

**Economic Impacts of Refugee Resettlement**  
*in the United States and Texas*

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## **Economic impacts of refugee resettlement in the United States and Texas**

### **Introduction**

Historically, the United States has been at the forefront of refugee resettlement by admitting an average of 70,000 refugees every year. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines a refugee as “a person who is outside of his or her country and is unable or unwilling to return because of persecution or well-founded persecution based of their race, religion, nationality, social group, political opinion.”<sup>1</sup> After the Second World War, the United States began accepting refugees. Overtime, the federal government, and various stakeholders joined forces to develop a robust infrastructure to admit refugees. Resettling refugees benefits the economy as communities throughout the United States have discovered. Texas has made a significant contribution to the resettlement program. In 2016 alone, the state received about 7,000 refugees, including 150 unaccompanied refugee children and 6,550 unaccompanied minors. Refugees leave an indelible impression on their communities, and cities across the state and strengthen the economy. They are more likely than other immigrants to start enterprises and own homes. Several elderly and once-declining towns have expressed gratitude to young, enterprising refugees for revitalizing their businesses across different sectors.

By welcoming refugees, Texas has recorded several economic wins. In 2015, refugees had \$4.6 billion in spending power and paid \$1.6 billion in taxes. Texas has the potential to prosper economically through the refugee resettlement program. Even though the federal government initially funds local resettlement agencies to assist refugees, the assistance is temporary and rarely

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR. "Who is a Refugee." UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency. Accessed May 3, 2022. <https://www.unhcr.org/4d944d089.pdf>.

goes beyond eight months as employable refugees are required to accept the first reasonable job offer, they receive and are expected to become financially self-sufficient by their 180<sup>th</sup> day in the United States. On the other hand, their contribution to the economy is long-lasting. In 2017, a report from the Department of Health and Human Services showed that refugees recorded a net positive contribution to the economy of \$63 billion between 2005 and 2014<sup>2</sup>; they contributed approximately \$41 billion and \$22 billion to the federal and state governments respectively.<sup>3</sup> Also, refugees have higher education and home ownership than other immigrants in the United States.

Clearly, the influx of refugees in Texas vitalized its economy. Upon their resettlement, refugees participate in labor and spend their income in local businesses. As such, Texas has seen a tremendous growth in sales of various products, including oil, electronic services, clothing, and footwear, since the influx of refugees in the state.<sup>4</sup> If you could choose immigrants who come to Texas, you would want entrepreneurs, homeowners, and people who would make a lot of money in the years ahead. In a nutshell, you would prefer refugees.<sup>5</sup> Refugees are more likely than other immigrants and American citizens to create their enterprises. This is critical since new firms account for a sizeable portion of job creation in the United States. According to the Refugees in Towns project, the companies in Austin have included home-based sewing, catering, and food trucks.

According to the New American Economy, the financial assistance provided to refugees is repaid overtime as their income rapidly increases in the years following their integration.<sup>6</sup> Each

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<sup>2</sup> Salehyan, Idean. "The strategic case for refugee resettlement." *Washington, DC: Niskanen Center* (2018).

<sup>3</sup> Immigrants as economic contributors: "Refugees are a fiscal success story for America." (2018, June 14). Retrieved from <https://immigrationforum.org/article/immigrants-as-economic-contributors-refugees-are-a-fiscal-success-story-for-america/>

<sup>4</sup> Kerwin, Donald. "The US refugee resettlement program—A return to first principles: How refugees help to define, strengthen, and revitalize the United States." *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 6, no. 3 (2018): 205-225.

<sup>5</sup> Fix, Michael, Kate Hooper, and Jie Zong. "How are refugees faring? Integration at US and state levels." *Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute* (2017).

<sup>6</sup> Kaplan, Julika, Natalie Lazarescou, Sally Huang, Sarah Ali, Sophia Banu, Ye Beverly Du, and Srijana Shrestha. "Overview of challenges faced by refugees following resettlement in Houston, Texas: a qualitative study at five refugee resettlement agencies." *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care* (2021).

recently settled refugee adds \$ 98,200 per year to the economy of Texas. When a refugee begins a business in Texas, s/he saves the public authority more than \$ 33,000 in benefits and creates almost \$ 10,000 in net income. Besides the successful integration of 1.1 million refugees between 1987 and 2016, the U.S. economy made significant gains from the resettlement program. For instance, refugees have a national median household income of \$43000.<sup>7</sup> Of these refugees, 35% have home mortgages that they are successfully repaying and contributing to the country's GDP.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, many refugees are self-employed. The percentage of refugees who own businesses has exceeded the percentage of citizens who have their own businesses. A comparison of the median income of 1.1 million refugees who resettled in the US between 1987 and 2016 with other Americans shows that the median personal income of the refugees (\$20000) was equal to that of non-refugee immigrants.<sup>9</sup>

