

**Forum:** Population Movement Council

**Student Officer(s):** Anh Minh Tran, Sandra Ngo, Solbi Yun

## **TOPIC 3: The question of the safe third country principle for migrants and asylum seekers**

**Be sure to consult the [UNIS MUN LibGuide](#) for additional resources.**

### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

“By the end of 2022, 108.4 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations” ([UNHCR](#)). With conflicts raging on in different parts of the world, such as the Gaza situation, the Russo-Ukraine War, and the India-Palestine conflict, it is inevitable that countries, mostly More Economically Developed Countries, faces the challenge of maintaining a healthy migration flow and share the burden of housing and providing for refugees and asylum seekers. However, many factors have affected the migration flow and people are disbalanced across the countries in the world. The safe third country principle allows Member States to send applicants to third countries with which the applicant has a connection, such that it would be reasonable for him to go there, and to receive protection. This can also protect countries being abused and targeted by asylum seekers trying to gain more benefits than personal safety. For instance, in light of the Venezuelan conflict, asylum seekers and refugees should seek safety in any other South American country, not to take advantage of the U.S.'s better economic incentives and welfare. Ensuring that the international community shares the responsibility for housing refugees is the top priority for this topic/committee.

### **International**

On the International Scale, various conflicts in the world have escalated the migration problem to be more than people thought. Forced displacement worldwide is the largest in the seven decades of the United Nations ([UNHCR](#)). The re-emergence of conflicts in South Sudan (2.6 million displaced), Central America and Venezuela violence (~ 6 million displaced), Ukrainian conflict (~ 12.4 million displaced), Rohingya Refugee Emergency (~ 1.2 million displaced), has suggested another peak in the movement of people around the globe. Allowing a state to decline a refugee claim after the seeker has already passed another country is an important step to regulate the responsibility of states in the global community to

house refugees. Works to have international rules, regulations, and agreed-upon frameworks in the way to go.

## **Regional**

Not only the European Union, but also the Latin America and the South East Asia area needs to revisit different frameworks for asylum seekers, given conflicts reappearance in those regions. The EU has contributed to its economy by extending a helping hand to Turkey to share the burden of housing Syrian refugees. The Dublin system allows refugees to settle in the first country in Europe, but its criticism is that due to the lack of borders in the EU states, seekers can self-select areas for opportunities, diverting away from the purpose of safety. For more information, please visit this article and download the PDF on a comparative approach between Europe, Latin America, and SouthEast Asia regulations ([Article](#)). If three regions are too many, please study the region your country is in and study the regional frameworks for that region, in particular, to prepare for the conference.

## **National**

Within each country, it is essential to ensure regulations about the safety of refugees and asylum seekers that came from each conflict region mentioned above in the “International” sections. States that are flooded with refugees, for example, the European Union, should make agreements with other safe nations to house refugees and limit the economic strains that were put on those countries. Many countries have attempted or successfully established deals and partnerships with other countries, such as the United States, Turkey, Germany, or even the United Kingdom. The United States has reached an agreement with Canada as a third country ([Immigration Impact](#)). Other countries outside of Europe have also been ruled by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) as safe third countries such as Morocco and Algeria ([AIDA](#)). And there is also the British - Rwanda deal. This is about the nation’s interests within a larger global goal. Frameworks within a country to ensure an equal chance to asylum claims is important as well ([USCIS](#)).

## **Local**

As asylum seekers and refugees have completed the legal frameworks and are settling in a country, it is essential for the government to provide them with support systems to further integrate them into the community. Civil society organisations, communities, and government should be encouraged to take the

initiative and play a role in ensuring a smooth transition, and to shape public opinions about tolerating a different race in their neighbourhood. In countries such as the United Kingdom or the United States, protecting the rights of different asylum seekers from different parts of the world is vital and they are combating a big xenophobia and racism problem. Some organisations that were established include the U.S. Refugee Support Services ([ORR](#)) or the Irish Red Cross which also works in restoring asylum seekers' family links ([UNHCR: Help Ireland](#)).

