

Population and Immigration: Fact Sheet 4

Refugee resettlement

November 2020

Australia's Humanitarian Program was capped by the Commonwealth government at 13,750 places annually from 2010 to 2012. The ceiling was increased to 20,000 for the 2012-13 financial year, then returned to 13,750 for 2013-14 to 2016-17, with a special intake of 12,000 from Syria and Iraq. In 2018-19 and 2019-20, the ceiling was increased to 18,750, but has again returned to 13,750 under terms announced in the 2020-21 budget.

The Humanitarian Program comprises offshore and onshore components. The number of places available offshore in any one year depends on the number of asylum seekers granted asylum in Australia (onshore). This Fact Sheet discusses the offshore program. See *Fact Sheet 3* to learn about asylum seekers onshore.

The offshore component has two main categories: Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program. **Refugees** are persons who have fled their country of nationality owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinion. The majority selected by Australia are referred by the UN Refugee Agency, on the grounds that they have little hope of return to their native country and are in greatest need. Most are from regions in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

The **Special Humanitarian Program** admits persons who are subject to gross violation of their human rights, although they may not meet the definition of refugee. They must be nominated by an Australian permanent resident or an organisation that can provide support.

Persons granted asylum in Australia may nominate immediate family members.

'Woman at Risk' is a visa category within the refugee program, recognising the vulnerability of refugee women without the protection of a male relative.

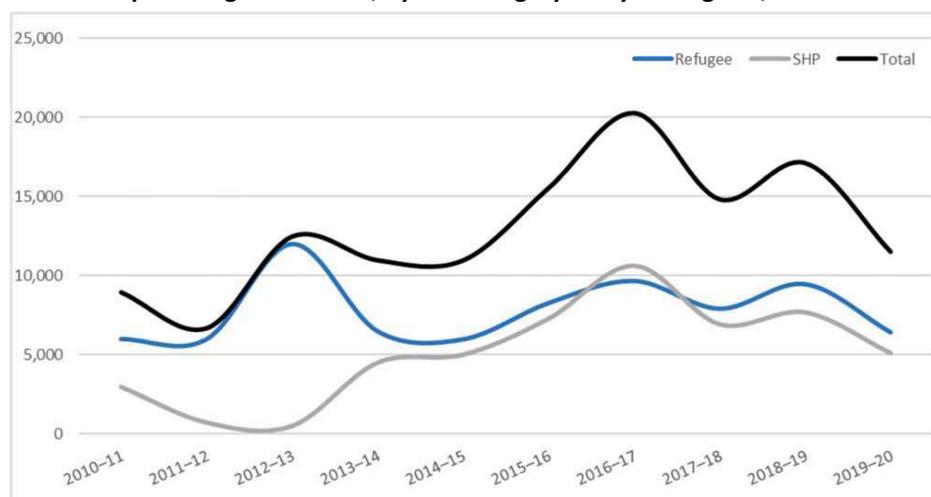
Each year there are many more applications for resettlement in Australia than available places and it may take several years for a decision. In 2019-20, 70,621 persons lodged an application offshore.

Due to international travel restrictions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the granting of all offshore humanitarian visas was suspended on 19 March 2020. As a result, in 2019-20, only 11,521 were granted. The visa grants included 881 places in the 'Woman at Risk' category.

The number of refugee resettlement places between 2008-09 and 2011-12 were largely constant at close to 6,000, with a doubling to 12,021 in 2012-13. The number of Special Humanitarian places fell from 4,511 in 2008-09 to 503 in 2012-13, as the category is offset against onshore protection grants. In 2019-20, 5,099 places were in the Special Humanitarian Program.

In 2019-20, the top five countries of birth for visa grants were Iraq at 50% (5,785), Congo 10% (1,165), Syria 8% (947), Myanmar 7% (796) and Afghanistan 5% (619). 62% of visas were granted to persons born in the Middle East, 22% Africa, and 16% Asia. Less than 1% originated from the Americas.

Number of persons granted visas, by visa category and year of grant, 2010-11 to 2019-20



Source: Department of Home Affairs, [Australia's Offshore Humanitarian Program: 2019-20](#), p. 15