

This note offers an overview and analysis of global statelessness statistics for the end of 2019, as published in June 2020 in UNHCR's [2019 Global Trends Report](#). The available country-by-country data on people under UNHCR's statelessness mandate is found in ["Table 5"](#),¹ in which the footnotes are an important source of further information on what the data covers and where it has been drawn from. A short technical note and glossary to help understand the global statelessness data is provided at the end of this analytical report.

Summary of key findings

4.2 million stateless people are reported in the new data published, which covers 76 countries. As the *Global Trends* report explains, "fewer than half of all countries in the world submit any data and some of the most populous countries in the world with large suspected stateless populations do not report on statelessness at all". UNHCR concludes that "the true extent of statelessness is estimated to be much higher", but does not provide a concrete projection. Nor is the state of statelessness in the world addressed in the *Trends at a glance* section or the web-based summary report, reducing the visibility of the issue. Since there have been no developments on such a scale to suggest that there has been a major shift in the aggregate numbers, ISI continues to use its estimate of at least 15 million stateless people globally. Following developments in Assam, India, in 2019, there is however a real risk that the number will grow, as 1.9 million people's citizenship has been cast into doubt. This emerging context is not flagged in the *Global Trends* narrative, but reporting data as the situation unfolds will be critical to tracking the impact on the overall global picture.

The Rohingya from Myanmar are still the largest stateless population for whom data is provided. This year, the methodology for reporting on displaced Rohingya has been amended further, with available data on Rohingya refugees also provided for India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand – alongside Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and Rohingya in Myanmar. The total number reported across these six countries is 1.57 million, yet this data is still not comprehensive and does not provide a full picture the global Rohingya population.

New data is also reported for Côte d'Ivoire, which has moved to the 'top' of the list of countries with the largest (non-displaced) stateless populations: 955,399 people. The new figures given for Uzbekistan, Greece, Italy and Tajikistan are also *higher* than the data from the previous year. Details are not provided as to what prompted these changes, nor why other reporting has remained static in spite of improved availability of data (e.g. the Netherlands), nor why no figure is provided at all this year for some countries (e.g. Switzerland or Australia). In Thailand, Estonia and Latvia – three countries in the top 10 of largest reported populations globally – the data shows a *decrease* of numbers, but only at a rate of 2.5%, 8.5% and 10% respectively over the past three years. Globally, a total of 754,500 stateless people acquired or confirmed their nationality between 2010 and 2019: important progress and encouraging when seen in absolute numbers, yet less so when understood in percentage terms of the global stateless population. This must also be understood against a context in which inherited statelessness continues to cause tens of thousands of children a year to be born without access to a nationality and where new situations loom that have the potential to generate large-scale statelessness.

¹ Unless indicated otherwise, all data reported in this note is drawn directly from the 2019 *Global Trends* report and its accompanying "Table 5".

1.25 million, or 30%, of the 4.2 million stateless people accounted for globally in the newest statistics are UNHCR-assisted. This drops to just 100,000 if the displaced Rohingya populations are removed from the equation – of whom 62,000 in Côte d'Ivoire. No further details are given as to what “UNHCR-assisted” means. 22 countries remain marked with an asterisk (*), indicating a significant stateless population but no reliable data. Pledges to improve data collection were made by 34 states at the UNHCR High Level Segment on Statelessness in October 2019, but only four of these are countries with a “persistent asterisk”. UNHCR is undertaking a wider effort, in collaboration with national statistical offices, academic experts and other UN agencies to clarify standards and definitions for statistical reporting and develop improved methodologies for data collection. This effort aims to address what a UNHCR technical paper describes as the “disjointed and inconsistent nature of reporting on stateless populations”. It also presents a critical opportunity to revisit the approach to the reporting of stateless *displaced* populations, to explore ways to improve the visibility of information on statelessness within the wider *Global Trends* reports and to further develop the contextual narrative explaining the numbers and what they show about the evolving state of statelessness in the world.

What is the global picture?

