

Asylum Statistics Annual Trends

November 2022

Many of the figures in 2020 and 2021 show the impact of coronavirus and the lockdown restrictions and differ significantly from previous years as a result.

APPLICATIONS:

- In 2021 the number of applications for asylum in the UK, excluding dependants, (50,042), was 68% higher than in 2020 (29,815). This was the largest number of applications since 2003.

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

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Applications	26,547	29,504	35,737	29,815	50,042
% change from previous year	-14%	+9%	+21%	-18%	+68%

Applications by nationality:

- In 2021 there were large increases in the number of applicants from most of the top ten countries. The only country in the top ten showing a decrease in applications was Pakistan.

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

	2020	2021	% change
Iran	3,854	9,849	+156%
Iraq	2,299	6,163	+168%
Albania	2,882	4,853	+68%
Eritrea	2,505	4,675	+87%
Syria	1,482	3,389	+129%
Afghanistan	1,349	2,727	+102%
Sudan	2,056	2,324	+13%
Vietnam	980	1,831	+87%
Pakistan	1,224	1,071	-12%
India	863	1,040	+21%

- Over the past 10 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 10 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 from which the number of applicants has declined in recent years.
- After declining numbers from 2009 to 2013 applications from Iraq have risen in recent years except for a fall in 2020. 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, 2019, 2020 and 2021. The number of applications from China rose significantly in both 2018 and 2019 but fell in 2020.

Applications by location

- The majority of applications are made in-country rather than at ports. Over recent years there have been relatively small variations in the percentage of applications made in-country, ranging from 78% to 92% of all applications. In 2021 89% of applications were made in country and the number of applications made at ports rose again after falling in 2020.

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

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
In-country	22,474	23,601	28,023	25,202	44,535
% change from previous year	-16%	+5%	+19%	-10%	+77%
Port	4,073	5,903	7,714	4,613	5,507
% change from previous year	+5%	+45%	+31%	-40%	+19%
Total	26,547	29,504	35,737	29,815	50,042
% change from previous year	-14%	+11%	+21%	-18%	+68%

DECISIONS:

- In 2021 67% of initial decisions were grants of asylum, 28% were refusals, 4.2% were grants of Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave, and 1% 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 significantly higher than the average over the past 5 years.
- The 'other grants of leave' category includes UASC leave, the temporary leave often given to unaccompanied children.
- The percentage of refusals in 2021 was much lower than the average over the past 5 years.
- The table below shows the figures for decisions made, it does not include cases where an application was withdrawn of which there were 2,686 in 2021.

Table 4: Initial Decisions (excl. Dependants)

	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
Decisions	21,269		21,084		20,766		14,304		14,532	
Refugee status	5,957	28%	5,557	26%	9,401	45%	5,725	40%	9,703	67%
Humanitarian Protection	146	0.7%	582	3%	637	3%	508	3.5%	578	4%
Discretionary Leave	84	0.4%	104	0.5%	70	0.3%	36	0.3%	25	0.2%
Other Grants of Leave	592	3%	688	3%	688	3.3%	269	2%	162	1%
Refused	14,490	68%	14,153	67%	9,970	48%	7,766	54%	4,064	28%

- 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 2021 were Iran, Eritrea, Sudan and Syria as can be seen in the table below.
- In contrast, among the countries with relatively large numbers of applicants Pakistan and Albania had above average refusal rates.

Table 5: Asylum decisions by nationality, 2021, top ten countries for number of decisions (excl. Dependants)

	Decisions	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	Family or Private Life / UASC Leave	Refusals
Iran	2,518	2,240	7	0	5	266
Eritrea	1,475	1,422	3	0	2	48
Iraq	1,161	404	132	1	13	611
Syria	997	979	4	0	0	14
Sudan	857	819	1	0	0	37
Afghanistan	795	603	25	3	13	151
Vietnam	719	499	1	1	7	211
Pakistan	628	314	1	1	18	294
Albania	512	218	4	1	12	277
Turkey	385	295	0	1	1	88

APPEALS:

- In 2021 42% of appeals were allowed, while 44% 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. The number of appeals heard has been declining since 2017 with a very large drop in 2020 and 2021.

Table 6: Appeals determined

	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
Determined	14,299		11,627		9,668		3,819		3,896	
Allowed	5,074	35%	4,457	38%	3,994	41%	1,488	39%	1,633	42%
Dismissed	8,623	60%	8,662	57%	5,023	52%	1,899	50%	1,699	44%
Withdrawn	602	4%	508	5%	651	7%	432	11%	564	14%

- Pakistan and India had below average success rates at appeals in 2021 whereas Albania and Iran had above average success rates. Afghanistan had an unusually high number of withdrawals (222 out of 400 cases). The number of appeals was quite low for many countries so the percentage success rates are not as useful as in earlier years.

