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Economic Survey of Refugees in the Hartford Region

Chinmay Rayarikar with Professor Janet Bauer
Hartford Commission on Refugee and Immigrant Affairs



Abstract

There is very little literature that deals with how well refugees in the United States compare to other groups in the region of their residence. There are certain secondary sources that talk of a "refugee gap". In this project, I tried to understand the extent of this gap in the Hartford metropolitan region in Connecticut. This will form a preliminary part of the solution to the problem of understanding how refugees can do better in economic terms in the region. I conducted surveys of those who are in the Hartford metropolitan region as refugees or asylum seekers, and collected anonymized information on their income levels, economic sector of work, educational qualifications, and issues they have faced with recredentialisation. The results show that **there is indeed a significant disparity in incomes between refugees and non-refugees in the Hartford metropolitan region**, and many refugees face significant challenges in using their educational credentials from their home countries when they come to the United States, and have to go through a lengthy process of recredentialisation.

Survey Details

The survey was conducted with a sample of 25 individuals who identified as refugees or asylum seekers, and those who lived in the Hartford metropolitan region. The information collected from the sample was anonymized and aggregated, and then compared with the data provided by the US Census for non-refugees. For more accessibility, the form, which was originally in English, was also translated into Burmese, Arabic, and Urdu. The specific questions that were asked in the survey dealt with:

- Country of origin
- Age
- Occupation sector before and after relocating to the United States (from a choice of five sets of occupations grouped based on which economic sector they fall under)
- Occupation type before and after relocating to the United States (from a choice of permanent, temporary, or part-time)
- If they received any state assistance in the United States
- Work experience (in years) before relocating to the United States
- If they faced any difficulties with recredentialisation

Research Question

To what extent are there economic disparities between refugees and non-refugees in the Hartford area? This comparison will be made based on the metrics of average personal incomes, occupation type, occupation sector, and educational levels.

