

Refugee Council

Information



SUPPORTING AND
EMPOWERING
REFUGEES

Asylum statistics Annual Trends

November 2019

APPLICATIONS:

- In 2018 the number of applications for asylum in the UK, excluding dependants, (29,504), was 11% higher than in 2017 (26,547). After a significant drop in the number of applications from 2009 to 2010 there had been an upward trend from 2011 to 2015 which had reversed in 2016 and 2017.

Table 1: Asylum applications in the UK (excl. Dependents)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Applications	25,033	32,733	30,747	26,547	29,504
% change from previous year	+6%	+31%	-6%	-14%	+9%

Applications by nationality:

- In 2018 there were significant increases in the number of applicants from Eritrea, Albania and Iran and a significant decrease for Bangladesh compared with 2017.

Table 2: Top ten asylum applicant producing countries (excl. Dependants)

	2017	2018	% change
Iran	2,570	3,320	+29%
Iraq	2,379	2,700	+13%
Eritrea	1,085	2,151	+98%
Pakistan	2,495	2,033	-19%
Albania	1,430	2,005	+40%
Sudan	1,685	1,611	-4%
Afghanistan	1,326	1,349	+2%
India	1,327	1,321	-0.5%
Bangladesh	1,712	1,297	-24%
Vietnam	1,070	1,215	+14%

- Over the past 7 years 14 different countries have appeared in the list of the top ten asylum applicant producing countries. Eritrea, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh have been in the top ten in every one of the last 7 years.

- Zimbabwe had the highest number of applicants in 2009 (5,599) and third highest in 2010 (1,446) but since then has never been in the top ten. China and Somalia are other countries where the number of applicants has declined in recent years.
- After declining numbers from 2009 to 2013 applications from Iraq have risen in recent years. Libya featured in the top ten list in 2011, but not before or since. The number of applicants from Syria rose steadily from 2010 until 2016, but fell in 2017 and since 2012 there was an increase every year in applications from Eritrea until 2016 and 2017 but numbers began to rise again in 2018.

Applications by location

- The majority of applications are made in-country rather than at ports. Over recent years there have been only small variations in the percentage of applications made in-country, ranging from 85% to 92% of all applications. In 2018 80% of applications were made in country, which is the lowest figure in the last 10 years.

Table 3: Applications by location (excl. Dependents), by year

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
In-country	22,423	29,815	26,865	22,474	23,601
% change from previous year	+8%	+33%	-10%	-16%	+5%
Port	2,610	2,918	3,882	4,073	5,903
% change from previous year	-6%	+12%	+33%	+5%	+45%
Total	25,033	32,733	30,747	26,547	29,504
% change from previous year	+6%	+31%	-6%	-14%	+11%

DECISIONS:

- In 2018 67% of initial decisions were refusals, 26% were grants of asylum, 3.5% were grants of Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave, and 3% were grants of leave to remain under other categories, such as family or private life rules; a category introduced in 2011.
- The percentage of decisions to grant refugee status was the lowest in the past 5 years.
- There has been a steady decline in the number of decisions to grant discretionary leave to remain. This is related to a change in the way decisions are made on applications from unaccompanied children, who used to be frequently granted discretionary leave when they were under 18.
- The 'other grants of leave' category includes UASC leave, the temporary leave often given to unaccompanied children whose claim is refused.
- The percentage of refusals in 2018 was similar to 2016 and 2017.

Table 4: Initial Decisions (excl. Dependents)

	2014		2015		2016		2017		2018	
Decisions	19,783		28,623		24,895		21,269		21,084	
Refugee status	7,266	37%	9,975	35%	7,137	29%	5,957	28%	5,557	26%
Humanitarian Protection	68	0.3%	110	0.4%	187	0.8%	146	0.7%	582	3%
Discretionary Leave	200	1%	227	0.8%	114	0.5%	84	0.4%	104	0.5%
Other Grants of Leave	617	4%	1,110	4%	1,027	4%	592	3%	688	3%
Refused	11,632	59%	17,201	60%	16,430	66%	14,490	68%	14,153	67%

- Among the countries with large numbers of asylum applicants from which the highest percentages were given refugee status or other forms of leave to remain in 2018 were Iran, Eritrea, and Sudan as can be seen from the table below.
- In contrast, among the countries with relatively large numbers of applicants Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nigeria had well above average refusal rates.
- The larger number of decisions to grant UASC leave for applicants from Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan relates to the number of applications from unaccompanied children from these countries.

