

EVERYONE WINS WHEN **EVERYONE IS COUNTED**



REFUGEES COUNT!



Until 2017, the United States led the world in refugee resettlement.¹ California has historically resettled more refugees than any other state, welcoming nearly a quarter of all new arrivals since 1975.²

As of the end of 2017, California had welcomed a total of 738,101 new refugee arrivals since 1975.³ In addition, between 2008 and early 2018, California resettled an additional 12,304 Afghan and Syrian refugees granted Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) due to their work for the U.S. government in Afghanistan and Iraq.⁴ This data reflects new arrivals through formal government resettlement agencies and does not include the tens of thousands of additional refugees who have made California their home after initially resettling in another state.

Refugee newcomers face issues similar to those experienced by many immigrants: language barriers, high housing costs, low incomes, and inadequate access to education opportunities, jobs, and healthcare. They live in urban and rural areas across the state, and will face similar barriers to Census participation as other hard-to-count communities. But refugees face an additional set of unique challenges to participation that requires strategic, culturally sensitive, in-language outreach, education, and technical assistance.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Distrust of government: In addition to cultural differences that result in a distrust of government, refugees are arriving after experiencing significant trauma in their countries of origin and often during their long journey to this country. Their instinct may be to distrust a government questionnaire seeking personal information about them and their families.

Hidden homelessness: Refugees often have more children and extended family to house and support through reunification efforts. California's affordable housing crisis makes finding affordable and appropriate housing a significant challenge identified by refugee families.⁵ They are often forced to live in overcrowded situations, and many times in violation of leases, which may deter them from accurately representing the number of people in their household.

Fear: Many refugee populations are experiencing heightened government surveillance and harassment in the wake of the Trump administration's policies and rhetoric against refugee communities, including the repeated Muslim bans. These targeted threats pose a direct and significant barrier to Census participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Translation and interpretation services: California's diverse refugee population represents more than 50 different languages and dialects. Because Census information will not be offered in most of these languages, there is a need for significant investment in local translation and interpretation services for CBO's and local governments.

Trusted messengers: Support is needed to ensure there are in-language, trusted community messengers. They will be critical to educating the community on the importance of participation and its direct impact on quality of life issues like affordable housing that are of importance to refugee newcomers. These trusted messengers can be trained by community based organizations and service providers, but special consideration should also be given to ensuring they are hired as enumerators and included in Census staffing.

Trusted spaces: Partnerships with and support for community based organizations and health and human services providers is critical to ensuring that questionnaire assistance will be provided in language and in trusted, safe spaces.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Pew Research Center, "For the First Time, U.S. Resettles Fewer Refugees Than the Rest of the World," Phillip Connor and Jens Manuel Krogstad, July 5, 2018,
- 2 Pew Research Center, "Key Facts About Refugees to the U.S.," Jens Manuel Krogstad and Jynnah Radford, January 30, 2017
- 3 California Department of Social Services, Refugee and SIV Arrivals Data, 1975-2017 Arrivals by County and Year
- 4 California Department of Social Services, Refugee and SIV Arrivals Data, SIV Data Reports by FFY
- 5 Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans, "San Diego Refugee Experiences," 2016 Report

For more information about the Census Policy Advocacy Network, please contact
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