

Asylum statistics Annual Trends

November 2020

APPLICATIONS:

- In 2019 the number of applications for asylum in the UK, excluding dependants, (35,566), was 21% higher than in 2018 (29,504). After a significant drop in the number of applications from 2009 to 2010 there had been an upward trend from 2011 to 2015 which had reversed in 2016 and 2017.

Table 1: Asylum applications in the UK (excl. Dependants)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Applications	32,733	30,747	26,547	29,504	35,737
% change from previous year	+31%	-6%	-14%	+9%	+21%

Applications by nationality:

- In 2019 there were significant increases in the number of applicants from Iran, Albania, China and Vietnam compared with 2018.

Table 2: Top ten asylum applicant producing countries (excl. Dependants)

	2018	2019	% change
Iran	3,320	4,855	+46%
Albania	2,005	3,488	+74%
Iraq	2,700	2,985	+11%
Pakistan	2,033	1,937	-5%
Eritrea	2,151	1,876	-13%
Afghanistan	1,349	1,573	+16%
India	1,321	1,580	+20%
Vietnam	1,215	1,561	+28%
Sudan	1,611	1,524	-5%
China	1,020	1,329	+31%

- Over the past 8 years 14 different countries have appeared in the list of the top ten asylum applicant producing countries. Eritrea, Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan have been in the top ten in every one of the last 8 years.

- Zimbabwe had the highest number of applicants in 2009 (5,599) and third highest in 2010 (1,446) but since then has never been in the top ten. Somalia is another country where the number of applicants has declined in recent years.
- After declining numbers from 2009 to 2013 applications from Iraq have risen in recent years. Libya featured in the top ten list in 2011, but not before or since. The number of applicants from Syria rose steadily from 2010 until 2016, fell in 2017, but rose again in 2018 and 2019. The number of applications from China rose significantly in both 2018 and 2019.

Applications by location

- The majority of applications are made in-country rather than at ports. Over recent years there have been only small variations in the percentage of applications made in-country, ranging from 85% to 92% of all applications. In 2019 78% of applications were made in country, which is the lowest figure in the last 10 years.

Table 3: Applications by location (excl. Dependants), by year

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
In-country	29,815	26,865	22,474	23,601	28,023
% change from previous year	+33%	-10%	-16%	+5%	+19%
Port	2,918	3,882	4,073	5,903	7,714
% change from previous year	+12%	+33%	+5%	+45%	+31%
Total	32,733	30,747	26,547	29,504	35,737
% change from previous year	+31%	-6%	-14%	+11%	+21%

DECISIONS:

- In 2019 48% of initial decisions were refusals, 45% were grants of asylum, 3.3% were grants of Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave, and 3.3% were grants of leave to remain under other categories, such as family or private life rules; a category introduced in 2011.
- The percentage of decisions to grant refugee status was easily the highest in the past 5 years.
- There has been a steady decline in the number of decisions to grant discretionary leave to remain. This is related to a change in the way decisions are made on applications from unaccompanied children, who used to be frequently granted discretionary leave when they were under 18.
- The 'other grants of leave' category includes UASC leave, the temporary leave often given to unaccompanied children whose claim is refused.
- The percentage of refusals in 2019 was easily the lowest in the past 5 years.

Table 4: Initial Decisions (excl. Dependants)

	2015		2016		2017		2018		2019	
Decisions	28,623		24,895		21,269		21,084		20,766	
Refugee status	9,975	35%	7,137	29%	5,957	28%	5,557	26%	9,401	45%
Humanitarian Protection	110	0.4%	187	0.8%	146	0.7%	582	3%	637	3%
Discretionary Leave	227	0.8%	114	0.5%	84	0.4%	104	0.5%	70	0.3%
Other Grants of Leave	1,110	4%	1,027	4%	592	3%	688	3%	688	3.3%
Refused	17,201	60%	16,430	66%	14,490	68%	14,153	67%	9,970	48%

- Among the countries with large numbers of asylum applicants from which the highest percentages were given refugee status or other forms of leave to remain in 2019 were Iran, Eritrea, and Sudan as can be seen from the table below.
- In contrast, among the countries with relatively large numbers of applicants Pakistan, Albania, India and Nigeria had well above average refusal rates.
- The larger number of decisions to grant UASC leave for applicants from Iraq, Afghanistan and Albania relates to the number of applications from unaccompanied children from these countries. In the case of Nigeria there were few UASC cases but a significant number of other grants.

