

What is the Difference between Immigrants and Refugees?

Refugees

Refugees are forced to leave their home countries because of war, environmental disasters, political persecution and/or religious or ethnic intolerance. They come to the United States with a special immigration status that gives them automatic admission into the country and helps them connect with family members who are already in the country. This status also provides them with a “green card” or a permit to work. Refugees are “invited” to live in the United States to start a new life.

Immigrants

Immigrants generally come to the U.S. for one of two reasons:

- they are joining family members who already live in this country
or
- they are “economic immigrants” seeking work and a better life for themselves and their families

Immigrants and refugees have a good deal in common. They experience new cultures and languages. They are often ethnic minorities who might face open discrimination or other forms of hostility, regardless of their immigration status.

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