

Hosting refugees and asylum seekers

November 2025

1. Definitions

What is a refugee?

A refugee is defined by the UN as someone needing international protection, who has fled their home country and whose home country's government cannot or will not protect them.¹

What is an asylum seeker?

Asylum-seekers are individuals who have sought international protection and whose claims for refugee status have not yet been determined.²

2. How many refugees and displaced persons are there worldwide?

According to UNHCR data (end of 2024), the world has **123.2 million forcibly displaced people** (within or outside their country of origin), as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.³ About 49 million (40 % of the total displaced) are children below 18 years of age.⁴ Of these 123.2 million, **73 million are internally displaced** (within their own countries; top 5 is Sudan, Syria, Colombia, DRC, Yemen).⁵

The other millions are displaced outside their country to seek protection elsewhere. These are:

- **31 million are refugees. This is the main category that we focus on in this factsheet.**
- 5.9 million are Palestine refugees under UNRWA mandate
- 8.4 million are asylum-seekers via UNHCR (having applied for international protection but no decision has been taken yet).
- 5.9 million are other people in need of international protection (Venezuelans)

3. Where do the 31 million refugees come from? The top-10 of countries of origin:⁶

Syrian Arab Republic	6.0 million
Afghanistan	5.8 million
Ukraine	5.1 million
South Sudan	2.3 million
Sudan	2 million
Myanmar	1.3 million
DRC	1 million
Somalia	0.9 million
CAR	0.7 million
Eritrea	0.5 million

4. Where do these refugees go to for safety?

Many people in Europe think that the most refugees are all hosted in Europe and the USA. This is not true:

- **67%** of all refugees under UNHCR's mandate and other people in need of international protection were hosted in **neighbouring countries**.
- **73%** were hosted in **low- and middle-income** countries.
- **27%** are hosted in **high-income countries**: in Europe (incl. Türkiye, Russia,, UK, Norway etc.), Middle East, Central Asia, east Asia and Pacific (Australia/New Zealand, Japan), Canada and USA.⁷

Some countries take in far more refugees than others relative to their population.⁸

5. Which countries host the most refugees?

The top-10 of all countries which host the most refugees worldwide is:

- Islamic Republic of Iran 3.5 million

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- Türkiye 2.9 million
- Germany 2.7 million
- Uganda 1.8 million
- Pakistan 1.6 million
- Chad 1.3 million
- Poland 1 million
- Ethiopia 1 million
- Bangladesh 1 million
- Sudan 0.8 million

6. How many refugees are hosted in Europe, compared to other regions?

Of the 31 million refugees worldwide, the largest number is hosted by:⁹

- Europe 12 million (= about 38%). Followed by:
- Asia/Pacific countries 6.8 million,
- East/ Horn of Africa 5.1 million,
- Middle Est /North Africa 2.6 million,
- West/Central Africa 2.5 million,
- the Americas (north/middle/south) 1.2 million,
- Southern Africa 0.8 million.

Of the **12 million refugees** in Europe, 5 million are from Ukraine, 4 million from Syria, 0.6 million from Afghanistan, and the top-10 is completed in smaller numbers from Iraq, Eritrea, Azerbaijan, Venezuela, Iran, Türkiye and Somalia.¹⁰

However, the number of **asylum applications** in Europe was just over 1 million in 2024.¹¹

7. Which European country hosts the most refugees ?

Within Europe, the top-10 of countries hosting the most refugees by end of 2024 are:¹²

- Türkiye 2.9 million
- Germany 2.7 million
- Poland 1 million
- France 721 thousand
- UK 516 thousand
- Spain 429 thousand
- Czech rep. 391 thousand
- Italy 313 thousand
- Austria 285 thousand
- Netherlands 263 thousand

8. How many people apply for international protection (asylum) in Europe?

In 2024, just over 1 million (1,014,420) applications for international protection were received by EU+ countries.¹³ The top-3 countries of first-time applicants in EU+ is: Syria, Afghanistan and Venezuela.¹⁴

Almost four-fifths of all applications in EU+ countries (NB: this is not the same as "Europe"!) were received by just five countries in 2024: Germany (237,314 applications – 23.4% of total EU+), Spain (165,767 – 16.3%), Italy (158,867 – 15.7%), France (158,730 – 15.6%) and Greece (73,688 – 7.3%). Malta ranked 26 of the total EU+ countries with 438 applications.¹⁵

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9. How many illegal migrants are in Europe?

