critical of the protesters, along with approximately two men quietly certain in the same choice, while as many as 26 could be thought to be virulently against the centre. Hence it might be thought that in terms of activists – although no explicit questions were asked about that – that the pro-asylum centre party could be outnumbered by as much as 10 to 1.

– Also it was found that one issue could persuade a lot of respondents in the ‘pro’ and ‘don’t know’ position, A and C, to change their mind and oppose the centre. This was the question of gender. Time and time again questions were asked and comments made about if or are the asylum seekers ‘all male’. Its very clear that those in favour of the centre, only are so because they are under the impression that these new arrivals are women and children fleeing the war

in Ukraine, if they thought that these were actually military age men from all over the world, they would oppose the centre. In fact you could go so far as to say that if that was a presumption of this survey – and it does seem to be the on the ground reality –, that the new arrivals were going to be all male, then the response of the people of Mullingar would be well nigh unanimous against it.

– As regards issues that arose which were not part of the given five ones, the most significant seemed to be housing, and to a certain extent other social services used by migrants like the health service.

Housing was raised very frequently. The government TDs representing Mullingar, like Peter Burke, are apparently saying that there is no great housing problem there, and hence no homeless Irish person will be able to access the new facilities put in place for the migrants. That wasn't what this survey found. One of the first respondents talked about been on the housing list for a very long time and the third respondent was a homeless man originally from Poland. (He was very much against the centre, because having worked here for 20 years he found he could access no real official help while the new arrivals seemingly had all laid on for them.) Numerous other people described the terrible housing shortages affecting Irish people.

The government line on this issue has always been that any problems in housing have nothing to do with immigration, but its clear that this is not the view of the general public. It clearly did colour their views of the immigration flow, and hence they raised it during this survey.

This issue took a slightly sinister turn when one respondent said she is not going to any more anti-asylum centre protests, because she is afraid that the government will mark her down in the housing list. When pressed that this was unlikely she replied that she was certain that this was possible (or already done in other cases?), that they can re-jig the criteria when you are on this list to deny you a house if they want to.

– Finally there is clearly a large number of 'don't know's here, those who selected the C choice, and some discussion of these respondents is necessary. Incidentally we are not talking about a literal 'don't know' position here, they all seemed to have heard about the centre and knew well what the survey was about. In any case it seems that they fall into about three categories:

a) Some are just totally indifferent, or cared about the issue much less than the football on the television!

b) Some are likely to be nervous talking about any issue that impinges on accusations of 'racism', and would prefer not to engage on any survey that treads in that area.

c) Some are engaged in the issue, are thoughtful about it but genuinely in two minds as to which position to take. For example some have been abroad and are conscious of the difficulties migrants experience, of whom there have been so many from Ireland, but are also a little suspicious as to the numbers and gender of those arriving now in Ireland.

Its really impossible to say how many are in each of these categories, but note the point made above, that many would oppose the centre if they thought it was going to be all males from non-Ukraine countries.

SECTION D

In the last section of the survey questionnaire we asked respondents to give their own reasons or sentiments towards the proposal, in a sense an attempted summary in a few words of their position. In a number of cases these were written down by the respondents themselves, but more often they were verbally communicated and were generally read back to them and then agreed upon. These are broken down here according to their answers to sections A, B or C, (for example the phrase 'B.3 then 5' means that this respondent has placed the third point in the questionnaire under section B as their first preference and then the fifth point as their second preference) and abbreviations used are: 'm' – male, 'f' – female, '<50' under 50 years of age, '>50' over 50 years of age, 'wc' – working class and 'mc' – middle class.

A

Comments from some of the respondents broadly in favour of the proposed asylum centre.

“It’s the government’s responsibility to accommodate those they accept into Ireland.” (A.1, m, mc, <50.)

“We should be a welcoming and hospitable country in so far as we are able.” (A.1 then 2, f, mc, >50.)

“Outraged that any Irish person has the audacity to oppose any immigrants coming into our country.” (A.1 then 3, f, mc, >50.)

“We are in a crisis, these people are here whether we like it or not...[The questions on the sheet] are very broad.” (A.2, f, mc, <50.)

“I don’t mind Ukrainians but not others.” (A.3, m, wc, >50.)

“Not against the proposal per se but it has to be families and not all men. When you stated asylum seekers I understood that as Ukrainians only, I am against too much immigration of refugees in general. [If the incoming migrants are not fleeing the war in Ukraine, he would be totally against the proposed asylum centre.]” (A.3 then 1, m, mc, >50.)

“With our history, depending on the kindness of other countries, do the same [here, now], within reason.” (A.3 then 4, m, wc, >50.)

“I disagree with the current protests, including the lies spread online.” (A.5 then 3, f, wc, >50.)

B

These commentators were broadly against the proposed asylum centre.

“Overrun with them” (B.1 then 2, f, mc, >50.)

“Fraud coming into a country without identification...enough is enough” (B.1 then 3, f, wc, >50.)

“Look after the Irish first.” (B.1 then 3, f, wc, <50.)

“My daughter is in school and comes home via the Barracks.” (B.1 then 3, m, mc, >50.)