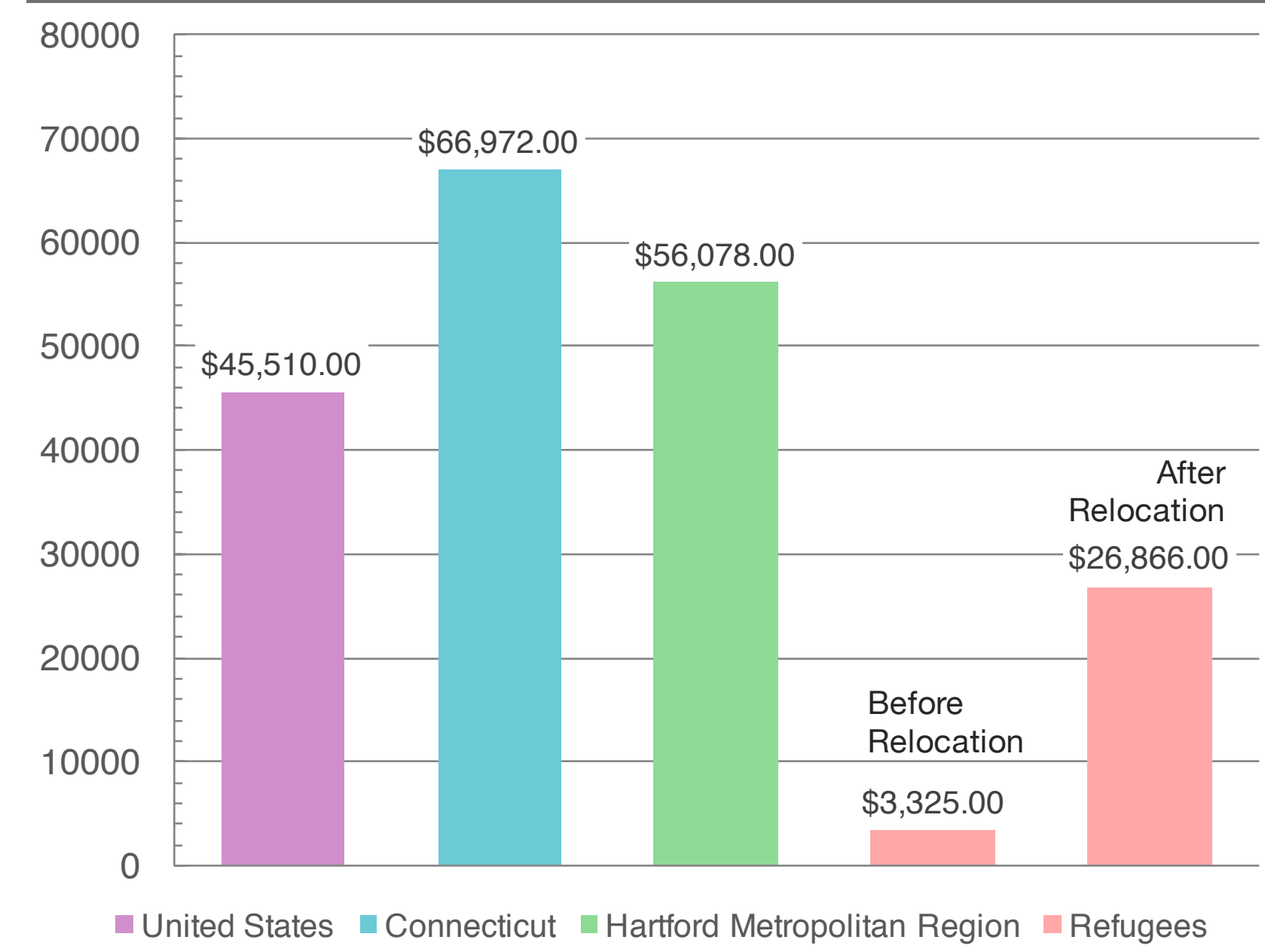
Background

- About 800 refugees are resettled in Connecticut every year.
- There are three resettlement agencies which work with the Connecticut government to facilitate resettlement.
- These agencies are located in Bridgeport, New Haven and Hartford.
- Refugee resettlement takes place in both large cities and small towns.
- Recent refugees originate from DR Congo, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Myanmar, and Sudan.
- Older refugees used to usually be from Cuba, Vietnam, and Bosnia.

Challenges

- The opposition to refugees forces them to lay low. This adds to their feeling of marginalization, in addition to having faced issues with cultural adjustment and forced relocation to a new country. This opposition is usually from the same individuals and groups that oppose immigration.
- The US refugee and asylum seeker process is one of the complex in the world already.
- With the current political changes, the future of refugee resettlement programs remains uncertain.
- It is unclear whether state and city level government will be able to counter any legislation passed at the federal level with regards to refugee resettlement.
- There is very little information available on the economic conditions of refugees in the United States.
- This is because many refugees do not report their economic data (or immigration status) due to a fear of persecution from the groups talked about above.
- While some refugees do have very high incomes and standards of living, most live in conditions just above poverty levels and usually in low-income neighborhoods.
- For refugee children, there are problems with adjusting to English as a medium of instruction in schools, which affects academic performance later in life as well.

