

STATISTICAL YEARBOOK 2003

TRENDS IN DISPLACEMENT, PROTECTION
AND SOLUTIONS

MAY, 2005



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2003 Statistical Yearbook was produced by Bela Hovy (editor) and Tarek Abou Chabake (data management).

The support of the following UNHCR colleagues is gratefully acknowledged: Furio De Angelis, Ellen Hansen, Jon Hoisaeter, Manuel Jordao, Marjon Kamara, Philippe Leclerc, Romain Leonarduzzi, Karolina Lindholm-Billing, Andrew Mayne, Radhouane Nouicer, Yvon Orand, Christian Oxenboll, Wendy Rappeport, Yves Soulier, Richard Stainsby, Karl Steinacker and Jean-Noel Wetterwald.

The 2003 Statistical Yearbook could not have been produced without the co-operation and assistance of Governments and UNHCR staff in country offices.

The 2003 Statistical Yearbook was produced under the auspices of the Division of Operational Support, UNHCR.

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Keywords: 1. Refugees. 2. Asylum. 3. Migration. 4. Protection. 5. Durable solutions. 6. Indicators. 7. Title. 8. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

ISSN 1684-9051

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

MAIN FINDINGS	8
INTRODUCTION	12

GLOBAL ANALYSIS

CHAPTER I. POPULATION LEVELS AND TRENDS	15
Introduction	15
Population of concern	16
<i>Global trends</i>	16
<i>Regional trends</i>	16
Refugees	17
<i>Country of asylum</i>	17
<i>Origin</i>	18
<i>Net refugee movements</i>	19
Asylum-seekers	20
<i>Country of asylum</i>	20
<i>Origin</i>	20
Others of concern	20
<i>Internally displaced persons</i>	20
<i>Stateless persons and others of concern</i>	21
TABLE	
I.1 Total population of concern to UNHCR, end-2003	22
 CHAPTER II. DURABLE SOLUTIONS AND NEW DISPLACEMENT	25
Introduction	25
Durable solutions	25
<i>Voluntary repatriation</i>	25
<i>Resettlement</i>	26
<i>Local integration</i>	28
New arrivals	29
<i>Mass refugee movements</i>	29
<i>Individual recognition</i>	30
Other population changes	30
TABLES	
II.1 Refugee populations, new arrivals and durable solutions by country of asylum, 2003	34
II.2 Refugee populations, new arrivals and durable solutions by origin, 2003	37
 CHAPTER III. ASYLUM AND REFUGEE STATUS	
DETERMINATION	38
Introduction	38
Global trends	38
<i>Applications</i>	38
<i>Decisions</i>	39
<i>Origin</i>	40
Industrialized countries	41
<i>Applications</i>	41
<i>Decisions</i>	42

<i>Total admissions</i>	43
Non-industrialized countries	43
<i>Applications</i>	44
<i>Decisions</i>	45
TABLES	
III.1 Applications and refugee status determination by country of asylum, 2003	47
III.2 Applications and refugee status determination by origin, 2003.....	50
III.3 Applications and refugee status determination in selected industrialized countries, 2001-2003	51
III.4 Applications and refugee status determination in non-industrialized countries, 1999-2003	52
 CHAPTER IV. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND LOCATION..	 54
Introduction	54
Gender and age	54
Location	55
TABLES	
IV.1 Population of concern to UNHCR by gender and age, end-2003.....	57
IV.2 Refugee population in camps by gender and age, 2001-2003	60
 CHAPTER V. CAPACITIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF HOST COUNTRIES	 62
Introduction	62
Methodology	62
GDP per capita	63
Population size	63
Land area	64
TABLES	
V.1 Indicators of host country capacity and contributions, 1999-2003.....	65
 CHAPTER VI. SOURCES, METHODS AND DATA CONSIDERATIONS	 68
Introduction	68
Sources	68
Data collection methods	69
Estimating refugee populations	70
TABLES	
VI.1 Sources and methods of data collection, 2003.....	71
VI.2 Sources and classification of data in industrialized countries	73

MAPS

1. Population of concern to UNHCR by country or territory of asylum (residence), end-2003
2. Refugee population by country or territory of asylum, end-2003
3. Number of refugees per 1 USD GDP per capita, 1999-2003
4. Average annual refugee population by origin, 1999-2003
5. Origin of asylum applicants in industrialized countries, 1999-2003
6. Women of all ages of concern to UNHCR, end of 2003

