



# Three Common Myths about Refugees

“Migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity. They are children, women and men who leave or who are forced to leave their homes for various reasons, who share a legitimate desire for knowing and having, but above all for being more.”

- Pope Francis, Message for the 100th World Day of Migrants and Refugees<sup>1</sup>

Refugees resettled into the United States are men, women and children who are seeking refuge from persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. As the number of displaced persons in need of resettlement continues to increase globally, it is important to dispel myths about refugees and refugee resettlement in the United States.

**MYTH: “The refugee resettlement process is not secure and terrorists can easily enter the country”**

**FACT:** The most difficult way to enter the United States legally is as a refugee. No other category of traveler to the United States undergoes such a rigorous and detailed [screening process](#).<sup>1</sup> The screening process takes 18 to 24 months in many instances—and involves numerous federal intelligence and security agencies, including [the Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\)](#), [the Department of State](#), [the Department of Defense](#), [the National Counterterrorism Center](#), and [the Federal Bureau of Investigation](#).<sup>2</sup>

Fewer than 1% of all refugees are even considered for resettlement. If referred to the U.S. program, refugees undergo biographic and fingerprint security checks to confirm their identity. They are also extensively interviewed by specially trained DHS’ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services officers. The vetting process is designed to ensure that each incoming refugee is not a public safety or national security risk. The review process

for Syrian refugees has intensified and includes additional layers of [security screening](#). Ultimately, if our government has concerns that an applicant is a threat or safety risk, that refugee will not be admitted into the United States.

**MYTH: “The United States is the only country that takes in refugees. We do more than our share to help refugees.”**

**FACT:** Historically, the United States has maintained a refugee resettlement program and, since 1975, has welcomed approximately [three million refugees](#). While the United States has the largest resettlement program, twenty-eight other nations, including Canada, Australia and Norway, are also engaged in refugee resettlement.

However, as noted above, very few refugees are eligible for resettlement. Other refugees are forced to flee and seek safety in host countries. While the U.S. provides aid to refugees overseas, the hosting countries, particularly those in geographical proximity to global crisis areas, are nearing a breaking point. Lebanon, for example, currently hosts over one million refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict, which amounts to about [1 refugee for every 5 people](#)<sup>3</sup> in Lebanon. Other countries hosting a large number of refugees include Turkey, Pakistan, Ethiopia and Jordan.

The refugee crisis is a global crisis and one in which U.S. leadership is crucial. In addition to providing aid and resettlement to refugees for humanitarian reasons, U.S. involvement is key to facilitating the stability of the

1 Amy Pope, “Infographic: The Screening Process for Refugee Entry into the United States,” November 20, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/11/20/infographic-screening-process-refugee-entry-united-states>

2 See [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov); [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov); [www.nctc.gov](http://www.nctc.gov); [www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov)

3 Amnesty International, “Syria’s Refugee Crisis in Numbers,” February 3, 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/02/syrias-refugee-crisis-in-numbers/>

regions where these crises are occurring.

## MYTH: “Refugees are a burden on receiving communities.”

**FACT:** The primary goal of any refugee resettlement agency in the United States is to help provide protection to refugees and help them become self-sufficient in their new homes. Blessed with extraordinary resilience and courage, resettled refugees quickly become self-reliant and productive members of the community. Within a relatively short period of time post-arrival most refugees manage to find a stable job, send their children to school and pay taxes. Refugees compete in the labor market on the same terms as any other American. One [study](#)<sup>4</sup> of refugees living in the Cleveland, Ohio, area found that the fiscal impact of refugees was an estimated \$2.7 million in tax revenue and a total economic benefit of \$48 million in 2012 alone. Likewise, between 2002 and 2012 refugees started 38 businesses that employed 141 locals in the Cleveland area. In addition to contributing economically, refugees culturally enrich communities and parishes with new perspectives, histories and cultures.

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4 Refugee Services Collaborative of Greater Cleveland, *Economic Impact of Refugees in the Cleveland Area*, October 2013, <http://rscleveland.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/ClevelandRefugeeEconomic-Impact.pdf>

