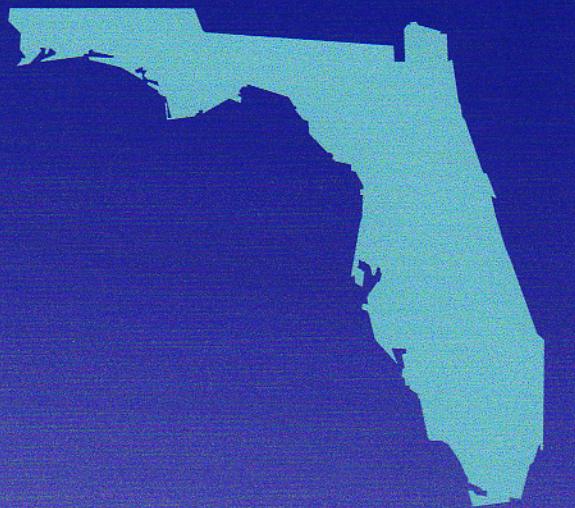




Refugee Programs Administration



Cuban, Haitian, and Bosnian Refugees in Florida: A Follow-up Study

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A Follow-up Study**

Prepared for

**Refugee Services
Florida Department of
Children and Families**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In December 1998 Florida's Refugee Services of the Florida Department of Children and Families contracted with the Educational Services Program (ESP) of Florida State University (FSU) to conduct a comprehensive study of Cuban, Haitian, and Bosnian refugees in Florida. In the summer of 1999 a survey was sent to refugees, service providers, and employers. In January and April 2000 a follow-up survey was sent to refugees. This report presents the findings of the follow-up survey.

Methods

Cuban, Haitian, and Bosnian refugees from Duval, Hillsborough, Miami-Dade, and Orange counties were surveyed to determine their status one year after receiving services. Samples for each population that were drawn from Refugee Services databases for the 1999 survey were used again. The follow-up survey instrument was developed by ESP with assistance from Refugee Services. Data collection and analysis was conducted from January to May 2000.

Results

Responses to the follow-up survey indicate that many of the refugees surveyed in 1999 have continued to progress towards the goal of self-sufficiency. More than half of respondents (58%) felt that they are better off now than in 1999. Most respondents felt that they had improved their ability to communicate in English since 1999, although most

still ranked their English speaking, reading, and writing ability at low proficiency levels. The majority of respondents (83%) are employed. Most are still in low-wage positions (less than 15% earn more than \$9.00 an hour). However, actual hourly wages have increased somewhat for most respondents. For example, while 19% were making from \$7.01–\$9.00 an hour in 1999, 32% of respondents were making that same amount by April 2000, and only 5% were earning less than \$5.15 an hour. Moreover, while still experiencing downward occupational mobility, more respondents appeared to hold jobs in their professions than previously; the percentage of respondents working in their profession increased from less than a quarter in January 2000 to more than a third by April 2000. There has also been a decline in reliance on public assistance and other nonemployment income. Almost half of refugees were estimated to be receiving Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA), WAGES, or SSI/SSDI in 1999; but by April 2000, only 11% of respondents reported receiving any public assistance, although some were receiving support from family or friends. Few respondents (less than a third) were receiving any refugee services, and although many feel a need for services, contact with original service providers is limited (less than 10% said that they had received additional assistance from their original service provider since 1999).

Despite these gains, respondents are still experiencing some of the same difficulties that they faced a year ago, including lack of adequate English proficiency, difficulty meeting basic needs (housing, transportation, health care, child care), unsatisfactory jobs, and lack of adequate income and benefits. We found that many refugees in this study were educated, had professional experience, and were more in need of specialized

services, including intensive English language training, recertification assistance, and orientation to American culture, rather than only basic and vocational education and placement in minimum wage positions.

Respondents also indicated that most service providers do not keep in contact with them beyond the mandatory 90-day follow-up period; yet many refugees feel a need for continued assistance and support. The findings of this study and the research literature on refugee resettlement indicate that, in general, a period of 1–3 years (rather than 90 days or a few months) is necessary before refugees can become fully self-sufficient. Assuming service eligibility cannot be extended and funding for services cannot be increased due to regulations established at the federal level, it may be useful to establish a practice of informing refugee clients about free and low-cost community resources or referrals available to them (such as multilingual hotlines, libraries, or local education and training resources).

There are new initiatives at the federal level, however, that may address some of these consistent problems. Changes to medical programs for refugees will allow some refugees without medical coverage to be insured, while changes to the administration of the cash assistance program may streamline service delivery. Also available are new grant programs that will allow states to offer assistance or increased services to refugees in areas including entrepreneurial activities and microenterprise development, education and recertification, and homeownership.

The needs of refugees would probably be best served if funding could be increased and eligibility for assistance programs could be extended. These actions are, however, the prerogative of the federal government. Changes in policy and the availability of new

grant programs at the federal level may be useful in addressing some of the consistent problems facing refugees in Florida.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

In December 1998 Refugee Services contracted with the Educational Services Program (ESP) to conduct a comprehensive study of the three largest refugee populations in Florida: Cubans, Haitians, and Bosnians. The stated objectives of the study are to determine

- problems and obstacles these refugees encounter during resettlement and to suggest ways to solve or cope with these difficulties;
- employment-related effects of training provided to refugees (by service providers);
- refugees' level of satisfaction with training; and
- employers' level of satisfaction with refugees' job performance.

The study consists of three phases: a review of existing studies and relevant literature; a survey of refugees, service providers, and employers; and a follow-up study of refugees. This report details the follow-up study of Cuban, Haitian, and Bosnian refugees in Florida. The report is organized as follows: this section, *Introduction*, which presents a summary of the findings of the survey of refugees, service providers, and employers; *Methods*, which explains the methodology used to conduct the follow-up study; and *Results*, which presents the findings of the follow-up study and their implications.

Background: The 1999 Refugee Survey

Florida has had a long history of settling refugees, most notably Cubans and Haitians. Research on refugees suggests that successful refugee resettlement depends primarily upon economic adaptation, English language proficiency, and ethnic community development (Forbes, 1985). Cubans have generally been able to quickly adapt to life in Florida, in part due to the support of vibrant ethnic communities (Portes & Clark, 1987; Potocky, 1996). After initially encountering economic hardships and discrimination during the previous decades, Haitians in the 1990s have begun to prosper (Potocky, 1996; Stepick, 1998). Bosnians who have fled the struggle in the former Yugoslavia tend to suffer from serious health problems, but most have begun working shortly after arrival (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1995, 1996).

In the spring and summer of 1999, ESP conducted a survey of Cuban, Haitian, and Bosnian refugees, service providers, and employers in Florida. The following sections summarize the findings of these surveys.

Survey of Refugees

The findings of the refugee survey were generally consistent with the results of other studies conducted on Cuban, Haitian, and Bosnian refugees. Most refugee respondents have been in the United States or Florida for less than one year, and many are married and/or have families. Most have at least some secondary education and have improved their ability to communicate in English since arrival. Even though many refugees have been in Florida for short periods of time, most (73%) are working. Many refugees, however, are experiencing downward occupational mobility; those with skilled or

professional backgrounds are not finding jobs in their professions. Although more than half of refugee respondents (55%) held professional and technical positions in their home countries, most are working in low-wage labor (49%) or service (25%) positions now. More than one-third (39%) of refugee respondents were not satisfied with their current job, and more than two-thirds (71%) did not feel that their current job was helping them to meet their goals in life. Refugee respondents also face difficulties meeting basic needs (such as housing, transportation, health care, and child care), difficulty attending English classes, and discrimination. Many also lack adequate knowledge about life in America.

Almost two-thirds of refugee respondents (63%) said that they were generally satisfied with training or services that they have received. Most felt that training or services had helped them communicate in English better (76%) and learn employment-related knowledge (63%). Almost three-fourths (73%), however, felt that training or services had not helped them increase their income. Refugees listed English language training as the most useful service. Additionally, some refugees were not aware of the scope of services available to refugees. Specific suggestions to improve services included providing more services such as English, computer, and vocational training; social, cultural, and work orientation programs; and financial aid for education.

Service Providers

About two-thirds of service provider respondents served Miami-Dade County, and more than half (60%) primarily served Cubans. Service providers generally (86%) felt that most refugees are successfully adapting to their communities, and most providers (88%) said that most refugees have access to ethnic community supports or networks.

Providers noted that refugees continue to have difficulties with English, meeting basic needs, and some hardships due to welfare reform. They also reported that many of their clients were receiving public assistance. Providers felt that many refugees have unrealistically high expectations about opportunities and lifestyles in America. Provider recommendations included making ESL programs more flexible in meeting the needs of refugees, focusing services on clients and families, subsidizing services, and extending program eligibility periods.

Employers

Employer respondents represented a diverse group of businesses. More than half (52%) had over 100 employees, but almost a third (31%) said that less than 10% of their employees were refugees. Employers generally feel satisfied with the job performance of refugee employees. Most felt that refugees are hardworking and punctual and have adequate job skills, but lack adequate technical, managerial, and leadership skills. Employers also felt that, while not negatively affecting their current job performance, low English proficiency levels among refugees cause communication difficulties with supervisors, staff, and customers. Employers felt that more training in English could improve communication skills as well as promotion opportunities.

Conclusions

Actions that Refugee Services can consider to improve services include increasing the publicity of services available to refugees; continuing to assist refugees in meeting basic needs; considering subsidizing new services (such as assistance with recertification of foreign degrees, specialized job placement services for women, and immigration

assistance); continuing to assist refugees with educational needs; and improving delivery of services through simplifying procedures, focusing on clients, extending program eligibility periods, and collaborating with employers.

METHODS

Research Objectives

As described previously, this survey constitutes the third and final stage of a comprehensive study of Cuban, Haitian, and Bosnian refugees in Florida. The overall objectives of the study are to determine the (a) types of difficulties refugees in Florida encounter during resettlement and (b) effects of training and services provided to refugees. However, there may be significant changes in the lives of refugees after they have been living and working in the U.S. for some time. The main intent of the follow-up study then is to explore any changes in the lives of refugees and generally how well they are faring a year after receiving services. To achieve these objectives, ESP developed a survey instrument for the follow-up study and administered it twice, 9 months (January 2000) and 12 months (April 2000) after refugees had received services.

Sampling

The sampling process for the follow-up study used the refugee samples previously drawn for the 1999 survey of refugees, service providers, and employers discussed in the previous section. In the 1999 survey, Cuban, Haitian, and Bosnian refugees from Duval, Hillsborough, Miami-Dade, and Orange counties were surveyed using samples taken from Refugee Services client databases.¹ Refugees living in these counties were surveyed in the summer of 1999 using 3 samples, one for each of the 3 refugee populations, for a

¹Cuban, Haitian, and Bosnian refugees are most highly concentrated in these four counties.

total of 1,077 refugees.² In January 2000, members of the refugee samples were re-surveyed as part of the first phase of the follow-up study. By this time, however, the original sample size had decreased from 1,077 refugees, due to the difficulty of tracking refugees whose addresses were incorrect or who had moved without forwarding addresses. Staff of Refugee Services contacted refugee service providers to obtain any available new addresses for these individuals. However, only a small amount of updated addresses were found and surveys were sent to these individuals. Thus, in the *January dissemination* of the follow-up survey, 399 Cubans, 116 Haitians, and 268 Bosnians were surveyed, for a total of 783 individuals. In the *April dissemination* of the follow-up survey, 364 Cubans, 82 Haitians, and 244 Bosnians were surveyed, for a total of 690 individuals.

