Statelessness Worldwide

There are an estimated 10-15 million stateless people worldwide whom no country recognizes as a citizen. Because they are not recognized, stateless people often do not appear in official statistics. UNHCR has gathered data on approximately one-third of the estimated global population (3.9 million).

There are 93 countries where stateless populations are known to exist; 15 of these do not have reliable data on the stateless numbers. Primary risk factors and causes include inheritance of status, conflict in nationality laws, state succession, discriminatory nationality laws, birth registration, and armed conflict.

A new stateless child is born every 10 minutes. Statelessness contributes to cycles of poverty and vulnerability, reducing household income by one third.

Statelessness contributes to the presence of stateless persons—stateless refugees. Some of these people are not recognized as citizens by their country of origin or last habitual residence. The largest groups of stateless refugees are listed in alphabetical order below, and displayed on the map by their country of residence.

Prevalent statelessness

There are an estimated 70,000 or more stateless people in the following countries:

- Saudi Arabia: 70,000
- Estonia: 81,849
- Uzbekistan: 86,703
- Kuwait: 93,000
- Russia: 113,474
- Dominican Republic: 120,000
- Syria: 160,000
- Latvia: 262,802
- Zimbabwe: 300,000
- Thailand: 506,197
- Cote d’Ivoire: 700,000
- Burma: 1,090,000

*The Dominican government created a legal path to restore citizenship to this population and has publicly committed to resolve the citizenship status of all Dominican-born individuals at risk of statelessness.

**Latvia and Estonia dispute these UNHCR figures, arguing that their ‘noncitizens’ residents should not be considered stateless, as they are eligible for naturalization and enjoy many of the benefits of citizenship. Latvia acknowledges 270 stateless residents in its most recent census.

Sources: UNHCR, UNICEF, Department of State, Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, Norwegian Refugee Council, Kingston University of London