

Shifting the Conversation on Immigration

Thinking Biblically about
Refugees and Immigration

EVANGELICAL IMMIGRATION **table.** world relief® 



A Troubling Statistic

- Just 20% of evangelical Christians say their views on the arrival of immigrants are primarily informed by the Bible ([LifeWay Research](#), 2022)



Jesus Himself was a child refugee
(or possibly an asylum seeker)

Matt. 2:13-18



An Angry King

Matthew 2:13-23

Illustration by Kelly Pulley, from *The Beginner's Bible*

Legal Definitions

- A **refugee** is a person who has fled their country because of a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their:
 - Race
 - Religion
 - Political Opinion
 - National Origin
 - Social Group
-
- An **asylum seeker** is an individual who professes to meet this legal definition of a refugee upon any where they wish to stay, but whose case has not yet been adjudicated by an appropriate authority
- Globally, more than 108 *million* people are forcibly displaced, including 35 million refugees, 5 million asylum seekers and more than 60 million who are “**internally displaced**” ([UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#))



Refugees and other
immigrants are made in the
Image of God and possess
inherent dignity and
potential (Gen. 1:26-27)

Economics of Refugees & Immigrants

- 45% of Fortune 500 Companies were founded or cofounded by a refugee or other immigrant or their children ([American Immigration Council](#))
- 20 years after arrival, the average refugee adult has contributed approximately \$21,000 more in taxes than they have received in governmental assistance and services at all levels ([University of Notre Dame study](#))
- An extensive study by The National Academies of the Sciences, Engineering and Medicine “concludes that immigration has an overall positive impact on long-run economic growth in the U.S.” ([National Academies study](#))



God loves and cares for the vulnerable: the orphan, the widow, and the foreigner – and he commands his people to as well (Deut. 10:17-19; Deut. 24:19-22; Ps. 146:9; Zech. 7:9-10; Jer. 22:3; Mal. 3:5)



We are commanded to love our neighbors—without caveats

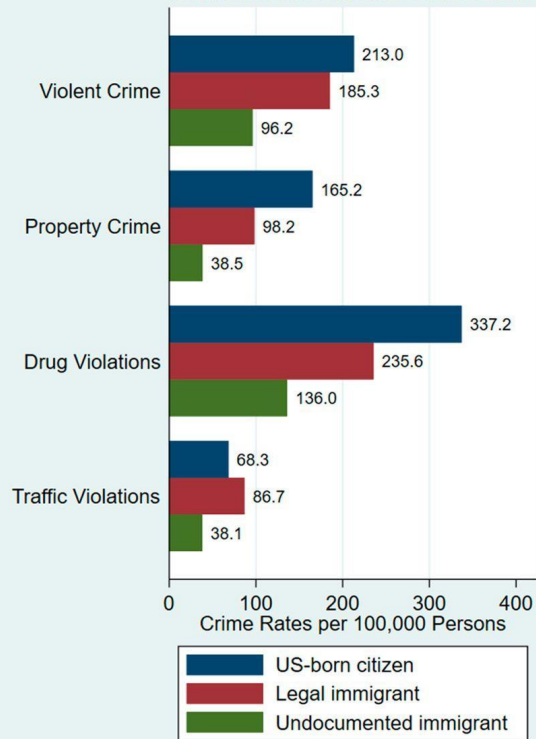
(Lev. 19:18, 34; Luke 10:25-37)

Refugees and Terrorism

- Refugees admitted through the U.S. Refugee Admissions program already are subjected to the most thorough vetting of any category of visitor or immigrant to the US ([Heritage Foundation](#))
- Since the Refugee Act of 1980, 0 Americans have lost their life in an Islamist terrorist attack perpetrated by a refugee ([Cato Institute](#))

