

# From Struggle to Resilience

The Economic Impact of Refugees in America



# From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America

**Cover:** Image of Hem Rai, refugee from Bhutan turned restaurant entrepreneur in Akron, Ohio.

Photo Credit: Maddie McGarvey for NAE

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# Executive Summary

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In recent months, few topics have been more debated and politically significant than the question of how to handle recent refugees. This is due in part to the size of the problem facing world leaders now. At the close of 2015, more than 65 million people were displaced from their homes by conflict and persecution—the highest such number in recent history.<sup>1</sup> When U.S. policymakers discuss how to confront this unprecedented challenge, they frequently focus on potential humanitarian obligations or public safety concerns. While both of these aspects of the debate are obviously important and relevant, they do not capture what many communities across the country see as the most enduring legacy of these American newcomers: Namely, the economic impact they make on the cities and towns they ultimately come to call home.

All across the country, stories abound of communities that have been reshaped by refugees in recent decades. In St. Louis, residents credit Bosnian refugees with opening restaurants, buying vacant homes, and turning around a South City neighborhood once ridden with crime.<sup>2</sup> In Minneapolis, Somali refugees have become such an integral part of the city’s business and cultural landscape that one now represents the area in the state house.<sup>3</sup> And in Louisville, Kentucky, factory owners say they likely would not be in business if not for the ambitious refugees who come to them seeking work.<sup>4</sup> Such experiences highlight the very real—if underappreciated—way that refugees impact not only our society, but also the bottom lines of our main streets and local employers.

In this report, we explore this topic issue in greater detail, providing one of the few comprehensive analyses of how modern-day refugees are contributing to the U.S. economy overall. Using the 5-year 2015 American

Community Survey (ACS), we identify a pool of almost 2.3 million likely refugees based on their country of origin and year of arrival in the United States. This method is conservative in nature, but provides us with a large and representative picture of the 3.4 million refugees who arrived between 1975 and today. The results our work produces are clear. Refugees pay tens of billions of dollars in taxes each year. And in a country where immigrants have long been known to be as much as twice as likely as the U.S.-born to start businesses, refugees show a particular willingness to make such long-term investments in the country. They found companies, earn citizenship, and buy homes at notably high rates.

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*While refugee policy is often framed as a humanitarian or safety issue, it is often the **economic impact of refugees** that leaves the most enduring impression.*

## KEY FINDINGS

### ➤ **Refugees contribute meaningfully to our economy as earners and taxpayers.**

In 2015, the almost 2.3 million refugees captured in our analysis earned a collective \$77.2 billion in household income. They also contributed \$20.9 billion in taxes. That left them with \$56.3 billion in disposable income, or spending power, to use at U.S. businesses.

### ➤ **While refugees receive initial assistance upon arriving in the United States, they see particularly sharp income increases in subsequent years.**

While refugees here five years or less have a median household income of roughly \$22,000, that figure more than triples in the following decades, growing far faster than other foreign-born groups. By the time a refugee has been in the country at least 25 years, their median household income reaches \$67,000—a full \$14,000 more than the median income of U.S. households overall.

### ➤ **Refugees have an entrepreneurship rate that outshines even that of other immigrants.**

The United States was home to more than 180,000 refugee entrepreneurs in 2015. That means that 13 percent of refugees were entrepreneurs in 2015, compared to just 11.5 percent of non-refugee immigrants and 9.0 percent of the U.S.-born population. The businesses of refugees also generated \$4.6 billion in business income that year.

### ➤ **Refugees make particularly meaningful contributions to the economies of several large states.**

In 18 U.S. states—including Minnesota, Michigan, and Georgia—the likely refugees in our sample hold more than \$1 billion in spending power. In California alone, their spending power totals more than \$17.2 billion, while in Texas, the equivalent figure is more than \$4.6 billion.

### ➤ **Even more so than other immigrants, refugees take steps to lay down roots and build lives in America.**

More than 84 percent of refugees who have been in the country for 16 to 25 years have taken the step of becoming citizens, compared to roughly half of all immigrants in the country that long. Additionally, 57.4 percent of all likely refugee households own their homes, a figure relatively close to the homeownership rate among U.S. residents overall.

### ➤ **In an era when the country faces unprecedented demographic challenges, refugees are uniquely positioned to help.**

Recent estimates have indicated that by 2030, 20.3 percent of the U.S. population will be older than age 65, up from just 12.4 percent in 2000. Refugees can help lessen the anticipated strain this will place on our workforce and entitlement programs. An estimated 77.1 percent of refugees are working-age, compared to the just 49.7 percent of the U.S.-born population. Refugees even outshine non-refugee immigrants on this metric: Only 72.2 percent of that group was working age in 2015.

This study provides insight into a small and often misunderstood segment of the foreign-born population. While much of the political rhetoric describes what refugees cost the United States in the first eight months of their stay—the short period when they receive government resettlement assistance—this report clearly demonstrates the strong upward trajectory experienced by many refugee families in the country long term. It also echoes what many county executives and community leaders from places as varied as Los Angeles to Lewiston, Maine have long said publicly: Rather than representing a drain on their communities, the high rate of labor force participation of refugees and their spirit of entrepreneurship are instead helping to sustain them.<sup>5</sup>

In the coming months, policymakers will likely have to make important decisions concerning the country's refugee program. Although recent pauses on refugee admissions have been overturned in the courts, in practice, the United States has seen the number of refugees admitted plummet in recent months.<sup>6</sup> Any debate surrounding this issue obviously should take into account any legitimate security concerns that exist. As this report makes clear, however, the economic argument for admitting refugees deserves recognition and consideration in serious policy debates as well.

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*Refugees show a particular willingness to make **long-term investments in the country**—they found companies, earn citizenship, and buy homes at notably high rates.*



# Introduction

**M**innesota is known for being home to many of America's largest firms, with 20 Fortune 500 companies, including 3M and Target, headquartered there.<sup>7</sup> The state's strong and stable workforce plays a role in keeping the area attractive to so many iconic American companies. But while news articles frequently focus on Minnesota's highly educated and relatively young population—at least as compared to other Great Lakes states—Brittany Hibma, a local employment counselor, sees another dynamic at work. Working for one of the largest refugee resettlement agencies in the state, she has seen many major employers come to rely on refugees to fill difficult jobs that likely would have remained vacant otherwise. These range from meatpacking to janitorial positions to odd-hours manufacturing roles. "I can think of several companies in our area," Hibma says, "that would probably struggle to keep their doors open without them."

While refugees represent a small segment of the U.S. population—less than one percent of all residents in the country overall—stories like Hibma's are nevertheless somewhat common. In communities across the United States, particularly more rural ones, refugees have helped fill workforce gaps in a variety of sectors like healthcare and manufacturing. And they have stood out from the broader population—and even other immigrants—by the high rate at which they have started businesses, creating jobs and opportunity for other U.S. workers. In this report, we explore these issues, as well as some of the other ways that our country's roughly 3.4 million refugees are helping to strengthen the broader U.S. economy.<sup>8</sup> To do this, we rely on an imputation method developed by NAE that identifies likely refugees

in the American Community Survey microdata based on the year they arrived in the United States and their country of birth—a widely accepted approach that has appeared in other papers examining the refugee population.<sup>9</sup>

Using this method, we uncover what many people working with refugees have long known or suspected: Refugees contribute billions of dollars to our economy as taxpayers and consumers each year. And given that many are motivated to start anew after escaping war and conflict, they show a willingness to invest in becoming American—naturalizing and buying homes at high rates. Most notably, however, they find a way to achieve the American dream. Starting off with relatively modest incomes, they experience a steep upward trajectory in household earnings in subsequent years unrivaled by many other population groups.

While this report focuses on refugees, it is important to note that the success stories discussed here are relevant not only to refugee families, but also to the broader workforce as well. Hibma says that in her community, major employers like SkyChefs, Amazon, and Jennie-O Turkey actively recruit refugee workers—as does IWCO Direct, one of the country's leading direct mail firms. The success of those employers only expands the opportunities available to others, such as the trucking companies, lawyers, and equipment manufacturers that service them. "The refugees we work with are incredibly determined to do a good job, and to become a valuable part of our society and community," Hibma says. As this report demonstrates, from an economic perspective, many are succeeding in that important goal.

PART II

# Earnings, Taxes, and Upward Mobility

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**T**his report looks at the contributions of refugees that have arrived in the country since the Second World War—the era when the United States first began accepting steady and significant numbers of refugees. Using ACS microdata, we isolate likely refugees by focusing on an individual’s year of arrival in the United States and his or her country of birth. We then compare our overall numbers with refugee arrival data from the Department of Homeland Security to determine which cases should be assigned “likely refugee” status. (More details on our analysis can be found in the appendix.) This allows us to capture large waves of refugees from countries like Somalia, Bosnia, or Syria. It inevitably, however, misses some that come from countries that send a large number of migrants to the United States via other legal channels. One prominent example of this is Iran. Although Iranian refugees have arrived in the United States at a relatively steady rate since the Iranian Revolution (1978-1979), the country’s long history of immigration to the United States means that refugees make up a small share of overall immigrant arrivals from that country each year. Therefore, aside from the years directly after the upheaval of the Iranian Revolution when the flow of Iranian refugees was high, we exclude Iranians.

While not fully comprehensive, this method nevertheless produces a large sample that we believe is representative of the overall refugee population in the country. The numbers in this report capture the experience and contributions of almost 2.3 million likely refugees. Since 1975, the country has accepted roughly 3.4 million. Even without the full population of refugees, however, we can see that they are making a large economic impact. In 2015, the likely refugees we