ANNEX I. COMPARATIVE TABLES

A. POPULATION LEVELS AND TRENDS, END OF YEAR

A.1 Population of concern to UNHCR by region of asylum, 1999-2003	77
A.2 Population of concern to UNHCR by country of asylum, 1999-2003.....	78
A.3 Refugee population by region of asylum, 1994-2003	80
A.4 Refugee population by country of asylum, 1994-2003	81
A.5 Refugee population by region of origin, 1994-2003.....	85
A.6 Refugee population by origin, 1994-2003.....	86
A.7 Refugee population by origin and country of asylum, 1994-2003.....	88

B. DISPLACEMENT AND DURABLE SOLUTIONS DURING THE YEAR

B.1 Prima facie refugee arrivals by region of asylum, 1994-2003.....	93
B.2 Prima facie refugee arrivals by country of asylum, 1994-2003.....	94
B.3 Prima facie refugee outflows by origin, 1994-2003.....	95
B.4 Prima facie refugee outflows by origin and country of asylum, 1994-2003	96
B.5 Voluntary repatriation of refugees by country of asylum, 1994-2003	98
B.6 Voluntary repatriation of refugees by region of origin, 1994-2003.....	100
B.7 Voluntary repatriation of refugees by origin, 1994-2003.....	101
B.8 Voluntary repatriation of refugees by origin and country of asylum, 1994-2003	102
B.9 UNHCR resettlement departures by region of asylum, 1994-2003	104
B.10 UNHCR resettlement departures by country of asylum, 1994-2003.....	105
B.11 UNHCR resettlement departures by region of origin, 1994-2003	107
B.12 UNHCR resettlement departures by origin, 1994-2003	108
B.13 UNHCR resettlement departures by origin and country of asylum, 1994-2003	109
B.14 Resettlement arrivals in industrialized countries, 1994-2003	110
B.15 Resettlement arrivals in industrialized countries by origin, 1994-2003.....	111
B.16 Naturalization of refugees by country of asylum and origin, 1998-2003.....	112

C. ASYLUM AND REFUGEE STATUS DETERMINATION IN INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES

New applications and first instance decisions

C.1 Asylum applications submitted at the first instance, 1994-2003.....	113
C.2 Origin of asylum applicants in industrialized countries, 1994-2003.....	114
C.3 Origin of asylum applicants in Europe, 1994-2003.....	115
C.4 Origin of asylum applicants in the European Union, 1994-2003	116
C.5 Origin of asylum applicants by country of asylum, 1994-1998	117
C.6 Origin of asylum applicants by country of asylum, 1999-2003	118
C.7 Recognition of asylum-seekers under the 1951 Convention, 1994-2003.....	119
C.8 Asylum-seekers allowed to remain for humanitarian reasons, 1994-2003.....	120
C.9 Rejection of asylum applications, 1994-2003	121
C.10 Total number of asylum decisions, 1994-2003.....	122
C.11 Undecided asylum cases at the end of the year, 1994-2003	123
C.12 Convention recognition rates, 1994-2003.....	124
C.13 Total recognition rates, 1994-2003.....	125

Reconsidered applications and appeal/review decisions

C.14 Asylum applications submitted on appeal, 1994-2003	126
---------------------------------------------------------------	-----

C.15 Recognition of asylum-seekers under the 1951 Convention, 1994-2003.....	126
C.16 Asylum-seekers allowed to remain for humanitarian reasons, 1994-2003....	127
C.17 Rejection of asylum applications, 1994-2003	127
C.18 Total number of asylum decisions, 1994-2003.....	128
C.19 Undecided asylum cases at the end of the year, 1994-2003	128
C.20 Convention recognition rates, 1994-2003.....	129
C.21 Total recognition rates, 1994-2003.....	129

Total admissions

C.22 Asylum-seekers allowed to stay by origin, 1994-2003	130
C.23 Asylum applications and total admissions in industrialized countries, 1994-2003	131

D. REGIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS AND COUNTRY/TERRITORY CODES

D.1 UN Major areas	132
D.2 UNHCR Regional Bureaux/Operations	133
D.3 UNHCR regions.....	134
D.4 Regional classification--Millennium Development Goals.....	135
D.5 Industrialized countries.....	137
D.6 UNHCR country/territory codes.....	138

ANNEX II. DATA SHEETS

TECHNICAL NOTES	140
REGIONAL DATA SHEETS	143-191
COUNTRY DATA SHEETS	192-515

MAIN FINDINGS

TOTAL POPULATION OF CONCERN

- By the end of 2003, the global population of concern to UNHCR was estimated at 17.0 million persons, including 9.7 million refugees, 882,000 asylum-seekers, 1.1 million refugees who had repatriated during 2003, 4.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) of concern to UNHCR, 233,000 IDPs who had returned to their place of origin in 2003 and 905,000 Others of concern, many of whom are stateless.