## II. Definition of Key Terms & Concepts

### Safe Third Country Principle

Referring to the concept that an asylum seeker must apply for protection in the first country they reach. This term is significant because it prevents asylum seekers from self-selecting their country of interest to apply for safety for their own monetary gain. Countries can reject a claim if they found out that they are not the first country that the asylum seeker has visited. This is key for the global community to share the burden of providing for the refugees, not just countries with good social welfare, better job opportunities, or better economies.

### Non-Refoulement

A fundamental principle of international law that prevents the returning of asylum seekers to a country (could be the origin country) where they might face danger, persecution, or other human rights violations. As countries can now reject refugees using the Safe Third Country Principle, it is essential to adhere to the safety and protection of the rejected individuals, whether it is to keep them within a camp or deport them to another safe country, like what Great Britain is trying to do with refugees (Conservatives: Rwanda deal in progress; Labor: Why aren't they making a deal, refugees are still in our hotels and we are paying for them?). Non-refoulement essentially forces Great Britain to protect asylum seekers' rights and not deport them into danger.

### Centripetal and Centrifugal forces

Centripetal is what pulls migrants into a country, and centrifugal is what pushes migrants out of their host countries. Understanding these terms will help delegates understand why populations within a country are motivated to migrate to another country. These terms also help delegates to decide on regulations whether

to accept the asylum claims of some people or not, because they might have different push and pull factors that are not related to seeking safety (possibly to get more money instead).

### Detentions

While the asylum seekers' claim is processed, they might be kept in confinement which restricts their movement. Understanding this might help delegates explore alternatives to detentions to further integrate a refugee into the local community, to help them settle in faster after their claim is successfully processed. Ensuring this to happen relies on initiatives taken by governments, civil societies, and different communities. [Global Compact on Refugees: UNHCR](#)

## III. Key Stakeholders

### United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The UNHCR, as mentioned many times in this Chair Report, was established in 1950 in order to aid and protect refugees, facilitate their relocation into another safe third country, and also repatriate them back to their own country after it is deemed safe. Aside from providing valuable databases for the number of migrants, the UNHCR also has national offices in many countries in the world, with each office managing its own migration flow and protecting asylum seekers who entered their country. Even though the UNHCR sometimes has tensions with member states that stem from different views and interpretations of the Safe Third Country principle, having an UNHCR means empowering asylum seekers protecting their rights, and facilitating global cooperation and responsibility regarding this topic.

### Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

NGOs also advocate for the human rights and well-being of asylum seekers. Significant NGOs include Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, which conducts research about the treatment or abuses of refugees ([Migrants Division](#)), or the International Rescue Committee, which responds to the world's humanitarian crisis, predominantly in cases of conflicts and helps people to survive and rebuild their lives in a different country. Despite having struggles in humanitarian aid in conflicts due to relations between NGOs and member states, some recent successes include the Security Council resolution for a brief humanitarian pause in Gaza, and research that informs the EU assistance to migrants in Libya, and highlights the abuses of migrant rights by Turkey's President Erdogan ([HRW](#)).

## Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

CSOs are independent groups from the government that organise initiatives for migrants and refugees. In this topic, delegates should focus on international CSOs but also CSOs in their country that protect migrants' rights and well-being. CSOs can influence government policy and bring into light problems that exist in the world, which can induce tensions between them and the country, but can also facilitate more efficient change. Examples include Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders), which acts to provide treatment for citizens and asylum seekers amidst conflict, and recently called on EU Parliaments to act in accordance with the Gaza conflict and suggest a course of actions ([MSF](#)). A list of important CSOs that relate to this topic can be found here ([download pdf](#)). Please search and make sense of the CSO that is related to your country, it could really boost your preambulatories, your opening speeches, and your commitment/or not to the international refugee crisis.

## States of Conflict

To address this problem, it is crucial to work with states that are currently under conflict, to ensure humanitarian pauses, protection for civilians in the country, and the opportunity to relocate. Examples include: Libya, Ukraine, Myanmar, Palestine, Venezuela, etc. Wars are the leading cause of displaced people, refer to the “International” section of the Introduction for further statistics and links to guide your research.

