



# IDAHO AT A GLANCE

## Refugees in Idaho

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### INTRODUCTION

A **refugee is someone who has fled their home country and is unable to return** due to “persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion”<sup>1</sup>. The United States Refugee Resettlement Act (1980) created a permanent process for the U.S. to admit and support refugees, which is implemented in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).<sup>2</sup> The U.S. permanently resettles refugees in all states, including Idaho.<sup>2,3</sup>

### ANNUAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

#### UNITED STATES

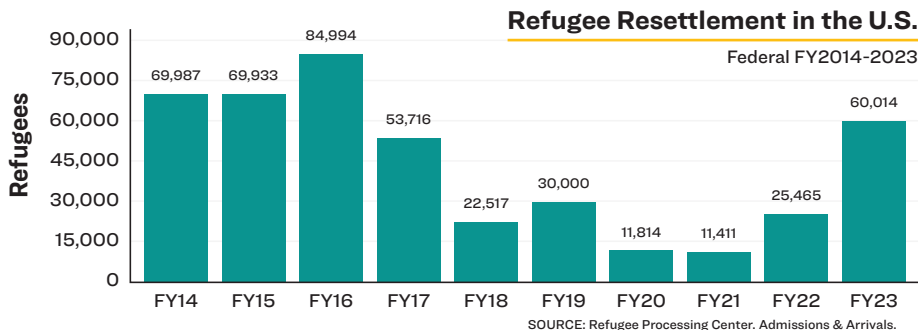
Approximately **3.2 million refugees have been resettled in the U.S. since 1980.**<sup>2</sup> In federal fiscal year (FY) 2023, **60,014 refugees** were resettled in the U.S.<sup>4</sup>

The annual limit, or ceiling, of refugees admitted for resettlement in the U.S. is determined by Congress and the President, based on recommendations from the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security, Health and Human Services, and State.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

The ceiling varies by year and has ranged from 18,000 in FY2020 to 125,000 in FY2022-2024 over the past decade.<sup>5</sup>

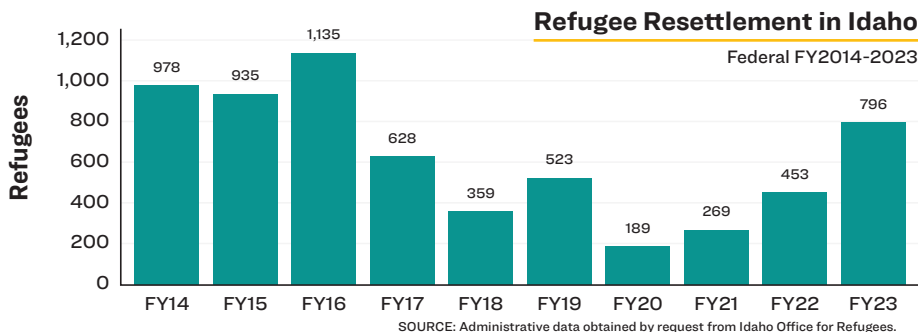
#### Resettlement:

The legal and physical transfer of refugees from their home countries to another country that has agreed to admit them and grant them permanent residency.<sup>7</sup>



#### IDAHO

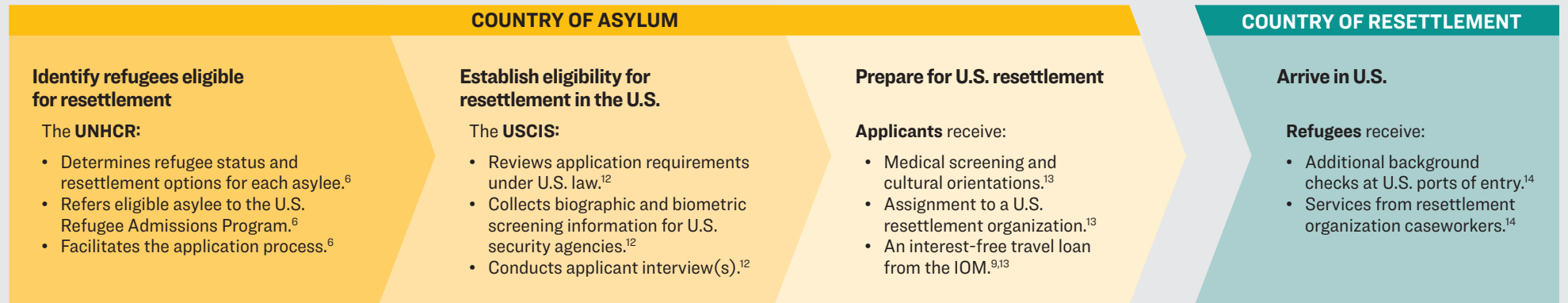
In **FY2023, 796 refugees were resettled in Idaho**, and **973 were approved for resettlement in FY2024.**<sup>3,8</sup>



## REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROCESS

Refugee resettlement is a **complex process with many agencies working together** internationally, nationally, and locally, with a **focus on the success and safety of refugees and local communities.**<sup>2</sup> U.S. federal agencies lead the refugee screening and approval process, while refugees are still abroad.<sup>9</sup> It takes approximately **two years from eligibility determination to arrival** in the U.S.<sup>10</sup>

This process happens in collaboration with the **UNHCR** and **International Organization for Migration (IOM).**<sup>9</sup> U.S. federal agencies that participate in the process include the **Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and U.S. Department of State.**<sup>9</sup> In 2023, the U.S. resettled **less than 1% of the 31.6M** refugees worldwide.<sup>11</sup>



## RESETTLING IN IDAHO

Three organizations in Idaho are authorized to **provide the basic needs for refugees for the first 30 to 90 days** after arrival.<sup>15,9</sup> The U.S. Department of State funds the initial support services, including placement assistance, translation services, food and housing support, and more.<sup>9</sup>



During the first year of resettlement, organizations in Idaho coordinate transitional services in collaboration with the Idaho Office for Refugees. Services include English language classes, job readiness, housing, health care enrollment, social adjustment support, and more, and are provided in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Office of Refugee Resettlement.<sup>20</sup>

## SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISAS AND HUMANITARIAN PAROLE

The U.S. provides humanitarian assistance to others who do not meet refugee status, with **Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs)** and **humanitarian parole.**<sup>9</sup> SIV holders and humanitarian parolees are included in local resettlement support projections and funding, and they are **not included in the annual refugee resettlement ceiling.**<sup>8,9</sup> Each program has different eligibility requirements and different processes for entering the U.S.<sup>9</sup>

After SIV holders and humanitarian parolees arrive in the U.S., **they are eligible for resettlement services** with the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement.<sup>9</sup>

Between October 2021 and 2024, **34% of people resettled in Idaho were humanitarian parolees** from Afghanistan and Ukraine and **6% were SIV holders** from Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>8</sup>

### Nampa

Since opening in 2022, the **Ukrainian Welcome Center** has provided resettlement assistance to **Ukrainian humanitarian parolees** in **Nampa** as a community partner.<sup>15</sup>

## DEFINITIONS

**Asylee:** A person who is either already present in a country that is not their home or seeking admission at a port of entry.<sup>16</sup>

**Asylum:** Protection from deportation for an individual at a port of entry for legal admittance or to stay in the country based on fear of persecution or harm.<sup>16</sup>

**Displaced Person:** A person who has been forced to flee their home to avoid armed conflict, violence, or violations of human rights who has not crossed an internationally recognized border.<sup>17</sup>

**Humanitarian Parole:** U.S. legal status granted to an individual who may be otherwise ineligible for admission into the U.S. for a temporary period due to urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit.<sup>18</sup>

**Special Immigrant Visa (SIV):** A visa that is granted to individuals who worked for the U.S. Armed Forces in Afghanistan or Iraq as translators or interpreters.<sup>19</sup>

## COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN AND IDAHO

Idaho has welcomed **over 20,000 refugees, SIV holders, and humanitarian parolees from at least 53 countries** since 1980.<sup>8</sup> In **FY2023**, Idaho resettled people from **19 countries**, with **45% coming from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.**<sup>8</sup>

Countries of origin have changed over time in response to global events and U.S. priorities.<sup>2,9,21</sup>

### Top Countries of Origin for Refugees, SIV Holders, and Humanitarian Parolees in Idaho



SOURCE: Administrative data obtained by request from Idaho Office for Refugees.

## REFUGEES' ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS TO IDAHO

Refugees contribute to Idaho's economy through spending, entrepreneurship, and labor.



SOURCE: "Starting Anew: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America." American Immigration Council, June 2023.

Refugees have high rates of entrepreneurship.<sup>22</sup> Since 2002, **refugees have created over 260 new businesses in Idaho** across agriculture, hospitality, manufacturing, and other sectors.<sup>8</sup>

Nearly **80% of refugees** in the U.S. are of working age.<sup>22</sup> Nationally, and in Idaho, nearly two-thirds of the population is of working age.<sup>23,24</sup> As the U.S. population ages, working refugees support increasing labor needs.<sup>22</sup>

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