

# Utah Refugee Employment Study

## Phase 1 Report to the Asian Association

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### Executive Summary

This report is the first in a series of reports summarizing the Utah Refugee Employment Study. This study is the product of a collaboration between the Refugee and Immigrant Center at the Asian Association of Utah and Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at the University of Utah, Yvette Young. The study is proceeding in three phases. In the first phase, employment counseling and placement data provided by the Asian Association was compiled into a database suitable for statistical analysis. Phase 1 of the study completed data entry for 2012 and analyzed a host of factors affecting refugee employment in the Greater Salt Lake Metropolitan Area. These factors include refugees' education, employment history prior to resettlement, U.S. work experience, aspirations, trainings, and employment barriers. The state of the Utah economy and labor market are also considered. In phase two of the study this analysis will be duplicated for multiple years between 2003 and 2014. The final phase of the study will involve interviews with both refugees and refugee service providers to gain their perspectives on the process of seeking employment and on the experience of refugees working in Utah.

### Key Phase 1 Findings

- Education, English-speaking ability, and work experience improve employment prospects, but their benefits are limited.
- Female refugees experience a persistent disadvantage in the U.S. labor market.
- Transportation difficulties do not affect the amount of time it takes to find a job if transportation support programs are available.
- High unemployment rates in Utah negatively affect the time it takes to find a first job, but have no effect on finding a job with living wage.



{ Some forms of cash assistance improve the prospects of finding a first job, while others improve the likelihood of attaining a livable wage. }

Phase two of the project is ongoing, and phase three is anticipated to begin in August 2015. This report provides a summary of the data and findings from the first phase of the study. A key finding for policy makers is that some forms of cash assistance improve the speed with which a new arrival finds a first job while other forms improve the likelihood of getting a job with a livable wage.



## Demographic Summary

Utah is home to approximately 35,000 refugees from more than **70 countries** in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. The largest groups of refugees resettled in Utah come from six nations: Bhutan, Burma, Iran, Iraq, Somalia and Sudan.

The Refugee and Immigrant Center at the Asian Association of Utah (RIC-AAU) has assisted refugees from nearly **60 countries** with their search for employment. Of the clients who were originally resettled in Utah, fifty three percent of the refugees served by the RIC-AAU between 2003 and 2013 were resettled by Catholic Community Services (CCS) and forty-six percent were resettled by the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

These demographic characteristics of the RIC-AAU's clients are largely the same as the characteristics of the total population of refugees resettled in the state of Utah. Fifty-seven percent of the RIC-AAU's clients are male and forty three percent are female, and the majority are between the ages of 18 and 44.

**Table 1: Nationalities of RIC-AAU Clients**

| Country of Origin | Percentage |
|-------------------|------------|
| Bhutan            | 13.09      |
| Burma             | 13.75      |
| Iran              | 9.79       |
| Iraq              | 7.34       |
| Somalia           | 15.90      |
| Sudan             | 10.09      |
| All Other         | 30.04      |

The average family size of the RIC-AAUs employment clients who came in for services at any time during 2012 is 3.11 and the median family size is 3. While some households have as many as 11 family members, the larger families appear to be outliers. The number of children in these households ranges from 0 to 8 with a mean of 1.55 and a median of 1. When comparing genders, there is a statistically significant difference between male and female clients with regard to number of children they report in their household. The female employment clients of the RIC-AAU, on average, have more children than the male clients. In addition, 32% of the female clients are single parents while only 1.45% of male clients are single parents. Moreover, this difference is statistically significant.

The gender differences in family structure may have important implications for employment. On average, it takes single parents 17 days longer to find a job after coming to the RIC-AAU for employment services. The negative effect of single-parenthood on the employment search affects single-mothers and single-fathers equally, however, as noted above, female clients are much more likely to be single parents than male clients. Details on wage differences for different family structures are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Mean Wages by Family Structure**

|                       | Male Wage | Fem. Wage | Difference |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| No Children           | \$9.19    | \$9.02    | +0.17      |
| Single Parent         | 6.45      | 8.57      | -2.12      |
| Two Parents           | 8.95      | 8.21      | +0.74      |
| All Family Structures | 9.05      | 8.51      | +0.54      |

Figure 1.

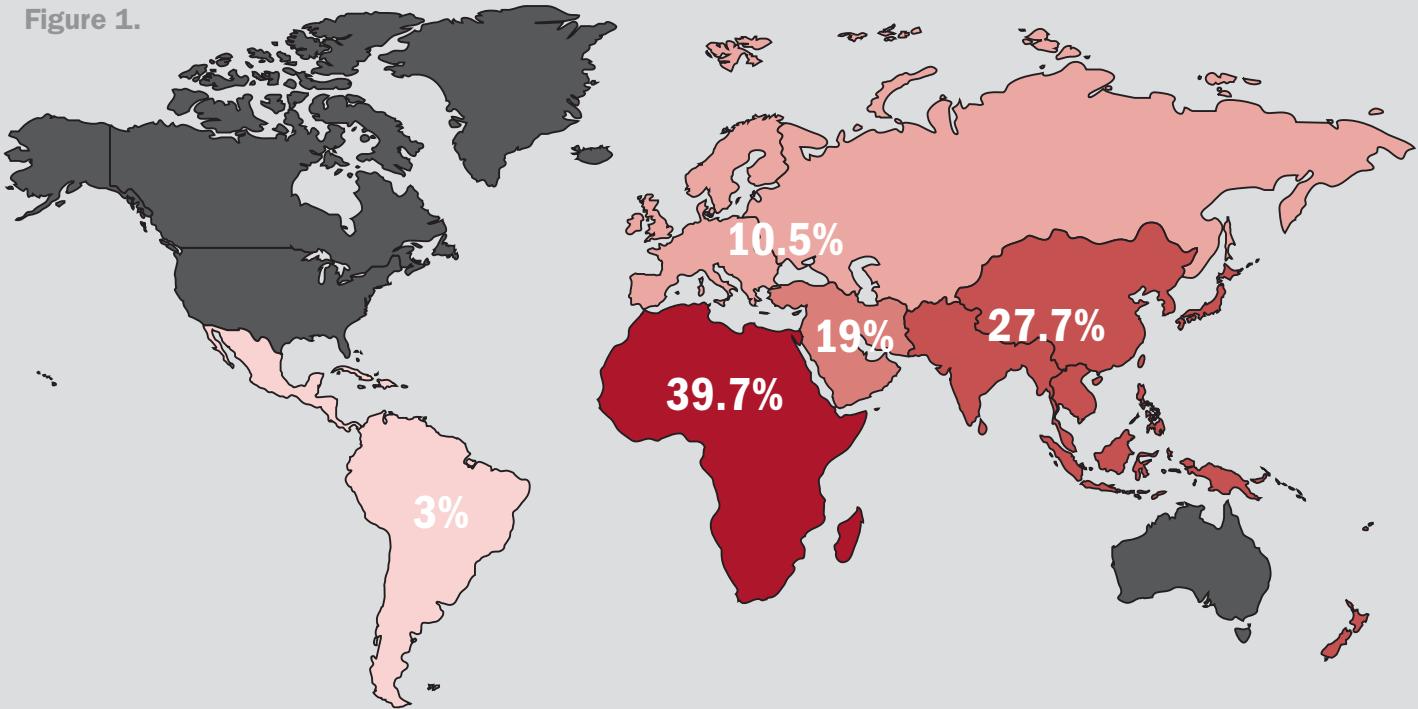


Figure 2.

