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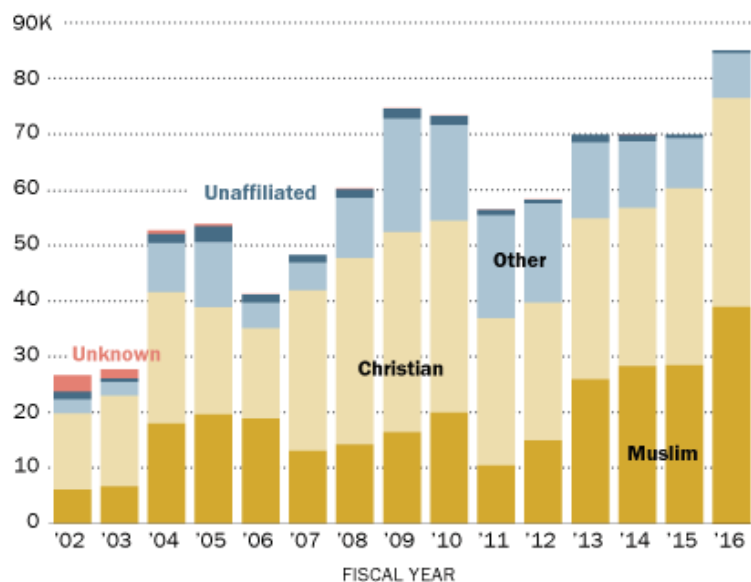
U.S. admits record number of Muslim refugees in 2016

BY PHILLIP CONNOR ([HTTP://WWW.PEWRESEARCH.ORG/STAFF/PHILLIP-CONNOR/](http://www.pewresearch.org/staff/phillip-connor/))

A total of 38,901 Muslim refugees entered the U.S. in fiscal year 2016, making up almost half (46%) of the nearly 85,000 refugees who entered the country in that period, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of data from the State Department's Refugee Processing Center (http://ireports.wrapsnet.org/Interactive-Reporting/EnumType/Report?ItemPath=/rpt_WebArrivalsReports/MX%20-%20Arrivals%20by%20Nationality%20and%20Religion) . That means the U.S. has admitted the highest number of Muslim refugees of any year since data on self-reported religious affiliations first became publicly available in 2002.

U.S. admits its highest number of Muslim refugees on record in fiscal 2016

Number of refugees entering the U.S. by religious affiliation



Note: "Other religions" include Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and other religions. Data do not include special immigrant visas and certain humanitarian parole entrants. Fiscal years are Oct. 1 through Sept. 30 each year.
Source: U.S. State Department's Refugee Processing Center accessed Oct. 3, 2016.

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(http://www.pewresearch.org/ft_16-10-03_muslimrefugees/) Almost the same number of Christian (37,521) as Muslim refugees were admitted in fiscal 2016, which ended Sept. 30. A slightly lower share of 2016's refugees were Christian (44%) than Muslim, the first time that has happened since fiscal 2006, when a large number of Somali refugees (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/01/5-facts-about-the-global-somali-diaspora/>) entered the U.S.

People seeking to enter the U.S. as refugees are processed overseas. As part of the process, they are asked a series of questions, including their religious affiliation. When their applications are approved, refugees travel to the U.S. to be resettled by nonprofit groups associated with the Office of Refugee Resettlement (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr>). Refugees to the U.S. are different from asylum seekers, who claim asylum after already being in the U.S. or crossing into the U.S. via an airport or land border.

Refugees make up a small percentage (about one-in-ten) of the roughly 1 million immigrants granted lawful permanent residency in the U.S. each year. Because the U.S. government does not keep track of the religion of new legal immigrants, it is not possible to say what share of all recent immigrants are Muslim. A 2013 Center report (<http://www.pewforum.org/2013/05/17/the-religious-affiliation-of-us-immigrants/>), however, estimated that as of 2012, roughly six-in-ten new legal immigrants were Christian, compared with one-in-ten who were Muslim.

