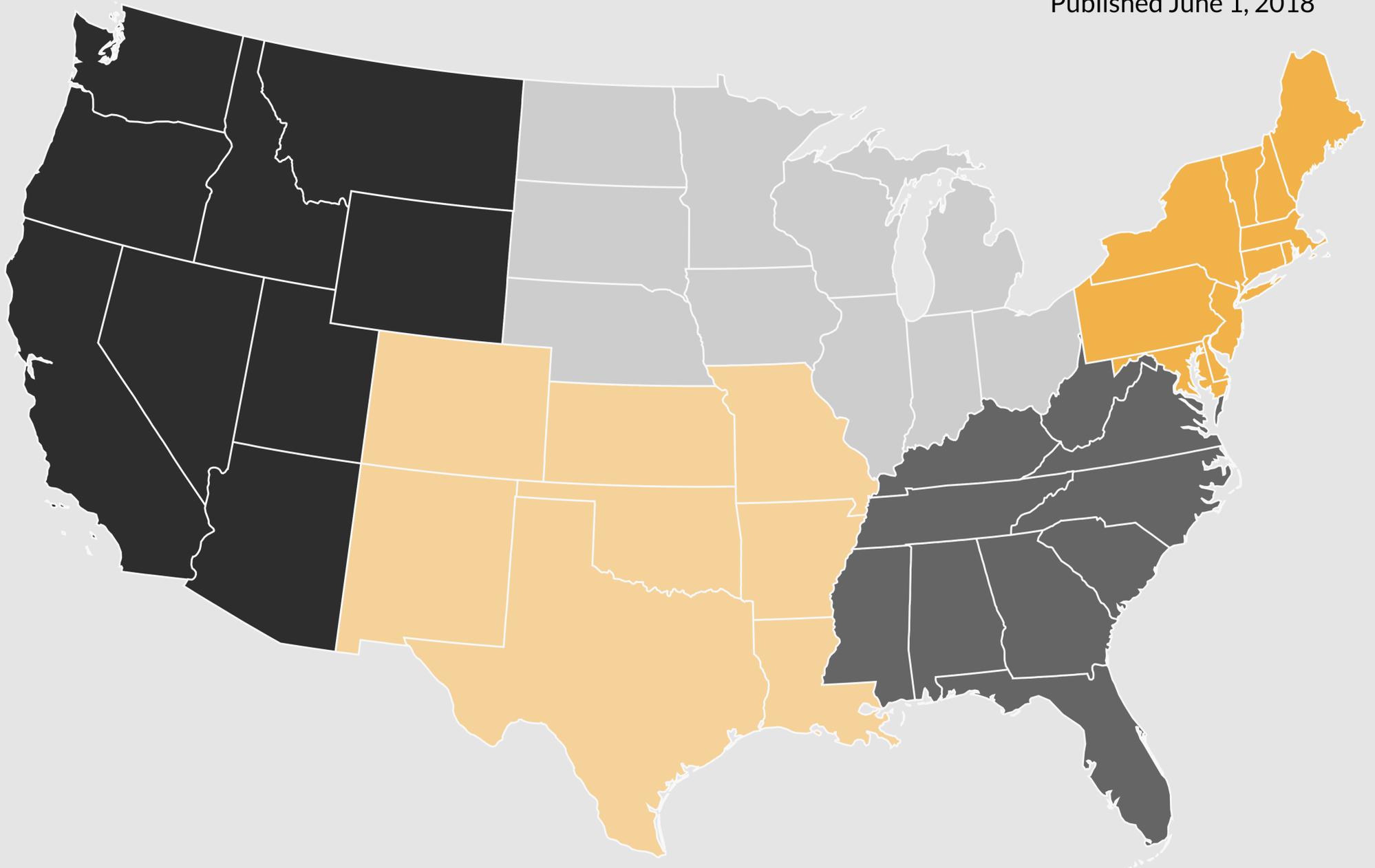# RRSC: Regional Resettlement Update

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This update analyzes resettlement trends in five different regions across the US between FY2012-2016.

- Northeast
- Southeast
- Midwest
- South-Central
- West

Given our broad definition of each region, we are aware that some of these states and cities may not all be considered in the same region or the regions typically defined as "Northeast", "Southeast", or "Midwest"; however, such regional labels have long been recognized as contested, overlapping, and evolving. In our study, we have grouped together states in sometimes unusual clusters that have more to do with trends in resettlement than particular historical affiliations and understandings. Similarly, we have used somewhat different definitions of 'small' and 'large' cities and urban areas than are sometimes used either in popular discourse or by demographers in order to better align with the patterns of resettlement.

