Aug. 19, 2021

How Afghan immigrants and refugees can enter the U.S.

As many Afghans attempt to leave their home country, fearing reprisal from the Taliban, the U.S. is sorting out who to let in. People can apply for visas or refugee status while not in the U.S., while they'd apply for asylum upon reaching the U.S. border or while in the U.S.

Most Afghans who have immigrated in recent years have arrived using a special immigrant visa, designed for people who worked for the U.S. or the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Emergency Security Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 passed in July authorized an additional 8,000 SIVs for Afghan applicants, and reduced the work requirement from two years of work to one year of work for the U.S. or ISAF.

Separately, Afghan refugees have thus far comprised a small portion of the total U.S. refugee program. The 20,000 admitted to the U.S. during the past two decades made up just 2 percent of all U.S. refugee admissions over that time period. The Watson Institute at Brown University estimates that since 2001, about 2.1 million people have fled Afghanistan.

Afghans who are trying to leave the country can apply for special visas or refugee status to enter the U.S.

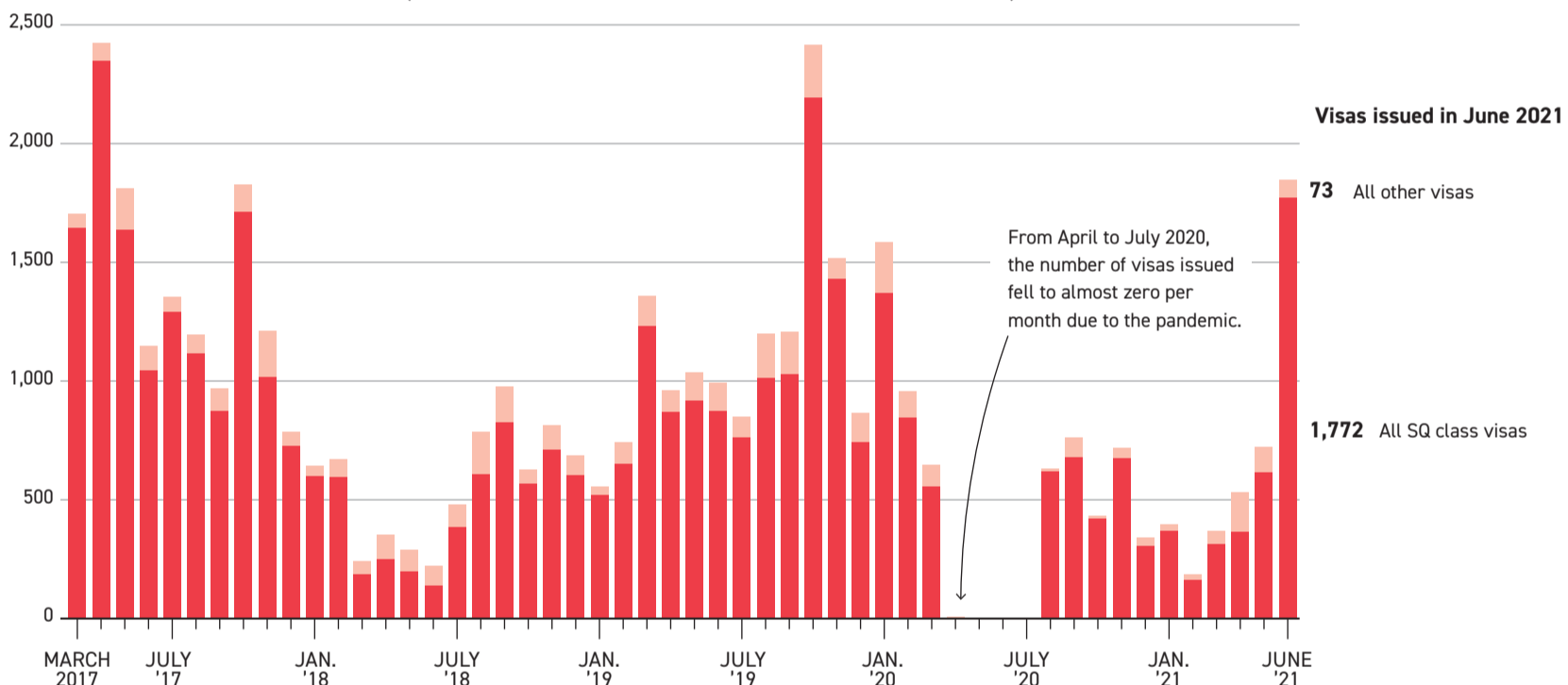| SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISAS	REFUGEE PRIORITY STATUSES		
SQ	**P-1**	**P-2**	**P-3**
Applicant worked for the U.S. government or for the ISAF for a qualifying amount of time.	State Department: "Individual cases referred by designated entities (an Embassy, designated NGO or the UNHCR)."	As of Aug. 2: Applicant worked for the U.S. government or ISAF but did not meet the minimum time, or worked for another qualifying organization.*	Status granted for reunification with family already in the U.S.