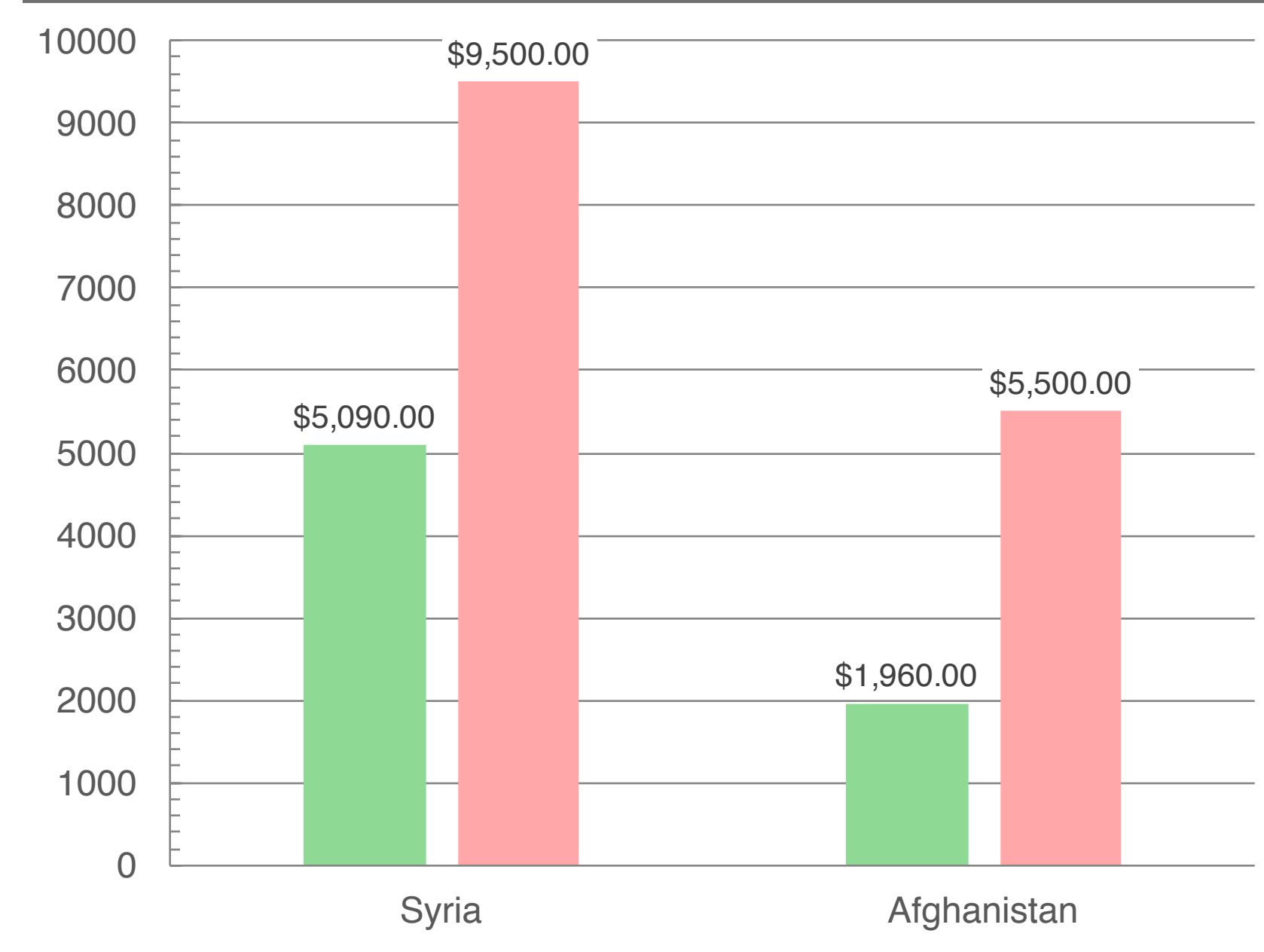
Income Comparison



Refugee incomes in comparison to average personal incomes of the US, Connecticut and the Hartford metropolitan region. The refugee data includes average incomes both before and after relocating to the United States.

