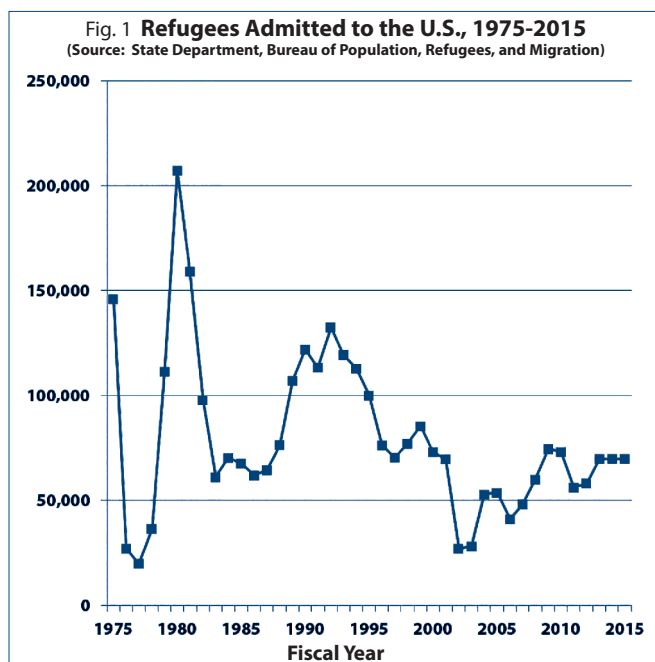


## THE IMPACT OF REFUGEES ON THE SIZE AND SECURITY OF THE U.S. POPULATION

An NPG Forum Paper  
by Edwin S. Rubenstein

Since the end of World War II, the United States has provided a safe haven for many oppressed peoples. The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 – the first refugee legislation enacted by Congress – provided for the admission of 400,000 Europeans uprooted by the war. Later laws provided for the admission of persons fleeing communist regimes in Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, Korea, China, and Cuba.

More than 3 million refugees have been admitted to the U.S. since 1975.



The ebb and flow of refugees over this period can be linked to foreign wars and terrorist events in this country. The big spike in the late 1970s and early 1980s reflects the admission of more than 350,000 Indochinese refugees following the communist takeover of Vietnam and Cambodia in 1975. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, followed shortly by the Balkan Wars, triggered another wave of refugees in the early 1990s; nearly half of all refugees admitted to the U.S. between 1989 and 1994 were from former communist bloc nations.

Admissions plummeted briefly after the September 2001 attacks, only to rebound in the aftermath of the 2003 Iraq war. Over the past four decades refugee admissions

have been as high as 207,000 in 1980, and as low as 27,000 in 2002. The normal range for refugee admissions has been between 60,000 and 90,000 per year.

Another type of refugee, the asylee, is an individual who is already in the United States but is unable or unwilling to return to his own country due to fear of persecution. In FY2013 (the most recent data available) 25,199 persons were granted asylum.<sup>1</sup> The top three countries of origin – China (PRC), Egypt, and Ethiopia – accounted for 51% of all asylees that year.

The combined inflow of refugees and asylees is currently running at about 95,000 per year. There are tens of thousands of Central Americans – presently detained in U.S. government facilities after being caught illegally crossing our nation’s border – who would only increase this annual population growth if they were granted asylum.

### The Chain Migration Problem

Even at its peak, the refugee/asylee influx seems quite small compared to the number of legal immigrants entering the country. Legal immigration, as measured by the number of individuals granted Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) status, averaged 875,000 per year over the 1975 to 2015 period. However, the impact of refugees on American population growth is far greater than their numbers alone would suggest:

- For two years after their arrival, refugees can petition to have immediate family members – spouses, children, and parents – join them as legal immigrants.
- Refugees themselves are required to apply for LPR status one year after their arrival.
- Five years after becoming an LPR, refugees may apply for U.S. citizenship.
- As a naturalized citizen, they can petition to have other family members – adult sons and daughters (married or unmarried), brothers and sisters – enter as legal immigrants.

