



Here's how many Skittles you'd need for Trump Jr's refugee metaphor to make sense

Anna Swartz

September 20, 2016

On Monday night, Donald Trump Jr., son of the current Republican nominee for president, tweeted out a meme comparing Syrian refugees to a bowl of poisoned Skittles.

The text at the top of the meme, which shows a stock photo of a bowl full of Skittles, reads, "If I had a bowl of Skittles and I told you just three would kill you. Would you take a handful? That's our Syrian refugee problem." At the bottom of the meme is a "Trump-Pence" logo alongside the campaign's ubiquitous slogan: "Make America Great Again!"

The implication of the meme is clear: Even if most Syrian refugees pose no threat to U.S. citizens, and just a few are "poisonous," would you really take the risk? Would you knowingly dip your hand into the tainted candy bowl? Three poisoned Skittles out of a bowl of 100 may not seem like a lot, but — the meme argues — it isn't worth the risk.

However, in addition to the obvious problem of comparing people fleeing war and violence to a bowl of candy, the math behind the meme is off — way, way off.

So, if we must compare Skittles to Syrian refugees, we'd need way more than a single cereal bowl's worth of candies to find three that "would kill you." A more accurate estimate would be closer to hundreds of thousands of Skittles.

Historically, refugees who have resettled in the U.S. haven't posed a danger to Americans.

According to the [Migration Policy Institute](#) — a nonpartisan, Washington, D.C.-based think tank — between Sept. 11, 2001 and October 2015, approximately 784,000 refugees came to the U.S.

Of those 784,000, a grand total of three refugees were arrested for "planning terrorist activities," according to the MPI, which added this disclaimer in its report: "It is worth noting two were not planning an attack in the United States and the plans of the third were barely credible."

That means 0.00038% of refugees who resettled here over a 15-year period were involved in terrorist activities. If we extend those numbers to the Skittles metaphor, the meme shared by Trump Jr. should look a little more like this:

This is a bit more representative of Donald Trump Jr.'s Skittles attempted analogy. Source: Tri Vo/Mic

That's right: Instead of a bowl of Skittles, Trump Jr. would need to fill an entire swimming pool to make his point about a few poisoned candies.

"I think I can count on one hand the number of crimes of any significance that I've heard have been committed by refugees," Lavinia Limón, president of the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, told the *Atlantic* in 2015. "It just hasn't been an issue."

And it's unlikely to become one either, even if the U.S. were to open its doors to thousands more Syrian refugees over the coming years. Refugees from the war-torn nation have to endure a rigorous screening process before they can come to the U.S.

"It is one of the most robust security check programs within any immigration process," an employee at the Department of Homeland Security with intimate knowledge of the process said in a 2015 interview with *Mic*.

But according to some estimates, even a swimming pool full of Skittles doesn't accurately depict how slight the risk is of a dangerous refugee slipping into the U.S. A 2016 report from Libertarian think tank the Cato Institute estimated that "the chance of an American being murdered in a terrorist attack caused by a refugee is 1 in 3.64 billion per year."

Did you catch that? Billions. We're going to need a bigger pool.