Survey Instruments

The follow-up survey was developed by the ESP project staff and reviewed and approved by Refugee Services project staff. The procedures for translating the follow-up materials were the same as those used for the 1999 survey. During November and December 1999, the follow-up survey instrument and associated cover and follow-up letters were translated into Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Serbo-Croatian by professional translators and back-translated into English by third-party translators to insure that the meanings of the survey materials were conveyed accurately.

²In the 1999 survey, Cubans were randomly sampled. The entire populations of Haitians and Bosnians from the four counties were included, however, since these populations were too small in number to be randomly sampled. This sampling process is detailed in *Cuban, Haitian, and Bosnian Refugees in Florida: A Report on Survey Findings*, available from Florida Refugee Services.

The main intent of the follow-up survey instrument was to explore any changes in the lives of refugees since they were previously surveyed in 1999. The first questions in the survey asked for demographic information from recipients as well as whether or not they had participated in the 1999 survey. This section was followed by a series of questions concerning employment status and English proficiency in which recipients were asked to compare their current status with their status in the summer of 1999. Recipients were then asked to indicate whether or not they had received follow-up assistance from the service provider who first had helped them and whether or not they had obtained further assistance in the areas of English language training, job-related training, child-care services, mental health services, or legal/immigration services, and if they were currently in need of any of these services. Next, survey recipients were asked if they felt that they had improved in areas such as education, English, employment, knowledge of American culture, or life in general, and if they generally felt better off or worse off since the previous survey. Lastly, the survey closed with a series of open-ended questions asking respondents to discuss difficulties they have faced with working and living in Florida, their future plans and goals for themselves and their families, and other services that would contribute to their successful resettlement. See Appendix B for a copy of the survey.

Follow-up surveys were disseminated first on January 4–5, 2000 (*January dissemination*). In order to reduce error during the distribution and analysis processes, surveys were color-coded by refugee group: white for Cubans, tan for Haitians, and gray for Bosnians. Using names and addresses obtained from the samples taken from Refugee Services databases, members of each sample were sent a survey with a cover letter

containing information about the project, confidentiality issues, a date by which to return the surveys, and ESP project staff contact information. Similar information was included in the instructions on the front of each survey instrument.

The same survey instrument was disseminated again, with minor changes, on April 19, 2000 (*April dissemination*). For the *April dissemination*, recipients were asked to compare their present situations with their situations in January 2000. Thus, while the content of all questions remained the same for the *April dissemination*, the language for questions relating to changes since 1999 was revised to elicit information on changes since January 2000. Table 1 below illustrates the dissemination process.

Table 1: Survey Dissemination Plan

Survey	Cuban	Haitian	Bosnian
<i>January</i>			
Number Sent	399	116	268
<i>April</i>			
Number Sent	364	82	244

As Table 1 indicates, sample sizes decreased prior to the *April dissemination*. Many surveys were returned by the postal system as undeliverable. Almost 100 survey packages were returned for this reason (20–30 from each refugee group). As mentioned previously, the addresses of these sample members were checked by Refugee Services staff and although it was not possible to determine the current addresses for all sample members whose survey packages had been returned as undeliverable, new addresses were found for some 20 sample members (14 Bosnians, 6 Cubans). At the end of January, surveys were sent to these sample members at their new addresses.

During the *January dissemination*, survey recipients were asked to mail their completed surveys by January 31 using the preaddressed, postage-paid envelopes

contained in their packages. Follow-up letters were sent on January 19 to encourage recipients to complete and return their surveys if they had not already done so, or to contact ESP if they needed more information or materials. The deadline for returning the surveys was extended to February 11. During the *April dissemination*, recipients were asked to mail their completed surveys by May 8 in the initial cover letters, while in the follow-up letter sent on May 5, recipients were given an extension through May 12.

Analysis

To facilitate the data analysis process, all quantitative data was entered into SPSS computer files. Each survey was examined for completion before being entered, and all files were double-checked for errors. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and multiple response) were run on each SPSS file. Responses to open-ended items were translated into English by third-party translators and were entered into Microsoft Word files. Results were also compared by refugee population—Cubans, Haitians, and Bosnians—to identify any important differences among items such as employment status, income, English proficiency, or changes in these areas over time in between groups. Qualitative analysis, including coding and categorizing, was conducted on responses to open-ended items.

RESULTS

Response Rates

Most surveys were received by the dates requested in the follow-up letters. As with the previous 1999 survey, following the initial dissemination of each survey, ESP received a few calls from participants regarding information about the project. For the *January dissemination*, of the total 783 surveys disseminated, several were returned as not deliverable by the postal service. As a result, the total number of possible returns was 690, which included 364 Cuban surveys, 82 Haitian surveys, and 244 Bosnian surveys. Of the 690 total possible returns, 161 were returned, including 100 Cuban surveys, 14 Haitian surveys, and 47 Bosnian surveys. These returns yielded an overall response rate of 23.3%. Response rates for each survey are as follows: Cuban survey, 27.5%; Haitian survey, 17.1%; and Bosnian survey, 19.3%. See Table 2 for more information about response rates for the *January dissemination*.

Table 2: Follow-up Survey Responses: January Dissemination

Population	1999 Survey Sample Size	Follow-up Sample Size	Total Possible Returns	Number of Returns Received	Response Rates
Cuban	500	399	364	100	27.5%
Haitian	211	116	82	14	17.1%
Bosnian	366	268	244	47	19.3%
Total	1,077	783	690	161	23.3%

For the *April dissemination*, 690 surveys were disseminated and again several were returned as not deliverable by the postal service. The total number of possible returns became 608, including 326 Cuban surveys, 69 Haitian surveys, and 213 Bosnian surveys.

Of the 608 total possible returns, 104 were returned, including 65 Cuban surveys, 10 Haitian surveys, and 29 Bosnian surveys. These returns yielded an overall response rate of 17.1%. Response rates for each survey are as follows: Cuban survey, 19.9%; Haitian survey, 14.5%; and Bosnian survey, 13.6%. See Table 3 for more information about response rates for the *April dissemination*.

Table 3: Follow-up Survey Responses: April Dissemination

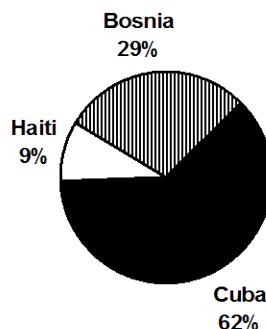
Population	1999 Survey Sample Size	Follow-up Sample Size	Total Possible Returns	Number of Returns Received	Response Rates
Cuban	500	364	326	65	19.9%
Haitian	211	82	69	10	14.5%
Bosnian	366	244	213	29	13.6%
Total	1,077	690	608	104	17.1%

As shown in Tables 2 and 3, response rates ranged from just under 15% to almost 30%, with an average response rate of 23% and 17%. The average response rate of the 1999 survey of refugees was 28%, with 30% for Cubans, 20% for Haitians, and 29% for Bosnians. Thus, the response rates for the follow-up survey are somewhat less, due primarily to mortality of the sample. However, it should be noted that these rates are comparable to those obtained in prior studies of similar refugee populations (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1995, 1996; Institute for Health and Human Services Research, 1998; Schilit, 1991), and the findings of this survey generally agree with the results of such earlier studies. Additionally, a comparison between respondents and the original refugee sample of key variables did not indicate any significant differences.

Characteristics of Respondents, January Dissemination

One hundred and sixty-one individuals from Cuba, Haiti, and Bosnia responded to the *January dissemination* of the refugee follow-up survey. Slightly more than half (57%) said that they had completed the previous 1999 survey. Sixty-two percent of respondents were from Cuba, while 29% were from Bosnia and 9% were from Haiti (see Figure 1 below). Overall, respondents were evenly split between males and females. Almost half (47%) were from 32 to 47 years of age. Most (89%) indicated that they had 9 or more years of schooling.

Figure 1: Respondents' Country of Origin, *January Dissemination*



Most respondents (83%) were working now. A third had held their jobs for 1 to 6 months, while 46% had their jobs for 6 months to 1 year. More than half (57%) were making \$5.15–\$7.00 an hour. When asked if they had been receiving any income from other sources in the summer of 1999, about 30% of respondents (48 individuals) said yes. These sources included Refugee Cash Assistance (22), WAGES (5), SSI or SSDI (3), family or friends (18), and other sources (16). Only 12% of respondents (18 individuals) indicated that they were at the present time (January 2000) receiving income from other sources, including Refugee Cash Assistance (1), SSI or SSDI (2), family or friends (8), and other sources (9).

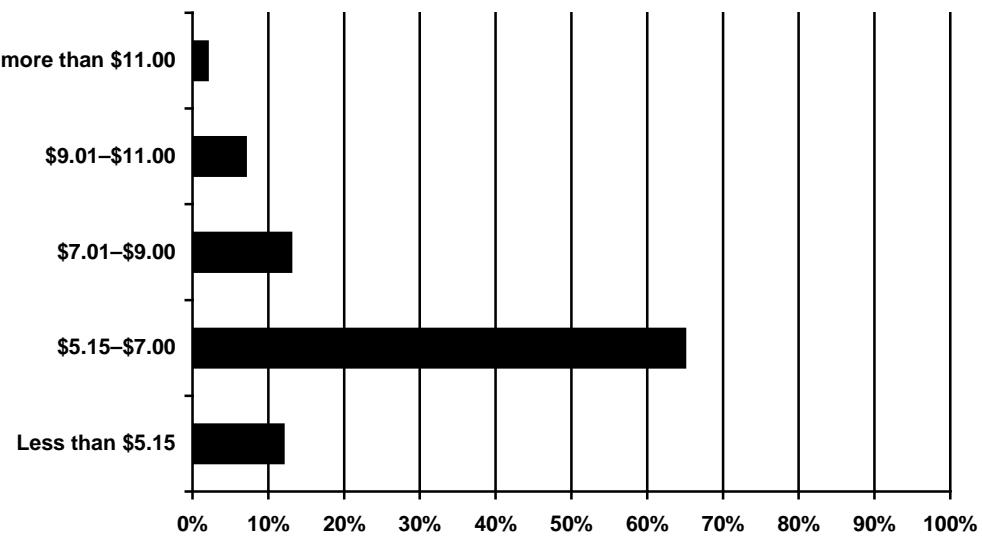
Survey recipients were asked to self-rate their ability to speak, write, and read in English, using ratings of “excellent,” “good,” “average,” “fair,” and “poor.” Almost half (49%) rated their English speaking ability as “poor” and 27% as “fair.” Similarly, 52% of respondents rated their English writing ability as “poor” and 22% as “fair,” while 48% felt that their English reading ability was “poor” and 20% felt it was “fair.” However, when asked whether or not they felt that their English had improved during the last 6 months, 44% of respondents felt that their English was “somewhat better” and 26% felt it was “much better.”

When asked how they felt their lives had changed during the past 6 months, respondents generally felt that they were doing well. More than half responded that they were “much better off” (15%) or “better off” (43%) now than 6 months ago, while about a third (32%) said that their condition was “about the same.” Only 10% felt that they were “worse off” (8%) or “much worse off” (2%) than before.