Our delineation of resettlement sites between small, mid, and large cities is based on the Department of Commerce's 2010 definitions of "urbanized areas" and "urbanized clusters.

- **Urbanized area:** *An urbanized area consists of densely settled territory that contains 50,000 or more people (Ratcliffe et al., 2016)*
- **Urbanized cluster:** *An urban cluster consists of densely settled territory that contains at least 2,500 people, but fewer than 50,000 people (ibid).*

Urbanized areas include the densely settled surrounding area of a city–urban fringe–within its population total, but not necessarily the broader metropolitan statistical area (MSA) ("Geographic Areas Reference Manual", 1994).

Using urbanized areas as a means of determining population works best for our study given that the actual resettlement sites where refugees end up may differ from the sites noted in our study. This is because the official resettlement site is most often listed as the same as the address of the local resettlement agency. This office location may be somewhat different from the towns, municipalities or metropolitan regions where the bulk of refugees are actually initially placed.

For analysis purposes, we decided to quantify a small urbanized area as fewer than 500,000 people, mid-sized urbanized areas between 500,000 and 2 million people, and a large urbanized area as greater than 2 million people. The use of "major city" refers to any urbanized area with a population greater than 1 million.

Please note that the figures displaying approved refugee capacity as it compares to population is based on city population, not necessarily urbanized areas or MSAs.

We analyzed resettlement in each region of the continental United States using three indicators for refugee resettlement:

1. Approved capacity in absolute terms

2. Approved capacity as it compares to the city's population

3. Approved capacity as it compares to the city's foreign-born population

The general trends within each region were as follows:

OUR FINDINGS

In the **Northeast,** small city resettlement was more prevalent compared to other regions.

In the **Southeast,** large cities generally led resettlement but small cities were still active in resettlement for the region.

In the **Midwest,** large cities generally still led for the region but surrounding metropolitan areas of these cities were also involved.

In the **South-Central US,** major cities led resettlement by a significant margin, with a limited number of small cities involved compared to other regions.

In the **West,** major cities and metropolitan areas were the main focus of resettlement (similar to the Midwest), but some more isolated small and mid-sized cities were also involved.

While there was a notable trend of smaller cities participating more in the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) across the country, different regions exemplified this trend to varying degrees. The Northeast was most representative of small city resettlement, while the South-Central region was the least. The Southeast, Midwest, and West regions exhibited traits of small city resettlement but approved placements of refugees were still primarily focused on major cities.
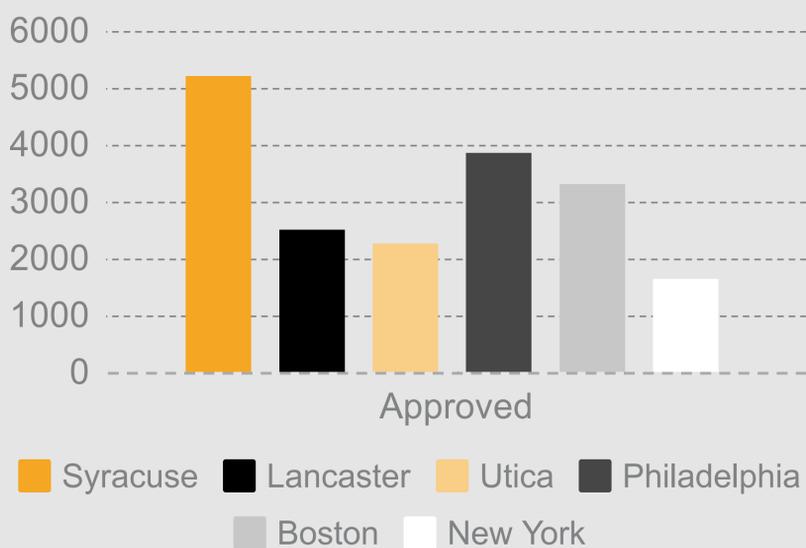
Small City Resettlement

Northeast Resettlement

When looking at resettlement across the United States, there are examples of smaller US cities (fewer than 500,000 people in the urbanized area (UA)) outside of larger metropolitan areas participating in the USRAP. This is most evident in the Northeast region, where several small cities approved comparable numbers of refugees as the major gateway cities such as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and D.C.

