

December 8, 2023

Honorable Members of the SD Legislature
500 East Capitol Avenue
Pierre, S.D. 57501

Dear Members of the SD Legislature:

Attached is the annual report on refugee resettlement for federal fiscal year 2023.

Please contact me at Rebecca.Knudsen@lsssd.org or 605-444-7501 with any questions.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Kiesow-Knudsen
President and CEO
Lutheran Social Services of SD

CC: Members of the South Dakota Legislature
Governor Noem
John McCullough, Director of the SD Legislature Legislative Research Council



Annual Report on Refugee Resettlement in South Dakota FFY 2023

Introduction

This report provides an overview of information regarding refugee resettlement in South Dakota. Refugees are defined as individuals who are unable to return to their home country due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality and 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 U.S. 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 allowing them to remain indefinitely. Refugees arrive with temporary residency and may apply for legal permanent residency after one year. After five years, legal permanent residents may apply for U.S. citizenship. All refugees arrive eligible for employment.

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 via in person and/or video technology.

- Community Orientation & Education
- Case Management
- Employment Services
- Services to Older Refugees (60+)
- English Language Training
- Immigration Services
- Interpreter Services

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

A 36-hour community orientation is provided to all new arrivals as well as community members who are interested in participating. Topics presented include laws in the U.S., driver's license information, rental agreements, shopping, health care, parenting, immigration, citizenship, education and employment. Guest speakers from the community, including law enforcement, are invited to participate. Interpretation is provided. A proficiency exam is administered upon completion of orientation. Any individual who does not demonstrate proficiency receives one-to-one follow-up 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.

English language training is available four days and two evenings a week. Classes focus on oral and written English skills. LSS immigration attorneys assist refugees who are pursuing permanent residency or U.S. citizenship.

Areas Receiving Refugees

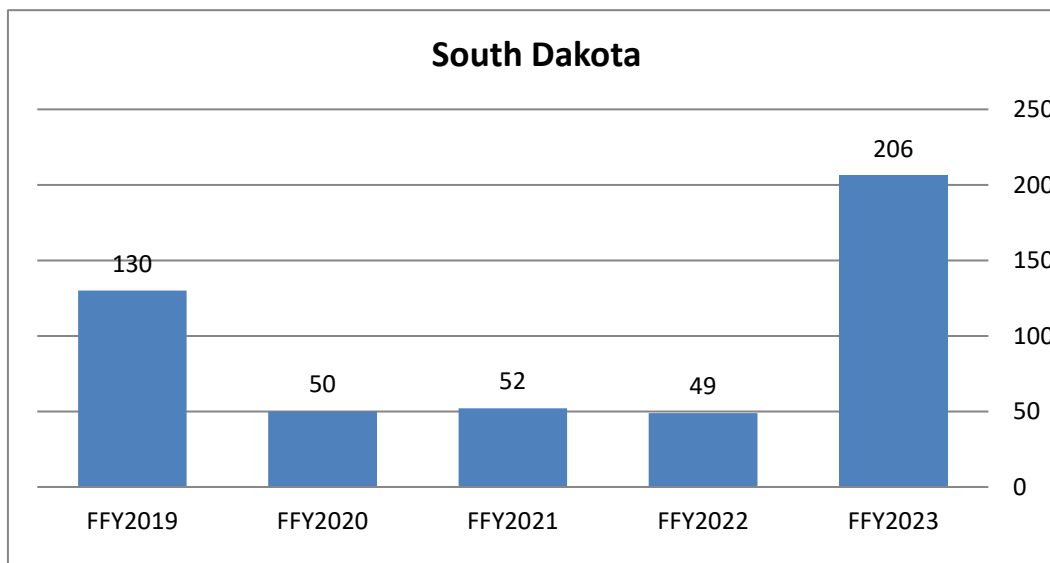
LSS receives direct arrivals in Sioux Falls. During federal fiscal year 2023, LSS also maintained a staff presence in Huron, Rapid City and Yankton to support clients who arrived via secondary migration or through the Uniting for Ukraine program (U4U) (see note below). Secondary migration refers to refugees who were initially resettled in other states and later chose to move to South Dakota. In the past year, entrants to Yankton were predominantly of Cuban/Haitian descent who traveled to the area to join a US Tie or for employment.

