

Quarterly asylum statistics

March 2021

This briefing covers the latest quarterly asylum statistics. For annual and longer term trends see the Refugee Council briefing on asylum trends.

The most recent period for which statistics have been published is the final quarter of 2020. Many of the figures in the last 3 quarters show the impact of coronavirus and the lockdown restrictions and differ significantly from previous quarters as a result.

APPLICATIONS:

- The number of applications for asylum in the UK decreased sharply in Q2 2020 compared with previous quarters but rose again in Q3.

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

Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
9,939	8,455	4,850	8,508	7,643

Applications by nationality:

- Compared with the corresponding quarter in 2019 there was an increase in the number of applicants from three of the top ten countries of origin. There were very large percentage increases for Sudanese and Syrian applicants. El Salvador has never featured in the top ten before Q4 2020.

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

	Q4 2019	Q4 2020	% change
Iran	1,461	990	-32%
Albania	1,020	984	-4%
Eritrea	431	686	+59%
Iraq	749	435	-42%
Syria	263	423	+61%
Sudan	326	395	+21%
Afghanistan	427	349	-18%
Pakistan	462	323	-30%
El Salvador	259	301	+16%
Vietnam	497	203	-59%

Applications by location

- The proportion of applications made at ports and in-country changed only marginally before Q2 2020 but increased hugely to 97% in-country in Q2 2020 and remained high, at 89%, in Q3 and then fell to 79% in Q4.

Table 3: Applications by location (excl. dependants), by quarter

	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
In-country	7,405	6,527	4,716	7,566	6,016
Port	2,534	1,928	134	942	1,627
Total	9,939	8,455	4,850	8,508	7,643

DECISIONS:

- In Q4 2020 3,728 initial asylum decisions were made, excluding dependants; an increase on the previous two quarter but still lower than earlier quarters.
- 40% of initial decisions in Q4 2020 were to grant asylum, an increase on the previous two quarters. 3.7% of initial decisions in Q4 2020 were to grant Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave, and 55% were refusals, a large decrease from Q3.

Table 4: Initial Decisions (excl. dependants) by quarter

	Q4 2019		Q1 2020		Q2 2020		Q3 2020		Q4 2020	
Decisions	5,096		5,244		2,734		2,659		3,728	
Refugee status	2,449	48%	2,658	51%	957	35%	632	24%	1,506	40%
Humanitarian Protection	192	4%	226	4%	94	3%	64	2.4%	126	3.4%
Discretionary Leave	13	0.3%	10	0.2%	12	0.4%	3	0.1%	13	0.3%
Other Grants	143	2.8%	105	2%	58	2%	55	2%	50	1.3%
Refused	2,299	45%	2,245	43%	1,613	59%	1,905	72%	2,033	55%

- Countries with an above average percentage of applicants granted protection in Q4 2020 included Eritrea, Syria and Vietnam but refusal rates were very high for some countries.

Table 5: Asylum decisions by nationality, Q4 2020, top ten countries for number of decisions

	Decisions	Refugee status	Humanitarian Protection	Discretionary Leave	Other Grants	Refusals
Iraq	566	270	1	0	1	294
Sudan	420	200	1	0	0	219
Iraq	368	58	14	1	7	288
Eritrea	307	242	0	0	0	65
Afghanistan	201	74	0	0	2	125
Vietnam	170	115	0	0	4	51
Pakistan	163	48	0	1	3	111
Albania	141	58	2	3	1	77
Syria	113	88	3	0	0	22
India	98	2	0	1	2	93

APPEALS:

- 874 appeals were determined in Q4 2020, an increase from Q2 and Q3 but still lower than the previous quarters.
- The proportion of appeals allowed was 38% in Q4 2020, while 47% were dismissed. The remainder were withdrawn and the percentage withdrawn was higher than usual.