“For the grand kids coming up...The government are turning a blind eye to it.” (B.1 then 3, f, wc, >50.)

“The government should be looking after our own first.” (B.1 then 4, m, wc, <50.)

“No housing for Irish people.” (B.1 then 5, m, mc, <50.)

“Too many males.” (B.1 then 5, f, wc, >50.)

“The people of Mullingar are in danger from these people, especially women and children” (B.1 then 5, m, wc, <50.)

“Our own homeless are not getting an equitable treatment [meaning they aren’t treated as well as the asylum seekers].” (B.1 then 5, m, wc, <50.)

“Plenty of homeless Irish people, I don’t feel safe walking home in Mullingar now.” (B.1 then 5, f, wc, <50.)

“Its terrible for the town. The Barracks was closed for the wrong reasons and now they are putting in these tents beside a listed building.” (B.1 then 5, m, wc, >50.)

“They are taking in too many already.” (B.2 then 3, f, mc, >50.)

“Ireland is not for the Irish anymore...A gravy train here for them.” (B.3 and 1, f, mc, >50.)

“My own daughter was homeless for 6 months with 3 children and was couch surfing. Kids missed school with no fixed abode while these unveted men are being brought into the country and are being housed straight away.” (B.3 then 5 [this person agreed enthusiastically with all these points, and didn’t place much store in distinguishing between them], f, wc, <50.)

“The biggest issue is the women issue, [having lived abroad his impression was that] some Muslims seem to rate dogs, cats and goats above women.” (B.3 then 5, m, wc, <50.)

“Cannot look after are own people...overwhelmed.” (B.4 then 1, m, wc, >50.)

“Why have this government not housed all the Irish homeless and from the Council waiting list? I’m on the waiting list since 1997. I’m almost 70 years old, with cancer, and in rented house.” (B.4 then 2, f, wc, >50.)

“100+ men with nothing to do for 12+ months is dangerous.” (B.4 then 3, f, mc, <50.)

“Where are all the children, elderly or disabled [among the asylum seekers] – all men?” (B.5 then 1, f, wc, <50.)

“The fact that it is all men.” (B.5 then 1, m, mc, <50.)

“Don’t know who they are.” (B.5 then 1, m, wc, <50.)

“Helping the new asylum seekers more than needy people in Ireland.” (B.5 then 1, m, wc, <50.)

“The unknown about them...too many of them...costing the country too much.” (B.5 then 1, f, mc, >50.)

“Media has an extreme left-wing bias.” (B.5 then 1, m, mc, >50.)

“I am worried for the safety of women and children.” (B.5 then 1, m, mc, <50.)

“[adds into question B.2:] + question what benefits are they gaining (the government) from allowing this.” (B.5 then 2, f, mc, >50.)

“I have two kids renting, now facing eviction, we need to look after our own first.” (B.5 then 2, f, wc, >50.)

C

This category is basically analogous to the ‘Don’t Know’ section in opinion polls.

“Worried that it is all men.” (f, wc, <50.)

“Survey questions are too narrow in focus, I don’t think this survey is suitable for decision or policy making.” (m, mc, >50.)

“Not against migrants per se...I was a migrant [outside Ireland]...I can see both sides.” (f, mc, <50.)

“I wouldn’t mind [either way].” (f, mc, >50.)

“Don’t really care.” (f, mc, >50.)

“Needs to be looked at a lot more.” (m, mc, <50.)

“I am against it [when it involves] all single men.” (m, mc, >50.)

“No problem [if it just means] families [not solely single men].” (m, mc, >50.)

“I have no interest in it.” (f, wc, >50.)

“Its all males going in, no problem with that but why?” (f, wc, <50.)

“They [the asylum seekers] have to go somewhere. If its temporary: Ok; otherwise...Are they documented or are they not?” (f, wc, <50.)

“Busy with work, haven’t taken much notice of it.” (m, wc, <50.)

“Not interested in it.” (f, wc, >50.)

“I know people need help but am also worried for the safety of my kids.” (f, wc, <50.)

“I’m in two minds, where are the women and children?” (f, wc, <50.)

‘FOR OFFICE USE ONLY’ SECTION

These are results subdivided by Age, Gender and Class. Section C, ‘Don’t knows’, were respectively, i.e. corresponding to the second line in the following 6 tables, : 14, 12, 11, 15, 11, 15 [sic], but since this yields very little data this section is excluded when calculating the overall reply numbers and percentages. However note that the overall balance of respondents including these ‘Don’t knows’ was an acceptable 47%/53% <50/>50, 48%/52% female/male, and 49%/51% Working Class/Middle Class, not the slightly distorted figures when Section C is excluded.

