

2023 Survey of Afghans Resettled Under Operation Allies Welcome Summary of Findings

Overview

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), under the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), conducted a second Survey of Afghans Resettled Under Operation Allies Welcome (OAW) to better understand the resettlement of Afghan evacuees in the United States. [The first survey](#), which ORR conducted in June 2022, offered the most comprehensive feedback from Afghans served under OAW and was an important component of ORR's broad and ongoing effort to leverage data for evidence-based decision-making. ORR administered the second survey in April/May 2023, sending invitations to many of the same respondents as the first. While the survey results are not generalizable to the entire resettled Afghan population (see methodology description below), the key findings show several improvement trends, while also highlighting some areas in need of further attention.

2023 Key Findings

- ❖ **Most respondents can pay their living expenses.** Nearly two-thirds of all respondents (64.5%) in the second survey reported they were able to pay their living expenses last month. Among those who participated in both surveys, this ability to pay increased from 45.4% to 66.6% in the second survey.
- ❖ **The overwhelming majority of survey respondents are employed.** Nearly 83% of respondents are employed compared to 66.8% in the first survey.
- ❖ **There is an increased need for employment-related and housing assistance.** While employment rates are high, of those respondents who participated in both surveys, 44% cited employment assistance as one of their top needs, up from 34%. Approximately half of respondents from both surveys reported their households needing housing assistance, rising from 39.1% a year ago.
- ❖ **Female respondents reported unique employment challenges.** A greater proportion of female respondents reported needing transportation assistance to find a job (59%) or a different job (27%) than male respondents. Additionally, 51% of unemployed female respondents identified English language skills as a challenge in finding employment, compared to 29% of unemployed male respondents.

- ❖ **Nearly two-thirds cite immigration status assistance as a key need.** However, 87.7% of respondents reported they had applied to change their immigration status or category, and 64.5% indicated they had received some form of immigration legal assistance.
- ❖ **Over half of all respondents indicated experiencing mental health challenges, with three-quarters of these reporting they have not received professional help.** Responses suggest though that respondents are receptive to receiving professional help but may not know how to access it.

Survey Methodology and Demographics

ORR sent the second survey to 13,309 Principal Applicants (PAs), age 18 and older resettled in the United States through OAW as of December 31, 2022, for whom ORR had contact information. This represents approximately 43 percent of all adult PAs, generally considered the “head of household.” ORR distributed the survey via email in English, Dari, and Pashto on April 24, 2023. The survey remained open for two weeks, and ORR received responses from 1,815 individuals, 1,308 of whom responded to all survey questions. The response rate represented 9.8%, an increase from the 9.5% response rate to all of the first survey questions.

While the survey results provide important information on PA attitudes and needs, they do not necessarily represent the views of all OAW Afghans and are not generalizable to that population. ORR only had contact information for PAs who are predominately male; therefore, women are underrepresented compared to their share of the overall population. Additionally potential respondents may not have been able to respond to the survey due to limitations in literacy, education, technological experience, and internet access.

ORR Response

ORR continues to serve OAW Afghan arrivals through its comprehensive programming to support integration, self-sufficiency, and well-being. Since the first survey was conducted, ORR has funded several new programs specifically to support new Afghan arrivals:

- ❖ **Legal Services:** Immigration Legal Services for Afghan Arrivals ([ILSAA](#)) helps build the capacity of immigration legal service providers, supports Eligible Afghan Arrivals (EAAs) in engaging in immigration legal services, and provides immigration legal services to EAAs across the country. ILSAA is helping EAAs file for re-parole, asylum, family reunification, and other immigration services.
- ❖ **Mental and Behavioral Health Services:** A new [behavioral health program](#) provides direct client services, training and technical assistance, and direct behavioral health support to local service providers, and crisis response activities to address the behavioral health needs of Afghans resettled across the country. Additionally, ORR funded the Services to Afghan Survivors Impacted by Trauma ([SASIC](#)) program, which provides holistic and integrated medical, psychological, and social work services to Afghans who experienced combat-related trauma.
- ❖ **Employment Pathways:** A [Refugee Career Pathways](#) program specifically works with Afghan arrivals to help them obtain self-sufficiency by obtaining the means to secure professional or skilled employment drawing upon previously acquired knowledge, skills, and experience. An [Employer Engagement](#) program supports Afghan arrivals by strengthening employer engagement in and support of their integration and self-sufficiency through trainings, career counseling, apprenticeships, and internships. A [Family Child Care](#)

[Microenterprise Development](#) program provides Afghans with training and technical assistance in professional child care, microenterprise development, and financial literacy.

- ❖ Ethnic Community Development: An [Ethnic Community Self-Help](#) program for Afghan arrivals strengthens the capacity of Ethnic Community-Based Organizations (ECBOs), providing Afghans with the critical services to help them become integrated members of their community.
- ❖ Housing: ORR has supported initial housing assistance through the [Refugee Support Services](#) and [Preferred Communities](#) programs and recognizes the need for ongoing housing assistance. While most Afghans report employment, some report not being able to cover living expenses. ORR continues to support emergency housing assistance through these programs as needed. In addition, ORR recently entered a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to facilitate additional opportunities for housing supports.

Other, ongoing services support Afghan youth through school and academic support and youth mentoring, and provide housing, employment, and health promotion services.

In partnership with the Administration for Children and Families, and in solidarity with refugee families, ORR also stresses the importance of advancing equity in all of its programmatic and policy initiatives. Such initiatives include incorporating the lived experience of refugees served by ORR programs, including Afghan arrivals to inform ORR priorities, as well as encouraging grant recipients through policy to practice inclusion through purposeful collaboration and engagement with ethnic communities to inform local service design and delivery. ORR also continues to conduct listening sessions with Afghans, and other arrivals, to better understand the impact of its programming and ongoing service needs.

ORR will continue to work with its federal, state, and local partners to ensure Afghans have equitable access to the critical services they need to achieve self-sufficiency, integration, and well-being.

September 29, 2023