



Annual Report on Refugee Resettlement in South Dakota FFY 2025

Introduction

This report provides an overview of information regarding refugee resettlement in South Dakota. Refugees are defined as individuals who are outside their country of origin and unable to return to their home country due to a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion. While all refugees are immigrants, not all immigrants are refugees. Immigrants choose to leave their homes and may come to the United States with temporary visas, allowing them to remain for a certain period of time or under certain conditions (such as students or tourists), or they may have permission to remain indefinitely as permanent residents of the United States. Refugees arrive with temporary residency and may apply for legal permanent residency after one year. After five years, legal permanent residents, including refugees who have adjusted status, may apply for United States citizenship. All refugees arrive eligible for employment incident to status.

The refugee resettlement program is administered at the federal level by multiple agencies with the primary being the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement and the U.S. State Department. Multiple levels of screening and vetting are completed before they are accepted into the country. The LSS role is to ensure that arrivals who have been approved receive the support to successfully integrate into their new community.

Description of Services Provided

At the request of the state, LSS assumed oversight of refugee resettlement in South Dakota in 2000. The primary goals for all services are self-sufficiency and community integration. To assist refugees in achieving those goals, the following services are provided:

- New Arrival Cultural Orientation & Education
- Case Management
- Youth Mentoring Services (15-25)
- English Language Training
- Immigration Legal Services
- Employment Services
- Services to Older Refugees (65+)
- Community Interpreter Services
- Refugee Cash Assistance
- Refugee Health Promotion

LSS greets new arrivals who are directly resettled in South Dakota at the airport and with the assistance of grant funding and donations, provides initial housing and basic needs. Through federal funding, refugees are eligible for up to twelve months of cash assistance to cover basic necessities until self-sufficiency is reached¹. To receive this support, employable adults must cooperate with an employment program and case manager, attend at least three hours a week of English language training, and attend cultural orientation.

¹ As of May 5, 2025 any new entrants will only be eligible for 4 months of Refugee Cash Assistance, however, as we have not had any new arrivals since that time, everyone in services currently is still on the 12 month schedule and will soon be finished if they are not already.

A 30-hour cultural orientation is provided to all new arrivals. Sometimes targeted booster orientations are offered to groups such as youth or seniors. Topics presented include laws in the United States, driver's license/insurance and registration information, rental agreements and tenants' rights, banking and finance, shopping, health care, parenting, immigration law, citizenship, K-12 education, and employment. Guest speakers from the community, include law enforcement, school district, health care and banking. Interpretation is provided in the relevant groups for each cohort. An exit exam is administered upon completion of orientation. Any individual who does not demonstrate proficiency receives one-to-one follow-up on topics they did not grasp from their case manager.

LSS case management and employment services are available to new arrivals for up to five years. All refugees are legally qualified for employment upon arrival. Employment services assist employable adults in finding their first job as well as job upgrades. Case management includes assisting new arrival refugees with benefits enrollment, K-12 school enrollment for children, English Language Training (ELT) enrollment for adults, obtaining various identity documents, public transit system navigation, assistance with finding initial housing and furnishing as well as understanding how to pay on rent and utilities, and assistance arranging medical appointments.

English language training is available three days and two evenings a week. Classes focus on oral competency level 1-4 and written proficiency level 1-5. Placement testing for level at entry is conducted by LSS staff as soon as possible after arrival in the United States, and clients are assigned to begin instruction at their appropriate level within the first two months in country.

LSS immigration attorneys and Department of Justice (DOJ) Accredited Representatives assist refugees who are pursuing permanent residency, work permits or United States citizenship through a fee based program, or various grants, when available. LSS Immigration legal services also assist refugees in filing petitions for their relatives, in getting replacement documents or other immigration legal processes, as needed.

