

# Refugee Integration in Buffalo, NY

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## Abstract

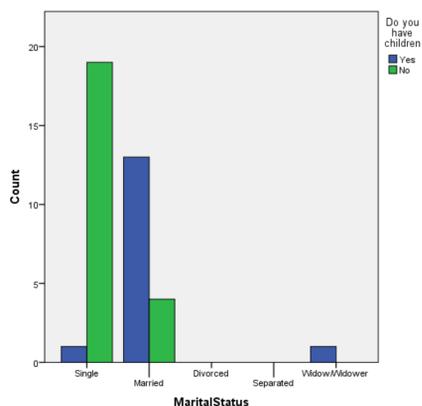
This project used both personal interviews and data to assess the incoming population to Buffalo, NY. The cultural background and ease of transition to the American way of life was assessed for these newcomers to Buffalo. Personal interviews shed light on the difficulties that immigrants face, especially among the refugee population, of hardships in their home country as well as difficulties adjusting to the United States. The purpose of the project was to identify ways to improve refugee services to meet the needs of those entering the Buffalo area. This study found that services to refugees in Buffalo could be improved by supporting and protecting mothers and children, increasing accessibility of ESL classes to newly arriving refugees, and working more closely to integrate the variety of cultures from refugees with the culture in the city of Buffalo. Local programs and communities must be knowledgeable about the needs of newcomers to the city of Buffalo in order to serve them in the best way possible.

## Methods

Data was collected through a questionnaire that was given to refugees utilizing services in Buffalo, NY. The International Institute, Jericho Road, and Journey's End Refugee Services allowed the researchers to offer their questions to the refugee clients.

## Results and Discussion

Figure 1. Parenthood based on Marital Status



Note: Data were collected in the City of Buffalo, NY in 2015 as a part of the Refugee Questionnaire *Tell your Story* with support of the International Institute, Jericho Road, and Journey's End Refugee Services. (Wejnert, 2015). N=38

## Results and Discussion (continued)

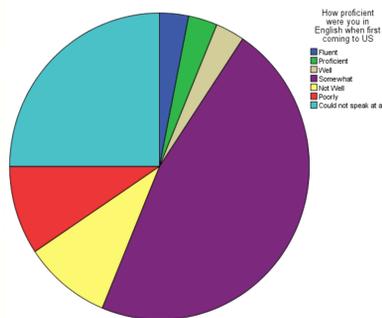
Table 1. Correlation between Marital status and Parenthood

Correlations		Do you have children	MaritalStatus
Do you have children	Pearson Correlation	1	-.625*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
MaritalStatus	Pearson Correlation	.39	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-.625*	.000
	N	38	38

Note: Data were collected in the City of Buffalo, NY in 2015 as a part of the Refugee Questionnaire *Tell your Story* with support of the International Institute, Jericho Road, and Journey's End Refugee Services. (Wejnert, 2015). N=38

As seen in Figure 1, most of the refugees questioned are single without children. This could be due to the social stigma surrounding single parents, either that they are not capable of immigrating with only their children or that they are not chosen to immigrate and are not given refugee status. There is a very strong correlation for people being single without children and married with children, as seen in Table 1. This is an expected correlation, as most people would expect those with children are married. However, it can also show that those that are married are likely to have children. More traditional cultures, such as that in the countries that these refugees are fleeing, women are expected to bear their husband children once they get married.

Figure 2. Proficiency in English for Refugees Coming to Buffalo, NY

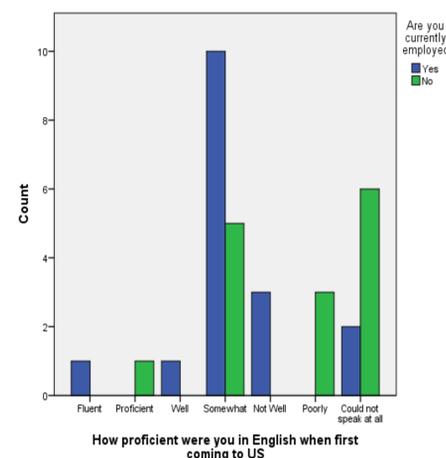


Note: Data were collected in the City of Buffalo, NY in 2015 as a part of the Refugee Questionnaire *Tell your Story* with support of the International Institute, Jericho Road, and Journey's End Refugee Services. (Wejnert, 2015). N=32

Most of the refugees coming to the Buffalo can speak English somewhat. Around 1/4 of refugees, however, speak no English at all. This could undoubtedly make the immigration process much more difficult. This could be a reason that more refugees that spoke English somewhat when they immigrated might have been preferred, since it would cost the US more in resources to help those that did not speak English.

## Results and Discussion (continued)

Figure 3. Employment of Refugees Coming to Buffalo, NY Based on Proficiency in English



Note: Data were collected in the City of Buffalo, NY in 2015 as a part of the Refugee Questionnaire *Tell your Story* with support of the International Institute, Jericho Road, and Journey's End Refugee Services. (Wejnert, 2015). N=32

There is a significant correlation between English proficiency and employment. As the proficiency of English increases, people are more likely to be employed. Most refugees that did not have a job were of lower English proficiency. This shows that refugees coming to America with better English proficiency rates are more likely to be successful at getting a job once they immigrate.

Table 2. Correlation of Employment of Men and Women After Entering US

	Gender of Respondant	Are you currently employed	How long have you been staying in the US in months
Gender of Respondant	Pearson Correlation	1	-.718**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Are you currently employed	Pearson Correlation	-.718**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.253
How long have you been staying in the US in months	Pearson Correlation	-.145	.219
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.552	.253
	N	19	29

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note: Data were collected in the City of Buffalo, NY in 2015 as a part of the Refugee Questionnaire *Tell your Story* with support of the International Institute, Jericho Road, and Journey's End Refugee Services. (Wejnert, 2015). N=19

## Results and Discussion (continued)

Time of being in the United States did not have a very significant effect on whether somebody was employed or not. The greatest difference seen here is the difference in gender. Women were much more likely to be unemployed, regardless of the time spent in the United States. All men were employed. Perhaps this is largely due to the cultural belief that women should not work outside the home, which is common in less developed countries.

## Conclusions

Refugees are a growing population in the city of Buffalo. The influx of different cultures, beliefs, and family structures greatly affects the Buffalo community. Through researching the dynamics of incoming populations, the programs that help people in refugee centers and community development can be optimized.

- There are many refugees coming to Buffalo that are women with children
- Most refugees that are employed in Buffalo came with at least a rudimentary knowledge of English
- Women are not being integrated into the community through employment
- Refugees entering Buffalo have more traditional values when it comes to the place of women in society

## Potential Policy Implications

The benefits that incoming refugees have had to the city of Buffalo have been extensive. Buffalo is much more vibrant and diverse for welcoming refugees in to its community. However, they have certain needs that must be met. Through the *Refugee Integration* research, important needs were identified to better support incoming refugees. Services to refugees in Buffalo could be improved by :

- **Supporting and protecting mothers and children**
- **Increasing accessibility of ESL classes to newly arriving refugees**
- **Working more closely to integrate the variety of cultures from refugees with the culture in the city of Buffalo**