

Refugees' Economic Contributions in the United States



Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.

Refugees Own Homes

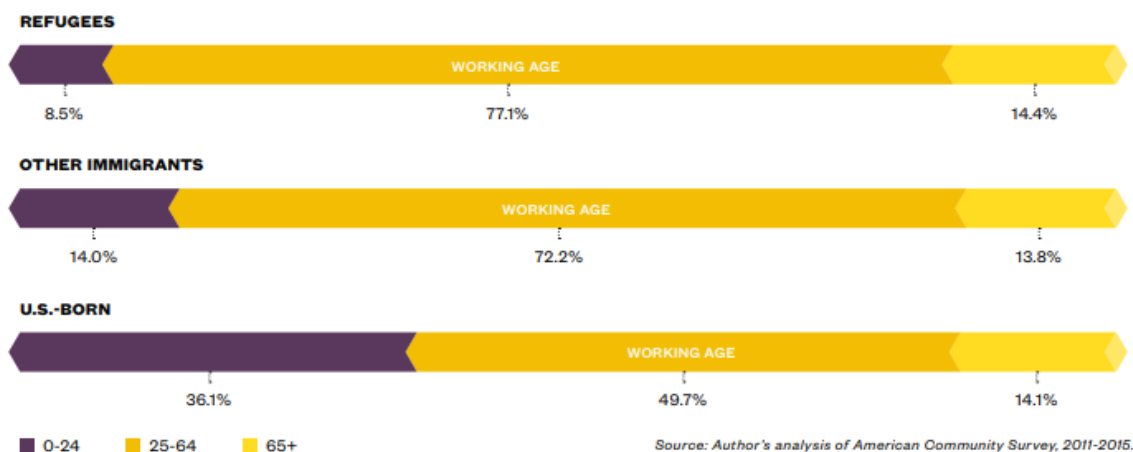


Many refugees become homeowners in the U.S. The New American Economy (NAE) found that in 2015, on average, 57 percent of refugees owned their own homes. Refugees purchasing homes can have a lasting positive impact on our economy and communities. Refugees, tend to move into blighted neighborhoods, which can reverse neighborhood population decline and problems stemming from housing vacancies.¹ We have seen evidence of this in cities like Akron, Ohio; Buffalo, New York; St. Louis, Missouri; Alexandria, Virginia; and Garden Grove, California.²

Refugees are Employees and Employers

Refugees in the U.S. want to work. On average, 81.8 percent of refugee men and women participate in the labor force, compared to the overall national rate of 62 percent. Female refugees typically wait longer before participating in the workforce, but after ten years, work at nearly the same rates as native-born women.³

Currently, 77 percent of refugees living in the U.S are of working age. As the native-born workforce continues to age, given this, refugees will continue to have a positive impact on the American economy, and are of particular importance, as the native-born workforce continues to age.⁴

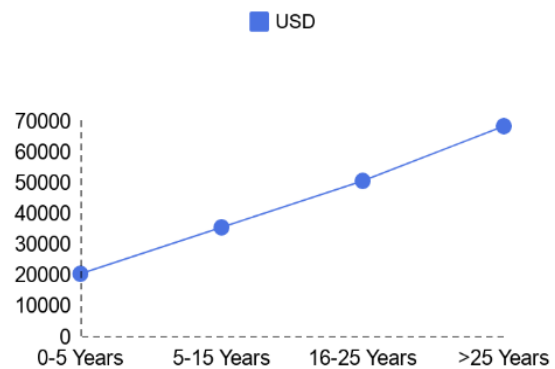


This large labor force contribution is especially important to the U.S., where many refugees hold jobs that native-born individuals will not accept. In fact, refugees are twice as likely to hold jobs in the general service industry, including dry cleaning, housekeeping, and repair.⁵ This has helped to revitalize industries, like meat-packing, that prefer to hire loyal and dedicated employees who will stick around.

Resettled refugees also increase their incomes over time. A 2017 Center for American Progress report found that newly arrived refugees had a median household income of \$21,782, while refugees here for more than 25 years had median incomes of \$67,000.⁶ This is exemplified by recently arrived Somali refugees, 23 percent of whom work in white-collar jobs. After 10 years, that number jumps to 43 percent.⁷

Refugees also start their own businesses, filling gaps in sectors like healthcare and manufacturing. Refugees are 50 percent more likely to become entrepreneurs than native-born Americans, and in 2015, 181,000 refugee entrepreneurs contributed \$4.6 billion in business income to the U.S. economy.⁸

Median Household Incomes of Refugees, By Years in the United States



Did you know?

STEVE JOBS' FATHER WAS A SYRIAN REFUGEE?

HIAS HELPED ASSIST A CO-FOUNDER OF GOOGLE, SERGEY BRIN'S FAMILY,
BEFORE THEY CAME TO THE U.S.?

IN 2015, 13 PERCENT OF REFUGEES IN THE U.S. WERE ENTREPRENEURS.

Refugees are Taxpayers

Over time, refugees fully pay back any costs associated with their resettlement by paying U.S. taxes.⁹ These tax contributions also mean a great deal at the state and local level. In 2015, refugees contributed more than 100 million to state and local governments through the tax system and contributed \$21 billion in taxes overall.¹⁰

Founded in the 1880s to help resettle Jews fleeing persecution, HIAS is the world's oldest refugee agency. Today, guided by our Jewish values and history, we bring more than 130 years of expertise to our work providing services to all refugees in need of assistance, regardless of their national, ethnic, or religious background. To learn more about our work visit us at HIAS.org

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- ¹ New American Economy (2017). *From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America*.
- ² Center for American Progress and Fiscal Policy Institute (2016). *Refugee Integration in the United States*. New York, New York.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ New American Economy (2017). *From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America*.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Urban Institute (2018). *Bringing Evidence to the Refugee Integration Debate*.
- ⁷ Center for American Progress and Fiscal Policy Institute (2016). *Refugee Integration in the United States*. New York, New York.
- ⁸ New American Economy (2017). *From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America*.
- ⁹ National Bureau of Economic Research (2017). *The Economic and Social Outcomes of Refugees in the United States: Evidence from the ACS*.
- ¹⁰ New American Economy (2017). *From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America*.