Table 5: Asylum decisions by nationality, 2019, top ten countries for number of decisions (excl. Dependants)

	Decisions	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	Family or Private Life / UASC Leave	Refusals
Iran	3,460	2,211	6	2	34	1,207
Iraq	2,187	420	133	9	86	1,539
Eritrea	2,007	1,735	3	1	4	264
Sudan	1,675	1,418	3	0	7	247
Afghanistan	1,134	546	52	1	111	424
Albania	1,102	143	1	7	98	853
Pakistan	850	249	2	2	40	557
Nigeria	665	115	1	11	73	465
Vietnam	616	248	47	4	31	286
India	606	1	0	9	18	578

APPEALS:

- In 2019 41% of appeals were allowed, while 53% were dismissed.
- The success rate at appeal had remained steady for a number of years, but there was a significant increase in both 2015 and 2016 as well as an increase, after several years of decline, in the number of appeals heard. Fewer appeals were heard in 2019 than in 2016, 2017 and 2018 and the success rate was slightly higher than earlier years.

Table 6: Appeals determined

	2015		2016		2017		2018		2019	
Determined	9,224		12,581		14,299		11,627		9,668	
Allowed	3,260	35%	5,051	40%	5,074	35%	4,457	38%	3,994	41%
Dismissed	5,511	60%	6,914	55%	8,623	60%	6,662	57%	5,023	52%
Withdrawn	453	5%	616	5%	602	4%	508	5%	651	7%

- The table below compares the success rate at appeal for the top ten countries by the number of initial decisions. The 'grants' column shows an initial decision to grant any form of status.
- The first 6 countries in the list had significantly above average appeal success rates. Albania, Pakistan, Nigeria and India all had below average initial grants of status and Pakistan, Nigeria and India also had below average appeal success rates.

Table 7: Success rates at appeal by country, 2019

	Initial Grants (%)	Appeals determined	% success at appeal
Vietnam	54%	354	55%
Iran	65%	1,133	55%
Eritrea	87%	93	56%
Sudan	85%	218	53%
Afghanistan	63%	603	51%
Albania	23%	610	49%
Iraq	30%	1,666	37%
Nigeria	30%	402	31%
Pakistan	34%	714	29%
India	5%	176	19%

The figures on appeals may differ from those shown in earlier summaries due to changes in the data sources (see note at the end of this summary).

REFUGEES RESETTLED:

- Refugees have been accepted for resettlement in the UK via the Gateway Programme, the Mandate Scheme, the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (started in 2014) and most recently the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (started in 2016).
- The UK commitment to the Gateway Programme was for 750 refugees per year, referred by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The Mandate scheme covers people who have been granted refugee status by UNHCR and have ties to the UK.

Table 8: Refugees resettled (incl. Dependents)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Gateway Programme	652	804	813	693	704
Mandate Scheme	18	8	28	18	11
Syrian Vulnerable Persons	1,194	4,369	4,832	4,407	4,408
Vulnerable Children		31	539	688	489

- The Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme reached its target of 20,000 individuals resettled by 2020 and a new consolidated scheme replaces all the above schemes.

ASYLUM SUPPORT:

- The total number of asylum seekers (including dependants) in receipt of Section 95 asylum support at the end of 2019 was 43,549 of whom 40,702 were in dispersal accommodation and 2,847 were receiving subsistence only.
- The numbers rose during 2018 and were then at their highest since 2007 but have fallen back slightly in 2019.
- The region of the UK with the largest number in dispersal accommodation at the end of 2019 was the North West (9,665). This region has had the largest proportion since the beginning of 2008.
- 2,738 asylum seekers were in initial accommodation at the end of 2019.

Table 9: Asylum seekers in receipt of asylum support (incl. Dependants)

	End of 2015	End of 2016	End of 2017	End of 2018	End of 2019
Dispersed accommodation	31,432	36,626	37,716	41,316	40,702
Subsistence only	2,931	2,763	3,020	2,949	2,847
Initial accommodation	1,985	1,990	1,802	2,129	2,738

Applicants supported under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

- 2,455 decisions to grant Section 4 support were made in 2019. This is an increase from 2018 but still significantly lower than earlier years.
- At the end of 2019 3,804 applicants, including dependants, were receiving Section 4 support.

Table 10: Grants of Section 4 Support

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of grants	5,127	4,530	5,257	2,007	2,455

Table 11: Numbers in receipt of Section 4 Support (incl. Dependants)

	End of 2015	End of 2016	End of 2017	End of 2018	End of 2019
Number supported	3,821	3,773	4,114	4,032	3,804

- For more detail on asylum support see the separate briefing on this subject produced by the Refugee Council.

ENFORCEMENT & COMPLIANCE:

Removals (Asylum Applicants)

- Including dependants, in 2019, 3,222 asylum seekers were removed or departed voluntarily, a 20% reduction from 2018 (4,049)
- The total number of removals and voluntary departures went down in each year from 2009 until 2017. The number went down again in 2018 and 2019.
- 1,710 asylum seekers left under Voluntary Return schemes in 2019. The figures for voluntary returns tend to change as more information becomes available about verified voluntary returns, often being increased, so comparison of the latest figure with earlier years has to be treated with some caution.