This chain migration process is replete with fraud. DNA testing reveals that as much as 90% of “family connection” claims in some refugee groups are false.<sup>2</sup> This explains why refugee groups from small, sparsely populated countries often trigger unexpectedly large inflows of legal and illegal immigrants.

The nexus between today’s refugees and tomorrow’s legal immigrants is rarely discussed, yet it has troubling implications for the size of the U.S. population. The Vietnam experience is particularly instructive. In recent years, the number of Vietnamese refugees admitted to the U.S. has dwindled to less than 100 – only 35 were admitted in 2015. Yet an average of 30,000 Vietnamese obtained LPR status each year since 2003.

Similarly, after averaging 40,000 to 60,000 per year following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the number of communist bloc refugees fell steadily to 8,700 in 2003. From 2004 to 2015, not a single refugee has been admitted from the former Soviet Union. Over this period, however, an average of roughly 30,000 individuals from Russia, the Ukraine, and other components of the former Soviet Union have been granted LPR status each year.

The same holds for Cuba, whose modest refugee totals – about 2,000 per year since 2010 – coincide with an LPR influx that currently averages about 35,000 per year.

The chain migration process – by which one generation of refugees can spawn future generations of legal immigrants – has been part of U.S. immigration policy since the 1965 Immigration Act. That law was supposed to cap legal immigration at about 200,000 per year, but the cap was waived for immigrants with relatives already in the U.S. Like compound interest, its impact unfolds over a long period of time, but may be imperceptible in the short-run.

### **National Security vs. Humanitarian Aid**

In recent years, national security has become the largest threat created by U.S. refugee policies. Iraq, Somalia, Iran, and Syria were among the top ten countries of origin for refugees entering the U.S. in 2015. They accounted for 38% of refugees entering that year, up from 26% in 2011 – and there is good reason to expect that share will rise further.

From 2011 to 2015 total refugee arrivals rose by 24%, while those from Iraq and Iran rose by 35% and 53% respectively, the number of Somali refugees nearly tripled (up by 180%), and the Syrian refugee inflow rose

Table 1 **Refugee Arrivals by Country of Nationality, Fiscal Years 2011 and 2015**  
(Ranked by 2015 Country of Nationality)

	2015		2011	
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
Burma	18,386	26.3%	16,972	30.1%
Iraq	12,676	18.1%	9,388	16.6%
Somalia	8,858	12.7%	3,161	5.6%
Congo, Democratic Republic	7,876	11.3%	977	1.7%
Bhutan	5,775	8.3%	14,999	26.6%
Iran	3,109	4.4%	2,032	3.6%
Syria	1,682	2.4%	29	0.1%
Eritrea	1,596	2.3%	2,032	3.6%
Sudan	1,578	2.3%	334	0.6%
Cuba	1,527	2.2%	2,920	5.2%
Other countries	6,870	9.8%	3,580	6.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>69,933</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>56,424</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Sources: Migration Policy Institute, *Refugees and Asylees in the United States*, October 28, 2015; Homeland Security, *Refugees and Asylees: 2013*, August 2014.

from 29 to 1,682 – up a staggering 5,700%. Still, the White House plans to accept an additional 10,000 Syrian refugees by the end of this fiscal year.<sup>3</sup>

Refugee activists point out that Obama’s commitment is a trickle compared to Angela Merkel’s acceptance of nearly 93,000 Syrians in 2015. Lost in the humanitarian rhetoric is the fact that Germany had no choice. The European Union’s generous asylum policies make it easy for migrants to declare themselves refugees after entering illegally. Once admitted to any EU country, the new “refugees” have legal access to all EU countries. Germany’s strong economy makes it a preferred destination.

