PEACE PERCEPTIONS POLL 2018

international alert

BRITISH COUNCIL

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Through the Peace Perceptions Poll, we asked more than 100,000 people in 15 countries – from those in active conflicts to those in relative peace – about their views on peace and conflict.

The poll sought to answer questions around how people experience and respond to violence where they live, what contributes to more peaceful and secure societies, and how they think their government should respond to conflict.

The poll comes at a time when conflict is on the rise, leaving millions displaced, killed and injured. A time of increasing tension between great powers, the erosion of international norms and with the cost of conflict spiralling out of control.

Within this context, the findings showed a clear public appetite for an approach to violence that moves beyond crisis response towards long-

term conflict prevention, commonly termed 'peacebuilding'. This approach seeks to deal with the underlying drivers of conflict while building societies' capacity to deal with conflict peacefully.

The poll will help political leaders and senior policy-makers better understand the views, hopes and aspirations of their constituencies when it comes to pursuing sustainable solutions to today's leading security challenges, whether that is terrorism, migration or internal conflicts.

The results underscore the need for tailored, informed, long-term solutions to conflict. The responses highlighted a level of innate understanding from members of the public about how to get to peace. While the poll illustrates the diversity of people's experiences, it also shows how much people have in common when it comes to how we aspire to, create and sustain more peaceful societies.

SUMMARY

WHERE WAS THE POLL CONDUCTED?

Brazil, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Hungary, India, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Africa, Syria, Tunisia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (US). Targeted polling was also undertaken separately in Northern Ireland.

The report includes detailed country snapshots on Colombia, DRC, Lebanon and Ukraine, together with a 'special insight' on Northern Ireland.

PERCEPTIONS OF PEACE AND CONFLICT

Those living in more peaceful countries tended to be more pessimistic about their future prospects for peace. The UK topped the list of countries with more people thinking that peace and security would get worse than those that thought it would get better, followed by Brazil, the US and Hungary. People in some of the worst conflict environments, such as Syria, Nigeria and DRC, were more optimistic. (See Figure 1.)

However, this split is not as straightforward as it seems. National responses in conflict-affected countries masked very different perceptions at sub-national levels, reflecting that in many countries conflict often takes place outside capitals and major population centres.

Terrorism was people's top security concern, followed by harassment by state authorities and criminal violence. Tribal, religious and ethnic conflict as well as domestic violence ranked highly in certain countries. (See Figure 2.)

WHY DO PEOPLE TURN TO VIOLENCE?

'A lack of jobs and ability to provide for one's family' ranked highest when it came to what people thought motivated others in their communities to violence, with nine countries ranking it first and a further four ranking it second. This was followed by a sense of injustice and a need to improve one's social status.

HOW DO PEOPLE RESPOND TO VIOLENCE?

The most common responses to violence within communities were: asking local police or security forces to take action, and non-violent protests, followed by approaching local political leaders, violent acts in retaliation, and migration.

These findings challenged some conventional political narratives that tend to focus on economies and border security while ignoring political factors. People who feel politically excluded were more likely to select migration as a response to conflict in their community.

FIGURE 1: WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO LEVELS OF PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS – NATIONALLY
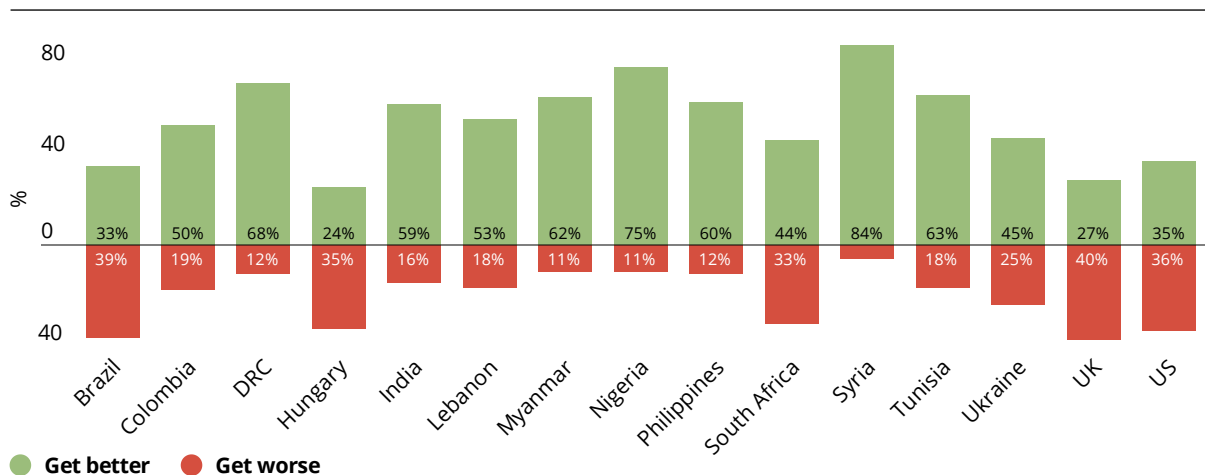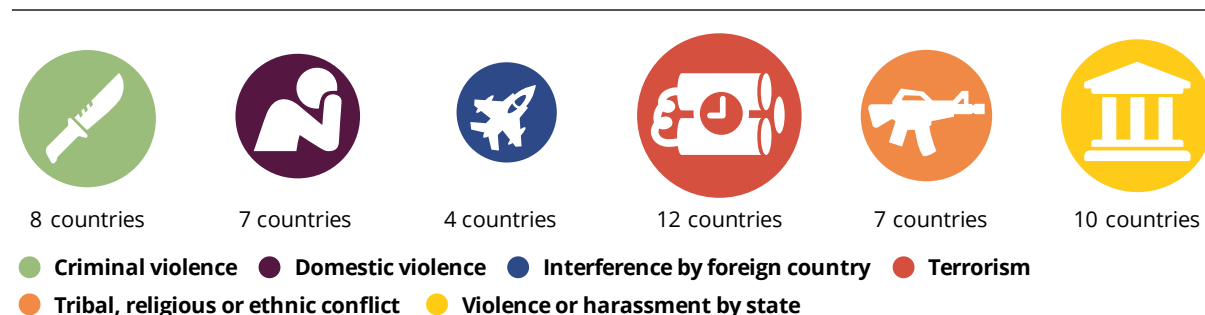

