



# Refugee and asylum seeker context in Australia

Refugees represent a number of culturally distinct populations grouped by the shared experience of seeking and being granted asylum. Australia is in the top five countries that offer permanent resettlement to refugees and asylum seekers.



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# About this resource

This resource contains information to support health staff understand refugees and asylum seekers living in Australia. This resource discusses the major cultural groups of refugees and asylum seekers and the role of Australia's Humanitarian Program in supporting resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers.

## USING THIS RESOURCE

The information in this resource is designed to support suicide prevention in refugees and asylum seekers. It is recommended that this information is used in conjunction with advice from health professionals and resources. A list of helpful resources is located at the end of this fact sheet.

## REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN AUSTRALIA

In 2019, the United Nations estimated that there are approximately 88 million forcibly displaced people, and 1.4 million refugees who were in need of resettlement. Australia is one of many countries globally that resettles refugees and asylum seekers. Since the end of World War II, Australia's Humanitarian Program has settled more than 880,000 refugees.

Australia's Humanitarian Program limits the amount of people resettled in Australia each year and this often reflects the economic and government standpoint at the time. Figures for the previous five years are shown below:

- 2020 - 2021 allowed for 13,750 people
- 2019 - 2020 allowed for 13,750 people
- 2018 - 2019 allowed for 18,750 people
- 2017 - 2018 allowed for 16,250 people
- 2016 - 2017 allowed for 13,750 people.

## WHO ARE THE REFUGEES RESETTLED IN AUSTRALIA

Recent major cultural groups settled under Australia's Humanitarian Program include people from:

- Middle East and Afghanistan
- Central Africa
- Horn of Africa (Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia)
- Asia (Burma/Myanmar, Bhutan)
- In recent years, the Government also provided an additional 12,000 places for people displaced by conflict in Syria and Iraq.

**Effectively supporting the integration of people from refugee backgrounds and people seeking asylum, can be achieved through their inclusion in social, economic and community life.**

*(Barnes, 2003).*



## WHO ARE PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM LIVING IN AUSTRALIA

People can claim asylum once they have arrived in Australia on a valid visa – for example, as a student or tourist visa. This may happen because circumstances in their home country change while they are in Australia, or because they come to Australia intending to seek asylum as there is no visa that allows them to claim asylum before they come to Australia.

### Arrivals by plane

During 2019-2020, there were 23,266 people seeking asylum in Australia from modes of transport excluding boat, but only 1,650 grants for asylum were made. The number of people granted asylum in Australia is disproportional in relation to the high number of people seeking asylum. The main nationalities of those who seek asylum by plane are quite different from those who come by boat. In the past five years, the main nationalities seeking asylum by plane include those from:

- Malaysia
- China
- India
- Vietnam
- Pakistan.

The highest number of applications were made by people between the age of 25-34.

### Arrivals by boat

On 30 June there were 12,450 people who had sought asylum in Australia by boat. People seeking asylum by boat were more likely to have travelled from the Asia-Pacific region.

The average processing time for a visa decision to be made for people arriving by boat was 231 days.

More than 80% of these people were either living in Victoria or New South Wales.

### Further information

Refugee Council of Australia: [refugeecouncil.org.au](https://refugeecouncil.org.au)

Australian Human Rights Commission: [humanrights.gov.au](https://humanrights.gov.au)

Kaldor Centre: [kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au](https://kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au)

Parliament of Australia: [aph.gov.au/about\\_parliament/parliamentary\\_departments/parliamentary\\_library/pubs/rp/rp1314/boatarrivals](https://aph.gov.au/about_parliament/parliamentary_departments/parliamentary_library/pubs/rp/rp1314/boatarrivals)