

# ***Refugees and Immigrants:***

A Church Response

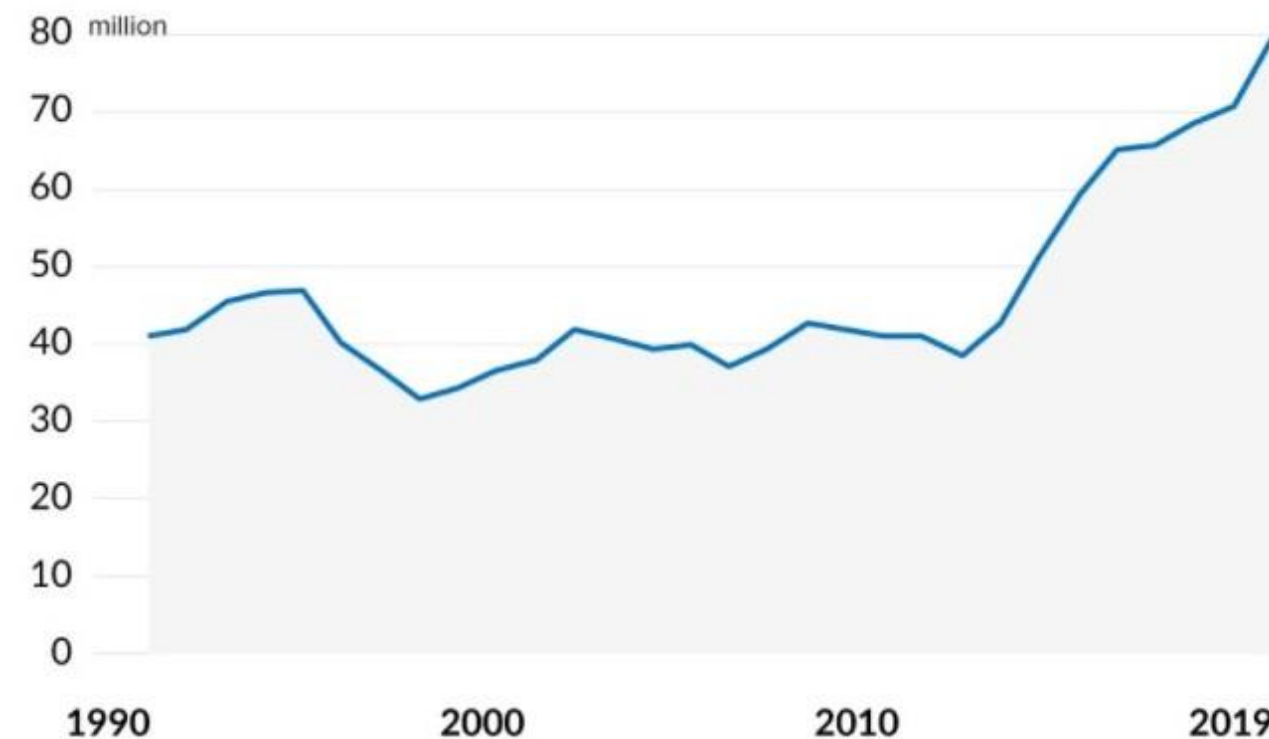
September 2020



Source: UNHCR / 18 June 2020

# 79.5 MILLION

forcibly displaced people worldwide at the end of 2019



## 45.7M Internally displaced people

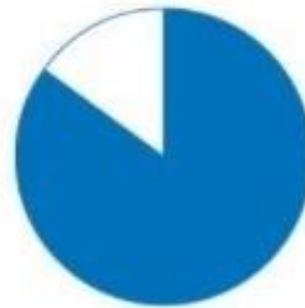
Source: IDMC

4.2M Asylum-seekers

3.6M Venezuelans displaced abroad



**40%**  
of the world's  
displaced people  
are children



**85%**  
Hosted in  
developing  
countries \*

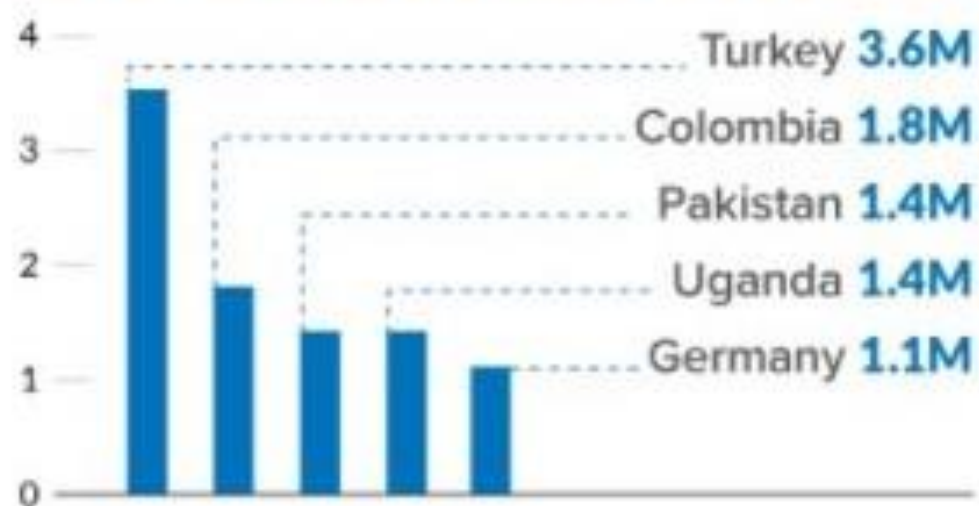


**73%**  
Hosted in  
neighbouring  
countries \*

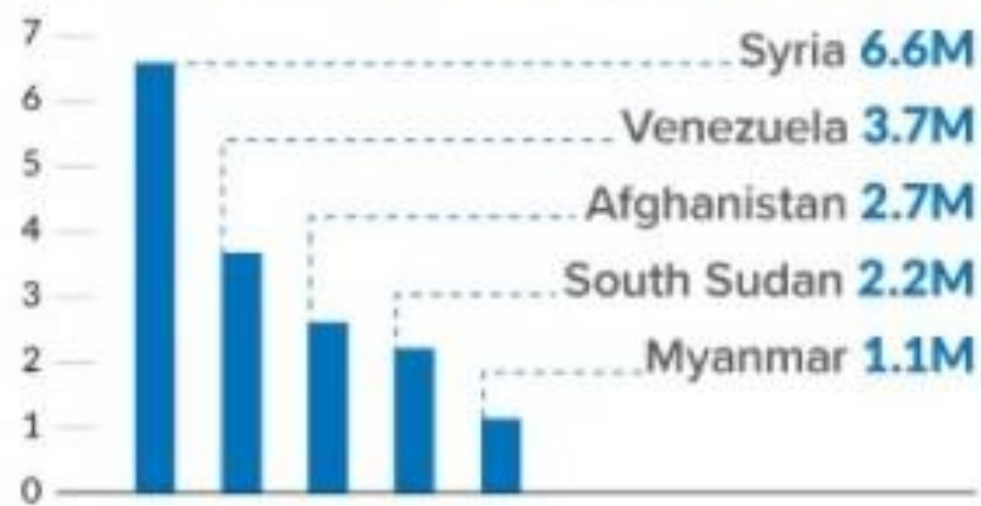


**68%**  
Came from just  
5 countries \*

## TOP HOSTING COUNTRIES



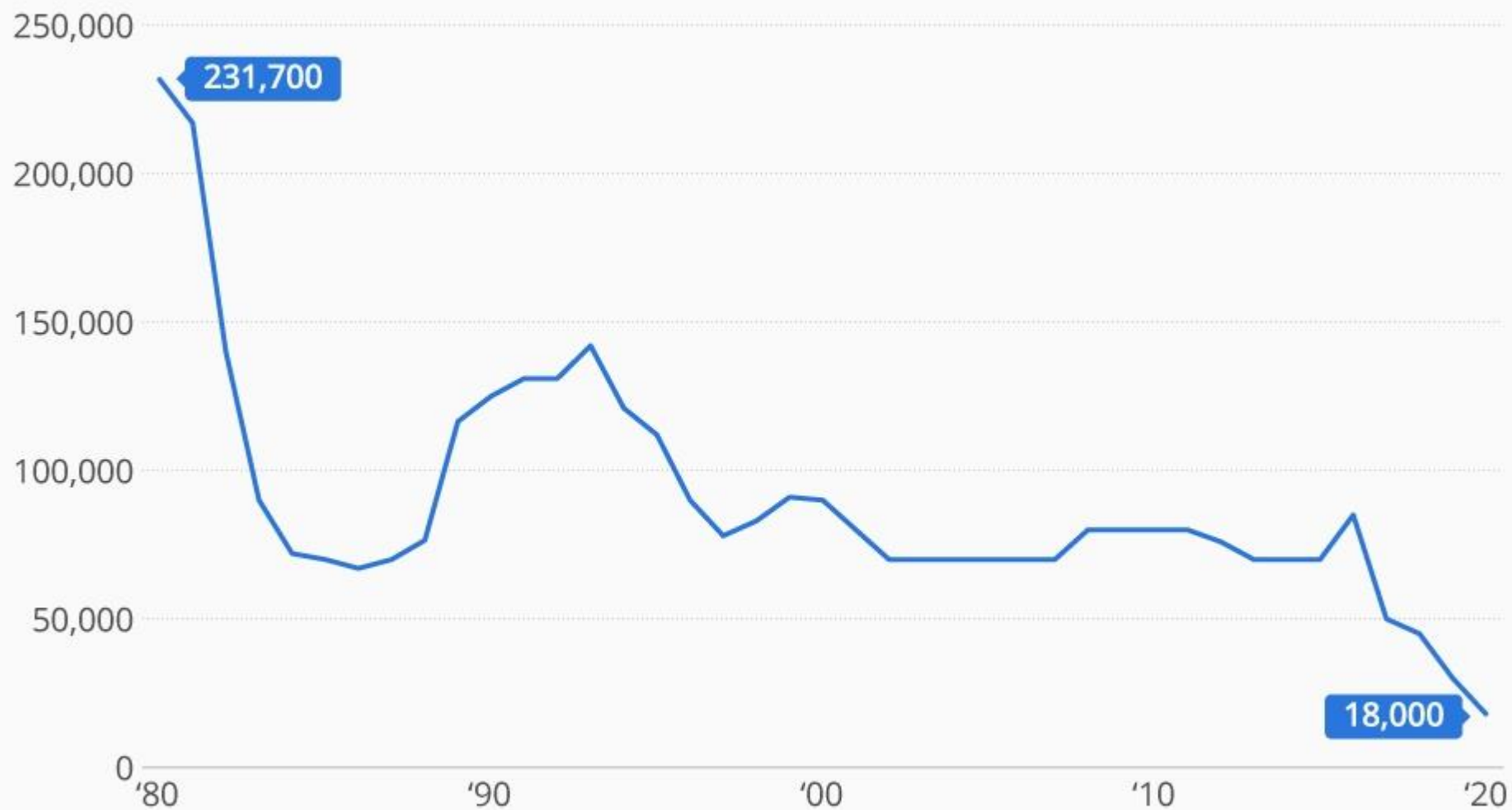
## TOP SOURCE COUNTRIES



\* Data includes UNHCR refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad

# U.S. Slashes Refugee Limit To Historic Low

Annual refugee ceiling in the U.S. by fiscal year



@StatistaCharts

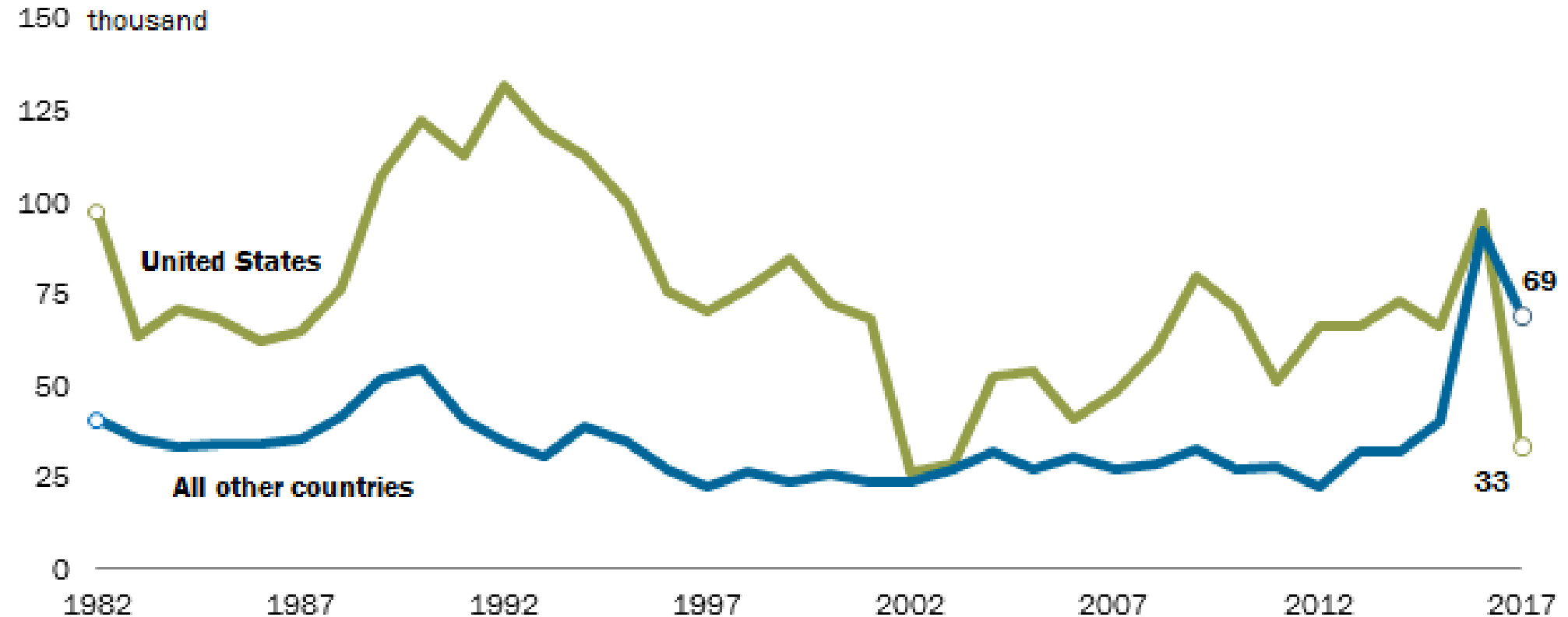
Source: Migration Policy Institute

statista

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## Number of refugees resettled in the U.S. falls below total from the rest of the world for the first time in 2017

*Number of resettled refugees worldwide, in thousands*



Source: Pew Research Center Analysis of United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees data, accessed June 27, 2018.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

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# DECLINE OF CHRISTIAN REFUGEES

The number of Christian refugees facing persecution for their faith has decreased dramatically between FY16 and FY19.