The Syrian civil war could surpass Vietnam and Iraq in its ability to bring refugees to this country. Nearly 5 million Syrians have been displaced and are living as refugees in nearby countries. In addition, the State Department has declared that 17 million people – more than two-thirds of Syria’s pre-war population – are in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Refugee Admissions Process: Risks and Costs are Both High**

Government officials assure us that refugees “are subject to more intensive security than any other traveler to protect us against threats to our national security.”<sup>5</sup> There is no reason to doubt this. The problem in screening refugees from Syria – or other failed states such as Somalia, Libya, Yemen, or Afghanistan – is not a lack of resources or commitment.

*The problem is that it can’t be done.*

Our vetting is heavily dependent on electronic checks of databases with biographical information, photos, and fingerprints.<sup>6</sup> But little of the type of information that could potentially raise “red flags” is available in this

format. Birth certificates, death records, drivers' licenses, school records, credit card statements, police records, and all the other electronic footprints we take for granted are rare or non-existent in the developing world – even in the best of times.

In fact, it has been reported that most Syrian refugees present hard copies of documents from that country. Many are legitimate. As veteran immigration agent Dan Cadman explains: “This is because many Syrian government offices have been overrun in the chaos of war, leaving their trove of blank documents – passports, national identity cards, drivers' licenses, etc. – behind for extremist groups and criminal gangs to take advantage of.”<sup>77</sup> ICE's Forensic Document Laboratory (FDL) has genuine blanks of every country's documents, but that doesn't help when false identities are inserted into legitimate forms.

Amazingly, using such bogus documents is no disqualifier. The rationale for overlooking fraudulent documents is embedded in international law. It dates from World War II, when Raoul Wallenberg saved many Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe by putting their names on Swedish passports.

In theory, counterfeit documents would be discovered by immigration officers who have access to the FDL. In practice, their workload is too crushing to scan every document. Only if an immigration officer suspects something is amiss would FDL get involved. Should a document prove fraudulent, immigration officials must discern whether the individual is a legitimate refugee using a false document out of desperation – or if they are a terrorist.

Cadman warns: “Given ground realities, that is a near-impossibility, and failing the ability to establish legal disqualifiers to entry, the decision will inevitably be to grant status and admit. That is what refugee officers do.”<sup>78</sup>

National security is not a major concern with refugees from Burma, the Congo, and Bhutan. Indeed, these countries are far from the minds of most Americans, and yet they account for 46% of all refugees admitted in FY2015. Why? The answer lies in a 1980 law that made refugees a permanent component of U.S. immigration policy.

### **The 1980 Refugee Law: Expanding the “Refugee” Definition**

Originally, the criteria for admitting refugees were set in this country and were aligned with U.S. foreign policy goals. Refugees brought here received assistance as needed – mainly from private charities. Financial self-sufficiency within a short period of arrival was universally expected.

Congress' frustration with the apparent inability of private resettlement agencies to cope with the post-Vietnam refugee surge set in motion legislation that, at the end of the day, greatly exacerbated the problem. The Refugee Act of 1980 effectively terminated our control over the origin and purpose of refugees coming into the country.

Traditionally, a refugee was someone fleeing government persecution – often in fear for his or her life. The 1980 Act redefined refugee to conform with the United Nations Protocol relating to the status of refugees, namely: **“a person who is unwilling or unable to return to his country of nationality or habitual residence because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.”**<sup>79</sup>

The new law broadened the meaning of “persecution” to include various types of social subjugation – not necessarily government-sanctioned discrimination. Such behavior may be abhorrent, but it is usually not life-threatening and is rarely the result of systematic political oppression. In addition, the law extended refugee status to every member of any class of people believed to face discrimination. Thus individual members of persecuted groups *are not required to provide any evidence of persecution* to be deemed a refugee.

Not surprisingly, a robust fraudulent documentation industry attesting to membership in persecuted groups has arisen. In what has become an international black market, documents are now easily procured to show a family relationship with a refugee already in the U.S.

Under the Act, the current President is still nominally in charge of the U.S. refugee program. He or she, in consultation with Congress, sets an annual cap for refugee admissions. However the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the agency that determines exactly who meets the refugee definition – and, therefore, where most of our refugees come from.