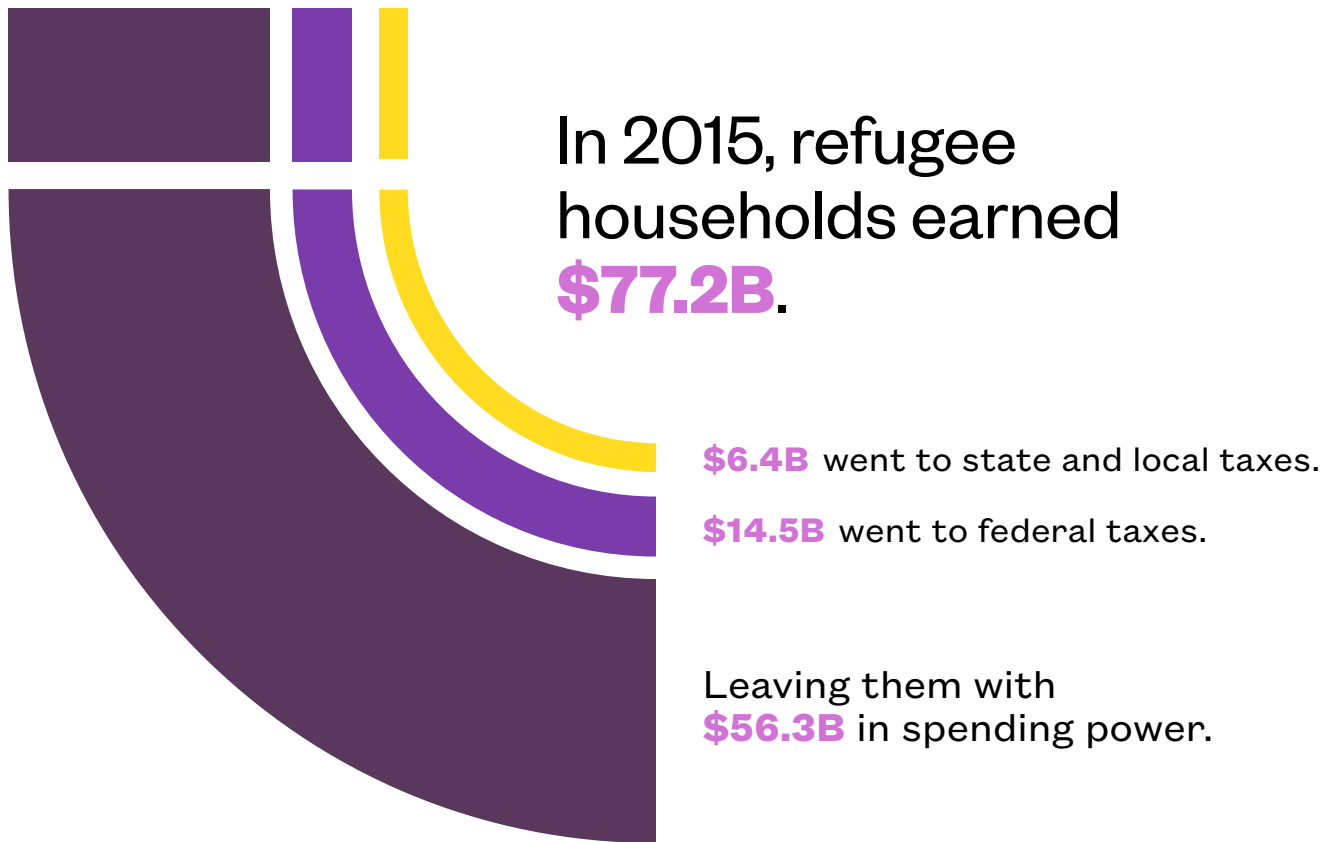
studied earned a collective \$77.2 billion in household income. They also contributed \$20.9 billion in taxes, including \$14.5 billion in federal taxes and \$6.4 billion in payments to state and local governments.

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*The almost 2.3M likely refugees in our sample held **\$56.3B** of spending power in 2015—roughly equal to the revenue generated by Lowe’s that year.*

One important measure of how a given group contributes to the country’s economy is the amount they spend each year as consumers. More than three out of every five U.S. jobs were in the service sector in 2014, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.<sup>10</sup> These jobs included positions in retail, healthcare, and hospitality—industries that each provided employment to more than 15 million Americans in 2014.<sup>11</sup> The

FIGURE 1: REFUGEE EARNINGS AND TAX CONTRIBUTIONS, 2015



important role of the services sector in our economy means that it is critically important for businesses to know that they have access to a strong base of paying customers. Without a suitable number of patients, restaurant diners, and shoppers it is hard for many of these businesses to grow and thrive.

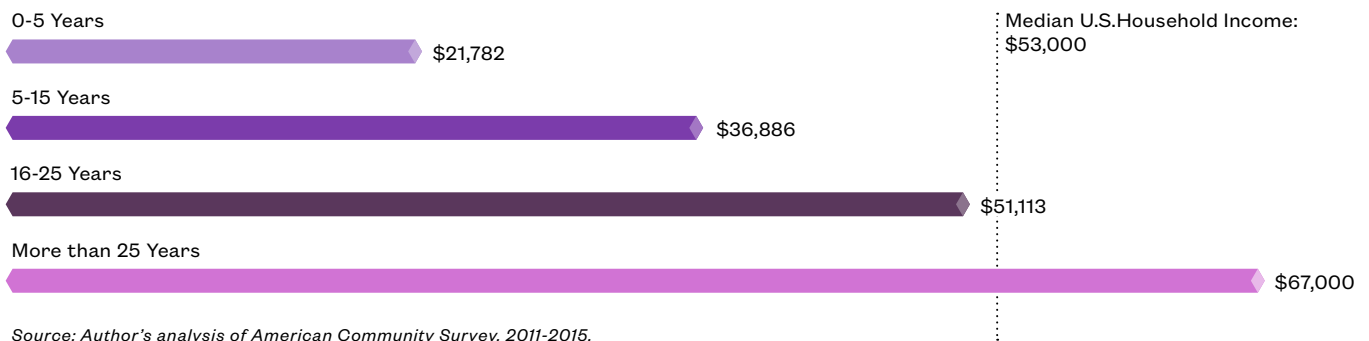
In this report, we shed light on the role that refugees play as consumers by looking at the “spending power” of this group. This measure, used frequently in NAE research, refers to the discretionary income left over to households after deducting what they pay in federal, state, and local taxes.<sup>12</sup> Based on our analysis, the almost 2.3 million likely refugees in our sample held \$56.3 billion of spending power in 2015. To put that figure in context,

it is roughly equal to the revenue generated by the big box retailer Lowe’s that year.<sup>13</sup>

But, while the aggregate contributions of refugees as earners, taxpayers, and consumers is itself impressive, one particularly notable thing stands out about the refugee community: Their incredible degree of upward mobility. While the median household income of refugees who have been in the country just five years or less was roughly \$21,800 in 2015, for those who had been here more than 25 years, it stood at \$67,000—significantly higher than the \$53,000 median household income of the U.S. population overall. (See Figure 2.)



FIGURE 2: MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOMES OF REFUGEES, BY YEARS IN THE UNITED STATES, 2015



In several counties with particularly dense concentrations of refugees, the upward earnings trend was even steeper. For example, in Kings County, Washington, an area including Seattle, refugees in the country five years or less had median household incomes of roughly \$21,000. The equivalent figure for those here for 25 years or longer was more than \$79,000. In Fairfax County, Virginia, the median income of likely refugee households jumps from \$28,500 to more than \$114,000 over the same time period. We show the figures for the cities and counties that have accepted the most refugees relative to the size of their overall population since 1975 in Figure 3.<sup>14</sup>

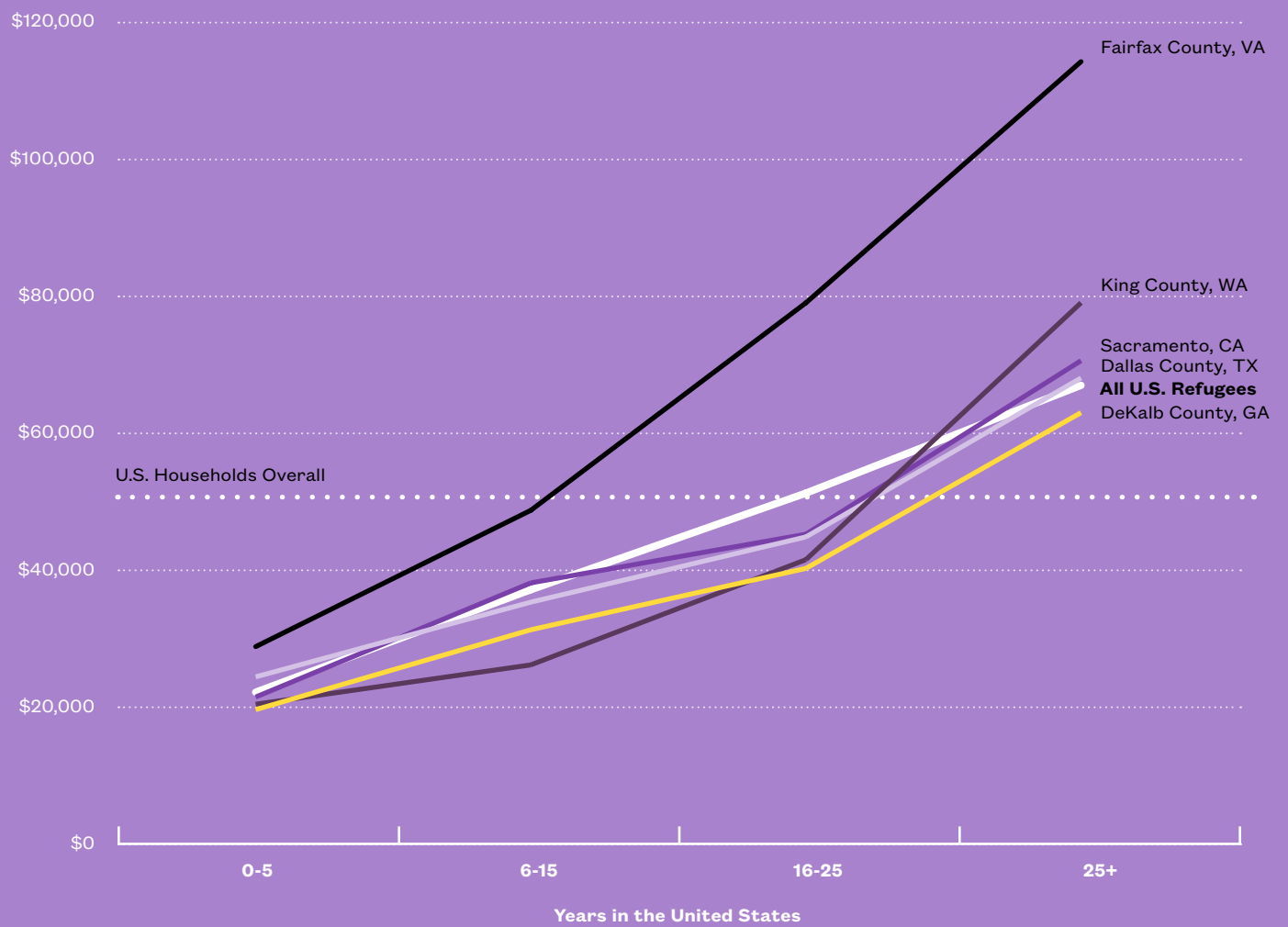
*While the economic contributions of refugees are impressive, their incredible degree of upward mobility truly stands out.*

The steep income trajectory of refugees gains additional meaning when we consider it next to other comparable groups. Non-refugee immigrants who have been here five years or less have median household incomes of \$40,700. That figure steadily increases as well, hitting more than \$53,000 for households led by immigrants that have been in the country at least 25 years. That means that the median household income of non-refugee immigrants grows by roughly 30 percent during that time period. In comparison, the median household income of refugees during that same timespan more than triples. (See Figure 4.)

Tashitaa Tufaa is one refugee who knows what it is like. Growing up in Ethiopia, he says he and his 13 brothers and sisters often dreamed of the United States. “It was such a powerful country in our minds,” Tufaa says, “a place where people were safe and achieving their dreams.” In 1992, at the age of 24, he was finally able to test his theory: Tashitaa was resettled to the United States as a political refugee, determined to build a life for himself in America.