**64.7%**

Decrease in a arrivals of all religious background



**36.7%**

Decrease in total Christian arrivals



**87.3%**

Decrease in total Muslim arrivals



IRAQ

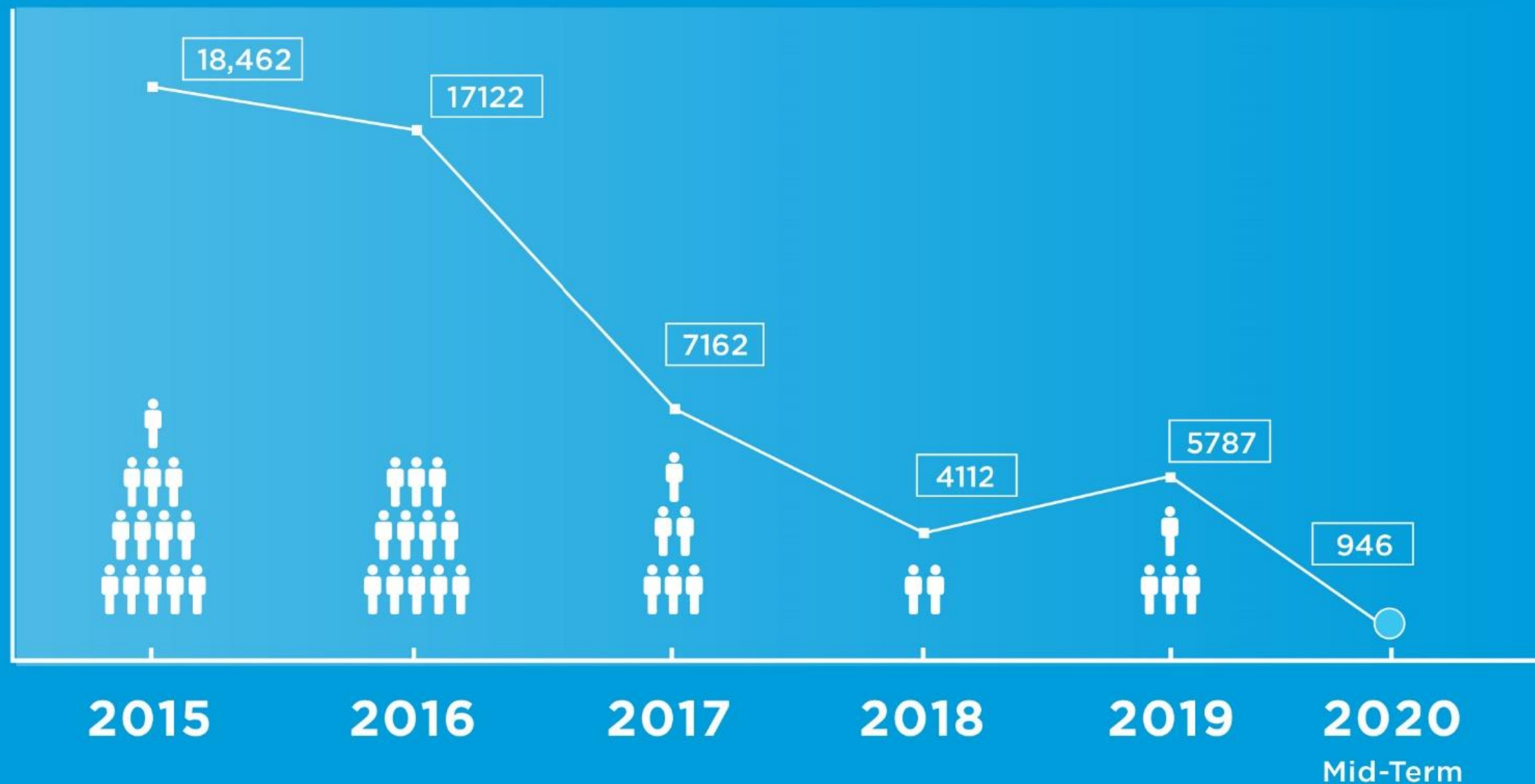


IRAN



PAKISTAN

# Arrival of Christian Refugees from the 50 Countries on the Open Doors USA 2020 World Watch List



From the 50 Countries on the Open Doors USA 2020 World Watch List

## Projected Decline of Christian Refugee Arrivals, 2015 to 2020

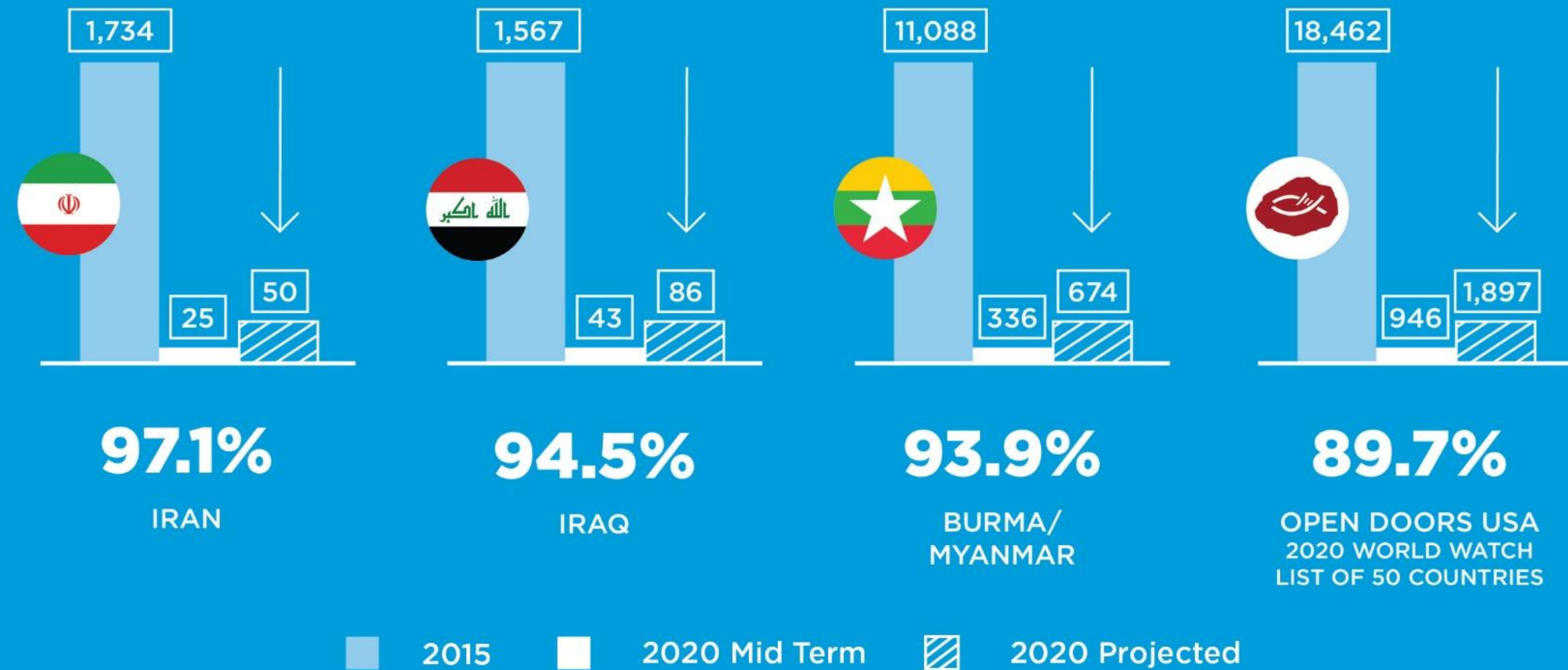




Photo: Jordan Halland

## Meet Sunny and Arooj

Pakistan



Photo: Sean Sheridan

## Global Persecution of Christians

Today, at least [260 million Christians](#) live under the threat of persecution in countries that hinder, outlaw or otherwise oppress the expression of the Christian faith. Christians face some of the most severe persecution in authoritarian countries, such as North Korea, Iran, Myanmar, China and Eritrea. These and other oppressive governments restrict Christian freedom of religion and impose harsh, sometimes debilitating, penalties on Christian conduct and expression.

