



Washington Examiner

California and New York are hubs for Afghan resettlements

Tori Richards

August 24, 2021

If history is a guide, the main resettlement areas in the United States for future Afghan refugees will be California, Virginia, and New York.

These three states have a respective 45%, 14%, and 9% of the nation's Afghan population, according to the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank.

A few governors have stepped up to welcome incoming Afghans, including [Gavin Newsom](#) of California. The Golden State was the first to enact a care program for unaccompanied migrant children earlier this year.

“We are a state of refuge,” [Newsom said at a rally](#) to oppose his recall. “I'm proud of the fact over the last decade, California has taken in more refugees than any other state in America.”

Most of California's Afghans live in the San Francisco Bay area and around Sacramento. In the city of Fremont, a neighborhood called “[Little Kabul](#)” cropped up in the 1980s when the first wave of refugees came to America following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This gave some semblance of home when the refugees opened ethnic restaurants and shops.

More than 132,000 Afghan immigrants live in the U.S., according to a 2019 [U.S. Census Bureau survey](#). Between 2001 and July 2021, 20,841 Afghan refugees were admitted, according to the Cato Institute.

However, as Taliban aggression increased, just 474 Afghan refugees were admitted between October 2020 and July 2021, a [State Department report](#) showed. It lists the largest acceptance rates as being in California, New York, Texas, and Missouri.

“A lot of the first ones who were settled in the United States went to these different areas and then, when others come, they want to go where there are Afghans,” said Alex Nowrasteh, director of immigration studies for Cato. “[Afghans] want to be with each other because they understand the community and the labor market.”

Many of the Afghans had nice homes, good jobs, and college degrees in their home country and find navigating the U.S. a daunting experience, Nowrasteh said. As with most refugees, locating similar work is hard, and they often land only blue-collar jobs.

In an article titled “There Is No Good Reason to Block Afghan Refugees,” Nowrasteh said that up to 2 million Afghans could flee their country in the next year or two. Most will go to neighboring countries or Europe, but some will come here. Arguments “against such a resettlement are unconvincing,” he wrote.

Nowrasteh’s research shows that fears Afghans would engage in terrorism or rampant crime in America are misplaced.

“From 1975-2017, zero people were murdered by Afghans in terror attacks on U.S. soil,” he wrote. “The risk of Afghan terrorism is small.”

He also addressed crime, saying the rate compared to native-born Americans was far less. Americans in the age group 18-54 are about 11.6% more likely to be incarcerated than Afghans.\

It’s unclear whether the State Department will allow the refugees to pick their community of choice because normally, the government decided where to place refugees, Nowrasteh said.

The situation with Mexico border crossings is different because it involves Customs and Border Protection, which is looking for sponsors or family members to take the migrants.