Table 5: Asylum decisions by nationality, 2018, top ten countries for number of decisions

	Decisions	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	Family or Private Life / UASC Leave	Refusals
Iran	2,253	891	8	2	70	1,282
Iraq	2,037	238	55	22	125	1,597
Pakistan	1,695	291	1	2	19	1,382
Sudan	1,287	539	2	2	18	726
Eritrea	1,284	814	1	0	5	464
Afghanistan	1,233	408	19	8	111	687
Bangladesh	1,185	61	2	2	16	1,104
Albania	837	15	0	4	47	771
Nigeria	703	62	1	15	55	570
Vietnam	652	221	15	3	34	379

APPEALS:

- In 2018 38% of appeals were allowed, while 57% were dismissed.
- The success rate at appeal had remained steady for a number of years, but there was a significant increase in both 2015 and 2016 as well as an increase, after several years of decline, in the number of appeals heard. Fewer appeals were heard in 2018 than in 2016 and 2017 and the success rate was similar to earlier years.

Table 6: Appeals determined

	2014		2015		2016		2017		2018	
Determined	6,178		9,224		12,581		14,299		11,627	
Allowed	1,758	28%	3,260	35%	5,051	40%	5,074	35%	4,457	38%
Dismissed	4,081	66%	5,511	60%	6,914	55%	8,623	60%	6,662	57%
Withdrawn	339	6%	453	5%	616	5%	602	4%	508	5%

- The table below compares the success rate at appeal for the top ten countries by the number of initial decisions. The 'grants' column shows an initial decision to grant any form of status.
- The first 4 countries in the list had significantly above average appeal success rates. Vietnam had a higher than average percentage of initial grants of refugee status and slightly above average appeal success rate. Iraq, Albania, Pakistan, Nigeria and Bangladesh all had low initial grants of status and Pakistan, Nigeria and Bangladesh also had below average appeal success rates.

Table 7: Success rates at appeal by country, 2018

	Initial Grants (%)	Appeals determined	% success at appeal
Sudan	42%	420	72%
Afghanistan	33%	761	55%
Eritrea	64%	92	51%
Iran	39%	1,384	50%
Vietnam	34%	310	40%
Albania	2%	434	40%
Iraq	12%	1,439	39%
Pakistan	17%	1,329	27%
Nigeria	9%	458	24%
Bangladesh	5%	1,070	19%

The figures on appeals may differ from those shown in earlier summaries due to changes in the data sources (see note at the end of this summary).

REFUGEES RESETTLED:

- Refugees may be accepted for resettlement in the UK via the Gateway Programme, the Mandate Scheme, the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (started in 2014) and most recently the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (started in 2016).
- The UK commitment to the Gateway Programme is for 750 refugees per year, referred by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The Mandate scheme covers people who have been granted refugee status by UNHCR and have ties to the UK.

Table 8: Refugees resettled (incl. Dependents)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Gateway Programme	630	652	804	813	693
Mandate Scheme	13	18	8	28	18
Syrian Vulnerable Persons	143	1,194	4,369	4,832	4,407
Vulnerable Children			31	539	688

ASYLUM SUPPORT:

- The total number of asylum seekers (including dependants) in receipt of Section 95 asylum support at the end of 2018 was 44,265 of whom 41,316 were in dispersal accommodation and 2,949 were receiving subsistence only.
- The numbers rose during 2018 and are now at their highest since 2007, which relates in the main to the rise in the number of applications for asylum in recent years before 2016.
- The region of the UK with the largest number in dispersal accommodation at the end of 2018 was the North West (9,949). This region has had the largest proportion since the beginning of 2008.
- 2,129 asylum seekers were in initial accommodation at the end of 2018.

Table 9: Asylum seekers in receipt of asylum support (incl. Dependants)

	End of 2014	End of 2015	End of 2016	End of 2017	End of 2018
Dispersed accommodation	26,346	31,432	36,626	37,716	41,316
Subsistence only	3,404	2,931	2,763	3,020	2,949
Initial accommodation	1,476	1,985	1,990	1,802	2,129

Applicants supported under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

- 2,007 decisions to grant Section 4 support were made in 2018. This is a significant decrease compared with recent years.
- At the end of 2018 4,032 applicants, including dependants, were receiving Section 4 support.

Table 10: Grants of Section 4 Support

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of grants	5,558	5,127	4,530	5,257	2,007

Table 11: Numbers in receipt of Section 4 Support (incl. Dependants)

	End of 2014	End of 2015	End of 2016	End of 2017	End of 2018
Number supported	4,997	3,821	3,773	4,114	4,032

- For more detail on asylum support see the separate briefing on this subject produced by the Refugee Council.

ENFORCEMENT & COMPLIANCE:

Removals (Asylum Applicants)

- Including dependants, in 2018, 4,049 asylum seekers were removed or departed voluntarily, a 24% decrease from 2017 (5,316).

- The total number of removals and voluntary departures went down in each year from 2009 until 2017. The number went down again in 2018.
- 965 asylum seekers left under Assisted Voluntary Return schemes in 2018.
- Other types of departure have tended to decrease year by year, with the exception of 2011 when there was a peak in the number of other verified returns. The figure for other verified returns in 2018 was the lowest in the last 5 years.

