

March 2018
Immigration Bureau, Ministry of Justice, JAPAN

Number of applicants recognized as refugees in 2017

-The number of applications for recognition of refugee status was 19,629, an increase of 8,728 applicants (about 80%) compared with the previous year. In addition, the number of applicants who filed appeals was 8,530, which was an increase of 3,333 (about 64%) when compared with the previous year. These numbers are the highest ever.

-As a result of the refugee recognition procedures, 65 applicants were permitted to stay in Japan. Among them, 20 applicants were recognized as refugees, while 45 applicants were permitted to stay due to humanitarian consideration although they did not qualify as refugees.

There were some wrong figures in this content. We sincerely apologize for the mistakes and have corrected them in April 2018. The corrected figures are as per the attached "List of Errata".

1. Application for refugee recognition (primary examination)

(1) Number of applications for refugee recognition

The number of foreign nationals who applied for refugee recognition (hereinafter referred to as "applicants") was 19,629, an increase of 8,728 applicants (about 80%) compared with the previous year.

Among them, 1,563 applicants, or about 8%, had re-submitted their application for refugee recognition on multiple occasions (hereinafter referred to as "repeat applicants") in the past.

The nationalities of the applicants covered 82 countries and the main nationalities were the Philippines, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Nepal.

(2) Processing status

The number of processed applications for refugee recognition was 11,367, an increase of 3,174 applicants (about 39%) compared to the previous year.

The breakdown consisted of 19 applicants recognized as refugees (hereinafter referred to as "recognized refugees"), 9,736 applicants who were not recognized as refugees (hereinafter referred to as "non-recognized applicants"), and 1,612 applicants who withdrew their applications, etc.

2. Appeals

(1) Number of appeals filed

The number of foreign nationals who filed appeals against dispositions denying them recognition of refugee status (hereinafter referred to as "petitioners") was 8,530 petitioners, an increase of 3,333 petitioners (about 64%) compared with the previous year.

The nationalities of the petitioners covered 62 countries and the main nationalities were Vietnam, the Philippines, Nepal, Indonesia and Turkey.

(2) Processing status

The number of processed appeals was 4,391, an increase of 1,455 petitioners (about 50%)

from the previous year.

The breakdown consisted of 1 petitioner whose appeal was deemed to be “with grounds”, 3,084 petitioners whose appeal was deemed to be “without grounds”, and 1,306 petitioners who withdrew their appeals, etc.

3. Number of applicants recognized as refugees or permitted residence due to humanitarian consideration

As a result of the refugee recognition procedures, 65 applicants were permitted to stay in Japan.

Among them, a total of 20 persons comprising the 19 persons in 1 (2) above and the 1 person in 2 (2) above were recognized as refugees, and 45 applicants, who were not recognized as refugees, were permitted to stay due to humanitarian consideration.

Number of applicants recognized as refugees in 2017

1. Number of applications for refugee recognition and number of appeals filed

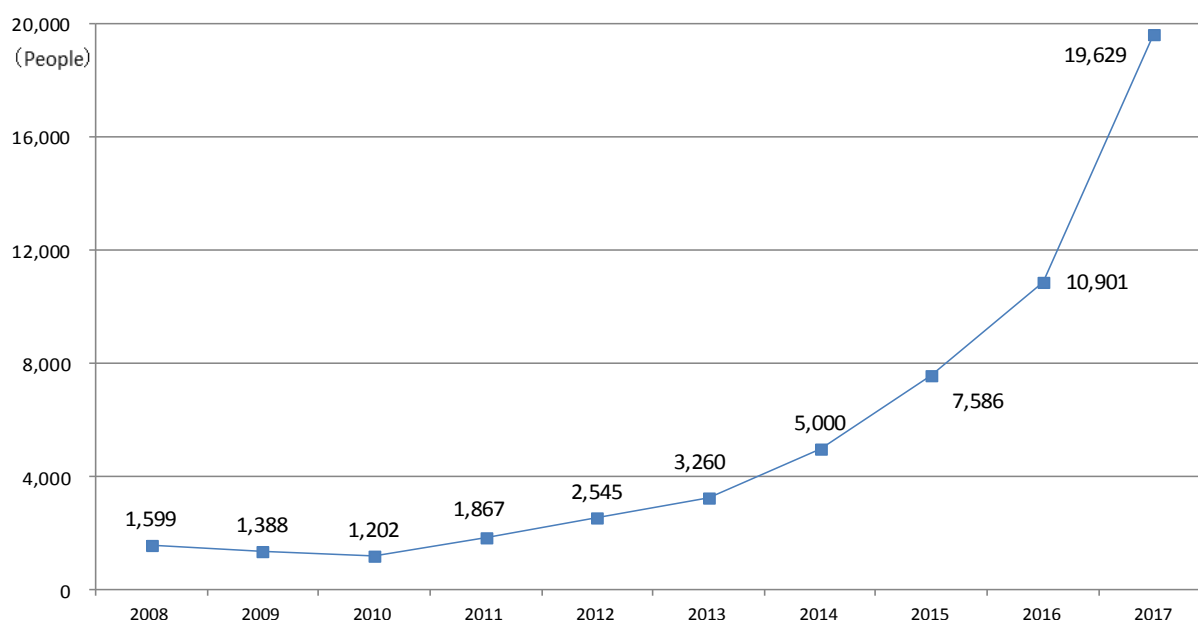
(1) Number of applications for refugee recognition