Table 12: Removals and voluntary departures of Asylum Applicants, incl. dependants

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Enforced	3,617	2,581	3,209	2,271	1,512
Voluntary	1,816	1,536	2,107	1,778	1,710
Total	5,433	4,117	5,316	4,049	3,222

Detention

Persons leaving detention

- A total of 9,081 people were recorded as removed from the UK upon leaving detention in 2019, having been held solely under Immigration Act powers.

Persons detained

- At the end of 2019 a total of 1,637 persons were detained, there were no children who were in detention at this point in time.
- 994 persons who had sought asylum at some stage were being detained solely under Immigration Act powers (61% of all immigration detainees)
- During 2019 a total of 14,086 entries into detention by asylum seekers were recorded, and 14,424 cases of asylum seekers leaving detention. These figures do not necessarily correspond to the numbers of people detained as some will have entered and left detention more than once.
- 86% of all detainees were male.

Table 13: People in detention

	End of 2015	End of 2016	End of 2017	End of 2018	End of 2019
Total	2,607	2,738	2,545	1,784	1,637
Asylum detainees	1,250	1,626	1,508	1,085	994

Children in Detention

- In 2019 98 children entered detention. 24 of these children were detained at the Gatwick pre-departure accommodation, and 31 at Tinsley House.
- *For more detail on children in detention see the separate briefing on this subject produced by the Refugee Council. There are also briefings on detention in the asylum system and the detained fast track process.*

CHILDREN:

Applications by Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum

- The number of applications from Unaccompanied Children, excluding dependants, was 3,649 in 2019, a 19% increase compared with 2018.

Table 15: Asylum applications by Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum (excl. Dependants)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Applications	3,254	3,290	2,401	3,063	3,649
% change to previous year	+67%	+1%	-33%	+28%	+19%

- Eritrea was the country of origin for the largest number of unaccompanied children in 2019.
- 85% of all applications in 2019 were from the 7 countries listed below. There were fewer than 100 applications from every other country.

Table 16: Top child asylum applicant producing countries (excl. Dependants)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Eritrea	736	413	355	684	559
Iran	227	388	233	269	536
Vietnam	182	194	306	324	446
Iraq	182	324	271	332	442
Sudan	148	255	356	496	441
Afghanistan	694	754	277	223	422
Albania	481	420	265	293	237

- In 2019 89% of applicants were male, a similar percentage to earlier years.

Age Disputed Cases

- The number of age disputed cases decreased in 2019. As a percentage of the number of applications during the year it was considerably lower than 2018.

Table 17: Age Disputed Asylum applications (excl. Dependants)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Applications	791	929	718	875	798
% change to previous year	+148%	+18%	-23%	+22%	-9%

N.B. 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 according to Home Office policy. This used to state that 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” but the wording has changed since June 2019 to “very strongly suggests that they are 25 years or over”.

Decisions

- The rate of grants of protection (refugee status and humanitarian protection) has risen quite starkly in recent years, both numerically and as a percentage of decisions.
- For unaccompanied children who have reached the age of 18 when they receive their decision, refusal rates have tended to be much higher; there was a refusal rate of 82% in 2015. However the refusal rate fell to 57% in 2016, fell again to 45% in 2017, rose to 60% in 2018, and fell to 39% in 2019
- For unaccompanied children a new category since 2013, 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 means there are far fewer grants of discretionary leave.
- The majority of decisions on asylum applications by unaccompanied children under the age of 18 used to be 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 only 3% of total decisions.

Table 18: Initial asylum decisions on unaccompanied children aged 17 and under

	Total	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	UASC Leave	Family or Private Life	Refusals
2019	1,830	1,382	79	0	172	42	155
2018	1,325	773	44	2	316	1	189
2017	1,454	817	36	2	386	2	211
2016	1,656	502	50	14	828	2	260
2015	1,568	357	18	38	809	0	346

Table 19: 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
2019	1,289	638	63	5	0	81	502
2018	824	299	29	2	0	3	491
2017	586	307	12	1	0	1	265
2016	295	118	6	1	1	2	167
2015	362	63	1	3	0	0	295

ASYLUM APPLICATIONS (DEPENDANTS):

- In 2019 there were 9,800 applications from dependants. The detailed under 18 breakdown from earlier years is no longer available. In 2019 there were 7,211 dependants who were under 18 and 2,589 who were over 18.

The tables below show the age and gender of dependants .

