



PORSESH POLICY
RESEARCH INSTITUTE
Fact-based Analysis & Solutions

SURVEY OF THE AFGHAN IMMIGRANTS IN WASHINGTON STATE

Community Perspective and
Resettlement Challenges

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ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

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The following organizations played an integral part in helping with survey dissemination and data collection. We thank them for their time, community outreach, and community capital:

- Hazara Community of Washington (HCWA)
- Kabul Washington Association (KWA)
- Afghan American Community of Washington
- Masjid Quba

We would like to extend special thanks to the Afghan community within Washington for taking the time to share information with us, participate in our research and efforts, and share our survey with others.

Executive Summary

With the rapidly growing population of Afghan immigrants in the U.S. since 2021, their successful integration into American society is increasingly important. Limited and outdated existing data and research underscore the need for further and more in-depth exploration of the issues facing this community. Understanding the unique experiences of newcomers is crucial for policymakers, service providers, and researchers to develop more effective support systems and integration strategies. This study is a step in that direction, providing a more encompassing picture of Afghan immigrants' experiences than previously recorded.

This research focuses on analyzing survey data collected in 2023 from two hundred Afghan immigrants/families in Washington State, aiming to shed light on the often misunderstood and understudied Afghan immigrant community. The survey-based approach, coupled with interviews with community leaders, intends to contribute foundational insights into a community with one of the longest-term, largest, and most recent immigration experiences to the United States. By concentrating on Afghan immigrants in Washington State, the study not only enriches academic discussions but also aims to inform policymakers and community stakeholders about the unique challenges faced by this specific immigrant group, fostering a more informed and empathetic approach to immigration issues. The key highlights from the in depth survey are below.

- The majority of the participants were from the larger Seattle metropolitan area, specifically between Seattle and Tacoma with some outliers in the Spokane and Vancouver areas.
- The survey respondents are 67% male, 32% female, including married and unmarried adults; female participation in the survey is smaller as survey respondents were primarily male head of the households.
- The correlation between the age composition (25-35 years old) and household structure (primarily one child) reinforces the narrative that the surveyed age group tends to have smaller families, possibly due to the transitional phase of establishing themselves in the U.S., seeking employment, and managing housing costs.
- Notably, 45% (a combination of 44.2% of respondents are LPR/Green Card and 0.5% of those that have SIV) of respondents hold Green Cards, signifying permanent residency.
- The data reveals that a substantial majority, constituting 90%, demonstrated proficiency in Farsi/Dari, a language commonly referred to as Dari in Afghanistan to distinguish it from its Iranian counterpart. Moreover, over half of the respondents, totaling 58%, exhibited proficiency in Pashto, emphasizing its significant linguistic presence within the surveyed population. Notably, 43% of respondents demonstrated English proficiency, 10% acquired their English skills in the US without prior education or knowledge of the language.

- Specifically, 58% of respondents have been residing in the state for less than five years, with an additional 17% having settled in the past 5-10 years.
- A significant 61% of the surveyed individuals are either not citizens or are ineligible to vote, highlighting a notable segment of the respondents currently unable to participate in electoral processes.

Due to time and budget constraints, a single analysis is provided for discussion comparing community and social networking with education levels that were reported in the survey. The analysis underscores the significance of educational attainment in shaping social networking and participation patterns among Afghan immigrants. Respondents with bachelor's degrees displayed lower participation rates in traditional events (75%) but higher rates in non-traditional events (52%). This trend continues with individuals holding tertiary education degrees, where traditional event participation remains steady at 84%, while non-traditional event participation escalates to 75%. This suggests a positive correlation between higher education levels and integration, socialization, community participation, and openness to cultural diversity. These insights are crucial for tailoring support programs and integration initiatives to address the diverse needs of the community.

The goal of the findings is to provide a deeper reflection on the experience of Afghan immigrants within Washington state that could aid healthcare providers, resettlement agencies, and other relevant entities such as policymakers in creating resources and taking into consideration the second-largest immigrant group in the state. The implications of the data collected within the survey can demonstrate strengths of the community as well as highlight barriers to housing, health, and integration that Afghan immigrants face. It is the organizers' wish for this data to be utilized as both practical and theoretical contributions to academic and policy research. The Afghan community within the U.S. is largely understudied. The hope of this research is to contribute to the larger body of work that brings the immigrant experience to the forefront of academic research to help inform evidence-based research for policy change and monetary allocations of support within the community.

I. Introduction

Immigration, a constant throughout human history, has evolved into a contemporary phenomenon shaped by geopolitical conflicts, persecution, and economic adversity. The case of Afghanistan stands out as a compelling subject for immigration studies, given its century-long history of complex migration and the large diaspora resettled across the globe. The enduring conflict in Afghanistan has precipitated significant migration and internal displacement. With the fall of the country to the Taliban in August 2021, Afghanistan witnessed another wave of mass exodus, intensifying the global challenge of immigration. This paper concentrates on the immigration and integration challenges confronted by Afghan immigrants in Washington State, United States of America (U.S.), contributing to the existing literature on modern immigration issues through a survey-based analysis of their resettlement experiences.

Afghanistan's history is characterized by a century-long narrative of migration and forced displacement, providing a contextual backdrop for a detailed exploration of the causes, relationships, and consequences of long-term migration.

This paper narrows its focus to the contemporary resettlement and integration challenges faced by Afghan immigrants. The research, employing a rigorous survey-based approach, seeks to scrutinize the resettlement and integration experiences of Afghan immigrants in Washington State. The study seeks to address questions surrounding primary challenges during the resettlement process, perceptions and navigation of the integration process in the United States, and discernible differences in experiences among demographic groups.

The primary question driving this research is how Afghan immigrants experience and navigate the multifaceted process of integration in the United States. The goal is to provide context on the role that community support networks can play in this process. This, in turn, can offer social services valuable information on tailoring their resources for proper utilization, development, consumption, and monetary spending.

This research focuses on analyzing survey data collected in 2023 from 197 Afghan immigrants/families in Washington State, aiming to shed light on the often misunderstood and understudied Afghan immigrant community. The survey data is augmented by key informant interviews (KIIs) with Afghan community leaders representing different ethnic groups and genders. The study's scope and methodology intend to contribute foundational insights into a community with long-standing, significant, and recent immigration experiences to the United States. By concentrating on Afghan immigrants in Washington State, the study not only enriches academic discussions but also aims to inform policymakers and community stakeholders about the unique challenges faced by this specific immigrant group, fostering a more informed and empathetic approach to immigration issues.

Purpose of the study

Over many decades, with a new wave in 2021, immigrants from Afghanistan have resettled across the mainland U.S. Immigration poses significant challenges as immigrants must leave behind many things they value and are connected to, such as family, history, culture, and country, while also adapting and integrating into a new society. This research aims to explore the process of resettlement for Afghan immigrants in the United States. Resettlement is a complex and multifaceted topic that encompasses areas such as housing, education, employment, health, culture, and other aspects of adapting to a new society. It's important to note that the immigration experience can vary based on individual, cultural, and systemic factors. This particular body of research focuses on understanding the resettlement experience of Afghan immigrants in Washington State as a case study.

II. Literature Review

A review of existing literature on Afghan immigrants in the U.S. was performed to inform and contextualize this study. Previous research focused on the experiences of Afghan immigration is limited. Available analyses largely utilize data published before the 2021 Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and therefore do not necessarily capture experiences of more recent arrivals, which may be significantly different given the rapid and rushed nature of resettlement following this event. The limited Afghan-focused research consistently identifies immigration and integration experiences largely in line with those of the wider U.S. immigrant population, though it does highlight certain issues affecting Afghans more acutely. These are discussed below. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau forms the basis of most of the available reports.

Historical context/ Background Information

The first recorded Afghans in the U.S. arrived in 1890. U.S. census records indicate less than 10 Afghan-born residents in 1900 and approximately 58 in 1910 (Baden, 2018). Early Afghan migration largely occurred as part of a global flow of labor, with many initially residing in various British territories before immigrating to the U.S. (Nichols, 2008). Notably, 40 of the 58 Afghan immigrants recorded in 1910 resided in the Aberdeen area of Washington State, making it the first recorded community of more than 5 Afghans in the U.S. Small numbers of Afghans continued to settle in the U.S. through the 1970s, shifting from a pattern of labor migration to that of more affluent individuals pursuing professional and educational opportunities, those joining family, diplomatic families placed in the U.S., and people increasingly arriving as refugees since the 1970s onward (Baden, 2018). The Afghan-born U.S. population was likely more than 1,000 people by 1974 (Ruggles, 2015).

The first large wave of Afghan immigration to the U.S. occurred in the early 1980's in the wake of the 1979 Soviet invasion, following a 1978 coup by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (Baden, 2018). This led to a prolonged proxy war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union on Afghan soil, lasting until Soviet withdrawal in 1989 (Shahrani, 2000). The ensuing political conflict, civil war and rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan continued to destabilize the country through the end of the 20th century.

Displaced Afghans largely fled to Pakistan and Iran, with a comparatively small number of refugees reaching the U.S. (Batalova, 2021). The U.S. census recorded 3,760 Afghan immigrants in 1980, 28,444 in 1990, and 45,195 in 2000 (Gibson, 1999). This rapid growth of the U.S. Afghan population marked an 11-fold increase between 1980 to 2000.

A report on Afghan evacuation by Voice of America (Dawi, 2022) shows that of the 76,000 who were evacuated out of Afghanistan, 36,821 were Special Immigration Visa (SIV) applicants and 3,529 were Permanent Residents; the other 36,433 individuals were evacuated for various other reasons. The same report states that more than 43,000 individuals applied for parole status of which 170 were approved, 1,500 rejected and 41,000 were pending (Dawi, 2022).

The Special Immigration Visa (SIV) is generally for those Afghanistan citizens who worked directly or indirectly for the US mission in Afghanistan, including interpreters, engineers, contractors, government officials, security and armed forces. The US has also welcomed activists and other vulnerable individuals through the US asylum program. All of these together make the bulk of immigrants from Afghanistan. While the history of Afghan migration to the US remains understudied, the majority of immigration has occurred in the past four decades, primarily due to various conflicts that ravaged Afghanistan. These conflicts include the Soviet invasion (1982-1992), the Afghan civil war (1992-1995), the Taliban regime (1995-2001), and the “Kabul Evacuation” of 2021, which led to the largest wave of Afghan immigration to the US.

The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan following the attacks on September 11, 2001 led to further displacement of Afghan people over the next two decades, while the United State’s presence there became increasingly entrenched. Many Afghans worked for the U.S. government and military during this time as interpreters and in various professional capacities, exposing them and their families to great danger of Taliban retaliation. This spurred the creation of the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program in 2006 which paved a U.S. permanent residence route for these individuals and their immediate family members (Batalova, 2021). 19,916 of these visas were granted between 2007 to 2015 alone (Bruno, 2021). The number of Afghan immigrants in the U.S. rose to 54,563 in 2010 and 132,573 in 2019 (Camarota, 2021). The majority of these individuals came via the SIV channel (Batalova, 2021).

The Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 after withdrawal of U.S. forces created an enormous new wave of migration. About 86,000 Afghans nationals were relocated to the U.S. by September 2022, as part of the “Operation Allies Welcome” program (Alvarez, 2022). Under this program the U.S. granted many people humanitarian parole for two years in addition to the creation of a new priority category for refugee processing. Parolees were granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS), providing similar temporary immigration permissions as those with refugee and SIV status. TPS does not however provide a path to permanent residence, thus parolees have endured significant uncertainty and stress about their futures. The highly politicized Adjustment Support Act has recently been reintroduced to Congress to address this issue, amid ongoing controversial debate (Afzali, 2023). The likelihood of

a permanent residency solution remains to be seen, with many Afghan people living in a state of limbo in the meantime.

Immigration and integration experiences

As of 2021, the largest Afghan immigrant populations were located in California, Texas, and Virginia (Waddell, 2021). California received 32% of Afghans resettled between 2001-2021. Washington State resettled 5% of Afghans in this same period as the fourth top destination, with the highest concentration of people living in King County (Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, 2021). Between August 2021 to February 2022, 3,000 Afghan refugees were resettled in Washington (Port of Seattle, 2022) and over 4,000 Afghan Special Immigrant Visa holders arrived between 2010 to 2020 (Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, 2021). Washington has continued to receive high numbers of people through Operation Allies Welcome(OAW) . Under OAW, Afghans resettled to the U.S qualify to receive various services and benefits to assist with financial, employment, housing, health, and immigration needs among others. Eligibility varies state to state and based on personal circumstances, and most support is temporary.

Data from 2019 indicates that on average Afghan immigrants skew younger than both foreign- and U.S.-born populations. They also have higher rates of marriage and citizenship compared to other immigrants. Similarly to other immigrant groups, approximately a quarter of adult Afghans have not graduated from high school. As expected, men display much higher educational attainment rates than women. This reflects the immigration routes through which Afghans commonly arrive, most men having worked with the U.S. government which requires higher education and English proficiency. This also reflects Afghan gender norms. It has been observed that the gap in education level between Afghan immigrants and native-born people has widened substantially since 2000, with important implications for economic outcomes. Afghan immigrants have also been noted to have lower overall levels of English proficiency than the general foreign-born population, 59% of women and girls reporting limited proficiency versus 43% of men and boys. Research shows that despite being less educated than U.S.-born men, Afghan males between 18 to 64 are actually more likely to be employed. Afghan women however have around 15% lower employment rates than both immigrant and U.S.-born women. Top occupations for those employed include production, transportation, material moving, sales and office work (Batalova, 2021; Camarota, 2021).

In terms of economic integration, 2019 data revealed Afghan immigrants to be more than twice as likely to be living below the poverty line than immigrants generally or native-born individuals (Batalova, 2021). An analysis of data from 2006-2015 in a study published in 2021 found Afghan immigrants' earned incomes to be the lowest among seven refugee comparison groups (Stempelaand, 2021). This has been attributed to low overall employment rates with particularly low rates among Afghan women. The finding of a strong gendered effect is notably paralleled in a 2017 study on Afghan refugees in the Netherlands, explained by wider differences between Afghan and western gender orders than many other immigrant groups (Bakker, 2017). These

low earnings were also connected to higher education degrees earned outside the U.S.; many Afghans holding impressive professional credentials which they are unable to get recognised or supplemented in the U.S. Physical and mental health challenges due to high exposure to trauma were identified as additional contributing factors. This study also hypothesized anti-Muslim discrimination as a key unmeasured explanatory factor in economic patterns, as Afghan people have faced severe religious stigmatisation which has become increasingly politicized in recent years. The authors additionally noted that Afghan immigrants that arrived in the 1980's exhibited improvement on all measures of income, employment and education, whereas more recent arrivals had not to the same degree at the same length of time in the U.S. Further investigation into the reasons behind this shift were proposed.

Research shows mental health to be an area of particular concern for Afghan immigrants (Alemi, 2013) due to extreme pre- and post-migration challenges, especially including adjustment difficulties and social support loss (Steel, 2009; Porter, 2005). The stress of sustained wars, foreign interference, government corruption, extremist ideological factions, trauma, and displacement is compounded by additional stressors continually accumulated during migration and after arrival in the U.S. The combination of these factors has been recognized as having significant impacts on day-to-day living, causing what some researchers have termed "interminable suffering" (Ramos, 2023; Silove, 2022). A high prevalence of conditions such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder have been documented among resettled Afghans (Alemi, 2017a). Moreover, research has shown that discrimination and perceived discrimination pose a significant threat to their mental health (Alemi, 2018). This has been recognized as a risk factor for negative health outcomes and significantly associated with high levels of depression in this population (Alemi, 2017b). Discrimination has been shown to greatly exacerbate existing stressors and identified as an important area for future research to inform effective interventions.

There is generally a lack of literature on mental health clinical interventions for this population (Ramos, 2023; Shabaik, 2018). Available information on medical and social service access emphasizes that settling in the U.S. does not necessarily yield improved opportunities or mental health for Afghan people, as resettlement challenges can create further disadvantages (Hadgkiss, 2014; Joshi, 2013; Fazel, 2005). Women disproportionately face mental health challenges and greater obstacles to accessing care (Ramos, 2023). A recent study on the mental health of Afghan women in the U.S. highlighted struggles caused primarily by barriers to health care, social isolation, financial difficulties, family concerns, and limited English proficiency (Siddiq, 2023). These issues echo findings in previous research on post-migration stress and poor mental health (Alexander, 2021). The participants of this study also consistently expressed holistic health beliefs, particularly identifying the influence of family involvement and religion on their health and health behaviors (Siddiq, 2023). This reinforces earlier research emphasizing that spiritual and psychosocial factors are integral to many Afghan people's ideas about health outcomes (Alwan, 2020; Padela, 2018).

In terms of physical health, data on chronic disease prevalence among Afghan immigrants is limited (Siddiq, 2023). Recent research indicates however that people

likely face increased rates of chronic illness the longer they live in the U.S. (Kumar, 2020; Yun, 2012). Afghan women are at increased risk and face greater challenges accessing preventive services (Naja, 2019; Yun, 2012). A significant challenge women face when accessing healthcare services is the cultural stigma around women receiving care from male doctors. Often Afghan women can't access necessary medical attention without the presence of a female physician, which may lead to severe negative consequences and undiagnosed health conditions (Amiri et al., 2018). Regarding access to both physical and mental healthcare, data has actually shown Afghans to have higher rates of insurance coverage than both foreign- and U.S.-born people (Batalova, 2021). This however does not often translate to sufficient healthcare utilization. For both physical and mental health, provision of more culturally appropriate health care has consistently been identified as critical to effectively addressing Afghan immigrants' complex health issues and challenges. Family-centered and religion-informed approaches have been recommended (Siddiq, 2023).

Given the rapidly growing population of Afghan immigrants in the U.S. since 2021, their successful integration into American society is increasingly important. Limited and out-of-date existing data and research highlights a need for further and deeper exploration of issues facing this community. Understanding their unique experiences is crucial for policymakers, service providers, and researchers to develop more effective support systems and integration strategies. This study is a step in that direction, providing a fuller picture of Afghan immigrants' experiences than previously recorded.

Data Empowerment for Policy Change

Data on immigrant experiences can aid policy makers and organizations in providing better care for displaced immigrants and individuals that are new to navigating the larger systems.