Such smaller cities may also be seen as leaders in resettlement when considering per capita resettlement and foreign-born populations.

Small vs Large City Resettlement in the Northeast

Syracuse, NY, Utica, NY, and Lancaster, PA approved the most refugees out of any small cities in the region, while major cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, and New York approved similar, and in some cases fewer refugees in absolute terms during our period of study. This is a good example of the resettlement program moving away from these traditional 'gateway' cities, and placing refugees in less populated areas that often have less experience with migrant communities.

Approved

- Syracuse
- Lancaster
- Utica
- Philadelphia
- Boston
- New York

Other Regions

Outside of the Northeast, resettlement was more focused on major urban areas, but there were still several examples within each region of small cities outside of larger metropolitan areas that approved a significant number of refugees (more than 1,000). This impact again is magnified when considering the city and foreign-born populations of each site.

In contrast to the Northeast, however, resettlement in other was still primarily anchored in the largest UAs, whereas many of these smaller sites in the Northeast approved comparable numbers to the largest UAs in the region. The South-Central US was the least representative of this trend altogether, with resettlement confined almost entirely to its largest cities.

The following graphic describes the US resettlement sites that approved more than 1,000 refugees between FY2012 and FY2016. Each of these has a UA population of 500,000 people or less and are not within the metropolitan area of a larger city.
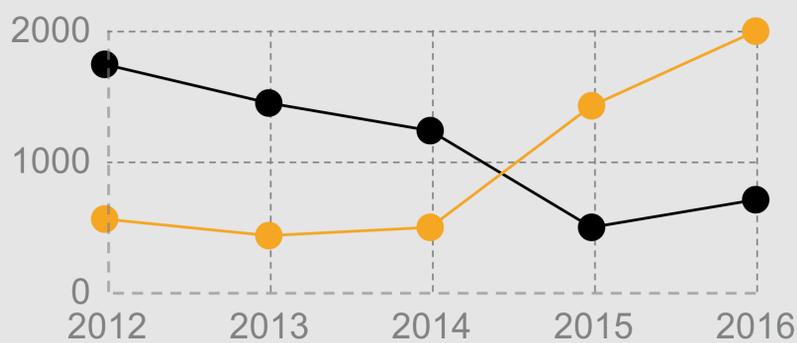
US Small City Resettlement

- Northeast (34.62%)
- Southeast (11.54%)
- Midwest (26.92%)
- South-Central (7.69%)
- West (19.23%)

Metropolitan Resettlement

Other than the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, Northeast resettlement was more centered on small and mid-sized cities rather than the metropolitan areas of cities such as New York, Boston, or Baltimore. In other regions, however, we have often seen large cities leading resettlement while their surrounding metropolitan areas also took in significant numbers of refugees. In some cases, metropolitan regions approved more than the core principal city itself. Good examples are Detroit and Washington D.C., in both of which the majority of all resettlement was approved outside of the central city but within the urban area.
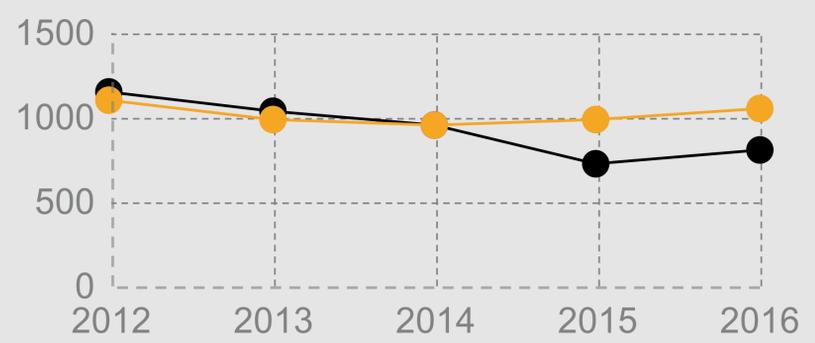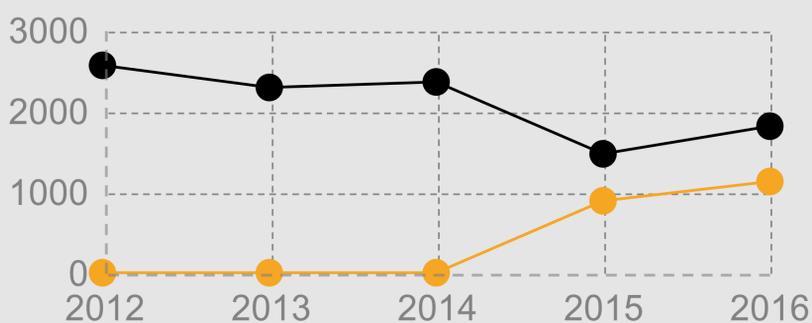
Annual Approved Capacity FY2012-16

