

ASYLUM BACKLOGS

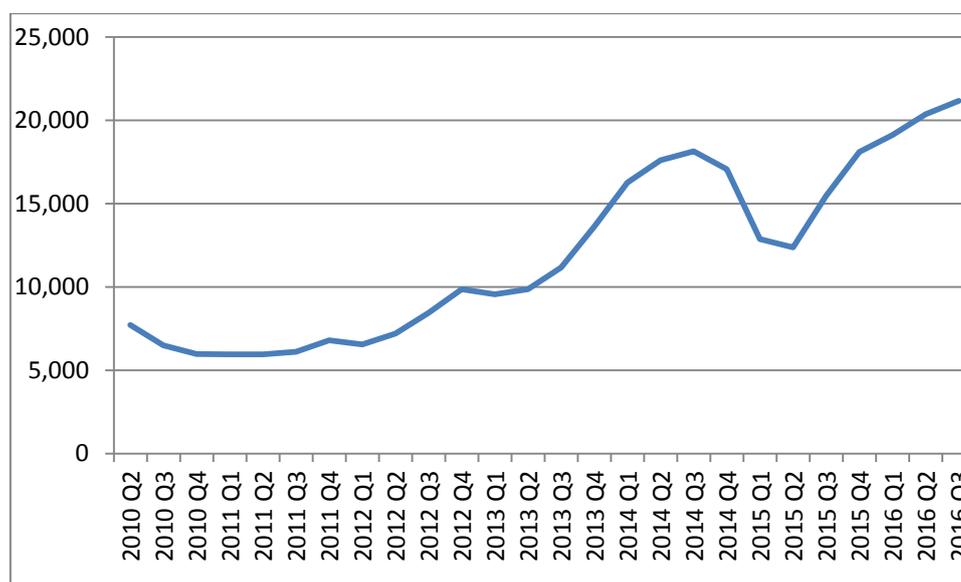
December 2016

At the end of September 2016, 25,902 of the applications for asylum received since April 2006 from main applicants were pending a decision (initial decision, appeal or further review). This was similar to the previous two quarters and significantly higher than a year ago. The Home Office has stated that the number of decisions outstanding increased over a period of time due to a decrease in staffing levels following a restructure initiated by the UK Border Agency and say that since January 2014, steps have been taken to reallocate resources to this area, the impact of which can be seen in some of the latest figures. However the number of cases outstanding for more than 6 months is still much higher than a year ago.

During 2010 the number of asylum initial decisions taken in each quarter was larger than the number of new applications. However in every quarter since then the opposite has been true, except for the last quarter of 2014 and the first two quarters of 2015. (The initial decisions taken in a quarter are not necessarily on applications made in that same quarter, but the cumulative effect of a continued gap over a number of years between applications made and decisions made is inevitably an increase in the number of cases with decisions pending).

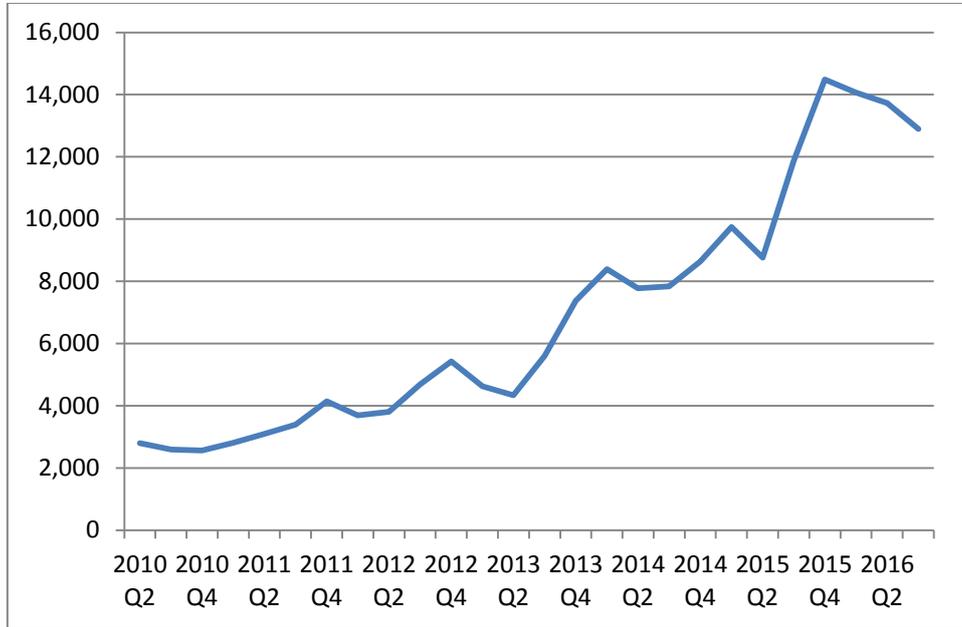
The statistics on pending cases have been published since quarter 2, 2010.

