



## Refugee and Immigrants in Georgia: The Facts

⇒ As new Georgians, refugees are **contributors** to communities. Competing in a 21<sup>st</sup> 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**.

⇒ **87 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.

⇒ **Approximately 3 percent** of students in DeKalb County Schools are refugees. Refugee enrollments result in more than \$5 million in federal and private funds for DeKalb County Schools per year, including support for English learning and parent engagement. Schools with significant refugee populations have **after-school programs** in partnership with local organizations.

⇒ The refugee-resettlement program enjoys **bipartisan support in Congress**.

⇒ **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.** Georgia's affordable housing market and key industries, such as food processing and manufacturing, suit it for successful refugee integration. 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 2015, CRSA agencies provided **English as a Second Language services to 4,535 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 High Commissioner of Refugees and then go through a **thirteen-step screening process including seven steps of security**. This process includes, among other things an in-person interview, fingerprinting and photographs 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

Like other immigrants, refugees are **more likely to purchase homes**. Immigrants represent about 13% of the US population but accounted for **39% of net growth in homeownership** between 2000 and 2010.

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 program year 2015, CRSA collectively assisted **3,038 refugees and immigrants to obtain jobs in Georgia**, with an **average hourly wage of \$8.95**, above minimum wage. CRSA agencies **contributed an estimated \$2.7 million to the Georgia economy** in FY2015 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 application including civics education and tutoring courses. In 2015, over **4,300 immigration services** were provided for new Americans, many of whom are on a direct path towards 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.