Table 6: Appeals determined, by quarter

	Q4 2019		Q1 2020		Q2 2020		Q3 2020		Q4 2020	
Determined	2,199		2,060		462		388		874	
Allowed	898	41%	836	41%	169	37%	141	36%	335	38%
Dismissed	1,115	51%	1,089	53%	221	48%	161	41%	411	47%
Withdrawn	186	8%	135	7%	72	16%	86	22%	128	15%

ASYLUM SUPPORT:

- The total number of asylum seekers (including dependants) in receipt of Section 95 asylum support at the end of Q4 2020 was 45,626, similar to the previous two quarters.
- 4,324 of these asylum seekers were receiving subsistence only support at the end of Q4 2020.
- 41,302 of these asylum seekers were supported in dispersal accommodation at the end of Q4 2020
- The region of the UK with the largest number of people in dispersal accommodation at the end of Q4 2020 was North West England (9,592).
- 12,235 asylum seekers were in initial accommodation under Section 98 support at the end of Q4 2020, a very large increase from quarters earlier than Q3.

Table 7: Asylum seekers in receipt of Section 95 asylum support at the end of each quarter (incl. Dependants)

	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
Dispersed accommodation	40,702	41,388	42,289	42,389	41,302
Subsistence only	2,847	2,856	3,480	4,131	4,324
Initial accommodation (s98)	2,738	2,577	5,444	10,315	12,235

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

- At the end of Q4 2020 6,180 applicants, including dependants, were receiving Section 4 support.

Table 8: Numbers in receipt of Section 4 Support at the end of the quarter (incl. dependants).

	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
Number supported	3,804	4,077	5,357	6,074	6,180

ENFORCEMENT & COMPLIANCE:

Removals (Asylum Applicants)

- In the year ending September 2020 1,831 asylum seekers were removed or departed voluntarily from the UK, a 43% decrease from the year ending September 2019 (3,221).
- 687 asylum seekers left via enforced removals from the UK in the year ending September 2020, a 53% decrease from the year ending September 2019 (1,464).
- 1,144 asylum seekers left under Voluntary Return schemes in the year ending September 2020, a 35% decrease from the year ending September 2019 (1,757).

Note: The most recent figures are often revised in subsequent statistical releases, usually upwards, so percentage decreases can change significantly when this happens. The figures up to December 2020 have not yet been published.

Detention

Persons entering and leaving detention

In the year ending December 2020 a total of 14,773 people were recorded as entering detention of whom 9,620 were asylum cases. In the same period 15,449 people left detention of whom 10,320 were asylum cases. Some people may have been in detention more than once.

Persons Detained at the end of Q4 2020

- At the end of Q4 2020 a total of 910 persons were detained, at this point no children were in detention.
- 438 persons who had sought asylum at some stage were being detained solely under Immigration Act powers (48% of all immigration detainees)
- 23 children were recorded as entering detention in the year ending December 2020.

CHILDREN:

Applications by Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum

- The number of applications from unaccompanied children, excluding dependants, was 562 in Q4 2020, lower than in three of the previous four quarters.

Table 9: Asylum applications by Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum (excl. dependants)

	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
Applications	1,066	763	118	848	562

- Afghanistan was the top country of origin for unaccompanied children (20% of all applications in Q4 2020). Eritrea accounted for 16%, Sudan for 15%, Iran for 13%, Syria for 8% and Vietnam for 6%. Together these six countries accounted for nearly 80% of all applications in Q4 2020.

- In Q4 2020 only 8% of applicants were female, a slightly lower percentage than usual.
- In Q4 2020 46 asylum applications by unaccompanied children were made by girls.
- There are a small number of applications recorded as sex unknown.

Table 10: Applications by unaccompanied children seeking asylum

	Total Applications	Applications by girls	% Female
Q4 2020	515	46	8%
Q3 2020	848	71	8%
Q2 2020	118	3	2.5%
Q1 2020	763	90	12%
Q4 2019	1,066	122	11%

For the detailed statistics on the main countries of origin for unaccompanied girls seeking asylum see the Refugee Council briefing on annual trends in statistics.