Areas Receiving Refugees

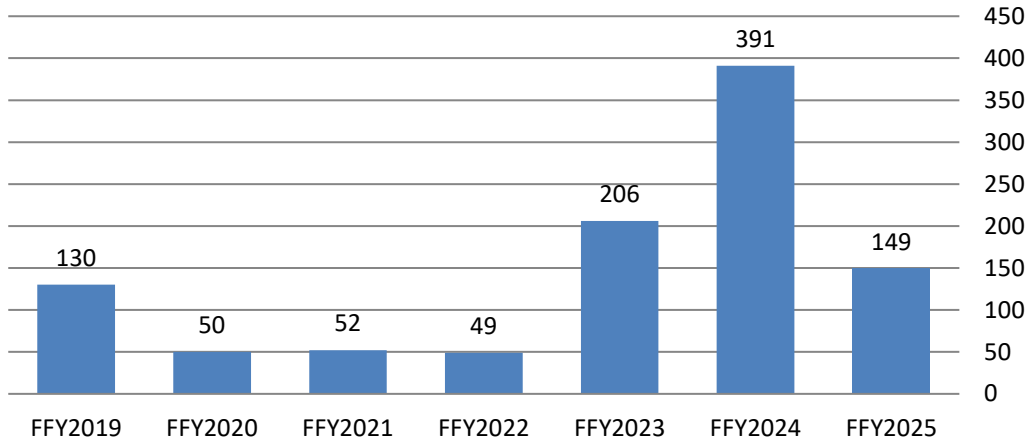
LSS receives direct arrivals in Sioux Falls. During federal fiscal year 2025, LSS also maintained a staff presence in Huron,² Rapid City and Yankton to support clients who arrived via secondary migration. Secondary migration refers to refugees who were initially resettled in other states and later chose to move to South Dakota due to job opportunities or to be closer to friends and family who are in the area. During the FY2025 federal fiscal year, the federal government discontinued counting the Ukrainians who arrived in the United States as part of Uniting for Ukraine as refugees. The federal government also halted both the United for Ukraine and Cuban Haitian Entrant parole programs in January 2025, so any new Ukrainian, Cuban or Haitian parolees who entered South Dakota did so as secondary migrants and most arrived in the USA in prior fiscal years.

Direct Resettlement Totals

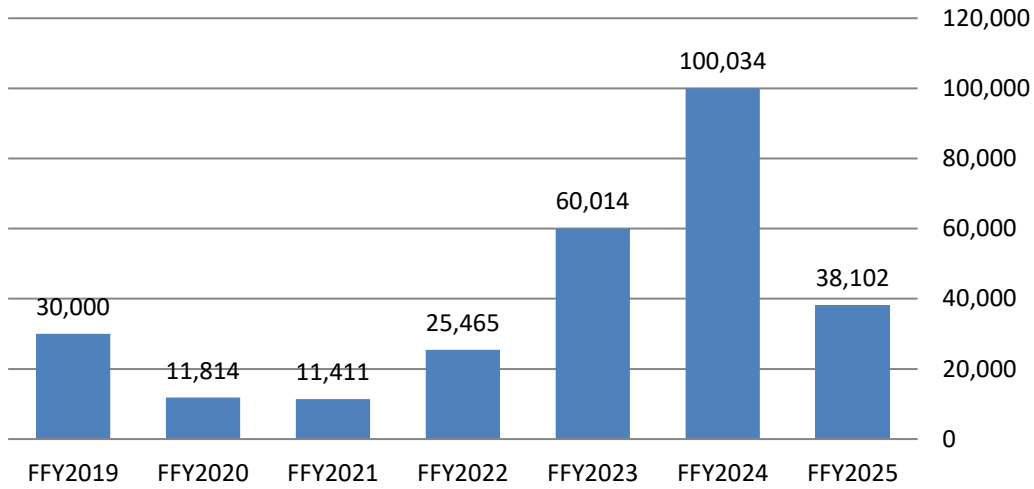
Data on individuals directly resettled in South Dakota during the past five federal fiscal years through the refugee resettlement program is included below. Data on South Dakota arrivals is based on LSS refugee arrival data. Data on national refugee arrivals is based on data available from the Refugee Reprocessing Center, which is operated by the U.S. State Department. "FFY" indicates the federal fiscal year. LSS of South Dakota provided direct resettlement services to 137 individuals; however, on the chart below you will notice that 149 individuals were directly re-settled into South Dakota, the five additional individuals arrived through WelcomeCorps or private sponsorship.