## ON THE RUN IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Children and families are fleeing horrific gang violence in **the Northern Triangle of Central America**: El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. To escape, they are seeking safety in Belize, Costa Rica, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama.

# 2,249%

Between 2011 and 2016, these host countries saw a shocking 2,249% increase in asylum applications from children and families in the Northern Triangle.



# Definitions

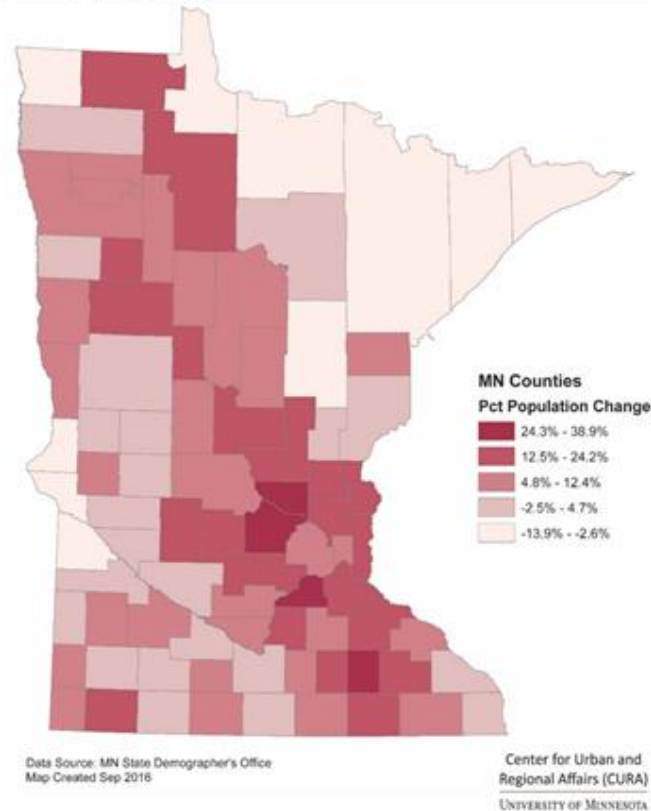
- **Immigrant**- a person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country.
- **Refugee**- a person who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion
  - Through the State Department U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program
- **Asylum-Seeker**- someone who is seeking international protection but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been determined
  - Arriving at the U.S./Mexico/Canada border or at the airport

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## **3 Refugee Durable Solutions**

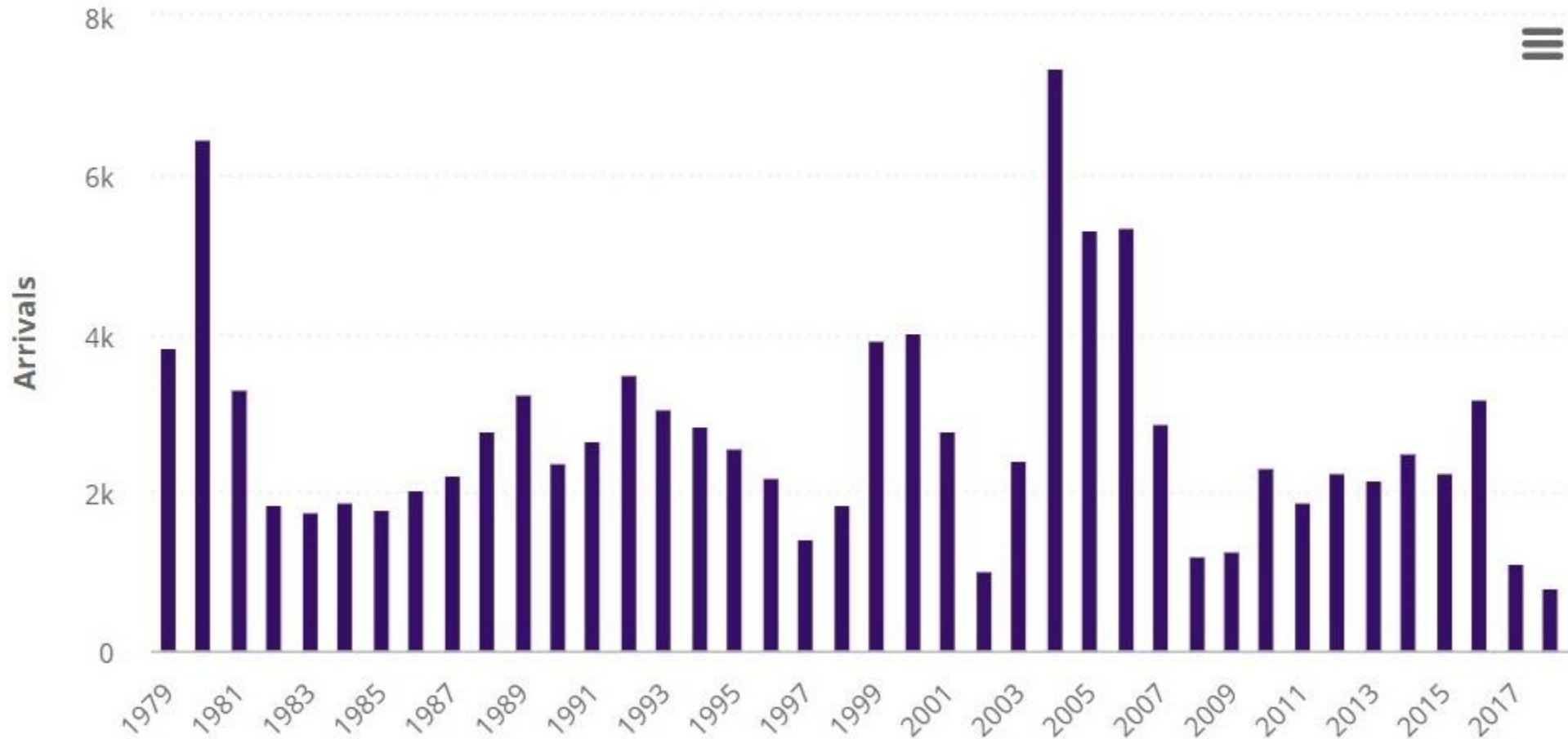
- 1) Voluntary Repatriation
- 2) Local Integration
- 3) Resettlement

