
REFUGEES, ASYLEES, FISCAL YEAR 2000

This report will appear as chapters in the forthcoming *2000 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*. All references to Appendixes, Charts, Tables, and other sections of the *Statistical Yearbook*, as well as detailed table numbers, appear as they will in the final *Yearbook* edition.

II. REFUGEES

This section presents information on persons who are admitted to the United States because of persecution abroad, including the number and characteristics of persons applying, approved, arriving, and adjusting to lawful permanent resident status.

A *refugee is an alien outside the United States who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution.* (See Appendix 2, p. A.2-11.)

This definition of refugee is set forth in 101(a)(42) of the Immigration and Nationality (INA) Act, as amended by the Refugee Act of 1980. It conforms to the international definition of refugee found in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. In addition, the INA allows the President to designate certain nationalities who may be processed for refugee status within their homelands.

U.S. Refugee Program

The United States has resettled refugees for more than 50 years. The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 brought 400,000 Eastern Europeans to the United States. Between 1953-56, the Refugee Relief Act resulted in more than 200,000 arrivals from what were then “Iron Curtain” countries. These early programs relied on immigrant visa channels to bring refugees to the United States. Beginning with the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, however, U.S. refugee programs began to rely increasingly on the Attorney General’s parole authority, culminating in the parole of several hundred thousand Indochinese following the fall of South Vietnam in 1975. It was not until the enactment of the Refugee Act of 1980 that refugees entered the United States in a statutory status.

Chart C depicts initial refugee admissions and adjustments to lawful permanent resident (LPR) status for the period 1946-2000. Under the INA, refugees may apply for LPR status one year after arrival in the United States. This graph demonstrates the time lag between initial admission and adjustment to immigrant status. At the onset of parole programs there generally were no mechanisms for adjustment to permanent status, thus creating a recurring need for special legislation. The Refugee Act of 1980 addressed this situation by including an adjustment

provision. Some refugees do not apply for adjustment for several years and some refugees never apply.

Admission ceilings

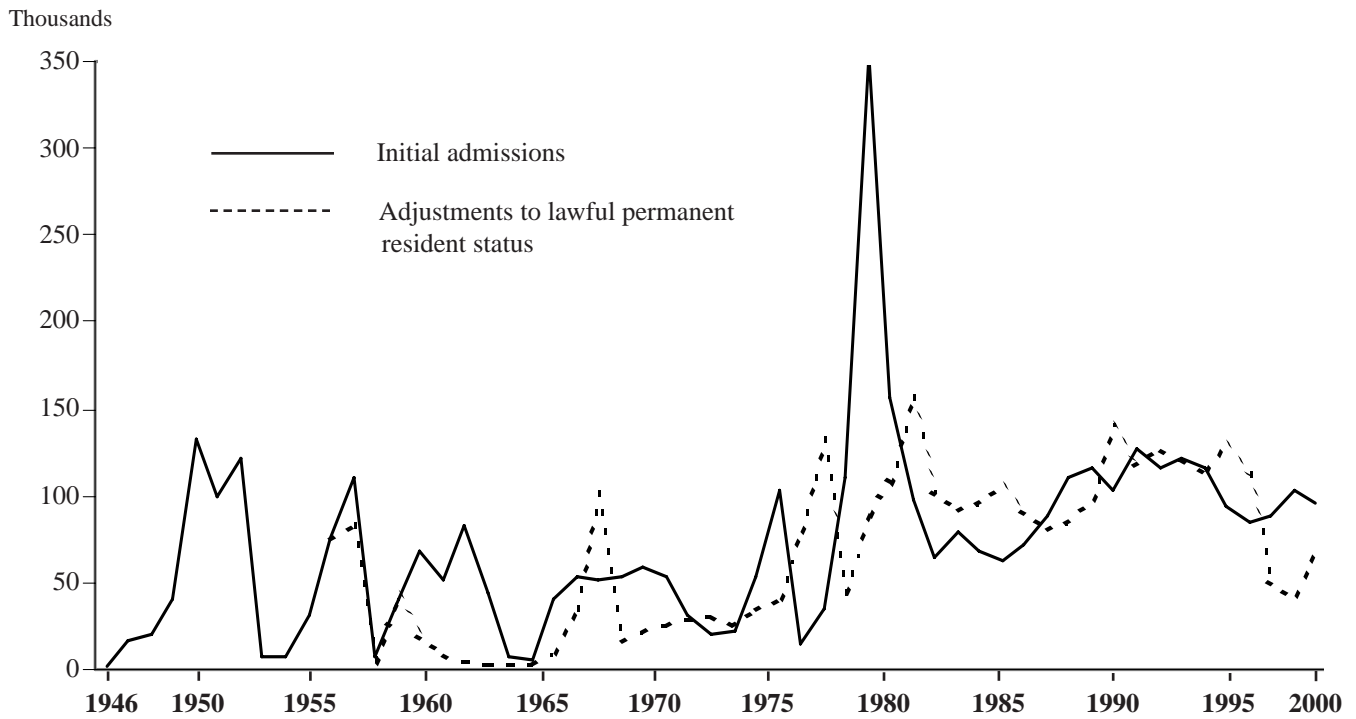
At the beginning of each fiscal year, the President, after consultation with the Congress, sets a worldwide refugee admissions ceiling. During the year, changes in the need for resettlement may require an increase in this overall limit on refugee admissions or a reallocation of the geographic or regional subceilings within the worldwide ceiling. For fiscal year 2000, the admissions subceilings were adjusted as follows:

Geographic region of origin	Initial ceiling	Final ceiling
Total	90,000	90,000
Africa	18,000	18,000
East Asia	8,000	8,000
Europe	47,000	44,500
Latin America / Caribbean	3,000	3,500
Near East / South Asia	8,000	10,000
Unallocated, funded	6,000	6,000

The authorized ceiling was decreased from 91,000 in 1999 to 90,000 in 2000. An unallocated and unfunded reserve of 6,000 admissions numbers was placed in the 2000 ceiling to be used if needed and if funding to support these admissions could be found within existing Department of State and Health and Human Services appropriations.

The regional subceiling for East Asia includes certain Vietnamese Amerasians, who enter the United States with immigrant visas. Although these aliens are immigrants rather than refugees, they are included in the refugee ceiling since they are eligible for refugee benefits in the United States. Only 1,004 Amerasians, including their family members, entered the United States in 2000. They are included in the immigrant rather than the refugee

Chart C
Refugee and Asylee Initial Admissions and Adjustments to Lawful Permanent Resident Status: Fiscal Years 1946-2000



Major refugee programs

1949-53	Displaced Persons Act	1978-84	Indochinese Refugee Adjustment Act	3/75-3/80	Indochinese refugees paroled
1954-57	Refugee Relief Act	2/70-3/80	Refugee-Parolees admitted	1980	Refugee-Parolee adjustments began
11/56-7/58	Hungarians paroled	1/59-3/80	Cubans paroled	4/80	Refugee Act admissions began
1959	Hungarian adjustments began	1967	Cuban adjustments began	1981	Refugee Act adjustments began
1966-80	Refugee conditional entrants			4/80-10/80	Marinel boatlift
				1985-87	Marinel adjustments

NOTE: For the period 1946-56, admissions to lawful permanent resident status and initial admissions were the same. See Glossary for fiscal year definitions. Source: Tables 23, 24, 27, and 32.

tables in the *INS Statistical Yearbook*. The admissions under the Amerasian program are declining, since most of the eligible persons have already been identified and entered the United States.

Criteria for refugee status

During 2000, refugees were interviewed and approved for admission to the United States by officers from 15 of the Service's 39 overseas offices. To qualify for admission to the United States as a refugee, each applicant must meet all of the following criteria: be a refugee as set forth in section 101(a)(42) of the INA; be of special humanitarian concern to the United States; be admissible under the INA; and not be firmly resettled in any foreign country. Spouses and minor children of qualifying refugees derive status and

also enter the United States as refugees, either accompanying or following to join the principal refugee. Occasionally, family members arrive in the United States as nonimmigrants independently of the principal refugee's admission. In such cases, they are processed for derivative refugee status without leaving the country. This was the case with 75 people in 2000.

