

# TIMES TELEGRAM

## **Study: Crime rates drop as refugees move in**

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Nine out of 10 cities that received the most refugees relative to the size of their total population have experienced a decrease in their violent crime rates and property crime rate, according to a recent study.

Utica, where refugees make up about 20 percent of the total population, experienced an approximate 20 percent decrease in both categories, according to a study released Feb. 7 by the Partnership for a New American Economy.

On the heels of President Donald Trump's executive order on immigration, which temporarily banned refugees and travelers from seven Muslim-majority countries based on claims of terrorism-related national security concerns — which currently is blocked by a federal appeals court ruling — Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees Executive Director Shelly Callahan said it's important to inject facts into the conversation.

"When you look at the presidential election leading up to this, it wasn't just some people ...; our current president was saying that Mexicans were rapists and drug dealers and Muslims were terrorists and rapists and God knows what else," Callahan said. "So I think people want to insert some facts, actual facts corroborated by data into the conversation."

The New American Economy, a bipartisan group of business leaders and elected officials who advocate for "comprehensive immigration reform," compared the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting data to refugee resettlement numbers obtained from the U.S. Department of State between 2006 and 2015.

Utica accepted 4,356 refugees during that time compared to a total population of 61,628 and experienced a 20 percent drop in the violent crime rate during that time as well as a corresponding 23.6 percent drop in property crime rate, according to the study. Syracuse, with a 144,564 total population, accepted 8,438 refugees from 2006 to 2015, and saw a 25.6 percent drop in its violent crime rate and a 24.9 percent drop in its property crime rate. One community, West Springfield, Mass., experienced an increase in both categories — 87.9 percent in their

violent crime rate and 2.6 percent in their property crime rate — something the study attributes to ongoing drug-related gang activity.

Utica police Lt. Bryan Coromato said the department does not inquire whether a person is a refugee when they make arrests, therefore it doesn't keep statistics relating to refugees and crime.

"Are there refugees that have committed crimes? Yes, but I'm sure it's in (the) minority of the refugee population," Coromato said.

When asked what kind of impact false claims regarding refugees and immigrants could have, Callahan said such misinformation frightens and divides communities.

"I think the reason it's important to tell the truth is because it's dangerous and divisive," Callahan said. "We have refugees and immigrants in this community that now feel unsafe. They feel threatened. They feel like people are looking at them differently because they believe these erroneous lies that have been told about them. So it's important for people to hear the truth. I think it's incumbent on the media and everyone who knows the truth to make sure that we're constantly telling the truth — the facts."

In September 2016, the Cato Institute released a policy analysis regarding terrorism and immigration. It found that of the 3,252,493 refugees admitted from 1975 to the end of 2015, 20 of them were determined to be terrorists, or 0.00062 percent.

"In other words, one terrorist entered as a refugee for every 162,625 who were not terrorists," the study wrote.

Additionally, the study notes that many of the refugees arrested after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks were admitted as children. Additionally, 50 other refugees have been arrested for terrorism or "the vague terrorism-related charges" such as planning terrorist attacks overseas or providing material support for foreign groups operating overseas.

That number includes Utica resident and naturalized citizen Nihad Rosic, who was arrested in early 2015 with five other Bosnians for allegedly providing material support to the Islamic State overseas. His case is ongoing.