(a) In recent years, the number of applications for refugee recognition (hereinafter referred to as “number of applications”) has been increasing rapidly every year with an approximate 50% increase compared to the previous year, and in 2017, the number of applications was 19,629, an increase of 8,728 applicants (about 80%) compared to the previous year, which is the largest number ever.

Of the 19,629 applicants, the number of applications submitted at the airports and seaports was 133.

Table 1 and Figure 1: Changes in the number of applications for refugee recognition

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number of applications	1,599	1,388	1,202	1,867	2,545	3,260	5,000	7,586	10,901	19,629

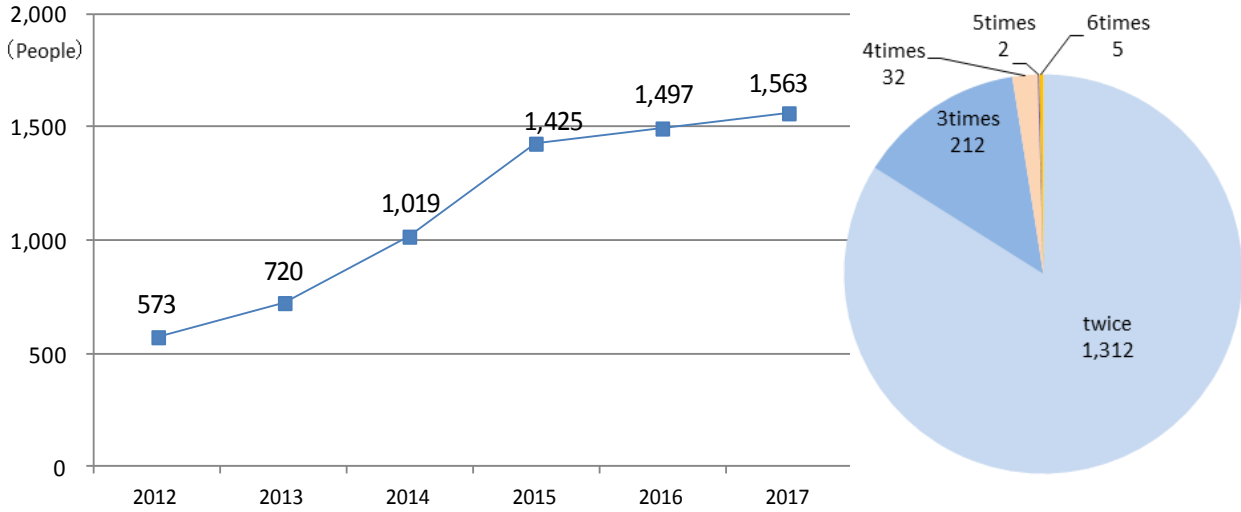


(b) Since no restrictions are specified in the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act on the number of times an applicant may submit an application for refugee recognition, 1,563 applicants, which is approximately 8% of the total number of applicants, are repeat applicants, and the biggest number of applications from the same repeat applicant was six applications.

As mentioned in (a) above, while the number of applications has reached a record high, the number of repeat applications is also the highest number ever. However, the increase has only been slight when compared to the rapid increase in the number of whole applications, most of the rapidly increasing applications for recognition of refugee status have been submitted by first-time applicants for recognition of refugee status.

Table 2 and Figure 2: Changes in the number of repeated applications

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	twice	3times	4times	5times	6times
Number of applications	573	720	1,019	1,425	1,497	1,563	1,312	212	32	2	5



(c) The nationalities of the applicants have grown to 82 countries, slightly increasing from the 79 countries in the previous year. The main nationalities are as shown in Figure 3 and Table 3.

Among them, the top 5 countries alone account for about 70% of the total number of applications, while the top 10 countries alone account for about 90%. The majority of applicants are concentrated in specific nationalities.