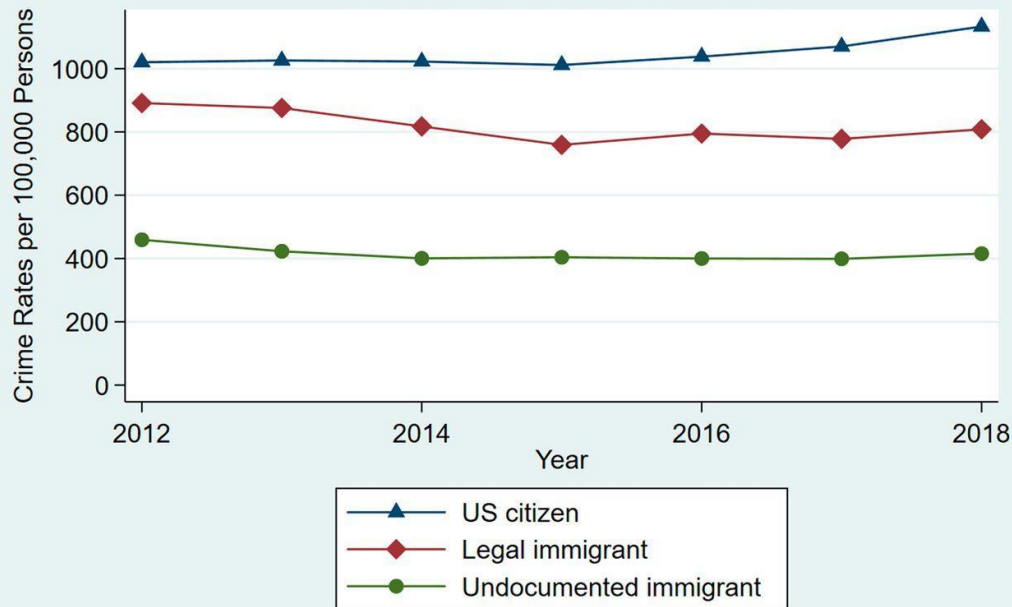
Immigrants and Crime in Texas

Total Crime Rates 2012-2018



Source: Texas CCH. All crimes are felonies. Legal immigrants include naturalized citizens.

Total Crime Rate 2012-2018



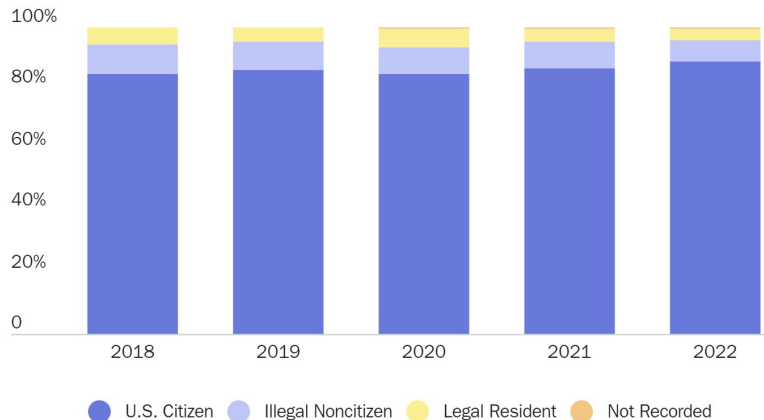
Source: Texas CCH. All crimes are felonies. Legal immigrants include naturalized citizens.

Source: Michael Light, Jingying He & Jason P. Robey, [“Comparing Crime Rates between Undocumented Immigrants, Legal Immigrants, and Native-Born US Citizens in Texas,”](#) Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 2020

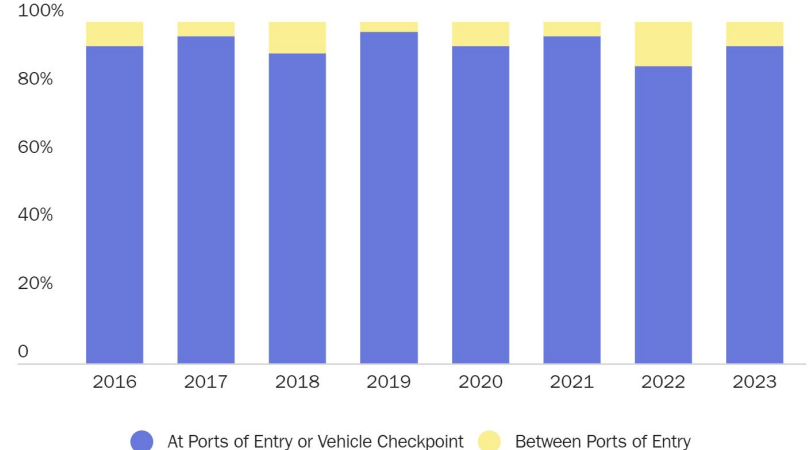
Drugs, Migration and Borders

- Drugs such as fentanyl are killing many Americans, and most fentanyl crosses borders from abroad to reach the U.S.
- However, roughly 89% of those convicted for trafficking fentanyl have been U.S. citizens, and more than 90% of apprehensions have occurred at Ports of Entry or interior Vehicle Checkpoints, not along illegal entry routes ([Washington Examiner](#), [Customs & Border Protection](#), [Cato Institute](#))

Fentanyl drug traffickers are overwhelmingly U.S. citizens, not illegal immigrant:
Citizenship status of defendants convicted of fentanyl drug trafficking, 2018-2022



Fentanyl is primarily smuggled through legal ports of entry, not illegal entry routes
Location of fentanyl seizures by Customs and Border Protection, 2016-2021





We are commanded to be subject to governing authorities
(Rom. 13:1-5)

Immigration Legal Statuses

- About 75% of immigrants in the US are lawfully present, including all who are admitted as refugees
- Among the roughly 11 million immigrants who *are* unlawfully present in the US, nearly half entered on a temporary visa but overstayed, and only about half come from Mexico ([Center for Migration Studies](#))
- Under current law, legal immigration is limited to:
 - Family-sponsored immigrants
 - Employer-sponsored immigrants
 - Refugees and Asylees
 - Diversity Visa Lottery Winners