*In recent years, up to 95% of the refugees coming into the U.S. were referred by the UNHCR or were relatives of U.N.-selected refugees.*

A permanent U.S. Refugee Admission Program (USRAP) is the burdensome legacy of the 1980 Act. The evolution of USRAP is summarized in the Obama Administration's refugee admissions report to Congress for FY2012:

**“...In the early years of the program, large numbers of relatively few nationalities located in a limited number of countries**

**dominated the program. Many of the resettled refugees had family members already in the United States. Over the past decade, however, the United States has worked closely with the [UNHCR] to make third country resettlement a viable, durable solution for increasing numbers from a broader representation of the world's refugee population, which currently stands at 15.1 million. While we have again resettled large numbers of Burmese, Bhutanese, and Iraqis this year, the USRAP has admitted refugees from over 70 nationalities who were processed in some 100 countries...."**<sup>10</sup>

Lost in the bureaucratic maze are the wishes of the refugees themselves. Many are not overly enthusiastic about coming to these shores. A survey of Burmese ethnic minorities in Thailand found that only 37% actually wanted to come to the United States.<sup>11</sup> No matter. The refugee industry selected this group for resettlement, and they are coming here.

Also lost is the United Nations' refugee bureaucracy. Despite classifying as many as 20 million individuals as refugees, the UNHCR does not advocate large-scale refugee resettlement because its drawbacks far outweigh its benefits.<sup>12</sup> U.N. officials know that even if rich countries were generous to the point of putting their national and economic security at risk, they could never admit more than a fraction of the refugee population. So humanitarian efforts should be concentrated where they can help the most people: in the camps near the home country and in clearing barriers for refugees to go home.

The Center for Immigration Studies has calculated that it costs 12 times more to resettle a Syrian refugee in the U.S. as it does to care for the same refugee in neighboring Turkey, Jordan, or Lebanon.<sup>13</sup> (The five year cost of resettling one Middle-Eastern refugee here is conservatively estimated at \$64,000, while U.N. figures indicate \$5,300 is needed to provide for the same person in his native region.) True humanitarians – people desirous of helping the most people in need – should push for resettling fewer refugees here and more abroad. Yet arrivals to the U.S. still increase. Why?

Once again, the 1980 Refugee Act is the major reason.

### **The 1980 Refugee Law: Federal Funding Spawns a Private Refugee Industry**

The 1980 Act authorized federal funding for the resettlement of refugees. These tax dollars have created new federal, state, and non-governmental (NGO) bureaucracies dedicated to administering and funding U.S. refugee programs. This arrangement, often referred to as a public-private partnership, has influenced refugee policy more than any other aspect of the law.

An expensive refugee assistance industry – focused more on protecting and expanding its share of public funding than helping refugees or the communities in which they settle – is the predictable, albeit unintended, consequence of the 1980 Act.

Two federal agencies sustain the refugee industry:

**The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM)**, in the State Department, supports a major share of UNHCR's budget. In FY2014 this support came to **\$1.28 billion**, making the U.S. by far the largest donor to the UNHCR.<sup>14</sup> Some of this money is supposedly used to expand the capacity of countries outside the U.S. to absorb refugees – potentially reducing the share of refugees coming to the U.S. *Despite this, more refugees come to the U.S. than to the rest of the world combined: 67% of UNHCR-referred refugees settled in the U.S. in 2014.*<sup>15</sup>

**The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)**, a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), enrolls refugees in a broad range of welfare programs – for which refugees automatically qualify after 30 days. ORR spent about **\$609 million** in FY2015. Nearly half of this goes to states and voluntary resettlement agencies to help defray cash, medical assistance, and employment-related assistance for newly arrived refugees. The balance funds formula grants to states and NGOs for English language and employment-related training and the Unaccompanied Alien Children Program.<sup>16</sup>

A non-governmental refugee resettlement industry, dependent on federal contracts, is the result. Groups like Human Rights First, World Relief, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS), and Episcopal Migration Ministries have strong presences in Washington. Collaborating with the State Department and the UNHCR, they push to have more refugees placed in America, bringing more federal monies flowing into their coffers.