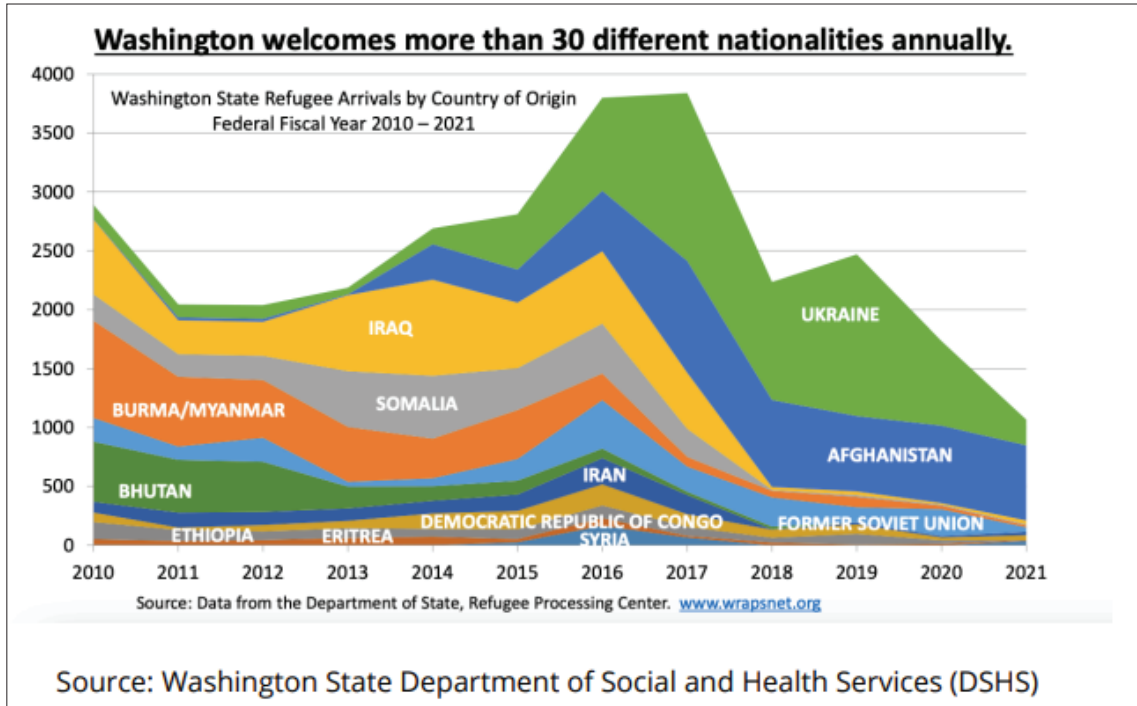


Figure 1. Washington State Department of Social and Health Services recorded immigrant nationalities. Graph accessed through: <https://ethnomed.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Examining-the-Primary-Care-Experiences-of-Refugee-Communities-in-King-County.pdf>

As of 2019, Afghan refugees are the fifth largest population immigrating to the U.S. (Budiman, 2020) and in 2021 recorded as the largest incoming nationality into the state of Washington (Erickson, 2023). Providing a voice and a space for their stories of their immigrant experiences while understanding the demographic of the population that is being served is important and necessary to make better changes to support systems as one system does not fit all. Within the [Examining the Primary Care Experiences of Refugee Communities in King County](#) report it is noted that the resettlement process is often long and requires building of new lives, social networks, and a new knowledge on navigating the new systems. As the number of immigrants, in various pathways, continues to increase and an emphasis continues to be on increased social services it is essential for data to be collected and shared widely (Erickson, 2023). This provides social services information on how they can tailor the experience and resources that they have for proper utilization, resource development, consumption and monetary spending. With a diverse group of people with many different strengths and knowledge it is key to provide the resources that are truly needed. In addition, comprehensive and disaggregated data can aid in development and updating of policies that are evidence-based, and ensure that the best course of action is taken based on data sources from the experience of the people living the reality (United Nations, 2023).

This body of research aims at providing a comprehensive data report on the experiences of the most recent 2021 wave of Afghan immigrants in Washington State.

III. Methodology

This research aims to comprehensively explore the resettlement experiences of Afghan immigrants in Washington State, employing methodology designed by the principal investigator, Hasan Javid, PhD. Dr. Javid is educated in culture and development related topics, has three years of experience working with a resettlement agency, is a part of the Afghan community within Washington, and has lived experience as an Afghan immigrant. This study was designed with his extensive experience and knowledge about the community, the resettlement agency and processes and a strong academic background in the field. The survey questionnaire was disseminated by the Afghan community members and through their respective community organizations in WA State. A mixed-methods approach was used to gather rich and nuanced data.

A. Survey Design

The survey design consists of community engagement and ethical considerations.

- The foundation of this study lies in a detailed survey questionnaire, meticulously crafted with 48 questions across six distinct sections covering demography, immigration, housing, health and well-being, and cultural integration. The comprehensive nature of the survey ensured a holistic examination of the resettlement journey of Afghan immigrants.
- Active engagement with community leaders and elders played a pivotal role. Meetings were convened to discuss the study's purpose, garner support, and request the dissemination of the questionnaire within their respective communities. This collaborative approach facilitated broader participation and community ownership of the research.
- Prioritizing ethical standards, the survey incorporated a statement of consent at the outset, outlining the purpose of the study and assuring respondents of anonymity. No personally identifiable information, such as names or addresses, was collected. The only contact information obtained was email addresses or phone numbers, strictly for authentication and follow-up purposes. Respondents were explicitly informed about the confidentiality of their responses, fostering an environment conducive to open and honest sharing.
- To ensure a diverse and representative sample, the researchers employed a multifaceted approach. The survey was distributed to verified community members via their phone numbers, facilitating direct telephonic responses. Additionally, in-person interactions were conducted at various community hubs, such as grocery stores, mosques, cultural events, and resettlement agencies. The survey was also disseminated through the heads of three major community organizations, fostering community-wide participation.

B. Procedures/ Data Collection

A questionnaire in an online survey, utilizing Google Forms, was created with 48 questions in six distinct sections including; demography, employment, immigration, housing, health and wellbeing, and lastly cultural integration and experiences. The introductory section of the survey included a statement of consent, the purpose of the study and an anonymity statement explaining that respondents will remain anonymous and their personal information will not be used or stored. The only information used for authentication and follow up was respondents' provided email address or alternatively their phone numbers. No names, address, or other sensitive information was requested or used in the survey, making sure personal information is safe. It was important to the study researchers that the respondents were aware before answering any questions that their answer would not have any negative impact on them and that they were requested to give their most honest and true answers without worrying about any consequences. The online Google Doc survey questionnaire form was submitted by respondents after completion and stored by the research team for cleaning and analysis.

The methods in which participants were engaged for data collected were multiple.

- In the first method, a questionnaire was sent to the phone numbers of verified community members and requested a response directly from them through telephonic conversation.
- The second method that was used was meeting with the community members, in person, in many different locations where they visit frequently such as grocery stores, mosques, community events such as Eid , concerts, Friday prayers, cultural and sports events. In addition, other means of reaching out to the Afghan community to gather participants included posting flyers with a Quick Response Code (QR) link in the above listed locations.
- Third method included resettlement agencies, where individuals who visited the agencies in person filled out the questionnaire form.
- The last method engaged the following organizations within Washington, in dissemination of the survey.
 - Hazara Community of Washington (HCWA)
 - Kabul Washington Association (KWA)
 - Afghan American Community of Washington
 - Masjid Quba, a mosque utilized for Afghan prayers

In meetings with community elders and leaders, the purpose of the study was discussed in full detail and the community leaders were requested to share the questionnaire form with their respective community members and ask them to respond. The community leaders played two important roles, helped in dissemination of the survey form to their respective members and shared their opinion and suggestions about the study and what they thought are major resettlement topics to include in the study.

C. Participants

Participants included 197 Afghan immigrants within the state of Washington. Figure 2 and 3 demonstrate a geographical visualization of the spread in location of respondents. The majority of the participants were from the larger Seattle metropolitan area, specifically between Seattle and Tacoma with some outliers in the Spokane and Vancouver areas.

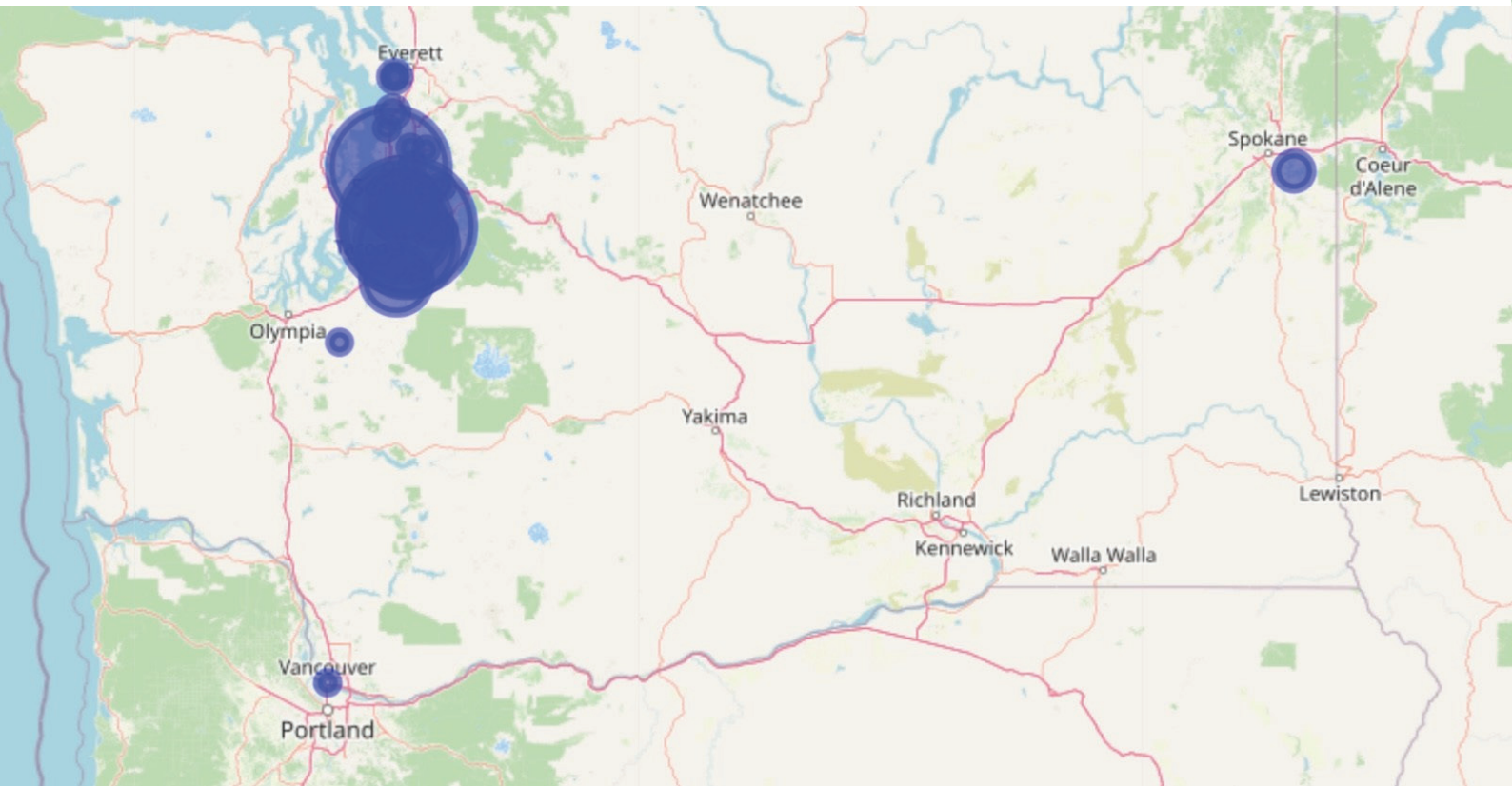


Figure 2. Map of survey respondents across the state of Washington. Survey Data, 2023. Larger and darker circles represent a larger number of participants within a certain area.

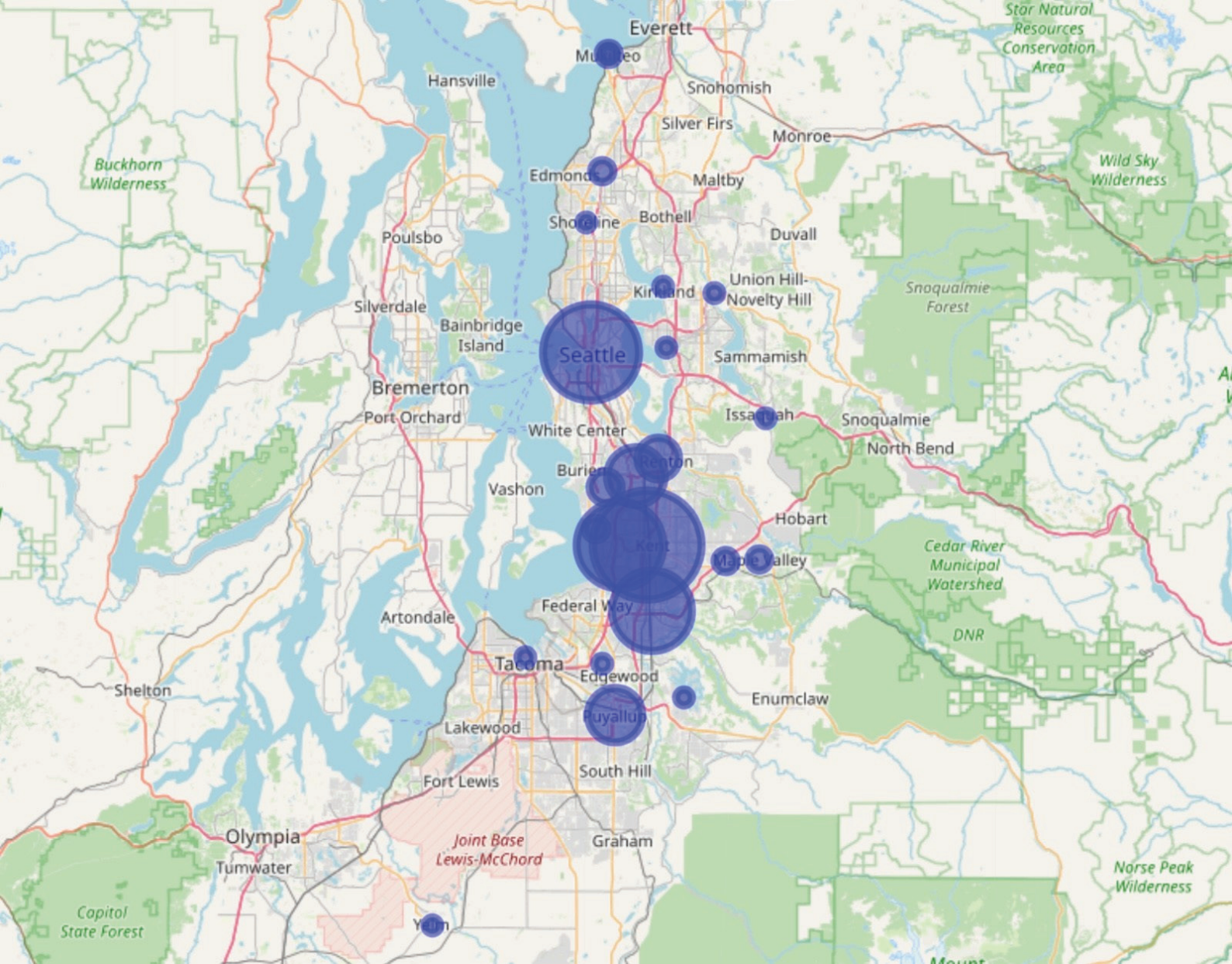


Figure 3. Zoomed in map of the larger Seattle metropolitan area of survey participants. Larger and darker circles represent a larger number of participants within a certain area.

C. Data Analysis & Reporting

Upon completion, the survey, implemented as a Google Doc online form, was submitted by respondents. The research team then undertook a thorough cleaning and analysis of the collected data. The researcher's direct engagement with the community ensured a culturally sensitive and informed approach to data collection, contributing to the richness and depth of the findings.

The collected data underwent compilation analysis, leveraging quantitative methodologies through the R software. The findings were then synthesized into a comprehensive research paper that aims to provide valuable insights into the resettlement experiences of Afghan immigrants in Washington State.

After the data collection, a comprehensive review and validation process was undertaken. Various tests were implemented to ensure the highest data quality before entering the analysis phase. These tests included:

Duplicate Test: to ensure each respondent was interviewed only once.

Logic Tests: to examine logical consistency of questions within each case and flag cases with inconsistencies, prompting follow-up calls for verification.

As a result of these tests, 8 cases were excluded from the data and analysis.

IV. Results & Discussion

The following are the results from the surveys collected illustrated through graphs. An interpretation of the results for each section is provided as a discussion point to help better understand the data visualization.

1.0 Demographics Analysis of Survey Respondents

This section reports the demographic composition of the participating Afghan immigrant population in this study, providing an overview of the various demographic characteristics including age, household composition, ethnicity, education level, and language. Investigating these factors allows a deeper analysis of the resettlement experiences between the subgroups within this Afghan immigrant community.

1.1. Gender Demographics

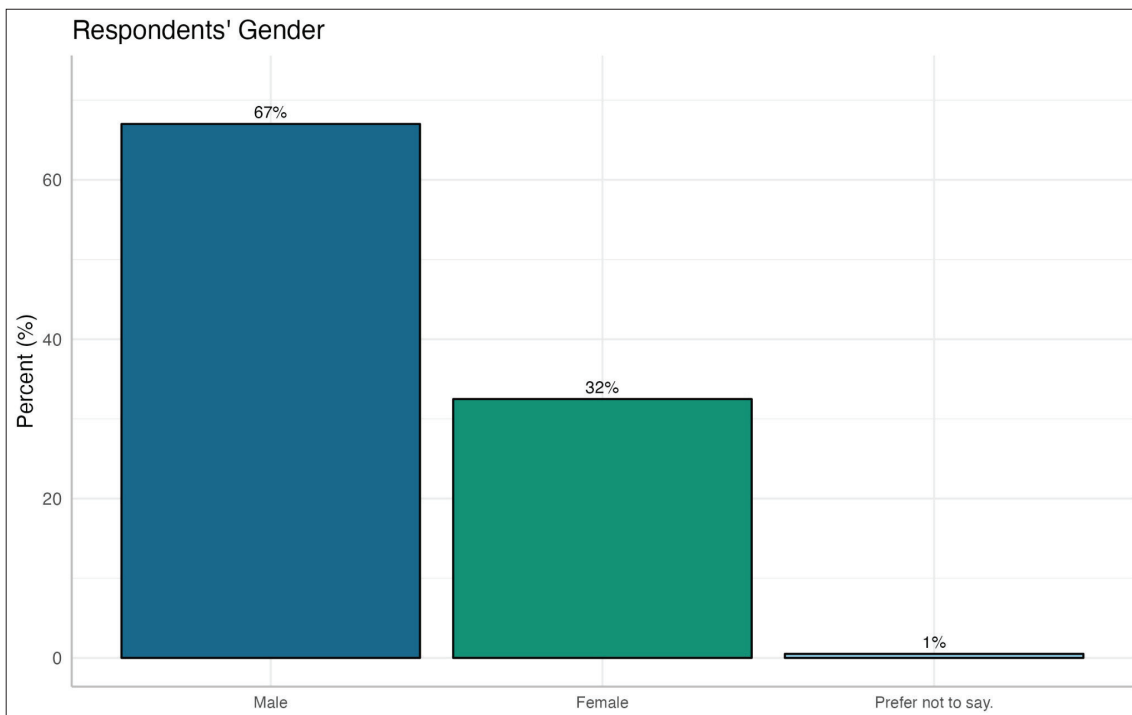


Figure 4. gender composition of the survey respondents

In a research endeavor targeting the Afghan immigrant community residing in Washington State, USA, the survey initiative was meticulously executed. The survey instrument was methodically crafted by the research team and subsequently disseminated within the targeted community in Washington State. Initial observations unveiled

a notable gender disparity, with a conspicuous predominance of male respondents indicating a male-centric response trend. To rectify this imbalance and enhance female participation, the survey team endeavored to engage with women within the community in a more focused manner. Despite this concerted effort, the level of female involvement remained suboptimal, falling short of the designated 50% threshold.

Subsequently, a novel stratagem was devised wherein female volunteers were enlisted to facilitate interactions with female members of the Afghan immigrant populace. This approach sought to foster a conducive environment, ensuring greater comfort and receptivity among female respondents. Consequently, the overall survey population witnessed a marked escalation from 81 individuals to 130, with a notable majority comprising female participants. In pursuit of augmenting the total surveyed populace to a minimum benchmark of 200 individuals, with a particular emphasis on bolstering female representation, the research team embarked on two additional initiatives.