Cubans

One hundred Cuban refugees and entrants responded to the *January dissemination* of the follow-up survey. Most Cuban respondents were 16–31 years old (34%) or 32–47 years old (46%). More than half (58%) had a secondary education and had completed at least some college (27%), had 15–16 years of schooling (20%), or had completed more than 16 years of schooling and had an advanced degree (11%). Eighty-three percent said that they were working now and 46% had been at the same job for 1–6 months, while 40% had been at the same job for 6 months–1 year. As Figure 2 indicates, the majority who were working earned just above the minimum wage.

Figure 2: Cuban Refugees' Hourly Wages, January Dissemination



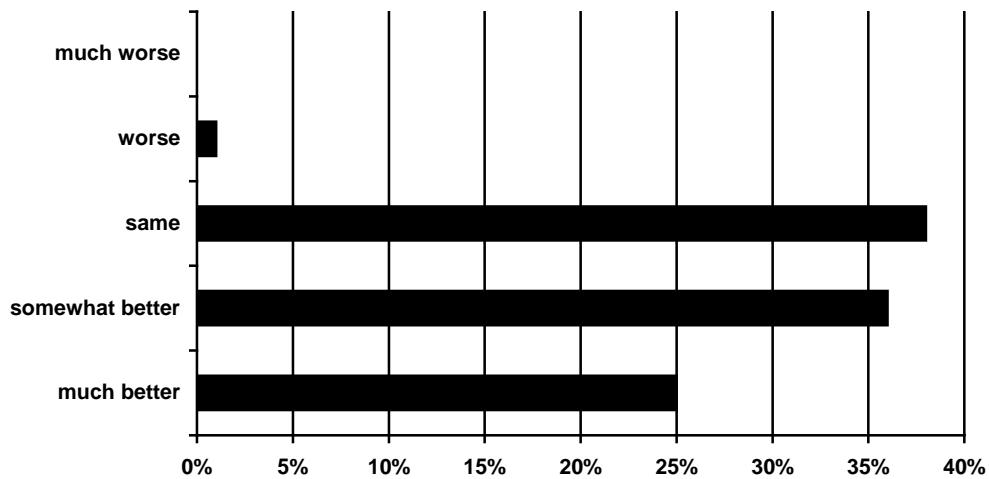
Thirty-nine percent of Cuban respondents said that 6 months ago (at the time of the original survey) they were receiving public assistance or other nonemployment income, while only 13 were receiving any now. During the summer of 1999, several individuals were receiving assistance from either RCA or WAGES, but none were in January. See Table 4 for more details.

Table 4: Number of Cuban Respondents Receiving Nonemployment Income (n=100)

Category	In 1999	January 2000
Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)	18	0
WAGES	5	0
Social Security (SSI/SSDI)	2	1
Family or friends	9	3
Other	16	9

About a third (36%) felt that their English was “somewhat better” than 6 months ago, and 25% felt it was “much better.” Only 1% believed that their English was “worse” than it had been 6 months ago. See Figure 3.

Figure 3: Cuban Refugees' Improvement in English since 1999



Fifty-five percent of Cuban respondents, however, rated their English speaking ability as “poor” and 30% as “fair.” Similarly, 53% of respondents rated their English writing ability as “poor” and 23% as “fair,” while 50% rated their English reading ability as “poor” and 21% as “fair.”

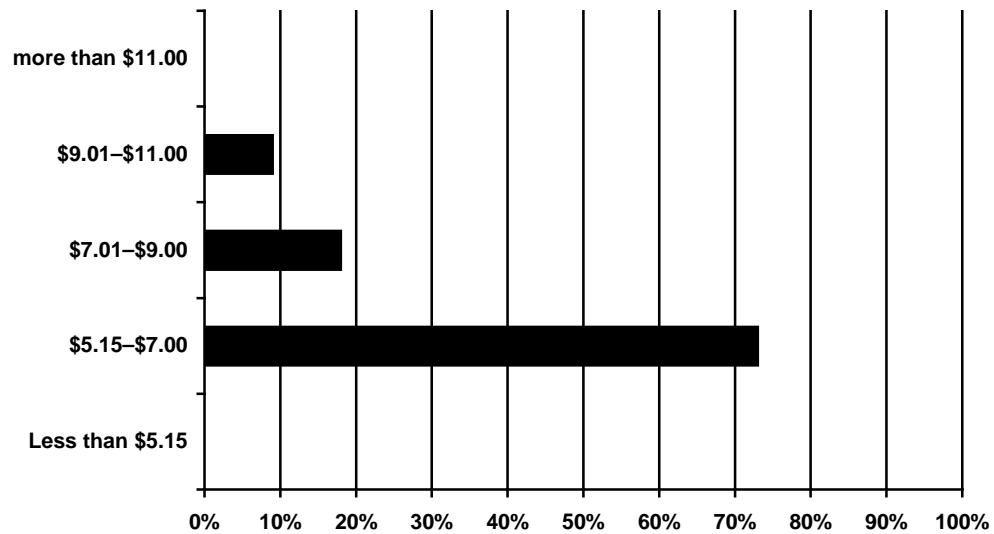
Overall, most Cubans felt that they were “much better off” (18%) or “better off” (48%) now than 6 months ago. Twenty-seven percent felt that they were doing “about the same,” while less than 10% said that they were “worse off” (5%) or “much worse off” (2%) than before.

Haitians

Fourteen Haitian refugees and entrants responded to the *January dissemination* of the follow-up survey. Half were 16–31 years old and 6 were 32–47 years old. Haitian respondents were made up of equal numbers of men and women. Half had completed 9–12 years of schooling, while 2 individuals had completed some college, and 3 had

completed 6–8 years of schooling. About 80% (11 individuals) said that they were working now. Three respondents had been at the same job for 1–6 months, while 4 respondents had been at the same job for 6 months–1 year. As Figure 4 indicates, the majority who were working earned \$7.00 per hour or less.

Figure 4: Haitian Refugees' Hourly Wages, January Dissemination



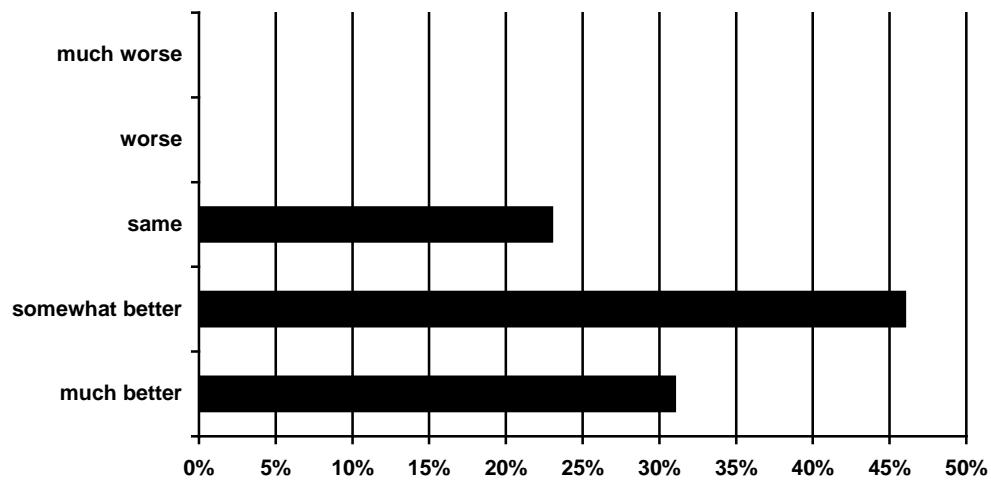
Only 3 Haitian respondents said that 6 months ago (at the time of the earlier survey) they were receiving public assistance or other nonemployment income, and only 1 was receiving any in January. See Table 5 for more details.

Table 5: Number of Haitian Respondents Receiving Nonemployment Income (n=14)

Category	In 1999	January 2000
Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)	0	1
WAGES	0	0
Social Security (SSI/SSDI)	0	0
Family or friends	3	0
Other	0	0

Almost half (6 respondents) felt that their English was “somewhat better” than 6 months ago, and 4 respondents felt it was “much better.” Three others believed that their English was the “same” as it had been 6 months ago. See Figure 5 for more details.

Figure 5: Haitian Refugees' Improvement in English since 1999



Almost half of Haitian respondents (6 individuals) rated their English speaking ability as “fair” and 3 individuals rated it as “poor.” Three others, however, rated their English speaking ability as “good.” Similarly, 5 respondents rated their English writing ability as “poor” and 3 rated it as “fair,” while 3 others rated it as “excellent.” Finally, about half rated their English reading ability as “poor” (4 respondents) or “fair” (3 respondents), while 3 others rated it as “excellent.”

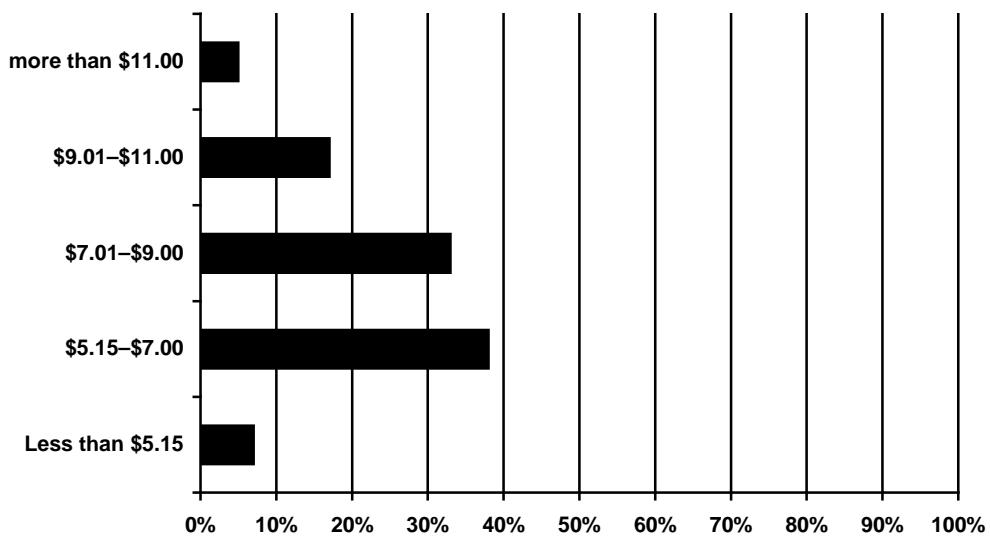
Haitian respondents seemed slightly less optimistic about changes in their lives during the last 6 months compared to Cubans or Bosnians. Most felt that they were “better off” (5 respondents) or “about the same” (5 respondents) now. Two others felt that they were “worse off” than before.

