

## RST In-Depth

### Historic Migration: A Timeline of Populations on the Move and Reasons Why

#### Brief European History

Source: Forced Migration Review (<https://www.fmreview.org/destination-europe/bundy>)

- Between 1846 and 1914, over 30 million migrants left Europe for America in one of the earliest modern mass migrations.
- The U.S. and other countries began controlling immigration and became more selective by the late 1800s and early 1900s.
- A shift to border controls, quotas, literacy tests, etc. was accelerated by the First World War and the 1917 Russian Revolution, which created Europe's first refugee crisis.
- Around 5 million refugees were created between 1914 and 1923, and around 1.7 million people moved between Greece and Turkey.
- In the first four years of World War II, Germany and the USSR "uprooted, transplanted, expelled, deported and dispersed" some 30 million people. By May 1945 there were well over 40 million refugees in Europe – homeless, uprooted and in flight.
- By 1947, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was running nearly 800 resettlement camps housing seven million people. By 1951 only 177,000 displaced persons remained in the camps. Millions had been resettled, even more were repatriated, and significant numbers emigrated.
- By 1951, a new legal and institutional framework was created in order to respond to the phenomenon of refugees, with the creation of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to succeed UNRRA and the passage of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.
- In the 1990s, Europe experienced its third refugee crisis due to the breakup of the Soviet bloc and the wars of then-Yugoslavia.
- The fourth refugee crisis in Europe dates from about 2011, with a spike in 2014-15. Its components included war in Syria and failed or fragile states in Libya, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

## Other Data/Facts

Source: Origins (<https://origins.osu.edu/article/refugees-or-immigrants-migration-crisis-europe-historical-perspective>)

- Continuing conflict between Turkey and Greece relating to Asia Minor led to the massacres of both Christians and Muslims at the hands of the rival army during the Greco-Turkish war of 1920-1922. With the destruction of the thriving port of Smyrna/Izmir—ironically the point of departure today for many desperate Syrian refugees—Greece and Turkey enacted the first compulsory population exchange in history, agreed upon with the mediation of the League of Nations in 1923. Some two million people, Christians and Muslims alike, were affected by this treaty which uprooted people from their homes without giving them any other choice.
- In 1933, about 50,000 of the approximately 500,000 German Jews tried to leave Germany, but European governments carefully controlled the entry of “foreigners” into their states. By 1941, about 160,000 Jews remained in Germany. Unable to flee, the vast majority were killed during the Holocaust.

## Refugee Timeline Regarding the United States

Source: USCIS (<https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/our-history/history-office-and-library/featured-stories-from-the-uscis-history-office-and-library/refugee-timeline>)

- The Bureau of Immigration was established in 1891 to oversee the admission of immigrants and those considered “refugees.” Because early U.S. immigration laws did not restrict the number of immigrants that would be accepted, no separate laws existed for refugee admissions and refugees could resettle in the U.S. as long as they met the regular requirements for immigrant admissions.
- The Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) drove thousands of Mexican refugees north to the U.S., where most were inspected and admitted for permanent residence by Immigration Bureau officers.
- The Immigration Act of 1917 required all immigrants aged 16 and older to demonstrate they could read, but those who sought entrance to the U.S. to avoid religious persecution were exempted from this requirement.
- The Quota Acts (1921-1924) set limits on immigrants admitted to the U.S. each year from every country. Immigration was easier for Northern & Western Europeans, but harder for the rest of Europe and other countries, later contributing to difficulties Jews and other minorities faced trying to get to the U.S.