The first years here were not easy. Although he had a college degree, the only job Tufaa could find initially was as a dishwasher—making just \$5.35 per hour. In the decade that followed, he took on multiple positions at once—putting in long hours as everything from a janitor to a taxi driver. In 2003, however, Tufaa decided to take on a new challenge. That year, he began going door-to-door, trying to convince hospitals and schools to let him—and his new, one-person company—transport

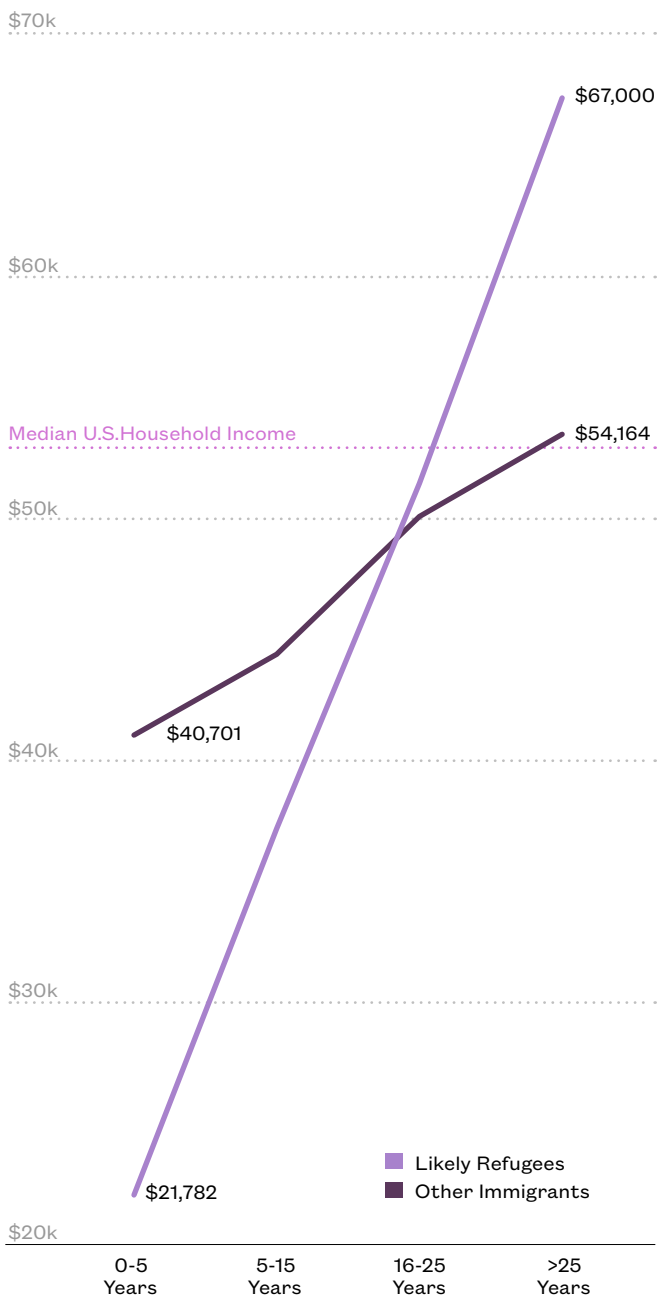
FIGURE 3: MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF REFUGEES IN SELECTED AREAS, BASED ON TIME IN THE UNITED STATES, 2015



	0-5 Years	6-15 Years	16-25 Years	More than 25 Years
Fairfax County, VA	\$28,455	\$48,478	\$78,961	\$114,400
Dallas County, TX	\$24,028	\$35,040	\$44,651	\$68,078
Sacramento, CA	\$21,077	\$37,886	\$45,052	\$70,610
King County, WA	\$20,023	\$25,808	\$41,293	\$79,091
DeKalb County, GA	\$19,231	\$31,000	\$40,046	\$63,000
All U.S. Refugees	<b>\$21,782</b>	<b>\$36,886</b>	<b>\$51,113</b>	<b>\$67,000</b>

Note: This chart displays figures for the cities or counties with that have accepted the largest numbers of refugees relative to the size of their populations since 1975. Areas without a large enough sample to make estimates for each time period are omitted.

**FIGURE 4: REFUGEES EXPERIENCE PARTICULARLY RAPID GROWTH IN MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOMES COMPARED TO OTHER GROUPS**



Source: Author’s analysis of American Community Survey, 2011-2015.

needy patients or students in his taxicab. “Some people simply laughed at me,” he recalls, “but one person was willing to take a chance.” That person, a school district transportation director, agreed to let Tufaa drive three homeless students to school who did not fit in the regular bus schedule. Within three years, Tufaa’s firm, Metropolitan Transportation Network (MTN), was buying its own school buses—paying for them with cash upfront before vendors took the company seriously.

No one makes that mistake today. Tufaa’s firm is now one of the largest bus companies in Minnesota, and it employs roughly 400 people during the school year. His firm also generated \$15 million in revenue last year. Tufaa, meanwhile, is also busy mentoring other refugees, some in places as far off as Arizona, hoping to get into the transportation business and build their own wealth. “I wanted to pay back this society for all it has given me,” he says, “and I know so many other refugees and immigrants feel the same.”

*“I wanted to pay back this society for all it has given me,” Tufaa says, “and I know so many other refugees and immigrants feel the same.”*

PART III

# Entrepreneurship

**R**efugees, by the nature of their experience, are often forced to become resourceful. Families from Bhutan or Burma—who often have spent years in refugee camps—frequently find creative ways to eke out a living in an informal economy. In many cases, this is done by selling goods or services to their fellow refugees. In one recent report, researchers from the World Economic Forum looked at this dynamic in several of the refugee camps in Jordan for refugees from the ongoing Syrian conflict. They found in one camp alone there were more than 3,000 Syrian-run businesses. A street cutting through the camp, nicknamed Champs Elysees, was chockablock with stalls selling bicycles, falafel, furniture, household appliances, and bread.<sup>15</sup>

Our research indicates that once refugees arrive in the United States they continue to display particularly high levels of entrepreneurship. In 2015, the country was home to more than 181,000 refugee entrepreneurs, a group that brought in \$4.6 billion in business income that year. While that number alone is notable, what is more telling is how the rate of entrepreneurship among refugees differs from immigrants overall—a group already known to play an outsize role founding new businesses.<sup>16</sup> In 2015, 13.0 percent of refugees were entrepreneurs. The equivalent figure for non-refugee immigrants was 11.5 percent—still significantly above the 9.0 percent entrepreneurship rate for the U.S.-born population that year. (See Figure 5.)

The high entrepreneurship rate of refugees gains more meaning when viewed in context. Entrepreneurship has always been critical to the health of our economy. Companies less than five years old create an average of 1.5 million new jobs for Americans each year.<sup>17</sup> In recent decades, however, the country’s rate of new business starts has been slowing. While roughly 16 percent of all U.S. businesses were less than one year old in 1980,<sup>18</sup>

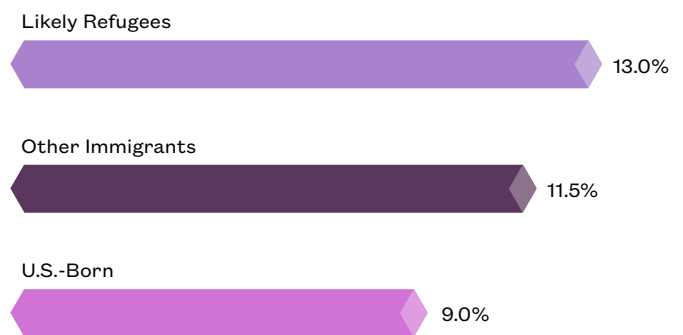
today, only 8.9 percent of firms were founded within the last *two years*.<sup>19</sup> That has made finding sources of new business generation of pressing concern to the current generation of policymakers.

Haroon Mokhtarzada is well aware of the heights that can be reached by refugee entrepreneurs. When Mokhtarzada was just three years old, his parents fled

**181,463**  
Number of Refugee Entrepreneurs

**\$4.6B**  
Total Business Income of Refugee Entrepreneurs

FIGURE 5: ENTREPRENEURSHIP RATES OF REFUGEES AND OTHER POPULATION GROUPS, 2015



Source: Author’s analysis of American Community Survey, 2011-2015.

the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, ultimately moving their family to the United States largely as political refugees. Although they were quite well off back home, the war quickly erased the family's wealth. "It was like a total reset when we came here," Mokhtarzada recalls. "Our family of six crammed into our grandparents' two-bedroom apartment when we first arrived in the States." He watched his parents turn that setback into something workable: They started a visa and passport procurement firm in their basement, which allowed them to build a comfortable life for their family in suburban Washington, D.C.

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*In 2015, refugee entrepreneurs generated **\$4.6B** in business income.*

This resourcefulness heavily shaped Mokhtarzada. As a kid, he dabbled in entrepreneurship, starting a lawn mowing business and a service that provided magic shows to kids' parties. But it was not until he got to college that he landed on his first truly big idea. Interning at a Web design firm at the start of the dotcom era, Mokhtarzada says, "I saw companies paying thousands of dollars for basic Websites that a 14-year-old could build. It was crazy." So, in 2001, Mokhtarzada and his brothers, Zeki and Idris, 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 started small. The brothers bought a single server from a company that went bankrupt in the dotcom bust, stashed it in Zeki's closet, and had Idris, still in high school, write some of the initial code. But it grew quickly. By 2006, Webs had raised \$12 million dollars in venture

capital funding. By 2011, the company was bought by Vistaprint, the online marketing and printing firm, for \$117.5 million. By then, Webs had grown to roughly 60 employees. It had also produced roughly 50 million Websites.

Mokhtarzada says in some ways his story is not so different from the story of so many other American newcomers. "I don't think it's a coincidence that so many immigrants wind up becoming entrepreneurs," Mokhtarzada says, "When you come here, you have no network and fewer job options—so you make opportunities for yourself." But he credits his family's experience coming largely as refugees with giving him an extra push. "Our parents would always remind us to think about those who weren't able to leave Afghanistan, and be cognizant that we were immensely fortunate for the opportunity we had been given," he says. "We knew we had to do something with this opportunity—this lottery ticket—that we'd received."

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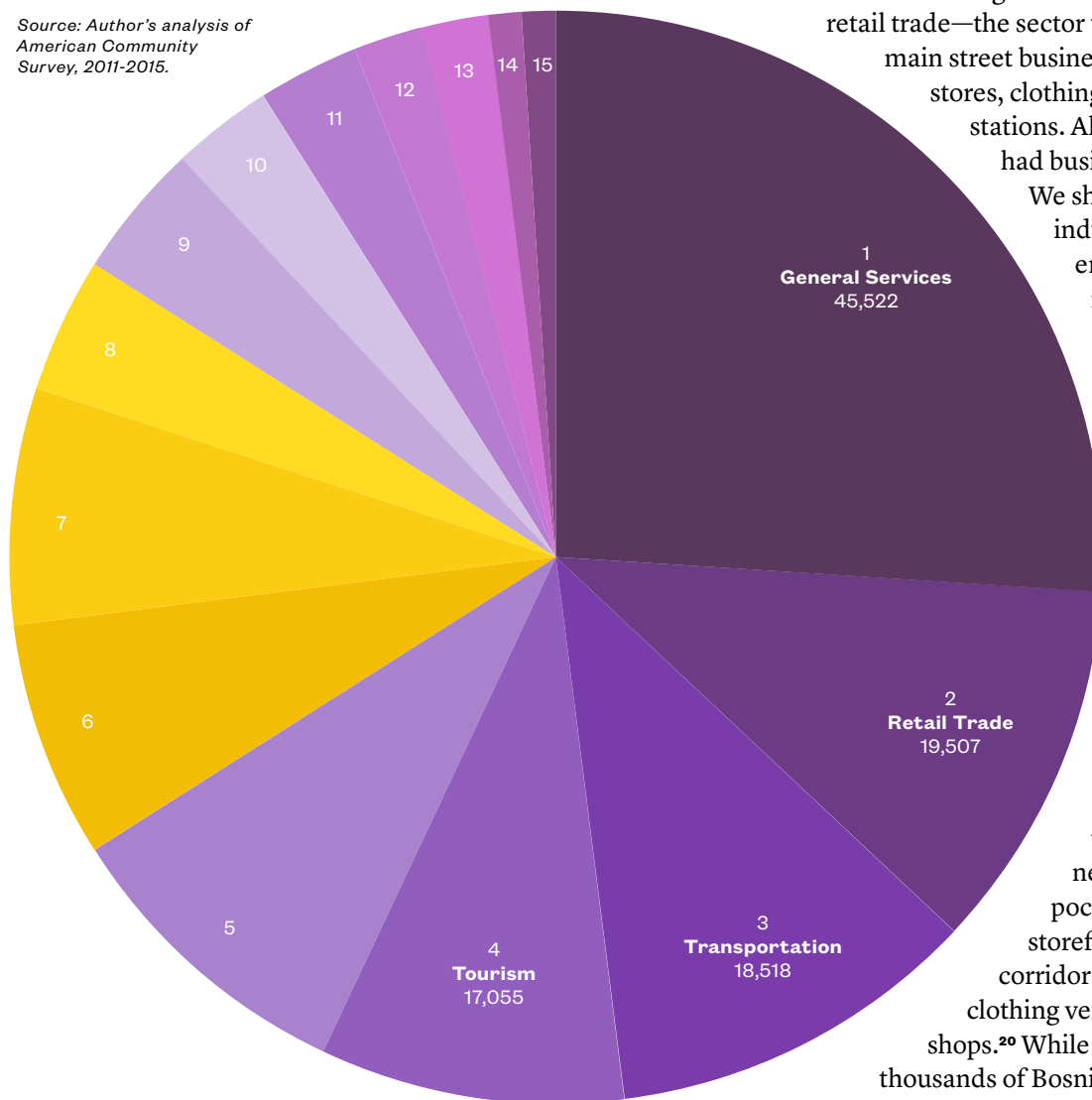
*"Our parents would always remind us about those who weren't able to leave Afghanistan," he says.*