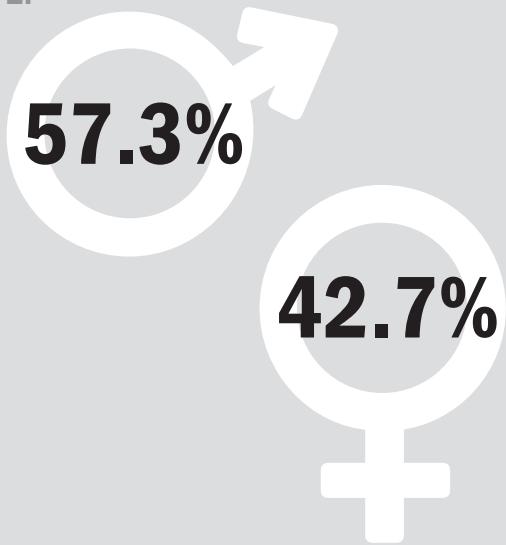


Table 3: Demographic Characteristics

| Age Range           | Percentage |
|---------------------|------------|
| 18 to 24            | 30.47      |
| 25 to 34            | 31.23      |
| 35 to 44            | 23.61      |
| 45 to 54            | 11.94      |
| 55+                 | 2.76       |
| Second Migrant      |            |
| No                  | 69.12      |
| Yes                 | 30.88      |
| Resettlement Agency |            |
| IRC                 | 46.41      |
| CCS                 | 53.59      |

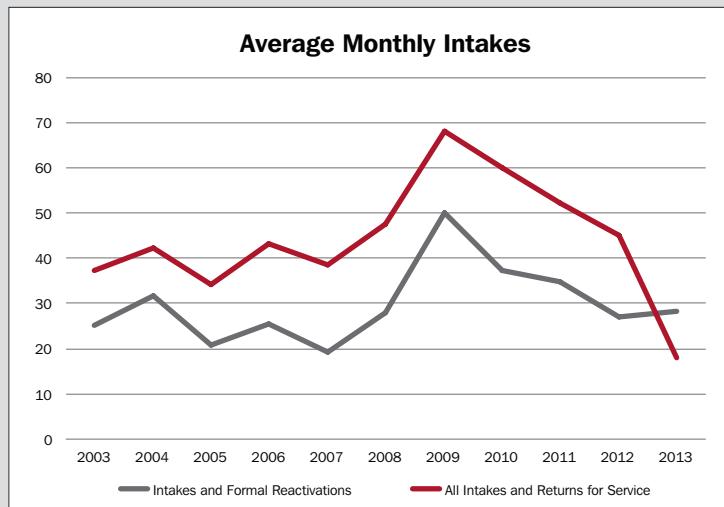
#### Demographic Characteristics of Employment Clients at the RIC-AAU



## Employment Clients

The RIC-AAU has seen fluctuations in the annual number of clients requesting assistance with their job search. In a typical year the average combined number of formal “intakes” for employment services and “reactivations” of previous clients ranges between 20 and 45 individuals per month. However, the average number of new and returning clients nearly doubled after the recession in 2008. (See figure 3.) When informal returns for service are included (returns that occur before a formal reactivation is required), the numbers are higher, but the pattern remains the same. After 2009 the numbers decline and return to normal. (Numbers for 2013 may not be accurate due to changes in the database and record keeping methods.)

**Figure 3: Average Client Intakes & Reactivations**



## Readiness for Employment

### Previous Occupations

Work history and occupational experience are key components of any job candidate's qualifications. Yet, not only do many refugees lack documentation of their work histories prior to arrival in the U.S., many have little or no experience working the types of jobs present in the U.S. labor market. 19% of the RIC-AAU's clients report that their previous profession was farming, typically subsistence farming. Few of these clients have the opportunity to apply their skills in paid employment in agriculture in Utah. 15% of the clients worked in construction or construction related jobs prior to arriving in the U.S. These clients will have excellent opportunities to use their previous experience in the Utah labor market when the economy is booming. However, during economic downturns, such as the recession in 2008, construction and other male dominated manual labor occupations disappear, making this field especially vulnerable to economic fluctuations. 11% of the RIC-AAU's clients worked as teachers prior to arriving in the U.S. Unfortunately, teaching positions in the U.S. require more years of education and require test-based certifications. Clients who wish to return to teaching typically must obtain or re-certify college degrees and must speak English well enough to pass Utah's certification exams. This can be a long and expensive path to employment. The same is often true for those who were previously employed in health care and social service work. Most other clients report working in entry-level,

low-skill positions. Only a handful report working as engineers, architects, lawyers and highly trained medical professionals.

**Table 4: Previous Occupations of RIC-AAU Clients**

| Country of Origin                    | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Farmer (Subsistence and Small Farms) | 19.36      |
| Construction and Related Jobs        | 15.08      |
| Student                              | 12.62      |
| Teacher                              | 11.12      |
| Miscellaneous Other                  | 6.52       |
| Food Service Occupations             | 5.67       |
| Customer Service, Sales, and Related | 5.45       |
| Cleaning and Custodial Occupations   | 4.28       |
| Health Care Professions              | 3.96       |
| Mechanic                             | 3.74       |
| Beautician                           | 2.99       |
| Housewife                            | 2.89       |
| Business Owners and Managers         | 2.57       |
| Seamstresses and Tailors             | 2.14       |
| Social Service Worker                | 1.60       |

# Readiness for Employment

## Status of Previous Occupations

Occupational status is a measure of the average educational requirements and average income of a given occupation. It ranks occupations on a scale ranging from 1 to 100.<sup>1</sup> RIC-AAU assists clients who were previously employed in occupations across the full range of statuses (1 to 97). Food preparation and serving occupations can have occupational statuses ranging from 1 to 8. Housekeeping and maid positions have a status of 11 and janitorial positions have a status of 17. General construction work has a status of 21, and construction workers who perform skilled labor or work with heavy equipment have statuses that range from 35 to 58. The occupational status of farmers and farm workers is only 4. In contrast, physicians and surgeons have an occupational status of 100, lawyers a status of 99, and scientists and engineers have statuses ranging from 94 to 97.

On average, the occupational status of RIC-AAU clients is 43.48 with a standard deviation of 23.35. One-third of RIC-AAU clients had occupations prior to arriving in

the U.S. with statuses below 30. Only three percent had occupations with statuses below 10, and only two percent had occupations with statuses above 90. It was anticipated, because occupational status is so closely tied with education and income, that the statuses of client occupations after resettlement will not be dramatically different. However, the status of clients' prior occupation and their first job in the U.S. are significantly different ( $t = 10.34, p = 0.000$ ). On average clients experienced a 20 point decline in occupational status for their first job placement in the U.S. The decline is even larger (24 points) for later job placements. The status decline is smallest for clients who obtain a job, either part time or full time, with a livable wage (200% of the Utah poverty threshold). For those clients occupational status declined by an average of 18 points and the decline is statistically significant. This decline in occupational status may come as a surprise to some clients, and may affect their longer term employment goals and their strategies for achieving those goals.

## Prestige of Previous Occupations

Occupational prestige is a measure similar to that of occupational status. It captures the average educational requirements and average income of a given occupation. In addition, it captures the broader social perceptions of the value of an occupation. In other words, it captures whether the position is respected or admired by others and to what degree. Like occupation status, occupational prestige is measured on a scale ranging from 1 to 100.<sup>2</sup> However, the prestiges of RIC-AAU clients' occupations prior to resettlement occupy a narrower range with less variation. The occupational prestige of RIC-AAU clients' previous professions ranges from 15 to 78. The average prestige is 47.29 with a standard deviation of 15.35. Due to the narrower range of occupational prestiges only 24 percent of RIC-AAU clients report working in occupations prior to resettlement in the U.S. that have occupational statuses below 30. 65% report working in prior occupations with statuses above 60.

The occupational prestige of RIC-AAU clients' occupations prior to resettlement is higher than the prestige of their

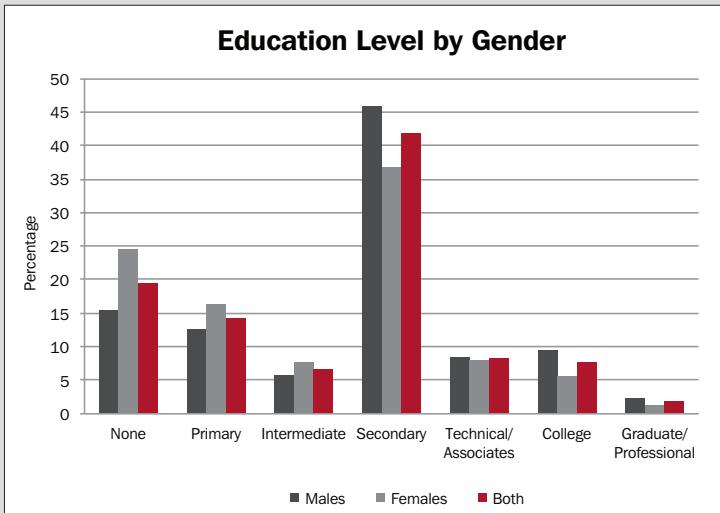
first job after resettlement. On average clients experience a 16.5 point decline in occupational prestige for their first job placement in the U.S. Once again, the decline is larger for later job placements (20 points). However, no decline in prestige is experienced for clients obtaining positions with a livable wage. This holds true for both full time and part time positions. The types of positions held by RIC-AAU clients after resettlement that offered livable wages include position in: construction (primarily skilled positions), interpreting, production, operation of machinery, installation, driving, and health care.

