



Throughout the world, 70.8 million people are unwillingly displaced, (forced to leave their homes), and this number continues to increase every day. Most people remain displaced within their home countries, but according Worldvision.com, about 25.9 million people worldwide have fled to other countries as refugees.<sup>1</sup> A refugee is a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war,

persecution, or natural disaster.<sup>2</sup> More than half of all refugees are children. Millions of children everyday flee from conflict and violence, poverty, or disasters in the hope of

finding a better life for themselves. Many of these

children travel alone, and sometimes undertake dangerous journeys that put them at risk for trafficking, abuse, or even death. When a child does not have the documents needed to cross a border, they may resort to crossing illegally, due to the fear of detention centers in the country they are fleeing to. By doing this, they further put themselves at risk for dangerous situations, such as kidnapping and being taken advantage of. Even when they get to the other side, the conditions are not ideal. They end up in overcrowded shelters, makeshift camps, or are left out in

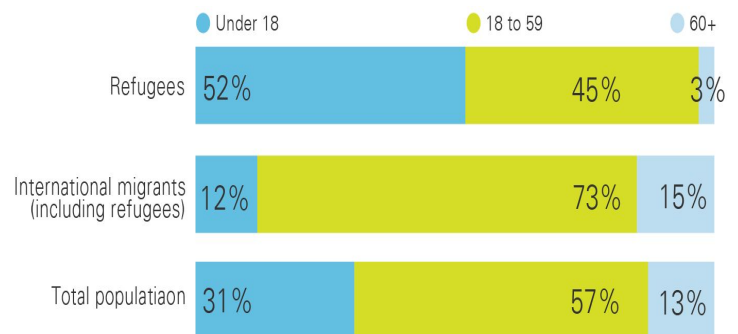


Figure 1: Ages of refugees, migrants and total population worldwide (2017)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/forced-to-flee-top-countries-refugees-coming-from>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>

the streets of dangerous cities. Here, they are in danger of being exploited or abused and are at a higher risk of being trafficked. In some countries, the government makes children work in exchange for food and shelter.

It is also proven that refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than non-refugee children. They may not even have access to health care and other necessities to keep them safe and healthy. In the world today, nearly 1 in 200 children in the world is a child refugee and nearly 1 in 8 migrants is a child. Wherever they are and regardless of their migration status, children have a right to be protected, to keep learning and to receive the care and services they need to reach their full potential.<sup>3</sup>

Every day, issues such as war and persecution impose themselves on citizens and force children to flee their home country in fear of what is to come next. In 2015, just two countries – the Syrian Arab Republic and Afghanistan – accounted for nearly half of all child refugees.<sup>4</sup> In both of these countries, wars are causing people to leave and find asylum in other countries. These long journeys that children experience can intensify the vulnerability and fear of children who are already in bad situations. The 10 largest hosts of the global refugee population are all in

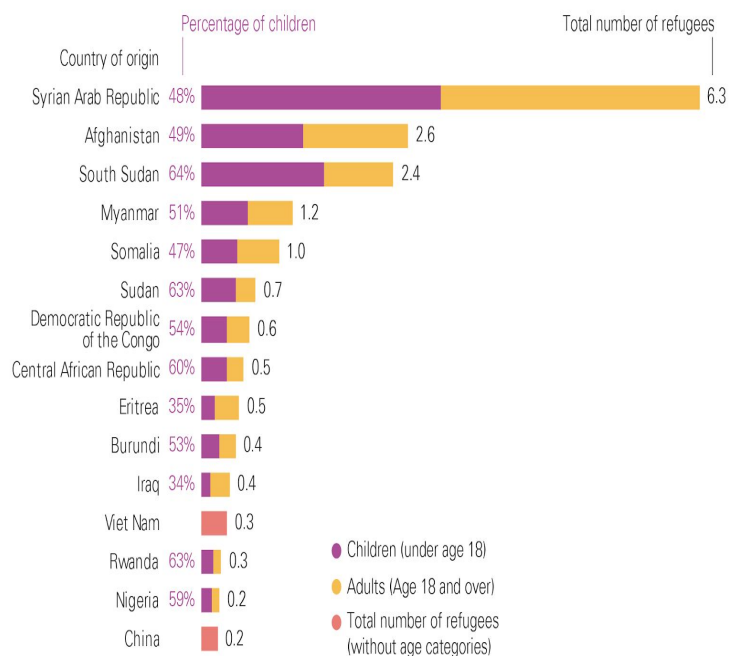


Figure 2: Number of refugees fleeing by age and country of origin in millions.