² Until March, when we had to reduce staffing and the Huron position was eliminated.
2025

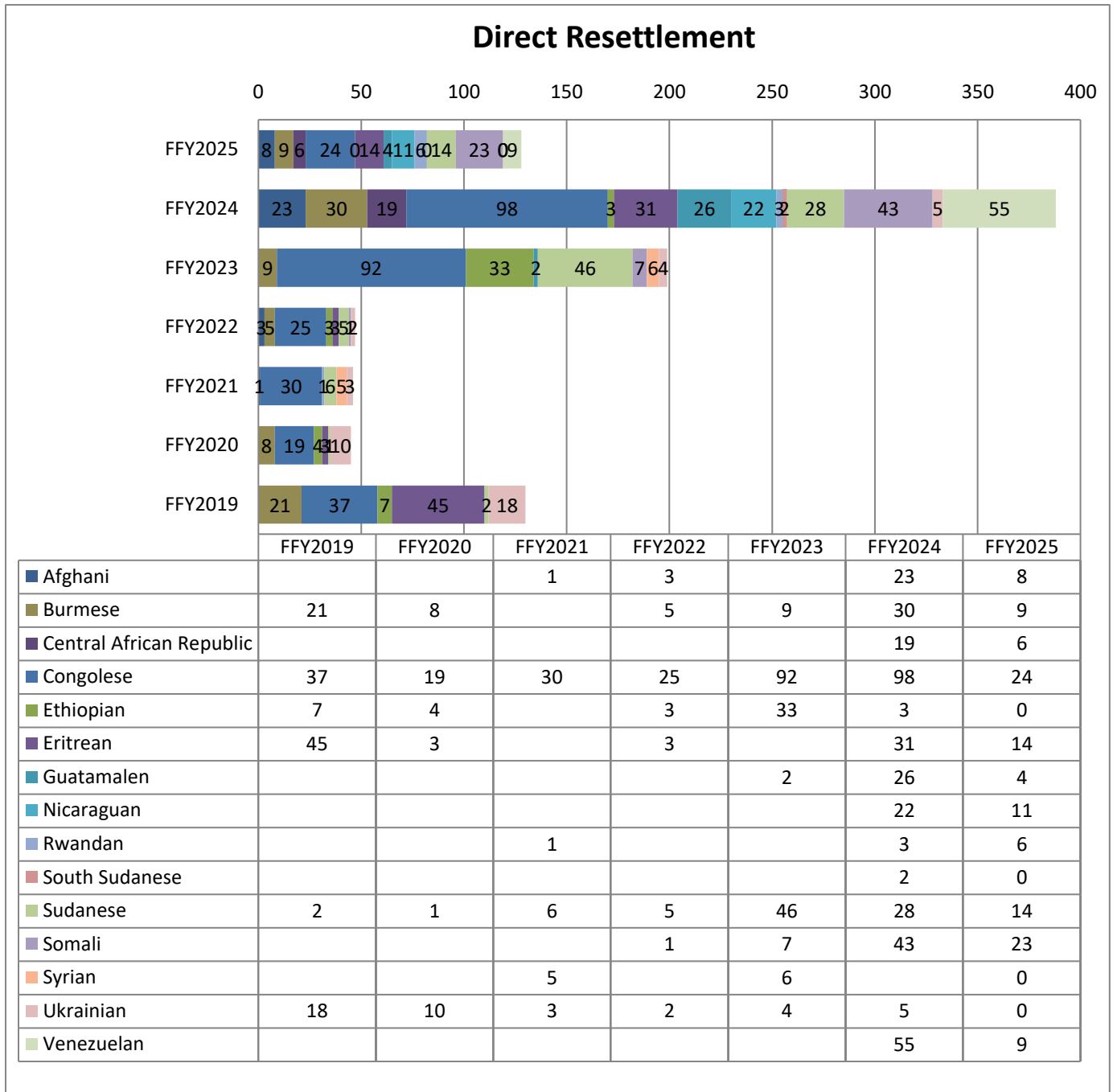
South Dakota



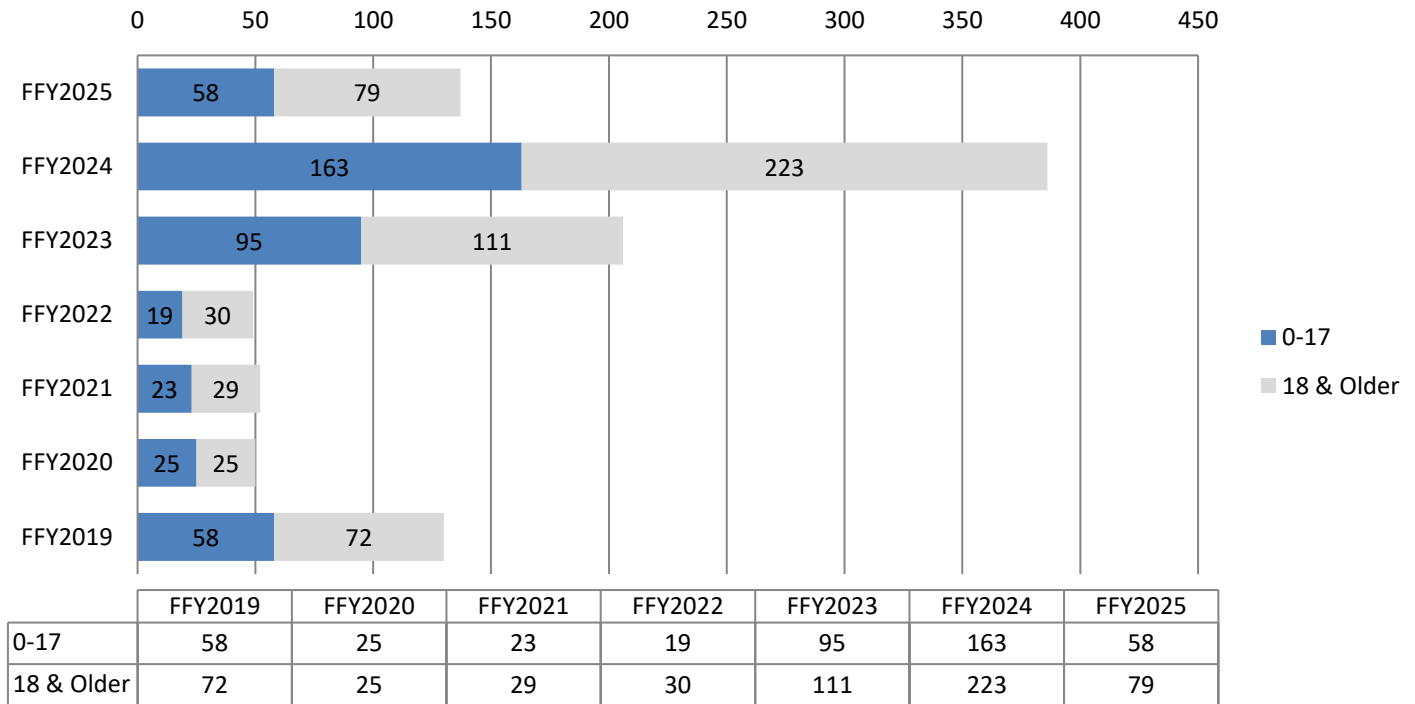
United States



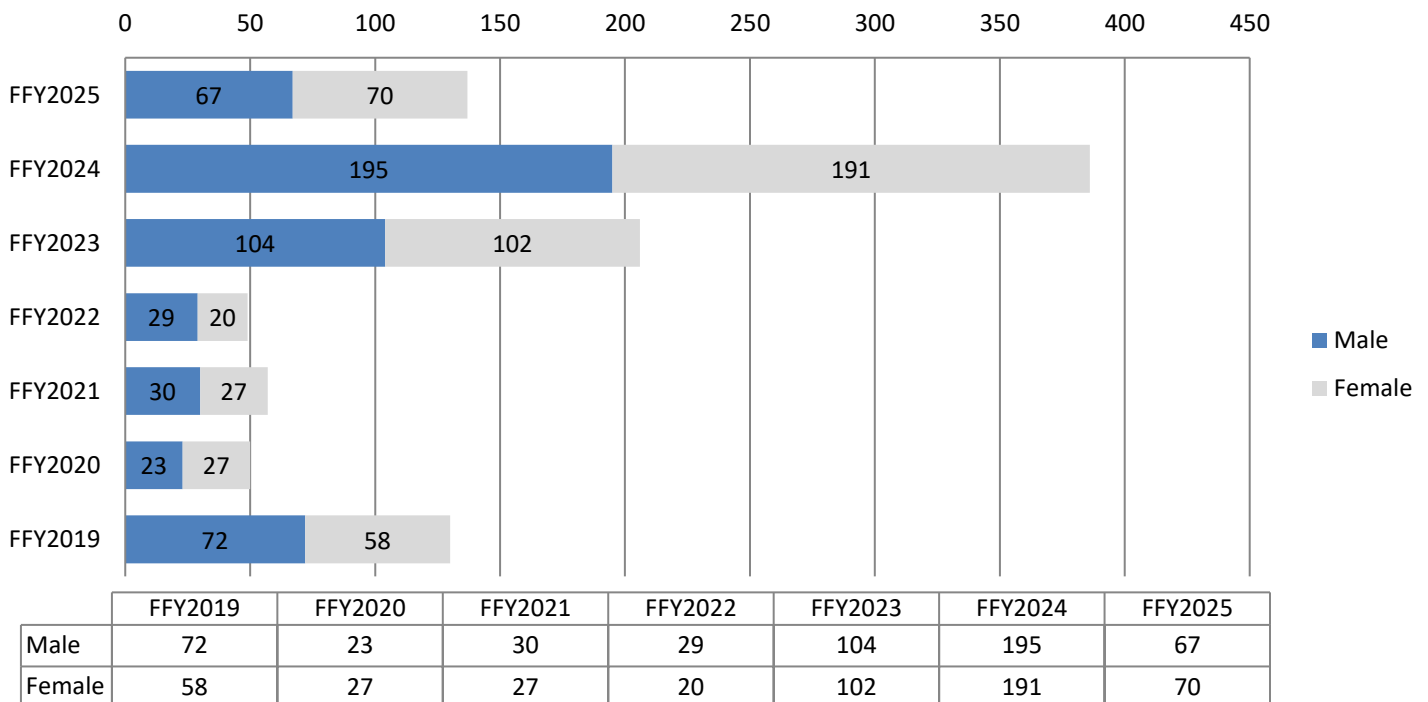
Demographic Overview



New Arrivals by Age



New Arrivals by Gender



Trends in Refugee Resettlement

In October of each year, the President of the United States makes a determination on the maximum number of refugees that will be accepted into the United States during the coming federal fiscal year. For FFY2025, that threshold was set at 125,000. For the FY2026 year the ceiling has been set at 7,500.

FFY	Presidential Determination	Actual Arrivals to the United States	Arrivals in SD
2016	85,000	84,994	439
2017	50,000	53,716	316
2018	45,000	22,491	209
2019	30,000	30,000	130
2020	18,000	11,814	50
2021	62,500	11,411	52
2022	125,000	25,465	49
2023	125,000	60,014	206
2024	125,000	100,034	391
2025	125,000	38,012	149