

## HOW MANY REFUGEES IN THE UNITED STATES?

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**The total number of refugees admitted to the United States in 2010 was 73,293. Refugee numbers rose steadily across the 2000s through 2009. The 2010 number represents a slight dip.**

A refugee is any person outside his or her country of nationality who is unable or unwilling to return to that country because they fear serious harm (USCIS, 2011). The number of refugees worldwide has held steady at 15.2 million for both 2008 and 2009, a decrease from 2007, as more than 600,000 people returned voluntarily to their country of origin (United Nations, 2010).

The number of refugees who may be granted admission to the United States over a given year is decided by the President and Congress, and influenced by global events. During the early 1990s, an average of 100,000 refugees arrived in the US each year. Subsequent declines in the numbers of refugees admitted are attributable to a change in the focus of the refugee program as well as to changes in security procedures implemented after September 11, 2001 (in 2002, the

number of refugees admitted fell to 26,773). In addition, refugee status is not necessarily long-term: Refugees may change their status by returning to their native country, immigrating to a new country, or becoming permanent residents of the United States. These are among the reasons that it is difficult to ascertain the specific number of refugees at any given time.

The Office of Immigration Statistics provides information on annual numbers of refugees admitted to the United States, and trends in refugee arrivals across years. During the most recent five-year period, 2006 to 2010, the average annual number of refugee arrivals was 59,463 ranging from a high of 74,602 in 2009 to a low of 41,094 in 2006. This period saw an increase in the number of refugees from Iraq, Burma, and Bhutan, as well as a decrease in the number of refugees admitted from Somalia.

### Number Refugee Arrivals from Ten Most Frequent Source Countries, 2006-2010

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Iraq	202	1,608	13,822	18,838	18,016
Burma	1,612	13,896	18,139	18,202	16,693
Bhutan	3	-	5,320	13,452	12,363
Somalia	10,357	6,969	2,523	4,189	4,884
Cuba	3,143	2,922	4,177	4,800	4,818
Iran	2,792	5,481	5,270	5,381	3,543
Congo, Democratic Republic	405	848	727	1,135	3,174
Eritrea	538	963	251	1,571	2,570
Unknown*	0	0	9	65	1,053
Vietnam	3,039	1,500	1,112	1,486	873
<b>Total, All Countries</b>	<b>41,094</b>	<b>48,218</b>	<b>60,107</b>	<b>74,602</b>	<b>73,293</b>

\*Includes admissions from Palestinian Territory.  
Data from the Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2010.

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