- After the conclusion of World War II, the United Nations was established in 1945, and President Truman authorized the same year that displaced persons and refugees be given expedited admission to the U.S. The INS collaborated with the U.S. military, the U.S. Public Health Service, the Department of State, and numerous charitable organizations on a plan that allowed over 40,000 displaced persons to enter the U.S. under the existing quota regulations. 1,000 refugees already living in the U.S. were allowed to become lawful permanent residents.
- Displaced Persons Act of 1948 was the first refugee act passed by Congress to address nearly 7 million displaced persons in Europe. Under the act, the U.S. admitted more than 350,000 displaced persons before it expired in 1952.
- The UNHCR was created in 1950 and served as the guardian of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which defines legal protections for refugees. U.S. did not sign the convention but later signed the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.
- The 1953 Refugee Relief Act authorized about 200,000 special non-quota immigrant visas for refugees and escapees from communist countries. (not all of these visas were used).
- From 1956-1957, the Hungarian Escapee Program was enacted (following the Hungarian Revolution against the Soviet Union), during which over 6,000 Hungarian refugees were admitted and over 30,000 Hungarians entered the U.S. under the attorney general's parole authority. Two years later, on July 25, 1958, Congress passed a law allowing Hungarian parolees to become lawful permanent residents of the United States.
- The UN designated 1959-1960 World Refugee Year, and Congress passed the Fair Share Refugee Act of 1960 allowing nearly 5,000 refugees to enter under the parole authority and providing them means to become lawful permanent residents after two years.
- From 1961-1962, more than 58,000 Cubans entered the U.S. under the attorney general's parole authority.
- In 1962 the Hong Kong Parole Program authorized about 15,000 Chinese refugees to enter the U.S.

- 1961-1965: The Migration and Refugee Assistance Act extended the terms of the Fair Share Refugee Act and allowed nearly 20,000 refugees to enter the U.S. under the Attorney General's parole authority.
- 1965: Amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) eliminated the quota system and established a preference category for conditional entrants. The Act authorized 10,200 to 17,400 refugees to receive visas each year.
- The 1965 Cuban Airlift allowed Cubans living in the U.S. to bring their relatives over. By the conclusion of the airlift program in 1973, over 3,000 flights had brought more than 250,000 Cuban refugees to the United States.
- 1975-1980: About 300,000 Southeast Asians entered the U.S. through parole authority following the fall of Saigon.
- In 1977, the INS created a special Office of Refugee and Parole to address global refugee crises and implement refugee policies.
- The Refugee Act of 1980 removed geographical & ideological limits on the definition of "refugee," provided the first statutory basis for asylum, increased the number of refugees who could be admitted annually, created the ORR, and gave the president (in consultation with Congress) the ability to set the annual number of admissions.
- 1980: The Mariel Boatlift allowed 125,000 Cubans to enter the U.S. under parole authority.
- 1997-1998 The Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act and the Haitian Refugee Immigrant Fairness Act gave certain individuals from said countries protected status.
- 1989-2000: About 50,000 Iraqis entered the U.S. as refugees or were granted refugee status after entering. The Iran–Iraq War, the Persian Gulf War, thirteen years of sanctions, and the Iraq War resulted in many more Iraqis of Arab origin and ethnic minorities seeking refuge in the U.S.
- 2002-2003: DHS establishes the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to oversee refugee and asylum affairs and creates ICE and CBP.
- 2011-2021: The Syrian refugee crisis is the result of a violent March 2011 government crackdown on public demonstrations in support of a group of teenagers who were

arrested for anti-government graffiti in the southern town of Daraa. The arrests sparked public demonstrations throughout Syria which were violently suppressed by government security forces. The conflict quickly escalated and the country descended into a civil war that forced millions of Syrian families out of their homes. Ten years later, the number of Syrian refugees has hardly declined, and more than 13 million people still need humanitarian assistance – including 6 million who are in acute need. About 20,000 Syrians entered the U.S. as refugees or were granted refugee status after entering.

- 2021-present: United States military forces withdrew from Afghanistan in August 2021, ending the longest war in the country's history after nearly 20 years of occupation. In their wake, thousands of Afghan civilians rushed to the airport in Kabul, hoping to be evacuated to the U.S. as the Taliban and other militant groups moved into the city. From October 2001 to August 2021, over 97,000 Afghan refugees and special immigrant visa recipients arrived in the U.S., with an additional 95,000 Afghan refugees (both SIVs and evacuees) projected to be resettled.