■ Los Angeles, CA   ■ Glendale, CA

Annual Approved Capacity FY2012-16

■ Seattle, WA   ■ Kent, WA
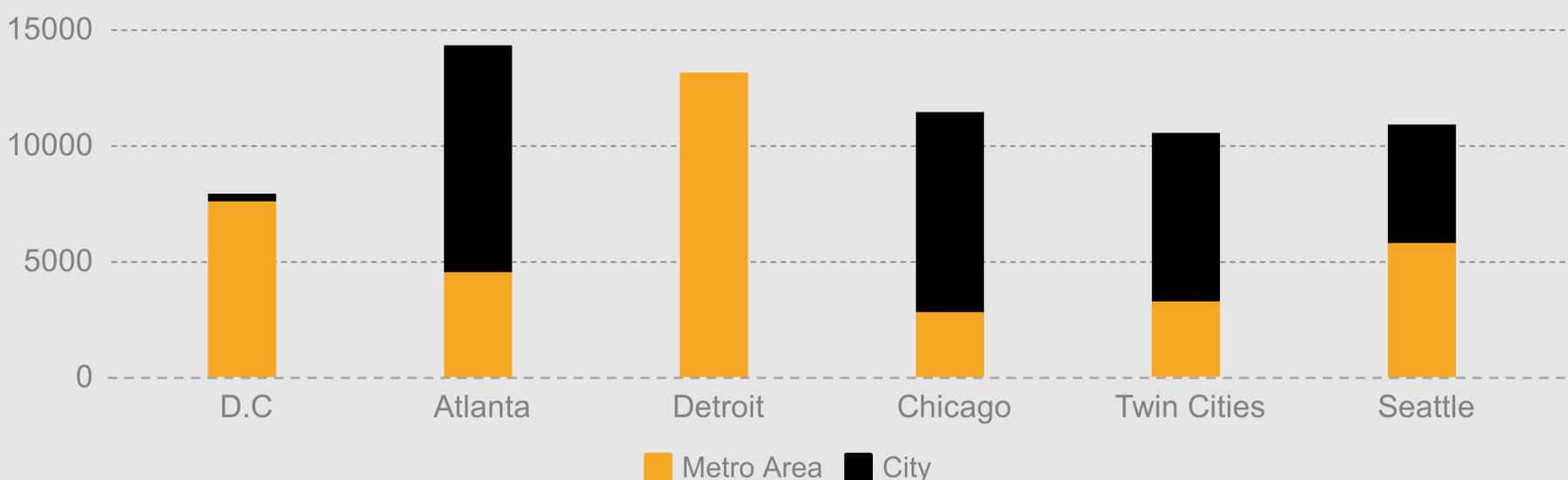
Annual Approved Capacity FY2012-16

■ Phoenix, AZ   ■ Glendale, CA

A related trend we observed was that between FY2012-2016, there were several instances of major cities approving fewer refugees each year, while a nearby location within the metropolitan area approved a higher and higher rate.

Below are the top six major city metropolitan areas for resettlement in the country, consisting of at least three separate sites. This does not include every metropolitan area in the US that approved refugees during this time, and does not include any major cities that do not also have surrounding towns or cities officially involved in resettlement, such as San Diego (16,682) and Houston (13,023).

