

STATISTICAL YEARBOOK

2001

**Refugees, Asylum-seekers and Other Persons of Concern -
Trends in Displacement, Protection and Solutions**

October, 2002



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FOREWORD

BY RUUD LUBBERS, UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

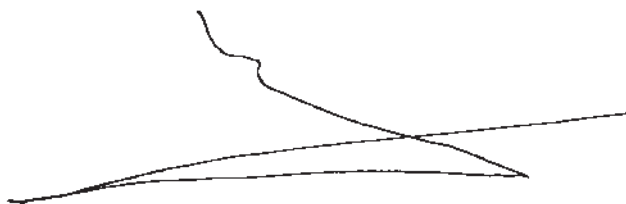
For more than fifty years, countries have been providing information to UNHCR concerning the number and conditions of refugees in their territories. Statistics are key to enabling the international community to assess the true dimensions of global forced displacement. They also illustrate the many challenges countries and UNHCR face in protecting refugees and in finding solutions to their plight. Since the early 1990s, the Office has gradually stepped up its statistical activities, with the aim of providing a clearer picture of the number and categories of persons in need of protection, as well as of those finding solutions.

The 2001 Statistical Yearbook is the first of a new series. Its main purpose is to provide relevant, reliable and consistent data on refugees, asylum-seekers and other persons of concern to UNHCR. But it goes beyond presenting facts and figures. It analyses basic patterns and trends, and addresses a number of critical issues, key questions and challenges in protecting and assisting refugees in today's globalised world. The relevance of solid registration and statistical data to the protection of refugees is fully recognised in UNHCR's Agenda for Protection. The Yearbook may prove useful in monitoring the implementation of the Agenda's far-ranging goals and objectives.

Considering that only a limited number of the world's refugees have officially obtained refugee status, much remains to be done to strengthen implementation of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Significant differences in asylum-seeker recognition rates, the use of various forms of protection outside the terms of the 1951 Convention, and differences in national statistical formats underscore the need for greater harmonisation and consistency in applying the 1951 Convention and related standards.

The gender and age disaggregated data presented in the Yearbook will help in the targeting of activities to protect and assist women, children and other groups with special needs. The Yearbook also allows for some measurement of progress in achieving durable solutions. While the link between asylum and migration is increasingly being felt in a number of countries, the Yearbook illustrates the difficulties in comparing migration statistics between countries, and underlines the need to implement relevant United Nations recommendations to improve national data collection. By providing objective data and indicators, the Yearbook may also help in assessing the burdens and responsibilities of countries hosting refugees.

I hope the Yearbook will prove to be a valuable tool for those researching the evolution of global forced displacement, the nexus between asylum and migration, and the sharing of burdens and responsibilities. Above all, I hope it will provide a more solid underpinning for the current refugee and asylum debate, and that it will contribute to informed policy and decision-making.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ruud Lubbers', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned at the end of the foreword text.

MAIN FINDINGS

The following are some of the main findings of the 2001 Statistical Yearbook.

1) During 2001, the size of the global refugee population remained unchanged at around 12.0 million. The total population of concern to UNHCR fell by nine per cent, from 21.8 million at the end of 2000 to 19.8 million one year later.

Asia hosted the largest overall refugee population (5.8 mln.), Africa was the second largest asylum region (3.3 mln.), Europe was host to 2.2 million refugees, and North America provided asylum to an estimated 650,000 refugees. While the number of refugees remained stable, there were declines in the number of recently returned refugees (-40%), internally displaced persons (IDPs) of concern to UNHCR (-16%), recently returned IDPs (-35%) and other persons of concern to UNHCR (-38%). The number of asylum-seekers increased by four per cent.

2) Afghan refugees make up a third of the global refugee population.

Afghanistan is by far the largest country of origin of refugees, accounting for an estimated 3.8 million refugees¹ or one-third of the global refugee population. In all, there are 21 countries from which the number of refugees exceeds 100,000.

3) In 2001, 832,000 refugee arrivals were recorded, 31 per cent less than in 2000.

In 2001, almost 500,000 refugees became displaced on a group basis, 240,000 asylum-seekers were recognised following individual refugee status determination, and 92,000 refugees from countries of first asylum arrived under resettlement schemes. Group refugee (*prima facie*) status was accorded mainly to refugees fleeing in Africa and Asia; most refugees in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean were admitted following individual asylum procedures; and refugee flows to North America and Oceania were managed mainly through organised resettlement programmes.

