Refugees commonly report exposure to torture, mass violence, political terror, deprivation, gender-based violence, and conflict. These different types of traumatic events may occur repeatedly and over extended periods of time. Refugees may also experience traumatic events associated with their forced displacement, including making dangerous journeys to reach safety.

Refugees endure significant losses. This can include the traumatic loss of a loved one, forced separation from family, as well as the loss of community and social connections, homes and livelihoods.

Following displacement, refugees often face ongoing insecurity and uncertainty regarding their future. This may include long periods of time in temporary accommodation, refugee camps or immigration detention.

Even if refugees resettle in a new host country, they often encounter significant daily stressors. These may include:

- Economic stressors relating to employment, financial security or safe housing
- Social stressors such as isolation or discrimination
- Settlement stressors including communication difficulties and not feeling connected to their new home.

The majority of refugees reside in low- and middle-income countries. Around one quarter of refugees live in refugee camps, while the remainder live in community or urban settings. In 2021, less than 1% of refugees permanently resettled in a new country, such as the USA, Canada, Sweden or Australia.

Asylum-seekers have not yet been granted refugee status. In 2022, there are over 100 million forcibly displaced people globally, including over 20 million refugees and over 50 million internally displaced people – this is the highest number of forcibly displaced people ever recorded.

Refugees & asylum-seekers are recognized as having a well-founded fear of persecution (usually by the host country or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR).

Refugees are forced to flee their home country because of violence, persecution or conflict.

An internally displaced person has been forced to leave their home but has not crossed an international border.

Refugee Trauma and Mental Health

Developed by the Refugee Trauma and Recovery Program (RTRP) UNSW Sydney, in particular Dr Belinda Liddell, Dr Yulisha Byrow, Natalie Mastrogiovanni and Isabelle Show.