Core City Resettlement Compared to Its Metropolitan Area
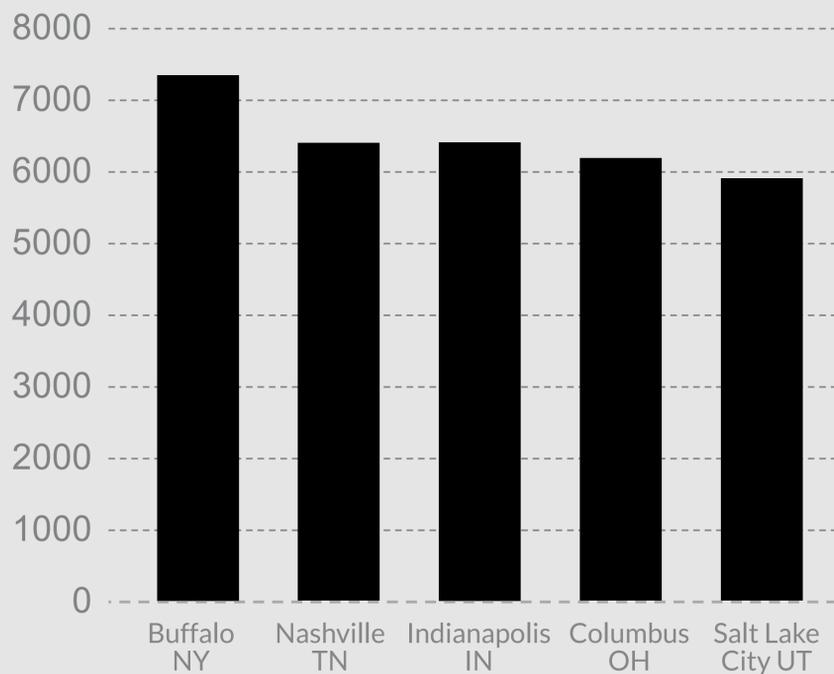

■ Metro Area   ■ City
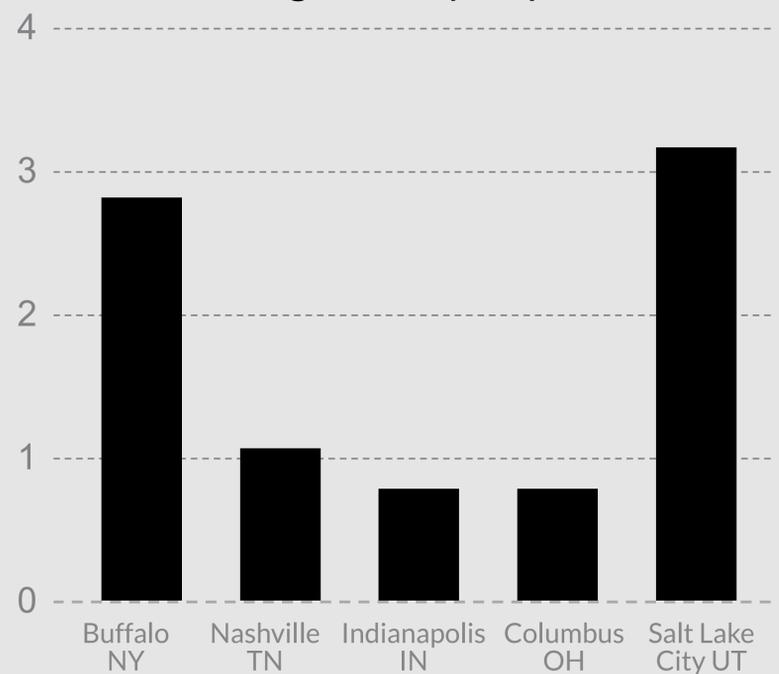
Mid-Sized City Resettlement