Firstly, it was noted by the female surveyor that certain female respondents lacked email addresses or exhibited limited proficiency in digital literacy and the English language. Accordingly, the survey questionnaire underwent a revision, omitting the email address requirement while accepting phone numbers as alternative means of identification. Furthermore, a Farsi/Dari-only version of the questionnaire was made available to cater to linguistic preferences. Despite persistent endeavors aimed at ensuring a balanced representation of women and various ethnicities, it was discerned that the Hazara demographic constituted a significant majority, surpassing the combined representation of Tajik, Pashtun, and Uzbek respondents. Plausible factors contributing to this phenomenon are discussed later in the report.

In tandem with the recruitment of female surveyors, the research team introduced a monetary incentive, offering a nominal gift ranging from \$15 to \$20 for each completed questionnaire. This incentive mechanism proved efficacious in incentivizing participation, ultimately facilitating the attainment of the targeted minimum of 200 respondents. Following meticulous data cleaning and analysis procedures, the total surveyed population culminated at 197 individuals, comprising 67% male and 32% female respondents.

1.2. Household Composition

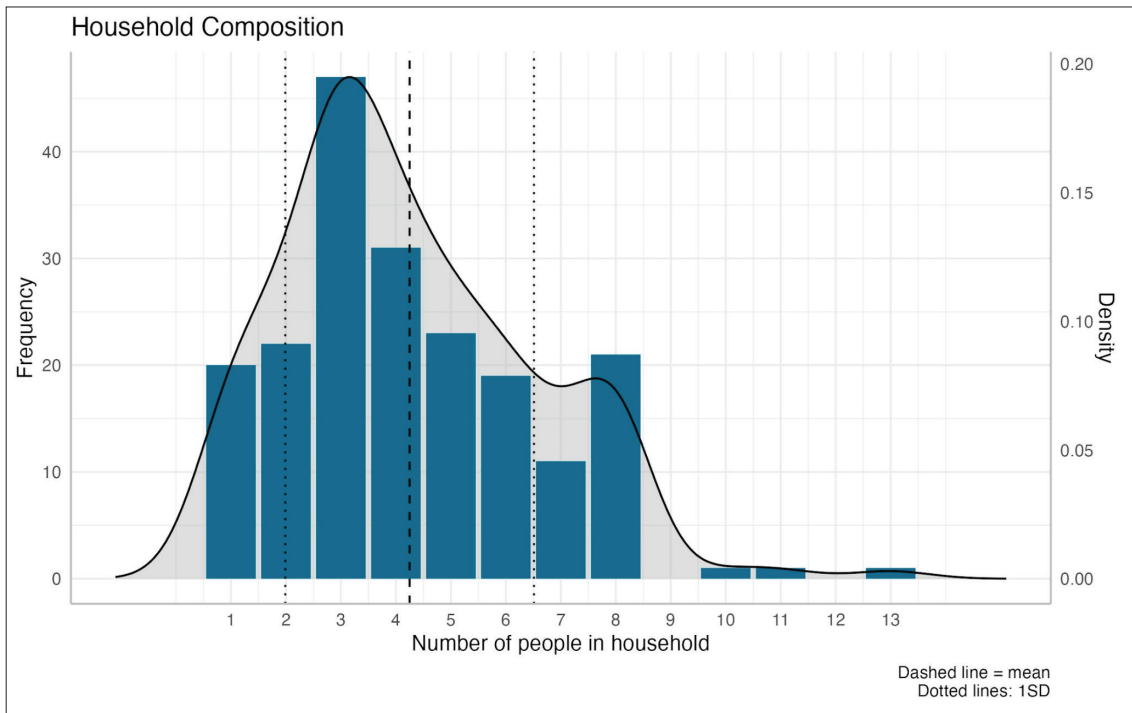


Figure 5. Household composition. 2023.

Figure 5 delves into the household composition of the 197 Afghan immigrant respondents surveyed in Washington state. The survey captured a diverse range of household structures, shedding light on the living arrangements of this community in their new environment.

Out of the total respondents, approximately 20 individuals identified as single, while 22 formed couples. Strikingly, the highest number in the dataset, comprising 47 respondents, represented couples with only one child or three-member households. This was followed by 31 families with four members and 22 families with five members.

The survey defined “current household members” as those family units residing in the same household within Washington state. This inclusive definition encompasses primary household members, such as spouses and their children, as well as scenarios where adult and married children live with their parents. Given that a significant portion of respondents are newcomers, it is common for Afghan families to consolidate living arrangements to mitigate housing costs. This trend aligns with the traditional Afghan cultural practice of living together or in close proximity, especially during the initial years of immigration.

The data further reveals a noteworthy pattern in household size, with a majority of Afghan immigrants forming three-member households. This aligns with the fact that the primary applicants for U.S. visas were those who worked with the US government in Afghanistan (SIV recipients), who are typically the younger generation educated in computer and English language skills. The correlation between the age composition

(25-35 years old) and household structure (primarily one child) reinforces the narrative that the surveyed age group tends to form smaller families. This may be attributed to their higher education level and younger age compared to the rest of the Afghan population, as well as being in the transitional phase of establishing themselves in the U.S., seeking employment, and managing housing costs. Larger families with household sizes of five to eight people also make up a significant portion of the surveyed population, as observed in the mid-right side of the provided figure. Understanding these household dynamics is crucial for policymakers and community leaders. They can tailor support programs to address the specific needs of Afghan immigrants during their initial years of settlement in Washington State.

1.3. Ethnicity

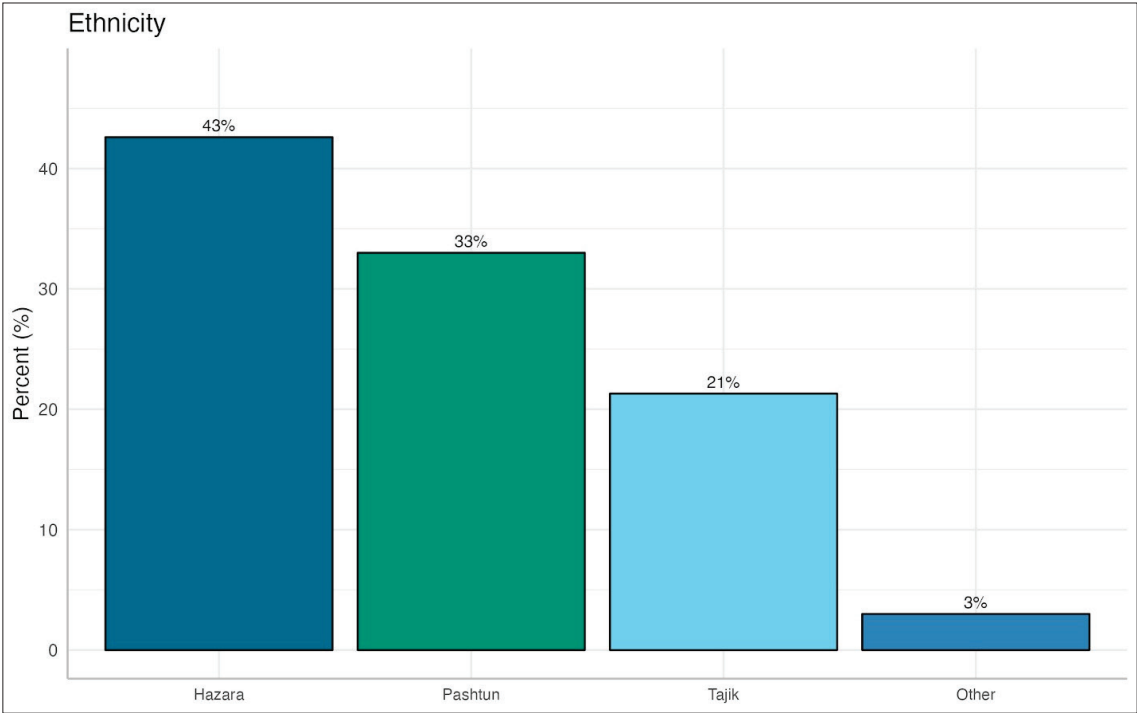


Figure 6. Ethnic Background of the Survey Respondents in Washington State. 2023.

This section outlines the ethnic distribution of 197 Afghan immigrant respondents in Washington state based on the survey conducted. The percentages provided offer insights into the composition of the surveyed group; however, it is important to note that these figures do not necessarily reflect the true distribution of ethnic backgrounds among the entire Afghan immigrant population in the state.

Among the respondents, 43% identified themselves as Hazara, indicating a significant representation of this ethnic group within the surveyed cohort. The Pashtun ethnic background follows closely, constituting 33% of the respondents. Tajik respondents comprise 21% of the surveyed population. The remaining 3% is attributed to individuals identifying with various other ethnic backgrounds, including Uzbek, Sadat, Bayat, and Baluch.

This data illuminates the ethnic diversity present within the surveyed Afghan immigrant community. However, caution must be exercised in generalizing these percentages to the broader Afghan immigrant population in Washington state, as the surveyed sample may not be fully representative of the entire demographic. These findings provide a snapshot of the ethnic backgrounds within the surveyed group and offer a foundation for further exploration and analysis in understanding the nuanced dynamics of the Afghan immigrant community in the state

1.4. Level of Education

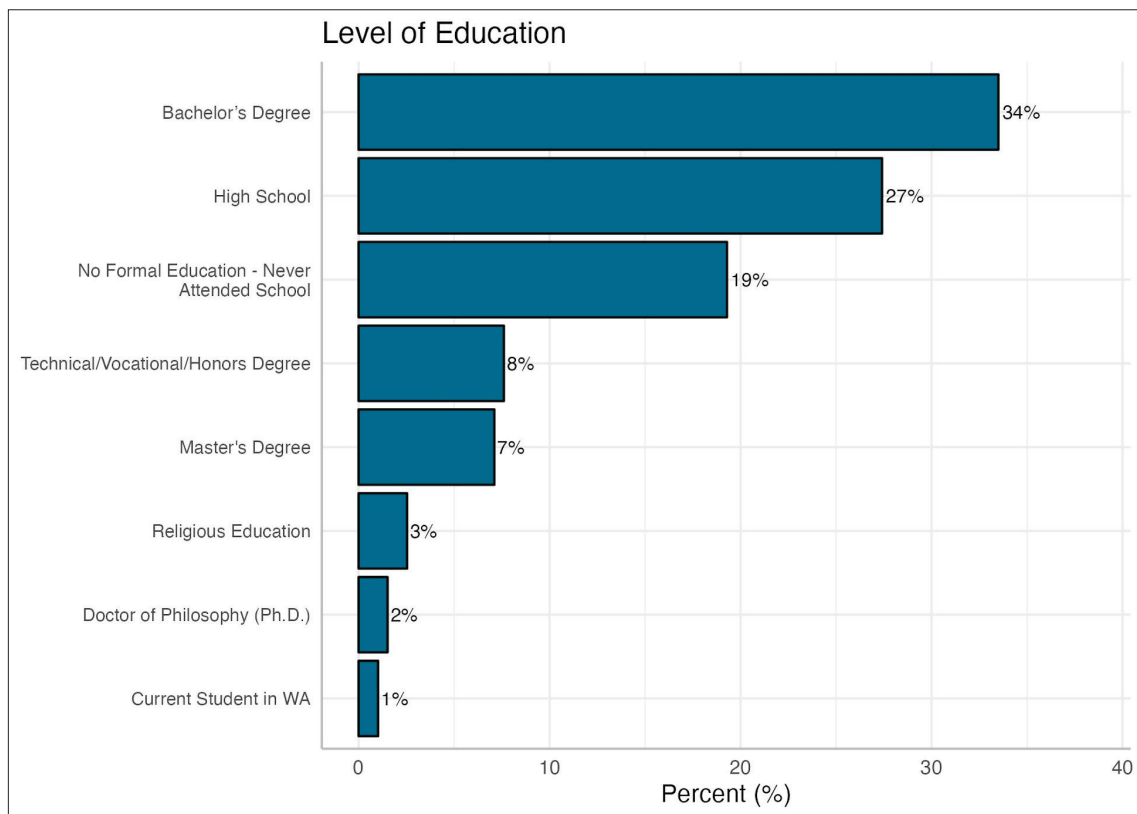


Figure 7. Level of Education of the Survey Respondents. 2023.

The educational composition of 197 Afghan immigrant respondents in Washington state reveals a diverse spectrum of academic backgrounds. Thirty-three percent reported having obtained a Bachelor's degree before arriving in the US, indicating a substantial segment with a foundation in higher education. Additionally, 23% possessed a high school diploma acquired outside the US, reflecting completion of formal education before immigration, likely from secondary education in Afghanistan. Nineteen percent marked "no formal education," suggesting a cohort that did not engage in formal education or schooling in their home country.

Eight percent of respondents held technical, vocational, or honors degrees, denoting the completion of 14 years of formal education in their home country before immigrating

to the US. Seven percent obtained a Master’s degree, showcasing a presence of individuals with advanced postgraduate qualifications. Four percent completed their school or college education in the US, indicating integration into the US education system post-immigration.

Two percent marked “religious education” as their level of education, reflecting a smaller portion of the surveyed group with religious studies. An additional 2% reported holding a Ph.D., signifying a small presence of individuals with the highest level of academic attainment. This detailed breakdown provides insights into the varied educational trajectories within the Afghan immigrant community in Washington state, crucial for tailoring educational support programs and integration initiatives to their specific needs.

1.5. Language Proficiency

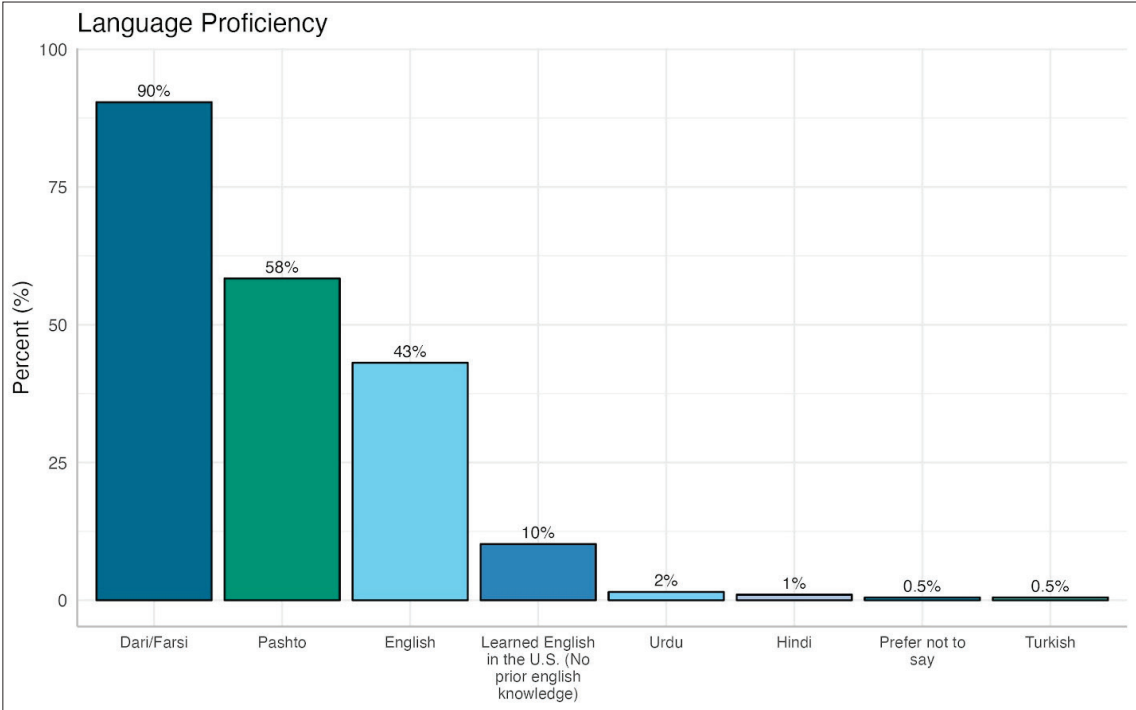


Figure 8 Language proficiency of survey respondents. 2023.

Figure 8 elucidates the language proficiency of 197 Afghan immigrant respondents in Washington state. The data reveals that a substantial majority, constituting 90%, demonstrated proficiency in Farsi/Dari, a language commonly referred to as Dari in Afghanistan to distinguish it from its Iranian counterpart. Moreover, over half of the respondents, totaling 58%, exhibited proficiency in Pashto, emphasizing its significant linguistic presence within the surveyed population. Notably, 43% of respondents demonstrated English proficiency, and of this group, 10% acquired their English skills in the US without prior education or knowledge of the language.

“For the integration, English is the challenging part for many people. In other particularly people who are staying home, elderly women and the others, even for the

people, for the men working outside, if they're in their job or workplace, they don't have a lot of communication, they do not improve their English.”

This quote from one Afghan community leader in Washington, provides insight into the remaining 57% of participants who do not exhibit English proficiency. Those in workplaces with limited exposure to the English language, women and the elderly appear to face the largest language barriers. While the 43% of participants who demonstrated knowledge of English shows progress within the community, this perspective also highlights the continued need for linguistic support.

The survey also captured the presence of other languages, namely Urdu/Hindi and Turkish, underscoring the rich linguistic diversity within the immigrant community. The data sheds light on the prevalence of multilingualism in Afghanistan, with many respondents showcasing proficiency in at least two languages, particularly Farsi/Dari and Pashto. It is essential to exercise caution in interpreting these findings, recognizing that proficiency does not necessarily equate to these languages being respondents' mother tongues. The observed linguistic diversity underscores the complex linguistic landscape shaped by cultural and political relationships in Afghanistan.



Mirza Mulla bakes traditional Afghani bread Kent, Washington.

EMPLOYMENT

2. Employment

In the resettlement and integration process of Afghan immigrants to Washington State, employment plays a pivotal role. Adapting to a new life often relies on financial stability and gaining suitable employment enables self sufficiency and advocacy. This section will report if respondents found jobs aligning with their prior experience, followed by a discussion of their experiences in the process of allocating employment concluding with a report on the perceptions of current employment.

2.1. US Job Relevance to Prior Expertise

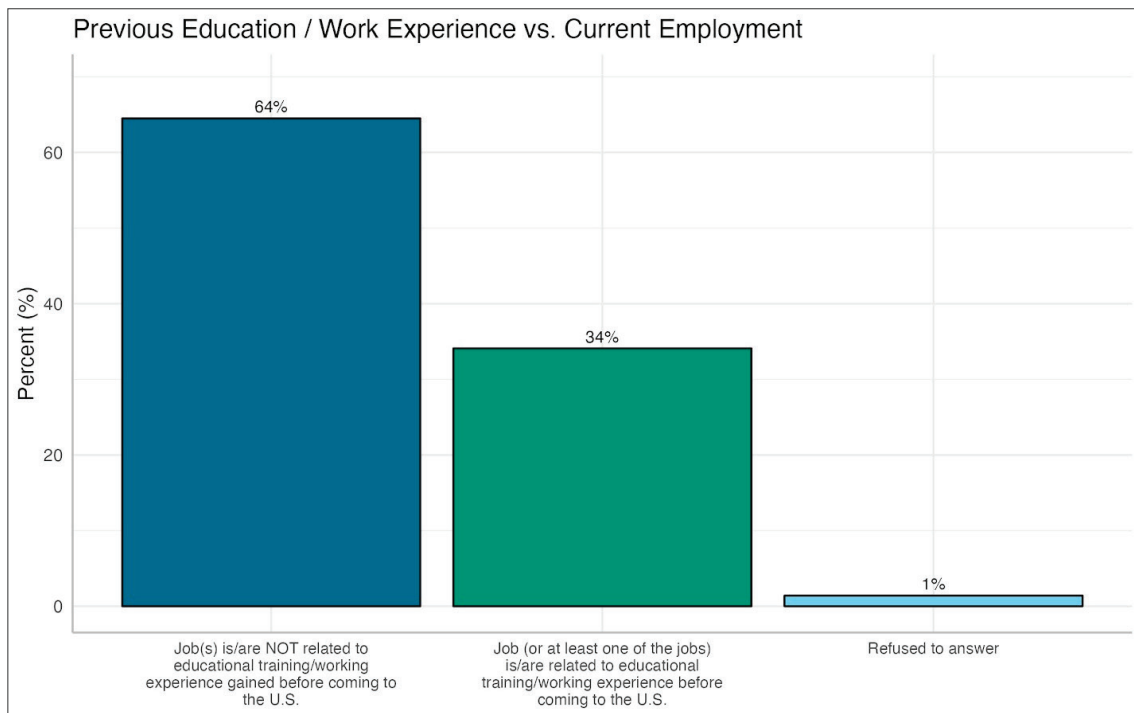


Figure 9. Relevance of prior work experience compared to current employment. 2023.