Table 20: Applications by Dependants by age

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Under 5	2,687	2,681	3,052	2,711
5 – 9 yo	1,312	1,337	1,640	1,589
10 – 13 yo	746	670	809	790
14 – 15 yo	307	282	336	319
16 – 17 yo	253	232	264	246
18+ yo	1,969	2,033	2,481	2,205

Table 21: Applications by dependants aged 18 and over

	Total Applications	Male dependants	Female dependants	% Female
2019	2,589	654	1,933	75%
2018	2,280	622	1,658	73%
2017	2,205	666	1,539	70%
2016	2,481	845	1,636	66%
2015	2,033	660	1,347	66%

N.B. There are a few cases where the age or gender of dependants is recorded as unknown.

WOMEN AND GIRLS:

Applications

- In 2019 26% of asylum applications were made by women. This was close to the average for recent years.

Table 22: Applications by women (Excl. Dependants)

	Total Applications	Applications by women	% by women
2019	35,737	9,120	26%
2018	29,504	8,025	27%
2017	26,547	7,364	28%
2016	30,747	7,680	25%
2015	32,733	6,788	21%

- The proportion of women applicants varies considerably from country to country. For a few countries there are more women applicants than men, or a roughly equal number, whereas in others the proportion of women applicants is low.

Table 23: Women asylum applicants from the top ten applicant producing countries 2019

	Total Applications	Applications by women	% by women
Iran	4,855	806	17%
Albania	3,488	956	27%
Iraq	2,985	548	18%
Pakistan	1,937	437	23%
Eritrea	1,876	452	24%
Afghanistan	1,573	193	12%
India	1,580	284	18%
Vietnam	1,561	554	35%
Sudan	1,524	189	12%
China	1,329	582	44%

Table 24: Top ten countries for women asylum applicants 2019

	Applications by women	% of total by women	Change in no. from 2018
Albania	956	27%	+195
Iran	806	17%	+20
China	582	44%	+178
Vietnam	554	35%	+112
Iraq	548	18%	-115
Nigeria	470	50%	+37
Eritrea	452	24%	+8
Pakistan	437	23%	+20
India	284	18%	+4
Namibia	240	55%	+83

- In 2019 only 11% of asylum applications by unaccompanied children were by girls. The percentage of applications by girls has remained steady in recent years.

Table 25: Applications by unaccompanied children seeking asylum

	Total Applications	Applications by girls	% Female
2019	3,775	413	11%
2018	3,063	334	11%
2017	2,401	261	11%
2016	3,290	333	10%
2015	3,254	296	9%

- The main countries of origin for unaccompanied girls seeking asylum in 2019 were those shown in the table below. There was a significant increase in applications from Vietnam in 2017 and from Eritrea in 2018. There were fewer than 10 girls applying from every other country in 2019.

Table 26: Applications by unaccompanied children seeking asylum (girls only)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Vietnam	43	71	121	131	164
Eritrea	106	110	29	99	120
Albania	38	33	24	15	14
Somalia	20	10	10	9	13
Ethiopia	15	35	6	15	12
Iran	10	6	7	11	10

Decisions

- Until 2014 women asylum seekers were generally slightly more likely than men to be granted asylum, and slightly more likely to be granted humanitarian protection or discretionary leave.
- Until 2014 the refusal rates for women tended to be lower than for men, however in 2015 the percentage of women granted asylum was significantly lower than for men and the refusal rate was higher. In 2018 and 2019 the refusal rate for women was lower than for men.

Table 27 Decisions by gender

	Granted Asylum		Granted HP or DL or other leave		Refused	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
2019	45%	47%	4%	9%	49%	44%
2018	24%	31%	6%	8%	70%	61%
2017	26%	31%	4%	4%	68%	65%
2016	29%	29%	6%	4%	66%	67%
2015	36%	30%	5%	5%	59%	65%

Appeals

- The differences in success rates between men and women are relatively small.

Table 28 Appeal decisions by gender

	Appeal Allowed		Appeal Dismissed		Appeal Withdrawn	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
2019	40%	44%	54%	47%	6%	9%
2018	40%	43%	55%	49%	6%	8%
2017	35%	37%	61%	59%	4%	5%
2016	41%	41%	55%	54%	5%	5%
2015	36%	34%	59%	60%	5%	6%

Note

Figures given in this summary may differ from those in earlier summaries. In some cases this is because of rounding which was done in Home Office Statistical Bulletins which is no longer done, and in other cases, particularly for more recent statistics, because of adjustments made as a result of more complete and accurate information becoming available.

The full detailed statistics covering the most recent period can be found on the Gov.UK website via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets>

For older statistics follow this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/series/migration-statistics>

The user guide to the Immigration statistics can be found via this link

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 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.