Map 1: Projected Change in Minnesota's Population, by County (2015-2045)



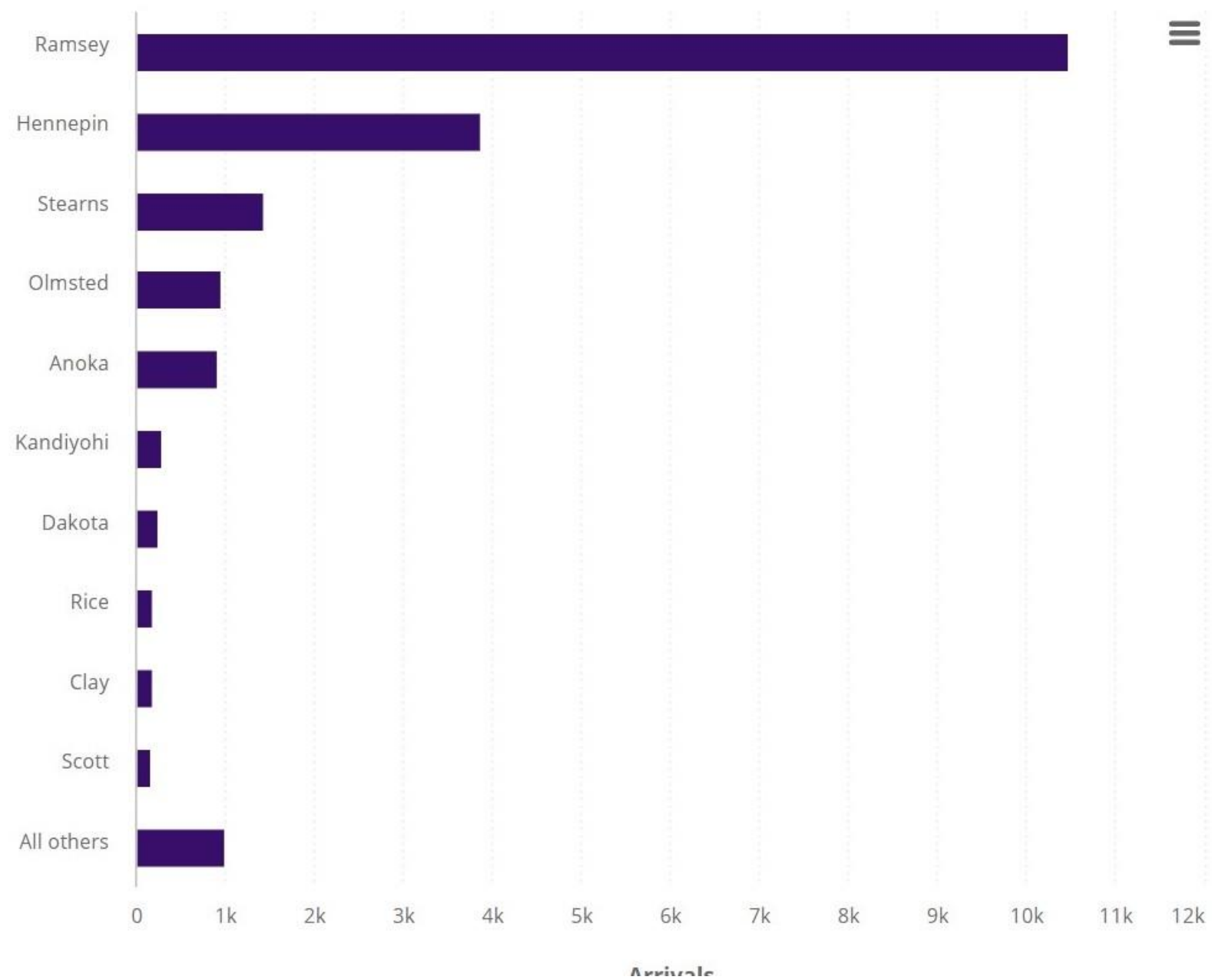
- Nearly [half million immigrants](#) call Minnesota home, a population that includes citizens and non-citizens, students and workers, and refugees who fled their home countries.
- In 2018, about [nine percent of Minnesotans were foreign-born](#), but that percentage was as high as 37 percent in the late 1800s.
- [Foreign-born residents from Asia have been our state's largest immigrant group since 1990](#); foreign-born residents from Africa now constitute the second largest immigrant group in Minnesota.
- The majority of Minnesota's foreign-born residents [live in the Twin Cities 7-county region](#), but immigrants are transforming many smaller communities across the state.

