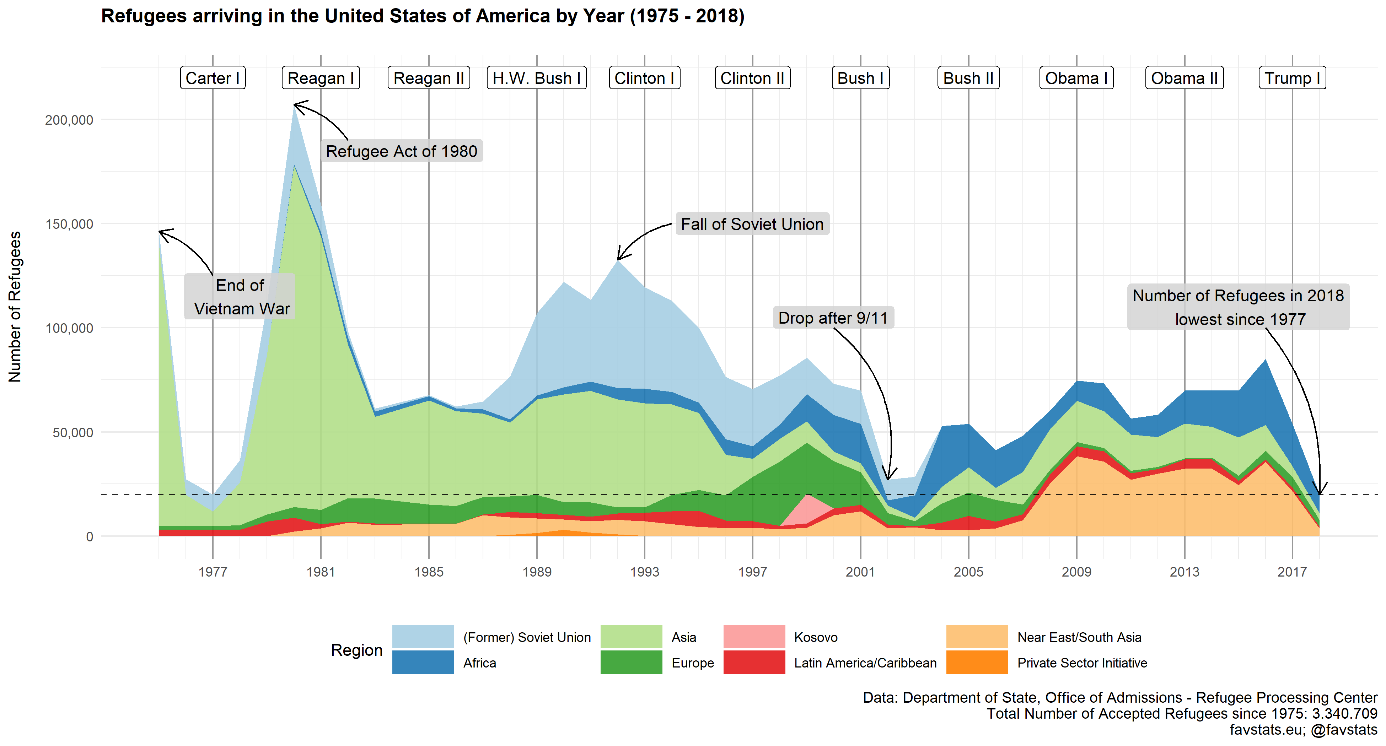
A short history of Refugees in the U.S.

A government shutdown is currently plaguing the United States. The main point of contention? Immigration. Here is a data-driven approach to shed some light on refugee admissions in the United States.

What is a refugee?

The size of the U.S. refugee program has often fluctuated. But the war in Syria and the resulting migration crisis in Europe has increased policymakers’ scrutiny of arrivals from the Middle East, beginning with the administration of President Barack Obama. President Donald J. Trump ratcheted up that scrutiny with a ban on refugees from certain countries and sharp cuts to overall refugee admissions, renewing debate over the national security implications of refugee policy.