Bosnians

Forty-seven Bosnian refugees responded to the *January dissemination* of the follow-up survey. Almost half (49%) were 32–47 years old and 28% were 16–31 years old. Women accounted for less than half of Bosnian respondents (43%). About half had

completed 9–12 years of schooling, while almost a third had completed some college (21%) or 15–16 years of schooling (11%). Eighty-four percent said that they were working now. Most (60%) had been at the same job for 6 months–1 year, but 24% had been at the same job for 1–2 years. Thirty-eight percent of those working were earning from \$5.15–\$7.00 an hour, and a third were earning from \$7.01–\$9.00 an hour (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Bosnian Refugees' Hourly Wages, January Dissemination



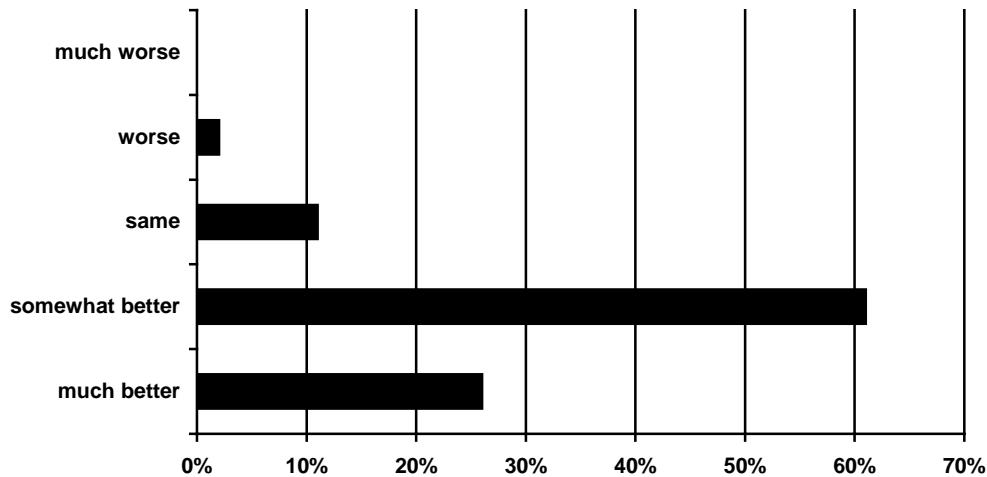
Eighteen percent of Bosnian respondents said that 6 months ago (at the time of the earlier survey) they were receiving public assistance or other nonemployment income. Only 6 were receiving any in January. However, the number receiving assistance from family or friends decreased only by one. See Table 6 for more details.

Table 6: Number of Bosnian Respondents Receiving Nonemployment Income (n=47)

Category	In 1999	January 2000
Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)	4	0
WAGES	0	0
Social Security (SSI/SSDI)	1	1
Family or friends	6	5
Other	0	0

More than half (61%) of Bosnian respondents felt that their English was “somewhat better” than 6 months ago, and 26% felt it was “much better.” Eleven percent believed that their English was the “same” as it had been 6 months ago. See Figure 7.

Figure 7: Bosnian Refugees’ Improvement in English since 1999



Forty-four percent of Bosnian respondents rated their English speaking ability as “poor,” 13% rated it as “fair,” and 24% rated it as “average.” Another 13%, however, rated it as “good.” Similarly, 55% rated their English writing ability as “poor,” 19% rated it as “fair,” and 19% rated it as “average.” Finally, 46% rated their English reading ability as “poor,” 17% rated it as “fair,” and 20% rated it as “average.”

Most Bosnian respondents felt that they were “better off” (34%) or “about the same” (38%) now. Thirteen percent felt that they were “much better off.” Only 11% felt that they were “worse off” than before.

Employment Status

Survey recipients were asked a series of questions regarding their current employment status as compared to the summer of 1999. Most respondents (83%) were working now, and a slightly smaller percentage (79%) reported that they were working 6 months ago. Of these, 73% were working at the same job they had 6 months ago. However, 94% who were employed now did not have the same type of job as they had in their home country, and less than a quarter (23%) said that their current job was in their field or in a profession that they would like to be working in. As indicated in the previous section, most respondents continue to be employed in low-paying positions. See Table 7 for a breakdown of employment status responses by refugee population.

Table 7: Refugees' Employment Status, January Dissemination

Question	Cubans		Haitians		Bosnians	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Are you working now?	83%	17%	79%	21%	84%	16%
Were you working 6 months ago?	74%	26%	79%	21%	89%	11%
If yes, are you working at the same job as you were 6 months ago?	67%	33%	62%	39%	86%	14%
If you are working now, is this job the same as your job in your home country?	7%	93%	0%	100%	5%	95%
If you are working now, are you employed in your field or in the profession you would like to be working in?	24%	76%	23%	77%	23%	77%

Many refugees described experiencing a loss of professional identity when, in order to meet their needs, they were forced to accept lower skill level and lower status jobs than they held in their home countries. Most were still searching for jobs that related in some

way to the type of work that they had done previously. The comments below illustrate the experiences of some respondents:

In my country I used to do administrative work. Here I am a simple employee in a factory . . . Of course I am not doing what I would like. I wish I could have a different kind of job . . . Your work is the basic and most essential thing in a person. [Cuban]

I have had a job for five months now but only as a substitute (I am a teacher). The classes will be over in a couple of months. What am I going to do then? I will have to look and look and look again until I'll find something and everything will go back to normal. I am worried because I do not have time for my son. This did not happen before I came to this country. Now I have two jobs . . . from 6:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. I do not have a family life. [Cuban]

I am working in my area but not in my profession (I am not doing what I have done all my life). As I said, I am working with electricity but not in my profession and this has blocked and frustrated my future goals. [Cuban]

In my country I was a professional. Right now I work in order to satisfy my family's needs. [Cuban]

I used to work for an international agency and I currently work as a security guard. [Haitian]

Back in my home country I had a permanent and secure job. Here my job is only temporary. [Bosnian]

Back in my country I was working in an office (sitting job). Here I am standing on my feet all of the working hours. [Bosnian]

This job is not in my profession. I am a technician and here I am a laborer. [Bosnian]

Program Participation

Most respondents were not participating in refugee services and programs to the same extent that they had been in 1999. During the past 6 months, 32% of respondents reported having a need for legal/immigration assistance, 27% received English language training, 19% needed child care, 8% received job training, and only 4% needed mental health services.³ Table 8 below gives a breakdown of program participation and service needs among the three refugee groups.

Table 8: Service Use among Refugees, January Dissemination

Question	Cubans		Haitians		Bosnians	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Have you received any English language training in the past 6 months?	27%	73%	43%	57%	23%	77%
Have you received any job-related training in the past 6 months?	12%	88%	7%	93%	0%	100%
Have you had any need for child-care services in the past 6 months?	15%	85%	29%	71%	24%	76%
Have you had any need for mental health services in the past 6 months?	1%	99%	14%	86%	7%	93%
Have you had any need for legal services or assistance with immigration needs in the past 6 months?	22%	78%	36%	64%	41%	59%

The majority of respondents also had not been in contact with their original service provider/resettlement agency since the summer of 1999. When asked if, during the past 90 days, they had been contacted by the service provider who first helped them find a job,

³See Appendix A for details on English language and job training programs as described by respondents.

42% of Haitian respondents and 13% of Cubans responded “yes,” yet 100% of Bosnian respondents said “no.” On the other hand, when asked if, during the last 6 months, they had any further assistance from the service provider who first helped them, only 7% of Haitian respondents and 5% of Cuban respondents said “yes,” while all Bosnians said “no.” The lack of contact from initial service providers was disconcerting to some respondents:

I was in contact with the Employment Service until I got my first job. After that, nobody from the agency contacted me. [Bosnian]

I believe that the refugee service provider that helped us the first time, needs to stay in contact with us and help us to find a job or help. This is very important. At least to have emotional support . . . [Cuban]

The employment agencies should not only care if you find a job but also how you are doing after 6 months. [Cuban]

Many respondents continued to have a need for some services. One hundred fifteen respondents reported a need for more education or English language training, while 64 needed job-related training/services, 56 needed legal/immigration assistance, 27 needed child-care services, 10 needed mental health services, and 42 needed other services. More education/English language and job-related training appeared to be needed by all three population groups, while Haitian and Bosnian respondents also reported a high need for legal/immigration assistance. Table 9 illustrates these needs as reported by each population group.

Table 9: Types of Assistance Needed, January Dissemination

What other assistance do you need?	Cubans (n=100)		Haitians (n=14)		Bosnians (n=47)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
education/English language training	75	75	8	57	32	68
child-care services	11	11	3	21	13	28
job-related training/services	30	30	8	57	26	55
legal/immigration assistance	26	26	9	64	21	45
mental health services	3	3	2	14	5	11
other assistance	26	26	7	50	9	19

Most respondents felt that they had improved their lives in some way since the summer of 1999. The majority (99 individuals) felt that life in general had improved for them, while 74 felt that they had improved their English, 56 felt that they had improved their employment situations, 50 felt that they had improved their knowledge of American culture, and 23 felt that they had improved through education/training. See Table 10 for more information.

Table 10: Areas of Improvement, January Dissemination

Which areas do you feel you have improved in the past 6 months?	Cubans (n=100)		Haitians (n=14)		Bosnians (n=47)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
education/training	16	16	4	29	3	6
English	37	37	8	57	29	62
employment	42	42	7	50	7	50
knowledge of American culture	29	29	5	36	16	34
life in general	61	61	8	57	30	64

Difficulties, Future Plans, and Services Needed

In the final section of the survey, respondents were asked to discuss the biggest problems they faced now, future plans or goals for themselves and their families, and what additional services could help improve their English knowledge or employment

situations. Responses to these sections were similar to responses received for the 1999 survey.

Difficulties

Most refugees were still struggling with problems such as earning enough to support themselves or their families; paying bills and meeting basic needs (child care, health care, and transportation); learning English and furthering their education; obtaining employment authorization and establishing residency or citizenship; and reuniting with family members in the United States or in their home country. Table 11 lists the frequencies of the types of difficulties that refugees reported in open-ended responses.

Table 11: Most Common Difficulties Facing Refugees, January Dissemination

Problem	Cubans (n=100)	Haitians (n=14)	Bosnians (n=47)
Income is too low	22	5	14
Difficulty with present job (need permanent work, higher income, better working conditions)	19	2	5
Difficulty paying bills (housing, utilities, etc.)	15	2	6
Difficulty meeting child-care needs	10	1	5
Difficulty obtaining work permit, residency, or citizenship	8	2	3
No time to study English or continue education	8	2	3
No health care insurance	9	2	3
Difficulty with English	29	0	22
Need to recertify foreign degree	3	0	0
Job is not in field	8	0	2
Family separation/re-unification	7	1	0
Difficulty with transportation	8	0	3
Difficulty adapting to U.S.	2	0	1
Problems with discrimination	3	0	1
No social life/free time	3	0	1
Need financial aid for education	5	0	0
Health problems	4	0	0
Worried about children's education/future	3	0	0
Lack of information about resources	0	0	4

Although the types of problems refugees faced are broken down into categories in Table 11 above, more often than not, respondents had to deal with multiple problems all at once. For example, refugees often faced the stress of juggling work and family

responsibilities while simultaneously trying to learn English. Respondents felt that their lack of English proficiency was a major reason for their difficulty in finding suitable jobs and was a serious obstacle to their being able to improve their material conditions.