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), the Vulnerable Children’s Resettlement Scheme (started in 2016) and most recently the Community Sponsorship and UK Resettlement Schemes.
- 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 had their status determined by UNHCR and have ties to the UK.

Table 7: Refugees resettled (incl. Dependants)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Community Sponsorship	0	0	0	0	133
Gateway Programme	813	693	704	77	0
Mandate Scheme	28	18	11	5	2
Syrian Vulnerable Persons	4,832	4,407	4,408	662	304
Vulnerable Children	539	688	489	79	12
UK Resettlement Scheme	0	0	0	0	1,136

Note: prior to 2021 those resettled under Community Sponsorship Schemes did not feature separately in government statistics but as part of resettlement programmes.

- There was a very large drop in the number of people resettled in 2020 compared with earlier years.

ASYLUM SUPPORT:

- The total number of asylum seekers (including dependants) in receipt of Section 95 asylum support at the end of 2021 was 54,669 of whom 49,949 were in dispersal accommodation and 4,720 were receiving subsistence only.

- The numbers rose during 2018 and were then at their highest since 2007 but fell back slightly in 2019 before rising again in 2020 and 2021.
- The region of the UK with the largest number in dispersal accommodation at the end of 2020 was the North West (9,947). This region has had the largest proportion since the beginning of 2008. The number in London grew during 2021 to 8,455.
- 24,175 asylum seekers were in initial accommodation at the end of 2021, which represented a very large increase from earlier years.

Table 8: Asylum seekers in receipt of asylum support (incl. Dependants)

	End of 2017	End of 2018	End of 2019	End of 2020	End of 2021
Dispersed accommodation	37,716	41,316	40,702	41,302	49,949
Subsistence only	3,020	2,949	2,847	4,324	4,720
Initial accommodation	1,802	2,129	2,738	12,235	24,175

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

- 2,065 decisions to grant Section 4 support were made in 2021. This is a significant decrease from 2020.
- At the end of 2021 5,613 applicants, including dependants, were receiving Section 4 support.

Table 9: Grants of Section 4 Support

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of grants	5,257	2,007	2,455	4,214	2,065

Table 10: Numbers in receipt of Section 4 Support (incl. Dependants)

	End of 2017	End of 2018	End of 2019	End of 2020	End of 2021
Number supported	4,114	4,032	3,804	6,180	5,613

- 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 2021, 793 asylum seekers were removed or departed voluntarily, a 48% reduction from 2020 (1,514) and much lower than earlier years.
- The total number of removals and voluntary departures went down in each year from 2009 until 2017. The number went down again in each of the last 4 years.
- 680 asylum seekers left under Voluntary Return schemes in 2021. 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 11: Removals and voluntary departures of Asylum Applicants, incl. dependants

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Enforced	3,001	2,122	1,364	486	113
Voluntary	2,148	1,849	1,803	1,028	680
Total	5,149	3,971	3,167	1,514	793

Detention

Persons leaving detention

- A total of 3,098 people were subject to enforced removal from the UK upon leaving detention in 2021, having been held solely under Immigration Act powers.

Persons detained

- At the end of 2021 a total of 1,179 persons were detained, there were no children who were in detention at this point in time.
- 622 persons who had sought asylum at some stage were being detained solely under Immigration Act powers (53% of all immigration detainees).
- During 2021 a total of 20,166 entries into detention by asylum seekers were recorded, and 20,004 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.
- 95% of all detainees were male.

Table 12: People in detention

	End of 2017	End of 2018	End of 2019	End of 2020	End of 2021
Total	2,545	1,784	1,637	910	1,179
Asylum detainees	1,508	1,085	994	438	622

Children in Detention

- In 2021 515 children entered detention. 197 were detained at Yarl's Wood IRC, a further 118 at Tinsley House IRC and 177 at Harmondsworth IRC. IRCs have been used as short-term holding facilities for people who have crossed the Channel in small boats.
- *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 4,382 in 2021, a 58% increase compared with 2020 and higher than earlier years.

Table 13: Asylum applications by Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum (excl. Dependants)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Applications	2,399	3,063	3,775	2,773	4,382
% change to previous year	-33%	+28%	+23%	-279%	+36%

- Iran was the country of origin for the largest number of unaccompanied children in 2021.
- 87% of all applications in 2021 were from the 8 countries listed below. There were fewer than 100 applications from every other country.

Table 14: Top child asylum applicant producing countries (excl. Dependants)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Iran	233	269	545	352	1,264
Afghanistan	277	223	437	457	637
Sudan	356	496	457	470	460
Eritrea	355	684	597	356	407
Iraq	271	332	459	212	400
Syria	39	39	53	98	309
Vietnam	306	324	459	298	212
Albania	265	293	238	105	121

- In 2021 95% of applicants were male, a similar percentage to earlier years.