While the number of successful irregular border crossings is not known, just over 239,000 detections of irregular border-crossings at the EU's external borders were recorded in 2024.¹⁶ This number dropped by a significant 38%, due to sharp decreases in arrivals through the Central Mediterranean and the Western Balkan routes.¹⁷

10. How many refugees and asylumseekers are in Malta?

Nr of refugees via UNCHR (cumulative) ¹⁸	Countries of origin of refugees in 2024
2024 7814	Ukraine 2591
2023 11,724	Syria 2394
2022 11,808	Libya 1450
2021 9335	Eritrea 678
2020 9168	Somalia 142
2019 8908	Sudan 109
2018 8579	Ethiopia 81
2017 7994	Palestine 57
2016 7941	Nigeria 53
	Pakistan 44

Nr of asylum seekers (cumulative) ¹⁹	Countries of origin of asylum seekers 2024 ²⁰
2024 1470	Syria 240
2023 815	Libya 175
2022 2070	Sudan 170
2021 3674	Nigeria 120
2020 4047	Ukraine 110
2019 3681	Somalia 75
2018 1860	Venezuela 65
2017 1349	Colombia 60
2016 868	Guinea 45
	Pakistan 40

Applications for international protection (asylum) and decisions in Malta for 2024²¹

Nr of applications	Refugee status	Subsidiary protection	Negative decisions
439 (Syria, Colombia, Bangladesh)	50 (Palestine, Syria, Iran)	140 (Syria, Eritrea, Ukraine)	281 (Syria, Pakistan, Bangladesh)

11. Who are the 8.4 million Asylum seekers via UNHCR?

The 8.4 million asylum seekers (worldwide) via UNHCR are mainly from the following countries:²²

- Venezuela 1.4 million
- Sudan 0.7 million
- Colombia 0.4 million
- Afghanistan 0.4 million
- Nicaragua 0.4 million
- Cuba 0.3 million

Smaller number are from Haiti, Honduras, Somalia and Mexico.

The majority of them sought asylum in the Americas (4.7 million, of which 3.2 million in USA), followed by Europe (1.5 million).²³

