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RELEASE: Analysis of Refugee Groups Provides Evidence of High Levels of Integration Across Indicators

Washington, D.C. — Today, in conjunction with an [event](#) on the same topic, the Center for American Progress and the Fiscal Policy Institute released a report that analyzes how four key refugee groups—Bosnians, Burmese, Hmong, and Somalis—in the United States are doing on key indicators of integration, such as wages, labor market participation, business ownership, English language ability, and citizenship. As the United States and other countries wrestle with how to handle the sharp rise in the number of people around the globe displaced by conflict and persecution, the long-term experiences of the four groups studied in this report should provide grounds for encouragement.

The methodology developed for this report allows for a rare analysis of how refugee groups integrate in the long run. The report finds that over time, refugees integrate well into their new communities. For example, after being in the United States for 10 years, refugees are in many regards similar to their U.S.-born neighbors, with similar rates of labor force participation and business ownership; the large majority have learned to speak English after being in the country for 10 years and have become naturalized U.S. citizens after being in the country for 20 years.

“Refugees have experienced some of the most horrific of circumstances imaginable. Yet as they establish themselves in America, they get jobs, start businesses, buy homes, learn English, and become citizens,” said David Dyssegaard Kallick, director of the Immigration Research Initiative at the Fiscal Policy Institute and principal author of the report. “Economic growth is not the primary reason refugees are resettled, but it is a positive byproduct of giving people with nowhere to turn a new place to call home. Doing the right thing is not only good for refugees—it’s also good for American communities.”

The report’s major findings, based on an analysis of 2014 American Community Survey 5-year data looking at Somali, Burmese, Hmong, and Bosnian refugees, include:

- Refugee groups are gaining a foothold in the labor market, with labor force participation rates of men in the Somali, Burmese, Hmong, and Bosnian refugee communities often exceeding those of U.S.-born men and with rates for women catching up after 10 years to about as high as or sometimes higher than those of U.S.-born women.
- Refugees see substantial wage gains as they gradually improve their footing in the American economy, with some starting their own businesses and many shifting to occupations better suited to their abilities as they find ways to get certification for their existing skills and learn new ones.

- Refugees integrate into American society over time, with a large majority of refugees having learned English and becoming homeowners by the time they have been in the United States for 10 years and with three-quarters or more having become naturalized U.S. citizens after 20 years.
- Somali, Burmese, Hmong, and Bosnian refugees are part of the economic revitalization of metropolitan areas around the country: From Minneapolis and St. Paul to St. Louis and from Fargo, North Dakota, to Columbus, Ohio, political leaders have welcomed the contributions of refugees to the local economies and to the expanded vibrancy of their cities.

As the report mentions, 1 in 12 immigrants in the United States came as a refugee or was granted asylum. And of around 3 million refugees, about 500,000—or 1 in 5—are Somali, Burmese, Hmong, or Bosnian refugees.

“The United States has a great track record of welcoming thousands of refugees each year and helping them find a safe place to call home. As this report confirms, refugees, who come from diverse backgrounds and humble beginnings, end up doing very well in the United States,” said [Silva Mathema](#), Senior Policy Analyst for the Immigration team at the Center for American Progress and co-author of the report. “Now is not the time for the United States to pull back on welcoming refugees. Rather, given the global refugee crises currently confronting us, now is the time to welcome and invest in programs and policies that help to integrate them.”

Read the full report, “[Refugee Integration in the United States](#).”

RSVP to the 12 p.m. ET event, “A Look at How Refugees are Integrating in the United States,” or watch the live stream [here](#).

For more information or to speak to an expert on this topic, please contact Tanya S. Ardit at the Center for American Progress at tarditi@americanprogress.org, or David Dyssegaard Kallick at the Fiscal Policy Institute at ddkallick@fiscalpolicy.org.

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The [Fiscal Policy Institute](#) is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit research and education organization committed to improving public policies and private practices to better the economic and social conditions of all New Yorkers. FPI’s Immigration Research Initiative looks at immigration issues in New York State, and around the country.

The [Center for American Progress](#) is a nonpartisan research and educational institute dedicated to promoting a strong, just and free America that ensures opportunity for all. We believe that Americans are bound together by a common commitment to these values and we aspire to ensure that our national policies reflect these values. We work to find progressive and pragmatic solutions to significant domestic and international problems and develop policy proposals that foster a government that is “of the people, by the people, and for the people.”