### Purpose Statement

Over four decades, the government of Texas, together with the Federal government, provided refuge and dignity to refugees from different parts of the world through the bipartisan U.S. Refugee Act of 1980.<sup>10</sup> Between 1975 and 2020, over three million individuals immigrated to the U.S. to seek peace and economic opportunities.<sup>11</sup> The refugee resettlement programs reached their peak in 1980 when the U.S. provided a safe haven to more than two hundred thousand refugees fleeing the Vietnam war. Notably, the effort to resettle refugees fulfills the U.S.'s humanitarian mission while it provides significant economic benefits to the country.

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<sup>7</sup> Immigrants as economic contributors: "Refugees are a fiscal success story for America." (2018, June 14). Retrieved from <https://immigrationforum.org/article/immigrants-as-economic-contributors-refugees-are-a-fiscal-success-story-for-america/>

<sup>8</sup> Kerwin, Donald. "The US refugee resettlement program—A return to first principles: How refugees help to define, strengthen, and revitalize the United States." *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 6, no. 3 (2018): 205-225.

<sup>9</sup> Immigrants as economic contributors: "Refugees are a fiscal success story for America." (2018, June 14). Retrieved from <https://immigrationforum.org/article/immigrants-as-economic-contributors-refugees-are-a-fiscal-success-story-for-america/>

<sup>10</sup> Kerwin, Donald. "The US refugee resettlement program—A return to first principles: How refugees help to define, strengthen, and revitalize the United States." *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 6, no. 3 (2018): 205-225.

<sup>11</sup> Office of Refugee Resettlement. "History." HHS. Last modified 2021. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/history>.

The resettlement program has suffered various restrictions, such as lowering the refugee admission ceiling in recent years. For instance, President Trump slashed the number of refugees to be admitted and cited various economic and security reasons; According to the UNHCR, the global refugee population reached its peak in 2016 when their number reached a record high of 22.5 million. During this period, the U.S. set a record low of newly admitted refugees to 45,000 only. Such low ceiling diminishes the humanitarian impact of the resettlement efforts and leads to the loss of the potential economic gains that refugees provide. Therefore, this research paper aims to highlight the positive economic impacts of refugee resettlement in Texas and the U.S. economy at large.

### Literature review

The literature review will discuss the economic impacts of refugees' resettlement in Texas. The discussion will mainly explain the three impacts of refugee resettlement: entrepreneurship, the replacement of an aging population, and overall economic growth. The literature review will highlight and discuss several essential resources that touch on each economic factor resulting from the resettlement of refugees in Texas and in the United States.

### Contribution to the American Workforce

There are two main arguments for the United States to admit refugees: a humanitarian reason and an economic one. Essentially, the areas affected by an aging population and loss of workforce can utilize refugees as vital members of their workforce who will ultimately adjust and provide a substantial boost to the economy. Studies indicate that refugees are highly motivated and hardworking individuals.<sup>12</sup> They also wish to give back to their host state and country.

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<sup>12</sup> Economics & Analytics, Chmura. "Economic Impact of Refugees in the Cleveland Area." *ABD* 1 (2012): Retrieved from: <https://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/clevelandrefugeeeconomic-impact.pdf>

As previously related, refugees contribute significantly to the American workforce by filling the needed jobs. Notably, they have a higher employment rate than other immigrants and the native-born U.S. population. Bernstein and DuBois (2018) found out that 78% of refugees arriving in the U.S. are aged between 25 and 44 years.<sup>13</sup> Their relatively young age combined with their work ethic makes them great candidates for the workforce.

Although refugees receive an initial financial assistance to facilitate their resettlement and integration into the community and labor market, their resettlement has a long-term positive contribution to the labor market. Mainly, refugees offer a plethora of affordable labor compared to American citizens. It is also worth noting that the arrival of refugees and their integration into the community solve the problems of the aging workforce. Essentially, most refugees arriving in the U.S. are below 25.<sup>14</sup> This age bracket consists of the most economically productive individuals who contribute to the economy's growth. Between 2009 and 2011, the male refugees of the working age had a 67% employment rate, while the US-born male had an employment rate of approximately 60%.<sup>15</sup> The female refugee is equally as likely to take part in both formal and informal employment as female American citizens.