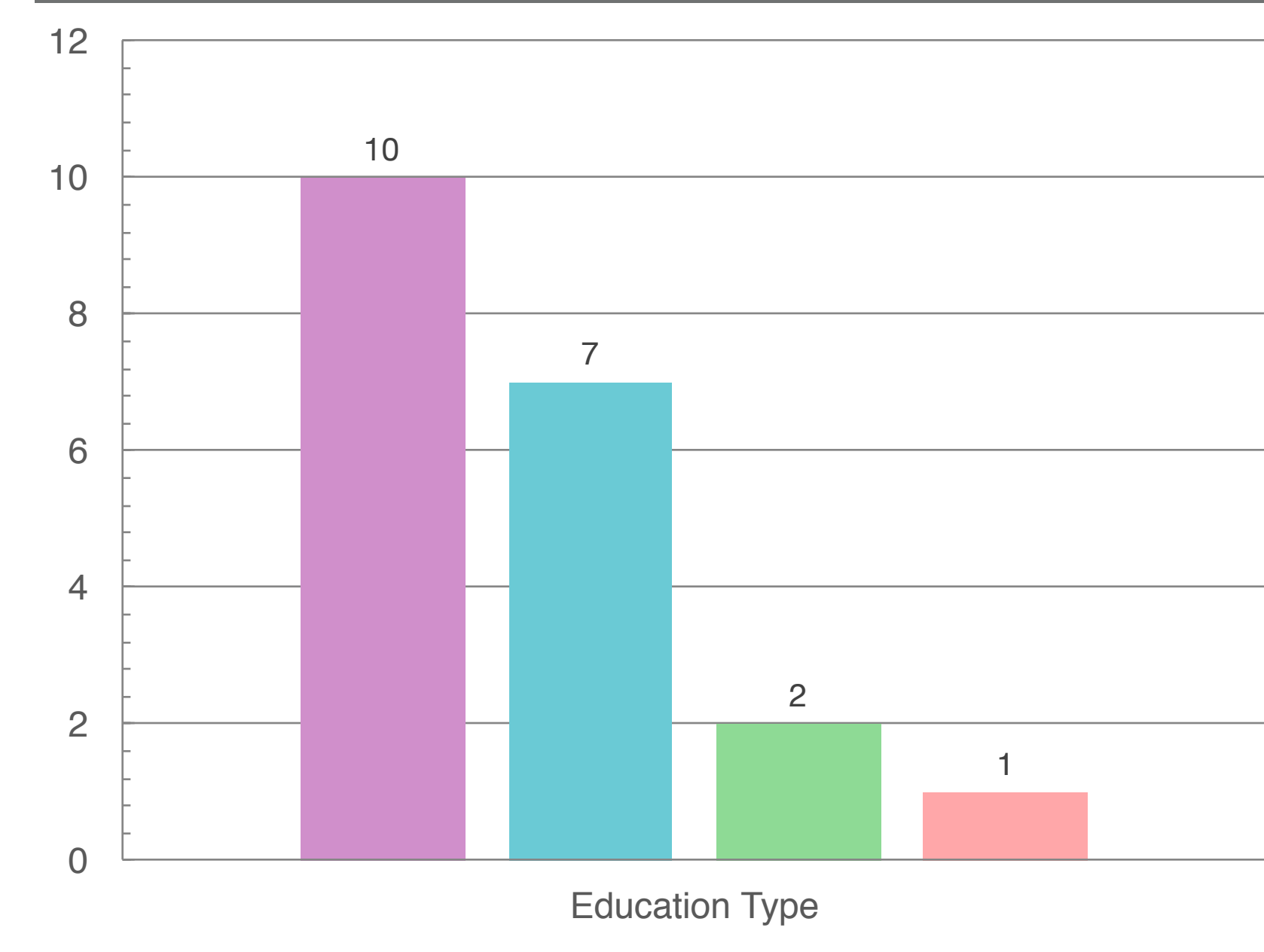
- Refugees who have been in the United States for a **longer period of time have higher income levels**.
- 7 out of 25 refugees **receive housing assistance** to help pay rent.
- 6 out of 25 refugees are **recipients of EBT benefits (food stamps)**.
- Refugees in the sample **earn almost half of what a regular Hartford resident does**. The data for refugees is from this research project.
- Refugees from some countries **earn more in their countries of origin than the average personal incomes for those countries**.

Country of Origin Comparison



Income comparison between average incomes of refugees from Syria and Afghanistan with the average personal incomes of their respective countries.

Education Levels



Distribution of refugees based on highest level of education achieved.

Insights

- There is a large **increase in income levels after relocating to the United States**.
- Average **income still remains just around the federal poverty line**, and below the Connecticut poverty line.
- Half of all refugees who responded to the question on education **had college degrees**.
- For refugees with college degrees, science degrees are the most popular. **6 out of the 10 refugees with college degrees have science degrees**. This is particularly important in light of the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) skills shortage in the US.
- Educational qualifications do not translate to better jobs in the US** for refugees. For example, someone with an engineering degree could still be working part-time on a factory floor.
- 8 refugees answered the question on recredentialisation. 3 out of 8 have **faced issues with having their degrees from abroad being accepted** in the US.
- This data suggests that new policy measures are needed to help refugees in the Hartford area with income and education oriented measures.

Survey Form and Translation Examples

Economic Attainment Survey

This survey is part of a study to understand if there are any disparities in economic attainment between refugees and non-refugees in the Hartford metropolitan region. This study will help the Hartford Commission on Refugee and Immigrant Affairs to formulate policies to better understand what the economic conditions of refugees in Hartford are, compared to the rest of the city.

All the information collected will be aggregated, and individually identifiable information will never be made public. Please do not write your name on this form. Participation is completely voluntary, and all questions are optional to answer. You may choose to stop filling out the survey at any point you like or omit any questions if you feel uncomfortable.

All data that is collected here will be average to forming a larger picture of the economic attainment of refugees. Once that is done, all of these forms will be destroyed by shredding. If you have any questions, please feel free to get in touch with me at (860)503-9988 or chinmay.rayarikar@trincoll.edu.

