

Immigration Factsheets

Refugees and asylum seekers

February 2021

COVID-19 Refugee update

- New Zealand's Refugee Quota Programme has resumed and the first group of 35 quota refugees arrive in New Zealand in February. They are the first of a few similar sized cohorts to arrive.
- Immigration New Zealand (INZ) is working with the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations agency for refugees (UNHCR) to arrange resettlement when travel and transit routes are considered safe.
- To manage and mitigate the impact on available spaces at managed isolation facilities, the number of new refugee quota arrivals will be coordinated between INZ and the Managed Isolation and Quarantine agency (MIQ). The planned approach will ensure sequencing of arrivals, logistics and support requirements.
- Refugees who arrive in New Zealand under the Refugee Quota Programme are granted Permanent Residence status in New Zealand and will not pay MIQ fees.
- Health and safety infection control processes are already in place to manage arrivals at Auckland International Airport and for travel to managed isolation facilities.
- During the managed isolation stay, Ministry of Health COVID-19 infection control measures and processes, and the COVID-19 testing regime will be in place.
- Onsite daily support covering health, psychosocial, and wellbeing is available for all people to access while in managed isolation.
- Refugees will also receive offsite (virtual) pastoral care and welfare support including access to specialised mental health care and psychosocial support through the INZ refugee quota programme and health staff based at Te Āhuru Mōwai o Aotearoa (Māngere Refugee Resettlement Centre)
- Information in relevant refugee languages will be provided including COVID-19-related health and safety information, settlement information and educational supports via self-learning packs.
- New Zealand has already accepted a number of cases referred by refugee agency UNHCR under emergency priority. These cases require immediate protection through emergency resettlement due to such reasons as an immediate life-threatening situation or deportation, or detention or imprisonment.

Background

- New Zealand is a party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugee and its 1967 Protocol, the 1984 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or



Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

- New Zealand has a long and proud history of refugee resettlement. New Zealand has been supporting refugee resettlement in various forms since 1870 when Danish refugees arrived and settled in the North Island.
- New Zealand has been resettling refugees on a regular basis since 1979 and the Refugee Quota Programme was introduced in 1987.

New Zealand's Refugee Quota Programme

- New Zealand's Refugee Quota is a reflection of the Government's commitment to fulfilling its international humanitarian commitments to provide protection to refugees who are not able to return safely to their home country.
- The annual Refugee Quota increased to 1,500 places annually from July 2020. The quota is unlikely to be met in 2020/21 due to the global impact of COVID-19.
- Refugees are identified for resettlement by the UNHCR according to internationally accepted guidelines that take account of physical and legal protection needs, as well as family reunification. They are submitted for consideration for resettlement in New Zealand in accordance with New Zealand's agreed annual resettlement plan. INZ is only able to consider the case of a refugee for resettlement under the refugee quota following a formal referral by UNHCR.
- It is entirely the decision of the UNHCR whether resettlement is the best option for a refugee and whether their case will be referred to a safe third country. New Zealand is not in a position to request particular cases, nor advocate with the UNHCR on behalf of individual refugees.
- All those selected for resettlement under New Zealand's Refugee Quota Programme undergo comprehensive on and off-shore screening and assessment processes focusing on credibility, security, risk and settlement, and meet health requirements.
- On arrival in New Zealand quota refugees are granted permanent residency and are eligible to access government funded services the same as other residents and New Zealand citizens. They are eligible to apply for New Zealand citizenship after five years of residence in New Zealand.
- All quota refugees currently spend their first six weeks at Te Āhuru Mōwai o Aotearoa (the Māngere Refugee Resettlement Centre) in Auckland, where they participate in a comprehensive reception programme that prepares them to live and work in the community.
- The reception programme includes sessions on Taha Māori (Māori perspectives), living in a multicultural society, New Zealand Police and the law, moving into the community, health (including parenting and healthy families), English language learning, and preparing working-age adults for employment and children for school.
- During the reception programme a Settlement Plan is developed with each quota refugee family that outlines the types of services they will be connected with to support their successful settlement in their community.
- Quota refugees are settled in locations around New Zealand based on community links, employment opportunities and access to services to help support their settlement. Locations are the Auckland region, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington region, Nelson, Christchurch, Dunedin and Invercargill.