Known collectively as “voluntary agencies” or “Volags,” most of these organizations are religiously affiliated. They, in turn, contract out resettlement work to hundreds of affiliates – most of them run by former refugees themselves.<sup>17</sup> The affiliates focus mainly on keeping refugees in touch with individuals of the same ethnicity and culture – both here and in their homeland. In other words, the main refugee agencies support groups that may slow, or even reverse, the ability of refugees to assimilate in the U.S.

Prior to 1980, Volags bore the full cost of refugee resettlement. In 1980, they became eligible for a State Department Reception and Placement Grant (RPG) to help defray the costs of resettling refugees in the first few months after their arrival.<sup>18</sup>

From 1980 to 2000, the RPG was \$900 per refugee. In 2010 the grant was doubled to \$1,800. Today it is \$1,875 per refugee. About \$1,100 of this pays for services directly received by the refugee; the Volags divert the remaining \$775 to staff salaries, office space, and overhead expenses related to resettlement.

If the RPG grant amount seems small compared to the costs of resettling a refugee, it is because “resettling” does not mean what you think it does. The refugee NGOs do little more than sign the refugees up for public housing, welfare, and other social services provided by local communities in which they are placed. After one month their responsibility is over – and they move on to the next revenue-generating refugee.

A higher RPG grant means more dollars available for advocacy and lobbying expenses incurred by Volags in their quest for refugee resettlement contracts.

Still the Volags cry poverty. This from *The Real Cost of Welcome*, a financial analysis published by the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service:

**“The public-private partnership is heavily skewed in favor of the private contribution. On average, the federal contribution is a mere 39% of the total resources needed to meet cooperative agreement guidelines. LIRS affiliates supplement PRM funding by contributing an average of \$3,228 in goods and services for each case.”**<sup>19</sup>

Dig into the cost calculations, however, and you find that 30% of what LIRS counts as “resources devoted to refugee resettlement” consists of “Volunteer Hours and In-Kind Donations.” In effect, LIRS wants the federal government to pay for the time and material that its supporters voluntarily give to the organization.

Do LIRS donors want this? Probably not. Most give because they think it is the right thing to do. Many of them believe government should stay out of the refugee business entirely. But for LIRS, more government money means more dollars available for political advocacy, lobbying – and ultimately, more federal contracts for refugee resettlement.

You think Volags are charities? Think again. David Robinson, the Director of the State Department’s Refugee Bureau, writes this about the refugee component of Catholic Charities: **“The federal government provides about 90% of its collective budget,”** and its lobbying umbrella **“wields enormous influence over the administration’s refugee admissions policy. It lobbies the Hill effectively to increase the number of refugees admitted for permanent resettlement each year... If there is a conflict of interest, it is never mentioned... The solution its members offer to every refugee crisis is simplistic and the same: increase the number of admissions to the United States without regard to budgets.”**<sup>20</sup>

Once a refugee program gets started, it is nearly impossible to stop. The Vietnamese resettlement program was finally closed in the late 1990s, more than twenty years after the Vietnam War’s end. But in 2006, despite the normalization of diplomatic relations with Vietnam (which presumably means the Vietnamese were not persecuting anyone), it was officially re-opened at the behest of refugee advocacy groups. Nearly 100,000 Vietnamese applied for refugee status when the latest refugee program was announced.<sup>21</sup>

One of the largest resettlement agencies, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), was created at the turn of the 20th century to help Russian Jews escape persecution. The organization thrived through its first half century, and experienced a revival in the 1980s and 1990s when hundreds of thousands of Jews fled the former Soviet Union.