### Refugees are Entrepreneurs who Drive the Economy and Create Jobs

Apart from their crucial contribution as productive employees in the labor market, refugees create businesses. Refugees are more likely to start their own business than American citizens and other immigrants. In a study to determine the self-sufficiency of refugees, researchers found that many refugees who live in Texas have achieved massive success in entrepreneurship and business

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<sup>13</sup> Bernstein, Hamutal, and Nicole DuBois. "Bringing evidence to the refugee integration debate." *Washington, DC: Urban Institute* (2018).

<sup>14</sup> Mayda, Anna Maria, Chris Parsons, Giovanni Peri, and Mathis Wagner. "The labor market impact of refugees: evidence from the US resettlement program." *US Department of State Office of the Chief Economist Working Paper 4* (2017): 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Immigrants as economic contributors: "Refugees are a fiscal success story for America." (2018, June 14). Retrieved from <https://immigrationforum.org/article/immigrants-as-economic-contributors-refugees-are-a-fiscal-success-story-for-america/>

ownership.<sup>16</sup> The study suggests that success stories of refugees who have ventured into entrepreneurship are regularly found in popular media and magazines such as The New York Times, Inc., Forbes, and Entrepreneurs. A recent Inc. article highlighted the success stories of refugees in the U.S. A refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo operated a successful carpentry workshop and another one from Cambodia owned a large grocery shop. Like other entrepreneurs, these resettled refugees focus on measurable results and slowly become self-sufficient.

Refugees also engage in microenterprise initiatives that spur economic growth in local communities. At first, they face challenges before adapting and acculturating to the American culture. However, a little assistance for the resettled refugees could accelerate their adaptation and foster an entrepreneurial spirit. The presence of microenterprise programs in the U.S. offers microcredit to newly resettled refugees who do not have financial collateral. The borrowers are given a three-month grace period before they can start repaying the loans with a 4% interest.<sup>17</sup> The program started in 2014 with 23 clients, and it had 150 clients in 2015. Notably, the clients maintained a 95% satisfaction rate of loan repayment with an improved credit score. This is one of the success stories among the refugees who have adopted the entrepreneurial culture upon their resettlement. These individuals operate many businesses, including grocery shops, towing transportation, carpentry, and cleaning businesses.<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, refugees have a legacy on American cities, communities, and towns across the country. States with many refugees experience positive economic impacts due to their

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<sup>16</sup> Fong, Rowena, Noel Bridget Busch, Marilyn Armour, Laurie Cook Heffron, and Amy Chanmugam. "Pathways to self-sufficiency: Successful entrepreneurship for refugees." *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work* 16, no. 1-2 (2007): 127-159.

<sup>17</sup> Idris, Mussa. "A Microenterprise initiative among newly resettled refugees in a city of the US south: challenges, successes, and lessons learned." *Annals of Anthropological Practice* 43, no. 2 (2019): 39-52.

<sup>18</sup> Idris, Mussa. "A Microenterprise initiative among newly resettled refugees in a city of the US south: challenges, successes, and lessons learned." *Annals of Anthropological Practice* 43, no. 2 (2019): 39-52.

entrepreneurial ability.<sup>19</sup> Refugees have the highest proportion of entrepreneurs compared to other immigrants and US-born citizens. In essence, 13% of refugees are in entrepreneurship compared to 11.5% of non-refugee immigrants and 9% of U.S.-born citizens.<sup>20</sup> In a 2015 study, researchers found out that 181,000 refugee owned businesses that generated about \$4.6 billion in income. Moreover, refugee businesses create thousands of jobs, services, and goods for millions of Americans.

In addition to their contribution to small and medium-sized businesses, refugees have also contributed to large businesses and innovations in the U.S. A few well-known corporations, such as Google (Sergey Brin), WhatsApp (Jan Koum), and PayPal (Max Levchin), were partly started by former refugees.<sup>21</sup> The entrepreneurial spirit portrayed by most refugees is a clear signal of their willingness to contribute to the local economies.

### Economic Contribution to the Local and National Economic Growth

Many examples illustrate the positive impacts of refugees to the economy. At Catholic Charities Fort Worth, 100% of the Match Grant program clients are self-sufficient by their 180<sup>th</sup> day in the country. Apart from providing for their families, refugees contribute to the economy and GDP of the U.S. Refugees who enter the U.S. between 18 and 45 years of age remit an average of \$21000 more taxes to the government than they receive in benefits.<sup>22</sup> Another positive impact of the refugee resettlement program is their high employability rate. Notably, 77% of refugees are in a working age, while only 50% of the U.S.-born population is in the working-age group. In

