



# The New Zealand Refugee Quota: A snapshot of recent trends

August 2020

## Summary

- The Government established a formal annual Quota for the resettlement of refugees in 1987. From 1 July 2020 this Quota increased from 1,000 to 1,500.
- The New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy provides a framework to guide refugee settlement activities across government and help refugees.
- Total Refugee Quota arrivals from the years ended 30 June 2011 to 2020 numbered 8,180. Arrivals peaked in 2018 at 1,020.

## Background

Refugees are people who cannot return to their home country because they have a well-founded fear of persecution because of their religion, race, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.<sup>1</sup> New Zealand has supported refugee resettlement in various forms since 1870, and on a regular basis since 1979.<sup>2</sup> A comprehensive review of New Zealand's refugee programme in 1987 led to the Government establishing a formal annual Quota for the resettlement of refugees that year.<sup>3</sup> The 1987 Quota of 800 was reduced to 750 in 1997, but the government agreed to pay travel costs.<sup>4</sup>

The Refugee Quota Programme is decided in three-year cycles.<sup>5</sup> In September 2015 the Government announced New Zealand would welcome 750 Syrian refugees over the next two and a half years in response to the ongoing conflict in Syria. Of the places, 600 would be via a special emergency intake above the annual Quota of 750, and 150 places would be offered within the Quota.<sup>6</sup> In June 2016 the Government announced that it would increase the size of the Quota from 750 to 1,000 places per year, the first increase since the Quota's establishment.<sup>7</sup> This occurred from July 2018.<sup>8</sup> In September 2018 the Government announced the Quota would increase from 1,000 to 1,500, and this occurred from 1 July 2020. Due to the global impact of the COVID-19

<sup>1</sup> Immigration New Zealand (INZ) [Immigration Factsheets – Refugees and Asylum Seekers](#) (September 2018) at 1.

<sup>2</sup> INZ [Immigration Factsheets: Refugees and asylum seekers](#) (December 2019) at 1.

<sup>3</sup> New Zealand Immigration Service *Acceptance of refugees as settlers in New Zealand* (May 1989) at 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> Ann Beaglehole. "Refugees" Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand Refugees (2005).

<sup>5</sup> INZ ["New Zealand Refugee Quota Programme"](#).

<sup>6</sup> Hon Michael Woodhouse ["New Zealand to take 750 more Syrian refugees"](#) Beehive (8 September 2015).

<sup>7</sup> Hon Michael Woodhouse ["Govt announces increase to Refugee Quota"](#) Beehive (14 June 2016); and INZ, above note 1 at 1.

<sup>8</sup> INZ, above note 1 at 1.

pandemic, it is unlikely that this increase will be reached in the year ending 30 June 2021.<sup>9</sup> No Quota arrivals or settlements occurred in July 2020.<sup>10</sup>

The composition of the Quota is agreed to annually by the Ministers of Immigration and Foreign Affairs. Refugees considered for resettlement under the programme (except certain applicants who are nuclear or dependent family members of the principal) must be recognised as mandated refugees and referred to New Zealand by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) according to prescribed resettlement guidelines. When Immigration New Zealand (INZ) processes and decides these cases: INZ policy, credibility, settlement, security, immigration risk, and health are considered.<sup>11</sup>

Quota arrivals are granted Permanent Residence status, whereby someone can live and work in New Zealand indefinitely, and come and go as they like.<sup>12</sup> Arrivals spend their first six weeks at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre. Here there is a reception programme to prepare them for their new lives. Suitable housing is located for refugees prior to the programme's completion. In the community, they are provided settlement support for up to 12 months. This includes a community orientation programme that complements the reception programme, and helps refugees link to services supporting their settlement.<sup>13</sup>

The New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy developed in 2012 is a framework to guide refugee settlement activities across government and help refugees more quickly achieve self-sufficiency, social integration and independence. The Strategy's vision is:

Refugees are participating fully and integrated socially and economically as soon as possible so that they are living independently, undertaking the same responsibilities and exercising the same rights as other New Zealanders and have a strong sense of belonging to their own community and to New Zealand.<sup>14</sup>

Due to the COVID-19 response Quota arrivals have been on hold. INZ has been working with agencies and international partners on requirements to support the resumption of Quota refugee resettlement. This has included ensuring international travel routes are available for safe refugee movements and appropriate health measures and controls are in place. As the COVID-19 response progresses, the Government will consider when Quota refugee resettlement will be able to resume.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern and Hon Iain Lees-Galloway ["Refugee quota increases to 1500 in 2020"](#) Beehive (19 September 2018); and INZ [Immigration Factsheets: COVID-19 response – Quota Refugees](#) (July 2020) at 2.

