

**REFUGEE IMMIGRATION TO CALIFORNIA,
1990-1994: A SUMMARY IN TABLES**

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Refugee Immigration to California, 1990-1994: A Summary in Tables

The following report summarizes the flow of refugees to California for the period spanning Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 1990-1994¹. The data were provided by the US Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), and tabulated by the Demographic Research Unit of the California State Department of Finance. State of residence for the refugees was derived from their reported ZIP Code of intended residence. The term "refugee," as used in this report includes both refugees and asylum seekers who are granted permanent resident status².

Table 1: Refugees to California by Federal Fiscal Year: 1990-1994

FFY	Number of Refugees	Percent of Total	Refugee Rate (per 1,000)
1990	38,507	20.1	1.29
1991	45,594	23.9	1.50
1992	38,261	20.0	1.23
1993	39,516	20.7	1.25
1994	29,284	15.3	0.92
Total	191,162	100.0	
Average	38,232		1.24

Over the past five years, 1990-1994, 191,162 refugees and asylees who were granted permanent legal resident status in the US elected to live in California, according to the INS data. This represents nearly one-third of the total number of refugees and asylees granted permanent residence in the US over the period, despite California having only one-eighth of the nation's population. Based on population size, over the period California had an average annual refugee immigration rate of 1.23 per thousand, compared with 0.38 per thousand for the rest of the US over the same period.

Refugees and asylees are required to reside within the US for a minimum of one year prior to acquisition of permanent residency. This means that the recorded year of immigration is not the same as the actual year of entry into the US. In practice, most of the refugees recorded in a given FFY entered the US in the two preceding calendar years. Conversely, most of the refugees entering the US in a given calendar year will not have their immigrant status recorded until at least the succeeding FFY, if not later.

¹ The Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) runs from October 1 of the preceding year through September 30 of the current year. The period covered in this report is from October 1, 1989 through September 30, 1994.

² This includes immigrants only with the visa types: CU6, CU7, IC6, R86, RE6, RE7, RE8, AS6, AS7, and AS8.

Table 2: Refugees by Port of Entry: 1990-1994

Port of Entry	Number	Percent
Los Angeles	87,050	45.5
San Francisco	73,738	38.6
Sacramento	15,156	7.9
San Diego	13,090	6.8
San Jose	1,465	0.8
Other California	82	*
POE outside of California	581	0.3
Total	191,162	100.0

* = less than one-tenth of one percent

There are fifteen official ports of entry for immigration into California, and more than 300 for the whole country. But more than 84 percent of the refugees immigrating to California used either Los Angeles or San Francisco as their official port of entry.

**Table 3: Refugees Age 15 and Older
by Marital Status and Sex: 1990-1994**

Marital Status	Males	Percent of Males	Females	Percent of Females	Total ⁺	Percent of Total
Single	31,628	44.06	24,658	35.26	56,294	39.71
Married	37,706	52.52	38,572	55.15	76,286	53.82
Widowed	572	0.80	3,391	4.85	3,965	2.80
Divorced	851	1.19	1,597	2.28	2,448	1.73
Separated	279	0.39	466	0.67	745	0.53
Unknown	752	1.05	1,250	1.79	2,010	1.42
Total	71,788	100.00	69,934	100.00	141,748	100.00

+ = includes 26 refugees of unknown sex.

Refugee males were slightly less likely to be married than their California counterparts, with 53 percent of the refugees age 15 and older being married, versus 56 percent for California males (1990 Census data). The opposite was true for females, with 55 percent of the female refugees age 15 and older being married, versus 52 percent for California females.

Table 4: Refugees by Age and Sex: 1990-1994

Age	Males	Females	Total⁺	Percent of Total
0 to 4	5,697	5,250	10,952	5.73
5 to 9	10,767	10,143	20,919	10.94
10 to 14	9,253	8,248	16,697	8.73
15 to 19	10,728	9,046	19,777	10.35
20 to 24	11,383	10,161	21,548	11.27
25 to 29	9,752	9,364	19,119	10.00
30 to 34	8,091	8,603	16,697	8.73
35 to 39	6,950	7,367	14,320	7.49
40 to 44	5,987	6,330	12,321	6.45
45 to 49	5,019	4,479	9,500	4.97
50 to 54	3,990	3,476	7,466	3.91
55 to 59	2,955	2,863	5,818	3.04
60 to 64	2,529	2,562	5,092	2.66
65 and older	4,404	5,683	10,090	5.28
Unknown	14	18	32	0.02
Total	97,519	93,593	191,162	100.00

+ = column includes 50 refugees of unknown sex.

