

Migrant and Refugee Fact Sheet

There is often confusion on the terms related to immigration and refugee status. What's the difference between a migrant and a refugee? Where do most refugees come from? Who is considered an asylum seeker? Below find answers to these questions and more.

Migrants:

The term migrant is not uniformly defined by international law. In general, a migrant refers to a person who voluntarily leaves their country of origin in search of better opportunities (often economic).

However, the reasons people leave their country of origin are often complex, requiring a just and humane response to each case. Some countries make immigration more difficult than others, forcing people to make decisions that may not always align with the law.

Forcibly Displaced People:

According to the 2018 UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) Global Report, almost 70.8 million individuals are forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations. That's an average rate of 37,000 people being forced to flee from their home daily.

This number includes almost 41.3 million internally displaced people, 25.9 million refugees, and 3.5 million asylum seekers.

Refugees:

A refugee is a person who has fled his or her home country to escape violence, persecution, or war. Refugees leave with a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. For many refugees, they are unable to return home and express fear in doing so.

Refugees are protected by international law as a result of the international treaty known as the 1951 Refugee Convention, and the following 1967 Protocol.

Origin of Refugees

Two-thirds of refugees come from just five countries: Syria (6.7 million); Afghanistan (2.7 million); South Sudan (2.3 million); Myanmar (1.1 million); and Somalia (949,652).

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

6.7 MILLION

AFGHANISTAN

2.7 MILLION

SOUTH SUDAN

2.3 MILLION

MYANMAR

1.1 MILLION

SOMALIA

0.9 MILLION

67 % of all refugees in 2018 were from 5 countries .

United Nations. "UNHCR Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018." UNHCR, June 20, 2019.

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Location of Refugees

The countries hosting the largest number of refugees are Turkey (3.7 million), Pakistan (1.4 million), Uganda (1.2 million), Sudan (1.1 million), and Germany (1.1 million). Developing countries host 84% of refugees worldwide. Four in five refugees live in countries neighboring their countries of origin.



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Living Conditions of Refugees

Refugees live in widely varying conditions, from well-established camps and collective centers to makeshift shelters or living in the open. As of 2019, most refugees live in urban areas. They all await one of three possible “durable” solutions: repatriation to their country of origin, integration in their host country, or resettlement in a third country.

Refugees Resettlement

Refugee resettlement occurs when individuals or families are transferred from one country of asylum to another that has agreed to admit them and provide permanent settlement. Resettlement is typically an option for the most vulnerable of refugees when their needs aren't being met in the country that is currently providing them protection. For example, a Syrian currently receiving protection in Turkey may be resettled in Sweden.

The U.S. is one of the few countries that accepts refugees for resettlement. In recent years, the U.S. government has reduced the annual number of admitted refugees from 110,000 to 30,000. In 2019, the US set the 2020 maximum to 18,000, its lowest level since 1980, the year in which the refugee resettlement program was started by Congress. UNHCR estimates that over 1.2 million refugees are in need of resettlement.

U.S. trailed rest of world in refugee resettlement in 2017 and 2018 after leading it for decades

Number of refugee admissions, in thousands, by calendar year



Note: Figures rounded to the nearest thousand.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees data, accessed June 12, 2019.

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Internally Displaced Persons:

An internally displaced person (IDP) is someone who has been forced to flee from their home but remains within the borders of their home country. They are not protected by international law as they have not crossed an international border, meaning they remain under the protection of the local government although it may be the cause of their displacement.

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Location of IDPs

Colombia has the highest population of IDPs at 7.8 million. Syria follows with almost 6.2 million people internally displaced. The Democratic Republic of Congo has the third highest population as 4.5 million people are internally displaced, with 322,000 new displacements in 2018 due to active conflicts and political uncertainties. In Ethiopia, 1.5 million people were internally displaced in 2018 due to intercommunal conflicts along the Somali border).

Colombia 7.8 MILLION
SYRIA 6.2 MILLION
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO 4.5 MILLION

**LARGEST POPULATIONS OF
INTERNALLY DISPLACED
PEOPLE IN 2018**

Asylum Seekers:

An asylum seeker is someone who has fled their home country, crossed into another, and now seeks international protection by formally applying for asylum. If granted asylum, the person may be recognized as a refugee and given refugee status. An applicant for asylum must demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country in order to be granted asylum. Refugee status is determined either by the country receiving the application or UNHCR.

An asylum seeker is the term used to describe someone who is in the process of applying for asylum. All refugees were once asylum seekers, but not all asylum seekers will become refugees.

Location of Asylum Seekers

2.1 million individual applications were submitted to different States or UNHCR. Of these new applications, UNHCR registered 227,800 applications in 2018.

By country, the United States registered 254,300 new asylum applications in 2018, making it the largest recipient of asylum applications. Most of the applications came from El Salvador (33,400), Guatemala (33,100), and Venezuela (27,500). Peru is the second largest recipient of asylum applications, receiving 192,500 applications with the majority of the claims coming from Venezuelans (190,500). Germany is the third largest, receiving 161,900, with most of the claims coming from Syrians.

**In 2018
VENEZUELAN**



**filed the largest number of
new asylum applications
worldwide.**

By nationality, Venezuelans filed the largest number of new applications worldwide, with 341,800 new claims in 2018. This means Venezuelans account for more than one in five claims submitted.

Total Protection Rate

Globally, including both UNHCR and State asylum procedures, the Total Protection Rate (TPR) in 2018 was 44 percent, meaning that less than half of all asylum cases resulted in protection.

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This resource was created in partnership with Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)

JRS serves individuals who have been forcibly displaced from their home due to persecution, conflict, or generalized violence. This includes refugees, internally displaced persons, and asylum seekers, as well as the communities that host them. More than 677,000 individuals were direct beneficiaries of JRS projects in 2018.



The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organization with a mission to accompany, serve, and advocate on behalf of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. JRS undertakes services at national and regional levels with the support of an international office in Rome. JRS was founded in 1980 by Pedro Arrupe, SJ as a work of the Society of Jesus.

Visit www.jrsusa.org for more information and resources.

ENDNOTES

United Nations. "UNHCR Global Trends 2018." UNHCR, June 2019. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/unhcrstats/5d08d7ee7/unhcr-global-trends-2018.html>.