

Myths & Facts

Refugees, Migration, and Humanitarian Assistance

Myth

The United States is not doing much to help refugees.

FACT

The United States is the largest single humanitarian donor, sending billions of dollars per year to provide millions of the world's most vulnerable people with life-saving assistance. The State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) provides protection, eases suffering, and works to resolve the plight of persecuted and uprooted people around the world. We do this on behalf of the American people by providing life-sustaining assistance, working through multilateral systems to build global partnerships, promoting best practices in humanitarian response, ensuring that humanitarian principles are thoroughly integrated into U.S. foreign and national security policy, and encouraging other countries to do the same.

Myth

The United States is really not helping Syrian refugees.

FACT

The U.S. is the largest single donor to the Syrian crisis response. We have provided over \$5.1 billion in humanitarian assistance since the start of the crisis. Through this humanitarian funding, the U.S. provides food, shelter, water, medical care, protection, and other urgent relief to millions of people suffering inside Syria, and 4.6 million refugees in the region from Syria. The humanitarian assistance supports the operations of the United Nations, other international organizations, and non-governmental organizations. Through these organizations, the U.S. is able to provide assistance in all 14 governorates of Syria, helping the people who need it most—and ultimately saving lives and alleviating suffering amid daily threats of violence and deprivation.

Myth

The U.S. doesn't bring refugees to our country, no matter how desperate their situation.

FACT

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) embodies the United States' values of compassion, generosity, and leadership in serving vulnerable populations. The U.S. is the largest refugee resettlement country in the world, having welcomed more than three million refugees since 1975. The USRAP has brought to this country 70,000 of the world's most vulnerable refugees in each of the past three years, and plans to increase that number to 85,000 in 2016, and 100,000 in 2017. These refugees have added an immeasurable amount to the richness of American culture, contributed to economic strength, and honored our core values.

Myth

The U.S. government is secretive about the number and location of refugees in this country.

FACT

The Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System website provides reliable, searchable data on refugee admissions, dating back to 2002. Anyone can create reports that reflect country of origin, state of destination, gender, age, religion, and other statistics on resettled refugees.



Myth

The United States government brings refugees here without screening.

FACT

Refugees being considered for admission to the U.S. are subject to the highest level of security checks of any category of traveler to our country, involving multiple Federal intelligence, security and law enforcement agencies, such as the National Counterterrorism Center, the F.B.I., and the Departments of Homeland Security, State, and Defense, in order to ensure that those admitted are not known to pose a threat. The safeguards include fingerprint and biographic checks, and an interview by specially trained DHS officers who scrutinize the applicant's explanation of individual circumstances to ensure the applicant is a bona fide refugee. Mindful of the particular conditions of the Syria crisis, Syrian refugees go through an enhanced level of review.

Myth

The U.S. fails to communicate their intentions to resettle refugees to communities and government.

FACT

The U.S. resettlement program is, at its core, a grassroots endeavor. Federal money comes into a local community to fund services for refugees, but it is local community organizations, churches, and volunteers that determine how the funding will be balanced with private resources to serve arriving refugees. Every year, the State Department and its partner resettlement agencies consult with local governmental authorities and relevant stakeholders to discuss the size and scope of the refugee caseload proposed for each local community. In addition, most states have a designated state refugee coordinator, who coordinates the process.

Myth

Syrian refugees resettled here are dangerous to my community.

FACT

The Syrian refugees considered for admission to the U.S. are overwhelmingly women and children. Men who are considered for admission are usually attached to families. Refugees are far more likely to be the victims of terrorism than they are to pose a threat to anyone. Since January 1, 2010 nearly 3,000 Syrian refugees have been admitted to the U.S., but only after the most extensive level of security screening of any category of traveler. None have ever been arrested or removed on terrorism charges.

Myth

Refugees don't integrate well into American communities.

FACT

Cities around the U.S. have benefited from the presence of refugees and immigrants. For example, Buffalo, NY is seeing its first increase in population since the 1960s, thanks to refugees and immigrants settling there. Local officials have publicly recognized the revitalizing impact that they can have on a community. When Somali refugees first started arriving to the small town of Lewiston, ME years ago, there was significant vocal pushback from many members of the community. Now, the population (and economy) that had been in decline since the 1970s is thriving, thanks to people of many different nationalities.

Myth

Refugees are an undue burden to U.S. taxpayers when they come to this country.

FACT

The U.S. resettlement program is predicated on able-bodied adults obtaining jobs and supporting themselves and their families as soon as possible after arrival. And while it can be difficult for newly arrived refugees to find employment within a few short months, especially during times of general economic hardship, they tend to make it happen. In fact, a study conducted in Cleveland, OH found that refugees placed in the Cleveland area typically found employment within five months of their arrival.