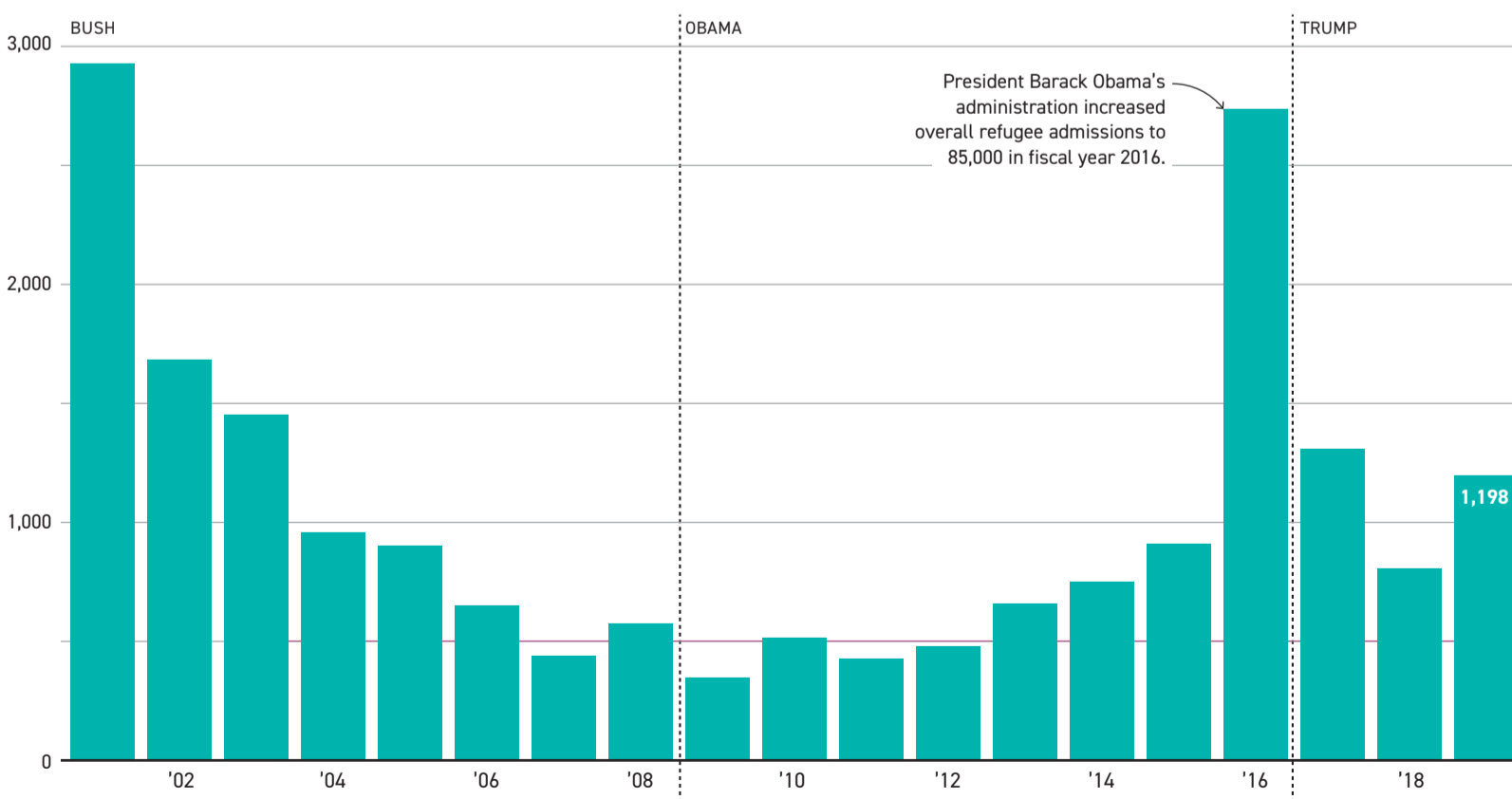## Most visas issued to Afghans over the past 4 years have been SQ visas

MONTHLY VISAS ISSUED TO AFGHANS (BASED ON FOREIGN STATE OF CHARGEABILITY OR PLACE OF BIRTH)

Visas issued in June 2021

73 All other visas

1,772 All SQ class visas

From April to July 2020, the number of visas issued fell to almost zero per month due to the pandemic.

Note: State Department visa counting methodology changed in FY 2019, though effects from the change are estimated at less than 1 percent.

Number of Afghan citizens admitted as refugees has remained low over past 2 decades

REFUGEE ARRIVALS TO U.S. FROM AFGHANISTAN BY FISCAL YEAR

BUSH

OBAMA

TRUMP

President Barack Obama's administration increased overall refugee admissions to 85,000 in fiscal year 2016.

1,198

From 2001 to 2019, Afghans accounted for **2 percent** of U.S. refugee admissions.

*The U.S. groups refugees into three priority classes: P-1, P-2 and P-3. The P-2 designations are groups of special concern designated by the State Department. On August 2, the department announced a P-2 designation for Afghan refugees which includes people who worked for the U.S. government in Afghanistan but did not meet the minimum time working for an SQ visa; Afghans who worked for programs that were funded by, received grants from or were supported by a cooperative agreement with the U.S. government; or those who worked for U.S. media organizations or nongovernmental organizations.