The chart below show the total number of cases awaiting an initial decision.

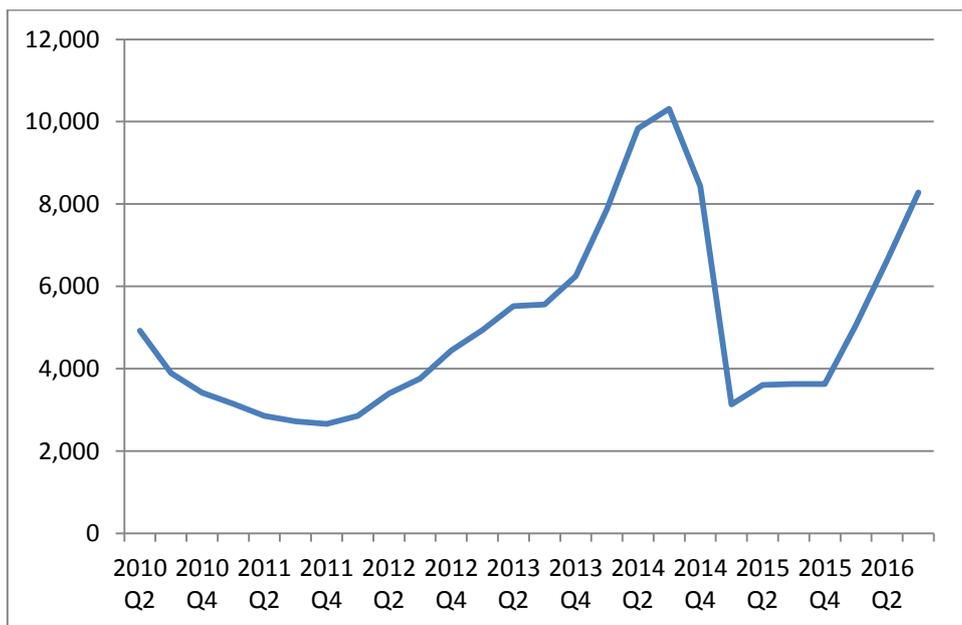


The published statistics also break down the cases into those where an initial decision has been pending for less than 6 months and more than 6 months. The charts below show this data.

Decision pending 6 months or less:



Decision pending for more than 6 months:



It is clear that the number of cases waiting over 6 months increased very significantly from 2011 until 2014, but then reduced quite rapidly until the most recent quarters when it has been rising again.

Decisions pending further review

Since the beginning of 2012 until recently there was relatively little change in the number of cases pending further review, ranging from a high of 4,904 in the first quarter of 2012, to a low of 3,412 in the first quarter of 2014. However in the last quarter of 2014 the figure rose to 5,907, and rose again in 2015 up to 9,236 at the end of June 2015, the highest since 2010 when these statistics were first reported. At the end of September 2016 the figure had fallen to 4,729.

The Home Affairs Select Committee of the House of Commons looks at the work of the Immigration Directorates within the Home Office on a regular basis. Their most recent report, published in March 2016, examines the work of the Directorates over the period July to September 2015. It includes a section dealing with asylum applications, including backlogs. On the timescales for determining asylum applications the Committee commented on the impact of the increased number of applications. They said:

- UKVI altered its service standards timetable so that a higher proportion of new straightforward claims for asylum are given an initial decision within six months. This is at the same time as the number of applications is rising. The total number of main applications in the year ending September 2015 was 19% higher than in the year ending September 2014. In Q3 2015 the number of main applicants and dependants reached 12,028 compared to 7,567 in Q2 2015.
- The number of asylum applications surpassed the number of decisions made in Q3 2015. We are concerned that the department may not be able to maintain the service levels it has set itself on initial decisions for new asylum claims within 6 months. To do so may require further funding and resources.

The Committee's report can be found at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/inquiry/>

The most recent asylum statistics can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2016/list-of-tables#asylum>

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.