*"We knew we had to do something with this opportunity that we'd received."*

**FIGURE 6: DISTRIBUTION OF REFUGEE ENTREPRENEURS, BY INDUSTRY, 2015**

1	General Services	<b>26.1%</b>	9	Manufacturing	<b>4.0%</b>
2	Retail Trade	<b>11.2%</b>	10	Real Estate	<b>3.3%</b>
3	Transportation	<b>10.7%</b>	11	Wholesale Trade	<b>2.4%</b>
4	Tourism	<b>9.4%</b>	12	Finance	<b>1.7%</b>
5	Health Care	<b>9.2%</b>	13	Agriculture & Misc.	<b>1.7%</b>
6	Construction	<b>7.2%</b>	14	Education	<b>1.2%</b>
7	Scientific Services	<b>7.0%</b>	15	Information	<b>0.7%</b>
8	Admin Support	<b>4.1%</b>			

Source: Author's analysis of American Community Survey, 2011-2015.



Mokhtarzada obviously made his mark as an entrepreneur in the broader technology industry. In our analysis, we find that refugee entrepreneurs contribute to a wide range of sectors. In 2015, the most common industry for self-employed refugees was what the Census refers to as general services or “other services”—a wide range of customer-serving fields that includes dry cleaning, automotive services, appliance repair, and hairdressing. That year almost 46,000 refugee entrepreneurs—or 26.1 percent of the total—had businesses operating in that industry. The second most common sector among self-employed refugees was retail trade—the sector that includes many

main street businesses like grocery stores, clothing stores, and gas stations. Almost 20,000 refugee entrepreneurs had businesses in that field.

We show the other top industries where refugee entrepreneurs are represented in Figure 6 at left.

The notion of refugees helping to revitalize Main Street is one that is reflected anecdotally in many communities. In Akron, Ohio, for example, Bhutanese and Burmese refugees have turned the North Hill neighborhood, once pockmarked with vacant storefronts, into a bustling corridor of grocery stores, clothing vendors, and jewelry shops.<sup>20</sup> While in St. Louis, tens of thousands of Bosnian refugees have



settled in Bevo Mill, a section of the city once known for its high crime and near ghost-town status.<sup>21</sup> Today, Little Bosnia, as it is known, is home to many popular restaurants, bars, cafes, and specialty food shops owned by Bosnians.<sup>22</sup> Our data also shows that refugees make up more than one out of every 10 self-employed entrepreneurs in Alexandria, Virginia. In Garden Grove, California, a city roughly 30 minutes south of Los Angeles, they made up more than one out of every five self-employed workers.

Refugees who opt to be entrepreneurs are also considerably more likely than the U.S.-born—or

even other immigrants—to gravitate towards certain key industries. While only 6.2 percent of U.S.-born entrepreneurs open businesses in the tourism, hospitality, and recreation industry, a full 9.4 percent of entrepreneurs who are refugees do. That is significant, given that the travel and tourism industry directly or indirectly provided jobs to 15.8 million Americans in 2016.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the refugees in our sample were more than three times as likely as U.S.-born entrepreneurs to have businesses in the transportation and warehousing industry. We show the four industries with the largest such gap between their appeal to refugee and U.S.-born entrepreneurs in Figure 7 below.

**FIGURE 7: TOP INDUSTRIES THAT ATTRACT REFUGEE ENTREPRENEURS IN GREATER SHARES THAN U.S.-BORN, 2015**

	Share of All Refugee Entrepreneurs	Share of All U.S.-born Entrepreneurs	How Much More Likely are Self-Employed Refugees to be in Field?
<b>Transportation</b>	10.7%	3.4%	<b>3.1x</b>
<b>General Services</b>	26.1%	11.8%	<b>2.2x</b>
<b>Tourism &amp; Hospitality</b>	9.4%	6.2%	<b>52.9%</b>
<b>Retail Trade</b>	11.2%	7.6%	<b>47.9%</b>

Source: Author's analysis of American Community Survey Data, 2011-2015.

## PART IV

# Impact on States

**T**o fully understand the impact refugees are having on the economy, it is important to look not just at the national picture—but at data for individual states as well. Our sample of almost 2.3 million likely refugees includes individuals based in every state. Some states, however, have particularly large refugee populations. More than one out of every four likely refugees in our sample, for instance, are located in California. Six other states—Illinois, Minnesota, Washington, Virginia, Texas, and Michigan—have likely refugee populations of more than 80,000 people.

In Figure 8, we show the spending power held by refugees in 43 states across the country. (States that had a high margin of error—due to the small number of likely refugees there—are omitted.) The consumer power of refugees is highest in California, a state where refugees had \$17.2 billion in spending power in 2015. In Texas, the equivalent figure was \$4.6 billion. Although those two large states rank first and second on that metric, they are hardly the only places where refugees hold considerable clout as consumers. In 18 states—including places as varied as Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Georgia—refugees had spending power of more than \$1 billion in 2015.

A somewhat different picture emerges when we consider the states where refugees held the largest share of spending power in 2015. California once again leads this group, with refugees holding 2.2 percent of the state's total spending power in 2015. That state is followed, however, by four smaller states that have substantial refugee populations—Minnesota, Virginia, Washington, and Massachusetts.

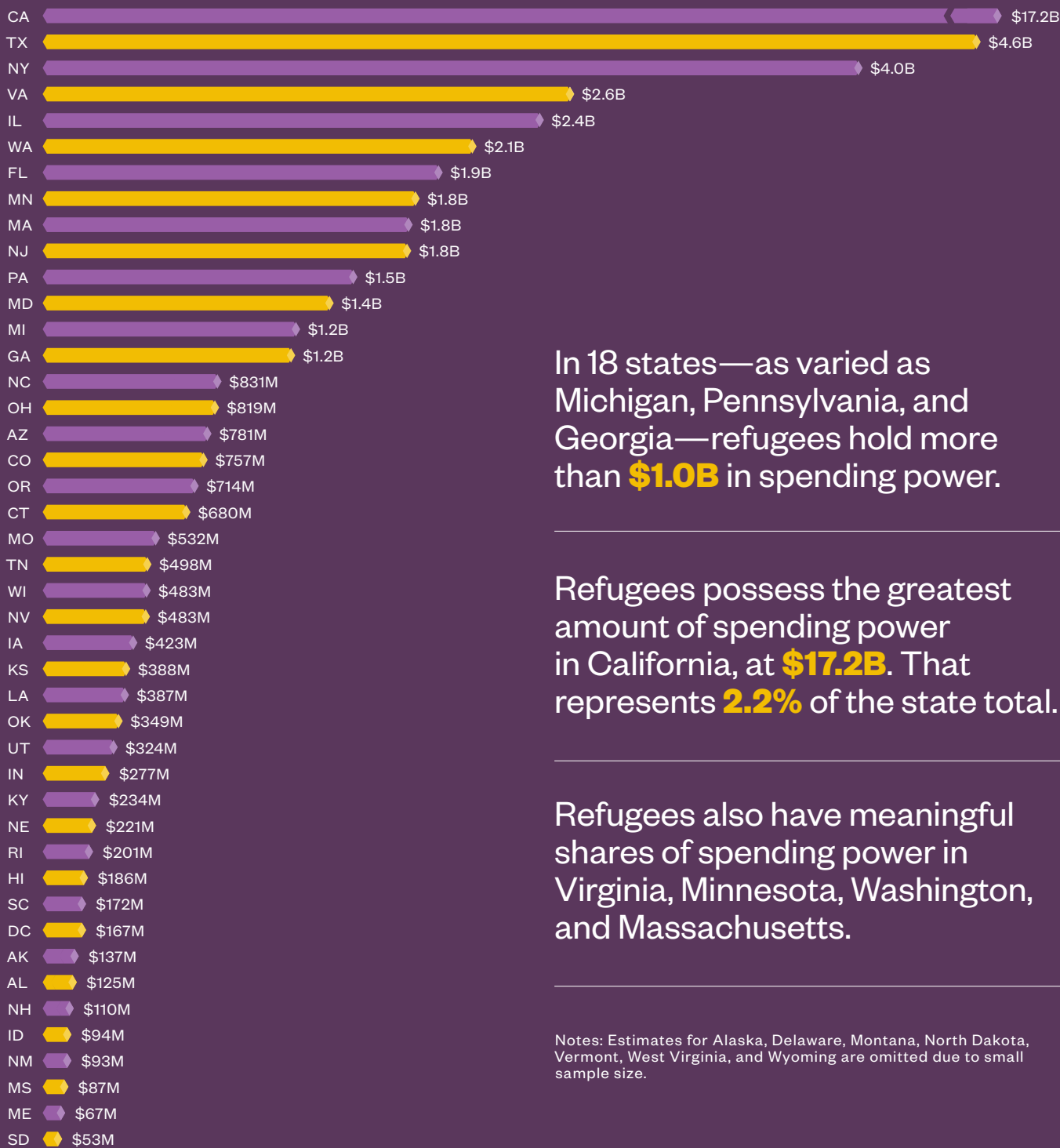
Refugees, of course, also play a role at the state level as both earners and taxpayers. In 2015, they contributed

more than \$100 million in state and local taxes in 15 states. (See Figure 9.) Due to the size of their population, the share of state and local taxes paid by refugees is fairly small across the board: In no state was it more than 2.2 percent in 2015. In an era of tightening budgets, however, these payments were nevertheless meaningful. The \$30.6 million they paid in state and local taxes in Pennsylvania, for instance, would fully cover what the state spends on autism services and intervention each year.<sup>24</sup> The more than \$625 million they paid in New York is roughly equal to what the state plans to invest innovating its life sciences sector in the coming decade—a prominent statewide economic development effort.<sup>25</sup>

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*Some states have particularly large refugee populations. More than **one out of every four** likely refugees in our sample, for instance, are located in California.*

FIGURE 8: SPENDING POWER OF REFUGEES, BY STATE, 2015



In 18 states—as varied as Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Georgia—refugees hold more than **\$1.0B** in spending power.