The United States has a long history of accepting refugees fleeing war, violence or persecution. From the aftermath of World War II to wars in Asia and the collapse of the Soviet bloc, there has not been a shortage of people seeking to escape dire conditions and applying for refugee status in the United States. According to State Department data, more than 3.3 million refugees have been resettled in the United States since 1975.

After the Vietnam War and the record high number of refugees from Southeast Asia, [Congress passed the Refugee Act](http://www.rcusa.org/history) of 1980 (signed into law by President Jimmy Carter), which established the Office of Refugee Resettlement, standardized the refugee admission process and serves as the legal basis for U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) to this day. The year the law passed, refugee admissions peaked at an all-time historic high with more than 200,000 individuals being admitted to the U.S., largely from Southeast Asia.

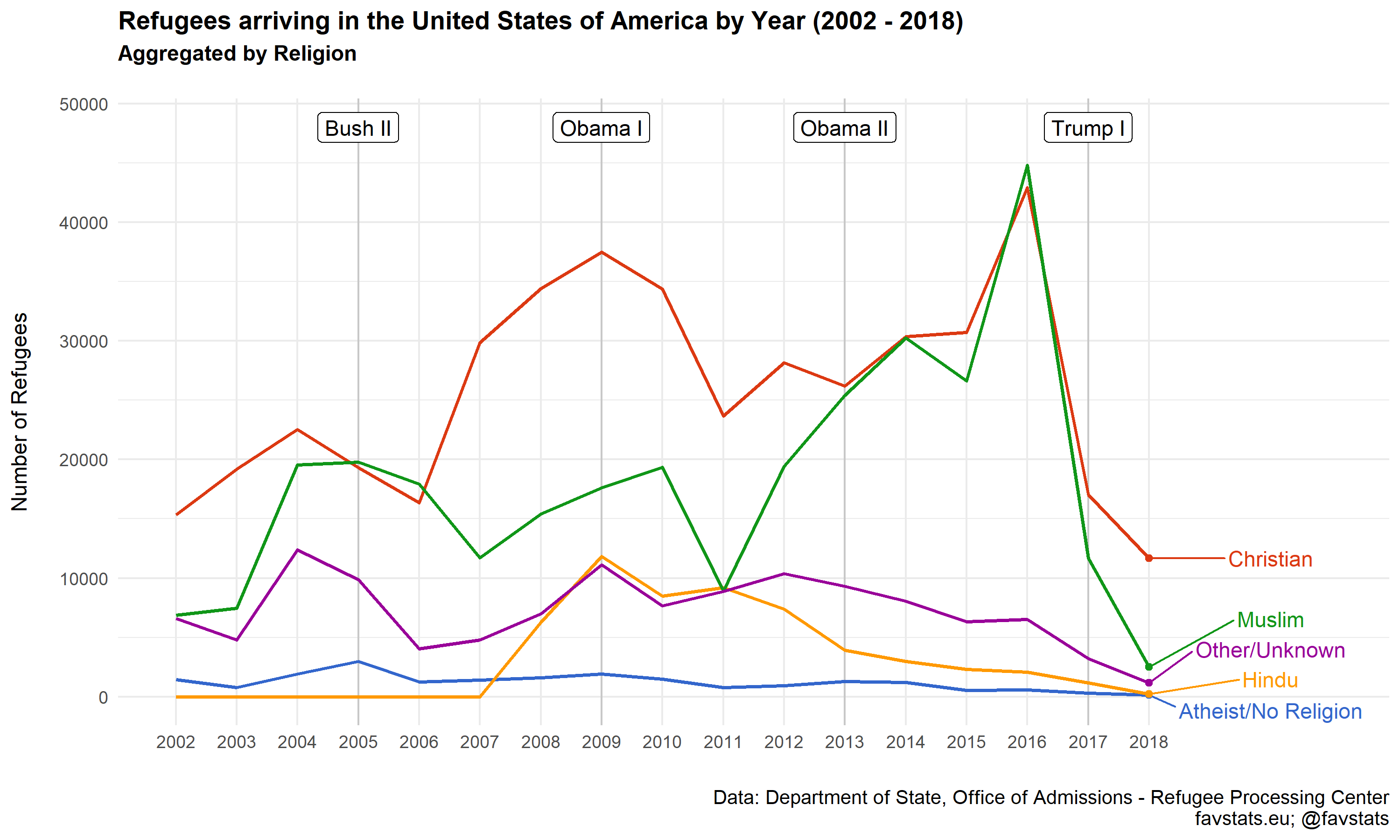
With the fall of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Eastern bloc, refugee numbers peaked again in the early to mid 1990s with a total of 776.000 arrivals between the period of 1990 and 1996. Out of those, 40% came from the Soviet Union or countries previously under its control. Between 1997 and 2000, another 300.000 refugees arrived, mostly from Europe (37%) due to the wars in former Yugoslavia and the genocide in Kosovo. Since then, refugee admissions from Europe have decreased significantly – only 8% of all refugees resettled in the U.S. between 2001 and 2018 came from Europe.

