Refugee Resettlement

Patricia Fenrick | Resettlement Programs Office

• Requires state and local governments to provide written consent before people with refugee status coming through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program can be resettled. This applies to all people coming through this program, even refugees coming to join family members who are already Minnesotan residents

• Currently, all but 5 states in the U.S. have given their consent. Gov. Walz gave consent for Minnesota on Dec. 13th, 2019
An **immigrant** is a person who was born in another country (not born to U.S. citizen parents) who has come to the United States.
What is refugee status?

Refugee Status is a form of protection granted to people who have been forced to flee their country because of experiencing violence and persecution based on:

- Race
- Religion
- Nationality
- Membership in a particular social group
- Political opinion

Refugee status is granted prior to US arrival to those who meet the processing priorities set by the U.S. Department of State. More than 70% of arrivals are women and children.
Asylum status is a form of protection granted to people who are already present in the United States or are seeking admission at a port of entry, who meet the definition and criteria of refugee (experience or fear of persecution). The process for establishing a claim of asylum before an USCIS asylum officer or immigration judge may take some time, often a year or more.
Foreign Born Immigrants

Non-citizen
48%

Citizen
52%

9%
Non-citizen Status

- No status
- Non-immigrant temporary status
- Immigrant status
  - Employment-based visas
  - Family-sponsored visas
  - Groups of humanitarian concern
Groups of Humanitarian Concern

Battered Spouse, children, parents
Humanitarian Parole
Special Situations
Temporary Protected Status
Female Genital Cutting (FGM)
Forced Marriage
Deferred Enforced Departure
Special Immigrant Juveniles

People fleeing Persecution
Three distinct phases of resettlement process

1. Overseas process
2. Reception and Placement
3. Building Well-being
1.4 million refugees were in need of resettlement in 2019. 92,400 were resettled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resettlement countries</th>
<th>Countries hosting refugees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada – 28,100</td>
<td>Turkey – 3.7 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States – 22,900</td>
<td>Pakistan – 1.4 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia – 12,700</td>
<td>Uganda 1.2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.K. – 5800</td>
<td></td>
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<td>France 5,600</td>
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U.S. Refugees Admissions Program

A HUMANITARIAN and PROTECTION program of the US Department of State
Overseas Process

- Presidential Administration sets the limit of refugee arrivals annually which is currently 18,000.
- All people who come through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program are approved and screened prior to arrival in the U.S.
- People selected through this process have legal, permanent status in the U.S., immediate work authorization and a pathway to Citizenship after 5 years.

Run by Department of State and Homeland Security
U.S. Refugee Admissions Program

Annual Presidential Determination signed each year sets:
- Maximum number of refugees admitted to US
- Priority populations to resettle in the coming year
- Nationalities eligible for family reunification programs

2019 Admissions Ceiling
- Africa ...................... 11,000
- East Asia ................. 4,000
- Europe and Central Asia .... 3,000
- Latin America/Caribbean ... 3,000
- Near East/South Asia ........ 9,000
- Unallocated Reserve .......... 0
- TOTAL .......................... 30,000

2020 Admissions Ceiling
- Religious persecuted minorities from former Soviet Union countries .................. 5,000
- Iraq ................................................................. 4,000
- El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras ........ 1,500
- People already in “ready for departure” status as of Sept. 30, 2019 ..................... 7,500
- Total ........................................................................ 18,000
Arrivals Ceilings 1980-2016

U.S. Refugee Admissions and Refugee Resettlement Ceilings, Fiscal Years 1980-2017

2017 Ceiling - 110,000/50,000
2018 Ceiling - 45,000
2019 Ceiling - 30,000
2020 Ceiling – 18,000
Vetting Process

Refugees are subject to the highest level of security checks of any U.S. entrant, facing a MINIMUM 18- to 24-month processing period.
“U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is deeply committed to safeguarding the American public from threats to public safety and national security, just as we are committed to providing refuge to some of the world’s most vulnerable people. We do not believe these goals are mutually exclusive, or that either has to be pursued at the expense of the other.”
Refugee Security Process

The vetting procedure involves:

- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of State
- Department of Justice
- Department of Defense
- National Counterterrorism Center
- Department of Health and Human Services
- FBI
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Refugee Security Process

The vetting procedure includes:

- 6 different security databases
- 5 separate background checks
- 4 biometric security checks
- 3 separate in-person interviews
- 2 interagency security reviews
The Screening Process
For Refugee Entry into the United States

1. Many Refugee applicants identify themselves to the U.N. Refugee Agency, UNHCR. UNHCR, then:

- Collects identifying documents
- Performs initial assessment
  - Collects biodata: name, address, birthday, place of birth, etc.
  - Collects biometrics: iris scans
    (for Syrians, and other refugee populations in the Middle East)
- Interviews applicants to confirm refugee status and the need for resettlement
  - Initial information checked again