## IV. Key Issues including Background Information

### Burden and Responsibility Sharing

There has been a large disparity in commitment to provide adequately to house refugees and asylum seekers across the global community. Some countries, regardless of their economic status, have either committed too much, or have contributed less than other countries in the world, and as a result, a country has to unfairly take in many of the refugees from conflicts around the world. ASEAN countries have been famous for their non-interference policies ([CSIS](#)), Turkey has been a country that received a lot of refugees, and apparently rich countries only house 24% of the world's refugees... ([IRC](#)).

### Approving Refugees regarding the “Safe Third Country Principle”

Many refugees have taken advantage of systems to avoid seeking protection until they reach their country of choice, based on different centripetal factors. With the Safe Third Country Principle, countries are now able to reject asylum applicants, but it is still essential to adhere to the process of non-refoulement, to ensure the protection of rejected applicants. This has led to concerns and disputes between a country and a global community regarding the handling of people and the definition of what is a Safe Third Country, with application to Norway asylum seekers possibly returning to Russia ([NRC](#)).

### Public Attitudes

As refugees and asylum seekers are going through the process of settling within a country, they might encounter different public opinions and societal pressures coming from the citizens of the country. Public and societal attitudes, such as xenophobia, racism, negative perceptions, against “aliens” or newcomers greatly influence refugee policies within a country. Working to balance refugees rights and needs with public concerns is important to promote the integration of migrants into a community. The exclusion and marginalisation of migrations by British people has pushed the government to attempt to sign a deal to relocate asylum seekers to Rwanda, another Safe Third Country ([Aljazeera](#)).

### V. Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Date	Description of event
1950	The establishment of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that is dedicated to provide for migrants and asylum seekers.
1980	Adoption of the Safe Third Country Principle by the EU, followed by other member states.
1984	The Cartagena Declaration on Refugees was signed by 10 Latin American countries, which reaffirms the rights to asylum and the principle of non-refoulement.
1990	Dublin Regulation/Convention signed by EU member states, allowing European states to return migrants to the first country that they touched (within the

- 2004 countries that signed the treaty).
- Canada-United States Third Country Agreement, essentially the Dublin Regulation but between the two countries, to better enforce and manage migration flow
- 2015 European countries temporarily suspend the Dublin Regulation by closing their borders against refugees and asylum seekers, due to increasing wars in the Middle East, mostly from Syria.
- 2018 Global Compact on Refugees passed, framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing. The United States voted *against* ([UNHCR](#)).
- 2023 Global Refugee Summit was held in December, a forum that brings together 4000 delegates from 165 countries to address contemporary refugee problems.

## VI. Possible Challenges & Solutions

### Treaties/Legal Frameworks

Countries in the world might have various perspectives and policies regarding the management of refugees and asylum seekers, shaped by public opinion, government policies, and also CSOs and NGOs that operate in the country. However, countries could work together and devise a reasonable international framework or a Dublin Regulation/Cartagena Declaration but on a global scale, to bring together all countries capable of sharing the burden. Working to create deals between countries to adhere to the Safe Third Country Principle also is a viable option. To create something the world can agree about and commit to regarding refugees even with different nations' interests is the way to go.

### Responsibility of each Member State

Following the Safe Third Country Principle and the Non-Refoulement principle both ensure that asylum seekers receive enough protection and aid, but also for them to not abuse the system. Delegates should dig deep and analyse the migration system on a national level, and to ensure that countries in the world that receive migrants follow the correct procedure to house them. They shouldn't violate at least the

fundamental laws and the international community should have the responsibility to keep countries in check.

### **Racial Inequality and Migrant Treatments.**

This issue relies heavily on the amount of inequality and xenophobia in each country. However, this could be solved by different ways to bring NGOs, CSOs, and Intergovernmental organisations to collaborate with member states, to offer reasonable aid, and programs, to protect and ensure that there are suitable treatments and opportunities for migrants, and to condemn any countries that do the opposite.

## **VII. Recommendations for Resolution Writing including Research**

Delegates should start by researching their countries policies regarding migrants, and prepare to defend themselves (if they are violating) or to extend a helping hand and collaboration to other countries.

