

Refugee Council

Information



SUPPORTING AND
EMPOWERING
REFUGEES

Children in the Asylum System

February 2019

The asylum statistics are published quarterly by the Home Office.

Unaccompanied Children Applications

The number of asylum applications by unaccompanied children is shown in the tables below. From 2010 to 2013 there was a downward trend in the number of applications. The higher numbers in 2015 and 2016 reflect an overall rise in asylum applications and unaccompanied children accounted for just under 10% of all asylum applications in 2018 compared with over 16% in 2008.

Table 1: Asylum applications by Unaccompanied Children (excl. Dependents)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Applications	1,945	3,253	3,290	2,399	2,872
% change to previous year	+54%	+67%	+1%	-27%	+20%

Table 2: Asylum applications by Unaccompanied Children by quarter (excl. Dependents)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2018	600	573	799	900
2017	546	602	588	663
2016	693	699	722	1,176
2015	525	575	1,023	1,130
2014	397	396	551	601

In 2018 there were significant increases in the number of applications from Eritrea and Sudan. There were increases for all the other countries in the top 8 countries of origin, except Afghanistan.

Apart from these 8 countries there were no other countries with more than 40 applicants.

Table 3: Top 9 child asylum applicant producing countries (excl. Dependents)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Eritrea	460	736	413	355	620
Sudan	51	148	255	356	462
Vietnam	103	182	194	305	312
Iraq	32	182	324	271	308
Albania	632	481	420	265	286
Iran	73	227	388	233	251
Afghanistan	179	694	754	227	210
Ethiopia	18	114	104	90	117

In 2018 89% of applicants were male, which is similar to earlier years.

Unaccompanied Children: ages

In 2018 the age distribution was:	Aged 16 – 17	74%
	Aged 14 – 15	21%
	Aged under 14	2%

There are also a small number of cases which are recorded as 'age unknown'.

The 'age unknown' category is **not** related to age disputed cases.

The number of **age disputed** cases raised is shown in the table below. These are cases where an applicant claims to be a child but the Home Office assessment of appearance, or occasionally other evidence, leads to a dispute of the claim to be a child. There was a large increase in 2015 and a further increase in 2016. The numbers fell in 2017 but rose again in 2018.

Table 4: Age Disputed Asylum applications (excl. Dependents)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Applications	318	789	928	716	872
% change to previous year	-2%	+148%	+18%	-23%	+22%

During 2018 the countries of origin with the largest numbers of age disputed cases raised were:

Eritrea	238
Sudan	130
Afghanistan	102
Iraq	88
Iran	83
Vietnam	73
Ethiopia	55

These countries accounted for 88% of age disputed cases raised.

The Home Office statistics on age disputed cases do not include the category of those applicants who claim to be children but who are treated as adult because in the opinion of an Immigration Officer "their physical appearance and/or general demeanour **very strongly** indicates that they are **significantly** over 18 years and no other credible evidence exists to the contrary"

Unaccompanied Children Decisions

- Of the decisions made on unaccompanied children's claims in 2018, 50% were refugee status.
- For decisions on unaccompanied children who have reached the age of 18 there was a refusal rate of 57% in 2016. The refusal rate dropped in 2017 to 45% but rose again to 60% in 2018.
- Unaccompanied children who have reached the age of 18 have generally been more likely to have their asylum claim refused.
- Although there are fewer outright refusals for children under the age of 18 this is because a child who cannot be returned to their country of origin is granted a specific form of leave called UASC

leave. Prior to 2013 discretionary leave was granted in these cases, which is why there are now far fewer grants of discretionary leave than in the past.

Table 5: Initial asylum decisions on unaccompanied children aged 17 and under

	Total	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	UASC Leave	Family or Private Life	Refusals
2018	1,327	771	44	2	319	1	190
2017	1,454	817	36	2	386	2	211
2016	1,656	502	50	14	828	2	260
2015	1,568	357	18	38	809	0	346
2014	988	418	9	23	380	4	154

Table 6: Initial asylum decisions on unaccompanied children aged 17 and under by Quarter

	Total	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	UASC Leave	Family or Private Life	Refusals
Q4 2018	302	205	20	1	47	0	29
Q3 2018	365	219	9	0	68	1	68
Q2 2018	332	171	8	1	106	0	46
Q1 2018	328	176	7	0	98	0	47
Q4 2017	421	245	10	1	94	1	70

Table 7: Initial asylum decisions on unaccompanied children who have reached the age of 18