The average and median ages of refugees were 28.2 and 25 years for males, and 29.4 and 27 for females, respectively. This is somewhat younger than the median ages of 30.4 and 32.5 for males and females for the California's population from the 1990 US Census.

Table 5: Refugees by Type of Visa: 1990-1994

Type (Visa Designation) {Public Law No.}	Number	Percent
Refugee (RE6, RE7, RE8) {P.L. 96-212}	174,215	91.1
Cuban Refugee (CU6, CU7) {P.L. 98-732}	800	0.4
Indochinese Refugee (IC6) {P.L. 95-145}	51	*
Refugee Parolee (R86) {P.L. 95-412}	123	*
Asylee (AS6, AS7, AS8) {P.L. 96-212}	15,973	8.5
Total	191,162	100.0

* = less than one-tenth of one percent

Refugee and asylee immigrant status is defined by the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended by the Refugee Act of 1980. Refugees obtain their status in one of the eighteen overseas offices of the INS (or domestically, in the case of asylees), and must meet a set of criteria ensuring their status before immigrating. Despite the different labels, all the types of refugees listed in the above table qualify for their status based on the premise that they are unable to return on their country of nationality based on a "well-founded fear of persecution" that is due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership of a particular social group. Additionally, refugees must be considered of "special humanitarian concern" to the US. In practice, this determination is based on political concerns, and it is this that determines why more refugees are admitted from some countries than others.

Despite the label, most refugees from Southeast Asia arrive with "Refugee" type visas (RE6, RE7, RE8), and not "Indochinese Refugee"-type visas (IC6).

The difference between asylees and the other types of refugees is the location of the alien at the time of application for asylum - refugees normally apply for their status while outside of the US, while asylees apply for it after already having arrived in the US.

Table 6: Refugees by Continent of Birth: 1990-1994

Continent	Number	Percent
Europe	51,468	26.9
Asia	124,264	65.0
Africa	5,561	2.9
Oceania	55	*
North America	9,640	5.0
South America	174	0.1
Total	191,162	100.0

* = less than one-tenth of one percent

More refugees came to California from Asia than all the rest of the continents combined³.

³ Russia and the other CIS countries are considered European rather than Asian. Turkey is considered Asian.

**Table 7: Refugees by Country of Birth
and by Nationality: 1990-1994**

Country	Country of Birth		Nationality	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Vietnam	59,781	31.3	50,315	26.3
Soviet Union	21,625	11.3	22,118	11.6
Laos	19,426	10.2	26,636	13.9
Iran	19,069	10.0	6,559	3.4
Thailand	10,664	5.6	1,847	1.0
Ukraine	9,752	5.1	1,673	0.9
Nicaragua	5,922	3.1	5,830	3.1
Russia	4,875	2.6	1,616	0.8
Afghanistan	4,847	2.5	4,448	2.3
Cambodia	4,451	2.3	4,000	2.1
Romania	4,045	2.1	3,412	1.8
Ethiopia	3,539	1.9	3,249	1.7
El Salvador	1,887	1.0	1,872	1.0
Iraq	1,839	1.0	1,751	0.9
Belarus	1,707	0.9	104	0.1
Azerbaijan	1,373	0.7	57	*
Cuba	1,317	0.7	1,007	0.5
Moldova	1,234	0.6	125	0.1
Uzbekistan	1,055	0.6	74	*
China	1,051	0.5	807	0.4
Poland	984	0.5	827	0.4
Somalia	970	0.5	951	0.5
Armenia	893	0.5	417	0.2
Stateless	0		47,445	25.0
Other	9,856	5.2	4,022	2.1
Total	191,162	100.0	191,162	100.0

* = less than one-tenth of one percent

Nearly a third of all the refugees were born in Vietnam (59,781), 22 percent from the countries of the former Soviet Union (43,805), 16 percent from Laos or Thailand (30,090), 10 percent from Iran (19,069), 3 percent from Nicaragua (5,922), 3 percent from Afghanistan (4,847), and the remaining 14 percent came from more than fifty other countries.

Country of birth and nationality are not always synonymous. For refugees in particular, the question of origin has a multi-dimensional component that can not be captured either by the place of birth or nationality variable alone.

Some displaced nationalities have lived in another country for so long that they start having children there, with the result that the country of birth variable no longer accurately reflects their children's national

origins. Refugees from Laos and Thailand are a case in point, as Laotian refugees have been in Thailand for so long that a sizable number were born there, but do not have Thai citizenship or nationality. Hence the discrepancy between the country of birth and nationality columns for these two countries in the table above. For some analytical purposes it is preferable to combine the figures for both countries. Identity may be more complex than either place of birth or nationality would indicate, as many of the refugees from these two countries would consider themselves *Hmong* or *Mien* rather than Thai or Laotian.