4.2 million stateless people are reported in the new data published, which covers 76 countries. Importantly, the *Global Trends* narrative goes on to explain that “fewer than half of all countries in the world submit any data and some of the most populous countries in the world with large suspected stateless populations do not report on statelessness at all”. More specifically, 22 countries remained marked with an asterisk (*) at the end of 2019, indicating a significant stateless population but no reliable data. As such, the *Global Trends* report observes that “the true extent of statelessness is estimated to be much higher”, concluding that “millions of people are stateless across the world”. It should be noted that in the “Trends at a glance” section at the top of the 2019 *Global Trends* report, there is no information about the state of statelessness – whereas prior to 2017, this had included data about the global stateless population. Particularly in the context of the #iBelong campaign, which aims to end statelessness by 2024, it is unfortunate that information on global statelessness has not been prominently displayed in this key section of the report. This year, a feature section following the “Trends at a glance” offers an overview of highlights from “2010-2019: A decade of displacement”. Here, statelessness is included, but only with the mention that *754,500 stateless persons obtained or confirmed a nationality*. The absence of further comment on the state of statelessness globally in the summary overview at the top of the report – as well as any dedicated narrative on statelessness in the web-based summary overview available via unhcr.org/globaltrends2019 – reduces the visibility of the issue.

Previously, for many years, UNHCR had estimated the number of stateless people worldwide to be at least 10 million, a projection which included within it, the estimated stateless populations in countries marked by an asterisk. But this more concrete figure has been replaced with the looser language of “millions” in the last few annual *Global Trends* reports – including this most recent one. Measuring the scale of statelessness is inherently challenging, both methodologically and politically,² and UNHCR has called upon states to improve quantitative and qualitative data on stateless populations as Action 10 of the [Global Action Plan to End Statelessness](#) under UNHCR’s #iBelong campaign. The milestone that had been set for 2017 was 100 states and by 2020 the aim was to have quantitative data available for 120 states. However, in this year’s *Global Trends*, the number of countries reporting statelessness data actually fell. Five countries that had previously done so did not submit data for 2019: Australia, Haiti, Malta, Panama and Switzerland. No further information provided about why data reporting has been interrupted and statistical information on statelessness

² See Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, ‘Counting the world’s stateless: reflections on statistical reporting on statelessness’ in UNHCR Statistical Yearbook 2013, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/54cf99f29.pdf>.

continues to be available in other sources – for instance from the Australian Department of Home Affairs³ and the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration.⁴ Meanwhile, the two countries that reported data for the first time – Indonesia and India – did so due to a change of methodology, which resulted in displaced Rohingya hosted by these countries being included in the *statelessness* data for the first time. The figures reported do not provide a picture of the wider situation of statelessness in either country. Consequently, the use of a ‘looser’ estimate should not by itself, be interpreted to mean there has been a significant drop in statelessness globally.

In an extensive review of publicly available data relating to statelessness globally in 2014, ISI estimated the total figure for the number of people living without a nationality in the world to be at least 15 million.⁵ In each annual *Global Trends* report since then, only a relatively small number of stateless people have been reported to have acquired or confirmed their nationality, so there is no indication of a significant reduction in the numbers. In 2019, 81,100 stateless people were reported to have acquired a nationality. In the same period, following the completion of a detailed mapping study, the figure for the number of stateless persons in Côte d’Ivoire was revised upwards from 692,000 to over 955,000. Further, a significant number of babies are born into statelessness every year. UNHCR previously used the statistic of a child born stateless every 10 minutes (which translated to over 70,000 children a year) – an estimate calculated on the basis of the more conservative, ‘known’ global stateless population.⁶ UNHCR has since stopped using this figure due to methodological concerns. However, when considering that countries marked by asterisks and those featured in the reporting at all were not taken into consideration in establishing this estimate and accounting for the continuing prevalence of intergenerational statelessness, a large number of children are born into statelessness each year. Since ISI’s 2014 survey of available data, there have been no developments on such a scale to suggest that there has been a major shift in the aggregate numbers and ISI continues to use the estimate of at least 15 million to indicate how many people it understands to be stateless globally. There is, however, a real risk that the number of stateless people will grow considerably, following developments in Assam, India in 2019 that have cast 1.9 million people’s citizenship status into doubt. Data collection as the situation unfolds will be critical to understanding the effect on the global statelessness picture.