Country	Get better	Get worse
Brazil	33%	39%
Colombia	50%	19%
DRC	68%	12%
Hungary	24%	35%
India	59%	16%
Lebanon	53%	18%
Myanmar	62%	11%
Nigeria	75%	11%
Philippines	60%	12%
South Africa	44%	33%
Syria	84%	
Tunisia	63%	18%
Ukraine	45%	25%
UK	27%	40%
US	35%	36%

● Get better   ● Get worse

FIGURE 2: WHAT TYPES OF VIOLENCE MOST COMMONLY APPEAR IN COUNTRIES' TOP THREE CONCERNS

8 countries   7 countries   4 countries   12 countries   7 countries   10 countries

● Criminal violence   ● Domestic violence   ● Interference by foreign country   ● Terrorism
● Tribal, religious or ethnic conflict   ● Violence or harassment by state

WHAT DOES PEACE LOOK LIKE?

The poll found universal factors that people – from the UK to Ukraine and Nigeria to the Philippines – felt represented more peaceful societies. The top five responses were when:

- 💬 people can resolve disputes without violence
- 💵 people have the opportunity to earn a living to support their family
- ⚖️ there is less crime
- 📝 people can vote in a national election
- 📉 there is less violence

A number of these factors reflect 'positive peace', or factors that represent peace beyond the absence of violence.
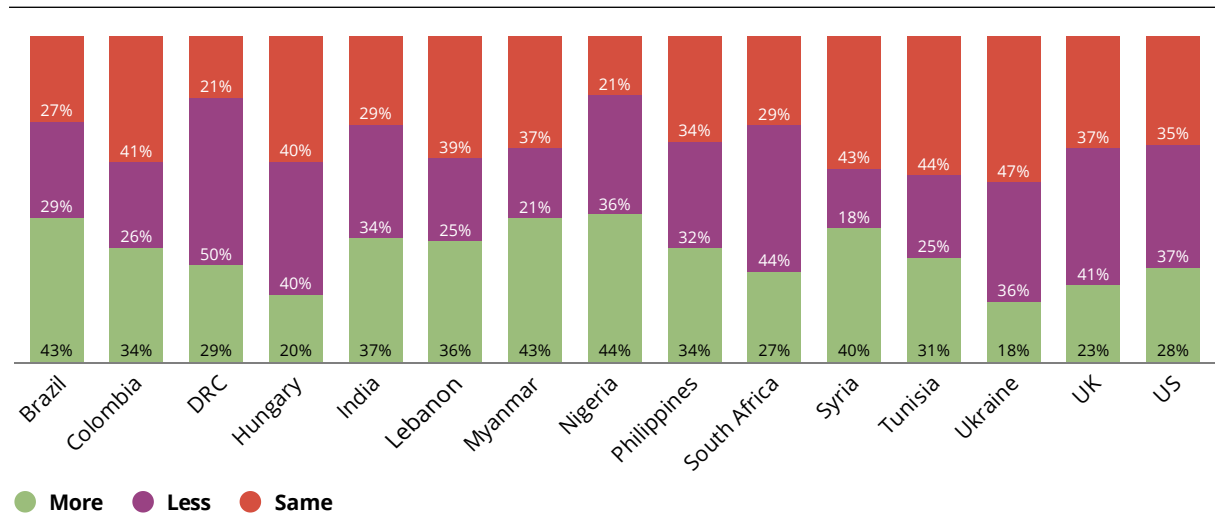
SPECIAL INSIGHT: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION

