

**FACT SHEET
REFUGEES IN NEW HAMPSHIRE**

What is a refugee?

Refugees are people who have fled from their home countries to another country because of war or some kind of serious danger to their lives. They may be persecuted, tortured, or killed in their original homeland due to their race, religion, national origin, political ideology or being a member of certain social groups. People who flee their country can apply for and receive refugee status from the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. They can then be resettled in a third country.

Why are refugees resettled in the United States?

As a member of the United Nations, the United State is committed to a humanitarian response to the global refugee crisis. The Refugee Act of 1980 authorized the admission of refugees into the U. S. Every year the Department of State sends a report and recommendation on refugee admittance to the Congress. Congress votes on the number of refugees allowed to enter the country, then the President signs a Presidential Determination to approve the Congressional decision on admission ceilings. For 2010 Congress authorized acceptance for up to 80,000 refugees.

Do other countries also resettle refugees?

Only 1% of the estimated 12 million refugees throughout the world are resettled in third countries. The United States accepts $\frac{1}{2}$ of that 1% and South Africa receives $\frac{1}{4}$ of that 1%. While the United States receives the greatest number of refugees, Canada accepts 6 times as many refugees *per capita* as are accepted into the United States. Sweden, Norway, Austria and Germany accept even more per capita than Canada.

Are refugees screened before entering the U.S.?

Refugees are screened for health and background before coming to the U.S. under the auspices of the United States Department of State. Regional panels assign a certain number of refugees to each state per year.

How many refugees come to New Hampshire?

In 2009, 561 refugees were resettled in the state. From 1997 to 2009 a total of 5,413 refugees were resettled in New Hampshire. In comparison, the current total population of all New Hampshire residents is approximately 1,300,000.

Where do refugees come from?

Refugees in New Hampshire come from many world regions.

Area	Total Resettled in NH since 1997	Countries
Europe	2,237	mainly from Bosnia, Croatia, Russia, Ukraine
Africa	1,906	mainly from Burundi, Congo, Liberia, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan
Asia	891	Vietnam, Bhutan
Middle East	377	mainly from Afghanistan, Iraq

Where do refugees settle in New Hampshire?

Most refugees in New Hampshire are first settled in Manchester, Concord, Laconia, and Nashua. They may then move to other areas of the state or to other states.

Where can I find more detailed statistics about refugees in New Hampshire?

You can visit the following websites:

United States Office of Refugee Resettlement at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/>

New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health and Refugee Affairs at www.dhhs.nh.gov/omh/refugee/index.htm

The University of New Hampshire Center for the Humanities has posted a study about refugees in New Hampshire. You can find it at: www.unh.edu/uprooted

What kind of assistance do refugees receive?

Refugees receive assistance from agencies such as the International Institute of New Hampshire, Lutheran Social Services for New Americans, New Hampshire Catholic Charities, churches, other nonprofits, and volunteers when they first arrive in New Hampshire.

Refugees are allotted \$900.00 per refugee (w/an additional \$200 emergency fund) to cover the costs of housing, utilities, household goods, clothing, food, and pocket money for the first 30 days. Resettlement agencies receive \$700 per refugee for staff time and administrative costs. Staff help newly arrived refugees settle in an apartment, make and get to medical appointments, register children in school, get oriented to their community, find public transportation, look for employment, and learn English.

How long do refugees need assistance?

The U.S. government has established a 90-day resettlement period. Service agencies are under contract with US government for services provided to refugees during their initial

weeks. Refugees are encouraged to become self-sufficient as soon as possible. This includes learning English and finding employment. In most cases the need for services diminishes after the first three or four months. However, some may need to apply for programs such as health insurance for dependent children or food assistance for longer periods of time.

Would refugees stop coming to New Hampshire if agencies stopped providing services for them?

Refugees are assigned for resettlement in New Hampshire (and in every state) by regional committees of the U.S. State Department and through National Voluntary Agencies. Groups such as Lutheran Social Services and the International Institute of New Hampshire are not-for-profit agencies who are contracted by one or more National Voluntary Agencies to provide services to refugees. If these groups did not help, other groups or the state government would have to provide services. New Hampshire also relies upon large numbers of volunteers – both formally and informally – to provide help to newcomers.

What kinds of responsibilities do refugees have once they are in the US?

Within three years, refugees are required to pay back the U.S. government for the cost of their airline flight to the United States. They are expected to take the first job that is offered to them. They are expected to follow all the laws of their localities, state and country. Newcomers also realize that in order to be successful they need to learn English and most refugees work hard to do so.

Once settled, many refugees who have been in New Hampshire awhile also feel it is their responsibility to give back to their community and to help others in need.

What rights do refugees have?

Refugees have the same rights and responsibilities as U.S. citizens. However, a refugee cannot vote or get a U.S. passport until he or she becomes a citizen.

When can refugees become citizens?

Refugees may become U.S. citizens after they have been in the country for five years. They must first apply for permanent residency and take a citizenship test. (A sample U.S. citizenship test is posted on the Center for the Humanities website at www.unh.edu/uprooted .)

What's the difference between refugees and other immigrants?

Refugees do not choose to become refugees or leave their original homes. They need an opportunity to start their lives over again because they have been displaced by war or persecution. Refugees are allowed into the U.S. by the federal government for

humanitarian reasons and receive short-term financial support. While all refugees are immigrants, not all immigrants are refugees. Other legal immigrants come to the U.S. under different criteria. If they are adults, they come by choice and must show that they are self-supporting before they enter the U.S.

Do refugees take away jobs from U.S. citizens?

Many refugees initially take entry-level positions that do not require English proficiency. Also, many refugees work two or more entry-level, low-wage jobs so that they may become financially stable and independent. In New Hampshire, until recently, manufacturers were paying up to \$500 bonuses to workers who would recruit others to work in the factories because there was a labor shortage. Many refugees filled those manufacturing jobs.

Sources for the information in this fact sheet include:

United States Office of Refugee Resettlement
United States Department of State
New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health
and Refugee Affairs