Where are the largest reported stateless populations?

The ten countries that report the largest stateless populations accounted for over 87% of the overall number of stateless people who were counted in 2019. As seen in the table below, following the publication of improved statistical data, **Côte d’Ivoire** now reports the largest stateless population in the world. In addition to providing a more accurate picture of the scale of statelessness in the country – increasing the total figure by over 250,000 people – the mapping study undertaken by the Ivorian government and UNHCR also produced valuable data disaggregation. As summarised in the *Global Trends* narrative, this more detailed data suggests that women and children are disproportionately affected. Children, for instance, make up 54% of those identified as stateless, while accounting for 48% of the general population of Côte d’Ivoire.

³ See Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness, Statelessness Network Asia Pacific, Refugee Advice & Casework Service and Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, *Joint Submission to the Human Rights Council: Universal Periodic Review – Australia*, 9 July 2020, para. 25. available at: https://law.unimelb.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/3436278/ISI-UPR-Submission-Australia-For-Website.pdf.

⁴ See European Network on Statelessness and Humanrights.ch, *Statelessness Index: Switzerland*, July 2020, available at: https://index.statelessness.eu/sites/default/files/Country%20Briefing%20Switzerland%20ENG_2020.pdf.

⁵ This figure also accounted for stateless refugees and Palestinians who receive assistance from UNRWA, who are not included in the global data on statelessness, which focuses on persons under UNHCR’s 1954 Convention statelessness protection mandate. Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, *The World’s Stateless*, 2014, available at <http://www.institutesi.org/worldsstateless.pdf>.

⁶ This estimate was based on the calculations relating to the “countries hosting the 20 largest stateless populations”. UNHCR, *I am here, I belong. The urgent need to end childhood statelessness*, 2015, p. 1.

Ten countries with highest reported stateless populations reported in UNHCR Global Trends data:

End of 2019	End of 2018	End of 2017	End of 2016
Côte d'Ivoire (955,399)	Bangladesh* (906,635)	Bangladesh* (932,204)	Myanmar (925,939)
Bangladesh* (854,704)	Côte d'Ivoire (692,000)	Côte d'Ivoire (692,000)	Côte d'Ivoire (694,000)
Myanmar* (600,000)	Myanmar* (620,939)	Myanmar* (621,763)	Thailand (487,741)
Thailand* (475,009)	Thailand (478,843)	Thailand (486,440)	Latvia (242,736)
Latvia (216,851)	Latvia (224,844)	Latvia (233,571)	Syria (160,000)
Syria (160,000)	Syria (160,000)	Syria (160,000)	Kuwait (93,000)
Malaysia* (108,332)	Kuwait (92,000)	Kuwait (92,000)	Russia (90,771)
Uzbekistan (97,346)	Uzbekistan (79,942)	Uzbekistan (85,555)	Uzbekistan (86,524)
Kuwait (92,020)	Estonia (77,877)	Russia (82,148)	Estonia (82,585)
Estonia (75,599)	Russia (75,679)	Estonia (80,314)	Saudi Arabia (70,000)

* Figures includes stateless Rohingya displaced from/in Myanmar.

