

ASYLUM BACKLOGS

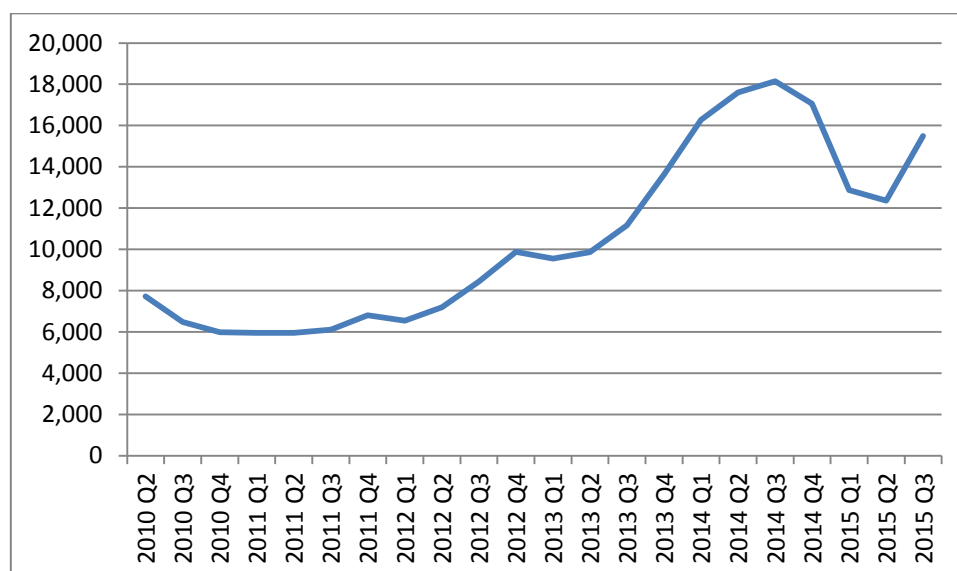
November 2015

At the end of September 2015, 24,236 of the applications for asylum received since April 2006 from main applicants were pending a decision (initial decision, appeal or further review). This was more than at the end of September 2014 (22,879). The Home Office states that the number of decisions outstanding increased over a period of time due to a decrease in staffing levels following a restructure initiated by the UK Border Agency and say that since January 2014, the Home Office has taken steps to reallocate resources to this area, the impact of which can be seen in some of the latest figures.

During 2010 the number of asylum initial decisions taken in each quarter was larger than the number of new applications. However in every quarter since then the opposite has been true, except for the last quarter of 2014 and the first two quarters of 2015. (The initial decisions taken in a quarter are not necessarily on applications made in that same quarter, but the cumulative effect of a continued gap over a number of years between applications made and decisions made is inevitably an increase in the number of cases with decisions pending).

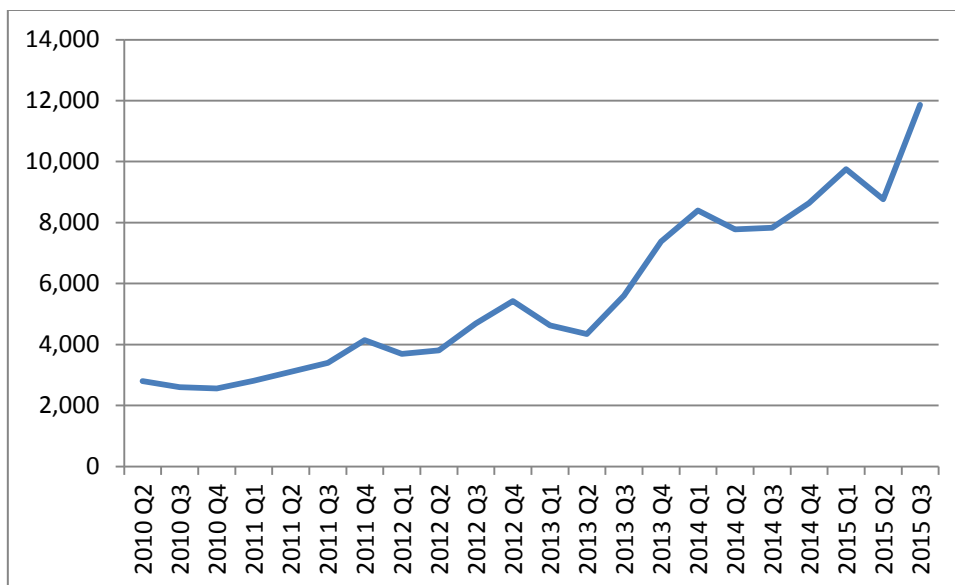
The statistics on pending cases have been published since quarter 2, 2010.

