

## Refugee Integration & Economic Contributions to the United States

### Words from a Mayor

Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan says:  
*"When these families moved in, these people were not greeted with anger and protest. They were greeted with smiles and hugs."*

### A Family of Entrepreneurs

Haroon Mokhtarzada fled the Russian invasion of Afghanistan as a kid, and he and his family were resettled as refugees in the United States. Though his family was well off in Afghanistan, they had to find new means of income once they relocated. His parents began a passport procurement firm in their basement which allowed the family to live comfortably.

Shaped by his parents' entrepreneurial mindset, Haroon and his brothers started Webs - the first major company that allowed users to easily design their own websites for free using templates without obtrusive ads and popups. Webs raised \$12 million dollars in venture capital funding, and in 2011, the company was bought by Vistaprint for \$117.5 million.

### Planting Roots in New Communities

Dhan Subba is a farmer and refugee from Bhutan. After living in Nepal for 18 years, Dhan picked up several farming skills which he now uses to harvest vegetables. Participating in IRC's New Roots Program, Dhan uses his talents to grow produce for his community. Vacant lots in Charlottesville have since transformed into weekend markets where Dhan meets his neighbors and interacts with the community. While Dhan still keeps his day job, he invests a lot of time and energy in his farm and community.

### Quick Facts:

- Refugees are eager to work and quickly find employment.
- Refugees are [self-sufficient](#), joining the labor force, learning English, opening up businesses, and buying houses.
- In rural communities, refugees have helped fill workplace gaps in a variety of sectors like healthcare and manufacturing.
- Refugees contribute billions of dollars to our economy as taxpayers and consumers each year.
- Refugees become financially literate, build credit, and utilize mainstream banking.

Nationwide, research has shown that refugees are large contributors to local economies. Refugees revitalize cities and towns by offsetting population decline and boost economic growth throughout the country by opening businesses, paying taxes, and buying homes. Many businesses would go under if not for refugee employees.

### REFUGEES PARTICIPATE IN THE WORKFORCE

- The average workforce participation rate of refugees is 81.8%, well above the national rate of 62%.
- Refugees are more than twice as likely as U.S.-born workers to hold jobs in general or "other services"—a sector that includes a variety of service roles such as dry cleaning, housekeeping, and machine repair.
- Several industries rely heavily on refugee workers to support their economic stability. Refugee arrivals of refugees significantly impairs economic growth.

### MANY REFUGEES START THEIR OWN BUSINESSES, CREATING JOBS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

- 13 percent of refugees were entrepreneurs in 2015, compared to just 9.0 percent of the U.S.-born population.
- 40% of all Fortune 500 companies were founded by refugees, immigrants or their children.
- In Columbus, OH the rate of entrepreneurship among refugees is double that of the general population, and refugees support an estimated 21,273 jobs and contribute \$1.6 billion to their local economy every year.
- In Lancaster, PA refugees helped create or preserve 1,062 local manufacturing jobs that would have vanished or moved elsewhere.
- In Cleveland, OH refugee businesses supported 175 jobs and \$12 million in area spending in 2012 alone.
- In Buffalo, NY refugee businesses, such as restaurants and shops, have redeveloped streets and revitalized neighborhoods because of refugees starting businesses and creating destinations to explore cuisines.

# Refugee Council USA

## Words from a Mayor

Utica, NY Mayor Robert Palmieri says:  
*"We've had a rebirth into some of our older neighborhoods that were starting to decay. Refugees have come in here and revitalized them and made them a proud neighborhood once again."*

## Living the American Dream

Jacob Mach was one of the Lost Boys of Sudan, a group of 20,000 boys who were displaced or orphaned during the Sudanese civil war from 1983 to 2005. In 2001, the U.S. granted Jacob refugee status, and he arrived in Clarkston, Georgia at the age of 21. Upon his arrival, he worked at the grocery store Publix, as well as working nightshifts at hotels. After years of saving money, he was able to bring his wife and son from Kenya to Georgia. Since then, he has earned his Bachelor's Degree from Georgia State University and has obtained American citizenship. In 2012, Jacob was recruited and trained to be an officer for the Atlanta Police Department. He passed the exam after intense training, and upon graduation, realized that his dreams have come to life.

## From Refugee to Engineer

Meqdam "Mike" Almaroof arrived in Seattle from Iraq, and spent his first months searching for jobs. Through *Tatweer*, a mentorship program that pairs refugees with clients in their desired fields, Mike obtained employment at Kent – a reputable engineering company. Since then, Mike has led a project surveying 100 sidewalk ramps and drawing retrofit designs to make them accessible for handicapped individuals. His plans have since been approved and construction is set to begin!

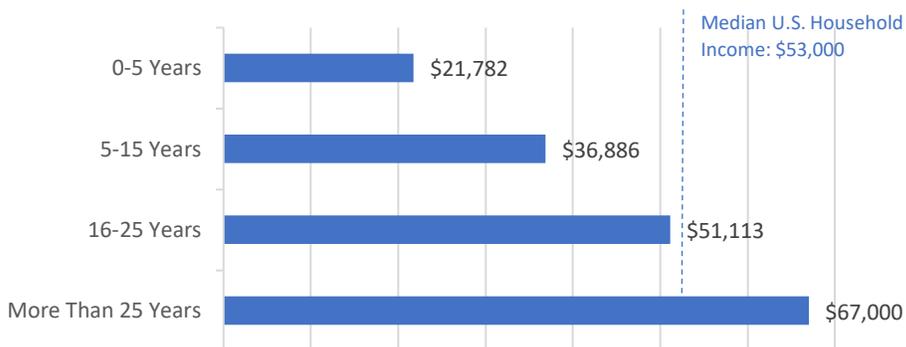
## Additional Resources

- [Contributions of Refugees](#)
- [State-by-State Refugee Profiles](#)
- [Community Welcome of Refugees](#)
- [State by State Welcome Stories](#)

## REFUGEES ARE TAX PAYERS AND HOMEOWNERS

- Refugees contributed [\\$21 billion](#) in taxes in 2015 alone. Over a [20-year period](#), refugees contributed \$21,000 more in taxes than the initial investment to resettle them.
- Public benefits usage declines with the length of residence, and after ten years only 3% of refugee households received cash welfare benefits, compared with 21.3% of the general population.
- A report in Tennessee found that refugees contribute more than they consume in benefits, paying almost twice as much in tax revenues – including for schooling and health care – in the past two decades alone.
- Home ownership rates among refugees who have lived in the U.S. for more than 10 years are comparable to U.S.-born families and increases total housing values by millions of dollars.

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



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