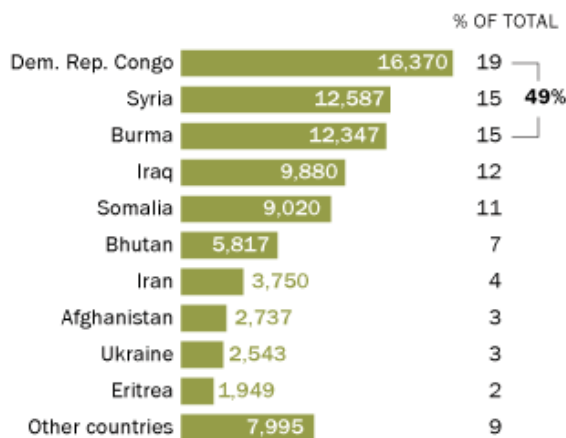
Just two countries – Syria (12,486) and Somalia (9,012) – were the source of more than half of fiscal 2016's Muslim refugees. The rest are from Iraq (7,853), Burma (Myanmar) (3,145), Afghanistan (2,664) and other countries (3,741).

Overall, a far larger total number of Christian refugees than Muslim refugees have entered the U.S. since fiscal 2002. During the past 15 years, the U.S. has admitted 399,677 Christian refugees and 279,339 Muslim refugees, meaning that 46% of all refugees who have entered the U.S. during this time have been Christian while 32% have been Muslim.

In the just-ended fiscal year, about 8,120 refugees (10%) were members of faiths other than Islam or Christianity. More than 3,000 belonged to Buddhist traditions while nearly 2,000 more were Hindu. A much lower number of refugees in 2016 were atheists or claimed no religious affiliation (449 refugees overall, or less than 1% of the year's refugees).

Nearly half of U.S. refugees in 2016 were from D.R. Congo, Syria and Burma (Myanmar)

Number of refugees entering the U.S. in fiscal 2016, by origin country



Note: Data do not include special immigrant visas and certain humanitarian parole entrants.
 Source: U.S. State Department's Refugee Processing Center accessed Oct. 3, 2016.

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(http://www.pewresearch.org/ft_16-10-03_muslimrefugees_countries/) The U.S. received 84,995 refugees in fiscal year 2016, effectively meeting the 85,000 ceiling (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/29/presidential-determination-presidential-determination-refugee-admissions>) set by the Obama administration at the beginning of the year. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (16,370), Syria (12,587) and Burma (Myanmar) (12,347) were the top origin countries of refugees in 2016. Together, refugees from these three nations represented nearly half (49%) of all refugees admitted to the U.S. over the past year.

The administration set the goal of resettling 10,000 Syrian refugees (<http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/08/05/488896247/u-s-is-on-target-to-accept-and-resettle-10-000-syrian-refugees>) in the U.S. in the fiscal year. This goal was exceeded, and refugee status was given to 12,587 Syrians. Nearly all of them (99%) were Muslim and less than 1% were Christian. As a point of comparison, Pew Research Center estimated (http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projection-table/2050/percent/Middle_East-North_Africa/) Syria's religious composition to be 93% Muslim and 5% Christian in 2010.

Note: This post, originally published Aug. 16, 2016, has been updated to include data for all of fiscal year 2016.



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29 Comments



Anonymous • 4 months ago (#comment-672318)

if the U.S. don't stop letting refugees in, something bad is going to happen. and look at Canada they are having problems with them Muslims I guess they want to have there own rules.



Anonymous • 4 months ago (#comment-672285)

The type of immigrants is more important than the quantity. We need and want immigrants who desire to become American Citizens, Speak English, Learn our History, respect and follow our laws, and embrace our flag, customs, etc. This country has failed to maintain the focus on immigration that made our country great. People came here from all walks of life but became dedicated citizens. New Immigrants want us to change our country to resemble the country they have come from, they want their flag, their language, their laws, etc. This is not conducive to making America strong.



Anonymous • 4 months ago (#comment-672322)

Amen!



Anonymous • 4 months ago (#comment-672396)

Well spoken. This is the point that angers generational Americans. The immigrants choose to leave their country and the corruption there for 1 reason or another. They choose to come live the American Dream. Live it and love it. I would never want to leave my United States of America. Our customs are the best. That's why everyone desires to come here



Anonymous • 4 months ago (#comment-672397)

While I agree with the overall point you are making there needs to be some clarification of what I think you are trying to say. If by saying, "embrace our flag," you mean embrace our constitution and our economic model of competitive capitalism then I absolutely agree. However, they are free to practice their religion, say, and do what they want as long as they do not break laws. Bottom line, they simply need to follow the law of our land, which has created the best and most fair playing field in the world (i.e. their Sharia law has no place in our system).