Uniting for Ukraine

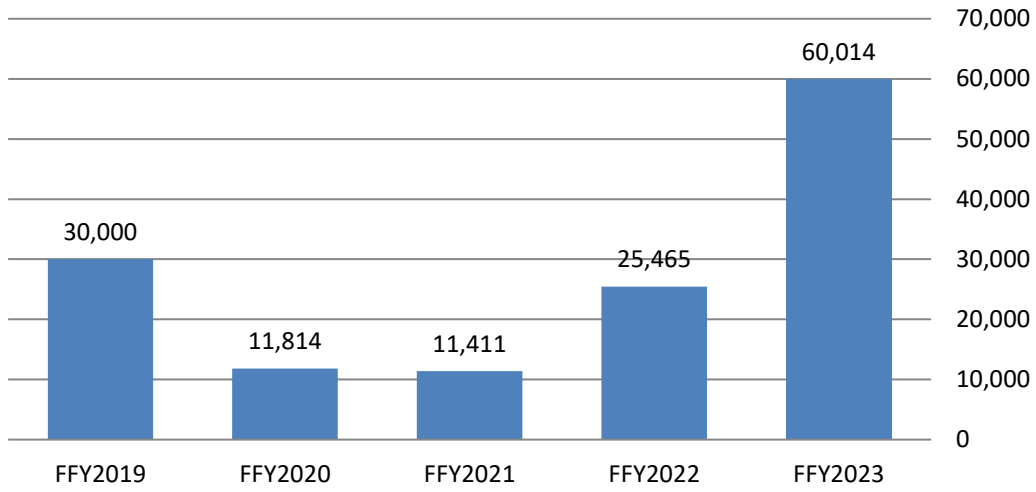
LSS worked with a total of 143 cases totaling 268 Ukrainians in FFY2023 via the United for Ukraine (U4U) program, which was sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services. Individuals arriving via the U4U program are eligible for refugee benefits upon arrival and for a period of up to two years. Congress has not yet offered a legal pathway to permanent residency. Also, data on the Ukraine program is not included in the tables below as it is a separate federal program. While LSS provides support to Ukrainian arrivals, the program is not administered centrally like the refugee resettlement program. Ukrainians must secure the support of local sponsors in order to be resettled in South Dakota.

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.