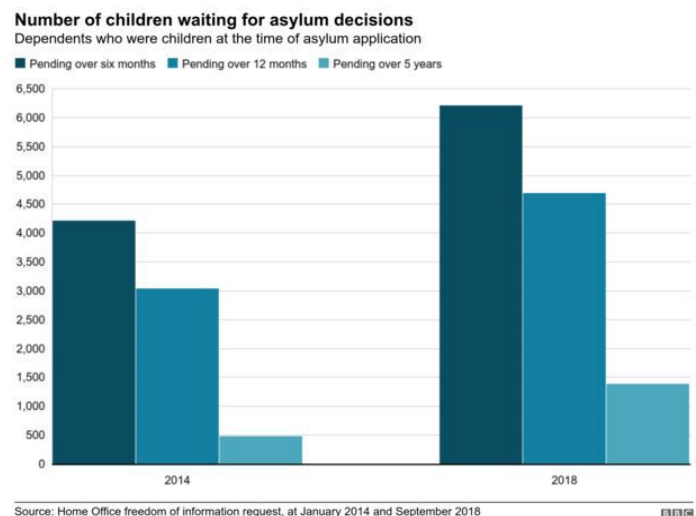
<sup>3</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Uprooted\\_growing\\_crisis\\_for\\_refugee\\_and\\_migrant\\_children.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Uprooted_growing_crisis_for_refugee_and_migrant_children.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Uprooted\\_growing\\_crisis\\_for\\_refugee\\_and\\_migrant\\_children.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Uprooted_growing_crisis_for_refugee_and_migrant_children.pdf)

Asia and Africa, with Turkey hosting by far the largest total number of refugees. Not all countries have space and resources to host refugees, so it can become a problem when there are too many of them.

Even when countries have space and resources to host refugees, conditions are still not ideal, especially for children. Opportunities, like access to healthcare and education, that refugee and migrant children have in their destination countries is completely based on the national policy in that country. For example, China does not readily accept refugees due to their national policies. Many Chinese nationals believe that since they have their “one child policy”, they wouldn’t have space for other refugees. They also believe that refugees cause trouble and don’t have time to manage the crime in refugee camps.<sup>5</sup>

Child refugees often retreat to refugee camps in search of protection. Many times, these children are escaping political violence and religious oppression. Their only chance at survival is coming to a refugee camp, in the hopes of eventually being able to resettle in another country. This can be a long process, lasting anywhere from a few years to a lifetime. Refugee camps become home for those utilizing them since they stay so long. As a result of horrid conditions, refugee camps become a place that



**Figure 3:** Comparison of the number of years that children were waiting for asylum decisions in 2014 and 2018.

<sup>5</sup><https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/09/12/why-do-some-countries-get-away-with-taking-fewer-refugees-united-states-china/>

many would like to leave just as much as their real homes in their native country.<sup>6</sup> Some reasons why refugee camps have a negative connotation is because of their small portion sizes, lack of water needed per day, poor sanitary conditions, and the absence of quality living space.<sup>7</sup>