<sup>10</sup> INZ [Refugee and Protection Unit Statistics Pack Current to July 2020](#) (August 2020) at 6-7.

<sup>11</sup> INZ, above note 5.

<sup>12</sup> INZ, above note 5; INZ ["Becoming a permanent resident"](#).

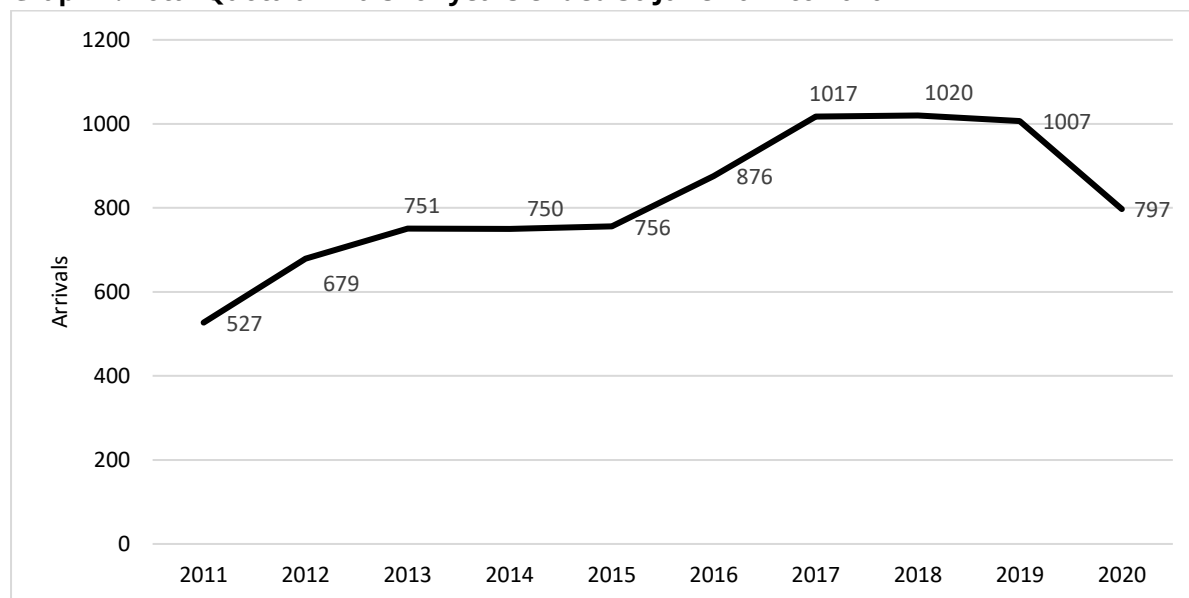
<sup>13</sup> INZ, above note 5.

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment [New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy Priorities to 2020](#) (2018) at 2-3.

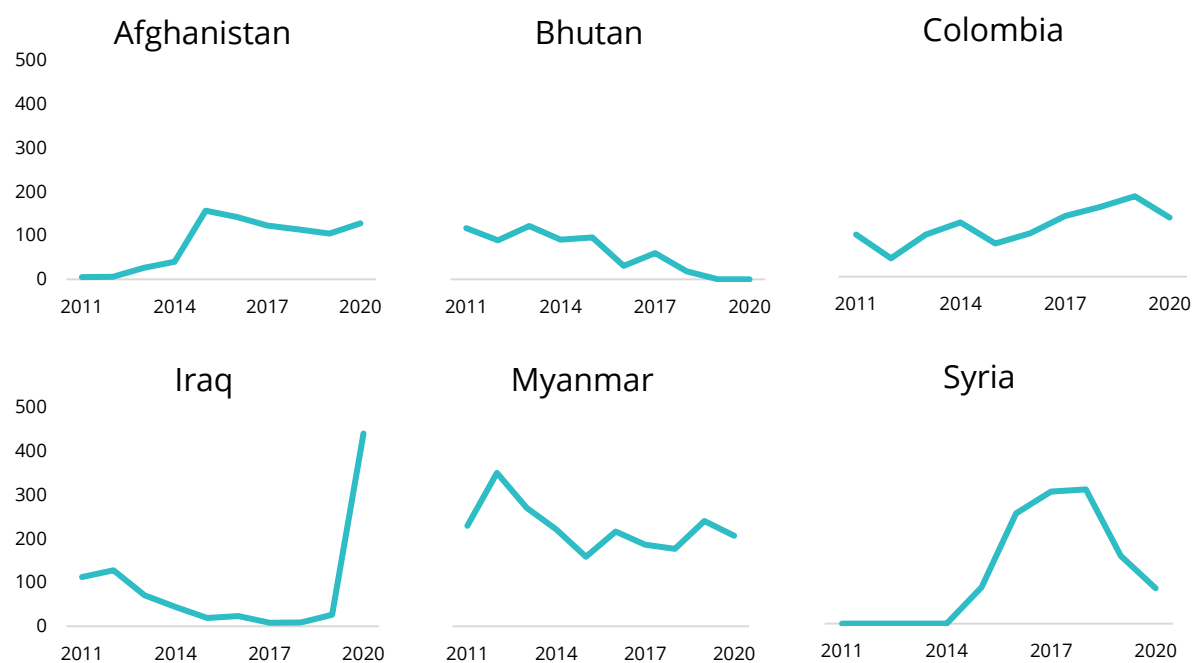
<sup>15</sup> INZ, above note 9 at 2.