Meanwhile, the number of applicants from countries which, according to the “Global Trends 2016” press release of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) issued in June 2017, are considered to be the top five countries in the world from which a large number of people are being forced to flee (Syria, Colombia, Afghanistan, Iraq, South Sudan) was only 36 applicants. The majority of applications for refugee recognition that are rapidly increasing in Japan are from applicants originating from countries where there are no circumstances causing a mass exodus of refugees / displaced persons.

Figure 3: Number of applications for refugee recognition by nationality

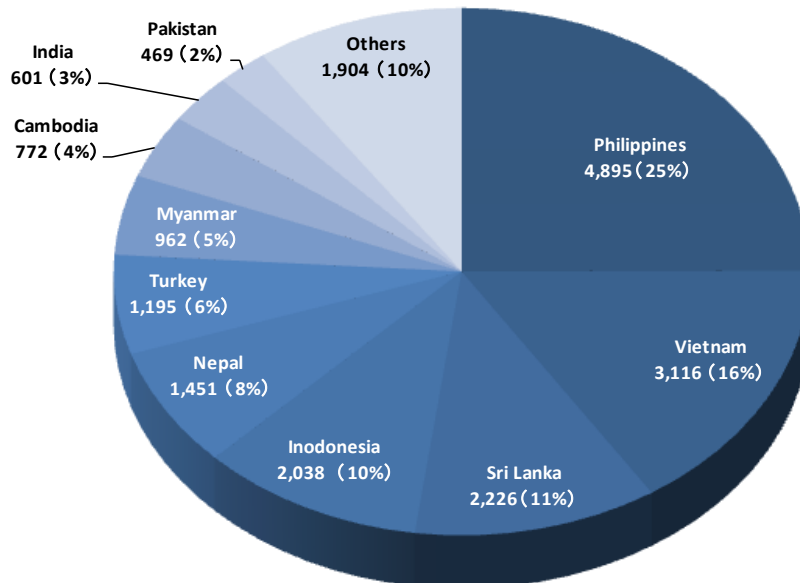


Table 3: Changes in the top twenty five countries in the number of applications by nationality

(People)

	2015		2016		2017		Rate of change (compared to the previous year)	Percentage of total application
1	Nepal	1,768	Indonesia	1,829	Philippines	4,895	246.7%	24.9%
2	Indonesia	969	Nepal	1,451	Vietnam	3,116	190.7%	15.9%
3	Turkey	926	Philippines	1,412	Sri Lanka	2,226	137.3%	11.3%
4	Myanmar	808	Turkey	1,143	Indonesia	2,038	11.4%	10.4%
5	Vietnam	574	Vietnam	1,072	Nepal	1,451	0.0%	7.4%
6	Sri Lanka	469	Sri Lanka	938	Turkey	1,195	4.5%	6.1%
7	Philippines	299	Myanmar	650	Myanmar	962	48.0%	4.9%
8	Pakistan	295	India	470	Cambodia	772	142.8%	3.9%
9	Bangladesh	244	Cambodia	318	India	601	27.9%	3.1%
10	India	229	Pakistan	289	Pakistan	469	62.3%	2.4%
11	China	167	Bangladesh	242	Bangladesh	438	81.0%	2.2%
12	Nigeria	154	Ghana	174	China	315	101.9%	1.6%
13	Thailand	83	China	156	Iran	120	12.1%	0.6%
14	Iran	68	Nigeria	108	Ghana	106	-39.1%	0.5%
15	Cameroon	67	Iran	107	Cameroon	98	48.5%	0.5%
16	Cambodia	67	Cameroon	66	Tunisia	87	38.1%	0.4%
17	Ghana	50	Tunisia	63	Nigeria	77	-28.7%	0.4%
18	Uganda	42	Senegal	45	Senegal	75	66.7%	0.4%
19	Tunisia	32	Uganda	39	Uganda	68	74.4%	0.3%
20	DR of the Congo	24	DR of the Congo	39	Thailand	65	209.5%	0.3%
21	Senegal	23	Guinea	38	Mongolia	61	110.3%	0.3%
22	Ukraine	20	Egypt	31	DR of the Congo	35	-12.5%	0.2%
23	Ethiopia	17	Mongolia	29	Guinea	26	-31.6%	0.1%
24	Guinea	16	Thailand	21	Egypt	24	-22.6%	0.1%
25	Egypt	14	Ethiopia	13	Ethiopia	22	69.2%	0.1%
—	Others	161	Others	158	Others	287	82.8%	1.5%
Total		7,586		10,901		19,629	80.1%	100.0%

(d) The status of residence at the time of the submission of the application by the applicants was 18,716 (approximately 95% of the total number of applications) for legal residents, 913 (approximately 5% of the total number of applications) for illegal residents, with legal residents making up the majority.