The data analysis pertaining to respondents' perceptions of the alignment between their skills, education, and experiences from their home country and the nature of their jobs in the US reveals insightful patterns. Of the surveyed individuals, 64% find themselves engaged in employment roles that do not correspond or match their acquired skills and education. This indicates a significant proportion of respondents experiencing a mismatch between their professional qualifications and the nature of their current jobs, suggesting that their skills may not be optimally utilized in their current employment. Conversely, 34% of the respondents express being employed with jobs relating to their prior experiences, emphasizing that their skills, education, and expertise obtained before migrating to the US align effectively with their current employment. This group experiences a congruence between their qualifications and the demands of their work, demonstrating a successful integration of their professional background into their US employment. The findings shed light on the challenges and successes faced by Afghan immigrants in Washington state in leveraging their pre-migration skills and education within the US job market.

2.2. Finding Employment in the U.S.

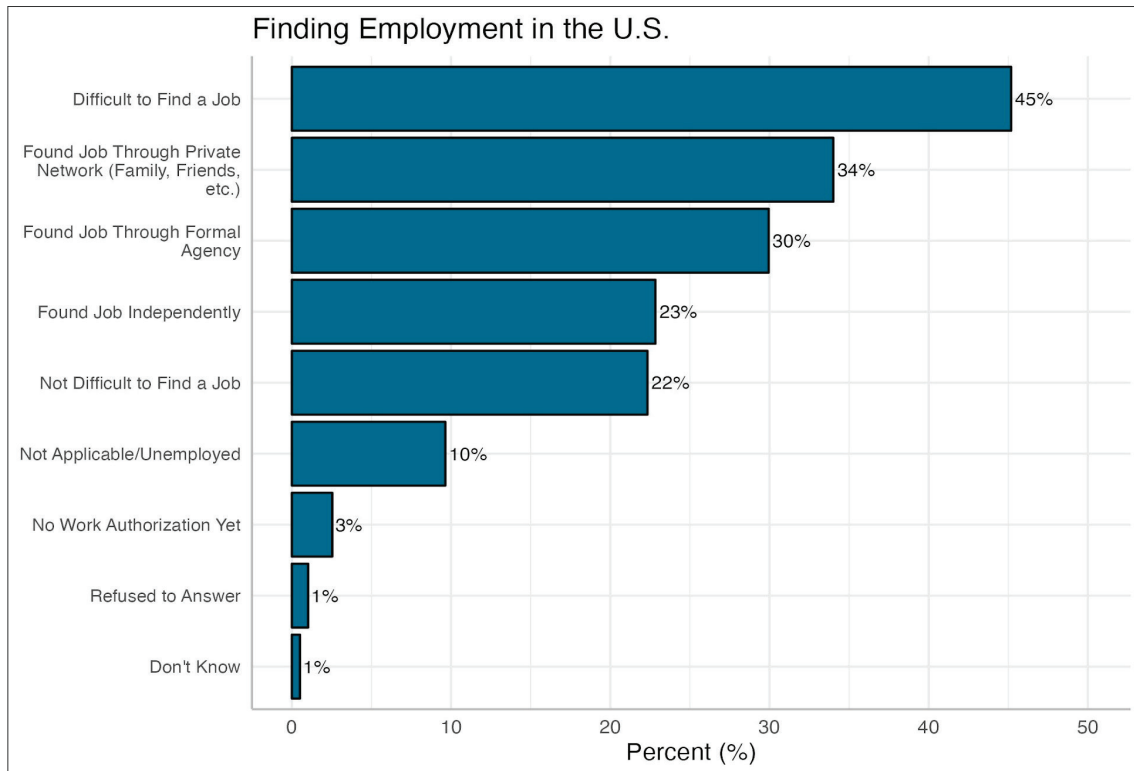


Figure 10. Employment process among Afghan immigrant survey respondents. 2023.

In examining the process of finding employment in the United States among Afghan immigrants, Figure 10 offers detailed insights into the assistance received and the challenges encountered during job searches. 45% of respondents expressed the difficulty they faced or are currently facing in securing employment, underscoring the challenges that Afghan immigrants encounter in the US job market.

Conversely, 34% of respondents reported relying on informal networks, such as family, friends, and other personal connections, to secure employment, highlighting the importance of social networks in the job search process. An additional 30% of respondents found assistance through resettlement agencies and official case workers assigned by the Department of Social Health and Services (DSHS) or their partner organizations, emphasizing the role of these agencies in facilitating the employment search for Afghan immigrants.

A segment of respondents, constituting 23%, independently found employment without external assistance, utilizing technology and online platforms for job searches. This subgroup likely comprises individuals proficient in technology and familiar with online job-seeking practices.

Contrary to the 45% who found job searching challenging, 22% of respondents described the process as easy or not difficult. Meanwhile, 10% of respondents identified

as unemployed and not actively seeking employment, potentially representing mothers and spouses focusing on childcare and homemaking responsibilities.

An additional 3% of respondents are awaiting their work authorization cards, emphasizing the bureaucratic barriers faced by some Afghan immigrants in accessing employment opportunities. 1% chose not to provide a response, while 0.5% answered “don’t know,” indicating a level of uncertainty or lack of specific knowledge about the job search process. These findings underscore the varied experiences and strategies employed by Afghan immigrants in navigating the US job market, reflecting the multifaceted nature of their employment journeys.

“You know that at the beginning, it’s very clear that everyone who came to a new country, they have a lot of challenges, many basic things that they dealing with, like a food stamp, accommodation. These are very basic and as long as they cannot get at least a calm environment in their home, they cannot thinking about employment and other things. So it will take months somehow that they can document that they need to start working”

“So when they came here and they are faced with a lot of challenges, the main thing is the soft skills, like budgeting, and having no financial management are the things that they may not have, or they don’t have that experience to how we deal with that.”

This perspective exemplifies how the beginning process of finding a job is particularly difficult for most Afghan immigrants. These challenges are amplified as they try to establish stability and address more of their immediate needs upon arrival. Additionally, the lack of familiarity with U.S. job related soft skills, like basic personal finance topics, hinders their ability to secure stable employment after immigrating.

2.3. Satisfaction with Current Employment

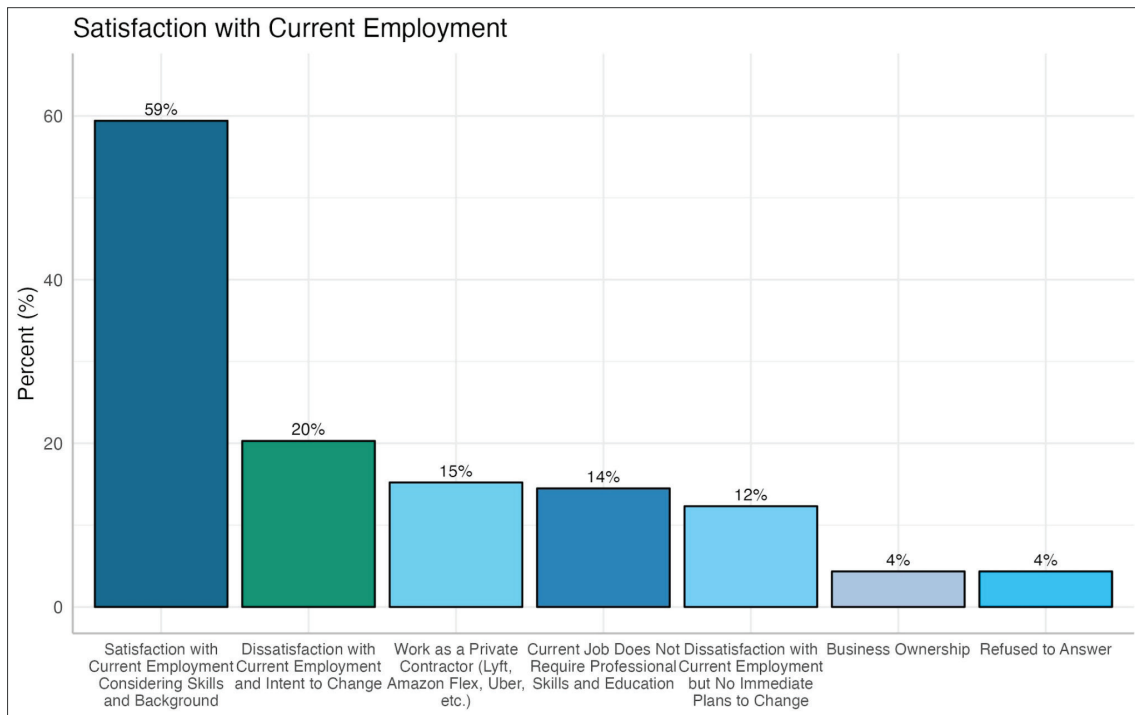


Figure 11. Respondents' satisfaction with current employment. 2023.

Figure 11 presents a comprehensive exploration of respondents' satisfaction with their current employment in the United States, providing insights into the intricate interplay between their skills, backgrounds, and job satisfaction. This section is related to the overall employment topic here and its addition enables us to delve into respondents' perceptions of how well their skills and expertise, brought from Afghanistan, align with their current roles in the US job market. The respondents could choose any number of the multichoice answer here, or add their own comment at the end of it.

Starting with the left side of the figure, respondents expressing satisfaction with their current employment stand at 59%, despite 64% acknowledging in a previous response that their jobs may not closely correspond with their skills and background. This apparent dissonance prompted respondents to articulate that while their jobs may not perfectly match their skills, the nuances of the US job market, distinct from Afghanistan, often pose challenges in finding an exact match.

Returning to the main paragraph, 20% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their current employment and a desire to change jobs when possible, indicating a subgroup seeking better alignment with their skills and experience. Additionally, 12% of respondents, also dissatisfied with their current employment, indicated no immediate plans to seek a change, possibly reflecting practical constraints or acceptance of the current job despite dissatisfaction.

Moreover, 15% of respondents classified their current jobs as not requiring a license, education, or specific skills, reflecting a category often referred to as unskilled labor. An

intriguing aspect emerges with 4% of respondents indicating they started and run their own businesses, spanning grocery stores, bakeries, and professional services, showcasing entrepreneurial endeavors within the Afghan immigrant community in WA state.

A similar number of respondents, 4%, declined to answer these questions of employment. These multifaceted findings offer valuable insights into the diverse employment landscape and job satisfaction dynamics among Afghan immigrants in Washington state.

A distinct source of employment for the respondents is the gig economy where they work as private contractors with companies such as Uber, Lyft, Amazon, DoorDash etc. Among the survey respondents, 15% identified their primary occupation as driving for Uber and Lyft, highlighting a reliance on gig economy platforms for income. It is noteworthy that this figure excludes individuals engaging in ridesharing as a part-time or side hustle which is quite common among members of the Afghan community. Gig economy plays an important role as a quick source of income specially for those who do not have a regular job or need additional income.

IMMIGRATION



Former Afghanistan Air Force member Sitara Wafa, accompanied by her parents and younger sister, granted admission to the United States under humanitarian parole.

3. Immigration

This third section explores the respondents' reasons for and timing of U.S. immigration status. First, is a report of when individuals or families arrived in the United States, followed by data collected on location of family members. The next segment covers immigration mechanisms and investigates motives behind seeking resettlement in the United States, specifically. Concluding this section is a report on the respondents' current immigration status.

3.1. Arrival Time in the U.S.

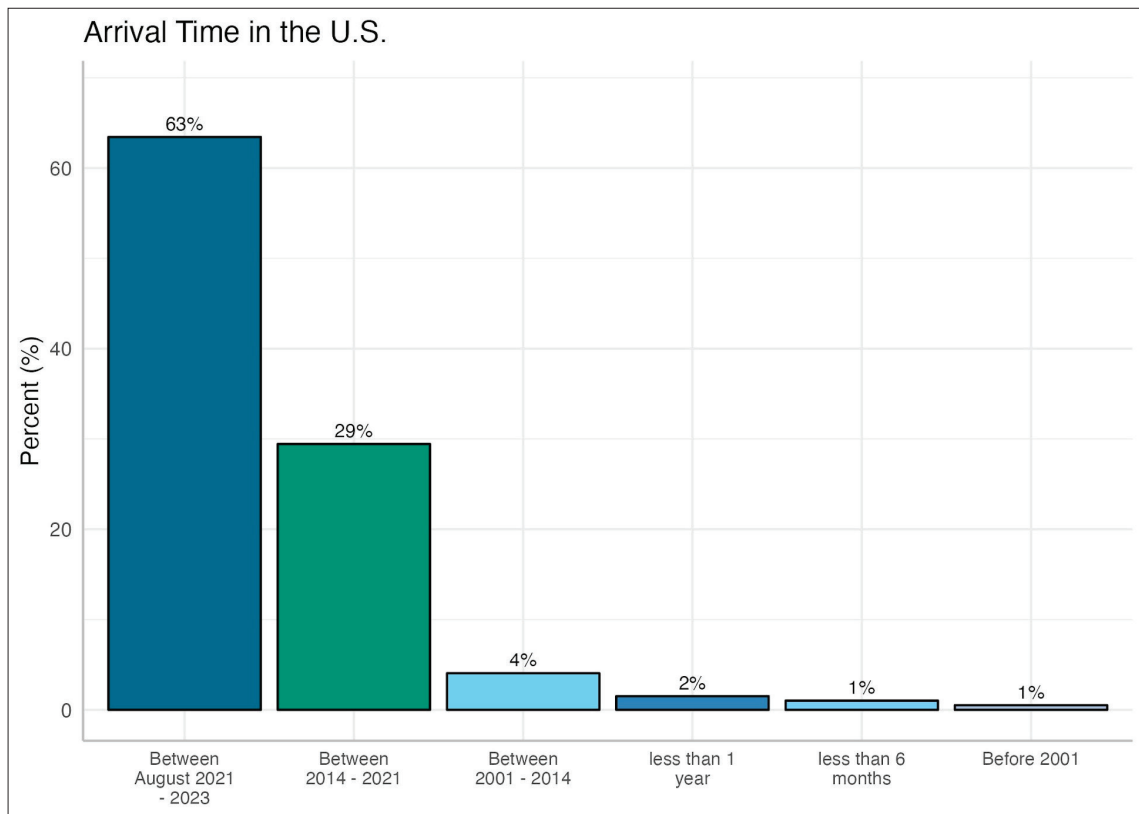


Figure 12. Time of arrival to the United States, among Afghan immigrant survey respondents. 2023.

Figure 12 delineates the temporal dynamics of Afghan immigrant survey respondents' arrivals in the United States, revealing a substantial influx over the past two decades. Significantly, 64% of surveyed individuals arrived after the fall of the Afghan government and the subsequent US evacuation/withdrawal in August 2021, an influx notably influenced by the resurgence of violence and the return of the Taliban to power.

Upon closer examination, 29% of respondents arrived between 2014 and 2021, representing a period marked by heightened US military engagement and the pursuit of Special Immigration Visas (SIVs) for those directly or indirectly associated with US missions or government-related projects in Afghanistan. An additional 4% of respondents arrived between 2001 and 2014, encompassing the era characterized by the US invasion and subsequent developments in Afghanistan.

Noteworthy are the 2% of respondents who, in their comments, indicated arrival periods of less than one year and less than six months, aligning with the post-August 2021 cohort. A modest 0.5% of the 197 respondents mentioned arrival before 2001, reflecting a smaller but enduring presence of individuals who settled prior to the initiation of the US-led intervention.

It is imperative to contextualize these arrival patterns within Afghanistan's intricate historical context. The nation has grappled with prolonged conflicts, notably the Soviet occupation in the 1980s, followed by civil wars and the Taliban's rise to power in the 1990s. The ensuing waves of emigration, particularly to neighboring countries, underwent transformations with the US invasion from 2001 to 2021, leading to both returnees and sustained emigration due to escalating violence and the Taliban's assumption of control in the subsequent decade.

The subset of respondents who arrived between 2014 and 2021, notably associated with US missions through the Special Immigration Visa (SIV) program, reflects the interplay of geopolitical events and immigration trends. Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge the challenges in reaching those who arrived before 2001, as they are likely integrated into mainstream society, potentially limiting survey accessibility and, consequently, may be underrepresented.

This survey provides a comprehensive snapshot of Afghan immigrants in Washington state, illustrating the prominence of recent arrivals and the complex historical factors shaping their migration trajectories.

3.2. Location of Family Members

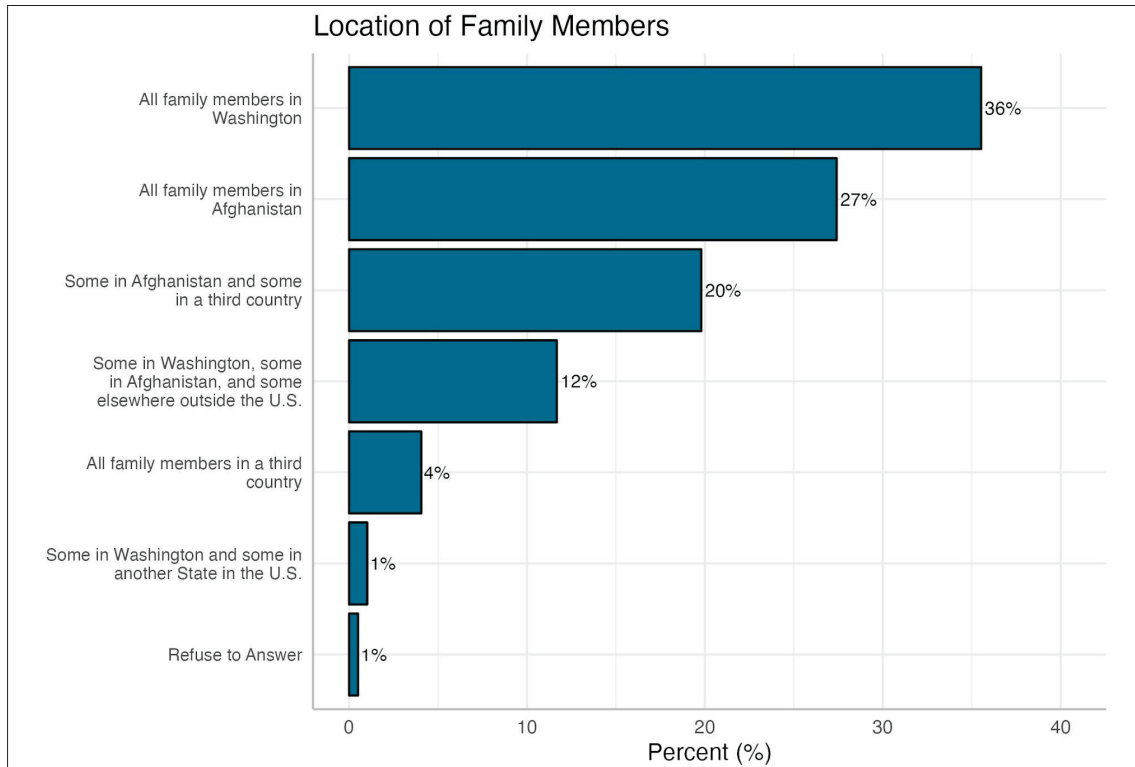


Figure 13. Location of survey respondents' family members at time of survey. 2023.