There are no Jewish refugees today. Virtually every Jew has freedom of movement, and the vast majority live in democratic societies. Instead of declaring “mission accomplished,” HIAS simply adopted a different mission. Today it is one of the largest contractors for Sudanese, Kenyan, and Ugandan refugees. In 2014 the head of advocacy and policy at HIAS called for the U.S. to accept 75,000 Syrian refugees over the next five years. At 15,000 per year, Syria would rival Iraq as the largest source of refugees since September 11, 2001.<sup>22</sup>

While the influx of Syrian refugees will create fiscal and security problems for many U.S. communities, it will increase donations and save staff jobs at HIAS and other refugee industry operatives. For them, doing well has replaced doing good.

## **Abandoned Upon Arrival**

Economic integration and self-sufficiency are the professed goals of the refugee industry. Behind the PR is a brutal truth: refugee NGOs routinely abandon their charges before they find work, moving on to the next, more profitable cycle of fresh refugee admissions.

The Volags’ responsibility ends a few months after a refugee’s arrival. After that they expect the welfare system to take over – and they are not disappointed. Unlike most legal immigrants, newly-arrived refugees are eligible for the full gamut of Federal safety net benefits. They are treated as if they were native-born citizens.

Government reports find that refugees who arrived in the country in the prior five years are 3-5 times more likely than native-born Americans to receive cash welfare, Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid, and food stamps, as well as to live in public housing.

Table 2 **Welfare Dependency Rates: Natives v. Refugees**  
(% of Households Receiving Benefits)

Program	Refugees	Natives
Cash Assistance	47.1%	9.5%
Medicaid	56.0%	22.8%
Food Stamps	74.2%	15.6%
SSI	21.1%	7.1%
Public Housing	22.8%	5.0%

Sources: Office of Refugee Resettlement, *Survey FY2013* (Refugees);  
*Survey of Income and Program Participation*, 2012 (Natives).

Housing assistance is one area where refugee dependency has remained stable in recent years. At 22.8% in 2013, refugee usage of public housing is below its 2009 peak (31.6%), but considerably above the low of 12% recorded in 2010.

Unemployment is still the best predictor of welfare

dependency. The trend here seems positive: while refugees continue to be unemployed at greater rates than the average American, the gap has narrowed considerably.

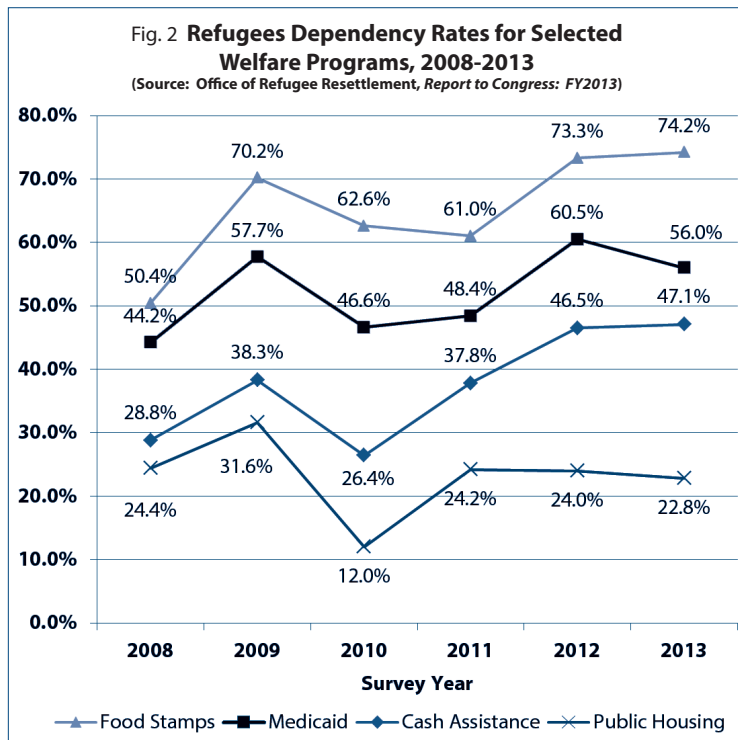
Refugee unemployment has been cut nearly in half since 2009, when a catastrophic 27% were unemployed. What had been a three-fold multiple relative to the U.S. rate is, in the latest survey, a two-fold plus multiple – still too high, but better than it was.