Age Disputed Cases

- There was a very large increase in the number of age disputed cases in 2021. This was by far the largest number of cases in any of the last 10 years.

Table 15: Age Disputed Asylum applications (excl. Dependants)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Applications	718	875	798	853	2,539
% change to previous year	-23%	+22%	-9%	+7%	+195%

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".¹

¹ This policy has now reverted back to the pre-June 2019 wording but the 'over 25' wording was in place during 2021.

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, to 35% in 2020 and to 13% in 2021.
- 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 fewer grants of discretionary leave.

Table 16: Initial asylum decisions on unaccompanied children aged 17 and under

	Total	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	UASC Leave	Family or Private Life	Refusals
2021	892	816	20	1	23	0	32
2020	678	547	18	2	56	1	54
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

Table 17: 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
2021	1,618	1,330	77	1	0	3	207
2020	689	414	32	0	0	2	241
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

ASYLUM APPLICATIONS (DEPENDANTS):

- In 2021 there were 8,490 applications from dependants. The detailed under 18 breakdown from earlier years is no longer available. In 2021 there were 6,031 dependants who were under 18 and 2,459 who were over 18.

The tables below show the age and gender of dependants for earlier years.

Table 18: 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 19: Applications by dependants aged 18 and over

	Total Applications	Male dependants	Female dependants	% Female
2021	2,459	489	1,966	80%
2020	1,833	410	1,421	78%
2019	2,589	654	1,933	75%
2018	2,280	622	1,658`	73%
2017	2,205	666	1,539	70%

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

WOMEN AND GIRLS:

Applications

- In 2021 14% of asylum applications were made by women. This was well below the average for recent years.

Table 20: Applications by women (Excl. Dependants)

	Total Applications	Applications by women	% by women
2021	50,042	7,016	14%
2020	29,815	6,679	22%
2019	35,737	9,120	26%
2018	29,504	8,025	27%
2017	26,547	7,364	28%

- 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 21: Women asylum applicants from the top ten applicant producing countries 2021

	Applications by women	Total Applications	% Female
Iran	558	9,849	6%
Iraq	497	6,163	8%
Albania	578	4,853	12%
Eritrea	885	4,675	19%
Syria	209	3,389	6%
Afghanistan	149	2,727	5%
Sudan	79	2,324	3%
Vietnam	300	1,831	16%
Pakistan	217	1,071	20%
India	165	1,040	16%

Table 22: Top ten countries for women asylum applicants 2021

	Applications by women	% of total by women	Change in no. from 2020
Eritrea	885	19%	+300
Albania	578	12%	-147
Iran	558	6%	+95
Iraq	497	8%	+95
Nigeria	376	54%	+30
Vietnam	300	16%	-6
Philippines	259	85%	+97
El Salvador	242	37%	+64
China	231	47%	-164
Pakistan	217	20%	-82

- In 2021 only 5% of asylum applications by unaccompanied children were by girls. The percentage of applications by girls has declined in the last two years.

Table 23: Applications by unaccompanied children seeking asylum

	Total Applications	Applications by girls	% Female
2021	4,382	224	5%
2020	2,773	243	9%
2019	3,775	413	11%
2018	3,063	334	11%
2017	2,401	261	11%

- The main countries of origin for unaccompanied girls seeking asylum in 2021 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 10 or fewer applying from every other country in 2021.

Table 24: Applications by unaccompanied children seeking asylum (girls only)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Eritrea	29	99	120	95	90
Vietnam	121	131	164	78	38
Ethiopia	6	15	12	6	17
Somalia	10	9	13	10	17

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, 2019, 2020 and 2021 the refusal rate for women was lower than for men.

Table 25 Decisions by gender

	Granted Asylum		Granted HP or DL or other leave		Refused	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
2021	64%	69%	5%	5%	31%	26%
2020	37%	50%	5%	7%	58%	43%
2019	45%	47%	4%	9%	49%	44%
2018	24%	31%	6%	8%	70%	61%
2017	26%	31%	4%	4%	68%	65%

Appeals

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

Table 26 Appeal decisions by gender

	Appeal Allowed		Appeal Dismissed		Appeal Withdrawn	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
2021	40%	48%	45%	40%	15%	12%
2020	38%	43%	52%	42%	10%	15%
2019	40%	44%	54%	47%	6%	9%
2018	40%	43%	55%	49%	6%	8%
2017	35%	37%	61%	59%	4%	5%

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/immigration-statistics-data-tables-year-ending-september-2022>

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/publications/user-guide-to-home-office-immigration-statistics--9>

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.