



Office of Research and Evaluation
Research Grantee Study Summary

University of Cincinnati

Civic Action for Refugee Empowerment in Cincinnati

What is the background for this study?

This study explores how to collaboratively identify, develop, and assess civic infrastructure that creates and sustains meaningful and supportive engagement among diverse refugee and immigrant communities. Using a cycle of action research, local refugees and immigrants, and other stakeholders participate in a series of focus groups, inform collective analysis and reflection, and develop and implement action plans. The findings inform local migrant communities, local government, other organizations interested in civic engagement and/or refugee integration, and academic arenas focused on community research.

What are the research questions?

The purpose of this study is to examine how to create and sustain meaningful and supportive civic engagement infrastructure for diverse refugee and immigrant communities. The research questions are:

1. How should settings that are intended to promote civic engagement be structured to support the engagement and community building of refugees and immigrants?
2. What factors support refugee and immigrant communities broadly in civic engagement efforts?
3. What funding and resources are necessary to create sustainable infrastructure that supports refugee and immigrant civic engagement for the long haul, including compensations and benefits to community leaders?
4. How do we ensure that civic infrastructure responds to the needs and desires of the refugee and immigrant community, especially when crises and hardship arise?

Who are your community partners?

Partners include Cincinnati Compass, a branch of local government centered on welcoming immigrants and refugees to the region, and its Compass Community Council composed of refugee and immigrant communities.

How are community members engaged in the research to action process?

The research team includes 11 members of the local refugee community as co-researchers, with one also serving as the project manager, who drive all aspects of research and implementation. Refugee and immigrant co-researchers share decision-making in the final research plan and data collection methods and are trained to

Study At-A-Glance

Study Title

Civic Action for Refugee Empowerment in Cincinnati

Researchers

Anjali Dutt, PhD
Farrah Jacquez, PhD

Grant Cohort 2022

Timeline 2022-2025

Study Location Cincinnati, Ohio

Study Topic Area(s)

Community Development
Health & Social Wellbeing
Immigrants, Immigration, & Refugees
Social Equity
Volunteering, Nonprofit Studies, and National Service

carry out the collaborative action plan, including training on community research ethics, survey and focus group facilitation, and collective analysis/interpretation of the study findings. The Compass Community Council additionally serves as a direct line connecting co-researchers and community members with city government to facilitate an iterative process of research, action, and reflection.

What data and methods are used in this study?

Researchers conduct a series of focus groups and surveys with different refugee and immigrant communities. These focus groups and surveys are led and co-designed by refugee and immigrant co-researchers and center on learning about the perceptions and goals of their communities. Surveys allow participants to express their sense of belonging in the region and express what supports individuals believe that they can contribute to their community. Researchers also interview leaders of local organizations centered on civic engagement and/or refugee integration.

How does this research translate to community action?

This research informs the development and implementation of actions focused on creating sustainable infrastructure in Cincinnati that deepens refugee civic engagement and weathers unexpected societal challenges and changes. Insights from the Compass Community Council support the reformation of the Refugee and Immigrant Civic Leadership Program, which introduces refugees and immigrants to the Cincinnati government, community organizing, advocacy and public speaking, equity and inclusion in civic work, and group strategizing. Researchers also design an exhibit that will showcase the leadership contributions refugees and immigrants bring to the Cincinnati region.

What are potential opportunities to apply study findings and/or build on this research?

Findings contribute to the growing body of research on processes that foster civic engagement among marginalized communities. The research team plans to build on this study by examining how the created infrastructure affects different refugee communities and developing any needed changes to address gaps.

For more information on the study:

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- Explore the [AmeriCorps Open Data Research Grantee Dataset](#).

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