Comprehensive Immigration Reform Proposals

- Bipartisan legislative immigration reform proposals aim to:
 - Make it harder to immigrate *illegally*, by improving border security
 - Make it easier to immigrate *legally*, adapting the U.S. visa system to be more responsive to needs of the U.S. labor market and of families seeking reunification
 - Create an earned legalization process for immigrants in the U.S. unlawfully who pay a fine and meet various other qualifications

Immigrants May Be Bringing Spiritual Revival

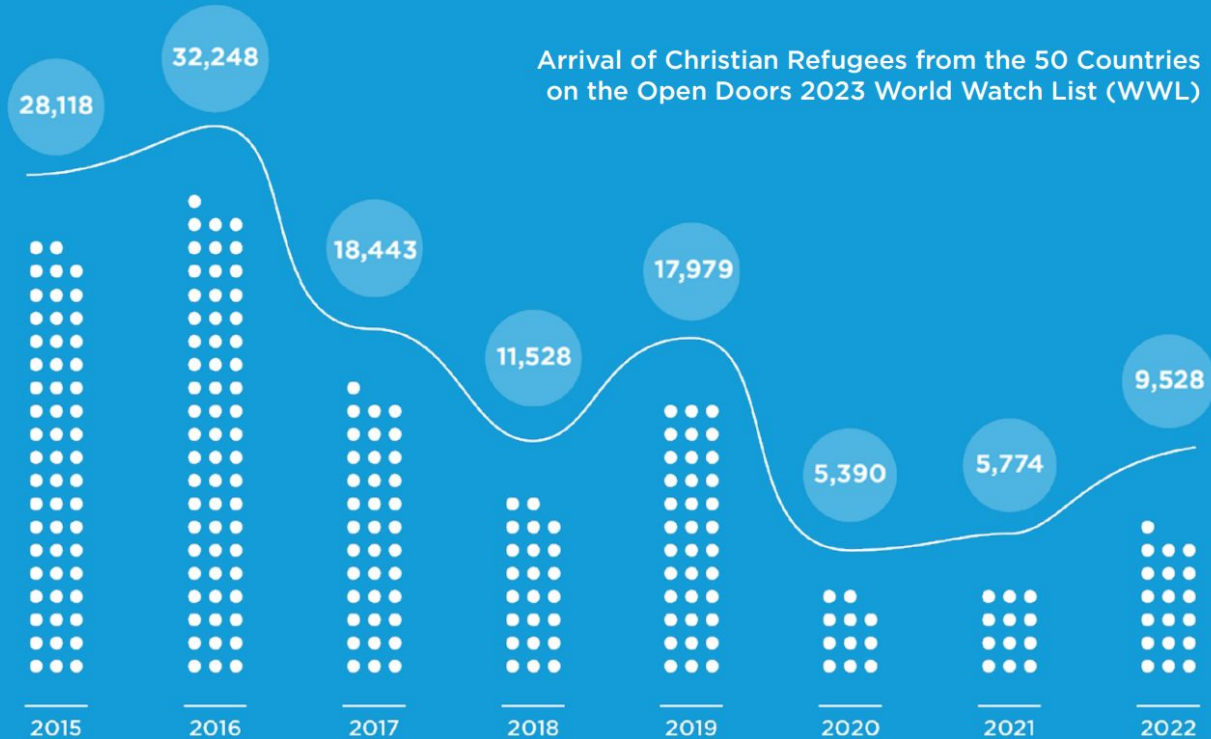
“86% of the immigrant population in North America are likely to either be Christians or become Christians. That’s far above the national average...The immigrant population actually presents the greatest hope for Christian renewal in North America... We shouldn’t see this as something that threatens us.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

— [Dr. Timothy Tennent](#), missiologist & president, Asbury Theological Seminary



Many refugees and asylum seekers are fleeing persecution on account of their Christian faith – and as we welcome persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ, we welcome Jesus (Matthew 25:35)

RESETTLEMENT OF PERSECUTED CHRISTIAN REFUGEES ON THE DECLINE



Source: [Closed Doors Report](#), [World Relief & Open Doors US, 2023](#)

Decline of Christian Refugee Arrivals, FY 2016 - FY 2022

2016 2022





By welcoming those of other faiths, we have opportunities to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19) and to “give an answer to everyone who asks” for the reason for the hope within us (1 Pet. 3:15)

A Missional Opportunity

– *Something is **missionally malignant** whenever we are willing to make great sacrifices to travel the world to reach a people group but are not willing to walk across the street.*

- Missiologist J.D. Payne, Samford University

A Christian Response to Refugees & Immigration

Prayer

Listening

Empowering Churches Abroad

Advocacy

Serving Locally

Evangelism

Biblical Hospitality

- God commands His people to people to “practice hospitality” [*philoxenia*] (Rom. 12:13), which literally means to “practice loving strangers”
- Throughout the Scriptures, we find examples of those who welcomed strangers and, as a result, have been blessed (Ruth 4:13, 1 Kings 17:7-24, Acts 28:1-10) and even welcomed angels without realizing it (Gen. 18:1-20, Heb. 13:2)

Biblical Hospitality



Q&A

For more information

worldrelief.org

evangelicalimmigrationtable.com

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