

Refugee Council

Information



SUPPORTING AND
EMPOWERING
REFUGEES

Children in the Asylum System

November 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 over 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	3,254	3,290	2,401	3,063
% change to previous year	+54%	+67%	+1%	-27%	+28%

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

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2019	951	753	901	
2018	667	604	851	941
2017	547	602	589	663
2016	693	699	722	1,176
2015	525	576	1,023	1,130

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	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	227	223
Ethiopia	18	114	104	90	137

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	791	929	716	875
% 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	241
Sudan	130
Afghanistan	103
Iraq	88
Iran	84
Vietnam	72
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. 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".

Unaccompanied Children Decisions

- Of the decisions made on unaccompanied children's claims in 2018, 58% were refugee status, where the decision was made whilst the child was under 18.
- 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	1,325	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 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
Q3 2019	460	353	22	0	53	0	32
Q2 2019	521	401	22	0	41	2	55
Q1 2019	475	297	16	0	47	83	32
Q4 2018	302	205	20	1	47	0	29
Q3 2018	365	219	9	0	68	1	68

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	820	299	29	3	1	3	485
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
Q3 2019	263	154	11	1	0	1	96
Q2 2019	330	153	18	3	0	1	155
Q1 2019	398	205	25	1	0	2	165
Q4 2018	165	79	11	1	0	1	73
Q3 2018	199	68	9	1	0	0	121

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	275	266	0	0	5	0	4
Afghanistan	248	101	13	1	99	0	34
Iraq	161	68	20	0	45	0	28
Sudan	156	133	2	1	14	0	6
Iran	135	46	0	0	61	1	27
Vietnam	104	66	5	0	20	0	13
Ethiopia	60	42	0	0	11	0	7
Albania	57	0	0	0	29	0	28

Far fewer decisions were made in the case of children who had reached the age of 18. There were six 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
Albania	125	3	0	0	0	1	121
Afghanistan	114	21	2	2	1	0	88
Iran	104	16	1	0	0	0	87
Sudan	101	83	0	0	0	0	18
Eritrea	95	94	0	0	0	0	1
Iraq	80	6	15	1	0	0	58

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 2018 data only shows the total number under 18, which was 6,699, with 2,280 over the age of 18.

Table 10: Applications by Dependents 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

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 proportion 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	2019 Jan - Jun
East Midlands	Out In	12 30	0 24	0 11	0 0
East of England	Out In	21 32	69 150	92 119	39 39
London	Out In	50 4	168 1	75 1	0 0
North East	Out In	0 10	0 13	0 1	0 0
North West	Out In	0 17	0 50	0 16	0 0
South East	Out In	148 54	153 36	42 25	5 5
South West	Out In	1 46	3 51	0 13	0 0
Wales	Out In	0 1	0 0	0 0	0 0
West Midlands	Out In	0 10	1 35	0 15	0 0
Yorkshire & Humber	Out In	0 28	0 44	9 17	3 3

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/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets?utm_source=27b97e9b-2b9b-4afc-8f03-87f42674b1f5&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

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.