Only applicants who are strong candidates for resettlement move forward (less than 1% of global refugee population).
Applicants are received by a federally-funded resettlement support center (RSC):

- Collects identifying documents
- Creates an applicant file
- Compiles information to conduct biographic security checks
Biographic security checks start with enhanced interagency security checks:

- U.S. security agencies screen the candidate, including:
  - National Counterterrorism Center/Intelligence Community
  - FBI
  - Department of Homeland Security
  - State Department

The screening looks for indicators, like:
- Information that the individual is a security risk
- Connections to known bad actors
- Outstanding warrants/immigration or criminal violations

DHS conducts an enhanced review of Syrian cases, which may be referred to USCIS Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate for review. Research that is used by the interviewing officer informs lines of question related to the applicant’s eligibility and credibility.

This process is repeated any time new information is provided, such as a previously used name or different phone number. Otherwise, the process continues.
Interviews are conducted by USCIS Officers specially trained for interviews.

Fingerprints are collected and submitted (biometric check).

Re-interviews can be conducted if fingerprint results or new information raises questions. If new biographic information is identified by USCIS at an interview, additional security checks on the information are conducted. USCIS may place a case on hold to do additional research or investigation. Otherwise, the process continues.
“The questions were very detailed: about my friends and family and how I spent my time. The interviewers even knew the location of the hospital where I was born. We were exhaustively, endlessly vetted. I was stunned by the level of scrutiny and the length of the process.”

-Linda from Baltimore
Excerpt from Washington Post article
BIOMETRIC SECURITY CHECKS:

- Applicant’s fingerprints are taken by U.S. government employees
- Fingerprints are screened against the FBI’s biometric database
- Fingerprints are screened against the DHS biometric database, containing watch-list information and previous immigration encounters in the U.S. and overseas.
- Fingerprints are screened against the U.S. Department of Defense biometric database, which includes fingerprint records captured in Iraq and other locations.

IF NOT ALREADY HALTED, THIS IS THE END POINT FOR CASES WITH SECURITY CONCERNS.
Otherwise, the process continues.
The need for medical screening is determined

This is the end point for cases denied due to medical reasons. Refugees may be provided medical treatment for communicable diseases such as tuberculosis.
CULTURAL ORIENTATION AND ASSIGNMENT TO DOMESTIC RESSETTLEMENT LOCATIONS:

- Applicants complete cultural orientation classes.
- An assessment is made by a U.S.-based non-governmental organization to determine the best resettlement location for the candidate(s). Considerations include:
  - Family; candidates with family in a certain area may be placed in that area.
  - Health; a candidate with asthma may be matched to certain regions.
- A location is chosen.

RECURRENT VETTING:

Throughout this process, pending applications continue to be checked against terrorist databases, to ensure new, relevant terrorism information has not come to light. If a match is found, that case is paused for further review.

IF THERE IS DOUBT about whether an applicant poses a security risk, they will not be admitted.

Applicants who continue to have no flags continue the process.
International Organization for Migration books travel

Prior to entry in the United States, applicants are subject to:

- Screening from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's National Targeting Center-Passenger
- The Transportation Security Administration's Secure Flight Program

THIS IS THE END POINT FOR SOME APPLICANTS.
Applicants who have no flags continue the process.
U.S. ARRIVAL:

All refugees are required to apply for a green card within a year of their arrival to the United States, which triggers:

- Another set of security procedures with the U.S. government.

REFUGEES ARE WOVEN INTO THE RICH FABRIC OF AMERICAN SOCIETY!

WHITEHOUSE.GOV
The vetting procedure involves:

- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of State
- Department of Justice
- Department of Defense
- National Counterterrorism Center
- Department of Health and Human Services
- FBI
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Reception and Placement

• Federally funded with community (private) support raised through the NGOs
• Initial resettlement guidance for 30-90 days which ensures basic needs are met with a focus on early self-sufficiency.

Run by Department of State and Non Governmental Organizations

Last year Minnesota received 848 people through the U.S. Refugee Admissions program.
In 2020 expect less than 500 statewide due to federal changes
Reception and Placement Services

5 Minnesota Resettlement Agencies:

- Arrive Ministries – Richfield
- Catholic Charities - Rochester
- International Institute of MN – St. Paul
- Lutheran Social Services - Minneapolis, St. Cloud
- MN Council of Churches - Minneapolis
Phase 2: Reception and Placement by Resettlement Agencies

Reception and Placement Services:

- 30-90 Days Case Management with resettlement agencies
- Connection to Ongoing Services
- One-time Grant to help with Initial Expenses ($1125/person)
- Begin Travel Loan Repayment
Primary arrivals in 2019=891
Primary vs. Secondary Refugee Arrivals