After the 9/11 attacks , refugee numbers experienced a significant drop as President George W. Bush halted admission processes for several months. In 2002 and 2003, the U.S. took in fewer than 29.000 refugees each year, down from 70.000 admission in 2001. Starting in 2004, refugee admissions started to increase again. Almost half, 50.000 refugees out of 107.000 refugees in 2004 and 2005, came in from Africa alone.

During the Obama administration, admissions mostly stayed between 55.000 and 85.000 refugees per year, except for the years of 2011 and 2012. In fiscal 2016, the Obama administration [resettled 12,587 Syrian refugees](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/20/u-s-on-track-to-reach-obama-administrations-goal-of-resettling-110000-refugees-this-year/), more than 20% above the original target.

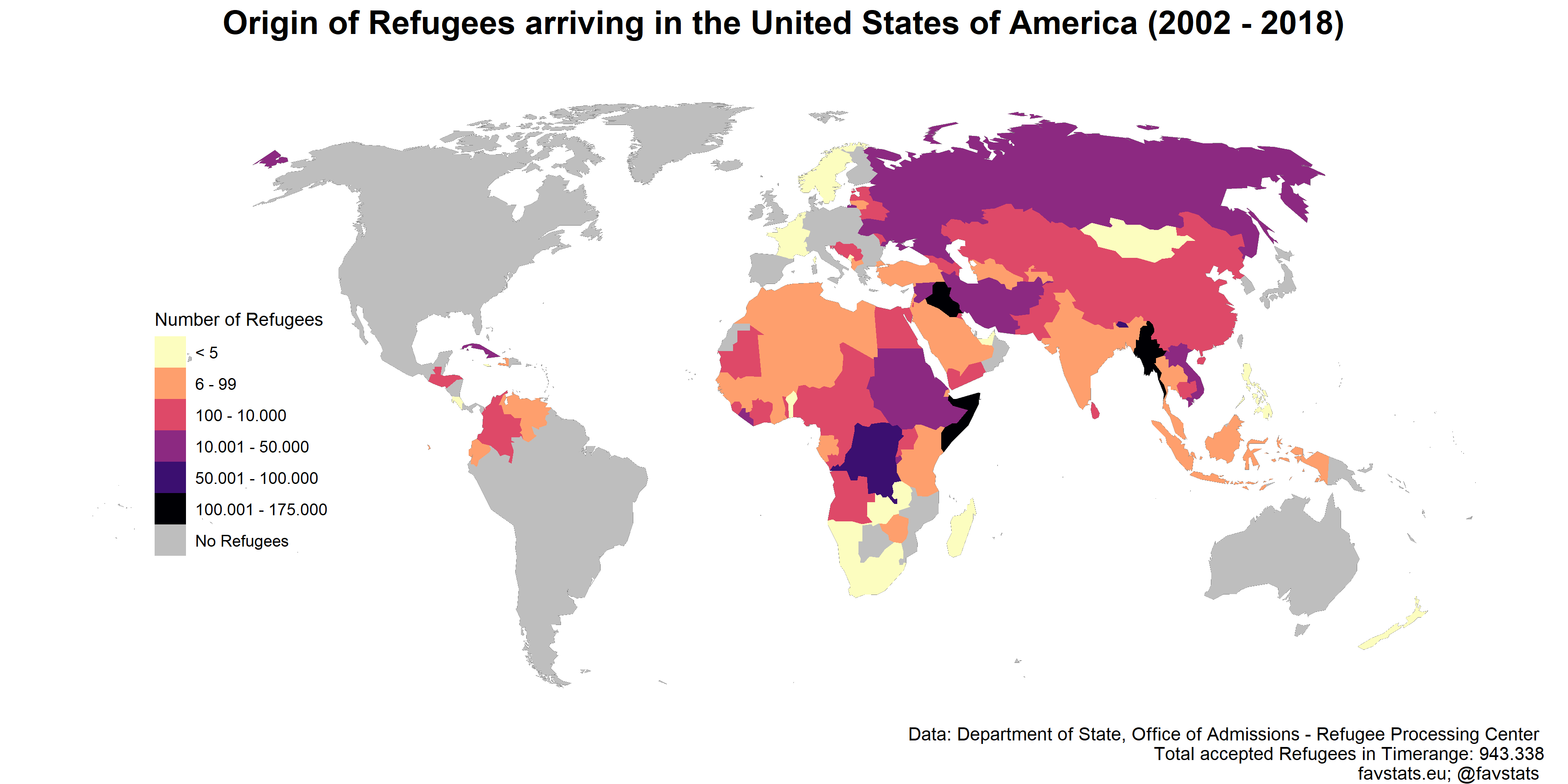
Now, in what is described as the world’s worst refugee crisis since World War II, the Trump administration is resettling a record low number of refugees, less than 20.000 people in the fiscal year 2018: the lowest number since 1977.