The status of residence of legal residents was 11,323 for “Temporary Visitor” entering for the purpose of sightseeing etc. The number for “Technical Intern Training”, the majority of whom had entered Japan having received a recommendation from an organization of the national or local government of the home country or an equivalent organization, was 3,037. Those who with the status of residence of “Student” was 2,036, and those who submitted an application for refugee recognition after they had expressed their intention to depart from Japan and had been granted permission to stay having requested a period to prepare for departure thereby being granted “Designated Activities (Departure Preparation Period)” was 1,019. The number of applicants who had repeatedly submitted applications for recognition of refugee status and had been granted “Designated Activities (Processing of Refugee Recognition Application)” was 709. In particular, the number of applications from applicants residing in Japan with “Temporary Visitor”, “Technical Intern Training” or “Designated Activities (Departure Preparation Period)” has increased significantly to more than double when compared to the previous year.

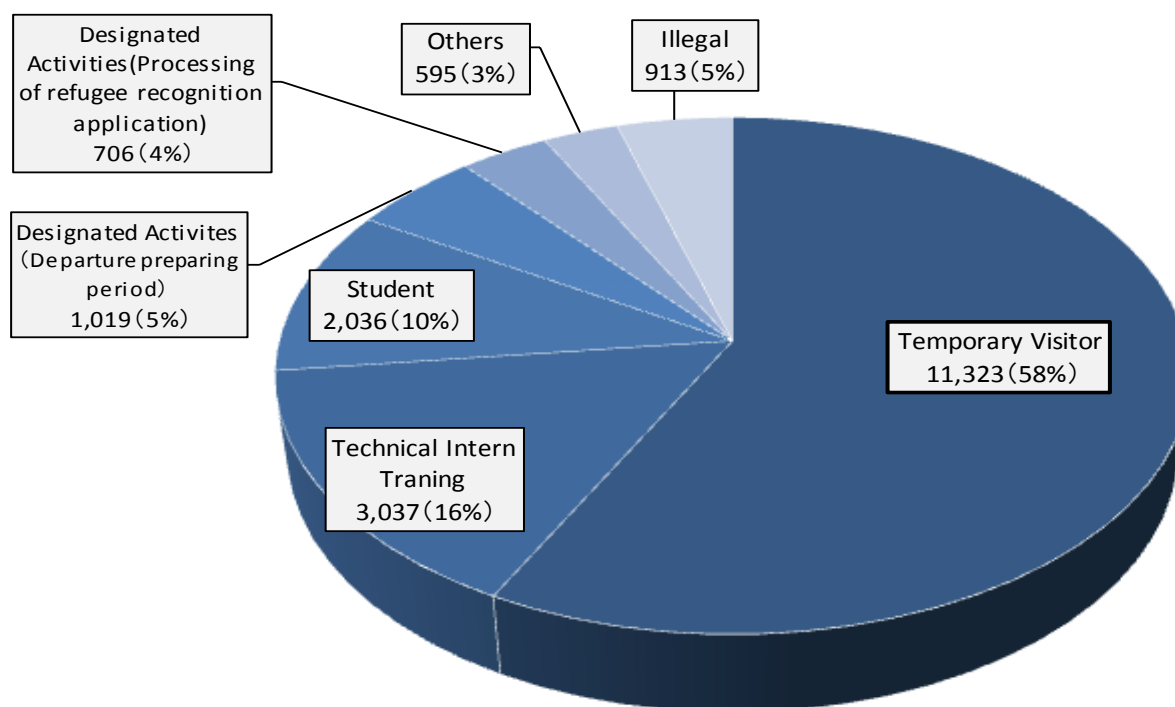
Table 4: Changes in the number of applications for refugee recognition by status of residence
(People)

		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Rate of change (compared to the previous year)	Percentage of total application
Legal		2,404	4,134	6,394	9,702	18,716	92.9%	95.3%
Status of Residence	Temporary Visitor	1,351	1,813	2,882	5,395	11,323	109.9%	57.7%
	Technical Intern Training	118	414	731	1,106	3,037	174.6%	15.5%
	Student	197	699	1,413	1,399	2,036	45.5%	10.4%
	Designated Activities (Departure preparing period) ※Note1.	–	–	–	436	1,019	133.7%	5.2%
	Designated Activities (Processing of refugee recognition application)	376	628	849	784	706	-9.9%	3.6%
	Others	362	580	519	582	595	2.2%	3.0%
Illegal ※Note2.		856	866	1,192	1,199	913	-23.9%	4.7%
Total		3,260	5,000	7,586	10,901	19,629	80.1%	100.0%

※Note 1. In these statistics, “Designated Activities (departure preparing period)” is included in “Others” because it was not counted in 2014 and 2015.

