

REFUGEES LIVING IN TEXAS

This fact sheet offers a profile of likely refugees living in Texas 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 Texas arrived penniless but have integrated into their local communities over time.

- As of 2017, at least 120,000 refugees lived in Texas. Forty-seven percent lived in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), 31 percent in the Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land MSA, 9 percent in the Austin MSA, 4 percent in the San Antonio-New Braunfels MSA, and 3 percent in the Amarillo MSA. The remaining 7 percent lived in the rest of the state.
- The refugees' top five countries of origin are the Vietnam (38,000), Iraq (21,700), Burma (10,700), Iran (7,000), and Somalia (6,100). Some 51 percent are female, and 49 percent are male. About 82 percent are between 18 and 64 years of age, 10 percent are under 18 years old, and 9 percent are 65 years old or older.³
- Texas has both recently-arrived and long-established refugee communities. About 29 percent of refugees in Texas have resided in the United States for less than 5 years, 14 percent for 5 to 9 years, 6 percent for 10 to 14 years, 32 percent for 15 to 24 years, and 19 percent for 25 years or more.

At least 120,000 refugees lived in Texas as of 2017, with most arriving from Vietnam, Iraq, Burma, Iran, and Somalia.

Over half (57%) of refugees in Texas have become US citizens, and Texas-based refugees have 58,400 US-born citizen children.

- Many refugees have put down deep roots in Texas. Fifty-seven percent of refugees in Texas have become US citizens, and 43 percent are non-citizens. Thirty-eight percent are married to US citizens. Refugees have 58,400 US-born citizen children. Thirty-one percent live in mortgaged homes, and twenty-three percent lived 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.

³ Percentages are rounded and might not sum to 100.

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- High rates of refugees have learned English: 42 percent of those age 5 and over speak English very well or only English, 29 percent speak English well, 23 percent speak a little English, and 6 percent speak no English.⁴
- Texas's refugees possess a variety of educational backgrounds: 32 percent of those aged 18 or older have a bachelor's degree or higher; 19 percent have attended college; 23 percent have a high school education or its equivalent; and 26 percent have less than a high school education. These education levels will rise over time since 19 percent of refugees aged 3 or over are enrolled in school.
- Refugees in Texas 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 \$42,000, as compared to \$59,000 for the Texas 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 \$45,400.
- The median personal income of refugees in Texas was \$20,000 in 2017, as compared to \$23,000 for the Texas population as a whole. However, the median personal income of refugees who have resided in the United States for 10 years or more exceeded the state median personal income at \$24,000.

The majority of Texas-based refugees have some English skills, including 42% over the age of 5 speaking English as their primary language or speaking English very well.

About 95% of refugees in Texas in the labor force are employed. They are vital parts of the construction, food, beauty, and transportation industries.

- About 95 percent of refugees in the labor force are employed. Refugees living in Texas 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 34 percent of refugees also work in skilled occupations, including some 6,900 health care

practitioners and around 6,700 in science, mathematics, engineering, and computer careers. Some 11 percent of those in the labor force are self-employed and, thus, employ others.

⁴ Percentages are rounded and might not sum to 100.

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Table A. Top 10 Industries Employing Refugees	
Industry	Number
Nail salons and other personal care services	4,400
Restaurants and other food services	4,300
Hospitals	3,200
Construction	3,200
Elementary and secondary schools	2,700
Department stores and discount stores	2,300
Truck transportation	2,300
Animal slaughtering and processing	2,300
Machinery manufacturing	2,100
Computer systems design and related services	2,000

Table B. Top 10 Occupations of Refugees in Texas	
Occupation	Number
Personal appearance workers	5,000
Assemblers and fabricators	2,500
Driver/sales workers and truck drivers	2,400
First-line supervisors of sales workers	2,400
Cashiers	2,300
Retail salespersons	1,900
Taxi drivers and chauffeurs	1,900
Managers (including postmasters)	1,800
Food processing	1,700
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	1,600

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.