

## REFUGEES LIVING IN FLORIDA

This fact sheet offers a profile of likely refugees living in Florida and describes their integration and contributions to the state over time, relying on data from the US Census Bureau's 2017 1-Year American Community Survey (ACS).<sup>1</sup> All refugees covered by this fact sheet were admitted to the United States between 1987 and 2017.<sup>2</sup> By 2017, more than half were naturalized citizens and most of the remainder had adjusted to legal permanent resident status. Like all refugees in the United States, refugees in Florida arrived penniless but have integrated into their local communities over time.

- As of 2017, at least 85,800 refugees lived in Florida. Forty-five percent of these resided in the Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), 18 percent in the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater MSA, 12 percent in the Jacksonville MSA, and 6 percent in the Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford MSA. The remaining 19 percent live throughout the state.
- The refugees' top five countries of origin are Cuba (35,000), Vietnam (10,400), Ukraine (9,100), Bosnia (5,800), and Russia (4,900). Some 55 percent are female, and 45 percent are male. About 81 percent are between 18 and 64 years of age, 6 percent are under 18 years old, and 13 percent are 65 years old or older.
- Florida has both recently-arrived and long-established refugee communities. About 14 percent of refugees in Florida have resided in the United States for less than 5 years, 24 percent for 5 to 9 years, 20 percent for 10 to 14 years, 25 percent for 15 to 24 years, and 17 percent for 25 years or more.

**85,800 refugees lived in Florida as of 2017, with most arriving from Cuba, Vietnam, Ukraine, Bosnia, and Russia.**

**60% of refugees in Florida have become US citizens, and Florida-based refugees have 36,700 US-born citizen children.**

- Many refugees have put down deep roots in Florida. Sixty percent of refugees in Florida have become US citizens, and 40 percent are non-citizens. Thirty-six percent are married to US citizens. Refugees have 36,700 US-born citizen children. Thirty-five percent live in mortgaged homes, and 21 percent reside in homes owned 'free and clear.'

<sup>1</sup> This factsheet is based on a sample of 1.7 million likely refugees of the 2.3 million refugees admitted to the United States between 1987 and 2017, as recorded by the Department of Homeland Security. CMS identified likely refugees using the 2017 1-year American Community Survey (ACS). This large sample permits CMS to estimate the size and characteristics of likely refugees in key states. To do so, it compiled DHS statistics on refugee arrivals by country of birth and year of entry. It then used arrival data by birth country and year to select refugees randomly from corresponding cells in the 2017 ACS data. For more information see Kerwin, Donald. 2018. "The US Refugee Resettlement Program—A Return to First Principles: How Refugees Help to Define, Strengthen, and Revitalize the United States." New York: Center for Migration Studies. <https://cmsny.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CCUSA-CRS-USCCB-US-Refugee-Resettlement-Report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The term "refugee" used here refers to status at entry. These counts cover the 1987 to 2017 period and thus do not include special Cuban and Haitian entrants or advance parolees.

# REFUGEE COUNCIL USA

- High rates of refugees have learned English: 39 percent of those age 5 and over speak English very well or only English, 21 percent speak English well, 25 percent speak a little English, and 14 percent speak no English.<sup>3</sup>
- Florida's refugees possess a variety of educational backgrounds: 30 percent of those aged 18 or older have a bachelor's degree or higher; 19 percent have attended college; 31 percent have a high school education or its equivalent; and 20 percent have less than a high school education. These education levels will rise over time since 12 percent of refugees aged 3 or over are enrolled in school.
- Refugees in Florida quickly become economically self-sufficient. In 2017, households with at least one refugee had median incomes of \$42,000, as compared to \$52,000 for the Florida population as a whole. The median personal income of refugees in Florida was \$18,000 in 2017, as compared to \$22,000 for the Florida population as a whole. The median personal income of refugees who have resided in the United States for 10 years or more is higher than that of

**The majority of Florida-based refugees have some English skills, including 39% over the age of 5 speaking English as their primary language or speaking English very well.**

**About 96% of refugees in Florida in the labor force are employed. They are vital parts of the construction, food, and beauty industries.**

refugees overall, at \$20,500.

- About 96 percent of refugees in the labor force are employed. Refugees living in Florida work in a variety of industries. They are vital to the state's construction, food, beauty, and transportation industries. The top 10 industries employing refugees, and refugees' top 10 occupations, are listed below in Tables A and B, respectively. Some 30 percent of refugees also work in skilled occupations, including 5,400 in management, business, and financial

occupations, and nearly 4,800 health care practitioners. Some 16 percent of those in the labor force are self-employed and, thus, employ others.

---

<sup>3</sup> Percentages are rounded and might not sum to 100.

# REFUGEE COUNCIL USA

<b>Table A. Top 10 Industries Employing Refugees</b>	
<b>Industry</b>	<b>Number</b>
Construction	5,100
Restaurants and other food services	3,700
Nail salons and other personal care services	2,500
Hospitals	2,400
Traveler accommodation	2,300
Grocery stores	1,800
Elementary and secondary schools	1,800
Truck transportation	1,600
Services to buildings and dwellings	1,500
Services incidental to transportation	1,400

<b>Table B. Top 10 Occupations of Refugees in Florida</b>	
<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Number</b>
Driver/sales workers and truck drivers	3,300
Personal appearance workers	3,100
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	2,300
Construction laborers	2,200
Janitors and building cleaners	2,000
Managers (including postmasters)	1,700
Retail salespersons	1,600
First-line supervisors of sales workers	1,400
Cashiers	1,200
Chefs and cooks	1,200

**Source: Center for Migration Studies of New York 2019. Unpublished estimates based on 2017 1-Year American Community Survey data and Department of Homeland Security data on refugee admissions, 1987-2017.**