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<sup>19</sup> New American Economy. "Refugees in Texas: A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions of Refugees." (2019). Retrieved from: [https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wpcontent/uploads/2019/11/Texas\\_refugee\\_MTI.pdf](https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wpcontent/uploads/2019/11/Texas_refugee_MTI.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> New American Economy. "Refugees in Texas: A Snapshot of the Demographic and Economic Contributions of Refugees." (2019). Retrieved from: [https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wpcontent/uploads/2019/11/Texas\\_refugee\\_MTI.pdf](https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wpcontent/uploads/2019/11/Texas_refugee_MTI.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Immigrants as economic contributors: "Refugees are a fiscal success story for America." (2018, June 14). Retrieved from <https://immigrationforum.org/article/immigrants-as-economic-contributors-refugees-are-a-fiscal-success-story-for-america/>.

<sup>22</sup> International Rescue Committee (IRC). "*The Future of Refugee Welcome in the United States.*" (2017).

addition, the long-term impact of the resettlement program benefits the economy by bringing millions of dollars to states, stimulating local businesses, and creating job opportunities.

Studies indicate that a newly resettled refugee earns an annual income of approximately \$21000 which is usually spent locally, making their local economies more vigorous. Refugees start with a low income, but they drastically increase their earnings overtime. Fifteen years into their resettlement, their income reaches \$37000/year. At the same time, those who have lived in the U.S. for 25 years have an increased income of \$51000.<sup>23</sup> This income is higher than the median income of U.S. households. The continuous growth of their annual income reflects the refugee's propensity to invest in human capital and valuable skills. After several years, refugees become homeowners at a higher rate than non-refugee immigrants. They also contribute a significant amount of taxes which benefits the different levels of government. In 2015, refugees earned a total income of \$77.2 billion and paid \$20.9 billion in taxes.<sup>24</sup>

## Methodology

The methodology will outline and explain framework and tools used in data analysis. It provides in-depth information about the methods and justification for their usage. The chapter will also elucidate various stages of the study that include the selection of participants, data collection, and data analysis. The methodology section also describes the role of the researcher in relations to reflexivity. The chapter will end with findings and discussions relating to the economic impacts of the refugees in Texas. Noteworthy, the findings section will give a comprehensive report from the interviews and focus groups from the participants of the study.

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<sup>23</sup> Immigrants as economic contributors: "Refugees are a fiscal success story for America." (2018, June 14). Retrieved from <https://immigrationforum.org/article/immigrants-as-economic-contributors-refugees-are-a-fiscal-success-story-for-america/>

<sup>24</sup> Kerwin, Donald. "The US refugee resettlement program—A return to first principles: How refugees help to define, strengthen, and revitalize the United States." *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 6, no. 3 (2018): 205-225.

The current study involved conducting interviews with both refugees and refugee resettlement professionals who provide services to the refugees. The interviews and surveys entailed discussing multiple truths that were presented to the participants in form of questionnaire. The researcher drew on interpretive paradigm to inform certain social aspects of the study within the social constructivist approach. The primary focus of this research was to investigate and understand the economic impacts of the refugee's settlement in Texas and the United States.

### Logic of Inquiry

The data collection and analysis of the findings are guided by an interpretive paradigm, which serves as a supplement to the transformational research. The interpretive paradigm explores a social order through the collection of subjective data and the detection of trends in the responses of participants. The interpretative paradigm is a type of qualitative research method<sup>25</sup>. Instead of a single, unchanging reality, this research paradigm suggests that reality is a collection of human experiences rather than a single, objective truth.<sup>26</sup> Investigating phenomena in more depth may be accomplished by taking into consideration the experiences of individuals as well as their social environments, among other things. This study procedure evaluates the world according to this viewpoint, which believes that reality cannot be apprehended in isolation from its surrounding environment. This is a suitable paradigm for evaluating the perceived implications of refugee

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<sup>25</sup> Bhattacharjee, A. (2012). *Social science research: Principles, methods, and practices*. University of South Florida.

<sup>26</sup> Sulaiman-Hill, Cheryl MR, and Sandra C. Thompson. "Sampling challenges in a study examining refugee resettlement." *BMC international health and human rights* 11, no. 1 (2011): 1-10.

resettlement on a community as a result of the fact that the responses of the participants will be impacted by their socio-historical backgrounds.