4) Some 463,000 refugees repatriated in 2001, 40 per cent less than in 2000.

During 2001, the largest movements of returnees took place to Sierra Leone (92,300), FYR Macedonia (90,000) and Somalia (51,300). The annual number of refugees who repatriated with direct assistance from UNHCR fell by 60 per cent. Female refugees constituted 51 per cent of voluntary repatriation departures. Refugee returns in 2001 were the lowest in the past 10 years.

5) UNHCR resettled almost 30,000 refugees in 2001, one quarter less than in 2000.

Some 77 UNHCR country offices resettled almost 30,000 refugees in 2001, 44 per cent of whom were female. Ten refugee nationalities accounted for 90 per cent of all resettlement departures. The main countries of origin were Sudan (5,400), Afghanistan (5,200) and Iraq (4,100).

6) During 1992-2001, the global number of refugees fell with 24 per cent.

In 1997-2001, the global number of refugees fell by 24 per cent compared to the previous five years. More refugees repatriated than were forced to leave their country and new refugee outflows have declined. Twelve major refugee nationalities showed a considerable fall in displacement levels, whereas four nationalities were confronted with major new displacement.

7) Less developed countries are both a major source and destination of refugees.

During 1992-2001, 86 per cent of the world's refugees originated from developing countries, while these countries provided asylum to 72 per cent of the global refugee population. The fact that seven out of 10

¹ According to Government estimates, the Islamic Republic of Iran hosted 2.3 million Afghans, whereas some 3.3 million Afghans were residing in Pakistan by the end of 2001. The figures provided here are UNHCR estimates.

refugees are hosted by low-income countries underscores the responsibility of industrialized countries to share in international refugee protection.

8) The number of refugees being resettled from Africa is increasing.

During 1992-2001, 284,000 refugees were resettled from first asylum countries under UNHCR auspices. The share of refugees from Asia fell from 65 per cent in 1992-1996 to 39 per cent during 1997-2001, whereas the share of refugees from Africa rose from 20 to 45 per cent.

9) Women constitute almost half of the total population of concern to UNHCR.

It is estimated that 48.1 per cent (9.5 million) of the total population of concern to UNHCR are female. An estimated 1.9 million persons of concern to UNHCR are children under the age of five (11.6%), 5.5 million children are aged between five and 17 (32.9%), half of the population (48.7%) is aged between 18 and 59, whereas 1.1 million persons (6.9%) are 60 and over. Demographic profiles differ significantly between regions and across refugee situations.

10) Forty per cent of the population of concern to UNHCR live in camps.

An estimated 40 per cent of all persons of concern to UNHCR are living in camps, 13 per cent are living in urban areas, whereas 47 per cent are either living dispersed in rural areas or their type of settlement was unspecified. This latter group mostly includes persons of concern in industrialised countries whose type of settlement is not available. In Africa and Asia, 50 per cent of the population was living in camps, while 10 per cent was living in urban areas. In Europe, the Americas and Oceania, less than 10 per cent of the population live in camps. The average camp size amounts to almost 9,000 persons.

11) Women constitute 51 per cent of the population in refugee camps.

Official data indicate that the number of women living in camps is very close to that of men. In 90 per cent of the larger camps, the proportion of women varies between 45 and 55 per cent. However, women of working age are slightly more numerous (53%) than males.

12) In 2001, 915,000 asylum applications were submitted in 144 countries in 2001. In total, some 36 per cent of all asylum decisions taken during 2001 were positive.

During the year, 932,000 cases were decided, of which 168,000 resulted in refugee status, 78,000 in humanitarian status, while 445,000 cases were rejected. In total, the refugee recognition rate amounted to 24 per cent. When asylum-seekers allowed to remain on humanitarian grounds are included, the recognition rate increases to 36 per cent.

13) Afghanistan was the main country of origin of asylum-seekers during 2001.

The main countries of origin of asylum-seekers in 2001 were Afghanistan (66,800), Iraq (60,800) and Turkey (41,300). Altogether, the 10 largest asylum-seeker nationalities accounted for 41 per cent of all applications.

14) Women have a greater chance of being granted refugee status than men.

