

## Children in the Asylum System

## August 2017

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. In recent years they rose, but still accounted for just over 10% of all asylum applications in 2016 compared with over 16% in 2008.

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

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Applications	1,125	1,265	1,945	3,253	3,290
% change to previous year	-10%	+12%	+54%	+67%	+1%

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

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2017	499	547		
2016	693	699	722	1,176
2015	525	575	1,023	1,130
2014	397	396	551	601
2013	282	288	327	368
2012	263	244	310	308

In 2016 there were significant increases in the number of applications from Iran, Iraq and Sudan. Applications from Afghanistan increased in 2015 and 2016 after several years in which the numbers had fallen compared with a few years ago.

*Table 3: Top 9 child asylum applicant producing countries (excl. Dependants)*

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Afghanistan	235	150	179	694	754
Albania	265	470	632	481	420
Eritrea	80	131	460	736	413
Iran	119	76	73	227	388
Iraq	12	6	32	182	324
Sudan	19	32	51	148	255
Vietnam	62	68	103	182	194
Syria	21	64	118	169	140
Ethiopia	11	7	18	114	104

In 2016 86%% of applicants were male, which is a small decrease compared to earlier years.

## Unaccompanied Children ages

In 2016 the age distribution was:

Aged 16 – 17	61%
Aged 14 – 15	27%
Aged under 14	7%
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. There was a large increase in 2015 and a further increase in 2016.

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

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Applications	337	323	318	789	928
% change to previous year	-9%	-4%	-2%	+148%	+18%

During 2016 the countries of origin with the largest numbers of age disputed cases raised were:

Afghanistan	295
Iran	163
Iraq	127
Eritrea	95

These countries accounted for over 73% 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 2016, 28% 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 have generally been 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 57% in 2016 but the refusal rate has dropped in recent quarters.

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
<b>2016</b>	1,656	502	50	14	828	2	260
<b>2015</b>	1,568	357	18	38	809	0	346
<b>2014</b>	988	418	9	23	380	4	154
<b>2013</b>	936	237	4	380	119	18	178
<b>2012</b>	594	159	3	342			90

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
<b>Q2 2017</b>	367	213	7	1	91	0	55
<b>Q1 2017</b>	274	135	4	0	102	1	32
<b>Q4 2016</b>	327	130	8	0	149	0	40
<b>Q3 2016</b>	308	76	21	3	156	0	52
<b>Q2 2016</b>	466	131	15	2	233	2	83

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
<b>2016</b>	295	118	6	1	1	2	167
<b>2015</b>	362	63	1	3	0	0	295
<b>2014</b>	282	69	1	0	0	2	210
<b>2013</b>	176	50	0	3	0	2	121
<b>2012</b>	87	26	0	8			53

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
<b>Q2 2017</b>	217	138	5	0	0	0	74
<b>Q1 2017</b>	66	36	1	0	0	0	29
<b>Q4 2016</b>	75	41	2	0	0	0	32
<b>Q3 2016</b>	57	14	3	0	0	1	39
<b>Q2 2016</b>	101	38	0	1	0	1	61

## Decisions by country of origin

The tables below show decisions by country of origin for 2016. 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 is the country with the highest refusal rate. Compared with the years before 2015 there was a large reduction in the number of applicants from Eritrea granted refugee status, from 95% to 44%.

Table 9: Initial asylum decisions on unaccompanied children aged 17 and under, 2016

	Total	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	UASC Leave	Family or Private Life	Refusals
<b>Afghanistan</b>	406	83	1	6	269	0	47
<b>Eritrea</b>	328	143	31	0	120	0	34
<b>Albania</b>	228	2	0	0	173	0	53
<b>Iran</b>	215	54	0	4	108	0	49
<b>Iraq</b>	160	35	16	0	76	0	33
<b>Syria</b>	64	50	1	1	7	0	5
<b>Vietnam</b>	61	36	0	0	22	0	3

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

Eritrea 69 decisions, of which 18 were refusals, and 46 grants of asylum  
 Albania 44 decisions, all of which were refusals  
 Syria 39 decisions, of which 3 were refusals, and 36 grants of asylum  
 Iraq 25 decisions, of which 22 were refusals, and 3 grants of asylum.  
 Iran 24 decisions, of which 20 were refusals, and 4 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.

Table 10: Applications by Dependants by age

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Under 5</b>	2,030	2,423	2,687	2,681	3,052
<b>5 – 9 yo</b>	1,094	1,125	1,312	1,337	1,640
<b>10 – 13 yo</b>	566	590	746	670	809
<b>14 – 15 yo</b>	247	223	307	282	336
<b>16 – 17 yo</b>	191	210	253	232	264
<b>18+ yo</b>	1,658	1,705	1,969	2,033	2,481

## NOTE

In their latest statistical publication the Home Office revised the figures for quarter 1 of 2017 for both the number of applications and decisions. This means that the figures in this briefing for that quarter differ significantly from those in the briefing issued in May.

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](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-2017/list-of-tables>

## **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.