Special program for applicants from the former Soviet Union

Beginning in 1990, the administrative processing of refugee applicants residing in the former Soviet Union was shifted to the United States. Applicants from the former Soviet Union have been required to submit an initial questionnaire to the State Department's

Table B
Refugee-Status Applications Filed and Approved, and Refugees Admitted, by Selected Nationality: Fiscal Year 2000

Nationality	Refugee applications filed	Refugee applications approved	Refugee arrivals
All nationalities	91,854	66,546	72,143
Bosnia-Herzegovina	28,344	19,466	19,033
Soviet Union ¹	14,530	9,934	14,903
Cuba	9,079	2,845	3,184
Somalia	7,354	5,700	6,026
Iran	6,084	5,437	5,145
Sudan	4,853	4,056	3,833
Liberia	4,326	4,242	2,620
Iraq	4,152	3,155	3,158
Sierra Leone	2,659	2,275	1,128
Afghanistan	2,116	1,561	1,709
Croatia	2,061	2,663	2,995
Ethiopia	1,608	1,221	1,347
Congo, Democratic Republic	1,447	1,519	1,354
Burma	998	880	637
Togo	535	278	511
Other	1,708	1,314	4,560

¹ Includes the republics of the former Soviet Union. In fiscal year 2000 the INS did not capture data on filings and approvals for the individual republics of the former Soviet Union. Instead the Washington Processing Center aggregated the data for all the republics.
Source: Tables 22 and 24.

Washington Processing Center (WPC) in Rosslyn, Virginia. The WPC established interview eligibility based on information supplied on the initial questionnaires and scheduled interviews in Moscow. On the day of their interview, applicants submitted completed refugee applications to INS officers in Moscow. Since 1990, those applications were counted as filed on the interview date. Fiscal year 2000 is the last year for this process; the processing of applicants is returned to the Moscow office effective in 2001.

Data Overview

Applications (Tables B, 21-22)

The number of applications for refugee status filed with the INS decreased from 1999 (111,576) to 2000 (91,854) (Table 21). The leading countries of chargeability of the applicants were Bosnia-Herzegovina with 31 percent of the applications, the former Soviet Union (16 percent), Cuba (10), Somalia (8), Iran (7), and Sudan (5) (Table B and Table 22). Among those countries of chargeability from

which at least 1,000 applications were filed in 2000, the largest percentage increases over 1999 were in applications filed by nationals from Sierra Leone (227 percent), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (217), Afghanistan (203), Iran (65), Sudan (49), and Iraq (43). The countries of chargeability with the largest percentage decreases were in applications filed by nationals of Yugoslavia (principally Kosovars, -98 percent), Nigeria (-90), and Togo (-29). Overall, among the five geographic regions of chargeability from which applications for refugee status were filed in 2000, applications filed by nationals from the Near East/South Asia, Latin America/Caribbean, and Africa increased 69, 20, and 19 percent, respectively, while those filed by nationals from the East Asia and Europe geographic regions decreased about 88 and 32 percent, respectively, over 1999.

Approvals (Tables B, 21-23)

The total number of refugees approved for admission to the United States was 22 percent lower in 2000 (66,546) than

in 1999 (85,592) (Table 23). Bosnia-Herzegovina continued as the leading country for approvals despite a 21 percent decline from 1999. The other leading countries or regions were the republics of the former Soviet Union, Somalia, Iran, Liberia, and Sudan. These countries plus Iraq, Cuba, Croatia, and Sierra Leone account for 90 percent of all refugee approvals in fiscal year 2000 (Table 22).

Countries with more than 1,000 approvals which had large increases in approvals in fiscal year 2000 include the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2,878 percent increase), Sierra Leone (259), Afghanistan (166), Iran (141), Croatia (119), and Liberia (100). Several countries with more than 600 approvals in fiscal year 1999 had significant decreases in fiscal year 2000: Yugoslavia (-98 percent), Nigeria (-94), Ethiopia (-53), and Togo (-56).