Relatively few women request asylum: seven out every 10 asylum-seekers are males. Data covering 35,000 decisions in 32 countries indicates that the refugee recognition rate for males is 68 per cent, compared to 76 per cent for females.

15) In 2001, asylum applications in industrialised countries rose with eight per cent.

In 2001, the 38 most industrialised countries received 595,700 new applications for asylum, eight per cent more than in 2000 (551,500). The increase in the six non-European industrialised countries was 31 per cent, whereas Europe's increase was limited to three per cent. The 15 member countries of the European Union (EU) received 388,400 applications, one per cent less than in 2000 (391,300). Central Europe recorded a 33 per cent increase in annual applications.

16) In 2001, the United Kingdom received the largest number of asylum applications (92,000), followed by Germany (88,300) and the United States (83,200).

In 2001, the United Kingdom received the largest number of asylum-seekers (92,000), followed by Germany (88,300) and the United States (83,200)². Major receiving countries recording a significant increase in annual applications included the Czech Republic (106%), Austria (65%), the United States (45%), Sweden (44%), Norway (36%) and Canada (29%). Sharp decreases were reported in Belgium (-42%), Italy (-38%) and the Netherlands (-26%).

17) In 2001, most asylum-seekers in industrialised countries originated from Afghanistan, Iraq and Turkey.

In 2001, the leading country of origin of asylum applicants in industrialised countries was Afghanistan, accounting for 10 per cent of all applications, followed by Iraq (9%) and Turkey (6%). Major relative increases in applications were recorded by asylum-seekers from Mexico (109%)³, Colombia (101%) and Viet Nam (63%). Countries whose nationals filed significantly fewer applications included Poland (-57%), the Islamic Republic of Iran (-41%) and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (-39%).

18) There is a growing tendency to appeal negative asylum decisions.

Increasingly, asylum authorities in industrialised countries are reconsidering asylum claims for the purpose of review or appeal. In 2001, the number of reconsidered applications rose with 19 per cent. Applications in review represented 29 per cent of all applications lodged.

19) Industrialised countries admitted 184,800 asylum-seekers in 2001, 13 per cent more than in 2000.

In the 38 most industrialised countries, 90,900 asylum-seekers were granted Convention refugee status in first instance during 2001, whereas 29,300 asylum-seekers were granted Convention refugee status after review or appeal. Some 57,000 asylum-seekers were allowed stay for humanitarian reasons in first instance and 7,600 asylum-seekers were granted humanitarian status after their claim had been reconsidered.

20) During 2001, the number of pending asylum cases fell in first instance procedures, but rose in appeals.

In the industrialised countries, the number of pending cases fell from 595,000 at 1 January to 580,000 on 31 December 2001 (-3%). In the 10 countries which reported appeal data, the number of undecided asylum cases under appeal increased by nine per cent during the year, from 167,100 to 181,800.

21) Some 31 per cent of all asylum cases decided in industrialised countries were positive in 2001, virtually unchanged from 2000.

Of the asylum-seekers allowed to stay, 20 per cent were admitted under the 1951 Convention, whereas 11 per cent were allowed to remain for humanitarian reasons. Total recognition rates in Europe are lower than in North America, but exceed those in Australia and New Zealand.

22) Most asylum-seekers admitted by industrialised countries in 2001 originated from Afghanistan (29,000), Iraq (23,000) and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (16,300).

The largest number of asylum-seekers admitted either as refugees or on the basis of humanitarian considerations, including in appeal, originated from Afghanistan (29,000), Iraq (23,000) and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (16,300). Half of all asylum-seekers admitted in 2001 originated from four countries.

23) Industrialised countries resettled eight per cent less refugees in 2001.

In total, 12 industrialised countries resettled some 92,100 refugees from first asylum countries. Nine countries reported lower resettlement arrivals in 2001, including the main resettlement countries Australia (-18%), Canada (-9%) and the United States (-6%).

² UNHCR estimate, based on an average of 1.4 persons per asylum case (see Table IV.2).

³ These applications were mostly lodged by Mexicans residents in the United States who intended to prolong their stay.

24) Since 1982, industrialised countries received 8.7 million asylum applications.

In the past 20 years, 8.7 million asylum applications were submitted in the 38 most industrialised countries, 6.7 million of which were lodged in Europe. The 15 countries of the European Union received 5.9 million asylum-seekers. The total number of asylum applications peaked at 858,000 in 1992. Since 1997, the figure has steadily increased, reaching 596,000 in 2001. During the 20-year period, Germany received the largest number of asylum-seekers (30%), followed by the United States (15%)⁴ and the United Kingdom (9%).

