

REFUGEES LIVING IN GEORGIA

This fact sheet offers a profile of likely refugees living in Georgia 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).¹ All refugees covered by this fact sheet were admitted to the United States between 1987 and 2017.² 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 Georgia arrived penniless but have integrated into their local communities over time.

- As of 2017, at least 37,200 refugees lived in Georgia. Ninety-two percent of these resided in the Atlanta metropolitan statistical area (MSA). The Gainesville and Augusta MSAs each hosted about 2 percent of Georgia's refugees. The remaining 4 percent live throughout the state.
- The refugees' top five countries of origin are Vietnam (9,200), Burma (7,000), Ukraine (2,900), Bosnia (2,200), and Ethiopia (2,100). Some 52 percent are female, and 48 percent are male. About 78 percent are between 18 and 64 years of age, 8 percent are under 18 years old, and 14 percent are 65 years old or older.
- The bulk of refugees in Georgia have resided in the United States for 10 years or more. About 18 percent of refugees in Georgia have resided in the United States for less than 5 years, 15 percent for 5 to 9 years, 11 percent for 10 to 14 years, 33 percent for 15 to 24 years, and 23 percent for 25 years or more.

At least 37,200 refugees lived in Georgia as of 2017, with most arriving from Vietnam, Burma, Ukraine, Bosnia, and Ethiopia.

55% of refugees in Georgia have become US citizens, and Georgia-based refugees have 21,600 US-born citizen children.

- Many refugees have put down deep roots in Georgia. Fifty-five percent of refugees in Georgia have become US citizens, and 45 percent are non-citizens. Thirty-two percent are married to US citizens. Refugees have 21,600 US-born citizen children. Forty-two percent live in mortgaged homes, and 22 percent reside in homes owned 'free and clear.'

¹ 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>

² The term "refugee" used here refers to status at entry.

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- High rates of refugees have learned English: 39 percent of those age 5 and over speak English very well or only English, 28 percent speak English well, 20 percent speak a little English, and 13 percent speak no English.
- Georgia's refugees possess a variety of educational backgrounds: 23 percent of those aged 18 or older have a bachelor's degree or higher; 21 percent have attended college; 25 percent have a high school education or its equivalent; and 31 percent have less than a high school education. These education levels will rise over time since 17 percent of refugees aged 3 or over are enrolled in school.
- Refugees in Georgia quickly become economically self-sufficient. They also experience substantial gains in income as they spend more time in the United States. In 2017, households with at least one refugee had median incomes of \$38,200, as compared to \$55,000 for the Georgia population as a whole. However, households with refugees who have been in the United States for 10 years or more had a median income of \$42,000.
- The median personal income of refugees in Georgia was \$20,000 in 2017, as compared to \$23,000 for the Georgia population as a whole. However, the median personal income of refugees who have resided in the United States for 10 years is close to the state median personal income at \$22,900.

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

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- About 98 percent of refugees in the labor force are employed. Refugees living in Georgia work in a variety of industries. They are vital to the state's beauty, food, and construction industries. Many refugees also work in healthcare and higher education. 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 2,700 in management, business, and financial occupations, and nearly 1,300 health care practitioners. Some 14 percent of those in the labor force are self-employed and, thus, employ others.

Table A. Top 10 Industries Employing Refugees	
Industry	Number
Nail salons and other personal care services	2,400
Restaurants and other food services	1,800
Animal slaughtering and processing	1,600
Construction	1,100
Hospitals	900
Truck transportation	800
Computer systems design and related services	700
Colleges, universities, and professional schools, including junior colleges	600
Automobile dealers	600
Public administration	600

Table B. Top 10 Occupations of Refugees in Georgia	
Occupation	Number
Personal appearance workers	2,500
Driver/sales workers and truck drivers	1,100
Janitors and building cleaners	1,000
Food processing	1,000
First-line supervisors of sales workers	800
Packers and packagers, hand	800
Assemblers and fabricators	700
Chefs and cooks	600
Stock clerks and order fillers	500
Purchasing managers	500

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.