Refugees possess the greatest amount of spending power in California, at **\$17.2B**. That represents **2.2%** of the state total.

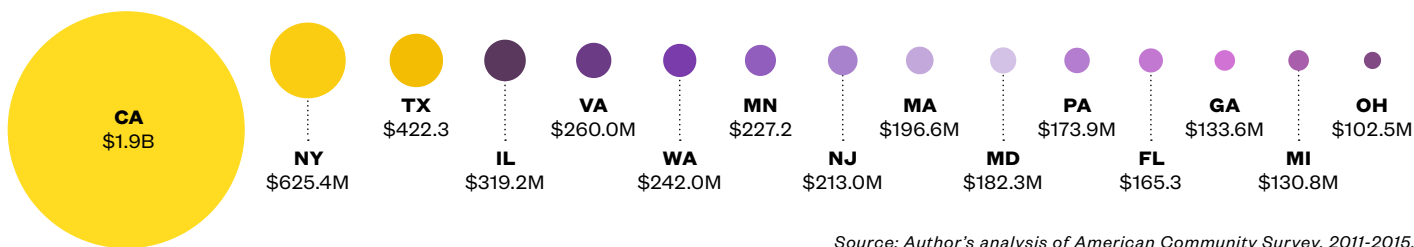
Refugees also have meaningful shares of spending power in Virginia, Minnesota, Washington, and Massachusetts.

Notes: Estimates for Alaska, Delaware, Montana, North Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming are omitted due to small sample size.

In the map below we highlight the parts of the country where refugees have the highest earnings. In the back of this report, we also show detailed income, taxes, and spending power data for each state that had a large enough sample to make reliable estimates. As the map

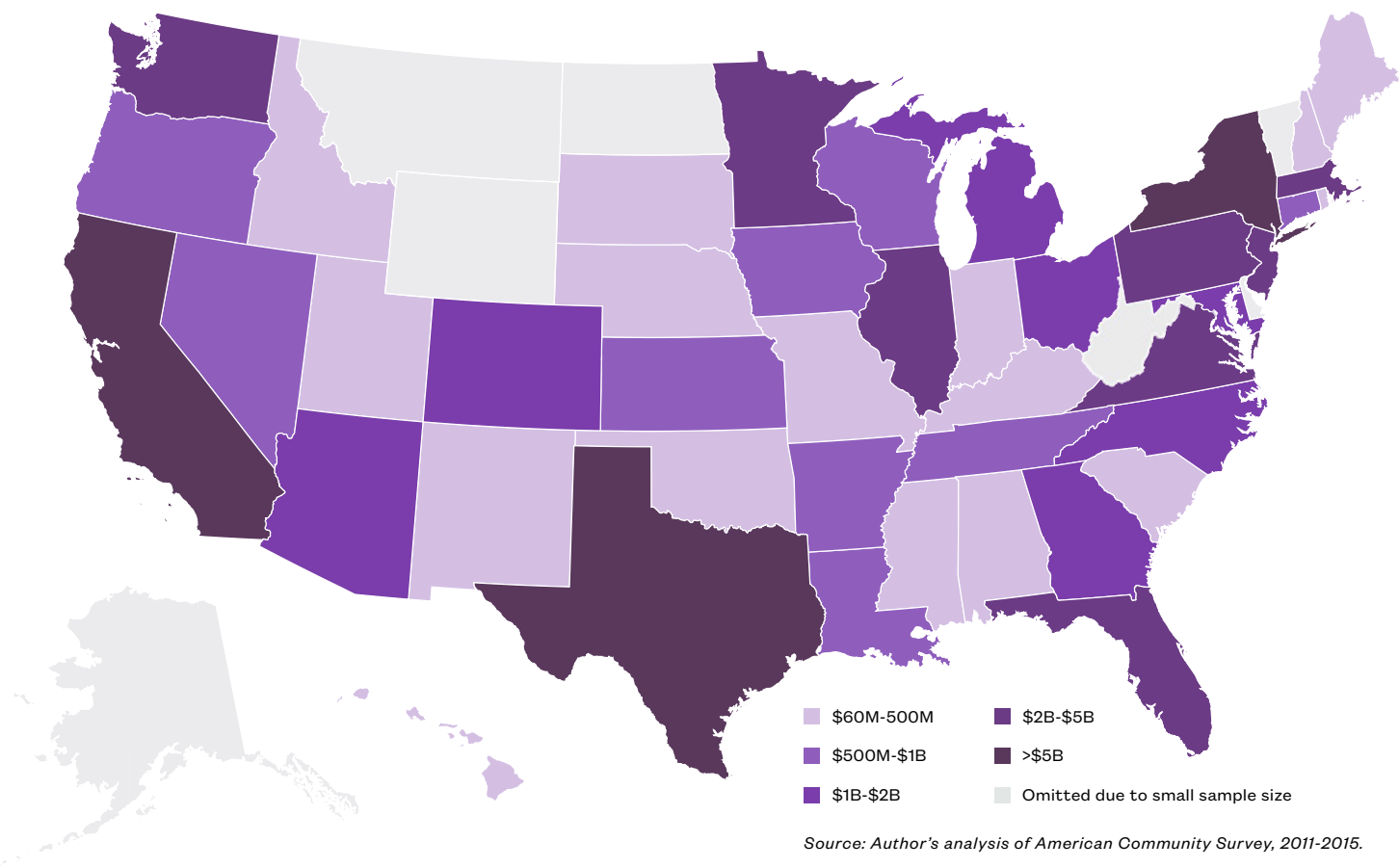
shows, in 18 U.S. states refugee households earned more than \$1 billion in 2015. Aside from the states already mentioned in this section, that group includes Ohio, North Carolina, Arizona, and Colorado.

FIGURE 9: STATES WHERE REFUGEES CONTRIBUTED THE MOST IN STATE AND LOCAL TAX REVENUE, 2015



Source: Author's analysis of American Community Survey, 2011-2015.

FIGURE 10: HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF LIKELY REFUGEE HOUSEHOLDS, BY STATE, 2015



Source: Author's analysis of American Community Survey, 2011-2015.

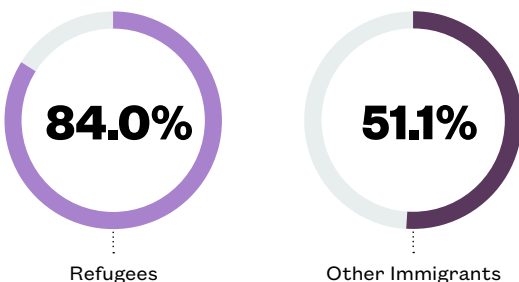
PART V

# Becoming American

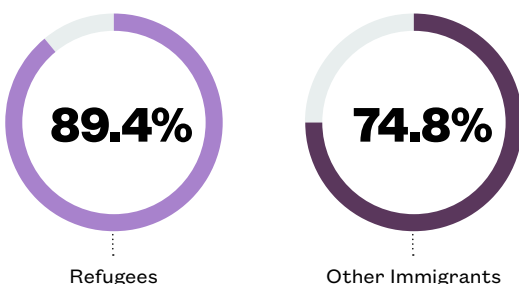
**B**ecause they have escaped dangerous situations back home, refugees are particularly motivated to move beyond the place they came from and become American. This phenomenon is demonstrated clearly in our data. Refugees who have been in the country for 16 to 25 years naturalize at particularly high rates. In 2015, 84.0 percent of likely refugees in the country that long had become citizens. The equivalent figure for non-refugee immigrants was just 51.1 percent. A similar pattern holds for refugees here for five to 15 years and more than 25 years as well, as is demonstrated below.

**FIGURE 11: NATURALIZATION RATES OF REFUGEES AND OTHER IMMIGRANTS, BASED ON YEARS IN THE UNITED STATES, 2015**

## 16-25 Years



## >25 Years



Source: Author's analysis of American Community Survey, 2011-2015.

Laying down long term roots in the United States is evident in other behaviors too. Refugee households, for instance, tend to have particularly high levels of home ownership. In 2015, 57.4 percent of households led by refugees—or close to 600,000 households in total—owned their homes. More impressively, more than one out of every seven households led by likely refugees owned their homes outright, without any outstanding liens or mortgages. The overall homeownership among the refugee population was higher than it was for other immigrants. In 2015, roughly half of households led by non-refugee immigrants owned their homes. While refugees came closer, both groups had somewhat lower home ownership rates than the U.S.-born population overall. (See Figure 12.)

Both homeownership and citizenship have important economic implications. Because citizenship allows immigrants to pursue a greater range of positions, including public and private sector jobs requiring a security clearance, it has been found to raise a person's annual wages. One study by researchers at the University of Southern California, for instance, pegged the size of that wage increase at eight to 11 percent.<sup>26</sup>

**FIGURE 12: HOMEOWNERSHIP RATES OF REFUGEES AND OTHER POPULATION GROUPS, 2015**

	Share of Households that Own their Home	Number of Home-Owning Households
Refugees	57.4%	596,969
Other Immigrants	50.6%	8,034,270
U.S.-Born	65.8%	65,824,875

Note: Excludes those in group quarters.

Source: Author's Analysis of American Community Survey, 2011-2015.

And because immigrants in general—and particularly refugees—tend to move into neighborhoods that have fallen out of favor, the buying of homes can help reverse neighborhood population decline and problems stemming from housing vacancies. According to one NAE study, immigrants helped grow U.S. housing wealth by \$3.7 trillion between 1990 and 2010 largely due to this phenomenon.<sup>27</sup>

*Refugees tend to move into neighborhoods that have fallen out of favor, which can help reverse population decline and crime.*

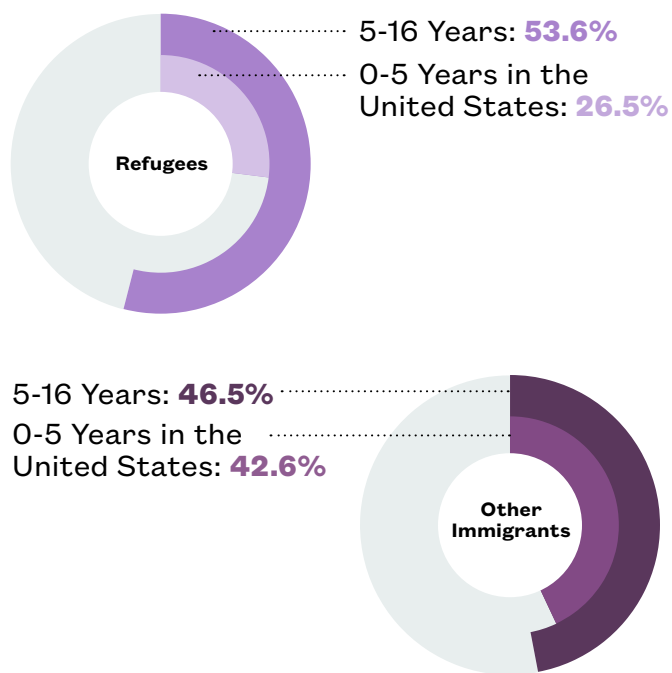
Upstate New York is one area where refugee homeowners have had a particularly large impact. The Upstate Region has settled tens of thousands of refugees in the last decade. On Buffalo’s West Side, a low-income section of the city, more than 500 previously empty homes are now filled by refugee families.<sup>28</sup> In Utica, a city where roughly one out of every seven houses were vacant as recently as 2002, refugee homeowners have been credited with revitalizing whole blocks. Many of the homes they purchased on the city’s east side were so damaged they lacked certificates of occupancy when refugee families arrived.<sup>29</sup>