# Refugee Quota arrival and settlement trends for years ended 30 June 2011 to 2020<sup>16</sup>

**Graph 1: Total Quota arrivals for years ended 30 June 2011 to 2020**



**Graph 2: Highest numbers of Quota arrivals by nationality for years ended 30 June 2011 to 2020**

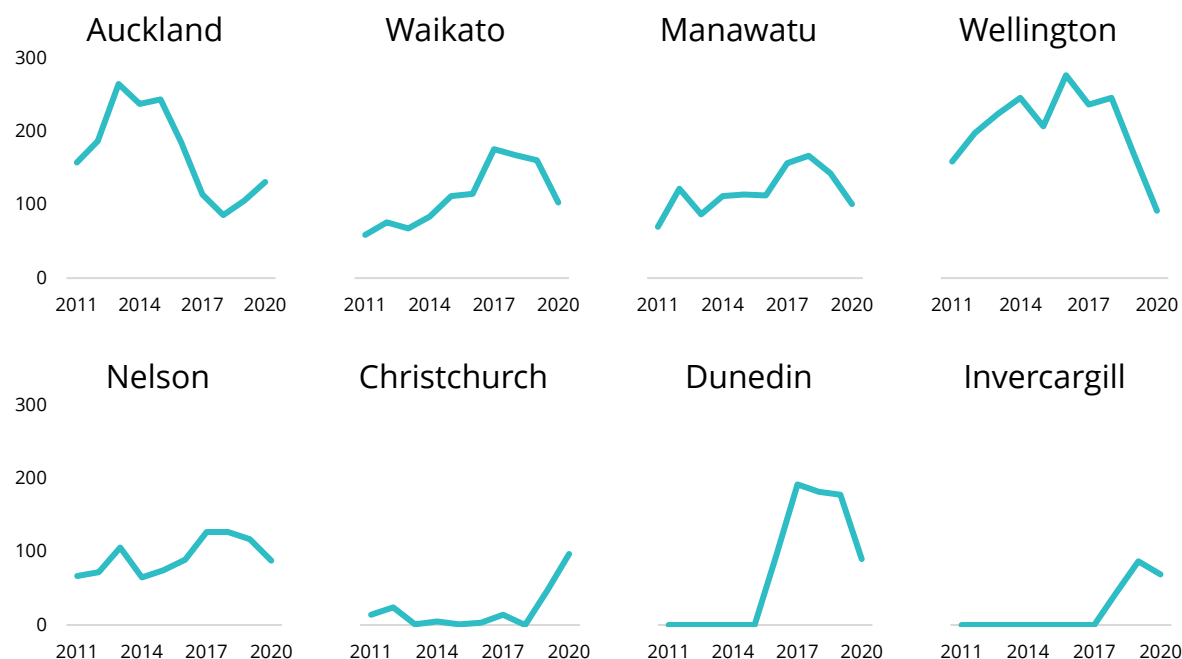


See Appendix Table One for figures.

<sup>16</sup> All figures for graphs and the appendix tables are from INZ *Refugee and Protection Unit Statistics Pack Current to June 2020* (July 2020) at 6-7 and *Refugee and Protection Unit Statistics Pack Current to July 2020* (August 2020) at 6-7.