In spite of the apparent change to the global 'ranking', the **Rohingya** are still the largest stateless population reported in UNHCR's statelessness statistics.⁷ As discussed in ISI's [Statelessness in numbers: 2018](#), after hundreds of thousands were forced to flee their homes from August 2017, UNHCR decided to "exceptionally" report displaced Rohingya populations in **Myanmar** and **Bangladesh** in both its IDP/refugee and statelessness statistics.⁸ This approach has been maintained in the latest *Global Trends* report and in addition to reporting Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh within the statelessness data, those displaced to **India, Indonesia, Malaysia** and **Thailand** are now also included.⁹ As a result, the number of stateless people reported in Malaysia has risen by almost 100,000, such that it is now the seventh largest reported. Together, the total number of Rohingya reported across these six countries is 1.57 million (or 38% of the global stateless population accounted for in the reported statistics).¹⁰ The change of methodology for reporting by these four other significant Rohingya hosting countries is an important step in addressing the difference in treatment that previously existed between the reporting of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and those elsewhere. However, ongoing challenges around data collection and reporting for displaced Rohingya populations in these countries means that the figures do not offer a full picture and the true numbers are likely to be higher. No data is reported for Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, two further countries that are known to host a significant number of Rohingya refugees. In Myanmar, the estimate of 600,000 relates predominantly to stateless Rohingya in Rakhine State – including IDPs – and does not include those in other regions or other stateless communities.¹¹ It would be helpful if the narrative accompanying the data, either in "Table 5" or in the body of the *Global Trends* report were to make more explicit what limitations exist in terms of the figures reported on the Rohingya population displaced around the world – for instance by clarifying that figures only refer to the limited populations UNHCR has access to or data on and outlining what the data gaps are.

Of the other countries that feature in this overview in 2019, three show a continued gradual reduction in the numbers affect: **Thailand, Estonia** and **Latvia**. The figures reported show a decrease of 2.5%, 8.5% and 10% respectively over the past three years (i.e. between end 2016 and end 2019). Thailand is among the countries highlighted in the narrative of the *Global Trends* report as having confirmed the nationality of "particularly large numbers" of stateless people since the start of the #IBelong campaign in 2014,¹² but in percentage terms this has yet to have a significant impact on the overall size of the stateless population in the country.

⁷ Palestine refugees and displaced persons who are receiving assistance from UNRWA are also not reported in the UNHCR-collated global statelessness data because their situation is covered by UNRWA.

⁸ Since UNHCR began its statistical reporting on statelessness in 2004, the focus has been on persons who do not also have what UNHCR describes as "another reportable status" (e.g. as refugees, IDPs or asylum seekers), which makes approach to report on displaced Rohingya "exceptional".

⁹ These figures are added onto the separate figures in relation to statelessness in the country – where available – in a separate column of the statistical reporting table, to produce the "Total number of stateless people including displaced Rohingya population from Myanmar".

¹⁰ The breakdown is as follows: Myanmar – 600,000; Bangladesh – 854,704; India – 17,730; Indonesia – 582; Malaysia – 99,292; Thailand – 121.

¹¹ A footnote in the data table (n24) provides this explanation, stating that data on other parts of the country is not available.

¹² The other countries mentioned explicitly in this regard are: Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Sweden and Kyrgyzstan. See *Global Trends 2019*, p. 58.

As compared to previous years' data, the numbers of stateless people reported in **Uzbekistan** has increased due to newly reported statistics – even though it has also been mentioned as a country where significant numbers of people had their nationality confirmed in 2019.¹³ Finally, for **Kuwait** and **Syria** there is, once again, no new data available and the figures remain static.

What else does the data show?

In the data reported for 2019, several other countries outside the 'top 10' also show notable changes since the previous year. In Europe, where data mismatches and data aging were flagged as a challenge in a number of countries,¹⁴ there have been several updates. The data reported for both **Greece** and **Italy**, for example, exhibits a marked *increase*: from 198 to 4,734 in Greece and from 732 to 15,822 in Italy. In **Belgium** also, the number reported has climbed – from 7,695 to 10,933. Although there is no explanation about the changes, they are likely due to an alteration in the methodology underlying data collection, categorisation or reporting with a view to improving the data accuracy (rather than marking a major shift in the actual situation on the ground). At the same time, in other countries, the statistics reported have not been updated in spite of the availability of new data. For instance, and as already reported last year, data from the National Statistics Bureau in the **Netherlands** indicates a stateless population of close to 13,000,¹⁵ but the number reported in the global statistics remains at 1,951. Elsewhere in Europe, data revisions have resulted in the numbers *decreasing* – for instance in **Poland** where the figure has fallen from 10,825 to 1,328, although the footnote indicates that this number refers to “the number of stateless persons holding a personal identification number issued by the Government, which does not cover all stateless people in the country”.¹⁶ The statelessness numbers in the **Russian Federation** have also fallen, to 68,209 people at the end of 2019, continuing the steady progression shown in recent years.¹⁷

