

Myth vs. Fact

Debunking Common Misconceptions about Immigrants and Refugees in the U.S.

Myth: Most immigrants are coming to the United States illegally.

Fact: **Regardless of someone's manner of entry**, seeking asylum is a **legal right** – and more than that, it's a cornerstone of U.S. and international law. Each year, tens of thousands of people migrate to the U.S. via the **refugee resettlement program**, through **work visas**, to **reunite with family**, and more. Of those who come through the Southern border, approximately [92% were apprehended or turned themselves in to Border Control](#) to begin their asylum cases.

Myth: Refugees and immigrants take American jobs.

Fact: With nearly **10 million unfilled jobs nationwide** and at a time of **record-low unemployment**, immigrants are essential to filling in the gaps in the American workforce. Immigrants are also more likely to contribute to **job creation** than displacement, with more than [55% of the country's billion-dollar startups](#) founded by immigrants.

Myth: Refugees and immigrants don't pay taxes and are a drain on our nation's resources.

Fact: Refugees and asylees contribute significantly to U.S. communities at the federal, state, and local level—both economically and culturally. Refugees and asylees contributed an estimated **\$581 billion in revenue** to the U.S. economy from 2005 to 2019, and, in some cases, they [pay into Social Security without reaping its benefits](#). Most importantly, they are our doctors and nurses, our well-known chefs, our favorite musicians, our overnight construction workers, our local shop owners, our neighbors, and so much more.

Myth: Immigrants and refugees are not authorized to work.

Fact: Refugees, people seeking asylum, and immigrants entering the country on visas are **all able to obtain legal work permits**. What's more, foreign-born workers made up **18.6% of the civilian labor force in 2023**. Immigrants are an essential part of the American workforce.

Myth: Refugees and immigrants are unskilled workers.

Fact: Immigrants and refugees in the United States fill essential positions at all levels of skill. Immigrants are farmworkers, hospitality workers, doctors, nurses, computer programmers, educators, architects, logistics specialists, emergency services staff, and much more. The United States depends on those contributions at all levels; in 2021, for example, nearly **2.8 million immigrants worked in healthcare in the U.S.** — accounting for about 18% of the sector and serving in countless different positions. Of those in upper-wage occupations, around 75% of immigrants work either in **IT, management, or finance**, and most serve in **high-ranking, high-skilled positions such as software developers or CEOs**. No matter their level of work, immigrants make the U.S. stronger and more productive.

Myth: Refugees and immigrants are responsible for bringing drugs into the country.

Fact: The **vast majority** of immigrants who cross the border **immediately present themselves to authorities to seek asylum**. There is virtually no reason for someone seeking asylum to simultaneously be attempting to smuggle in drugs, thereby threatening their asylum status. What's more, according to the U.S. Sentencing Commission, **86% of those caught smuggling drugs into the U.S. from 2017 through 2021 were U.S. citizens**.

Myth: Refugees and immigrants commit more crimes and make the country more dangerous.

Fact: Research has proven time and again that there is **no link between immigration and increased crime rates** and that immigrants are **60% less likely to be incarcerated**

than their native-born peers. In fact, some studies show that [increased immigration results in lower crime rates](#)—meaning immigrants make the United States safer for all.

Myth: Refugees and immigrants will change voting patterns in the United States.

Fact: Immigrants, like natural-born citizens, represent a wide variety of political leanings. Polls consistently show that immigrants and refugees do not uniformly support one political party. In fact, a 2023 *Los Angeles Times* [poll](#) revealed that, when asked “Which U.S. political party best represents your views?”, 52% of immigrants and refugees polled responded “Neither or not sure.” While immigrants and refugees may become eligible to vote after obtaining citizenship, the process of naturalization and voter registration takes a minimum of five years for most (and accusations of undocumented immigrants voting in U.S. elections are [virtually baseless](#)).

Myth: When the U.S. welcomes refugees and immigrants, we neglect other underserved groups.

Fact: While refugees and immigrants face unique challenges, their needs are often quite similar to those of other underserved communities who face discrimination, poverty, and lack of adequate health care, among other challenges. Welcoming and addressing the shared needs of immigrants and refugees can help create policy changes that benefit all underserved groups. Studies have shown, for example, that rather than lowering wages due to competition, the immigrant workforce has instead [supported higher wages for all populations](#). States like Colorado and Washington have [expanded affordable health coverage](#) initiatives that not only aim to include undocumented immigrants but also enhance access for all residents. These policies contribute to stronger public health systems and improved outcomes for every community member. When we work toward equity, we work toward a better society for all.

Myth: Most Americans don't support immigration or a path to citizenship for undocumented people.

Fact: Despite harsh rhetoric and extremism in the media and beyond, most Americans support bipartisan solutions on immigration. Recent polling shows that 81% of voters in battleground states support a pathway to citizenship for immigrants who have been living and working in the United States for years, and other studies have shown that 68% of Americans believe immigration is a good thing for our country.

Talking Points

Immigration is **Essential**

Immigrants and refugees make the United States a better place—and have for centuries.

- Not only is welcoming newcomers the right thing to do as people of good conscience, but doing so revitalizes communities, lowers crime rates, strengthens the economy, and helps employers fill jobs at a time of historically low unemployment.
- The U.S. workforce relies on immigrants at all levels of employment—both to fill jobs across sectors and to work in essential fields native-born citizens are less likely to, including agriculture, construction, and sanitation.
- Immigrant entrepreneurs drive innovation, launching new industries and advancing technology, moving our nation forward. Together, we thrive when diverse voices and experiences shape our country's future.

We all want the same things: safety, security, health, and happiness for ourselves and our family.