## Refugee arrivals to Minnesota, 1979-2018

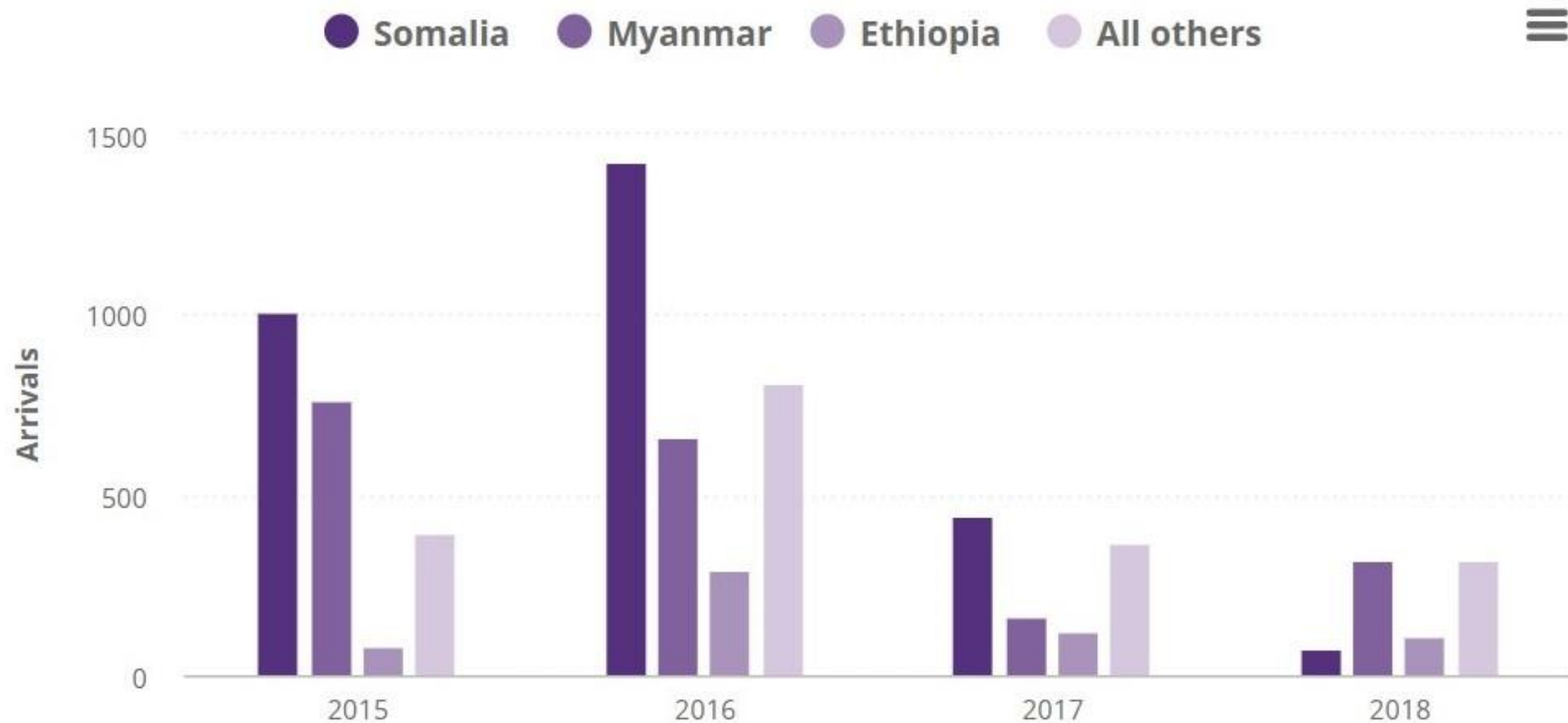


<https://www.minnpost.com/new-americans/2020/01/as-minnesota-counties-vote-on-accepting-refugees-here-are-the-counties-where-refugees-have-actually-moved-in-the-last-decade/>

# Top 10 counties for new refugees in Minnesota, 2009-2018



## Refugee arrivals to Minnesota by country, 2015-2018

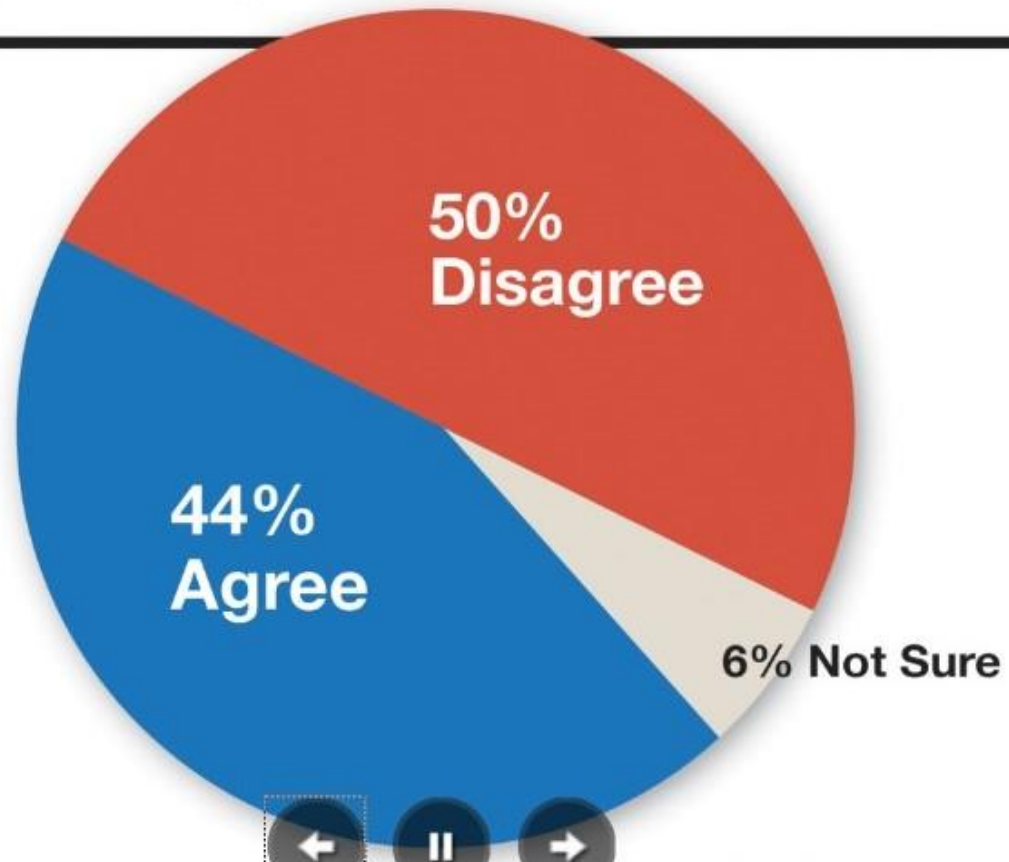


Source: Minnesota Department of Health

*Among Protestant Pastors:*

**My church has a sense of fear about global refugees coming to the United States.**

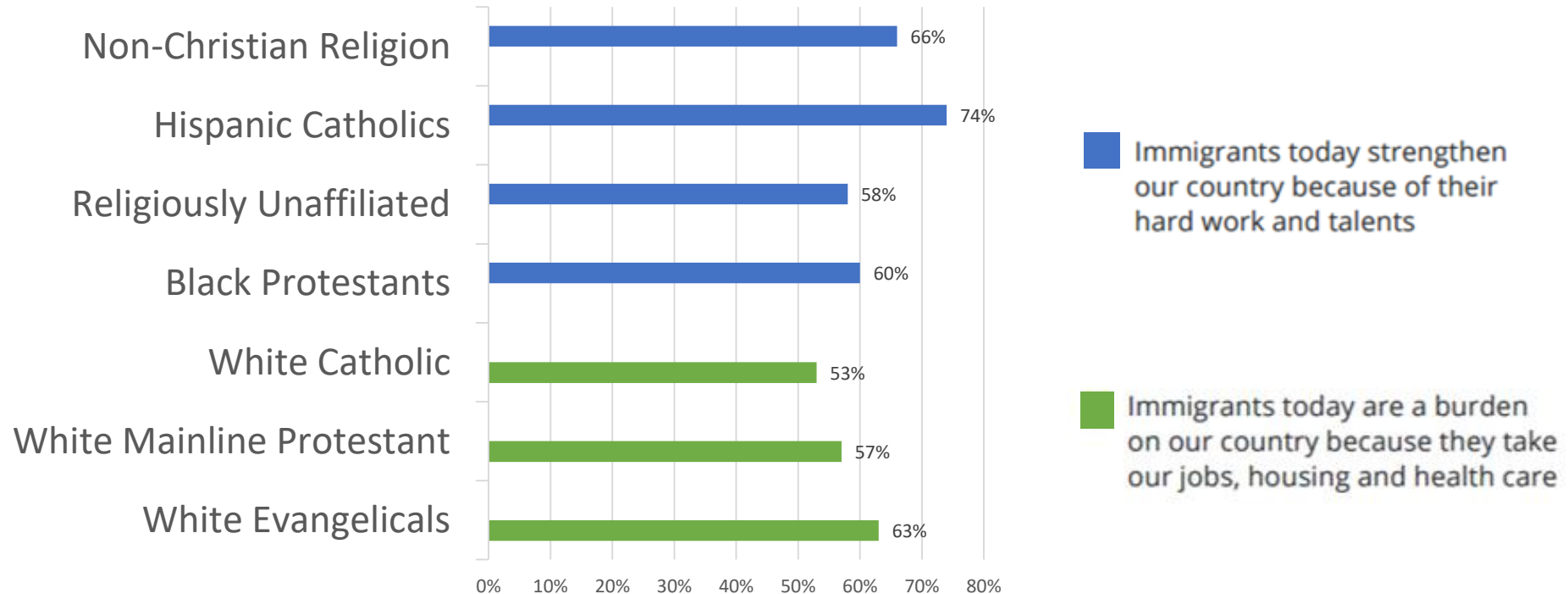
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Graphic from Lifeway Research