In other parts of the world, there have been other increases and decreases in numbers as improved data has become available. In **Tajikistan**, the reported stateless population grew from 4,616 to 7,151, thanks to data from a registration exercise carried out in three regions of the country – although in the *Global Trends* narrative, Tajikistan is also a country where “significant numbers of people had their nationality confirmed”. In the **Philippines**, the numbers dropped from 1,068 to 383 thanks to “improved information concerning persons of Indonesian descent who have acquired nationality”.¹⁸ Elsewhere, statistical updates are still pending, including in **Zimbabwe** (marked with an asterisk) where for several years the data table has included a footnote indicating that “a study is being pursued”;¹⁹ and in **Kenya**, where the current figure (an estimate of 18,500) will reportedly be reviewed in 2020 on the basis of the 2019 Population and Housing Census and several studies of stateless populations in the country that have been undertaken over the last few years.²⁰ The **United States** continues to be marked with an asterisk, in spite of the publication in early 2020 of an extensive study that draws together data from the US Census Bureau, supplemented by some administrative data on stateless refugees and asylum-seekers.²¹

¹³ The new data comes from updated government statistics on statelessness shared in the context of Uzbekistan's reporting to the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. See footnote 42 in “Table 5”.

¹⁴ ISI, *Statelessness in Numbers 2019*, available at: https://files.institutesi.org/ISI_statistics_analysis_2019.pdf.

¹⁵ Ibid, p.7. Note that the number of persons of undetermined nationality in the Netherlands is even higher, at over 40,000 – they are also not included in the figure reported for the Netherlands, despite the annotation in “Table 5” that the statistics “cover stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality”.

¹⁶ See footnote 28 in “Table 5”.

¹⁷ The Russian Federation has thereby dropped ‘out’ of the list of countries reported to host the ten largest stateless populations for the first time, but this is also a result of the methodological changes in terms of reporting on displaced Rohingya that have resulted in Malaysia entering this list.

¹⁸ See footnote 27 in “Table 5”.

¹⁹ See footnote 43 in “Table 5”.

²⁰ See footnote 18 in “Table 5”.

²¹ The study concludes that 218,000 US residents are potentially affected by statelessness. However, this data includes people who are ‘at risk of statelessness’, making it more difficult to align this data with the global statistical reporting that refers to people who are stateless or of undetermined nationality. Centre for Migration Studies, *Statelessness in the United States: A Study to Estimate and Profile the US Stateless*

This contextual information can only be found by studying the footnotes in the separate data table that deals specifically with *Persons under UNHCR’s statelessness mandate* (“Table 5”). In several cases, these footnotes offer details that are of great interest. For example, for **Colombia**, the figure reported remained unchanged in 2019, at just 11 stateless people in the country. However, the footnote provides a direct insight into a critical development to occur in the national context during the year: “In 2019, Colombia granted nationality by birth to 28,500 children with undetermined nationality born in Colombia to Venezuelan parents displaced abroad. As these children were both identified as persons with undetermined nationality and granted Colombian nationality in 2019, there was no impact on the figures reported”.²² Similarly, although for the **Dominican Republic** an asterisk remains in place in the table itself – for the fourth year running – the footnote provides some updated data on those who were affected by the 2013 Constitutional Court ruling that left a large number of people stateless. It highlights numbers provided by the Dominican government during the 2019 High Level Segment on Statelessness with respect to “Group A” (61,049 people, 48% of whom have reported now been “authorized by the National Electoral Board (JCE) to request their nationality documentation”) and “Group B” (1,700 of which have submitted applications for naturalization but no decisions have been issued yet).²³ However, this data does not clarify the overall picture with regards to statelessness in the country.²⁴