Unemployment rates measure the percent of a group's labor force that is not working. If a person stops looking for work – say he or she feels the chance of finding a job are too slim, or no longer wants to work – then he or she is no longer considered to be in the labor force, and therefore, is no longer counted as unemployed. This can have the ironic effect of lowering a group's unemployment rate even when fewer members of the group are actually working. For this reason, Labor Force Participation Rates (LFPRs) are often a better measure of a group's desire to work than unemployment rate.

The unemployment problems of recent refugees cannot be attributed to a lack of resources devoted to training, counseling, or placing them in gainful employment. More than anything it reflects deterioration in the innate employability of new refugees. Relative to earlier cohorts, today's refugees are more likely to have spent time in refugee camps, have experienced trauma, be disabled, and come from cultures where females are discouraged from entering the workforce.

The ability to speak English is a leading indicator of employability, not to mention the ability to assimilate into American culture. The news here is not good: according to the latest survey of refugees, more than half – 55.7% – who arrived in 2013 spoke no English at all, and only 14.7% spoke English well.<sup>23</sup> Among those who arrived in the prior five years, the percentages are not much better: 49.6% spoke no English, and only 15.1% spoke it well.

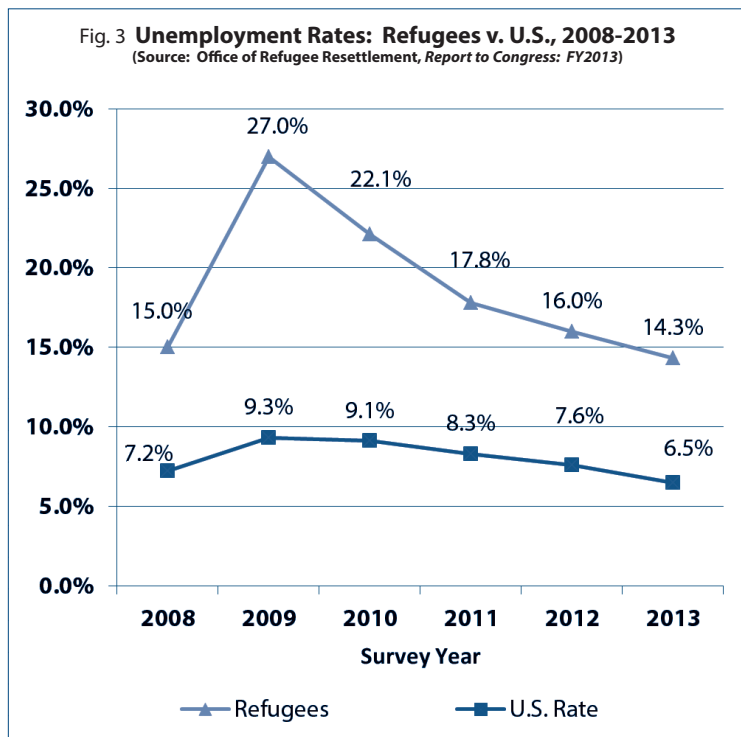
These problems are not easily rectified by federal contractors committing to a few months with each refugee. Forty years after the Vietnam War, many Vietnamese Americans are still unassimilated – most living in separate



More importantly, recent refugee arrivals appear more dependent on many types of public assistance than earlier refugee cohorts. A steady rise in dependency is evident in survey data presented in the Office of Refugee Resettlement's latest report to Congress.

Forty-seven percent of refugee households surveyed in 2013 received some kind of cash assistance. While unchanged from the prior year's survey, it is significantly above the 38.3% cash dependency rate recorded in the 2009 survey, at the depth of the Great Recession. Similarly, a whopping 74% of refugees surveyed in 2013 were on food stamps – a dependency rate above that recorded at the economy's low point.