Table 8: Refugees from the former Soviet Union by Country of Birth and Nationality: 1990-1994

Country of Birth	Nationality										Total
	USSR	Russia	Ukraine	Belarus	Azerbaijan	Moldova	Armenia	Other CIS	Other Nations	Stateless	
USSR	8,446	168	241	9	2	19	28	9	77	12,626	21,625
Russia	3,130	719	76	3	1	14	6	0	12	914	4,875
Ukraine	5,796	359	1,297	4	1	2	3	4	22	2,264	9,752
Belarus	1,126	109	8	82	0	0	0	2	8	372	1,707
Azerbaijan	741	51	0	0	53	0	131	0	2	395	1,373
Moldova	700	39	19	0	0	89	0	0	1	386	1,234
Armenia	381	2	1	0	0	0	169	0	0	340	893
Other CIS*	1,567	162	26	6	0	1	10	164	9	401	2,346
Sum of ex-USSR	21,887	1,609	1,668	104	57	125	347	179	131	17,698	43,805
Other Nations	231	7	5	0	0	0	70	0	116,967	30,077	147,357
Total	22,118	1,616	1,673	104	57	125	417	179	117,098	47,775	191,162

* = the former Soviet Republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Georgia.

Table 8 above demonstrates that nationality and place of birth may not be synonymous because a country is comprised of more than one nationality. The former countries of the Soviet Union are a case in point, with refugees from a particular country of birth often being of many nationalities, and vice versa. As late as 1994 many refugees from the former Soviet Union were still reporting the "Soviet Union" as their country of birth or nationality, despite that country's disintegration more than two years prior to their immigration here. As with Laos and Thailand, for some purposes aggregation of these refugees might better reflect the weight of their numbers. But again, aggregation might blur what might be fairly termed very different nationalities. For example, refugees from Armenia and Russia may have no more in common than do Danish and Indian immigrants.

When the refugees from the countries of the former Soviet Union are aggregated, they form the second largest group for the 1990-1994 period. The size of the group depends on whether one looks at the figures for country of birth or nationality, as the former group is larger than the latter by about seventeen thousand refugees (43,805-26,289), because so many of these refugees have no nationality, but instead enter the US as "stateless". Thirty-seven percent of all stateless refugees entering California over the period were from the countries of the former USSR.

Table 9: Number of Refugees by Country of Last Permanent Residence: 1990-1994

Country	Number	Percent
Vietnam	41,697	21.8
Thailand	32,728	17.1
Soviet Union	26,640	13.9
Italy	18,547	9.7
Philippines	13,263	6.9
Nicaragua	5,677	3.0
Germany	5,330	2.8
Iran	5,184	2.7
Austria	5,115	2.7
Pakistan	3,620	1.9
Laos	3,199	1.7
Romania	3,165	1.7
El Salvador	1,852	1.0
Sudan	1,796	0.9
Ukraine	1,633	0.9
Kenya	1,551	0.8
Hong Kong	1,445	0.8
Other	18,720	9.8
Total	191,162	100.0

The question "Where do they come from?" is apt to receive a more complex answer with respect to refugees than with other types of immigrants. Many refugees reside, often for very long periods, in countries other than that of their nationality prior to their immigration to the US. In the table above, Thailand, Italy, the Philippines, Germany, Austria, Pakistan, Sudan, Kenya, and Hong Kong were all listed as the countries of last permanent residence by large numbers of refugees, yet very few of these countries are listed as the country of birth or nationality by the refugees (Table 7). These countries may be countries of transit, albeit of the longer-term sort. Italy was listed by more than 18,000 refugees as the country of their last permanent residence. Yet virtually none of them were Italians - most of them had been born in one of the countries of the former Soviet Union.