Sometimes respondents felt torn between spending time with their families and studying to improve their English or attending school. The following experiences of two respondents illustrate these hardships:

This moment I work for the production industry. I was a lawyer in Cuba . . . I haven't been able to practice the English language because I don't have time because of my work and because I have a daughter (three years old). I would like to attend night classes in a college after my daughter finishes her preschool courses. That way my daughter could come with me, because my husband works until very late. This way my daughter could find a way to study and we also could share some time together in a productive way. Anyway, my future plan is to improve my English skills in order to succeed . . . Mastering the English language is something personal, something that requires a lot of sacrifice and dedication. I do not want to miss the first years of my daughter's development. I am already being far away from her a lot of the time because of my work. It is not easy to organize the time I have left. Perhaps with a better salary and a better job . . . [Cuban]

I am working from 7:30–4:00 and my wife from 5:00–12:00 p.m. We do not have time to see each other. We have three kids. The youngest one is 18 months old and day-care services are too expensive for our salary. Because of lack of English language, we do not have a good chance to get a better job. There is no time for school. My wife is a little sick, as it is very hard on her to work in the house from 7:30–4:00 and then go to the job from 5:00–12:00 p.m. . . . We are trying to succeed, but I do not feel like we made any progress in these 11 months. [Bosnian]

The following are other responses received for this question:

It is not easy for any refugee to adapt to a new country. He has different customs and habits, a different way of living . . . Adapting is the hardest part (it takes from one to three years). This is the part that hits all refugees the most, besides English . . . [Cuban]

My main problem is that I cannot find a job. This has become a big issue. It is very difficult. I also have two children and I cannot afford to pay for daycare. I have been waiting for my residency for two years (spending money in a work permit when I probably ended without any job). [Cuban]

The problem that I have is that I am the only one working to pay all the bills. My wife does not have immigration papers so she cannot work or go to school. [Haitian]

I have asked for Medicaid until I got discouraged and they never gave it to me. I am three months pregnant . . . February will be four months since I am pregnant and I have never been to the doctor. Please help me find Medicaid. [Haitian]

My biggest problem now is that I would like to go to school but I can't. I don't have day care for the kids and I can't afford to pay for five kids. [Haitian]

I can't find a good enough job. Lack of fairness from Americans towards the Bosnians and nationalism between people from former Yugoslavia. [Bosnian]

Lack of English language, low paid job, lack of transportation, expensive apartment. [Bosnian]

Plans and Goals

Respondents had a variety of aspirations for the future. In addition to obtaining further training in English and continuing their education, most refugees are simply striving to reach the “American dream” of having a well-paying job, car, house, and a good future for their children. Table 12 lists the frequencies of future goals and plans described by refugees in open-ended responses.

Table 12: Plans and Goals of Refugees, January Dissemination

Goal/Plan	Cubans (n=100)	Haitians (n=14)	Bosnians (n=47)
Study English/continue education	59	9	13
Improve material condition of self and family	30	6	10
Obtain a better job/job in field	44	6	10
Prepare for children's future/education	18	2	10
Reunite with family members	12	3	1
Buy a car/obtain driver's license	6	2	1
Obtain work permit/residency/citizenship	5	2	2
Buy a house	14	0	12
Recertify foreign degree	8	0	0
Move to another state/residence	2	0	0
Obtain health insurance	2	0	0
Get married/start a family	2	0	0
Learn more about America	2	0	0
Adjust to life in the U.S.	0	0	3
Return to home country	0	0	2

The following are some of the comments received for this question:

To find a job that allows me to use my knowledge and be more useful to the society and to myself. [Cuban]

Work to improve the economic conditions of my family. To buy a house. Improve my English. To see my children and parents in Cuba. [Cuban]

My future plan is to be reunited with my little daughter. Even though I was a single mother and living all my life with her, we had to separate. I hope destiny could help to reunite with her soon. On the other hand, I want to keep working. A job is the most precious thing that someone can have in this country. If all the family could get together we could try to buy a house. [Cuban]

I would like to go to school to be able to read and write English better. Then, I would like to go to Miami-Dade Community College to become a LPN or RN . . . May God bless you all! [Haitian]

My objective is to become a U.S. citizen and I would like to work so I can have money and all the kids can go to college. [Haitian]

My goal is to have my family with me in the United States because the kids are going through a lot in Haiti. [Haitian]

To take advantage of all possibilities given to us in this country. [Bosnian]

Education for my children, make more money, to buy a car for my wife. Plans and wishes are one thing and reality is another. [Bosnian]

Learn more English, get a job in my profession, purchase the house, education for children. [Bosnian]

Services Needed

Respondents to this section listed several services that they felt would be helpful for refugees. Many of the services mentioned related to the need for refugees to learn English. Some of the services mentioned were self-study courses in English (video, televised, etc.), intensive English classes, on-the-job English training, VESOL, job training, more orientation services, financial aid for education, extended eligibility for assistance (Medicaid), flexible schedules for work, transportation assistance, provisions for health care coverage, and more assistance with immigration needs. Some of the responses of refugees follow:

I think that it would be the most effective if refugees were attending English classes for at least 6 months mandatory. Our people are well educated, but lack of English makes big obstacles in finding good jobs. [Bosnian]

Students should not have to pay for the bus. For somebody that has the desire to continue studying, paying for it is very expensive and I do not have a car. My living standard is very low. This is the reason I will continue studying and progressing. [Cuban]

I believe that nobody can study English when s/he does not have an income that allows him/her to have her/his basic needs satisfied. [Cuban]

I believe that the only service that could be useful is to propose a good English course. This is the only thing that would help me to succeed in this country. [Cuban]

English courses with child care in the same school. [Cuban]

While most respondents to the survey did not specifically describe their experiences with and feelings about services for refugees, some used this section to express their opinions regarding refugee services and this study. Five Bosnian respondents and a Cuban respondent in particular had concerns about the quality of services they had received:

When I was receiving help from the refugee program, it was also very hard. They treat you as if you were a criminal. They ask you questions backwards and forwards and they put pressure on you to refuse the help from them. Instead of helping you, they make you psychologically sick. [Cuban]

I did not get any assistance. They never have time; they are giving promises that they cannot keep. [Bosnian]

... " _____ " fees are too high. [Bosnian]

Insufficient services by " _____ ". [Bosnian]

I have lost trust in you a long time ago. [Bosnian]

Other respondents expressed a more positive viewpoint:

Thank you for considering our opinions! [Cuban]

If God wills your efforts can help situations similar to us. We wish all of you and your colleagues and family many good things in this millennium . . . Thank you and God bless you. I hope God gives you twice as much as you give to us. [Cuban]

I did not answer it [the 1999 refugee survey] because I believe this survey does not serve any purpose. This time I am answering it because I think perhaps it could help other refugees not to feel oppressed and offended, as has been my case . . . [Cuban]

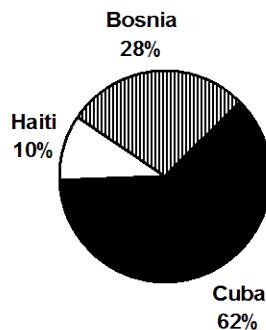
I am very pleased with the classes I receive at MDCC [Miami-Dade Community College], classes that are supported by the government and serve all refugees. We can study without having to pay which is something almost impossible if we would be counting on our income. [Cuban]

I am very glad to know that somebody has concerns about us. [Bosnian]

Characteristics of Respondents, April Dissemination

Sixty-five Cuban, 10 Haitian, and 29 Bosnian refugees responded to the *April dissemination* of the follow-up survey, for a total of 104 respondents. Eighty percent said that they had completed previous versions of the survey (either the 1999 survey, the January follow-up, or both). Almost a third (28%) were 16–31 years old, while 50% were 32–47, and 23% were 48–64. About half of all respondents had at least some secondary or high school level education, and 43% had at least some postsecondary or college education. Eighty-two percent were working now, with 49% making \$5.15–\$7.00 an hour, and 32% making \$7.01–\$9.00 an hour. Thirty-six percent had held their current job for 6 months to 1 year, 34% had held their current job for 1 to 2 years. Seventy-nine percent were working at the same job as they had been 3 months earlier. Less than a fifth (19 individuals) said that they had received nonemployment income, including Refugee Cash Assistance (2), WAGES (2), SSI or SSDI (2), family/friends (5), and other sources (8). Only 11% were receiving such assistance now, including WAGES (1), SSI or SSDI (2), family/friends (4), and other sources (6).

Figure 8: Respondents' Country of Origin, April Dissemination



As with the *January dissemination*, respondents to the *April dissemination* did not feel that their English proficiency was adequate. Sixty percent of respondents felt their English speaking ability was “poor” and 19% felt it was “fair,” while 60% felt their English writing ability was “poor” with 21% stating it was “fair,” and lastly 55% felt that their English reading ability was “poor” and 21% felt it was “fair.” However, 52% said that their English proficiency was “somewhat better” than 3 months ago, and 15% felt that it was “much better.”

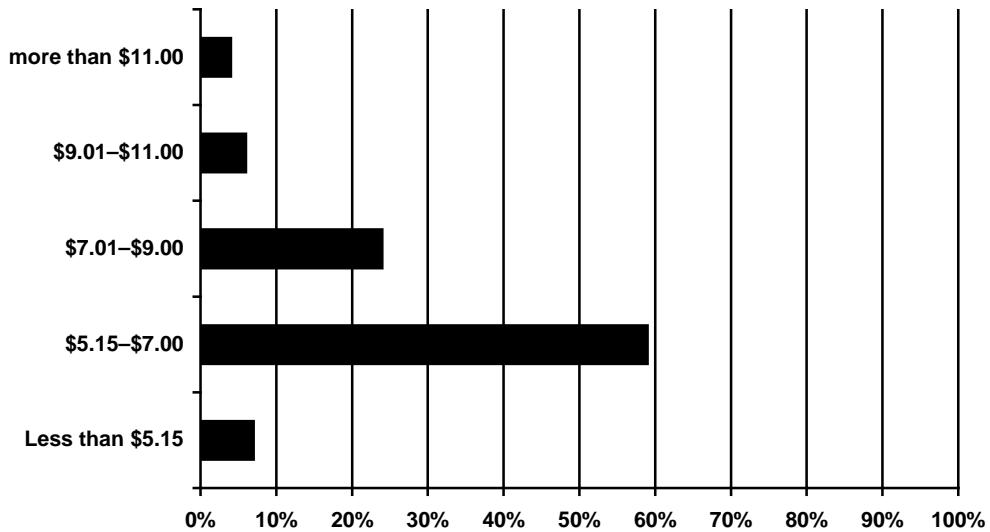
A little more than half of respondents felt that they were either “better off” (46%) or “much better off” (7%) now compared to 3 months earlier. Less than 10% felt that they were either “worse off” (6%) or “much worse off” (2%) than before.

Cubans

Most Cuban respondents to the *April dissemination* were 16–31 years old (30%) or 32–47 years old (44%). Less than 2 percent had less than a secondary education, while more than half had completed at least some college (28%), had 15–16 years of schooling (15%), or had completed more than 16 years of schooling and had an advanced degree (11%). Eighty-two percent were working now and 43% had been at the same job for 6

months–1 year. As shown in Figure 9, the majority who were working continued to earn only slightly above the minimum wage, although more Cubans reported making \$7.01–\$9.00 per hour than during the *January dissemination*.

Figure 9: Cuban Refugees' Hourly Wages, April Dissemination



Only 20% of Cuban respondents reported that they had been receiving income from other sources or public assistance 3 months earlier (at the time of the *January dissemination*). Most Cubans (89%) reported that they were not receiving any nonemployment income now. See Table 13 for more details.