**Who are the refugees?**



The state department provides us with some demographic information about the refugees from 2002 onwards. Except for three years (2005, 2006 and 2016) most of the admitted refugees in each year were Christian. Here too, we can see a sharp decline once the Trump administration came in to power in 2017.

**Where do refugees come from?**



Given the current crisis at the border, one might expect that there are a bunch of refugees from the South America. A look at the data though, reveals that the U.S. barely takes any refugees from South America. Why is that the case?

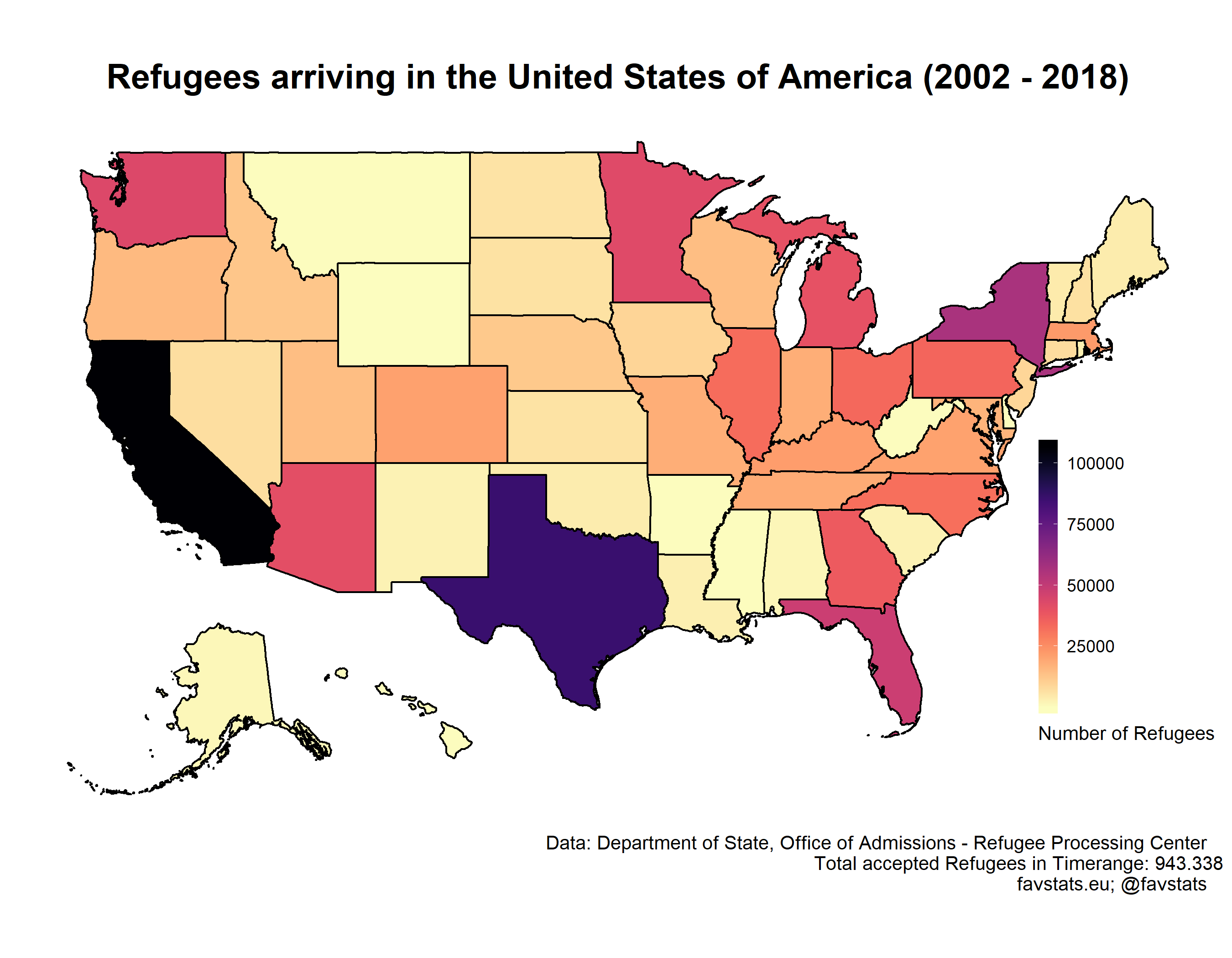
The United States differentiates between *refugees* and *asylum seekers*.

The [U.S. Code defines a refugee](https://www.uscis.gov/laws/immigration-and-nationality-act) as any person outside of the U.S. that is of special humanitarian concern to the U.S. and “has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.”

Refugees are typically admitted through the UNHCR's Resettlement Program after their refugee status has been assessed and they have been vetted by the State Department, a process that takes at least 18 months. While many immigrants, legal and undocumented, come from Central and South America, U.S. regulations make it difficult for them to qualify as refugees as they have to present themselves at a port of entry or be within the territory of the U.S. to seek asylum (which refers to a different process).