25) In Europe, the number of asylum countries has doubled since the early 1980s.

In Europe, the number of countries receiving at least 1,000 asylum applicants annually doubled, from 12 in 1982-1986 to 24 in 1997-2001.

26) Since 1982, industrialised countries have admitted almost two million asylum-seekers.

Almost two million asylum-seekers have been officially admitted in industrialised countries since 1982, 1.6 million of whom were allowed to stay in Europe (80%). This includes asylum-seekers who were granted refugee status and those who were allowed to remain for humanitarian reasons, but excludes war refugees granted temporary protection who did not apply for asylum. France, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States each received 10 to 15 per cent of all recognised asylum-seekers.

27) During 1992-2001, industrialised countries resettled 1.2 million refugees from countries of first asylum.

The United States has resettled the largest number of refugees since 1992 (77%, including family reunion), followed by Canada (10%) and Australia (8%). Half of all resettled refugees originated from Europe (49%), one-third came from Asia (34%), whereas 10 per cent originated from Africa. The Russian Federation was the major country of origin of resettled refugees (24%), followed by Viet Nam (19%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (17%).

28) Among the industrialised countries, Switzerland has received the largest number of refugees compared to the size of its national population.

Taking into account all sources of protection, it is estimated that 3.1 million refugees were admitted in the industrialised countries between 1992 and 2001, 1.7 million of whom were granted protection in Europe. These estimates include asylum-seekers granted Convention refugee status or admitted for humanitarian reasons, resettled refugees and refugees granted temporary protection. Some refugees, particularly those granted temporary protection, have returned to their country of origin. On a per capita basis, Switzerland received the largest number of refugees (23.4 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants), followed by Sweden (16.6) and Denmark (13.8).

29) The economic impact of refugees is significant in a number of African countries as well as in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Compared to their per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP), African countries host the largest number of refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR. Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran are the two main countries outside Africa where the economic impact of refugees on the local economy is particularly high.

30) In 2001, South-Eastern Europe hosted the largest number of displaced persons compared to the size of its national population.

In relation to national population size, South-Eastern Europe hosts the largest number of displaced persons. Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia were among the main affected countries in 2001. Displacement is also significant in relation to national population size in the northern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia).

⁴ Cases only. On average, there are 1.4 persons per asylum case in the United States.

31) UNHCR expenditure on operational activities amounted to almost 19 US dollars per person of concern in 2001.

Per capita expenditure by UNHCR on operational activities fluctuated between over USD 100 in Central America, Central Europe and the Baltic States to less than USD 10 in Eastern Europe, South-West Asia, South America, Western Europe, North America and the Caribbean. The correlation between the size of UNHCR assistance programmes and the capacity of host countries appears limited.

INTRODUCTION

Statistics are part of UNHCR's daily work. Both the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees⁵ and the Statute of the Office⁶ refer to the obligation of States to report statistical data to the High Commissioner. Evidently, the importance of statistical data in protecting refugees and finding durable solutions was recognised from the early days.

Although numbers have long been considered an essential tool at the field level, the effort to compile and analyse data at the aggregate level is a more recent development. While UNHCR country offices have reported refugee statistics for decades, little practical use was made of this information. The general lack of interest in data resulted from a combination of factors, including political sensitivity during the cold war era, limited use of indicators to assess operational effectiveness, modest external interest and the absence of professional capacity within UNHCR.

The Office started to systematically compile, analyse and disseminate data in the early 1990s. Since then, the scope and role of refugee statistics has steadily evolved, from an annual reporting exercise for official purposes, to a vital source of information for those interested in protecting refugees, monitoring global trends and assessing UNHCR activities. Users have come to include Governments, international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), policy advisors and makers, the media, scholars and the informed public at large. UNHCR statistics have become invaluable in monitoring the scope and nature of UNHCR protection activities, measuring progress towards achieving durable solutions, designing programmes on the basis of gender and age profiles and analysing trends in asylum and refugee admission. UNHCR provides methodological advice and support to those compiling and analysing statistics and participates in international fora to streamline asylum, refugee and international migration statistics.