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## Which of the following statements comes closest to your own view?



Source: PRRI/Brookings 2016 Immigration Survey.

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## Am I Thinking about This Issue *As a Christian?*

1. It is a **Biblical** Issue
2. It is a **Church** Issue
3. It is a **Missional** Issue

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## Many of the heroes and heroines of the biblical narrative were immigrants themselves

- Abraham
- Rebekah
- Joseph
- Ruth
- David
- Jesus
- Paul
- Called by God/Fled Famine
- Family-Based Immigrant
- Victim of Human Trafficking
- Family-Based Immigrant/Fled Famine
- Asylum Seeker
- Refugee / Celestial Immigrant
- Employment-Based Immigrant

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**Ger**, the Hebrew word closest to “immigrant” in English,  
appears **92 times** in the Old Testament

“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.”

(Leviticus 19:33-34 NIV)

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# A Biblical Issue

## God Recognizes the Immigrant as Particularly Vulnerable, Along with Orphans and Widows

- “He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing.” (Deuteronomy 10:18)
  - “The LORD watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow.” (Psalm 146:9)
  - “Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor.” (Zechariah 7:10)
  - “I will be quick to testify against... those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice.” (Malachi 3:5)
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# A Biblical Issue

## God Commands the Israelites to Remember Their Own History

- “When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living among you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, **for you were aliens in Egypt**. I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 19:33-34)
  - “Do not oppress an alien; **you yourselves know how it feels to be aliens**, because you were aliens in Egypt.” (Exodus 23:9)
  - As American Christians, we do well to remember our histories as well—both as spiritual ancestors of the Israelites and as children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of immigrants to the United States
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# A Biblical Issue

## Immigrants Are Our Neighbors

- The second great command is to “love your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:27)
  - A legal scholar asks Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?”
  - Jesus responds with the story of a man who cares for a traveling stranger, of a different ethnic group, in need
  - Whatever our approach to immigration policy, we are commanded to view immigrants themselves as our neighbors—with love
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# A Biblical Issue

## Christians are Called to Hospitality

- “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, **I was a stranger and you invited me in**, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me... I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” (**Matthew 25:35-36, 40**)
  - “Do not forget to **entertain strangers**, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.” (**Hebrews 13:2**)
  - Scripture challenges us to think that immigrants—rather than aliens to be feared—might actually be a blessing**
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# An Issue for the Church

## How Many Churches Are There in This City?

- Biblically, [there is one Church](#)— “one Body, one Spirit, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.” (Ephesians 4:4-6)

Each part of the Body is interdependent on each other part, so no part can say to another part that it is unneeded (1 Corinthians 12:14-25)

- Whether we see it or not in our own local church, [immigrants are a large and ever-growing element of evangelical churches in the United States](#)

In fact, research by Dr. Todd Johnson at Gordon-Conwell Seminary suggests that immigrant congregations are the fastest growing segment of evangelical churches in the U.S.

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# The Great Commission + The Great Commandment

Jesus commands us to “**make disciples of every nation**”  
(Matthew 28:19)

Jesus commands us to “**love your neighbor as yourself**”  
(Matthew 22:37-40)

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

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## **Christians are Called to Hospitality: Philoxenia vs. Xenophobia**

“I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, **I was a stranger and you invited me in**, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me... I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”

**(Matthew 25:35-36, 40)**

“Do not forget to **entertain strangers**, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.” **(Hebrews 13:2)**

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## A Missional Opportunity

“From one man [God] made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this *so that men would seek him* and perhaps reach out for him and find him.” (Acts 17:26-27)

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## A Missional Opportunity

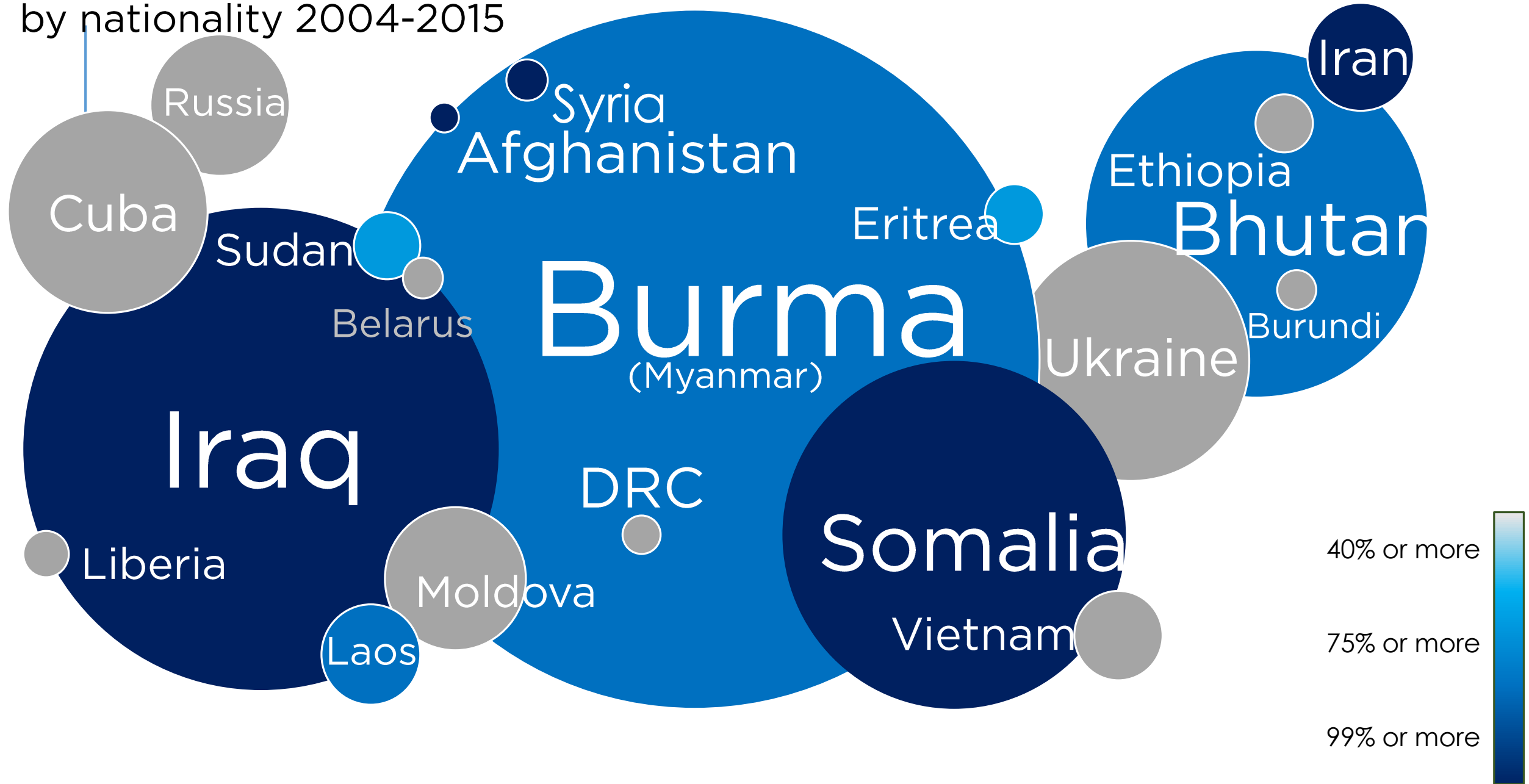
**“86% of the immigrant population in North America are likely to either be Christians or become Christians. That’s far above the national average...The immigrant population actually presents the greatest hope for Christian renewal in North America... This group that we want to keep out is actually the group that we most need for spiritual transformation... We shouldn’t see this as something that threatens us. We should see this as a wonderful opportunity.”**