Anonymous • 6 months ago (#comment-671327)

A 2013 Center report, however, estimated that as of 2012, roughly six-in-ten new legal immigrants were Christian, compared with one-in-ten who were Muslim.

but the headline reads; Nearly half of refugees entering the U.S. this year are Muslim

i assume many readers like myself replace “refugees” with the word “immigrant” and read the article because of that false assumption. lumping all immigration together as a threat has been one of donald j.’s most effective campaign themes.

the fact that southern border illegal immigration is at net zero with illegal hispanics returning to their home countries is adamantly denied by donald j. and the right wing propaganda machine. they also try to make legal immigration of one million people per year it seem like an invasion of hordes of potential terrorists while the number of highly vetted refugees is a tiny fraction of all immigration.

in other words the headline is clickbait and undermines the stories factual content.



Anonymous • 6 months ago (#comment-671287)

“As part of the process, they are asked a series of questions, including their religious affiliation. ” as we saw with San Bernadino case, there is zero follow up, the wife had used a nonexistent address.



Anonymous • 4 months ago (#comment-672320)

The wife did not enter as a refugee.



Steve Coe • 6 months ago (#comment-671276)

It would be very interesting to also know how long refugees of various faith traditions had to wait from the time their application was submitted until refugee status was approved by the US.



Oliver Clozoff • 6 months ago (#comment-671275)

I have a hard time believing these numbers for Christian refugees. Where are they coming from? The article does not say. It's for sure they're NOT coming from Iraq or Syria.



Lisa Jennings • 6 months ago (#comment-671309)

There are christians that live in the middle east.



Anonymous • 6 months ago (#comment-671332)

That is not true. Only 11% are Christians.



Anonymous • 6 months ago (#comment-671360)

11% of the population of Syria is over 2 million people. Not to mention many Christian refugees also come Sub-Saharan Africa, which has a sizable Christian population.



Anonymous • 6 months ago (#comment-671273)

Please clarify use of term 'non-profit' . This sounds like private charity instead of the government-reimbursed organizations many taxpayers don't realize they are supporting. Thank you



Marijan Favetti • 6 months ago (#comment-671289)

Perhaps if you bothered to do some research, specifically to see who the Office of Refugee Resettlement is partnering with you'd see that they are:

Church World Service (CWS)Visit disclaimer page

- Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC)Visit disclaimer page
- Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM)Visit disclaimer page
- Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)Visit disclaimer page
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)Visit disclaimer page
- US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)Visit disclaimer page
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS)Visit disclaimer page
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)Visit disclaimer page
- World Relief Corporation (WR



Anonymous • 6 months ago (#comment-671259)

The immigrant numbers are much higher than that. Maybe you were referring to weekly or at best bi weekly numbers



Will Gill • 6 months ago (#comment-671307)

Refugee does not include illegal immigration numbers, Illegal immigration numbers are much higher than all the refugee numbers combined.



Anonymous • 4 months ago (#comment-672261)

Nor it includes immigration to start with... Refuge status is granted temporally to those who are fleeing from a serious threat to their life, integrity or freedom.



Anonymous • 6 months ago (#comment-671257)

Lop-sided immigration, makes no sense. Vetting inadequate.



Tim Crowley • 6 months ago (#comment-671254)

No real surprise. Given the areas where there is strife that causes refugees, this is to be expected.



Ara Yilancioglu • 6 months ago (#comment-671252)

Is it a coincidence you left the most significant fact for the last paragraph of your article? In a predominantly muslim country like Syria, 99% to be close to exact, the USA has "resettled less than 1%" of the Christians.

In a muslim country where the islamic religion is the single most powerful driving force behind every single day of life in that country, why is the USA resettling LESS THEN 1% of the Christians?

In a 99% predominately islamic country like Syria where it's common knowledge that Christians heads are being chopped off for not converting to Islam, in the country where the non-islamists are persecuted because they don't worship Allah, why in the world is the USA helping LESS THAN 1% of the Christians in Syria?