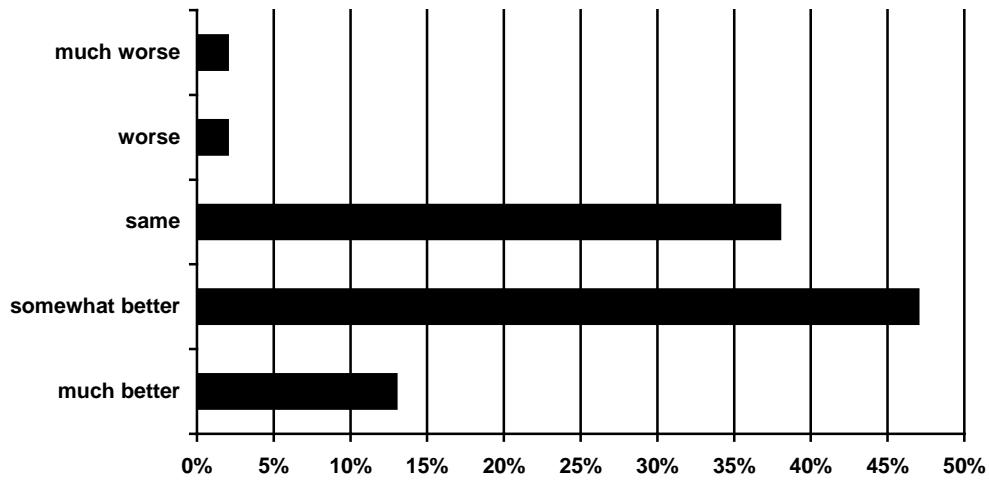
Table 13: Number of Cuban Respondents Receiving Nonemployment Income (n=65)

Category	January 2000	April 2000
Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)	1	0
WAGES	2	1
Social Security (SSI/SSDI)	0	0
Family or friends	4	3
Other	7	5

Cuban respondents did not seem to feel that their English proficiency was good. Sixty-nine percent rated their English speaking ability as “poor” and 22% as “fair,” while, 60% rated their English writing ability as “poor” and 27% as “fair,” and 55% rated their

English reading ability as “poor” and 27% as “fair.” Most felt, however, that they had improved their English during the past 3 months. See Figure 10 below for more information.

Figure 10: Cuban Refugees Improvement in English since January 2000

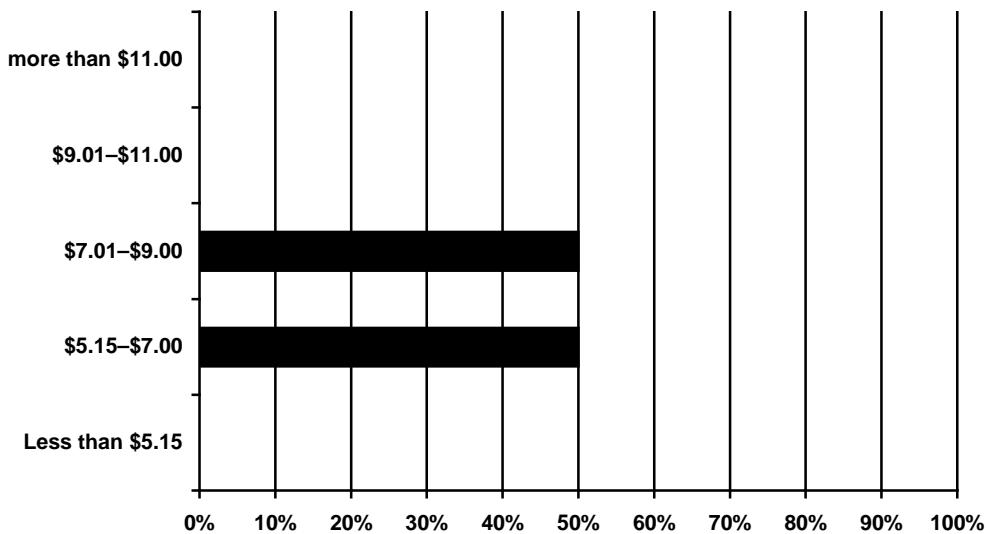


About half (51%) of Cubans felt that they were “better off” in their lives now as compared to 3 months ago, and 35% felt that they were doing “about the same.” Less than 10% said that they were “worse off” (5%) or “much worse off” (2%) than before.

Haitians

Ten Haitians responded to the *April dissemination* of the follow-up survey, down from 14 respondents for the *January dissemination*. Six respondents were aged 32–47, and 6 had completed 9–12 years of schooling, while 2 individuals had completed some college. Almost half (4 individuals) said that they were not working now. Of those currently working, 2 said that they had been at the same job for 6 months to 1 year, and 2 reported working at the same job for more than 2 years. Those employed were earning hourly wages of \$5.15–\$7.00 (3) and \$7.01–\$9.00 (3). See Figure 11.

Figure 11: Haitian Refugees' Hourly Wages, April Dissemination



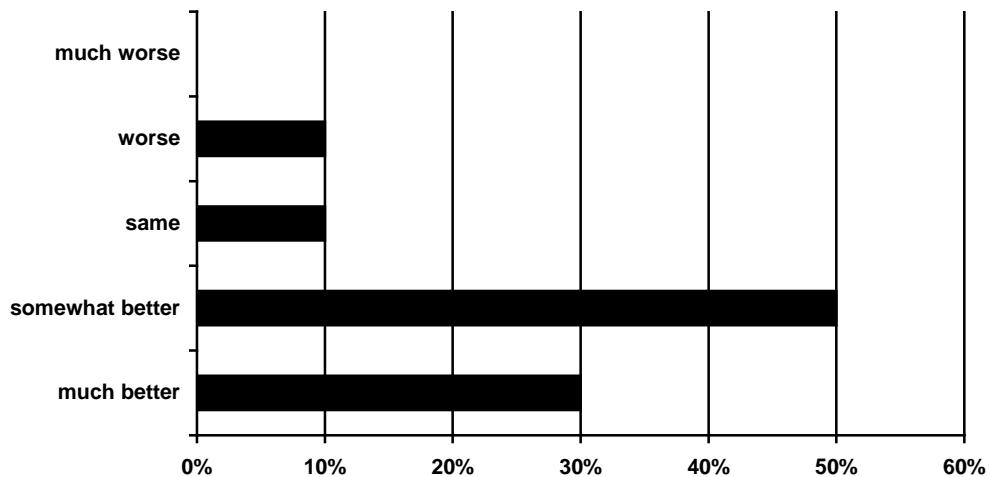
Two Haitian respondents said that 3 months ago (in January) they were receiving other income/support (from family/friends) and were still receiving it now. See Table 14.

Table 14: Number of Haitian Respondents Receiving Nonemployment Income (n=10)

Category	January 2000	April 2000
Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)	0	0
WAGES	0	0
Social Security (SSI/SSDI)	0	0
Family or friends	1	1
Other	1	1

Half of Haitian respondents felt that their English was “somewhat better” than 3 months ago, and 3 respondents felt it was “much better.” Three others believed that their English was the “same” than it had been 6 months ago. Half felt that their English speaking and writing ability were “good” (2) or “average” (3), and more than half felt that their English reading ability was “good” (2) or “average” (4). However, 4 individuals rated their English speaking and writing ability as “poor,” and 3 respondents rated their English reading ability as “poor.” See Figure 12.

Figure 12: Haitian Refugees Improvement in English since January 2000

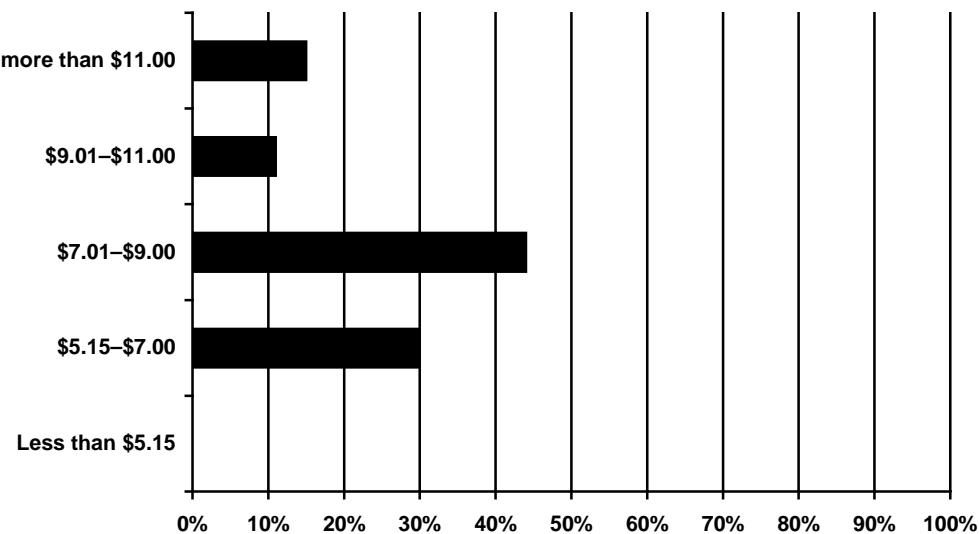


Haitian respondents seemed to feel more optimistic about changes in their lives over the last 3 months than they had been previously. Half felt that they were “better off” (5 respondents) and 3 felt that they were “about the same” (5 respondents) now.

Bosnians

Twenty-nine Bosnian refugees responded to the *April dissemination* of the follow-up survey. Sixty-eight percent were 32–47 years old, and 62% had completed 9–12 years of schooling, with 21% having completed some college and 7% having completed 15–16 years of schooling. Ninety percent said that they were working now, and about half (52%) said that they had been at the same job for 1–2 years. Forty-four percent of those working were earning from \$7.01–\$9.00 an hour, while 30% were earning \$5.15–\$7.00 (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Bosnian Refugees' Hourly Wages, April Dissemination



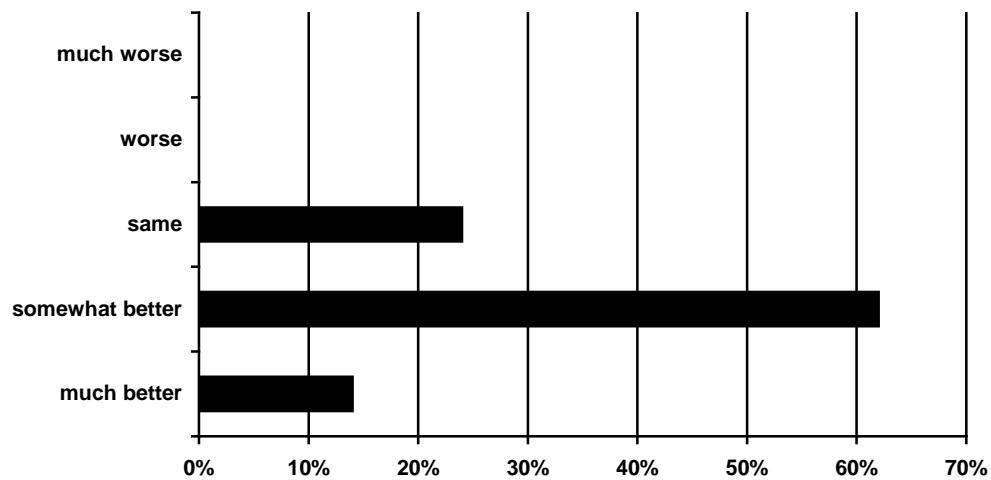
Most Bosnian respondents (89%) said that 3 months ago they were not receiving income from other sources or public assistance, and only 7% were receiving any now. Two respondents reported receiving SSI/SSDI benefits in January 2000 and were still receiving them now, while 1 respondent reported receiving RCA in January but not currently. See Table 15.

Table 15: Number of Bosnian Respondents Receiving Nonemployment Income (n=29)

Category	January 2000	April 2000
Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)	1	0
WAGES	0	0
Social Security (SSI/SSDI)	2	2
Family or friends	0	0
Other	0	0

More than half (62%) of Bosnian respondents felt that their English was “somewhat better” than 3 months ago, and 14% felt it was “much better.” However, most felt that their proficiency was low. Forty-eight percent rated their speaking ability as “poor,” 68% rated their writing ability as “poor,” and 64% rated their reading ability as “poor.” See Figure 14.