Dependency on federal medical insurance also continues at or near rates experienced during the Great Recession. From 2008 to 2013 the share of refugees receiving Medicaid increased from 44% to 56%, albeit with drops in 2010 and 2013. The 2013 survey reveals that only 11% of refugee families obtained medical insurance through an employer.



communities,<sup>24</sup> while about half of them still have limited proficiency in English.<sup>25</sup>

### Local Government Burden

Over the past few decades, resettlement has shifted away from traditional immigrant gateways such as Los Angeles and New York City to smaller cities where the cost of living is lower. In many cases, the refugee influx was fast and unexpected. Small communities were forced to absorb individuals who often do not speak English, are uneducated, and lack marketable skills.

The federal programs designed to help these jurisdictions cope with this situation are short-term in nature. They do not extend beyond an initial reception period. At that point, state and local governments must use whatever scarce resources they have to support refugees. State and local dissatisfaction with the fiscal costs of refugee resettlement has generated resistance across the country, from Idaho to South Carolina and places in between. Three states have tried to stop refugee resettlement entirely within their borders.

In 2010, Georgia Governor Nathan Deal withheld contracts for federal funding earmarked for English language instruction, job training, and afterschool programs for refugees.<sup>26</sup> From 2009 to 2011 Georgia became home to 9,131 refugees, one-third from Bhutan and one-third from Burma. In late 2011, a network of refugee NGOs persuaded the Governor to release the funds.

Tennessee passed the Refugee Absorptive Capacity Act in May 2011.<sup>27</sup> The law tried to force the State Department to enforce two provisions of the 1980 Refugee Act – one requiring that state and local governments be notified when a

large number of refugees were coming, the other allowing a local government to request a “moratorium” on new refugees by documenting that it lacks the capacity to meet the needs of its current population. So far, the pre-2011 status quo remains in place.

In 2012, New Hampshire passed legislation similar to the Tennessee law.<sup>28</sup> The Mayor of Manchester championed the legislation. 2,100 mostly Somali, Sudanese, Bhutanese, and Iraqi refugees have settled in his city over the past 10 years – a city which was originally home to only around 110,000 people.

Such pushback is not surprising. Refugees are a drain on state and local resources – they increase the burden on public schools, social service agencies, and emergency rooms. They also worsen the strain on local infrastructure such as roads, public housing, and mass transit. To be sure, refugees are good for the businesses that sell to them, and for local landlords that rent to them. But for ordinary workers – the bottom 99% – they represent a competing labor force that lowers wages and increases taxes.

### Conclusion

There are an estimated 20 million refugees in the world. If the U.S. (and every other “rich” country) were to double – or even triple – its spending on refugee resettlement, still only a fraction of the global refugee population could be absorbed. Rather than allowing a lucky few to settle here – and then abandoning them almost immediately after their arrival, refugees are better served by upgrading refugee camps and removing barriers to their repatriation.

As we have seen, the lines are often blurred between humanitarian aid and financial gain when it comes to refugees – financial gain that only serves the charitable groups who lobby for more and more refugee admissions. And once here, many refugees will face an uphill battle to stand on their own two feet financially or become assimilated into American culture – which can create an even greater sense of isolation from family and friends who remain far away.

Aside from the well-being of the refugees themselves, the U.S. cannot ignore that we are ultimately responsible for the best interests of our nation’s future. We must consider the toll on local and state jurisdictions, which stand to unexpectedly receive mass influxes of refugees – as well as the federal government, which stands to pay huge sums to “charity groups” for refugee resettlement. With current chain migration policies allowing each refugee to ultimately add multiple new immigrants to the U.S. population, the drain on local, state, and federal resources will only compound exponentially.

We also cannot ignore the burden on existing American citizens – who stand to face higher competition for certain jobs, pay more in taxes to support these new additions to

their community, and who will live with the environmental consequences of this rapid population growth (pollution, water scarcity, runoff, overdevelopment, energy shortages, etc.). In all, the push for ever-more refugees has become a “feel-good activity” – but one that unfortunately will end up harming more people than it helps.

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**NOTE:** The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of NPG, Inc.



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