Furthermore, delegates should prioritise learning about initiatives to better address the refugee crisis in the world, and to focus specifically on their continent, or their region. They should also find countries in their region and discuss possible solutions to collaborate to create new resolutions, or further extend the impacts of signed treaties, so learning about those treaties in the timeline is essential to have a sense of how they have been dealing with the situation.

Possible ideas for resolution writing:

1. Global fund for burden sharing.
2. Strengthen agreements on third-country principles and non-refoulement.
3. Global cooperation on managing asylum seekers.
4. New treaties and agreements, even clarifying the definition if needed.
5. Increase support to countries hosting refugees.
6. Promote integration programs.
7. Promote acceptance of refugees on the national and international levels.
8. Improve the process to verify asylum seekers' claims for protection.
9. Address specific needs of some refugee groups.
10. Promote private sector engagement in the refugee crisis.
11. Invite organisations and NGOs to support or to conduct specific research relating to this topic
12. Facilitate the family reunification process.



## VIII. Bibliography

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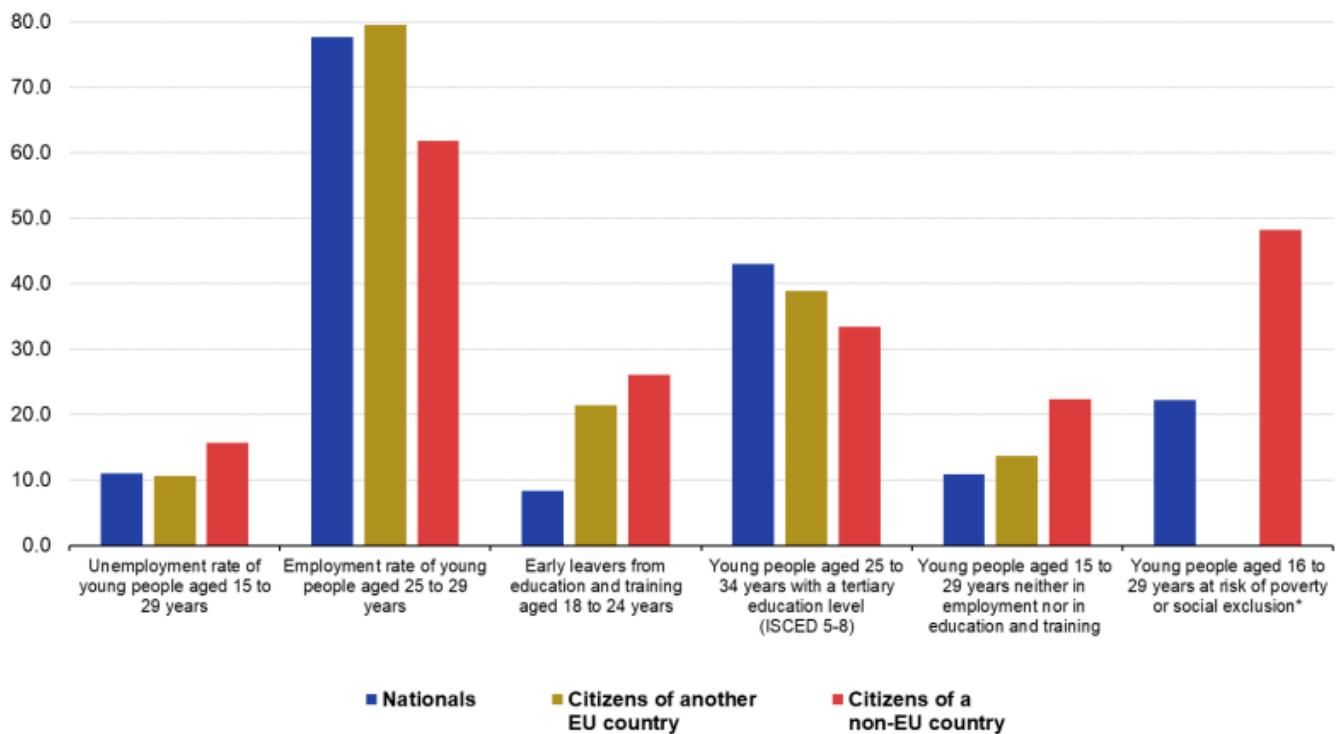
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## IX: Additional Resources

Migrant integration statistics - socioeconomic situation of young people

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migrant\\_integration\\_statistics\\_-\\_socioeconomic\\_situation\\_of\\_young\\_people](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migrant_integration_statistics_-_socioeconomic_situation_of_young_people)

### Selected indicators of youth integration in the EU by citizenship, 2022 (%)



\* Data for citizens of another EU country is not available.

