Refugees and Immigrants in Georgia: The Facts

⇒ As new Georgians, refugees are contributors to communities. Competing in a 21st Century economy will require taking full advantage of our most important resource—our people. That means welcoming the new Americans who are starting businesses, committing to local communities, and helping to build a stronger economy.

⇒ 91 percent of refugee households in Georgia are working and paying their own expenses within six months of arrival—among the highest early self-sufficiency rates in the country.

⇒ Refugees are immigrants to the United States who are fleeing their homeland because of persecution and invited by the American people. Refugees undergo the most rigorous background, security, and medical screens of any class of immigrants.

⇒ One year after arrival, refugees apply for lawful permanent residency (green card). Four years later, they are eligible to become US citizens. Refugees are grateful to Americans for helping them regain their self-sufficiency and become patriotic citizens.

⇒ The State of Georgia does not fund any programs specifically for refugees. Georgia voluntarily administers federal pass-through dollars; all refugee funds in Georgia's state budget come from the federal budget.

⇒ Refugees represent diverse faiths, including Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and Buddhists.

⇒ The refugee program works in partnership with Georgia schools to create Georgia’s next generation of leaders. Schools with significant refugee populations have after-school programs in partnership with local organizations. In 2016, these afterschool programs saw a collective 94% attendance rate, and over 90% of students meet their goals in areas such as homework completion, English language proficiency, and academic performance in math and reading.

⇒ Annually Georgia's communities welcome 2,500 - 3,000 newly arriving refugees. Georgia is one of the nation's most populous states and becomes home to refugees in proportion to its size. Five local agencies help refugees adjust initially, and a larger network of organizations supports refugees moving along the path to self-sufficiency.

⇒ Refugees begin learning English immediately after arrival. In 2016, CRSA agencies provided English as a Second Language services to 2,855 clients.

Turn over for information about our safety and security, refugees’ economic impact, and the benefits of welcoming communities
Safety and Security

All refugees seeking to enter the U.S. must first be officially deemed as a refugee by the United Nations and then go through a thirteen-step screening process, including seven steps of security. This process includes an in-person interview, fingerprinting by U.S. government officials, and a rigorous medical screening from agencies including the FBI, Department of Homeland Security, and State Department.

Numerous studies have shown that immigrants commit crime at far lower rates – in both number and per population – than native-born men. In fact, a 2008 study found that U.S.-born adult men are incarcerated at a rate over two-and-a-half times greater than that of foreign-born men. (Public Policy Institute of California, 2008).

Economic Impact

A 2015 report from the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute (GBPI) found that over 60,000 new immigrant business owners in Georgia contributed a net $2.9 billion in business income in 2013 alone.

Refugees are welcomed by many of Georgia’s largest industries, such as poultry processing, manufacturing, warehousing, tourism, and hospitality. Initially refugees tend to work in entry-level jobs, often during second or third shift, in sectors with labor shortages.

In 2016, refugees in Georgia worked in over 600 businesses, with an average hourly wage of $9.63, above minimum wage. CRSA agencies contributed an estimated $3 million to the Georgia economy in FY2016 through rent and utilities spent for refugees.

Welcoming Communities

In line with its strong faith traditions and humanitarian spirit, Georgia has embraced those fleeing persecution and violence for more than 30 years. Georgia's refugee resettlement program is among the most successful and is seen as a model nationwide.

Becoming a more welcoming community means more customers for our local businesses, more jobs created by immigrant entrepreneurs, and a thriving economy that benefits us all.

Immigration

Multiple CRSA agencies offer services for citizenship, including civics education and tutoring courses. In 2016, CRSA agencies assisted over 470 new Americans become citizens. Agencies also assisted over 5,000 new Americans to register to vote after citizenship.

Many immigrants have already served for the United States armed forces before ever arriving the country. These men and women are welcomed on a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) and have served as pilots, interpreters, drivers and fighters during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.