



Refugee Ban Would Shut Out More Christians Than Muslims

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When Secretary of State John Kerry promised to respond more vigorously to the worldwide refugee crisis last year, more than 85 members of Congress signed onto a bill to shut down the entire refugee program.

Texas Congressman Brian Babin, the bill's sponsor, explained their view: "The most persecuted religious minority in the world have been Christians, and of these 70,000, soon to be 100,000 per year coming in from the Middle East, less than 4 percent are Christian."

Babin is right to be concerned for Christian refugees, but his facts about the refugee program are quite wrong. A majority of the 70,000 refugees that the United States accepted last year were from areas other than the Middle East.

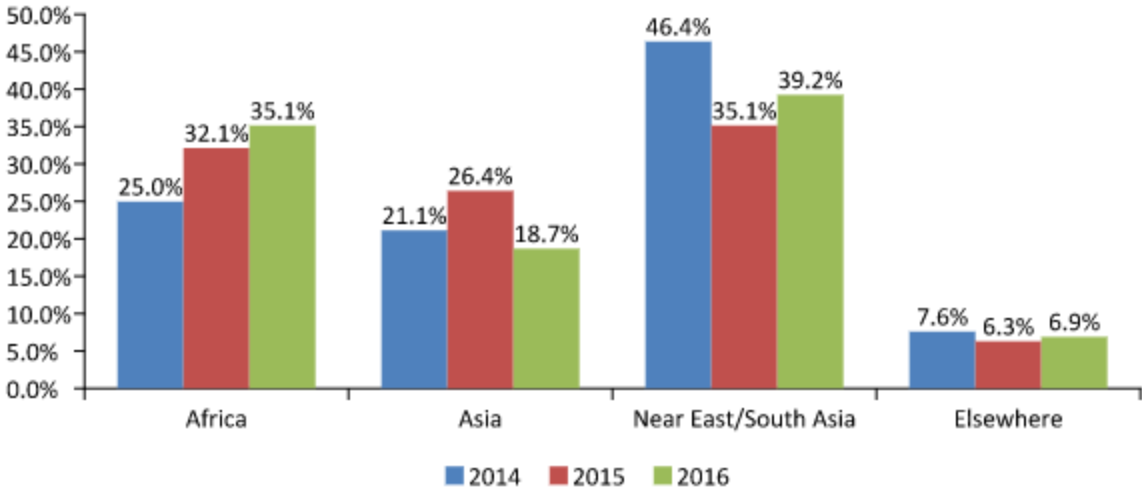
The U.S. refugee program has not only accepted a higher percentage of Christians than he stated, it has actually accepted *more* Christians than Muslims, even after President Obama's changes at the beginning of this year.

A Shutdown of the Refugee Program Would Injure Refugees of All Faiths

Because most Syrian refugees are Muslim, and Syria has received the bulk of the attention recently, many people have come to associate the refugee program exclusively with the Middle East and Muslims. But the reality is that the majority of refugees come from outside the Middle East.

More than 60 percent of refugees come from areas that are not the "Near East" or "South Asia," according to data from the State Department. As can be seen below, this share is down from 2014.

Figure 1: Refugees in U.S. Refugee Program by Region (FY 2014-2016)