- To manage the increase in the refugee quota, six additional locations have been preparing to receive refugees for the first time. Blenheim and Timaru welcomed refugee families in June 2020, and Masterton, Levin and Ashburton will receive refugees once the resettlement programme resumes. Refugee resettlement in Whanganui is yet to be confirmed.
- INZ contracts community-based providers to deliver settlement support services for up to 12 months to quota refugees following their arrival in the settlement locations. This support includes coordinating a community orientation programme and linking quota refugees to the services they need, such as GP enrolment, employment and English language classes.
- The Settlement Support Service providers are:
 - New Zealand Red Cross in most of the settlement locations, including three of the new locations – Levin, Masterton (in partnership with Connecting Communities Wairarapa) and Blenheim;
 - Presbyterian Support Service South Canterbury in Timaru; and
 - Ashburton Safer Community Council Trust Board in Ashburton.
- The duration of the Settlement Support Service contracts is from February 2020 to 30 June 2022, to align with the contract that covers the eight existing refugee settlement locations. Another procurement process will occur for all refugee settlement locations in June 2022.

Refugee Family Support Category

- The Refugee Family Support Category (RFSC) provides people who were granted residence as refugees or protected persons the opportunity to sponsor a family member and that person's partner and dependent children for New Zealand residence. Each year there are 300 places available. This number will increase to 600 places from July 2021.
- The RFSC has a two-tier registration system with priority given to tier one sponsors who meet a high threshold of need. The first step is for eligible people to register as a sponsor of their family members who are offshore. If they meet the eligibility criteria to sponsor their family members, then they will be sent an Invitation to Apply (ITA) and their family members who are offshore will then complete the relevant residence application.

Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship category

- The Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship (CORS) category is additional and complementary to the Refugee Quota Programme and enables New Zealand-based community organisations to sponsor refugees for resettlement.
- 24 refugees were sponsored for the initial pilot in 2018 by four approved community organisations - Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand (Wellington), Gleniti Baptist Church (Timaru), South West Baptist Church (Christchurch) and the Society of St Vincent de Paul (Nelson).
- The key objectives of the category include:
 - Providing an opportunity for community organisations to be actively engaged in refugee resettlement and to build local communities that welcome refugees,



- Enabling sponsored refugees to quickly become independent and self-sufficient in New Zealand, and
- Providing an alternative form of admission for refugees to complement the annual refugee quota.
- Principal and secondary applicants must be mandated as refugees and meet relevant immigration policies for the category, including security, risk and health assessments. Principal applicants need to have a basic understanding of English, have a minimum of three years' work experience (or a qualification requiring at least two years' tertiary study), have an acceptable standard of health and be aged between 18 and 45.
- A process evaluation of the initial pilot found that the CORS category had brought communities together to support refugees, and that sponsored refugees were settling well.
- The government has provided funding to extend the category pilot for a further three years from 1 July 2021. The extension of the pilot will enable up to 50 sponsored refugees to be resettled in New Zealand in each of the three financial years from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2024 (a total of 150 sponsored refugees over the three financial years).
- Sponsored refugees will be supported to settle in New Zealand by their approved community organisation sponsor(s).
- It is intended that a broad range of community organisations and groups will be able to engage in supporting the settlement of sponsored refugees under the extended pilot. This work will begin in 2020, with Immigration New Zealand working with community organisations to co-design the process to become approved sponsors.
- As well as UNHCR-referrals of refugees to be considered for sponsorship under the extended pilot, approved community organisations will be able to nominate (name) refugees to sponsor so long as those refugees meet the requirements for participation in the category.