**Policy note:** Training low and no-skill clients for these types of positions may offer viable pathways to acquiring a livable wage in positions that offer clients an acceptable (non-declining) social position. It is anticipated that clients who receive positions with both a livable wage and acceptable levels of prestige are more likely to remain at their jobs long-term which will contribute to their family's long-term economic self-sufficiency. Phases 2 and 3 of this research will explore this in greater depth.

<sup>1</sup> Nam, C. B. and M. Boyd. 2004. "Occupational Status in 2000: Over a Century of Census-Based Measurement." *Population Research and Policy Review* 23(4):327–58.

<sup>2</sup> Treiman, D. J. 1977. *Occupational Prestige in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Academic Press.

**Figure 4: Education Levels of RIC-AAU Clients**



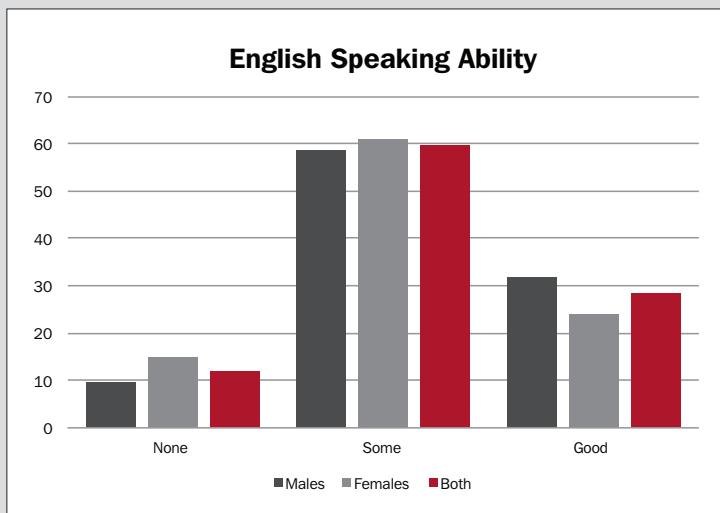
**Table 5: Level of Education (Percentages)**

| Level of Education    | RIC-AAU Clients | All Refugees Resettled in Utah |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| None                  | 20.49           | 4.24                           |
| Primary               | 14.77           | 21.77                          |
| Intermediate          | 6.23            | 13.14                          |
| Secondary             | 41.39           | 26.49                          |
| Technical/Associates  | 7.92            | 9.06                           |
| College               | 7.41            | 14.98                          |
| Professional/Graduate | 1.79            | 8.01                           |
| Unknown               | 0.00            | 2.32                           |

\*Pearson chi2(7) = 939.5326 Pr = 0.000

\*Kendall's tau-b = 0.1324 ASE = 0.009

**Figure 5: English Speaking Ability of RIC-AAU Clients**

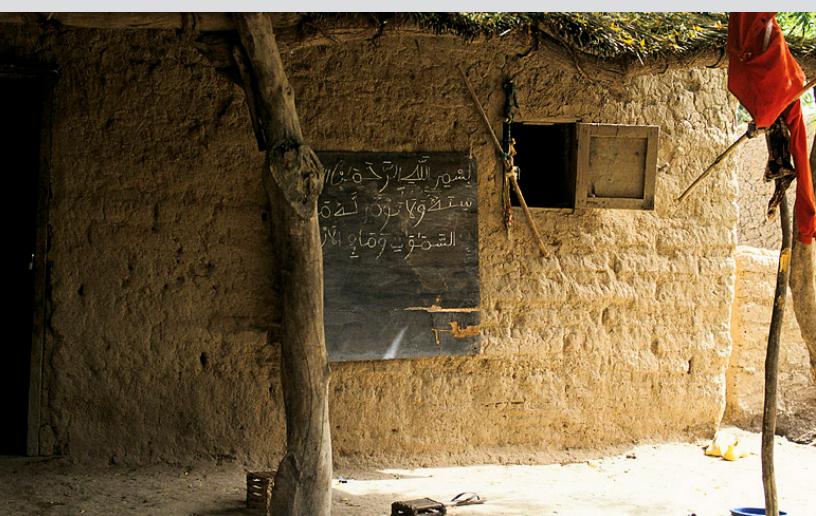


**Table 6: English Speaking Ability (Percentages)**

| English Speaking Ability | RIC-AAU Clients | All Refugees Resettled in Utah |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| None                     | 9.98            | 46.73                          |
| Some                     | 61.47           | 35.79                          |
| Good                     | 28.55           | 15.47                          |

\*Pearson chi2(7) = 1.0e+03 Pr = 0.000

\*Kendall's tau-b = -0.2631 ASE = 0.008



# Readiness for Employment (continued)

## U.S. Work Experience

Refugees who have more experience in the U.S. labor market typically have fewer challenges finding work. Approximately 40% of refugees who are first time employment clients at the RIC-AAU have no experience working in the U.S. Others found jobs with the help of their resettlement agency or they found positions on their own. Some were resettled and have work experience in states other than Utah, but are new to the Utah labor market. On average, new employment clients already have 7 months of U.S. work experience under their belt.

Surprisingly, U.S. work experience has no effect on the amount of time it takes to find a first job in Utah. In addition, more U.S. work experience has a negative effect on the wage of a client's first job in Utah. The same pattern is evident for later jobs. Among those refugees who need assistance with their job search, prior experience working in the U.S. does not appear to be an advantage. This may be due to the fact that they are disadvantaged in other areas such as educational attainment and English speaking ability. Analyses controlling for multiple factors are presented in the last section of this report.

## Education

Another factor known to improve a job candidate's employment opportunities is education. However, refugees resettled in the U.S. face three difficulties with regard to education. First, many refugees had little or no education in their country of origin. Second, refugees who have completed high school, some college or more often have no documentation of their academic achievements. Third, due to international differences in programs of education, some academic credentials are not recognized in the U.S. even if the individual has documentation of their academic history.

In general the female clients of the RIC-AAU are undereducated relative to males. The same holds true for the larger refugee population of the state of Utah. In

addition, when comparing the education levels of RIC-AAU clients to the education levels of the entire population of refugees resettled in the state of Utah, there are significant differences ( $\text{Chi}^2 = 939.53, p = 0.000$ ). The RIC-AAU clients have lower levels of education than the overall refugee population, making the search for employment more challenging. Among RIC-AAU employment clients 20.49% have no education, while only 4.24% of the total population of refugees resettled in Utah have no education. In contrast, only 7.41% of RIC-AAU clients have a college degree and 1.79% have a graduate degree, while 15% of the total population of refugees resettled in Utah have a college degree and 8% have a graduate or professional degree.

## English Speaking Ability

With English being the dominant language in the state of Utah, most companies conduct business solely in English. A handful of Utah companies conduct business in both English and Spanish. Few conduct business in the native languages of the refugees resettled in Utah. As a result, speaking English is crucial to success in the Utah labor market. Most employment clients of the RIC-AAU speak some English. Only 10% percent of the clients speak no English, and nearly 30% speak English well. The English speaking abilities of male and female clients are quite similar. Still, there is a small, but statistically significant difference between the English speaking abilities of males and females. On average, male clients speak slightly better English than female clients. The difference is more dramatic when the RIC-AAUs four-category

scale of English Speaking ability is used. More female clients speak no English or poor English, while more male clients speak fair English or good English.

There is a significant difference in the English speaking abilities of the RIC-AAU's employment clients and the overall population of refugees resettled in Utah. Relative to the overall population the RIC-AAU's clients speak better English. 61% of RIC-AAU's clients speak some English while only 36% of the overall population of refugees resettled in Utah speak some English. In addition, 29% speak English well while only 15% of the overall population of refugees resettled in Utah speak English well. In contrast, 47% of the overall population of Utah refugees speak no English, while only 9% of the RIC-AAU's clients speak no English.