Table 10: Refugees by County by Year: 1990-1994

County	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	Total	Percent of Total	Refugee Rate
Alameda	1,433	2,162	2,021	1,852	1,398	8,866	4.6	1.35
Alpine	0	0	0	0	0	0	*	0.00
Amador	4	1	4	1	0	10	*	0.06
Butte	213	190	304	126	260	1,093	0.6	1.14
Calaveras	0	1	8	2	1	12	*	0.07
Colusa	0	1	0	0	1	2	*	0.02
Contra Costa	506	652	681	665	441	2,945	1.5	0.70
Del Norte	7	13	8	6	0	34	*	0.26
El Dorado	1	1	4	8	1	15	*	0.02
Fresno	1,620	2,506	2,343	2,695	1,761	10,925	5.7	3.08
Glenn	9	0	1	12	27	49	*	0.38
Humboldt	58	74	36	9	43	220	0.1	0.36
Imperial	1	2	6	5	1	15	*	0.02
Inyo	0	0	0	0	0	0	*	0.00
Kern	41	52	50	57	25	225	0.1	0.08
Kings	7	38	9	11	5	70	*	0.13
Lake	0	0	1	0	0	1	*	0.00
Lassen	1	0	0	0	1	2	*	0.01
Los Angeles	16,665	17,962	6,076	10,475	7,938	59,116	30.9	1.31
Madera	2	7	8	7	11	35	*	0.07
Marin	116	160	73	98	65	512	0.3	0.43
Mariposa	2	0	1	0	0	3	*	0.04
Mendocino	1	1	0	3	0	5	*	0.01
Merced	594	623	562	515	513	2,807	1.5	2.97
Modoc	1	0	1	1	1	4	*	0.08
Mono	0	0	0	0	0	0	*	0.00
Monterey	79	145	84	86	72	466	0.2	0.25
Napa	4	12	10	10	2	38	*	0.07
Nevada	1	1	0	2	0	4	*	0.01
Orange	3,968	3,226	7,959	6,252	1,663	23,068	12.1	1.84
Placer	10	15	33	15	35	108	0.1	0.12
Plumas	1	0	0	0	3	4	*	0.04
Riverside	235	248	363	314	102	1,262	0.7	0.20
Sacramento	1,739	2,581	4,330	2,851	3,370	14,871	7.8	2.72
San Benito	0	0	1	1	2	4	*	0.02
San Bernadino	465	628	654	576	219	2,542	1.3	0.34
San Diego	2,277	2,509	2,493	2,936	2,550	12,765	6.7	0.98
San Francisco	1,651	3,403	2,002	2,560	2,594	12,210	6.4	3.31
San Joaquin	1,387	1,286	1,652	663	615	5,603	2.9	2.23

San Luis Obispo	3	3	1	1	0	8	*	0.01
San Mateo	274	865	380	375	226	2120	1.1	0.63
Santa Barbara	61	188	55	64	21	389	0.2	0.20
Santa Clara	2,924	4,068	4,173	4,447	3,900	1,9512	10.2	2.54
Santa Cruz	13	46	22	21	19	121	0.1	0.10
Shasta	100	128	152	169	49	598	0.3	0.76
Sierra	0	0	1	0	1	2	*	0.12
Siskyou	0	0	2	0	3	5	*	0.02
Solano	92	92	60	85	27	356	0.2	0.20
Sonoma	67	83	103	122	89	464	0.2	0.23
Stanislaus	436	263	240	230	353	1,522	0.8	0.77
Sutter	4	19	26	8	15	72	*	0.21
Tehama	0	0	0	0	0	0	*	0.00
Trinity	0	0	0	0	0	0	*	0.00
Tulare	542	329	336	500	164	1871	1.0	1.13
Tuolumne	2	6	0	1	1	10	*	0.04
Ventura	71	159	66	138	66	500	0.3	0.15
Yolo	315	261	567	350	348	1841	1.0	2.51
Yuba	135	252	163	113	223	886	0.5	2.90
TOTAL⁺	38,507	45,594	38,261	39,516	29,284	191,162	100.0	
Refugee Rate (per 1,000)	1.29	1.50	1.23	1.25	0.92	1.24		

⁺ = State total includes refugees with county unknown.

* = less than one-tenth of one percent of the total

Immigration to the US by refugees is a story of very uneven patterns of settlement: they go to some states, but hardly to others; within those states, they go to particular counties and not others.

Seven counties (Los Angeles, Orange, Santa Clara, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, and Fresno) received four-fifths of the refugees, with the first three accounting for more than half. From a national perspective, these seven counties (out of more than 3,000 in the entire US) received one-quarter of the national total over the period. Los Angeles County received more refugees (59,116) than Orange (23,068) and Santa Clara (19,512) counties combined, and also more than any other state in the US except for New York and Florida. Based on population size, the counties with the highest average annual rates of legal refugee immigration (per 1,000) were San Francisco (3.31), Fresno (3.08), Merced (2.97), Yuba (2.90), Sacramento (2.72), and Santa Clara (2.54) (Maps 1 and 2).