Figure 13. delineates the distribution of family members among survey respondents, with the understanding that the concept of family may vary from the traditional nuclear family structure. Notably, 36% of the surveyed population indicated that all their family members are currently residing with them in Washington state. In contrast, 27% of respondents reported that all their family members are situated in Afghanistan, reflecting a significant segment of individuals separated from their primary family units.

Furthermore, 19% of respondents shared that their family members are located in a third country. This category encompasses situations where family members reside in countries such as Pakistan, Iran, or Turkey, either as long-term refugees or awaiting US visas—particularly relevant for those who arrived as part of the Kabul Evacuation. It is essential to acknowledge the complexity of family dynamics and the varied contexts in which family members may be dispersed.

In summary, 36% of Afghan immigrants in Washington state are accompanied by all their family members, while 27% are without any family members present. The remaining half of the surveyed population experiences a dispersion of their families, with members residing in Afghanistan and other countries, illustrating the diverse familial circumstances among Afghan immigrants in Washington state.

3.3. Immigration Path to the U.S.

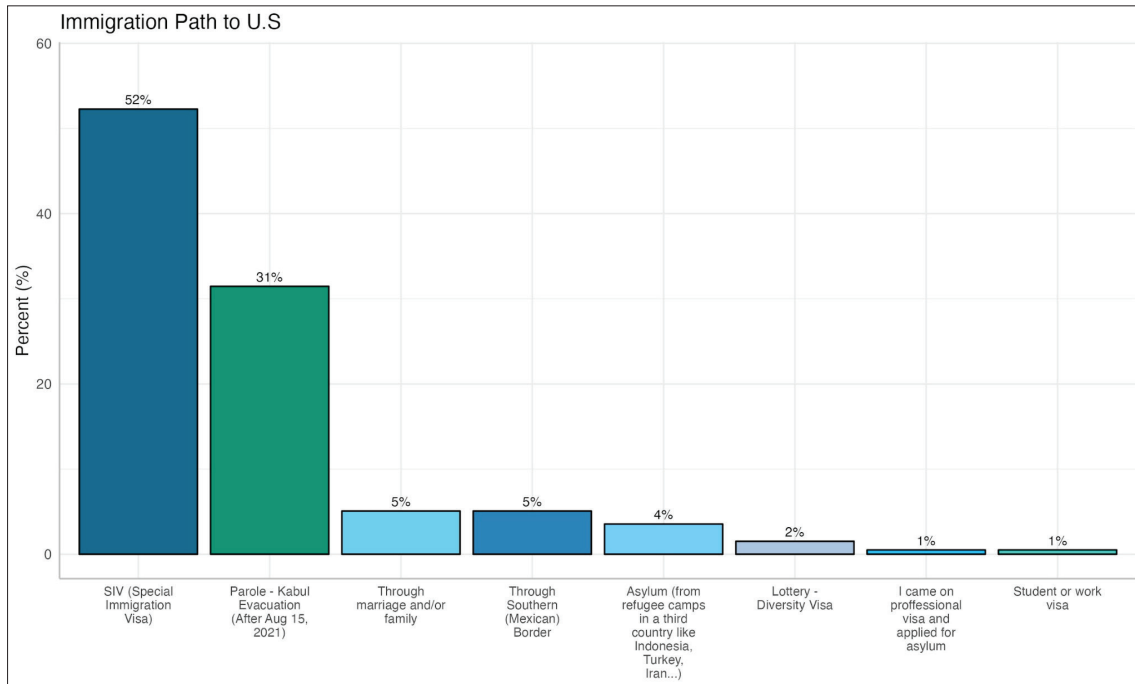


Figure 14. Respondent's immigration path to the United States. 2023.

Figure 14 presents a comprehensive overview of the immigration paths undertaken by Afghan survey respondents in their journey to the United States. Unsurprisingly, a majority, exceeding half of the surveyed population, arrived through the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program, a pathway often associated with individuals who directly or indirectly supported US missions in Afghanistan. Additionally, a substantial portion entered the US as parolees, signifying those who arrived following the fall of Kabul in August 2021 and the subsequent large-scale evacuation efforts.

Beyond these prominent pathways, 5% of respondents accessed the United States through marriage and family visas, attesting to familial reunification as a key motivator for immigration. Another 4% navigated the complex process of relocation through refugee camps, primarily located in third countries such as Indonesia, Turkey, and Iran, where they applied for US asylum.

Furthermore, 4% of the surveyed population entered the US through the Southern border with Mexico, highlighting the diversity in migration routes undertaken by Afghan immigrants. 2% secured entry through the Diversity Visa Lottery, a program designed to promote diversity in the immigrant pool.

This detailed breakdown elucidates the multifaceted nature of Afghan immigrants' paths to the United States, showcasing the prevalence of specific immigration programs and the varied circumstances that lead individuals to seek refuge or opportunities in the US.

3.4. Reasons for Immigration to the U.S.

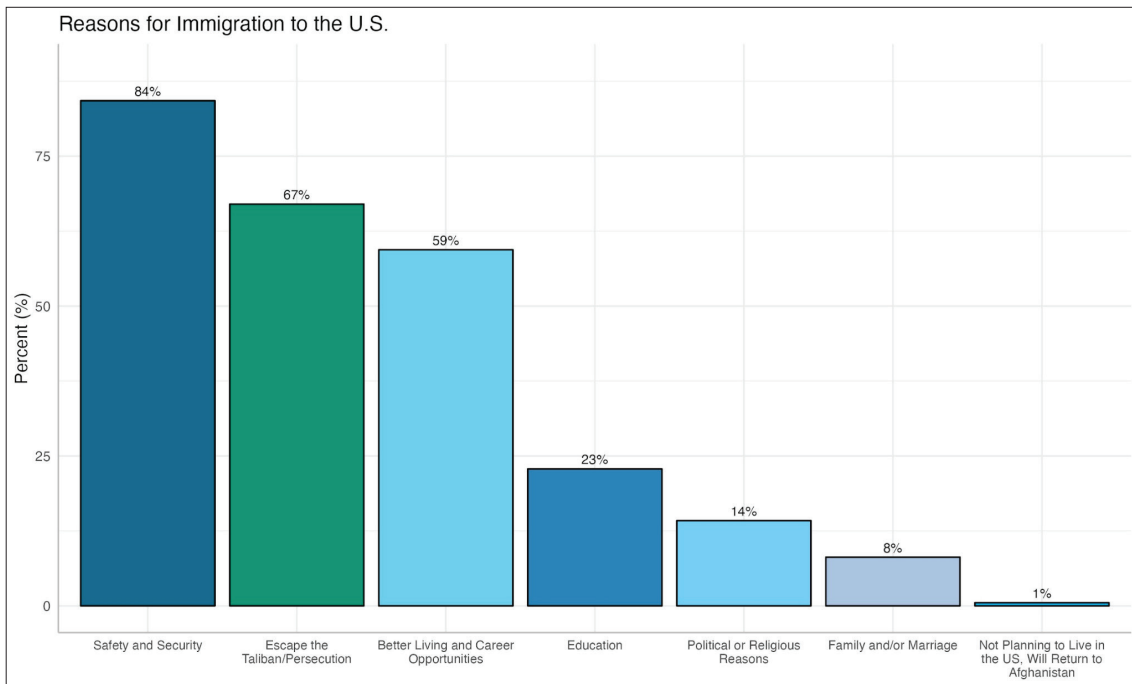


Figure 15. Self-reported reasons for immigrating to the United States. 2023.

Figure 15 presents respondents' motivations for immigrating to the United States. Respondents could choose from predetermined options or add their own reasons. The top three selected reasons are safety and security (84%), escape from Taliban persecution (67%), and pursuit of better living and career opportunities (59%). Additionally, 23% chose education, 14% indicated political or religious reasons, and another 8% cited family/marriage as motivations for immigration.

3.5. Current Immigration Status

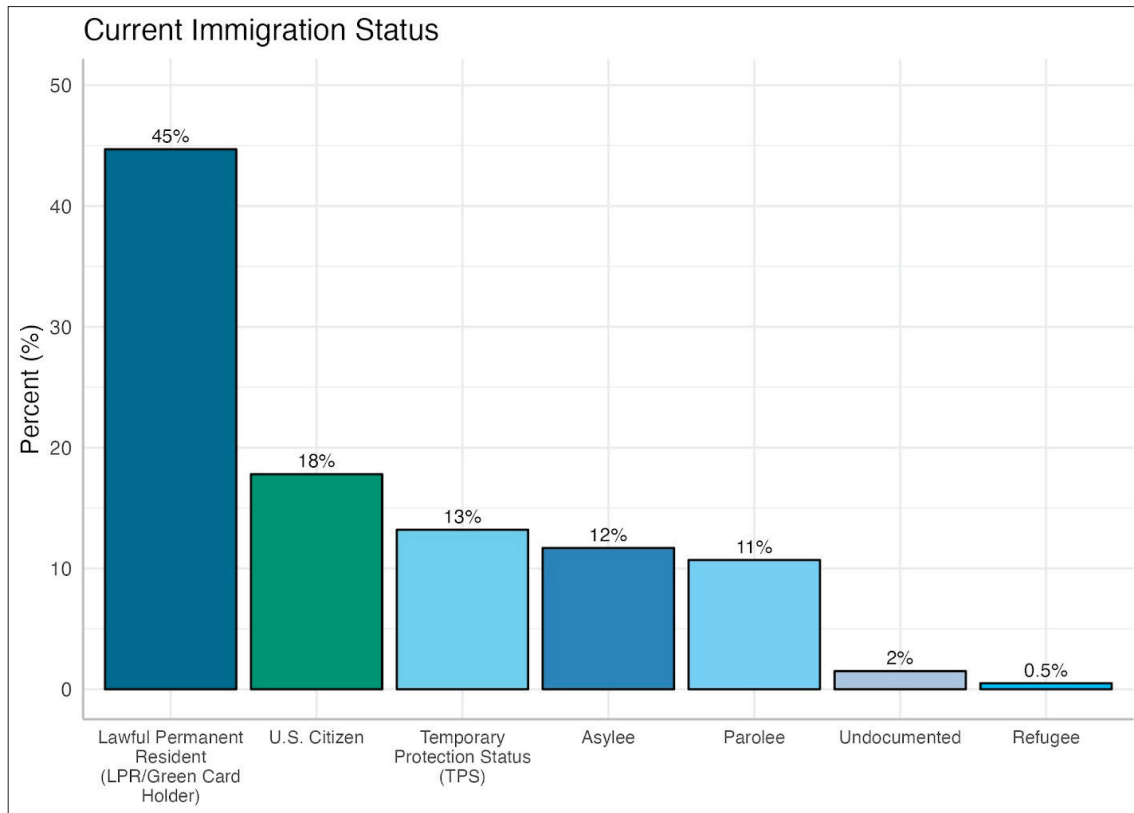


Figure 16. Respondents' immigration status at time of survey. 2023.

Figure 16 provides an overview of the current immigration status of respondents, offering insights into the diverse categories represented within the surveyed population. Notably, 45% (a combination of 44.2% of respondents are LPR/Green Card and 0.5% of those that have SIV) of respondents hold Green Cards, signifying permanent residency. Recipients of the Special Immigrant Visa are awarded green cards soon after their arrival in the United States, which explains why a majority of survey respondents marked their residency status as Lawful Permanent Resident or Green Holder. Recipients of SIVs are generally those individuals who “were employed by or on behalf of the US government” in Afghanistan. Given the prevalence of the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) pathway in the immigration paths Figure, it is anticipated that a portion of this group will likely pursue US citizenship after completing five years of continuous residence.

The subsequent 18% who identify as US citizens are likely those who initially entered the US on various visa types including immigrant, refugee and asylum; and after living in the US for five years obtained U.S. citizenship. The following three columns collectively represent individuals who arrived after August 2021, were paroled into the US, and granted temporary protection status for asylum applications. This combined group comprises over 30% of the respondents, mirroring the 32% figure mentioned previously for those paroled after the August 2021 Kabul evacuation.

The remaining 2% of respondents fall into the category of undocumented immigrants, entering the US through the southern border, while 0.5% still maintain refugee status, yet to transition to permanent residency or Green Card status—a common progression in the immigration process. This comprehensive snapshot sheds light on the varied immigration statuses within the Afghan immigrant community in Washington state.

3.6. Years Lived in Washington State

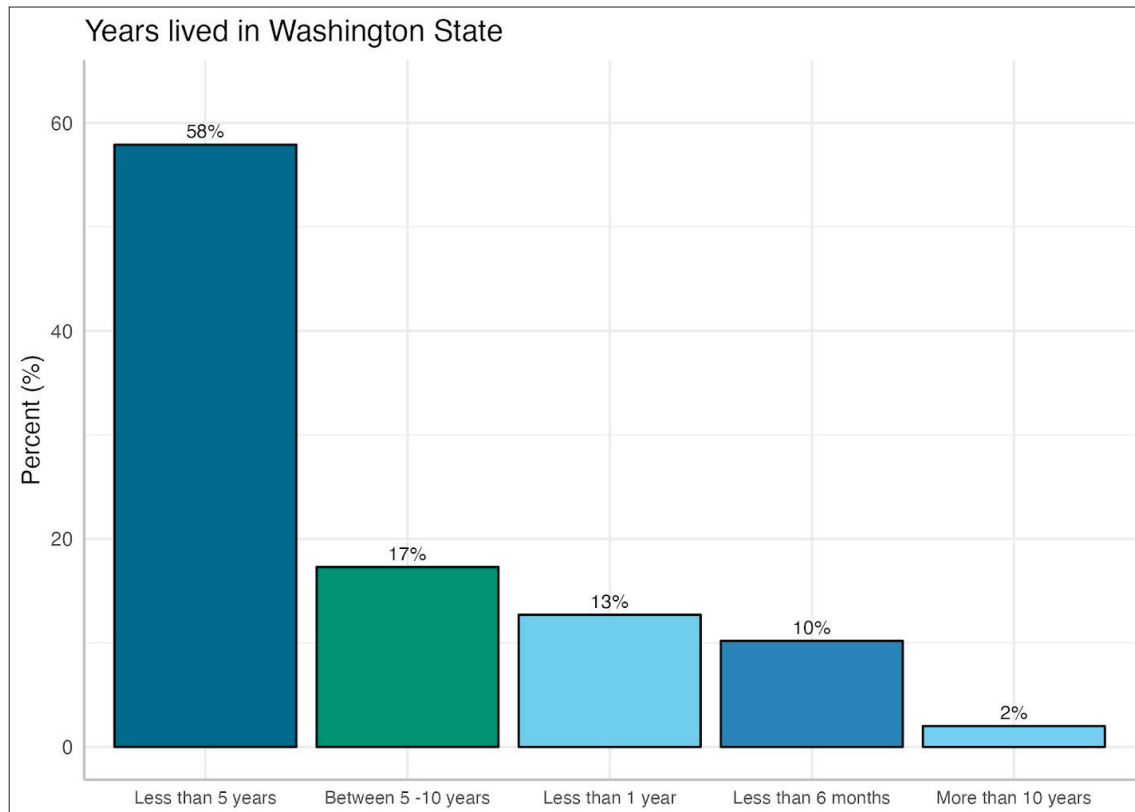


Figure 17. Self-reported number of years spent living in Washington State. 2023.

Figure 17 delineates the duration of time respondents have resided in Washington state, offering insights into the settlement patterns of the Afghan immigrant community. The distribution reflects a predominant influx within the past two decades. Specifically, 58% of respondents have been residing in the state for less than five years, with an additional 17% having settled in the past 5-10 years. Furthermore, 13% of respondents have lived in Washington for less than one year, 10% for less than six months, and 2% for more than 10 years.

This distribution closely aligns with the trends observed in the Figure depicting respondents' arrival times in the US, where a significant majority entered the country within the past 10 years. These findings collectively underscore the recent and concentrated nature of Afghan immigrants' relocation to Washington state, with a substantial portion arriving within the last decade.

4. Housing

Housing is an important establishment of one's home and belonging. It is important to understand what assistance is offered or utilized by Afghan immigrants, and who is able to have resources for their own housing.

4.1. Assistance Source for Initial Accommodation in the U.S.

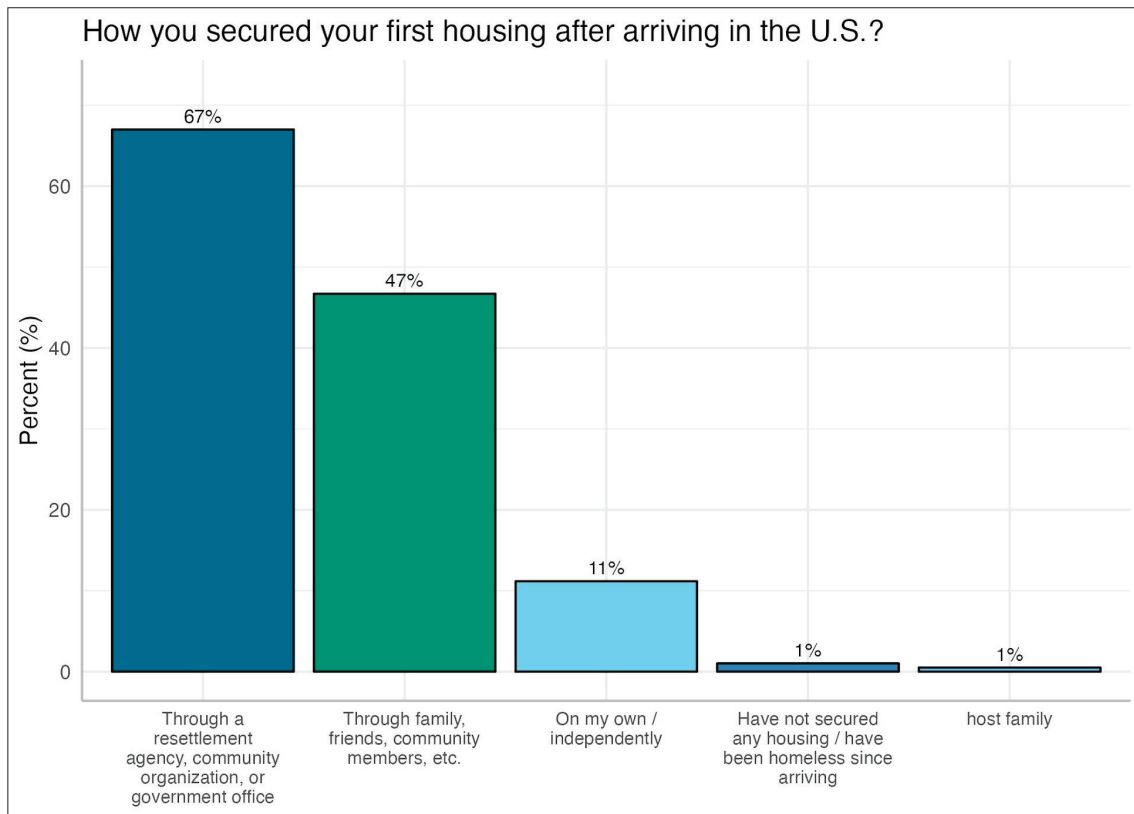


Figure 18. Description of securement of housing upon arrival of Afghan immigrants. 2023.