Figure 14: Bosnian Refugees Improvement in English since January 2000



Bosnian respondents generally felt that they were “about the same” (48%) or “better off” (31%) now compared to 3 months ago. Only a few felt that they were “worse off” (10%) or “much worse off” (3%) than before.

Employment Status

The employment status of most respondents was similar to their status in the *January dissemination* of the follow-up study. Most were working (82%) and had been working 3 months ago (84%). Of those employed, 79% were working in the same job as 3 months ago. Compared to responses received for the *January dissemination*, however, a higher percentage of respondents were now working in jobs that were the same as in their own countries (11% compared to 6% for January) or that were in the field or profession that they would like to be working in (35% compared to 23% for January). See Table 16.

Table 16: Refugees' Employment Status, April Dissemination

Question	Cubans		Haitians		Bosnians	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Are you working now?	82%	18%	60%	40%	90%	10%
Were you working three months ago?	86%	14%	70%	30%	86%	14%
If yes, are you working at the same job as you were three months ago?	76%	24%	67%	33%	89%	11%
If you are working now, is this job the same as your job in your home country?	14%	86%	0%	100%	7%	93%
If you are working now, are you employed in your field or in the profession you would like to be working in?	33%	67%	14%	86%	44%	56%

Respondents still complained of having only “dead-end” jobs and still expressed a desire to find employment more suitable to their backgrounds:

No steady job since they constantly send me home until a new notice. Discrimination at other job searches where I've gone because I don't speak English. Inattention to the innumerable applications and forms that I've filled out for other jobs. Inattention of the employment agencies in keeping in touch with their clients and their work needs.
[Cuban]

My company has been bought by our biggest competitor. They're going to lay us off within a few weeks. I really need to work to live (like everybody); moreover, I have a two-year-old daughter to support. [Cuban]

I work to the point of exhaustion and I still can't have a decent living. [Haitian]

I am satisfied with this job, but I am afraid that I might lose it because it is so easy to lose your job here. [Bosnian]

My current job does not have anything in common with the job I was performing in my country. [Bosnian]

Program Participation

The percentage of respondents participating in refugee services and programs decreased slightly since the *January dissemination*. Thirty-one percent of respondents reported having a need for legal/immigration assistance, 22% received English language training, 14% needed child care, 7% received job training, and only 4% needed mental health services during the past 3 months. See Table 17 for more information.

Table 17: Service Use Among Refugees, April Dissemination

Question	Cubans		Haitians		Bosnians	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Have you received any English language training in the past three months?	25%	75%	40%	60%	10%	90%
Have you received any job-related training in the past three months?	9%	91%	11%	89%	0%	100%
Have you had any need for child-care services in the past three months?	13%	87%	25%	75%	14%	86%
Have you had any need for mental health services in the past three months?	1%	99%	0%	100%	11%	89%
Have you had any need for legal services or assistance with immigration needs in the past three months?	28%	72%	63%	37%	29%	71%

The majority of respondents also had not been in contact with their original service provider/resettlement agency in the last 3 months. When asked if during the past 90 days they had been contacted by the service provider who first helped them find a job, 100% of Bosnian, 89% of Cuban, and 86% of Haitian respondents said “no.” When asked if during the last 3 months they had any further assistance from the service provider who first helped them, 100% of Haitian and Bosnian and 98% of Cuban respondents said “no.” Some respondents described their experiences:

When I just came, there was someone from the _____ [service provider] who helped me find a job. After that she left the job and I did not see her anymore and then I started looking for a job on my own. [Haitian]

One-and-a-half years ago, right after I arrived here, I was getting food stamps for 2–3 months. After that I have never received anything. [Bosnian]

Right after I came to the USA, my caseworker visited me twice. I found a job on my own. [Bosnian]

For the first three months, I was getting food stamps and some cash assistance. I had to even pay \$200 to _____ [service provider] for used furniture. Nobody ever called on a phone or visited me. [Bosnian]

Seventy-two respondents reported a need for more education/English language training, 37 needed job-related training/services, 34 needed legal/immigration assistance, 12 needed child-care services, 4 needed mental health services, and 18 needed other services. See Table 18 for more details.

Table 18: Types of Assistance Needed, April Dissemination

What other assistance do you need?	Cubans (n=65)		Haitians (n=10)		Bosnians (n=29)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
education/English language training	48	74	7	70	17	59
child-care services	5	8	3	30	4	14
job-related training/services	19	29	5	50	13	45
legal/immigration assistance	14	22	6	60	14	48
mental health services	2	3	0	0	2	7
other assistance	8	12	4	40	6	21

Most respondents felt that they had improved their lives in some way in the last three months. The majority (59 individuals) felt that life in general had improved for them, while 36 felt that they had improved their English, 33 felt that they had improved their employment situations, 44 felt that they had improved their knowledge of American culture, and 13 felt that they had improved through education/training. See Table 19 for more information.

Table 19: Areas of Improvement, April Dissemination

Which areas do you feel you have improved in the past 3 months?	Cubans (n=65)		Haitians (n=10)		Bosnians (n=29)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
education/training	9	14	3	30	1	3
English	22	34	4	40	10	34
employment	24	37	5	50	4	14
knowledge of American culture	25	38	6	60	13	45
life in general	40	62	2	20	17	59

Difficulties, Future Plans, and Services Needed

Responses to these sections were similar to responses received for the *January dissemination*.

Difficulties

Most refugees were still struggling with the same types of problems mentioned among respondents to the *January dissemination*. Table 20 lists the frequencies of the types of difficulties that refugees reported.

Table 20: Most Common Difficulties Facing Refugees, April Dissemination

Problem	Cubans (n=65)	Haitians (n=10)	Bosnians (n=29)
Difficulty with English	23	1	10
Income is too low	17	2	5
Difficulty with present job (need permanent work, higher income, better working conditions)	12	0	2
Difficulty paying bills (housing, utilities, etc.)	2	2	8
Difficulty meeting child-care needs	3	0	3
Difficulty obtaining work permit, residency, or citizenship	1	1	2
No time to study English or continue education	5	1	0
No health care insurance	5	0	3
Need to recertify foreign degree	3	0	2
Job is not in field	4	0	5
Family separation/re-unification	2	1	1
Difficulty with transportation	6	0	2
Difficulty adapting to U.S.	2	0	1
Problems with discrimination	1	0	1
No social life/free time	0	1	0
Need financial aid for education	1	0	0
Unemployed	7	3	2
Health problems	4	1	3
Worried about children's education/future	0	0	2
Lack of information about resources	1	0	3

The following are some of the responses received for this question:

Not being able to practice my profession as a professor because I'm not fluent in the language when in our state, the majority of the educational centers work mainly with Spanish. I did education (specialty in physical education and sports with 21 years of experience). [Cuban]

Transportation owing to the public transport system in Miami. On the other hand, also a little bit of disinformation, since the means of information to achieve the things that you want are not so good, many of the benefits that I've gotten like school (for example), I've gotten through friends that've helped me. [Cuban]

The biggest problem I have now is that I cannot sleep because I live on one side and my kids live on another. This gives me lots of problems. [Haitian]

My wife is not working. She is at home with our child. Our monthly bills are too high for only one working person in the family. There is not enough money for food . . . I have English knowledge and a job, but life is very hard here. [Bosnian]

I am pregnant and I am not able to perform any job. We don't have enough money to pay all bills and food. My husband has a low paid job and we have two children that are of school age. Our children need everything and we are not getting any financial assistance. [Bosnian]

Plans and Goals

Respondents had a variety of aspirations for the future. Table 21 lists the frequencies of future goals and plans described by refugees in open-ended responses.

Table 21: Plans and Goals of Refugees, April Dissemination

Goal/Plan	Cubans (n=65)	Haitians (n=10)	Bosnians (n=29)
Study English/continue education	36	4	6
Improve material condition of self and family	32	5	6
Obtain a better job/job in field	30	4	2
Prepare for children's future/education	6	0	5
Reunite with family members	5	3	0
Buy a car/obtain driver's license	0	0	0
Obtain work permit/residency/citizenship	4	1	2
Buy a house	11	0	3
Recertify foreign degree	5	0	0
Move to another state/residence	2	0	0
Obtain health insurance	1	0	1
Get married/start a family	2	0	0
Learn more about America	1	0	1
Adjust to life in the U.S.	2	0	0
Return to home country	1	0	1

The following are some of the comments received for this question:

My goal is to be able to become what I was in my country (Cuba), with effort and sacrifice. I love my profession and the simple act of saving and caring for life makes me continue struggling to achieve it. One ought to think a lot about the opportunity to help many that like me come with the desire to be and continue being what we were in our countries. [Cuban]

To improve my English and my job, also to reunite with my family here—wife and my daughters and grandchildren—in this country. [Cuban]

For me, I ask God to give me health in order to be able to work. Well, I'm a single, 53-year-old woman. And the only thing I want is to work. I owe the hospital around \$3000 since I have been admitted 3 times for asthma. [Cuban]

I have planned to become economically independent. I would like to have my own business. Even if I have to start at zero I will try. [Haitian]

My objective/goal is to go to school to learn English and become a nurse. [Haitian]

Studying English, looking for better job, make sure that my children are regularly attending the school, house purchase. [Bosnian]

I would like to move to Bosnia as soon as possible. [Bosnian]

Services Needed

Respondents to this section listed several services that they felt would be helpful for refugees. As with the *January dissemination* many respondents discussed services related to improving their proficiency in English, such as self-study courses, courses on videocassette, flexible class schedules, and providing less expensive courses. Some of the responses of refugees are listed below:

I consider that as a refugee you give us enough help to study and improve ourselves. I'm very thankful for what you do for us. [Cuban]

*. . . I would like to say thanks at any rate for all the help that you have given me.
[Cuban]*

*Maybe giving a service that provides more information about jobs, studies, etc., since a lot of times the information is what is hidden to one who is a recent arrival to this country.
[Cuban]*

. . . The class programs aren't productive to further student learning. A lot of Spanish is spoken without prioritizing English, which is what I want to learn. We spend the whole time on the verb TO BE because every day there are new students. There aren't separate groups based on level. Everybody falls into the same class, hindering the student and making the professor's job difficult. As such, the classes and the teaching method are deficient. [Cuban]

That there be training schools for us, to learn the language as well as to train us for different jobs. And that they help us to get those jobs, even though later we may have to pay for those services. [Cuban]

A better job search given the capacity of the person. [Cuban]

Coming to the U.S. really helped me at the political level. It saved me from the Tontons Macoutes [secret police] in Haiti. [Haitian]

Thank you very much for being concerned about us. [Bosnian]

Opportunity to attend longer English language courses right after moving into USA, and organizing English classes and vocational schools by employers. [Bosnian]

Discussion

Summary of Findings

Many of the findings of the follow-up surveys indicated promising improvements in the status of refugees since they were surveyed in 1999. More than half of respondents felt that they are ‘better off’ now than in 1999. Many felt that “life in general” had improved, and that they had improved their English, employment situations, and knowledge of American culture since 1999. Demographic characteristics of respondents did not change significantly.

Regarding their ability to speak, read, or write in English, most respondents ranked themselves at low proficiency levels. The majority did feel, however, that they have improved their ability to communicate in English since 1999. Additionally, most respondents are working, and hourly pay has increased for many respondents, especially among Cubans and Bosnians.⁴ See Table 22 for a 1999–2000 comparison of the changes in the hourly pay of working respondents.