- The global population of concern to UNHCR fell by 18 per cent during 2003. While a decline was recorded across all six population categories, the largest drop occurred in the return of refugees (-55%) and IDPs (-80%). The global refugee population fell by 9 per cent. The asylum-seeker population, that is persons whose asylum applications have not yet been adjudicated, fell by 10 per cent during 2003. The number of IDPs under UNHCR's mandate decreased by 10 per cent, while the number of Others of concern fell by five per cent.

- By the end of 2003, Asia hosted the largest population of concern to UNHCR (36.4%), followed by Africa (25.2%), Europe (24.4%), Latin America and the Caribbean (7.8%), North America (5.8%) and Oceania (0.4%).¹

- In 2003, the population of concern to UNHCR dropped in five out of the six regions of the world. The decrease was highest in Asia (-34%), followed by Europe (-9%), North America (-8%), Africa (-7%) and Oceania (-6%). Only Latin America

and the Caribbean recorded an increase in the population of concern to UNHCR (+26%).

- Only refugees and IDPs who have returned during the past 12 months are included in the population of concern to UNHCR. Field operations may assist returnees for a longer period, however.

- While the decline in the population of concern to UNHCR is a positive trend, it does not necessarily signal a decrease in UNHCR's activities. In many operations, significant gaps continue to exist in the quality of protection and the well-being of refugees.

Refugees

- The number of refugees at end-2003 (9.7 million) was the lowest since 1980, when 8.4 million persons were estimated to be displaced outside their country of origin.

- By the end of 2003, developing regions hosted 6.5 million refugees, 67 per cent of the global refugee population. The 50 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) provided asylum to 26 per cent of the world's refugees.

- In 2003, the refugee population fell by 914,000 persons (-9%) with a decline being recorded in all regions. A 13 per cent drop in the number of refugees was recorded in Asia while the decline ranged from five to six per cent in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and North America. Only a minor decline was witnessed in Oceania (-1%).

- By end-2003, Asia hosted the largest number of refugees (37.6%), followed by Africa (32.4%), Europe (22.8%), North America (6.0%), Oceania (0.7%), and Latin America and the Caribbean (0.4%).

¹ See Table D for the regional classifications used in the 2003 Yearbook.

- Pakistan (1.1 million) and the Islamic Republic of Iran (985,000) hosted the largest number of refugees at end-2003, according to UNHCR's estimates. Other major countries of asylum included Germany (960,000), the United Republic of Tanzania (650,000), the United States (453,000), China (299,000), and Serbia and Montenegro (291,000).

- By the end of 2003, there were some 2.1 million Afghan refugees according to UNHCR's estimates, accounting for one quarter of the global refugee population. Sudan was the second largest country of origin of refugees (606,000), followed by Burundi (532,000) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (453,000).

Durable solutions

- In 2003, 1.1 million refugees repatriated to their home country, a 55 per cent decrease compared to 2002, when some 2.4 million refugees returned. Afghans constituted some 59 per cent (646,000) of all returnees during 2003. Other countries of origin to which many refugees repatriated during 2003 were Angola (133,000), Burundi (82,000) and Iraq (55,000). In total, 29 countries of origin reported the return of more than 100 refugees.

- UNHCR's country offices in first asylum countries resettled some 25,900 refugees during 2003, a 32 per cent increase compared to 2002 (19,600). The UNHCR office in Kenya recorded the highest number of assisted departures (7,300), followed by Egypt (3,500) and Turkey (2,900). The main nationalities benefiting from UNHCR-facilitated resettlement were refugees from Sudan (5,200), Afghanistan (3,600), Somalia (3,300), Ethiopia (3,000) and the Islamic Republic of Iran (2,700).