Table 12: Removals and voluntary departures of Asylum Applicants, incl. dependants

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Enforced	4,372	3,398	2,365	2,722	1,807
Assisted Voluntary	1,453	864	498	729	965
Notified Voluntary	747	793	740	1,235	896
Other Verified Returns	453	378	514	630	381
Total	7,025	5,433	4,117	5,316	4,049

Detention

Persons leaving detention

- A total of 11,152 people were recorded as removed from the UK upon leaving detention in 2018, having been held solely under Immigration Act powers, of whom 21% were asylum detainees.

Persons detained at the end of the year

- At the end of 2018 a total of 1,784 persons were detained, there were no children who were in detention at this point in time.
- 1,085 persons who had sought asylum at some stage were being detained solely under Immigration Act powers (61% of all immigration detainees)
- 91% of all detainees were male.

Table 13: People in detention

	End of 2014	End of 2015	End of 2016	End of 2017	End of 2018
Total	3,462	2,607	2,738	2,545	1,784
Male	3,135	2,337	2,489	2,275	1,621
Female	327	270	249	270	163
Asylum detainees	1,698	1,250	1,626	1,508	1,085

Detained Asylum Seekers by Nationality

- At the end of 2018, of the countries with the largest numbers of asylum detainees Nigeria, China, and Somalia do not also appear in the top ten countries for the number of asylum applications in 2018.

- Iran, Eritrea, and Sudan ranked in the top ten countries for the number of asylum applications in 2018. However at the end of 2018 there were 20 Iranian asylum seekers, 26 Eritreans, and 8 Sudanese in detention.

Table 14: Countries with largest numbers of asylum detainees

	End of 2017	End of 2018
India	195	126
Albania	92	123
China	81	105
Bangladesh	183	94
Pakistan	91	82
Vietnam	51	53
Iraq	45	52
Nigeria	167	39
Afghanistan	41	35
Somalia	49	34

Children in Detention

- In 2018 63 children entered detention, of whom 42 were asylum detainees. 36 of these children were detained at the Gatwick pre-departure accommodation, and 24 at Tinsley House.
- *For more detail on children in detention see the separate briefing on this subject produced by the Refugee Council. There are also briefings on detention in the asylum system and the detained fast track process.*

CHILDREN:

Applications by Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum

- The number of applications from Unaccompanied Children, excluding dependants, was 3,063 in 2018, a 28% increase compared with 2017.

Table 15: Asylum applications by Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum (excl. Dependants)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Applications	1,945	3,254	3,290	2,401	3,063
% change to previous year	+54%	+67%	+1%	-33%	+28%

- Eritrea is now the country of origin for the largest number of unaccompanied children. After large numbers in 2015 and 2016 the number of applications from Afghanistan decreased significantly in 2017 and 2018. 91% of all applications in 2018 were from the 9 countries listed below.

Table 16: Top child asylum applicant producing countries (excl. Dependents)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Eritrea	460	736	413	355	684
Sudan	51	148	255	356	496
Iraq	32	182	324	271	332
Vietnam	103	182	194	306	324
Albania	632	481	420	265	293
Iran	73	227	388	233	269
Afghanistan	179	694	754	277	223
Ethiopia	18	114	104	90	137
Syria	118	169	140	39	39

- In 2018 89% of applicants were male, a similar percentage to earlier years.

Age Disputed Cases

- The number of age disputed cases increased in 2018 and was significantly higher than in 2013 and 2014. As a percentage of the number of applications during the year it was slightly higher than 2017.

Table 17: Age Disputed Asylum applications (excl. Dependents)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Applications	318	791	929	718	875
% change to previous year	-2%	+148%	+18%	-23%	+22%

N.B. 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. This used to be 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” but the wording has changed since June 2019 to “very strongly suggests that they are 25 years or over”.

Decisions

- The majority of decisions on asylum applications by unaccompanied children under the age of 18 used to be grants of discretionary leave. In 2013 over 70% of all grants of discretionary leave were to children aged 17 and under, although they accounted for only 3% of total decisions.
- For unaccompanied children who have reached the age of 18 when they receive their decision, refusal rates have tended to be much higher; there was a refusal rate of 82% in 2015. However the refusal rate fell to 57% in 2016 and to 45% in 2017 but rose to 60% in 2018.
- For unaccompanied children a new category since 2013, UASC leave, is used in cases where the only reason for giving leave is that the applicant is a child who cannot be returned, and this means there are far fewer grants of discretionary leave.

Table 18: 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	1,325	773	44	2	316	1	189
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 19: 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

ASYLUM APPLICATIONS (DEPENDANTS):

- In 2018 there were 8,979 applications from dependants. The detailed under 18 breakdown from earlier years is no longer available. In 2018 there were 6,699 dependants who were under 18 and 2,280 who were over 18.