# Formal and Informal Support and Resources

During the early period of their integration into Utah society refugees use a variety of formal and informal resources to aid their economic integration. Formal sources of support include government cash assistance and refugee specific training programs and inter-agency collaborations. Informal sources of support include networks of family and friends, as well as neighborhood networks.

## Formal Support: Cash Assistance

The vast majority of employment clients of the RIC-AAU receive no formal government cash assistance. Formal cash assistance includes traditional sources of welfare such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Family Employment Program (FEP), and Social Security Income (SSI), as well as Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and cash assistance provided by resettlement agencies. Forms of cash assistance that fund specific needs such as food, health care, and housing are not included in this table.

Of the 3890 clients who came in for employment services between 2003 and 2012, 89% were not receiving any form of cash assistance. Only 0.28% reported receiving supplemental cash assistance from their resettlement agency. Four percent were receiving Refugee Cash Assistance when they received employment services. Approximately 12% were receiving TANF or FEP, and only 0.1% were receiving SSI. Two forms of cash assistance were found to have a positive effect on employment. After

controlling for a number of other factors (including the employment readiness and potential barriers of the client) receipt of TANF or FEP correlated with more rapidly finding a first job, and receipt of RCA correlated with more rapidly acquiring a job with a livable wage. The inverse was also found to be true; receipt of RCA correlated with taking a longer period of time to find a first job and receipt of TANF or FEP correlated with an taking a longer time to find a livable wage.

**Table 7: Clients Receiving Cash Assistance**

| Cash Assistance Type | Percentage |
|----------------------|------------|
| None                 | 84.09      |
| Volag Assistance     | 0.28       |
| RCA                  | 3.96       |
| TANF and FEP         | 11.57      |
| SSI                  | 0.10       |

## Formal Support: Training

Clients with low levels of education, poor or no English speaking ability, and limited employment training are often placed in a subsidized employment training program such as the Humanitarian Center's work/language training program, the Department of Workforces Services' Work Site program,

PREST, or WRESL. 36.57% of the RIC-AAU clients who came in for service in 2012 participated in at least one formal training program. In general, clients who completed a training program received lower wages in their subsequent jobs than those who did not participate in a training program.

## Informal Support Networks

Social networks often provide additional resources such as information about job openings and referrals for employment. Beginning in 2012 the RIC-AAU began tracking both formal and informal collaborations in the employment search.

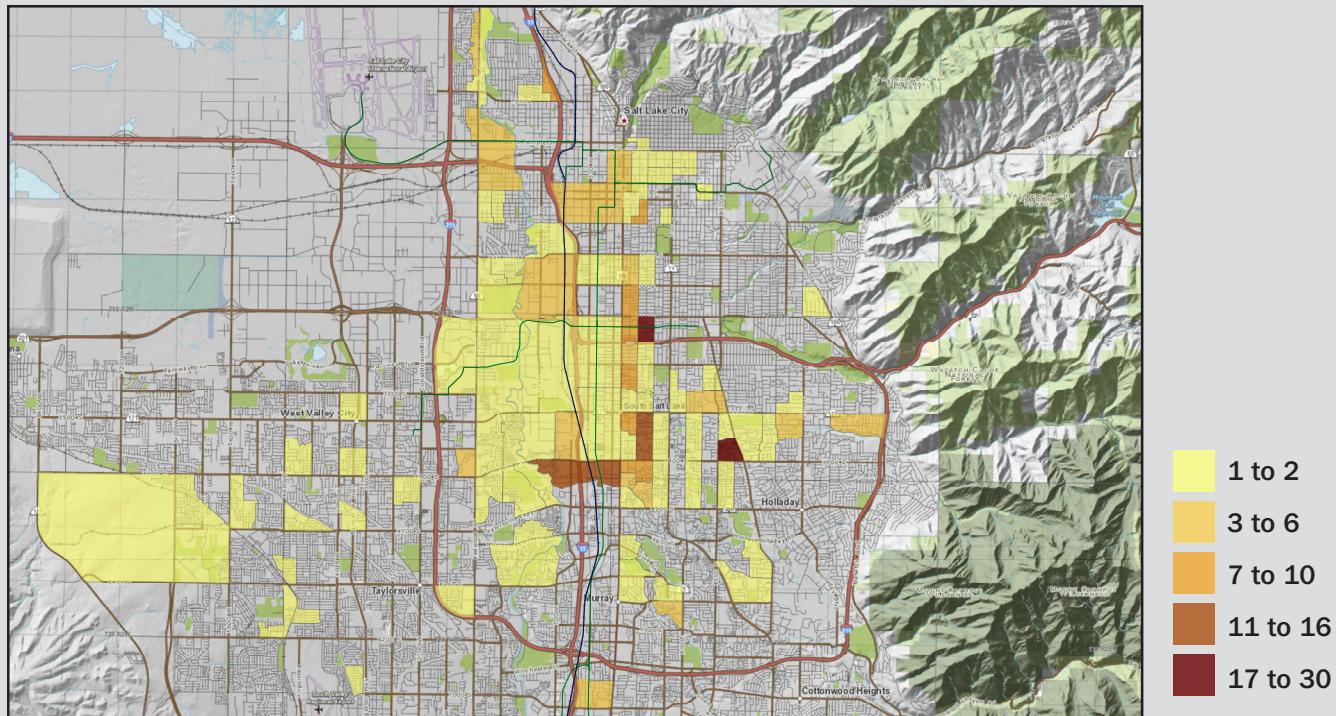
| Collaborative Source          | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| None                          | 68.88      |
| Family/Friend/Self            | 19.20      |
| Ethnic Association            | 2.32       |
| IRC/CCS                       | 1.16       |
| Other Agencies                | 4.01       |
| State Offices: RSO, DWS, etc. | 3.59       |
| More than 1 Organization      | 0.84       |

In 2012 nearly 69% of all clients had no collaborative or informal network support for their job search. 19% received informal assistance from friends or family, and family, and the remaining 12% received some sort of formal network support.

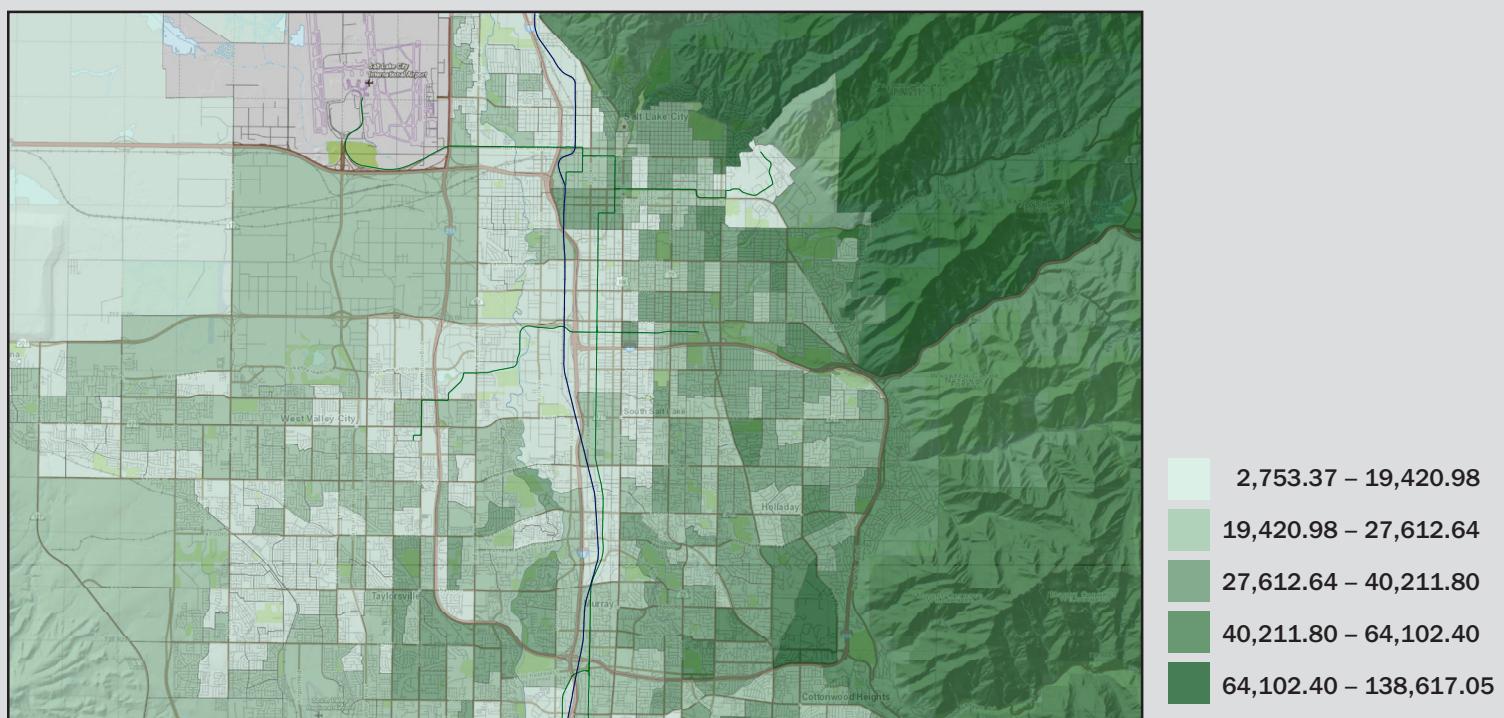
Receipt of information and informal support depends on the characteristics of an individual's social network. Family and close friends will typically have access to information and resources that are similar to those possessed by the individual. More distant connections, such as those found in one's religious congregation or neighborhood may yield access to a wider variety of resources. However, we suspect that the neighborhoods of most employment clients are low-income and the networks may lack some of the more valuable resources (information and support) available in wealthier neighborhoods.