President Obama and his administration's policies do nothing to help the REAL refugees in these chaotic, primarily islamic countries. If the Shias have religious or cultural differences with the Sunnis, LET THEM. If the Kurds have religious or cultural difference with the Shias, LET THEM! But in GOD'S name why are we extracting the same intolerant people and importing them into the USA? Those same intolerant muslims who hate homosexuals, who demean women, and who don't assimilate to western cultures are the same toxic people we are IMPORTING into the USA!

The CHRISTIANS are the real refugees and the real asylum seekers and the real victims being slaughtered every day. The Christians are the tolerant people who don't throw homosexuals off buildings. The Christians are the people who most directly associate with 'western' cultures and traditions!

The practices of the Obama administration of assisting into the USA the same people who are unable to assimilate to the various sects of their OWN islamic religions in their own islamic countries. The Christians in these islamic countries are having their necks slit open, forced to move to mountaintops and starve, and have their churches razed and burned to the ground. Do we just ignore the news broadcasts from these countries?

One would think President Obama would learn from the grave mistakes of England and Europe. That is, if President Obama really means to do what is right for the USA.



Rich Rose • 6 months ago (#comment-671330)

Ara...well stated!



Anonymous • 6 months ago (#comment-671248)

So, do any of them have any skills that will contribute to America?



Jim Kocsis • 6 months ago (#comment-671242)

This article is extremely misleading and seeks to bury the most relevant information in the last paragraph. While Syria has a civil war going on, no group has suffered as much as Syria's Christians, yet 99% of those we are admitting to the U.S. are Muslim?? Beyond the perils of the war itself, Christians have been specifically targeted by ISIS and therefore should be our priority, to say nothing of the fact that they are far more likely to assimilate into U.S.society successfully. The fact that Christians compromise a much smaller percentage of the Syrian population as compared to Muslims does not make admitting them as the priority any less valid, quite to the contrary, their position as a small persecuted minority within Syrian society makes their claims for asylum even more valid.



Anonymous • 4 months ago (#comment-672262)

You might be getting this wrong actually. Christians Syrians have suffered the least on average during the civil war and that's mainly because the places where they live have been kept off war for most the duration of the civil war. Christians in Syria live mostly in the west coast, around center Damascus, Homs and Lakatia (and some in the high-class neighbors in Aleppo who have been largely untouched as well).

What is often not told in the new is that Bashad al Assad leads a largely secular Government and thus his larger and stronger base support comes from the religious minorities, including Christians. Most Arabs (the rebels, minus Kurds) hates his secularism and wants to re-institute the Sharia law (some with more strict

interpretations than others, though). Now, there was been some Christians internally displaced in Syria, but they have a strong enough family and community support to relocate in other parts of Syria not currently in combat.



Jane Cook • 6 months ago (#comment-671239)

Why would we be taking in Burmese refugees? Burma has never been better. Why are we taking in economic refugees from Congo? They belong to Belgium. Send them there.
Syrians need to go to the UAE or Saudi. Why us?



Anonymous • 6 months ago (#comment-671316)

I can't say much about Congo. But regarding Burma, they're going through a political strife, while regarding Syria, the rich Gulf states are not letting in a single refugee for some very odd reason. The rest of the Muslim countries are either too far, already have a large number of immigrants (Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon) or are having their own issues. That's exactly why Europe and the US are the main destinations. Well, God knows for how long. :/



Mara Ranian • 6 months ago (#comment-671344)

I agree with you!



Steve Coe • 6 months ago (#comment-671350)

Jane, you are apparently unaware of the real situation in Burma. There have indeed been some positive changes, and most citizens have a better life now than they did before 2010. However, the Burma army continues to attack their own citizens of ethnic minority groups, most of whom are Christian. The Muslim Rohingya people also continue to live in squalor. Even though they have had the opportunity to elect 75% of their parliament (the remaining 25% are active military officers appointed by the army), the elected government is still constitutionally subordinate to a still-brutal military. It puzzles me that the vast majority of western media, who have been informed otherwise, report as though Burma is now a wonderful democracy. It is not that (yet). I personally just returned from a four week trip there two days ago, so my comments are current.