※Note 2. “Illegal” means a foreign national who does not have permission to stay.

Figure 4: Breakdown of applications for refugee recognition by status of residence



(e) The breakdown of the sex of the applicants was 13,679 men (approximately 70% of the total number of applications) and 5,950 women (approximately 30% of the total), with the proportion of men higher than that of women.

In addition, looking at the men and women, by age, the largest number of applicants

were in their 20s for both men and women, and further, the percentage of applicants from 20 to 34 years of age was about 66% for men and about 64% for women, while for both men and women, the number of applicants under the age of 20 was very small accounting for less than 10%.

In Europe*, the proportion of young people was high with about 28% for male applicants and about 40% for the female applicants accounting for the applicants under the age of 18 years, and in addition, the proportion of people between the ages of 18 to 34 years was 57% for men and 40% for women, which is lower than the numbers in Japan, showing that the trends of the applicants differ from those of Japan. From this, it is clear that there are many young, vulnerable applicants, both male and female in Europe, while in Japan many of the applicants are of an age where they are able to work.

*Eurostat “Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex (data for 2016)

Figure 5: Number of applications for refugee recognition by sex and age groups

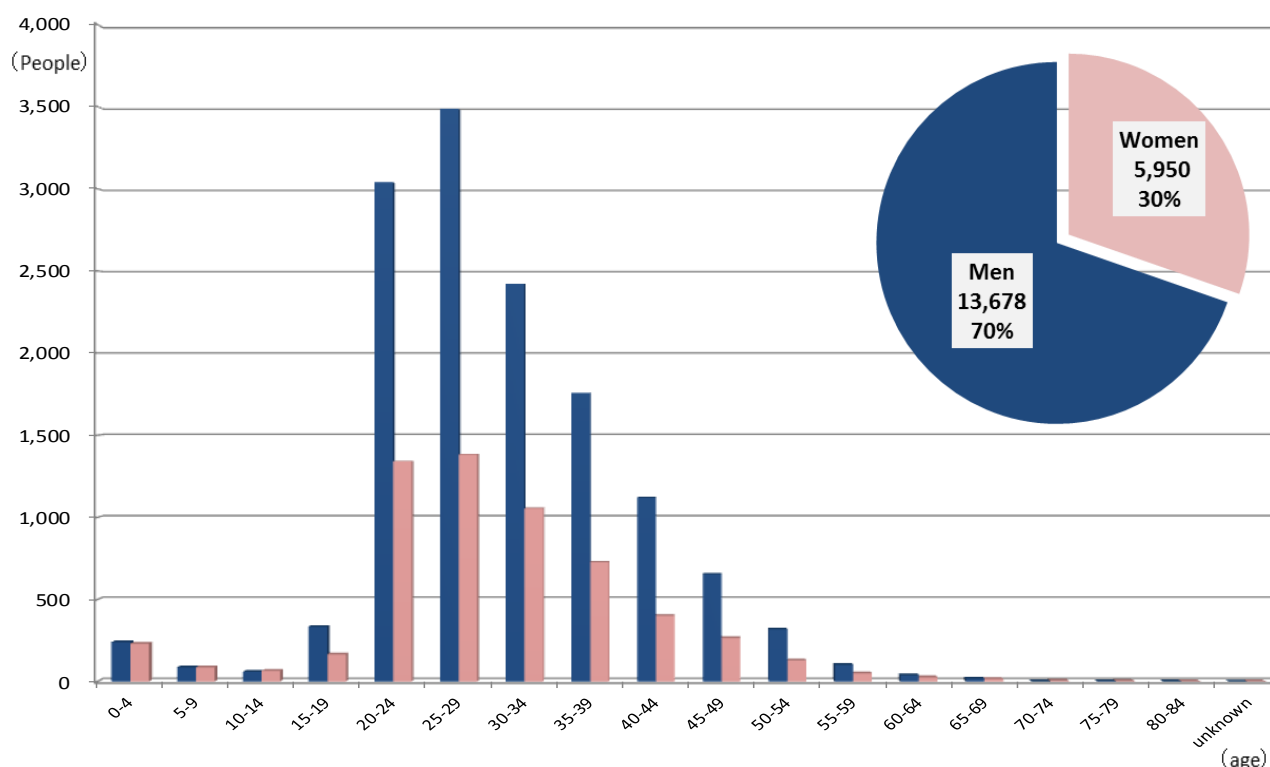
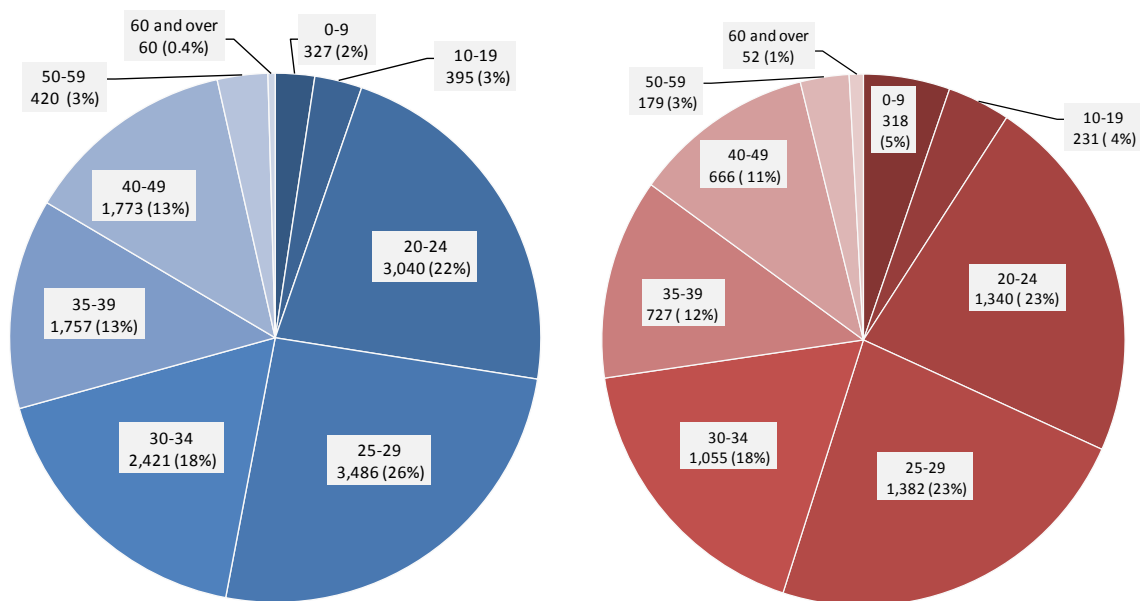