- According to Government statistics, 11 industrialized countries resettled 55,600 refugees in 2003,

10 per cent above the 2002 level (50,600) but 40 per cent below the 2001 level (92,500). The resettlement of these refugees may have been facilitated by UNHCR, through another agency or bilaterally.

- The main resettlement countries in 2003 were the United States (28,400 refugees resettled during US Fiscal Year), Australia (11,900), Canada (10,800) and Norway (1,600). Major nationalities being accepted for resettlement during 2003 were refugees from Sudan (8,400), Afghanistan (6,000), Ukraine (5,100), the Islamic Republic of Iran (4,000) and Liberia (3,700).

Refugee outflows

- Some 290,000 refugees were displaced as part of a mass outflow in 2003, slightly fewer than in 2002 (293,000) and the lowest level in over 20 years. Almost all mass outflows occurred in sub-Saharan Africa (96%).

- Countries receiving the largest number of prima facie refugees during 2003 included Chad (111,000), Côte d'Ivoire (41,000), Guinea (37,000), Liberia (16,000), the United Republic of Tanzania (13,000) and Yemen (12,000). In total, 15 asylum countries reported the arrival of more than 1,000 prima facie refugees.

- The main source countries of new mass refugee outflows during 2003 were Sudan (112,000), Liberia (87,000), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (30,000), Côte d'Ivoire (22,000), Somalia (15,000) and the Central African Republic (13,000).

Industrialized countries

- New asylum claims submitted in the industrialized countries fell by 19 per cent, to 471,000 in 2003.²

² For the classification of industrialized countries, see Annex D.5.

Europe received 390,000 new asylum claims (-18%), North America received 75,000 new claims (-23%) and Australia/New Zealand received 5,100 asylum-seekers (-25%).

- Some 309,000 asylum requests were lodged in the 15 countries of the European Union (-21%). Including the 10 new member countries of the European Union (EU) who acceded in 2004, the number of asylum claims submitted in the EU amounted to 347,000 (-19%).

- The Russian Federation was the main country of origin of asylum-seekers in industrialized countries: 35,000 new claims were lodged by Russian citizens, most of whom are from Chechnya, in 2003. Serbia and Montenegro was the second leading origin of asylum-seekers (27,300), followed by Iraq (25,700), Turkey (24,800), China (23,200) and the Islamic Republic of Iran (15,700).

- During 2003, 93,600 asylum-seekers were granted Convention refugee status at the first instance (59,300) and on appeal (34,300) in the industrialized countries. Another 32,400 asylum-seekers were allowed to remain for humanitarian reasons at the first instance (27,400) and on appeal (5,000).

- Convention refugee status was granted in 14 per cent of first instance decisions taken in 2003, the lowest recognition rate since 1994. Including humanitarian status, 20 per cent of all substantive asylum decisions taken at the first instance in 2003 were positive, the lowest level since 1993.

- As in 2002, some 20 per cent of all substantive asylum decisions taken on appeal during 2003 resulted in the granting of refugee (18%) or humanitarian status (3%).

- The number of undecided asylum cases at the first instance and on

appeal in industrialized countries decreased by 16 per cent during 2003. By end-2003, 497,000 asylum-seekers were awaiting a decision at the first instance; while another 168,000 asylum claims were pending at the appeal level.

Non-industrialized countries

- During 2003, the non-industrialized countries received 157,000 applications for asylum or refugee status, 11 per cent below the 2002 level (176,000). South Africa was the largest asylum-seeker receiving country during 2003 (36,000 or 23 per cent of all claims), followed by Malaysia (19,000 or 12%), Ecuador (11,000 or 7%), Ghana (8,600 or 6%), Egypt (6,700 or 4%) and Pakistan (5,800 or 4%).

- The Democratic Republic of the Congo was the main country of origin of asylum-seekers: 18,000 new claims by its citizens were lodged during 2003. Myanmar was the second leading origin of asylum-seekers (15,800), followed by Colombia (14,600), Liberia (9,800), Ethiopia (8,300), Sudan (6,900) and Afghanistan (6,800).

- Some 63,600 asylum-seekers in non-industrialized countries were granted refugee status in 2003, most notably in Ghana (11,500), Egypt (10,700), Malaysia (7,500), Ecuador (3,300) and South Africa (3,300).

Gender and age

- Available data on 8.7 million persons of concern to UNHCR indicate that 48 per cent are female. Women are overrepresented in the older population, reflecting their longer life expectancy.