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- ¹ https://ourworldindata.org/data-insights/countries-differ-sharply-in-how-many-refugees-they-host#:~:text=According%20to%20a%20bar%20chart%2C%20the%20number,%*20**US**%201.2%20refugees%20per%201%20C000%20people
- ² https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/data-summaries?data_summaries%5Bregion%5D=&data_summaries%5Bcountry%5D=&data_summaries%5Bview%5D=population%5Byear%5D=2024&data_summaries%5BpopType%5D=ASY&data_summaries%5B_mode%5D=global&data_summaries%5B_token%5D=fc4f1f6.RzEiFVVNanr06HL4hoWdEY63LmcqBPG-ie7TqV0MHFI.H3ZGWSF9PTiVhie07PH2JvfBTt9haqftwY-DzRRBVtsxYEBvFBwcDcGySg&data_summaries%5Bsubmit%5D=
- ³ <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics>
- ⁴ <https://www.unhcr.org/media/global-report-2024>
- ⁵ <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics>
- ⁶ <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics>
- ⁷ <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/insights/explainers/refugee-hosting-metrics.html>
- ⁸ <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/insights/explainers/refugee-hosting-metrics.html>
- ⁹ https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/data-summaries?data_summaries%5Bregion%5D=&data_summaries%5Bcountry%5D=&data_summaries%5Bview%5D=population%5Byear%5D=2024&data_summaries%5BpopType%5D=REF&data_summaries%5B_mode%5D=global&data_summaries%5B_token%5D=a0ebbade42a.yo2O9PXgP-z-kw2Ebvx5ld5gqk3ezKEmswPk4NzhAqQ.uN72xZaVWJ215FfCIJcbYpQs5HqEiZIWwVyltJ6rY--41eGzuNMIn4mjYg&data_summaries%5Bsubmit%5D=
- ¹⁰ https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/data-summaries?data_summaries%5Bregion%5D=7&data_summaries%5Bcountry%5D=&data_summaries%5BwithinFrom%5D=within&data_summaries%5Bview%5D=population%5Byear%5D=2024&data_summaries%5BpopType%5D=REF&data_summaries%5B_mode%5D=region&data_summaries%5B_token%5D=a0ebbade42a.yo2O9PXgP-z-kw2Ebvx5ld5gqk3ezKEmswPk4NzhAqQ.uN72xZaVWJ215FfCIJcbYpQs5HqEiZIWwVyltJ6rY--41eGzuNMIn4mjYg&data_summaries%5Bsubmit%5D=
- ¹¹ [https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2025-06/2025 Asylum Report EN 0.pdf](https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2025-06/2025%20Asylum%20Report%20EN%200.pdf), p. 198
- ¹² https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download?data_finder%5BdataGroup%5D=displacement&data_finder%5Bdataset%5D=population&data_finder%5BdisplayType%5D=totals&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D=5B0%5D=REF&data_finder%5Byear_filterType%5D=range&data_finder%5Byear_rangeFrom%5D=2024&data_finder%5Byear_rangeTo%5D=2024&data_finder%5Bcoo_displayType%5D=doNotDisplay&data_finder%5Bcoa_displayType%5D=region&data_finder%5Bcoa_region%5D=7&data_finder%5Byear%5D=&data_finder%5Bcoo%5D=&data_finder%5Bcoa%5D=&data_finder%5Badvanced%5D=&data_finder%5Bsubmit%5D=&data-finder=on&sort%5Brefugees%5D=desc&page=1
- ¹³ [https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2025-06/2025 Asylum Report EN 0.pdf](https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2025-06/2025%20Asylum%20Report%20EN%200.pdf)
- ¹⁴ [https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2025-06/2025 Asylum Report EN 0.pdf](https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2025-06/2025%20Asylum%20Report%20EN%200.pdf)
- ¹⁵ [https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2025-06/2025 Asylum Report EN 0.pdf](https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2025-06/2025%20Asylum%20Report%20EN%200.pdf)
- ¹⁶ <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/irregular-border-crossings-into-eu-drop-sharply-in-2024-oqpweX>
- ¹⁷ [https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2025-06/2025 Asylum Report EN 0.pdf](https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2025-06/2025%20Asylum%20Report%20EN%200.pdf)
- ¹⁸ https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/data-summaries?data_summaries%5Bregion%5D=7&data_summaries%5Bcountry%5D=132&data_summaries%5BwithinFrom%5D=within&data_summaries%5Bview%5D=population%5Byear%5D=2024&data_summaries%5BpopType%5D=REF&data_summaries%5B_mode%5D=country&data_summaries%5B_token%5D=340b2e734440c4e76cb7ba9dc.eN3Wm4PD6QmHAgADfjKJutUlqc1-c5SJRXM5CSBB1Q.Co6uquC2injMdvzFMFJoZaES8JBvP1iV0qNsGblZh8KhbnzcVDeevAyaQ&data_summaries%5Bsubmit%5D=
- ¹⁹ https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/data-summaries?data_summaries%5Bregion%5D=7&data_summaries%5Bcountry%5D=132&data_summaries%5BwithinFrom%5D=within&data_summaries%5Bview%5D=population%5Byear%5D=2024&data_summaries%5BpopType%5D=ASY&data_summaries%5B_mode%5D=country&data_summaries%5B_token%5D=340b2e734440c4e76cb7ba9dc.eN3Wm4PD6QmHAgADfjKJutUlqc1-c5SJRXM5CSBB1Q.Co6uquC2injMdvzFMFJoZaES8JBvP1iV0qNsGblZh8KhbnzcVDeevAyaQ&data_summaries%5Bsubmit%5D=
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- ²¹ [https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2025-06/2025 Asylum Report EN 0.pdf](https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2025-06/2025%20Asylum%20Report%20EN%200.pdf)
- ²² https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/data-summaries?data_summaries%5Bregion%5D=&data_summaries%5Bcountry%5D=&data_summaries%5Bview%5D=population%5Byear%5D=2024&data_summaries%5BpopType%5D=ASY&data_summaries%5B_mode%5D=global&data_summaries%5B_token%5D=e1ab2e8a4e7914b38d22614.9uK7rMnq5MPUnOyxvdvdiYdmn_2MK95J8RfMyLBgyc.hLHDnaqfg7Kf67b3OJy4TWxb_EisdZxJVZse22CL4myEutTrhNnTsKOsgw&data_summaries%5Bsubmit%5D=

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This factsheet was compiled for BDE by Adri van den Berg. Adri worked for many years as a Country of Origin Information (COI) researcher, her final post before retiring being with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO, now EUAA) in Malta.