### Research Setting and participants

I adopted a chain-referral method as the sampling technique for this inquiry. Chain-referral method is a non-probability sampling technique in which the participants or samples have characteristics that are rare to find. It was with great care that the initial participants were selected, with consideration given to their capacity to meet the inclusive conditions. In order to participate in the study, the participants were asked to forward the invitation to any additional professionals whom they believed might meet the eligibility requirement. When it was time to start the study, the researcher reached out to all of the potential participants through email or phone in the first week of January this year. The study also used an exclusion criterion. Those who were excluded from the study entailed refugees who resettled with less than one year, those who were still residing within the refugee camps, and other immigrants who did not have a refugee status. Ineligible participants were unable to complete the questionnaire because they did not meet the prerequisites for participation. Participants did not get any monetary compensation for their efforts. There were no individuals or particular groups who may have benefited directly from this study, and there were no negative consequences.

Thirty potential volunteers were contacted (20 refugees and 10 refugee resettlement professionals) to take part in survey. Everyone who took part in the survey completed it, resulting in a 100 percent rate. There were no at-risk populations represented among the potential participants in the pool of participants. We acquired written consent from each and every participant prior to allowing them to take part in the survey questionnaires. Before the interview began, the participant formed an informed consent. They were also given the opportunity to

participate or decline participation based on the extent to which they felt that their anonymity was guaranteed.

### Methods of Data Collection

The anonymous survey consisted of ten questions: five questions for the refugees, and five questions for the resettlement service providers. It was required to ask two multiple-choice demographic questions in order to get information on the respondents' professional association and their participation in the larger community. The questions were designed to be brief and straightforward. There were three short-essay questions on each component of the economic effect evaluation, with one question on each component. There were three short-essay questions on each component. A series of optional multiple-choice questions about a specific variable associated with that component of the impact assessment followed each short essay question; these were yes or no questions. When answering the multiple-choice questions, respondents were given an opportunity to support their claims if they chose to. Noteworthy, I performed the investigation using the transformative research idea as a guide. In order to capture developing themes, the transcripts were reviewed numerous times and then analyzed using thematic analysis.

## Sample of the questionnaire for the refugees

Please answer appropriately and accurately:

1. What was the reason why you resettled to this region from your country/ region of birth?

Select appropriately,

- a) Work
- b) Studies
- c) Join family
- d) Natural disasters
- e) War
- f) Other

If "other" kindly state the reason below.

2. Have you indulged in any form of business or employment here in Texas?

- a. Yes
- b. No

State the kind of business / employment.

3. Do you feel that refugee resettlement has a positive impact on the economy of Texas?

4. What economic impacts do you think refugee resettlement has on Texas?

1
2
3
4

5. How much do you think refugees have contributed to the economy of Texas?

Very much	moderately	Not much	Not at all
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Sample questionnaire for the refugee services professionals.

Please answer the following questions diligently:

1. What is the approximate number of refugees you have dealt with in the past on month period?

2. How cooperative would you say the resettled refugees in Texas are?

Very cooperative	Moderately cooperative	Less cooperative	Not at all
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Please explain your choice below.

3. Are most of the refugees in the area indulged in business?

- a. Yes  
b. No

If yes, please clarify the type of businesses they are involved in

small businesses	scalable startups	large companies
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4. Are any refugees involved in employment? What type?

- a. Yes  
b. No

Part-time employees	Agency workers	Casual workers
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5. How would you describe the impact of refugees to the economy of Texas?

## Data analysis

Due to the nature of this exploratory study, the information gathered from the multiple-choice questions can only be used to define the demographic features of participants and the amount to which they agree with certain claims. The qualitative data was examined using approaches that relied on words. These strategies are particularly well suited for inquiries with limited responses. First, words were classified into categories based on whether they related to activity, quality or value, place, or person. Following that, the number of times a word was repeated was recorded. Finally, the scissor and sort technique were used to develop themes for the study. The responses to the short-essay questions were analysed using this approach to identify common themes. It is necessary to proofread the material and clip out any relevant quotations before using the scissor and sort approach, commonly known as the cut and paste method. There was a brief summary of the context in which each quotation was derived on the back of each quote. Quotes that were similar in nature were grouped together, and each group was given a name that served as the theme for the whole collection. Using evidence to create a hypothesis about the phenomena under investigation, an interpretative method is employed. The use of repeated words is essential in clarifying the concepts being discussed. Themes derived from transcripts of short-essay questions, along with Likert-scaled ratings, presented a rough picture of the impact of refugee resettlement from the perspective of those who were engaged.