All Vietnamese refugee processing centers outside Vietnam were closed at the end of 1997. Residents of former refugee camps were asked to return to Vietnam. Their cases are processed through a special program called the Resettlement Opportunity for Vietnamese Returnees (ROVR) in Vietnam. The number of cases approved by the ROVR program in 2000 is not available.

Dependents

Refugee statistics include spouses and children who are cleared to join principal refugees already in the United States, and they count against the annual ceiling. Overall, 1.9 percent of the applications and 2.1 percent of the approvals were family reunification cases. Just five countries/regions account for 75 percent of the applications and 79 percent of the approvals: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq, Somalia, the former Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia.

Arrivals (Tables B, 23-24)

Refugee arrivals into the United States decreased from 85,076 in 1999 to 72,143 in 2000 (Tables B, 23, and 24). This decrease was largely due to the decreases in refugee arrivals from Yugoslavia and Vietnam. The leading countries for refugee arrivals in 2000 were Bosnia-Herzegovina (19,033), the former Soviet Union (14,903), Somalia (6,026), Iran (5,145), Sudan (3,833), Cuba (3,184), and Iraq (3,158)—comprising 77 percent of the total. The time lag between approval of a refugee application and the refugee's arrival in the United States may be several months or more. After approval, refugees

More than 72,000 refugees arrived in the United States during 2000.

must undergo health and security clearances, have sponsorship and placement arranged, and in some cases go through orientation and English language training. This time lag accounts for the discrepancies between approval and arrival figures in any given year. Several thousand of the fiscal year 2000 arrivals were approved for refugee status in fiscal year 1999.

Understanding the Data

Data Collection

The Immigration and Naturalization Service collects data on refugees at three points during processing: when they apply for refugee status abroad; when they are admitted to the United States; and when they adjust to lawful permanent resident status. The INS overseas offices collect data on applicants for refugee status. Each office completes INS Form G-319, *Report of Applicants for Refugee Status under Section 207*, which reports refugee casework by the country to which each applicant is chargeable.

Both the Bureau for Refugee Programs (Department of State) and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (Department of Health and Human Services) collect data on refugees admitted to the United States. The Bureau for Refugee Programs collects data through the Intergovernmental Organization for Migration, which is a nongovernmental organization that arranges the transportation of refugees to the United States. The Office of Refugee Resettlement, responsible for the disbursement of funds for refugee benefits, collects detailed data on the characteristics of refugees at the time they are initially admitted to the United States.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service collects data on refugees adjusting to lawful permanent resident status as part of its immigrant data series gathered by the Computer Linked Application Information Management Systems (CLAIMS). The data collected include demographic variables as well as immigration-oriented variables (see Immigrants section). This is the only stage in the refugee process where the INS collects detailed information about the characteristics of refugees.

Limitations of Data

After careful consideration of the reporting requirements and limitations of data collected by the INS, it was decided that the *INS Statistical Yearbook* would present refugee arrival statistics from the Bureau for Refugee Programs, Department of State. This source counts the actual number of refugees arriving in the United States in each fiscal year. Comparison of refugee arrival data from editions of the *Yearbook* prior to 1996 with the present

edition must be made with caution. From 1987 to 1995 refugee arrival data presented in the *Yearbook* were derived from the INS's Nonimmigrant Information System (NIIS). This system compiled refugee arrival data by country of citizenship on a monthly basis from INS Form I-94, *Arrival/Departure Record* (see Nonimmigrants section). However, since this system records each entry of a person with nonimmigrant status, a refugee traveling abroad and returning to the United States may be counted more than once during a fiscal year.

Refugee detailed tables are located at the end of the Asylees text section.

III. ASYLEES

This section presents information on persons who come to the United States to seek asylum from persecution abroad, including the number and characteristics of persons who filed, were granted asylum, and adjusted to lawful permanent resident status.

