

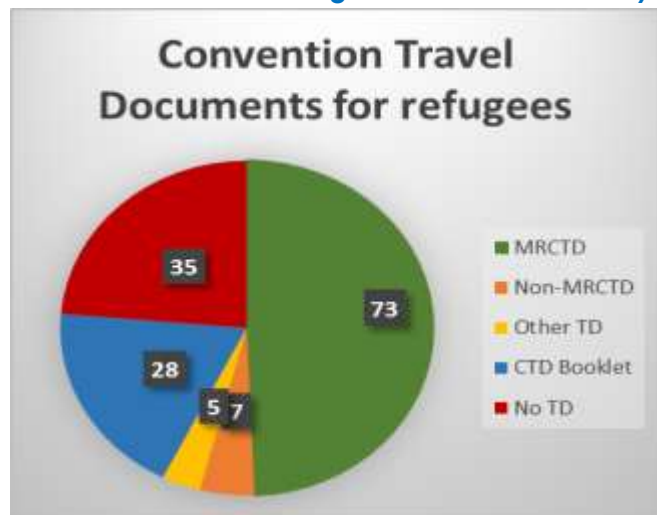
UNHCR Annual Update 2017: Machine-Readable Travel Documents for Refugees and Stateless persons

This update provides for an analysis of State practice in relation to Article 28 of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1954 Statelessness Convention, which obliges State Parties to issue Convention Travel Documents (CTDs) to refugees and stateless persons lawfully on their territory.

As of December 2017, **73 States Parties to the 1951 Convention and/or its Protocol reported to UNHCR that they were issuing machine-readable CTDs to refugees in conformity with international aviation standards.** This represents 49% of all State Parties, and is more than double the number of States when compared to six years ago (in 2011).

In addition, **7 States** issued non-machine readable CTDs, **5 States** issued other travel documents, such as “foreigner’s passports” or “laissez-passer”, and **28 State Parties** (and one non-State Party) issued “CTD booklets”, which are provided by UNHCR.

24% of State Parties to the 1951 Convention (35 States) reported on the non-issuance of travel documentation to refugees on their territory.



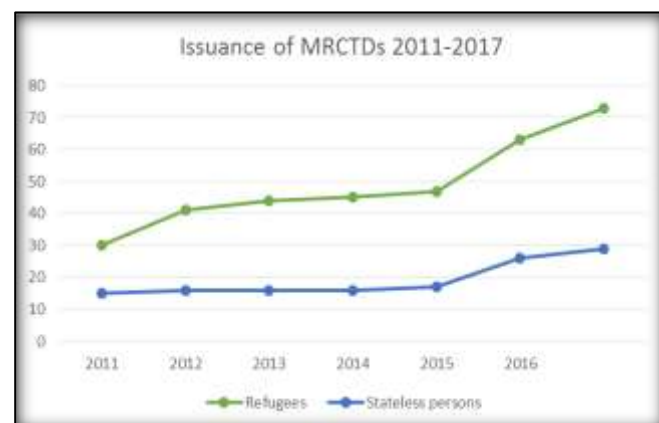
Among the parties to the 1954 Convention, **30 States reported to UNHCR that they were issuing machine-readable CTDs to stateless persons in conformity with international aviation standards.** This represents **34%** of all States Parties. In addition, **15 States** reported to issue other travel documents (such as “certificates of identity”).

49% of State Parties to the 1954 Convention (44 States) reported on the non-issuance of travel documentation to stateless persons.

