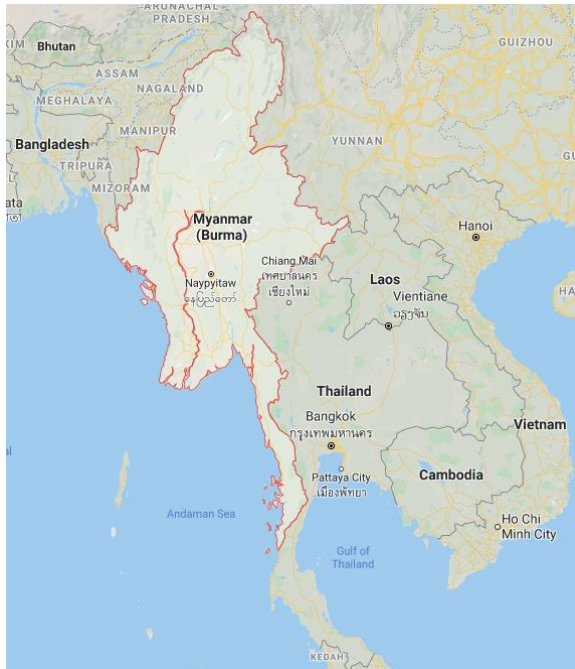


## Karen People Information

The Karen people come from the Country of Myanmar formerly known as Burma. It is estimated that there are between 7-9 million Karen people in Myanmar. The Karen people are very diverse with different ethnic subgroups and languages.

The Karen are unique in that it is not necessary to have Karen parents to be Karen. Many Karen indicate that to be Karen a person must identify as Karen; they must know the Karen culture and customs; as well as speak a Karen language.



## Spirituality

Most of the Karen people will practice one of three types of religion.

**Buddhism** - This teaches that individuals are responsible for their own actions and that every action has a consequence, *karma*. In addition, the concept of “self-awakening” is an important tenet of Buddhism and is characterized by the belief in reincarnation. If a person lives a good and harmonious life, he or she will be rewarded in the next life. The ultimate reward is to reach Nirvana, the freedom from all worldly concerns such as greed, hate, and ignorance. Nirvana is achieved by following the teachings of Buddha.

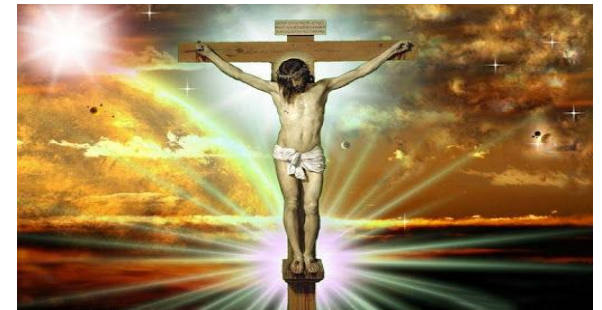


**Animism** (spirit worship) - Animists believe that all-natural objects and individuals have multiple souls. According to this system of beliefs, protective and

wild spirits inhabit many objects and natural settings in the world. The animist belief system is divided into two realms, the spirits of the land and familial/ancestral spirits



**Christianity** - The conversion of some Karen to Christianity occurred during the early to mid-18th century when Christian missionaries began settling in rural areas of Burma. Converts learned to read and write in both English and Burmese.



## History

It is believed that the Karen were one of the first groups of people to settle in Burma more than two thousand years ago. Unfortunately, there are very few written records of the Karen.

Over one thousand years ago the Burmans began migrating to Burma started to rule the country.

The British occupied Burma and destroyed the Burman monarch between 1824 and 1885. Following the conclusion of World War II, the British granted independence to Burma.

It was hoped that an independent Burma would promote equality between the populations. The Burman leaders seized power after the British left.

There were massacres of the Karen people which lead to the Karen starting their "Revolution" on January 31, 1949.

During the 1950's Burma had a shaky democracy. This democracy fell to a Military Dictatorship in 1962 when the Burmese Army took power in a coup d'etat. The Military ruled in one way or another until 2011.