Figure 18 provides insights into how respondents secured their initial accommodation upon arrival in the United States. Typically, resettlement agencies orchestrate the preparation of accommodation, such as rented apartment units, prior to the immigrant family's arrival, facilitating a seamless transition from the airport to their new residence. However, the Kabul Evacuation presented exceptional circumstances, overwhelming the demand for resettlement services.

In this extraordinary situation, many evacuees initially were provided lodging in hotels, Airbnbs, and other temporary shelters until their designated resettlement agencies secured more permanent housing. The Figure indicates that 67% of respondents obtained their first housing through resettlement agencies or other government partner organizations. Additionally, 47% relied on assistance from family and friends in securing their initial homes, while 11% navigated the process independently. A marginal 1% mentioned being homeless or lacking secure housing at the time of the survey, often representing individuals temporarily staying with acquaintances or residing with host families until they find their own rented apartments.

It is noteworthy that while 58% (11% independently plus 47% through family and friends etc.) of respondents claimed to have found their own housing, 67% indicated that resettlement agencies played a role in securing their initial accommodations. This apparent discrepancy can be explained by the complex dynamics of the housing market, with resettlement agencies often stepping in to offer assurances also known as Pledge Letter to landlords, provide rental assistance, and facilitate the process for new arrivals who may face challenges in meeting typical rental criteria such as proof of income, social security number, and work authorization. This dual involvement underscores the significant role of resettlement agencies in the initial housing arrangements of Afghan immigrants in Washington state.

4.2. Initial Housing Situation Upon Arrival in the U.S.

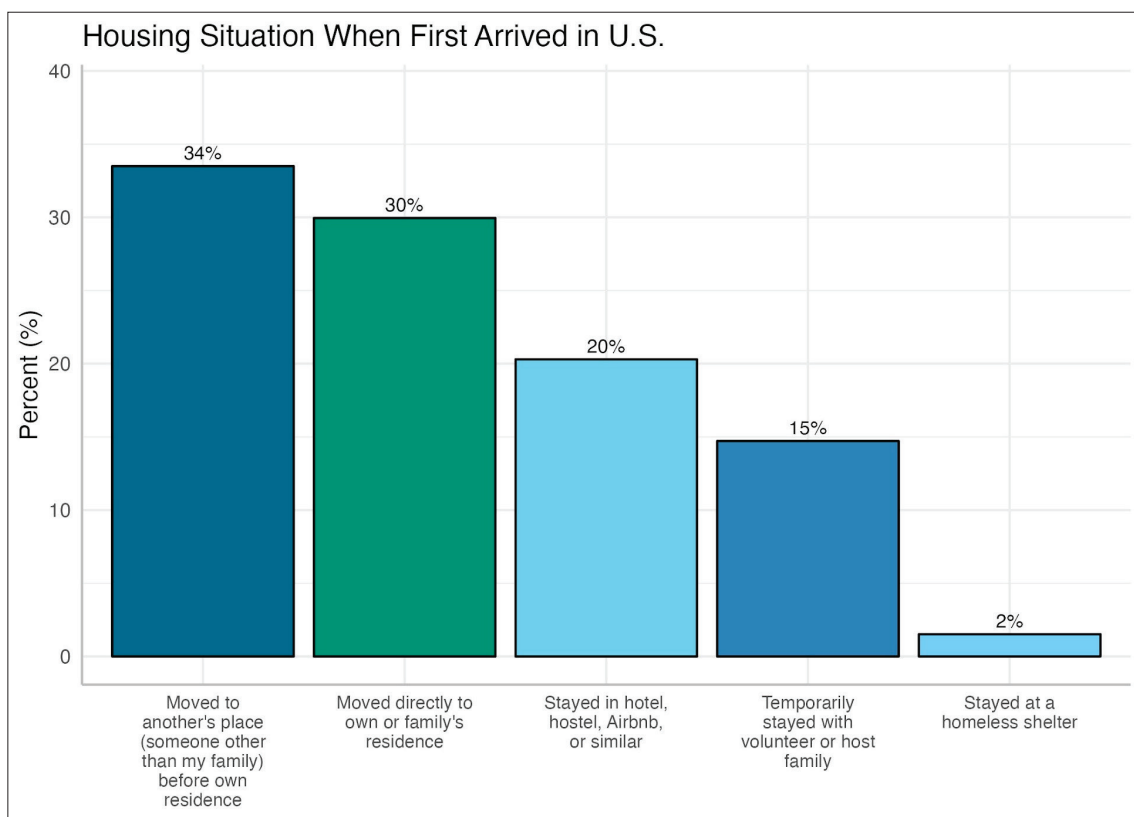


Figure 19. Initial housing upon arrival in the U.S. of Afghan immigrant individuals and families.

Figure 19 provides additional granularity regarding respondents' initial housing experiences, particularly in relation to whether they moved directly to their own apartments or had to stay elsewhere temporarily. Typically, new arrivals are promptly taken to their pre-secured rented apartments by their respective resettlement agencies. However, the surge in Afghan immigrants over the past three years, particularly since August 2021, has posed challenges in securing individual apartments for each newcomer. Consequently, many respondents had to stay in temporary arrangements before transitioning to their permanent residences.

The data reveals that 34% of respondents were initially moved to someone else’s place before subsequently relocating to their own apartments. This suggests a temporary accommodation arrangement with friends, family, or other hosts. In contrast, 29% of respondents were taken directly to their own apartments, potentially indicative of those who arrived before the heightened influx post-August 2021.

Additionally, 20% of respondents reported staying in temporary lodgings such as hotels, Airbnbs, or other rented spaces, reflecting the adaptive measures taken by resettlement agencies to manage the surge. Another 15% mentioned staying with host families or other volunteer groups, emphasizing the community support provided during the resettlement process.

An additional 2% of respondents mentioned a unique initial housing situation—homeless shelters—highlighting the challenges faced by some in securing immediate accommodation, eventually leading to their transition to their own apartments. This comprehensive breakdown underscores the diverse experiences within the Afghan immigrant community in Washington state during the complex process of securing housing upon arrival.

4.3. Current Housing Situation

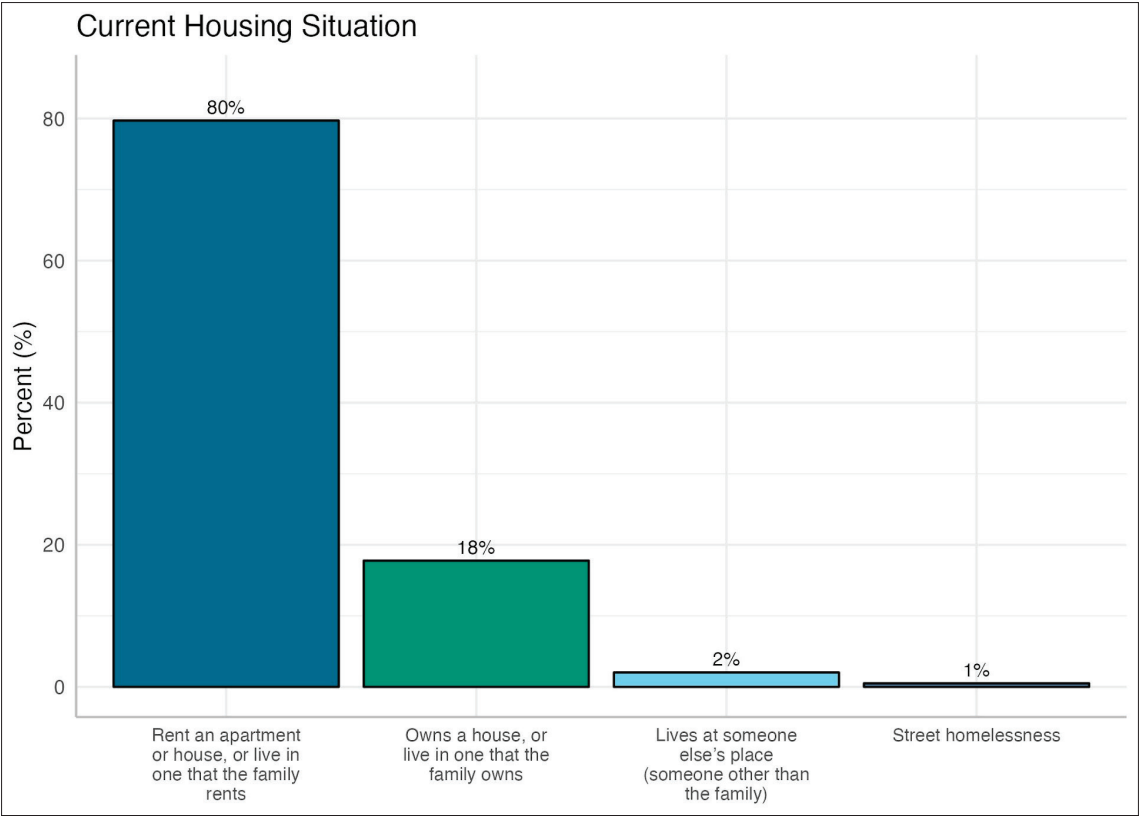


Figure 20. Afghan immigrants housing situation at the time of survey. 2023.

Figure 20 delineates the current housing situation of respondents, providing insights into their evolving living arrangements since their initial resettlement. Notably, the

data indicates a positive trend, with the vast majority having transitioned to their own apartments. The overwhelming majority, 80% of respondents, currently reside in rented apartments, marking a significant shift from initial temporary shelters, hotels, or stays with others.

Moreover, 18% of respondents have achieved homeownership, indicating a further progression towards permanent housing solutions. This transition aligns with the conventional trajectory of immigrants moving from temporary accommodations to more permanent and personally owned residences.

While the data paints a generally positive picture of successful settlement, a small percentage, 2%, still faces challenges in securing their own place, and one respondent reported being homeless.

“Finding the housing is also a challenging because some of them have a big family, it is very hard to get the three or four bedroom apartment and, the rent is very expensive.”

Despite these exceptions, the overall trend reflects a commendable progression towards permanent and independent housing arrangements for the Afghan immigrant community in Washington state.

5. Health

Health is impacted by many social determinants and is a key element in predicting an individual’s overall state of well being. In addition, measurements within health such as general health, health insurance and mental health are key in predicting mortality rates and quality of life.

5.1. General Health Condition

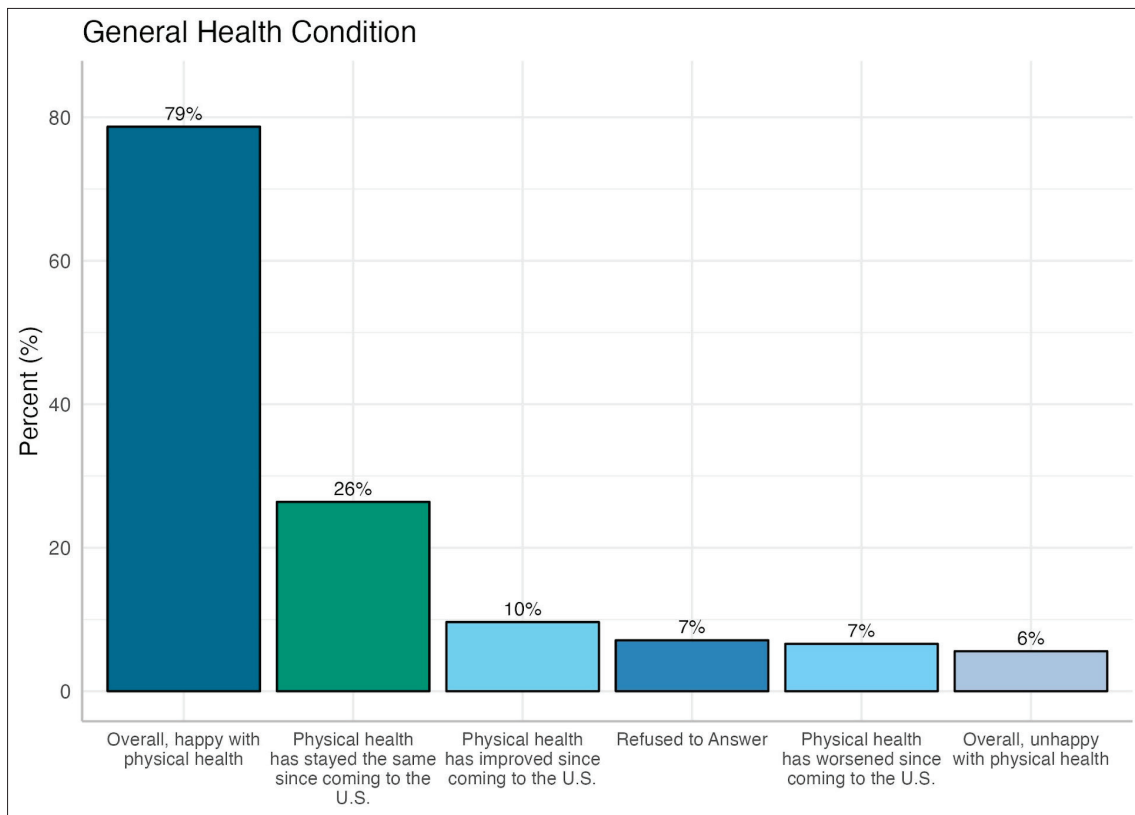


Figure 21. Survey respondents self-reported general health conditions. 2023.

Specifically, 58% of respondents have been residing in the state for less than five years,

Figure 21 illustrates the responses gathered from Afghan immigrants in Washington State regarding their general health conditions. The data reflects the sentiments of the respondents concerning their physical well-being, encompassing aspects such as satisfaction, perceived changes since their arrival in the U.S., and whether their health condition has improved or worsened. Respondents were able to select multiple answers to convey their general health conditions.

The predominant trend indicates a positive outlook on physical health, with a notable 79% expressing contentment. Conversely, 6% of respondents reported dissatisfaction with their general health. Analysis of perceived changes since arrival reveals that 26% note a consistent health status, while 7% feel their health condition has worsened.

Notably, a substantial 10% of respondents reported an improvement in their physical health since their arrival in the U.S. This finding adds a dimension of optimism to the overall health perspective within the surveyed population.

It is essential to acknowledge the nuances within this data. The percentage of respondents who opted not to answer the health condition question is 7%, underlining the sensitivity surrounding health disclosures. This figure encapsulates the complex

range of experiences and perceptions within the Afghan immigrant community in Washington State.

5.2. Health Insurance

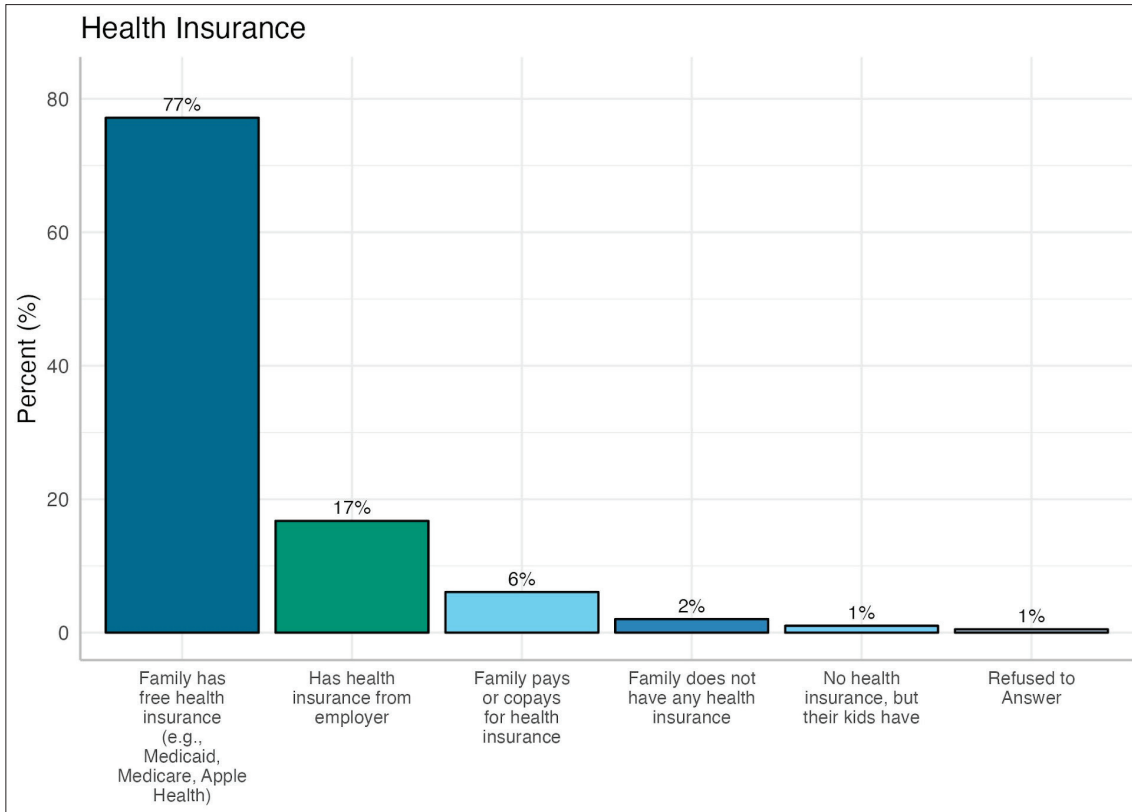


Figure 22. Self-reported health insurance status of survey respondents. 2023.

Figure 22 illuminates the intricacies of health insurance coverage within the Afghan immigrant community in Washington State. The data portrays a nuanced landscape of insurance sources and payment mechanisms among the surveyed population.

The predominant finding is that a significant 77% of respondents rely on government health insurance, primarily through programs such as Medicaid and Medicare. This underscores the substantial dependence on public healthcare initiatives within this demographic.

Additionally, 17% of respondents reported obtaining health insurance through their employers, showcasing a segment of the community accessing coverage through workplace-based plans.

A noteworthy 6% of the population participates in copay programs, where individuals contribute a portion of their health insurance costs, with the remaining covered by their insurance plans. This illustrates a specific approach to managing healthcare expenses within the community.

Conversely, 2% of respondents indicated a lack of any health insurance coverage,

emphasizing the presence of uninsured individuals within the surveyed population. 1% of respondents lacked personal health insurance but had coverage for their children, indicating a possible undocumented status.

A minimal subset, constituting 1% of respondents, opted not to disclose their health insurance status.

Figure 19 encapsulates the diverse pathways to health insurance coverage within the Afghan immigrant community, offering valuable insights into the prevalence of different insurance sources and arrangements.

5.3. Health Services Barrier

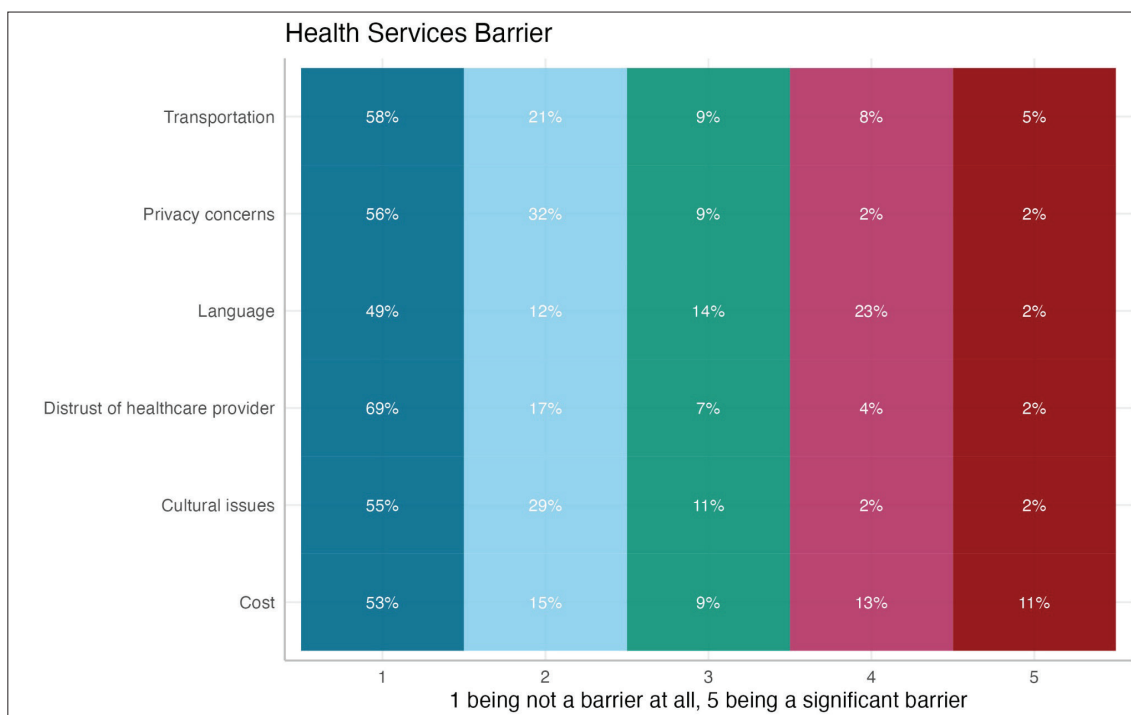


Figure 23. Self-reported health service barriers by survey respondent. 2023.