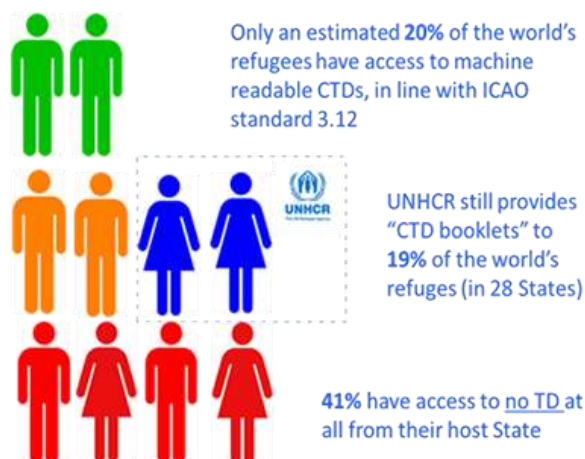


Moreover, a significant number of refugees and stateless persons are hosted in States which are *not* signatory to these Conventions, and therefore under no treaty obligation to issue them with travel documents. While, in most cases, this leaves refugees and stateless persons with no legal avenues enabling them to seek to travel abroad, a number of good practices have been identified.

A survey conducted by UNHCR in February 2017 documented that at least **13 non-States parties have established practices to issue travel documents to refugees or stateless persons**, and among these, six States issue such documents in line with international aviation standards.



What does this mean for the world's refugees?



ICAO Standard 3.12:

In June 2015, ICAO adopted a specific standard which requires Member States to ensure that travel documents for refugees and stateless persons are machine-readable, in accordance with the specifications set out in ICAO Document 9303.

To support Member States in its implementation, UNHCR and ICAO have jointly issued the *Guide for the Issuance of Convention Travel Documents for Refugees and Stateless Persons* (February 2017), available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/52b166a34.html>.

States who are not able to amend their national regulations and procedures to Standard 3.12 are, in line with Article 38 of the Chicago Convention, obliged to notify the ICAO Council of their departure from the standard. In such cases, UNHCR may continue to provide the State with CTD booklets, with the aim of transitioning to machine-readable CTDs in the longer term.

UNHCR notes that, while the right to a CTD is enshrined in the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1954 Statelessness Convention, **a large number of State Parties are still not issuing any kind of travel documents to refugees or stateless persons**, effectively limiting the rights of these populations to travel internationally for work, education, maintaining family relations, and for seeking durable solutions or complementary pathways.

In this regard, **UNHCR would like to highlight the recently adopted Executive Committee Conclusion** (No. 114 (LXVIII) 2017) on machine-readable travel documents for refugees and stateless persons, which, in particular:

- Calls upon States parties to the 1951 and 1954 Conventions to consider taking all the necessary legislative, administrative and technical measures, taking into account their legal frameworks and national capacities, to introduce machine-readable CTDs for refugees and stateless persons;
- Encourages the exchange of good practices, among both States Parties and non-States Parties; and
- Commits to further strengthening international solidarity and equitable responsibility- and burden-sharing, so as to ease the pressure on host States, including in facilitating the transition to and continued issuance of machine-readable travel documents to refugees and stateless persons.

UNHCR is committed to cooperate with, and provide support to, States who wish to transition to machine-readable CTDs, including through technical and legal advice and, when appropriate, material support.

In **Europe**, six new States Parties introduced MRCTDs in 2016-2017: Hungary, the Holy See (*), Italy, Moldova, Portugal, and Russia.

MRCTD compliance rates:
89% for refugees
61% for stateless persons

In **the Middle East**, only one new State introduced MRCTDs in 2016-2017: Israel.

MRCTD compliance rates:
14% for refugees / 25% for stateless persons

In **Asia**, only one new State has introduced MRCTDs in 2016-2017: The Philippines.

MRCTD compliance rates:
32% for refugees
33% for stateless persons

In **the Americas**, seven new States introduced MRCTDs in 2016-2017: Argentina, Bahamas (*), Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica (*), Paraguay and Uruguay.

MRCTD compliance rates:
40% for refugees
25% for stateless persons

In **Africa**, seven new States introduced MRCTDs for refugees in 2016-2017 (*): Burundi, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Togo, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe.

MRCTD compliance rates:
26% for refugees / 0% for stateless persons

(*) MRCTDs only issued to refugees, not stateless persons