Figure 6: Number and percentage of applications for refugee recognition by sex and age groups
(Men) (Women)

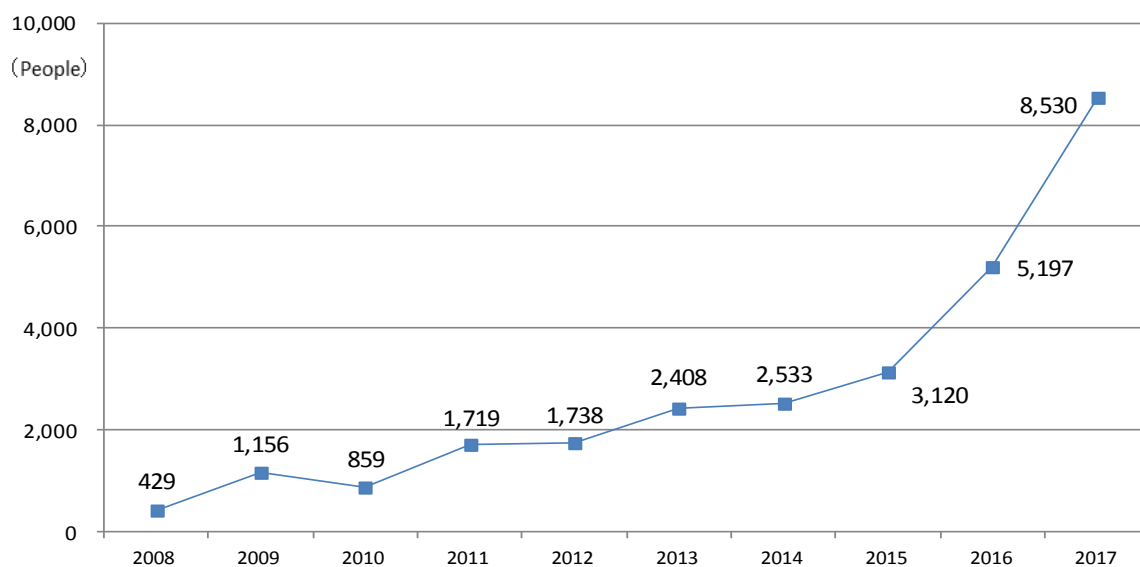


(2) Number of appeals filed

(a) The number of petitioners has seen an increasing trend each year in line with the fact that the number of applications filed in recent years has increased, and in 2017 the number was 8,530, a significant increase of 3,333 petitioners (about 64%) compared with the previous year.

