

Children in the Asylum System

August 2016

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. However in 2014 and 2015 they rose significantly, but still accounted for just over 10% of all asylum applications in 2015 compared with over 16% in 2008.

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

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Applications	1,248	1,125	1,265	1,945	3,253
% change to previous year	-18%	-10%	+12%	+54%	+67%

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

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2016	661	658		
2015	525	575	1,023	1,130
2014	397	396	551	601
2013	282	288	327	368
2012	263	244	310	308
2011	343	339	271	295

In 2015 there were large increases in the number of applications from Eritrea and Afghanistan, in the latter case after several years in which the numbers had fallen compared with a few years ago. Applications from all the other countries on the list below increased, with the exception of Albania.

Table 3: Top 8 child asylum applicant producing countries (excl. Dependants)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Eritrea	102	80	131	460	736
Afghanistan	394	235	150	179	694
Albania	123	265	470	632	481
Iran	171	119	76	73	227
Vietnam	78	62	68	103	182
Iraq	16	12	6	32	182
Syria	8	21	64	118	169
Sudan	9	19	32	51	148

In 2015 over 90%% of applicants were male, which is a similar percentage to earlier years.

Unaccompanied Children ages

In 2015 the age distribution was:	Aged 16 – 17	62%
	Aged 14 – 15	24%
	Aged under 14	7%
	Age unknown	6%

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.

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

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Applications	370	337	323	318	789
% change to previous year	-30%	-9%	-4%	-2%	+148%

During 2015 the countries of origin with the largest numbers of age disputed cases raised were:

Afghanistan	235
Iran	115
Eritrea	106
Iraq	105

These countries accounted for over 70% 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 in 2015, 22% were refugee status.
- Until 2013 the majority of decisions on asylum applications by unaccompanied children under the age of 17 were grants of discretionary leave.
- A new category, UASC leave, was introduced in 2013 and is now used in cases where the only reason for giving leave is that the applicant is a child who cannot be returned, and this means that there are now far fewer grants of discretionary leave than in the past.
- Unaccompanied children who have reached the age of 18 are generally 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 82% in 2015 although in the 1st quarter of 2016 it had dropped to 58%.

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
2015	1,568	357	18	38	809	0	346
2014	988	418	9	23	380	4	154
2013	936	237	4	380	119	18	178
2012	594	159	3	342			90
2011	939	183	6	605			145

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 2016	463	131	15	2	235	2	78
Q1 2016	550	160	6	9	290	0	85
Q4 2015	424	110	7	4	208	0	95
Q3 2015	342	81	2	7	183	0	69
Q2 2015	414	67	8	8	235	0	96

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
2015	362	63	1	3	0	0	295
2014	282	69	1	0	0	2	210
2013	176	50	0	3	0	2	121
2012	87	26	0	8		0	53
2011	127	27	3	9			88

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 2016	105	37	1	1	0	1	65
Q1 2016	64	25	1	0	1	0	37
Q4 2015	74	13	0	1	0	0	60
Q3 2015	62	9	0	0	0	0	53
Q2 2015	52	12	0	2	0	0	38

Decisions by country of origin

The tables below show decisions by country of origin for 2015. 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 and Egypt stand out as the countries with the highest refusal rate. Only 1 applicant from Sudan was not granted refugee status. Compared with 2014 there was a large reduction in the number of applicants from Eritrea granted refugee status, from 95% to 37%.

Table 9: Initial asylum decisions on unaccompanied children aged 17 and under, 2015

	Total	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	UASC Leave	Family or Private Life	Refusals
Albania	440	1	0	8	288	0	143
Eritrea	368	137	13	2	162	0	54
Afghanistan	241	41	0	11	147	0	42
Egypt	75	0	0	1	54	0	20
Syria	68	26	0	0	32	0	10
Vietnam	63	13	0	0	40	0	10
Sudan	58	57	0	0	1	0	0
Iran	55	22	0	0	21	0	12

Far fewer decisions were made in the case of children who had reached the age of 18. Five countries of origin accounted for over 70% of the total decisions, and were the only countries with more than 20 initial decisions. These were:

Albania 143 decisions, of which 141 were refusals, and 0 grants of asylum
 Eritrea 37 decisions, of which 21 were refusals, and 16 grants of asylum
 Syria 31 decisions, of which 17 were refusals, and 14 grants of asylum
 Iran 23 decisions, of which 18 were refusals, and 5 grants of asylum.
 Afghanistan 21 decisions, of which 19 were refusals, and 2 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 for which data is available. The relevant statistics are published in August each year.

Table 10: Applications by Dependants by age

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Under 5	1,904	2,030	2,423	2,687	2,681
5 – 9 yo	1,061	1,094	1,125	1,312	1,337
10 – 13 yo	587	566	590	746	670
14 – 15 yo	257	247	223	307	282
16 – 17 yo	201	191	210	253	232
18+ yo	1,667	1,658	1,705	1,969	2,033

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

All statistics are taken from the government quarterly statistics bulletin

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-april-to-june-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.

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