## Findings and discussions

### Respondents

The research questions were presented to thirty participants. Among them, twenty were resettled refugees while ten were refugee services professionals. The sample of resettled refugees was similar to other refugees and their answers to the survey questions to be generalized to the entire

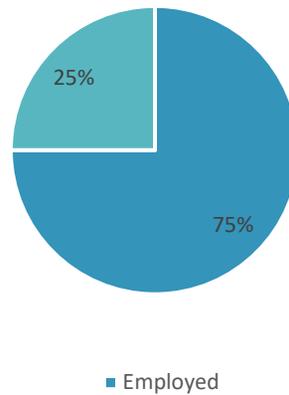
resettled refugee's community. When selecting the study participants, I ensured to include the respondents that have similar characteristics to the resettled refugees. As such, one of the inclusion criteria was age. The participants needed to be aged between 24 and 60 years which is the average age of the refugees in Texas. Also, the sample was selected from individuals who have the refugee's status to differentiate them from other immigrants. Also, the study only included political refugees. The researcher first asked the respondent about what brought them to Texas. Therefore, the study only included those who migrated to Texas to seek a safe haven which is the fundamental characteristic of the entire refugee population.

As shown by the absence of negative quality or magnitude phrases, respondents did not mention any potential negative consequences as a result of refugee resettlement's influence on the overall impact of the local community. As indicated by the responses to an open-ended question on the social impact of refugees in the county, several sectors of society have benefited from the resettlement of refugees from Syria, Iraq, and other countries. There are other benefits including "a deeper knowledge of people" and "being motivated by refugees when they hear their stories." Refugees have also had favourable economic implications, according to the comments, with many stating that they are "productive employees," "employers themselves," and useful to the "overall economic success of the city," among other things. When it came to the economic impact, the bulk of the comments had a consistent theme: "contributions to the economy." In response to questions regarding the social and environmental repercussions of refugee resettlement, economic considerations were also prominent in the responses received.

### Jobs and Labor supply

*Figure 1.1 below illustrates the employment status of resettled refugee*

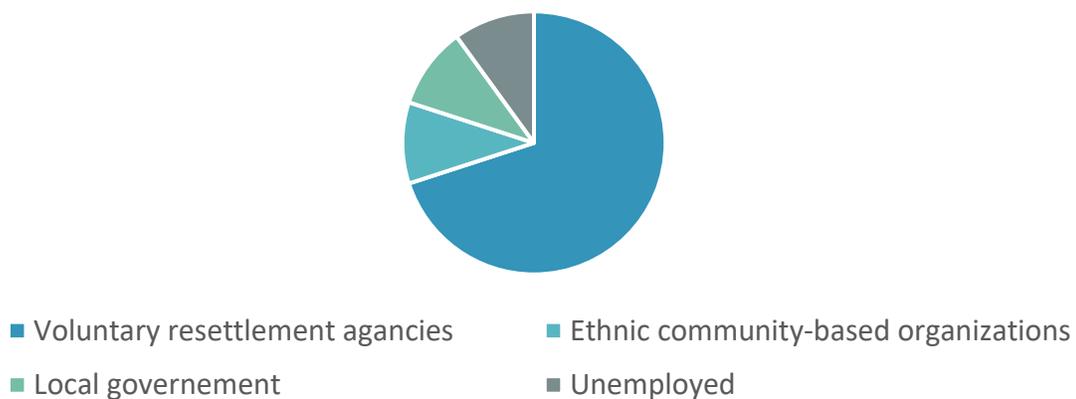
## Employment Status of Resettled Refugees



The pie chart above represents the employment status of resettled refugees in Texas. The bulk of the twenty refugee responses (fifteen out of twenty) said that they are employed, with 75% of those who responded agreeing with this statement. The sample demonstrates that the great majority of refugees in Texas are employed and, as a result, have a positive impact on the economic growth of the region and the United States in general, as demonstrated in the previous section.

*Figure 1.2 below represents an analysis of the employees by type.*

## Type of employer



From the above pie chart, sixteen of the twenty refugee survey respondents successfully answered virtually every multiple-choice question, with the remaining fifteen to eighteen respondents completing the short survey questions. Twenty-one respondents (70 percent) were employed by voluntary resettlement agencies, two (10 percent) by ethnic-community-based organisations, and two (10 percent) by local governments, according to the survey.