Aside from buying homes, refugees often take another important step towards integration: They learn the English language. While only 26.5 percent of refugees

in the country five years or less speak English very well or fluently, a full 53.6 percent of those here six to 15 years speak at that level. That jump is far larger than the one experienced by other immigrants. (See Figure 13.) This has important economic implications as well. Past research has found that having poor English language skills is a particularly strong factor leading to immigrant underemployment. A recent report by NAE, the Migration Policy Institute, and World Education Services, for instance, found that college-educated immigrants who spoke English “not well” or “not at all” were five times more likely to hold low-skilled jobs than those who spoke English fluently after controlling for other factors.<sup>30</sup>

FIGURE 13: REFUGEES ACQUIRE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS FASTER THAN OTHER GROUPS

### Share Speaking English Very Well or Exclusively



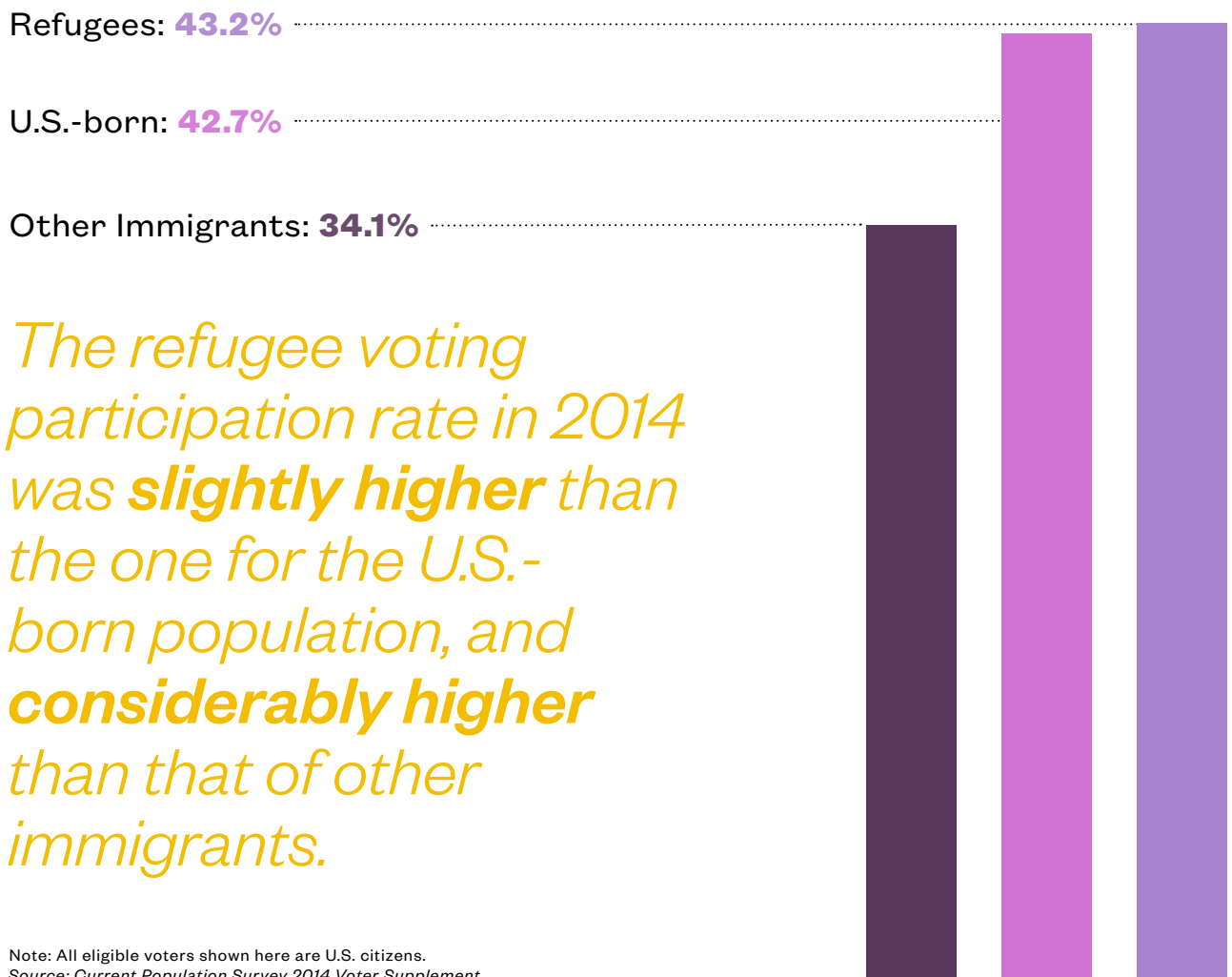
Source: Author’s analysis of American Community Survey, 2011-2015.



Refugees who are eligible also vote at relatively high rates—exercising what many consider an important civic duty. In the 2014 midterm election, more than 563,000 refugees cast ballots. That meant, of the population eligible, 70.7 percent of refugees had registered to vote, and 43.2 percent cast ballots. That voting participation rate was slightly higher than the one for the U.S.-born population, and considerably higher than the participation rate of immigrants who came to the country via other channels. (See Figure 14 below.)

Having higher participation rates than U.S.-born residents may turn out to be a new phenomenon for refugees. However, it should be noted that the sample for 2014 was smaller than that of 2012, a presidential election year. In 2012, 44.6 percent of likely refugees came out to vote. That figure was far eclipsed by the U.S.-born voting participation rate, which was 62.5 percent that year.

FIGURE 14: VOTER PARTICIPATION RATES AMONG REFUGEES AND OTHER POPULATION GROUPS, 2014



*The refugee voting participation rate in 2014 was **slightly higher** than the one for the U.S.-born population, and **considerably higher** than that of other immigrants.*

Note: All eligible voters shown here are U.S. citizens.  
 Source: Current Population Survey 2014 Voter Supplement

PART VI

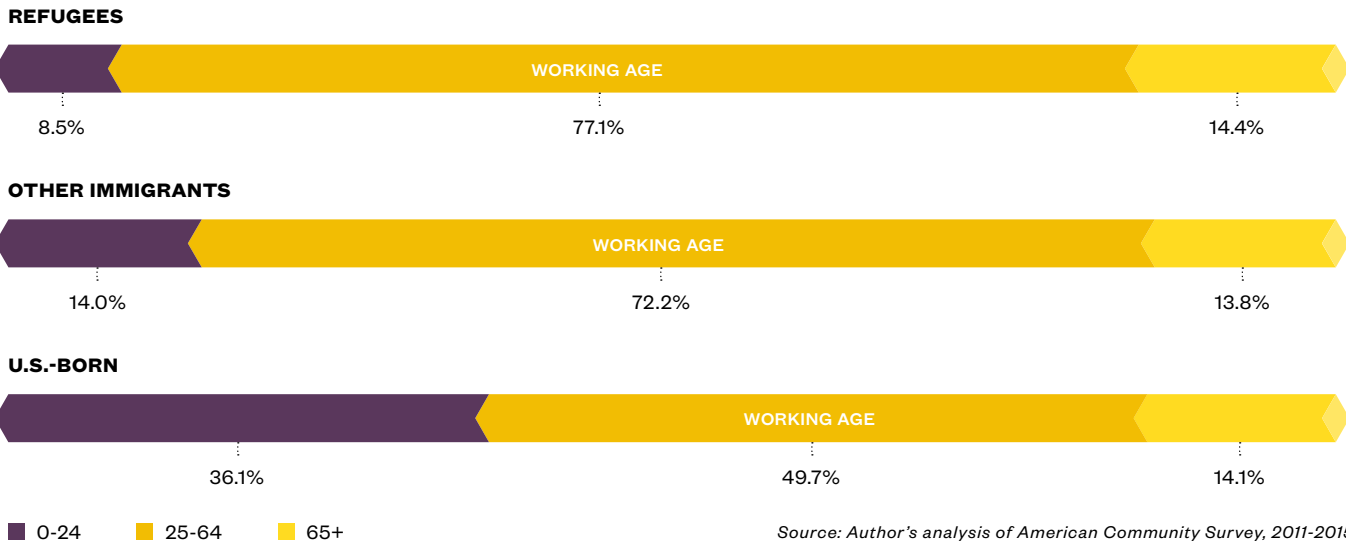
# Demographics and Contributions to the Workforce

The demographics of the refugee population demonstrates why they are uniquely positioned to contribute to the U.S. economy now. The refugees in our sample are overwhelmingly working-aged. In 2015, more than three out of every four refugees in the country were between the ages of 25 to 64. This compared to less than half of the U.S.-born population, or 49.7 percent. That disparity is important given the aging crisis that will face America in the coming years. By 2050, the United States is projected to be home to 83.7 million people aged 65 or above—roughly double the number in 2012. Immigrants in general have long

been pointed to as one way the country can gain a crucial source of younger workers to counter the strain this will place on our workforce and tax base. We find that refugees in particular are an important part of that strategy. While 77.1 percent of likely refugees were working age in 2015, the equivalent figure for non-refugee immigrants was 72.2 percent. (See Figure 15.)

Our data also demonstrates some of the real challenges that refugees face. Compared to some other immigrant groups, they are less likely to boast high levels of education. In 2015, 27.7 percent of refugees older than

FIGURE 15: REFUGEES ARE MORE LIKELY THAN OTHER GROUPS TO BE WORKING AGE

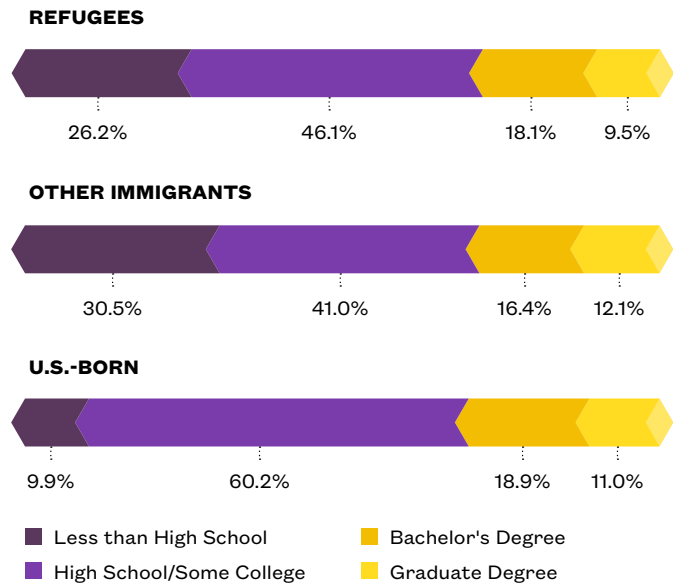


25 had a bachelor’s degree or higher. This compared to 29.9 percent of the equivalent U.S.-born population. They also, unlike the foreign-born population as a whole, are less likely than the U.S.-born to have a graduate degree. In many ways this is not surprising, given that many refugees have lived through displacement and war or have grown up in refugee camps with little access to higher education. This reality makes the large contributions refugees make to our economy—as both entrepreneurs and earners—all the more notable.