An asylee is an alien in the United States who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. (See Appendix 2, p. A.2-2.) An asylee must meet the same criteria as a refugee; the only difference is the location of the person upon application—the potential asylee is in the United States or applying for admission at a port of entry, and the potential refugee is outside the United States. The Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended by the Refugee Act of 1980, regulates U.S. asylum policy as well as governing refugee procedures. The Act, for the first time, established a statutory basis for granting asylum in the United States consistent with the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

U.S. Asylum Program

Filing of claims

Any alien physically present in the United States or at a port of entry may request asylum in the United States. According to the Refugee Act, current immigration status, whether legal or illegal, is not relevant to an applicant's asylum claim. Aliens may apply for asylum in one of two ways: with an INS asylum officer; or, if apprehended, with an immigration judge as part of a removal hearing. Traditionally, aliens who appeared at ports of entry without proper documents and requested asylum were referred for exclusion hearings; however, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996 made major revisions to the procedure, effective on April 1, 1997. Under the new law, such aliens are referred to asylum officers for credible fear interviews. These interviews are not formal asylum hearings. The purpose of the interviews is to determine whether aliens have credible fear of persecution or torture and are thus eligible to apply for asylum or withholding of removal before an immigration judge. In credible fear interviews, aliens only need to show that there is a significant possibility that they might establish eligibility for asylum. To be granted asylum, aliens must show they have been persecuted in the

past or have a well-founded fear of persecution. An alien may request that an immigration judge review a negative determination by the INS on a credible fear claim. The data reported in this section pertain only to asylum cases filed with INS asylum officers. Aliens denied asylum by the INS may renew asylum claims with an immigration judge once they are in removal proceedings.

Adjudication of claims

On April 2, 1991, the Asylum Officer Corps (AOC) assumed responsibility within the INS for the adjudication of asylum claims that were filed with the INS. Before that date, such claims had been heard by examiners in INS district offices. During fiscal year 2000, asylum officers worked from eight sites in the United States—Arlington, VA, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, Newark, NJ, and San Francisco. Applicants who did not live near these locations were interviewed by asylum officers who traveled to other INS offices.

In March 1994, the INS published proposed regulations designed to streamline the asylum decision process, discourage the filing of frivolous claims, and in cases of claims that do not appear to meet the standards for granting asylum, integrate the work of asylum officers with the work of the immigration judges in the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), an independent Justice Department agency. The final asylum reform regulations were published in December 1994, and took effect on January 4, 1995.

Under asylum reform, the INS standard is to conduct the asylum interview within 43 days after the claim is filed, and to identify and grant those cases that have merit (generally in 60 days from the date of filing the application). If the INS asylum officer does not grant the claim, the applicant is referred immediately for removal proceedings before EOIR (unless the alien is still in a legal status). The immigration judge may grant the claim or may issue a denial and an order of removal. Under this system,

INS asylum officers issue relatively few denials, but an interview followed by a referral to EOIR represents the asylum officer's judgment that the application is not readily grantable. The INS will issue a denial (and cannot refer the case) when the applicant is still in a legal status. An applicant who fails without good cause to keep a scheduled appointment for an asylum interview is referred immediately to EOIR for removal proceedings; this is considered to be one type of case closure.

Beginning in 1997, the AOC also began conducting credible fear interviews as required by IIRIRA and interviewing applicants for refugee status at INS overseas locations.

More than 46,700 applications for asylum in the United States were received during 2000.

Data Overview

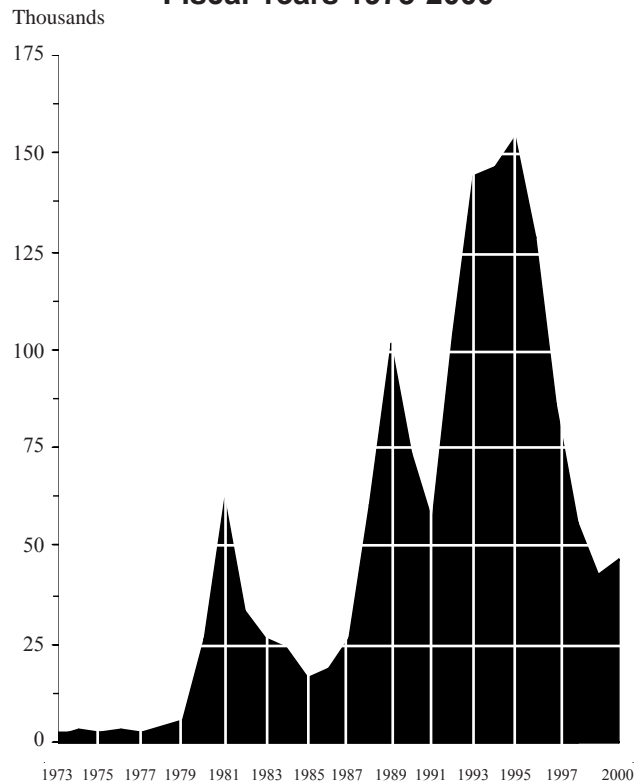
Applications filed (Chart D, Tables 25, 27)