# Neighborhood Networks and Resources

Density of refugee residences in the Greater Salt Lake Metropolitan area (2012 clients only).



Annual per capita income by census block group (neighborhood average).



# Neighborhood Characteristics

The majority of refugees in the greater Salt Lake metropolitan area reside in racially diverse neighborhoods with low average incomes (See maps on previous page). Of the four Salt Lake City neighborhoods with the highest density of refugee clients (2012 clients only), two have populations that are more than 45% non-white, one has between 25% and 45% non-white residents, and one has 75% to 85% white residents (based on 2010 Census data). Three of these four neighborhoods have very low average annual per capita incomes. The incomes in

these three neighborhoods range between \$2,753.37 and \$19,420.98 per year. The fourth neighborhood has per capita incomes that range from \$19,420.98 and \$27,612.64. There were no RIC-AAU clients in 2012 who lived in the Salt Lake neighborhoods with the highest incomes. One benefit of living in higher income neighborhoods is that the residents have better access to public transportation than many other refugee neighborhoods. Trax routes are shown in green on the above maps.

# Refugees' Barriers to Employment

**Table 9: Employment Barriers of RIC-AAU Clients**

| Skill Deficits                                      | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| Unable to Interview in English                      | 33.13      |
| Does Not Have a Driver's License                    | 66.20      |
| <b>Health Issues</b>                                |            |
| Physical Health Issues Reported                     | 22.81      |
| Mental Health Issues Observed or Reported           | 7.34       |
| <b>Economic Barriers</b>                            |            |
| Lacks Appropriate Interview Clothes                 | 10.84      |
| Relies on Public Transportation                     | 71.08      |
| Requires Child Care                                 | 23.61      |
| <b>Social/Cultural Barriers</b>                     |            |
| Hygiene Issues Observed                             | 2.48       |
| At Least One Social, Religious, or Cultural Barrier | 24.47      |
| Schedule Restrictions                               | 2.85       |
| Restrictive Gender Norms                            | 0.24       |
| Prohibitions on Working with Meat or Alcohol        | 17.58      |
| Dress Code Restrictions                             | 3.80       |



# Refugees' Barriers to Employment

## Skill, Health and Economic Barriers

Barriers to employment can take a variety of forms. The barriers that are tracked by the RIC-AAU fall into four general categories: skill deficits, health issues, economic barriers, and cultural barriers. The skill deficits listed here are those that might create a barrier to employment, regardless of the type of position. For example, an inability to interview in English may impact a client's ability to get a job, regardless of whether the position requires proficiency in spoken English. The employment counselors at the RIC-AAU described 33.13% of the clients as being unable to interview for a job in English. Between the first and second time clients came to the RIC-AAU for employment services, only 11.76% improved their ability to interview in English. Between the second and third time a client came to the RIC-AAU for employment services, 17.95% improved their ability to interview in English. Due to the fact that interviewing requires specific tactics and vocabulary that may not be used in daily life, an individual's overall ability to speak English may not transfer to an ability to conduct an interview in English. 5.9% of the RIC-AAU employment clients improved their skill in spoken English but did not improve their ability to interview in English. Another 4.1% of the clients improved their ability to interview in English without improving their overall skill in spoken English. The majority of clients, 82.35%, experienced no change in either spoken English or their ability to interview in English. Because both measures of English speaking ability are measured with subjective scales rather than with tests these comparisons should be interpreted with caution.

Physical and mental health issues can also restrict an individual's ability to work or limit the types of jobs they are capable of doing. 22.81% of the RIC-AAU clients reported

some type of physical health condition. Both temporary and long-term physical health conditions were documented. Mental health conditions are also tracked. These are documented if reported by the client or observed by an employment counselor. However, mental health conditions are stigmatized in many cultures and are often not reported. Only 7.34% of the RIC-AAU clients have some type of mental health condition reported in their files. However, this number should be interpreted with caution due to under-reporting.

The third category of employment barriers—economic barriers—represents the group of barriers that are the easiest for service agencies to address. Approximately 10.84% of clients lack appropriate interview clothes. However, there is no relationship between lacking interview clothing and the time it takes to find a job. There is also no effect on the client's wage. The absence of an effect speaks to the effectiveness of the RIC-AAU's programs that provide clothing vouchers. Similarly, there is no relationship between reliance on public transportation and the time it takes to find a job. However, reliance on public transportation correlates with lower wages. On average clients who rely on public transportation receive \$0.48/hour less than clients with other transportation options ( $t = 2.60, p = 0.01$ ). Finally, 23.61% of the RIC-AAU's clients express the need to find appropriate child care before they can work. Once again, there is no relationship between the need for child care and the time it takes to find a job, but there is a relationship between the need for child care and the wage a client receives after finding a job. On average clients who need child care receive \$0.60/hour less than clients who do not ( $t = 2.58, p = 0.01$ ).

## Cultural Barriers

The most difficult barriers for voluntary agencies to address are social and cultural barriers. They are also some of the most difficult to document. The RIC-AAU documents a handful of the more tangible cultural differences in the Employment Assessment form. 24.47% of RIC-AAU clients report at least one social, religious, or cultural barrier. These include schedule restrictions, strict dress codes, other religious constraints, and restrictive gender norms. 17.58% of clients have religious or cultural beliefs that prohibit them from working with meat or alcohol. 3.8% have

religious or culturally-based dress codes that may prohibit them from working in some occupations. Only 0.24% of clients mention restrictions related to gender, however, most individuals don't recognize this type of cultural difference until they have experienced some type of conflict or social strain in the workplace. Cultural differences surrounding normative, but unwritten behavioral rules can be very difficult to document. Phase 3 of this study will explore the "clash of cultures" experienced by refugees using focus group data.



## Refugee Job Placements

### Duration of Search for First Job

Unlike voluntary immigrants, refugees have unique access to social services and welfare programs after resettlement in the U.S. However, financial support is only available for a short period of time, and many forms of social support are only available for the first five years. As a result, there is a great deal of pressure for refugees to find employment soon after being resettled in the U.S. On average **57.06%** of first-time RIC-AAU clients are placed in a job, and it takes these new clients an average of **5.85 months** to be placed in their first job. These numbers do not include placements in subsidized positions such as the Humanitarian Center's subsidized training program. Approximately 11% of the first-time clients were placed in a subsidized position. There are statistically significant differences in placements for refugees from different regions of origin ( $\text{Chi}^2 = 132.86$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ).