Divided by Age
Under 50 years of age

	A, for the asylum centre	B, against the asylum centre
20 replies (43%), of these:	3 (15%)	17 (85%)
Their first preferences:	A.1: 2 (66%) A.2: 1 (33%)	B.1: 8 (47%) B.3: 3 (18%) B.5: 6 (35%)

Over 50 years of age

	A, for the asylum centre	B, against the asylum centre
27 replies (57%), of these:	8 (30%)	19 (70%)
Their first preferences:	A.1: 4 (50%) A.3: 3 (37.5%) A.5: 1 (12.5%)	B.1: 7 (37%) B.2: 1 (5%) B.3: 2 (10.5%) B.4: 2 (10.5%) B.5: 7 (37%)

Divided by Gender
Women

	A, for the asylum centre	B, against the asylum centre
24 replies (51%), of these:	6 (25%)	18 (75%)
Their first preferences:	A.1: 4 (67%) A.2: 1 (16.5%) A.5: 1 (16.5%)	B.1: 7 (39%) B.2: 1 (5.5%) B.3: 3 (17%) B.4: 1 (5.5%) B.5: 6 (33%)

Men

	A, for the asylum centre	B, against the asylum centre
23 replies (49%), of these:	5 (22%)	18 (78%)
Their first preferences:	A.1: 2 (40%) A.3: 3 (60%)	B.1: 8 (44%) B.3: 2 (11%) B.4: 1 (6%) B.5: 7 (39%)

Divided by Socio-Economic Class

Working Class

	A, for the asylum centre	B, against the asylum centre
25 replies (53%), of these:	5 (20%)	20 (80%)
Their first preferences:	A.1: 2 (40%) A.3: 2 (40%) A.5: 1 (20%)	B.1: 11 (55%) B.3: 2 (10%) B.4: 2 (10%) B.5: 5 (25%)

Middle Class

	A, for the asylum centre	B, against the asylum centre
22 replies (47%), of these:	6 (27%)	16 (73%)
Their first preferences:	A.1: 4 (67%) A.2: 1 (16.5%) A.3: 1 (16.5%)	B.1: 4 (25%) B.2: 1 (6%) B.3: 3 (19%) B.5: 8 (50%)

While on the surface this does not yield too many surprises, or only small differences, nonetheless some curious patterns are evident:

- Men and the middle class are more likely to give a ‘Don’t Know’, Section C, answer.
- Younger people are more likely to be against the asylum centre, and this rises when age is cross referenced by class. Under 50s working class people are more likely to be against the centre than middle class under 50s: excluding ‘don’t knows’ this is 92%/69% working class/middle class.
- Over 50s give a wider range of answers to the five questions, both for and against the centre.
- The working class respondents were more likely to be worried about safety, especially for women, than the middle class.
- The working class are more against the centre than the middle class, but not to a huge degree. (Incidentally it should be pointed out that this class distinction is hard to measure in a

survey like this, it was generally calculated by housing estate but nearly all Irish houses are very expensive these days so that might not classify people very well.)

– Slightly surprisingly there is no great difference in the overall figure for men and women, but in the preferences for the questions there is one significant difference. Among those in favour of the centre women were considerably more likely to opt for the reason: “We need to do everything to help asylum seekers”, and this was also more popular among the middle class as well.

Notes

This survey was conducted in person over three days in four different housing estates in Mullingar, selected to give a proper socio-economic and geographical mix across the town i.e. two respondents from near the Barracks, one on the street, and on the 5th, 8th and 10th of March 2023 in Chestnut Grove, Ginnell Terrace, Newbrook Grove and Grange Village. All statistics are rounded to whole numbers but where a rounding error was set to occur, i.e. it would not add up to 100% where it should, some of the constituent numbers were rounded to the nearest half. We would like to thank profoundly all who participated or who helped with this survey.

by Brian Nugent.

Mullingar Barracks Asylum Centre Survey

A Survey conducted to ascertain views of the residents of Mullingar, and immediate environs, towards the proposed asylum centre at the military barracks, March 2023.

With respect to the proposed asylum centre at the Barracks in Mullingar, are you:
 Broadly in favour of it (if so answer section A), or,
 Broadly against it (if so answer section B), or,
 C (if you don't care either way), and, if you wish,
 D (if you would like to give your own reasons)?

Please Fill out this section by preference number, that is 1 for the most important issue, etc:

A	B
I am in favour of the proposed centre because:	I am against the proposed centre because:
We need to do everything to help asylum seekers: <input type="checkbox"/>	I am concerned for the safety of Mullingar residents, especially women: <input type="checkbox"/>
I trust the government to do the right thing here: <input type="checkbox"/>	I do not trust the government on this issue: <input type="checkbox"/>
Its important not to be racist and this is an example of that: <input type="checkbox"/>	I feel that the Irish race are overwhelmed with too many non-Irish nationals already: <input type="checkbox"/>
I think Ireland need to be enriched by more immigration: <input type="checkbox"/>	I want the community groups that currently occupy the site to be able to continue: <input type="checkbox"/>
I am against all borders, Ireland should be for all: <input type="checkbox"/>	I am angry that these asylum seekers seem not to need passports or other verification: <input type="checkbox"/>

C

I don't care what happens to the Barracks or to Irish immigration policy in general:

D

You can give here any other reasons why you favour / or oppose / or are indifferent / towards the proposed centre:



Issued by Concerned Residents of Mullingar/ Mullingar Says No, 3 March 2023.

For Office Use Only, Please estimate which category the respondent occupies:

Male Female | Rural Urban | Working Class Middle Class | <50 >50