Table 22: Changes in Hourly Pay Among Refugees since 1999

Hourly Pay	1999	January 2000	April 2000
Less than \$5.15	8%	10%	5%
\$5.15–\$7.00	65%	57%	49%
\$7.01–\$9.00	19%	20%	32%
\$9.01–\$11.00	4%	10%	7%
More than \$11.00	4%	3%	7%

Refugees who work are still experiencing downward occupational mobility. The percentage of refugees working in their professions, however, has increased, from less

⁴The increase in hourly pay appears to be less among Haitian respondents. However, although 7% of 1999 respondents who were employed were earning less than \$5.15 an hour, none of the follow-up respondents were.

than a fourth in January to more than a third in April. There also has been a decline in reliance on nonemployment income since 1999. Almost half of refugees in 1999 were estimated to be receiving public assistance (RCA, WAGES, SSI/SSDI). By April 2000, however, only 11% of respondents reported receiving public assistance, although some were still depending on family or friends for support. About a third of respondents are receiving services for refugees, but many say that they still need services. For example, in January, 115 out of 161 respondents cited a need for more education/English language training. Contact with original service providers is also limited. Less than 10% of respondents said that they had received additional assistance since 1999.

Conclusions

The intent of this study was to provide the State of Florida and the research community with follow-up data on Cuban, Haitian, and Bosnian refugees in Florida by investigating what changes, if any, have occurred in the lives of refugees during the year since they were previously surveyed. Although this report noted improvements in the status of refugees—such as the increase in hourly pay, decrease in public assistance usage, and increase in the percentage of refugees employed in their fields—it is striking that, even after being here a year or more, most refugees are still facing some of the same difficulties that they encountered upon their arrival. These problems include lack of suitable English proficiency, difficulty meeting basic needs, unsatisfactory jobs, and lack of adequate income and benefits.

In the realm of policy making, a commonly held view of refugees is that they are unskilled and inexperienced workers. Contrary to this belief, we found that many of

those surveyed were highly educated and often arrived in the U.S. with professional backgrounds and work experience. It appears that the primary obstacle keeping them from finding employment similar to that in their home countries is not lack of work experience, but rather lack of English proficiency. We found, for example, that many refugees from Cuba and Bosnia come with qualifications for “high wage/high skill” jobs but need English language training, orientation to American society, and recertification of foreign degrees/diplomas in order to become self-sufficient Florida residents. Indeed, much of their potential may be underused. From an economic standpoint, they could contribute more to the economy if they were able to fully utilize their professional skills and experiences.

Most service providers do not appear to keep in contact with refugees after the mandatory follow-up period. However, it appears that many refugees feel that they need continued assistance and support. It may be useful for service providers (who are not doing so already) to inform refugees about free or low-cost resources or referrals available to them once the follow-up period is over, such as libraries, hotlines, or education and training classes in local communities. With the potential for privatization of refugee resettlement in Florida, it is even more important that Refugee Services personnel continue to monitor the follow-up practices of service providers.

Florida’s Refugee Services program has helped many refugees adapt to life in Florida. There is a fairly successful rate of employment (around 80%) among refugees surveyed in this study. There also have been increases in income and English language proficiency since the 1999 survey. Yet refugees still face major problems such as unsatisfactory jobs and lack of adequate income and benefits, lack of adequate English

proficiency, and difficulty with meeting basic needs. It is unclear how these problems can be addressed except through extending service eligibility and increasing funding. Indeed, it seems untenable to cut services and expect refugees to become fully self-sufficient in only a few months after their arrival while research literature indicates that self-sufficiency requires 1–3 years to allow for English learning and adaptation. Extending service eligibility and increasing funding levels for supportive services such as health care, transportation assistance, and immigration assistance, and productive services such as English training (including varied methods), job development activities, and recertification assistance may help alleviate these persistent difficulties.

There are several new initiatives at the federal level that may address refugee needs (ORR Final Rule, 2000). The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) has revised Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) eligibility regulations to allow refugees who are without medical coverage (including refugees who have become employed and thus ineligible for Medicaid) to be covered for an extended period under RMA. The RCA program has also been revised. States now have the option to implement refugee resettlement programs in one of three ways: partnerships with resettlement agencies, public-sector administration of RCA (similar to TANF), or alternative implementation under the Wilson/Fish program. However, it is not yet clear how these changes will affect the availability of cash assistance to refugees.

The ORR has also made new funding available for additional services. Perhaps the most interesting is the Individual Development Accounts for Refugees (IDA) grant program. In the IDA program, the federal government matches refugee savings accounts for as much as \$2000 per individual or \$4000 per household. IDA money may be used

for home ownership and renovation, education and training including recertification, microenterprise development, purchase of an automobile if needed for employment, and purchase of a computer for business or educational use. In addition, the Technical Assistance to Special Programs grant program continues to support technical assistance for areas including employment, English language training, services to the elderly, and needs of refugees relating to welfare reform. It adds new funding for services including IDAs, microenterprise development, model projects for comprehensive cash assistance and employment services, and projects for refugees who have experienced long-term difficulties in assimilation. Finally, the Assistance for Treatment of Torture Survivors grant program funds pilot programs to provide for increased services for refugees who are torture survivors.⁵ It may be useful for Refugee Services staff to review periodically Florida's eligibility for these types of grant programs.

It appears that the vast majority of refugees want to work in the hopes of achieving the "American Dream" and feel that Florida can provide them this opportunity. As is clear from this study and other research on refugees, however, although the majority do not want to rely on a "handout" from the government's coffers, they do need a great deal of help to become self-sufficient. New initiatives such as those at the federal level help refugees meet this goal.

⁵See the ORR Web page at <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/orr> for more information on these grant programs.

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Appendix A: Additional Training and Services Received by Refugees

Sources of English language training received by refugees since June 1999

Cubans

Location	Duration
Miami-Dade Community College (Guantanamo Refugee Education and Training [GREAT], Wolfson Campus, VESOL Program)	from 1 month to 1 year
Caribbean Erwin Center	2 times per week and 2 hours in the morning
Florida National College (Miami)	4 months and 6 months
Hi-Tech School of Miami	3 months and 6 months
High School/Public School Programs	Not reported
“Downtown College at Jacksonville”	Monday through Friday, 3 hours a day
Coral Park (Miami)	Monday and Wednesday from 6 to 9 (respondent only attended for 2 months)

Haitians

Location	Duration
Christian Baptist Church	Not reported
Evans High School (ESOL) (Orlando)	Not reported
North Miami Adult Education Center	Not reported
Mid-Florida Technical School (Orlando)	Not reported
Lindsey Hopkins Technical Education Center (Miami)	Not reported

Bosnians

Location	Duration
Tomlinson Adult School (St. Petersburg)	Monday through Friday, 8am to 12pm
Wolfson High School (ESOL) (Jacksonville)	2 classes per week
Florida Community College at Jacksonville	Not reported

Sources of job training received by refugees since June 1999

Cubans

Location	Type of training
South Miami Senior High School	accounting
On-the-Job Training (Boston Market, Walgreens, others)	baker/cook, management, pharmacy technician, bookkeeping, garage door installation
Other	computers (technician, programming), child care

Haitians

None reported

Bosnians

None reported

Appendix B: Follow-up Survey



Survey of Needs for Florida Refugees

Follow-up Survey

Would you please complete the following survey? These questions are part of a study being done for the Refugee Programs Administration of Florida.

During the summer of 1999, you received a survey from us asking about your experiences in Florida. Even if you did not complete the first survey, please complete this one. The Refugee Programs Administration wants to find out how you feel your work and your way of life have changed in the past six months.

Please answer the questions carefully and honestly. If there is a question that you do not want to answer, skip over it and go to the next question. You will not lose any refugee benefits or be dropped from any programs if you do not complete this survey. Your name will not be recorded and your answers will remain confidential. When you have answered the questions, please put this survey in the attached envelope and mail it. You do not need to add a stamp.

Directions: For each question, please put a check (✓) next to your answer or write your answer on the lines provided.

1. What is your age?

- under 16
- 16-31
- 32-47
- 48-64
- 65 or over

2. What is your gender?

- male
- female

3. How many years of schooling do you have?

- 1–5 (primary school)
- 6–8 (middle school/junior high school)
- 9–12 (secondary school/high school)
- 13–14 (postsecondary/college)
- 15–16 (university)
- more than 16 (advanced degree)

4. Did you complete a refugee survey from us previously (during the summer of 1999)?

- yes
- no

5. Are you working now?

- yes
- no

6. If yes, how long have you been working at your current job?

- less than 1 month
- 1–6 months
- 6 months–1 year
- 1–2 years
- more than 2 years

7. How much pay do you receive per hour?

- Less than \$5.15
- \$5.15–\$7.00
- \$7.01–\$9.00
- \$9.01–\$11.00
- more than \$11

8. Were you working six months ago?

- yes
- no

9. If yes, are you working at the same job as you were six months ago?

- yes
- no

10. If you are working now, is this job the same as your job in your home country?

- yes
- no

If no, please tell how this job is different from the one in your home country.

11. If you are working now, are you employed in your field or in the profession you would like to be working in?

- yes
- no

If no, please describe the kind of work you would rather be doing.

12. Were you receiving any of the following types of assistance six months ago?

- yes
- no

If yes, please check (✓) all apply.

- Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) program
- Work and Gain Economic Self-Sufficiency (WAGES) program
- Social Security benefits (Social Security Income [SSI] or Social Security Disability Insurance [SSDI])
- family or friends
- other

13. Are you receiving any of the following types of assistance now?

- yes
- no

If yes, please check (✓) all apply.

- Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) program
- Work and Gain Economic Self-Sufficiency (WAGES) program
- Social Security benefits (Social Security Income [SSI] or Social Security Disability Insurance [SSDI])
- family or friends
- other

14. How good is your English in the following categories?

Speaking: excellent good average fair poor

Writing: excellent good average fair poor

Reading: excellent good average fair poor

15. How much better is your English now than six months ago?

- much better
- somewhat better
- same
- worse
- much worse

16. In the past 90 days, have you been contacted by the service provider who first helped you find a job?

- yes
- no

17. During the last six months, have you had any further assistance from the service provider who first helped you?

- yes
- no

If yes, please explain.

18. Have you received any English language training in the past six months?

- yes
- no

If yes, please describe the English language training (who provided training, how long, where).

19. Have you received any job-related training in the past six months?

- yes
- no

If yes, please describe the job-related training (who provided training, how long, where).

20. Have you had any need for child care services in the past six months?

- yes
- no

21. Have you had any need for mental health services in the past six months?

- yes
- no

22. Have you had any need for legal services or assistance with immigration needs in the past six months?

- yes
- no

23. What other assistance do you need? Please check (✓) all apply.

- education/English language training
- child care services
- job-related training/services
- legal/immigration assistance
- mental health services
- other: _____

24. Which areas do you feel you have improved in the past six months? Please check (✓) all apply.

- education/training
- English
- employment
- knowledge of American culture
- life in general

25. How do you feel your life has changed during the last six months?

- I am much better off than before.
- I am better off than before.
- I am about the same as before.
- I am worse off than before.
- I am much worse off than before.

26. What are some of the biggest problems facing you now?

27. What are your future plans or goals for yourself and/or your family?

28. What other services would help you improve your English skills, improve job skills, get a job, or receive a higher income?