The annual number of asylum applications filed with the INS has fluctuated greatly since the effective date of the Refugee Act of 1980, as shown in Chart D. In fiscal year 2000, 46,776 asylum cases were filed or reopened (received). These cases involved 61,875 individuals. The number of cases increased 23 percent from the 38,091 cases filed in 1999 (Table 25). There were sharp increases in filings by nationals from Colombia, China, Haiti, Mexico, and Armenia. Once again there were large declines in new filings by nationals of El Salvador and Guatemala.

In 2000, 40,686 new claims for asylum were filed with the INS. The People's Republic of China, with 5,745 new claims, ranked first, followed by Haiti (4,337), Mexico (3,756), Colombia (2,728), and Somalia (2,386) (Table 27). Individuals from the republics of the former Soviet Union filed 3,907 new claims; 69 percent were from Russia and Armenia. A male was the principal applicant in 63 percent (25,550) of the new claims filed. About 57 percent of all individuals involved in new claims are male.

Nearly 6,800 asylum cases were reopened in 2000 (including 709 cases that were both new filings and reopened during the year). The leading countries of nationality of the reopened cases were Guatemala (1,112), El Salvador (874), the People's Republic of China (808), and Haiti (425).

Chart D
Asylum Applications Received by the INS:
Fiscal Years 1973-2000



NOTE: See Glossary for fiscal year definitions. Source: Table 25.

The number of reopened cases in 2000 was about 70 percent of the cases reopened in 1999. An automatic function triggers the reopening of cases that were administratively closed when aliens apply for renewal of their employment authorization. This relates to applications filed prior to the asylum reforms of 1995, where the cases were administratively closed due to a failure to appear for the asylum interview. This function also automatically reschedules an interview. Some of these reopened cases may qualify under the terms of the American Baptist Churches (ABC) vs. Thornburgh settlement.

Trends in asylum applications filed by nationals from Central America (Table 27)

For over a decade, nationals from Central America dominated the annual number of asylum applications filed in the United States. From 1986 to 1992, about half of all asylum applications were filed by Central Americans. By 1993 and 1994, that percentage had fallen somewhat, but it remained at about 40 percent of the total applications filed. Then, the number of applicants from Central America surged to a new height in the next two years, well over half of all asylum applicants. A sharp decline in cases filed by

Nicaraguans was later offset by a sharp increase in cases filed by Guatemalans and Salvadorans. Beginning in 1997, the numbers started a sharp decline largely due to the termination of the filing period under the terms of the American Baptist Churches (ABC) *vs.* Thornburgh settlement. As a result, Central Americans accounted for about 4 percent of the new claims and 9 percent of the total filed and reopened in 2000.