Table 5 and Figure 7: Changes in the number of appeals filed

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number of appeals	429	1,156	859	1,719	1,738	2,408	2,533	3,120	5,197	8,530

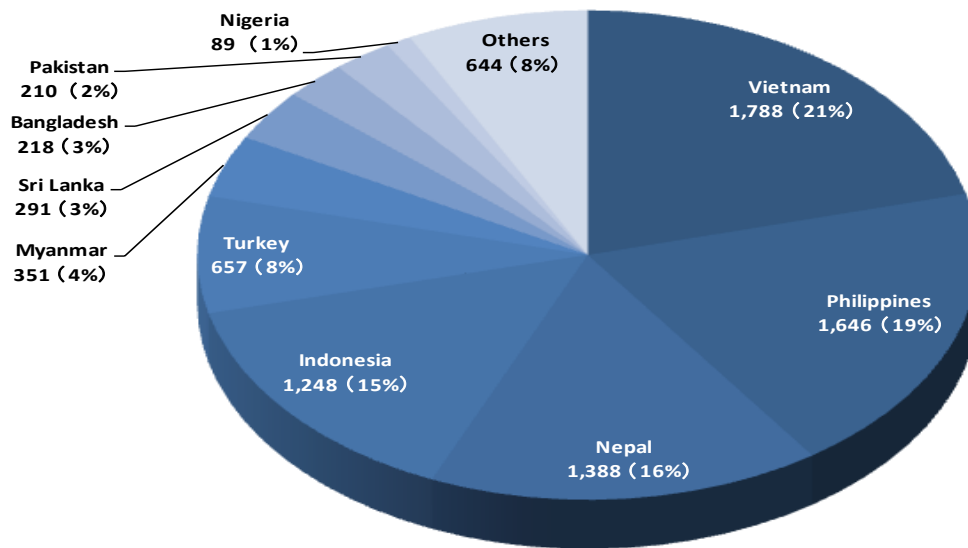


(b) The nationalities of the petitioners has increased from 50 countries in the previous year to 62 countries, and the main nationalities are as shown in Table 6 and Figure 8. Of this number, approximately 79% of the total number of petitioners are from the top five countries alone, and about 92% are from the top 10 countries alone, and the majority of petitioners are concentrated in specific nationalities.

Table 6: Changes in the top fifteen countries in the number of appeals filed by nationality (People)

	2015		2016		2017		Rate of change (compared to the previous year)	Percentage of total application
1	Nepal	887	Indonesia	1,229	Vietnam	1,788	159.1%	21.0%
2	Turkey	462	Nepal	939	Philippines	1,646	363.7%	19.3%
3	Sri Lanka	309	Vietnam	690	Nepal	1,388	47.8%	16.3%
4	Vietnam	214	Turkey	575	Indonesia	1,248	1.5%	14.6%
5	Myanmar	198	Philippines	355	Turkey	657	14.3%	7.7%
6	Pakistan	151	Sri Lanka	348	Myanmar	351	25.4%	4.1%
7	Thailand	126	Myanmar	280	Sri Lanka	291	-16.4%	3.4%
8	Bangladesh	117	India	189	Bangladesh	218	34.6%	2.6%
9	India	90	Bangladesh	162	Pakistan	210	76.5%	2.5%
10	Philippines	73	Pakistan	119	Nigeria	89	81.6%	1.0%
11	Indonesia	72	Iran	55	Iran	88	60.0%	1.0%
12	Nigeria	70	Nigeria	49	Ghana	79	79.5%	0.9%
13	Ghana	68	Ghana	44	India	63	-66.7%	0.7%
14	Iran	45	Cameroon	30	Tunisia	58	-	0.7%
15	Cameroon	45	Cambodia	19	Cambodia	57	200.0%	0.7%
—	Others	193	Others	114	Others	299		3.5%
Total		3,120		5,197		8,530	64.1%	100.0%

Figure 8: Number of appeals by nationality



2. Status of processing

(1) Applications for refugee recognition (primary examination)

(a) The number of applications for refugee recognition processed was 11,367, an increase of 3,174 applicants (about 39%) compared with the previous year. This number consisted of 19 applicants recognized as refugees, 9,736 non-recognized applicants, and 1,612 applicants who withdrew their application, etc.