Age Disputed Cases

- The number of age disputed cases raised in Q4 2020 was 251, a decrease compared with Q3. Afghanistan (68), Sudan (39), Iran (35), and Eritrea (31) were the countries of origin with the largest number of age disputed cases in Q4 2020.

Table 11: Age Disputed Asylum applications (excl. dependants)

	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
Applications	189	125	31	325	251

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

- If an unaccompanied child’s claim for international protection is refused, they may be granted UASC leave. Since 2013 this leave is granted in cases where the only reason for giving leave is that the applicant is a child who cannot be returned. It is not granted for anyone over the age of 17 and a half. A smaller number of decisions than usual were made from Q2 2020.

Table 12: 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
Q4 2020	125	114	1	1	4	0	5
Q3 2020	98	77	1	0	6	0	14
Q2 2020	39	32	1	0	0	3	3
Q1 2020	323	263	11	1	28	1	19
Q4 2019	410	330	19	0	31	1	29

Table 13: 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
Q4 2020	185	139	6	0	0	1	39
Q3 2020	129	57	6	0	0	0	66
Q2 2020	40	30	1	0	0	0	9
Q1 2020	244	142	7	0	0	0	95
Q4 2019	223	125	9	0	0	0	89

ASYLUM APPLICATIONS (DEPENDANTS):

- In Q4 2020 there were 1,813 dependants included in asylum applications.
- 1,306 of the dependants were under 18 years old and 1,051 were female.

Table 14: Dependants included in asylum applications

	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
Number of main applicants	9,871	8,455	4,850	8,508	7,643
Number of dependants	2,419	2,114	939	1,719	1,813

For the detailed statistics on dependants see the Refugee Council briefing on annual trends in statistics.

FAMILY REUNION:

Adults who have been granted refugee status or humanitarian protection are entitled to apply for family reunion. Immediate family members, defined as spouses or partners and children under the age of 18 are eligible to apply for entry to the UK.

Table 15: Family reunion entry clearance visa grants by quarter

	Total	Under 18	18 and Over
Q4 2020	1,667	914	753
Q3 2020	1,624	922	702
Q2 2020	131	79	52
Q1 2020	2,006	1,077	929
Q4 2019	2,305	1,119	1,186

The number of cases dealt with has increased from the very small number of cases dealt with in Q2 2020 but that may be due to a significant backlog of applications.

WOMEN AND GIRLS:

- In Q4 2020, there were 1,680 applications where the main applicant was a woman or girl. This represents 22% of all applications, similar to previous quarters.

Table 16: Applications by women or girls by quarter

	Q3 2019	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
Total	9,140	9,871	8,455	4,850	8,508	7,643
Female	2,292	2,515	2,236	1,087	1,596	1,680
% Female	25%	25%	26%	22%	19%	22%

- The proportion of female applicants varies considerably from country to country. For a very small number of countries there are more female than male applicants whereas in many countries the percentage of female applicants is low. Among the countries with the largest number of female applicants in Q4 2020 China and Nigeria have high percentages.

Table 17: Female applicants from the top ten applicant producing countries Q4 2020

	Female Applicants	Total	% Female
Iran	89	990	9%
Albania	223	984	23%
Eritrea	136	656	21%
Iraq	69	435	16%
Syria	40	423	9%
Sudan	14	395	7%
Afghanistan	22	349	4%
Pakistan	80	323	25%
El Salvador	97	301	32%
Vietnam	53	203	26%

Table 18: Top ten countries for female applicants Q4 2020

	Female Applicants	% Female of total application
Albania	223	23%
Eritrea	136	21%
El Salvador	97	32%
China	95	54%
Iran	89	9%
Pakistan	80	25%
Nigeria	77	49%
Iraq	69	16%
Vietnam	53	26%
Syria	40	9%

NOTE

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/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-december-2020/list-of-tables#detention-and-returns>

For older statistics follow this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/series/migration-statistics>

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.