Political and economic inclusion were regarded as fundamental to peace and security: 90% of respondents said economic inclusion was very or somewhat important to peace in their country; 83% said the same for political inclusion.
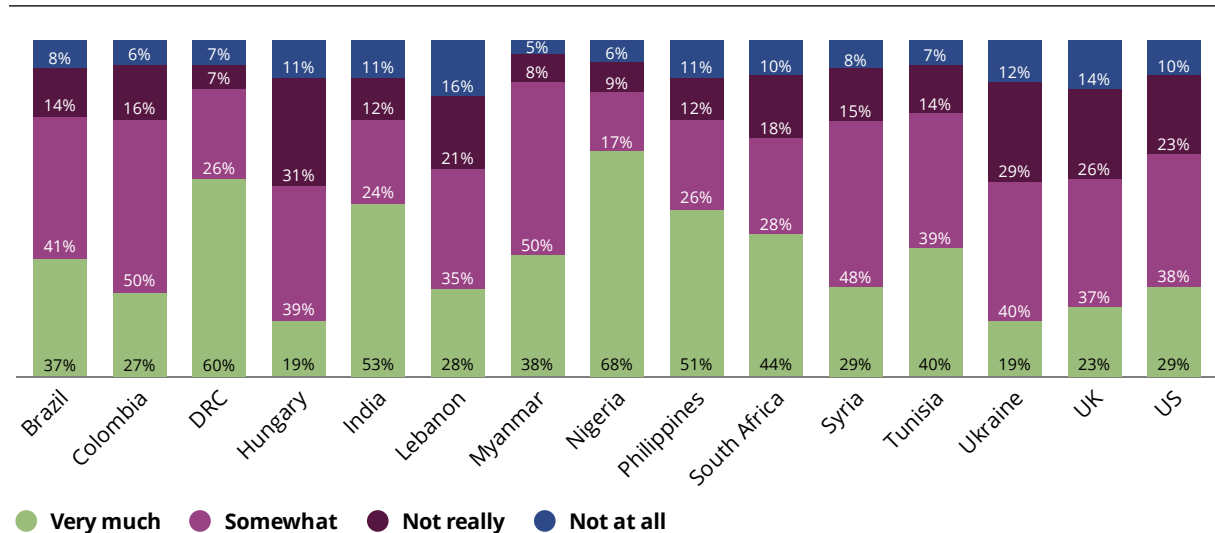
DRC and South Africa perceived the highest levels of political exclusion, followed by the UK, Hungary and the US. (See Figure 3.)

Across the majority of countries polled, corruption in politics was cited as the number one reason why people felt they had less political agency than five years ago. Eleven countries ranked it first, while a further three ranked it second. This factor was felt most strongly in South Africa, Ukraine and Nigeria.

FIGURE 3: WHETHER PEOPLE FEEL MORE OR LESS ABLE TO INFLUENCE POLITICAL DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THEM

Country	More	Less	Same
Brazil	43%	29%	27%
Colombia	34%	26%	41%
DRC	29%	50%	21%
Hungary	20%	40%	40%
India	37%	34%	29%
Lebanon	36%	25%	39%
Myanmar	43%	21%	37%
Nigeria	44%	36%	21%
Philippines	34%	32%	34%
South Africa	27%	44%	29%
Syria	40%	18%	43%
Tunisia	31%	25%	44%
Ukraine	18%	36%	47%
UK	23%	41%	37%
US	28%	37%	35%

● More ● Less ● Same

FIGURE 4: WHETHER PEOPLE FEEL ABLE TO IMPROVE THEIR FAMILY'S ECONOMIC SITUATION

Country	Very much	Somewhat	Not really	Not at all
Brazil	37%	41%	14%	8%
Colombia	27%	50%	16%	6%
DRC	60%	26%	7%	7%
Hungary	19%	39%	31%	11%
India	53%	24%	12%	11%
Lebanon	28%	35%	21%	16%
Myanmar	38%	50%	8%	5%
Nigeria	68%	17%	9%	6%
Philippines	51%	26%	12%	11%
South Africa	44%	28%	18%	10%
Syria	29%	48%	15%	8%
Tunisia	40%	39%	14%	7%
Ukraine	19%	40%	29%	12%
UK	23%	37%	26%	14%
US	29%	38%	23%	10%

● Very much ● Somewhat ● Not really ● Not at all

Those who thought they had more political influence attributed it extensively to social media and technology. This is against a backdrop of increasing distrust in technology companies and mounting evidence of the highly negative role that social media can play in spreading disinformation and mobilising violence.