*Compared to other immigrant groups, refugees are less likely to boast high levels of education, making their large contributions to the economy all the more notable.*

The refugees in our group also contribute to a wide variety of industries, some of which have real need for additional workers now. 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, or machine repair. In 2015, one in 10 refugee workers held jobs in that industry. Similarly, refugees gravitated in high numbers toward healthcare, an industry where one

FIGURE 16: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT LEVEL OF LIKELY REFUGEES AND OTHER POPULATION GROUPS, AGES 25+, 2015



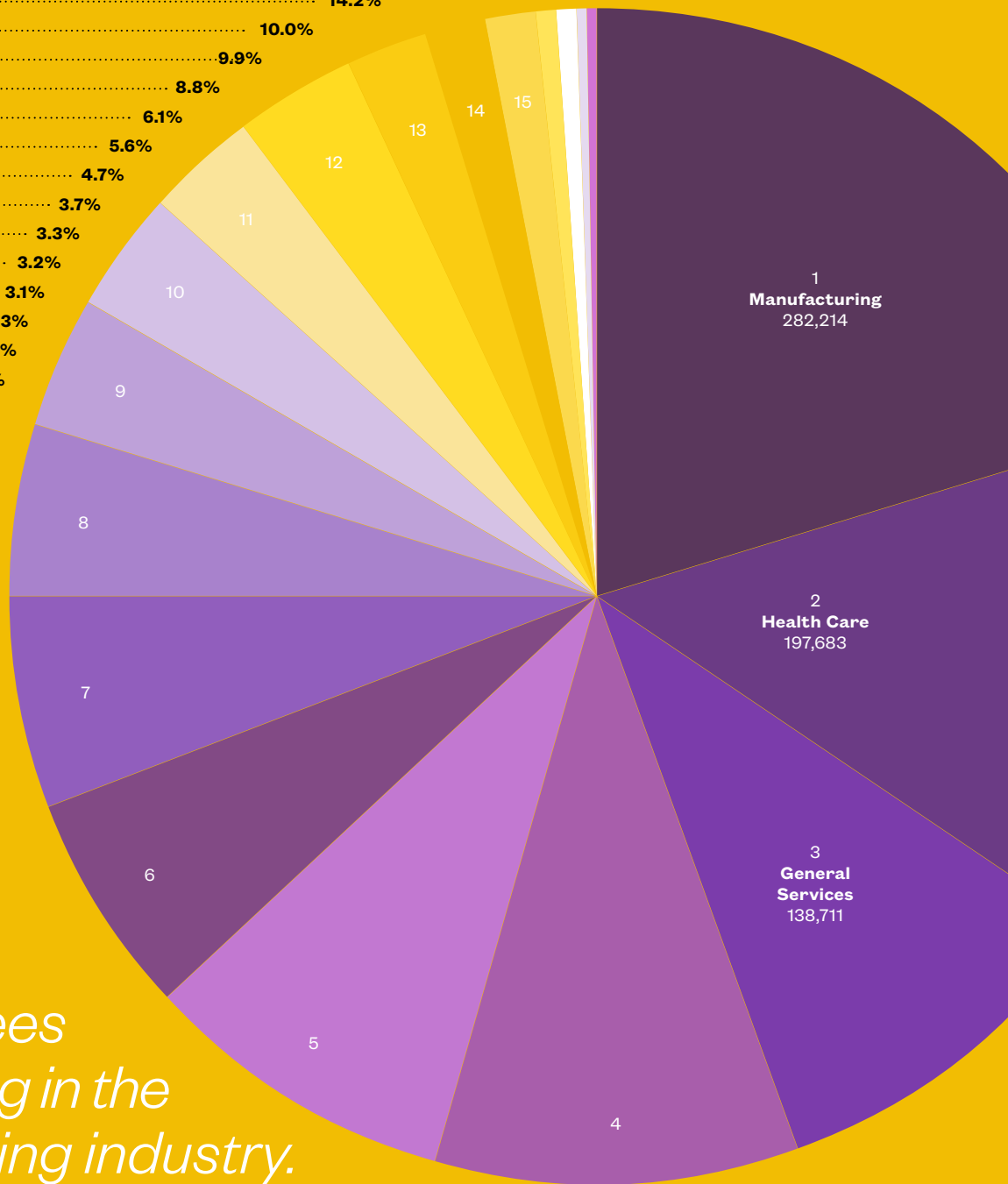
Source: Author’s analysis of American Community Survey, 2011-2015.

out of every seven refugees worked. With baby boomers aging into retirement, this sector has a particular need for more workers now. Past NAE analysis has found that in 2014, 5.7 open healthcare jobs were posted online for every one unemployed healthcare worker.<sup>31</sup>

Where refugees appear to make the biggest mark, however, is in the manufacturing sector. In 2015, more than one in five refugees, or 20.3 percent, were working in the manufacturing industry. This meant the sector employed almost 280,000 refugees that year. Although the data does not allow us to drill down further, many experts say that refugees—many of whom come to America with little work experience—frequently fill jobs that may hold less appeal to U.S.-born workers. This can include positions in rural areas or in fields such as meatpacking or poultry processing. Hibma, the Minneapolis refugee employment counselor, says that because refugees tend to be stable employees, staying in roles for years at a time, their presence can help an employer with hard-to-fill jobs remain viable.

FIGURE 17: BREAKDOWN OF REFUGEES IN THE WORKFORCE, BY INDUSTRY, 2015

1	Manufacturing	20.3%
2	Health Care	14.2%
3	General Services	10.0%
4	Retail Trade	9.9%
5	Tourism	8.8%
6	Scientific Services	6.1%
7	Transportation	5.6%
8	Education	4.7%
9	Finance	3.7%
10	Admin Support	3.3%
11	Construction	3.2%
12	Administration	3.1%
13	Wholesale Trade	2.3%
14	Real Estate	1.7%
15	Information	1.5%
16	Agriculture & Misc.	0.5%
17	Utilities	0.4%
18	Mining, Oil, and Gas	0.2%
19	Military	0.2%
20	Company Mgmt.	0.1%



*In 2015, more than 1 in 5 refugees were working in the manufacturing industry.*

David Giovanni, senior vice president of the manufacturing firm Molded Fiber Glass Companies, knows that dynamic well. In 2010, he moved to Aberdeen, South Dakota to run one of the company's plants, a facility that produced blades for wind turbines. He had entered into a difficult situation from a labor perspective. South Dakota has a consistently low unemployment rate, typically about half the national average. In recent years, it has hovered around 2.7 percent, one of the lowest such rates in the country.<sup>32</sup>

Given the rapidly expanding wind energy market, Giovanni hoped to expand the plant. But he quickly learned it would be difficult to find enough workers. With its friendly tax policies and low utility costs, "South Dakota is a great place for companies to be, but the available workforce has been a little bit of an issue for us," Giovanni explains. "So, for us to be able to handle our business levels, we had to look at alternatives."

Luckily, he found one. Following the lead of a turkey processing plant in Huron, South Dakota that had faced its own recruitment challenges, Giovanni began exploring hiring from an unlikely source: The Karen community, a group of refugees who had escaped persecution and internment in Myanmar. Gaining an introduction to community leaders in Minnesota, Giovanni offered several Karen jobs in Aberdeen. The word spread and many other Karen soon followed. That was in 2011 when his factory had just 150 employees. Today it employs 600, half of them U.S.-born. "If we had not been able to tap into that reservoir of people, we would have had difficulty," Giovanni says. "Quite frankly, the refugee workers have been critical to our success as a company."

Today, Molded Fiber Glass pays above-average wages and offers benefits that rank in the top quartile for the area. It gives employees tuition assistance for related

college coursework and pays its immigrant workers to take English-language classes. In addition, human resources staff help refugees navigate life outside of work, assisting them in finding housing, cars, and doctors. They also help them read bills and school forms.

The investment has been well worth it, the company says. Production has more than tripled, and the town has benefited from the influx of young workers and families. With an aging population and young people increasingly moving to urban areas, South Dakota as a whole has been struggling economically. "The refugees have begun to meld into the community," Giovanni says, "so it's also an economic boom for Aberdeen."

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*"If we had not been able to tap into that reservoir of people, we would have had difficulty," Giovanni says. "Quite frankly, the refugee workers have been critical to our success as a company."*

# Conclusion

In an era when refugee policy is frequently in the news, it is easy to forget that refugees in many ways are just like other generations of immigrants who have come before them. They arrive to the country, having escaped hardship, determined to make the most of their opportunity to become American. In 2015, they boasted far higher entrepreneurship rates than the U.S.-born population or even other immigrants. Many appear to naturalize and become citizens as soon as they are able. And their household incomes increase steadily the longer they remain in the country. In 2015, refugees here more than 25 years had median incomes more than triple their counterparts who arrived within the last five. This signals that refugees, despite the steepest odds, often manage to achieve the American dream.

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*Initial, short term assistance to refugees is a smart investment.*

Our study also demonstrates why any debate about what refugees potentially cost the U.S. government should be viewed with an eye to the long-term. After refugees arrive in the United States, they are frequently eligible for dedicated cash assistance from the federal government, which usually amounts to several hundred dollars per month. They also have temporary access

to Medicaid for their healthcare needs. That period, however, is short, typically lasting only eight months or less.<sup>33</sup> By rapidly growing their incomes in subsequent years—not to mention buying homes and starting businesses at high rates—refugees prove that initial, short-term assistance is a smart investment.

This report is certainly by no means the perfect representation of the scope of contributions made by refugees. Because the population is not identified specifically in the U.S. Census, our methodology is able to capture large waves of likely refugees based on their country of birth and year of arrival in the United States. It inevitably misses some refugees that came from less prominent sending countries. It also does not capture the contributions of the children of refugees, many of whom may have been born in America or may still be too young to have become meaningful earners. In communities across the country—from Los Angeles to Utica, New York—we hear that these children often show the same grit and resilience as their parents, making the honor roll and gifted and talented programs in large number.<sup>34</sup> Second-generation immigrants more generally have been found to out earn their parents, typically boasting household incomes on par with households led by the U.S.-born.<sup>35</sup>

In a period when little hard economic data is presented on refugees in policy debates, however, this report provides a valuable reminder of the economic contributions of refugees. More work should be done to track the unique successes of this population. It will also be the responsibility of state and local policymakers, many of whom see the impact of refugees most directly, to tell the stories of how refugee contributions are sustaining their communities.



# Methodology Appendix

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## Identifying Likely Refugees

While refugees remain one of the most scrutinized and well-documented type of travelers to the United States, there is surprisingly little quantitative data available on refugees and their socioeconomic characteristics after they are resettled. The main reason for this is that nationally representative surveys that normally provide socioeconomic data to researchers do not include information on respondents' immigration status beyond citizenship status. Therefore, more qualitative researchers have an abundance of information about refugees when they enter, yet little to examine about their socioeconomic performance as they integrate into U.S. society.

To address this, we use an imputation method to identify cases in microdata that are likely to be refugees. This is similar to work of Kallick and Mathema<sup>36</sup> as well as Capps et al.<sup>37</sup> on the characteristics of refugee groups in the United States after their resettlement. The main source of our data is the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year sample for 2011-2015. For data on voting patterns, we use the 2012 and 2014 November Voter Supplements from the Current Population Survey (CPS). Both the ACS and CPS are conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau and all microdata sets were downloaded from the University of Minnesota Population Center's IPUMS project.