### Duration of Search for a Living Wage

The U.S. government expects refugees to be economically self-sufficient within five years of resettlement. However, their primary concern is that refugees no longer need financial support in the form of welfare or other benefits. True self-sufficiency requires, at a minimum, a living wage. In 2012 the living wage for the state of Utah was estimated to be \$9.43/hour. More realistically, it entails a wage that is 200% of the state poverty threshold plus the skills and training that will allow the refugee to independently find new employment circumstances whenever necessary. In 2012, 200% of the state poverty level is an hourly wage of \$11.32/hour. It is this higher estimate of a living wage that is used in all study analyses.

There are also significant differences in the placements of men and women. More women are placed in subsidized positions, while more men are placed in traditional jobs. In addition, it takes new female clients an average of 36 days longer to find a first job than it takes new male clients. Annual trends for males and females are shown in Figure 8.

**Table 10: Job Placements by Gender (Percentages)**

| Type of Placement    | Male  | Female | Both  |
|----------------------|-------|--------|-------|
| None                 | 29.12 | 36.08  | 32.09 |
| Subsidized Position  | 8.24  | 14.31  | 10.83 |
| Traditional Position | 62.63 | 49.61  | 57.07 |

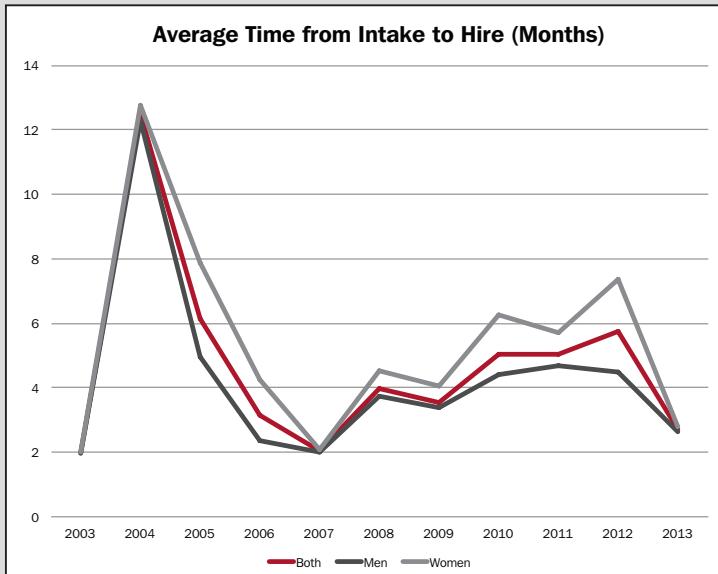
\*Pearson  $\text{chi}^2(7) = 75.0865$  Pr = 0.000

\*Kendall's tau-b = 0.1106 ASE = 0.015

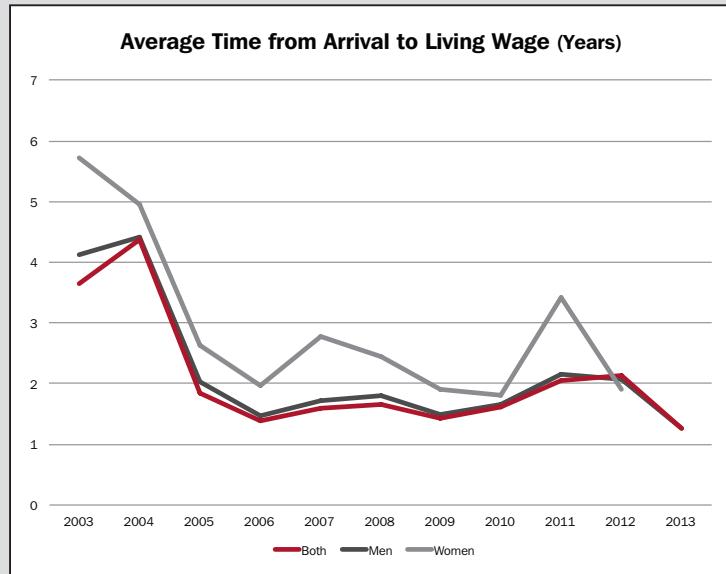
On average it takes RIC-AAU clients **2.15 years** from arrival in the U.S. until they receive a wage that is 200% of the state poverty threshold. **12.42%** of all job placements were in jobs that paid a living wage. An impressive 74.89% of all placements that paid a living wage were full time positions. Unfortunately, women were very unlikely to obtain a position with a living wage. Only 5.65% of women who were placed in jobs received a living wage, while 16.14% of men who were placed in jobs received a living wage, and this difference is statistically significant ( $\text{Chi}^2 = 99.19$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ).

The average wage received by RIC-AAU clients between the years of 2003 and 2013 was \$8.93/hour. In 2012 the average wage was \$9.04/hour. On average, male clients earn \$0.98/hour more than female clients ( $t = -14.47$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ).

**Figure 8: Average Time from Intake to Hire**



**Figure 9: Average Time from Arrival to Living Wage**



**Table 11: Wage Differences by Client Characteristics**

| Characteristic               | Wage Advantage*   | Wage Difference   | t                 | p                  |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Gender                       | Males             | \$0.98            | 14.47             | 0.000              |
| Family Structure             | Non-Single Parent | 0.51              | 2.14              | 0.033              |
| Number of Children           | No Children       | 0.30 <sup>1</sup> | 2.12 <sup>2</sup> | 0.040              |
| Region of Origin             | Eastern Europe    | 0.20 <sup>1</sup> | 6.76 <sup>2</sup> | 0.000              |
| Originally Resettled in Utah | Second Migrants   | 0.13              | 1.82              | 0.068 <sup>3</sup> |
| Utah Resettlement Agency     | IRC               | 0.20              | 2.15              | 0.032              |

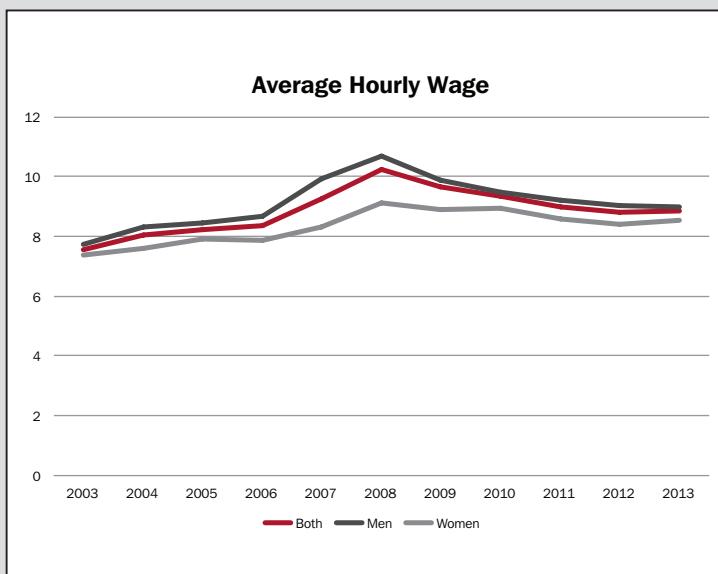
\*Category or group for which wage advantage is evident.

<sup>1</sup>F-statistic based on a one-way ANOVA test.

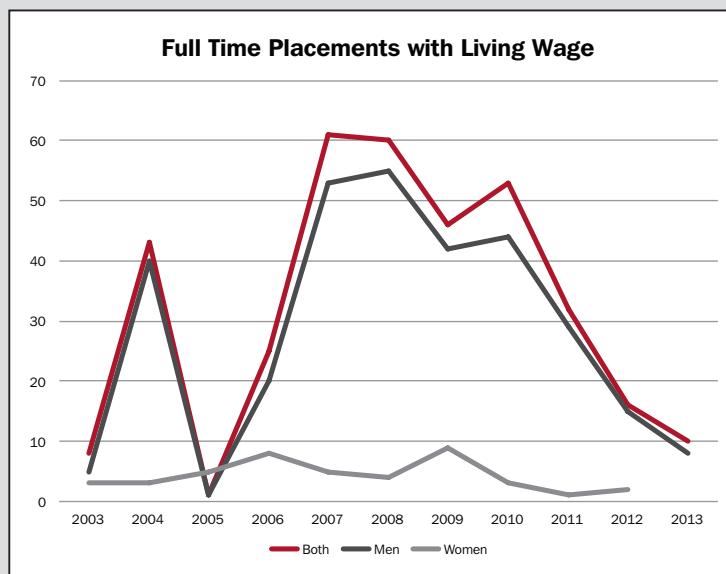
<sup>1</sup>Difference from mean.