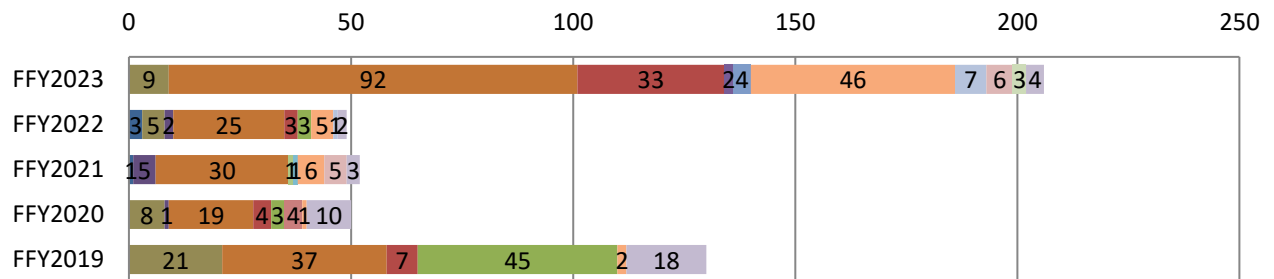


United States



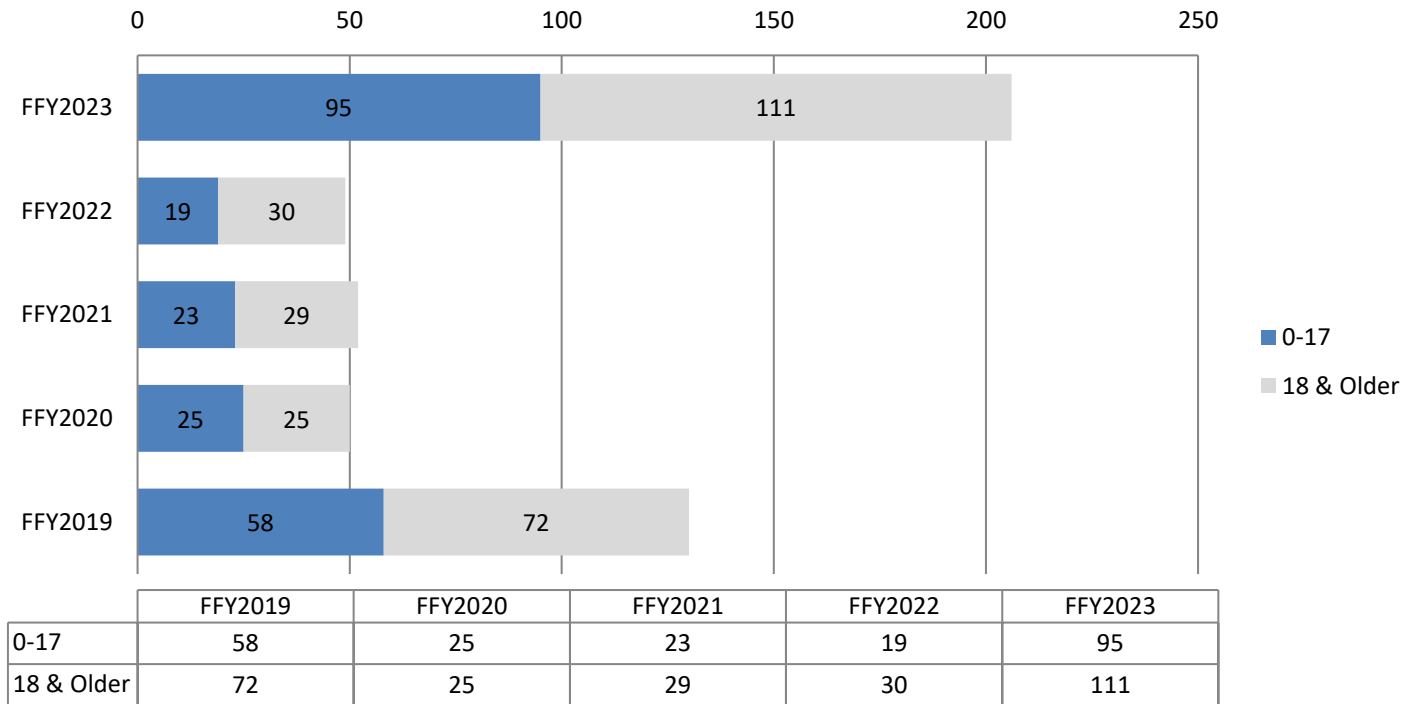
Demographic Overview

Direct Resettlement

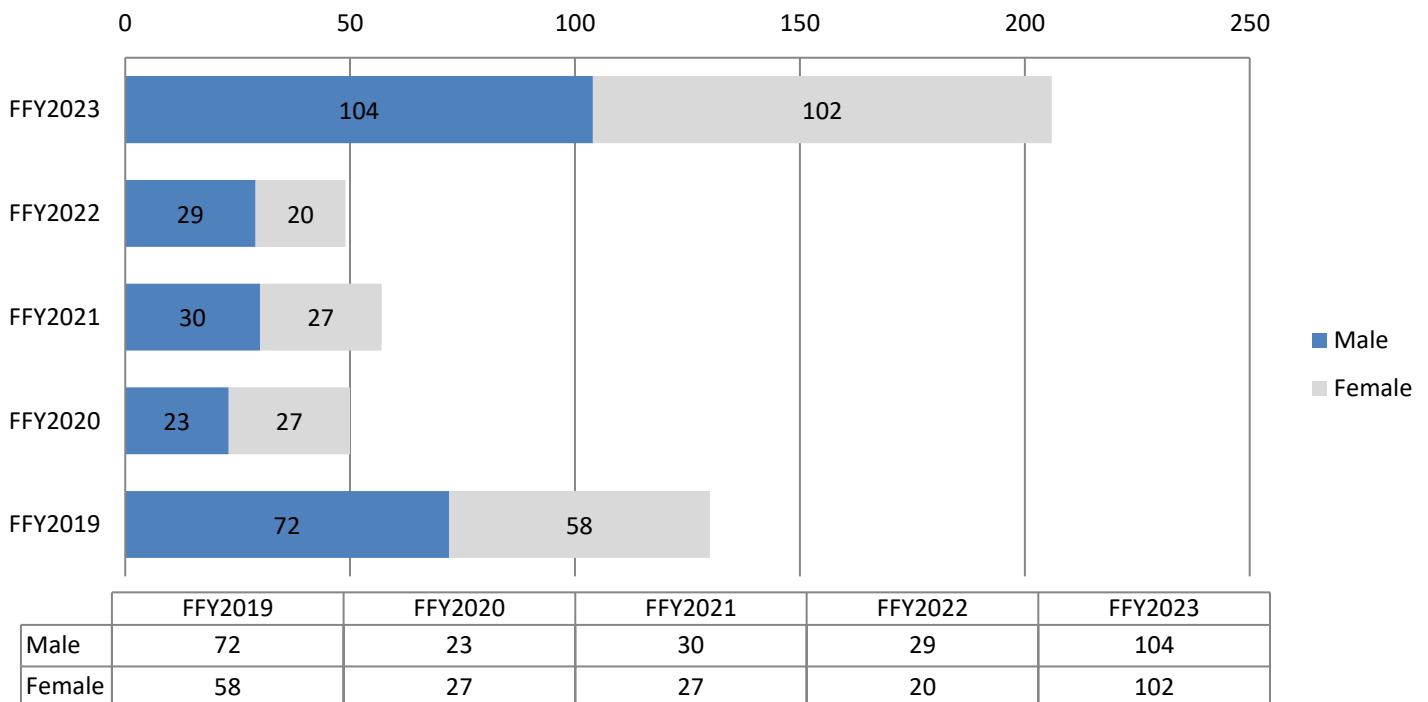


	FFY2019	FFY2020	FFY2021	FFY2022	FFY2023
Afghani			1	3	
Bhutanese					
Burmese	21	8		5	9
Burundi		1	5	2	
Chadean					
Congolese	37	19	30	25	92
El Salvadoran					
Ethiopian	7	4		3	33
Eritrean	45	3		3	
Guatamalen					2
Iranian					
Iraqi					
Lebanese					4
Liberian		4			
Nepali			1		
Pakistani					
Rwandan			1		
Sudanese	2	1	6	5	46
Somali				1	7
Syrian			5		6
Vietnam					3
Ukrainian	18	10	3	2	4

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 FFY2024, that threshold was set at 125,000.

FFY	Presidential Determination	Actual Arrivals to the U.S.	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		