

Asylum Seekers in Europe

November 2020

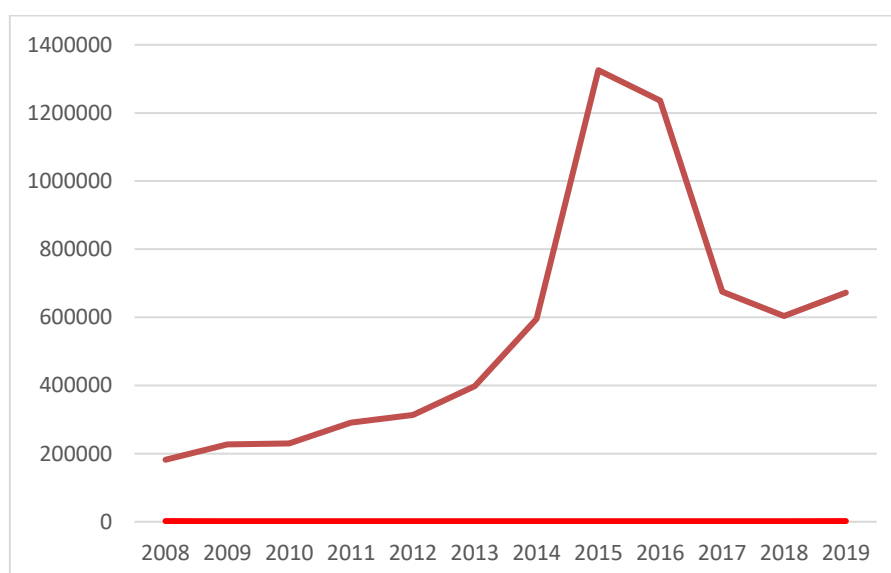
The main source of data covering Europe as a whole is the Eurostat database. Eurostat depends on statistics supplied by the equivalent of the Home Office in each country.

The number of asylum seekers in Europe has increased in recent years with a particularly large increase in 2015 but numbers fell quite sharply in 2017 and by a smaller amount in 2018 and then rose in 2019. The table and chart below show the total number of first time applications in each year since 2011 as reported by Eurostat. Eurostat also publishes figures described as the total number of applications, which includes fresh claims as well as first time applications, and may also have some double counting as a result of applicants who having made an application in one country being removed to another country under the Dublin Regulation, and then made a claim in that country. The trends for these two sets of figures are similar.

The total number of first time applications for 2019 was 49% lower than the 2015 figure.

First Time Applications

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
290,885	313,265	398,570	595,530	1,325,465	1,236,285	675,780	604,220	672,475



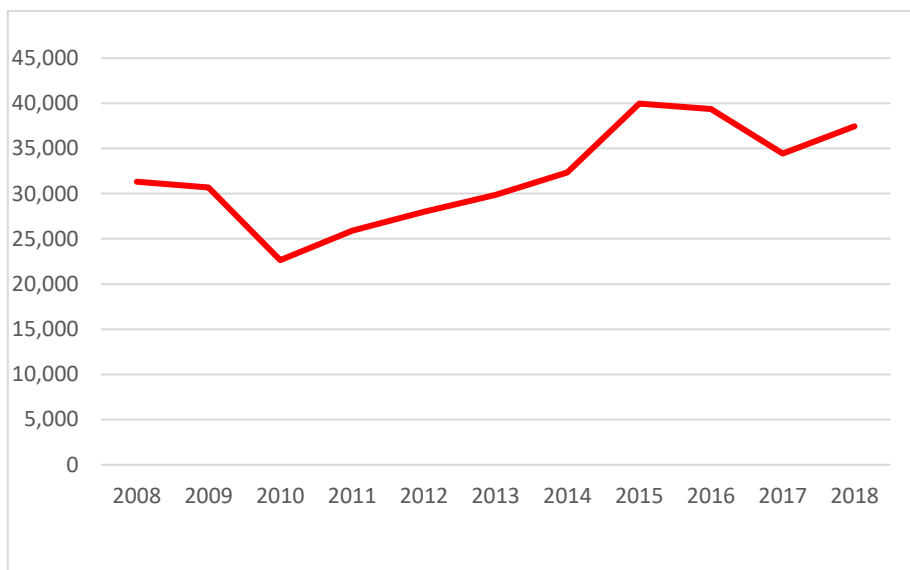
The Home Office has also published statistics for the number of asylum applications in Europe. For some countries these were sourced from the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees, and for others from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. They differed from the Eurostat figures by a few percentage points. Generally the Home Office figures have been higher

than the figure for first time applications quoted by Eurostat, but lower than the total number of applications quoted by Eurostat, although in 2015 and 2016 the Home Office figure was lower than both Eurostat figures. The differences are almost certainly due to differences in the methodology of collection of the data.

UK Figures

The numbers of asylum applications increased in the UK, but not as steeply as in Europe as a whole. The table and chart below use Home Office statistics. These figures include dependants.