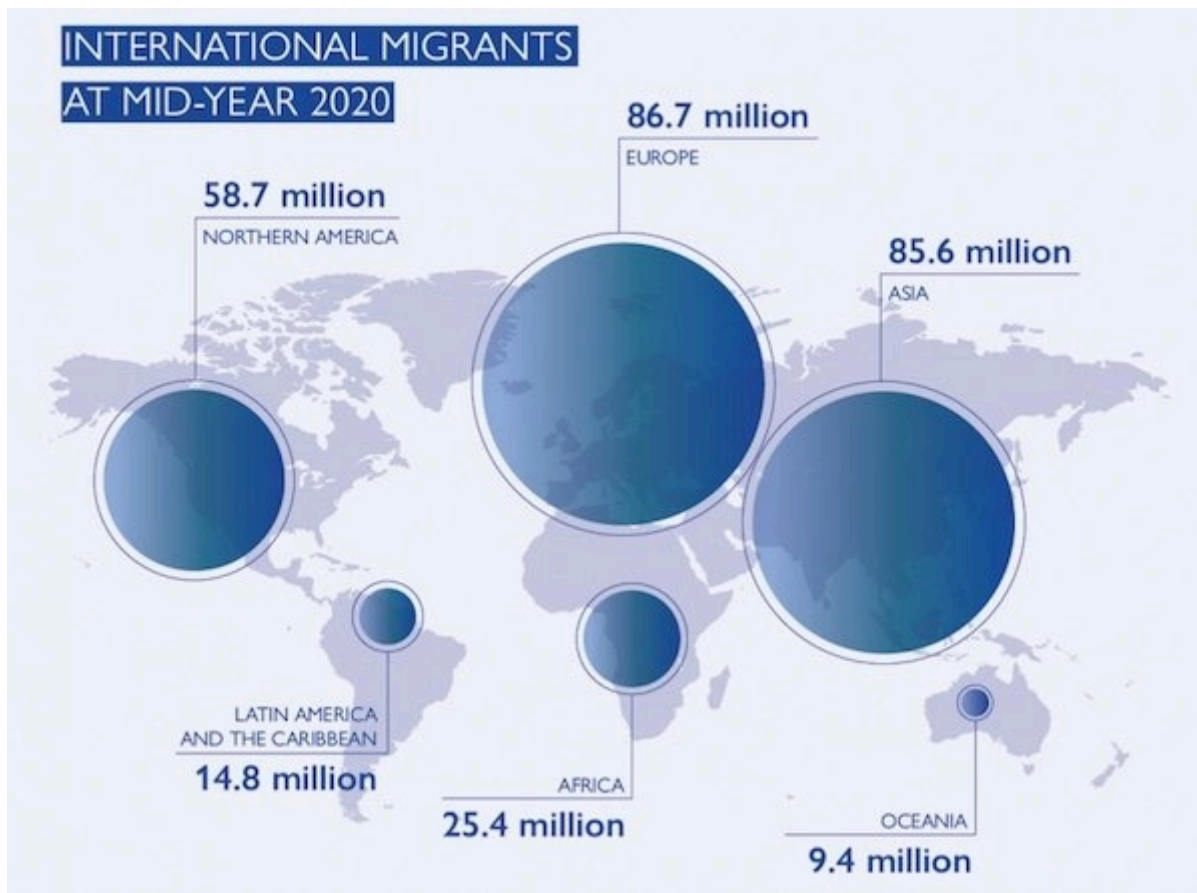
Source: Eurostat (online data codes: ifsa\_urgan, ifsa\_ergan, edat\_ifse\_01, edat\_ifse\_23, edat\_ifs\_9911, ilc\_peps05n)

eurostat 

Migration, Forced Displacement, and Human Development

<https://afghanistan.wilsoncenter.org/article/migration-forced-displacement-and-human-development>