A closer examination of “Table 5” also reveals further insights into UNHCR’s engagement on statelessness. Column G provides separate data on the number of stateless people who are **UNHCR-assisted**. A total of 1.25 million out of the 4.2 million reported global stateless population are reported as being assisted by UNHCR at the end of 2019. This equates to approximately 30%. However, if the displaced Rohingya (who also fall under UNHCR’s non-statelessness mandate) are removed from the equation, only around 100,000 stateless people remain who are assisted by UNHCR, of whom 62,000 are in Cote d’Ivoire. It would be of useful to understand what is meant by ‘UNHCR-assisted’ in this context, for non-displaced stateless populations.

What efforts are being made to improve the data?

In our 2019 *Statelessness in numbers* note, we discussed in some detail what is not shown in the data,²⁵ commenting on “persistent asterisks”,²⁶ data mismatches, data aging and statelessness “hotspots”.²⁷ As set out above, 22 asterisks remain in place in the new global statistical update and numerous footnotes point to ongoing efforts to execute studies or improve the data. In late 2019, a paper was published in the UNHCR Statistics Technical Series on the question of *UNHCR Statistical Reporting on Statelessness*, which remarks on the “disjointed and inconsistent nature of reporting on stateless populations in UNHCR”.²⁸ Among the problems identified are conceptual ambiguities whereby different approaches are taken to definitions and their application – “enumerated populations in 2018 include 21 stateless, 18 de facto stateless, 17 undetermined and 22 combinations thereof”;²⁹ and changes in data collection and reporting methods over

Population, January 2020, available at: <https://cmsny.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/StatelessnessReportFinal.pdf>.

²² Footnote 5 in “Table 5”.

²³ Footnote 10 in “Table 5”.

²⁴ See further on the challenges around statistical reporting on statelessness in the Dominican Republic, *Dominicanos por Derechos*, The Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion and The Center for Justice and International Law, *Joint Submission to the Human Rights Council: Universal Periodic Review – Dominican Republic*, 12 July 2018, available at: https://files.institutesi.org/UPR32_DominicanRepublic.pdf.

²⁵ ISI, *Statelessness in Numbers 2019*, available at: https://files.institutesi.org/ISI_statistics_analysis_2019.pdf.

²⁶ Where certain countries have been identified as having a significant stateless population but no reliable data, and this has remained the case across a number of years.

²⁷ Where the issue is considered to be of urgent concern, will not always be visible in global statistics, because these cover populations that are stateless during the reporting period and not (also) populations that are at risk.

²⁸ UNHCR Statistics Technical Series (19/1), *UNHCR Statistical Reporting on Statelessness*, 2019, p. 12, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/5d9e182e7.pdf>.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 11.

time, including that “some sources continue to cite outdated estimates, others have at different points reported recent data one year and reverted to outdated data from a different source the following year”.³⁰

Already in UNHCR’s 2017 *Global Trends* report,³¹ a wider “review” of UNHCR’s statistical reporting methodology was mentioned as being underway and this technical note was developed as one tool to inform this process. This year’s *Global Trends* narrative includes an extensive section on “Recognising the problem: Better statistics on statelessness”,³² which talks about the way forward. Two parallel initiatives are underway, one definitional and the other methodological:

1. **Expert Group on Statelessness Statistics:** experts from national statistical offices and several UN agencies established to develop *common standards and definitions on statelessness statistics*.
2. **Inter-Agency Group:** international agencies and academic experts convened to develop *statistical and demographic estimation methods to secure valid, reliable and comparable statistics on stateless populations*.