During the 1990s, the trend in asylum claims filed or reopened by nationals from Central America has been driven in large part by ABC cases. Under the terms of this 1991 class action lawsuit settlement agreement [American Baptist Churches *vs.* Thornburgh, 760 F. Supp. 796 (N.D. Cal. 1991)], many nationals of El Salvador and Guatemala were allowed to file or renew their claims for asylum. Nationals of Guatemala had a filing deadline of March 31, 1992, which was the peak year for claims from this country (although the INS allowed them to file until January 3, 1995). The 187,000 Salvadorans who had registered for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) in 1991 became eligible to file for asylum at the expiration of their TPS period in 1992. They were later granted additional time under deferred enforced departure periods which extended until December 1994, and they ultimately had until January 31, 1996 to apply for asylum under the ABC agreement. The number of ABC claims filed by Salvadorans surged during fiscal year 1996 before the filing deadline. These claims are heard under the pre-reform regulations as well as other stipulations of the settlement agreement. Applications filed after the ABC filing deadline were processed as reform filings, except those ABC cases that were closed by the EOIR or federal courts and were not previously filed with the INS. Under the settlement, once the latter cases are identified by the INS, they are treated as ABC filings instead of reform filings. During 2000, 849 cases were identified as either filed or reopened as ABC cases.

On November 19, 1997, the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA) was signed into law. Section 203 of the NACARA permits certain Guatemalans, Salvadorans, and nationals of former Soviet bloc countries to apply for suspension of deportation or special rule cancellation of removal under the more generous standards in effect before the 1996 immigration law. Individuals granted relief under NACARA 203 are permitted to remain in the United States as lawful permanent resident aliens. All ABC class members, who are eligible for ABC benefits and have asylum applications

pending with the INS, also are eligible to apply for the NACARA benefits with the INS Asylum Program. Certain qualifying family members may also apply for NACARA benefits. In fiscal year 2000 there were 56,763 applications filed under NACARA 203 provisions. There were 9,089 cases granted and 61,602 pending applications at the end of the fiscal year.

Cases completed (Tables 25, 27, 28)

During fiscal year 2000, the Asylum Officer Corps completed work on 58,428 claims and adjudicated about 65 percent (37,897) of them (Table 25). The number of cases granted in 2000 was 16,549, representing 43.7 percent of the cases adjudicated compared to the 38.5 percent approval rate in fiscal year 1999. The granted cases included 22,861 individuals—principals, spouses, and children (Tables 27 and 28). The leading countries of nationality were the People’s Republic of China (2,514 granted cases), Somalia (1,678), Ethiopia (1,246), and Colombia (1,164) (Table 27).

There are special procedures for adjudicating cases based on coercive population control. Section 601 of the IIRIRA stipulates that a person qualifies as a refugee or asylee persecuted for political opinion if forced to undergo, has a well founded fear of being compelled to undergo, or resists a coercive population-control procedure. It sets a combined annual ceiling of 1,000 persons who may be granted refugee or asylee status under this provision. Both the INS and the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) grant conditional asylee status to qualified applicants each year under this provision—status that is not subject to the 1,000 annual ceiling (currently, there are more than 1,000 conditional grants in a year). At the beginning of a new fiscal year, the INS Asylum Division issues 1,000 final grants—counted toward the annual ceiling of the previous year—to those who have received a conditional asylee status from either agency in previous fiscal years. The selection criterion for final grants is the date of the conditional grants. Those who received their conditional grants earlier would receive their final grants first. At the beginning of fiscal year 2001, the INS issued the 1,000 fiscal year 2000 final grants for asylum status to 323 individuals who received their conditional grants from the INS, 615 whose conditional grants were made by immigration judges, and 62 whose conditional grants were made by the Board of Immigration Appeals. The People’s Republic of China was the country of origin of all grants. No one was granted refugee status in fiscal year 2000 based on coercive population-control measures.

Cases pending

The number of asylum cases pending for adjudication decreased about 4 percent, from approximately 342,000 in 1999 to approximately 329,000 in 2000. Cases filed by nationals of El Salvador (52 percent of total pending), Guatemala (30), Haiti (5), and Nicaragua (4), accounted for about 90 percent of the pending cases. The ABC cases, which also can be handled under the NACARA provisions, comprised 97 percent of the Salvadoran and Guatemalan cases filed, and 79 percent of all pending cases. A large number of Nicaraguan and Cuban pending cases also will be eligible for the NACARA benefits. A number of Haitian pending cases are eligible for benefits under the Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act (HRIFA) of 1998. The number of pending cases that are not ABC, HRIFA, or NACARA is approximately 31,600.