<sup>3</sup>Significant only at the 0.10 level.

**Figure 10: Trends in Average Hourly Wage**



**Figure 11: Full Time Placements with Living Wage**



# The Utah Economy and the Economic Downturn

The recent economic decline, dubbed by some “The Great Recession,” began in late 2008 and extended into mid-2009. As a result of this economic downturn Utah experienced reduced per capita incomes and inflated unemployment rates. Across the nation the industries that suffered the most were male-dominated industries such as manufacturing and construction. Moreover, the largest job losses occurred in those industries. One of the most surprising findings of this study relates to the gender differences in job acquisition and wages. Despite the decline in male-dominated jobs, female refugees in Utah were more heavily impacted by the economic downturn than male refugees. The gender gap in wages increased during the recession, while the gender gap in the time from intake to hire increased in 2008 and remained steady through 2009. This may indicate a general preference in the Utah labor market for male employees. This will be explored in greater depth in Phases 2 and 3 of the study.

**Table 12: Utah Unemployment Rates and GDP**

| Year | Unemployment Rate | Per Capita GDP |
|------|-------------------|----------------|
| 2003 | 5.80              | 35,273         |
| 2004 | 5.10              | 35,678         |
| 2005 | 4.10              | 36,870         |
| 2006 | 2.90              | 38,226         |
| 2007 | 2.50              | 38,995         |
| 2008 | 3.30              | 39,001         |
| 2009 | 7.40              | 37,770         |
| 2010 | 7.80              | 37,903         |
| 2011 | 6.50              | 38,373         |
| 2012 | 5.50              | 39,158         |

## Job Retention

### Job Retention

The early jobs acquired by refugees after arrival in the U.S. are predominantly entry level positions. Most are not positions that are sought after or aspired to by employment clients. As a result, turn-over can be high in these positions. RIC-AAU policy requires that clients remain at a new position for at least 90 days. 62.79% of clients placed in traditional (non-subsidized) positions remained in that position for 90 days or more. Another 12.46% found a new position within the first 90 days. 24.75% did not retain their position and

did not find a replacement position. The proportion of clients retaining their positions is nearly identical for men and women. Clients from Eastern Europe and the Middle East are most likely to retain the same job for at least 90 days. Clients from Latin America are the most likely to acquire a different job within the first 90 days. Clients from Africa are the most likely to not retain their job and not obtain another job. These regional differences in job retention are statistically significant ( $\text{Chi}^2 = 18.17$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ).

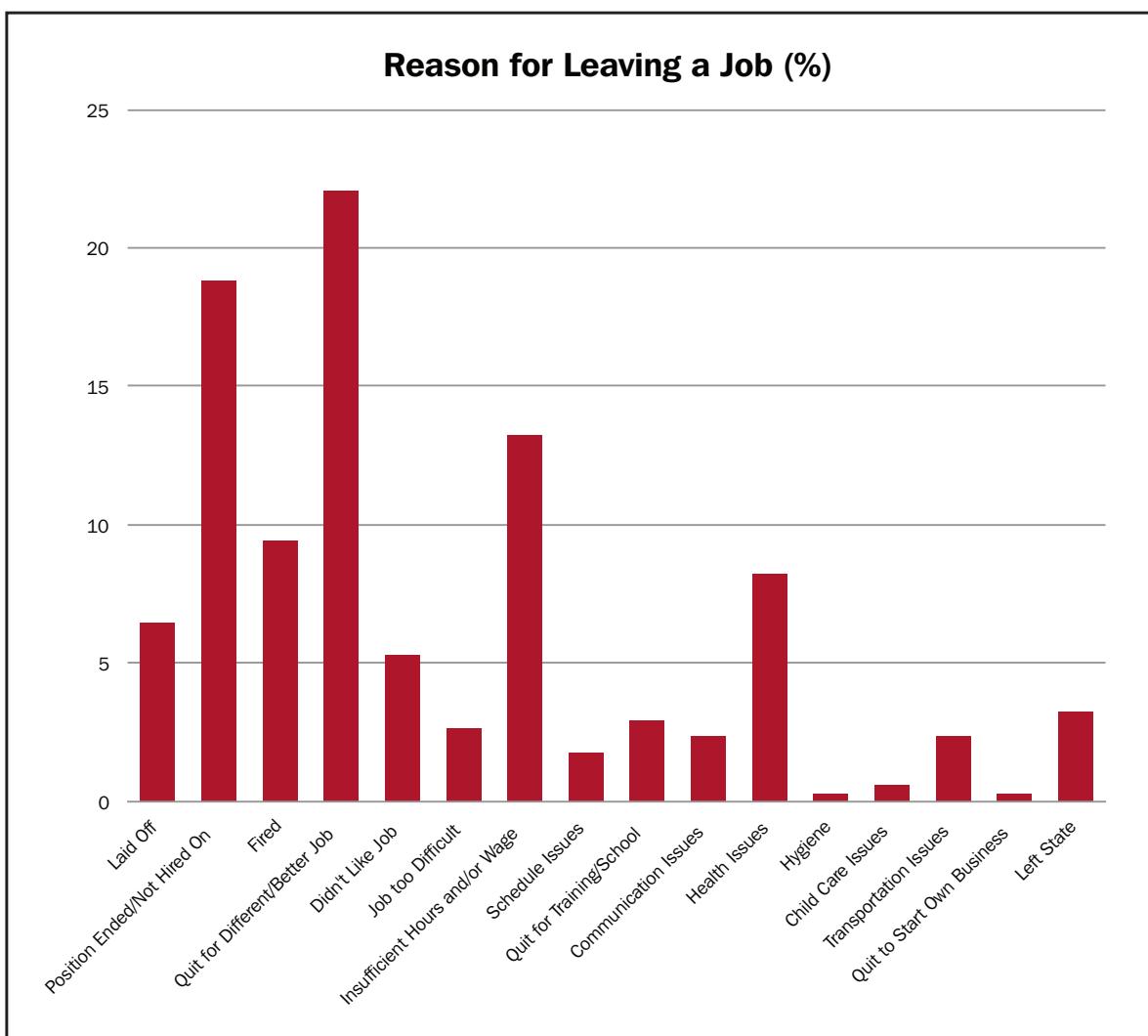
### Reason for Leaving a Job

When RIC-AAU clients leave a job and later return for employment services they give a number of different reasons for leaving their previous position. The most common reason given was that the client found a different or better job. 22.06% of returning clients cited this reason. The second most common reason, given by 18.82% of clients, was that the position was temporary or seasonal. Another 6.47% stated that they were laid off. The third most common reason cited for leaving a previous position was that the wages or hours at

the job were insufficient for the client’s needs. 13.24% gave this as the reason they left a previous position. Other reasons for leaving a job included that the client didn’t like the job, the job was too difficult, there were communication issues, the schedule was unacceptable, the client quit for school or training programs, the client had health problems, there were complications with child care or transportation, and the client left the state. Only 9.41% of the RIC-AAU’s employment clients were fired from a previous job placement.