Figure 23 delves into an insightful analysis of perceived barriers to health services within the surveyed immigrant population, providing nuanced perspectives on factors influencing healthcare access. Respondents were prompted to assign a numerical rating, ranging from 1 to 5, to indicate the extent to which various barriers, including transportation, privacy concerns, language, distrust of healthcare providers, cultural issues, and cost, hindered their access to health services.

The majority of respondents, exceeding half, assigned a minimal rating of 1 to all suggested barriers, indicating that they did not perceive these factors as significant obstacles to receiving health services. Privacy concerns emerged as the most commonly identified minor barrier, with 32% of respondents attributing a rating of 2, surpassing other barriers.

For those who assigned a rating of 3, signaling a moderate barrier, language garnered the highest percentage at 14%, while cultural issues, privacy concerns, transportation, cost, and distrust received ratings of 11%, 9%, 9%, 9%, and 7%, respectively.

Elevating the perceived barriers to a higher magnitude with a rating of 4, language emerged as the predominant concern, with 23% of respondents deeming it a significant obstacle, followed by cost at 13%, and transportation at 8%. Distrust of healthcare providers, cultural issues, and privacy concerns were regarded as substantial barriers by 4%, 3%, and 2% of respondents, respectively. A recent study conducted on refugee communities within King County, with one of the focus groups being Afghan refugee communities, showed that community leaders had some themes of mistrust within the health provider community. Themes that were brought up focus on providers needing to have awareness of important cultural considerations and differences, and having sensitivity around certain health topics such as routine physical examinations (Erickson, 2023). This is important to note, as newly arrived immigrants might not have awareness about the systemic differences that might exist within the health provider system therefore not marking it as a substantial barrier.

At the extreme end of the scale at a rating 5, cost garnered the highest percentage, with 11% of respondents identifying it as a significant barrier. Transportation was highlighted by 5%, while distrust of healthcare providers, cultural issues, and privacy concerns each received votes from 2% of respondents.

While the data indicates that a significant majority currently experiences limited barriers to health services, a cautionary note emphasizes potential shifts in these perceptions as the population undergoes changes in health insurance coverage eligibility over time. The survey highlights the evolving nature of healthcare barriers, emphasizing the importance of ongoing research and adaptability in addressing the dynamic healthcare needs of the immigrant population.

“For the health care, you know better that, you know, the United States has a very tough health, um, network for service providers. They are based on the insurance and the people who don’t have insurance, they cannot afford. You know, that even very basic service going to the emergency service will cost thousands of dollars and the people who are very low income, they don’t have, um, you know, that money, even for the basic needs, that would be a big thing to do... And the other side is the knowledge or the, you know, that how the system is working is the other barrier because you know, that people, they came from other countries, they don’t have that knowledge.”

5.4. Health Services Utilization

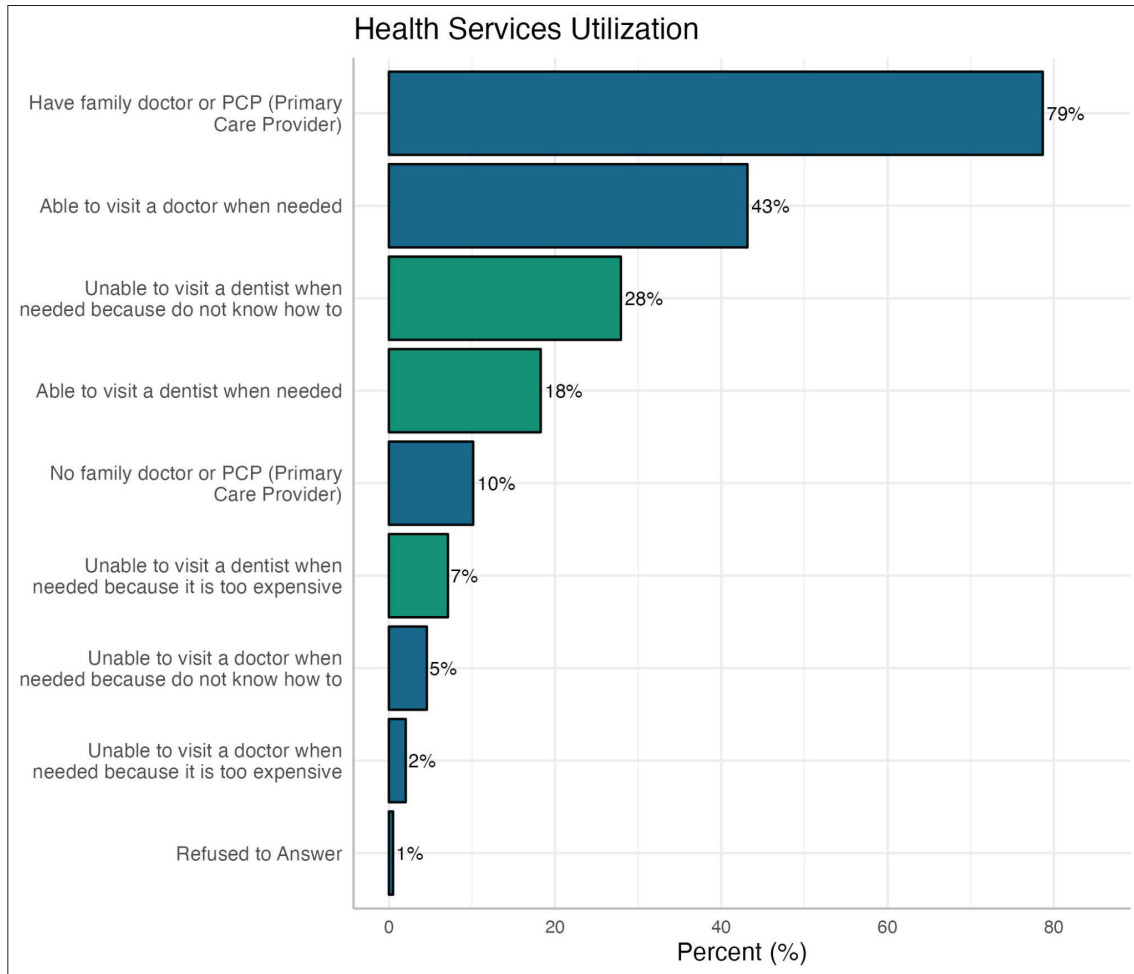


Figure 24. Self-reporting of health services utilization by survey respondents. 2023.

Figure 24 provides a comprehensive view of the survey results pertaining to the utilization of health services among the surveyed Afghan immigrant population. The focus here shifts from the mere access to health care and insurance to the practical utilization of various health services, including having an assigned primary care provider (PCP), visiting a family doctor, accessing dental services, and overcoming barriers to utilization.

A notable 79% of respondents indicated that they, along with their family members, possess an assigned PCP or family doctor, highlighting a substantial portion of the population with established healthcare connections. In contrast, 10% of respondents reported lacking an assigned PCP.

When queried about their ability to visit a doctor when needed, 43% of respondents affirmed their capability to do so. However, 7% acknowledged challenges in accessing medical care, citing financial constraints (2%) and a lack of knowledge about how to access healthcare services (5%) as limiting factors.

Turning attention to dental care, 35% of respondents expressed difficulty in accessing a dentist when needed, while 28% identified insufficient information and awareness about accessing dental services as a notable barrier. Another 7% perceived the cost associated with dental visits as prohibitive. In contrast, 18% of respondents asserted their ability to visit a dentist when the need arose.

The data in Figure 21 reflects the nuanced landscape of healthcare utilization within the surveyed Afghan immigrant community, shedding light on both successes and existing challenges in accessing and utilizing healthcare services.

5.5. Mental Health and Wellbeing

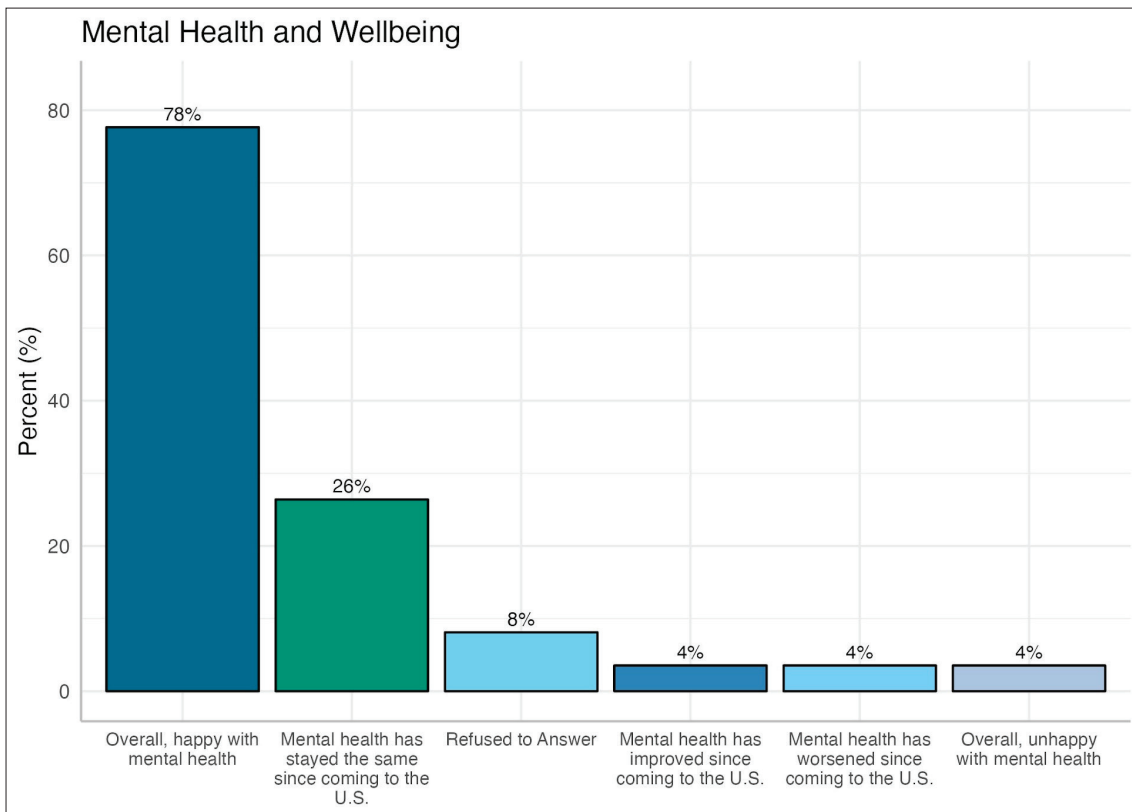


Figure 25. Self-reporting of Afghan immigrants on their state of mental health and wellbeing. 2023.

Figure 25 captures respondents' responses to inquiries concerning mental health and well-being. The patterns in these responses mirror those observed in the assessment of general health conditions, offering insights into the mental health landscape within the surveyed Afghan immigrant community.

A substantial 78% of respondents conveyed contentment with their overall mental health condition, underscoring a prevalent sense of satisfaction within the community. Conversely, a mere 4% expressed dissatisfaction with their mental health. The 26% reported that their mental health condition has remained consistent since their arrival in the U.S., with no discernible improvement or deterioration. However, 4% acknowledged a perceived decline in their mental health condition since their arrival, while another 4% reported experiencing a positive evolution in their mental well-being.

Additionally, 8% of respondents opted not to provide an answer to this question, reflecting the sensitivity of inquiries related to mental health and the diverse array of individual experiences within the community.

While a resounding 78% of respondents displayed contentment with their mental health status, community member perspectives provide important nuanced experiences.

“And, if they don’t have a great job here, (or one that is) appropriate, of course, it affects their emotions. So they face challenging about the stress about the finding their way. So first couple years is so challenging for them.”

This quote from a female community advocate highlights the challenges surrounding economic integration and employment, which negatively impacts mental health for many recently resettled Afghan immigrants in Washington state. Additional perspectives like these shows how the nature of needs over time can evolve and the importance of continued mental health support for this immigrant group.

These findings underscore the importance of considering mental health as a dimension integral to the overall well-being of the Afghan immigrant population in WA State. The responses in Figure 22 and the community provides a nuanced perspective on the mental health trajectories of community members, emphasizing the need for tailored support mechanisms and resources to address both challenges and successes in this domain.

6. Integration

Reflection and outlooks on integration into the society that is being migrated into provides how well a system is in taking in individuals and providing them with a sense of safety, security and belonging. The following graphs show Afghan immigrants’ outlooks on culture, political efficacy and knowledge, and community participation.

6.1. American Versus Afghan Culture

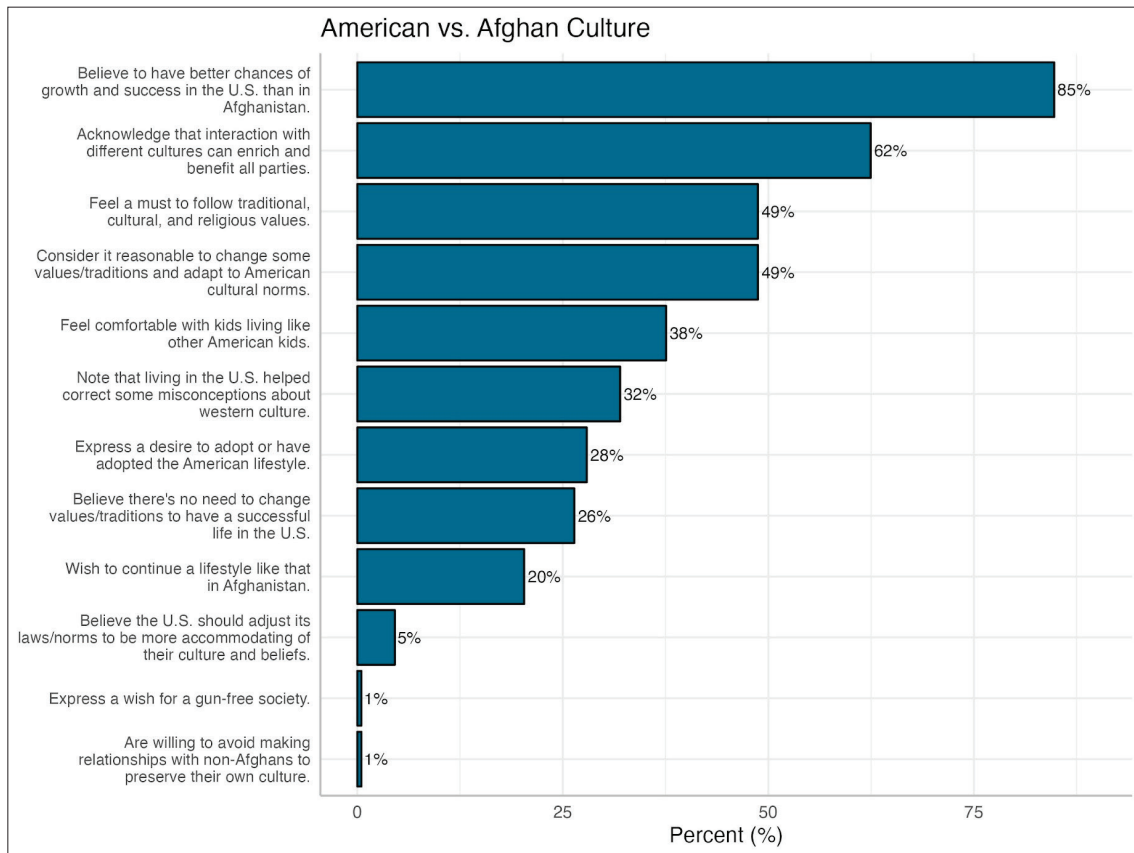


Figure 26. Afghan immigrant survey responses to outlooks on culture within the U.S. and Afghanistan.

The data gleaned from a survey of Afghan immigrants in Washington state offers nuanced perspectives on their views regarding American and Afghan cultures. The findings elucidate their attitudes towards assimilation, cultural interactions, and perceptions of opportunities in the United States.

A substantial 85% of respondents expressed a firm belief in better prospects for growth and success in the US compared to Afghanistan, indicating a prevailing optimism within the immigrant community.

Regarding cultural interaction, 62% of respondents acknowledged the enrichment and benefits derived from engaging with diverse cultures, reflecting a positive inclination toward cultural diversity and openness to interacting with and learning from the diverse American communities.

In terms of cultural adaptation, a balanced divide emerged: 49% of respondents were open to changing their values to align with American cultural norms, while another 49% were committed to preserving their traditional cultural and religious values.

Parental perspectives on their children's lifestyle in the US varied, with only 38% expressing comfort and openness to the idea of their children living like other American kids.

A noteworthy 32% of respondents admitted to harboring incorrect ideas about Western culture before arriving in the US, suggesting that firsthand experiences contributed to correcting their preconceptions and that they now have a more favorable opinion of it.

Regarding lifestyle preferences, 28% openly expressed a desire to discontinue their previous Afghan lifestyle in favor of adopting a lifestyle similar to other Americans.

In terms of resistance to cultural change, 26% believed they could achieve success in the US without altering their cultural beliefs, while a more rigid 20% expressed a desire to maintain a lifestyle akin to their experiences in Afghanistan.

A minor 5% of respondents advocated for adjustments to US laws and norms to better accommodate immigrant cultures, indicating a recognition of potential improvements in the host country's policies.

This comprehensive examination of the perspectives held by Afghan immigrants yields valuable insights into the community's perceptions of culture and cultural integration. The survey data presents considerable potential for extended scholarly inquiry into the realms of culture and integration. Notably, an exploration of the evolution of these responses in relation to variables such as educational attainment, ethnic background, age, gender, duration of residence in the US, and immigrant generational status promises to be of particular interest and significance.

The conducted data analysis not only illuminates the intricate tapestry of attitudes within this immigrant population but also serves as a foundational resource for policymakers and community leaders. The nuanced understanding derived from this investigation offers a scholarly basis for informed decision-making, contributing substantively to the discourse on immigrant integration and cultural dynamics.