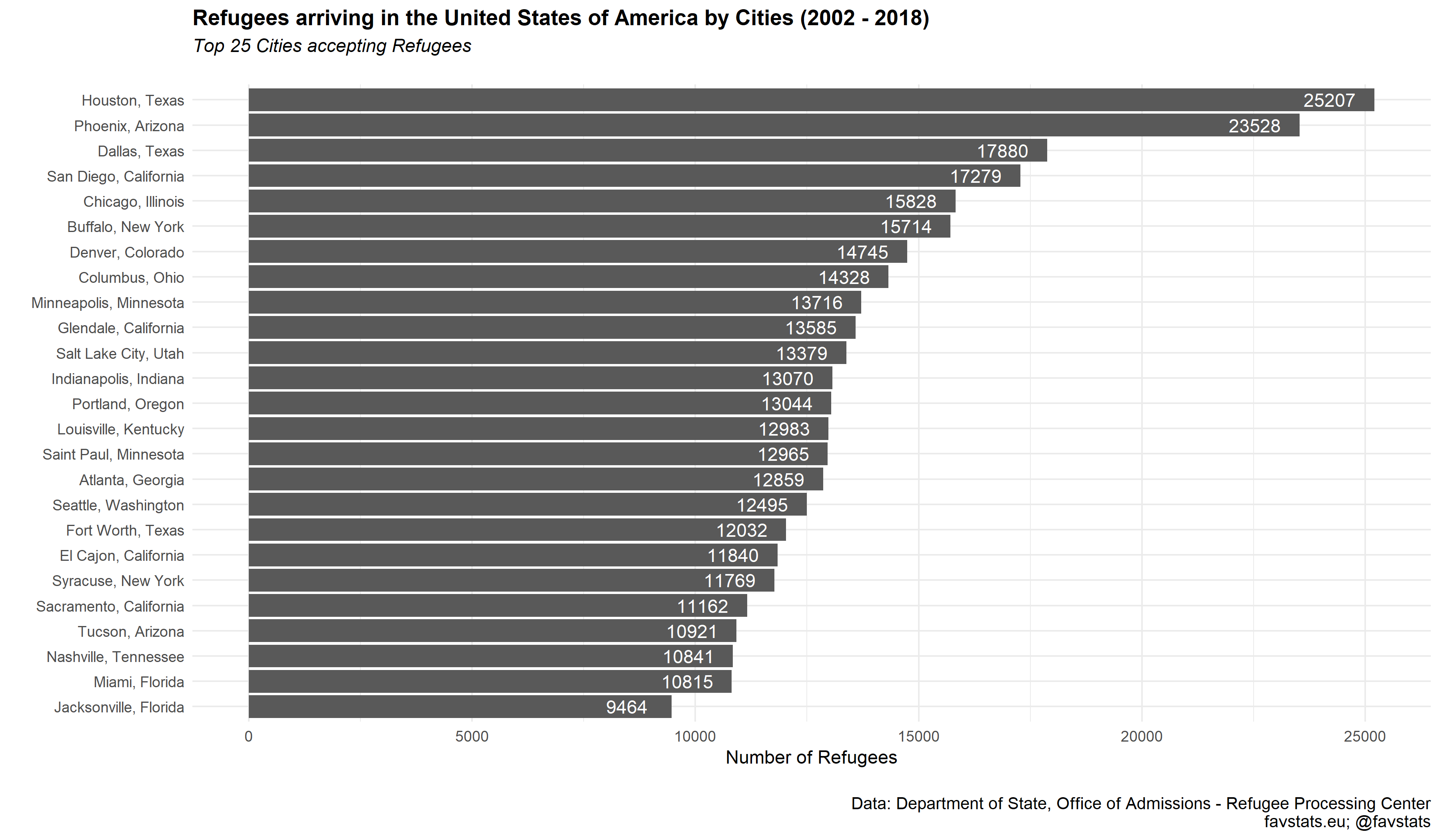
The highest number of refugees from 2002 to 2018 came from Somalia, Iraq and Myanmar followed by the Congo. Percentages? Events?

**Where do refugees go?**



Finally, one can ask where the admitted refugees will go. Most refugees from 2002 to 2018 were admitted in California. Almost 10% of all refugees were admitted there. Not very surprisingly, the Midwest took in the fewest number of refugees.

By county? Add cities?



Here’s a long-term view of refugees in the United States. Refugee admissions peaked in 1981 with the Refugee Act of 1980.

[Write something about the Refugee Act of 1980]

Most refugees at the time came from Asia and more specifically (which Country)?

1986 refugees from the Soviet Union and regions of the east bloc started coming in they peaked in 1992, the year the Soviet Union fell, with a total of 140.000 admitted refugees that year.

A next focus is the drop after 9/11. Bush enacted such and such which led to a sharp drop in 2002.

In the years after, the number slowly to an average of roughly 75.000 refugees per year. This all changed in 2016 with the election of Donald Trump. Travel ban and other things led to a sharp decline in admitted refugees and the Trump administration broke two low number records in a row. In 2018, the U.S. admitted the lowest number of refugees since 1977.

That is where we are now.