UNHCR’s goal is to submit a set of international recommendations on statelessness statistics for adoption by the UN Statistical Commission in 2022. In mid-2020, UNHCR also announced the recruitment of an individual consultant to assist in the development of this work. One important question to be explored within this process, as noted in previous *Statelessness in Numbers* analytical notes, is whether the same “exceptional” approach to the reporting of displaced Rohingya – separately, yet visibly, within the global statelessness statistics – could be extended to all stateless people who also have “another reportable status” in order to resolve the challenge of avoiding double counting while painting a clearer picture of the overall situation of statelessness globally. It would then also be easier to understand what proportion of the global stateless population has been displaced, helping to inform efforts to address statelessness as a root cause and consequence of forced migration and thereby contribute to strengthening the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and finding durable solutions for stateless refugees and IDPs.³³ The further clarification of statistical categories would also be welcome given that the data is currently stated to cover “stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality”,³⁴ but in practice the populations enumerated in the data (including the approach to who is deemed ‘stateless’) actually varies significantly.³⁵

Meanwhile, pledges to improve statelessness data made by 34 states at UNHCR’s High Level Segment on Statelessness in October 2019 also provide a foundation for further progress. 29 of these states pledged to conduct quantitative or qualitative studies, while nine committed to include statelessness in upcoming population census exercises.³⁶ Looking at which countries made such pledges, however, it is regrettable that just four of these states are among the 22 that are marked with an asterisk (*) in the global statelessness data: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Panama and Zimbabwe.³⁷ This means that the majority of those countries that have (long) been identified as home to a significant stateless population have not used this pledging process to commit to data collection efforts. Nevertheless, a further 21 countries that made pledges on data at the High Level Segment are states that do not appear at all, at present, in global statelessness statistics – i.e. they are places about which no data is available or reported. The remaining nine states to make pledges already report data but commit to efforts that should improve coverage or accuracy.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2017/>.

³² See *Global Trends 2019*, p. 62

³³ Section D of the introduction to the Global Compact on Refugee focuses on “Preventing and addressing root causes”, which affirms that “All States and relevant stakeholders are called on to tackle the root causes of large refugee situations”.

³⁴ See annotation in the header of “Table 5”.

³⁵ See n22.

³⁶ See the map in *Global Trends 2019*, p. 63.

³⁷ Note that according to *Global Trends* data, a study was already ongoing in Zimbabwe for a number of years. In Zimbabwe’s High Level Segment Pledges, a commitment was made to publishing this study by 2021, as well as to include statelessness in the next national census in 2022.

Technical note & glossary

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) releases statistics on the scale of the problem of forced displacement worldwide in its [annual *Global Trends reports*](#). Since 2004, these reports have included data on statelessness. UNHCR is the only body that systematically collates and publishes figures for the number of stateless persons globally. The data covers stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality. It is drawn from a range of sources, including both government data and statistics gathered through UN, academic or civil society data collection. Information on data coverage, methodology and sources is included in some cases in footnotes in the data table ([in 2019, “Table 5”](#)) in which the global statelessness data is compiled.

As a general rule, UNHCR only reports one legal status for each person of concern, such that stateless refugees, IDPs and asylum seekers are included in the data on displaced populations and not *also* in the statelessness data. An exception to this practice has been introduced for displaced Rohingya from Myanmar. Palestine refugees and displaced persons who are receiving assistance from UNRWA are also not reported in the UNHCR-collated global statelessness data because their situation is covered by UNRWA.

Within its statistical reporting on statelessness, UNHCR uses two different symbols to indicate where data is absent:

An **asterisk (*)** is used to mark countries where UNHCR has information about stateless persons but no reliable data.

A **dash (-)** is used to mark countries where there is no data or the value is zero.

For more on how UNHCR compiles and reports data on statelessness, as well as more generally on the challenges of measuring statelessness, see:

- UNHCR Statistics Technical Series (19/1), *UNHCR Statistical Reporting on Statelessness*, 2019, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/5d9e182e7.pdf>.
- Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, *The World's Stateless*, 2014, available at <http://www.institutesi.org/worldsstateless.pdf>.
- Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, 'Counting the world's stateless: reflections on statistical reporting on statelessness' in UNHCR Statistical Yearbook 2013, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/54cf99f29.pdf>.

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