Quota refugees are settled based on community links, employment opportunities and access to services to help support their integration.<sup>17</sup> Additional settlement locations (Timaru, Whanganui, Blenheim, Masterton, Levin and Ashburton) were selected following the decision to increase the Quota from July 2020. This is in line with the Government's commitment to increase the number and spread of refugee resettlement support services so communities are prepared well before new refugees arrive.<sup>18</sup>

**Graph 3: Quota settlement by selected regions for years ended 30 June 2011 to 2020**



See Appendix Table Two for figures. Three refugees were also settled in Hawkes Bay in the year ending 30 June 2015, 10 in Blenheim in 2020 and 16 in Timaru in 2020.<sup>19</sup>

**Main nationalities settled in selected regions 2011 to December 2019<sup>20</sup>**

Region	First	Second	Third
Auckland	Myanmar	Iraq	Afghanistan
Waikato	Colombia	Afghanistan	Pakistan
Manawatu	Myanmar	Bhutan	Afghanistan
Wellington	Myanmar	Syria	Colombia
Nelson	Myanmar	Bhutan	Colombia
Christchurch	Eritrea	Afghanistan	Bhutan
Dunedin	Syria	Palestine	Afghanistan
Invercargill	Colombia	Ecuador	

<sup>17</sup> INZ, above note 2 at 2.

<sup>18</sup> Hon Iain Lees-Galloway [“Whanganui welcomes refugee resettlement”](#) (7 February 2019); and INZ [“Immigration Factsheets: Refugees and asylum seekers”](#) (December 2019) at 2.

<sup>19</sup> INZ, above note 16 at 7.

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment Official Information Act response (21 February 2020).

## Appendix

**Table 1: Quota arrivals by nationality for years ended 30 June 2011 to 2020 <sup>21</sup>**

Nationality	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Afghanistan	5	6	26	40	157	143	123	114	105	128
Bhutan	117	89	122	91	96	31	60	18	0	0
Burundi	12	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Colombia	96	42	96	124	76	99	139	159	184	135
Congo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	0
D.R. of Congo	6	8	0	9	0	0	0	12	19	47
Ecuador	10	16	12	23	12	7	12	20	12	0
Egypt	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0
Eritrea	7	0	0	33	0	7	0	0	27	64
Ethiopia	5	7	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0
Iran	0	0	0	6	0	0	19	40	5	0
Iraq	7	113	128	71	44	19	23	8	9	26
Myanmar	230	351	271	222	159	217	187	177	241	207
Nepal	0	0	0	0	9	0	6	0	0	0
Pakistan	0	0	0	0	0	0	39	44	76	33
Palestine	5	0	12	25	31	26	59	73	77	36
Somalia	0	11	0	12	27	13	12	9	35	13
South Sudan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0
Sri Lanka	12	24	57	75	35	24	27	7	29	11
Sudan	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Syria	0	0	0	0	83	252	302	307	155	81
Vietnam	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0
Other	15	4	13	19	21	22	9	18	15	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>679</b>	<b>751</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>756</b>	<b>876</b>	<b>1017</b>	<b>1020</b>	<b>1007</b>	<b>797</b>

**Table 2: Quota settlement by selected region for years ended 30 June 2011 to 2020 <sup>22</sup>**

Region	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Auckland	158	187	265	238	244	185	114	86	106	131
Waikato	59	76	68	84	112	115	176	168	161	103
Manawatu	70	122	87	112	114	113	157	167	143	101
Wellington	159	198	224	246	207	277	237	246	168	92
Nelson	67	72	106	65	75	89	127	127	117	88
Christchurch	14	24	1	5	1	3	14	0	47	97
Dunedin	0	0	0	0	0	94	192	182	178	90
Invercargill	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	44	87	69

<sup>21</sup> All figures for appendix tables are from *Statistics Pack Current to June 2020* at 6-7 and *Statistics Pack Current to July 2020* at 6-7.

<sup>22</sup> Settlement to Christchurch was suspended, except for a limited number of family-linked cases, following the September 2010 earthquake. Invercargill was selected as a new refugee settlement location in May 2017. INZ "[Invercargill chosen as new refugee settlement location](#)" (1 May 2017). Three refugees were settled in Hawkes Bay in the year ending 30 June 2015, 10 in Blenheim in 2020 and 16 in Timaru in 2020. INZ, above note 21 at 7.

## Suggestions for further reading/links

Beaglehole, Ann. "[Refugees](#)" Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand Refugees (2005)

Ministry of Social Development. "[Refugees and Migrants](#)"

Immigration New Zealand.

[Immigration Factsheets: COVID-19 response – Quota Refugees](#) (July 2020)

[Immigration Factsheets: Refugees and asylum seekers](#) (December 2019)

["New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy"](#)

[Statistics – Refugee and Protection Unit Statistics Pack](#)

["Refugee and Protection"](#)

*Refugee and Protection Unit Statistics Pack Current to July 2020* (August 2020)

*Refugee and Protection Unit Statistics Pack Current to June 2020* (July 2020)

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