In May of 1990, the government held free elections for the first time in approximately 30 years. The National League for Democracy (NLD) lead by Aung San Suu Kyi won 392 out of the 492 seats in this election. The Military junta refused to cede power and continued to rule the nation as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) until 1997. In 1997 the SLORC changed their name to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and ruled until March 2011 when the military junta was dissolved.



The push toward Democracy has continued and on April 1, 2012 the NLD won 43 of 45 available seats in the government. General elections were also held on November 8, 2015 and on March 15, 2016 Htin Kyaw was elected as the country's first non-military president since 1962.

## Culture

Karen people are very polite and respectful. Karen people can be described as friendly, quiet, and cheerful. Karen culture promotes a sense of pride for being simple, humble, unassuming, and peace-loving.

Being direct is considered rude, and many Karen find elements of the western style of communication, such as directness, loud speech, and emphatic body language, uncomfortable.





For Karen people, self-expression that promotes community values and cultural identity is more important than communication that promotes individual opinions or needs. This communication style helps to prevent disagreements and encourage harmonious interactions. Modesty, or not emphasizing one's own feelings or opinions, is also an important value in Karen culture.

When greeting one another, people will say, *Kaw Leh Ah Gay* (Good morning), *Ni Leh Ah Gay* (Good Afternoon), *Ha Leh Ah Gay* (Good evening) and *Na Leh Ah Gay* (Good Night) rather than shake hands or bow. Another common greeting is to ask someone if they have eaten rice (the staple food), *N'aw May Wele Ha*. This is the equivalent to asking someone, "Have you eaten recently?". It is a cultural value to offer food to a guest in one's home, or a gift.



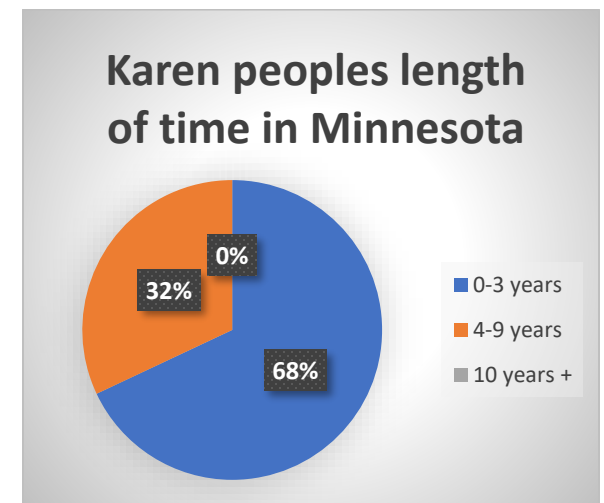
It is very uncommon to see men and women displaying affection in public. Kissing and hugging by opposite genders in public is considered impolite or disrespectful. Other behaviors that can be seen as culturally impolite include direct eye contact, folding one's arms in front of oneself when talking, sitting so that one's feet are pointing in the direction of another person (especially someone older), and touching someone's head where it is believed a person's spirit resides.

The Karen people are a matrilineal society. As such, it is common for young married couples to live with the wife's family for a short length of time. Both men and women share the responsibility of raising children. In terms of decision-making, both husband and wife are involved because decisions affect the whole family, although the husband is usually the one to communicate the decision in public.

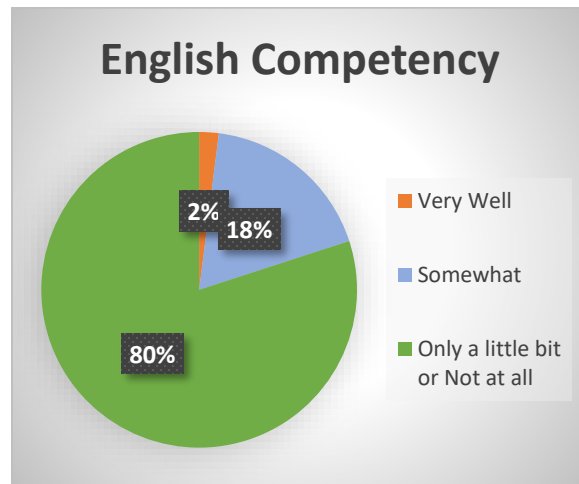
### Karen Refugees



The Wilder Foundation did a study in 2016 called *Speaking for Ourselves: Populations at a Glance*. In this study 68% of Karen participants had been in Minnesota for 3 years or less and the remaining 32% had lived in Minnesota between 4 to 9 years. There were no Karen participants who had lived in the state for 10 years or more. This shows how recently the Karen have come to the state as refugees.