The tables below show the age and gender of dependants.

Table 20: Applications by Dependants by age

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

Table 21: Applications by dependants aged 18 and over

	Total Applications	Male dependants	Female dependants	% Female
2018	2,280	622	1,658	73%
2017	2,205	666	1,539	70%
2016	2,481	845	1,636	66%
2015	2,033	660	1,347	66%
2014	1,969	556	1,413	72%

N.B. There are a few cases where the age or gender of dependants is recorded as unknown.

WOMEN AND GIRLS:

Applications

- In 2018 27% of asylum applications were made by women. This was close to the average for recent years.

Table 22: Applications by women (Excl. Dependents)

	Total Applications	Applications by women	% by women
2018	29,504	8,025	27%
2017	26,547	7,364	28%
2016	30,747	7,680	25%
2015	32,733	6,788	21%
2014	25,033	6,842	27%

- The proportion of women applicants varies considerably from country to country. For a few countries there are more women applicants than men, or a roughly equal number, whereas in others the proportion of women applicants is low.

Table 23: Women asylum applicants from the top ten applicant producing countries 2018

	Total Applications	Applications by women	% by women
Iran	3,320	786	24%
Iraq	2,700	663	25%
Eritrea	2,151	444	21%
Pakistan	2,033	417	21%
Albania	2,005	761	38%
Sudan	1,611	133	8%
Afghanistan	1,349	180	13%
India	1,321	280	21%
Bangladesh	1,297	117	9%
Vietnam	1,215	442	36%

Table 24: Top ten countries for women asylum applicants 2018

	Applications by women	% of total by women	Change in no. from 2017
Iran	786	24%	+144
Albania	761	38%	+75
Iraq	663	25%	-78
Eritrea	444	21%	+233
Vietnam	442	36%	+63
Nigeria	433	52%	-73
Pakistan	417	21%	-53
China	404	40%	+67
India	280	21%	-50
Afghanistan	180	13%	+16

- In 2018 only 11% of asylum applications by unaccompanied children were by girls. The percentage of applications by girls has remained steady in recent years.

Table 25: Applications by unaccompanied children seeking asylum

	Total Applications	Applications by girls	% Female
2018	3,063	334	11%
2017	2,401	261	11%
2016	3,290	333	10%
2015	3,254	296	9%
2014	1,945	232	12%

- The main countries of origin for unaccompanied girls seeking asylum in 2018 were those shown in the table below. There was a significant increase in applications from Vietnam in 2017 and from Eritrea in 2018. There were fewer than 10 girls applying from every other country in 2018.

Table 26: Applications by unaccompanied children seeking asylum (girls only)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Vietnam	36	43	71	121	131
Eritrea	57	106	110	29	99
Albania	41	38	33	24	15
Ethiopia	4	15	35	6	15
Iraq	6	1	10	8	14
Iran	7	10	6	7	11

Decisions

- Until 2014 women asylum seekers were generally slightly more likely than men to be granted asylum, and slightly more likely to be granted humanitarian protection or discretionary leave.
- Until 2014 the refusal rates for women tended to be lower than for men, however in 2015 the percentage of women granted asylum was significantly lower than for men and the refusal rate was higher. In 2018 the refusal rate for women was significantly lower than for men.

Table 27 Decisions by gender

	Granted Asylum		Granted HP or DL or other leave		Refused	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
2018	24%	31%	6%	8%	70%	61%
2017	26%	31%	4%	4%	68%	65%
2016	29%	29%	6%	4%	66%	67%
2015	36%	30%	5%	5%	59%	65%
2014	37%	36%	4%	5%	59%	59%

Appeals

- The differences in success rates between men and women are relatively small.

Table 28 Appeal decisions by gender

	Appeal Allowed		Appeal Dismissed		Appeal Withdrawn	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
2018	40%	43%	55%	49%	6%	8%
2017	35%	37%	61%	59%	4%	5%
2016	41%	41%	55%	54%	5%	5%
2015	36%	34%	59%	60%	5%	6%
2014	27%	33%	68%	61%	5%	6%
2013	24%	28%	70%	64%	6%	8%

Removals

- In 2018 of the people recorded as removed from the UK on leaving detention 17% (1,907) were female.

Note

Figures given in this summary may differ from those in earlier summaries. In some cases this is because of rounding which was done in Home Office Statistical Bulletins which is no longer done, and in other cases, particularly for more recent statistics, because of adjustments made as a result of more complete and accurate information becoming available.

The full detailed statistics covering the most recent period can be found on the Gov.UK website via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/immigration-statistics-data-tables-year-ending-september-2019>

For older statistics follow this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/series/migration-statistics>

The user guide to the Immigration statistics can be found via this link

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

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.