We first isolate the U.S.-born population from the foreign-born using citizenship variables, with those reporting to be native-born citizens or citizens born

abroad to U.S. citizen parents recoded as "U.S.-born." The remaining respondents, those responding as either naturalized citizens or non-U.S. citizens, are recoded as "foreign-born." We use each foreign-born respondent's country of birth and their year of arrival to identify those who are likely to be refugees. To identify the years that saw significant inflows of refugees from each country, we use data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as well as the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migrations WRAPS database and compare yearly totals with the ACS data showing how many people in the United States were born in each country and the year that each immigrated to the United States. Comparing the two, we assign refugee status to those born in a given country of origin who arrived during years when the number of refugee arrivals from that country according to DHS/WRAPS data exceeded 50 percent of the total population born in a given country who immigrated in each year.

What we find aligns broadly with what we know about refugee numbers in general. The vast majority of the refugees we identify came to the United States after 1980, after the Refugee Act, which established the foundation for modern U.S. refugee policy. There are four main exceptions. First, refugees fleeing from Communist countries in Europe—such as Hungarians in 1956, Yugoslavians, and Soviet refugees until 1989. While the United States has welcomed Iranian refugees consistently and constantly since the Iranian Revolution began in 1978, it is only during the first few years after the revolution that refugees made up a substantial portion of arrivals from the country as whole. As a result, we only classify Iranian immigrants from the

earliest years as refugees. Third, Ethiopians who fled after the fall of Haile Selassie in 1974 and the Ogaden War of 1978-1979 were also included as refugees. Lastly, refugees from Indochina (i.e. Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos), who began to arrive in 1975, after the fall of Saigon and the signing of the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act are included. A full list of countries of origin and the years for which we considered immigrants from these countries to be refugees can be found below. Additional work was done to identify specific ancestry groups such as Assyrians (i.e. Iraqi Christians) and the Hmong, but we found that this additional layer of cross tabulation did not identify any other likely refugees not already identified using the country of birth and year of immigration cross tabulation.

Two groups are notably absent from our study: Cubans and Haitians. We chose to not include these groups as Cubans and Haitians have mainly been admitted through country-specific programs that confer upon them different benefits and statuses through different processes.

Using this methodology, we are able to identify 97,003 cases in our main data source, the 5-year ACS sample, that are likely refugees. When weighted, these cases represent 2,264,210 people out of a total U.S. population of 316,515,024 in 2015. Inherently, this number and our method does not capture every refugee living in the United States in 2015. Refugee flows from countries that have other more traditional immigration pathways to the United States are not counted here, nor are countries that have sent relatively few refugees or immigrants to the United States overall, since such populations are difficult to pick up in surveys such as the ACS due to small sample sizes.

However, while the counts of refugees may not match the administrative data on resettled refugees, we are confident that our method give reliable estimates of the characteristics of refugee populations in the United States and are comparable to similar estimates done by the Migration Policy Institute in Capps et al.<sup>38</sup>

TABLE 1: REFUGEE COUNTRIES OF BIRTH AND YEARS OF IMMIGRATION USED TO IMPUTE REFUGEE STATUS

Country of Birth	Years Selected
<b>Yugoslavia (and Former Yugoslavia, if not spec. otherwise)</b>	1975-2000
<b>Croatia</b>	1999-2001
<b>Serbia</b>	2001-2004
<b>Bosnia-Herzegovina</b>	1993-2004
<b>Vietnam</b>	1975-1996
<b>Cambodia</b>	1975-1994
<b>Laos</b>	1975-1997
<b>Afghanistan</b>	1978-2015
<b>Bhutan</b>	2007-2015
<b>Burma/Myanmar</b>	1997-2015
<b>Iran</b>	1978-1982
<b>Iraq</b>	1990-2015
<b>Syria</b>	2014-2015
<b>Sudan</b>	1990-2015
<b>Liberia</b>	1992-2010
<b>Sierra Leone</b>	1999-2008
<b>Ethiopia</b>	1978-1993, 1999-2008
<b>Eritrea</b>	2001-2015
<b>Somalia</b>	1992-2015
<b>Zaire/Dem. Rep. Congo</b>	1996-2015
<b>Albania</b>	1991-1994

## Data Sources and Key Terms

While refugees remain one of the most scrutinized and well-documented type of travelers to the United States, there is surprisingly little quantitative data available on refugees and their socioeconomic characteristics after they are resettled. The main reason for this is that nationally representative surveys that normally provide socioeconomic data to researchers do not include information on respondents' immigration status beyond citizenship status. As such, more qualitative researchers have an abundance of information about refugees when they enter, yet little to examine about their socioeconomic performance as they integrate into U.S. society.

As mentioned above, the main source of our data is the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year microdata sample for 2011-2015. All data points except those specifically about voter activity come from the ACS. For data on voting patterns, we use the 2012 and 2014 November Voter Supplements from the Current Population Survey (CPS).

We define the working age population as those 25 to 64 years old. Definitions on those in the labor force and employed are the same as in the U.S. Census.

As in past NAE briefs, we use the term “spending power,” which we define as the disposable income leftover after subtracting federal, state, and local taxes from household income.<sup>39</sup>

To make industry breakdowns easier to understand, we recoded individual industries into broader categories, matching the two-digit codes from the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), developed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and used by Federal statistical agencies to classify business establishments.

In this study, we use the term “entrepreneur” and “self-employed” interchangeably. We do not make

the distinction between self-employed people who own incorporated or unincorporated businesses. The number of self-employed people is limited to those who reported being self-employed, in the labor force, and not unemployed. We aggregate these entrepreneurs' self-declared business income to produce estimates on their total business income.

The data on housing tenure also comes from the ACS. Immigrant homeowners are defined as foreign-born householders who reported living in their own home, whether owned outright or on a mortgage.

Data on naturalization and eligibility come from the ACS. We use the citizenship variable in the ACS microdata to estimate the naturalized and non-citizen breakdowns of each demographic group.

Data on educational attainments is limited to only the population 25 years old or older, following standard demographic study practices, including those of the U.S. Census. We group master's, professional, and doctorates together under the blanket term “advanced degrees.”

The estimates for registration rates and active voters are calculated from the Voter Supplement in the Current Population Survey (CPS) for the years 2012 and 2014 using the IPUMS database. The sample in CPS includes only civilian non-institutional persons.

## Calculating Spending Power

Using the 2015 ACS 5-year microdata sample, we estimate the aggregate household income, tax contributions, and spending power of foreign-born households. We estimate state and local taxes using the tax rates estimates produced by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy by state income quintiles.<sup>40</sup> For federal tax rate estimates, we use data released by the Congressional Budget Office in 2014 and calculate the federal tax based on the household income federal tax bracket.<sup>41</sup>

## Calculating Underemployment

Using the Bureau of Labor Statistics standards, we identify lower skilled jobs as jobs normally requiring a high school degree or less. A full list of occupations can be found at: <https://data.bls.gov/projections/occupationProj>. We then cross tabulate those holders of bachelor's degrees or advanced degrees with holders of lower skilled jobs to estimate the number of underemployed workers in each demographic group.

## Calculating Naturalization Eligibility

For eligibility, we impute naturalization eligibility based on whether non-citizens fulfill several conditions. We consider a non-citizen eligible to naturalize if they are 18 years or older, can speak English, and have had continuous residence in the United States for at least five years.

# Data Appendix

**DATA APPENDIX: HOUSEHOLD INCOME, TAX CONTRIBUTIONS, AND SPENDING POWER OF LIKELY REFUGEE HOUSEHOLDS, BY STATE (IN \$ MILLIONS), 2015**

State	Number of Likely Refugees	Household Income	Federal Taxes	State and Local Taxes	Spending Power
AL	5,886	\$160.20	\$22.50	\$13.30	\$124.50
AZ	40,123	\$1,032.30	\$168.30	\$83.10	\$780.90
AK	5,873	\$184.80	\$30.20	\$17.30	\$137.30
CA	645,437	\$23,974.00	\$4,790.00	1,943.10	17,240.90
CO	34,206	\$1,004.20	\$175.30	\$72.10	\$756.90
CT	23,228	\$952.60	\$179.90	\$93.10	\$679.50
DC	6,048	\$232.30	\$45.20	\$19.80	\$167.40
FL	77,963	\$2,534.50	\$459.10	\$165.30	\$1,910.00
GA	61,409	\$1,599.10	\$274.10	\$133.60	\$1,191.40
HI	7,892	\$255.70	\$44.90	\$25.20	\$185.60
ID	5,392	\$123.90	\$20.10	\$9.60	\$94.20
IL	95,259	\$3,316.80	\$589.50	\$319.20	\$2,408.10
IN	17,593	\$371.20	\$59.80	\$34.20	\$277.20
IA	20,395	\$573.60	\$100.20	\$50.50	\$422.90
KS	15,872	\$519.50	\$89.40	\$42.00	\$388.10
KY	14,814	\$311.00	\$48.40	\$29.00	\$233.70
LA	16,357	\$517.20	\$90.60	\$39.20	\$387.40
ME	5,996	\$84.20	\$9.70	\$7.50	\$67.00
MD	49,857	\$1,935.60	\$382.60	\$182.30	\$1,370.70
MA	64,190	\$2,432.20	\$474.10	\$196.60	\$1,761.40
MI	74,284	\$1,605.80	\$264.90	\$130.80	\$1,210.10
MN	94,175	\$2,400.20	\$380.70	\$227.20	\$1,792.30
MS	3,806	\$114.90	\$18.40	\$9.70	\$86.70
MO	26,329	\$708.20	\$117.30	\$59.10	\$531.70
NE	12,924	\$290.10	\$42.50	\$26.60	\$221.00

State	Number of Likely Refugees	Household Income	Federal Taxes	State and Local Taxes	Spending Power
NV	20,359	\$622.20	\$106.10	\$33.50	\$482.60
NH	6,076	\$141.70	\$23.10	\$8.80	\$109.90
NJ	51,360	\$2,468.20	\$500.70	\$213.00	\$1,754.50
NM	4,170	\$129.20	\$27.60	\$9.20	\$92.50
NY	139,529	\$5,782.00	\$1,168.10	\$625.40	\$3,988.40
NC	40,891	\$1,104.60	\$182.20	\$91.40	\$831.00
OH	42,898	\$1,102.00	\$180.10	\$102.50	\$819.40
OK	15,235	\$472.10	\$86.30	\$36.90	\$349.00
OR	28,393	\$951.70	\$167.20	\$70.60	\$713.90
PA	68,333	\$2,024.70	\$356.60	\$173.90	\$1,494.30
RI	8,087	\$282.90	\$56.00	\$26.10	\$200.80
SC	7,473	\$225.90	\$37.50	\$15.90	\$172.40
SD	4,321	\$66.20	\$8.80	\$4.80	\$52.60
TN	26,634	\$649.90	\$108.90	\$43.40	\$497.50
TX	177,719	\$6,207.70	\$1,159.30	\$422.30	\$4,626.00
UT	15,335	\$431.80	\$75.20	\$32.80	\$323.90
VA	86,847	\$3,518.80	\$704.20	\$260.00	\$2,554.70
WA	88,080	\$2,809.40	\$500.60	\$242.00	\$2,066.80
WI	25,434	\$649.40	\$105.40	\$60.80	\$483.30

Notes: Estimates for Alaska, Delaware, Montana, North Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming is omitted due to small sample size.

Source: Author's analysis of American Community Survey, 2011-2015.

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