#### 1. International Migrants At Mid-Year 2020

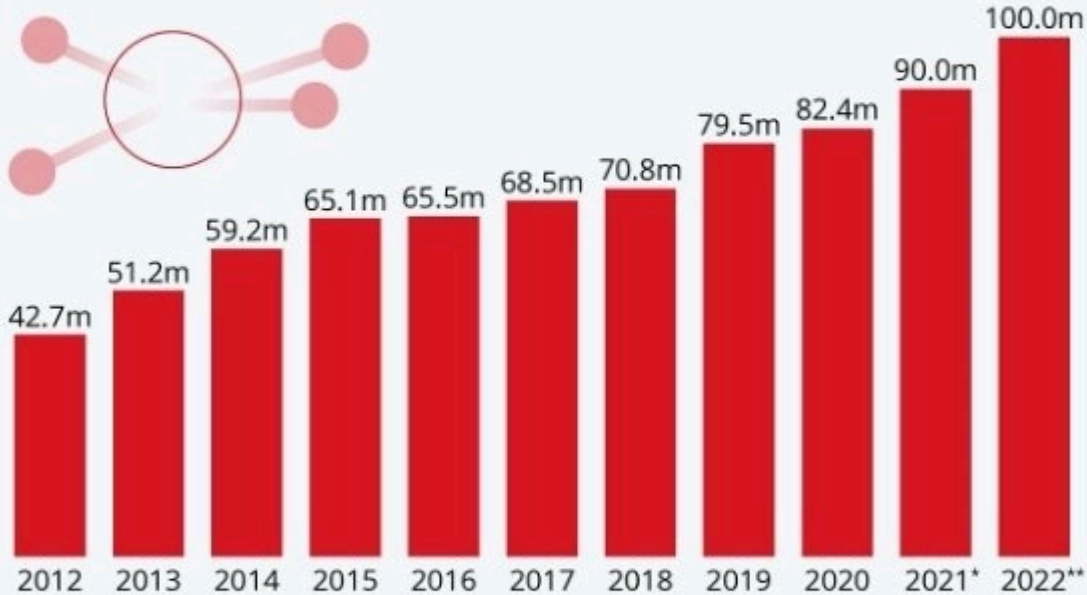


Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2020). *International Migrant Stock 2020*

## 2. Forced Migration Figures (2012-2022)

# Number of Forcibly Displaced People Reaches 100 Million

Number of forcibly displaced people worldwide by year



Internally displaced, refugees and asylum seekers.