Those who felt most economically excluded generally lived in middle- to high-income countries, including Hungary, Ukraine, the UK, Lebanon, the US and South Africa. (See Figure 4.)

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO CONFLICT?

Prevention is better than a cure. When asked what was the most effective approach to creating long-term peace, people in 10 countries ranked 'dealing with the reasons why people fight in the first place' top, with a further four ranking it second. People in nine countries ranked 'supporting societies and communities to deal with conflict peacefully' in their top two. These two elements constitute 'peacebuilding' and contrast with the other more reactive options offered to respondents. (See Figure 5.)

With space for nuance in political discourse diminishing, this poll shows that, nevertheless, prevention is what people demand when it comes to the challenge of conflict.

This outcome will be of particular interest to those seeking to pursue a root causes approach to dealing with conflict.

Peacebuilding has been a relatively underutilised tool compared to other responses to conflict, such as military intervention and humanitarian aid, both of which tend to be used responsively rather than preventatively.

When asked where governments should spend more to promote peace, while given options such as emergency aid, military intervention and diplomacy, 'dealing with the reasons why people fight in the first place' ranked first in 10 of the 15 countries, followed by 'teaching peace, tolerance and conflict resolution in schools'. (See Figure 6.)

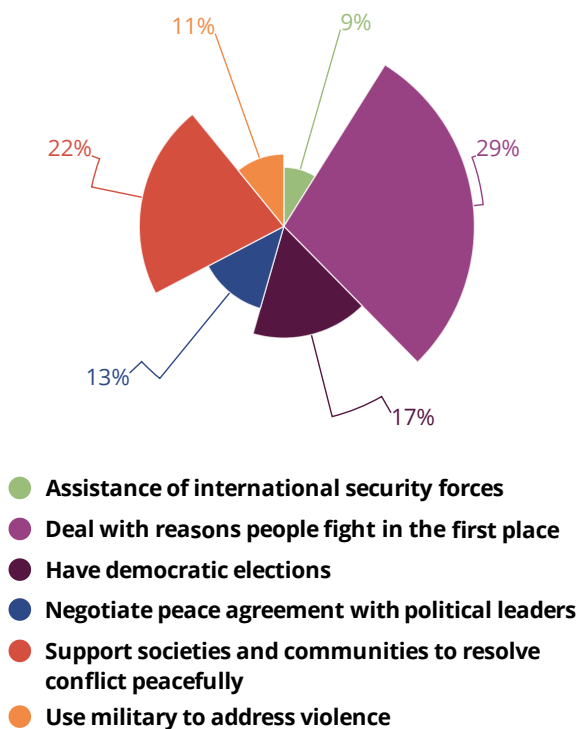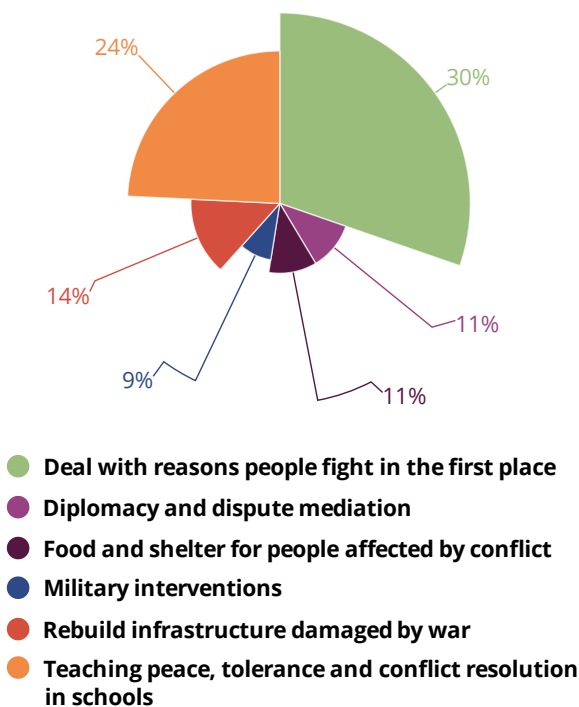**FIGURE 5:** WHAT WOULD BE MOST EFFECTIVE IN CREATING LONG-TERM PEACE

- ● **Assistance of international security forces**
- ● **Deal with reasons people fight in the first place**
- ● **Have democratic elections**
- ● **Negotiate peace agreement with political leaders**
- ● **Support societies and communities to resolve conflict peacefully**
- ● **Use military to address violence**

FIGURE 6: WHAT SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT SPEND MORE ON TO PROMOTE PEACE

- ● **Deal with reasons people fight in the first place**
- ● **Diplomacy and dispute mediation**
- ● **Food and shelter for people affected by conflict**
- ● **Military interventions**
- ● **Rebuild infrastructure damaged by war**
- ● **Teaching peace, tolerance and conflict resolution in schools**