Credible fear interviews

During fiscal year 2000, 10,337 aliens appeared at ports of entry without proper documents and requested asylum. Most of these aliens were subsequently referred to asylum officers for credible fear interviews. Nationals of the People's Republic of China submitted the most applications (3,944), followed by Haiti (1,073) and Sri Lanka (999). These three countries accounted for about 58 percent of all applications in 2000. Some applicants change their mind and decide to withdraw their request for a credible fear interview before an interview takes place. The Asylum Officer Corps made 9,726 credible fear determinations in 2000 and found sufficient evidence of credible fear in 98.7 percent of the cases. These cases were referred to immigration judges for adjudication.

Understanding the Data

Data Collection

Prior to April 1, 1991, data on asylum applicants reflect cases filed with INS district directors and, subsequently, cases filed with INS asylum officers on Form I-589 (*Request for Asylum in the United States*). A centralized, automated data system (Refugee, Asylum, and Parole System—RAPS) supports the processing of the existing caseload and new asylum applications. The system supports case tracking, schedules and controls interviews, and generates management and statistical reports. The system reports asylum casework by nationality and other characteristics of asylum applicants. Data can be reported by case or by the number of persons covered, since a case may include more than one person. Data on asylum

applicants have been collected by the INS for selected nationalities since July 1980, and for all nationalities since June 1983.

As with refugees, the Immigration and Naturalization Service collects data on asylees adjusting to lawful permanent resident status in the Computer Linked Application Information Management Systems (CLAIMS) (see Immigrants section). Adjustment to immigrant status was the only point at which detailed characteristics of asylees were collected prior to 1992. The RAPS system provides data on selected characteristics of asylum seekers and asylees at an earlier time.

The number of asylum applications filed is defined here as the sum of new applications received and applications reopened during the year. Tables 27 and 28 show the number of applications that were reopened during the year. Most of these are cases that had been closed earlier without a decision. The tabulations also show the number of cases referred to immigration judges, with and without an interview. A referral due to failure to keep an appointment for an interview without good cause is considered comparable, for statistical purposes, to a closed case. The approval rate is calculated as the number of cases granted/approved divided by the number of cases adjudicated, which is defined as the cases granted/approved, denied, and referred to EOIR following an interview (including referrals under the filing deadline).

The data on credible fear claims are collected in the Asylum Pre-screening System (APSS). These data are not stored in RAPS and are not reflected in the detailed tables for this section.

Limitations of Data

The statistics shown here for fiscal year 2000 differ slightly from preliminary statistics released by the INS Asylum Division in October 2000. The data presented here were tabulated from the RAPS system eighteen months after the close of the fiscal year and incorporate late additions and corrections to the database. Since asylum claimants can reopen a case, it is possible that some of the decisions categorized in the detailed tables in this edition of the *Yearbook* are a change from a completion category in some previous fiscal year. In addition, technical limitations of the data file used to produce these tables preclude a precise count of the number of pending applications at either the

beginning of a fiscal year or the end of the year. That is because reopened cases in the data file do not indicate the date the case was previously considered complete. In fiscal year 2000 the uncertainty about the number of pending cases is approximately 4,000 cases.

Data on applicants for asylum collected by the Immigration and Naturalization Service historically have covered only cases filed with the INS. Information has not been available on cases filed by aliens after the INS has placed the alien in removal proceedings before an immigration judge in the Executive Office for Immigration Review. The two agencies are working to integrate their data systems to provide these data in the future. Asylum was granted by EOIR to approximately 9,200 individuals in 2000; therefore, the total number of individuals granted asylum by both agencies was about 32,000.

Principal applicants whose asylum applications are successful can apply for their spouses and minor children, whether they are in the United States or abroad, and these relatives also receive status as asylees. The RAPS system collects information on the spouses and children of asylum applicants only if they are included on the principal's application. Information regarding relatives whose principals petition for them after receiving asylum is collected by the CLAIMS and is not included in any table in this publication. The data collected by the INS at the time asylees adjust to permanent resident status include all aliens who adjust regardless of whether they were granted asylum by the INS, immigration judges, or the Board of Immigration Appeals. Adjustment data also include all spouses and children of persons granted asylum.