

**All the different terms for immigrants can be confusing!
Here are a few simple definitions to help you determine the differences.**

Refugee

A person outside of the United States who seeks protection on the grounds that he or she fears persecution in his or her homeland. To attain refugee status, the person must prove that he or she has a “well-founded fear of persecution” on the basis of at least one of five internationally recognized grounds. Those include the person’s (1) race, (2) religion, (3) membership in a social group, (4) political opinion, or (5) national origin. Refugees generally apply in refugee camps or at designated processing sites outside their home countries. In some instances, refugees may apply for protection within their home countries. If accepted as for resettlement, the person is admitted to the U.S. with permission to stay and receives assistance through the Refugee Resettlement Program.

Asylee

A person who has entered the United States or presents him or herself at the US border, and who fears persecution if sent back to his or her country, may apply for asylum here. Like a refugee, an asylum applicant must prove that he has a “well-founded fear of persecution” based on the same grounds.

SIV

Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) are issued to individuals who supported US armed forces overseas in conflict zones, especially Iraq and Afghanistan. They become LPRs upon entry to the US (Green card holders) They are eligible for some of the same programs as refugees in US Resettlement Agencies.

Immigrants

A foreign-born individual who has been admitted to reside permanently in the United States as a lawful permanent resident (LPR) or green card holder. Application can be made through various ways.

Non-Immigrant Visa
Visas can be issued for temporary travel for a variety of reasons and generally have a set duration.

Naturalization

Lawful permanent residents are eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship through a process called Naturalization. To qualify, applicants must reside in the U.S. for 3-5 years, demonstrate knowledge of U.S. history and government, show they have paid taxes and have committed no serious crimes, and demonstrate that they understand, speak and write English.

Undocumented Immigrant

A person who is present in the United States without the permission of the U.S. government. Undocumented immigrants enter either: (1) without proper documentation/inspection or with false documents or (2) legally with a temporary visa and then remain in the US beyond the expiration of the visa. It is possible for undocumented immigrants to gain lawful permanent status based on qualifiers under immigration law. Legal consultations can advise individuals of possible eligibility.

Unaccompanied Minor
The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines

unaccompanied refugee minors (URM) as children who are separated from both parents and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible to do so. In the Resettlement Program, URMs are children under age 18 who are resettled alone in the United States, without a parent or relative able to care for them.

Parolee

Humanitarian parole is used to bring someone who is otherwise inadmissible into the United States for a temporary period of time due to an emergency.