Of these, the number of those who withdrew their application accounted for about 14% of the number of applications processed, and the nationalities of most of these applicants were the Philippines, Vietnam, and Turkey, while the main reasons given were “Return to the home country”, “Because I was able to solve my problem, and “Because I am not a refugee”, and many of the applicants returned voluntarily to their home country.

(b) The nationalities of the applicants denied recognition of refugee status covered 66 countries, with the main nationalities being 2,295 from Vietnam, 1,794 from the Philippines, 1,644 from Nepal, 1,315 from Indonesia, 675 from Turkey, 475 from Myanmar, 384 from

Sri Lanka, 180 from Bangladesh, 136 from Pakistan, and 93 from Nigeria.

(2) Appeals filed

- (a) The number of appeals processed was 4,391, an increase of 1,455 applicants (about 50%) compared with the previous year. This breakdown includes one applicant (recognized refugee) who was deemed to have grounds for the appeal, 3,084 applicants who were deemed to be without grounds (non-recognized applicants), and 1,306 applicants who withdrew their appeals, etc. Of these, the number of those who withdrew their appeal accounted for approximately 30% of the number of applications processed.
- (b) The main nationalities of non-recognized applicants were 797 from Indonesia, 606 from Vietnam, 412 from Nepal, 276 from the Philippines, 259 from Turkey, 146 from Myanmar, 128 from Sri Lanka, 91 from Pakistan, 50 from Ghana, and 47 from Bangladesh.

3. Number of applicants recognized as refugees or permitted to stay due to humanitarian consideration

As a result of the refugee recognition procedures, 65 applicants were permitted to stay in Japan. The breakdown is as follows.

- (1) The number of recognized refugees was 20 comprising the 19 applicants recognized as refugees in the primary examination and the 1 applicant recognized as a refugee in the appeal procedure, while the number of nationalities covered 10 countries, with the main nationalities being 5 from Egypt, 5 from Syria and 2 from Afghanistan.
- (2) The number of applicants who were not recognized as refugees but were permitted to stay due to humanitarian consideration was 45. Of these, 14 persons were permitted to stay based on the situation of the home country, and the main nationalities of these were 4 from Syria, 3 from Myanmar, 2 from Iraq and 2 from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

4. Operational status of permission for provisional stay

While the number of applicants for whom a judgment was rendered on permission for provisional stay was 784, the number of applicants granted permission for provisional stay was 35 (Note 1), a decline of 23 compared to the previous year. The main reasons for not being granted permission was:

- Submitted an application for refugee recognition after six months had passed since landing in Japan (the day on which the applicant became aware of the fact in cases where the grounds for the person becoming a refugee occurred while such person was in Japan): 426 applicants.
- Reasonable grounds to suspect the person is likely to flee: 330 applicants.
- Persons who had already been issued with a deportation order: 214 applicants.

※Note 1. “Permission for provisional stay” is a system whereby if an illegal resident has submitted an application for recognition of refugee status, such applicant will be granted permission for provisional stay in Japan so as to stabilize the legal status of the applicant for refugee recognition during the period of the illegal residence, except for cases falling under the grounds for exclusion stipulated in Article 61-2-4, paragraph (1) of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act.

※Note 2. If there are multiple reasons (grounds for exclusion) for why one applicant was not granted permission, all of the reasons are included in the calculations.

5. Contents of the claims in the refugee recognition applications (preliminary screening)

(1) Main claims of the recognized refugees

- A family member who was the leader of a rebel army in the home country died as the

result of participating in a battle against the government forces, and the applicant is also deemed to be related to the rebel army, and is wanted by the government of the home country.

-The applicant is regarded as an anti-government person in the home country having supported the anti-government forces despite not only being a public official but also being a party member of the ruling party.

-The applicant was intimidated through torture by anti-government forces having criticized the anti-government forces as a commentator via the media.

(2) Main claims of the non-recognized applicants

- Claimed trouble with an acquaintance, neighboring resident, or the mafia etc. (approximately 48% of the total number of persons denied recognition of refugee status).
- Claimed the possibility of harm from persons related to the home government or an opposition party due to political activities (about 22% of the total number)
- Claimed the possibility of persecution due to believing in a specific religion or conversion to a religion (about 6% of the total number)
- Claimed anxiety about security in the home country (about 5% of the total number)
- Claimed the possibility of persecution due to race (about 5% of the total number)
- Claimed trouble with a relative such as over inheritance or marital problems (about 5% of the total number)
- Stated a desire to work in Japan (about 3% of the total number)

Figure 9: Breakdown of main claims of the non-recognized applicants

