

Children in the Asylum System

February 2018

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 8% of all asylum applications in 2017 compared with over 16% in 2008.

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

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Applications	1,265	1,945	3,253	3,290	2,206
% change to previous year	+12%	+54%	+67%	+1%	-33%

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

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2017	499	547	543	617
2016	693	699	722	1,176
2015	525	575	1,023	1,130
2014	397	396	551	601
2013	282	288	327	368

In 2017 there were significant increases in the number of applications from Sudan and Vietnam. There were decreases for all the other countries in the top 9 countries of origin, and an especially large decrease for applications from Afghanistan.

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

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Sudan	32	51	148	255	337
Eritrea	131	460	736	413	320
Vietnam	68	103	182	194	268
Albania	470	632	481	420	250
Iraq	6	32	182	324	248
Iran	76	73	227	388	213
Afghanistan	150	179	694	754	210
Ethiopia	7	18	114	104	74
Syria	64	118	169	140	41

In 2017 89% of applicants were male, which is similar to earlier years.

Unaccompanied Children ages

In 2017 the age distribution was:	Aged 16 – 17	71%
	Aged 14 – 15	22%
	Aged under 14	4%
	Age unknown	3%

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, but the numbers fell in 2017.

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

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Applications	323	318	789	928	712
% change to previous year	-4%	-2%	+148%	+18%	-23%

During 2017 the countries of origin with the largest numbers of age disputed cases raised were:

Afghanistan	124
Eritrea	112
Iraq	99
Sudan	92
Iran	87
Vietnam	55

These countries accounted for over almost 80%% 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 2017, 55% 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 dropped in 2017.

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
2017	1,414	794	36	2	378	2	202
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
2013	936	237	4	380	119	18	178

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
Q4 2017	422	245	10	1	94	1	71
Q3 2017	351	201	15	0	91	0	44
Q2 2017	367	213	7	1	91	0	55
Q1 2017	274	135	4	0	102	1	32
Q4 2016	327	130	8	0	149	0	40

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
2017	584	306	12	1	0	1	264
2016	295	118	6	1	1	2	167
2015	362	63	1	3	0	0	295
2014	282	69	1	0	0	2	210
2013	176	50	0	3	0	2	121

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
Q4 2017	200	76	4	1	0	0	119
Q3 2017	101	56	2	0	0	1	42
Q2 2017	217	138	5	0	0	0	74
Q1 2017	66	36	1	0	0	0	29
Q4 2016	75	41	2	0	0	0	32

Decisions by country of origin

The tables below show decisions by country of origin for 2017. 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.

Table 9: Initial asylum decisions on unaccompanied children aged 17 and under, 2017

	Total	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	UASC Leave	Family or Private Life	Refusals
Eritrea	344	332	0	0	4	0	8
Afghanistan	323	128	11	2	139	0	43
Iraq	148	30	15	0	71	1	31
Iran	131	45	0	0	53	0	33
Sudan	124	111	0	0	6	0	7
Vietnam	92	45	7	0	27	0	13
Albania	57	1	0	0	31	0	25
Ethiopia	53	37	0	0	9	0	7

Far fewer decisions were made in the case of children who had reached the age of 18. There were six countries with 40 or more decisions.

Table 10: Initial asylum decisions on unaccompanied children aged 18 and over, 2017

	Total	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	UASC Leave	Family or Private Life	Refusals
Eritrea	137	132	1	0	0	0	4
Sudan	83	67	0	0	0	0	16
Afghanistan	57	12	3	0	0	0	42
Iran	55	21	1	0	0	0	33
Albania	48	2	1	0	0	0	45
Iraq	46	8	2	0	0	0	36

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. These statistics are published in August each year so the most recent are for 2016.

Table 10: Applications by Dependants by age

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

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 number of unaccompanied children to refer new arrivals to another region or council.

The table below shows transfers out of and into each region.

Region	Transfers	2016	2017
East Midlands	Out	12	0
	In	30	24
East of England	Out	21	69
	In	32	150
London	Out	50	168
	In	4	1
North East	Out	0	0
	In	10	13
North West	Out	0	0
	In	17	50
South East	Out	148	153
	In	54	36
South West	Out	1	3
	In	46	51
Wales	Out	0	0
	In	1	0
West Midlands	Out	0	1
	In	10	35
Yorkshire & Humber	Out	0	0
	In	28	44

The figures in this table cover the last two quarters of 2016 and the whole of 2017.

NOTE

In their August statistical publication the Home Office revised the figures for quarter 1 of 2017 for both the number of applications and decisions relating to unaccompanied children. This means that the figures in subsequent briefings 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

For detailed statistics see the government quarterly statistics bulletin

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-october-to-december-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.