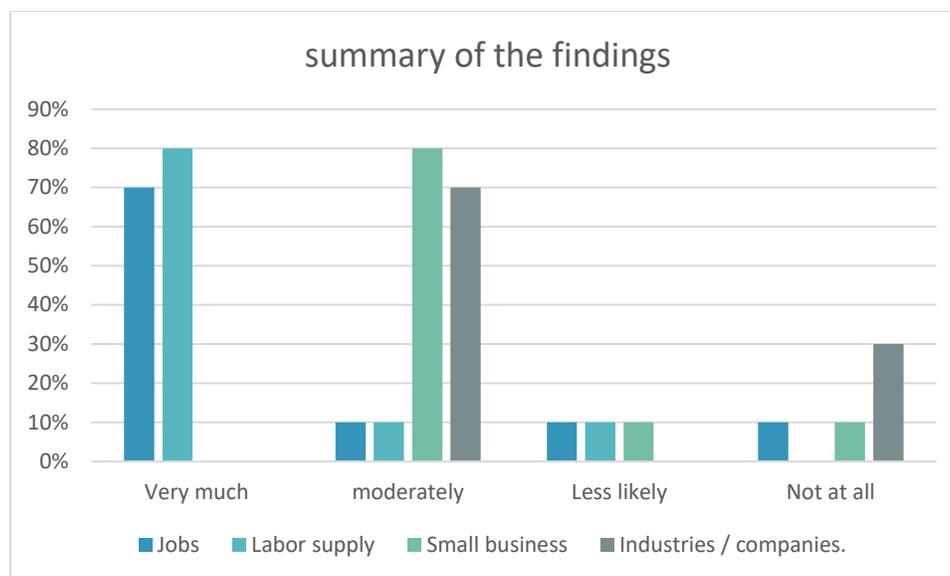
*Figure 1.3 is a graph showing years of experience among the resettled refugee workers*



The histogram above shows the work experience of resettled refugees in Texas. Among the twenty respondents, one (5 percent) had between three and six years of experience working or volunteering with refugee populations, whereas seventeen of the twenty (85 percent) had at least 10 years of experience working or volunteering with refugee populations. Ten percent of those who answered the survey had worked or volunteered in Texas for a period of ten years or more, with the remaining two percent having lived or worked in the state for between six and nine years.

#### Small business

*Figure 1.4 is a graph illustrating the degree of involvement of the refugees in the labor market and small businesses*



Eighty percent of refugees revealed that they once operated a business in Texas. In comparison thirty percent of other non-refugee immigrants own business in Texas state. The study also revealed that twenty percent of refugees had never operated a business in the region in response to the question on business ownership. An online poll of 11 people revealed that the majority (55 percent) of those who responded expressed an interest in starting a business in Texas. Seven members of the group are the owners of a small business, with the remaining four members owning a scalable startup.

Among refugee services professionals, the response rate was 90 percent, with nine out of the ten participants who were surveyed responding to every question on the questionnaire. Eighty percent of the nine respondents who answered the questionnaire for refugee services professionals indicated they were aware of refugees who owned businesses and believed the number of businesses owned by refugees was higher than the national average. Among those who responded, seven (70 percent) felt that the majority of refugees were employed, whilst the other two believed that the majority of refugees were unemployed and reliant on government help for their subsistence (70 percent).

**Table 1.1 illustrates involvement of refugees in the labor market and small businesses**

Economic impact	Very much	moderately	Less likely	Not at all
Jobs	70%	10%	10%	10%
Labor supply	80%	10%	10%	0%
Small business	0%	80%	10%	10%
Industries / companies.	0%	70%	0%	30%

Overall, it can be seen that the vast majority of refugees (approximately 75 percent) were either involved in business or employed, or a combination of the two. This may be considered the foundation of economic growth because a large portion of the taxes collected comes from small and medium-sized firms as well as the labor market and employment.

## DISCUSSIONS

Refugees have qualities that increase their marketability. As compared to non-refugee immigrants, refugees have a greater level of educational attainment: they are more likely to completed high school and are about equally likely to have completed college.<sup>27</sup> In the process of imitating a country's local economy, refugees contribute to the growth of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>28</sup> One of the most important outcomes of humanitarian assistance has

<sup>27</sup> Baez, Javier E. "Civil wars beyond their borders: The human capital and health consequences of hosting refugees." *Journal of development economics* 96, no. 2 (2011): 391-408.

<sup>28</sup> Taylor, J. Edward, Mateusz J. Filipski, Mohamad Alloush, Anubhab Gupta, Ruben Irvin Rojas Valdes, and Ernesto Gonzalez-Estrada. "Economic impact of refugees." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 113, no. 27 (2016): 7449-7453.

been the establishment of work opportunities for Texans, who are now experiencing high unemployment rates.<sup>29</sup>

According to the findings of a research conducted on the organisation and administration of the refugee regime in Texas, the relief programme directly employed around 600 people on a full-time basis in the region. In addition to directly benefiting the economy, participants from other countries working in government ministries and non-governmental organisations contribute to the development of human resources as well as the strengthening of national and local capacities to administer disaster relief programmes and respond to national calamities. Some estimates show that local wages have been forced down as a result of the inflow of refugees, despite the fact that they have given a cheap and conveniently available labour supply for both smallholder and estate agricultural sectors in places where seasonal labour shortages previously occurred. These variables all contribute to the area's GDP growth, and as a result, the general public gains confidence in the existing leaders and politicians' abilities to achieve their objectives.