The chart below show the total number of cases awaiting an initial decision.

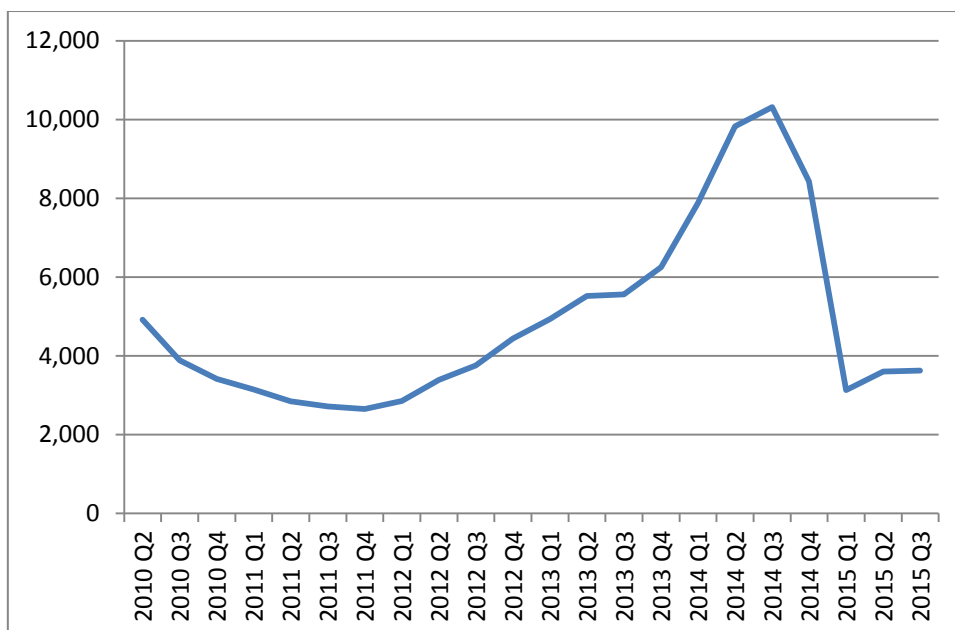


The published statistics also break down the cases into those where an initial decision has been pending for less than 6 months and more than 6 months. The charts below show this data.

Decision pending 6 months or less:



Decision pending for more than 6 months:



It is clear that the number of cases waiting over 6 months increased very significantly from 2011 until 2014, but then reduced quite rapidly until the two most recent quarters.

Decisions pending further review

From the beginning of 2012 until recently there was relatively little change in the number of cases pending further review, ranging from a high of 4,904 in the first quarter of 2012, to a low of 3,412 in the first quarter of 2014. However in the last quarter of 2014 the figure rose to 5,907, and rose again in 2015 up to 9,236 at the end of June 2015, the highest since 2010 when these statistics were first reported. At the end of September the figure had fallen slightly to 8,749.

The Home Affairs Select Committee of the House of Commons looks at the work of the Immigration Directorates within the Home Office on a regular basis. Their most recent report, published in December 2014, examines the work of the Directorates over the period January to June 2014. It includes a section dealing with backlogs, covering all immigration cases as well as asylum applications. The Committee commented that they did not believe that the Home Office had explained adequately why there is a backlog in straightforward cases.

On asylum applications the Committee made two comments. These were:

- We welcome the move to establish service standards for asylum claims. However, we do not know what these service standards are or when they will be introduced and we recommend that the Home Office does so immediately to bring certainty into the asylum system.
- We consider it entirely unacceptable that almost half of asylum applicants do not receive even an initial decision within 6 months. This is a very long time period for people to have to wait for a first response. We further recommend that the Home Office publish the method by which it intends to assess the performance of UKVI in dealing with the asylum cases that fall outside the service standards.

The Committee's report can be found at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmhaff/712/71202.htm>

In October 2013 the Committee devoted a whole report to the asylum system. A section of that report dealt with the delays in the system and the backlogs, including the 'legacy' cases. The report can be found at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/asylum/>

The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration has also published reports which refer to the backlogs, including the old cases which formed what were referred to as 'legacy' cases. In 2013 he produced a report on the progress made on legacy asylum and migration cases. The report can be found here:

<http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/inspections/inspection-reports/2012-inspection-reports-2/>

The most recent asylum statistics can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2015/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.