- Almost half (46%) of the population of concern to UNHCR are children under the age of 18. In sub-Saharan Africa, due to higher birth rates, the

proportion of minors is about 54 per cent.

Locations

- In 2003, UNHCR received detailed data on some 300 individual camps with an average population size of 10,000. About one-third (32%) of the camps hosted more than 10,000 residents.

- UNHCR had registered or was otherwise involved with refugees in over 280 urban locations in 2003. The average number of refugees at these locations was 3,100. Some 75 per cent of urban locations hosted fewer than 1,000 persons.

Host country capacities

- Pakistan hosts the highest number of refugees in relation to its economic capacity. During 1999-2003, the country hosted on average 3,900 refugees per 1 US dollar Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita. The Democratic Republic of the Congo was the country with the second highest refugee burden (2,800 refugees), followed by the United Republic of Tanzania (2,500 refugees) and Ethiopia (2,000 refugees).

- Armenia hosts the largest number of refugees in relation to its national population size. During 1999-2003, it hosted on average 86 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants. Serbia and Montenegro was the second main country affected by refugee displacement in relation to its national population (39 per 1,000 inhabitants), followed by Guinea (35) and Djibouti (34).

- Armenia also hosts the largest number of refugees in relation to the size of its national territory. During 1999-2003, it hosted on average almost 9,000 refugees per 1,000 square kilometer. The Netherlands

was the country with the second highest refugee population in relation to its surface area (4,100), followed by Serbia and Montenegro (4,000), and Germany (2,700).

- The economic effects of hosting refugees are particularly felt in developing countries. In relation to their GDP per capita, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Republic of Tanzania host the largest number of refugees.

- The demographic impact of refugees is significant in Africa and Europe. Armenia, Serbia and Montenegro and Guinea host the largest number of refugees in relation to the size of their national population.

INTRODUCTION

The objectives of the third edition of the UNHCR Statistical Yearbook are similar to those of the previous two. By providing timely, relevant and comparable data on persons of concern to UNHCR, the Yearbook provides a basis for evidence-based planning, monitoring and evaluation of refugee situations, forced displacement and UNHCR activities. It seeks to contribute to informed decisionmaking and public discourse in an area which is often characterised by lack of information, strong views and divergent opinions.

Both the *1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* ("the 1951 Convention") and the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees refer to the responsibility of countries to provide statistical data to the High Commissioner. To provide protection, assistance and durable solutions, UNHCR's country offices across the world collect statistics on a continuous basis.

The UNHCR statistics are generally based on data provided by the host country. In countries where UNHCR is operationally active, statistics are often jointly established between the host government and UNHCR. The instances where UNHCR has provided estimates have been clearly indicated.

The scope of the Yearbook is limited to monitoring levels and trends of populations of concern to UNHCR. Although the population size is an important determinant of UNHCR's activities, it is not the only one. The quality of international protection and the well-being of beneficiaries, other key aspects of operations planning, are not captured by this Yearbook.

The 2003 Yearbook consists of three main parts.

The first part provides a global analysis of recent trends. **CHAPTER I** presents a global overview of the size and changes in the population of concern to UNHCR. **CHAPTER II** focuses on the main population movements during 2003, with a particular emphasis on durable solutions and new refugee outflows. An overview of asylum applications and refugee status determination is provided in **CHAPTER III**. Gender and age, key variables in any refugee programme, are discussed in **CHAPTER IV**. This chapter provides information on refugee locations, including camps. The issue of international responsibility and burden sharing is addressed in **CHAPTER V**. Here, the size of the refugee population and their duration of stay is compared with the national capacity to host refugees. **CHAPTER VI**, finally, focuses on methodological issues. It considers the nature of the data, the various sources used and definitions, as well as different factors influencing data quality. ***Chapter VI is essential in understanding and using the data contained in the 2003 Yearbook.***

The second part of the 2003 Yearbook (**ANNEX I**) provides time series, allowing for an easy comparison of trends globally, by region as well as by country for all major subject matters (*Tables A.1 through C.23*). Regional classifications and country codes are also explained (*Tables D.1 through D.6*).

In the third section (**ANNEX II**), 49 regional and 162 country profiles are provided. These profiles are preceded by a brief technical note.

Some data contained in this publication may differ from statistics published previously due to retroactive changes or the inclusion of previously unavailable data. Similarly, it is expected that the data contained in the