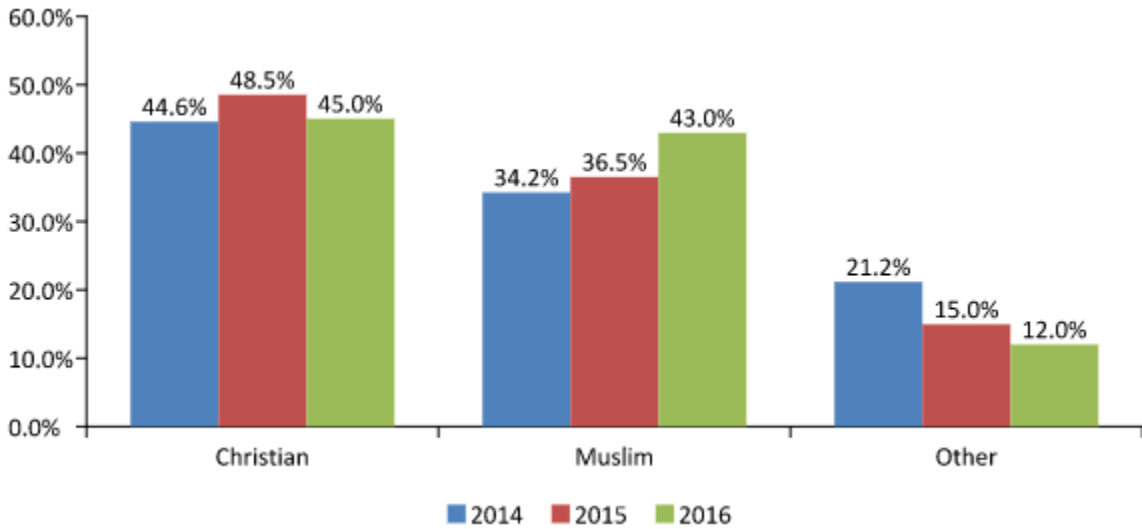


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It's also incorrect to associate the refugee program primarily with Muslims. The State Department data show that the majority of the refugees admitted under the U.S. refugee program so far this year subscribe to religions other than Islam.

The share of Muslims has steadily risen as the refugee crisis in Iraq and Syria has worsened, but not at the expense of Christians, whose share has remained level since 2014.

Figure 2: Refugees in the U.S. Refugee Program by Religion (FY 2012-2014)

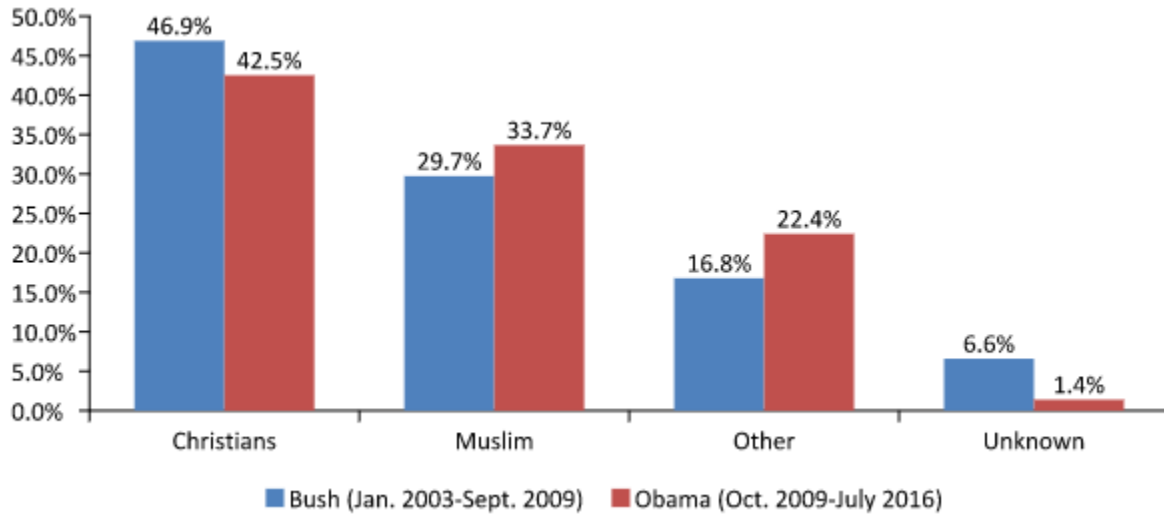


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President Obama has also not overseen any dramatic changes to the religious makeup of the refugee program compared to his predecessor. In the years available, the Bush administration admitted a slightly higher share of Christians and slightly lower share of Muslims.*

Other religions saw the largest percentage increase during the Obama years (5.6 percent), but overall the makeup is still similarly divided.

*Figure 3: Refugees in the U.S. Refugee Program by Religion Under the Last Two Administrations**

