

Children in the Asylum System

September 2014

The asylum statistics are published quarterly by the Home Office. The last full year for which statistics are available is 2013.

Unaccompanied Children Applications

The number of asylum applications by unaccompanied children is shown in the tables below. Over the last five years there has been a downward trend in the number of applications. In 2013 they rose again, accounting for just under 5% of all asylum applications compared with over 16% in 2008.

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

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Applications	2,857	1,515	1,248	1,125	1,265
% change to previous year	-28%	-47%	-18%	-10%	+12%

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

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2014	373	372		
2013	282	288	327	368
2012	263	244	310	308
2011	343	339	271	295
2010	395	353	386	381
2009	950	672	663	572

In 2012 Albania became the country of origin for the largest number of unaccompanied children. The number of applicants from Afghanistan has dropped sharply over the past 5 years, with significant reductions also for Iraq and Iran among other countries. Applications from Syria are increasing, reaching 64 in 2013.

Table 3: Top five child asylum applicant producing countries, 2013 (excl. Dependants)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Albania	55	32	123	265	470
Afghanistan	1,485	487	394	235	150
Eritrea	224	123	102	80	131
Iran	184	176	171	119	76
Vietnam	80	96	78	62	68

In 2013 86% of applicants were male, which is a similar percentage to earlier years.

Unaccompanied Children Ages

In 2013 the age distribution was:

Aged 16 – 17	66%
Aged 14 – 15	23%
Aged under 14	6%
Age unknown	5%

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.

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

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Applications	1,146	530	370	337	323
% change to previous year	-24%	-54%	-30%	-9%	-4%

During 2013 the countries of origin with the largest numbers of age disputed cases raised were:

Afghanistan	66
Albania	44
Syria	31
Eritrea	31
Iran	26
Sudan	23
Vietnam	22

These countries accounted for over 75% of age disputed cases raised.

Unaccompanied Children Decisions

- In recent years the majority of decisions on asylum applications by unaccompanied children under the age of 17 have been 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 less than 5% of total decisions.
- Unaccompanied children who have reached the age of 18 are much more likely to have their asylum claim refused.
- For decisions on unaccompanied children who have reached the age of 18 there was a refusal rate of 70% in 2013.

The new category, 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 will mean there are far fewer grants of discretionary leave.

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
2013	936	237	4	380	119	18	178
2012	594	159	3	342			90
2011	939	183	6	605			145
2010	1,627	264	11	1,089			263
2009	2,607	297	19	1,908			383

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
Q2 2014	130	57	1	5	47	2	18
Q1 2014	110	45	1	1	48	2	13
Q4 2013	155	54	0	0	72	1	28
Q3 2013	198	51	1	56	46	1	43
Q2 2013	291	61	1	164	1	15	49

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
2013	176	50	0	3	0	2	121
2012	87	26	0	8		0	53
2011	127	27	3	9			88
2010	209	27	1	7			174
2009	193	27	0	4			162

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
Q2 2014	47	12	0	0	0	0	35
Q1 2014	54	26	0	0	0	0	28
Q4 2013	35	12	0	0	0	1	22
Q3 2013	52	14	0	1	0	0	37
Q2 2013	46	11	0	1	0	1	33

Decisions by country of origin

The tables below show decisions by country of origin for 2013. For children aged 17 and under the table includes those countries of origin where 20 or more decisions were made during the year.

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

Albania stands out as the country with the highest refusal rate. Turkey, and to a lesser degree Iran, also had a higher than average refusal rate, but with much smaller numbers involved.

Table 9: Initial asylum decisions on unaccompanied children aged 17 and under, 2013

	Total	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	UASC Leave	Family or Private Life	Refusals
Albania	278	5	0	148	57	1	67
Afghanistan	197	29	1	109	26	8	24
Eritrea	87	75	0	5	3	0	4
Iran	74	24	1	26	5	1	17
Somalia	34	25	0	3	3	2	1
Vietnam	33	7	1	11	8	1	5
Syria	27	17	0	3	3	0	4
Turkey	24	2	0	7	4	0	11
Sudan	20	17	0	2	1	0	0

Far fewer decisions were made in the case of children who had reached the age of 18. Four countries of origin accounted for over half the total decisions. These were:

Albania 31 decisions, of which 30 were refusals, and 1 grant of asylum
 Afghanistan 24 decisions, of which 22 were refusals, and 2 grants of asylum
 Iran 18 decisions, of which 9 were refusals, and 9 grants of asylum
 Eritrea 18 decisions, of which 4 were refusals, and 14 grants of asylum.

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

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 over the last 5 years

Table 10: Applications by Dependants by age

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Under 5	2,163	1,530	1,904	2,030	2,423
5 – 9 yo	1054	829	1,061	1,094	1,125
10 – 13 yo	654	470	587	566	590
14 – 15 yo	271	200	257	247	223
16 – 17 yo	220	158	201	191	210
18+ yo	1,366	1,129	1,667	1,658	1,705

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”

For unaccompanied children figures for years before 2012 given in earlier briefings are not directly comparable to 2012 and 2013 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

About the Refugee Council The Refugee Council is the largest organisation 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.