Using the findings of this study on the impacts of refugee resettlement on the community, further conversations on how to analyze the impact of refugee resettlement and other social programmes on the community may be facilitated. The collection of information, networking, collaboration, and data analysis are all required for the progress of social services. However, while data collection in social work environments is frequently viewed as bureaucratic,<sup>30</sup> the data may be examined using a transformational or other social justice paradigm to empower communities and improve treatment delivery as well as relationships with the wider community.

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<sup>29</sup> Global Detroit. "Economic Impact of Refugee in Southeast Michigan. Detroit, MI: Global Detroit." (2014).

<sup>30</sup> Kerr, Sari Pekkala, and William R. Kerr. "Economic impacts of immigration: A survey." (2011).

## Assumptions and limitations

### The Issues of Trust and Mistrust in Research with Refugees

*The primary challenge in research among refugees stems from issues of mistrust and fear of abuse from government and authority figures.* Before refugees are resettled in their host countries, they experienced conflicts and trauma. Also, refugees go through drastic changes in their lives, leading to the restructuring of the social order.<sup>31</sup> This could include their language, ethnic and religious lines, and the trust is usually broken along the way. It implies that members of other ethnic, religious, and language groups are mistrusted. This experience makes refugees wary of others, especially if they do not belong to the same social groups. The trust breaks down along the perceived differences at a societal level.

### Impact of Mistrust on the Research

Since mistrust is a common characteristic among refugees, most of them were unwilling to participate in the research interviews and surveys voluntarily. Although I tried to reach as many resettled refugees in Texas as possible, most individuals did not turn out during the day of the interviews. Notably, many resettled refugees had promised to take part in the study, but they did not show up during the actual day of the interviews. As such, the final study only involved a total of 30 participants. In essence, the reason for this behavior could be attributed to mistrust and suspicion among them. However, those who showed up for the surveys gave a 100 percent response rate.

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<sup>31</sup> da Silva Rebelo, María José, Mercedes Fernández, and Joseba Achotegui. "Mistrust, anger, and hostility in refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants: A systematic review." *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne* 59, no. 3 (2018): 239.

### Sample Representativeness

The lack of a clear sampling framework was a challenge of its own. Also, the limitations with census data presented a problem when attempting to measure the respondents' representativeness accurately. Pertinent data about the economic contribution of refugees was not readily available for the study. Once the refugees are resettled, they adapt quickly and become part of the community in their new homes (Sulaiman-Hill & Thompson, 2011). This adaptation and acculturation of refugees make them a "hidden population." It is very difficult for researchers to conduct a study with hidden populations since their characteristics are indistinguishable from the general population based on knowledge and sampling capabilities.

### Conclusion and recommendations

The current study had many limitations due to various issues associated with refugee research subjects. Some of the challenges arose from mistrust and suspicion or a lack of a clear sampling framework and project scope. Therefore, I have developed several recommendations for researchers who want to study this topic in the future.

#### Building trust

The best approach to work with refugees during a research process is to establish trust with participants. Due to the curtailment of political rights and pending status recognition, refugees may feel vulnerable during the process of research. Therefore, the research should consider the sensitivity to their feeling to be of paramount importance at all times. Employing former refugees to conduct the research interviews would remove the barrier arising from the mistrust of people perceived to authority or strangers.

### Use Multiple Gatekeepers and Avoid overdependence on a Single Network.

Since refugees do not belong to a homogenous group, the researcher should avoid “overdependence on one network” to interview individuals with similar economic activities. Several starting points for the snowball sample chain yield a greater density and more representative sample than when using key community organizations. Also, one should move away from network/community-based contacts when selecting a sample and find alternative methods to access the refugee population to obtain a more representative sample.

### Policy Recommendations

Given the positive economic contribution of the resettled refugees to the economy of Texas and the United States, the state and federal governments should take some strides in enhancing this group’s entrepreneurial ability and capability. The following are policy recommendations that could ensure that refugees continue to contribute to the GDP of the state productively.

- ❖ Ensure coherence of refugees’ entrepreneurship approach with the broader entrepreneurship and refugee policies at the local and state levels.
- ❖ Align refugee entrepreneurship approach with the international system.
- ❖ Measure and report the economic impacts of refugee resettlement in Texas.
- ❖ Review and eliminate the regulatory barriers that may hinder the refugees from participating in the entrepreneurship or workforce.

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