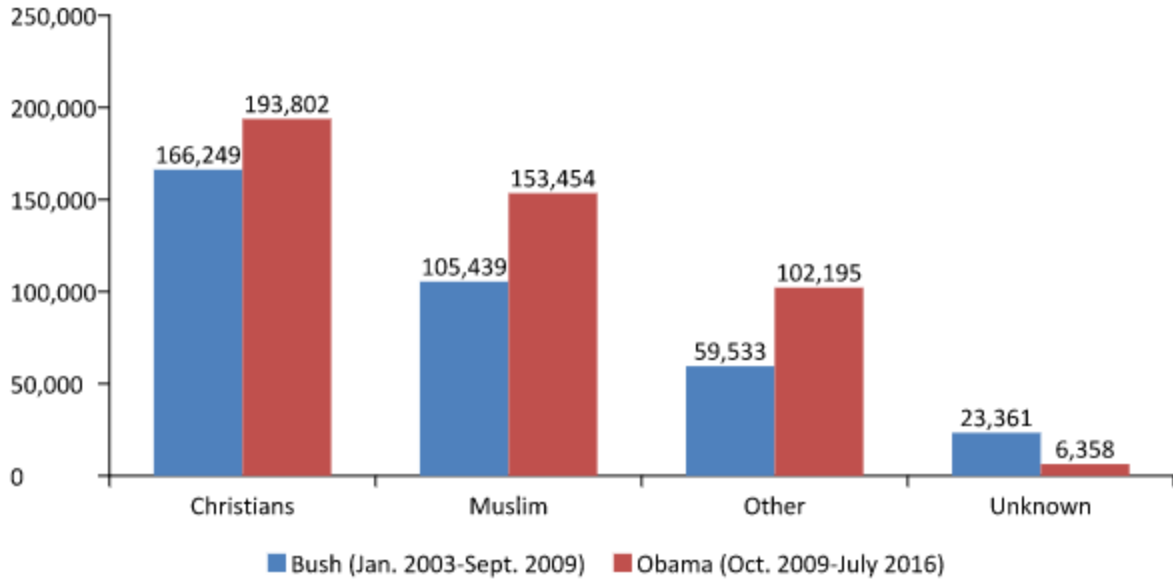


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The lower *share* of Christian refugees, though still larger than for other religions, could create the misleading impression that Christians have done somewhat worse in recent years.

This is decidedly not the case. In *absolute* terms, significantly more refugees of all faiths, including Christians, were accepted during President Obama's final seven years than during his predecessor's final seven years (data is unavailable before January 2003).* In fact, 27,000 more Christians escaped persecution under the current administration.

Figure 4: Refugees in U.S. Refugee Program By Religion Under the Last Two Administrations

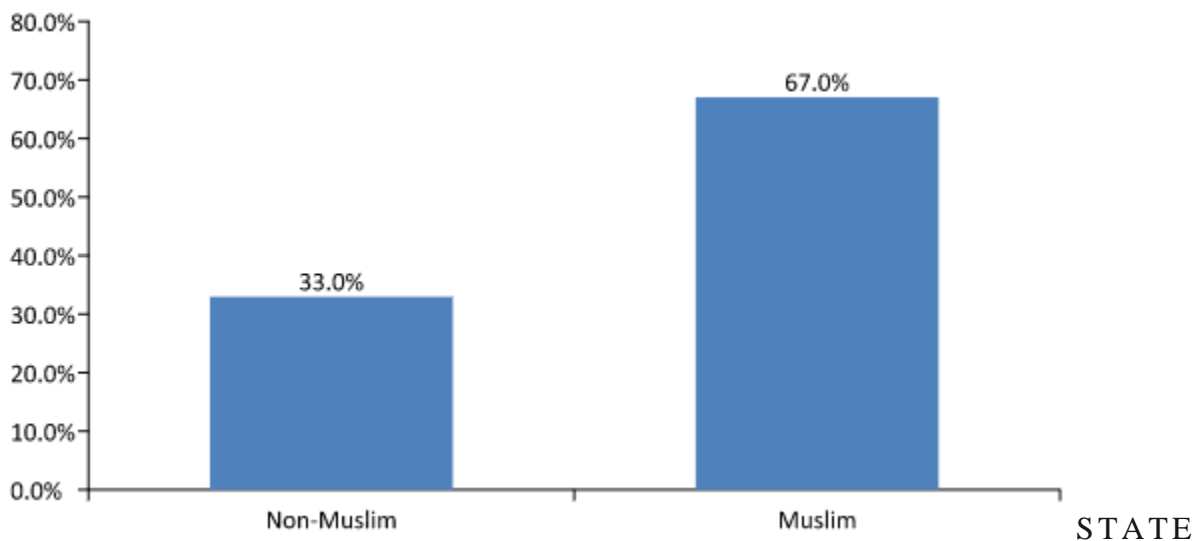


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Adherents of religions other than Islam compose a substantial portion of the refugee flows even from majority Muslim countries. While most of the refugees admitted from these nations are Muslim, about a third are not.

The refugee program admits large numbers of non-Muslims from areas in which they are the minority, far in excess to their proportion of the populations (Figure 5). More than 80,000 Christians escaped persecution in Muslim majority countries since January 2003.

Figure 5: Muslim and Non-Muslim Refugees in the U.S. Refugee Program from Majority Muslim Countries



DEPARTMENT, CIA WORLD FACTBOOK

Banning refugees—from any area in the world—would hurt members of many faiths. The question for congressmen like Babin is whether they should allow their fears over Muslims to trump their compassion for Christians.

Considering no Muslim refugee has carried out a deadly attack in the United States in the history of the modern refugee program, we should overcome those fears. The United States should do more to provide safety for Christian refugees but that does not require—nor should it prompt—doing less to help Muslim and other non-Christian refugees.

**FY 2009's refugee allocation was apportioned under President Bush.*

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