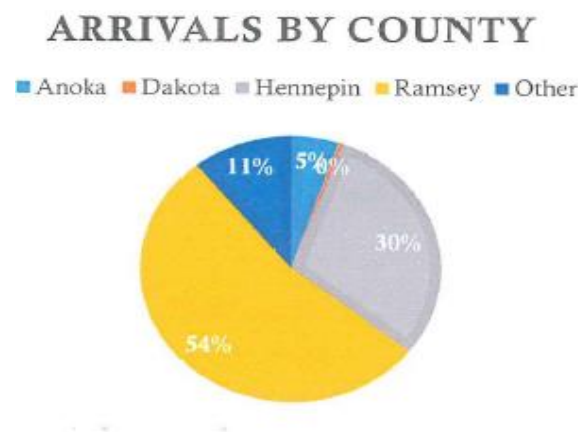
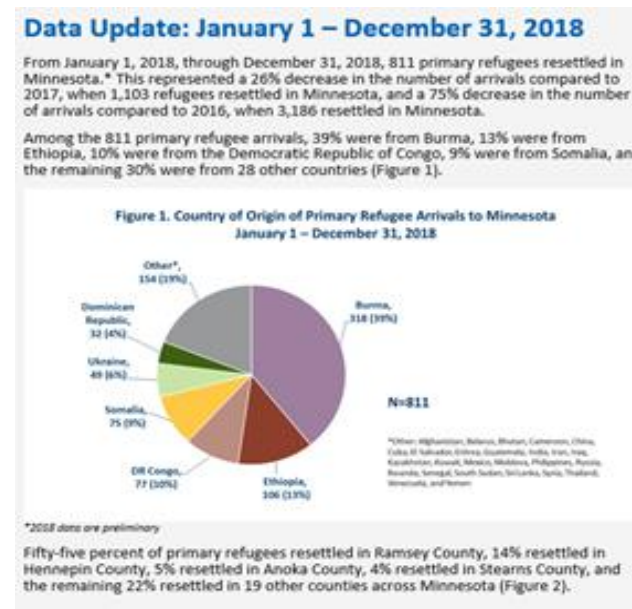
The Wilder Foundation study also reviewed language with the Karen participants. All participants spoke Karen and 80% reported they could read the Karen language. Only 2% of Karen participants Spoke and understood English “Very Well”, while 80% reported that they speak English “only a little bit” or “not at all”.



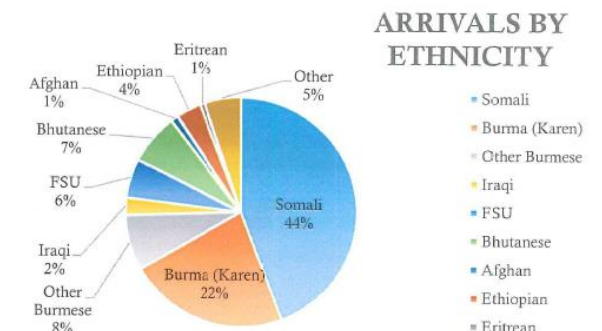
This disparity in English comprehension can make it difficult for the Karen to interact with the majority of the population for which English is their primary language.

Karen and Burmese are two distinct language groups and it should not be assumed that a Burmese interpreter can speak fluent Karen. Karen people who have Burmese interpreters may not report that the interpreter is saying something incorrectly as they do not want the

Burmese person to get in trouble. Karen interpreters who are unable to understand what the speaker is saying may not ask for clarification and instead may make something up.