**Table 11: Refugees by City by Year for Cities⁴
Receiving 1,200 or More Refugees: 1990-1994**

City (County)	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	Total	Average Refugee Rate
Los Angeles (Los Angeles)	7,527	9,114	3,716	6,303	4,697	27,883	1.57
San Jose (Santa Clara)	2,299	3,073	3,125	3,202	2,827	14,526	3.60
San Francisco (San Francisco)	1,651	3,404	2,003	2,560	2,597	12,215	3.31
Sacramento (Sacramento)	1,469	2,003	3,417	2,143	2,480	11,512	6.02
Glendale (Los Angeles)	4,745	3,208	698	1,400	864	10,915	11.83
Fresno (Fresno)	1,532	2,444	2,244	2,554	1,660	10,434	5.51
San Diego (San Diego)	1,998	2,179	2,004	2,154	1,739	10,074	1.75
Garden Grove (Orange)	930	700	2,216	1,772	495	6,113	8.29
Stockton (San Joaquin)	1,374	1,256	1,628	652	598	5,508	4.99
Santa Ana (Orange)	944	664	1,382	1,167	260	4,417	2.91
Westminster (Orange)	605	440	1,528	1,221	299	4,093	10.23
Oakland (Alameda)	754	854	824	711	589	3,732	1.97
Merced (Merced)	563	555	540	459	473	2,590	8.84
Anaheim (Orange)	472	361	726	512	196	2,267	1.62
Long Beach (Los Angeles)	499	409	281	281	158	1,628	0.75
Hayward (Alameda)	199	426	370	269	207	1,471	2.49
Rosemead (Los Angeles)	417	338	224	226	187	1,392	5.29
Alhambra (Los Angeles)	524	381	187	155	140	1,387	3.29
Santa Clara (Santa Clara)	153	224	296	381	277	1,331	2.80
Fremont (Alameda)	166	341	298	277	209	1,291	1.44
Visalia (Tulare)	405	194	247	333	87	1,266	3.05

Seven cities were estimated to have received more than ten thousand refugees over the period: Los Angeles (27,883), San Jose (14,256), San Francisco (12,215), Sacramento (11,512), Glendale (10,915), Fresno (10,434), and San Diego (10,074). Each received more than the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky combined.

⁴ City totals for Tables 11 and 12 were derived from the reported ZIP Code of intended residence data, and not actual or reported city of intended residence. Because ZIP Codes often cross municipal boundaries, the numbers of refugees for cities should be considered as approximations.

Table 12: Refugees by City and Year for Cities with Average Annual Refugee Rates of more than 4.0 per 1,000 population: 1990-1994

City (County)	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	Total	Refugee Rate
Marvsville (Yuba)	129	252	150	113	222	866	13.77
Glendale (Los Angeles)	4,745	3,208	698	1,400	864	10,915	11.83
Oroville (Butte)	110	147	201	59	151	668	10.89
Westminster (Orange)	605	440	1,528	1,221	299	4,093	10.23
Merced (Merced)	563	555	540	459	473	2,590	8.84
Garden Grove (Orange)	930	700	2,216	1,772	495	6,113	8.29
Sacramento (Sacramento)	1,469	2,003	3,417	2,143	2,480	11,512	6.02
Fresno (Fresno)	1,532	2,444	2,244	2,554	1,660	10,434	5.51
Rosemead (Los Angeles)	417	338	224	226	187	1,392	5.29
Stockton (San Joaquin)	1,374	1,256	1,628	652	598	5,508	4.99
Beverly Hills (Los Angeles)	151	295	102	126	81	755	4.69
West Sacramento (Yolo)	225	73	209	88	89	684	4.57
San Gabriel (Los Angeles)	218	214	81	123	186	822	4.35
Stanton (Orange)	44	68	237	252	79	680	4.33
San Pablo (Contra Costa)	89	108	164	127	50	538	4.15

Based on population size, the cities with the highest average annual rates of legal immigration (per 1,000) were Marysville (13.8), Glendale (11.8), Oroville (10.9), Westminster (10.2), Merced (8.8), Garden Grove (8.3), and Sacramento (6.0). With the exception of Sacramento and Glendale, the flow of refugees to each of these cities was heavily predominated by refugees from only one country or nationality. For Marysville, Oroville, and Merced, more than 95 percent of the refugees were from Laos or Thailand. For Garden Grove and Westminster, more than 95 percent of the refugees were from Vietnam. Three-fourths of Glendale's refugees were from Iran, with the balance coming from the countries of the former Soviet Union. Only Sacramento had a flow of refugees not predominated by any one nationality, but rather a blend from many countries.