

Facts not Fear (#FactsNotFear)

While terror attacks in Paris and around the world have made some Americans more fearful and ignited concerns around refugees in the US, from our daily work at LSS/NCA we know that the refugees who are admitted to the US seeking safety and protection from violence, war, persecution and other conditions in their homeland are not a risk to our safety. They come prepared to work hard, to give back to this country, and to ensure their children have a better future. Here are some facts from our partner LIRS on the resettlement process and Syrian refugees. Please share them with your community so we can spread #FactsNotFear.

The Refugee Resettlement Process & Syrian Refugees

- Intensive security screening by the US government of all refugees prior to admission to the US is, and will continue to be, a detailed and rigorous process. The US hand picks the refugees who are resettled here.
- Before a refugee can even be considered to come to the US, he or she must first be determined to be eligible. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) — or occasionally a US embassy or another non-governmental organization (NGO) — determines which refugees (about 1 percent) should be resettled, which can take four to 10 months.
- Once a case is referred from the UNHCR to the United States, a refugee undergoes a multilayered security screening process that could take several rounds, an in-person interview with Department of State personnel, approval by the Department of Homeland Security, medical screening, a match with a sponsor agency, “cultural orientation” classes, and final security screening. This all happens before a refugee ever gets onto American soil.
- This intensive vetting process, as well as US law on refugees and asylum seekers, makes it difficult to quickly admit large numbers of refugees. On average, the vetting process takes 18 to 24 months.
- For refugees from Syria and similar countries, however, the process can span two years. Experts confirmed that two years is the average review duration for Syrian refugees, which means that some wait even longer.
- Once they are approved for resettlement in the US, LSS/NCA steps in to receive refugees and provide stateside-based cultural orientation, initial housing, English language training, workforce preparation, medical care, and enroll children in school. This initial help is supported by funding from the US government and private sources. Most refugees are expected to be financially self-sufficient within 90 days.

- In FY 2015, the US resettled 1,293 Syrians but expects to resettle 10,000 in FY 2016. That number could change given the impact of refugees we are seeing arrive in Europe. (The number of Syrians resettled in the US from 2011-2014 was only 172 in total).

Conditions for Syrian Refugees (current as of: 11/16/2015)

- More than 50% of the entire population of Syria has been displaced from their homes – by bombardment, civil war, and the growing threat of ISIS. The civil war in Syria has killed more than 220,000 people, more than half are considered to be civilians.
- Currently, there are 4,287,293 registered Syrian refugees in countries neighboring Syria including persons in: Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and in several countries in North Africa. 76% of these refugees are women and children – imagine, 2 million children who have lost everything.
- Refugees are not allowed to work legally in these countries where they first seek asylum, women who head households are especially vulnerable, and, in some cases, the cash allowance provided by UNHCR to help a refugee pay for housing, food, and medical care has been reduced to \$7 per month per person (Source: UNHCR).
- In Lebanon, the preliminary findings of a recent vulnerability study found 70% of Syrian refugee households live far below the national poverty line – up from 50% in 2014.
- The majority of refugees in Jordan and Lebanon lack the financial resources to contemplate the costly and dangerous journey to Europe. Nonetheless this year, more than 2,500 refugees have died in the Mediterranean attempting this journey.

Other Resources

[State Department Resettlement Fact Sheet](#)

[Security Screening of Refugees Admitted to the United States by the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants](#)