- Many immigrants and refugees are forced to flee their homes due to war, violence, persecution, extreme poverty, and other unlivable circumstances. They are coming to the United States because they have no other choice.
- We are all human beings with pasts, hopes, dreams, and the right to safety and dignity. That does not change based on where we were born.
- Embracing newcomers renews the United States' commitment to the ideals of opportunity and freedom that define us.

The hatred and bias we see in the news is not reflective of who we are.

- The baseless great replacement theory and widespread use of dehumanizing language and “crisis” narratives is a very real threat to our democracy, sowing hate and inciting violence.
- In fact, most Americans believe that immigration is a good thing for our country. Many have an immigrant story themselves—a grandfather, a friend, or a teacher that came to the United States and changed their lives for the better.
- Across the country, congregations and communities are welcoming newcomers into their churches, neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces—and finding they have so much more in common than they don’t.
- Our nation’s history of immigration is not just our past – it’s our present reality, enriching and shaping our society today and in the future, ensuring we remain a strong and vibrant society.

Seeking asylum is legal, and we need a functional immigration system that is fair, humane, and orderly.

- Seeking asylum is a cornerstone of U.S. and international law.
- A humanitarian response that dignifies human life and acknowledges people’s suffering should drive our border policy — not one that turns away people fleeing persecution.
- The United States has long provided a safe haven for those fleeing systematic oppression and tyranny and those seeking safety and freedom. We must not throw that reputation and responsibility away.
- There are solutions. We need a significant increase in processing capacity, including hiring more asylum officers and judges; making sure that we have ample processing facilities that are safe, adequately staffed, and aren’t overcrowded; and making case decisions more efficient.

Refugee and Immigrant Stories

Seeking Asylum

Ana Rosa and her Family

Ana Rosa was forced to flee Venezuela after she and her three children, who are all deaf, were targeted by the political opposition. The family made a long, difficult journey through Central America, including a stretch through a dangerous jungle where they had to tie themselves together to stay safe. When they arrived in the U.S., they were given a shower, a warm meal, support, and a chance to start over. With the help of Global Refuge, the three children all received life-changing cochlear implants to allow them to fully hear again—offering a firm footing from which to start their new lives.

[Watch the video.](#)



Pedro*

As an outspoken opponent of his country's political dictatorship, **Pedro** feared for his safety and fled to escape persecution. After a dangerous journey, he made it to America and sought refuge in a San Antonio church. There, he was introduced to the Global Refuge team, who helped Pedro complete his asylum application, secure an apartment, and enroll in English classes. He now makes his living pursuing his passion for art and pays it forward by providing volunteer medical services to other newcomers in need.

*Name has been changed to protect anonymity.

[Watch the video.](#)



Economic Empowerment

Norma

Norma came to America from Kenya with her young son at the start of the pandemic in 2020. With job prospects uncertain, she connected with Global Refuge for career guidance. Working with Norma to determine her strengths, passions, and career goals, our team helped her utilize her talent for marketing to launch a fulfilling career at a Fortune 500 company. She now has a job she enjoys, the flexibility she needs as a single mother, and a quality of life that allows her to provide a safe, nurturing environment for her son.

[Watch the video.](#)



The Preferred Refugee Employer Program

Ables Landscapes in Charleston, SC is dedicated to fostering a welcoming workplace and helping refugees achieve economic independence through the Global Refuge Preferred Refugee Employer (PRE) program. By opening their doors to refugee talent, Ables is enriching its workforce and receiving ongoing support and training, while their employees are starting their new lives in America with meaningful employment that helps them establish a solid foundation for success in their new country.

[Watch the video.](#)



Refugee Resettlement

Inna and Oleh

Inna and Oleh fled their home in war-torn Ukraine in search of refuge in America. With the support of Global Refuge and our partner Bethany Christian Services, they found so much more than just a safe place to start fresh. From accessing vital health care to finding meaningful employment, we walked alongside the couple and their 4-year-old son throughout their journey as they regained their sense of hope, home, and community.

[Watch the video.](#)



Bhuwan

Bhuwan is a former refugee from Bhutan who was resettled by Global Refuge in the United States. His refugee journey took him from fleeing his home in the middle of the night to escape violence and persecution to living in a refugee camp in Nepal for 18 years to coming to America in 2009 and getting elected to the city council of Reynoldsburg, Ohio in 2020 – becoming the first-ever Bhutanese-Nepali to be elected to office in the United States.

[Watch the video.](#)



The U.S. Legacy of Welcome

Maja

Maja fled her home in war-torn Bosnia when she was just a teenager. After spending four years in a refugee camp in Austria, she got approval to enter the United States and start a new life here. Global Refuge and our partners Lutheran Social Services of Northeast Florida welcomed her at the airport, furnished her apartment, and helped Maja navigate her new country and find a support network in Jacksonville. Decades later, Maja is now a dean, Fulbright specialist, and professor at the Forbes School of Business and Technology at the University of Arizona Global Campus.

[Watch the video.](#)



The Gurguing Family

Fourteen-year-old Nelly Simmons, her 23-year-old sister Helen Hoehl, and their parents, Jacob and Anna Gurguing, arrived in the U.S. from Poland in 1952 after spending time in a German refugee camp post-WWII. Global Refuge paid for their passage, and the family was sponsored by a Lutheran congregation and the community of Mifflin, Ohio. The family greatly appreciated the many ways the whole community assisted them, from helping Jacob attain employment to supporting Helen's and Nelly's educations. Today, Nelly credits Global Refuge as highly instrumental in her family's long-term success and in making their lives of abundance and grace possible.

