



# Ukraine Refugee Crisis

Last Updated August 25, 2022

## BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

Since February 24, 2022, the UNHCR has reported more than 12 million Ukrainians fleeing the military invasion by Russian forces. This is the largest mass migration in Europe since World War II. The majority of refugees fleeing Ukraine are women and children due to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's order for men ages 18-60 to help in combat. As of August 17, 2022 it is reported that more than 6.5 million have been settled across Europe while 7 million are thought to be displaced within Ukraine.<sup>1</sup>

The majority of refugees have fled to other European countries. While 1.27 million refugees remain in Poland, many who initially crossed here have moved further west in Europe. As of August 17, 2022 the countries receiving the largest number of Ukrainians include Russia with 2.19 million (mostly from the separatist Donetsk region), Poland, Germany (971,000) and Czech Republic (413,000).<sup>2</sup>

In March 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur expressed concern about reports of racist threats and discrimination against non-White people who are fleeing violence. Black Africans, people from India and Pakistan, and people of Middle Eastern descent have reported being pushed back in lines at the border, being denied access to bomb shelters, and being refused at shelters or other temporary accommodations.<sup>3</sup> The UN, the International Organization for Migration, and U.S. leaders have all called for humane treatment and access to protection for all who are fleeing, including third-country nationals.<sup>4</sup>

## RELIEF FOR UKRAINIANS CURRENTLY IN THE US

On March 3, 2022 the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced [Temporary Protected Status \(TPS\)](#) for Ukrainian nationals and those who last resided in Ukraine and the registration period opened on April 19. TPS is available for Ukrainians who have resided in the US since at least April 11, 2022. TPS applicants undergo background checks and receive work authorization. TPS for Ukraine has been designated for a period of 18 months, though this period can be extended by the administration. An estimated 800 of the 28,000 Ukrainians who may be eligible for TPS are here in Massachusetts.<sup>5</sup> As of March 4, 2022, deportations to Ukraine have been suspended. In addition, DHS announced a number of measures to create more flexibility in immigration services for Ukrainians, including flexibility around requests for extension of status and off-campus employment for international students.<sup>6</sup>

## UNITING FOR UKRAINE

In late March 2022, President Biden announced that the U.S. would welcome up to 100,000 Ukrainians and others fleeing the Russian invasion. In April 2022, the administration announced the [Uniting for Ukraine](#) program, through which Ukrainians with a financial sponsor in the U.S. can apply for humanitarian parole to enter the country. Individuals arriving through this program will generally be granted humanitarian parole status for up to two years. As of July 29, 2022, more than 92,000 applications from U.S. individuals looking to sponsor Ukrainians had been received. More than 62,000 Ukrainians have been granted permission to travel, though not all have yet arrived.<sup>7</sup> As of the end of July, more than 100,000 Ukrainians had already arrived in the U.S., including through the Uniting for Ukraine program, but the Biden Administration has made clear that the 100,000 figure was not intended as a cap and Ukrainians will continue to be welcomed.<sup>8</sup> Data on Ukrainian arrivals to Massachusetts is not yet available, but we estimate several hundred recently arrived Ukrainians have settled in Massachusetts.

1 <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/ukraine-humanitarian-crisis-refugees-aid>

2 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

3 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=28194&LangID=E>

4 <https://www.voanews.com/a/un-agency-calls-for-end-to-discrimination-against-third-country-nationals-fleeing-ukraine/6472312.htm>

5 <https://cmsny.org/tps-ukraine-022522/>

6 <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/alerts/immigration-help-available-to-those-affected-by-special-situations-including-the-invasion-of-ukraine>

## BENEFITS ELIGIBILITY

Ukrainians who have been granted humanitarian parole - whether through the Uniting for Ukraine program or after seeking protection at the border - qualify for many of the same benefits as individuals who have been resettled to the U.S. as refugees. This includes access to healthcare benefits (MassHealth in Massachusetts), food stamps, and cash assistance if otherwise eligible.<sup>9</sup>

## REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Before refugees can be resettled in the United States, they must register with the U.N. and begin the process with local authorities. Specific resettlement efforts to the U.S. in response to the current crisis are not yet known, though we can expect arrivals from a limited number of Ukrainian refugees who were on the path to resettlement prior to the most recent events.

For the current fiscal year (ending September 30, 2022), the number of refugees that can be resettled in the U.S. from Europe is capped at 10,000. The Biden Administration could increase this quota for Ukrainians and other nationals fleeing invaded areas. The Biden Administration could also give authorization for travel to the U.S. and allow for issuance of humanitarian parole once here, similar to the process undertaken for the evacuation of Afghans this past year, and expedite the processing and entry of those with pending refugee or family based petitions. As of the end of July, 1,126 Ukrainian refugees had been resettled to the U.S., including 33 to Massachusetts.<sup>10</sup>

Several thousands of Ukrainians have also arrived at our southern border seeking protection. At least 200 Ukrainians who sought protection at our borders have since settled in Massachusetts. To guarantee that Ukrainians and all other asylum seekers are afforded their right to ask for protection at our border, we must end harmful policies that turn away those who would qualify for protection and leave them vulnerable to danger in Mexico or their home countries.

## How To Help

There are many community efforts underway in Greater Boston and Western Massachusetts, and other areas of the state to help support Ukraine. The Boston Globe is maintaining a list of different charities, actions, and initiatives [HERE](#).

The [Center Makor](#) is coordinating opportunities to volunteer to host a Ukrainian family.

Refugee resettlement agencies in Massachusetts are also providing some assistance to Ukrainian arrivals, though they generally do not have refugee status or qualify for refugee benefits. In addition, refugees from Afghanistan, Haiti and other countries are already in our communities. Monetary and in-kind donations and volunteering are very helpful ways to support important resettlement efforts in our communities. Learn more at the links below about volunteering and other services:

[Ascentria Care Alliance](#)

[Catholic Charities Boston](#)

[International Institute of New England](#)

[Jewish Family Services MetroWest](#)

[Jewish Family Services of Western Mass](#)

[Refugee Immigrant and Assistance Center](#)

7 <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/08/04/opinion/us-must-open-its-doors-more-ukrainian-refugees/>

8 <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-admits-100000-ukrainians-in-5-months-fulfilling-biden-pledge/>

9 <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/fact-sheet/benefits-ukrainian-humanitarian-parolees>

10 <https://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/>