**PRIMARY RESETTLEMENT:**
Families whose first destination in the U.S. is Minnesota

**SECONDARY RESETTLEMENT:**
Refugees who arrive in another state, then move to Minnesota at a later time

**FACT:**
Minnesota leads the nation in secondary refugee migration.
Building Well being in Minnesota

Run by Minnesota Department of Human Services Resettlement Programs Office

- Federally funded
- Non-mandatory services during first 5 years for self-sufficiency and integration
  - Employment
  - Family coaching
  - Navigation services
  - Community orientation
  - Student success
DHS Resettlement Programs Office

Serving people with the following immigration statuses:

- Refugee
- Asylee
- Special Immigrant Visa holder
- Certified Victims of Trafficking
Groups of Humanitarian Concern

Humanitarian Protection Status Umbrella

- Victim of Trafficking
- Cuban Haitian Entrant
- Iraqi & Afghani Special Immigrant Visa
- Asylee
- Refugee
- Amerasian
Resettlement Programs Office

Manage federal grants that fund limited essential support for new arrivals to rebuild their lives

Work with federal, state and community partners to facilitate effective integration of groups under humanitarian protection

Provide education and training around the state about the refugee program and multicultural workforce development
People with Refugee Status in the US

• Have legal immigration status granted prior to arrival
• Status valid indefinitely
• Work authorized upon arrival
• Pay taxes
• Path to citizenship (5 years)
• Access to public benefits if meet eligibility criteria
• Do not receive special access to programs
Economic cost and contribution

Initial investment:
• Loan for plane ticket travel which is paid back
• Integration support as people adjust to new school system, new culture and navigating in society

Long term contribution:
• Workforce and tax contributions
• Over $227 million annually contributed in state and local taxes
• Generate new business
• $1.8 Billion in spending power
“Most studies estimating the fiscal impacts of immigrants have found that the taxes (including state, federal and Social Security taxes) that immigrants pay exceed the cost of the services they use, in aggregate and over the long-run. In addition, the children of immigrants have a long-run fiscal impact similar to that of the children of the U.S.-born population. These children enter the labor force and pay far more in taxes than they receive in benefits.”

-United States Treasury
FIGURE 9: STATES WHERE REFUGEES CONTRIBUTED THE MOST IN STATE AND LOCAL TAX REVENUE, 2015


- Struggle to Resilience
- NAE 2017 report
FIGURE 2: MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOMES OF REFUGEES, BY YEARS IN THE UNITED STATES, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 Years</td>
<td>$21,782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-15 Years</td>
<td>$36,886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-25 Years</td>
<td>$51,113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 25 Years</td>
<td>$67,000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

“Immigrants are not magic ingredients to an economic development strategy, but they are an asset to the cities they join and when that asset is underutilized, it is a loss to the local economy.”

Growing business

181,463
Number of Refugee Entrepreneurs

$4.6B
Total Business Income of Refugee Entrepreneurs

**FIGURE 5: ENTREPRENEURSHIP RATES OF REFUGEES AND OTHER POPULATION GROUPS, 2015**

- Likely Refugees: 13.0%
- Other Immigrants: 11.5%
- U.S.-Born: 9.0%


-Struggle to Resilience NAE 2017 report
Minnesota growth needs immigrants

“The [Twin Cities’] refugee groups have played a significant role in the revitalization of Minneapolis and St. Paul; together with other immigrant groups, they have helped spur the cities’ population rebound after a mid-20th century decline.”

- “Refugee Integration in the United States” 2016 report from Fiscal Policy Institute
Scarcity of workers and skilled labor + Low unemployment → Top barriers to Minnesota’s economic growth
“With deaths projected to outnumber births in 2040, international migration is going to continue to be crucial for population growth in Minnesota. Our state’s domestic migration has been steadily negative since 2002...New neighbors from other countries, will be especially needed to fill jobs and keep our communities vital in the decades ahead.”

- Minnesota State Demographic Center, 2017
Importance of immigration in Minnesota

- 60% of Immigrants are prime working age
- 41% of population growth is from foreign born

Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey
Good retention and strong recruitment

- Refugees tend to have higher job retention
- Strong recruitment after initial trust is built
- There are less surprises in hiring process

*From Refugees as employees: Good retention, strong recruitment. FPI, May 2018*
“If you don’t have enough human capital, you’re not going to have a growing economy. No policies, no tax cuts, no deregulation is going to make up for the fact that we simply don’t have enough workers....We’re going to need a vibrant, legal immigration population.”

- Senator Ron Johnson, R-Wis.
“What’s clear to me is that, in the same way that immigration has played a very large role in shaping the history of [Minnesota], it is going to do so again in the future, one way or another. The simple laws of demography and economics demand it.”

- Federal Reserve Bank Senior Vice President, Mark Wright
Resettlement Office Resources

Educational workshops and presentations:

- Refugee Process 101
- World in Your Lobby
- Message Framing for Refugee work
- Immigration and work authorization demystified
- Working with oral cultures
- Infographics, fact sheets, resources

100 countries
100,000 people since 1979
Thank you!

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