

Children in the Asylum System

November 2015

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. However in 2014 they rose, but still accounted for just under 8% of all asylum applications compared with over 16% in 2008. Further increases have occurred in 2015.

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

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Applications	1,515	1,248	1,125	1,265	1,945
% change to previous year	-47%	-18%	-10%	+12%	+54%

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

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2015	498	518	947	
2014	397	396	551	601
2013	282	288	327	368
2012	263	244	310	308
2011	343	339	271	295
2010	395	353	386	381

In 2012 Albania became the country of origin for the largest number of unaccompanied children. The number of applicants from Afghanistan has dropped over the past 5 years, until 2014, with significant reductions also for Iraq and Iran among other countries. Applications from Syria are increasing, reaching 118 in 2014.

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

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Albania	32	123	265	470	632
Eritrea	123	102	80	131	460
Afghanistan	487	394	235	150	179
Syria	6	8	21	64	118
Vietnam	96	78	62	68	103
Iran	176	171	119	76	73

In 2014 88% of applicants were male, which is a similar percentage to earlier years.

Unaccompanied Children ages

In 2014 the age distribution was:

Aged 16 – 17	63%
Aged 14 – 15	27%
Aged under 14	6%
Age unknown	4%

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.

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

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Applications	530	370	337	323	318
% change to previous year	-54%	-30%	-9%	-4%	-2%

During 2014 the countries of origin with the largest numbers of age disputed cases raised were:

Eritrea	70
Afghanistan	56
Albania	37
Vietnam	27
Syria	24
Sudan	13
Iran	13

These countries accounted for over 75% 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

- 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 are much 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 74% in 2014.

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
2014	988	418	9	23	380	4	154
2013	936	237	4	380	119	18	178
2012	594	159	3	342			90
2011	939	183	6	605			145
2010	1,627	264	11	1,089			263

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
Q3 2015	342	81	2	7	183	0	69
Q2 2015	411	67	8	8	233	0	95
Q1 2015	383	98	1	18	181	0	85
Q4 2014	446	180	4	11	183	0	68
Q3 2014	306	136	3	7	103	0	57

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
2014	281	69	1	0	0	2	209
2013	176	50	0	3	0	2	121
2012	87	26	0	8		0	53
2011	127	27	3	9			88
2010	209	27	1	7			174

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
Q3 2015	62	8	0	0	0	0	54
Q2 2015	55	13	0	2	0	0	40
Q1 2015	181	29	1	0	0	0	151
Q4 2014	76	18	0	0	0	2	56
Q3 2014	107	13	1	0	0	0	93

Decisions by country of origin

The tables below show decisions by country of origin for 2014. For children aged 17 and under the table includes those countries of origin where 20 or more decisions were made during the year.

A high proportion of decisions to grant refugee status can be seen for several countries.

Albania stands out as the country with the highest refusal rate. Turkey and Afghanistan also had a higher than average refusal rate, but with much smaller numbers involved, particularly in the case of Turkey.

Table 9: Initial asylum decisions on unaccompanied children aged 17 and under, 2014

	Total	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	UASC Leave	Family or Private Life	Refusals
Eritrea	282	269	1	0	9	0	3
Albania	272	2	0	0	190	0	80
Afghanistan	112	16	0	5	72	0	19
Iran	46	23	5	4	9	1	4
Syria	36	22	0	0	8	0	6
Vietnam	36	11	3	1	18	0	3
Egypt	23	0	0	1	16	0	6
Sudan	22	21	0	0	1	0	0
Turkey	21	1	0	3	8	1	8

Far fewer decisions were made in the case of children who had reached the age of 18. Four countries of origin accounted for over 60% of the total decisions, and were the only countries with more than 20 initial decisions. These were:

Albania 97 decisions, of which 96 were refusals, and 1 grant of asylum
 Eritrea 34 decisions, of which 3 were refusals, and 31 grants of asylum
 Afghanistan 24 decisions, of which 21 were refusals, and 2 grants of asylum
 Iran 22 decisions, of which 16 were refusals, and 6 grants of asylum.

As can be seen there are significant differences between these countries of origin.

The table below shows the decisions made during the first three quarters of 2015, for all countries of origin for which 40 or more decisions were made. Compared with 2014 there are falls in the percentage of grants of refugee status for Eritrea and, to a lesser but noticeable extent, Syria and Iran.

Table 10: Initial asylum decisions on unaccompanied children aged 17 and under, first three quarters, 2015

	Total	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	UASC Leave	Family or Private Life	Refusals
Albania	320	1	0	7	208	0	104
Eritrea	254	93	8	2	117	0	34
Afghanistan	171	30	0	9	104	0	28
Egypt	66	0	0	1	48	0	17
Syria	51	17	0	0	25	0	9
Vietnam	45	8	0	0	32	0	5
Sudan	45	44	0	0	1	0	0
Iran	40	15	0	0	16	0	9

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 over the last 5 years.

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Table 11: Applications by Dependents by age

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Under 5	1,530	1,904	2,030	2,423	2,687
5 – 9 yo	829	1,061	1,094	1,125	1,312
10 – 13 yo	470	587	566	590	746
14 – 15 yo	200	257	247	223	307
16 – 17 yo	158	201	191	210	253
18+ yo	1,129	1,667	1,658	1,705	1,969

NOTE

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

All statistics are taken from the government quarterly statistics bulletin

<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.