\* preliminary figure \*\* preliminary figure as of May

Source: UNHCR



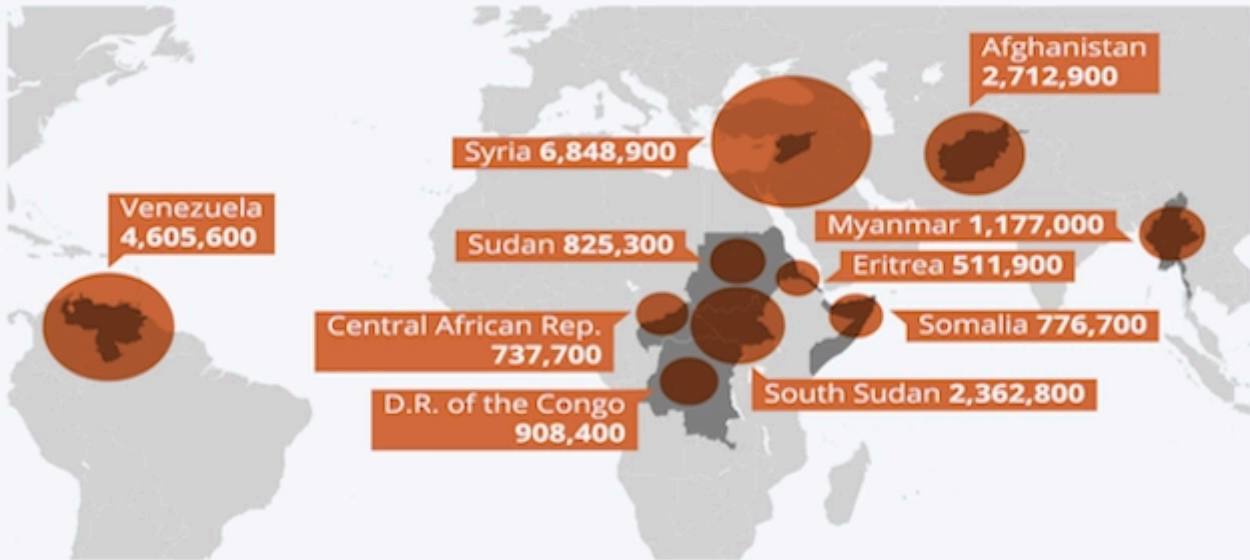
statista

Source: Armstrong, Martin. "Number of forcibly displaced people worldwide from 2000 to 2021." Statista. May 22, 2023.

### 3. World's Refugee Population

# Mapping The World's Refugee Population

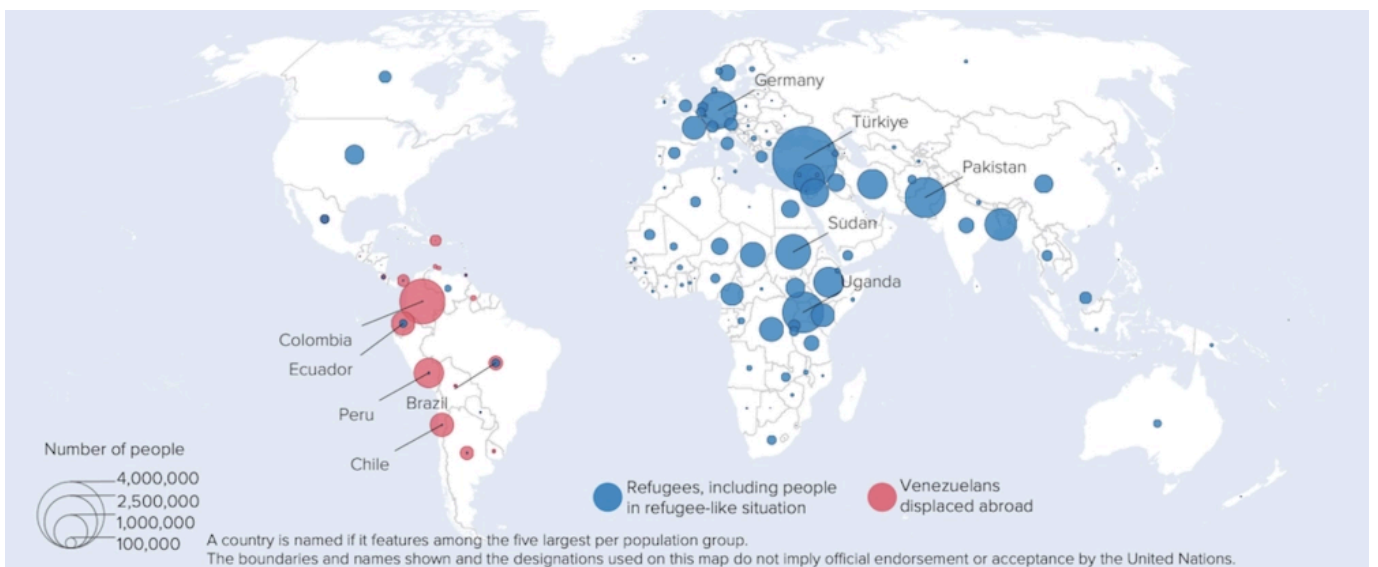
Top 10 origin countries of people displaced across borders at the end of 2021



Excludes asylum seekers abroad  
Source: UNHCR



## 4. Global Distribution of Refugees



Source: "Global Trends Report 2021." UNHCR, June 16, 2022.