



The chances of a refugee killing you, and other surprising immigration stats

Terrorism is real, but odds are extraordinary

Aj Willingham, Paul Martucci, and Natalie Leung

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In the span of a weekend, President Trump's travel ban sent the country into crisis. There is confusion. Nerves are raw. There is passion on both sides of the issue, and as provisions and court orders and changes to the executive order fly from every direction, it's time to step back and look at some numbers that put the ban in context.

Millions of people travel in and out of the US every year

Non-immigrants include people like tourists, business travelers, students and some relatives of US citizens. They also include workers with H-1B visas, given to people with specialty occupations.

2016 saw a record number of refugees being let into the US. However, they come from several different backgrounds and parts of the world.

Would you have guessed, for instance, that the top three countries from which these refugees came were, in order, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria, and Myanmar?

New citizens also come from some surprising places

Let's take a look at immigrants who eventually become citizens. That's what naturalization is -- becoming a full US citizen through a rigorous naturalization process. Mexico was the top place of birth for citizens naturalized in 2015. The other top two countries where these new US citizens were born? India and the Philippines.

Muslims make up a small portion of immigrants, and an even smaller portion of the population

According to the Pew Research Center, About a 10th of immigrants coming to the US are Muslim. They also estimate there are about 3.3 million people who practice Islam in the US. Another interesting tidbit from their report: They estimate the number of Americans who convert to Islam is about equal to the number of Muslim-Americans who convert to another faith or no longer identify with Islam.

The 'travel ban' targets Muslim-majority countries

The executive order lists seven countries, all of which are predominantly Muslim: Iran, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Libya, Yemen and Somalia.

These countries represent a tiny number of new refugees

2016 marked the highest number of Syrian refugees admitted into the US. The 12,587 refugees accounted for 14% of all refugees admitted. That number is dwarfed by the overall estimated number of Syrian refugees -- about 11 million in the past six years -- as well as the number of refugees who flee to Europe. According to Eurostat, 350,000 Syrians applied for asylum in EU countries in 2015.

People from the 'travel ban' countries are barely involved in terrorism in the US

When we say barely, we mean BARELY. According to the CATO Institute, not one person from the seven countries included in the ban has killed anyone in a terror attack on US soil in the last 40 years. This includes refugees, as well.

During this time, only 17 people from these nations combined have been convicted of directly planning or implementing a terrorist attack.

Terrorism is real, but the odds are extraordinary

International terrorism is a serious global issue, one that most leaders and citizens agree needs to be taken seriously. However, when the risk is boiled down to a matter of immigrants, refugees, and American citizens, the threat becomes infinitesimally small. According to a review by the CATO Institute, the chances of an American dying in a terrorist attack committed by a foreigner in the US stands at about one in 3.6 million. The breakdown includes attacks over a 41-year period and includes the 9/11 attack, in which 3,000 people died. Once you narrow it to refugees and illegal immigrants, the threat is even smaller.

Other, more prevalent risks to life put it in perspective

Again, the threat of terrorism needs to be --and is -- taken seriously, but there are thousands of other phenomena that claim more American lives.

Even so, the statistics above don't tell the whole story. For instance, in 2016, the number of Americans killed in terrorists attacks in the US was unusually high because of the Orlando nightclub shooting, which claimed 49 lives and is considered an act of terrorism carried out by a Muslim extremist. However, it's important to remember that attack was also the deadliest terrorist attack -- and the deadliest mass shooting -- in the US since 9/11.

On the other hand, the gun violence statistics do not include suicides by firearm, which usually hover around or above 20,000 per year.