	Total	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	UASC Leave	Family or Private Life	Refusals
2018	824	299	29	2	0	3	491
2017	586	307	12	1	0	1	265
2016	295	118	6	1	1	2	167
2015	362	63	1	3	0	0	295
2014	282	69	1	0	0	2	210

Table 8: Initial asylum decisions on unaccompanied children who have reached the age of 18 by Quarter

	Total	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	UASC Leave	Family or Private Life	Refusals
Q4 2018	164	78	11	1	0	1	73
Q3 2018	198	68	8	1	0	0	121
Q2 2018	230	74	5	0	0	1	150
Q1 2018	232	79	5	0	0	1	147
Q4 2017	201	76	4	1	0	0	120

Decisions by country of origin

The tables below show decisions by country of origin for 2018. For children aged 17 and under the table includes those countries of origin where 50 or more decisions were made during the year.

A high proportion of decisions to grant refugee status can be seen for several countries.

Albania was the country with the highest refusal rate.

Table 9: Initial asylum decisions on unaccompanied children aged 17 and under, 2018

	Total	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	UASC Leave	Family or Private Life	Refusals
Eritrea	274	265	0	0	5	0	4
Afghanistan	248	100	13	1	101	0	33
Iraq	168	68	20	0	46	0	34
Sudan	157	134	2	1	14	0	6
Iran	136	46	0	0	61	1	28
Vietnam	102	65	5	0	20	0	12
Ethiopia	60	42	0	0	11	0	7
Albania	58	0	0	0	29	0	29

Far fewer decisions were made in the case of children who had reached the age of 18. There were seven countries with 50 or more decisions.

Table 10: Initial asylum decisions on unaccompanied children aged 18 and over, 2018

	Total	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	UASC Leave	Family or Private Life	Refusals
Afghanistan	115	21	2	2	0	0	90
Albania	115	3	0	0	0	1	111
Iran	104	16	0	0	0	0	88
Sudan	101	83	0	0	0	0	18
Eritrea	95	94	0	0	0	0	1
Iraq	80	6	16	0	0	0	58
Vietnam	50	11	6	0	0	0	33

As can be seen there are significant differences between these countries of origin.

Calais

Following the closure of the camps in Calais there was an operation to transfer children to the UK. Between 1st October 2016 and 15th July 2017 a total of 769 children were transferred to the UK from Calais. There were 227 children from Afghanistan, 211 from Sudan, 208 from Eritrea and 89 from Ethiopia. There were fewer than 10 children from any other country.

Dependant Children

The annual statistics include figures for the number of asylum applicants who are dependants rather than having an application in their own name. The majority of dependants are children. The table below shows the breakdown of dependants by age. The most recent statistics available are for 2017.

Table 10: Applications by Dependents by age

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Under 5	2,423	2,687	2,681	3,052	2,711
5 – 9 yo	1,125	1,312	1,337	1,640	1,589
10 – 13 yo	590	746	670	809	790
14 – 15 yo	223	307	282	336	319
16 – 17 yo	210	253	232	264	246
18+ yo	1,705	1,969	2,033	2,481	2,205

National Transfer Scheme

This scheme has operated since July 2016. The intention is to share the responsibility for looking after unaccompanied children between local councils. It allows a council which has more than a defined number of unaccompanied children to refer new arrivals to another region or council.

The table below shows transfers out of and into each region.

Table 11

Region	Transfers	2016 July - December	2017	2018
East Midlands	Out In	12 30	0 24	0 11
East of England	Out In	21 32	69 150	92 119
London	Out In	50 4	168 1	75 1
North East	Out In	0 10	0 13	0 1
North West	Out In	0 17	0 50	0 16
South East	Out In	148 54	153 36	42 25
South West	Out In	1 46	3 51	0 13
Wales	Out In	0 1	0 0	0 0
West Midlands	Out In	0 10	1 35	0 15
Yorkshire & Humber	Out In	0 28	0 44	9 17

NOTE

For unaccompanied children figures for years before 2012 given in earlier briefings are not directly comparable to later figures because of a change in the way the statistics have been compiled. There is a link below to the Home Office publication explaining the change. See page 66 of the guide. The Home Office has now updated the figures for years before 2012 to reflect the change in methodology.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/232217/user-guide-immig-statistics.pdf

For detailed statistics see the government quarterly statistics bulletin

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-december-2018/list-of-tables>

About the Refugee Council

The Refugee Council is one of the leading organisations in the UK working with asylum seekers and refugees. We give help and support to asylum seekers and refugees, and also work with them to ensure their needs and concerns are addressed by decision-makers.