6.2. Civic and Political Participation in the U.S.

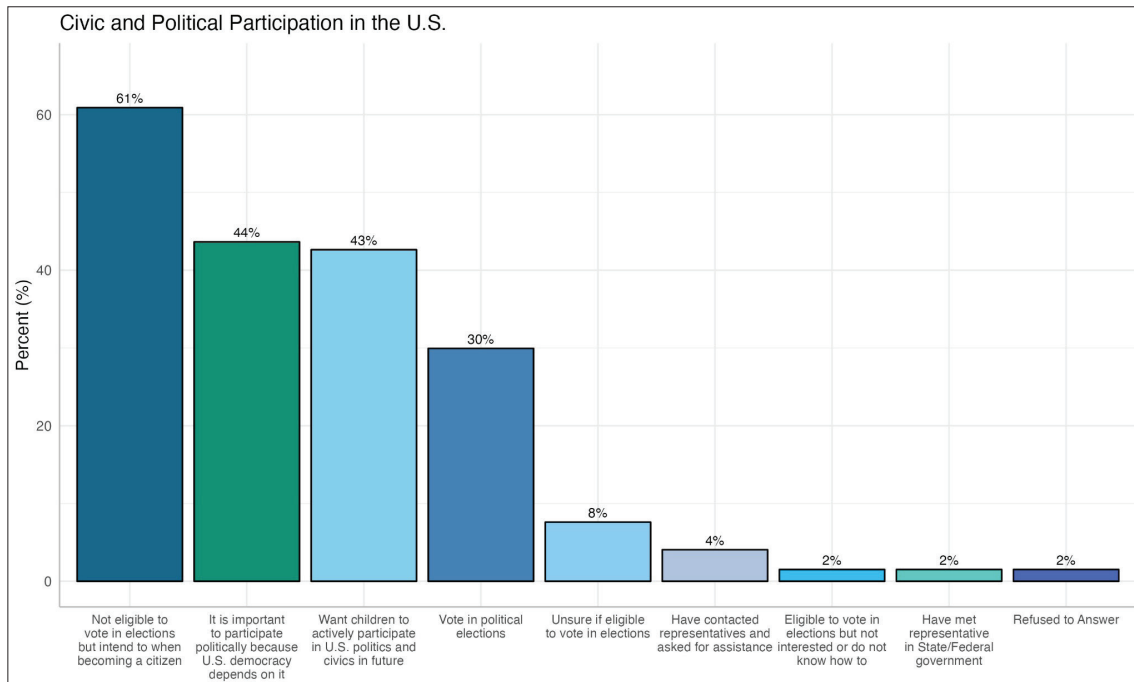


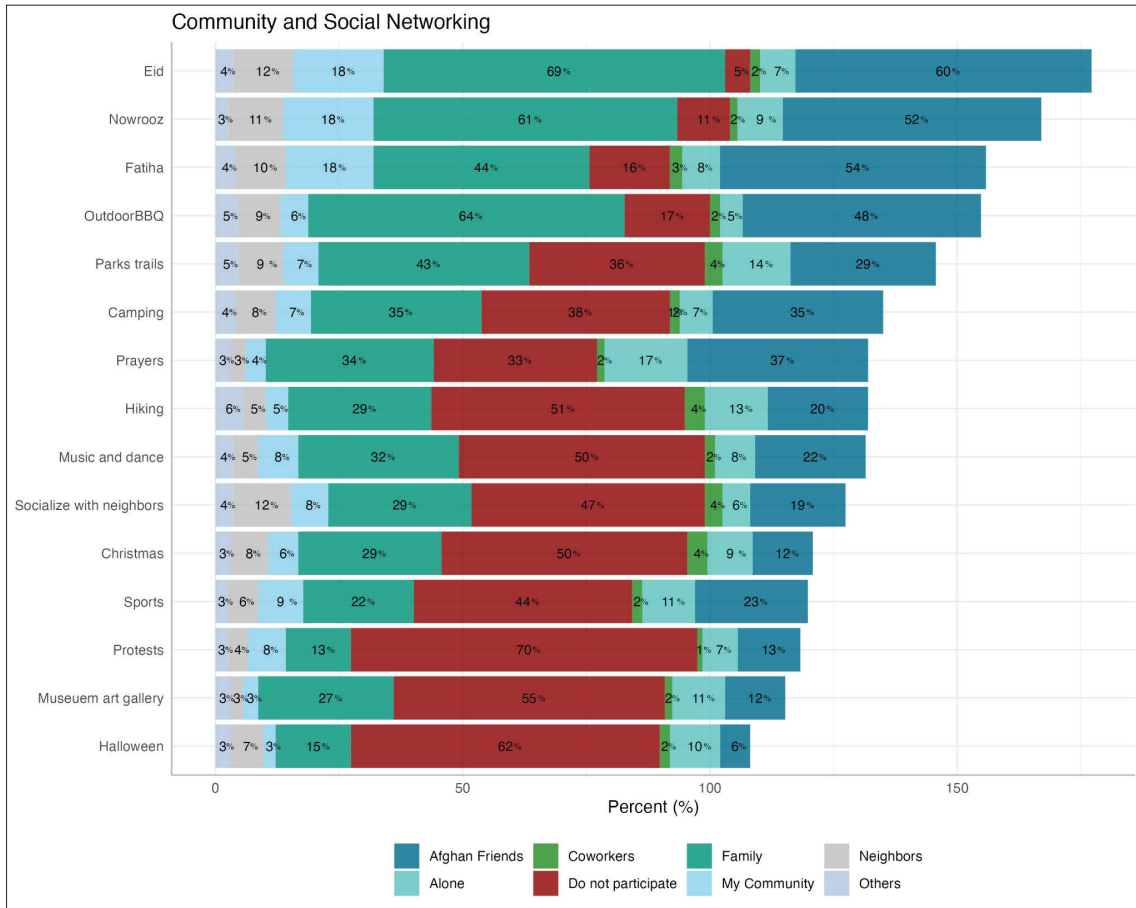
Figure 27. Afghan immigrant survey responses on civic and political participation within the U.S.

Figure 27 illustrates civic and political participation within the Afghan immigrant community in Washington, focusing on pertinent aspects such as voting eligibility, attitudes toward democratic processes, engagement with elections and elected representatives. The survey data encapsulated in this figure reveals a multifaceted landscape:

A significant 61% of the surveyed individuals are either not citizens or are ineligible to vote, highlighting a notable segment of the respondents currently unable to participate in electoral processes. Considering the data from Figure 13 regarding current immigration status and the fact that the majority of surveyed individuals are newcomers to the US and not yet citizens, it is unsurprising that 61% in this section mentioned their ineligibility to participate in elections.

Approximately 44% of respondents affirm the significance of participation in elections and democratic processes, emphasizing the importance of public engagement for the vitality of democracy. Furthermore, 43% express a desire for their children to actively engage in civic and political activities in the United States, highlighting a generational aspiration for increased involvement in the democratic framework. Approximately 29% of respondents actively partake in elections by casting their votes, signifying a notable portion of the community that exercises its electoral rights. A smaller subset, constituting 8% of participants, conveys uncertainty regarding their eligibility to vote, indicating a need for clarity or information dissemination on voting qualifications. Conversely, 2% of participants, despite being eligible to vote, opt not to participate in elections due to disinterest or a lack of knowledge about the process.

Exploring engagement beyond the ballot, the questionnaire inquired about direct communication with representatives in the US Congress. A modest 4% of respondents reported contacting their representatives for assistance, while an even smaller fraction, 2%, disclosed having met with their representative at least once at the State or Federal level. Lastly, 2% of respondents chose not to respond to the survey questions,



underscoring the importance of considering non-responses in the overall interpretation of civic and political participation data.

Figure 24 encapsulates a comprehensive snapshot of the civic and political landscape within the Afghan immigrant community in Washington, offering valuable insights into their current involvement, aspirations, and challenges in actively participating in the democratic processes of their host country.

6.3. Community and Social Networking

Figure 28. Afghan immigrants survey responses on levels of community involvement and social networking within the U.S.

Figure 28 delineates the community and social networking experiences of respondents within the Afghan immigrant community in the United States. The figure captures the extent to which individuals engage with their fellow Afghan community members and the degree to which their interactions extend beyond the community to involve

broader societal connections. The survey presented a comprehensive list of events and programs, prompting respondents to indicate their observance or participation, specifying whether they engage with Afghan friends, coworkers, family members, neighbors, or the community at large.

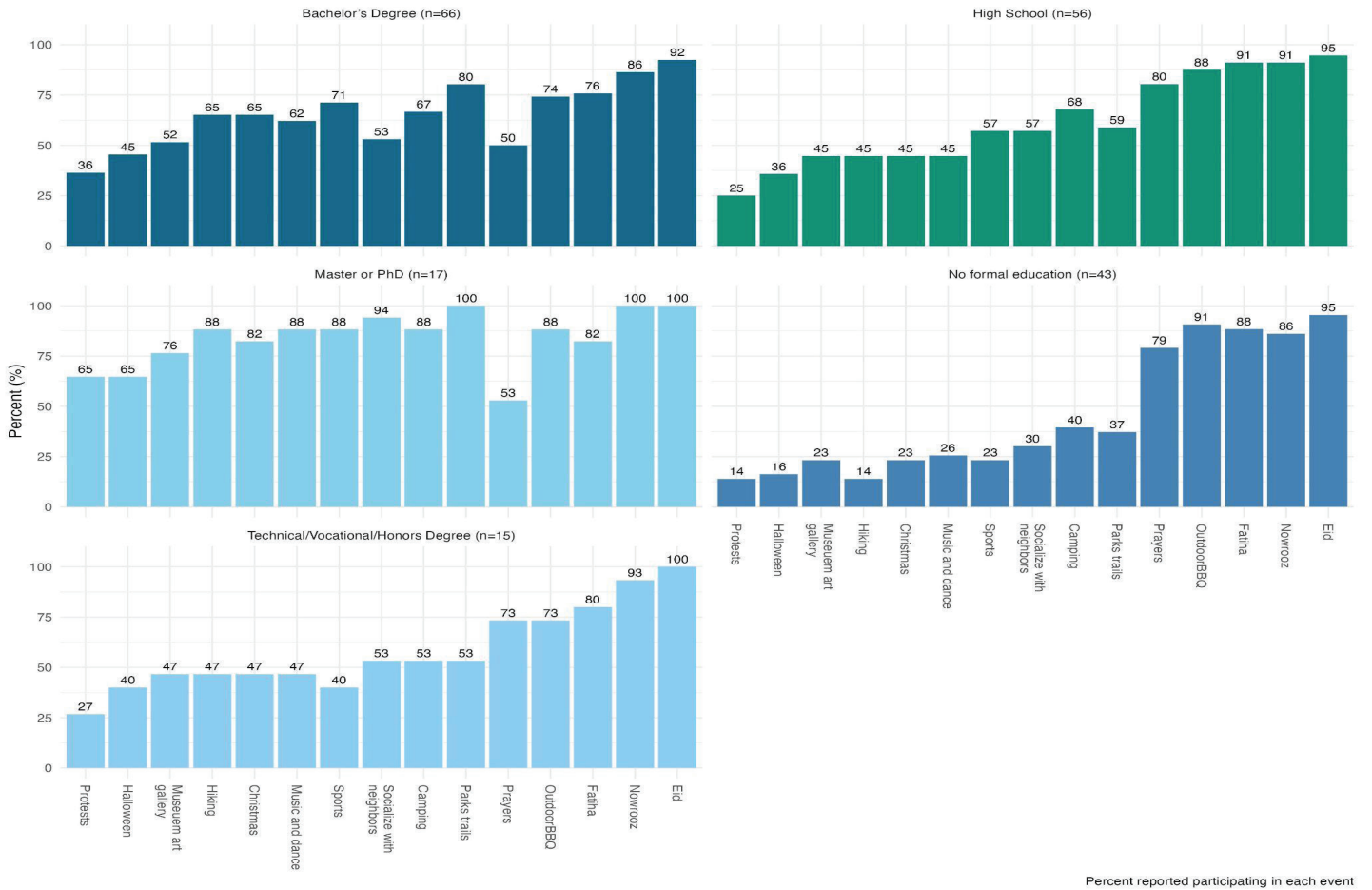
Eid celebrations, the Solar/Persian New Year (Nawrooz/Nauruz/Nowrooz), and outdoor picnics/BBQs emerge as the top three community/social events, drawing the participation of approximately 60% of respondents who engage with family members and Afghan friends during these occasions. Conversely, Halloween, visits to museums and art galleries, and participation in protests constitute the top three events/activities with around 60% of respondents indicating non-participation. Other events, such as camping, hiking, prayers, music and dance, socializing with neighbors, and Christmas, fall within the spectrum of responses.

The dominance of traditional events like Eid and Nawrooz, along with communal activities rooted in Afghan culture, reflects their prevalence among the Afghan community in the US. Notably, these events predominantly involve fellow Afghan community members and family, rather than neighbors, coworkers, or individuals participating alone.

Conversely, events not inherently tied to Afghan traditions, such as Halloween, Christmas, visits to museums and art galleries, sports activities, and socializing with neighbors, exhibit lower participation rates. The majority of respondents refrain from engagement in these activities, underscoring a tendency to limit social interactions and community participation within the immigrant community.

It is essential to underscore that the survey participants are predominantly newcomers,

Community and Social Networking



Percent reported participating in each event

and these observed patterns align with expectations. The limited interaction, socializing, and networking outside the immigrant community reflect the early stages of integration. This data emphasizes the restricted engagement of immigrant community members with mainstream society, highlighting an important aspect of limited participation and interaction with the broader society.

7. Sample Comparison Analysis: How does education level impact immigrants community and social networking in the integration process?

Due to time and budget constraints a single analysis is provided for discussion on comparing community and social networking with the education level that was reported in the survey. Figure 29, below, shows this comparison followed by a detailed description of the analysis.

Figure 29. Social networking and participation correlation with education level

The analysis conducted on survey data reveals a discernible correlation between the level of education and social networking and participation among Afghan immigrants in Washington state. Events, commonly practiced in Afghanistan as part of the local culture and traditions, include celebrations such as Eid, Nowrooz, Fatiha, Picnic/ Outdoor BBQs, and prayers. This study defines it as “traditional events”. Conversely, “non-traditional events” encompass activities not customary or as common in Afghanistan, often introduced to immigrants post-migration, such as civic activism/ protests, American specific celebrations like Halloween, museum visits, festivals, and

Christmas.

The study categorized events along a spectrum, with traditional events positioned on the right side and non-traditional events on the left. Events like music, sports, and hiking, considered somewhat transitional, were dispersed across the spectrum. The analysis, based on responses from 197 surveyed individuals, delineates distinct patterns of social participation and networking concerning educational attainment.

Participants with no formal education exhibited the highest disparity between traditional and non-traditional event participation, with over 87% engaging in traditional events compared to only 20% in non-traditional ones. As educational levels ascend, a gradual shift occurs towards increased participation in non-traditional events. For instance, individuals with high school diplomas show an increase in non-traditional event participation to 39%, while those with technical/vocational/honors degrees demonstrate 42% participation.

Remarkably, respondents with bachelor's degrees displayed lower participation rates in traditional events (75%) but higher rates in non-traditional events (52%). This trend

continues with individuals holding tertiary education degrees, where traditional event participation remains steady at 84%, while non-traditional event participation escalates to 75%. This suggests a positive correlation between higher education levels and integration, socialization, community participation, and openness to cultural diversity.

Furthermore, an inverse relationship between education level and participation in religious events, notably prayers, was observed. While participation in traditional events remained relatively constant across education levels, prayer participation exhibited a decline with higher education levels. For instance, participation in mosque prayers decreased from 80% for those with a high school education to 50% for individuals with tertiary education.

In conclusion, the analysis underscores the significance of educational attainment in shaping social networking and participation patterns among Afghan immigrants. These insights are crucial for tailoring support programs and integration initiatives to address the diverse needs of the community.

V. Conclusion

Throughout the literature review research, there was a lot of information and data on refugees and asylums, yet there is a lack of data on Afghan immigrants and their experiences. With the data collected from this survey, there is a lot of potential for the data collected within the Afghan immigrant experience in this specific survey research and beyond. Comparison analysis could be conducted among gender, age groups, ethnic groups, to help understand which groups are affected by what barriers to housing, health, and integration. The researchers invite anyone who is interested in utilizing this data for further research. It is important to note that the data collected is public data and will be available along with the report on the PR research website.

A. Implications of Findings

The goal of the findings is to provide a deeper reflection at the experience of Afghan immigrants within Washington state that could aid health providers, resettlement agencies and other relevant entities such as policy makers in creating resources, and taking into consideration the second largest immigrant group in the state. The implications of the data collected within the survey can show strengths of the community as well as highlight barriers to housing, health and integration that Afghan immigrants face.

B. Limitations of the Study

- The head researcher is of Hazara ethnicity, and part of the community; this could be seen as a contributing factor to a large Hazara ethnic population within survey results.
- Survey research has limitations such as reliability of self-reporting, the comfortability of providing objective and honest answers despite the researchers control understanding of confidentiality, and unintentional bias within the survey.
- An additional limitation of the study is that reporting could be based on experiences depending on where individuals are in the process of resettlement. An individual

who might be here for a longer period of time might be experiencing different barriers than someone who has just arrived.

- Gender- based or gender-specific analysis was not conducted to run comparisons between different genders.
- C. Recommendations for Future Research
- This research presents the current state of the experiences faced by some Afghan immigrants, for future it would be beneficial to conduct focus groups to empower this community and the individuals within it to drive the change they wish to see.
- A comparison between individuals that migrated 20 plus years ago versus those who came within the last decade.
- It would be beneficial to conduct a 1 year or a 5 year post arrival survey to compare this data with the experiences that Afghan immigrants had to gather input and overall observation of the systems at large (ei. housing, health, integration).
- Further research based on gender would be beneficial to help better tailor social

services experiences to people based on their gender. There is a need for future sample size to include more women.

- Research can be conducted based on resources utilized within social services. This would allow a partnership with local social services and an evaluation of the services that they provide.
- A larger sample size would benefit the data to compare wide spread and general experiences.
- Similar study of other immigrant groups, for example Ukrainians and Somalians, would provide a basis for comparative studies of immigration and resettlement and integration.
- Future studies can adopt the methodology demonstrated in this research to integrate the insider perspectives and experiences of immigrant communities, ensuring a balanced representation of both sides of the story to contemporary immigration and integration issues.

D. Summary of Key Findings

This exploratory survey provides valuable insights into the experiences of Afghan immigrants who have settled in Washington State over the past few decades. The majority of respondents indicated that they fled Afghanistan following the 2021 United States withdrawal and the subsequent Taliban takeover. Predominantly, they entered the U.S. between 2021-2023 through Special Immigrant Visas. The lack of security and safety was cited as one of the primary reasons for immigration, with 67% mentioning escaping from Taliban rule. Despite the challenges they faced, Afghan immigrants display high ambition to rebuild stability and create a new life in Washington State. Approximately 43% of respondents demonstrated English proficiency, with 10% acquiring their English skills in the U.S. without prior education in the language. When asked if their current job in the U.S. matches their skills and experience, 64% responded negatively, while the remaining 34% stated that their job aligns with their education and expertise. Overall, respondents expressed positive perceptions and experiences with public assistance, including health insurance and food and cash

assistance, despite facing challenges in housing upon arrival. Additionally, individuals with higher education levels tend to exhibit greater social networking and integration in wider U.S. society compared to those with lower or no education.

E. Practical and Theoretical Contributions

It is the researchers' wish for this data to be utilized as both practical and theoretical contributions to academic and policy research. The immigrant population's resettlement experience, including Afghans within the United States, is an unexplored area. The Afghan community within the U.S. is largely understudied. The hope of this research is to contribute to the larger body of work that brings the immigrant experience to the forefront of academic research to help contribute to evidence-based research for policy change and monetary allocations of support within the community. Integration of immigrants remains a hot issue around the world; this research hopes to bring the immigrant community's perspective to the discussion of modern immigration issues. It is the goal of the PR Research Institute and the individuals working on this report to enhance the available literature and policy recommendations.

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