Building on the experience of the past decade, the Yearbook "tells the refugee story" on the basis of data, trends and indicators. By providing and analysing comprehensive statistics and trends, the Yearbook aims to contribute to informed decision-making and public discourse in an area often characterised by a lack of information, strong views and divergent opinions.

Chapter I presents a global overview of current and past international displacement. It identifies the countries and regions marked with the highest displacement levels, major new outflows and durable solutions.

Chapter II discusses the gender, age and location of refugees. In particular, this chapter identifies the main determinants of the demographic composition of refugee and asylum-seeker flows.

Chapter III provides an overview of individual applications for refugee status and assesses the extent of UNHCR involvement in assisting Governments in screening individual refugee claims.

Chapter IV presents a comprehensive overview of asylum and refugee admission in industrialised countries. Changing patterns in asylum migration, the expansion of Europe's "asylum space" and the scope of the 1951 Convention in today's refugee protection are being discussed.

Chapter V presents an analytical framework to assess the refugee burden on host countries in relation to their national capacity. A brief analysis of UNHCR operational expenditure is also included.

Chapter VI, finally, focuses on methodological issues. It considers the nature of the data, the various sources used, definitions and factors influencing the reliability of data.

⁵ "... the Contracting States undertake to provide them in the appropriate form with information and statistical data requested ..." . (Chapter VI, article 35: Co-operation of the national authorities with the United Nations).

⁶ "The High Commissioner shall provide for the protection for refugees falling under the competence of his Office by ... obtaining from Governments information concerning the number and conditions of refugees in their territories ... " . (Chapter II, paragraph 8: Functions of the High Commissioner)

In addition to documenting the most recent year, the Yearbook aims to place recent events in the context of longer-term developments. Tables depicting the most recent situation are to be found at the end of each chapter, whereas longitudinal data are provided in the Statistical Annex.

The Statistical Annex presents trends, generally for the period 1992-2001, by country or territory and region of asylum, origin and year.

Section A of the Annex focuses on the total population of concern (1997-2001) and on the refugee population (1992-2001). Tables are also included on new refugee displacements and on the number of refugees who found durable solutions through voluntary repatriation and resettlement.

Section B presents trends in governmental and UNHCR refugee status determination in non-industrialised countries since 1997.

Section C covers asylum and refugee admission in industrialised countries. Government data have been compiled in areas such as asylum applications, asylum-seekers allowed to stay and refugee arrivals under resettlement programmes.

Section D, finally, provides information on regional classifications and country codes used in the Yearbook.

For a good understanding of the data, the Annex should be read in conjunction with Chapter VI on definitions, sources and data considerations.

The statistics reported in the Yearbook were generally provided by Governments, based on their own definitions and methods of data collection. Government data was often supplemented by information from UNHCR registration systems and implementing partners.

Some data presented in the Annex may differ from statistics published previously. These differences are the result of retroactive changes in estimates, updated statistics and, in a few cases, modified definitions. In particular, estimates for the total population of concern to UNHCR over the past few years have been revised due to a change in the definition of the returnee population. Whereas returnees were previously counted during a two-year period, the current definition of returnees is limited to those who returned during one year only. Estimates for some industrialised countries have changed due to the availability of better data.

To facilitate comparison with other UNHCR documents, the Statistical Yearbook applies three different regional classifications. The "UN major areas" is used to summarise trends by continent. "UNHCR Regional Bureaux/Operations" is mainly used for administrative and budgetary purposes, whereas the "UNHCR regions" is a more detailed regional classification used in UNHCR's Global Appeal, Global Report and other documents. The group "industrialised countries" was created for the purpose of the Statistical Yearbook to facilitate analysis and comparisons between industrialised countries as well as across Europe. In some charts, country names have been abbreviated to three-digit codes. Both the regional classifications and the country codes are explained in Statistical Annex D.

Data on citizens of the former USSR have been reported under Russian Federation. Citizens of former Czechoslovakia have been recorded under the Czech Republic. Citizens of former Yugoslavia have been recorded under the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In Tables and Annexes, the word Democratic in country names has generally been abbreviated to "Dem.", and the word Republic is reflected as "Rep.". In the text, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is generally referred to as FYR Macedonia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is often referred to as FR Yugoslavia or Yugoslavia, FR and the Democratic Republic of the Congo is abbreviated to DR Congo.