**Figure 12: RIC-AAU Clients' Reasons for Leaving Previous Positions**



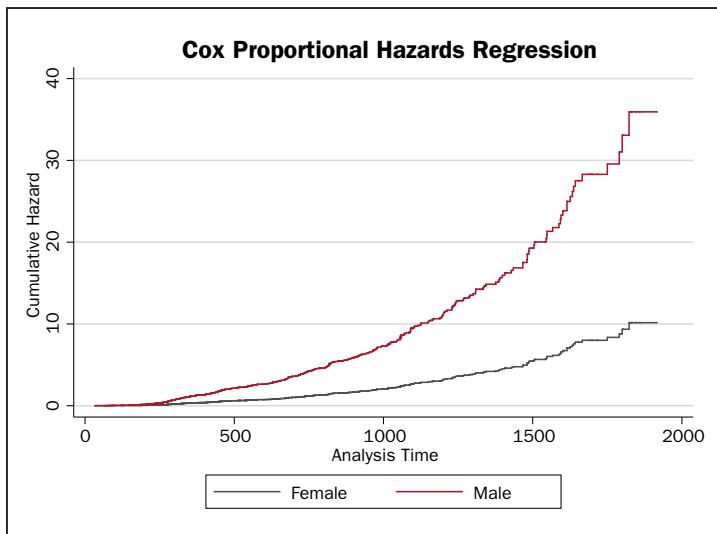
# Combinations of Factors Affecting Employment

## Method of Analysis

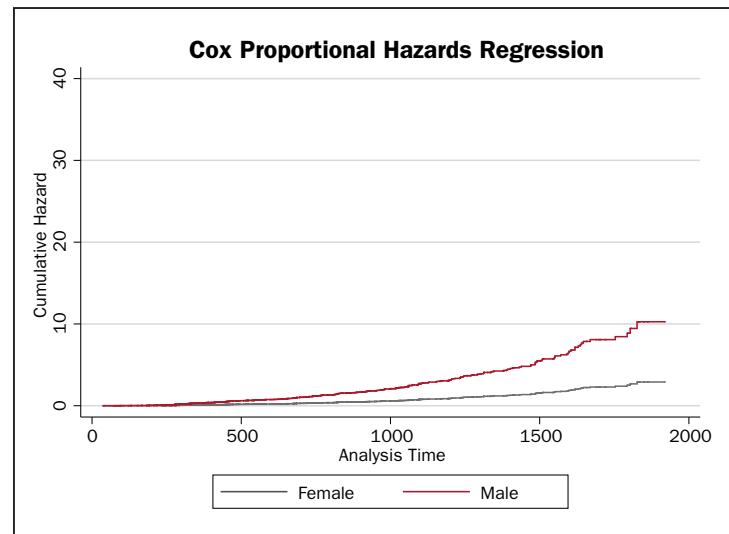
As the previous sections have shown, a broad variety of factors can affect the time it takes for refugee clients to get a job and to obtain a living wage. The demographic characteristics of a job seeker, like age, marital status, employment status and location of original resettlement all affect clients' prospects of finding a job and a living wage in different ways. In addition, the skills and barriers of each individual can affect their ability to find a job and a living wage. Skills, like education, English speaking ability, and work experience, and barriers, like reliance on public transportation, and the need for child care, interact with each other to determine a refugee's readiness for and ability to accept employment. Furthermore, negative

economic circumstances, such as the recent recession can also impact the labor market and the individual's employment search. In order to examine the combined effect of each of these factors I conducted two sets of analyses. Both use a form of statistical analysis called Event History Analysis to model the time between intake or arrival and a job event, and estimate the likelihood of finding a job. The first model analyzes the time from first intake for employment services to placement in a first job. The second model analyzes the time from arrival in the U.S. to placement in a job with a living wage. The complete results of these models are shown in Table 13.

**Figure 13: Cumulative “Hazard” of Getting a First Job**



**Figure 14: Cumulative “Hazard” of Getting a Living Wage**



## Demographics

For both outcomes—finding a first job and finding a job with a living wage—being male is a distinct advantage. At any given time after the first intake for employment services being male multiplies the likelihood of finding a first job by 5.27, regardless of the individual's level of education, English speaking ability, work experience, etc. Similarly, being male multiplies the likelihood of finding a job with a living wage by 3.54. Figure 13 shows the cumulative hazard, or likelihood, of finding a first job for both men and women. These cumulative “hazards” account for the individual's skills, barriers, support, and the Utah economy. The hazard, or likelihood, of getting a

first job changes over time and the effect of being in the job market longer is a greater accumulated “hazard” of getting a job. The likelihood for both men and women increases over time, but it increases more rapidly for men.

Surprisingly, age has no effect on either outcome. Single parenthood (not shown) also had no effect when other factors, such as English speaking ability, education and the need for child care are considered. In addition, the need for child care reduced the likelihood of finding a first job by 28%, but it had no effect on finding a job with a living wage.

## Skills and Barriers

The skills a job-seeker brings to the table have a variety of different effects. A one-month increase in U.S. work experience has no effect on the time it takes to find a first job, but it slightly increases the amount of time it takes to find a job with a living wage. English speaking ability also has different effects on the different employment outcomes. Relative to speaking no English, all other categories of English speaking ability had a positive effect on the time it takes to find a first job, but only speaking "fair" English improved the likelihood of finding a job with a living wage. Relative to speaking no English, speaking "fair" English multiplies the likelihood of finding a first job by 2.17, and it multiplies the likelihood of finding a job with a living wage by 1.98. Similarly, education has different effects on finding a first job and a living wage. Relative to no education, only intermediate education (6 to 8 years of schooling), has any effect on the time it takes to find a first job. In contrast, increasing levels of education have increasingly positive effects on the likelihood of finding a job with a living wage.

## Cash Assistance

In a separate set of models I examined the effect of various forms of cash assistance on finding a first job and finding a living wage. These models substitute cash assistance for the unemployment rate and poverty rate variables. They find that receiving SSI increases the time it takes to find a first job relative to receiving no cash assistance. No other forms of cash assistance had an effect on the time it takes to find a first job. In contrast, receiving Refugee Cash Assistance has a positive effect on the likelihood of finding a job with a living wage relative to receiving no cash assistance.

## Summary

In general, gender is a huge factor in predicting the speed with which a client will find a first job after intake for services and find a job with a living wage after arrival in the U.S. Moreover, the advantage of being male accumulates over time. Both education level and English speaking ability also affect the likelihood of getting a job. However, English speaking ability (at any level) has more of an effect on finding a first job, while education is more effective for finding a job with a livable wage. Potential employment barriers such as transportation and the need for child care have no effect on the length of the job search, which speaks to

**Table 13: Event History Analysis of Multiple Factors**

| Factor                                     | First Job | Living Wage |
|--|-----------|-------------|
| Sex (Male = 1)                             | 5.27***   | 3.54***     |
| PH Sex (Effect of Sex over Time)           | 0.99***   | 0.99***     |
| Age (in Years)                             | 0.99      | 1.00        |
| U.S. Work Experience (in Months)           | 0.99      | 0.96***     |
| English Speaking (Reference = None)        |           |             |
| Poor                                       | 2.03*     | 1.43        |
| Fair                                       | 2.17**    | 1.98*       |
| Good                                       | 2.19*     | 1.31        |
| Education Level (Reference = None)         |           |             |
| Primary                                    | 1.14      | 1.64*       |
| Intermediate                               | 1.81*     | 2.29**      |
| Secondary                                  | 1.18      | 1.31        |
| Technical/Associates                       | 1.20      | 1.51        |
| College                                    | 1.30      | 2.48**      |
| Professional/Graduate School               | 1.45      | 4.75***     |
| Need Childcare to Work (Yes = 1)           | 0.72*     | 0.90        |
| Socio-Cultural Barriers (Reference = None) |           |             |
| Schedule Restrictions                      | 0.59*     | 0.59        |
| Meat and Alcohol Restrictions              | 0.73+     | 0.75        |
| Dress Code                                 | 0.61+     | 0.55+       |
| Subsidized Training Prog. (Yes = 1)        | 0.71*     | 0.82        |
| Utah Unemployment Rate                     | 0.88*     | 1.11        |
| Utah Poverty Rate                          | 0.88**    | 0.89        |

\*\*\* p < .001, \*\* p < .01, \* p < .05, + p < .10

<sup>1</sup> All coefficients show the effect for the factor when the values of all other factors are held constant (i.e. identical for all respondents).

<sup>2</sup> Coefficients above 1.0 indicate an increased likelihood of finding a job. Coefficients below 1.0 indicate a decreased likelihood of finding a job.

the effectiveness of existing programs that help refugee clients in these areas. Social, cultural and religious barriers primarily affect clients' searches for a first job, but have little effect on the search for a job with a livable wage. The model examining cash assistance found that receiving Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) is beneficial to long-term employment outcomes. Receiving RCA shortens the time between arrival and the U.S. and receipt of a living wage. Finally, the state of the Utah economy appears to only affect the search for a first job with high unemployment rates and poverty rates lengthening the job search.



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