Among the most common trends in resettlement across all regions was the placement of refugees in mid-sized cities (Approx. 500,000- 2 million UA population) not within larger metropolitan areas. Many of these cities, despite their varying regions, shared similar characteristics of approving a large number of refugees relative to their size and making a notable impact on their demographics through resettlement, as there are generally fewer immigrant communities already within these cities.
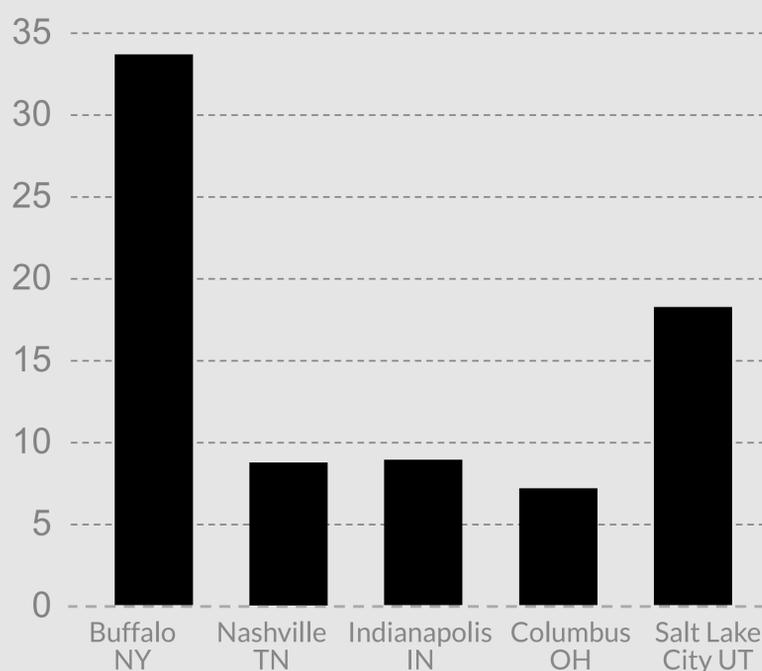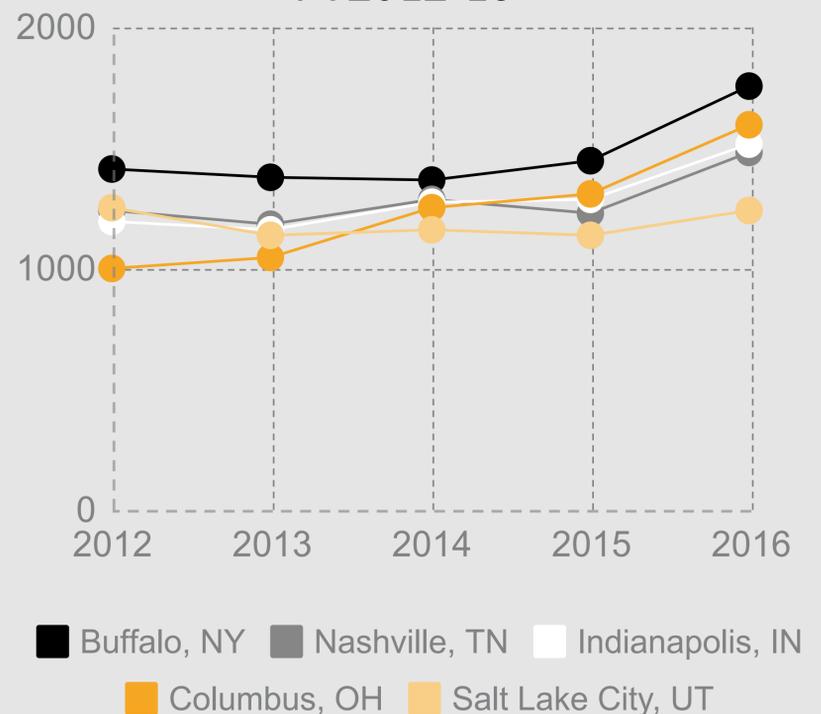
Mid-Sized City Approved Capacity

Mid-Sized City Approved Capacity as a Percentage of City Population

Mid-Sized City Approved Capacity as a Percentage of Foreign-Born Population

Annual Approved Capacity FY2012-16

Legend: Buffalo, NY; Nashville, TN; Indianapolis, IN; Columbus, OH; Salt Lake City, UT

The high percentages of the foreign-born population approved are common across many of these mid-sized cities throughout the country. In contrast to many bigger cities with larger general and foreign-born populations, resettlement at such a rate in mid-sized cities can have a much different effect on city and community dynamics.

CONCLUSION

The USRAP has extended well beyond the major US cities especially those traditionally thought of as "gateway cities" such as New York, Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

Approved City Settlement Capacity
- 1 - 300 [n=64]
- 300 - 1000 [n=54]
- 1000 - 3000 [n=59]
- 3000 - 6000 [n=32]
- 6000 - 16682 [n=13]

Of the 13 cities that have approved over 6,000 refugees during the five-year span, only three cities have approved over 10,000: Phoenix, AZ (10,457), Houston, TX (13,023) and San Diego, CA (16,482)

While many of these cities still play a significant role in resettlement, we observed that the metropolitan areas of such cities have been approving comparable, and in some cases larger numbers of refugees than their larger counterparts.

Mid-sized and small cities around the nation also accounted for a major portion of refugees coming to the US during our study period, bringing both new challenges and opportunities for resettlement.

References

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To view our state and regional reports on US resettlement, visit our website at
http://spatializingmigration.net/additional-information-and-documents/project-reports/