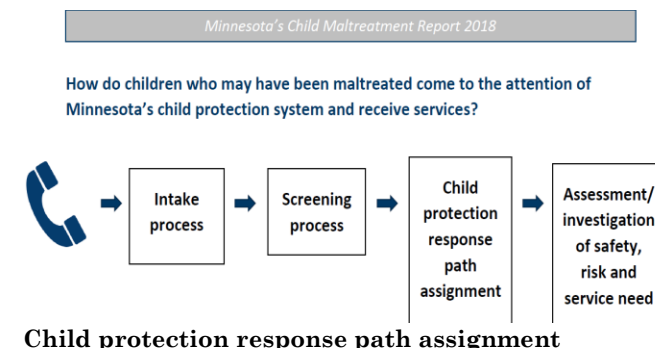


## Resettlement Agency Data for FY 2016 (Oct 1, 2015-Sep 3-, 2016)



## What is child maltreatment?

Minnesota Statutes provide a detailed description of what constitutes child maltreatment (see Minn. Stat. 626.556). In general, Minnesota Statutes recognize six types of maltreatment: Neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, mental injury, emotional harm, medical neglect and threatened injury.



Once a report has been accepted and screened in, local agencies assign a case to one of three child protection responses: Family Assessment, Family Investigation, or Facility Investigation. All response paths are involuntary and families must engage with child protection or face the possibility of court action.

## Services planning with youth

Support for parents and family members  
mental health support (individual or Family therapy, wraparound services, Support groups)

## Legal rights

Legal representation for youth (civil, delinquency/criminal, immigration, guardian ad litem) Minnesota Crime Victims Reparations Criminal justice system-related advocacy, such as access to restitution Victim advocacy and witness coordination Advocacy for child and family Providing both legal advocacy within prosecutor's office and community-based advocacy

Connections, belonging, and normal youth development Caregiving that promotes normalcy, including determining interests, hobbies, cultivating strengths, developmentally appropriate goals, and positive youth development activities

Connection to culturally specific supports in the community

Social support, belonging, pro-social skills, connection to family and/or community Medical, mental and behavioral health mental health support for youth (individual and family therapy, crisis support, Children's Therapeutic Services and Supports)

Connection to culturally specific and traditional spiritual healing

Medical care (insurance coverage, primary care doctor, reproductive health, long-acting reversible contraception, sexually transmitted infection testing and treatment, preventive care, pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV, chronic and acute conditions, dental, optometry, transgender-specific health care)

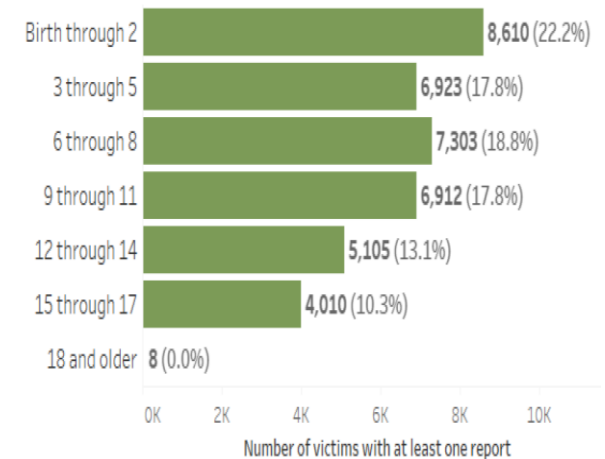
Finding culturally relative foster home/non relative/Kinship foster home.

Understanding Karen parenting styles. Parenting resources, Transportation arrangement. Reminders of appointments, Reading/completion of paper work/documents. Benefits letters

## Chemical dependency treatment

(including medication-assisted treatment of opioid use via buprenorphine, services for withdrawal symptoms, inpatient treatment and other

## Minnesota's Child Maltreatment report 2018. Number and percent of alleged victims with at least one completed assessment/ Investigation by age group in 2018



Number of alleged victims by race, ethnicity and agency, in 2018 Ramsey County
African American/ black: 1,458
American Indian: 154
Asian/ Pacific Islander: 463
Two or more races: 507
Unknown/ declined: 137
White: 1,027
Hispanic (any race): 443
Total alleged victims: 3,746