1. Country or region of origin	2. Age
3. Highest level of education attained	4. If college educated, field of study
5. Occupation sector, if any, before relocating to the United States (circle relevant option)	

The survey in English

دراسة استقصائية للتعليم الاقتصادي

هذه الدراسة الاقتصادية هي جزء من دراسة لفهم ما إذا كانت هناك أية فروق في التعليم الاقتصادي بين اللاجئين وغير اللاجئين في المنطقة المحيطة بالهارتفورد. وهذه الدراسة تستخدم مساحات هارتفورد الحضرية على شرف اللاجئين والمهاجرين إلى صياغة استراتيجيات تعليم أفضل لنا في هارتفورد. المعلومات الاقتصادية للاجئين في هارتفورد، بالمقارنة مع بقية المدينة.

سيتم تجميع جميع المعلومات التي تم جمعها مع الحفاظ على خصوصية المعلومات القابلة للتحديد. رجا، لا تكتب اسمك على هذه الاستمارة. المشاركة طوعية تماما، وجميع الاسئلة الاختيارية. يمكنك التوقف عن ملء الاستمارة في أي وقت تشاء، أو حذف أي أسئلة إذا كنت تشعر بعدم الارتياح.

جميع البيانات التي يتم جمعها هنا ستستخدم في تشكيل الصورة الأكبر للتعليم الاقتصادي للاجئين، وحتى تم ذلك، كل هذه الاستمارات سوف يتم تدميرها بواسطة أجهزة ترميز الورق. إذا كان لديك أية أسئلة، لا تتردد في الحصول على المزيد من المعلومات بالاتصال بالرقم أسفله أو بالتواصل عبر البريد الإلكتروني.

(860) 503-9988
chinmay.rayarikar@trincoll.edu

البلد	العمر
أعلى مستوى تعليمي	إذا كان متعلما جامعا، ما التخصص

The survey in Arabic

စီးပွားရေးနှင့်ပညာရေး

ဤစစ်တမ်းကို Hartford မြို့တော်နယ်နိမိတ်အတွင်းရှိနေထိုင်သူများနှင့် ပူးပေါင်းဆောင်ရွက်ခဲ့ပြီးဖြစ်သည်။ ဤစစ်တမ်းသည် လူထုအား အထွတ်အမြတ်ရရှိစေရန်နှင့် ဤစစ်တမ်းသည် Hartford မြို့တော်နယ်နိမိတ်ရှိ နေထိုင်သူများ၏ စီးပွားရေးနှင့်ပညာရေးဆိုင်ရာ အခြေအနေအထားကို အသိပေးရန်အတွက် အထောက်အကူပြုမည်ဖြစ်သည်။ ဤစစ်တမ်းသည် လူထုအား အသိပေးရန်အတွက် အထောက်အကူပြုမည်ဖြစ်ပြီး ဤစစ်တမ်းသည် လူထုအား အသိပေးရန်အတွက် အထောက်အကူပြုမည်ဖြစ်သည်။ ဤစစ်တမ်းသည် လူထုအား အသိပေးရန်အတွက် အထောက်အကူပြုမည်ဖြစ်ပြီး ဤစစ်တမ်းသည် လူထုအား အသိပေးရန်အတွက် အထောက်အကူပြုမည်ဖြစ်သည်။

စစ်တမ်းအတွက် အသိပေးရန်အတွက် အထောက်အကူပြုမည်ဖြစ်ပြီး ဤစစ်တမ်းသည် လူထုအား အသိပေးရန်အတွက် အထောက်အကူပြုမည်ဖြစ်သည်။

စီးပွားရေးနှင့်ပညာရေးဆိုင်ရာ အခြေအနေအထားကို အသိပေးရန်အတွက် အထောက်အကူပြုမည်ဖြစ်ပြီး ဤစစ်တမ်းသည် လူထုအား အသိပေးရန်အတွက် အထောက်အကူပြုမည်ဖြစ်သည်။ ဤစစ်တမ်းသည် လူထုအား အသိပေးရန်အတွက် အထောက်အကူပြုမည်ဖြစ်ပြီး ဤစစ်တမ်းသည် လူထုအား အသိပေးရန်အတွက် အထောက်အကူပြုမည်ဖြစ်သည်။

(860)503-9988 နှင့် ဆီးပေးလိပ်စာ chinmay.rayarikar@trincoll.edu တို့ဆက်သွယ်နိုင်ပါသည်။

1. နေထိုင်ရာဒေသ

The survey in Burmese