- Dr. Timothy Tennent

Missiologist & President, Asbury Theological Seminary

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World Relief resettlement + most **unreached** people  
by nationality 2004-2015



# Welcoming the Stranger:

How Should I Respond?

@JennyYangWR

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## How Should I Respond?

- Prayer
  - Listening
  - Education
  - Advocacy
  - Service
  - Evangelism
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## How Should I Respond? Prayer and Listening

- Scripture tells us to “[pray without ceasing](#)” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) – so prayer should be at the beginning, middle, and end of our engagement with this issue
  - We are called to pray “for kings and all those in authority.” (1 Timothy 2:1-2)
  - We need, first and foremost, to [listen to what Scripture has to say](#) that relates to how we interact with immigrants.
    - There are also many books and other resources to help us understand this issue better
  - We also need to [listen to our immigrant brothers and sisters](#) to really understand this issue
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## How Should I Respond? Prayer & Listening



### ***“I Was a Stranger...” Challenge***

For 40 consecutive days, commit to prayer and to reading one Scripture passage per day about God’s heart for immigrants.

More info can be found on:

[www.EvangelicalImmigrationTable.com/IWasAStranger](http://www.EvangelicalImmigrationTable.com/IWasAStranger)

*Mobilize your church to do the same!*

## How Should I Respond? Education

- The “**Welcoming the Stranger**” **Learning Group 9-session** guide, available at [www.welcomingthestranger.com](http://www.welcomingthestranger.com), is a great tool for small groups or Adult Education Classes

**WELCOMING**  
**THE STRANGER**  
Discovering and Living God's Heart for Immigrants



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## How Should I Respond? Advocacy

- There are plenty of important ways that we should love our neighbors on an interpersonal level—that's most of the missional work we do
  - But when systemic injustice is at the root of a problem, **loving our neighbor means advocacy** as well
    - “On the one hand, we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside, but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho Road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.” (Martin Luther King, Jr., April 1967)
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## How Should I Respond?

### Service

- While immigrants are a diverse group economically, many are among the poorest people in society, with many human needs
- You could get involved by **volunteering**
  - Serve as an ESL tutor or a “friendship partner” for a newly arrived refugee
  - Help immigrants fill out paperwork for naturalization at church-based citizenship workshops

### Evangelism

- As we befriend, serve, and advocate with immigrants, we have the opportunity to share the gospel, the **good news** of a transformative relationship with Jesus Christ
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# Next Steps for You:

1. Walk thru YouVersion's "Seeking Refuge" Devotional
2. Share a social media graphic from "Closed Doors"
3. Pursue a friendship with an immigrant
4. Register for "Thinking Biblically About Immigration" on October 21<sup>st</sup> at 12-1pm EST

# Next Steps for Your Church:

1. Share YouVersion's "Seeking Refuge" Devotional
2. Mention the plight of persecuted Christians in a sermon or church e-newsletter
3. Invite others to pray on the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (here & overseas) on Nov. 1st, 2020
4. Recruit congregants to virtually volunteer with World Relief to serve those fleeing persecution
5. Invite an immigrant in your church to share their story
6. Invite others to join, "Thinking Biblically About Immigration," on October 21st at 12-1pm EST

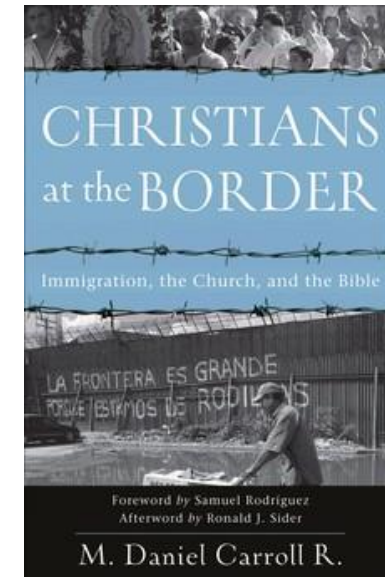
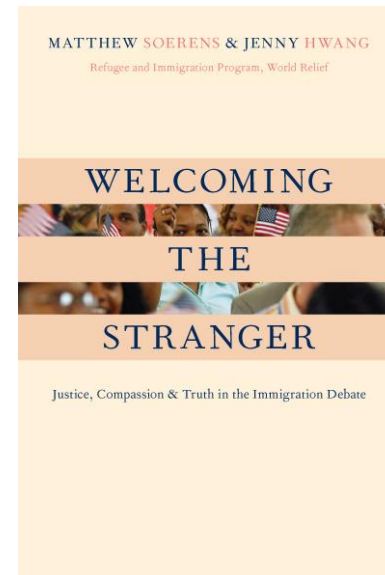


## How Can I Learn More?

### •Books

•***Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate*** by Matthew Soerens & Jenny Hwang (InterVarsity Press, 2009)

•***Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible*** by Daniel Carroll (Baker, 2008)







## How Should I Respond?

### Go Deeper - Websites



[WorldRelief.org](http://WorldRelief.org) – regularly updated blog, basic info on immigration, films, experiences, conference info & registration   more

[WelcomingTheStranger.com](http://WelcomingTheStranger.com) – includes 9-session Learning Group guide for free download or purchase  

**Evangelical  
Immigration  
Table**

[EvangelicalImmigrationTable.com](http://EvangelicalImmigrationTable.com) – includes an Evangelical Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform signed by many prominent Christian leaders



world relief

**STAND**/FOR THE VULNERABLE™

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