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
25,898	27,978	29,875	32,344	39,968	39,357	34,435	38,483	44,494

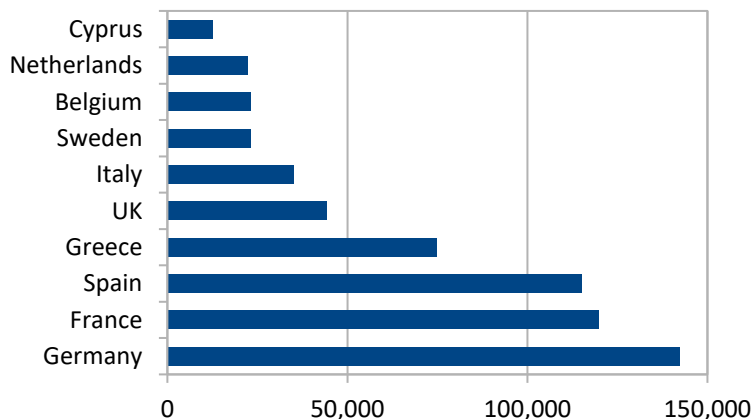


The Home Office figures which include details about dependants are published in August each year.

In 2019 the UK was 5th in Europe in terms of the number of first time asylum applications. This was the same as in the previous 3 years.

Germany had the highest figure. Some countries, such as Sweden, with a smaller population than the UK, had proportionally more applications

The chart below compares the Eurostat data for the top ten countries for first time applications in 2019.



In terms of the number of asylum seekers per 1000 population in 2019 the UK is below the average for Europe.

If the number of applications is looked at in relation to each country's GDP, again the UK is well below the average across Europe. Of the 10 countries in the table above only Germany has a higher nominal GDP than the UK.

Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum

Eurostat data shows that there was a significant increase in applications from unaccompanied children in 2015 compared with earlier years but the numbers have fallen more recently.

From 2008 to 2013 the annual total for Europe as a whole (EU 28 plus Norway and Switzerland) varied between 11,466 and 14,425. However in 2014 it was 23,150, and in 2015 the total was 102,680 In 2016 the numbers fell to 65,525, and there was a further fall in 2017 to 32,355, in 2018 to 20,430 and in 2019 to 18,295 still significantly higher than for any year before 2014.

Sweden alone reported 34,295 applications in 2015, more than a third of the total. Germany reported 22,255 applications. In 2016 Germany reported 35,935 applications, more than half the total but reported 9,085 in 2017. For the UK the figure increased from 1,945 in 2014 to 3,255 in 2015 but then fell to 3,175 in 2016 and to 2,205 in 2017 before rising again to 2,870 in 2018 and 3,650 in 2019. The country reporting the highest figure in 2019 was the UK.

Countries of Origin of Asylum Seekers

In 2015 there were large increases in applications from several countries of origin compared with 2014, but the numbers stabilised in 2016 for the main countries of origin and decreased significantly in 2017. The figures for first time applications for the EU28 for the five countries of origin with the largest number of first time applications in 2019 are shown in the table below. The large increase for Venezuela and Colombia contributed to a large increase in applications made in Spain from 54,050 in 2018 to 117,795 in 2019.

Country	2018	2019
Syria	80,940	77,245
Afghanistan	41,055	56,165
Venezuela	22,285	45,030
Colombia	10,135	32,010
Iraq	39,825	31,325

The corresponding figures for the UK were:

Country	2018	2019
Syria	711	1,038
Afghanistan	1,349	1,570
Venezuela	25	29
Colombia	12	19
Iraq	2,700	2,971

Iran was the country of origin for the largest number of asylum applicants in the UK in 2019.

Decisions

Decisions made during 2019 do not necessarily relate to applications made during that year. Across Europe (EU 28 plus Norway and Switzerland) a total of 584,795 initial decisions were made in 2019, compared with 672,475 first time applications.

The table below shows the decisions for the top 10 countries in terms of initial decisions made. A positive decision means a decision to grant refugee status, humanitarian protection, or a subsidiary protection status.

Country	Decisions	% Refugee	% Positive	% Rejected
Germany	154,175	29.2	45.6	54.4
France	113,890	15.2	24.7	75.3
Italy	93,485	10.8	19.7	80.3
Spain	58,035	2.8	66.2	33.8
Greece	32,700	41.3	53.1	46.9
UK	28,460	44.2	52.7	47.3
Sweden	20,720	15.9	29.3	70.7
Belgium	17,170	32.3	38.0	62.0
Austria	13,890	40.5	53.5	46.5
Netherlands	12,935	19.0	37.4	62.6

It is clear that some countries are much more likely than others to grant humanitarian or subsidiary protection than others. Spain, for example, stands out as very low in terms of grants of refugee status but then has a large increase when all positive decisions are counted.

In 2019 across Europe as a whole 22% of decisions were to grant refugee status and 40% were positive.

Notes

Detailed figures for the UK can be found in Refugee Council briefings on asylum statistics, dealing with quarterly figures and annual trends.

The Eurostat data is as published in May 2020 and may be subject to later revision.

The most recent Home Office statistics can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-september-2020/list-of-tables>

Eurostat data can be found at:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/asylum-and-managed-migration/data/database>

More information about asylum systems in Europe can be found in the Asylum Information Database:

<http://www.asylumineurope.org/>

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.