New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy

- The Government launched the New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy (the Strategy) in December 2012. The Strategy guides refugee settlement activities across-Government to deliver better settlement and integration outcomes for refugees in New Zealand.
- The implementation of the Strategy is a cross-government effort and participating agencies lead implementation in their respective areas. The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) as the lead agency in refugee settlement, coordinates the overall implementation of the Strategy and the annual reporting against the agreed measures and success indicators.
- The Strategy's goals include:
 - Increasing the number of former refugees in paid employment and reducing the number receiving unemployment-related benefits.
 - Reducing the proportion of former refugees receiving housing assistance
 - Increasing the proportion of former refugee school leavers achieving NCEA Level 2 after five years or more in the New Zealand education system
 - Increasing the number of refugee children who receive age-appropriate immunisations, and

- Ensuring better use of GP services and greater access to mental health services.
- Since implementation of the Strategy, the mix of services provided to refugees has been evolving to place a greater emphasis on living and working in New Zealand and linking refugees to services in the community, including employment. In addition, work has been undertaken to better support refugees' access to English language learning and work is underway to address interpreter and translation services barriers for refugees accessing mainstream services. A driver training programme has been established to enable refugees to obtain their restricted licence, which is anticipated to provide support to accessing employment opportunities.
- Detailed progress on the implementation of the Strategy is available on a dedicated page on the INZ website at [immigration.govt.nz/about-us/what-we-do/our-strategies-and-projects/refugee-resettlement-strategy](https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/what-we-do/our-strategies-and-projects/refugee-resettlement-strategy).
- Detailed statistics are available on our website:-
<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/documents/statistics/statistics-refugee-and-protection.pdf>
- New Zealand is a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1984 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- New Zealand is obligated under United Nations conventions to consider claims from people who claim refugee or protected person status while in New Zealand. These people are known as claimants or asylum seekers.
- A refugee is a person who meets the definition of a refugee provided by the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, as amended by the 1967 protocol.
- A protected person is a person for whom there are substantial grounds for believing he or she would be in danger of torture, arbitrary deprivation of life or cruel treatment if deported from New Zealand.
- The identity and details of refugee and protection claimants and their claim are confidential under section 151 of the Immigration Act 2009. It is an offence to disclose this information outside of the exceptions set out in section 151(2).
- Refugee or protection status can be claimed on arrival at a New Zealand airport or port, or at a later time after arrival in New Zealand.
- The majority of people who claim asylum in New Zealand arrive in the country on valid visas or are issued visas on arrival and live in the community. A very small number of people claim asylum on arrival at New Zealand's borders.
- Claimants have a right to contact a lawyer and are provided an interpreter for their interview.
- Claimants may be eligible for a work or other temporary visa while they await the outcome of their claim. They are eligible for publicly funded healthcare and their children may attend school. Claimants may also be eligible for welfare support.
- Refugee and Protection officers (RPOs) in the Refugee Status Unit of INZ decide all claims for refugee or protection status at first instance. It is a shared inquiry, where the claimant is responsible for establishing their claim, and the RPO may also determine the relevant facts, including assessing credibility. The RPO then determines



the risk of the person being persecuted or otherwise suffering cruel treatment if deported to any place.

- If the claim is approved by the Refugee Status Unit, the person is recognised as a refugee or protected person.
- Refugees and protected persons are eligible to apply for permanent residence and New Zealand citizenship after five years of residence.
- Refugees and protected persons are also eligible to access employment and income support and public health services, the same as New Zealand residents or citizens.
- If the claim is declined by the Refugee Status Unit, the person can appeal to the independent Immigration and Protection Tribunal.
- The Refugee Status Unit also decides whether a person's refugee or protected person status should be cancelled because it was obtained through fraud; whether a person no longer needs to be protected because of changes in their or their country's circumstances and whether a refugee should be deported because they have committed serious crimes and pose a risk to the community. These decisions can also be appealed to the Immigration and Protection Tribunal.
- INZ provides information about the process, and support services, in English and other languages on our website: <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/audiences/supporting-refugees-and-asylum-seekers/asylum-seekers>
- Detailed statistics are also available on our website:- <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/documents/statistics/statistics-refugee-and-protection.pdf>