The detention of refugees has become commonplace in a number of countries and has serious lasting effects on individuals and families. UNHCR is concerned about the growing use of immigration detention, particularly of children.<sup>8</sup> As the years go on, detainment camps for children continue to worsen. The conditions are unpleasant, and the treatment is intolerable. The United Nations Refugee Agency has reported that sexual assault is commonplace in Moria, a refugee camp in Greece. In Northeastern Syria, 29 children and newborns have died over the past two months in or on their way to the al-Hol refugee camp because the camp struggles to put up with cold, harsh winter conditions and an abundance of displaced children. Many refugee camps are overpopulated, as they are home to 5,000 refugees, exceeding their capacity by 2,000 people. To put it mildly, these conditions are inhumane and are not fit for children to live in. By reforming the refugee camps, living conditions for children will improve which will most likely result in less anxiety, suicide, and depression. Producing this change of camps would dramatically reduce the dangerous effect of the living conditions on the refugees' mental health. Research suggests that asylum seekers are five times more likely to have mental health needs than the general population and more than 61% will experience serious mental distress. However, data shows that they are less likely to receive support than the general population.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup><https://sites.duke.edu/refugeementalhealth/2018/03/27/refugee-camps-poor-living-conditions-and-their-effects-on-mental-health/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.uniteforsight.org/refugee-health/module3>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/detention.html>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/statistics/mental-health-statistics-refugees-and-asylum-seekers>

As the child refugee crisis intensifies, an increasing number of refugees crowd the camps. This leaves more children staying in the camps for longer periods of time because only a certain amount of them can be resettled. At the minimum, these camps should be clean and contain running water even if they are not built to last a long time.<sup>10</sup>

Many child refugees find themselves in Greece, Italy, and surrounding countries. Due to this, UNICEF's 2019 goals focused on sending support to these nations. UNICEF funds health care services at refugee camps including mental health services for children and vaccine and nutrition advice for mothers accompanied by young children. Much of their support also goes to unaccompanied children. They work with civil service organizations in different countries to protect children from the dangers that may await them in the countries they are migrating to in addition to finding out who they are and trying to find them guardians. For example, according to UNICEF, in South Sudan around 17,000 juveniles have been reported missing or have become split up from their families. In 2014, UNICEF and its partners made a working group to bring together families. Since then, the group has reunited almost 5,400 children with their families using a secure communication techniques.<sup>11</sup>

A priority for these children is securing them an education, which UNICEF aims to do by quickly enrolling them in schools. UNICEF also implements life skills classes for children in addition to formal education. The accessibility of education, protection, and health care is hoped to be eased by partnerships between different nations and UNICEF. In 2018, UNICEF managed to help 285,000 refugee children. A little more than 5,000 unaccompanied and high-risk children got help from UNICEF, as they were identified and had their migration case managed, at least

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<sup>10</sup><https://sites.duke.edu/refugeementalhealth/2018/03/27/refugee-camps-poor-living-conditions-and-their-effects-on-mental-health/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/unicef-has-plan-keep-refugee-and-migrant-families-together/34635>

15,600 children received some form of education, and about 26,000 refugee children used the mental health services.<sup>12</sup> However, 50 million children are displaced and there is still more to be done.<sup>13</sup> The goal of this committee is to produce new ways of aiding refugees, as well as strengthen existing methods and solutions. These methods should protect children from the dangerous situations they face as refugees and improve their quality of life, which includes their level of education and access to health care. Additionally, problems in children's refugee camps, such as overcrowding, mental health, and cruel treatment need to be resolved. Together, as a committee, the lives of children refugees are aimed to be improved.

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<sup>12</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/appeals/refugee\\_migrant\\_europe.html](https://www.unicef.org/appeals/refugee_migrant_europe.html)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.unicefusa.org/mission/emergencies/child-refugees-and-migrants>

## Questions To Consider:

- How welcoming is your country towards child refugees?
- How would a child refugee go about obtaining the proper papers to legally cross into your country?
- How are children, especially unaccompanied children, treated at detainment camps in your country?
- What percentage of refugees in your country are children?
- Is your country already a recipient of help from UNICEF?
- Has your country partnered with UNICEF in the past to provide aid to child refugees?

## Helpful Links:

- <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/displacement/>
- <https://www.unicefusa.org/mission/emergencies/child-refugees-and-migrants>
- <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/detention.html>
- [https://www.unicef.org/appeals/refugee\\_migrant\\_europe.html](https://www.unicef.org/appeals/refugee_migrant_europe.html)